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PM MODI HOLDS  
ROADSHOW IN  
COIMBATORE



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BATTLE RAGES AROUND  
GAZA'S LARGEST HOSPITAL  
IN ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR



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IOA DISSOLVES AD-HOC  
COMMITTEE FOR WRESTLING,  
WFI TO TAKE CHARGE

TOP OF THE DAY

AZAM KHAN  
GETS 7 YEARS  
IN PRISON

NEW DELHI: Uttar Pradesh's Rampur Court on Monday sentenced Senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Azam Khan to seven years in prison and also imposed a fine of Rs 8 lakh on him over the forced demolition of a house in Dungaarpur in 2016. The Special MP-MLA court also sentenced three others to five years in prison and imposed a fine of Rs 2.5 lakh on each of them in the case. Senior prosecution officer Amarnath Tiwari told Legally Speaking that Judge Vijay Kumar convicted Azam Khan, a former Uttar Pradesh minister, Azhar Ahmed Khan, a former chairperson of the municipal corporation, Ale Hasan, a former police circle officer, and Barkat Ali, he added. Three other accused -- Jibran, Farman and Omendra Chauhan -- in the case were acquitted by the court, the further said.

NDA seals Bihar  
deal, Chirag gets 5  
seats, BJP 17

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The ruling National Democratic Alliance has reached seat-sharing agreement in Bihar for the Lok Sabha polls with the BJP set to contest 17 seats and JD-U 16.

The seat-sharing agreement was announced by BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde on Monday. He said LJP (Ram Vilas) will contest five seats and Hindustani Awam Morcha and Rashtriya Lok Morcha will fight one seat each. "The NDA alliance will fight the polls collectively. We will put our full force on all 40 seats in the state. We will win on all the 40 seats. It is my belief," he said.

The BJP has got one seat more than the JD-U, according to the seat arrangement.

He said the BJP will field candidates in Pashchim Champaran, Purvi Champaran, Aurangabad, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Maharajganj, Saran, Begusarai, Nawada, Patna Sahib, Patliputra, Aara,

SLUGFEST OVER 'SHAKTI' REMARK

Modi says Mother  
India attacked

TDG NETWORK  
JAGTIAL (TELANGANA)/NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "fight against Shakti" drew a strong retort from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who said every mother and daughter was a form of "Shakti" for him and that he will sacrifice his life for their security.

Addressing poll rallies in Telangana and Karnataka, the Prime Minister also said the upcoming Lok Sabha elections will be a fight between destroyers and worshippers of 'Shakti'.

In his first rally in Jagtial in Nizamabad in Telangana after the announcement of the Lok Sabha polls schedule, Modi said the nation dedicated the success of Chandrayaan-3 last year to 'Shiv Shakti' but the Opposition parties are talking about destroying "Shakti".

"On Sunday in Mumbai, there was an INDI alliance rally after the announcement of the schedule for elections. They announced their manifesto at Mumbai's Shivaji Park, and said their fight was against 'Shakti'. For me, every mother and



"INDI alliance in its manifesto announced to finish, destroy Shakti. I accept their challenge.

every daughter is a form of 'Shakti'. Mothers and sisters, I worship you as 'Shakti'. I am Bharat Maa's 'pujari'," he asserted.

"INDI alliance in its manifesto announced to finish, destroy Shakti. I accept their challenge. I will sacrifice my life for the security of mothers and sisters."

Gandhi in his speech at Shivaji park in Mumbai after the conclusion of his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' had said: "Our fight against Modi is not on a personal level. Modi is a 'mask' who works for a 'Shakti' (power). He is a shallow man who

What I spoke about is  
not religious: Rahul

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Under attack for his "fight against shakti" remark made at a rally in Mumbai, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday clarified that he was not talking about any religious power but the 'shakti' of unrighteousness, corruption and falsehood.

He accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of twisting his words and said he was speaking about the power of which Modi was wearing the mask.

"Modi ji does not like my words, he always tries to change their meaning by twisting them in some way or the other because he knows that I have spoken a solemn truth.

"The 'shakti' (power) that I mentioned, Modi ji is the mask of that power and we are fighting against it. It is such a power that today it has captured India's voice, India's institutions, the CBI, I-T, ED, Election Commission, the media, Indian industry and the entire constitutional structure of India in its clutches," he said in post in Hindi on X.

Using the same 'shakti' (power), he



"Modi ji does not like my words, he always tries to change their meaning by twisting them in some way or the other....

alleged, Prime Minister Narendra Modi waives loans worth thousands of crores of Indian banks, while an Indian farmer commits suicide when he is unable to repay a loan of a few thousand rupees.

"The same 'shakti' (power) is given India's ports, India's airports, while India's youth is given the gift of 'Ag-niveer' that breaks their courage. While saluting the same power day and night, the country's media suppresses the truth.

P5

DMK names  
9 seats allotted  
to Congress

TDG NETWORK  
CHENNAI

Days after allotting nine Lok Sabha seats to the Congress in Tamil Nadu and the only segment in Puducherry, the DMK on Monday named the specific constituencies that the grand old party, a key ally, will contest from.

Sivaganga, Cuddalore, Krishnagiri, Kanniyakumari, Tiruvallur (Reserved), Mayiladuthurai, Tirunelveli, Karur and Virudhunagar are the nine Lok Sabha seats given by the ruling DMK to the Congress for the upcoming general election.

DMK President M K Stalin and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) President K Selvaperunthagai signed an agreement at the ruling party's headquarters Anna Arivalayam here on Monday, specifically naming the constituencies allotted.

Selvaperunthagai told reporters that his party would announce the candidates in two-to-three days. The DMK has also allotted the lone LS segment in Pu-

P5

SC directs SBI to disclose serial  
numbers, other details of e-bonds

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked State Bank of India (SBI) to be transparent and impartial in its handling of electoral bonds data, emphasising the need for full disclosure. Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, leading a five-judge Bench, addressed the SBI, represented by senior advocate Harish Salve, stating that the bank should not adopt a selective approach but rather provide comprehensive details without reservation.

The court emphasised



that all information related to electoral bonds should be shared with the Election Commission of India (ECI), encompassing unique alphanumeric and serial numbers, purchase details, and contributions to political parties under the electoral bonds scheme.

No stay on disqualification  
of 6 Himachal MLAs

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to stay the order of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker disqualifying six Congress rebels who had cross-voted in the recent Rajya Sabha polls in the state. A bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna

Parties bicker as 8 people die in  
Kolkata house collapse

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE  
KOLKATA

An un-authorized, under-construction multi-storied building collapsed on shanties next to it in Kolkata late last night, killing eight people in a minority-dominated part of the city. The toll may go up further as rescuers toil to clear the debris under which more people are feared trapped.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, recuperating at home after an accident last week, visited the spot in the Garden Reach area with a bandaged head and a black hijab-like cloth wrapped around her face to announce a compensation of Rs 5 lakh for each death.

While the Trinamool Congress tried to deflect blame to its predecessor the CPM for illegal construction in the city, the BJP slammed the ruling party for having different yardsticks keeping in mind its vote bank politics. It said that the Chief Minister had no time to visit Sandeshkhali where her partymen grabbed land and

Alphanumeric and serial numbers, purchase details, and contributions to parties should be shared with ECI

SBI Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara was directed to submit an affidavit by 5 p.m. on Thursday, assuring that the bank had disclosed all pertinent information without withholding any data. The ECI was instructed to promptly upload the pro-

P5

TN moves SC as Governor  
refuses to reinstate minister

LATHA SRINIVASAN &  
ASHISH SINHA  
CHENNAI/ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin and Governor RN Ravi are again face to face against each other as the latter had written to Governor RN Ravi to reinstate Ponmudy as minister but the former denied to do so, citing concerns about constitutional

Ex-Delhi  
minister Jain  
back in Tihar

NEW DELHI: Former Delhi health minister and AAP leader Satyendar Jain returned to Tihar Jail on Monday, hours after the Supreme Court dismissed his regular bail plea in a money laundering case, officials said. "Jain arrived at Tihar jail in the evening.

RELATED REPORT P3

EC removes Home  
Secys in 6 states

ABHINANDAN MISHRA  
NEW DELHI

Less than 48 hours after the code of conduct came into effect, the Election Commission of India (ECI) ordered the removal of top bureaucrats in six states, including those presently under the rule of the BJP. More such orders are expected to come in the coming days.

Those who have been

TMC sees red as  
DGP shunted out

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE  
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress today voiced its displeasure publicly after the Election Commission ordered the immediate shunting out of State Director-General of Police Rajeev Kumar, who is seen to be an extremely close aide of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The EC asked the Chief

asked to be removed from their present posts include Rajeev Kumar, director general of police in West Bengal. The 1989 batch IPS officer is widely regarded as being close to CM Mamata Banerjee. In his place, Vivek Sahay, a 1988 batch IPS officer has been appointed as the DGP. Sahay was till Monday afternoon working as Commandant General, Home Guards.

DETAILS P5



Secretary to post Rajeev Kumar to a "non-election" related assignment with immediate effect.

DETAILS P5

Telangana Governor  
quits on 'own volition'

TDG NETWORK  
CHENNAI

Tamilisai Soundararajan said on Monday that she had tendered her resignation as Governor of Telangana of her own volition and that she wanted to involve herself in intense public service.

Speaking to reporters at the airport here hours after Telangana Raj Bhavan announced that she had tendered her resignation, Tamilisai said there "was no pressure to do so (quit)." She underlined that she enjoyed her days in the gubernatorial post as a "people's governor."

She has also resigned as

Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry. "No, there was no pressure (to quit). I resigned of my own volition as my desire is to serve the public directly. I want to involve myself in intense public service," the former BJP Tamil Nadu president said.

She said she had quit the "luxurious life" of a governor and said, "People will understand my love." Asked what her next course of action would be in the wake of speculations that she might contest the April 19 Lok Sabha polls from Tamil Nadu, she said she would spell out her plans later.

INSIDE

THE LEGACY  
OF LOK SABHA  
SPEAKERS

As custodians of parliamentary decorum and guardians of democratic principles, the legacy of Lok Sabha Speakers resonates through the chronicles of Indian democracy.

DETAILS P9

Taliban warns Pak  
of consequences

AGENCIES  
KABUL

Taliban's Ministry of Defence released a statement in response to Pakistan's early-morning airstrikes in Afghanistan's Khost and Paktika on Monday, stating that any violation of the country's sovereignty would have bad consequences, according to TOLONews.

In retaliation, Taliban has claimed to use heavy weapons to target Pakistani mili-

tary centres. "Once again, Pakistani military and reconnaissance jets have entered Afghanistan's territory and bombarded the homes of civilians in Barmal of Pak-

6 KILLED IN PAK'S AIRSTRIKES IN AFGHANISTAN P11

tika and Spera of Khost," the Taliban said in a statement.

It warned that infringement on Afghan sovereignty would have repercussions.



# PM MODI HOLDS ROADSHOW IN COIMBATORE

Pays tributes to victims of 1998 bomb blast during BJP’s first such grand scale road show in Tamil Nadu, which witnessed a good turnout.

TDG NETWORK  
COIMBATORE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a roadshow here on Monday, amid non-stop chants of ‘Modi, Modi’ by BJP workers and he paid floral tributes to portraits of 58 people killed here in 1998 serial bomb blast.

The roadshow, amid tight police security, comes days after the Madras High Court green-flagged the event, directing the police to allow it with reasonable conditions. The police had initially refused permission citing reasons, including the “communally sensitive” nature of the area, and the ongoing public exams in schools. As Modi began his roadshow in an open, flower-decked vehicle, people who gathered on both sides of the road showered flower petals on him, chanted slogans hailing him. While traditional music was played to welcome him, several of



A view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s roadshow.

them danced and waved at him enthusiastically. This is the first time such a road show, on a grand scale, has been organised by the BJP in Tamil Nadu, which witnessed a good turnout. “Meendum Modi, Vendum Modi,” (Once again Modi, we want Modi) was one of the slogans raised by BJP supporters. Many people who lined up on the roads held lotus flowers in their hands to welcome Modi and

raised “Bharat Mata Ki Jai” slogans. Clad in a spotless white kurta, Modi sported a colourful BJP shawl and often raised both his hands to wave at people who took vantage positions in buildings to take a glimpse of him. All along the about 2.5 km route, from Saibaba Colony to RS Puram in downtown Coimbatore, Modi’s vehicle slowly made its way while people followed him on the

service lanes. At the end of the road show, Modi paid floral tributes to the portraits of people who were killed in the bomb blast that rocked this textile city in 1998, hours before iconic BJP leader LK Advani was to address a poll meeting on February 14 that year. Fifty eight people were killed and over a 100 injured. The portraits were placed in a small, makeshift memorial square. The

BJP flags fluttered against the backdrop of colourful lights and festoons and the Prime Minister waved and cheered saffron party workers who were waiting for over an hour to take a look at him. Performances of folk dance and traditional music energised the cadres who sung songs and danced. This is the first time Modi has held a roadshow here and also this is the first political engagement of the PM following announcement of schedule for the Lok Sabha polls by the Election Commission. BJP Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai, Union Minister of State L. Murugan, Coimbatore MLA and BJP Mahila Morcha national president, Vanathi Srinivasan were the three leaders who accompanied the Prime Minister in his vehicle. Modi is scheduled to address a BJP rally at Salem in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday.

# ‘Modi Ki Guarantee’ adulterated with ‘power of lies’: Kharge

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday alleged that the government’s promise of providing houses to all has turned out to be a “scam” and claimed that ‘Modi Ki Guarantee’ is adulterated with the “power of lies”. Kharge said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 17, 2020, promised the country that by 2022 every Indian would have a roof over his head. “‘Modi’s guarantee’ of providing houses to all turns out to be a scam!” he alleged. “While busy cursing Congress, built less houses than the Congress in 10 years. 1.2 crore less houses!” he said in a post in Hindi on X. In the BJP’s housing scheme, most of the money for 49 lakh urban houses i.e. 60 per cent of the houses, was paid by the public from their own pockets, he said. “A government urban house is built for an average of Rs 6.5 lakh, out of which the



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge

Central government gives only Rs 1.5 lakh. Some part is given by the states and municipalities. The rest of the burden falls on the public. That too about 60 per cent of the burden. This is what the Parliamentary Committee has said,” Kharge said. “Millions of houses are ‘unoccupied’. For example, more than 5 lakh houses under Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) are ‘vacant’. Obviously there is great adulteration of the power of lies in ‘Modi’s Ki Guarantee’.

**COMPLAINT AGAINST MODI FOR ‘VIOLATING’ POLL CODE**  
NEW DELHI: Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale on Monday filed a complaint against Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging that he violated the poll code by using an Indian Air Force helicopter to attend an election rally in Andhra Pradesh. In a letter to Andhra Pradesh chief electoral officer Gokhale referred to Modi’s visit to Chilakaluripet in Palnadu district on Sunday, where PM addressed a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) rally along with TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu. “This is to bring to your urgent notice and to file a formal complaint for violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 17.03.2024 in the Assembly Constituency of 96-Chilakaluripet in Palnadu District of Andhra Pradesh,” Gokhale said in his letter.

## I.N.D.I.A bloc not against EVMs: Cong

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said the I.N.D.I.A bloc was not against Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) but demanded that there should be 100 percent matching of the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). Speaking to reporters here on Sunday, the Congress leader said, “During the INDIA meeting held on December 19 2023, all parties concurred that we are not against EVMs but against manipulation of EVMs. We are not asking to go back to paper ballot but are only calling for the VVPAT to be matched 100%.” Earlier, on March 15, the Supreme Court refused to entertain a petition urging a return to paper ballot, alleging irregularities in the functioning of electronic voting machines (EVMs). The court declined to entertain the petition filed by petitioner Nandini Sharma, saying that every method has some positive and negative points. The court also expressed its inability to entertain these many petitions related to similar ‘concerns’ about EVMs. Ramesh’s statement marked a departure from the position



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

*However, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh demanded there should be 100 percent matching of Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).*

taken by veteran Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Digvijay Singh, who has repeatedly questioned the integrity of EVMs. Digvijaya claimed that there doubts around the conduct of the poll panel. “An AICC resolution unanimously passed and adopted in 2018 stated that people doubt the

fairness of elections conducted through EVMs (electronic voting machines). We demand, therefore, that the upcoming general elections be held through ballot papers only. Whenever we raised questions on the neutrality of EVMs, the Election Commission did not give any response other than sending us their manuals and FAQs (frequently asked questions). We don’t trust the EVMs.” Claiming that the honchos sitting on the board of the EVM manufacturers are close to the ruling party at the Centre, the veteran Congress leader said, “We will continue our fight (for holding elections through ballot papers) and go to the people. No one is bigger than the public in a democracy. There are doubts around the unbiased nature and conduct of the Election Commission (EC). It suits this government if votes are cast through EVMs. The four directors on the board of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), which makes EVMs, have links to the BJP.” Earlier on January two, Jairam Ramesh wrote a letter to the Election Commission seeking an appointment to meet the delegation of I.N.D.I.A bloc leaders to discuss the issue of VVPAT.

## Army introduces Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Army has raised the Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG), an elite technology Unit, which will undertake research and evaluation of futuristic communication technologies like AI, 5G, 6G, machine learning, quantum technologies etc. for defence applications. Communications are an important component of military operations. In the fast-evolving technologies for the battlefield, the side with better communication technologies and the ability to connect the various constituents for information sharing will have an edge over its adversary. The modern warfare necessitates the induction of new equipment to provide seamless communication support to units and formations during operations. To imbibe such advancements in technology, the Indian Army has raised this groundbreaking technology-oriented unit STEAG which will bolster

*Aligning itself with the tenets of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Start-Up India, STEAG will help bridge the divide between the Armed Forces on the one hand and Industry and Academia on the other.*

its capabilities in the digital domain. STEAG will be the nursery for nurturing and developing tailored technologies spanning the complete spectrum of wired and wireless systems to include electronic exchanges, mobile communications, Software Defined Radios (SDR), Electronic Warfare (EW) systems, 5G and 6G networks, Quantum Technologies, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning etc. It will be a premier organization, the first of its kind equipped with the capability to harness niche technology, leverage cutting-edge solutions and identify suitable use cases for defence applications by fostering collaboration and partnership with Academia and Industry.

The hi-tech unit will carry out technical scouting, evaluation, development, and management of core ICT solutions, and provide user interface support by maintenance and upgradation of contemporary technologies available in the environment. Aligning itself with the tenets of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Start-Up India, STEAG will help bridge the divide between the Armed Forces on the one hand and Industry and Academia on the other. The new Centre of Excellence is expected to be a game changer in fostering self-reliance in high-end communication technologies, which have thus far been a monopoly of select countries with advanced economies and research ecosystems.

## AgustaWestland case: SC declines to hear Michel’s bail plea

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, on Monday, declined to entertain a fresh bail plea of Christian Michel James, an alleged middleman being investigated by the CBI and the ED in the alleged Rs 3,600-crore AgustaWestland chopper scam cases related to the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters. It was argued that James cannot be charged under any other offenses apart from those mentioned in the extradition decree and should be granted the benefit of the doctrine of specialty. He was arrested in December 2018 after being extradited from Dubai. “How can you file the Article 32 petition in this case?” questioned a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. Addressing the submission that James cannot be charged for other offenses not part of the extradition decree, the bench stated this had been previously addressed and it cannot go “ad nauseum.” The counsel for the extradited accused highlighted that he has been in jail for the last five years, which could be the maximum sentence

upon conviction. On February 7 last year, the top court denied bail to James, rejecting the submission that he be released on the grounds of completing half of the maximum sentence in the cases. The CJI, while writing the judgment, had stated James may pursue his remedy of regular bail before the trial court in the case. James had sought bail under section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which allows a person to be released on bail upon completing half of the maximum sentence prescribed for the offense. The accused had challenged the Delhi High Court order dated March 11, 2022. Dismissing the bail pleas in both the CBI and ED cases in 2021, a trial court had determined it was not a fit case for bail considering the overall facts and circumstances, The CBI, in its charge sheet, alleged an estimated loss of 398.21 million euros (about Rs 2,666 crore) to the exchequer due to the deal signed on February 8, 2010, for the supply of 12 VVIP helicopters worth 556.262 million euros (around Rs 3,600 crore).

## E-bond scheme biggest scam of the year: Bhupesh Baghel

TDG NETWORK  
RAIPUR

Former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and Congress leader Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday called electoral bond scheme the “biggest scam of the year”. Baghel took the attack to BJP over Centre’s now-junked electoral bond scheme, a day after the Election Commission (EC) notified the dates for the Lok Sabha elections. Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Congress leader said, “This is the biggest scam of the year. The BJP senses that it is losing the Lok Sabha elections and was, hence, resorting to newer tactics against the Opposition.” However, coming out in defence of the scheme, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, SP Singh Baghel, said the Opposition was hurling unfounded allegations at the BJP over the electoral bond scheme. “The Opposition is spread-



Ex-Chattishgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel

*TMC, Congress and BRS got Rs 1600, 1400 and 1200 crore respectively under same scheme, hits back union minister SP Singh Baghel*

ing canards against BJP for receiving funding under the electoral bond scheme,” he said. “TMC, which is only a regional party, received Rs 1600 crore under the same scheme while the Congress received Rs 1400 crore, and the BRS got Rs 1200 crore. An election bond makes it

binding on all political parties receiving funds to put all the transactional details on their books or balance sheets. However, before all of that, the parties can encash the bonds for meeting their expenses,” he added. Hitting out at the Congress, he said, “Now the Congress is alleging that Electoral Bond



Union minister SP Singh Baghel

Scheme was launched to extort firms using central agencies. Under their regimes, even transfer postings or handing of contracts were listed under party fund.” Earlier, Election Commission made public fresh data on electoral bonds, which was previously submitted to the Supreme Court in sealed covers, following a directive from the apex court to make it available to the public. “The Election Commission of India has today uploaded the data received in digitized form from the registry of the Supreme Court on electoral

bonds on its website,” the poll panel said in a statement. The EC initially submitted the details in the sealed covers to the Supreme Court and was later asked to put them in the public domain. Notably, this information pertains to transactions that occurred before April 12, 2019. The details of electoral bonds issued after this data were disclosed by the election commission last week. “Data so received from political parties was deposited in the Supreme Court without opening sealed covers.

## Political stunt: Ex-Maharashtra CM Chavan on Rahul’s remark

TDG NETWORK  
NANDED

After Congress leader Rahul Gandhi’s claim that a senior Congress leader broke down before Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan who quit the Congress to join the BJP last month, rejected the claim stating these remarks are factually incorrect. “He (Rahul Gandhi) has not taken any name, however, if he wants to make any remarks on me, it is illogical and baseless... It is also a lie that I have met Sonia Gandhi in Delhi. These remarks are factually incorrect. All of this is a political stunt.” BJP leader Ashok Chavan said. Earlier, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi claimed that a senior Congress leader, who recently quit the party visited his mother Sonia Gandhi and broke down saying he did not want to go to jail. “A senior leader in Maharashtra, who left the Congress recently, went crying



Ex-Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan

to my mother saying, ‘Sonaji, I am ashamed that I don’t have the power to fight this Shakti. I do not want to go to jail’. Thousands of people are being similarly threatened,” the Congress MP claimed. Earlier, at a show of strength along with partners in the INDIA bloc, marking the culmination of his 63-day ‘Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra’, in Mumbai, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday came down heavily on the Centre saying that the Opposition was fighting the might of the state. Taking a

veiled swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Rahul, endorsing the remark of an INDIA leader who spoke before him, said, “It is true that the soul of EVMs have been traded to the King (PM Modi).” “There is a word ‘Shakti’ (might) in Hinduism. We are fighting against a Shakti (might of the state). The question is, what is that Shakti and what does it entail for us? The soul and integrity of EVMs have been traded to the King (Modi). This is a fact. Not just EVMs but every autonomous institution of the country, be it the ED, CBI or Income Tax department, have traded their spines to the Centre,” Rahul said. Later, speaking at the rally, Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge echoed Rahul’s refrain, saying that the ‘Shakti’ that the Opposition is fighting against comes from the ‘RSS’ (BJP’s ideological parent Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and ‘Manuvaad’ (Brahmanism or Brahmanical clout).



# KEJRIWAL SKIPS ED'S SUMMONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE DJB CASE

AAP termed the summons illegal and said the Enforcement Directorate and CBI are the goons of the BJP, and the BJP plans to arrest Delhi Chief Minister before the Lok Sabha election.

TIKAM SHARMA  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday, March 18, 2024, skipped the Enforcement Directorate summons that was issued to him in connection with a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

This summons was issued to him on Saturday, March 16, 2024, under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), and the central probe agency asked the Chief Minister to appear before the Enforcement Directorate sleuths for questioning on Monday. Although the Aam Aadmi Party said that "the Rouse Avenue Court has granted bail to Kejriwal in connection with Enforcement Directorate (ED) complaints for skipping multiple summonses, then why is the agency still



*This summons was issued to him on Saturday, March 16, 2024, under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), and the central probe agency asked the Chief Minister to appear before the Enforcement Directorate sleuths for questioning on Monday.*

sending summonses to him?"

Furthermore, the party also termed the summons illegal and said the Enforcement Directorate and CBI are the goons of the BJP, and

the BJP plans to arrest Delhi Chief Minister before the Lok Sabha election.

They further said that the BJP was afraid of the increasing popularity and status of

## PRESSURE BEING PUT ON ED, CBI TO SEND SUMMONS: AAP LEADER GOPAL RAI

New Delhi: After Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal skipped the ED summons, Delhi Minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Gopal Rai on Monday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of pressuring the probe agencies to send summons to the AAP chief.

"The summons are politically motivated. ED and CBI sends summons due to the pressure from BJP. Delhi CM has time and again said that it is illegal...ED approached the court saying that the summon was legal. The court granted bail to him (Arvind Kejriwal). Why are they so restless to send summons again and again. Let the court decide if it is illegal or legal," Gopal Rai told ANI on Monday.

Earlier today, Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party convenor Arvind Kejriwal did not appear before the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) in connection with the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) money laundering probe. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party lashed out at the Delhi CM and said that the Delhi Jal Board case is bigger than the liquor scam.

CM Arvind Kejriwal.

The probe agency case is based on an FIR registered by the CBI for offences related to alleged corruption and bribery in the DJB. It was alleged that a contract to install electromagnetic flow metres was

given to a company at inflated rates.

Earlier, the investigative agency arrested retired DJB chief engineer Jagdish Kumar Arora and contractor Anil Kumar Aggarwal in connection with the case.

## 4 arrested for duping Delhi man of Rs 16 lakh in gold trading scam

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Four people have been arrested for allegedly duping a Delhi-based businessman of Rs 16 lakh in an online "gold trading" scam, said police on Monday. According to Delhi police, "The 4 scammers were arrested after raids were conducted in Delhi, Gujarat and Punjab by the Cyber Police, Outer North District."

The scammers were arrested in connection with a pan-India online gold trading scam run by cybercriminals under a criminal conspiracy to cheat people. "In this module, the scammers allured the complainant on a WhatsApp group to invest in gold trading through an application called "GBL Gold" that was being operated by scammers outside the country," said police. The police further said that the fictitious website of the GBL Gold application used in the scam was designed by

crooks operating from China and was shared through WhatsApp and Telegram IDs whose IP addresses were those of Huwai, China. The module was formed and modulated in China. "The money obtained from the scam was being transferred into accounts handled by the fraudsters and then si-phoned using USDT, Crypto and other such apps to evade agencies," said the police. The police said that the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) is in the process of tracing all India-related links related to the fraud and is determining the exact amount of the scam.

The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) was established by MHA in New Delhi to provide a framework and eco-system for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to deal with cybercrime in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. Further details on the matter are awaited.

## Delhi excise policy case: BRS MLC Kavitha moves SC challenging her arrest

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

Bharat Rashtira Samithi MLC K Kavitha on Monday has moved the Supreme Court challenging her arrest in a money-laundering case related to the Delhi excise policy irregularities matter.

Kavitha got arrested by the ED team on last Friday in Hyderabad and later brought to Delhi. Kavitha was arrested after a day-long questioning followed by a raid at her residence. Earlier on March 16, the Rouse Avenue Court sent Kavitha to custodial remand until March 23, 2024.

K. Kavitha was produced in the courtroom under heavy security in the presence of a number of lawyers, media persons and party workers.

Senior Advocate Vikram Chaudhari, along with Advocate Nitesh Rana, appeared for the K Kavitha before the court. Advocates Wajeeh Shafiq, Anuj Tiwari and Deepak Nagar also appeared for accused K Kavitha in the matter. However, Special



*ED further argued, that it is an admitted position that there is no written interim order in their favour. The statement that we gave was that we would give 10 days before issuing a summons.*

ED Counsel Zoheb Hossain and Special Public Prosecutor Naveen Kumar Matta appeared for the ED.

Chaudhari argued that this arrest was a blatant abuse of power. They have clearly violated the Supreme Court orders, which have protected

us. He stated that, as per the law, there is a stay on her arrest until March 19.

He also added that the vindictiveness and malafide on the part of the ED are further writ large from the fact that despite the pendency of the issue/prayer before the apex

## Lost his father in Naxalite attacks, son now presidential candidate in JNUSU

RAHUL GAHLAWAT  
NEW DELHI

The upcoming JNUSU elections at Jawaharlal Nehru University have taken an emotional turn with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) announcing Umesh Chandra Ajmeera as their Presidential candidate. Umesh's story is not just one of political ambition but of personal loss and resilience. Hailing from Warangal, Telangana, Umesh's childhood was marked by tragedy when his father was killed by Naxalites in 1997, and his mother passed away soon after, overwhelmed by grief and the forced conversion of her faith.

Despite these adversities, Umesh's determination led him to JNU, where he found a supportive community within the ABVP. His rise to the position of President of ABVP's JNU unit and now a Presidential candidate in the central council for the JNUSU elections is a testament to his strength and the ABVP's commitment to



inclusivity, representing diverse societal facets, including his Adivasi Banjara (ST) background.

Umesh's candidacy sends a powerful message against Naxalite violence and for social justice. With ABVP fielding candidates from Dalit, Adivasi, and women communities, they aim to represent the entire spectrum of society. The panel's dedication to women's inclusion is evident, with nearly half of the 42 councillor posts being represented by women. Reflecting on his journey, Umesh says, "My father was a victim of the Naxalite at-

tacks when I was still a child and my mother was forced to abandon her religion. She died within a few days unable to cope up with the trauma. I came in contact with ABVP when I joined JNU for higher education. They welcomed me and made me their own. Moreover, when the JNU Students' Union election notification arrived, they announced me as their Presidential candidate in their Central Panel. I strive to meet the expectations of ABVP in all the ways possible and am taking forward ABVP's positive work to every single student of the institution."

## Swiss woman murder case: Court directs FSL to expedite result, file report

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

New Delhi's Tis Hazari Court on Monday directed the Forensic Science Lab (FSL), Delhi to expedite the FSL results pending in the Swiss woman murder case. This matter is at the stage of framing of charges after filing of the charge sheet in January and an FSL report is awaited.

This case is related to the alleged murder of a Swiss woman in the Tilak Nagar area in October 2023. The Delhi police have already filed a charge sheet.

Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Vijay Shankar directed the director of FSL to expedite the results and listed the matter on May 15.

On January 30, the court issued notice to the Director of FSL. The Court had also directed him to file the appropriate report before the next date of hearing.

"Issue notice to the Director, FSL, Rohini, Delhi with

direction to expedite the FSL result and file appropriate report in respect of FSL result on or before the next date of hearing," ASJ Vijay Shankar ordered on January 30, 2024.

The court had also issued notice to the SHO of Tilak Nagar police Station with directions to file the appropriate report in respect of the FSL result on or before the next date of hearing.

A notice was also issued to the Investigation Officer (IO) for the next date of hearing.

Legal Aid Counsel (LAC) Advocate Rajiv Jha appeared for accuse Gurpreet Singh alias Mandeep Singh.

The court has requested Secretary, DLSA, West District, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi to appoint a legal aid counsel to the accused.

On January 15, the court took cognizance of the charge sheet filed in the Swiss woman murder case.

## Big blow to AAP leader Satyendar Jain, SC dismisses bail plea

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected the regular bail plea of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Satyendar Jain in a money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal also directed the AAP Leader to surrender to jail authorities immediately. Presently, he is on interim bail on medical grounds.

On January 17, the bench reserved their verdict on Jain's bail plea after considering the arguments put forth by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing Jain, and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, representing the Enforcement Directorate.

On January 8, the apex court had extended the interim bail granted to Jain until further notice, citing medical grounds.

The initial interim bail had been granted on May 26, 2023, and had been subsequently extended on multiple occasions.

Jain approached the top court to challenge the Delhi High Court's order rejecting his bail plea in the money



## SATYENDAR JAIN BACK IN TIHAR AFTER 9 MONTHS AS SC REJECTS REGULAR BAIL PLEA

NEW DELHI: Former Delhi health minister and AAP leader Satyendar Jain returned to Tihar Jail on Monday, hours after the Supreme Court dismissed his regular bail plea in a money laundering case, officials said. "Jain arrived at Tihar jail in the evening. He was taken to jail number 7 after the formalities of lodging him in the prison were completed," a jail official said. The 69-year-old was medically examined before being sent to a separate cell in the prison, officials said.

laundering case. On April 6, the Delhi High Court dismissed Jain's bail plea, expressing concerns that he, being an influential figure, could tamper with evidence and might not adhere to the conditions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) case against Jain is rooted in a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

complaint, alleging that he acquired movable properties between February 14, 2015, and May 31, 2017, for which he could not provide satisfactory accounting. Jain was apprehended on May 30, 2022, under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and is currently in judicial custody. The trial court had dismissed his bail petition on November 17, 2022.

## CBI opposes bail plea of Manish Sisodia



TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Monday opposed the bail plea of former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in a Delhi court and said that some high-profile people may be arrested.

The CBI said that an investigation is underway in the Delhi Excise policy case and the accused may hamper it.

Sisodia is pressing his bail application after his curative bail plea was denied by the Supreme Court.

Special judge MK Nagpal announced his decision after hearing submissions from senior advocate Mohit Mathur for Manish Sisodia and CBI's

Additional Public Prosecutor Pankaj Gupta.

The court has listed the matter on March 22 for hearing arguments on behalf of the Enforcement Directorate.

Senior advocate Mohit Mathur began by stating that the Supreme Court (SC) has observed that 13 months have passed and granted bail to o.

"Manish Sisodia satisfied the triple test. He is not at flight risk. There is no chance of tampering with evidence. In fact, there is no evidence left now. All have become approvers," the senior advocate submitted. The other accused was given bail on the basis of my judgement (Sisodia), however ironic it may be, Senior advocate Mathur submitted.

## Special cell dismantles interstate arms racket, 2 held

RAHUL GAHLAWAT  
NEW DELHI

In a crackdown on the illegal arms trade, the Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested two key operatives of an interstate illegal arms supply racket. The accused, Rahim and Vishal Solav, were apprehended near Burari Chowk, Outer Ring Road, Delhi, with 20 semi-automatic pistols in their possession.

According to the police, the operation was based on a tip-off about the duo's activities. The accused were caught red-handed while attempting to deliver a large consignment of illegal firearms to a contact in Delhi, sourced from a manufacturer in Khargon, Madhya Pradesh.

Rahim, a seasoned player in the illegal arms trade with over a decade of involvement, has been previously implicated in more than five criminal cases. He and his accomplice Vishal were found to be part of a larger syndicate operated



by Sheikh Azam, alias Aju, alias Ravan, from Betul, MP. The syndicate is known for procuring and distributing illegal weapons across Delhi, MP, and Maharashtra.

Vishal, a newer recruit, was drawn into the racket by Rahim, his neighbor, and was paid Rs. 5,000 per trip for his involvement. Both individuals have had challenging backgrounds, with Rahim being illiterate and Vishal having only a primary school education, factors that contributed to their descent into criminal activities.

The police said the seized arms, intended to be sold for around Rs. 30,000 each, highlight the lucrative nature of the illegal arms market. The swift action by the Special Cell has not only prevented these weapons from reaching the hands of criminals but also struck a blow to the network supplying them.

The case has been registered at the PS Special Cell, Delhi, and further investigation is underway to uncover the full extent of the racket and any other individuals involved.



TOP OF THE DAY

DEATH TOLL RISES TO 8 IN KOLKATA BUILDING COLLAPSE

KOLKATA: Death toll in collapse of under-construction building in South Kolkata has risen to eight, an official said on Monday.A five-storey under-construction building collapsed in Kolkata's Garden Reach area late on March 17. Seventeen people have suffered burn injuries. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited the site of the incident and also met with the injured at a hospital in South Kolkata.Earlier, WB Fire and Emergency Services Minister Sujit Bose had announced compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and Rs 1 lakh to those injured in the building collapse.

REFRAIN FROM HATE SPEECH: PUNJAB CEO

CHANDIGARH: Punjab's Chief Electoral Officer Sibin C, on Monday convened a meeting with representatives from major political parties in the state to discuss essential aspects of Lok Sabha elections. Punjab CEO outlined the key provisions of the Model Code of Conduct, stressing that political parties and candidates must refrain from hate speech, religious or caste-based vote solicitation, personal attacks on opponents, or criticism based on unverified reports. Sibin C also provided detailed insights into the election process, highlighting key statistics such as total number of voters (2,12,71,246), including Male voters (1,11,92,959), Female voters (1,00,77,543), Transgender voters (744), Persons with Disabilities (PwD-1,57,257), Overseas Voters (1597) and the number of polling stations (24,433).

CONDITION OF JOURNALIST SHOT AT IN NALANDA STABLE

NALANDA: A journalist Deepak Vishwakarma was allegedly shot by unidentified miscreants in Bihar's Nalanda district and his condition is currently stable, said the police on Monday. Briefing about the incident, SP Ashok Mishra said that they got the information about Deepak Vishwakarma, who was attacked and has been shot by some miscreants. "We got information that Deepak Vishwakarma, who is very well known to us, has been attacked. Initially, the locals told us that he met with an accident, but as per his statement, he had been shot at," Nalanda SP told reporters. The police added that the bullet shell has been recovered from the sites and an investigation has been started.

BSF RECOVERS 3.3 KG HEROIN IN TARN TARAN

TARN TARAN: BSF recovered a packet of suspected heroin, about 3.306 kilograms, in Punjab's Tarn Taran district on Monday, officials said. During the operation, vigilant troops successfully recovered a suspicious black-coloured bag near the Dargah of Bodal Saha Peer Baba, near Mehdiपुर village in the Tarn Taran district. Upon inspection, the bag was found to contain six white packets (gross weight approximately 3.306 kilograms), suspected to contain heroin. A metal ring and four illumination strips were attached to the bag.

TAMIL NADU CM, GOVERNOR AGAIN FACE TO FACE

 Governor RN Ravi refuses to reinstate Ponnudiy as minister, Tamil Nadu government moves Supreme Court

LATHA SRINIVASAN & ASHISH SINHA  
CHENNAI/ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin and Governor RN Ravi are again face to face against each other as the latter had written to Governor RN Ravi to reinstate Ponnudiy as minister but the former denied to do so, citing concerns about constitutional morality. Meanwhile, Supreme Court on Monday agreed to entertain a plea from Tamil Nadu government challenging Governor RN Ravi's decision to deny appointment of senior DMK leader K Ponnudiy as a minister in state cabinet. The governor recently declined to reinstate the senior DMK leader and former Higher Education Minister in the state cabinet, citing concerns about constitutional morality. A bench consisting of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra acknowledged arguments presented by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing state



Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi (left) exchanged greetings with chief minister MK Stalin (File Photo: ANI)

government, emphasising the urgency of the matter, which warranted listing for a hearing. "Please send an email. I will look into the email," remarked CJI. In a letter addressed to Chief Minister MK Stalin, the governor noted that the apex court had only temporarily suspended Ponnudiy's conviction through an interim order. Consequently, the governor declined to appoint the leader to the Stalin cabinet. However, the state government recently reinstated Ponnudiy as a legislator following the Supreme Court's suspension of his conviction in a disproportionate assets case. In December 2023, Madras

High Court sentenced former Higher Education Minister Ponnudiy to three years' imprisonment in a disproportionate assets case. This conviction was stayed and the sentence suspended by Supreme Court on March 11. Subsequently, Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin had written to Governor RN Ravi to reinstate Ponnudiy as minister. However, the Governor rejected Stalin's request stating it was against Constitutional morality. DMK MP and Supreme Court advocate P Wilson stated that Tamil Nadu Governor was "proving to be a repeat offender and is acting with scant regard to the Constitution". Wilson said, "Governor RN

Ravi has given his own interpretation of Supreme Court's order stating that conviction has only been 'suspended, not set aside'. This is an absurd interpretation and is 'an affront to the order. The Governor's action is a clear act of contempt of Court since the Court suspended the conviction for the sole reason that it should not operate as a disqualification.' Wilson went on to add that the Governor should be sacked and that he was trying to run a parallel government in the state. "The Supreme Court has held in several rulings that the Governor cannot question assessment of Chief Minister regarding suitability of person being appointed as a Minister. Governor's confrontation with Government is unsurprising since he is acting as defacto President of TN's BJP unit and has a proclivity to seek media attention, but by his current action he has committed gross constitutional impropriety and contempt of Court. He is seeking to run a parallel government from Raj Bhavan because BJP can never set foot in Fort St. George.

SC declines to stay HP assembly Speaker's order disqualifying 6 MLAs

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to stay the order of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker disqualifying six Congress rebels who had cross-voted in the recent Rajya Sabha polls in the state.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta issued notice to the office of HP Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania, seeking its response to the plea within four weeks.

The bench specified that

pending the adjudication of their plea, rebel HP Congress MLAs would not be permitted to vote or participate in the Assembly's proceedings.

Regarding the question of holding by-elections for the six vacant seats, the bench remarked that it would need to examine whether the elections notified by the ECI should be stayed during the pendency of the plea.

The matter was scheduled for listing on May 6, and the rebel MLAs were given a week to file their rejoinder. The filing of nominations for the six vacant assembly seats

is set to commence on May 7. The six rebels—Sudhir Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Rajinder Rana, Inder Dutt Lakhnpal, Chetanya Sharma, and Devinder Kumar Bhutto—were disqualified on February 29 for defying a Congress whip to be present in the House and vote in favor of the Himachal Pradesh government during the cut motion and budget.

Following the disqualification of the rebels, the effective strength of the House decreased from 68 to 62, while the number of Congress MLAs reduced from 40 to 34.

MP: Cong leader Syed Jafar joins BJP

TDG NETWORK  
BHOPAL

In a big blow to the Congress party ahead of Lok Sabha election, Congress leader Syed Jafar, a close aide of former Chief Minister Kamal Nath, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday.

Jafar took the membership of the saffron party in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, BJP state president VD Sharma and others at the state BJP office in Bhopal.

Jafar had been Congress State General Secretary, Congress Media Vice President and state spokesperson of the party.

After joining the party, the Congress leader said that he joined the saffron party to maintain the integrity of the country.

"I thought and brainstormed about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's slogan 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas', The agenda that RSS had when it was formed in 1925 and on

which BJP worked on being in power and the Congress party is continuously doing confused politics. Seeing all this, I have joined the Bharatiya Janata Party to maintain the integrity of the country and development of the country," Jafar said.

On being asked, he is close to Kamal Nath whether he had discussed with him before which sides or addressed his grievances before him, Jafar added that he had no resentment with Nath.

PM Modi afraid of Kharge: Karnataka Deputy CM Shivakumar

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was afraid of the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as he started his campaign for Lok Sabha elections from Kharge's home district Kalaburagi.

He said that the party is sure to win 20 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka including Kalaburagi.

"PM Modi is afraid of the leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge. Hence he started his election campaign from Karnataka, especially Kalaburagi. Congress will win 20 seats in Karnataka including Kalaburagi parliamentary constituency," Shivakumar told ANI.

Kalaburagi (Gulbarga Lok

*When asked about the party's second list, the deputy chief minister said that the party's second list of candidates for the Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka will be announced on March 20. Already, the Congress has announced candidates for seven seats out of a total of 28 in the state*

Sabha segment) is the home district of Congress chief Kharge, who was elected to the Lok Sabha in 2009 and 2014. He lost to BJP's Umesh Jadhav in the 2019 general elections.

When asked about the party's second list, the deputy chief minister said that the party's second list of candidates for the Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka will be announced on March 20. Already, the Congress has an-

nounced candidates for seven seats out of a total of 28 in the state

"The Congress election committee meeting will be held on March 19 and the list is likely to be released on March 20," Shivakumar said.

He further said that the guarantee implementation committee members meeting will be held on March 21 at the state, district and taluk levels. "We are going to assign Lok Sabha election responsi-

bilities to them at the meeting," he told ANI.

Karnataka has 28 Lok Sabha seats. In 2019, BJP won 25 seats with a vote share of 51.7 per cent while Congress won one seat with a 32.1 per cent vote share. On the other hand, JD(S) too got one seat and South Indian actress Sumalatha Ambareesh and independent MP won the Mandya constituency in Karnataka with the support of the BJP.

The Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka will be held in two phases on April 26 and May 7. The elections for 543 Lok Sabha seats will be held from April 19 to June 1, with counting of votes scheduled for June 4. Elections to State legislatures of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim will also be held in the same period.

Don't make us investigating agency: Gujarat HC on foreign students' assault PIL

ASHISH SINHA  
NEW DELHI

Gujarat High Court on Monday emphasised that it should not function as a probe agency and clarified that not every incident warrants a PIL, concerning an assault on students from foreign countries at a university hostel in Ahmedabad.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Aniruddha P Mayee declined to take suo motu cognisance of the incident, stating that the matter falls under the purview of the police.

The court's stance came in response to a lawyer's request

to address the issue through a suo motu PIL.

Chief Justice Agrawal emphasized, "Our effort is that justice be done, but don't make us an investigating agency. We are not doing that. We still want to remind ourselves that we are constitutional courts. We will definitely take into cognisance if such matter comes in, but this is not one of those."

She reiterated that not every incident in the city is suitable for PIL consideration and cautioned against substituting the court for law enforcement.

When lawyer KR Koshti raised concerns about the

FIR not encompassing all pertinent sections, the court directed him to seek legal recourse.

According to police reports, around two dozen individuals allegedly entered the government-run Gujarat University's hostel in Ahmedabad on Saturday night, objecting to students from foreign countries praying near the facility block where they resided. The altercation resulted in two students—one from Sri Lanka and another from Tajikistan being hospitalized. An FIR was filed against 20-25 unidentified assailants, and nine investigative teams were assigned to probe the incident.

AIADMK slams DMK for getting Rs 509 cr from lottery baron

LATHA SRINIVASAN  
CHENNAI

AIADMK leader Edappadi Palaniswami took to social media on Monday to slam the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu over electoral bonds.

Palaniswami said DMK had received funds through electoral bonds from Future Gaming, a company which was into lottery and "gambling". "It is a matter of shame that the DMK, which pretended to act against online gaming and introduced a weak legislation, received funds from a gambling company that put lives at risk," he stated.

AIADMK leader went on

FUTURE GAMING GAVE HIGHEST TO DMK: BJP

Mumbai: BJP leader Pravin Darekar on Monday replied to Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut over Electoral Bonds data and said that a gaming company has given more to Tamil Nadu ruling DMK, which is a part of the I.N.D.I.A bloc. In a post on X, Sanjay Raut had said "On February 28, written a letter to Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis and informed him about online lottery gambling game going on in Maharashtra. Many young children are ruined in this online lottery gambling den and many families have been destroyed. This gambling is supported by the government, as the police and ministry are getting huge installments. Action is demanded. How will Fadnavis take action?" he said.

to write, "The AIADMK governments in the past banned the lottery business and online gambling in the interests of the people. But the DMK government enacted a toothless legislation to ban online gambling and, on the other hand, received donations from the very company involved

in gambling business. It is indeed a shame. The people of Tamil Nadu will teach the DMK a befitting lesson in the Lok Sabha elections." DMK's TR Baalu replied to Edappadi Palaniswami's criticism and said that the DMK had been transparent in its disclosure about the donations it had

received to the Election Commission of India. Baalu added, "It was the DMK government that enacted the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Online Gaming Act after the Madras High Court said that the law enacted during the Palaniswami-led AIADMK regime for the purpose was illegal.

EC banks on AI for trouble-free polls in WB

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE  
KOLKATA

In a bid to ensure trouble-free elections in West Bengal, the Election Commission is firming up plans to use the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this year's Lok Sabha elections in the State.

Election Commission sources in Kolkata said the use of AI would make it possible for the poll panel to detect irregularities in sensitive booths during the poll process.

"Various AI tools will be used to monitor polling processes, anal-

yse data, and ensure election integrity through machine learning algorithms and help us take preventive measures promptly," a senior poll panel official told The Daily Guardian.

He explained that with the number of sensitive booths in the State running into a few thousands, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to spot and act on electoral malpractices at such booths in this year's Lok Sabha elections would go a long way in controlling election improprieties.

"AI tools have been programmed to recognise the polling process in a booth and trigger alerts whenever it spots any discrepancy, such as an absence of poll officials or the presence of more than the usual number of people in a booth," he added.

He explained that AI-based analyses of audio and video footage obtained from each polling station's webcast would trigger a process of auto-selection if any sort of irregularity was noticed. This "auto-selection" would en-

sure early alerts to EC officials. There are also plans to keep track of queue management through AI-based webcasting.

For example, if the footage recorded any instance of commotion or high-decibel sounds in booths, these booths would get "auto-selected" by AI. Alerts would then simultaneously go out to officials at the EC's office in Delhi, the CEO's office in Kolkata and the District Election Officer (DEO) at the district headquarters for them to verify and act on the

situation with field officers, the official added.

"Even if a voter is present in the voting compartment for a longer-than-usual period, it will trigger an alert and the voter's facial image will be captured," the official said.

Polling data will also be analysed to look at discrepancies - such as more-than-usual votes cast in a very short time.

"Machine learning algorithms can also be used to analyse election data from previous elections

to identify patterns that could indicate election fraud and prevent it from happening in the future. AI technology may also be used to monitor voting machines to detect any attempts at hacking or tampering," an EC official added.

Sources said AI monitoring would be deployed at all sensitive and vulnerable booths, so that all data was properly captured, analysed and forwarded to returning officers and observers, so that proper preventive measures can be adopted.



# EC REMOVES HOME SECYS IN 6 STATES

Those in BJP-ruled states also included in reshuffle

ABHINANDAN MISHRA  
NEW DELHI

Less than 48 hours after the code of conduct came into effect, the Election Commission of India (ECI) ordered the removal of top bureaucrats in six states, including those presently under the rule of the BJP. More such orders are expected to come in the coming days.

Those who have been asked to be removed from their present posts include Rajeev Kumar, director general of police in West Bengal.

Home secretaries in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand- all states where BJP is in power, along-with Home secretaries of Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh that have non-BJP



Chief Ministers, too have been removed.

Also impacted by Monday's order is the 1989 batch IAS officer, Iqbal Singh Chahal who is presently posted as Brihanmumbai municipal commissioner. Maharashtra is presently ruled by BJP and its alliance partners.

Apart from these vital posts, the ECI ordered the transfer of Secretaries of the general administrative de-

*Monday's order impacts the 1989 batch IAS officer, Iqbal Singh Chahal Brihanmumbai municipal commissioner.*

partments in Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh.

In West Bengal, the ECI has asked the Chief Secretary of West Bengal to shift Kumar to a 'non-election' related post and the charge of the DGP be handed to the next senior officer. The Chief Secretary was also asked to send a panel of three eligible officers for the post of DGP and Inspector General of Police to the ECI by 5 PM.

While some of the officials, impacted by today's order, were found to be holding dual charge in the offices of the respective chief ministers of each state, some others were changed because of their perceived closeness to people holding power in state.

Such orders by the ECI, during the elections, are taken on the inputs it receives from various quarters, including its own exercise and suggestions and complaints received from the opposition parties and members of the society. This is done in order to maintain neutrality and ensure a free and fair election exercise. The ECI had announced the poll schedule for general elections, assembly elections and by-elections on 16 March at 3 pm.

# TMC sees red as DGP shunted out

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE  
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress today voiced its displeasure publicly after the Election Commission ordered the immediate shunting out of State Director-General of Police Rajeev Kumar, who is seen to be an extremely close aide of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The EC asked the State Chief Secretary to post Rajeev Kumar to a "non-election" related assignment with immediate effect and send a list of three names by 5 pm today to replace the incumbent DGP.

Based on the list sent by the State Government, the EC approved the appointment of Vivek Sahay as the new Director-General of Police for West Bengal. The State Government issued the order to appoint Sahay

as the new DGP within minutes of getting the EC's approval.

Rajeev Kumar, who was appointed as the DGP in December 2023 after the retirement of Manoj Malaviya, is known to be close

*Rajeev Kumar, who was appointed as the DGP in December 2023 after the retirement of Manoj Malaviya, is known to be close to Mamata Banerjee*

to Mamata Banerjee. In 2019, in an unprecedented move, the CM had held a two-day dharna after the CBI accused Kumar, the then Kolkata Police Commissioner, of allegedly sup-

pressing and destroying evidence in the investigation of the Saradha chit fund scam. The State Police had also prevented the CBI team from entering Rajeev Kumar's official residence while the Chief Minister sat on dharna overnight on a main Kolkata thoroughfare to protest the CBI move.

Election Commission sources said that the poll panel often takes such steps in order to ensure a level-playing field during elections. The decision to shift the West Bengal DGP was taken as the officer was removed earlier too from active election management-related duty during the 2016 Assembly election in the State and in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the sources pointed out.

Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh hit out at the Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP) over the removal of the DGP by the Election Commission, saying that the move was a "reflection" of the ruling party.

"We have seen that the BJP is trying its best to grab different organisations including the ECI...They have taken over the control of Central agencies and different organisations. In this case also, after the announcement of the Lok Sabha elections...what we saw today, is the reflection of the BJP," Kunal Ghosh said.

He added: "They know that in the Lok Sabha election, BJP will be defeated in most of the seats in West Bengal...Their organisation is very poor, very weak...We are confident that BJP may transfer a few officers but the public with Trinamool Congress and didi (Mamata Banerjee). The TMC will defeat the BJP again."

# Exporters need to follow new British rules to avail duty benefits: DGFT

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Exporters seeking to avail duty concessions on shipments to the UK will have to adhere to the new British rules under the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS).

In a trade notice, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said that the United Kingdom (UK) has replaced its existing origin declaration process under Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP) with the UK DCTS effective from June 19, 2023.

The transition period for this change was extended until December 31, 2023.

"Starting from January 1, 2024, onwards, Indian exporters to the UK are required to adhere to the new rules under DCTS to avail concessions on their exports to the UK," the trade notice to the exporters community said.

It added that goods that meet the UK DCTS Rules of Origin (RoO) requirements would be eligible to claim a concessional rate of import duty for exports to the UK. "Consequently, the origin

criteria necessary for satisfying the Rules of Origin to avail tariff concessions on exports from India to the UK must be filled in through self-certification," it added.

Accordingly, it said, Indian exporters are directed to use origin declaration wording under DCTS scheme, in place of origin declaration wording under GSP.

Certain labour-intensive sectors such as leather, carpets, chemicals, iron and steel and textiles were the major beneficiaries of the GSP scheme.

The US, European Union (EU), Australia, Japan and many other developed countries grant unilateral import duty concessions to developing countries under their GSP schemes.

As per estimates, India's exports worth USD 2.5 billion were entitled for the GSP benefit in the UK.

India and the UK have been negotiating a free trade agreement since January 13, 2021. As many as 14 rounds of talks have been completed and both sides are aiming to conclude the negotiations at the earliest.

# Tata Steel to cease operations of coke ovens at Port Talbot plant in UK

AGENCIES  
LONDON

Tata Steel on Monday, said it has decided to cease operations of the coke ovens at the Port Talbot plant in the UK.

It will increase import of coke to offset the impact of the coke oven closures, Tata Steel said in a regulatory filing. "As a further update on its operations in the UK, Tata Steel UK has decided to cease operations of the coke ovens at the Port Talbot plant, in Wales, following a deterioration of operational stability," the filing said.

Tata Steel had previously stated that many of its heavy-end assets in Port Talbot are at their end-of-life capability.

Tata Steel is currently at an advanced stage of consultations with trade unions in the UK on its proposal for the planned restructuring involving closure of the iron and steelmaking assets at Port Talbot, and transition to sustainable low-carbon steelmaking facility.

The transition plan involves a 1.25 billion pound investment in Electric Arc Furnace technology in Port Talbot and asset upgrades.

# Murthy gifts shares worth Rs 240 cr to grandson

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Infosys founder N R Narayana Murthy has gifted 15 lakh shares to grandson Ekagrah Rohan Murty valued at around Rs 240 crore, according to a regulatory filing.

Murthy has gifted 15 lakh shares, or 0.04 per cent of his equity holding, to Rohan Narayana Murty son Master Ekagrah Rohan Murty --making him the youngest billionaire shareholder of Infosys.

The value of total gifted shares come to around Rs 240 crore as per company's



*Murthy has gifted 15 lakh shares his equity holding, to Master Ekagrah Rohan Murty*

closing share price of Rs 1,602.3 apiece.

# Modi says Mother India attacked

CONTINUED FROM P1

doesn't have a 56-inch chest."

"In Hindu religion, there is a word 'Shakti'. We are fighting against a Shakti. Now the question arises: What is that Shakti? As someone here said, the King's soul is in EVM. It is correct. The King's soul is in EVM. It is in every institution of Hindustan, in ED, in CBI, in the Income Tax department."

At the rally in Shivamogga in Karnataka, Modi said, "If they (INDI alliance) want to destroy 'Shakti', then worshipping 'Shakti' is our resolve."

The Prime Minister said that when he heard about the fight against Shakti from Shivaji Park, he wondered how it would have hurt Shiv Sena supremo late Bal Thackeray's soul.

The Prime Minister noted that the remark was made at Shivaji Park where every child grows up with the mantra of 'Jai Bhavani, Jai Shivaji'.

"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (17th Century AD Maratha ruler) took the blessings of Goddess Tulja Bhavani and marched for the freedom of India. He was a Shakti worshipper. And at the same Shivaji Park, it was announced to eliminate Shakti," Modi said.



PM Modi at a public meeting. File photo

Modi also took a swipe at former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Bal Thackeray's son Uddhav Thackeray, Sena (UBT) head, who was present when Gandhi made the speech. "And who were there on the dais? What would be happening to Bal Thackeray's soul?" he asked.

Noting that he was a worshipper of 'Shakti', the feminine form of God just as crores of Hindus, he said it was 'Shakti' which gave him the energy when he entered the public life.

Underlining that every woman of the country is a reflection of 'Shakti', Modi said his government always gave preference to 'Nari Shakti' or 'women power'.

Modi again referred to the success of Chandrayaan-3 mission last year and said, "When Chandrayaan-3 reached where no one had ever reached before (lunar south pole), we gave that place the name 'Shiv-Shakti

Point'."

Modi further said an attack on 'Shakti' means attack on women oriented programmes and Mother India.

"Emergence of Shakti destroys terrorism and atrocities. Now the INDI alliance and Congress have challenged this Shakti. Every woman, daughter and sister will give a befitting reply to the Congress. They will understand what it means to challenge Shakti."

In a post on X, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla lashed out at Rahul Gandhi, saying it is very clear from his comments that his party is fighting against Hinduism. He has showed his "hatred" for women power and all forms of its manifestation, Poonawalla said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said Rahul Gandhi neither understands Hindu religion nor democracy.

# SC directions to SBI

CONTINUED FROM P1

vided information.

Furthermore, the court clarified that its previous judgment, dated February 15, 2024, mandated the disclosure of data concerning electoral bonds purchased and redeemed from April 12, 2019, onwards. An application requesting disclo-

sure of electoral bonds data from March 1, 2018, to April 12, 2019, was dismissed by the court.

Addressing concerns about the purpose of alphanumeric numbers on the bonds, the court sought clarification on their role in ensuring security and facilitating an audit trail. The Solicitor General highlight-

ed the misinterpretation of facts and subsequent social media scrutiny following the publication of electoral bonds data.

Chief Justice Chandrachud reiterated the court's commitment to transparency and adherence to the rule of law, emphasizing the importance of disclosure in maintaining accountability.

CONTINUED FROM P1

of the deceased and for the injured persons. We stand by the distressed families and rescue operations shall continue," the Chief Minister posted on social media. The State Government announced a compensation of 5 lakh for the deceased and 1 lakh to the injured.

Local residents alleged that the building was constructed illegally after filling up a waterbody. They said that construction of the building had been going on for the past six months under the nose of the administration. They also raised questions as to how a five-storeyed building could be constructed in an area where the approach road was only three feet wide.

Mayor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, State's Urban Development Minister and local MLA Firhad Ha-

kim said that it was difficult for him to take stock of illegal constructions in every lane.

He said the trend of illegal construction started during the Left Front regime and blamed Kolkata Municipal Corporation officials for not being vigilant.

Admitting that illegal constructions in the area were rampant, Hakim said: "It has been a trend here and also in some other areas since the Left Front era." He also admitted that there could have been a "lapse on the part of the officials" for failing to monitor whether constructions in the locality were being made in accordance with law.

The CPIM, the biggest constituent of the Left Front, hit back at the allegation. Senior leader Sujan Chakraborty said: "It is laughable that Kolkata's Mayor, who is also the local MLA, blames the Left Front for the ille-



NDRF personnel and others during a rescue operation at Metiabruz, South Kolkata on Monday where a 5-storey under-construction building collapsed last night.

gal building being built in his own constituency. He seems to have forgotten that the Trinamool Congress has been in power at the city's civic body for the past 15 years."

The Leader of the Opposition and BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari called the collapse "a TMC-made disaster".

"Firstly, since 2010, after the TMC Party gained control of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), edging

such illegal constructions existed in the Garden Reach area itself.

Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said that instead of indulging in politics, the Opposition should stand by the people in distress

"Although no one lived in the under-construction building, it collapsed on the adjacent shanties. We fear that many individuals might still be trapped under the rubble," said a local resident.

Indranil Khan, the State BJP Yuva Morcha president, tweeted: "The catastrophic collapse of an unauthorised illegal building at Azhan Molla Bagan in KMC Ward No 134, Garden Reach area, crushing and trapping several people including children underneath, is a fatal consequence of the corrupt civic system in Kolkata running in tandem with TMC-backed syndicate mafia."

# DMK names Cong's 9 seats

CONTINUED FROM P1

ducherry to the Congress. The list of constituencies was announced by the DMK days after it finalised the numbers of its seat-sharing arrangement with its allies.

The DMK allotted Tiruchirappalli LS segment to Vaikolled MDMK, a constituency currently represented by the Congress party's Su Thirunavukkarasar. The MDMK has named Principal Party Secretary and Vaiko's son Durai Vaiko as its candidate for Tiruchirappalli.

Of the nine seats allotted to Congress, Cuddalore, Mayiladuthurai and Tirunelveli are currently held by the DMK in the 17th Lok Sabha and the remaining seats were won by the Congress in 2019 as an ally of the Dravidian party.

In the 2019 LS polls, barring the Theni LS seat which was won by the AIADMK, the Congress won the other eight constituencies it contested.

The DMK has now completed the exercise of seat allocation, which began over a month ago.

Madurai and Dindigul have been allotted to CPI(M), Nagapattinam and Tiruppur to CPI and the reserved seats of Chidambaram and Villupuram to VCK. The IUML will contest from Ramanathapuram and the Kongunadu Makkal Desiya Katch (KMDK) is set to fight from Namakkal on the Rising Sun symbol.

The DMK will be contesting in 21 Lok Sabha seats (22 seats when Namakkal is included, as KMDK will contest on the DMK symbol) and its allies in the remaining 18 LS segments in Tamil Nadu.

# ‘What I spoke about is not religious’

CONTINUED FROM P1

"Narendra Modi ji, who is a slave of the same power, imposes GST on the poor of the country without controlling inflation and auctions the country's wealth to increase the strength of that power.

"Recognise that power and so does Narendra Modi ji. It is not any kind of religious power, it is the power of unrighteousness, corruption and falsehood. That's why whenever I raise my voice against it, Modi ji and his machine of lies gets upset and enraged," Gandhi said.

At a rally in Mumbai, Gandhi commented that, "We are not fighting against Narendra Modi, nor are we fighting against one person. But, one face has been projected in the forefront."

*"I recognise that power and so does Modi ji. It is not any kind of religious power, it is the power of unrighteousness, corruption...."*

"In Hindu dharma, there is a word 'shakti'. We are fighting against a 'shakti' (power). The question arises as to what is that 'shakti'....," he said at the public rally in Mumbai where several leaders of the opposition were present.

Congress leader Pawan Khara likened the BJP to 'Asuri Shakti' and alleged that the nation has seen atrocities against women in the last 10 years and cited the rape cases in Unnao,

Kathua and Hathras as well as the harassment of women wrestlers.

"The prime minister is upset and the entire BJP is talking baseless things after Rahul Gandhi attacked 'Asuri Shakti'. This election is between 'Asuri Shakti' and 'Daivik Shakti'," the Congress national spokesperson said.

He claimed that the people of the country, be it farmers, youths, women and the poor, are all standing with Rahul Gandhi and he will emerge victorious in this election.

"This election will decide whether the country will be run by 'Asuri Shakti' or 'Daivik Shakti'. This country always got its strength from 'Daivik Shakti' and the youths, women and farmers are standing with Rahul Gandhi," the Congress leader said.

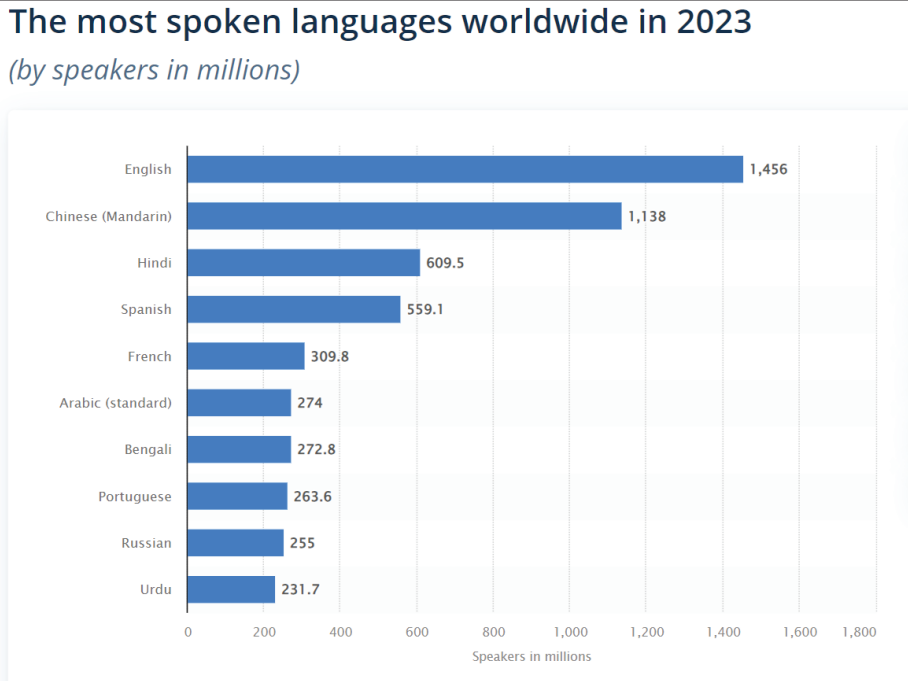


# LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE: DIVE INTO WORLD’S MOST WIDELY SPOKEN LANGUAGES

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Have you ever pondered the most commonly spoken languages globally? Despite there being over 7,000 languages worldwide, more than half of the global population communicates in just 23 of them. Whether it's the musical flow of Spanish, the intricate depth of Mandarin, or the rhythmic patterns of English, mastering these prominent languages can unlock doors to diverse cultures and abundant opportunities.

Understanding this information is crucial for those planning global expansion strategies and seeking advancement in the business sphere. Moreover, whether in professional environments or personal growth endeavours, proficiency in multiple languages opens up new horizons and fosters deeper cultural appreciation.



Despite the absence of native speakers, MSA garners a considerable number of non-native speakers due to its widespread usage in formal contexts. It is commonly employed in newspapers, TV broadcasts, and movies, serving as an academic language found in literature and politics. However, MSA is not utilized in everyday conversation among Arabic speakers.

We’ve curated an all-encompassing list for you, ranging from languages that English speakers may find relatively easy to learn to those posing more significant challenges, all based on authentic data.

Following are the top 10 most spoken languages globally:

**ENGLISH:** English stands as the foremost language globally, with a staggering 1,452 million speakers. Of these, 372.9 million speak it as their first language, while the total count surpasses 1.4 billion when including non-native speakers. According to Ethnologue, English holds the top spot as the most spoken language worldwide, encompassing both native and non-native speakers.

Much akin to Latin or Greek in their prime, English has evolved into the lingua franca of the modern era. It serves as the default language in various do-

main, including international business, tourism, technology, and more.

For bilingual individuals proficient in Spanish and English, their linguistic prowess allows them to comprehend a significant portion of global connectivity. They can effectively communicate with one in three internet users and access over 60% of the content published online. This highlights the immense utility and reach of the English language in the digital age.

**MANDARIN:** Mandarin boasts an impressive 1,118 million speakers, with 929 million of them speaking it as their first language. When considering total speakers, Mandarin emerges as the second most widely spoken language globally, surpassed only by English. However, it takes the lead as

the most spoken language in terms of first-language (native) speakers, primarily due to China's substantial population.

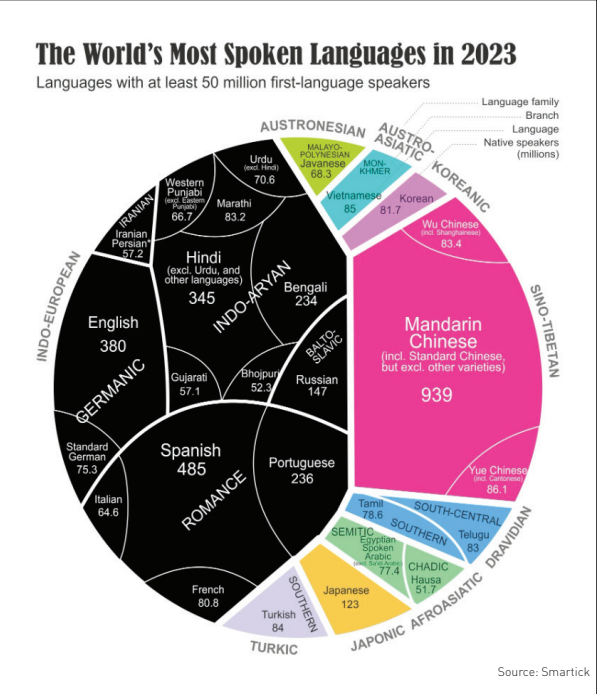
It's essential to note that Mandarin isn't technically a distinct language but rather a collection of dialects within the Chinese language family. What distinguishes these dialects is their mutual intelligibility, allowing speakers of different Mandarin dialects to understand one another effectively. This linguistic unity under the umbrella term “Mandarin” contributes significantly to its widespread usage and influence.

**HINDI:** Hindi boasts a substantial 602+ million speakers, with 343.9 million using it as their first language. Alongside English, Hindi holds the status of being one of the 22 official languages of India, the world's second

most populous country. India's remarkable linguistic landscape, encompassing over 121 languages, contributes to the significant number of non-native speakers who utilize Hindi as a lingua franca.

The extensive reach of Hindi extends beyond the borders of India, as it is spoken by over a quarter of the population of Nepal as well. This widespread usage underscores the importance and influence of Hindi as a language of communication and cultural exchange across the Indian subcontinent.

**SPANISH:** Spanish boasts an impressive 548+ million speakers, with 474.7 million using it as their first language. Globally, Spanish holds the distinction of being the second most widely spoken language in terms of native speakers. Addition-



ally, it stands as the most spoken among the Romance languages and ranks as the third most utilized language on the internet.

The extensive spread of Spanish can be attributed to Spain's significant colonial expansion, which not only reached the Americas but also extended to Africa and Asia. Presently, there are 21 Spanish-speaking countries worldwide, with numerous others harbouring substantial Spanish-speaking populations.

Of particular note is the United States, which holds the distinction of being the second country with the largest number of Spanish speakers globally. This highlights the widespread presence and influence of the Spanish language across diverse regions and cultures.

**FRENCH:** French boasts a total of 280 million speakers, with 79.9 million utilizing it as their first language. Similar to Spanish and English, French spread globally through the expansion of the French colonial empire. Presently, there are 29 French-speaking countries dispersed across various regions worldwide.

Regarded as the language of culture, French holds significant importance in the global discourse. Despite English's dominance in business, French stands out as a language deeply intertwined with cultural heritage and intellectual pursuits. This importance is underscored by its status as the third most spoken language worldwide in terms of non-native speakers. This widespread adoption speaks to the enduring influence and relevance of the French language in today's interconnected world.

**MODERN STANDARD ARABIC:** Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) boasts a total of 274 million speakers, with no individuals using it as their first language. This distinction makes MSA unique on this list, as it lacks native speakers. The Arabic language encompasses numerous dialects, such as Egyptian Arabic, Levantine Arabic, and Mesopotamian Arabic, among others. Individuals grow up speaking their respective local dialect rather than MSA.

Despite the absence of native speakers, MSA garners a considerable number of non-native speakers due to

its widespread usage in formal contexts. It is commonly employed in newspapers, TV broadcasts, and movies, serving as an academic language found in literature and politics. However, MSA is not utilized in everyday conversation among Arabic speakers.

For those interested in learning Arabic, it is recommended to begin with a specific dialect and subsequently explore MSA to broaden linguistic horizons. This approach allows for a more practical and comprehensive understanding of the Arabic language and its diverse forms of expression.

**BENGALI:** Bengali boasts an impressive 272+ million speakers, with 233.7 million using it as their first language. Serving as the official language of Bangladesh, Bengali also finds usage in certain regions of India and Burma. While Bengali may appear surprising on a list of the most spoken languages globally due to its regional concentration, its inclusion becomes understandable when considering the significant population density of the regions where it is spoken.

**RUSSIAN:** Russian boasts over 258 million speakers worldwide, with 154 million using it as their first language. Its inclusion among the most widely spoken languages globally is less surprising given that Russia holds the distinction of being the largest country in the world by territory. Moreover, while Russian serves as the official language of only four nations, it enjoys widespread usage across 19 countries.

A noteworthy fact about Russia is that it holds the title of having the highest number of native speakers among all European languages. This further underscores the language's significant influence and reach, not only within Russia but also across various regions where it is spoken as a second language.

**PORTUGUESE:** Portuguese boasts a significant 257+ million speakers worldwide, with 232.4 million utilizing it as their first language. Similar to other languages, Portuguese underwent extensive expansion during the European colonial period. Presently, it holds the status of being the official language in nine countries across Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia.

Among these countries, Brazil stands out as the largest, with the highest number of Portuguese speakers. This fact is particularly noteworthy as Brazil's substantial population contributes to making Portuguese the most widely spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere. This linguistic dominance underscores the enduring legacy of Portuguese colonial influence and its continued relevance in contemporary global discourse.

**URDU:** Urdu boasts a sizable 231.3 million speakers worldwide, with 70.2 million using it as their first language. It holds the status of being one of the two official languages in Pakistan and is prevalent in certain regions of India as well. Notably, Urdu shares a high degree of mutual intelligibility with Hindi, allowing speakers of both languages to understand each other with relative ease.

Despite their linguistic similarities, Urdu and Hindi differ in their scripts. Urdu utilizes a modified Persian script for its alphabet, while Hindi employs Sanskrit. This distinction in scripts does not hinder mutual comprehension between Urdu and Hindi speakers, highlighting the linguistic and cultural interconnectedness of these languages in the Indian subcontinent.

# Delving into voter turnout of India’s first Lok Sabha elections

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

On Saturday, the Election Commission of India announced that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections will be conducted in seven phases, scheduled from April 19 to June 1. The results will be announced on June 4, marking the commencement of the Model Code of Conduct.

The voting process will commence with the first phase on April 19, followed by the second phase on April 26, the third phase on May 7, the fourth phase on May 13, the fifth phase on May 20, the sixth phase on May 25, and concluding with the seventh phase on June 1. The counting of votes is scheduled for June 4.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar explained that the decision to conduct the polls in seven phases was made considering various factors such as geographic conditions, festivals, and examination schedules.

Approximately 96.8 crore individuals are eligible to exercise their voting rights in the forthcoming elections across over 12 lakh polling stations.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, secured a resounding victory by winning 303 seats out of the total 542 contested seats. The party's ex-

VOTER TURNOUT								
STATES		ELECTORS			VOTERS			POLL
		1-Seat	2-Seat	Total	1-Seat	2-Seat	Total	% (age)
1.	Bilaspur	68130	0	68130	0	0	0	0.00
2.	Himachal Pradesh	180581	350437	531018	47812	175377	223189	25.32
3.	Vindhya Pradesh	577606	1183320	1760926	199271	506567	705838	30.06
4.	Madhya Bharat	2613161	1477696	4090857	1005046	948525	1953571	35.08
5.	Orissa	4682647	3025514	7708161	1544805	2114688	3659493	35.39
6.	Rajasthan	6169212	1507207	7676419	2177429	1349528	3526957	38.40
7.	Uttar Pradesh	19087384	12682925	31770309	7689230	9385745	17074975	38.41
8.	Bhopal	419970	0	419970	169457	0	169457	40.35
9.	Bihar	10682079	7398102	18080181	4529665	5462786	9992451	40.35
10.	West Bengal *	7129070	5371405	12500475	3295488	4318445	7613933	40.49
11.	Kutch	288400	0	288400	119580	0	119580	41.46
12.	Hyderabad	6084897	2947332	9032229	2543182	2311680	4854862	44.70
13.	Madhya Pradesh	6507523	4567617	11075140	3310471	3882120	7192591	45.98
14.	Tripura	329806	0	329806	157371	0	157371	47.72
15.	Assam	2764093	1377627	4141720	1314986	1332141	2647127	47.96
16.	Saurashtra	1838880	0	1838880	762705	0	762705	49.41
17.	Manipur	298552	0	298552	152467	0	152467	51.07
18.	Mysore	2500372	1469363	3969735	1394261	1430166	2824427	51.93
19.	Bombay	10827120	5962489	16789609	5821586	5706704	11528290	52.38
20.	Ajmer	329484	0	329484	178999	0	178999	54.33
21.	Punjab	4413314	2305031	6718345	2538332	2454006	4992338	55.33
22.	Madras	17516497	9464464	26980961	10193521	9740640	19934161	56.33
23.	Delhi	356815	387853	744668	203765	452135	655900	57.92
24.	Patiala And East Punjab States Union	1050256	713275	1763531	611839	863273	1475112	59.56
25.	Coorg	94593	0	94593	63813	0	63813	67.46
26.	Travancore Cochin	3504646	705598	4210244	2462085	1028391	3490476	71.00
TOTAL		110315088	62897255	173212343	52487166	53462917	105950083	44.87
* Includes One 3 Seats Parliamentary Constituency								



In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, secured a resounding victory by winning 303 seats out of the total 542 contested seats. The party's exceptional performance was notably evident in states like Uttar Pradesh, where it won 62 out of 80 seats, reaffirming its status as the preeminent political entity in the nation.

ceptional performance was notably evident in states like Uttar Pradesh, where it won 62 out of 80 seats, reaffirming its status as the preeminent political entity in the nation.

However, it all started with the first Lok Sabha polls held in 1951, after India got its Independence. Here are some insights, explaining the voter turnout, during the first general elections held in 1951.

The list of national parties during the first Lok Sabha polls in India comprised a diverse range of political entities representing various ideologies and interests.

These parties included the All India Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS), Bolshevik Party of India (BPI), Communist Party of India (CPI), Forward Bloc (Marxist Group) (FBL(MG)), Forward Bloc (Ruikar Group) (FBL(RG)), Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha (HMS), Indian National Congress (INC), Krishikar Lok Party (KLP), Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP), Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), Akhil Bharatiya Ram Raja Parishad (RRP), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), All India Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF), and Socialist Party (SP).

Each of these parties represents various constituencies, ideologies, and social groups, contributing to the diverse political landscape of the country.



# CAA: JDU LEADER ANWAR'S STATEMENT TRIGGERS ROW

TDG NETWORK  
MOTIHARI

Deviating from the official line of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Janata Dal (United) leader Khalid Anwar on Sunday said the law, guaranteeing permanent residency to members of persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, will not be implemented in Bihar.

The remark assumes significance as the JD(U) partners with BJP and other allies in ruling NDA coalition in the state.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Anwar claimed that JD(U) chief and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has ruled out the implementation of the CAA in Bihar.

"The CAA will not be implemented in Bihar. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has already made it clear that all 13 crore residents in the state are Biharis and there is no need for the



JDU leader Khalid Anwar

CAA, NRC (National Register of Citizens) or NPR (National Population Register) here. As long as Nitish-jii remains in power, no one needs to worry about the CAA," Anwar told reporters at a press conference in Motihari on Sunday.

Amid the Opposition furore over the notification of rules for the implementation of the CAA last week, the JD(U) leader sought to dispel fears of loss of citizenship, saying that the law merely intended to give permanent residency to religious

*The remark assumes significance as the JD(U) partners with BJP and other allies in ruling NDA coalition in the state.*

minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who are living in the country as refugees, and not take away anyone's citizenship.

"Those instilling fear among people that their citizenship will be taken away are spreading falsehoods," he added. Supporting his argument that there was no need for the CAA to be rolled out in Bihar, the minority leader said the previous Nitish Kumar-led government passed a resolution in the Assembly that neither the NRC nor the NPR would be implemented in the state. "I would

like to reiterate that as long as Nitish Kumar is in power, no one from Bihar, irrespective of their religion, will be deprived of their citizenship. During the previous government, we passed a resolution in the Assembly that there is no need for NPR or NRC in Bihar and such laws will not be implemented here," Anwar said.

His statement could ruffle feathers in the ruling NDA, as it pointed to a clear dissonance between CM Nitish and his coalition partners, especially the BJP, on implementing a crucial piece of legislation.

Last week, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified rules for implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), days ahead of the announcement of the schedule for the Lok Sabha elections.

The act aims to provide citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim migrants, including Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians, who migrated from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and arrived in India before December 31, 2014.

## BJP's popularity declining: Sinha

TDG NETWORK  
PATNA

In a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP and candidate for the Asansol Lok Sabha seat, Shatrughan Sinha denounced the party's recent slogan "Ab ki baar 400 paar", suggesting it stemmed from fear rather than confidence.

Sinha accused the BJP of resorting to desperate measures amid declining popularity.

Highlighting the role of the BJP, in the recent electoral bonds case, Sinha stated that the party misused the central agencies to extort money from companies.

"The BJP is in trouble because of a big scam called the electoral bonds case. They're accused of using government agencies to get money from companies and giving contracts to dishonest companies, going against their promise of not being corrupt. Because of all this, BJP's popularity has dropped a lot.

Now, they're trying to win people back with the slogan 'Ab ki baar 400 paar' because they are desperate," Sinha said.

Referring to the 2004 elections, when the BJP was ousted by the Congress government, Sinha stated, "We feel that this time 2004 may



TMC MP Shatrughan Sinha

*West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee earlier stated that the Centre will not be allowed to carry out exercises of the National Register of Citizens and Citizenship Amendment Act in the state.*

be repeated. There will be tremendous changes after 20 years. I was also in that government. At that time despite how well Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was doing, 2004 happened and Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister," he said.

Sinha remarked that the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) before the upcoming elections is well-timed, adding that Mamata Banerjee won't let it get implemented in West Bengal. West Bengal

## Difficult to hold elections in WB without central forces: BJP leader

TDG NETWORK  
NORTH 24 PARGANAS

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Agnimitra Paul said on Monday that if adequate central forces are not deployed at the booths, then it would be difficult to hold elections in West Bengal. The BJP leader said this in response to Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal's remark on the phases of Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking to ANI on Monday, Paul said, "Before giving out such big dialogues, Kapil Sibal should himself come to West Bengal, go to the booths and see how the elections are conducted here."

"Kabil Sibal Ji is a senior advocate himself and therefore he should know that the votes are conducted by the public for the public. However, it's not possible here for the common man to reach a booth and vote as per one's choice because of TMC goons," she said.

The BJP leader further said, "Kapil Sibal Ji, please come to West Bengal and

see how your didi (Mamata Banerjee) conducts voting here. We (the BJP) and the public are really happy that the vote is being cast in 7 phases. If adequate central forces are not here at the booths, then it will be difficult to conduct elections in West Bengal."

This comes after Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal accused the Election Commission of favouring the Bharatiya Janata Party over the 7-phase Lok Sabha poll schedule.

A day after the Election Commission of India announced the schedule for the upcoming Lok Sabha election in seven phases, Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Kapil Sibal alleged that "they are showing their loyalty." "They (the Election Commission of India) are showing their loyalty towards the BJP and saying that we are scheduling elections in seven phases so that the army of campaigners and resources that you (the BJP) have can use it accordingly. ECI's loyalty is visible in every phase.

## BJP questions Karnataka Govt after altercation over music during Azaan

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

The Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly, R Ashoka on Monday criticised the state government over failing to maintain law and order after an altercation occurred between a group of people and a shopkeeper last evening in Bengaluru for allegedly playing music during Azaan.

"Is Hanuman Chalisa banned in Karnataka CM @siddaramaiah aware? Emboldened by the appeasement politics of @INCKarnataka Govt, a violent muslim mob brutally attacked a Hindu Shopkeeper in Bengaluru for playing Hanuman Chalisa. After Pakistan Zindabad slogans raised in Vidhan Soudha and bomb blast in Rameshwaram Cafe, this yet another glaring example of how Congress government has let the anti-national elements capture Bengaluru leading to complete collapse of law and order," R Ashoka posted on X. Meanwhile, BJP leader PC Mohan alleged that the attack on man is the grim reality of Congress's Mohabbat Ki Dukaan. "In Bengaluru,



A CCTV footage showed the moment when a shopkeeper was seen involved in an argument with a group of men in Karnataka's Bengaluru.

a poor Hindu man was assaulted by a Muslim mob for allegedly playing the Hanuman Chalisa. The grim reality of Congress's Mohabbat Ki Dukaan," BJP leader PC Mohan posted on X. Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya alleged that the incident was result of Congress' appeasement politics. "A Hindu shopkeeper who was playing bhajans at his shop was assaulted by anti social elements saying bhajans aren't allowed during time of 'azaan'. The emboldening of such elements is a direct result of Congress's appeasement politics. Just a few days back, people who shouted Pakistan Zindabad were given bail. With such political backing available to

Jihadis, naturally such incidents of crime against Hindus have risen in our State. CM must stop setting wrong precedents. I call upon him to update the State on what action is initiated against the miscreants on this case" Surya posted on X. Meanwhile, the Bengaluru Police said that during the 'Azaan' time, when a shopkeeper played a song loudly near Siddanna Layout, in Bengaluru, an altercation occurred between a group of people and the shopkeeper. "An altercation occurred between a group of people and a shopkeeper last evening during 'Azaan' time when a shopkeeper played a song loudly near Siddanna Layout, in Bengaluru.

## Kerala Oppn leader alleges unholy nexus between CPI(M), BJP

TDG NETWORK  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Congress leader and Kerala LoP VD Satheesan on Monday alleged that there is an unholy nexus between CPI(M) and BJP and CBI and ED is not questioning Kerala CM Vijayan of the SNC Lavalin case which was postponed for 38 times, adding that they had brought evidence to prove that.

"A few years back, opposition in Kerala had made an allegation that there is an unholy nexus between CPI(M) and BJP and we had brought evidence to prove that," said Satheesan.

Pointing at the cases pending against Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, he said, "The case against Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan, is pending before the Supreme Court, 38 times it was postponed, CBI was not ready to appear before the court. In many cases, the CBI and ED are not ready to question Kerala CM...now the LDF convenor stated that BJP will come up second place in many constituencies (in Kerala)."

In 2006, journalist TP

Nandakumar filed a complaint with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) against Vijayan, current Kerala Finance Minister TM Thomas Issac, and Communist Party of India (Marxist) polit bureau member MA Baby.

Vijayan was accused of allegedly hatching a criminal conspiracy while he was serving as the Electricity Minister of Kerala from May 1996 to October 1998.

Vijayan and other senior executives of the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) -- former Power Department secretary K Mohanachandran and former joint secretary A Francis -- were accused of allegedly awarding the contract for renovation and modernisation of a few hydroelectric projects to a Canada-based company SNC-Lavalin at exorbitant rates. Satheesan further slammed, "Now the LDF convenor stated that BJP will come at second place in many constituencies (in Kerala). We replied that wherever BJP will come second, LDF will come up in third position. LDF convenor also said that

there are good BJP candidates in Kerala..."

He further made an allegation saying that there exists a business contract between BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar and the LDF convenor. "I challenge Rajeev Chandrasekhar to prove that there is no connection existing," he added.

It is noteworthy that one of the most high-profile constituencies in this Lok Sabha election is Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. Three-time MP from the constituency Shashi Tharoor of the Congress is up against Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar of the BJP and a strong left candidate in Panryan Raveendran a former MP.

Kerala holds 20 Lok Sabha seats. The elections to all the 20 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala will be held on April 26. The 18th general elections to 543 seats in the country will be held in seven phases with the first phase beginning on April 19. Kerala among 13 States will go for polls in the second phase on April 26. Counting of the votes will be held on June 4.

## Assam locals resort to frog wedding to please rain gods

TDG NETWORK  
BISWANATH

Amidst the ongoing problem of drought in Assam, locals of Adarsha Gorehagi village in Biswanath district have resorted to age-old ways to please the rain gods; marrying of frogs in a ceremony with proper rituals.

The ceremony, also known as 'Bhekuli Biya', saw enthusiastic participation from villagers of all ages as they fervently hoped for the skies to open up and bring relief to their drought-stricken lands.

The prolonged absence of rainfall has cast a shadow of distress over the agricultural community in the state, where farmers are grappling with the harsh realities of drought and dust storms. A frog wedding is an ancient ceremony that involves marrying wild frogs with traditional rituals to please the rain god to get relief from the drought-like situation.



*The people present there asserted that the ritual will certainly work and they will get respite from this situation.*

The people present there asserted that the ritual will certainly work and they will get respite from this situation. "There is no water in ponds. There is no food for cattle and goats. Facing a drought-like condition, 700 families of Gorehagi village conducted frog marriage," a local woman told ANI. "There has been no rainfall from the past many days

and due to non-availability of rain many trees are dying, and the paddy fields are dry. The farmers are facing massive problems. So, the villagers of Gorehagi village have decided to conduct frog marriage and it is our tradition. As our ancestors suggested, we have decided to perform frog marriage with proper rituals and all villagers have participated," a local youth said.

## Retired woman teacher duped of Rs 51 lakh in MP's Gwalior

TDG NETWORK  
GWALIOR

A case of cyber fraud has come to light from Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior district where a retired woman teacher was duped of Rs 51 lakh, a police officer said on Monday.

The elderly woman has been identified as Asha Batnagar, a resident of CP colony in the district. Her husband passed away in 2017 and she has been living here alone. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shiyaz K M said, "A retired teacher was defrauded of Rs 51 lakh. She said that she had received a call which was made from Mumbai and the fraudster told her that he was calling from Mumbai and the SIM on which he (fraudster) was calling was issued from Mumbai only. Some child pornography video material has been transmitted through that particular SIM (woman's sim), a case is going on in this regard in Mumbai. Besides, a lot of illegal transactions have taken place in one of her accounts and a case of money laundering

*All the arrested accused are residents of Gwalior. They used to send money to people involved in cyber frauds by taking commission, ASP further said.*

has been registered in Mumbai for the same." Later, the woman received a video call in which she saw a person in uniform and it disappeared.

After that she again gets a call in which a person introduced himself as Mumbai Police and told her that her number was under suspicion and threatened her in name of ED and CBI, ASP further said.

"The fraudster also told her that she should not contact anyone. They (fraudster) also demanded money that has to be transferred to them and they have to deposit the amount in the court. If the woman is proved innocent then this amount will be returned to her.

After which the retired teacher transferred the money to the given account number," the officer added. The elderly woman was quite

scared and did not contact anyone for two days. After which people nearby somehow contacted her and then got to know about the matter. Later on she approached police and lodged a complaint. Based on the complaint of the woman, a case has been registered into the matter against unknown persons and investigation into the matter is underway, he added.

Meanwhile, in another case of cyber fraud in the district, the Gwalior police arrested five persons including a woman.

The police interrogated them and found out that they had cyber fraud connections to different states.

All the arrested accused are residents of Gwalior. They used to send money to people involved in cyber frauds by taking commission, ASP further said.



# Case for legislative guarantee of minimum support prices

The price of guarantee will be less than the higher interest rate and cost of capital



OPINION  
MOHIT & DR. ALISHA VERMA

In 2023, government procurement achieved 26 million tons against a target of 35 million tons. These two years saw more than MSP being paid by market prices. Farmers have returned to their streets. This time, there isn't an instant trigger like there was the previous time they marched to Delhi to protest the adoption of the three controversial farm regulations. The farmers have many requests, but the main one is a legislative guarantee for Minimum Support Prices (MSP). Although this has long been demanded, its exact meaning is not entirely clear.

missing markets has clearly resulted from the lack of clarification. The National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act were both preceded by similar scare tactics. In reality, the government has not become insolvent as a result of either of these pieces of law. Rather, they turned out to be a vital resource for individuals within the pandemic. MSP is an easy-to-use system that guarantees the price stability of vital agricultural products. Other nations' farmers have access to such methods. By actively intervening in the market when prices fall below the MSP, the government hopes to protect farmers from price instability.

In India, it has been around for more than 50 years. So why are farmers requesting a formal guarantee? Prior to the sowing season, the government releases the MSP for 23 crops each year. However, the government does not act on the MSP announcement for the majority of crops. In actuality, it is only used for the two main crops, rice and wheat, and sporadically for other crops like pulses. However, even in these situations, the government's market intervention serves to fulfill legal requirements and fulfill its commitments under the NFSA rather than to assist farmers. Farmers are merely asking that the MSP program be carried out as planned by the government. The majority of political parties and labor organizations support a legislative guarantee of this kind, but despite this consensus, successive governments have been slow to legitimize this system. The main cause has been the worry that the costs of providing such a guarantee would be too high. Large sums of money, between Rs. 10 and 18 lakh crores, have been proposed as the guarantee's cost. The majority of these presumptions stem from a lack of knowledge about agricultural markets and MSP's function in price stabilization. There are two reasons why it is false to assume that the government

will have to purchase all agricultural products if MSP implementation is guaranteed. Firstly, what is commonly called the marketable surplus is the portion of the produce that is available in the market. Second, government intervention is only necessary when the market price of a commodity is lower than the MSP, even in the situation of marketable surplus. However, even in this instance, action is only required to the degree that it generates surplus demand and drives up market rates. Usually, it might only represent a small portion of the market's arrivals. Years with greater market prices will require no intervention from the government. Furthermore, farmers are unlikely to sell at prices below market rates, even in the event that the government steps in. For wheat, this occurred throughout the previous two years. Government purchases accounted for just 19 million tons, compared to the 44 million tons objective set for 2022. Against a target of 35 million tons, government procurement came in at 26 million tons in 2023. Market prices exceeded MSP in each of these two years. On the other hand, it is unfair to consider the price of obtaining rice and wheat to be the same as the price of the MSP program. Actually, the majority of it is a consumer

subsidy rather than a farmer subsidy. But regardless of the MSP guarantee, this is a government commitment made under the NFSA and is required. Farmers simply receive the bare minimum in exchange for their labor-intensive produce—nothing more. Unless the government offers a subsidy, the cost of government purchase for the remaining crops that are not included in the NFSA bundle is not incurred. The only amount the government must pay is the discrepancy between the issue price and the economic cost of grain procurement. The cost is zero and all of the expenses are recovered for the remaining crops, which the government does not sell by providing subsidies. In rare cases, when market prices are higher, the government can also profit by selling the produce it has purchased at a little markup on both domestic and foreign markets. This will assist stabilize market pricing as well as lower domestic prices during spikes in inflation. The government has been exporting stocks to take advantage of higher foreign prices for a number of years in addition to open-market activities. The farmers' issues might not be resolved by a guaranteed MSP. However, it presents a favorable chance to address the disparities in

the MSP and procurement system. These days, procurement is restricted to specific regions and can only include wheat and rice. To address the regional disparities in agricultural productivity, an enlarged and regionally diversified MSP covering a wider range of crops is required. Additionally, it will guarantee crop diversification and investment in, strengthening, and expanding storage management all essential for the management of natural resources. Farmers' and their need for an overhaul of the MSP system are, in large part, the result of years of disregard for the agrarian economy, which has resulted in falling real wages and incomes. Although the cost of such a guarantee is impossible to calculate, it will undoubtedly be less than the higher interest rates and increased cost of capital that the economy must bear as a result of managing inflation. Additionally, price stability will shield the typical consumer from the whims of inflation. More crucially, safeguarding farmers' incomes will support the recovery of the rural sector during a period when it is beset by weak demand and rising inflation.

*Mohit, Assistant Professor Law, Geeta Institute of Law, Panipat  
Dr. Alisha Verma, Assistant Professor Law, Amity University Rajasthan*

## Action against Left-wing extremism in its final leg



OPINION  
UJJAWAL DEEPAK

Left-Wing Extremists (LWE) have a long history of daring democracy through violence. This alleged "ideological war" not only stalled development in the affected areas but has also led to the burnt of lives of 16,652 security personnel and civilians in the furnace of violence in the last four decades. The irony is that the militants have obstructed development works and prevented the construction of schools, hospitals and roads under the cover of fighting for water, forest and land. Consignments of foreign weapons have been delivered to these militants with the help of NGOs and some urban Naxalites who are growing with foreign financial assistance, who talk about the rights of tribals.

many years. This situation has undergone radical changes since 2014. Due to the tough and impactful decisions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the impact of Left-Wing Extremism has been greatly limited and contained today and the fight has now reached the final leg. With the message of development and peace in self-reliant new Bharat, the Ministry of Home Affairs has formulated a three-pronged strategy to deal with Left-Wing Extremism»Better strategy to rein in militants, «better Centre-state coordination» and «People's participation through development».

**THREE-PRONGED STRATEGY**  
This three-pronged strategy has achieved historic success in containing LWE in the last 10 years, which is reflected in the data. The lowest number of LWE violence in the last 35 years and the lowest number of deaths in 40 years were reported this year. Violent incidents decreased by 76% compared to the high in 2010 and the number of civilians and security personnel killed decreased by 90% from the peak of 1005 in 2010 to 98 in 2022. The geographical spread of Left Wing Extremism has also steadily

declined. Last year, incidents of violence were reported from 176 police stations in 45 districts alone, while in 2010, incidents of violence were reported in 465 police stations in 96 districts. The shrinking scope of LWE is also reflected in the fact that 72% of violence last year was reported from only 10 districts. At the police station level, 50% of the violence has been reported from only 30 police stations. For the first time after several decades, the number of civilian and security forces deaths was less than 100 in 2021. The reach of good governance to the affected remote areas has created a bridge of trust in the government in the hearts of the people today. Left Wing Extremism has historically flourished in areas where poverty has taken roots. In his view, the groups affected by poverty had sowed the seeds of militancy by using the discontent of the people affected by poverty as manure and water. Due to the local support these groups received, the security institutions had to face many problems. But the situation changed after 2014. The Modi Government's schemes for the welfare of the poor spread in these areas as well and people came to believe that the Government was their true benefactor, not the extremists! Under the leadership of PM Modi and under the guidance of HM Amit Shah, the *Vikas Se Jan Bhagidari* has ensured people's participation in the efforts of security agencies by putting additional emphasis on schemes for poor welfare and development in the affected areas. As part of the strategy

to contain the militants, all efforts have been made to reduce the security vacuum and core area. Since 2019, 195 new camps have been opened, which have reduced the security vacuum to almost zero in the affected areas, barring a few areas. The strategy is showing positive results and has succeeded in completely eliminating the security vacuum by setting up its camps in Maoist strongholds like Barmasia and Chakarbanda in Bihar and Budha Pahar and Parasnath in Jharkhand. The result is that the LWEs have shrunk to a few regions. The leaders of the 14 Politburo and Central Committee members have been neutralised through intelligence-based operations, creating a major vacuum in the senior Maoist leadership. The security forces surrounded the Naxalites by adopting an offensive strategy against the militants and under this policy, the 13-day joint operation using the newly established security camps in Lohardaga district of Jharkhand in February 2022 had many successes. In the direction of financial choking, a total of Rs 68.57 crore cash and assets have been seized by the States, ED and NIA. Setting up of separate verticals in NIA, special operations teams in central and state police forces with the help of expertise and knowledge sharing of Special Task Force has been used to weaken Left Wing Extremism with technical and tactical support using latest technology. Special funds have been provided for early construction of major night landing helipads for air support.

Under better Centre-State coordination, the Centre provided non-discriminatory assistance to the affected state governments for Central Armed Police Forces battalions, helicopters, training, funds for modernization of state police forces, equipment and weapons, intelligence, construction of fortified police stations etc. 2606 crore released to affected States in last 09 years for capacity building of States (about 124% increase in 9 years). The Special Forces and Special Intelligence Branches of the states have received projects worth Rs 1724 crore in the last five years. 536 Fortified Police Stations were constructed and 102 Fortified Police Stations are being built. Under the scheme of assistance to central agencies, Rs 106 crore was given for camp infrastructure and Rs 12.06 crore for upgradation of 6 hospitals.

**INITIATIVES, INFRA AND INROADS**  
To improve road connectivity, 12100 km of roads have been sanctioned in the last 9 years and about 10350 km of roads have been constructed. Department of Posts opened 4903 new post offices with banking services in the last 9 years in the affected districts. Since April 2015, 955 new bank branches and 839 ATMs have been set up in 30 most affected districts. In order to speed up communication, 2343 mobile towers were installed at a cost of Rs 4080 crore in the first phase and 2542 mobile towers are being installed at a cost of Rs 2210 crore in the second phase. 214 Eklavya Schools have been sanctioned after 2014, out of which 163

Eklavya Schools have been sanctioned in the last 4 years. 11 Kendriya Vidyalayas and 6 Navodaya Vidyalayas have been opened. Under the skill development scheme, 48 Industrial Training Institutes and 68 Skill Development Centres were approved at a cost of Rs 495 crore. Activities like health camps, drinking water, solar lights, distribution of medicines, skill development, farm equipment, seeds etc. are being conducted for the local population by the companies of Central Armed Para Military Forces deployed in the affected areas in which works worth Rs 140 crore have been done since May, 2014. Under the Tribal Youth Exchange programme, some 22,000 youth have been taken for a tour of large and developed areas of the country with an expenditure of Rs 26.5 crore. The objective is to make these youth aware of technological/industrial advancement so as to wean them away from the impact of LWE. The initiative to take the benefits of the government's development schemes to the general public has been successful and this is feeling the pressure in the structure of the Naxalites. People's self-confidence towards assimilation of the poor and tribals in society and socio-economic development is increasing. Opposition and difference of opinion have been accepted with full respect in the Indian Constitution. It would be unimaginable that in India, with a population of over 125 crore and more than 10,000 dialects and the richest in culture, it would be unimaginable for all views to agree with each other.

PERSPECTIVE  
CONCERN AND CONFUSION

## STATE OF INDIA-U.S. RELATIONS

At times it is not clear whether the US administration is plain ignorant in its foreign policy dealings, specifically when it comes to India, or just duplicitous. Or is it actually a case of US government departments and individuals working in silos, running their own agendas, without caring for the fallout of their actions and utterances—one of the fallouts being offending allies and partners, including India. The US Justice Department, for one, has been pursuing the supposed assassination attempt allegedly by the Indian government of known Khalistani extremist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, even though the Indian government has been clear that assassinations are not part of its policy. And now Justice is investigating an Indian entity to find out if it indulged in any bribery of any Indians on Indian soil, apparently because there is some US investment in that entity. That this is direct interference in a nation's internal matters, does not bother this department of the US administration.

The latest trouble is with India's Citizenship Amendment Act—now that the rules have been notified. The State Department is particularly concerned that the CAA has been notified and says that it is monitoring how the Indian government is implementing it, as, "respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law for all communities are fundamental democratic principles." This resulted in a sharp rebuttal from the Ministry of External Affairs, which called the statement, "misplaced, misinformed and unwarranted." After that, US ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti went a step further by saying that the US opposition to the CAA was based on principles—that a democracy must follow the principles of religious freedom and equality. It is not known how, by expediting the process of granting citizenship to persecuted minorities coming from Muslim-majority countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, any principle of democracy or human rights has been violated. It is not that Muslims coming from the neighbouring countries cannot apply for Indian citizenship or will not be granted citizenship under the Citizenship Act of 1955, if they have a valid case. In the normal course of things, following all the rules, they too can become Indian citizens.

As External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar mentioned, the US too has fast-tracked the citizenships of specific groups of people based on their faith and ethnicity. The Lautenberg Amendment fast-tracked the citizenship of persecuted Christians and Jews from Russia; the Spectre Amendment extended this to persecuted minorities from Iran. How is it that the US fast-tracking the citizenship of persecuted minorities is upholding democracy, but India doing something similar is muzzling human rights? Moreover, as it is being mentioned, the CAA cannot be seen in isolation. It has to be seen in the historical context of the partition, when some people belonging to certain faiths did not or could not come to India. Over time, as they were systematically oppressed, where would they find refuge, if not in India? Also, what principle is Ambassador Garcetti talking about—the principle that cannot see the deliberate extermination of the minority communities in three of India's neighbouring countries, so much so the minorities have more or less disappeared from Afghanistan, are about to disappear from Pakistan and will eventually disappear from Bangladesh? Shouldn't Mr Garcetti's lectures on democracy and principles be directed at India's neighbours?

In fact, in India-US relations, it seems that the Defence and Commerce departments of the US government are serious about ensuring that this partnership lives up to the potential of being the most consequential of this century. But that is definitely not the case with departments such as State and now Justice. At a time when the US has placed India at the centre of its Indo-Pacific strategy, the State Department has been railing against India on imaginary violations of human rights, apart from delaying visas for Indian citizens for hundreds of days. The Pakistani-influenced United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has been trying to get India blacklisted and sanctioned for being a "country of particular concern" for religious minorities. The State Department reports on religious freedom take substantial inputs—a majority of them distorted and fake—from the USCIRF, including on India. But let us not impute any sinister motive to the State when it comes to India. Maybe its "concerns" about India are stemming from both ignorance and its own "wokeness". However, what State needs to realise is that its mishandling of the India desk may impact India-US relations negatively, which is not in the interest of either country. The whole of government approach is missing in this and raises serious questions about the interests and agendas that are often working at cross purposes in the Joe Biden administration.

So who does this help? China, of course. As Mr Garcetti, he has been very closely linked to China for decades—this is reported and well known. As the US ambassador to India he should know the importance of not making statements that offend Indians and gladden the Chinese. It is the India-US relationship that is at stake here.

JOYEETA BASU



# THE LEGACY OF LOK SABHA SPEAKERS

As custodians of parliamentary decorum and guardians of democratic principles, the legacy of Lok Sabha Speakers resonates through the chronicles of Indian democracy, serving as a testament to the enduring strength and resilience of the nation's democratic institutions.

## TDG NETWORK

The Speakers of the Lok Sabha in India hold a position of paramount importance within the nation's parliamentary framework. Charged with overseeing the proceedings of the lower house of Parliament, they wield significant authority and responsibility in ensuring the smooth functioning of the legislative process. Throughout the rich tapestry of India's democratic history, these individuals have served as custodians of parliamentary decorum, bastions of democratic values, and architects of consensus-building in the tumultuous arena of Indian politics.

The speaker of the Lok Sabha is the presiding officer and the highest authority of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Parliament of India. The speaker is elected generally in the first meeting of the Lok Sabha following general elections. Serving for a term of five years, the speaker is chosen from sitting members of the Lok Sabha.

The independent India has witnessed 17 Lok Sabha Speakers, including second innings of two speakers, till date. As Lok Sabha election are round the corner and the house is possibly going to have a new speaker, today, we are going to provide you the insights about the history of the Lower House's speakers since indepen-

## LOK SABHA SPEAKERS' LIST

 Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar 15 May 1952 to 27 February 1956	 M. A. Ayyangar 8 March 1956 to 10 May 1957	 Sardar Hukam Singh 17 April 1962 to 16 March 1967	 Neelam Sanjiva Reddy 17 March 1967 to 19 July 1969	 Gurdial Singh Dhillon 8 August 1969 to 19 March 1971
 Bali Ram Bhagat 15 January 1976 to 25 March 1977	 Neelam Sanjiva Reddy 26 March 1977 to 13 July 1977	 K. S. Hegde 21 July 1977 to 21 January 1980	 Balram Jakhar 22 January 1980 to 15 January 1985	 Rabi Ray 19 December 1989 to 9 July 1991
 Shivraj Patil 10 July 1991 to 22 May 1996	 P. A. Sangma 23 May 1996 to 23 March 1998	 G. M. C. Balayogi 24 March 1998 to 19 October 1999	 Manohar Joshi 10 May 2002 to 2 June 2004	 Somnath Chatterjee 4 June 2004 to 30 May 2009
 Meira Kumar 30 May 2009 to 4 June 2014	 Sumitra Mahajan 6 June 2014 to 16 June 2019	 Om Birla 18 June, 2019 (Incumbent)		

as a formidable advocate for social justice and democratic reforms.

However, it was in the aftermath of India's independence in 1947 that Mavalankar's leadership truly came to the fore. With the establishment of the Constituent Assembly tasked with drafting the

has held the mantle of the Speakership, each leaving an indelible mark on the annals of Indian parliamentary history.

M. A. Ayyangar (1956-1957): Madabusi Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, a distinguished lawyer and politician, served as Speaker of the Lok Sabha

Singh Dhillon, a prominent leader from Punjab, presided over the Lok Sabha during a challenging period marked by internal strife and external threats. He was known for his calm demeanor and dedication to parliamentary norms.

Bali Ram Bhagat (1976-1977): Bali Ram Bhagat, a seasoned politician from the Indian National Congress, held the Speakership during a brief period of parliamentary revival following the Emergency. He was known for his commitment to upholding democratic values and parliamentary traditions.

Neelam Sanjiva Reddy (1977-1979): Returning to the position of Speaker after serving as President, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy continued to uphold the dignity and integrity of the Speakership, earning admiration from all quarters.

K. S. Hegde (1979-1980): Kariya Siddappa Hegde, a veteran parliamentarian from Karnataka, served as Speaker during a critical juncture in Indian politics. He was known for his impartiality, integrity, and commitment to upholding parliamentary democracy.

Balram Jakhar (1980-1989): Balram Jakhar, one of the longest-serving Speakers of the Lok Sabha, was a towering figure in Indian politics. Hailing from Rajasthan, he was known for his advocacy of agricultural issues and his dedication to the welfare of farmers.

Rabi Ray (1989-1991): Ray's political career gained momentum when he joined the Socialist Party and later became associated with the Janata Party. He was elected to the Lok Sabha multiple times, representing the Puri constituency in Odisha.

Somnath Chatterjee (2004-2009): Born on July 25, 1929, in Assam, Chatterjee was associated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). Chatterjee's tenure as Speaker was marked by his deep knowledge of



Meira Kumar: The First Woman Speaker of Lok Sabha.



Om Birla: The Current Speaker of Lok Sabha.

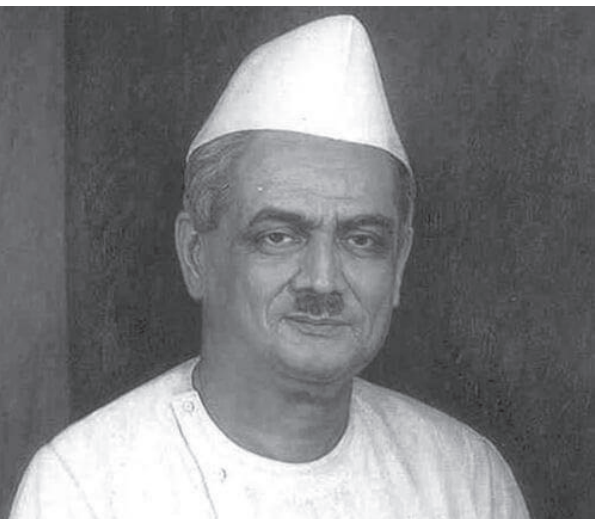
Patil was a member of the Indian National Congress. As Speaker, Patil presided over the Lok Sabha during a period of significant legislative activity and political transition, demonstrating firmness, impartiality, and a deep understanding of parliamentary procedures. His tenure as Speaker was marked by his commitment to upholding the dignity and integrity of the institution, ensuring constructive debates, and fostering consensus among members of Parliament.

P. A. Sangma (1996-1998): Purno Agitok Sangma, popularly known as P. A. Sangma, served as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1996 to 1998. Born on September 1, 1947, in the state of Meghalaya, Sangma was a prominent political leader known for his advocacy of tribal rights and regional development. He was a founding member of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and held various ministerial positions in the central government. As Speaker, Sangma brought a unique perspective to the role, being the first tribal leader to hold the position. His tenure was marked by his efforts to uphold parliamentary norms, ensure the smooth functioning of legislative proceedings, and represent the diverse interests of the Indian populace.

G. M. C. Balayogi (1998-2002): Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi, often referred to as G. M. C. Balayogi, served as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1998 to 2002. Born on January 1, 1951, in Andhra Pradesh, Balayogi was a member of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and a prominent leader from the southern state. Prior to his tenure as Speaker, he held various positions in the TDP and served as a Member of Parliament.

Manohar Joshi (2002-2004): Born on December 2, 1937, in Ratnagiri, Joshi is a member of the Shiv Sena party. He began his political career in the 1960s and held various ministerial positions in the Maharashtra state government before being elected to the Lok Sabha. As Speaker, Joshi brought his experience and leadership skills to the role, ensuring the smooth functioning of parliamentary proceedings and upholding the dignity of the institution.

Somnath Chatterjee (2004-2009): Born on July 25, 1929, in Assam, Chatterjee was associated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). Chatterjee's tenure as Speaker was marked by his deep knowledge of



Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar: The First Speaker of Lok Sabha.

## INTERESTING TRAITS

Lok Sabha Speakers, throughout India's democratic history, have been pivotal figures shaping the legislative landscape. Here are some fascinating facts about them:

**First Woman Speaker:** Meira Kumar became the first woman Speaker of the Lok Sabha in 2009. Her appointment was a significant milestone in India's parliamentary history, symbolizing the growing role of women in politics and governance.

**Somnath Chatterjee's Longest Tenure:** Somnath Chatterjee holds the record for the longest tenure as Speaker of the Lok Sabha. He served in this position from 2004 to 2009, spanning the 14th and 15th Lok Sabhas.

**Balram Jakhar's Unique Career Path:** Balram Jakhar served as Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1980 to 1989. Interestingly, he began his career as a farmer and went on to become a prominent political leader known for his advocacy of rural development issues.

**Neelam Sanjiva Reddy's Unique Double:** Neelam Sanjiva Reddy had the unique distinction of serving as both Speaker of the Lok Sabha and President of India. He was Speaker from 1967 to 1969 and later became the sixth President of India from 1977 to 1982.

**Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar, the First:** Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar, the first Speaker of the

Lok Sabha, was instrumental in establishing the norms and traditions of the parliamentary system in India. He was respected for his impartiality and integrity.

**Bali Ram Bhagat's Brief Stint:** Bali Ram Bhagat holds the record for the shortest tenure as Speaker of the Lok Sabha. He served in this position for less than a year, from March 1976 to July 1977.

**Sumitra Mahajan's Simplicity:** Sumitra Mahajan, popularly known as "Tai" (elder sister), was known for her simplicity and accessibility. She preferred to maintain a low profile despite holding one of the highest offices in the country.

**Om Birla's Youthful Tenure:** Om Birla, the current Speaker of the Lok Sabha since 2019, is one of the youngest individuals to hold this position. His dynamic leadership style and focus on parliamentary decorum have garnered praise from across the political spectrum.

**P. A. Sangma's Historic Candidacy:** P. A. Sangma, who served as Speaker from 1996 to 1998, made history by being the first tribal leader to hold the position. He belonged to the Garo tribe in Meghalaya and was a prominent advocate for the rights of indigenous communities.

The Speakers of the Lok Sabha occupy a position of unparalleled significance in the Indian parliamentary system. Through their leadership, integrity, and unwavering commitment to democratic ideals, they serve as the custodians of parliamentary democracy, guiding the nation through the ebb and flow of political currents with wisdom, sagacity, and grace. Theirs is a legacy that transcends the bounds of time and space—a testament to the enduring spirit of Indian democracy and the resilience of its democratic institutions.

dence:

### THE FIRST SPEAKER

Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar (1952-1956): The journey of the Speakership in the Lok Sabha commenced with Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar, who assumed office in 1952. Mavalankar, an illustrious leader of the Indian National Congress, set the stage for subsequent speakers by establishing the norms of impartiality, fairness, and dignity in the conduct of parliamentary affairs. Born on November 27, 1888, in Baroda (now Vadodra) in present-day Gujarat, Mavalankar hailed from a family deeply entrenched in the Indian nationalist movement. Inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, he emerged as a prominent political leader during the struggle for independence. Mavalankar's journey into the realm of parliamentary politics began with his election to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934, where he distinguished himself

Constitution of India, he was entrusted with the crucial responsibility of chairing the Assembly's Steering Committee. His astute guidance and diplomatic acumen played a pivotal role in navigating the complex negotiations and consensus-building processes that shaped the foundational document of independent India.

In 1952, with the dawn of India's parliamentary democracy, Mavalankar assumed the historic role of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. As the custodian of parliamentary proceedings, he set the tone for the institution's functioning, upholding the principles of impartiality, fairness, and democratic governance. Mavalankar's tenure as Speaker was characterized by his firm adherence to parliamentary norms, his unwavering commitment to the rule of law, and his steadfast defense of the rights and privileges of members of Parliament.

Since then, a succession of eminent leaders

for a brief period. He was known for his erudition and astute understanding of parliamentary procedures.

Hukam Singh (1957-1962): Hukam Singh, a seasoned politician from Punjab, served as Speaker during a crucial phase of India's parliamentary evolution. He was respected for his firmness, fairness, and commitment to upholding the dignity of the Speakership.

Neelam Sanjiva Reddy (1962-1967): Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, a towering figure in Indian politics, served as Speaker before later becoming the President of India. He was known for his statesmanship, integrity, and ability to foster consensus among members of Parliament.

Sardar Hukam Singh (1967-1969): Sardar Hukam Singh returned to the Speakership for a second term, bringing his experience and leadership to bear during a period of political turbulence and transition.

Gurdial Singh Dhillon (1969-1971): Gurdial

tion of the Speaker is fixed by the President. Further, all comments and speeches made by members of the House are addressed to the Speaker. The Speaker also presides over the joint sitting of both houses of the Parliament of India. The counterpart of the Speaker in the Rajya Sabha (Council of the States) is its Chairperson; the Vice-President of India is the ex-officio chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. On the order of precedence, the Speaker of Lok Sabha ranks sixth, along with the Chief Justice of India. The Speaker is answerable to the House. Both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker may be removed by a resolution passed by the majority of the members. Lok Sabha Speaker can be elected by President on a nomination basis.

All bills passed requires the speaker's signature to go to the Rajya Sabha for its consideration. The Speaker also has a casting vote in the event of a tie. It is customary for the Presiding Officer to exercise the casting vote in such a manner as to maintain the status quo.

### POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha conducts the busi-



# ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT DISMISSED JAUHAR DECISION’S OF CANCELLING LAND LEASE

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court in the case observed and has dismissed the challenge made to the cancellation of the lease of Maulana Mohamad Ali Jauhar University's land in the state's Rampur District.

In the present case, the writ petition has been moved challenging the Ut-

tar Pradesh government's move to seize the land by voiding the lease deed associated with the University.

The State Government in the case cancelled a 3.24-acre land lease to Maulana Mohammed Ali Jauhar Trust, led by former UP minister Azam Khan, citing lease condition violations alleging that originally allocated for a research institute, a school was running on the

property. As per the rules, after the cancellation of the lease, the possession of land automatically goes to the government.

The Division bench comprising of Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta and Justice Kshitij Shailendra in the case observed and has reserved its verdict in the matter after hearing both parties days after it listed Jauhar University Trust's plea for 'urgent admission'

in December 2023.

The bench in the case observed and has directed the State government to keep the helpline for children of Rampur Public School operative till the end of the academic year 2023-24.

The court noted that during the hearing in the case, the Advocate General had defended the cancellation of the lease without show cause notice on grounds that public interest is of

paramount consideration.

It was also argued before the court that the land which was acquired for the purpose of higher learning (research institute) was being used to run the Rampur Public School.

While defending the cancellation of the lease on grounds of blatant misuse of government land by erstwhile cabinet minister Mohammad Azam Khan, Advocate General Ajay

Kumar Mishra had alleged that Former UP Minister Azam Khan while sitting as a cabinet minister, holding the portfolio of Minister of Minority Affairs, headed the Trust in the capacity of its chairman, which was a conflict of interest.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Amit Saxena had alleged a violation of principles of natural justice in the cancellation of the lease deed and sealing of

the property by the UP government.

Therefore, it was the primary contention of the Trust that no notice was served upon any member of the committee or the trust itself before action was taken against the Research Institute and that the report of the Special Investigation Team was never served upon the petitioner trust.

It was also argued before

the court that had the petitioner been confronted with the material which was relied upon to cancel the lease and seal the premises, it could have replied adequately.

The court observed that in the absence of any material or evidence and lack of knowledge as to why the lease was being cancelled, the petitioner was not in a position to file a reply to the State.

## Allahabad High Court Refused To Quash Chargesheet Against 3 Men Accused Of Raising Anti-India Slogans In A Temple

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court in the case Faizan Ahmad @ Idrisi Faizan Shamshad Ahmad And Others vs. State Of U.P. Thru. Prin. Secy. Home Deptt. Civil Secrt. Lko. And Another 2024 observed and has refused to quash a summoning order as well as a charge sheet against 3 persons in a case which relates to their alleged act of raising anti-India slogans in a temple, while a religious preaching was going on there.

The bench headed by Justice Subhash Vidyarthi in the case observed that the allegations against them are of hailing

another country and raising slogans against our nation, and of abusing and threatening the persons present in religious preaching, which clearly make out a case of trial of the applicants.

The court in the case was deciding an application as stated under section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC for quashing a criminal case, the High Court has to examine the prosecution case only to ascertain whether the case for trial of the accused person is made out or not and that the defence of the accused cannot be taken into consideration at this stage.

**FACTS OF THE CASE:**

The court observed that as

per the allegations against the applicants (Faizan Ahmad @ Idrisi Faizan Shamshad Ahmad And Others), in July 2017, they entered a temple campus while a religious preaching was going on there and they started raising slogans hailing another country and against India.

Therefore, they allegedly threatened the persons present there.

During the investigation, the statements of some eye-witnesses were recorded, who supported the allegations in the FIR.

Further, the charge-sheet was filed against them under Section 153, Section 506 of the Indian Penal Code, IPC.

The counsel appearing for the applicant before the High Court argued that there was no material to establish that the applicants had committed any offence.

The court noted that the FIR against them alleged extending threats and raising objectionable slogans.

The court also noted that all three applicants were arrested on the spot and some independent witnesses examined by the investigating officer stated that the incident was witnessed by them and it was given effect to by the applicants.

Accordingly, the court refused to grant them any relief in the matter.

## DELHI HIGH COURT HOSTS INTERNATIONAL JUDICIAL CONCLAVE ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court hosted the International Judicial Conclave on Intellectual Property Rights at the auditorium and judges' lounge, S Block on March 16 to March 17, 2024.

The event organised was being co-hosted by Delhi Judicial Academy, the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the United States Department of Justice.

ish Dayal, Judge, Delhi High Court

The Hon'ble Ms. Naima Haider, Judge, High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh

The Ms Virginia Maria Covington, Senior District Judge, US District Court for the Middle District of Florida

Mr. Shanaka Harshan Keku-nawela Pathiranga, Additional Magistrate, Chief Magistrate's Court, Sri Lanka

Mr. Amit Sibal, Senior Advocate

U.S. Consulate General for Hong Kong & Macau

The sessions were moderated by Shwetasree Majumder, Pravin Anand, Adarsh Ramaniujan and Saif Khan.

The key points from the sessions were that copyright and patent laws across jurisdictions will have to evolve to reflect development in technology, which includes the rise of AI-assisted inventions and AI-generated content.

Mr. Michael Frank, Magistrate Judge, US District Court for the Northern District of Florida

Prof. (Dr.) Pushpa Kumar Lakshmanan, Law Centre-I, Faculty of Law, University of Delhi

Prof. Yogesh Pai, National Law University (Delhi)

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Vipin Sanghi, Chief Justice (Retd.), Nainital High Court

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Manmohan Singh Judge (Retd.), Delhi High Court

The said event had sessions on various topics which includes like protecting and enforcing intellectual property in new digital ecosystems, navigating standard essential patent, SEP litigation, cross border intellectual property enforcement and criminal remedies, addressing digital piracy, online counterfeiting and trade secrets and breach of confidentiality and current issues in industrial designs.

Further, there was consensus amongst the panellists that courts in a single jurisdiction should avoid setting a global FRAND rate for a given SEP.

It was also discussed that the question as to whether personality or publicity rights should be considered an independent proprietary right or it should fall under the purview of privacy law is a subject of ongoing debate.

The panellists for the sessions on March 16 were:

The Hon'ble Mr Justice Manmohan, Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Delhi

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Rajiv Shakdher, Judge, High Court of Delhi

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Judge (Retd.) Supreme Court of India

The Honble Mr. Brajesh Pyakurel, Judge, High Court of Patan, Nepal

The Hon'ble Mr. Jeyaramam Trotsky, Judge, Colombo High Court, Sri Lanka

The Ms Kiyo A Matsumoto, District Judge US District Court for te Eastern District of New York

The Hon'ble Ms Justice Moushumi Bhattacharya, Judge, Calcutta High Court

The Hon'ble Mr Koruwege Priyantha Fernando, Judge, Commercial High Court, Sri Lanka

Ms Virginia Maria Covington, Senior District Judge, US District Court for the Middle District of Florida

Mr. Habakala Kankanamage Naleen Prasanna Alwis, Chief Magistrate, Chief Magistrate's Court, Sri Lanka

Mr. Abhimanyu Bhandari, Advocate

The sessions were being moderated by Swathi Sukumar, J. Sai Deepak and Hemant Singh.

The panellists discussed that restrictions and the limitations on Intermediary liability is an important facet while dealing with digital piracy and that Indian.

## SUPREME COURT ISSUED NOTICE IN PLEA OVER OBC EXCLUSION FROM RESERVATION IN BIHAR MUNICIPAL BODIES

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Sunil Kumar v. The State of Bihar and Ors., observed and has issued notice in the petition raising the issue of exclusion of Other Backward Classes, OBCs from the scope of 'triple test' for reservation in Municipal Elections of Bihar.

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice KV Viswanathan was hearing the present case.

The court in the case was hearing the petitioner's challenge to a Patna High Court judgment passed on January 31, which dismissed his writ petition pertaining to the issue.

The said question came up before the Division Bench of the Patna High Court, which vide judgment dated

October 4, 2022, wherein the court declared that the reservation of seats for OBC and Extremely Backward Classes in urban local body elections of the state was illegal, as the quotas 'failed two out of three tests' set by the Supreme Court in the case Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra & Ors.

Further, the High Court directed the State Election Commission, SEC to re-notify seats reserved for OBC in the local polls as general category seats.

The court observed that when the review proceedings were initiated in respect of the judgment by the respondent-state, a 'Dedicated Commission' was formed to complete the 'triple test' exercise. Thus, the said commission submitted a report on EBCs, excluding OBCs from the ambit of the survey.

Aggrieved, the petitioner filed a fresh writ petition before the High Court, in which the impugned judgment came to be passed.

The judgement passed concluded that the earlier judgment of October, 2022 did not hold consideration of reservation only for EBCs to be illegal and bad.

The court also relied on the case Dr K Krishna Murthy v. Union of India, which focused on the interpretation of Article 243D(6) and Article 243T(6) of the Constitution of India. Thus, the said articles authorize the enactment of laws allowing reservations for backward classes in panchayats and municipal bodies, respectively.

The Supreme Court in Vikas Kishanrao Gawali pronounced the triple test, which is to be followed be-

fore providing reservation to the OBC category. In terms of this test, the government shall:

1. Set up a dedicated commission to conduct a rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of the backwardness in local bodies;
2. To Specify the proportion of reservation required in local bodies in light of recommendations of the commission, so as not to fall foul of overbreadth;
3. To Ensure reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs taken together does not exceed an aggregate of 50 per cent of the total seats.

The counsel, Advocate on Record Rahul Shyam Bhandari moved the present petition.

The following are the panelists for the sessions on March 15:

The Hon'ble Ms Justice Hima Kohli, Supreme Court of India

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Yashwant Varma, High Court of Delhi

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Muhamed Mustaque, Kerala High Court

The Hon'ble Mr. K.M. Kamrul Kadar, Judge, High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh

The Hon'ble Ms Amali Ishanthi Kumar Ranaweera, Judge, Civil Appeal, High Court, Sri Lanka

The Ms Kiyo A Matsumoto, District Judge US District Court for the Eastern District of New York

The Hon'ble Mr Justice K.V. Viswanathan, Judge, Supreme Court of India

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice An-

Mr. Ashok Kumar Chhetri, Joint Secretary, Judicial Council Secretariat, Government of Nepal

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Chandra Dhari Singh, Judge, Delhi High Court

Honble Mr. Kumar Regmi, Justice , Supreme Court of Nepal

Mr Michael Frank, Magistrate Judge US District Court for the Northern District of Florida

Mr. Sandum Shyam Kumar Withana, District Judge, District Court, Sri Lanka

Mr. Dayan Krishnan, Senior Advocate

The James S. Yoon, International Computer Hacking and IP (ICHIP) Attorney Advisor for Asia, U.S. Department of Justice,

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, Judge (Retd.) Supreme Court of India

The Honble Mr. Brajesh Pyakurel, Judge, High Court of Patan, Nepal

The Hon'ble Mr. Jeyaramam Trotsky, Judge, Colombo High Court, Sri Lanka

The Ms Kiyo A Matsumoto, District Judge US District Court for te Eastern District of New York

The Hon'ble Ms Justice Moushumi Bhattacharya, Judge, Calcutta High Court

The Hon'ble Mr Koruwege Priyantha Fernando, Judge, Commercial High Court, Sri Lanka

The courts have passed seminal decisions exploring the scope of intermediary liability, which includes the case of MySpace and Google v. DRS.

Therefore, the penallists discussed the Indian Law Commission Report which pertains to the trade secrets. Thus, the lacuna of the current regime was considered in the light of the Report, and it was acknowledged that the same have been addressed by the Report to some degree.

Further, it was also discussed that in the US overlaps are quite common but unlike in India, in the US, design law does not take away someone's right to also claim IP rights other than that under the Designs Act.

## Karnataka High Court: Appellate Authority’s Order Under Section 70 Is Final, High Court Cannot Sit In Appeal | Chit Funds Act

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Karnataka High Court in the case M/S Margadarsi Chits (k) Pvt.Ltd And H Srinivas Reddy And Others observed and has held that there is only one statutory appeal against an order passed under Section 69 of the Chit Funds Act and an order passed by the Appellate Authority as stated under Section 70 of the Act is final and no appeal lies against it before the High Court.

The single bench headed by Justice M.I. Arun in the case observed and has dismissed the petition filed by M/s Margadarsi Chits (K) Pvt. Ltd which had challenged the order passed by the Joint Registrar of Chits.

In the present case, the petitioner file the plea that H Srinivas Reddy had sub-

scribed to a chit issued by the petitioner. Thus, on him defaulting in payments proceedings were initiated against him by the petitioner before respondent the Deputy Registrar of Chits who passed an order in favour of the petitioner herein holding that respondent No.1 is liable to pay the amount of Rs.1,74,325 with costs and interest.

Aggrieved with the same, an appeal was preferred by the Reddy as stated under Section 70 of the Act, before respondent No.7.

The court while allowing the first appeal that respondent No.1 is not liable to pay any amounts to the petitioner.

The bench in the case referred to section 70 and has stated that there is only one appeal provided in the statute against the order passed under Section 69 of

the Act. Any order passed under Section 70 of the Act shall be final.

The court in the case observed and has held that the petitioner in the instant case is not alleging that any of its fundamental rights is violated nor it is able to show that any of the principles of natural justice have been violated by respondent No.7, nor is it a case where the order impugned is passed without jurisdiction.

Adding to it, the court stated that it being not the case of the petitioner that the law has been erroneously interpreted by the respondent No.7. The said court in exercise of its power as stated under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, cannot sit as an Appellate Authority over the order passed under Section 70 of the Act. Thus, it

cannot delve into a disputed question of facts.

The court observed while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has held that it being the case of the petitioner that the facts have not been properly appreciated by the Appellate Authority i.e., respondent No.7 and that respondent No.1 is liable to pay amounts to the petitioner as alleged. Thus, the said allegation has reached finality by the order passed by respondents No.7 and this Court in exercise of its powers as stated under Article 226 of the Constitution of India cannot examine the same.

Accordingly, the court dismissed the petition.

The counsel, Advocate K.L. Patil appeared for RL.

The counsel, Advocate V.S. Kalasuramath HCGP represented R6 & R7.

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case X v. Y observed that the court must scrutinize the complaint or FIR filed by the wife against the husband and his family members in order to determine whether the allegations are a 'case of cheer drafting' or have some element of truth.

The bench headed by Justice Navin Chawla in the case observed that where the wife is set to implicate the entire family of the husband in a criminal case and it is to be expected that she would get a complaint properly drafted through her lawyer making specific allegations against each one of them.

Therefore, the court in the case observed and has stated that it would defeat the ends of justice if only on such averment, thus,

the family members were to face the agony of trial.

The court stated that the said court must scrutinise the complaint or FIR to determine whether the allegations are a case of clever drafting or have at least some elements of truth in the same.

Adding to it, the court stated that though the Court is not expected to conduct a mini-trial, it also cannot be a mere spectator and refuse to exercise the power of quashing the case that is vested in it under Section 482 of Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC, where it finds that continuation of such proceedings would defeat the ends of the justice and would amount to insurmountable harassment, agony and pain to the accused and be an abuse of the criminal process.

The court in the case observed and has quashed the

FIR registered by a wife in 2017 against the maternal uncle and aunt of the husband for the offences under Section 498A, 406 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

In the present case, the FIR was filed against other accused persons as well, the wife alleged that right from the date of marriage, the husband and his relatives were harassing her for dowry and beat her. While the marriage happened in the year 1997, the FIR was registered in 2017, i.e. after 23 years.

The petition was filed by the husband's maternal uncle and aunt wherein it seeks to quash of the FIR on the ground that they were residing separately from the husband and wife and were dragged in the case only because they were the husband's family members.

The bench headed by Justice Chawla in the case observed that mostly general and vague allegations were made against the husband's family members, thereby naming his entire family.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that the FIR and even the consequential charge-sheet are based only on the averment made by the respondent no.2 in her complaint. Thus, barring her statement or complaint, there being no other material placed on record by the respondent no.2 against the petitioners.

The counsel, Advocates Mr. Manoj Taneja and Mr. Vishal Khadia appeared for the Petitioners.

The counsel, Advocates Mr. Shoaib Haider, APP; Mr. K.P. Toms & Mr. Piyush Mehra represented the complainant



TOP OF THE DAY

THOUSANDS  
PAY RESPECT TO  
BUDDHA'S RELICS  
IN KRABI

BANGKOK: Thousands of devotees paid respects to the sacred relics of Lord Buddha and his two disciples on Monday in Krabi, Thailand.

The holy relics of Lord Buddha and his two disciples are currently enshrined in Wat Mahathat Wachira-mongkol in Krabi.

Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Tashi Gyalson and a delegation from the Ministry of Culture also paid respects to the holy relics of Lord Buddha and offered 'sanghadaan' to venerable monks.

Chairman @tashi\_gyalson & delegation from @MinOfCultureGol paid respects to the holy relics of Lord Buddha & his two disciples currently enshrined in Wat Mahathat Wachiramongkol in Krabi Thailand and offered 'sanghadaan' to venerable monks," the Indian Embassy in Thailand posted on X.

ISRAEL CRACKS  
DOWN ON  
RECKLESS DRIVING

TEL AVIV: The Israel Police reported that over the weekend "many forces" of Border Police as well as volunteers acted in what was described as a "national large-scale operation" together with vehicle examiners of the Israel Police against drivers who drive recklessly in various types of motorized all-terrain vehicles, while risking the lives of other road users.

The reckless driving incidents included the destruction of agricultural areas by riding off the road vehicles on farmland.

The drivers in question entered forests and recreation and tourism centers while driving wildly.

CHINA ASSERTS  
CONTROL IN  
KINMEN WATERS

TAIPEI: China's persistent encroachment into the waters surrounding Taiwan-held Kinmen is a strategic maneuver aimed at establishing "de facto" jurisdictional control in the area, Central News Agency Taiwan reported, citing Taiwanese experts.

According to Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration [CGA], on both Friday and Saturday, four Chinese Coast Guard patrol vessels entered Kinmen's waters. The CGA closely monitored these incursions, issuing warnings until the Chinese ships departed.

In response, the China Coast Guard justified its actions on Friday, stating that its patrols in the waters off Kinmen were "legal," CNA Taiwan reported.

PTI CONTINUES  
REMORSE OVER  
ALLIANCE WITH SIC

KARACHI: The fragile alliance between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) continues to strain under the weight of conflicting statements from leaders of both parties, sparking a wave of retrospection and criticism within PTI's ranks, Dawn reported.

Reflecting on the past, more PTI leaders came forward to label the alliance a strategic error.

BATTLE RAGES AROUND GAZA'S LARGEST  
HOSPITAL IN ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Hamas reportedly made extensive use of Shifa Hospital, launched rockets from its compound, hid hostages in the bowels of the building, tortured collaborators, and dug tunnels connecting Shifa to nearby sites

AGENCIES  
TEL AVIV

Israeli troops raided the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City after being fired on by Hamas terrorists inside the medical facility, the Israel Defense Forces said on Monday morning.

"Following intelligence indicating the presence of terrorists in the area of the Shifa hospital, and their use of the hospital's infrastructure to conduct terrorist activity, the IDF and ISA are currently conducting a precise operation to thwart terrorist activity and apprehend terrorists in the Shifa hospital compound," the IDF said.

"During the activity, terrorists opened fire at the troops from within the hospital. The troops responded with live fire and hits were identified. Our troops are continuing to operate in the area of the hospital."

The military released foot-



Demonstrators lie on the ground to protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza, in San Sebastian, northern Spain. AP

age of gunmen firing on the soldiers.

"We see that the Hamas terrorist organization is continuing its military activity inside hospitals. We are willing to provide any humanitarian aid needed. Our request is simple: an immediate end to all of the terrorist activity in the hospitals."

Over the past few days,

the Head of the Coordination and Liaison Administration (CLA) for Gaza spoke with the Director of the Gaza Ministry of Health about Hamas terror squads resuming activities within the Shifa hospital and the necessity to thwart them in coordination with the Shifa administration.

The IDF said that before the operation, soldiers were

instructed on the importance of operating cautiously and avoiding harm to the patients, civilians, medical staff, and medical equipment. In addition, the army brought Arabic speakers to facilitate dialogue with the patients remaining in the hospital.

The IDF stressed that there is no obligation for the patients or medical staff to evacuate and that soldiers are providing food, water and medical supplies to patients and civilians in the Shifa compound.

According to IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, 85 per cent of Gaza's hospitals have been used by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad for terror.

In December, Ahmed Kahlot, director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip, confirmed to Israeli interrogators that he and other staff were Hamas operatives.

During the interrogation, Kahlot described how Hamas used hospitals and ambulances to hide operatives, launch military activity, transport members of terror squads and even deliver a kidnapped Israeli soldier.

Other Gazans have told Israeli interrogators deeply embedded themselves in the Palestinian Red Crescent Society to use hospitals as a base for attacks.

As reported by the Tazpit Press Service, Hamas made extensive use of the Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest medical center. Hamas launched rockets from its compound, hid hostages in the bowels of the building, tortured collaborators, and dug tunnels connecting Shifa to nearby sites. Israel also released a recording of a phone call confirming that Hamas also stores at least a half-million liters of fuel underneath the compound.

Half-a-dozen people killed in Pakistan's  
airstrikes in Afghanistan

AGENCIES  
KABUL

Pakistani military aircraft carried out airstrikes in the Barmal district of Paktika province and the Afghan Dubai area of Sepera district in Khost province. Tragically, these strikes targeted civilian homes, resulting in the loss of six lives and destruction of property, a spokesperson for Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, Zabihullah Mujahid, said in a statement.

Reports indicate that six individuals, including three women and three children, lost their lives in Paktika, while two women perished in Khost due to a collapsed house.

"Last night at around 3 o'clock in the Barmal district of Paktika province

and in Afghan Dubai area of Sepera district of Khost province, Pakistani planes bombed the houses of civilians, as a result, 6 people including 3 women and 3 children were martyred and a house destroyed in Paktika, as well as, two women were martyred due to the collapse of a house in Khost province," the statement said.

Notably, the purported target of the strikes, Abdullah Shah, is confirmed to be within Pakistan's borders.

"The person named Abdullah Shah, who the Pakistani side claims was targeted in the incident, is in Pakistan, on the other hand, there is a tribe living on both sides of this region who have daily trips and close relationship," the statement.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

strongly condemns these attacks and calls this reckless action a violation of Afghanistan's territory.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has "strongly" condemned these actions, labeling them as a "reckless violation of Afghanistan's territory".

Drawing upon its history of resisting external powers, the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan reaffirmed its stance against any incursion into its territory.

In a strongly-worded statement, Taliban caretaker government's spokesperson called upon the leadership of Pakistan to "stop some army generals from the continuation of their wrong policies for the benefit of others like the last 20-year and spoiling the relationship between the two

neighboring Muslim nations".

The statement emphasised that blaming Afghanistan for internal issues in Pakistan is both unfounded and counterproductive.

Warning of potential repercussions, the Islamic Emirate highlighted the dangers of escalating tensions, underscoring the need for restraint and diplomacy.

"Pakistan should not blame Afghanistan for the lack of control, incompetence and problems in its own territory. Such incidents can have very bad consequences which will be out Pakistan's control. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not allow anyone to harm anyone's security by using the territory of Afghanistan," the statement also said.

North Korea launched suspected  
ballistic missile, says Japan

AGENCIES  
PYONGYANG

North Korea has launched a suspected ballistic missile, the Japanese Prime Minister's Office announced on Monday. The South Korean military said North Korea fired an unspecified ballistic missile towards the East Sea on Monday, Yonhap News Agency reported.

In a post on X, the Japanese Prime Minister's Office stated, "[Emergency alert] North Korea has launched a suspected ballistic missile. More updates to follow."

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected the missile but stopped short of sharing further details.

The suspected missile launch by Pyongyang marked its second this year since January 14.

North Korea launched the missile just days after South Korea and the US concluded the annual Freedom Shield exercise on Thursday, according to Yonhap News. The two nations participated in the exercise

for 11 days to strengthen deterrence against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats.

On February 2, North Korea fired several cruise missiles off the west coast, marking its fourth cruise missile launch this year, Yonhap news agency reported, citing the South Korean military.

Monday's was the latest in a series of the North's cruise missile launches this year. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), it detected the North's launch around 11 am (local time) from its west coast.

However, it did not specify the number of missiles, according to Yonhap News Agency.

"While strengthening our monitoring and vigilance, our military has been closely coordinating with the United States to monitor additional signs of North Korea's provocations," the JCS stated in a text message sent to reporters.

North Korea launched the missile just three days after Pyongyang conducted a test of the Hwasal-2 strategic cruise missile off the west coast.

Pakistan govt 'assures'  
IMF of expediting  
privatisation programme

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government has 'assured' the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of expediting the privatisation programme, reported ARY News, citing sources.

According to finance ministry sources, the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is proceeding as per the plan and efforts are underway to complete the process soon.

They further said that the federal government has also prepared a plan to privatise power-sharing companies.

Moreover, the other loss-making state-owned enterprises, including First Women Bank, State Life Insurance, and Pakistan Engineering Company, are also on the list, ARY News reported. According to the sources, Pakistan is expected to sign the Staff-Level Agreement with the IMF next week.

The signing of the staff-level agreement with the IMF will clear the way for Pakistan to receive the last tranche of USD 1.1 billion under the SBA Agreement, the sources added.

They further stated that during the talks with the IMF, Pakistan's officials assured the international lender of jacking up the electricity tariff from July 1, while monthly, quarterly and yearly fuel adjustments will hit consumers for cost recovery, according to ARY News.

Earlier, the Pakistan government rejected the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) demand for a National Finance Commission (NFC) Award revisit.

PIA fined as air hostess  
reaches Canada  
without passport

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) incurred a substantial penalty after one of its air hostesses reached Canada without a passport, as reported by ARY News, citing insider sources.

According to sources, the air hostess was scheduled for duty on flight PK-781 from Islamabad to Toronto when the unprecedented incident occurred.

She travelled from Islamabad to Toronto using only PIA General Declaration documents, circumventing the standard passport requirement.

In the aftermath of this

breach, the national carrier faced a significant fine for permitting flight attendants to enter Canada without appropriate documentation.

A spokesperson for PIA confirmed the imposition of a USED 250 fine for the incident, emphasising the gravity of the violation.

However, the spokesperson refuted claims suggesting the air hostess had intentions to seek political asylum upon arrival in Canada.

It's worth noting that over the past two years, more than 10 PIA air hostesses have reportedly gone missing in Canada, sparking concerns regarding the welfare and safety of airline staff on international routes.

US will always work with  
S Korea against N Korea's  
provocations: Blinken

AGENCIES  
SEOUL

United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday and said that the US will always work with South Korea to firmly respond to North Korea's provocations, according to state media Yonhap.

The US reassurance came hours after Pyongyang fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters, a statement released from the South Korea's presidential office said "Secretary Blinken said the United States will always be with South Korea to respond firmly to North Korea's provocations and for peace



and stability on the Korean Peninsula," the presidential office said in a media statement, Yonhap news agency reported.

The US diplomat made the remarks, during a meeting with the South Korean President Yoon on the sidelines of the third Summit for Democracy being held in Seoul.

Nepal's former Speaker Krishna Mahara arrested in gold smuggling case

AGENCIES  
KATHMANDU

Nepal's former speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, has been arrested in connection with a gold smuggling case, police said on Monday.

According to police, Mahara, who is the vice-president of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) was arrested from Kapilvastu district and brought

to Kathmandu by flight this morning.

"He (Krishna Bahadur Mahara) has been arrested from Kapilvastu and brought to Kathmandu. He will be in custody with the permission of the court," Basanta Kunwar, IGP of Nepal Police, confirmed over the phone.

According to the police, Mahara will be presented in court for an extension of custody.

The newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Home Min-



ister Rabi Lamichhane had on Sunday ordered the police to implement a report of the inquiry commission on large-scale gold smuggling that pointed out Mahara's 'involvement' in the case according to the Kathmandu Post.

Last week, the inquiry commission headed by Dilli Raj Acharya, a former High Court chief judge, submitted its report to the home minister, which was later sent to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal

The inquiry commission report had allegedly pointed out that the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) had deliberately attempted to let Mahara go off the hooks of investigators along with others.

A cabinet meeting held late on Thursday decided to implement the suggestions and report of the commission thoroughly.

The commission was tasked with investigating lapses in the police investigation into the smuggling of 61 kg of gold in 2023 and

9 kg of gold concealed inside electronic cigarettes in 2022.

Rahul Mahara, son of Krishna Mahara, is in judicial custody after the District Attorney's Office filed the case against him last year in connection with the 9 kg gold smuggling attempt.

Previously, the police had inquired with Krishna Mahara after he was found to be in constant touch with Chinese smugglers. However, he was never interrogated in the case.



BIODIVERSITY UNDER THREAT



A diver at the North Seymour island dive site in the Galapagos archipelago, Ecuador. Greenpeace has called for the creation of a high seas protected zone under a new UN treaty to secure a much wider area around Ecuador's Galapagos archipelago, whose unique fauna and flora inspired Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Photograph: AFP

# Putin returns as President of Russia with over 87% votes

AGENCIES  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin won the presidential elections, receiving 87.17 per cent of the votes based on the result of processing 70 per cent of the electoral protocols, Russia-based TASS reported, citing data from the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation candidate Nikolai Kharitonov secured the second spot with 4.1 per cent of the votes while New People Party candidate Vladislav Davankov stood third with 4.8 per cent votes.

The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) candidate, Leonid Slutsky, received a mere 3.15 per cent of the votes counted.

According to preliminary data as of 6 pm (Moscow time) on Sunday, the voter turnout in the presidential elections, which for the first time took place over three days from March 15-17, stood at 74.22 per cent. Voter turnout for the elections held in 2018 was 67.54 per cent.

Putin received more votes in comparison to the 2018 elections where he bagged 76.69 per cent of the total votes counted. The performance of the other candidates was lower than that of the previous competitors of Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2018, according to reports.

In 2018, Pavel Grudinin, who was the candidate for the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, received 11.77 per cent of the votes while LDPR candidate Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (LDPR) bagged



5.65 per cent votes.

All three parties that nominated candidates for the 2024 elections can count on receiving funds from the federal budget, TASS reported, adding that as per law, all parties have the right to funding even if their candidate vying for the post of head of state overcomes the three per cent barrier. For each vote, the party will re-

ceive 152 Roubles, the report noted.

This was the first time, remote electronic voting was used for the presidential elections in Russia. Residents used the federal platform in 28 regions while people in Moscow cast votes on their own platform.

The final turnout for online voting on the federal platform stood at 94 per cent, meaning that 4.4 million people cast their votes online.

In Moscow, almost 3.7 million electronic ballots were issued, including voters who used special terminals at polling stations.

According to the results of remote electronic voting on the federal platform, Putin secured the first spot with 87.41 per cent of the votes while Davankov stood in second place with 6.28 votes.

## Friends and allies hail Putin's victory, Western leaders condemn

AGENCIES  
PARIS

Friends and allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin were quick to congratulate him on winning a fifth term in power but Western leaders condemned a ballot held under repressive conditions and with no credible opposition.

**CHINA: POPULAR 'SUPPORT'**

Beijing congratulated Putin, saying: "China and Russia are each other's largest neighbours and comprehensive strategic cooperative partners in the new era."

President Xi Jinping said the result "fully reflects the support of the Russian people", Chinese state media reported.

**IRAN: 'DECISIVE'**

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi hailed Putin's "decisive victory", state news agency IRNA reported.

Chad's President Mahamat Idriss

Deby Itno, son of the country's late longtime leader Idriss Deby, congratulated Putin in a Facebook post. He said the result was "proof of the Russian people's trust" in Putin.

**VENEZUELA: 'BODES WELL'**

In Latin America, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said: "Our older brother Vladimir Putin has triumphed, which bodes well for the world".

Cuba's Miguel Diaz-Canel said the official result was "a credible indication that the Russian population supports (Putin's) management of the country".

**ZELENSKY: 'EVIL'**

In Europe, however, the election met with condemnation. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed it as illegitimate. "Everyone in the world understands that this person, like many others throughout history, has be-

come sick with power and will stop at nothing to rule forever," he said. "There is no evil he would not do to maintain his personal power."

**EU: 'REPRESSION'**

The European Union said Russians had been denied a "real choice" after all candidates opposed to the war in Ukraine were excluded.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the vote was "based on repression and intimidation".

The 27-nation bloc said it would "never recognise" the result of polling staged in regions of Ukraine occupied by Moscow. But it did not heed a call from the widow of leading Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny not to recognise Putin as the legitimate president of Russia.

**GERMANY: 'HEINOUS'**

Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, said the vote "without choice" demonstrated "Putin's heinous behaviour against

his own people".

France's foreign ministry said "the conditions for a free, pluralist and democratic election were not met".

It said the vote was held amid "increasing repression of civil society and all forms of opposition to the regime" and saluted "the courage of the many Russian citizens who have peacefully demonstrated their opposition to this attack on their fundamental political rights".

**BRITAIN: 'ILLEGAL'**

British Foreign Minister David Cameron said the "illegal" election "starkly underline the depth of repression under President Putin's regime, which seeks to silence any opposition to his illegal war (in Ukraine)".

"Putin removes his political opponents, controls the media and then crowns himself the winner. This is not democracy."

**CZECH REPUBLIC: 'FARCE'**

Czech Foreign Minister Jan

Lipavsky called the vote a "farce".

Moldova's President, Maia Sandu, said: "We cannot talk about free and fair elections when the real opponents are removed from the race, some are sent to jail, others are expelled from the country; when reprisals are so great that people are afraid to speak out; when nothing remains of the free press".

She added: "This is not the conscious and free choice of citizens."

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani condemned the vote as "neither free nor fair", adding: "We are continuing to work for a just peace that will bring Russia to put an end to the war of aggression against Ukraine."

**NORWAY: 'VIOLATION'**

Norway, which shares a border with Russia, said the fact that the Kremlin had organised voting in parts of Ukraine "illegally occupied" by Moscow was "a serious violation of international law".

## Russia-NATO conflict is 'one step away' from World War III: Putin

AGENCIES  
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday warned the Western powers that any direct conflict between Russia and the NATO alliance, led by the US, would mean the world will be "one step away" from a full-scale World War III, TASS reported.

However, he also said that it is "unlikely" that anyone is interested in this.

The Russia-Ukraine war has sparked the most severe strain in Moscow's relations with the West since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Putin has frequently highlighted the dangers of nuclear warfare but asserted that he has never deemed it necessary to employ nuclear weapons in Ukraine, according to TASS.

Speaking to reporters, here, after emerging victorious in the post-Soviet Russian history, Putin said that in the future, a direct conflict between Russia and NATO cannot be ruled out, although no one is interested in this.

"I think that everything is possible in the modern world. But &lt;...&gt; it will be one step away from a full-scale third world war. I think

it's unlikely Is anyone interested in this?" TASS quotes Putin as saying.

Before Russia's March 15-17 elections, Ukraine had ramped up its attacks against Russia.

On Kyiv sending a large number of soldiers on the border zone, Putin said that "somewhere up to 5 thousand people" are present here.

The Russian Volunteer Corps (recognised as a terrorist organization in the Russian Federation) and similar groups include 2.5 thousand, who are now, "like meat... thrown into assaults," in the latest attacks these "so-called volunteers" lost approximately 800 people, according to TASS.

Securing a crushing victory in the Russian Presidential elections, Putin also said that he had agreed to a prisoner swap involving Alexei Navalny before the opposition leader's sudden death in an Arctic prison in February.

Calling Navalny's death a 'sad event', Putin said there were other cases of people in prisons passing away.

In his address at his election headquarters on Sunday, Putin said, "As for Mr. Navalny--yes, he passed away.

## Iceland's largest volcanic eruption turns sky orange with massive plumes of smoke

AGENCIES  
REYKJAVIK

The volcanic eruption in Iceland's Reykjanes Peninsula is the largest of the four recent ones in the area and has left the sky with plumes of smoke and orange hues, according to The Washington Post.

According to the initial assessments, the eruption was the largest of the four recent ones since swarms of earthquakes caused the Svartsengi volcanic system to awaken for the first time in almost 800 years.

The orange hues and the smoke were seen from the Icelandic capital, Reykjavik, according to photos.

The volcano that erupted on Saturday in southwestern Iceland has been recorded for the fourth time in three months, reported The Washington Post.

The eruption led to destructive lava flowing towards the town of Grindavik, prompting the evacuation of the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa resort and the nearby town of Grindavik, amid emergency warnings.

Moreover, it quickly formed a 1.8-mile-long fissure in the ground, the Icelandic Meteorological Office said.

Lava was still flowing early Sunday, and footage of the eruption was being live-streamed by RUV, Iceland's national broadcaster, according to The Washington Post.

However, there was no such information available about the scale of damage or possible casualties.

The sky around Mount Hagafell and Mount Stora Skogfell was captured, turning a molten orange as people watched and emergency services prepared to respond.

Early Sunday, lava was flowing towards the south and southeast at a pace of about 0.62 mph, the Meteorological Office said.

If that pace continues, it said, lava could reach the ocean -- which can send steam flying and, in some cases, cause explosions of lava fragments that can be dangerous to anyone nearby, it added.

According to the local media, following the alert, authorities moved to evacuate people from the area, including the Blue Lagoon, one of the country's most popular tourist attractions.

Iceland is one of the most active volcanic areas on the planet. Instead of having a central volcano, the Reykjanes Peninsula is dominated by a rift valley, with lava fields and cones, CNN reported.

## UK 'economy is turning a corner', PM Rishi Sunak attempts optimistic reset

AGENCIES  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday attempted an optimistic reset amid reports of growing unrest within his own Conservative Party ranks as he unveiled a new package of reforms for small businesses and insisted the UK "economy is turning a corner".

The British Indian leader referenced his family-run pharmacy in the southern England port city of Southampton, where he was born and helped out as a schoolboy, as an example of his first-hand small business experience. In an indirect message for the rebels, he stressed that it was important to stick with the plan for the economy that was working after a tough couple of years.

"There is now a real sense



that the economy is turning a corner with all the economic indicators pointing in the right direction," Sunak said during a Business Connect event in Warwickshire, in the Midlands region of England.

"This year, 2024, will be the year Britain bounces back... inflation has more than halved and is falling fast, growth is higher than anyone

expected, debt is on track to fall; we are not there yet but we are absolutely moving in the right direction. So, let's stick to the plan and build a better, brighter future together," he said.

Under the new package of measures, the UK government will fully fund apprenticeships in small businesses from April 1 by paying the full cost of training for anyone up to the age of 21 - reducing costs for businesses and delivering more opportunities for young people to kick start careers.

The move is underpinned by an additional GBP 60 million of new government funding for next year to support apprenticeships and also cut red tape.

"Growing up in my mum's pharmacy, I know first-hand how important small businesses are.

## Zimbabwe goes hungry as crops wither amid El Nino drought

AGENCIES  
BUHERA (ZIMBABWE)

Residents of the Zimbabwean village of Buhera stood in groups at a primary school waiting to be called by name to receive life-saving hand-outs of grain, peas and cooking oil.

"We are grateful, but the food will only be enough for one month," said Musaikwa, 71, who lives with her elderly husband, as she trudged away with her bag of

grain. "My crops are wilted." Zimbabwe has failed to feed itself since 2000 when former president Robert Mugabe seized white-owned farms, disrupting production and leading to sharp falls in output, leaving many Zimbabweans reliant on food aid for survival.

The crisis has been exacerbated by an El Nino-induced drought that has hit many southern African nations. The government has estimated that 2.7 million peo-

ple will go hungry this year, although the real number could be higher.

The government is considering whether to declare a state of emergency, a government minister told Reuters.

El Nino is a naturally occurring weather phenomenon associated with a disruption of wind patterns that means warmer ocean surface temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific.

It occurs on average every two to seven years, typically



lasts nine to 12 months and can provoke extreme weather such as tropical cyclones, prolonged drought and subsequent wildfires.

"When you drive around, you will see that many crops have wilted," said World Food Programme acting country director Christine

Mendes in Buhera, about 220 km (140 miles) south-east of the capital, Harare.

Zimbabwe's staple maize harvest is expected to halve to 1.1 million tons this year.

WFP has helped 270,000 people in four drought-prone districts between January and March but will need additional funds to feed more, said Mendes.

In Buhera, 47-year-old Mary Takawira assessed her crop, which dried up before maturity.

## Trump says he favours national abortion ban after certain number of weeks

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump said on Sunday he favors a national abortion ban after a certain number of weeks, with exceptions -- but did not confirm how many weeks, leaving his stance on a top US election issue murky.

The former president said that he would "soon" issue a proposal on the number of weeks at which a ban should be implemented, as he spoke to "Fox News Sunday" days after becoming the presumptive Republican nominee for November's White House race.

Trump was asked about a New York Times article from February that said he had told advisers he liked the idea of a 16-week national abortion ban -- with exceptions for rape, incest or the mother's health -- but was hesitant to address it publicly lest he alienate socially conservative supporters.

He did not specify to Fox at what point in a pregnancy



he believed abortions should be banned, saying that "in a number of weeks I'll be coming out with a recommendation."

"I think the recommendation will be accepted," Trump said, adding he was proud that his three Supreme Court nominations had shifted the court's balance rightward, allowing it in 2022 to end federally guaranteed abortion rights.

The Supreme Court's shock ruling left it to states to establish their own abortion laws. Some have enacted near-total bans; others, like Maryland, passed laws to enshrine abortion rights.



LAKME FASHION WEEK: ANANYA PANDAY MAKES HEADS TURN IN RAHUL MISHRA'S ENSEMBLE



TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

The finale day of Lakme Fashion Week saw several stars adding glam quotient to the runway. Ananya Panday was one of them. Ananya turned showstopper for ace designer Rahul Mishra. She walked the ramp in a black mini dress decked in floral applique work and sequins. For the make-up, she opted for smoky eye shadow, smudged kohl on the undereye waterline and glossy caramel lip shade.

She elevated her look with thigh-high boots. The pictures and videos of Ananya's ramp walk are all over social media. The Fashion Design Council Of India (FDCI) also posted images of Ananya's fashionable look.

"With this collection, Rahul Mishra looks at his con-

stant muse i.e. nature as the ultimate sculptor and artist. The collection appreciates otherwise simple natural forms for their structural personality through a sculptor's lens.

Envisioned in bright solid hues and graphic textures, the inspiration reveals itself in rigid but organic installations of natural forms that consist of vegetal and animal motifs. As a strong reference to his eight year old daughter's influence on his creative endeavours, the visuals are partially influenced by the children's story, "The Fox and the Star" whose characters appear in the collection amongst other imagined structures.

The collection also plays with geometric representations of some organic forms to represent the relation of stone and sculpture," a post read on FDCI's Instagram page.

New graphic novel gives '101 reasons' to vote for PM Modi

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Writer Shantanu Gupta has come up with a new comic, '101 Reasons, Why I Will Vote For Modi' that encourages voters to vote for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, starting on April 19.

Touted to work as a compendium of different comic art styles, the book has used as many as 10 internationally renowned art styles in its making, including semi-realistic style, manga style, disney style, traditional Indian comic book style and black and white style. It is essentially a conversation between a Modi critic and the author himself, and how the latter during the discussion ends up providing over 100 reasons to the

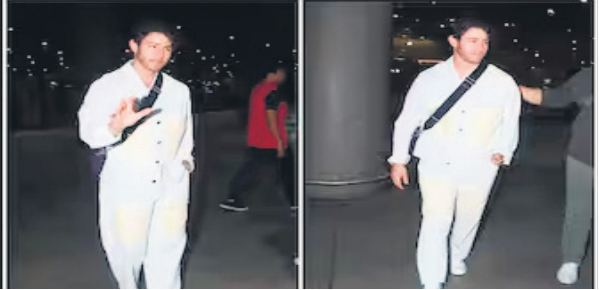
critic to vote for Modi in the 2024 general elections.

"I have collected most of the stories after directly talking to the beneficiaries of the different schemes of the Modi government.

Each of the 101 reasons are presented with comparison data of pre 2014 scenario, the human stories involved and an English poetic couplet to capture the impact of that particular scheme of the Modi government," said Gupta, author of another graphic novel 'Ajay to Yogi Adityanath', in a statement.

According to The Write Order publications, the book, through its innovative art work, talks about the many changes that have come in the life of the common people through PM Modi's pro-poor policies.

NICK JONAS ARRIVES IN MUMBAI



TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Singer Nick Jonas was spotted at the Mumbai airport in the early hours of Monday.

He made a stylish entry in an all-white look at the airport. He sported a white shirt that he paired with matching pants and sneakers.

This is Nick's second visit to India this year. He and his brothers Kevin and Joe Jonas performed at the Lollapalooza India music event in January.

Nick arrived in India a few days after his wife and actress Priyanka Chopra and their daughter Malti Marie touched down in the country.

Priyanka has been in India for her work commitments.

She recently launched a brand store of Bulgari in Mumbai's Jio World Plaza. For the launch, she teamed a luxury reptile-inspired piece with an embroidered

bralette and floor-sweeping pants by Anamika Khanna, as well as gold stiletto sandals. She is one of the global brand ambassadors for the brand.

She also made heads turn with her presence at Bvlgari and Isha Ambani's Roman Holi celebration in Mumbai. Priyanka opted for a pastel pink stylish slit skirt-styled sheer pre-draped saree that she paired with a bustier blouse. She wore matching hued heels to complement her look.

Meanwhile, on the work front, in the coming months, Priyanka will be seen in 'Heads of State', alongside John Cena and Idris Elba.

She is also set to lend her voice to Disney's upcoming film Tiger.

The movie will be released on Disney+ Hotstar and it revolves around understanding the intricacies of the intriguing world of one of our planet's most loved creatures.

PICTURE PERFECT

Madhuri Dixit Nene walks the ramp during the grand finale of FDCI x Lakme Fashion Week 2024. (ANI)



'SHAITAAN' CROSSES RS 100 CRORE-MARK AT BOX OFFICE

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Supernatural thriller "Shaitaan" has added Rs 24.41 crore to its net box office collections (NBOC) in the second weekend of its release, taking up its total earnings to Rs 106.01 crore, the makers said on Monday.

Starring Ajay Devgn, Jyotika, and R Madhavan, the film had collected Rs 81.60 crore in its first weekend. It released in theatres on



March 8.

Presented by Jio Studios, Devgn Films and Panorama Studios, "Shaitaan" is produced by Devgn, Jyoti Deshpande, Kumar Man-

gat Pathak and Abhishek Pathak.

"Shaitaan" maintains absolute dominance in its second weekend collecting Rs 10.17 crore on Sunday and a week-

end total of Rs 24.41 crore.

"Week 1 - Rs 81.60 crore, 2nd Friday - Rs 5.12 crore, 2nd Saturday - Rs 9.12 crore, 2nd Sunday - Rs 10.17 crore, Total 2nd weekend - Rs 24.41 crore. Total - Rs 106.01 crore NBOC (India) & Rs 152.11 crore Worldwide Gross," the makers said in a press note.

"Shaitaan", directed by Vikas Bahl, is the Hindi remake of the 2023 Gujarati horror film "Vash", written and directed by Krishnadev Yagnik.

'Family is the greatest bond...': Amitabh Bachchan

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan's latest post on his blog is all about his love for his family members.

From extending greetings to his daughter Shweta and son-in-law Nikhil Nanda to talking about family love, Big B poured his heart out in the post.

"A day filled with the love of family and the greetings and the hilarity of the 'progress reports' .. Birthdays galore .. Shweta , the first born, and Nikhil her husband .. within a day of each other and the bringing in of the GOLDEN age -50 years," he wrote.

"At Prateeksha , she was brought to the home , our first home of our own, when she was barely 2, and Abhishek a few months old .. and today to see them celebrate the day in the same home on the same table and surroundings .. LIFE IS A WONDER .. Children and grandchildren all together .. Family is the greatest bond .. of love togetherness and the joys of each other .. may it ever be in lasting .... and the family at the GOJ .. ? they are supreme," he added.

He also dropped pictures from his weekly Sunday ritual. In the pictures, he can be seen happily greeting fans outside Jalsa. Abhishek Bachchan also made a special appearance.



.. may it ever be in lasting .... and the family at the GOJ .. ? they are supreme," he added.

He also dropped pictures from his weekly Sunday ritual. In the pictures, he can be seen happily greeting fans outside Jalsa. Abhishek Bachchan also made a special appearance.

Big B is associated with the Indian Street Premier League (ISPL) as the owner of team

Mumbai. The ISPL is India's tennis ball T10 cricket tournament. Big B's team 'Majhi Mumbai' lost the final game to Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan's Tigers of Kolkata.

Hours after attending the match, Amitabh Bachchan posted a motivational post for the Majhi Mumbai team. "A loss in the FINALS .. at the ISPL .. sad but on the day the other team played a better game .. so we resolve that the next season of the game we shall endeavour with greater effort and WIN .. THE FIGHT is more valuable when defeat has been initiated , for when there is no defeat .. victory shall never be highlighted .. you have to win against an opposition, else how does one register a win .. So we give the credit to the opposition .. it is their due .. resolve our spirits and prepare for the next fight .. Maybe the presence and the encouragement , like the game before could have enthused them .. but just not our day .. we take it on the chin and get ready to punch back soon," he wrote.

SIDHARTH MALHOTRA VISITS MUMBAI THEATRE SCREENING 'YODHA'

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

After portraying a RAW agent in 'Mission Majnu' last year, actor Sidharth Malhotra is back with yet another action-packed thriller, 'Yodha.'

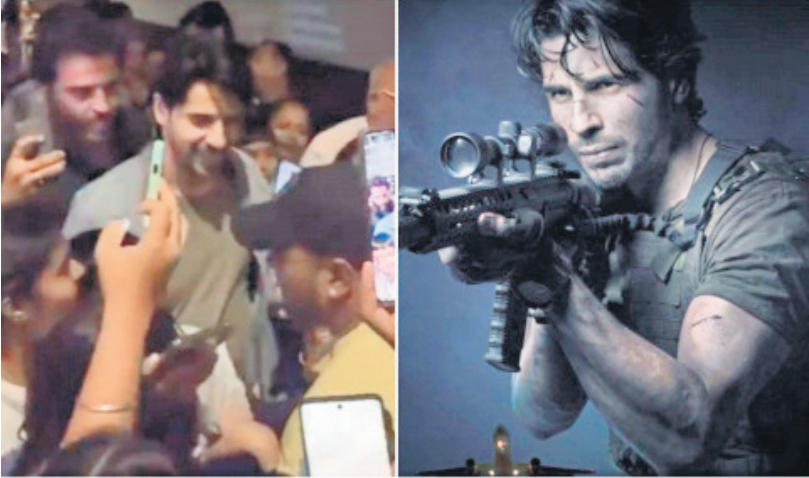
Directed by Sagar Ambre and Pushkar Ojha, 'Yodha' hit theaters a few days ago and as per trade analysts reports is performing well at the Box Office.

To show his appreciation for his fans' support in making the film a success, the actor decided to surprise some of them by visiting a cinema in Mumbai.

A recent video of the actor shared widely on social media showed fans thronging him at a Mumbai theatre. The clip captures Sidharth interacting with moviegoers and taking selfies with them after they watched a show of 'Yodha'.

Fans of the 'Kapoor & Sons' actor can be heard cheering for him and expressing their love for the film. Sidharth looked stylish in an army green T-shirt paired with a denim jacket and pants.

Directed by debutant duo Sagar Ambre and Pushkar Ojha, the high-octane action thriller film follows the character



of Arun Katyal, the commanding officer of an elite unit, the Yodha Task Force, on a thrilling rescue operation.

Meanwhile, Sidharth had also recently visited Delhi to promote the film. At the event, he spoke highly of the movie.

He said, "Yodha is a completely fictitious story. We have created a new task force - Yodha. So when you create something from scratch, you can take a lot of liberties. We have introduced many variations in the film, and the action I got

to perform is very different from 'Sher-shaah.' Here, I am more energetic, lean, and use different sorts of weapons. It is a far more commercial and entertaining film. I think it features some of my best action sequences in the last decade or so."

The film has been produced by Hiroo Yash Johar, Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Shashank Khaitan. Disha Patani and Raashii Khanna are also part of the action movie.

BRAIN PICKING



What you feel inside reflects on your face. So be happy and positive all the time.

-SRIDEVI

(Indian actress)



BFF SARA ALI KHAN, JANHVI KAPOOR SWEAT IT OUT IN GYM

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Workout buddies Sara Ali Khan and Janhvi Kapoor have posted a cool video of them burning calories in the gym. Taking to her Instagram stories, Sara, on Monday, shared the video featuring her intense workout session with close friend Janhvi. Both were seen radiating a cool vibe in their athletic attire as they were guided by instructor Namrata Purohit.

A fan later reposted the 'Murder Mubarak' star's workout video expressing admiration for the duo's dedication to fitness.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Sara's latest movie, 'Murder Mubarak,' directed by Homi Adajania, hit Netflix on March 15. Pankaj Tripathi, Karisma Kapoor, Sanjay Kapoor and Tisca Chopra are also a part of the film.

Sara will be next seen in the patriotic film 'Ae Watan Mere Watan,' set in pre-independence India. Essaying the role



of freedom fighter Usha Mehta, her character plays a crucial role in India's fight for independence from the British. Directed by Kannan Iyer, the movie also features Emraan Hashmi, Anand Tiwari, and others, premiering on Prime Video on March 21.

On the other hand, Janhvi Kapoor was last seen in the 2023 romantic drama 'Bawaal,' directed by Nitesh Tiwari and co-starring Varun Dhawan. Her upcoming projects include pairing with Rajkumar Rao in 'Mr. and Mrs. Mahi.' She will also be seen in the Pan-India film 'Devvara' which also stars Saif Ali Khan and NTR Jr in the lead roles.

OSCAR-WINNER MM KEERAVANI BAGS ANUPAM'S DIRECTORIAL MOVIE



TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

The upcoming Anupam Kher directorial movie 'Tanvi The Great' has now on-boarded Oscar-winning music director MM Keeravani. This collaboration promises to be an exciting one. With Anupam Kher leading the show and MM Keeravani crafting the music, Tanvi The Great is expected to have some beautiful melodies. Talking about the same, MM Keeravani said, "I am thrilled to be a part of 'Tanvi The Great'. Collaborating with Anupam Kher is like being yourself all the time. Work was never this much fun before."

In a post announcing this, Anupam Kher wrote, "ALL DREAMS COME TRUE: Proud to announce that one of the finest music composers of our times \*Oscar and \*GoldenGlobe winner @mmkeeravaani sir is the music director of my directorial film \*TanviTheGreat! I have been a fan of \*Keeravani sir since I heard the song \*TumMileDilKhile. Spending almost a year to create the music and songs for \*TanviTheGreat has been a total BLISS and BLESSING! Thank you Sir for your brilliance and generosity! Jai Ho! @anupam-

kherstudio." The Kashmir Files actor posted on his birthday this year that he will be making his directorial debut. He wrote on March 7 on social media, "Tanvi The Great: Today, on my birthday I proudly announce the name of the film I have decided to direct. Some stories find their path and compel you to share it with the world! And the best way I thought to start is by taking the blessings of my mother in her temple with my father's pic blessing me too. Have been working on this musical story of \*Passion \*Courage \*Innocence and \*Joy for the last three years. And finally starting shooting tomorrow on the auspicious day of \*Mahashivratri.

Birthday is the best day to CHALLENGE yourself! Please Send me your love, best wishes and blessings! Om Namah Shivay! \*TanviTheGreat \*Musical \*Film \*Passion \*Courage @anupamkherstudio." MM Keeravani, or MM Keem as he is known in Bollywood, is a recipient

of Oscar Award and Golden Globe award for RRR's 'Naatu Naatu' song and many more acclaimed awards under his name. Tanvi The Great is produced by Anupam Kher Studio.



# 5 TIPS FOR MANAGING PREGNANCY ANXIETY

DR MADHURA SAMUDRA

Pregnancy can be a time of heightened emotional sensitivity, and anxiety may manifest in various forms such as persistent worries about the baby's health, insecurities over your changing body, fear of childbirth, or concerns about parenting skills. Anxiety in pregnancy can range from mild unease to more severe anxiety disorders.

Here are 5 tips to manage your anxiety during pregnancy for an uplifting and empowering journey -

- Practice Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:



Engage in mindfulness activities like meditation, prenatal yoga, or deep breathing exercises that can help in reducing stress and anxiety. Indulge in some me time

with aromatherapy which is a powerful tool for relaxation and stress relief. Certain essential oils that are safe to be used during pregnancy include Lavender oil, Chamomile, Lemon etc. Our

Lemonpound cake soy wax candle is a perfect addition to your meditation routine that creates a calm environment and helps you ease into serenity.

- Focus on your physical health: Physical activity can boost your mood, improve sleep, and reduce anxiety. Indulge in low intensity exercises like Yoga or Swimming and consult your healthcare provider to find out which exercises are safe for you. Exposure to sunlight and nature can help you navigate emotions with ease leaving you feel rejuvenated and relaxed.

- Get Adequate Sleep & Rest: Prioritise sleep and maintain a regular sleep

routine. Poor sleep can exacerbate anxiety, so try to get atleast 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep during the night and a 30-45minute nap during the day. Rest does not mean discontinuing your daily duties, but sitting out on plans or allowing yourself to slow down based on your needs will be very relaxing.

- Keep a Journal: Writing down your thoughts and feelings can be a therapeutic way to process your emotions. Keeping a pregnancy journal can also help you reflect on the positive aspects of your journey and track your progress. The "Bump Book" by Glomama is a cherished keepsake to track all your important dates, ap-

pointments and pen down your thoughts and feelings. Crafted by a Mental Health Professional herself, it also includes space to document your affirmations, cravings and plan important events.

- Massage Therapy: Massages during pregnancy can be a great way to promote relaxation, stress relief and alleviate muscle tension. Prenatal massage is specially tailored to meet the needs of pregnant women and focuses on addressing the emotional and physical changes during this time. Using special formulations of oils that cater to problems like skin dryness, stretching and itchiness with no overpowering fragrance have added benefits. Our Belly oil contains nourishing ingredients like Centella Asiatica, Calendula and Sweet Almond Oil, Jojoba oil, Castor seed oil promote a sense of calmness and also hydrate the skin from within.

It is important to take care of your emotional needs during this special time and also address the warning signs to have a beautiful Pregnancy and Postpartum journey. Follow the above tips to your way into an exciting and enriching motherhood.

The author is the MBBS, MD Psychiatry and a Co founder glomama.

## STUDY SUGGESTS AYURVEDIC DRUG NEERI KFT AIDS KIDNEY RECOVERY

TDG NETWORK

On World Kidney Day, a team of researchers from the National Institute of Unani Medicine(NIUM) in Bengaluru has revealed the effectiveness of the herbal formulation Neeri KFT in regulating serum creatinine levels & improving kidney function.

In study, they found that within 42 days of patient treatment, the Ayurvedic medicine prepared from herbs like punarnava, gokshura, varuna, kasni, makoy, palash, and giloy by AIMIL Pharmaceuticals helps effectively regulate serum creatinine levels, thus promoting overall kidney health. This study has been published in esteemed journal Avicenna Journal of Medical Biochemistry. Dr. Sanchit Sharma, Executive Director of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals, emphasized on the growing international recognition of traditional medicine, noting ayurveda's mention of several remedies to strengthen kidneys, including Neeri KFT.

According to health experts, an early diagnosis of kidney disease is crucial, as demonstrated by the study's findings of significant improvements when treatment begins at the onset or in the early stages. However, the study also underscores the challenges faced by patients globally, with 90 per cent of Indian patients unable to afford treatment for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), while over a million people worldwide rely



on dialysis or have undergone kidney transplants.

In the study, researchers categorised patients into two groups, one was given Neeri-KFT while other was provided with Kabab chini. After 42 days of intervention, the researchers observed a decrease in serum creatinine levels in both groups. Furthermore, there was an enhancement in the glomerular filtration rate (GFR). Both these parameters are indicators of improved kidney function.

Patients also experienced improvement in appetite and fatigue, the researchers noted.

They concluded that by emphasizing the potential of traditional medicine in treating various diseases,

despite low awareness levels, and urged for greater accessibility to affordable treatment options for all.

In India, nine out of ten patients cannot afford expensive treatment. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the scientific facts of traditional medicine as an affordable option.



## HOLI HEALTH: NOURISHING FESTIVE FEASTS FOR VIBRANT CELEBRATIONS



FOOD IS MEDICINE

DR ANISH DESAI

Holi, celebrated with vibrant colors, marks a time of joyous gatherings and indulgent snacking. While this festival is synonymous with fun and food, maintaining a balance between celebration and health is possible. Embracing the spirit of Holi doesn't have to mean sidelining wellness. By incorporating wholesome and nutritious options into the festive menu, one can revel in the festivities without compromising on health, ensuring a celebration that's both vibrant and virtuous.

While playing Holi, it is always better to avoid chemical-based colors and

ditional flavors but also offers a guilt-free way to enjoy this festive sweet.

Homemade Thandai, a traditional Holi beverage, blends milk, nuts, and spices like fennel, cardamom, and saffron. Making it at home allows for control over sugar levels and the choice of wholesome ingredients. Personalizing the recipe enhances the nutritional value, ensuring a healthier version of this drink. Embrace the essence of Holi with a homemade Thandai that's both nourishing and indulgent.

For a healthier Malpua, opt for whole wheat flour instead of refined flour. Fry them in minimal oil or ghee to re-



duce the fat content. For a more wholesome version, sweeten it with jaggery or honey rather than refined sugar. For a healthier Puran Poli, prepare the filling with lentils, jaggery, and grated coconut to reduce the need for additional sugar. Opt for whole wheat flour when making the dough for added fiber. Cook the Puran Poli in minimal ghee to cut down on unhealthy fats. These adjustments retain the authentic flavors while making Puran Poli a nutritious choice. Indulge in the vibrant colors and joyous spirit of Holi without sacrificing health by incorporating these nutritious foods into your celebration. This will ensure a festive experience that's both wholesome and delightful.

Gujiya, a classic Holi delicacy typically deep-fried, can be made healthier by baking. Opt for a filling of khoya (dried whole milk) mixed with an assortment of nuts and dried fruits to ensure each bite is nutritiously delightful. This baked version not only retains the tra-

## REVOLUTIONIZING BRAIN TUMOR CARE: APOLLO HOSPITALS INTRODUCES ZAP-X

TDG NETWORK

Apollo Hospitals Group, India's premier healthcare provider, has unveiled the ZAP-X Gyroscopic Radio surgery Platform, marking a significant milestone as the first in South Asia to introduce this revolutionary technology. This groundbreaking advancement in brain tumor treatment is poised to redefine patient care, offering non-invasive, pain-free sessions lasting just 30 minutes. With ZAP-X, Apollo Hospitals continues its legacy of innovation and commitment to providing world-class healthcare solutions for patients in India and beyond.

ZAP-X heralds a new era in brain tumor treatment, prioritizing patient comfort and recovery. Its non-invasive nature and shorter treatment duration not only minimize patient discomfort but also accelerate recovery times. By utilizing a self-shielded, gyroscopic linear accelerator design, ZAP-X ensures precise targeting of tumor cells while minimizing radiation exposure to surrounding healthy brain tissue. This innovative approach significantly enhances patient outcomes by avoiding critical structures like the brain stem, eyes, and optic nerves, thus safeguarding cognitive function.

The clinical capabilities of ZAP-X extend beyond brain tumors to include the treatment of various neurological conditions such as Arteriovenous Malformations (AVMs), Trigeminal Neuralgias, Movement Disorders like Parkinson's disease, Epilepsy, and other intracranial lesions. Dr. Prathap Chandra Reddy, Founder Chairman of Apollo Hospitals Group, emphasized the significance of ZAP-X, stating that it enables non-invasive, pain-free sessions with minimal radiation exposure. Advanced safety



protocols, including instant error detection and reduced radiation leakage, ensure the well-being and quality of life of patients post-treatment.

ZAP-X's key advantages include its non-invasiveness, pain-free sessions, frameless design, pinpoint accuracy, and real-time image guidance. With high success rates, including over 95% control rate in 10 years for various conditions and an exceptional 99.4% control rate in 5 years for small, defined tumors, ZAP-X demonstrates its effectiveness in providing relief with minimal side effects.

Prof. John R. Adler, Founder and CEO of Zap Surgical and Professor of Neurosurgery at Stanford School of Medicine, hailed ZAP-X as a significant

medical advancement. He emphasized that eligible patients no longer need to undergo debilitating surgical resections or whole-brain radiotherapy, as ZAP-X offers quick treatment in an outpatient setting, allowing patients to return to normal activities the same day with no incisions and no pain.

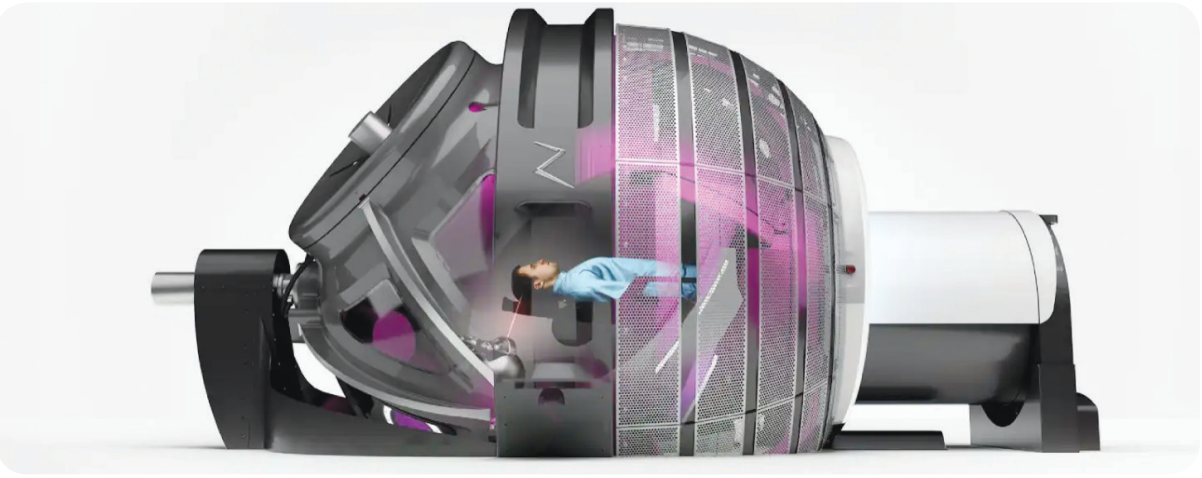
Traditionally, brain surgeries last 3-4 hours, requiring extended hospitalization and anesthesia. In contrast, ZAP-X completes treatment within a single 30-minute session, enabling a day-care procedure and allowing patients to return home post-treatment without the need for prolonged hospital stays.

The Apollo Institute of Neurosciences stands as a pioneering force in revolu-

tionizing neurological care across India and the region. With over 180,000 successful neurosurgeries and a formidable team of over 300 neurosurgeons and neurologists, Apollo Hospitals treats more than 25,000 patients annually, performing nearly 6,000 brain and spinal surgeries. Leveraging cutting-edge AI technology, the Institute has redefined stroke protocols, ensuring swifter and more accurate diagnosis and treatment.

Apollo Hospitals, founded in 1983, has evolved into the world's largest integrated healthcare platform, with over 10,000 beds across 71 hospitals, nearly 6,000 pharmacies, and over 200 clinics and diagnostic centers, along with 150 telemedicine centers. With a commitment to research and innovation, Apollo continues to invest in bringing the most cutting-edge technologies, equipment, and treatment protocols to ensure patients receive the best available care in the world.

In conclusion, the unveiling of the ZAP-X platform by Apollo Hospitals represents a monumental leap forward in brain tumor care, offering patients a non-invasive, pain-free treatment option with minimal side effects and faster recovery times. This innovation underscores Apollo's dedication to transforming lives and reaffirms its position as a global leader in healthcare excellence.





EXPERIENCE VIBRANT HOLI CELEBRATIONS AT ISKCON DWARKA, DELHI!

TDG NETWORK

Experience the Vibrancy of Holi at ISKCON Dwarka on 25th Mar with fabulous activities : Phoolon ki Holi, Lath Mar Holi, Matki Phod Holi, Sumptuous Food stalls with 100KG cake cutting

Holi, the festival of colors, is a vibrant celebration of joy and togetherness. Across India, different regions have unique ways of celebrating this auspicious occasion. From Phoolon ki Holi to Lath Mar Holi and Matki Phod Holi, each tradition adds its own charm to the festivities.

PHOOLON KI HOLI:

One of the most picturesque forms of Holi is Phoolon ki Holi, where instead of colors, fragrant flower petals are used to playfully drench each other in colors of nature along with Lord Krishna. This gentle and colorful celebration is a favorite among many at ISKCON Dwarka, who prefer a more serene Holi experience.



LATH MAR HOLI:

In the region of Mathura and Vrindavan, Lath Mar Holi is a playful yet energetic event where women playfully hit men with sticks (lathis) while men try to shield themselves and drench the women in colors. Similar way, It's a unique and lively tradition at ISKCON Dwarka too where come people and play Lathmaar Holi with Foam sticks and shield to make this activity very enjoyable.

MATKI PHOD HOLI:

Another exciting aspect of this year Holi at ISKCON Dwarka is the Matki Phod



Holi, where a clay pot is hung high, and enthusiastic participants compete to break the pot by aiming it. The person who successfully breaks the pot is rewarded



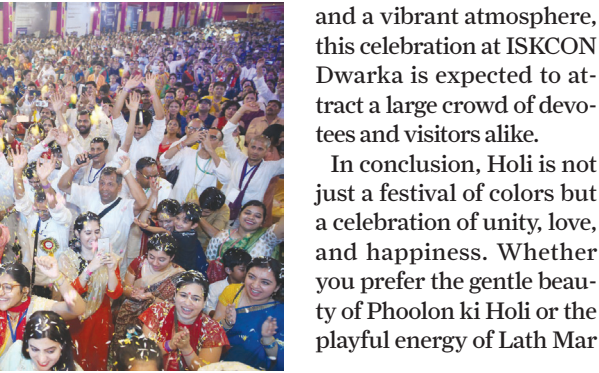
& cheers from the crowd.

FOOD STALLS:

No Holi celebration is complete without delicious food and drinks. Food stalls offering a variety of traditional snacks like gujiya, thandai, pakoras, and sweets are set up during the festivities. It's a time to indulge in mouth-watering treats and enjoy the festive spirit with family and friends.

GRAND HOLI CELEBRATION AT ISKCON DWARKA:

On 25th March 2024, ISKCON Dwarka is hosting a grand Holi celebration



that promises to be a spectacular event filled with music, dance, colors, and spirituality. With cultural performances, live music, Holi and Matki Phod Holi, there's something for everyone to enjoy during this joyous occasion at ISKCON Dwarka, Delhi.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTENTIONS: WHY THEY MATTER MORE THAN ACTIONS

DR HANSAJI YOGENDRA

We all want to be good but none of us can ever be all good. Such is the nature of human existence that at some point our actions can't be called good in the normal way. Simply put, we all make mistakes. Do we become bad people because we made mistakes? One way to solve this conundrum might be through the question of intentions or sankalpas.

That is, when we do something bad were our intentions good. Were our bad actions the result of a particular set of adverse circumstances and not wrong intentions? Being so, are we then good human beings? Let's understand more

through two perspectives: Intentions: Perspectives from the Katha Upanishad and the Mahabharata The Katha Upanishad has a particular story of Nachiketa's encounter with Yama. But for our purposes, the character we need to look at is Vajashravas, Nachiketa's father. The story goes that Vajashravas decided to renounce his wealth and enter sanyasashrama. So, he organised a huge yagya. But as he saw his cattle being driven away by unknown men, attachment filled his heart. Vajashravas then began to donate only the sick and old heads of cattle. Clearly his intentions had changed driven by greed and attachment. While Vajashravas was

wealthy, our second character, Saktu Prasad was a poor priest who lived during King Yuddhishtira's rule. One day as Yudhisthir organised a charity donating copious amounts of wealth; he saw a golden mongoose run past the treasury. He chased the mongoose to understand the mystery behind its golden appearance. The mongoose fled and Yudhisthir was perplexed. Sage Narada then came down to explain things to Yudhisthir. Narada explained that not far from Yudhisthir's palace lived a poor priest, Saktu Prasad and his family. The priest and his entire family of ten people got by with a single fist of rice every day. One day a hungry, orphan

child came to them asking for food. Despite the hungry faces of his family members Saktu Prasad donated the handful of rice to the child. Then when this mongoose was scampering nearby, Saktu Prasad touched it and such was the power of his good, kind intentions or sankalpas that wherever Saktu Prasad's fingers touched the mongoose its fur turned golden. Narada explained that both Yudhisthir and Saktu Prasad had performed the same karma of dana or charity. But the one with the superior intention was Saktu Prasad who simply wanted to help the orphanchild. While both Vajashravas and Yudhisthir's intent was coloured by the need to

be seen and known as kind and generous. THE TAKEAWAYS: ● Sometimes your actions or your karmas may not be called good by others. But if it is the right thing to do at that time, do it. A parent scolding a child to correct the child may seem a harsh action but the intention is one of love and care. ● Always try to avoid the intention to harm anyone: avoid unfair criticisms, harsh words, jealous thoughts and deceptive actions. ● Practise setting positive life goals and intentions for yourself: help where you can, work with a selfless attitude and strive for the betterment of people around you.

● Being nice is not the same thing as being good. Being good means you have to take difficult decisions and actions to do the right thing. Your intentions or sankalpas have a profound impact on your karmas. Intentions can also help you navigate the moral dilemmas of life. Whenever you are in a tough spot in life, ask yourself if the intentions behind your actions were correct. If yes, then take succor from the fact that you had to do what needed to be done at that time. Dr Hansaji Yogendra is the director of The Yoga Institute. She is also the president of the Indian Yoga Association and the International Board of Yoga.

THE SUBTLETY OF DHARMA



MYSTIC MUSING  
RAJESH M. IYER

'The hunter was having a particularly tough time finding an animal to hunt, and it was getting exasperating. That's when he spotted a deer. He aimed an arrow, but the sprightly deer dodged him. The deer ran and reached an opening in the forest with two roads, one leading to the village and another towards the mountain. The deer scanned the area, and its eyes met the sage's, who sat under the tree. Apparently, he had been meditating and was perhaps about to head back to his ashram. For a moment, their eyes locked. That's when the deer heard the fast-approaching footsteps of the hunter and ran down the opening that led to the mountains. The hunter came to the spot and was surprised to find the sage in the deep woods. Finding him not meditating, the hunter asked him if he had seen the deer run away. The sage nodded and pointed to the opening that led to the village. The hunter ran in that direction.' Finishing the story abruptly, the guru asked his disciples, 'So what's your opinion about the sage's action?' Everyone found the sage to be right in saving the poor deer. 'He was compassionate, and that makes his action right.' The guru countered, 'What about the lie? He misled the hunter.' 'Lying for the sake of helping someone isn't a sin,' one of the disciples blurted out the philosophy that he had heard since childhood. 'You also taught us aapad-dharma, where rules can be bent during an emergency for greater good.' The guru nodded as he spoke, 'And how does one decide greater good? The hunter was also performing his duties. Is it not his dharma to fill the stomachs of the little ones in his house? The sage's action deprived the entire family of dinner, perhaps even of money he could've earned by selling the remaining meat.' The disciples became pensive upon hearing the guru's words. In their rush to judge, they had forgotten to factor in all the aspects. There's something called Dharma Sukshmata, or the subtlety of Dharma. Each action has contrasting elements intertwined and is neither entirely good nor bad. We ought to be careful before painting any action in purely black or white shades without understanding the perspective and the situation, and definitely not before getting a glimpse of the complete picture.



HOLIKA DAHAN: SYMBOLIC BONFIRE LIGHTING CEREMONY FOR HOLI FESTIVAL

TDG NETWORK

Holika Dahan, a significant ritual preceding the colorful festival of Holi, holds profound cultural and religious significance in Hindu tradition. Also known as Chhoti Holi or the bonfire night, Holika Dahan marks the victory of good over evil and the triumph of righteousness over malevolence. The origins of Holika Dahan trace back to ancient Hindu mythology, particularly the legend of Prahlad and Holika. According to Hindu scriptures, Hiranyakashipu, a tyrannical demon king, sought to eliminate his devout son Prahlad's devotion to Lord Vishnu. Holika, the sister of Hiranyakashipu, possessed a boon that made her immune to fire. In a bid to annihilate Prahlad, Holika sat with him in a pyre. However, divine intervention saw Prahlad unscathed while Holika perished, signifying the protection of the virtuous and the destruction of evil. Holika Dahan symbolizes the triumph of virtue and truth over deceit and malevolence. The ritual is observed on the night before the festival of Holi, typically during the full moon night of the Hindu lunar month of Phalgun. Communities come together to build a pyre using wood, twigs, and



shipu, possessed a boon that made her immune to fire. In a bid to annihilate Prahlad, Holika sat with him in a pyre. However, divine intervention saw Prahlad unscathed while Holika perished, signifying the protection of the virtuous and the destruction of evil. Holika Dahan symbolizes the triumph of virtue and truth over deceit and malevolence. The ritual is observed on the night before the festival of Holi, typically during the full moon night of the Hindu lunar month of Phalgun. Communities come together to build a pyre using wood, twigs, and

other combustible materials. Effigies of Holika and sometimes other demons are placed atop the pyre, symbolizing the eradication of evil forces. As dusk descends, families and communities gather around the bonfire, chanting prayers, singing hymns, and performing rituals. The atmosphere resonates with the crackling of flames and the fervent devotion of the participants. The bonfire represents the cleansing of impurities, the dispelling of negativity, and the welcoming of auspiciousness. One of the key customs during Holika Dahan involves

circling the bonfire multiple times. This act, known as pradakshina, is believed to purify the soul and ward off evil influences. People also offer various items such as grains, fruits, and sweets to the fire as a gesture of gratitude and seeking blessings for prosperity and well-being. Holika Dahan is not just a religious observance but also a community celebration fostering unity, harmony, and togetherness. It transcends religious boundaries, with people of different faiths and backgrounds joining in the festivities, reinforcing the spirit of communal harmony and mutual respect. Moreover, the bonfire serves as a reminder of the cyclical nature of life, symbolizing the end of winter and the onset of spring. As the flames engulf the effigies and the pyre burns brightly, it heralds the arrival of Holi, the festival of colors, joy, and camaraderie. In essence, Holika Dahan embodies the essence of Indian culture and spirituality, celebrating the eternal victory of righteousness and the eternal defeat of evil. It is a time for reflection, renewal, and rejoicing, as communities come together to usher in the vibrant festivities of Holi with faith, fervor, and festivity.





# IOA DISSOLVES AD-HOC COMMITTEE FOR WRESTLING, WFI TO TAKE CHARGE

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Monday dissolved the ad-hoc committee which was appointed to handle the day-to-day activities of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), saying that there is no need for the body following lifting of the ban on the federation by United World Wrestling (UWW) and the successful completion of selection trials for future competitions.

UWW lifted the ban on WFI in February with immediate effect. The UWW had placed the WFI under provisional suspension on August 23 last year after the federation failed to hold an election in the stipulated time following accusations of sexual harassment and protests against ex-president Brij Bhushan Singh by top wrestlers Bajrang Punia,



Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik. An ad hoc committee was put in place.

In late December, elections were held and Sanjay Singh was elected as the new president of WFI. However, the wrestlers protested against his election, saying he was an aide of ex-president Brij Bhushan. Days after the elections, the Ministry suspended the federation

again, a decision that came after Sanjay had announced the hosting of the U-15 and U-20 nationals at Nandini Nagar in the Gond district of Uttar Pradesh by the end of the year. An ad-hoc committee of IOA was put in place once again to handle the day-to-day affairs of the federation.

The trials for men's and women's wrestlers were

*In late December, elections were held and Sanjay Singh was elected as the new president of WFI. However, the wrestlers protested against his election, saying he was an aide of ex-president Brij Bhushan.*

held from March 10-11. The Asian Wrestling Championships will be held from April 11 to 16, while, Asian Olympic Qualifiers will be held from April 19 to 21.

IOA said in an office order that the decision to dissolve the Adhoc Committee comes "in light of the lifting of the ban on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) by

the United World Wrestling (UWW) and the successful completion of selection trials by the ad-hoc committee appointed by the IOA as per the directives of the High Court of Delhi".

"Consequent upon the aforementioned developments, there is no further need for running the activities of the WFI through an ad-hoc committee," it said.

IOA noted that it is imperative that WFI, on the advice of UWW, appoints a safeguarding committee or officer to address concerns of abuse and harassment of athletes and to make sure that all rules, regulations and guidelines set by UWW and other authorities are followed.

"The WFI is also directed to conduct the elections of the Athletes Commission in a time-bound manner, in accordance with the established procedures and guidelines.

## 'Feeling of winning has not sunk in yet': RCB skipper Mandhana

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Following her side's maiden Women's Premier League (WPL) title win, Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) skipper Smriti Mandhana said a poor performance in the inaugural season taught her and the team a lot, as she thanked the team management and fans for continuously backing and supporting her.

An all-round Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) led by yet another solid knock by Ellyse Perry and brilliant bowling spells from spinners Shreyanka Patil and Sophie Molineux captured their first-ever Women's Premier League (WPL) title after defeating Delhi Capitals by eight wickets in the title clash at Arun Jaitley Stadium on Sunday. This win comes after a second-last-place finish in the inaugural edition, in which they won just two matches out of eight.

After the title win, Smriti

said that the feeling of winning the title has not sunk in yet and she cannot find the right way to express it.

"The feeling has not sunk in yet, maybe it will take time. Hard for me to come out with a lot of expression. Only thing I want to say is I am proud of the bunch. We have been through ups and downs but they have stuck at it, and the way we have gotten past the line (tonight), it was amazing," said Smriti.

The skipper said that the team had a fine Bengaluru leg but faced two tough losses in Delhi. The important thing however was to peak at the right time, she

added. "The last league match was like a quarter, then the semi and then the final.

In such tournaments, you have to peak at the right time. Last year taught us a lot of things, as a player, as a captain and as a team. The management, the way they backed me during the review after the season... they have been through a lot and a big thumbs up (to them). For them to have this trophy, it is amazing for them. I am not the only one who has won the trophy, the team has won. For RCB as a franchise to win, it is really, really special," said Smriti.

## UP Warriorz's Deepti Sharma secures WPL 'Most Valuable Player' award

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Following the conclusion of the second season of the Women's Premier League (WPL), UP Warriorz vice-captain Deepti Sharma was crowned as the 'Most Valuable Player' of the tournament and said that she got to bat higher up this time around and make crucial contributions.

UP Warriorz failed to qualify for playoffs, finishing in the fourth spot with three wins and five losses.

"I have played what I feel my game is during this tournament.

I kept believing, and played different shots according to the ball. Before the tournament, I did a lot of drills to improve my game (on the off-side). It was something I developed and I am happy with that. Last season, I did not get many opportunities to bat. This season, I batted higher and happy to have contributed for the team in crucial situations



also. Hopefully, I can keep performing this way," said Deepti.

Deepti scored 295 runs in eight matches at an average

of 98.33 and a strike rate of over 136. She scored three fifties, with the best score of 88\*. She also took 10 wickets.

## ROHIT SHARMA JOINS MUMBAI INDIANS TRAINING CAMP AHEAD OF IPL 2024

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

India skipper Rohit Sharma on Monday joined the Mumbai Indians (MI) training camp ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024.

The Mumbai-based franchise took to their official X (formerly Twitter) account and shared a clip of the former MI skipper joining the squad.

"WOH AA GAYA... RO AA GAYA," MI wrote on X while sharing the video.

In November last year, Pandya moved back from Gujarat Titans (GT) to his former franchise as part of a trade between both franchises.

The star all-rounder spent two years with GT, spearheading their campaign in the cash-rich league with aplomb. In GT's debut season in

2022, Hardik got them off to a fairytale start, with the team lifting the coveted trophy.

The 17th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will start from March 22, with defending champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) set to clash with Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in a South Indian derby at -MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Last year's runners-up Gujarat Titans and five-time champions Mumbai Indians will square off against each other in a mouth-watering clash on March 24 at Ahmedabad. The fixture has gained a lot of hype because of star all-rounder Pandya's move to his former franchise MI following two great seasons with GT. Shubman Gill has taken over the captaincy of GT.

## PM Modi praises Punjab's 15-yr-old badminton player Tanvi Sharma

TDG NETWORK  
HOSHIAARPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has commended 15-year-old badminton player Tanvi Sharma, who hails from Punjab, for her stellar performances at the national and international levels throughout the Badminton Championships of 2023. Sharma has captured the attention of the nation by clinching a gold medal at the Senior Asian Championship held in Malaysia.

In a letter to the badminton player, Modi, on behalf of the entire nation, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the young athlete, recognising her outstanding achievement on the international stage.

Expressing his pride in India's sporting talent, PM Modi highlighted the government's commitment to supporting athletes through initiatives such as the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). These efforts aim to provide

world-class training facilities and access to global coaching expertise for Indian sports stars, enabling them to compete at the highest levels of competition.

The prime minister emphasized the inspirational role Tanvi plays for the younger generation, noting that her success will undoubtedly motivate countless aspiring athletes across the country. By raising awareness about initiatives like TOPS and promoting opportunities in sports, Tanvi's achieve-

ments contribute not only to a flourishing sporting culture but also to the Fit India movement, he said.

While sharing her feelings upon receiving the letter from the PM, she expressed her immense pride and happiness, stating that the letter has filled her with a sense of honour and accomplishment. Tanvi described the letter as a symbol of recognition for her hard work and dedication to badminton, and she vowed to continue striving for excellence in the sport.

## India announces 27-member Indian men's hockey team for 5-match Australia tour

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Monday named the 27-member Indian Men's Team for the upcoming five-match hockey away Test series against Australia starting on April 6 in Perth, Australia.

The team will be playing matches starting 6th April, with their second match on 7 April followed by a match on April 10, 12 and 13. The Indian team will leave from New Delhi on April 1st and will return on April 15, 2024.

The Indian Team will be led by ace drag-flicker and defender Harmanpreet Singh and vice-captained by midfielder Hardik Singh in the five-match tour which will be a litmus test for the team in their preparations for

the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

The team will feature PR Sreejesh, Krishan B Pathak, Suraj Karkera, Harmanpreet Singh, Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Mandeep Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Gurjant Singh, Hardik Singh, Akashdeep Singh, Jugraj Singh, Vishnukant Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Bobby Singh Dhami, Nilakanta Sharma, Sumit, Sanjay, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Shamsher Singh, Manpreet Singh, Amir Ali, Mohammed Raheel Mouseen, Jarmanpreet Singh and Amit Rohidas.

Chief Coach Craig Fulton has opted to go with the almost entire core group in order to give players optimum chance to showcase their potential before the final 16-member team is selected for the Olympic Games Paris 2024.

"This will be a very important tour for us as it will not only ascertain the level we are at and the areas we want to get better ahead of the Paris Olympics but this is also an important tournament for the players. We chose to go with the almost entire core group so that each player gets enough opportunity to showcase their full potential and also it is a good tour to test different combinations," Fulton said as quoted by a release from Hockey India.

"Playing against a team like Australia who are one of the potential podium finishers in Paris will be challenging and at the same time an enriching experience for the level of competition they bring to the matches. It will be a good exposure trip and we are looking forward to it," he added.

## 'It is really good to be back': Virat Kohli

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

Star India batter Virat Kohli expressed happiness at his return to the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) camp ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season starting from March 22 and acknowledged "It is really good to be back."

The 17th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will start on March 22, with defending champions Chennai Super Kings (CSK) set to clash with Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in a South Indian derby at their home arena -MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Virat has not played any competitive cricket since the two T20I matches of the



three-match series against Afghanistan in January. He missed the five-match Test series against England at home due to the birth of his son Akaay in London. With the IPL just a few days away, the fans are no doubt excited to see Virat back on the cricketing field, wearing

the Red and Gold colours of the franchise.

In a video posted by RCB on their social media, Virat said, "It is really good to be back, firstly playing cricket. Also, exciting to come back to Bangalore for the start of the IPL season. Similar emotions, similar feelings. I

have not been off the media radar for two months, I have been into normalcy you can say. I am pretty happy to back, I hope all the fans are happy and excited as well."

This season of IPL will be crucial for Virat as the women's RCB team has lifted their maiden Women's Premier League (WPL) after beating Delhi Capitals in the final on Sunday at Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium. Virat, once the RCB skipper, will be looking to end the men's team's 16-year title drought. Also, a great IPL campaign will also help him solidify his spot in India's ICC T20 World Cup 2024 squad, where his spot is under threat due to the emergence of young players as per several media reports.

## 'When you beat Reds, you can beat any opponent': Man U coach Erik Ten Hag

TDG NETWORK  
MANCHESTER

Manchester United manager Erik Ten Hag feels that the Red Devils victory over Liverpool in the FA Cup could be the moment when the team gets the much-needed belief to do "amazing things."

Manchester United and Liverpool played out a game for ages following their 4-3 victory in the FA Cup quarter-

final clash at Old Trafford. The hosts put on a performance of the season in a game that was nothing short of a roller-coaster ride.

United went a goal up but found themselves trailing at the end of the first half. They levelled the game on the cusp of full-time to force the match into extra time. Harvey Elliott sent Liverpool back in front but United struck twice to win the game 4-2.

Ten Hag was ecstatic after the match

and felt that the momentum could be the turning point for them and said as quoted from the club's official website, "Every team needs such moments into a season and we never had that moment. This could be that moment where the team can really get the belief and the energy so that they can do amazing things. And I think when you can beat Liverpool in the way we did and you can beat any opponent. So it's up to us to prove that point.