

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUSIVE OF EDUCATION TIMES & DELHI TIMES (CIRCULATED ONLY IN DELHI NCR) | \*APPLICABLE ONLY ON MONTHLY PURCHASE (IN DELHI NCR)

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

# VECTUS

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### MLA's kin held for running over biker

A nephew of NCP (Ajit Pawar) MLA Dilip Mohite Patil was arrested late Saturday after a car with him at the wheel fatally struck a 19-year-old biker head-on while overtaking a van at a bend on a narrow stretch in Pune. **P7**

### Af stun Aus with 21-run win at T20 WC

Afghanistan Saturday penned history in the T20 World Cup 2024, as they defeated Australia by 21 runs in their second Super 8 clash in Kingstown. **P17**

### 2 teens, mom killed in Gzb gas-leak fire

A woman and her two teenage daughters died and four others suffered grievous burns when a gas cylinder leak triggered a fire in a house in Ghaziabad Sunday. **P3**

### 13-yr-old detained for IGI bomb hoax

A 13-year-old boy was detained for sending a bomb hoax email to IGI airport on June 17. He was "inspired" by a similar incident involving another child. **P6**

### 2 drown clicking selfies on boat

Two teenagers drowned in the Ganga while clicking selfies on a boat while another managed to swim to safety in Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly district. **P7**

## Only 813 of 1,563 who got grace marks take NEET-UG re-exam

### Others Opt For Old Scores Minus Grace

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Only 52%, or 813, of the 1,563 candidates in seven centres who got grace marks due to 'loss of time' in the NE-

**▶ EDIT PAGE: Examine Our Exam-Nation**

ET-UG took the retest on Sunday, officials said. Others have opted for their original scores minus grace marks.

In Chandigarh, where two candidates had registered for the retest, neither turned up.

### Amid 'darknet' threat, NTA experiences a meltdown

New Delhi: National Testing Agency (NTA) is experiencing a meltdown, with staff unsure about safe delivery of any exam due to the 'darknet' threat, reports Manash Gohain. De-

**▶ India needs flexible exam system like SAT: Pradhan, P9**

spite the challenges, there is still an expectation to conduct and announce results on time to prevent delays in the academic calendar, which managed to get back on track last year after Covid-19 disruptions. Another major concern is kee-

### 17 MORE BARRED FROM NEET, TOTAL 110

**▶ 17 from Bihar barred from taking NEET-UG over 'malpractices'.** Total now 110, including 30 from Godhra & 63 from other parts of India

**▶ CBI files FIR on 'irregularities' in NEET-UG.** Teams in Patna & Godhra, where paper leak cases were filed

**▶ 2 govt teachers linked to pvt coaching class in Latur, Maha, detained for questioning**

**▶ ABVP: Explain sudden NEET-PG postponement, P 8**

At the Jhajjar centre, which was under the scanner as several high rankers had emerged from there, 287 of the 494 candidates took the retest.

A senior NTA official said, "While the overall attendance

for Sunday's retest was 52%, there were 291 candidates who appeared in Chhattisgarh, one in Gujarat, 287 in Haryana, and 234 in Meghalaya."

**▶ 17 from Bihar barred, P 9**

ping the agency together amid rumours of officials on deputation looking to leave.

Veteran staff members believe that whether exams are computer-based or offline, it will be difficult to regain confidence until the agency's fundamentals are reworked.

NTA has had to cancel three national-level tests, including two — NCET for IITEP & UGC-NET — after the exams were held. CSIR-UGC-NET was postponed days before the exam.

**▶ Big shake-up in tech, P 9**

"No one has a clue when the exam will be held next. My son quit his job to prepare for a year. Now, he isn't sure whether to start working again or wait for fresh dates

— K. NAGESWARA RAO, WHOSE SON TRAVELLED 200KM FOR NEET-PG TEST IN ANDHRA

**▶ Oppn, BJP ally PMK slam Centre for NEET mess, P 9**

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### CBI team probing UGC-NET leak attacked in Bihar

A CBI team investigating the UGC-NET leak case was attacked on Saturday in Bihar's Nawada by villagers who allegedly mistook them for impostors, leading to four arrests, reports Kshitiz. This is the first reported assault on investigators of recent paper leak cases in the state, officials said. The attack occurred when the team, including a woman constable, reached Kasiyadh village for the probe. The team's vehicles were also damaged. **P8**

### After waste of time, effort & money, fear of a wasted year

Ayantika.Pal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi/Noida: Wasted time, wasted effort, wasted money, but above all, gnawing fear of a wasted year.

On the morning they were prepared to write an exam that would determine the course of their medical careers and the rest of their lives, scores of candidates huddled in agony around small notices pasted on boards outside their centres that said the NEET-PG had been postponed and would be "notified at the earliest".

**▶ Girl travels 600km, P 9**

### Kejriwal moves SC after HC stay on bail order

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has moved Supreme Court against Delhi HC's interim stay on a trial court's order granting him bail in a money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam. The AAP national convener could have walked out of Tihar Jail on Friday had HC not granted the interim relief to ED. **P3**

### Maya reinstates nephew as her political heir

BSP supremo Mayawati reinstated Sunday her nephew Akash Anand as the national coordinator and her successor in the party, expressing hope that he will handle the responsibilities with "maturity" this time. On May 7, Mayawati had removed Akash from his roles due to "lack of maturity". **P7**

### 2 CoBRA men killed in Maoist blast in Sukma

Two personnel from CRPF's CoBRA unit were killed in a Maoist IED explosion in Silger region of Sukma on Sunday. The blast was so powerful that it blew a crater 40ft long and 30ft wide and hurled the truck several feet in the air. Twelve securitymen have died in Maoist attacks this year. **P7**

## Now, Prajwal's brother Suraj, a JD(S) MLC, held for unnatural sex

### 4th From Gowda Clan To Be Booked For Assault, Kidnap

Shrinivas.M@timesgroup.com

Hassan: Former PM HD Deve Gowda's grandson and JD (S) member of the legislative council (MLC) Suraj Revanna was arrested Sunday on charges of unnatural sex, wrongful confinement and criminal intimidation.

Suraj (37), the eldest son of former minister HD Revanna, is the fourth member of the Gowda family to face serious allegations after his father, mother Bhavani Re-



Suraj Revanna is taken into custody in Hassan on Sunday

vanna, and 34-year-old brother Prajwal Revanna. Former Hassan MP Prajwal was arrested over three weeks ago in connection with an alleged sex scandal.

**▶ CID gets bro case, P 18**

## Std deduction under new I-T regime may be raised

The finance ministry is assessing the possibility of raising the standard deduction limit for taxpayers under the new regime, without tinkering with the exemption-laced older regime, reports Sidhartha. As NDA govt readies to present its first budget of its third term, it is unlikely to undertake major tweaks in capital gains mechanism. There have been suggestions to align the holding period across asset classes but govt may not be inclined to disturb the system. **P13**

### LS to meet today amid row over pro tem speaker

The row over appointment of Bhartruhari Mahtabas pro tem speaker is likely to cast a shadow over the first session of the 18th LS starting Monday. Row over NEET-UG and cancellation of other tests is set to dominate proceedings after the first two days when new MPs will take oath. It will be followed by Speaker election on June 26. **P7**





Think Ahead. Think Growth.

## India's semiconductor industry to face 300,000 professionals shortage by 2027

Source: MINT - Indian Business and Financial Daily Newspaper

### IN THE BACKDROP OF BOOM IN THE FIELD OF SEMICONDUCTOR AND MICROCHIP INDUSTRY VIPS-TC | SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY THOUGHTFULLY OFFERS A COURSE IN

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- B.Sc. (Hons.) Biotechnology\*

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- Bachelor of Vocation in Automobile Manufacturing
- Bachelor of Vocation in Logistics Management
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IMD predicts very light rain over the next seven days | 4

# TIMES CITY 148

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2024

TEMP ON SUNDAY  
**39.8°** MAXIMUM  
**29.6°** MINIMUM  
 FORECAST: Partly cloudy sky. Max and min temp on Monday would be around 39 and 30°C

SUNSET 7.23 PM (MON) | MOONSET 6.13 AM (TUE)  
 SUNRISE 5.25 AM (TUE) | MOONRISE 8.04 PM (MON)

With 29 recent deaths, Delhi's heatwave toll mounts to 275 | 4

AQI IN DELHI ON SUNDAY (MODERATE CATEGORY)

BSES' new plan to ensure uninterrupted power supply even if there is a snag | 6



## CM moves SC against HC's interim stay on bail order

New Delhi: Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has moved Supreme Court against Delhi High Court's interim stay on a trial court's order granting him bail in a money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam.

The high court on Friday paused the release of the chief minister after the trial court granted him bail on June 20.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener, who was arrested by Enforcement Directorate on March 21, could have walked out of Tihar Jail on Friday had the high court not granted the interim relief to the federal anti-money laundering agency. "Till the pronouncement of this order, the operation of the impugned order shall remain stayed," a vacation bench of the high court said and asked the parties to file written submissions by June 24.

the order for two-three days as it wanted to go through the entire case records.

It also issued a notice to Kejriwal seeking his response to the ED's plea challenging the trial court's June 20 order, by which he was granted bail. The court had listed the plea for hearing on July 10.

In its bail order, the trial court had held that prima facie, Kejriwal's guilt was yet to be established and that ED had failed to furnish direct evidence linking him to the money-laundering case.

The excise policy was scrapped in 2022 after lieutenant governor ordered a CBI probe into alleged irregularities and corruption involving its formulation and execution.

According to ED and Central Bureau of Investigation, irregularities were committed while modifying the policy and undue favours extended to the licence holders. ■



Arvind Kejriwal

## Teachers with 10 yrs of service in one school must apply for transfer online

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Directorate of Education in a circular has stated that all govt schoolteachers who have completed 10 years continuously in the same school must apply for an online transfer by going for the maximum number of choices.

If a teacher doesn't apply online, they will be transferred to any school as per the official requirement.

"Online applications are invited for transfer from all categories of teachers, except guest teachers, vocational teachers and contract teachers. All teachers are required to apply on the proforma available on the departmental website. The interested teachers are advised to give choices in the order of their preferences," said the circular dated June 11 and issued by deputy director of education Sushita Biju.

"All the teachers who have completed 10 years continuously

The circular stated that in the case of mutual consent transfers, both teachers would have to apply compulsorily online and should be of the same subject and gender

in the same school shall compulsorily apply online vide this circular for transfer on the basis of mutual or general opting for maximum number of schools. Such teachers who do not apply online vide this circular, headquarters on its own will transfer them to any school as per official requirement," the circular said.

It added that all the manual transfer applications received in this directorate till date may be treated as null and void after issuing the circular regarding online transfers. The circular stated that in the

case of mutual consent transfers, both teachers would have to apply compulsorily online and should be of the same subject and gender (except in co-ed schools where gender restriction is not applicable). Once transfer is done on this basis, both teachers will not be eligible for change for two years.

Ajay Veer Yadav, general secretary of Govt Schools Teacher's Association, Delhi, said: "We met directorate of education after the circular was issued, making it compulsory for all govt schoolteachers who have completed 10 years continuously in the same school to apply for an online transfer. We have been assured that no teacher will be harassed."

Yadav added: "We are happy that our demand for the removal of a problematic provision empowering the head of school for transferring two teachers from schools has been accepted and implemented by the directorate of education."

# Praying For Rain – Or Not: Spectre Of Waterlogged Streets Looms Yet Again

Despite Starting Early, Agencies Struggling To Meet Deadlines As Monsoon Approaches

Vibha Sharma & Siddhanta Mishra | TNN

New Delhi: The pre-monsoon showers hit Delhi on Friday, but govt agencies are still struggling to meet targets for cleaning the major drains across the city, with implications for waterlogging and flooding in the city.

Delhi govt's irrigation & flood control department, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Development Authority need an additional week to finish their tasks, while the Public Works Department may require a couple of more days to complete clearing drains of silt, having completed 85% of the targeted work.

PWD manages 1,037 storm water drains along its 1,400 km road network. Despite starting the desilting work earlier this year, the agency is still facing delays. "We are trying our best to complete the work of desilting by next week in the majority of places. But there will be slight delays in some zones for various reasons," said a PWD official.

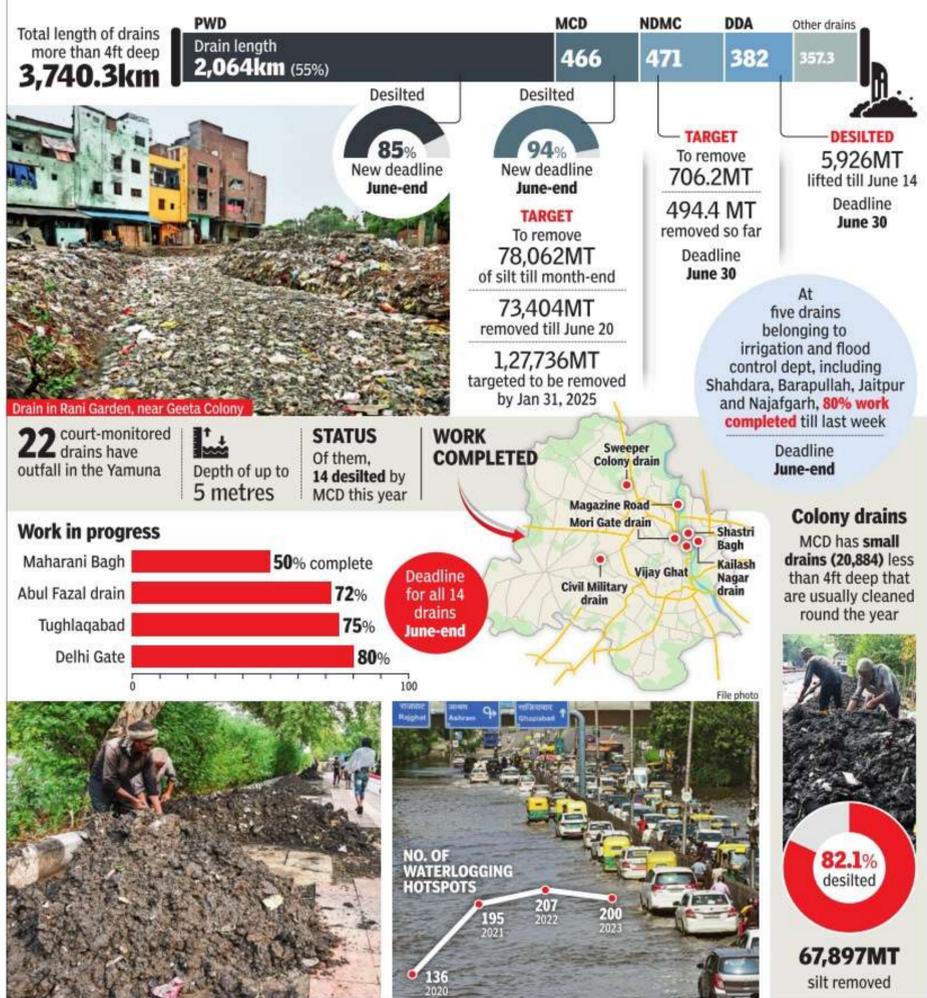
In the 22 major drains that have their outlets in river Yamuna, barely 50% of the desilting has been done in some locations, though others have seen 70% of the work done. Delhi High Court has earlier expressed concern at the city's preparedness for the monsoon season and instructed the Chief Secretary to establish a single agency responsible for overseeing the management of 22 major drains in the city.

Meanwhile, residents have doubts about the authorities' claims of having met 85% of the desilting target because they have hardly seen silt dumped on the roadsides, unlike in previous years. There is a fear of a recurrence of last year's flooding.

Gurdeep Singh, who lives in Ordinance Apartments in Vikaspuri, said, "The authorities claims of having cleaned the drains is farcical. Before the Lok Sabha election,

## CHALLENGES REMAIN

Photos: Jatin Kumar, Rajesh Mehta



after silting in PVR Complex Vikaspuri but even after 20 days no one came to collect the silt, so we had to approach the area councillor and MCD zonal officials for timely action. However, on the PWD road facing my apartment,

the drains weren't unclogged. I hope they don't do anything now since we don't want heaps of silt adding to our monsoon problems."

Nitin Gupta of Kamla Nagar Traders Association claimed, "Last year, due to flooding

our basements were flooded. In 2022, due to the drains not being cleared, we had to get pumps to flush out water. We fear there will be the same this year."

MCD has already breached its June 15 deadline for desilting the major drains. As

of June 20, MCD has completed desilting of 250 out of 713 drains that are more than 4 ft deep, with work still in progress at 434 locations. According to an MCD report, 73,404 tonnes of silt have been removed from 713 drains, which is

94% of the targeted volume of 78,062 tonnes.

Raja Iqbal Singh, leader of the opposition in MCD, stated, "So far 94% of work has been done and it will take another week to 10 days to meet the Phase I target. MCD had initially set May 30 as the deadline for completing the desilting work, which was extended to June 15. However, even after not meeting the two deadlines, AAP in MCD is simply ensuring arrangements to deal with waterlogging."

MK Gupta of S Block, Greater Kailash I, said, "We have two agencies that are involved in desilting in our area. On Hansraj Gupta Marg, PWD does desilting, and for colony drains, we have written to MCD's maintenance department. Till now, there's no action. If it rains heavily, our locality will be waterlogged."

## TIMES Special

NDMC set a target for removing 2,000 cubic metres of silt, and has cleared 1,400 cubic metres so far. "Most of our drainage falls into the Kushak nullah and Sunheri Pul nullah. While desilting is in progress at all places, we have arranged 99 fixed pumps, 62 temporary and cleaned 8,704 bell mouths to ensure no water logging happens," said NDMC vice-chairman Satish Upadhyay.

I&FC manages all the major drains, including the largest Najafgarh drain that is approximately 57km long and directly enters the Yamuna. "There are approximately 15 lakh tonnes of silt accumulated in these drains, which is equivalent to roughly one-sixth of the total legacy waste at the Ghazipur landfill site. Of the 15, more than 10 lakh tonnes have already been removed from major drains," claimed a govt official.

DDA, which has jurisdiction over 382km drains in Dwarka, Rohini and Narela, claimed to have lifted 5,926 tonnes so far. It also said it had installed pumps at vulnerable locations to prevent waterlogging.

## Gas leak sparks blaze in Gzb house, woman and two daughters die

Umesh Kumar



By the time fire tenders reached, locals had doused the flames

Avishek Kumar @timesgroup.com

Ghaziabad: A 36-year-old woman and her two teenage daughters died and four others of their family suffered grievous burns when a gas cylinder leak triggered a fire in a house in Tila Mod on Sunday morning. DCP (trans-Hindon) Nimish Patil said the fire is believed to have started at 11.40am and a distress call was made around noon. But by the time fire tenders reached the house, local residents had doused the flames.

"Yes, the flames were brought under control by the locals there. A team of firefighters and police started a rescue operation and brought out the occupants, all of whom were critically injured. They were taken to GTB Hospital for treatment, where the woman and her two daughters succumbed to injuries. The others are undergoing treatment," he added.

The three who died were Bhagmati (35) and her daughters Himani (18) and Priyanka (16). Mukesh Kumar, Bhagmati's husband; his brother-in-law Nathuram (55); his son Ankit (17); and Sonu (35), Nathuram's son-in-law, suffered grievous burns. Nathuram, who

owns the house, runs a potato business in the Sahibabad mandal. Mukesh and his family had been living with him for the past three years.

Chief fire officer Rahul Pal said since the house was undergoing renovation, all seven occupants had stored their belongings in one room.

"Preliminary investigation suggests gas started leaking from the pipe after Bhagmati prepared lunch earlier in the day. When everyone gathered to eat, she went to the kitchen to heat the food. No sooner did she turn the burner on, the entire room burst into flames," he added. According to Pal, a huge ball of fire is suspected to have formed in the house because the leaking gas had spread to every room by then.

## Saket residents allege land grab, tree cutting in 'deemed forest'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Residents of Saket have alleged that around 500 jhuggies have sprouted on a parcel of land, which is a deemed forest, behind Press Enclave.

The Press Association Co-operative Group Housing Society said that the people in the illegal cluster have caused considerable harm to the fauna and flora by "often cutting trees for firewood and engineering forest fires to grab more land". The association claimed that they were also burning plastic and rubber waste.

"Over recent years, this green belt, the lungs of Saket, has been encroached upon and was grabbed by numerous individuals residing in over 500 makeshift jhuggies.... These individuals (are) relieving themselves in the open, including in and around the forest, particularly near the boundary wall of the Press Enclave colony. This not only crea-

tes a health hazard but is converting the green forest into a dump yard," the association alleged. It filed a complaint at Saket police station on June 20.

A deemed forest is not a notified or a reserve forest. In Delhi, any area over 2.5 acres with over 100 trees per acre is a deemed forest.

A senior forest official said:

"We will get this area inspected and if any violation related to tree norms is found, action will be taken. After the inquiry, a notice will be issued to the land-owning agency...." Ajay Sud, president of the Press Association Co-operative Group Housing Society, said: "The encroachers are endangering the environment."

Rakesh Dabas, president of the federation of RWAs Saket, said: "The deemed forest... is unsafe for residents."

When TOI visited the site, some of the jhuggies seemed to have electricity with meters.

In April 2023, the forest and wildlife department informed National Green Tribunal that

it had found encroachment in the area.

"On the land, some jhuggies were present behind the Kadeem Zari Muslim Eidgah, Hauz Rani village. Plastic, polythene bags and other material were found dumped on this land. However, some trees were found to have naturally fallen. No burning

of plastic, polythene bags or electric wires was observed," the forest department had told NGT last year in a report.

NGT later in an order said: "Unauthorised encroachments exist.... Following the order dated 14-01-2010 passed by a Delhi court, DDA has been restrained from taking action with respect to Khasra No. 197 (5-1D) of village Hauz Rani. However, there is no stay granted by the court with respect to Khasra No. 198 of Village Hauz Rani and DDA has submitted that DDA shall take up the matter with revenue department."

DDA didn't respond to queries on the matter.



Residents claimed the flora and fauna of the forest land was being destroyed



The squatters have even installed electricity meters

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# 39.8 Going On 53! Humidity Adds To Delhi's Discomfort

## Rain Keeps Avg Temp Below 40°C, Heatwave Unlikely Till Month-End

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Several parts of the city recorded light rain on Sunday. The maximum temperature remained below 40 degrees Celsius for the second consecutive day, but the heat index or feel-like temperature rose to 53 degrees Celsius as high humidity caused discomfort to people.

A heatwave is unlikely in Delhi until the month's end, with India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicting very light rain over the next seven days. The normal monsoon onset date for Delhi is June 27. During this summer, Safdarjung has recorded 14 heatwave days, the highest number of such days in at least 14 years. The maximum temperature was 39.8 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal, at Safdarjung on Sunday. The city recorded its worst streak from May 14 to June 21 when maximum temperature continuously surpassed 40 degrees Celsius. The spell broke



TRYING TO PLAY IT COOL

on Saturday when it touched 39.4 degrees Celsius.

Though the maximum temperature stayed below the 40-degree mark, the high humidity made it uncomfortable as the heat index was recorded at 53 degrees Celsius as against 47 degrees Celsius a day earlier. The humidity level oscillated between 49% and 73% in the past 24 hours. IMD has predicted that the

heat index is likely to remain in the range of 51-53 degrees Celsius for the next 48 hours.

Safdarjung logged 0.6mm rainfall between 8.30am and 5.30pm on Sunday. During the same period, 6.9 mm rainfall was recorded at Palam, while only 'trace' was seen at Lodhi Road. Ridge and Anand Nagar received 0.8mm and 1.2 mm, respectively.

The minimum tempera-

re settled at 29.6 degrees Celsius, two degrees above normal, against 28.6 degrees Celsius on Saturday.

"Very light rain is likely to lash the city over the next six days. There is a possibility of thunderstorms over the next few days," said an IMD official, adding that heatwave conditions are unlikely till the month-end.

IMD has sounded a 'yellow' alert for Monday for thunderstorm accompanied by very light rain. Gusty winds at the speed of 30-40 kmph are expected on Monday. However, the maximum temperature is likely to stay around 39 degrees Celsius on Monday, it may again cross 40 degrees Celsius from Tuesday.

The maximum temperature is predicted to remain in the range of 40-42 degrees Celsius from June 25 to 28 and it may again dip to 39 degrees Celsius on June 29. The minimum is likely to hover around 29-31 degrees Celsius over the next few days.

# Hospitals report 29 more recent deaths, heatwave toll is now 275

Anuja.Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** The city's record-breaking heat wave has clocked a death toll of 275, with an additional 29 deaths recently.

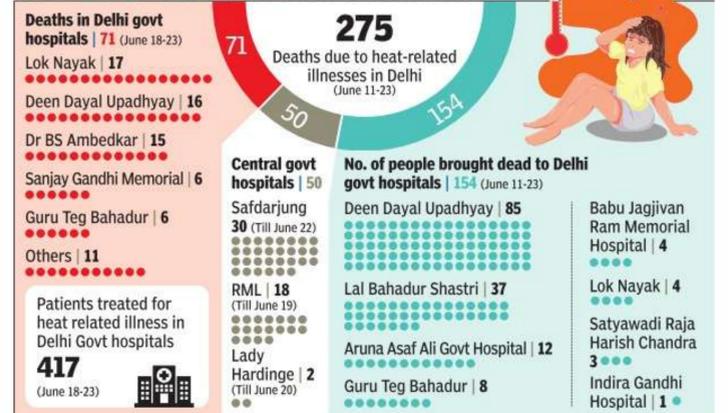
Among the victims, 154 people were "brought dead to various hospitals," underscoring the gravity of the situation.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the actual death toll may be even higher than the reported figures. Several hospitals have discontinued sharing information on deaths attributed to heat strokes. This lack of comprehensive information raises concerns about the true extent of the crisis.

Over the course of June 22 and 23, an additional 28 patients lost their lives due to heat-related illnesses while receiving care at Delhi government hospitals, bringing the total death toll to 71. The information indicates that in the past two days, a minimum of 132 people suffered from health issues caused by extreme heat, and the number has risen to 417.

Safdarjung Hospital also reported one more fatality linked to heat-related illness on June 22. Currently, the hospital

## 154 BROUGHT DEAD TO HOSPITALS



is treating 15 patients, with 10 of them in critical condition. "Since June 16, 67 patients have been admitted to the hospital due to heat-related illnesses," confirmed authorities.

The latest figures reveal that on June 22 and 23 alone, eight such cases were reported.

Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital disclosed information regarding heat-related casualties and patient admissions until June 19. The data revealed that the hospital had recorded 18 deaths due to heat-

related illnesses by that date.

At the time of the report then, the hospital had 32 patients admitted, with 26 on ventilator support. Following the release of this initial information, the hospital has declined to provide any additional updates or details concerning heat-related illnesses and fatalities.

# 'Won't end fast till Delhi gets rightful share'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Water minister Atishi's indefinite fast entered its third day on Sunday even as the crisis in Delhi continued to worsen. In a video message, Atishi alleged that the closure of a gate at Hathnikund Barrage by Haryana had further reduced the raw water supply to Delhi's treatment plants.

According to the latest summer bulletin, DJB produced only 906 million gallons of water per day (MGD) of drinking water on Sunday, significantly lower than the city's average demand of 1,290 MGD. Officials attributed the reduced production to the under-performance of major treatment plants at Wazirabad and Chandrawal.

"I am on this fast because there is a

huge water crisis in Delhi. Delhi does not have its own water; all the water here comes from neighbouring states. Delhi needs a total of 1,005 MGD of water, out of which 613 million gallons comes from Haryana," said Atishi.

She alleged that Haryana had been reducing the supply for the past three weeks, claiming it didn't have enough water to provide to Delhi. However, she claimed, journalists who visited Hathnikund Barrage captured photos and videos that clearly showed that the barrage was full of water, but the gate from which it was released for Delhi had been closed. "I request Haryana govt with folded hands to open the gates of Hathnikund Barrage. Delhiites should get the water they are entitled to. This

strike will continue till Haryana govt gives Delhiites the water they are entitled to," Atishi said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said it would be the first "satyagraha" in Indian history where the satyagrahi (Atishi) only appeared for photo opportunities and then disappeared. He said as water minister, Atishi had a responsibility to alleviate the crisis in Delhi and fix leakages, but she was, instead, trying to evade her duties.

Earlier in the day, minister Saurabh Bharadwaj claimed that PM Narendra Modi was quite on the issue despite several letters being written to him. Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Devender Yadav, meanwhile, said Atishi was indulging in "drama" instead of finding a solution.

# LG speaks to Haryana CM after AAP delegation meets him over water crisis

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Hours after an AAP delegation met LG VK Saxena seeking his intervention to request Haryana govt for extra water, the latter spoke to Haryana chief minister on Sunday regarding this matter. "LG spoke to CM of Haryana at 4pm. Haryana CM has assured that he will seriously look into the matter and try to help tide over the situation, to the farthest possible extent," said LG's office in a statement.

A delegation of AAP functionaries met LG at 12.15 pm and appealed for his intervention to secure Delhi's "rightful water share" from Haryana. The delegation, including Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and ND Gupta, minister Saurabh Bharadwaj and MLAs Dilip Pandey, Somnath Bharti, Rajesh Gupta, Rituraj Jha and others, highlighted the severe shortfall of water, re-leased by Haryana to Delhi. Bharadwaj said, "We informed LG that there is a shortage of about 113 MGD of water in the supply coming from Haryana right now. Due to this, lakhs of people in Delhi are facing prob-

## LG'S OFFICE SAYS

**Not only Delhi's but the population of all states has also increased proportionately and all states are equally affected by the heatwave. LG assured that he would take up the matter of the release of water on humanitarian grounds with CM of Haryana, as requested by AAP delegation**

blems. Since LG is the representative of central govt, we requested him to talk to Haryana govt and get Delhi its full share of water. On this, LG has assured that he will talk to Haryana govt and try to get Delhi its full share of water."

The delegation also conveyed to LG that it will rain in a week. "It has started raining in Shimla, Himachal, and so much water will come in the next week that Haryana will not be able to stop it even if it wants to.

It is just a matter of a week. We have requested LG to try and get water from Haryana for Delhi for a week," Bharadwaj said.

After listening to the representatives, LG reiterated that the share of Yamuna water between Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and other neighbouring states had been fixed by Upper Yamuna River Board and was up for renewal in 2025. The same had been upheld time and again by Supreme Court, most recently a week back. LG said the advice by SC that Delhi could approach Haryana for extra water on humanitarian grounds could be fructified only in an atmosphere of cooperation and amicable dialogue, rather than by indulging in accusations, abuse and blame game through media and social media.

"Not only Delhi's but the population of all states has also increased proportionately and all states are equally affected by the heatwave. He assured that he would take up the matter of the release of water on humanitarian grounds with CM of Haryana, as requested by AAP delegation," said LG's office in a statement.

# City hosp frees 90-year-old of rare stomach condition

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** A city hospital has successfully treated a 90-year-old man with a rare and life-threatening stomach condition that had caused his stomach to move up towards the chest.

The man initially experienced severe difficulty in breathing while eating. After an examination, doctors found out that a portion of his stomach had pushed upward into his chest through a small opening in the diaphragm, a rare condition known as gastric volvulus, which posed a grave threat to his life. It occurs in less than 1% cases.

This condition arose due to a hiatal hernia, which allowed the stomach to move into the chest cavity.

The patient, Muralidhar, said he was unable to eat anything and would vomit whatever he consumed. He also felt a persistent heaviness on the chest. Alarmingly, he said, he lost 10kg in a single month.

His family took him to several hospitals. It was only then that they learned that his stomach had shifted into his chest. "Several doctors refused to take the risk of surgery. They all said it was risky at this age. I had little hope of being successfully treated," he said.

The case was eventually taken up by the experienced doctors at Sir Gangaram Hospital.

According to the medical team, diagnosing gastric volvulus is particularly challenging because it is so rarely considered.

They said it occurs in about 1 in 100,000 patients who undergo upper stomach surgery, with a significantly high mortality rate of 15-25%.

Dr Tarun Mittal of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital explained that performing a surgery on a 90-year-old patient was rare and complex, especially when the entire stomach had moved into the chest.

He elaborated that the treatment involved bringing the stomach from the chest cavity back into the abdomen and placing a mesh to prevent the abdominal contents from moving upwards again.

The surgery, which lasted four hours, was meticulously planned.

After surgery, Muralidhar reported a significant improvement in his condition. He expressed gratitude towards the medical team, saying that he was able to eat and was hopeful of living many more good years with his family.

# From painful past of acid attack to resilience to live

Anuja.Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Sally Mann, a renowned American photographer known for her black-and-white works, once said that "photographs open doors into the past, but they also allow a look into the future."

That is what the recently concluded exhibition of photographs of acid attack survivors displayed at The Stainless Gallery in Delhi aimed to depict. The pain that these victims went through and the resilience that they embody define their future lives.

Aaina Tak Ka Safar (the Journey to the Mirror) went beyond simply displaying the faces of the women. The photographs showed their determination to triumph over the suffering and pain. The photographs prominently displayed their scars, serving as a testament to the immense suffering they have endured.

"The scars can be seen in the photographs clearly, which show how much pain they have gone through," said 22-year-old photographer Nanki Singh, fresh out of the School of Visual Arts in New York with a BFA in Photography and Video. She featured eight powerful photographs depicting the lives of six acid attack survivors. "The images showcase their transformative journey," she said.

The photographs captured the emotional and physical challenges the women faced, particularly the difficulty when looking into the mirror, she added.

"Despite undergoing numerous surgeries, ranging from 10 to 20 operations, their faces and skin bear indelible marks of the ordeal. The exhibition aims to highlight their resilience and courage in embracing their altered appearance, emphasising that true beauty lies in inner strength" Nanki said.

Anshu Rajput (26), an acid attack survivor whose image was featured in the exhibition, said: "These photographs show our identity which we are living with. These are beautiful pictures."

She said she felt like a celebrity when people approached her and learned about her journey, unlike the stares she



ART ATTACK: Nanki Singh (top) showcases her work at the exhibition

gets when she goes out.

The exhibition provided a unique experience for the survivors, as people appreciated their photographs, making them feel valued. Rajput emphasised that this was an incredible experience. They had never encountered this before.

Singh told TOI that she consciously opted for black and white pictures when capturing and exhibiting her photographs due to the optimal interplay between the subject and lighting in this format.

Moreover, photographs in colour can potentially divert the viewer's focus with their shades and backdrops, while monochromatic images guide the gaze directly to the subject.

"The main motive of the exhibition was to show how comfortable these women are in their own skin."

Singh possesses a longstanding fascination with the narratives of women who demonstrate resilience. Her prior work includes projects that revolve around domestic

abuse and the documentation of menstruation.

Singh, revealed that although capturing the photographs took only a month, she invested nearly four years in understanding the lives of her subjects. She wanted to delve deep into their experiences, the challenges they faced, and their daily struggles. Singh aimed to develop a profound connection with them to accurately portray their stories.

"I decided to keep visiting them. Over the course of four years, I visited the survivors annually during my vacations to India," she said. Singh spent time with the survivors at the Sheros Hangout in Noida, a cafe run by acid attack survivors. They also celebrated birthdays together.

In March, Singh's debut exhibition titled 'Aaine Tak Ka Safar' at the Chelsea Art Gallery in Manhattan successfully raised \$13,000, which was donated to support the cafe. The recent exhibition also saw generous contributions.

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SHARING MEMORIES

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# Smooth sailing for office-goers as passport seva kendra at ITO relocates to Jhandewalan

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** In a big relief to thousands of people working in the offices on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, including media houses, the passport seva kendra (PSK) at ITO's Herald House has been shifted to Videocon Tower at Jhandewalan. It will commence operations from July 24.

The decision to open a PSK at the end of the lane that flanks the main road was inexcusable because of the traffic nightmare that ensued. Within days the spot became a traffic bottleneck with the parking mafia taking over the entire place.

Vehicles were parked haphazardly all along the road and often in multiple rows with scant regard for people whose workplaces were located here. In fact, legitimate parking places for the office-goers were taken over by visitors to the passport office, stretching back to Shaheed Park. A one-way road became a two-way affair, leading to daily chaos.



**IT'S A MAZE:** Within days of the PSK opening at ITO, the spot had become a traffic bottleneck

This showed that no assessment of the parking infrastructure had been carried out before going ahead with the opening of the PSK. How NOCs were given remains a mystery.

Soon, many shops and vendors – selling stationery to food and offering various services – began doing business in that narrow lane, close to PSK with their patrons obstructing traf-

fic. Also, a long queue of passport applicants – and often an unregulated crowd – on the street would aggravate the situation.

The shopkeepers and vendors will now lose business but they shouldn't have been allowed to operate right from the beginning. Many of them are now looking for options at Jhandewalan. The profit of parking operators too will get badly dented but the anarchy they had unleashed in this narrow street will be a thing of the past.

According to the passport department's website, the new office is located on the ground floor of Videocon Tower in Jhandewalan. A notice on the passport website reads: "Applicants having appointment at PSK Herald House-ITO, kindly note the new address: Videocon Tower, Ground Floor, Block-E, Jhandewalan Extn., New Delhi -110055. (Nearest metro station: Jhandewalan)".

No official reaction could be elicited from either Tata Consultancy Services, which operates the PSKs, nor traffic police on the development.

# Burger King shooting suspect gives cops the slip in Jammu

Rajshankar Jha  
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**New Delhi:** Delhi Police sleuths missed one of the three prime suspects in the Burger King shooting incident at west Delhi's Rajouri Garden by a whisker at Katra station in Jammu. Suspect Anu (24) managed to enter the last bogey of the general category of a Mumbai-bound train to give cops a slip.

Police suspect that she may be headed to Goa or nearby places to meet shooters Ashish and Vicky and then may attempt to flee abroad. Many henchmen of US-based fugitive Himanshu Bhuau have visited Goa in the last one year. On June 6, one of his key henchmen, Ajit Kalia, was arrested from there.

Anu, who honey-trapped the target, Aman Joon, and brought him to the eatery last week, had fled to Jammu on the night of incident, June 18. The next day she stayed at a guest house in Katra and its owner told the cops that she used the hotel Wi-Fi before going to the station.

The CCTV footage of the station shows Anu, wearing a neon green top, black trousers, and a scarf, hurriedly walking across the platform. She was carrying a trolley bag besides a backpack.

Anu was heading to board



Anu was spotted boarding a Mumbai-bound train at Katra station

Bombay Swaraj Express which departed from Katra station at 10am on June 20. As she managed to reach near the train around 10.06am, it had started moving slowly. Anu, however, managed to board train.

Police have found that Anu had made a fake account in the name of Preeti on Instagram to befriend Joon. She was running at least 15 accounts – all in different names – on the social media app.

After the killing, Anu vacated her paying guest accommodation in Mukherjee Nagar. She asked the owner to give her security deposit to a friend. She then went to the railway station to board a train to Katra.

Cops have questioned her family members, who said

Anu's surname was Dhankad but she goes by her first name. Her family said they had filed a habeas corpus writ after she went missing last year. It later turned out that she had joined Bhuau's syndicate.

Meanwhile, cops have been questioning jailed gangsters Naveen Bahl and Neeraj Bawana after seeking their custody from court. Both gangsters, lodged in high security cells of Tihar Jail, were mentioned in the Instagram post by Bhuau in which he claimed responsibility for Joon's killing.

The murder, claimed the post, was to avenge the killing of Bawana's cousin Shakti by rivals in 2020. Joon was believed to have tipped off the killers about Shakti's whereabouts.

# Police Make First Arrest In Killing Of 2 Newborns

## Father-In-Law Held; Husband, Others Absconding; House Locked

Rajshankar Jha  
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**New Delhi:** A day after TOI reported about the sensational case of female infanticide in the national capital, Delhi Police on Sunday made the first arrest in the case. The arrested man has been identified as Vijender Solanki, the father-in-law of the woman whose female twins were taken away by her husband and his family after their birth, killed and buried at an isolated spot.

The woman's husband, Neeraj Solanki, and other members of her in-law's family are absconding after locking their house in outer Delhi's Pooth Kalan village. The raids are being conducted to nab others, police said. Police on Sunday also recorded the statement of the woman, Pooja, and her family members. Her family has alleged that the killing of babies was planned. Police said they had exhumed the bodies after seeking judicial orders.

The woman belongs to Ismaila village in Rohtak district of Haryana. She and her family came to Sultanpuri police station on Sunday. In her statement, the woman told police that she married Neeraj on Feb 2, 2022.

The family allegedly asked for Rs 30 lakh and jewellery which they have received. However, the harassment started soon after the marriage and she was pressured for giving birth to a boy. Her family members have

detailed the allegations of dowry and torture besides the sequence of events surrounding the incident. An enquiry by the sub divisional magistrate (SDM) is also underway.

Solanki was arrested on Sunday after he was questioned for several hours. "He denied his involvement and claimed the babies died due to illness. He, however, couldn't answer why were the newborns taken away from the mother," said an investigator. Police said they will file a watertight chargesheet in the case and they are waiting for the autopsy and other medical reports.

The chilling case has yet again brought to fore the issue of female infanticide in the country. Although infanticide has been criminalized in India, it remains an under-reported crime due to various factors. While there is no reliable data, police are roped in in a minuscule number of cases.

A 2016 report by NGO Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) has revealed that preference for son over daughter is a major reason for female infanticide. The report claimed India had one of the highest female foeticide incidents in the world.

In law, section 315 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) defines infanticide as the killing of an infant in the 0-1 year age group. It is a cognizable and a non-bailable offence. In India, the Pre-conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act prohibits sex-selection or disclosure of the sex of the foetus.

# 3 men held for killing cab driver in Shastri Park

**New Delhi:** Three men were arrested recently for killing a cab driver in Shastri Park.

The accused were identified as Akash (24), Yogish (33), and Rohit (24). Deputy commissioner of police (crime) Sanjay Sain said they received information on May 30 regarding the murder of a 28-year-old cab driver, identified as Jauhar Abbas.

Sain said the breakthrough came through extensive technical surveillance and scrutiny of CCTV footage, which led them to Akash, Yogesh, and Rohit. The trio were apprehended from Gokulpuri. During questioning, Akash, alias Moosi, disclosed financial disputes with his wife's former employer, Waqar, who owned a call centre. On the day of the incident, Akash called his friends Rohit and Yogesh to confront Waqar at Shastri Park. An altercation ensued with three bystanders who noticed the weapons. During this, one of the bystanders struck Rohit with a helmet, prompting Akash to stab him in retaliation before fleeing. **TNW**

# Prosecutions for stop line violations up 32%, Def Col among top hotspots

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Defence Colony, Mayur Vihar, and Safdarjung Enclave have emerged as the worst hotspots for stop line violations, according to an analysis by Delhi Traffic Police.

Statistics for the current year reveals that Delhi Traffic Police booked 2,37,976 offenders for stop line violations, marking a significant increase from 1,80,538 violators in 2023. This represents about 32% rise in the number of prosecutions for stop line violations compared to the same period last year.

A senior officer, noting the substantial increase in these violations this year, said, "The data indicates a marked rise in instances where drivers fail to adhere to stop line regulations. These violations pose a significant risk to pedestrian safety and disrupt the smooth flow of traffic. Delhi Traffic Police has intensified efforts to curb this trend through increased vigilance and the use of technology".

The traffic police conducted a comprehensive analysis of the top 10 traffic circles with

the highest number of challans issued in 2024. "By identifying areas with frequent traffic violations, this study facilitates targeted enforcement efforts to enhance road safety and ensure compliance with traffic regulations," the officer said.

Apart from Defence Colony, Mayur Vihar, and Safdarjung Enclave, other identified areas include Lajpat Nagar, Dwarka, Tilak Nagar, Punjabi Bagh, Vasant Vihar, Civil Lines, and Model Town.

Police highlighted that enhanced monitoring, including deployment of automated cameras at major intersections, played a crucial role in detecting these violations. "The traffic police has also conducted several awareness campaigns to educate the public about the importance of stopping at designated lines," the officer added.

Along with technological steps, traffic police increased on-ground enforcement. Regular checks and stringent actions against offenders aim to deter motorists from breaching stop line rules, another officer emphasized.

# RAIDS ON TO NAB THE ACCUSED

WHAT HAPPENED

Pooja Solanki gave birth to twins in a hospital in Rohtak Sector-36 on May 30. Her husband and in-laws were allegedly unhappy over her giving birth to girls. On June 1, she, along with her newborns, was discharged from the hospital. She decided to go to her parents' home in Rohtak. Her husband, Neeraj Solanki, and his family members reached



the hospital and took the children to their car, saying they would follow her car to Rohtak. Midway, Neeraj changed the route and went somewhere else. Pooja's brother, Jugnu Khatri, contacted him, but there was no reply. Khatri called Neeraj's father, Vijender, to check if he went to Pooth Kalan. Vijender assured him that if

# YOU READ IT HERE

**Family 'Unhappy', Two Newborn Girls Killed And Buried In Capital**  
Police Exhumed Bodies, Booked On Judicial Order: FIR Filed, But No Arrest Yet

his son reached his house, they would come to Rohtak with the kids. Later, Khatri came to know that Pooja's in-laws had killed and buried the kids in Sultanpuri

**POLICE ACTION**  
Cops conducted raids at Neeraj's house in Badwala Chowk, Pooth Kalan. Neeraj was found absconding. Cops questioned his father and arrested him later.

**CASE FILED**  
Cops exhumed the bodies on judicial orders and sent them for postmortem.

WHAT POOJA CLAIMS

Neeraj and Pooja had got married in 2022. She claimed she was regularly harassed for dowry and that the family wanted her to give birth to a son. Her statement was recorded on Sunday at the Sultanpuri police station.

# 'In-laws conspired to kill me too'

Abhay@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Pooja Solanki, who arrived in the city on Sunday, was visibly shaken. In the nine months of pregnancy, she used to plan about starting afresh and living a happy life with her baby. But she had barely seen her new-born daughters before they were taken away, killed and buried allegedly by her husband Neeraj Solanki and his family. She had only seen these things in movies and never imagined it could happen to her.

Speaking to TOI outside Sultanpuri police station, Pooja, a science graduate, detailed how her in-laws had allegedly conspired to kill her as well but she had managed to escape. She recalled how her life turned upside down when she learnt and informed Neeraj and his family about the pregnancy.

Pooja was warned that the new-born must be a boy. This demand weighed heavily on her, adding immense stress to an already challenging period.

The distraught mother recounted that three months later, her in-laws deceptively to-



Police found the house of Neeraj Solanki (inset) locked

ok her to a clinic under the guise of a routine check-up. To her shock and horror, it turned out to be a sex determination test. Upon discovering she was carrying girls, they tried to get an abortion done and subjected her to physical assault when she refused.

Pooja said, "I managed to escape from my in-laws' house, reached a bus stand. I was pregnant, and my condition was unbearable, but somehow, I took a bus to Ismaila in Rohtak. During

the journey, I borrowed a phone from another woman who was traveling with me to inform my brother about the situation, and I reached my parents' house."

Her family members claimed that the entire incident was orchestrated by her in-laws. They not only took away the new-borns but also confiscated Pooja's phone to prevent her from contacting relatives on her husband's side and informing them about the situation.

"After giving birth, I was in extreme pain from the surgery... The agony was excruciating. I couldn't see my daughters' faces clearly; I couldn't even hold them," she lamented. "And then there was the emptiness – I couldn't even feed them. They were supposed to bring me joy, but now it all feels tragically crushed," she said as her voice faltered, overwhelmed with emotion.

Her sister-in-law, Manita Khatri, expressed shock at the regressive mentality of her in-laws in distinguishing between girls and boys. "Pooja's in-laws never contacted her since she came to her parents' house," she added.

TOI on Sunday visited outer Delhi's Pooth Kalan village where Neeraj lived with his family. The residents claimed that the Solanki family had been living there for over a decade. On Saturday and Sunday, they saw several policemen at the house who then enquired about the family in the neighbourhood. The Solanki family owned two houses and both were locked.

# BMW rams auto-rickshaw on NH8; youth dies, one injured

**Gurgaon:** A 22-year-old man died and his colleague suffered injuries when a BMW car hit an auto-rickshaw from behind on NH8 in Sector 18 during the early hours on Saturday. The driver abandoned his car and fled the spot. The police registered a case against the car driver.

Gurusevak Singh (22), who was from DLF-3, worked for a private company in DLF-2, police said.

According to police, the police received a complaint from Singh's brother Sukhdev Singh Bajwa of UP's Rampur. He reported that his younger brother and his colleague, Nitu Kumari (23) from Bahadurgarh, were travelling during the early hours of Saturday, when the BMW ramed the autorickshaw from behind on NH8 near the Airtel Corporate office in Sector 18.

"The auto driver and the two passen-

gers suffered injuries in the accident. The injured were shifted to nearby Narayana Hospital by our team with the help of locals," inspector Surender Singh said.

Two of the injured, Gurusevak and Nitu were subsequently referred to Fortis Hospital on Saturday morning, the officer said. While undergoing treatment at the hospital, Gurusevak succumbed to his injuries on Saturday afternoon. **TNW**

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# Teenager apprehended for sending bomb threat to IGI

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**  
New Delhi: A 13-year-old boy was apprehended for sending a hoax bomb threat email to IGI Airport on June 17. The claim that there was a bomb on a Delhi-Dubai flight turned out to be a hoax. The boy was inspired by a similar incident involving another child a few days earlier, which he had seen on social media. He claimed to have sent the

**The boy was inspired by a similar incident involving another child a few days earlier**

email purely for fun. Police said that on June 17, they received a complaint from DIAL (Security & Vigilance) regarding a bomb threat email targeting a flight scheduled from Delhi to Dubai, leading to the registration of a case. According to deputy commissioner of police (IGI) Usha Rangani, the airport was placed on high alert and a full emergency was declared due to the severity of the threat. "The guidelines and protocols outlined in the SOP were strictly adhered to, ensuring the safety and security

of all passengers at the airport. Subsequent investigations confirmed that the threat email was a hoax," she stated.

A dedicated team, led by SHO (IGI) Vijender Rana, was formed to investigate the case. "During the investigation, it was discovered that the sender's email ID was deleted immediately after sending the email," the officer explained. Technical surveillance traced the origin of the email to Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, and the suspect was identified as a 13-year-old boy, a Class IX student. The boy used a phone provided by his parents for studying to send the email and promptly deleted the address, believing he could remain anonymous.

"The boy claimed he did it for fun and excitement but did not inform his parents out of fear," the officer said. The mobile phone linked to the hoax threat email was seized by the police, and the boy was handed over to his parents.

This incident marks the second case of a 13-year-old boy being apprehended for sending a hoax email to IGI Airport in June. Earlier, another boy had sent a threat email claiming that there was a bomb on a flight scheduled from Delhi to Toronto on June 4, allegedly sending the email "just for fun" to test if the authorities could trace him.

# Uninterrupted power: BSES Plan To Light Up Homes In Dark Hours

## BSES Starts Work On India's 1st Standalone Battery Energy Storage System

**Atul.Mathur@timesgroup.com**

**New Delhi:** In the time to come, you may get continuous electricity supply even if there is a technical fault in the power transmission or distribution system or the grid develops a snag.

Power distribution company BSES, which supplies electricity to nearly two-thirds of Delhi through its two subsidiaries, has started working on India's first utility-scale standalone Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), which is said to be the largest in South Asia.

Being installed at BSES Rajdhani's Kilokari substation in south Delhi, the system will serve as an alternate source of power supply in the local area when there is a power cut due to unforeseen reasons. BSES Rajdhani has already got the approval from the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) to initiate the project and it should be ready to be commissioned within 10-12 months. Once commissioned, more residential areas will be taken up along the project.

Officials said the project would be designed to handle the extreme variations in electricity demand, improve

### FOR ENHANCED GRID STABILITY

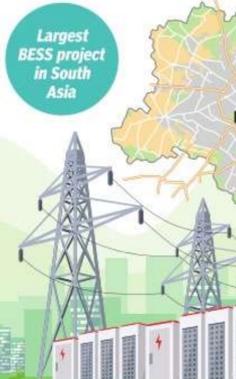
**WHAT |** India's first utility-scale, standalone Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project

**HOW BIG |** 20 MW (40 MWh) BESS being installed at BRPL's 33/11 KV Kilokari substation in south Delhi

**STATUS |** Has already obtained regulatory approval from DERC

**> Expected to improve power supply for nearly one lakh residents of the area**

**DEADLINE |** Likely to be completed in 10-12 months



- BENEFITS**
- > Improved power supply
  - > Enhanced grid stability
  - > Optimised power purchase costs
  - > Reduces overloading of network
  - > Renewable power integration
  - > Easy deployment

power supply, reduce network overloading and enhance the grid stability. It will also help in reducing the cost of power procurement and integrate renewable energy, thus deferring the need for capacity upgrades at the 33/11 kv power sub-station at Kilokari.

"The BESS is being installed using cutting-edge technology as a cost-effective option for managing electricity distribution at high and medium levels," said a BSES official.

BSES Rajdhani is working on the project in partnership with IndiGrid and the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet's (GEAPP) and likely to improve power supply for nearly one lakh residents Kilokari, a heavily congested low-income residential pocket. With its easy deployment, the project will set templates for other state electricity regulatory commissions and power discoms, paving the way for future pro-

jects across the country. BESS will use Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) chemistry, which is said to be the most advanced and proven technology in its league. The system can be used as a generation, transmission and a distribution asset. In case of a power cut, it can serve the electricity demand locally. It can operate both in parallel—that is when the power supply is available - and -islanded—when there is a cut-mode, iso-

lating operations from power disturbances or failures.

"Earlier this month, there was a long power cut in parts of east and south Delhi due to a fire in a substation in Uttar Pradesh's Bagpat area. This system can come handy in such scenarios and the residents of the area, where BESS is available, can enjoy the continuous supply. Power outages can be prevented by a BESS unit like this one," said an official.

The BESS will be charged during off-peak hours with surplus or low cost power available (discharged) during time of peak power demand. Officials said this will help savings in power purchase costs by avoiding costly market purchase during the period of peak power demand.

It will also integrate renewable energy and help the discom meet renewable power obligations. It will help BSES in 'greening-the-grid' by adding flexibility to procure increased share of renewable energy.

During peak hours, when the power load is maximum, the system will help avoid withdrawal from the grid, thereby avoiding overloading. "For this very reason, it will be very useful in congested areas," said an official.

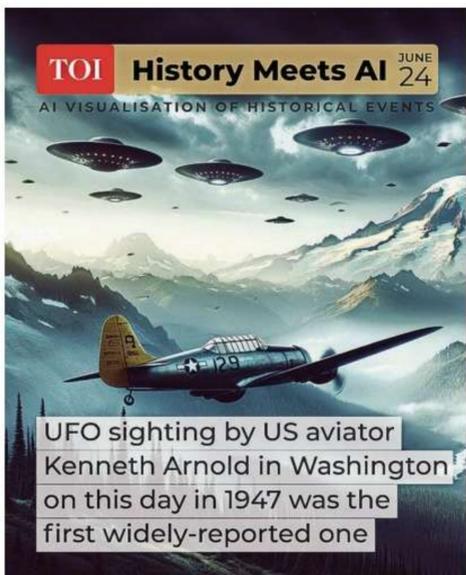
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On behalf of the Governor of West Bengal, T-tender is invited by the Chief Medical Officer, District Hospital, Purba Medinipur District, Pin-721636 for the work Display of Good Samaritan Guidelines as in Govt. Hospital (MCH, SDH, SSH and 14 RH) through PVC/CPD board at different blocks under Purba Medinipur, from resourceful, eligible agency having experience in similar nature of works. Technical & Financial Bid Submission Closing Date: 03/07/2024 at 5:00 PM. For Detail, Please visit the website [www.pwbmedinipur.gov.in](http://www.pwbmedinipur.gov.in), [www.wb.tenders.gov.in](http://www.wb.tenders.gov.in) or [www.wbhealth.gov.in](http://www.wbhealth.gov.in) or the Office of the Undersigned. Sd/- CMOH & Secretary, DH&FWS, Purba Medinipur  
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**TRIPURA CM GIFTS 500KG OF QUEEN PINEAPPLES, 'WORLD'S BEST VARIETY', TO B'DESH PM HASINA**

**MAMATA-LED TMC PROTESTS NOT BEING MADE PART OF TEESTA WATER-SHARING TALKS WITH B'DESH**



## 2 clicking selfies drown in Ganga

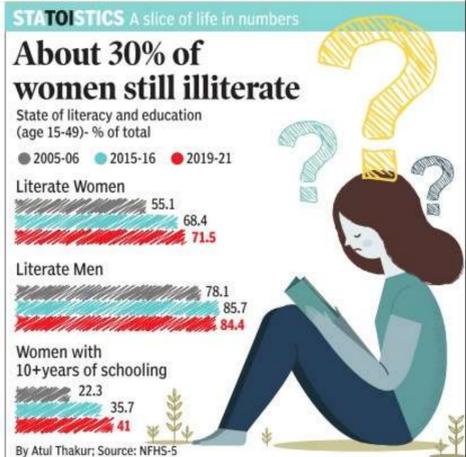
Two teenagers drowned in the Ganga river while clicking selfies on a boat while another managed to swim to safety in UP's Rae Bareilly. Tauheed (17), Shaan (18) and Fahad (19) went to the Ganga ghāt on Saturday. "While clicking selfies they moved towards the edge of the boat and lost balance and fell into the strong current of the river. Tauheed and Shaan were swept away while Fahad managed to swim ashore," said circle officer Arun Kumar. Police deployed divers to trace the missing boys. Tauheed and Shaan's bodies were retrieved on Sunday morning. **TNN**

## Terrorist killed along LoC at Uri

A terrorist was killed during an anti-infiltration operation along the LoC at Uri in north Kashmir's Baramulla, officials said Sunday, reports **Saleem Pandit**. The gunfight started late Saturday after a search in the Bajrang-Uri sector following specific information about some terrorists trying to sneak across the LoC, the officials said. Confronted, the intruders opened fire on the forces, triggering the gunfight, they added. The slain terrorist is yet to be identified. "Operations are continuing," the Army's Srinagar-based Chinari Corps posted on X.

## 1st arrest in C'garh mob lynching case

More than two weeks after three truckers from UP were killed by a lynch mob in Chhattisgarh, police made their first arrest in the case on Saturday. The suspect was identified as 23-year-old Harsh Mishra, a Raipur resident who works in a cement retail shop. He was arrested from Borsi in neighbouring Durg district, police said. The incident took place on Mahanadi bridge near temple town Arang on the night of June 7. A group of alleged cow vigilantes chased and intercepted a truck carrying buffalo. The three men in the truck were thrashed on the suspicion that they were smuggling cows. Two of them died and their bodies were allegedly thrown off the bridge. The third jumped into the river in a bid to escape. He died in hospital on June 18. "We can't say yet whether any cow vigilantes or other groups are involved. Investigation is on," said Kiran Rathore, who is heading a 14-member team for the investigation into the incident.



## 2 CoBRA personnel killed in Maoist IED blast in C'garh's Sukma

**Raipur:** Two personnel from CRPF's elite CoBRA unit were killed in a Maoist IED explosion in Silger region of Sukma on Sunday. Twelve security personnel have died in Maoist attacks this year.



The blast was so powerful that it blew a crater around 40ft long and 30ft wide and hurled the truck — in which the personnel were travelling — several feet in the air. It landed upside down with its driver's cabin obliterated. The toll would have been higher had the vehicle been transporting troops rather than groceries.

The toll would have been higher had the vehicle been transporting troops, and not groceries. Twelve security personnel have died in Maoist attacks this year

Maoists targeted a road opening party that was moving from Silger camp, the base of 201 CoBRA Battalion, to Tekalgudem camp, police said. Insurgents had planted an IED under the road. The explosion happened around 3pm near Timmapuram village, 3km from Silger, as soon as the truck passed over the IED. This region is an insurgency hotbed, less than 10km from Hidma's native village, Puwarti, and 440km from Raipur. The only two persons in the truck — Vishnu R, 35, from Thiruvananthapuram and Shailendra, 29, from Kanpur — were killed on the spot. The vehicle was smashed to pieces. "The driver and co-driver were

in the truck when the blast occurred. They died instantly. Other jawans of the battalion were following on motorcycles and escaped as they were at a safe distance," Sukma SP Kiran Chavan told **TOI**. Security forces are combing the area. The Silger security camp was established during the previous Congress govt. Ever since BJP formed the govt in Dec last year, security forces have mounted pressure on Maoists with offensive operations and aggressive patrols. Since Dec 2023, 136 Maoists have been killed in the state, and hundreds of lower-level cadres have surrendered. Four security personnel have been killed and around 30 wounded in 25 IED blasts this year in Bastar division. More than 60 jawans have died in Maoist IED explosions in the past five years.

## 1st Session Of 18th LS Starts Today With Oath-Taking Of MPs

# Row over NEET-UG, other tests set to dominate LS proceedings

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The row over appointment of BJP leader Bhartruhari Mahtab as pro-tem speaker is likely to cast a shadow over the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha commencing on Monday. Besides, irregularities in the NEET-UG exam and cancellation of other tests is set to dominate proceedings after the first two days when newly-elected MPs will take oath.

The oath-taking will be followed by election of the speaker on June 26 and President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of both Houses on June 27.

Opposition has also demanded review of the three penal laws passed by Parliament last year. Govt, however, has made it clear that it is not going to bow to opposition pressure.

But first up will be the row over appointment of Mahtab as pro-tem speaker. The move has drawn flak from the opposition, which alleged that the claim of Congress member K Suresh to the post was overlooked.



Oath-taking of MPs will be followed by election of Speaker on June 26 and Prez Murmu's address to the joint sitting of both Houses on June 27

On Monday, Murmu will administer oath to Mahtab as pro-tem speaker at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Mahtab will then reach Parliament House and call the Lok Sabha to order at 11am. The proceedings will begin with members observing a moment of silence on the occasion of the first sitting of the 18th Lok Sabha. This will be followed by Lok Sabha secretary general Utpal Kumar Singh placing the list of members elected to the lower House.

Mahtab will then call upon PM Narendra Modi, the leader of Lok Sabha, to take

oath as member of the House. After the panel of chairpersons, he will administer oath/affirmation as Lok Sabha members to the council of ministers. Members from states, in alphabetical order, will take oath or make affirmation over the next two days.

The President is scheduled to address the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on June 27. The debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address will begin on June 28. The PM is expected to respond to the debate on July 2 or 3.

## Cong's fresh salvo on pro tem Speaker

**O**n the eve of the 18th Lok Sabha's first session, Congress asked why BJP's Bhartruhari Mahtab was chosen as pro tem Speaker over his party colleague Ramesh Chandappa Jigajinagi, who is also in his seventh consecutive term. Congress has been protesting against govt superseding senior-most member in LS K Suresh for the ceremonial post of pro tem speaker, who administers oath to newly-elected MPs.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh said, "Kodikkunil Suresh of INC, who is in his eighth term, should have been pro tem speaker. But Bhartruhari Mahtab of BJP has been appointed on the flimsy grounds that he has greater claim because this is his seventh consecutive term." **TNN**

Both Houses are expected to go into a brief recess and reassemble on July 22 for presentation of the Union Budget.

## EAM's homage to Kanishka victims amid Canada spat

**New Delhi:** Paying homage to the AI182 'Kanishka' bombing victims, foreign minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said the attack anniversary was a reminder why terrorism should never be tolerated.

Marking the 39th anniversary of the bombing, he said this was one of the worst acts of terrorism in history. The minister's remarks came in the middle of the diplomatic strife between India and Canada over what the former calls political space given by Canadian authorities to extremists who advocate violence against India.

Another Union minister, Hardeep Puri, called the bombing one of the most reprehensible acts of terror committed against India. The bombing of the Montreal-New Delhi Air India flight 182 was blamed on Sikh militants who did it in retaliation to 'Operation Blue Star'.

The 'Kanishka' flight exploded 45 minutes before it was to land at London's Heathrow airport on June 23, 1985, killing all 329 people on board, most of them Canadians of Indian descent. Puri said the "dastardly" bombing remained one of the most reprehensible acts of terror committed against India. **TNN**

## I killed as NCP MLA's nephew hits bike with SUV on narrow road

Mihir Tanksale & Alim Shaikh

**Pune:** A nephew of NCP (Ajit Pawar) MLA Dilip Mohite Patil was arrested Saturday after a car with him at the wheel fatally struck a 19-year-old motorcyclist head-on while overtaking a pickup van at a bend on a narrow stretch of road near Eklahare village of Ambegaon taluka in Maharashtra's Pune district.

Mayur Mohite, whose uncle represents Khed Alandi constituency in the assembly, was charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, rash and negligent driving, and other offences linked to the death of Om Sunil Bhalerao.

Mayur, who runs a business, was returning to Shel Pimpalgaon in Khed taluka from Narayangaon with two friends in his SUV when the accident occurred on the old highway to Nashik. The accident site is 65km from Pune.

Pune Rural police said deceased Om Sunil, a resident of Kalamb, was on his way home from Eklahare. His mother is a former deputy sarpanch of Kalamb village.



Mayur Mohite was arrested for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, rash and negligent driving

Maichar police station in-charge inspector Arun Phuge said, "The road near Eklahare where the accident occurred around 9pm is a narrow one. The SUV overtook the van at speed and appeared right in front of the motorcyclist coming from the opposite direction. The resultant collision was fatal for the biker."

Police quoted witnesses as saying that Mayur and the other occupants of the SUV didn't alight to help the victim. "Some youth from our village reached the spot and took Om to a hospital, where he was declared dead," a villager said. Pune Rural SP Pankaj Deshmukh told **TOI** that Mayur's blood samples had been collected to check for presence of alcohol.

With inputs from Gitesh Shelke

## Yoga poses at Golden Temple get designer death threats

**Vadodara:** A Vadodara-based fashion designer and influencer, Archana Makwana, was put under police protection on Sunday after getting death threats online over her yoga poses at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, reports **Tushar Tere**. The Gujarat police provided her security and advised her to stay home for the next few days over threats to her life.

The Punjab police booked Makwana for hurting religious sentiments after a complaint was filed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Saturday.

Makwana performed meditation and "Shirsasana" (head stand) on the Golden Temple premises on June 21, International Day for Yoga, and posted the pictures on social media.

The SGPC criticised the incident and said it hurt their religious sentiments. Makwana removed the pictures and posted a video apologising for her act. "I thought of performing shirsasana to spread the message of unity as well as fitness. I never thought that it would hurt sentiments. I apologised for the act, as I was scared for my life," Makwana told **TOI**.

## Maya reinstates nephew as BSP nat'l coordinator

Neha Shukla @timesgroup.com

**Lucknow:** BSP supremo Mayawati reinstated Sunday her nephew Akash Anand as the national coordinator and her successor in the party, expressing hope that he will handle the responsibilities with "maturity" this time. Akash is the son of Mayawati's brother Anand Kumar.

On May 7, during the third phase of LS elections, Mayawati had removed Akash from his roles due to 'lack of maturity'.

After officially putting him again as the second-in-command in the party structure, she said: "I hope people in the party will support and encourage him more this time, so that he emerges true to my expectations."

He was also declared party's star campaigner for by-polls in Punjab and Uttarakhand along with Mayawati.

The earlier decision to remove him followed a campaign speech in Sitapur on April 28 where Akash used unparliamentary language



On May 7, during the third phase of Lok Sabha elections, Mayawati had removed Akash from his roles due to 'lack of maturity'

against political opponents, leading to an FIR against him and 39 others. However, the primary concern was BSP's diminishing chances in the elections, as it became apparent that the Jatav vote had shifted away from the party.

In the 2024 polls, BSP did not win any seats in UP, with its vote share dropping from 19.4% in 2019 to 9.3%. It had secured 10 seats in 2019. Akash, after being named Mayawati's successor in Dec 2023, campaigned extensively for the first time, holding 17 rallies before being benched on May 7. Party's loss in Nagina, a seat it won in 2019, highlighted the challenges faced. "There was also a demand to bring him back. I thank Behenji for giving him the responsibilities," said BSP state president Vishwanath Pal.

## UP DSP found in hotel with woman constable demoted to constable

Pathikrit Chakraborty @timesgroup.com

**Lucknow:** UP Police has demoted a DSP found in a hotel with a woman constable three years ago to the rank of a constable, his first post when he joined service decades back. Kripa Shankar Kanaujia is now 59, with only about a year left for retirement.

Saturday's order requires Kanaujia to join as a constable in PAC's 26th battalion in Gorakhpur. The decision has stirred debate within police circles on the quantum of punishment for "misconduct", the term mentioned in the official communication about the DSP's demotion. Senior officers also stressed that punishment should be proportionate to "crime".

Another senior officer pointed out that very few constables rose to become DSPs after serving decades and argued that such demotions should be ordered in the rarest of rare cases.

Former UP DGP and BJP RS MP Brijlal preferred dis-



The decision has triggered a debate on quantum of punishment that an officer can be awarded for 'misconduct'

missal, rather than demotions, for officers indulging in such misdemeanours.

However, a senior UP Police pointed out that the action against Kanaujia was taken under UP govt's servant (discipline and appeal) rules 1999, which allow reversions to the first post as part of penalty.

The matter goes back to July 2021 when Kanaujia was a circle officer in Unnao. He had requested the then SP for leave citing family commitments but did not go home. It was reported that he checked into a hotel near Kanpur, accompanied by the woman constable.

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# CBI files FIR on NEET-UG 'leak', sends spl teams to Bihar, Guj

Agency Will Also Examine Role Of Govt Staff

Rajshankar Jha  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: CBI on Sunday registered an FIR in connection with alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG exam and despatched special teams constituted by agency chief Praveen Sood to Patna and Godhra where local police have registered cases of paper leaks.

The agency will also examine the role of public servants connected with conduct of the examination besides probing the entire "gamut of events and the larger conspiracy", sources said.

CBI will take over probes being conducted by the police in Bihar and Gujarat. On Sunday, Gujarat accorded sanction to CBI to probe alleged irregularities in the exam held on May 5. Bihar may follow suit soon, sources said.

"The ministry of education has requested CBI to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the entire



Economic Offences Unit personnel of Bihar police with the arrested NEET accused after medical examination at LNJP hospital in Patna on Sunday

gamut of alleged irregularities, including conspiracy, cheating, impersonation, breach of trust, and destruction of evidence by candidates, institutes, and middlemen, including attempted irregularities," a CBI spokesperson said.

CBI has filed the case based on a written complaint from the director of the de-

partment of higher education in the education ministry.

The complaint said certain isolated incidents occurred in a few states during the conduct of NEET examination by the National Testing Agency on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 cities abroad, with over 23 lakh candidates appearing for the exam.

Mistaken as impostors, CBI men thrashed in Bihar; 4 held

Patna: A CBI team investigating the UGC-NET paper leak case was attacked Saturday in Bihar's Nawada by villagers who allegedly mistook them for impostors, leading to four arrests, reports Kshitiz. This is the first reported assault on investigators of leak cases in the state, officials said.

The attack occurred when the officers, including a woman constable from Nawada Town police station, reached Kasiyadh village for the investigation. The team's vehicles were also damaged. "The CBI team had seized two cell-phones in the probe. However, the villagers mistook them for impostors and assaulted them. Four people, including a woman, were arrested and sent to jail," Nawada SP Ambrish Rahul said.

# From paper leak to training students, tech-savvy 'handlers' run exam racket

Kshitiz@timesgroup.com

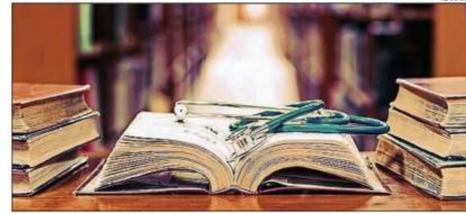
Patna: When it comes to job description, the versatility of a "handler" is no longer limited to airport cargo, the police dog squad, political campaigns, or even a spy ring.

Investigators piecing together the conspiracy behind the NEET-UG paper leak have a handle on how "handlers" operate in the shady realm of the nationwide exam racket whose roots have been traced to Bihar and Jharkhand.

"The nine handlers arrested in the NEET-UG case so far—six in Jharkhand and three in Bihar—are tech-savvy individuals who played a crucial role in orchestrating the leak of question papers, training examinees who paid for these to memorise the answers, and even escorting them to their respective centres," a senior police officer said.

The six handlers arrested from Jharkhand's Deoghar used to reside in rented accommodation, masquerading as labourers. Their brief was to ensure the leaked papers reached the intended recipients while maintaining high secrecy and anonymity.

"Once a particular exam got over, they would get to work on identifying the chinks



THE CROOK BOOK: The six handlers held in Deoghar, Jharkhand, used to reside in rented accommodation, masquerading as labourers. Their brief was to ensure that the leaked papers reached the intended recipients while maintaining high secrecy and anonymity

in the system for the next one," the officer said.

To expand their client base, these handlers would look for opportunities to connect with coaching centres, schools and colleges on some pretext. They would seek out individuals associated with the exam process, aiming to bribe them into getting useful information.

Bihar Police's raid on a safe house based on a tip-off on the morning of the May 5 NEET-UG exam threw up evidence of these handlers herding around 30 candidates into this meeting place at Ram Krishna Nagar on Patna's outskirts on the eve of the test.

"The examinees were there through the night to memorise answers to the leaked

question papers. The handlers then transported them to their exam centres in private vehicles, taking all necessary precautions to ensure their safety," the officer said.

Online form submission for entrance exams was introduced nationwide around 2010, replacing the earlier method of sending applications by mail. The older system had loopholes that fraudsters and corrupt officials would easily exploit.

"Before the introduction of online forms, examination conducting agencies would assign roll numbers based on when they received the application envelopes. Criminals exploited this system by sending multiple application forms

in a single envelope, using codes like 'bogies' and 'engines' to refer to candidates and their proxies, respectively," said an IPS officer of the Bihar cadre.

"This strategy ensured that all these candidates were allocated roll numbers for the same examination centre and hall, facilitating cheating."

Another senior IPS officer said paper leaks could occur at various stages—from when these papers are compiled to their storage in bank currency chests before being transported to the exam centres.

He said the older cheating methods included replacing candidates with proxies after videography verification at the exam centres and altering optical mark recognition (OMR) sheets later.

"Handlers gathering their clients in one place to memorise answers under their guidance is a new trend. This is meant to eliminate a paper trail."

Vishal Kumar, an IPS officer formerly with the Economic Offences Unit (EOU) probing the NEET-UG paper leak in Bihar, said three significant gangs were active in the state. One is suspected to be led by Ranjit Kumar Singh, alias Ranjit Don, accused of masterminding multiple paper leaks before foraging into politics.

# ABVP: Students have right to know why NEET-PG called off

Siwan (Bihar): Following the postponement of the NEET-PG examination, ABVP general secretary Yagyawalkya Shukla demanded explanations from both the government and the National Board of Education regarding the sudden postponement of the exam just hours before it was due to be held on June 23 morning.

This is the second competitive exam that has been postponed after UGC-NET was cancelled due to the exam paper being leaked on darknet.

"If the National Board of Examination or the ministry of health and family welfare had any kind of suspicion, they should have brought forth everything in front of candidates with full transparency... Student

PM helpless before paper leak racket, edu mafia: Rahul

Slamming the govt for irregularities and cancelling of entrance exams, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said shuffling bureaucrats of National Testing Agency was no solution to the endemic problem in the education system which had "rotted under BJP". Rae Bareilly MP Rahul Gandhi added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "helpless before the paper leak racket and education mafia".

bodies demand the government and the National Board of Education that the students have the right to

Stalin, BJP ally PMK target Centre for cancelling exam

Tamil Nadu CMMK Stalin on Sunday sharpened his attack on the Centre after the NEET-PG 2024 exam scheduled for Sunday was postponed at the eleventh hour. BJP's ally PMK, too, condemned the decision to postpone the exam at the last moment and demanded a ban on NEET. Stalin said the postponement of the exam, following the cancellation of UGC-NET, "has thrown thousands of our doctors into deep despair".

know the reasons and circumstances behind the step," Shukla said in a self-made video.

2 Maha teachers booked, charged under new law against leaks

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Maharashtra Police booked Sunday zilla parishad (ZP) teachers and an ITI group instructor from Latur and a person from Delhi over alleged links with the NEET scam, reports Mohammed Akhef.

One of the Latur trio was detained Sunday. All four were charged under the new anti-cheating law notified by the Centre a few days ago. The cops claimed to have found exam-related documents and details of suspicious financial transactions in their phones. "Based on a complaint by Maharashtra ATS, we have registered an FIR under sections 3(v), 4 and 10 of the newly introduced Public Examinations (Prevention of unfair means) Act, 2024 and sections 420 (cheating) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of IPC," Latur SP Somay Munde said.

# Computer-based tests more secure than pen-paper mode exams: Experts

Manash Gohain & Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

New Delhi: Amid controversies surrounding irregularities in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) and the cancellation of the University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) due to question paper leaks on the "darknet," experts are debating the pros and cons of offline versus digital exam delivery. The ministry of education has announced the formation of a high-powered committee to review all aspects of the examination process and the functioning of the NTA. Some experts argue that computer-based tests (CBT) are more secure than traditional pen-and-

paper exams.

Under scanner, NTA officials acknowledged the challenges of conducting exams securely in both formats despite adhering to all security protocols. They suggested a year-round exam model similar to the Scholastic Aptitude Test conducted by the College Board, Educational Testing Service in the US, allowing candidates to appear multiple times and use their best score for college admissions.

While NEET-UG has traditionally been a pen-and-paper exam, UGC-NET, which has been computer-based since 2018, reverted to a pen-and-paper OMR mode on Tuesday. However, the exam was cancelled following inputs from the National Cyber Crime

Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) indicating it had been compromised.

Some believe that computer-based testing is the future due to reduced human involvement. Dr Arun Gupta, president of the Delhi Medical Council, said: "It may be a good idea to make the NEET-UG exam computer-based. The govt can allow the exam to be taken twice a year to make the process more efficient and avoid any shortage of computers or other infrastructure related problems." A senior official from the Greater Noida Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) also supports adopting CBT models to minimise paper leak risks, stating that such allegations

undermine the integrity of the examination process and the medical profession.

In 2018-19, the education ministry proposed a computer-based multi-session mode for NEET-UG, similar to the JEE (Main), but this did not gain traction within the health ministry. Former HRD minister Ramesh Pokhriyal had mentioned the possibility of biannual and digital NEET-UG exams, but he later retracted his statement.

A senior official with experience in conducting NEET-UG and UGC-NET emphasised that CBT spread over multiple days or sessions would limit the impact of a single-day/session leak and make it easier to track due to digital footprints, as seen in the 2021 JEE (Main).

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L. Lakshay S/o V Murlu R/o 703, Pkt B, Sec 13, Dwarka, New Delhi 110072 changed my name to Lakshay Murlu vide affidavit dated 20/06/2024 sworn before notary public Prabha Rani Delhi (Registration no 10661) for all future purposes

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BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

# Big shake-up in tech needed to secure exams: Official

'Outfits Using Dark Web Have Hacked System'

Manash.Gohain  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A "big shake-up in technology and capacity building" is the need of the hour, according to a senior official. The official noted that merely looking at exam models proposed by the forthcoming high-powered committee will not be enough. For example, the computer-based ITEP had to be cancelled "despite having a comparatively smaller number of candidates. Each file was around 5GB, and when downloaded at the centres, they received distorted question papers".

ITEP is the entrance test for select central and state universities, IITs, NITs, RIEs, and govt colleges for integrated teacher education programmes.

Sources in the IT department are confident that CUET-UG results could be ready by June 30, but they are uncertain about the rescheduling of the cancelled and postponed exams. Citing the example of the All-India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT) paper



The CBI headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday. A source in the govt says a national level think tank needs to work on threats related to dark web

leak in 2004, where CBSE managed to hold the exam within a week, an NTA source said the agency's security department, IT, and administrative staff "don't feel it's possible now" due to fears that organisations using the 'dark web' have completely hacked into NTA's security protocols and "have decided to expose the chinks this year".

"They are not going to stop. The dark web is used by terrorist organisations. We are not sure how safe even our black box (where question papers are stored) is," said a worried official, indicating that NTA doesn't have the capacity to thwart such "organised attacks". A source in the govt added, "A national level think tank needs to work on

such threats." While questioning the recent functioning of the agency, insiders insist there have been no "paper leaks in Bihar".

"Two days ago, Bihar Police asked for details of six candidates, sharing their roll numbers. Two of the roll numbers don't exist, in another two, the names and roll numbers don't match. There are so many contradictions, including the timing of the seizures, which was post-exam when all the question papers are already in the public domain," said an official from NTA's computer section.

Within the autonomous organisation, there are strong rumours of a "big exodus" of officials on deputation who feel their careers are at stake.

6 held for UP recruitment exam paper leak

Lucknow: UP STF arrested six people Sunday in connection with the paper leak of this year's Review Officer/Assistant Review Officer (Preliminary) Examination. The arrests were made in Prayagraj, reports Pathikrit Chakraborty. The papers were leaked from a printing press in Bhopal, STF said.

The examination was conducted by Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission on Feb 11 and cancelled on March 2 following reports of a paper leak.

Those arrested were identified as Sunil Raghuvanshi (mechanical engineer at the printing press), Subhash Prakash, Vishal Dubey, Sandeep Pandey, Amarjeet Sharma, and Vivek Upadhyay.

"The trio of Rajeev, Vishal and Subhash persuaded Sunil to leak the question paper. Sunil demanded Rs 10 lakh. He had also put a condition that the candidates must study the leaked paper in Bhopal under his supervision to prevent widespread dissemination," said additional SP, STF, Vinod Kumar Singh.

Tharoor mocks UP over paper leaks, BJP calls it insult to state

New Delhi: A screenshot shared by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on social media mocking UP over the spate of paper leaks led to several BJP leaders reacting strongly with Union minister Jitin Prasad dubbing it an insult to the state.

"I don't see the humour in running down my state and its people by stereotyping them with such condemnable remarks. Such an insult to UP is deplorable and must be condemned in strongest words," Prasad said.

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "This gentleman frequently indulges in satirising various cultures (first North-East and now UP) with remarkably caustic words."

The comments came in response to Tharoor's post on X in which a respondent is shown "rewarded" 10/10 for the response "where answer is out before question" against a query in Hindi, "Uttar Pradesh kaise kehate hain". He commented on the post with "shandaar", also adding the hashtag "Pariksha pe charcha".

IMA backs govt, says it's critical to hold key tests with diligence

New Delhi: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Sunday lauded govt for enacting stringent laws to address malpractice and irregularities in competitive examinations amid controversy over alleged paper leak of NEET-UG and postponement or cancellation of various other exams.

While many doctors' groups and opposition party members had demanded a retest, IMA supported govt move to go ahead with counselling for allotting seats to successful candidates. "We recognise that students are the future of India, and it is critical that important competitive exams are conducted with utmost diligence and confidentiality," the IMA said.

# Pradhan: India needs flexible, less stressful exam system

Manash.Gohain  
@timesgroup.com



New Delhi: Citing the Bihar Police investigation which showed that prima facie all the beneficiaries of the paper leak of NEET-UG took the exams in different centres in Patna, National Testing Agency (NTA) on Sunday maintained that the "leak" was a localised affair.

On a day when CBI formally took up the probe and appeared set to take over the separate investigations into irregularities in the medical entrance exam, NTA sources said 17 of the NEET-UG applicants suspected to have benefited from the leak took exams at 13 of the 70 centres in Patna.

Highlighting this, sources emphasised that 1 lakh candidates, who are most likely to secure an MBBS/ dental seat, were spread across 4,500 of 4,750 centres, implying that the leak did not affect other centres, including 57 others in Patna.

The assessment, though preliminary in nature which would require corroboration by CBI, strengthens NTA's case against cancellation of NEET-UG unless the Supreme Court deems otherwise. The apex court, which is scheduled to hear the matter on July 8, has not stopped the counselling process, but has not ruled out cancellation. Sources debunked allegations that the toppers were bunched in "particular centres".

NTA sources said of the 19

sought by the education ministry on Saturday. "Prima facie from the report, the incident seems localised. But to get to the root of the matter is important, which is why a thorough investigation is being sought by CBI," a senior govt official said.

Pradhan said, "Let the professional agency do the probe. Bihar and Gujarat Police did a good job of intercepting and preventing malpractices."

He said govt acted in the most "transparent manner". "Action on NTA and reform of the agency has been initiated, and the probe handed over to CBI."

Pradhan also said this was the time to "reduce the anxiety of students and rebuild their trust by safeguarding their interest".

Govt on Saturday had replaced the NTA leadership, while appointing a seven-member 'NTA reform panel' to strengthen the integrity of the examinations. The panel will have its first meeting on Monday.

Meanwhile, a remark by education minister Dharmendra Pradhan was seen as an indication that govt is open to any suggestion for a drastic reconfiguration of the examination process. "India needs a flexible and less stressful exam system like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the admission test for colleges in the US," Pradhan told the media.

Bihar Police submitted a report on the investigation

# Exam fiasco hits hard: Odisha girl travels 600km, J&K doc spends ₹12k on hotel, trip

Continued from P 1

Some were unaware, some were unsure what to believe so they reached the venues anyway, and some hoped to find answers to their immediate next question — what would the next date of the exam be?

There was no clarity whatsoever on offer. At the venues, each candidate echoed the other's confusion and anxiety, and distress building up over days in the academic calendar slipping away. Indignation was directed at the National Testing Agency (NTA), which many candidates called "irresponsible".

Among the 2 lakh candidates who were to sit for NEET-PG, there were many who had travelled long distances and following carefully nurtured dreams to reach the exam centres — like Neha Tabassum, who came to Noida from Jammu with her husband, spending Rs 12,000 on tickets and a hotel, money that went down the drain. "I discovered the exam was postponed only when I was on my way to the centre in the morning. It took two years of preparation, and this would have been my second attempt. What kind of exam arrangement is this? It's frustrating," she said.

Sunanda Pansari, who came to an exam centre in Bhubaneswar from Kalahandi in Odisha, 600km away, said it was exasperating that the exam's dates had been changed four times. "This is extremely wrong. I have travelled 600km to attend the exam. We should have been informed at least 24 hours in advance about the decision. There is also no information (from govt) on the paper leak



Students protest against NEET-UG re-test in Rajkot on Sunday. Shocked by the uncertainty over a national exam like NEET, a candidate said

as of now," she said, referring to the NEET-UG fiasco.

K Nageswara Rao, whose son was to take the exam in Visakhapatnam, travelled 200km to reach the Andhra Pradesh capital from East Godavari. "It was a bolt from the blue," he said of the sudden cancellation. "No one has a clue when the exam will be held next. My son quit his job to prepare for a year. Now, he is not sure what to do, go back to working immediately or wait till the exam dates are announced again," he said.

Sankha Mandal, a medical officer with the railways who was to appear for NEET-PG at a centre in Kolkata, was similarly distraught. "It's very tough to prepare for such a tough competitive exam while working a full-time job. The indefinite wait for the next date is painful," he said.

Outside ION Digital Zone in Noida, one of the exam venues in Delhi-NCR, K Muri from Bangalore, who has been staying in Delhi to prepare for NEET PG, said the exam's dates had any way been changed three times already and the uncertainty has driven up stress levels. "The first date for NEET PG this year was

March 3, then it was postponed to July 7 and again advanced to June 23. Now, it has been postponed till further notice, this time just 12 hours before the exam. This uncertainty is extremely stressful. The exam system and management need to think from a student's perspective," he said.

Lambasting NTA, whose director-general Subodh Singh was removed by govt on Saturday evening as the nodal examination body battles a crisis, Atul, an MBBS graduate from Delhi, asked, "How does one pursue academics in such a shaky and mismanaged scenario? This is the third major exam to be cancelled within a week after UGC-NET and CSIR-UGC-NET."

Another MBBS grad, Ankit, who lives in Ghaziabad, said he left his job just to prepare for NEET PG. "I am shocked by the uncertainty over a national exam like NEET," he said.

Neelam Upadhyay, a Delhi resident, knew about the postponement, but felt she could not trust anything till she saw for herself because of the amount of misinformation that swirls around. So, she landed up at the Noida centre.

"I came just to check if the notification about the exam cancellation was real or fake news," she said.

Renu Aggarwal, the chief medical superintendent of the district hospital in Noida was there too, not as a govt representative but as a mother. Her son was to appear for NEET PG. "If they wanted to postpone the exam for security reasons, they should have done it earlier, giving time to students. Many students got harassed due to this sudden change," she said.

Ankita, a candidate from Gurgaon, said postponement was annoying, but "it is better this way than to rewrite the paper. If a paper leak were to be found".

Outside an exam centre in Jaipur, Yash Dubey, a practising doctor; pointed out that the delay would prove costly for some candidates. "There are many candidates who are opting for Institute of National Importance Combined Entrance Test (INI-CET) counselling to get a PG seat at AIIMS. Those who get a seat via INI-CET but give it up have to pay Rs 3 lakh. Now, with a delay in NEET-PG, candidates who thought of bettering their rank and landing a seat in their desired course at AIIMS will have to take up seats in whichever courses they have got at present through INI-CET. This will at least assure them of a PG seat. Later, however, if they get their desired course through NEET-PG, they will have to vacate the INI-CET seat, and for this, have to pay Rs 3 lakh. How is this fair?" he asked.

(With inputs from Uma Mahesh in Vizag, Nirupa Vatyam in Hyderabad, Suparna Roy in Jaipur and Poulami Roy in Kolkata)

# Cong expels 5 for ink attack on Odisha unit chief over NEET stir

Bhubaneswar: Five Congress members in Odisha, including a woman, were expelled Sunday for alleged involvement in an ink attack on state unit president Sarat Pattanayak three days ago. Pattanayak had accused BJP of engineering the attack because of Congress protests against the alleged NEET-UG paper leak. BJP denied

the charges and blamed Congress infighting, reports Debraj Mohapatra.

Those expelled are Prakash Mishra, Shriyasmita Panda, Sandip Routray, Amresh Parida and Aryan Samal. "Their indisciplined act damaged the image of the party," Santosh Singh Saluja, chairman of Congress's disciplinary committee, said.

# APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of an unknown male Age: Approx 45 years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'7", Face: Long, Built: Medium, Hair: Long, was wearing Blue colour Printed Shirt, Blue colour Pant and Hawai Chappal in feet, was found in unconscious/dead condition at N.S. Marg, in front of Tikona Park, Darya Ganj, Delhi on 19.06.2024. In this regard a DD No. 14A U.S. 174 CrPC, Dated 20.06.2024, has been lodged at P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi. His dead body has been preserved in MAMC Hospital Mortuary for 72 Hrs. Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

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(Shubhanshu Dixit)  
Additional Chief Engineer  
PHED, Region, Kota

DIPRC/4577/2024

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क्रमांक: अति./बी./अके.बी./2024-25/1792-1820 दिनांक:-14.06.2024  
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# Mahayuti to hedge state poll bets with please-all budget

Stage Set For A Stormy Final Session In Maha

Chaitanya Marpakwar  
@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: With Mahayuti taking a drubbing in the Lok Sabha elections, Maharashtra deputy chief minister and finance minister Ajit Pawar will look to do a balancing act and reach out to castes, backward communities and minorities as he presents a populist, please-all poll budget during the monsoon session of the state legislature that begins on Thursday.

The last session before assembly polls, likely to be held in Oct, is expected to be stormy as govt will look to reach out to voters and MVA, still riding the high from its stellar performance in LS polls, will look to corner it over several key issues, especially exam leaks, Maratha and OBC reservation rows and the agrarian crisis, as well as expose 'scams'.

Political observers said it would be a challenge for govt to make sure the Budget rings in some positivity and is seen as inclusive, especially for backward castes and minori-

## MONSOON SESSION'S TALKING POINTS

**Maratha reservation:** Activist Manoj Jarange recently suspended his fast, setting a July 13 deadline for final notification over the 'sage soyare' (blood relatives) demand

**OBC protests:** Activists Laxman Hake & Navnath Waghmare on Saturday called off their hunger stir against "a backdoor entry" for Marathas into the OBC quota after govt's written assurance

**Caste census:** Amid the rows, oppn has pushed for a caste-based census



**Muslim quota:** Muslim netas have renewed demand for 5% quota for the community

**New policies:** Oppn wants policies on hoardings and shifting chemical factories out of residential areas

**Farmer issues:** Oppn & farmer activists have sought higher compensation for crop damage and better support prices. The delayed rainfall has upped the demand for drought relief

**Land acquisition:** While layout mapping on Nagpur-Ratnagiri NH has begun, farmer leader Raju Shetti has said if the land is acquired without paying 4x the rate, "a reply will be given in Swabhimani Shetkari style"

## CM awaits 'BJP central brass nod' for cabinet expansion

Mumbai: CM Eknath Shinde had said he will expand his cabinet after LS polls & make appointments on state-run corporations & boards, but there is still no clarity on whether these will happen before monsoon session. There are 29 state ministers, while the permitted strength for the council is 43, reports Chaitanya Marpakwar.

Many Shiv Sena MLAs have been waiting for an expansion since June 2022, when the party split, and close to half a dozen speculative dates were given since Shinde took over as CM. With the assembly polls expected in Oct, there is pressure from MLAs to be inducted as ministers, especially in Sena, political observers said.

Sena sources said Shinde is keen on cabinet expansion, but it will only occur after a go-ahead from central BJP brass. If it does take place, three to four new ministers each from Sena, BJP and NCP could be inducted, they said.

## 4 channels go off air in AP after elections, YSRCP petitions Trai

Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh): Some news channels have gone off air at several places in Andhra Pradesh following the declaration of the results of the Assembly and Parliamentary elections with an opposition YSRCP Parliamentary alleging coercion by state govt leading to them being blocked.

Allegations of channels —TV9, NTV, 10TV and Sakshi TV —being blocked have been levelled against NDA govt, comprising TDP, BJP and Janasena. YSRCP member SNiranjan Reddy complained to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) over the alleged blocking of these four vernacular news channels by govt.

In a letter to Trai, Reddy claimed Andhra Pradesh Cable TV Operators Association took these four channels off air due to alleged coercion by the TDP-led govt in the state. He alleged TV9, NTV, 10TV and Sakshi TV were blocked 'without any lawful justification or procedural compliance.'

Meanwhile, a local multi-system operator (cable TV service provider) from the Godavari region confirmed these four channels were blocked.

The operator, who services up to 300 households with cable TV connections observed that the blockade began even before N Chandrababu Naidu took oath as the CM. pn

## Experts worried as juvenile hilsa floods Kolkata markets

Monotosh Chakraborty | TNN



Kolkata: Markets across Kolkata have been flooded with juvenile hilsa, weighing between 50g and 200g. This rampant fishing of 'ilish' is causing severe damage to the hilsa ecosystem in the Ganga estuary. Fine mesh nets, which trap even the smallest fish, are being used in what many describe as an act of temporal greed. This unsustainable practice is pushing the hilsa population to spawn in Bangladesh, where catching juvenile hilsa is a punishable offence.

The first hilsa catch of the season predominantly comprises juvenile fish. Larger hilsa weighing between 400g and 600g have also been caught but their numbers are very low. Last week, an average of 130 trawlers brought in 80% small hilsa hauls with remaining 20% consisting of other fish and larger hilsa. In past two days, there has been a slight increase in the quantity of larger hilsa.

Ajed Ali Gaji, a fisherman, explained, "Fishermen were in dire straits during the ban period from April 15 to June 14, staying at home. Trawler owners face significant expenses and pressure. During Eid, guards on the India-Bangladesh river border are more relaxed, and many unscrupulous traders take

Last week, an average of 130 trawlers brought in 80% small hilsa hauls with the remaining 20% consisting of other fish

advantage of this. They cross the border under the cover of darkness with their trawler lights off and capture juvenile hilsa indiscriminately. This has been happening for the past week, though it's now reducing slightly. About 130 trawlers are bringing in 2.5-3 quintal juvenile hilsa daily. This fish is then taken to Namkhana, Kakdwip and Patharpratima, and end up at Diamond Harbour's Nagendra market. It's an open secret. Juvenile hilsa is also sold in Murshidabad, Nadia and North 24 Parganas. The slightly larger fish are sold in city fringe markets, like Senhati, Behala, Dharapara, Kudghat, and Kasba."

Expressing concern, Bijon Maity, secretary of Kakkdwip Fishermen Association, said, "We are against catching

small fish. We have discussed this issue. While some listen, a few unscrupulous fishermen continue to do this in secret. We have also appealed to the traders to stop buying and selling small fish."

Jagannath Sarkar, secretary of Diamond Harbour Hilsa Market, said, "I am looking into this matter. It must be stopped."

Principal scientist and head of Kakkdwip Research Centre, ICAR — Central Institute of Brackish Water Aquaculture, Debasish De said, "As long as bottom-trawling with trawl nets continues, this problem will persist. Unless the rule of using 90cm or 90mm net mesh is strictly followed, we cannot solve this issue."

"We experience a second migration here. The first peak migration is from Oct 15 to Nov 15, and the second is from end of Feb to end of March. Attention must be paid during these times, and restrictions should be imposed on fishermen if necessary. The third migration is from June 15 to April 14. Restrictions similar to those during this period should be imposed during the other two migration periods," De added.

Hilsa fishing industry is at a critical juncture, with experts and stakeholders calling for stringent measures to preserve this vital fish population and ensure sustainable fishing practices.

## Panel: States' bonuses on top of paddy MSP distorting markets

Dipak Dash | timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), which recommends MSP for different agri-produce, has urged states not to announce bonus over MSP fixed by Centre for paddy as this "distorts the market". The recommendations have come at a time when several states are offering bonus over MSP or political parties have made this poll promise before getting elected.

It made these recommendations in its latest 'Price Policy for Kharif Crop' report, which contains MSP for summer crops. It recommended that procurement of rice and wheat should be restricted in those states that impose high charges and pay bonus, in order to bring parity among states. Odisha is the latest state to announce bonus on MSP for paddy after BJP came to office this month.

"Unsustainable and uneconomical practice of offering bonus over and above MSP for paddy procurement by state govts creates distortions in the market. This restrains private trade participation and potentially discourages competition, which, otherwise could be advantageous for farmers," CACP said.

The report referred to how Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Maharashtra have declared a bonus for paddy in the past.

Chhattisgarh last season announced to purchase paddy at Rs 3,100 a quintal against



Odisha is the latest state to declare bonus on MSP for paddy after BJP came to office this month. The report cites examples of Karnataka, Kerala, TN, Jharkhand and Bengal which have declared bonuses in the past

MSP of Rs 2,183 a quintal for the current marketing season (Oct-Sept). BJP, in its manifesto for Odisha, had promised to buy paddy at Rs 3,100 per quintal while Centre recently announced MSP of Rs 2,300 for 2024-25 season.

CCPA has also highlighted how several states levy charges including market fee, commission to societies and 'arhatias' besides paying bonus over MSP announced by Centre.

While CCPA has recommended concerted efforts for area expansion and yield improvement, and procurement of pulses to become self-sufficient, it also said that to tackle the problem of large imports of edible oils, there should be a dynamic import duty structure based on MSP of oilseeds and domestic and world prices of vegetable oils. In addition, the duty differential between crude and refined oil should be kept at 10-15%.

## Assailants on bike gun down BJP youth wing neta in Indore

Indore: A 35-year-old BJP youth wing (Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha) leader was shot dead by two bike-borne men in Indore early Sunday. Soon after the crime, a group of men broke into the house of the accused and set it afire. They vandalised the furniture and vehicles and made the videos viral on social media, prompting police to deploy heavy force in the area.

DCP Pankaj Pandey said Monu Kalyane, vice president of BJYM's city unit, was gunned down in front of a shop near Chimanbaag square on Jail Road around 3am. Monu is survived by his elder brother, parents, wife and two children.

Soon after the murder, Monu's supporters broke into the house of the accused and torched furniture and bedding. They also ransacked the premises and vehicles parked outside. Videos of the vandalism went viral on social media in which the accused mentioned 'Badla Abhi Baki Hai'.

"Kalyane was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead on arrival," said an official. tnn

## Deaf-mute wife helps nab man for rape bid, chilling murder

Indore: GRP officers on Sunday said they had solved the murder of a woman whose dismembered body parts were found on two trains in Indore and Rishikesh earlier this month. The killer? A 60-year-old man, who lured her to his Ujjain home by offering her shelter for the night but drugged her & tried to rape her, reports Karishma Kotwal.

Police identified the accused as Kamlesh Patel, a history sheeter with several theft cases, who lived in the trackside slums, close to Ujjain station. He has admitted to the murder, said GRP inspector Sanjay Shukla.

It was Patel's speech-and-hearing-impaired wife Aarti, who testified against him, narrating through gestures how she woke up to find him trying to rape the woman, bludgeon her when she resisted, and then strangle her with a length of rope, Shukla said.

Patel then spent 4.5 hours cutting the victim's body into pieces after locking his wife out of the house, police said. Police recovered victim's clothes, a butcher's knife and an iron bolt from his house.



## Tribute to the Great Warrior Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji on his Martyrdom Day

June 24, 2024

“बंदा सिंह बहादुर एक महान योद्धा थे। उनका जीवन हम सभी के लिए प्रेरणा है। मैं बाबा बंदा सिंह बहादुर को उनकी बहादुरी और बलिदान के लिए नमन करता हूँ।”  
- नरेन्द्र मोदी



The Goan coastline, with its tapestry of golden sands, sun-kissed islands, lush mangroves, and blue skies, makes for an alluring destination. Tourists have discovered that the best way to capture it all is from the deck of a yacht cutting through azure waters

# IT'S FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR Goa's Yacht Sector

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From watching the sun dip below the horizon while standing on a gently swaying deck, to proposing to the love of your life, Indians are always looking for new ways to make unforgettable memories. Keen to create a "never-before" experience for the 'Gram', many tourists are turning to yachts, and Goa has them aplenty.

Yacht operators in Goa say tourists are willing to pay top dollar, which is anywhere between Rs 12,000 and Rs 75,000, for a front row seat to witness nature's masterpiece — a multi-hued sunset or a palette of verdant mangroves — all while sipping on champagne.

"Every sunset is occupied. If the tourists are there, there are multiple bookings every day. Weekends are occupied," said the owner of Boat Goa, a firm that offers yacht services.

Two months earlier, a group of military officers rented a yacht to celebrate their retirement from the services. And every week, a man gets down on one knee to pop the question while his beaming fiancée stands at the bowsprit, her gown caught in the wind. The wind, the waves, and that sparkling ring — it's a scene straight out of a romantic novel.

"We get a lot of pre-wedding shoots in the morning half...that is something that is trending in a big way. The couple books the yacht for a minimum of two hours. They need the warm light in the morning, which is between 7am and 9am. After that, the light gets harsh," said Leon Fernandes,



director of Yacht Life Goa. "We have seen a steep jump in the number of people looking to make reels during sunset," Fernandes said. Indians, with their innate sense of romance and flair for the dramatic, are latching onto this nautical trend with gusto. It's not just about the journey anymore. It's about crafting that reel to set Instagram feeds ablaze.

Also, it's not just proposals. Honeymoons, babymoons and wedding anniversaries...Yacht operators have seen them all.

"Over the last few years, yachts have gained popularity and have increased in number. We foresee this will be a trend that will continue to grow. Group sizes of eight to 15 people are the most common when it comes to yacht bookings. Anniversary and birthday celebrations, proposals, retirement parties, and high-profile guests just looking for a private

time to celebrate on vacation are mostly the reasons yachts are booked," said Ryan Prazeres, co-founder and CEO of OneBoard.

The price tags for these floating experiences vary as much as the types of yachts on offer. For those looking to dip their toes into the world of yachting, prices start at a reasonable Rs 12,000. But for those seeking the pinnacle of maritime luxury, prices can soar to a princely Rs 75,000 for a mere two hours.

"The average cost for just the yacht is Rs 20,000. The number of people can bring their own food and drinks. We provide an ice box, water and some mixers and wafers," said Prazeres.

For private luxury yachts, the peak booking season is from Nov to Feb, with weekends generally sold out. Couples looking for some intimate time generally prefer early morning cruises, while the prime slots for tourists and corporate events are 4pm to 8pm.

Goa has around 50 pleasure boats, which include close to 20 luxury yachts, just over 10 catamarans and an equal number of speedboats. There are twin-hulled boats for sunset cruises too, which can accommodate larger groups. The larger catamarans are used for corporate functions and large private parties with groups of anywhere between 40 and 100 individuals.

"An IT company based in Germany, which has a team based in In-

dia, recently hosted its annual meeting on the yacht to thank its team members. A lot of corporate events for team members and distributors are held on yachts instead of hosting them at a hotel's banquet hall. It becomes more memorable," said the owner of Boat Goa Yacht Services.

But it is not all smooth sailing. Given that customers are paying a significant amount for a luxury experience, the lack of infrastructure threatens to run the industry

ground. "One challenge we have witnessed and the most common feedback we get is that when guests pay such a high price for a two-hour luxury experience, they expect the infrastructure, parking, the jetty, and the pathway to the yacht to be of decent quality. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and guests must board through narrow lanes with no proper lighting, the pathways some-



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## SETTING SAIL



Types of YACHTS

₹20,000  
Average cost for just the yacht



Luxury yachts



There are more than 15 yachts that have a capacity of between 5 and 25 people



Sailing yachts



Cabin cruisers



Speed boats



Sail boats

The price range is ₹15,000-70,000 for two hours, which includes one hour cruising and one hour anchored

Goa also has catamarans that are not as premium but are used for corporate functions or large private parties

The average cost for the yacht, food, entertainment, and drinks is ₹30,000

Peak booking season is Nov-Feb



5-15 people | Can be accommodated on luxury yachts

Party yachts are generally bigger and can accommodate large groups

Party vessel



Maintaining a yacht is very difficult as spare parts are not available, adequate manpower is scarce and repairs are very expensive and time-consuming. This is a niche market. The yacht continues to incur costs whether you run it or not

Yacht owner



## Key API market, but India still pays crores for orphan drugs

Policy Blocks Make Indian Cos Reluctant To Make Drugs At Home

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Hyderabad: Though India manufactures most of the key active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) for over 400 FDA-approved orphan drugs — used to treat rare diseases such as Gaucher's disease and spinal muscular atrophy — patients in India are forced to cough up crores of rupees to procure them.

The reason: Reluctance among Indian pharma companies to develop the drugs at home owing to policy hurdles.

Hence, APIs exported to foreign companies are after being transformed into medicine in the form of tablets, capsules, injections, etc. sold back to India at exorbitant prices. For instance, an annual dose of Trientine, imported for treatment of Wilson's disease (genetic disorder that causes buildup of copper) costs Rs 1.6 crore, while the Eliglustat drug administered to patients with Gaucher's disease (metabolic disorder causing fat buildup in organs) costs Rs 1.8 crore. These prices often make it impossible for pa-



**BITTER PILL:** Many industry experts feel that these drugs could easily be made available for a fraction of their current cost

tients to avail of treatment, say industry sources.

According to Lysosomal Storage Disorders Support Society, at least 20 patients across India, suffering from rare diseases like Pompe, Gaucher's, Wilson's etc, have died in two years because they can't afford the medicines.

"Exported as powder, when the APIs are shipped back to India as a tablet or injection, we need an import licence. For that, we have to pay 10% of the cost of the drug along with the cost of the package. Also, since some drugs are unstable above room temperature, they have to be sent in a cold box. This further hikes the cost," said Ramaiah Muthyala, presi-

dent, Indian Organisation for Rare Diseases. According to him, only eight of these 400 drugs are actually expensive while the prices of the rest are just inflated. "Encouraging Indian companies to manufacture the drugs is the solution to tackle these expensive price tags," he added.

In fact, many industry experts feel that these drugs could easily be made available for a fraction of their current cost — for as little as Rs 20,000 to Rs 3 lakh — if generic drug manufacturing companies in India develop them.

But that isn't an easy affair, claim local firms that have started foraying into this business recently. There is no organised database of

patients to ascertain the requirement of such drugs. Also, India lacks a proper channel for marketing such drugs, say industry players.

"Even though we have a ready product to treat Dravet Syndrome (genetic form of epilepsy), which has brought down the cost to a tenth of the price of the US product, it's a challenge to find patients," said Dr Jagadeesh Rangisetty, CEO, Biophore Pharmaceuticals, stressing the need to bridge this gap. The company is one of three Indian firms that recently took up manufacturing of orphan drugs. Only about 12 drugs are being manufactured, while for all other diseases patients are dependent on foreign sellers.

The official also stressed the lack of incentive, R&D support and a proper channel to buy and sell products are factors discouraging companies from manufacturing orphan drugs at home. The US govt, on the other hand, allows seven years' exclusive rights to the company developing a drug for rare diseases to sell these in addition to extending all necessary support for R&D.

## Isro's reusable launch vehicle completes final landing test

Bengaluru: Isro conducted Sunday the third and final landing experiment of its reusable launch vehicle (RLV) — the RLV-LEX-03 test — paving the way for an orbital re-entry test of a vehicle that will be six times the size of the technology demonstrator version used for experiments so far, reports **Chethan Kumar**.

Sunday's test was conducted at 7.10am at Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) at Challakere in Chitradurga district, some 220km from Bengaluru.

S Unnikrishnan Nair, director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), told TOI after LEX-03: "It was perfect. The trail was so beautiful. This was the first time we got to see it. Conventional aircraft have a very shallow approach, but RLV has a very steep approach. We get numbers from the test to prove this, but seeing is believing. We could see right from the time it was dropped from the helicopter."

Isro said: "RLV-LEX-03 re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability under more challenging release conditions (cross range of 500 m) and more severe wind conditions. The vehicle, named Pushpak, was released from IAF's Chinook helicopter at an altitude of 4.5km."

## Roads ministry seeks nod for ₹22 lakh crore highway plan

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New Delhi: In a big push for infrastructure development, road transport and highways ministry has sought Cabinet approval for Rs 22 lakh crore investment in a highway development plan covering around 30,600 km by 2031-32.

The plan, submitted to finance ministry and shared with all key ministries last week, includes construction of 18,000 km of expressways and high-speed corridors, decongestion of 4,000 km national highways around cities and building of strategic and international roads. Around 35% of the investment will come from the private sector.

TOI has learnt that the master plan for highway development has been proposed in two phases. Officials participating in the inter-ministerial meeting chaired by road transport secretary Anurag Jain said the ministry has finalised the roadmap to tender all projects under phase-1 by 2028-29 and complete them by 2031-32. The Rs 22 lakh crore estimate is for projects to be taken up in the first phase.

The ministry has requested 10% annual increase in budgetary allocation for project implementation. In the interim budget, govt had allocated Rs 2,78,000 crore for the ministry,



The road and highways ministry has requested the Cabinet for a 10% annual increase in budgetary allocation for project implementation

marking a 2.7% increase from the previous financial year.

The financial estimate in the second phase to develop 28,400 km will be determined later. As per the plan, sanctioning and awarding of stretches under phase-2 will be completed by 2033-34, with construction finishing by 2036-37.

The ministry highlighted how it has planned the development of NH and expressways after carrying out assessment of GSTN data, including commodities transported from point to point and has also taken into account transportation of cargo by trains.

The analysis of GSTN data showed nearly 73% of freight was transported by road in 2021-22, with railways accounting for around 23%. The data also showed that for commo-

ties transported less than 350 km, 82% was moved by road, and for distances over 600 km, 62% was transported by road.

Once completed, the average travel speed of trucks on the national highway network will go up to 85 kmph from the current 47 kmph. The average travel speed on highways is over 100 kmph in the US and 90 kmph in China. Govt expects that increasing the average speed will help India achieve its target of reducing logistics costs to 9-10% of GDP.

High-speed corridors have been identified to ensure that such stretches are accessible within 100-150 km from any part of India. Currently, only 3,900 km of high-speed corridors are operational, and by 2026-27, this figure is expected to rise to around 11,000 km.

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CL 1538

# Standard deduction may rise under new tax regime

## Eyes On Budget: Major Tweaks Unlikely In Capital Gains Setup

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**New Delhi:** The finance ministry is assessing the possibility of raising the standard deduction limit for income taxpayers under the new regime, without tinkering with the exemption-laced older regime.

Besides, as the NDA government is ready to present its first Budget of its third term, it is unlikely to undertake major tweaks in capital gains mechanism, an issue on which the income tax department has been seeking a review. There have been suggestions to align the holding period across asset classes but government may not be inclined to disturb the system, at least for the moment.

While discussions on the contours of the Budget have just begun with finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman undertaking public

### BATTLING FOR CONCESSIONS

- Most wings of govt are seen in favour of offering concessions to taxpayers, especially the middle class
- A higher standard deduction will benefit all the salaried taxpayers, including those in the upper segment, although it will entail some revenue loss
- Under capital gains setup, there have been suggestions to align the holding period across asset classes but govt may not disturb the system
- Also, there have been suggestions from industry leaders to tweak the rates in the higher brackets to boost consumption



consultations, most of the exercise is currently limited to the finance ministry and internal assessment is being undertaken on multiple issues some of which will be discussed with other wings of govt before the final call, based on feedback from the PMO.

The overall mood indicates that most wings of govt

are in favour of offering concessions to taxpayers, especially the middle class, which has been a supporter of the Modi regime but is increasingly raising questions about the returns it gets for the tax it pays, be it through public healthcare or education.

In the 2023 Budget, FM had introduced a standard deduction of Rs 50,000 for sa-

laried taxpayers and those who earn pension under the new tax regime, which became the default option, unless you opted out. Also, rebate under Section 87A was increased under the new tax regime for taxable incomes not exceeding Rs 7 lakh, allowing those earning up to this level (taxable income) to not pay any tax under the new regime. The highest surcharge under the new regime was also removed.

Currently, individuals with a taxable income of upwards of Rs 3 lakh have to pay 5% income tax and there have been suggestions from industry leaders to tweak the rates in the higher brackets to boost consumption. A higher standard deduction will benefit all the salaried taxpayers, including those in the upper segment although it will entail some revenue loss.

## Rights issue: Byju's moves HC against NCLT order

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Troubled edtech startup Byju's has moved the Karnataka high court challenging the National Company Law Tribunal's order restraining it from going ahead with the second tranche of its \$200-million rights issue. Byju's declined to comment.

In a fresh order issued earlier this month, the Bengaluru bench of the NCLT had directed the startup to not proceed with the second tranche besides restricting it from using any funds that have been collected since the opening of the issue on May 13. The NCLT also directed the company to maintain status quo with regard to existing shareholders and their holding.

The second tranche is part of the issue through which the cash-starved company sought to raise \$200 million. With certain investors not participating during the first round, the issue was not fully subscribed and hence split into two tranches. In the second round, the unsubscribed portion was put up for existing investors to invest on a super-pro-rata (a provision which allows investors to buy a larger percentage of the company) basis.

In their petition, a group of Byju's investors have reiterated that due to the siphoning off funds by the startup's management, the company is in "dire straits" and therefore, they should not be allowed to raise further money.

## Contamination Cases Lead To Policy Overhaul

# Food cos step up vigil, e-tailers ready to 'delist'

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**Mumbai:** E-commerce platforms are stepping up product checks in their dark stores and warehouses to ensure consumer safety amid a spate of instances of food contamination.

Plans are afoot to rejig internal policies, with some platforms even willing to delist sellers in case of repeated violation of safety protocols on their part. Quick commerce firm Zepto is considering rolling out a recall policy, where if a customer of the platform finds any instance of food contamination in a product manufactured and marketed by an FMCG brand, the company will recall the entire batch of products, sources told TOI.

"As platforms, we have zero visibility into the manufacturing processes of FMCG brands. Such episodes of food contamination reflect lapses on the manufacturing side of the brands. The onus is on them. We try our best to comply with the quality parameters that are under our control," the CEO of an online platform said on condition of anonymity. Zepto did not comment.

Once a product is sealed, platforms cannot control its quality, an executive with another online firm said. "We already have a policy in place wherein we delist sellers if we find any serious lapses on their part. That's the toughest step we can take and if required, we will do that," the executive added.

As far as brands are concerned, they are tightening the vigilance on the manufacturing process. ID Fresh Food, for instance, plans to deploy AI cameras in its manufacturing plants for better inspection of the procedures. "Food contamination usually happens at the factory level and in

certain cases, it can also occur when the storage is improper. We have quality inspectors who do the due diligence but with AI cameras, the process will be strengthened," said P C Musthafa, global CEO and co-founder at ID Fresh Food, the maker of idli, dosa batter, parathas and chapatis.

tion at various stages, right from procurement of raw material to production and storage. "Adoption of technology at various stages of the production process including fully automated machines, scanners and metal detectors helps identify and segregate products with issues and ma-

### From Product Recall To Camera Checks

- **E-commerce platforms** have zero visibility into the manufacturing processes of FMCG brands, an e-commerce platform's CEO said
- According to the chairperson of IFBA, food business operators should revisit goods manufacturing practices to ensure adequacy to the evolving delivery platforms
- Zepto is considering rolling out a recall policy, where if a customer of the platform finds any instance of food contamination in an FMCG product, the co will recall the entire batch of products
- Among brands, ID Fresh Food plans to deploy AI cameras in its manufacturing plants for better inspection of the procedures
- Hershey's India says products undergo multiple quality checks before reaching consumers. Baskin Robbins says it has strict process controls in place entailing evaluation from procurement of raw material to production and storage
- Adani Wilmar's plants are American Institute for Baking-approved — the benchmark standard quality for any factory



Hershey's India, which came under the scanner recently after a customer alleged finding a dead mouse in the brand's chocolate syrup, said that every product undergoes multiple quality checks before reaching consumers. "We have investigated these reports and verified all our food safety and production processes. We are confident that we have the right measures in place to ensure food safety and this kind of alleged contamination is not possible," the company said, adding that it received no response from the customer even after repeated attempts to establish contact, further suggesting that the claim is not "legitimate".

Ice cream maker Baskin Robbins said that the brand has stringent process controls in place entailing evalua-

tion of the sanctity of the process. As a brand that customers trust, the onus is on us to keep the vigil," said Mohit Khattar, CEO at Graviss Foods, which is the master franchisee of the brand in India.

Angshu Mallick, MD & CEO at Adani Wilmar, said that all its plants are AIB (American Institute for Baking) approved, which is the benchmark standard quality for any factory and the firm's understanding of the India market makes it better equipped to deal with quality issues. "In light of recent incidences, Food Business Operators should revisit their GMP (goods manufacturing practices) systems and processes and ensure adequacy to the evolving delivery platforms," said Deepak Jolly, chairperson, Ind Food & Beverage Association (IFBA).

# GST waiver on ESOPs spells relief for cos like MS, Google & Oracle

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**New Delhi:** The GST Council's decision on Saturday to waive the levy on ESOPs will benefit the likes of Microsoft, Google, Oracle and Walmart whose Indian employees were getting the benefit from their global parent with the Indian arm making a payment on which authorities were seeking tax.

The issue had been pending with the Council for several months after the legal wing suggested a waiver. The decision was, however, taken on Saturday as the Council met for the first time in eight months. Tax consultants said that several companies would be relieved as they were under the lens of tax authorities for what was a normal remuneration practice across the corporate sector.

Under GST law, securities are neither considered goods, nor services. Purchase and sale of securities or shares is neither supply of goods or

### HOW IT WORKS

- When a foreign holding company transfers shares to employees of its Indian arm, reimbursement by the domestic entity to the parent is done on a cost-to-cost basis, which is at the market value and without any commission
- Since the transfer of funds to the foreign holding company is for transfer of securities, it does not attract any GST
- If the foreign company charges an additional fee or commission then it will be treated as a supply of service and attract GST
- The tax will have to be paid by the Indian entity on a "reverse charge basis"



services and does not attract GST, an official explained. Further, companies offer ESOPs to their employees to motivate them to perform better and to retain them and are part of the remuneration in line with the terms of the contract. Again, services rendered by employees are neither classified as goods or services and do not attract GST.

When the foreign holding company directly transfers shares to employees of the Indian arm, reimbursement by the domestic

entity to the parent is done on a cost-to-cost basis, which is at the market value and without any commission. Since the transfer of funds to the foreign holding company is for transfer of securities, it does not attract GST.

If the foreign company, however, charges an additional fee or commission then it will be treated as a supply of service and attract GST. The tax will have to be paid by the Indian entity on a "reverse charge basis".

### 'As is where is' added to GST lexicon

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**New Delhi:** The GST Council on Saturday clarified several pending issues, from the levy on sprinklers and poultry keeping machinery to railway SPVs and reinsurance. They related to interpretation of the law or regularisation on an "as is where is" basis. In all, there were seven such instances in the press release.

While the idea is to remove litigations and disputes, it also means that those who have paid the demand raised by authorities will not get a refund but those who have prolonged the disputes will breathe easy, said a tax expert. Tax professionals see it as part of recognition by authorities that the law was not aligned with business practices and is now being tweaked to avoid unnecessary disputes.

## FPIs are back, buy ₹12,170cr stocks in June

**New Delhi:** Staging a comeback after election results, foreign investors have pumped Rs 12,170 crore in Indian equities so far in June, mainly driven by expectations of continued policy reforms and sustained economic growth.

This came following a net withdrawal of Rs 25,586 crore from equities in May on poll jitters and more than Rs 8,700 crore in April amid concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

The total outflow now stood at Rs 11,194 crore so far in 2024 (till June 21), data with the depositors showed. Sunil Damania of MojoPMS, said FPIs inflow will remain constrained due to the high valuations. FPIs had been waiting on the sidelines for the election results. So far in 2024 — barring March (Rs 35,000 crore inflow) — they have been pulling out from India. Early trends indicate FPI buying in financial services, telecom and realty, said V K Vijayakumar of Geojit Financial Services. AGENCIES

# Are EV loans cheaper? Depends on what vehicle & lender you choose

Yogesh Kabirdoss & Nandini Sengupta | TNN

**Chennai:** Buying an EV? Is the financing rate on offer the same if you were to buy a petrol or diesel vehicle? The answer is both yes and no.

In electric passenger vehicles, the rates are competitive with ICE and sometimes lower as well. In e-two-wheelers, the rates are invariably higher depending on the brand and the credit profile of the customer.

"Captive NBFCs and banks offer green loans for e-PVs which is 0.1% cheaper than ICE financing so the rates are more or less the same. In e-two wheelers, the rate differential is anything from 1-4% depending on product and brand," said Deloitte India partner Rajat Mahajan.

Currently, loans for petrol and diesel passenger vehicles attract anything between 9.3% and 10.3% interest rates, while ICE two-wheeler rates are 16-20%. In EVs, cars and SUVs come for 8.5-9.5% while e-two-wheelers come for 18-22%.

### Green Rates Starting To Get Competitive

SHIRAM FINANCE	INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK
EV commercial vehicles and passenger vehicles   12-14%	EV four wheelers   8.7-10.2%
E-two-wheelers   18-22%	E-two-wheelers   11%
L&T FINANCE	
E-two-wheelers   8.5-9.5%	

But that's not the critical part. Financiers and dealers admit, off the record, that EV financing is lower than ICE even when both are from the same automotive brand.

"As EVs are an evolving segment, banks and NBFCs have been cautious while funding due to lack of understanding of how EV batteries work (working life, replacement/repairs) and are awaiting the evolution of a strong secondary/resale market," IndoStar Capital Finance CEO Karthikeyan Srinivasan said.

That explains the differ-

ence in financing penetration between ICE and e-two-wheelers. "Currently, petrol two-wheeler financing penetration is 80% plus," said Nikunj Sanghi, MD of JS Fourwheel, Hero Motocorp and M&M dealers. While, "financing penetration of e-two wheelers have gone from 15-20% around 18 months ago to 40-45% now with 80% financing coming from banks," said Mahajan.

EV financing has also seen rate revisions in the past one year. Public sector Indian Overseas Bank for instance has increased the rate of inter-

est for EV four-wheelers by 25 basis points to 8.65-10.15% from 8.4-9.9% a year ago due to revision in repo-linked lending rate. However, its rate of interest on EV two-wheelers remains the same at 11%. The bank also provides 0.2% interest concession for e-four-wheelers "to promote clean energy and environment," said IOB MD & CEO Ajay Kumar Srivastava. L&T Finance has also hiked rates on EV financing by 1-1.5 percentage points in a year. "Currently, it is 8.5-9.5% (flat). The range is due to the different risk profiling of clients," said a spokesperson.

In commercial vehicles, where EV adoption is higher than PVs, there has not been much change in rates and EVs are more competitive than ICE. Reason: captive NBFCs. Mahesh Babu, CEO, Switch Mobility said: "We leverage the synergies of Hinduja Leyland Finance, the financing arm within our group, utilising financial infrastructure to provide competitive financing options for customers."

## Moving On From FDs? Manage Exposure With Equity Savings Funds

Among high valuations, wealth managers believe conservative investors moving from fixed deposits could consider an investment in equity savings funds that invest 15-25% of their corpus in large-cap stocks and give the benefit of equity taxation.

### What Are Equity Savings Funds?

Equity savings schemes are funds that belong to the hybrid category. They invest in a mix of equity, debt and arbitrage opportunities. A scheme in this category invests in equity and debt securities, employing a combination of three investment strategies — pure equity (net long equity), arbitrage plays, and debt. The net long equity exposure is generally in large-cap cos, which generates capital appreciation. Allocation to arbitrage opportunities and debt securities provides income and generates stable returns for the portfolio.

## Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

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

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

### What Is The Portfolio's Composition?

Typically, equity could constitute 65-90% of the portfolio, of which arbitrage opportunities could be 25-75%, unhedged equities at 15-40% based on the fund manager's strategy, and debt and money market instruments making up the remaining 10-35%. If the fund manager is positive on equities, he would generally opt to have a higher allocation in the portfolio. Conservative fund managers typically keep it at 15-25%, with equity comprising primarily large-cap cos. The debt portion, too, is conservatively managed by investing in AAA-rated paper or govt securities with low duration.

### How Are These Funds Taxed?

The portfolio of these schemes is structured so that the corpus invested in stocks and arbitrage remains above 65%. Hence, they are classified as equity mutual funds for taxation purposes. Investors pay 15% as short-term capital gains tax if the holding period is less than a year and 10% as long-term capital gains tax for a holding period of more than a year and for gains above ₹1 lakh, making these schemes attractive for investors in the 30% tax slab.

### Who Are They Suitable For?

Over the last three years, according to data from Value Research, this category of funds delivered a return of 9.39%. Financial planners believe these schemes work for investors looking for returns above fixed deposits over three years, first-time mutual fund investors moving from FDs, and investors worried about high volatility in pure equity funds. These funds typically suit investors seeking equity exposure with low volatility and having a short-term time horizon of 1-3 years. The tax advantage is a bonus.

— PRASHANT MAHESH



## CONTRAPUNTO

The mind is not a vessel to be filled,  
but a fire to be kindled

PLUTARCH

## Fix It, GOI

The future of India's young depends on govt  
thinking creatively on reforming exams

Misery piles on for our young examinees. Last Wednesday, education ministry cancelled UGC-NET exam, conducted a day earlier, fearing a paper leak. On Saturday, it postponed NEET-PG exam scheduled for the next day, over "logistical issues". When seen together with NEET-UG controversies, the message is loud and clear: something is seriously wrong with the National Testing Agency's (NTA) functioning. And fixing the problem poses the first big challenge for new NDA govt.

**Problems evident for long** | The crisis may have blown up this year, but the signs have been there for years. Exams like NEET and JEE conducted by NTA have run into controversies regularly. In NEET 2022, CBI had to step in following allegations of impersonation in the exam. In 2021, a Russian hacker even hacked into the software for that year's JEE to help examinees cheat.

It is the reluctance of authorities to take timely action against such episodes that is responsible for the present mess. This was made clear, when despite ample evidence, the education ministry remained in denial of a paper leak in this year's NEET, ordering a CBI inquiry only on Saturday.

**Remedy has failed us** | What is galling is that NTA was put in place precisely to weed out issues we are facing today. So, one of the questions that needs to be asked is whether there are in-built flaws in conducting a mammoth exam like NEET, with 2.4mn examinees taking it in 13 languages across 4,500 centres.

It is welcome that govt has set up a high-powered committee to examine NTA's functioning and recommend ways for fair conduct of exams. It has also brought into effect the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 to prevent use of unfair means in public exams.

**Nothing should be off table** | But the panel's work will have to be more than a bureaucratic exercise if the system is to be rid of its flaws. We need genuine reforms that address the spectrum of concerns that experts have been raising. The use of technology that allows algorithmic question patterns is one answer to paper leaks in a vast system with innumerable nodes. Conducting exams more than once a year, as is the case in US, is another option to be considered. But decentralising the exams altogether is an option govt mustn't shy away from. The future of young Indians is at stake.



## Examine Our Exam-Nation

The national testing system, centred around a three-hour exam that encourages rote learning, is broken and irreparable. What we need is a new method that employs three-year progressive evaluation

Kalyan T Chakravarthy and  
Hemali Chhappia @ timesgroup.com



India's centralised exam system is losing credibility by the day. As GOI, which sacked NTA's chief, is struggling to restore a

semblance of order, it's time to ask a different, more fundamental set of questions.

Fixing accountability and rescheduling exams may be all very well, but what about the impact of such decisions on young minds? In any case, should a three-hour test be a deciding factor that defines the lives of millions of young Indians? There is a serious issue with the system and we need to revisit the three Ms - mindset, methodology and modality - to fix it. And we need to look inwards for solutions.

**Macaulay to Maitreyi mindset** | The rise of Kota, Sikar, Hyderabad as coaching hubs should have raised red flags long ago that India's entrance exams can be cracked with two years of intensive coaching. Worse, what students go through to do so is terrifying: coaching institutes have even gone to the extent of jamming windows and removing fans to ensure students do nothing but study and there is no untoward incident when stress drives them up the wall.

What we instead need are tests that allow for *soch*, moving away from a Macaulay system of measuring memory to a more holistic system that measures innate inclination (*swadharma*), IQ and EQ. We need to break free of the colonial legacy and adopt an India-centric system, a version of which had been in vogue long ago - as exemplified by the Upanishadic story of Maitreyi, India's first woman scholar - before it was replaced by Macaulay's rote learning-based mindset.

Given the controversies we are facing, examiners can no longer be lazy; they must be imaginative and devise tests that genuinely assess the learning levels and understanding of students.

**Use of technology is key** | In a nation where millions of aspirants want to be a doctor or engineer, where candidates and their parents are open to paying lakhs

to get their hands on a question paper and its answer key, what could possibly be the way to conduct exams? Technology offers us solutions. AI may have disrupted the jobs scenario, but it has also taught us to live with, adapt to, and embrace uncertainty.

The question to be asked is: why must our exams be so symmetrical, syllabi clearly defined, textbooks rigidly prescribed. We know deep inside that the marrow of any exam's soul is to evaluate, not put teenagers

quick evaluation may not lend themselves to subjective questioning, but multiple-choice questions can be replaced by fill-in-your-choice format, allowing for infinite possibilities in solutions, with machine evaluation and immediate result generation. After candidates are filtered, a second advanced exam could ask them to defend their responses, thus reinforcing their application of learnt concepts.

**From competitive exams to self-evaluation** | If there is technology to rig the system, there is also enough resource to prevent the system from breaking. The present exam system is overwhelming for students. Testing them for a paltry three hours a year can jam the nerve pathways of the most robust mind and body. We need an exam modality that allows students to realise their dreams, potential and the pathway ahead. One test cannot be a single point of failure.

The New Testing system ought to be a three-year progressive evaluation, with a national general aptitude assessment with normalised scores to wipe out state differences. A part of this would be a psychometric test in grade 10, which assesses the strengths of each candidate, and what she is best at pursuing. Before an entrance test is held, grades 11 and 12 should have focused national tests, including those assessing special aptitudes like writing code or creating music.

Such an early feedback system for self-selection would allow several things to happen: a potential writer, economist, artist, or musician would be freed of the pressure to live the wry half-lives they would as engineers or lawyers. Also, it would reduce crowding into three or five entrance exams of the country.

Second, tests need to be offered on an on-demand basis. Third, students must be allowed to choose from more than one national testing agency. Open book exams are also an option to be considered.

The examination system needs to be reimagined, recalibrated and revised, as the existing model is not working. Indian exams need Indian solutions. We owe our students new ways of testing them, so that, once evaluated, they can go back to deriving joy and wonder from constant learning and discovery.

Chakravarthy is executive director of PanIIT Alumni Reach for India Foundation.



**We should have a national aptitude assessment with normalised scores to wipe out state differences, and a psychometric test in grade 10 that points to the strengths of each student**

through a pressure cooker environment that kills the joy of learning. AI can be deployed to design and pick questions from a large bank to personalise in real-time each candidate's question paper, thus eliminating the possibility of paper leaks.

Exams with a high volume of aspirants requiring

## 'No reason why INDIA can't win the next Bihar assembly elections, even if advanced...Our vote share has shot up'

Days after LS results, parties in Bihar are already preparing for 2025 assembly polls. State party CPI-ML has returned to Parliament after 35 years with two MPs in the 18th Lok Sabha. In a stunning comeback in 2020 Bihar polls, the radical Left party won 12 seats. Party general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, credited with CPI-ML's electoral revival, tells Subodh Ghildiyal about lost opportunity in Siwan and Saran, where Lalu's daughter Rohini Acharya narrowly lost by 13.6k votes, and sharp spike in INDIA's EBC vote shares.

**SP-led opposition did very well in UP, but RJD's score in Bihar was underwhelming.**

Though their socio-economic profile may be similar, the situation was very different in the two states. UP, after all, is the laboratory of "bulldozer raj". It has seen much worse caste oppression and anti-Muslim violence than Bihar. Of course, INDIA bloc in Bihar could have put up a better performance with better management of seat-sharing, choice of candidate and campaign execution. That said, outcome of eastern UP and south Bihar is quite on the same level.

In the final phase, INDIA won 6 of 13 seats in Purvanchal, and 6 of 8 in adjoining region of south Bihar. As an example of better seat-sharing, we had a legitimate claim over Siwan, which could've helped us and INDIA win not only one more seat, but also improve our chances in adjoining constituencies, including Saran that RJD lost by a very narrow margin. Likewise, friction between

an Independent and RJD over Purnea possibly weakened INDIA prospects over seats in Koshi-Seemanchal.

**Will INDIA have a good show in assembly polls?**

In 2020, we bounced back after a crushing defeat in 2019. This time, our LS performance in terms of vote share and seats has been much better. There's no reason why INDIA cannot secure a clear victory in the next assembly elections even if they're held ahead of schedule.

This was the first time CPI-ML contested LS elections in alliance with RJD - Left as a bloc wasn't part of RJD-Congress alliance in 2019. Impact of Left's inclusion in general, and ML in particular, saw massive improvement in INDIA vote share. CSDS-Lokniti post-poll survey found that vote share increased by 38 percentage points among non-Paswan Dalits, by 28 among Paswans, by 9 percentage points among non-Yadav OBCs and by 7 among Muslims. INDIA should consolidate these gains and prepare for the next battle without delay.

**CPI-ML is in Parliament after decades. Do you see a bigger sustainable trend?**

In the past we've won independently in multi-corner contests, winning assembly seats on our own. But our votes weren't enough to win an LS contest. But we still finished second on seats like Siwan and Ara in Bihar, and Koderma in Jharkhand.

This time, support of INDIA allies has been as crucial to our victories, as was our support

for their wins. Both our MPs are farmer netas who represent Shahabad and Magadh regions. Eight of our 12 MLAs also represent this region. More focused attention to developmental needs here alongside the struggle to improve education, healthcare and housing needs, jobs and conditions of scheme workers will help the party expand.

**How can parties like Congress improve opposition's political strategy without taking a radical tack, like, say, CPI-ML?**

Not for me to advise other parties. Congress has nearly doubled its tally, indicating a significant revival. Perhaps this also calls for a certain degree of reinvention and reorientation of policies. There are signs that Congress is moving in that direction. Greater emphasis on social equality, adequate representation of sections so far excluded, common people's economic welfare, and people-oriented development can help pro-democracy forces come closer.

**How do you see the way forward for BJP govt at Centre?**

BJP aimed for 370 seats, but fell short by 130! Certainly a big defeat. Sangh-BJP forces may have to go a little slow in terms of implementation of their core agenda. Modi 2.0 was marked by escalation, acceleration and all-out aggression. I only hope democracy can prevail more decisively. The broad spectrum of political forces, civil society and digital community aligned with INDIA will have to continue to work in unison.

**Do you think TDP and JDU will cramp BJP's style?**

Not majorly, but the threat of JDU and TDP moving away will haunt BJP. Its previous allies Shiv Sena and Akali Dal paid a heavy price; parties like BJD, YSRCP, BRS and AIADMK also suffered while supporting BJP at the national level. If TDP and JDU move away, no potential ally would risk joining hands with BJP.

## Helping The Help

At home or abroad, Indians treat domestic  
workers as exploitable, cheap labour

Britain's wealthiest family, the Hinduja, appealing a Swiss court's ruling, which found them guilty of exploiting domestic help from India, raises two important issues. First, domestic workers who go abroad for work are a vulnerable category. Second, the huge cohort of domestic workers in India continues to face exploitation because there's no legal protection and social safety net.

**Vulnerable abroad** | In the Hinduja case the family is accused of underpaying workers, keeping them on call without proper breaks, confiscating their passports and paying them in Indian currency. While the family has denied these charges, it's a reality that domestic workers working abroad often face similar employment conditions.

GOI has launched a consular grievances redressal system called MADAD. It's a measure of the challenge that top FAQs on MADAD cover non-payment of dues, termination or absence of employment contract, and repatriation.

**Vulnerable at home too** | Conditions of domestic workers in India aren't any better. According to govt data, total number of domestic workers in the country was 28mn in July 2023.

The actual number is likely to be more than twice as much. GOI did enact four labour codes in 2020 aimed at providing decent working conditions and wages. But they don't specifically cover domestic workers. Plus, despite most state govts adding domestic work to the list of scheduled employment, they haven't implemented this on the ground. Only Kerala is moving ahead with a specific law for the welfare of domestic workers that will fix minimum wages, working hours, and ensure a safe work environment.

**Learning from international examples** | India needs a standalone law covering domestic workers. Asean countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, have laws that ensure weekly off days, pensions, minimum wages and even social security for domestic workers, most of whom are foreign nationals in those countries. GOI too must make a beginning in this direction for domestic workers at home.



## It's hair-razing

Man's trial by woman's shampoo and conditioner

Milind Ghatwai



Most men of a certain vintage can't tell a shampoo from a conditioner. They are clueless about what goes first. They occasionally take a sly look at the colourful bottles stacked on bathroom shelves in their homes or hotels but chicken out due to fear of the unknown. But they do so at their own peril. When they get to use either, it's a consequence of someone else's motive - their better halves, partners, or whoever calls the shots at home.

It begins on an innocuous note. Products that don't deliver on promised lustre, bounce, shine come their way. The guilt of leaving expensive stuff half-used reminds women of their men. Ditto for nearly out-of-date bottles that are fobbed off with sugar-coated words.

The male is coaxed into washing his hair with whatever is left in the fancy bottles. He's clueless about the sudden attention his scalp gets. He is happy about bubbles and foam. So far so good. After all, sharing is caring. But things get a little sinister when it comes to testing products of indeterminate provenance. Or those that say something in the fine print that you read only in the comfort of your home.

Can women be accused of unethical conduct? No. Who cares about male hair anyway? Hasn't Bollywood sung paeans to female locks, tresses, and curls, whether *bheegi*, *bikhari* or *reshami*. Not to forget Urdu shayari. The male variety gets a mention only in films like *Bala*, where it's for lack of it, not abundance.

Anyway, there's only anecdotal evidence about such clinical trials at home. Will women plead guilty to the charge? Are women likely to squeal on other women? Probably these minor transgressions are covered under *omerta*. Men at the receiving end of such experiments must take solace in the fact that they're helping preserve a national treasure. No need to call it a sacrifice because you are most likely to get rid of what grows on your head at the earliest.

There's one product that some men swear by. A certain beer shampoo. The very name gives them a heady feeling, if not essential vitamins and oils. But gentlemen from the old school, who detest anything that deviates from the customary, are perplexed when they encounter a bald spot. The root cause of falling hair need not be only stress. They need to read the fine print too.

## Calvin &amp; Hobbes



## Develop The Ability To Make Enlightened Choices

BK Brij Mohan

Yog consists of profound and subtle teachings; it is described as the supreme secret revealed by God. Yog is "evenness of mind" and "skill in action," chapter 2 of the Bhagwad Gita enunciates. "Established in yog, perform action," Krishna exhorts Arjun. Later, in chapter 8, Arjun is asked to always be steadfast in yog. These examples from the Gita make it clear that yog is more about our state of mind and way of life than mere physical postures.

Its goal is bigger than attaining perfect physical health and fitness. The practice of yog, in all its aspects, including action without attachment to the result, devotion to God, acquisition of knowledge, and control over the self, leads to freedom from the bondage of vices and liberation from sorrow.

Yog is an essential component of not just spiritual practices but also ethical conduct and a life of virtue. The purity of mind that comes from regular practice of meditation, a key element of yog, enables one to have accurate discernment and the right judgment, which leads to correct action, success, and happiness.

If the mind is tainted by vices, it distorts our perception of people and situations, negatively influencing our conduct and decision-making. Purity of mind is fundamental to fostering divine qualities, while an impure mind is the breeding ground of demagogical tendencies, as the Gita envisages in chapter 16. Yog holds the key to transforming an evil mind into a pure one.

The protection of the good, destruc-

tion of evil, and establishment of righteousness that God manifests for - as He tells Arjun in chapter 4 of the Gita - is done by His teachings of yog. It enables humans to know their true spiritual identity and connect with Him to empower themselves and overcome their weaknesses.

The yog taught by God is Raj Yog, meant for the salvation of all. It is a spiritual process and practice capable of being universally adopted and undertaken even by the elderly. This king of yog enables the self to rule over the senses and sublimate worldly desires and attachments. It also leads to the purification of the soul and freedom from sorrow.

In Raj Yog, the Self is recognised as an immortal being, a sentient non-physical entity or as a divine point of

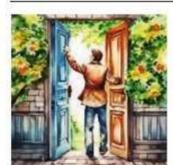
light twinkling between and behind eyebrows. In the process of Raj Yog, our mind and intellect stay connected to the Supreme Soul through His loving remembrances, even while doing our daily duties.

Regular practice of Raj Yog draws into the soul the powers and virtues of the Divine and transforms it from weak to powerful, from disturbed to peaceful, from its subservience to passions, people and situations to being master of the self, unshaken by circumstances.

Raj Yog is an ancient art and skill that restores intellectual communion with the Supreme Being. It's not just about achieving physical well-being but also about learning a better way of life by developing the ability to make more enlightened choices.

The writer is chief spokesperson for Brahma Kumaris Organisation

## Sacredspace



The truth knocks on the door and you say, 'Go away, I'm looking for the truth,' and so it goes away. Puzzling.

Robert M Pirsig



**ESTRANGED TIES? TOM CRUISE'S DAUGHTER SURI DROPS HIS SURNAME AS SHE GRADUATES FROM HIGH SCHOOL, A MOVE AKIN TO BRAD PITT'S KIDS**

**SEAN PENN REFUTES DECADES-LONG RUMOURS THAT HE HIT EX-WIFE MADONNA WITH BASEBALL BAT, SAYS STILL HAS A SOFT SPOT FOR HER**

## Netanyahu doubles down on criticism of US arms supply

**Israeli Def Minister In Washington For 'Reconciliation' Efforts**

**Jerusalem:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu aired new grievances Sunday over the Biden administration's supply of munitions for the war in the Gaza Strip as his minister of defence arrived in Washington for meetings with senior US officials.

Some Israeli news outlets had portrayed the visit by Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, although preplanned, as a "reconciliation" trip aimed at smoothing recent tensions with the country's most crucial ally, Netanyahu's gov't and the Biden administration have been increasingly at odds over Israel's conduct in Gaza, and Netanyahu lashed out at the United States last week for withholding munitions.



Tens of thousands of protesters waving Israeli flags and chanting slogans against Netanyahu's gov't rallied in Tel Aviv Saturday, demanding elections

But Sunday morning, Netanyahu doubled down. In remarks broadcast in Hebrew before his weekly Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said he appreciated the Biden administration's support for Israel through eight months of war, "but starting four months ago, there was a dramatic decrease in the supply of armaments." "For long weeks, we turned to our American friends and requested that the shipments be expedited. We did that time after

time," Netanyahu said.

There was no immediate comment from the Biden administration about the remarks, which could upstage Gallant in Washington. They come just days after Netanyahu released a combative video, in English, excoriating the Biden administration for, as the Israeli leader put it, withholding weapons and ammunition when Israel was "fighting for its life" against Iran and other common enemies.

US officials said at the time that they found the video "perplexing" and did not know what Netanyahu was talking about. While the Israeli prime

minister complained of "bottlenecks", the Biden administration maintained that it had held up only one shipment of 2,000-pound bombs over concerns about their use in densely populated parts of Gaza.

Yuli Edelstein, a Likud lawmaker and chair of the Israeli Parliament's foreign affairs and defence committee, said Saturday that differences of opinion with the US should not be handled "via video clips." Netanyahu on Sunday defended his actions, saying he went public based on "years of experience and the knowledge that this step was vital to opening the bottleneck." **NVT**

## Israeli troops strap injured Palestinian to jeep in W Bank

**Jerusalem:** Israeli troops tied a wounded Palestinian to the top of a military vehicle Saturday morning during an operation in the occupied West Bank, a scene that was captured on video and quickly went viral, prompting outrage. The Israeli military said that the act violated military procedure and that there would be an investigation.

Israeli soldiers raided Wadi Burqin, a Palestinian town on the outskirts of the city of Jenin, to arrest Palestinians suspected of involvement in militant groups. A firefight broke out between Palestinian militants and Israeli soldiers, the military said. Israeli troops arrested a Palestinian injured in the shooting. "In violation of orders, the suspect was taken by the forces while tied on top of a vehicle," the military said. The troops handed over the wounded Palestinian to the Palestinian Red Crescent for medical care, it added. The occupied West Bank has seen increasing violence since the war began. Over 500 Palestinians and 12 Israelis have been killed in the territory. **NVT**

## Pak opposition contests PM's nationwide military op plan

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

**Islamabad:** Opposition parties in Pakistan criticised PM Shehbaz Sharif's decision to initiate a nationwide military operation named Azm-i-Istehkam (Commitment for Stability), which aims to eradicate extremism and terrorism in the country. The move came shortly after Beijing warned Islamabad and identified security as a critical challenge threatening China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Former PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party, alongside other opposition lawmakers, rejected the military operation without prior parliamentary consultation. "It is our demand that if there is any operation, whether intelligence-based or full-fledged or in certain districts, villages, or tehsils, it is necessary to take parliament into confidence," PTI chairman Gohar Khan said. He called for an in-camera briefing by military officers, referencing previous practices. Leader of the opposition Omar Ayub Khan echoed the call for parliament's approval for military operations.

Militants have increasingly targeted Chinese interests in Pakistan, particularly in the northwest and southwest regions, including CPEC. In March, two attacks highlighted the ongoing threats: an attempted breach of Gwadar Port Authority complex by Baloch Liberation Army and a suicide bombing in Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa targeting a convoy of Chinese engineers, resulting in multiple fatalities.

High-ranking Chinese official Liu Jianchao underscored the security threats to CPEC as primary hazards to the project's cooperation and success. "As people often say, confidence is more precious than gold. In the case of Pakistan, the primary factor shaking the confidence of Chinese investors is the security situation," he said.

## Russia blames US for deadly Ukrainian strike on Crimea

**Says US Missiles Used In Attack That Left 5 Dead, 124 Hurt**

**Moscow:** Russia said on Sunday that the US was responsible for a Ukrainian attack on the Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula with five US-supplied missiles that killed at least five people including three children. At least 124 were injured, including 27 children, five of whom are in a serious condition.

Russian defence ministry said four of the US-delivered Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) missiles, equipped with cluster warheads, were shot down by air defence systems and the ammunition of a fifth had detonated in mid-air. The ministry said US specialists had set the missiles' flight coordinates on the basis of information from US spy satellites, meaning Washington was directly responsible. "Responsibility for the deliberate missile attack on the civilians of Sevastopol is borne above all by Washington, which supplied these weapons to Ukraine, and by the Kyiv regime, from whose territory this strike was carried out."

The US began supplying Ukraine with longer range ATACMS missiles, which have a 300-km range, earlier this year. Russian-installed authorities in Crimea said missile fragments had fallen near a beach in Sevastopol where locals were holidaying. Russia will respond to



A partial electricity cut in Kyiv, Ukraine's energy operator said Sunday that rolling electricity blackouts will be imposed nationwide throughout Monday because of increased Russian attacks on power stations

## Religious sites, police post attacked in Russia's Dagestan; 6 cops, a priest die

**Moscow:** Gunmen opened fire at a synagogue, an Orthodox church and a police post in Russia's North Caucasus region of Dagestan on Sunday, killing six policemen and injuring 12, the region's interior ministry was quoted as saying. The ministry, quoted by Russian news agencies, said two gunmen had been shot dead as the incidents unfolded. An Orthodox priest was also reported to have been killed.

The agencies reported that street fights were gripping Makhachkala, the chief

administrative town in Dagestan, a mainly Muslim region on the Caspian Sea.

An unofficial channel on Telegram said police were preparing to storm a building where gunmen were holed up in Derbent, about 125km further south.

The gunmen attacked a synagogue and a church in Derbent, home to an ancient Jewish community and a Unesco World Heritage site. The interior ministry was quoted as saying that both the synagogue and church were ablaze. **REUTERS**

the attack, the ministry said. Neither Ukraine nor the US has commented on the attack, which came on a day

when Ukraine said one person had been killed and 10 others wounded by Russian strikes on Kharkiv. **REUTERS**

## France's far-right party leads in opinion poll

**Paris:** France's far right National Rally (RN) party and its allies are seen leading the first round of the country's parliamentary elections with 35.5% of the vote, according to a poll published Sunday. The Ipsos survey - conducted for Le Parisien newspaper and Radio France on June 19-20 - showed the left-wing New Popular Front (NPF) alliance in second place with 29.5% of the vote. Prez Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance was seen in third place, winning 19.5% of votes. The turnout rate is seen at

## Ex-prez Hollande says once-protége Macron's ascent over: 'Far-right has never been so strong'

**Paris:** France's ascendency is "over", former head of state Francois Hollande said Saturday, after his former protégé called a snap election likely to hand massive gains to the far right. Suffering at the time from abysmal poll ratings, Socialist Hollande did not himself stand for a second term at the 2017 election. Running as a pro-business centrist, his former economy minister Macron pulled off a surprise win that shattered traditional governing parties on the left and the right. Now just two years into the younger man's second term, "Macronism is over, if indeed it ever existed. But it's over, I say it with no special hostility," Hollande said. "I don't mean that his presidential term is coming to an end, that's something different. But what he may have represented for a time is over," he added. "The far right has never been so strong." **AFP**

between 60 and 64%, which would be much higher than the 47.5% seen at the last general election in June 2022.

The RN's lead in polls ahead of the election that will take place in two rounds, on June 30 and July 7, is unlikely to win the party an absolute majority. Macron called the ballot after his alliance's crushing defeat at EU polls earlier this month.

In a separate Ipsos survey, the National Rally is seen as the most trustworthy when it comes to managing the economy and public finances. **REUTERS**

## 32-yr-old Indian dies in US store shooting

Madhu.Rasala @timesgroup.com

**A** 32-year-old Andhra Pradesh native in the US died Sunday of gunshot wounds inflicted by a robber who attacked him at the counter of a gas station convenience store in Pleasant Grove, Dallas, the previous day.

CCTV footage of the crime shows the assailant shooting D Gopi Krishna, whose family is from Yajali in Karlapalem mandal of Bapatla district, at close range before hopping over the counter to reach the cash till. Gopi, who had an Indian engineering degree with which he hoped to land a proper job, was employed at the store counter when he was shot and critically wounded. He died hours after being hospitalised.

D Laxman, Gopi's uncle, told TOI that the young man with a wife and a one-and-a-half-year-old son, travelled to the US eight months ago for job opportunities. He was staying with a relative.

## Trump proposes a 'migrant league of fighters' for UFC

**Former US Prez Donald Trump** said Sunday in an address to an evangelical group he had suggested starting a sports league for migrants to fight one another. He described migrants with the dehumanising terms he often uses to refer to them, saying they were "tough", "come from prisons" and are "nasty, mean." Trump then said he suggested to Dana White, an ally of his who is CEO of the UFC, "Why don't you set up a migrant league of fighters?" He continued, referring to the UFC: "And then you have the champion of your league - these are the greatest fighters in the world - fight the champion of the migrants? I think the migrant guy might win! That's how tough they are." Trump also said White "didn't like the idea too much."

White, when asked, said, "It was a joke, it was a joke. I saw everybody going crazy online. But yeah, he did say it." **NVT**

## Egypt says will prosecute haj travel agents for 'fraudulent' trips

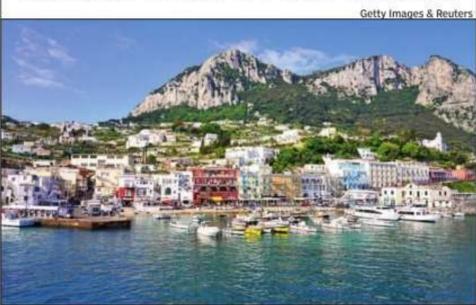
**Cairo:** Egyptian PM Mostafa Madbouty ordered 16 tourism companies stripped of their licences and referred their managers to the public prosecutor Saturday over illegal pilgrimages to Mecca, the cabinet said. The PM also imposed a fine on the companies to benefit families of the pilgrims who died.

The order came after countries whose citizens performed this year's haj reported more than 1,100 deaths, many attributed to the oven-like summer heat in Saudi Arabia. An AFP tally Friday put the toll at 1,126, more than half of them from Egypt. Arab diplomats said earlier this week Egyptians accounted for 658 deaths - 630 of them unregistered pilgrims.

Prez Abdel Fattah El-Sisi ordered a "crisis cell" headed by Madbouty follow up on the deaths of Egyptian pilgrims.

A cabinet statement said the rise in the number of deaths of unregistered Egyptian pilgrims stemmed from some companies which "organised the haj programmes using a personal visit visa, which prevents its holders from entering Mecca" via official channels. It added more than 50,000 Egyptians joined the pilgrimage officially, and that there were "31 deaths as a result of chronic diseases". **AFP**

## WATER WOES FORCE ITALY'S HOLIDAY HOTSPOT TO BRIEFLY BAN TOURISTS



**T**he Italian island of Capri lifted a ban on tourists Saturday after problems with the water supply to the holiday hotspot were resolved. Capri's mayor Paolo Falco said the ban was "revoked" after a technical issue preventing the arrival of water from the mainland was fixed. The ban was announced early Saturday, forcing several morning ferries on their way to the island from Naples and Sorrento in southern Italy to return to port. In justifying the ban, Falco warned of "a real emergency" and said that local tanks were "running out". Capri, in the Bay of Naples, is famed for its white villas, cove-studded coastline and upscale hotels. In May and June, Capri was the most popular Italian destination among foreigners. **AFP**

## UK election betting scandal widens as 4th Tory official is probed

**London:** The chief data officer of Britain's Conservative Party has taken a leave of absence, British media reported on Sunday, following growing allegations that the governing party's members used inside information to bet on the date of Britain's July 4 national election before it was announced.

Sunday Times and others reported that Nick Mason is the fourth Conservative official to be investigated by the UK's Gambling Commission for allegedly betting on the timing of the election. The Times alleged that dozens of bets had been placed with potential winnings worth thousands of pounds.

The reports came after revelations in recent days that two Conservative election candidates, Laura Saunders and Craig Williams, are under investigation by the gambling watchdog. Saunders' husband Tony Lee, the Conservative director of campaigning, has also taken a leave of absence following allegations that he was also investigated over alleged betting.

Police said one of PM Rishi Sunak's police bodyguards was arrested on Monday on suspicion of misconduct in public office. The arrest came after the

gambling regulator confirmed it was investigating "the possibility of offences concerning the date of the election."

The growing scandal, just two weeks ahead of the national election, has dealt a fresh blow to Sunak's Conservative Party, which is widely expected to lose to the opposition Labour Party after 14 years in power.

Sunak said this week that he was "incredibly angry" to learn of the allegations and said that anyone found to have broken the law should be expelled from his party. Sunak

announced on May 22 that parliamentary elections would be held on July 4. The date had been a closely guarded secret and many were taken by surprise because a vote had been expected in the fall.

Senior Conservative minister Michael Gove condemned the alleged betting and likened it to "Partygate", the ethics scandal that contributed to former PM Boris Johnson's ouster in 2022. "It looks like one rule for them and one rule for us. That's the most potentially damaging thing." **AP**

## Yacht fireworks spark blaze on Greek island

**Athens:** A Greek prosecutor Sunday brought criminal charges against the captain and crew of a chartered yacht suspected of triggering a forest fire on a resort island in the Aegean Sea during a fireworks display. The blaze on Hydra destroyed about 75 acres of pine forest Friday.

The crew of the yacht, which was anchored just off where the fire started with 17 tourists on board, were arrested Saturday when they docked near Athens. The tourists were not detained or charged.

State-run ERT said the crew was charged under stricter legislation adopted recently and would face sentences of 10-20 years in prison if convicted. **AP**

## AROUND THE WORLD



**FESTIVE CHARM:** Ukrainians jump over a campfire during a celebration on the Ivana Kupala holiday, an ancient tradition originating from pagan times, which is marked with overnight festivities during which people sing and dance around campfires believing it will purge them of their sins and make them healthier. Hundreds participated in the event amid the war with Russia

## This is the world's ugliest dog. It took him 5 tries to win



Wild Thang has won a \$5,000 prize

**M**aybe it's the way his lolling pink tongue juts out, or how his glittering wide eyes bejewel a tiny head under a mop of long, frizzy, brown-and-white fur, but there's just something about Wild Thang - and a panel of judges agreed. The 8-year-old Pekinese from Oregon was crowned the World's Ugliest Dog on Friday, confirming that when the looks

are, well, lacking, there's something to be said for persistence. It was his fifth try for the top prize at the competition. As winner, Wild Thang takes home \$5,000.

**'Widespread disruption' at UK airport after power cut**  
A "significant" number of flights at the UK's third-busiest airport were delayed or cancelled Sunday after a major power cut, the airport operator said. Power has now been restored at the international airport in the north of England, but some passengers were told to "not come to the airport until further notice" as flights were being cancelled. Some flyers took to X to describe the "chaos", with one passenger saying there was "baggage thrown on any carousel" and another saying they were "stuck on the plane".

## A school with 7 students: America is witnessing a 'microschools' boom

**Atlanta:** When Nathanael was in kindergarten, he told his mother, Diana Lopez, that he did not want to return to school - ever. His teacher yelled at him, he said. And when Lopez picked him up from school, he would often immediately start to cry. Nathanael has autism, and in a busy classroom of 25 children, the teacher seemed to have few strategies for working with him, Lopez recalled. This year, at a new school, Nathanael, 7, was happier. He shared a teacher with only six other students - not in one classroom, but in the entire school.

Nathanael attended a microschool, an increasingly popular type of super-small, largely unregulated private school, often serving fewer students than are enrolled in a single classroom at a traditional school. The programmes are benefiting from two trends: Since the Covid-19 disrupted schooling, many parents have rethought their children's education, and are open to nontraditional options. And Republican state lawmakers and donors, who have long supported private-school choice, have increasingly directed money toward microschools across the US, saying they give parents a chance

to withdraw from school districts at a reasonable price - typically \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. Microschool students are usually registered with their states as home-schoolers. But the new generation of microschools, like the programme Nathanael attended, Kingdom Christian Academy, operates more like modern-day one-room schoolhouses, meeting in homes, church basements and storefronts. These schools are often open four or five days per week, with full-time teachers, set curricula and sometimes even standardised tests.

There is little data on the

programme founders, estimates there are 95,000 microschools and home-schooling pods nationwide, serving more than 1 million students. That number is expected to grow as eight states last year joined Arizona and West Virginia in providing near-universal access to education savings accounts, a type of voucher that can be used for home-schooling costs. In April, Georgia, too, passed a law creating the accounts. An estimated 1 million children now use public funds for some form of private education, more than double the number from before the pandemic, according to new research from EdChoice, a nonprofit that supports school choice and tracks the sector. **NVT**



**NEW WAY OF LEARNING:** There are estimated 95,000 microschools across the US, serving more than 1m students. And this number is expected to grow



SOME PEOPLE WANT TO WIN AND DO SO BY PLAYING WELL, AND OTHERS JUST WANT TO WIN. PERSONALLY I JUST WANT TO WIN. I THINK AT THE END OF OUR CAREERS WHAT WE WILL REMEMBER IS WHAT WE HAVE WON, NOT HOW WE PLAYED."

—AURELIEN TCHOUAMENI  
FRANCE MIDFIELDER

# STAYIN' ALIVE

## ITALY VS CROATIA

Leipzig Stadium

HEAD TO HEAD (9 games)



FORM GUIDE / (most recent first)

CROATIA				
D	L	W	W	W
ITALY				
L	W	W	D	W

### MAN TO MAN

Barella	Modric
2	2
179	155
1	0
0	0
1	2
1	0
24.04	10.41
31.4	31.1
92.5%	88%
0%	20%
148/157	142/163
18	23
9	16
3/4	1/2

# 5

Croatia's once parsimonious back line has already been breached five times in two games



NICOLÒ BARELLA



LUKA MODRIC

**66** In Russia 2018 World Cup, we didn't concede in the group stage; in Qatar World Cup we conceded only once in the group stage. Here we've already let in five. Every dangerous attack ends up in our net. We need to change our approach and fix it before facing Italy."  
— Zlatko Dalic, CROATIA COACH

### GROUP B EQUATION

● Croatia will be through as group runners-up if they beat Italy and Albania do not beat Spain.

● If Albania also win, Croatia and Albania will be split for 2nd and 3rd place by overall goal difference or then goals scored, or then disciplinary points or then Euro Qualifiers rank.

● Croatia will be unable to advance if they lose, or if they draw and Albania avoid defeat.

### What ails Croatia?

**POSSESSION 60.5%:** Croatia are third in the possession stats with 60.5% behind only Germany and Portugal, but Croatia have 1 point.

**TOPS EXPECTED GOALS METRIC:** The Croats top Opta's expected goals metric, ahead of Spain, 2nd on completed passes into the penalty area, with 27, behind Germany (28), and in the same position for shots on 37, again (Ger 38). Turning dominance into goals has proved tough. (STATS TILL SUNDAY)

didn't do in the first two matches, and we need to fix that."

Coach Zlatko Dalic complained ahead of the game he was not being given credit when Croatia did well but was immediately criticised when they struggle. "I have learned some things in these seven years where there have been far more successes than failures," he said. Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic was positive ahead of the clash with the Euro 2020 winners. "We control our own fate -- that's a good thing," said the stopper, who shone at the Qatar World

Cup, saving a penalty in a shoot-out against Brazil to take Croatia to the semis. Italy need a draw against Croatia to claim second place but after being thoroughly outplayed in their 1-0 loss to Spain, expectations are not high for the Azzurri.

Newspaper Gazzetta dello Sport labelled them "Little Italy", a far cry from the steely team which beat England at Wembley. The coach could also bring the changes with striker Mateo Retegui in contention, along with defender Matteo Darmian, who could replace Giovanni Di Lorenzo. AFP

## Toppers Spain aim to see Albania fail

Dusseldorf: Spain are already qualified for the Euro 2024 round of 16 as Group B winners and is the only team yet to concede a goal. If they are to qualify, Albania will likely need a win that would rank among all-time great upsets. The kickoff in Dusseldorf is at the same time as group rivals Croatia and Italy meet in Leipzig.

Spain's slick, confident performance in their 1-0 win over defending champions Italy means they — European champions in 1964, 2008 and 2012 — are once again being hailed as favourites for the title. Germany and Portugal were the only other teams to win their opening two games.

The one possible negative from Spain's win over Italy was that it took an own goal from Italian defender Riccardo Calafiori.

No Spain player has scored since Dani Carvajal just before half time in the opening 3-0 win over Croatia. Albania scored the opening goal in both of their games — breaking a record with one after just 23 seconds — but ended up with just one point after a 2-1 loss to Italy and a dramatic 2-2 draw with Croatia.

Spain midfielder Rodri is suspended for the game. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente is said to be considering whether to rest right back Dani Carvajal or central defender Robin Le Normand, who have already been booked once. Another yellow card would leave them suspended for the round of 16. AP

### ALBANIA VS SPAIN

Dusseldorf Arena

HEAD TO HEAD (8 games)



FORM GUIDE

ALBANIA				
D	L	W	W	L
SPAIN				
W	W	W	W	D

(most recent first)

### STANDINGS

#### GROUP A

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Ger*	2	2	0	0	6	6
Swi	2	1	1	0	2	4
SCO	2	0	1	1	-4	1
Hun	2	0	0	2	-4	0

#### GROUP B

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Spain*	2	2	0	0	6	6
Italy	2	1	0	1	0	3
Alb	2	0	1	1	-1	1
Cro	2	0	1	1	-3	1

#### GROUP C

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Eng	2	1	1	0	1	4
Den	2	0	2	0	0	2
Slo'nia	2	0	2	0	0	2
Serbia	2	0	1	1	-1	1

#### GROUP D

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Fra	2	1	1	0	1	4
Ned	2	1	1	0	1	4
Aut	2	1	0	1	1	3
Pol	2	0	0	2	-3	0

#### GROUP E

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Rom	2	1	0	1	1	3
Bel	2	1	0	1	1	3
Svk	2	1	0	1	0	3
Ukr	2	1	0	1	-2	3

#### GROUP F

TEAMS	P	W	D	L	GD	Pt
Port*	2	2	0	0	4	6
Tur	2	1	0	1	-1	3
Cze	2	0	1	1	-1	1
Geo	2	0	1	1	-2	1

\* Qualified for Last 16; Table updated till Bel vs Rom match

### TONIGHT'S TUSSLES

Group B	Time
Croatia vs Italy	12.30am
Albania vs Spain	12.30am

Live on Sony Sports Network

## AN ITALIAN'S JOB

### LUCIANO SPALLETTI

Italy The best-known of the Italian coaches at the tournament, Spalletti attended the FIGC's coaching school in 1998-99 and graduated with the maximum grade attainable: 110 cum laude. He wrote his thesis on "The 3-5-2 playing system." He won Italian Cup titles with Roma in 2007 and 2008 and then Russian league trophies with Zenit St. Petersburg in 2010 and 2012.

Spalletti took charge of Italy last year, shortly after quitting Napoli. He led the southern team to their first Serie A title in more than three decades.

Italy continues a tradition at the European Championship with Italian coaches — this time five — in charge of national teams at the tournament in Germany. This tops the Netherlands' mark of having three coaches — out of 16 teams — at Euro 2008. Among the five, all but Domenico Tedesco studied at the Italian federation's coaching school.

### VINCENZO MONTELLA

Turkiye Montella was also one of the top students in class, with a final mark of 110/110 at the end of his course in 2011. Montella took charge of Turkey's national team last year but has been living in the country since 2021 as coach of Super Lig team Adana Demirspor. The 50-year-old had previously coached Fiorentina, AC Milan and Sampdoria among others in his native country as well as Sevilla in Spain. His only trophy as coach was the Italian Super Cup with Milan.

### FRANCESCO CALZONA

Slovakia Slovakia may be Calzona's first job as head coach but the 55-year-old has had an impressive apprenticeship. Calzona was also part of Spalletti's staff at title-winning Napoli. Calzona left before the season ended, when former Napoli and Slovakia captain Marek Hamsik suggested he take over as the coach of Slovakia's national team.

### MARCO ROSSI

Hungary After several years of coaching in the lower Italian leagues, Rossi considered joining his brother's accountancy firm. But a chance meeting with the sporting director of Honved in Budapest led to him taking charge of the Hungarian team. The 59-year-old Rossi had two spells with Honved and led the team to their first Hungarian league title in 24 years in 2017. He also coached a Slovakian team. He was appointed Hungary coach in July 2018. Rossi also steered Hungary to Euro 2020.

### DOMENICO TEDESCO

Belgium The 38-year-old Italian-German was appointed as Belgium's coach in February 2023 but has quickly built a solid team that was unbeaten in his tenure until the shock loss to Slovakia. The youngest of the Italian coaches emigrated from Italy to Germany when he was two years old. He began his coaching career with the youth squads at Stuttgart when he was just 22 while working at the Mercedes factory.

**66** The secret (to Italian managerial success) is our predisposition to the art of making the best out of everything, even in difficult situations. An Italian-Neapolitan art, which is often useful in being a coach."  
— Renzo Ulivieri, president of the Italian football coaches' association

### CLUB CLASS

The strength is evident not only in the national teams but also at the club level. Carlo Ancelotti won his fifth Champions League title this month while Atalanta, under Gian Piero Gasperini, won the Europa League.



## Team Hopes Striker's Luck Will Turn As They Look Forward To Ukraine Match In Even Group

# Lukaku stays 'offside' but Belgium in sight of goal

Stuttgart: Belgium defender Arthur Theate said he has no doubt Romelu Lukaku's luck will turn after seeing three goals ruled out in his team's first two matches at Euro 2024.

Lukaku is Belgium's all-time leading scorer with 85 goals but has yet to add to that tally in Germany, having another effort disallowed in Saturday's 2-0 win over Romania in Cologne.

Lukaku set up the opening goal for Youri Tielemans in the second minute and was a constant threat to the Romanian defence, but his strike in the second half was ruled out by VAR for a marginal offside decision. Kevin De Bruyne wrapped up the points in the closing stages to leave all four teams in the group level on three points.

That came after he was twice denied by video reviews in Belgium's shock 1-0 loss to Slovakia.

"It's probably not easy because it's his third goal that's disallowed, but I think it's unlucky when you see the offside," Theate said on Sunday. "It's very, very hard to accept because it's maybe one centimetre

(offside), but I think he's in a good mindset.

"He's very important for us, he creates a lot of chances, a lot of spaces, so if he carries on and keeps going like this, I'm sure he will score a lot of goals."

All four teams in Group E are level on three points going into the final round of matches, the first time that has happened in the tournament's history. Belgium take on Ukraine in Stuttgart on Wednesday, while Romania face Slovakia at the same time in Frankfurt.

"It's not easy. We knew this when we lost the first game against Slovakia, we're going to have to not lose anymore," said Theate, who returned alongside 37-year-old Jan Vertonghen in defence against Romania.

"We won yesterday so it's a great thing. Now we have to do the same thing on Wednesday. We just have to look at ourselves and do our job and then everything will be fine."

BIT PART: Lukaku (facing) had a third goal ruled out by VAR at these Euros. But he laid the ball off for Tielemans to score

Romania, ranked in 47th place, competed gamely as they chased their own shock, but this time Belgium's superior class proved decisive. "I have the same feeling as against Slovakia: we played well but the difference is that we scored and won today," said Belgium captain De Bruyne.

"We made a few mistakes and gave away a few chances, but we can be satisfied with our performance, both offensively and defensively."

Domenico Tedesco's team faces Ukraine in their decisive group match on June 26. "We have an extreme amount of potential. Let's see, the last game will be difficult," he said.

"We are very relieved we won. It was very important to get the three points. For the rest of the tournament, we are released (from the pressure) and happy." AGENCIES

BELGIUM	2
Tielemans 2, De Bruyne 80	
ROMANIA	0

5 Belgium have now won five of their last six Euro group matches.

17 The 1-0 loss against Slovakia on Matchday 1 is Belgium's only defeat in their last 17 matches (W11 D5).

## Brazil look for fresh start after period of turmoil

Los Angeles: Brazil open their 2024 Copa America campaign against Costa Rica on Monday in Los Angeles with a whole new look almost from top to bottom, with Real Madrid's rising star Vinicius Jr leading a group that were waiting for an opportunity for a fresh start.

After a heartbreaking shoot-out defeat by Croatia in the World Cup quarterfinals at Qatar 2022, Brazil went through two caretaker managers as they waited for almost a year trying to lure manager Carlo

Ancelotti from Real Madrid. But after the Italian extended his contract with the Spanish giants, Brazil settled on journeyman Dorival Jr. He won the Copa Libertadores and the Copa do Brazil with Flamengo a few months after taking over. He led Sao Paulo to a Brazilian Cup title before accepting the Brazil job in January.

Dorival had a lot on his plate with the national team. Brazil suffered defeat in three consecutive World Cup qualifiers for the first



THE SPEARHEAD: Vinicius Junior, who will lead the line for Brazil, chases the ball during practice ahead of their opener against Costa Rica

time, their first loss to Uruguay for 22 years and saw the end of a 58-match unbeaten home streak in the qualifiers.

Add to that the loss of Neymar, with a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus in his left knee on international duty in October, and Brazil hit rock bottom. With no Ancelotti and a team in turmoil, Dorival turned his attention to recovering the confidence and self-esteem of a young and revamped squad in which Vinicius Jr claimed the responsibility of carrying the load as Brazil's key player.

Dorival relied on his players' grit and pride, fixing up a team that was more feisty than colourful.

They got a 1-0 win over England at Wembley and fought back to draw 3-3 with Spain at the Bernabeu earlier this year.

In both games his hero was 17-year-old sensation Endrick.

The Copa America will be the first time Dorival has had time to work extensively with his players, who face Costa Rica following a three-week training camp in Florida before taking on Paraguay and Colombia in Group D.

With most of the attention on world champions Argentina and Lionel Messi, now playing in the MLS, Brazil will start their Copa America campaign without great expectations.

### MEXICO EDGE JAMAICA; SUPER SUBS GIVE VENEZUELA A WIN

Santa Clara (United States): Goals from substitutes Jhonder Cadiz and Eduard Bello gave Venezuela a 2-1 win over 10-man Ecuador in their Copa America Group B match on Saturday.

In the group's other game, Mexico made a winning start to their campaign with a 1-0 victory over Jamaica in Houston but lost their captain Edson Alvarez to injury.

Ecuador were forced to play with 10 men from the 22nd minute of the game at Levi Stadium when striker Enner Valencia was sent off for dangerous play. The 34-year-old forward struck the chest of Venezuela defender Jose Martinez with his boot. AGENCIES

# T20 WORLD CUP

"WELL DONE BROTHER. BETTER TEAM ON THE DAY. YOU BOYS ARE AN INSPIRATION FOR SO MANY BACK HOME AND ABROAD. SO SAD WE CAN'T SEE YOU ALL PLAY IN AUSTRALIA."  
—Usman Khawaja | AUS TEST BATTER'S SOCIAL MEDIA POST CONGRATULATING RASHID KHAN



FACE-OFF

IND VS AUS  
TV TIME: 8 PM  
STAR SPORTS  
HOTSTAR

HEAD TO HEAD

IND 19  
AUS 11

LAST FIVE MATCHES

IND W W NR W W  
AUS L W W W W

VENUE: GROS ISLET

IND 8/10  
AUS 12/10

NUMBERS GAME

**794** Runs scored at an average of 52.93, including eight fifties in 21 innings by Virat Kohli — the most by any batter against Australia in T20Is.

**104\*** Glenn Maxwell, with his 48-ball unbeaten knock against India at Guwahati on Nov 28, 2023, remains the only batter to post a hundred in his 100th T20 International.

**5** Number of times India and Australia have met in the T20 World Cup. India emerged victorious in 2007, 2014, 2016, while Australia won in 2010 and 2012.

**168.70** Suryakumar Yadav's strike rate while scoring 2259 runs at an average of 44.29 in 62 innings, including four hundreds and 19 fifties — the highest among the batters with 1000 runs or more in T20Is.

Group 1	Teams	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
Group 1	IND	2	2	0	2.425	4
	AUS	2	1	1	0.223	2
	AF	2	1	1	-0.650	2
	BAN	2	0	2	-2.489	0
Group 2	ENG (0)	3	2	1	1.992	4
	SA	2	2	0	0.625	4
	WI	2	1	1	1.814	2
	USA	3	0	3	-3.906	0

**Group 1**

Teams	M	W	L	NRR	Pts
IND	2	2	0	2.425	4
AUS	2	1	1	0.223	2
AF	2	1	1	-0.650	2
BAN	2	0	2	-2.489	0

**Group 2**

ENG (0)	SA	WI	USA
3	2	1	3
2	2	0	0
2	1	1	3
3	0	3	0

Miller rapped for Code of Conduct breach

St Lucia: Explosive South African batter David Miller was reprimanded and handed one demerit point for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during a Super Eights Group 2 match of the T20 World Cup against England. Miller was found to have breached Article 2.8 of the Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match."

The incident occurred in the 19th over of South Africa's innings. Miller played a full toss from pacer Sam Curran and expected it to be called a 'no ball' for height. When it was not declared a 'no ball', the left-hander signalled to review the decision when it could not have been reviewed.

If not Windies, Viv backs India to win title

North Sound: Batting legend Vivian Richards visited the Indian team's dressing room and expressed his support for Rohit Sharma and his men. The West Indian was a part of the fielding medal ceremony which was won by Suryakumar Yadav after they defeated Bangladesh in the Super Eights on Saturday. "Well done today, going all the way?" he asked.

"What can I say to a team that is already so powerful? You have a good thing going here and I can only say that if the guys in maroon don't get it done, I will be backing you. Is that reasonable enough?" Richards said in the video posted by the BCCI.

## PAYBACK TIME FOR INDIA?

### Men In Blue Have A Chance To Avenge ODI World Cup Final Defeat Vs Australia

TIMES IN THE CARIBBEAN  
Dwaipayan.Datta@timesgroup.com

St Lucia: The small island, with the Caribbean Sea on one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other, is absolutely buzzing. For the last couple of days — cricket tourists — mostly Indians from the US and Canada — have been trooping in for an extended weekend, and once the Saturday night theatre happened in St Vincent, the excitement has gone up manifold.

Australia's defeat to Afghanistan has suddenly opened up the possibility for the Indian fans who are here and those across the world to finally get their redemption. The defeat to the Aussies in the ODI World Cup final in Ahmedabad in November is something no one related to Indian cricket has forgotten, and now it's a chance to pay the Aussies back with interest. A win on Monday for India will not only officially seal for them a semis berth, but also show Australia the door, provided Afghanistan beat Bangladesh later on Monday.

The Indian team, that came in here late on Saturday night and cancelled their practice session on Sunday owing



EAGER: India will look to knock Australia out

to exhaustion and the extreme humidity in this part of the world, would also surely be licking their lips.

On current form, there's absolutely no reason why India wouldn't beat their biggest rivals Australia, making their own journey forward a little smoother: India apart, there is no other team than Australia which has so many individual match-winners who can destroy opposition on their day. If they can be taken care of before the semis, Rohit Sharma's boys would probably have to just carry on playing the way they are and this cup would be theirs.

The Darren Sammy International Stadium, the venue of this game, though has been slightly different from most other venues across the Caribbean. Scores have fluctuated between 180-220, barring the last game between South Africa and England, which the Proteas won with 163. Normally the ball does come on to the bat here which should be a bit of a relief for Aussies, who were

absolutely strangled by the Afghanistan bowlers on the super slow St Vincent track.

Australia had chosen to drop Mitchell Starc and add left-arm spinner Ashton Agar in the playing XI on Saturday. Even though Agar was extremely economical (0/17), there was no denying that Starc's explosive ability to run through opposition in Powerplay was missed.

Aussies will be tempted to bring Starc back for this huge game, even though the average economy rate of spinners in St Lucia is 7.9 in the five matches played, which is significantly better than it is for the pacers (9.4).

Captain Mitchell Marsh knows it, but he also knows that if they are to make a match of it against a marauding India, they will first have to deal with the mental scars of a defeat like this in a turnaround time of mere 36 hours.

"First things first, we have to recover: We have a lot of belief in our group because we know we are a good cricket

team. We had an off night but I guess there's also a positive in the fact that in 36 hours we go again. It's a big game — a must-win. I think if you look back at the short history of this team, I know for a fact that it brings out the best in our guys, so the boys will certainly be up and about for it," Marsh put up a brave face on Saturday night.

For India, it's way more straightforward. Every constituent part of the Indian machine has been running smoothly and it's about keeping it going. No change is expected in the playing XI and with Jasprit Bumrah in outstanding form, one can hope the threat of Travis Head upfront will be taken care of. The explosive left-hander has caused enough heart-burns for India across formats, but he is coming off a failure against Afghanistan.

Everything points to a perfect day for Team India and its fans, it's just about Rohit and his boys to maintain the composure that they have shown in the World Cup so far.

"It's a big game, it will be against India obviously and it's a must-win game. I think if you look back at the short history of this team, I know for a fact that it brings out the best in our guys. So, the boys will certainly be up and about for it."  
— Mitchell Marsh, AUS CAPTAIN

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### Semifinal spot on the line as South Africa take on co-hosts West Indies

North Sound: Hosts West Indies will need their all-round firepower for taming a rampaging South Africa in their must-win final Super Eight clash to seal the

other group match to qualify. South Africa, who have won all their six games so far, surrendered their top position to England as their net run rate, thanks to narrow wins, is not great. Hence, only a victory will see them go through.

West Indies may derive some mental advantage from the fact that they beat South Africa 3-0 in a bilateral series before the start of the World Cup. However, a majority of the South African and West Indies main players were absent from that series due to the IPL.

PREVIEW  
semifinal berth at the T20 World Cup here. After their only loss in six games to England in their opening Super 8 game, WI regrouped to smash co-hosts USA by nine wickets.

For WI, a win will see them through to the last-four, while a loss will knock them out as England thumped the USA in



HISTORY: Afghan players celebrate their victory over Australia

## Inspired Afghanistan give Oz a reality check

Kingstown: Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran shared an opening stand of 118 before Gulbadin Naib took over to drive Afghanistan to a 21-run win over Australia in St Vincent on Saturday and keep alive their hopes of reaching the Twenty20 World Cup semifinals.

A win for Australia would have sent the 2021 champions and India into the last four, but even a second hat-trick in as many matches from Pat Cummins was not enough to keep their unbeaten record at the tournament intact. Half centuries from Gurbaz and Zadran helped the Afghans rack up 148-6 in their 20 overs, before their bowlers dismissed the Australians for 127 on a tricky track.

Naib claimed 4-20 and Naveen-ul-Haq bagged 3-20, but it was the third century partnership of the tournament from Gurbaz and Zadran that laid the foundation for a win that also kept Bangladesh alive. "We've waited for a long time (for this)," said man-of-the-match Naib.

"It's a big moment for our nation and our people. I have no words, but thanks to the fans who supported us in our career and cricket journey... thank God we finally beat Australia. It's a great achievement for Afghanistan. We have achieved many things in the last 10 years, but this is big."

Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh won the toss and sprang a couple of

surprises by sending the Afghans in to bat and naming a team with left-arm spinner Ashton Agar in the bowling line-up in place of Mitchell Starc.

In the early overs it looked like the Australian bowlers would suffocate the Afghans, but the lack of a breakthrough wicket allowed Gurbaz and Zadran to settle in and accelerate through the middle overs.

Crisp batting and hard running from the Afghans put the pressure back on the Australians, who made uncharacteristic fielding errors under the Arnos Vale Ground lights.

The pair reached their half-centuries before Marcus Stoinis finally separated them in the 16th over, when Gurbaz mistimed a shot to David Warner at deep square leg to depart for 60.

Spinner Adam Zampa removed Azmatullah Omarzai (2) and Zadran (51) in the following over and pacer Cummins sent back skipper Rashid Khan cheaply with the final ball of the 18th over.

Karim Janat and Naib followed with the first two deliveries of the 20th over as Cummins became the first bowler to take two hat-tricks at a T20 World Cup.

Afghanistan made the best possible start with ball with Naveen bowling Travis Head for a duck in the opening over and having Marsh caught in the deep for 12.

1 After losing five matches (four ODIs & one T20I) between Aug 25, 2012 & Nov 7, 2023, Afghanistan have tasted their first win in six international matches vs Australia — by 21 runs at Kingstown on June 22, 2024.

3 Number of century stands logged by Afghan openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz & Ibrahim Zadran in the T20 WC to become the first pair to accomplish the feat.

3 Gulbadin Naib (4/20) is the third bowler to be used as fifth change (No.8) and take four wickets in a T20I (and the first to do so in T20 WC) — the first two being Ireland's Stuart Thompson and Sierra Leone's Abass Gbla.

1 Pat Cummins has become the first bowler to bag a hat-trick in successive T20s apart from the first to accomplish the feat twice in T20 World Cup — vs Bangladesh at North Sound and vs Afghanistan at Kingstown. He is now the fifth bowler to bag multiple hat-tricks in T20Is, joining Lasith Malinga, Tim Southee, Mark Pavlovic and Waseem Abbas.

Warner followed for three off Mohammad Nabi's first delivery to leave the Australians struggling on 32-3 in the final over of the power play, before the Afghans heaped more pressure by removing Stoinis and Tim David.

The explosive Glenn Maxwell gave Australia some hope with a battling 59 off 41 balls, but his dismissal by Naib, thanks to an acrobatic catch by Noor Ahmad, and sealed their fate.

**Brief scores: Afghanistan 148/6 in 20 overs** (Gurbaz 60, Zadran 51; Cummins 3/28) **bt Australia 126 in 19.2 overs** (Maxwell 59; Naib 4/20, Naveen 3/20) by 21 runs. REUTERS

## Could not sleep in Mumbai after loss to Oz, can't sleep today too: Rashid

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India and West Indies are the two teams with biggest fan bases in this part of the world. But if there's one nation that the neutrals love to root for, it is Afghanistan.

The celebration around the Afghan team in a pub in a remote corner of St Lucia tells you the story — everyone wants this beleaguered nation to defy the odds, both in life and sport. As for the Afghan players, these victories — in ODI World Cup against Pakistan or in the T20 World Cup against Australia on Saturday — are not just victories on the cricket pitch. It is a way of telling all those back home that there's light at the end of the tunnel, there's something to look forward to when life hasn't exactly been fair to them.

"It gives people back home so much hope and especially the young generation... Cricket is the only source of happiness back home and you all know that. And I feel like we are so lucky to be here giving those moments of happiness to the people back home," Rashid Khan, the mercurial captain of the Afghanistan



team, said after his team pulled off the upset win against Australia.

Afghanistan have played every game in this World Cup with a lot of purpose. Even in their defeat to India in Barbados the other day, there were moments when they made it difficult for the best side of the tournament. It is this desire to give something back to the country that keeps Rashid & Co. punch above their weight, time and time again.

"We hardly see such events back home where our people can celebrate and enjoy. But these little games, or big if you want to call it that, give them so much happiness. All that matters is the smile on the faces of my countrymen," Rashid said.

The best thing about this Afghanistan team is that they are not shy of looking the opposition in their eye.

Take their wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz for example. He didn't mind having a word with Marcus Stoinis, the Aussie allrounder, who isn't exactly known to be tongue-tied when things heat up.

Rashid fully endorsed Gurbaz's sledging of Stoinis saying: "Some guys in the team, they need that fire. Once they keep silent, they forget how good they are. I want the fire to keep burning."

In a way, the win on Saturday was a redemption for Rashid & Co. after the way they lost to Australia in the ODI World Cup in Mumbai a few months ago. They had the game all wrapped up before Glen Maxwell played one of the best ODI innings of all time to take the game away.

Maxwell threatened to do the same on Saturday too for a while, before Afghan bowlers had the last laugh. Rashid acknowledged that the Mumbai game hurt him and that he can "sleep better now". "That was a night that didn't let me sleep. Probably, tonight too, we won't sleep, but that's because of happiness," Rashid said, hoping to live the dream again on Monday against Bangladesh.

### The race to the T20 WC semis

**Group A**

- India (4 points) are virtually through. If they beat Australia (2) on Monday, they qualify as the top team from the group. Afghanistan (2) will then need to beat Bangladesh (0) on Tuesday to go through.
- If India lose to Australia and Afghanistan beat Bangladesh then India, Australia and Afghanistan will finish on 4 points each. NRR will come into play where Afghans are behind. They will need to beat Bangladesh by a big margin. India can only miss out if Australia and Afghanistan win their final matches by more than 120 runs.
- If Afghanistan lose to Bangladesh and India lose to Australia, the latter two advance.
- If Australia lose, they finish on 2 points along with Afghans and Bangla. Again, NRR will be decisive where Aussies have an advantage.

**Group B**

- Defending champions England (4) are through after their win over USA (0). The winner of Monday's South Africa (4) vs West Indies (2) tie will qualify. An SA win puts them on top. WI need to win big to qualify as toppers.

## Kuldeep enjoying the challenge of being a step ahead of batters

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St Lucia: If there's one bowler whose non-inclusion in the India playing XI in the New York leg of the T20 World Cup was slightly criticized in different quarters, it is Kuldeep Yadav.

The chinaman bowler has been India's best spinner across formats in recent times, still the Indian team management was waiting to employ him in slightly more favourable conditions for spinners than what it was at New York. But as the coaches kept explaining Kuldeep the situation, the wrist-spinner didn't lose heart and he delivered the moment he got his chance in West Indies.

Performances of 2-32 against Afghanistan and 3-19 against Bangladesh have proved how well-prepared in his mind Kuldeep was. The bowler mentioned that he "would have loved to bowl in New York", but he felt totally included in everything that was going on. "I wasn't playing, but I was the 12th man there. I was helping out the teammates and carrying the drinks, so that is more like playing. I didn't bowl there but I would have loved to because it was more like pitches in Australia," Kuldeep said after India's comprehensive win against Bangladesh.

It was in the West Indies that Kuldeep made his T20 debut back in 2017. He had a fair idea of what to expect in the Caribbean that helped. "I knew the condition very well — the length to bowl and the importance of varying the pace. It was perfect for the spinners to come here and bowl," Kuldeep added.

The left-armed explained how he doesn't think much about the conditions, which way the wind is blowing and all that when he comes into the bowl. For him, it is more about the



**POTENT THREAT:** Kuldeep Yadav made timely strikes in the middle overs against Bangladesh

length and outthinking the batsman. "I didn't think about the wind, just the length mattered. And obviously reading the batter and what they are expecting from me. It is about just reading one step ahead what the batters are thinking and reacting to it," Kuldeep said.

It was evident that he was outsmarting the batters when he got Tanzid Hasan with a beautiful googly as the right-hander shaped to go to his back-foot. As for Towhid Hridoy, the mode of dismissal was the same, just that the ball turned in the opposite direction after landing in the same spot.

Kuldeep plays his IPL cricket for Delhi Capitals, whose home ground is Ferozeshah Kotla, which isn't the easiest venue for a spinner. Coming from there, the T20 World Cup was a welcome relief for Kuldeep. "IPL is totally different, what you experience in IPL is what you are experiencing in the T20 World Cup are not the same... For me, wherever I play, it is about being more aggressive. That actually helped me in the IPL and it is helping me here as well," Kuldeep said, hoping to keep it going against Australia in their last Super-8 game on Monday going against Australia in their last Super-8 game on Monday.

## Jordan, Buttler power England into semifinals

Bridgetown (Barbados): Pacer Chris Jordan grabbed a sensational hat-trick in his birthplace before captain Jos Buttler's blitzkrieg helped England storm into the semifinals of the T20 World Cup with a 10-wicket mauling of USA here on Sunday. Making a comeback in place of Mark Wood, Jordan (4/10) mopped up the USA tail by claiming four wickets in five balls, including the hat-trick, in the 19th over as the Americans folded for 115 in 18.5 overs.

Buttler then blazed away to a 38-ball 83 not out as England completed the chase in 9.4 overs to become the

first team to make the semifinals of the showpiece.

During his scintillating knock, Buttler smashed seven sixes and six fours, including hitting five maximums in a Harmeet Singh over to leave the USA bowlers battered and bruised. Earlier, the 35-year-old Jordan, who was born and grew up in Christ Church, Barbados, began the penultimate over dismissing a well-set Corey Anderson for 29 with a low full toss.

After surviving the next ball, Ali Khan found his off stump knocked over before Jordan went on to dismiss Nosthush Kenjige and Saurabh



Netravalkar off successive deliveries to pick the first hat-trick for England in men's T20Is. Leggie Adil Rashid, named player-of-the-match, bowled a miserly spell of 2-13.

2 Chris Jordan is the second bowler to take four wickets in an over in the T20 World Cup — the first being Ireland's Curtis Campher vs Netherlands at Abu Dhabi on Oct 18, 2021. Overall, he is the fifth to accomplish the feat in T20Is — the other three being Rashid Khan, Lasith Malinga and Jason Holder.

**Brief Scores: USA: 115 in 18.5 overs** (Nitish Kumar 30, Corey Anderson 29; Chris Jordan 4-10, Adil Rashid 2-13) **lost to England 117/0 in 9.4 overs** (Jos Buttler 83\*, Phil Salt 25\*) by 10 wickets.

## GALLERY

## Archery: Dhiraj's two bronze takes India to 4 medals

Dhiraj Bommadevara picked up two bronze medals on the final day of Archery World Cup Stage III at Antalya, Turkey, to help India finish with a haul of four medals in the last international event before the Paris Olympics. The women's compound team of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur bagged the gold, while Priyansh clinched the silver in compound individual event on Saturday.

**Chelsea sign Brazilian Estevao Willian:** Brazilian winger Estevao Willian will join Chelsea from Palmeiras in 2025, the Premier League club announced. Chelsea did not specify the amount they will pay for the 17-year-old, with British media saying that the Brazilian Serie A club will receive an initial fee of 29 million pounds (\$37 million) plus performance-related add-ons.

**Cameron Young posts 59 at Travelers:** Cameron Young made a par putt from just inside 10 feet for an 11-under 59 on Saturday in the Travelers Championship, the first sub-60 round on the PGA Tour in nearly four years.

**Money shines:** Money Exchange, Saro Bird, Land of Gold, Vayu and Dynamic Force shone well during the trouts in Mysore. Outer-sand: 600m: Land of Gold (Md. Imran Ashraf) - 39secs: attracted. Money Exchange (RB) - 42secs: shone well. Saro Bird (Ayaz Khan) - 39secs: caught the eye. Vayu (RB) - 40secs: moved quite well with plenty in hands. Dynamic Force (RB) - 43secs: shaping well. TNN/AGENCIES

## ACTION TODAY

**CRICKET:** ICC T20 WC, WI vs SA, 6 am; India vs Australia, 8 pm (Star Sports); **FOOTBALL:** Euro 2024, Albania vs Spain; Croatia vs Italy, 12.30 am Tuesday (Sony Sports)

## Sinner's first on grass

## Edges Hurkacz To Clinch Halle Open Title

Halle: World No. 1 Jannik Sinner won his first ever grass court tournament on Sunday, beating former champion Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (10/8), 7-6 (7/2) in the Wimbledon warm-up ATP Halle tournament.

The 22-year-old Italian went to the top of the ATP rankings thanks to his semifinal run at the French Open. "It means a lot. It was a tough match against Hubi," said Sinner after playing his doubles partner. "I knew I had to serve really well and you play only a couple of really important points throughout the whole set. So I was happy and I tried to produce in the best possible way in the important moments. I'm very happy about this tournament because (winning for) the first time on a grass court, it's a good feeling."

The triumph means Sinner is the first player since Andy Murray in 2016 to win his first tournament after becoming world No. 1.



FIGHTING IT OUT: Jannik Sinner leaves the court after winning the final

The fifth-seeded Pole, Hurkacz, 27, won Halle two years ago and was chasing a second title of the season after winning on clay at Estoril in April.

**Tommy Paul warms up for Wimbledon with Queen's final victory:** Tommy Paul added his name to a list of American tennis greats in winning the Queen's Club tennis title after defeating Lorenzo Musetti 6-1, 7-6 (10/8) in Sunday's final.

Victory gave the fifth-seeded American his third ATP tour title - and biggest

success of his career - after he won in straight sets after 88 minutes on court in London.

**Pegula bags title in Berlin:** Jessica Pegula saved five match points against Anna Kalinskaya to win her first title on grass in the Wimbledon warm-up WTA tournament in Berlin. Fourth seed Pegula pulled through 6-7 (0/7), 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) after earlier ousting top seed Coco Gauff in the semifinal which had been suspended overnight. Berlin is Pegula's fifth career title and first since winning in Seoul last year. AGENCIES

## Aditi climbs to T-43 at PGA C'ship

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**Sammamish (USA):** A trifle wobbly to start with, Aditi Ashok, who relied on her strong suit - putting - to get out of trouble, found her touch around the greens in the third round of the KPMG Women's PGA Championship on Saturday.

The Indian ace came up with clutch putts, in the eight to 12 feet range, to save pars early in the round. Despite missing a handful of birdie putts and two lip outs, the 26-year-old stayed patient to post a creditable even-par 72. She climbed to tied 43rd position with a three-day total of five-over 221.

South Korea's Amy Yang, still searching for her maiden Major title, shot a gritty one-under 71 to open up a two-shot lead. The 34-year-old, winner of the season-enders last year and a five-time winner on the LPGA, took her total to seven-under 209.

## India drub SA by 6 wickets to sweep women's ODI series 3-0

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru:** Smriti Mandhana continued her purple patch and capped a fine run with a record. The opener played another match-winning knock (90; 83b, 11x4) to help India register a 6-wicket win, which ensured a 3-0 series sweep over South Africa in the third and final ODI at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Sunday.

With a fine knock, Smriti took her three-match tally to 343, the highest individual score in a three-match bilateral ODI series in women's cricket. She bettered South African Laura Wolvaardt's record of 335.

Opting to bat first, South Africa were restricted to 215 for 8 in 50 overs with Deepti Sharma and Arundhati Reddy scalping two wickets each. The target was not a



IN FORM: Smriti Mandhana smashes one to the fence on Sunday

tall order for the in-form home team, who reached the target in the 41st over.

Earlier, South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt (61) and Tazmin Brits (38) laid a solid foundation with a 102-run opening-wicket stand. But the visitors lost wickets including both the openers and

Marizanne Kapp in quick succession to slump to 143/5. **Brief scores:** South Africa 215 for 8 in 50 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 61, Tazmin Brits 38; Arundhati Reddy 2/36, Deepti Sharma 2/27) lost to India 220 for 4 in 40.4 overs (Smriti Mandhana 90, Harmanpreet Kaur 42) by six wickets.

## Salvi is Indian women's team's bowling coach

Gaurav Gupta

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**Mumbai:** Former India and Mumbai seamer Aavishkar Salvi is the bowling coach of the Indian women's team for the ongoing home series against South Africa.

On Sunday, the teams played the third and final ODI of the series, after which they will lock horns in a one-off Test in Chennai and three T20s.

Salvi, who was Punjab's head coach for the past two seasons, guided the northern team to their maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy title last season. "Salvi has been offered a three-year contract recently at the BCCI's National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. If the results are good, he could be with the Indian women's team for a longer period," a source told TOI.

In the past, Salvi was the bowling coach of Oman. The 42-year-old, who played 4 ODIs in 2003 before injuries plagued his career, featured in 62 first-class matches, 52 List A matches and 19 T20 games for Mumbai.

## Verstappen pips Norris to top spot

Barcelona: Max Verstappen

marking his seventh victory out of ten races that have taken place during the 2024-25 season. It was Lando Norris, who started the race at pole but lost the lead in the very first corner when he went too wide trying to block a charging Verstappen giving surprise contender George Russell the space to move from P4 to P1. Lando Norris

## SPANISH GP

fell to P3 just seconds later and fell behind Red Bull.

Verstappen went on to overtake the Mercedes in the third lap and secured a marginable lead that ultimately secured the second consecutive win for the three-time world champion. Despite the poor start Lando was in the thick of the action. He engaged in brilliant wheel to wheel action with Russell, and a P2 finish for the British driver also secured the trophy for 'Driver of the Day' for the McLaren star.

Lewis Hamilton recently



ON SONG: Max Verstappen celebrates on the podium after winning the Spanish GP

spoke on the improvement of performance in his car after recent upgrades, and it was on full display on the day as he overtook his Mercedes teammate to secure a P3 finish in what was the 7-time world champion's 198th podium finish and his first since the Mexico GP last season.

Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz in their Ferraris finished fifth and sixth. With the win, Verstappen has scored 219 points in the drivers championship. He has a sizeable lead on second-placed Lando Norris, who has 150 points to his name. AGENCIES

## NADA suspends Bajrang again, serves him 'notice'

**New Delhi:** The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) on Sunday suspended Bajrang Punia for a second time, three weeks after its Anti-Doping Panel (ADDP) panel had revoked his suspension on the grounds that NADA had not issued a "notice of charge" to the wrestler. NADA had on April 23 suspended the Tokyo Games bronze medallist wrestler for refusal to give his urine sample for dope testing during the selection trials held in Sonapat on March 10. The sport's global governing body United Wrestling World (UWW) had also suspended him.

Bajrang had appealed against the provisional suspension and the ADPP had revoked it on May 31 till NADA issues the notice of

charge. Swinging into action, NADA on Sunday served the notice to the wrestler. "This serves as a formal notice that you are being charged with the violation of Article 2.3 of the National Anti-Doping Rules, 2021 and now you are provisionally suspended," said NADA's communication to Bajrang.

Bajrang has time till July 11 to request for a hearing or accept the charge. The elite wrestler has maintained that he never refused to give sample but only demanded to know NADA's response to his e-mail where he wanted to know why expired kits were sent to take his samples in December 2023. Bajrang's lawyer Vidhuspat Singhania said they will challenge the suspension. "Yes, we will have to file a reply," Singhania added. PTI

## IOA proposes medical insurance, pension for all ex-Olympians

**New Delhi:** The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is set to bring in medical health insurance and pension scheme for all former Olympians, the top sports body's president PT Usha said here on Sunday.

Usha has proposed the recommendations to the IOA's Executive Committee which will come up for discussion soon. The IOA will solely cover all these expenses from its coffers and the idea came to Usha's mind after she witnessed the plight of Indian archer Limba Ram.

"The IOA is taking many athlete-centric steps and one of these is medical insurance and pension for all our ex-Olympians," Usha told PTI, while felicitating legendary Indian athlete Gurbachan Singh Randhawa. "We have submitted the proposal to all EC members for all ex-Olympians. It is a small help from

IOA for all ex-Olympians. We should remember all our ex-Olympians."

Usha said the idea struck her after she met ailing Olympian Limba Ram, who suffered a brain stroke and approached IOA on a wheelchair for financial assistance. "I was really moved when I saw Limba Ram on a wheelchair in the IOA office struggling for financial assistance. That moment the idea came to my mind," she said.

Randhawa also appreciated the IOA chief's efforts but requested her to do more for the well-being of veteran Olympians.

"Sports persons' spouses don't get pension after their death so please pitch for that, that is necessary. I hope the government spends 10 to 15 per cent under CGHS on former athletes. Financial assistance for old sports persons should be there." PTI

## Prajwal bro's case handed to CID

## Cops' Lens On Counter-Plaint Alleging Plot To Frame Suraj

Continued from P1

Suraj, a surgeon-turned-politician, was arrested following a police complaint by a 27-year-old JD(S) worker. On Sunday night, he was remanded in judicial custody for 14 days and sent to Parappana Agrahara Central Prison in Bengaluru.

The complainant first approached senior police officers in Bengaluru on June 21 and later filed a formal complaint with Holenarasipura police in Hassan district, resulting in the registration of an FIR. "Based on the complaint, we've filed the case and due procedure has been followed," Karnataka home minister G Parameshwara said, while confirming the state govt's decision to hand over the investigation to CID.

According to sources, Suraj was summoned to appear before investigators at the CEN police station in Hassan city Saturday evening. He re-



Suraj Revanna being brought back to the police station from the hospital after a medical test in Hassan on Sunday

portedly denied the allegations during questioning.

Following his arrest and medical examination, Suraj was transferred to Bengaluru Sunday, where he was permitted to consult with his legal team. The investigation includes an examination of calls and messages exchanged between Suraj and the complainant, as well as the latter's visit to Suraj's farmhouse on June 16.

Police are also investigating a counter-complaint filed by a friend of Suraj, accusing the JD(S) worker of fabricating the allegations to extort money from the legislator.

Suraj has faced multiple controversies since entering public life. After younger brother Prajwal's election to Lok Sabha in 2019, Suraj tran-

sitioned into politics, starting with his role as director of Hassan District Cooperative Central Bank (HDCC) in 2020. He was later elected unopposed as director to Holenarasipura Taluk Primary Agricultural Credit Societies.

In 2021, Suraj contested the legislative council elections from Hassan segment on a JD(S) ticket and won. However, his candidacy was marred by accusations of concealing personal details, including his marital status.

Suraj has maintained a relatively low profile compared to his family members. His father Revanna was elected MLA in 1994, while mother Bhavani served as member of the Hassan zilla panchayat. "He is yet to come out of the shadow of his father," a senior JD(S) functionary said.

## Caught by surprise, JD(S) distances itself from case

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mysuru/Bengaluru:** The arrest of JD(S) patriarch and former PM HD Deve Gowda's second grandson in a matter of weeks took party functionaries by surprise and they're trying to distance themselves from the case involving MLC Suraj Revanna, who faces charges of unnatural sex, wrongful confinement, and criminal intimidation.

Suraj's uncle and Union minister HD Kumaraswamy refrained from commenting, saying: "Why are you asking me? I don't know anything about the case. The law will take its own course."

In Mysuru, party's core committee chief GT Devegowda said disciplinary action against Suraj, son of former minister HD Revanna, may be considered, while asserting that JD(S) is not responsible for his alleged actions.

"If one person from Kar-

nataka does something wrong, can the entire 6.5 crore Kannadigas be held responsible? Nevertheless, we have taken cognizance of his arrest and will initiate measures if necessary," he said, assuring that the party will not shield anyone guilty, as demonstrated in the previous case involving Suraj's brother and former MP Praj-

## TROUBLE IN FAMILY

wal Revanna, who was arrested over three weeks ago for alleged sexual abuse.

JD(S) ally BJP preferred to keep quiet too. BJP's Mandya district in-charge minister N Cheluvaryaswamy dismissed claims of a political motive behind the arrest.

Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah confirmed that govt had granted police full autonomy to investigate the case impartially. "There is no political conspiracy against the Revanna family or JD(S)," he assured.

## Rahul thanks people of Wayanad for 'unbridled love'



Rahul expressed confidence that Priyanka will do an excellent job

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Sunday addressed an emotional letter to the people of Wayanad, the constituency he is giving up to represent Rae Bareilly in Lok Sabha, and said when he faced abuse on a daily basis, their unconditional love protected him.

He also expressed confidence that his sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who is set to contest from the constituency in the ensuing bypoll, will do an excellent job of being an MP if the people of Wayanad decide to give her the opportunity.

"I was a stranger to you and yet you believed in me. You embraced me with unbridled love and affection. It didn't matter which political formation you supported, it didn't matter which community you were from or which religion you believed in or which language you spoke," Rahul said.

"When I faced abuse day after day, your unconditional love protected me. You were my refuge, my home and my family. I never felt for even a moment that you doubted me," he added.

"I am sad, but I am consoled because my sister Priyanka will be there to represent you. I am confident that she will do an excellent job of being your MP if you decide to give her the opportunity. My central commitment to both you and the people of Rae Bareilly is that we will fight and defeat the hatred and violence being spread in the country," he said.

## Muslims with Kunbi certs too should get OBC quota: Jarange

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**Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar:** Adding a fresh twist to the Maratha-OBC quota issue, Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange on Sunday said Muslims and other community members, including Brahmins, who have Kunbi records should get OBC quota benefits, like Marathas. The statement comes at a time the state govt is trying to appease Marathas by providing those with Kunbi records OBC quota, while OBC activists are up in arms demanding that OBC quota shouldn't be disturbed.

This is likely to add a fresh challenge to Mahayuti govt as BJP has consistently opposed quota for minorities, while its partner Ait Pawar-led NCP has been backing quota for Muslims in education. In 2015, the Devendra Fadnavis govt had scrapped the 5% quota granted to Muslims by the previous Congress-NCP govt.

"Muslims, Marwaris, Lingayats, Brahmins and others with Kunbi records have the right to the reservation. It is up to the members of those



Jarange said govt has to offer quota to Muslims at any cost

communities to decide if they want to avail of the quota benefits or not. However, it is legitimate to give them the benefit of reservation," Jarange said, adding that Kunbi records of lohar (blacksmith) and kumbhar (potter) communities have also surfaced.

Claiming that he is firm on getting OBC reservation for "eligible" Muslims, Jarange told reporters in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar that the govt has to offer quota to the minority community at any cost.

Reacting to this fresh demand, OBC activist Laxman Hake said the Muslim community does not have a social hierarchy like the Hindu community does.

## 22 TN fishermen held by Lanka over 'poaching'

**Madurai:** Sri Lankan navy apprehended 22 Rameswaram fishermen on Sunday on charges of poaching in the Island nation's territorial waters. They were produced before a magistrate and remanded in judicial custody till July 5.

The three trawlers belonging to N Justin, J Raymond, and R Herin set sail on Saturday from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu. There were seven fishermen each on Justin and Raymond's boats and eight fishermen on Herin's boat.

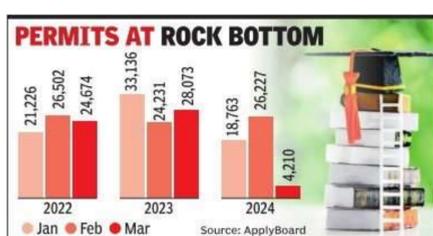
During the operation, the navy impounded the trawlers. The seized trawlers and the fishermen were handed over to Mailadi fishery inspector. TNN

## Canada permits for desi students at new low

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**Ahmedabad:** Indicating a sharp drop in processing of study permits from Indian students, the Canada govt sanctioned only 4,210 such permits in March this year - lowest or one-sixth of the average permits processed in the same month in past two years - an analysis of the data of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) by a Canadian edutech firm shows. IRCC processed 28,000 and 24,600 permits from Indian students in March 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The dip in student visas sanctioned in March indicates the impact of the



string of announcements by the Canadian govt including a cap on foreign students at 3.6 lakh annually, mandatory provincial attestation letters (PAL) required for visa, and closer watch on dubious educational institutes, along with factors such as job shortage and housing crisis in major Canadian cities.

The new initiative has landed another blow to the aspirants - a survey initiated by the Canadian govt in educational institutes indicated that govt intends to align the post-study work permits to the sectors in which the country would require skilled human resources. No official an-

nouncement on the issue, however, is made so far.

Upinder Singh Bedi, a Canada-based immigration lawyer, said Canada is adopting the Australia model where only skilled professionals or workers will be welcomed. "Some of the sectors where the demand could be high include STEM, medicine and nursing, and vocations such as carpentry, plumbing, masonry and so on. I believe those who have already secured admission in Sept intake may not be impacted," he said.

Several Indian students are already in fix and are devising ways to ensure that their Canadian dream is not dashed in an increasingly difficult job market.

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