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THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Actor **Saif Ali Khan** talks to **TOI** about the attack on him by an intruder: 'I have like 30 most awful scars running down my neck. I don't understand how he missed my carotid artery and jugular vein', See Delhi Times

Bangladesh criticises India's comments on the demolition of the historic Dhanmondi 32 **residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**, calls them 'unexpected and undesirable', P 14

Trump says he has spoken to Putin by phone about ending the war in Ukraine, reports New York Post. It's the first known direct conversation between the US president and his Russian counterpart since early 2022, P 14

Skipper Rohit Sharma's 119 runs and Ravindra Jadeja's wily 3-wicket spell help **India defeat England by 4 wickets** in 2nd ODI to take 2-0 lead in 3-match series, P 19

Biren quits as CM of Manipur, assembly session suspended

Singh Gives In After Meeting With HM, Nadda

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Guwahati: Manipur CM N Biren Singh's defiance of repeated resignation calls over his handling of the ethnic conflict raging there since May 2023 ended Sunday when he put in his papers on eve of the assembly's budget session, and a possible no-trust motion by Congress against the BJP-led govt.

FULL COVERAGE: P 9, 10

Governor A K Bhalla accepted Biren's resignation and asked him to continue "till alternative arrangements". Late Sunday, the governor's secretariat notified that its Jan order summoning the assembly session stands "null and void" with immediate effect.

The buzz around his resignation grew after Biren flew to Delhi, his second trip in a week, late Saturday. After a lengthy meeting with home minister Amit Shah on Sunday – BJP chief J P Nadda was also present – he returned to Imphal along with BJP's Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra.

▶Guv change was hint, P 18

MOVE TO AVOID NO-TRUST MOTION?

- Resignation sets off speculation on 'why now?' As per watchers, Biren wanted to avoid no-trust motion planned by Cong as he wasn't confident of support of his party legislators
- However, his exit appeared imminent since A K Bhalla's appointment as guv last Dec

WHO'LL BE CM? Name of ex-speaker Y Khemchand, a vocal critic of Biren, among those doing the rounds

Biren handing his resignation to guv A K Bhalla

"It has been an honour to serve people of Manipur. I'm grateful to Centre for timely actions, interventions, developmental work... for safeguarding interests of every single Manipuri —BIREN SINGH

Mounting public pressure, SC investigation and no-trust motion by Congress have forced a reckoning. But most urgent priority is to restore peace... PM must visit Manipur at once —RAHUL GANDHI

Prez rule likely if alternative govt doesn't emerge

Centre is open to exploring all political alternatives in the wake of Biren Singh's exit, including giving opportunity to another state BJP neta to stake claim to the CM's post, sources said. The last option, in the event of no alternative govt formation working out, would be imposition of President's rule, **report Bharti Jain & Akhilesh Singh**.

Singh's ouster was driven by the assessment that his own support among MLAs had dwindled. With Singh out, Centre hopes that Kuki representatives will be open to talks for sorting out issues creating mistrust between their community and the Meiteis. P 9

31 Maoists, two securitymen die in fierce Bastar gunbattle

81 Naxals Killed In Ops In Just 6 Weeks Of 2025

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Raipur: At least 31 Maoist insurgents and two security personnel were killed Sunday in a fierce gunfight in the dense forests of Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, one of the last Naxal strongholds in the country. The operation is ongoing and officials expect the Maoist death toll to rise.

This is the second-largest Maoist casualty count in a single security strike, after 38 guerrillas were gunned down in Narayanpur's Thulthuli on Oct 3 last year. Since 2024, more than 280 Maoists have been killed in Bastar. The number of Maoists killed this year has risen to 81 in just six weeks. Major operations include the killing of 16 Naxal fighters in Gariaband on Jan 21 and eight in Gangaloor on Feb 2. Security forces have also faced fatalities. On Jan 6, eight constables and a driver were killed when Maoists targeted their vehicle with an IED weighing nearly 70kg in Bijapur.

Union home minister Amit Shah praised the security forces for the successful operation. "The nation will always be indebted to these heroes.... I once again reaffirm that by March 31, 2026, we will eradicate Naxalism from the roots of this country so that no citizen loses their life due to it," he said. The gunfight erupted early Sunday after a contingent of over 650 security personnel launched a coordinated operation from multiple directions to hem in insurgents in the jungles of Bijapur's Indravati National Park.

▶Gun-tantra to..., P 18

LARGE CACHE OF ARMS RECOVERED

- **Intel reported presence of a large group of Maoists** and 'senior commanders' in the jungles of Bijapur district's **Indravati National Park**
- Big contingent of more than **650 security personnel launched a coordinated operation** from multiple directions to hem in insurgents in jungles
- **Toll expected to rise** as encounter still on

Security personnel take bodies of Naxals to district HQ in Bijapur

- A large cache of weapons seized from Maoists, including **AK-47s**, SLRs, INSAS and .303 rifles, **barrel grenade launchers** and explosives

Dairy MD among 4 held in Tirupati laddu ghee case

CBI's SIT arrested four people, including the MD of a Tamil Nadu dairy, on Sunday in the Tirupati laddu ghee adulteration case. SIT's probe revealed serious violations in ghee supply, with irregularities at every step, sources said. CBI arrested the four after questioning them for three days, they said. P 15

Baby, 3 labourers crushed by dumper

Three women labourers engaged in construction work and a toddler playing nearby died when a sand-laden truck overturned on them in Gujarat's Banaskantha Saturday night. P 15

8 Kumbh pilgrims die in accidents

Eight Kumbh pilgrims — four from Chhattisgarh, three from MP and one from Odisha — were killed in road accidents on Sunday, raising the death toll from such mishaps to 79. P 18

Grandson kills Hyd industrialist

The grandson of Velamati Chandrashekara J Rao, founder of Telangana's Veljan Group of Industries, was arrested Sunday on charges of stabbing the 86-year-old to death over a property row. P 9

Murder convict pays off fine with earnings

Durgappa, 68, sentenced to life in a murder case, was set to walk free in Nov '24 due to good behaviour, walked out after he paid the fine of Rs 1.1 lakh with his earnings as prison cook. P 9

You lost due to curse of Yamuna, LG tells Atishi

New Delhi: You lost because of the curse of Yamuna Maa, lieutenant governor V K Saxena is learnt to have told outgoing CM Atishi on Sunday when she visited Raj Bhawan to submit her papers.

Sources also quoted Saxena telling Atishi that he had warned her boss Arvind Kejriwal about the "curse of Yamuna" after he got the Supreme Court to stall a project to clean the river.

FULL COVERAGE: P 2-4

According to sources in Raj Bhawan, Atishi did not respond to the LG's remarks. When approached by TOI, the LG's secretariat refused to comment on this account of Saxena's conversation with Atishi. TNN

PTI

Atishi submits her resignation as CM to LG VK Saxena on Sunday

▶Stay on Yamuna panel, P 4

City man beaten to death in bus over spilled food

New Delhi: A 28-year-old passenger was brutally murdered inside a private RTV bus in Bawana, allegedly by its driver, conductor and their helper, after his food accidentally spilled onto the seats. Police said the men thrashed the victim, inserted a rod in his private parts and dumped his body near Bawana flyover. One of them has been arrested.

Manoj, who lived with his wife and three children in Narela, used to work as a cook in wedding functions and was his family's sole breadwinner. On Feb 1, he and his co-worker Dinesh attended a function in Sultanpur Dabas. After finishing work past midnight, they packed some leftover food and boarded an RTV bus. TNN

ATTACKED WITH ROD

- Manoj, co-worker Dinesh **boarded an RTV bus after cooking** at a function
- Manoj dropped some food on seats & floor, which **angered driver and his aides**
- They let Dinesh get off bus, but **held Manoj back**
- Abused and thrashed him, attacked him with rod, then **threw body near a flyover**

▶Man hit with rod, P 6

SC acquits man on death row, says probe faulty

The Supreme Court has set aside the death penalty awarded to an Agra man who was earlier convicted for the murder of his brother, sister-in-law and four children in a property dispute case in 2012, **reports Sudeep Lavania.** Gambhir Singh has been in jail since the past 13 years. Pulling up IOs, SC said, "Investigation of a case involving the gruesome murders of six persons was carried out in a most casual and negligent manner." It held that probe failed to provide "proper evidence" to convict the accused. P 11

B'luru cops pull the plug on Ed Sheeran the busker

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Bengaluru: Imagine taking a leisurely Sunday stroll, only to stumble upon your favourite artiste performing on the street, followed by the shock of him being put on pause. That's exactly what happened when Ed Sheeran treated Bengaluru to a surprise gig on Church Street during his India Tour — a true 'Peak Bengaluru' moment.

Just as fans gathered in awe, police unplugged the mic mid-performance, citing lack of permission and footpath encroachment. As officers tried to escort him away, Sheeran told the crowd, "We've permission to be here, but this policeman is shutting it down. See you later!"

Cops stopped the performance barely a minute into 'Shape of You'

▶ 'Had permission', P 18

Atishi quits as CM after poll drubbing, vows to hold BJP accountable

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Atishi handed over her resignation as chief minister to lieutenant governor VK Saxena on Sunday, a day after AAP's defeat in the Delhi assembly polls to BJP.

Saxena dissolved the legislative assembly.

Atishi managed to retain her Kalkaji seat at a time several senior AAP functionaries like party chief Arvind Kejriwal and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia lost their seats. She became the chief minister of Delhi in Sept last year after Kejriwal stepped down.

Later in the day, Atishi met former chief minister Kejriwal at his residence along with the other winning candidates of AAP. After meeting, she said: "AAP will act as a responsible opposition, ensuring that BJP fulfils its promises, including the Rs 2,500 financial assistance for women and the continuation of key public welfare schemes."

She added that Kejriwal "emphasised that the MLAs must serve the people in their constituencies and ensure that all public grievances are addressed effectively." Atishi further highlighted that the people had placed their trust in AAP by electing 22 MLAs. "It is now the party's responsibility to serve them and resolve their issues," she said. She stressed that AAP will be a responsible opposition party and "BJP must be held accountable."

Atishi also said that "AAP will make sure that BJP does not obstruct or undo the development work accomplished by the Aam Aadmi Party over the past 10 years."

Former deputy chief minister Sisodia also met Kejriwal along with candidates who lost the election. He alleged "misuse of govt machinery, money and liquor during the elections".

Sisodia said that during the discussion, Kejriwal stressed the importance of the MLAs continuing public service, regardless of the outcome and that they will be used in the expansion of the party.

What Win For 11 Councillors Means For MCD

Eight Of Them From BJP, Party's Chances In Mayor Polls Get Boost

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New Delhi: Of the 22 councillors who contested the Delhi assembly elections, 11 won their contests. While eight BJP councillors won, AAP secured three seats. None of the Congress councillors emerged victorious.

The victorious BJP candidates included Ravinder Negi from Patparganj, Neelam Pehalwan from Najafgarh, Rekha Gupta from Shalimar Bagh, Shikha Roy from Greater Kailash, Umang Bajaj from Rajendra Nagar, Gajender Drall from Mundka, Poonam Sharma from Wazirpur and Chandan Choudhary from Sangam Vihar. From AAP, three councillors won— Punardeep Sawhney from Chandni Chowk, Prem Chauhan from Deoli and Aaley Mohammad Iqbal from Matia Mahal.

BJP's alderman Raj Kumar Bhatia, a nominated member without voting rights in MCD, also secured victory. He defeated AAP councillor Mukesh Goyal from Adarsh Nagar. Goyal is serving his sixth term as a councillor in MCD.

After the assembly election results, BJP has 112 councillors, AAP 119 and Congress eight.

Municipal Corporation of Delhi has 12 vacant positions, including the seat of MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat, who won a parliamentary election in May 2024.

Sources said that the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act does not mandate by-elections for vacant positions before mayoral elections. Should these seats remain unfilled before the April mayoral election, BJP's prospects of winning the mayoral position could strengthen, provided there is no cross-voting or Congress doesn't support other party, they added.

The mayoral elections occur annually during the first meeting of the civic body's yearly cycle beginning in April, with any general candidate eligible to contest this year. The deputy mayoral election will also take place in the same meeting, without any reservation requirements for the position.

The mayoral election process in Delhi involves an electoral college consisting of 250 councillors, 10 MPs (seven from Lok Sabha and three from Rajya Sabha), and 14 MLAs chosen by Delhi Assembly's Speaker. Additionally, 10 aldermen are part of the process but they lack voting rights in house proceedings or mayoral elections.

Previously, with AAP holding 62 assembly seats in Delhi, it nominated 13 of their MLAs and one from BJP. They also had the backing from three AAP's Rajya Sabha members. The dynamics are set to shift as BJP now holds 48 assembly seats while AAP has 22.

Prior to the mayoral election, the Speaker will finalise nominations and the party in office is likely to select more BJP MLAs for MCD. "And with additional support from seven Lok Sabha members, BJP has high chances to secure an advantage of 8-9 votes in the upcoming election," sources added.

In the last mayor elections in Nov, after a delay of eight months, AAP scored a narrow victory when their mayoral candidate, Mahesh Kumar Khichi, won by a slim margin of three votes against BJP's Kishan Lal. AAP secured 133 votes and BJP 130. The outcome was totally unexpected, considering AAP had 143 votes, including two Congress councillors who crossed over, compared to BJP's 122 before the commencement of the proceedings at Civic Centre.

12 VACANT SEATS IN MCD HOUSE

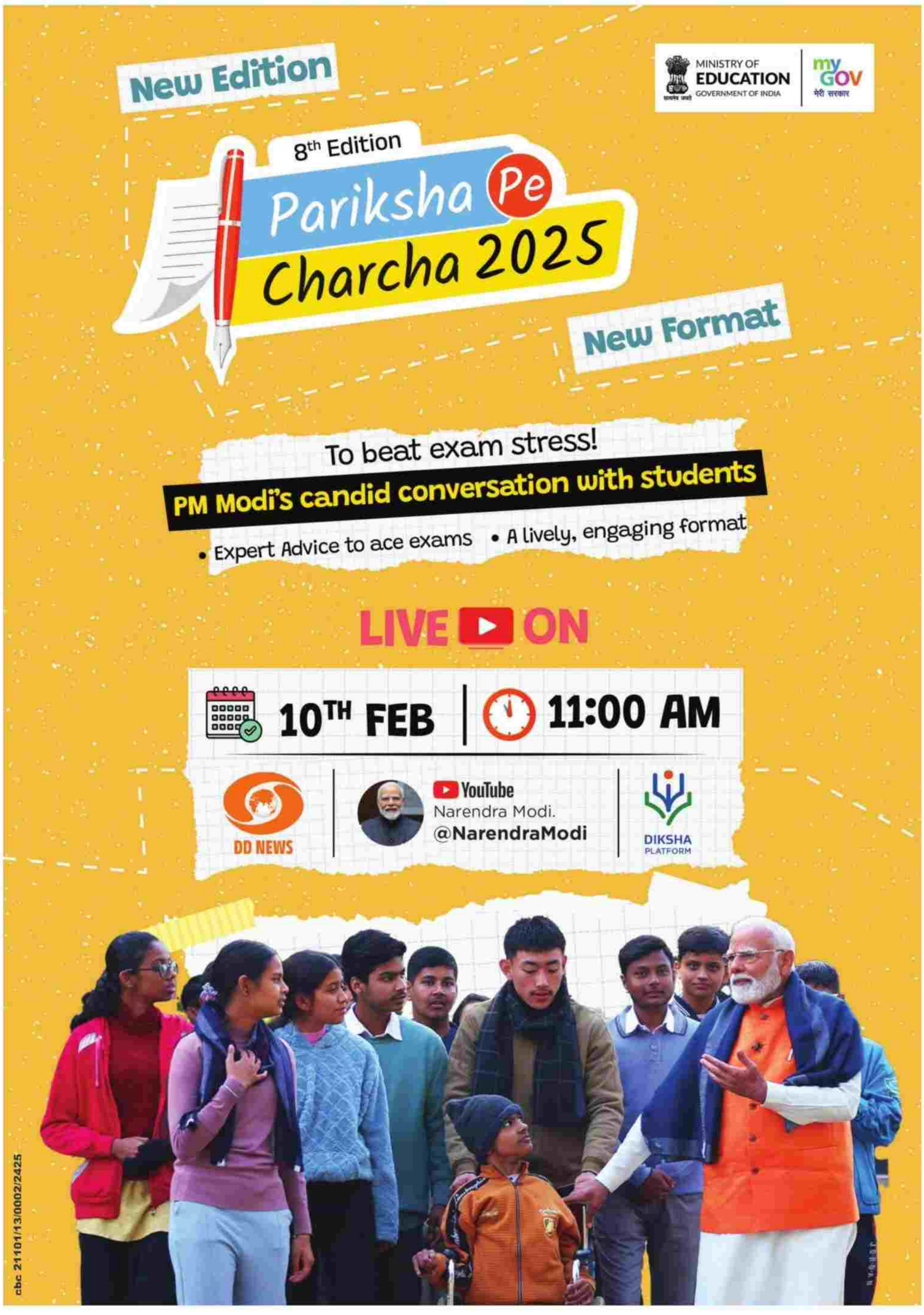
1 22 councillors contested assembly elections...
12 BJP
8 AAP
2 Cong

2 ...11 of them emerged victorious
- 8 BJP (**Ravinder Negi** from Patparganj, **Neelam Pahalwan** from Najafgarh, **Rekha Gupta** from Shalimar Bagh, **Shikha Roy** from Greater Kailash, **Umang Bajaj** from Rajendra Nagar, **Gajender Drall** from Mundka, **Poonam Sharma** from Wazirpur and **Chandan Choudhary** from Sangam Vihar)
- 3 AAP (**Punardeep Singh Sawhney** from Chandni Chowk, **Prem Chauhan** from Deoli and **Aaley Mohd Iqbal** from Matia Mahal)

3 These outcomes have resulted in 12 vacant seats in MCD, including MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat's position

4 As things stand, BJP has 112 councillors, AAP 119, and Congress 8

5 If these vacancies remain unfilled before the mayoral election in April, BJP's chances of securing the mayor's position could improve



BJP govt will table 14 pending CAG reports in first house session

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Former leader of opposition Vijender Gupta on Sunday announced that the newly-formed BJP government will present 14 long-pending CAG reports in the very first session of the Delhi Assembly. He accused the previous AAP government of massive corruption, claiming that once these reports are made public, the truth will be exposed.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already promised the people of Delhi that all 14 pending CAG reports will be tabled in the first session of the Assembly. Now that the AAP's misrule has ended, and with the power shift to the BJP, the AAP leaders who have been hiding their corruption since 2017 by not presenting a single CAG report will now have to flee from the Assembly when their misdeeds come to light," said Gupta.

This issue of not tabling the CAG reports became a key talking point for the BJP during the recent Assembly elections. Gupta, a three-time MLA from Rohini, shared his frustration, stating that attempts to raise the matter in the Assembly had been met with humiliation by ruling party MLAs.

"Despite repeatedly raising this issue in various sessions, we were humiliated by ruling party MLAs instead of getting a constructive response. This led us to seek intervention from constitutional authorities like the President, lieutenant governor, and chief secretary. When nothing changed, we filed a petition in the Delhi High Court to compel the government to present these reports," he added.

Gupta urged Delhi residents to carefully review the reports when made public, warning them not to forgive AAP leaders for their alleged corruption. "These corrupt individuals will soon be on the run," he said.

He also assured that "good days for Delhi have begun" and that the BJP government will fulfill every promise made in its manifesto.

In response to BJP, meanwhile, an AAP official said: "We hope that the BJP will abandon its negative politics and focus on the real issues of the people. The BJP had promised to provide Rs 2,500 per month to all women in Delhi by March 8 and to provide 300 units of free electricity. Now, it must uphold its promises with honesty and fulfill its commitments to the people."

Asked if the party is apprehensive about tabling of CAG reports, AAP official said: "Arvind Kejriwal is a staunchly honest leader. Till today, not a single charge has been proven against him. This is precisely why, despite implementing several welfare schemes, the erstwhile AAP-led Delhi government maintained a revenue surplus. We will continue to raise public issues and ensure that the BJP delivers on its promises."

AAP SAYS

We hope that BJP will abandon its negative politics and focus on the real issues of the people. The BJP had promised to provide Rs 2,500 per month to all women in Delhi by March 8 and to provide 300 units of free electricity. Now, it must uphold its promises with honesty and fulfill its commitments to people

At 27.4°C, Delhi records year's warmest day so far, AQI deteriorates

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The capital experienced a warm and sunny Sunday, with the maximum temperature reaching 27.4°C, marking it as the warmest day of the year so far. The rise in temperature was attributed to the impact of a western disturbance, which not only led to a spike in temperatures but also caused the city's air quality to deteriorate to the 'poor' category.

The maximum temperature was four degrees above normal, surpassing the previous high of 27°C recorded on Jan 31. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), temperatures are expected to remain warm through Tuesday, possibly reaching 28°C, as wind speeds continue to be low. Weather analysts pointed to the western disturbance as the cause, which altered wind direction and reduced speeds, bringing warm winds from the south-westerly or westerly direction.

The minimum temperatures, however, remained below normal as the clear skies at night allow heat to escape to the outer atmosphere. The minimum temperature on Sunday was recorded at 7.8 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal for this time of the year, compared to 9.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier. According to the forecast, minimum temperatures are likely to rise as well. They are expected to hover between 8-10 degrees Celsius on Monday and be between 10-12 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the city's air quality reverted to the 'poor' category on Sunday after two consecutive days of 'moderate' AQI. Air quality worsened on Sunday, with the average AQI recorded at 227, placing it in the 'poor' category, up from 152 the previous day. The city's air quality is expected to remain 'poor' until Tuesday but is forecasted to improve to the 'moderate' category by Wednesday. The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology's early warning system suggests that Delhi's air quality may fluctuate between 'poor' and 'moderate' over the coming week.

No Repeat Celebrations: 26 Of 47 MLAs In Poll Fray Lose

But All Six Sitting MLAs Of BJP Emerge Victorious In Polls

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New Delhi: Of the 47 MLAs who entered the electoral race for another term in office, 26 faced defeat. While BJP maintained its 100% strike rate with all six MLAs repeating their last election's success and comfortably winning their seats, the performance of AAP's legislators from the seventh legislative assembly of 2020-25, who re-contested from the parent party or switched sides, largely remained sub-par.

Facing a tough electoral battle after being in office for two consecutive terms, AAP repeated 36 of its 62 MLAs from the last term while giving tickets to some new faces and some former legislators who joined it before the polls. Of the 36, only 14 managed to retain their seats while 22 lost. Some of the big names who lost included the party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal, former deputy CM Manish Sisodia, ministers in the outgoing govt, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Raghuvinder Shokeen, and Rakhi Birla. Sensing a strong anti-incumbency building up in some constituencies, AAP even changed the seats of Sisodia and Birla, but success still eluded them.

With just 22 seats in the 70-member legislative assembly, AAP will now have to sit in the opposition, with its dream run that started from the debut election of 2013 cut short. Despite being the second-largest party with 28 seats, AAP formed govt in 2013 with the outside support of Congress, which lasted for 49 days. It won a record number of 67 seats in 2015, followed by 62 in 2020.

Of the 14 outgoing MLAs who re-contested and won, included Atishi, Gopal Rai and Mukesh Kumar Ahlawat.

Of the five AAP MLAs who jumped ship much before the announcement of the polls and were given tickets by rival parties to contest, only two managed to win.

BJP fielded three of them – Kailash Gahlot, Raaj Kumar Anand, and Kartar Singh Tanwar – but only Gahlot and Tanwar got elected. Congress fielded two – Abdul Rehman and Dharampal Lakra – and both lost.

The Kejriwal-led party also fielded the family members of three outgoing legislators, of which just one – Aaley Mohammad Khan – scored a victory, but Krishna Nagar MLA SK Bagga's son Vikas and Uttam Nagar legislator Naresh Balyan's wife Pooja lost.

Of the eight MLAs it had in the last assembly, BJP repeated six and all of them were re-elected. Of the remaining two, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri successfully contested the Lok Sabha election in June last year and the seat remained vacant, while Anil Bajpai was denied the ticket.

While OP Sharma won his fourth consecutive election from Vishwas Nagar since 2013, this is going to be Mohan Singh Bisht's sixth term in the Delhi assembly. Bisht won his first election in 1998, followed by 2003, 2008, 2013, and 2020. He changed his seat from Karawal Nagar to Mustafabad this time. Sharma and Vijender Gupta were elected even in 2015 when AAP won 67 seats.

In the new House, BJP will have 48 MLAs.

POOR SHOW BY AAP LEGISLATORS

AAP re-nominated 36 of its 62 MLAs from the last term, while giving tickets to some new faces and former legislators who joined before the polls. Of the 36, only 14 managed to retain their seats, while 22 lost

Constituency	Candidate	Result
AAP MLAs GIVEN TICKET		
Wazirpur	Rajesh Gupta	Lost
Model Town	Akhilesh Pati Tripathi	Lost
Tri Nagar	Preeti Jitender Tomar	Lost
Shakur Basti	**Satyendar Jain**	Lost
Shalimar Bagh	Bandana Kumari	Lost
Ballimaran	Imran Hussain	Won
Sadar Bazar	Som Dutt	Won
*Jangpura	**Manish Sisodia**	Lost
Kondli (SC)	Kuldeep Kumar	Won
Okhla	Amanatullah Khan	Won
Moti Nagar	Shiv Charan Goel	Lost
Rajendra Nagar	Durgesh Pathak	Lost
Greater Kailash	Saurabh Bhardwaj	Lost
Malviya Nagar	Somnath Bharti	Lost
Karol Bagh (SC)	Vishesh Ravi	Won
Delhi Cantt	Virender Kadian	Won
New Delhi	**Arvind Kejriwal**	Lost
R K Puram	Parmila Tokas	Lost
Burari	Sanjeev Jha	Won
Babarpur	**Gopal Rai**	Won
Gokalpur (SC)	Surendra Kumar	Won
Narela	Sharad Chauhan	Lost
Badli	Ajesh Yadav	Lost
Bawana (SC)	Jai Bhagwan	Lost
Nangloi Jat	Raghuvinder Shokeen	Lost
Sultanpur Majra (SC)	Mukesh Ahlawat	Won
Rithala	Mohinder Goyal	Lost
Kalkaji	**Atishi**	Won
Ambedkar Nagar (SC)	Ajay Dutt	Won
Sangam Vihar	Dinesh Mohaniya	Lost
Tughlaqabad	Sahi Ram	Won
*Madipur (SC)	Rakhi Bidlan	Lost
Dwarka	Vinay Mishra	Lost
Vikaspuri	Mahinder Yadav	Lost
Rajouri Garden	Dhanwati Chandela	Lost
Tilak Nagar	Jarnail Singh	Won
RELATIVES OF MLAs		
Matia Mahal	Aaley Mohd. (Son)	Won
Krishna Nagar	Vikas Bagga (Son)	Lost
Uttam Nagar	Pooja N Balyan (Wife)	Lost
BJP		
Rohini	**Vijender Gupta**	Won
Laxmi Nagar	Abhay Verma	Won
Vishwas Nagar	OP Sharma	Won
*Mustafabad	Mohan Singh Bisht	Won
Ghonda	Ajay Mahawar	Won
Rohtas Nagar	Jitender Mahajan	Won
AAP MLAS CONTESTED ON BJP TICKET		
Chhatarpur	Kartar Singh Tanwar	Won
*Bijwasan	**Kailash Gahlot**	Won
Patel Nagar	Raaj Kumar Anand	Lost
CONGRESS		
Seelampur	Abdul Rehman	Lost
Mundka	Dharampal Lakra	Lost

*Constituency changed

Middle-class discontent, anti-incumbency, conflicts with LG cost AAP dearly

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New Delhi: The electoral setbacks for AAP candidates stemmed from various factors, including the disenchantment of middle-class voters, anti-incumbency, poor quality of water supply in residential areas, and the party not forming an alliance with Congress.

Their ongoing conflicts with the lieutenant governor also proved to be detrimental, as voters perceived it would hamper effective governance even if the party won. Some said that BJP misused the state machinery, which affected their chances.

An AAP candidate who lost the poll said: "We had very good support in the underprivileged sections of society due to free water, electricity and bus schemes. But there was anger in the middle class due to the poor condition of water in many colonies. They felt that they were not getting their due share," he said. He said that BJP's tax relief for up to Rs 12 lakh in the Union Budget further cemented the middle and upper middle class in their favour. "The condition of the roads was a thing that many flagged in meetings in middle-class colonies," he said.

Sources in the party said that the frequent confrontation with the LG was also a reason that damaged the party's image. "We often said that LG was not allowing us to work. This made a section believe that even if we win, our promises, including Rs 2,100 to women, could be blocked."

Another AAP candidate who won said: "The BJP candidates got all sorts of help with police and other constitutional machinery."

He said that there was anti-incumbency, especially when the party in opposition was using the state machinery to stall work. He said that if the party would have formed an alliance with Congress it could have won seats that it lost by low margins. AAP got 22 seats, while BJP bagged 48.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal directed AAP candidates who lost in the Delhi Assembly elections to stay connected with the people, address their concerns, and continue public service. Senior functionary Manish Sisodia stated that Kejriwal met AAP candidates and praised them for their perseverance.

BJP will fulfil Modi's guarantee of development, says Anurag Thakur

Lucknow: BJP MP Anurag Thakur on Sunday claimed that AAP lost Delhi elections as former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal sidelined the founders of the party.

"Look at the politics of Kejriwal. He entered politics by climbing upon the shoulders of Anna Hazare, finished him off, and then formed his own party. He then sidelined the founding members of his party," Thakur said. Expressing gratitude to the people of Delhi, Thakur said BJP would work towards fulfilling all promises made to the people of the city.

"One of the major factors behind BJP's victory in Delhi was 'Modi ki Guarantee'. People have thrown out those who make guarantees of lies and have given a concrete guarantee that he (Kejriwal) will never return again," he said. "People of Delhi were fed up with misgovernance and corruption. Now, it's 'Delhi mein Modi, Desh mein Modi'. Roads leading from 'sankalp' (promise) to 'siddhi' (fulfilment) have been opened," he added. TNN

BJP celebrates victory in Delhi with plans for development, transparency

Times News Network

New Delhi: A day after securing victory in Delhi after drubbing AAP, BJP leaders gathered with newly-elected MLAs on Sunday to discuss their roles and responsibilities in both politics and public service. The BJP defeated the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday, marking an extension of its influence in the national capital.

The Delhi BJP office at Pant Marg was vibrant with celebrations as sweets were distributed, and newly-elected MLAs were greeted with traditional music from Uttarakhand, shehnai, and cheers from workers and supporters. Key figures such as BJP national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh, Delhi BJP in-charge Baijayant Panda, Delhi BJP general secretary (organisation) Pawan Rana, and state unit president Virendra Sachdeva, engaged with the MLAs during the festivities.

The discussions, organised by parliamentary constituencies, were attended by concerned Lok Sabha MPs. Senior leaders encouraged the MLAs to work within organisational and administrative frameworks, urging complete transparency in their governance. The Delhi BJP, in a statement, highlighted the importance of ensuring that every MLA maintains a transparent and honest approach in their work.

During the meetings, leaders drew attention to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's victory message from Saturday evening, calling on the party to quickly focus on transforming Delhi into a developed city. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva emphasised, "This is just a courtesy meeting where seniors brief the new MLAs about the party's vision, its founding principles, and the high expectations people have of them."

Mohan Singh Bisht, MLA from Mustafabad, was among the first to arrive, expressing plans to change his constituency's name to Shiv Vihar or Shiv Puri, reflecting the dominant community in the area. "On one side, there are 58 per cent people and, on the other, 42 per cent. It is the right of the 58 per cent that the name should be changed accordingly. The name could be Shiv Vihar or Shiv Puri," he said.

BJP MLA from Malviya Nagar, Satish Upadhyay, expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Modi and party leadership for the historic win. "Those responsible for misappropriating funds meant for Delhi's development must be brought to justice," he said, taking a dig at AAP.

Neeraj Basoya, BJP MLA from Kasturba Nagar, said, "AAP is saying that Congress has cut their vote... how can someone define that the vote Congress candidate has got is of AAP?"

Raising larger concerns about local sanitation issues, Basoya promised to address them promptly. "There is a problem of sanitation across the constituency—parks are dirty, water in several areas is dirty, and sewage water is getting mixed. My focus will be that basic problems get solved. Also, I will ensure that there is no shortage of water during summer and sewerage blockage is cleared in every corner of the constituency."

Piyai Bhattacharjee

Top BJP functionaries engaged with victorious MLAs on Sunday

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

EOI for Gold Souk

Location: Sector 22, Dwarka, New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) intends to allot a parcel of land on license fee basis, measuring around 3.91 Hectares located in Sector 22, Dwarka, New Delhi, for developing a Gold Souk.

The development control norms will be as per MPD 2021 and Unified Building Bye-Laws 2016.

Interested entities are requested to submit their response to this EoI via an email to commrinddisp@dda.org.in or kunal.kashyap81@gov.in by **05:00 PM** of **24.02.2025** along with their corporate profile & key financial numbers (like gross revenues, PAT and net worth) for the last 3 years.

DDA will hold a stakeholder consultation on 17.02.2025 at 11:30 AM

EOI can be accessed at: https://dda.gov.in/tenders

Key Site Details:

Land Area
3.91 Hectares

FAR
125 (FAR for TOD - 300)

Land Status
Vacant & encumbrance free

Mode of Allotment
License fee basis

License Period
Initially 40 years, extendable by another 20 years

Site Coordinates
28.554914, 77.057799

For site visits please contact:
Sh. Rahul Dev Samtayan on +91 94318 90236
For any queries please contact:
Sh. Kunal Kashyap, Commissioner (LD), DDA on + 91 98362 50026

Why Most Rural Areas In City Showered Their Votes On BJP

Party Won Almost All Of These Seats By Margins Ranging From 1,782 To 31,475

Kushagra.Dixit
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New Delhi: Though an electoral minority now, Delhi's rural areas showered their votes on BJP, which won in 13 out of the 14 constituencies that have prominent rural character and farming villages.

Barring Tughlaqabad, which houses many clusters – AAP's core voter base, BJP won Narela, Bawana, Mundka, Rithala, Badli, Bijwasan, Palam, Matiala, Najafgarh, Chhatarpur, Mehrauli, Vikaspuri, and Nangloi Jat by margins ranging from 1,782 (Mehrauli) to 31,475 (Bawana).

In north-west Delhi's Badli, the last time BJP was elected was in 1998 when its leader Jai Bhagwan Aggarwal defeated Congress's candidate by a margin of over 4,000 votes. It was lost since; however, the constituency was reclaimed by BJP's Aahir Deepak Chaudharyy, who defeated AAP's Ajesh Kumar by a margin of 15,163 votes, while Delhi Congress's president Devendra Yadav lost by over 20,000 votes.

In west Delhi's Vikaspuri, which was carved out in 2008 and has prominent villages like Bakkarwala, Baprola, and Ranhola, BJP opened its account for the first time with Pankaj Kumar Singh defeating AAP's Mahinder Yadav by 12,876 votes.

The reasons were quite obvious. While AAP focused primarily on the urban poor and did not offer much to Delhi's *dehaats* – most of which were in shambles, the rural population turned towards BJP. Apart from forming govt in neighbouring Haryana – to which most of Delhi's rural areas connect – the saffron party at the Centre can address issues like Land Reform Act, mutation, irrigation and agricultural infrastructure.

"Voting for BJP seemed a smart choice for people in rural areas. We raised issues, even staged protests outside the CM's residence, but we expected more from a person who emerged from an *andolan*. Initially, Kejriwal assured us to resolve issues of house tax, but it was never tabled. On the contrary, the issue of mutation was resolved by the LG," said Chaudhary Surendra Solanki, pradhan of Delhi's Palam 360 Khaps.

Solanki further stated that rallies and assurances by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah helped BJP win rural seats.

"Shah met us on the sidelines of a rally and assured us that 90% of major issues would be resolved at the earliest. The PM also met us on Feb 2 at the RK Puram rally. At his Dwarka rally, we presented him with a hal (plough)," he recalled.

According to Paras Tyagi, president of Centre for Youth Culture Law and Environment (CYCLE), an organisation that pressed and advocated rural Delhi's issues, people were fed up with the "consistent nagging and excuses" by Kejriwal that the LG and Centre were not letting them work. He also pointed out that most of the winners from rural areas are from the Jat community.

"Caste factor played a crucial role as well, as most of the winners from rural areas are from the Jat caste. The villagers and farmers, who are waiting for the development of their villages, were promised the implementation of Land Pooling and Green Development policies that also impacted the voting. They will expect development from BJP," said Tyagi.

13 OUT OF THE 14 MAJOR RURAL CONSTITUENCIES CHOSE BJP

	BJP won by	
1. Bawana	31,475 Votes	last win in 2013
2. Rithala	29,616	last win in 2013
3. Najafgarh	29,009	last win in 2013
4. Matiala	28,723	last win in 2013
5. Nangloi Jat	26,251	last win in 2013
6. Badli	15,163	last win in 1998
7. Vikaspuri	12,876	first win, constituency created in 2008
8. Bijwasan	11,276	last win in 2013
9. Mundka	10,550	last win in 2008
10. Palam	8,952	last win in 2013
11. Narela	8,596	last win in 2013
12. Chhatarpur	6,239	last win in 2013
13. Mehrauli	1,782	last win in 2013
	BJP lost to AAP by	
14. Tughlaqabad	14,711	BJP last won in 2008

STAR CAMPAIGNERS

Narendra Modi visited Dwarka that covered a large section of rural areas population

Amit Shah went to Bijwasan, Narela and Dwarka areas close to Palam

Arvind Kejriwal visited Bijwasan, Mundka, Najafgarh, Palam, Matiala, Narela and Bawana

Rahul Gandhi went to Badli and Bawana

WHAT CHANGED

- Kejriwal's campaign focused primarily on economical weaker sections, clusters, slums, etc
- Voters unhappy over lack of steps for agriculture, high cost of irrigation, house tax
- Rural areas often found elected representatives missing or inaccessible
- Dependence on the Centre to resolve major issues like land reforms Act (Section 33 and 81 bars them from selling land patches)
- Landless villagers got land and plots but not land rights
- Eight of the 13 rural seats won by BJP had a Jat candidate

Biggest issue was trust in govt, says Sachdeva

Piyal Bhattacharjee

VIRENDRA SACHDEVA SAYS

Our focus was on 52 assembly seats, which we won in the Lok Sabha. I thought if the same people were voting for us in the Lok Sabha election, then why were they not voting for us in the Vidhan Sabha? So, by my standard, I am four seats less, and next time we will ensure that we achieve even that

TOI INTERVIEW

Virendra Sachdeva, who heads the Delhi BJP, was instrumental in securing the party's victory in the assembly elections following a 26-year gap. His leadership saw the party execute a targeted campaign focusing on every day concerns such as roads, water supply, Yamuna clean-up. The Delhi BJP highlighted corruption allegations against AAP, which struck a chord with Delhi voters. Sachdeva is now among a handful of party chiefs who led the state unit to victory in the Delhi elections. These are excerpts from his interview to **Abhinav Rajput**:

■ What was the biggest issue that defined this election?

The biggest issue was trust in the govt. There was rampant corruption, and delivery was zero, either in terms of basic things like providing clean water or making roads. People simultaneously saw that Narendra Modi (central govt) was doing a lot of work in Delhi in the form of expanding the metro, rapid rail and houses for the poor. So, people thought Narendra Modi wanted to make Delhi a world-class city, but AAP govt was not allowing him.

■ When you went to people, what were their biggest talking points?

The corruption in the liquor policy and 'Sheesh Mehal' were issues on which people wanted answers from Arvind Kejriwal, but he was not giving the answers. Then there was the issue of air pollution and Yamuna pollution, which he again was not addressing. So, we kept our entire focus on local issues, be it traffic problems, pollution or parking.

■ As a backroom boy of the party or strategist, what used to be your routine during elections?

I was involved in micro-strategy. I kept my party workers on alert mode that if there were fake voters, they should flag it. If 'Sheesh Mehal' was our election issue, then I made sure we made a model of it and showed it to people. If we were weak in getting votes in jhuggis, then we worked on it for eight months with party workers going there constantly. They heard their problems and tried to solve them. So, we did things at the micro level.

■ Were you anticipating so many seats because everyone was saying it would be a close election with results going either way?

Our focus was on 52 assembly seats, which we won in the Lok Sabha. I thought if the same people were voting for us in the Lok Sabha election, then why were they not voting for us in the Vidhan Sabha? So, by my standard, I am four seats less, and next time we will ensure that we achieve even that.

■ You swept West and North West Delhi, winning almost all seats. There was not a single seat from here last time. What changed?

If you see the Lok Sabha results also, we had the maximum vote differences in these regions. We addressed the people in the villages. A lot of development projects worth crores were given to villages through LG (DDA) in these areas. Then, giving a relaxation on taxes for up to Rs 12 lakh in earnings was a major relief for people. The issue of sealing shops was addressed in our manifesto. We said that these would be opened in six months, and we will do it.

■ What will be the first three-month agenda of your govt?

In the first meeting of the Vidhan Sabha, we will keep all the 14 CAG reports on the table. SIT for all the corruptions that were in the AAP govt, and the Ayushman scheme will be implemented. Waterlogging points have already been identified, and there is a need to work on them immediately so that it doesn't happen again. Clean drinking water has to be provided to people. Yamuna cleaning will also be a focus area.

■ By when can we expect the next CM of Delhi?

This decision has to be taken by the top leadership, and they will take it at the right time. As of now, we have not been given any date. Today, we are holding a meeting with MLAs, which is a courtesy meeting.

■ What was the most challenging thing for you as state chief?

When one who has a leader like Narendra Modi and who has everyday people like JP Nadda and Amit Shah guiding him, what challenge does he have?

■ Do you think losing MCD was a blessing in disguise?

It is said like that. But if you want to make the city clean, then MCD will have to work. If you have to remove the landfill, then MCD will have to work, and we will work with their cooperation.

■ BJP won after 26 years. What did you do differently this time?

This is the collective effort of every ground-level karyakarta, booth worker, every office-bearer. This has been possible due to the work and direction given by the party leadership and then executed by us.

ECI submits final list of results to LG

New Delhi: The Election Commission submitted the Due Constitution Notification for Delhi assembly polls to LG V K Saxena, marking the conclusion of what it termed a "free, fair, and transparent democratic exercise". In a statement, ECI said the notification containing the list of newly elected candidates was handed over to the LG by Principal Secretary Ajoy Kumar and Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Alice Vaz. PTI

Correction

In a panel titled, "The Chief Ministers of Delhi", published on Feb 9, 2025, Sheila Dikshit's party was inadvertently mentioned as BJP. Dikshit belonged to Congress. The error is regretted.

Apex court's stay on high-level committee on Yamuna in place for over 2 years now

▶Continued from P1

The warning about the "curse" has its roots in a standoff between Saxena and Kejriwal two years ago. Faced with high levels of pollution in Yamuna, in Jan 2023, the National Green Tribunal had set up a high-level committee under LG to oversee rejuvenation of the river.

As the panel went about its task, Kejriwal voiced his support and offered assistance. However, Delhi govt subsequently challenged the NGT order in the SC, with senior advocate A M Singhvi arguing that a domain expert should lead the panel. The stay has remained in place for over two years now.

During a meeting with Kejriwal after the SC ruling, Saxena is learnt to have told the AAP chief that he would face the curse of Yamuna.

Delhi govt's change in stance in the SC was attributed by the bureaucracy to Kejriwal's fear that credit for the project would not accrue to AAP if it was executed under LG. In 2015, Kejriwal had promised to clean the Yamuna within five years but failed to initiate concrete measures.

His failure to make good on the pledge became a major issue in the poll campaign. BJP mocked him for this, reminding the electorate that Yamuna's waters would turn so clean by 2025 that he would happily take a dip. The pitch played to migrants from Bihar, Jharkhand and UP who go to the Yamuna banks in lakhs during Chhath festival. Post-poll analyses show that large sections of Poorvanchalis voted for BJP, breaking away from AAP which they had backed in the last two assembly polls.

It also became the symbol of the larger worsening pollution crisis.

With the issue going against him, Kejriwal blamed Haryana govt for "poisoning" the river, drawing adverse reactions from the neighbouring state as well as BJP.

Soon after the election verdict on Saturday, PM Narendra Modi hit out at APP for not respecting the beliefs of people, in what was seen as a reference to Chhath Puja where devotees are required to stand in a water body to offer 'arghya' to the Sun god.

"The beliefs of the people of Delhi were crushed under the feet of these people (AAP) and then they blatantly accused Haryana," the PM said as he vowed to clean and beautify the river. He finished his speech by repeatedly chanting "Yamuna Maiya Ki Jai".

Mustafabad MLA proposes changing name to Shiv Vihar

New Delhi: BJP's newly-elected Mustafabad MLA, Mohan Bisht, on Sunday proposed renaming the northeast Delhi constituency, which has a significant minority community population, to "Shiv Vihar" or "Shiv Puri". He made this statement while attending a meeting of newly-elected BJP MLAs at the party office on Pant Marg.

Bisht justified the proposal, saying the Hindu population in the constituency was higher. "On one side, there are 58%, and on the other, 42%. It is the right of the 58% that the name should be changed accordingly," he said.

Bisht, 67, defeated AAP's Adeel Ahmad Khan by 17,578 votes in Mustafabad. Elected as an MLA for the sixth time, Bisht was moved from Karawal Nagar, where he won in 2020. Though initially upset about the change, he agreed to contest from Mustafabad after BJP leadership intervened.

Regarding the speculation around the CM candidate, Bisht said, "I am a regular party worker, and whoever the party chooses will carry the 'lotus' symbol." TNN

NRI arrested in Delhi for assaulting woman several times after promise of marriage

Abhay@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: An NRI living in the US has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a woman multiple times under the pretext of marriage. He was apprehended from a hotel in Mahipalpur, southwest Delhi. According to police, the accused had been married twice before—once in US and once in Punjab. The survivor, a resident of southwest Delhi, met the NRI through a matrimonial website.

On Feb 5, a team from the local police station apprehended the accused from a hotel room in Mahipalpur. The woman and her parents filed a written complaint alleging that her mother had selected the man's profile through a matrimonial platform in 2022. She interacted with him for a month, and they found each other suitable for marriage.

"He proposed marriage to her, and she told her parents that they liked each other. They entered into a relationship. After one year, he informed her that he was coming to India and would meet her on Nov 1, 2023. She came to Delhi from her hometown and received him at IGI Airport. They went to a hotel in Mahipalpur," police said.

There, the NRI promised to marry her and engaged in a physical relationship with her under that pretense. She stayed with him for two days before he left for Punjab, where his family resides. He assured her that he would meet her parents with his family after returning.

A few days later, he told her he had to travel to Dubai urgently due to a family dispute with a neighbour. He also asked her to accompany him to Dubai, where she was allegedly sexually assaulted again.

Last month, the complainant discovered that the accused had been married in the US since 2017. While he was living separately from his wife, the marriage had not been legally dissolved. Additionally, on Jan 19, 2024, he married another woman in Punjab, who is currently living with his parents.

Since 2022, the accused had allegedly been making false promises of marriage to the complainant and sexually assaulted her multiple times under that pretext. When he came to Delhi to meet her again, the woman's family alerted police, leading to his arrest.

HC rejects transfer of probe in siphoning case, says affects cops' morale

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi High Court has ruled that transferring a criminal investigation from one agency to another should only happen in rare and exceptional circumstances, highlighting that such decisions could harm the morale of the police.

In a recent order, Justice Subramonium Prasad emphasised that mere allegations are not enough to justify transferring an investigation. "Transfer of investigation to another agency is only done in rare and exceptional cases, such as cases where high officials of state authorities are involved," the judge observed.

The court dismissed petitions filed by individuals accused in a cheating case, who sought to transfer the investigation from the Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police to either the CBI or the Special Cell. The case involved allegations that the accused siphoned money from homebuyers and investors. The petitioners argued for a Special Investigative Team (SIT) or a superior agency to monitor the investigation.

However, the HC found the investigation satisfactory and said the petitioners failed to present sufficient material to show any laxity by the investigating agency. The court noted, "In fact, transfer of investigation from the investigating agency affects the morale of the police, which must be avoided at all costs."

The complainants in the case are homebuyers who had invested substantial amounts in properties under construction by the accused. The court applied the parameters set by the Supreme Court, which state that an investigation should only be transferred when there's evidence of an unfair, incomplete, or dishonest probe. The judge dismissed the petitions, stating there was no material to suggest any shortcomings in the current investigation.

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62-year-old arrested for sexual assault on minor

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A 62-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly repeatedly sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl in southwest Delhi's Sarojini Nagar. The inquiry revealed that the accused had threatened to kill the minor. Police said the crime came to light after the girl's pregnancy was discovered.

On Feb 6, police received information from a hospital about the admission of a minor girl who was found to be pregnant. A team from the local police station visited the hospital and spoke to the doctor. The investigating officer met the survivor, who initially claimed she was in a consensual relationship with a boy for a year. However, her statement was later found to be false.

During her statement, the girl told police that she lives with her mother and brother in Sarojini Nagar. "Her mother works as a maid, and her brother works as a security guard. Her mother took her to Safdarjung Hospital for a medical checkup, where she was found to be two months pregnant. She stated that, four months ago, her neighbour lured her with requests to fetch items from the shop, then called her to his room and forcibly engaged in sexual relations with her, also threatening her," police said.

Out of fear of the accused, the girl initially gave a false statement to doctors. A case under relevant sections of the BNS and the Pocso Act was registered at Sarojini Nagar police station. Deputy commissioner of police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary formed a team under SHO (Sarojini Nagar) Atul Tyagi, which apprehended the accused from his house.

During inquiry, the girl told police that the accused had threatened her with dire consequences if she revealed the incident to anyone. The accused works as a security guard.

Mother, 3-Year-Old Girl Die As Truck Rams Bike

Father, Elder Daughter Injured On KMP Expressway

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Gurgaon: A 32-year-old homemaker and her three-year-old daughter died after a truck struck them on the KMP Expressway on Sunday morning. The woman's husband and elder daughter suffered grievous injuries in the accident, which occurred near Dhulawat village in Nuh.

Rajesh Singh, who works with a private firm in Manesar, was headed for his hometown in UP's Firozabad with his family when he stopped his motorcycle near Dhulawat village to answer nature's call. Bikes and two-wheelers are not allowed on the expressway, where vehicles hurtle down at 80-100kmph.

Tragedy struck when Sumitra and her younger daughter Shivanya were returning to the parked bike to resume their journey.

A truck approaching from Panchgaon hit them before ramming into parked motorcycle. The accident raised several questions on enforcement of vehicle restrictions on KMP

"A truck approaching from Panchgaon hit them before ramming into our parked motorcycle. My wife and younger daughter suffered critical injuries to their head and died on the spot," Rajesh said in his complaint.

Rajesh and their elder daughter Prachi (5) were taken to a nearby hospital by passersby. Doctors said their condition was stable.

Sub-inspector Digvijay Singh of Sadar Tauru police station said the truck driver abandoned the vehicle and fled after the accident. "We have seized the truck and are working to identify and apprehend the driver," he said. "Motorcycles, too, are not allowed on the expressway," Singh added.

A case was registered against the unidentified truck driver for causing death due to negligence, endangering life, and rash driving on a public way. The bodies were taken to a govt hospital in Nalhar, where autopsies were conducted. The bodies were then handed over to the family.

The accident raised several questions on enforcement of vehicle restrictions on the KMP. "We are investigating the circumstances to find out how the motorcycle made its way to the restricted highway and the series of events that resulted in the accident," Singh said.

Man hit with rod, thrown off bus near Bawana flyover

▶Continued from P 1

During the journey, Manoj accidentally spilled some food on the seats and floor of the bus, infuriating the driver and his friends. While they allowed Dinesh to disembark at Bawana Chowk, they prevented Manoj from doing so. The bus driver, Ashish, and his accomplices then started abusing and thrashing Manoj, police said.

"Ashish also used a rod to attack Manoj's private parts. After Manoj became unconscious, the men threw his body near the flyover and fled in the bus," an officer said.

Incidentally, the accused were present as guests at the wedding where Manoj and Dinesh had gone to cook.

On Feb 2, police received a call informing them about an unidentified body lying on the roadside. "A team from Bawana police station reached the spot. Initially, the body appeared to be that of a vagabond and there were no visible injuries. Blood was oozing out from his nose," the officer said.

"The next day, the victim was identified as Manoj by his brother Jitendra, who lives in Narela's Gautam Colony. Jitendra said his brother had been missing since early morning," the officer added.

A post-mortem examination was conducted on Feb 5, which revealed the victim had several internal injuries and wounds on his private parts. Police ruled out any sodomy attempt by the accused. A case under BNS sections 103(1) (murder) and 3(5) (common intention) was registered at Bawana police station.

"We started scanning CCTV footage and zeroed in on the accused with the help of technical surveillance. During a raid, one of the accused, Sushant Sharma (24), a resident of Karala village, was arrested. He used to take up odd jobs on the RTV bus, and they would pick up passengers from Peeragarhi and Bawana," the officer said.

DCP (Outer North) Nidhin Valsan said several teams have been formed to arrest the other two accused, who are on the run. "CCTV footage is being scanned to ascertain the routes taken by the duo to flee and raids are on at multiple places to nab them," he said, adding that the RTV has been recovered.

3 foreign nationals held for smuggling cocaine worth ₹40cr

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Customs officials at Indira Gandhi International Airport apprehended three foreign nationals—two Brazilian women and a Kenyan man—for allegedly smuggling cocaine worth approximately Rs 40 crore. The suspects had concealed the drugs by swallowing capsules. Officials are investigating potential links between the suspects and a larger drug-trafficking network.

The arrests took place within a 48-hour period starting Friday at Terminal 3, based on specific intelligence. The suspects arrived on different flights at different times, possibly as a tactic to evade detection.

The first arrest on Friday involved a Brazilian woman traveling from Sao Paulo via Paris. A physical examination raised suspicion, prompting further investigation. She later confessed to ingesting drug-filled capsules, which were subsequently retrieved at Safdarjung Hospital.

"A total of 100 capsules were recovered, all of which contained cocaine. A total of 802 grams was recovered, worth around Rs 12.03 crore," a senior customs official said. On the same day, within a few hours, a Kenyan man was also nabbed.

"The man had arrived from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. At the hospital, 67 capsules containing cocaine worth Rs 14.94 crore were recovered," the department said.

Early Saturday, authorities arrested another Brazilian woman, aged 26. "A total of 98 capsules had been ingested by her, worth Rs 12.99 crore," said the official.

34-yr-old man nabbed for shooting father-in-law in Seelampur last year

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A 34-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly shooting his father-in-law dead in Seelampur in March last year. The motive was revenge for a prior insult, police said.

The accused had been thrashed by his father-in-law and brother-in-law and sought retaliation. He intended to kill his wife and her family but, finding only his father-in-law present, shot him.

On March 18, 2024, police received information from Dileram, a resident of Gautampuri, Seelampur, that while he was walking home, someone shot him from behind. During the investigation, it was revealed that his son-in-law, Prempal, was the shooter. Dileram succumbed to his injuries about two months after the incident.

Deputy commissioner of police (Crime) Vikram Singh said Prempal had been absconding since the incident. Knowing that police track suspects using mobile phone locations, he constantly changed hideouts and avoided using a phone. "He was declared a proclaimed offender, and he continuously changed his locations. On Saturday, he was apprehended in the Sahibabad area of UP," police said.

Police said that during interrogation, Prempal disclosed that he had been married for about eight years, but his wife obeyed her parents and brother more than him, leading to frequent quarrels. About a year ago, after one such argument, his father-in-law and brother-in-law came to his house and beat him up. Following this, his wife left him and moved back to her maternal home. Seeking revenge for the humiliation, Prempal decided to kill them.

The accused obtained a pistol and three cartridges, writing the names of his wife, father-in-law, and brother-in-law on each cartridge. On the day of the incident, he went to their house intending to kill all three, but since only his father-in-law was present, he shot him.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

KMDA TENDER NOTICE
e-NIT No. KMDA/CIVIL/E&AM/Planning Circle/SE/17 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, bonafied, eligible and experienced firms / companies / individual contractors, for the work, **Name of Work, Estimated Amount, Earnest Money, Time of completion,** Upgradation and Modification of damaged Nemai Tirtha Ghat under Baidyabati Municipality, District :- Hooghly (2nd Call)., Rs.49,74,994/-, Rs.99,500/-, 06 months, **Last date & time of online Bid submission:** 28.02.2025, Time 13.30 hrs., for details contact the above office or visit both websites. **(KMDA-1131)**
www.kmda.wb.gov.in
www.wbtenders.gov.in
ICA-T2799(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

KMDA TENDER NOTICE
e-NIT No. KMDA/CIVIL/E&AM/ DIVISION-V/E/04 OF 2024-25

Online e-Tender is invited by the Executive Engineer, Division-V, E&AM Sector, KMDA, 3rd Floor, Block-I, Unnayan Bhavan, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700091, from reliable, resourceful, bonafide, eligible and experienced firms / companies / individual contractors / Joint Ventures / Consortium, for the work, **Name of Work, Estimated Amount, Earnest Money, Time of completion,** Dismantling work, Pile test of existing structure in connection with the work of 'B+G+III storied Industrial building for Food Processing Hub of West Bengal, State Food Processing and Horticulture Development Corporation Limited at Bamanghata, south 24 Pgs., Rs.37,36,412/-, Rs.74,750/-, 03 months, **Last date & time of online Bid submission:** 28.02.2025, Time13.30 hrs., for details contact the above office or visit both websites. **(KMDA-1134)**
www.kmda.wb.gov.in
www.wbtenders.gov.in
ICA-T2802(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

TENDER NOTICE
WBSDB/EE/CED-II/NIT-20(e)/2024-25

e-tender are invited by the Executive Engineer, Civil Engineering Division No.-II, Sundarban Development Board from the reliable bonafide resourceful contractors for the Construction of Staff Rest Shed & Maintenance of Sundaram in Sagar Block of South 24 Pargana, West Bengal. Details may be had from the office of the EE/CED-II/SDB on working days during office hours or in website https://wbtenders.gov.in Publishing date: 10.02.2025 at 12.00 hrs. Bid submission start date: 11.02.2025 at 11.00 hrs. Bid submission end date: 24.02.2025 at 15.00 hrs. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Civil Engineering Division No.-II, Sundarban Development Board
ICA-T2798(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

Executive Engineer, Central Mechanical Division, Nirman Bhavan, Salt Lake, Kol-91 on behalf of the Governor of the West Bengal asked for percentage rates for the work against **NIQ NO: WBUDMA/EE/CMD/e-NIQ-04/2024-25 for Serial No. (01to03) against TID-812110-1, 812110_2 & 812110_3.** Details may be seen at W.B Tender Portal & Departmental website:www.wburbanservices.gov.in. **Last date of bid submission is 25.02.2025 up to 11:00 Hrs.**
ICA-T2812(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE
e-N.I.T No- WBIW/EE/MBD/NIT No-08(e)/2024-25

On behalf of the Governor of West Bengal, e-tender is invited by the undersigned for 02(Two) no. of works under Mahananda Barrage Division, I & W Dte. Online Bid Submission closing date is 24.02.2025 at 15.00 Hrs. Other details may be seen in the website www.wbiwd.gov.in & http://wbtenders.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, Mahananda Barrage Division, Tinbatti More, Siliguri
ICA-T2795(4)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
1) Bid reference no. - NIT Reference No.:- WBMSCL/NIT-095/2025 Dated-05/02/2025

West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for the work "Annual maintenance for Civil and Sanitary & Plumbing works at Diamond Harbour SSH and Kakdwip SSH during the year 2025-26." Last date of submission of bid (online) - 24.02.2025 upto 3:00 PM. The tender document can be downloaded from www.wbmsc.gov.in and www.wbtenders.gov.in on 10.02.2025 at 11:00 A.M. request for Clarification, if any, may be sent to cpec@wbmsc.gov.in Sd/- General Manager, WBMSCL Joint Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal
ICA-T2805(3)/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
1) Bid reference no. - NIT Reference No.:- WBMSCL/NIT-097/2025 Dated-05/02/2025

West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for the work "Annual maintenance for Civil and Sanitary & Plumbing works at Sagardighi SSH, Jangipur SSH and Domkal SSH during the year 2025-26." Last date of submission of bid (online) - 24.02.2025 upto 3:00 PM. The tender document can be downloaded from www.wbmsc.gov.in and www.wbtenders.gov.in on10.02.2025 at 11:00 A.M. request for Clarification, if any, may be sent to cpec@wbmsc.gov.in Sd/- General Manager, WBMSCL Joint Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal
ICA-T2806(3)/2025

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WBSEDCL

WBSEDCL invites e-Tender as follows :

NIT No.: RM/MRO/CIVIL/e-TENDER/2024-25/04, **Dt.:** 05.02.2025 of the **Regional Manager,** Malda Region, WBSEDCL. **Estimated Cost:** ₹3,21,76,789/- for *'Construction of 33/11 kV indoor (AIS) type Sub-Station incl. control room building, retaining wall-cum-boundary wall, approach road, switchyard development, cable trench, sanitary plumbing at Jalalpur under Malda Division, WBSEDCL.'*
ICA-T2811(3)/2025
For details, visit https://wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbsedcl.in

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

No. 48/WBVB/1E-5/2022 Date : 07 /02/2025
Walk in Interview

Walk-in-interview for two posts each of Valuation Officer and Field Officer, West Bengal Valuation Board, on contract basis from retired employees having minimum requisite qualification and have retired from Government of West Bengal/Corporations, Statutory bodies, Boards, Undertakings wholly or partially owned/controlled/funded by Government of West Bengal and who held identical or higher posts while in service, is scheduled to be held on 18.02.2025 at 12 noon onwards at the Office of West Bengal Valuation Board, Poura Prasashan Bhavan, 2nd Floor, DD-1, Sector -1, Salt Lake City, Kolkata 700 064. Intending candidates shall have to report for interview within 11:30 am on the scheduled date at the office of the Board.

The details of educational qualification, experience and other criterion for the position and format for application are available on **www.wburanservises.gov.in**. Interested and eligible candidates may appear for walk-in-interview along with filled up prescribed bio-data with original supporting documents.

Note : No TA/DA will be paid for attending the interview.

Sd/-
Member Secretary
West Bengal Valuation Board
ICA-N59(2)/2025

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tender & notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to declare that I, Vimlesh Shukla W/o Shri Ashok Shukla, resident of E-3/280, Gali NO.7-A, 4th Pusta, Sonia Vihar, Delhi-110094, am the sole legal heir of the late Sudarshan Sharma, who passed away on [25/01/2022], as per the Death Certificate No. [B-2022: 10-90347-00630].
Details of Legal Heir: I am the sole legal heirs as per survivor certificate and registered WILL.
Name: Vimlesh Shukla and
Relationship to Deceased: Sister
Anyone having any claim against the estate of the deceased should contact me within 60 days from the date of this publication.
Signature:
[Your Signature]
Date:[Date]

TENDERS

TENDER NOTICE
AT&S
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Major Disposal Items: Chemical soaked filter, Rubber, Cotton waste/gloves
Visit us with license certificate to collect tender form from AT & S Purchase department on any working day on or before **17.02.2025** between 2PM to 5PM. Last date to submit the tender is **20.02.2025** before 5PM.
Senior Manager – Purchase & Logistics
M/s. AT & S India Pvt. Limited
12A,12B & 82 Nanjangud Industrial Area, Nanjangud, Mysore District-571301
Tel: +91(0) 08221-244000.
kanti.sumanth@in.ats.net

Union Bank of India
Human Resources Department,
Central Office, 239, Vidhan Bhavan Marg, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400021
Request For Proposal (RFP)
Union Bank of India, a leading Public Sector Bank with pan India presence, having its Central Office in Mumbai, invites online offers for the following: **Engaging Consultancy Services for Conducting & Awarding ISO 30414: 2018 Human Resource Management–Guidelines for Internal & External Human Capital Reporting Certification of Bank's HR Department. GeM Portal Bid Ref No.: GEM/2025/B/5918318 Date: 07.02.2025.**
Please visit the Bank's website **www.unionbankofindia.co.in** or the Government portal **www.eprocure.gov.in** or Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal **https://www.gem.gov.in** for downloading the RFP document, to know the eligibility criteria and other details. The last date for receipt of RFP response is **February 28, 2025 till 04:00 PM.**
Notification of amendments/corrigendum, if any will be made available on the Bank's website **(www.unionbankofindia.co.in)** /Government portal **(www.eprocure.gov.in)** / Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal **(https://www.gem.gov.in).**
Date:07.02.2025
General Manager (HR)

personal

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Jaiprakash A V R/o Agasanapura Post And Village Malavalli Taluk Mandya District -571430 have changed my minor son's name from Chiranthan A J to Anikethana A J.

I Rami Devi W/o late Sh Balbir Singh Gusain, Vill-Bahera, PO-Baherakhal, Patti-Banelsyun, Distt-Pauri Garhwal(UK) Pin-246146, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Rani Devi in my Aadhar No. 458044077465. The actual name of mine is Rami Devi. In future I will be known as Rami Devi.

I, Kanwar Preet Singh Grewal, S/O Bhajan Singh Grewal, R/O A-301, Express Greens, D-10, Sector 44, Noida, declare that I have been known by both names, Kanwar Preet Singh Grewal and Kanwarpreet Grewal. These names are of one and the same person. My name is mentioned as Kanwarpreet Grewal in my daughter, Sirjana Kaur Grewal's school records.

I, Jyoti Kundra W/o Pradeep Kumar R/o RZ-7B, Shankar Park, West Sagar Pur, New Delhi declare that my name wrongly written as Jyoti in Birth Certificate of my son. The correct name is Jyoti Kundra. Jyoti Kundra & Jyoti are same.

I, Akshita S Ashok D/o Shri Ashok Kumar resident of Flat No.601, Tower B-9, Supertech Ecovillage-1, Greater Noida West (U.P) 201 306 has corrected my father's name from Ashok Kumar to Ashok Kumar Melayambadiyil. Henceforth, my father's name would be known by name Ashok Kumar Melayambadiyil for all future purpose.

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Ghaziabad	Sunil Srivastava	99994 99496
West Delhi + Dwarka + Gurgaon	Aman Pasricha	93126 33518
Central Delhi	Amit Ghosh	98117 90649
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INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT

A BUDGET FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

UNION BUDGET 2025-2026

EMPOWERING MIDDLE-CLASS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

- No income tax: Income up to ₹12 lakh per annum and up to ₹12.75 lakh per annum for Salaried Class (including Standard Deduction of ₹75,000)
- The taxpayers can now claim NIL annual value for two self-occupied properties.
- The period for filing the updated return has been extended from 24 to 48 months.
- National Savings Scheme (NSS) withdrawals are tax-free for deposits made on or after the 29th Aug, 2024.
- NPS Vatsalya contributions to get tax benefits like the NPS account.

RELIEF IN TDS/TCS RULES

- Limit for tax deductions on interest for senior citizens to be doubled from ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh.
- The annual limit of ₹2.40 lakh for TDS on rent will now be ₹6 lakh, benefiting small taxpayers.
- The threshold to collect Tax at Source (TCS) on remittances under RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), is increased from ₹7 lakh to ₹10 lakh.
- Removal of TCS on remittances for educational purposes.
- No prosecution for delayed TCS if paid at any time on or before the time prescribed for filing the quarterly TCS statement.
- Higher TDS deduction will apply only in non-PAN cases.

TAX REFORMS TO FUEL UP BUSINESSES

- Determination of arms length price of international transaction for a block period of three years is proposed to streamline transfer pricing process.
- Expanded Safe Harbour Rules to reduce litigation and provide certainty in international taxation.
- New Presumptive taxation regime for non-residents engaged in providing services or technology to a resident company engaged in electronic manufacturing.
- New Safe Harbour Rule for non-residents who store components for supply to specified electronics manufacturing units.

REDUCING COMPLIANCE BURDEN

To reduce the compliance burden for small charitable trusts/institutions, the period of registration is increased from 5 years to 10 years.

BOOSTING EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT

- Tonnage tax Scheme extended to Inland Vessels registered under the Inland Vessels Act 2021.
- The benefit under section 80 IAC is extended for five years and the eligible start-ups incorporated before April 1, 2030 can claim the benefit.
- As a measure to boost infrastructure funding, the deadline for investment in Sovereign Wealth Funds and Pension Funds has been extended to 31.03.2030.
- Specific benefits for ship-leasing units, insurance offices, and treasury centers of global companies set up in the IFSC.
- To claim benefits, the cut-off date for commencement in IFSC has also been extended by 5 years to 31.3.2030.
- Certainty of taxation to Cat I and Cat II AIFs for investments in infrastructure and other such sectors on the gains from securities.

For Website

Income Tax Department
Central Board of Direct Taxes

For FAQs

CBC 15401/13/0018/2425

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SEASONS UNDER THE SUN

Rajesh Mehta

Visitors enjoy the weekend at the Delhi Tulip Festival organised by NDMC at Chanakyapuri

A Lot Is Fishy Here: Sea Change In The Way Smugglers Operate

These 'Fish' Illegally Travel To US By Sea To Evade Detection By Authorities

Rajshekhar.Jha
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Donkeys are passe; fish are the new smuggler's disguise. Illegal migrants are increasingly trading the complex 'donkey routes' for oceanic odysseys with fake Seaman's Books. For decades, the notorious donkey route, which took migrants through deserts and jungles, was a popular pathway for undocumented migrants seeking to enter the United States via Central America.

However, with increased border security and crackdowns on human smuggling, many would-be migrants are now seeking alternative routes, investigators tracking trafficking say. There is a growing number of individuals opting to "become fish" instead, using fake Seaman Books to illegally travel to the US by sea. This tactic allows them to bypass traditional land borders and evade detection by immigration authorities.

The use of counterfeit Seaman Books has become a growing concern, as it enables individuals to pose as merchant mariners or fishermen, granting them access to international waters and potentially, the US coastline. The book is a vital official document exclusively issued to individuals employed in the maritime sector, encompassing merchant navy personnel, cruise line staff, and fishermen.

The lucrative maritime and fishing industry has become a breeding ground for illicit activities, with forged seafarer documents enabling unscrupulous recruiters to swiftly assemble crews for high-seas vessels. These ships often remain at sea for months, leaving crew members with no opportunity to set foot on land.

"Organised crime groups involved in migrant smuggling have also been known to utilise fishing vessels to transport individuals across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Fishing companies seeking cheap labour often collaborate with these recruiters, who provide counterfeit documents, including passports, identity cards, and training certificates, to facilitate the illicit trade," said an investigator.

Delhi Police stumbled on this modus operandi last year when the airport cops arrested five agents involved in trafficking through this route. They sent two individuals using the fake Seaman Books. The route took them to Mexico via Qatar and Istanbul.

While some take the sea, others try different ways. Some fall for agents who promise US entry using forged or fake visas prepared in their dedicated lab. "Agents forge visas that closely resemble authentic ones, duping passengers and immigration officials. But despite their attempts, passengers are frequently apprehended at immigration check posts or airline counters. Even if they manage to bypass Indian authorities, they are often intercepted at the destination country's immigration check," said a senior cop.

Seventy-one agents involved in this kind of scam were arrested by IGI Airport police in 2024.

Another way people adopt is by choosing to travel with a disguised look. In 2019, 32-year-old Jayesh Patel disguised himself as 81-year-old Amrik Singh with a dyed white beard and a turban to board a flight to New York from the Delhi airport. Sporting fake prescription glasses and carrying a fake passport, he arrived for the security check in a wheelchair, but authorities called his bluff.

Last year, the airport police arrested a 24-year-old man who was trying to reach America via Canada using the passport of a 67-year-old man.

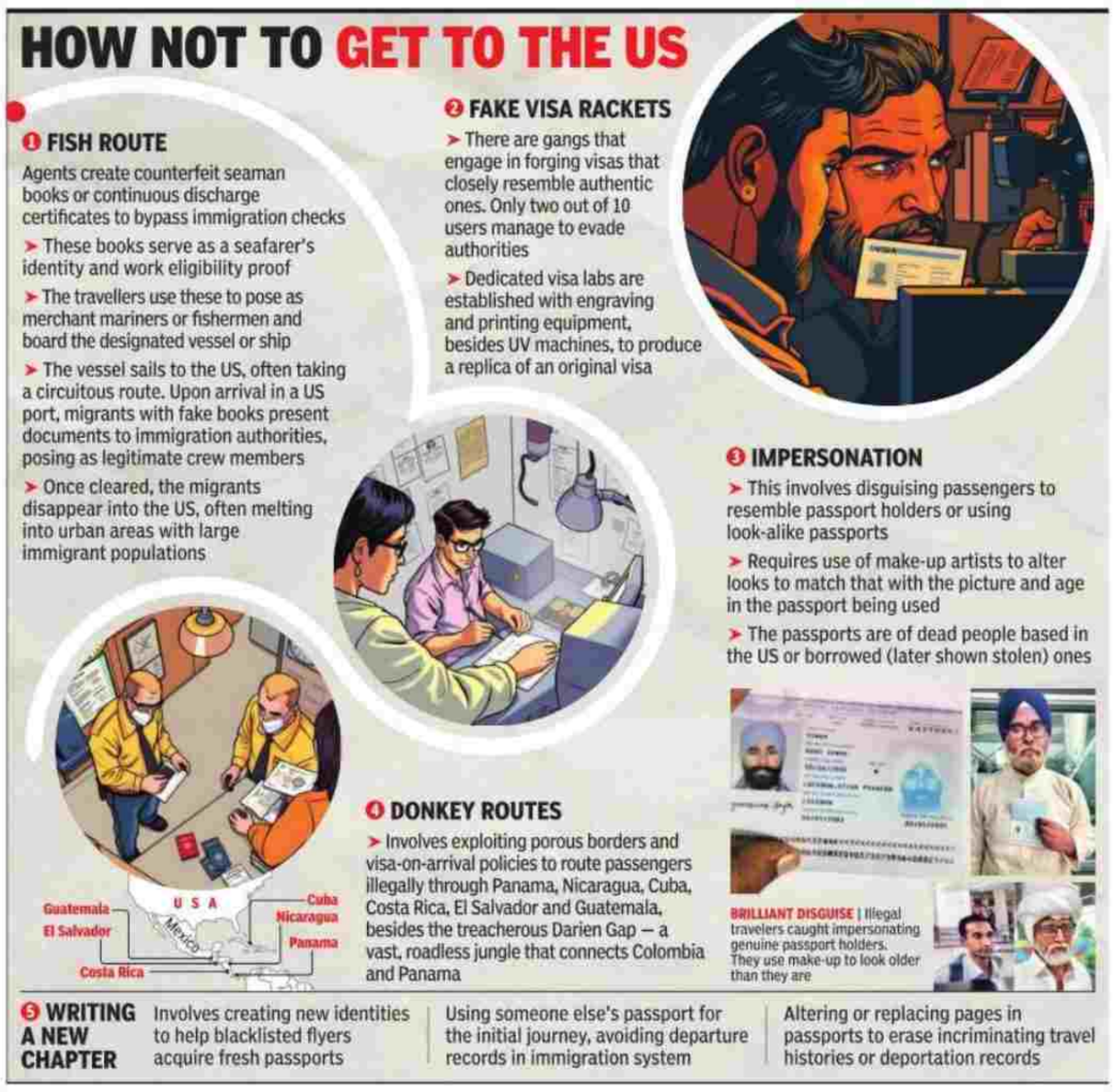
Blacklisted passengers, previously deported or rejected by immigration authorities, often turn to agents who create new identities and help them acquire fresh passports, erasing their previous records. "Agents alter or replace pages in passports to erase incriminating travel histories or deportation records, allowing passengers to travel freely despite being blacklisted," said the officer.

In this scam, agents also forge entire travel histories by placing fake immigration stamps in passports, allowing passengers to deceive visa officers into approving their applications.

Then there are "no departure cases" wherein passengers return as deportees without their departure being recorded in the immigration system. These passengers often used someone else's passport for their initial journey, so their departure is not found in the records of the immigration system.

And yes, there is always the "donkey route" where people desperate to live the "American Dream" spend nights traversing through jungles and deserts, sleepless and hungry.

Next: Why outlaws survive illegal route to US



Court acquits man of stabbing his wife, says injured's testimony lacking

Times News Network

New Delhi: A Delhi court acquitted a man of the charge of stabbing his wife, stating that the primary evidence of the injured's testimony was lacking in the case.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge Twinkle Wadhwa, in an order dated Feb 4 regarding the forensic science laboratory (FSL) evidence, said that such scientific evidence was merely corroboratory and could not replace the primary evidence of the complainant's testimony.

"Further, police witnesses who were examined in this case only proved the investigation, and their evidence is secondary. It cannot replace the primary evidence lacking in this case," the court said.

The court was hearing a case against the accused, Ajay Kumar Mandal, against whom Sonia Vihar Police Station registered an FIR under BNS Section 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide).

According to the prosecution, Mandal inflicted stab injuries on the neck of his wife, Nikki Devi, in Aug 2019. However, it said that the complainant, Devi, was not traceable, and repeated summons to her remained unserved.

The court, noting the prosecution's argument that the blood of the injured matched with the blood on the seized articles, said, "Only because the complainant's blood matched with the seized articles does not prove anything as the complainant herself has not appeared before the court to state that any such incident happened with her."

The court then acquitted Mandal, saying the charge against him was not proved.

Reversing SUV crushes 4-yr-old to death in Gr Noida

Avishek.Kumar@timesofindia.com

Noida: A 4-year-old boy playing with friends was run over by a Thar that was being reversed outside his home in Greater Noida's Ecotech-3 on Saturday.

Police said on Sunday that they arrested the Thar's driver Gajendra, who is the owner of the house where the boy's family stays on rent. The incident was reported in Jalpura village around 4pm.

Raju Singh told cops that his nephew Prashant was playing outside their house along with another kid from the neighbourhood.

Raju Singh told cops that Gajendra reversed the Thar without looking and hit his nephew Prashant. Even after the collision, he continued reversing and ran the vehicle over the boy

Gajendra, who lives in the village, reversed the Thar without looking and hit Prashant. Even after the collision, he continued reversing and ran the vehicle over the boy, Raju said.

"We were informed by the other children who were playing there. Immediately, we reached the spot and took the child to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead. After the incident, the accused fled from the spot, leaving the vehicle behind," Raju said.

Raju added that Prashant's father died in a road accident in UP's Badaun three years ago.

Ram Chandra Singh, additional SHO of Ecotech-3 police station, said that an FIR was registered against Gajendra under sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (1) (death due to negligence) of BNS.

Police have seized the vehicle (UP16 EU0515) and arrested Gajendra from Greater Noida. Further investigation is underway, the additional SHO said.

'Must be treated with utmost seriousness': HC denies pre-arrest bail to woman, son in ₹400cr financial fraud

Times News Network

New Delhi: Delhi High Court has refused to grant anticipatory bail to two individuals accused in an alleged Rs 400 crore financial fraud case, stressing that such offences are crucial to the commercial and economic world and must be treated with "utmost seriousness". Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma recently dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of Charu and Aadhar, a mother-son duo, in connection with an FIR filed by Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing in 2022. The court highlighted the need for sustained custodial interrogation in the case.

"Such kinds of offences are very serious to the commercial and economic world and are required to be seen with the utmost seriousness. The accused persons are in such close relations that the possibility of them not giving correct information, to save each other, cannot be brushed aside," the court noted.

The court further remarked, "Conspiracies are hatched and executed in the dark. It is very difficult to get direct evidence in conspiracies and more difficult when the alleged accused persons are so closely related to each other. The case involves financial transactions and, in such a case, the sustained custodial interrogation seems to be the most vital option."

HC SAYS

The accused are in such close relations that the possibility of them not giving correct information, to save each other, cannot be brushed aside

The prosecution's allegations, the court stated, were "grave" and suggested a "well-orchestrated financial fraud" leading to the misappropriation of significant amounts of money. Police said, the accused were involved in a complex financial fraud, which prompted an FIR based on a complaint from a private firm. The firm claimed that the accused, in collusion with others, fraudulently siphoned off business and funds from the complainant company to their newly-incorporated entities. The complainant also stated that the offences were committed across multiple jurisdictions through cross-border transactions, amounting to economic crimes of approximately Rs 400 HC noted that the claim by the applicants that they were merely signatories could not be accepted at face value.

98 lives lost in 3 yrs: Collapses show bldg safety on weak base

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New Delhi: A building collapse in Burari's Kaushik Enclave on Jan 27, which claimed five lives, was only the latest instance of negligence of construction norms. In around three years, similar collapses have taken a toll of 98 lives, raising questions about safety and construction standards and implementation of building codes.

According to official records, the 2022-2023 financial year saw 349 building collapses, leading to 43 deaths and 315 injuries. The situation worsened the following year, with 371 collapses resulting in 23 fatalities and 171 injuries. In the current year, between April 1, 2024, and Jan 27, there have been 413 crashdowns that have killed 32 people and injured 187.

According to Delhi Fire Service officer, one of the primary factors contributing to the collapse of newly constructed buildings is the use of substandard materials. "Lintels should always be robust, and building materials should consistently meet high-quality standards," he emphasised. "This is crucial in ensuring the structural integrity of a building and preventing catastrophic collapses."

The officer said that another critical factor was adherence to building codes and regulations, particularly with regard to height restrictions. "All too often, builders flout these regulations and construct structures that exceed the permitted height," he said. "For instance, a building that is only designed to support two floors is expanded to four-five floors, placing immense pressure on the lintels and significantly increasing the risk of collapse."

Atul Garg, director, DFS, pointed out that the foundation was critical in preventing the building from crashing down. "In numerous instances, we have found that when a building is under construction a thorough strength analysis isn't conducted to determine the optimal number of floors that can be safely supported," he said.

Buildings constructed in unauthorised areas faced a significant risk of collapse because of laxity in rigorous analysis and adherence to safety protocols, noted Garg. "These structures are often erected without proper planning, supervision or regard for safety precautions. This can have devastating consequences," he warned.

Another fire officer revealed that in many cases, water seepage was the cause of the building falling down. "Regular maintenance of the building is essential to prevent such incidents. Residents should ensure that water does not accumulate in one place or seep into the structure over time," the officer said. "It's crucial that any water buildup is promptly addressed and removed to avoid further damage." Regular checks and immediate action can help prevent water-related deterioration that can weaken the foundation, making buildings vulnerable to collapse.

School Buzz

Raghubir Singh Junior Modern School, Humayun Road hosted the 21st Lala Raghubir Singh English Language Meet, 2024-25 with great zeal. Around14 schools from Delhi and NCR participated in three different events. Neerja Chathly, professional development trainer, curriculum developer and Monisha Gupta, principal presenter of examinations and teacher trainer with the Cambridge Assessments English, judged the event. The rolling trophy was won by the host school but was passed on to the first-runner up.

RS Junior Modern School, Humayun Road

DPS International, Saket under the aegis of The DPS Society organised, 'Aurora 2024-25'-an inter-school Spanish language festival'. The main theme of the event was "Water is the essence of existence" keeping in mind the crisis of water the world faces today. Twelve schools of Delhi and NCR participated in events such as Art and Dance Drama, Solo Song, Poetry Singing and Dramatization, Character de facto, Puppet show, Weave a rhyme, Word game and Quiz. Winners of various events were awarded trophies and certificates. Vrinda Sarup, member, MCM Committee of DPSI was the chief guest. Dr Maria Eugenia González Medina Education Attaché, Embassy of Spain in India, Vanessa A Espinosa Aguirre Counsellor Culture, Embassy of Mexico in India, Enrique Descalzi, counsellor culture, Embassy of Peru in India were the guest of honour. Other special guests were Dr Gaurav Kumar, chairperson, CSPILAS, JNU & Dolly Chanana joint director, DPSS.

DPS International, Saket

Mount Carmel School, Dwarka, celebrated its annual day with much fanfare. Distinguished dignitaries like Justice Prateek Jalan, Dr Ricky Andrew Synkon, MP (Lok Sabha), and Suresh Kumar Sharma, former IG of Punjab Police graced the occasion at the Neena Mohini Auditorium. School principal Dr Rajeev Tyagi welcomed all. The highlight of the day was the recognition of academic excellence. The super achievers from each class were awarded for maintaining outstanding academic standards, and the subject toppers of the AISSCE (2023-2024) were also felicitated. The school acknowledged the alumni who have secured admissions in prestigious universities. Special awards, including the Shubha Valsalan Memorial Award, the W J Samuel Award, and the Aryan Singhal Memorial Award, were presented. Dr Michael Williams, director of Mount Carmel Schools, delivered an insightful speech. Students mesmerised the audience with their live vocal and instrumental performances. The event culminated with grand finale, the annual play, A Christmas Carol, enthralling all.

Mount Carmel School, Dwarka

Gyan Bharati School, Saket organised its annual exhibition. The chief guest for the occasion was artist Prof Rajeev Lochan. The guest of honour was Kanchan Chander, another senior artist along with Roop Chand, founder and CEO of RCIFA. Anju Chawla, former Dy director, Education was also present. School chairman Gopal Ansal presided over the exhibition. Other dignitaries included Gaurav Mohan Puri, Member of BOG and Shobhit Charla. A special section by the school Mental Health Department was inaugurated by David Absalom, Dy executive secretary (Operations) of Blind Relief Association. School principal Dr Mudita Sharma delivered an eloquent address insisting on the need of supporting students' creative abilities. School director Lata Vaidyanathan appreciated the artistic endeavour of students. The school premises had an array of exhibits that included projects handcrafted by students from pre-primary to the senior secondary. The exhibition aimed to provide a platform for students to express their individuality through various forms of art, including painting, sculpture, photography, and digital art.

Gyan Bharati School, Saket

TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2025

TMC'S DEREK O'BRIEN MOVES PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL IN RS SEEKING TO CRIMINALISE MARITAL RAPE

MILKIPUR VICTORY CAN'T COMPENSATE FOR BJP'S 'HISTORIC' AYODHYA LOSS IN LS POLLS: AKHILESH

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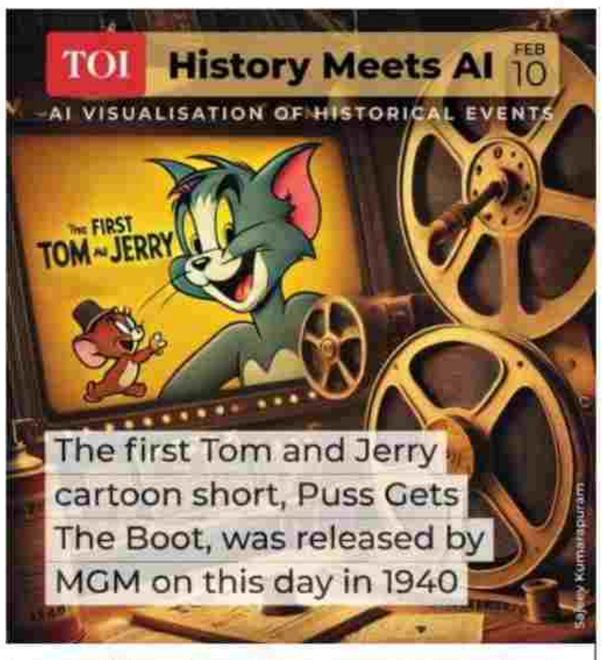


Hostelites land in soup over pizza

Ordering pizza to their hostel room almost led to the suspension of four girls at a govt hostel in Pune's Pimpri Chinchwad.

The hostel, run by Maharashtra's social justice and special assistance department, issued a suspension notice on Jan 6 to four residents after a pizza box was found in their room. Hostel authorities gave them two days to respond and identify who had ordered the pizza, warning that all four could face one-month suspension.

One of the girls, a first-year BSc student at a city college, told **TOI**, "I shifted to the hostel a month ago. Although I did not order the pizza, the hostel in-charge called my mother and asked her to travel from Dharashiv. When she arrived, I decided to leave on Feb 8 and move in with my relatives, as I am being unfairly targeted."

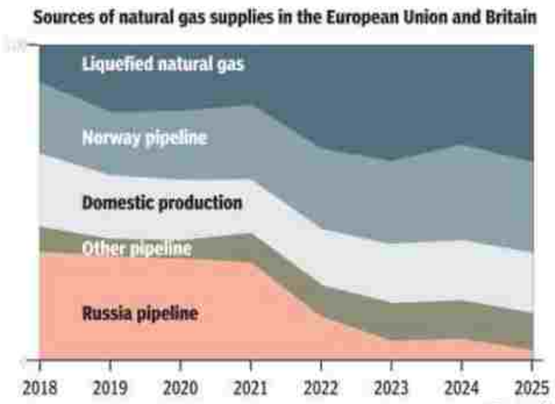
However, hostel in-charge Meenakshi Narhare told **TOI** the notice was intended only as a warning to students violating the rules. She pointed out that the other three students were still in the hostel, despite the two-day deadline for responding to the notice having passed. "We do not allow students to bring food from outside to prevent poisoning or similar incidents," she added. TNN

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

How Europe Turned Off Russian Gas

After the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, European nations diversified their energy sources, reducing reliance on Russian gas. However, Russia remains a large supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG), second only to the US in 2024

Sources of natural gas supplies in the European Union and Britain



Source: NYT

Grandson stabs Hyd industrialist to death over property dispute

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Hyderabad: The grandson of Velamati Chandrashekara Janardhan Rao, founder of Telangana's Veljan Group of Industries, was arrested Sunday on charges of brutally murdering the 86-year-old over a property dispute three days ago.

Police said they had recovered the murder weapon from Kilaru Kirti Teja, 29, who had recently returned from the US after completing his master's degree there. While the postmortem report is awaited, the cops claim the Hyderabad-based industrialist had "over 70 injuries", indicating he was stabbed as many times.

"On Thursday night (Feb 6), Teja had an argument with Rao, accusing the latter of not dividing his property the right way among family members. He was upset nobody in the company gave him money or respect. In a fit of rage, Teja attacked his grandfather and repeatedly stabbed him. After killing Rao, Teja changed his blood-stained clothes and fled from his grandfather's house in Somajiguda," inspector B Shobhan of Panjagutta police station said.

While police confirmed the multiple stab injuries on the victim's body, they maintained that the exact number could be ascertained only after they received the post-mortem report. Teja was arrested from a spot near Rao's house, police said. He had been living with his parents in Lanco Hills, a gated community in Hyderabad's western corridor.

Teja had held a grudge against Rao. On the day of the murder, he went to his grandfather's house with his mother — Rao's daughter — and confronted the industrialist. "When the victim's mother tried to restrain her son, the accused attacked her as well," said a police official. He said it was Teja's mother who alerted her brother, a resident of Jubilee Hills, about the murder. Rao has three daughters and a son.

Biren gone, Centre hopes to engage Kukis in peace talks

To Consider Prez Rule As Last Option If Govt Formation Efforts Fail

Bharti Jain & Akhilesh Singh | TNN

New Delhi: With Manipur CM N Biren Singh stepping down, Centre is hopeful Kuki leaders will be more amenable to sitting across the negotiating table to sort out issues creating mistrust between Kuki and Meitei communities and which has been at the root of ethnic strife in the state since May 2023.

While there have been several attempts by Centre to get Meitei and Kukis to the talks table — with its interlocutors, over the past few months, having first met representatives of the two communities separately and later trying to get them to sit together — there has been stiff resistance from Kukis against starting substantive negotiations under the Singh regime. So much so, the peace efforts have hit a stalemate due to this stance; the resignation of Singh on Sunday is expected to soften the Kukis, convinced that the govt is accommodative of their concerns and flexible and sincere in taking the talks forward.

▸ RESTART BUTTON: P 10

POLITICAL FLASHPOINTS

May 3, 2023 | Violence erupts; widespread destruction reported. Govt imposes shoot-on-sight orders and evacuates 9,000 people

May 12 | 10 Kuki MLAs demand a separate administration, accusing state govt of bias

May 14 | CM Biren Singh meets Amit Shah in Delhi; casualties rise to 74, with 40,000 displaced

June 30 | Protesters block Biren from leaving secretariat until his resignation letter is destroyed

Aug 7 | Kuki People's Alliance withdraws support from Biren's govt

Sept 28 | Protesters attempt to breach Biren's home over Meitei students' deaths

June, 2024 | Biren's leadership questioned after NDA loses both LS seats

June-end | NDA MLAs' Delhi visit fuels speculation about Biren's resignation, but he stays on

Aug | Biren vows to restore peace within 6 months, refusing to step down

The timing of Singh's resignation — which followed soon after he met home minister Amit Shah — was driven by the assessment that his support among MLAs has dwindled over time, with around one-and-half-dozen BJP MLAs having demanded a change in state leadership a few months back. Also, there is a sense that people of the state, both from the Valley and the hills, are tired of the prolonged conflict and failure of the Singh govt to curb it and now want a decisive leadership to broker peace.

Sources said Centre is open to exploring all political alternatives in wake of Singh's exit. This includes giving ample opportunity to another state BJP leader to stake claim to be the CM. The last option, in the event of no alternative govt formation working out, would be the imposition of President's rule.

Manipur is due for assembly elections in Feb 2027.

Sources in the Manipur security establishment indicated that the state police and central forces are in a state of alert to any possible reactions, including violent protests, to Singh's resignation, particularly from his Meitei supporters. "The assessment is that the majority of Meitei people are tired of the ethnic strife and keen on a peaceful resolution. There may be pockets of support for Singh but forces are alert and prepared to handle any eventuality," a senior officer told **TOI**.

With former home secretary Ajay Bhalla — who enjoys the trust of Shah — having been recently sent to Manipur as governor, Centre hopes even a spell of President's rule, if inevitable, will help create a neutral setting for talks between Meiteis and Kukis.

'Beef biryani' on menu triggers row, AMU says 'clerical error'

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Agra: A notice to serve "beef biryani on Sunday, instead of chicken biryani" at Aligarh Muslim University's (AMU) Suleiman Hall triggered a row with some students raising strong objections and taking up the matter with the varsity's senior authorities. Later, officials at AMU termed it a "clerical mistake while typing", and issued a show cause notice to those responsible, adding that "appropriate action will be taken against those found guilty."

AMU proctor Mohammad Wasim Ali said, "The notice was purportedly issued by a senior food in-charge of the dining hall. As soon as it was brought to our attention, we made it clear that it was a typographical error, which should not have happened. The notice has been withdrawn and replaced with a new one, stating that 'dining hall would continue to operate as it did before with the same menu and food arrangements'. It was a human error and we've rectified it."

There are 19 halls in the university, the proctor said, adding that "our menus are designed with the utmost respect for everyone's sentiments." "The students themselves sit together and decide on these matters by mutual consent. The same process was followed on Saturday... There is no special menu on Sundays. A detailed menu chart is prepared for the entire week and month."

Nikhil Pratap Singh, an AMU student who raised the matter, meanwhile said, "The notice came to our knowledge on Saturday. It explicitly mentioned that on Feb 9, 'beef biryani will be served in the hall's dining room, instead of chicken biryani'. There are students from other communities here. AMU administration should immediately take cognisance of this serious matter and investigate it further."

Murder convict uses jail earnings to pay ₹1L court fine, walks free 3 mths after end of term

Mouneshwar Sonnad | TNN

Kalaburagi: As the heavy gates of Kalaburagi central jail swung open last Thursday, Durgappa, 68, stepped out. But freedom came at a price — Rs 1.1 lakh, to be precise.

The murder convict was set to walk free in Nov 2024 on account of good behaviour during his 12 years behind bars. But a court-mandated fine stood between him and his release. With no family support and no financial means outside, his fate seemed uncertain — until his own earnings as a prison cook came to his rescue. A farm hand from Karnataka's Raichur district, Durgappa was convicted in 2013 for murdering his wife the year before. The sessions court sentenced him to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 1.1 lakh, with an additional 18 months of jail time if he failed to pay. He was lodged in Raichur jail, and transferred to Kalaburagi the same year.

iStock

FORTUNE CHANGES FATE

His life behind bars could have stretched till 2027 had it not been for a remission granted on account of good conduct. The only hurdle? Paying the court fine. Unknown to him, the years spent working as a prison cook accumulated into a handy sum. Until recently, prison wages were meagre — Rs 100-150 a day. But when govt raised the pay to Rs 524, his earnings quietly built up to nearly Rs 2.8 lakh in his account.

When authorities discovered this, Kalaburagi jail chief superintendent R Anitha stepped in. She accompanied Durgappa to a bank, where he withdrew the required amount. He appeared in Raichur sessions court Thursday and paid the fine. The gavel struck again, this time in his favour. The court ordered his immediate release.

GBS outbreak fuels fears of water quality in Pune

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Pune: For hours, the Chavans didn't know what had gone wrong with their son. He had been unwell for a few days, down with a bout of diarrhoea, but on Jan 12, seven-year-old Sai Chavan suddenly fell to the ground, and stopped moving. Mother Noor Jahan and father Suraj rushed him to hospital where doctors were flummoxed: Sai had symptoms they couldn't diagnose. Eventually, he was taken to a private hospital in Pune city and it was there that specialists had answers for the couple — their son had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS).

By early Feb, the Chavans' neighbourhood of Nanded Gaon had enough cases to be classified as the "primary outbreak zone" — nearly 90 cases would come from this area and nearby localities of Kirkatwadi, Sinhagad Road and Khadakwasla, all that were not long ago merged with Pune Municipal Corporation.

On Feb 4, almost a month after the first cases emerged, health authorities released their findings. Bacteria Campylobacter jejuni had made its way into the water supply, they said, triggering a mass infection event. So far, more than 180 people have been sickened; six have died.

The Chavans found themselves at ground zero. "We should never have trusted the corporation's water, it was our mistake," said Noor. Near her stood Suraj, trying to get his son to walk again. But Sai's knees buckled; he was still in pain.

Getty Images

Over 180 people have been affected by GBS in Pune so far, and six have died

The family was given a municipal tap connection after Nanded Gaon merged with PMC in 2021, but with a catch: the water they got — for an hour every day — was sourced from a nearby well. The well's water was only chlorinated, unlike the rest of Pune's supply which goes through an elaborate purification process at a treatment plant. Incidentally, the well was also the source of water for households across Kirkatwadi, Nandoshi village, Dhayari, Sinhagad Road and DSK Vishwa township.

Vikas Joshi, a resident of DSK Vishwa, whose brother is in hospital on oxygen support with GBS symptoms, says, "There is no point in having a water filter here at home because the supply itself is so contaminated. We buy large cans, boil the water and then drink it."

Dr Santosh Rawale, who practises in Dhayari, says GBS fears are rampant. "I now get 20 people every day with stomach flu or other infections, asking me if it's GBS. Many residents here had upset stomachs before the outbreak happened."

Looming Manipur trust vote may've forced Biren's hand

BJP Brass, Worried By Rift Among MLAs, Moved To Save The Blushes

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Guwahati: N Biren Singh's resignation as Manipur's chief minister on Sunday after almost two years of parrying calls for his ouster came with the obvious question: Why now?

The buzz is that the BJP brass in Delhi forced his hand, concerned over the widening rift among party legislators in the state over his handling of the ethnic conflict and the possibility of the opposition Congress going ahead with a damaging no-confidence motion against the BJP govt despite not having the numbers to do so. Governor AK Bhalla declared his notification summoning the budget session from Monday "null and void" after Biren's resignation.

BJP and its allies account for 45 MLAs in the House of 60, which, on paper, means the no-trust motion would have met a quick end. However, of the 37 BJP MLAs, seven are Kukis who might have abstained from voting. Also, among the remaining 30, Biren no longer enjoys unconditional support.

The BJP brass would not have wanted to risk the slightest chance of embarrassment in the event of voting on the first opposition motion since this govt assumed office.

TIME FOR A NEW JOCKEY? Manipur CM N Biren Singh greets polo players at an event in Imphal on Saturday

The fissures within BJP Legislature Party widened last Nov when 19 MLAs, including the seven Kuki legislators, skipped a meeting called by Biren to discuss law and order in the state in the wake of violence in Jiribam.

The same month, BJP's strongest ally in the state — Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma's NPP — withdrew support to the govt for Biren "completely failing to resolve the crisis and restore normalcy". Sangma said his party would review the decision if there was a leadership change.

A leaked audio clip in which Biren purportedly makes offensive remarks against a community also went against him. The video went viral in Aug last year.

On Feb 3, the Supreme Court sought a report from Central Forensic Science Laboratory on the tape that suggests Biren's role in fomenting ethnic violence.

The Manipur govt came out with statements twice — on Aug 8 and 20 last year — stating the clip was "doctored" and that its circulation on social media was "a malicious attempt by certain sections to incite communal violence or derail the process of peace that has been initiated at multiple levels". TNN

Meitei 'saviour' Biren appeals against separate tribal set-up

Guwahati: N Biren Singh's attempts to project himself as the "saviour" of Manipur's majority Meitei community throughout the 648 days of the ethnic conflict found an echo in his resignation letter as the chief minister on Sunday. He highlighted the state's "territorial integrity" as one of the "most important" priorities, indirectly appealing to the Centre not to give in to the Kuki tribe's demand for an autonomous administration.

Biren said a state with a rich and diverse civilisational history spanning thousands of years deserved protection. Over the past two years, he would repeatedly hold infiltrators from Myanmar responsible for the violence, while maintaining that there would otherwise be no conflict involving Manipur's indigenous population.

Women belonging to the Meira Paibis, a Meitei group, at a protest in Imphal on July 10, 2023

In his letter to the goveror, Biren requested the Union govt to specifically "crack down on border infiltration and formulate a policy for deportation of illegal immigrants".

Biren also mentioned the need to "continue the fight against drugs and narco-terrorism" linked to Myanmar.

Hours before resigning, he congratulated security forces in Manipur and the forest department for destroying five acres of illegal poppy cultivation that could potentially yield about 25 kg of opium. This was at G Monglian village hill range in Churachandpur district. Biren urged the Centre "to continue the stringent and fool-proof revised mechanism of FMR (free movement regime), with biometric data being stringently applied" and also "time-bound and faster" implementation of the border fencing project.

Uneasy calm prevails in Imphal, security beefed up

Kangkan.Kalita1 @timesofindia.com

Guwahati: An uneasy calm engulfed Imphal after N Biren Singh resigned as chief minister Sunday, prompting an escalation of security to prevent violence in the capital of strife-torn Manipur.

Police, central forces, Army and Assam Rifles personnel patrolled the city's streets in large numbers. "There are concerns about deterioration of law and order. Clashes might erupt between Biren Singh's supporters and opponents. People might express their sentiments on the streets. Hence, senior officers are monitoring Imphal's situation closely from the streets," said a senior police officer in Imphal East.

While the situation appeared stable Sunday after Singh's exit, a senior cop indicated they were on their toes. "Security measures are stringent in Imphal and checkpoints have been set up to prevent protests or confrontations," the officer said.

There was no report of any trouble from residents so far. "I have observed no disturbances, protests or violence after the resignation of the CM. The city and major thoroughfares were peaceful with traffic normal for a Sunday," said a student from Bamon Leikai in Imphal West. Many residents had anticipated a change of guard. "Everyone wants a fresh start for Manipur. Neither Kukis nor Meiteis want this uncertain situation to persist. Perhaps, the leadership transformation can herald a new beginning for the state. That's why everyone is silent and observing the situation," said the functionary of a prominent Meitei group.

ANATOMY OF A CONFLICT

2023

April 20, 2023 | Manipur HC asks state govt to consider Meitei community's demand for ST status

April 28 | Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) declares shutdown; Biren Singh cancels visit to Churachandpur to inaugurate an open-air gym after tribal protesters vandalise it

May 3 | March by All Tribal Students' Union Manipur to oppose proposed ST status for the Meitei community turns violent, marking the start of the ethnic flare-up

May 5 | At least 54 killed in the first three days of feuding; Centre invokes Article 355 and takes over security machinery

May 28 | Mobs from both communities go on arms-looting spree, targeting police stations, IR Battalions and Imphal police training academy; 4000 weapons looted in two weeks

May 29 | Home minister Amit Shah arrives in Imphal on a four-day visit, meets Meitei groups in Imphal and Kuki people at Moreh

June 4 | Congress MLA K. Ranjit's house is torched, along with numerous other abandoned homes in Kakching district

June 14 | Official residence of Nemcha Kipgen, lone woman minister in the Manipur govt, is attacked and set ablaze

July 19 | A video purportedly showing two tribal women being paraded naked on May 4 sparks nationwide outrage; one of them was allegedly gang-raped

Aug 4 | Mob breaks into a police armoury and walks away with several AK and Ghatak rifles, among other weapons, and a huge quantity of ammo

Aug 7 | Kuki People's Alliance withdraws support from Biren Singh govt

2024

Feb 15 | Mob loots armoury of 5th IRB HQ in Imphal East

June 4 | BJP loses both Lok Sabha seats to Cong

Nov 11 | CRPF guns down 10 suspected Kuki-Zo militants in Jiribam

Nov 16 | Bodies of three Meitei women and as many children kidnapped by tribal militants found floating in a river near Assam border

PM let Biren stay despite loss of life, says Cong

New Delhi: Accusing Biren Singh of instigating division in the state for two years, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi Sunday said PM Narendra Modi allowed Singh to continue "despite the violence, loss of life and the destruction of the idea of India" in the state.

Congress linked Biren's resignation to the no-confidence motion that the party was to move on Monday, even as it demanded that Modi immediately visit Manipur that he has not since the ethnic conflict broke out. "The resignation shows that mounting public pressure, SC investigation and no-confidence motion by Congress have forced a reckoning. But the most urgent priority is to restore peace, and work to heal the wounds of the people of Manipur. PM Modi must visit Manipur at once, listen to the people and finally explain his plan to bring back normalcy," Rahul said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "The resignation of BJP's Manipur CM is like 'shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted'." He added, "It is painful to say that for 21 months, BJP ignited a fire in Manipur and left the people, across communities to fend for themselves." TNN

After Biren red card, all eyes on Delhi's next pick for captain

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Guwahati: As former footballer N Biren Singh was shown the red card and sent off as Manipur CM, BJP now finds itself in extra time, scrambling to pick a player who can turn the game around.

With the state deeply divided, the party will look for a playmaker who can rebuild trust and governance in Manipur; someone capable of bridging the gap between the warring Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

The question is — who will be the captain when the state administration and security apparatus are deeply fractured? Among the frontrunners is rural development and panchayati raj minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh. A former speaker, RSS-backed Khemchand has been vocal against Biren's handling of the ethnic crisis that erupted in May 2023 and was among 19 BJP legislators who skipped a key meeting convened by the former CM last year. His recent summons to New Delhi has further fuelled speculation about his potential elevation.

Another strong contender is T Biswajit Singh, a senior cabinet minister whose name has been in the mix for the top post since 2022.

He was earlier considered as an alternative to Biren when BJP won its second consecutive term in Manipur 2022. T Satyabrata Singh, the current assembly speaker and another politician called to New Delhi for consultations, is also seen as a possible pick. While no official announcement has been made, BJP's Manipur unit president Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi said: "Things will be known when it happens. There is a process." For now, all eyes are on BJP brass in New Delhi as Manipur awaits its new captain.

Bid to save face, says tribal body; BJP defends ex-CM

BJP's Manipur unit chief Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi stood up for outgoing CM N Biren Singh, saying he did "so much" for the state since 2017, only to be confronted by an ethnic conflict that "caused him distress for two years".

Sharda Devi said the footballer-turned-politician decided to exit make way as CM "thinking about the future of the state and its people".

Ginza Vualzong of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum said Biren's resignation was pre-emptive. "I believe he knew that he would be voted out in the no-confidence motion in the assembly. He must have submitted his resignation to save face...Moreover, with his leaked audio tape being taken up by SC, I guess this time, even the BJP govt can't do much to save him.

Militants loot arms from IRB outpost in Thoubal

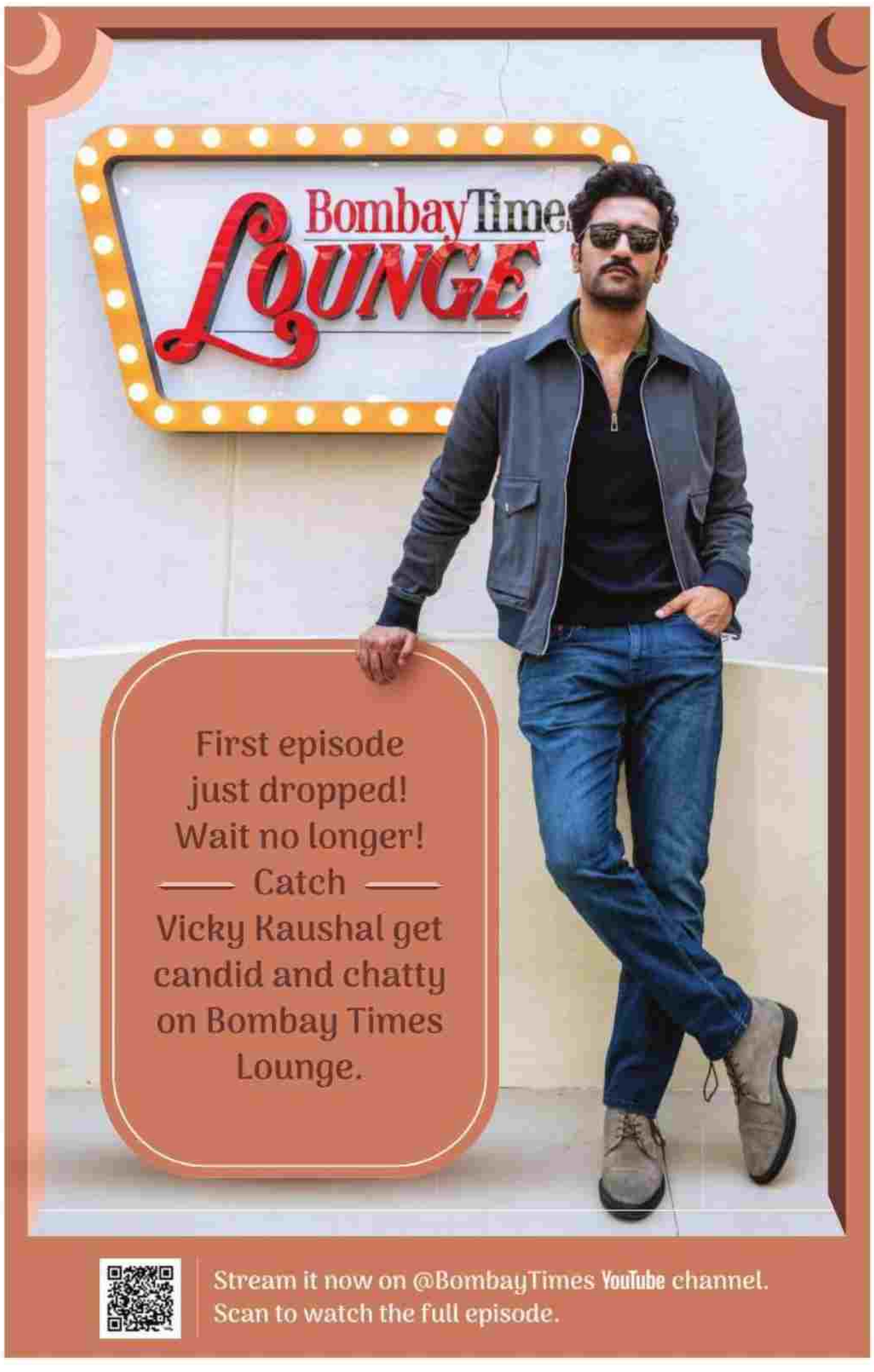
Kangkan.Kalita1 @timesofindia.com

Guwahati: Militants raided an India Reserve Battalion (IRB) outpost in Thoubal district of Manipur and looted six SLRs, three AK-series rifles, and a large quantity of ammunition Saturday night.

Additional forces were deployed and a search was conducted, yielding eight stolen weapons. However, one SLR remained missing at the time of reporting. An investigation has been launched to determine how the attack was carried out, which left three security personnel wounded, police said. Sources said gunmen arrived in multiple vehicles, seized weapons at gunpoint, and fled with around 270 rounds of ammunition and 12 magazines. Police identified militants from Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) as the attackers, though other groups are also suspected to have been involved. A KCP militant was arrested Sunday.

The looting of arms from forces has been a persistent issue in Manipur since the outbreak of ethnic violence on May 3, 2023. Mobs and insurgent groups have taken away thousands of weapons and ammunition from police stations, IRB outposts, and armouries.

In the initial months of violence, an estimated 4,000 weapons, including AK-series rifles, SLRs, and carbines, were looted, along with over 6 lakh rounds of ammunition. While forces have managed to recover a portion of the arms, a large number remained in circulation, fuelling extortion, targeted attacks, and insurgency.



INLAND WATERWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
(Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Govt. of India)
SAGARMALA
Head Office : A-13, Sector-1, Noida-201 301 (U.P.)
Phone : 0120-2527667, Fax : 0120-2522969, hc.iwai@nic.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Tender No. : IWAI-15017/30/2024-Hy

E-Bids are invited from Interested Bidders for SUPPLY OF TRANSDUCERS FOR MULTI BEAM ECHO-SOUNDER (BATHYSWATH BATHYMETRIC SYSTEM).
Details and Tender document can be downloaded from **10.02.2025 to 25.02.2025** from our web site '**www.iwai.nic.in**' and CPPP Portal '**https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**'. Last date for submission of online bids is **24.02.2025 up to 15:00 hrs** and date of opening of tender is on **25.02.2025 at 15:00 hrs.** Submission of online bids will be through **https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**.
The Tender Documents and other relevant details are available at IWAI website **www.iwai.nic.in** and e-procurement site **https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**
Date : 10.02.2025 **HYDROGRAPHIC CHIEF, IWAI, NOIDA**

स्वारस्य प्रकटन (2024-25) क्र. 1,

सहाय्यक संचालक, पुरातत्व विभाग, महाराष्ट्र शासन, नाशिक यांच्या अधिपत्याखालील गोदावरी घाट नाशिक येथील सन 2026-27 च्या सिंहस्थ कुंभमेळा अनुषंगाने राज्य संरक्षित आणि असंरक्षित स्मारक यांचे जतन, संवर्धन व परिसराचे सुशोभिकरण तसेच त्र्यंबकेश्वर येथील मंदिर, कुंड यांचे जतन, संवर्धन व परिसराचे सुशोभिकरण या कामांचा स्थल व्यवस्थापन आराखडा (SMP) तथा सविस्तर अंदाजपत्रक व ई- निविदा तयार करण्याकरिता इच्छुकता अर्ज मागविण्यात येत आहेत, पर्यटन व सांस्कृतिक कार्य विभागाच्या शासन निर्णय क्र. पुवस-2023 / प्र.क्र.225 / सां. का. 3, दिनांक 26.10.2023 मधील विवरणपत्र-अ नुसार नामिकासुचीतील तज्ञ वास्तुविशारदांकडून इच्छुकता अर्ज (Letter of Interest) मागविण्यात येत आहेत. इच्छुक वास्तुविशारदांनी आपला इच्छुकता अर्ज या कार्यालयास दि. 18/02/2025 पर्यंत तांत्रिक सादरी करणासह सादर करावा.
संपर्क :- ई-मेल: adanashik@gmail.com
दुरध्वनी क्रमांक 0253-2507496
स्वाक्षरी/-
(अमोल ना. गोटे)
सहाय्यक संचालक (पुरातत्व), नाशिक विभाग.
DGIPR/2024-2025/6243

Health Department, Haryana, Recruitment of Medical Officers

Announcement

It is hereby announced for the general information of the candidates who had applied for the post of Medical Officers in Health Department, Haryana. That on the basis of the written examination conducted by UHS Rohtak on 01.12.2024 and documents uploaded by the candidates; the candidates have been shortlisted on the basis of selection criteria published in advertisement dated 08.08.2024. The shortlisted candidates are directed to appear in the O/o Director General Health Services, Sector-6, Panchkula on 17.02.2025 at 10.00 AM for their Biometric verification along with the original document verification. The shortlisted candidates are also directed to bring original documents, 2 passport size photo and admit card etc at the above given date, time & venue. If any of the candidates does not appear for Biometrics and original document verification on ibid dates, no further opportunity would be provided and they shall not be considered any further. No enquiry/correspondence in this regards shall be entertained. The details of shortlisted candidates have been uploaded on the website of health department i.e. **www.haryanahealth.gov.in**.

Sd/-
Member Selection Committee-cum-DGHS Haryana, Sector-6, Panchkula
RO No. 32334

MAHAGENCO Maharashtra State Power Generation Co. Ltd.
E-TENDER NOTICE-45/2024-25

1) CHP/e-tender 260/Rfx No.3000054903: Work of renovation/ upgradation /modification of shuttle belt conveyor of unit 3 & 4 at CHP 2x250 MW Paras TPS. (**Esti. Cost :-** (Rs.431.80 Lacs **EMD :-** Rs. 435300/-)
(1) Selling period for above tender Sr. No. 1 from 10.02.2025 to 02.03.2025 Submission on dated 03.03.2025 at 16.00 Hrs
Note: For detail please see our web site: https://eprocurement.mahagenco.in
CHIEF ENGINEER
MAHAGENCO TPS PARAS

भारतीय विमानपत्तन आर्थिक विनियामक प्राधिकरण
Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA)
भारत सरकार/Government of India
3rd Floor, Udaan Bhawan, Safdarjung Airport, New Delhi – 110003
Ph.: 011-24695044

PUBLIC NOTICE

STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATION MEETING FOR AIRPORT TARIFF DETERMINATION OF IGI AIRPORT, DELHI FOR 4TH CONTROL PERIOD (01.04.2024 to 31.03.2029)

Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA) has issued Consultation Paper No. 07/2024-25 on 31.01.2025 (which is available on AERA website at URL www.aera.gov.in) w.r.t the Tariff Determination for Aeronautical Services for Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi for the 4th Control period Tariff Cycle of five year (01.04.2024 to 31.03.2029).

In accordance with the provision of Section 13(4) of the AERA Act, 2008, the various tariff proposals of the Authority read with the relevant discussions contained in the Consultation Paper, are put forth for Stakeholders' Consultation. A Stakeholders' Consultation Meeting in hybrid mode (Physical/Online) in this regard is scheduled on 17th February 2025 (Monday) at 02:30 PM at:

Indian Aviation Academy,
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070.

All stakeholders like Passengers/Passengers' Associations, General Public, Airport Operators, Airlines, Industry Associations/Bodies, Independent Service providers for Cargo, Ground Handing and Fuel Farm etc., are requested to join the said meeting and give their valuable suggestions/comments/views on the aforesaid Consultation Paper on tariff proposals of IGI airport, Delhi.

Those participants opting for online mode may send their confirmation by 16th February, 2025 with **Name/ email address/ mobile number** by email (to director-ps@aera.gov.in and rajan.gupta1@aera.gov.in), so that the online link can be shared with such participants for the stakeholders' meeting on 17th February, 2025.

Sd/-
CBC 03112/12/0013/2425 **Secretary, AERA**

SC raps cops for 'faulty probe', acquits man on death row

Agra: SC has set aside death penalty awarded to an Agra man who was earlier convicted for murder of his brother, sister-in-law and four children in a property dispute case in 2012. The man, Gambhir Singh, has been in jail since past 13 years. Pulling up the investigating officers, SC stated "the investigation of a case involving the gruesome murders of six persons was carried out in a most casual and negligent manner", reports **Sudeep Lavania**.

Court held that the investigation by Agra police failed to provide 'proper evidence' to convict the accused, adding that "prosecution's case is full of holes which are impossible to mend".

It rejected the testimony of the investigating officer and stated that it did not find "anything regarding the theory of motive" of the crime and highlighted lapses in handling of evidence, particularly pertaining to use of murder weapons. "Having considered the materials available on record in its entirety, we find that the present one is a case involving utter lackadaisical approach on part of the investigating agency as well as prosecution," court stated in its judgment delivered on Jan 28, which was made available on Feb 7.

Rape case fabricated, 3 get court relief after 4 yrs in jail

Dehradun: A fast track court in Dehradun acquitted three men who spent four years in jail on rape charges under Pocso Act after finding that the case against them was fabricated. The court ruled that the woman, then 19, was in a consensual relationship with one of the accused and filed a false complaint after he refused to divorce his wife, reports **Pankul Sharma**.

Court exonerated Khurshid Ahmed, Sattar Khan, and Mohd Shahid on Friday after examining the evidence and noted that the woman, despite knowing that Khurshid was married and had three children, was in a relationship with him and had a baby with him in Nov 2020. When he refused to divorce his wife, her mother and sister lodged a rape case against him and falsely implicated his two friends, Sattar and Shahid, to pressure him. Court found that prosecution failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt and acquitted all three accused and ordered Dehradun jail superintendent jail to release them immediately.

Beyond exams: The real learning thrives in nurturing environments

By Dharmendra Pradhan

Nature has bestowed upon each human being a distinct identity – from our fingerprint to iris, from our perceptions to thoughts, from our talents to achievements. This profound truth about human uniqueness has been the defining feature of our society and our educational system must mirror this uniqueness. Reflecting this uniqueness, Swami Vivekananda once said, "Education is the manifestation of perfection already present in man."

Drawing out the natural talent of a child and creatively engaging her in academic and extra-curricular pursuits of her choice have been formidable challenges before our educational institutions.

Our role, as educators and policymakers, is to nurture the unique talent of a child, leading to her excellence in chosen pursuit. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has marked a paradigm shift as to how we define and nurture talent. It is a philosophical framework that can truly descry the nuanced contours of uniqueness that exist in each child.

Under our PM's visionary leadership, we are implementing wholesome reforms in education to ensure that the educational journey of a child remains ever exciting and memorable, shorn of any stress and pressure. This perspective is central to our educational reforms, right from foundational learning to the highest levels of education and research.

A few years ago, Bal Vatika or toy-based learning would have invited widespread scepticism. Today, thanks to NEP, these innovative approaches are revolutionising early education, making learning a joyful undertaking rather than a burdensome obligation. Our new education system recognizes that each child blossoms as per her natural talent.

Our credit transfer policy that puts in place an Academic Bank of Credit, represents yet another innovative step ahead. It recognises that life's path may not always be linear but zigzag, and that learning can occur in a variety of circumstances and at varying paces. Learners could halt formal education as they pursue a passionate interest, obtain practical experience, or support their family. When they return to formal education, their experiences and accomplishments come handy and are valued and incorporated into their academic record of credit. This adaptability underscores that the doors to learning are always open.

Our govt is committed to nurture a culture where examination success never overshadows holistic development, threatening the mental well being of our youth. Recognising this critical challenge, our govt has made it a national priority to help overcome exam-related stress.

The PM's ground-breaking 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' initiative represents our commitment to transforming how students, parents, and educators need to approach assessments.

The PM's interaction with students, parents, and guardians has turned exam anxiety into a national dialogue. He has endeavoured, over the years, to allay anxiety around exams that puts needles strain on impressionable minds.

His practical tips, drawn from his own life and experiences, have been well received by exam-goers, ensuring a stress-free optimal exam performance by them.

In an example of true leadership, we are witnessing a visionary leader's dedication to fostering the future generation of Indians that contributes to nation building.

'Pariksha Pe Charcha' has been transformative in highlighting the critical importance of mental health and supportive learning environments. This is a mindset that needs to be magnified and permeated across our entire educational landscape - not just 10th and 12th Boards. The pressure and stress of exams need to be dispelled from all stages of learning.

In the wise words of Rabindranath Tagore, "Don't limit a child to your own learning, for he was born in another time." Our approach to educational change is guided by this wisdom. The idea that stress in education is inevitable needs to give way to the understanding that real learning thrives in nurturing environments. When communities, educators, and families work together to create an atmosphere where students can flourish, success ensues. From the classroom to the playground, from vocational training centres to research laboratories, we must create spaces where diverse talents can find their spark and flourish.

As we progress rapidly towards a 'Viksit Bharat', our education system stands as a key foundation stone of national transformation.

Today, I call upon every parent, teacher, and citizen of our great nation. The transformation of education is not merely a govt initiative — it is a national mission that demands our collective commitment and shared perspectives.

We will achieve our goals when collaboration and partnership between govt and civil society define our policies and actions.

The writer is Union education minister. Views are personal.

Chandrayaan-3 landing site likely to be 3.7bn years old: Scientists

New Delhi: The landing site where India's Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft touched the surface of moon's south pole in 2023 is about 3.7 billion years old, according to Indian scientists. Using high-resolution remote sensing datasets, a team of scientists, including from Isro's electro optics systems lab in Bengaluru, physical research lab in Ahmedabad, and Panjab University in Chandigarh, mapped the Chandrayaan-3 moon landing site, also known as 'Shiv Shakti' point (located at 69.37°S, 32.32°E), reports **Surendra Singh**.

"The geological map reveals the spatial distribution of three distinct terrain types within the landing area that includes high-relief rugged terrain and smooth plains and low-relief smooth plains," said the team in a paper, published in Science Direct journal. "The crater size-frequency distribution based best-fit ages of these distinct geological units are estimated to be 3.7 Ga (billion years)," the study said.

"It dates back to the same era when the earliest microscopic life forms began emerging on Earth," said scientists in an article published in Nature. Offering new insights into moon's history, the geological map of the landing site reveals that debris from nearby Schomberger crater covers the area.

WINGS OF POWER

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

The Offshore Future of Indian Aircraft

India is building its indigenous defence equipment manufacturing capabilities. Aircraft undertaking multiple roles is one of them. Some of these may even serve in foreign colours

PIC: ©100X

97
LIGHT COMBAT AIRCRAFT(LCA) TEJAS
An order for 97 Tejas Mk-1A fighters, worth ₹67,000 crore, is in progress

45
LIGHT COMBAT HELICOPTER (LCH)
The LCH currently features 45 per cent indigenous content by value

India is steadily advancing its indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities, aiming to reduce dependence on imports and establish itself as a global supplier of military equipment. This push for self-reliance spans across land, air, and naval platforms, with a particular focus on developing advanced combat aircraft and helicopters.

A significant aspect of this effort is the creation of multi-role aircraft that can serve in diverse operational scenarios, from air superiority missions to ground support and naval operations. Notably, some of these domestically developed aircraft may even be exported, reflecting India's growing footprint in the global defence market.

This ambition is exemplified by the development of a slew of homegrown fighter jets designed to enhance the Indian Air Force's (IAF) fleet while also presenting an attractive option for international buyers.

Furthermore, the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence and advanced materials, is enhancing the performance and capabilities of these aircraft. Collaborations between public and private sectors are fostering innovation and efficiency in production processes.

As India continues to invest in research and development, its defence industry is poised to play a crucial role in securing national interests and contributing to global peacekeeping efforts.

LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER

The push to accelerate the production of a light combat aircraft is gaining momentum, with key suppliers ensuring timely engine deliveries that are crucial for completing the aircraft. Significant advancements have been made in the aircraft's design, including the successful integration of advanced electronic warfare systems and sophisticated radar technologies. Testing is underway for an indigenous air-to-air missile, marking an important milestone as preparations are made for deliveries to the air force.

The aircraft is part of a contract covering multiple units, including both fighter and trainer variants. The initial batch is anticipated soon, as the manufacturer works to fulfil commitments despite previous delays. Additionally, plans for further acquisitions of this aircraft type are in progress.

COMBAT CHOPPER

Designed for a wide range of operations, these helicopters can target enemy air defences, engage slow-moving and remotely piloted aircraft, neutralise high-altitude bunkers, conduct counter-insurgency missions in various environments, and provide vital support to ground forces. Their versatility makes them invaluable assets in modern warfare, capable of operating effectively in diverse terrains and under challenging conditions.

Equipped with advanced avionics and weapon systems, these combat choppers can conduct precision strikes while maintaining a low radar profile to evade detection. Features such as enhanced situational awareness, targeting systems, and advanced weaponry, including guided missiles and machine guns, ensure that they can engage threats swiftly and efficiently.

MULTI-ROLE UTILITY

The advanced light helicopter is an indigenously developed twin-engine utility aircraft designed for multi-role and multi-mission capabilities. Its development began several decades ago with initial assistance from a foreign partner. The helicopter has since undergone rigorous testing and certification for both military and civilian operations.

Available in multiple variants, this helicopter serves diverse operational needs. The program for a multi-role helicopter was initiated years ago, reflecting a commitment to developing indigenous capabilities in aviation technology.

—For editorial queries, contact ***Pooja.Madhok@timesofindia.com***

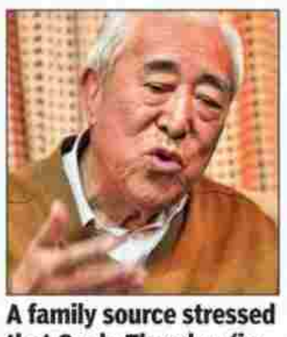
IAF, ARMY CHIEFS ON TEJAS SORTIE

PTI

IAF chief Air chief marshal AP Singh (left) and Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi took a sortie aboard a Tejas ahead of the Aero India 2025 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Sunday. Defence minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate the five-day event on Monday. It will see a variety of aircraft perform — presence of Russian Su-57 and US's F-35 being a major highlight — besides participation of more than 900 exhibitors (150 foreign) and 90 countries, 26 defence ministers and 118 CEOs, including 59 from foreign companies, reports **Chethan Kumar.** India's defence exports are set to surge beyond Rs 30,000 crore, while domestic defence production is expected to exceed Rs 1.6-lakh-crore by 2025-26, Singh said on Sunday

Dalai Lama's brother, a key figure in Tibet's fight for freedom, dies in Kalimpong

Kalimpong: Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's elder brother who was a towering figure in Tibetan politics and fled China before his sibling did, died Saturday aged 97 at his home in north Bengal's Kalimpong. "He (Thondup) passed away peacefully due to old age," said a family member, reports **Nisha Chettri**.



A family source stressed that Gyalo Thondup (in pic) had dedicated his life to the Tibetan cause. 'He mostly spoke on behalf of his brother, the 14th Dalai Lama, and met world leaders to fight for Tibet's freedom,' said the source

Another family source stressed that Thondup, who later became a businessman with a thriving noodles business in Kalimpong, had dedicated his life to the Tibetan cause. "He mostly spoke on behalf of his brother, the 14th Dalai Lama, and met world leaders to fight for Tibet's freedom," said the source. Thondup had sneaked out of Tibet in 1952. The Dalai Lama, who is now 89, fled in 1959.

Thondup's sister and brother-in-law have come from Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala, the seat of the Tibetan govt-in-exile. Senior officials from there are expected to arrive Monday. Thondup's funeral will be held Tuesday in Kalimpong.

Thondup was born in 1928 in China's Taktser. In 1939, he moved to Tibet's Lhasa with his family. At 14, he went to study Chinese history in China's Nanjing, where he met influential leaders, including Chiang Kai-shek. In 1948, he married Zhu Dan, the daughter of a Kuomintang general. As tensions in China escalated, he left Nanjing in 1949.

Thondup had shared his experiences of life in exile with this reporter when his noodle factory was gutted in a fire in 2019. He said after fleeing Tibet in 1952, he arrived in Darjeeling but struggled to find work. At that point, an official in Sikkim suggested he start a business, but he had no experience. The Indian govt gave him an import licence and his friends in Kalimpong helped him.

He later started the noodle factory. "My wife and I discussed it, so I looked for land in Kalimpong. The prices were high but I was lucky to buy a plot for Rs 7,200," Thondup had said then. By 1966-67, he had set up his residence, named "Tagtser House", in Kalimpong and his noodle business that supported his family for over five decades. Thondup later detailed his life experiences in his memoir, The Noodle Maker of Kalimpong.

India-US Relationship Status Set For Update With Modi Visit

PM Narendra Modi will visit the US on Feb 12-13 at the invitation of President Donald Trump. This will be the first meeting between the two leaders after Trump assumed office for his second term. Modi will be the fourth global leader to visit the US since Trump's inauguration.

On the agenda

To build on the strong India-US Global Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and set an ambitious agenda for a mutually beneficial and trusted relationship across all sectors. Focus likely on enhancing cooperation in trade, nuclear energy, defence, critical and emerging technologies, counter-terrorism and Indo-Pacific.

Also on the agenda are differences over trade or what Trump calls need for fair trade, illegal migration and visa delays. India will seek Trump's cooperation in carrying forward recent landmark initiatives like iCET and IMEEC, both launched under the Biden administration. Even as Trump threatens to slap higher tariffs on India and others, the Modi govt will hope to restart discussions for a mini, if not comprehensive, trade deal that can restore India's benefits under the GSP that were revoked in 2019, while allowing the US greater market access. Meeting with business leaders, talks with Elon Musk not ruled out.

PREVIOUS INTERACTIONS

- Modi visited US in June 2017 and hosted Trump for a state visit in Feb 2020
- The two leaders have also spoken on the phone twice since Nov 2024 (Nov 6, 2024, and Jan 27, 2025)
- In early engagement with the new administration, foreign minister S Jaishankar represented the PM at Trump's inauguration. During the visit, Jaishankar met secretary of state Marco Rubio and participated in the Quad foreign ministers' meeting in Jan

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

1 Bilateral Ties

- India and the US launched a 'strategic partnership' in 2005
- India-US ties were elevated to Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership during Trump's visit to India in Feb 2020
- During the first Trump administration, the Indo-Pacific region gained significant attention as a key strategic area in US foreign policy
- In concert with Japan, Australia, the US and India reinvigorated the Quadrilateral Dialogue. Trump administration took the lead in promoting Quad from a senior-official level dialogue to a ministerial-level dialogue. Under the Biden administration, Quad was elevated to a leaders summit

2 Trade and Investment

- The US is one of the largest trading partners of India with overall bilateral trade in goods and services of $190 billion in 2023. India has a trade surplus of over $36 billion
- During FY 2023-24, US was the third largest source of FDI into India with inflows of almost $5 billion

3 Energy Partnership

- The US is India's sixth largest energy trade partner and India's hydrocarbon trade with the US was $13.6 billion in FY 2023-24

4 Education and Cultural Cooperation

- India, US signed the first ever 'Cultural Property Agreement' in 2024 to prevent and curb the illicit trafficking of antiquities. US has returned 578 antiquities to India since 2016
- US is one of the most favoured destinations for Indian students for higher education

5 Defence Cooperation

- India-US defence cooperation is based on 'New Framework for India-US Defence Cooperation' which was renewed for 10 years in 2015
- In 2016, the defence relationship was designated as a Major Defence Partnership
- The apex dialogue mechanism is the 2+2 ministerial dialogue. It provides guidance on political, military and strategic issues
- India is one of the largest military exercise partners for the US
- India has contracted for more than $20 billion US-origin defence articles since 2008, including C-130J, C-17 and Apache

6 S&T and Space Cooperation

- The Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement was renewed in Sept 2019 for 10 years
- Isro and Nasa are developing a microwave remote sensing satellite for earth observation: Nasa-Isro Synthetic Aperture Radar
- In Jan 2024, Nasa and Isro signed a Joint Statement of Intent to mount a joint effort to the International Space Station

- Isro has nominated two Indian astronauts on the Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station, who are currently being trained in the US
- India and US have strong cooperation in critical and emerging technologies. Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) was launched by the NSAs in Washington in Jan 2023

Lanka navy apprehends 14 fishermen from TN, total rises to 88 this yr

Madurai: Sri Lankan Navy apprehended 14 fishermen from Rameswaram and confiscated their two trawlers for allegedly fishing in their territorial waters late on Saturday, raising the total number of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody to 88 this year.

The fishermen were handed over to fisheries officials in Kilinochchi district and are likely to be produced before a local court before being lodged in Vavuniya prison.

The two trawlers were among over 500 that sailed from Rameswaram fishing harbour on Saturday morning. Sri Lankan Navy said it deployed a fast attack craft and inshore patrol craft to drive away Indian fishing boats that were poaching in the sea area north of Mannar. They seized two of the boats and arrested the 14 fishermen who continued engaging in illegal fishing, they said.

Meanwhile, a fishing trawler from Rameswaram sank off the island's Dhanushkodi coast on Saturday night after its hull developed a crack. The seven-member crew was rescued by nearby trawlers. TNN

Centre depriving TN of edu funds for rejecting NEP, says CM Stalin

Chennai: Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin accused BJP-led Union govt Sunday of diverting funds meant for students in the state to other regions as a form of political coercion. "No govt in India's history has been so ruthless as to strangle access to education for political revenge against a state," he said, alleging that the move was a consequence of Tamil Nadu rejecting the national education policy (NEP) 2020 and the three-language formula. According to reports, Rs 2,152 crore allocated for Tamil Nadu under PM Shri scheme was diverted to Gujarat and UP. Citing these reports, Stalin criticised Centre's actions.

"For rejecting the imposition of #NEP2020 and the three-language policy, they (BJP govt) resorted to open blackmail, snatching away Rs 2,152 crore meant for Tamil Nadu's students and now they have handed it over to other states. This is nothing short of coercion, punishing our students for standing up for their rights," the CM wrote on X. Stalin said BJP has "once again proven itself to be the face of injustice and hatred towards Tamil Nadu".

DMK organisation secretary RS Bharathi also criticised BJP govt over financial allocations to Tamil Nadu. Speaking to reporters at the party headquarters, Anna Arivalayam said: "Tamil Nadu has contributed Rs 6.28 lakh crore, but Union govt has given only Rs 56,000 crore in return." Bharathi also took aim at finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman. "She says she is from Tamil Nadu but has done nothing for the state," he said, alleging that Centre had failed to provide funds for disaster management and for MGNREGS. TNN

Caught in wire trap laid by poachers, leopard dies of starvation in Maha

Navi Mumbai: A female leopard met a gruesome death in Sindhudurg district after being caught in a deadly wire trap, which is used by poachers to illegally hunt wild animals, reports **Umesh K Parida**. The leopard, in search of prey, was trapped in the wire contraption for several days in the Dodamarg range, and died due to starvation, as per the autopsy. It was found hanging from the trap which was laid on a slope in a private dense forest area.

The female leopard was found hanging from the trap which was laid on a slope in a private dense forest area in Sindhudurg district

Forest officials said that the menace of wire traps is serious as protected animals are falling prey to it. Range forest officer, Vaishali Mandal said, "The trap does not have a flat surface underneath. Our team, after completing procedural formalities, visited Ker village again. Anyone wishing to share information regarding those who laid the trap should contact us. The informant's name will be kept confidential. The informant will also be rewarded."

UP demolishes portion of mosque 'built on encroached govt land' in Kushinagar

Lucknow: A portion of a mosque in UP's Kushinagar district, about 325 km from Lucknow, allegedly built on 'encroached' land, was demolished by bulldozers in presence of security personnel and senior officials on Sunday.

Ram Bachan Singh, an activist, had complained on the CM's portal that the Madni Masjid was built after encroaching govt land and demanded a survey. Later, the mosque management moved the Allahabad high court, which granted a stay on the encroached portion of the mosque. The stay was till Saturday.

The mosque's caretaker said Muslim community had purchased 32 decimals of land around 15 years ago to construct the mosque. He claimed there was no encroachment and the mosque stood on 30-decimal land.

The first complaint against the illegal construction was filed in 1999 by Ram Bachchan Singh, but no action was taken. The case resurfaced in Dec 2023 when an official inquiry was launched. Following a probe, the municipal administration issued three notices to the mosque committee on Dec 23, asking for legal documentation, but no valid papers were submitted. Consequently, a part of the structure was declared unauthorised. TNN

CAD-2508

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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C) IDCO, IDCO TOWERS, BHUBANESWAR-751022

Tender Call Notice No. H.O./P&C/ EST-E-2191/03/04/2023/(Part-II)/ 3757 Dated: 05.02.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Value of work (Approx.)	Period of Completion
1.	Survey, site investigation, site development, Detailed design & drawing, construction, Testing & commissioning of 10 ml RCC MBR at Kanjiama with pump house, ancillary civil structures, pumping system, LT electrical system including diesel generator sets and instrumentation and control system including PLC & SCADA for water supply to Malipada Industrial Estate, Khurdha, Odisha (on turnkey basis).	₹ 14.84 Crores	06 (Six) Calendar Months

1. Other details

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-Line for Bidding	
		From	To
1	2	3	4
Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, IDCO Tower, Bhubaneswar-751022	Bid ID No - P&C/EST/E-42/2024-25	17:00 Hours of dt. 07.02.2025	17:00 Hours of dt. 28.02.2025

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal, www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Corrigendum or addendum if any will not be published in news papers and can only be seen in the e-Procurement portal **www.tendersodisha.gov.in as well as IDCO Website www.idco.in**

Sd/-
Chief General Manager (P&C)
IDCO, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-14003/11/0106/24-25

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA
Public Works Division Nanded
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. (39) FOR 2024-25

E-tenders for 05 Works in B-1 form are invited by the Executive Engineer P.W.Division Nanded (Phone No.02462-253711) from the registered contractors in appropriate class of Public Works department of Govt of Maharashtra for the improvement in Dist. Nanded.

1. The tender costs of the above works are more than Rs.1.00 crores.
2. All information related to this tender is made available on the following website. Also, all the changes will be made available on this website.

www.mahapwd.gov.in
https://mahatenders.gov.in

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Public Works Division Nanded

DGIPR/2024-2025/6213

Government of Madhya Pradesh
Office of the Engineer-in-Chief
Water Resources Department,
Jal Sansadhan Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal (M.P.)
Email Id: ceproc.encwrd.bpl@nic.in
Tel: 0755-2767635 Fax: 0755-2552406

N.I.T. No. 1129/2024-25/E-in-C/e-tendering **Bhopal, Dated : 05.02.2025**

Bids for following works are invited on website **https://www.mptenders.gov.in** Last Date of purchase/download of Bid Document and submission of bid is **04-03-2025 17:30 hrs.** Any amendment/modification can be seen only on the website. Detailed N.I.T. and other details can be viewed on above mentioned website.

S. No.	Tender No.	Work	District	Amount (Lakhs)
1.	2025_WRD_400930	Refurbishment of Mohanpura Left Bank Lift System.	Rajgarh	1114.69

''पॉक्सो है सुरक्षा का हथियार, बच्चों पर न करें अत्याचार'' G-22794/24

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Procurement)

Office of Superintending Engineer,
Moradabad Circle, P.W.D. Moradabad
Short Term E-Procurement Notice Inviting Tenders

No. 790/E-Tender-MBD Circle/24-25 *Dated : 29-01-2025*

1. On behalf of the Governor of UP, tenders for following work are invited by the Superintending Engineer, Moradabad Circle, PWD Moradabad online on website http://etender.up.nic.in from registered contractors from 12.02.2025 **at 10.00 am to 20.02.2025** at 12.00 pm. Technical bid/Prequalification of tenders shall be opened on **20.02.2025** at 12.30 pm. in office of undersigned by tender committee in presence of authorised representatives/bidders who wish to be present. Financial bid of the tenders' who qualify in technical bid shall be opened on date and time as specified by a notice in the office of undersigned. In case of Government holiday the required process shall be carried out on next working day. Amount mentioned in column 5 & 7 shall be mandatory deposited by net banking only on E-Tender Portal.

2-

Sl. No	DISTRICT	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Time of completion of the work (Including rainy season)	Cost of Tender Documents including GST	Category of road contractor eligible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Due to excessive rainfall in the financial year 2024-25, the roads of the district have become extremely damaged, due to which short-term tenders are invited as below (Financial Year 24-25 Renewal with Genral Repair Work)							
1	Sambhal	Renewal with Genral Repaire of Meerut Badaun road (SH-18)	1609.00	30.00	8 Month	2354.00	A Road Work category
2	Sambhal	Renewal with Genral Repaire of Sambhaj Joya road (MDR)	513.00	10.26	8 Month	2354.00	A Road Work category
3	Sambhal	Renewal with Genral Repaire of Saidnagli Manota Chaudharpur road (ODR)	581.00	11.62	8 Month	2354.00	A Road Work category

3. In PWD technical evaluation of tenders is to be done by Prahari Software. URL for Prahari is http://wms.uppwd.gov.in/Prahari/ On opening of the website Prahari login page will open in which user type Contractor is to be selected. User name and password for login on Prahari shall be same as used for contractor's registration on Chnakaya Portal. Bidders have to upload all the basic information and required document on Prahari as given in Prahari in detail. If a bidder does not upload information and document on Prahari technical evaluation of the tender shall not be done and the bidder will be responsible for that. Rules/conditions & details of the tender are available at website http://etender.up.nic.in. and http://wms.uppwd.gov.in/Prahari

(Er. Sunil Prakash)
Executive Engineer
Provincial Division PWD
Sambhal

(Er. S.P. Singh)
Superintending Engineer
Moradabad Circle, PWD Moradabad
For and on behalf of Governor of UP
Mob No. 9557104999
Mail ID:- semoradabad13@yahoo.com

UPID-228474/07.02.2025 www.upgov.nic.in

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER (Only through KPP-Portal)

BWSSB invites tenders in two stage tender system from eligible contractors for the following works:

Name of the work	Amount put to tender / EMD
Office of the Chief Engineer (WWM-West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bengaluru - 560009	
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(WWM-W)/ACE(WWM-STP-W)/DCE (WWM-H&AV)/TA-2/1536/2024-25 Date: 05-02-2025	
1) Work of Comprehensive Operation and Maintenance of 5 MLD UWTP at Chikkabanavara for the period of 5 years.	Rs.809.11 Lakhs / Rs.14.32 Lakhs
The Last date for submission of completed tender documents is on **11.03.2025 upto 16:30 hrs.** Date of opening of tender is on **12.03.2025 at 17:30 hrs.** Sd/- Chief Engineer (WWM-West)	
Office of the Chief Engineer (WWM-East), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, KG Road, Bengaluru - 560009	
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(WWM-E)/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-1/1150/2024-25 Date: 07-02-2025	
2) Work of providing and laying 1800mm dia RCC NP-3 class sewer pipeline by using Trenchless Technology Method near Dobhi Ghat NGR Layout coming under AEE(WWM-N-K&T)-2 Sub Division - **Call-2**	Rs.397.75 Lakhs / Rs.5.96 Lakhs
IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(WWM-E)/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-12/1152/2024-25 Date: 07-02-2025	
3) Work of providing and laying 1800mm dia RCC NP-3 class sewer pipeline by using Trenchless Technology Method near Madiwala Lake coming under AEE(WWM-N-K&T)-2 Sub Division - **Call-2**	Rs.397.75 Lakhs / Rs.5.96 Lakhs
The Last date for submission of completed tender documents is on **24.02.2025 upto 17:30 hrs.** Date of opening of tender is on **27.02.2025 at 16:00 hrs.** Sd/- Chief Engineer (WWM-East)	

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during the working hours.

DIPR/CP/BCPL/4771/2024-25

Tender Notice

RFP No.: MPLRS/2025/Digitization/ 001

Chief Executive Officer, Madhya Pradesh Land Record Management SAociety ("CEO MPLRS") invites proposals from eligible Bidders/agencies for **"Request for Proposals for Selection of Agency for Digitization of Legacy Records, providing DMS & DBES solution and Carry out Data Entry".** More details on the required Services are provided in the RFP.

#	Tender No.	Name of the Work/ Services	Tender Fees (In INR)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In INR)	Last date & time of submission of Bid
1	MPLRS/ , 2025/ Digitization/ 001	Request for Proposals For Selection of Agency for Digitization of Legacy Records, providing DMS & DBES solution and Carry out Data Entry	INR. 5000/- + Processing Fees (non-refundable) to be paid online through MP e-tendering portal.	**INR 1,05,00,000 /-** (INR One crore five lakh rupees only) Bidder shall submit the EMD online through the eProcurement portal. (www.mptenders.gov.in).	07-March-2025 at 17:00 Hrs.

Chief Executive Officer, Madhya Pradesh Land Record Management Society (MPLRS)
O/o Commissioner Land Records, Madhya Pradesh,
Moti mahal Gwalior / Rajasva Bhavan Naka Chandrabadni, Needam Road
Gwalior (M.P.), PIN-474007
email: mp-lrs@mp.gov.in

''पॉक्सो है सुरक्षा का हथियार, बच्चों पर न करें अत्याचार'' G-22807/24

WINGS OF POWER

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

Soaring ahead: Aviation boom

India's air transport sector is rapidly growing, fuelled by rising passenger demand and government initiatives

PICS: ISTOCK

Artha.Neog@timesofindia.com

As one of the fastest-growing aviation markets globally, India's air transport sector has undergone significant transformations in recent years. Driven by increasing passenger demand, government initiatives, and technological advancements, this feature explores the key trends, challenges, and prospects for the Indian air transport market.

According to data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), India witnessed a remarkable recovery in air travel in 2024, with domestic passenger traffic surpassing 161 million. This resurgence can be attributed to several factors, including the expanding middle class and a surge in leisure travel as individuals resumed vacations and family visits. International passenger traffic also rose substantially, with 30 million passengers traveling abroad, reflecting robust demand for international routes. Major airports recorded record-high traffic numbers, further underscoring the sector's recovery and growth.

The Indian government continues to prioritise air connectivity expansion through initiatives like the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme, which aims to make air travel more affordable and accessible. This program has led to the establishment of new regional airports and the launch of several underserved routes, significantly enhancing connectivity to remote areas. Over 619 routes have been operationalised under UDAN, encompassing 88 airports.

The industry anticipates Budget 2025-26 will bring new announcements to bolster this initiative further. Living up to expectations, the government unveiled an ambitious vision for UDAN's future, planning to expand the scheme to 120 new destinations and aiming to cater to an additional four crore passengers over the next 10 years. For FY26, the government has allocated ₹2,400 crore to the Civil Aviation Ministry, including ₹540 crore earmarked specifically for the UDAN scheme. Additionally, major airlines have expanded their fleets, introducing new aircraft to meet rising demand. The growth of low-cost carriers has also contributed to making air travel more affordable, further boosting passenger numbers.

In 2024, the Indian air transport market embraced technological advancements that enhance operational efficiency and passenger experience. Airlines and airports have implemented contactless travel solutions, including automated check-in kiosks, digital boarding passes, and biometric security checks, streamlining the travel process and improving customer satisfaction.

Sustainability has emerged as a key focus, with airlines investing in newer, more fuel-efficient aircraft to reduce carbon emissions. The use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) is gaining traction, with Indian carriers collaborating with global partners to develop and implement these eco-friendly alternatives.

Looking ahead, the Indian air transport market is poised for sustained growth. By 2030, it is projected that India will become the third-largest aviation market globally, with the potential to handle over 500 million domestic and international passengers annually. The government's focus on enhancing airport infrastructure, increasing investment in air traffic management systems, and promoting regional connectivity will be crucial in realising this vision.

While challenges persist, the sector's resilience and adaptability position it well for a prosperous future, making air travel an essential component of India's evolving transportation landscape. Airlines are expanding their fleets to meet rising demand, while advancements in technology and sustainability initiatives are shaping the future of air travel. Additionally, public-private partnerships are playing a key role in modernising airports and improving passenger experience through innovation and enhanced efficiency.

The Indian air transport market is poised for sustained growth. By 2030, it is projected that India will become the third-largest aviation market globally

OUTLOOK FOR 2025

SIGNIFICANT GROWTH ANTICIPATED
The Indian aviation sector is poised for considerable expansion in 2025,

PROJECTED PASSENGER TRAFFIC
Domestic passenger traffic is projected to grow by 7-10 per cent in FY25, reaching 164-170 million, while international traffic is expected to rise by 15-20 per cent, supported by new e-visa policies,

FLEET EXPANSION
Airlines are expanding their fleets to meet rising demand, while advancements in technology initiatives are shaping the future of air travel

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TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2025

TO ME FAITH MEANS NOT WORRYING
— JOHN DEWEY

DAVID SCHWIMMER URGES ELON MUSK TO BAN KANYE WEST ON X OVER HIS ANTISEMITIC POSTS: 'STOP GIVING DERANGED BIGOT A MEGAPHONE'

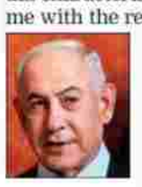
DENZEL WASHINGTON IS SET TO MAKE BROADWAY RETURN BUT REVEALS HE'S STRUGGLING WITH SPEECH AFTER NEARLY BITING HIS TONGUE OFF RECENTLY

Bibi draws flak for suggesting Palestinian state on Saudi soil

Riyadh Hits Back In Strongest Remarks Since Gaza War; Arab Nations Join In

Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries on Sunday condemned remarks by Israel's prime minister who appeared to suggest in an interview that a Palestinian state could be established on Saudi territory.

Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks, which some Israeli media characterised as a joke, came with the region already on edge over the potential displacement of Palestinians after President Trump first floated the idea of moving Gazans to neighbouring nations. Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit said that the thinking behind Netanyahu's remarks "is unacceptable".



The Saudi foreign ministry, meanwhile, noting the importance of the Palestinian issue to the Arab world, stressed "its categorical rejection to such statements that aim to divert attention from the continuous crimes committed by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian brothers in Gaza".

In a television interview on Thursday, right-wing Israeli journalist Yaakov Bardugo was discussing with Netanyahu the prospect of diplomatic normalisation with Saudi Arabia when he appeared to misspeak, attributing to Riyadh the stance that there would be "no progress without a Saudi state".

"Palestinian state?" Netanyahu corrected him. "Unless you want the Palestinian state to be in Saudi Arabia," the Israeli premier quipped. "They (the Saudis) have plenty of territory." Bardugo responded that he did "not rule this out". Netanyahu went on to describe the talks leading up to the so-called Abraham Accords, in which several Arab countries normalised ties with Israel, concluding: "I think we should allow this process to take its course".

His suggestion prompted criticism, including from Qatar, and the Palestinian foreign ministry, which described the remarks as "racist". It was also condemned by the UAE, one of the few Arab nations with formal ties with Israel. Egypt announced Sunday that it will host an emergency Arab summit on Feb 27 to discuss "new and dangerous developments".

In its statement, Saudi Arabia said "this extremist, occupying mentality does not understand what the Palestinian land means" to Palestinians. Such a mindset, it added, "does not think that the Palestinian people deserve to live in the first place, as it has completely destroyed Gaza" and killed tens of thousands "without the slightest human feeling or moral responsibility". Sunday's comments were the strongest yet out of Riyadh since the 2023 attacks by Hamas. AFP & BLOOMBERG

Reuters

ISRAEL PULLS OUT FROM KEY GAZA ROAD: The Israeli military has withdrawn from Gaza's Netzarim corridor that bisects the enclave, Hamas said on Sunday, a move that was expected under the ceasefire agreement

US moves to send $8bn in arms to Israel

The US state department has given Congress formal notification that it plans to move forward with sales of over $8 billion in weapons to Israel, bypassing an informal review process that was ongoing in one House committee. The move took place just two days after President Trump met with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and said the US would "take over" the devastated Gaza Strip and turn it into a "Riviera of the Middle East." NYT

'Dad, I came back alive!': Hostages give glimpses of their 15-mth ordeal

Isabel Kershner

Doron Steinbrecher vowed that she would never wear pink again when she made her first public comments in a video after being freed from more than 15 months in Hamas captivity in Gaza. A year ago, she had appeared in a hostage video made by her captors wearing a pale rose-coloured sweatshirt. When the Palestinian militant group Hamas released her last month, she was dressed in a bright magenta track suit and looked pale.

Sitting in front of a camera again took her back to the difficult moments when her captors filmed her in Gaza, Steinbrecher, 31, said in the video, looking composed and smiling at times. "This time, I'm sitting comfortably on a couch with my family watching me in a warm and pleasant place," she said. Trying to convey that she had not been broken, she said it was important for her to show everyone that "I'm OK."

HOME AT LAST: Hostage Doron Steinbrecher reunites with her dad

With 16 Israelis released since Jan. 19 under a ceasefire deal with Hamas, social media posts and statements from relatives are providing glimpses of the joy and relief of freedom as well as hints of the torment they have endured. Col. Avi Benov, a doctor and deputy chief of the Israeli military's medical corps, told reporters that several of the recently released female hostages had spent the last eight months underground in Hamas tunnels in Gaza. Some hostages who were released in Nov 2023 have described suffocating humidity in the tunnels that made it difficult to breathe. Benov said the first seven women recently released were all were suffering from "mild starvation," while some still had shrapnel in their bodies from injuries they sustained on Oct. 7, 2023.

The recently released hostages have remained largely protected from the glare of the media, Medical and mental health professionals say preserving their privacy is essential to the long healing process. Footage released by the military of the hostages' reunions with close family members have given a sense of the elation surrounding their return. "Dad, I came back alive!" freed hostage, Romi Gonen, 24, shouted into a phone after being reunited with her mother on Jan. 19. NYT

Trump says he spoke to Putin about ending Ukraine war; Russia won't confirm or deny

Moscow: US President Donald Trump said he has spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin by phone about ending the war in Ukraine, the New York Post reported, the first officially acknowledged conversation between Putin and a US president since early 2022. Trump, who has promised to end the war but not yet set out in public how he would do so, said last week that the US was talking to both the Russians and Ukrainians about resolving the conflict, but he gave no additional details.

In an interview from Air Force One on Friday, Trump told the New York Post that he had "better not say" how many times he and Putin had spoken. He also did not disclose when the latest conversation had taken place. "He (Putin) wants to see people stop dying," Trump said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the TASS state news agency that "many different communications are emerging." "I personally may not know something, be unaware of something," Peskov said when asked by TASS to comment. "Therefore, in this case, I can neither confirm nor deny it."

Asked during an NBC News interview on Sunday when the conversation or conversations between Trump and Putin took place, US NSA Mike Waltz also declined to say. "I'm not going to get ahead of the president and there certainly are a lot of sensitive conversations going on," Waltz said.

Trump has repeatedly said he wants to end the war and that he will meet with Putin to discuss it, though the date or venue for a summit is still not publicly known. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are seen by Russia as possible venues for a summit, Reuters reported earlier this month.

In the coming days, a flurry of US officials are heading to Europe in part to discuss the war, including secretary of state Marco Rubio, secretary of defence Pete Hegseth, vice-president JD Vance and Keith Kellogg, the special envoy for the Ukraine war. In the NBC interview, Waltz indicated that Trump would be willing to use sanctions and tariffs to coax Putin to the negotiating table.

Waltz said US and Ukrainian officials would discuss the US gaining access to Ukraine's rare earth resources as compensation for US aid to the eastern European ally. "Those conversations are going to happen this week," he said. On Friday, Trump had said he would probably meet Ukrainian President Zelensky next week to discuss ending the war. REUTERS

Reuters/File

On Friday, President Trump said he would probably meet his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymr Zelensky next week to discuss ending the war. Zelensky earlier said he wanted Ukraine to supply the US with rare earths and other minerals in return for financially supporting its war effort

UK shadow mins join stir against China's mega embassy plan

London: UK shadow ministers and fellow opposition Conservative Party parliamentarians were among hundreds of protesters who descended upon the proposed site of China's so-called mega embassy in east London.

Shadow justice secretary Robert Jenrick, shadow security minister Tom Tugendhat and former Tory leader Ian Duncan Smith joined protests at the site of the historic Royal Mint Court near the Tower of London Saturday.

UK media reports said the protesters wanted to register their opposition against a much-larger new embassy which they fear could be used as a "spy hub". "This is the wrong site. It is the wrong process and it is wrong for the national security," Jenrick said. The Metropolitan Police clashed with the protesters, who shouted slogans such "Mega Embassy, Mega No".

China bought the 20,000sqm of land in 2018 for £225 million to build a much larger embassy than its current one. The local council has rejected its application twice, but the final decision now rests with deputy PM Angela Rayner. Chinese President Xi Jinping is believed to have raised the issue directly with British PM Keir Starmer. PTI

Baltic states unplug from Russian grid, gain energy independence

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania Feared Weaponising Of Grid By Russia

Vilnius: The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania completed a switch from Russia's electricity grid to the EU's system on Sunday, severing Soviet-era ties amid heightened security after the suspected sabotage of several subsea cables and pipelines.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen hailed the move, years in the planning, as marking a new era of freedom for the region, in a speech at a ceremony in Vilnius alongside the leaders of the three countries and the Polish president. "These chains of power lines linking you to hostile neighbours will be a thing of the past," von der Leyen said.

Debated for many years, the complex switch away from the grid of their former Soviet imperial overlord gained momentum following Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

It is designed to integrate the three Baltic nations more closely with the EU and to boost the region's energy security. "This is freedom, freedom from threats, freedom from blackmail," von der Leyen said, adding that the wider European continent was also liberating itself from the use of Russian natural gas.

After disconnecting on Saturday from the IPS/UPS network, established by the Soviet Union in the 1950s and now run by Russia, the Baltic nations cut cross-border high-voltage transmission lines in eastern Latvia, some 100 metres from the Russian border, handing out pieces of chopped wire to enthusiastic bystanders as keepsakes.

The IPS/UPS grid was the final remaining link to Russia for the three countries, which re-emerged as independent nations in the early 1990s at the fall of the Soviet Union, and joined the EU and Nato in 2004.

The three staunch supporters of Kyiv stopped purchases of power from Russia following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, but have relied on the Russian grid to control frequencies and stabilise networks to avoid outages. The small Baltic countries worried Russia would weaponise the electricity grid against them.

For Russia, the decoupling means its Kaliningrad exclave, located between Lithuania, Poland and the Baltic Sea, is cut off from Russia's main grid, leaving it to maintain its power system alone. The Kremlin said it has taken all necessary measures to ensure uninterrupted, reliable operation in its electricity system, including the construction of several gas-fired power plants in Kaliningrad. REUTERS

AFP

(L-R) Presidents of Estonia Alar Karis, Andrzej Duda (Poland), Gitanas Nauseda (Lithuania), Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission) and Edgars Rinkevics (Latvia) at a presser in Vilnius on Sunday

B'desh: India's comments on Mujib home demolition 'unexpected, undesirable'

Ahsan Tasnim

Dhaka: Bangladesh has criticised India's comments on the demolition of the historic Dhanmondi 32 residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, calling them "unexpected and undesirable".

Foreign ministry spokesperson Mohammad Rafiqul Alam said Bangladesh does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and expects the same in return. "As you know, the former PM (Sheikh Hasina) has been making political statements at various times while staying in India, which is not being received well by the people of Bangladesh," he said.

Earlier, India condemned the vandalism and demolition of Dhanmondi 32, calling it "regrettable". India's foreign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said, "It is regrettable that the historic residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a symbol of the heroic resistance of the people of Bangladesh against the forces of occupation and oppression, was destroyed." Jaiswal added that those who value Bangladesh's freedom struggle understand the significance of this residence for the national consciousness of the country.

The interim govt of Bangladesh, led by Muhammad Yunus, has previously termed the vandalism as unfortunate and unexpected, linking it to "provocative remarks" made by Hasina from India. It urged India to ensure that its territory is not used to promote instability in Bangladesh and to prevent further remarks by Hasina.

Meanwhile, France-based human rights outfit JMBF called the attacks an affront to Bangladesh's democratic values.

Dhaka launches 'Op Devil Hunt', arrests 40

Forty people have been arrested in Bangladesh in an operation launched following a violent attack on student activists during vandalism at the house of an Awami League leader in Gazipur district. Dubbed "Operation Devil Hunt", a govt statement said the operation began after gangs "linked to the fallen autocratic regime attacked a group of students, leaving them severely injured". The violence occurred during the attack on the house of former Liberation War affairs minister Mozammel Haque. PTI & AFP

Wooing Trump: A diplomacy of flattery

Washington: Shortly after President Trump mused Friday over imposing tariffs on Japan while sitting alongside the country's PM Shigeru Ishiba, the Japanese leader was asked by a reporter to reflect on his first meeting with Trump. It was a prime opportunity to respond to Trump's economic threat. Instead, Ishiba took a different tack — becoming the latest foreign leader to fawn over, rather than flout, the US president.

"I was so excited to see such a celebrity on television," Ishiba said, prompting Trump to turn to him and smile from ear to ear. "On television he is frightening, and he has a very strong personality, but when I met with him, actually, he was very sincere and very powerful, and with strong will for the US."

Days before, PM Netanyahu called Trump "the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House". President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador made an unusual gesture, proposing that Trump jail migrants in the country illegally — and even convicted US citizens — in its notorious prison complex.

It is not a new strategy. During the first Trump term, President Emmanuel Macron of France gushed over him. Poland offered to rename a US military base Fort Trump. Netanyahu proposed that an Israeli settlement in the Golan Heights be renamed Trump Heights. PM Justin Trudeau of Canada invited Trump's daughter Ivanka to take part in a meeting of female business leaders. But by 2018, Trump had imposed tariffs on Canada and called Trudeau "dishonest & weak". Trump and Macron's bromance morphed into a feud over the direction of Nato. Trump would later erupt at Netanyahu when he congratulated Biden on his 2020 win.

Elizabeth Shackelford, a former diplomat, described the use flattery as a "fool's errand". "Trump doesn't have any problem cutting people off." NYT

AFP

Japan PM Shigeru Ishiba became the latest foreign leader to fawn over, rather than defy, the US prez

After ex-president Biden, Blinken & Sullivan too lose security clearance

President Trump has revoked security clearances for Antony Blinken, the former secretary of state, and Jake Sullivan, the former national security adviser, White House officials said on Saturday.

The move came a day after Trump said he had revoked the security clearance for his predecessor Joe Biden, stopping his access to daily intelligence briefings. It is another sign of the growing rift in Washington.

Former United States presidents have traditionally received intelligence briefings so they can advise incumbent presidents on national security and foreign policy. In 2021, Biden revoked security clearance for Trump. REUTERS

Musk will help uncover hundreds of billions in govt fraud, says Trump

Washington: President Trump said in remarks airing on Sunday that Elon Musk, who is presiding over a purge of US govt jobs, will help find "hundreds of billions of dollars of fraud" in federal agencies.

Speaking in a Fox News interview, Trump said the American people "want me to find" waste and that Musk has been "a great help" in rooting out unnecessary spending. "We're going to find billions, hundreds of billions of dollars of fraud and abuse," Trump said in interview excerpts released by Fox. Musk has already taken steps to shut down the USAID, laying off thousands of employees. Trump said next he will order Musk to turn his govt scalpel to the department of education. "Then I'm going to go to the military," Trump said AFP

DAILY PLANET

AFP

People chill at the beach amid a heat wave in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

'Cool' Macron uses his deepfake videos to promote AI summit in Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron has posted artificial intelligence-generated fake videos that he features in as he promoted a technology summit that opens in Paris on Monday. In one scene, Macron dances to a 1980s hit song "Voyage Voyage" by French singer Desireless. In another, he is inserted in a spy comedy film about the exploits of a French secret agent played by Jean Dujardin. In a third, he sings a rap song and shows off his moves, channelling French performer Nekfeu. "Nicely done," the real Macron, who sported a suit and tie, said in the video. "It's pretty well done, it made me laugh," Macron added, referring to the videos created over the years and featured in his Instagram post. "More seriously, with artificial intelligence, we can do some very big things: change healthcare, energy, life in our society," the 47-year-old president said. "France and Europe must be at the heart of this revolution to seize every opportunity and also to promote our principles," he added. On Monday and Tuesday, Macron will host the AI Action Summit in Paris, gathering heads of state and govt. India will co-chair the event. The clip ends with one of the most famous parodies in which Macron is depicted as US TV action hero MacGyver, known for his looks and resourcefulness. "There, that's definitely me," quipped Macron. By Sunday afternoon, the post has racked up more than 73,000 likes on Instagram. Some people said they thought that Macron's Instagram account had been hacked. "A cool president," said one comment.

Sri Lanka suffers power outage as monkey comes in contact with grid

Sri Lanka suffered a power outage when a monkey came in contact with the power grid at a Colombo suburb Sunday, a power official said. The entire grid failed around 11.30am and the power was restored after several hours, the official said.

Inclusive future begins with inclusive education: Queen Rania

In an exclusive interview to **TOI**, *Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan spoke on a range of issues. Excerpts:*

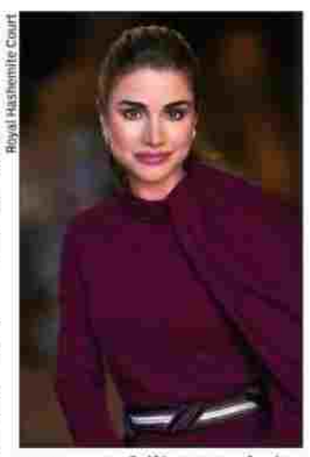
■ **What are the biggest barriers to women's leadership in business and governance, and how can they be reimagined?**

Women's rise into leadership roles has been slow, but significant. In 1960, there was only one female head of state — in 2023, 60 countries were headed by female leaders, as were just over 10% of Fortune 500 companies. Every success story provides more proof of women's unique leadership qualities, such as the tendency to listen before leaping into action, and to choose cooperation over competition. Ensuring women's pathways to leadership positions is smart business. As multiple studies have shown, companies with more women on their boards outperform those without. If economies want to attract and foster talented women, they need to provide stable, flexible, family-friendly workplaces.

■ **How can education systems be reshaped to create a more inclusive future?**

An inclusive future begins with inclusive education. Unfortunately, millions of children worldwide are robbed of their right to education due to conflicts, instability, and governments failing to make it a priority. All children deserve better. Education must also be constantly adapted to keep up with our fast-paced world. It's not just about improving standardized test scores; it is about fostering creative, driven youth. Through emerging technologies, including AI, and highly-skilled educators, we must continue to reinvent education from the ground up to prepare upcoming generations for any curveballs life throws their way.

Royal Hashemite Court



■ **What are your thoughts on the ceasefire currently taking effect in Gaza? Do you believe it is a hopeful sign of future peace?**

The ceasefire has brought some relief. The bombs have stopped, and aid is coming in. However, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic: 90% of homes, 90% of schools, and nearly every hospital is in ruins. Recovery and reconstruction will be a long, arduous process, requiring enormous levels of global support. My country Jordan has been active on this front, coordinating aid via airbridge and truck convoys.

> **Millions of children worldwide are robbed of their right to education due to conflicts, instability, and governments failing to make it a priority. All children deserve better**

A ceasefire is just the beginning. The ongoing targeting and displacement of Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank is proof that we need a lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We cannot go back to the days before this war. That status quo has been broken forever, and the future needs to include respect for international law, self-determination for the Palestinian people, and mutual security for all.

Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan, will be speaking at ET NOW Global Business Summit 2025, to be held on Feb 15 & 16 at Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi

Mizoram govt bid to hand over airport to IAF stirs political row

HC Vanlalruata | TNN

Aizawl: Mizoram's main opposition, Mizo National Front (MNF), vowed to prevent Lengpui airport in state capital from going into the hands of Indian Air Force even as Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) govt has been making efforts to hand over the lone airport to IAF. A team of MNF legislators, led by opposition leader Lalchhandama Ralte, visited the airport on Saturday.

Ralte said both MNF and Congress govts had put lot of efforts in establishing the state's first airport and successive govts ran the airport. "When ZPM assumed office in Dec 2023, one of the first things that CM Lalduhoma did was proposing the handing over of our airport to IAF, which is shameful," he said.

"Previous CMs Lal Thanhawla (Congress) and Zoramthanga (MNF) were able to retain ownership of the airport despite financial difficulties. This shows ZPM govt's total financial failure," he said while highlighting adverse consequences — like civilian-military conflict — if the airport is handed over to IAF.

Opposition MNF highlighted adverse consequences — like civilian-military conflict — if Lengpui airport in state capital is handed over to IAF

"Across India, 27 IAF-controlled airports have civilian enclaves. These bases often prioritise military operations, including jet fighter and transport plane activities. Locations such as Pune, Tezpur, Bagdogra, and Srinagar serve as examples. With Mizoram's strategic location near China, it is likely that Lengpui will be developed into a jet fighter base," he said, adding, "Frequent fighter jet sorties and airspace restrictions could limit civilian flight operations, affecting flight frequency and impacting Mizoram's economic progress. Noise pollution from fighter jets would also disrupt nearby areas, including Aizawl."

"Lengpui and its surrounding areas, including Aizawl, could become high-priority targets during conflicts due to the airport's strategic importance as a military installation. People of Mizoram will never allow their beloved airport to go into the hands of IAF," he added.

Ralte said previous MNF govt had already proposed construction of a second runway. The detailed project report of this had already been submitted to Centre.

CBI's SIT makes first arrest in Tirupati laddu ghee adulteration case, takes 4 into custody

Sandeep.Raghavan
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Tirupati: In first arrests in the Tirupati laddu ghee adulteration case, CBI's SIT on Sunday took four people into custody, including the MD of the Tamil Naidu dairy in the eye of the storm.

According to sources, the four include R Rajasekharan, MD of Dindigul-based AR Dairy; Vipin Jain and Pomil Jain of Uttarakhand-based Bhole Baba Dairy and Apoorva Chawda representing Vaishnavi Dairy from Nellore. Sources said CBI arrested the four after questioning them over the past three days. The accused were produced before a local magistrate in Tirupati for remand.

SIT's investigation revealed serious violations in ghee supply, with irregularities at every step, sources said.

The row had erupted in Sept last year when Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu alleged that ghee adulterated with animal fat was used to prepare Tirupati laddus during the YSRCP govt. TDP later released a laboratory report in support of the allegations, which was refuted by YSRCP and dubbed as meant to tarnish the party.

Subsequently, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) blacklisted AR Dairy and lodged complaint against them at Tirupati East PS.

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3 labourers, 1 kid killed as dumper falls on them

Palanpur/Ahmedabad: Three women labourers engaged in construction work and a toddler playing nearby died when a sand-laden truck, driven recklessly, overturned on them at a village in Gujarat's Banaskantha Saturday. Officials deployed cranes and bulldozers to remove the victims from beneath the truck and rushed them to hospital, where Renuka Ganawa (24), Sonal Ninama (22), Ila Bhabhor (40), and Rudra (2) were declared dead. Police have detained the dumper driver. TNN

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Application form can be downloaded from the Akademi's website: www.lalitkala.gov.in or collected from the office of Lalit Kala Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi – 110001 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The forms are also available at all the Regional Centres of the Akademi at Lucknow, Kolkata, Chennai, Bhubaneswar, Garhi, Shimla, Ahmedabad and Agartala.

Application duly filled with enclosures should reach the Secretary, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi within 30 days from the date of release of the advertisement. Phone 011-23009224/200.

Rajeev Kumar
Secretary

Prof. V. Nagdas
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CBC 09105/12/0003/2425

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Stenographer Grade C	By direct recruitment.	Level-7 (₹44,900-1,42,400) in the pay matrix.
Stenographer Grade D	By direct recruitment.	Level-4 (₹25,500-81,100) in the pay matrix.
Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS)	By direct recruitment.	Level-1 (₹18,000-56,900) in the pay matrix.

Application in the prescribed format, duly completed in all respects and signed by the candidate with self-attested copies of testimonials etc., along with IPO/ Demand Draft for ₹ 100 (non-refundable) drawn in favour of NCR Planning Board payable at New Delhi towards Application Fee should reach the Member Secretary, NCR Planning Board, 1st Floor, Core-4B, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003. The Application Fee can also be paid online.

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प्रत्यक्ष साक्षात्कार

आगामी शैक्षणिक सत्र **2025-26** हेतु अंशकालिक संविदा आधारित शिक्षकों का पैनल बनाने हेतु विद्यालय में साक्षात्कार होना है, जिसमे पंजीकरण का समय प्रातः **07:45** बजे से **9:30** बजे तक है | साक्षात्कार प्रातः **8:30** बजे से प्रारंभ होगा | इच्छुक एवं केंद्रीय विद्यालय संगठन के नियमानुसार पात्रता रखने वाले अभ्यर्थी साक्षात्कार में सम्मिलित हों |

स्थान	दिनांक	विषय
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सभी पद पूर्णतः अंशकालिक एवं अनुबंध पर आधारित हैं एवं विद्यालय की आवश्यकता पर निर्भर हैं| कोई भी अभ्यर्थी किसी भी प्रकार की नियमित नियुक्ति का हकदार नही है| पात्रता एवं अन्य जानकारी हेतु केंद्रीय विद्यालय की आधिकारिक वेबसाइट https://kvsangathan.nic.in/ का अवलोकन करें| अभ्यर्थी साक्षात्कार हेतु अपने मूल दस्तावेज, दस्तावेजों की स्वप्रमाणित दो छायाप्रतियाँ एवं स्वयं की दो फोटो साथ लेकर आयें |

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THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

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1st Ukraine-India Students' Writing Contest gets diverse views on peace

The first Ukraine-India Students' Writing Contest 2024 themed on 'With Love to Ukraine' brought to the fore innovative thoughts on peace and harmony penned by young minds from all over India. The contest organised jointly by EEDI and PT Global Edu for schoolchildren was held under the EEDI project 'Ukraine and South Asia: Open Dialogues'. The Embassy of Ukraine in India facilitated the liaison. The contest winessed more than 950 entries from over 200 Indian schools. Ambassador of Ukraine to India Oleksandr Polishchuk highlighted the importance of people-to-people ties from childhood, ensuring Ukraine and India grow closer.

CBSE helps students deal with exam stress ahead of Boards that begin this week

Sonal.Srivastava
@timesofindia.com

To help students cope with exam stress, CBSE is promoting student well-being through its 24x7 helpline, annual psycho-social counselling, structured capacity-building programmes, regular counselling workshops, webinars, and awareness campaigns as the class X and XII students prepare for the board exams starting on February 15.

Sanyam Bhardwaj, controller of examinations, CBSE, says, "The commonly reported issues faced by students include academic stress, peer pressure, substance abuse, mental health concerns, career concerns, digital addiction and life skills etc. Collaborations like 'Say No to Drugs and Yes to Life' with NCB, IHBAS, and other institutions further promote the mental well-being of students and enhance their life skills. Campaigns to educate students on drug risks, equip them with coping skills, and promote early intervention. Through expert-led discussions and interactive activities, CBSE reinforces awareness, guiding students towards a conscious and holistic life." Through such workshops, programmes and summits for students, parents, counsellors and principals in schools, CBSE continues to expand its outreach, benefiting thousands annually.

Commonly reported issues include academic pressure, substance abuse, mental health concerns

The exam pattern change in the CBSE boards 2025 was introduced to reduce rote memorisation. "Board exams are different from other competitive examinations and consist of various types of questions comprising long answers and objective types. Several questions do not demand direct answers and can be solved through steps that have value points; hence, marks are assigned to these steps. Competency-based questions are the ones which not only require some steps to answer and link to some competency of that subject, but these are based on the application and hence, cannot be answered by cramming the answer. So, it is true that changing the percentage of competency-based questions from 40% in 2023-24 to 50% in 2024-25, will reduce rote memorisation," Bhardwaj adds.

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>> 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.hyd@gmail.com*

Q1. A certain sum of money becomes five times itself in 15 years at simple interest. In how many years does it become nine times itself?
a. 30 b. 27 c. 31 d. 28

Q2. The probability that a square selected from an 8x8 chessboard is of size 4x4 is
a.25/204 b. 15/102 c.7/102 d. 2/51

Q3. The area of square is equal to five times the area of rectangle of dimensions 125cm x 64cm. What is the perimeter of square?
a.600cm b. 800cm c.400cm d. 1000cm

Q4. If six-digit number 15x67y is divisible by 66, then the value of x+y can be
a. 11 b. 9 c. 7 d. 5

Answer key for the last week's quiz: 1.(d), 2.(c), 3.(a), 4.(b), 5.(d), 6.(c), 7.(a), 8.(d), 9.(d)

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The city is not a concrete jungle, it is a human zoo

– DESMOND MORRIS

Post Birenial Rule

Biren Singh should have gone earlier. He's made Manipur peacemaking tougher for successors

That Biren Singh stepped down almost 21 months after Manipur was engulfed by ethnic violence highlights five key points. First, no political resignation in recent memory has been as overdue. After the turmoil in Manipur began, the responsibility of restoring law and order was largely Singh's domain. But not only did he fail to impose the writ of the state, his public posturing exacerbated the situation. This led to greater polarisation and avoidable loss of lives and property.

Second, Singh's resignation now certainly provides an opening for a resolution of the Manipur crisis. But the delay means it will be far tougher. There is now almost total separation between the state's Kuki and Meitei communities. Both sides have armed themselves. And a political resolution would mean big compromises. Meiteis won't accept division of the state, while Kukis will certainly push for greater autonomy. This will require deft negotiations on the part of New Delhi.

Which brings us to the third point – disarming both sides. Kuki and Meitei gangs raided and looted the armoury of security forces in Manipur. Plus, Manipur police was accused of behaving in a partisan manner throughout the strife. Unless stolen guns are recovered and Manipur police reformed, no headway can be made in negotiations. Fourth, the situation in neighbouring Myanmar may have played a part in Singh's resignation. With the rebel Arakan Army practically taking over Rakhine state in recent months, New Delhi perhaps realised that banking on the Myanmar junta to secure the border, and stop militants and arms from crossing over into Mizoram and Manipur, was no longer a good bet. Thus, Singh had to go before the situation in Manipur became beyond repair.

Finally, it's not clear at this point if Singh will be replaced by a new CM or will central rule prevail. But whether it's Manipur governor or the next CM, either has his task cut out. Addressing the deep distrust between Kukis and Meiteis will take massive effort, involving security forces, civil society groups and political solidarity. Given the level of polarisation, this won't be easy. But Singh's exit is at least a start.

Lesson No. 1

Delhi verdict tells all parties urban voters want liveable cities. But local bodies are funded poorly & run worse

Last year, Supreme Court hauled up Delhi's govt and its municipal corporation at least four times over piling garbage. On Feb 5, voters booted out the govt. Pundits say the middle class swing that kneecapped AAP in Delhi may have started with civic problems like garbage and broken roads. So, parties that have promised Singapores and Shanghais – and roads as smooth as an actress' cheeks in Patna – for years should stop mistaking voters' patience for amnesia, and start fixing city governance.

Municipal bodies are called the third tier of govt for a reason. Roads, water, sewers, schools, clinics are their mandate. But in state after state, their powers have been curbed even though cities house more than a third of India's people and generate about two-thirds of GDP. Forget smaller cities, elections to BMC – Mumbai's corporation – are three years overdue. A mammoth budget of almost ₹75,000cr is left to the discretion of unelected administrators. That's no way to run a great city. NYC, London and Paris take civic bodies seriously. Their mayors have real executive powers. Remember Rudy Giuliani in his NYC mayor avatar after 9/11? Boris Johnson chose to be London mayor for eight years after two terms as an MP.

Empowering India's municipal corporations would mean deepening their pockets. Currently, according to an RBI report, their revenue receipts amount to just 0.6% of GDP. Property tax, the biggest municipal revenue stream, accounts for a fifth of this. Loss of levies like entertainment tax and octroi after GST has left civic bodies at the mercy of state govts and Centre. In Delhi's case, AAP govt claimed Centre didn't allocate any funds to MCD even though it set aside ₹82,207cr for local bodies in last year's budget. As cities grow, so will their municipal financing needs, and bonds are an option worth considering now. US cities use them to raise funds regularly, and the country's municipal bond market is worth $4tn. It helps that scores of US municipalities have AAA rating. To tap markets, Indian cities would need to be more transparent about their accounts. Double-engined Delhi and Mumbai should start now.

Blurb's got the blues

Book's gung ho about life after the breakup

Shinie Antony

All those authors who are living under a false name and buying fake moustaches can now come out of hiding. There's a chance they may no longer be pestered to furnish breathless praise for books they'd read only at gunpoint. With a major Simon & Schuster imprint ditching this practice, the end of arm-twisted blurbs may be nigh. Some say this will usher in a new era of organic word-of-mouth reccos; others suspect a clever, specialised form of sales pitch that will aim to sound artless and unprompted. Like all that makeup for a no-makeup look.

Writers are often interrupted by their agents, publishers, editors, author friends with blurb requests. While back blurbs are coined by insomniac editors to sum up what goes on in the novel, it's the endorsements that are real fiction. If a book isn't casting a magical spell, it's stealing our breath and leaving us gasping. Coming-of-age generational sagas are always subverting genres. All books are unputdownable, luminous, stupefying, brilliant, a tour de force and primal cry.

Book jackets are battlefields of quotes from rival authors in what is a mini genre of its own. While the blurbist must maintain her voice and style, she must also make a blurb sound different from her other blurbs; she can't be 'stunned' by every book without admitting to paralysis. Giving a quote for another writer establishes her as the superior author; this is so intoxicating that some write more blurbs than books. Once a decent number of quotes has been collected – three minimum and ten the norm – the editorial team decides which quote goes on the front cover, which on the back cover and which to lump with the rest inside the book. A blurb hierarchy comes into play.

No rest for the average writer. After writing multiple drafts, bagging a publisher, pretending to agree to every edit suggested by the editor and duly changing pubic to public, they must now beg other writers to lie flamboyantly about their new book. A writer is defined by the writers she knows! Even if curated blurbage is eradicated, books will not automatically confess to being humdrum, pretentious or lacking a plot. They will still claim to change your life, but in more cunning, farm-to-table marketing. A previously 'heart-touching and heartwarming' read will henceforth be recommended by your doc during an ECG.

Two takeaways from AAP's Delhi disaster: Low-income, non-poor groups are ideology-free when voting. People desert leaders who fall in love with their own powerful selves

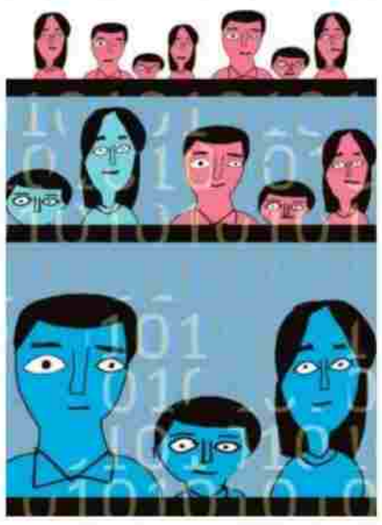
The Very Pragmatic Middle Class Poor

Uday Chandra

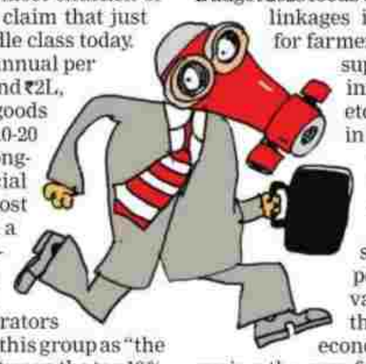
Professor of Govt

AAP's defeat in Delhi presents a clear irony. A party led by middle class activists and driven by middle class demands appears to have been abandoned by its core voters. Yet, to understand what truly happened, we must ask who counts as middle class in Delhi and, more broadly, in India today.

Two decades ago, India's middle class was projected to expand to 30% of the population – roughly 45cr – with some optimists even predicting it could reach 50%. Today, we know better. Middle classes – plural, not singular – are deeply heterogeneous, and even before Covid, their size remained well below 10cr. A 2021 Pew survey estimated that India's middle class, defined as those earning $10-20 a day, had shrunk to 6.6cr, highlighting the precarity of this group. This isn't too far from the tax base prior to Budget 2025.



However, only the most churlish of commentators would claim that just 6.6cr Indians are middle class today. In a country with an annual per capita income of around ₹2L, many more consume goods and services worth $10-20 a day, albeit without long-term wealth or financial stability. Indeed, most Indians earning $3-10 a day may fit this broader profile. Economist Thomas Piketty and his Indian collaborators have recently labelled this group as "the middle 40%", those between the top 10% and the bottom 50% in income terms.



We may label this amorphous population, following sociologist Asef Bayat, the "middle class poor", as opposed to the "abject poor". Studying West Asian cities such as Cairo, Istanbul and Tehran, Bayat argues that neoliberal economics has created a vast, amorphous population that hovers above the global poverty line yet remains locked out of the stability and privileges of middle class. Stuck in economic limbo, these "middle class poor" are often the driving force behind populist politics, whether on the streets or on social media.

In the Arab Spring or in more recent protests in Iran, the same class is visible online and offline. In mega cities dependent on migrant labour such as Delhi and Mumbai, middle class poor constitute a vast floating population. Their social networks and consumption practices, including media practices, shape the nature of everyday life in our cities. Their political behaviour can't be simply reduced to timeworn ethnic categories rooted in caste and religion. Aspirations and agency of individuals matter more.

To return to Delhi, we must re-examine the widely held assumption about AAP as a middle class party. If "middle class" denotes a small clutch of educated taxpayers, then we cannot explain AAP's sizable vote share now (44%) or in the previous two elections in Delhi (54% in both 2020 and 2015).

But we may be better served by the notion of the "middle class poor". This group was at the forefront of the 2011 anti-corruption protests, which shook Delhi's political establishment. Economic liberalisation under Congress had lifted them out of absolute poverty, yet it had failed to provide them with the stability and security that defines middle class globally.

After AAP won, auto-rickshaw drivers, unsurprisingly, became its shrillest propagandists. Reduced water and electricity bills, improved public education, and expanded healthcare access were widely celebrated by Delhi's middle class poor.

Of course, in neoliberal times, middle class poor citizens are likely to prefer a market-friendly socialism – govts provide the infra and direct support needed for economic mobility while individuals and households navigate the market on their own terms. There may even be an opportunity to articulate a fuller socialist agenda of the kind witnessed recently in UK and Brazil.

Growing popularity of cash transfers across party lines underscores this shift – middle class poor now expect economic security that enables them to survive and compete in the market. Similarly, welfare provisions for Bihar in Budget 2025 focus on obstacles to market linkages in the state. Support for farmers, too, in the form of support prices and better info, roads, marketing etc seeks to enable them in the marketplace. Welfare and markets may not be antonyms any longer.

Derisive terms such as *revdi* and populism have limited value once we realise that post-liberalisation economic precarity is paving the way for an altogether new politics across India and far beyond. Globalisation has made the market indispensable in our lives, but it has also introduced economic risks and uncertainties that we did not know before.

Shifting politics of middle class poor is, above all, pragmatic and post-ideological. Herein lies the challenge for parties and politicians, who must adapt on the go, as the old votebanks of caste and religion fractalise into micro-identities and coalesce into unpredictable new social formations.

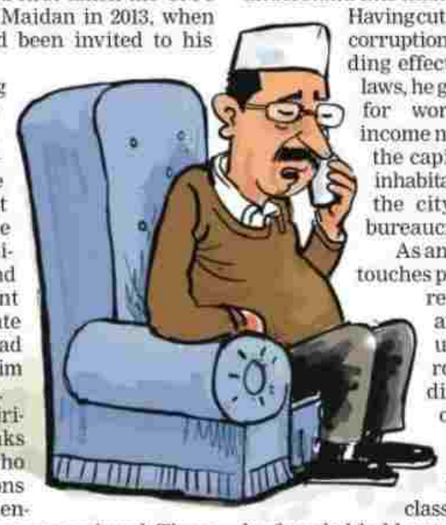
The writer teaches at Georgetown University, Qatar

Why Power Makes Aam Aadmi Khaas

Indrajit Roy

Professor of Politics

Hubris meets nemesis – that's the takeaway for politicians from the just-concluded Delhi elections. By making this vote a referendum on himself, Kejriwal allowed himself to be carried away by a sense of his own self-importance. This was a far cry from the man who had first taken the CM's oath at Ramlila Maidan in 2013, when all of Delhi had been invited to his swearing-in.



By putting himself at the centre of it all, he fed the perception that he was an arrogant man, whose pride outshone his ability to govern and his commitment to the city-state whose voters had reposed faith in him for over a decade.

In defeat, Kejriwal joins the ranks of politicians who have lost elections despite the immense popularity they once enjoyed. These include Sheila Dikshit, his predecessor whom he defeated in 2013. Before that, Indira Gandhi lost to Raj Narain in Rae Bareli in 1977 Lok Sabha elections, held in the wake of the Emergency. By the time of their defeat, both Sheila and Indira were perceived to be too haughty, too inaccessible, and therefore out of touch with their voters.

Overseas, the British electorate handed Churchill and his Conservative Party a shock defeat in 1945, despite his personal popularity and his leadership during World War II. Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda, US's George Bush Sr and Indonesia's Megawati Sukarnoputri all lost re-election bids despite enjoying widespread admiration and despite having led their countries through key historical moments. Hubris, a (misplaced) belief in their own political invincibility, lay at the heart of their defeat.

Hubris and the arrogance it spawns breed inaccessibility, a fatal flaw for politicians across political systems. For a politician to be an effective leader, they have to (or at least appear to) be accessible to their followers. After all, leaders are made by followers – an inaccessible politician might be personally brilliant, but that is no good if they barricade themselves from the people. Greater the hubris, wider the gap between politicians and the people, which gradually dilutes the support enjoyed by the former among the latter.

Hubris is often positively correlated with power. It's assumed that power stems from the ability to dominate others, to cultivate arrogance and maintain a distance from followers and the general population. But power in our contemporary times is also about being able to influence people. And it is impossible to influence their choices without being accessible to them.

Effective politicians feel the pulse of their people, understand the similarities and differences between them, and shape popular agendas for the public good. By hampering politicians' abilities to speak to people on the latter's terms and appreciate contrarian points of view, hubris prevents them from being able to influence or set public agendas.

Nobody should be better placed to understand this than Kejriwal himself. Having cut his teeth as an anti-corruption activist demanding effective transparency laws, he gained prominence for working with low-income neighbourhoods in the capital, helping their inhabitants better navigate the city-state's intricate bureaucracy.

As an issue, corruption touches people across different social classes and was thus a useful lightning rod to galvanise different segments of the population. Coupled with Kejriwal's own modest 'middle class' origins, the party he founded held out the possibility of changing the political culture in the national capital, by holding itself accountable to voters across the city-state's diverse geographies.

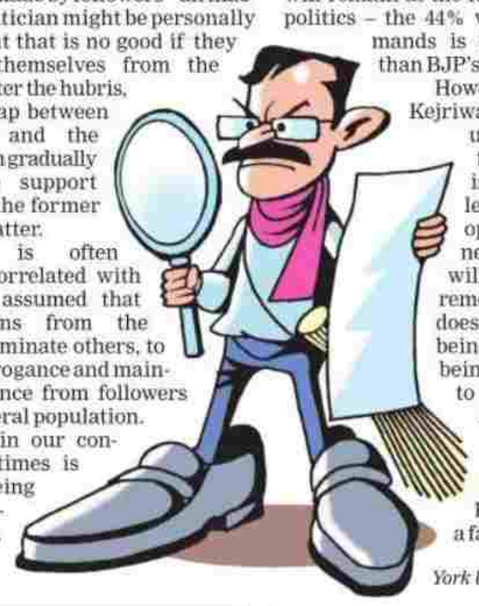
These possibilities floundered. Within a decade of governing Delhi, Kejriwal, like so many before him and undoubtedly after, fell prey to the very hubris to which he had once appeared such a promising alternative.

For a while, he offered Delhi's city-state a glimmer of hope that an alternative way of conducting politics might be possible. Govt need not be distant from the people but could, it was promised, be held accountable through everyday channels of political communication.

Much will be said – and rightly so – about Kejriwal's social conservatism, his regressive stance on reservations, and unwillingness to confront Hindutva. But the idea that he could govern without being detached from the people, was put into practice, all too quickly to be undone by hubris.

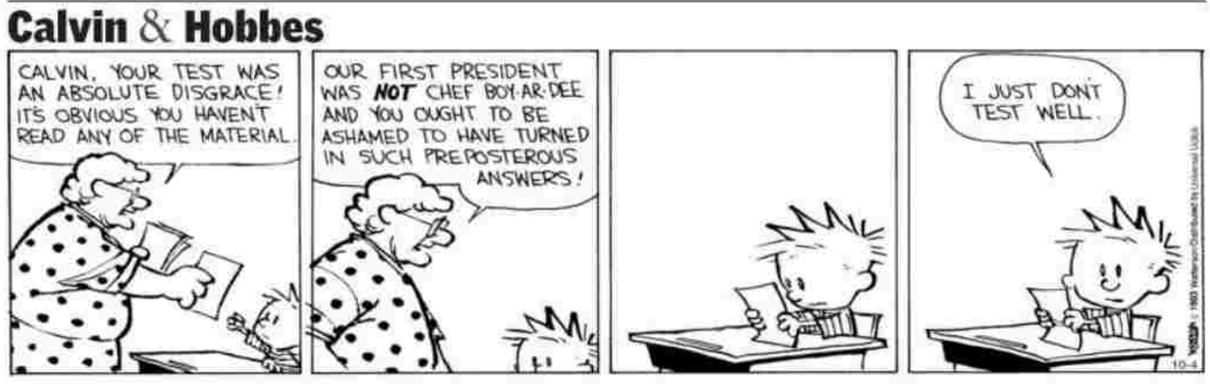
It's always premature to write political obituaries. Even more so after the results of a single, bitterly contested electoral battle. Beyond Kejriwal, AAP will remain at the forefront of Delhi's politics – the 44% vote share it commands is only slightly less than BJP's 46%.

However, life without Kejriwal as CM will be uncharted territory for the party. This is, of course, a challenge, but also an opportunity. The new leadership that will emerge should remember that power does not operate from being detached. Rather, being accessible is key to being influential. AAP would do well to learn a lesson from its founding father's nemesis. Pride comes before a fall.



The writer teaches at York University, UK

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace

Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose.

Lyndon B Johnson

Transcend Speciesism For A Kindred Earth

Sumit Paul

Man is a deluded creature who always thinks that he's born to rule and dictate. This human delusion has assumed dangerous proportions in these times when man is on a rampaging spree, destroying and devouring all those he fallaciously perceives as inferior to him. The religio-scriptural belief that a human is the best of all creations has made us believe that we are the monarch of all we survey.

The misconception that nature has made us the undisputed supreme species that can eliminate others at will underscores speciesism. The great Persian mystic Hakim Sanai wrote centuries ago, "Humans must learn to coexist with all creatures," and poet Anvari said that "Hubristic humans are threats to all creatures and non-human animals."

All mystics believe that the very concept of equality and egalitarianism could be fully understood and realised only when humans could accept the most exalted truth that even a leaf, an ant and a branch of a tree had a pure *dizaaf*, essence and spirit – in Ottoman Turkish – as sacred as a human spirit.

In other words, it's not enough to establish equality and egalitarianism among humans but there should be seamless equality and a spirit of relatable empathy among all and sundry. How can we be condescending or disparaging to any other species on earth? Never forget that 'Har zarra chamkta hai anwaar-e-Ilahi se' – every particle glitters with effulgence of divinity. The problem with us is our ingrained condescension. Even in our so-called love for animals and other species, there's always an element of pontification that can be equated with Rudyard Kipling's downright pejorative phrase of *The White Man's Burden*.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Who has given us the right to treat animals the way we've been treating them right from the dawn of human civilisation?

Humans call themselves the most exalted and also ethical beings. Are we? Jalaluddin Rumi says, *"Shadeed-az-kwa nee ast munazin / Ya rafeer ul-qist amnazeer / Choon ke ast shadaaz raftam ke azdaan / Wahen ul-khirama, za dizt'un bu'azir?"* – I've existence and I value it so much / So have all the beings on earth and they too, try to preserve it / Then, how can I kill even the tiniest creature / Just to satiate my palate?

Rumi said that all lives were sacred: Taa'shif nifaak b'astz sang – even a seemingly lifeless stone has a degree of consciousness; respect it. Like all mystics, Rabia Basri, and Rumi were vegetarians and shunned milk and milk products. 'Sheer mun-haraam nuzt' – to me, even milk is forbidden. He even refrained from sacrificing animal/s as an Islamic ritual on Eid-Al-Azha. Our values, ethics, and sense of morality disappear into thin air when we think of animals as lesser beings. Since we've not been able to treat every being as equal, we've not been able to treat humans in an egalitarian manner. Their rampant exploitation, nay depredation, of nature is an expression of our inherent speciesism and belief in being the apogee of all creation.

International Day of the Arabian Leopard is observed on Feb 10

TIMES BUSINESS
THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2025

Microsoft & Nvidia Take A Quieter Approach To Trump

Source: Bloomberg

A week ago, Jensen Huang (right), CEO of chipmaker Nvidia, slipped into the White House to meet President Donald Trump for the first time. **There was no fanfare**, and he left without a single public photo taken of the two

Two weeks earlier, Microsoft's CEO, Satya Nadella (left), had a lengthy lunch with Trump at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. They **dined with little fuss** and barely made the news

Other big tech cos have been **boisterous in their courtship** of the new administration

Stakes Are High

The new administration has to finalise rules about the sale of Nvidia chips and building Microsoft data centres overseas

Chennai co bags ₹3,251cr sewage plant order in Saudi

Chennai: VA Tech Wabag has secured a consortium order valuing about Rs 3,251 crore ($371 million) for setting up an independent sewage treatment plant in Riyadh. The new order for the Chennai-headquartered company comes two months after a tender for another order, which the company had secured in Sept 2024 from Saudi Water Authority valued Rs 2,700 crore for a desalination plant in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, was cancelled. TNN

FPIs sell ₹7,300cr stocks in a week

New Delhi: The exodus of FPIs from the Indian equity markets continued, as they withdrew over Rs 7,300 crore in the first week of this month due to global trade tensions. This came following an outflow of Rs 78,027 crore in Jan. AGENCIES

Tesla loses ground to VW, Seat in Germany

Tesla was the biggest loser among electric-vehicle makers last month in Germany, where consumers snubbed Elon Musk's brand and bought more Volkswagen, Seat and BMW cars. VW gained the most, selling 6,521 more EVs than a year ago. BLOOMBERG

D-St eyes on inflation data, foreign funds

Investors will track a host of macro data announcements scheduled this week, including inflation numbers, and monitor global market trends, and trading activity of foreign institutional investors, analysts said. AGENCIES

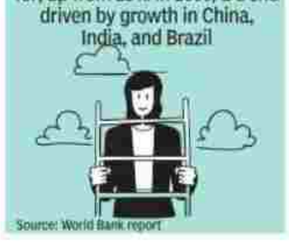
Bajaj Auto to drive in e-rickshaw by March

New Delhi: Bajaj Auto is gearing up to enter the domestic e-rickshaw segment by the end of this fiscal to tap a 'sizable opportunity' in a fast-growing but highly unorganised market. AGENCIES

figure it out

Nearly 45%

of global GDP is what Emerging Market and Developing Economies (EMDEs) account for, up from 25% in 2000, a trend driven by growth in China, India, and Brazil



Source: World Bank report

Slowdown story: Middle class buys smaller soaps, bigger TVs

Inflation Shrinks Grocery Bills, EMIs Drive Electronics Spends

Asmita.Dey@timesofindia.com

There is a slowdown in urban consumption as the middle class household budgets get stretched but that doesn't necessarily mean all spends are down.

There's a consumption dichotomy at play — the segment is moving to smaller packs in fast-moving consumer goods because of price hikes but are availing flexible payment schemes and EMI plans to buy premium durables and pocket heavy items like jewellery. More than 75% of consumer durable purchases are being backed by EMIs, said Nilesh Gupta, director at Vijay Sales. Five years back, this share was at 55-60%.

Easy financing options and low EMIs have enabled the middle class to opt for premium products, Fumiyasu Fujimori, MD, PMIN at Panasonic Life Solutions India told TOI, adding that the segment is buying the firm's IoT enabled connected appliances, inverter ACs and top load washing machines. Think tank PRICE defines the middle class as households earning between Rs 5 lakh to Rs 30 lakh per annum. Credit card companies and brands typically offer incentives to customers buying through EMIs, fuelling this trend; the repo rate cut by RBI could also allow brands to offer better EMI options going ahead, Gupta said.

"Post-Covid, we have seen consumers going for product upgradation and it has not changed," Gupta said. There should be further acceleration in the adoption of premium products among urban and aspirational consumers on the back of the Budget boost which will increase disposable incomes, said N S Satish, president at Haier Appliances India. "The income tax relief will leave consumers with disposable incomes but this may lead them to spend on items like consumer durables using EMIs, weighing on the share of FMCG spends," said Mayank Shah, VP at Parle Products.

CONSUMPTION CONUNDRUM

EMIs essentially allow consumers to make payment for a product in smaller tranches and the trend will continue as many consumers do not have surplus savings to pay for high-ticket items at one go, said Angshuman Bhattacharya, partner at EY-Parthenon. Job-creation and increase in wages will be the long-term key to boosting consumption. "Consumers are aspiring more but wages have not risen in sync," said Bhattacharya.

Jewellery companies like Malabar Gold are offering gold saving schemes, flexible payment options and exchange programs to allow consumers to manage price fluctuations and make purchases, said M P Ahammed, chairman at Malabar Group. Some companies, for instance, have a scheme wherein it allows consumers to make small deposits for 11 months and at the end of the period, a select section from the store inventory can be purchased at no making charges.

In the FMCG space, the scenario is starkly different. Across categories like personal care, snacks and soaps, there is a growing preference for smaller packs as consumers are seeking flexibility in managing their budgets. The trend is most pronounced in middle-income households, said Shivam Puri, CEO & MD, Cipla Health. Even in premium segments, consumers are buying smaller packs. "We are seeing growth in the premium category for lower-priced SKUs... consumers are strategically managing their spend by selecting lower-priced options within the segment," said Rajeev Jain, SVP, corporate marketing at DS Group.

Audit regulator NFRA gets boost from court ruling

HC Backs Provisions, Allows Action Against Audit Co, Partners

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a boost for the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), the Delhi high court has upheld the provisions that allow action against the audit firm and its partners, along with the agency's retrospective jurisdiction, while dismissing petitions that questioned the reliance on audit files to prove professional misconduct.

Hearing a bunch of petitions from aggrieved audit firms and bodies, representing chartered accountants, a bench of Justices Yashwant Varma and Dharmesh Sharma, however, raised concerns over NFRA not constituting divisions to separate powers for audit quality review and disciplinary actions and sought fresh evaluation of findings in 11 cases, most dealing with IL&FS.

With the matter had been cleared by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal in Dec 2023, NFRA may seek a review of the Delhi HC order on this aspect as the Supreme Court had also subsequently looked into the issue.

In its 476-page order, the bench has upheld the constitutional validity of section 132 of the Companies Act and NFRA rules, ruling that the provision was neither an overreach, nor was it arbitrary, but was necessary to maintain professional accountability.

Dismissing the stand that a firm should not be liable for the actions of its partners, the court said: "In essence, the relationship between a firm and its members, while delivering auditing services is one of complete integration, where roles and responsibilities overlap to ensure the highest levels of professional service. The nature of such services does not permit a firm to distance itself from the actions of its partners, especially when those actions are performed in furtherance of the firm's obligations." It has affirmed that the intent of Parliament was to vest exclusive authority in the NFRA to investigate allegations of misconduct and to bring even pending proceedings within the scope of its investigation.

TO MATCH GLOBAL STANDARDS

- Delhi High Court has dismissed petitions that questioned reliance on audit files to prove professional misconduct
- Court has raised concerns over National Financial Reporting Authority not constituting divisions to separate powers for audit quality review and disciplinary actions
- It has sought fresh evaluation of findings in 11 cases, most dealing with IL&FS
- HC has dismissed the stand that a firm should not be liable for actions of its partners

It said:

"In essence, the relationship between a firm and its members, while delivering auditing services is one of complete integration, where roles and responsibilities overlap to ensure the highest levels of professional service. The nature of such services does not permit a firm to distance itself from the actions of its partners...

- It added that idea is to bring India's auditing and financial oversight framework in line with global standards

'Govt's capex spends set to gather pace'

8th Pay Commission May Be In Place By April, No Impact In Next Fiscal, Says Expenditure Secy

Sidhartha & Surojit Gupta | TNN

Expenditure secretary Manoj Govil is hopeful that capital spending will gather pace and said the signs are visible already. In an interview to **TOI** he also said the 8th Pay Commission should be in place by April. Excerpts

Capex was lower than the budgeted level this year. One of the reasons was that Budget was approved in Aug. How to avoid such a situation?

The Budget was presented in July but it is because of activities associated with elections as states also reported lower capex during the first few months. The nature of the process is such that because of political activity and in part because of the model code of conduct, certain activities get slower. Officers and the staff are often drafted for election duty. But it generally picks up very fast. We have preliminary figures up to Jan. For April-Jan this year in terms of capex we are around Rs 30,000 crore more than the corresponding figure for April-Jan of the previous financial year, which did not have elections. We hope to reach close to or may be even surpass the revised estimate of Rs 10.18 lakh crore.

Have you factored in the impact of pay commission because the core salary hike will have to be implemented from Jan 1, 2026?

We have estimated that there will be no fiscal impact of the pay commission in the next financial year. After the pay commission is set up, it will take some time to submit its report, which will then have to be processed by govt. So in the next financial year, we do not expect an outgo. The outgo will be there in the financial year starting April 2026.

When do we expect pay commission to be set up?

We hope soon, may be in a couple of months, by April. We have asked the ministry of home affairs, defence and DoPT for their views on the draft terms of reference. Once we get their views and suggestions then the TOR will be framed, and approval will be sought from the Cabinet.

What will be the impact of the unified pension scheme, which is to be implemented from April?

The committee that looked at it said the financial implication for implementation will be Rs 6,250 crore a year. In addition, because UPS has been also allowed to the past retirees of NPS, the committee estimated that around Rs 800 crore will be required for arrears. Around Rs 7,000 crore is the first year requirement and the next year it will be Rs 6,250 crore plus because the pay scales keep on increasing as well as the DA keeps on increasing, so there might be some natural increase to that number.

Will most employees shift to UPS?

UPS is quite attractive because it provides full inflation utilisation. Otherwise, if a person under NPS has to buy an annuity, that may not be inflation protected. It is a choice-based system and the notification also says that a choice will be given to the employees.

Have states indicated their willingness to shift to UPS?

Some states have indicated that they will implement UPS even before the Gazette notification was out. PFRDA has issued draft regulations. Based on the comments received, the final regulations will be issued and then the process for asking for choice of the employees will start. Once govt of India's rules are in place, many state govts will come on board. Once states are ready, PFRDA will create an appropriate mechanism for them also to set up a UPS for their employees.

"We hope to reach close to or may be even surpass the revised (capex) estimate of ₹10.18 lakh crore

"Unified pension scheme (UPS) is quite attractive because it provides full inflation utilisation. Otherwise, if a person under NPS has to buy an annuity, that may not be inflation protected

"Some of the states have indicated that they will implement UPS even before the Gazette notification was out... Once rules are in place, many state govts will come on board

—MANOJ GOVIL | EXPENDITURE SECRETARY

Edme eyes global insurance broking biz after Birla co buy

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Mumbai: Samara Capital, along with investors including Norwest Venture Partners, Creador, and industry veteran Sanjay Radhakrishnan have acquired a 100% stake in Aditya Birla Insurance Brokers at an enterprise valuation of Rs 455 crore. The company has been renamed Edme Insurance Brokers, with the new promoters aiming to establish it as India's first multinational insurance broker.

Edme will focus on retail, corporate, and reinsurance segments, with its retail interface operating entirely online. The company is upgrading its technology stack, incorporating AI to structure data more effectively. The new system will enable seamless integration with corporate clients' platforms.

Speaking to **TOI**, Sanjay Radhakrishnan said that the company with a composite brokerage will look at business in London, Dubai and Singapore.

"Structurally, most insurance brokers are built on the lines of insurance companies while having specialty lines," said Radhakrishnan. "We aim to develop specializations based on industries rather than just lines of business." Radhakrishnan formerly built mnc brokerage JLTs insurance business in India before it was acquired by Marsh.

The firm's retail engagement will primarily follow a B2B2C model, working with corporate employees. Radhakrishnan highlighted the importance of targeting SMEs, which employ small teams but are significant employers. He said Edme aims to increase penetration in this segment.

Dosa batter co iD Fresh looks to list in 2 years

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Bengaluru: iD Fresh Food, known for its ready-to-cook products such as idli and dosa batter, plans to go public by Oct 2027, its chairman & global CEO **P C Musthafa** said. The Bengaluru-based company is preparing for an IPO as part of its long-term growth strategy. "We should be able to demonstrate growth and ebitda well to our investors by then," Musthafa told **TOI** in an interview.

The company plans to close the 2024-25 financial year at Rs 680 crore in total revenue. This marks an increase of Rs 126 crore from the previous year. At earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (ebitda) level, it aims to close the 2024-25 financial year with a margin of 9%, doubling from the corresponding period last year. Future targets include Rs 875 crore in revenue with a 15% ebitda margin in the 2025-26 financial year and Rs 1,100 crore with a 20% margin in the 2026-27 financial year.

iD Fresh Food has raised $119 million from investors such as Premji Invest and NewQuest Capital Partner, according to Tracxn data. The company, founded in 2005, has its largest factory in Bengaluru. Other company-owned factories are in Mumbai, Hyderabad, and the UAE, with one planned in Chennai. In cities such as Visakhapatnam, Kochi, and Kolkata, it partners with third-party manufacturers. "We are setting up a new factory in Hyderabad, with a capex of Rs 25 crore, which we are able to fund from our own profits."

The company has been expanding its product offerings. This year, it launched a range of chutneys, which reached Rs 1.5 crore in monthly revenue within a year. Its specialty batter range, introduced four months ago, is generating Rs 1 crore per month, while its expanded paratha business is bringing in Rs 50 lakh monthly.

Inflation picks up in China

China's consumer inflation accelerated for the first time since Aug, caused by a burst of household spending around the Lunar New Year holiday even as deflationary pressures persist.

The consumer price index rose 0.5% in Jan from a year earlier, the National Bureau of Statistics said Sunday, compared with a 0.1% gain in the previous month.

A temporary spending boom during the eight-day break briefly masked the extent of the deflationary challenge facing the world's second-biggest economy. The price of services increased 0.9%, accounting for more than 50% of the total rise in CPI, according to the statistics bureau.

China's factory deflation extended into a 28th month with a 2.3% decline, flat with the index's contraction in Dec. Analysts at Nomura Holdings estimate that China's CPI could have been distorted by around 0.4 percentage point last month, as some prices gained when consumers ramped up purchases ahead of the festival that ran from Jan 28 to Feb 4 this year. BLOOMBERG

'Health insurance to beat motor biz'

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Mumbai: Health insurance's share in the non-life segment is set to surpass other categories put together as the sector continues to expand, the chief of standalone health insurer Niva Bupa Health Insurance said.

At present, health is the largest segment with a 40% share of total non-life premium. According to Krishnan Ramachandran, MD & CEO of Niva Bupa Health Insurance, the industry is growing at 14-15%, with significant potential for further expansion and the company's British parent Bupa is 'excited' about the Budget move to allow 100% foreign direct investment.

"Unlike motor insurance, the second-largest segment, which depends on new vehicle sales, health insurance has vast scope due to its low penetration. Globally, five of the top 10 insurers by market capitalisation operate in health insurance."

According to Ramachandran, insurance regulator Irdai's decision to allow a 10% hike in senior citizen premiums can be implemented while maintaining a combined ratio of 95%. The combined ratio represents the proportion of claims and management expenses to total premiums. The total premium income of the non-life industry was 2,89,673 crore in FY24. "Health insurance in India remains affordable. A family can secure coverage for around 2% of the sum insured, which is reasonable," he said.

Niva Bupa is leveraging technology to scale operations without increasing fixed costs. "All our policies are digitally onboarded, 51% are issued straight through with automated underwriting, and 21% of retail claims are automatically approved."

Bupa has a different structure compared to other insurers. As a private company limited by guarantee, it does not distribute dividends but reinvests profits. Niva Bupa is one of Bupa's two group companies that are listed. Despite the listing, Ramachandran said the company is not under pressure for quarterly profits as its promoter, Bupa, and former promoter and largest shareholder, True North, have a long-term business focus. The 2024 IPO reduced Bupa's shareholding from 62% to around 55% to create space for foreign investors while staying within the then 74% FDI cap.

"Unlike motor insurance, the second-largest segment, which depends on new vehicle sales, health insurance has vast scope due to its low penetration. Globally, 5 of the top 10 insurers by market capitalisation operate in health insurance...

Health insurance in India remains affordable. A family can secure coverage for around 2% of the sum insured...

—Krishnan Ramachandran | MD & CEO, NIVA BUPA HEALTH INSURANCE

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

Why You Should Not Ignore Debt Mutual Funds

High returns from equity mutual funds and a long bull run in stock markets often make investors give other assets such as debt mutual funds a miss. Financial planners point out that debt has its own role to play in portfolios and should not be ignored.

What Are Debt Mutual Funds?

A debt mutual fund or a fixed-income fund is one that invests in fixed-income securities like government securities, debentures, corporate bonds and other money-market instruments. While the returns are not assured, these are relatively stable investments and have lower risk. Debt funds look at generating returns by investing money in avenues like bonds and other fixed-income securities. This means these funds buy bonds and earn interest income on the money. The yields that debt MF investors receive will be based on this.

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescomutualfund.com. 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.

How Invest In These Funds?

One can make either a lumpsum investment or use systematic investment plans (SIP) to invest in debt mutual fund schemes. In case you have a sizeable amount of money you wish to invest in one go, the lumpsum method is preferable. If you want to invest smaller portions of money at regular intervals, typically from your salary for a short-term goal that earns you a reasonable return which is higher than bank deposits with easy liquidity, SIPs can be a good option.

What Are The Advantages?

A debt MF scheme holds a number of securities in the portfolio, thus giving diversification to investors when compared to holding a single bond in the portfolio. Investors can choose the type of debt fund scheme based on the time-frame, investment objective and risks which they are comfortable with. For one day to three months, investors could use liquid or overnight funds; for 3-12 months, ultra short-term funds or money market funds; for one year to two years, short-term bond funds and corporate bond funds; for two years and above, long-term gilt funds. Investors can also get exposure to debt through hybrid funds based on the type of schemes they invest in. The tax efficiency is higher through that route. Investing in debt funds helps balance the overall portfolio and bring down risks. While equity funds can offer potentially higher returns over a longer term than debt mutual funds, there will be interim bouts of volatility as returns on equity mutual funds are linked directly to the performance of the stock market. —PRASHANT MAHESH

GALLERY

Sindhu pulls out of Asia meet due to hamstring issues

New Delhi: Two-time Olympic medallist shuttler PV Sindhu pulled out of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships in China due to a hamstring issue, dealing a huge blow to the country's chances of improving the colour of their medal in the prestigious edition.

Alcaraz battles past De Minaur for title: Carlos Alcaraz clinched his first indoor title, overpowering a spirited effort by Australia's Alex de Minaur to win the Rotterdam Open tournament 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Bencic wins first WTA title as mother: Belinda Bencic beat Ashlyn Krueger 4-6 6-1 6-1 to capture the Abu Dhabi WTA 500 title, four months after returning to the circuit from maternity leave.

Shapovalov books final with Ruud: Denis Shapovalov's gutsy semifinal performance helped him defeat Tommy Paul to secure a berth in the final of the ongoing Dallas Open. The Canadian defeated defending champion Paul 7-5, 6-3, booking a title clash against Casper Ruud.

BFC back to winning ways: After wasting a penalty, hosts Bengaluru FC feasted on Jamshedpur FC's defensive lapses to rout the visitors 3-0 at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium.

Boxer Cooney dies a week after title defeat: Boxer John Cooney died a week after being taken into intensive care following his Celtic super-featherweight title defeat to Nathan Howells. Cooney underwent surgery after it was discovered he had an intracranial hemorrhage. AGENCIES

ACTION TODAY

CRICKET: Ranji Quarters, 9.30 am (Jio); NZ vs SA, 2nd ODI, 10 am (Sony, Fancode); **FOOTBALL:** ISL, Odisha FC v Punjab FC, 7.30 pm(Jio)

Madrid Derby Draw: Both Coaches Talk Of Missed Chances

Madrid: Atletico Madrid manager Diego Simeone said his team paid the price for missed opportunities in a heated LaLiga derby at Real Madrid on Saturday after Kylian Mbappe cancelled out Julian Alvarez's opener for the visiting side.

Atletico were unable to make the most of the chances they created during a dominant start to the game.

"We played a very good first half but we didn't have the clarity to take advantage of the chances we created," Simeone told a press conference.

"We could have managed those opportunities better. That led to a draw despite the feeling that in many parts of the game it looked like we could have won it. With them scoring early in the second half, they hit play on the crossbar and played with a higher intensity after that.

"After 20 minutes or so we got the game a little more in control and had our chances too... It ended in a draw a match in which maybe both teams were left thinking they deserved more."

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti also felt his team could have done better. "The team is disappointed because they think they deserved more... but we're happy because we're still leaders," he said. "In the second half we had total control, we had a lot of chances."

Ancelotti opted to deploy his four key attacking players in Mbappe, Vinicius Junior, Jude Bellingham and Rodrygo Goes, in lieu of a more conservative approach.

Simeone praised referee Cesar Soto Grado following controversy surrounding the build-up to the derby after Real Madrid lodged a letter of complaint against the Spanish league's match officials. Both sides complained over contentious plays on Saturday, Atletico for a studs-up challenge on Pablo Barrios by Dani Ceballos and Real for the penalty that gave Atletico the lead when Aurelien Tchouameni's foul on Samuel Lino was awarded after a lengthy VAR review. "I thought the referee handled it in the best way he could," Simeone said. "For some people, Ceballos deserved a straight red... At least I think he should have checked it in the VAR, but others may disagree...

Real stayed top of LaLiga on 50 points, one ahead of Atletico in second who missed a chance to leapfrog them. Barcelona, third on 45 points, visit Sevilla on Sunday.

Defender Lucas Vazquez was ruled out against Manchester City in the Champions League playoffs with a thigh injury. Vazquez joins defenders Antonio Rudiger, David Alaba, Dani Carvajal and Eder Militao on the sidelines. REUTERS

Getty Images

WIDE ANGLE: Action during the 1-1 draw at the Bernabeu

> We had a good first half, but we weren't relaxed enough in front of goal to (score) more. In the end it was a draw in which both teams think they could have taken more from it."
> —**Diego Simeone,** ATLETICO COACH

> The team is disappointed because they think they deserved more... but we're happy because we're still leaders."
> —**Carlo Ancelotti,** REAL COACH

An Indian win in ice hockey after 2018

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The bane of being a winter games athlete in a tropical country has never left them. But on Sunday, the Indian men's ice hockey team overcame all that by recording their first international win since 2018 when they beat Macau 4-2 at the Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China.

SPOTLIGHT

Not having participated in an International Ice Hockey Federation tournament since 2018 and getting just a handful of days to prepare for the current event due to selection delays, the Indian team scripted a memorable win in their last group-stage game.

It may not prove enough to advance. Having suffered huge losses — a 0-30 and a 1-19 drubbing by Hong Kong and Turkmenistan respectively, India were at the bottom of the pool, but the win was a great morale boost for a team constantly facing the odds. They ended their campaign in third spot in Group C with three much-treasured points.

Sports science expert, Dr Sarthak Patnaik, who is currently with the team in China, said the victory at the Harbin Ice Hockey Arena was important for a number of reasons.

"It was a great win, especially considering the challenges our players are facing. They have suffered multiple injuries but have not given up. Moreover, the squad is quite thin, we are playing without many extra players or substitutes. That's stressful but the team has carried on the fight," Patnaik, of the Bhubaneswar-based Sports Science India, told **TOI** from Harbin.

Gukesh trails 0-1 vs Caruana

Hamburg: D Gukesh suffered a rare setback in normal time control, losing to USA's Fabiano Caruana in the first game of the quarterfinals of the Freestyle Grand Slam chess tournament here.

Gukesh was at the top of his game for a good part, improvising when it was necessary but he failed to find a queen sacrifice in the latter stages of the middle game.

It changed the course of the game for him. Caruana was quick to take charge of the situation and did not give a chance for the Indian to make a comeback.

Meanwhile, Magnus Carlsen scored a fine win over Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan. Alireza Firouzja of France lost to Vincent Keymer of Germany in the opener.

In the other game of the quarters, Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan played out a draw with Hikaru Nakamura while in the inconsequential 9th place decider, American Levon Aronian won his first game at the expense of Vladimir Fedoseev of Slovenia. PTI

Liverpool dumped out of FA Cup

Championship's bottom club Plymouth Argyle chalks up famous win over EPL leaders

London: Premier League leaders Liverpool were knocked out of the FA Cup by second-tier strugglers Plymouth after losing 1-0 in a stunning fourth-round upset on Sunday.

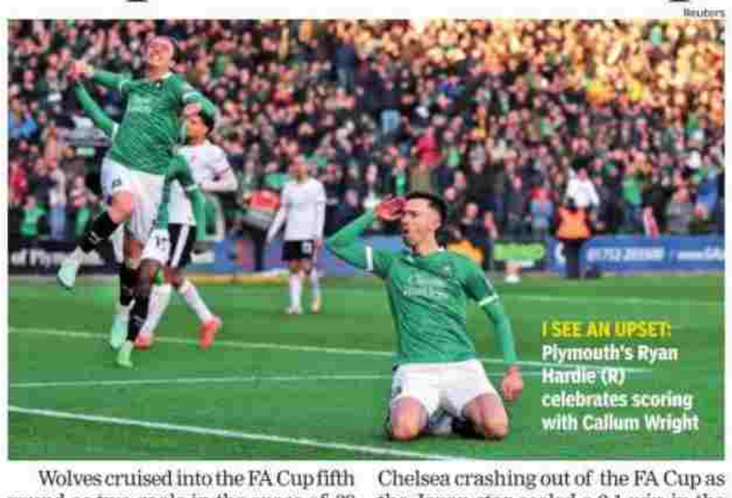
It ended any hopes of a quadruple of major trophies for Liverpool, who leads the Premier League by six points with a game in hand, finished top of the revamped first stage of the Champions League and have reached the English League Cup final.

Ryan Hardie's 53rd-minute penalty proved to be the winner for Plymouth, a club from the southwest of England which is in last place in the second-tier Championship and recently fired Wayne Rooney as its manager. Liverpool fielded a heavily rotated lineup, without stars like Mohamed Salah, Cody Gakpo and Virgil van Dijk, and it backfired.

Wolves cruised into the FA Cup fifth round as two goals in the space of 39 seconds sealed a 2-0 win over Blackburn. Vitor Pereira's side took a welcome break from the fight to avoid Premier League relegation, comfortably avoiding a shock exit against the Championship promotion chasers at Ewood Park.

Brighton's Kaoru Mitoma sent Chelsea crashing out of the FA Cup as the Japan star sealed a 2-1 win in the fourth round. Chelsea haven't won a domestic trophy since lifting the FA Cup in 2018 and their wait will go on for another season after they blew the lead at the Amex Stadium. Thrashed 7-0 at Nottingham Forest in the Premier League last weekend, Brighton bounced back impressively. AGENCIES

Reuters



I SEE AN UPSET: Plymouth's Ryan Hardie (R) celebrates scoring with Callum Wright

NEW BOY GIMENEZ STRIKES FOR MILAN BEFORE CL PLAYOFF AGAINST OLD CLUB

Rome: Santiago Gimenez scored his first goal for AC Milan on Saturday as the seven-time European champions won 2-0 at Empoli in a Serie A clash which finished with both teams down to 10 men. Mexico striker Gimenez, who signed from Feyenoord during the winter transfer window, classily struck Milan's second in the 76th minute in Tuscany to seal the three points.

Rafael Leao headed home Milan's opener eight minutes before Gimenez's first Serie A strike as Milan moved up to seventh, five points off the Champions League positions with a game in hand.

Gimenez's goal is good news for Milan and the 23-year-old who will face his old club Feyenoord in Eindhoven in the Champions League playoffs on Wednesday. "It's going to be really tough, it's a lot of emotion because Feyenoord gave me a lot, they are like family," Gimenez told DAZN.

Paulo Dybala netted his first goal of 2025 to help a much-changed Roma team to a 1-0 win at relegation-threatened Venezia on Sunday.

Diksha loses playoff

Rabat: Diksha Dagar came within striking distance of winning her third Ladies European Tour title, before losing a playoff at the Lalla Meryem Cup golf tournament. Debutant Avani Prashanth managed to shoot 70 and finished tied-16th.

Jeev scores an ace, finishes T-28th: Jeev Milkha Singh made an ace in his round of 75 as he finished tied-28th in the season-opener on the PGA Tour Champions here on Sunday. Jeev, who had rounds of 74-72 on the first two days ended with a total of 2-over as Miguel Jimenez (69) edged Steven Alker for 2-stroke victory.

Shubham triumphs: Delhi's Shubham Narain put behind disappointments of past few seasons, registering victory on the third playoff against Panchkula-based amateur Anant Singh Ahlawat at the final qualifying stage of the PGTI Qualifying School 2025 in Jamshedpur. AGENCIES

TIMES NATION

Protest rallies, Abhaya clinics mark RG Kar victim's b'day

Kolkata: The family of the RG Kar victim along with other protesters remained on the streets on Sunday, setting up Abhaya clinics and taking out rallies, to mark her 32nd birthday, report **Sanjib Chakraborty & Sumati Yengkhom**.

"My daughter always used to treat patients on her birthday. Every year, we celebrated with payesh and a cake-cutting at night. But this year, her 32nd birthday was observed with tears at Abhaya clinic," said the late intern's mother. West Bengal Junior Doctors' Front set up Abhaya clinics at key locations where the young doctor lived and served, including Nataghar, Mahendra Nagar, and Parthapur Bazar More in Sodepur.

Patients who visited the clinic received saplings, symbolising her spirit.

On Jan 18, a lower court had sentenced Sanjay Roy, the main accused in the RG Kar rape-murder case, to life sentence. CBI has approached high court, appealing for capital punishment for Roy for the heinous crime on Aug 9 last year.

Residents of Panihati, which is not too far away from her residence, organised a silent march. Beginning from her residence, the procession marched to Sodepur's Kanch Kal More. "On her birthday, we vowed to continue our fight for justice. Everyone who stood with us on Sunday reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that my daughter gets justice," said her father.

In the evening, junior doctors gathered in front of the 'Cry of the Hour' statue on RG Kar campus.

They said they are always with the victim's family in their demand for justice.

The rally of doctors, which started from College Square, was halted at the gate of RG Kar by security personnel, who locked the main gate. The marchers were later allowed inside to pay their respects. The gathering included senior doctors and healthcare workers from various organisations, including Service Doctors Forum and Medical Service and Nurses Unity.

Guv change hinted at Biren power shift

Bhalla's Arrival 'Weakened' CM's Position

▶Continued from P 1

The closest that Biren had come to stepping down before this was on June 30, 2023, when a crowd of supporters, most of them Meitei women, waylaid his convoy en route to Raj Bhavan. An elderly woman then dramatically snatched his resignation letter and tore it to shreds.

Over the next 19-odd months, the footballer-turned-politician would brave mounting pressure from within and outside BJP to quit as Manipur vacillated between violence and short-lived calm.

As fissures within BJP deepened over the continuing conflict, Biren found himself in an increasingly vulnerable position.

Last Nov, majority of BJP legislators, including those from the Meitei community, abstained from an emergency meeting convened by him to assess the situation in the wake of more violence attributed to tribal militants. Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma's NPP, a BJP ally, withdrew support to govt specifically over Biren's handling of the conflict. Sangma said his party would reassess its stand if there was a change at the helm.

In Manipur's 60-strong assembly, NDA bloc consists of 37 BJP legislators, six from NPP, five of NPF, one from JD(U) and three Independents. Congress has five MLAs and Kuki People's Alliance two. One seat fell vacant with the NPP incumbent's death.

The first signs of Biren's position getting weaker came after Bhalla, a former Union home secretary, was appointed governor last Dec. Speculation about a change intensified last week with talk of a no-trust move.

In his resignation to the governor, Singh said, "It has been an honour to serve the people of Manipur thus far. I am extremely grateful to central govt for time actions, interventions, developmental work and implementation of various projects for safeguarding the interests of every single Manipuri."

Last Nov, majority of BJP legislators in Manipur, including those from the Meitei community, abstained from an emergency meeting convened by Biren Singh to assess the situation in the wake of more violence attributed to tribal militants

Delhi-Katra e-way to take 1 more year to be completed: Govt

New Delhi: People will have to wait for at least one more year to travel non-stop from Delhi to Katra using a new expressway. Road transport and highways ministry informed Lok Sabha that two sections of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway in Punjab are scheduled for completion by March 2026 and two more links from the main expressway in Punjab would be ready by April 2027, reports **Dipak Dash**.

The 667-km greenfield expressway is being built at a cost of Rs 40,000 crore. NHAI had bid out five out of 21 packages of the expressway in March 2021. Initially, govt had targetted to complete the stretch by the end of 2023 to reduce the travel time between Delhi and Katra to less than eight hours.

As per govt, the 158km falling in Haryana will be complete by April. Officials said the project has been delayed due to several reasons, including non-availability of land and contractual issues in Punjab. In the case of one package (30km) in Punjab, NHAI has terminated the contract due to land acquisition issues. The ministry has informed Parliament that "work will be taken after resolving the land acquisition issues".

State transitioning from gun-tantra to gantantra: C'garh CM

Indravati was the site of another big operation on Jan 12

▶Continued from P 1

Intelligence reported the presence of a large group of Maoists and senior commanders. By late afternoon, 31 bodies of Maoist guerrillas had been recovered, Bastar DIG Kamlochan Kashyap said. Two securitymen were wounded, apart from the two killed.

A large cache of Maoist weapons was seized, including AK-47s, SLRs, INSAS and .303 rifles, barrel grenade launchers (BGL) and explosives. Reinforcements have been dispatched to the site, nearly 150km from district HQ and 420km from Raipur.

Indravati was the site of another big operation on Jan 12, when security forces killed three Maoists. The park borders the Maoist headquarters of Abujhmarh, which straddles Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. The area has long served as a stronghold for insurgents, providing them with a safe zone for recruitment and inter-state movement.

Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai declared that the state is transitioning from "gun-tantra" (rule of the gun) to "gantantra" (democracy). "Our soldiers have entered naxal strongholds and are eliminating them. The success achieved by our forces is commendable, and I salute their bravery...," he said, while condoling the deaths of two security men.

Ed Sheeran says had permission, B'luru cops deny any approach

▶Continued from P 1

Ed Sheeran began singing at 11.51am but was shut down just a minute later. This reignited debates about whether authorities should be more flexible and welcoming to spontaneous artistic expressions. The local Cubbon Park police denied that permission was granted for the performance. When **TOI** tried to contact the management of Ed Sheeran, they were unresponsive. Ed Sheeran is in Bengaluru as part of his India tour.

Sheeran, however, later posted on Instagram: "We had permission to busk, by the way. Hence, us playing in that exact spot was planned out beforehand. It wasn't just us randomly turning up."

According to Cubbon Park police, no one approached them seeking permission to perform at the site. "No one can perform on the footpaths or roads as it causes inconvenience to others. Our team asked them to stop. When they didn't heed, the cops at the spot unplugged the mic connection," a police official said.

> **Fans argued that stopping a global pop icon from briefly performing was unnecessary and avoidable**

Sanjay Kumar, president of Church Street and Rest House Association, defended the police action, asserting that rules must be followed. "Even abroad, performances require permission. Sheeran's team could have approached us, and we would have arranged a private space in a restaurant or an open venue for Bengaluru to enjoy," Kumar said.

But fans and netizens voiced their frustration and disappointment, arguing that stopping a global pop icon from briefly performing was unnecessary and avoidable, especially in a city known for its vibrant music culture. While some called it an embarrassing moment for Bengaluru, others pointed to the lack of public spaces for cultural events.

Dad of Shraddha Walkar dies of cardiac arrest

Mumbai: Vikas Walkar, father of Shraddha Walkar whose gruesome murder in 2022 by her live-in partner Aftab Poonawalla had shocked the nation, died due to a cardiac arrest in his Vasai West residence Sunday morning, reports **Vishal Rajemahadik**.

On finding him motionless, his family rushed him to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead. He was tirelessly pursuing his daughter's murder case with Delhi police for past three years as her mortal remains were yet to be handed over to the family.

Powerlifter shot dead in Sonipat over parking row

Rohtak: A drunk man shot dead a 20-year-old national-level powerlifter, firing five bullets at him after an argument over the sportsperson's parked motorcycle, which the assailant alleged was blocking his car in Haryana's Sonipat Sunday.

Vansh, a district-level gold medallist and national silver medallist, had gone to meet his classmates, Akshita and Vanshika, at Pragati Nagar to collect a charger. He parked his motorcycle at the corner of the lane around 3 pm.

A little while later, the accused, Kuldeep, arrived in his car and repeatedly honked, claiming the motorcycle was blocking his way. Vansh came out, and a heated argument ensued, drawing Akshita and Vanshika to intervene. When Kuldeep began assaulting the women, Vansh tried to stop him. Kuldeep went to his car, took out a pistol and shot Vansh , police said.

Vansh was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead. TNN

6 harass boy, kill his dad when he intervenes

Lucknow: A man was beaten to death over a minor altercation with a group of youths in a village in Gonda on Sunday. Police said Dilip Kumar, 37, was assaulted with bamboo sticks when he came to the rescue of his son Raman, 10, who was being forced to call one of the youths, Ankit, as 'papa'.

When the boy refused, Ankit abused him, leading to a confrontation with Dilip. The youths thrashed him. Dilip succumbed to injuries on way to a hospital. Police have registered a case against the six accused. TNN

8 Kumbh pilgrims die in accidents; toll rises to 79

Varanasi/Bhopal: Eight Kumbh pilgrims — four from Chhattisgarh's Raipur, three from MP's Satna district, and one from Odisha's Kandhamal — were killed in separate road accidents on Sunday, raising the death toll from such mishaps since the start of the world's largest religious congregation to 79, report **Rajeev Dikshit**.

An SUV carrying ten pilgrims returning to Raipur after visiting Maha Kumbh collided with a trailer near Daranakhar of UP's Sonbhadra around 7.15am. "Anil Pradhan (37), Laxmi Bai (30), Thakur Ram Yadav (58), and Rukmani Yadav (56) were killed, while six others suffered grievous injuries," Sonbhadra ASP Kalu Singh said.

In another accident in Sonbhadra, a woman, Lata Rath from Tumdiband in Kandhamal, died, while her sister sustained injuries when their bus, en route to Prayagraj, collided with another bus in Piparikhand area on Sunday afternoon.

In Satna, three members of a family, including an 11-year-old child, from MP's Rewa, died when their pickup van, collided with an SUV on Satna-Chitrakoot highway around 12.30 am on Sunday.

TIMES SPORT

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2025

FISHER SMASHES WORLD INDOOR 3000 METRES RECORD IN THRILLING RACE WITH HOCKER

DEEPTI SHARMA NAMED UP WARRIORZ CAPTAIN FOR WPL IN PLACE OF INJURED ALYSSA HEALY

THE HITMAN IS BACK!

Rohit Announces Return To Form With Thunderous 119, Helps India Chase Down 304, Clinch ODI Series

Sourav.M@timesofindia.com

Cuttack: For the crowd it was a moment to celebrate but for the India skipper it was a moment of relief when he got the monkey off his back. Dancing down the track to hit Adil Rashid effortlessly over long-off for a six to bring up his 32nd ODI hundred, the Hitman just had a customary look at his batting partner Shreyas Iyer at the other end before raising his willow half-way to acknowledge the houseful crowd here at Barabati Stadium on Sunday.

The century came after 16 innings across formats for Rohit and more than a year after his last ton against Afghanistan during the ODI World Cup in Oct 2023.

Though Virat Kohli was undoubtedly the most cheered player on the ground for the second day running, he flattered to deceive, staying for only eight balls to score five runs. But the spectators at the cricket-starved old city were enthralled by the sublime knock of the Indian captain on the day, that enabled the hosts to take a series-clinching four-wicket victory over England with 33 balls to spare. India reached 308/6 to take an unassailable lead in the three-match series.

And when he started the long walk back to the pavilion after scoring 119 off 90 balls with 12 fours and seven maximums, Rohit had ensured a win and a standing ovation from the vociferous crowd.

Rohit's coming back to sublime form ahead of the Champions Trophy certainly augurs well for India as he reached his hundred in 76 balls, his second fastest in ODIs.

Rohit took charge from the start of the chase and raced to 29 off 18 balls before the play stopped for about 35 minutes due to a floodlight failure after 6.1 overs. If one thought this could break Rohit's concentration, they were wrong. He raced to his half-century in 30 balls. Such was Rohit's presence that last game's Player of the Match Shubman Gill was reduced to playing second fiddle in that opening stand of 136 runs, where the Punjab opener scored a 52-ball 60. Gill was superb in the field too, taking three catches

Iyer (44 off 47 balls) continued his good form and missed a second consecutive half-century when he was run out following a miscommunication with striker Axar Patel (41* off 43 balls). India did have some soft dismissals in the middle order but the chase was well within control.

Earlier, Ravindra Jadeja starred with 3-35 to keep England within a below-par score. It was because of his wickets against the run of play to dismiss set batters like Joe Root (69 off 72 balls) and Ben Duckett (65 off 56 balls) that England could never build on the solid start of 75 without loss after 10 overs.

Banton replaces Bethell: Meanwhile, England on Sunday called up batter Tom Banton as cover for injured allrounder Jacob Bethell for the third ODI.

338

SIXES HIT BY ROHIT SHARMA IN ODIS. He surpassed West Indian great Chris Gayle's record of 331 to be second on the list of most six-hitters. Only Pakistani star Shahid Afridi, with 351 maximums, is ahead of the Indian captain.

BCCI

LONG TIME COMING... Rohit Sharma was in full cry at the Barabati Stadium during his 32nd ODI hundred in the second ODI against England in Cuttack on Sunday0

SMASHING SHARMA

119 RUNS	90 BALLS	12 FOURS	7 SIXES	132.2 SR

IND VS ENG 2nd ODI

SCOREBOARD

England: Phil Salt c Jadeja b Varun 26, Ben Duckett c Pandya b Jadeja 65, Joe Root c Kohli b Jadeja 69, Harry Brook c Gill b Rana 31, Jos Buttler c Gill b Pandya 34, Liam Livingstone (run out) 41, Jamie Overton c Gill b Jadeja 6, Gus Atkinson c Kohli b Shami 3, Adil Rashid (run out) 14, Mark Wood (run out) 0, Saqib Mahmood (not out) 0. **Extras** (LB-2, NB-1, W-12) 15.
Total (all out, 49.5 overs) 304.
Fall of wickets: 1-81, 2-102, 3-168, 4-219, 5-248, 6-258, 7-272, 8-297, 9-304.
Bowling: Mohammed Shami 7.5-0-66-1, Harshit Rana 9-0-62-1, Hardik Pandya 7-0-53-1, Varun Chakravarthy 10-0-54-1, Ravindra Jadeja 10-1-35-3, Axar Patel 6-0-32-0.
India: Rohit Sharma c Rashid b Livingstone 119, Shubman Gill b Overton 60, Virat Kohli c Salt b Rashid 5, Shreyas Iyer run out (Buttler/Rashid) 44, Axar Patel not out 41, KL Rahul c Salt b Overton 10, Hardik Pandya c Overton b Atkinson 10, Ravindra Jadeja not out 11. **Extras** (LB 1, W-7) 8.
Total: (for six wickets, 44.3 overs) 308.
Fall of wickets: 1-136, 2-150, 3-220, 4-258, 5-275, 6-286.
Bowling: Saqib Mahmood 6-0-36-0, Gus Atkinson 7-0-65-1, Mark Wood 8-0-57-0, Adil Rashid 10-0-78-1, Jamie Overton 5-0-27-2, Liam Livingstone 7-0-29-1, Joe Root 1.3-0-15-0.
Player-of-the-Match: Rohit Sharma.

7 Number of successive series India have won at home against England since 2006.

25 Number of hundreds Rohit Sharma (32) has scored in Indian victories. He has joined Virat Kohli (42), Sachin Tendulkar (33) and Ricky Ponting (25) to do it. His 32nd ton is also the fifth as Indian captain.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

Varun second oldest Indian to make ODI debut

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Cuttack: On Saturday, Varun Chakravarthy had visited Puri's Jagannath temple along with India teammates Washington Sundar and Axar Patel. And it took just a day for his prayers to be answered.

Encouraged by his record and recent good form in T20Is for India, Tamil Nadu mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy made his ODI debut here on Sunday replacing chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav. And with his maiden ODI cap at 33 years 164 days, the Kolkata Knight Riders player became India's second oldest One-Day cricketer in 50 years after the legendary wicketkeeper Farokh Engineer made his debut in the inaugural ODI for the country way back in 1974 against the same opponent.

Varun, a white-ball specialist who has played his only First-Class match against Hyderabad in 2018, was presented the cap by Ravindra Jadeja.

33y 164d

Varun Chakravarthy's age. He is the second oldest player to appear for India in ODIs — the oldest being Farokh Engineer, who debuted at the age of 36 years 138 days against England at Leeds on July 13, 1974.

"Varun, cap No. 259. It's a special day for you and your family," Jadeja told Varun as team members huddled up for the cap-presentation ceremony.

"From tennis-ball cricket to T20 cricket, we all have seen your magic. Now it's time to do something really special in this format. Just give your hundred percent. Good luck," the senior all-rounder added.

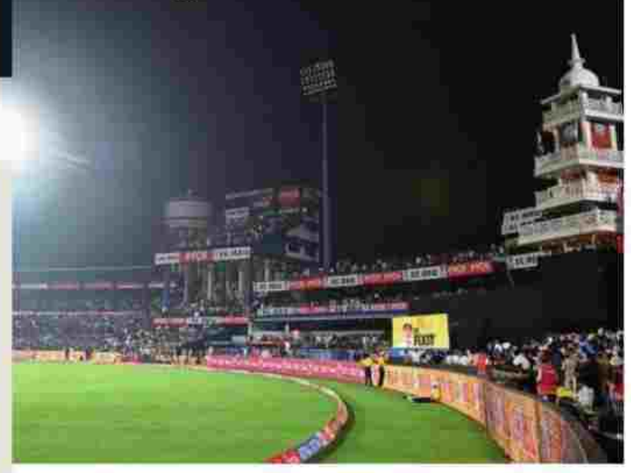
Varun, sharing his thoughts on the memorable day, said, "It feels really good because it's been a long journey from my T20I debut, and I have got his breakthrough now. It's come after playing a lot of domestic cricket, Vijay Hazare (Trophy). I will cherish it."

Varun has already played 18 T20Is for India.

Varun gave India the first breakthrough by dismissing Phil Salt in his second over and the 11th of England's innings. However, he had a subdued debut with figures of 10-0-54-1.

OCA embarrassed after floodlight failure stalls ODI

Sanjib Kumar Das



LIGHTS OUT: A generator malfunction during the second ODI at Cuttack's Barabati Stadium interrupted India's chase of 305 for 35 minutes on Sunday. There was no reduction in overs

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Cuttack: Just as Rohit Sharma looked to shrug off his lack of form in front of a houseful crowd at the Barabati on Sunday, the India captain's charge and the second ODI match here was halted for about 35 minutes due to a floodlight failure which caused major embarrassment for the host Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) as well as Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

At the time of the interruption after 6.1 overs, India were cruising at 48 for none in their quest of 305 with Rohit unbeaten on 29 off 18 balls with a boundary and three towering sixes. Gill was on 17 off 19 balls.

One of the eight floodlights near the clock tower went off at 6:15pm. It came on for a few seconds at 6:21pm. As the players and match officials started to take their positions anticipating the restart, with pacer Saqib Mahmood about to bowl to Rohit, the lights on that stand went off again. After waiting for 2-3 minutes in the middle of the park, the players and umpires were forced to go off and cool their heels in the dugouts.

The 45,000-strong crowd turned the waiting minutes into a spectacle, grooving to hit numbers and loud music while turning their mobile torches on.

> **"The generator attached to the floodlight malfunctioned, so the lights were off on that particular stand beside the clock tower. Now we have got the back-up generator on. It took time to change the connection from one generator to the other, which caused the delay."**
> —OCA official

Only cricket was left out of the ground due to the humiliating situation.

Asked about the reason behind the long delay in restoring the floodlight following the disruption, an OCA official reasoned, "The generator attached to the floodlight malfunctioned, so the lights were off on that particular stand beside the clock tower. Now we have got the back-up generator on. It took time to change the connection from one generator to the other, which caused the delay. Now it's OK."

Some OCA officials also stated that all the eight floodlights have undergone regular testing for the past five days to be match ready, which is a general practice at any venue.

Ankit hits ton before Mumbai strike back

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: Ankit Kumar is having a dream run in Ranji Trophy. The Haryana skipper smashed his second consecutive century in the tournament on Sunday to put his team in a good position in the quarterfinal against formidable Mumbai at the Eden Gardens here. His 136 took Haryana to 263 for five in their first innings, 52 runs away from taking the lead.

In the morning, Mumbai added 37 runs to their overnight total of 278 to end their first innings at 315. Tanush Kotian, who had scripted a remarkable recovery along with Shams Mulani on Saturday, missed his century by just three runs. His was the first wicket to fall on Sunday, being bowled by Haryana medium-pacer Sumit Kumar, who finished with a three-wicket haul.

The start of the Haryana innings was a contrast to Mumbai's, with Ankit picking up from where he had left in the previous match. The opener's 118 against Karnataka had played a key role in giving them the crucial first-innings lead in the drawn match.

Ankit and Lakshya Dalal put on 87 for the first wicket before the latter departed after contributing 34. Shardul Thakur trapped Lakshya leg-before for his only wicket of the day. The jolt, however, did little to dampen Haryana's reply as Ankit, in the company of Yashvardhan Dalal, continued to defy Mumbai. The duo took the score to 168 before Ankit lost his partner, once again to a leg-before decision. Yashvardhan's 36 was, ironically, Haryana's second highest score of the day.

Even as Haryana seemed to be running away with the day's honours, Mumbai hit back with Kotian and Mulani once again in the centre of the action. The spinners shared three more wickets as Haryana gave away some of their advantage.

Brief scores: Mumbai 315 (T Kotian 97, S Mulani 91; A Kamboj 3-71, S Kumar 3-81). Haryana 263/5 (A Kumar 136)

Krishna Roy

Ankit Kumar celebrates his century

RANJI TROPHY

THAKARE TAKES FOUR FOR VIDARBHA AS TN STRUGGLE

Nagpur: Pacer Aditya Thakare's four-wicket burst had Tamil Nadu hanging on the ropes at 159 for six after the second day of their quarterfinal match here on Sunday. Tamil Nadu have a long batting line-up but none of their top order batters showed gumption to fight out on a rather tricky surface. The promising 18-year-old C Andre Siddharth played a lone hand with an impressive 65 off 89 balls (10x4, 2x6) but he did not have any support from the other end.
Brief scores: Vidarbha 353 (K Nair 122, H Dubey 69, D Malewar 79; S Yadav 3/91, V Shankar 3/75) vs TN 159/6 (CA Siddharth 65; A Thakare 4/18). \

NABI'S FIVE-FOR HANDS J&K ADVANTAGE AGAINST KERALA

Pune: Seamer Auqib Nabi complemented his useful contribution with the bat with an excellent five-wicket haul to put Jammu and Kashmir in the driver's seat against Kerala on the second day of their quarterfinal here on Sunday. Responding to J&K's first innings total of 280, Kerala were struggling at 200 for nine at stumps, trailing by 80 runs with just one wicket in hand.
Brief scores: Jammu and Kashmir 280 (MD Nidheesh 6/75) vs Kerala 200/9 (J Saxena 67; Auqib Nabi 5/36).

MANAN & JAYMEET STAND GIVES GUJARAT CONTROL

Rajkot: Manan Hingrajia and Jaymeet Patel, the orthodox yet effective pair of southpaws, added 134 runs for the fourth wicket to put Gujarat in complete command against Saurashtra on Day 2 of their quarterfinal here Sunday.

Gujarat ended the second day's play at 260/4 and are currently 44 runs ahead in their first innings with an aim to get a sizeable first innings lead. Hingrajia (83) and Jaymeet (88*) came together when Gujarat were in a spot at 78 for 3 but two the left-handers doggedly took the visitors past the home team's paltry score of 216.
Brief scores: Saurashtra 216 vs Gujarat 260/4 (M Hingrajia 83, J Patel 88*). PTI

Dominant Oz sweep SL series

Galle: Australia wrapped up a dominant 2-0 sweep of the Test series against Sri Lanka at Galle on Sunday, romping to a nine-wicket victory before lunch on day four.

Set a modest target of 75 to win, Australia lost only Travis Head as they stormed to a commanding victory in a ruthless display from the world's top-ranked Test side.

Head and Usman Khawaja put on 38 for the first wicket, looking at ease on a turning wicket. Prabath Jayasuriya removed Head, caught behind but Marnus Labuschagne with 26 and Khawaja, 27, knocked off the runs. With three runs required for the win, Dimuth Karunaratne, playing his 100th and final Test match, was called up to bowl.

Labuschagne flicked his third delivery to midwicket to level the scores, and with another flick on the next ball, sealed the win 16 minutes before lunch. The second Test victory triggered jubilant celebrations among the Australian fans, who far outnumbered the home contingent in the stands.

Steve Smith's men began Sunday's fourth day by bundling Sri Lanka out for 231 from 211/8 overnight.
Brief scores: Sri Lanka 257 & 231 (o/n 211/8) (K Mendis 50; M Kuhnemann 4-63, N Lyon 4-84) lost to Australia 414 & 75/1.

PLAYERS WITH MOST CATCHES IN TESTS

Fielder	Tests	Catches
R Dravid	164	210
J Root	152	207
M Jayawardene	149	205
S Smith	116	200
J Kallis	166	200

List excludes catches taken as wicketkeeper. —Stats: Rajesh Kumar

Karunaratne eyes coaching career after Test farewell

Sri Lanka's Dimuth Karunaratne said Sunday it had been "a very emotional day" after his 100th and final Test ended with a defeat. "It has been a long career. After my family and friends, I was spending most time with my teammates," he said. "I am leaving them, but this team will be always in my heart." AGENCIES

KARUNARATNE

YARRAJI, SHIRSE WIN GOLD IN NATL GAMES

Dehradun: Andhra Pradesh's Jyothi Yarraji and Tejas Shirse of Maharashtra on Sunday won their third successive gold medals at the National Games after clocking record times on the second day of athletics competitions here Sunday.

Shirse (men's 110m hurdles) and Yarraji (women's 100m hurdles), both national record holders in their respective events, had won gold in 2022 and 2023 editions in Gujarat and Goa.

Yarraji clocked 13.10s to better her own National Games record of 13.22 seconds, set in the 2023. Shirse clocked 13.65 seconds to better his earlier Games record of 13.71s, also set in 2023. PTI

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Saudi Arabia & other Arab countries condemn Israel PM Netanyahu's remark in an interview that a Palestinian state could be established on Saudi territory, P 14

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Two-time Oly medallist shuttler PV Sindhu will not be part of India's squad for Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships due to a hamstring injury, P 18

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