

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



PRESSING NEED FOR PROBE AGENCIES TO STRIKE BALANCE: CJI
PAGE 7

Kejriwal sent to Tihar till April 15: ED says he's uncooperative, evasive, misleading

ED: Kejriwal said accused reported to Atishi, Bharadwaj; AAP: old statement

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was sent to Tihar Jail on Monday afternoon, hours after a city court granted judicial custody till April 15.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which arrested Kejriwal on March 21 in connection with the now-scrapped Delhi excise pol-

icy case, sought 15 days judicial custody, saying that he was "totally uncooperative," "evasive," gave "misleading replies" and "concealed information" during his questioning.

Speaking to reporters before entering the courtroom, Kejriwal said: "Jo PM kar rahe hain woh desh ke liye achha nahin hai (whatever the PM is doing is not good for the country)." AAP ministers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at court on Monday. PTI

NOTICES TO RECOVER ₹3,567 CR FROM PARTY

After Cong said 'tax terror', I-T tells court: No coercive action until elections over

Congress lawyer Singhvi calls it 'gracious' gesture

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE INCOME Tax Department assured the Supreme Court Monday that it will not take any "coercive steps" to recover approximately Rs 3,500 crore demanded from the Indian National Congress before the end of Lok Sabha elections 2024.

"Please record my statement that till the matter is heard next... whenever, we will not take any coercive steps... We will not take any coercive steps till the elections are over", Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the I-T Department, told a bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih.

This comes a day after the INDIA bloc flagged the I-T action as a bid by the ruling party and establishment to choke Opposition parties in the run-up to polls.

The apex court was hearing appeals filed by the Congress challenging the demands made by the I-T Department. The bench recorded the I-T Department's assurance and posted the matter for next hearing on July 24.

On Mehta's request, the bench also clarified in its order that "it is needless to observe that the concession made by the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



At the Congress's central election committee meeting for the Lok Sabha elections in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD DEMAND

Unease within, poll panel deliberates over response to Opp alarm

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THERE IS a sense of "unease" in the Election Commission (EC) over how to respond — if at all — to the Opposition alliance's demand that the poll panel "stop coercive action" by Central agencies to ensure a level-playing field in the Lok Sabha elections, *The Indian Express* has learned.

Sources said meetings have been held to explore ways to address the string of concerns — in a five-point charter — raised Sunday at the Ramliha Maidan by

Opposition parties regarding fairness of the poll process.

One option, they said, is to issue an advisory to investigative agencies, calling for "neutrality and impartiality" — an echo of what the EC had done in 2019 when it had told the ED to act neutrally after Opposition parties had accused the party in power of using agencies against them. The Commission, it is learned, is also deliberating whether there is room to "go beyond" what was stated in its 2019 advisory.

At the same time, there is a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



PM Narendra Modi with (from left) Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, CM Elanath Shinde on Monday. PTI

PM to RBI: On Day 1 after swearing-in, lot of work coming your way

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi Monday told the Reserve Bank of India to think of ways to support new emerging sectors such as space, green energy, dig-

ital technology and tourism in the coming days, because a lot of work will come its way once the new government takes oath.

"Abhi 100 din mai chunav mein busy hoon. Aap ke paas bharpoor samay hai. Aap soch ke rakhiye, kyonki shapath lenne ke

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

KATCHATHEEUVU: JAISHANKAR ADDS HIS WEIGHT

Lanka minister says no word from India on island; Centre working on it: TN BJP

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

INDIA HAS not sent any official communication yet on the Katchatheevu island issue, a senior Sri Lanka minister told *The Indian Express* on Monday even as the BJP scaled up its attack on the Congress, accusing it and the DMK of giving away the island,

EXPLAINED Emotive issue in Tamil Nadu

FOR THE BJP, the focus on Katchatheevu appeals to Tamil sentiments in a state where regional pride carries resonance, and has been an obstacle in its efforts to make inroads.

and the party's Tamil Nadu unit chief K Annamalai claiming that the Centre is taking all possible measures to reclaim the territory. "As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, Katchatheevu island falls within the Sri Lankan line of

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MORE REPORTS

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TELANGANA SNOOPING ROW

BRS opponents' cars intercepted, cash seized, supporters not spared: Probe

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, APRIL 1

INTERCEPTING VEHICLES of opposition candidates and seizing cash, conspiring to ensure a BRS victory for the third time in

Telangana, running a surveillance network that covered not just critics but also supporters — starting allegations have emerged in the alleged snooping scandal that has rocked Telangana and put the state's Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) under scanner.

The allegations figure in a demand report filed by officers investigating the case, seeking custody of former Deputy Commissioner of Police (Task Force, Hyderabad City) P Radhakrishnan Rao, who was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jumla of 2 crore new jobs per year

Jumla of double the income for farmers

Jumla of women security

Jumla of controlling Inflation

Jumla of 15 lakhs in every account

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR PREVIOUS JUMLAS?

MERE VIKAS KA DO HISAAB

HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT

Issued by All India Congress Committee.

IMD: Longer, more intense heat waves likely this summer

EXPRESSIONS SERVICE BENGALURU, APRIL 1

THE INDIA Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a harsh and arid summer with prolonged and more intense heat waves over most parts of the country in April-June.

There is a high probability of heat wave episodes lasting as long as 10-20 days against a normal of four-eight days in most of the upcoming three months, the IMD said. Rainfall associated with pre-monsoon conditions is expected to be below normal over most regions; aridity and shortage of water will add to the overall increased temperatures forecast for the season.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, Saurashtra-Kutch, Maharashtra, north Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha are likely to see high day temperatures and heat waves. More importantly, there will be higher than normal heat wave spells in April-June, the IMD warned.

"Most regions in the country will experience above normal maximum temperatures during the summer season this year. Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, northern Odisha, adjoining Gangetic West Bengal and eastern India are likely to experience normal or below normal temperatures," said IMD Director General Srityunjan Mohapatra during the release of the temperature outlook for April-June on Monday.

The summer season will begin on a warm note with day temperatures during April likely to remain significantly higher over Madhya Pradesh, north and central Maharashtra, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Telangana,

FROM PAGE ONE I-T to court: No coercive action until polls

FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

SG with respect to demand is without prejudice to all rights and contentions that it may have against the plaintiff herein" and that the demand of approximately Rs 3500 crore is not strictly related to the controversy in these appeals and touch upon other demands which arise against the plaintiff."

Appearing for the Congress, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi pointed out that the main civil appeal, which is pending, concerns demands regarding the 1994-95 assessment year pursuant to a 2007 notice.

He said that the department had already "collected Rs 135 crore by way of attachment of properties." Singhvi said that "we are not a profit-making organisation and we do not have any assets. Our case is gross receipt is not taxable."

Calling the gesture "gracious," Singhvi said: "I am very rarely rendered speechless. By my learned friend's intervention, I have been rendered speechless. Kindly have it in July," he said.

Mehta said the Rs 1,700-crore demand raised in 2021 was based on parameters laid down in a 2016 judgment. Just weeks before the first

phase of the Lok Sabha elections 2024 begins, the Congress Saturday said it had received fresh notices from the I-T Department for payment of a party contribution of 14.15 per cent of 2017-18, raising demands of Rs 1,745 crore. This, together with the notices for assessment years 1994-95 and 2017-18 to 2020-21, brought the total demand to Rs 3,567 crore.

In response to the notices, the Congress hit out at the BJP-led central government accusing it of indulging in "tax terrorism" to "financially cripple" it ahead of Lok Sabha elections.

On March 28, the Delhi High Court rejected four petitions moved by the Congress challenging the initiation of tax reassessment proceedings against it for a period of four Telangana years—2017-18 to 2020-21—by the Department.

But on March 22, it also dismissed the party's pleas challenging the tax reassessment proceedings for assessment years 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17. However, left open the question "whether the asserted delay in commencement of proceedings would be fatal to the assessment itself" for urging at an appropriate juncture.

On the I-T actions against it, the Congress party had sought a stay on withdrawal of Rs 135 crore from its bank accounts in March this year, but lost its appeal before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. The party also lost the Delhi High Court a challenge to the search operations conducted by the I-T department. The party had argued that these were "time-barred" and a "delayed action". It has so far received notices demanding Rs 3,567 crore in taxes for eight years.

Given that the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the I-T department, on Monday at the Supreme Court said they "will not take any coercive steps till the elections are over", sources said a decision by the EC on whether or not to respond formally to the Opposition concerns will be taken soon.

The twin balance sheet issue is now history, he said. "The banking system, which at some point of time was on the verge of collapsing, has become profitable and is showing higher growth in credit," he said. He said the transformation of the banking sector in the last 10 years was difficult but it could be achieved because there was clarity in the government's policies, intentions and decisions. It was also possible as the government made concerted efforts, and with "high quality" human resources.

"Intentions are correct, policies are correct, decisions are right, and when decisions are right, the outcome will also be right," Modi noted.

He highlighted that there are 52.19 lakh accounts today, with more than 55 per cent accounts belonging to women and over 7 crore Kisan Credit Cards have been given to farmers, fisherman and other beneficiaries, he said.

Talking about Unified Payments Interface (UPI), the real-time payment system, Modi said it has become a globally recognised platform with more than 1,200 crore transactions taking place per month. The RBI is also working on the Central Bank Digital Currency. "The steps taken in the last 10 years were just a trailer, too many things still need to be done," he said.

He spoke about the diverse banking needs of a large set of people in the country and stressed on making policies that can improve ease of doing banking and access to credit to all.

He said through the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning, India can excel in the area of digital public infrastructure (DPI).

On inflation, the Prime Minister said 10 years ago, the financial policies did not reflect the intention to deal with the double digit price rise.

To curb higher inflation, the government provided the RBI the inflation targeting framework on which the RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has been successful, he said. The government also took steps to reduce inflation by introducing and fiscal consolidation.

"It is because of this that despite the Corona pandemic and was between different countries, inflation in India is at moderate levels. The country has clear priorities, cannot be stepped from making progress," Modi said.

Under the inflation targeting framework, the government has mandated the RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent with a band of +/- 2 per cent. The RBI has been targeting to bring consumer price-based inflation to 4 per cent on a sustainable basis.

In February, consumer price-based inflation (CPI) or retail inflation stood at 5.09 per cent against 5.1 per cent recorded in January.

Assembly elections. The agency had called Kejriwal the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the alleged scam.

Meanwhile, Kejriwal's counsel moved an application in court to allow him access to three books — the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and How Prime Ministers Decide by Neeraj Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, *The Indian Express* — in custody; the court granted the request.

The counsel also moved an application requesting home-cooked meals, saying Kejriwal was "severely diabetic," medication for his diabetes, a table and chair. Allowing this, the court directed the jail superintendent to ensure the prescribed medication was provided, and directed regular monitoring of his blood pressure and sugar level. The court also directed Kejriwal to use his own mattress, bedsheet, pillows, blanket and access to books, notepad and pens, subject to scrutiny as per the jail's rules.

BRS opponents' cars intercepted

arrested on March 29 after he purportedly confessed to carrying out illegal activities based on inputs from SIB officers. The report was filed in the Nampally Criminal Court on Monday.

According to the report, ahead of the December 2018 Assembly elections in Telangana and subsequent bypolls in Dubbaka and Munugode, suspended Deputy Superintendent of Police D Praneeth Rao, based on surveillance conducted by him, providings inputs to other officers who took action against candidates of parties contesting against the BRS.

It states that Radhakishan admitted that instructions to carry out illegal surveillance were issued by the then SIB chief P Prabhakar Rao, who is also an accused in the case. It further states that based on inputs given by Praneeth Rao, the Task Force (under the Hyderabad City security wing) led by Radhakishan Rao intercepted Anand Prasad, owner of Bhavya Cements company, who was contesting as the TDP candidate from Serilingampally constituency, and seized Rs 70 lakh which he had withdrawn earlier.

The report states that unless Prasad and his staff were under constant surveillance, Praneeth Rao would not have known when he withdrew the money and when he was carrying it in his car.

As per the report, during the byelection in Dubbaka in November 2020, "Praneeth Rao shared technical evidence and identified the target vehicle field, and the Task Force team intercepted a vehicle belonging to a chit fund company of Siddipet, whose owners were related to BJP candidate M Raghunandan Rao."

Lanka says no word from India

control. Narendra Modi's foreign policy with Sri Lanka is organic and healthy. So far, there has not been an official communication from India to return the powers of Katchatheevu island. No such request from India so far. If there is such a communication, the foreign ministry will reply to that. Jeevan Thondaman, a Tamil-origin minister in President Ranil Wickremesinghe's Cabinet, told *The Indian Express*.

This came on a day External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar added his weight to the BJP claims that the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi had given away the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka in 1974 and kept this "hidden" and Annamalai said the central government has taken all possible measures to reclaim the territory.

Speaking at a press conference at the BJP headquarters in Delhi, Jaishankar, however, paraded a question on whether the government plans to reclaim the island, saying the matter is in Supreme Court. "It is a sub-judice matter," he said.

Later in the day, Annamalai told reporters in Chennai that "the ball is in the Centre's court now. All solutions possible will be considered. The only aim of the BJP in this issue is to protect the safety of Tamil fishermen. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and EAM Jaishankar are being very serious in this case. It (Katchatheevu) was handed over illegally to Sri Lanka."

Even as Thondaman denied any communication yet from India, he said he is the Sri Lanka minister, who did not want to be named, told *The Indian Express* that national boundaries cannot be changed as per wishes of a new government.

"For good or bad, Katchatheevu was formally recognised inside Sri Lanka's line of control. Once the boundary is decided, no one can demand a change just because of a change in government... But Katchatheevu hasn't been a topic of discussion in the Sri Lankan Cabinet; there is no communication from India in this regard," the minister said.

He said Katchatheevu is about the Tamil ethnicity, they exist on either side of the borders. If it is about the Tamil fishermen issue, linking both is inappropriate and inaccurate because the issue with regards to Indian fishermen is all about the bottom trawlers who are using fishnets to drain away the fish from the waters of Sri Lanka.

Inputs from ENS, New Delhi

Uneasiness within, poll panel deliberates over response to Opp alarm

concern that the EC should not be seen as interfering in a judicial process and come in the way of the law taking its course. Sources said that the Commission has to balance the need for a level-playing field for all political parties with the imperatives of due process.

On Sunday, at least three former CECs had told *The Indian Express* that the action by Central agencies against Opposition parties could potentially upset the

PM to RBI: On Day 1 after swearing-in, lot of work coming your way

level-playing field during the Lok Sabha polls. Two of them said there is scope for the EC to intervene and question why such action cannot be deferred until after the polls.

A Delhi court on Monday sent Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15 after he was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on March 21. When Kejriwal had knocked at the Delhi High Court after his arrest, the court had re-

(SDF) basket and recalibration of the foreign portfolio investment (FPI) regime on the back of internationalisation of the rupee. The Prime Minister praised the RBI for its efforts in improving the health of India's banking sector and the economy. "In 2014, when I entered the RBI's 80th birthday, the situation was facing difficult challenges. Due to higher NPA levels (of banks), everyone had doubts about the banking sector's stability in the future," he said.

The situation was so bad that public sector banks were unable to provide the required push to the country's economic growth, he said.

Modi said his government adopted the strategy of reorientation, resolution and recapitalisation to improve the health of the banking sector. The government infused capital of Rs 3.5 lakh crore in public sector banks and took many reforms to strengthen their governance.

With the introduction of 15 per cent to the global GDP growth, India has become the growth engine of the world. "In such cases, the effort should be that the rape is more accessible and acceptable in the world," he said.

India is aiming to make the rupee a global currency. Last year, an RBI-appointed Inter-agency Departmental Group (IDG) had recommended a slew of measures, including inclusion of the rupee in the Special Drawing Rights

Kejriwal sent to Tihar till April 15: ED says he's uncooperative, evasive

chats that pointed to Nair's involvement in the alleged scam. The agency said it also showed Kejriwal evidence of more than 10 meetings between Nair and other co-accused members in the case, like liquor manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and "middlemen". It said Kejriwal "evaded" questions by saying he was unaware about these persons.

Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, representing the ED, told the court of Special Judge Kaveri Bajewa that Kejriwal was not cooperative and had not shared his passwords with the agency.

The ED had seized four cell-phones, including Kejriwal's, and his arrest on March 21. The Chief Minister switched off his iPhone and has not shared the passwords, sources said. Senior officials linked to the case had said Kejriwal stated that he would not answer any of the AAP's "election strategy" and pre-poll allegations if it accessed his phone data and chats.

The arrestee (Kejriwal) has even given false and contrary evidence vis-a-vis other members of the AAP. When he was confronted with the statements given by his own party leaders he has called them confused," the ED said in its demand application.

The ED also alleged that Kejriwal was shown WhatsApp

Bengal Gov removes Gaur Banga V-C of Gov Banga University, has been withdrawn, with immediate effect.

chancellor of Gov Banga University, has been withdrawn, with immediate effect," the Government's order stated. Last Saturday, the HC-run professor's gangster Mukta Gupta had called a one-day convention at the Gov Banga University grounds. Stayed from state Education Minister Bratya Basu, about 1,700 representatives of various colleges and universities of the state participated in the event. However, both the Congress and BJP leaders were not present. "I felt humiliated when I received the notice from the Governor and the chancellor; I was

SC refuses to stay order allowing puja in Gyanvapi cellar

ANANT KHARISHNAN NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE SUPREME COURT on Monday refused to stay the order allowing a Hindu priest to perform puja in the southern cellar ("Vyas Tekhkhana") of the Gyanvapi mosque complex.

A three-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud that perused a Google Earth image of the complex and surroundings, noted that "access to the cellar... is from the southern side" and "access to the mosque, for which the namaz is from the northern side."

The bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, ordered, "As this stage brought in mind the fact that namaz is being offered by the Muslim community unhindered, after the January 17 and 31, 2024, orders, and the offering of puja and worship by Hindu priests in respect of the area of the tekhhana, it would be appropriate to maintain the status quo as it obtains at present so as to enable both the communities to offer religious worship in the above terms."

SC go-ahead for 'survey' of Bhojshala complex

EXPRESSIONS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE SUPREME COURT on Monday refused to stay the March 11 Madhya Pradesh High Court order directing the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct within six weeks a survey of the Bhojshala Temple cum Kamal Maulla Mosque complex in the Dhar district.

However, a bench presided over by Justice Hrishikesh Roy said no physical excavation that would alter the character of the premises should be carried out. Issuing notice on the mosque's appeal against the high court order, the bench also said no further action should be taken on the outcome of the excavation without its permission.

Last month, the appellants, while seeking an urgent hearing

of the matter "in view of the sensitivity of the issue," had said that the survey may cause damage to the place of worship and affect religious sentiments of communities at large."

For Hindus, the ASI-protected complex is a temple dedicated to the Goddess Yagdevi Saraswati, while for Muslims the Bhojshala Temple cum Kamal Maulla Mosque. As per an arrangement in 2003, Hindus perform puja at the complex on Tuesdays, while Muslims offer namaz on Fridays.

The petitioners, who are the Hindu Front for Justice, have argued that Kamal Maulla Mosque was constructed between the 13th and 14th centuries during Ala-ud-din Khilji's reign by "destroying and dismantling ancient structures of profusely constructed Hindu temples." The HC ordered a scientific investigation, survey, and excavation of the complex.

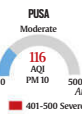
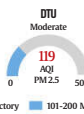
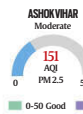
Bengal Gov removes Gaur Banga V-C of Gov Banga University, has been withdrawn, with immediate effect.

chancellor of Gov Banga University, has been withdrawn, with immediate effect," the Government's order stated. Last Saturday, the HC-run professor's gangster Mukta Gupta had called a one-day convention at the Gov Banga University grounds. Stayed from state Education Minister Bratya Basu, about 1,700 representatives of various colleges and universities of the state participated in the event. However, both the Congress and BJP leaders were not present. "I felt humiliated when I received the notice from the Governor and the chancellor; I was

Mamata gov reinstates him

not present at the said conference held on the university grounds. I did not know anything about this. But suddenly a conspiracy worked and I was removed. But then on April 1, the government reinstated me. I felt humiliated when I received the notice from the Governor and the chancellor; I was

3 THE CITY



SKY WATCH
 Partly cloudy sky. Gusty winds (speed 30-40 kmph) very likely to prevail.
MAX: 33 °C below normal
MIN: 18 °C below normal

CAPITAL LEADERS UNDER FIRE

Undertrial no. 670 — CM enters Tihar; allowed 5 visitors, sugar check, books



AAP MLA Rituraj Jha, Express

As AAP MLA alleges 'Op Lotus', BJP asks why no police complaint yet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AAP MLA Rituraj Jha on Monday claimed that he was approached by a group of 'BJP operatives' to join the party, and was offered Rs 25 crore, if he brings 10 MLAs with him and "breaks the AAP".

Speaking at a special session of Delhi Legislative Assembly, the AAP MLA said: "...There have been discussions in the House several times before, on how the BJP has been conspiring to poach AAP MLAs as the BJP party in Delhi, through its Operation Lotus... After the rally yesterday (Sunday), I went to attend a wedding in Bawana's Daryapur, close to four people (BJP operatives) took me aside and told me that they have been trying to convince me and inform me repeatedly over the phone. If I don't agree, I won't get anything..."

Jha alleged that the "BJP operatives" he met at the wedding also told him "the President's Rule could be imposed in the Capital, and that he (Jha) should agree and bring 10 MLAs with him by breaking the party".

"Until now, there were only rumours of imposing the President's Rule... but now, they (BJP) have started their Operation Lotus...", he said, adding that the BJP has also offered him Rs 25 crore as well as make him a minister when BJP would form its government in the national capital.

"...When I asked them what makes them think that we will easily break away, they said, don't be foolish... the President's Rule could be imposed in the Capital," he said in the Assembly.

Denying the allegations, Delhi BJP leaders on Monday said that the AAP is just trying to divert people's attention from the arrest of the party's chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

BJP MLA Vijender Gupta, asked "If Jha has filed a police complaint... AAP has made these allegations a dozen times, but never filed a complaint... Using this House to say anything is not right...", he said.

BJP MLA Abhay Verma, state unit's chief spokesperson, said: "This is nothing but a divert the attention of the people from the arrest of Kejriwal..."

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL & ARNAJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

FIVE REGULAR visitors, including his wife and children, permission to carry some books, two security personnel outside the ward number 3 of Tihar prison's Jail number 2 — this is what Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is undertrial prisoner (UT) no 670, is allowed in prison.

Wearing a white shirt, Kejriwal entered the Tihar jail complex at around 4:45 pm on Monday, and his picture was clicked for the record registration. After being checked by the jail security, his baggage — inside which he was allowed to carry a few pairs of clothes — was scanned too. He was lodged in jail no. 5, with all the adjoining cells left vacant," said the source.

Two security personnel have been deployed round the clock outside Kejriwal's ward along with other staff to monitor his activity on CCTV cameras.

"Five visitors — Kejriwal's wife, daughter, son, private secretary Bibhav Kumar, and Rajya Sabha MP and AAP's national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak — have been mentioned in the visitors' register for regular visits."

Kejriwal's former deputy Manish Sisodia is lodged in jail no. 1, former health minister Satyendar Jain in jail no. 7 and



(Left) Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal being taken to Tihar jail on Monday. Kejriwal's wife Sunita as the CM at the Rouse Avenue Court.

man Sukesh Chandrashekar and jail no. 5. On "jail mulakat", Kejriwal will be allowed to meet his family members twice a week, apart from "legal mulakat".

Elaborating the daily routine that Kejriwal would follow, just like other inmates, another official said that the barracks open at 6 am and he shall be permitted to carry devices such as sugar sensor, in case of non-availability with the jail authorities. The jail superintendent concerned was directed to provide Kejriwal with isabgol, glucose, toffees, bananas, as and when required in case of sudden fall in his sugar level. Further, the jail is being conducted to consider the request for the request for permitting special diet, as prescribed, such as home cooked food and bottled water were also

allowed by the court as requested by the CM's counsel.

Kejriwal was also allowed to carry to carry/ wear his spectacles and the superintendent was directed to consider the request of the applicant to provide his book, notepad and pen, as requested and as per the jail manual, and if the same were not available with the jail authorities, the accused may be issued to carry his own books and notepad and pen, subject to scrutiny as per rules. Jail officials also said that the request headed by the Director General (Prisons) and the superintendent of the jail is being conducted to consider the requests made by the Chief Minister and the same will accordingly be decided.

HC disposes of PIL to restrain CM from 'passing orders'

ED told to place matter before spl judge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE DELHI High Court on Monday asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to place before the special judge its note concerning Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal "passing orders" while in custody following his arrest in the now-scrapped excise policy case.

Earlier in the day, Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of the Rouse Avenue Court sent Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15. On March 28, the special judge had extended ED remand of Kejriwal — who was arrested on March 21 and was in custody in the central agency's custody on March 22 — until Monday (April 1). The HC was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) moved by one Surjit Singh Yadav, seeking a direction to the Director General (Prisons) and the superintendent of the jail is being conducted to consider the requests made by the Chief Minister and the same will accordingly be decided.

counsel submitted to the HC that it is seized of the issues raised in the PIL, and handed over a note on the issue, adding that it had not provided any apparatus or infrastructure to the CM in its custody.

Taking note of the submission, a division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora said: "Since respondent no. 4 (Kejriwal) is in police custody by virtue of the order passed by the Special Judge (PC Act), CBI-09 (MP/MLA Cases), Rouse Avenue District Court, this court directs respondent no. 2 (ED) to bring its comments/ note by way of a status report to the notice of the Special Judge, who is directed to pass appropriate orders in accordance with law, if any."

While disposing of the PIL, the HC, however, clarified that it had not commented on the "locus standi" of the petitioner to file the PIL and the merits of the allegations made by him. The bench further said that merits of the allegations shall be examined by the Special Judge.

Yadav's counsel argued in the HC: "...No rule allows him to pass orders like this while in custody. Delhi prison rules don't allow him to pass such orders. Respondent no. 5 (Atishi) who is a minister in the Delhi government is having press conferences showing that he (Kejriwal) has been passing orders in ED custody."

PARTY LEADER JASMINE SHAH ON CM'S ARREST

'BJP realised AAP won't break, so targeted Atishi, Bharadwaj'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE BJP and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are targeting senior AAP leaders and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj as they have realised the party will not break despite CM Arvind Kejriwal's arrest, senior AAP leader Jasmine Shah said on Monday.

His statement came after the ED submitted in the court that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told the agency that AAP's communications incharge Vijay Nair, one of the accused in the excise policy case, did not report to him but to Atishi and Bharadwaj.

During a press conference, Shah said, "Nair was in a press conference two years ago... Now the question arises that why did ED raise the statement which it had in writing after one-and-a-half to two years?"

Because BJP had never even denied that senior leaders of INDIA alliance will



Delhi ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj and Atishi. Archive

stand with AAP. "He further said, "They have understood now that AAP will not break with Kejriwal's arrest, that is why they are targeting the other two senior leaders, who also hold several portfolios in Delhi government."

Shah alleged BJP wanted to impose President's rule in Delhi by poaching the ruling party's MLAs.

Meanwhile, Congress MLA from Punjab, Sukhpal Singh Khaira, ruffled feathers after he suggested Atishi and Bharadwaj were named by Kejriwal as he wanted to remove them from the

race for the CM's chair. In a tweet, he said, "I am sure Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj would have targeted how mischievous is their trickmaster Arvind Kejriwal who has killed two birds with one stone... He is very cleverly re-named them. I am sure BJP will be the political future of Atishi and Bharadwaj to make way for his wife Sunita."

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, too, said the AAP national convenor has "tarnished" the political future of Atishi and Bharadwaj to make way for his wife Sunita.

'A summons a day keeps the ED happy': Kavitha's counsel slams central agency

NIRBHAY THAKUR NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

"A SUMMONS a day keeps the Enforcement Directorate happy, just like an apple a day keeps the doctor happy," said senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi while arguing for interim and regular bail for Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) legislator K Kavitha, who the agency accused of allegedly paying Rs 100 crore to AAP leaders in return for liquor licences in Delhi.

Highlighting that it was not necessary to arrest K Kavitha, Singhvi told Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court: "Kavitha is a woman with her roots in the society... She must not be treated like a gangster with a MCOCA case." Kavitha is eligible for bail as nine statements mentioning that businessman Arun Ramchandran Pillai were not against her, and one against her were retracted, the counsel added.

Pillai, also an accused, was arrested for his alleged involvement in the case. The ED had said that



K Kavitha. Archive

Pillai "represented the South Group", an alleged liquor cartel linked to Kavitha and others that paid kickbacks amounting to about Rs 100 crore to the AAP to gain a larger share of the market in the Capital under the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy. The South Group, according to the ED, comprises Sarath Reddy (promoter of Aurobind Pharma), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (NCR Congress MP from Ongole in Andhra Pradesh), his son Raghav Magunta, Kavitha and others.

The ED had also alleged in Pillai's remand papers that he "represented the same investments" of Kavitha, who has also been questioned by the CBI in connection with the case.

The counsel also said that the statements of Buchi Babu George, a former minister in the Parliament, and Kavitha's counsel (CA) allegedly linked to Kavitha — against Kavitha were "contradictory". "In four chargesheets, I wasn't made an accused... Giving the accused summons the same day that she is operating, is a complete travesty of justice... It's the antithesis of justice."

too," said Hossain, who was accompanied by Special Public Prosecutor N K Matta.

The Special Judge adjourned the matter till April 4, while asking Singhvi why he was continuing the arguments for so long if the interim bail was sought on an urgent basis. Special Judge Baweja also said that arguments for interim bail are different from regular bail. Earlier, the court had sent Kavitha to a 14-day judicial custody until April 9. Prior to that, she was in the ED custody for 10 days in connection with the Delhi excise policy. The ED had taken her custody from Hyderabad on March 15, and produced her next day. She was sent to ED custody for seven days, and on March 23, the court granted the agency extended her custody for three more days, until March 26.

Kavitha's nephew is also involved in the "transfer/ utilisation of proceeds of crime," says the ED.

At ₹7,484 cr, excise dept sees highest revenue collection

GAYATHRI MANI NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

AMID ONGOING uproar over CM Arvind Kejriwal getting arrested in the liquor policy case, the Delhi excise department has collected its highest ever revenue under the old excise regime, crossing the Rs 7,000 crore figure for the first time, said officials.

According to data shared by the Delhi government, the department has collected revenue of Rs 7,484 crore, which also includes excise revenue and Value Added Tax (VAT) on liquor in 2023-24. This is 10% higher than the Rs 6,830 crore collected in 2022-23.

"This is the highest ever excise revenue collected in Delhi," said a senior officer, adding that the number of liquor shops and brands have also increased in the past couple of years. The old excise regime was brought back after the AAP government scrapped its ambitious new liquor policy in 2022. Now, only government liquor shops can operate in Delhi.

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said that people of Gautam Buddha Nagar have got a number of developmental projects such as the airport in Jewar, Film City, Metro, and a dedicated freight corridor, and thus, "it is now their turn to vote for the BJP."

While the first phase of the airport is set to begin in September-end, work on the Film City project is yet to take off on the ground.

"This is the same district which was considered cursed by previous chief ministers. Later, I understood that this was because the bureaucrats sent by them used to impoverish the local people and enrich their 'own' people. That is why I decided to personally visit the area," said Adityanath, addressing a Prabuddha Varg Sammelan organised by the BJP wing of the Lok Sabha election, at GL Bajaj Institute in Greater Noida.

The sammelan has become a regular feature for the party, which invites people from different backgrounds such as doctors, engineers, businessmen and entrepreneurs in a bid to spread its message.

Invoking the 2017 gang rape and murder incident in Jewar, Adityanath said, "I remember before 2017 too people were afraid of Jewar. The horrific incident escalated the fear. Then only I decided to develop the area."

While targeting the Opposition, Adityanath said earlier people had to face multiple crimes because of riots. "Voh curfue lagate the, hum Kanwar Yatra nikalte haien (they used to impose curfews while we take Kanwar Yatra). The government is giving free cylinders, welfare schemes are being implemented at major level. You have got metro,

Gave you Metro, airport, your turn now to vote for BJP: UP CM

DHEERAJ MISHRA GREATER NOIDA, APRIL 1

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said that people of Gautam Buddha Nagar have got a number of developmental projects such as the airport in Jewar, Film City, Metro, and a dedicated freight corridor, and thus, "it is now their turn to vote for the BJP."

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UP CM Yogi Adityanath in Greater Noida on Monday. Express

airport, film city and others, now go to vote," said the CM, while seeking votes for party candidate Mahesh Sharma.

Sharma, a sitting Parliamentarian, said Gautam Buddha Nagar is the economic engine of the state. "The investments in the district have opened up jobs for many people... Nobody ever thought that Metro will run upto Jewar," said Sharma.

Satendra Sisodia, Western UP region president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said, "The government has ensured safety and honour to the women, and criminals are now afraid of the strong law and order situation in the state."

Found 50-acre area to develop as forest, DDA tells Delhi HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE DELHI High Court was informed by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Monday that it has identified an area of 50 acres, which will be developed as a forest for the city, after which the court asked the authority to submit the details of the land parcel.

The submission was made in a petition related to permissions granted by tree officers concerned for felling trees without passing speaking orders. On March 18, a single judge bench of Justice Jasmeet Singh had for violation of the court's previous orders issued contempt notices to the vice-chairman of DDA and Principal Secretary, Delhi government's Forest Department, concerning the "felling of 1,000 trees," including in the Southern Ridge, for the construction of an approach road between Chattarpur Road and SAARC University, Maidan Garhi.

On Monday, DDA's counsel, on instructions submitted that a 50-acre land had been identified for developing a forest for Delhi.

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JNU admin orders inquiry as student alleges sexual harassment near campus

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

A STUDENT of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has alleged that she was sexually harassed near the campus by a few students late Saturday night. The university administration has ordered an inquiry into the incident, an official said Monday.



Authorities have summoned the suspected students.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Sudhir Kumar, the Chief Proctor, said "The proctor's office received a complaint from a student on the afternoon of March 31 regarding an incident that took place at around 1-2 am of Sunday night. The student alleged that she was at the Ring Road in a car with a few individuals inside stopped and

and is taking necessary action. We will soon come up with an appropriate punishment for the ones responsible for this incident. We have also reached out to the Dean of Students for appropriate care and support to be given to the complainant and to ensure her safety," Kumar added.

Meanwhile, JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) accused a student group of being responsible for the incident. In a statement, the union said, "four people... were found harassing female students... in the presence of security guards. They were found harassing and using derogatory remarks directed at the students. JNUSU strongly condemns this act of sexual harassment."

The union further stated, "It was further noted that when the survivor went on to lodge a complaint, the security took her ID card. We would like to state that JNUSU will not tolerate any attempts at normalising such acts, or any attempts at shielding the perpetrators."

In a letter written to the Chief Proctor's Office on Monday, the union said, "On behalf of JNUSU, we demand: Issuance of restraint order against the Perpetrator... To ensure safety of the survivor, a restraint order must be issued immediately... The cat, belonging to one of the perpetrators... must be seized immediately since it is used to harass female students regularly."

No FIR has been lodged with the police in the case yet.

L-G HAS NO ROLE TO PLAY IN THE MATTER: COUNSEL 'Funds not to play to DJB': Supreme Court seeks response from Delhi Finance Secretary

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE SUPREME COURT Monday sought the response of the Delhi Finance Secretary on a petition by Delhi's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government alleging that money meant for the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) had not been released.

A three-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud posted the matter for hearing next on April 5.

Singhvi, however, said that after the Centre passed the law on civil servants serving in the GNCTD (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi), the secretaries were not listening to the government. "My secretaries don't listen to me," stated Singhvi.

To a query from the CJ as to why the funds were not being released, Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who appeared for the Delhi Lieutenant Governor, said that the funds for the DJB have to be released by the GNCTD government's finance department, adding the L-G did not have any role to play in the matter.

"Jal Board is a statutory authority, L-G has no role to play," he said, adding "the real respondent is her (Water Minister Atishi's) own Secretary".

"If your secretaries don't listen to you, what should I do?", countered Rohatgi.

Singhvi said that if the L-G had nothing to do with the matter, then Rohatgi should not be opposing the petition.

Advocate Farasat said that the L-G was made a party to the plea as services are under his control after the central law on the subject.

Letters were written to the L-G multiple times but to no avail, he pointed out.

Man dies trying to swerve car to save animal

Gurgaon: A 32-year-old man died in an accident after he tried to swerve his car to save an animal in Gurgaon in the early hours of Monday, police said.

According to DCP (North) Manoj Meena, eight people were injured by the big cat and were sent to Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital for treatment. The local police received a call around 6.15 am about a leopard on the prowl. According to Jagatpur residents, the leopard first crossed the road that separates the forest area from the village, before proceeding to a local dairy where it spent roughly 20 minutes around 5.30 am. It then ventured further into the village where it attacked 18-year-old

Leopard enters Wazirabad home, injures eight people

LUPASIKA SINGHAL AND ABHINAVA HARGOVIND
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1



The leopard was trapped inside a room before being tranquilised and rescued.

Nasir who was standing outside his house. As the teenager raised an alarm, villagers came to his rescue, hitting the leopard with lathis.

The leopard then attacked Sanjeev Kumar, who lives right across Nasir's house. "I was standing in front of my house when the leopard attacked Nasir. We all hit the leopard with lathis and that's when it turned on me and clawed my chest and back," said Kumar as he nursed deep gashes and bite marks on his body. "The problem was that it would attack one and when others would come to save that person, it would attack them

as well," Kumar added. By this time, forest department officials had arrived at the scene. Chased by villagers, the leopard bolted inside Chaudhary's house and entered the room, which the officials promptly latched shut.

Following this, the officials laid a net on the ground and rushed to the roof with tranquiliser guns. One of the officials then opened the doors to the room where the leopard was trapped, as soon as the animal rushed out and landed in the net, veterinarians darted the animal and took it away.

The Chaudhary family, however, is still shaken by the episode. Said Mahendra, Nitin's father: "My daughter-in-law had left for the temple early in the morning. Before leaving, she bolted the room, in which her children were sleeping, from outside. We were scared for the safety of the children as the room in which the leopard was trapped was situated right next," said Mahendra, a now-retired Delhi Jal Board (DJB) official.

The last time a leopard was spotted in the area was eight years ago, in 2016. After several people reported sightings, forest department officials captured the wild cat and transferred it to the Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand.

A source associated with the Yamuna Biodiversity Park said that throughout the winter, pugmark impression pads are laid out at the park to monitor animal movement. However, no leopard presence was recorded. Elaborating on the pads, a source said, "On all trails in the park, a 1x1 square metre loose soil patch is made. This is a pugmark impression pad. When the animal crosses the trail, it leaves a pugmark, and this is recorded and measured in the morning."

Meanwhile, the leopard caught on Monday is yet to be released into the wild. "It will be released as per protocol," said a forest department official.

Removal of shops: Streets vendors protest against MCD

SAMAN HUSAIN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

A GROUP of street vendors staged a protest outside the Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) Civic Centre on Monday to oppose their shops allegedly being removed by force despite proper licences.

According to Rajesh Singh, a member of the National Association of Street Vendors (NASVI), "Despite approximately 76,000 vendors holding

street vending certificates as per the 2014 Act, and an additional 2 lakh vendors recognised under the post-COVID Swamidhi scheme, the MCD continues its displacement drives."

Nasir Uddin, who sells suitcases and bags near the Shahdara metro station, said, "They visit and remove our shops without any prior notice... about a month ago, they had confiscated my products... I have multiple vending licences and I have been setting up my stall in the same area since 1974."



During the protest Monday.

Stating that central government's Swanidhi scheme has brought him some respite, Uddin asked how would he pay back the loans in light of contin-

ued removal of the shop by the MCD.

Uddin, who claims to be a member of the Town Vending Committee, said, "No decision to remove street hawkers can be taken without discussion with the town vending committee in which 40% of the members are street vendors themselves. But no meetings of the committee are taking place due to which vendors are being left unheard."

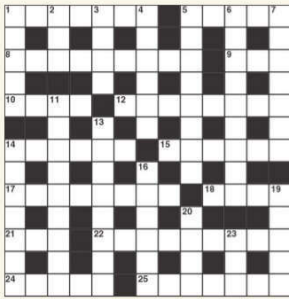
Manoj Kumar Rai, a vendor from Mayur Vihar Phase 1, said,

"The MCD had come last month... they (officials) were about to break my shop but somehow I managed to save it this time."

Meanwhile, an MCD official said, "The second round of the survey is currently pending; once the second round is completed, vendors who were left themselves. But no meetings of the committee are taking place due to which vendors are being left unheard."

Manoj Kumar Rai, a vendor from Mayur Vihar Phase 1, said,

CROSSWORD 5327



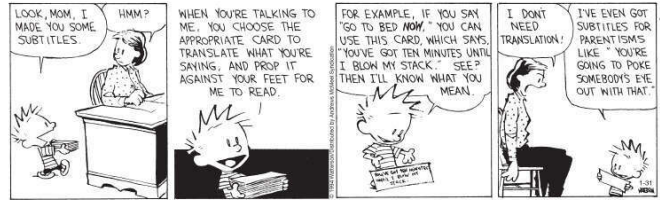
- ACROSS**
1 Unfolds and gives way (7)
5 Looks at the pages being turned (5)
8 Note is performed as shown (9)
9 Bird seen in September, October (3)
10 Squabbles back in the garden (4)
12 Young female accompanist (8)
14 Sort of hat we put bands round (6)
15 Concerning a girl that's careless (9)
17 He makes a living from dirty pictures (8)
18 Big city with the old style look (4)
21 To ring excessively (3)
22 Hint that union's disruption is about to finish (9)
24 They entertain large numbers of people (5)
25 May be the last men to show regrets (7)
- DOWN**
11 Screens unwelcome visitors in two ways (5)
2 A fool who could be taken for a ride (3)
3 Spot a worker in the dark (4)
4 Soul mate of Erros (6)
5 A divinely expressed wish (8)
6 Personal representations (9)
7 Assists in short time (7)
11 Hardly positions of strength (4,5)
13 There is nothing amiss in such speculations (8)
14 Make your mark as a non-runnery? (7)
16 The CO sounds a bit of a nut (6)
19 Nothing like exists in spring (5)
20 Sunny smile? (4)
23 The study of lions? (3)

Solutions Crossword 5326 Across: 1 Manifest, 5 Gala, 9 Cargo, 10 Thin, 11 Postmistress, 13 Outlets, 14 Nettle, 17 Miss the point, 20 Tenth, 21 Dairy, 22 Raah, 23 Entrance Down: 1 Mock, 2 News, 3 From the rat, 4 Star, 6 Roats, 7 Arrested, 8 Little wonder, 12 Commuter, 15 Tension, 16 Berlin, 18 Sinus, 19 Lyre

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Somehow along the line you appear to have upset someone whose influence could help you in the future. There is no time like the present for putting shaky relationships back on a firm footing. At work you need to take a more creative course.

TALURIUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

The financial picture remains rather uncertain, possibly because you have allowed an opportunity to slip through your hands. Optimism is all very well, but don't allow unrealistic hopes to influence your actions. While your head is in the clouds keep one foot on the ground.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The current relationship between Jupiter and Saturn is positive, and you should use the opportunity to implement plans which you have been considering for some time but felt were not in your line of business. Within the month you will have forgotten that certain current problems ever existed.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The emotional Moon is now impacting on a sociable area of your horoscope, revealing that you have everything to gain from associations with other people. At work you'll have to operate as part of a team. Go it alone and you may do yourself long-term damage.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The period you've just been through has not been entirely to your liking. However, every astrological cloud has a silver lining, and very soon the benefits derived from recent ups will be made plain. In the end you'll decide that the wait was worth it.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Tensions are building up at home, although there is no reason why this should be considered bad. Anything which forces you to get out of your rut and make improvements is to be welcomed. There seems to be a great deal going in your favour at home, so any difficulties could be a result of impatience.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

You are fortunate to be born under the sign of Venus, a planet which has been affording you protection lately. Now you must learn to stand on your own two feet. It's fine to depend on partners sometimes, but not all the time.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

You may have been sitting on confidential information or keeping a secret on behalf of a friend. However, be prepared for everything to come into the open before the week is out. There is no way that partners will let you off the hook, so you'd better have your story ready.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Seeing as there is shortly to be a critical planetary alignment in your sign, you should tread carefully. It's necessary to retain your sense of optimism regarding the future, yet your downfall could be over-confidence. My advice would be to double-check every detail.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Today's lunar positions offer you the strongest possible advice to listen to close partners. You may be astonished at the quality of their ideas, and quite possibly pleasantly surprised by the outcome. Your other planets are pointing the way to monetary success.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

It will seem terribly unfair when people who do not hardly know you feel they have the right to comment critically on your behaviour. Yet this is what may happen today and tomorrow, so don't rise to the bait. You'll get everything you need by watching and waiting until the time is right.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

A professional upset is on the cards, yet the changes which result may be to your liking. Meetings or communications at the end of the week may clarify the picture, so don't sign on the dotted line just yet. In fact, a commitment may not be necessary until next year.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded square and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

...is a keystone of wealth - both financial affluence and emotional security - Suite Oman (6, 4)

PRAEO CESHMN

NOINO EORRGW

SOLUTION: PRAEO = PRAISE; CESHMN = CASHMERE; NOINO = NOBLE; EORRGW = ELEGANCE

Difficulty Level 2s

Instructions To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

SUDOKU 5519

Difficulty Level 1s = Very Easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5518

3	6	5	1	9	8	4	2	7
9	1	7	4	6	2	3	5	8
8	2	4	5	3	7	6	9	1
6	9	8	3	5	4	1	7	2
5	4	1	2	7	6	9	8	3
7	3	2	9	8	1	5	4	6
2	5	3	7	1	9	8	6	4
1	7	6	8	4	5	2	3	9
4	8	9	6	2	3	7	1	5

SUDOKU 5519

7			3			2		
5		9		8			4	
	3				7			
2	7	3	8	9	4			6
3	6	7	1	4	5	2		
	1	2				8		
1	6		2	6			7	
								9

5 DECISION 2024



SOUTH WATCH

Why Katchatheevu, a speck of an island, is causing a splash in TN poll waters

With this, BJP hopes to send multiple messages – invoking Tamil sentiments to playing the national interest card

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

CAN AN uninhabited island, spread over 285 acres, 1.6 km in length and no more than 300 metres broad, give the BJP the space it needs to plant its feet in Tamil Nadu? On Monday, the BJP apparently proved the grand old party's inadequacy to protect the country's territory.

What has the BJP said?
The allegation was first made by Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai based on an RTI, and was then taken up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media. On Sunday, Modi posted: "Eye opening and startling! New facts reveal why Congress callously gave away #Katchatheevu. This has an-

gered every Indian and reaffirmed in people's minds – we can't ever trust Congress!" On Monday, the PM followed up with a post saying: "Rhetoric aside, DMK has done nothing to safeguard Tamil Nadu's interests. New details emerging on Katchatheevu too unmasked the DMK's double standards totally." Jaishankar too addressed a press conference, alleging that the DMK had "connived" with the India government on the issue.

What explains its focus?
The focus on Katchatheevu kills several birds with one stone for the BJP. It appeals to Tamil sentiments in a state where regional pride carries much resonance, and has been a major obstacle in the efforts of the BJP, with its nationalist agenda, and make inroads there. It also puts the DMK, which is the senior partner of the INDIA bloc in the state, on the defensive, especially by highlighting emotive issue of capture of Indian fishermen in Lankan wa-



Katchatheevu is an uninhabited island spread over 285 acres and is 1.6 km in length and about 300 metres wide. Archives

ters – a matter that has been raised by parties cutting across the political divide in Tamil Nadu, including the DMK and its allies – to territorial control over Katchatheevu. A senior BJP leader said: "Prime Minister Modi has long been trying to position the Congress as a party that has

made a lot of mistakes across history, against its own claims of a party of freedom fighters or as a party that won freedom for the country. When the Congress tries to paint the BJP as a party devoid of any glorious past and polities that is issue, the BJP has to take the sheen away and expose

the Congress's vulnerabilities." Plus, with the Opposition attacking the government over territory "lost" to China in Ladakh, this is one way to blunt the issue.

What is BJP's long-term plan?
Any space it can carve for itself in the South is a positive for the BJP where it is still placed behind other parties in most states, and in direct fight with the Congress in Karnataka and Telangana. "Now the party is trying to take on the DMK," the BJP leader said, adding that the gains may not be visible as far as immediate elections go. The BJP has invested a lot of energy in Tamil Nadu, where the political landscape remains dominated by the regional parties DMK and AIADMK, with the Congress on the slide. Spotting an opening, one of the first things the BJP did was to pick K Annamalai, a former IPS officer, as its young, aggressive state chief.

The BJP has also tried to shed the impression of a party committed to a monolithic nationalism, by professing its admiration for Tamil language, literature and culture. The Narendra Modi government has been holding Tamil Sangamams to mark the age-

old links between Tamil Nadu and Varanasi, and the traditional Tamil sceptre called Sengol – meant to symbolise a ruler's adherence to dharmic principles – was carried by the PM himself into the new Parliament building as part of its inauguration.

Modi often invokes Tamil culture in his messages, from wearing a veshti (lungi) on his visits to the state and during his interview to the Tamil channel Thanthi Sunday, to quoting Tamil classic Thirukkural and poet Subramania Bharati in his speeches.

Can the BJP succeed?
BJP leaders admit that the impact might not show in the current polls, but see it as part of a long-term project to win a new territory to its side. While its attempts to reunite with the AIADMK were not successful, the party is confident about making gains this time, from the 0 seats it won in 2019 and 1 in 2014.

The DMK-led alliance that swept the 2019 elections has several things going for it though, including the fact that this is one state where the INDIA bloc, a combination of the DMK, Congress, Left parties and IUML, has had smooth sailing.

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KEY PLAYERS

MUFTI SHOWERS PRAISE ON RAHUL, INDICATES NEW J&K ALIGNMENT

I HEREBY DECLARE

KRITI DEVI DEBBARMA, 49, BJP candidate for Tripura East

TOTAL ASSETS	₹85.9 CR (2024)	First-time candidate
Movable assets	₹5.87 cr	
Immovable assets	₹80.04 cr	
Liabilities	₹15.24 lakh	
Education	Diploma in Rural Management	
Pending criminal cases	None	

POLL POURRI

ELECTORS HAVE the "refuse to vote" option even after registering their identities before the presiding officer, allowing them to express their lack of confidence in any of the candidates seeking mandate. The right is separate from the provision to vote under the NOTA option. It is prescribed under the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961. Once an elector refuses to vote inside a booth after having credentials verified, the officer shall put "a remark to this effect against the entry in Form 7A and the signature or thumb impression... shall be obtained against such a remark", as per the rules. —PTI

Rainbow alliance with OBC parties over, SP falls back on Cong for UP battle

LALMANI VERMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

IN THE 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, the Samajwadi Party (SP) had aligned with smaller parties who have support bases within the OBC groups in the state. These alliances had helped the SP increase its tally and vote share, even though the BJP clinched the polls.

However, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the SP has lost the support of most of these parties, retaining only the support of Mahan Dal, which although not in a formal alliance, has decided to extend support to the party in some constituencies.

Currently, the SP is in an alliance with only the Congress in UP. As per their seat-sharing agreement, the SP is contesting on 63 seats, while the Congress will be in the fray from 17 seats. In the Assembly polls, the SP had a umbrella alliance with different regional parties claiming to have influence over OBC voters – the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), Janvadi Socialist Party (now named Jan Janvadi Party), Apna Dal (Kamerwadi), and Mahan Dal.

Of the state's 403 seats, the SP won 111 seats with 32% vote share, while the RLD got 8 and



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

the Lok Sabha elections alone after their seat-sharing discussions fell through.

SP spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary says these smaller parties "do not matter" to the party. "They have no base. Each of them were demanding 3 to 5 Lok Sabha seats... These parties come and leave when their self-interests are not fulfilled. Their move will not cause any damage," he claimed. Apna Dal (K) leader Pallavi Patel, who was elected as the MLA from Sitabdi in 2022 on SP ticket, blames the SP's "betrayal" for their break-up. She claims the SP itself announced that there would be no alliance.

The BJP has decided to contest alone in 30 Lok Sabha seats and has already announced candidates for 45 seats in eastern UP, including Azamgarh where Akhilesh's cousin Dharmendra Yadav is in the fray. JJP president Sanjay Chauhan will contest from Ghosi. The SP was keen on fielding senior party leader Rajeev Rai from the seat.

"Ghosi is dominated by members of the Chauhan community. But the SP fielded another candidate there. SP asked me to look for an alternative seat," Chauhan said. He adds that by breaking up with the smaller parties, the SP was "giving a chance to the BJP".

rest of the country, society and people that I remain with the NDA. For someone who opposed the Emergency, this is not acceptable and to remain silent would be a sin," Siddiqui told The Indian Express on Monday.

Siddiqui, who joined the RLD in 2016, is the first senior party leader to quit following its entry into the NDA last month.

In his resignation letter, Siddiqui had had respect for the RLD chief. "From the time of your grandfather Bharat Ratna



Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, the BJP's Nagpur candidate, campaigns on Monday. PTI

Senior RLD leader quits party over BJP alliance: 'To remain silent would be a sin'

LALMANI VERMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

HOURS AFTER Jayant Chaudhary shared the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally on Sunday, Rashtriya Lok Dal's (RLD) national vice-president Shaheed Siddiqui resigned citing the BJP's "concerted attacks on democratic institutions and the Constitution".

"This is the last straw. In these circumstances, it is not in the in-

terest of the country, society and people that I remain with the NDA. For someone who opposed the Emergency, this is not acceptable and to remain silent would be a sin," Siddiqui told The Indian Express on Monday. Siddiqui, who joined the RLD in 2016, is the first senior party leader to quit following its entry into the NDA last month. In his resignation letter, Siddiqui had had respect for the RLD chief. "From the time of your grandfather Bharat Ratna

Chaudhary Charan Singhji, your father Ajit Singhji and yourself, the party has stood for these (democratic) values. However, the RLD becoming a part of the NDA puts me in a bind and a piquant situation. I have struggled long and hard in my mind and heart but find myself unable to be associated with an alliance he Siddiqui used to run a weekly called *Nai Dumia*, which he launched in 1973 while a student at Delhi University, till the Covid-19 pandemic.

SAGAR RAJPUT & MOHAMED THAYER
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

JOURNALISTS REMEMBER former IPS officer Arup Patnaik's tenure as the Mumbai Police Commissioner as a "newsy" time, given the number of unusual changes brought about by him after being appointed the city top cop. The 1979 batch IPS officer from Odisha, who retired in 2015, has again hit the headlines now.

The Naveen Patnaik-led BJD has fielded Arup from the party's bastion Puri for the Lok Sabha polls, where he will take on BJP national spokesperson Sambhit Patra.

Arup, who joined the BJD in April 2018, currently heads the party's social welfare wing, Odisha-Mo Parivar (Odisha family). The BJD dropped four-time Puri MP and its Delhi face Phalokhona to give ticket to Arup. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Arup, who hails from Puri district, lost to the BJP's Aparajita Sarangi in Bhubaneswar by 23,839 votes. Patra, meanwhile, "pehle action mein section" and "pehle joota bad me Gita" (asking cops to act first and apply the law later) to having two six-foot tall bodyguards near him all

the time, issuing circulars asking cops not to have "vulgar" ringtones on their phones. He would also conduct "surprise visits" to police stations at night and check cupboards of police officers to ensure they were not up to anything illegal. He was also credited with improving the state of the police training across Mumbai.

Considered as a tough taskmaster and straightforward officer, Arup's strict demeanour had led to five junior IPS officers complaining to the state government about their unwillingness to work under him. The then home minister R R Patil had to convene a meeting to resolve the row.

Many believe that the biggest impact Arup had on Mumbai was by giving ACP Vasant Dhole a free run for raiding bars in the city. Despite drawing flak from various quarters over the controversial move, Arup stood by Dhole, even as he was dubbed the "bar busting top cop".

Arup played a crucial role in curbing the 1992-1993 communal riots in the investigation of the serial bomb blasts in Mumbai. He was also part of the CBI team that investigated multi-core Harshad Mehta securities scam. During his stint as Mumbai police chief, in July 2011, a serial bomb blast ripped through three locations in the metropolis that killed 26 people.

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NEWS MAKER

15 years an MP, now 'ex', Varun Gandhi's long wait gets even longer

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

VARUN GANDHI has been here before. Face to face with this question for perhaps as long as he can think back – where does he go next?

Denied a ticket by the BJP, the 43-year-old last week released a letter to the voters of the Pilibhit Lok Sabha seat, which he won in 2019. He talked about visiting the constituency for the first time in 1983 as a three-year-old child... holding my mother's hand... and ended with a promise, "not as an MP but as a son", to serve it "all my life". He made no mention of the BJP or of the candidate who has replaced him in the seat, Jitin Prasad.

Thus, the Nehru-Gandhi outsider always looking in, and the BJP insider always looking out, was again the man who fell

somewhere in between. There has been no word from the BJP on why Varun has stayed out while his mother Maneka Gandhi has been re-elected from Pilibhit, though both have been out of the party leadership's good books for some time. One of the longest-serving parliamentarians currently, with eight Lok Sabha wins, Maneka did not find a place in the Narendra Modi-II ministry.

Like always, there were voices from the Congress side inviting Varun to cross over to the party of the Nehru-Gandhis but not from the family itself. In light of their silence, it matters little that Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the Congress's leader in the outgoing Lok Sabha, went public saying Varun should join the Congress. Varun, who was surely not the family taken completely by surprise at the ticket denial, given how he has

been baiting the BJP leadership for several years now, seems to have suddenly opted for silence. Attempts to reach him failed.

The child

The incident that would change the trajectory of Varun's life happened just three months into his birth, on June 23, 1980, when his father Sanjay Gandhi died in a plane crash.

Sanjay had been tipped to be the political heir of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, encouraged by a dotting Indira Gandhi, then the Prime Minister. When a bereft Indira turned to a reluctant Rajiv Gandhi, it started a rift that has now lasted four decades.

Maneka, who saw her own political ambitions as being thwarted, left her in-laws' home with Varun in 1984, she decided to take on Rajiv from the family bastion of Amethi, once represented by Sanjay. Rajiv deployed



Varun grew up against the backdrop of enjoying the name but not the power of the Nehru-Gandhi family. Vishal Srivastava

his wife Sonia to campaign for him. Again, fate intervened when Indira was killed before the polls. In the sympathy wave that swept the country, the Congress won by what remains

the biggest-ever majority in Parliament, and Maneka lost to Rajiv – badly. Varun grew up against this backdrop, of enjoying the name but not the power of the coun-

try's No 1 political family. Amethi, meanwhile, passed on from Rajiv to Sonia to Rahul, before BJP leader Smriti Irani defeated him from there in 2019.

The politician

Having cut off ties with the Gandhi family, Maneka drifted slowly towards the BJP. From Varun was 24, she formally joined the party, led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the time. The BJP was happy about getting a Nehru-Gandhi of their own. And Varun seemed happier pursuing other passions such as writing, penning in 2000 a collection of poems entitled *The Otherness of Self*.

In 2009, the BJP under L K Advani fielded Varun from Pilibhit. The poet-politician showed a hearty appetite for politics, running what was seen as an openly anti-Muslim campaign. He was quoted as saying at an election rally: "If anyone raises a

finger towards Hindus or if someone thinks that Hindus are weak and leaderless, if someone thinks that these leaders lick our boots for votes, if anyone raises a finger towards Hindus, then I swear on Gita that I will cut that hand."

As the Election Commission said it would look into the matter, and the BSP government in the state held him under the NSA, Varun claimed that videos of his speeches had been "doctored" to malign him. (In 2013, he was acquitted in two cases after witnesses turned hostile.)

Later, senior BJP leaders such as Arun Jaitley would cite the controversy as one of the reasons for the party's failure to dislodge the UPA from power in 2009.

The maturing

As Arun Jaitley proved a fast learner, and soon after the 2009 polls, changed his political tune from hard Hindutva to talk about

development and poverty. His solo rallies in UP continued to draw crowds, even when the BJP was still struggling in the state, generating a buzz that Varun was positioning himself as the party's face in the state.

However, what Varun didn't realise was that the party itself was changing. As Advani gave way to the Modi era, Varun's existence as a figure completely outside the Sanghathan's circle of influence became increasingly untenable, even as the surname that once was his and his mother's calling card lost its sheen.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, however, Varun silenced any detractors when the BJP fielded him from a different seat, Sultampur, and he won. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP again shifted him to Pilibhit. He won, becoming a three-time MP.

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6 DECISION 2024



STATE WATCH

In Bihar, cautious NDA goes with knowns as RJD seeks to expand base

From MY to MY-BAAP, a new vote base for RJD, as BJP banks on a Modi show, facilitated by seven-phase polls

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, APRIL 1

ALTHOUGH both the NDA and INDIA bloc have announced their seat-sharing formula, and their constituent parties have declared their candidates as well, two things are clearly emerging in the battle for Bihar. While the NDA, which had won 39 out of 40 seats in the 2019 polls, is banking mostly on sitting MP, RJD chief Lalu Prasad has, expectedly, dictated the terms within the INDIA bloc as far as ally Congress goes.

More importantly, Lalu has tried to go beyond the RJD's traditional Muslim-Yadav (MY) vote base to 'BAAP' - or Bahujan (backwards)-Agda (forwards)-Aadhi (women) and Poor - giving INDIA's target caste combination the catchy acronym of 'MY-BAAP'.

As part of this plan, the RJD has fielded upper caste candidates, apart from OBC-Luv-Kush (or Kurmi-Koeri) groups, as well as the Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) among OBCs.



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav with CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, Congress's Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and CPI's D Raja during the INDIA bloc's rally at Ramila Maidan in New Delhi on Sunday. *PTI*

Though the Congress isn't too happy with its list of nine seats, it has little choice but to take the slim pickings offered by the RJD.

While the RJD drew a blank in the 19 seats it contested in 2019, it is deriving its confidence from both the 2020 Assembly polls which saw it emerge as the single-largest party, as well as Tejashwi Yadav's emergence as his father's sure-footed political heir. This time, the RJD will contest 26 seats.

Ever since the Congress won just 19 out of the 70 seats it contested in the 2020 Assembly polls, he (Lalu) has lost confidence in the Congress. While we wanted the Congress in the alliance, we didn't want it to become a baggage. On the other hand, the CPI(M) was rewarded with three Lok Sabha seats, as it won 12 in the 2020 Assembly polls. Lalu and Tejashwi have reworked the catch-all combination and won the 2024 Bihar election campaign around the theme of jobs," said an RJD leader.

The RJD has identified over a dozen seats where it expects a keener response because of the social combination and the choice of candidates. While the party expects a tough fight on Saran, from where it has fielded Lalu's second daughter Rohini Acharya, it also hopes that Lalu's eldest daughter Misa Bharti is third-time lucky against BJP rival Kamal Kripal Yadav on Patlipatna. With Saran BJP candidate Rajiv Pratap Rudy - like several other NDA MPs who have been fielded on the same seat for the third time - burdened with "double" anti-incumbency, the RJD is desperate to regain Saran, as it is the seat Lalu has represented multiple times.

Other seats where the RJD sees a chance are Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Siwan, Aurangabad, Vaishali, Supaul, Madhepura, Araria, Purnea and Nawada.

RJD rebel Hina Shahab (wife of late RJD MP Mohammad Shahabuddin) has filed her nomination from Siwan, and is being backed by the AIMIM. The RJD is happy with the AIMIM support, as it does not want the Muslim vote to be divided. The JD(U) has fielded debutant Vijayalakshmi Kushwaha for there, replacing sitting MP Kavita Singh.

The NDA bloc also expects the CPI(M) to put up a good show in Karakal and Ara against NDA rivals Uppendri Kishwaha (Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief) and Union minister RK Singh (BJP), respectively. While the CPI(M) will take on the UPJ in Khagaria, the INDIA bloc seems to have given a walkover to the BJP's incumbent Giriraj Singh on Begusarai by not fielding the Congress's Kanhaiya Kumar, going for Awadhesh Rai instead.

perment too much with its winning candidates. While the BJP has dropped veteran Ashwini Kumar Choubey from Buxar, it also dropped Rama Dev from Sheohar to offer the seat to the JD(U)'s Lovely Anand. It also dropped Muzaffarpur MP Ajay Nishad because of poor feedback. But the BJP's cautiousness over Bihar can be read from the scheduling of seven-phase polls in the state, allowing PM Narendra Modi the opportunity to hold the maximum number of rallies in the state.

The JD(U) also looks to use the PM's outsized persona and crowd control from the wilderness to win 22 seats in Bihar," said a BJP leader.

Despite the NDA's claims of expecting to win all 40 seats in the state, it too is banking on a 'good social alliance' - with Nitish, Chirag and Kushwaha expected to draw to the NDA the non-Yadav OBCs, a fair chunk of EBCs and Dalit votes, respectively. "The NDA is aware it can't hope for the huge victory margins of 2019 in most seats. This is a fresh battle. We can't take the RJD lightly, as we still remember the 2004 polls, when the NDA's India Shining slogan had backfired, and the RJD had returned from the wilderness to win 22 seats in Bihar," said a BJP leader.



BJP's Garhwal candidate Anil Baluni campaigns in Yamkeshwar, Uttarakhand, on Monday. *X/@anil_baluni*

In late CDS Bipin Rawat's village, BJP's Baluni flags Cong 'disrespect'

Says the party has 'no moral right' to ask for votes in Uttarakhand

AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, APRIL 1

VISITING SAINI, the native village of the country's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat, BJP candidate Anil Baluni launched a scathing attack on the Congress party, accusing it of consistently disrespecting General Rawat with derogatory remarks.

"We stand in the village of General Bipin Rawat, a source of immense pride for us. General Rawat's journey from this humble village to becoming the nation's first CDS is an inspiration. It deeply pained us to witness the Congress hurling abusive language at him, labelling him as 'gali ka gunda' and questioning his valour and competence," said Baluni during his field visit to pay homage to Rawat.

He was referring to comments made by Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit in 2017, for which he later apologised. Baluni called it unfortunate that no leader of Uttarakhand Congress apologised for the remarks or called for Dikshit's resignation, and instead, they stood with the party's top leadership. He said that the Congress party has no moral right to ask for votes in Uttarakhand.

"Today, five of their candidates seek votes in Uttarakhand. The public will rightly question them on their silence when derogatory comments were made against General Bipin Rawat, a hero of the soil and our pride. The Congress has a history of undermining the armed forces, seeking to demoralise them," Baluni said.

In response, former Congress

state president and the party candidate from the seat, Ganesh Godiyal, said the people of Uttarakhand will decide who has the moral right to ask for votes.

While the BJP has given a ticket from the Garhwal seat to party national chief spokesperson Baluni, Congress has relied on a former MLA (Srinagar seat) and former Congress state president Godiyal. Both are contesting their first Lok Sabha elections.

The death of General Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat, and officers from his staff, including Brig. L.S. Liddar, in a helicopter crash near Coonoor in December 2021 was a key issue in the 2022 Vidhan Sabha elections for Uttarakhand. During the election campaign in Uttarakhand, a state with a significant population serving in the defence forces, both the BJP and Congress had placed an emphasis on matters concerning the armed forces.

Leading up to the elections, the BJP conducted its 'Shaheed Samman Yatra' across the state, commemorating the sacrifices of 1,734 martyrs by collecting soil from their villages. Additionally, they organised a groundbreaking ceremony for 'Sainya Dham' in Dehradun, aimed at fostering a sense of national pride and inspiring individuals to make the ultimate sacrifice in their country.

During its 'Vijay Samman Rally' in Dehradun, held to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan in 1971, the Congress prominently displayed a large curtain of Rawat's clothing cutouts of Indira and Rahul Gandhi. The party also initiated a three-day 'Veer Gram Pranam Yatra' starting from Rawat's ancestral village.

INDIA BLOC PREDICAMENT

NC cuts PDP no slack, fields LS candidate from Mehbooba's turf

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, APRIL 1

THE NATIONAL Conference (NC) on Monday announced the candidature of senior party leader Mian Altaf Ahmed Lahrvi from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat, which is the home constituency of the NC's INDIA alliance partner and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti. Both Mehbooba, who won from Anantnag in 2014, and her father Mufti Mohammad Sayeed have represented the constituency in Parliament.



Mehbooba Mufti at INDIA rally in Delhi, Sunday. *ANI*

Lahrvi is a five-time former MLA from Kangan and has served as a Cabinet minister in the governments of both Farooq and Omar Abdullah. Announcing the candidature, Omar said, "There is no better candidate for the Anantnag-Rajouri seat than Mian sahab. People are familiar with his track record. He has never asked for votes based on religion or caste and has tried to make everyone work with him."

The NC has publicly maintained that it wants to contest all three Lok Sabha seats in the Kashmir Valley and its decision to

stick to it places a question mark over the Peoples Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration, an alliance of political parties in the Valley.

The PDP was looking for contesting elections as a unified force to present a united voice to 125 crore Indians about the situation in J&K. Unfortunately, some of the constituents under compulsion have defied people's will and broke away from PDP. PDP spokesperson Mohit Khan said, adding that the PDP would go solo with the support of like-minded people.

PARTY HOPPERS

Jolt to Congress as Madhya Pradesh's first tribal mayor Vikram Ahake joins BJP

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, APRIL 1

VIKRAM AHAKE, Congress leader and Madhya Pradesh's first tribal mayor from Chhindwara, quit the party and joined the BJP on Monday. A key ally of senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, Ahake's name was suggested for the mayoral post by Nath in 2022 despite opposition from a section of the Chhindwara party unit.

However, Kamal Nath's deci-

sion prevailed and Ahake became the mayor. Ahake's elevation was seen as an attempt by the Congress to counter the BJP's game plan of making inroads into the tribal community, which forms a significant chunk of the Congress's voting base.

The latest development comes on the heels of tribal MLA and member of the erstwhile Harari royal family Kamlesh Pratap Shah quitting the Congress over differences with Kamal Nath's son and sitting MP Nakul Nath.

The BJP has been weaning



Ahake was a key loyalist of Kamal Nath. *X/@vikramahake*

away Congress leaders in Chhindwara, claiming to break away more than 2,000 of them, in an attempt to win the seat that eluded them in the previous election.

Vikram Ahake, who hails from Rajakhoh Dana village in Chhindwara, has roots that are

AAP ex-MP Dharamvira Gandhi joins Cong

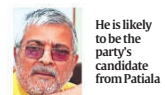
NAVJEVAN GOPAL
CHANDIGARH, APRIL 1

FORMER MP Dr Dharamvira Gandhi Monday joined the Congress and is likely to be the party's Lok Sabha candidate from Patiala - the seat that he represented in the Parliament as an Aam Aadmi Party leader.

"If get a chance, I will fight this seat. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are not ordinary as it will decide the future of our country. I want to be seen in the right side of history in the coming elections and that is why I am with the Congress," Gandhi said.

The 74-year-old said the Congress was the only party that was fighting against communal polarisation and threat to democracy in the country.

He was welcomed into the Congress by party's Punjab in-charge Devender Yadav, senior leader Pawan Khera, Punjab party chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa at party headquarters in New Delhi.



He is likely to be the party's candidate from Patiala

Bajwa said the Congress will be strengthened with Gandhi's joining the party.

Welcoming the former MP into the party, Yadav said Gandhi will prove to be a great asset for the party as he has huge social standing.

deeply embedded in the region's tribal fabric. His mother Nirmala serves as an Anganwadi worker, while his father Nareesh, a 55-year-old farmer, toils in their modest two-acre agricultural holding.

In the Indian Express spoke to Ahake in February, he said the state government has stalled several development projects to pressure Congress councillors to switch over to the BJP and said he too was approached by "multiple leaders" to join the saffron party. "I have resisted so far," he said then.

A doctor by profession, Gandhi had won the 2014 Lok Sabha election as an AAP candidate by defeating Preetee Kaur, who was then with the Congress. This time Preetee, who won on a Congress ticket in 2019, is contesting as a BJP candidate.

Gandhi, who was jailed during the Emergency, said he has a duty towards people. "I have no aspirations for electoral politics. I am in Congress for different, historical reasons. If Congress feels I am right kind of person to defeat Preetee Kaur, I will defeat her."

LOOK BACK

Kejriwal in prison: For many politicians before him, jail has been no bar

From George Fernandes to Lalu Prasad to history-sheeters in Bihar and UP, many examples before the AAP chief

DEEPTIMATI WARY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on March 21, has refused to resign from his post and is communicating with his ministers on matters of governance from custody.

While how the Delhi CM's arrest will impact the Aam Aadmi Party's chances in the Lok Sabha polls is something time will tell, here are a few examples of leaders who have won polls while in jail and of others whose incarceration had an impact on the performance of their parties.

Lalu Prasad

In 1997, the CBI chargesheeted then Bihar CM Lalu Prasad in the fodder scam case. Facing a rowl within the Janata Dal over the allegations, Lalu fled to the Rashtriya Janata Dal and resigned as CM, leaving

the reins of the government to his wife Rabri Devi. He was then arrested by the CBI and spent 135 days in jail.

In the 1998 Lok Sabha elections which followed months after his imprisonment, Lalu won March 21, has refused to resign from his post and is communicating with his ministers on matters of governance from custody.

While how the Delhi CM's arrest will impact the Aam Aadmi Party's chances in the Lok Sabha polls is something time will tell, here are a few examples of leaders who have won polls while in jail and of others whose incarceration had an impact on the performance of their parties.

Jayalalithaa

In December 1997, after the AIADMK lost power in Tamil Nadu, party chief and former CM Jayalalithaa was arrested by CBI in connection with a case of alleged irregularities in the purchase of colour TVs for village panchayats. Months after her arrest, the AIADMK won 18 of the

39 Lok Sabha seats in the 1998 Lok Sabha polls. In the next year's Lok Sabha polls, the party was reduced to 10 seats, but stormed back to power in Tamil Nadu in the 2001 Assembly elections, winning 132 of the 234 seats.

In September 2014, while Jayalalithaa was the CM, she was convicted in a disproportionate assets case. Two years later, the AIADMK won 136 Assembly seats and came to power in the state.

M Karunanidhi

DMK stalwart and former Tamil Nadu CM M Karunanidhi was arrested in June 2001 in an alleged case of corruption, weeks after the AIADMK swept to power in the state. The arrest of the former CM along with two Union ministers, Murasoli Maran and T.R. Baalu, precipitated into a crisis, with the Centre threatening to invoke Article 355.

In the 2004 Lok Sabha polls, the DMK improved its tally from 12 seats in 1999 to 16. In the 2006



(Clockwise from top left) Former Chief Ministers Lalu Prasad, Jayalalithaa, O.P. Chautala and B.S. Yediyurappa

Assembly polls, it formed a minority government in the state, after winning 96 seats out of 234.

Om Prakash Chautala

Five-time Haryana CM Om Prakash Chautala has been a hard hand since January 2013, after he was convicted in a teach-

ers' recruitment case followed by a DA case. His party, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), has seen a consistent slide in his absence.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the party won two of the 10 seats in Haryana. In the 2019 elections held that year, the party won only 19 of the 90 seats on

offer. In 2019, the party failed to open its account in the Lok Sabha polls while it was reduced to just one seat in the Assembly polls.

B S Yediyurappa

Then Karnataka CM B S Yediyurappa was forced to resign in July 2011 after the state Lokayukta indicted him for illegally profiteering from land deals in Bangalore and Shimoga, and also in connection with the alleged illegal iron ore export scam in Bellary, Tumkur and Chitradurga districts.

In October that year, he surrendered before a Lokayukta court and was arrested. He then quit BJP and floated the Karnataka Janata Paksha. In the 2013 Assembly polls, while he was won from Shikaripur, the BJP was re-elected by a margin of 10 seats in Haryana. In 2014, he merged his party with the BJP and won the Shimoga LS seat, even as the BJP won 17 seats in the state, but continued his election wins, as did family members.

George Fernandes

Socialist leader George Fernandes was arrested by the Indira Gandhi government on June

10, 1976, in Kolkata following the declaration of Emergency. He was arrested on charges of smuggling dynamite to blow up government establishments in protest against the imposition of Emergency, in what came to be known as the Baroda dynamite case.

In the 1977 elections, he contested from Muzaffarpur in Bihar but was still behind bars, and defeated the Congress candidate by around 3 lakh votes.

Mukhtar Ansari

Angster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Uttar Pradesh's Banda on March 28, was convicted in eight cases in the last two years. In 1996, he contested the 2002 UP Assembly elections and won the Rampur seat by 55,000 votes while still in jail. Later, following his conviction in a false speech case of 2019, Khan was disqualified from the Assembly. The resultant bypolls for both the Rampur Lok Sabha and Assembly polls were won by the BJP.

the Quami Ekta Dal and won again in the state in the 2012 Assembly polls. In 2017, he merged his party with the BSP and won again while he was in jail.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, his brother Afzal Ansari defeated the BJP's Manoj Sinha from the Ghazipur seat. In the 2022 Assembly elections, Mukhtar passed on the baton to his son Abbas, who won the Mau seat.

Azam Khan

Veteran SP leader and nine-time Rampur MLA Azam Khan was arrested in February 2020 and remained in jail for 27 months in connection with multiple cases ranging from alleged land grabbing to forging his son's birth certificate. He contested the 2022 UP Assembly elections and won the Rampur seat by 55,000 votes while still in jail. Later, following his conviction in a false speech case of 2019, Khan was disqualified from the Assembly. The resultant bypolls for both the Rampur Lok Sabha and Assembly polls were won by the BJP.

FULL REPORT ON

www.indianexpress.com

7 GOVT & POLITICS

Cong, DMK connived to give away Katchatheevu Island: Jaishankar

Says then Chief Minister Karunanidhi knew about the agreement with Sri Lanka

LIZ MATHEW & ARUN JANARDHANAN
NEW DELHI, CHENNAI, APRIL 1



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar on Monday added his weight to BJP claims that the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi gave away the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka in 1974 and kept this "hidden".

Speaking at a press conference at the BJP headquarters in Delhi, Jaishankar claimed that the Prime Ministers under Congress rule displayed indifference towards Katchatheevu and gave away Indian fishermen's rights despite legal views to the contrary.

Alleging that Prime Ministers such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi dubbed Katchatheevu, given to Sri Lanka in 1974 as part of a maritime boundary agreement, as a "little island" and "little rock", Jaishankar said that DMK

leader and the then Chief Minister M Karunanidhi had been informed about the agreement. He alleged that the DMK, which leads the opposition INDIA bloc in Tamil Nadu, "connived" with the Congress in 1974 and afterward in creating this situation.

Jaishankar's assertions came a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Congress of "callously giving away" the island to Sri Lanka. The Prime Minister targeted the opposition party on Monday as well. In a social media post, he said that the Congress and DMK "only care that their own sons and daughters rise".

On the arrest of Indian fish-

ermen, Jaishankar said it was the Narendra Modi government which has been working to ensure that they are released, adding, "We have to find a solution. We have to sit down and work it out with the Sri Lanka government." According to the minister, 6,184 Indian fishermen were detained by Sri Lanka in the past 20 years.

Later in the day, Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai, while asserting that the Centre is considering all possible solutions to reclaim the island, also targeted the BJP.

Quoting documents he availed through an RTI petition, Annamalai told reporters in Chennai that the DMK was equally responsible for the situation. Quoting minutes of a meeting held a month before the handing over of the island, he said that then External Affairs Minister Kewal Singh secured Karunanidhi's approval on the matter.

Annamalai said Singh had met Karunanidhi at Fort St. George, the state secretariat, and discussed the issue. Undermining DMK's current position on the issue, he said, Karunanidhi did not oppose the move but only asked if the Centre could "postpone the decision by two years". Annamalai said "it shows he was also party to this decision".

"When the Congress government at the Centre handed over the island to Lanka, DMK also had a role in this process. It seems the current Tamil Nadu CM has written 21 times to EAM Jaishankar demanding retrieval of the island. But the fact is that he had the same DMK and the then CM Karunanidhi opposed the move 45 years ago, the Centre wouldn't have handed it over to Sri Lanka," Annamalai said.

"Whenever the parties united in alliance at the Centre, Indian lands were given away to other countries," he alleged.

DP KOHLI MEMORIAL LECTURE

CJI for balance in probe needs of agencies, privacy rights

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1



CJI D Y Chandrachud during the Lecture on 'Adopting Technology to Advance Criminal Justice', in Delhi. AN

UNDERLINING THE "pressing need to strike a balance", Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said Monday that unwarranted confiscation of personal devices by investigative agencies raises concerns of an individual's right to privacy.

Referring to Section 94 of the newly enacted Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and Section 185 of the Bharatiya Saksha Adhinyam 2023, the CJI said these grant the courts and law enforcement agencies "the authority to summon documents and materials, including digital evidence deemed necessary for investigation".

"Instances of raids conducted and incidents of unwarranted confiscation of personal devices highlight the pressing need to strike a balance between investigative imperatives and individual privacy rights," CJI said.

The CJI was delivering the 20th DP Kohli Memorial Lecture on "Adopting Technology to Advance Criminal Justice". The lecture is held on CBI Day, marking the day when the Central Bureau of Investigation was established in 1963. CBI Director Praveen Sood, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla and Attorney General for India R Venkataramani were present at the event.

The BNSS and the BAS replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Evidence Act respectively.

While underlining the complexities involved in investigation and trial of a corruption charge, the CJI called for a "swift" delivery of justice.

"To prosecute or defend in a CBI case is no easy task. Because of the nature of the investigation undertaken by the CBI, the record and documentary evi-

dence is bulky and complicated. Many scientific and field specific expert witnesses require scrutiny. The number of oral witnesses cited by the prosecution may run into triple digits. The nature of crime may also require close scrutiny of the functioning of a government department or the specialised field," the CJI said.

"The justice delivery mechanism must be swift. The life of the accused is altered and their reputation is significantly hurt when they are accused of an offence. Delays in the disposal of cases therefore become a significant impediment in the process of justice delivery," he said.

The CJI also lauded the newly enacted criminal laws as a "significant step towards modernising the justice system."

"The new criminal laws enacted by Parliament encompass substantive crime, procedure and evidence. These laws aim at digitising various aspects of criminal procedure. This is a significant step towards modernising the justice system. From the initial registration of a First Information Report to the final delivery of judgment, every stage of a criminal investigation is stated to be recorded digitally under the purview of the proposed legislation," he said.

SC seeks Govt, EC response on plea for full court of VVPAT slips

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

IN A significant development, the Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Election Commission and the Centre on a plea seeking a complete court of VVPAT slips in the current practice of verification of only five randomly-selected EVMs through VVPAT paper slips.

The Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) system permits an elector to see whether his vote was cast correctly. The VVPAT generates a paper slip which can be viewed by the voter and the paper slip is kept in a sealed cover and can be opened in case of a dispute.

The top court, on April 8, 2019, had ordered the poll panel to increase the number of EVMs that undergo VVPAT physical verification from one to five per assembly segment in a parliamentary constituency.

A bench comprising justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta took note of the submissions of lawyers representing activist Arun Kumar Agrawal seeking a complete court of VVPAT slips in elections.

The plea alleged the EC's guideline that mandates that VVPAT verification shall be done only on a matter of six hours. It said if simultaneous verification is done and more officers are employed for counting in each assembly constituency, then complete VVPAT verification can be done in a matter of two-six hours.

Gavai said the question to be being raised by experts with regard to VVPATs and EVMs and the fact that a large number of discrepancies between EVM and VVPAT vote counts have been reported in the past. It is imperative that all VVPAT slips are counted, it said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

FACING CHARGES from the BJP that the Congress government led by Indira Gandhi had given away the Katchatheevu island in 1974 to Sri Lanka, the Congress on Monday raked up what it called "Chinese occupation" of Indian territory to counter the BJP.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kelkar, referring to China releasing a fresh list of 30 new names of various islands in Arunachal Pradesh, said: "When China resorts to provocation, PM Narendra Modi attempts to seek refuge in a false narrative on Katchatheevu."

The party and some leaders in other Opposition parties such as Shiv Sena (UBT) cited a 2015 RTI reply, which stated that the agreements in 1974 and 1976 with Lanka did not involve either



PM trying to seek refuge in a false narrative, says Chharg

acquiring or ceding territory belonging to India and asked whether the "change" in Modi government's stance was for "election politics".

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said the India government acknowledged Lanka's claim on Katchatheevu to "maintain good relations and to save the lives of lakhs of Tamils".

"Why is the PM raking up an issue that was settled in 1974? To maintain good relations with Sri Lanka and help lakhs of Tamils there, the Indira government negotiated with the Sri Lanka government and in that negotiation,

the settlement was that Katchatheevu, a very small island about 13 sq km, will be acknowledged as belonging to Sri Lanka and in return six lakh Tamils were allowed to come to India," Chidambaram said.

"Why is the PM raking up that issue instead of talking about recent issues? 2,000 sq km of Indian territory is occupied by Chinese troops and that is a fact," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi shared an RTI response from the Ministry of External Affairs in 2015, which said: "This did not involve either acquiring or ceding of territory belonging to India since the area in question had never been demarcated. Under the agreements the Island of Katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lanka side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line."

'Viksit Bharat' centre stage at BJP manifesto panel 1st meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE ROAD MAP for the government's "Viksit Bharat" agenda took centre stage at the first meeting of the BJP's election manifesto committee. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chaired the meeting.

Union minister Piyush Goyal told reporters that the party has received over 3.75 lakh suggestions through its manifesto committee. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chaired the meeting.

"The road map for Viksit Bharat by 2047 was discussed in the meeting. People's enthusiastic participation for our manifesto shows their understanding of the prime minister and their expect-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chairs the meet in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

tations from him," he said. BJP leaders said all the suggestions received for our manifesto will be sorted out under different categories and narrowed

down for the committee's next meeting. With Modi constantly highlighting his government's priority for the poor, youth, women

and farmers, the ruling party is likely to give prominence to the issues related to them. Goyal, the co-convenor of the committee, noted that 916 video

vans were also driven through 3,500 Assembly constituencies across the country, reaching out to people and seeking their views for the manifesto.

The BJP had on March 30 announced the 27-member panel. With Article 370 repealed by the Modi government in its second term and the Ram temple construction in full swing and already open to devotees, two of the party's core promises for the past polls stand fulfilled. The BJP's governments in some states are also working to implement the Uniform Civil Code, another of its primary promises.

With PM Modi often asserting that his third term will be marked by big decisions, the buzz around its manifesto has been gaining in traction.

Malayalam writer Radhakrishnan quits Sahitya Akademi, alleges political interference; claim misleading, says body

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

NOTED MALAYALAM writer C Radhakrishnan resigned as an eminent member of the Sahitya Akademi on Monday in protest against this year's Akademi festival being inaugurated by a Union minister, who, according to him, lacks any knowledge of Malayalam literature.

In his resignation letter to the Akademi secretary K Sreenivasarao, Radhakrishnan alleged that this was the first time such a thing had happened in the long and illustrious history of the Akademi, which has consistently upheld the autonomy of the institution against pressure to yield to political clout.

Renowned for acclaimed novels like 'Munpe Parakkuma Pakshikal' and

'Spandanapinikale Nandi', the 85-year-old stated that all members of the Akademi had protested when a Union minister had participated in the organisation's annual festival and subsequently, assurances were given that this would not recur. The Akademi runs as an autonomous body under Ministry of Culture.

The move comes barely weeks after Minister of State for Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal had inaugurated the 39th edition of the annual 'Sahityotsav'. The Festival of Letters, attended by over a thousand authors.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Radhakrishnan said "it was a well thought-through decision" on his part "against political interference in the running of the Akademi". However, he clarified that he was not against any particular political party and

that his protest was against the politicisation of the administration of culture.

He also alleged there have been increasing incidents of government interference in its day-to-day functioning. Radhakrishnan said the two other Akademies (Lalit Kala Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi) "have already lost their autonomy" and he hopes the President or the Prime Minister would listen to the voice of writers, about this latest trend of political interference.

Rebutting his charges, the Akademi released a statement on Monday evening, saying that the information in his resignation letter is misleading. "The President, Sahitya Akademi, Madhav Kaushik, opined on the resignation submitted by C Radhakrishnan, noted Malayalam writer, of his membership of Sahitya Akademi's General Council that the information in his written resignation is misleading," it says.

In the letter, Radhakrishnan said that he "strongly protests" against this year's Sahitya Akademi Festival of Letters having been inaugurated by a "Cabinet Minister of the Government of India, a person without any known credential whatsoever in literature". However, Kaushik said: "This is entirely wrong, for Arjun Ram Meghwal, MoS Culture, is himself a writer. He is well versed in Rajasthani and Hindi."

BORROWING LIMIT CASE

No relief to Kerala, SC refers matter to constitutional bench

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE SUPREME COURT on Monday refused to grant any interim relief to Kerala government on its plea challenging the limitations placed by the Centre on its borrowing limit.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan concluded that the state itself had "admitted" that there has been over-borrowing/over-utilization of the borrowing limit between the FYs 2017-18 and 2019-20. It is not denied that if, as contended by the Union, such over-borrowing continues in the succeeding years, then the State has already exhausted its borrowing limits for the FY 2023-24".

The court, however, said the matter "raises more than one substantial question regarding interpretation of the Constitution", including whether "Article 293 of the Constitution vests a State with an enforceable right to raise borrowing from the Union government and/or other sources?" and "if yes, to what extent such right can be regulated by the Union government?"

The court said that "since Article 293 (dealing with borrowing powers of states) of the Constitution has not been so far the subject to any authoritative interpretation by this Court, in our considered opinion, the aforesaid questions squarely fall within the ambit of Article 145(3) of the Constitution". Besides, it also raises "various questions of

significant importance impacting the Federal Structure of Governance as embedded in our Constitution", the court said, referring the matter to a five-judge Constitution bench.

The court said it had applied the three-pronged test of prima facie case, balance of convenience and irreparable injury, to determine Kerala's interim relief claim and said the "State has failed to establish" its case.

Article 293 (dealing with borrowing powers of states) of the Constitution has not been so far the subject to any authoritative interpretation by this Court, in our considered opinion, the aforesaid questions squarely fall within the ambit of Article 145(3) of the Constitution". Besides, it also raises "various questions of

3 Visva-Bharati students accuse prof of seeking sexual favours, FIR registered

KOLKATA, APRIL 1

THREE WOMEN students of Visva-Bharati university have lodged a complaint against a guest professor, alleging that he sought sexual favours for passing them in the semester examination.

Police have registered an FIR and said they are investigating the matter. In their complaint, the students alleged the professor sent WhatsApp messages to them on WhatsApp, and also inappropriately touched them several times. Professor Abdullah Mollah used to send messages to girls at night. If one did not reply to these messages, he would threaten to fail them in the exam. The professor used to ask us to stay the night in return for getting good marks in the exam. He used to touch our body inappropriately," one of the complainants said.

Meanwhile, the professor denied the complaints and called the allegations baseless.

Suchana Seth chargesheet ready: Police say child died of strangulation, not poison

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA PANAJI, APRIL 1



Suchana Seth is sharp in mind, capable of misleading probe: Cops

THE FOUR-YEAR-OLD murdered in Goa hotel in January, allegedly by his mother Suchana Seth, died as a result of "shock and respiratory asphyxia" caused by "strangulation" and there was no "common poison" found in the body, the police are set to have said in their chargesheet. The chargesheet also states that "there are reasons to believe that the accused is sharp in mind and capable of misleading the investigation".

In the 642-page chargesheet filed by Goa police at the Children's Court in Panaji, the police have examined 59 witnesses. Suchana, the Bengaluru-based CEO of a tech consultancy, has been accused under sections 302 (murder), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence or giving false information to screen offence) of the Indian Penal Code and section 8 of the Goa Children's Act, 2003.

Suchana and her son checked into Hotel Sol Bannan Grande in North Goa's Candolim in January 6 night. She had booked the room till January 10, but cut her trip

short, informing the hotel staff on January 7 night that she wanted to check-out due to "urgent work" in Bengaluru. The next day, she was caught from Karnataka's Chitradurga district while allegedly trying to flee in a cab with her son's body stuffed in a bag.

She had married Venkatraman P R in 2010 and they had a son in 2019, following which differences cropped up in their marriage. The couple were separated and embroiled in divorce and custody proceedings.

According to the chargesheet, in January 2022, Suchana told her husband she wanted a divorce and subsequently filed a petition against him in a court in Bengaluru. The police said she also filed a case in a family court in Bengaluru under the Guardians and Wards Act and obtained an

ex-parte order in August 2022 prohibiting her husband from taking custody of his son from her.

The chargesheet noted that in subsequent proceedings, the court began to reinstate his access to his son, and as per an order on December 9, 2022, he was permitted to video call him every Tuesday and Thursday from 7 pm to 7:30 pm. After another order on the court dated April 10, 2023, he was permitted to meet his son every alternate Saturday from 11 am to 1 pm in the family court visitation centre, "but the accused (Suchana) was not allowing him to meet his son giving one or other excuses", the chargesheet states.

Further, a message written in black ink on torn pieces of tissue paper, put back together by forensic investigators, is a key part of the chargesheet. The document reportedly written by Suchana - found from the trolley luggage bag inside which her son's body was recovered in Karnataka - claims the child did not want to return to his father. "My ex-husband and the family court judge are threatening to send me to jail if I don't send my 4-year-old son against his will. My lawyer can't

find a way to keep my son safe. I can't bear this," the note states. According to investigators, the note "could help the police to establish a motive for the crime. However, Azhar Mehta, Venkatraman's advocate, said: "These allegations are all false and baseless. There is no merit and no truth in these allegations. This is an attempt by the accused to mislead the court on her own wrongdoing."

The Forensic Science Laboratory report to match the handwriting on the note to a handwriting specimen of the accused is awaited, according to the police. The chargesheet also states that according to the medical officer who conducted the post-mortem, "the cause of death is due to shock and respiratory asphyxia as a result of strangulation."

The forensic science examination report has been received from the Goa State Forensic Science Laboratory in Verna, in which it is opined that common poison could not be detected in the contents of the exhibits. "The chargesheet said, "The police claimed in the chargesheet that Suchana's 'sharp in mind and capable of misleading the investigation'."

As Jio Institute waits for Eminence status, its ex-Caltech Provost quits

RIKHA CHOPRA NEW DELHI, APRIL 1



Dr G Ravichandran

EVER SINCE it was selected by an expert panel in 2016 for the coveted "Institution of Eminence (IOE)" status, Reliance-backed Jio Institute has been waiting to receive the formal recognition from the government. On Monday, Dr G Ravichandran, one of the institute's top officials, filed his resignation as Provost well before the end of his term.

Dr Ravichandran, who served as the Otis Booth Leadership Chair of the Division of Engineering and Applied Science at California Institute of Technology from 2015 to 2021, was appointed as Jio Institute's founding Provost less than two years ago. He formally joined the institute in July 2022. His brief was to help realise the institute's ambitious plans to rank among the world's top universities. His resignation comes with the "Eminence" status in limbo and no clear path or plan for its future.

When contacted by The Indian Express, Ravichandran said his departure was for "personal reasons", and declined to comment on the current status of the Jio Institute's IOE tag.

Despite several attempts, Palak Sheth, the project director

and had only four regular faculty members.

An investigation by The Indian Express last year had shown that at least four private institutions continue to wait for the formal recognition. IOEs despite being selected under the Centre's ambitious scheme, backed by the Prime Minister's Office, promising sweeping autonomy in administration and academic and help them upgrade to global standards.

Jio Institute, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), and Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham are the four private institutions whose readiness reports were approved by the Union Government's empowered committee by July 2020.

At the heart of the delays affecting the IOE scheme is a defect in Empowered Expert Committee, which was first created to cut red tape and make UGC regulations more flexible for the 20 selected institutions.

However, the EEC has been inactive for the past two years because the last committee, led by former Chief Election Commissioner N Gopalaswami, completed its three-year term on February 20, 2021. Since then, the Government has not appointed new members or extended the term of the Gopalaswami panel.

3 held for issuing fake organ transplant NOCs in Jaipur

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE JAIPUR, APRIL 1

A TEAM of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested three people in Jaipur for taking bribe on the pretext of issuing objection certificates (NOC) for organ transplant cases, according to an official statement on Monday.

A staff of SMS Hospital and middlemen involved in carrying out organ transplant were caught red-handed at the hospital while allegedly taking a bribe of Rs. 70,000 for issuing NOC, Deputy Inspector General of Police (ACB) said on Monday.

The accused, who issued fake NOCs in lieu of money, include an officer of Sanjay Mansingh (SMS) Hospital and organ transplant coordinators at EHCC Hospital and Fortis Hospital in Jaipur, the chargesheet said.

4 dead as rain lashes Assam

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE GUWAHATI, APRIL 1

SUNDAY'S HEAVY rain and winds left a trail of destruction in Assam, with an assessment of the situation on Monday revealing that at least four people, including a four-year-old child, died in storm-related incidents.

Several parts of the Northeast witnessed thunderstorms and hailstorms on Sunday. In

Subedar Thanseia dies at 102

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

ONE OF the few surviving World War veterans in the country, Subedar Thanseia passed away Sunday after a brief illness. He was 102.

The distinguished veteran was from Mizoram and had been part of the Army's Assam Regiment. He is well known for his valour at the Battle of Kohima during World War I and his role in establishing the legacy of the 1st Assam Regiment during their deployment at Jessami. Officials said throughout his service, Subedar Thanseia demonstrated a commitment to the nation that went beyond the call of duty, "earning him a revered place in the annals of India's military history."

Advertisement for CONCOR Invites E-Tender in Single Packet System of tendering for the following work: [Details of tendering process, including name of work, estimated cost, and contact information.]

EXTENSION OF HOLI SPECIAL TRAINS

To clear post Holi rush of passengers, Northern Railway has decided to extend the services of following Holi special trains as per the details given below:-

Table with columns: Train No., From, To, Days to Dep., Notified up to, Extended Date. Lists various Holi special trains and their schedules.

* Rest instruction will hold good.

For detailed information, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & download Railmadad app.



SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION

Southern Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Delhi Division, Northern Railway, in terms of Railway Board letter No. 2022/TC(FM)/10/04 dated 13.06.2022, invites bids through e-Auction (www.ireps.gov.in) for leasing of partial space of SLR compartments and Parcel Vans (on round trip basis) for a period of two years as per detail and schedule given below:-

Table with columns: S. No., Date & time of e-Auction, Assets to be auctioned. Lists various assets for auction with their details.

Important notes: 1. For more information, requirement and various aspects regarding these e-Auctions, interested bidders are advised to visit https://www.ireps.gov.in/html/helpdesk/learning_centre.html. (e-Auction leasing section). 2. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 5% of the total contractual bid value to be deposited online during the auction. EMD of successful bidder will be retained as Security Deposit. 3. Railway Administration reserves the full and absolute rights to short terminate these contracts at any point of time and/or for taking any decision regarding the discontinuation/continuation of these contracts with modified/additional terms and conditions depending upon the continuation/discontinuation of these trains or commencement of new train services.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

Assistant Commandant Tikam Singh

ITBP salutes its braveheart Assistant Commandant Tikam Singh of 24th Battalion, who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Ladakh in 2022.



Resident of : Village & Post- Rajawala, Distt.- Dehradun, State- Uttarakhand.

CTGD B. C. BARIHAI OLJULAIAN 02-04-1994 CTGD KULWANT RAJ OLJULAIAN 02-04-1994 CTGD FOKEN SINGH OLJULAIAN 02-04-1994

CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of these bravehearts. On this day, they laid down their lives at the altar of duty while fighting with extremist. Their courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to them for their noblest deeds.

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM

Ref: Tender Notice No. 93/2022-2024 dated 14.02.2024, Sl. No. 04. Tender number 7238006G. Operating date 27.03.2024.

In reference to above, Item Description has been revised. A new condition in technical specification has also been included. Opening date of tender has also been extended from 27.03.2024 to 15.04.2024. All other terms & conditions remain unchanged. The Corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in dated: 01.04.2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused namely Ritika Khandelwal W/O Ashish Khandelwal R/O 35/28/22, Narang Colony, Tin Nagar, Delhi and Also At: House No. 3649, Ajay No. 6, Narang Colony, Kanhaiya Nagar, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in Case Reg. No. 8328/19 U/s 138 NI Act registered at P.S. Keshav Puram, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued stating that the said Ritika Khandelwal could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the accused Ritika Khandelwal has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Ritika Khandelwal is required to appear before the court to answer the said complaint on or before 03.05.2024.

By Order Metropolitan Magistrate-04 (North-West), Room No. 112, First Floor, Rohini Court, Delhi.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

SEE SECTION U/s 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Rajesh So Ajay R/O F-219, Juggi, Near Akhara, Shahbad Dairy, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in Case FIR No. 05/2017 U/s 323/341/506/34 IPC, P.S. P.S. Shahbad Dairy, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Rajesh cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Rajesh has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Rajesh of Case FIR No. 05/2017 U/s 323/341/506/34 IPC, P.S. Shahbad Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 10.05.2024

By Order Sh. Saugrabh Goyal Metropolitan Magistrate-05 (North), Room No. 114, First Floor, Rohini Court, Delhi.

NORTHERN RAILWAY Tender Notice

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement System

Principal Chief materials manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001 for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

Table with columns: Sr. No., Tender No., Brief Description, Qty., Closing Date. Lists tender items.

Note: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. Tender Notice No. 93/2024 Medicines Dated: 01.04.2024

Serving Customers With A Smile

IN REMEMBRANCE

Corps of Signals salutes its following Signallers who left us for their heavenly abode during the month of March 2024.

- (a) JC-388876X Subedar Amit Pandey (b) 15689808R Havildar Jenjith Kumar S (c) 1375673M Lance Naik Rogendra Kumar Goswami (d) 15673992N Sigmam M Suresh Kumar (e) 15715735A Sigmam Shafeeq P (f) 15751548M Sigmam Vipin Sankar P (g) 15707201A Sigmam Harveer Singh

On behalf of the Corps, we sincerely pray to Almighty for peace to the departed souls & strength to the bereaved families to bear this irreparable loss.

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one female Name: Neeti, Do. Sh. Shankar Kumar Sharma, R/O: L-28/70A, near Geeta Mandir, Mohan Garden, New Delhi has been missing from her house since 25.02.2024 at 05:00 pm. In this regard a DD No. 1204 dated 26.02.2024, has been registered at P.S. Mohan Garden, Delhi. The description of the missing female are as under:- Age: 26 years, Sex: Female, Height: 4'10", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Build: Medium, Wearing: Green colour suit, black colour salwar with pink colour shawl and grey colour slipper in her feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the female but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this female kindly inform to the following.

Website: http://cbl.nic.in E-Mail ID: cblcbl@nic.gov.in Fax No. 011-24336638 SHO Ph. Nos.: 011-24386638, 24366641 P.S. Mohan Garden, Delhi Ph: 011-25351009, 8750871029

Why SC barred unregulated soil extraction for linear projects

JAY MAZOOMDAR
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE SUPREME Court has set aside a notification issued by the Environment Ministry three years ago that exempted extraction of ordinary earth for linear projects, such as roads and railways construction, from obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC).
The exemption, offered in March 2020, was challenged before the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which asked the Ministry in October 2020 to review it within three months. As the Ministry dragged its feet, the matter reached the top court, which on March 21 this year struck down the "blanket" and "arbitrary" exemption.

The 2020 exemption
In September 2006, the Environment Ministry had issued a notification under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, on activities that would require prior EC. In January 2016, a second notification was issued, exempting certain categories of proj-

ects from this requirement.
The third notification of March 2020 added "Extraction or sourcing or borrowing of ordinary earth for the linear projects such as roads, pipelines, etc." to the list of exempted activities.
The Centre argued before the NGT that the exemption was necessary "for the aid of general public", and would help "the kumhars (potters), farmers, gram panchayats, vanjaras, oads of Gujarat", and all non-mining activities identified by the states. It also said that grant of exemption was a policy matter that did not warrant judicial interference.
The general purpose of the 2020 notification was to conform to the amendments made to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, in March 2020, allowing lesser to continue mining for two years with the statutory clearances and licences issued by their predecessors.

Grounds for challenge
The exemption was challenged before the NGT on the ground that allowing the extraction of earth indiscriminately was arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India. The petitioner argued that the exemption violated the requirement of prior EC in the leases as laid down by the top court in *Deepok Kumar v. the State of Haryana* (2012).
It was submitted that the Ministry had circumvented the legal procedure of inviting public objections before issuing the 2020 notification by wrongly exercising its powers to do away with such requirements "under the garb of public interest" during the Covid-19 national lockdown...to serve and further the interest of private miners and contractors".
In October 2020, the NGT held that the Ministry "should strike a balance and instead of being a blanket exemption, it needs to be hedged by appropriate safeguards such as the process of excavation and quantum". The Tribunal asked the Centre to "revisit" the notification within three months.

What government did
The Centre sat on the NGT order until the

appellant moved the SC. It was only after the SC concluded the hearing and reserved its judgment on August 10, 2023, that the Ministry issued an Office Memorandum on August 21, laying down the enforcement mechanism for the exemption.
On August 30, 2023, the Ministry notified that the exemption in question would be "subject to the compliance of standard operating procedures and environmental safeguards issued in this regard from time to time".
What the SC said
First, the court held that "completely unguided and blanket exemption" was arbitrary and violative of Article 14 because the 2020 notification did not define "linear projects" or specify the quantum and the extraction area.
"It is also not provided that only that quantity of ordinary earth, which is required to implement the linear projects, is exempted," the court said, adding that exemption granted without incorporating any safeguards defeats the purpose of the EP Act.

Second, the court held that the Ministry offered no justification for concluding "that in the public interest, the requirement of public notice should be dispensed with" at any stage — neither the notification itself nor in its submissions to the NGT and SC. The decision was made without any application of the mind, it said.
Third, even the August 2023 notification, the court said, failed to elaborate on the concept of linear projects, specify the authority responsible for environmental safeguards or provisions for the same, or impose restrictions on the quantum of notification.
"The notification was issued two days after the nationwide lockdown was imposed. The work of linear projects, such as roads, pipelines, etc. had come to a grinding halt... We fail to understand the undue haste shown by the Central Government in issuing the impugned notification," the court said.

Not the first time
Similar exemptions under the EP Act have come under judicial scrutiny in the past.
■ In January 2018, the NGT quashed an exemption offered by the Ministry's 2016 notification from the requirement of prior EC for building and construction activities having built-up areas of more than 20,000 sq m. There was nothing to suggest an improvement in the quality of the environment to justify the exemption, the Tribunal observed.
■ Underlining that the EP Act mandates prior approval, the NGT in July 2015 struck down two Office Memorandums issued by the Ministry in December 2012 and June 2013 for granting ex-post facto EC to projects under the 2006 notification.
■ Another notification of the Ministry in July 2021 sought to perpetuate an amnesty window opened for just six months in March 2017 to clear projects under the "violation category" and issued ex-post facto approval to more than 100 projects, until the SC stayed it in January this year.
■ On March 6, the Kerala High Court quashed a 2014 notification that exempted educational institutions and industrial sheds with built-up areas of more than 20,000 sq m from obtaining EC.

EXPLAINED LAW

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

WHY A FORMER PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA HAS BEEN BANNED FROM POLLS

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE ELECTION Commission of South Africa last week barred former President Jacob Zuma from contesting in the country's upcoming polls in May.
While the commission did not provide a specific reason for the decision, it is likely due to Zuma's 2021 conviction and imprisonment in a contempt of court case. South Africa's constitution does not allow an individual convicted for more than a year to hold public office.



Former President Jacob Zuma speaks to his supporters in Durban, South Africa, on March 27. Reuters

Why does the ban matter?
The African National Congress (ANC) came to power in 1994 after the struggle against apartheid was won. Since then, it has had a strong hold over South African politics.
Although the popularity of the ANC has waned in recent years, the party has managed to maintain more than 50% vote share in every national election. Zuma — formerly with the ANC — and his new wife uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party, however, are poised to change that.
Polling by *Markazi* in March showed the ANC had 41% of the national vote, and the MK, 11%. In Zuma's home province of KwaZulu-Natal, the ANC is weaker. A different poll, which was released when voters were asked to choose between ANC and MK, more than 60% chose the latter.
The impact of the disqualification is yet to be seen. The MK party will appeal the order but regardless of the outcome, Zuma might continue campaigning against the ANC.

Fought to end apartheid, and was imprisoned with other anti-apartheid leaders including Nelson Mandela.
Zuma served as deputy President of South Africa from 1999 to 2005 and was dismissed after allegedly receiving dubious payments in an arms deal. He also faced rape charges but was later acquitted.
After becoming the President, Zuma did win some acclaim for his policies.
But his two-term presidency was marred by allegations of corruption and wrongdoing.
Zuma was also accused of allowing the Gupta family — a wealthy Indian-origin business family with interests ranging from IT and engineering to mining, real estate, and leisure — to acquire immense influence over his administration.
Under mounting pressure, and a looming no-confidence vote, Zuma resigned in 2017. Four years later, he was arrested and sentenced to 15 months in prison for refusing to appear in court during a corruption inquiry.
Following his release from jail after a few months on medical parole, Zuma formed the MK party.

GEORGE MATHIEW
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI), which was established on April 1, 1935, is responsible for monetary stability, currency management, inflation targeting, regulating the banking system, and setting interest rates. The central bank's story of the last 90 years includes ups and downs, but has generally been one of stellar achievement.

Early years of RBI
Legislation to set up the Reserve Bank of India was enacted in March 1934, and the provisions relating to the constitution of the bank, issue of share capital, and establishment of central and local boards came operative from January 1, 1935.
The first Governor of the RBI was the Australian Sir Osborne Arkel Smith, one of the two managing governors of the Imperial Bank of India. Sir C D Deshmukh was the first Indian to become Governor.
Following Partition, it was agreed that the RBI would cease to be the currency authority for Pakistan, and Indian notes would cease to be legal tender in Pakistan.
The RBI's relationship with the government has been testy at times. But the bank has been steadfast in defending its turf whenever the government has tried to interfere.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at a ceremony marking 90 years of the RBI in Mumbai on Monday. Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais and Chief Minister Ek Nath Shinde are also seen. PTI

The reforms of 1991
A sharp increase in oil prices in August 1990 led to an acute economic crisis, making the balance of payments situation unmanageable. Depleting foreign exchange reserves along with massive capital outflows, and pushing India close to default.
The RBI transferred more than 46 tonnes of gold from its reserves to the Bank of England to borrow forex to manage immediate liquidity problems. The rupee was devalued by 9% and 10%, in three days.
Full convertibility of the rupee on trade account was allowed, giving more flexibility to trade. Banking reforms were announced, the setting of interest rates by lenders was deregulated, and new private bank licences issued between 1991 and 1995.

Secretary of the Planning Commission, to the RBI to succeed I G Patel as Governor. Singh, who held office till January 14, 1985, prepared the groundwork for strengthening monetary policy actions, and banking reforms got a boost.
Singh acknowledged in the book *Strictly Personal: Manmohan and Gursharan*, authored by his daughter Damani Singh, that as Governor, he had serious differences with then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. Singh advised the government against granting approval to Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), a foreign bank promoted a decade earlier by the Pakistani businessman Aga Hasan Abedi, to open branches in India. However, the government wanted the RBI to grant BCCI a licence, and directed it to approve the application.
After the RBI led by Singh opposed it, the government took to the Cabinet a proposal to strip the RBI of its power to license foreign banks. Singh sent his resignation to Mukherjee and the Prime Minister. However, he was persuaded to stay on as Governor.
Singh and Mukherjee reportedly had differences of opinion on the hostile takeover plan of Escorts and DCM by UK-based industrialist Swraj Patel. However, Mukherjee wrote in his book *The Turbulent Years*, that the decision to move Singh from the RBI to the Planning Commission in 1985 was taken by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Subbarao, Patel vs Govt
D Subbarao, who was Governor between September 5, 2008 and September 4, 2013, mentioned his disagreements with then Finance Minister P Chidambaram. "The Prime Minister (Singh) never asked me (about it). He would ask... whether the Finance Minister was persuaded. I would say yes or no. He would leave it at that. He never pressed a point of view. You can say I was supporting me for he remained under this conflict review period between the Finance Ministry and the Governor," Subbarao told *The Indian Express* in an interview.
Governor Urjit Patel had a running feud with the Finance Ministry when the government asked for more surplus (dividend income) from the RBI. Patel resigned after serving for two years in the post.

2008 crisis and after
India escaped the 2008-09 global financial crisis through a combination of management, structure, and luck. Pre-crisis, the policies of Governor Y V Reddy against capital inflows, especially to the real estate sector, and against rapid foreign bank expansion, were timely. Post-crisis, management was excellent, and approval of the internationalist Swraj Patel. However, Mukherjee wrote in his book *The Turbulent Years*, that the decision to move Singh from the RBI to the Planning Commission in 1985 was taken by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Demonetisation of 2016

On November 8, 2016, the government announced the demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes of the Mahatma Gandhi Series. It also announced the issuance of new Rs 500 and Rs 2000 notes in exchange for the demonetised notes.
The sudden withdrawal of notes created a liquidity shortage in the country. There were long queues outside banks, and people faced immense hardships across the country. It also rolled the economy — demand fell, businesses faced a crisis, and GDP growth declined close to 1.5 per cent. Many small units reported huge losses even after nine months. The pace of demonetisation was slow.
Managing the situation was one of the biggest challenges faced by RBI. At stake was the credibility of the bank and Governor Patel.

MPC, asset quality review

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) which decides on interest rates started during the early phase of Patel's tenure; he chaired the first meeting of the MPC on October 3 and 4, 2016.
Despite calls from corporate India to go easy on the asset quality review kicked off by Rajan, Patel continued the exercise. The RBI has utilised the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to address the huge debt pile of some of the biggest defaulters; it has drawn up twofolds of corporates with a net worth of around Rs 4 lakh crore which are in various stages of resolution in National Company Law Tribunals.

Covid-19 pandemic

As demand crashed, there were production cuts and job losses, and growth fell. Shaktikanta Das, the current Governor, and his team opted for an accommodative monetary policy. Repo rate, the main policy rate, was brought down to 4% to kickstart growth. However, the liberal policy led to a spike in inflation, forcing the RBI to raise rates by 250 basis points to 6.5% now.
However, the pandemic aided the RBI in boosting digitalisation of payments. The launch of UPI revolutionised payments in the banking system.

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How India's first solar observatory was set up in Kodaikanal 125 yrs ago

ANJALI MARAR
BENGALURU, APRIL 1

SINCE ANCIENT times, seafarers, mathematicians, astronomers, and physicists have studied the Sun. In 1792, the British East India Company established the Madras Observatory, a first-of-its-kind facility in this part of the world, where early solar and other astronomical observations in India began.
On April 1, 1859, it was merged with Kodaikanal's Solar Physics Observatory and it then became the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KoSO), which has been operational for 125 years.

year droughts during this period, and an associated global famine is estimated to have killed nearly 50 million people.
The Great Drought was due to multiple factors — solar activity, cool Pacific Ocean conditions followed by a record-breaking El Niño (1877-1878), strong Indian Ocean Dipole, and warm North Atlantic Ocean conditions.

Why Kodaikanal was chosen
Based on evidence that sunspot periodicity (a solar cycle of 11 years, when the Sun's activity can be at maxima or minima) was linked to the seasonal rainfall distribution over India, the Famine Inquiry Commission recommended that the Government of India undertake regular solar observations and establish a dedicated solar observatory in southern India. Thus, the idea for an Indian solar observatory was born.
Scotish physicist Charles Michie Smith, who had briefly served as the Government Astronomer at the Madras Observatory, was

asked to locate a site. Leh, Mussoorie, and Shimla in North India were rejected for being dusty and cloudy, with an unstable atmosphere there. Regular solar observations from southern Indian hilltops were found to be better.
Smith surveyed Kodaikanal in the Palani hills and Kotagiri in the Nilgiris on parameters like rainfall, cloud cover, sky transparency, haze, atmospheric stability, humidity, fog, and mist. Kodaikanal was finally chosen as the ideal location.
In August 1893, the government of Raj sanctioned the Solar Physics Observatory under the meteorological building. In 1895, Lord Wellesley, then Governor of Madras, laid its foundation stone.
Under Smith, who later became the first director of the renamed KoSO, construction of the observatory picked up pace. By the end of 1900, the main observatory building and two adjacent domes had been built.



The Kodaikanal Solar Observatory. Wikimedia commons

pacts the RBI's atmosphere. Powerful solar storms and solar flares can potentially ham satellite-based operations, power grids, and navigation networks.
Expanding scope of study
Following the recognition of all Indian observatories, implemented by the Government of India on April 1, 1899, the

Madras Observatory was merged with KoSO. Systematic solar observations commenced here on March 14, 1901.
The Bhavnagar Telescope, named after Maharaja of Bhavnagar, operated at KoSO during its nascent years. This 16-inch Newtonian (later Cassegrain) mobile telescope was imported from Dublin, Ireland, and first established at the Maharaja Talha Singhji Observatory in Poona (now Pune) around 1850. However, when the Indian observatory closed down, it was sent to KoSO in 1912.
Initial KoSO solar observations included tracing bright lines from the Sun's atmospheric layers, measuring solar radiations, and the direct photography of the Sun in monochromatic lights of calcium and hydrogen (done to show specific features clearly).
Until the end of World War II in 1945, KoSO was dedicated to solar physics. Thereafter, it expanded its ambit to study cosmic rays, radio astronomy, ionospheric physics, etc. The continuous recording of the solar cycle (an index of solar activity) commenced in 1952 and is considered India's earliest solar radio observations.

KoSO at age 125
After astrophysics was separated from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), KoSO was reconstituted into an autonomous institution named the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) on April 1, 1971.
From solar data recorded on basic photographic plates or films, KoSO boasts a huge digital repository containing 148 lakh digitised solar images. These include 33,500 white-light images (showing sunspots) and thousands of other images of the Sun recorded every day since the start of the 20th century. It is the only observatory offering high-resolution digitised images for such a long period.
Currently, it houses a spectrum of advanced instruments like a White-light Active Region Monitor (WARM), with calcium and sodium filters to make full disc simultaneous observations of the photosphere and chromosphere layers of the Sun.
The KoSO's rich data repository could help scientists look at the Sun's past and link its behavioural changes to understand and predict its future impact.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

RBI AT 90

Central bank must learn from the past and plan for the challenges it could encounter in the years to come



ASHOK LAVASA

ONE OF THE heartening features of the press briefing by the Election Commission of India (EC) on the day general elections 2024 were announced was its emphasis on level playing field (LPF). The EC said that the EC had circulated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) to all political parties, requesting them to bring to the notice of their star campaigners. It would be ruthless in dealing with complaints of action that disturbed the LPF, he said.

LPF is an expression that doesn't apply in sports or wars. It cannot be anybody's case that only two teams that are equally matched should play against each other. In cricket, home teams are known to tailor the pitch to their advantage but this "unfair practice" is grudgingly condoned because the visiting teams await their turn. Similarly, it is not considered unfair if a mighty army pummels a tiny opposition in combat. Everything, they say, is fair in love and war. No wonder the phrase "Fair is foul, foul is fair" has confounded human beings, pointing to the possibility of the truth being the opposite of what it might appear to be.

Why, it is then, that LPF should be a sacred precept for free and fair elections? One reason could be that an election in a democracy is neither a war nor an amorous contest. It is the most crucial event of a democracy where different parties and independent candidates vie with each other to earn the voters' mandate to represent them in the House of elected representatives. A vote is meant to be a social contract based on faith and facts.

In order for this contest to be fair, the availability of LPF is considered a sine qua non during elections even if it is acknowledged that the contestants might not be equal otherwise. It is neither for the political parties nor for the candidates themselves to even out the field by trying to be one-up on each other. If inherent inequality is recognised as part of the game, it is the regulator's responsibility to ensure that there is LPF during elections when they endeavour to influence the voters in their favour.

A closer look at the application of this principle of LPF shows that the "levelling" is specific to the advantage that the ruling party enjoys vis-a-vis opposition candidates. That is at the heart of the feeling that the field is "unlevelled". In sports the weakest team might confront against the strongest. In fact, in the initial

To go by the book or to rewrite the script in order to conduct free and fair elections

rounds of a competition in games like tennis, the weakest unseeded players are pitted against the players who rule the ranking tables. No tears are shed if they are trounced by those that have superior skills and prowess because sports don't claim to be democratic. Election in a true democracy, however, is a different ball game.

Although there are common laws to govern ordinary civic behaviour in normal times, political parties and candidates are expected to observe a certain decorum during elections, which they have voluntarily agreed to under the superintendence of the EC. Not all the prescribed restraint is strictly inscribed in law. Sometimes it is a mark of their commitment to decent public behaviour; at others, it is a display of the EC's even-handed approach. That indeed is the genesis of the MCC that the EC is expected to enforce during elections.

A scrutiny of the MCC shows that there are four principal players covered by the Code: candidates, political parties, ruling party and bureaucracy. The last two are part of the ruling dispensation but the code applies to them separately too. The bulk of the code covers violations otherwise covered in law, such as, not to "aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities", or not to level "unverified allegations" and launch personal criticism, or not appealing "to caste or communal feelings for securing votes", or parties and candidates not resorting to "corrupt practices". The Code stipulates that parties and their workers will not disrupt the activities of rival parties. There are sections on campaign meetings, processions, polling booths and election manifestos.

The noteworthy thing, however, is that the MCC devotes a separate section on the "party in power whether in the Centre or state", enjoining it to "ensure that no cause is given for any complaint that it has used its official position for the purposes of its election campaign". The misuse, as covered by the Code, is essentially pertaining to the use of government facilities such as guest houses, transport or public infrastructure, and the use of its authority to utilise public funds for issuing advertisements or granting new sanctions. The MCC doesn't go beyond this.

The routine functioning of the state ma-

chinery and the legal system is in no way restricted by the letter of the current MCC. It is a moot point if it is even desirable for the EC to interfere in the due process of law such as court hearings, or whether routine investigation by law enforcement agencies be subject to adjudication by the EC, as it might make the situation more untenable. Perhaps, misuse of authority by state agencies was not even conceived or flagged by the stakeholders when the MCC was initially drafted.

The MCC, however, is an evolving document just as human behaviour is. Cognisant of this, in the wake of the General Elections in 2009, the EC vide its letter dated March 19, 2009, clarified that the applicability of the MCC extended to commissions such as the Electricity Regulatory Commissions, which are statutory autonomous bodies discharging their authority under an Act. Similarly, regarding the applicability of the MCC on the presentation of Budget, an unambiguously annual sovereign function, the EC clarified vide its letter dated March 9, 2009, that "the prevalent convention" was that "instead of presenting full budget only a vote on account is taken... in cases where a General Election is imminent... and the MCC is in operation" because it "contributes to a healthy democratic practice." The Commission, in deference to the state legislatures, refrained from laying "down a precept or prescribe a course of action".

Perhaps, the current environment and the refrain of LPF being queered by the establishment warrants the EC to examine the facts and circumstances leading to the complaints as it had done in 2019 when it issued an advisory to the Department of Revenue. It should determine whether the series of unprecedented actions by the enforcement agencies violate any "healthy democratic practice."

The unenviable dilemma of the EC would be whether to go by the book or to rewrite the script in deference to its responsibility of conducting "free and fair elections" — a term mentioned in the Constitution but pervading the spirit of "superintendence, direction and control... of the conduct of elections". The MCC, too, is much more than what is understood; it encompasses a spirit of fairness that needs to be fully grasped and enforced.

The writer is a former Election Commissioner

Perhaps, the current environment and the refrain of level playing field being queered by the establishment warrants the EC to examine the facts and circumstances leading to the complaints as it had done in 2019 when it issued an advisory to the Department of Revenue. It should determine whether the series of unprecedented actions by the enforcement agencies violate any 'healthy democratic practice'.

DISQUIETING DISSONANCE

Caste atrocity in Alwar school shows endemic nature of a problem that politics and policy need to do more to address

IN THE RUN-UP to elections, as the prime minister speaks of the four castes that matter — the poor, women, youth and farmers — and the main Opposition party, Congress advocates for a nation-wide caste census, on Saturday, an eight-year-old Dalit boy got an early, unwarranted lesson in deeply ingrained inequality. On the premises of a government school in a village in Rajasthan's Alwar, the Class IV student was assaulted for touching a bucket of water. When confronted afterwards, the accused issued casteist slurs and a brazen declaration that he could not be brought to book for the incident. The impunity of the act points to a grim and sobering reality: That between the big ideas of social justice and big-ticket ameliorative schemes such as SHRESHTA (Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas) and SHREYAS (Scholarships for Higher Education for Young Achievers Scheme), aimed to make classrooms more equal spaces, caste violence remains an everyday reality in the country.

The data released in December last year by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the year 2022 underlines the increasing vulnerability of Dalits in India to caste-based violence. In 2022, a total of 57,582 cases were registered for crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs), an increase of 13.1 per cent over the previous year. Crimes against Scheduled Tribes (STs) saw an increase of 14.3 per cent over those registered in 2021. Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar recorded the highest number of crimes against SCs. Behind the cold, hard numbers, some of the human faces of this discrimination included a 15-year-old SC boy in UP's Auraiya who died after being beaten by an upper-caste teacher for an alleged spelling mistake in September 2022, a nine-year-old in Rajasthan's Jalore who succumbed to injuries inflicted by an upper-class teacher for drinking water from a pot meant for upper-caste teachers.

Even taking into account the fact that there is now an increase in the number of complaints being registered, this points to a glaring dissonance between the vision of a *viksit* and *atmanirbhar* Bharat and the ground reality. While both the Centre and the Opposition speak of justice and empowerment, a lot more needs to be done, in terms of institutionalising and increasing sensitisation and safeguards, to address this entrenched injustice.

DOGS LIKE US

There is growing evidence of canine vocabulary and intelligence. But what about other thinking animals?

THERE ARE TWO ways, broadly, that human beings view their relationships with canis familiaris. Some people still use the vocabulary of property, of being "masters" of their canine companions — a throwback perhaps from when dogs, apart from being friends, were working animals far more widely than they are today. At the other extreme are those for whom their pets are very human, members of the family with appropriate kinship terms and relationships. For example, in a nuclear family with a pet, the parents will be mummy and papa (or whatever appellation is used in the home), and the children will be siblings to the dog. This set of people often claim, to the chagrin of their less dog devoted friends, that their "child" can understand everything they say, that he is smarter than the average person. As it turns out, they might be more right than wrong.

As early as 2011, researchers found that dogs knew the names of many more specific objects and people than previously thought. One border collie called Chaser learned well over 1,000 names. Now, a new study, published in Current Biology, looked at the brain wave activity to establish exactly what dogs are thinking when they seem to recognise balls, frisbees, their favourite toy or their favourite shoe, chewed to bits. The results, simply put, show evidence of object recognition.

There are at least two implications that follow from the study and other similar findings. First, when the pooch gives a blank stare after destroying the latest household item, she might be faking it. The study also found that they can recognise words and choose to ignore them. The second is more ethical and goes beyond the canine kingdom. Elephants, dolphins and whales, primates and great apes — multiple non-human species — have shown signs of emotion and intelligence. Few of them — compared to dogs — have been pets, or even had human "masters". As more animals seem more like people, it might be time to humanise them — just like dogs.



SATYAM VISWANATHAN

THE MOST IMPORTANT lessons about life are not taught in school or college. Or, as Oscar Wilde said, "Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught." How to navigate human relationships, manage personal finances, handle organisational dysfunction, deal with winning and losing, make important decisions including who to marry and who to vote for, how to overcome our own very human frailties — most of us muddle our way through these highly consequential aspects of life.

Daniel Kahneman, who died on March 27, was a psychologist who won the Nobel Prize in Economics, pretty much creating the field of behavioural economics along with the fellow traveller Amos Tversky. But his impact in teaching us how to think about thinking and thereby finding answers to the most important questions that impact our lives — is perhaps his most lasting and valuable legacy. Kahneman's central message could not be more clear or more critical. Left to our own devices, we are likely to make judgements and take decisions based on fallacies, delusions and systematic biases. If we want to make better decisions in our personal lives and as a society, we need to be aware of our biases and find ways to work around them.

Kahneman's view of the human condition was a tragic one. His work demonstrated that we are all, without exception,

A MATTER OF INSTINCT

Daniel Kahneman alerted us to inherent biases. With effort, they can be overcome

As anyone living in India understands only too well, the brazenness of the political class in exaggerating achievements, claiming credit, and promoting themselves as messiahs knows no bounds. Yet, the relentless campaigning short-circuits any cognitive recognition we might have of the bombastic hard-selling. Again, in Kahneman's words — "A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth."

born with cognitive quirks that make us deeply and inherently flawed, and it is our fate to live with this tragedy. His research revealed our tendency to think that other people have biases but not us. It demonstrated that we are typically overconfident in our opinions, impressions and judgements and we exaggerate the knowledge we have: "Our comforting conviction that the world makes sense rests on a secure foundation: Our almost unlimited ability to ignore our ignorance."

Even more unfortunately in today's world, where content is created by the minute in unimaginable volumes and disseminated via algorithms that prioritise virality and engagement over accuracy, Kahneman's work shows how susceptible we are to well-told stories. And how eager we are to imagine realities that help rationalise our beliefs and actions. In his own words: "The confidence people have in their beliefs is not a measure of the quality of evidence but of the coherence of the story the mind has managed to construct."

As anyone living in India understands only too well, the brazenness of the political class in exaggerating achievements, claiming credit, and promoting themselves as messiahs knows no bounds. Yet the relentless campaigning short-circuits any cognitive recognition we might have of the bombastic hard-selling. Again, in Kahneman's words — "A reliable way to make people believe in false-

hoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth."

So, when deciding who to marry his advice was to think carefully about whether genuine long-term affection is likely: "Not expecting that your feelings will remain exactly the same as they are now... will be quite a useful thought to have when people marry... this is a person you love now, but you are going to have to like them later. And that's quite important."

Another key takeaway from Kahneman's work is that choice is effortful: "Thinking is to humans as swimming is to cats; they can do it, but they'd prefer not to." An ever-burgeoning number of options is not conducive to our happiness and creates stress in our decision-making. Online marketplaces that limit the number of options we see on screen, provide us with best-seller recommendations, and tempt us with "those who bought this item also bought these" nudges, are simplifying decision-making using learnings from Kahneman and Tversky's work.

Kahneman's contributions in co-creating the field of behavioural economics have had immense implications acknowledged across policymaking, financial markets, organisational behaviour, and consumer decision-making. Above all, he has given us a deeper understanding of ourselves.

The writer is a marketing and consumer research professional



APRIL 2, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

NIRANKARI MEET

THREE WOMEN AND a child were killed and about 30 people injured when terrorists threw two highly powerful hand grenades at a religious congregation of Nirankaris at Rajya in Anantnir district. The grenades were thrown by two cyclists passing by the Nirankari Bhawan shortly after 4.30pm when the congregation was in progress. Though there have been individual attacks on Nirankari leaders, this strike is the first of its kind.

BJP ON ARTICLE 25

THE BHARATIYA JANATA Party warned the

government against amending Article 25 of the Constitution. According to them, the move was likely to be regarded by the extremists in Punjab as a surrender to threats. The national executive of the BJP felt the government's proposal to amend the Article, which smacked of appeasement as it had come in the wake of the Akali's constitution-burning campaign.

CENTRE VS WORKERS

THE UNION GOVERNMENT said that it was now for the port and dock workers' representatives to come forward with their next proposal because the government had already "stretched itself to the very liberal offer of

18.43 per cent increase." Reacting to the joint statement issued by the Port and Dock Workers' Federation, a spokesman said that the Rs 57 crore offer by the union leaders entailed a 28.3 per cent increase.

SPACE COUNTDOWN

THE SPACESHIP, SOYUZ-11, is now perched atop a launcher. The final countdown has begun for the spaceship to soar towards the Salyut station bearing the Indian cosmonaut and his Soviet escorts. The testing of all systems for a final round has commenced and telemetered data is flowing to the computers of the central command centre.

THE IDEAS PAGE

The importance of hope

Reversing the decline in fertility, predicted in recent studies, isn't impossible. Policies that instil hope in young people could help



VIKRAM PATEL

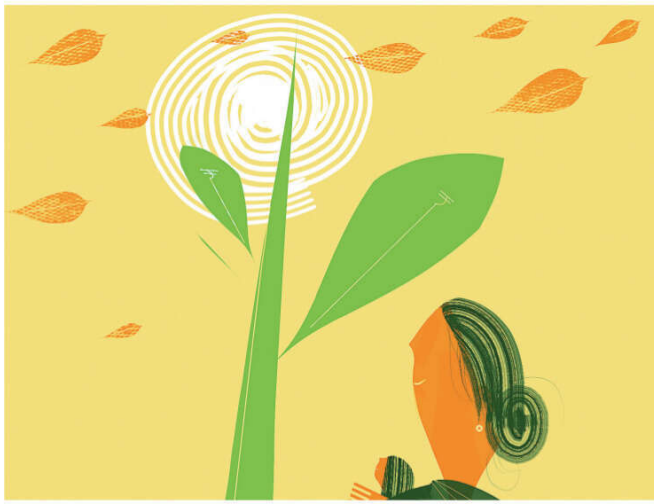
NOT SO LONG ago, we were fed with terrifying projections of a population "time bomb" which would overwhelm our country, and the world, depleting all its resources and leaving everyone impoverished. We were exhorted to trim our family size for the sake of the country — no more than two children and just one would be truly patriotic. China went further: Those who had more than one child were subjected to shame and stiff penalties. It is remarkable how the narrative has flipped.

The publication of a paper on global population trends in the *Lancet* last week is only the latest to project that the population "time bomb" staring us in the face is in the exact opposite direction. Now, it appears that the world's population is likely to shrink precipitously in most countries, including India. China is projected to lose up to half its current population by 2100. Only sub-Saharan Africa will buck this trend — in this not-too-distant future, one in two children born in the world will be African, ironically much like our remote past when people from the continent dominated our planet.

Of course, many of us will not live long enough to experience this shrinking world. We must also pause for a moment to acknowledge that all modelled estimates of population are based on assumptions which do not account for unexpected shifts in social norms, such as those that have led to reductions in the estimated number of people on our planet in the future. So, the best way to interpret these estimates is as a warning that, if we don't do anything to understand and address the factors behind declining fertility, populations are going to shrink. This is alarming primarily because the losses will be entirely due to fewer births. This, in turn, paints a dystopic picture — a world increasingly populated by old people. Neighborhoods once filled with the laughter of kids playing could now be dominated by the staccato of walking sticks. And who will then support the legions of older people who are not only less productive but also in greater need of health and social care resources?

There are many theories about why fertility is falling, even in countries where religion frowns upon contraception. A common theory is that education and women's empowerment are key factors, along with the increasing probability of child survival. This theory argues that, as women have greater agency and certainty about the survival of their children, they opt for smaller families. But it fails to answer why so many women, and couples, are opting not to have any children at all. In many countries, such as the US, the largest change in family size have not just been amongst those who have more or more children but also those who have zero children.

Another theory is that women and couples are opting not to have children because



CR Sasikumar

of workplace policies that deny them job security and income support to enjoy parenthood, especially because the costs of child-rearing have increased in atomised societies where traditional support systems have evaporated. However, this theory fails to explain why fertility is falling even in wealthy countries, including those with the most generous parental policies. It does not explain why fertility is falling even amongst wealthier segments of the population who have no financial constraints. Indeed, a recent analysis found that the effects of pro-natal policies, such as childcare subsidies and extended parental leave and tax incentives, on fertility rates are very small.

I believe that the most important reason for declining fertility is that young people are intentionally choosing not to have children because they fear the state of the world their children would inherit. For example, there is growing evidence that young people do not want to bring children into a world whose very survival is threatened by climate change, even as the global community fails to take the needed action.

In India, several other headwinds, documented in a series of recent reports, are fuelling uncertainty. The India Employment Report 2024 describes the bleak scenario for young people: Nearly 90 per cent are informally employed, facing a future which offers no income security and low wages. The World Inequality Lab reports that in 2022-23, the richest one per cent of Indians had cornered 40 per cent of the wealth of the nation. Such an astonishing level of inequality, which is inimical to societal solidarity and connectedness, is unparalleled in our history. India was ranked 126th out of 143 nations in the World Happiness Report 2024, behind even Pakistan and the coun-

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try's youth were amongst the unhappiest of all. And, several international bodies have downgraded India's democracy to being "partially free" or "flawed" or as an "electoral autocracy".

Why would anyone want to start a family in such a bleak scenario?

That said, the demographic changes that are being predicted are not inevitable. Policies such as promoting women's education have led to a reduction in fertility. Fertility too can be stabilised. To do so, in a nutshell, policies need to restore hope in young people. More immediately, policies need to be framed to not squander India's much-vaunted demographic dividend of being home to the largest number of young people in the world.

A hopeful future lies in a more equal and compassionate country — this can be realised through progressive taxation, bolstering labour and social security, pension laws, and parental retirement benefits. A hopeful future is a more caring country, one where universal health coverage is truly universal and offers high-quality long-term care for persons living with chronic conditions.

We should be prepared for the inevitable surge in the numbers of older people. A hopeful future is a more inclusive and dignified country, one which embraces its diversity and in which we can dissent with civility and fearlessly — features that seem to have been deeply damaged in the run-up to the elections. Our future generations will look back to this moment in our history and ask if we, the people knew what lies ahead and did the right thing.

The writer is Paul Farmer Professor of Global Health at Harvard Medical School

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It seems as though the US government finally wants to give Islamabad a chance. [But] Biden has avoided congratulating Prime Minister Sharif on his election or acknowledging the political turmoil that followed February's general election, which suggests that Washington wants to maintain a safe distance." —DAWN

An imperfect farm solution

Farmers need to be supported. But seeking a legally-guaranteed MSP without debating all its complications could do more harm than good



AJAY VIR JAKHARA

EARLIER THIS MONTH, farmers were on the streets again to demand a legally-guaranteed minimum support price (MSP). The agitation, centred around politics in Punjab, fizzled out as the unions were riddled with factionalism. However, debates about legally-guaranteed MSP or its impracticality continue to linger. In trying to avoid fermenting differences amongst those seeking such MSP, many unresolved issues have been brushed under the rug. These I fear, might become contentious later. Seeking "legally-guaranteed MSP" before developing a broader consensus and thinking through its operating mechanism, is like putting the cart before the bullock.

MSP is a policy calculated by the government for different crops, some of which it procures for its food security buffer stocks, redistributing to the poor, mitigating inflation and stabilising prices. In the process, farmers get financial support. Therefore, no government is likely to stop announcing MSP and procuring crops at this support price. Legally-guaranteed MSP has largely come to signify the right of the farmer to receive this value.

There is unanimity amongst those seeking legally-guaranteed MSP on several issues. Though the number of farmers benefiting from MSP has increased by more than 50 per cent in the last 10 years, such farmers remain a small minority. Farmers who grow cereals will be happy to settle for legal provisions for the 23 crops for which MSP is currently available. These comprise only about 28 per cent of the country's total agricultural output. Other producers want all agricultural produce covered. Academics too are divided. Many espousing the farmers' demand believe that the provisions cannot be extended to perishable commodities like fresh fruit and vegetables as they would be impossible to implement.

Farmers believe that after legal MSP comes the government's demand to physically procure everything. This idea is unsound and has been rejected outright by almost all who understand that MSP has to be ensured through different means, such as procurement or the government paying the difference between the market price and MSP. Many believe the law would mean that traders who purchase the produce below the MSP risk prosecution. Similarly, such a provision would negate the option of paying farmers the difference between the market price and the MSP, as it would obliterate the most vital market price discovery mechanism.

If legally-guaranteed MSP were to be implemented, it would be operationalised according to the area crop production plan — in a particular area, a farmer would be incentivised to grow the crops best suited to the area's agro-climatic conditions. Farmers growing paddy will not want to shift to other crops as the alternatives can never be as profitable. On the other hand,

a legal enactment would result in support for and procurement of different crops expanding exponentially across India. Therefore, it is only logical, given the increased cost and scale of interventions, that interventions would be for limited produce (five acres worth) per farmer family. This is the norm in all states for all crops (apart from wheat and paddy). Due to these two fundamentals, paddy and wheat procurement in Punjab could be reduced by at least a third. This would slow the seeds of a fiercer and uglier competition.

More complications could result from the ambiguity in the calculation of legally-guaranteed MSP. Currently, the CACP, which sets the MSP, calculates it by averaging the countrywide costs. For example, for wheat, the MSP is Rs 2,275. For Punjab, the C2 cost of production is Rs 1,503 while in Chhattisgarh it is Rs 1,939. Therefore, farmers in Punjab receive 51.36 per cent and their counterparts in Chhattisgarh receive 17.33 per cent over their respective C2 cost of production. In a legally-guaranteed MSP regime, it would only be natural for states — like Bihar and UP, which have a combined total of 120 parliamentary seats — to insist on state-specific MSP to gain maximum benefit for their farmers.

It is presumed that the central government will foot the bill for legally-guaranteed MSP. However, many who are better informed maintain that states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka will vehemently object to signify the right of the farmer to receive this value. Finance Commission norms on the basis for devolution of funds — 40 per cent from states and 59 per cent from the Centre. This is notching new. Already, all centrally sponsored schemes like Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, RKVY-RAFTAR have a 60:40 ratio where a state has to pitch in with a 40 per cent share. Once MSP becomes law, states would have to pitch in with their share. If that is not acceptable to them, their share in the Finance Commission's central pool would have to be reduced by over four per cent.

Ironically, the farmers of Punjab, who benefit economically from the present system, are the ones agitating. They would actually lose out if they succeeded in securing the guarantee for the country. They deserve better (also see 'Saving Punjab from Rice', Dec 2023). The farmers of Punjab, who benefit economically from the present system, are the ones agitating. They would actually lose out if they succeeded in securing the guarantee for the country. They deserve better (also see 'Saving Punjab from Rice', Dec 2023). The farmers of Punjab, who benefit economically from the present system, are the ones agitating. They would actually lose out if they succeeded in securing the guarantee for the country. They deserve better (also see 'Saving Punjab from Rice', Dec 2023).

Finally, the most important point that's missing in every discussion on the issue is that about 42 per cent of India's population is directly dependent on agricultural activities. Ninety per cent of this population, the landless labour, marginal and small farmers, either have no produce to sell or a very small surplus. Therefore, even if they were to receive C2-50 per cent MSP price, it would not give them sufficient income to lead a life of dignity. The pertinent question then is: Why don't farmers' unions look beyond MSP? While farmers need to be supported, there are no perfect solutions. Along with MSP, the right combination of intervention need to be determined before a few more generations are lost.

The writer is chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

Striking a jarring note

Rich legacy of Carnatic music cannot be reduced to Brahminical patriarchy



OOPALEE OPERAJITA

THE BROUHAHA AROUND the Sangita Kalanidhi awarded to T M Krishna by the Madras Music Academy is not going away soon. In his new capacity, after having boycotted the academy for nine years, Krishna gets to preside over its sessions during its annual festival in December. In South India, that is a big deal.

Two popular and gifted singers, sisters Ranjani and Gayatri, wrote to N Murali, the president of the academy, stating that Krishna's award meant they would not perform at its festival in December. Ditto the talented Trichur Brothers, who also said they would not perform at the Music Academy in December because, if they did, they would not be true to themselves. So did Dushyanth Sridhar, a well-known Harikatha exponent. Chitravani Ravikiran, virtuosos raggyogokam, returned his Sangita Kalanidhi award in protest. However, the mightiest banyan tree fell when the family of midrangam vidwan, Palghat Mani Iyer — a titan, and a real ratta, or jewel, of Bharat and of global classical music, not merely Carnatic music — returned his Sangita Kalanidhi award.

N Murali's truculent response to Ranjani-Gayatri was unwarranted: They have a right to take a stand. None of the aforementioned living artists has questioned the worth of Krishna's music. Alas! The Music Academy will never again be the same.

Krishna is a noted singer, who would have done well to stick to his singing. Instead, he has traversed a rather dubious

path, often making outrageous pronouncements. If the practitioner of an art form vilifies its treasured and time-tested bedrock, she or he is complicit in its violation. When any musician strays into the path of a specious and disruptive activism, chaos ensues.

Actions speak: After much fanfare, how many Dalit and deprived musicians has Krishna seriously trained? And why is the Music Academy's advisory committee chock full of the very Brahmins it denounces?

The *Nadabrahma* is sacred, and held to be the origin of the universe. Nicolas Malebranche and George Berkeley said that every thing, including art, derives from the consciousness of God. In a world rife with banalities, we need faith, a sense of the magical, and beauty. We also need to develop kindness and compassion — in myriad ways, music does that for us.

The ancient songs of the Sanatan Dharma dwell on the *paravidya* that affords moksha, through prayer, seeking, and music. To have this exalted thought despoiled by a Krishna is, understandably, anathema to the protesting musicians, as well as to millions of rasikas, and fellow artists.

Krishna reduces the wealth of Carnatic music, spread over centuries, to Brahminical patriarchy. This is boring, and untrue. Leading non-Brahmin artists are aplenty, from the forefathers of Carnatic music, Parandara Dasa, from Karnataka, M S Subbalakshmi, still the most celebrated Carnatic musician, Rajaratnam Pillai, and Mandan Srinivas, to name a few,

and their meteoric rise and sustained stardom should loudly negate these theories.

I belong to the Pandanallur school of Bharatanatyam, whose founding guru is not Brahmin; neither are those of the Vazhuvoor or Thanjavur school. We often dance to compositions by the non-Brahmin Sirkazhi Trinity: Muthu Thandavar, Arunachala Kavi, and Marimutha Pillai.

Carnatic music's core is spiritual. You can innovate all you want, but there is no need to dismember the tradition. At each of his concerts, Krishna must be asked: You berate Hindu gods, and then sing their praises. How does that work, without causing rupture?

The imposing legacy of songs by composers, including the trinity of Thyagaraja, Shyama Shastri, and Muthuswami Dikshitar does not merit wanton desecration. Among Krishna's ill-advised, retrospective idealisations is a tearing down of Thyagaraja. Will a Krishna, or the raft of anti-Sanatanis, provide us with anything like the magnificent corpus of Thyagaraja's 700 works, replete with depth, beauty, range, timelessness, and richness?

Krishna's flawed methodology of retrospective social engineering causes him to repeatedly lapse into imposing today's constructs and values on bygone eras. Artists and writers flourish — and are evaluated — in the context of the social and religious milieus of their eras.

My distinguished Carnatic musician and Bharatanatyam dancer friends take every one alike. I have discerned no caste — or any

other — bias in them. If these biases exist, there is a more intelligent, effective, and holistic way to iron them out, as they must be — but through consensus, rather than disruption.

One of the favourable outcomes of this fracas is the diminished importance of those demanding lockstep loyalty. Musicians and dancers live through, and for their audiences; without an audience there would be no *sabhas*, concerts, concert halls, *rasa nishpatti*, or *chamattara*. The stranglehold of a few *sabhas* and official bodies needs to vanish, and performance opportunities need to be equitable.

Periyar, Krishna's hero, who wrought a few positive changes in society, was, nevertheless, someone who repeatedly called for the killing of Brahmins (as a distressed Jawaharlal Nehru mentions in a letter to K Kamaraj). I believe with such statements, his "good" work is intractably tainted. Today, the discourse against Brahmins — who constitute a mere two-three per cent of Tamil Nadu's population, some of whom are priests, and desperately poor — is an act of violence. More power to the artists who make up the resistance — may their sublime music regale us for many more decades.

The writer was appointed Distinguished Fellow at Carnegie Mellon University in 1990. She is also a global adviser on public policy, communications, and international relations and is an award-winning Odissi and Bharatanatyam artist and choreographer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A SELFISH POLITICS

THIS REFERS to the article, 'Maharashtra's moving parts' (IE, April 1). The current political landscape, especially in Maharashtra, is plagued by a poverty of ethical conduct. The lack of clarity among political parties regarding alliances poses a significant threat to public welfare. These splits underscore the self-serving nature of political leaders, who seem indifferent to the repercussions of their actions. Parties must adopt a more ethical and transparent approach that resorting to dirty politics for short-term gains will ultimately backfire.

Ajay Corriea, Vasai

MAKE A PLAN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Free, fair, four' (IE, April 1). The Opposition INDIA bloc call for a level playing field in the polls will resonate with all who believe in democracy. Central agencies have targeted the Opposition but turned a blind eye to NDA leaders. With the mode code of conduct in force, the ECs action must not only be fair but must be seen to be fair. Rallies are a good way to mobilise people but INDIA is yet to declare a comprehensive common minimum programme to convince the people that it can do better than Modi in addressing the burning issues of unem-

ployment, inflation and social strife.

I R Murnu, New Delhi

NO VISHWAGURU

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Awar Dalit boy beaten for touching Buddha' (IE, April 1). An eight-year-old boy was beaten up because he touched the buckel belonging to an upper caste Hindu. This should make all Hindus hang their heads in shame. India's ambition to become a vishwaguru sounds hollow in the context of such incidents of untouchability that keep cropping up across the country.

Narendra Dani, Lucknow

FEEBLE DEFENCE

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Modi defies electoral bond scheme' (IE, April 1). PM Modi's justification of electoral bonds is flawed. When it was the scheme's complete anonymity concerning the donor and because that drove the BJP's daily-dollars. With the disclosure, how can he now claim it was done for the scheme that one could know who gave and who received money? The PM's denial that the banning of the bonds was a setback for the BJP does not hold water when the latter was the scheme's biggest beneficiary.

Kamal Laddha, Bangalore

12 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



S Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol

SOUTH KOREA

Yoon urges to end impasse over trainee doctors

Seoul: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Monday his government is open to talks with doctors who oppose his plan to increase medical school admissions, while accusing critics of offering no reasonable alternative to ease a doctor shortage. In a 50-minute address to the country, Yoon signalled his willingness for the first time to seek a compromise on his medical reform proposals after the government called for dialogue with striking doctors. Yoon apologised for the inconvenience caused by the ongoing strike by trainee doctors but accused the medical sector of putting their own interests ahead of public health. **REUTERS**

LIBYA

PM residence hit with RPGs, no casualties

THE RESIDENCE of Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah was targeted with rocket-propelled grenades on Sunday in an attack that killed no casualties, a Libyan minister told Reuters. The minister, who spoke in condition of anonymity, confirmed in a message that the attack only caused some damage. The minister has not disclosed any further details. Dbeibah has vowed not to cede power to a new government without national elections. **REUTERS**

UNITED STATES

Bridge collapse a national disaster, says Governor

Baltimore: Describing the collapse of Francis Scott Key bridge last week as America's "national economic catastrophe", Maryland Governor Wes Moore has said the removal of the wreckage is a complex and time-consuming operation. "This is not a Baltimore catastrophe, not a Maryland catastrophe, this is a national economic catastrophe," Moore told CNN in an interview on Sunday. Moore said this port is one of the busiest, most active ports in the country. "So, this is not just going to have an impact on Maryland. This is going to impact the farmers in Kentucky, the auto dealer in Ohio, the restaurant owner in Tennessee," he said. **PTI**

AFGHANISTAN

9 children killed while playing with old landmine

Islamabad: An old land mine found by children in eastern Afghanistan exploded while they were playing with it, killing nine children, a Taliban spokesman said Monday. The mine, which the children found near their village in Gero district in Ghazni province, was from decades ago, said Hamidullah Nisar, director of the Taliban's information and culture department in Ghazni. He said the explosion Sunday killed five boys and four girls who were 5 to 10 years old. **PTI**



Al Shifa Hospital and the area around following a two-week Israeli operation in Gaza City on Monday. **Reuters**

TEL AVIV'S STRIKES ON IRAN PROXIES AMID GAZA CONFLICT

Iran commander, diplomats dead in Syria attack, Tehran blames Israel

Tehran vows harsh response, Israel denies comment on 'reports in foreign media'

REUTERS
DAMASCUS, APRIL 1
SUSPECTED ISRAELI warplanes bombed Iran's embassy in Syria on Monday in an escalation of Israel's war against Iran's regional proxies, flattening a building in a strike Tehran said killed a top Revolutionary Guards commander and several diplomats. Reuters reporters at the site in the Mezzeh district of Damascus saw emergency workers clambering atop rubble of a destroyed building inside the diplomatic compound, adjacent to the main embassy building. Emergency vehicles were parked outside. An Iranian flag hung from a pole in front of the debris. Iranian state media said one of those killed was Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and that Tehran believed he was the target of the attack.

ISRAEL PASSES BILL THAT ENABLES TV JAZERA BAN
Jerusalem: PM Benjamin Netanyahu revived moves Monday to shutter Qatar-owned Al Jazeera TV in Israel, pledging to take "immediate action" to close its local office. The Knesset approved the bill allowing the temporary closure of foreign broadcasters considered to be a threat to national security. **REUTERS**

Israeli troops leave Gaza's Shifa hospital a wreck in sea of rubble

REUTERS
JERUSALEM, APRIL 1

ISRAELI FORCES left Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Monday after a two-week operation by special forces who detained hundreds of suspected Palestinian militants and left a wasteland of destroyed buildings. With access to Gaza's biggest hospital severely restricted, the Israeli and Palestinian versions differed sharply. Palestinian officials called the raid on a hospital treating severely wounded patients a war crime, while Israeli officials said special forces units conducted a targeted strike against a Hamas stronghold deliberately located among vulnerable civilians. Thousands of Palestinians - 6,200 according to the Israeli military - had been sheltering in the complex, one of few locations in the north of Gaza with some access to electricity and water. Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of the Hamas-run Gaza media office, said Israeli forces had killed 400 Palestinians in and around the hospital including a woman doctor and her son, also a doctor, and put the facility out of action. Israeli military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said three of the main buildings in the complex had been destroyed in the fighting - the main emergency room, the maternity ward and an annex. "The place is destroyed, buildings have been burnt and destroyed. This place needs to be rebuilt - there is no Shifa hospital anymore," said Samir Basel, 43, speaking to Reuters as he toured Al Shifa.

NINE TIMES SPEED OF SOUND, REDUCES DEFENCE REACTION TIME

Russia fired 5 hypersonic missiles at Kyiv this year, says Ukraine

REUTERS
APRIL 1
RUSSIA HAS USED five of its new Zircon hypersonic missiles to strike Kyiv since the start of the year, the city's military administration said on Monday. The attacks are among more than 180 Russian missile and drone attacks launched against the Ukrainian capital in the first three months of the year, the administration said in a post on Telegram. "The sea-based Zircon missiles have a range of 1,000 km (625 miles) and travel at nine times the speed of sound, Russia says. Military analysts have said the missiles' hypersonic speed could mean greatly reduced re-



A Russian missile explodes in Kyiv earlier this week. **Reuters**

RUSSIAN STRIKES KILL 5 IN UKRAINE'S EAST, WEST
RUSSIAN SHELLING killed at least three people in different regions of eastern Ukraine on the front of war against Russia, local officials said, and two more in Lviv, far from front lines. A strike also targeted civilian infrastructure in Kharkiv, its Governor said. **REUTERS**

action time for air defences and a capability to attack large, deep and hardened targets. President Vladimir Putin confirmed in his annual state-of-the-nation address on Feb. 29 that Russia had used Zircon missiles in battle, without saying what sites had been targeted. He has described the Zircon as part of a new generation of unrivalled arms systems. **PTI**

ISTANBUL MAYOR IMAMOGLU EMERGES AS MAJOR OPP FIGURE

Resurgent Opp thumps Erdogan in Turkey's pivotal local elections

President's coalition loses mayoral seats in 16 cities

REUTERS
ISTANBUL, APRIL 1

Turks dealt President Tayyip Erdogan and his party their biggest electoral blow Sunday in a nationwide local vote that reasserted the opposition as a political force and reinforced Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu as the president's chief rival. With most of the votes counted, Imamoglu led by 10 percentage points in the mayoral race in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, while his Republican People's Party (CHP) retained Ankara and gained 15 other mayoral seats in cities nationwide.



Supporters of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu celebrate outside the City Hall in Istanbul on Sunday. **Reuters**

Partial official results reported by state-run Anadolu Agency showed AKP and its main ally giving up majorities in 19 key municipalities including big cities. It marked the worst defeat for Erdogan and his AK Party (AKP) in their more than two decades in power, and could signal a change in the country's divided political landscape. Erdogan called it a "turning point" in an address. He and the AKP fared worse than opinion polls predicted due to soaring inflation, dissatisfied Islamist voters and, in Istanbul, Imamoglu's appeal beyond the CHP's secular base, analysts said. "Those who do not understand

the nation's message will eventually lose," Imamoglu, 53, told thousands of jubilant supporters late Sunday, some of them chanting for Erdogan to resign. "Tonight, 16 million Istanbul citizens sent a message to both our rivals and the president," Imamoglu said while addressing his supporters. Addressing crowds gathered at AKP headquarters in Ankara, the capital, Erdogan said his alliance had "lost altitude" across the nation and will take steps to address the message from voters. "If we made a mistake, we will fix it" in the years ahead, he said. "If we have anything missing, we will complete it."

EXPLAINED
The Istanbul challenge

THE POLL results will keep Turkey's largest city and economic powerhouse, Istanbul in opposition hands. The strong showing by Ekrem Imamoglu will assert his status as a potential contender for the presidency. It has also rejuvenated the morale of the opposition, which tried to unseat Erdogan in 2023, but saw its own coalition dismantled.

Court suspends 14-year sentence given to Imran, wife in graft case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 1

IN A major relief to jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan, a high court on Monday suspended the 14-year term given to him and wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana corruption case. The two were sentenced to 14 years in jail each by an accountability court on January 31 for alleged corruption in state gifts they got from the state depositary, days before the court announced that their appeals against the conviction would be heard after the Eid festival next month. But Khan may not be released as he is con-



Former Pak PM Imran Khan and wife Bushra Bibi at Lahore HC in 2023. **File**

granting them bail in the case. However, the court announced that their appeals against the conviction would be heard after the Eid festival next month. But Khan may not be released as he is con-

'MASTERMIND' AMONG 12 HELD OVER SUICIDE BLAST

Islamabad: At least 12 people, including the mastermind, have been arrested in connection with last week's suicide bombing that killed five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, officials said on Monday. **PTI**

France presses China on trade, war in Ukraine, ahead of Xi's Europe tour

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, APRIL 1

THE FRENCH foreign minister pressed China on trade issues and the war in Ukraine on Monday ahead of a planned visit to France by Chinese leader Xi Jinping later this spring. Stéphane Séjourné, in talks with his counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing, largely echoed positions that have been laid out by European leaders, including Dutch PM Mark Rutte on a visit to Beijing last week. "The rebalancing of our eco-



French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing on Monday. **AP**

nomic partnership is a priority, as it is for our European partners," Séjourné said at a joint news conference with Wang. "The European Union is a very open market... But the current deficits with... countries, including China, are not sustainable for us."

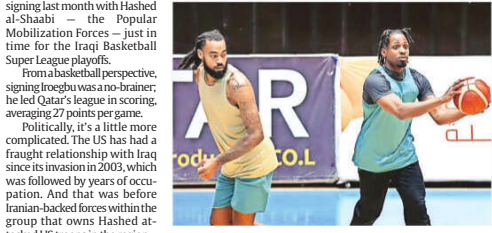
On the Chinese side, officials have raised concern about a "de-risking" strategy by the EU to not overly depend on any one country for vital supplies and minerals. On the Ukraine war, he said France expects China, as a major country, to pass on clear messages to Russia. China, though, has a different stance on the war than Europe or the US, both of which back Ukraine. China may have Russia's ear, but it's unclear what message it is delivering.

HASHED AL-SHAABI WERE ALLIES OF US-LED COALITION FIGHTING ISLAMIC STATE BEFORE TURNING AGAINST THEM

Americans star in Iraq basketball team co-owned by forces that hit US troops

ABBY SEWELL & QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
BAGHDAD, MARCH 31

A PRO basketball team in Iraq is owned by a paramilitary group, and some of its forces recently attacked US troops. But this hostility toward Uncle Sam has its limits: The team is banking on a high-scoring American player to help lead them to a championship. Like many former US college basketball players facing stiff competition for a spot in the NBA, 27-year-old Uchenna Iroegbu of Sacramento has taken his talents abroad, excelling on teams in Nigeria and Qatar. Now the 6-foot point guard is in Baghdad after signing last month with Hashed al-Shaabi - the Popular Mobilization Forces - just in time for the Iraqi Basketball Super League playoffs. From a basketball perspective, signing Iroegbu was a no-brainer; he led Qatar's league in scoring, averaging 27 points per game. Politically, it's a little more complicated. The US has had a fraught relationship with Iraq since its invasion in 2003, which was followed by years of occupation. And that was before Iranian-backed forces within the group that owns Hashed attacked US troops in the region. Iroegbu, who has been shooting hoops since he was old enough to hold a ball, helps his



Isaac Banks (left) and Uchenna Iroegbu take part in a team practice in Baghdad. **AP**

focus on basketball and avoids talking about politics. He had never even heard of Hashed before the team made him an offer. One of three US citizens on the team, Iroegbu considers this assignment to be just like any other. "I'm a pretty simple guy. I go to practice, and if I'm not practicing, I'm in my room. I hang out with my teammates, play video games, read books - the same old, same old," he said during a break from practice. Nearby, a young boy walked through the aisles hawking strong Arabic coffee to the few spectators in attendance. All of Iraq's teams are state-owned and sponsored by different wings of the government, such as the oil and interior min-

istries, and they receive partial funding from the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Games are broadcast on a state-run TV channel dedicated to sports. Hashed is owned by a coalition of primarily Shiite, Iranian-backed forces that joined in the fight against the Islamic State militant group in 2014 after it seized large sections of Iraq. Two years later, the Iraqi government designated them as an "independent" unit of its army. At the time, the Hashed militias were allies of convenience with forces from a US-led international coalition fighting the Islamic State. But today, some of the groups have a hostile relationship with the US.

Some of the militias launched multiple drone attacks against US bases in Iraq and Syria in retaliation for America's support of Israel in its war in Gaza. The coach of Hashed, Akil Najem, said those tensions have no bearing on the team or its players. "The club is a civilian organization and we're dealing with civilian people, so it doesn't have any relationship to these politics," said Najem. The head of the organization is Jamal Fadel, a former player on Iraq's national team. "All of the Iraqi teams depend on the international players," who contribute as much as three-quarters of the team's points in a given game, he said. **AP**

ECONOMY

GOLD ₹68,420
RUPEE ₹83.39*
OIL Crude oil (Indian basket) ₹78.570
SILVER

*Not Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) per 100 litres

SENSEX: 74,014.55 ▲ 363.20 (0.49%) NIFTY: 22,462 ▲ 135.10 (0.61%) NIKKEI: 39,803.09 ▼ 566.35 HANG SENG: 16,541.42 ▲ 148.58 FTSE: 7,952.62 ▲ 20.64 DAX: 18,492.49 ▲ 15.40

*Data market that for annual accounting closing of banks; International market data till 19:00 IST

BRIEFLY

RBI: 97.69% of ₹2K currency notes returned

New Delhi: The Reserve Bank of India on Monday said nearly 97.69 per cent of the ₹2,000 denomination bank notes have returned to the banking system, and only ₹8,202 crore worth of the withdrawn notes are still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of ₹2,000 denomination bank notes from circulation.

SEBI launches new version of SCORES

Mumbai: Securities and Exchange Board of India on Monday launched the new version of the SEBI Complaint Redress System (SCORES 2.0), an online system for investors in the securities market to lodge complaints. It strengthens the investor complaint redress mechanism in the securities market by making the process more efficient through auto-routing, auto-escalation, monitoring by the designated bodies and reduction of timelines. **ENS**

Finance merges with AU Small Finance Bank

New Delhi: In accordance with the Reserve Bank India (RBI) approval on March 4, 2024, AU Small Finance Bank (AUSFB) has announced the amalgamation of Finance Small Finance Bank (Finance SFB) with and into AU SFB, effective Monday. **ENS**

'From Apr 1, no new change in I-T regime'

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry on Monday said there is no change in the new income tax regime for individuals for the current fiscal year and individual taxpayers can opt out of the regime at the time of filing their ITR. **PTI**

Commercial LPG rate reduced

New Delhi: Rates of commercial LPG used by establishments such as hotels, restaurants were slashed by ₹5.71 per cylinder in line with global prices. **PTI**

Antitrust scrutiny: Microsoft to separate Teams, Office globally

FOO YUN CHEE
BRUSSELS, APRIL 1

MICROSOFT WILL sell its chat and productivity apps separately from its Office product globally, the US tech giant said on Monday, six months after it unbundled the two products in Europe in a bid to avert a possible EU antitrust fine. The European Commission has been investigating Microsoft's tying of Office and Teams since a 2020 complaint by Salesforce-owned, competing workplace messaging app Slack. Teams, which was added to Office 365 in 2017 for free, subsequently replaced Skype for Business and became popular during the pandemic due in part to its video conferencing. Rivals, however, said unbundling the products together gives Microsoft an unfair advantage. The company started selling the two products separately in the EU and Switzerland on October 1 last year.

"To ensure clarity for our customers, we are extending the steps we took last year to un-

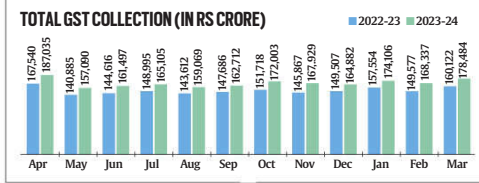
11.5% YEAR-ON-YEAR GROWTH

GST collections hit ₹1.78L cr in Mar; 2nd highest since roll-out

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

GROSS GOODS AND SERVICES tax (GST) collections rose 11.5 per cent year-on-year to ₹1.78 lakh crore in March (or sales in February), the second-highest level since the July 2017 rollout of the indirect tax regime, data released by the Finance Ministry on Monday showed. A strong growth in revenue from domestic transactions even as revenue from imports moderated along with a higher compliance in the backdrop of anti-evasion measures being taken by authorities supported growth in GST collections.

The highest-ever GST collection was recorded at ₹1.87 lakh crore in April 2023. "Gross GST revenue for March 2024 crossed the second-highest collection ever at ₹1.78 lakh crore, with a 11.5% year-on-year growth. This surge was driven by a significant rise in GST collection from domestic transactions at 17.6%," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. On a net basis, taking into account the impact of refunds, GST revenue increased 18.4 per cent to ₹1.65 lakh crore in March 2024, up from ₹1.47 lakh crore in the previous financial year. "FY 2023-24 marks a milestone with total gross GST collection of ₹20.18 lakh crore exceed-



ing ₹20 lakh crore, a 11.7% increase compared to the previous year. The average monthly collection for this fiscal year stands at ₹1.68 lakh crore, surpassing the previous year's average of ₹1.5 lakh crore," the Ministry said. With this data, Central GST (CGST) collections crossed the revised estimates of ₹8.12 lakh crore in FY24. "With a continued double-digit growth, the CGST collections have exceeded the FY2022-E, even as there is a modest shortfall in the GST compensation cess inflows, which are now being used to repay the loans undertaken during the Covid period. With the CGST collections surpassing the FY2024-E, the tax levied on all interstate supplies of goods and services – was ₹8,794 crore (including ₹4,032 crore collected on import of goods) and cess was ₹12,259 crore (including ₹596 crore collected on import of goods)."

Out of 38 states/union territories (including Centre's jurisdiction), 26 states/UTs recorded higher growth in GST collections than the national average of 11.5 per cent growth in March. In absolute terms, Maharashtra was at the top with collection of ₹27,988 crore (22 per cent growth), followed by Karnataka with collection of ₹13,014 crore (26 per cent growth), Gujarat with ₹11,392 crore collection (15 per cent growth), Tamil Nadu with ₹11,017 crore (19 per cent growth) and Uttar Pradesh with ₹9,087 crore collections (19 per cent growth). Overall, the total GST collections stood at ₹1,78,484 crore in March, out of which Central GST – the tax levied on intra-state supplies of goods and services by the Centre – was ₹34,532 crore. State GST – the tax levied on intra-state supplies of goods and services by states – was ₹43,746 crore. Integrated GST – the tax levied on interstate supplies of goods and services – was ₹79,202 crore (including ₹40,322 crore collected on import of goods) and cess was ₹12,259 crore (including ₹596 crore collected on import of goods).

In December, the government settled ₹43,264 crore to Central GST and ₹37,704 crore to State GST from Integrated GST. As a result, the total revenue for the month post settlement was ₹81,450 crore for State GST. Tax experts said the strong growth shows economic recovery. Abhishek Jain, Partner and National Head, Indirect Tax, KPMG in India, said, "A 17.6 per cent growth in collection in March from domestic transactions indicates strong domestic economic growth and adds significant cheer to the overall increase collections. Also, the average monthly collections increasing by approximately ₹5,800 crore this year indicates 'robust growth story and recovery'."

MS Mani, Partner, Deloitte India, said, "Record collections exceeding ₹20 lakh crore during FY24 demonstrate the economic recovery across sectors and was possible due to the measures taken by the GST authorities to improve compliance and stamp out evasion. The big focus on comparison of taxpayer behaviour across tax and corporate databases has also made businesses convinced on the need to be compliant not only in their activities, but also keep track of their vendors' tax behaviour and ensure that the entire value chain becomes compliant."

Markets start new fiscal on a high note; Sensex, Nifty hit record in intra-day trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

STOCK MARKETS started the new fiscal on a high with benchmark Sensex and Nifty scaling fresh record highs in intra-day trade before settling in the green on Monday, backed by firm trends in Asian markets and foreign fund inflows.

Extending its winning momentum to the third day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 363.20 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 74,014.55. During the day, it zoomed 603.27 points or 0.81 per cent to hit its record intra-day high of 74,254.62. The NSE Nifty climbed 135.10 points or 0.61 per cent to 22,462. During the day it jumped 203.05 points or 0.90 per cent to hit the all-time peak

SENSEX UP 363PTS

■ Extending its winning momentum to the third day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 363.20 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 74,014.55



to the swift pace of China's PMI data, indicating traction in the economic recovery, Nair added. The broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 2.98 per cent and the midcap index climbed 1.64 per cent. Among the indices, realty zoomed 4.18 per cent, telecom communication jumped 3.44 per cent and metal by 3.39 per cent. Commodities by 2.91 per cent, utilities by 2.62 per cent and industrials by 2.16 per cent. Consumer Durables and auto were the laggards.

Among Asian markets, Seoul and Shanghai settled in the green while Tokyo ended lower. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Thursday. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹1,188.31 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

PV sales soar to record high in FY24; dispatches cross 42L mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

DRIVEN BY robust demand for sports utility vehicles, passenger vehicle sales in India soared to a record high in FY 2023-24 with dispatch of over 42 lakh units.

The overall passenger vehicle dispatches from manufacturers to dealers last fiscal rose to 42.3 lakh units, an increase of 9 per cent, as compared with 38.9 lakh units in FY 2022-23 on the back of record sales by manufacturers, including Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai Motor India and Toyota Kirloskar Motor.

The share of sports utility vehicles in the overall passenger vehicle dispatches rose to 50.4 per cent in the last fiscal as compared to 43 per cent in FY 2022-23. "This is the first time that passenger vehicle sales have crossed the 40-lakh sales mark in the country, much of the growth that has happened is in the SUV segment," Maruti Suzuki India Member Executive Committee Shashank Srivastava told reporters here. The SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle) segment witnessed a year-on-year growth of 28 per cent, hatchbacks by 12 per

ROBUST SUV SEGMENT

17,93,644 units
Maruti Suzuki India reported the highest-ever yearly domestic sales

7,77,876 units
Hyundai Motor India recorded its best-ever sales for 2023-24



cent; sedans by 6 per cent while MPVs (Multi-Purpose Vehicles) have grown by 19 per cent and vans by 6.5 per cent last fiscal, he said. Maruti Suzuki India reported the highest-ever yearly domestic sales of 17,93,644 units and record exports of 2,83,067 units in 2023-24 fiscal.

Rival Hyundai Motor India recorded its best-ever sales at 7,77,876 units for 2023-24 fiscal, an increase of 8 per cent, over 7,20,565 units in the 2022-23 financial year. In the domestic market, the auto major dispatched 6,14,721 units to its dealers, an increase of 8 per cent, as against 5,67,546 units in FY 2022-23. The Hyundai Motor India CEO Tarun Garg said the industry growth in FY24, the company's passenger vehicles (including electric vehicles), posted its third consecutive year of highest-ever sales with wholesales of 5,73,495 units (up 6 per cent versus FY23) and retail sales growing around 10 per cent versus FY23. "At Motors Passenger Vehicles MD Shailesh Chandra said,

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

THE TRADE dynamics with China and European Union (EU) in 2023 was in favour of India as its exports to both the geographies jumped by 7.1 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively compared to the previous year, the commerce and industry ministry said on Monday. This comes after a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report last month showed that India's dependence on China and EU jumped by 1.2 per cent each in 2023 amid changing trade dynamics along geo-political lines.

"The current observation of increasing India's trade dependence may carry negative connotations. However, detailed analysis indicated trade dynamics in favour of India. India's trade during calendar year (CY) 2023 indicated that India's exports to both China and EU countries have increased by 7.1 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively in CY2023 over CY2022." The ministry further stressed that India's imports from China have also declined by 3 per cent during 2023.

The ministry stated that Toyota Kirloskar Motor also reported its highest-ever wholesales of 2,63,512 units in the last fiscal, an increase of 48 per cent, as against 1,77,683 units in 2022-23. Mahindra & Mahindra reported a 28 per cent increase in passenger vehicle wholesales at 1,81,087 units as against 1,39,225 units in 2022-23 financial year. Tata Motors said its passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 5,73,495 units, up 6 per cent versus FY23 and retail sales growing around 10 per cent versus FY23. "At Motors Passenger Vehicles MD Shailesh Chandra said,

Vistara temporarily curbs flight schedule as 'crew unavailability' leads to cancellations, delays

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

WITH A large number of its flights cancelled and delayed on Monday, Tata group airline Vistara decided to temporarily curtail its daily flight schedule, apart from deploying larger aircraft on select domestic routes in order to combine flights. According to industry sources, numerous Vistara pilots did not report to work on Monday, ostensibly to register their protest against the new pay structure that is in line with that of the Tata group's flagship airline Air India. Vistara is set to merge with Air India.

As of 10 PM Monday, over 60 Vistara flights were cancelled and nearly 180 delayed from the airline's schedule of over 300 daily flights, as per flight tracking data. Over the weekend, too, a number of Vistara flights were either delayed or cancelled, although the number of affected flights was significantly lower than the disruptions witnessed on Monday. Vistara also acknowledged "crew unavailability" as one of the reasons for the recent disruptions.

"We have had a significant number of flight cancellations and delays in the past few days due to various reasons including crew unavailability. We acknowledge and are deeply concerned about the inconvenience this has caused to our customers. Having said that, our teams are working towards minimizing the discomfort to the customer. We have decided to temporarily reduce the number of flights we operate, to ensure adequate connectivity across our network," a Vistara spokesperson said.

The airline, however, did not specify how many flights it planned to cut and for how many days this truncated

schedule be in effect. "We have also deployed larger aircraft like our B787-9 Dreamliner and A321neo on select domestic routes to combine flights or accommodate more number of customers, wherever possible. Furthermore, we are offering alternate flight options or refunds to affected customers, as applicable. Once again, we understand that these disruptions have caused immense discomfort to our customers, and sincerely apologise to them for the same. We are working towards stabilizing the situation and will resume operating our regular capacity very soon," the airline's spokesperson said.

Over the weekend and on Monday, social media platform X (formerly Twitter) had a large number of posts from irate passengers expressing their frustration and anger due to flight cancellations and delays. According to industry sources, at the heart of the issue is discontent among a large number of Vistara pilots over the new pay structure, as per which, their minimum guaranteed flying allowance would reduce significantly. According to the new pay structure for Vistara pilots announced in February, they will be eligible for guaranteed

pay for 40 hours, down from the 70 hours in their earlier contracts with the airline. This, many pilots fear, could lead to a notable cut in their take-home salaries. A number of Vistara pilots had called in sick in the first week of March as well, again allegedly to protest against the new pay structure. At the time, the airline did not cite crew shortage as a reason for flight cancellations and delays. Later in March, the Vistara management is learnt to have given an ultimatum to unhappy pilots to accept the new pay structure, or give up the one-time payout that came with it and also the opportunity to work with Air India post its merger with Vistara.

The Air India-Vistara merger, which is expected to be completed in 2025, is part of the ongoing consolidation of airlines under the Tata umbrella. The Tata group is already in the process of merging its low-cost carriers Air India Express and AIX Connect (formerly Air Asia India). Once both the mergers are complete, the Air India group will have a full-service carrier Air India and a low-cost airline Air India Express. Singapore Airlines, which has a 49 per cent stake in Vistara, will own 25.1 per cent of the merged Air India.

Trade with China, EU 'in favour' of India in 2023: Govt

In calendar year 2023 exports to China and European Union countries have increased by 7.1% and 2.1%, respectively

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

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'IMPORTS FROM CHINA DOWN 3% IN 2023'

■ The commerce and industry ministry said that imports from China have also declined by 3% during 2023 and that trade has remained resilient despite global challenges

India's trade has remained resilient despite global challenges. According to UNCTAD's Global Trade Update released in March 2024, the projection for global trade in 2023 between January to December indicated a decline in global trade by 3 per cent. While the merchandise trade slipped by 5 per cent, service trade increased by 8 per cent.

"Compared to UNCTAD's global merchandise trade estimates of 1 per cent decline globally, the decline in India's merchandise exports has been less at (-) 4.8 per cent from CY2022, while the estimates of rise in services exports has been more rapid, up 1.1 per cent from the same period as compared to 7 per cent globally," the ministry said.

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Interested Buyers are invited to participate in the e-Auction for the disposal of Fire Affected Approx. 4500 MT of Mild Steel, approx. 10 MT of Stainless Steel, approx. 3 MT of Copper & approx. 6 MT of Aluminium. The subject salvage will be sold on "As is Where is", Whatever there is and "No Complaint" Basis and belongs to M/s. Unicharm India (P) Ltd. The subject materials can be inspected at Plot Nos. 1041-1045, 1053, 1054, Industrial Estate, GIDC, Sanand-II, Vinchbar, Gujarat - 382170 on working days only between 02-04-24 to 15-04-24 from 10 AM to 5 PM. Kindly contact Mr. Rohini Srivastava at 8588853991 for inspection. **AUCTION WILL BE HELD ON 16-04-24.** Kindly contact Mr. Bibha Jha at 8389652088 to obtain the form containing terms & conditions of Auction or download from website <https://www.seetheddeal.com/>. **Auctioneers: Seal The Deal** having registered office at 148, Pocket 2 Sector 2, Rohini, Delhi - 110085. **LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION OF FORM & EMD DEMAND DRAFT IS 15-04-24.**

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CIN: L13100TG1998GOI001674

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EOI No: HO/Contracts/DC/RRN/2024/200 Dated: 01.04.2024
NMDC Limited, A "New User" in Tendering section at website link <https://www.nmcd.com> and also in the following link: 2/Central Public Procurement portal - <https://www.aprocure.gov.in/publishapp> and search EOI documents through EOI number.
For accessing the EOI documents from NMDC website for the first time, on-line registration is required. The following link contains the details: <https://www.nmcd.com/investor/registration>. The intending parties are required to visit the NMDC's website and / or CPP Portal for conformation, if any, at a future date.
For further clarification, the following contact details are available: General Manager (C. P & S), NMDC Limited, Hyderabad, Telephone No. 040-23252800, email: contracts@nmcd.com.

Executive Director (Works)

Classifieds

PERSONAL
Garima Arora/Ro/Flat No 501 Sonipat

Farida, Wo Mohd Abi Qureshi, Ro/1127, Gali Pappi Wali, Moha Khan, New Delhi-110055, have changed my name to Farida Khan.

Dr. Jyoti Joshi, spouse of SGT Mathew Jenkins R resident of 0147, Aynolite, VTC, Kalkulam, P.O. Kanjikkuzhi, Kalkulam, Dist: Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu - 625018 have changed my name from Dr. Jyoti Aarti Joshi to Dr. Jyoti D Devi Affidavit dated 30 Mar 24

Bhupinder Singh Parhar/Ro/Flat No. 1004, Tower-2, White Orchid, Gaur City-2, Sector-16C, Greater Noida West, U.P. 201318 have changed my name to Bhupinder Singh Raghubir Singh Parhar. 0070896759-1

Bhola Nath/S/O Sh. Barkat Ram/Ro/Plot No. 2, 2nd Floor, Shri Colony Bk-2, Indira Vikas portion Bk-2, Mukherjee Nagar Delhi-110005 have changed my name from Bhola Nath Kapoor to Bhola Nath for all future purposes. 0040722310-1

Angela Samson Wo Akshay Samson/Ro/ E-3, 409, Shaheed Nagar, Agra, U.P. 282006 do hereby declare that my name Angela Singh changed to Angela Samson for all future purposes. 0040722332-1

Anbari Khatoun, Ro/Ro Zulgerman, Ro/Ro H.No. 2525/5, 1st Floor, Katra Gauri Shankar, Delhi-110019, have changed my name to Anbari Begum, for all purposes. 0040722336-1

Aliya Afaq Wo/Usa Hafiz Nurgul Mohala North Ghonda, Delhi-110005 have changed my name from Aliya Qureshi to Aliya Afaq for all purposes. 0040722401-1

Alam ZAKIR, D/O. MOHD ZAKIR, R/O. 103-A, GALLI NO.17, ZAKIR NAGAR, NEW DELHI-25, have changed my name to ALMAS ZAKIR for all purposes. 0040722371-1

IVINO S/O DHARAMVIR SHARMA R/O H.NO.20, VPO KHERI KALAN, FARIDABAD, HARYANA have changed my name to VINOD BHARDWAJ. 0070896753-1

Iseema Wo, Ankit Kumar Jindal R/O 146-147, Pocket-25, sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085 have changed my name to Seema Jindal. 0040722376-1

Rajkumar S/O Bishu Sen/Ro N-2, C-273, Kashi Park, Azadpur, Delhi-11003, have changed my name to Rajkumar Yadav. 0070896758-1

Mohammad Aman S/o Falzan Ahmed R/O 3/101, Kishan Kunj, Laxmi Nagar, Shakar East Baramah, Shakarpur, East Delhi-110092 have changed the name of my minor son from Abdur Rehman to Haider Mujtaba for all purposes. 0040722312-1

Kamla Rana Wo Arun Kumar Rana R/O A/7248, Sector-17, Rohini, Delhi-110085 declare that Kamla Rana & Kamla Kumari both are one same person. 0040722381-1

Harjinder Singh S/o Kulwant Singh Anand/Ro-1/37, Ashok Vihar Phase-2, Ashok Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi-110052, have changed my name to Harjinder Singh Anand. 0070896732-1

Bhupendra Singh S/o Ram Singh Chauhan/Ro Flat No-C-2, First Floor, Kharsa No-12/1, Gali No. 8, Utranchal Enclave, Kamal Puri Majra, Bauri, North Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201304, have changed my name to Bhupendra Singh Chauhan. 0070896725-1

Arun Kumar S/O, Naresh Chandra Rajput R/O, Jayas, Gaur City-2, Sector-133, Noida, Gated Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, 201304, have changed my name to Arun Kumar Rajput. 0040722374-1

Sneh Lata Lakhotia Wo Rashi Singh Lakhotia/Ro 301-Rock Tower, Sector-56, Noida have changed my name to Sneh Lakhotia. 0070896780-1

Reshma Rani D/O Sh. Raghubir Singh Bhalla born on 18-04-1979, residing at House No. 261, Shiv Nagar Colony Bhiwani, Haryana, have changed my name to Seema vide affidavit dated 26-04-24 at Bhiwani, Haryana. 005239989-1

For general information that I, ANVIN KUMAR GUPTA, Son of Shri UMA SHANKER GUPTA, residing at B-3/30, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-2, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110052, declare that name of my wife has been wrongly written as SHWETA GUPTA in my minor-daughter's name HRIDYA GUPTA aged-14 years in her school records. The actual name of my wife is SWETA GUPTA respectively which will be amended accordingly. 0040722399-1

Mohd Abid @ Mohd Abid S/O Mohd Hanif Qureshi, Ro/6312, Gali Haji Amir Bux, Idgah Road, Quresh Nagar, Sadar Bazar, Uttar Pradesh, 201304, have changed my name to Mohd Abid Qureshi, for all purposes. 0040722362-1

Lad Hanif Qureshi, Ro/6312, Gali Haji Amir Bux, Idgah Road, Quresh Nagar, Sadar Bazar, Uttar Pradesh, 201304, have changed my name to Mohd Abid Qureshi, for all purposes. 0040722362-1

Kavish Kaul S/O Sunil Kumar R/O B-271, Sector-5, Gurukul Vihar, Sector-56, Surinagar (Haryana)-122011, have changed my name to Kavish Koul. 0040722401-2

Lad Hanif Qureshi, Ro/6312, Gali Haji Amir Bux, Idgah Road, Quresh Nagar, Sadar Bazar, Uttar Pradesh, 201304, have changed my name to Mohd Abid Qureshi, for all purposes. 0040722362-1

Utherto known as RAJENDRA SINGH son of MAJESH CHAND resident of 20, Baharpur, Jaashan 321602, have changed my name and shall hereinafter be known as RAJENDRA SINGH. 007022395-9

Zabasha Shaikh, Wo- Mohammed Moino, R/O- H.No.2132-33, Third-Floor, Katra-Mehra, Sector-16C, Greater Noida West, Chhatri Chohan Daryaganj, Delhi-110002, have changed my name to Zabasha permanenty. 0040722404-9

Vandna Rani D/o Jugal Kishore R/O H.No. 98A Vijaya Vihar Ph-2, Rohini Delhi-85, have changed my name to Sapna Wo Sanjay, after marriage. 0040722410-8

Sunil Jindal, S/O Sh. Jal Narayan Gupta, H.No.E-18 Hauz Khas, Market New Delhi 110016, have changed my name to Sunil Jindal. 0040722404-3

Preminder Kaur Matharoo, Wo- Sh. Joginder Singh Matharoo, R/O- C-7/15, Manwal- Nagar, Rohitkar Road, Paschim Vihar, West Delhi, Delhi-110087, that in my Voter-Card bearing no.- F.Y.W.24088, my name has been wrongly written as Preminder Kaur instead of Preminder Matharoo which may be amended accordingly, for all future purposes. 0040722395-8

Sidharth Sankar Choudhary R/O H.No. RZD-895, Sector-17, Rajnagar-2, Palam Colony, New Delhi-110077, that name of my has been wrongly written as Sidharth in my daughter's (Aditi Priya) DOB Certificate. The actual name of my Sidharth Sankar Choudhary & her mother's name has been written as Pallavi, the actual name of Pallavi/Choudhary. 0040722366-1

Sidharth S/O Indar Kumar Sharma, R/O-1/5732, Gali No.16, Balbir Nagar, Shahrada, Delhi-110032, have changed my name to Sidharth Gaur for all purposes. 0040722401-1

Sumittra S/O BRIJESH SHOKEEN R/O SV KVRKANT APARTMENT SECTOR-13, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUMITRA SHOKEEN. 0040722410-1

ISONIA SHARMA, WO MANOJ SHARMA, R/O A-1/402, 4TH-FLOOR, PANCHSHEEL GREENS, G/O-1, SECTOR-16, KATRA GOURI SHANKAR BUDDHA NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201206, changed my name SONIA SHUKLA. 0040722404-7

ISHARMI DEVI PRAKASH S/O PRADEEP KUMAR, ADD-107, LITLAK KHAND GUR NAGAR, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019, changed my name to SHARMILA, for all future purposes. 0040722395-2

ISHARMI DEVI PRAKASH S/O PRADEEP KUMAR, ADD-107, LITLAK KHAND GUR NAGAR, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019, changed my name to SHARMILA, for all future purposes. 0040722395-2

ISHARMI DEVI PRAKASH S/O PRADEEP KUMAR, ADD-107, LITLAK KHAND GUR NAGAR, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019, changed my name to SHARMILA, for all future purposes. 0040722395-2

ISHARMI DEVI PRAKASH S/O PRADEEP KUMAR, ADD-107, LITLAK KHAND GUR NAGAR, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019, changed my name to SHARMILA, for all future purposes. 0040722395-2

ISHARMI DEVI PRAKASH S/O PRADEEP KUMAR, ADD-107, LITLAK KHAND GUR NAGAR, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019, changed my name to SHARMILA, for all future purposes. 0040722395-2

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LPADEEY Dass (Aadhaar No.870049319633)/S/ oSh. Purnam Dass, R/O- H.No. 10, Block-D, Sheela Colony, Gurugram, Haryana-122001, inform that Harinaresh Pradyo Dass born on 22/08/1985, is my son and both names are same. 0040722404-9

LPROMILA alias PROMILA SAHDEV/D/O GWANWAROP MALIK, Wo/ARASH KUMAR R/O-54, 2nd Floor, Pradeesh- Sec.13, Rohini Sector-7, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to PROMILA SAHDEV. 0040722399-5

LPRENA, Wo/RO NARESH SINGH, R/O H.NO.55-MAIN ROAD, NEAR CHURCH, RADHEY SHYAM VIHAR PHASE-1, MURADABAD, NEAR BIAD UTAR, PRADESH-201026, changed my name PRERNA NARESH SINGH. 0040722399-2

LROHINI, Wife Pratik Singh/S/O Late Subhash Chandra Singh/R/O-A-206/02, Sector-2, Avantika, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my minor son name from Abhyudaya aged-10 years to Abhyudaya Singh, for all future purposes. 0040722403-2

LNEHA SRINIVASTA WO HARISH KUMAR R/O S-2, ZEBRE FASH ROAD, 4-STOREY QUATERS-BASTI-1, MARGOLA, GURGAON, GATE CHAWARI, BAZAR, DELHI-110006, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NEHA SRIVASTA. 0040722410-4

LMonika Dalvi/Ro Hari Krishan Dalvi/Ro/ D-23, Block-F/ Laxmi-park, Nangloi West, Delhi, 110041, have changed my name to Monika, for all purposes. 0070896471-1

L Sandeep Garg S/O Sh. Suresh Chandra S/O C-1863, Third Floor, Palam Vihar, New Delhi, Haryana-122017, have changed my name to Sandeep Garg for all purposes. 0070896771-1

Sunil Kumar S/O Ramnivas Singh/Ro D-157 sector-27, Noida have changed my name to Sunil Bansal for all future purposes. 0070896771-1

Shanti Devi/Wo Late Mohan Singh Rawat/Ro H.No.912, Arun Vihar, Sector-37, Noida, Gautambudha Nagar U.P. have changed my name to Shanti Rawat for all future purposes. 0070896783-1

Ravi Kumar, R/O House No-F-56, Harijan Mahala, Vihar, West Delhi-110030, have changed my minor son's name from Aryan to Aryan Chakshay for all purposes. 0040722329-1

Rakesh Chauhan S/O Hari Lal Chauhan/Ro CB-60, Janta Flats, Hari Nagar, No-64 declare that Rakesh Chauhan and Rakesh Kumar are same person. 0040722314-1

RAJENDRA S/O BISHAN SINGH R/O C-1/67A, KESHAV PURAM, DELHI-110052, declare that MY MINOR SON'S NAME FROM ROHAN TO ROHAN SINGH KHANNA FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES. DOB-17/9/2010 TO 17/9/2011. 0070896791-1

Pratibha Mittal Patney/D/O Ghanashyam Das Mittal/Ro B-2/2-C, Sector-29 ONGC, Greater Noida GB Nagar, Uttar Pradesh 201301 have changed my name to Pratibha Mittal. 0070896784-1

PRAMOD KUMAR S/O PRAKASH AGARWAL R/O K-47, SHASTRI NAGAR, MEERUT, UTTAR PRADESH have changed my name to PRAMOD KUMAR AGARWAL. 0070896757-1

Neel/D/o Sunil dutt/Ro Nehal(28), Rewari, Haryana 123102 have changed my name Nehal to Nehal bhargava for all purpose. 0040722395-7

Hanif @ S Mohd hanif @ S M Hanif @ S M Qureshi @ Sheikh Mohd Hanif/S/O Noor ul Huda/Ro 6312, Gali Haji Amir Bux, Idgah Road, Quresh Nagar, Sadar Bazar, Delhi-110006, have changed my name to Mohd Hanif Qureshi, for all purposes. 0040722364-1

Maya Singh Wo Abhay Dev Singh/Ro A-706 Apex The Kromin, Siddh Vihar, Sector-13, Gaziabad have changed my name to Maya Devi. 0040722377-1

KISHORE S/O RAM KISHAN R/O 601, T-HATSI, SECTOR-3, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, have changed my name to KISHORI. 0040722364-5

Himanshu Tyagi/Ro 935-HIG, Sec-9, Vasundhara, Gaziabad have changed my minor son name from Kriyanj Tyagi to Ayansh Tyagi. 0070896801-1

Muskan Vihar Wo Prajwal Singh R/O Vaih-Sharota, Ward-Rajpur, PO-Rudrapur, Dist-Deoria, Uttar Pradesh-274204 have changed my name to Muskan Singh. 0070896797-1

IRANJEET S/O JAGDISH, ADD- WZ-29A, STREET NUMBER-13, SAHINI, DELHI-110085, have changed my name to IRANJEET SINGH, for all purposes. 0040719107-9

IRANJEET SINGH, for all purposes. 0040719107-9

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IRANJEET SINGH, for all purposes. 0040719107-9

LASHESH KUMAR TRIPATHI/S/O TRIPATHI, ADD: PLOT NO.106, KH. NO.14/18, 19, 20, JANTA NAGAR, FARIDABAD, HARYANA DELHI-110043, changed my name to ASHISH KUMAR TRIPATHI. 0040722395-10

LASARAO, SHAK-S/O HALEEM H.NO-59, DABAR TALAS DEHANT VIHAR/LON SINGH R/O-54, 2ND FLOOR, PRADEESH-201102, CHANGED MY NAME TO MOHD ASRARUL HAQ, for all future purposes. 0040722410-2

LAMIT KUMAR S/O OM PRAKASH NAYAR, Flat No. 110024 HATS CHANDED MY NAME TO AMIT KUMAR JAIN. 0040722410-3

Vivek Kumar C/O Nishu Nangia R/O W-25/1-2, 2nd-Floor, Gali No-1, Virender Nagar, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Vivek Sharma. 0070896785-1

Vivek Singh S/O Sodagar Singh/Ro A-137 Nihal-Vihar Ph-2, Noida Extension, Noida, Delhi, have changed my name to Ameer Singh. 0040722403-1

UMA D/O NO. JC-5718 RANK E.HON. CAPT. LATE THAKUR SINGH R/O Z-669/29, SHRI SINGH R/O BAR, REWARI, HARYANA-124101, have changed my name to UMA BISHI WIDE AFFIDAVIT D/L.124. 0070896471-1

Sandeep Garg S/O Sh. Suresh Chandra S/O C-1863, Third Floor, Palam Vihar, New Delhi, Haryana-122017, have changed my name to Sandeep Garg for all purposes. 0070896771-1

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Shanti Devi/Wo Late Mohan Singh Rawat/Ro H.No.912, Arun Vihar, Sector-37, Noida, Gautambudha Nagar U.P. have changed my name to Shanti Rawat for all future purposes. 0070896783-1

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Urhu Varma Wo-U Suresh Varma, R/O House, No-C-602, residence apartments, Aerde city, Near petrol pump, sector-52, Wazirabad, Gurugram, Haryana-122006, My Parents Receipts Dt-03-07-2006, 20 Payments Possession Certificate Dt-05-07-2006, my Property Flat No.202, Tower-F The Residencies, Sector-52, Sector-52, Gurugram, Founder please inform at: 9868092999. 0040722404-10

Shahnawaz Khan, S/O Ashi Ahmud Khan/Ro Silver Oakwood-2, Mehrauli, New Delhi-110030 have lost my B.A degree & marksheet (JNU 2010, Ro No 05/52/71/61), M.A. degree & marksheet (JNU 2010, Ro No 05/52/71/61), along with 10+2 degree (H/05, 2010, Ro No 02/43/304/3-101) certificate (CBSE 2010, Ro No 51285767), find contact - 8130722242. 0040722333-1

Shahnawaz Khan, S/O Ashi Ahmud Khan/Ro Silver Oakwood-2, Mehrauli, New Delhi-110030 have lost my B.A degree & marksheet (JNU 2010, Ro No 05/52/71/61), M.A. degree & marksheet (JNU 2010, Ro No 05/52/71/61), along with 10+2 degree (H/05, 2010, Ro No 02/43/304/3-101) certificate (CBSE 2010, Ro No 51285767), find contact - 8130722242. 0040722333-1

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15 SPORT

PLAYING TODAY

IPL: RCB vs LSG, 7:30pm
Live on: Star Sports Network & streaming on Jio Cinema

Home not sweet home as Hardik gets harsh welcome at Wankhede

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

THE MUMBAI Police deployed cops in civil clothes at the MCA Pavilion, just where the Mumbai Indians dugout is, as a precautionary measure on Monday before their first home game of the IPL season against Rajasthan Royals at the Wankhede Stadium.

The crowd, who cheered for former skipper Rohit Sharma and screamed 'Mumbai ka Raja kaun? Rohit Sharma', booed Pandya when he entered the venue to warm up before the toss.

chant: 'Ganpati bappa mourya'. The crowd repeated it.

By this time, Pandya had taken his stance and that was when the announcer started out his name. Then came the boos, shouting from the square-leg region before the aural taunt spread around.

It took Pandya just four balls to get them on his side, though, even if briefly. He charged out to Nandre Burger, who has bowling quickly and generating some disconcerting bounce in the sixth over and sliced a four over point. As the ball rolled over the boundary, cheers broke out. Next ball, the din grew ever so audibly when he rushed down the track to slap a back-of-length ball through the off-side. This time, the flags waved and lungs cleared. Couple of balls later, the crowd was upon its feet to cheer the home captain as he well-poled one to the long-on boundary.

Now most of them were standing up as Burger ran in for the last ball of the over, which Pandya sliced off the outer edge to third man. Two runs and the crowd cheered as if it were a boundary.



Hardik Pandya was booed by the fans as soon as his name was called out before the toss which led to Sanjay Manjrekar calling for the crowd to 'behave'. *Sportspics*

He was eventually out for 34 off 21 balls as Mumbai Indians managed to post just 125/9. Dropping a catch at mid-off during the Rajasthan Royals chase didn't endear Pandya to the home crowd either.

Earlier, Pandya was booed by fans as soon as his name was called out before the toss which led to commentator Sanjay Manjrekar, who was there in the middle, to call for the crowd to 'behave'.

He has already been booed at two away venues where Mumbai played their previous two games of the season. He bore the brunt of

the Gujarat Titans fans' ire at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, which was expected since Hardik had led the franchise to move back to Mumbai after leading them to the title in their first season.

However, Pandya getting stick from fans in the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad was a bit surprising.

Earlier, Ravichandran Ashwin, who was in the opposition for Monday's game had come out in Pandya's support, blaming "fan wars" and "cinema culture" for the unpleasant reception the latter has received, stressing that he was an India player first and then a franchise cricketer.

"You are free to enjoy what you like about your favourite players or team, but not at the cost of putting another player down," the off-spinner stressed.

"People should remember which country these players represent. It's our country. Fan wars should never take such an ugly route. I've said it many times, this is cinema culture that happens only here," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

BRIEFLY

Esports Nationals to kick off on April 18

New Delhi: The National Esports Championships (NESC) will start on April 18, the Esports Federation of India (EFI) announced on Monday. The NESC will provide a platform for players across India to demonstrate their prowess in DOTA 2 (Open), eFootball (Open), and Counter-Strike 2 in the open and female categories. The online qualifiers, set to commence from April 18, will be played in a double-elimination format. The winners will advance to the regional qualifiers wherein they will compete against the other Asian countries to secure their berth for the global finals of the 16th World Esports Championships (WEC), starting on November 11 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. *PTI*

Asthana takes Eventing crown

New Delhi: Shvahi Asthana was crowned champion in the individual category at the National Eventing Championship that concluded here on Monday. It is his second successive podium finish in the two-legged Nationals, having secured a third-place finish in the opening leg. Ashish Malik took the second spot before his joy was doubled after earning a podium finish in the team event, finishing third. *PTI*

LeBron-powered Lakers sink Nets

Los Angeles: LeBron James tied a season high with 40 points and matched a career high by hitting nine 3-pointers as the Los Angeles Lakers raced out to a big lead and never trailed in a 116-104 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Sunday night in New York. The Lakers (42-33) won for the sixth time in seven games and bounced back nicely from being held to 90 points in Friday's 19-point loss at Indiana. James notched his 40th 40-point game of the season by shooting 13-for-17 from the floor. He went 9-for-10 from 3-point range. Anthony Davis added 24 points and 14 rebounds as the ninth-place Lakers won 11/2 games in front of the Warriors in the Western Conference. Golden State beat the San Antonio Spurs 117-113 on Sunday. *REUTERS*

SYNOPSIS

It was a night of disappointment for Mumbai Indians batsmen as they imploded on a red-soil pitch with some assistance to seam and some bounce for spinners before a composed Riyan Parag ensured Rajasthan Royals catered to a win

SRIRAM VEERA
MUMBAI, APRIL 1

Rohit goes, crowd groans

IT WAS all set for a Rohit Sharma special. Only it didn't happen. When he walked into the arena before the game, he was greeted with loud fanatic cheers, borrowing a line from the Ramgopal Verma movie Satya: "Mumbai ka raja kaun, Rohit Sharma!" When he came to bat later, the cheers were deafening and he took a while to get ready. The guard was scratched, a look here and there, and one at the bowler, and he was yet to settle in.

A slight shimmy to the legside to look around even more as the shouts kept growing. Eventually, he faced up but Trent Boult pulled down the blinds with a perfect curler away, not merely the garden-variety angle but one that seemed away, and Rohit's hands betrayed him as they covered for the line, only to find the outside edge. He still might have survived but an alert Sanju Samson dove low to his right to pouch the rapidly-dipping ball.

The crowd groaned. And it would grow louder next ball when Boult produced the other variation: a nippacker that trapped Naman Dhir LBW, plumb in front of the stumps.

Pandya goes, crowd falls silent

It was all set for a Hardik Pandya special, a potentially romantic story of how he won a hostile crowd over with his heroics. It started like that but fizzled out. At the toss, he was booed. As he faced up to his first delivery when his name was announced from the stadium speakers, he was booed. Four balls later, he silenced them with a sliced drive over backward point. Next ball, he had them on their feet waving the Mumbai Indians flags when he rushed down the track to whack a back-of-length delivery from Nandre

Boult and beautiful

Mumbai's horror start to the season continues as Boult and Burger run through top order to set up easy win for Rajasthan



Rajasthan Royals' pacer Trent Boult celebrates after dismissing Rohit Sharma for a duck. *Sportspics*

Burger through cover-point.

Couple of balls later, he had them hollering as he charged out to ping long-on. A little later, R Ashwin, the man who had supported him on his YouTube channel, chiding fans for booing him, slipped in a few

carrom balls at him and he scythed one through the off-side. More cheers.

It's then that Pandya ran into Rajasthan's best spinner on the night, Yuzvendra Chahal in the 8th over. There was a fizzing leg-break that Hardik tried to

cut in his trademark fashion - not a twitch off the foot movement, just a flaying bat swinging on bent knees, but couldn't connect. But off the fourth ball in that over, he unfurled the late cut to pick up a boundary. But Chahal would come back in his next

over, the 10th of the innings, with a brave fought leg-break seemingly in Pandya's arc. The previous ball had been a quicker leg-break that beat Pandya, who couldn't resist the lofted drive this time. Chahal's bravery and trickery paid off as the ball mis-cued into the night sky to be taken at long-on, and Chahal would hunch on his knees and curl into a fist-pump. The crowd fell silent as Pandya trudged off.

He would have another brief failed impact on the game and the crowd. In the fourth over of the chase, when Jos Buttler bunted a delivery from Jasprit Bumrah, who was wused with the new ball, Pandya threw in a spectacular dive at mid-off at an angle to nearly pull off a screamer, but the ball popped out as he hit the ground. The crowd's joy was cut abruptly and a groin sort of hung suspended in the air for a moment.

Ishan falls, crowd sigh

It seemed it could be Ishan Kishan's night, and he had got the crowd on his side with three wristsly-flayed boundaries, but then came a quality pacy ball from Burger. It kicked up rapidly and just about straightened around off and that was enough for Kishan to get squared-up, like Ramnareh Sarwan would do, and squirt an edge behind.

Varma exits

Could it turn out to be a night for Tilak Varma, who slammed a couple of sixes to raise the home crowd's hopes? It didn't. By this time, Chahal had taken down Pandya and was surging in confidence. A shortish ball in the 14th over could have been punished but Varma awkwardly swatted it back to the bowler. Next one was a Chahal classic: a well-outside-off flighted delivery that, in hindsight, most batsmen would feel would be wide had they left it alone, but they never can. Neither could Varma, who reached out for a cut, only managing to squirt it to the left of short third where Ashwin moved in time to take a smart lunging catch.

From then on, Mumbai could only manage to ensure they didn't get bowled out, and though they took the couple of wickets in the chase, Riyan Parag, who stayed composed in a mature knock, adding 35 runs in 40 balls with Ashwin, batting at No.5 again, ensured that there wouldn't be too much fuss.

BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai Indians 125/9 in 20 overs (Hardik Pandya 34, Tilak Varma 32; Chahal 3/11, Boult 3/22) lost to Rajasthan Royals 127/4 in 15.3 overs (Riyan Parag 54 not out; Akash Madhwal 3/20) by six wickets

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between at the game

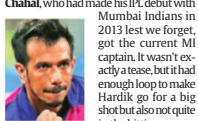


Royals facing starting trouble

On paper, RR have one of the most exciting opening partnerships in the IPL. Yashviji Jaiswal has made heads turn in international cricket in recent times. Jos Buttler is one of the most destructive batters on his day. But, on the field, the opening partnership has provided poor returns so far for RR. In all three of their matches, the first wicket has fallen at best by the end of the second over, meaning Sanju Samson has had to walk in early repeatedly. In the first match, Buttler fell at the end of the second over against Lucknow. In the second match, Jaiswal was dismissed also in the second over against Delhi. On Monday in Mumbai, Jaiswal was the first to go again, as he was out off the last ball in the first over, caught at cover off Kwenya Maphaka, to give the 17-year-old pacer his first IPL wicket. JosWal, as RR's social media dubbed this combo, is yet to fire in unison in IPL 2024.

Chahal shows off his supreme skills

For a while there, Hardik looked like he was well on his way to playing a definitive redemption innings. After more drama at the toss, and utter chaos wrecked by the left-arm pacers of RR, Hardik was resuming MI's batting effort. Then Yuzvendra Chahal, who had made his IPL debut with Mumbai Indians in 2013 lest we forget, got the current MI captain. It wasn't exactly a case, but it had enough loop to make Hardik go for a big shot but also not quite in the hitting zone as it turned and made the batter connect only with the bottom of the bat. Soon after, Chahal used one of his signature moves of luring a batter away from his hitting zone. For the right-handers he often uses it as a set-up delivery, but for left-handers, it becomes a wicket-taking option with the angle. The reward was another well-set batter's end as Tilak Varma fell. Chahal once again offered a reminder of his ability to outthink opponents. He finished with superb figures of 4-0-11-3.



No holding Bumrah back

Hardik received a lot of heat for using Jasprit Bumrah sparingly inside the Powerplay in their first two games. Having just 125 on the board, Mumbai Indians didn't have the luxury to save their spearhead for later in the innings, for there was to be no 'later' in this contest. So, after rookie Kwenya Maphaka gave away 10 runs in the first over for Yashviji's wicket, Hardik had to go to his bowling superstar, with the Wankhede cheering him on. But such was Mumbai's plight that they needed a magical Bumrah spell to send any shivers down RR's spine. Bumrah bowled more than a few peelers, as he does, but Buttler and Samson survived. Hardik didn't help matters by dropping Buttler at mid-off (though a tough chance), prompting another round of booing. Not having a second slip when Samson edged one through the region didn't help too. The RR skipper was dismissed soon after, but it showed that the Mumbai Indians skipper was a step or two behind the game as well as tactics are concerned. RR gave



Bumrah the respect he deserved and had the leeway to play out the biggest threat as there was no scoring-rate pressure in the chase. *Pics: Sportspics/PTI*

Mumbai forced to take quick calls



It didn't take long for Mumbai Indians to pull the trigger. Naman Dhir's dismissal for a first-ball duck in the first over brought in an immediate reaction. For the first time since the Impact Player rule came in place last year, a player was substituted this early into a game. With Trent Boult striking twice in his first over, MI brought in Dewald Brevis to try and shore up their batting lineup. Alas, they'd be burned really soon. Brevis' stay in the middle was a brief one as he fell in the third over, once again Boult the man to take the wicket. So MI's first choice No 3 and an additional batting option contributed a total of 0 runs and lasted two balls. The stuff of nightmares.

Riyan reaps rewards for keeping it simple

"I have simplified everything," said Riyan Parag as he put on the Orange Cap at the end of RR's comfortable win. In his own admission, he hasn't lived up to his potential so far in the IPL. But the Assamese youngster has started this season on fire. Scoring a second consecutive half-century, Riyan powered RR to a third-straight win of the season. In terms of the situation he has walked into, he has done so far. Riyan showed restraint at the start once again, playing Jasprit Bumrah out cautiously to ensure MI didn't get wind in their sails. Once the finish line started to appear in sight, he set himself free. A six over cover off Gerald Coetzee was a standout shot, and he finished things off with swag: 6, 6, 4. "I have had three-four years of not performing at all. You go back to the hotel room and think when you know you can do it and the results are not coming, you go back to the drawing board. I realised I wasn't practicing at this kind of level so I went and did that," Riyan said.





Mirabai returns to competitive action with 184kg total lift

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA APRIL 1

TOKYO OLYMPICS silver-medallist Mirabai Chanu all but qualified for the 2024 Paris Games after she finished third in the women's 49kg Group B event of the IWF World Cup here on Monday.

Returning from a six-month injury lay off, Chanu lifted a total of 184kg (81kg+103kg) at the tournament, which is the final and a mandatory qualifier for the Paris Olympics.

"It feels incredible to come back after an injury. Almost every lift I made today felt clean, clear, and powerful, and I'm leaving this competition feeling strong and confident," Chanu said.

"The rehabilitation was tough and demanding, but with the support of everyone involved in my rehab and recovery, I pushed through all the complications." With the completion of her event, Chanu has fulfilled the criteria for the Paris Olympics, which is participating in two compulsory events and three other qualifiers.

The 2017 world champion is currently ranked second in the women's 49kg Olympic Qualification Ranking (OQR) behind China's Jian Huihua.

The qualification period for weightlifting will end on April 28, following which the IWF will notify the NOCs which have athlete(s) ranked in the top 10.

The top 10 lifters from each weight class will qualify for the Paris Olympics.

"The goal was to secure my spot for the Paris Olympics, and now that I am strongest for the Paris Olympics, all my attention is on making a mark at the Paris Olympics," she added.

Chanu, who last competed at the Asian Games in September where she suffered a hip tendonitis injury, was not at her best, but was able to make five clean lifts.

Her final clean and jerk attempt of 106kg was deemed a no lift on technicality. "Today's event was to assess how Mira's body is progressing given she is returning after six months of injury and rehabilitation. And more importantly to get her confidence back," chief coach Vijay Sharma said. "We were not bothered about the qualification, she has already qualified. Now we will focus on peaking at the right time in Paris," he added.

Chanu's lifts in the snatch and clean and jerk sections were nowhere close to her personal best efforts.

The 29-year-old has a personal best of 88kg in snatch while she had lifted the then world record of 119kg in clean and jerk at the Asian Championships in 2021.

But given that she is coming off an injury and rehab, Chanu still has time to peak in July and her progress looks good.

She will have a lot of ground to cover up as her opponents had total efforts of up to 221 kg in the A category on Monday. Chanu will be the lone Indian weightlifter at the Paris Games, as he will be her third appearance at the Olympics.

India needs unlikely Gopichand-Padukone alliance in Paris medal pursuit

SHIVANI NAIK

FIRST, THE dire alarmist scenario: There might be no Olympic medal in badminton from the Paris Games for India.

So the perennial gripe, intrigue, petty politics and tensions of which stakeholders get credit for a medal's success might not play out in Paris. And that's a relief, and absolutely no one will be happy with this scenario. Supporting NGOs, central funders in Delhi, parents, support staff and coaches — both childhood and elite — might have little to celebrate because the Paris badminton medals are very tough to nail down. It's because everyone doesn't always pull in the same direction.

Now, an unlikely but ideal scenario: The three big coaches Pulella Gopichand, Vimal Kumar and Prakash Padukone, pool in their brains to help HS Prannoy, Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu give the medal a proper go.

The alarm is based on pure data and its projections — Indians haven't exactly been on a title-spree in singles. Sen, Prannoy and Sindhu can all slay the big names but there is not even a whiff of consistency of making semifinals, which put them in the list of favourites for the podium.

And despite their gold-level potential in doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty are up against a formidable fleet of Top-

Ready for the reckoning

For R Pragganandhaa, working on openings and beach volleyball are part of Candidates debut prep

AMIT KAMATH MUMBAI, APRIL 1

AT THE upcoming Candidates chess tournament, India's 18-year-old R Pragganandhaa and 22-year-old R Vaishali will carve a slice of history before a pawn has marched down the battlefield of the 64 squares; they will become the first brother and sister duo to play at the prestigious tournament, which has been around since 1950.

In sport, there cannot be a better advantage than having a sibling whom you can play at the same level. But in chess, that equation does not hold true, which is why the brother and sister have been training separately as they work towards what is the toughest test of their fledgling careers so far.

"They both are going to play in important tournaments. So both their preparations have been largely separate. It's very logical. Both are playing in different events with different expectations. Simple thing is, Pragg's rating is almost 2750 and Vaishali's is around 2500. There's an almost 250 points difference there. The kind of opponents they will be playing will be very similar. They cannot be playing the same openings. It will be like showing all your cards to the opponents in the beginning itself. If someone wants to prepare for Pragg, he just has to look at Vaishali's openings and he'll know that Pragg is bound to do. That's why we've been training separately. They're two different individuals, even though they're siblings. They have different needs going to the Candidates," explains coach RB Ramesh.

A few months back, at Viswanathan Anand's suggestion, Vaishali had also started to train under grandmaster Sandipan Chanda, who has been a second to Anand for some of his World Championship battles.

That sentiment — of not showing your cards — will dominate everything the Candidates do in the coming days. In an interview with The Indian Express recently, Dr Rajnikanth, Gukesh's father, another of India's Candidates competitors, would not put an exact number to how many trainers and seconds the 17-year-old is working with in preparation for the Candidates. That may not be a conscious move, but it is behind the scenes.

On the board, Ramesh says, Pragg has been focusing on his opening preparations rather than middle or endgame.

"We've been largely focusing on the openings ahead of the Candidates. Usually for other Candidates can lose thousands of calories per day while competing. And even a momentary lapse of focus due to physical tiredness can be the difference between victory and disaster at an event where only first place counts.

"We have been preparing since January whenever he was not competing at a event. He had a couple of big tournaments he played at: Tata Steel at Wijk Aan Zee and Prague Masters. But otherwise he has been training for the Candidates for almost the whole day. The focus also has been on his physical fitness, so he played a lot of sports like beach volleyball for a few weeks," says Ramesh.

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R Pragganandhaa has worked on avoiding physical tiredness for the Candidates tournament. Lennart Ootes/Fide

You have to get something out of openings to win. That's becoming increasingly difficult because of computers. Every top player has access to good computers. So if you want to play for a win, you need to have something special."

-RB RAMESH CHESS COACH

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R Vaishali (R) has prepared for Candidates with former Viswanathan Anand second Sandipan Chanda. FIDE

tournaments, we like to focus on other aspects as well, but here we've been focused on openings," says Ramesh.

Why specifically openings? "You have to get something out of the openings to play for a win. That's becoming increasingly difficult because of computers. Every top player has access to good computers and has good preparation. So everything goes normally, most games will end in a

draw. So if you want to play for a win, you need to have something special," explains Ramesh, who adds that he will be assisting Pragg from Chennai and will not be travelling to Toronto.

How Pragg has evolved

Pragg and Vaishali have been training under Ramesh from a very young age, so Ramesh is the perfect person to trace the evolution of Pragg into a Candidate.

Ramesh says he has seen his ward getting better, not just technically with his chess, but also as an individual off the board in a short span.

"He's a self-sufficient, confident youngster. Right now, he firmly believes that he can make it to the top, which was always his dream. Even at a young age, I never saw any doubts in him. He always knew he wanted to become a world champion even from a young age. But not just that dream, he also knew the responsibility that comes with chasing that dream. When he started playing against 2700-rated GMs regularly, there was some doubt whether this jump was coming too early in his career. But then he handled it well. That stage must have given him the confidence that he belongs. I'm proud to see that he has come this far, but I don't think this is his best. The best I believe is yet to come," says Ramesh.

Former world champion Magnus Carlsen still tops the charts with a rating of 2830. Following him are two Americans: Fabiano Caruana (rating of 2803) and Hikaru Nakamura (rating of 2789). Both Caruana and Nakamura are the favourites to become Candidates, which will earn them the right to take on world champion Ding Liren. The Chinese star is currently in fifth spot in the FIDE ratings with 2762 points.

Two other contenders at the Candidates 2024 chess tournament — France's Alireza Firouzja (2760, ranked 6th) and Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi (2758, ranked 7th) — are also among the top 10 rating spots.

Carlsen, who qualified for the event but has declined to compete, recently said on a Norwegian podcast Sjaltsnakk (chess chat) that if any of the three Indians won the open Candidates event, "it would be a shock".

Carlsen went on to add: "The Candidates is psychologically, for me, almost as tough as the world championship, for sure."

Sinner stops dream Dimitrov run to continue strong start to year

MARC BERMAN MIAMI, APRIL 1

JANNIK SINNER'S strong 2024 continued as he won the Miami Open with 6-3, 6-1 victory over 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov on Sunday.

In a flawless display on a 79-degree afternoon, Sinner, the 2023 Australian Open champion, won the 22-1 on the year in winning the Miami Open for the first time. Sinner had runner-up twice in 2021 and 2023.

In his second straight Miami Open finals appearance (Sinner lost last year to Daniil Medvedev), the 22-year-old played with an abundance of confidence deep in the crowd, cheering on the underdog from Bulgaria. Sinner ended it in 1 hour, 13 minutes with a backhand winner.

Sinner dropped just seven games combined in the semifinals and finals. "I figured this would be the lucky one," Sinner said. "I'm really happy I can hold the big trophy."

Chants of "Gri-gri" resounded the entire match inside the home stadium of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. Dimitrov had created a buzz this week with upsides of top seed Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinals and No. 3 seed Alexander Zverev in the semifinals.

"I felt like a rock star these days," Dimitrov said. Dimitrov, 10 years older than Sinner, at 32, will climb into the top 10 rankings for the first time since 2018.

"Unfortunately, 10 years made a huge difference today," Dimitrov said. "Clearly it's Jannik's week. He's been playing amazing tennis."

Sinner also hit a milestone, moving from No. 3 to 2 — highest ranking of his young career and in Italian history. "It means a lot to me," Sinner said. "More importantly it was a great performance for me. Being No. 2 is an amazing feeling and never thought to be at this point. I come from a very normal family and my dad is still working on my mom too."

Sinner, who was never broken and faced just one break point, was undeterred by the pro-Dimitrov crowd and could be an early favorite for the upcoming French Open.

The men's tour swings in April to the clay-court season in Europe finished off by the French at Roland Garros which begins on May 20. "The clay-court season is coming and usually I struggle there," Sinner said. "Let's see what I can do this year. You don't have much time. We start practice and not even one week to get used to the clay."

Sinner won his first major at the Australian Open, then captured the title Rotterdam, and was a finalist in Indian Wells. His only loss in 2024 was in the Indian Wells final to Alcaraz.

Dimitrov won the first eight points on his serve, holding at love in each game. Then the Bulgarian got broken at 2-2 when he tried to get too fancy. Amidst a long rally, Dimitrov hit a drop shot into the net. Thereafter, he advanced to the net twice only to get beaten by two deft passing shots by Sinner.

While Dimitrov has a decent net game, Sinner is perhaps the best passer in tennis. "He's the player that's a front-runner," Dimitrov said. "If he's up a break, I think his confidence kicks in even a little bit more. I think

he's one speed of game right now."

His chances in the second set were wiped out when he got broken 2-1. Sinner kept the ball deep on the final two rallies of the game and Dimitrov flubbed shots on the net. At 4-1, Dimitrov got broken again when he flubbed an easy volley long. Darren Cahill, Sinner's

coach of two years and a former top player and an ESPN analyst, said afterward he added "little things" to Sinner's game and "a belief".

The American woman made a clean sweep on the double. On the women's side, Americans Sofia Kenin and Bethanie Mattek-Sands rallied from a set down to top Gabriela Dabrowski (Canada) and Emma Rutliff (New Zealand) 4-6, 7-6(5), 11-9 in a third-set match that lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes.

The American men didn't fare well in Miami without anyone advancing in singles to the round of 16. AP



Jannik Sinner brushed Grigor Dimitrov aside 6-3, 6-1 in 73 minutes. AP

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8 challengers in a very competitive category. The pressure will only increase as the Games approach. The last World Championships and a bunch of finals before the French Open will have shown their pairings can dissect the Indian challenge.

Why then does it feel like an Olympics where Indians can mount a medal challenge in all these three categories? Because of the pedigree of the coaches and players. And the brains of the super-coaches, guiding them.

But can a spot of dialectics (merging diametrically opposite ideas on a midpoint), a sprinkling of counter-intuitive thinking and a wild leap of faith actually give India multiple medals rather than the solitary ekeed out one from the last three editions? Because these shuttlers are generational talents, and because there are wise coaches, whose insights and exchange of ideas can maximise those potentials.

In other words, can India's coaches/silos be broken down, and the Bangalore-Hyderabad rivalry take a temporary respite?

And under the uniquely Indian word, "tampliss" ('time please') so that Padukone chips in with witty advice for Prannoy and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. And Gopichand and Sen on opponents' weaknesses and handling big Games, and India's son-in-law Mathias Boe brings his insights on playing in Europe in August to aid all the



The pedigree of Indian badminton players going to Paris deserves Prakash Padukone (L) and Pulella Gopichand combining their coaching capabilities, file

five Indians, plus the women's doubles. There's a bunch of ideas to ponder. Padukone can bring in a fresh perspective on how to break Prannoy's stalemate and recurring issue of slow starts that are ultimately pushing him into punishing three-set deciders.

not ideal for the 32-year-old. Gopichand and Guru Siddhatt expertly broke down Viktor Axelsen for him at the Worlds, but an outside-brain like Padukone's can shake up a few tired and tattered formulae.

Their equation seems like it may never

be remedied wholly, though there's zero rancour and things went swell at the Asian team gold event, but Gopichand can still pull superbly for Sindhu against the Fab Four of women's singles — better than anyone. The Tai Tzu Ying quarters, the last time Sindhu beat her, is a tactical classic.

He doesn't need to be courteous, though a Padukone-Gopichand combine, helping Sindhu to a medal would be the stuff of dreams.

Gopichand's pointed inputs at just the right moment have brought India many medals. And An Se Young is really not looking like she can be broken without a wild spot of inspiration. Gopichand knows Sindhu, and reads her opponents even better. He can help, if only she would allow. His on-court pointers to close out matches have been legendary.

For Sen, he could just be a useful out-of-the-box, outside brain, as he heads to his first Games. Like Padukone and Vimal could be for Prannoy.

Boe has been a rock for Satwik-Chirag, and deserves all the credit for bringing them to this level even at the outset. He's an Olympic medalist himself, too, and took them to the Asian Gold.

Yet the duo can benefit greatly from listening to the two All England legends who understand the storms that invariably gather for

Erigaisi becomes top Indian in FIDE rankings

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE APRIL 1

INDIA HAS a new number 1 in the latest chess rankings as Arjun Erigaisi became the top-ranked Indian in the latest FIDE rankings released by the world governing body of chess on Monday.

With a standard rating of 2756, Erigaisi is ranked ninth in the world. Following him is five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand, who is the second ranked Indian on the FIDE list. The 21-year-old Erigaisi collected eight points in the 5th Shengzhen Chess Masters and Bundesliga and mounted to the ninth position on the list. This is his debut in the top 10 in the Open standard list.

Anand is on 11th spot in the ratings with a rating of 2751. He is followed by the troika of 18-year-old Pragganandhaa (R), 17-year-old Gukesh D and Velt Santosh Gujrathi, who will all be in action at the prestigious Candidates tournament later this week.

While Pragg is 14th in the FIDE charts with a rating of 2747, Gukesh is 16th with 2743. The 29-year-old Velt is 25th with 2727 points.

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Indian athletes ahead of Olympics, and in how to win big in Europe. Boe, in turn, can offer his blunt assessments to both Sen and Prannoy on the challenge of going deep into an Olympic fortnight.

Every Indian shuttler headed to Olympics needs not only the soothing words of their mentors, but the eagle eye of a critic or nit-picker who can objectively analyse and point out if there's scope for improvement. It's not even about many cooks having a go at the broth, but just some garnish here, and some tempering there. The supportive teams can do with a dash of brutal honesty at this stage of preparation.

Boe, Padukone and Gopichand along with Vimal are all experienced professionals with fascinatingly intricate badminton brains and above petty umpshanship now, having etched legacies that can't be erased.

Politics, mistrust and routinely instigated moment can spice up rivalries alright. And the player-coach tensions might offer popcorn accompaniments to the uninvited gossip swaths. But the Paris Games could do with some plain-India plotting against the Chinese, Japanese, Danes and Indonesians by a united badminton brain that all learn from.

There are three medals possible, but it could even be zero. So, nail down the medals first, we can devote rears to who gets credit later.