



A UK court rules that Julian Assange can't be extradited to US on espionage charges unless American authorities guarantee he won't get death penalty, giving the WikiLeaks founder a partial victory in his long legal battle, **P 12**

## Five Chinese engineers killed in suicide attack on convoy in Pak

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN

**Islamabad:** Five Chinese engineers, including a woman, and their local driver were killed Tuesday when a suicide attacker rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into their convoy in Shangla district in northwest Pakistan's mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.

No group had so far claimed responsibility for the attack, which came days after a strike on a complex in Gwadar, a strategic port in

► Pak foils attack on naval base, kills 4 attackers, **P12**

southwest province of Balochistan operated by China. The banned Baluch Liberation Army had claimed responsibility for the Gwadar strike, in which the assailants and several troopers were killed. Thousands of Chinese personnel work on projects linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; an extension of Beijing's global Belt & Road Initiative.

On Tuesday, the Chinese engineers were on the way from Islamabad to Dasu, the site of a key hydroelectric dam being constructed by a Chinese company, when they were targeted hit by the suicide bomber from the opposite side.

► Continued on P12

## IIT grad Davuluri is new Microsoft Windows boss

**IT** Madras alumnus Pavan Davuluri has been appointed as the new head of Microsoft Windows and Surface. Tech news portal The Verge said Davuluri has taken charge of the Surface silicon and devices work, with the previous head Mikhail Parakhin leading a new team focused on Windows and web experiences. **P11**

## Russian agency blames Ukraine, West for attack

Russia's Federal Security Service chief Alexander Bortnikov said Tuesday that US, UK and Ukraine were behind the Moscow attack, despite denial by Kyiv and a claim of responsibility by an IS affiliate. Putin had pointed towards an alleged Ukrainian link but also said attackers were "radical Islamists." **P12**

## Student kills self, 6th in Kota this year

A 20-year-old NEET aspirant from UP's Kannauj died by suicide in his PG room in Kota Monday night. The ceiling fan in the PG accommodation was not equipped with an anti-suicide device, as mandated by the guidelines issued by district administration. This is the 6th suicide by a student in coaching hub this year. **TNN**

## Divi's Lab, Megha promoters top global \$ billionnaire list from Telangana & Andhra

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### TELUGU \$ BILLIONAIRE BARONS

Name	Co	Wealth (in \$ bn)	Global Rank
Murali Divi	Divi's Labs	7	381
P Pitchi Reddy	Megha Engg	6	536
PV Krishna Reddy	Megha Engg	6	561
Rameswar Rao	My Home	4	942
B Parthasarathi Reddy	Hetero Labs	3	1,024

(Source: Hurun Global Rich List 2024)

ture at 381st spot.

The Divis are followed on second and third spot by P Pitchi Reddy (536th global rank) and PV Krishna Reddy (661st), promoters of Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Ltd that has been in the news lately for

being the second largest donor of electoral bonds worth Rs 1.232 crore. The uncle and nephew duo of PP Reddy and Krishna Reddy have increased their wealth by 53% and 51%, respectively, to \$ 6 billion each to move up

305 and 303 places on the much-coveted global rich list.

The last tycoon in the top 1,000 global rich list from Hyderabad is My Home Industries promoter Rameswar Rao Jolly & his family at 942nd spot globally and fourth from Hyderabad with a wealth of around \$4 billion after he shored up his wealth by 164% to pole vault 1,379 places on the global list.

The fifth spot (1,024th) is shared by pharma barons - PV Ramprasad Reddy & family of Aurobindo Pharma and B Parthasarathi Reddy & family of Hetero Labs with a wealth of \$3 billion each.

► Continued on P5

INCLUSIVE OF HYDERABAD TIMES (FOR METRO ONLY) | TIMESOFINDIA.COM | EPAPER.TIMESOFINDIA.COM

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

EU calls on Facebook, TikTok and other tech titans to crack down on deepfakes and other AI-generated content by using clear labels ahead of Europe-wide polls in June, **P 12**

Sameer Hiremath & Pallavi Swadi, grandchildren of forging industry pioneer Neelkanth Kalyani, move Pune civil court against their uncle and Bharat Forge chairman Baba Kalyani (pic), seeking division of family assets, **P 11**



## You are Shakti Swaroopa: PM to BJP nominee

**P**M Modi Tuesday called up Rekha Patra, BJP's Basirhat LS candidate and one of several victims of alleged large-scale sexual violence and land grab in Sandeshkhali, and addressed her as "Shakti Swaroopa" for showing courage to register the first FIR over the atrocities.

"You have fought a long battle. Your fight under adverse political circumstances is not only an inspiration for Basirhat but entire Bengal," the PM said. Stating that Patra had huge responsibility in public life, the PM said Bengal was known for Shakti Puja and Durga Puja and her courage in raising the issue of Sandeshkhali's women was inspirational for all. Later, he spoke to T N Sarsu, BJP nominee from Kerala's Alathur, who has been campaigning for the victims of a cooperative bank scam and raised their plight with him. **P8**

## Cong vs BJP in T? Revanth hints with attack on PM Modi

Roushan.Ali@timesgroup.com

**Hyderabad:** Telangana Congress president and chief minister A Revanth Reddy Tuesday launched into Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA govt, indicating that the main contest in the upcoming general elections in the state will be between Congress and BJP. Telangana is set to vote on May 13.

At a meeting with party leaders from the Chevella parliamentary constituency, Revanth sought to know why the people of Telangana should give their vote to Modi for a third term when he sanctioned the bullet train project to Gujarat, but did not extend MMTS to Vikarabad, ensured Sabarmati river development in Gujarat, but has not supported Musi river development or Pranhita-Chevela

project nor completed the Regional Ring Road in Telangana. "What did Modi do to Telangana in the last 10 years and on what basis BJP leaders here are asking for votes. Social justice is possible only with Congress govt. We are determined to win 14 seats — A Revanth Reddy | CM

► Continued on P2



Dali crashed into Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing it to collapse and taking down vehicles and people. Workers who stopped traffic to the bridge after hearing the ship's mayday call were those missing

Officials halted the flow of traffic on the bridge between the mayday call and the collision. Maryland governor Wes Moore said at a briefing, "By being able to stop cars from coming over the bridge, these people are heroes. They saved lives last night," he said.

Eight people were on the bridge at the time and six remained unaccounted for, the state's transportation secretary said hours after the collision, which closed one of the busiest ports in US. A preliminary investigation pointed to an accident, Moore said, and there were no credible reports of terrorism. Ship traffic was suspended at Baltimore port until further notice. AGENCIES

► Continued on P12

## Bridge collapses after snag-hit freighter rams it in US; 6 missing

### Mayday Call By All-Indian Ship Crew Saves Lives

**Baltimore:** A massive freight ship stacked high with containers smashed into a bridge while sailing out of Baltimore early on Tuesday, sending cars and people into the river below and closing one of the busiest ports on the US eastern seaboard.

The entire 22-member crew of the cargo ship are Indians who alerted authorities about a "power issue" before the collision. Rescuers pulled out two survivors, one of whom was hospitalised, and were searching for more in the Patapsco river after huge metal spans of the 2.6km Francis Scott Key Bridge crumpled into the icy water at around 1.30am.

### Kavitha sent to Tihar jail; says it's a 'political laundering' case

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

**New Delhi:** Four days after Germany sought a fair trial for Arvind Kejriwal and was rebuffed for its "interference" by India, the United States echoed the sentiment.

"We encourage a fair, transparent, and timely legal process for chief minister Kejriwal," Reuters quoted a US state department spokesperson as saying. The official said the US was closely following reports of the Delhi CM's arrest.

Soon after comments in the matter from the German foreign office, India had summoned a senior German diplomat to register a "strong" protest. "We see

such remarks as interfering in our judicial process and undermining the independence of our judiciary. Biased assumptions made on this account are most unwarranted," the ministry of external affairs said in a statement.

On Tuesday, reports from the US said United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has voiced concern over the Indian govt's notification of rules to implement CAA, saying no one should be denied citizenship based on religion or belief.

The problematic CAA establishes a religious requirement for asylum seekers in India fleeing neighbouring countries," USCIRF commissioner Stephen Schnecik said in a statement on Monday.

► Continued on P5

## After Germany, US seeks 'fair, transparent, timely legal process' for Kejriwal

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

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► Continued on P5

## EAM backs Philippines on SCS, riles China

**A**mid increasing China-Philippines tensions in South China Sea (SCS), EAM S Jaishankar Tuesday backed the southeast Asian country's efforts to uphold its sovereignty after a meeting with his counterpart Enrique Manalo in Manila. The meet took place a day after the Philippines lodged a protest against China's "aggressive actions" in the South China Sea. Jaishankar's remark was enough to rile China, as its foreign ministry hit back saying maritime disputes are issues between the countries concerned. **P7**

Punjab is the second state after Odisha where BJP will contest on its own after hol-

## No alliance with Akalis, BJP will go it alone in Punjab

IP.Singh@timesgroup.com

**Jalandhar:** Punjab is poised for a four-cornered contest as BJP announced its decision to go solo in the single-phase Lok Sabha elections in the state on June 1, scotching speculation of a revival of its alliance with Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), which had pulled out of NDA in 2020 during the farmers' movement against three farm bills that Centre had later withdrawn.

Punjab is the second state after Odisha where BJP will contest on its own after hol-

### DANCE OF DEMOCRACY

► BJP gives assembly bypoll tickets to 6 Himachal Cong rebels. Move sparks dissent in its ranks | **P8**

► BJP names 3 more fresh faces for LS polls; Union minister Rajkumar Ranjan Singh (Inner Manipur) among those dropped | **P8**

► H D Kumaraswamy of JD(S) set to contest from Mandya, nephew Prajwal from Hassan | **P8**

ding alliance talks.

In the eastern state, BJP's discussions with CM Navneen Patnaik's BJD for a tie-up, the first after the regional party exited NDA in 2009, broke down around March 22.

BJP had last contested general elections independently in Punjab in 1996. Subsequently, it formed alliances with Akalis, led by Parkash Singh Badal, for five assembly and six Lok Sabha elections.

► Continued on P16

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# DANCE of DEMOCRACY

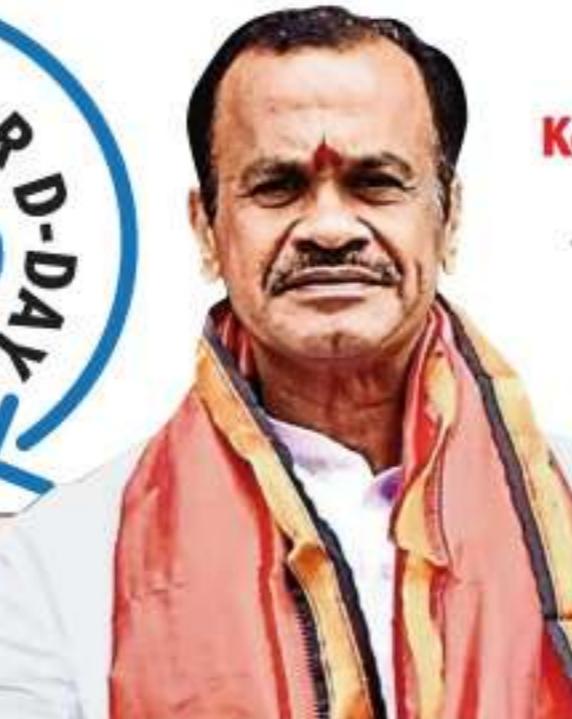
## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ASKED BY MP

• Whether the Centre has asked state govt to issue notifications regarding admissions under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009? (July 8, 2019)

• Whether the govt is aware that the financial condition of Telangana is in a precarious stage? Whether it is true that the Centre has not provided any extra funds to the state? (Feb 10, 2020)

2 BATTLEGROUND TELANGANA

FOLLOW DANCE OF DEMOCRACY ON TWITTER @TIMESOFINDIA



## HOW TELANGANA MPs FARED

Komati Venkat Reddy

DEBATES ■ 22

QUESTIONS ■



357 ATTENDANCE 57% 70% National average 79% State average

• Whether cities situated on river banks have to incorporate river conservation plans while preparing their master plans under the National Mission for Clean Ganga and other projects, if so, the details thereof. Whether provisions have been made in the national water policy that emphasise the need for such plans? (Aug 5, 2021)

—Compiled by Kaushik Gunuganti

THE TIMES OF INDIA | HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024

Political parties — regional and national — are straining every sinew to win Telangana's 17 Lok Sabha constituencies, which could determine their fortunes at the Centre. U Sudhakar Reddy analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Congress, BJP, and BRS in the state

# PARTIES IN DIRE NEED OF LS BOOSTER

## Congress

### STRENGTHS

- Potential increase in women's votes due to welfare schemes such as free bus travel, gas cylinders for ₹500 & free electricity
- Implementation of five of six guarantees within first 100 days despite financial constraints
- Addressed unemployment actively by issuing job notifications, a significant electoral issue
- Ruling party status provides political support
- Emphasis on social justice in cabinet allocation
- Appointment of non-corrupt officials in key positions in police department and other wings enhances credibility
- Growing support from Reddy community indicates political influence
- Strong Modi image at Centre is disadvantage for Congress
- Potential worsening of summer woes like drinking water problems and power issues due to election delays
- Inability to fully implement all the promised welfare sops due to fund shortage

### WEAKNESSES

- Perception loss regarding potential to come to power due to weak alliances in other states
- Strengthening presence in South Telangana & Khammam & Warangal, promising electoral gains
- Poor performance in assembly polls in Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri districts and certain BRS strongholds
- Weak alliances in other states
- Winning majority of Parliament seats could stabilise state govt for the next five years
- Revanth Reddy's leadership could stabilise party. His continuation as CM will brush aside negative image that Congress changes CMs often
- Victories in city and in North and Central Telangana could give it a pan-Telangana appeal
- Chance to establish stronghold & strengthen position of the party in southern India
- Failure to secure expected number of Lok Sabha seats may destabilise state govt
- Detractors of Revanth Reddy may attempt to dethrone him and grab power

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Winning majority of Parliament seats could stabilise state govt for the next five years
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- Victories in city and in North and Central Telangana could give it a pan-Telangana appeal
- Chance to establish stronghold & strengthen position of the party in southern India

### THREATS

- Failure to secure expected number of Lok Sabha seats may destabilise state govt
- Detractors of Revanth Reddy may attempt to dethrone him and grab power

## BJP

### STRENGTHS

- Strong influence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi evident in public rallies
- Track record of past Lok Sabha election performance
- BRS MLC Kavitha's arrest sends a clear message that BJP is not aligned with BRS
- Construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya created positive sentiment
- National perception of Modi's return to power
- Strong resources for contesting against Congress
- Inclusive ticket distribution among all castes strengthens social justice angle
- Established presence in Hyderabad & North Telangana

### WEAKNESSES

- Allocation of seats to recent defectors may cause internal discontent
- Some candidates weaker compared to Congress counterparts
- Absence of strong face & state-level leadership

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Winning majority seats could position BJP strongly for 2028 assembly elections
- Potential to be a key partner, in case of political turmoil in Congress govt
- Telangana leaders in the party can assume central ministerial roles

### THREATS

- Loss could hamper momentum for next five years
- Failure to secure expected seats in state could affect national tally



## SWOT ANALYSIS

## BRS

### STRENGTHS

- Ex-CM K Chandrasekhar Rao remains face of party
- Significant percentage of voting in Hyderabad & parts of state in assembly polls

### WEAKNESSES

- Limited political presence at national level
- Already lost perception battle due to defections to either Congress or BJP
- Decreased morale among cadres and leaders. Yet to recover from assembly poll loss

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Victory could boost cadre & leadership morale

### THREATS

- Existential threat if party sees severe defeat in Lok Sabha elections
- Risk of internal split & defections
- Substantial decrease in voter support benefiting Congress or BJP
- No sway in state & Centre, could see more leaders facing various charges



## ₹38cr cash & drugs seized in 1 week in T

# LS polls: Cong tries to get caste balance right

## Party Poll Panel Likely To Finalise Nominees Today

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**Hyderabad:** Following the announcement of Lok Sabha poll schedule, law enforcement agencies have seized cash, liquor, and drugs, all worth ₹38 crore in a week.

During a surprise raid on March 21 at PSN Medicare Private Limited in Sangareddy, officials from the drugs control administration and prohibition & excise wing discovered the illicit manufacturing and exportation of 3-Methylmethacathinone to European countries.

Additionally, prohibition and excise officials seized 90 kgs of 3-MMC worth ₹9 crore from another location, resulting in the arrest of company director Kasthuri Reddy, manager K Sudhakar Reddy, and incharge G Venkateswarlu, under the NDPS Act.

In a separate operation at Vanamali Organics in Maheswaram, officials seized 11.5 kg of Methylmethacathinone valued at ₹1.1 crore, leading to arrest of manager KV Raja Gopal. Karimnagar cops confiscated an amount of ₹6.6 crore from Prathima multiplex on March 16. **TNN**

## 'BRS shedding crocodile tears'

**Hyderabad:** Excise minister Jupally Krishna Rao and advisor to the state govt, Mohammed Ali Shabbir, on Tuesday charged

BRS of shedding "crocodile tears" over farmers' issue.

The Congress govt has decided to compensate farmers with ₹10,000 per acre, who lost their crops due to untimely rains. "BRS leaders, especially ex-minister T Harish Rao, are enacting a drama of visiting the farmers to check the crop damage," alleged Shabbir Ali.

Minister Jupally said the govt would implement the crop insurance scheme for the farmers from the ensuing rainy season. **TNN**



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## COMMUNITIES IN FOCUS

- Cong focuses on balancing caste equations in state for the remaining eight seats
- Out of 17 seats, 5 are reserved (2 STs, 3 SCs) while rest are for general candidates
- 2 SC seats given to Mala leaders, now Madigas emerge favourites for third SC seat
- Leaders from various communities are considered: Madiga, Mala, BC & Reddy communities
- Intense competition for Khammam seat with candidates from various backgrounds

### YET TO BE ANNOUNCED SEATS

### SEATS

## &lt;h

**RAMZAN TIMINGS**  
Iftar (Wednesday) | 6.35 pm  
Sehri (Thursday) | 4.51 am

## Pastor gets five-yr jail for sexual abuse

**Hyderabad:** The XII additional metropolitan sessions judge for POCSO cases in Nampally, T Anitha, convicted a pastor of sexually abusing a teenage girl, awarded five-year jail sentence and imposed a fine of ₹2,000 on him.

Additional public prosecutor A Ram Reddy said the girl deposed before the court about how she was abused by the convict, T Suresh, 49, in May 2021 and how he tortured her. Police said the girl, during the summer vacation after Inter first year, approached a matrimony centre, where Suresh worked as a manager, for a part-time job. Under guise of teaching her work, he was touching her inappropriately.

She raised an alarm and ran away from the workplace and informed her parents. Later, a case was registered against Suresh under sections 354 and 354(A) of IPC and POCSO Act. He was arrested. The court conducted a trial and found him guilty and sentenced him. TNN

# From June 2, AP must pay rent to stay put in T bldgs

**Hyd To No More Be The Common Capital Of T, AP**

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### SHIFTING OUT

- Telangana was carved into new state on June 2, 2014
- Provision made in AP Reorganisation Act, 2014
- Hyderabab remained common capital for 10 years for both Telangana and AP
- AP continued to use some of buildings in Hyderabad
- Buildings used for administrative and other purposes
- AP will have to vacate buildings under its control
- It will also have to vacate Lake View guesthouse and hand it over to T govt
- Ministers and MLAs from AP come to guesthouse on Raj Bhavan Road for press conferences

langana and AP. Before shifting to AP's new capital of Amaravati, all the offices of AP govt functioned from Hyderabad and even some blocks in the old secretariat were given to AP.

The then AP chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu started shifting all wings and departments to Amaravati in 2016 and completed the exercise in 2017. In June 2019, the AP govt handed over buildings except some. Then governor, who was the common governor for both the states, issued orders and asked the Telangana govt for waiver of property tax on these buildings.

Sources said the AP govt wants to keep CID and Hermitage buildings for administrative purposes and for emergency use, ministers and MLAs from that state come to Lake View guesthouse on Raj Bhavan Road and hold press conferences.

"It's like Andhra Bhavan in Delhi. Whenever, CMs and ministers of the states go to Delhi for any work, they stay there and hold officials meetings, if required. But in case of Hyderabad, almost all top leaders, ministers and MLAs belonging to AP, have their own houses here," a AP official said.

Lake View guesthouse. "Since the assembly elections are being held in neighbouring state, Telangana govt may wait for a month or two before taking any decision," a source said.

As per section 5 of the Reorganisation Act, from the appointed day i.e., June 2, 2014, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) area is common capital of both Te-

**Justice Sujoy Paul sworn in as T HC judge**

**Hyderabad:** Justice Sujoy Paul was on Monday sworn in as a judge of Telangana high court. Chief Justice Alok Adarhe administered the oath to the new judge who came on a transfer from Madhya Pradesh high court.

Later, the CJ sat along with him. He conducted the day's proceedings with Justice Sujoy. TNN

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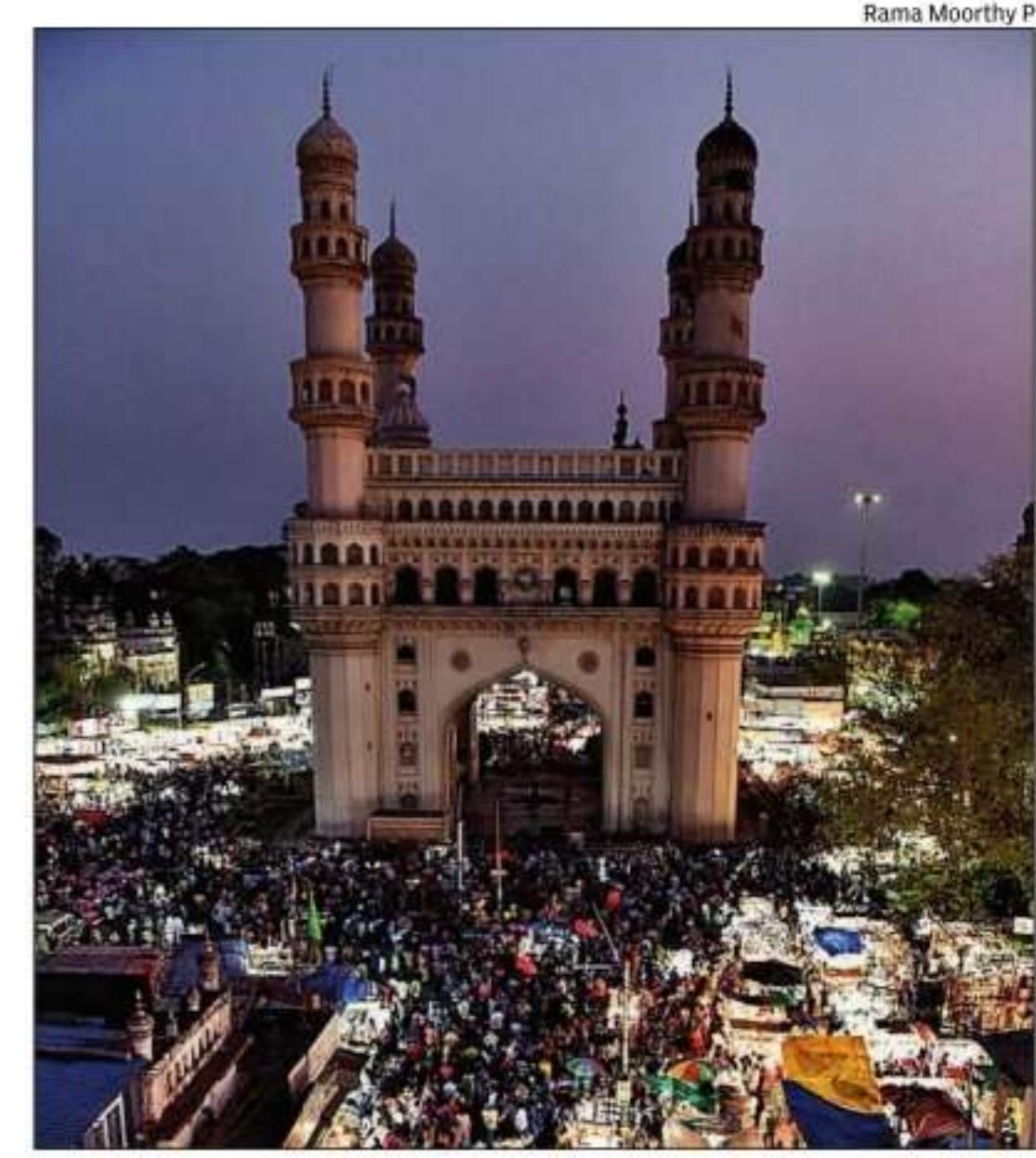
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## Unlit Charminar amid Ramzan leaves tourists disheartened

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**Hyderabad:** The heart of Hyderabad's bustling Old City — the historic Charminar — staying unilluminated during Ramzan, has left Indian and foreign tourists disheartened.

Amid the lively ambiance of Ramzan, which started on March 12, not just the Charminar but other heritage sites like Mecca Masjid and Darulshifa Mosque too remained unlit, dampening the spirits of visitors.

Conveying their disappointment, a couple from Dehradun said how their experience was partly dampened because of this.

"While the Old City teemed with activity, tantalising food aromas, and the bustling Chudi Market, the sight of the unlit Charminar could have been better. It was only covered with iron rods and wooden blocks," said Azam Qureshi, a 29-year-old visitor.

He added, "Despite enjoying our time in the Old City, witnessing the Charminar and other monuments illuminated would have truly made our trip feel complete."

Sheikh Basha, a street vendor near Charminar, highlighted the monument's significance as the city's identity, and said, "This happens every year. They either light it up towards the end or do not illuminate it at all. Visitors keep inquiring but we remain clueless about the re-

ason behind the lights being switched off," Basha added.

Smitha S Kumar, the superintending archaeologist of the Archaeological Survey of India in Hyderabad said that they had not received any prior communication from the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) about the illumination issue.

"However, after discussions, permission was granted to illuminate the monument starting from March 29," she added.

When asked about the recurring issue, GHMC cited maintenance and repair work as the reason behind the Charminar's darkened exterior during Ramzan. This explanation, however, failed to appease tourists, visitors, and even local vendors, who argued that maintenance activities should have been completed much before the start of the holy month of Ramzan and that the charm of the monument should have been highlighted at this time.

**Dayakar Rao Says Doesn't Know Praneeth ■ Calls Intensify For Action Against Accused**

## Ex-min Errabelli denies phone tapping, land grabbing charges

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Former BRS minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Tuesday denied having any links with phone tapping accused and also rejected land grabbing allegations.

Businessman Sharan Chowdhary had alleged that the former minister had detained him, and extorted ₹50 lakh in property issue.

"I don't know who Sharan Chowdhary is. My name is

### Police seek custody of three accused

**Hyderabad:** Panjagutta police probing alleged phone tapping and destruction of tapping devices, approached court seeking custody of arrested accused D Praneeth Rao, N Bhujanga Rao and Tirupathanna, who worked with Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) in the past. Police filed a petition seeking two days custody of Praneeth Rao and five-day custody of the others. They are currently in judicial remand and at Chanchalguda central prison. The court is yet to pronounce orders on custody petitions. TNN

being dragged in this and also phone tapping issue. It is part of a political conspiracy. I am being framed to change the party, which will not happen," Dayakar Rao said on Tuesday.

He claimed Chowdhary

had a criminal record and in the past created fake documents and encroached properties.

He said, "Some are claiming I have links with arrested DSP Praneeth Rao. I don't know him."

### Expedite probe, Cong asks DGP

**Hyderabad:** Congress leaders on Tuesday submitted representations to the director general of police to expedite investigation into the phone tapping case and ensure that all those involved in the case are punished.

Congress MLA from Mahbubnagar Y Srinivas Reddy and TPCC senior vice-president G Niranjan said while the BJP is misusing CBI, income tax department and ED to target the opposition leaders, previous BRS govt allegedly misused Special Intelligence Branch for phone tapping. TNN

### Need judicial inquiry: BJP to state govt

**Hyderabad:** BJP state chief G Kishan Reddy demanded the state govt order a judicial inquiry into phone tapping issue and said action should be taken against those involved in the case, including officials who worked in higher positions during BRS rule.

Kishan Reddy said police officials, with support of political leaders, blackmailed and extorted money from businessmen and others. He recalled when a BJP office staff, coming to office after withdrawing money from bank in 2019, was detained by police, who also raided the office. TNN

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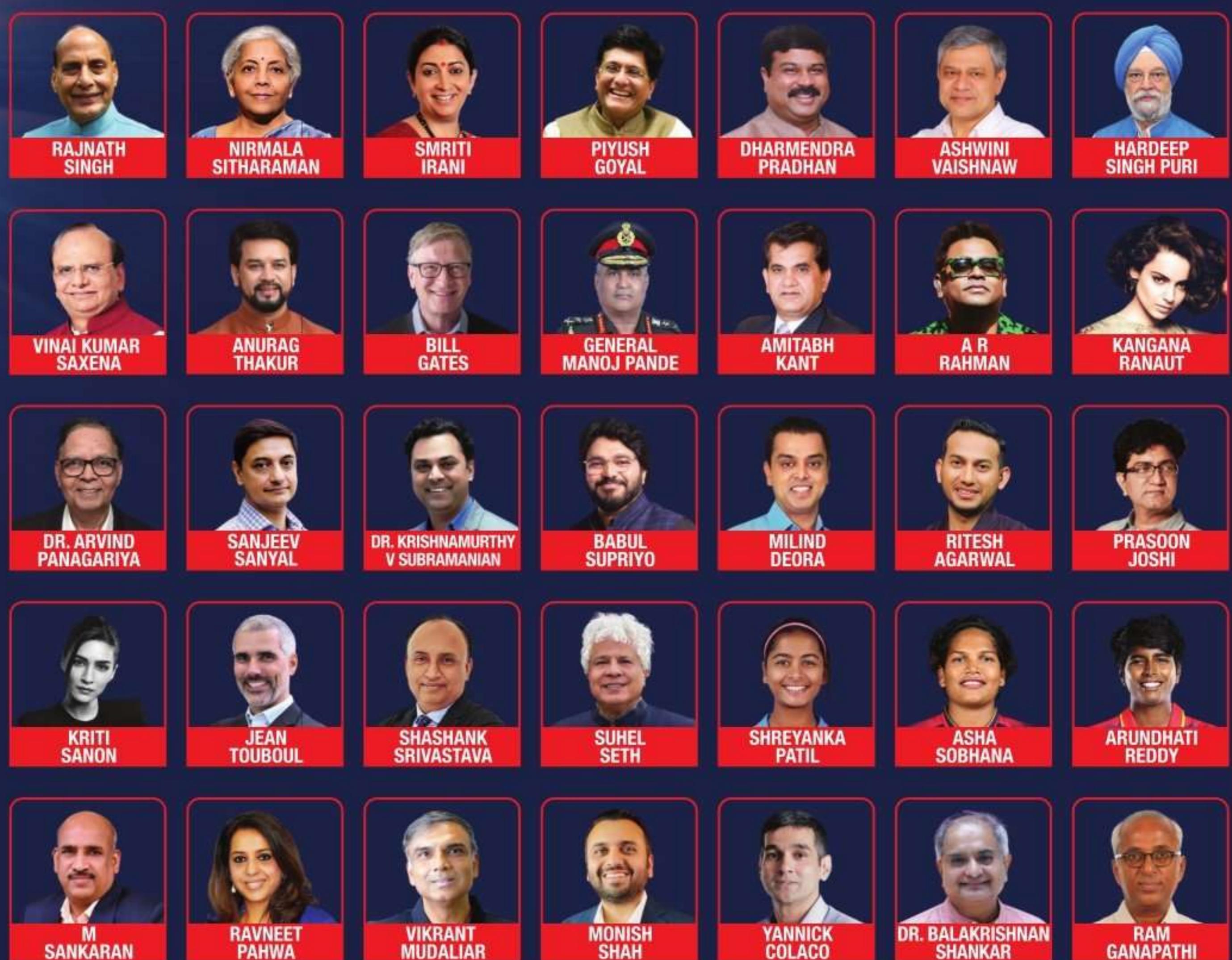
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# INDIA UNSTOPPABLE

## KEY SPEAKERS



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THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024

# CONTROL INFLATION, CREATE JOBS



## Introduce people-centric policies

Political parties should promise clean and corruption-free governance. They should mention in their manifesto that they will bring in and implement people-centric welfare policies. They should not lure citizens with freebies during elections. They should take up developmental projects and ensure the standard of living of all citizens. All parties should ensure that state resources are used for the welfare of society, but not for the benefit of politicians.—Govind Kumar

## Make healthcare affordable

Despite having all the resources needed to become a developed country, we are still a developing country even after 77 years of independence. To change this and become a developed country, we need a well-laid infrastructure. Affordable medical and educational facilities should be provided to all citizens. There is also a need to bring accountability and transparency in the governing system so that the poor do not suffer.—Brig Jagjit Singh Ahuja

## Bring down fuel prices

First and foremost, the political parties should promise to bring down prices of LPG, petrol, and diesel to Rs 500, Rs 75, and Rs 65 respectively. Poor women, who lost their husbands, should be given monthly pensions. School children belonging to BPL families should be provided free and quality education up to class 10. Fees in private schools should be regulated to provide relief to parents. Poor should be provided with 2BHK houses and medical insurance. They should also take stringent action against corrupt officials.—AV Narasimha Rao

## Improve infrastructure

There is a need to bring in social security schemes for all, especially senior citizens. Irrespective of any political affiliation, policies should be pro-India and should have continuity. Free and quality education in the English medium should be provided to all children up to class 12. Politicians should improve infrastructure—roads, electricity, and public transportation. We need to have quality irrigation for agriculture development and food security.—Philip Joshua

## Promote green energy

Political parties should ensure that welfare programmes and development projects are taken up for the benefit of all, but not for a segment of people. The education and healthcare needs of the citizens should be addressed. Further, they should take up projects to boost industrial growth. Industries working in the renewable and green energy sector should be encouraged by providing subsidies and other support. They should also concentrate on industrial growth and employment generation.—Satyanarayana BS

## Protect lakes

Political parties should work towards protecting the environment. The focus should be more on preserving water. There is a need to make rainwater harvesting mandatory. Lakes and trees should be protected. GO 111 should be brought back to save Himayatsagar and Osmansagar lakes. The parties should decongest the city as traffic jams have become a major headache.—Ramana Prasad



YELLAMA CHERUVU

## Strengthen MSME

The MSME sector is the backbone of a robust economy. Micro and Small Industries should be allowed to work with self-certification without any bureaucratic hurdles. This will increase employment and also revenue for both state and central govt. Although single window systems like TS-Ipass of the state govt should be in place in most cases the budding and also existing entrepreneurs have to run from pillar to post to get permissions.—Vimalesh Gupta

## Keep prices in check

Development of the nation and making India atma nirbhar should be the main agenda of political parties. Controlling inflation on essential food commodities, bringing down the fuel prices, including LPG prices, creating more employment opportunities for the youth, and filling up of all govt job vacancies, should be in the manifestos of political parties. The other issues that need to be addressed include affordable housing, healthcare, and education for all and the upliftment of the poor through various schemes. They should desist from announcing freebies.—Parimala G Tadas

**Ahead of Lok Sabha elections, TOI readers say political parties must bring down prices of essential commodities and fuel. Citizens also want affordable housing, healthcare, education and more employment opportunities**

## Provide employment

The foremost thing that needs to be in the manifestos of political parties is job creation. This can only happen by taking up huge infra projects like highways. Another issue that is bothering the country right now is water scarcity. To preserve water, rainwater harvesting pits should be made mandatory for residences having more than 100 sq yds. Gated communities should have big pits for each acre. All senior citizens should be provided with pensions as their savings are dwindling and are not sufficient to meet high inflation. Addressing pollution should also be a priority.—ARR Datta

## Give pension to 60+

Controlling inflation should be in the manifestos of political parties. While the govt provides free ration to the poor, it is those from the middle class who are suffering because of inflation. Another problem that is bothering the middle class is the increasing cost of healthcare and education. Unless the government provides free and quality education to all, our economy will not improve. The same goes with healthcare as well. There is also a need to strengthen public transportation, especially last-mile connectivity, and provide a minimum pension of Rs 20,000 to senior citizens for their survival.—Dr A M Dayal

## Decongest roads

Affordable healthcare should be in the manifestos of all political parties. There is also a need to improve education infrastructure, especially in rural areas. The parties should also improve the public transport system and MMTS service to decongest roads and plant more trees and green areas. There is also a need to focus on skill development and creating job opportunities for the youth.—Nilankan Dey



Pic: Venkata Rao M

## Improve roads, drainage

It is needless to mention freebies are used to attract voters during elections. The main issues bothering voters are bad roads, poor drainage system, and flooding or water logging in the rainy season. These need to be addressed on a priority basis. Education becoming costlier and going out of the reach of the common man should also be dealt with. Voters, on their part, should not get swayed by false promises or freebies and should cast votes for only those who can address their issues and ensure development.—Mangalampalli Satya Mohan Singh

## Provide corruption-free governance

The topmost priority should be to ensure the safety and security of citizens, strengthen defense capabilities, and effectively counter internal and external threats from neighboring countries. Further, providing corruption-free governance, reducing bureaucratic hurdles and commitment to transparency and accountability will generate trust among the citizens. In addition, promoting communal harmony, protecting the rights of minorities, and advancing social justice initiatives to uplift marginalized communities, addressing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion are critical. Apart from the above, reforms should be brought in to improve farmers' income.—Srinivasa Jakkam



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# Learnt to be independent

By Pooja Sinha

When I arrived in Hyderabad a year ago, I knew nothing about the city. I was not familiar with Hyderabad despite my brother living here for a few years.

I was a simple girl living in her shell with lots of wishes and dreams to fulfil. This city helped me realize some of those dreams. It has truly taught me how to live independently and fully. To explore new streets and enjoy coffee alone. I discovered more about myself and the true meaning of happiness here.

I explored most of Hyderabad, especially the Statue of Equality with its holistic vibes and enchanting aura around the temples that made me feel more connected to God.

The tranquil paths, fresh air; and colorful city lights around Hussain Sagar Lake brought peace to my soul with every wave.

During the rainy season, the gentle breeze tousling my hair and the warm embrace of the city taught me that letting go little by little can work wonders. Tall buildings with vibrant colors in Hitech City, the bustling atmosphere near Charminar, and the streets filled with racing cars and people gathering around street food have filled me with excitement and curiosity.

I will always cherish the memories of sunrise, sunset, delectable cuisine, and the fragrances of nature. The people here have made me feel truly at home.

(The writer is a data analyst)

### READER'S CORNER

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**Dear readers,**  
Is there a new interest — art, gardening, travel, poetry, and cooking among others, that you picked up recently? Then share your story with us at [toi.timesconnect@gmail.com](mailto:toi.timesconnect@gmail.com)



# No end to digging up roads, commuters upset in Anandbagh



The HWSSB and GHMC are struggling to control unauthorized digging and road cutting. Unplanned road excavations by both government and private entities to install pipelines or cables are causing inconvenience to residents. Affected areas include Anandbagh main roads and Urjitha apartment lane. Private parties have conducted road excavations and left without repairing, forcing residents to protest.—Anandbagh Residents Association

There are potholes at multiple places in Vinayak Nagar Colony, Shaikpet. The residents have been demanding the local admin to address the issue since September 2023 but to no avail. We also filed 2 Prajavani applications for the same. According to news reports, the chief minister had instructed zonal commissioners to visit the colony to assess the situation, but no one came to visit. In the latest plea, the poll code was cited as a reason for delay in solving the problem. The residents request the authorities concerned to fill the potholes which is a basic maintenance issue.—Maryala Ajay Kumar



POTHOLE NOT REPAIRED



PARKING ISSUE

Gandhi Nagar has emerged as a centre for study circles due to which many houses have been converted into hostels and a significant number of roadside eateries have opened. Vehicles belonging to individuals visiting the subregistrar's office located in the vicinity or dining at the nearby eateries are consistently parked on both sides of the road making it difficult for commuters to navigate through. Authorities concerned are urged to address the challenges experienced by the residents in this locality.—NB Bhagawati



DANGER TO COMMUTERS

There are several damaged manholes behind the Mahatma Gandhi statue at Jeedimetla village is causing inconvenience to commuters. The manholes pose a clear danger to pedestrians and motorists alike. GHMC and the authorities concerned are requested to fix the issue immediately.—Gunnala Srinivas

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, tell us the top 5 issues that should be given priority by political parties in their manifesto.

**Send in your views and suggestions to us at:**

**toi.timesconnect@gmail.com**

or scan the QR code. Last date for entries: April 2

## Repeat offender held for wine shop break-in

**Hyderabad:** A 41-year-old repeat offender, P Ravi, has been arrested for allegedly looting a wine shop in Turkapally, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. Ravi, who was released recently from Nalgonda district jail for a previous theft, committed the crime a few hours after his release.

Ravi and his three accomplices — B Hareesh Kumar, 28, S Naveen Kumar, 29, and C Narsimulu, 25 — were caught by Turkapally police on Tuesday.

Deputy commissioner of police (DCP), Bhongir, M Rajesh Chandra said Narsimulu, Ravi's nephew, was a first-time offender, who provided assistance to the group.

He said the group was apprehended following a lead from CCTV footage during a vehicle check at Turkapally on Monday night.

Cops seized ₹2.04 lakh cash and two bikes from the culprits, who have now been sent in judicial remand. TNN

## Convey stand on CBI probe in a week: HC

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana high court on Tuesday gave one more week to the state to convey its stand on two PILs seeking a CBI probe into the alleged IMG Bharata land irregularities.

The case relates to the decision of then TDP govt of united AP headed by CM N Chandrababu Naidu in 2004 to allot 850 acres of prime land and several stadiums in Hyderabad to a newly floated entity called IMG Bharatha for developing sports facilities. But this was cancelled in 2006 by the Congress government. TNN

## CJI to lay foundation stone of new HC bldg

**Hyderabad:** The work on the new building for Telangana high court at Rajendranagar will begin from Wednesday. Chief Justice India DY Chandrachud will lay the foundation stone in the presence of HC judges and several dignitaries from the state govt at 5.30 pm. TNN

# Excise case: Kavitha sent to Tihar jail on 14-day remand

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**Hyderabad:** BRS MLC K Kavitha was shifted to Tihar jail after a Delhi court on Tuesday sent her to 14-day judicial custody till April 9 in the alleged Delhi liquor policy scam case. Kavitha was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Hyderabad on March 15 in connection with the excise policy-linked money laundering case. "She will be lodged in jail No. 6, which is women's jail. A medical examination will be conducted on her," an official said.

Kavitha was presented before special judge Kaveri Bawej at the Rouse Avenue court. The ED did not seek further custody, stating that they no longer required her custodial interrogation. Kavitha's lawyer Nitesh Rane sought interim bail, citing her son's upcoming exams. The court has scheduled the hearing of her bail plea for April 1.

The court had initially sent Kavitha to ED custody until March 23, which was then extended by three more days. The ED argued for judi-

### I'LL COME OUT CLEAN: KAVITHA

- Kavitha sent to 14-day judicial custody till April 9 in alleged Delhi excise policy scam case
- ED does not seek further custody of the BRS MLC
- Agency says they no longer required custodial interrogation of Kavitha
- Court scheduled to hear her bail plea on April 1
- Kavitha claims ignorance about business dealings of her nephew Meka Sri Sharman when questioned by Enforcement Directorate
- Calls case against her fabricated & false

### Kavitha's phone tampered with: ED

A report from the Directorate of Forensic Science (dated May 17, 2023) indicated mobile data tampering during the investigation. The ED is currently analysing data extracted from Kavitha's mobile phone.

The ED, in its request for judicial custody, alleged that Kavitha engaged in paying kickbacks to govt officials for benefits in the excise policy 2021-22. The agency also accused Kavitha of transferring ₹100 crore to AAP leaders through her staff and associates. TNN

cial custody on the grounds that Kavitha could influence witnesses or tamper with evidence, potentially hampering the ongoing investigation.

During questioning, Kavitha said she was unaware of the business dealings of her nephew Meka Sri Sharman when asked by ED.

Outside the court, Kavitha told the media, "This is a political laundering case. One accused has already joined BJP and another is getting a BJP ticket, and a third accused has donated ₹50 crore to BJP through electoral bonds."

Speaking at the party workers meeting in Sangareddy, Harish Rao alleged that the BRS leader K Kavitha would have not been arrested in the Enforcement Directorate false case had the BRS agreed for alliance with the saffron party in the upcoming LS polls.

Meanwhile, BJR state chief Kishan Reddy dismissed the allegations that Kavitha was implicated in the Delhi excise case due to political vendetta. He said ED has sufficient evidence of Kavitha's involvement. TNN

## BJP framing Oppn leaders, says Harish

**Hyderabad:** BRS leader & former minister T Harish Rao said that the BJP govt at Centre was framing opposition parties' leaders across the country by booking cases through central investigating agencies.

According to police, based on a tip-off, a team caught the two persons under suspicious circumstances near Panjagutta Metro station. Police seized 10 Ecstasy pills, five grams of MDMA and 100 grams of ganja from Saeed and seized 10 Ecstasy pills, 15 grams of ganja, OCB paper used for wrapping ganja and a laptop from Kalyani. They were caught on Saturday night and sent in judicial re-

# Palestine nat'l among two held with MDMA, Ecstasy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Saudi Arabiaborn Palestine national, Saeed Ali Mohammad Al Kafri, 38, and his Goa-based associate, Romi Bharat Kalyani, 40, have been arrested and a huge quantity of different drugs — MDMA, Ecstasy pills and ganja — were recovered from their possession by the Panjagutta police recently.

Though Al Kafri and Kalyani were caught red-handed with the drugs at Panjagutta on Saturday and remanded in judicial custody on Sunday, the incident came to light on Tuesday.

According to police, based on a tip-off, a team caught the two persons under suspicious circumstances near Panjagutta Metro station. Police seized 10 Ecstasy pills, five grams of MDMA and 100 grams of ganja from Saeed and seized 10 Ecstasy pills, 15 grams of ganja, OCB paper used for wrapping ganja and a laptop from Kalyani. They were caught on Saturday night and sent in judicial re-

mand on Sunday," Panjagutta police said.

Al Kafri, who came to the city on a student visa in 2009, has been found to be overstaying after the expiry of his visa and got into the drug trade. He operated one of the major drug networks in the city and supplied the contraband to a large number of peddlers here, Panjagutta police said.

Police said Al Kafri was born in Saudi Arabia, but obtained a Palestine refugee document in Syria. In 2009,

he along with his elder brother S Shobhan came to the city on a student visa.

### CAME TO INDIA AS STUDENT

- Saudi-born Palestinian national Saeed Ali Mohammad Al Kafri came to India on student visa
- Al Kafri overstayed after visa expired in 2017 & obtained Aadhaar card in 2018
- He started consuming drugs in 2018 & later took to peddling
- He got into drug trade & went on to operate one of the major drug networks in city
- Al Kafri used WhatsApp for communications & UPI platforms for payments
- He procured drugs from Indian peddlers in Goa, Mumbai & Delhi, & from Nigerians in Bengaluru

After his visa expired in 2017, they got an extension. Further, Saeed obtained an Aadhaar card in 2018 and a PAN card subsequently. He started consuming drugs in 2018 and took to peddling gradually.

Police said he procured drugs from Nigerians, residing in Bengaluru, and also from Indian peddlers in Goa, Mumbai and Delhi.

## Pharma and infra magnates dominate 2024 Hurun rich list from Telugu states

From P1

### MORE BILLIONAIRES IN PHARMA

Name	Company	\$ Billion
PV Ramprasad Reddy	Aurobindo Pharma	3
G Amarendra Reddy	GAR	2
K Satish Reddy	Dr Reddy's Labs	2
M Satyanarayana Reddy	MSN Labs	2
Venkateswarlu Jasti	Suven Pharma	2
GV Prasad	Dr Reddy's Labs	1

ces, Amarendra Reddy moved up 32 places following a 6% increase in fortunes.

Meanwhile Suven Pharmaceuticals' Venkateswarlu Jasti & family, who sold 50.1% stake in the company to global PE giant Advent International last year for ₹6,313 crore, raced up 736 places to hit the 2,038th spot globally with \$ 2 billion along with MSN Labs' M Satyanarayana Red-

dy & family.

While Jasti shored up his wealth by 55%, Satyanarayana Reddy fell 354 places after his wealth eroded by 15%. Both of them shared the seventh spot for the two Telugu states too.

Dr Reddy's Labs co-chairman GV Prasad & family, with a wealth of \$1 billion after growing his fortunes 27%, hit 2,418th spot globally after

ascending 356 places and ranks eighth in Telangana.

He is followed by Ramky Group founder Alla Ayodhya Rami Reddy, who was also ranked India's second-richest MP in August 2023, at ninth spot in the Telugu states and 2,750th rank globally after he rose 173 places thanks to a 20% rise in his wealth.

Incidentally, Ramky Group also features on the list of electoral bond donors along with some group companies like Chennai Green Woods (₹105 crore).

The five newly-minted dollar billionaires from the city include Deccan Fine Chemicals promoter GS Raju & family, realty and construction major Aparna Constructors & Estates promoters C Venkateswara Reddy and S Subramanyam Reddy.

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WT.5694.2024

# International Education Fair

## CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

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**D**riven by a desire for global exposure and competitiveness in an increasingly interconnected world, students and education enthusiasts congregated at the Taj Deccan, Banjara Hills, for the World Education Fair 2024 on Saturday. The event, which aimed at providing insights and opportunities for students aspiring to pursue higher education abroad, garnered substantial attention from aspirants and parents alike. The fair was hosted by Orient Spectra, with The Times of India as its media partner.

### THE GLOBAL ADVANTAGE

Reflecting on the significance of the fair, N Srinivas Goud, managing director of Orient Spectra, remarked, "The fair isn't just about information gathering, it's also a chance for students to understand the unique offerings of each country and university. Whether students are interested in stay-back options, internships, or specific fields of study like engineering, science, management, data science, or artificial intelligence, they'll find tailored information to suit their interests and career goals."

He also added, "Students can gain insights on associated costs and living expenses. Moreover, we've got different banks to facilitate education loans, including non-collateral options, which are particularly beneficial for Indian students seeking international education. With support from various government scholarships and schemes, students can access funds to pursue their academic goals across different disciplines."

In addition to the exhibition stalls, the fair also witnessed country-specific seminars led by experts such as Campus France and representatives from Germany. These seminars delved deep-



## Unveiling prospects for global learning

With over 50 representatives from various countries, the World Education Fair aimed at offering a unique opportunity for students to learn about emerging programmes, and discover new educational opportunities

er into job opportunities, educational advantages, and the unique features of studying in these countries.

Some of the institutions that participated in the event were Heriot-Watt University, Elmhurst University, Rowan University, University of Bridgeport, Texas State University, Saint Peter's University, University of West London, University of Hertfordshire, and Northumbria University, among others.

### SEEKING INFORMED COUNSEL

Maneesha C Balaji, India Country Manager, Elmhurst University, emphasized the allure of Chicago and how it amplifies the appeal of studying at Elmhurst, with abundant job prospects complementing a cutting-edge curriculum, robust infrastructure, and ample research opportunities. She highlighted

ed, "Despite its longstanding presence, Elmhurst University remained relatively unknown to international students until recently, having opened its doors to them only two years ago. Presently, the university is open to five diverse graduate programmes, including STEM offerings such as Masters in Computer Information Technology, Masters in Industrial and Urbanization Psychology, and Supply Chain Management, alongside non-STEM options like Masters in Project Management and MBA. Admission criteria are accommodating, requiring a minimum GPA of 6.5 with a 4-year bachelor's degree and straightforward English language proficiency."

Vishal Sagar Muthyalu, country manager at the University of Bridgeport, emphasized on the university's strong empha-

sis on STEM disciplines. "Our core focus lies in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Research is at the heart of our institution, driving its commitment to academic innovation. Among a few standout programmes is the Department of Computer Science, offering advanced studies in MS and artificial intelligence. And then there is an interdisciplinary science between electronics and computers, which is titled Computer Engineering. These programmes represent the pinnacle of our offerings."

Additionally, the University of Bridgeport also boasts a cutting-edge MS programme in biomedical engineering, alongside traditional tracks in mechanical and electrical engineering. Responding to industry demand, the university has introduced specialised

programmes in business analytics and data analytics, as well as a technology management programme. These STEM-centric offerings cater to the evolving needs of today's job market.

"However, our university isn't solely focused on STEM. We recognise the importance of diverse academic pursuits, offering programmes such as an MS in criminal justice and various psychology programmes," Vishal informed.

Swapna Parasa, partnership manager, South India, Quacquarelli Symonds (QoS), divulged, "We offer various programmes in computer science across esteemed institutions like Temple University, Philadelphia, which ranks among the top hundred universities. Drexel University's renowned machine learning programme is highly sought after by students interested in engi-

neering disciplines. St. Peter's University in New Jersey offers programmes in data science, business analytics, and data analytics, catering to diverse student interests."

### THE ADDED LEVERAGE

Vishal shared, "Regarding scholarships, we adopt a merit-based approach, offering financial assistance to students with a strong academic record, typically those achieving above 70 per cent. Our scholarship evaluation team ensures fairness in the distribution of grants, which are typically spread over the first two semesters."

Swapna resonated, "Regarding scholarships, our incentives are tailored to each institution. For instance, St. Peter's University evaluates scholarships on a case-by-case basis, potentially granting up to \$6,000."

### ASPIRANTS SPEAK

Roopal Mittal, the parent of Veeha Mittal, who passed class 10, divulged that his girl has recently completed her 10th grade, and she still has two years ahead to explore her options and strategically plan her career path. "Today, we're attending a session titled 'Why France,' which will provide insights into the opportunities the country presents. Following that, we'll also consider other potential avenues," he shared.

Latit Gupta of grade 11, Harvest Public School, Khammam too, resonated, "I'm currently in the eleventh grade, and I'm considering starting my college application process a bit earlier. Therefore, I'm exploring various stalls to learn about the opportunities available. Physics is my main interest, as I aim to pursue a bachelor's degree in the subject. Additionally, I have a keen interest in psychology. So far, I've visited four stalls, and I've found some valuable insights from the discussions."



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# Indosol to start production at ₹25,000 cr solar module plant

## Gets Nod For 10 GW Project In AP's Nellore

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**Hyderabad:** Indosol Solar Private Limited, a special purpose vehicle set up by transformer manufacturer Shirdi Sai Electricals Limited (SSEL), is all set to commence production of its fully automated, integrated solar module manufacturing facility in Andhra Pradesh.

Indosol Solar, which has bagged approval from the Centre for its 10,000 MW, Rs25,000 crore solar module manufacturing project under two tranches of the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for high efficiency solar PV modules, is starting

## PROJECT TO CREATE 23K JOBS

- Indosol to establish solar module production at ₹25KCr
- Project to come up under 2 tranches of production-linked incentive scheme
- 1st production line, with 500MW solar module capacity, to begin from March 31, 2024
- 2nd phase of 5GW to come up by 2026 end at ₹10KCr cost



- 20 lines of 500MW each will be set up as part of 10GW project
- Project expected to create 23,000 direct & indirect jobs in AP

off with one production line with a capacity to manufacture 500 MW of solar PV modules from March 31, 2024.

The Phase I facility with a 500MW capacity has come up over a 30-acre parcel of land at Ramayapatnam of Nellore district that was allocated in January 2024, the company said. SSEL Group CEO Sharat Chandra Kolla

said the fully automated module line is first of its kind in India as it is capable of making PERC (passivated emitter rear cell), TOPCon (tunnel oxide passivated contact), HJT (heterojunction technology) modules with glass-glass and back sheet combinations.

He said phase-I of the project, comprising around 5GW, will come up at an investment of Rs15,000 crore by the end of 2025, while the second phase of 5GW will come up by 2026 end at a cost of Rs 10,000 crore. The project is expected to create about 23,000 direct and indirect jobs in AP.

Kolla said a total of 20 lines of 500MW each will be set up as part of the 10GW project, which will require a total of 8,000 acres, including 5,000 acres for manufacturing facilities for the modules, cells, wafers, polysilicon and ingots, and another 3,000 acres for ancillaries desalination plants, reservoirs and township. The facility will also manufacture around 1,200 tonnes per day of glass panels and 30,000 tonnes per annum of polysilicon. While the first phase is being targeted for completion by 2025 end, the second phase is expected to become operational by 2026 end, he said.

## Mercury levels hit 42°C mark across T'gana

**Hyderabad:** For the first time this season, temperatures have surpassed 42° Celsius in Telangana on Wednesday, according to the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS). Talamadugu and Jaintia in Adilabad recorded the highest temperature hitting 42.3° Celsius.

The situation was similar across the state as 22 of 33 districts reported temperatures exceeding 40° Celsius, including Nalgonda and Suryapet.

Despite this, Hyderabad saw a slightly lower temperature of 39.8° Celsius at Vijaynagar Colony in Masab Tank.

The IMD predicts that these high temperatures will persist, maintaining an orange alert for several districts until March 30, including Adilabad, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Mancherial, and Asifabad. Later in the week, Nalgonda, Suryapet, and Mahabubabad will also join the list under the orange alert. TNN

## 120 bldgs sealed over property tax arrears

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

### 4 LAKH YET TO PAY ₹3.5K CR ARREARS



- Commercial properties sealed as arrears pending for 2-3 years
- Notices being served on residential buildings
- GHMC can issue warrant notices to attach property to recover dues

**Hyderabad:** Intensifying its efforts to ramp up property tax collection before the end of the 2023-24 fiscal, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has seized (sealed) as many as 120 commercial properties in the city for not clearing pending arrears. The civic body has so far collected property tax of ₹1,550 crore against the target of ₹2,100 crore.

According to GHMC officials, the commercial properties have been sealed after the building owners failed to pay pending arrears in the last two to three years.

Searches were conducted on the premises of Capricorn Shipping along with its directors Vijay Kumar Shukla and Sanjay Goswami, and associated entities including Laxmiton Maritime, Hindustan International, Rajnandini Metals, Stawart Alloys, Bhagyanagar Limited, Vinayak Steels, Vashishta Constructions, and their directors/partners Sandeep Garg, Vinod Kedia and others, the ED said in a statement. Bha-gyanagar Ltd, Vinayak Steels and Vashishtha are Hyderabad-based companies. TNN

Notices were being served on taxpayers of residential buildings. As many as four lakh taxpayers in the city were yet to clear ₹3,500 crore arrears, leaving the civic body in dismay and reeling under severe financial crunch.

"We have also issued 600 distress warrants under Section 269 of the GHMC

Act as many owners were not coming forward to pay property taxes despite waiver on interest on arrears and current tax. Majority of the properties were sealed in Hayathnagar, Goshama-hal and Kukatpally circles," a GHMC official said.

If GHMC issues distress warrant notices, it could attach the property and recover the dues.

## Anti-trafficking workshop held

**Hyderabad:** Railway Protection Force (RPF), in collaboration with Government Railway Police (GRP) and an NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) organised a workshop on anti-human trafficking on Tuesday to enhance collective efforts in combating it. Senior divisional security commissioner Secunderabad Debadmitra C Banerjee said RPF has implemented many measures to curb trafficking, including deployment of anti-human trafficking units at railway stations. TNN

## 2,800 police personnel & 360 CCTVs for IPL matches in Hyd

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



**Hyderabad:** Rachakonda police will deploy 2,800 personnel, drawing from all wings of the police department, in connection with IPL-2024 matches to be hosted at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal. Two teams of Octopus, an elite counter terrorism unit of Telangana police, will be on standby at the stadium. The matches will be held between March 27 and May 19.

Rachakonda police commissioner Tarun Joshi reviewed the security arrangements at the stadium on Tuesday. For safety and security of players and spectators, elaborate bandobast arrangements were being made in coordination with different wings, like the security wing, traffic, law & order, Special Police, Armed Reserve, Octopus, Mounted Police, Special Branch and Special Operations Team, he added.

"In and around the stadium, 360 CCTV cameras are being installed, including at vehicle

check points, parking places, en route and parking areas. A joint command & control room is being established at the stadium to monitor all the CCTV footage in real time," he added.

Anti-sabotage checks with the help of bomb disposal teams will continue until the match is completed. Scanners at the stadium will allow police and security personnel to detect prohibited material.

Police said spectators will

## Panel to focus on stray dog menace

**Hyderabad:** GHMC commissioner Ronald Rose has stressed on the need to focus on sterilization of stray dogs.

He emphasized the need for public vigilance to avoid dog bites and suggested preventive actions. Rose said a core committee will work with voluntary organisations to propose solutions to the govt for implementation so as to address the menace of stray dogs. TNN

## Jeedimetla police arrest three thieves, recover 17 stolen bikes

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Police on Tuesday caught a thief and two of his associates. Seventeen stolen bikes were recovered from them. The trio had sold the bikes to a mechanic in Kamareddy.

Main accused Gogula Devashayam, a stone cutter, was caught after cops chanced upon a CCTV footage while investiga-

ting a theft in Jeedimetla. Based on his confession, cops caught his aides Reddy Ramesh and Manne Raju. The absconding mechanic was identified as Kalal Shiva Kumar Goud.

After stealing bikes, Devashayam would drive to Lingampet in Kamareddy district, to hand it over to Goud for disposal, said ACP (Balanagar) G Hanumantha Rao.

## ASI suspended over extra-marital affair

**Hyderabad:** V Ramaiah, an assistant sub-inspector at Ibrahimpatnam police station in Jagtial, was suspended after he was found to be involved in extra-marital affair with a woman.

A few months ago, the woman had approached cops to complain against her husband of harassing her. ASI Ramaiah befriended her in the pretext of helping her with the case. He slowly developed physical relationship with her. His acts came to light after their pictures went viral on social media, said police. TNN

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spouse of KOSGI SHAROFF

ANANDA RAO resident of 203

Ayyanna Pearl, Kakatiya Hills

Madhapur, Hyderabad

Telangana 500081, have

changed my name from K S

SAROJA ANAND to KOSGI

SHAROFF SAROJA ANAND

vide affidavit dated

22 March 2024, at

Hyderabad.

I, K. V. Moulihithika R/o 18-2-

264/14, Sri Nilayam, Abbaena

Colony Road No-2, Tirupathi,

Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh have

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Naga Sal Hiranyakda to Kappala

Venkata Naga Sal Hiranyakda.

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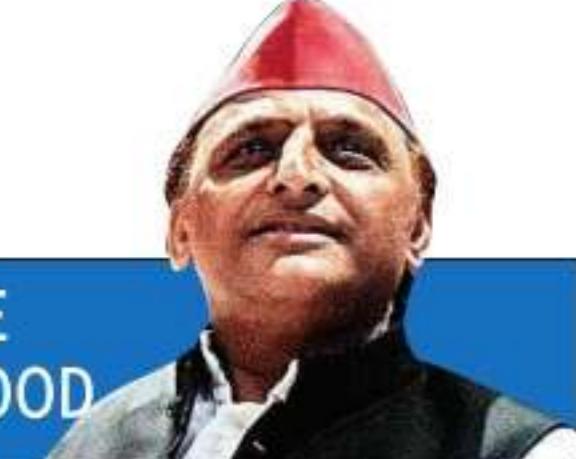
Gandipet Junction, Mandal

Narsingi, Gandipet,



TMC CHIEF MAMATA BANERJEE TO START CAMPAIGNING FOR LS POLLS ON MAR 31 WITH RALLY IN KRISHNANAGAR

SP CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV SLAMS BJP GOVT OVER CLIMATE ACTIVIST SONAM WANGCHUK'S FAST FOR LADAKH STATEHOOD



## India backs Philippines amid muscle-flexing by China in SCS

EAM Underlines Significance Of UNCLOS 1982

Sachin.Parashar  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Amid increasing China-Philippines tensions in South China Sea (SCS), foreign minister S Jaishankar Tuesday backed the southeast Asian country's efforts to uphold its sovereignty after a meeting with his counterpart Enrique Manalo in Manila.

The meeting took place a day after the Philippines summoned the Chinese ambassador and lodged a protest against China's "aggressive actions" in the SCS, nearly 90% of which is claimed by Beijing. Last week, US also condemned China's "dangerous" actions against what it called lawful Philippine maritime operations.

Calling for strict adherence to a rules-based order, Jaishankar reiterated "firmly India's support to the Philippines for upholding its national sovereignty". The minister underlined the significance of UNCLOS (United



External affairs minister S Jaishankar and Philippines secretary of foreign affairs Enrique Manalo in Manila, Philippines, on Tuesday

Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) 1982 as the constitution of the seas, calling upon all parties to adhere to it, both in letter and in spirit.

However, unlike after their last meeting in India in June 2023, the ministers stopped short of asking China specifically to abide by a 2016 legally binding ruling that strongly refuted China's expansive claims in its dispute with the Philippines. India had then joined Manila for the first time, as stated in a joint statement, in categorically asking China to abide by the 2016 Arbitral Award on the SCS that Beijing continues to ignore.

The UNCLOS arbitration tribunal had called Beijing's

nine-dash line, which claims sovereignty over 90% of SCS water, and its reclamation activities in the Philippine waters unlawful.

Jaishankar said in a nation deeply invested in that region because of its Act East policy and Indo-Pacific vision, India follows all developments. "We are strongly supportive of ASEAN's centrality, cohesion and unity. We are also convinced that the progress and prosperity of this region is best served by staunch adherence to a rules-based order," said the minister. Jaishankar also briefed Manalo about the Indian Navy's deployments in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea.

### Third party not in a position to interfere: China

Beijing: China on Tuesday urged India to respect its sovereignty claims over South China Sea saying that no "third party" will be in a position to interfere in maritime disputes between the two countries.

"Maritime disputes are issues between the countries concerned and any third party is not in a position to interfere," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. "We urge relevant side to face facts of issues of South China Sea, respect the sovereignty and maritime interests of China and the efforts made by the countries in upholding peace and stability in the South China Sea," he added.

Jian was replying to a question at a media briefing on the remarks made by external affairs minister S Jaishankar that India supports the sovereignty of Philippines.

China claims most of the South China Sea as its own, while Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims. PTI

## 3rd strategic Ladakh road almost ready

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has now established 'connectivity' on the 298-km Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road in Ladakh, which will be the third axis to the strategically-important region after Manali-Leh and Srinagar-Leh.

"When Zanskar river was frozen in Jan, we used this to our advantage. We moved equipment and personnel along the river to establish additional attack points. This enhanced the progress of work," BRO chief Lt-General Raghu Srinivasan said on Tuesday.

"We have now established connectivity on this vital axis. Soon, we will start work on blacktopping the road. With construction of Shinkun La tunnel also commencing, the third all-weather axis to Ladakh will be established," he added.

The PM-led cabinet committee on security in Feb last year had approved construction of the Rs 1,681 crore twin-tube 4.1-km tunnel under the forbidding Shinkun La (la means pass), at an altitude of 16,558 feet, on the border between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh for 'alternative' all-weather connectivity to Ladakh. The tunnel is likely to be



The 298-km road will connect Manali to Leh through Darcha and Nimmu on Kargil-Leh highway

constructed in another two years or so.

The 298-km road will connect Manali to Leh through Darcha and Nimmu on Kargil-Leh highway. "The Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road derives its strategic importance from the fact that it is not only shorter vis-a-vis the other two axes, but also crosses only one pass, Shinkun La," an officer said.

"Once the tunnel comes up, this axis will have all-weather connectivity as well. The provision of connectivity along this third axis to Ladakh will give a quantum boost to our defence preparedness along the northern borders (with China)," he added.

Intrepid BRO personnel had been tirelessly cutting through the vertical rock face connecting the final stretch of Niraq gorge in sub-zero temperatures, with teams engaged in work on both sides.

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## CUET-UG registration deadline March 31 now

New Delhi: The deadline for submitting CUET-UG applications has been extended to 9.50pm, March 31, from March 26. The exam is scheduled to be conducted from May 15 to 31, 2024. "The deadline has been extended based on the requests received from candidates and other stakeholders," said UGC chairperson M Jagadesh Kumar. The competitive exam will be conducted in 13 languages — English, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. TNN

## Rajiv convicts to be deported to Lanka: TN to HC

Sureshkumar.K  
@timesgroup.com



Murugan (top), Robert Payas, and Jayakumar will be deported to Sri Lanka within a week or once deportation orders are issued

to the petitioner itself is a valid document, "based on which he can get the deportation order from FRRO, Chennai, and thereafter can travel back to his home country".

The latest round of litigation initiated by Murugan pertains to his bid to seek asylum in the United Kingdom and to reunite with his daughter Mehera, who is a UK citizen and has completed her medical physics degree there.

Ever since SC set them free in 2022, the four freed convicts were taken to a special campus in Tiruchi prison as they are Lankan nationals. After the death of Santhan on Feb 28, Murugan moved HC for travel documents from Sri Lankan deputy high commission in Chennai.

However, recording the submissions, the bench said: "At this stage, the question of issuing any separate identity card as sought for in this writ petition does not arise. We feel that no order is required to be passed in this writ petition as per the prayer sought for herein to give a direction to the authorities to issue an identity card to the petitioner."

Disposing of Murugan's petition, the HC bench said the travel document issued by Sri Lankan high commission

in response to a plea moved by Murugan seeking direction to the authorities of foreigners' camp at Trichy to issue him a photo identity certificate.

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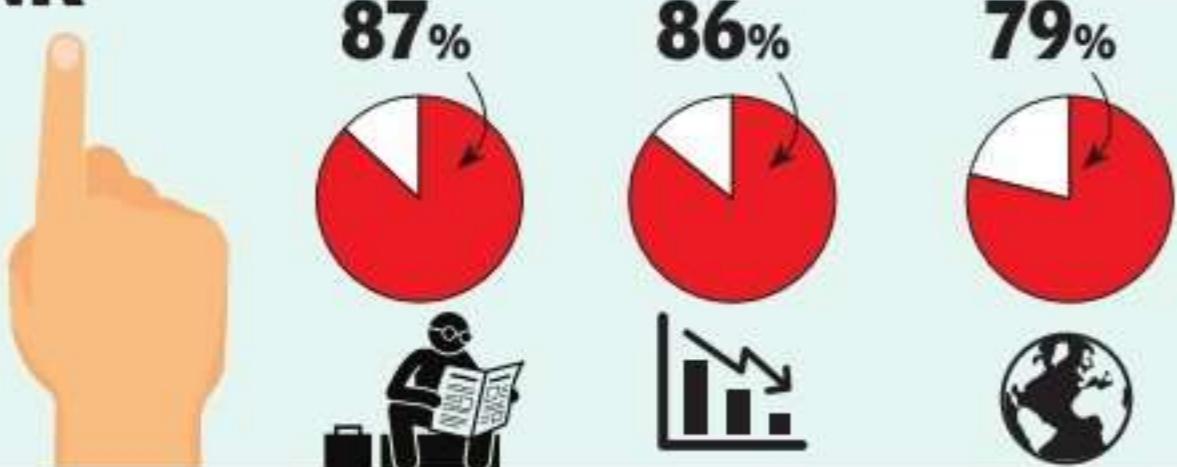
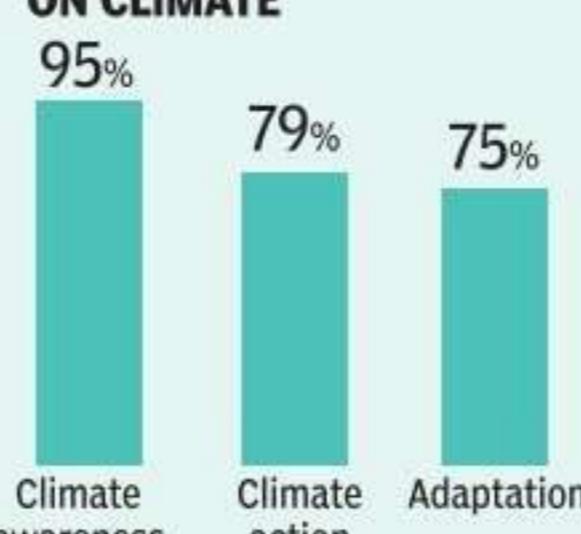
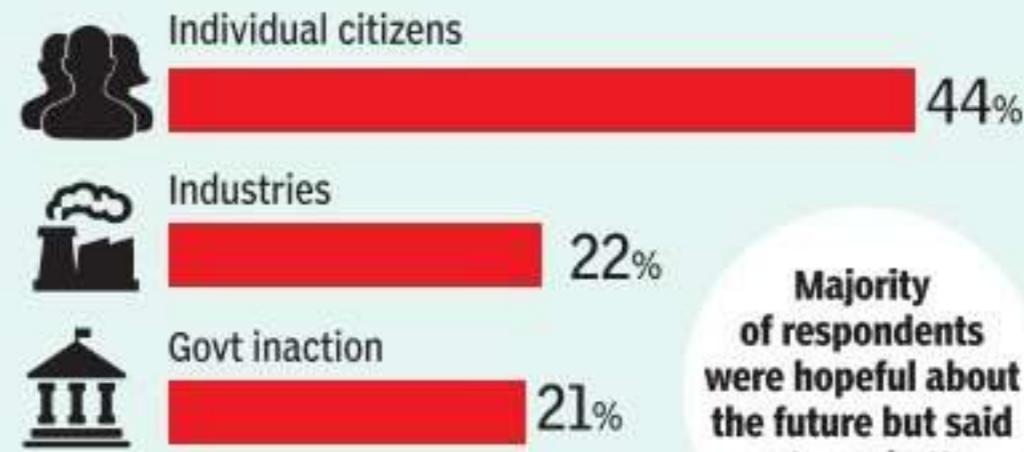
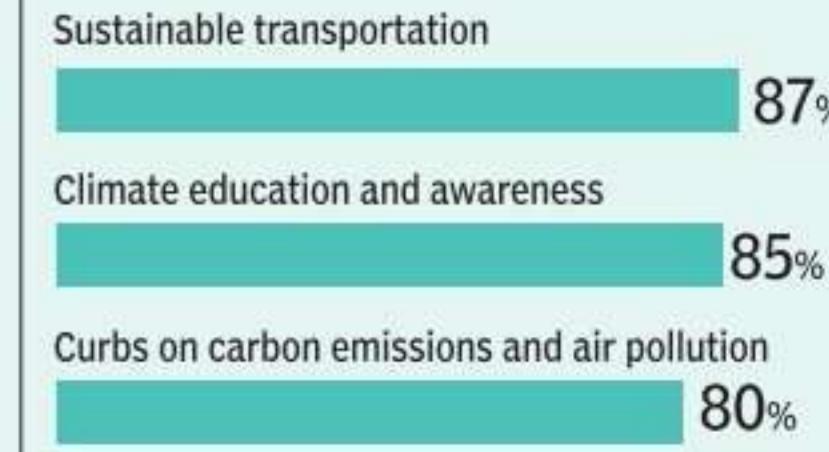
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**WHAT FIRST-TIME VOTERS THINK**

Environment, climate crisis are top on first-time voters' mind this election, shows a survey conducted among 1,600 youths in Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE ON CLIMATE****WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR CLIMATE CRISIS****HOW TO TACKLE IT**

\* Survey conducted by Asar, Climate Educator's Network (CEN) and CMSR Consultants

# Modi talks to Sandeshkhali survivor, hails her courage

Calls Her 'Shakti Swaroopa' In An Attack On TMC, Rahul

Akhilesh.Singh  
@timesgroup.com



Rekha Patra (R) had registered the first FIR against the Trinamool strongman allegedly responsible for sexual violence in Sandeshkhali

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday praised Rekha Patra — one of the several survivors of the alleged large-scale sexual violence and land grab at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal and who has been nominated by BJP for the Basirhat Lok Sabha seat — and called her "Shakti Swaroopa" for showing the courage to register the first FIR against the Trinamool strongman allegedly responsible for her ordeal.

"Your self-confidence is very high... you are Shakti Swaroopa. You have fought a long battle and have displayed immense courage. Your fight under adverse political circumstances is not only an inspiration for Basirhat but entire Bengal," the PM said in remarks which appeared aimed at both the Trinamool leadership and Rahul Gandhi who had recently equated the fight against Modi to the fight against 'Shakti' mentioned in Hindu scriptures.

## After row, Cong netas say post on Kangana not their handiwork

**New Delhi:** A day after National Commission for Women wrote to Election Commission seeking strict action against Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinivas and Kisan Congress state joint coordinator H S Ahir for disparaging comments against actor Kangana Ranaut, who is BJP's candidate from Himachal Pradesh's Mandi constituency, BJP on Tuesday approached EC seeking action over the "objectionable post".

Shrinivas and Ahir claimed the post was not put out by them and they are trying to find out who posted it. Congress said it has always believed that there is no space for such language in public discourse and the matter should end with Shrinivas clearing the air.

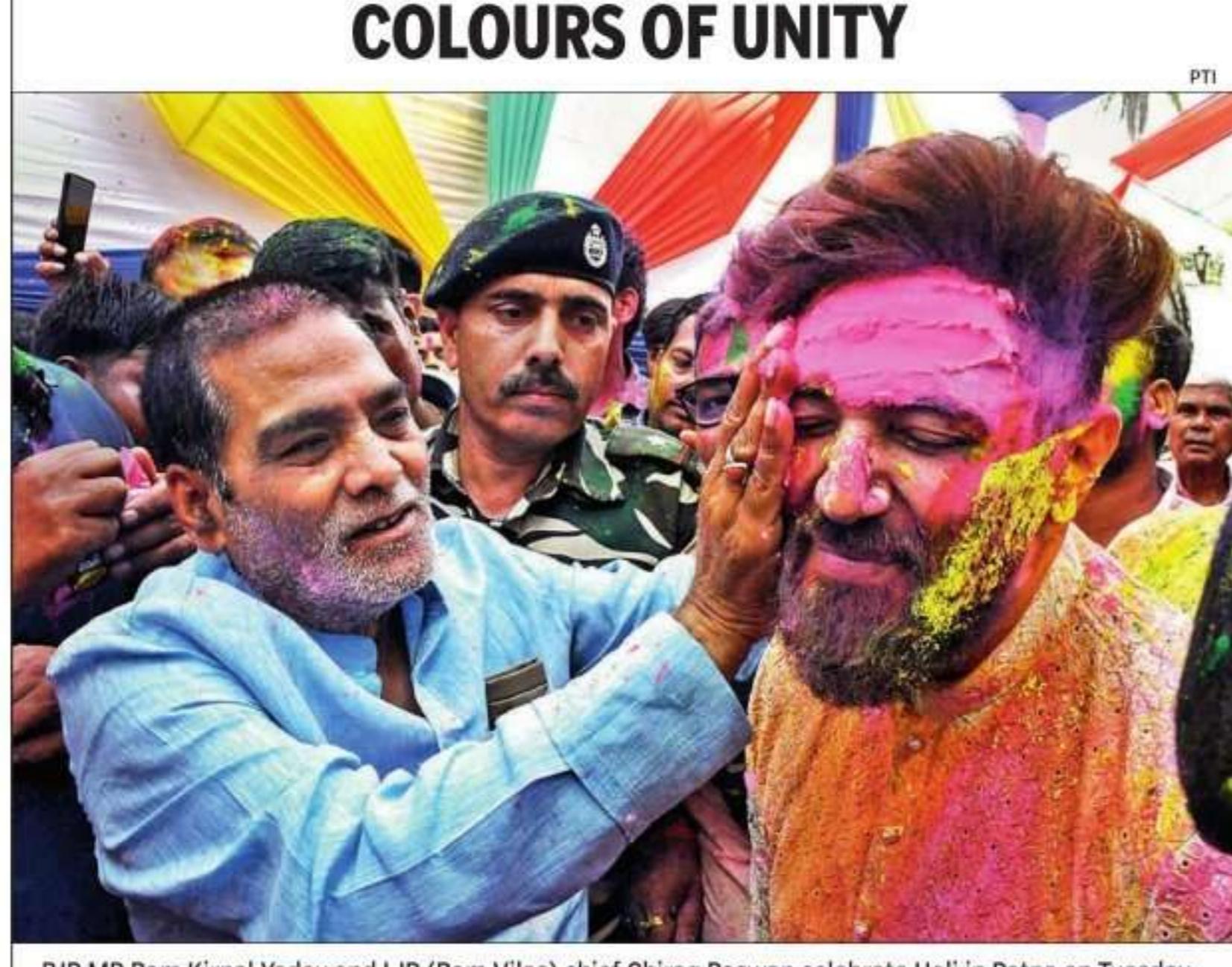
NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma, in a letter to CEC Rajiv Kumar, referred to the remarks as "derogatory and outrageous to dignity of a woman". She requested Kumar to take strict action against Shrinivas and Ahir.

However, EC sources indicated little elbow room for taking Shrinivas to task for a possible violation of model code and other laws, with a senior functionary referring to her dissociating herself from the statement and blaming it on indiscretion of a member of her social media team.

Rejecting the clarification, BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi slammed Congress and said the "dastardly comments" by Congress' social media head were "not posted by default, but by design".

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said the "indecent post" was not just an insult to Ranaut or women but whole of Himachal.

Ex-HP CM Jai Ram Thakur said the party "is legally examining the matter".



BJP MP Ram Kirpal Yadav and LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan celebrate Holi in Patna on Tuesday

## COLOURS OF UNITY



# BJP leader questions Didi's 'parentage', EC seeks report

Tamaghna.Banerjee  
@timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** Bengal BJP candidate and former state unit president Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday described Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee as being of "doubtful parentage", prompting a backlash from Trinamool and a complaint with Election Commission (EC).



Ghosh said she is Goa's daughter, goes to Tripura and says she is Tripura's daughter..."

Ghosh said during a media interaction in Durgapur before going to make the deputatory remarks.

EC later sought a report from Burdwan (West) district administration. "Such comments... constitute an attack on her (Mamata's) personal character and modesty, and amount to a blatant violation of code of conduct," Trinamool wrote to EC, demanding it act against Ghosh and restrain him and other BJP leaders from making such remarks.

State minister Chandrima Bhattacharya alleged a pattern. "We have seen how PM Modi used to address Mamata during 2021 campaign.

Ghosh's statement reflects

the same mentality. BJP has always maltreated women, be they victims of abuse or Olympic wrestlers," Bhattacharya said, asking why the "hyperactive" National Commission for Women was not taking Ghosh to task.

Ghosh, however, told TOI he does not think he said anything objectionable and is ready to face EC's questions. "Mamata is the one who is misguiding people with her false statements. I have merely asked a question that is on people's mind. I don't think I have said anything disrespectful or objectionable," he added.

Many from within BJP termed Ghosh's statement "bizarre" in private.

During 2021 assembly polls, he had advised the CM to wear Bermudas following her leg injury.

## BJP names 3 more LS poll nominees, drops Union minister

**New Delhi:** BJP on Tuesday named three more candidates for Lok Sabha polls, dropping all its sitting MPs, including Union minister Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, from these seats won by it in 2019.

It has fielded Thounaojam Basanta Kumar Singh, a minister in Manipur govt, from Inner Manipur constituency in place of the Union minister.

In two Rajasthan constituencies, BJP has fielded Indu Devi Jatav and Kanhaiya Lal Meena from Karauli-Dholpur and Dausa, respectively, dropping sitting MPs Manoj Rajoria and Jaskaur Meena.

BJP has now announced its candidates for 401 seats so far for the elections to 543-member Lok Sabha, scheduled to be held between April 19 and June 1.

Municipal officials said the BMC received six applications from parties and some of the applications requested reservation of the ground on multiple dates. "We have sent the requests to the state urban development department and the Election Commission. Further action will be taken based on the decision taken by them," a municipal official said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said there was democracy in the country and all parties were free to book grounds for holding their rallies. "Anyone can hold a rally."

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Congress, which recently held a mega rally at Shivaji Park to mark the conclusion of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on March 17, is yet to apply to hold more rallies on the ground. NCP (SP) applied for use of the ground on May 17, the last day before poll campaigning ends for voting in the city on May 20.

At least a dozen days have been sought by five parties, Shiv Sena, Shiv Sena (UBT),

NCP, and MNS for use of the ground at Shivaji Park to mark the conclusion of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on March 17, is yet to apply to hold more rallies on the ground. NCP (SP) applied for use of the ground on May 17, the last day before poll campaigning ends for voting in the city on May 20.

Shiv Sena led by chief minister Eknath Shinde has even applied to hold its Dussehra rally at the venue on Oct

12, after having had to hold the previous two editions at BKC in 2022 and Azad Maidan in 2023, when the Shiv Sena (UBT) was given Shivaji Park for its Dussehra gathering.

Shiv Sena (UBT) and Raj Thackeray's MNS have both

**Rallies and functions at the venue have been restricted since August 2010, when the high court, acting on a PIL, banned non-sporting activities except under special circumstances**

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A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way

— John C Maxwell | Author

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 | Hyderabad

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— Henry Ford | Industrialist

## How PE Investors Pick CEOs

Private equity firms are a key source of growth capital in the Indian economy, investing \$40–50bn annually. There are about 10,000 cos in India, which are or were partly or majority-owned by PEs. Leadership assumes significance in these entities. What are the attributes that PEs look for in CEOs for their portfolio cos?

By R Suresh

P firms have grown in size, stature and domain expertise: India now has more than 300 of these firms. PE investments fall under two broad categories — buyout and strategic equity.

In a buyout, firms acquire majority equity and take on the responsibility to operate the company. Under the latter, they hold significant minority stakes with the management responsibility continuing to be with majority owners (invariably the founding family). In both these cases, PE firms enforce hiring for a few leadership positions, including the CEO. They look for key attributes in the CEO beyond the normal standard stack. These include:

**Growth Appetite:** PE firms would typically commit attractive returns to their investors called 'limited partners' (investors who allocate capital to PE companies), of the order of 20–25% CAGRs. They, in turn, need to invest in companies which

have the potential to grow at such high rates. This can be achieved only when CEOs of these portfolio companies drive non-linear growth. CEOs in PE-invested companies cannot survive if the growth rate is anaemic, and they need to display a huge appetite to grow the top line and margins.

**Capability To Grow:** PE companies advise CEOs to look for inorganic growth opportunities through mergers and acquisitions, hence they look for CEOs with prior deals' experience. At the same time, they also demand organic growth investing from the CEO. This includes investment in areas like debottlenecking, efficiency improvement, market expansion, product portfolio enhancement, and building services portfolio among others. Organic and inorganic initiatives are like line functions. Every quarter, the CEO is reviewed on these dimensions.

**Strategic Fin Management:** The CEO will be selected either from the domain or possess great general management capabilities, which is fundamental. However, in ad-



dition, PE firms do make it a point to test the capabilities of the CEO in understanding financial structures, metrics and performance. For instance, the CEO needs to comprehend the balance sheet, P&L, key ratios, free cash flow, return on equity/internal rate of return, leverage, operating margin and valuation, as compared to the CEOs in a more standard set-up where domain expertise and operating the business to achieve the revenue, cost and margin objectives is the deliverable.

**Communication Skills:** In a PE-invested setup, the requirement is for the CEO, who proactively communicates with the board, provides them guidance about future quarterly performances, and flags off both potential wins that the company is experiencing and setbacks, if any. The adage in the PE world: when in doubt, communicate.

(The writer is managing director, INSIST Consulting)

**Capability Building:** PE companies keep pushing the CEO to hire a successor or identify someone within and make sure that the chief financial officer, COO and business development

engines are capable executives. The latest trend is to somehow 'shoe-horn' a CFO (chief digital officer) into the picture, who can automate business processes using AI/ML technologies. Similarly, a CSO (chief sustainability officer) hiring is a trend.

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## CONTRAPUNTO

The basis of optimism  
is sheer terror  
—OSCAR WILDE

## Too Big To Check?

Regulatory actions against Big Tech don't effectively cover areas that allow them to create an oligopoly

It's been an eventful week in the world of Big Tech regulation. EU launched sweeping investigations into the activities of three of them, Apple, Alphabet and Meta, to check if they are complying with the area's Digital Markets Act (DMA). Independently, in US, Florida has introduced a law that bans children under 14 from social media platforms.

**The problem** | Big Tech represents an inversion of the early ideas of competition. Global tech industry's appeal lay in the fact that entry barriers to competition couldn't be lower. A college dropout with a killer idea and the smarts could reduce an industry leader to an also ran. That's now history.

**Power of concentration** | Digital economy is driven by economies of scope. That is, providing a variety of services makes a firm more competitive by giving it access to a huge trove of data. AI is nothing without extraordinarily large data sets and computing power. So, now, folks with killer ideas are pushed into the embrace of Big Tech. Think of the grip Microsoft has on OpenAI. Big Tech now dominates three crucial areas, AI, platform economies and social media.

The challenge for regulators is to find a framework that can effectively address the full range of Big Tech operations.

**DMA and gatekeeper approach** | EU's DMA is the world's most ambitious regulatory effort to rein in Big Tech. It identified a handful of companies as gatekeepers and held them to high standards. On March 25, it launched its first non-compliance investigations to check if the three companies are using market dominance to choke potential competition. DMA represents an extension of earlier regulatory efforts to curb anti-competitive practices of Big Tech. It's an area where most regulators have made progress.

**Regulatory gaps persist** | Florida's law tackles a small part of a critical problem posed by social media. It's another matter that bans of the kind planned are hard to impose. Social media is also a platform that allows firms to suck in data. It's put them in pole position to harvest early gains from application of AI in mass products.

**Getting back to the past** | Silicon Valley's outsized global influence creates resentment. But in its favour was the belief that it was a true meritocracy. That's now morphed into a conventional oligopoly. The regulatory challenge now is helping the tech industry get back to its roots.

## Pak Of Trouble

Beijing is realising being pals with Islamabad is costly. Not a surprising result when you back a terror state

Pakistan's security problems are again worsening. But this time the Chinese are burning their fingers too. Monday's strike, where militants from Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) tried to storm Pak navy base PNS Siddique in Balochistan's Turbat, took place within a week of an attack on Gwadar port complex. The common link? China, Gwadar is the centrepiece of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, while the naval base was reportedly hosting Chinese drones.

**Risky business** | Yesterday, five Chinese nationals were killed by a suicide bomber in northwest Pakistan. This clearly shows all is not well with CPEC projects that have increasingly come to be seen

as robbing Pakistan's poor for the benefit of military elite. Minerals-rich Balochistan has long complained about Islamabad's imperialistic treatment. Now the anger is directed at generals' best friend Beijing. While Pak army does provide security for CPEC projects, this hasn't stopped attacks.

**Double game?** | But Pakistan is a master at using terrorism for leverage. BLA has been a thorn in Islamabad's side for years. Yet, if it keeps the Chinese on tenterhooks, that's leverage the generals wouldn't mind when they are taking on billions of dollars in Chinese loans.

**Double trouble** | This too-clever-by-half strategy of course leads to costs. Sapping with terrorists has cost Pakistan a huge number of civilian lives. Along with BLA, Pak Taliban too has increased frequency of attacks since termination of ceasefire with Islamabad in Nov 2022. So much for the generals' 'brilliant' strategy of grooming Afghan Taliban for strategic depth.

**Losing face and more** | Despite generals calling the shots, China knows it won't ever get its money back. But it doesn't want to lose face by admitting it. Beijing is realising that its all-weather friend is all-weather trouble. India should continue to keep its guard up and prevent any spillovers of Pak terror. If the Beijing-Islamabad nexus weakens, it's good for New Delhi.

## Tea and sympathy

When you enjoy your morning cup of chai, you should say 'Thank you' to the Brits

Jug Suraiya

If you're savouring a cup of tea while reading this newspaper, you should thank the British for having brought both chai and Angrezi to India where we've transformed the beverage and the language to suit our tastes, infusing them with home-grown masala.

The story of how Camellia Sinensis, the botanical name of the tea plant, came to be cultivated in India reads like thriller fiction.

Indeed, in his 1966 epic novel, *Tai Pan*, about the founding of Hong Kong as a British outpost, James Clavell used as a subplot the smuggling out to India of tea seeds from China, a practice strictly forbidden by Chinese law.

European travellers to India in the mid-17th century recorded the use of tea as a medicinal drink in parts of Assam, but the plant was not widely cultivated, nor commonly used.

From the early 19th century on, Britain had become an enthusiastic tea-drinking nation, its popularity initially confined to the affluent, but gaining appeal among the working class, not least because the necessity of boiling the brew made the unclean water safer to drink.

For the tea they drank, the British had to pay the Chinese in bullion. This would have beggared Britain, except that the Chinese were willing to pay

in bullion for opium, the poppies for which were grown in Bengal. Though opium was illegal in China, it was smuggled in by the British to pay for their tea.

When the Chinese authorities resisted, it led to two so-called Opium Wars, to subjugate China and, in effect, turn it into a nation of druggies.

Then, in 1851, an enterprising British functionary, appropriately named Robert Fortune, managed to sneak out 20,000 Chinese seedlings. Planted in the Darjeeling hills, these flourished, and the tea trade grew bigger than ever as Indians too took to the brew, though with the addition of ginger and other spices.

The teacup you hold has quite a storm of history in it. Not least for having given us our own version of America's great success story, From Log Cabin to White House. From 'Chaiwalla' to PM.

Post-retirement, the enthusiasm

## secondopinion

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## Rich In Drama, Poor In Numbers

Piketty co-authored World Inequality Lab study says 'India stands out as a very unequal country'. But it's based on data their earlier study scored low on transparency. How does this work?

Atanu Biswas



In a recently released working paper co-authored by economist Thomas Piketty, Paris-based World Inequality Lab (WIL) estimated India's income and wealth inequality during 1922-2023. It said that following Independence, inequality declined until the early 1980s, after which it began to rise and has skyrocketed since the early 2000s.

The study's primary goal is to estimate India's inequality levels (as of 2022) from a global perspective. The study says that income share of the top 10% and top 1%, in India in 2022-23 are 60%, and 22.6%, respectively, both remarkably high. One may recall the enormous commotion WIL's 'World Inequality Report 2022' caused in Dec 2021 worldwide, including in India. The tone of both studies is somewhat similar. Consequently, the report and current paper should perhaps be studied together.

**Whose data is it?** | "India stands out as a poor and very unequal country, with an affluent elite," the 2022 Report stated. It said income share for the top 10% was 57.1%, and the top 1% had 21.7%. These numbers closely resemble the equivalent numbers from the current study. But, as a statistician, I'm concerned with the data, sampling plans, and methodologies used to produce these estimates.

One can wonder how the income distribution was estimated in the first place, given India doesn't have any official income surveys. Did they make a lot of assumptions while using auxiliary data?

Data on consumption following the 68th cycle of the NSSO Household Consumer Expenditure Surveys in 2011-12, was the last publicly available consumption survey government data, until about a month ago, when Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23 was released.

**Method in the rad-ness?** | Further, because the 2022-23 statistics employed a *different methodology* than the earlier survey, they perhaps *cannot be compared directly*. And there's always room to challenge the methodology, coverage, design, and quality of the survey data from various private organisations. Hence, estimates based on such secondary data are likely to be erroneous. Moreover, margin of error is also unknown.

To produce a long-term homogenous series of income and wealth inequality in India, the current study combined "national income accounts, wealth aggregates, tax tabulations, rich lists, and surveys on income, consumption, and wealth in a consistent framework." In the 2022 report, in order to harmonise, analyse, and

disseminate comparable international inequality data, collaboration with statistical institutions, tax authorities, universities, and international organisations was made. It acknowledged they "lack basic information about inequality".

**Mind the math** | The pre-tax income inequality series (g-percentile shares, averages, and thresholds), up to 2019, were taken into consideration, in accordance with



NUMBER GAMES: Of course, we have removed poverty. If we had not, would all these luxury apartments, five-star hotels, super bazaars, etc. come up?

World Inequality Database's general policy.

By assuming pre-tax income distribution remains constant during 2015-19, and that all income g-percentiles increase at the average per adult national income growth rate, the Indian pre-tax income inequality series during 2015-19 is derived from a simple growth-neutral extrapolation.

Now this may not always be a very reasonable assumption.

Further, a comparable income inequality series

from 2014-15 until 2022-23 was constructed similarly for the current study, acknowledging severe data challenges, including absence of key data sources.

**Glitchy India numbers** | Now, the Indian data's Transparency Index was given a relatively low score (5.5 out of 20) in the World Inequality Report 2022. In that case, how justifiable is it to draw a significant conclusion from *that* data? To what extent are estimates likewise accurate for other countries? How accurate are the analogies, then?

Undoubtedly, inequality is widening both in India and globally, and the pandemic worsened it. People know that from experience, and WIL's work certainly indicates similarly. Everywhere, including India, the number of billionaires is rising. WIL's study described India experiencing a 'Billionaire Raj', with the number of billionaires in 2022 being over three times as many as in 2011.

**Tax the rich?** | The paper also proposes imposing a super tax on Indian billionaires and multi-millionaires and changing the tax system to account for both wealth and income. These are by no means novel. At a recent meet of world leaders, in-between nibbles of Swiss chocolate in Davos, over 250 billionaires and millionaires even signed an open letter advocating for wealth taxes to fund public services globally.

In *It's OK to Be Angry About Capitalism*, Bernie Sanders proposes an even more radical solution: Washington should confiscate 100% of any money earned by Americans over \$999 million.

**Demand the data** | So, what about the real numbers to reflect inequality in India? With such imputed data of questionable quality, is it possible to accurately quantify them, as well as the errors, to predict inequality measures? It's certainly possible actual inequality is what these analyses show. However, it could even be significantly worse, or better.

**Imprecision hurts** | With this kind of data at hand, it's a daunting task to predict the precise situation, so the current estimates should better be viewed as a general indication of trends. But such imprecise estimates cause much controversy.

It's said such studies are an attempt to portray ongoing and expanding inequality. Yes, they are. But as a statistician, I say there are situations when 'no data' is better than 'bad data' and 'no estimate' is preferable to weird estimates. Instead, seek better data and/or updated measurements of inequality.

The writer is professor, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

## Funding Politics: Many Ideas, No Takers

Analysis on electoral bond data won't answer the question of regulation. But no party really wants it. Only voters can change this

Trilochan Sastry



The electoral bonds data in public domain, with secret numbers readable only by ultraviolet light, will continue to be parsed and investigated. But, we also need to, now, think beyond EBs. From its introduction to its cancellation, the road EBs took has made it clear that political party funding reforms are an absolute imperative.

Three principles guide overall political party and campaign funding. At the outset, there should be no foreign money and no black money.

**Favours Inc** | Second, 'quid pro quo', where donations are given for gaining favours from govt needs to be minimised, for which, a basic requisite is complete transparency.

Quid pro quo could mean govt contracts, permitting illegal activities like sand and granite mining, gambling, and manufacture and supply of illicit liquor. It could mean tax benefits to large companies, or changes in policies and laws to benefit large donors, or giving environmental clearances – favours may be against public interest.

In the case of EBs, quid pro quo, if any, needs to be investigated, especially in govt contracts. Did any of the donors get such contracts? Donors are largely real estate and infra companies. It remains to be investigated whether they obtained govt contracts against donations.

Also, the link if any between CBI and ED raids and donations through electoral bonds needs to be established.

**Compliance, key** | The third principle is a level-playing field. So much money is required to contest elections that about 99% of citizens cannot afford it. To what extent a level-playing field is possible, or desirable, also needs to be discussed. But if there is to be a level-playing field, we need realistic spending limits, strictly enforced. Further, we need to enforce transparency in spending limits.

Most of Europe and some US states have a certain

level of public funding. But for this to be a reality in India, we need to enforce transparency in spending limits, remove black money and stop bribing of voters.

**Transparency, transparency** | The best international practice in other democracies is transparency in party and candidate funding. There are funding limits on companies and individuals. Apple Inc, with a \$3 trillion market cap, can fund the entire US presidential, Congress and Senate elections. This power is curtailed by imposing limits on corporate as well as individual donations.

What does EB data reveal? That vast majority of donors were businesses, 90% of which were private limited, whose finances aren't publicly available. The biggest donor is a gambling company. The second and third largest are also privately held companies, which means we don't know how much profits they made. Only the top donor Future Gaming gave funds to all top five political parties.

It's worth reiterating that only a few of the large donors are publicly listed. It remains to be seen if they donated through the older system of direct online transfer or through Electoral Trusts. Notably, India's biggest publicly listed companies are missing from the list of EB donors.

Other than BJP, the only other national party with significant EB donations is Congress. Trinamool, YSRCP and DMK as regional parties got huge donations compared to their states' population. Congress fared badly – most of their donations were from smaller companies.

We also have several non-political organisations that campaign for political parties or even candidates. Their campaign expenses need to be counted towards



election expenses and made public, as is required in other countries.

**Black money scouts** | Electoral bonds weren't able to curb black money. They were introduced in early 2018, and during 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Election Commission seized a record amount of cash.

Nearly all donations through EBs are from unknown private companies. Hardly any amount is from the large corporate houses and from individuals. Black money can be curbed only by direct seizure before elections by ED, CBI and IT authorities.

What it took for EB data to be made public was a glimpse of the slow road to funding reforms. After both lists were made public, one with unique numbers of 20,421 EBs purchased, and the other, separately, of political parties that received bonds along with the numbers, it took journalists and analysts countrywide barely hours to match. It's worth noting SBI asked for time till mid-June 2024 to do this matching.

There are tough questions, and many discussions and a clear understanding of all implications are needed. Various govt appointed committees on this and related issues – most recent was the Law Commission on Electoral Reforms, which submitted its report in 2015. There are earlier reports as well.

There's no lack of recommendations. But govt aren't willing to act. Perhaps the demand must come from a fully aware public. The vexed question of political funding regulation remains. It requires a much larger consultation between voters, Election Commission and political parties.

The writer is chairman, Association for Democratic Reforms



## Sacredspace



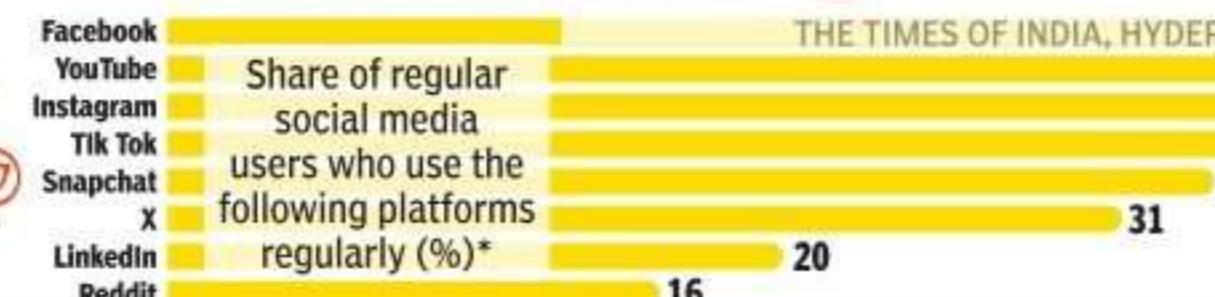
John Lennon

## When Life Is Much More Than A Dream

Narayani Ganesh

I received Holi greetings from

Facebook continues to be most popular social media platform in the US, followed by YouTube and Instagram, according to a survey. With Reddit planning to go public, the survey takes stock of platform's grounding in the US that has highest user base. In Canada, Australia & India too Reddit's share among users is quite prominent



\*Multiple options possible

76  
53,334  
US respondents (18-64 y/o)  
surveyed Jan-Dec 2023

Source: Statista

## Baba Kalyani's niece, nephew move court over family assets

Their Mother Is Already In Legal Dispute With Baba Over Hikal

Reeba.Zachariah  
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**Mumbai:** Sameer Hiremath and Pallavi Swadi — grandchildren of forging industry pioneer Neelkanth Kalyani — have moved Pune civil court against their uncle and Bharat Forge chairman Baba Kalyani, seeking division of family assets. They have demanded one-ninth of the family estate including stakes in Bharat Forge and Kalyani Steel as their share.

The suit has also been filed against five other family members, including their mother Sugandha Hiremath, her brother Gaurishankar Kalyani, his children — Sheetal Kalyani & Viraj Kalyani — and Baba's son Amit Kalyani.

While the value of the ancestral wealth, including the vast land banks the family holds in Pune, Maharashtra and elsewhere in Maharashtra, couldn't be ascertained, the market capitalisation of Kalyani Group's listed companies is about Rs 62,834 crore. Sugandha is already in an ownership dispute with Baba over Hikal, one of the major speciality chemicals players in the country.

In their petition, Sameer (50) and Pallavi (48) said that after the death of Neelkanth's wife in Feb 2023, Baba, "instead of giving effect to the various wishes and writings that

### Group's Listed Cos Are Worth Over ₹60K Cr

#### LATEST TIFF

➤ Sameer Hiremath and Pallavi Swadi, the nephew and niece of **Kalyani Group chairman Baba Kalyani**, have said that Kalyani family assets were created because of the efforts of their great grandfather Annappa



#### EARLIER SPATS

➤ In the '90s, Baba had alleged that his father had 'deprived' him of his rights  
➤ Later, he was involved in a legal tiff with his younger brother Gaurishankar

➤ In 2014, **Gaurishankar's daughter** sued him and sought a division of family assets along with the suit. They also want other family members to disclose acquisitions over the years using family funds

➤ In 2023, Baba's younger sister Sugandha Hiremath sued him over stake transfer

have been executed from time to time, has in a complete volte-face refused to have any further discussions" and they apprehend that "he will take over all the assets of the Kalyani family HUF and deprive them of their shares as coparceners in the same". Baba (75), among the country's wealthiest, has a net worth of \$4 billion, according to Forbes.

Their suit explains that the family's wealth can be traced to their great grandfather Annappa Kalyani, an agriculturist-cum-trader. Annappa held large movable and immovable properties, which were subsequently inherited by his only child Neelkanth. In Feb

The suit said that since all

the businesses were commenced and the investments were made from the family funds, all these businesses and investments constituted the properties of the joint family and so Baba "alone does not and cannot have a right to the same".

The suit further said "due to the authoritarian and non-cooperative attitude of Baba in managing the affairs of the HUF, differences arose between the joint family, thereby resulting in filing of certain litigations in different courts". In 2014, Sheetal had filed a case in the same Pune civil court against Baba demanding a share in the ancestral property. This case is pending.

The petition said Kalyani Consultants, an entity controlled by Gaurishankar, and which holds shares of Bharat Forge and other companies, should belong to the collective ownership of all coparceners and not solely to Gaurishankar and his family as the entity was formed with the joint assets of the Kalyani family. Sameer and Pallavi said the HUF has more assets than what they are aware of as transactions have happened using family funds. Therefore, all those properties, including gold and jewellery, form a part of the family estate. They want Baba to be ordered to disclose all the assets of the HUF and bring them to

Adani buys Shapoorji's Odisha port in ₹3.1k cr deal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Adani Ports will buy Shapoorji Pallonji Group's Gopalpur Port in Odisha for an enterprise value of Rs 3,080 crore, adding to its pan-India network and enhancing its cargo volume.

In addition to the enterprise value, there is a contingent consideration of Rs 270 crore to be payable after 5.5 years, subject to fulfilment of certain conditions as agreed with the sellers, Adani Ports said.

**YOU READ IT HERE**  
**SP Group to sell Odisha port to Adani co in ₹3.3k cr deal**  
Debt Reduction Measures to Come in Line w IPO of Group Co Assets  
Sheetal Sheetal  
The Times of India dated Mar 26, 2024

Adani Ports will buy 56% in Gopalpur Port, which has a capacity to handle 20 million metric tonnes annually, from SP and 39% from Orissa Stevedores. The remaining 5% will continue to be held by Orissa Stevedores, a source said.

Gopalpur Port is estimated to have an operating profit of Rs 232 crore and a revenue of Rs 520 crore in fiscal 2024. The Odisha government had awarded a 30-year concession to Gopalpur Port in 2006, with the provision of two extensions of 10 years each.

The port, which mainly caters to mineral-based industries like iron & steel and alumina, has received over 500 acres of land on lease for development, with an option to receive additional land on lease to meet future capacity expansions. Gopalpur Port came into the fold of SP after it acquired management control of the unit in 2017.

That time the port was at an under-construction stage. SP then built the port infrastructure, stabilized industrial relations and improved efficiencies.

**Houses under construction see 31% rise in prices: Study**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** Prices of under-construction projects across 13 cities rose 30.6% on a year-on-year basis as more people opted for affordable under-construction properties amid rising residential prices, a study by real estate platform Magicbricks showed.

Between Jan-March, prices are estimated to have increased 7.8%, with Noida (7.1%), Greater Noida (6.1%) and Mumbai (5.7%) registering the sharpest increase during the period. Prices of under-construction projects had recorded a sequential increase of 6.3% between Oct-Dec 2023, according to the Magicbricks Propindex Report.

"In India, slowing inflation, a smaller fiscal deficit and lower US policy rates will lay the ground for RBI to start cutting rates. But we believe more clarity on the path of disinflation could push this decision at least to June 2024, if not later," the report added.

The agency expects consumer inflation to decline further to 4.5% on average in fiscal 2025 and does not see the global shipping issues impacting overall inflation.

tents to wait through the whole night outside the Apple Store for the next product launch," said Lucas Zhong, a Shanghai-based analyst at Catalys, a market research firm. "The iPhone 15 launch wasn't nearly as popular."

Apple declined to comment. Apple started selling iPhones in China in 2009. The last time it was losing ground to Huawei, in 2019, the Trump administration inadvertently extended Apple's lifeline by restricting US technology firms from dealing with Huawei. But the restrictions also forced Huawei to develop its own wireless chip and operating system. NYT NEWS SERVICE

of payments data on Tuesday, the rupee recovered to 83.29 from its all-time low of 83.43 on Friday due to the dollar weakening in international markets.

The deficit in the trade of petroleum and oil products widened to \$25.8 billion from \$17.9 billion in the quarter before due to a rise in the oil import bill. However, the deficit was lower than the \$29.3 billion a year ago.

The higher oil trade deficit resulted in the goods trade account registering a deficit of \$71.6 billion in Q3 FY24, up from \$64.3 billion in Q2 FY24. Services exports grew by 5.2% year-on-year,

## ₹1L UG tech internships ticket to full-time roles

**Undergrads Getting ₹1 Lakh Stipends From Biggies Like Google & Microsoft On The Rise**

Shilpa Phadnis & Veena Mani | TNN

RV College of Engineering's dean of placement, said that companies such as Amazon, iPath, and Microsoft have offered stipends up to ₹1.4 lakh for various tech roles. Similarly, Walmart, Goldman Sachs, and Palo Alto have provided ₹1-lakh stipends.

Rs 1-lakh stipend.

A majority of the students interning with these tech firms have secured full-time positions. Sood pointed out a high conversion from internships to full-time positions, with top tech firms in India offering annual compensation

### High-Demand Fields: Data Science, Cloud

➤ IIT Mandi has seen 27 students bag Rs 1-lakh-or-more stipends this year so far

➤ Bengaluru's RV College of Engineering has seen 39 students earning over ₹1L in monthly stipends compared to 8 last year

➤ About 30 students from the Vellore Institute of Technology reported a ₹1-lakh stipend, with

cos like Couchbase and Amazon offering ₹1.2L and ₹1.1L respectively

➤ MIT-World Peace University, Pune said cloud data management Veritas Technologies has shortlisted 10 computer science students for internships with a ₹1L stipend

between ₹40 lakh to ₹65 lakh, and international roles reaching up to ₹1 crore.

Naveen C, senior manager, training and placement in Bengaluru-based Reva University, said that a student interning with Visa received ₹90,000 stipend and later a job offer of over ₹50 lakh per annum.

Last year, VIT's Rajkumar said a connected infrastructure and analytics company, MotorQ, offered a record annual compensation of ₹1 crore to two VIT students, including stock awards. Emails sent to Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Palo Alto Networks, Goldman Sachs, Intuit India, iPath, Uber and Atlassian didn't elicit a response till the time of going to press.

### Storable Inc sets up 1st Asia GCC in Hyd

**Hyderabad:** US-based self-storage technology solutions provider Storable Inc has set up a new office spread over 15,000 sq ft in Hyderabad's IT hub of Knowledge City.

Storable, which rolled out its first Asia global capability centre (GCC) in Hyderabad in April 2023, currently has a headcount of 60 people in Hyderabad which it plans to double to 120 by the end of 2024.

The expansion at Hyderabad is part of Storable Inc's plans to expand its R&D presence in India by ramping up its engineering capacity and support the company's aggressive growth plans. TNN

### SpiceJet to settle \$91mn liabilities

**New Delhi:** SpiceJet has reached a settlement with Export Development Canada to resolve liabilities valued at \$91 million (Rs 755 crore), the airline said in a filing on Tuesday. The liabilities stem from a loan acquired by the airline in 2011 for procuring 15 aircraft. As part of the settlement, SpiceJet will pay a settlement amount and acquire ownership of 13 EDC-financed Q400 aircraft.

The foreign bonds were priced at 450 basis points (100bps = 1 percentage point) above Secured Overnight Financing Rate of 4.5%.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York, a company release said.

IBHFL's dollar-denominated bonds have been raised as 'Social Bonds', under its social financing framework. IBHFL is the second NBFC to issue such social bonds, following Shriram Finance's issue in January this year. Such bonds whose proceeds are deployed towards home loans in the affordable housing segments, loans to micro- and small-enterprises, towards green buildings and renewable energy qualify as social bonds.

We have raised a billion dollars between equity, international and domestic debt over the last 40 days," said Gagan Banga, VP & MD, IBHFL.

The foreign bonds were priced at 450 basis points (100bps = 1 percentage point) above Secured Overnight Financing Rate of 4.5%.

The higher CAD is positive for the rupee, and many economists are forecasting a strengthening of the rupee in the coming weeks. Ahead of RBI releasing the balance

of payments data on Tuesday, the rupee recovered to 83.29 from its all-time low of 83.43 on Friday due to the dollar weakening in international markets.

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**Mahindra pledges ₹500cr to Mahindra Univ in Hyd**

Nandini.Sengupta  
@timesgroup.com

**Chennai:** Mahindra Group chairman Anand Mahindra has pledged Rs 500 crore to the Mahindra University in Hyderabad. This amount is 10 times the Rs 48 crore (\$10 million in 2010 valuation) that he pledged to Harvard University nearly 14 years ago.

Speaking to TOI, he said: "My family and I are announcing a Rs 500-crore pledge to Mahindra University, which will be spread over five years starting this year." This, he clarified, will be in addition to the Rs 50 crore he has pledged for the Indira Mahindra School of Education endowed in his mother's name, at the Mahindra University. "This year there will be a disbursal of Rs 100 crore plus Rs 50 crore and in the ensuing four years, it will be Rs 100 crore per year," he said. MU is headed by Anand Mahindra as chancellor and Dr Jayulu Medury as vice-chancellor.

### Abu Dhabi fund bets ₹1 cr on edu loan co

**Mumbai:** Education loan provider Avanse Financial Services has raised Rs 1,000 crore equity from Mubadala Investment Company and Avendus PE Investment Advisors.

Anse said that the fund infusion will help in growing its business profitably. The company funds Indian students' education across various countries and provides growth and working capital to Indian educational institutions. TNN

**IIT grad Pavan Davuluri new MS Windows boss**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru:** IIT Madras alumnus Pavan Davuluri has been appointed as the new head of Microsoft Windows and Surface.



Davuluri, a 23-year veteran at Microsoft, working across PC and Xbox hardware, Surface, Windows and silicon, has led product teams and dabbled in software and hardware playbooks. After IIT, Davuluri went to the University of Maryland, US. He started his career at Microsoft as a reliability component manager and moved up the ranks to become a corporate VP for Windows and Sil-

icon & Systems Integration in 2021. He took on the role of corporate VP for Windows + Devices last year.

The Verge's information it said comes from an internal memo from Rajesh Jha, Microsoft's head of experiences and devices, outlining the new Windows organisation. "This will enable us to take a holistic approach to building silicon, systems, experiences, and devices that span Windows client and cloud for this AI era," Jha is reported to have said in the memo.

**S&P sees GDP growth easing to 6.8% in FY25**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

#### 'RBI curbs to raise cost of capital'

**Mumbai:** S&P has said RBI's clampdown, which includes recent restrictions on IIFL, JM Financial and Paytm Payments Bank, may raise the cost of capital for institutions. The agency said that the actions would also slow down credit growth. TNN

port titled Economic Outlook Asia-Pacific Q2 2024: APAC Bides Its Time On Monetary Policy Easing.

Restrictive interest rates are likely to weigh on demand in next financial year, while regulatory actions to tame unsecured lending will affect credit growth. A lower fiscal deficit will also dampen growth. It expects RBI to

cut rates by June this year. "We forecast rate cuts of up to 75 bps (India, Indonesia, New Zealand, and the Philippines) this year (which for India is the fiscal year), with the median reduction of 50 bps. In line with our projection for US policy rates, we largely expect these moves to occur in the second half of the year," the report said.

"In India, slowing inflation, a smaller fiscal deficit and lower US policy rates will lay the ground for RBI to start cutting rates. But we believe more clarity on the path of disinflation could push this decision at least to June 2024, if not later," the report added.

The agency expects consumer inflation to decline further to 4.5% on average in fiscal 2025 and does not see the global shipping issues impacting overall inflation.

**Has China lost its taste for the iPhone?**

#### LOCAL



# TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024

THE MORE VIOLENT THE STORM, THE QUICKER IT PASSES —PAULO COELHO



**REBEL WILSON: SACHA BARON COHEN IS PREVENTING RELEASE OF MEMOIR WITH CHAPTER ON HIS 'MISBEHAVIOUR' ON A FILM SET IN '16; ACTOR DENIES**

**HOMES OF HIP-HOP MOGUL SEAN 'DIDDY' COMBS IN LA & MIAMI RAIDED IN CONNECTION WITH SEX ASSAULT & TRAFFICKING CASES AGAINST HIM**

**UK court: Assange can't be extradited to US unless death penalty ruled out**

London: A British court ruled on Tuesday that Julian Assange can't be extradited to the US on espionage charges unless US authorities guarantee he won't get the death penalty, giving the WikiLeaks founder a partial victory in his long legal battle over the site's publication of classified American documents.

Two high court judges said they would grant Assange a new appeal unless US authorities give further assurances within three weeks about what will happen to him. The ruling means the legal saga, which has dragged on for more than a decade, will continue — and Assange will remain in London prison, where he has spent last five years.

Judges Victoria Sharp and Jeremy Johnson said the US must guarantee that Assange, who is Australian, "is afforded the same First Amendment protections as a US citizen, and that the death penalty is not imposed".

The judges said that if the US files new assurances, "we will give the parties an opportunity to make further submissions before we make a final decision on the application for leave to appeal". The judges said a hearing will be held May 20 if the US makes those submissions. The US justice department declined to comment on Tuesday.

Assange's supporters say he is a journalist protected by the First Amendment who exposed US military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan that was in the public interest. Assange's wife Stella said the WikiLeaks founder "is being persecuted because he exposed the true cost of war in human lives". AP

## Ukraine, US, UK behind Moscow attack: Russia

**Putin And FSB Chief Admit To Islamist Radicals' Role, But Claim They Were Aided By Kyiv & West 'Special Services'**

Moscow: The director of Russia's most powerful security agency said on Tuesday that he believed Ukraine, along with the US and Britain, were involved in the attack on a concert hall just outside Moscow that killed at least 139 people.

Ukraine, which has denied any link with Friday's attack, dismissed the Russian accusations as lies. Islamic State, the militant group that once sought control over swathes of Iraq and Syria, claimed responsibility for the mass shooting.

"We believe that the action was prepared by both the Islamist radicals themselves and was facilitated by Western special services," Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Federal Security Service (FSB), said.

"The special services of Ukraine are directly related to this," Bortnikov said, adding Kyiv had helped prepare Islamist radicals at an unidentified location in West Asia.

When asked by Russian reporters if Ukraine and its allies, the United States and Britain, were involved in the attack on the concert hall, Bortnikov said: "We think that's the case. In any case, we are now talking about the texture that we have. This is general information."

Bortnikov, 72, who has served as head of the FSB since 2008, said Russia had yet to identify those who specifically ordered the deadliest attack inside Russia for two decades, but said that retaliatory steps would be taken. He offered no specific evidence for the claims, which hardliners in Moscow and London have denied those accusations.

On Monday, three days after the massacre, Putin said for the first time that radical Islamists had carried out the attack but that the attackers were



Emergency services personnel at the burnt-out concert venue in Moscow

### Zelensky replaces top security official

President Zelensky sacked the secretary of Ukraine's national security council and replaced him with the head of his foreign spy agency Tuesday in a new shakeup that follows the overhaul of the military high command last month. No reason for the changes were given. Oleksiy Danilov had held the post since Oct 2019. The council has a coordinating role on issues of national security and defense under the president and comprises the top political, security and defence chiefs. REUTERS

the West — and particularly the US and the UK — as enemies. Russia has repeatedly said that blasts on the Nord Stream gas pipelines under the Baltic Sea in Sept 2022 were carried out by the US and the UK. Washington and London have denied those accusations.

Analysts have said that the Kremlin may be seeking to deflect attention from what appears to be a startling intelligence failure. s. REUTERS & NYT

### Ukraine: A third of Russia ships affected

Ukraine has sunk or disabled a third of all Russian warships in the Black Sea in just over two years of war, the navy spokesman said Tuesday, a heavy blow to Moscow's military capability. Ukraine's navy spokesman Dmytro Pletenichuk said the latest strike on Saturday hit Russian amphibious landing ship Konstantin Olshansky that was resting in dock in Sevastopol in Russia-occupied Crimea. The ship was part of the Ukraine navy before Russia captured it while annexing Crimea in 2014. AP

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### TECH I'D LIKE TO SEE

#### AUTONOMOUS CARE - TAKING CONTROL OF OUR HEALTH

For me, it's the realisation of a concept that I'd call 'Autonomous Care', where technology and healthcare blend to enhance the quality of our well-being. Two key patterns will drive this ecosystem: The proliferation of automated digital networks that deliver reliable, on-demand personal health data for us to monitor, and the autonomy for us as healthcare consumers to decide how we want to navigate with that data across a physical (physical-digital blended) healthcare network. At the core

of this technology is the motivation for consumers to take control of their care journey from symptom investigation, to diagnostics, to therapeutic advice, all the way into their care journey and tracking health outcomes. Thus, creating a world that I'd call 'self-first responderism', where every one of us as healthcare consumers is empowered with the technology and information to take control of our health events and exercise informed choices on how and with whom we want to navigate our healthcare journey.

Bala Sankaranarayanan | CEO & PRESIDENT, THRYVE DIGITAL



### LEARNING GAME DEVELOPMENT

On the occasion of Women's Day, gaming company Zynga brought together over 100 students from leading design institutes in India. The students participated in workshops, gaming sessions and group discussions, and gained insights into game development, including coding, art design, storytelling, and project management.



### Almost Artificial

Sunil Agarwal & Ian Baker



# How software product mgrs help build global products

It's a role that is becoming vital; salaries are surging

Sujit.John@timesgroup.com

India is beginning to focus increasingly on building software products. Many local startups are doing it. Some of the global capability centres (GCCs) of MNCs in India are doing it. And as that happens, the role of the software product manager (SPM) is becoming vital. We wrote earlier this week about estimates by consulting firm Zinnov that showed product manager salaries in GCCs in India are hitting the roof: entry-level product managers start with a median salary of Rs 8 lakh a year, while at the mid-level, a senior product management lead earns between Rs 28 lakh and Rs 34 lakh, and a senior director of product management between Rs 91 lakh and Rs 1.2 crore.

It's a role that India has historically not had because of its focus on services. Somshubro Pal Choudhury, partner at Bharat Innovation Fund and who previously worked at several leading global semiconductor companies, notes that Indian talent has traditionally been good at executing on IT projects, and even on software products, but invariably the product definition and specifications would come from the MNC headquarters. This pushed the country to train people in mas-

### PRODUCT THINKING IS ENABLING GLOBAL REACH

Product management has been a driver of the India story on how to solve large societal complex problems at scale and speed, so that billions of people get services. And now we are taking these out to other countries. So it's a very exciting time to be a product manager in this sector in India. My product managers are all travelling – one is in Liberia, another in Mozambique, yet another in Nigeria, understanding their problems, and helping them build solutions.

Viraj Tyagi | CEO, eGOF FOUNDATION



As an engineer, we have been trained to understand ones and zeros, we understand binary, we need an answer, should I make it or should I not make it. But in the product management world, everything is nebulous. So you have to be very comfortable in those shades of grey, tell the customer that something is coming while working with an engineer to quickly develop an MVP.

Somshubro Pal Choudhury | PARTNER, BHARAT INNOVATION FUND

We generate 80% of OTPs in India. We have also built an interoperable, universal QR code. It can be used with anything, and across countries. You can use it for an Alibaba, or for a 'buy now pay later' use case. We focused on the foundational elements, so we don't need to rebuild it for anyone. That is the kind of product thinking that has happened, which gives you power to reach any country quickly.

Suresh Rajagopalan | CEO, WIBMO

sive numbers to become software engineers. But conceptualising a product and managing it requires a very different mindset from that of a software engineer.

Rishi Nayar, country head at Ellucian, the US higher education technology company that is today building products out of India, says a product manager plays a key role in translating

What we need now are good, agile product managers. It's not just about product management the way it was with 18 month cycles; it has to be things that can happen very quickly. So you have to be able to try an experiment, fail fast, learn from it, move on, look at where AI can help.

Rishi Nayar | SVP & COUNTRY HEAD, ELLUCIAN

We guys (IT training institutions) basically trained computer science guys. So they all picked up software engineering. But they don't know much of management. And then we said, well, we have a lot of projects, so there are project managers now. But product management, they just don't know.

S Sadagopan | CHAIRMAN, ISPMA INDIA CHAPTER

We're in the Silicon Valley area, and software product management is such a huge industry, and Berkeley, at least at the undergrad level, doesn't have any opportunities for students to be exposed to SPM, but so many students are interested in it. There's a big student organisation culture on the Berkeley campus, you'll find dozens of clubs for very niche interests. But for product management, there are very few, for software product management, specifically,

there were none. But now we have started working with Hara (Haragopal Mangipudi, global board member, ISPMA), and it has been great. We had several sessions with him. We helped host the North American summit of ISPMA.

Isabelle Diana May-Xin Ng | UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, UC, BERKELEY (ON A VISIT TO INDIA FOR ISPMA CONFERENCE)

customers' needs and desires into something that engineering teams can build.

Suresh Rajagopalan, CEO of Wibmo, a fintech company specialising in digital payment solutions, says it's the product manager who has to think of the product to be built based on an understanding of customers, its positioning, pricing, promotion.

He says Wibmo was a very India centric company. But about 4-5 years ago, they completely rearchitected the product. "We said we are building now for the world, so we enabled interoperability, which meant payments across any card issued anywhere in the world could be authenticated here. We built it so that there would not be any downtime,

because there simply could not be an OTP failure. Today, we operate in 33 countries, 300 financial institutions and large telecom companies get authenticated out of India," he says, noting this would have been impossible without a product management mindset. "The product guy has to think like a mini CEO," he says.

Viraj Tyagi, CEO of eGov Foundation, which has built an urban governance platform and the Divoc digital platform for public health programmes, says he did product management first at American Express, "and they were completely maniacal about customer centricity." He says the first advice he has for any product manager who is starting off is, if you are customer centric, you will do the right thing by the customer.

It was this product thinking that got eGov Foundation to move from building products for individual organisations (like municipal bodies) to building a foundational infrastructure that others can build on top of to serve a wide variety of customers. Today, that infra is being used widely in India, but also by a number of countries.

It's that kind of global scalability that product managers can bring. And that's why India needs a lot more product managers, says S Sadagopan, chairman of the India chapter of the software product management association ISPMA, and former head of IIIT-Bangalore. There is a lot of tribal knowledge today, he says, that goes under the name of SPM. "That can be a handicap. We need good product managers who really understand the process," he says.

riety concerns," he says.

Sushil Gole, EVP & head of IT governance at CSB Bank, says that because institutions like banks churn out tons of financial data, Gen AI can be used to identify potential anomalies and detect fraudulent activities with never-before-seen accuracy. And that's just the start, says Gole. On the customer's side, Gen AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants, he says, will make all sorts of financial services far more seamless to access as well. "We at CSB Bank have just initiated that journey," he says.

The journey to incorporating generative AI solutions involves training foundational models on the proprietary data generated by companies like CSB, says Tushar Haralkar, principal pre-sales engineering country leader of security software at IBM India & South Asia.

"How long it takes to train the model depends on the volume of data that we are trying to feed in and making sure it is the right amount of data, because there will be multiple data sources from where the AI has to get that data to train and tune that model. And there are different kinds of models which are available too, like open-source models, which require different computational powers. What we have seen is that it takes around two to three weeks to train a model," he says.

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Gen AI has significantly transformed the cybersecurity landscape. Specifically, it has empowered security professionals, and improved cyber security tools, and threat detection capabilities and that's because Gen AI brings to the table vast amounts of data calculation at rapid speeds, which helps us proactively mitigate risks, and come up with swift responses and quicker identification of potential cyber threats.

Uwaraj Waman | PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT & PRACTICE HEAD, IAM INDIA, AJIAS

AI enabled solutions are going to play a key role in securing CSB Bank by substantially improving our productivity both at the tech level as well as at the human level. But when we're talking about integrating Gen AI into BFSI operations, it's imperative to prioritise security consideration first to safeguard sensitive data. If customer data is compromised, a hell of a lot of answers will be needed to be provided at various regulatory levels.

Sushil Gole | EVP, HEAD, IT GOVERNANCE, CSB BANK

I believe the intersection between Gen AI and cybersecurity is important. Using Gen AI, we can reduce the time to detect, the time to investigate, and the time to respond to cybersecurity attacks from hours to minutes and from weeks to hours. In the future, we must move from reactive to proactive security, so that we can prevent fraud from happening in the first place rather than investigating at a later stage. We can leverage AI for that as well.

Tushar Haralkar | PRINCIPAL PRE-SALES ENGINEERING COUNTRY LEADER, SECURITY SOFTWARE, IBM INDIA & SOUTH ASIA

# A vegetable seller's son turns a techie

Sree.Mani@timesgroup.com

### INSPIRATION

He was the son of a vegetable seller in Hyderabad, but is now a data administrator at an IT company. That journey came with lots of twists for Rakesh R. There was nobody to give him career advice, but a government scholarship for the economically backward enabled him to get into an engineering college. He studied electronic and electrical engineering, without really knowing what he wanted out of it.

After graduating, he tried for a job with the state government, but failed. So, he joined a Hyderabad-based robotics startup. "I was desperate for a job. I didn't know anything about robotics. I was sort of a store-boy at the company, keeping a tab of hardware. So, I left the firm when I got a job at another company for Rs 8,000 a month," he says.

This was a good engineering company, and he was working for a client in the telecom sector. But again, all he had to do was check if the telephone

cables were connected to the right user. "Had to simply plot the user's address on the telecom company's app using Google Maps," Rakesh recalls. But he stuck to it for about two years to support the family monetarily. He jumped to another job because of the higher pay of Rs 13,000. But within two weeks of that, a relative helped him move to an organisation that gave him a salary of Rs 36,000 a month. This was a marketing role, and nothing to do with what he had studied. "They were doing a pilot for some product. I worked there for six months but was paid for only three months. That's when it hit me that I should be focusing on roles, not months," he says.

Next-generation sequencing (NGS), also known as high-throughput sequencing, refers to a set of advanced, massively parallel sequencing technologies that have revolutionized genomic research. Unlike the first-generation sequencing (the Sanger sequencing method), which sequences one DNA molecule at a time, NGS allows for the sequencing of millions of small fragments of DNA simultaneously. This leap in technology offers substantial advantages in speed, throughput, and cost over traditional Sanger sequencing, enabling a wide array of genetic analyses to be performed more efficiently and economically. The advent of NGS has transformed biological and medical research, enabling the identification of genetic markers associated with diseases, understanding the genetic diversity within populations, and advancing personalized medicine.



► Manoj Gopalkrishnan's AlgoBio develops software that brings scale and efficiency to molecular testing processes. The Bengaluru-based startup's next-generation sequencing (NGS) enables faster and more accurate DNA/RNA sequencing, better insights into genes, diagnosis of rare diseases, study of tumours, and investigation of cellular biology.

► At the turn of the century, the first human genome was sequenced at the price tag of \$2.7 billion. Over the next two decades, this price point has come down to 0.00001% of that, but it still remains out of reach for many. Gopalkrishnan's patented Tapestry platform seamlessly integrates with industry standard sequencing workflows, significantly reducing time and cost. It enables compression of molecular information, just like compressing a computer file to reduce its size for easier sending and storage.

— Shilpa Phadnis

Mobius strip

A Mobius strip is a fascinating surface with the unique property of being non-orientable, which means it has only one side and one edge. This curious property makes it a subject of interest not only in mathematics but also in various fields such as art, physics, and engineering. Imagine taking a long, rectangular strip of

### GLOSSARY OF IN-GROUP TERMS USED



ON THIS PAGE

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paper. Give one end of the strip a half-twist (180 degrees), and then join the two ends of the strip together to form a loop. The resulting shape is a Mobius strip. The Mobius strip is named after the German mathematician August Ferdinand Möbius, who independently discovered the strip in 1858, around the same time as Johann Benedict Listing, another German mathematician.

# Humiliated on home turf

**Lower-Ranked Afghanistan Shock India In Chhetri's 150th International Match**

Sudeshna.Ghosh@timesgroup.com

**Guwahati:** Sunil Chhetri did not disappoint in another of his landmark games. However, India were left with one of their most disappointing results on home soil in a 1-2 defeat to Afghanistan in their crucial FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium on Tuesday.

After scoring in his 50th and 100th matches in national colours, India's milestone man ended his team's scoring rut since November to add his name to the scoring charts in his 150th international game for the country on Tuesday.

However, Afghanistan, who had held India to a goalless draw in the first fixture in Saudi Arabia, made sure that it was just a sub-plot in the clash as Rahmat Akbari (70th) levelled the score just three minutes after skipper Chhetri was substituted by Igor Stimac in the second half. And despite the Indians trying their best to make amends in the last minutes, it was once again the Ashley Westwood-coached Afghans who stole the game away from the hosts when Sharif Mukhammad converted a penalty for his team with two minutes of regulation time left.

India's defeat did not change their second position in Group A, at least till the return fixture between third-placed Kuwait and leaders Qatar later in the day. However, with



four points from four matches so far, India have made their return fixture against Kuwait in Kolkata, scheduled for June 6, a must-win scenario.

It was a different story for Haider Amiri-led Afghanistan, lying 41 places below India on the FIFA ladder, who scripted their first win of the qualifiers and gave a fitting farewell to veteran Amiri playing

his last match for the national team. But it was a hugely disappointing performance by the home side who were unable to take advantage of the home conditions. The passes were wayward and the crosses seldom reached their desired targets. Neither Liston Colaco from the left nor Manvir Singh from the right could strew in chances that was not dealt with by the Amiri-led Afghan defence. And Brandon Fernandez, getting his first start in almost a year, also lacked the zing in his set-pieces. The best chance for India came early on, in the third minute, when Chhetri could not convert Colaco's cross inside the box and Manvir sent the ensuing rebound high and wide. Soon, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu was forced to save an Amiri header after a corner kick.

## WC QUALIFIERS: HOW THEY STAND IN GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	Pt
<b>Qatar</b>	3	3	0	0	9
<b>India</b>	4	1	1	2	4
<b>Afghanistan</b>	4	1	1	2	4
<b>Kuwait</b>	3	1	0	2	3

## Keeper Panthoi moves to Australia

Marcus.Mergulhao@timesgroup.com



its high standards for women's football. But I've been preparing for this opportunity for a long time and won't disappoint."

Besides her stint with Metro United where she will be the first-choice goalkeeper, the 28-year-old will also train with A-League side Adelaide United, whose coach Adriana Stenta had spotted her during the 'Women in Sports' elite football tri-

als in Kolkata last year.

"It was Adrian who spotted Panthoi as a potential target for the future, but since the A-League runs from September to April, he recommended her to Metro United," player representative Anuj Kichlu told TOL. "There is a small month-long overlap between the state leagues and A-League, so the top players can be seen in action. The aim is to play in the local leagues and then move forward." Metro United have already played the first two games of the season with Panthoi expected to join them for the third game.

On June 6, Sunil Chhetri and Co will face off against Kuwait in Kolkata



and then play away to Qatar five days later on June 11. Despite sounding confident, the coach, who was booed by the crowd during the match and also while leaving the stadium, wasn't happy with the performance of his players. "What I was not happy about in these two games is that we could not bring the intensity to a needed level. There was no effective impact from the players from the bench which was obvious. If you take three front players who worked really hard today in the frontline, you expect some impact there, some stability and some good control passing. But it didn't happen," said the coach after the game.

"Obviously we were giving too many simple passes away and conceded silly goals. Most of the game, we controlled well. But once again it's proved that when you see some of their players' passing and ball control, you ask yourselves, where we stand," he added. TOL

## Former China soccer chief jailed for life

**Beijing:** A former chief of China's soccer association has been sentenced to life in prison for accepting more than \$10 million in bribes, state media reported on Tuesday, following one of the biggest anti-corruption probes in the sport in years.

The sentence handed down to Chen Xuyuan came in the wake of probes into more than a dozen high-level soccer officials since late 2022. Chen had brought "tremendous damage" to Chinese soccer, the official Xinhua news agency reported, citing a court ruling.

The sport has long grappled with corruption, which fans have blamed for the enduring underperformance of the national team. In 2012, two former chiefs of the same soccer association were each sentenced to 10 1/2 years in jail for taking bribes.

Chen, 67, had worked on the docks in Shanghai when he was a youth. He eventually became the head of Shanghai International Port Co in the 2010s, before chairing the Chinese Football Association (CFA) in 2019. A court in central Hubei province found Chen had taken advantage of his various posts from 2010 to 2023, including those linked to the CFA, to aid others in matters regarding project contracting, investment



Chen Xuyuan (C), former chairman of Chinese Football Association, stands during his trial operations and sports events arrangements, Xinhua reported.

In return, Chen accepted money and valuables worth over 81 million yuan (\$11.22 million). In a state TV documentary series on corruption aired in January, Chen confessed to accepting bribes and described one incident the night before he became CFA chairman when he received backpacks containing cash from two local soccer officials.

Confessions of corruption have become a common feature on national television since President Xi Jinping came to power and unleashed a sweeping anti-graft campaign. "They came into my room, casually placed their backpacks on my sofa, and said, 'congratulations, president Chen, we hope you can take care of us more,'" he said.

"When I asked what they were offering, they responded it is just a tradition and they all do it this way."

On Chen's sentencing, the People's Daily, the official paper of the ruling Communist Party, said there was no end point to the fight against corruption. AGENCIES

## STIMAC PROMISES IMPROVEMENT BY JUNE

**Guwahati:** India might have gone down to Afghanistan in Guwahati on Tuesday in their World Cup qualifier but coach Igor Stimac is still quite confident of advancing to the next stage. Speaking to the broadcaster, the Croatian coach said, "I am confident about what we are going to do in June and I gave the reasons why that confidence is coming from me. We are going to have enough time to prepare everything, work really hard and improve on things."

On June 6, Sunil Chhetri and Co will face off against Kuwait in Kolkata and then play away to Qatar five days later on June 11. Despite sounding confident, the coach, who was booed by the crowd during the match and also while leaving the stadium, wasn't happy with the performance of his players. "What I was not happy about in these two games is that we could not bring the intensity to a needed level. There was no effective impact from the players from the bench which was obvious. If you take three front players who worked really hard today in the frontline, you expect some impact there, some stability and some good control passing. But it didn't happen," said the coach after the game.

Lahn said, "Xabi was an intelligent player, but is also an intelligent person and that's why I think he is thinking carefully about what his next steps could be. "Is now the right time (to move on from Leverkusen) or later? I'm excited to see (where he goes). I'm sure he'll coach big-ger clubs than Leverkusen in his coaching career."

## 'Strategist' Alonso to make right call on future: Lahm

**Munich:** Philipp Lahm backed Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso on Tuesday to make the right decision on his future, calling his former Bayern Munich teammate "a strategist". Xabi Alonso has always been a strategist. You could already predict he was going to become a great coach," Lahm said in an interview.



Lahn said, "Xabi was an intelligent player, but is also an intelligent person and that's why I think he is thinking carefully about what his next steps could be. "Is now the right time (to move on from Leverkusen) or later? I'm excited to see (where he goes). I'm sure he'll coach big-ger clubs than Leverkusen in his coaching career."

Lahn played alongside Alonso for three years at Bayern, with both retiring in the summer of 2017. Lahm is now tournament director for Euro 2024 hosts Germany, while Alonso has since emerged into the hottest coaching property in football.

## Anti-doping fraud attempt: Brazil's Barbosa banned

**Buenos Aires:** Flamengo's former Brazil forward Gabriel Barbosa Almeida was suspended for two years by a Brazilian sports court on Monday for attempted anti-doping fraud. The 27-year-old, known as Gabigol, was accused of making it difficult to carry out an anti-doping test the day before Flamengo's game in the Rio de Janeiro state league, which he took hours after his team mates, media reported.

## 'ANGEL DI MARIA THREATENED BY DRUG GANGS IN ROSARIO'

**Buenos Aires:** Argentine police and prosecutors are investigating an anonymous death threat to soccer star Angel Di Maria delivered in his hometown of Rosario.

Monday's message, following a similar threat last year to Argentine captain Messi, came a week after Di Maria, now playing for Benfica, said he would like to end his career at his boyhood club, Rosario Central. "Tell your son Angel not to come back to Rosario because we will kill a family member," the message read, according to the news portal Infobae, which cited police sources. "Not even Pullaro is going to save you," it added,

Lahn played alongside Alonso for three years at Bayern, with both retiring in the summer of 2017. Lahm is now tournament director for Euro 2024 hosts Germany, while Alonso has since emerged into the hottest coaching property in football.

That kind of threat brings a lot of social commotion and that is their aim – to make the population scared, hit public figures," Esteban Santantonio, who works in security for the local government, told broadcaster Todo Noticias. Rosario has been rocked by waves of violence between rival drug dealing groups. AGENCIES

## Dark days behind him, Anirban living the real dream now

Mousumi.Bora@timesgroup.com

**I**t's a homecoming of every sort," said Anirban Lahiri, opening with a customary quip. "I've been telling some of my friends that for me, it's the fifth major and I'm finding it harder and harder to get into the majors, so I'm glad that I'm playing this week."

He was referring to the Hero Indian Open. The 36-year-old, back with "fewer hair" and grey streaks peeping out of his cap, seemed content with life.

It wasn't so almost three years ago. When the world was dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, Lahiri faced the demons too.

A change had to come. Since then, he has switched from the USPGA Tour to LIV Golf and moved from American shores to the Middle-eastern hub of Dubai. But before that, he had to go through the storm. On the verge of quitting golf, a disillusioned Lahiri returned to India with a one-way ticket in December 2021.

"I told my coach Vijay Divecha that I'm not going back because I didn't want to play. So, I had to go through a healing process. That was the year I got Covid, the year I went to Tokyo Olympics," he recalled, happy to have emerged from the depths of despair.

"People have talked a lot about mental health. I've dealt with the challenges, and I am happy to say that I'm exactly where I want to be in my life right now," he added. "The whys were very important, and they were beginning to disappear. Because the whys became Fedex Cup points, the whys became playoffs, events and Presidents Cup. Of course, these are goals to have but when they overtake your life, it can be quite miserable."

He had a serious bout of Covid. His wife Ipsa, who had also contracted the virus, had to drive for seven hours from Palm Beach to Hilton Head for



him. "It was a harrowing time. Covid certainly gave me a different perspective on life. My wife had a rougher go at it because she had to look after me and our two-year-old infant."

Away from India and immediate family, they never felt so alone. "Also, we were going through a reality check, and I was getting more and more unhappy."

Looking through the window, others may have thought he was "living the dream" but it had turned sour. "Only I knew I was miserable, and this was one of the main reasons I joined LIV."

PCB approaches Ronchi for head coach position

ing the Pakistan cricket team.

Ronchi had previously denied the opportunity to take up the head coach role of the Men in Green, after which Grant Bradburn was appointed to the post in April 2023.

PCB has been on a hunt for a new men's national team head coach since Bradburn parted ways with Pakistan after the World Cup last year.

Former Pakistan player Moham-

mad Hafeez served as the head coach and team director during their tours to Australia and New Zealand. But last month, he stepped down from the post of team director.

Shane Watson had then emerged as the top contender to fill the position.

It offered him the gateway to the stability and work-life balance he was yearning for. "People who do not understand what I've been through will not understand this but that is their problem. I've made my peace and I'm at a much better place now mentally and physically. India is just a short flight away. I can see my family, coach. I have two young kids and I get to watch them grow up. Why have I done so much in my career if I can't do those things?"

Anirban dwelled on the beautiful stories being written around him. "I go back a long way with a lot of the guys who are now here at DLF G&CC," he said.

Matteo Manassero was the European Tour's youngest winner at age 17 and 188 days in 2010. Having lost his card in 2018, the Italian returned to claim his second win after 11 years, two weeks ago. "Matteo was probably at the peak of his career when I was getting on the Tour," Lahiri glanced back.

Familiar face Kiradech Aphibarnrat had his own struggles with loneliness on the PGA Tour and post-Covid issues, and was thinking of early retirement. On Sunday, he was runner-up at

the Singapore Classic. "Kiradech and I went through a similar rollercoaster ride," Anirban could empathize with the Thai. And there is 'Belgian bomber' Nicolas Colsaerts. In 2021, he was diagnosed with primary membranous nephropathy, an autoimmune condition which can lead to kidney failure. "It's been a little bit of a struggle to get back to form after that forced break," said the 41-year-old Ryder Cup vice-captain.

"I've been doing it for more than 20 years, and all of a sudden you ask yourself different questions. Sometimes, it takes a little bit longer to find answers. Now, when I wake up in the morning, I know exactly why I'm doing this again, which wasn't the case the last couple of years."

Lahiri went back, "I remember Nico was my playing partner in Abu Dhabi when I was new on the Tour. He was top-50 then."

Maybe the 2015 Indian Open winner can write another chapter here. "You ask me what's the motivating factor, you have it right there," Lahiri asserted. "We are all out here trying to win tournaments. I want to win, I am desperate to win."

## Govt approves wrestler Punia's request for financial assistance

**New Delhi:** The sports ministry on Tuesday approved wrestler Bajrang Punia's request for financial assistance and also extended the tenure of his strength and conditioning coach Kazi Kiron Mustafa Hasan till end of May even though he is out of contention for the Paris Olympics this year.

Punia, who is part of a long-standing protest against the Wrestling Federation of India for alleged sexual harassment of women grapplers by its former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, had failed to finish in the top-four of the 65kg category at the recent trials to pick the squads for the Asian Championships and the Asian Olympic Qualifiers next month.

"Mission Olympic Cell



approved for him.

As per the selection criteria, the top-four in all the Olympic weight categories will take on the quota winner in the final selection trials to decide who will represent India at the Games.

Apart from the 30-year-old Punia, the MOC also approved Commonwealth Games champion table tennis player Sreeja Akula's request for financial assistance to train in Chinese Taipei ahead of the Olympics. Sreeja will train under coach Liu Jun-Lin for 12 days.

The MOC also approved judoka Tulika Mann's request for financial assistance for participation in a Grand Slam event in Antalya followed by training camp at the same location. PNI

## SREEJA RISES TO CAREER-BEST 40 IN ITTF RANKINGS

**New Delhi:** Leading Indian table tennis player G Sathiyan on Tuesday leapfrogged 43 places to be 60 while Sreeja Akula rose to a career-high 40 in the ITTF World Rankings, following their WTT Feeder Series title wins last week.

TODAY'S  
FACE-OFF | PLAYED 21  
SRH VS MI | TV TIME 7.30 PM  
STAR SPORTS / JIOCINEMA



LAST FIVE MATCHES  
SRH L L L L L  
MI L L W W L  
VENUE: HYDERABAD  
ODDS  
SRH 11/10 MI 5/10

# TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2024 IPL 2024

I WAS TRYING TO BOWL AS MANY DOT BALLS AS POSSIBLE TO CREATE PRESSURE ON THE BATTERS. THE DOT BALLS GIVE YOU WICKETS IN THE END.  
— Harpreet Brar  
PUNJAB KINGS SPINNER

# SUPER KINGS BOSS OVER TITANS

Allround Show Helps Chennai Hammer Gujarat By 63 Runs

Shrivathsan.S@timesgroup.com

**Chennai:** Not for nothing are Chennai Super Kings considered a different beast at home in the IPL. Despite opting for a brand-new bowling template and boldly fielding only one specialist spinner at the MA Chidambaram Stadium here on Tuesday, Chennai were too good for Gujarat Titans during their comprehensive 63-run victory.

After the batting trio of Rachin Ravindra, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and Shivam Dube powered CSK to a mammoth 206-6, the bowling unit, which comprised only one tweaker in left-armers Ravindra Jadeja, did more than enough to restrict GT to 143-8. Super Kings thus notched up their second successive win, while Titans endured their first defeat of the season.

Defending a huge total at the venue referred to as the team's fortress, CSK were in cruise control throughout the second half. Medium pacer Deepak Chahar (2-28) set the

tone by removing both openers – GT skipper Shubman Gill and Wriddhiman Saha – in his first spell, following which his bowling colleagues took the onus to get the job done.

With both Matheesha Pathirana (1-29) and Mustafizur Rahman (2-30) finding a place in the playing XII, Chennai sent down as many as 18 overs of pace, indicating a clear deviation from their usual template of choking the opposition with spin. Barring 'local lad' B Sai Sudharsan (37 off 31 balls, 3x4), who came on as an 'Impact Player' in the chase, none of the Titans batters showed good application on a pitch that hardly had any demons on it.

Earlier, invited to bat first, Super Kings were off to a blazing start on a belter, courtesy Ravindra's belligerent knock. Stylish southpaw Ravindra (46 off 20 balls, 6x4, 3x6) provided the opening burst and picked up from where he left off. He had also scored an aggressive 37 against RCB in the opener. Ravindra ruled the Powerplay, at the end of which CSK were 69-1.

While Ravindra hammered the Titans bowling attack into submission from the word go, Ruturaj (46 off 36 balls, 5x4, 1x6) made the most of an early reprieve to lay a solid foundation. Dube, CSK's designated spin hitter in the middle overs, took no time to settle down, playing his role to perfection with an influential



**22** Balls taken by Shivam Dube to race to his fifty, the second quickest in this edition of the IPL. Andre Russell (64\* off 25) had taken only 20 balls to reach the milestone for KKR vs SRH in Kolkata on March 23. Dube's quickest fifty came off 20 balls during his innings of 50 off 21 balls against KKR in Kolkata on April 23, 2023.

23-ball 51 (2x4, 5x6).

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Ruturaj duly accepted the gift.

At the other end, Ravindra made mincemeat of new-ball partners Omarzai and Umesh Yadav before being stumped by Saha off leggie Rashid Khan. Ravindra's innings had an assortment of strokes, be it a flick for a maximum over deep fine-leg or crisp cover drive for a four over covers.

Another left-hander, Dube, too left a mark in the middle after beginning his knock with successive sixes off left-arm spinner Sai Kishore.

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