



THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Netanyahu-led Israel gov't stops the entry of all goods and supplies into Gaza Strip and warns of 'additional consequences' if Hamas doesn't accept a new proposal to extend a fragile ceasefire, P 12

Three civilian aircraft have reportedly been intercepted by F-16 fighter jets after breaching the restricted airspace above Mar-a-Lago, the Florida resort of US President Donald Trump

Bangladesh chief adviser Muhammad Yunus stresses importance of documenting all 'atrocities committed' during the regime of ousted PM Sheikh Hasina, including crackdown on student protesters and all extrajudicial killings over the years, P 12

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy's 5-42 and Shreyas Iyer's 79 runs off 98 balls help India beat New Zealand by 44 runs to set up a semi-final clash with Australia in Champions Trophy, P 17

Renewals hit as health insurance premiums surge

One in 10 policyholders have missed out on renewals in 2024-25 as a result of surging health insurance premium. About 10% policyholders have seen renewal costs rise by 30% or more. Insurers say a worsening claims ratio (percentage of claims to total premium collected) is behind the hikes. **P 15**

Raj mantri in tapping row loses bungalow

Rajasthan gov't has cancelled the allotment of a govt bungalow to cabinet minister Kirori Lal Meena. The decision follows his allegation that his own gov't was tapping his phone. **P 7**

Daughter of Union minister harassed

Seven men were booked under POCs Act for allegedly stalking and harassing a Union minister's minor daughter and her friends at a village fair in Maharashtra's Jalgaon last Friday. **P 10**

Mahila Samman regn from March 8: BJP MP

The registration process to give women Rs 2,500 under Mahila Samman Scheme will start March 8, BJP MP Manoj Tiwari said Sunday, adding it will take a month to complete all the work. **P 6**

False FASTag charges attract NHA fines

Cracking down on instances of false deductions from FASTag wallets of users, NHA has started penalising toll collectors Rs 1 lakh for each error. Action has been taken in 250 cases. **P 7**

European allies rally around Ukraine, to raise def spending

UK: Europe Must Do Heavy Lifting, Needs US Help

European leaders emerged from a summit with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and other heads of state in London on Sunday to say that the European Union had embarked on a surge in military spending.

EDIT PG: Ukraine Must Fight On/Beyond Kyiv

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said Europe will fortify Ukraine with economic and military aid, aiming to turn the country into "a steel porcupine that is indigestible for potential invaders". Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte said several European countries had pledged to



UK PM Keir Starmer, accompanied by Zelensky & other European leaders, at a summit in London. He said UK, Ukraine, France & other nations will form a 'coalition of the willing', draw up a peace plan and present it to US

increase their military spending. Rutte insisted that US President Donald Trump was committed to Nato.

The gathering took on greater urgency after Zelensky's heated Oval Office meeting with Trump and Vice-President JD Vance on Friday raised fears that the US would try

to strong-arm Ukraine's president into making a peace deal. "We're gathered here today because this is a once-in-a-generation moment for the security of Europe, and we all need to step up," host British PM Keir Starmer, with Zelensky beside him, told the assembled leaders. "Getting a good outcome

for Ukraine is not just a matter of right and wrong, it's vital for the security of every nation here & many others too," he said. Starmer said the UK will use £1.6 billion (\$2 bn) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defence missiles for Ukraine. He wrapped up the summit by saying Europe had to do the heavy lifting in defending itself.

Earlier, Starmer told BBC that he, Zelensky and French President Emmanuel Macron had agreed that they "would work on a plan for stopping the fighting and then discuss that plan with the US". Any peace agreement "is going to need a US backstop," he said.

The British PM said UK, Ukraine, France and some other nations would form a "coalition of the willing" and draw up the peace plan and present it to Trump. **NYT & AGENCIES**

► 'US not unreliable ally', P 12

Avalanche toll doubles to 8 as all 4 missing found dead

50-Hour Search And Rescue Op Comes To End

Gaurav Talwar & Kalyan Das | TNN

Dehradun: The last four missing workers at the avalanche-hit Border Roads Organisation camp near Mana on the India-China border in Uttarakhand were found dead on Sunday, taking the toll in the

tragedy to eight and ending the three-day multi-agency search and rescue operation led by the Indian Army to an end after almost 50 hours.

Two of the 46 rescued workers are in critical condition.

The deceased were identified as Mohindra Pal, Jitendra Singh and Harmesh Chand

'2 SNOWSLIDES WITHIN 5 MINS'

► 46 of the 54 workers at site survived, considered a high survival rate in avalanche

► Hi-tech gear such as rotary rescue saws, thermal imaging, victim-locating cameras & avalanche rods used. Rescue dog & drone-based intelligent buried object detection system also deployed

► 2 avalanches hit Mana within 5 mins, says survivor



Rescuers at work on Sunday

Orange alert for heavy snow in HP

Met department has issued an orange alert for heavy snow in Lahaul-Spiti, Chamba and Kangra districts of Himachal, even as most roads in Lahaul-Spiti and parts of Kinnaur and Chamba remained blocked Sunday. Thunderstorms are expected in the mid and low hills. **P 8**

EC: Duplication of EPIC no. doesn't mean fake voter

Duplication in electors photo identity card (EPIC) number allotted from two different states doesn't imply duplicate or fake voters as one can only vote at the polling booth mentioned in his or her card, which will be different even if the number is the same, EC said Sunday after a TMC neta flagged the case of an elector from Bengal sharing the same number with another in UP. EC said an identical alphanumeric series may have been used by two states under the manual mechanism prior to shifting of poll rolls to ERONET. **P 7**

Just 45.5% vote in Ggn civic poll, lowest across elections

Turnout fell to an all-time low Sunday as Gurgaon voted in the Haryana corporation elections. Only 41.8% of the electorate in the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) area voted, the lowest not just in civic polls but any election the city has voted in, reports Vishakha Chaman.

Overall turnout for the district was slightly better at 45.5%, thanks to the Municipal Corporation of Manesar (MCM) area seeing a much better turnout of 67.3%.

Gurgaon has never recorded less than 50% turnout in any election, LS, assembly or corporation. The previous low



A first-time voter at a polling booth in Jharsa on Sunday

was in the 2019 assembly polls when the district averaged 53%, across Gurgaon, Sohna, Badshapur and Pataudi.

The turnout in Faridabad was even lower—40.2%. **P 6**

Of 1.2L hirings by tech sector, 1L were by GCCs

India's tech sector added 1.2 lakh people to its workforce in 2024-25, with global capability centres (GCCs) accounting for over 1 lakh of these roles, report Veena Mani & Shilpa Phadnis.

TOI earlier reported how this would be the second consecutive year when GCCs would surpass IT firms in net hiring. The scenario reflects a period when major IT companies are experiencing single-digit growth rates and workforce reduction, while GCCs contributed significantly to employment growth in the previous year. **P 16**

Gas cylinder explodes in city building fire; 1 dead

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A 40-year-old woman died and two firefighters were injured after a blaze in a house in central Delhi's Motia Khan led to a gas cylinder blast on Sunday. Fire officials said the blaze could've become bigger had other cylinders kept in cramped spaces in the building also exploded. There was only one escape route in the house, which proved to be a major hurdle for fire personnel.

The victim, Hemlata, was in her kitchen on the third floor of the house when the cylinder exploded. The massive



The third floor, where the blast occurred, was reduced to rubble

blast also injured two firefighters who had entered the building to control the blaze.

► House a death trap, P 2

Protests against NEP, Hindi now erupt in US

A section of Tamil diaspora in Dallas, US, organised a protest on Saturday against the three-language policy and alleged imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu.

Holding placards against the Union gov't's National Education Policy (NEP) the protesters said, "Don't threaten Tamils. Don't impose Hindi. We don't need the three-language policy." Supporting the protest, Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin shared its news clipping on his social media handle and wrote, "Let Tamil live for long." **P 10**

PHILIPS

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Minister holds meet for 24x7 power supply in summer | 3

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2025

AQI IN DELHI ON SUNDAY (MODERATE)

DDA records highest housing sales in a decade | 4



TEMP ON SUNDAY
27° MAXIMUM
14.2° MINIMUM
FORECAST Partly cloudy sky. Max and min temperatures on Monday would be around 29°C and 13°C
MOONRISE 10.10PM (MON) MOONRISE 9.19AM (TUE)
SUNSET 6.22PM (MON) SUNRISE 6.43AM (TUE)



Unverified house help can leave you in line of fire | 3

Last-Mile Millstones: How E-Rickshaws Are A Jigsaw Capital Is Unable To Solve

Wrong-Side Driving, Haphazard Parking Not Only Slow Down Traffic But Also Endanger Lives

Ishita Jairath@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Every morning, metro stations across Delhi resemble a battlefield. E-rickshaws swarm the exits, jostling for passengers, clogging the roads, violating all traffic rules. Last year alone, Delhi Traffic Police bookings surged 47% with the violations by these battery-powered vehicles rising from 2,08,130 in 2023 to 3,05,959 in 2024.

While these three-wheelers are crucial for last-mile connectivity with Delhi Metro, their wanton ways are a headache for the authorities and the commuters. They carry more people than permitted, park haphazardly on arteries and slow down traffic, they block entry points to markets making even pedestrian movement cumbersome. And they often risk riding on the wrong side into oncoming traffic.

There are around 1.2 lakh registered e-rickshaws in the city, but the numbers actually operating may be double that. In 2024, for every four traffic violations, three were for improper parking (221,665 or 72% of the bookings). Among others hauled up were 46,307 for no-entry violations and 11,736 for operating without insurance. Only 2,228 e-rickshaws were impounded.

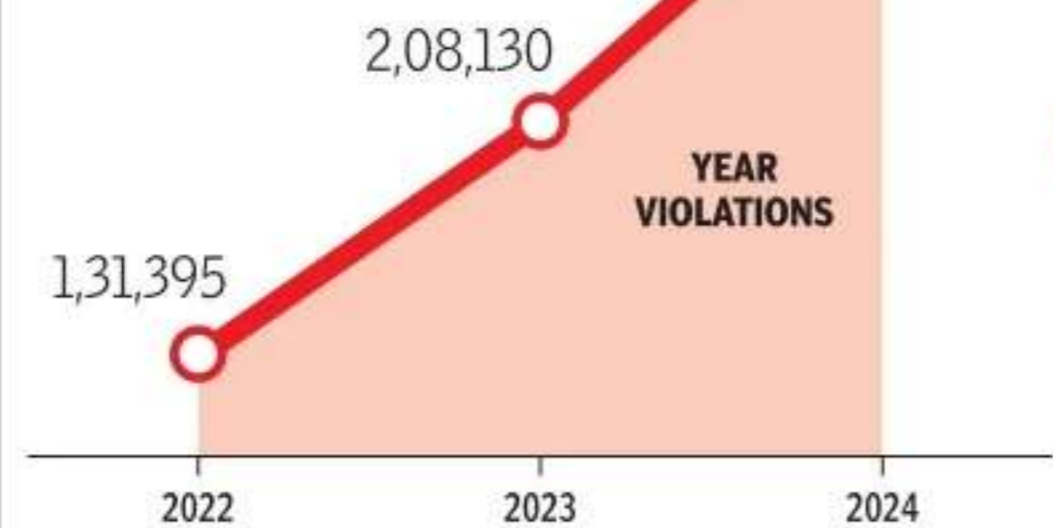
Data shows 15 fatalities involving e-rickshaws in 2023 and 21 in 2024. Police determined that the three-wheeler was at fault in 18 of the accidents in 2023 and 20 in 2024.

In Sept 2014, Delhi High Court said plying of unregistered e-rickshaws in the city was illegal. Delhi gov't's transport department then issued a notification prohibiting the plying and idle parking of the three-wheelers on 236 stretches in Delhi, with the Public Works Department asked to put up signboards cautioning drivers against operating or parking their e-rickshaws on these stretches. In many places, however, these boards didn't

A NECESSARY EVIL?

There are around 1.2 lakh registered e-rickshaws in the city, but the numbers actually operating may be double that

Delhi registered a 47% increase in violations by e-rickshaws in 2024 over the previous year



ITO



IMPROPER PARKING TOPPED THE VIOLATIONS



RK Ashram Marg

Number of fatalities involving e-rickshaws rose from 15 in 2023 to 21 in 2024

appear to have been installed. At Chandni Chowk, Suchita Kacker Meena complained, "My 87-year-old dad always called them *Barraiyas*. They don't follow signals, they swerve unpredictably, and just when you think you've dodged one, another appears. It's chaos." In South Ex, a resident exclaimed, "They taint the city's glory and beauty!"

BS Vohra, who lives in east Delhi, said, "First, the e-rickshaws occupy the entire road, impeding the movement of cars and the pedestrians. If the footpaths aren't already encroached, the e-ricks use them. Secondly, they pose a threat to drivers by being all over the place and you never know when or where they might suddenly appear. My suggestion is to first control their numbers. Secondly, erect

stands for them. And then, the drivers have zero driving training or civic sense." Dr S Velumrangan, chief scientist and head of the traffic engineering and safety division, Central Road Research Institute, said, "Designating fixed stands for e-rickshaws near metro stations, markets and residential areas and capping their number of the roads can help. They seem to be increasing by the day. They should only be allowed on col-

lector roads, not on arterial roads. Many of our metro lines run along arterial roads and this enables the mushrooming of e-rickshaws for last-mile connectivity. They leave only one lane for vehicles. This must be thought through, not only with regard to e-ricks but also cabs." Velumrangan also pointed out that one could easily make out that some of the e-rickshaw drivers are underaged. He added that the ab-

Multiple cylinders, single escape route: House a death trap

Continued from P 1

Police said the house belonged to a family of four, including Hemlata, her mother, brother, and sister-in-law. Three of them were outside when the incident took place. The ground floor housed an office or shop, while the other floors were occupied by the family.

Fire officials said the two personnel injured in the blast were assistant divisional officer Ravinder Singh and fire officer Ved Prakash. Sources said there were more than three cylinders in the house.

The fire department received a PCR call around 3pm on Sunday. Four fire tenders, along with 24 firefighters, rushed to the spot, which was a house at Gali Gai Wali in Motia Khan, a fire official said, initially, they received information that children were trapped but later came to know that a woman was trapped.

The fire official described the house as a "fire trap", as some of the other gas cylinder they recovered were about to explode. There was a single escape route and the space was cramped with smoke all around. "During a fire, there is a chance to escape, but during a blast, there is no chance. We su-

spect the woman died because of the blast and not the fire," the official added.

The third floor was mostly damaged as the fire destroyed everything, even metal objects. One compressor was found on the ground floor. Officials suspect that there may have been a blast from some equipment with a compressor during the incident. However, the matter will be investigated by the police.

The city experienced a significant surge in fire-related incidents in February, with a 12% increase in such cases compared to the year-ago period. Data shared by the fire department, covering the period from February 1 to February 24, revealed a concerning trend, with 932 fire incidents reported in the city.

In contrast, during the same period last year, 834 incidents were reported. The data further showed that in February this year, 42 people were injured and rescued, and two lost their lives in fire-related incidents. Last year, though, the toll was higher, with 16 people dead and 34 injured and rescued. In January this year, as many as 938 incidents were reported, with six fatalities and injuries to 38.

TRAGEDY STRIKES

WHEN | 3-3.30pm
WHERE | Motia Khan, central Delhi

What happened?
A cylinder blast ignites a fire at the top floor of a four-storey house
Fire department receives a PCR call around 3 pm
Four fire tenders and 24 firefighters rushed to the spot

Challenges
The cramped space and multiple cylinders prove to be a major hurdle in rescue efforts
Police suspect a compressor on ground floor may have also contributed to the blast



Aftermath
A 40-year-old widow, Hemlata, dead
Two firefighters, assistant divisional officer Ravinder Singh and fire officer Ved Prakash, injured
The third floor is mostly damaged

From IGI to Fbd: Green corridor helps in timely hand transplant

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As a 48-year-old man in a private hospital waited for a new lease of life — a human hand, harvested from Surat, that could restore his independence — every passing minute mattered. Around 11am on Sunday, a medical team in Surat carefully retrieved the donor's hand after allocation by National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation. A flight was arranged to transport it to Delhi, where the next challenge awaited: ensuring the organ reached the hospital in time. That's when Delhi Traffic Police stepped in.

Around 2:58 pm, the flight landed at general aviation (GA) terminal, meant for private planes. Waiting outside was inspector Satish Yadav and his team, ready to escort the ambulance carrying the transplant team and the precious cargo. "Every second counts in such cases, and we had to ensure a clear route," Yadav said. The green corridor was planned, spanning 43km, of which they were handling the distance from the airport to Delhi-Badarpur border.

With traffic cleared ahead, the convoy sped through the city. The stretch from the airport to the border was covered in just 36 minutes. From there, it took another 15 minutes to reach the hospital in Faridabad. "We received the request from the hospital early Sunday morning," said DCP traffic (New Delhi) Dhal Singh. "As soon as we got the call, we coordinated with our teams to ensure a smooth passage. It was a combined effort with Faridabad traffic police and hospital administration." The hospital management confirmed that the surgery began on time, giving the patient the best possible chance of recovery. "It's a long and complex procedure, but the timely arrival of the organ was crucial. The coordination between medical teams and traffic police made all the difference," a hospital spokesperson said.

A burglar and a snatcher: When 2 criminals met their match in these alert, brave men

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New Delhi: Defying fear and showcasing extraordinary bravery, two men took matters into their own hands, chasing and capturing criminals in two separate incidents in south Delhi.

The first incident took place in the Masjid Moth area on Feb 26. Jitender Kumar, an in-charge at a security company, and after a brief chase, managed to catch him near Masjid Moth. Police were alerted, and during a search, Rs 5,000 was recovered from the suspect's pocket, stolen from a purse.

The suspect initially attempted to mislead Kumar,

but was caught red-handed after the theft was uncovered. He had used a metal tool to break into the house and steal the money. A case has been registered under multiple sections of the BNS, and the investigation is ongoing.

In another remarkable show of bravery, a 48-year-old taxi driver, Rajkumar, had his phone snatched in the Green Park area on Feb 28. The incident occurred around 5.15 pm when Rajkumar was seated

inside his taxi. A young man, wearing a yellow jacket, approached and suddenly snatched the phone from Rajkumar's hand before fleeing towards Maharaja Agrasen Park. Without hesitation, Rajkumar shouted for help. His friend, Devendra Singh, who was nearby, rushed to his aid, and together, they chased the thief. Despite the thief's attempts to escape, Rajkumar and Devendra successfully captured him.

The police were notified, and the stolen phone was recovered from the thief. A case under sections 304 (snatching) and 317 (stolen property) of the BNS has been registered.

Maximum to touch 30°C today, but northwesterly winds to bring relief

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The maximum temperature in New Delhi is expected to reach 30°C by Monday, but a dip is forecast for the following days due to the arrival of northwesterly winds. These winds, which will start from Tuesday, will bring a cooling effect, lowering the temperature to around 25-28°C.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), on Sunday, the maximum temperature was 27 degrees Celsius, at Safdarjung, the city's base station. It was 28.6°C a day earlier.

The Met department said the wind direction is likely to

be easterly on Monday, but it may change to northwesterly, which is likely to prevail from Tuesday to Friday. Easterly winds are warmer and bring moisture, while northwesterly winds are colder as they come from the western Himalayan region to the city.

"The maximum temperature is expected to be around 28-30 degrees Celsius on Monday. However, it is likely to dip to around 25-28 degrees Celsius on Tuesday due to cold northwesterly winds at a speed of 20-30 kmph," said a Met official.

The city recorded a minimum temperature of 14.2 degrees Celsius, one degree above normal, on Sunday. It was 16.6 degrees Celsius a day ear-

lier. The minimum is expected to stay between 12-14 degrees Celsius on Monday, and may hover in the range of 15-17 degrees Celsius from Tuesday to Friday.

Meanwhile, Delhi's air quality continued to remain in the 'moderate' category for a third consecutive day on Sunday. The air quality index (AQI) was 125 on Sunday, compared to 126 on Saturday and 121 on Friday.

"The AQI is likely to be in the 'moderate' category from Monday to Wednesday. The outlook for the subsequent six days shows that AQI will be between 'moderate' and 'poor'," stated air quality early warning system for Delhi.

Bright idea! DMRC upgrading display system at stns, in trains

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New Delhi: Delhi Metro is upgrading its Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) in stations and trains to align it with the latest systems. It has decided to upgrade 110 units at 18 stations on Yellow Line. PIDS is an integral part of Delhi Metro, providing real-time information to passengers at stations about their arrival and departure.

These new display units are adaptive, designed to adjust brightness based on ambient light conditions without causing discomfort to passengers. These display units can show static and moving messages, images and videos. Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has positioned PIDS units in key areas of each station, including concourse spaces for entry updates, platforms for train arrivals and departures, and entry or exit points for navigation and schedule assistance. A DMRC official said, "PIDS are being upgraded as per the

requirement. Forty-four PIDS at seven stations on Line 6 (Heritage Line) from Kashmere Gate to Janpath were recently upgraded." The official added that work on 18 stations on Line 2 (Yellow Line) from GTB Nagar to Qutub Minar would involve 72 double-sided displays at platforms and 38 single-sided displays at concourse levels.

DMRC introduced dual-screen PIDS during Phase-II, which provided two-line information in Hindi and English about train arrival times and destinations. Under Phase-III, Delhi Metro adopted LED-based PIDS featuring digital clocks and the capability to play informative videos. In the ongoing Phase-IV expansion, DMRC fully implemented true LED-based PIDS at new stations, ensuring screens can adjust brightness to protect passengers' comfort and display information in Hindi, regional and English languages. "The exact number of PIDS units per station varies based on the station's size and design," the official said. DMRC also upgraded passenger information boards (PIBs) within trains, replacing traditional LED screens and static route maps with advanced LCD-based systems. "These new systems provide real-time dynamic station information, door opening direction indicators, and a current time clock display. Additionally, they feature passenger awareness videos with audio and advertisement displays, enhancing the overall travel experience," said the official. These upgrades are underway in a phased manner across 70 trains on Line 1 and Lines 3 and 4.

MAKING YOUR TRAVEL EASIER

Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) provides real-time information to passengers at stations. PIDS units are strategically installed in key areas of each station, including:

- Concourse Areas** | To inform passengers upon entering the station
- Platforms** | To provide details about train arrivals and departures
- Entry/Exit Points** | To assist passengers with navigation and scheduling

- ▶ New PIDS designed to adjust brightness based on ambient light conditions for convenience of passengers
- ▶ These new display units can display static and moving messages, images and videos
- ▶ Apart from stations, PIDS are being upgraded in trains

In numbers
▶ Delhi Metro has 295 stations across multiple lines
▶ Total PIDS panels 1,456
▶ Total TFT (thin film transistors, to make images look brighter) 585



To be upgraded
18 stations on Line 2 (GTB Nagar to Qutub Minar)
110 PIDS units will be upgraded
72 double-sided displays at platforms
38 single-sided displays at concourse levels



Recently upgraded
7 stations on Line-6 (Heritage Line) from Kashmere Gate to Janpath
44 PIDS units upgraded
28 double-sided displays at platforms
16 single-sided displays at concourse levels



'Inside Job': How Unverified House Help Leaves You In The Line Of Fire

Police Check Can Arrest Spurt In Crimes With Involvement Of Domestic Workers

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New Delhi: Domestic helpers—a lifeline to most households, but if unverified, can be a potential risk to the lives of employers—warn Delhi Police, while highlighting latest data that projects how 564 domestic helpers have been arrested in the last five years in cases of theft.

The recent arrest of a cook who held a family hostage and decamped with Rs 60 lakh worth valuables and cash from the house within days of being hired has once again highlighted a disturbing pattern that has become all too common in households across Delhi-NCR. In the last five years, there were 649 reported incidents of thefts by domestic helpers in Delhi alone, reminding us of the perils of hiring unverified help, said police.

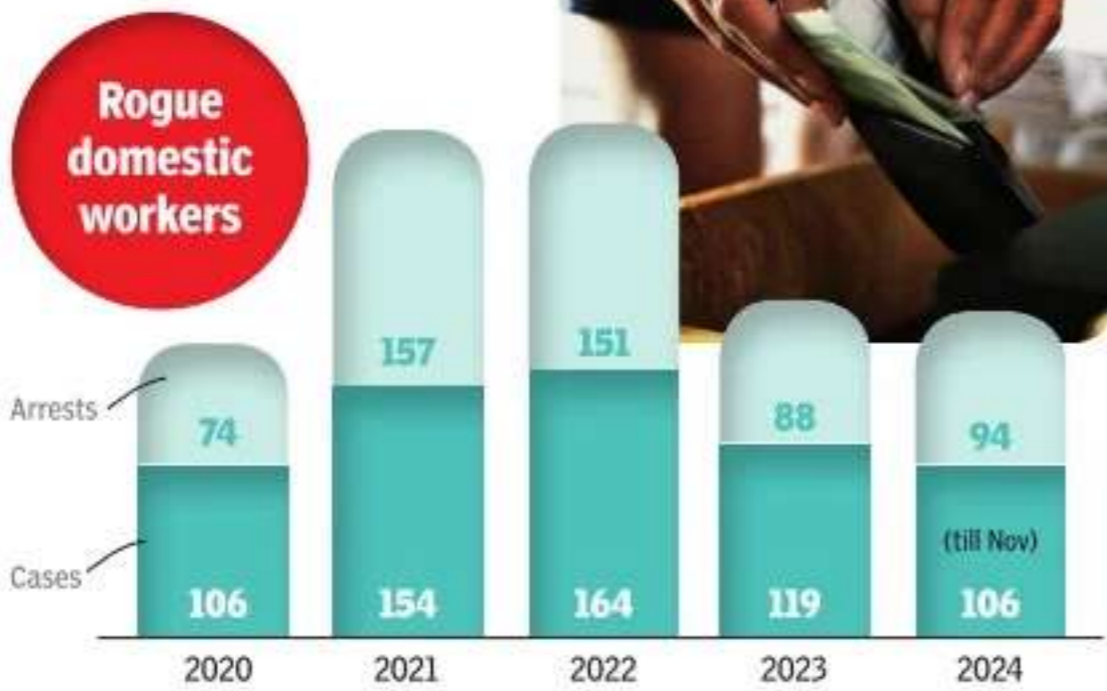
TIMES Special

Delhi Police data reveals a fluctuating trend in house help theft cases over the past five years. According to the data, 106 cases of house help theft were reported in 2020, which increased to 154 in 2021 and further rose to 164 in 2022. However, the number of cases declined to 119 in 2023. Last year, until Nov, 106 cases were recorded, indicating a similar trend to 2020. In terms of arrests, the data shows that 74 house helpers were arrested for theft in 2020, followed by 157 arrests in 2021, and 151 arrests in 2022. While the number of arrests dipped to 88 in 2023, last year saw a slight increase with 94 arrests made until Nov.

The modus operandi is familiar—unverified house helpers, hired without proper background checks, gain the trust of their employers

564 ARRESTS IN LAST 5 YEARS

In the last five years, there have been 649 reported incidents of thefts by domestic workers in Delhi



HOW YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF

- 1 Conduct thorough police verification:** Ensure that the house help's antecedents are verified by the local police. This can help identify any potential criminal records or suspicious activities
- 2 Check references:** Verify the house help's previous employment references to ensure they have a good track record. Speak to their previous employers to gauge their reliability and trustworthiness
- 3 Perform background check:** Conduct a thorough background check on the house help, including their identity, address and family background. This can help identify any potential red flags
- 4 Don't hire without proper documentation:** Ensure that the house help provides all necessary documentation, including their ID proof, address proof and employment contracts. Don't hire anyone without proper documentation
- 5 Monitor their activities initially:** Keep a close eye on the house help's activities, especially during the initial few weeks of employment. Monitor their behaviour, work habits and interactions with family members to ensure they are trustworthy

and strike when least expected. The police have sounded an alert, emphasising the importance of verifying the antecedents of domestic helpers.

On the reasons behind house help theft cases, a senior police officer said that greed plays a big role in these crimes. "The helper is well aware of the house's layout, know-

PAST CASES

Feb 2025

1 A 67-year-old man allegedly murdered by his son in a conspiracy with a former househelp and his son in Narela

2 A domestic help arrested in connection with a burglary at his employer's house in GK-II, where cash worth Rs 13 crore and jewellery valued at ₹90 lakh were stolen

Sept 2024

A domestic worker was arrested for allegedly stealing jewellery from the employer's house in CR Park

Oct 2024

Two domestic workers allegedly robbed a 76-year-old woman at her residence in Safdarjung Enclave

Jul 2024

A house help was arrested for stealing jewellery worth several lakhs from her employer's residence in Dwarka

May 2024

A doctor was murdered by his house help, along with her associates, in Jangpura

ing exactly where the valuable items are kept," the officer said. "They use this knowledge to their advantage, waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike. When

they find the right moment, they flee with the stolen goods, often leaving their employers shocked and devastated," the officer added.

According to police, in some cases, servants commit crimes to exact revenge against their employers. "We have seen instances where servants, harbouring grudges against their employers, have resorted to theft and other crime," he said.

Police emphasised that verifying the backgrounds of house helpers can play a crucial role in preventing theft. "Once the help is verified, it creates a psychological deterrent in the mind of the domestic help, as the individual knows that if the person engages in any wrongdoing, he/she will be caught by the police," police said.

Meanwhile, there are also gangs that plant their members in households. Once the insider finds the right opportunity, they inform their associates, who then strike, fleeing with the valuables. In Feb, police arrested a key suspect in Odisha for a burglary at a GK-II house that happened in Oct 2024. The domestic help, mastermind of the gang, decamped with Rs 1.3 crore cash and Rs 90 lakh worth jewellery. The gang would travel to Delhi, seek employment as domestic helps, conduct surveillance, and share details with gang members before striking the house when empty. Another modus operandi of seeking a job is to prepare fake documents.

Police have requested employers to conduct a thorough background check on the house help, including their identity, address, and family background, and ensure that the house help provides all necessary documentation, including their ID proof and employment contracts.

Youth initiative cleans 500kg of waste from Yamuna bank

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Over 100 youths gathered at Yamuna bank near Kalindi Kunj and collected 521kg of non-biodegradable waste on Sunday. Among the collected waste were plastic bags, cloth, desecrated idols, wrappers, and other solid debris.

The group was led by a citizen group called There is No Earth B, in collaboration with IIT-Delhi's NSS, the NGO Prayan Foundation, and Rotaract Club of Ashoka Rotarians. It mostly comprised college students.

The drive was conducted to mark the occasion of International Waste Pickers' Day, which was on March 1. "We recovered more than 521kg of non-biodegradable waste lying on the floodplain. We also pulled out waste from the river," said Faryadur Rehman (26), one of the volunteers of There is No Earth B. He added that such a high quantity of waste from only a small section of a few hundred metres showed the Yamuna and its banks remained heavily polluted and were being choked by solid and industrial waste.

Bhawna Tanwar, manager, There is No Earth B, said, "We plan to continue our cleanup drives at Yamuna Bank while also exploring other banks and ghats of the Yamuna. Moreover, we aim to scale the campaign by taking it to the advocacy level, directly engaging with decision-makers to push for policy changes."

She added that they conducted more than 350 cleanup drives so far across the country in environmentally sensitive areas, such as Sanjay Van, Ridge Forest, Cakra Beach, Sukhna Lake, Yamuna Bank, Hebbal Lake and Juhu Beach, among others. "At Yamuna Bank alone, we organised more than 20 cleanup drives," she said.



Three held with ecstasy drugs worth ₹85 lakh

New Delhi: Three men were arrested with 170 grams of MDMA drugs worth Rs 85 lakh from southwest Delhi recently. The accused were identified as Mohammad Rahul (23), his brother Mohammad Babul (31), and associate SK Sabir (36). The gang has connections with foreign nationals, said police.

Deputy commissioner of police (south west) Surendra Choudhary said, "Sabir and Babul were actively involved

in an organised drug trafficking network, operating under the influence and guidance of notorious drug peddlers Aryan and Toni, who are currently incarcerated."

The gang's modus operandi involved establishing a network of buyers, primarily targeting individuals seeking the psychoactive and stimulant effects of MDMA. It used encrypted communication methods and coded language to avoid detection. TNN

Registration for monthly ₹2,500 aid to women will begin on March 8: Tiwari

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New Delhi: BJP MP Manoj Tiwari on Sunday said that the registration process under the Mahila Samman Scheme would start from March 8. A list of beneficiaries will be prepared and the entire process of providing Rs 2,500 to every financially poor woman will be completed in one and a half months, he added.

Tiwari appealed to the eligible women to register for the scheme. In its manifesto released ahead of the Delhi Assembly election, BJP had promised Rs 2,500 per month to women from economically weaker sections.

The opposition, AAP, recently criticised BJP gov't for not approving the scheme in its first cabinet meeting, as promised by the Prime Minister. Chief minister Rekha Gupta claimed that the previous AAP gov't left behind "empty coffers" for the new BJP regime. However, she added that all the promises made by BJP to the people would be fulfilled.



CM Rekha Gupta and other BJP functionaries thank the people of the Poorvanchal community for supporting the party in the recently concluded assembly elections, at Delhi BJP office, on Sunday

AAP chief spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar, in a statement, reminded BJP of its promises made to the people before coming to power. "Before the elections, BJP promised that every woman in Delhi would receive Rs 2,500 in their accounts by March 8. BJP also assured that LPG cylinders would be provided at

Rs 500, and every household would receive a free cylinder on Holi and Diwali. CM Rekha Gupta should start working on fulfilling these promises," she said.

Senior AAP leader Kuldeep Kumar said that BJP was "betraying" public trust by failing to implement the scheme in its first cabinet meeting and inste-

ad using the assembly session to target Arvind Kejriwal. During the Delhi Assembly elections, PM Narendra Modi assured women that if BJP formed gov't, they would receive Rs 2,500 every month as part of Modi's Guarantee, he added.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that AAP leaders had become "unemployed" after the defeat of their party in the Delhi Assembly elections and were creating "fictitious" issues. BJP is determined to fulfil all the promises made in its manifesto, he asserted.

Sachdeva further claimed that two CAG reports were tabled in the Delhi Assembly recently and AAP and its MLAs were staging protests only to divert the people's attention from their corruption. "BJP pledged during the assembly elections to present the CAG report in the very first session of the assembly, and now that the report has been revealed, Kejriwal is completely missing. His MLAs are misleading the public through false protests. Even today, the public wants answers on why the excise policy was withdrawn."

Sood takes up summer plan with officials for 24x7 power supply

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi's power minister Ashish Sood held a meeting with senior officials from the power department and power companies at Delhi Secretariat on Saturday. The focus was on implementing the summer action plan to ensure an uninterrupted power supply during the season. Directives were issued to all stakeholders to begin the implementation of the plan immediately.

Sood said ensuring a reliable power supply for all residents of Delhi was a priority for Delhi gov't.

The minister also mentioned the vision of developing a model colony in Delhi where overhead power cables are not hanging and all wires are properly organised. He further stated that discussions were held with officials regarding removing any unauthorised cables or wires of other companies from electricity poles to reduce the load on the poles and eliminate tangled wiring. Sood instructed officials to

ensure that if any power grid fails in any part of Delhi, repairs must be completed within a maximum of five minutes to prevent any disruption in electricity supply. He also said that review meetings of the power department would be held every 15 days to assess the progress on decisions taken in previous meetings.

A senior official of the power department said with the help of Delhi State Load Dispatch Centre's data, a forecast was made and, in consultation with the power distribution companies (discoms), preparations were made for the summer.

Reiterating the vision of a Viksit Delhi, the minister stated that Delhi gov't, under the guidance of PM Narendra Modi and the leadership of chief minister Rekha Gupta, was working in action mode to ensure that no citizen in Delhi faces power issues during the summer season.

Earlier, after holding a meeting with home minister Amit Shah on Friday, Sood said that it was a historic day because

the double-engine gov't had started working in a true sense. "In the meeting, several issues regarding coordination, jail, prosecution, the collector's office role in law and order, and other matters were discussed. You will see changes on the ground soon," he added.

"When there was waterlogging in Delhi, the previous gov't only did one thing—passing the buck to other agencies... I am surprised to know that after the waterlogging, Shah repeatedly asked Delhi gov't for such spots where NDRE, SDRF, or other agencies could be taken help of, but the previous gov't didn't care to provide information," he alleged.

The minister further said that the traffic situation was very bad in Delhi. "Central gov't wrote several letters to Delhi gov't with remedial measures, but the previous gov't did not take any action," he claimed.

Sood said that he also discussed women's safety issues with the home minister: "Issues concerning dark spots and areas where there are no mobile signals were discussed, as those are unsafe areas," he added.

Relics of Somnath Jyotirlingam unveiled in Delhi

New Delhi: Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on Sunday unveiled rare relics of the original Somnath Jyotirlingam for the first time in Delhi.

The event, a Maha Satsang-titled Anandam, was attended by Delhi CM Rekha Gupta and Vidhan Sabha Speaker Vjender Gupta, among others. CM said, "I still remember Gurudev, how thousands of Art of Living volunteers, under your guidance, took up the massive task of cleaning the Yamuna ghats, removing thousands of truckloads of waste." She added: "Now, we will take this task forward, create a beautiful riverfront and organise a grand Maha Aarti with your presence. I will personally come to invite you."

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said, "It is heartening to see the chief minister speak about the Yamuna cleaning initiative already." He mentioned that The Art of Living's Meri Delhi, Meri Yamuna campaign for the Yamuna cleanup began way back in 2010. The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the relics that belonged to the original Somnath Jyotirlingam. The relics will be available for viewing on March 4 and 5 at Chinmaya Mission, Lodhi Road. TNN

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HOW TWO ACID-ATTACK SURVIVORS — ONE MAN AND ANOTHER WOMAN — ARE MANAGING TO FIND THEIR FEET IN HEARTWARMING TALES OF RESILIENCE

'Dreams don't die': She still wants to sing, dance, learn, work like nothing happened

Given a second shot at life, he wants to make the most of it

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New Delhi: "I thought he was offering me water." At just 19, Ruman Saifi lay on the floor, bruised by yet another beating by her husband. When he handed her a plastic bottle, she believed it contained water—until the searing pain told her otherwise. He forced her to drink acid in 2019, a substance meant to clean toilets.

Now 25, Ruman battles every day with the physical and emotional consequences of that monstrous act. "My stomach, food pipe, and organs are damaged beyond repair. I need constant medical attention, but without financial support, I rely on private treatment in Delhi. I have no choice but to live away from my seven-year-old son. He's just a little boy, too young to understand why his mother is a name on a phone screen instead of someone who tucks him in at night," she said.

Born into a family in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr that barely made ends meet—her father a bike mechanic, one brother a driver, the other a welder—she learned early on

that dreams were a luxury. "I grew up knowing that every rupee counted. When I got married and moved to the city, my family thought I escaped a life of struggle. We knew life could be tough, but I never imagined the cruelty that awaited me," she reflected.

Her marriage in 2016 was supposed to be a fresh start, but it quickly became a cage of abuse. "At first, I didn't know about my husband's drug addiction; by the time I found out, his violence already became routine."

"For years, we somehow got by with family intervention. By then, I already gave birth to my son, and I kept telling myself—leaving was no longer an option. But I'll never forget March 2019. All I wanted was to visit my parents. That simple request turned into a fight—a fight that ended with acid searing through my body, sentencing me to a lifetime of pain."

Doctors at the first hospital delivered a death sentence: five to six months to live. "The acid ate away at my insides—I was just 22 kg, barely holding on. But my elderly father refused to accept it. He carried me in his arms from



Ruman was just 19 years old when she was forced to drink acid. After six years of struggle, a Delhi court convicted her husband and in-laws

one hospital floor to another, never letting go of hope."

Amid this darkness, a ray of light emerged in the form of Brave Souls Foundation, whose intervention helped her secure treatment at a reputable private hospital. Yet, life in Delhi comes with its own set of sacrifices. "My son lives with my parents. Every train journey back to Delhi feels like I'm leaving half my heart behind," she said.

"My family doesn't have enough for me to stay in a city

like Delhi, and I can't receive medical treatment in the small village in UP where I come from. I have no choice but to travel by train or public bus," she rued.

Forced to leave school in seventh grade and then quickly pushed into marriage, Ruman's potential remained unlocked. "But dreams don't die easily. I still want to learn, to work, to dance and sing like nothing happened," she said.

After six years of relentless struggle, a Delhi court convicted

her husband and in-laws for voluntarily causing hurt.

Shaheen, founder of Brave Souls Foundation, highlighted several systemic challenges acid attack survivors face. "In Ruman's case, we needed to approach the court under Section 156(3) CrPC to ensure proper charges were filed," she explained.

"After six years, justice was finally delivered, though the process could have been more streamlined. We had to seek high court's intervention to get free medical treatment that should have been more readily available to survivors," she asserted.

On policy implementation, Shaheen said, "While govt schemes and Supreme Court guidelines exist, Ruman received his interim compensation of Rs 3 lakh after five years."

She added, "Survivors of acid ingestion face different hurdles as their wounds aren't externally visible. Despite her medical limitations, she travelled from Uttar Pradesh for hearings and now, she continues to travel for her medical treatment without any proper support."

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New Delhi: Raghendra Singh (name changed), now 44 years old, recalls the day in 2010 when his then-fiancee threw acid on his face in east Delhi's Vinod Nagar. His attacker jumped bail in 2010 and is on the run.

Singh remembered the woman calling him to a rendezvous near a gurdwara around 8.30pm. He tried to postpone the meeting, but she taunted him that he did not love her. "I

therefore, met her. As we were talking in an alley, she dropped her gold chain. As I bent down to pick it, she took out a bottle from her bag and threw acid on my face," said Singh. "At first, I couldn't comprehend what had happened, but then my face started to burn. I was screaming in pain when I was taken to a hospital."

A native of a remote village in Rudrapur district in Uttarakhand, Singh, an arts graduate, then lived with his brother in Noida and worked in a private firm. His family and a woman who agreed to marry him in 2016 redeemed his self-esteem. "With my right eye gone and face disfigured,

I was not doing well. I also earned just around Rs 6,000 per month working with my village head in Uttarakhand. A woman met me, spoke to me, and had just one condition for marriage—I should never be addicted to alcohol, drugs or cigarettes," said Singh.

The son of an Indian Army ex-serviceman underwent seven surgeries. "A single surgery cost a minimum of Rs 40,000 even in govt hospitals. I was treated in AIIMS, Safdarjung, and other hospitals and got the best medical care available," he said. Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLSA) awarded me Rs 10 lakh as compensation—Rs 3 lakh in 2021 and Rs 7 lakh in 2024," revealed Singh.

Last month, life rewarded him for his perseverance when he got a clerical job provided by DSLSA last month. "My parents, wife and two children are happy and proud. I thank DSLSA for the opportunity. This isn't just a job but a second chance at life for me and I will make the most of it professionally as well as personally," smiled Singh.

Rajeev Bansal, member-secretary, DSLSA said, "I congratulate him for the achievement. I hope this will change his life

for the good. We are committed to changing the lives of those who were wronged."

It was his maternal uncle who saw the advertisement inviting acid attack victims to apply for the clerk's job. "I got a call on Feb 10 from the DSLSA confirming my appointment. I was in tears and started crying. My parents, wife and children were ecstatic to find out why I was weeping and scolded me for scaring them with such behaviour," said Singh.

After the acid attack, his helplessness at not being able to financially support his family gnawed at him. "I remember once when my elder son wanted a bicycle and I had to convince him otherwise because I did not have any money at that point in time. When my father bought him the cycle, I felt bad, weak and so helpless. I don't want to undergo the same feeling or experience similar situations ever again," said Singh.

His aim in life is to provide good education to his children and to care for his parents in their old age. "Now with Rs 30,000 per month, I will do my best to fulfil my dreams. This income may not be much for others, but for me, it is priceless," beamed Singh.

15k units in 2 years: DDA records highest housing sales in a decade

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New Delhi: Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has reported its highest-ever collection from housing sales over the past decade, with Rs 5,185 crore generated from selling over 15,000 flats between April 2023 and Feb 27, 2025. This surpasses the Rs 4,462 crore raised over eight years (April 2015 to March 2023), according to DDA officials.

In the financial year 2024-25, DDA sold 7,184 flats, the majority under the first-come, first-served scheme, which offered discounted rates for construction workers, women, and people from SC/ST categories. Narela alone accounted for 2,700 flat sales in this period.

This surge in flat sales has boosted DDA's financial stability, as the revenue is credited to its general development account (GDA). "The increased cash flow has strengthened DDA's ability to fund new development projects and enhance urban infrastruc-

BOOST TO DDA'S FINANCES

Financial Year	Flats sold (approx)	Revenue realised (in cr, approx)
2022-23	2,511	757.8
2023-24	7,842	2,416
2024-27.02.2025	7,184	2,786
TOTAL	17,537	5,959.8

ture," said officials.

For FY 2024-25, DDA has collected Rs 2,786 crore from flat sales, already surpassing last year's total of Rs 2,416 crore by Rs 370 crore.

"The financial position of the DDA improved since May 2022 after VK Saxena took over as lieutenant governor and chairperson of the authority. He stressed on innovative marketing strategies, which included offering discounts and schemes to needy people, accelerating the sales of flats," stated the authority.

Saxena had raised concerns about DDA's declining financials when he took charge, noting that the authority

faceted liabilities exceeding Rs 10,000 crore.

Saxena also shared the financial status of the DDA, which included a total deficit of Rs 3,209.14 crore and the DDA's loan liabilities of five years (from 2016-17 to 2021-22) amounting to Rs 8,915 crore.

He invited the general public to provide suggestions to improve the situation. Subsequently, a consultant was hired to suggest a strategy to boost sale of flats.

Since then, multiple housing schemes, including the 2023 focus on Narela, have contributed to the turnaround. Aggressive advertisements and ensuring phase-

wise completion of large projects in record time at Narela, Loknayak Puram, Dwarka, and Rohini were also concentrated upon during the DDA's meetings.

In 2024, DDA launched penthouses through e-auction and introduced new schemes, such as the Shramik Awaas Yojana and Sabka Ghar Awaas Yojana, offering discounted homes to a variety of groups.

Meanwhile, taking note of issues raised by locals in Narela regarding lacking infra services, the LG held interactions with various departments and took steps to fulfil gaps.

DDA has been working on improving infrastructure in Narela, including expanding metro connectivity and DTC bus routes, alongside plans for a university, education hub, and international sports stadium, said officials. "From the existing 20 DTC routes connecting Narela, there is a plan to add 50-60 routes, covering all sectors. Delhi govt is expected to take a decision to increase DTC routes soon," said officials.

5 of 19 waterbodies either dry or encroached upon

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New Delhi: The forest and wildlife department has informed National Green Tribunal that of the 19 waterbodies under its jurisdiction, five require interventions for revival, as they are either dry or encroached upon. These include a waterbody each in Garhi Mandu, Rajokri, Sikarpur, and two in Mukhmelpur.

The tribunal is hearing a case on disappearing waterbodies in the city based on a media report. TOI earlier reported that the wetland authority of Delhi told the tribunal that out of 322 waterbodies identified by Geospatial Delhi Limited using satellite imagery in the city, only 43 were found during ground truthing. Besides, out of 1,045 waterbodies identified through revenue records, only 631 were detected on the ground.

The forest department, in a report dated Feb 13, which was submitted to NGT recently, said regular or annual cleaning and restoration of waterbodies was done by the department, depending upon budget availability. It said a specific timeline for the restoration, rejuvenation, and remediation of waterbodies had not been mentioned as these activities depended upon the availability of the budget.

The waterbody at Garhi Mandu has water present in a small patch, and most of it is in a dry condition. The forest department said a plan for the rejuvenation of the waterbody would be prepared in three months. At Rajokri village and Sikarpur, the waterbodies are dry, and the forest department said steps would be taken to rejuvenate the waterbody, said the forest department.

At two waterbodies in Mukhmelpur,

the first waterbody is encroached upon by a built-up area. "Letters for demarcation have already been issued to the district magistrate (north) and DDA. Once the exercise of demarcation is carried out, the process for removal of encroachment and restoration of the waterbody will be initiated," stated the forest department in its report.

It added that another waterbody here was filled with sewage water discharged from the neighbouring village. "A letter and reminder were sent to the irrigation and flood control department for restoration, rejuvenation, and bioremediation of the waterbody, and the response is still awaited. The process of restoration, rejuvenation, and bioremediation of the waterbody shall be initiated at the earliest as soon as a response from IP&C is received," said the report.

The Secret Lives Of Secrets

CITY CITY BANG BANG

SANTOSH DESAI



The secrets start early. Watch how quickly children pick up on the idea of secrets. They have well-guarded secrets that they tell only their best friends, play secret games,

share pinkie promises, and are part of secret clubs that need secret passwords. The idea seems to come to them organically at a fairly young age and has done so through time and across cultures, suggesting that it is something that is deeply ingrained in human behaviour.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have the self-important and highly bureaucratized version, something we call the Official Secrets Act. There is something delightfully absurd about the pluralisation and capitalisation of "Official Secrets", as if secrets could be neatly catalogued, filed, and stamped by drowsy govt clerks. That this is no laughing matter is clear; witness the seriousness with which the establishment takes it. Edward Snowden and Julian Assange are testaments to just how seriously govts take their secrets, revealing the profound connection between secrecy and institutional power.

When it comes to children, we can understand that it plays a vital role in the creation of an inner world, of the separation of the self from the outside world. It helps create a sense of interiority, and the exercise of this recognition is an important muscle for them to develop. The idea is that it is the sharing of secrets that defines who belongs to their inner circle and who does not.

In the case of adults, secrets take on different hues. The middle-class Indian home is itself a laboratory of secrecy practices. Family finances remain carefully guarded from children (and sometimes between spouses), health concerns are discussed in cryptic euphemisms, and family disputes are hidden behind the carefully constructed façade

of normalcy presented to visitors. "Log kya kahenge?" (What will people say?) remains the unspoken regulator of what can and cannot be revealed.

Even trivial secrets—inconsequential gossip about people we barely know—can create intense feelings of inclusion or exclusion. Being "in the know" satisfies something primal in us, while being left out can sting in ways disproportionate to the actual value of the information withheld.

The unbearable anxiety that not being privy to a secret creates is a sign of

In the end, secrets reveal more about us than we reveal about them. They remind us that despite our technological sophistication, we remain creatures of social meaning, constantly negotiating our place in the human web through what we choose to reveal and what we choose to hide

how desperately we want to be included, to belong in the inner circle of life. The secret is a membership pass that truly distinguishes who is really at the centre and who is not. The idea of the secret is so tantalising because we believe that there is a truth just beyond our grasp, that things are not what they seem, and by lifting the veil a tiny bit, we will catch a glimpse of what really is at the heart of this incomprehensible world. The secret confirms our worst fears about everything, but at the same time, it adds depth to our lives by hinting at a vast sub-stratum of reality that can only be occasionally accessed.

This inner conflict shapes our relationship with secrets as much as external social factors. Keeping a secret

and telling a secret involve different emotions. Keeping a secret is like filling oneself with an almost unbearable amount of information, where keeping the lid on is a tremendous effort. Secrets spill out of us, often providing both a sense of relief and guilt. Sharing a secret feels like distributing goodies; it is the ultimate favour we bestow on someone—the acknowledgement that we deem worthy of confiding in.

In the digital age, in the absence of a natural internal space, we must create one with the help of passwords and encryption. In this world nothing is truly safe, though. It is another matter that we voluntarily share far more information here than we do in our physical lives. And then there are algorithms that sense who we are in ways we are not aware—those sneaky data sharks that slither up beneath us in a subterranean way.

Perhaps most curious of all is our relationship with The Secret—that capitalised, definitive promise of ultimate knowledge that drives us toward gurus, self-help books, and spiritual quests. From Rhonda Byrne's bestseller to the whispered mantras of modern gnomes, we seek the elusive key that will unlock life's mysteries. That the answer to Life, Universe, and Everything might be, as Douglas Adams jokingly suggested, simply "42" is a possibility too deflating to contemplate.

In the end, secrets reveal more about us than we reveal about them. Our management of them—the keeping and sharing, the seeking and avoiding—forms an intricate dance of social connection that we perform largely without conscious thought. They remind us that despite our technological sophistication, we remain creatures of social meaning, constantly negotiating our place in the human web through what we choose to reveal and what we choose to hide. Perhaps that is the real secret—that beneath our carefully managed boundaries of knowledge lies our unchanging need for connection, belonging, and the reassurance that we matter enough to be included in the circle of knowing.

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Just 45.5% turn up to vote in Gurgaon civic election

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Gurgaon: Elections to Gurgaon municipal corporation (MCG) recorded a turnout of only 41.8% as of 8pm on Sunday, registering the city's lowest-ever voter participation not just in the civic polls but across all formats.

The turnout marks a sharp decline from previous municipal polls—which saw 63.3% participation in 2011 and 55.7% in 2017. Gurgaon has never recorded less than 50% turnout in any Lok Sabha or Assembly election since 1952. Even during the 2009 general election, which saw the city's lowest Lok Sabha turnout, 60.7% of voters had exercised their franchise. Similarly, the lowest assembly election turnout was 53% in 2019.

Across Gurgaon district, which includes two municipal councils—Sohna and Pataudi Jatauli Mandi—and the Farrukhnagar municipal committee, the turnout was 44.9% at 8pm. This, too, was far lower than the 50% mark. In the neighbouring Manesar corporation—which saw its first poll since being set up in 2020—the turnout stood at a much better 64.8% as of 8pm. Manesar, however, has less than 1 lakh registered voters,



Many voters found their names missing from electoral rolls

compared to 9 lakh of MCG. Faridabad was worse, recording an even low turnout of 40.2% by 8pm. Across Haryana, the figure was 46.4%.

Multiple factors contributed to this dismal show. Election fatigue emerged as a primary reason, with voters expressing reduced enthusiasm following Lok Sabha and Assembly polls separated by only a few months last year. Figures showed a stark urban-rural divide as well, with polling stations in areas like Nathupur and Chakkarpur witnessing longer queues, unlike their city counterparts.

"It's unfortunate that urban areas witnessed such low voter participation, while rural wards demonstrated better electoral engagement. Among

all municipal corporations holding elections on Sunday, Gurgaon and Faridabad particularly registered poor attendance." BJP's mayoral candidate, Rajrani Malhotra, said. Administrative issues complicated matters further, with many voters finding their names missing from electoral rolls. "I have been voting at the same polling station for decades. But I couldn't vote today because my name wasn't on the list," said Ashok Kumar Jangra, a Sector 23 resident.

Voters who did participate on Sunday emphasised critical infrastructure issues—from sanitation to sewage, waterlogging, water supply, and road maintenance. The civic poll results will be declared on March 12.

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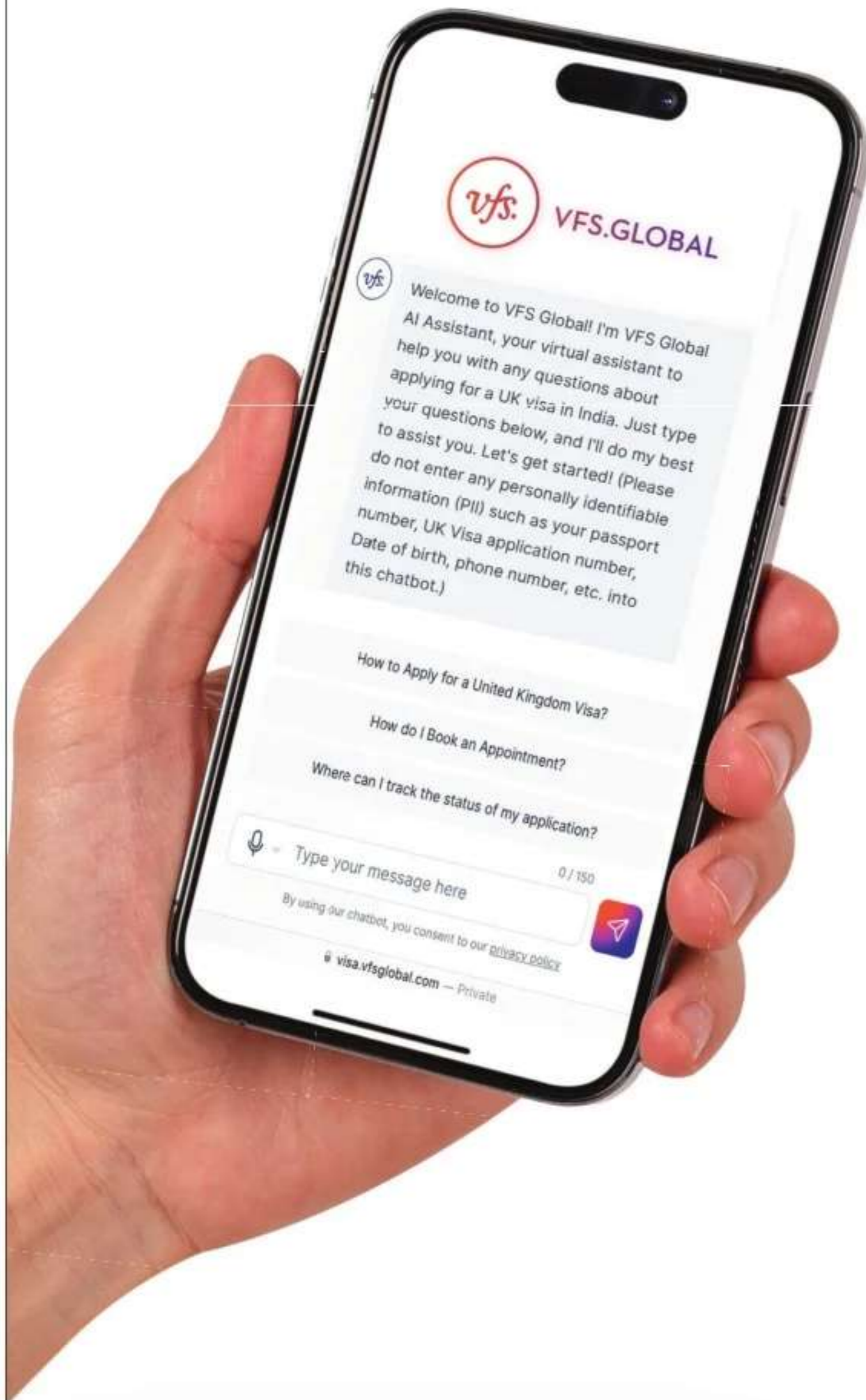
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Secure & Private



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Ethical & Responsible AI



Developed with bias-free AI principles in partnership with the Responsible AI Institute.

Developed by VFS Global's AI teams in Dubai, Mumbai, and Berlin, this AI assistant was created using advanced Generative AI technologies. Trained on official, publicly available data, it ensures accurate, secure, and compliant support for visa customers.



The rollout of VFS Global's AI-powered chatbot demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring our visa services are accessible, efficient and meet the needs of all customers. Providing instant access to accurate information about the visa application process will ensure we continue to offer the best service to our customers.

Jen Vidler

Deputy Director, Cross Cutting Service Operations, Visa, Status and Information Services, Customer Services Group, UK Visas and Immigration



Technology and innovation are the cornerstone of our operations here at VFS Global, and we are proud to leverage our AI capabilities to deliver more streamlined information and assistance to our customers travelling to the UK from across the globe. We are developing a range of products that will change the paradigm in our industry and allow our client governments and customers to truly feel the power of technology to enhance their experience.

Zubin Karkaria

Founder & Chief Executive Officer, VFS Global Group



How VFS Global is leveraging AI to transform Visa, Consular, and Citizen services



Intelligent Passport Scan

Faster and more accurate AI-driven technology extracts and verifies passport data instantly, reducing manual errors and ensuring a smoother appointment booking experience for applicants.

GenAI-powered Assistant

Our GenAI-powered assistant is now live across 200+ routes for multiple Client Governments, including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, South Africa and UKVI.

Back Office Automation

Quicker document processing and reduced wait times by automating data entry, this solution speeds up back-end processing, allowing faster transmission of documents.

Biometrics on Mobile

Convenient & faster identity enrolment with mobile-based biometric capture, applicants can experience faster biometric enrolment, making the process even more accessible.

Priority Pulse

Faster responses to urgent queries, AI prioritises critical applicant queries ensuring faster responses to urgent concerns, leading to an improved customer experience.

Document Conversion Utility

AI led document submission automatically adjusts format, resolution and file size, ensuring documents meet visa requirements without the applicant needing to make manual modifications.

Smart Appointment Booking with Liveness Detection

Fair Access AI verifies applicants through facial recognition, ensuring fair appointment access, and reducing hassles for genuine applicants.

Intelligent Document Processing

Using AI to review customer supporting documentation to ensure they meet visa documentation requirements.



A Responsible Approach to AI

At VFS Global, we believe in using AI ethically and responsibly. Our AI solutions are developed in collaboration with Client Governments to ensure compliance with global statutory regulations. We work with the Responsible AI Institute (RAI) to maintain transparency, fairness, and security in everything we do.

Certain AI-driven solutions mentioned are currently under development and undergoing testing and may be subject to change before their final release. Their release and deployment are subject to necessary approvals from Client Governments, compliance with global statutory regulations, and market readiness.



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GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
N.B.D.D NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
Notice Inviting e-Tender by the S.E./NBDD Vide Nit No.79 (Sl. No. 01 & 02) of 2024-25. Details of works to be seen in the above mentioned Nit in the website:- www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbnorthbengal.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer, North Bengal Development Department.
ICA-T4511(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-TENDER NOTICE
Ref. No.: WBIDC/PI/CW/2024-25/01 E Tender ID: 2025_WBIDC_821378_1 WBIDC Inviting e-Tender for selection of Contractor for "Creation of Compensatory Waterbody At Northern Zone Of Panagarh Industrial Park." Panagarh, Paschim Bardhaman District available www.wbtenders.gov.in
ICA-T4519(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-Tender Notice
Irrigation & Waterways Directorate/Govt. of W.B. e-N.I.T No. - WBIIW/EE-II/LDCD/e-NIT-18 of 2024-25
Executive Engineer-II, Lower Damodar Construction Division, Fuleswar, Uluberia, Howrah-711316 Invites e-tender (online) for One (01) no. work vide e-N.I.T No. - WBIIW/EE-II/LDCD/e-NIT-18/2024-25. Notice Memo No -219 dated, 25/02/2025 of the EE-II/LDCD. Document Download start date is 03/03/2025 at 17:00 hours. Bid submission start date is 03/03/2025 at 17:30 hours & bid submission end date is 17/03/2025 at 17:00 hours. For details please visit website www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbiwd.gov.in
Sd/- Executive Engineer-II, Lower Damodar Construction Division
ICA-T4492(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-QUOTATION NOTICE
NIT No. WBP/BKPC/NIT/2024-25 An e-Quotation is invited from the bonafide suppliers / firms for supplying of Lubricant of Vehicles & Motor Cycle under Barrackpore Police Commissionerate for the financial year 2025-26. Intending suppliers / firms are requested to submit the Quotation within 07 (Seven) working days from the date of publication in news papers. Tender will be opened on 07:02 day from the date of publication at 14.00 hrs. Tender papers can be downloaded from www.wbtenders.gov.in Sd/- Dy. Commissioner of Police(HQ), Barrackpore.
ICA-T4531(2)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Electronic bids are invited by the Executive Engineer, Teesta Mechanical Division for 02 nos. Work from bonafide, resourceful contractor. Abridged e-NIT No: WBIIW/EE/TMD/e-NIT-06/2024-25. Last date of bid submission: 18.03.2025. Detailed NIT may be seen at www.wbiwd.gov.in & www.wbtenders.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, Teesta Mechanical Division, I & WD, Tinsati, Siliguri, Pin: 734005. ICA-T4505(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-Tender Notice
Notice Inviting Tender No. WBIIW/EE/SLGIG/01(4e)/2024-25 Open Tender is invited by the Executive Engineer, Siliguri Irrigation Division, Siliguri on behalf of Governor of W.B. for the work mentioned here under through e-Tendering from the eligible & resourceful Contractors having sufficient credential & financial capacity for execution of work of similar nature. Details of NIT & Tender documents may be downloaded from www.wbiwd.gov.in or www.wbtenders.gov.in on or after 03.03.2025 after 17:30 hrs. Bid submission end date: 19/03/2025 upto 15:00 hrs. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Siliguri Irrigation Division, 26, Nabinsin Road, Mahanandapara, P.O. Siliguri, Dist. Darjeeling. ICA-T4495(2)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
N.B.D.D NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER
Notice Inviting e-Tender by the S.E./NBDD Vide Nit No. 78 (Sl. No. 01 & 02) of 2024-25. Details of works to be seen in the above mentioned Nit in the website:- www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbnorthbengal.gov.in Superintending Engineer North Bengal Development Department
ICA-T4508(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
KMDA TENDER NOTICE
e-NIT No. KMDA/CIVIL/E&AM/Planning Circle/19 of 2024-25
Online e-Tender is invited by the Superintending Engineer, Planning Circle, E&AM Sector, KMDA, 4th Floor, Block-A, Unnayan Bhavan, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700091, from reliable, resourceful, bonafide, eligible and experienced firms / companies / individual contractors / Joint Ventures / Consortium, for the work, Sl. No., Name of Work, Estimated Amount, Earnest Money, (1) Construction of proposed Urban Primary Health Centre (U-PHC) at Ward No. 4 within Dum Dum Municipality (2nd Call), Rs.90,28,674/-, Rs.1,80,600/-, (2) - same as sl.no (1) - at Bangor, Ward No. 28 within South Dum Dum Municipality (2nd Call), Rs.89,91,304/-, Rs.1,79,800/-. Time of completion: 06 months for each sl. No. Last date & time of online bid submission: 19.03.2025, Time 1:30 pm, for details contact the above office or visit both websites. www.kmda.vb.gov.in (KMDA-1238) www.wbtenders.gov.in ICA-T4512(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-Tender Notice
The Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Panchet Division, Bishnupur, Dist. - Bankura, invites vide e-tender Notice Nos. WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-28 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-30 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/BKD/CH-42 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/BKD/CH-44 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call) regarding the "Construction of Community Hall" under Bishnupur & Bankada FMU of Panchet DMU, Bishnupur under the Scheme of WBFBCCCR (JICA) during FY 2024-25. Bid Submission will be started from 03/03/2025 at 11:00 a.m. to 18/03/2025 at 05:00 p.m. Interested contractors/bidders are hereby requested to check the website: www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.westbengalforest.gov.in & www.bankuraforest.in or contact the office of the undersigned for details. Sd/- Raju Sarkar, WBFS, Head Panchet DMU. ICA-T4497(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING RE E-TENDER
For Engagement of Staff Car on Monthly Hired Basis at Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay GMCJH invited by The MSVP, SCCGMCH, Uluberia, Howrah. Details are available on the website: <https://wbtenders.gov.in> Bid submission Start Date: 07.03.2025 at 10:00 A.M. Closing end: 17.03.2025 at 12:00 Noon. Opening on: 19.03.2025 at 12:00 Noon. ICA-T4513(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-Notice Inviting Tender
Executive Engineer, Kalighati-Chattopadhyay GMCJH invited by The MSVP, SCCGMCH, Uluberia, Howrah. Details are available on the website: <https://wbtenders.gov.in> Bid submission Start Date: 07.03.2025 at 10:00 A.M. Closing end: 17.03.2025 at 12:00 Noon. Opening on: 19.03.2025 at 12:00 Noon. ICA-T4513(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Abridged e-Tender Notice
No. 11/SILVIL(HILLS)SPAP/2024-25 e-tender is invited from Agencies/Contractors for Changing of polycarbonate sheet & repairing of glass house at Lloyd Botanic Garden, Darjeeling under Silviculture (Hills) Division, Darjeeling. Last date of bid submission & the technical bid opening date can be seen on the website of <https://wbtenders.gov.in> For participating in the e-tender visit <https://wbtenders.gov.in> This advertisement is also given at www.westbengalforest.gov.in Sd/- Divisional Forest Officer, Silviculture (Hills) Division ICA-T4525(2)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Notice Inviting Tender
e-NIT invited by the Executive Engineer, Mayurakshi & N Division, I&WD, Siuri for 01 nos work - e-NIT No. WBIIW/EE/ MEMD/e-NIT-11/2024-25. Tender ID: 2025_WD_819807_1. Last date of bid submission: 15/03/2025 upto 17:00 hrs. Detailed e-NIT may be seen at www.wbiwd.gov.in & www.wbtenders.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, Mayurakshi & N Division, Birbhum-731101, Ph: 03462-255057 ICA-T4490(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
ABRIDGED NOTICE
NIT No. WBIIW/EE/JID/e-NIT-13/2024-25
The Executive Engineer, Jalpaiguri Irrigation Division invites tender for 01 (One) no. work from the eligible and resourceful contractors having sufficient, necessary credential and financial capability for execution of works of similar nature. Bid Submission Start Date: 03rd March, 2025 from 10:30 AM. Bid Submission End Date: 17th March, 2025 upto 17:30 PM. For further details regarding "Scope of work" & "Opening of tenders" Please visit <https://wbtenders.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer, Jalpaiguri Irrigation Division, Club Road, Jalpaiguri, Ph: 03561-230249. ICA-T4488(2)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-Tender Notice
The Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Panchet Division, Bishnupur, Dist. - Bankura, invites vide e-tender Notice Nos. WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-28 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-30 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/BKD/CH-42 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/BKD/CH-44 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call) regarding the "Construction of Community Hall" under Bishnupur & Bankada FMU of Panchet DMU, Bishnupur under the Scheme of WBFBCCCR (JICA) during FY 2024-25. Bid Submission will be started from 03/03/2025 at 11:00 a.m. to 18/03/2025 at 05:00 p.m. Interested contractors/bidders are hereby requested to check the website: www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.westbengalforest.gov.in & www.bankuraforest.in or contact the office of the undersigned for details. Sd/- Raju Sarkar, WBFS, Head Panchet DMU. ICA-T4497(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for the works mentioned below. Sl. 1. Name of the work: Repairing & Restoration of Existing Fire Protection & Detection System of Basirhat SH (G4) in the district North 24th PGS under WBMSCL. NIT Ref. No. WBMSCL/NIT-158/2025 Dated - 25/02/2025. Last date of submission of bid (online) 17.03.2025 upto 3:00 P.M. Tender/scan be downloaded from www.wbtenders.gov.in or www.wbmscl.gov.in on or after 03/03/2025 at 11:30 A.M. Clarification requests, if any may be sent to ee_wbmscl.krishnaji@gmail.com Sd/- General Manager, WBMSCL, Joint Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal. ICA-T4513(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE
e-NIT No. WBIIW/EE/MIDMD/e-NIT-20/2024-25
On behalf of the Governor of West Bengal, Notice Inviting Tender is invited by the undersigned for 01 (One) no. work under Metropolitan Drainage Mechanical Division, I & W Dte., Govt. of West Bengal. Bid Submission End Date: 18.03.2025 at 5:00 P.M. Other details will be available from the notice board of office of the undersigned on working days and also from website: www.wbiwd.gov.in & www.wbtenders.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, Metropolitan Drainage Mechanical Division, I & W Dte., Govt. of West Bengal. ICA-T4500(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-Tender Notice
The Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Panchet Division, Bishnupur, Dist. - Bankura, invites vide e-tender Notice Nos. WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-31 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-32 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-33 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call), WBFBCCCR/PNT/JICA/CDA/VP/CH-34 (e) of 24-25 (2nd Call) regarding the "Construction of Community Hall" under Joypur & Taldangra FMU of Panchet DMU, Bishnupur under the Scheme of WBFBCCCR (JICA) during FY 2024-25. Bid Submission will be started from 03/03/2025 at 11:00 a.m. to 18/03/2025 at 05:00 p.m. Interested contractors/bidders are hereby requested to check the website: www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.westbengalforest.gov.in & www.bankuraforest.in or contact the office of the undersigned for details. Sd/- Raju Sarkar, WBFS, Head Panchet DMU. ICA-T4488(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Notice Inviting e-Tender by the S.E./NBDD Vide Nit No. 79 (Sl. No. 01 & 02) of 2024-25. Details of works to be seen in the above mentioned Nit in the website:- www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbnorthbengal.gov.in Superintending Engineer North Bengal Development Department
ICA-T4511(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Notice Inviting e-Tender by the S.E./NBDD Vide Nit No. 78 (Sl. No. 01 & 02) of 2024-25. Details of works to be seen in the above mentioned Nit in the website:- www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbnorthbengal.gov.in Superintending Engineer North Bengal Development Department
ICA-T4508(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Notice Inviting e-Tender by the S.E./NBDD Vide Nit No. 79 (Sl. No. 01 & 02) of 2024-25. Details of works to be seen in the above mentioned Nit in the website:- www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbnorthbengal.gov.in Superintending Engineer North Bengal Development Department
ICA-T4511(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
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ICA-T4508(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
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ICA-T4511(4)/2025

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ICA-T4511(4)/2025

HC concerned over untreated effluents choking Yamuna

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi High Court has expressed serious concern over untreated effluents flowing from 16 industrial areas choking Yamuna. HC noted that these areas lacked common effluent treatment plants (CETPs), resulting in the free flow of untreated effluents. The court's recent observations came while examining an affidavit filed by Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), which stated that there were 33 industrial areas in Delhi, with 24 transferred to DSIIDC by DDA. However, only 12 areas were fully under DSIIDC's control, while the remaining 12 areas were still managed by DDA. The report also submitted that a total of 13 CETPs had been installed, which catered to 17 industrial areas. However, only the last two CETPs at Bawana and Narela were under the control of DSIIDC, it said. HC pointed out that it was shocking that in the industrial areas, the effluents were freely flowing without any treatment. The condition was very serious and abysmal, which would, therefore, lead the court to the question of how the solution was to be arrived at to ensure it was treated, the HC noted. It added that as far as Narela and Bawana CETPs were concerned, DSIIDC was taking requisite steps to monitor the effluents and protocols were being followed.

To address the larger issue, the court directed DDA to hand over the remaining 12 lease administration rights to DSIIDC and ordered the installation of CETPs while instructing the commissioner of industries to propose a comprehensive plan for the installation, monitoring, and supervision of all CETPs. HC also asked the official to file an affidavit providing details on the maintenance and revenue sources of CETPs, as well as the plan for installing treatment plants in the 16 areas lacking them. The commissioner has been directed to personally appear in court on the next date of hearing.



People observe the first day of Ramadan at Jama Masjid on Sunday

Pilot project: Reach out to DCP for grievance redressal

Abhay@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: A pilot project is underway in eight police stations of Outer North Delhi, enabling complainants to directly reach out to the DCP with their grievances. As part of this initiative, a booth equipped with a tablet has been set up at each station. The tablet features a "Talk to DCP" application, allowing complainants to simply click the app button and directly speak with the DCP to share their concerns. The DCP then directs the SHOs to take necessary action. The project, currently being implemented in stations including Narela, Bhalswa Dairy, Bawana, Shahbad Dairy, Narela Industrial Area, Samaypur Badli, Swaroop Nagar, and Alipur, sees the DCP attending to four to five calls per day from each station. Future plans involve relocating the booth to public areas, allowing broader access for people to communicate directly with the DCP.

The primary goal is to address concerns of citizens facing issues with law enforcement or difficulty in accessing senior police officials. It specifically targets individuals who feel their complaints were ignored or mishandled by local police. When a call is received via the "Talk to DCP" app, the DCP directly handles the complaint and issues necessary directions to the relevant police station. "A senior police official, such as the SHO or senior inspector, meets with the complainant to address their issue. This step ensures that the complainant's concern is acknowledged and addressed at the local level by the appropriate authority," the police said. Police said if the in-charge senior officer at the police station either refuses to attend to the complainant or fails to take the necessary action, the matter is escalated to the ACP or SDPO. This escalation aims to provide the complainant with an additional avenue to have their grievance heard and resolved at a higher level of authority. "In cases where the complainant's issue still remains unresolved after being referred to the ACP's office, they are granted the option to communicate directly with the district DCP through the app," police said. Further, for record-keeping, a register will be maintained by the operator in the DCP Office. Regular feedback from the complainant will be obtained to ensure their grievances are timely addressed. DCP (outer north) Nidhin Valsan said the application primarily focuses on facilitating grievance redressal. It aims to ensure that no concern goes unheard due to administrative delays, lack of senior officer attention, or geographical limitations.



Booths equipped with a tablet have been set up at police stations

Man orders phone online, gets a packet of soap and biscuit from 'delivery boy'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A man who ordered a phone from an online shopping website was shocked to receive a soap and a biscuit packet instead. The incident occurred in south Delhi's Sheikh Sarai on Feb 13. The man, who works at a college in Sheikh Sarai, told police that on Feb 11, he ordered a phone through an online shopping website using the cash-on-delivery option. The next day, he received a call from a person who claimed to be the delivery boy. "I told him to deliver the product the next day, as I was going to be at home. The next day, he called me thrice around 11 am and handed over a mobile phone box in the shopping website's packaging with the same product details as I ordered," the complainant said. The man then made a payment of Rs 16,680 through a UPI transaction. After going to his office, he opened the box to find a soap bar and a biscuit packet inside. He made calls to the delivery boy, who assured him of a replacement through a complaint on the online shopping website. "After that, his phone was switched off. I have not received any response to my email from the company. I request that strict action be taken against the delivery person," he stated in his complaint. Later, another delivery boy arrived with the mobile phone the complainant ordered, asking for an additional payment of Rs 16,680. "I was very surprised by this type of fraud. I wondered how anyone knew that I ordered a phone, and how the fraudulent delivery boy obtained all my details, including my phone number," he said. A case under section 318 (cheating) and 319 (cheating by personation) of BNS has been registered and further probe is on.

During the hearing, however, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan urged HC to lay down guidelines for the use of smartphones in schools. HC acknowledged the "deleterious and harmful effects that arise from the indiscriminate use and misuse of smartphones in school", but said "smartphones also serve several salutary purposes, including as devices that help with coordination between parents and the children, which adds to the safety and security of students attending school". The court also stressed that "much has changed in the past years as regards the use of technology, including for educational and other related purposes". "As a matter of policy, students should not be barred from carrying smartphones to school, but the use of smartphones in school must be regulated and monitored. Where it is possible to make arrangements for the safekeeping of smartphones, students should be required to deposit their smartphones when they enter school and take them back when returning home," HC directed. It said smartphones must not disrupt classroom teaching, discipline, or the overall educational atmosphere. "To this end, the use of smartphones in class must be prohibited. The use of cameras and recording facilities on smartphones should also be barred in the common areas of the school as well as in school vehicles; schools must educate students on responsible online behaviour; digital manners, and the ethical use of smartphones. Students must be counselled that high levels of screen time and social media engagement can lead to anxiety, diminished attention spans, and cyber-bullying," it further noted. HC said the policy should permit the use of smartphones for connectivity and purposes of safety and coordination, but disallow them for entertainment/recreational use.

JNU students' body slams 'bid to delay' elections

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: During the University General Body Meeting (UGBM) at JNU, the highest platform for student representation, several important resolutions were passed concerning the JNUSU elections. The primary resolution demands that the JNUSU advocate for the immediate release of the notification to begin the election process. This notification was delayed due to pending instructions from the high court, after interventions in last year's elections. Additionally, the student body expressed its opposition to the recently introduced CPO Manual, which criminalises fundamental forms of student expression, including debate, dissent, postering, and protest demonstrations on campus. The UGBM passed a resolution rejecting the CPO manual in its entirety, with JNUSU committed to challenging its enforcement and seeking its revocation. The resolutions passed during the UGBM specifically addressed the JNUSU election. The student body condemned the actions of the vice-chancellor and the dean of students in attempting to delay the JNUSU election. "We are going to meet the dean of students on Monday and demand that a notification is issued regarding the conduct of JNUSU elections. The elections are not stuck because of the high court, they are stuck because of the administration," said a JNUSU member. Furthermore, the student body strongly condemned recent unconstitutional attempts by ABVP to bypass the JNUSU constitution by calling for an unauthorised "UGBM," thereby undermining both the constitution and the mandate of the students. JNU

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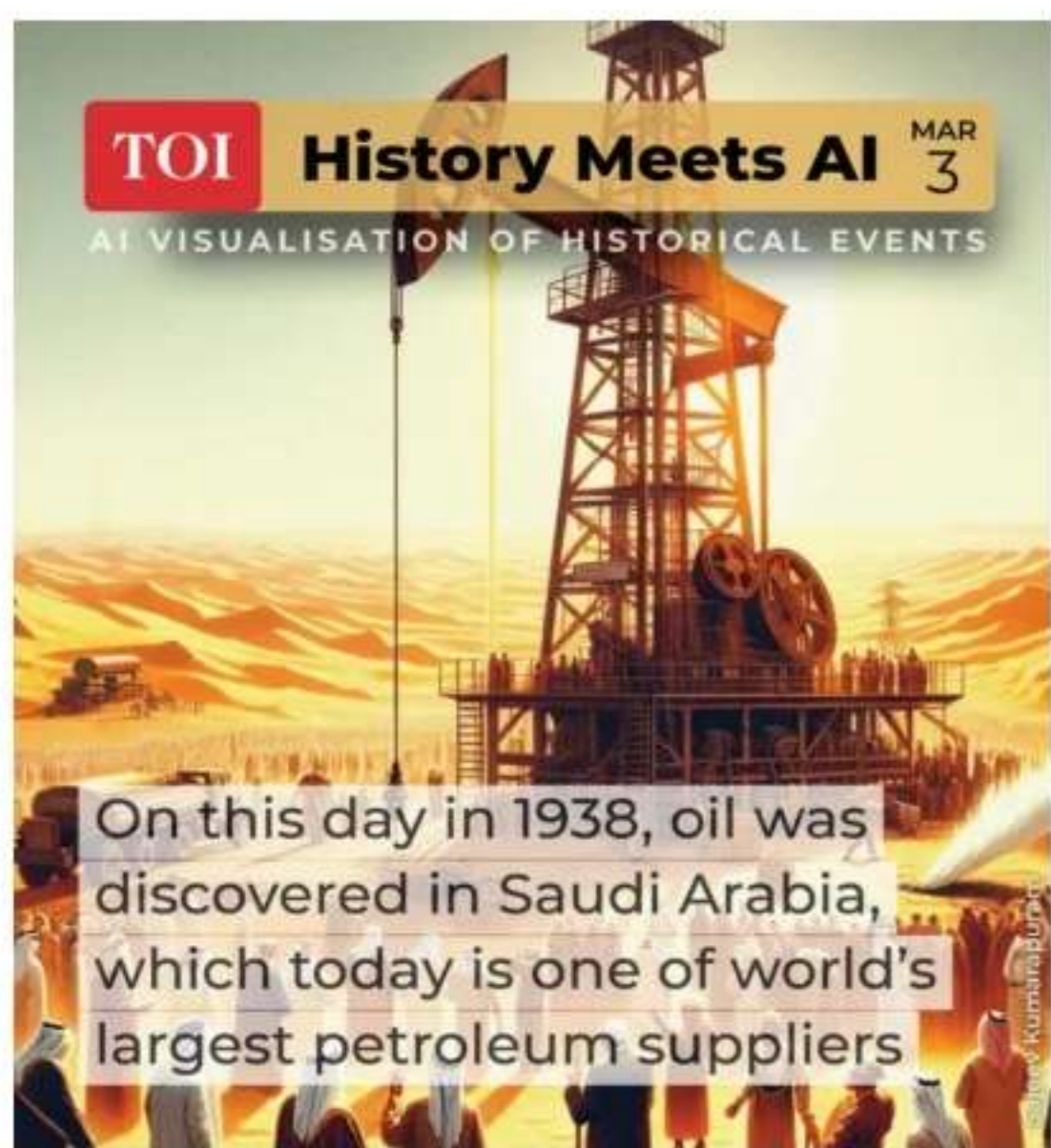
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TOI History Meets AI MAR 3
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On this day in 1938, oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia, which today is one of world's largest petroleum suppliers

B'day bash on road: Mayor's son held

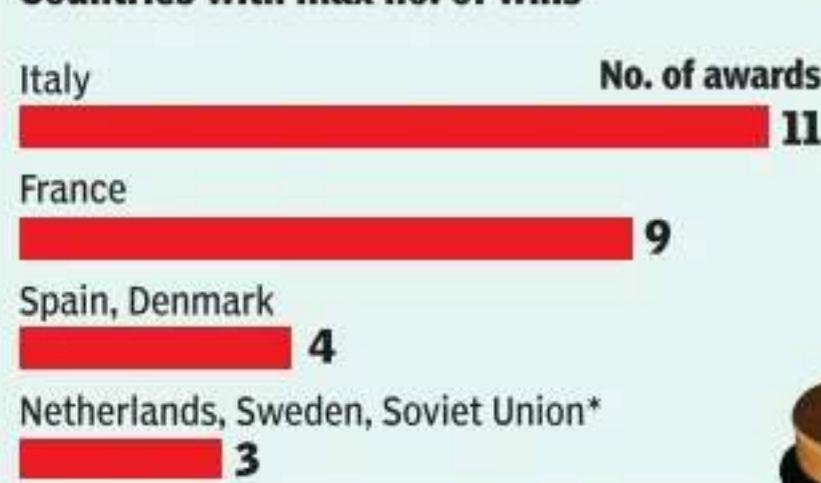
The son of Raipur's newly picked mayor and four of his friends were arrested for cutting a birthday cake in the middle of the road in front of his house on Saturday night when the mayor took the oath of office, reports **Rashmi Drolia**. They were in police custody overnight before being released on bail. As video of the cake-cutting by Mayor Meenal Choubey's son, Mehul, and his friends went viral, ex-CM Bhupesh Baghel slammed BJP, accusing the govt of double standard. Baghel posted on X, "How can two laws exist in one state? If the mayor is his mother, does that make cutting a cake on the street and bursting fireworks acceptable? Recently, Youth Congress workers were jailed for celebrating a birthday on the roadside. If the law was enforced then, it should be enforced consistently."

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers By Mudita Girotra

Which countries dominate international Oscar?

In 1947, the Academy introduced a special award for foreign-language films, which evolved into the Best International Feature Film category in 1956. Italian films have the highest wins in this category, followed by France

Countries with max no. of wins



Voter card number duplication doesn't imply fraud, says EC

Clarification Comes After TMC Charge

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Sunday clarified that duplication in electors photo identify card (EPIC) number allotted to electors from two different states/UTs does not imply duplicate or fake voters as the elector can only vote at the polling booth mentioned in his EPIC, which will be different even if the card number is same.

Stating that identical alphanumeric series may have been used by two different states/UTs under the decentralised and manual mechanism followed prior to shifting of the electoral roll data-



base of all states/UTs to the ERONET platform, the EC, however, clarified that even in EPIC with identical numbers, other fields, including demographic details, assembly constituency and polling booth, are different. "Irrespective of the EPIC number, any elector can cast a vote only at their designated polling station in their respective constituency in the state/UT where they are enrolled in the electoral roll, and nowhere else," the poll panel underlined.

EC statement confirms anomalies: TMC

TMC in West Bengal said on Sunday's statement by the EC backed its claims about the inclusion of non-resident voters in the state's electoral list to help a particular party. TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh told reporters that the EC's statement "confirms our claims that there are names in the electoral list which had been included after conclusion of previous polls. This is aimed at helping BJP get more votes." "These names don't tally with the list of permanent residents of a constituency. Our supreme Mamata Banerjee had pointed out this anomaly days back," he added.

Conceding that the use of the same alphanumeric series in EPIC cards issued by certain state/UT chief electoral officer's (CEO) offices left scope for duplicate EPIC numbers being allotted to electors in different assembly constituencies in different states/UTs, the commission on Sunday said it has decided to ensure the allotment of unique EPIC number to registered electors. "Any case of duplicate EPIC number will be rectified by allotting a unique EPIC number. The

ERONET 2.0 platform will be updated to aid and assist in this process," it said.

The EC clarification on duplication in EPIC numbers came after a TMC leader flagged the case of an elector from Cooch Behar, West Bengal, who allegedly shared the same EPIC number with another elector in Didarganj, Uttar Pradesh. Only last week, West Bengal CM and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee had alleged the presence of "fake" and "outsider" voters in the state.

Raj cancels bungalow allotment of minister who alleged phone tap

ShoebKhan@timesofindia.com

Jaipur: Rajasthan BJP govt has cancelled the allotment of a govt bungalow to cabinet minister Kirori Lal Meena, months after he requested general administration dept to revoke it in Nov 2024. This request came four months after he submitted his resignation to CM Bhajan Lal Sharma in July 2024, which remains unaccepted by his own party, alleging that the govt was tapping his phone.



Kirori Lal Meena submitted his resignation in July 2024, but it remains unaccepted by BJP

The decision highlights the widening rift between Meena and the govt, particularly after his repeated claims that his own administration engaged in surveillance against him. Following these allegations, BJP issued him a notice in Feb. While Meena initially conceded, saying, "I made a mistake," he reiterated his phone surveillance claims just a week ago.

"Neither was he satisfied with the portfolios — partial control of agriculture and rural

development — nor with the official residence allotted to him on SMS Hospital Road. He wanted a bungalow in Civil Lines," a source said. Attempts by TOI to contact Meena for a response were unsuccessful.

A BJP neta said, "The govt approved his request to cancel the bungalow allotment in light of the controversy he stirred by accusing the administration of spying on him. This decision makes it clear that the govt is in no mood to grant him any additional space."

'No heir in lifetime': Maya removes nephew from all party posts again

Neha.Shukla@timesofindia.com

Lucknow: BSP national president Mayawati removed her nephew Akash Anand from all party posts for the second time in a year on Sunday, suggesting he had failed to prove himself worthy of being her political heir despite getting a second chance, and blaming his dissident father-in-law Ashok Siddharth for his "ruined" career.

Mayawati appointed Akash's father Anand Kumar and Rajya Sabha MP Ramji Gautam to jointly take over



Mayawati had sacked nephew Akash Anand in May last year but reinstated him in June

his responsibilities as BSP's national coordinators. The former UP CM also declared at the national party conclave — her London-educated nephew wasn't present — that she wouldn't name a succes-

sor in her lifetime.

Akash, whom Mayawati had publicly anointed as her heir on Dec 10, 2023, fell foul of his aunt within months. The BSP chief sacked him on May 7 last year, midway through the Lok Sabha polls, citing his "lack of maturity". She reinstated him on June 26.

"The party is supreme, relations can come later," Mayawati said on Sunday. She said Akash's father-in-law, a former RS MP, drove a wedge through BSP and also instigated his son-in-law, resulting in his expulsion on Feb 12.

Bride abducted on MP highway, rescued by cops

Bhopal: A bride was kidnapped on a highway while heading to her in-laws' home with the groom and baraat in MP's Guna district on Sunday.

A bunch of goons chased the newlyweds in an SUV, attacked the groom with knives, dragged the bride out and drove off with her. The crime triggered all-out police action and the bride was rescued from Devas, over 200km away.

"The groom says the bride knew the accused, but nothing can be said as of now. Things will be clear once she arrives in Guna," cops told TOI.

Bandit Kusuma, who avenged Phoolan's Behmai killings, dies

Lucknow: Former bandit Kusuma Nain, once a terror across UP and MP, died from TB complications at Lucknow's KGMU on Saturday.

Kusuma, serving a 20-year jail term, was suffering from tuberculosis for the past two months, Etawah district jail superintendent Kuldeep Singh said. She was admitted to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Government Hospital in Etawah after her condition worsened on Feb 1. She was referred to Saifai Medical University, from where she was shifted to KGMU in Lucknow. She was a key associate of

dreaded dacoit Ramasare, alias Fakkad Baba. Kusuma shot to notoriety in 1984, when she, along with dacoits Lalaram and Shriram, executed 12 villagers by lining them up and shooting them in Asta village.

Her act was a revenge for the Behmai massacre of 1981, when Phoolan Devi and her gang shot 20 men execution-style, sending shockwaves across the country. In retaliation, Asta village, home to Phoolan's caste members, became the target. Nain and her associates ruthlessly executed villagers and burned down homes in vengeance.

'False' toll fee deduction? NHA cracks the whip

Dipak.Dash@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Have you ever received a toll deduction message from your FASTag wallet even though your car was parked or you hadn't passed through a toll plaza? Officials explain that this can occur when toll operators mistakenly enter the vehicle number, often due to issues with the FASTag being unreadable for various reasons, or when people carry tags in their wallets. Cracking down on such in-



FASTAG ERRORS

stances of "false" deductions from FASTag wallet, the NHA has penalised toll collectors in at least 250 cases. For each violation, the highways authority's toll management entity, IHMCL, has started imposing a fine of Rs 1 lakh.

Due to this high penalty, the number of such cases has reduced by almost 70% and now 50 such genuine complaints reach IHMCL in a month while nearly 30 crore FASTag transactions happen at all plazas on the national highway network.

Many users have taken to social media to highlight instances of false toll deductions from their FASTag wallets, in addition to lodging complaints with IHMCL. "Customers facing false deductions can file a complaint by calling 1033 or

emailing falseduction@ihmcl.com and each case is thoroughly investigated. And if the complaint of such deduction or incorrect manual transactions is established, chargebacks are issued to the customer immediately. Additionally, a Rs 1 lakh penalty is imposed on the toll operator responsible," said a senior IHMCL official.

He said, the main reason for such false deductions is entry of incorrect vehicle numbers by toll operators while processing electronic transactions manually.

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RE-NOTIFICATION FOR LAW FACULTY RECRUITMENT FOR BACKLOG POSTS

In continuation of the notification no. KSLU/DPAR/2021-22/1106(B) dated: 13.10.2021, & the notification no. KSLU/DPAR/2023-24/3145 dated: 23.02.2024, applications are invited in Eight Sets in the prescribed format from the eligible Indian citizens for the following Permanent Teaching (Backlog) Posts, eligible Indian citizens who are residing in abroad are also eligible to apply.

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The Indomitables Of Mana Who Dodged Cold Burial

Clad In Vests, 23 Men Ran Barefoot In Snow To Reach BRO Camp 4Km Away

Shivani.Azad@timesofindia.com

Dehradun: On a bitterly cold morning amid heavy snowfall near Mana, at nearly 10,500 feet, 23 men knew they couldn't afford to wait for help. When an avalanche thundered down on their shelter at dawn on Friday, they had only their instincts—and a loader—to rely on. Clad in nothing but vests, barefoot on ice, they ran, chasing the machine as it carved a fragile path through the snow. Their only chance was to outrun, what seemed to them was a collapsing mountain. For two hours, through snow and howling winds, they pushed forward, their bodies numbed by the cold, until they finally reached the BRO camp, around 4km away.

Laddu Kumar Pandit, 28, was among them. Jolted awake by the avalanche's impact, he knew there was no time to think. He lunged for his loading vehicle—normally used to clear snow and debris—and powered it forward, instinct taking over. "It was like death was chasing us," he told TOI. "We had to run faster than we ever had before." Behind him, his colleagues, many of them disoriented from sleep, scrambled onto the frozen road, their feet sinking into the ice as they followed the machine's tracks.

The avalanche, stretching 100 metres across and rising nearly 20 feet, had torn through their shelter, leaving no time to gather belongings or shoes, they shared.

"Some were wearing only vests," said Munna Prasad, one of the survivors from Bihar. "Panku and Anil were injured when the shed collapsed, so we placed them inside the vehicle. Our foreman, Satish, who weighs over a quintal, couldn't keep up either, so he got in too. The rest of us had no choice—we ran non-stop, sometimes moving briskly to catch our breath before picking up the pace again. For almost 4km, we fought the odds until we finally reached the BRO camp at 9.15am."

The men's survival depended not just on speed, but on knowing where to go. Dheeraj, Prasad, and Kisan had worked in the Badrinath region for two years and were familiar with the route. "That was the only thing keeping us from total panic," said one of them. "We knew exactly which direction to run. The fear was there, but we never second-guessed our path."

By the time they reached the camp, exhaustion and frostbite had set in. Some collapsed, their feet raw from the ice, while others huddled together, trying to grasp the reality that they had made it. From there, they were taken to the Military Hospital (MH) in Jyotirmath, where the warmth of blankets and medical attention replaced the deafening silence of the mountains.

"Only when we reached the camp did we finally feel safe," said one of the workers.



SDRF personnel conduct search and rescue operations in avalanche-hit Mana in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Sunday. The avalanche destroyed eight accommodation containers and a shed

Steel containers ensured workers' survival

Dehradun: In the Himalayas, avalanches and mishaps are unforgiving. Survival in such conditions is rare. The numbers from recent years tell a grim story. In recent years, avalanches have trapped over 140 people, causing nearly 70 deaths. From mountaineers in Uttarakhand to trekkers, soldiers, and tourists in Jammu and Kashmir and Sikkim, these disasters have repeatedly struck India's mountain regions, with survival depending on rescue efforts, reports Gaurav Talwar.

But this time, something

worked in the survivors' favour: the steel containers they were sleeping in and the possibility of an immediate response by Indian Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel, who happened to be stationed nearby.

In Mana, the avalanche's impact was immense, swallowing eight accommodation containers and a shed, hurling them hundreds of meters toward the Alaknanda river. Those thrown outside stood little chance. But inside the containers, survival became possible. "These metal

shelters saved most of them. They had just enough oxygen to hold on until we got them out," a senior rescue official said. Had they been in barracks or tents, their fate would have been grim.

Each of these containers, built with reinforced steel and designed for extreme conditions, could hold 12-14 workers. Their solid structure prevented them from being crushed under the weight of the snow. More importantly, they remained sealed off, keeping those inside from being buried alive.

'One moment we were sleeping, the next thrown like puppets'

Gaurav Talwar
@timesofindia.com

Dehradun: There was no time to run. One moment, the workers were asleep inside their container homes, the bitter cold pressing in from all sides, the hum of the mountains steady and unbroken. Then came a roar—deep, monstrous, growing louder by the second. The earth beneath them shuddered. The walls groaned. And before anyone could move, the avalanche was there, like a sudden apparition in a horror movie.

Ganesh Kumar, a road construction worker from Pithoragarh, barely had time to open his eyes before the container was ripped from its place it was pegged and sent tumbling into the snow. "It happened so fast, we had no time to think," he said from his hospital bed in Jyotirmath. "One moment, we were asleep. The next, the entire container was flung ahead, rolling over and over. It must have been 50, maybe 60 metres. We had no control. We were just... thrown... like puppets."

Then came the deafening silence. The world outside was gone, above a thick pile of snow. Inside the crumpled container, the men lay tangled, gasping for breath, bodies stiff with cold. "Darkness, silence, and the unbearable cold wrap-

ped around us like a shroud," one of them recalled. "The snow was everywhere—pushing against us, pressing into our chests. We tried shouting, but the sound just died around us. It felt like the snow was swallowing our voices."

The hours crawled by, stretching endlessly. The cold bit deep, turning their limbs numb. Some of them tried clawing at the walls, but there was no way out. The air felt thinner. Some stopped talking. "It felt like we were already gone," one survivor said.

Then, a noise—faint at first. Footsteps. Voices, muffled through the snow. Hope surged through their bodies like a shock. "At first, I thought I was imagining it," another worker said. "Then the sound got closer, and suddenly, the snow started shifting." Hands broke through the ice, pulling them from the wreckage, dragging them into the open air. "They were our saviours—farishtay (angels)," another survivor said, his voice still trembling at the memory of the Army and ITBP personnel cutting through the snow to reach them. Manoj Bhandari from Uttarakhand district said, "Even now, the memories haunt us—how close we came to being buried forever. Some of our friends didn't make it. That pain... it's not going anywhere."

2 avalanches hit Mana within 5 minutes, says survivor

Dehradun: Vijay Pal from Moradabad, one of the 46 survivors of the avalanche that struck a Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp near Mana village on the India-China border in Uttarakhand, said on Sunday that a second avalanche hit just five minutes after the first one on Friday morning, reports Kalyan Das.

Pal is currently undergoing treatment at the military hospital at the Army base in Jyotirmath. The search and rescue operation, led by the Army, which lasted over 50 hours, concluded on Sunday with the recovery of the body of the last remaining person trapped under the snow. Recalling his experience, Pal, a labourer working on the BRO site, said he and 13 others were inside a container when the first avalanche struck. "It was early in the morning when we heard a loud gushing sound nearby. We immediately realised an avalanche struck because it had happened there before. Before we could process it, the second one hit just five minutes later, throwing our container at least 40 to 50m away," said Pal.

He said he gathered himself after a few minutes and struggled to break free from the heavy snow. "I somehow managed to free myself and reached an Army camp about 150m away, where I received primary treatment and spent the night before being taken to the military hospital in Jyotirmath. Until then, I had no idea about the fate of the 13 others in the container," said Pal.

Orange alert issued, heavy snowfall, rain likely in 3 HP dists; key roads hit

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Shimla: Weather dept has issued an orange alert for heavy snow and rain in Chamba, Kangra, and Lahaul-Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh, even as most roads in Lahaul-Spiti and parts of Kinnaur and Chamba remained blocked on Sunday. Shimla meteorological centre has forecast light to heavy snowfall and heavy rain in Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Una, Kullu, Mandi, Shimla, Solan, and Sirmour districts. Thunderstorms and lightning are also expected in the mid and low hills of the state.

A massive avalanche struck near Spiti Valley's Gue village, stopping just 200m short of ITBP camp on Sunday. Another avalanche near Jahlma village in Lahaul on Saturday blocked the flow of the Chenab river. In Lahaul-Spiti, electricity could not be restored in many areas even after three days. In Kullu district, the highway to Manali was reopened on Saturday afternoon.

The entrance to Atal Tunnel, which was blocked after an avalanche, was cleared of snow on Sunday. Shimla-Kinnaur high-



Army personnel rescue BRO workers who got trapped under snow following the avalanche that struck on Feb 28

way, which remained blocked at several points, is expected to be cleared by Monday morning. Bharmour-Kharamukh road in Chamba district and most roads in Pangti sub-division also remained blocked on Sunday.

A 40-year-old patient in need of urgent medical care was airlifted from the snowbound Pangti area of

Chamba to a hospital in Manali on Sunday. Villagers carried the patient on a makeshift stretcher from Dhanala village to the helipad.

A landslide hit a car, injuring four occupants on Chandigarh-Manali highway near Pandoh in Mandi district on Sunday afternoon, besides leading to a major traffic jam on the highway.

Thermal imaging devices, drones deployed for search & rescue ops

► Continued from P 1

Officials clarified that 54 workers—not 55 as initially reported—were engaged in the double-laning project of the Mana Pass highway, which connects Mana village near Badrinath to the India-China border. Sunil Kumar, from Dumaal village in Himachal's Kangra district, was mistakenly listed as missing but was later confirmed to be at home on leave. Of the workers at the site, 46 survived, of which 44 were taken to Army hospital in Jyotirmath. Two critically injured workers are admitted to AIIMS Rishikesh, the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said.

The operation relied on advanced search equipment, including thermal imaging, victim-lo-

cating cameras, rotary rescue saws, and avalanche rods.

The Army also deployed a 'drone-based intelligent buried object detection system' flown in from Delhi by an Mi-17 helicopter. An avalanche rescue dog was used in the search as well.

Lt Col Manish Shrivastava, PRO, defence (Dehradun), said, "We deployed five quadcopters, three mini remotely piloted drones, and two members of the Tiranga Mountain Rescue (TMR) team, which specialises in avalanche rescues. The TMR signed an agreement with the Army last Sept in the presence of the COAS to train personnel for high-altitude operations."

Headed that eight helicopters were used. "Five were from Army aviation, two from the Indian Air

Force, and one from a private agency. The Army's central command signed a contract in Feb to integrate private helicopters for logistics support in high-altitude areas of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. These helicopters helped evacuate all survivors to the military hospital in Jyotirmath."

With a yellow alert for rain and snow issued for Monday, CM Dhama had set a deadline to recover the last missing worker by Sunday, warning that worsening weather conditions from March 3 would complicate further efforts. The 54 workers at the camp included 14 from Bihar, 11 each from Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, six from Himachal Pradesh, one each from Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, and 10 from Nepal.

Location of workers trapped in tunnel not yet known: T'gana CM

Roushan.Ali@timesofindia.com

Hyderabad: The location of eight workers trapped inside the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel since the roof collapse on Feb 22 is not known yet, and it may take two or three more days to pinpoint the spot, Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy said after visiting the site in Domalapenta, Nagarkurnool, on Sunday.

After a review meeting with 11 expert agencies, the CM said that rat-hole miners had drilled where the NGRI ground-penetrating radar showed possible human remains but found only metals. During the meeting, Revanth and irrigation minister N Utam Kumar Reddy, a former IAF fighter pilot, said the Telangana govt's top priority is to find the trapped workers.

"There is no exact trace of the trapped workers. As of now, 11 agencies, including the Army and Navy, are working to rescue the workers. We have directed the teams to use robots to save the workers and also prevent any loss of life in the operations. The rescue operation is one of the most complicated. As of now nothing can be said about the fate of the trapped workers. The time now is to stand together by keeping politics aside and supporting their families," he said, adding that govt was ready to help the affected families.

The CM also said the Congress govt was firm on completing the SLBC tunnel project once rescue operations were completed. He said a technical assessment will be done to make the tunnel safe for future work.

On Sunday, work to find the workers was in full swing but continuous water flow along with sludge was impeding operations. Work was expected to speed up by Monday evening when the crucial con-



After a review meeting with 11 expert agencies, CM Revanth Reddy said rat-hole miners had drilled where the radar showed possible human remains but found only metals

veyor belt to carry out the sludge was expected to be in working condition again, the CM said after being briefed by rescue team representatives. "They (rescue personnel) are not able to come to a full understanding of where the humans and the machinery got stuck," he said.

Responding to criticism by opposition parties, the chief minister said, "Politicising such an accident is inappropriate. It is neither the experts' nor the govt's fault, but a natural disaster. Water that accumulated over the years between rocks gushed out, causing the portion of the tunnel to collapse."

"The previous BRS govt, from 2014 to 2023, did not complete even 2.3 km of work and stopped it for 10 years. The Congress govt took up the project. Work stopped as the previous BRS govt did not pay bills and electricity charges to the contractor, following which power supply was cut. We paid the bills and resumed the work. The Congress govt is committed to completing the project and bringing water to fluoride-hit parts of Telangana," Revanth said.

Woman lives with dead pet cat for 3 days hoping it would return to life, then kills self

Meerut: Upset at the death of her pet cat, a 36-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide in her house in Amroha, UP, on Saturday night. Her family said she kept the dead feline with her for three days believing it would "return to life", reports Rahul Singh.

Circle officer Deep Kumar Pant told TOI that Pooja Devi, a resident of Mohalla Kot, was married in Delhi 10 years ago, and got divorced two years later. "Ever since her divorce, she had been staying with her mother and two brothers in Hasanpur. About three years back, she started taking care of a stray cat which she found on the road. On Thursday, her pet died and she refused to bury her, insisting it



The woman was suffering from depression and was seeking medical attention, said circle officer Deep Pant

would come back alive," said Pant. Around 8pm on Saturday, the woman hanged herself from the ceiling fan on the third floor of her house with the dead cat lying

next to her. "Preliminary investigation revealed the woman was in depression for years and was seeking medical attention. She was in shock and couldn't bear the loss after the pet's death. Her father also died some years back while one of her brothers suffers from mental illness," added Pant.

Police have handed over the body to her family after a post-mortem. Her mother, Gajra Devi, said that Pooja had brought up the light-brown coloured cat like her own child. "She was not letting us bury the dead animal and was sleeping with it for the past few days. Then, when she realised that her cat would not come back, she took her own life," her mother added.

AP cops summon IPS officer for dy speaker's torture in custody

Vijayawada: Police in Andhra Pradesh's Prakasam district have issued a notice to Bihar-cadre IPS officer Sunil Naik, directing him to appear for questioning in connection with the alleged torture of deputy speaker Raghurama Krishna Raju in custody when he was a TDP MP in 2021, reports Madhu Rasala.

Naik had been deputed to Andhra Pradesh during the previous YSRCP govt and appointed as CID DIG. However, with TDP-BJP-Jana Sena alliance assuming office after elections in 2024, he returned to Bihar. He currently serves as IG of fire services and home guard in Bihar. Raju was arrested in Hyderabad on May 14,

2021, for alleged hate speeches against certain communities and "promoting disaffection" against the Jaganmohan Reddy-led govt. He was granted bail by SC on May 21 after he alleged torture in custody.

Investigators found that Naik was present when Raju was arrested and later taken to CID regional office in Guntur. Based on this information and recorded statements, officials decided to question him regarding his role. Naik has been asked to present himself for questioning at Prakasam SP Mallika Garg's office in district headquarters Ongole. "Further action in the case will depend on the findings of the ongoing inquiry," Garg said Sunday.



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The selection criteria shall be strictly as per S.O. 364 of 2020 dated 27-11-2020.

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- House Job experience in a teaching institution = 05 marks (Maximum)
- Experience certificate = 10 marks (Maximum)
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- Postgraduate Degree (Maximum 05 marks) For MD/MS/DNB = 10 marks For Diploma Course = 05 marks.
- Professional Publications in a standard Medical Indexed Journal (02 marks for each Publication) = 10 marks

Total 100 Points (Break-up 99)
Pre-Award Roll Merit :- Out of 99
Viva Voce :- 10 points by the committee members

While making selections, the provisions of Reservation Act and the Rules made there under shall be followed.

The candidates are advised to enclose the self-attested copies of the following documents with their application forms which should reach in the office of the undersigned by or before 19/03/2025.

- Attempt Certificate of all examinations of MBBS of any other qualification issued by the University.
- Distinction /Honour /Medal/Academic Merit Certificate, if any.
- Post - Graduate Degree/Diploma Certificate.
- House Job experience in any teaching institution.
- Experience certificate (Rural service experience as Medical Officer (non PSC) under NHM and other medical scheme of Govt. Of India, minimum duration - one year).
- Date of Birth Certificate
- Domicile Certificate of J&K.
- Affidavit duly attested from 1st class Magistrate stating that the doctor is not in active Govt Services/ Certificates are genuine and is not involved in any Criminal activity.
- The application of any Medical officers working in any other Medical college in the state shall be accepted only on production of "No objection certificate" from the concerned Head of the institution.

The appointee shall be authorized to take leave as per S.O. 364. Absence of more than one month from duties in a year shall lead to disciplinary action including cancellation of appointment without any prior notice.

The eligible candidates shall have to appear before the selection Committee to be constituted under S.O. 364 of 2020 dated 27-11-2020 by the Government under the Chairmanship of Commissioner/Secretary to Govt., Health & Medical Education Department, at Government Medical College, Udhampur along-with all original testimonials and other related documents at the time of interview.

The date of interview shall be notified separately.
No TADA shall be given to the candidates appearing in the interview.

Note :-

- The preference shall be given to candidate possessing Higher qualification such as DNB/MD/MS/Diploma/MD, Diploma Emergency Medicine or experience in Rural Service or House Job.
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Parentage : _____
Date of Birth : _____
Permanent Address : _____
Contact No : _____
Email Id : _____

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MBBS	
PG/MD/MS	
Any Other	

- Poster presentation in National/International Conferences (enclose if any)
- Paper presentation in National/International Conferences (enclose if any)
- Certificate of Best Paper Award (enclose if any)
- Certificate of Best Poster Award (enclose if any)
- Certificate Best Video Presentation (enclose if any)
- Any other relevant certificates which may be desired by the selection committee.

DIP No: D/P/J-10673/24/01.03.2025 Signature of Candidate



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NMC includes MS in Traumatology and Surgery as feeder course to strengthen trauma healthcare

Priyadarshini.Gupta@timesofindia.com

Post-Graduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB) under the NMC recently announced to provisionally allow PG degree holders in Traumatology and Surgery to appear in NEET SS 2024 for the MCh specialties in Neurosurgery, Vascular Surgery, and Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. PGMEB plans to include it as one of the eligible feeder courses for MCh specialties, a surgical degree programme. It means PG degree holders of Traumatology and Surgery will now be eligible to appear in NEET SS 2024, which is scheduled on March 29 and 30, 2025.



Career growth

The NMC move is expected to expand opportunities for specialised surgical training and counter the shortage of skilled doctors in trauma care centres. Dr B Srinivas, secretary, NMC, says, "MS in Traumatology and Surgery is a relatively new course, introduced only two to three years ago as a broad specialty. Being a newly established programme, it was not recognised as a feeder course for super specialty programmes such as Plastic Surgery. Traditionally, MS General Surgery and DNB Surgery were considered the primary feeder courses for such super specialty training. However, students pursuing MS in Traumatology and Surgery aspired to specialise further in plastic surgery and requested the NMC to include it as a feeder course." Given that these students have already undergone rigorous training in trauma-related surgical procedures, the NMC's PGMEB decided to allow them eligibility for NEET SS, adds Dr Srinivas. "Since the inclusion of MS Traumatology and Surgery required regulatory amendments, necessary changes were made in time for students to appear for the upcoming NEET SS exam in March," he says. Dr Srinivas further adds, "Given India's high incidence of road accidents, there is a need for specialised trauma surgeons. This move will help create a well-trained workforce for handling trauma cases efficiently, ultimately enhancing the country's overall healthcare system."

Given India's high incidence of road accidents, we need more specialised trauma surgeons

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One-year MEd programme to be research-centric

Rajlakshmi.Ghosh @timesofindia.com

Much like the one-year BED programme, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is bringing back the one-year MEd programme from 2026-27. This programme is being reintroduced around a decade after it was discontinued in 2014 when the two-year MEd programme gained precedence. The decision to roll back the one-year MEd programme comes in the wake of the new Draft NCTE (Recognition Norms and Procedure) Regulations, 2025, which was recently approved and is now available for public feedback. The one-year MEd programme will be a full-time programme, while a two-year part-time MEd will also be started for working professionals who are teachers and education administrators.

Ensuring flexibility

As per the draft, the one-year MEd full-time programme is an advanced level course of 40 credits spread over two semesters. Speaking to Education Ti-

mes, Pankaj Arora, chairman, NCTE, says, "This new restructuring is aligned with NEP 2020 and the UGC Framework for PG programmes, ensuring flexibility for students at different stages of their academic journey. Moreover, since UG students are increasingly enrolling for the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), the NCF has proposed that after four years of graduation, students can come straight to the one-year master's degree. However, since this a specialised master's programme, FYUP students will have to complete one-year BED before they can enrol for the one-year MEd programme." Alternatively, candidates seeking admission to the MEd full-time programme should have obtained at least 50% marks or an equivalent grade in BED 1-Year/ BED 2-Year/ITEP or dual degree BA BED/ BSc BED/BEI Ed/BCOM BED

The course will be spread over two years for working professionals

to apply for the programme. Notably, the UGC has proposed three types of master's programmes. While one is pure research-centric, another is coursework-centric while a third category is core papers-driven. "The new MEd programme is based on a mixed model where coursework, practical training

and research will enable the teacher educators to improve the quality of teaching-learning and research," Arora says. Until 2014, MEd was a one-year programme before the NCTE shifted it to a two-year master's programme. The new one-year MEd is different from the earlier one-year programme considering it is more research-centric and in keeping with global standards.

Focus on analytical skills

Highlighting that the new MEd programme will

save a year of the aspirants, Vandana Saxena, professor, Department of Education, DU, emphasises, "This is a totally different programme. The earlier programmes were content-heavy and lacked proactive participation of students in their own learning even at master's level. This programme, on the other hand, is focused on developing analytical and higher order research skills among students while keeping them firmly grounded in theoretical understanding."

"While the two-year MEd programme may have had less enrolments which could be a factor for reviving the one-year programme, it was

important to give students a shorter duration course without compromising on the quality of education. Additionally, the two-year MEd was losing its charm among students," Arora says.

The 2-year MEd programme will be discontinued from 2026-2027 and no fresh admission will be allowed to any of the existing institutions conducting 2-year MEd programme after 2025. Once a portal is launched in April/May 2025, students can register for the 1-year MEd programme. A single-nation-wide entrance test is expected to be conducted by the NTA for admission to the full-time programme.

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Protest against three-language policy in TN reaches Dallas

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
Chennai: A section of Tamil diaspora in Dallas (US), organised a protest on Saturday against the three language policy and alleged imposition of Hindi in Tamil Nadu.
Holding placards against the central govt's National Education Policy (NEP) the protesters said, "Don't threaten Tamils. Don't impose Hindi. We don't need the three language policy."
Supporting the protest, Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin shared his news clipping on his social media handle and wrote, "Let Tamil live for long."
There have been sporadic

protests across Tamil Nadu condemning the central govt for withholding funds to the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan scheme.
The protests intensified after Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Rs 2,152 crore for the scheme will be released only if the state agreed to implement NEP.

Fadnavis, Shinde deny rift, blame media

On Budget Session Eve, CM Says Oppn Has Shut Doors To Dialogue

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
Mumbai: Opposition's picture is not of "hum saath saath hain" but rather "hum aapke hain kaun", said CM Devendra Fadnavis while again denying a cold war between him and his deputy Eknath Shinde.
Addressing a press conference along with Shinde and deputy CM Ajit Pawar on the eve of state's budget session, Fadnavis highlighted the absence of Congress's Vijay Wadetiwar as well as NCP (SP)'s Jayant Patil from opposition's media interaction.
Fadnavis said from the time the new govt was formed, it made an attempt to start a dialogue with the opposition, but its heads closed all doors to a dialogue. "We invited them to the tea party, which is nothing but to hold a discussion, but they boycotted this discussion as well."
Referring to a nine-page communication sent by MVA on problems in the state, Fadnavis said it was entirely based on news reports and govt has already responded to each of them. "If they want to raise these issues again, they can do so, and we shall respond to them."
While pointing to the disunity in opposition, he denied there being a "cold war" between him and Shinde. He mocked Sena UBT MP Sanjay Raut, saying he was now competing with "Salim-Javed", the legendary Bollywood screenwriters. "There is no



'Everything is thanda, thanda, cool, cool. Fadnavis & I have just swapped our chairs,' said Shinde

war: Those who know both of us will remember what we do when we are together," quipped Fadnavis, referring to the split engineered in the united Sena. Shinde immediately added, "Everything is thanda, thanda, cool, cool. It is just that Fadnavis and I have swapped our chairs. Only Ajit Pawar's chair is fixed." Pawar shot back, "What can I do if you couldn't hold on to your chair?"
The CM said he did not block any of Shinde's projects and the media should carry both sides of a story. Shinde, too, urged the media to carry balanced news reports. Clarifying his recent "don't take me lightly" remark, Shinde said he had already clarified that it was directed at those who took him lightly and how he had taught them a lesson, in a veiled reference to Uddhav Thackeray. Fadnavis added, "I don't take Shinde lightly. So, the remark was directed at those who underestimated him."
On budget session, which begins on Monday, the CM said five bills would be introduced during the session and there would be two debates — on women's empowerment on March 8 and a two-day debate towards the end of the session on the Constitution. He said soybean and tor dal procurement was done in record numbers.

"We acquired additional godowns to store tur dal."
The CM said govt will table a balanced budget on March 10 and ensure fiscal discipline. Flagship schemes will continue, and only ineligible beneficiaries will be dropped, he added.
On opposition's demand for resignation of NCP ministers Manikrao Kokate and Dhananjay Munde, he said in the former's case, his punishment had been suspended. "We shall take a decision on Kokate after the court's order. We have already clarified about the demand for Munde's resignation."
On French consultant Systra's allegations against MMRDA, Shinde said a letter was received from them on Feb 27, but there was no mention of any financial demands being made. Fadnavis said his govt won't compromise on transparency.
face. Tell me what you want. I will try. Shinde: CM. Shah: Can't happen yet. CM will be from the party [BJP]. Shinde: What should I do? Shah: You merge with BJP. Then the claim will be there... An outsider won't become the CM of Maharashtra now. Shinde: What about our party then? Shah: Leave that to us, we only made that party." Raut further wrote.
Raut also hit out at Shinde for raising questions over Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray not attending Maha Kumbh and said Shinde should first ask RSS chief if he visited Maha Kumbh to take a dip seriously," he said.
Narrating the alleged conversation between Shinde and Shah at a hotel in Koregaon Park on Feb 22, 4am, Raut, in his weekly column, "Rok Thok", in Saamna, wrote: "Shinde: I have no respect in govt, I was CM till yesterday. Today all my decisions are being reversed... Me and my people are being cornered, we joined the alliance on your word that I will be CM."
"Shah: Our 125 MLAs were elected... How can you claim CM's post? Shinde: The election was held under my leadership. Shah: No, election was held on Modi ji's

Shinde junks Raut claim that Shah asked him to merge with BJP for CM's post

Chaitanya Marpakwar
@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Sena UBT MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed that Maharashtra deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde met Union home minister Amit Shah in Pune in the wee hours of Feb 22 and expressed frustration over being sidelined in Mahayuti govt and his decisions being reversed by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. Shah allegedly suggested Shinde merge Shiv Sena with BJP to secure the CM's post, emphasising that no outsider will become Maharashtra CM now.
Terming Raut's claims "false and baseless", Shinde on Sunday evening denied meeting Shah. He was responding to a question at the govt's tea party ahead of budget session of the state legislature.
Hitting back at Raut, Shiv Sena minister Sanjay Shirsat said those who have sold their Sena to Congress and NCP (SP) must not talk about the real Shiv Sena.
"Who has told them all this? Did Shah tell them? We don't take them

Raut also hit out at Shinde for raising questions over Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray not attending Maha Kumbh and said Shinde should first ask RSS chief if he visited Maha Kumbh to take a dip

Raut also hit out at Shinde for raising questions over Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray not attending the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj. He said Shinde should first ask RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat if he had visited the Maha Kumbh to take a dip.
Sena functionaries in Vidarbha called Raut's article a "figment of imagination". "Sena UBT is frustrated to be in opposition... they are aware that a similar fate awaits them in Mumbai [civic polls], after which the party will be finished. So, to create distrust between Mahayuti members, Raut is making such allegations."
(With inputs from Nagpur)

CESC LIMITED
CIN: L31901WB1978PLC031411
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
CESC Limited invites Tenders from eligible bidders for Refurbishment of Boiler Feed Pump Cartridge.
Details available under Tender section of the official CESC website <https://www.cesc.co.in>

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
MADURAI HIGHWAYS, PROJECT CIRCLE
TENDER NOTICE
T.N. No: 10 / 2024-25 / SDO / Dated: 27.02.2025
For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender under two cover system through online only will be received up to 07.04.2025, 15:00 hours by the Superintending Engineer (H), Projects, Madurai Circle for the work of Forming of Bypass to Sivagangal town branching from Km 129/2 of Thanjavur - Manamadurai road SHU (Sivagangal Urban Stretch) and merging with Thanjavur - Manamadurai road NH226 (NHAI road) at Km 141/8 (Length 10.80 Km) Phase-II Km 7/6 - 10/8' pertaining to Madurai (H) Projects Division.
Details of work, approximate value of work, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 14.03.2025 onwards in the Government website <https://tenders.gov.in>. If any changes / corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.
Superintending Engineer (H), Projects, Madurai Circle
DIPR / 818 / Tender / 2025

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER / EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
Gujarat Gas Limited (GGL), desires to invite bids against Tender(s) under two bid system through e-tendering portal and profiles against (EOI); from eligible and interested parties for the following categories:
Sr. Tender ID / No. EOI Ref No. Tender / EOI Description Link for accessing the Tender / EOI Documents
1 155632 PE PNG Operations & Maintenance (O&M) activity at Various Clusters of Sirsa-Fatehabad-Mansa GA www.gujaratgas.com/ggl-current-tender/
2 GGL/EOI/2024-25/021 Contractor Empanelment for Appointment of Agency for Outstanding Recovery in Domestic, Commercial, Non-Commercial and NDEC Segment www.gujaratgas.com/EOI/Notice-board/
3 GGL/EOI/2024-25/022 Contractor Empanelment for Supply of Fire Extinguishers
Any revision, clarifications, corrigenda, addenda, notifications etc. related to this notice will be available only on the mentioned website. Interested parties should visit regularly to stay updated.

MAHARASHTRA METRO RAIL CORPORATION LTD.
(A joint venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Maharashtra)
PUNE METRO RAIL PROJECT
District Court Metro Station Premises, Nyaymurti Ranade Path, Shivajinagar, Pune 411005 Tel.: 020-26051074
E-mail: tenders.pmp@mahmetro.org | www.punemetrorail.org
Tender Notice No: P2-DDC 02/2025 (NCB) Date: 03/03/2025
Name of Work: Detailed Design Consultancy services for 14 (Fourteen) Elevated Stations Excluding Viaduct in Station Portion on Kharadi - Khadakwasla and Nal Stop - Manik Baug Corridors of Pune Metro Rail Project.
Interested bidders may visit Pune Metro Rail Project Website www.punemetrorail.com, to view this tender notice (NIT) and can download the Tender documents and obtain further details regarding the Tender from the e-tender portal of Govt. of Maharashtra <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 16:00 Hrs. On 04/03/2025 to 16:00 Hrs. on 31/03/2025
Executive Director/Procurement & Contracts
Maha-Metro, PMRP
Pune Metro : City's Transport Solution

OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION LIMITED
NTA-OFFSHORE
OFFICE OF GROUP GENERAL MANAGER-HEAD-NTA
11-HIGH ONGC OFFICE COMPLEX,
BANDRA-SION LINK ROAD, SION (WEST), MUMBAI-17
NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Description: Hiring the Preset Mooring Services for 6 numbers of Wells in East Coast for Anchor Moored rig for a period of 360 days
Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC) invites Expression of Interest for hiring the Preset Mooring Services for 6 numbers of Wells in East Coast for Anchor Moored rig of 500m water depth capability for a period of 360 days, as per the schedule described below:
Start Date of EOI 01.03.2025
Last date for submission of Expression of Interest document and confirmation by the firms for attendance on the day of EOI Meet
Expression of Interest Meet 18.03.2025, 11:00 Hrs (IST), and also in virtual mode
Venue for EOI Meet 8' floor Conference Hall, 11-High ONGC Complex, Mumbai
For details of Expression of Interest (EOI) and downloading the Brief Scope of Work and other documents, please login to our website at <http://tenders.ongc.co.in>.
For any queries, please contact:
Name: Vivek Dixit Mobile: +91-9969223707 email: dixit2_vivek@ongc.co.in
Name: Nikhil Kosambia Mobile: +91-9485138577 email: kosambia_nikhil@ongc.co.in

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, (Lakes-Yelahanka), 3rd Floor, Annex Building-3, N.R Square, Bengaluru - 02.
No:EE(Lakes-Ylk)/Tend-08/2024-25 Date:01.03.2025
INVITATION FOR TENDER NOTIFICATION (IFT)
(Two Cover System)
(Through GOK KPP Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> only)
Tenders on Item Rate basis are invited by the undersigned for the works mentioned below from the registered contractors of Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or Equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES or any State Government Organizations.
Sl No Name of the works
1 Development of Nagavara Lake by enhancing storage capacity of lake through desilting and removal of slush, construction of wetland, sewage diversion drain, installation of sluice gate, water body protection and other allied works.
Approx. value of work : ₹ 2000.00 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 20.00 Lakhs (Rs.5.00 lakhs through e-procurement and balance amount through Bank Guarantee) (BG)
2 Development of Hebbala Lake by enhancing storage capacity of lake through desilting and removal of slush, construction of wetland, sewage diversion drain, installation of sluice gate, water body protection and other allied works.
Approx. value of work : ₹ 2000.00 Lakhs, EMD: ₹ 20.00 Lakhs (Rs.5.00 lakhs through e-procurement and balance amount through Bank Guarantee) (BG)
Calendar of Events : (1) Available of Tender Documents 03.03.2025 after 4:00 pm. (2) Pre-Bid meeting on 14.03.2025 at 4:00 pm (3) Last date & time for Receipt of Tenders is 02.04.2025 upto 4:00 pm (4) Opening of Technical Bid 03.04.2025 at 4:30 pm (5) Opening of Financial Bid: After approval of Technical Bid (will be informed later)
Sd/- Executive Engineer (Lakes-Yelahanka)

उत्तराखण्ड पावर कारपोरेशन लि०
कायलिय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता
विद्युत वितरण मण्डल चम्पावत
पत्रक 2025 किराक (च) निविदा दिनांक 28/02/2025
ई-निविदा तिथि बढोत्तरी सूचना
विद्युत वितरण मण्डल चम्पावत से आमन्त्रित ई० निविदा संख्या 62/2024-25 किराक (च) निविदा तिथि तक न्यूनतम प्रतिभाषण प्राप्त न होने के कारण निविदा जमा व खुलने की तिथि बढोत्तरी कर दिनांक 07/03/2025 ज्ञाती है निविदा से सम्बन्धित अन्य विषय व शर्त पूर्ववत् रहेगी एवं निविदा से सम्बन्धित अधिक जानकारी <https://uktenders.gov.in> वेबसाइट पर देखें।
Sd/- अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत वितरण मण्डल चम्पावत

CAD-2722
omfed
The Odisha State Co-operative Milk Producers' Federation Limited
D-2, Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751007
PH NO.: 0674-2546030, 2540273, 2540417, 2540974
E-mail ID: omfed@yahoo.com
E-TENDER NOTICE
OMFED invites sealed offer from eligible HT / MV licensed Electrical Contractor for SUPPLY & FIXING OF 1000 AMP INDOOR TYPE VCB with ACCESSORIES, FEEDER PANEL AS PER SPECIFICATION AT ROURKELA DAIRY, LUAKERA, DIST. SUNDARBARI. Interested bidders may download the tender document from the OMFED website www.omfed.com only for reference. Bid document will be available in the <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> from 10.00 AM of 03.03.2025 to 2.00 PM of 04.03.2025 for bidding. Tender cost of Rs. 5,000/- (Five Thousand) along with E.M.D of Rs. 30,000/- shall be deposited through online portal. The technical bid shall be opened at 11.00 AM on 04.03.2025 at the OMFED Corporate Office in the presence of interested bidders at OMFED Corporate Office, D2, Sahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751007 in presence of interested bidders. Bids without requisite EMD shall not be considered. Tenderers are requested to visit OMFED website regularly as any corrigendum / addendum may be published in OMFED website and not in any other media/newspapers. OMFED reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders or part thereof without assigning any reason.
Sd/- Managing Director
OPR-060310/01/2824-25

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, AGRA CIRCLE, P.W.D. AGRA
Short Term Notice inviting E-Tender
Letter No. 970/14M-AC/2024-25 Dated: 14-02-2025
1. The Superintending Engineer, Agra Circle, P.W.D. Agra on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the Percentage rate bids from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP, PWD, Road work. The Bidder may submit bids for any or all of the works. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

Sl. No.	District	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Total Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of Document (Rs.)	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer	Category of Contractor		
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
INVITATION FOR TENDER (Only through KPP portal)
BWSSB invites TENDERS in Two Stage Tender System from registered agencies for the following works.
Office of the Chief Engineer (East), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore-09
Sl. No. Name of the Works Amount put to Tender EMD Amount
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(E)/ACE/IE-II/DC(E)/M)/I/A(E)/12577/2024-25 Date: 01.03.2025
1 Laying of 230mm dia SW line and 300 mm dia RCC NP3 class pipeline in place of 150 mm dia SW line at Ibbalur village coming under Bellandur Service station of AESE-5 Sub-division (Call-3). Rs. 120.99 lakhs Rs. 2,00,000/-
The Last date and time for receipt of completed tenders will be on 18.03.2025 upto 16:00 hrs. The bids opening is on 19.03.2025 at 16:00 hrs.
Sd/- Chief Engineer (East)
Office of the Chief Engineer (Project), 3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore-09
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr&DCW)/2321/2024-25 Date: 01.03.2025
2 Procurement of 8 Nos. of Suction Cum Jetting Machines of 6000 litres capacity (to carry 4000 litres of water and 2000 litres of sewage) to be mounted on suitable BS-VI chassis provided by Board including equipment maintenance for 5 years + one year Warranty period. Rs. 4,43,13,240/- Rs. 6,65,000/-
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr&DCW)/2322/2024-25 Date: 01.03.2025
3 Procurement of 8 Nos. of BS-VI Chassis of Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) not less than 11 Ton suitable to mount 6000 litres capacity Combination Machines (Suction Cum Jetting to carry 4000 litres of water and 2000 litres of sewage). Rs. 1,71,84,000/- Rs. 2,58,000/-
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr&DCW)/2323/2024-25 Date: 01.03.2025
4 Procurement of 7 Nos. of Suction Cum Jetting Machines of 8000 litres capacity (to carry 6000 litres of water and 2000 litres of sewage) to be mounted on suitable BS-VI chassis provided by Board including equipment maintenance for 1 year Warranty period + 5 years. Rs. 4,72,50,000/- Rs. 7,09,000/-
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr&DCW)/2324/2024-25 Date: 01.03.2025
5 Procurement of 7 Nos. of BS-VI Chassis of Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) not less than 16 Ton suitable to mount 8000 litres capacity Combination Machines (Suction Cum Jetting to carry 6000 litres of water and 2000 litres of sewage). Rs. 1,75,08,141/- Rs. 2,63,000/-
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr&DCW)/2325/2024-25 Date: 01.03.2025
6 Procurement of 8 Nos. of Suction Cum Jetting Machines of 6000 litres capacity (to carry 4000 litres of water and 2000 litres of sewage) to be mounted on suitable BS-VI chassis provided by Board including equipment maintenance for 5 years + one year Warranty period. Rs. 4,43,13,240/- Rs. 6,65,000/-
The Last date and time for receipt of completed tenders will be on 13.03.2025 before 16:00 hrs. The bids opening is on 14.03.2025 at 17:00 hrs.
Sd/- Chief Engineer (Project)
The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-Procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.
DIPR/CPY/5380/2024-25

People have developed habit of begging from govt, says MP mantri, triggers row

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh minister Prahlad Patel has sparked a controversy by equating public demands and petitions to govt with "begging". At a function in Rajgarh district on Saturday, panchayat and rural development minister Patel said this "army of beggars" is weakening society.
"People have developed a habit of begging from govt. Politicians come, they get a basketful of papers. They are garlanded on stage and a letter is put in their hands. This is not a good habit. Instead of taking, develop the mindset of giving. You will be happy and will build a cultured society. Gathering an army of beggars does not strengthen society, but weakens it. The attraction towards free things is not a mark of respect for



Patel said, "Gathering army of beggars doesn't strengthen society, it weakens it"

these brave women," Patel, a former Union minister, said after unveiling a statue of Rani Avantibai Lodhi at Suthaliya town.
"Can you name any martyr who has ever begged? Despite this, we continue to organise programmes, make speeches, and move on," Patel said, adding that as a "Narmada Parikrama pilgrim", he has asked for alms, but never for himself. Videos of his speech were shared on social media, triggering sharp criticism from opposition Congress.
PCC president Jitu Patwari posted on X: "Residents of the

state, arrogant BJP is now calling the public beggars! This is an insult to the hopes and tears of those in sorrow! They make false promises during elections and then backtrack. When people remind them of their promises, they call them beggars. Remember them well, many such faces of BJP will come to your doorstep again in some time, begging for votes."
In another post he wrote, "... If BJP calls a demand for rights begging, then the public must consider how those who beg for votes dare to openly call them beggars. If those who beg for votes and remain in power as traders of authority can call the public beggars, it would be a historic insult to public opinion! If those who pretend to be the 'chief servant' remain silent this time, then the public will have to prepare their own bitter pill for their pain."
Leader of opposition Umang Singh said, "It is duty of govt and its ministers to serve the public. Patel is a senior minister. He & govt must clarify whether people of state are being referred to as beggars."

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS
Corrigendum
Tender No.: 70/24/1135 Date: 25/02/2025. Following corrigendum is prepared against the T/Case No. 70/24/1135 for re-schedule of Tender Closing date. Date of Tender Opening (TOD) (existing): 27/02/2025. To Be Read As: 15/03/2025.
PR8/824 Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/CRJ.
Like us on : www.facebook.com/clwrailways

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
The Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) E.C. Railway/Samastipur for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open Tender from experienced and financially capable tenderers for the following works in E-Tendering mode of IREPS web portal of Indian Railways:-
S. No. : 1. Tender Notice No. TC-35-2025-SPJ. Name of work : Samastipur Division - Cess Repair Work - 189.590TKM, Tender Value. (In ₹) : ₹47,96,31,160.87, Earnest Money (In ₹) : ₹25,48,200/- Completion period of the work : 18 Months.
S. No. : 2. Tender Notice No. TC-36-2025-SPJ. Name of work : Cess supply of ballast in loop lines and dead ends in Samastipur Division of E.C. Railway, Tender Value. (In ₹) : ₹18,70,88,013.90, Earnest Money (In ₹) : ₹10,85,500/- Completion period of the work : 06Months.
1. Last Date & time for receiving of Tender in E-Tender mode on IREPS web portal: - 21.03.2025 upto 12:00 hours. 2. Opening Date & time for E-Tender: 21.03.2025 after 12:00 hours. 3. Website particulars where complete details of tender & tender document can be seen on Website: www.ireps.gov.in. Amendments/modifications if any shall not be published in the newspapers but the same shall be uploaded in the website.
Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-ord ECR/Samastipur
PR/02204/SPJ/Engg./T/24-25/44

Pocso case against 7 for stalking mantri daughter & friends at Maha fair

Santosh Sonawane & Alim Shaikh | TNN

Nashik: Seven men allegedly stalked and harassed a Union minister's minor daughter and her friends during a visit to a village fair in Maharashtra's Jalgaon last Friday, brushing aside the constable escorting the girls when he demanded to check their mobile phones to confirm they hadn't secretly recorded videos.
One of the suspects was detained Sunday after police registered an FIR against all 7 men under Pocso Act and sections 75(1) (sexual harassment), 78(2) (stalking), 79 (outraging a woman's modesty), & 189(2) (unlawful assembly) of BNS.
"We are looking for the remaining suspects. They will be arrested soon," Muktanagar DSP Krishnakant Pingle said.
The minister, who was in Gujarat on the night of the fair, visited the police station to enquire about the progress of the investigation. "I went to the police station not in the capacity of a Union minister, but as a parent. The culprits bothered

my daughter despite knowing that she is the daughter of an MP. One can only imagine what would have happened to other girls. I am pressing for strict action against culprits," he said.
Opposition latched onto the case as a reflection of 'deteriorating law and order in state under Mahayuti govt, wondering how ordinary people can feel safe if criminals were able to harass a Union minister's daughter and her friends despite the presence of a police escort."
NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule urged CM Devendra Fadnavis to review law and order and assure people that they would be safe: "Every girl who lives in the state is a daughter of Maharashtra. It is govt's duty to protect her."
Congress' Vijay Wadetiwar accused Mahayuti politicians of shielding criminals: "They may not be aware how much daughters of ordinary people struggle to protect themselves."
CM Fadnavis said suspects belonged to a political party that he didn't name. "Strict action will be taken against such people. They won't be spared," he said.

2 months, 29 convictions: NCB starts '25 with blows to cartels

Govt Unsparing In Punishing Traffickers: Shah

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a significant blow to international drug cartels, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) secured convictions in a dozen cases across country in first two months of the year.

The convictions have resulted in 29 hardcore drug traffickers being found guilty, Union home minister Amit Shah said Sunday.

In a post on X, Shah said, "Modi govt is unsparing in punishing drug traffickers who drag our youth into the dark abyss of addiction for the greed of money. As a result of a foolproof investigation with a bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom strategy, 29 drug traffickers have been convicted by the court in 12 different cases across India.



Union minister Amit Shah at an inauguration event in Mehsana Sunday

We pledge to continue combating the drug menace with ruthless and meticulous investigations to build a drug-free Bharat."

The convictions happened in Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Dehradun, Delhi, Hyderabad, Indore, Kolkata and Lucknow between Jan and Feb.

Convictions under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act are challenging to secure due to stringent requirements of proof and need to establish

culpability beyond reasonable doubt. "NDPS Act mandates that prosecution prove the accused's guilt through credible search and seizures besides clear links, which can be difficult to obtain, especially in cases where the accused may have taken steps to conceal their involvement," an officer said. Further, the Act's emphasis on need for corroborative evidence, such as witness testimony or forensic analysis, makes it harder to secure convictions.

In Chandigarh, two individuals were convicted and sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000 each for attempting to transport 438g opium to Canada. A Zimbabwean national was convicted and sentenced to 11 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 3 lakh for possessing 2.9kg heroin in Kochi.

The cases where convictions happened involved seizure of narcotics, including charas, ganja, heroin and opium. The convicted individuals were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment ranging from one to 15 years, along with fines.

According to NCB, in Ahmedabad, three individuals were convicted and sentenced to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1 lakh each for possessing 23.8kg charas. In Bhopal, four individuals were convicted and sentenced to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 2 lakh each for trafficking 123kg ganja.

In Chandigarh, two individuals were convicted and sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000 each for attempting to transport 438g opium to Canada. A Zimbabwean national was convicted and sentenced to 11 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 3 lakh for possessing 2.9kg heroin in Kochi.

State polls set to pit INDIA allies against each other, hit unity

Subodh Ghildiyal
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Amid growing concerns over unity of opposition INDIA bloc in the wake of BJP's political victories, a push from a section that it should revive its sense of purpose as during 2024 Lok Sabha elections is meeting with strong roadblocks. The main hurdle in getting the alliance together to convey a joint resolve is said to be the coming elections which will see INDIA bloc parties take one another as rivals.

Congress sources said while there is no view against an INDIA bloc meeting, there is no agenda at hand to hold one either, while coordination between the allies in Parliament is going well, as witnessed during the last two sessions. "If any immediate agenda crops up, there can be a get together, but presently there is none," sources said.

However, sources in non-Congress alliance parties said three elections lined up in 2026 and 2027, for which preparations have started, are creating complications, and political dissonance among allies will only get shriller with time. "They have made the situation complex for greater show of unity and purpose," an INDIA bloc member said.

Assembly elections in Bengal are scheduled for early 2026, followed by those in Kerala in mid-2026, and in Punjab in early 2027. If an alliance does not fructify between TMC and Congress in Bengal, the state battle will have three allies, including Left, fighting against each other. It was Congress and Left which contested as a marginal bloc against TMC in 2021, while TMC and BJP slugged it out as the main players.



Congress sources said while there is no view against an INDIA bloc meeting, there is no agenda at hand to hold one either

Besides, Congress and AAP will be main opponents in AAP-governed Punjab, continuing the face-off between the two in the Delhi elections in Feb, which BJP won. Then, Congress and Left will be the main rivals in Left-ruled Kerala.

While Congress, CPM-led Left and TMC faced-off against each other in Lok Sabha polls too, AAP had tied up with Congress. Many believe holding a joint political show at this moment will undercut their posturing as fierce rivals on their home turf. "It is the reason why I feel it would be difficult to hold an INDIA meeting," an opposition member said.

The opposition platform, cobbled ahead of Lok Sabha polls, came together seamlessly and ensured a state-wise seat-sharing formula that helped the allies challenge BJP and perform better than expected in the polarisation-propelled contest.

But the bloc has since lost its unity, with allies sparring politically, and also fighting against each other in elections, as was the case in Haryana and Maharashtra polls. Renewed BJP upsurge has led to many opposition parties emphasising the need to bring about fresh cohesion in INDIA bloc.

**OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL
GOVT. MEDICAL COLLEGE, HARIDWAR**
Email ID: gmcharidwar@gmail.com, Website: www.gmcharidwar.com
Letter No.: GMC/Advt./Recruitment/2024-25/1147 Dated: 01/03/2025

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW
A walk-in-interview for various faculty positions of Government Medical College, Haridwar is scheduled at 10:00 am on 18-03-2025, Tuesday in Govt. Medical College Jagjeetpur, Laksar Road, Haridwar. The appointments will be made on contractual basis for three years (extendable on yearly basis) or till recruitment of faculty in the college would be operational through PPP mode or till regular appointments are made, whichever is earlier. The details of vacancies in various departments are uploaded in the website of Govt. Medical College Haridwar, www.gmcharidwar.com and www.medicaleducation.uk.gov.in

Principal
Govt. Medical College, Haridwar

UJVN Ltd.
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprises)
H.O. "UJJWAL" Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone-0135-2763808 Fax 0135-2763507
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

RO No. 156 TENDER NOTICE Date: 01.03.2025

Office of the Executive Engineer (Test), Dhakrani, invites sealed tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No: 03/EE(Test)/DKN/2024-25, 04/EE(Test)/DKN/2024-25 & 05/EE(Test)/DKN/2024-25
Name of work: 1. Calibration of various Testing Instruments and panel meters.
2. AMC of Computer and other peripherals.
3. AMC of CCTV & SITC of New CCTV camera
Estimated cost: Rs. 7.54,806/- (Excluding GST), Rs. 6,20,342/- (Excluding GST), Rs. 11,30,000/- (Excluding GST)
Date of availability of bid document on website: 04/03/2025 From 11:00 AM
Last date for submission of tender: 24/03/2025 Upto 16:00 PM
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website www.ujvn.com
Executive Engineer (Test)

"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

**Government of Tripura
Office of the Resident Commissioner
Tripura Bhawan, Kautilya Marg, Chanakyaपुर
New Delhi-110021**
Phone: 011-2301 5157, 011-2301 2693
Email: rescm-tr@nic.in

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(Ranjit Das, TCS)
Jt. Resident Commissioner

HC directs Centre to decide on residency of Pak-born 5-yr-old caught in legal limbo

Ajay Sura
@timesofindia.com

Chandigarh: Punjab and Haryana high court has directed Centre to decide on extension of stay for a five-year-old girl born to an Indian mother and a Pakistani father in a legal battle that blurs the lines of nationality, citizenship, and parental rights. Hadia Afridi was born in Pakistan to Gulfasha and her Pakistani husband.

The couple's marriage has since been dissolved,

leaving the child in an uncertain situation. Justice Kuldeep Tiwari passed the order Friday on a plea by Hadia, filed through her mother, seeking the stay extension.

The case is marked by unique circumstances. Gulfasha, an Indian citizen, married the Pakistani national according to Muslim rituals and ceremonies on Feb 14, 2019. Despite the marriage, Gulfasha did not surrender her Indian citizenship and continues to hold an Indian

passport. The couple lived together in Pakistan, but their marriage ended in divorce. Later, Gulfasha and Hadia returned to India.

Since Hadia was born in Pakistan, she is a Pakistani citizen. However, as a five-year-old, she is unable to survive without her mother.

The father, who resides in Pakistan, is making efforts to get custody of the child. Hadia, through her mother, made a representation dated Jan 31, 2025, to ministry of external affairs. However, no decision has been taken so far by the authorities, prompting Gulfasha to move HC.

During Friday's hearing, additional solicitor general Satya Pal Jain, representing Centre, said the child's request would be decided if a reasonable time was granted.

Considering the peculiar circumstances, Justice Tiwari directed Centre to consider the request most sympathetically and pass an apt order within three months.

> MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2025
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FOCUS

Educati+n TIMES

AIIMS and IITs lead AI-CoEs to develop structured AI datasets in agriculture and healthcare sectors

Rajlakshmi Ghosh
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The MoE has selected four premier institutes to spearhead India's AI Centers of Excellence (CoEs). AIIMS Delhi, IIT Delhi, IIT Kanpur and IIT Ropar have been chosen to lead the CoEs in AI with an emphasis on health, sustainable cities and agriculture, respectively, agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan informed Parliament recently. By bringing together premier research institutions, industry leaders, and government bodies, the CoEs aim to bridge the gap between academia and industry, ensuring that research is not just theoretical but translates into real-world solutions.

Seamless industry integration, availability of high-quality annotated datasets, scalability of AI solutions for diverse Indian contexts, and regulatory concerns surrounding AI ethics and data privacy are some of the issues that the CoEs will address. Additionally, the AI sector in India is still evolving, and the lack of structured AI datasets in areas like agriculture and healthcare poses a challenge for model training and deployment.

"The focus areas of the CoEs include disease detection and healthcare advancements, precision farming techniques for improved agricultural productivity, and AI-powered smart city solutions for urban sustainability. By creating scalable AI models, the initiative seeks to integrate these technologies with national programmes, ensuring large-scale deployment and impact," says Prof Manoj Gaur, director, IIT Jammu and Principal Investigator (PI) of this initiative which has been allocated a total financial outlay of Rs 990 crore from 2023-24 to 2027-28 as part of the government's 'Make AI in India and make AI work for India' vision. Since the initiative directly supports the 'Make AI in India' vision, it will focus on the development of indigenous AI technologies rather than relying on foreign solutions. "Additionally, part of the funding will be used to create open-source AI tools and datasets, particularly

Different aims

Unlike academic research centres that function independently within their respective institutions, these CoEs operate as part of a national AI ecosystem, bringing together multiple institutions, including IITs, NITs, IIITs, and other stakeholders, to work on unified research objectives, Prof Ahuja says. Through industry-driven projects, internships, and mentorship programmes within academic settings, the CoEs will ensure that graduates gain hands-on experience with AI technologies. "The three CoEs will work closely with the newly announced AI CoE for Education to potentially influence the educational curriculum," Prof Gaur adds.

in the agriculture sector, to ensure that small farmers and rural enterprises can benefit from AI without high adoption costs," says Rajeev Ahuja, director, IIT Ropar. Discussing the initiative's larger impact, Prof Rangan Banerjee, director, IIT Delhi, says, "Each of the CoEs set up as independent section 8 not-for-profit companies, are a part of the government's mandate in the Union Budget for AI integration in various fields with the objective of making a difference in people's lives. Considering the initiative is still in its infancy, each of the CoEs will require funding of around Rs 300 crore over a period of time to deliver on the proposed outcomes."

EducationTIMES
BRAINSTRAIN
>> First three correct entries will win a 'pen drive.'
Send in your entries only through e-mail with your Name, Address, Email, Tel no. and Profession to Brainstrain.hy@gmail.com

Directions for questions 1 to 5: Pick the word from among the choices, that is the most appropriate substitute for the question word in the given context and mark its corresponding letter as your answer.

- SPURT: The government has directed oil companies to freeze retail prices of petrol and diesel despite a spurt in the price of Brent crude.**
(a) surge (b) cascade
(c) torrent (d) flurry
- CONCILIATORY: it was the right conciliatory note to strike in a debate that has had its fair share of heat.**
(a) propitiatory (b) ameliorative
(c) condoning (d) propitiating
- WHITTLED DOWN: Mr Arun Shourie has slowly and steadily whittled down the opposition to privatisation.**
(a) consumed (b) carved
(c) eroded (d) trimmed
- TROUNCE: Steve Waugh's words were inspirational enough to help the team trounce the Pakistanis in the final.**
(a) spank (b) chastise
(c) lambast (d) rout
- INCONTROVERTIBLE: The weapon inspector's report was not expected to provide incontrovertible evidence of weapons of mass destruction.**
(a) conclusive (b) disputable
(c) inconvenient (d) indecisive

Answer key for the last week's quiz: 1.(c), 2.(d), 3.(c)

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IN 8TH GRADE, TIMOTHEE CHALAMET WAS VOTED 'MOST LIKELY TO BECOME FAMOUS'. NOW HE'S UP FOR AN OSCAR

HARRISON FORD STEPS DOWN AS PRESENTER AT '25 OSCARS AFTER SHINGLES DIAGNOSIS, REP SAYS 'HE'S DOING OKAY'



US not unreliable ally, but Europe must provide funding for Kyiv: UK

Chief Of European Commission Calls For Urgently Rearming Europe

London: British PM Keir Starmer said on Sunday that Europe was at a crossroads in history and must do the heavy lifting to defend itself as world leaders met in London to discuss ways of working together to stop Russia's war in Ukraine. His call for European allies to increase their arms spending to shore up their own defences and Ukraine's was not a sign that he thought the US had become an unreliable ally, he said. No two countries are closely aligned than the UK and the US, Starmer said. "One thing our history tells us is that if there is conflict in Europe, it will wash up on our shores," he said.

The summit comes two days after US support for Ukraine appeared in greater jeopardy after President Trump lashed out at Ukrainian President Zelensky and said he wasn't grateful enough for US support. Starmer hosted more than 19 world leaders, mostly from across Europe, and also Canadian PM Justin Trudeau. "Even while Russia talks about peace, they are continuing their relentless aggression," Starmer said at the opening of the meeting. Starmer, flanked by Zelensky and French President Emmanuel Macron, said the three of them had agreed to work on a plan to stop the fighting, and take that to the US, which has discussed brokering a peace deal.



POPULAR SUPPORT: Protesters wrapped in Ukrainian flags rallied outside Downing Street in London on Sunday, during a European summit on the war between Russia and Ukraine. Some held placards saying 'Putin Kaput' or calling for a ban on all international trade with Russia. (R) Zelensky, Starmer and Macron huddle during the summit

Nato chief says told Zelensky to restore relationship with Trump

Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte has said he told President Zelensky that he had to "find a way to restore his relationship with the American president". Rutte told the BBC on Saturday that he told Zelensky that "he really had to respect what (US) President (Donald) Trump has done so far for Ukraine." He was referring to the first Trump administration's decision in 2019 to supply Ukraine with Javelin antitank missiles that Ukraine used against Russian tanks in 2022. REUTERS



Top US officials suggest Zelensky may have to quit to reach peace deal

Top Washington officials suggested Sunday that President Zelensky might have to step down if a deal is to be reached, underscoring President Trump's stunning shift in approach to the war. "We need a leader that can deal with us, eventually deal with the Russians, and end this war," NSA Mike Waltz told CNN. "Either he needs to come to his senses and come back to the table in gratitude, or someone else needs to lead the country," said Mike Johnson, speaker of the House of Representatives. AFP

"We need to agree what steps come out of this meeting to deliver peace through strength for the benefit of all," he said. "So, let's get started."

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen warned on Sunday that "we urgently have to rearmed Europe". Before the meeting, Von der Leyen said she would present a "comprehensive plan" at the EU summit, adding that "we have to have a surge in defence" and "step up massively". "It's now of utmost importance we increase spending ... it's important we prepare for the worst," she added. Addressing Trump, she said: "We're ready together with you to defend democracy, to defend the principle that there's a rule of law, that you cannot invade your neighbour and bully your neighbour, or you cannot change borders with force. It's in our common interest that we prevent future wars."

Italian PM Meloni met with Zelensky on the sidelines of the London meeting on Sunday reaffirming Italy's support for Ukraine. Her office said she expressed support, together with European and Western partners and the US, "to build a just and lasting peace, which ensures a future of sovereignty, security and freedom for Ukraine". It was in line with Italy's position through the war while keeping the US in the picture.

The leaders of the three Baltic states have not publicly criticised the decision not to include them in London's meeting. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have in the past seen major powers make decisions over their heads. AGENCIES

Russia praises Trump, scolds Europe for being crucible of war

Moscow: Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov Sunday praised President Trump's "common sense" aim to end the war in Ukraine, but accused European powers which have rallied around Kyiv of seeking to prolong the conflict. Lavrov said the US still wanted to be the world's most powerful country and that Washington and Moscow would never see eye to eye on everything, but they had agreed to be pragmatic when interests coincided.



Lavrov said the model of US-China relationship was the one that should be built between Russia and the US to do a lot of "mutually beneficial things" without allowing disagreements to collapse into war. "Donald Trump is a pragmatist," Lavrov told Russian military newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda. "His slogan is common sense. It means, as everyone can see, a shift to a different way of doing things."

"But the goal is still MAGA," Lavrov said. "This gives a lively, human character to politics. That's why it's interesting to work with him." Lavrov criticised Europe, saying for the past 500 years it had been the crucible of "all the tragedies of the world" — including colonisation, wars, crusades, Crimean War, Napoleon Bonaparte, WWI and Hitler. He dismissed European ideas for sending in a contingent of European peacekeepers, and said Russia did not like the idea of Europeans propping up Zelensky. REUTERS

Israel cuts off Gaza aid to press Hamas to accept new truce plan

Hamas Calls It 'Blackmail', Asks Egypt & Qatar To Intervene

Jerusalem/Cairo: Israel blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza on Sunday as a standoff over the truce that has halted fighting for the past six weeks escalated, with Hamas calling on Egyptian and Qatari mediators to intervene. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office said earlier it had adopted a proposal by US President Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza that would halt fighting for the Ramzan and Passover periods, hours after the first phase of the previously agreed ceasefire expired. The truce would be conditional on Hamas releasing half of the living and dead hostages on the first day, with the remainder released at the conclusion, if a deal is reached on a permanent ceasefire.

Hamas says it is committed to the originally agreed ceasefire that had been scheduled to move into a second phase, with negotiations aimed at a permanent end to the war; and it has rejected a temporary extension to the 42-day truce. Reflecting the fragility of the deal, officials said Israeli gunfire killed four Palestinians in separate attacks in Gaza. The Israeli military said that "suspects" were identified close to its troops and that they had planted a bomb. It said an airstrike was carried out to "eliminate the threat." Under the original agreement, the second phase was intended to see the start of negotiations over the release of the remaining 59 hostages, the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, and a final end to the war. However the talks never began and Israel says all its hostages must be returned for fighting to stop. "Israel will not allow a ceasefire without the release of our hostages," Netanyahu's office said, announcing that the entry of aid goods and supplies into Gaza would be halted. "If Hamas persists in its refusal, there will be additional consequences."



People gather for iftar on the first day of Ramzan in Gaza Strip on Saturday

Gaza reconstruction plan ready: Egypt

Egypt said Sunday its Gaza reconstruction plan, which ensures Palestinians remain in their land, is ready and will be presented at an emergency Arab summit in Cairo Tuesday. Arab states, which were swift to reject President Trump's plan for the US to take control of Gaza, are scrambling to agree on a diplomatic offensive to counter the idea. Egypt intends on seeking international backing and funding for the plan and emphasised Europe's key role. REUTERS

US approves \$4bn in military aid to Israel

US secretary of state Marco Rubio said Saturday he had signed a declaration to expedite delivery of around \$4 billion in military assistance to Israel. Trump's admin has approved nearly \$12 billion in military sales to Israel, Rubio said, adding it "will continue to use all available tools to fulfill America's long-standing commitment to Israel's security." This is the second time in recent weeks the US has declared an emergency to approve weapons sales to Israel. REUTERS

Pro-Ukraine protest near Vermont ski resort where Vance planned vacation

Crowds protesting vice-president JD Vance the day after an Oval Office blowout over Ukraine lined roadways Saturday near a Vermont ski resort where he planned a weekend vacation with his family.

Many of the hundreds of demonstrators held signs in support of Ukraine, while other anti-war protesters waved Palestinian flags or signs in support of immigrant rights. Protesters showed up at several locations in the area, including both sides of Route 100 in Waitsfield.

Though demonstrations were planned days in advance, they were energized Saturday morning by a heated Oval Office exchange a day earlier between Vance, President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Vance berated Zelensky for challenging Trump's assertions that Russian President Vladimir Putin could be trusted.

"Ski Russia because JD Vance has no friends in Vermont, but he's got lots of friends in Russia, so he should go there for vacation," Tekla Van

Hoven of Waterbury told WCAX-TV.

Vance and his family arrived in Vermont ahead of the weekend, with plans to ski at Sugarbush Resort in Warren. A few protested at the resort throughout the day, but all were peaceful and none were disruptive," resort spokesman John Bleh said in an email Sunday. He declined further comment, referring reporters to the White House.

Messages left Sunday for White House officials weren't immediately returned. AP

ACLU sues to block migrant transfers by US to Gitmo

Washington: The Trump administration faced the first direct legal challenge to its policy of sending migrants to the US military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for continued immigration detention with a lawsuit filed Saturday by a coalition of human rights and immigrant advocacy organisations.

"Plaintiffs seek this court's intervention to put a stop to these cruel, unnecessary and illegal transfers to and detention at Guantanamo," the newly filed complaint said. The plaintiffs, led by the American Civil Liberties Union, are for now seeking a judicial stay to block the transfer of 10 migrants whom the coalition signed up



Tents for detained migrants in Gitmo

to represent. But it appears to lay the groundwork to seek a potential broader order against the transfer policy, which has raised many novel legal issues.

The 10 migrants named in the lawsuit have final removal orders, it said, and come from countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Venezuela. The lawsuit asserts that none are gang members,

and some have been specifically threatened with transfer to Guantanamo. "In attempting to justify the transfers, the govt has claimed that the individuals it sent to Guantanamo are members of gangs and dangerous criminals — the 'worst of the worst,'" the complaint said, citing a remark in Jan by defense secretary Pete Hegseth. It continued: "That characterisation is patently false. It is also legally irrelevant because the govt lacks statutory authority to send any immigration detainees from the US to Guantanamo."

The justice department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. NYT

Trump relaxes limits on counterterrorism strikes outside conventional war zones

President Trump has rescinded Biden-era limits on counterterrorism drone strikes and commando raids outside conventional war zones, reverting to the looser set of rules he used in his first term, according to officials familiar with the matter. Under



restrictions imposed by the Biden administration, US military and CIA drone operators generally had to obtain permission from the White House to target a suspected militant outside a conventional war zone. Now commanders in the field will again have greater latitude to decide for themselves whether to carry out a strike. The relaxation of the rules suggests that the US is likely to more frequently carry out airstrikes aimed at killing terrorism suspects in poorly governed places that are not deemed traditional battlefield zones, like Somalia and Yemen. It also means there may be greater risk to civilians. The Trump administration did not formally announce the change, elements of which were reported earlier by CBS News. NYT

SCORES IN US RALLY AGAINST DOGE



Demonstrators gathered outside Tesla stores across the US on Saturday to protest the automaker's billionaire CEO, Elon Musk, and his push to slash govt spending on behalf of President Trump. The demonstrations are part of a growing backlash in North America and Europe to Musk's disruptive role in Washington. Critics of Trump and Musk hope to stigmatise purchases of Tesla. Liberal groups for weeks have organised anti-Tesla protests in hopes of galvanizing opposition to Musk's DOGE

Iran parl fires economy minister over crashing rial

Tehran: Iran's parliament on Sunday impeached the country's economy minister and voted to remove him from office, amid growing concerns over the crashing rial and accusations of mismanagement.

Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf announced that 182 of 273 lawmakers voted to dismiss Abdolnasser Hemmati, just six months after President Masoud Pezeshkian's govt took office. Pezeshkian, who defended Hemmati, said the govt is locked in a tough battle with the West. He called for greater unity from parliament to face these challenges.

The decision comes amid rising tensions over Iran's nuclear programme and worsening relations with the West. Iran's economy has been severely affected by international sanctions. In 2015, the rial was worth 32,000 to the dollar, but by the time Pezeshkian took office in July, it had plummeted to 584,000 to the dollar. AP

Yunus: Need to document Hasina regime crimes

Ahsan Tasnim

Dhaka: Bangladesh chief adviser Muhammad Yunus Sunday stressed the importance of documenting all atrocities committed during the regime of ousted PM Sheikh Hasina, including the crackdown on student movement participants, police brutality against protesters following the verdict against Islamist leader Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, and all extrajudicial killings over the years.

"There is a need for proper documentation of all atrocities committed against the people without such documentation, it is difficult to uncover the truth and ensure justice," Yunus said when Gwyn Lewis, the UN resident co-ordinator in Bangladesh, and Huma Khan, senior human rights adviser at Lewis's office, called on him. Lewis informed Yunus that the UN high com-

Uganda reports 2nd Ebola death, victim a 4-yr-old

Kampala: A second Ebola patient, a four-year-old child, has died in Uganda, the WHO said, citing the country's health ministry. The fatality brings the number of confirmed cases in Uganda to 10.

The country declared an outbreak of the highly infectious and often fatal haemorrhagic disease in Jan after the death of a male nurse at Mulago National Referral Hospital in capital Kampala. The WHO's Uganda office said late Saturday the ministry had reported "an additional positive case in Mulago hospital of a four-and-a-half-year-old child, who tragically passed away" Tuesday. Mulago is the country's sole referral hospital for Ebola cases.

The ministry said on Feb 18 that all eight Ebola patients under care had been discharged but that at least 265 contacts remained under strict quarantine in Kampala and two other cities. REUTERS

DAILY PLANET



ALASKA'S DOG RACE JUST GOT LONGER: The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race will traverse a new course adding 160km this year, making the route the longest in history. The trail has been rerouted due to the lack of snow in a particular stretch. This means teams of dogs will pull their mushers a record 1,815km across Alaska's wilderness

Elon Musk has another child, a boy, his 14th

Billionaire Elon Musk, who is a close adviser to US President Trump, has another child, his 14th. His latest child, a son, is with Shilon Zilis, an executive at Musk's Neuralink with whom he already has three other children.

curb the growing population of an invasive species that bears a resemblance to a very large rat: Eat them

The invasive species, nutria, is a large, semi-aquatic rodent increasingly found in marshes. As a part of its National Invasive Species Awareness Week, which ended on Friday, the federal agency released a list of invasive species that Americans can hunt, catch and cook to help control the unwanted pests. Topping the list: the nutria, whose population is increasing and disrupting marshland ecosystems. The agency noted in its advisory that hunting nutrias is not a total solution but is a start. "Nutria jumbo. Their meat is lean, mild and tastes like rabbit," it said. "Save a swamp, saute a nutria."

'Moon dust on our boots': Texas co's robotic vehicle makes lunar landing

Cape Canaveral: A private lunar lander carrying a drill, vacuum and other experiments for NASA touched down on the moon Sunday, the latest in a string of companies looking to kickstart business on Earth's celestial neighbour ahead of astronaut missions.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lander descended from lunar orbit on autopilot, aiming for the slopes of an ancient volcanic dome in an impact basin on the moon's northeastern edge of the near side. Confirmation of touchdown came from the company's Mission Control outside Austin, Texas. "You all stuck

the landing," Will Coogan, the Blue Ghost chief engineer, said during a livestream from the flight operations room. "We're on the moon." A few minutes later, Jason Kim, the chief executive of Firefly, declared, "We got some moon dust on our boots."

A smooth, upright landing makes Firefly — a startup founded a decade ago — the first private venture to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over. Even countries have faltered, with only five claiming success: Russia, the US, China, India and Japan.

Two other companies' landers are hot on Blue Ghost's heels, with the next one by Hous-



BREAKTHROUGH: The Blue Ghost lander touched down on the moon on Sunday. A smooth, upright landing makes Firefly the first private outfit to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over

ton-based Intuitive Machines expected to join it on the moon Thursday. A third from Japanese company ispace is still three months from landing. Launched in mid-Jan from

Florida, the 6-foot-6 tall lander carried 10 experiments to the moon for NASA. The space agency paid \$101 million for the delivery, plus \$44 million for the science and tech on board. It's the third mission under NASA's commercial lunar delivery programme, intended to ignite a lunar economy of competing private businesses while scouting around before astronauts show up later this decade. The demos should get two weeks of runtime, before lunar daytime ends and the lander shuts down.

It carried a vacuum to suck up moon dirt for analysis and a drill to measure temperature as deep as 10 feet below the surfa-

ce. Also on board: a device for eliminating abrasive lunar dust — a scourge for NASA's long-ago Apollo moonwalkers, who got it caked all over their space suits and equipment. On its way to the moon, Blue Ghost beamed back exquisite pictures of Earth. It continued to stun once in orbit around the moon, with detailed shots of the surface. At the same time, an on-board receiver acquired signals from the US GPS and European Galileo constellations, an encouraging step forward in navigation for future explorers. The landing set the stage for a fresh crush of visitors angling for a piece of lunar business. AP & NYT

To help keep an invasive rat-like rodent in check, US says: Eat them

The US fish and wildlife service has a suggestion to help

AROUND THE WORLD

In 2016, Bob Dylan became the first songwriter to receive the Nobel Literature prize for creating 'new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition' during a recording career spanning almost 55 years

The Times of India is the world's largest-selling English daily

Welfare dreams, debt nightmares: Cracks in Kerala's economy

The Kerala Model unravels as debt skyrockets, salaries and pensions consume over 75% of state's revenues, and borrowing limits tighten, reports **KP Saikiran**

Kerala has long been the golden child in the grand theatre of Indian governance — praised for its social indices, high literacy, and robust welfare system. But beneath the applause, a financial reckoning is unfolding. The state's economic house, built on the pillars of generous welfare and relentless borrowing, is swaying precariously.

Why? The answer, some classics still hold up, such as Karl Marx — "The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possession of modern peoples is their national debt."

Nowhere is this truer than in Kerala, where the debt clock ticks ominously, swallowing revenues and forcing the state into unprecedented cuts. State govt has halved its plan size — from approved Rs 38,000 crore to just Rs 19,000 crore — even before the governor ratified the 2024-25 budget.

Kerala's predicament is not sudden — it is the slow-burning consequence of an economic model that prioritises spending over sustainability. Over 75% of Kerala's revenue is devoured by salaries, pensions, and interest payments, leaving little for infrastruc-

ture or economic expansion. Economist Mary George laid bare the problem: "87% of our borrowings go into meeting revenue expenses. Only 13% is for capital expenditure. It's a debt spiral, not an investment strategy."

Between 2016 and 2022, Kerala's total debt surged from Rs 1.8 lakh crore to a staggering Rs 3.3 lakh crore — an 80% leap in just five years. Interest payments alone have crossed Rs 40,000 crore since 2021, a figure that dwarfs the budgets of many small states.

Kerala, a state that champions decentralisation, paradoxically runs one of India's

TIMES Special

most centralised bureaucracies. Its workforce is not just large — it is inefficient. With 86% more govt employees per lakh population than Karnataka and 25% more than Telangana, the system strains under its own weight.

"One agriculture officer in Kerala manages just 141 hectares, while his counterpart in Karnataka oversees 1,425 hectares," said economist D Narayana. "This is not administration; it's employment generation at the cost of efficien-

cy." The clerical machinery is even more bloated — Kerala Public Service Commission (PSC) employs 1,784 people compared to Karnataka's 225. Each additional typist, clerk, or driver adds to a wage bill that has become an albatross around the state's neck.

Kerala's reputation as a welfare state was once its greatest strength. Today, it is its Achilles' heel. In 2011, social security pensions covered 16.2 lakh people. By 2023, the number had exploded to 57.7 lakh. Pension payouts have quadrupled, yet govt struggles to pay beneficiaries on time.

Pending pension payments have turned Kerala's welfare model into an exercise in borrowed time. Four instalments remain unpaid, and with borrowing limits tightening, the state risks defaulting on its commitments.

The state's attempt to bypass borrowing restrictions through Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) has backfired. Initially devised as an off-budget funding mechanism, KIIFB's borrowings are now classified as state debt, further tightening the fiscal noose.

Congress MLA and assembly opposition leader VD Sathesan offered a blunt critique: "When you provide a

sovereign guarantee on KIIFB loans, how can you claim they're not state liabilities? We warned about this, but govt was too busy passing the burden onto future generations."

Faced with an economic cliff, CPM-led LDF govt has doubled down on blaming the Centre. It claims to have "lost" Rs 91,000 crore due to restrictions on borrowing and reductions in revenue devolution. But critics argue that Kerala's problem is not a lack of funds

— it's a lack of fiscal discipline. Raising service fees and taxes on non-tax revenue streams may offer temporary relief, but they are no substitute for structural reform. The hard truth remains: Kerala's spending outpaces its income, and without radical changes, collapse is a real possibility.

Kerala's treasury is in a perilous position. In an SC filing last year, state govt admitted that it might have to shut down treasury operations due

to liquidity constraints. By Oct 2023, Rs 26,226 crore in budgetary commitments had already been deferred.

"We are running a welfare state on fumes," said a senior bureaucrat. "The treasury is a dam holding back a flood. But the cracks are widening."

That's not all. Kerala's vanishing enterprises is another tale of contradictions. Over the past nine years, the state has seen 42,179 MSMEs shut their doors, displacing

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

50% plan size cut | Development plan cut from ₹38,000 cr to ₹19,000 cr; largest reduction in state's history

Debt soaring by 80% in 5 years | Total debt jumped from ₹186,453 cr (2016-17) to ₹335,641 cr (2021-22)

Revenue expenditure crisis | 87% of borrowings go to salaries, pensions, and interest, leaving just 13% for development

Bloated bureaucracy | Kerala has 86% more govt employees per lakh population than Karnataka and 25% more than Telangana

Exploding pension bills | Beneficiaries increased from 16.2 lakh (2011) to 57.7 lakh (2023), but 4 pension instalments remain unpaid (as of date)

Declining revenue, rising borrowing | Own tax revenue



(SOTR) is stagnating, with only the motor vehicle tax showing growth

₹40,000 crore paid in interest (2021-23) | Debt cycle is unsustainable, with borrowings funding routine expenses

Supreme Court warning | In Jan 2023, Kerala admitted that state treasury operations

might shut down due to liquidity issues

Centre classified KIIFB loans as state liabilities, further reducing Kerala's borrowing capacity

Unfulfilled welfare promises | LDF promised to raise pensions to ₹2,500, but even existing payments are delayed

Healthcare heroes unpaid, babus rewarded

For 21 days, voices of Kerala's ASHA workers have echoed outside state secretariat — 26,140 women demanding three months' unpaid wages and a raise from their paltry Rs 7,000 monthly honorarium. "Every payment comes after a strike," said S Mini, vice president of Kerala ASHA Health Workers' Association. "Sometimes, we wait eight months."

Their struggle is met not with sympathy but with delays and excuses. Yet, the working class stands with them. Auto-rickshaw drivers ferry them for free, voluntary groups provide food and water — support born from shared hardship.

Govt says it cannot raise ASHA wages, pleading financial distress. Though it professes empty coffers, it has found the means to more than double the salaries of Kerala's public service commission members. The chairman's salary has recently surged from Rs 76,450 to Rs 224,100 and members will now receive Rs 219,000 — up from Rs 70,290. Their rent and travel allowances have ballooned as well. The contrast is stark. ASHA workers — backbone of Kerala's public health system — must fight for survival, while bureaucrats see their fortunes swell. In the arithmetic of governance, some lives remain cheaper than others. **TNN**

more than 103,764 workers. LDF govt downplays the crisis, insisting those affected have found work elsewhere. Yet, the numbers tell a different story — one of faltering small businesses, even in economic strongholds like Thrissur, Ernakulam, and Thiruvananthapuram. At the same time, govt boasts of a meteoric rise in MSME registrations — 343,491 in just three years. Citing improved ease of business and Kerala's rising BRAP ranking, officials hail it as a triumph. But the ground reality suggests otherwise.

"The surge is largely due to the Centre's UDYAM registration schemes," said economist Mary George. In a state where established enterprises

crumble, the illusion of MSME growth raises a pressing question — is Kerala truly witnessing a business boom, or merely an accounting sleight of hand? The question is not whether Kerala's economy is in trouble — it's how long before the reckoning becomes inescapable. Can the state undertake urgent fiscal and administrative reforms or continue down a path that leads to insolvency? According to experts, pragmatism must take its place, or the "Kerala Model" may soon be remembered as a cautionary tale rather than a success story. The myth of infinite borrowing is collapsing. The economy is not a bottomless pot of gold — it is a ledger that must balance.

TEMPLE, THEN JUNGLE: PM BEGINS GUJ TRIP



PM Modi at Somnath Temple where he offered prayers on Sunday. He also visited Vantara — a wildlife conservation and rehabilitation centre set up by Reliance Industries — at Jamnagar Refinery Complex — before heading to Sasan, in the heart of Gir sanctuary, for an overnight stay. The PM is scheduled to chair a meeting of National Board for Wildlife in Sasan on Monday after a jungle safari

3 men pushing truck crushed by another in UP

Shamli: Three labourers lost their lives, and eight others sustained injuries when a stationary truck they were pushing was struck by another truck on the Bareilly bypass in Moradabad on Sunday morning, report **Sachin Sharma & Asif Ansari**.

Police said a group of 20 men and women, working in Gurgaon's Sector 57, was returning home to Lakhimpur Kheri in a truck when their vehicle broke down near Kalyanpur around 4 am. As some workers attempted to push it from behind, a second truck carrying vegetables rammed into them, crushing several labourers. The injured were rushed to hospital, with two of them in critical condition.

"The accident led to traffic congestion at the site. Cranes were used to clear the wreckage and restore movement. Both truck drivers fled the scene. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, and further legal action will follow based on complaints from the victims' families," said SP (city) Kumar Ranvijay Singh.

5 killed as two speeding bikes collide head-on

Agra: Five people were killed and a minor was injured in a head-on collision between two speeding motorcycles in Agra district on Saturday night, reports **Punit Lal**.

Police said the victims on one of the motorcycles were returning from a wedding when they crashed into an approaching bike. None of the victims were wearing helmets, police added.

The accident claimed the lives of four cousins from the first bike — Bhagwan Das, 35, Vakil, 35, Ram Swaroop, 28, and Sonu Singh, 30. Bhagwan and Sonu each had two children, while Vakil had three.

The rider of the second motorcycle, 17-year-old Karan Chahar, also died on the spot. Karan was appearing for his board exams and was on his way to attend a wedding when the accident occurred.

Properties of J&K militants plying from POK seized

Jammu: J&K Police have attached four properties in Poonch district belonging to three terrorists operating from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The trio fled to POK and is now "actively engaged in promoting terrorism, disturbing peace, and threatening social harmony in Poonch and other parts of J&K," police said.

The properties belong to Najab Din and his brother Mohd Latif, residents of Kirni village, and Mohd Bashir alias Tikka Khan, of Qasba village. On Feb 28, properties of five Hizbul Mujahideen operatives were seized from Gool area of Ramban district. **TNN**

From interviews to personalised learning, AI revolutionising edu

Hemali Chhapia
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Mumbai: The pressure cooker of management school interviews this year acquired a digital sheen. Instead of facing a panel of professors, candidates at a city B-school sat across a panel that comprised a teacher and an AI-assisted interviewer — an indigenous tool on a computer designed to probe, analyse, and even cross-check responses.

"You mentioned your role in your family business," the AI prompted an interviewee. "Can you share examples of the changes you introduced?" The algorithm listened, parsed, and flagged discrepancies — picking up contradictions between the candidate's answers and statement of purpose.

Welcome to the new age of Indian campuses, where AI is reshaping day-to-day activities. If AI-assisted interviews have already started refining student selection at NMIMS School of Business Management, a committee of Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, decided to use AI to tailor sharper lessons.

Dr Homi Bhabha State University (HBSU) has an entire digital workforce of 'AI agents' to handle administrative tasks, such as scheduling calls or interviews. In some schools, AI-driven solutions customise learning for students with special needs.

About the newly formed teaching, learning and assessment committee at IIT-B, director Shreshth Kedar said it is an attempt to modify pedagogy and make teaching more active. Formed six months ago, the panel took inputs from various departments to take teaching beyond what is available on the Web and assess whether IIT-B could incorporate activities in the classroom or reshape assessment in a manner that students could use their creativity and not just input data in an AI tool for answers.

For many educational institutes, AI is breaking down large systems into smaller and more achievable goals. Technology is eliminating inefficiencies, ensuring teachers can focus on creativity, mentorship, and critical thinking, rather than get bogged down by grading and administrative work.

Textbook publisher Navneet is offering an AI tool with its books to help teachers draw up presentations, use sim-

AI PARADOX: LEADING IN SKILLS, LAGGING IN POLICY

India stands at a crossroads in AI revolution

According to UNESCO's 2022 State of Education Report, the country boasts the highest AI skill penetration rate — more than three times the global average

Yet, there is no formal policies governing AI in education, even as concerns grow over its misuse in generating deepfakes and academic dishonesty

Recognising AI's potential, CBSE introduced it as a subject for Class IX in 2019, and for Class XI in 2020

Meanwhile, the All India Council for Technical Education has recommended AI as an elective for B.Tech students, encouraging institutions to launch dedicated B.Tech programmes in AI and Data Science to build a specialised workforce

Deep-AI on campuses

The Ashwin Mittal Center of Excellence in Advanced AI Solutions for Business Decisions at IIM, Mumbai, focuses on large language models, machine learning, knowledge graphs, and predictive analytics

The center will explore AI's transformative impact on business, trade, and commerce

It will empower students and faculty to tackle real-world challenges, fostering entrepreneurial spirit and positioning IIM, Mumbai, as a leader in AI and Analytics innovation

At the National Institute of Technology Rourkela, a research team has developed an AI-based tool aimed at improving traffic management in developing countries

Research team has leveraged an Intelligent Vehicle Detection system, which uses computer vision to identify vehicles in images and videos

This system collects real-time traffic data to optimise traffic flow, reduce congestion, and aid in future road planning

Again, at the National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, another team has developed an AI-driven breakthrough to improve blood sugar predictions for diabetics

The study introduces a machine-learning model that sharpens glucose forecasting

By enhancing accuracy, this innovation empowers individuals and doctors to make more precise, personalised treatment decisions

ulations, and even offer "deeper research" for students wanting to explore beyond.

At HBSU, AI is not just facilitating education, it's redefining student support services. "We are using agentic AI for personalised performance assessments," said VC Rajanish Kamat.

The AI systems pinpoint areas where students struggle, and generate customised remedial teaching sessions.

Consider the experience of NMIMS School of Business Management, which picked up around 2,000 from the thousands of candidates who applied this year with the help of an AI tool. "The AI-assisted interviews allowed all candidates a uniform duration — 20

minutes — to prove themselves. The AI tool has their resume and statement of purpose uploaded in the backdrop, and apart from general questions, some are asked from what they submitted in their documents," explained

Pro-Vice Chancellor Sharad Mhaiskar: "The month-long exercise of interviews, said candidates, felt a lot less stressful, in some cases very relevant. "When I went to another B-school for an interview, I was asked questions about my religion, another panellist asked me who from my past I would like to meet once before I die," said Aakash Gujral, a management aspirant.

AI's integration into cur-

riculum design is now nearly universal across institutions. Many have already embedded AI modules within their coursework. Meanwhile, schools like R. N. Podar School are experimenting with AI to make teaching plans.

"We are trying to use AI to predict which colleges students should apply to based on past performance, chart their mental health trends, and improve teaching methodologies," said director-principal Avnita Bir. While AI offers remarkable advantages, institutions remain mindful of its ethical challenges and privacy concerns. "We have experts advising us on using AI responsibly so that no student is harmed," Bir added.

esheets against them within the statutory 90-day period.

Sources said the cops summoned now were mostly manning RG Kar's police outpost, while some were at the local Tala police station on Aug 9 and Aug 10 last year. The trainee doctor was raped and killed on Aug 9, following which massive protests by doctors and citizens erupted in the city.

CBI has questioned sever-

al Kolkata cops earlier, including senior officers who were part of an SIT that probed the crime before the central agency was handed the case by the high court. Several of these officers had deposited in court in the just-concluded trial.

The victim's parents have, however, been vocal about alleged CBI lapses, from lack of cooperation to shoddy probe.

CBI summons 11 cops in RG Kar rape-murder case

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: CBI has summoned 11 Kolkata cops for questioning on Monday and Tuesday in connection with its probe into criminal conspiracy and destruction of evidence in the RG Kar rape-and-murder case.

This comes two days after the slain 32-year-old PGT intern's parents took their complaint of "a slow-paced

and ineffective probe" to CBI director Praveen Sood.

On Jan 20, a sessions court in the city had sentenced civic volunteer Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment for the crime. A city court is hearing a related case in which former RG Kar principal Sandip Ghosh and former local Tala OC Abhijit Mandal had been arrested, but were later granted bail because CBI filed no charg-

esheets against them within the statutory 90-day period.

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Once Kol's high-flying passion, pigeon races now on last wings

Sudipto Das@timesofindia.com

Kolkata: Kolkata was once the feather in the pigeon-racing cap, with several city clubs vying for coveted trophies. However, only a couple of them remains, and a handful of pigeon fanciers continue with their passion. The city has also relinquished the honour of being the capital of the racer Homer breed in India to Chennai.

The number of serious racing pigeon fanciers in Kolkata has dwindled to less than 50 from around 500 in the 80s. From the early 50s until the mid-90s, Chinese-origin residents of Kolkata dominated pigeon-racing contests in India. Still active, Calcutta Racing Pigeon Club (CRPC) — the oldest such club in India — was founded by PS Lee, a Chinese, in 1953. CRPC's current president, YS Chen, is also of Chinese origin.

During peak racing times, a Homer pigeon would travel to its city's loft after completing a race within a day from Allahabad to Kolkata (814km), faster than any express train. It is still a mystery how these pigeons found their way home over such long distances. Studies say the compass mechanism of a homing pigeon likely relies upon the Sun. Some researchers believe it uses magnetoreception, which involves relying on Earth's magnetic fields for guidance. In 1993, KK Lee's bird "Mischievous" returned from Allahabad to Kolkata in a record time of just 9 hours 30 minutes. It started at 7 am and reached Kolkata the same day by 4:30 pm. In 1983, YS Chen's pigeon "Snow Ball" became Delhi champion with a record timing of 23 hours 37 min from Delhi to Kolkata. In 1988, William Ku's "Foreign Currency" shattered the record and finished the race in just 18 hours 17 minutes. The average speed of a Homer pigeon is 60-80 kmph. Debjit Mullick,



Homer breed pigeons at a fancier's loft in Kolkata. Fanciers said urbanisation, high upkeep costs have clipped the wings off the sport

a third-generation pigeon fancier and a CRPC member, still has more than 120 Homer pigeons at his century-old house's rooftop. "The cost of a certain bloodline of a Homer pigeon can go up to a lakh. Due to my job, I have been unable to participate in long-distance racing over the last few years," Mullick said.

Others pointed to various factors that have clipped pigeon-racing's wings. "The city highrises and ever-increasing costs of upkeeping a Homer pigeon, followed by impediments of rail booking for transporting pigeons and recent stringent law on aviculture, are taking a toll on the century-old hobby," said Pratip Nandy, president of Calcutta Racing Pigeon Organisation (CRPO). The member strength of CRPO has shrunk to 7 from 50 and CRPC's to 28.

Sanjoy Das, organising secretary of CRPC, explained training schedules. "The training for young pigeons usually starts in late Nov by short-distance releases of birds from Dankuni (on the city's fringes) to Kolkata, followed by Galsi and Tarakeshwar," said Das. Long-distance individual races start usually from mid-Dec until scorching summer sets in. The races are usually conducted with both young and old birds from Kolkata to Asansol (200km), Hazaribag (333km), Gaya (458km), Mughalsarai

(661km) and finally Allahabad. "Our birds are trained in such a way that during day-time long-distance flying, they hardly halt, except for rare water breaks," said Shyamal Das, secretary of CRPO.

Such clubs stopped extreme long-distance races (1,000 km and above) like Kolkata to Kanpur (1107 km) and finally Delhi (1441 km) for old birds because these pigeons need an overnight halt after sundown. "The pigeons are unable to navigate in the dark and often fall prey to owls at night, which leads to many injuries and the missing of the highly expensive Homer pigeon," said Ashim Mondal, another fancier. It is likely the British first brought this special breed of domestic pigeon to Calcutta for its unique ability to find its way home over extremely long distances. It used to carry messages and was referred to as a "pigeon post", and the particular breed was used during wars.

Nurtured by zamindar families during World War II, the British Army seized all the homing pigeons for their use. This resulted in the discontinuation of the racing events. Abani Das, a descendant of Rani Rashmoni, managed to hide some he had imported from England. Later, P S Lee, the Chinese shoe businessman, bought four such pigeons from Das and established CRPC at Bentinck Street.



CONTRAPUNTO



In the person of our nation we are able, vicariously, to bully and cheat...with a feeling that we are profoundly virtuous

-ALDOUS HUXLEY

Taking Stock, Fast

Sebi brass, including ex-chief Buch, face corruption charge. Probe fast for investor confidence

Madhabi Puri Buch's three-year term as Sebi chief ended last Friday, but she's yet to wash her hands of it. Although she dodged conflict-of-interest charges and a call from Parliament's public accounts committee while in office, a special anti-corruption court has now ordered registration of a complaint against her and other Sebi officials in connection with a company's listing. This company was allegedly allowed to list without fulfilling regulatory conditions, resulting in losses for investors. The court has said that, at first glance, it looks like a case of "regulatory lapses and collusion".

Charges of collusion and corruption are difficult to prove against chiefs of regulatory bodies. Another former Sebi chief, CB Bhavne, was accused of allowing MCX-SX to function as a full-fledged private stock exchange, but the case was closed after a few years. Last year, Sebi dropped charges in the NSE co-location case, citing lack of evidence - which can also mean nobody looked hard enough.



The charge was that some traders were allowed to set up their servers near NSE servers for a speed advantage - they could execute trades faster than rivals. A former NSE chief, who was allegedly receiving orders from a mystic in the Himalayas, was exonerated.

Since 1988, when it was set up, Sebi has weathered many high-profile scandals. Although some, like the Satyam case, involved collusion by auditors, the fact remains that Sebi failed to protect investors. The Harshad Mehta scam of 1992, when Sensex jumped four-fold in a year, shook investor confidence for a long time. There was the Ketan Parekh scam, and the IL&FS collapse. In the Sahara case, Sebi ordered refund of ₹25,000cr to investors, but 13 years on, not even 10% has been returned.

India's stock markets aren't new but the middle-class's strong participation in them is just a decade old. Month after month, even when portfolio investors have pulled funds, the middle class has kept its faith in SIPs. Yet, the over 10,000-point fall in Sensex since last Oct shows how fragile the market is even now. A swift probe is necessary to maintain investor confidence.

Beyond Kyiv

Trump's attitude to Ukrainian sovereignty holds a worrying message for India, given its neighbourhood

Trump's brutish treatment of the idea of Ukrainian sovereignty - televised across the world as he and his deputy harangued Zelenskyy - has larger implications. India especially should take note. Trump seems agreeable to Putin's doctrine of limited sovereignty for countries that were part of USSR. But what's okay for Putin can't be the rule democracies conduct themselves by. Therefore, when Trump's America, the world's most powerful democracy, coddles border-breaching aggression, the dangerous message is that there may be no adverse fallout of one nation simply rolling into its neighbour's territory. India has had to tackle expansionist strategies of its eastern neighbour, and respond to state-sponsored terrorism on its western border. So, a Trumpian worldview is not one it can get comfortable with.

Consequences of aggressive leaders breaching territorial sovereignty of other nations are multifold - the highest cost is borne by people. History shows a ceasefire isn't peace. And peace between warring nations cannot be brokered when a victim state's assertion to its independence and borders is pooh-poohed. Brokering then is just tyranny, not a negotiation. Its heft allows Washington to arrogate to itself the right to intervene - it wields the power to change the course of events. But as history reminds us periodically, stability in any region and at any border lies in knowing when to stop. It is in such restraint that peace can survive. Given this, being offhand about nations being invaded, being partitioned, allowing their right to sovereignty to be eroded, is akin to supporting the law of the jungle - might is right. Europe's eastern border has always been a shifting entity; in the 21st century it is a clutch of states that bank on restraint of the big powers to maintain independence, autonomy and stability.

Trump's now-sort-of-withdrawn Gaza Plan was an affront - peace-making subordinated to real estate deal-making. It's still early days for his play in Ukraine, although the prognosis looks bad. If his administration remains cavalier about breach of national sovereignty, New Delhi must remain alive to the fallout of what Trump is doing and what he's likely to do.

Why Ukraine Must Fight On

Trump wants Zelenskyy to make concessions. But only a strong Ukrainian military will stop Putin. Current White House thesis that Russia will be a US ally against China is totally wrong

Oleksandr Musiienko



Columnist based in Kyiv

Ukraine's war for freedom from Russian aggression was mocked during the televised Trump-Zelenskyy meeting. The upshot has been an intensified anxiety about whether the civilised world will continue to support Ukraine.

Zelenskyy and Ukrainian leadership approached the meeting where the minerals deal was to be signed with Washington as a strategic move. The draft agreement was prepared to create a joint fund for future extraction of rare earth metals and minerals. Ukraine's position remained constructive - after all, we are the victims of aggression. We expect US to continue to support us in this struggle.

Unfortunately, at this moment, Trump administration appears to be leaning towards Moscow. Ukraine is being pressured to make unpopular concessions and compromises with Russia.

Message in a quarrel | If US is to maintain its status as leader of the free world, a guardian of democracy, freedoms, and rule of law, what signal has the current administration in Washington sent out to the world? Its actions are especially relevant to authoritarian regimes - Beijing and Moscow are closely watching Trump's actions.

American politicians often caution that China is US's primary competitor and threat No.1. But Beijing will surely view Trump's stance on Ukraine as a sign of weakness. For, US isolationism and a reduced international role will only encourage Beijing's aggressions against Taiwan, in South China Sea, and against other neighbours.

Russia needs China | The belief that improving US-Russia relations may create an alliance to contain China is also unlikely to pan out, given Russia's

aggression against Ukraine has already exposed weaknesses of the Russian military machine.

Moreover, Russia can continue this war largely because China maintains economic cooperation, enabling Kremlin to execute its aggressive plans. So, how can an exhausted Russia contain China? It cannot, making this idea fundamentally flawed.

Kyiv's stand | Ukrainians are united, consolidated around President Zelenskyy. Ukraine is currently

Putin's problems | Is Kremlin any closer to achieving its goals? Ukraine has shown that Russian army can be repelled on the battlefield. Of course, this requires support of our external partners and allies. Putin wants to now impose an unjust ceasefire on Ukraine.

Moreover, Russia demands Ukrainian troops withdraw from two major cities that aren't even under Russian control - Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. This is, of course, unacceptable and is an example of Russia's blatant disregard for international law.

Kremlin needs a pause in the war because Russia has suffered massive losses. They want to declare a ceasefire as a so-called "gesture of goodwill". However, in the current status, Ukraine's armed forces are closer to stopping Russia's offensive and stabilising the frontline. This has changed the situation significantly, placing Ukraine in a position of strength at the negotiating table.

Putin needs mobilisation and resource accumulation to continue the war. He has no intention of ending it, especially if he senses weakness in support for Ukraine. It is precisely why no opportunity should be given for him to be able to persist in his aggressive ambitions of annexing strategic regions. Only if Putin concedes that Ukraine is in a position of strength and admits that Russian forces cannot advance will he cease the aggression.



mobilising internal resources to allocate more funds for defence and security needs, including production of weapons. We expect European countries to rally around Kyiv. We also hope India, as the world's largest democracy, will stand by Ukraine.

President Zelenskyy's correct to say Ukrainian people want peace more than anyone - but it must be a peace that's just and based on international law. Ukraine has proven itself on the battlefield and continues to fight for its freedom. Meanwhile, Putin seeks to seize Ukrainian territories and subjugate Ukrainian people to advance his neo-imperial ambitions of conquering other European states.

A stronger Europe | The idea of a unified European army is gaining new relevance against the backdrop of the Continent's and world's security situation. Europe, by investing more in its defence-industrial complex, can also invest in Ukraine's defence.

It can invest in Ukraine's defence industry with joint production of missiles, drones, and other necessary military equipment for a shared security. This will also make Europe a serious global player. Europeans have the necessary resources to do this. And it is what Ukraine is calling for.

Ukrainians deserve a just peace based on international law. We count on India's support in this, as well as on developing our cooperation in the future.

The writer is head of Center for Military & Legal Studies, a Ukrainian think tank

Our Children Have Told Us A Wonderful Story

Aser 2024 shows govts succeeded in minimising Covid impact on learning gaps. Rural kids are doing better & govt schools are teaching better than low-fee private schools

Rohini Nilekani



A moment comes, not too often, when a society can sense joyful satisfaction. Not elation but a quiet happiness. I believe we should savour such a moment now.

The recently released Annual Status of Education Report 2024, spearheaded by 20 years by Pratham, with the participation of tens of thousands of volunteers across more than 605 districts calls for celebration. After years of disappointment that the country's children were not learning as well as they should despite serious efforts of *sarkar* and *samaj*, results show there's a clear uptick in both language and arithmetic skills.

This is especially clear in the lower grades up to Class 5. We're nowhere near where we want to be, with 100% of children at grade level efficiency. But we seem to be at a tipping point, where reversal looks unlikely. Most children seem to have bridged the pandemic deficit, and states like UP have done particularly well.

A lot of credit must go to both Centre and state govts. Focus on foundational learning and numeracy (FLN) is yielding results - 80% of schools reported they had received both training and materials for basic learning. Interestingly, gains in competence were consistently higher in govt schools across the country, than in rural budget schools.

The focus on little ones is critical. Brain development science tells us more than a million new neural connections are formed every second in the first few years of life. Connections that form early provide either a weak or a strong foundation for connections that form later. Early experiences shape brain architecture, which then determines future learning, behaviour and health too. What happens to 0- to 8-year-olds matters greatly. The National Education Policy has set a goal of universal coverage for all 3- to 6-year-olds to be in high-quality learning environments by 2030. We're well on the way. Aser tells us that of all rural children,

77.4% of 3-year-olds and 83.3% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool or Aanganwadis.

It is hard to attribute this shift to any one cause. But the pandemic created a nationwide jolt to the system. The school system had to go digital. Govt's 'Diksha' platform swung into action. Teachers were trained overnight with new skills. Virtual classrooms and processes were set up. There was a countrywide consensus that children were in danger of falling behind. Everything that could be done would be done to prevent this.



Suddenly, families became bigger stakeholders in the process. Especially young mothers, who're themselves more educated than their mothers, with tremendous hopes pinned on their children. They taught themselves to teach. They learned to go online. They saw how play itself became an opportunity for exploration. How the home could be a laboratory for learning. Across the country, people shared notes about their frustrations and their discoveries.

Not all the loss could be prevented. The inherent disadvantage of spending two years without formal teaching is showing up in middle school. The learning

levels of children in grades 6,7 and 8 seem to have remained flat across the previous Aser reports. We will need to pay very special attention to these students to bring them up to speed. These are already difficult puberty years and children, if not sensitively engaged with, can fall prey to low self-esteem. There is much work ahead.

But there is other good news. Less than 3% of 14- to 16-year-olds were found to be out of school. The majority, 89%, of school-goers have a smartphone at home, of whom 82% know its use reasonably well.

Perhaps the native digital citizens now in middle school can leapfrog through new digital tech powered by AI that allows for better self-learning journeys, in language and math. This is already being tried at some scale and success in Tamil Nadu.

Meanwhile, younger children need to learn less through screens and more through play. Albert Einstein believed that 'Play is the highest form of research.' If all of *samaj* participated in this process of celebrating childhood learning through free play, maybe we could soon achieve what most countries only dream of - enabling every child to learn how to learn, with joy, agency and dignity.

Recently, a nationwide 'Bachpan Manao' campaign has been launched. Together with several civil society organisations, including our Ekstep Foundation, it will aim to enthuse communities, schools and families to encourage free play, and get a broader understanding of how it cements future learning skills. GOI has a popular kit for schools called 'Jadui Pitara' to unleash imaginative play-based learning. We hope this will become a strong societal mission, just as Aser has become a citizen's movement to take public stock of children's learning.

Current 3-year-olds, almost all already enrolled in preschool, will be the nation builders of 2047. We have a unique opportunity to nurture this generation of 0- to 8-year-olds, to make them strong lifelong learners, adapted to a fast-changing environment. With big leaps accomplished, this is the quiet happiness moment society can relish and be rejuvenated for the task ahead.

The writer is chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies

Meow and claws

A cat writes to her manager, who's being managed by Musk

Aaron Kashtan



Columnist based in North Carolina

Dear manager, it has come to my attention that you have requested a list of five things I did during the past week. I comply with this request under protest, as I have an extremely busy schedule, and in writing this list, I am taking time away from my other essential duties.

I am employed full-time as a domestic companion to an adult human male, whose name I cannot be bothered to learn. Last week, I performed the following tasks pursuant to my job: Made sure the human was awake at 6am | The human has a tendency to sleep late, thereby missing the best hours for hunting delicious prey. Therefore, each morning this week I awakened the human at 6am sharp, initially by meowing and, if necessary, by employing my claws.

Napped | To perform my other duties, I must be well-rested. Therefore, on each day this week I took multiple naps. I slept on surfaces such as the couch, the cardboard box, the other cardboard box, and the human's lap (not, of course, the cat bed).

Scratched the furniture | My claws are in need of regular sharpening so that I can use them for defensive purposes, but the human has not provided me with a fresh scratching post in some months. Therefore I used the aforementioned couch and other pieces of furniture to keep my claws sharp. This also improved the appearance of the furniture.

Attacked the human | My human is regrettably unaware of his surroundings and unskilled at defending himself. To train my human's self-preservation skills, I used my claws and fangs to attempt to murder him. In doing so, I also improved his mood by distracting him from his boring tasks.

Napped | Because I was exhausted after performing the four previous tasks, I was required to take additional naps.

In addition to the above, I also provided emotional support to the human by purring and by permitting him to stroke my luxuriant fur. Furthermore, I performed all the above tasks despite being in a constant state of starvation, as the human does not feed me enough.

You will appreciate that my services are essential to the proper functioning of this organisation, and that my working time was spent productively. Due to the stress caused by writing this letter, I will now be required to take an additional nap. Sincerely, Cat.

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace



It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Can Planet Earth Count On Us?

Thich Nhat Hanh

Dear Mother Earth, Human species is but one of your many children. Many of us have been blinded by greed, pride, and delusion, and only a few of us have been able to recognise you as our mother. Not realising this, we have done you great harm, compromising your health and beauty. Looking deeply, we also recognise that you have enough patience, endurance and energy to embrace and transform damage we have caused, even if it takes you hundreds of millions of years.

When greed and pride overtake our basic survival needs, the result is always violence and unnecessary devastation. We know that whenever one species develops too rapidly, exceeding its natural limit, there is great loss and damage, and lives of

other species are endangered. For equilibrium to be restored, causes and conditions naturally arise to destroy and annihilate that species. Often, these causes and conditions originate within the destructive species itself. We have learnt that when we perpetrate violence towards our own and other species, we are violent towards ourselves. When we know how to protect all beings, we are protecting ourselves.

We understand that all things are impermanent and without a separate self-nature. That is why we know that, in ultimate dimension, you transcend birth and death, being and nonbeing. Nonetheless, we need to protect you and

restore balance, so that you can continue for a long time in this beautiful and precious form, not just for our children and their children but for 500m years and beyond. We want to protect you so you can remain a glorious jewel within our solar system for eons to come.

We know that you want us to live in such a way that in each moment of our daily lives, we can cherish life and generate energies of mindfulness, peace, solidarity, compassion, and love. We vow to fulfil your wish and respond to your love. We have deep conviction that generating these wholesome energies, we will help reduce the suffering on Earth and contribute to alleviating suffering caused by violence, war,

hunger, and illness. In alleviating our suffering, we alleviate yours.

Floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis aren't punishments or manifestations of your anger, but are phenomena that must occur on occasion, so that balance can be restored. The same is true of a shooting star. For balance in nature to be achieved, at times, some species have to endure loss. In those moments, we have turned to you and asked whether or not we could count on you, on your stability and compassion. You didn't answer us right away. Then, beholding us with great compassion, you replied, "Yes, of course, you can count on your mother. I will always be there for you." But then you said, "Dear children, you must ask yourselves, can your mother count on you?"

Today, we offer you our solemn reply, "Yes, you can count on us." World Wildlife Day falls on March 3



THE SPEAKING TREE



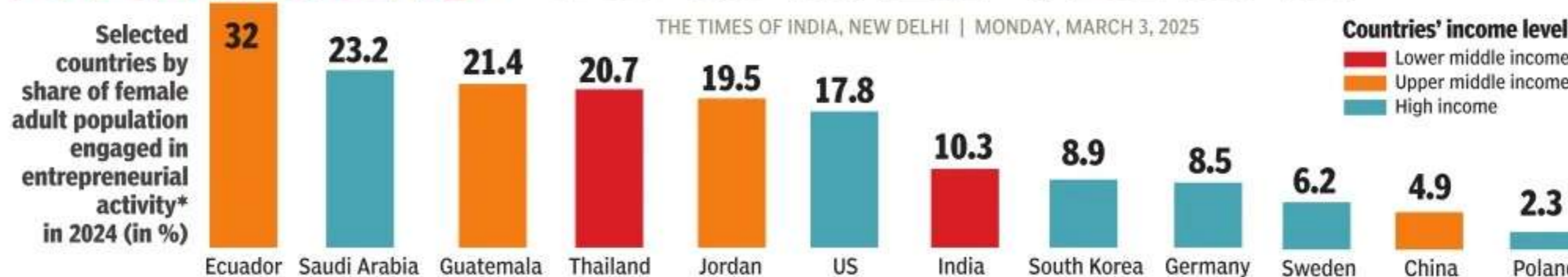
Earth and contribute to alleviating suffering caused by violence, war,

RICH COUNTRIES PRODUCE FEWER FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

A study carried out in 51 countries and territories by the Global Entrepreneurship Research Association found that female entrepreneurs are especially common in middle-income nations like Ecuador, Guatemala, Jordan, and Thailand. High-income countries in the Americas, such as Canada, Chile, and the United States, also performed better than their European and East Asian peers. Within both types of economies, significant differences exist between the rates of female entrepreneurs. While 32% of adult women are engaged in entrepreneurial activity in Ecuador and around 20% are starting their own businesses in Jordan, fewer women are entrepreneurs in other middle-income countries like Egypt (2.6%) or China (4.9%)

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2025



* Founding and establishing their own business for the first 3.5 years
Sources: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Statista

Retail money trumps FPIs' on D-St

After Nearly 2 Decades, MF & Retail Investor Shareholdings Top Foreign Funds'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: For the first time since 2006, the combined shareholding of mutual funds and retail investors is more than that of foreign portfolio investors, an analysis by NSE showed. This comes on the back of persistent selling by foreign funds since Oct last year while domestic institutions, dominated by mutual funds, remained net buyers.

The analysis, using shareholding data disclosed by companies as of Dec 2024, also showed that foreign ownership of stocks listed on the NSE, at 17.4%, was the lowest in 13 years.

Aided by sustained SIP inflows, MFs' share rose further to a all-time high of 10% in

Selloff: FPI Holdings Hit 13-Yr Low of 17%



NSE listed companies, the analysis noted. "MFs injected a record net amount of Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the Dec quarter, and further (about) Rs 71,000 crore in the first one-and-a-

half month of this quarter, taking the total net inflows to Rs 4.2 lakh crore in the fiscal thus far (as of Feb 14, 2025)."

The analysis also showed that individual investors' di-

rect non-promoter ownership in India Inc was at nearly 18-year high of 9.8%, corroborating with record investments of about Rs 56,000 crore in the Dec quarter. "Individuals as direct and indirect (via MFs) investors (now) own a record-high of 18.2% of the total market cap, outpacing the share of FPIs (17.4% now) for the first time since 2006," researchers at NSE noted.

In March 2014, the gap in ownership between FPIs and individual investors along with MFs was as high as 11 percentage points. This reversing of the gap indicates the growing role and significance of individual investors in the Indian equity markets. "Strong performance of Indian equities, coupled with rising partici-

pation, has resulted in a significant increase in household wealth over the last few years. Our estimates suggest that the household wealth in Indian equities increased by over Rs 46 lakh crore in the last five years, and Rs 30 lakh crore in the last two years."

The analysis by researchers at NSE also showed a steady decline in promoter holding in Indian companies. "Total promoters' share in the NSE-listed companies fell for the second quarter in a row 49.6%. The decline was broad-based across categories, with the most significant dip seen in the govt holding. In Nifty, the drop was more pronounced bringing promoter ownership to a two-decadal low of 41.4%."

Health premiums surge, some renewals take a hit

Deductible, Downgrade Or Drop Out: Policyholders Face Tough Choice | Rising Claims, Costs Bite Insurers

Mayur.Shetty @timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Health insurance premium costs have surged forcing some policyholders to either downgrade or drop out of their cover. 1 in 10 policyholders has missed out on renewals in this financial year. About 10% of policyholders have seen their renewal costs rise by 30% or more this year — only half of them paid the full premium.

Why are premiums soaring? Insurers say a worsening claims ratio (the percentage of claims to total premium collected) is behind the hikes.

The reason why a section of policyholders see sharp hikes is that health premiums do not rise in a steady, predictable manner but tend to jump at intervals. Insurers typically adjust their rate schedules every three years to account for medical inflation — the rising cost of treatments. Premiums also increase with age, with sharper hikes in later years reflecting higher claims in older age groups.

Over the last 10 years, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in premiums ranged between 5-10% for 52% of policyholders. This means that for more than half of them, a Rs 100 premium increased to Rs 162-259 after 10 years.

For another 38%, CAGR

in premiums ranged from 10-15%, translating to their Rs 100 premium rising to Rs 259-404 over the same period. However, 3% of policyholders saw their premiums rise with a CAGR of 15-30%.

ce market, highlighting rising premiums, consumer strategies to mitigate costs, and the industry's response to increasing medical inflation. While some policyholders face sharp premium hi-

MATH BEHIND SHARP HIKES

- Health premiums do not rise in a predictable manner but tend to jump at intervals
- Over 10 years, the CAGR in premiums for 52% of policyholders ranged between 5-10%. This means a Rs 100 premium increased to Rs 162-259 after 10 years, according to a Policybazaar study
- For another 38%, CAGR ranged from 10-15%, translating to their Rs 100 premium rising to Rs 259-404 over the same period
- Medical inflation is estimated at 14%... while avg increase in premiums is lower, according to Policybazaar
- Worsening claims ratio (the percentage of claims to total premium collected) is also driving hikes
- According to Irdai, maternity related claims are a major factor for 26-35 age group, and account for 25% of claims. Similarly among older people, cataract operations account for bulk of expenses

"The percentage of people who saw a very large price increase is very small. You have to look at what is happening in the context of medical inflation, which is close to 14%, while the average increase in premiums is much lower," said Amit Chhabra, chief business officer general insurance at Policybazaar. He adds that the 90% renewal is a 10% improvement from the previous year and the renewal rate is trending upwards.

A study by Policybazaar provides insights into India's evolving health insuranc-

kes, most are finding ways to manage expenses through new plan structures and cost-saving measures.

"If there is a price increase, and I don't want to absorb that increase, then as a customer, I have the option to move to a slightly lower variant, which brings down the premium. Many people are also opting for deductibles when renewing their policies to reduce costs," said Chhabra. Besides medical inflation, and emergence of new tech, there is also widening of the scope of cover in health insurance.

Sebi allows small fin cos to invest in bad debt securities

Mayur.Shetty@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Markets regulator Sebi has eased norms for security receipts — issued by asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) to manage bad loans — by allowing smaller finance companies to invest in the financial instruments.

Sebi's outgoing chief Madhabi Puri Buch in a notification on Feb 28, her last day in office, allowed smaller NBFCs and housing finance companies to invest in the security receipts, expanding a market that was restricted to larger financial institutions.

The move aims to inject liquidity into distressed debt but comes with safeguards to prevent defaulting promoters from reclaiming assets.

2021 to review ARC regulations, had recommended expanding eligibility to all NBFCs and housing finance firms. It also proposed allowing high-net-worth individuals (Rs1 crore+), corporates (Rs 10 crore+), trusts, family offices, pension funds, and distressed asset funds to invest.

The move aims to inject liquidity into distressed debt but comes with safeguards to prevent defaulting promoters from reclaiming assets

"Investment in security receipts can offer an alternative investment class with higher income yield. Small NBFC/HFC squeezed for margins can look at it as an investment option," says Hari Hara Mishra, chief executive of the Association of ARCs in India. However, he stresses the need for greater transparency on ARC performance, particularly historical recoveries.

Sebi, BSE to challenge order against former chiefs, others

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Markets regulator Sebi, in a statement on Sunday, said it would be initiating appropriate legal steps to challenge an Anti-Corruption Bureau court order for a probe into alleged irregularities in listing a company on the BSE in 1994. The markets watchdog said it remains committed to ensuring due regulatory compliance in all matters.

The court on Saturday directed the police to file an FIR against former Sebi chief

Madhabi Puri Buch, three other Sebi officials, former BSE chairman Pramod Agarwal and BSE MD & CEO Sundaraman Ramamurthy.

Sebi said that even though these officials were not holding their respective positions at the relevant point of time (1994), "the court allowed the application without issuing any notice or granting any opportunity to Sebi to place the facts on record".

Through a release, the BSE said that the company named in court papers, Cals Refineries, was listed at

BSE in 1994. The exchange said, "The officials named in the application were not in their respective positions at the time of listing and were not connected with the company at all," the exchange said. "The application is frivolous and vexatious in nature," it added.

The bourse also said that the court had "allowed the application without issuing any notice or granting any opportunity to BSE to place the facts on record." "BSE is initiating necessary and appropriate legal steps," it said.

TOI **How Systematic Transfer Plans Help Stagger Investments**

IN THE CLASSROOM

The sharp drop in stock market indices, with Nifty down 15% from its all-time high, has made investors reluctant to make lumpsum investments in equity funds. Wealth managers suggest systematic transfer plans (STPs) to stagger investments over time.

Why Are Lumpsum Investments Slowing?
Investors are worried that if they put all their investible money now and stocks fall further there will be a market loss. This is making them postpone their investments.

How Do STPs Help In Current Scenario?
Investors stagger money, typically from a liquid or ultra-short-term fund, to an equity fund. The investor decides the frequency of transfer. The key benefit of using an STP is that until the money remains invested in a liquid fund, it earns extra return, generally higher than that of a savings account.

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

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

STPs vs SIPs?
Both systematic investment plans (SIPs) and STPs stagger investor money into equity. An investor with cash who believes equity will do well over the long term but is worried about near-term corrections can use STPs. STPs are generally done for shorter time frames of six months to 18 months to mitigate market volatility and uncertainty. In comparison, SIPs are done by investors who do not have lump sum money. These investments are done to meet long-term goals.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

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Scan the QR code to know more

Adani revives US investment plans: Report

Infrastructure-focused Adani Group has revived plans for major investments in the US, the Financial Times reported on Sunday. The business group has reactivated potential plans to fund projects in sectors such as nuclear power and utilities as well as an east coast port, the report said, citing four people close to group founder and chair Gautam Adani. REUTERS



Investment index of states likely in 2 mths

New Delhi: Niti Aayog member Arvind Virmani has said that work on the second phase of the investment friendliness index of states is in progress and it is expected to be released in a month or two. The Union govt in its FY26 Budget announced the launch of the 'Investment Friendliness Index of States' in 2025 to further the spirit of competitive cooperative federalism. AGENCIES

Glenmark recalls ADHD medicine bottles in US

Glenmark Pharma is recalling close to 15 lakh bottles of a generic medication used in the treatment of ADHD in the US market, the US health regulator said. The company is recalling the lot due to "CGMP deviations", the regulator USFDA said. The recall is due to "presence of N-Nitroso Atomoxetine impurity above the FDA recommended limit," it added. AGENCIES

GCCs drive hiring for 2nd yr, make up 1L of 1.2L tech jobs

In April-Dec 2024, Top Indian IT Cos Hired 11K Employees

Veena Mani & Shilpa Phadnis | TNN

Bengaluru: India's technology sector expanded its workforce by 1.2 lakh people in 2024-25, with global capability centres (GCCs) accounting for over 1 lakh of these roles. It is significant that GCCs hired over 100,000 professionals during this period, up from 90,000 last year. Overall, the tech industry has 5.8 million employees.

Through the first nine months of 2024-25, top Indian IT firms hired just 11,000 people. In fact, the top five Indian IT services organisations increased their workforce by only 5,190 employees during the 2023-24 financial year. TOI reported how this will be the second consecutive year where GCCs will surpass IT firms in net hiring.

Even as India's tech sector is expected to become a \$300 billion industry in the 2025-26, the last few years have seen business models become dynamic and outcome-based. For the first ti-

INDIAN TECH SECTOR SNAPSHOT



me, Nasscom highlighted an even distribution in export revenues of \$224 billion between MNCs (including GCCs) and Indian IT firms, with each contributing \$112 billion.

The pendulum has swung from an employees' market to an employers' market, even as the IT sector's business model is undergoing a massive transformation, with AI disrupting the linear relationship between revenue and employment. The current scenario reflects a period when major IT companies are experiencing single-digit

growth rates and workforce reductions, while GCCs contributed significantly to employment growth in the previous year.

At the recent Nasscom Technology & Leadership Forum (NTLF), HCL CEO C Vijayakumar said if the IT services industry is "paranoid" about the change like an "existential threat," it will come out winners in the long term.

Cognizant CEO Ravi Kumar told TOI recently that with machines writing 20% of the code, teams can accomplish more tasks with fewer personnel. This, Kumar said, creates an interesting

economic scenario known as Jevons Paradox, where increased efficiency in resource usage leads to higher overall demand for that resource. In AI's case, the efficiency it brings is enabling a lot more to be accomplished using AI, thereby increasing its use.

Kumar said GCCs are not adversaries, and Cognizant is beginning to work actively with them to do so parts of their work. He said he has set up a team to cater to GCCs.

Ramkumar Ramamoorthy, partner at Catalinca, a tech growth advisory firm, said, "It's akin to the tale of two cities. The past year was another year of tepid growth for major IT services companies and of outsized growth for GCCs, resulting in the net hiring by GCCs being substantially higher for the second year in a row," he said.

Nasscom president Rajesh Nambiar believes IT firms and GCCs complement each other and can benefit from this synergy.

Mahindra beats Hyundai in car sales & revenue

Ranks Second | Clocks ₹71K Cr Revenue In April-Jan Compared To Korean Co's ₹59K Cr

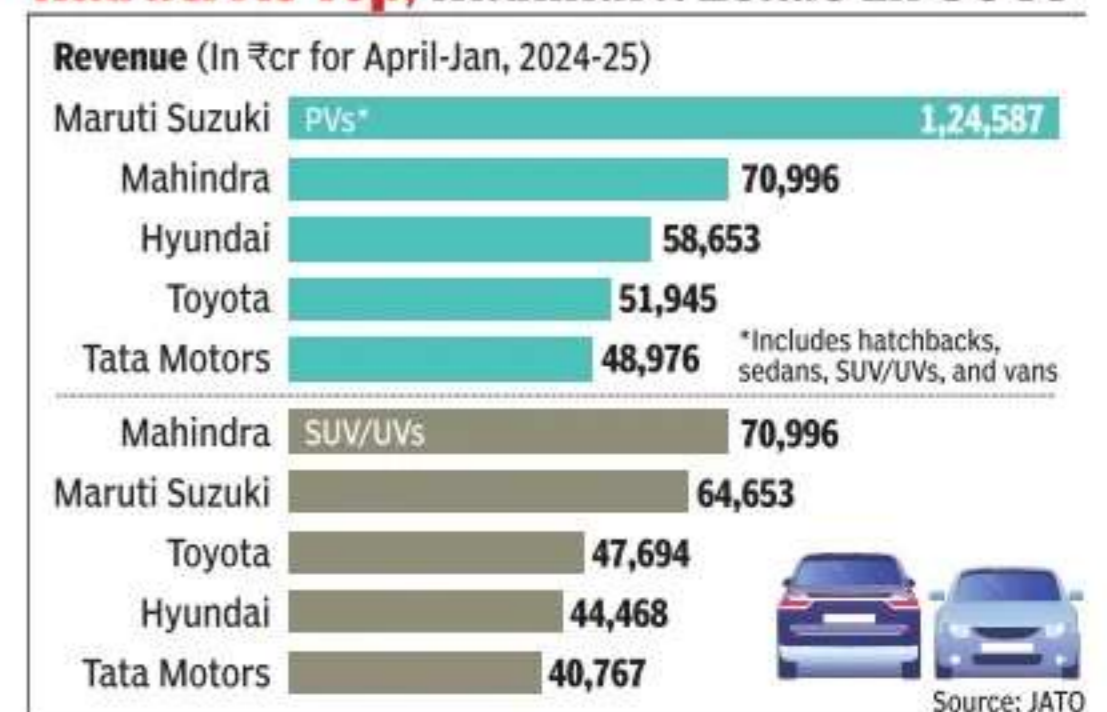
Pankaj Doval | timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Mahindra & Mahindra has not only clinched the Number 2 slot in sales of passenger vehicles, but the demand for its premium off-roaders has also meant that the company has moved ahead of Korean Hyundai in revenue market share while getting the crown of the largest SUV seller in the country.

Powered by sale of SUVs such as Scorpio-N, Thar, XUV700 and XUV3XO, Mahindra's revenue in April-Jan 2024-25 stood at nearly Rs 71,000 crore, much ahead of Hyundai's Rs 58,653 crore and that of others like Toyota (Rs 51,945 crore) and Tata Motors (Rs 48,976 crore), according to the data accessed from research firm JATO. Only Maruti, the largest PV player, leads the segment with a revenue of over Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

Rajesh Jeurikar, executive director & CEO of Mahindra's automotive and farm divisions, said the company has a clear focus on maintaining its volume and value leadership in SUVs, while driving in new "adventure-ready" off-roaders. "For us, revenue market share is a more critical metric, and so is having the top position in SUVs. And

Maruti At Top, Mahindra Leads In SUVs



in this process, if we also become the No. 2 PV player during certain periods, that's clearly an added bonus for us," Jeurikar told TOI.

According to JATO, while Maruti leads the PV revenue market with a share of 30%, Mahindra comes in second with 17%, Hyundai third with 14%, Toyota fourth with 12.5%, and Tata Motors fifth with 12% (in ten months of this fiscal).

In Jan this year, Mahindra emerged as the second-largest PV seller (behind only Maruti Suzuki) as it sold 50,420 units against 47,727 sold by Hyundai. Tarun Garg, chief operating officer of Hyundai India, said the company expects de-

mand to come back following income tax relaxation given in the Union Budget. "Despite geopolitical challenges, we remain optimistic that the proposed tax reforms in the Budget and improved liquidity will provide the much-needed demand boost."

Mahindra has clearly gained from the growing demand for SUVs, especially as the company refreshed its aging fleet at a time when the positive trend started to build up for off-roaders. Rapidly-developing highways, better inter-city connectivity, and changing lifestyle trends have fuelled the demand for SUVs, giving them a share in excess of 50%.

'Don't worry, this may be time to engage in stocks'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Ridham Desai, managing director and chief equity strategist at Morgan Stanley India, said increasing consumption and private borrowing along with macroeconomic stability puts India at an advantage and there is no need to worry about the recent stock market slump.

Speaking at an event here on Sunday he said, "Do not be too worried, this may just be a very opportune time for you to engage in stocks."

India is the only country in the G20 economy where the ratio of govt debt to GDP is de-

clining, with the possibility that by 2028, India will run a primary balance, he said. "When govt steps away from the debt market, (it) crowds in private sector borrowing activity and (will) take growth higher," he said.

Desai said the rising number of middle-class and rich families over the decade means more companies believe that India is going to drive between 10-50% of their revenue growth in the next five years. He anticipates a lending boom with the ratio of private debt increasing from 75% to 100% GDP in a decade, further boosting the growth.

"When you combine the declining primary deficit with rising private sector leverage, you get a very good stock market outcome," he said. "This is the fastest growing consumer market in the world and it is going to be a very significant market. So, India's future, in my view, remains very bright," he said.

He said declining volatility of inflation and interest rate meant that India's growth volatility also declined. "If you know that the growth volatility will be low, you will actually pay a premium valuation for such a business. That in large part explains the boom in the stock markets of the last few years," he said.

Goyal's US visit for FTA starts today

New Delhi: With India and the US gearing up to start negotiations for a proposed bilateral trade agreement, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal's Washington visit will begin on Monday.

Goyal is likely to hold talks with US trade representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick, the official said.

During the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, India and the US announced their commitment to negotiate the first tranche of Bilateral Trade Agreement by fall of 2025. AGENCIES

Startup funding rises to over \$1bn in Jan-Feb, 'mature' cos tap growth cap

Yogesh Kabirdoss | timesofindia.com

Chennai: 'Growth-PE' stage companies are seeing traction from private equity-venture capital (PE-VC) investors. The early trend, which is likely to continue for the rest of CY2025, reflects upon a shift to mitigate risk amid market uncertainties.

Data released by research firm Venture Intelligence estimates that Growth-PE stage companies have doubled their PE-VC in-

vestments to nearly \$1.1 billion in Jan and Feb of CY2025 against \$594 million during the same period last year (CY2024). The PE investments exclude those from the real estate sector.

"In the past couple of months, there has been a pick up in PE-VC investments in mature startups and companies floated by larger groups that have chosen to tap PE-VC investors for growth capital. For instance, startups such as InfraMarket, Leap Finance,

Captain Fresh and Rapido have attracted growth capital. Akasa Air and Neubeurg Diagnostics are examples of larger business groups partnering PE investors for growth capital," Arun Natarajan, founder, Venture Intelligence told TOI.

The Growth-PE segment comprises Seed to Series D investments above \$20 million into companies that are less than 10 years old or Series E to Series F of institutional investments into firms that are not more than a decade old.

Pilgrims' shoes pile up at Ram temple entry as exit separated



Earlier, pilgrims would leave their footwear at gate-1 and retrieve them from the same spot

Ayodhya: Separate entry and exit gates at Ayodhya's Ram Lalla temple over past 30 days, introduced to manage the huge influx of devotees, has led to piles of abandoned footwear at the temple's entry gate. Municipal corporation has already removed nearly 30 trolleys of shoes and sandals from entry gate-1, reports Arshad Afzaal Khan.

Earlier, pilgrims would leave their footwear at gate-1 and retrieve them from the same spot after completing a circumambulation of half a kilometre. However, authorities redirected exits through gate-3 and other gates to manage huge rush during Maha Kumbh. To reclaim their footwear from the entry point, pilgrims now need to walk about 5-6 km along Rampath. As a result, many are choosing to abandon their footwear and proceed barefoot to their vehicles or lodgings.

Anil Mishra, a trustee of Ram temple Trust, said, "Changes have been made in arrangements to ensure that unexpected surge of devotees can have easy access to darshan without chaos."

Over 1.25 crore devotees visited Ram temple during 45 days of Maha Kumbh. The influx began on Makar Sankranti and continued unabated until Mahashivratri. From Jan 26 onwards, 10-12 lakh devotees thronged the city daily, not only to seek spiritual solace but also to experience Ayodhya's evolving tourism landscape. "For the first time, the doors of Ram Lalla temple remained open till 1 am to accommodate continuous flow of devotees," Mishra said.

Cycling, jogging 4 hrs/wk can shed 30% of liver fat: Experts

Survey: Half Of Delhi's Adults Have Fatty Liver

Durgesh Nandan Jha | timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Moderate-to-vigorous-intensity exercise, for example brisk walking, cycling and jogging, for 150-240 min per week can help reduce liver fat by 30%, the Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver (APASL) said.

In its first-ever clinical guideline for managing metabolic-dysfunction associated fatty liver disease (MAFLD), the expert body has said while a combination of diet and structured exercise training has synergistic benefits for persons suffering from the condition, regular exercise alone elicits broad hepatic (liver-related) and cardiometabolic benefits irrespective of weight loss and can improve health-related quality of life. "Regular exercise improves insulin sensitivity, reduces in-



If left untreated or not managed well, fatty liver can lead to serious complications, such as chronic liver disease and liver cancer

flammation, and alters substrate metabolism in the muscle, liver and adipose tissue, which affects hepatic free fatty acid flux," says the APASL guideline, which has been published in Hepatology International. It recommends 150-240 min per week of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise for meaningful reduction in liver fat but suggests that as little as 135 min per week may also be effective.

MAFLD refers to a buildup of fat in the liver, in addition to one or more metabolic risk factors such as overweight/obesity, Type 2 dia-

betes, raised cholesterol in blood and metabolic dysregulation, among others.

A recent survey carried out across 11 districts of Delhi has found that nearly one in every two persons above 18 years of age have MAFLD.

Dr S K Sarin, an expert involved in developing the APASL guideline, who is also the director of ILBS, said MAFLD is associated with severe liver diseases like non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (accumulation of liver fat in people who drink little or no alcohol), scarring or permanent damage of the liver, liver cancer, and premature death.

Punjab couple made ₹3,500cr selling cloud space; remanded in ED custody

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A couple arrested by ED from Punjab on Friday, who had masterminded a multi-level marketing fraud by duping investors with promises of handsome rental value on purchase of cloud space & leasing it back, has been remanded in ED custody.

On Saturday, a special PMLA court in Jalandhar remanded Sukhvinder Singh Kharour to 10 days and Dimple Kharour to five days in ED custody. They allegedly collected over Rs 3,500 crore in past 2-3 years and siphoned off the "proceeds of crime".

Look out notices were issued after they went underground. At least 26 luxury cars worth Rs 80 crore (belonging to the couple) were seized by ED last month. ED also attached other assets in Punjab, totalling Rs 178 crore.

"The cloud sale and lease back model was found non-existent to cheat the investors. The proceeds of crime of Rs 3,558 crore (ascertained so far) generated out of criminal activities were diverted by VMSL (Vuenow Marketing Services Ltd) and group companies in giving commission to channel partners, purchase of various luxurious vehicles, gold and diamonds,

routing of hundreds of crores through shell entities and further investment in properties," ED said.

The accused created multiple shell entities to siphon off proceeds of crime. Huge funds were also diverted into bank accounts of Dimple and to film production units controlled by her, such as Kharour Films LLP, Fruitchaat Entertainment Pvt and Avni IT Infra Ventures Ltd, in which she is a director. However, these companies do not have any relation with the cloud particle business VMSL that collected huge funds from investors, the agency said.

ED was on the lookout for the influential couple who had evaded arrest in Punjab for a long time despite several complaints of cheating and fraud. The central agency finally registered an FIR in Noida and with the help of UP Police issued a look out notice. Officials coordinated with international enforcement agencies that helped in tracing the accused in Nepal from where they were sent to India. "Sukhvinder, CEO and founder of Vuenow Group is 'mastermind' of the scam who in connivance with his close aides orchestrated the 'Cloud Particle Scam'," ED said.

Ex-student held for JU violence; SFI calls for stir at all WB univs

Kolkata: The Jadavpur University (JU) campus seems to be facing an extended period of unrest after SFI on Sunday called for a students' strike at all state universities on Monday, and police arrested a former student and registered seven FIRs in connection with Saturday's trouble on campus, report Poulami Roy Banerjee & Tamagnna Banerjee.

Education minister Bratya Basu, who had gone to the campus on Saturday to attend the annual general body meeting of the West Bengal College and University Professors Association, a Trinamool Congress wing, was heckled when students supporting SFI and CPIML-affiliated AISA raised "go back" slogans, demanding he declare students' elections on the spot. JU academics, including interim VC Bhaskar Gupta, also bore the brunt of students' ire during a melee in which first-year student, Indranuj Roy, an SFI supporter, was injured by Basu's car. Roy and Abhinaba Basu, a first-year PG student of comparative literature, are in hospital.

Basu's car was also damaged, the meeting venue ransacked, several university professors thrashed and a university employees' union office was set on fire. In all, seven FIRs have been lodged: two suo motu by Jadavpur police; three by university teachers; one FIR of molestation by a TMCP student; and one filed by SFI, against Basu, for rash driving.

At least seven engineering departments have first-semester exams scheduled on Monday: HS exams are also set to begin from Monday. The protesting organisations, however, stressed that while they will boycott classes and urge suspension of official work on campuses, there would be no road blockade that could cause trouble to HS examinees.

Sahil Ali (25), a former JU student who now works at an IT firm, was picked up from his PG accommodation at Bijoigarh. He was remanded in police custody until March 12. On Sunday, Basu said there was an attempt to turn JU into a "free zone" for hooliganism.

Court: Inaction by Sebi necessitates judicial intervention

Continued from P 1

The three Sebi officials are Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G and Kamlesh Chandra Varshney, all whole-time members. BSE ex-chairman Pramod Agarwal has been named in the court order.

The complainant invoked various IPC offences and the Prevention of Corruption Act for suspected offences of criminal misconduct by public servants and illegal gratification.

Shrivastava's application, which had sought directions for an FIR and probe against Buch and others, said a probe would uncover "alleged offences committed by the proposed accused involving large-scale financial fraud, regulatory violations, and corruption."

The complainant alleged that Sebi officials failed in their statutory duty, facilitated market manipulation, and enabled corporate fraud by allowing the listing of a company that did not meet the prescribed norms. Shrivastava, a Dombivali resident, arguing in person, said despite approaching the police and the regulatory bodies "on multiple occasions no action has been taken, necessitating judicial intervention under Section 156(3) CrPC (criminal procedure code)." The section empowers the court to direct police to take action if a cognizable offence is made out.

The court noted that the allegations pertain to the fraudulent listing of a company on the stock exchange with the active connivance of regulatory authorities, particularly Sebi, without compliance under the Sebi Act, 1992, and rules and regulations thereunder. It said the complaint alleged "procedural lapses and non-compliance in the IPO process, leading to an irregular listing of the company" and cited documents, also "placed on record," such as regulatory filings and stock market



The court noted that the allegations pertain to fraudulent listing of a company on the stock exchange with active connivance of regulatory authorities, particularly Sebi, without compliance under Sebi Act, 1992, and rules thereunder

reports "indicating artificial inflation of share prices and market manipulation." Sebi was established as a non-statutory body in 1988, and as a statutory body in 1992. The Sebi Act came into force on Jan 30, 1992.

The special court referred to a Supreme Court ruling of 2015, which set out that a private application must be supported by an affidavit ensuring due diligence and the "Magistrate must be satisfied that a prima facie case exists before directing an investigation." The court, on reviewing the material before it, also observed that the "inaction by law enforcement and SEBI necessitates judicial intervention."

The judge said, "Considering the gravity of allegations, applicable laws, and settled legal precedents, this court deems it appropriate to direct an investigation under Section 156(3) CrPC." It said, "The concerned Anti-Corruption Bureau, Worli, Mumbai Region, Mumbai is directed to register an FIR under the relevant provisions of IPC, Prevention of Corruption Act, SEBI Act, and other applicable laws."

The court said it would monitor the investigation.



I GAVE MYSELF A CHALLENGE WITH COACH ROB WALTER. I WANT TO BE THE BEST. I KNOW I CAN PLAY SITUATIONS WELL. I KNOW MY SWING IS GOOD."

HEINRICH KLAASEN
SA KEEPER-BATTER

Kiwis polished off with spin

Varun Leads Tweakers' Super Show
With 5-42 After Solid 79 By Shreyas
Helps India To 249; India Win By 44
Runs, To Face Aussies In Semifinal

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

Following his successful India return on Oct 6 at Gwalior last year with figures of 3-31 against Bangladesh in the first T20I, Varun Chakravarthy has experienced an extraordinary career resurgence.

At the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday, the 33-year-old spinner, playing only his second ODI, dismantled New Zealand with his mystery wrist and finger spin with figures of 5-42 in 10 overs, securing India's 44-run victory in the final group match of the ICC Champions Trophy. Notably, this venue previously marked a low point in his career during the 2021 T20 World Cup where he went wicketless on a dewy evening against Pakistan as India crashed to a 10-wicket loss. In his other two games at the venue in that tournament, he had gone wicketless and that caused him to spend a lengthy period in the wilderness.

It was a tactical masterstroke by India to field four spinners on a turning surface, with Varun replacing pace bowler Harshit Rana. While Varun did the star turn, fellow tweakers Kuldeep Yadav (2-56), Axar Patel (1-32), and Ravindra Jadeja (1-36) also bamboozled the Kiwis.

India, having won all three group matches, topped Group A and will face Australia in Dubai on Tuesday, seeking redemption for their 2023 ODI World Cup final loss on Nov 19 in Ahmedabad. New Zealand will compete against South Africa in Lahore on Wednesday.



5/42
Varun Chakravarthy is the third Indian to bag a five-for in the CT behind Ravindra Jadeja (vs WI, 2013) and M Shami (vs Ban, 2025)

Varun's effectiveness was visible from his first over itself as his deliveries and variations troubled all batters consistently as New Zealand struggled to break free and score at the required run-rate that kept mounting with every dot they faced. New Zealand ended up consuming 150 dots. Varun's victims included Will Young (22), Glenn Phillips (12), Michael Bracewell (2), Mitchell Santner (2), and Matt Henry (2).

After claiming 14 wickets in the T20I series against England, Varun showed that he has it in him to successfully adapt to the ODI format. He is also the earliest among Indian bowlers to bag a five-for, having achieved the feat in his second game. Stuart Binny, who picked 6/4 vs Bangladesh in Mirpur in 2014, held the earlier record, having done so in his third ODI.

Kiwi maestro Kane Williamson's brilliant 81 wasn't enough for the Black Caps to stave off defeat as the combined efforts of India's spinners proved too much to negotiate as New Zealand folded up for 205 in 45.3 overs. Earlier, Shreyas Iyer's solid 79 anchored India's innings, though Mark Henry's spell of 5-42 limited India to 249-9.

This one can fly: Phillips gatecrashes Virat's party

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Dubai: The stage was perfectly set for him. Playing in his landmark 300th ODI, Virat Kohli, India's biggest batting superstar since the iconic Sachin Tendulkar, walked in to thunderous cheers on Sunday afternoon at the Dubai International Stadium. His arrival came after India lost Shubman Gill's wicket early in their final league match of the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy against New Zealand.

In the stands for his special occasion was his wife, actor Anushka Sharma, who had flown down from Mumbai, hoping that 'King Kohli' would make the occasion unforgettable. Considering that he was just fresh off scoring a magnificent, unbeaten hundred against arch-rivals Pakistan at the same venue a week back, the expectation was justified. However, the 15,000-odd fans at the stadium here, and the millions watching on TV were left thoroughly disappointed when Kohli, after scoring 11 off 14 balls which included two fours, cut a ball from

pacers Matt Henry around the off-stump area in the seventh over, only to be caught brilliantly by Glenn Phillips, who flew as if he was a bird, to his right, to grab the ball at backward point.

Phillips's Superman-esque act left Kohli stunned, as he stood at his crease for a few moments before trudging back to the pavilion, shaking his head in disappointment. The crowd, of course, was silenced for a while. Kohli's party was gatecrashed by Phillips.

Social media, however, was soon abuzz with reactions to the catch: "The Superman of the tournament," a fan posted on X.

This isn't the first blinder that Phillips has pouched in the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy. The 28-year-old gave the tournament, which has mostly witnessed some dull cricket, one of its best moments when he flew to his left at backward point to pouch a screamer to dismiss Pakistan captain Mohamad Rizwan off Will O'Rourke in the tournament's first match at Karachi. In the press conference before the Black



VIRAT KOHLI

Caps' match against India, Phillips was asked in jest if he was using a glue stick to take those amazing catches. The man from Auckland put it down to luck and his hard work. "I wish I could say that I've got a special little glue tag that I use, but unfortunately, that's not the case. If anything, my palms are sweeter than anything else. It comes down to a lot of hard work and doing the basics as much as I can and then sometimes luck just plays a good part in it."



"I wish I could say that I've got a special little glue tag that I use, but unfortunately, that's not the case. If anything, my palms are sweeter than anything else. It comes down to a lot of hard work and doing the basics as much as I can and then sometimes luck just plays a good part in it."

— Glenn Phillips, New Zealand allrounder on his brilliance in the field

SCOREBOARD

INDIA: Rohit Sharma c Will Young b Jamieson 15, Shubman Gill lbw b Matt Henry 2, Virat Kohli c Glenn Phillips b Matt Henry 11, Shreyas Iyer c Will Young b William O'Rourke 79, Axar Patel c Williamson b Rachin Ravindra 42, KL Rahul c Latham b Santner 23, Hardik Pandya c Rachin Ravindra b Matt Henry 45, Ravindra Jadeja c Williamson b Matt Henry 16, Mohammed Shami c Glenn Phillips b Matt Henry 5, Kuldeep Yadav not out 1. Extras: (b-1, w-9) 10. Total: 249-9 in 50 overs

Fall of wickets: 15-1, 22-2, 30-3, 128-4, 172-5, 182-6, 223-7, 246-8, 249-9

Bowling: Matt Henry 8-0-42-5, Kyle Jamieson 8-0-31-1, William O'Rourke 9-0-47-1, Mitchell Santner 10-1-41-1, Michael Bracewell 9-0-56-0, Rachin Ravindra 6-0-31-1.

NEW ZEALAND: Will Young b Varun 22, Rachin Ravindra c

Patel b Pandya 6, Kane Williamson st Rahul b Patel 81, Daryl Mitchell lbw Kuldeep Yadav 17, Tom Latham lbw Jadeja 14, Glenn Phillips lbw Varun 12, Michael Bracewell lbw Varun 2, Mitchell Santner b Varun 28, Matt Henry c Kohli b Varun 2, Kyle Jamieson not out 9, Will O'Rourke b Kuldeep Yadav 1. Extras (lb 2, nb 1, w 8) 11. Total (all out in 45.3 Overs), 205.

Fall of wickets: 1-17.2-49.3-93, 4-133, 5-151, 6-159, 7-169, 8-195, 9-196, 10-205.

Bowling: Mohammed Shami 4-0-15-0, Hardik Pandya 4-0-22-1, Axar Patel 10-0-32-1, Varun Chakravarthy 10-0-42-5, Kuldeep Yadav 9.3-0-56-2, Ravindra Jadeja 8-0-36-1.

Result: India won by 44 runs.

Player-of-the-Match: Varun Chakravarthy.

Semis line-up: March 4: India vs Australia, Dubai; **March 5:** New Zealand vs South Africa, Lahore



79 Shreyas Iyer has got the second highest score by an Indian vs NZ in the Champions Trophy behind Sourav Ganguly's 117 at Nairobi on Oct 15, 2000.

8 Kane Williamson's fifth fifty-plus innings, including 100 vs Australia at Birmingham on June 2, 2017, in the Champions Trophy is his 47th fifty in ODIs. His strike rate of 67.50 (81 off 120 balls) remains his slowest 50-plus innings in the event.

98 Runs put on by Iyer and Patel - India's highest fourth-wicket stand vs New Zealand in the Champions Trophy. The stand is India's second highest overall in the event behind the 132 between Sachin Tendulkar and Ajay Jadeja vs Australia at Dhaka on Oct 28, 1998.

"I did feel nervous in the initial stages. I have not played many matches for India in the ODI format but as the game went on I felt better. Virat, Rohit, Shreyas and Hardik were talking to me and that helped. I found out last night that I was playing this game."

—Varun Chakravarthy

"Very important to get a good result, we played a perfect game. It was important at that stage (after being 30/3) to build a partnership, and I thought we got to a good total. We have the quality in our bowling to defend that total. Varun has something different about him, so wanted to try and see what he can offer."

—Rohit Sharma

'UAE always in a state of readiness to host tournaments'

Gaurav.Gupta@timesofindia.com

Dubai: It doesn't have a big cricket culture, but the United Arab Emirates, in recent years, is turning out to be a hub of major cricketing events. Due to Covid-19, the UAE hosted the Indian Premier League in 2020 and the second half of the 2021 season, as well as the T20 World Cup in 2021. It also staged the Asia Cup in 2018 and 2022 due to geopolitical issues.

In Oct last year, the UAE hosted the Women's T20 World Cup after it was moved from a politically unstable Bangladesh. It is currently hosting India's matches in the 2025 ICC Cham-

pions Trophy. With India and Pakistan refusing to travel to each other's countries to play even in multi-nation tournaments, it could end up staging the Asia Cup (in the T20 format) in Sep this year too.

Certainly, it can't be easy to stage international matches at the last minute, but the Emirates Cricket Board has achieved a sort of expertise in it.

"We've only come to know from the media that we are hosting the Asia Cup. There's been no official confirmation to us in this regard. Our



SUBHAN AHMED

unique selling point (USP) is that we can host events at short notice. In the last five years, we've hosted the IPL, Pakistan Super League, the Asia Cup, (Women's T20) World Cup all at very short notice. So, we are prepared. We are (always) in a state of readiness, anytime we are given an opportunity to host an event," ECB COO Subhan Ahmed told reporters at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday, during the India versus New Zealand match.

"It's not very difficult for us because we've been hosting interna-

tional matches for a long time now. It's definitely challenging as a host when the other teams are there (in Pakistan) and only one team is here, but we deal with the situation as if we are organising this tournament independently, and we've organised it very smoothly so far. It's a PCB and the ICC's decision to host the matches here. We've 100% autonomy in operational decisions," Ahmed, who had stepped down as the COO of Pakistan board in 2020, said. The ECB COO said that his board started to manage the workload of the pitches at the DICS immediately after being told that they will host India's matches in the 2025 Champions Trophy during the ILT20.

"The moment we learnt that we will host India's matches in the Champions Trophy, we started preparing for this even as the ILT20 was on. We complied with all the ICC requirements, giving the required rest to those pitches which we were going to use for the Champions Trophy," Ahmed revealed.

Amidst hosting numerous international cricket tournaments, the UAE is also working towards developing its own cricketers. Two net bowlers—left-arm pacers Awas Ahmed and Wasim Akram—impressed Rohit Sharma significantly.

Krishna sets national indoor record in shot put

M.Sudharshan @timesofindia.com

Chennai: India's Krishna Jayasankar set a new indoor national record in women's shot put with a throw of 16.03m at the Mountain West Indoor Track and Field Championships in Albuquerque, the USA, on Saturday. The record is, however, yet to be ratified.

The Chennai girl, who represented the University of Nevada, achieved her best throw in her final attempt, surpassing Makalya Long (15.98m) to win bronze. The 22-year-old Krishna is the daughter of former Indian basketball players Jayasankar Menon and Prasanna. "I am happy that her hard work is paying off. She has been away from the family for quite some time and it is not easy. Apart from looking after her studies, she does part-time work. She has to concentrate on her training as well. Hope-



Krishna Jayasankar

fully, she will be able to perform much better going forward," Jayasankar told TOI. Krishna, who had initially trained under Jamaican coach Michael Wessel at the Tenvic Academy in Andhra Pradesh, moved to Jamaica in 2021 along with her coach after the academy was shut down. Wessel encouraged Krishna to continue her training in Jamaica. "Krishna trained in Jamaica for six months alongside several Olympic medalists. Based on her performances, she received scholarship offers from

Seb Coe says India has strong case in 2036 Olympics bid

New Delhi: International Olympic Committee (IOC) president's post contender Sebastian Coe feels India's bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games is a "strong case" but competition will be tough with several other countries throwing their hats in the ring.

India has already submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to host the 2036 Olympics and Paralympic Games to the IOC's Future Host Commission, taking the first concrete step in an ambitious plan after months of informal dialogue with the global sport's apex body.

"Well, you won't be surprised given my background to say that I'm obviously very happy that India is committed to global sport and particularly the Olympic movement. I'm very happy to hear that. "And look, it will be very competitive. It won't be the only bidder, but the case that it (India) can make is a very strong case," Coe said in an interview.

Poland, Indonesia, South Africa, Qatar, Hungary, Turkey, Mexico and Egypt are among other countries which have expressed a desire to host the 2036 Olympics.

The 2036 Games host nation will not be known before 2026. But it is certain that the host will be chosen during the presidency of the winner of the March 20 election of the new IOC chief. PTI

Tsitsipas claims Dubai title to end losing run in ATP 500 finals

Dubai: Stefanos Tsitsipas beat Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3 6-3 in the final of the Dubai Championships on Saturday to earn his first ATP 500 title.

It was third time lucky for Tsitsipas who had twice lost in the Dubai final, against Roger Federer in 2019 and Novak Djokovic a year later.

The fourth seed produced a dominant display and needed just 90 minutes to down Auger-Aliassime. "There is nothing that ensured the win today, it was just pure fighting," Tsitsipas, who will return to the world's top 10 for the first time since May, said. "It's a big relief that I'm able to hold that trophy after the third attempt. It's something that I had in the back of my mind, and I'm happy to say I accomplished it."

It was the 12th career title for 26-year-old Tsitsipas but he had lost his previous 11 finals in ATP 500s.

"To be owning a spot in the top 10 is definitely one of the greatest feelings a tennis player can experience," he added. "It comes with hard work and sacrifices, but I'm happy

Bereaved Team India manager returns home

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Dubai: R Devraj, Team India manager during the 2025 Champions Trophy, has left the squad to attend to a family bereavement. Devraj's mother, Kamaleshwari passed away on Sunday morning, prompting him to immediately depart for Hyderabad. Devraj is the secretary of the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA).

"With deep sorrow, we inform you that our secretary Devraj's mother, Kamaleshwari garu, has passed away. May her soul rest in peace. Our heartfelt condolences to Devraj garu and his family," the HCA said in a statement.

The news of his departure came even as India were playing against New Zealand in their final group match in the ongoing Champions Trophy. It is unclear whether Devraj will return to resume his managerial duties, though much of it will also depend on the outcome of Tuesday's semifinal.

Yuki wins maiden ATP 500 doubles title

Dubai: Yuki Bhambri claimed his maiden ATP 500 men's doubles title after he and his Australian partner Alexei Popyrin edged past Harri Heliövaara and Henry Patten 3-6, 7-6, 10-8 at the Dubai Tennis Championships here. PTI



that I'm in a position where I can really celebrate." Tsitsipas reeled off four successive games to take the opening set from 2-3 down. Auger-Aliassime was unable to convert any of his seven break points and that proved costly as the match slipped away from him in the second set. REUTERS

GALLERY

UP Warriorz hope to return to winning ways against GG

Lucknow: UP Warriorz will aim to avenge their earlier defeat when they take on Gujarat Giants in their crucial return-leg Women's Premier League fixture here on Monday. In the first meeting on February 16, Gujarat Giants secured a six-wicket win. Now, UP Warriorz, RCB, and Gujarat Giants are all tied on four points, and placed between third and fifth position. This clash becomes a must-win for both.

Chhetri's equaliser ends East Bengal's playoffs charge

charge: East Bengal FC drew 1-1 against Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League (ISL) in Kolkata on Sunday. The Blues needed the added time of the second half to grab a point from the fixture, ending East Bengal FC's playoff charge. Raphael Messi Bou gave East Bengal the lead. Sunil Chhetri scored the leveller from a penalty. The Red and Gold Brigade, placed eighth, have 28 points from 23 games now, and could get to a maximum of 31 with one game remaining, which would still fall short of the currently sixth-placed NorthEast United FC (32).

Naidoo wins South Africa Open in playoff

Local favourite Dylan Naidoo won the rain-hit South African Open at the Durban Country Club on the first playoff hole against Laurie Canter on Sunday. The 27-year-old Naidoo took the biggest prize in South African golf at the Durban Country Club, where another South African golfer of Indian ethnicity, Papaw Sewgolum, once had to collect his prize in the rain because racial laws meant he was not allowed in the club house.

Holt clinches Challenger title

American Brandon Holt, son of Tennis Hall of Famer Tracy Austin, clinched his second ATP Challenger singles title of the season with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Japan's Shintaro Mochizuki in the Bengaluru Open final.

Delhi FC logs win against Dempo

Delhi FC recorded their first win in 10 games, beating Dempo SC 2-1 in the I-League in Mahipur on Sunday. While Samir Binong and Zimababwean Victor Kamhuka scored for Delhi FC, Trinidadian Marcus Joseph (35th) struck for Dempo. AGENCIES

ACTION TODAY

CRICKET: WPL, Gujarat vs UP, 6.30 pm (Star Sports)
FOOTBALL: ISL, Chennaiyin FC vs NEUFC, 7.30 pm (Star Sports); I-League, Sporting Club Bengaluru vs Aizawl FC, 4.30 pm; Gokulam Kerala vs Shillong Lajong, 7.30 pm (Sony Sports); FA Cup, Nottingham Forest vs Ipswich Town, 1 am Tuesday (Sony Sports)



ON CLOUD NINE: Ecstatic Vidarbha players after the final win on Sunday

Three cheers for Vidarbha

Beat Kerala With First Innings Lead To Win Ranji For Third Time

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Nagpur: For the last five days, Vidarbha cricket loyalists have been shouting 'Vee-darbha, Vee-darbha' at the Jamtha Stadium here. On Sunday, their numbers grew to a few thousand. At around 2.20pm, the chants reached a peak. The crescendo drowned the pain of last season's heartbreak, and the agony of a five-year wait for another title. Vidarbha capped an outstanding Ranji Trophy season in style to emerge champions. The team with most wins this season, batted Kerala out of the title clash to lift the Ranji Trophy for the third time. Having earned a 37-run first innings lead, Vidarbha extended their second innings to 375 for 9 in 143.5 overs and batted till the fog end of second session on Day 5.

As Darshan Nalkande, batting at No 10, ran two to complete his fifty, umpires called it a day. The younger among the Vidarbha camp rushed to the pitch. Yash Thakur, Vidarbha No. 11, bat in one hand, a souvenir stump in the other, was hugged by Yash Rathod, the highest scorer with 960 runs. Harsh Dubey, having scripted history with 69 scalps, uprooted another stump to keep as the memory of a once-

DOMESTIC HIGH in-a-lifetime season, topped by the 'Player of the Series' award. Like all through the final, Kerala had their chances on Day 5 too. Like all through the final, they were denied by Vidarbha. The day started with Kerala sniffing an early chance thanks to Aditya Sarwate. The left-arm spinner, a Vidarbha hero till last season, deceived Karun Nair (135, 295b) to give Kerala a breakthrough in the seventh over; Nair, after adding three runs to his overnight score, charged down to Sarwate only to miss the line of the ball and get stumped. Skipper Akshay Wadkar and Harsh Dubey then denied Kerala another wicket for the next 11.4 overs. However, their dismissals in back-to-back overs saw Vidarbha slide to 283 for 7 in 110 overs. With around two-and-half sessions left, and Vidarbha lead at 320, Kerala would have hoped to dismiss the tail soon to give themselves a chance of chasing the total. Vidarbha, though, had men in their ranks to deny the rival any footing on the last day. Throughout the season, someone or the other has bailed out Vidarbha from tight situations. How could the final be any different?

After the big names in the batting line-up had done their job, the Vidarbha lower order denied Kerala the chance to have a go at glory. Akshay Karnear, on the fringes for most of the season, made 30. SCORES: Vidarbha 379 & 375 for 9 (K Nair 135, D Malewar 73, D Nalkande 51; A Sarwate 4-96) draw with Kerala 342. Vidarbha win by first innings lead.

3 Vidarbha have won their third Ranji title and the first since 2018-19 when they won back to back trophies — by 9 wickets vs Delhi at Indore in 2017-18 and by 78 runs vs Saurashtra at Nagpur in 2018-19.

34 Aditya Sarwate, with 34 wickets at 19.70 in nine matches finished as the second highest wicket-taker for Kerala in the 2024-25 Ranji season behind the 40 (ave 22.50) in 10 matches by Jalaj Saxena.

51 Unbeaten knock by Darshan Nalkande is his second fifty in first-class cricket — the first being 66 not out as No. 10 batter vs Kerala at Nagpur in February 2020. —Rajesh Kumar

'Life-changing' win for ex-criminal Peake

Former motorcycle gang member who was convicted to 5 years in prison wins NZ Open

Arrowtown: Former Australian motorcycle gang member-turned-golfer Ryan Peake, who served a lengthy jail term for assault, produced a "life-changing" maiden win Sunday to qualify for this year's British Open.

Peake held his nerve for a one-stroke victory at the New Zealand Open, earning him a berth at the major in Portrush, Northern Ireland, in July, pending clearance to travel as a convicted criminal. The 31-year-old from Perth celebrated animatedly on the 18th green of the Millbrook Resort course near Queenstown. Peake held back tears as he admitted a focus on golf had turned



GOLF his life around — he will now have an exemption on the Asian Tour, who co-sanctioned the event with the Australasian Tour. "I'm pretty lost for words at the moment, life-changing," the heavily tattooed Peake said.

He nearly didn't play, having been delayed from entering in New Zealand by immigration officials because of his conviction in 2014 for a serious assault as a 21-year-old. He was sentenced to five years in prison, the culmination of what he has admitted were a series of bad decisions that had seen him join an outlawed motorcycle gang, the Rebels. In prison, he was contacted by Western Australian golf coach Ritchie Smith, who urged Peake to resume what had been a promising career as a junior.

He only arrived on Tuesday night. "Just by getting here, I'd kind of already won," he said. AFP

Thai high: Marc outduels brother Alex

Buriram: Six-time world champion Marc Marquez used all his experience to fight back from a mid-race wobble to outduel his brother Alex Marquez for a "dream" win in Sunday's season-opening Thai MotoGP.

It completed a dominant debut for his new factory Ducati team, with pole-sitter Marquez having romped to victory in Saturday's sprint at the Buriram Circuit for a maximum 37 championship points.

The Spanish great took his 63rd MotoGP victory by 1.732sec from younger sibling Alex, who is still seeking a first chequered flag, with Italian two-time world champion



MOTOGP Francesco Bagnaia third. Marc Marquez tucked into second spot, lurking ominously on Alex's back wheel for 15 laps as he managed his tyres expertly and kept a pressure issue under control. His strategy paid off as he made

a decisive move with less than laps of the 26 to dive under Alex on turn 12 before stretching away to complete a second family one-two, after Saturday's sprint. "Yesterday I was happy, today I am super happy," said Marc Marquez. "I mean it's a dream. I cannot ask for more."

"To share this weekend with my brother is something unreal for our family. There are no words to describe how you feel when you are on the podium with your brother." The start of the new MotoGP season was overshadowed by the absence of world champion Jorge Martin. AFP

Barca win big; old boy Isco derails Real's title hopes

Barcelona: Barcelona returned to the top of the LaLiga table with a comfortable 4-0 home victory over 10-man Real Sociedad on Sunday.

Barcelona's sixth straight league win moved them into first place with 57 points from 26 games, one ahead of Atletico Madrid. Defending champions Real Madrid are third with 54 points after a 2-1 defeat at Real Betis on Saturday.

Sociedad went down to 10 men in the 17th minute when defender Ariz Elustondo was sent off for fouling Dani Olmo and Barcelona quickly made their advantage count as Gerard Martin and Marc Casado both scored their first professional goals. Barcelona kept up the pressure after the interval and created chance after chance, wrapping up the win with second-half strikes from Ronald Araujo and Robert Lewandowski.

On Saturday, defending champions Real Madrid suffered a dent to their title defence with a 2-1 defeat at Real Betis. Isco scored the winner from the penalty spot against his former side.

The former Madrid player delivered a corner kick that was headed in by fellow midfielder Johnny Cardoso in the 34th minute, canceling out Brahim Diaz's opener for Madrid. Isco then put Betis ahead



A REMINDER: Betis' Isco (2nd from L), who missed months of action with injury, scored the winner against his old Madrid club

from the penalty spot in the 54th after he passed to Jestis Rodriguez and Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger knocked the Betis forward down in the area.

Isco left Madrid three years ago, having helped them win five Champions League titles before he lost his starting job and then struggled to get off the bench. But Madrid might wish they had him back after the 32-year-old midfielder was the most decisive player on the field at the Benito Villamarin. Isco, however, shared the credit for the win with his teammates. "Madrid have the best players and a million dif-

ferent ways it can hurt you, so if it weren't for the hard work of the entire team we wouldn't have been able to do this," Isco said, before adding that he was still "grateful" for his time at Madrid.

The playmaker also showed he has not been slowed down by a leg injury that likely cost him a spot on Spain's European Championship side last summer. He returned to the field in December and is playing like he'd never been away.

"It is a dream of any player to play for his national team," Isco said after the win. "I haven't played for Spain in six, seven years, so of course I would like to." AGENCIES

Newcastle lose to Brighton; City win

Newcastle: Danny Welbeck scored deep into extra time to send Brighton & Hove Albion into their first FA Cup quarter-final for 42 years with a dramatic 2-1 victory over Newcastle United on Sunday after both teams were reduced to 10 men. Newcastle's Alexander

FA CUP Isak and Brighton's Yankubah Minteh scored in the first half and Welbeck struck the winner in the 114th minute with an exquisite finish from a tight angle.

Manchester City survived a scare for the second round in succession as they beat Championship strugglers Plymouth Argyle 3-1 to reach the quarterfinals on Saturday. Teenager Nico O'Reilly saved City's blushes with two headed goals after Ukrainian Maksym Talovierov had sent thousands of visiting fans into delirium by heading Plymouth into the lead. Both his goals were set up by Kevin de Bruyne, who added a late third goal to finish off the south-coast side.

While Plymouth were unable to emulate their shock victory over Premier League leaders Liverpool in the fourth round, City will now be big favourites to win the Cup for the third time under Pep Guardiola. REUTERS

NAPOLI STEAL A DRAW FROM LEADERS INTER TO STAY IN RACE

Naples: Napoli's performance in Saturday's 1-1 draw against leaders Inter Milan in their top of the table clash has shown they can fight for the Serie A title, manager Antonio Conte said. Conte's side risked falling further

SERIE A behind in the Scudetto race having surrendered first place to Inter last weekend but a late Philip Billing goal kept Napoli a point off the pace.

"This match was important not only for the standings, but also for a matter of personality," Conte told reporters. "With 11 games to go, being one point from the top must make us understand that, despite the difficulties, if we want, we can play for the Scudetto until the end."

It was the perfect response after the disappointment of Napoli's 2-1 defeat at Como last Sunday and the manager wants to see more. REUTERS

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BSP PRESIDENT MAYAWATI REMOVES HER NEPHEW AKASH ANAND FROM ALL PARTY POSTS FOR THE SECOND TIME IN A YEAR

Court: Book ex-Sebi chief Buch for 'lapses' in listing co in 1994

BSE MD & CEO Among 5 Others To Be Probed

Swati.Deshpande
@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Ordering a probe into alleged irregularities in listing a company on BSE in 1994, a special Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) court in Mumbai on Saturday directed the agency to file an FIR against Sebi's former chief Madhabi Puri Buch, three other Sebi officials, a former chairman of BSE and current BSE MD & CEO Sundaraman Ramamurthy.

"There is prima facie evidence of regulatory lapses and collusion, requiring a fair and impartial probe," said the March 1 order delivered by special judge S E Bangar. The allegations regarding failure to exercise regulatory oversight were in a private complaint filed by Sapan Shrivastava, a Mumbai-based application mentions him as a 'media reporter'. He sought a

'PRIMA FACIE PROOF OF COLLUSION'

> Complainant alleges Sebi officials facilitated market manipulation, enabled fraud by allowing listing of co that didn't meet norms

> Case relates to listing of Cals Refineries on BSE in 1994. Sebi & BSE say those named in the court order were not in these positions then

> Complainant says he had approached police & regulatory bodies but 'no

action was taken', necessitating judicial intervention

> Spl Judge S E Bangar says there's prima facie evidence of regulatory lapses and collusion

> Says complaint alleged 'procedural lapses in IPO process'; cited regulatory filings & market reports 'indicating artificial inflation of share prices, market manipulation'



Madhabi Puri Buch

probe against these officials in connection with the listing of a company named Cals Refineries (the court order doesn't mention this company).

The state of Maharashtra and Govt of India are listed as accused in the court order.

> 'Judicial intervention', P 16

Officials didn't hold respective posts then: Sebi

Sebi, which said it would take legal steps to challenge the ACB court order, added that though the officials in question, including Buch, were not holding their respective positions in 1994, "the court allowed the application without issuing any notice or granting any opportunity to Sebi to place the facts on record".

Between 1994 and Buch taking over in 2022, Sebi has had eight chairmen.

BSE said these officials were "not connected at all" with Cals Refineries and called the application "frivolous and vexatious in nature". It said it was "initiating necessary and appropriate legal steps". P 15

Indian tries to enter US as Pak national, caught

AC Patel from Gujarat became Mohammad Najir Hussain of Pakistan by paying an agent in Dubai to forge his identity. He swapped his Gujarat roots for a Pakistani character just to secure a spot on a flight to US. Patel's real passport had expired in 2016 and instead of renewing it, he relied on human traffickers. But American authorities saw through the deception and unmasked him, reports Ashish Chauhan. Patel arrived at Delhi airport on Feb 12 via flight AA-292 after US authorities sent him back to India. **INSIDE FLAP**

Total smartphone ban for students 'undesirable': HC

New Delhi: A complete ban on the use of smartphones by school students is both an "undesirable and unworkable approach", Delhi high court has underlined.

In a first-of-its-kind ruling, HC also laid down norms to guide schools on framing a policy for the use of smartphones by students. Examining guidelines issued by govt bodies and school boards in this regard, Justice Anup J Bhambhani noted that these "proceed on the fundamental premise that the use of smartphones in school should be banned".

The court was hearing a

'FRAME POLICY'

> HC lays down norms for schools to frame policy, says allow phones for safety, but not for entertainment

> Phones shouldn't interfere with discipline and teaching, schools must educate kids on responsible online behaviour, cyberbullying, says court

case of a minor student who misused a smartphone in school, leading to strict action by the concerned Kendriya Vidyalaya against him, reports Abhinav Garg.

> 'A lot has changed', P 6

Kerala man gets shot in bid to sneak into Israel

Jordanian border guards gunned down Thomas Gabriel Pereira (47), an auto driver from Kerala, while he was trying to illegally enter Israel last month. He was part of a four-member group that had travelled to Jordan on three-month tourist visas, misled by an agency promising Israeli work visas.

Two of the four are in a Jordanian jail. Pereira's family found out about his death only recently after the fourth member of the group, a relative of Pereira and another auto driver, was deported by Jordan. **INSIDE FLAP**



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What a male superstar, many netas, and most of India agree on

When Chiranjeevi complained about 'too many' girls being born in his family, he was doubling down for a system that refuses to give women agency over their own bodies and sees girls as unsuitable heirs to family wealth

Renuka.Bisht@timesofindia.com

Those who keep calling out the misogyny of Telugu cinema had a gotcha moment this month. At a *Brahma Anandam* pre-release event, megastar Chiranjeevi pulled no punches about what he doesn't like about his "home". That it's full of granddaughters. That he's scared his son, of *RRR* fame, might again have a girl. That he keeps wishing and telling Ram Charan, "At least this time, have a boy so that our legacy continues."

What Chiranjeevi expressed is a common sentiment. The shock is that he said it. However pervasive gender bias remains, there has been enough of a shift in culture for the well-to-do, the better educated, the people in public gaze, to restrain from voicing it in public.

His supporters say the comments were 'playful'. But intentions aside, they touch a painful reality of our society. Son preference remains widespread and sons remain primary in ideas about carrying forward the family legacy.

Mistreatment of both daughters and mothers is the necessary oxygen for such ideas. Newborn girls are regularly found abandoned in our country. Husbands and in-laws do not hesitate to shame women at the hospital itself, for giving birth to daughters. Accounts of the mental and physical torture at home thereafter, defy belief. Her body exhausted by childbirth, what nourishment can she give a daughter?

and in-laws take charge of her reproductive choices. To seal a woman's disempowerment, and complete her disconnection from her own body, she's told "producing" more women is bad labour.

A grim birth inequality follows. The 2017 Eco Survey estimated 63 million "missing" and 21 million "unwanted" girls, by looking at the sex ratio and how people stop having children based on the sex of the last child. Skewed sex ratios are to be found even in the Indian diaspora, such as in Canada. Defying other countries' trajectory, here development is failing as an antidote to son preference.

Per NFHS, only 8% of women make healthcare decisions independently, and only 3% of them want more daughters than sons. Lack of autonomy loops women into internalising patriarchy, privilege makes men perpetuate it. Thus culture overrides material progress.

“I keep wishing and telling Ram Charan, 'at least this time, have a boy so that our legacy continues'. But his daughter is the apple of his eye... I'm scared that he might have another girl”
—Chiranjeevi, Telugu Actor



last rites. They are discouraged from even attending funerals. But recent decades have seen more and more women break both these taboos, which also got a particular beating from Covid.

Manmohan Singh's last rites were performed by his daughter. Same for Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Pankaja Munde lit her father's pyre. Mandira Bedi, her husband's. But we are still far, far from a woman doing this solemn duty becoming a familiar sight at local crematoriums.

Who inherits? | Being disallowed from the last rites represents a larger disinheritance. For example, while the daughter taking the husband's surname happens in the West too, what doesn't is the daughter being considered 'paraya dhan', someone else's wealth. For Indian daughters, being 'paraya' means getting less affection, less nutrition, less education — and less parental estate.

Tellingly, in the early 1990s, a prominent business baron adopted his grandson and made him heir, rather than pass on his legacy to a daughter. Since then, laws have become more progressive. In 2005, an amendment to the Hindu Succession Act gave daughters equal rights in their father's property. More recently, a high court has ruled that a woman can be the 'karta' (head) of a Hindu Undivided Family. Thanks to another judgment, daughters can apply for a 'compassionate appointment' irrespective of their marital status.

Even as these new, equal rights are permeating into society, India's slowing birth rate is throwing up a new threat. Men and govts have begun trying to re-educate women into making more babies. At root, it's about the status of childbearing. It keeps women subjugated because it's not recognised as their choice. Or their right. Is their body even their body?

Whose body does the labour? | Think about Chiranjeevi's 'joke' from the point of view of Upasana Kamineni, Charan's wife and an entrepreneur in her own right. That will underline how patriarchy has weaponised motherhood against women. The systemic goal is to benefit men, hurting women is the incidental part of patriarchy's design. It's the punchline.

First, as Simone de Beauvoir wrote, patriarchy constructs a value system where "to give birth and to breast-feed are not activities, but natural functions." By making pregnancy about biological destiny rather than choice, its labour and risks are made low-status. And shadowy. You never ever hear the childbirth stories. There are no epic poems about this profound and lionhearted experience just because it's a women-only experience.

Who gets born? | Then, even in this, women's agency is torn away. Husbands

Who changes societal norms? | Development economist Seema Jayachandran's research highlights that well-intended policy actions are also fraught with risks. For example, offering financial incentives to have daughters can concentrate girls in poorer families. What she finds of special value is social interventions that shift the patriarchal norms, and increase the intrinsic value that families place on girls. Her analysis also explains the seriousness of Chiranjeevi making a joke out of his granddaughters. Instead of changing the sexist norm, where boys have greater value, he nails it deeper.

Status and norm-changing are found to be tied across cultures. Demographer Christophe Z Guilmoto has called it the 'pioneer' effect. He finds that from South Korea to Armenia, change originates with the prosperous, more educated strata of society. At least, elsewhere. Put another way, in India, the Chiranjeevi sentiment might be excusable in poverty, but made by those who live in material comfort, it's indefensible.

Who takes charge of death? | From the inequality at birth follows the inequality at death. Women are disallowed from the

Jordanian troops shoot Kerala man trying to sneak into Israel

Another From Group Of Four Injured, Sent Back To India

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

T'puram: Jordanian border guards shot dead 47-year-old autorickshaw driver **Thomas Gabriel Pereira** from Kerala while attempting to illegally cross into Israel from the kingdom last month. He was part of a four-member group that had travelled to Jordan on three-month tourist visas, misled by an agency promising Israeli work visas.

Pereira's family in Thiruvananthapuram district found out his death after Edison, a 43-year-old relative who was also part of the group, was recently deported by Jordan following medical treatment for a leg wound suffered in the shooting. The other two members remain in a Jordanian prison.



The border between Israel and Jordan. The other two members of the group that had travelled on tourist visas remain in a Jordanian prison

According to reports, Indian embassy in Jordan informed Pereira's family about his death through an email, but the message went unchecked for long. His family has now approached Norka Roots, a Kerala govt agency for expatriates, seeking help in repatriating his body.

Pereira and Edison, both autorickshaw drivers, had not disclosed their true intentions before their departure. Their families were informed only hours before

their journey to Jordan on Feb 5. The two remained in contact until Feb 9, after which they attempted to cross into Israel through a mountainous valley on Feb 10. Jordanian soldiers spotted and opened fire on them.

Their relative Agnes Henry expressed the family's distress. "We have no clue who took them to Jordan and how much money was paid. Please help get at least his body back," she said.

The case has raised concerns over illegal migration and fraudulent visa agencies.

"Many have fallen victim to visa agency fraud. Recently, many from coastal villages were misled into joining the Russian army under false job promises, and fight the war in Ukraine. Police must take action to raise awareness and prevent such scams," Norka Roots CEO Ajith Kolassery said.

How Gujarat's Patel became Pakistan's Hussain: Deported from US, man reveals passport secret

Ashish.Chauhan@timesofindia.com

Ahmedabad: AC Patel from Gujarat had become Mohamad Najir Hussain of Pakistan — but only for a moment. And in that moment, he had belonged nowhere at all.

Patel's passport bore Hussain's name and nationality, but American authorities saw through the deception. The man who claimed to be Hussain was unmasked. Patel arrived at Delhi airport on Feb 12 via flight AA-292 after US authorities sent him back to India. American agencies have



US has intensified crackdown on illegal immigrants following Trump's new term. Patel, whose real passport had expired in 2016, was arrested on arrival in Delhi for misuse of passport and cheating by impersonation

intensified their crackdown on undocumented Indians following Donald Trump's new term since Jan, target-

ing immigrants living illegally in US and deporting them home. In the past month alone, three flights packed with Indian deportees — including 74 Gujaratis — have landed in India after being expelled by US authorities.

Patel's real troubles had only just begun. Delhi police arrested him on arrival. He faces multiple serious charges, including cheating by impersonation, and misuse of passport. What stunned Indian immigration officials was the Pakistani passport. Not just any forged document, but an actual lost passport that belonged to Hussain.

Cornered, Patel confessed. He had paid an agent in Dubai to forge his identity, swapping his Gujarat roots for a Pakistani character, just to secure a spot on a flight to US.

Patel's real passport had expired in 2016 and instead of renewing it, he relied on human traffickers who provided him with fraudulent documents and facilitated his illegal journey via Dubai.

"Human smugglers pick passports that are strong for getting a US visa or randomly assign some UAE citizen's passport to sneak into US," a source said.