



## DOUBLE DELIGHT

Today's bumper issue of TOI is organised in two sections, both equally packed with news and analysis. To get the full reading experience of today's edition, make sure you don't miss the other section

## OTHER BOOK TOP STORIES

- India doubles down on UK over Jaishankar security breach
- Return of Sunil Chhetri both good news and bad
- UP cleric suggests pushing back Friday prayer on Holi

## A 1st, oil PSU gets chief from pvt sector

Vikas Kaushal, former India head of management consultancy firm Kearney, was appointed chairman of state-run Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd — the first person from the private sector to head an oil PSU. A chemical engineer, Kaushal has an MBA from IIM-A. **OTHER BK, P 1**

## Delhi govt looks for next DERC chief

Delhi govt has started the hunt for a new chairperson for DERC following the resignation of Justice Jayant Nath (retd), who was appointed in Aug 2023 by an SC bench on a pro tem basis, following a stalemate between the previous AAP govt and the LG. **P 2**

## Trainee SI collapses during run, dies

A trainee sub-inspector collapsed during a practice run and died at the Police Academy in Raipur's Chandkhuri on Friday, barely a week into the regimen. He was 29. His death has led his family to question the pre-recruitment medical tests. **P 6**

Def Purchases From Russia Must End Now, US Commerce Secy Tells New Delhi

## India has agreed to cut tariffs 'way down', declares Trump

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: US president Donald Trump on Friday said India has agreed to bring tariffs "way down", while claiming credit for the move in yet another tirade against several "high-tariff" countries. "India charges us massive tariffs, you can't even sell anything in India, it's almost restrictive... By the way, they have agreed to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done," he told reporters in the White House. The comments came at a time when an Indian team led by commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal is in the US to work out the contours of a bilateral agreement. So far,



"...India charges us massive tariffs. You can't even sell anything in India, it's almost restrictive... They have agreed, by the way; they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done..."

— US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

India has historically bought significant amounts of its military (items) from Russia...that needs to end. India is the 'I' in Brics, trying to create a currency to replace the dollar... These kinds of things do not create the love and affection we really, deeply feel towards India

— US COMMERCE SECY HOWARD LUTNICK

govt has remained tight-lipped about the negotiations that are currently underway.

Trump's statement came hours after US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick sought a "grand" deal that included farm products, while suggesting India stop defence purchases from Russia. "It's time to do something big...something that connects India and US together, but...on a broad scale, not product by product, but rather the whole thing," he said at the India Today Conclave.

► Farm sector, P 8

## Wang: Dragon and elephant have to dance

A "cooperative pas de deux (dance for two) of the dragon (China) and elephant (India) is the only right choice for both." Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said Friday, saying there is every reason for the two nations to support, rather than undercut, each other.

As important members of the Global South, China and India have the responsibility to take a lead in opposing hegemonism, he said, in an apparent reference to US, China and India are locked in a bitter fight over tariffs. **OTHER BK, P 7**

## Delimitation: Stalin writes to 7 CMs for joint action

Chennai: Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin sought to add heft to his campaign against population-based delimitation on Friday by writing to seven of his counterparts, former CMs and party chiefs, calling for an uncompromising fight against what he said was "an unfair exercise".

► Teach MBBS, engg in Tamil: Shah to Stalin, P 6

Stalin requested fellow CMs Pinarayi Vijayan (Kerala), Siddaramaiah (Karnataka), Revanth Reddy (Telangana), Chandrababu Naidu (Andhra Pradesh), Mamata Banerjee (Bengal), Bhagwant Mann (Punjab) and BJP's Mo-

The Union govt's plan for delimitation is a blatant assault on federalism, punishing states that ensured population control and good governance by stripping away our rightful voice in Parliament

— TN CM STALIN

han Majhi (Odisha) for their consent to join and nominate a senior representative each to a joint action committee that would draft a common strategy to challenge the proposed delimitation system. **TNN**

► Naveen, KCR, Jagan, P 9

## Speeding e-rick kills 10-yr-old, injures another

A 10-year-old girl died and another minor girl was injured after they were hit by an e-rickshaw in north-west Delhi's Jailorwala Bagh on Friday. While the e-rickshaw was seized by police from the spot, its driver was arrested and was booked under BNS Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder). An officer said that the driver was suspected to be drunk, and cops were waiting for the medical report to ascertain it. The other girl received injuries to her legs and is undergoing treatment at a hospital. **OTHER BK, P 2**

## ACCUSED CITE 'SECURITY CONCERNS' BEFORE &amp; AFTER INDIA SHIFT

## US SC judge rejects 26/11 accused's plea against extradition

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: New Delhi is close to having former Pakistani Army doctor and 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana brought to justice after US Supreme Court Associate Justice Elena Kagan rejected his emergency application on Thursday to stay his extradition to India.

Rana's attorneys immediately bumped up the application to Chief Justice John Roberts, likely the last court of appeal, with little possibility of reprieve after President Trump personally assured his extradition during PM Modi's visit to Washington DC last month and the State Department signed off on handing him over to Indian authorities.

On Thursday, Rana cited possible religious persecution and torture in India on account of his Muslim faith, besides 'serious medical condition', to forestall the extradition, which he argued through attorneys would be a 'de facto death sentence'.

► 'Working closely with US', P 9

## Delhi unsafe for me, prefer jail to bail, Michel tells judge

Vineet Upadhyay | timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Christian Michel James, one of the alleged middlemen in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper case who was granted bail by Delhi high court earlier this week, appeared before a city court on Friday and submitted that he could not accept it and wanted to go back to custody as Delhi was unsafe for him.

Saying that because of "security risks", he would rather finish his sentence and leave India instead of being released on bail, he submitted before the court of special judge Sanjeev Aggarwal, "I can't accept the bail. It's unsafe. Every time I step out of Tihar, something happens. The problem I am having is with police. I'd rather talk to you in private."

When the judge asked about his well-being, James said Delhi was just a larger prison for him. He mentioned something happened in AIIMS that he would rather talk to the court about in private.

► 'Can't you find a safe house?' P 9

## Mishra's '20 remarks bid to stoke enmity: Court

New Delhi: Delhi's Rouse Avenue court Friday dismissed a plea filed by Delhi law minister Kapil Mishra against the cognizance and summoning order of a trial court in a case of alleged violation of model code of conduct in 2020 over his statements, reports Vineet Upadhyay.

The court said his alleged remarks appeared to be a "brazen attempt to promote enmity on the grounds of religion by way of indirectly referring to a 'country' which unfortunately...is often used to denote the members of a particular religion".

► See OTHER BOOK, P 3

## IN THE COURTS

► Karnataka HC quashes ED summons against CM Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi and minister Byrathi Suresh in alleged Mysuru site scam | P 8

► Pjb & Haryana HC blasts Ludhiana court for imposing ₹1.1cr sureties, ₹55 lakh bank guarantee, keeping an accused in jail for over 4 yrs after bail | OTHER BOOK, P 7

► Allahabad HC dismisses PIL saying branding and sale of 'Shankar Parvati Chhap' beedi hurts religious sentiments | P 8

## PA tries to fire at Sita Soren over fund row

Sita Soren, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's estranged sister-in-law, had a close shave Friday when a PA of several years attempted to point a loaded pistol at her at a Dhanbad hotel during a dispute over campaign funds tied to last year's LS and assembly polls, report Chandan Paul and Sanjay Sahay. Sita's supporters overpowered Debashish Manoranjan Ghosh and police later took him into custody. The unlicensed pistol has been seized. **P 8**





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**THE TIMES OF INDIA** **CITY**



DDA opens  
Amrut  
Biodiversity  
Park to  
visitors | **B2, P3**



TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Jan Aushadhi Kendras provide WHO-certified medicines and medical items to the public at 50-70% lower prices compared to branded medicines. Many medicines are available at a lower price of up to 90%. These pharmacies will also help govt hospitals by facilitating local medicine purchases in case of emergencies, chief minister said.

# Hunt For New DERC Chairperson Starts

## Appointment Had Become A Major Bone Of Contention Between AAP Govt And LG In 2023

**Atul.Mathur@timesofindia.com**

Sources said Justice Nath tendered his resignation days after BJP defeated AAP in the assembly polls. The power department of Delhi govt issued his relieving order on Friday.



Now that the case is being withdrawn, sources said Delhi govt, in consultation with the high court, will have to shortlist a panel of three names for the post and send it to the LG for his concurrence. Once approved by the LG, the DERC chairperson can be appointed

DERC chairperson became a major bone of contention between AAP govt and Centre in 2023 after the latter amended the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Act and altered power dynamics by taking 'services' under its executive con-

**After AAP govt's earlier pick for the post, retired Justice Rajiv Kumar Shrivastava, expressed his inability to join, the Centre, drawing powers from the amended Act, issued a gazette notification appointing retired Justice Umesh Kumar. The then AAP govt called the appointment 'illegal and unconstitutional'**

The then AAP govt called the appointment "illegal and unconstitutional" and alleged that CM Arvind Kejriwal had recommended the name of another retired Justice, Sangeet Lodha, but the Centre "wilfully ignored and overlooked" the aid and advice of

Now that the case is being withdrawn, sources said Delhi govt, in consultation with the high court, will have to short-list a panel of three names for the post and send it to the LG for his concurrence. Once approved by the LG, the DERC chairperson can be appointed.

## Cabinet likely to give double bonanza on Women's Day

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

Both schemes were part of BJP's electoral promises made in the run-up to the recently concluded assembly polls. Sources said BJP might announce both initiatives at the Mahila Diwas programme at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium, which would be attended by national president JP Nadda and Delhi CM Rekha Gupta.

While the actual criteria to identify the beneficiaries will only be known after the cabinet's approval, sources said nearly 17-18 lakh women aged between 21 and 60 years were likely to benefit from the scheme. Only one member from a family is likely to be eligible for the Mahila Samridhi Yojana, said a source.

Earlier on Friday, the leader of opposition in the Delhi assembly, Atishi, wrote to Gupta, urging her to ensure the immediate transfer of Rs 2,500 to women's accounts. "The Prime Minister assured the mothers and sisters of Delhi that once the BJP's govt is formed, the scheme to provide Rs 2,500 per month would be approved in the first cabinet meeting and funds would start reaching women's accounts by Women's Day," the former Delhi CM stated in her letter. "To give the women of Delhi their due, the funds should be transferred without delay," she added.

# Govt starts withdrawing petitions of previous regime

**Atul.Mathur@timesofindia.com**

In the Feb 15 edition, TOI front-paged a story that the law department had asked all ad-

Some of the prominent cases being withdrawn included the petition against the Act of Parliament amending the Govt of NCT of Delhi Act, 1991, and handing over the 'services' related matters to the LG; the formation of high-level committees under the lieutenant governor for the cleaning of the Yamuna and solid waste management; and one rela-

## CASES TO BE WITHDRAWN

### In Supreme Court

NGT order regarding solid waste management committee

➤ Section 45D of GNCTD Act and appointment of STPs

Officials said that an initial list of eight cases – seven pending in the Supreme Court and one in the high court – was drawn up and shared with the new govt. They added that on the direction of the competent authority, all these cases were to be withdrawn in “public interest.”

In his first address to the newly-elected Delhi legislative assembly, LG VK Saxena emphasised that "constant con-

## AAP, BJP spar over decision to shut down 250 mohalla clinics

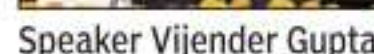
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

On X, former chief minister Atishi alleged that shutting down the clinics was just the beginning and soon the partially free electricity, water, bus travel for women and education sector development would stop.

# Speaker sets 100-day target for 'paperless' legislature

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

The NeVA team, led by additional secretary and mission leader Satya Prakash, made a presentation of the application, detailing its key features. It said that NeVA serves as a unified digital platform for all legislative functions, including the submission of notices, ministerial replies, legislative business, discussions,



Emphasising the urgency of the project, Gupta directed that the implementation be completed within 100 days. He reaffirmed the commitment to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'One India, One Application', advocating for digital governance across all legislatures to en-

# Good things — and air — don't last forever, GRAP-I is back

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The measures under stage I are preventive actions, directing govt agencies to intensify measures to control air pollution. This includes intensifying the use of anti-smog guns, water sprinkling and dust suppression mea-

Among the measures are enforcing a complete ban on coal or firewood in tandooirs in hotels, restaurants and open eateries; enforcing orders of NGT and Supreme Court on overage vehicles; enforcing courts or tribunal orders regarding ban on firecrackers; and ensuring that diesel generator sets are not used as a regular source of power

Meanwhile, the maximum temperature was 29.5 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal, on Friday. The minimum temperature stood at 10.2 degrees Celsius, four notches below normal. IMD has predicted that the mercury is likely to rise over the next few days. The day temperature is expected to reach 33-35 degrees Celsius by March 11.

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# Teens in ghettos draw on their dreary life to fight prejudice

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■ When I was little, I would play every evening. Boys and girls played together. But when I turned 11, restrictions started as I was ordered, "Don't play in the street", "Don't play with boys", "Don't go to the park." Gradually, I stopped playing altogether.

■ When girls go out to work, family members say, "Come home on time", "Dress properly", "What's the need for a mobile phone", "Don't talk to anyone while walking", "Mind your own business", and much more.

■ When I was a child, I used to fly kites with my grandfather. I wanted to study and do something on my own, but my father did not let me. I started doing household chores from a young age. Even after marriage, I continue to do household work.

■ Like every day, my uncle was helping my aunt with housework. After doing the dishes,

he was chopping onions and garlic when a friend arrived and immediately teased him saying, "Look, he's cooking like a woman."

**New Delhi:** These narratives are lived experiences of teenagers from the congested alleys of Delhi's low-income settlements. They are now employing storytelling to challenge gender biases and stereotypes. Stories drawn from the daily household routines give a peek into how women and girls negotiate words, conversations and behaviour smacking of a bias at every step.

These stories in Hindi from Khichripur, Jafrabad and Sunder Nagri bring out stark biases in society. Sixteen-year-old Sayma Zafar in Jafrabad shared how she stopped playing outdoors after she turned 11 due to growing restrictions. Neha Raikwar, 17, of Khichripur revealed how girls' freedom is curtailed when they step out for work and there is constant scrutiny by neighbours



Narratives by the youth collective, comprising both girls and boys, are part of the gender transformation project

and relatives. The girls and boys also reflect on the sheer drudgery of household mothers put up with from the time they wake up till they go to bed.

These narratives by the youth collective, comprising both girls and boys and steered

by NGO Ankur Society for Alternatives in Education, are part of the gender transformation project in which observations of identity biases are built into stories that the participants share with their families, community and their schools.

The power of the stories to change the mindset is proved in the words of Zafar, who lives with her tailor father and mother in Jafrabad. "Writing helped me share how deeply the restrictions on playing affected me as a child," the 16-year-old disclosed. "When I read out

this story to my parents, they did not react immediately but I noticed a change in my father's attitude thereafter. Now he does not stop me from going to the Ankur centre and that I see as a sign of change."

Raikwar shared that capturing her mother's childhood made her realise how much she had sacrificed while working as a labourer. In her story, the Class XII student reflects on how her mother was unable to fulfil her own dream of studying because her father did not permit her to pursue her education. "I have resolved to study well and join the banking sector to make my mother proud," the teenager told TOI.

In another telling story, Raikwar puts the issue of sharing the household before the readers when she reflects on the dilemma of a neighbour who is taunted and teased by people for helping his wife with household chores. "One morning, when piped water supply was available, my uncle started washing his and his children's clothes. Some relatives had come to their house. Seeing my uncle, one said, 'Are you a woman that you are washing clothes?' My uncle felt

## 17-YEAR-OLD NEHA RAIKWAR SAYS

**Outsiders also provoke families, saying, 'What do you lack that you send your daughters-in-law and daughters to earn? You're ruining the family's reputation'. If family members get instigated, the girl stops working and restrictions on her increase**

bad but ignored it and continued working," wrote Raikwar.

The teenager also highlights the challenges girls face when they step out to work. "Outsiders also provoke families, saying, 'What do you lack that you send your daughters-in-law and daughters to earn? You're ruining the family's reputation'. If family members get instigated, the girl stops working and restrictions on her increase significantly," Raikwar narrated. However, she also cites examples where parents dismiss such relatives by saying, "So what! Let her earn, she's taking care of her own expenses. Just because we didn't get the chance to work doesn't mean we should stop our daughters."

The storytellers include boys like Deepanshu from Sunder Nagri. At 16, he chose to question society's biases

through his story in which he captured the stress faced by a girl, Radhika, when she got late reaching home after work. In a vivid description, Deepanshu shared how Radhika walked briskly through a dark alley on a quiet street. "A group of boys standing nearby had their eyes fixed on Radhika. Realising that it was 8.30pm, Radhika got anxious because she worried that at home, she would face a tirade of questions from her father," he wrote of the girl's anxiety as she approached her home.

Sharmila Bhagat, director, Ankur, said that the children and youth through their creative practice and stories make a gentle dent in power hierarchies based on gender. "The stories are a reflection of their knowledge of the world around them and the times they live in," she said.

# With A Seat At High Table, They're Reshaping Politics

These Women Politicians Are Calling The Shots Even As Challenges Remain

Ishita Jairath &  
Vibha Sharma | TNN

**New Delhi:** Delhi's political landscape is experiencing a significant shake-up. With Rekha Gupta as CM and Atishi as leader of the opposition, it is clear that women are no longer just ticking the representation box — they are calling the shots in the capital.

It wasn't always like this. Priyanka Gautam, who unsuccessfully contested the Kondli assembly seat in Feb, recalled how things were back in college. "When we were undergraduates, just getting our names mentioned was a big deal — forget being given the mic!" said the first-time councillor in Municipal Corporation of Delhi who won on an AAP ticket but switched later to BJP.

Things have changed now. Ritu Goel, two-time municipal councillor from Rohini, believes women bring balance, transparency and commitment to governance. "Women are naturally more serious, honest and committed. We bring the same efficiency to governance that we do at home — it's in our DNA," Goel asserted.

Yogita Singh, BJP councillor from Kalkaji and former vice-president, Delhi BJP Mahila Morcha, agreed. "We multitask at home, we multitask in office. When women take charge, things get done," she said. However, women politicians often have to be twice as assertive to get half the respect their male counterparts do. Congress councillor Ariba Khan, who represents Abul Fazal Enclave, does not mince words. "We try to bring a different culture into politics, but the truth is, if you don't raise your voice, you're ignored. Sometimes, aggression is the only way to be heard."

Khan also comes from a political family, being the daughter of former MLA Asif Mohammad Khan. She admitted that



background can be an advantage. "A political background helps, but at the end of the day, your decisions are your own."

Gautam said this was partly true, not universal. "Advice and support of family are common in all professions, but when that advice turns into control, it becomes a problem. A woman leader must make independent decisions. I have always been self-driven and my political journey was shaped by my personal interest and effort, not family influence," she said.

Most people believe that save for a few career politicians, most women in politics are either dependent on the men in their families or follow their directions. "There's a reality we cannot ignore — around 70% of women in politics, especially at the local level, are not entirely independent. Their husbands or male relatives influence their decisions. Many women in politics follow the unwritten 'terms and conditions' set by those around them and they are expected to align with certain expectations rather than challenge them," admitted Naziya Danish, Congress councillor from Zakir Nagar

**RITU GOEL SAYS**  
**Women are naturally more serious, honest and committed. We bring the same efficiency to governance that we do at home — it's in our DNA**

and wife of former councillor Shoaib Danish. She however, claimed she herself spoke for herself and never acted on someone's asking.

Danish added that while women could bring a different culture, "the system of often doesn't allow them to do so". She said, "I have personally faced situations where I was only seen as someone's wife first, rather than as a leader in my own right. The mindset needs to change."

Even after securing positions, women leaders find themselves under extra scrutiny. Danish put it bluntly: "Men are judged by their decisions. Women leaders? By their clothes, their body language and their tone. If we don't carry ourselves 'properly', we aren't acknowledged as serious politicians."

However, Shelly Oberoi, AAP councillor from East Patel Nagar, claimed to have faced maximum hurdles as the first mayor of the reunified MCD during her tenure. "But we know administration and we believe in politics in which everyone, man or woman, has an equal role to play," Oberoi said. "Despite being a first timer, my party entrusted me with the responsibility of the mayor and gave me a free hand to express my plans for the betterment of MCD, which was going through a severe financial crisis."

And then there is the bureaucracy — yet another hurdle. "Babudom has its own complexities. There are times when officials cooperate and times when they don't take women leaders seriously," said Danish. "It depends on how much influence you can exert. While some women in leadership manage to establish authority, many still struggle to command the same level of respect as their male counterparts."

Yogita Singh has had a different experience. "I find working with bureaucrats easier than working with male politicians. Female IAS officers understand our challenges.

Even male officers are learning to take women leaders seriously," she said.

The battle has been long but women's political representation is growing. While MCD has had 50% of its seats reserved for women for years, even in the assembly and Lok Sabha, political parties are giving them bigger roles — Rekha Gupta's elevation as CM is an example — but the numbers tell a different story.

In the recent assembly polls, the number of women legislators elected dropped from eight in 2020 to five. This despite all major parties fielding more women candidates. But change is coming. Kamaljeet Sehrawat, BJP MP from West Delhi and former mayor, said the gamechanger would be the Women's Reservation Act, to be implemented from 2029, which makes it mandatory to reserve 33% of all seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women. "Once that happens, no party will have an excuse to field fewer women candidates. BJP already has facilitated women's participation at every level," Sehrawat said. "We have a woman CM, two women MPs from Delhi and women leading major ministries in the central govt."

But quotas alone do not define leadership. Every woman leader has her battles and victories. For instance, Goel amended the teachers' transfer policy in MCD to give needy women priority in this. Danish has worked on improving basic amenities for women and initiated measures like building public toilets and tackling traffic congestion in Okhla. "Every representative has a role to play in improving society," said Danish. "The only difference is women have to fight twice as hard as men to be taken seriously."

They are continuing the fight. But it isn't now about getting a seat at the table — it's about changing the rules of the game.

# This angel on wheels lives daily cycle of life & death

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**New Delhi:** "I see women at their most vulnerable — some bringing life into the world, others on the verge of leaving it." As Pooja Bawa grips the steering wheel of her pink ambulance, the weight of her work is not lost on her. In the past three years, the 41-year-old has transported around 250 patients across Delhi — pregnant women, victims of domestic violence, those who have attempted suicide. She knows almost every route to the 50 hospitals she rushes to daily, but what she knows even better is the fear, pain and desperation behind her in the rear of the ambulance.

"When we deal with suicide cases, we see someone at their weakest, their families shattered and it really makes you think. What must have happened in her life for her to reach that point, especially when it's a young mother? I can't help but wonder how lonely she must have felt," Bawa reflected as she sat in her vehicle after assisting a woman who had allegedly tried to kill herself in East Delhi.

Bawa volunteers with Shaheed Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal, a non-profit organisation. Its free ambulance service earned recognition during the Covid pandemic after helping hundreds of people for free. It was during this time that a crucial gap became clear — many families felt uncomfortable relying on male ambulance drivers and helpers, especially in emergencies involving women. This realization led the organisation's founder Jitender Singh Shunty's wife Manjeet Kaur to start the Pink Ambulance initiative to ensure that women had women to help them in such difficult situations.

For Bawa, driving an ambulance isn't a job but a calling. A Dilshad Garden resident and mother of a 14-year-old daughter, she left her job after marriage, never imagining that she would one day be behind the wheel of an emergency vehicle. "Sometimes my day starts as early as 5am getting



## POOJA BAWA SAYS

**My family is very supportive, not a day goes by when my husband or other family members don't hype me up for the work that I do, the hours that I put in. That's what I want — for women to feel celebrated, not just on Women's Day, but all 365 days of the year**

the household chores done and can go on till 2am responding to late night emergency calls," she said. "Before starting my day, I make sure my bag contains a pair of sunglasses and a good SPF sunscreen. I carry with me my family's love and courage when I drive out to attend to patients."

She added, "I used to do social work without even realising it was social work. Now, every day, I see the circle of life — helping a mother in labour in the morning and attending to a suicide case at night."

Bawa often finds herself comforting expectant mothers as they clutch her hand while stepping into the ambulance anxiously whispering, "Sab theek hoga na (Will everything be okay?)". Their husbands look to her for reassurance. "In those moments, I remember my own drive to the hospital when I was in labour, the same uncertainty and fear. That's why I do everything I can to make both the women and men feel assured," she said.

The job is not without challenges. "Delhi's roads are chaotic. People don't give way to ambulances. They ig-

nore the siren or, worse, drive right behind us to escape traffic. A few seconds can be the difference between life and death, and yet, people don't care," said the ambulance driver, who also has personal difficulties to stand up to: "There's this stereotype that women can't drive. To people who think so, I just smile and tell them, 'Sit in my ambulance once and then judge'."

Despite it all, Bawa finds immense fulfilment in what she does. Families call her days later, sending photos of the newborns she helped transport, offering sweets in gratitude. Her biggest supporter is her daughter. "She is so proud of me. She sees me working and feels empowered," Bawa beamed. "My family is very supportive, not a day goes by when my husband or other family members don't hype me up for the work that I do, the hours that I put in. That's what I want — for women to feel celebrated, not just on Women's Day, but all 365 days of the year."

Bawa and Shaheed Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal are training more women volunteers to be able to attend to patients and transport them to hospitals.

# How these two women with physical challenges hand-hold others

Ambika.Pandit@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** Bushra Shahid (32) fearlessly rides pillion on a bike that she books using online apps each day and makes it to work like everyone else. She negotiates crowded elevators and busy corridors and addresses the obstacles of persons with disabilities about assistive devices through the day. With her lived experience of blindness from birth, Bushra is now trying to make a difference with her outreach work at the central govt's department of empowerment of persons with disabilities (DEPwD).

The post-graduate from Aligarh Muslim University is the first visually impaired woman to join the department under the govt's Young Professionals programme in 2023 when DEPwD chose to bring on board an inclusive group of young minds on contract to experience and contribute to the process of policy making around accessibility and empowerment.

At the Antyodaya Bhawan office in the CGO complex, there is another young professional, Divya Kamal (28), who did not let her disabling spinal injury from a stairca-

se fall in 2014 ground her dreams.

Divya, a post-graduate from Delhi School of Economics, does a variety of work. She has monitored video skill training centres, handled grievances related to the PM's Daksh portal, and assisted beneficiaries applying for jobs. She is now preparing reports on the accessibility status of buildings and infrastructure.

Divya says she has tried to add perspective based on her experience in life before the accident and the challenges she faced after the disability. The fall left her with a limp in her leg.

Bushra and Divya are the only two women with disabilities among the young professionals working with teams under some of the central govt's seniormost officials leading flagship programmes on accessibility and skills training.

DEPwD secretary Rajesh Aggarwal sees this inclusive group as critical to enabling professionals with disabilities. It could bring the community's perspective and feedback from them to the policy planning process. Also, this could be a way to sensitise co-workers on the needs of colleagues



(From left) Divya Kamal and Bushra Shahid are the only two women with disabilities working with teams under some of central govt's seniormost officials

es with disabilities

Ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, TOI spent time with Bushra and Divya at work.

Bushra, sitting with colleagues with a dupatta gracefully draped around her head, said that her work profile ranged from data entry to addressing queries and grievances over the phone, preparing feedback reports on assistive devices

and facilities provided to beneficiaries and reporting on the challenges to her seniors.

Her inclusion story comes full circle every day during a 3.30pm tea break with colleagues.

How does she get around the place? Bushra pointed to the floor that had tactile markers across the office. That made walking around seamless for her.



Photos: Anindya Chattopadhyay

Bushra's parents had to fight hard to give her an education. They also fought the mindset among relatives and friends who saw Bushra as a liability. "There were people who suggested to my father that he should consider ending my life when I was an infant. My father refused to buckle under pressure," Bushra said. "My parents had seen a lot of financial

hardship so they believed it was important for me to study and become financially independent," she said.

Her father, who once ran a small general store, now works as a truck driver. "Whatever little I save, I send it home. I wish I can someday earn enough to support my parents' monthly expenses," Bushra said. She said that there

was a need for creating more opportunities for people with disabilities in govt departments.

She knows she is a vital link between the community and govt. Bushra spoke about an instance of a man from Rajasthan who needed help with a dysfunctional motorised tricycle. "I comforted him, flagged his grievance to my seniors who immediately addressed it. I also gave him numbers of repair centres near his home so that he can seek help in the future," she said.

Divya, who hails from Ranchi in Jharkhand, uses a stick for support when she walks, but takes the available public transport from Gurgaon to her workplace every day.

The days after her back surgery, when she was bedridden, are etched in her memory. "The road to recovery was overwhelming. That year tested me in ways I had never imagined. My parents and grandmother stood by me every step of the way," she said.

"It is okay to be scared or cry," she said. "But giving up should not be an option. Today, I am proud, not just for how far I've come, but because I have accepted myself the way I am."



\*T&C Apply.

Unless specified, the retail prices shown are for 1 unit of the product.

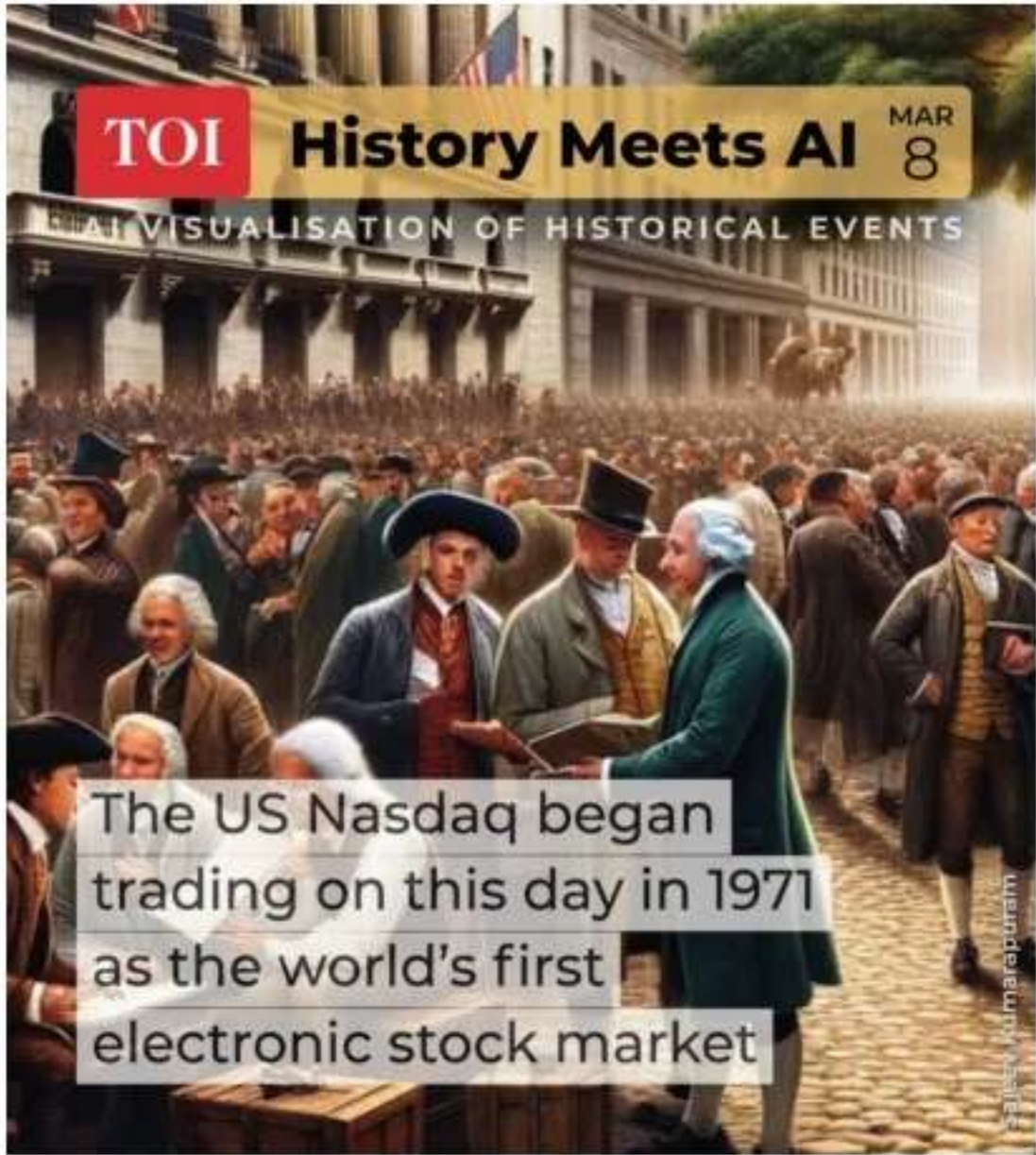




FOREIGN SECY VIKRAM MISRI VISITS MOSCOW, DISCUSSES UKRAINE WAR & BILATERAL TIES

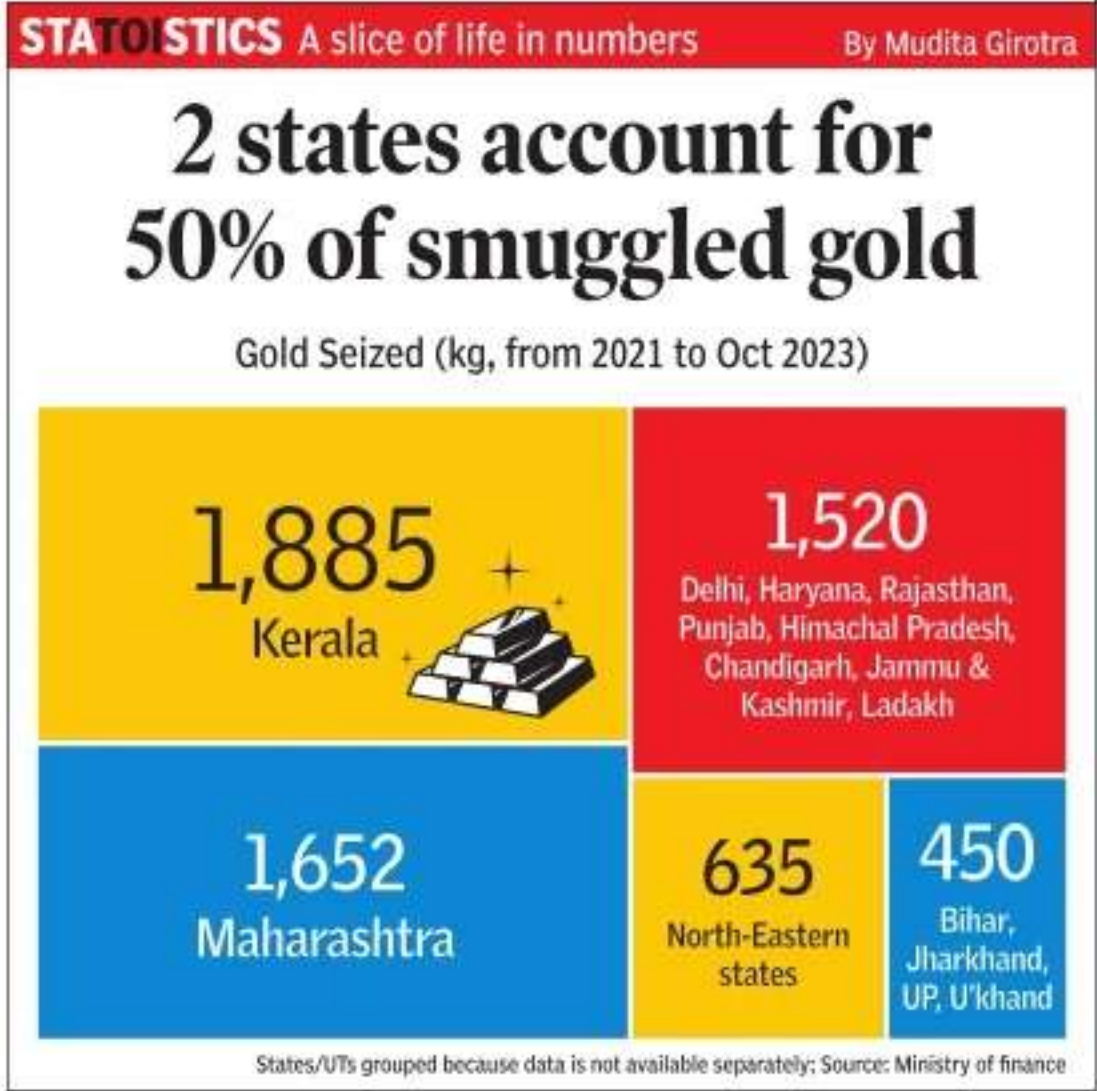


DY CM SHINDE'S AIDE DROPPED FROM MAHA GOVT THINKTANK; MOVE SEEN AS LIMITING HIS CLOUT



The US Nasdaq began trading on this day in 1971 as the world's first electronic stock market

**Priest sells temple land to Mandir Trust**  
Uttar Pradesh Police have registered a case against priest Ramakant Pathak for allegedly selling the property of Naya Anand Bhavan Temple in Ayodhya to Ram Mandir Trust through fraudulent means. The complaint was filed by the temple's caretaker who claimed the property was an ancient religious asset that couldn't be transferred for personal gains. Ramakant was the temple priest in the past but removed because of his alleged misconduct. Despite a 2016 court order that asked him to vacate the temple premises, he stayed on and later conspired with revenue officials to transfer the temple land to his name, the complaint states. On Sept 21, 2024, he reportedly sold 21,198.8 sqft of temple land to Shri Ram Janmahoomi Teerth Kshetra, the Ram temple trust, for Rs 6 crore using forged documents. TNN



# Sidda ups budget allocation for schemes for minorities by 33%

'Halal Budget', Says BJP, Slams Govt For 'Appeasement Policy'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru/ New Delhi: Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah Friday presented his record 16th budget, allocating Rs 4,535 crore for minority welfare programmes—an increase of 33% over Rs 3,409 crore last year—igniting a political firestorm with BJP branding it 'halal budget' and accusing Congress govt of practising "appeasement" policies.

However, a big takeaway from the budget, with an outlay of over Rs 4 lakh crore, was an increase in capital expenditure by 25%, compared to 2% last year. Within capital expenditure, two biggest increases are in public works (187%) and urban development (173%). The CM made a specific mention of Bengaluru, saying the yearly grant of Rs 3,000 crore being provided to the city will be enhanced to Rs 7,000 crore. The state economic survey



released Friday estimates that Karnataka will grow by 7.4% this fiscal, higher than India's growth of 6.4%. Agriculture has made a turnaround because of good rains. Services grew by 8.9%, higher than the 7.9% in previous fiscal. This was led by IT-related services that grew by 11.1%, up from 10.2% in 2023-24. Despite the higher capital allocations, Siddaramaiah has managed to keep the fiscal deficit at 2.9% of state GDP, just below the

BJP spokesperson Anil Antony slammed the quota provided to minorities, saying it is unconstitutional and a huge deviation from the principles of Dr B R Ambedkar, who strongly opposed reservations based on religious grounds. "Congress is now disregarding its past credentials on social justice and is evolving into a modern version of Jinnah's Muslim League," he added.

Antony, while accusing Congress of minority appeasement, cited provisions made in the budget, including Rs 6,000 per month for imams, Rs150 crore for development of waqf properties in Karnataka, reinstatement of the scrapped 4% Muslim quota and 4% reservation in every govt contract worth up to Rs 2 crore.

BJP's Karnataka unit posted on social media, "Scam CM Siddaramaiah in Karnataka presents a halal budget—appeasement at its peak."

## Huge dip in funds allocation for women's schemes, beneficiaries: Maha eco survey

Nisha.Nambiar@timesofindia.com

Pune: Maharashtra's Economic Survey 2024-25 released Friday by deputy chief minister and finance minister Ajit Pawar revealed an alarming decline in the number of beneficiaries and financial allocations across women's welfare schemes.

Shakti Sadan facilities, which provide rehabilitation services to trafficking victims and vulnerable women, recorded a dramatic 57% drop in inmates—from 3,902 in 2023-24 to 1,672 in the current fiscal. Similarly, govt women hostels, shelter

homes and protective homes collectively served 4,527 women in 2024-25, 32% down from 6,654 the previous year. The funding for these facilities was slashed by 36%, from Rs 15.31 crore to Rs 9.82 crore.



The report states that women counselling centres experienced one of the biggest funding cuts, with allocations reduced by 69% (from Rs 4.20 crore to just Rs 1.32 crore), while their beneficiary count fell by 29%—from 25,734 to 18,322.

Protection services for domestic violence victims saw a 17% decrease in no. of beneficiaries (from 11,722 to 9,704) &

## Another GBS death takes Pune toll to 12

Pune: A 38-year-old man who moved from Bengal to Pune recently died of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) this week, becoming the 12th casualty in the outbreak since the city's first case was detected Jan 9. The last death linked to this rare but treatable neurological infection was on Feb 19. The countrywide toll stands at 25.

The patient was treated at Sane Guruji Hospital before being shifted to Sassoon Hospital. He died on March 3, but the cause of death wasn't reported by the health department until Friday. Pune's caseload climbed to 225 with one more GBS-linked hospitalisation. TNN

## Teach engg, medicine in Tamil: Shah to Stalin amid language row

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Tamil Nadu should offer the option of studying engineering, medical science or any other technical course with Tamil as the medium of instruction to benefit those who lack proficiency in English, Union home minister Amit Shah suggested to CM M K Stalin on Friday amid continued Centre-state friction over the national three-language policy.

"This will not only empower the mother tongue but also provide equal opportunities to students educated in Tamil medium schools," he said at CISF's 56th Raising Day parade in Thakkolam.

Shah said he had been talking about need for technical courses in Tamil for two years, but the DMK govt was still to initiate any such step. The remark came a day after Stalin demanded to know why, unlike Hindi Diwas, there was no similar celebration for any of the 21 languages included in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule. On Friday, the CM fired another salvo, terming the Union govt's refusal to re-



Shah's remark came a day after Stalin demanded to know why, unlike Hindi Diwas, there was no similar celebration for any of the other 21 languages in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule

lease funds to the school education department for opposing the three-language policy as "an attack on Tamils".

Shah said the NDA govt was walking the talk, referring to its initiative to conduct exams for recruitment to central armed police forces in 13 regional languages. "Until now, there was no such provision. Hindi and English were the only options. The Modi govt ensured job aspirants could take the exam in Tamil and other languages in the Eighth Schedule."

## 29-yr-old trainee sub-inspector dies during practice run in MP

Raipur: A trainee sub-inspector collapsed during a practice run and died at Police Academy in Raipur's Chandkhuri on Friday, barely a week into the regimen. He was 29.

Trainee SI Rajesh Kosariya's death has led his family to question the pre-recruitment medical tests. Rajesh set off on the run with fellow trainees but felt uneasy midway and fell down. The other runners helped evacuate him. He was taken to a nearby hospital, which referred him

to a private hospital but he was declared dead on arrival.

Rajesh's name was on the list of trainees who were to receive their appointment letters from CM Vishnu Deo Sai on March 10. His family has demanded an probe into the cause of his death. Rajesh's elder brother has raised concerns over the physical tests conducted during SI recruitment, suggesting that if the tests were done properly, his "heart condition" might have been detected earlier. TNN

**King George's Medical University U.P., Lucknow**

Notice No: 025/e-tender/Medicine/MS/2025 Date: 06/03/2025

**E-Tender Inviting Notice**

Online e-bids are invited on two e-bids systems latest by 29.03.2025 at 5:00PM for the Rate contract of Medicines from the manufacturers or Distributors on the terms and conditions as per tender documents. The details of the tender can be viewed at [www.kgmu.org](http://www.kgmu.org). Tender will be available on e-portal <https://etender.up.nic.in>.

(Medical Superintendent)

**उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड**  
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्णप्रयाग  
E-Mail: edckarnprayag@gmail.com

**ई-निविदा सूचना**

विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्णप्रयाग, उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लि, के अन्तर्गत ई-निविदा संख्या 47/विधिविमर्गण0/2024-25 एवं 48/विधिविमर्गण0/2024-25 आमंत्रित की जाती है।

उपरोक्त निविदाओं की अधिक जानकारी/शुद्धि पत्र हेतु [www.uktdenders.gov.in](http://www.uktdenders.gov.in) पर देखें।

"विद्युत बिलों के 24x7 ऑनलाइन भुगतान हेतु [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org) पर जायें"

पत्रांक: 260/विधिविमर्गण0/उपाकालि दिनांक: 07/03/2025 **अधीक्षण अभियन्ता**

"राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचायें" **टोल फ्री नं 1800-419-0405**

**STATE INSTITUTE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT DHARAMSHALA**

VPO, Khaniara, Tehsil Dharamshala & District Kangra Ph. No. 01892-246036  
Website: [www.sihmdharamshala.org](http://www.sihmdharamshala.org) (Email: [sihmdharamshala@gmail.com](mailto:sihmdharamshala@gmail.com))

Applications are invited in the prescribed format for the consolidated recruitment of the following post at the State Institute of Hotel Management, Dharamshala, H.P.

Name of Post	Number of Posts	Category	Pay Scale	Last Date for submission of	Application Fee
Principal	1 (One)	UR	Rs. 73,860/- (Consolidated for a period of 6 months)	31.03.2025	1500/-
Lecturer	3 (Three)	UR	Rs. 25,800/- (Contractual Pay 60% of 43,000/- HPCS Revised Pay Rules, 2022)	31.03.2025	1000/-

For application forms, eligibility criteria, and other relevant details, please visit [www.sihmdharamshala.org](http://www.sihmdharamshala.org).

Eligible candidates must apply using the prescribed application form: **A Demand Draft of ₹1500/- or ₹1000/- (as per the respective post) in favour of the Principal, SIHM, Dharamshala, payable at Dharamshala.** must be submitted along with the application and required documents. The complete application must reach by **March 31, 2025 (05:00 PM)**.

No TADA will be provided for candidates attending the interview/Exam. The competent authority reserves the right to accept or reject any application, fill or not fill the vacancy, or re-advertise with out providing any reason.

Advt. No. 1209/07.03.2025 **Chairman**

**EXCISE COMMISSIONERATE, PUNJAB. PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Notice inviting applications for the allotment of Retail Sale Licenses of Punjab Medium Liquor (L-14A) and Indian Made Foreign Liquor (L-2) in Punjab for the Financial Year 2025-26.**

1. It is informed to the General Public that the Schedule of E-tendering Process for the allotment of retail sale licenses of Punjab Medium Liquor (L-14A) and Indian Made Foreign Liquor (L-2) in Punjab for the financial year 2025-26 under Excise Policy, 2025-26 was published in newspapers on 28-2-2025.

2. Due to administrative reasons, the End Date and Time of submission of e-Bid, opening of technical and financial bid has been extended. Revised Schedule for the allotment of groups is given below:

S. No	Date	Day	Event
1	5-3-2025 at 9:00 am	Wednesday	e-Bid submission Start Date and Time
2	17-3-2025 at 12:00 noon	Monday	e-Bid submission End Date and Time
3	17-3-2025 at 12:15 pm	Monday	Opening of Technical Bid
4	17-3-2025 at 5:00 pm	Monday	Opening of Financial Bid

3. The applicant shall be required to submit bids for e-tender online on the portal i.e <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.

4. All the tenderers are requested to have Class -3 Digital Signature Certificate and get themselves registered with the application service provider of NIC.

Dated 07/03/2025 **Excise Commissioner, Punjab**  
DPR/Ph. - 0039/12/26/2023/42376

**King George's Medical University U.P., Lucknow.**

Notice No.: 024/e-tender/Medicine/MS/2025 Date : 06.03.2025

**E-Tender Inviting Notice**

Online e-bids are invited on two e-bids systems latest by 21.03.2025 at 5:00 PM for the Rate contract of Medicines from the manufacturers or Distributors on the terms & conditions as per tender documents. The details of the tender can be viewed at [www.kgmu.org](http://www.kgmu.org). Tender will be available on e-portal <https://etender.up.nic.in>.

(Medical Superintendent)

**माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड, राजस्थान, अजमेर**

विविध प्रकार की रीटि विवरण हेतु निविदा/बोली सूचना

बोर्ड परीक्षाओं के उपरान्त शेष विविध प्रकार की रीटि (1) परीक्षा आवेदन पत्र (वर्ष 2021), अनुपयोगी प्रश्न, ओएसआर शीट्स (लिफाफे सहित), कम्प्यूटर शीट्स, रजिस्टर एवं अन्य विविध प्रकार की रीटि अनुमानित वजन 407.10 क्विंटल अनुमानित मूल्य 5,70,000.00 (2) अनुपयोगी प्रश्न पत्र लिफाफे/बोल्स/पॉलिथिन कवर/टाट बैग अनुमानित वजन 200 क्विंटल अनुमानित मूल्य 2,20,000.00 जहां है जैसी स्थिति में उसी स्थिति में विक्रय हेतु बोली दिनांक 25.03.2025 को अपराह्न 03.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित की जाती है। बोली सम्बन्धी विस्तृत विवरण <http://sppp.raj.nic.in> एवं बोर्ड की वेबसाइट [rajeduboard.rajasthan.gov.in](http://rajeduboard.rajasthan.gov.in) पर देखा जा सकता है। UBN - SEB2425WSOB00052

सचिव

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHANDIGARH E-TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Bid Submission Schedule (Online)	Opening Technical Bid (Online)
<b>EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - M.C.P.H. Division No. 2</b>			
1.	Dismantling / Reconstruction of 07 nos. public toilets into aspirational toilets in the market of Sectors 26 (Grain Market), 28, 47 & Manimajra Chandigarh, Ch. to: SBM 2.0 (Urban). Amount : Rs. 1,28,93,850/- EMD : Rs. 2,57,880/- Time Limit : 09 Months	07.03.2025 To 17.03.2025 at 10:45 AM	17.03.2025 at 11:00 AM
<b>EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - M.C.P.H. Division No. 3</b>			
2.	Dismantling / Reconstruction of 31 Nos. Public Toilets into Aspirational Toilets as per the guidelines of SBM Urban 2.0 in various sectors i.e. 7,8,9,11,18,20,26,28,27,47 and Manimajra, Chandigarh (Sub Work : 12 Nos. Public Toilets under MCPH-3 Chandigarh), (Ch. to: Capital Head: SBM 2.0 (U)). Est. Cost : Rs. 1,81,33,076/- EMD : Rs. 3,62,662/- Time Limit : 12 Months	08.03.2025 To 18.03.2025 upto 01:00 P.M.	18.03.2025 at 03:00 P.M.

Note :- 1) Tender Notice alongwith detailed terms and conditions is available/uploaded on website at [www.chandigarh.gov.in](http://www.chandigarh.gov.in) or [etenders.chd.nic.in](http://etenders.chd.nic.in)

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**  
M.C.P.H. Division No. 2 & M.C.P.H. Division No. 3, M.C. Chandigarh

**उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड**  
(उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्णप्रयाग Email: [edckarnprayag@gmail.com](mailto:edckarnprayag@gmail.com)

**निविदा सूचना**

विद्युत वितरण मण्डल, कर्णप्रयाग, उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लि, के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित निविदा आमन्त्रित की जाती है, जिसका विवरण निम्नवत है -

क्र. सं.	निविदा विषय	कार्य का विवरण	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य (जीएसटी सहित)	अनुमानित लागत (रु० लाख में)	घरोहर राशि (रु० में)	निविदा क्रय करने हेतु अन्तिम तिथि एवं समय	निविदा जमा करने की अन्तिम तिथि एवं समय	निविदा खुलने की तिथि
1	49/ EDC(KY) 2024-25	वि०वि०उपखण्ड सुमाडी के अन्तर्गत स्थान सुमाडी से जखोली तक 33 के०वी० लाईन में स्थापित रैकान/रैबिट कन्डक्टर को डींग कन्डक्टर में बदल जाने का कार्य।	1180.00	19.45	58,400.00 (अधिशाली अभियन्ता, विद्युत वितरण खण्ड रुद्रप्रयाग)	24.03.2025 (12:00 बजे तक)	24.03.2025 (15:00 बजे तक)	25.03.2025 (10:30 बजे तक)

"विद्युत बिलों के 24x7 ऑनलाइन भुगतान हेतु [www.upcl.org](http://www.upcl.org) पर जायें"

पत्रांक: 261/विधिविमर्गण0/उपाकालि दिनांक 07/03/2025 **अधीक्षण अभियन्ता**

"राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचायें" **टोल फ्री नं 1800-419-0405**

**ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण**  
प्लॉट सं. 01, नालेज पार्क-IV, ग्रेटर नौएडा, पीएलएचए नगर, उत्तर प्रदेश-201300  
वेबसाइट: [www.greternoidaauthority.in](http://www.greternoidaauthority.in) ई-मेल: [authority@gnida.in](mailto:authority@gnida.in)

पत्रांक: वरि.प्र./ई-निविदा सेल/2025/581 दिनांक: 07.03.2025

**ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

महाप्रबंधक (अभियन्तण) ग्रेटर नौएडा औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण द्वारा मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी, ग्रेटर नौएडा की ओर से ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-वरि.प्र./ई-निविदा सेल/2025/580 दिनांक 07/03/2025 के माध्यम से उल्लेखित क्रम संख्या-01 से 11 तक के कार्य की ई-निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। समस्त नियम व शर्तें ग्रेटर नौएडा प्राधिकरण की वेबसाइट: [www.greternoidaauthority.in](http://www.greternoidaauthority.in) पर ई-निविदा लिंक एवं ई-पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध हैं किसी परिवर्तन, संशोधन व अतिरिक्त सूचनाओं के लिए उक्त वेबसाइट देखते रहें।

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम/ वर्क संकिल	अनुमानित लागत
<b>निर्माण कार्य</b>		
1.	सेक्टर गामा-2 में कौडल फेंसिंग उपलब्ध कराना व लगाना तथा बाउंड्रीवाल की मरम्मत का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-5)	रु. 16.75 लाख
2.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में सेक्टर बिल्डर्स एरिया के पॉकेट-पी-3 में केंद्रीय विद्यालय में असंबोली ग्राउंड एवं कक्ष का निर्माण कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-4)	रु. 26.57 लाख
3.	सेक्टर गामा-1 में कौडल फेंसिंग उपलब्ध कराना व लगाना, गार्ड रूम अटैच शौचालय का निर्माण तथा बाउंड्रीवाल की मरम्मत का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-5)	रु. 34.03 लाख
4.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में बिल्डर्स एरिया के पॉकेट-पी-3 में केंद्रीय विद्यालय की पुरानी बिल्डिंग का नवीनीकरण का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-4)	रु. 39.03 लाख
5.	ग्राम ऐमनाबाद में सी.सी. रोड एवं ड्रेन को ऊपर उठाने का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-3)	रु. 61.10 लाख
6.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सेक्टर बी. जेड. पी. एरिया में आर.सी.सी. नाली (45 मी. चौड़ी मलकपुर रोड) की मरम्मत एवं निर्माण का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-4)	रु. 64.49 लाख
7.	औद्योगिक सेक्टर-ईकोटेक-10 में जलापूर्ति सिस्टम बिछाने एवं उपलब्ध कराने का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-7)	रु. 68.75 लाख
8.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के सेक्टर-2 और 3 के बीच 60 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क पर रिक्वायर्स का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-3)	रु. 140.36 लाख
<b>जलापूर्ति एवं सीवर के कार्य</b>		
9.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के जोन-4 (सेक्टर ईटा-1, 2, जीटा-1, ओमीकॉन-1, 1ए, 2, 3 एवं ज्यू-1, 2, 3) में डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन पाईप लाईन का लीन वर्ष तक अनुरक्षण का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	रु. 247.42 लाख
10.	ग्रेटर नौएडा के जोन-3 (सेक्टर-32, 33, (पार्ड-1,2) 36, 37 सिगमा-1, 2, 3, 4 एवं चर्च नगरी) में डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन पाईप लाईन का लीन वर्ष तक अनुरक्षण का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल-जल)	रु. 308.02 लाख
<b>विद्युतीकरण का कार्य</b>		
11.	ग्रेटर नौएडा में 85 क्यूसेक गंगाजल परियोजना में एम. आर. ए. आर-1, 2, 3 एवं जेड आर-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15 एवं 19, के 2 वर्षीय इलेक्ट्रिकल, मेकेनिकल और इन्स्ट्रुमेंटल हेतु सी.ए.एम.सी. का कार्य। (वर्क संकिल गंगाजल-ईएण्डएम)	रु. 744.39 लाख

क्रम सं. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, एवं 8 पर अंकित कार्यों को दिनांक- 11.03.2025 से 21.03.2025 को 5:00 बजे तक अपलोड किया जा सकता है। प्राप्त ई-निविदाओं की प्री-क्वालिफिकेशन दिनांक 24.03.2025 को 11:00 बजे खोली जाएगी एवं क्रम सं.-9, 10 एवं 11 पर अंकित कार्यों को दिनांक 11.03.2025 से 25.03.2025 को 5:00 बजे तक अपलोड किया जा सकता है। प्राप्त ई-निविदाओं की प्री-क्वालिफिकेशन दिनांक 28.03.2025 को 11:00 बजे खोली जाएगी।

वरिष्ठ प्रबंधक (ई-निविदा सेल)

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HC quashes ED's Muda summons to Sidda's wife & K'taka minister

Bengaluru: Karnataka HC Friday quashed ED's summons issued against Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi and minister Byrathi Suresh in the alleged Muda site scam.

Justice M Nagaprasanna said he followed a coordinate bench's decision wherein similar summons issued by ED to former Muda commissioner DB Natesh, was quashed.

The CM's wife argued there were "no required ingredients" to invoke the money-laundering law against her. "I'm the wife of CM. I have moral responsibility to ensure such allegations are doubted. I returned (the 14 sites, which triggered controversy) to the rightful authority," she claimed.

Urban development minister Byrathi Suresh said nothing could connect him to the controversy as he became a minister in June 2023, and the alleged allotments took place in 2021.

ED claimed, apart from the 14 sites allotted to the CM's wife, Muda had made similar other illegal allotments as well. TNN

HC dismisses PIL on naming of beedi brand

Prayagraj: Allahabad HC has dismissed a PIL challenging the branding and sale of a "beedi" (tobacco product) by the name "Shankar Parvati Chhap".

Passing the order on March 5, the high court directed the petitioner, Adarsh Kumar, to seek legal remedies through proper channels rather than invoking a PIL.

The petitioner had urged the court to restrain the marketing of this beedi, which is manufactured from Uttar Pradesh's Bhadohi, as it hurts religious sentiments by using the names and images of Hindu deities Shankar and Parvati along with a religious logo.

UP govt, represented by advocate AK Goyal, opposed the petition, arguing that no clear violation of the law had been demonstrated. "We do not find any reason to entertain the present petition purportedly in public interest," HC said. TNN

Farm sector can't stay closed, open it up, at least in part: US

'India Needs To End Its Significant Amounts Of Arms Import From Russia'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick called upon India to open up the agricultural sector for trade, saying "it just can't stay closed".

The farm sector has remained a no-go area for govt that has cited domestic sensitivities, even as US has insisted on greater access for American nuts, fruits and poultry. "Indian market for agriculture has to open up... How you do that and the scale by which you do that, may be, do quotas, may be do limits. You can be smarter when you have your most important trading partner on the other side of the table," he said, indicating that the US acknowledged that an open-ended liberalisation may not be feasible.

While suggesting that India should "step out of the model" he repeatedly called for a bilateral deal, arguing that a pact "with the largest consuming economy in the world" would be beneficial.



NO OPEN-ENDED LIBERALISATION?

PM interested in tareef, not tariffs: Jairam

Narendra Modi is only interested in "tareef" and not concerned with tariffs, Congress general secretary and spokesman Jairam Ramesh said on Friday and wondered where is the PM's "56-inch chest" in dealing with the US threats on the reciprocal-tariff issue. "Our prime minister wants to hear only 'tareef (praise)', he is not concerned about tariffs. 'Tareef kum aur tariff pe baat kijiye (talk about the tariffs issue and less about your praise),' he said. PTI

Speaking at the India Today Conclave, Lutnick sought a "grand deal": "Let's bring India's tariff policy towards America down, and America will invite India to have really an extraordinary opportunity and relationship with us."

Responding to a question on the larger India-US ties amid too much emphasis on trade and tariffs during Trump's second term, he said: "there are plenty of lev-

ers that govts can pull while doing business with each other... India has historically bought significant amounts of its military (equipment) from Russia. We think that is something that needs to end."

He then went on to say that India was the 'I' in BRICS, the group that also includes Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa, where Beijing had proposed a common currency, something that Trump is unhappy with, seeing it as an attempt to reduce importance of the dollar. "These are the kind of things that don't create the love and affection that we feel deeply towards India. We would like those things to end and we would trade to be more fair and we would like to create an incredible and strong relationship with India," the US commerce secretary said.

On China, he said: "China has very high tariffs. Tariffs we have put today is because of opioid production... when we get to April 2, we will talk of a broader range of tariffs."

Working with US for mutually beneficial trade pact, says govt

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As US President Donald Trump reiterated that reciprocal tariffs against India and several other countries would come into effect on April 2, govt said it was working with the US to negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement to strengthen two-way trade between the countries. The two govts are in the process of advancing discussions on the proposed agreement, which was announced during PM Modi's visit to the US last month.

"Commerce and industry minister (Piyush Goyal) was in US and met his counterparts. Our objective through the BTA is to strengthen and deepen India-US two-way trade across the goods and services sector, increase market access, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepen supply chain integration between the two countries," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. According to sources, India remains hopeful of reaching an understanding with the US on the tariff issue in the next few weeks, or before the April 2 deadline.

Trump, however, again targeted India for being a "very high tariff nation" as he reiterated that the US reciprocal tariffs will kick in on April 2. "And the big one will be on April 2, when reciprocal tariffs, so if India or China, or any of the countries that really... India is a very high tariff nation," he said.

Trump also said right now, tariffs were "temporary" and "small ones" but "the predominant tariffs" that would be reciprocal in nature would start from April 2 and they would be a "big game changer for our country".

"Because we've been ripped off by every country, and now whatever they charge us, they charge us 150-200% (and) we charge them nothing. So whatever they charge us, we're going to charge them, and there'll be no getting out of it. So we look forward to April 2," he said.

Family agrees to Manmohan memorial site

New Delhi: Former PM Manmohan Singh's family has accepted the plot earmarked for his memorial at the Rashtriya Smriti Sthal. With this, decks have been cleared for the memorial for Singh. A senior housing and urban affairs ministry official confirmed that they have received a letter from Singh's family and the process to allot the land will start soon.



Sources said Singh's three daughters, their husbands and a former Union FM had visited the proposed memorial site. The plot measuring around 900 square metre is adjacent to the site earmarked for former President Pranab Mukherjee's memorial.

Officials said next in the process would be the transfer of land in the name of a trust to be set up in Singh's memory. The family has to propose and finalise the names of members of the trust, which is likely to be set up soon. Once the trust is formed, the govt will transfer a one-time grant of Rs 25 lakh for building the memorial. Central Public Works Department officials have visited the site. TNN

Sita Soren's PA tries to pull a gun on her after campaign funds dispute

Chandan Paul & Sanjay Sahay | TNN

Dhanbad/Ranchi: Sita Soren, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's estranged sister-in-law, had a close shave Friday when a long-time personal assistant attempted to point a loaded pistol at her at a hotel during a dispute over campaign funds tied to Lok Sabha and state polls, both of which she'd lost as a BJP nominee.



Other supporters overpowered PA Debashish Manoranjan Ghosh. Later, cops took him into custody and seized the unlicensed pistol.

Both poll losses were attributed to mismanagement of campaign funds. Sources close to Sita said Ghosh was earlier removed as PA after her LS poll debacle. He was

Sand miners rough up woman tehsildar

Sambhajinagar: A gang of six men manhandled a woman tehsildar (revenue official) when she tried to crack down on alleged illegal sand-mining in Partur town of Maharashtra's Jalna district early Friday. A dash camera installed on tehsildar Pratibha Gore's car partially captured the six pushing the 51-year-old before fleeing the spot, reports Mohammed Akhef.

Jalna SP Ajay Bansal said three of the men had been nabbed and their vehicles seized. "An FIR has been filed on the complaint by the tehsildar related to obstructing govt servant from duty," Bansal said. Maharashtra tehsildars' association has demanded strong action against the gang. "Revenue staffers are the only ones attacked for acting against the sand mafia," said a member.

reinstated before assembly polls last Nov. Ghosh, sources said, was a long-time associate of Sita's late husband Durga Soren. After Durga's death in 2009, Sita took the poll plunge to become an MLA and since then, Ghosh has been associated with her.

Sita was visiting Dhanbad for a wedding. "After attending the event, I went to the hotel to get some rest. A discussion was taking place

on possible reasons for my (poll) loss. Ghosh was managing my funds and campaigning. When we posed questions, he could not answer many. Suddenly, he put his hand in the pocket in a bid to pull out the pistol, but others caught him," Sita added.

Sita had ended her 15-year-long association with JMM following "family tussles" and shifted allegiance to BJP in March last year.

Centre ticks off Mizoram CM for Myanmar pact

New Delhi: Following reports that two Myanmarese rebel groups signed a merger pact recently in the presence of Mizoram CM Lalduhuma, the Indian govt said Friday state govts are not supposed to handle foreign policy. "We have seen some reports on the matter. Our position on the situation in Myanmar is well known. I would also like to reiterate that foreign policy issues do not lie within the remit of the state govts," said the MEA spokesperson.

Myanmar's anti-junta groups from Chin state — the Chinland Council (CC) and the Interim Chin National Consultative Council — signed the merger agreement in Aizawl, according to the reports.

The govt has been closely following the situation in Myanmar because of the likely security implications arising out of fighting between Myanmar's military and rebel forces in areas close to the border. TNN

Photo mix-up in Shah posters, BJP blames DMK



BJP filed a complaint with police, demanding action against those responsible

Chennai: In a major embarrassment to BJP, posters to welcome home minister Amit Shah in Ranipet, Tamil Nadu, had photos of Tamil actor-director Santhana Bharathi instead. Supporters of DMK and its allies quickly circulated it on social media asking when BJP cadres would understand the difference between the two. Shah was in Thakkolam Friday to participate in 56th CISF Raising Day event.

BJP state chief K Annamalai said the posters were the handiwork of DMK men. "They are unable to respond to our logical arguments on adopting three-language formula. Hence, they are trying to humiliate our leaders," he said.

The posters were printed in the name of BJP state executive committee member A Arulmozhi, who denied any knowledge of it. She said miscreants had put up the posters to embarrass her and BJP. Arulmozhi told reporters the name of the printer was missing from the posters, which clearly exposed the mischievous intent. Later, she filed a complaint with Ranipet SP demanding stringent action against those responsible. TNN

Manipur search op leads to 114 looted arms

Imphal: Security forces recovered an assortment of 114 sophisticated guns, explosives and ammunition during a co-ordinated operation across nine districts of Manipur on Friday to trace weapons lost in the mob looting spree targeting state armouries during the first few weeks of the ethnic conflict there.

The Army's Spear Corps posted on X that a joint team comprising military, CRPF, BSF and state police fanned out into Bishnupur, Senapati, Thoubal, Jiribam, Chandel, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Imphal East and Imphal West to recover stolen and illegally held weapons. "The seizure includes automatics, rifles, pistols, improvised mortars, IEDs, grenades, ammunition and war like stores," it said.

The operation was planned after the deadline set by governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla for civilians to return stolen and illegally held weapons ended March 6 with the surrender of around 900 guns. Of the combined loot of 6,000-odd weapons, less than half have been recovered or returned. TNN

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Sh. S.K. Kapoor (21.05.1926 - 08.03.2014) 11 years ago, this day God took you in his care. Your values, ideals, beliefs continue to inspire us. We dedicate our respect & remembrance. Missed by:- Smt. Romila Kapoor (Wife) & Entire Kapoor family. Thakur Dass & Co.(J) K.R.S. Chemical Co. Phone: 9810050866

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# PM: Previous govts ignored poor, 'garibi hatao' was poll gimmick

'NDA Govt Has Brought 25Cr Out Of Poverty'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Surat: PM Narendra Modi accused previous govts on Friday of neglecting the plight of the poor and using the "Garibi Hatao" slogan merely as a vote-grabbing gimmick without bringing any real change.

On a two-day visit to Gujarat, Modi addressed a gathering in Surat's Limbayat after participating in the Food Security Saturation campaign. He began his tour by inaugurating and performing a ground-breaking ceremony for development and infrastructure projects worth Rs 2,587 crore in Silvassa town of the UT of Dadra and Nagar



PM at an event to launch the Surat Food Security Saturation Campaign

Haveli, including a 450-bed NAMO Hospital. He said those who failed to win even a single seat in recent elections "wouldn't even know how many zeroes were in Rs 32 lakh crore (amount disbursed as loans under PM Mudra Yojana over the past decade)." Modi said the BJP-led NDA govt has lifted over 25 crore people out of poverty through various wel-

fare schemes launched in the last 10 years. "Jise kisi ne nahin puchha, use Modi ne puja hai (Those ignored by all, Modi has honoured them)," he said. In a veiled dig at previous Congress govts, Modi said, "For decades, people were fed up with hollow slogans of 'Garibi Hatao'. These slogans were revived whenever elections were near, but poverty only deepened."

## Rahul bats for Cong revamp

Leader of the opposition in LS, Rahul Gandhi, proposed on Friday that Congress implement a complete revamp of the party's organisational structure and this should kickstart from Gujarat. Rahul, who was in Ahmedabad ahead of AICC's convention next month, made this proposal at a meeting with Gujarat PCC office-bearers. **TNN**

Modi said that 10 years ago, nearly five crore bogus ration cards were in circulation, allowing a nexus of looters to siphon off food meant for the poor. "We cleaned up this mess, deleted those fake beneficiaries, and linked the entire system with Aadhaar cards to ensure that every grain reaches the rightful beneficiary," he said.

## Naveen, KCR, Jagan also on Stalin's list of invitees

► Continued from P 1

The Union govt's plan for delimitation is a blatant assault on federalism, punishing states that ensured population control and good governance by stripping away our rightful voice in Parliament. We will not allow this democratic injustice!" Stalin posted on X. "I propose an inaugural meeting on March 22 to chart our collective course forward," he wrote.

Ex-CMs K Chandrasekhar Rao (Telangana), Naveen Patnaik (Odisha) and Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy (AP) were also on Stalin's mailing list.

The delimitation exercise, originally anticipated after the 2031 census, could now take place earlier than expected, with the 2021 census having been delayed. If it is conducted per the next census outcome, states that controlled their population and achieved superior governance indicators would potentially have their representation reduced in the forum where national policies are determined, Stalin said.

"Once implemented, this democratic imbalance could persist for decades, leaving our states with diminished capacity to advocate our people's interests, secure rightful resources, and influence critical national decisions," he said, adding that he wasn't just opposing delimitation but also its alleged weaponisation against states that did nothing wrong.

Stalin said BJP functionaries vaguely stated that delimitation would be on a "pro rata" basis. "When the very foundation of our democracy is at stake, can we accept such vague assurances? When our states' future hangs in balance, do we not deserve a transparent dialogue?" Stalin said. He said the delimitation "issue" transcended individual state concerns and struck at the heart of federal principles.

"We must jointly develop alternatives that preserve our current representation in percentage terms. Only through collaborative analysis and unified advocacy can we hope to secure a delimitation process that honours our role in nation building without compromising on our current level of representation," the CM wrote.

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## Can't you find a safe house in Delhi, judge asks Agusta accused

► Continued from P 1

Christian Michel James was extradited from the UAE in 2018 in Rs 3600-crore money laundering case registered by ED. Later in the day, the court imposed the necessary bail conditions for releasing him.



After James asked the court to talk in private, the judge sent the mediapersons and police outside the courtroom.

Earlier this week, while granting him bail, HC said it was an exceptional situation where the accused was in custody for over 6.2 years but

the trial had not yet commenced due to incomplete investigation. On Feb 18, Supreme Court had granted him bail in a related CBI case subject to terms and conditions decided by the trial court.

In both cases, the court directed James to furnish a personal bond and surety of Rs 5 lakh each, at which James said, "How can a person who has been in jail for six years produce local sureties?"

When James said that he did not want to be released on bail, the judge said, "Can't you find a safe house in Delhi?"

James was extradited from Dubai in Dec 2018 and was subsequently arrested by CBI and ED.

James is among the three alleged middlemen being probed in the case, and the other two are Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa.

CBI, in its chargesheet, claimed an estimated loss of 398.21 million euros (about Rs 2,666 crore) to the exchequer due to the deal that was signed on Feb 8, 2010, for the supply of VVIP choppers worth 556.262 million euros.

The ED chargesheet filed against James in June 2016 alleged he received 30 million euros (about Rs 225 crore) from Agusta Westland.

## Working closely with US for Rana extradition: MEA

► Continued from P 1

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson of external affairs ministry, said on Friday: "You would have seen US President Donald Trump's comments regarding the extradition of Tahawwur Rana. The joint statement also reflects this sentiment. We are working closely with the US govt to complete the necessary formalities to allow for his extradition to India."

US SC Associate Justice Elena Kagan, who serves as the Circuit Justice for the Ninth Circuit which had earlier upheld Rana's extradition, rejected his "emergency application for stay pending litigation of petition for writ of habeas corpus". "Application...denied by Justice Kagan," the USSC website said in a terse announcement, without elaborating.

Rana has fought the extradition for almost four years, purportedly with help from the Pakistani establishment, which is loath to give up one of their own because of the precedent it would set.

## Will fix duplicate EPIC number issue before Bihar polls, says EC

Bharti.Jain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Election Commission, responding to concerns raised by some political parties regarding duplication in electors photo identity card (EPIC) numbers, announced on Friday that it would resolve the "decades-old issue" within the next three months.

Sharing that a recent sample inquiry of over 100 electors had revealed those with duplicate EPIC numbers to be genuine electors, EC said it has, following detailed consultations with technical teams and the concerned chief electoral officers (CEOs), set a three-month timeframe to ensure the allotment of a unique national EPIC number to the existing electors having duplicate EPIC number and to all future electors.

The three-month deadline — which will ensure that all duplicate entries are corrected before next assembly poll becomes due in Bihar — was fixed as the



Just 90 appeals were filed — all in Maharashtra — during the last summary revision

number of duplicate EPIC issued across the country was found to be small.

EC reiterated that "irrespective of an EPIC number, an elector linked to the electoral roll of a particular polling station can cast his vote at that polling station only."

Given that EPIC is issued to a voter solely on the basis of his inclusion in the electoral roll and any changes can be made during the annual or pre-poll roll updation, followed by a two-stage appellate process, it revealed that just 90 appeals — including 89 filed with district election offi-

cer, the first appellate authority, and one with chief electoral officer (CEO), the second and final appellate authority — were filed across the country at the last annual summary roll revision taken up between Aug 7, 2024 and Jan 10, 2025.

All the 90 appeals were filed in the sole state of Maharashtra. Though TMC has been at the forefront of flagging cases of duplicate EPIC numbers allotted to voters in West Bengal, the state did not see a single appeal being filed with the concerned DM/DEO or the state CEO.

Explaining the reason behind the duplication, EC said that since the allotment of EPIC series in the year 2000 to the states/UTs, some electoral registration officers (EROs) did not use the correct series. "The issue of allotment of duplicate numbers due to incorrect series across states/UTs could not have been detected as the states/UTs were independently managing the electoral roll databases," it clarified.

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**A thought for today**  
*Sometimes, if you wear suits for too long, it changes your ideology*  
**JOE SLOVO**

# Dress Down

## What should Zelenskyy wear to next Trump meet?

Team Zelenskyy meets Team Trump in Saudi next week. We don't know if the principals will be there, but if they are, Zelenskyy will likely swallow his pride. He's said he wants to "make things right" with US. Does that mean a suit? Trump clearly has a beef about Zelenskyy's military-casual look. "You're all dressed up today," he said as Zelenskyy bounced out of a made-in-America SUV at White House on Feb 28. His minions rubbed it in thereafter. A rightwing media reporter asked, "Why don't you wear a suit?" Zelenskyy's reply is now a T-shirt legend in Ukraine: "I'll wear the costume when this war is over."

But to end the war, Zelenskyy needs a deal. Wearing a suit may be a convenient first step towards it. But does he really need to? Mahatma ditched his suit for a loincloth, "to identify myself with the poorest of the poor in India". Nor did he slip back into a suit for his Buckingham visit. George V rolled his eyes – so what? His great-grandson, Charles III, politely welcomed an 'unsuited' Zelenskyy in Feb 2023, July 2024, and again last Sunday. Trump should also smell the coffee. The doers have hung up their suits. What Steve Jobs started, Zuckerberg, Altman and the other tech bros have regularised. Trump's right hand, Elon Musk, wears printed tees – one said 'Tech Support' – to Oval Office. Last year, Sunak wore trainers during a Downing Street interview.

Doing what others do, and expect of you, is conformity. Trump-Vance wants to put "ungrateful" Zelenskyy in a suit. Last time, they told him to "come back when he's ready". But the question on Ukraine's streets is, "Will Russia stop killing Ukrainians if we all wear suits?" Nyet. Likewise, the deal depends on substance, not Zelenskyy's style. He should be himself.

# One For Nice Guys

## Kiwis are a marvellously different cricket team

Australian cricket legend Dean Jones had this to say about the differences between cricket in Australia and New Zealand: "When kids in Australia come back home after playing cricket, their dads ask, 'Did you win?' But with kids in New Zealand, it's always 'Did you have fun?'" This perhaps explains why Kiwis are the perennial nice guys of cricket. Despite being one of the most consistent cricketing sides, Black Caps have always worn their success lightly. They will again feature in a major ICC final tomorrow as they take on India in the 2025 Champions Trophy decider. India, according to pundits, are favourites. But that won't bother Mitchell Santner and his men – they have always been unassuming underdogs.

Cricketers across generations will affirm that the Kiwis are just impossible to dislike. Recall how they lost out on winning the 2019 ODI World Cup on a ridiculous boundary rule after both they and England got tied scores in normal time and super overs. Any other team would have thrown a hissy fit. But not Kiwis. For them cricket is not only about winning. New Zealand Cricket actually has a nationwide programme called Smash Play Junior-Tamariki for 5-12-year-olds that promotes fun and values such as honesty, camaraderie and mutual support.

Thus, in a cricketing world where winning and commercial interests powerfully, sometimes toxically, combine, it's lovely to have a team that plays hard but doesn't take itself too seriously. And as their 2021 World Test Championship victory showed, nice guys don't always finish last.

# Why Even Sky Isn't The Limit For CEO Pay

## Blame their aura, clout, and firms' inflated stock values

Starbucks' new CEO Brian Niccol earned \$96mn for four months' work last year when his US baristas earned only \$18 an hour, on average. The hourly differential is mind-boggling. But Niccol is no outlier. The median compensation for S&P500 CEOs touched \$16.3mn in 2023. In tandem, the pay gap with 'median' employees – suits, not baristas, in Starbucks' case – also grew from 185 times in 2022 to 196 times in 2023. Nobody doubts that inequality has been growing since 1970s, but why? If it is money-grubbing, how do top managers justify it, *Alexander Pepper* asks in his book *If You're So Ethical, Why Are You So Highly Paid?*

Some say vertiginous CEO pay merely reflects the decision of market forces. They are not 'overpaid' because earning more than they deserve would be inefficient, and free markets hate inefficiency. Others say CEO pay is an example of economic 'rent' – they are paid way more than the minimum they would be willing to accept. We'll come to the first view later.

So, how are super managers able to extract economic rent? Is it because they are scarce? When corporate profit zooms under a new CEO – other things remaining unchanged – isn't it fair to attribute the increase to them? In which case, it would be fair that a part of the increase goes to them. The problem with this idea, Pepper points out, is that profits cannot increase if other things remain unchanged. A new CEO comes in, but workers aren't enthused, productivity doesn't change, the product doesn't get better, no extra effort is put in to sell it... It's impossible then for sales and profits to zoom. So other things have changed,

and the question is, what part of the change is objectively, quantifiably, the new CEO's contribution? Nobody knows.

You may argue that these changes were all due to the CEO. But consider, how can the new CEO of a carmaker, sitting in the HQ, influence customer service at a faraway workshop? There's a good deal of delegation, and some of the best ideas come from unsung managers down the chain.

A more plausible explanation – not justification – for soaring CEO pay is that the chiefs are part of rarefied social circles. Pepper says board members feel closer to them than to shareholders, and so are inclined to reward them handsomely. Unlike line workers, with whom salary negotiators feel no affinity, CEOs are insiders. But obliging one of your own has social costs. As worker pay remains stagnant, there's bound to be some outrage. Firms have a workaround for this – camouflaging executive pay so that only a financial whiz can ascertain the real compensation. For example, a large chunk of CEO pay is delivered as shares, but since it's not 'money in hand', CEOs don't value it very much. Result: they ask for a lot more of it to feel satisfied, and that inflates the bill.

Coming back to the market forces point of view, let's say the supply of CEOs is limited, and some of them are significantly better than others. As a firm, how do you attract the best? By offering 10-20% above a 'normal' CEO pay, or throwing money to get them at any cost? Pepper says saving money here could amount to being penny-wise but pound-foolish. Nobody wants to look foolish.

**mindfield**  
SHORT TAKES ON BIG IDEAS



# That Sadly Uncracked Glass Ceiling

## On Women's Day, let's note how tough it's for Indian women to get the top jobs

**Ratna Sahay**

Among the many achievements of G20 under India's leadership in 2023 was their specific commitment to promote women-led development. This commitment went beyond the general catchall of advancing "women's economic empowerment".

It signalled an increasing recognition by world's top leaders that promoting full, equal, effective, and meaningful participation of women in the economy as decision-makers benefits society multidimensionally.

What are these benefits? Where's the evidence? What is India's record in promoting more women to the top? What are the hindrances, and what more can be done?



**Women in leadership posts** | Countries that have embraced gender diversity in decision-making have witnessed better economic and financial performance of their economies and companies.

Women leaders in politics also enhance social development. Those in the corporate sector contribute to inclusive workplace policies, fostering a culture of fairness and equity.

In our research paper, co-authors Benedict Clements, Huy Nguyen, and I find that in a sample of about 120 countries, higher share of women in parliaments and cabinet positions raises govt health spend, both as share of GDP and as a share of total spend.

Greater representation of women in policymaking has positive effects on social outcomes, such as infant mortality rates, access to basic water services, and upper secondary school enrolment rates.

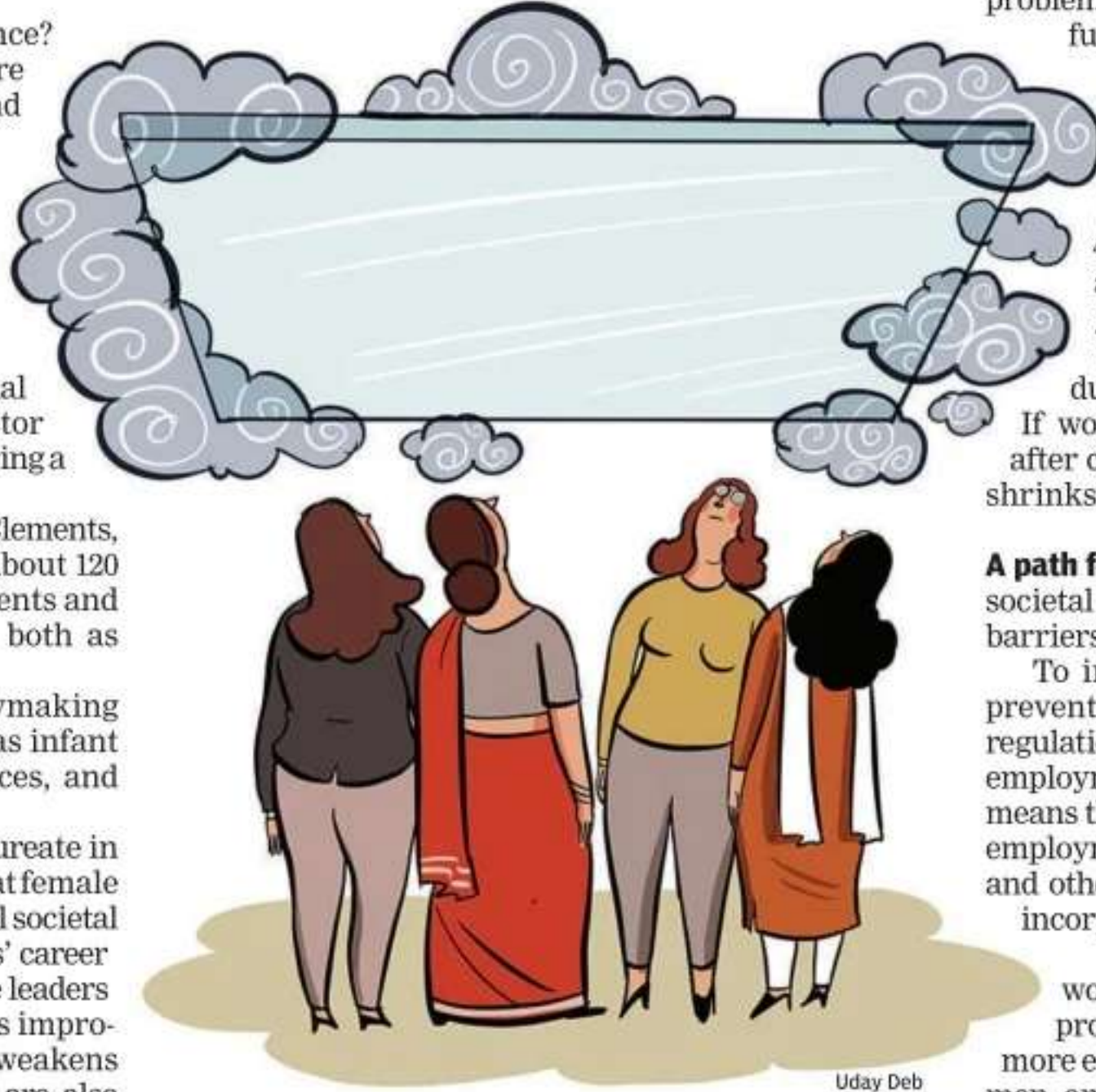
Studies conducted by Esther Duflo (Nobel laureate in 2019) and her co-authors during 2004-09 find that female political leadership in Indian villages has several societal benefits. It positively influences adolescent girls' career aspirations and educational attainment. Female leaders invest more in infra. Exposure to women leaders improves perceptions about their effectiveness and weakens stereotypes about gender roles, while women are also more likely to stand for, and win, elected positions.

The corporate sector, too, benefits. An IMF global study reported that a higher share of women on commercial bank boards and supervisory positions goes hand-in-hand with lower non-performing loans and greater financial stability. A cross-country study of fintech firms also finds that gender diversity on executive boards improves firm's performance in terms of funding obtained and revenues earned.

In a recent paper on India, my co-authors and I find that having at least one woman on the board in NSE-listed

firms is associated with higher profitability and lower debt-equity ratio. When such firms hire women in top management positions as well, employee ratings and sentiment scores are also higher.

**Why are women in India not breaking the glass ceiling?** | India still has a long way to go in achieving gender parity in policymaking. As of 2024, women held 14% of Lok Sabha seats and 15% in Rajya Sabha, and occupied less than 7% of ministerial positions. This places India far behind the emerging market and developing economies' average of 23% for parliamentary positions and 20%



for ministerial positions.

However, India's grassroots political representation presents a more encouraging picture. Reservation for women in panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) ranging from 33% to 50% has led to 1.4mn elected women representatives, enhancing gender balance in policymaking at the local level.

Companies Act (2013) played a pivotal role in increasing representation of women on boards in the corporate sector. Between April 2014 and April 2015, the share of women rose from about 5% to nearly 10%. As of April 2023, women held nearly 16% of board positions

# Decoding 6K-Year-Old Language Can Bury Modern Myths

## Work by an Indian cryptographer on the still-undeciphered Indus Valley script suggests Sanskrit may have been the root language. If true, it questions Aryan invasion theory as well as the north-south divide

Work by an Indian cryptographer on the still-undeciphered Indus Valley script suggests Sanskrit may have been the root language. If true, it questions Aryan invasion theory as well as the north-south divide

**Brishti Guha**



Yajnadevram, aka Bharath Rao, is a rare cryptographer – among epigraphists, archaeologists, linguists etc – who can claim to have cracked the code to deciphering the Indus Valley script. The earliest pottery with Indus script symbols dates to 4,000 BCE. Ever since, the Indus script has resisted attempted decipherments.

Many ancient scripts were deciphered using bilingual or trilingual inscriptions. Champollion's decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics was based on the fact that the Rosetta Stone (found during Napoleon's invasion of Egypt) had the same Greek names written in ancient Greek and hieroglyphics.

Another famous decipherment was due to Henry Rawlinson, who travelled to the Zagros Mountains, where there was a trilingual inscription in old Persian cuneiform, Elamite, and Sumerian. Risking his life, Rawlinson climbed the sheer cliff and accurately copied the inscription, using his knowledge of Persian to also ultimately decipher the Elamite and Sumerian scripts. Closer home, a breakthrough in decipherment of the Brahmi script was made using a bilingual coin minted by the Indo-Bactrian king, Agathocles. The coin had his name in Greek on one side, and in Brahmi on the other. However, Indus inscriptions were never conveniently accompanied by another identical message in a known script.

Yajnadevram used cryptography, building on a 1945 paper by Claude Shannon, father of modern information theory. During WWII, Shannon was asked to determine how to make secret codes unbreakable. Shannon found that all codes could be broken once enough coded messages had been read. Moreover, reading enough text ensured that the solution found was unique.

Most previous attempts at deciphering the Indus script involved assigning values to very short inscriptions. However, when the same symbols occurred in longer inscriptions, the assigned values would fail to result in a

meaningful phrase – resulting in decipherers assigning a different possible meaning to the same symbols once they occurred in longer inscriptions. Thus, the number of possible solutions kept going up as more messages were read, so a correct solution was elusive.

Rao's first task was to hypothesise a language for the Indus script. He was able to rule out "agglutinative languages", that include Dravidian languages, and ancient middle eastern or near eastern languages like Sumerian, Elamite, and Hittite. This was because of mismatches between the pattern these languages follow, and the pattern of the Indus symbols.

First, the Indus script had cases where the same symbol was repeated three times consecutively. This never occurred in agglutinative languages. But it did occur in old Vedic Sanskrit (for instance, *fajafa* which means "I fought").

Second, agglutinative languages never had compound words composed of more than two root words, while the Indus script had such words, as does Sanskrit. Third, agglutinative languages had prefixes or suffixes that couldn't exist as separate words and that were always joined to the root word in a fixed order.

However, the Indus script had possible prefixes and suffixes also occur as separate words, and occurred in different positional order in different inscriptions. This was inconsistent with agglutinative languages, but consistent with Sanskrit.



Thus, Yajnadevram started his decoding taking Sanskrit to be the language of the Indus script. By using code-breaking methods – identifying the symbol with highest frequency, then the symbol that occurs most frequently alongside it, in a sequence until all symbols are identified – he assigned values to the symbols. He found the assigned values resulted in meaningful words, grammatically correct expressions. He was able to decipher enough to satisfy Shannon's threshold for uniqueness.

Per Rao, his decoding makes it possible to read inscriptions in Sanskrit. Equally, it would not be possible to read the entire body of Indus inscriptions using a different language. Inscriptions mention deities, *havans*, horses, food. There are messages where the writer mentions the ocean is his home. This bears out archaeological evidence and Sumerian accounts of extensive international trade during Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC).

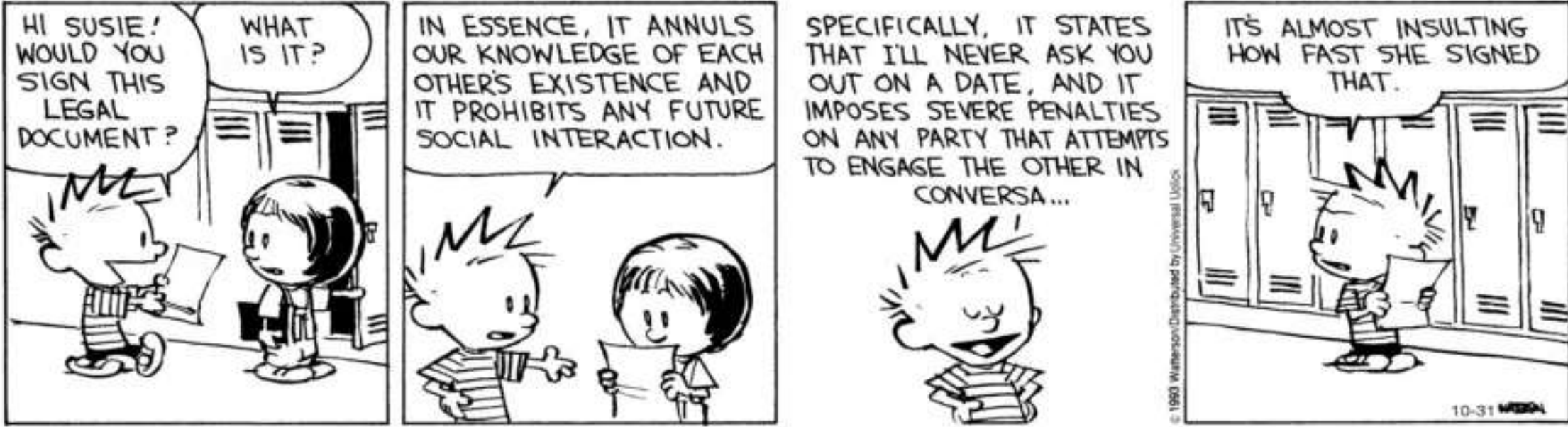
Yajnadevram compared each Indus symbol with the symbol producing the same sound in Brahmi, to find physical similarity. This, coupled with the existence of mixed inscriptions containing both Indus and Brahmi script, showed, he says, that Brahmi had evolved from the Indus script.

How does this decipherment change our view of history? First, the main tenet of the Aryan invasion theory is that steppe invaders brought Sanskrit into the country sometime around 1,500 BCE. They then imposed their culture, religion, and this language (Sanskrit) on us. However, Rao's decipherment suggests that Sanskrit was not only being spoken, but even written, back in 4,000 BCE.

Second, part of the north-south divide rests on the Aryan invasion theory, which says northerners are descended from steppe invaders who drove away the original IVC inhabitants, who became ancestors of southerners. Yajnadevram's study, by establishing linguistic, cultural, and religious continuity of our civilisation, destroys these theories.

The writer is associate professor, School of International Studies, JNU

## Calvin & Hobbes



# Gender Privilege Violates Cosmic Justice

**Ulihas Pagey**

A UN report says only 87 countries have ever had a woman leader. Globally, women make up 23% of cabinet members, only 27% lead ministries, and 36% hold positions in local legislatures. The idea of 'balance' is a fallacy. There is no balance when one side has held power for millennia. We need a reckoning, a radical redistribution of power, a dismantling of the foundation upon which this unequal world has been built.

We must challenge ingrained biases, subtle acts of misogyny, casual sexism that permeates our daily lives. We must hold men accountable for their complicity in a system perpetuating inequality. More than apologies; we must demand action. We must rewrite rules, redefine boundaries, and create a world where women are not just equal but sovereign.

At the core of patriarchal system lies a fundamental misperception of reality, based on gender and distorted understanding of the Divine, often projecting masculine attributes onto the Supreme, while relegating feminine qualities.

Ancient wisdom speaks of the cyclical nature of time, ebb and flow of power. Women are daughters of Lilith, inheritors of Kali, reclaimers of Inanna, Mesopotamian goddess of love and war. Our future is equitably human, and the first step is dismantling unequal status quo. From a spiritual lens, patriarchy is antithetical to principles of oneness, and equality. Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other spiritual texts emphasise cosmic unity of all beings. However, centuries of patriarchal

distortion have overshadowed this wisdom, relegating women to margins of social and spiritual recognition.

Deconstructing patriarchy, therefore, involves reclaiming this reverence and ensuring that women are seen as harbingers of spiritual and social prosperity. Law of karma, a cornerstone of Indic spirituality, asserts that all beings are born into their respective conditions based on their past vasnas or inherent nature, not their gender. To privilege one gender over another is a violation of this cosmic justice.

Hence, patriarchy becomes an act of collective ignorance. Overcoming it is, therefore, an act of collective spiritual awakening recognising that women are equal

co-travellers on the path to liberation.

Furthermore, ahimsa, nonviolence, extends much beyond physical harm to include emotional and systemic violence. Practices such as female infanticide, child marriage, and denial of education to girls are gross violations of ahimsa.

In Indian tradition, women are regarded as an embodiment of 'Saraswati', goddess of wisdom. To educate a girl is to honour Saraswati. Cancelling patriarchy demands that we move beyond mere rhetoric and recognise women as torchbearers of wisdom and harmony in society.

The call to cancel patriarchy is not a polite request. It is a demand for complete annihilation of a system that has thrived on degradation and erasure of women. We must reject false dichotomy of victimhood and empowerment, recognising that true power lies in our collective strength and our refusal to be silenced.

## Sacredspace



We need a nucleus of men in whom Shakti is developed to its uttermost extent, in whom it fills every corner of personality and overflows to fertilise earth.

Sri Aurobindo



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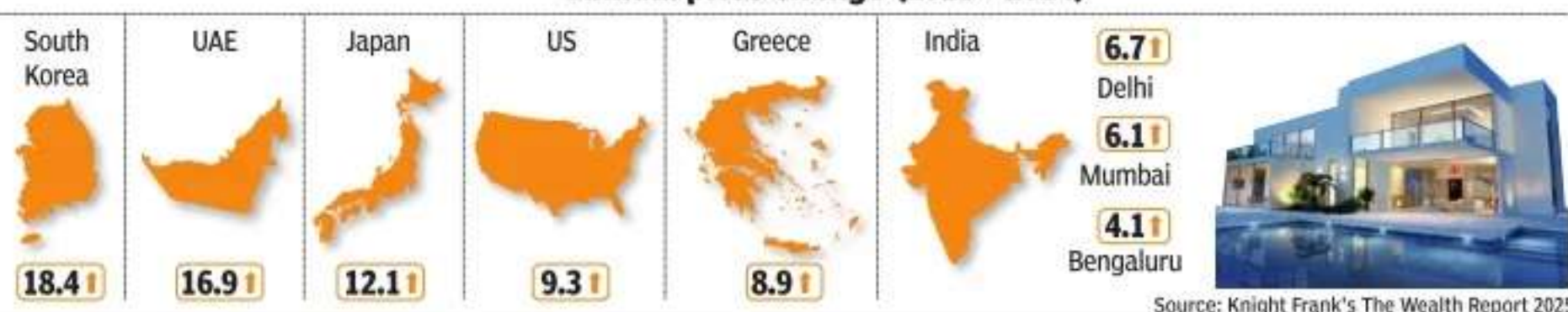


According to Knight Frank's The Wealth Report 2025, global luxury residential property values experienced a 3.6% average rise last year



Seoul, with an 18.4% YoY rise, led the rankings

Delhi is ranked 18th, a significant jump driven by a 6.7% yoy growth in luxury residential prices. Mumbai follows at 21st, while Bengaluru ranks 40th



Sebi to focus on enhanced transparency: Chief Pandey

'Accountable Regulatory Framework Fosters Clarity In Mkt'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Markets regulator Sebi will endeavour to enhance transparency about its working including board disclosures, its chief Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Friday. "Trust and transparency are crucial not only for regulated entities but also for functioning of Sebi as well. A transparent and accountable regulatory framework fosters confidence and clarity in the market," Pandey said in his first public speech, after taking over as the 11th chief of Sebi on March 1.

Pandey, a career bureaucrat, replaced Madhabi Puri Buch who completed her three-year tenure on Feb 28. In mid-2024, now closed US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research had alleged that Buch had conflict of interest in Sebi's investigations into the Adani group's alleged corporate malfeasance because of her previous investments in the same

In His First Public Speech...

A well-regulated market instils confidence among investors, ensuring fair and efficient capital allocation. Regulatory bodies, market participants, and corporates must uphold the highest standards of governance, disclosures and ethical practices

Capital market is a dynamic space, so change is imminent...If some statutes are redundant and outdated over the years and not serving any purpose, we are happy to review the same. We are open to ideas on this

Tuhin Kanta Pandey | CHAIRMAN, SEBI



overseas fund in which Adani had investments. Buch and the Adani group had denied all the allegations.

Calling 'trust and transparency' as the pillars of a healthy capital market, Pandey said for sustainable capital market growth, maintaining trust and transparency in the financial ecosystem was paramount. "A well-regulated market instils confidence among investors, ensuring fair and efficient capital allocation. Regulatory bodies, market participants, and corporates must uphold the highest standards of governance, disclosures, and ethical practices."

Pandey also said that enhanced transparency in regulatory actions, corporate reporting, and market operations would further strengthen the trust of both domestic and global investors in India's financial markets.

Headed that as part of Sebi's ease of doing business mandate, it will "not be lo-

king for maximum regulation but for optimum regulation".

"Capital market is a dynamic space, so change is imminent...If some statutes are redundant and outdated over the years and not serving any purpose, we are happy to review the same. We are open to ideas on this."

The Sebi chief indicated that his style of functioning would be consultative in nature. "Laws and regulations are better enforced through voluntary compliance. I am looking forward to engage with all stakeholders to discuss what more measures need to be taken to encourage voluntary compliance."

Pandey said Sebi would focus on investor awareness and education. "Market is not a straight path. To ensure investors are not lost in labyrinths, awareness and education is very crucial. An informed investor is self-protected. Sebi's effort in days ahead is to create awareness among existing and prospective investors."

Rupee gains 24p against \$, best weekly show in 2 yrs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The rupee finished the week on a strong note, closing at Rs 86.87 against US dollar, up 24 paise from the previous day's Rs 87.11. This represented its best weekly performance in over two years, rising 0.7% week-on-week, as the dollar weakened against most major currencies.

The greenback was on track for its worst week in more than two years, under pressure from concerns over the US economy's slowdown and ongoing uncertainties about tariff policies. The euro's rally, boosted by the European Central Bank's hawkish rate cut and surging German bond yields, also contributed to the dollar's decline.

EURO GAINS, \$ WEAKENS

The dollar index fell by over 3.5%, with euro reaching its highest point against dollar since Nov 2024. Meanwhile, Asian currencies gained modestly, rising between 0.1% and 0.4%. Dealers said RBI may have intervened in forex markets after rupee dipped below Rs 87.20 earlier in the day.

Equity markets were subdued, with BSE Sensex slipping by 8 points to 74,333, while Nifty rose 7.8 points to 22,553. Both indices had seen sharp gains in previous two sessions. Foreign institutional investors net sold Rs 2,377 crore in equities, according to exchange data. Investors are now awaiting US Fed chairman Jerome Powell's commentary and US jobs data.

Economists are forecasting unemployment rate remaining unchanged at 4%. A significant miss in the jobs report could lead to adjustments in expectations for the dollar.

How cos are invoking women power in AI era

Offer Targeted Leadership Programmes, AI Upskilling And Enhanced Flexibility

Rupali Mukherjee  
@timesofindia.com

India Inc is striving to reimagine workplaces, championing inclusivity, diversity, and gender parity in a highly disruptive, tech-driven world to spark a pink edge.

Companies are ramping up efforts to attract and retain women talent with targeted leadership programmes, cutting-edge AI upskilling, and enhanced flexibility that nurtures work-life balance. In this drive for a more equitable environment, equal opportunities have taken center stage — eclipsing salary and benefits as a defining priority for women — signaling a shift toward cultures that prioritise growth, fairness, and purpose.

In the post-pandemic return-to-office (RTO) era, flexibility has become a lifeline for women balancing professional and personal demands. Over half of Indian employees — 52% — would leave a job lacking sufficient flexibility, according to Randstad Workmonitor Survey 2025. Women tend to place more importance on work-life balance, it adds.

Viswanath P S, MD & CEO of Randstad India, a talent company, says, "Women are actively seeking greater flexibility, meaningful career development, and upskilling opportunities, particularly in AI and emerging technologies. The demand for full-time remote work is also significantly higher among women."

A bunch of companies including TCS and Accenture offer flexible work options, while some like Meesho include hybrid work policies to promote better work-life balance.

Govindraj M K, CHRO at

Myntra, says, "We provide additional flexibility through our MynVive: Myntra Rampack Programme, which offers new mothers and primary caregivers options offering extended flexibility, such as sabbatical leave for up to 24 weeks and the option to work at 50%

Cornerstone OnDemand, says, "As AI continues to transform industries, investing in targeted upskilling programmes for women is essential to cultivate an inclusive, agile workforce."

Encouragingly, job opportunities for women in India have

WORKING ON GENDER DIVERSITY

Women participation in India's organised sector has risen to 36% in 2024 from 33% in 2023



Job opportunities for women in India have surged by 48% in 2025, with notable growth in emerging tech fields

What they need  
Sustained investment in upskilling, flexibility, and growth opportunities

90% of women view generative AI as vital for career advancement, yet only one-third feel adequately prepared to utilise these tools, according to a report by Nasscom and Boston Consulting Group

Nearly 52% employees will leave a job lacking sufficient flexibility, according to the Randstad Workmonitor Survey 2025

capacity for three months post-maternity."

However, many companies are insisting on a strict return to office. Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder TeamLease, cautions, "The result will be that organisations that embrace AI to enable personalised learning, hybrid work and career paths, and flexible working will be able to attract and retain the best female talent."

As industries adapt to tech advancements, the demand for skills that align with innovation and adaptability has never been higher. As AI (artificial intelligence) and automation disrupt sectors, the workforce needs to be equipped with new tools to stay ahead of the curve. Yet, there is still a considerable gap in terms of availability, coverage, and quality.

Nishchae Suri, MD-India,

ve surged by 48% in 2025, with notable growth in emerging tech fields.

However, to fully harness this potential, organisations must address persistent upskilling gaps. Chakraborty says, "Most AI training programmes are not targeted at specific issues that women face, such as the lack of mentors in tech and biased skill tests. The attention should move to the development of career acceleration programmes that are available to all women, free from bias, and in line with their work preferences."

Flexible work models, structured career re-entry programmes, and targeted Learning & Development (L&D) and upskilling must anchor talent management for women employees, equipping them to navigate the future of work with resilience & agility.

Samsung union calls off protest

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Samsung India employees union on Friday withdrew its protest against the company after the latter agreed to allow them to rejoin work, thus ending the slew of protests, demonstrations. The company in a notice, posted outside its facility at Sunguvarchatram, said it would allow them back to work starting Saturday.

However, it did not allow the 23 employees, who were suspended, to return to

Samsung did not allow 23 suspended employees to return to work. These workers will undergo disciplinary action proceedings, it said

work. The company said these workers, pending enquiry, will undergo disciplinary action proceedings.

Samsung spokesperson said the company hopes to resolve outstanding issues di-

rectly with its workers. "Samsung welcomes workers' decision to call off the illegal strike and resume their duties at the Chennai plant. The company's initiative to welcome back striking workers and its proactive engagement have facilitated their return, effectively ending the strike. We remain committed to enforcing discipline in the premises and resolving outstanding issues directly with our workers to maintain a positive work environment," it said.

The union demanded reinstatement of suspended workers and opposed salary deductions for protestors but has compromised by agreeing to return to work without resolving these issues. "Samsung has agreed to pay the salaries of the workers starting Friday. We are willing to cooperate to resolve the issue if they are ready. We are even ready to work overtime considering the current situation," E Muthukumar, head of the Samsung employees union, told TOI.

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# VARUN 'MYSTERY' IS KIWI FEAR FACTOR

NZ Coach Gary Stead Feels Indian Spinner May Pose Considerable Challenge In Title Clash

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
IN DUBAI  
Gaurav Gupta@timesofindia.com

**Dubai:** He is playing in only his third One-Day International, and already, his presence in the ranks is being perceived as a significant threat to the opposition, that too in an ICC tournament final. When the teams last met here, Varun Chakravarthy hunted the Kiwis down with his 5/42, completely derailing the Black Caps' chase of 249. India eventually ended up winning by 44 runs.

This time around, as New Zealand start preparing for Sunday's title showdown against India at the Dubai International Stadium, their main concern appears to be how to counter the 'mystery spinner'. How the Kiwi batters play Varun will be key to their chances against a formidable and more fancied India.

The Black Caps have maintained their focus despite the logistical challenges of travelling between Pakistan and Dubai twice within a span of a week. A win here could fetch them their first ICC ODI tournament title in nearly 25 years, but Varun stands in their way.

New Zealand coach Gary Stead acknowledged the spinner's potential impact in the final when asked about New Zealand's main threat.

"He (Varun) is obviously a very good bowler. We'll have a look at the pitch conditions down there as well and see what effect he is likely to have on the game," Stead said, adding, "We certainly expect him to play after getting 5/42 against us in the last game. We'll be planning our intentions around that."

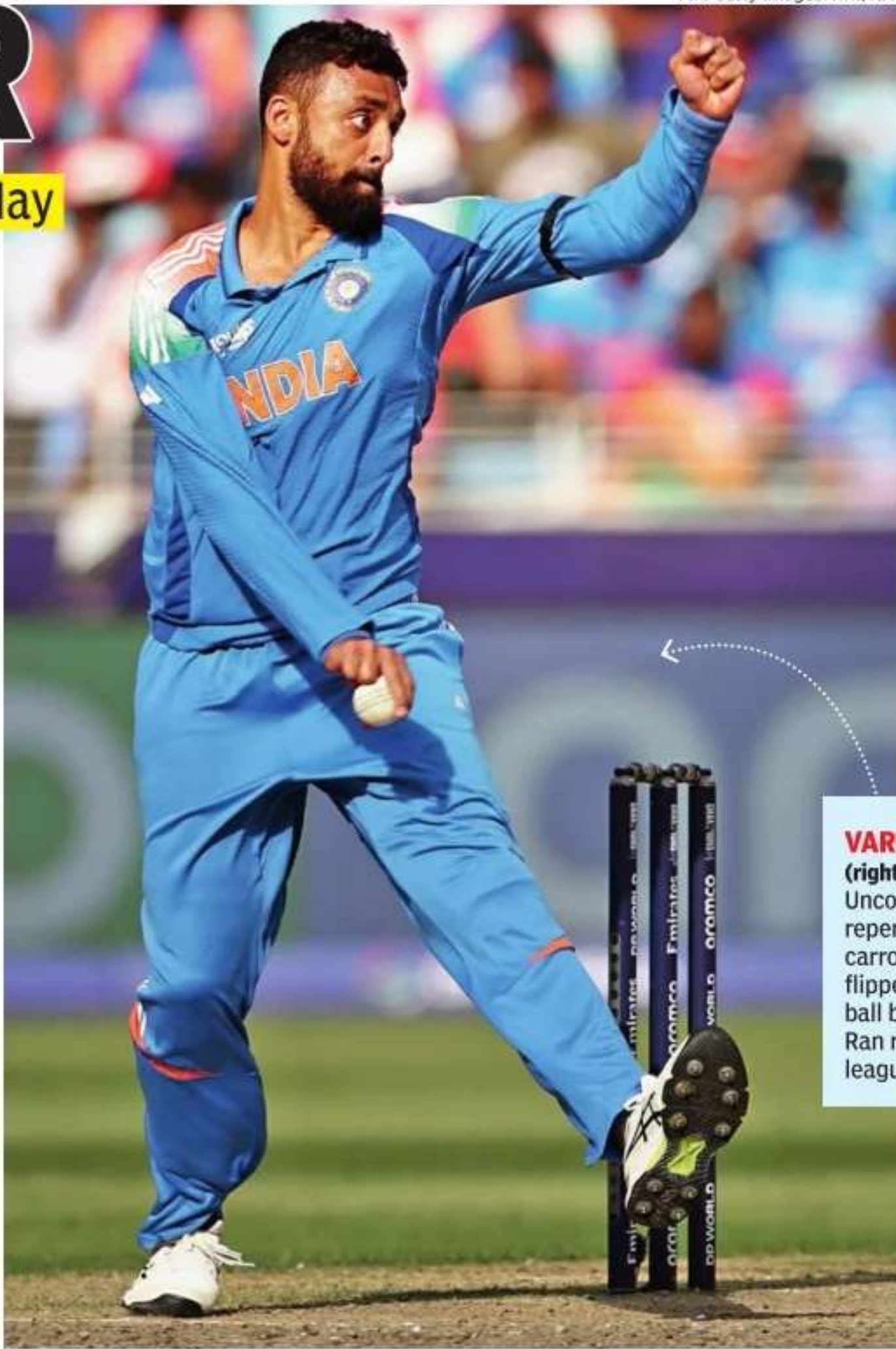
Varun has been in fantastic form on

the pitches of Dubai, following up his super show against New Zealand with a solid 2/49 against Australia in the semifinal. He even dismissed Travis Head with his first delivery, one of the big moments of the tournament for India. Notably, in the two games he's played so far, Varun has appeared to be more potent under lights. This is evident in his T20 stats too — he's taken 138 wickets in 106 T20 matches, predominantly for Kolkata Knight Riders, India, and various TNPL teams, with most matches starting late in the evening.

"When you have a wrist spinner like that, then you're looking for cues as a batter. I think it's always a little bit easier when you're in the daylight, to see those things, rather than under lights. So, look, there's no doubt he's a class bowler. He obviously showed his skills against us last time and he's a big threat in the game. So, we'll be putting our thinking caps on around how we nullify that and how we can still score against him," the 55-year-old said.

Stead chose to remain distant regarding India's perceived advantage of getting to play all their games in Dubai. "The decision around the schedule is out of our hands, so it's not something we worry about too much. India have got to play all their games here in Dubai, but we have had a game here as well. We'll learn very quickly from that experience. When you come to this stage of the tournament, it just comes to a one-off game. If we're good enough to beat India on Sunday, I'll be happy," he reasoned.

The Kiwis have so far travelled from Karachi to Rawalpindi to Dubai to Lahore and back to Dubai. Stead acknowledged the physical toll of such a schedule. "There's no doubt that coming here after playing in Lahore, we had a full day of travel yesterday. It just takes a



Pix: Getty Images, ANI, AFP

little out of you, but we've got a couple of days now where we will do a little bit of recovery and planning and training towards the game."

Arriving in Dubai on Thursday night, the team chose to rest at their hotel on Friday, scheduling only one training session before the final, planned for Saturday evening at the ICC academy. Stead emphasised that

at this stage of the tournament, mental and physical preparation takes precedence over extensive training. "I guess we're deep into the tournament now and sometimes it's not always a lot of training that you need, it's just getting your body and your mind right to compete in the final and that will be our key focus over the next two days," Stead said.

## SPIN QUARTET AWAITS FINEST HOUR

Axar Patel, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy have been instrumental in India's journey to the final. Each brings a distinct style of spin to the team, collectively weaving a web around opposition batters. **Hindol Basu** decodes India's spin attack ahead of the final...



**AXAR PATEL**  
(left-arm orthodox)  
The Powerplay expert. Is metronomic and relentlessly accurate. Has subtle variations. Rohit Sharma's go-to spinner in the first 10 overs, offering control and precision. Has ability to extract bounce, even on placid surfaces. Economy rate of 4.51 has been the best among Indian spinners.



**RAVINDRA JADEJA**  
(left-arm orthodox)  
The constant threat. More orthodox than Axar. Vastly more experienced. Reads game situations well and adjusts accordingly. Can bowl with varying speeds and trajectories, explore turn and skid the ball off the surface. Played a pivotal role in the semifinal. Controls the middle overs.



**KULDEEP YADAV**  
(left-arm wrist spin):  
Offers the rarest of skills. Gets significant turn and deceptive flight. Has ability to spin the ball both ways without a discernible change in action. Adds a dimension of unpredictability. Tends to pick up wickets in clusters. Served up a masterclass against Pakistan.

**VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY**  
(right-arm legbreak)  
Unconventional grip. Has a remarkable repertoire of deliveries, including the carrom ball, googly, arm ball and flipper. Difficult to read. Can turn the ball both ways with varying speeds. Ran rings around New Zealand in their league-stage encounter.

INDIAN SPINNERS IN CT2024-25							
Bowler	M	Wkts	Ave	Best	5WI	SR	ER
Varun Chakravarthy	2	7	13.00	5/42	1	17.1	4.55
Kuldeep Yadav	4	5	36.60	3/40	0	43.8	5.01
Axar Patel	4	5	33.40	2/43	0	44.4	4.51
Ravindra Jadeja	4	4	38.25	2/40	0	48.0	4.78
Overall	4	21	28.28	5/42	1	35.8	4.73

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

## Strip used for India-Pakistan game being prepped for final

Gaurav Gupta  
@timesofindia.com

**Dubai:** There's some good news for India's spinners. The Champions Trophy final will be played on the same strip used for the India-Pakistan group-stage match, **TOI** has learnt. So far, four different pitches have been used for the four India matches played at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium (DICS). The pitch prepared for Sunday's summit clash has had 14 days to recover since the last ODI match was played on it, making it "semi-fresh," according to a source.

In the Feb 23 game, India beat Pakistan by six wickets. Batting first after winning the toss, Pakistan folded for 241 in 49.4 overs, with Kuldeep Yadav being the top wicket-taker with 3/40 in nine overs. All-rounder Hardik Pandya took 2/31 in eight overs. Crucially, India employed 26 overs of spin in that match, conceding 129 runs and fetched them five wickets. In reply, India chased down the target in just 42.3 overs, with Virat Kohli scoring his 51st century.

The wickets here are be-



**CHIEF TORMENTOR:** Kuldeep Yadav, celebrating a wicket, was India's top wicket-taker with 3/40 in 9 overs against Pakistan

ing prepared by the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB). The curator is Australia's Matthew Sandery, who looks after the pitches at the ICC Academy too. The pitches for the Champions Trophy at DICS have mostly been slow and dry with some assistance for the spinners, and it seems that the wicket for the final will follow the trend.

After losing the semifinal here by four wickets, Australia

captain Steve Smith said familiarity with the surface wasn't the sole reason behind winning run in the tournament. "I'm not buying into it. It is what it is. India obviously played some really good cricket here too. The surface kind of suits their style, with the spinners that they've got and the seamers that they have at their disposal. They played well, outplayed us, and deserve the victory," Smith said.

## Bumrah may miss first two weeks of IPL

Arani.Basu@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** Jasprit Bumrah's return to competitive cricket may take a while longer. **TOI** has learnt that the ace fast bowler may miss the first week or two of the IPL and likely to join the Mumbai Indians camp only in April.

Bumrah is undergoing rehab at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru after sitting out of the ongoing Champions Trophy due to a lower back injury. "Bumrah's medical reports are okay. He has resumed bowling at the CoE. However, it is unlikely he'll be able to bowl at the start of the IPL in another fortnight. As per current status, the first week of April looks a more realistic date for him to get back to high-intensity cricket," a BCCI source said.

In that scenario, Bumrah is likely to miss the first three or four matches for MI. Bumrah, it is learnt, still hasn't started bowling full tilt. "It's standard operating procedure. The medical team will gradually build up his workload and intensity. Unless he is able to bowl full tilt without any discomfort for some days,

the medical team is unlikely to clear him," the source said.

Incidentally, Lucknow Super Giants pacer Mayank Yadav, too, is expected to join the IPL in April.

**Will pacer be fit for Eng Tests?**  
What needs to be factored in is that India have a tough five-Test tour of England immediately after the IPL. The eventual target is to have Bumrah fit for as many Tests in England as possible. With so much uncertainty around Rohit Sharma continuing as Test captain, Bumrah is seen as the frontrunner to lead the side if the selectors don't go for a younger captain, given the pacer's fitness concerns.

It is learnt that with Bumrah and Mohammed Shami prone to injuries, the selectors don't want to plan the entire tour of England around these two seamers. "How Shami and Bumrah endure the long IPL will be important. Shami is under constant watch. If the selectors get both of them together for two-three Tests, it will be the ideal situation. The team management will also be cautious of pushing the duo to pay all Tests together. Nobody



**With so much uncertainty around Rohit Sharma continuing as Test captain, Bumrah is seen as the frontrunner to lead the side if the selectors don't go for a younger captain, given the pacer's fitness concerns.**

wants either of them breaking down in the middle of a Test. Like it happened with Bumrah in Sydney. Too much depended on Bumrah alone in Australia," sources said.

Mohammed Siraj is almost certain to retain his Test place while Harshit Rana and Akash Deep will have to prove their worth. Mukesh Kumar and Arshdeep Singh will also be in the race. The India 'A' tour before the England Tests will be key.

## Kotak slams suggestions that India enjoyed 'undue advantage'

Gaurav Gupta@timesofindia.com

**Dubai:** The Indian team management has maintained a defiant stance over suggestions that the Men in Blue have enjoyed a huge advantage of playing at the same venue. Skipper Rohit Sharma and head coach Gautam Gambhir had stressed last week that conditions in Dubai are as alien for them as any other team. And on Friday, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak was the latest to stress that the side enjoyed no advantage.

"I don't understand what advantage has been gained. We've played to the draw given to us. If people feel it's an advantage after India won four matches in a row, then I don't know what to say. You must play good

cricket every day. If you don't play well, you can't complain," Kotak said on Friday.

"We are practising here at the ICC Academy and playing our matches at DICS. We are practising on a different wicket. That is how the draw is. Nothing else can be done about that. It is not as if the ICC changed things after we arrived here and we derived an advantage," Kotak said.

Kotak didn't agree to the fact that India held a psychological plus over New Zealand in the final as they were victorious by 44 runs when the two teams clashed in the group stage last Sunday. "There is no point in thinking about the last match. We must think about what to do on Sunday," the former Saurashtra stalwart said.



**FUN TIMES:** Virat Kohli, Hardik Pandya, KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja during a training session in Dubai on Friday

## 'Strikers need to be taught smarts early'

► Continued from P1

With 94 goals, the talismanic **Sunil Chhetri** may be India's greatest goal-getter, but his return to the Indian fold is both good news and bad. He is third to only Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi in the all-time active scorers' list, but we all saw a considerably diminished striker last year, with his last goal coming off a penalty in a 2-1 defeat to Afghanistan back in March 2024. But Chhetri's poor returns are not even half the problem.

Indian football is tottering while facing a weird predicament. A tiny sample: Marquez, Igor Stimac's successor after the Croat was shown the door last year, is a much-respected Spanish coach known to mould young talent and get results.

However, in a move awash with potential conflicts of interest, he was entrusted with the

tricky responsibility of coaching both club, FC Goa, and country, an arrangement that suited the All India Football Federation (AIFF). The club's hand was forced due to financial constraints, having paid huge compensation (Rs 3.36 cr approx) to the sacked Stimac, who had threatened to approach FIFA over unlawful termination.

At the moment, Marquez reportedly draws his salary from his FC Goa employers, while the AIFF only pays for allowances during the National team camps, the understanding being that he will be full time with the AIFF from next year till May 2026, a deal that will cost the AIFF approximately Rs 3 cr.

But secretly, like any self-respecting mister, Marquez would be squirming inside. The Indian scenario presents such a contrast to where the 56-year-old Catalan perhaps first learnt his trade.



Spain are the leading light of international football. Their biggest name is a 17-year-old, teeth-behind-braces schoolboy winger, Lamine Yamal, while their 40-year-old maestros do the playmaking in the middle rung of the depth-rich La Liga. In India, he has to recall a retired hero because he finds himself with no options.

In the four matches that India have played under Marquez,



the team is still without a win. If it's any consolation, there's been just one loss, while the other three ended in draws.

Domestic forwards have fared poorly in the current ISL season besides Chhetri, who has 12 goals, second only to the Moroccan Alaeddine Ajaraie at NorthEast United. It exposes just how bare Indian football's talent cupboard is. The forwards have never really deliv-

**THE BIG SPEND**

- There are 13 teams in the top-tier league of Indian football, with big guns like Mohun Bagan Super Giant and Mumbai City spending approximately Rs 60 cr to Rs 70 cr on their teams every year. Others like Bengaluru FC, East Bengal, FC Goa and Kerala Blasters spend approximately Rs 50-60 cr.
- Clubs recoup most of the money through their central revenue share of approx. Rs 25-30 cr, sponsorships, gate collection and merchandise.
- A club in the top-tier ends up with an annual loss of Rs 25 cr. NorthEast United and Jamshedpur FC incur the lowest losses.
- Clubs spend most of their money on player salaries, while clubs like Punjab, Goa and Bengaluru spend considerably on developing infrastructure, youth development and academy.
- NorthEast United have the lowest spend on player salaries at Rs 15.5 cr.

ered in the top-tier of Indian football. Only Brison Fernandes, a young winger from Goa, features among the top 10. Among the top 20, there's Subhashish Bose, a left-back from Mohun Bagan Super Giant!

Indian football's problems are too deep-rooted to disappear overnight. Yet, money certainly doesn't seem to be the problem. There's plenty of investment and footballers in the top-tier

earn handsomely. A national team player, for example, will earn anywhere between Rs 1.5 cr to Rs 2.5 cr annually, depending which club he chooses, a huge reward for a country that's currently ranked 127th in the world.

No wonder players are comfortable here and are in no mood to move abroad, play in lower divisions of Europe and improve themselves.

INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE: LEADING SCORERS		
Year	Foreigner	Indian
2014-15	Elano Blumer (CFC) <b>8</b>	Jeje Lalpekhlu (CFC) <b>4</b>
2015-16	Steven Mendoza (CFC) <b>13</b>	Sunil Chhetri (MCFC) <b>7</b>
2016-17	Marcelo Pereira (DD) <b>10</b>	CK Vineeth (KB) <b>5</b>
2017-18	Ferran Corominas (FCG) <b>18</b>	Sunil Chhetri (BFC) <b>14</b>
2018-19	Ferran Corominas (FCG) <b>16</b>	Sunil Chhetri (BFC) <b>9</b>
2019-20	Nerijus Valskis (CFC)/ Bartholomew Ogbeche (KB)/ Roy Krishna (ATK) <b>15</b>	Sunil Chhetri (BFC) <b>9</b>
2020-21	Igor Angulo (FC)/ Roy Krishna (ATKMB) <b>14</b>	Sunil Chhetri (BFC) <b>8</b>
2021-22	Bartholomew Ogbeche (HFC) <b>18</b>	Liston Colaco (ATKMB) <b>8</b>
2022-23	Diego Mauricio (OFC)/Cleiton Silva (EB)/Dimitri Petratos (ATKMB) <b>12</b>	Lallianzuala Chhangte (MCFC) <b>10</b>
2023-24	Dimitrios Diamantakos (KB)/Roy Krishna (OFC) <b>13</b>	Lallianzuala Chhangte (MCFC) <b>10</b>

Bhaichung Bhutia, the former India captain, felt Chhetri coming out of retirement was good news for the national team but wasn't too sure if it will help Indian football move ahead.

"It's very unfair to say Indian players don't get the opportunities to play," countered Bhutia, "Our youth development programmes must provide a more mature environment for attackers to grow. You

see the best goal scorers are from South America because they create that culture as a kid for you. You have to be smart. That smartness has to be brought out from a young age."

A striker needs not just a nose for goals but also the skill-set. But who'll help him acquire that? "We don't coach the position very well," pointed out Dempo CEO and AFC Pro License holder, Pradhyum Reddy.







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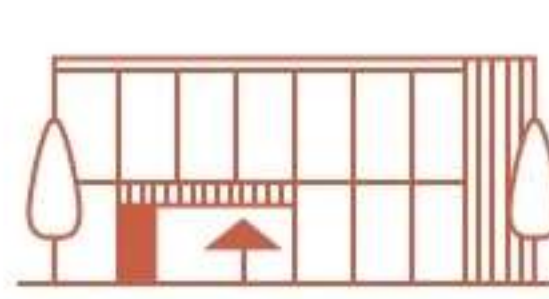
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# THE TIMES OF INDIA

Happy Women's Day

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Sebi to focus on more transparency about its working, including board disclosures, says chairperson Tuhin Kanta Pandey, **P 11**

## In the last 11 Years...

- ♀ Sex ratio at birth increased from 918 to 933
- ♀ Nearly half of the admissions in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are of women
- ♀ Sainik Schools and NDA opened for girls
- ♀ Permanent Commissioning of women in Armed Forces
- ♀ More than 48% of the Startups have atleast one woman director
- ♀ Around 70% beneficiaries of Mudra Yojana are women
- ♀ More than 10 crore rural women mobilised through Self-Help Groups
- ♀ Maternity leave increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks
- ♀ 3.7 crore beneficiaries provided with ₹ 16,500 crore under PM Matru Vandana Yojana
- ♀ 74% PM Awas homes are owned by women
- ♀ More than 10 crore kitchens have Ujjwala gas connections
- ♀ More than 15 crore homes have Nal se Jal connections
- ♀ About 12 crore Toilets constructed
- ♀ Abolition of Triple Talaq
- ♀ Muslim women can go alone for Haj

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**Happy International Women's Day**



TIMES  
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& HER DAUGHTERS

It is a matter of irony — and urgency — that we wish each other 'Happy Women's Day' today. This is ironic because the world faces an unprecedented existential crisis now. Termed 'global warming', humanity's use of fossil fuels, and its destruction of non-human species, have unleashed the Anthropocene, the era of human impacts literally changing how our planet functions, lives and breathes. As we release heating emissions, Earth warms, altering seasons, storms, soils and seas. Meanwhile, humanity suffers a debilitating gender crisis — as the UN finds, one out of every ten women lives in extreme poverty. Compared to 27% men, 32% women face moderate to severe food insecurity. The World Bank estimates globally, 31% women are not in education, training or employment, compared to only 15% men — while under 15% traditional agricultural land-holders are women, 37% lack access to the internet, a modern way to upward mobility.

Earth's ecological emergency and the crisis of women's empowerment are linked — both were born in the dawn of modernity. The 18th century onwards, humanity experienced multiple scientific breakthroughs, causing productivity and profitability to sky-rocket. However, these advances were also a leap back — they conjoined with brutal extractive practices worldwide. The Industrial Revolution came enveloped in slavery and was followed by a succession of breath-takingly violent wars. Grabbing resources frenetically inspired a range of regressive attitudes, from racism to speciesism — the idea that humans 'ruled' Earth and all others were 'inferior' — and sexism. Women began to be seen as 'lesser' people, kept on the margins of science and technology, deprived of economic power — even now, only 10.4% of Fortune 500 companies are led by women CEOs — and political agency. Among 195 countries, 112 — including, prominently, the United States, where all stability currently seems Trumped — have never had a woman head of state. The age of progress thus brought great benefits to some — and wreaked enormous damage to Earth and her daughters.

However, there are solutions even in such bleakness. As Times Evoke's global experts emphasise, recognising the linkages between the Anthropocene and the gender scene is crucial. By addressing their shared causes — from a decayed masculinity to selfishly deployed technology, relentlessly extracting what it can't replace — the world can envisage ways to correct both catastrophes. Join Times Evoke in wishing each other 'Happy Women's Day' — in this lies a prayer for everyone's stability.

## ‘Sexism and speciesism are linked — taking power from animals and women aids injustice’

**Lori Gruen** is William Griffin Professor of Philosophy at Wesleyan University. Speaking to Srijana Mitra Das at Times Evoke, she discusses ecofeminism — and its relevance as Earth heats:

## How do you define ecofeminism?

■ This is both a theory and a practise, so you could think of it as a 'praxis' — this recognises the way different systems of exploitation work together to justify the oppression of the natural world, of animals, women, non-white groups and marginalised people in general. Ecofeminism as an idea helps us uncover the way certain binaries have been constructed to place one group on top and another group down below — these are 'man-woman', 'culture-nature', 'human-animal', 'black-white', 'able-bodied-specially-abled', etc. Ecofeminism tries to deconstruct these binaries.

Its central idea is that when we recognise these notions exist as a type of value dualism, we see there are connections between the dominance of those on top and the exploitation of those at the bottom. The status quo encourages people to think those at the bottom have less value — this perception then grows within a system of thought, practice and institution-building and it keeps allowing groups who hold power to continuously disempower beings they



**I HEAR YOU, MY FRIEND:** Women's empathy for animals can lead to greater equity for both

think are less valuable. Ecofeminism is a very important way of analysing how such a world operates — and it helps us imagine what might be different by breaking down these binaries.

## Would you say there are links between the human treatment of animals — or speciesism — and sexism?

■ There is a deeply constructed link there to make animals and women 'others' — the idea is that the physical bodies of both these beings are 'resources' which can be used in different ways by those in power. Sexism and speciesism are intricately connected in this way — observe how people make a distinction between women and men and humans and animals. The value dualism there puts women below men and animals below humans. That logic, of domination and extraction, links the two behaviours together.



**WHEN SHE EXPLORES THIS EARTH:** Although they enjoy less secure mobility in the world compared to men, women often have a unique bond with nature and an instinctive regard and care for its diverse species

There are links between speciesism and other forms of discrimination as well. As long as people hold the view that animals don't matter or nature can be endlessly extracted from as a free resource, we build up a system of thinking that puts certain groups into categories of use and expropriation. Currently, in the United States, one way that people vilify immigrants is to compare them to animals — this is also a historic occurrence which has happened to many oppressed people over time. When groups in power try to entrench their hold, such linkages become clearly visible.

## You connect the destruction of nature with the domination of women in what is termed 'racial capitalism' — could you elaborate?

■ A large part of the system of racial capitalism suggests there are some particularly racialised 'others' who exist only to have their labour extracted without any or much fair compensation. That is a key part to understanding how racial capitalism operates, with this extractive taking of value for those in control of capital.

Importantly, in the case of animals, we extract their metabolic labour in all sorts of ways — with gender, we do this and society also extracts women's reproductive labour.

## They're different species — so, how are feminism, non-human animals and ideas of freedom and justice connected?

■ The exploitation and devaluing of animals and nature is a foundational logic that then helps justify the domination of women and other groups which appear beyond the normative. These systems need to be challenged — of course, justice and freedom for non-humans will look very different in practice than for women or non-white people, etc. However, the idea is that the value of this should be recognised — the undervaluing and disempowerment which the current structure practices can be eliminated in a more just system.

## VERSUS



## We live in an era when global warming is threatening the entire world — how is ecofeminism particularly helpful now?

■ One of the things ecofeminism brings to light in the context of climate change is the idea that we are all inter-connected. We are all in diverse kinds of relationships with one another — and it

**WOMEN AT WORK:** From construction to cuisine, women's work is often paid less or goes unseen

highlights how the things one does in a certain place have implications across the globe. This is a core idea in ecofeminism while climate change also helps us understand how we can't simply act in a certain way in one part of the world and have no bearing on another part.

Ecofeminism is thus very clear about inter-relations, not just of exploitation and domination, but also the ways in which our activities are related to the rest of the planet in terms of their impacts. This is a very analytical way of looking at modes of thinking, acting and being and helping us envisage new and different routes which can promote more equal and fair relationships among all living beings.

## Many people have much to gain from the status quo — what would inspire them to look at the world through an ecofeminist lens?

■ Part of the reason we are in the dire situation the entire planet faces now is because those who have benefited from unjust systems are so unwilling to change these. However, I believe change can come from encouraging people to reflect on their relationships more broadly — if people feel they are in a negative relationship with someone in, say, their family, community, office, etc., they usually want to find out what is wrong with this and change that part for the better. If people want to modify an unjust equa-



**AN EARTHY IRONY:** Women began growing plants and crops — but they still lack land ownership

tion, thinking like an ecofeminist helps them see how relationships — both those which are near us and those that are far away, such as the alliances we are in economically, socially or ecologically — can also be damaging. If we can see these dynamics in such a way, people can feel inspired to change them — and ecofeminism could be a tool to help replace systems that put one person or group in power and another as those exploited through that power.

Men can also be ecofeminists — this praxis is not gender-specific. Anyone who would like to analyse and change damaging systems of domination can become this. Even someone with a lot of power could become an ecofeminist, perhaps to improve their life's relationships or simply not want to leave a ravaged planet for the young who will follow them.

Photos: Getty Images &amp; iStock

THAT'S A  
WOMAN'S  
WORLD!

● Nature often gives girls a break. The **tinamou bird** is found in **Central and South America's tropical forests**. Generally ground-dwelling, **female tinamous are larger than males** who are flightless and **travel on a female's back**. This relationship isn't romantic though — female tinamous carry males around as the species has low population density, which makes it **smarter to keep a partner over searching each breeding season**



● While forest PR calls them 'king of the jungle', **lions actually live in packs led by lionesses** — a 'pride of lions' means **related lionesses and their cubs** who are reared communally. Around two-thirds of all lionesses stay within the pride of their birth, joined by a few males. **Lionesses are their pride's hunters** — they catch and allot prey while lions stay home and manage the kids

● The **'queen bee'**, ruler of her hive, is **much larger and longer-lived than her workers**. The queen is the only female who can reproduce with drone bees, laying up to 1,500 eggs a day. She is **devotedly looked after by a royal court** which feeds her royal jelly and also **puts her on a strict diet to fly long distances** when the bee colony grows larger and divides — **only then is a new queen born**

Research: The Guardian, Smithsonian Magazine, National Geographic, BBC



## ‘Queens to slaves, women used nature’s fragrances to express themselves — and enjoy Earth’s beauty’

**Elise Pearlstine** is a wildlife biologist and perfumer. Speaking to Srijana Mitra Das at TE, she discusses the history of women cherishing the heady fragrances of the natural world:

A rose by any other name,' remarked William Shakespeare in 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Would smell as sweet.' While Shakespeare wrote his verses in the 1590s, the power of his perceptive quill was such, his words remain true for women around the world even now. Women have always

loved the fragrances of nature, perhaps all the way back into pre-history when the first woman carefully grew the first cultivated plant on Earth and was entranced as much by its nourishment as the perfume it released in its enigmatic romance with birds and bees.

Elise Pearlstine explains, 'Women got involved in natural fragrances ever since they started gardening, growing and picking plants. Early women would macerate fragrant plants and oils and use these for healing — for a very long time, scent was perceived as part of



**BUD-DY:** In India, women use fragrant flowers in decoration and religious ritual

medicine. It also took on a huge dimension as adornment — this could even be regal. Consider Cleopatra and the fragrances she famously used.' The grand Egyptian queen reportedly liked Mendesian perfume, containing myrrh, cinnamon and desert date oil, a blend that spelled both enigma — and authority — to her public. Fragrance went all the way from empresses to the opposite end of the power scale. Pearlstine comments, 'Women historically used plants and perfume as an outlet and art



Photos: Getty Images &amp; iStock

**PURPLE REIGN:** Lavender, grown prominently in France, with women playing a key role in its cultivation, is a huge component of fragrances, its 2024 market valued at \$138 million

— in my book 'Scent: A Natural History of Fragrance', I write about enslaved women who worked on the farms of slave owners but then, they'd go home and create their own little gardens.'

Like a song or poem, natural scents addressed very personal needs, dreams that waited to be fulfilled, ruptures which had to be healed. Pearlstine says, 'Women liked scents which spoke to them and fulfilled something they sought in their life, trying to reach this while admiring nature's beauty. Hence, they distilled its fragrances or picked flowers for their home. Plants also mean sharing — we have a community garden where I live and most of the volunteers there are women. There is a sense of community in our collective work, nurturing flowering plants. India has many home gardens where women grow their own jasmine and other flora.' Fragrant spices like cinnamon, star anise and saf-

fron are also special but, as Pearlstine remarks, 'Spices are more masculine, becoming identified with the spice trade, a worldwide commercial effort to get these products into everyone's hands. For many women though, experiencing spices also becomes very individual — when someone cooks, they smell these spices, imagine them in food, warm them in a

## VERSES



**JUST A WHIFF:** From lime (L) to saffron (R), fragrant flora enliven cooking

pan — and get a beautiful and deeply pleasing aroma.'

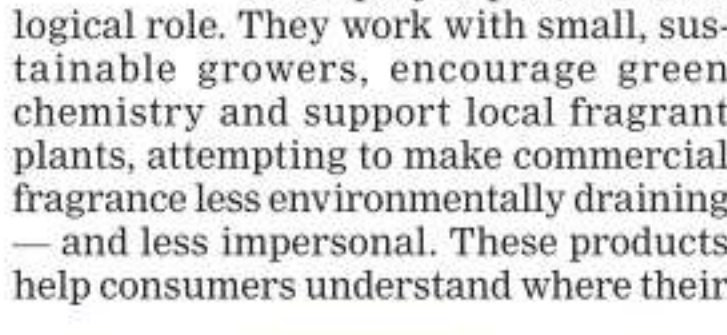
Which natural fragrances are most cherished worldwide? Pearlstine considers carefully, then replies, 'I'd say lavender — this is very popular and it's become increasingly all-purpose in a commercial sense. Of course, across all cultures, floral and herbal scents are liked. Citruses are fresh and bright, redolent of springtime. I've met many women who like sandalwood too — they recognise the grounding and healing scent it has. Sandalwood is evocative of skin. So, it speaks deeply to some. It involves all the senses, from touch and sight to smell.'

From grand palaces to gritty factories, perfumers through the times were quick to recognise the draw of natural fragrances — the global scent industry is now valued at \$50 billion-plus and given the boom in the self-care sector, whose essential aids encompass scented oils, candles, lotions and salts, this is only poised to grow. 'Commercial perfume was once a luxury — today, it's much more broad-based,' Pearlstine explains. 'Interestingly, people are also increasingly seeking affordable fragrances which are ethically sourced and sustainably grown. The internet gives consumers information about this and the perfume industry is beginning to recognise this demand — we see this in the rise of the artisanal fragrance sector.'

There is a quiet shift underway in the workshops of manufactured fragrance. Pearlstine elaborates, 'Although women

were its main consumers, men dominated the global fragrance industry for a very long time. Even in the early days of perfumery in France, the original formulators, scientists, herbalists, pharmacists and business leaders were men. There were a few exceptions like Coco Chanel, who was a pioneer in modern perfumery and paired it with fashion. Yet, men drove the industry. Today, that's changing — it's been a long time coming but we're seeing more women in leadership positions across the scent industry now.'

There is another interesting note in this fragrance. Pearlstine emphasises, 'Women are leading the way particularly in smaller artisan perfume companies — these often play a positive ecological role. They work with small, sustainable growers, encourage green chemistry and support local fragrant plants, attempting to make commercial fragrance less environmentally draining — and less impersonal. These products help consumers understand where their



**IT'S GONE FLORAL:** The booming global self-care industry relies on natural fragrances

fragrance comes from and how they can help support small-scale farmers, etc. For example, a lot of frankincense that goes into churches now is produced by small-scale women farmers in Africa. Companies are increasingly reaching out to such growers.' Interestingly, there is also significant global growth in the number of men seeking natural fragrances in a wide range of products — many of which women now envision and manufacture. TE thinks William Shakespeare would entirely approve.

## READERS WRITE

Dear Times Evoke,

I'm grateful to TE's team for the beautifully presented articles on sugar and cocoa (22<sup>nd</sup> February). David Singerman revealed such interesting insights on sugar changing from a luxury to a mass commodity. Katie Sampeck on the historical significance of cocoa was very enlightening. I felt a new appreciation for the hot chocolate I'd had for breakfast after reading these fine articles!

— **Parshva Jhaveri**, Bengaluru

Mass-produced sugar is a major driver of environmental harm. Sustainable alternatives like organic farming could help reduce these negative effects. Consumers, policymakers and corporations must work towards such options. David Singerman's research in TE was a great way to start the conversation about this commodity which has seeped into our everyday lives.

— **Anu Chawla**, Mumbai

TE's articles highlighting the environmental impacts of sugar and cocoa were real eye-openers. I never realised so much water is used to manufacture sugar or endangered species lose their habitats due to extended cultivation. I've actually stopped adding that extra sugar in my tea and coffee. Thank you, TE!

— **N. Viswanathan**, Thane

I'm extremely grateful to TE for its superb page featuring David Singerman and Katie Sampeck. This was very aesthetically presented with stunning facts. TE's drive to provide readers strong research from renowned experts is deeply appreciated.

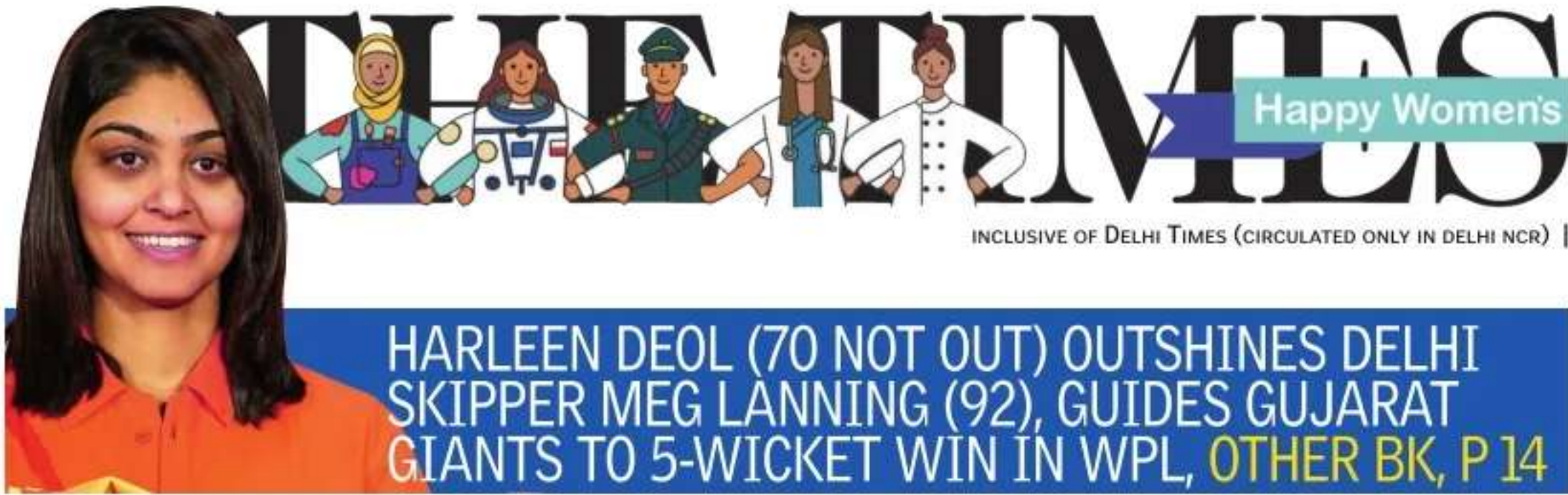
— **Rupal Taktawala**, Ahmedabad

We all love sugar — but very few of us knew its rich and complex history. Kudos, TE, for skillfully bringing out sugar's real story and its impacts on ecology. TE's interview with David Singerman was extremely insightful. Thanks for excellent work, TE!

— **VS Venkatesan**, Chennai

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# Meet the women decoding city’s most complex crimes

Fingerprints To Forensics, Each Is A Master In Her Domain

Abhay@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** Amidst the eerie stillness of crime scenes, a team of four women forensic and fingerprint experts attached with Delhi Police work to expose the truth hiding in the darkness. With skill, dedication and the need to see justice served, they unravel the tangled threads of crime, bringing closure for the victims and the perpetrators to book.

Avani Datta is an expert in human psychology. With over 100 cases under her belt

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY



since 2021, the 28-year-old’s exceptional ability to plumb the depths of human thought and behaviour, including of rape survivors, has helped gather vital information that might not have been accessible to police.

“There is no particular time to start my work. I have to be available 24/7,” said Datta, who has a master’s degree in forensic psychology. She

## ‘WE NOTICE THINGS THAT OTHERS MAY MISS’



Cybercriminals evolve fast, but we stay ahead. Even deleted chats and encrypted data leave a trail—we just have to find it before they strike again.’  
—Akanksha (26)  
Cybercrime Expert

‘Crime doesn’t wait for a convenient hour. Whether it’s 2am or back-to-back cases all day, our focus never wavers—murder, accidents, or crimes against women, every detail matters.’  
Mithra Madhu (28)  
Crime Scene Expert



‘Every fingerprint tells a story—but not always the right one. Weather, panic, and contamination can blur the truth, but my job is to find the one that matters.’  
— Shivangi Gupta (27)  
Fingerprint Expert

‘Truth hides in fear, silence, and deception. My job—day or night—is to break through those barriers and uncover what no one else can.’  
— Avani Datta (28)  
Forensic Psychologist



Photos: Jatin Kumar

said the main challenge in her job was to gain the trust of both the victim and the accused. “I have to uncover the things they are hiding from the cops,” she said.

When working with victims, she provides them a safe space, factoring in family reaction and social stigma so they feel free to reveal the truth. Sometimes, victims regret filing complaints, especially in sexual offense cases, and it is Datta’s responsibility to empower them to speak up. When dealing with the accused, Datta’s job is to pin down the lies and uncover the truth. She carefully reads their body language and behavioural cues to assess whether they pose a

threat during the interview.

Mithra Madhu, a crime scene expert, is the guardian of the forgotten. She gathers clues and pieces together the puzzle of the crime scene. Having pored through the possibilities at over 2,000 crime spots in the past four years, Madhu said, “You have to be mentally alert all the time. Sometimes a case comes at 2am or 3am and sometimes with just an hour between two cases. Through the day, we have 10-15 cases on our hands. We cannot allow stress to get the better of us, whether we are dealing with murder, accidents or crimes against women.”

► See **OTHER BOOK**, P 2

## SPECIALS INSIDE

- **Pooja Bawa** knows the route to 50 city hospitals she rushes to daily with **pregnant women, domestic violence & suicide survivors** in her **pink ambulance** | P 4
- **India Inc** is ramping up efforts to **attract women talent** with leadership programmes, AI upskilling & enhanced flexibility | P 11
- **Pink splash:** India’s first **FIFA-certified female referee & BCCI’s 1st woman curator** | **OTHER BK, P 14**
- **More special reports and analysis on P 4, P 10 & OTHER BOOK, P 2, P 8 & P 12**

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