



**Calcutta HC to govt: Ensure 1% transgender job quota in Bengal**  
TNN & AGENCIES

**PM Modi extends his warm greetings to Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu on Eid-al-Adha.** The frosty relations between India and the Maldives have witnessed an apparent thaw after Muizzu attended PM Modi's swearing-in-ceremony recently

# EVMs can be hacked: Musk. Not in India: Ex-IT jr minister

**Rahul, Akhilesh Join In, Doubt EVM Security**  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Electronic voting machines (EVMs) were again in focus with Elon Musk, the multi-billionaire founder of Tesla and SpaceX, and former Union IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar engaging in a debate on X after Musk suggested eliminating the machines following reports of EVM irregularities in Puerto Rico's primary elections.

Chandrasekhar, a former MoS for electronics and IT, strongly disagreed with Musk and said it was a "huge sweeping generalisation" that held no truth for the EVMs used in India which

**'HAPPY TO RUN A TUTORIAL, ELON'**

**EC junks report of tampering at Mumbai booth**

**As claims of illegal EVM access in Mumbai North-West LS seat intensified, Mumbai suburban returning officer (RO) on Sunday issued a rebuttal and sent notices to publications over reports on Sunday said no one, including officials of National Testing Agency that conducts the exams, would be spared if irregularities were found, and interests of all students who-**

**When well-known international tech experts are flagging the dangers of EVMs, what's the reason behind this admiration over its use, BJP must clarify**

**EVMs in India are a 'black box'...nobody's allowed to scrutinise... Concerns are being raised about transparency in our electoral process**

**X, sharing a post by Robert F Kennedy Jr which cited media reports about hundreds of voting irregularities related to EVMs in Puerto Rico.**

**'Sweeping statement', P 10**

**Israel says it will hold daily tactical pauses in military activity along a main road in southern Gaza to allow more aid to flow into the enclave, P 14**

**Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana slams 117 off 127 balls while leg-spinner Asha Sobhana shines with a 4-wicket haul on debut to set up India's 143-run thrashing of SA in the first ODI. Mandhana also becomes second Indian woman to reach 7,000 runs in int'l cricket, P 17**

**Kolkata:** Calcutta High Court has directed Bengal govt to ensure 1% reservation for transgender persons in all public employment, noting that no reservation was in place for the community in spite of a govt policy of equal treatment in employment.

"This court directs the chief secretary of the government of West Bengal to ensure 1% reservation for the category of persons mentioned in the NALSA judgement, in all public employment in the state," Justice Rajasekhar Mantha said in his order last Friday.

Supreme Court's NALSA judgement in 2014 was the first to legally recognise non-binary gender identities and uphold fundamental rights of transgender persons.

The HC's order was passed after the court heard a petition by a transgender person, who had not been called for counselling or interview in spite of succeeding in Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) 2014 and TET 2022.

Justice Mantha noted that Supreme Court had declared in a 2014 case that 'hijras' and eunuchs be treated as "third gender" for the purpose of safeguarding their rights under Part III of the Constitution.

**'Interview petitioner', P 10**

## After terror strikes, Shah reviews scene; Jammu troop levels to go up

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**New Delhi:** The Jammu division of J&K — which witnessed back-to-back terror attacks in its Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts last week — is set to get a big boost in number of security forces who will dominate the mountain tops to tackle fresh infiltration bids by terrorists from Pakistan. The security forces will also comb the forested and undulating terrain for terrorists holed up there with an intent to create unrest and communal flare-up among the region's mixed Hindu-Muslim population.

At a review meeting chaired by him here on Sunday, home minister Amit Shah directed security agencies to use "innovative means" and replicate the successes achieved in Kashmir region over the past few years — as reflected in the sharp decline in terrorist attacks and law-and-order-related incidents in the traditional Valley hotbeds, record flow of tourists and high voter turnout

are standalone systems not connected to the internet. "We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk wrote on

HM Amit Shah along with NSA Ajit Doval during a security meet

uts in recent Lok Sabha polls — by rolling out an area domination plan and zero-terror plan in the Jammu division that seems to be the new target of Pakistan-based terror outfits.

**'Seamless coordination', P 10**

## Zero FIR against gov's nephew for rape & conspiracy

**Kolkata Police** has lodged a zero FIR — for rape and criminal conspiracy, related to the alleged sexual abuse of a Kolkata-based Odissi dancer at a Delhi hotel in Jan 2023 — against governor C V Ananda Bose's nephew. The governor and his nephew have been implicated in this case. The governor, who has not been named, had earlier pointed out that a governor enjoyed complete immunity, even for personal acts, while in office. **P 6**

## 'Riot reference in texts can create violent persons'

**N**CERT director Dinesh Prasad Saklani has said that references to the Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition were modified in school textbooks to avoid creating "violent and depressed citizens". He was trying to reject accusations of saffronisation of the school curriculum. **P 8**

## Russia not at Ukraine meet, India refrains from signing communique

**BRICS Allies UAE, SA, Brazil Don't Endorse As Well**

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**New Delhi:** The issue of Russia's absence loomed large at the peace summit in Switzerland, as India joined over a dozen countries in not signing a joint communique that declared any peace agreement must be based on Ukraine's territorial integrity. India backed out saying abiding peace wasn't possible in the absence of options acceptable to both sides, as the summit also could not elicit the kind of support Ukraine was hoping for from the Global South.

Among others who did not back the communique, which was endorsed by 84 countries and organisations out of the 100 that participated, were important Indian

## Some irregularities in NEET at specific locations detected: Min

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Taking a serious view of the row over National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to medical colleges, education minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said no one, including officials of National Testing Agency that conducts the exams, would be spared if irregularities were found, and interests of all students who-

**Docs, students unite in fight against flaws, P 12**

ok the test would be protected. Govt is looking at reforms to ensure that such problems do not occur in future.

Pradhan, who took charge of the key portfolio last week, noted that "some irregularities in NEET have come to light from some specific locations" and assured students that these would not be tolerated.

"Some irregularities have come to light in two places. I

**I assure students and parents that govt has taken this (irregularities) seriously. Even if big officials of NTA are found guilty, they will not be spared. A lot of improvement is required in NTA. Govt is concerned... no culprit will be spared, they will get the harshest punishment**



NTA and the education ministry are looking into allegations of paper leak at some

## 'Scrap NEET': Stalin renews demand

**T**amil Nadu CM M K Stalin reiterated his party's demand to scrap NEET, highlighting complaints of alleged irregularities in this year's medical entrance test. He cited Gujarat Police FIRs on invigilators allegedly tampering with exam sheets for money amid claims that cheques, some worth crores, had changed hands. **P 12**

**'Won't be spared', P 12**

## 1st Modi 3.0 Budget to eye job creation by expanding PLI scheme, MSME focus

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**New Delhi:** Steps to boost jobs by expanding the Production Linked Incentive scheme to furniture, toys, footwear and more segments of textiles, along with a focus on MSMEs, while increasing income levels of women and boosting infrastructure, are

**'FM to meet farmers' bodies, economists, P 12**

expected to be among the key thrust areas of the Modi govt's first Budget in its third term with several of the issues also being part of govt's 100-day agenda that will feed into the targets for 2030.

Besides, the finance ministry is looking at sops for the middle class, which may not necessarily be limited to options around tax concessions but may extend to interest rate subsidies for housing loans and other measures.

These are preliminary areas of emphasis, some fo-

## MIDDLE CLASS SOPS?

**FM looks at sops for the middle class, which may not be limited to tax concessions but may extend to interest rate subsidies for home loans**

**Multiple suggestions to raise income levels for women**

**In case of infrastructure, govt is keen to continue with the thrust on public spending**

## Expand base, avoid super rich tax: CII

**I**TC CMD Sanjiv Puri took over as CII president during polls. In an interview to TOI, Puri emphasised the need to widen the tax base, while rejecting higher levies on the super rich and backed a three-slab GST structure. **P 15**

**Will meet state FMs, P 10**

## Goddess, humans and their best friend on one Khuti Puja dais

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**Kolkata:** A Ballygunge Durga Puja committee on Sunday involved the entire neighbourhood's pet dogs in this year's Khuti Puja — the ceremonial start to the Durga Puja preparations — following in the footsteps of several other city puja organisers who have made their festivities pet-friendly since 2022.

In its 58th year, the 71 Palli Baishakhi Sarbojanin Durgotsab Samity's puja, run by a 23-member women-only committee, seeks to involve man's — and woman's — best friends during Bengal's biggest festivity.

## TIMES Special

And why not? For this group of dog-lovers, every day is a 'dog day', so it made no sense to leave the four-legged friends out from the festival. "We feed strays, help adopt strays and even gave them shelter during Cyclone Remal," said club member Priyadarshini Sarkar, a proud owner of a Shih Tzu.

"In our locality, there are many pets, including Labradors, Rottweilers, Golden Retrievers, Great Danes, Indies and local strays, who were brought to the Khuti Puja," Sarkar added. "The idea was unique and everyone welcomed it," said club secretary Nandini Chatterjee. For Abana Patra, a resident of Moni Mukherjee Road in Ballygunge, it was the perfect opportunity for a day out with her pet. "I visited with my pet Dhabal Chand, a three-year-



Dogs and their humans at the Khuti Puja of 71 Palli Baishakhi Sarbojanin Durgotsab Samity in Ballygunge on Sunday

old Labrador, and we both enjoyed it," she said.

The theme banner of the puja was inaugurated by Ustha Uthup. In 2022, Bidhan Sarani Atlas Club of north Kolkata, in a first, showcased their pet-friendly puja theme, 'Shelter for Pets'. In that puja, 'Asur' (the demon) was replaced by two stray dogs and were shown sitting at the feet of the goddess Durga, praying for a home. Four canine members of the Kolkata Police's dog squad were the chief guests at the puja's inauguration.

Last year, the same club arranged a free pet check-up camp and packaged nutrient-rich foods for pets who were visiting their pandal. "Our idea turned so successful that other Durga Puja clubs, including even some Jagaddharti Puja organisers in Chandernagore, adopted our idea," said Biswajit Ghosh, the club's general secretary.

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to all On the occasion of **Eid-ul-Adha**

**Eid Mubarak**

**Mamata Banerjee**  
Chief Minister, West Bengal

Government of West Bengal

ICA-D968(22)/2024



**AUSSIE COUPLE IN KOLKATA AFTER TRAVERSING 14 COUNTRIES IN 102-YEAR-OLD BEAN CAR | 3**

**BMC TO LAY PIPELINE TO SUPPLY FILTERED WATER TO RAJARHAT-GOPALPUR HOMES | 4**



## S Bengal heat singes crops, sets veggie markets on fire

**Rates Soar By 30% To 80% In 4-5 Days**

**Krishnendu Bandyopadhyay & Monotosh Chakraborty | TNN**

Kolkata: Bengal's agricultural sector is facing significant challenges due to fluctuating weather patterns and disruptions in supply chains, leading to a sharp rise in vegetable prices across the

**Met: Rain likely in Kol tomorrow**

Kolkata may not receive heavy rain before Tuesday. Met office has predicted an increasing chance of thunderstorms from Tuesday but is not certain if that will usher in monsoon. Southwest monsoon arrived in Kolkata on June 19 last year. Met office said conditions are favourable for further advancement of monsoon to some parts of S Bengal, remaining parts of N Bengal in next four to five days. TNN

state. The disruption of train services due to the extension of railway platforms at Sealdah station also affected the supply chain.

### FLUCTUATING WEATHER DISRUPTS SUPPLY CHAIN

Veggie	June 1 (₹/kg)	June 9	June 16
Brinjal	50	90	150
Long beans	50	120	150
Ridged gourd	40	70	90
Pointed gourd	30	50	70
Okra	40	60	70
Green chillies	80	120	200
Cabbage	30	40	50
Bitter Gourd	60	80	120
Capsicum	140	160	200
Tomato	30	50	90



The fluctuating weather pattern has led to a rise in vegetable prices

The region recently experienced a cycle of dry heat waves punctuated by cyclone Remal that led to heavy rainfall and now a punishing moist-heat wave, leaving crops, particularly vegetables, under severe stress. This has widened the gap between supply and demand, causing prices to soar.

"The excessive heat, delay in monsoon arrival and disruptions in train services have collectively pushed up vegetable prices by 30% to 50% over the past four to five days. But in a fortnight, the rise is sharper," said Anir-

ban Ghosh, an agro-economist. Prices of some vegetables even soared by 80%.

Kamal De, president of the West Bengal Vegetables Growers' and Vendors' Association, said: "The excessive heat has significantly reduced yields, with many vegetable plants failing to bloom or dropping flowers before producing vegetables." He also held the disruption in train services as one of the biggest factors behind the rising prices.

Amirul SK, a farmer from Bhangar, added, "The delayed monsoon has stressed un-

derground water resources, with irrigation channels drying up. The relentless heat has exacerbated the situation." SK is also worried about excessive rain during the monsoon.

In urban markets, consumers are feeling the pinch as prices continue to climb. Kartick Saha, a vendor at Maniktala, said, "Despite offering fresh and high-quality vegetables, customers' demand has dwindled."

Sangita Chatterjee, a homemaker, said: "The steady rise in prices has severely hit our kitchen budget."

## Rain, fresh landslides cut off north Bengal from Sikkim, hit rescue ops

**Roshan Gupta | TNN**

**Siliguri:** The rescue operation for more than 2,000 tourists stranded due to multiple landslides in North Sikkim remained suspended due to inclement weather on Sunday.

The incessant rain triggered fresh landslides along NH-10, disrupting Sikkim's connectivity with north Bengal and leading to serpentine traffic along the highway.

In Sikkim, Mangan district magistrate, Hem Kumar Chettri, maintained that they would airlift the stranded tourists on Monday if the weather permits or else they would be rescued by the roadways and the tourists might have to walk for 100 metres where roads were yet to be restored.

Traffic movement was affected on NH-10 after boulders fell at Likhuvir on

**OVER 2K STILL STRANDED IN NORTH SIKKIM**

Thursday. The district administration said temporary disruptions were still occurring due to falling of boulders at Likhuvir and Melli.

Kalimpong district magistrate, Bala Subramanian, said ensuring the safety of the passengers they had advised the vehicles to take the alternative routes. Traffic diversion had been advised for vehicles from Siliguri and Sikkim at Rangpo and Coronation Bridge.

"The restoration work is going on full swing," said Chettri. Tourist stranded in Chungthang, who have taken shelter at the gurdwara, raised their grievances over bad network connectivity and requested the Sikkim government for immediate evacuation.



Incessant rain triggered fresh landslides along NH-10, hitting Sikkim's connectivity with N Bengal

"We have been stuck since June 13. Though we are getting food from the gurdwara, all of us are scared. There is no confirmation of airlifting. We want the govt to take immediate actions so that all stranded tourists can reach home safely. We are far from home, we cannot contact

our family members as there is no connectivity," a tourist said. Around 400 to 500 are stranded in Chungthang and around 1,500 in Lachung. "We do not have cash and the ATM is low on power as there is no electricity", said another group of tourists stranded at Chungthang.

## 'Move to help check animal cruelty'

**Continued from P 1**

Other prominent puja organisers, such as Behala Club in the south and Salkia Chitra Bayam Samity in Howrah have also, in the recent past, turned their pujas pet-friendly.

"The initiative is heart-warming and I hope such awareness measures will help reduce animal cruelty," said actress Debashree Roy, an animal rights activist. "Until a few years ago, a number of notable puja committees used to request KMC to shift strays away from their puja venues, which we fought hard to stop," she added. Sociologist Prashanta Roy said: "The approach is very positive. This sends a strong message to society — of building strong bonds with animals."

Indologist Niladri Sankar Bandyopadhyay also lauded



Club members with their pets during the Khuti Puja

the initiative. "In Hindu mythology, dogs have often been portrayed as loyal companions. Even in the Mahabharata, they have been portrayed as loyal to a fault, ones who stay with you when one is alone, even when all whom you hold dear are no longer there. These initiatives will foster that age-old belief and bond."

(Inputs from Poulami Roy Banerjee)

## Arrhythmia on rise among city's younger population, say docs

**Prithvijit.Mitra@timesgroup.com**

**Kolkata:** Arrhythmia or abnormal heart rhythm is on the rise among the city's younger population and a significantly higher number is being diagnosed with the cardiac disease every year, say city cardiologists even as World Heart Rhythm week was observed from June 2 to 9. It is a potential risk factor which is often ignored or remain undiagnosed due to muted symptoms.

Cardiac arrhythmias are abnormalities in heart rhythm and can be fatal, pointed out Tapabrata De, interventional cardiologist at Charnock Hospital. "Such rhythm disturbances are increasing in the general population, particularly in younger people with diabetes, high thyroid levels and due to smoking and alcohol," said De.

It is often overlooked as a cardiac issue and remains undiagnosed, said CMRI Hospital cardiologist and electrophysiologist Rakesh Sarkar. "A sudden palpitation, throbbing in chest or missing a few beats are ignored by the young while

### DISEASE FACTS

- Cardiac arrhythmias are abnormalities in heart rhythm and can be fatal
- Around 40% of cardiac patients in India show signs of heart rhythm disorders while 90% of cardiac arrests are caused by arrhythmia or irregular heart rhythm, according to the Indian Heart Rhythm Society (IHRS)
- It has led to sudden deaths of many young and middle-aged people, who were apparently symptomless, say cardiologists

kids can't recognize these. It could result in a sudden cardiac arrest. On most occasions, an ECG or a halter monitor is recommended which often fail to detect arrhythmia. This is where you need an electrophysiologist who conducts a thorough evaluation that includes a detailed review of the patient's medical history, analysis of symptoms and a variety of non-in-

vasive tests," said Sarkar.

Cardiac arrhythmias like ventricular tachycardia can lead to sudden death. "It has led to sudden deaths of many young and middle-aged who were apparently symptomless. It is common in people with underlying hypertrophic cardiomyopathy where muscles of the heart get abnormally thickened. A timely diagnosis and in suitable cases, implantation of a cardiac defibrillator can save lives," added De. Arrhythmia can strike at any age, said Fortis Hospital cardio-thoracic surgeon K.M. Mandana. "We are increasingly detecting it in young patients who are apparently healthy and fit. I have had several patients over the last two years," said Mandana.

A two-year-old who suffered a heart failure due to arrhythmia was treated at CMRI Hospital last week, said Sarkar. "Treatment needs to be tailored to the patient's specific needs by recommending the most suitable type of therapy such as medicines or Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) or pacemaker and optimal placement."

## Kingpin of iPhone theft held in Delhi

**Dwaipayan.Ghosh @timesgroup.com**

**Kolkata:** The main accused in the theft and loot of a truck that was carrying iPhones has been arrested by CID following extensive raids in New Delhi.

The case was handed over to CID by Calcutta High Court last Sept after the owners reported loss worth crores. The

**TRUCK LOOTED LAST SEPT**

total number of arrests in this case now stands at three.

"We conducted a raid in Delhi's Punjabi Bagh. Our team took into confidence the transporter — owner of Balaaji logistic, Sanjiv Kumar — and arrested one Aslam, a resident of Baghoda in Rajasthan's Alwar. He is the kingpin. He not only made the plan

to loot the mobile phones but executed it, too. He also confessed the same."

The gang involved in cyber fraud and looting trucks loaded with Apple mobile phones is active in Nuh and Mewat, Haryana, a probe by CID into the robbery in West Midnapore's Debra on Sept 28 had found.

"The entire operation is controlled from there. As soon as the new mobiles are loaded from the factory, the information reaches them. The expensive sets are being stopped and unloaded on the highway. Some of the looted mobiles are being used for cyber fraud. The rest are being sent to Dubai, Malaysia, and various parts of India," said an officer. The CID was able to find out by checking call details of the driver's mobile that calls had come to him several times from two numbers.

## Sunday rush missing: Minus Acropolis, Kasba chill-out zone wears a deserted look

**Sarthak Ganguly & Subhojyoti Kanjilal | TNN**

**Kolkata:** The fire and subsequent closure of Acropolis Mall has left the chill zone surrounding the mall premises deserted. The local economy is also feeling the heat as traders in the vicinity of the south Kolkata landmark destination claimed their business has nosedived since Friday.

From restaurants and pubs to small-time traders selling tea, cigarettes and juice outside the mall, all have stopped replenishing stocks as they said footfall of customers in this hangout zone has slumped drastically in the past three days.

Debobrata Pal, employee of an eatery, Soul of Chennai, located opposite the mall, said: "Our business has gone down in the past three days as people are hardly coming to this area. This situation will continue till the mall is back in operation. We get maximum customers on the weekends but this Saturday and Sunday looked gloomy."

Prashanta Pal, captain of the resto bar Cheeni Kum, said that on weekends people don't get seats at the restobar but the scene has changed this weekend following the fire.

Moloy Dey, chef of the restaurant Soul of Bengal, also rued they were missing out on the crowd of running customers dropping in for food after shopping or watching movies in the mall.

Small time stationery shops located opposite the mall also remain abuzz with customers —



From restaurants to small-time traders selling tea and juice outside the mall, all have stopped replenishing stocks

ranging from mall staff to patrons and visitors coming to the mall. But since Friday, the footfall has dipped.

"There was practically no business in my shop on Saturday and Sunday. On Friday, when the fire happened, some people from the mall had bought

water from me. In last two days, our business has slumped by 80%-90%," said Paritosh Dey, one of the shop owners.

Subham Mondal, owner of a tea stall near the mall, said, "Mall staff, visitors and employees from various offices used to visit my stall daily. I needed ar-

ound 5 kg tea leaves daily for the business. After the fire, footfall of customers has dropped so much that I am not being able to use even a 250-gram tea packet completely."

Some roadside hawkers, who used to make brisk business in the hangout zone, have

In the evening, our biz dips by 50%-60% as hardly any crowd is here since Friday. We are banking on our fixed clientele

**Moloy Dey |**  
CHEF OF SOUL OF BENGAL

Every weekend our place brims with customers and many have to stand on road. This weekend, the area has become deserted. Our business has dropped by 20%

**Prashanta Pal |**  
CAPTAIN, CHEENI KUM

I am shifting to a new place for now as I am not getting customers after the fire. Till Thursday, I had sold 200-250 glasses. The sales have now dipped to less than 20 a day

**Barun Kumar |**  
A JUICE SELLER

## Fire dept turns down plea to reopen mall

**Tamaghna Banerjee & Subhro Niyogi | TNN**

**Kolkata:** The state fire department on Sunday turned down an appeal by the Acropolis mall authorities to allow them to re-open the unaffected portion of the mall where a fire had broken out on Friday and have told them that the permission can be granted only after all agencies, including state forensic department, directorate of electricity and the fire department submit their audit reports about the reason behind the fire.

"The mall authorities have written to us to allow them permission to reopen the mall but we have told them that a decision can be taken only after a thorough assessment of all the audit reports regarding the cause and origin of fire and how the fire prevention and detection mechanism had worked," said Jag Mohan, the director general of fire services.

He said mall authorities have already submitted CCTV footage and all other documents sought by them from mall officials and their officials were assessing them. State forensic sciences department is yet to submit its findings though.

On Sunday, TOI found cops posted outside the mall and all the entry exit points were sealed by portable collapsible gates as security guards allowed selected staff to enter the building for clean up and restoration work and turned down visitors and other guests. The broken window panes were sealed with PVC sheets.

"The management of Acropolis Mall has been working tirelessly since the unfortunate fire to restore normalcy. We are investing substantial amounts to repair the damage caused by the fire and the subsequent efforts of the Fire Brigade. As per directions of fire authorities, we have provided all necessary documents and camera footage to them. The mall became the cynosure of all guests and the best hangout zone for all in south Kolkata. We are confident that we will be

### WAIT FOR CLEARANCES

- FSL report on cause and origin of fire
- Audit report by police
- Audit report by fire dept
- Clearance from directorate of electricity
- Final clearance from state fire and emergency dept



able to restore normalcy as soon as possible," said Krishna Jha, senior manager, operations at Acropolis Mall.

Sources of multiple agencies have hinted that the fire in the mall was not caused by a short circuit. That it was not an electrical one was also borne by the fact that electricity distributor CESC has not switched off supply to the mall. It is the mall authorities who switched off the circuit breaker to the mall transformer as required in a fire incident. The transformer is managed by the mall.

"Acropolis is a 33,000 volt high tension consumer. We have not switched off supply as this is not an electrical fire. The mall has acted as per norm as a matter of safety. Once they have the requisite clearances, the mall management will switch on the supply," a source at CESC said.

# Shot at on road, bizman gets threat calls from jailed Bihar gangster

## Cops Detain 3, Recover Motorbike

Sanjib Chakraborty | TNN

**Kolkata:** Hours after businessman Ajay Mondal had a close shave as a gang of extortionists fired eight rounds at his car on a busy BT Road at Belgharia's Rathala More on Saturday afternoon, he received at least three threat calls—reportedly from jailed Bihar gangster Subodh Singh and his associate Ramesh Singh—demanding a “settlement”.

“On Sunday, I received two more calls—around 9am and 1pm. While the first one was from Ramesh Singh in Bihar, the second time it was Subodh Singh again, who said: ‘I didn’t try to kill you, it was just a warning. You should compromise and settle the issue with me to run your business smoothly. Then nobody will harm you, and I will take over the matter. Had I wanted to kill you, my associates would have barged in-

## BEUR JAIL SUPER DENIES ALLEGATION

### Who is Subodh Singh?

Subodh Kumar Singh (40), also known as Dilip Singh, was arrested by the STF in Jan 2018, for a jewellery heist

Singh was transferred to Beur Central Jail, where he continues to be held as an undertrial prisoner

Singh hails from Chistipur village in Nalanda district. He has been orchestrating heists from within the jail for the past 5 years

His gang has carried out robberies in at least six states across India, including West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttarakhand

(Text by Kshitiz Singh in Patna)



Police at the spot on BT Road where the shooting took place on Saturday afternoon

He is not involved in extortion or murder cases. Some other miscreants must have used his name. Singh's modus operandi involves minimum violence — Jitendra Kumar | BEUR JAIL SUPERINTENDENT

I went to buy medicines. While returning home, I saw a huge police force in front of our home. I have been staying here for 30 years but never seen anything like this before  
Supriyo Chakraborty | LOCAL RESIDENT

I can't imagine a shooting here! The place is so crowded... anyone could have got injured  
Kakali Banerjee | LOCAL RESIDENT

thinking God for somehow surviving the deadly attack while sitting at the Belgharia police station and narrating the entire matter about the shooting to the senior police officers, my mobile phone started ringing. Initially, I didn't take the call. When the phone rang a second time, I picked it up. A calm voice from the other end, introducing himself as Subodh Singh, said 'Beur se bol raha hu. Is bar toh bach gaya sala... lekin agli bar kaun bachayega?' I immediately handed over my phone to a police officer," Mondal said.

“Subodh also called another promoter in Barrackpore at 4.30 pm on Saturday, mentioning the attack on Mondal as a warning. This time too, it was a VoIP call,” a senior police officer said.

Real estate developer Mondal, a resident of Barrackpore's Nonachandanpukur, who also owns several car and motorbike showrooms at Agapara, Khardah and Baguiati, claimed he had to pay “protection money” for over a decade after he started real estate projects, especially in Titagarh area.

“We are spending sleepless nights. My mother fell ill. How will my father run his business,” said Mousumi, Mondal's daughter.

# Free School Street shooting: Cops arrest 5, continue search for Gabbar aide Sona

Tamagna Banerjee @timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** Probing into the Free School Street firing case where a dispute over something as trivial as overtaking a bike led to a 29-year-old man being shot in the early hours of Saturday, cops have arrested five men. However, the main accused Sona alias Mohammed Faiyuddin (25)—a close aide of jailed gangster Gabbar—who had actually shot three rounds one of which hit the victim on his right leg is still absconding.

Police said Sona (47), was

arrested on criminal charges in the past, including the Khadim vice-chairperson Partha Roy Burman abduction case in 2002. He was implicated in a number of criminal cases ranging from murder, abduction, extortion, and drug trafficking by the police in the past. On Sunday, police arrested Sk Afsar, Md Shabbir, Md Asu, Md Farukh, and Matthew. Among them, Afsar and Shabbir are relatives of the main accused Sona. Shabbir is Sona's brother-in-law who he was visiting on Friday night.

At 4.30pm on Friday, a dis-



One of the arrested at Bankshall Court on Sunday

pute arose between Sona and the victim Ekhlash Beg when Ekhlash had overtaken him on

a bike on Mirza Ghalib Street. They had a heated argument after which both left the spot. Later, around 12.10 am on Saturday, Sona arrived at Shabbir's home where Ekhlash too had reached with his group of friends to avenge the dispute. An argument ensued again between the two and this time, Sona suddenly pulled out a pistol and started firing. As Ekhlash collapsed on the ground, Sona fled. Ekhlash is still admitted at CNMC Hospital with a bullet wound on his right calf muscle.

On Sunday, all the arrested were presented at a city

court and were remanded to police custody.

During the investigation, the Park Street police discovered that Sona is still involved in multiple notorious activities and has been behind bars on multiple occasions. In Kolkata's underworld, he is known to many as the “convent-educated gangster”.

“All five arrested men were with him at the time of the incident and had helped him to escape. We are interrogating his relatives and companions to trace his location and arrest him,” said a senior Kolkata Police officer.

# Car rolls into Hooghly with 11-yr-old inside



The car slid down the riverbank and went into the Hooghly. Locals jumped into the water and saved the 11-year-old boy who was seated inside the car

Tamagna Banerjee @timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** A car parked near the Hooghly river beside the Bhootnath temple in Nimtala, rolled down into the river with an 11-year-old boy seated inside on Sunday morning. Locals quickly jumped into action and rescued the child before he drowned.

As the parked car rolled into the river, the boy screamed for help. A group of lo-

icals along with two policemen posted nearby ran down the banks and jumped into the water to rescue the boy by smashing the car window within a minute.

On the first day of the month of Ashar, several people from the city and suburbs visited the Bhootnath Temple. The family from Narendrapur had parked their car in neutral at the Nimtala Ghat when the incident took place.

The young boy was given cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and revived quickly. With the help of Disaster Management Group (DMG) and River Traffic Police, the car too was pulled out of the waters.

# One killed, three hurt in three bike accidents across city

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** One person was killed and three others injured in two-wheeler accidents in the city. Around 4.55 am on Sunday, Akash Makhal (18), a resident of Pancharay, riding a bike without a helmet was killed after he lost control and rammed into a



Akash Makhal (18), a resident of Pancharay, riding a bike without a helmet was killed after he lost control and rammed into a

median divider near Mukundapur crossing on EM Bypass. He was rushed to hospital with multiple injuries where he was declared dead.

Around 1.40 am on Sunday, a biker (33) and a pillion rider (34) were injured when the bike lost control and rammed into a light post on Red Road. They were rushed to SSKM Hospital from where they were discharged after treatment. Both of them were not wear-

ring helmets.

Around 1am, a 19-year old resident of Bansdromi was injured after the bike lost control and rammed into a roadside wall on Raja SC Mullick Road. He was rushed to a nearby hospital and was discharged after treatment.

A 38-year-old auto rickshaw driver was injured after being dashed by a private car on NSC Bose Road on Saturday around 10.30pm.

## State asks colleges to submit a/c details

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** The state higher education department has asked college authorities to give a declaration on the account details of undergraduate details.

A Google form has been sent to the colleges, including govt and aided colleges, and they have been asked to fill the forms by June 18. Colleges have been asked to make it clear how many accounts are

## 'FILL UP FORMS BY TUESDAY'

being maintained by them. They have also been asked about the fixed deposits they have and their maturity.

The notice reached colleges on Sunday when the department was busy with the opening of admission portal. “It's very surprising that the notice reached at a time when we are busy with the admission portal opening,” said a principal. A higher education department official said colleges would be informed soon about the purpose of making the declaration.

# Aussie couple on 102-year-old car traverses 14 countries, reaches Kol

Susmita Banerjee

**Kolkata:** An elderly couple from Australia—Lang and Bev Kidby—took on the Classic Driver's Club's (CDC) vintage car rally on a sultry Sunday morning in Kolkata, after having traversed 14 countries over a period of almost four months in their 102-year-old vintage car, a 1923 Bean. The couple embarked on their journey as ‘an adventure trip’ before they get constricted by age on March 18 from England and reached the city last Monday.

Lang and Bev, in their late seventies, shipped the Bean from Australia to England and drove through Europe to enter Asia towards the end of April. Their journey to India saw them driving through Iran and Pakistan where they encountered several obstacles. The couple braved soaring temperatures and faced several mechanical issues with the car. However, Lang and Bev were prepared for harsh circumstances and trained themselves in aerobics to get fit.

On reaching Pakistan, Bev's e-visa was not accepted and she had to fly from Lahore to Dubai and then to New Delhi to reach India, whereas Lang had to drive all the way to India alone. The Kidbys' drove through multiple conflict areas as well and armed guards followed their expedition to prevent them from facing any issues in those areas.

The couple described the journey as ‘wonderful and worthwhile’. “Meeting new people is what makes the journey



Lang and Bev Kidby on an adventure trip with their 1923 Bean

more enjoyable. When my friends ask me about my interaction with the locals, I always say that they are wonderful and delightful to engage with,” said Bev. The duo went on to say that the overall trip was carried out effortlessly with the immense support of FIVA, the International Federation for Historic Vehicles. Their car clubs organized the couple's accommodation in all the different countries that they travelled through.

The couple's entry into Bengal was marked by a detour to Murshidabad's famous palace-turned-heritage-hotel Cossimbazar Palace. Pallab Roy, owner of the property, said “I am an automobile enthusiast myself and I take an inter-

est in restoring vintage cars.” Bev said that she has always enjoyed her stay in India. “It's so colourful and noisy; the hustle and bustle of the city is something I love”. They are currently lodged at a club and plan to depart from Kolkata in the coming week. However, their departure from the city is not the end of their journey. “This is merely two-thirds of our journey. We are shipping the car to Australia where we will travel 5,000 kilometers more,” said Lang.

## Ex-principal lodges complaint against school

Poulami Roy Banerjee & Dipawali Mitra | TNN

**Kolkata:** The former principal of an English-medium school in Dum Dum has lodged a police complaint against the school authority, including the secretary, for the sexual harassment and defaming her following a press conference by the school.

On Sunday evening, she went to Gariahat PS and lodged a formal complaint. Earlier, she had sent emails to Dum Dum and Gariahat police stations against the school management for defaming her, stating that her academic certificates are false and she had brought bad reputation to schools where she had worked earlier.

The ex-principal told TOI: “I filed the complaint when they defamed me on an open platform.”

The school secretary said, “She has the right to approach the cops. I will cooperate with the probe.”

## 2 bodies found

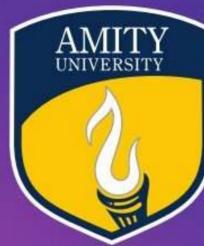
**Kolkata:** Two elderly persons were found dead in the city on Sunday. Around 8.30am, the decomposed body of a woman (79), a resident of Prince Anwar Shah Road was found lying on the floor in her room. In another case, a 64-year-old caretaker of a two-storey building on Strand Road was found dead on the staircase around 7.30am. TNN

TNN

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## Poll officer junks EVM tampering report as row erupts over Mumbai NW result

**Says Need No OTP To Unlock Device; Cops Send Phone For Forensic Test**

**Prafulla Marpakwar & Nitasha Natu | TNN**

**Mumbai:** With allegations of unauthorised EVM access intensifying, the Mumbai Suburban Returning Officer (RO) issued a rebuttal on Sunday and notices to publications that carried reports on the use of a phone by a polling agent in the Mumbai North-West Lok Sabha constituency. The RO, Vandana Suryavanshi, clarified that EVMs are standalone devices without wired connectivity and need no OTPs on mobile phones for unlocking.

On June 13, Vanrai Police in Goregaon had booked Mangesh Pandilkar, a representative of an independent candidate and a relative of Shiv Sena MP Ravindra Waiakar, for unauthorised use of a phone in a counting centre at NESCO ground. Police said some media outlets had incorrectly reported that the phone was used to access OTPs for opening EVMs. The phone, belonging to the operator of the EC portal, was sent for forensic analysis.

Refuting allegations of EVM rigging, Suryavanshi said on Sunday, "There is no OTP (one time password) on mobile phones for unlocking EVM as it is non-programma-

ble, and it has no wireless communication capabilities. It is a complete lie being spread which is being used by some politicians to create a false narrative. EVMs are standalone devices without any wired or wireless connectivity with units outside EVM system. Advance technical features and robust administrative safeguards are in place to rule out any possibility of manipulation. Safeguards include conducting everything in the presence of candidates or their agents."

Suryavanshi also pointed out that the counting of electronically transmitted postal ballot systems (ETPBS) takes place in physical form (paper ballots) and not electronically, as suggested by the false narratives. She mentioned that a criminal case has been filed in response to the spread of misinformation.

In his statement to Vanrai Police, Pandilkar, a representative of Lata Shinde, said he had borrowed the phone from Dinesh Gurav, the operator of EC's Encore portal, claiming he needed to call his driver. He claimed the phone was seized by police before he could make the call following a complaint by candidate Surinder Arora of Bharat Jan Aadhar



Waikar (extreme right) during the poll campaign in May. The returning officer sent notices to publications that carried reports on use of a phone by a polling agent in the Mumbai North-West LS constituency

Party. Gurav was the one authorised to use the device for receiving OTPs for the Encore portal. A forensic examination of the phone will confirm if Pandilkar's claims are true or whether he used the phone and for what purpose.

A senior bureaucrat explained that Encore portal operators like Gurav are responsible for entering polling data at the end of each round on the portal. The operator receives an OTP on a registered cell-phone, which they enter into the system to gain legal authorisation to enter the data.

The seized phone has been sent for forensic analysis to determine its purpose, calls made, and texts received. The bureaucrat said the phone may have received many OTPs whenever Gurav needed to up-

load data from his computer. The RO slapped a show-cause notice against the newspaper that had published the report containing "false, baseless and fictitious" allegations regarding "unlocking" of EVM with an OTP. The notice asked the editor of the newspaper to reply within 24 hours why criminal proceedings should not be initiated under IPC section 499 and 505 against them for "spreading rumours, maligning Indian voters and the electoral system".

As the controversy led to political reactions, chief minister Eknath Shinde dismissed the allegations as baseless and attributed them to frustration over Shiv Sena's (Shinde faction) electoral success.

(With inputs by Chittaranjan Tembhekar & Bharti Jain)

## Rahul: EVMs are 'black box' here, no permission for scrutiny

**New Delhi:** Opposition politicians Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav raised questions about "lack of scrutiny" of EVMs, warning that "absence of accountability" was threatening to turn democracy into a sham and that voting be held with paper ballots. The remark came after a discussion thread on X in which Elon Musk called for a ban on voting machines for fear of hacking.

Rahul posted a news report which alleged a relative of the narrow winner by 48 votes in Mumbai belonging to the BJP alliance had accessed EVMs through a mobile phone.

He said, "EVMs in India are a 'black box', and nobody is allowed to scrutinise them. Serious concerns are being raised about transparency in our electoral process. Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability."

"When fears of EVM tampering are being expressed in many elections of the world and... experts are openly writing about danger of tampering, BJP should clarify the reason behind insistence on using EVM," said Akhilesh. TNN

## Zero FIR against gov nephew on rape and conspiracy charges

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

**Kolkata:** Kolkata Police has lodged a zero FIR against governor C V Ananda Bose's nephew and transferred the case to Delhi Police.

The zero FIR, lodged for rape and criminal conspiracy, relates to the alleged sexual abuse of a Kolkata-based Odissi dancer at an upscale Delhi hotel in Jan 2023 but a formal complaint was lodged only last Oct. The governor and his nephew have been implicated in this case.

Raj Bhavan has not responded to the developments. In a statement, a senior official said: "With reference to Hare Street PS u/s 376/120B, on receipt of complaint, Hare Street PS registered a case against the nephew of HE Governor of WB for hatching a criminal conspiracy that resulted in victim's rape in a hotel at Delhi in January 2023. Ld CMM passed an order to treat the case as zero FIR & transfer the same to Delhi. Accordingly, the case has been transferred to Delhi Police." Kolkata Police officials refused to comment.

The complainant told cops she had approached Bose to help her sort out the problems she was facing in travelling and performing abroad. Bose, according to the complainant, asked her to approach the ministry of external affairs and promised to help.

**The zero FIR relates to the alleged sexual abuse of a Kolkata-based Odissi dancer at an upscale Delhi hotel in Jan 2023**

She was then sent flight tickets and booked a stay in a Delhi hotel on Jan 5 and 6, 2023, the complainant told cops. According to the complaint, the governor's nephew had arranged for her tickets and stay in Delhi. The governor was staying at Delhi's Banga Bhavan at that time and came to meet her at the hotel where she was abused, she claimed. She did not explain why she waited 10 months to lodge a complaint.

On May 2 this year, a Raj Bhavan staffer had complained that the governor had molested her twice (on April 24 and May 2). In this case, three Raj Bhavan employees, implicated in a different FIR, got bail from a lower court.

The governor has laid down the SC's interpretation of Article 361 in the Rameshwar Prasad case to point out that he enjoyed complete immunity, even for personal acts, while in office. In a statement, Bose had said: "In view of the immunity enjoyed by governor, police are constitutionally barred from carrying out any kind of preliminary inquiry or registering a FIR."

## Kids adopted post-retirement can't be denied pension: HC

**Ajay.Sura@timesgroup.com**

**Chandigarh:** Punjab and Haryana High Court has made it clear that there cannot be any discrimination in granting family pension to legally adopted children merely on account of the date of their adoption.

The court was of the view that children adopted post-retirement cannot be deprived of pensionary benefits.

Justice Tribhuvan Dahiya passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Vikas Kumar, resident of Haryana's Jhajjar district. He had sought quashing of a Haryana govt order dated Feb 14, 2019, that rejected his claim for family pension. He had also sought directions to release family pension, effective from Sept 24, 2012, with interest, till attaining 25 years of age.

The petitioner's father had retired from military service on July 4, 1970, and was released on military pension.

Thereafter, he joined Haryana govt on the post of 'barkandaz' (guard) on Sept 27, 1971, and was promoted to the rank of 'daffedar'. After his superannuation on July 31, 1987, he adopted the petitioner as son on March 1, 2000, but passed away on Jan 26, 2011.

## Abhishek undergoes day procedure in hosp, stable

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

**Kolkata:** Trinamool Congress general secretary **Abhishek Banerjee** underwent a minor surgical procedure at Apollo Multispecialty Hospital on Sunday. Banerjee, 37, was admitted to the hospital in the morning and was discharged a little after 3pm.

According to hospital sources, he is doing well after the procedure and is hemodynamically stable.

After the surgery, Banerjee was seen walking towards his car without any support and greeting well-wishers. He also spoke briefly with state fire minister Sujit Bose, who was present at the hospital.

On June 12, the Trinamool general secretary announced on his X handle that he would be taking a break from party activities due to pressing medical reasons. He posted, "In light of some pressing medical reasons, I will be taking a short hiatus from the organisation. This time off will be an opportunity for me to humbly explore and understand the needs of our people and community. I trust that GoWB will act swiftly and leave no stone unturned to ensure justice for those in need."

In Oct 2016, Banerjee survived a major road accident on Durgapur Expressway off Singur when the vehicle in which he was travelling collided with a milk van. He lost consciousness in the impact and suffered massive injury in his left eye. In Oct 2022, he underwent a surgery at Johns Hopkins in the US.

## Darshan fan's lewd messages angered actor's GF, say cops

**Chaitanya.Swamy @timesgroup.com**

**Bengaluru:** Darshan's fan Renuka Swamy started sending the star's girlfriend Pavithra Gowda messages through a fake Instagram profile two weeks before his June 8 murder and the messages turned lewd in the week before his killing allegedly at the hands of the actor and his aides, according to a senior police officer.

Police have also claimed that Swamy messaged, some with obscene content, many other women. These including a couple of actresses.

Pavithra has been arrested along with Darshan and his aides over the murder. According to the senior officer, Swamy posted comments on Pavithra's Instagram posts criticising her relationship with Darshan, prompting her to block him.

Swamy then began sending the lewd messages, including pictures of his private parts, to Pavithra through the fake Instagram



Actor Darshan and his girlfriend Pavithra Gowda have been held for Renuka Swamy's murder

profile 'Reddy2205', created in the name of Tanisha Reddy and opened much earlier, police said.

The fake account has about 500 followers and Swamy was following 2,348 people. He had posted around 304 messages through it.

Asked about the details of other women whom Swamy allegedly messaged, the senior police officer said: "We are not sure whom all he had sent the messages as his

phone is missing. We are going to write to Instagram to give details about the account. We will submit them while filing the chargesheet," the officer said.

According to the officer, the messages sent to Pavithra through the fake profile had been collected from her account. "We have seized her phone and taken screenshots of a few messages he had sent her and a few posts he had made about Darshan travelling with his wife Vijayalakshmi," the officer said.

An annoyed Pavithra is said to have informed Pavan K, an aide working for her on instructions of Darshan and is among those arrested, about the messages and asked him to track Swamy down. Pavan traced Swamy to Chitradurga and told Darshan about the messages. According to Pavan's confession, Darshan asked his men to kidnap Swamy and bring him to Bengaluru, where was allegedly thrashed to death in a shed.

## All allies on board with UCC, no reason to worry: Meghwal

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

**Kolkata:** Union MoS (independent charge) of law and justice Arjun Ram Meghwal said on Sunday that Uniform Civil Code (UCC) would have a smooth passage under the third Narendra Modi govt. He claimed allies would not pose any hurdle to its implementation.

Meghwal, who was in Kolkata to attend the inaugural session of a seminar on India's Progressive Path in the Administration of Criminal Justice System, said that NDA was very stable and there was "no reason to worry about UCC".

Earlier, JD(U) — the third largest constituent of the NDA govt — said any move towards implementation of UCC should go through a consensus. Although the party said it was not against UCC, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar had in 2017 raised his concerns on the matter with the Law Commission. After the recent Lok Sabha election results, JD(U) said that all stakeholders, chief ministers, political parties and sects should be consulted to prepare a draft of the code.

"It is on BJP's agenda and we mentioned it in our poll agenda... States like Goa and Uttarakhand have already implemented it," Meghwal said.

At the seminar, the minister said the 21st century belonged to India. "The 19th century saw Europe's dominance and England led that. The 20th century saw North America's dominance and the US led that. The 21st century will witness Asia's dominance and countries like China, Japan and India are likely to lead that. But apart from the size of the economy and economic development, there are several other parameters. One of those is the democratic set-up of the society," he said.

UCC is a proposed legal framework that aims at replacing personal laws with a common set governing every citizen in marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption.

## 'Transition to new criminal laws from July 1 will be smooth'

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

**Kolkata:** There would be a smooth transition to the three new criminal laws, passed by Parliament in 2023, once they were implemented from July 1, Union MoS (independent charge) of law and justice said on Sunday. Cases that have already been registered under Indian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, however, would continue to follow the old laws till the verdict was reached.

"There will not be any trouble even if a person goes to register an FIR in a remote area. There will be a smooth transition from July 1 and speedy disposal of justice. However, cases already registered will follow the old laws," said Meghwal.

The minister added: "The Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha

Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshadhiniyam are meant to give justice to people and not to punish them. There is a huge difference in the approach. For the British, punishing Indians was important."

Addressing the inaugural session of a seminar on the administration of the criminal justice system in Kolkata, Meghwal said national judicial academies and law universities had been imparting training on the new criminal codes. "We will increase infrastructure, increase the number of forensic laboratories. The three new laws will be effective from July 1," he said.

The minister said inputs and proposals had come from "18 states, six Union Territories, Chief Justices of 16 high courts, 144 MPs and 270 MLAs", apart from numerous organisations and institutions over the past four years. "These suggestions were debated in at least 58 official and hundreds of unofficial meetings. We are implementing them because the people wanted to change colonial law," Meghwal said.

## Attempt to implement uniform holy mass in churches triggers clashes in Kerala

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

**Kochi:** An attempt to implement uniform holy mass, prescribed by the Synod of the Syro Malabar Church in the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese in Kerala, led to clashes on Sunday between faithful. Police had to intervene to maintain law and order following the stand-off.

The latest circular of the

Church, which warns priests that they would be ipso facto out of the Catholic communion if they conduct any mass other than the synodal form after July 3, was supposed to be read out in churches on Sunday.

However, the circular was not read out in majority of the churches in the archdiocese, and in churches like the Edappally St George

Church, the faithful booed and jeered at a group which demanded the unification.

At Udayamperoor synodal church, some of the laity (lay people, as distinct from the clergy) members entered into an argument over the circular even as the mass progressed.

Churchgoers pushed and shoved at each other over the issue.

## Pak spies pose as Indian girls to honeytrap desi def officials

**Shishir.Arya@timesgroup.com**

**Nagpur:** A beehive of Pakistani spies posing as young Indian women with alluring names honeytraps officials in Indian defence establishments, reveal court papers about Nishant Agrawal, a former scientist of Brahmos Aerospace Private Limited's (BAPL) Nagpur unit recently convicted of leaking military secrets.

Many could fall for Indian-sounding Sejal Kapoor, Arohi Alok, Aditi Aaron, Aditi Agrawal, Anamika Sharma, Divya Chandan Roy, Neha Sharma and Pooja Ranjan. Agrawal did so, too, six years ago.

Uttar Pradesh's Anti-Terrorist Squad (UP-ATS) arrested Agrawal in Oct 2018. The UP native was sentenced to life by a court in Nagpur earlier this month.

Pankaj Awasthi, UP-ATS investigation officer, said in his deposition during Agrawal's trial that one 'Sejal' had set up a Facebook account from Pakistan. Using this, she chatted with Pakistani operatives and her Indian targets.

The chats showed she was part of a group that shared data and tips on de-

**Nishant Agrawal, a former scientist of Brahmos Aerospace Private Limited's Nagpur unit, was recently convicted of leaking military secrets**

ceiving Indian defence staffers. Awasthi added that one of the chats showed the group was trying to launch a cyberattack.

For Agrawal, Sejal was a recruiter in UK's Hays Aviation. Agrawal's profile had mentioned that he was a senior systems engineer at Brahmos Aerospace. He was also Facebook friends with two other individuals, Neha Sharma and Pooja Ranjan, whose accounts too were active from Pakistan, testified Awasthi.

Agrawal had chatted with Sejal on Linked-in too, where she showed interest in hiring him. Awasthi told the court that on Sejal's directions, Agrawal had clicked on links sent by her and installed three apps — Qwhisper, Chat to Hire and X-trust — on his personal laptop in 2017. The apps were malware that stole data from Agra-

wal's laptop, which contained classified information. Sejal and other spies tried to contact other defence officials too, both serving and retired, Awasthi told the court.

In the case of the Lucknow-based former IAF officer, the sleuths came across romantic chats between him and Sejal. However, the officer was not included as an accused. Sejal had sent the data-stealing malware Qwhisper to this officer, too. However, no secret records or evidence of crime was found in his personal laptop. The officer admitted chatting with Sejal.

In cross-examination by defence (Agrawal's) lawyer Chaitanya Barve, Awasthi said he had not sent the IAF man's laptop for forensic examination. Investigations revealed that the officer had formatted the device.

Investigations also revealed that Sejal was in touch with another former IAF staffer in Amritsar and that he had shared his mobile number with her. The Amritsar IAF officer, too, was not found to have committed any offence and was, therefore, not arrested, according to Awasthi.

## Bihar ASI hit by tractor ferrying illegally mined sand, badly hurt

**Nawada:** An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) suffered grave injuries after being hit by a tractor ferrying illegally mined sand in Bihar's Nawada on Sunday, reports **S B Sinha**. The attack on ASI Sanjit Kumar came exactly a week after a constable was crushed to death by a tractor of the sand mafia in the state's Aurangabad district.

In Nawada, Kumar tried to stop the vehicle in Laund village but the driver knocked him down and fled. The vehicle was plying despite a prohibition on sand mining in the area from June 15 to Oct 15.

According to SHO Ranjit Ram, Kumar had gone to the area after a tip-off about sand-laden vehicles. "The ASI spotted the tractor and tried to stop it but the driver deliberately ran the vehicle over him," the SHO said. The ASI was rushed to a hospital in nearby Pawapuri.

On June 9, constable Deepak Kumar, 29, was out on a routine check for illegal sand miners in Aurangabad when he was fatally hit by a tractor. The tractor driver, Ramta Singh, and its owner, Dharmendra Yadav, were arrested hours later.



### RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

FOREIGN EXCHANGE DEPARTMENT, KOLKATA

**Cancellation of FPMC Licence**

In exercise of powers conferred on it under Section 10(3) of the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, the Reserve Bank of India has cancelled the Full Fledged Money Changer (FFMC) licence of the following company, for contravention of extant FEMA provisions and directions issued thereunder.

Sl.	Name of the company	Address of Registered Office	Licence Number and Date	Cancellation Date
1	TRAVELVIEW FOREX PRIVATE LIMITED	13 SHASTRI ROAD, ABERDEEN BAZAR, ANDAMAN ISLANDS, SOUTH ANDAMAN, ANDAMAN & NICOBAR 744101.	KOL-FFMC-0725-2024 dated 10-02-2022	20-05-2024

Consequent to the cancellation, the FFMC shall not undertake or transact money changing activities as specified in the Master Direction on Money Changing Activities dated January 01, 2016, updated from time to time, and available on the RBI website (<https://www.rbi.org.in>).

Sd/  
General Manager

Date: 17-06-2024

## Man arrested in Raj over clip threatening to kill Salman

Ahmed.Ali@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Mumbai crime branch has arrested a 25-year-old man from Rajasthan on charges of criminal intimidation for allegedly uploading a video threatening to eliminate actor Salman Khan.

The arrested accused, Banwarilal Laturial Gurjar from Bundi, was brought to Mumbai on Sunday and produced before a local court which remanded him in police custody till June 18.

The south cyber police registered an FIR on June 12 after Gurjar allegedly uploaded the video on his YouTube channel in which he says: "Goldy (Brar), Rohit (Godara), Nitin and Vivek (they are all associated with jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi) and many more brothers are with us. Salman Khan has an attitude. Despite being told to apologise for the blackbuck killing, he hasn't... as we have said that we will eliminate him, it will be done."

Police said the video was shot on a highway. They traced the IP address to Rajasthan. Police said Gurjar had used a fictitious name, 'Are choddo yaar', and email address, but they managed to track him down from his mobile number.

"We are checking if he has a criminal background," said a police officer.

# Parties in House will take call on Speaker's post: Birla

## BJP Allies TDP, JD(U) Seem Comfortable With 2nd Term

Manash.Gohain@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Amid growing speculation that BJP leadership may prefer his continuation as Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla on Sunday said the decision would be made by all political parties. "Changes should keep happening. But I am nobody to comment on this. The Speaker's post will be decided by political parties in the House," he said.



Om Birla pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at the Parliament House complex during the inauguration of the Prerna Sthal in New Delhi

Speculation about Birla getting a second term as Speaker has gathered force amid strong indications that

the constitutional position will stay with BJP, the single largest party in Lok Sabha by a huge margin and, also, that two of its crucial allies — TDP and JD(U) — are comfortable with the idea.

BJP's preference for continuity in key appointments, especially for the cabinet committee on security, has reinforced the estimate in certain quarters about the outgoing Speaker being continued. An agriculturist and grassroots worker, Birla was re-elected from Kota-Bundi LS constituency, becoming the first Speaker in 20 years to win his second straight election. Prior to this, he was a member of the Rajasthan assembly from 2003 to 2014.

Birla's first term saw him developing equations across the spectrum, especially because of his declared stance of preferring newcomers, the 'back-benchers' who always chafed at the chair's "out of turn" indulgence of veterans. He also encouraged the 'back-benchers' to participate in proceedings, motivating them to overcome the fright of the big stage. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will be held from June 24 to July 3 and the Speaker's election has been scheduled on June 26.

On Sunday, Birla justified the move to relocate the status of freedom fighters and national icons spread across the Parliament premises to a new enclosure, Prerna Sthal.

## Cong: Shifting statues in Parl breaches 'spirit of democracy'

New Delhi: Calling it a violation of the "basic spirit of democracy", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge lamented that statues of Gandhi and Ambedkar had been removed from prominent places in the Parliament campus and moved to a separate corner, though the spots were decided decades ago after careful consideration about their importance.

Kharge slammed the relocation of statues of all important leaders "without consultation" despite the presence of a dedicated committee to take such decisions, the 'Committee

on the Installation of Portraits and Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians in the Parliament House Complex'. "The statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a meditative posture located right in front of the old Parliament building held immense significance for India's democratic polity. Members paid their respects at the statue imbuing within themselves the spirit of Mahatma. It is at this place that members often conducted peaceful and democratic protests, drawing strength from their presence," he said. **TNN**

## In U-turn, Gopi says called Indira 'mother of Cong'

Thiruvananthapuram: Union MoS Suresh Gopi on Sunday said he never called Indira Gandhi 'mother of the country'. Clarifying his remark was misinterpreted by the media, Gopi said he'd called Indira "mother of Congress" and "mother of modern India". At the memorial of Tamil Nadu's former CM K Karunakaran on Saturday, Gopi had described Indira as the "mother of India" and K Karunakaran as a "courageous administrator". **TNN**

Bomb-like object near BJP office: A bomb-like object was found near Murlidhar Sen Lane along CR Avenue outside BJP party office on Sunday evening, prompting Kolkata Police's bomb detection and disposal squad to remove the object with safety precautions. Cops are yet to examine the object. **TNN**

## 'Khata-khat': Puri takes dig at Cong for K'taka fuel price hike

New Delhi: Reacting to the steep hike in petroleum prices in Karnataka, oil minister Hardeep Puri took a swipe at Congress's Rahul Gandhi and said, "Khata-khat badh gayi mehngai (inflation has gone up very fast)."

The minister said after not fulfilling the promise of transferring Rs 8,500/month to a woman of each family, Congress-governed Karnataka had saddled people with the burden of paying Rs 3/litre more for petrol and diesel. Puri said with this increase, petrol in Karnataka was now Rs 8.2/litre more expensive than BJP-run govts in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. **TNN**

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Giriraj: Goats shouldn't be sacrificed in public on Eid

Patna: Union textiles minister Giriraj Singh on Sunday said goats should not be sacrificed in public places on the occasion of Bakrid, reports Manoj Chaurasia. The minister also asked district administrations to maintain communal harmony on the occasion, triggering sharp reactions from the opposition.

"Goats should not be sacrificed in public places as it may give rise to communal tension on Bakrid. I appeal to authorities in every district across the country, including Begusarai, to maintain peace and communal harmony," Giriraj told media-persons in Begusarai on Sunday.

Reacting sharply to Giriraj's remark, RJD said he had "no work other than creating communal tension in society by making such statements". Congress too reacted, suggesting the focus on his work.

Lessons on riots 'can create violent citizens': NCERT chief

Defends Changes, Denies Charges Of Saffronisation

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Rejecting accusations of saffronisation of the school curriculum, NCERT director Dinesh Prasad Saklani clarified that references to the Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition were modified in school textbooks to avoid creating "violent and depressed citizens".

Textbooks have seen several crucial topics dropped or altered. The assertion that ancient DNA from the Rakhigarhi site rules out Aryan immigration, leading to calls for more research into whether the Harappans and Vedic people were the same, has been removed. Also omitted is a detailed table of Mughal emperors' achievements.

Other deletions include BJP's "rath yatra" from Somnath to Ayodhya, the role of kar sevaks, communal violence after the Babri Masjid demolition, President's rule in BJP-governed states, and BJP's "regret over the happenings



Changes in textbooks were part of the annual revision process and should not stoke a controversy, NCERT director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said

in Ayodhya". The new Class 11 political science textbook claims political parties prioritise minority groups' interests for "vote bank politics", leading to "minority appeasement", a shift from the 2023-24 session's focus on the lack of evidence for this idea.

Additional changes include dropping references to the Babri Masjid demolition, the killing of Muslims in the Gujarat riots, Hindutva, and tweaking the reference to Manipur's merger with India.

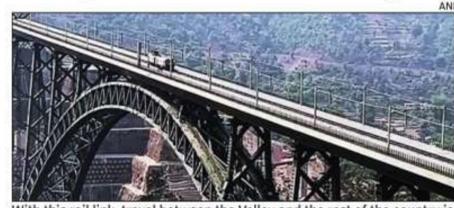
During an interaction with PTI at NCERT headquarters, Saklani emphasised that these tweaks were part of the annual revision process and should not stoke a controversy. "Why should we teach about riots in school textbooks?

We want to create positive citizens, not violent and depressed individuals," Saklani said. "Should we educate our students in a way that makes them offensive or creates societal hatred? Teaching about riots at a young age is unnecessary; they can learn about these events as they grow up," he said and pointed out that there was no similar outcry over the absence of the 1984 riots in textbooks.

The revised Class 12 political science textbook now refers to Babri Masjid as a "three-domed structure" and focuses more on the Supreme Court judgment that allowed the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site, rather than the details of the Ayodhya issue. This judgment led to reconstruction of the temple with the consecration performed by the PM on Jan 22.

Responding to allegations of curriculum saffronisation, Saklani said, "If something has become irrelevant, it must be changed. There's no saffronisation here. We teach history based on facts, not to create conflicts. Talking about the Indian knowledge system or the metallurgical advancements demonstrated by the iron pillar in Mehrauli is not saffronisation. These are facts."

1st trial train reaches Reasi in J&K via highest rail bridge



With this rail link, travel between the Valley and the rest of the country is set to become a reality in the next 4-5 months, railway officials said

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Indian Railways operated the first trial train from Sangaldan to Reasi, including on the world's highest rail bridge built on Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir, on Sunday.

With this rail link, travel between the Valley and the rest of the country is set to become a reality in the next 4-5 months, officials said.

Reasi was recently in the news because of a terror attack that claimed nine lives. The railways also achieved this feat days before PM Modi visits Srinagar to celebrate International Yoga Day. In a social media post, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "First trial train has successfully run from Sangaldan to Reasi, including crossing the Chenab bridge. All construction work for the USBRL are nearly finished, with only tunnel No. 1 remaining partially incomplete." Railway

officials said the Commissioner of Railways Safety is scheduled to conduct a two-day inspection later this month on the Sangaldan-Reasi section. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project spans 272 km and 209 km has been commissioned in phases. Currently, trains operate from Kanyakumari to Katra and the railway link from Baramulla to Sangaldan in the Kashmir Valley is operational.

The USBRL project, including the 48.1-km Banihal-Sangaldan section, was inaugurated by Modi on Feb 20. The first phase (118 km) of this strategic project, Qazigund-Baramulla section, was inaugurated in Oct 2009. The subsequent two phases were inaugurated in 2013 and 2014. The 1,315-metre bridge is part of a broader project which aims to make the Kashmir Valley accessible by the Indian Railways network.

Can't set timeframe for speaker to accept MLA resignation: HC

Shimla: A court of law can't fix a timeframe for an assembly speaker to decide if and when to accept an MLA's resignation, a single-judge bench of Himachal Pradesh High Court said while ruling on a petition filed by three Independent

legislators who put in their papers on March 22 and joined BJP. The trio was seeking a directive to the speaker to accept their resignations.

"Careful perusal of judgments passed by both members of the di-

vision bench reveal that they are in agreement that relief cannot be granted, but the only difference of opinion is whether timeframe can be issued to decide the issue of voluntariness/genuineness of resignation," Justice Sharma said.

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Letter No. ASMC/KAUSHAMBI/ADVERTISEMENT/2024-25/349 Date 15-06-2024

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Country : INDIA Loan No./Credit No./Grant No. : IDAIN5696 RFB No : IN-BIHAR/BAPEPS/WRD/PMC/GOODS/2024-25/02 Issued on : June 28, 2024 (28/06/2024)

- 1. The Government of India (GoI) on behalf of Government of Bihar (GoB) has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) towards the cost of Bihar Kosi Basin Development Project (KBKDP) and intends to apply part of the proceeds towards payments under the contract for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Training, Operation & Maintenance of Equipment's, Instrumentation & Tools for Carpentry Workshop at Physical Modelling Centre (PMC), Centre of Excellence (CoE) Birpur, Supaul, Bihar.

5. The bidding document in English Language are available online on https://eprocure.gov.in/ for a non-refundable fee of INR 10,000, in the form of Demand Draft on any Scheduled/Nationalized bank payable at Supaul in favour of Executive Engineer, Head Works Division, Birpur, Supaul -854340 (India). Bidders will be required to register in the website, which is free of cost. The bidder would be responsible for ensuring that any addenda available on the website is also downloaded and incorporated.

- a) Price of bidding document: ₹10,000 (Rupees Ten thousand Only) b) Date of commencement of downloading of bidding document: 28/06/2024 at 15:00 Hours onwards c) Last date for downloading of bidding document from e-procurement Platform: 30/07/2024 at 16:00 Hours

6. The bid document is available online and bids are to be submitted online through the e-procurement portal http://eprocure.gov.in. Bids submitted in any other manner will not be accepted. Bidders are required to obtain Digital signature Certificate (DSC) from the authorized Certifying Authorities Portal and then register with the e-procurement platform and submit bids by using their user ID and Digital Signature.

- 7. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security amount and currency of the Bid Security shall be 2 Lakhs in Indian Rupees in the form of Bank Guarantee from Scheduled bank in favour of Executive Engineer, Head Works Division, Birpur, Supaul -854340 (India) needs to be submitted as per the procedure as described in Paragraph 8 below.

PR. No. 002029 (WRD) 2024-25

This information is available on website www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar also नशी की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

पावर ट्रॉसमिशन कारपोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लिमिटेड

निविदा विस्तारित सूचना 4 - 63/SE(C)O&M/E-Tender/PTCUL/Dun/2023-24

निविदा सं 63/SE(C)O&M/E-Tender/PTCUL/Dun/2023-24 की डाउनलोडिंग, प्रारंभ एवं खतबंदी की तिथि क्रमशः दिनांक 16.07.2024 तथा 17.07.2024 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। निविदाएं दिनांक 16.07.2024 समय 5:00 बजे तक अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (जानपद) परिसर/खंड/नु, पिटकुल, बिजुल मवन, माजरा, देहरादून के कार्यालय में प्राप्त की जाएगी। तथा निविदा के तकनीकी भाग दिनांक 17.07.2024 समय 3:30 बजे जानपदीय कार्यालय हेतु पंजीकृत इच्छुक फर्मों के समक्ष खोला जायेगा। निविदा सम्बन्धित अन्य विस्तृत विवरण ई-निविदा वेबसाइट www.ptcul.org से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं।

निविदा सम्बन्धित अन्य विस्तृत विवरण ई-निविदा वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in/PTCUL एवं ई-निविदा सूचना पिटकुल वेबसाइट www.ptcul.org से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं। ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित जानकारी हेतु अध्यायी श्री सहायता के लिए PH.No.-91-88998990000, +0120-4200462, 0120-4001002, 0120-4001005, 0120-6277787 से सम्पर्क स्थापित करें। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता (जानपद) परिसर एवं अनु 23/का-234/अधीक्षण अभियन्ता/परिसर/पिटकुल/बिजुल/का-234/दिनांक-15.06.2024

KARNATAKA STATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED

No.1, Dr. Siddhiah Puranik Road, KHB Colony, Magadi Road, Bengaluru - 560079. Phone: +91-80-23283218. E-mail: md.kmscsl@gmail.com

No.HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/NPPCD/Re-TND/04/2024-25 Date: 15-06-2024

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

Ref: 1) Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/NPPCD/Re-TND/04/2024-25, (IND-0117)Date:15/06/2024. 2) Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/NPPCD/TND/OA/E/05/2024-25 (IND-0118)Date:15/06/2024.

Nationwide Tender is invited through e-Tendering system under KTPP Act 1999 and Rules 2000 for the following tenders:

- 1. Re-Tender for Supply of ENT Equipments under NPPCD programme. 2. Tender for Supply of Oto Acoustic Emission Analyzer under NPPCD programme.

The tenderers who have registered under e-Procurement department may participate through e-tendering system.

Details regarding EMD, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the Tender Document, which can be downloaded from the website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 15-06-2024. The eligible tenderers shall submit their e-tenders under e-procurement platform for above mentioned tenders. Further information if any may be obtained from this office.

Sd/- General Manager (Admin & Procurement) KSMSCL, Bengaluru.

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162 Date: 07/06/2024. 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 to E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dr.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ, 0341-2525631.

Office Address: Office of the PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan. Sl. No.; Tender No.; Brief Description of Item; Quantity; Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees); Tender Closing Date & Time(IST) are as follows: (i) 75243823; (ii) SS PIPE FITTINGS FOR WAG-9HC (SHELL PIPING) FOR E70 BRAKE SYSTEM as per Spec, CLW/MS/3/053 ALT-21 [One set consisting of 33 items as per set details attached] [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (iii) SS PIPE FITTINGS FOR WAG-9HC (SHELL PIPING) FOR CCB BRAKE SYSTEM as per Spec, CLW/MS/3/053 ALT-21 [One set consisting of 33 items as per set details attached] [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (iv) THINNER FOR TOP COATING PAINT, SPECIFICATION NO. 4TMS.096.020 Rev-1, STR NO. CLW/TM/12210 Rev-1 (SHELL LIFE 12 MONTHS) [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (v) THINNER FOR TOP COATING PAINT, SPECIFICATION NO. 4TMS.096.019 Rev-1, STR NO. CLW/TM/12210 Rev-1 (SHELL LIFE 12 MONTHS) [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (vi) HARDNER FOR TOP COATING PAINT, SPECIFICATION NO. 4TMS.096.020 Rev-1, STR NO. CLW/TM/12210 Rev-1 (SHELL LIFE 12 MONTHS) [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (vii) THINNER FOR TOP COATING PAINT, SPECIFICATION NO. 4TMS.096.019 Rev-1, STR NO. CLW/TM/12210 Rev-1 (SHELL LIFE 12 MONTHS) [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (viii) GLASS FIBRE CORD-1 DIA 7, Specification No. 4TMS.096.100, STR NO. EL/TM/2066, Rev-2, [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (ix) GLASS FIBRE CORD-1 DIA 11, Specification No. 4TMS.096.100, STR NO. EL/TM/2066, Rev-2, [Warranty Period: 30 Months after the date of delivery]; (x) 41105.50 Metre, (ii) 11342.00 Metre; (iii) 41105.50 Metre, (iv) 11342.00 Metre; (v) 41105.50 Metre, (vi) 11342.00 Metre; (vii) 41105.50 Metre, (viii) 11342.00 Metre; (ix) 41105.50 Metre, (x) 11342.00 Metre.

PR3-467 PCMM/CLW/Chittaranjan Like us on: www.facebook.com/clwrrailways

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE

Tenders are invited by the Executive Engineer, Cooch Behar Division, P.H.E. Dept. from the eligible agencies, financially sound & experienced agency/firm for the work of "Different works related to different PWSS under Cooch Behar Division, P.H.E. Dept." against following N.I.T. No. 01, 2, 3, 4 & 5/CD/2024-2025. Last date of dropping: 27-06-2024 up to 03:00 P.M. Details may be viewed in the http://www.wbtenders.gov.in Website. ICA-T8844(2)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

Basumat Corporation Limited

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Inviting e-tender vide Tender Reference number: DB-MD/BC/037/2024 Dt. 15/06/2024 (Tender id : 2024\_BCL\_694561\_1) for Enlistment of suitable Vendor(s) for off campus pre-printing and printing works on behalf of Basumat Corporation Limited mentioned in the above Notice from the bonafide suppliers within the end date of bid submission i.e. 11.07.2024 by 06.00 PM. For details visit http://wbtenders.gov.in/501/ICA-T8844(2)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

KMDA TENDER NOTICE

e-NIT No: KMDA/E-M/E/MD-I/NTI-09 of 2024-24 (2nd Call)

Online Tender is invited by the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division-I, E-M Sector, KMDA, 59, Nazrul Park, Ashwini Nagar, Kolkata-700159, from the eligible agencies, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Value of work, Earnest Money Deposit, Time of Completion, Operation and maintenance of Electro-mechanical equipment of Clear Water Pumping Station for 9 MLD capacity WTP under Pujali Municipality for 36 (Thirty Six) Months, Rs.47,11,394/-, Rs.94,228/-, 36 Months from Commencement date of the work, Last date & time of Online Bid submission: 03.07.2024, 14.00 hrs., for details contact the above office or visit both websites. (KMDA-29) www.kmda.wb.gov.in www.wbtenders.gov.in ICA-T8844(3)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

KMDA TENDER NOTICE

e-NIT No: KMDA/E-M/E/MD-I/NTI-09 of 2024-25

Online Tender is invited by the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division-I, E-M Sector, KMDA, 59, Nazrul Park, Ashwini Nagar, Kolkata-700159, from the eligible agencies, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Value of work, Earnest Money Deposit, Time of Completion, Round the clock operation and maintenance of Electro-mechanical equipment of Booster Pumping Station under Panitahi Municipality for 36 (Thirty Six) Months, Rs.65,39,382/-, Rs.1,30,788/-, 36 months from Commencement date of the work, Last date & time of Online Bid submission: 03.07.2024 up to 14.00 hrs., for details contact the above office or visit both websites. (KMDA-19) www.kmda.wb.gov.in www.wbtenders.gov.in ICA-T8844(3)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

KMDA TENDER NOTICE

e-NIT No: KMDA/E-M/E/MD-I/NTI-09 of 2024-25

Online Tender is invited by the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division-I, E-M Sector, KMDA, 59, Nazrul Park, Ashwini Nagar, Kolkata-700159, from the eligible agencies, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Value of work, Earnest Money Deposit, Time of Completion, Round the clock operation and maintenance of Electro-mechanical equipment of Raw Water Pumping Station for 59 MLD capacity WTP, Panitahi, at ward no. 3, Gouranga Ghat Road, under Panitahi Municipality for 36 (Thirty Six) Months, Rs.63,69,732/-, Rs.1,27,395/-, 36 months from Commencement date of the work, Last date & time of Online Bid submission: 03.07.2024 up to 14.00 hrs., for details contact the above office or visit both websites. (KMDA-22) www.kmda.wb.gov.in www.wbtenders.gov.in ICA-T8833(3)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

KMDA TENDER NOTICE

e-NIT No. 06/SE/GR/W/W&KMDA of 2024-2025 (2nd Call)

e-Tender is invited by the Superintending Engineer, GRWV Circle, W&S Sector, KMDA, Bidhanagar, Kolkata-700066, from eligible reliable, resourceful, bonafied and experienced Firms / Companies / Individual contractors, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Amount Pay to Tender, Earnest Money, Time of completion, Rejuvenation work of Existing WTP (2.03 MG) (Civil & Electro-Mechanical part) including (05/five) Years Operation & Maintenance Work (Civil & Electro-Mechanical part) related to Urban Water Supply Scheme of Diamond Harbour Municipality (2nd Call). Rs.71,95,000/-, from eligible reliable, resourceful, bonafied and experienced Firms / Companies / Individual contractors, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Amount Pay to Tender, Earnest Money, Time of completion, Rejuvenation work of Existing WTP (2.03 MG) (Civil & Electro-Mechanical part) including (05/five) Years Operation & Maintenance Work (Civil & Electro-Mechanical part) related to Urban Water Supply Scheme of Diamond Harbour Municipality (2nd Call). Rs.71,95,000/-, from eligible reliable, resourceful, bonafied and experienced Firms / Companies / Individual contractors, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Amount Pay to Tender, Earnest Money, Time of completion, Rejuvenation work of Existing WTP (2.03 MG) (Civil & Electro-Mechanical part) including (05/five) Years Operation & Maintenance Work (Civil & Electro-Mechanical part) related to Urban Water Supply Scheme of Diamond Harbour Municipality (2nd Call). 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**Step 5** → Add Credit on UPI

**Step 6** → Set UPI PIN

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## EC: Indian EVMs not connected to internet, unlike US

Bharti.Jain@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Reacting to Elon Musk's post on X about eliminating EVMs, a senior EC functionary said it was unfortunate that EVM methodology in India was being doubted when "it has systematically evolved and is accepted here, with the highest court having ruled in its favour time and again".

"The electoral system in the US does not provide for a watchdog at par with the Election Commission that has its duties clearly laid out in Article 324 of the Constitution," the functionary said.

The EC functionary said each state in the US could choose its voting methodology and these ranged from paper ballot to direct recording electronic systems with or without a paper trail. "Electronic systems are used variously in the US systems, but none partakes the technical characteristics of Indian EVM. EVMs in India are standalone machines with mandatory voter-verifiable paper audit trail and are not connected to the internet. The EVM methodology is carefully enshrined in a



EVMs and VVPATs created an immutable audit trail for post-poll forensics, the functionary said

rule-based operating procedure, providing for robust and continuous disclosures to all stakeholders including political parties and candidates," the functionary said.

The functionary said EVMs and VVPATs created an immutable audit trail for post-poll forensics. "Thus, the system finds validation not only in successful conduct of national and state assembly elections since 2004 and more than 20 transition/transfer of power among political stakeholders. It has rightfully been validated through several court rulings, the most recent being the Supreme Court ruling after a very unusual 'direct evidence' being provided in open court by the EC," he explained.

## 'Musk's EVM remark a sweeping statement'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Replying to a post on X by Elon Musk advocating elimination of EVMs, ex-Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said that view may be applicable in the US and other places where regular computing platforms are used to build "internet-connected voting machines" but not in India.

"This is a sweeping generalisation statement that implies no one can build secure digital hardware. Wrong. Indian EVMs are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media — no connectivity, no bluetooth, wifi, internet. Factory programmed controllers that cannot be reprogrammed," he posted.

He said EVMs could be

"architected and built correctly", as India has done, and even offered to run a tutorial for Musk on the subject.

Replying to this, Musk said, "Anything can be hacked." Chandrasekhar agreed that "anything is possible", at least in theory. "...But that's a different type of conversation from EVMs being secure and reliable," he said.

SC on April 26 upheld EVM system of polling and refused a plea to revive paper ballots, saying "blind distrust" of an institution "bred unwarranted scepticism & impeded progress".

BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya said Musk or whoever else thinks they can hack EVMs should approach the EC and take a shot at it.



## Ensure seamless coordination, says Shah to security agencies

Continued from P 1

Both meetings were attended by NSA Ajit Doval, J&K LG Manoj Sinha and officials from MHA, J&K, Army, paramilitary forces & intelligence agencies.

Pointing to Modi gov't's resolve to uproot terrorism in all its forms through "innovative means and seamless coordination among various security agencies", Amit Shah



said the fight against terrorism in J&K was in a decisive phase. He emphasised on seamless coordination among security agencies, identifying vulnerable areas and addressing the security concerns of such areas. Reiterating gov't's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism and commitment to crack down on terrorists

## Nalla Muthu, TOI 'Tiger Anthem' creator, gets award at MIFF

**Nagpur:** Subbaiah Nalla Muthu, renowned for wildlife conservation campaign film, Tiger Anthem, made in association with The Times of India, was presented V Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award at Mumbai International Film Festival on Saturday, reports Vijay Pinjarkar.

Tiger Anthem, part of TOI's initiative to commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger, garnered over 100 million views worldwide and received praise from PM Narendra Modi. It was also featured at G20 summit. "Its success has shown that non-fiction and awareness-driven subjects can be effectively presented in an engaging and entertaining musical format. This approach has the potential to reach both grassroots and global audiences," Muthu told TOI.

Muthu's unparalleled body of work on Indian tigers establishes him as one of the foremost natural history filmmakers worldwide, dedicating 16 years to telling soulful stories about India's big cats. Ministry of I&B acknowledged Muthu's exceptional contributions to non-feature and wildlife documentary filmmaking with this esteemed award.

## Amid search for terrorists, J&K police warn against rumours, fear-mongering

Security forces have been conducting search operations across J&K's Jammu division following reports of suspicious movements of armed men. Some of these operations have resulted in wild goose chases, prompting police to reiterate their advice for public to stay vigilant but not to succumb to rumours and fear-mongering, reports Sanjay Khajuria.

Panic has gripped locals following four terrorist attacks on June 9, 11, and 12 in the three frontier districts of Reasi, Kathua, and Doda. These attacks resulted in the deaths of seven pilgrims, their bus driver and conductor, and a CRPF constable. In a counteroffensive, two terrorists were killed.

Police also assured the public that areas around Vaishno Devi temple in Katra are safe. Searches by police, Army, and paramilitary teams confirmed no threats, an official said.

through "innovative means", he directed all security agencies to work in a mission mode and ensure quick response in a coordinated manner.

Sources told TOI that the revised counter-terror strategies for Jammu region shall include returning to the force deployment pattern of the

1990s, with more personnel guarding the mountain tops, resuming and intensifying counter-operations sector-wise and strengthening village defence committees in all districts in Jammu by refining their training and equipping them better to bust future terror strikes.

"The deployment levels of J&K police, central paramilitary forces as well as Army troops will be considerably enhanced in the Pir Panjal region," a senior officer said.

With higher force deployment expected to boost the intelligence flow and reduce response time to alerts on the presence or movement of terrorists in Jammu region — which unlike the flat-floor Valley has a difficult terrain with limited road and communication connectivity — counter-operations will be intensified in the days to come. Any local support to terrorists in Jammu division, like Kashmir, will invite serious consequences.

Good flow of intelligence followed by quick response by counter-terror forces helped to curb terrorist activities in the Valley, an officer said and added that the strategy will now be replicated in Jammu.

## Villagers in Maoist dens fight fears, vow to keep guerrillas out

Soumitra.Bose@timesgroup.com

**Nagpur:** Seven tribal hamlets along the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border volunteered to shut out armed Maoists for good, going from laying booby traps for gov't forces at the guerrillas' behest barely two months ago to braving the fear of a backlash to extricate themselves from a stranglehold of four decades of indoctrination.

Paraynar, Nelgunda, Kucher, Kawande, Gongewada, Midadapalli and Mahakapadi in Bhamragarh taluka sit at the foothills of Abujmarh on the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border, housing the headquarters of the proscribed People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA).

Theirs is a leap of faith powered by the promise of the development they have missed out on through the decades when Maoists held sway. The guerrillas still strike fear in the hearts of the villagers, but their writ is being slowly erased.

This Lok Sabha election was the first in memory that the run-up to voting day and beyond in south Gadchiroli's "liberated zone" went off without security forces suf-



Seven affected hamlets adopted 'Gaanbandi' scheme to ban Maoists

fering any damage.

On June 14, villagers of Midadapalli who admittedly helped the Maoists set up "spike-hole" traps in the forests to kill or maim commandos and central forces deployed for poll duty were among those who embraced gov't's Gaanbandi scheme during a "krishi melava", or farmer congregation, at the Dhodraj police outpost.

In return for taking a vow not to collude with the Maoists, the villagers were promised benefits of all welfare schemes that form the bulkwork of the scheme. "The same tribals who were working with the Maoists two months ago came forward to pinpoint ambush locations and help sanitise the area by uprooting IEDs," a senior police officer said.

Gadchiroli SP Neelotpal said the tribal population be-

yond the Dhodraj police outpost of Bhamragarh had always been hostile towards security forces, but were slowly waking up to the promise of infrastructural and economic development.

Dadalora Khidki was launched a few years ago under the supervision of ex-SP Ankit Goyal, who is now DIG of the Naxal range. The idea was to take govt benefits to the tribals' doorstep.

The recent surrender of PLGA platoon commander Mukesh Kannake of the Bhamragarh area committee, who had considerable influence over the tribals, played a role in the mindset changing from blind faith in Maoists to pro-development.

The remote villages also used to house Maoist camps and function as a crucial link in the logistics chain of the guerrillas, police said.

## Won't see CM till I meet victims of poll violence: Guv

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** A day after Calcutta High Court allowed victims of poll-related violence and state leader of opposition Suvedu Adhikari to meet the governor, C V Ananda Bose kept Raj Bhavan out of bounds for CM Mamata Banerjee till he met everyone affected who wished to speak to him.

On Sunday, the governor, who had earlier expressed his dismay at victims of violence being turned away, also said the cops responsible would be transferred. "All victims of violence will be allowed to meet me at Raj Bhavan. The CM will not be allowed to meet me till then. The police officers working at Raj Bhavan will be transferred. Everyone should understand binash kale biparit buddhi (one's mind works perversely at the time of doom)," he said.

The statement comes over a month after Banerjee on May 11 said at a public meeting that she would "not go to Raj Bhavan again" following a former staffer's allegation that Bose had molested her.

Former TMC Rajya Sabha MP Kunal Ghosh said: "The CM does not want to meet him. He has been wearing BJP's badge while discharging his duties. He should be concerned about the cases registered against him."

Adhikari went to Raj Bhavan in the evening. He claimed to have received 1,025 complaints from people who had fled their homes. He told Bose central forces should be kept posted in the state till Durga Puja. "Thousands of people are homeless in the face of violence. We have arranged shelter for them," he said. Bengal BJP president and



Adhikari with poll violence victims at Raj Bhavan on Sunday

## BJP worker thrashed, TMC man threatened

A BJP functionary was allegedly thrashed in Rajarhat on Sunday. Deonath Singh said Trinamool Congress workers assaulted him and his family for hoisting BJP flags outside his home. TMC denied the allegations. No arrests have been made. In Entally, a TMC functionary alleged miscreants on bikes threw bottles and bricks at his home and brandished guns while telling him to come outside. Mukesh Shaw called the cops but the men fled. TMC

junior Union minister Sukanta Majumdar met party workers at the Baruipur office. "The way people are being threatened at gunpoint shows that the law and order situation in the state is in bad shape," he said. Former state BJP president Dilip Ghosh went to Amtala to visit victims of violence.

A four-member team formed by BJP national president J P Nadda arrived in Kolkata in the evening and went to Maheswari Bhavan. The team is scheduled to visit Diamond Harbour, Jaynagar and Sandeshkhali on Monday and Cooch Behar on Tuesday.

## Nirmala will meet state FMs to seek inputs on Budget

Continued from P 1

Detailed consultations are yet to begin given that ministers took charge last week and PM Narendra Modi was travelling, sources familiar with the deliberations told TOI.

The pre-Budget consultations are to begin this week, but a lot of groundwork has already been done by officials, who were tasked by Modi to prepare the 100-day plan. Between Wednesday and June 25, FM Nirmala Sitharaman is slated to meet econo-

my chemicals where European companies are retreating, there have been issues around the size of investment that should be promoted by govt as large global champions are sought to be created in India.

The details of the MSME package are yet to be firming up but the idea is to empower small businesses, which were a focus of the post-Covid scheme too, so that there is enough impetus to create employment in the largest sector after agriculture.

Jobs, both in terms of quantity and quality, have been a key concern during the polls and many see BJP falling short of the majority mark as a fallout of the widespread discontent on this count. There have been multiple suggestions to increase income levels for women, and increase their participation in the workforce, including through some tax arrangements. Officials said the proposals will be discussed in detail as women are a key target group for NDA.



## HC to WBBPE secy: Arrange for interview of petitioner

Continued from P 1

The apex court, in 2014, had upheld a transgender person's right to decide their self-identified gender and directed Centre and state govts to grant legal recognition of their gender identity — male, female or third gender, noted Calcutta High Court's Justice Rajasekhar Mantha on Friday, directing state govt to ensure 1% quota for transgender persons in govt jobs.

The judge said that the top court had directed Centre and state govts to take steps to treat transgender persons as socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, and to "extend all kinds of reservation in cases of admission in educational institutions

and for public appointments".

The state's department of women and child development and social welfare, on November 30, 2022, had issued a notification that transgender persons were entitled to equal opportunity of employment without any discrimination, the state chief secretary had informed the HC. The court said it was clear from the notification that the state had adopted a policy of equal treatment in employment to transgender persons — but no reservation had yet been done, in accordance with the Supreme Court order. Justice Mantha also directed the secretary of West Bengal Board of Primary Education to arrange for interview and counselling of the petitioner as a special case.

## PNIE No.: 02/THCB/PD-IV/2024-25 Dated: 14.06.2024

Name of the Work: TOURISM AND CULTURAL PROMOTION HUB AT GANDHIGAT AGARTALA, WEST TRIPURA UNDER NESIDS (OTRI)

1. Estimated cost: Rs. 30.42 Crore.
2. Period of Completion: 540 days
3. EMD: Rs. 60.84 Lakh
4. Bid Fee: Rs. 25,000.00
5. Last date & time for online Bidding: July 15th, 2024, upto 15.00 Hrs.

The bid forms and other details including online activities should be done in the e-procurement portal <https://tripuratraders.gov.in>

Sd/- Deputy Executive Officer (PD-II) Tripura Housing and Construction Board West Tripura

ICA/C/275/24

## Malda Town-New Jalpaiguri Special Train

To clear extra rush of passengers, one Passenger Special train viz. 05796 Malda Town-New Jalpaiguri Passenger Special will run from Malda Town at 18.00 hrs. on 17.06.2024 to reach New Jalpaiguri at 00.15 hrs. on 18.06.2024 as per following revised timings, stoppages & composition :-

Station	Arr.	Dep.	Station	Arr.	Dep.
Malda Town	-	18.00	Dalkhola	21.15	21.17
		(17.06.24)	Surjakamal	21.27	21.28
Old Malda Jn	18.11	18.12	Kanki	21.38	21.40
Adina	18.20	18.21	Hatwar	21.50	21.52
Eklakhi Jn	18.31	18.33	Kishanganj	22.02	22.04
Kumarganj Jn	18.43	18.44	Panjipara	22.14	22.16
Samsi	18.54	18.55	Gaisal	22.26	22.28
Bhaluka Road	19.05	19.07	Gurjaria	22.38	22.40
Harischandrapur	19.17	19.18	Aluabari Road Jn	22.50	22.52
Kumedpur Jn	19.30	19.31	Mangurjan	23.05	23.07
Khurial	19.41	19.42	Tinnile Hat	23.17	23.19
Azamnagar Road	19.52	19.53	Dhumdangi	23.29	23.31
Mukuria Jn	20.02	20.03	Chatter Hat	23.41	23.43
Barsol Jn	20.15	20.17	Rangapani	23.53	23.55
Sudhani	20.27	20.29	New Jalpaiguri	00.15	-
Telta	20.40	21.05		(18.06.24)	

Composition : General 2nd Class (LWS) — 16, Power Car — 01 & SLRD — 01 = 18 coaches. Category : Passenger.

Chief Passenger Transportation Manager

Eastern Railway

## 4 flatmates among 15 dead in U'khand bus tragedy

Pankul.Sharma@timesgroup.com

**Dehradun:** Among the 23 tourists on board the ill-fated Tempo Traveler which fell into a gorge in Raitoli area of Rudraprayag district on Saturday, leaving at least 15 dead and 11 injured, were six women, who shared a flat in Noida.

The six friends, all in their 20s or early 30s, were working in different firms in Noida and staying together in a shared apartment in Sector 51. Little did they know that a short break from work to visit Chopta and Tungnath temple in the Garhwal hills would lead to the death of four and leave two severely injured.

Mohini Pandey (27), Smriti Sharma (28), Nikita Bhatt (26) and Anjali Srivastava (27) — lost their lives in the incident while Vandana Sharma (30) and Shubham Singh (27) sustained injuries. Nikita hailed from Udhampur and Prayagraj, respectively. Information officer at Rudraprayag, Rati Ram Singh, said that parents of Shubham and Vandana took them from the hospital after a "formal discharge" on Sunday.

The six friends boarded the vehi-



The driver is believed to have dozed off at the wheel, plunging the vehicle down a gorge in Rudraprayag on Saturday

cle at Noida on Friday night, as per information available with police. The tempo traveller travelled through the night and the driver is believed to have dozed off at the wheel, plunging the vehicle down a gorge.

Residents at the apartment complex in Noida where the friends stayed, expressed shock at the incident. "All the girls were well-mannered and polite. It has come as a shock that such a thing has happened to them," said a resident.

Meanwhile, the tragedy's toll rose to 15 Sunday as a Delhi resident succumbed to his injuries at AIIMS-Rishikesh. "Abhishek Meena, 18, son of an information service officer, died on Saturday night. There are currently six passengers admitted at AIIMS. The condition of one woman is critical while the remaining five are stable," AIIMS-Rishikesh PRO, Sandeep Kumar, told TOI.

IN THE HON'BLE HIGH COURT OF DELHI (ORIGINAL COMPANY JURISDICTION) IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 1956 & IN THE MATTER OF TRIVENI INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CO. LTD. COMPANY PETITION NO. 39/2009 E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE							
S. No.	Name of the Company and Location, details of License & FSI	Reserve Price/Fair Market Value	Earnest Money	S. No.	Name of the Company and Location, details of License & FSI	Reserve Price/Fair Market Value	Earnest Money
	Triveni Infrastructure Development Company Limited. Project: Triveni Galaxy Project at Sector- 78, Faridabad, Haryana. Area: 30.254 Acres. FSI Area: 214258 Sq. Mtr. *Additional terms and conditions as directed vide order dated 21.12.2023 passed in CP No. 39/2009 as mentioned below.	Rs. 550,00,00,000/-	Rs. 55,00,00,000/-				
1.	Land owned by M/s Triveni Infrastructure Development Company Limited - Village Faridpur, Faridabad			3.	Land owned by M/s Triveni Infrastructure Development Company Limited & M/s R.M.S. Club & Resorts Pvt. Ltd. Village Faridpur, Faridabad		
	Rect. No. Killa No. Area K-M				Rect. No. Killa No. Area K-M		
	31 2 8-0				28 3/1/2 2-12		
	28 19 8-0				4 8-0		
	22 8-0				8 8-0		
	31 9/2 7-3						
	12/1 5-17						
	12/2 2-3						
	22/1 2-2						
	18/2 0-2						
	19/2 6-8						
	20/2 1-3						
	21 0-2						
	1/2 3-17						
	10/1 6-18						
	28 23/2 7-11						
	31 3 8-0						
	4/1 4-3						
	17 24/2 1-0						
	25 8-0						
	18 21 7-9						
	18 17 8-0						
	18/1 1-12						
	18/2 3-9						
	18/3 2-19						
	22 7-3						
	23 7-9						
	24 7-9						
	17 17 8-0						
	24/1/2 4-10						
	Land owned by M/s Triveni Infrastructure Development Company Limited - Village Fajapur Majra Nimka, Faridabad, Haryana						
	Rect. No. Killa No. Area K-M						
	2 20 5-4						
	28 11/2/2 2-8						
	20/1/1 1-6						
2.	Land owned by M/s R.M.S. Club & Resorts Pvt. Ltd. Village Faridpur, Faridabad						
	Rect. No. Killa No. Area K-M						
	17 24/1/1 1-2						
	18 19 6-16						
	28 24/1 7-15						
	29 4 3-8						
	5/1 2-3						
	5/2 5-17						



# Education TIMES

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THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

Advertorial, Education Promotional Feature

## Central govt PENs a new system to check student dropouts, streamline migration

PEN will serve as a common thread across diverse learning stages, from pre-primary to postgraduate education

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To modernise the education system, the Ministry of Education has initiated the implementation 11-digit unique identification number for students, known as the Permanent Education Number (PEN), starting from the current academic year. The PEN project, announced in 2023, will be assigned to every student provided through the UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) portal that covers over 14.89 lakh schools, 95 lakh teachers, and 25 crore children nationwide.

In an interview with the *Education Times*, IAS Sanjay Kumar, secretary, Ministry of Education, Department of School Education and Literacy, says, "The idea PEN was conceptualised to identify every student through the UDISE+ portal, as outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. From regular administrative processes to major issues concerning students like transferring schools, the PEN will be a necessary document. The implementation of PEN would streamline and simplify the process of the student's transition from one school to the other across the country, a process often complicated, particularly at the pre-primary, primary, and upper-primary levels."

"Earlier, when parents changed their child's school, especially in classes such as II, V, or VII, their transition to the new school was not smooth, as the school administration insisted on procuring documents such as transfer certificate, caste, birth certificates, and class records, among others, which caused immense trouble to the parents. Several students have also dropped out of school or taken a gap year owing to the cumbersome process of migrating their data in the absence of a nationwide portal to ease the procedure," he adds.

Besides efficiency, PEN would bring about unparalleled transparency in the education system. "PEN is a tracking mechanism for students across all government and private schools across the country. It will help

**Permanent Education Number will function as a filter against duplication of data such as mark sheets and also verify or authenticate the certificates of students**

monitor the student's progress throughout their academic journey and also help implement government schemes based on their academic performance, which was not possible earlier. This not only streamlines administrative processes but also ensures that students' records remain consistently updated and accessible," says Kumar.

However, registering for the PEN is voluntary for schools and is to be undertaken only with parents' consent. "The PEN will not just be confined to school databases but also will be linked with other platforms including DigiLocker. It will serve as a common thread across diverse learning stages, from pre-primary to postgraduate education," says Kumar, who confirms most states have decided to implement the PEN system in their educational institutes.

The PEN, which is different from the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR), will function as a filter against duplication of data such as mark sheets and also verify or authenticate the certificates. It can also be used for scholarships, examinations and employment. Meanwhile, the Education Department in Andhra Pradesh has made PEN mandatory from the academic year 2024-25.

Srinivas Singh, state IT Coordinator, Commissioner of School Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh, says, "As many as 86 lakh PEN have been generated till now in Andhra Pradesh, and 40,000 are under process for the 2023-24 academic year. The registration for PEN generation for the academic year 2024-25 began this week af-

ter the schools reopened post-summer vacation. Just as the Aadhaar card is mandatory to avail government schemes, the PEN in the absence of the Aadhaar Card, tracks the students' progress and academic movement and also executes the centre-state educational schemes."

"Under the new system, the district education officers (DEOs) have been directed to chart the students who are looking to migrate and their data would automatically be transferred to the new school from the state headquarters. Apart from this, in remote areas, where high schools are absent, a report will be prepared on schools and students and sent to the district education officers through the PEN portal for the smooth transition of students," adds Singh.

The West Bengal School Education Department has decided to make the use of PEN compulsory this academic year. According to state officials, lin-

king PEN with the *Banglar Shiksha* portal, a system of unique IDs for students in vocational undergraduate, Anganwadi, and engineering courses, will enable schools and teachers in the state to seamlessly access student information. "Identifying students who relocated outside West Bengal through the *Banglar Shiksha* portal was challenging. With the implementation of PEN, the issue is likely to be resolved, allowing easy identification and record access nationwide," an official stated on the condition of anonymity.

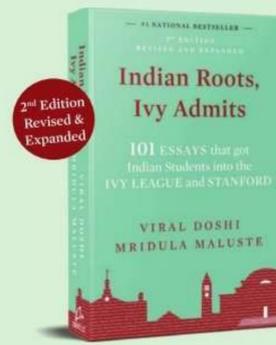
Telangana from academic year 2023-24, has made student PEN compulsory to identify the dropouts and bring them back into schools. The state education secretary, Vakati Karuna, has directed the school education department to print PEN on Secondary School Certificate (SSC) hall tickets this year.

IAS Ashish Modi, director of Secondary Education Department, Bikaner, Rajasthan, says, "The state education department has already started the process of generating the PEN IDs. Several IDs have already been initiated while the unique numbers for about 16,000 candidates are yet to be made."



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## SC does not want any major change in counselling schedule of NEET UG 2024

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The National Testing Agency (NTA) recently informed the Supreme Court (SC) that after the recommendations of the high-powered recommendation committee, NTA has decided to cancel the grace marks from the scorecards of 1,563 candidates. The NTA has provided students with two options - first, to accept the revised scores without the grace marks and second, to appear for a re-exam on June 23, 2024. Meanwhile, the apex court has not put a halt on the counselling process, candidates can actively take part in the counselling process.

NTA's decision comes while the vacation bench of

Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta heard the petition filed by a NEET educator Alakh Pandey. Talking to Education Times, Advocate Rohit Jain, counsel on record for Pandey, says, "The SC does not want any major change in the counselling schedule. It will take necessary action if any discrepancies are found, so, students should not panic and continue with the counselling process."

An aspirant from Gurugram, who scored 710 out of 720 marks, highlighted the anguish that he and students like him, who have scored well have suffered in the past few days. "Many of the students are not mentally as well as financially prepared for the re-exam. Their families have put in 100% of their re-

sources which assured them a good score, so why will they take the exam once again? The past few days have been very distressing for students who have scored above 690 or 700 marks."

NTA's second option; acceptance of the scores without the grace marks, remains open for those who are not willing to appear for the exam again. "Students have worked hard and have written the exam honestly, they might not be keen on writing the exam again, for them the option is open to accept the and can further attend the counselling rounds," says Jain.

Meanwhile, the SC will hear the case including all the claimed irregularities on July 8, once the court resumes after break.

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## Doctors, students and activists team up to lead fight against NEET irregularities

Himanshi Dhawan & Shruti Sonal | TNN

Three days before the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) on May 5, some students received pop-up alerts on Telegram: "Leak paper available, price Rs 5000, message to buy @HQPaper."

The Supreme Court has now issued notices to the Centre and NTA on these alleged leaks after PILs piled up. But RTI activist Vivek Pandey says he had posted about these "leak paper" offers on social media platforms even before the test. "But it fell on deaf ears," he says. On May 5, the day of the exam, Pandey felt a sense of déjà vu.

But rather than just being happy with his I-told-you-so moment, Pandey has been spending most of his time filing complaints with the Union health ministry on the problems with NEET-UG, seeking updates from Bihar



**QUESTION MARK OVER FUTURE:** Besides hitting the streets to protest, stressed students are seeking advice and aid for filing complaints and petitions

up in arms against the NTA.

Like Pandey, Kota-based educator and students rights' advocate Dr Amit Gupta regularly posts videos sharing the plight of aspirants, amassing nearly 30,000 followers on X (formerly Twitter). Gupta, who completed his MBBS but decided to become a teacher instead, began his 'activism' in 2015 after the AIPMT paper leak. "I gathered about 2,000 students, and we decided that enough was enough. Every time the cheaters just get away," Gupta says. The group held rallies and dharnas, demanding a re-exam. However, they soon realised that taking the judicial route would bear more fruit. Eventually, the SC ruled in their favour.

Since then, 46-year-old Gupta has been fighting for other reforms too. This year, after the NEET results row, Gupta began helping students out to file petitions. Years of experience in fighting legal battles have come in handy as his lawyers help students draft petitions and crowdsource legal fees. "If students take a single exam on one date with a single question paper in offline mode, there are bound to be leaks. Why can't we adopt the JEE model where multiple question papers are prepared and exams are held on different dates online?" he asks.

Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan has denied that there have been any leaks calling the allegations motivated. But the turmoil among students and parents has been hard to contain. Students Islamic Organisation of India too has been vocal in its protests on the exam. The group has about 10 lakh students in their network who

look to them for career guidance or funds as many belong to economically deprived backgrounds. SIO national secretary Abdullah Faiz says they received 300 complaints from students related to NEET discrepancies. "Then we saw reports about grace marks being given without a proper explanation, paper leaks in Bihar and Gujarat and six toppers from just one centre in Haryana. We decided to file a petition as we no longer trust the agency conducting the exam." SIO also conducted a survey among its students and found 64% had encountered problems like delayed start or early finish of the exam while 48% found discrepancies or errors in their scorecard. The most troubling thing, Faiz says, is that controversies surrounding the exam had impacted the mental health of over 70% of students.

Desperate students have hit social media, organised street protests and petitioned influencers and politicians. The recent controversies also prompted Dr Dhruv Chauhan, national council coordinator with the Indian Medical Association Junior Doctors Network, to request a re-examination. "Students have approached me saying they feel helpless. They and their families spend years planning and preparing for a medical career. Their faith has been shaken," Chauhan says.

Among the other petitioners are coaching institutes such as PhysicsWallah's Alakh Pandey and students like 19-year-old Andhra student Jaripiti Kartheek who took the exam for the third time. Even with the result of 506, he finds himself at a rank of 200520 which makes state medical colleges out of reach. "So many of the students who sat for the exam are struggling. NTA should change its approach—divide the courses and branches, and conduct different exams for each," he says.

## 'My loneliness is killing me': Youths, too, hit by malaise

Anuja.Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: While loneliness among the elderly is common, a recent study has revealed that even a large number of young people experience it and suffer its drastic impact, which can be fatal and is comparable with the harmful effects of smoking.

The study, published recently in journal 'Psychological Science' states that loneliness reaches its peaks in young and older adulthood, while decreasing in middle age. Incidentally, the World Health Organization has declared loneliness a global public health concern.

"Lacking connection can increase the risk for premature death to levels comparable to smoking daily," said the office of the US Surgeon General, while calling for action to address America's loneliness epidemic. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to reduce social disparities throughout adulthood to reduce levels of loneliness. According to doctors in Delhi, loneliness isn't merely a fleeting emotional state but a chronic condition with far-reaching consequences for cognitive health, sleep pattern and mortality rates. WHO recently discussed the fact that loneliness has reached epidemic proportions.

"It affects our resistance, our mental and physical health and increases our tendencies towards psychosomatic illnesses because of the stress it gives us," disclosed Dr Samir Parikh, chairman, Fortis National Mental Health Programme, Fortis Healthcare. Dr Gaurav Jain, senior consultant, internal medicine, Dharamshila Narayana Hospital, added, "The stress of loneliness can mani-

### CONNECT WITH PEOPLE TO FEEL GOOD

#### Steps to tackle loneliness

1. Reduce social media use, prioritise real-life relationships and human connections
2. Invest time and energy in relationships to make them meaningful
3. Join community programmes to foster a sense of belonging
4. Plan activities like playing, going together to market or joining a course/ learning with other people
5. Nurture and inculcate hobbies from young age, take up new hobbies after retirement when you have more time at hand
6. Practise mindfulness as it has been shown to reduce the sense of loneliness
7. Exercising, walking

or running in open air can help; laughter yoga can help combat loneliness

8. Listening to or playing music or attending dance classes can be useful

9. Reading books or listening to audio books is helpful

10. Engaging in spiritual practices can be beneficial

11. Connecting with nature is also helpful

#### Factors responsible for loneliness

- > Low income or unemployment
- > People living alone due to various reasons
- > Chronic diseases and disabilities
- > Societal pressure on certain groups such as LGBTQ

#### IMPACT ON HEALTH

Increased risk of anxiety | Stress | Depression | Substance abuse | Increased blood pressure | High cholesterol | Heart disease | Obesity | Brain stroke | Dementia | Suicidal thoughts



fest in cardiovascular issues like hypertension and heart disease, as well as compromise immune function, leaving individuals more susceptible to infections and illnesses."

In the short term, loneliness can lead to feelings of sadness, anxiety and stress. In the long term, it can contribute to chronic health conditions, decreased quality of life, and premature death.

Loneliness can be caused by a variety of circumstances. Dr Achal Bhagat, senior consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Apollo Hospitals, said, "Transitional phases for younger adults, such as moving away for college or entering employment, can lead to social isolation and a lack of meaningful con-

nections. Furthermore, the growing reliance on technology and social media may lead to a sense of isolation from in-person relationships. Meanwhile, older adults frequently feel loneliness due to restricted mobility, health issues, decline in cognitive abilities, financial constraints and the death of a spouse or loved one." However, middle adulthood is often less lonely because individuals at this stage tend to have social networks through work, family and community involvement. They may also have a greater sense of purpose and stability in their lives, said Archana Sharma, consultant clinical psychologist, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute.

Loneliness and social iso-

lation, if left unaddressed, can have detrimental effects on both mental and physical health, said Dr Madhusudan Singh Solanki, head, mental health and behavioural sciences, at Max Saket.

He cautioned that social media should never be used as an alternative to the real world and meaningful connections because this can actually increase loneliness and a sense of isolation. "The growing reliance on social media connections rather than personal is unfortunate, but the trend will continue," said Dr Vipul Rastogi, senior consultant neuropsychiatrist, Medanta. "People need to see their life as the sum of all parts, and not a biased view of work and work alone."

### DHRUV CHAUHAN DOC-ACTIVIST

Students approached me saying they feel helpless. Their families spend years planning and preparing for a medical career. Their faith has been shaken



police about investigations into a leak from the state while also petitioning for action against the NTA in the SC. He had earlier filed an RTI seeking clarifications on the grace marks awarded by NTA which later withdrew them.

Discrepancies in exams are personal for him. He attempted to pass the pre-medical test (PMT) in Madhya Pradesh for nearly four years but always ended up in failure. It was only when the Vyapam scam—where students cheated on a large scale to pass the state medical exam in connivance with senior officials, teachers and many middlemen—hit headlines that he realised that he was trying to win a fixed match. Pandey eventually cracked NEET but decided to work towards greater transparency in the medical education system, filing around 1,000 RTIs since 2016. "Though no one paid heed to his warnings in May, they are paying attention now."

"When the 'leak' stories came out, we had a small group of 50 students who were disturbed by the reports. Now our support group has expanded to 4,500," Pandey says, adding that there are lakhs who are now



**HELPING HAND:** Amit Gupta gives legal aid to students

## No culprit will be spared: Pradhan

Continued from P 1

Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said no one, including officials of National Testing Agency, would be spared if irregularities in NEET were found. The assurance came amid attacks from the opposition over NEET-UG, where 23 lakh candidates appeared on May 5. The results were declared on June 4, and NTA has come under severe criticism, amid allegations of irregularities, inflated marks and paper leak in the medical entrance exam.

Stating that information on alleged irregularities have emerged from some specific places, Pradhan said, "Govt is working towards its resolution and reform. Keeping the cognisance of the (Supreme) court, specific action has been initiated. Everything is being done under supervision of the court."

The minister added that the govt was committed to 100% transparency for an



important exam like NEET. "The Supreme Court itself is keeping an eye on the matter. We will not let anything wrong happen."

Earlier on Friday, Pradhan had indicated that scrapping the entire entrance examination was unlikely as the sanctity of the process could not be judged by alleged irregularities in a handful of centres. Some states with a large presence of a powerful lobby of education institutes have been opposing NEET and officials argued that coaching centres were fanning the controversy as the syllabus was aligned with Class 12, helping more students secure high marks.

Officials said of the 4,750 centres, concerns were expressed in the case of eight centres as less time was given in some of these centres, resulting in NTA giving grace marks.

## Stalin: NEET needs systemic change

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin has reiterated his party DMK's demand to stop NEET, highlighting complaints about alleged irregularities in the medical entrance test this year.

In a post on X on Sunday, Stalin cited Gujarat Police FIRs pertaining to investigators allegedly tampering with exam OMR sheets in exchange for money amid claims about cheques, some of several crores and others blank. "This conspiracy, implicating a school principal, a physics teacher, and several NEET coaching centres, underscores the urgent need for systemic change," Stalin posted.

Banning NEET has been one of the key demands of DMK and a poll promise. Stalin had shared on social media the report of a panel, Justice A K Rajan committee, constituted by his govt to expose the purported flaws of NEET. According to Stalin, the ongoing controver-



sies around NEET highlight its "fundamentally inequitable nature".

"In a society where education has been denied for thousands of years, we should offer more opportunities for advancement of the oppressed. On the contrary, NEET hinders the opportunities of such students," the CM wrote. Stalin argued that the recent events paint a different picture despite Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan's defence of NEET-organiser NTA.

"NEET, an examination masquerading as a measure of merit, has revealed itself as a pervasive scam. The Union govt must stop defending this anti-student, anti-social justice...NEET system," Stalin wrote. Stalin's sister and DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi echoed the NEET ban demand and called for a nationwide probe into recent irregularities.

## India, US in 'advanced talks' for co-production of combat vehicles

Rajat.Pandit@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: India and the US are now in an "advanced stage of talks" for the proposed joint manufacture of the latest generation of Stryker armoured infantry combat vehicles (ICVs) as part of their defence-industrial cooperation roadmap.

With the US also recently offering to demonstrate the mobility and firepower of the eight-wheeled Stryker in high-altitude areas in India, the defence ministry is examining a three-phase plan for the proposed project, sources told TOI. Under the plan, there will be a limited off-the-shelf purchase of the Strykers under the foreign military sales (FMS) programme of the US, which will be followed by joint production in India, and finally there will be co-development of its futuristic versions, sources said.



If the project is finalised, the Strykers will have to be customised and technologically configured for Indian terrain, including operations in high-altitude areas like eastern Ladakh and Sikkim, a source said

All this, however, is contingent on the Stryker meeting the operational requirements of the Army's mechanised infantry battalions as well as a high level of indigenisation and transfer of critical technologies to the Indian co-production partner, which could be a defence PSU or a private firm. "If the Stryker project is finalised, the existing Indian capabilities in ICVs

will be taken into account. Strykers will have to be customised and technologically configured for Indian terrain, including operations in high-altitude areas like eastern Ladakh and Sikkim," a source said. With the Army having a huge requirement of futuristic wheeled and tracked ICVs to progressively replace its existing fleet of over 2,000 Russian-origin BMP-II vehicles in

the years ahead, MoD is also pursuing indigenous projects. "Army also needs ICVs capable of amphibious operations in large numbers as well. Strykers are not amphibious," another source said.

The US is hard-selling the Strykers. Ahead of US national security advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to India, secretary of defence Lloyd J Austin cited the "co-production of armoured vehicles with India" as yet another indicator of the upward trajectory in the bilateral defence partnership during the Shangri La dialogue in Singapore two weeks ago.

The US, incidentally, has bagged lucrative Indian defence deals worth around \$2 billion since 2007. While the Stryker project is still in the discussion stage, India and the US are conducting final technical-commercial negotiations for inking two mega deals within this financial year.

## People liked boys more, so I'd beat them up, says UP girl who made MMA history

Puja Tomar took to martial arts for money and respect. As Budhana village greeted the winner with garlands and dhols, it was also a kick for patriarchy

Himanshi.Dhawan@timesgroup.com

Puja Tomar first started fighting out of anger, then for money and finally for respect. The third daughter in a Jat family living in Uttar Pradesh's Budhana village in Muzaffarnagar, Tomar knew her life was defined by what she was not. She was not a boy and she was not really desired, not by her family, or her relatives and, definitely, not by her community.

On June 9, Tomar did something that made everyone change their minds. She made history, not only as the first-ever Indian female fighter to sign up with Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), but also as the first Indian to win a bout. Dedicating her win to her mother and country, Tomar said, "This is not just my win. This win is for all Indian fans and all Indian fighters who people didn't think could stand here."

#### FIGHTING SPIRIT

To be fair, her father, a tractor dealer, quickly reconciled to the hand fate had dealt him and loved all three daughters in his own special way. He wanted them to be tough and athletic and ready to face the harsh world. "Main bachpan main sochti thi, sab duniya so rahi hai aur hum daud rahe hain (I used to wonder why we are running when the whole village is asleep)," she recalls now. Tomar's father died in an accident when she was six and suddenly everything changed. "From being pampered with new clothes to struggling for two meals a day, it was a big shock for our family. But my mother is a very strong person and made sure all of us got an education."

Her older sisters showed academic prowess—one is now a doctor and the other a nurse—but Tomar couldn't quite see herself hitting the books. She would much rather hit boys instead. "I knew that everyone liked boys more than girls. So, I thought if I beat them up, people will like me," says Tomar, who watched Jack-



**KNOCKOUT STAR:** Life was hard for the Tomar sisters after their father died, but Puja fought her way out of poverty

ie Chan films to pick up some tricks. It helped relieve some of the frustration she felt at the time as relatives bore down on her mother to stop her from going out and hanging around boys. Days would be spent on the small piece of land where the family grew sugarcane, their only source of sustenance.

In school, Tomar tried karate, even winning a couple of competitions and honing a deadly sidekick. "I was a street fighter. Lots of strength from hours spent on the farm but no technique," she adds. Tomar stumbled on martial arts Wushu when she was about 17 and quickly learned to excel in it despite very little guidance or help, picking up five national championship titles. Her mother's mantra was always on her mind: 'Darna nahi hai, maarna hai' (Don't be scared, fight hard) "I was winning but not earning, and though everyone at home supported me, I knew that there was a fund crunch," she says. Medical college fees for her sister had meant an additional burden. In 2017, Tomar was offered Rs 50,000 for a mixed martial arts (MMA) fight. "All I asked was 'where?' I was willing to fight anyone to earn a few bucks," she recalled. As she grappled,

#### SIGNATURE MOVE:

Delivering a lethal sidekick during the bout against Brazilian Rayanne dos Santos

kicked and boxed her way, she was spotted by the Matrix Fight Night (MFN) company promoted by Bollywood star Tiger Shroff, his mother Ayesha and sister Krishna. In 2022, Ayesha Shroff offered to pay for her training at the Soma Fight Club in Bali, Indonesia. Things finally seem to be looking up. "They said I had potential, but I needed to train properly," Tomar says. So, at 28, Tomar finally found a dedicated coach who corrected her technique, gave her a game plan against her opponents, and monitored her exercise and diet. "Pitte, pitte...peetna seekha." (After being beaten up several times, I learnt how to outwit others.)

#### WINNING BOUT

In June 2023, Tomar stepped into the ring and won the MFN world championship. "I came back home and gave my mother the championship belt. Again, some boy from the village created trouble. He told her this was a small belt, and that I should bring back the big belt which is the UFC one. He didn't even let me enjoy my win for a day," she laughs.

Exactly a year later, when she stepped into the Octagon for the UFC bout on June 9, she was fighting for respect. After the second round of the tough 15-minute fight, Tomar felt fatigue creeping and she remembers her coach shaking her, "Ankhen khol aur maar" (Open your eyes and hit). "I just summoned whatever willpower I had." Her Brazilian opponent Rayanne dos Santos tried to intimidate her by screaming, and Tomar screamed right back. And then landed her signature sidekick sending dos Santos flying across the ring. Her kicks and punches didn't stop as her coach's words rang in her ears. "Don't buckle, keep standing no matter what." The last five minutes felt like an eternity, Tomar says, as she eked out a 30-27, 27-30, 29-28 split-decision win. "I just collapsed after that," she says.

Her sparring partner of 12 years Himanshu Kaushik says he has never met anyone as strong-willed as her. "It is what has defined her in all these years of struggle," he says. Post-match, Tomar was treated to pizza "chicken wala with buffalo sauce" which was a sorry substitute for her most favourite thing in the world: sarson ka saag and makkhi ki roti, but it still felt like the best meal in the world. The 30-year-old has since been busy giving media interviews and dispensing advice to village girls on how to take off on their MMA journey. "They all want to fight now," she says with obvious pride.

And on June 13, Budhana welcomed its daughter, hoping to drown the past judgment it had meted out with garlands and dhols.



# Thanks to supernumerary quota, girl power rules

In the past five years, there has been a notable rise in the number of female candidates cracking JEE Advanced



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## Surging figures show promising future

For the JEE Advanced 2024, at least 42,947 female candidates registered; 41,020 appeared and 7,964 cleared the exam. The number of females who cleared the exam in 2024 is higher than in 2023, when 7,509 women cleared the exam. In 2022, at least 35,124 females registered for the exams, 33,608 appeared, and 6,516 qualified for the exam. In 2021, at least 6,452 females qualified the exam; 35,121 females registered for JEE Advanced 2020, at least 32,851 appeared and 6,707 qualified. Of the total qualified candidates in 2019, over 5,356 were females.

## Pushing the boundariest

Several IITs are running outreach programmes to popularise STEM among school students. For example, IIT Madras aims to reach 50,000 government school students by 2026 in seven states through the Science Popularisation Program in Vernacular Languages to popularise science and provide career guidance in regional languages. Recently, IIT Guwahati organised sessions for 3,311 school students in 12 batches to promote STEM. Over 2,000 participants were girls, representing approximately 65% of total student strength. IIT Dharwad is translating STEM-related resources and career guidance materials into Kannada so that students can better understand complex concepts and career options.

"Higher education in Science is an attractive proposition due to the worldwide focus on Women in STEM. In India, the performance of women students in Mathematics and Science has been consistently good, and it is heartening to see the numbers in higher education pick up as well," says Prof Preeti Aghalayam, dean, School of Engineering and Science and director-in-charge, Zanzibar campus, IIT Madras. She adds that the impact of several measures to raise awareness about women's education has been positive, including supporting top performers among female students and the increasing number of women pushing the boundaries and striving to carve an educational path of their choice.

## UGC-NET introduces Disaster Management

The University Grants Commission (UGC) informed the introduction of Disaster Management in the National Eligibility Test (UGC NET) exam. The new subject will come into effect from the (UGC NET) December 2024 exam. The UGC-NET is held biannually in June and December. "Based on the expert committee's recommendations, the Commission, in its 580th meeting held on May 15, 2024, has decided Disaster Management as an additional subject from December 2024 onwards to the existing list of subjects of UGC-NET," states UGC notification. The syllabus for the subject of Disaster Management is available on the UGC NET website. The University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) is a standardised exam in India that determines eligibility for assistant professor positions in Indian universities and colleges and for Junior Research Fellowship (JRF).

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**CELEBRITY CHEF GORDON RAMSAY 'LUCKY TO BE HERE' AFTER A 'REALLY BAD' BICYCLING ACCIDENT: 'HELMET SAVED MY LIFE'**

**JOE ALWYN BREAKS SILENCE ON TAYLOR SWIFT SPLIT, SAYS IT IS 'ABNORMAL' FOR BREAK-UP TO BE WEIGHED-IN BY OUTSIDERS**



## Kyiv's territorial integrity must be basis of any peace: Summit

**Snubbed Moscow Mocks Meet; No Country Volunteers To Host Sequel**

**Buergenstock:** Eighty-four countries called Sunday for the "territorial integrity" of Ukraine to be the basis for any peace agreement to end Russia's two-year war, though some key developing nations at a Swiss conference did not join — and the way forward for diplomacy remains unclear.

Over 90 countries attended the two-day talks at a Swiss Alpine resort at the behest of Ukrainian Prez Volodymyr Zelensky, billed as a "peace summit" even though Moscow was not invited. A decision by China to stay away all but assured that the summit would fail to achieve Ukraine's goal of persuading major countries from the "global South" to join in isolating Russia. Brazil attended only as an "observer". India, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and South Africa all withheld their signatures from the summit communique, even though some contentious issues were omitted in the hope of drawing wider support.

Still, the conference provided Kyiv with a chance to showcase the support from Western allies that it says it needs to keep fighting against a far bigger enemy. Leaders including US vice-president Kamala Harris, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French Prez Macron gathered at the mountain-top resort of Buergenstock. US Prez Biden did not attend despite invitations from Zelensky.

In the absence of a clear path to ending the war, Zelensky emphasised practical issues, such as securing food supplies and nuclear safety. Ukraine, one of the world's biggest grain exporters, has thwarted a blockade of its Black Sea



European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen with Zelensky in Lucerne

### Zelensky says Russia not ready for peace, wants China to play a bigger role in talks

Ukrainian Prez Zelensky said Sunday that Russia was not ready for a "just peace", insisting Kyiv was open to immediate talks if Moscow pulls its troops out of the country. The Ukrainian head of state was speaking at the end of a major summit in Switzerland, to which Russia was not invited. "Russia can start negotiations with us even tomorrow, if they leave our legal territories... (But) Russia and their leadership are not ready for a just peace, this is a fact," he said. Zelensky also said he would like to see China play a bigger role in discussing a settlement. Beijing, a close ally of Russia, did not attend in protest at Moscow not being invited. "I believe that China could help us. That is why I would very much like to see certain proposals that the Chinese side has," he said. "Ukraine has never said China is our enemy," he added. Asked whether he would consider China a friend, Zelensky said: "I believe that friends are those who help when things are difficult. I would like China to be a friend to Ukraine." AFP

ports, and also wants to build consensus around safety at a Russian-occupied nuclear power plant. In her closing remarks, Swiss Prez Viola Amherd warned that the "road ahead is long and challenging". Russia, as it has for weeks, mocked the gathering. "None

of the participants in the 'peace forum' knows what he is doing there and what his role is," said Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's deputy chairman of the country's Security Council. The final document said the UN Charter and "respect for territorial integrity and so-



**ROD STEWART BOOED FOR UKRAINE SUPPORT:** UK pop star Rod Stewart was greeted with loud boos at a concert in Germany on Friday while making a show of support for Ukraine. Wearing the colours of the country's flag, he dedicated the song 'Rhythm of My Heart' to Ukrainians before shouting a profane insult against Russian Prez Vladimir Putin

vereignty ... can and will serve as a basis for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine." It also called for Ukraine's control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant and its Azov Sea ports to be restored. But it omitted tougher issues of what a post-war settlement for Ukraine might look like, whether Ukraine could join Nato alliance or how troop withdrawals from both sides might work. No country came forward to host another such meeting, with notable silence from Saudi Arabia, mooted as a possible future venue.

Moscow has demanded recognition of its rule over territory its forces captured. Western leaders at the summit endorsed Kyiv's refusal to negotiate under such terms. "Confusing peace with subjugation would set a dangerous precedent for everyone," said Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. REUTERS & AP

### Russian forces kill six IS-linked hostage takers at detention centre

**Moscow:** Russian special forces freed two prison guards and shot dead six inmates linked to the Islamic State militant group who had taken them hostage at a detention centre in the southern city of Rostov on Sunday, Russian media said.

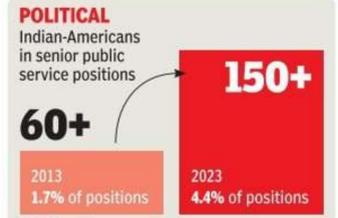
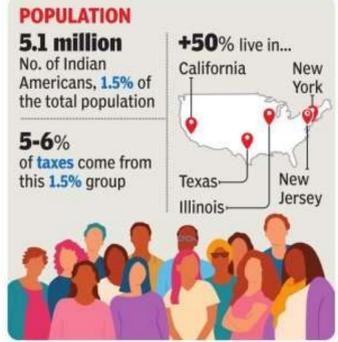
State media said that some of the men had been convicted of terrorism offences and were accused of affiliation with the Islamic State militant group, which claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a Moscow concert hall in March.

The six hostage takers, one of whom wore a headband with the flag used by the Islamic State that bears an Arabic inscription, knocked out window bars and climbed down several floors by rope before taking the guards hostage with a knife and fire axe. In video published by the 112 Telegram channel, one was shown brandishing a knife beside one of the bound guards in Rostov-on-Don. In negotiations with the authorities, they demanded free passage out of the prison.

But Russian special forces decided to storm the prison. Intense automatic gunfire could be heard in clips published on Telegram channels. "The criminals were eliminated," Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service said. "The employees who were being held hostage were released. They are uninjured," it said. According to local media, the hostage takers were from Russia's southern republic of Ingushetia and three of them had been detained in 2022 for planning an attack on a court in another Russian republic, Karachay-Cherkessia. REUTERS

### INDIANS LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM

The no. of Indians living in US has grown to 5m (till 2023), which represents a 50% increase since 2010. A look at their far-reaching impact on...



**Kamala Harris** made history as the first Indian-origin woman to be sworn in as vice-president in 2021

**CULTURAL**  
96 Indian movies grossed over \$1 million in North America, and \$340 million collectively between 2015 and 2023

10+ awards won by Indian Americans across the Oscars, Golden Globes, and Grammys since 2015

28 of the 34 Scripps National Spelling Bee champions have been of Indian origin since 2000 (PIO Bruhat Soma was this year's winner)

**ECONOMY**  
\$40 billion Indian investments in US as of 2023

4,26,000 No. of jobs created in US

16 of the Fortune 500 in US are currently led by Indian-origin CEOs

72 out of 648 unicorns in US led by Indian-origin CEOs

\$26 billion US top source of global remittances to India in 22-23

25% of 114 unicorns in India in 2023 have US-educated founders

**EDUCATION**  
2,50,000 Indian students enrol in US universities, making up 25% of int'l students annually

10% of US patents included a co-inventor of Indian origin in 2019, a 5X growth from 1975

35 out of 50 top US colleges have an Indian-American in leadership posts

10% of all physicians in the US Indian-origin in 2023 serving 30% of patients

**PHILANTHROPY**  
\$1.5 billion donated by Indian-American households in 2023

\$3 billion given to US universities since 2008

(65+ donations of \$1m+ to 40+ universities)

Source: Inc 42; RBI; CII; Open Doors; Report: Boston Consulting Group

### Scottish poll PIO candidate's Modi, RaGa posts spark row

Naomi Canton

**London:** Social media posts on PM Narendra Modi and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi by an Indian-origin candidate for Glasgow in the Scottish elections have ignited controversy in UK, prompting a police report under new hate crime laws. Alba Party candidate Dhruva Kumar, 36, reported his rival party Scottish Greens for allegedly inciting hatred between Hindus and Muslims in Scotland.

Scottish police investigated the complaint lodged on June 8 and found no criminality. Scottish Greens dismissed the claims as a publicity stunt by Alba. Kumar, born in Bihar's East Champaran, has alleged criticism from Scottish Greens over his past social media posts about Modi and Gandhi as an attack on his religion and ethnicity. He claims to be the first India-born candidate to stand in Scotland and has expressed support for Modi and BJP.

The controversy arose from alleged posts by Kumar on X from 2014, which contained inflammatory comments against "Nehru dynasty" and how "India has paid the price". Scottish Greens commented on these posts in National, a newspaper. In response, Kumar insisted his account was hacked and that someone "politically motivated" twisted his words into "bad English". He said: "In 2014 Modi took office and I remember I did some posts praising him and a new era for India. They have twisted what I wrote."

Scottish Greens candidate Niall Christie accused Kumar of exploiting right-wing politics.

### ITALIANS TAKE POPE FRANCIS TO PRIDE



**A**t Rome's Pride celebration, bare-chested men in pink angel wings danced to songs, women wrapped in rainbow flags kissed, and shimmering drag queens waved from parade floats. And then there was Pope Francis. His image was everywhere. On cardboard cutouts adorned with flower necklaces, on glittery banners, on stickers. Romans came to the Pride parade on

Saturday dressed like Francis, wearing papal hats and T-shirts that read, "There is never too much froggiagne," a reference to an offensive slur against gay men that the pope has been accused of using twice in recent weeks. The slur "is the slogan of the 2024 Pride," said Martina Lorina, 28, an actress who was holding up a banner bearing the word. After Italian media reported that the

pope used the slur at a meeting with priests to complain that there was too much "gayness" in the church, the Vatican apologized. But Rome's Pride attendees took a different tack to respond to the insult: They made it their own. Pride participants symbolically invited the pope and his slur to the party, using a tactic of the LGBTQ community to turn insults into words of pride. NYT

### Le Pen: Ready to work alongside Macron

**M**arine Le Pen, the leader of the French far-right, said she won't try to push out Prez Macron if she wins the snap parliamentary election that begins later this month. "I'm respectful of institutions, and I'm not calling for institutional chaos," Le Pen told Le Figaro newspaper. "There will simply be cohabitation."

Le Pen is seeking to appeal to mainstream voters as she aims to cement a majority in the next parliament. Her group, the National Rally, is already on track to become the biggest party, a prospect which has caused alarm among investors and France's international partners.

Le Pen said that if she can form a majority — either with National Rally lawmakers alone, or with allies — she would lead her party's parliamentary caucus and 28-year-old party leader Jordan Bardella will become PM. The two-round election concludes on July 7.

### Why a 3-legged lion and its brother swam across a crocodile-filled river

**O**n a dark night in Feb, two male lions stood in the shallows of the Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park, in Uganda, and looked across the water. Nearly a mile away was the shore on the other side. Hippos and 16-foot crocodiles inhabit the channel, which can be 20 feet deep in places. Barely 12 hours earlier, the two males had lost a battle for territory and were lucky to still be alive. Remaining on this side of the channel was dangerous, and they could probably hear the roars of female lions in the distance.

As with many cat species, lions don't like to swim. And one of the lions, known as Jacob by researchers, has only three legs. He lost a limb in a poacher's trap in 2020. But neither Jacob nor his brother, Tibu, were deterred. The two big cats set out for what the researchers call the longest-recorded swim ever taken by lions. The lions struggled on their first three tries to cross. During the second attempt, the drone that was tracking them picked up a large thermal signature that may have been a crocodile or a hippo in pursuit; the two male lions split into a Y formation before hurrying back to shore. Less



**SURVIVAL:** Researchers say the two male lions swam nearly a full mile across the Kazinga Channel, the longest by big cats ever recorded. The reason: Sex. Uganda's national park's lion population has fallen to around 40 today from 71 lions in 2018 with males outnumbering females 2 to 1

### Hollywood helps Biden raise \$30m for campaign

**Los Angeles:** Some of Hollywood's brightest stars headlined a fundraiser for Prez Joe Biden that took in a record \$30 million-plus for a Democratic candidate, according to his campaign. George Clooney, Julia Roberts and Barbra Streisand were among those who took the stage at the 7,100-seat Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles on Saturday. Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel interviewed Biden and former prez Barack Obama, who both stressed the need to defeat former prez Donald Trump in a race that's expected to be exceedingly close.



George Clooney and Julia Roberts were among those who took the stage at the fundraising event

During more than half an hour of discussion, Kimmel asked if the country was suffering from amnesia about the ex-

prez, to which Biden responded, "all we gotta do is remember what it was like" when Trump was in the White House. The amount raised outpaced the then-record \$26 million from Biden's fundraiser in March in New York that featured late-night host Stephen Colbert interviewing Biden, Obama and Bill Clinton. AP

### 'Unaware' Netanyahu slams military's tactical pauses plan

**I**sraeli PM Netanyahu criticized plans announced by the military on Sunday to hold daily tactical pauses in fighting along one of the main roads into Gaza to facilitate aid delivery to the Palestinian enclave.

It was likely that the prime minister was aware of the plan and that each announcement was tailored to different audiences. The whipsaw statements appeared to reflect the competing pressures facing Netanyahu, as he juggles demands from the Biden administration and elsewhere around the world with those of his own hawkish gov't. His far-right coalition partners oppose any concessions in Gaza.

The military had announced the daily pauses from 0500 GMT until 1600 GMT in the area from the Kerem Shalom Crossing to Salah al-Din Road and thence northwards. "When the prime minister heard the reports of an 11-hour humanitarian pause in the morning, he turned to his military secretary and made it clear that this was unacceptable to him," an Israeli official said. The military clarified that normal operations would continue in Rafah, the main focus of its operation in southern Gaza.

The strange choreography of the messaging became stranger still when the gov't suggested that Netanyahu only learned of the military's plan from news reports. But analysts said

that the two lions swam nearly a full mile across the Kazinga Channel, the longest by big cats ever recorded. The reason: Sex. Uganda's national park's lion population has fallen to around 40 today from 71 lions in 2018 with males outnumbering females 2 to 1. "These males and these swimming events are a symptom of this problem." NYT

### AROUND THE WORLD



**FUN WITH A CAUSE:** Amateur surfers participate in 'Paddle for Peace' to mark Juneteenth and International Surf Day in California

### Day after 1st public appearance, Kate takes snap of Will & kids for Father's Day



'WE LOVE YOU, PAPA'

The three young children of British heir-to-the-throne Prince William and his wife Kate released a Father's Day message and photograph on Sunday, saying "We love you, Papa". The photo shows the three children, Prince George, 10, Princess Charlotte, 9, and Prince Louis, 6, hugging William on a beach, with the photograph taken from behind as they all look out to sea. The caption says the photo was taken by Kate and reads: "We love you, Papa. Happy Father's Day," followed by two red hearts and G, C & L. The photograph was released

a day after Kate, Britain's Princess of Wales, was seen in public for the first time since she revealed she was undergoing treatment for cancer. Kate, William and the children joined King Charles and other members of the royal family on the balcony of Buckingham Palace after watching a military parade to celebrate the monarch's official birthday.

**Unruly passenger who was restrained with duct tape faces record \$81k fine**  
An American Airlines passenger who kicked and spit at flight attendants and passengers and attempted to open the cabin door before she was secured to a seat with duct tape has been sued by the US FAA for \$81,950, the largest fine issued by the agency for unruly behaviour. The passenger, Heather Wells, 34, of San Antonio, was travelling first class on July 7, 2021, when about an hour into the flight she ordered a Jack Daniel's and became agitated and said she "wanted out" of the plane. Wells began running toward the back of the plane, where she dropped to her knees in the aisle and began "talking incoherently to passengers, before crawling back toward the main cabin," the lawsuit said. Wells told a TV channel that she was having mental health issues.

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## Paytm in talks with Zomato to sell its movie, ticketing biz

### Transaction Seen Valuing Fintech's Vertical At ₹2,000 Crore

Asmita.Dey@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Paytm is in advanced stages of discussion to sell its movie and events ticketing business to Zomato as part of the fintech's strategy to divest its non-core assets, sources aware of the development told TOI. The deal, if finalised, could value the business vertical of Paytm at close to Rs 2,000 crore.

In a stock exchange filing late Sunday, Zomato said that it is in discussions with Paytm to acquire its movies and events ticketing business. The discussion, the firm said, is being undertaken with an intent to strengthen its 'going-out' business. "However, no binding decision has been taken at this stage that would warrant a board approval and subsequent disclosure," Zomato added.

In a separate filing, Paytm also said that the discussions

### To Boost Zomato's 'Going-Out' Segment

► Paytm's movie and events ticketing vertical is housed under its marketing services business which also includes advertising, credit card marketing, deals and gift vouchers

► The deal with Zomato, if finalised, could value the business vertical of Paytm at close to ₹2,000cr

► The co had said that it aims to achieve significant cost efficiencies, among other things, through the pruning of its non-core businesses

► The deal would give a leg-up to Zomato's going-out business, which already offers discovery and ticketing of offline experiences such as in-restaurant dining and live events such as Zomaland

are preliminary and do not involve any binding agreements that require approval or disclosure. "The company routinely explores various strategic opportunities aimed at enhancing shareholder value. The potential transfer of Paytm's entertainment business, a component of our marketing services, is one opportunity under consideration. As noted in our earnings

call, our focus will be on payment and financial services along with digital goods commerce, which are designed to help our merchants scale their businesses," the firm said.

"Paytm wants to focus on its payments and financial services businesses. It will only focus on opportunities which would help its merchants scale their businesses," sources said. For Zomato, the deal will

add value — acquiring Paytm's movie and events ticketing verticals would fit in well with and give a leg-up to its going-out business, analysts said. The food delivery firm's 'going-out' vertical already offers discovery and ticketing of offline experiences such as in-restaurant dining and live events such as Zomaland.

Revenues from its going-out segment have grown by over 100% year-on-year to Rs 93 crore in the March quarter. "Paytm is currently merging its movies and the Insider (events platform) vertical into one team. For now, customers may continue to book both movies and events on the Paytm app," sources said. However, Zomato is likely to work on integrating the two verticals within its platform once the deal is through, they added. A formal announcement of the deal could happen as early as next week, sources said.

## Hero Future Energies to invest \$2bn

Sanjay.Dutta@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Hero Future Energies, the renewable energy arm of the Munjal family-promoted Hero group, will invest upwards of \$2 billion over the next 30 months to ramp up its generation capacity. It will focus on projects with energy storage to leverage a sharp fall in battery prices, company's global CEO Srivatsan Iyer told TOI.

"Currently we have an operating capacity of 1.8 gigawatts (GW). We reached here in about 12 years. We will implement projects with a total capacity of 2.6 GW in the next two-and-a-half years as we feel the time has come for the company to spread its wings," Iyer said.

A good part of the projects in the pipeline include battery energy storage systems and were won in auctions conducted by SECI (formerly Solar Energy Corporation of India), the state-run agency tasked with implementing the National Solar mission. "We want to focus on integrating multiple technologies such as solar, wind and energy storage, instead of pure-play solar or wind projects," he said.

## Industry frets over new ad mandate

### Self-Certification Norms To Kick In From Tomorrow As Directed By Supreme Court

Rupali.Mukherjee@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Starting Tuesday, advertisers in India face a new mandate: A self-declaration certification (SDC), as directed by the Supreme Court. Conceptualised as a "positive step for protecting consumers, fostering trust, transparency, and enhancing brand reputation", the move aims to ensure that all stakeholders are more vigilant and compliant. Yet, opinion is divided among advertising bigwigs, media agencies, and marketing experts on the ease of its implementation and whether it will effectively curb the widespread issues of misleading claims and surrogate advertising.

On May 7, in a case involving the Indian Medical Association and the Centre, SC directed that no advertisements on television, print, digital, or radio can be published or aired without the SDC, aiming to ensure compliance with regulations and prevent misleading claims. "The entire advertising ecosystem, be it advertisers, agencies or publishers will need to create internal systems to be compliant," Manisha Kapoor, CEO and secretary general, Advertising Standards Council of India, told TOI.

This is true for all sectors and categories. "Practices such as advertising reviews, prior to publishing and preventive risk assessments to avoid potential backlash will now be embedded in the brand strategy of an organisation. The threat of adverse impact that emerges from this regula-

tion requires that organisations invest in verifying the claims of external communication," said Mustafa Surka — partner, risk advisory services at KPMG India.

The pre-release approval by the regulatory agency works better for all the stakeholders and saves time, resources and effort rather than a post-correction, feels Nandini Dias, former CEO of Lodestar UM. "Often after ad is released, someone objects and puts a stop to it. If the ad is pulled off, it disrupts the entire marketing activity for that quarter and causes huge loss to the brand. In the Doordarshan days, one had to submit the complete storyboard, frame-by-frame and get approvals,

Most consumer-focused sectors will face increased scrutiny, while the lens is now on the entire product life cycle, say industry experts. Several misleading ads are still being aired, despite the existence of several regulatory agencies, they add

and only after that was the film shot. And once we had DD approval, no other objections were considered. Today, the scenario is far more dynamic and complicated, it is essential to create a new system. While there is resistance as it will slow the systems down in the short-run, it will be beneficial to consumers and will help transparency in the long-run," she added.

"All consumer brands may associate themselves with a cause, but these claims may not be trustworthy. For

instance, making claims like a product is green, net zero, plastic neutral, will all need to be verifiable. Building brand trust requires clarity, responsibility, and accurate advertising," said Namrata Rana — partner, national head (ESG), KPMG India.

Advertising experts fear it may increase red tape, and companies and agencies will need manpower to navigate the cumbersome process.

"This seems to be an exercise in bureaucracy rather than the law. Creating bureaucratic hurdles make things difficult for advertisers, without solving the problem of misleading ads," said Santosh Desai, advertising veteran and former CEO, Future Brands.

More efforts may be needed. "Prima facie (the move) has been conceptualised to protect consumer rights. However, it may not be able to curb the menace of surrogate advertising and misleading claims — the basic objective for which it was created. The entire implementation and thereafter — monitoring, policing and punishment require a lot of thought, and is not clear at this stage," said Sandeep Goyal, chairman, Rediffusion.

In a representation to the I&B ministry, the Indian Newspaper Society too has flagged several concerns, including problems with the portal where self-declaration has to be made, and sought that the implementation may be deferred. It has suggested that the existing mechanisms should be strengthened and govt may consider limiting the mandate to healthcare related or medical ads.

## Frequent policy changes a worry, impact investment, says Hyundai

Pankaj.Doval@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Korean car major Hyundai, which is eyeing a Rs 25,000 crore fundraise from the Indian stock market by selling 17% equity, has flagged "frequent changes" in govt policy as a key concern, saying it impacts investment flows into India as well as pace of technology changes.

The company, which has invested nearly Rs 30,000 crore in India since it began operations around 1996, has said stability in policy will be key to adapting confidently to the required technological upgrades mandated by govt.

"Another challenge that the industry is facing is frequent changes in policies, which make it difficult for auto industry stakeholders not only to ensure adherence but also commit investments," the company said in the Draft Red Herring Prospectus filed with market re-

### 'CNG share to be more than EVs by FY29'

New Delhi: Hyundai said in its DRHP that the share of EVs will go up from the current 2.3% to as much as 17-20% by the end of FY29. However, EVs will trail CNG, which will see its share go from the current 15% in FY24 to 22-27% by FY29, the company said. "CNG station infrastructure is projected to rise at a healthy pace till 2030," it added. **TNN**

gulator Sebi. "Overall policy stability and transparency will be required going forward to ensure smooth technology transition and localisation in the country," the company said.

Hyundai has said it will invest a fresh Rs 32,000 crore in India over the next few years, mainly towards launching electronics and creating the requisite component and changing infrastructure for the greens, apart from boosting its production capacity.

It said EVs will be a key focus area for the company and it will start localising the manufacturing of elec-

trics for the mainstream, high-volume market.

However, the draft prospectus also expresses concerns over the localisation norms mandated by govt, which is pushing the growth of EVs. "Govt is encouraging localisation across sectors, especially in automotive sector via policies like PLI for automotive technology, PLI for advanced cell chemistry, phased manufacturing programme, atmanirbhar Bharat, and make in India. While the end goal of localisation is to reduce import dependence and bring down overall manufacturing costs, it also involves significant initial

capital investments from several stakeholders within the automotive industry. While the government has designed the schemes to support investments by offering several subsidies and import duty benefits, there are still concerns around meeting the eligibility criteria and availing of the benefits," the company said.

It said that "simplification and better tracking of policies" will ensure localisation in India. "The progress of the vendors tied up with individual OEMs would also lead to a change in the risk profile of the industry from a supply-side perspective."

To maximise price competitiveness of its EV models, Hyundai said it intends to focus on securing local production capabilities for key parts such as cells, battery packs, power electronics, drivetrain and building a localised EV supply chain.

What is your view? The most important facet is really about continuing to create the virtuous cycle of employment, consumption, investment and creating good quality jobs. Improving farm incomes, that's the most important area to focus on. As far as specifically direct tax is concerned, it's more about getting more people within the tax system, and not resorting to, as some have suggested, taxing the so-called super rich, or (imposing) wealth tax and things like that. The focus right now has to be on creating an economy that creates a lot of jobs, that's ultimately where the solution is going to live. The second is expanding the (tax) base.

How complex do you find GST in terms of number of slabs, classification issues? What changes would you want? We are recommending three slabs. In addition to that, we are also saying it should be more inclusive. Real estate, petroleum are outside, all these should be brought in. There is room for process simplification, which is an ongoing exercise.

There has been a lot of debate around inequality and there have been suggestions about taxing the super rich to raise resources. What is your view? We're recommending employment-linked incentives for these sectors, with some outcome metrics. The second important thing is to provide impetus to MSMEs, which create a lot of employment and there is larger integration into global value chains. The journey has started because the world also is looking at supply chain diversification. So, free trade agreements provide some impetus to this. Human capital development and social infrastructure is important. We have recommended increasing the investment in education to 6% of GDP and for healthcare to 3%. What is also important is to create a vibrant rural economy. The first piece that has to be solved is agriculture, both from a productivity perspective plus also resilience because weather events are only going to multiply. The second is to empower the youth in rural areas to be able to participate in other opportunities in the economy.

How is a coalition govt at the Centre going to impact policymaking? A number of policy instruments have been used in the past, while following a model of inclusive growth within the fiscal glide path and dealing with energy transition. The outcome is before us, the economy grew 8.2% last year. The economy is in robust health, that's really shows the strategy of investment-led inclusive growth is directionally right, because it creates

## Expand base, avoid super rich tax: CII prez

Surojit Gupta & Sidhartha | TNN

ITC chairman and managing director Sanjiv Puri took over as the new CII president during elections. The industry chamber is recommending several measures, including creating more jobs, skilling and generating political consensus on crucial reforms related to land & labour laws and farm & power sector. In an interview with TOI, Puri emphasised the need to widen the tax base, while rejecting higher levies on the super rich and backed a three-slab GST structure. Excerpts:

One of the first recommendations that CII has given is to create some institutional mechanism to develop consensus on some of the big reforms of land, labour, power, agriculture, fiscal sustainability because that also involves the states"

For creating good quality of jobs, CII is recommending some policy enablers to provide impetus to labour-intensive sectors, like apparel, toys, retail, entertainment, logistics, tourism, wood-based industry"

We are recommending three (GST) slabs...Real estate, petroleum are outside, all these should be brought in"

a virtuous cycle and enhances the productive capacity. That should energise more reforms. One of the first recommendations that CII has given is to create some institutional mechanism to develop consensus on some of the big reforms of land, labour, power, agriculture, fiscal sustainability because that also involves the states.

What are the stumbling blocks that you want govt to remove to accelerate job creation? Job creation is also a responsibility of the private sector, govt mainly has to put the enablers in place. Private capex is on the right trajectory. In FY22-23, it was at 23.8% of GDP, which is higher than

what it was pre-Covid and had dropped to 20.7% of GDP in 2021. There are several sectors where investments are coming, sectors related to infrastructure, cement and steel, sectors which have received impetus PLI like electronics, food processing, telecom, pharma, logistics, renewable energy, automobiles, EVs, semiconductor. On the issue of jobs — it's about jobs and also the quality of jobs. For creating good quality of jobs, CII is recommending some policy enablers to provide impetus to labour-intensive sectors, like apparel, toys, retail, media, entertainment, logistics, tourism, wood-based industry. There are so many areas where the employment to capital ratio is very favourable. So,

There has been a lot of debate around inequality and there have been suggestions about taxing the super rich to raise resources. What is your view? We're recommending employment-linked incentives for these sectors, with some outcome metrics. The second important thing is to provide impetus to MSMEs, which create a lot of employment and there is larger integration into global value chains. The journey has started because the world also is looking at supply chain diversification. So, free trade agreements provide some impetus to this. Human capital development and social infrastructure is important. We have recommended increasing the investment in education to 6% of GDP and for healthcare to 3%. What is also important is to create a vibrant rural economy. The first piece that has to be solved is agriculture, both from a productivity perspective plus also resilience because weather events are only going to multiply. The second is to empower the youth in rural areas to be able to participate in other opportunities in the economy.

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processed at the same day's NAV. The cut-off time for purchase orders in liquid and overnight funds is 1:30 pm. For buy orders, the fund house should receive the payment by the cut-off time for applicability of same-day NAV. Orders & payments received beyond cut-off times will be processed at the next trading day's NAV

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## MFs' Net Asset Value: The What, When (Is It Calculated) & How

Every mutual fund scheme declares its net asset value (NAV) at the end of each working day. The NAV is updated daily at 11 pm for all schemes, except for fund of funds, which are updated at 10 am the next day and displayed on websites of the fund house, Amfi, and investment platforms.

### What Is Net Asset Value?

The NAV represents a fund's per unit market value. This is the price at which investors are allotted units by the fund house or the price at which they can sell it back to the fund house. This is calculated by dividing the total value of all the assets in a portfolio, minus all its liabilities. The NAV is calculated by the fund house or by an accounting firm hired for the purpose.

## Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

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

### When Is Scheme's NAV Calculated?

The NAV is calculated and declared after market closing hours at the end of the day. Since stock prices move up and down every second, it is difficult to calculate NAV during market hours as the price of the underlying stocks in the portfolio could change. Hence, the NAV is calculated at the end of every market day, factoring in the closing market prices of the securities that the fund holds.

### What Is The Applicability Of A Day's NAV?

Investors are allocated units in a scheme after a fund house receives money to purchase units on a market trading day. For equity and debt funds, and redemptions from liquid and overnight funds, orders placed before the cut-off time of 3 pm will be



processed at the same day's NAV. The cut-off time for purchase orders in liquid and overnight funds is 1:30 pm. For buy orders, the fund house should receive the payment by the cut-off time for applicability of same-day NAV. Orders & payments received beyond cut-off times will be processed at the next trading day's NAV

### Is NAV Key In Picking A Scheme?

Wealth managers believe the mere NAV number of a scheme is irrelevant for an investor looking to buy a mutual fund. It should not matter to an investor if the NAV is ₹10 or ₹ 1,000. Take, for example, an investment of ₹1 lakh each in Scheme A at a NAV of ₹20 and Scheme B at a NAV of ₹50. The investment amount being equal, Scheme A would appear cheaper as 5,000 units were allotted compared to 2,000 units in Scheme B. Now suppose both schemes grow by 10% in a month. Scheme A's NAV will be ₹22 and Scheme B's will be ₹55. The value of your investment in both cases is ₹1,10,000.

For two schemes with identical portfolios and other things remaining constant, the difference in NAV will hardly matter and both schemes will grow at the same rate. Financial planners say daily changes in NAV don't matter. It is best to look at the annualised return of a fund over different timeframes to judge its performance.

—PRASHANT MAHESH

## CONTRAPUNTO

It is error alone which needs the support of govt.  
Truth can stand by itself

-THOMAS JEFFERSON

## EC, Talk Better

Controversy over Mumbai North West LS poll result must be settled quickly by the commission

That the Mumbai North West Lok Sabha victory would snowball into a controversy was almost a given. When Shinde Sena nominee Ravindra Waikar beat UBT Sena candidate Amol Kirtikar by 48 votes after recounting of both EVMs and postal ballots, concerns of a misconduct amped up to strong suspicions of misconduct in opposition camps. UBT Sena and others allege three serious counts of wrongdoing.

One, Shinde Sena candidate's agent/associate used a mobile phone inside the counting area. None except the Returning Officer can carry a mobile phone into counting centres. Call records of this phone are under police investigation. Two, following SC's order to store all VVPAT machines with symbol loading units, UBT Sena has sought technical inspection of the same - but EC website apparently has no SOP for such a technical probe, so it's vague what the "probe" might entail. Three, allegations centre on RO at the NESCO centre, the site of irregularities.

That very day, both Kirtikar and party workers raised alarm over the counting. Once the presence of an unauthorised phone was established, surely EC could have reacted immediately by putting out a statement. This kind of incident puts EC in the spotlight, not simply the state poll commission. And every such incident contributes to the chatter. For instance, before counting day, opposition sought EC walkback on allowing postal ballots to be counted after EVMs. Law says postal ballots be counted first. Why tweak that in the first place?

Kirtikar has written to EC with his complaints. Mumbai North West has pressed all the buttons for those asking for complete transparency of the election process. EC is firm about sanctity of its processes; it holds results speak for themselves. It argues due process is underway. But reality is instances where EC doesn't make its response public run the risk of getting a life of their own online. EC must necessarily communicate to today's alert electorate on its due processes.

In the internet era, EC has faced civil society scrutiny like never before. Reliability of EVMs, including VVPATs, its "unhackability", is at the core of EC's business of trust. Elon Musk's tweet, unrelated to India's election, that EVMs should be done away with, can only add fuel to the fire. EC has yet to make a statement on breaches of protocol. It must engage with the electorate more - on processes, its parallel paper trails, and its MO in the event of a breach.

## Swiss Fantasy

Ukraine-Russia peace conference without Moscow in the room, is more spectacle than substance

More than 90 countries participating in a weekend conference to forge a peace plan for Ukraine, suggested its ambition was realistic. But this was an out and out misreading. Because one crucial country was not invited: Russia. International mediators are not going to get far without first bringing both Ukraine and Russia to the same negotiating table.

**Western prioritisation** | This conference in Switzerland was preceded by a G7 commitment to a new \$50bn loan for Ukraine, securitised through interest on the frozen assets of Russia's central bank. An architect of this plan, US treasury secretary Janet L. Yellen says that it's about "getting Russia to help pay for the damage it's caused". This is quite a distinct goal from a ceasefire or peace.

**Russian maximalism** | Even less formidable goals - from food security to return of Ukrainian children - cannot be accomplished without negotiations with Russia itself. The great stumbling block, of course, is "the realities of today" that are Putin's precondition to negotiate. He wants to hold on to the Ukrainian territory gained through incremental advances on the battlefield, and more. Such maximalism has been propped up by the surprising resilience shown by both Russia's military and economy. And now an additional factor is, calculating that he will get a better deal by waiting it out till Trump is US president.

**Middle ground** | A March opinion poll found that Ukrainians under 35 are the most pessimistic about victory and the most willing to accept limited war outcomes. Two years of death and destruction later, the bitterest truth is actually identical for Zelenskyy and Putin. It is that victory remains elusive for both Ukraine and Russia. This is what international diplomacy must build on. A shared truth is more fertile ground for compromise, than an unshared conference.

## Fashion vs Fahrenheit

Neanderthals matched dress to weather, we don't

Shinie Antony



The weather is a handy icebreaker. We say 'too hot' and 'such a cold winter' to fill awkward pauses. Harmless, obvious statements like these further the cause of human interaction, and let us all occupy the planet in consensual boredom. In fact, entire marriages have gotten by on weather reports - 'I love you' replaced by 'looks like rain'. Novelists go on and on about the snowclad and the sun-dappled... But all ye who take its name in vain, beware! Weather wreaks revenge by being utterly unpredictable. It blows hot and cold.

However humid it may be, no human being is willing to sacrifice sartorial levels for comfort. At the ministerial swearing-in ceremony in Delhi recently, conducted in the open air, everyone came in bandhgalas and Banarasis. Brocade was the dress code. This despite the fact that due to an insufferable summer the city is stewing in its own juices. Deep underneath such finery, where the innermost fabric scratches skin, is where global warming gets personal. We are all about style statements. In strappy white linen when it's freezing and quilted jackets when sunny, pants cut at the ankle as if expecting floods, hair left loose in gyms. Spanx under skinny jeans two sizes small even if vital organs asphyxiate.

There was a time when cavemen ripped off the fur of the first bear they met to keep warm. In summers Neanderthals turned up naked for business meetings. Wardrobes used to be straightforward, attuned to climate conditions. But in the era of selfies, being photo-ready trumps discomfort. A grand occasion, like say a wedding or funeral, cannot succumb to whimsical temperatures. The kanjeevams and Nehru jackets must be unpacked, drycleaned and donned on D-day, just like the white chikankari kurtas must be teamed with mournful cream or beige dupattas. Brides and bridegrooms gently steam on stage in all their dolled-up finery. A corpse seldom minds the thinness of cotton sheets inside icy morgues.

Vanity at some point meets ACs and central heating, when entering a door means frostbitten Narnia or the fires of hell. In a magical reversal of Celsius, you are now boiling or shivering. Suddenly covered in goosebumps, rubbing your arms, shifting closer to people for warmth, like the Little Match Girl lighting her last matchstick. Or beaded with perspiration and expected to remove your sweater, your sole outerwear. That's when you insist it's actually cold and borrow someone's shawl.

## Note For FM: Save For India

Declining savings rate is a red flag in a growing economy. Unemployment as an election issue showed how low savings-led patterns of growth have a political cost

Narendar Pani



With general elections behind us, FM can take a step back from celebrating high growth rates and the size of the Indian economy to look more closely at some points of concern. Election results were a reminder that India's growth rates haven't always translated into an improvement in critical social indicators as well as in employment.

The conventional wisdom that inequality does not matter if growth is high enough to lift large numbers above an economists-defined poverty line, is losing some of its political sheen. Besides, there are warning signals in the growth process itself. Prominent among these red flags is the challenge of declining savings rates.

**Savings trend since 1991** | The proportion of Gross Domestic Savings to GDP since liberalisation began has followed an inverted U curve. It rose steadily from 23.3% of GDP in 1990-91 to 37.8% in 2007-08. Since then, there has been an equally steady decline, reaching 28.2% in 2020-21. Studies have shown that the increase was largely achieved through increased inequality. As the share of the rich in GDP rose, income moved from the poor who consumed most of their earnings to the rich who could afford to save more.

Increasing savings by raising the share of the rich in GDP, necessarily limits, if not squeezes, the share of consumption of the poor. This pattern cannot continue indefinitely.

In a democracy, there is political pressure to transfer resources to the worst off through welfare measures. While these measures could be dismissed as freebies, they've become a political necessity. There's also the possibility that, beyond a point, a rising share of income

for those at the top of the economic pyramid may only lead to assets being held outside the country, without a sustained effect on domestic savings. And there are signs that this has become an increasingly significant factor.

**Price to pay for shift to tech** | Decline in the rate of savings hasn't had an immediate impact on growth. Rise in FDI has made up for some of the shortfall in domestic investment. There has also been a structural shift in the Indian economy towards more productive sectors. But these are not unmixed blessings.

FDI can fluctuate quite sharply. The shifts to more productive sectors are no doubt very good news as far as growth rates are concerned, but this increase in productivity often comes from movement towards more capital-intensive work practices. This can leave large sections of the labour force out of work.

With employment already becoming a political issue, there'll be a price to be paid for a sustained shift to labour-substituting technologies. Lower domestic savings rates thus raise the prospects of both fluctuating growth rates as well as patterns of growth that are insensitive to employment.

Revising domestic savings rates would need a review of economic strategies that have taken deep root since liberalisation. In his 1991 Budget speech, Manmohan Singh suggested opening up the economy to make Indian industry more competitive. When that did not always happen, the economy became more dependent on foreign investment, both FDI and Foreign Institutional Investment (FII).

**Losing out on small investors** | Efforts to make India more attractive to FIIs included sustained pressure to move from multiple regional stock exchanges to two

large stock exchanges in Mumbai. Closure of regional stock exchanges had a negative impact on the still-developing links between local savings and investment in emerging corporate entities.

The regional stock exchanges helped businesses with local reputations to raise local capital. The more successful among these businesses could then move on to the national and even international stage. The Ambanis may have been the more striking story of movement from small business to a global empire, but they were not the only ones.

The emergence of local economic players also suited another dominant, but usually ignored, trend in the Indian economy: the movement from agriculture to industry. Agrarian families with access to traditional capital had an opportunity to move into local industry, and then use their local reputations to tap regional capital.

This also allowed small savers to invest in the enterprises of families they had long known about. The closure of regional stock exchanges cut a critical link in this chain. The large stock exchanges were associated with much larger Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), where the minimum investment was well beyond the capacity of very small investors. From a capital market in the 1980s where investors with no more than ₹1,000 could apply for shares in IPOs, we moved to a regime where such investors had no place.

**Beyond a point, a rising share of income for the top of the economic pyramid may only lead to assets being held outside the country, without a sustained effect on domestic savings. This is already a significant factor**

**Revive regional stock exchanges** | A meaningful strategy to raise the savings rate would need to build links between small savers and the local, national and global economies. This would require mobilising local savings in ways that develop the relationship between local investors and small savers. This could include the revival of regional stock exchanges as small cap exchanges, as well as other financial innovations that recognise all levels of the economic pyramid from the bottom to the top.

The writer is JRD Tata Chair Visiting Professor, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

## Why Govt Jobs Should Be Less Secure

Dismissing or demoting bureaucrats must be made simpler to ensure efficiency and accountability. Without this, no administration can achieve the speed of development it desires

Praveen Gedam &amp; Arghya Sengupta



With a new govt taking charge, the spotlight turns to bureaucrats who'll work to fulfil its mandate. The tenure and service conditions of bureaucrats are often overlooked, but are critical to ensuring the whole govt works in concert to achieve its development goals. Highest in criticality is the ability of govt to hire and fire civil servants.

**Mis-firing officers** | Most of us haven't heard of a govt employee being fired. This tells us how super secure govt jobs are. That's one reason why lakhs of highly educated people apply for lower-level govt positions every year, and why govt servants are often preferred over higher paid private-sector employees in arranged marriages.

Such security of tenure was a key feature of govt jobs globally as well, but has changed over time. In India, it hasn't.

**Pleasure to permanence** | Traditionally, all civil servants served at the "pleasure" of the Crown. This meant that the monarch could dispense with their service at any time. When India became a democratic republic, this was sought to be balanced by the need to create an independent and empowered bureaucracy. This led to the incorporation of Article 311 of the Constitution based on which disciplinary laws for govt servants were enacted. But the process laid down has become so complicated over the years that it's almost impossible to dismiss someone from a govt job. The only exception is if the person is convicted by a criminal court, another rarity in India for govt servants. The pendulum has swung from pleasure to permanence.

Unlike private sector, where bosses can fire someone for not doing her job well, in govt it's practically impossible. No doubt, job security is of paramount

importance. But it also means that it's extremely difficult to get rid of employees who're not discharging their duties. Anecdotal, we know of numerous cases where an engineer was unaware of standard guidelines for construction, a police officer prepared a criminal chargesheet under civil laws, and a clerk couldn't even write the name of his office. Most of them, and countless others like them, continue to 'serve'.

**Long & winding process** | Here's how extant disciplinary rules work in practice. The process starts with gathering evidence, followed by a showcause notice, some-



times suspension, hearing the govt employee's side, deciding whether to conduct an inquiry, gathering more evidence, preparing a chargesheet, appointing an inquiry officer, holding hearings, examinations and cross-examinations, giving the employee a chance to defend, preparing a report, giving this report to the employee, hearing the employee again twice - first on the report, and then usually also on the quantum of punishment - seeking views of the public service commission, and then finally making a decision.

Unsurprisingly, this takes years to complete. By

that time, every stakeholder other than the employee involved has moved on, and the problem leading to the inquiry isn't seen as important anymore. As a result, the employee is usually declared not guilty.

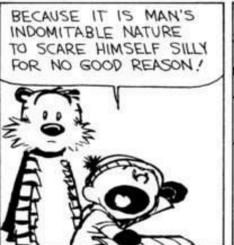
**Urgent reform needed** | For an efficient, modern, service-oriented bureaucracy, this process must be simplified. It should be completed within three months, during which other stakeholders (say, seniors and affected persons) are still around and consequences of misconduct of the employee are fresh in memory. Second, the quantum of punishment should also be an effective deterrent. At least for corruption, inefficiency, lack of delivery, insubordination, gross negligence and frequent absenteeism, major punishments such as dismissal or demotion should be made mandatory.

**Idea for first 100 days** | That said, protection from undue influences needs to be kept intact or even bolstered by shielding bureaucrats from arbitrary transfers (legally not punishments, but in practice so) through enacting suitable rules. The Indian bureaucrat is rightly praised for holding the vast and diverse country together, and guiding it towards progress. But at the same time, she is also criticised, again rightly so, for being slow and inefficient.

As India celebrates 75 years of its Constitution and with govt ready to unveil its first-100-day plan, it's time to rethink how govt itself works. Listening to people and reducing friction are important. A part of this can be achieved by ensuring faster and tougher punishments for bureaucratic inefficiencies while increasing protection of bureaucrats from undue influences. We must move away from the idea that govt jobs should be secure and permanent at any cost. Instead, let us start instilling accountability by ensuring that the dead wood is weeded out regularly and expeditiously. This will be one reform that will change the face of govt service for 100 years.

Gedam is Divisional Commissioner, Nashik. Sengupta is Research Director, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy

## Calvin &amp; Hobbes



## Sacredspace

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding... And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy.

Kahlil Gibran

## Knowledge Of The Self Liberates Us From Sorrows

V Balasubramaniam

Adi Shankaracharya said, "Though ignorance, avidya is beginningless - it is completely wiped out by the emergence of Vidya, knowledge."

Ignorance never goes away unless knowledge, its opposite, is born. The moment we learn what a pot is like, our unfamiliarity with it is over. Similarly, when we learn what a camera is like, our lack of knowledge of how it works is addressed.

Vedanta reveals that all our sorrows, fears, anxieties, stress, and confusion are not because we do not know physics, maths, or other subjects; they are because we do not know ourselves. Only knowledge of the Self liberates us from all sorrows and leads to a state of fearlessness.

In Vivekachudamani, Shankara-

charya states that all our sufferings are only due to a lack of awareness of our true nature. Just as a lack of understanding of physics can only be remedied by learning about physics, an absence of self-awareness can only be remedied by acquiring Self-knowledge.

Action cannot sublimate ignorance. Knowledge does verily destroy avidya just as light eradicates deep darkness. Trying to sweep darkness out of a dark room is futile. Even if an army of men carry the darkness in baskets and pour it out, the room will still be dark. Sweeping is not the right method of removing darkness. Only light can remove darkness, however thick it may be. Similarly, ignorance in us can be overcome by the pure light of Self-knowledge. That is why it is said

action cannot sublimate ignorance; knowledge is its only antidote. By removing avidya, one uncovers the Self.

The Bhagwad Gita states that the Lord does not take the virtue or sin of any; knowledge is enveloped by ignorance, and thereby, beings are deluded (5.15). Our scriptures clearly say ignorance is the problem, and knowledge of the Self is the only solution.

When *ajnan*, unawareness, is removed, there is nothing more to be done. Everything is clear, like daylight. Ignorance is like night; when it passes, you are in the daylight of enlightenment. Sometimes, we see thick mist enveloping a garden. If we try to grab it, nothing comes into our hands. It is not a wall; we can walk through it. Still, it obstructs our vision and hinders our

progress. The mist continues till the bright sunlight emerges. Thereafter, it evaporates. Similarly, this inexplicable ignorance causes troubles and endless sorrows in our consciousness. It can be dispelled only by the flash of Self-knowledge.

As a child, one looks, touches, tastes, smells, and listens to the sound, which is a word naming the object being perceived. In this way, ignorance is shed, and knowledge is gained, first of forms and names, then of colour and other related attributes. Later, finer distinctions, including shades of colour, various sizes, and shapes, become apparent.

Ignorance is present in every individual; it is like a dark place where the light of knowledge is essential. It is a cause of bondage and will disappear, just as a solitary lamp dispels darkness in a dark room.



THE SPEAKING TREE



# USA DONE, OFF TO THE CARIBBEAN

**India To Hit Nets Today In Barbados To Prepare For Super 8 Tie Vs Afghans**

**TIMES IN THE US**  
Dwaipayan.Datta@timesgroup.com

**Miami:** It's travel time. The American duty is over for India and now we're into what matters most — the Super-8 in the West Indies.

There wasn't everything perfect about the US leg — bad pitches, poor outfield, washed out game — but India didn't find it too tough to cross the first hurdle of the month-long marathon. Now it's Afghanistan, Bangladesh (most likely) and Australia in Barbados, Antigua and St Lucia respectively. And with two teams going ahead from the group — Rohit Sharma's boys should be there in Guyana for the semifinal on June 27.

With their last league game against Canada at Fort Lauderdale getting washed out without a ball being bowled, Team India players got a bit of time to put their feet up and relax. But with no practice also possible since their last match in New York on June 12, batting coach Vikram Rathour sounded a little worried. "This was of course not ideal. We would have preferred to build on the momentum and this was the game to express ourselves. But there's not much we can do about it," Rathour said.

The Indian team will hit the nets in Barbados on June 17 to prepare for their game against Afghanistan — a team that has been in fine form so far. But much like India, they, too, haven't played in Barbados and will have to adapt to conditions. The England vs Australia game was played at the Kensington Oval where the Aussies had plundered 201 and then leggie Adam Zampa got 2/28 to become Man of the Match.

Unlike Nassau County Ground in New York, where India played their three games, the Kensington Oval pitch should be batting-friendly and with no dew in the equation, the spinners, too,



Rohit Sharma and team during one of their league encounters

could come in handy.

It's to be seen whether India stick to the four-pacer theory or drop Mohammed Siraj, whose form has been slightly up and down, and play Kuldeep Yadav as the third spinner. Rathour kept the options open when he said: "We need to be a flexible team. We need to look at the conditions that are in front of us and be ready to deal with those. We'll react to what we get on that day and we have the resources to deal with any condition," Rathour said.

Afghanistan, of course, is a team that banks heavily on spinners with Rashid Khan leading the line. Mohammed Nabi and Noor Ahmed are the two other spinners who should get the nod. All of them were part of the IPL and they know everything about bowling to the Indian batters.

For India, it will be crucial that Virat

Kohli, who had an indifferent USA leg with scores of 1, 4 and 0, gets into the groove. Opening the batting, it could well be on Kohli to take the attack to the Afghan bowlers, and we might see him playing the slog sweep, a weapon that he has included in his arsenal to deal with the spin.

Rathour insists that a "hungrier" Kohli, following his slight bad patch in New York, could be even more dangerous. "I have absolutely no concern about his form. He batted superbly in the IPL and a couple of dismissals here doesn't change anything. Actually, it's good that he is a little hungrier, he is really keen to do well and really switched on," Rathour said.

That should be music to the ears of all those fans who have been waiting for India to break a decade-long ICC title jinx. The signs so far aren't bad at all.

# Pant, Arshdeep emerge as key players for India

**Team Looking Forward To More Contributions From The Duo**

Dwaipayan.Datta  
@timesgroup.com

**Miami:** These are two guys at two different ends of the spectrum. One's a phenomenal talent who is still lucky to be alive, let alone playing, while the other is an honest trier who keeps fighting.

Rishabh Pant and Arshdeep Singh are two completely different personalities, but if you're to closely analyse India's United States leg of the T20 World Cup — they are the two stars who have gone slightly under the radar.

Arshdeep, of course, has won a Man of the Match award with a spell of 4/9 against the United States, but Pant's contribution has almost gone unnoticed. In all the three games that India won, the wicketkeeper-batter who is playing for India for the first time after his life-threatening injury late in 2022, played crucial knocks. 36 not out, 42 and 18 might not look huge, but if you put it in context, the importance becomes clearer.

Pant is batting at No. 3, a position that is always reserved for the crème-de-la-crème of any batting line-up. And in New York, Pant came into bat when India lost the early wicket of Virat Kohli with virtually nothing on the board.

The world knows Pant is a dynamite with the bat, but what made it special for him here was he wasn't always at his destructive best. Yet, the southpaw never went below a run a ball, in fact his 31-ball 42 against Pakistan was probably the best batting effort on the New York minefield by any batter.

Pant's promotion to the No. 3 spot was the product of a brain-wave of captain Rohit Sharma, who seems to have meticulously prepared for this T20 World Cup after the heartbreak of the ODI World Cup in India. "The moment I saw Pant



Arshdeep Singh and Rishabh Pant celebrate a Pakistan wicket during the league stage

bat in the IPL, I knew where he would be batting in the World Cup," Rohit said in one of his press conferences. The decision was communicated to the wicketkeeper-batter early and the 26-year-old has gone out of his way to justify the captain's faith in him.

In New York before the first game, on a practice pitch which everyone was avoiding due to its uneven nature, Pant asked the throwdown expert to test him with vicious short balls from less than 22 yards. Pant was getting hit on the body a few times, but you could see that the lion-hearted cricketer was trying to overcome fear.

The team management was also looking to have the left-right combination going through the middle-order, something that Pant's promotion facilitates. In his decision to promote Pant to No. 3, Rohit is in fact looking forward to the West Indies leg as well, where he wants to use the dasher's counter-attacking abilities.

"The kind of ability he has, it's always tough to find the right number for Pant. But with three right-handers in the top four, I thought it was nice to have him in the middle. And later on, in West Indies, when spin is going to play a big part, his counterattacking can come into picture in a big

way. He has got an all-round game and we want to utilize that upfront, where he gets to play maximum balls along with some of the other experienced players," Rohit said.

While Pant's batting is crucial to India's success going forward, Arshdeep's ability to swing the new ball and deliver the yorker at the death are equally important. The fact that he is also a left-arter adds the much-needed variety to the pace attack, which has three more right-armers.

After doing well against Ireland, Arshdeep was entrusted to bowl the last over against Pakistan, where he did just enough to keep the desperate batters at bay. That was followed by his matchwinning effort against USA and in all probability, if the team management decides to go with three specialist pacers in West Indies in the XI, he will be one of them. Arshdeep, though, doesn't want to think that far. "I remember what (batting coach) Vikram Rathour told us in the team meeting — 'stay where your feet are'. So right now, we just stay in the present and prepare for that."

For now, the Super-8s are "the present" and Arshdeep would surely love to be at the top of his game at the Kensington Oval on Thursday.

# Pakistan register 3-wkt consolation win over Ireland

**Lauderhill:** Pakistan beat Ireland by three wickets to register a consolation win in their inconsequential T20 World Cup match here on Sunday.

Pakistan and Ireland have already been eliminated from the tournament with India and debutants USA progressing to the Super 8 from Group A.

Left-arm pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mohammad Amir wreaked havoc with the new ball, helping Pakistan restrict Ireland to 106 for nine.

Shaheen finally came to the party, albeit in a lost cause, returning with impressive figures of 3/22, while Amir scalped two wickets for 11 runs as Pakistan bowlers ignited fire on a damp pitch after electing to bowl.

Imad Wasim (3/8) bowled brilliantly while Haris Rauf (1/17) also accounted for a batter: Gareth Delany (31 off 19) and Mark Adair (15 off 19) shared 32-run for the seventh wicket to keep Ireland in the game.

Pakistan made a heavy weather of the chase as they were reduced to 5 for 5 in 9.3 overs before skipper Babar Azam (32 not out) and Abbas Afridi (17) did the repair job.

Barry McCarthy (3/15) was the pick of Ireland bowlers.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Ireland 106/9 (Delany 31; Shaheen 3/22, Imad 3/8, Amir 2/11) lost to Pakistan 111/7 in 18.5 overs (Babar 32 n.o.; McCarthy 3/15). AGENCIES



Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi collides with teammate Usman Khan while taking a catch

# Australia sink brave Scotland; England reach Super 8

**Gros Islet (St Lucia):** Australia saw off a determined challenge from Scotland to claim a five-wicket victory in a decisive final Group B match of the T20 World Cup for both teams at the Daren Sammy Stadium here on Saturday.

Replying to the Scots' 180 for five, their highest total in a T20 World Cup match, half-centuries from Travis Head (68; 49b, 5x4, 4x6) and Marcus Stoinis (59; 29b, 9x4, 2x6) paced them to the target and a 100 percent winning record in the group with two balls to spare. Tim David's unbeaten 24 off 14 balls finished the job to lift Australia to 186 for five.

But he required a generous slice of luck when dropped at deep mid-wicket before finishing off the match with a huge six in the same direction off the next ball from seamer Brad Wheel.

That result also eliminated Scotland and allowed title-holders Eng-



Marcus Stoinis in action against Scotland

land, who beat Namibia by 41 runs earlier in the day in a rain-affected match in Antigua, to qualify for the Super Eight alongside Australia.

Earlier, Brandon Mc Mullen led the Scottish effort with a topscore of 60 off 34 balls after they were put in. His ultra-aggression, and support

from opener George Munsey (35) in an 89-run second-wicket partnership, pushed the scoring rate up to ten runs per over: However Australia were able to regain a measure of containment when McMullen fell to leg-spinner Adam Zampa in the 12th over.

Despite a battling unbeaten 42

from skipper Richie Berrington, only 69 runs came off the last 52 balls of the innings when Scotland would have been looking to put up a total in excess of 200.

Glenn Maxwell's off-spin earned him the best figures of two for 44 although Zampa was the most economical, conceding 30 runs off his four overs.

A team that prides itself on impeccable fielding and catching, Australia fell away from that high standard with six chances, of varying degrees of difficulty, being put down by the 2021 champions.

**Brook boost for England**

Anything other than win would have seen England knocked out and they were left fearing an early exit when rain delayed the scheduled start by three hours. England, in a match eventually reduced to 10 overs per side, collapsed to 13-2 after losing

the toss.

But a stand of 56 between the Yorkshire duo of Harry Brook (47 not out off 20 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (31) helped take them to a total of 122-5.

Namibia were left with a target of 126 under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method for rain-interrupted matches. But they were never up with the required run-rate against England's new-ball duo of Reece Topley (0-6 in two overs) and Jofra Archer (1-15), with the Non-Test nation finishing on 84-3.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Scotland 180/5 (McMullen 60, Berrington 42 n.o., Munsey 35; Maxwell 2-44) lost to Australia 186/5 in 19.4 overs (Head 68, Stoinis 59, David 24 n.o.; Watt 2-34, Sharif 2-42).

England 122/5 in 10 overs (Brook 47 n.o., Bairstow 31; Trumpelmann 2-31) bt Namibia 84/3 in 10 overs (Van Lingen 33, Wiese 27). AGENCIES

# Wiese retires from international cricket

**North Sound (Antigua):** Namibia allrounder David Wiese has retired from international cricket after his teams final T20 World Cup group stage match against England on Sunday.

Namibia's campaign ended after their third group stage loss on Sunday to defending champion England. Their only win in the tournament came against Oman.

After Wiese was dismissed in the final over of Namibia's chase, he raised his helmet and bat to the crowd as he walked off before being greeted by his teammates at the dugout.

"The next T20 World Cup is still two years away, I'm 39 years old now, so in terms of international cricket, I don't



David Wiese who usually bats in the middle order, was promoted up the order to no. 3, smashed two sixes and a four in successive Adil Rashid in his 27 off 12 innings.

Originally from South Africa, Wiese has played in three consecutive T20 World Cups for Namibia. Wiese made his T20 debut for South Africa in 2013 and his ODI debut in 2015. He also represented the Proteas in the 2016 T20 World Cup. IANS

## GALLERY

### India women end fifth, men sixth

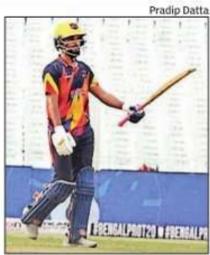
India women finished fifth and their men counterparts sixth in the Asian Team Squash Championships which concluded in Dalian, China, on Sunday. The Indian women's side beat Iran 2-0 in the match to decide the fifth and sixth positions with Rathika Suthanthira Seelan and Pooja Arthi Raghur scoring comfortable wins. However, the men's team lost to South Korea 1-2.

### Lovlina clinches silver:

Lovlina Borgohain lost to China's Li Qian to settle for a silver medal in the women's 75kg contest at the Grand Prix Usti nad Labem boxing tournament in the Czech Republic. Lovlina lost by a 2-3 split verdict in her final bout against the Asian Games champion on Saturday.

### Andy Murray named for fifth Olympics:

Andy Murray was on Sunday named as one of the four British singles players for the Paris Olympics, which will be his fifth Summer Games. Murray was granted an ITF place to compete at the French Open at Roland Garros despite his lowly singles ranking of 97 due to being a former Grand Slam winner and Olympic gold medalist.



Mridnapore Wizard's Priyanshu Srivastava during his unbeaten knock of 54 against Kolkata Tigers in a Bengal Pro T20 League match on Sunday. Wizards won by 9 wickets. Smashers Malda also won. Murshidabad Kueens and Rarh Tigers were victorious in the women's event

**Diksha tied third:** India's Diksha Dagar returned an even par 72 in the second round of the Ladies Italian Open golf tournament to be tied third at 5-under 139 in Rome. Diksha is two shots behind leader England's Amy Taylor (70-67) who is 7-under.

## ACTION TODAY

**CRICKET:** ICC T20 WC, Bangladesh vs Nepal, 5 am; SL vs Ned, 6 am; NZ vs PNG, 8 pm (Star Sports)  
**FOOTBALL:** Euro 2024, Romania vs Ukraine, 6.30 pm; Belgium vs Slovakia, 9.30 pm; Austria vs France, 12.30 am Tuesday (Sony Sports)  
**TENNIS:** Halle Open, 3.30 pm; ATP-500 London, 8 pm (Eurosport)

# Bhajan wins gold and Oly quota place

Archiman.Bhaduri  
@timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** Unheralded **Bhajan Kaur** earned India a Olympic quota place in the women's recurve archery by winning gold in the final Olympic Qualifier tournament in Antalya, Turkey, on Sunday.

## ARCHERY QUALIFIER

Her teammate Ankita Bhakat too was eligible for the quota place when the Kolkata-born archer made the quarter-finals, but the single berth on offer in the event finally went to Kaur as she fared better than Bhakat.



India, who missed out on team quota places in both men's and women's categories earlier in the competition, will thus make it to the mixed team event too in Paris as Dhiraj Bomma-devara had already won a men's quota place.

However, all eyes will be on the world rankings position after the World Cup Stage III event in Antalya, which will determine whether the Indian archers will manage to win team quota places.

Haryana girl Kaur, who qu-

alified third in the ranking round, received byes in both first and second rounds. In the third round, the 18-year-old beat Urantungalag Bishindee of Mongolia 6-2 (29-27, 28-26, 26-29, 27-24) and then went on to beat Urska Cavic of Slovenia 7-3 (28-22, 29-18, 28-28, 26-27, 27-24) in the pre-quarters. In the last-eight stage, Kaur breezed past Poland's Poland's Wioleta Myszor 6-0 (29-27, 27-24, 30-28) and humbled Moldovan Alexandra Mircea 6-2 (28-27, 28-27, 26-27, 27-26) to set up the gold-medal match against Fallah of Iran where she prevailed 6-2 (28-26, 29-29, 29-26, 29-29).

Earlier, ninth seed Bhakat,

after getting a bye in the first round, scored 6-4 (24-26, 25-25, 28-20, 25-25, 27-25) and 7-3 (28-25, 25-27, 27-27, 28-25, 26-25) victories over Israel's Shelley Hilton and Mikaela Moshe in the second and third rounds, respectively. Bhakat too ensured a quota place by beating Gabrielle Monica Bidaire of the Philippines 6-0 (26-23, 28-22, 28-23) in the fourth round before going down to Mobina Fallah of Iran 4-6 (27-27, 27-28, 29-27, 27-27, 28-29) in the quarters.

Ace archer Deepika Kumari, however, crashed out, going down to Azerbaijan's Yaylagul Ramazanova 4-6 in the third round after leading 4-0.

# Bryson moves 3 shots clear

**Pinehurst (USA):** Bryson DeChambeau brushed off hip issues to move three shots clear at the top of the US Open third round leaderboard on Saturday, setting up a potential mouth-watering showdown with world number three Rory McIlroy.

## US OPEN GOLF

On another steamy afternoon at Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina, DeChambeau recovered from an early bogey and troublesome hip that required treatment mid-round to return a three-under 67 to lead Frenchman Matthieu Pavon (69), Patrick Cantlay (70) and McIlroy (69) by three. Sitting a further two back and five off the pace are Japan's Hideki Matsuyama (70) and young Swede Ludvig Aberg (73),

who had held a one shot lead after the second round.

DeChambeau will be partnered with Pavin for Sunday's final round but it is McIlroy, paired with Cantlay, who will share the spotlight with the former-US Open winners and two of golf's most intriguing figures grapple for the trophy.

McIlroy, bidding to end a decade-long major drought, may be one of golf's most popular figures but the big-hitting DeChambeau has evolved into one of the most entertaining and has enjoyed the backing of huge crowds at Pinehurst.

DeChambeau broke away from the leading pack with a birdie at the 10th but on his way to the 11th was stretched out on the ground having work done on his hip. AFP



Bryson DeChambeau of USA exults after sinking a birdie in Pinehurst on Saturday

# Smriti hits a century as India drub SA

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru:** Smriti Mandhana's 26-month wait for her sixth ODI ton ended on Sunday as she spearheaded India's charge against South Africa women in the opening match at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here.

The southpaw, whose previous ODI hundred came against West Indies at the World Cup in March 2022, was the standout performer in the crushing 143-run win which helped the hosts take 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

On the back of Smriti's 117 (127b, 12x4, 1x6) and lower-order contributions from Deepthi Sharma (37) and Pooja Vashtakar (31 n.o.), India scored 265/8 in their 50 overs after Ayabonga Khaka's three-fer.

Debutant Asha Sobhana also joined the party, scalping four wickets with her flight and spin to dismiss the visitors for 122 runs. The leg-spinner's first wicket was Marizanne Kapp (24) in the 22nd over before she bagged the last three South African wickets to complete the rout in style.

Smriti's teammates in the pavilion gave her a standing ovation as she raised her bat to celebrate the century in the 43rd over. **Brief scores:** India women 265/8 in 50 overs (Smriti Mandhana 117, Deepthi Sharma 37; Ayabonga Khaka



Smriti Mandhana celebrates her century against South Africa in Bengaluru on Sunday

**7059** Smriti Mandhana completed 7000 runs in international cricket to become the second Indian player after Mithali Raj to accomplish the feat across formats in women's cricket.

**4/21** Asha Sobhana has become the third Indian player to produce a four-wicket haul on debut in Women's ODIs, joining Purnima Choudhary, Amanjot Kaur

—Rajesh Kumar

3-47, Masabata Klaas 2-51). South Africa women 122 all out in 37.4 overs (Sune Luus 33, Marizanne Kapp 24, Sinalo Jaffa 27 n.o.; Deepthi 2-10, Asha Sobhana 4-21). **India women won by 143 runs.**



MY WIFE WAS VERY, VERY HAPPY FOR ME TO BE HERE. ON SATURDAY IT WAS HER BIRTHDAY AND WE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN SPAIN. IT THEN CAME DIFFERENTLY. MY FIRST CONTACT WITH THE COACH WAS ON WEDNESDAY. I MISSED HIS FIRST CALL."

—EMRE CAN  
GERMANY MIDFIELDER

# BENCH PRESS

**Weghorst takes the pole: Supersub Scores Late Again In Netherlands' 2-1 Win Over A Defiant Poland Team**

**Hamburg:** Modern-day football sometimes shuns the strapping centre forward but Netherlands supersub Wout Weghorst came off the bench to spare their blushes on Sunday and show the value of a number nine with a killer instinct in a 2-1 Euro 2024 win over Poland.

There was no question that the Dutch were the dominant side against a Polish outfit who were perfectly happy to sit and wait for their moments.

Yet goals win games and if the Netherlands are to go far at the tournament they will need to sharpen their knives after a largely wasteful display in Hamburg.

The Dutch started the game with a dynamic front three of Cody Gakpo, Memphis Depay and Xavi Simons who were full of running and creative interplay, carving apart the Poles and creating chance after chance. They had 64% of possession and 20 shots on goal but apart from Gakpo's deflected effort in the 29th minute to level the scores, the opportunities came and went.

As the Netherlands' hopes of opening their Group D campaign with a victory started to fade, boss Ronald Koeman summoned Weghorst off the bench in the 81st minute, one of a number of changes he made as he looked to shift the dial in their favour. Two minutes later, the Netherlands had the lead as Weghorst latched on to Nathan Ake's pass and rifled the ball into the back of the net left-footed.

Weghorst, who came on with the Dutch trailing 2-0 to Argentina at the 2022 World Cup to score twice, has



**FINISH LINE:** Wout Weghorst (9) does the job for the Netherlands

<b>POLAND</b>	<b>1</b>
Buksa 16	
<b>NETHERLANDS</b>	<b>2</b>
Gakpo 29 Weghorst 83	

### STATS THE WAY

Poland		N'lands
12	Goal attempts	21
7	On target	4
33%	Possession	67%
293	Passes	583
78%	Pass accuracy	88%
10	Fouls	8
0	Yellow cards	1
0	Red Cards	0
2	Offsides	0

“WE SHOULD HAVE MADE MORE USE OF OUR OPPORTUNITIES. WE HAVE TO GIVE A HUG TO WOUT. ALL THE SUBS PERFORMED GREAT TODAY.”

—Cody Gakpo, DUTCH GOALSCORER

“I TRIED TO EXPLAIN TO EACH PLAYER THE POSSIBILITY FOR STARTING OR COMING ON THE FIELD IN THE SECOND HALF WHEN WE MIGHT NEED A DIFFERENT APPROACH. AND WOUT WAS A LITTLE UPSET. THAT'S A GREAT MENTALITY FROM THE PLAYER.”

—Ronald Koeman, DUTCH COACH

### TONIGHT'S TUSSLES

Group E	
Romania vs Ukraine	6.30pm
Belgium vs Slovakia	9.30pm
Group D	
France vs Austria	12.30am

Live on Sony Sports Network

## Eid al-adha Mubarak!



### STANDINGS: GROUP A STANDINGS: GROUP B

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Ger	1	1	0	0	4	3
Swi	1	1	0	0	2	3
Hun	1	0	0	1	-2	0
Sco	1	0	0	1	-4	0

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Spain	1	1	0	0	3	3
Italy	1	1	0	0	1	3
Alb	1	0	0	1	-1	0
Cro	1	0	0	1	-3	0

## Slovenia spoil Eriksen's fairytale Euro return

### Midfielder Scores Three Years after His Onfield Collapse

**Stuttgart:** Denmark captain Christian Eriksen marked a memorable return to the European Championship three years after suffering a cardiac arrest at the previous edition of the tournament, scoring the goal that secured a 1-1 draw with Slovenia in their Group C opener on Sunday.

**Group C: SLOVENIA 1 (Janza 77) DENMARK 1 (Eriksen 17)**



**BE RIGHT BACK:** Christian Eriksen scores the opening goal

The 32-year-old missed his team's run to the semi-final in 2021 after his shock on-pitch collapse in the opening match against Finland. On Sunday he did not waste any time to put the trauma of that game behind him as he played his first Euro game since then.

In a textbook playmaking performance, especially in a strong Danish first half, Eriksen orchestrated their game and set a quick early pace as per the orders of coach Kasper Hjulmand who fielded two strikers. He delivered almost

all of their set pieces while also scoring a 17th minute goal that handed the Danes the lead in a performance that will go a long way in silencing the critics.

Were it not for his team mates' sloppy finish, he could have added an assist or two to his match stats.

Only a few months ago this seemed a very unlikely scenario. "The Christian Eriksen we all know, he is no longer there. Christian Eriksen doesn't play football anymore," former Denmark and Real Madrid player Thomas Gravesen said in his scathing

criticism of the international. "Christian Eriksen sits on the bench and watches football. Christian Eriksen as we know him, he is no more." Eriksen was coming off a disappointing season with Manchester United that saw him earn little playing time under coach Eric ten Haag. That was hardly the run-up he needed for a major tournament. Many fans back home were surprised that Hjulmand had kept faith with him, while others were certain the midfielder was well past his best. REUTERS

## Deschamps eyes a ton of triumphs

**Hamburg:** After a shock last 16 exit from Euro 2020 and finishing runners-up as hosts in 2016, France can do themselves a big favour with a decisive win against an in-form Austria on Monday to stamp their authority on the tournament early on.

When coach Didier Deschamps takes to the dugout on Monday for France's European Championship opener, it will be an opportunity to register a phenomenal 100th win in charge of the team.

The 55-year-old is by some margin the most experienced coach at the tournament in Germany, with his almost 12 years in charge of Les Bleus, and brings with him impressive credentials as a player too.

Monday's Group D match in Dusseldorf marks Deschamps' 154th game as French coach with 99 wins, 30



### MBAPPE AGAINST 'DIVISIVE IDEAS' EVEN AS OFFICIALS URGE RESPECT FOR TEAM'S NEUTRALITY

France captain Kylian Mbappe declared himself "against extremes and divisive ideas" when asked about crucial upcoming legislative elections in the country. "We are a generation that can make a difference. We see the extremes are knocking on the door of power and we have the opportunity to shape our country's future," he said.

The striker also defended comments made by his teammate Marcus Thuram, saying he "had not gone too far" in calling on the country "to fight every day to stop" the far-right National Rally winning the elections. France's football federation has called for the national team's neutrality to be respected and for Les Bleus to not be politicised.

**80** Kylian Mbappe is on course to play his 80th game for France and a hat-trick would take him to 50 career international goals.

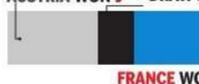
“(The political) situation is even more important than the game tomorrow. One does not impede the other, not at all. We know that it is a pivotal moment for French history, this is a never-before-seen event.”—Mbappe

### AUSTRIA VS FRANCE

Dusseldorf Arena

#### HEAD TO HEAD (25 games)

AUSTRIA WON 9 DRAW 3



#### FORM GUIDE

AUSTRIA



FRANCE



(most recent first)

draws and 24 losses in a glory-filled career, where consistency and calmness have been his hallmarks. He has been coach of his side more than three years longer than the next most experienced manager at Euro 2024 — England's Gareth Southgate.

There is the possibility in Germany for him to become the first to win the World Cup and the Euros as both a player and a coach but that is not something he said he was concerned about. AGENCIES

## Romania face tough test against Ukraine

**Munich:** While Romania cruised through the qualifying stages and topped their group, they face a stern test in their return to the European Championship finals after eight years when they take on an experienced and motivated Ukraine side on Monday.

Ukraine, making their fourth straight Euros appearance, have a talented squad with players such as Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk and have a fierce desire to put on a performance to give supporters facing war at home something to cheer.

With manager Serhiy Rebrov's side appearing in their first major tournament since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the former player underlined the importance of their opening Group E clash at the Munich Football Arena.

"I see a lot of kids supporting us when we play and it definitely gives our players extra motivation," Rebrov said. "Wherever we play we feel the support of all Ukrainians for whom football is a source of positive emotion."

### BELGIUM VS SLOVAKIA

Frankfurt Arena

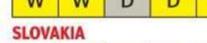
#### HEAD TO HEAD (3 games)

BELGIUM WON 1

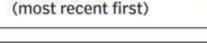


#### FORM GUIDE

BELGIUM



SLOVAKIA



(most recent first)

### ROMANIA VS UKRAINE

Munich Football Arena

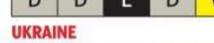
#### HEAD TO HEAD (6 games)

ROM WON 3 DRAW 1

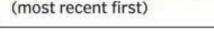


#### FORM GUIDE

ROMANIA



UKRAINE



(most recent first)

## Lukaku looks for redemption

**Frankfurt:** Romelu Lukaku cut a disbelieving figure after missing a succession of chances in Belgium's 0-0 draw with Croatia that sealed an early exit from the 2022 World Cup, but returns to the big stage at the European Championship hoping to banish those memories.

A half-fit Lukaku managed 53 minutes across Belgium's three games in Qatar and was not at fault for their disastrous group-stage campaign, but it was a low point for the 31-year-old. He will lead the line against Slovakia in Belgium's Group E opener in Frankfurt on Monday having scored 17 goals



**ROMELU LUKAKU**

in 11 national team appearances since the World Cup.

Rejuvenated Belgium hope to banish the memories of a dismal World Cup campaign and extend a 15-match unbeaten run in their European Cham-

pionship Group E opener. The country's golden generation were tarnished by a first-round exit in Qatar but, with several fresh faces in the team and some new energy, Belgium have been unbeaten since coach Domenico Tedesco took over in February last year.

If they keep cool heads in the changing room and their key players remain injury-free, then anything is possible. Belgium have kept clean sheets in 10 of their 15 games and have scored 33 goals, with Romelu Lukaku, Kevin De Bruyne and Jan Vertonghen the old heads among young talents Jeremy Doku, Johan Bakayoko and Amadou Onana.

## Mean boys: Spalletti wants upped ante against Spain

### Holders Italy Come Back Strong After Early Albania Shock

**Dortmund:** Italy must be meaner and more direct when they face Spain, though they may get more attacking opportunities, coach Luciano Spalletti said after his side's 2-1 win over Albania at Euro 2024 on Saturday.

Having conceded inside 23 seconds, defending champions Italy were ahead after 16 minutes and limited Albania to very few chances until a frantic finish as their opponents pushed for an unlikely equaliser. Spalletti said his team had showed character to recover from the early deficit and displayed a togetherness that will serve Italy well if they progress beyond the group stage. "We switched off but we need to appreciate the desire to try and go and play football even when the going got tough," he said.

Spalletti, who appeared frustrated during the second half, was clear Italy needed to improve, not least on Thursday against Spain who blew Croatia away 3-0 on Saturday. "There are a number of things we still have to improve because we thought we were better than we were in too many situations," he said. "We need to be



**NO DOUBT!** Italy celebrate Barella's winner on Saturday

<b>Group B: ITALY 2</b>	<b>1</b>
Bastoni 11, Barella 16	
<b>ALBANIA 1</b>	<b>1</b>
(Bajrami 1)	

meaner, neat and tidy in the way we build things up, you free up a man but then you need to go and hurt the opposition... we thought we were brilliant at just keeping possession."

But Spalletti suggested Spain's strengths could also play into Italy's hands. "We need to move the

ball a bit more quickly, because we did so badly on occasions tonight, but against Spain there will be (chances) to play the ball forward more," he said. "Because they tend to be more aggressive in their press, there might be greater scope to actually play in behind their defensive line."



### FASTEST GOALS IN EURO HISTORY

- 0:23** Nedim Bajrami (Italy 2-1 Albania, 15/06/2024, group stage)
- 1:07** Dmitri Kirichenko (Russia 2-1 Greece, 20/06/2004, group stage)
- 1:22** Emil Forsberg (Sweden 3-2 Poland, 23/06/21, group stage)
- 1:39** Yussuf Poulsen (Denmark 1-2 Belgium, 17/06/2021, group stage)
- 1:40** Robert Lewandowski (Poland 1-1 Portugal, aet, Portugal win 5-3 on pens, 30/06/2016, quarter-final)

## Fans lay wreaths at Dachau site for Nazi victims

**Cologne:** Fans from Scotland, Ukraine, Germany, Israel and other nations laid wreaths at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site on Saturday to commemorate victims of the Nazis, vowing "never again" and to use football as a force to unite people.

The group toured the camp and heard how the Nazis had persecuted Jewish footballers and coaches, forced prisoners to play soccer for propaganda before banning it, then allowed only some inmates to play under the camp's hierarchy of privileges for different categories of prisoner. Fans also heard the children of former camp victims tell their parents' stories, walked in procession with a Scottish bagpiper.

Dachau is half an hour's drive from Munich's football stadium, where Euro 2024 began on Friday. It was one of the first concentration camps to be set up by the Nazis, weeks after Adolf Hitler took power in January, 1933.

"It is a sombre place. You walk in and it is an uncomfortable feeling. But I think this sort of service is important to remember what happened, to



make sure we learn from mistakes... it has opened our minds to a lot of things," said Cole Cattanch, 21, a Scottish student from Falkirk, travelling through Germany to support the Scotland team.

Andreas Erbel, representing German football fans, said he came to the commemoration to help protect democracy. "I wanted to show that there is also a counterweight to the move to the right across Europe, that there are more people... who are open to the world."

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