



# DANCE of DEMOCRACY

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ASKED BY MP

- Whether the govt has any proposal to set up a Railway Coach Factory in Kazipet in Telangana? (July 10, 2019)
- Amount of Krishna water allocated to Telangana and AP? Whether the ministry has investigated claims that excess water is being drawn? Water drawn from river to be used for hydel generation without obtaining clearances from KRMB (Dec 8, 2022)

2 BATTLEGROUND TELANGANA

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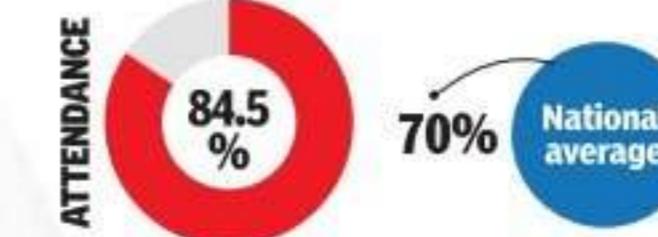
## HOW TELANGANA MPs FARED

**Uttam Kumar Reddy**

(61) Nalgonda

DEBATES ■ 18

QUESTIONS ■ 187



- Whether the railways is considering any proposal to build a direct railway line between Hyderabad and Vijayawada along NH 65? The details of journey time and distance travelled between these two cities. Whether this time and distance can be reduced significantly by connecting these two cities via a railway line? (March 24, 2021)



Nalgonda

THE TIMES OF INDIA | HYDERABAD, TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024

# Parties fear cross-voting ahead of Mahabubnagar MLC bypolls

March 28 Litmus Test Ahead Of Lok Sabha Polls

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**Hyderabad:** With hundreds of elected representatives in local bodies shifting their loyalties in the last few months, political parties are worried over cross-voting in Mahabubnagar local authorities constituency MLC seat, the bypolls of which are being held on March 28.

Of the total 1,439 voters who are the elected members of local bodies such as municipal ward members, ZPTC and MPTC members, mandal praja parishad presidents, about 1,000 of them have been shifted to Goa, Karnataka and Kerala by Congress and BRS to avoid poaching.

They will be brought to Mahabubnagar on the day of polling, an insider privy to the developments said.

Interestingly, the BJP, which has 100 elected members in segments like Narayanpet, is also fearing cross-voting to Congress.

**Digital health profile cards by July: Min**  
**Hyderabad:** IT and industries minister D Sridhar Babu on Monday revealed the state govt's intention to distribute 'health profile cards' to citizens starting in July. Speaking at a programme in city, the minister said these digital cards aim to facilitate prompt medical assistance during emergencies. TNN

**'Cong committed to SC categorisation'**  
**Hyderabad:** Chief minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday assured that the Cong govt will pursue the case of categorisation of SCs into A, B, C, and D groups, an issue currently under the purview of central govt. The assurance came during a meeting, where AICC secretary SA Sampath Kumar and other leaders discussed strategies. TNN

## BATTLE OF PRESTIGE FOR TOP LEADERS

- BRS until 2023 had a strength of 36 members in legislative council
- Congress & CM Revanth Reddy considers election prestigious
- BJP fears cross-voting to Congress party in Narayanpet



### TWO VACANCIES UNDER GOVERNOR QUOTA

- Previous BRS govt recommended two names: Dasoji Sravan and K Satyanarayana
- Former governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has not considered the BRS nominees

### THE STRENGTH GAME

Seats in Telangana legislative council



40

- BRS: 24, ■ Congress: 3,
- AIMIM: 2 ■ BJP: 1
- PRTU: 1, ■ Independent: 1,
- Nominated: 4
- Vacancies: 4

• Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda graduates constituency seat falls vacant

- BRS urged council chairman to disqualify two MLCs as they shift loyalties
- Decision on nomination is still pending with new governor CP Radhakrishnan

In this election, Congress fielded Manne Jeevan Reddy, a relative of BRS sitting MP from Mahabubnagar.

Reddy, who was vice-chairperson of Mahabubnagar zilla parishad.

"Of the 1,439 electors, nearly 72% of them belonged to the BRS. But in the changed scenario, hundreds of BRS members have joined Congress — officially and unofficially — as part of the party's 'operation akash'. The pink party has also lost several municipalities in the no-confidence motions

BRs nominated two MLCs, which were rejected by former governor

Congress govt nominations were nullified by the court

Sources said the previous governor did not decide on the high court observations on Kodandaram and Khan, resent after the court order, as the Congress had sent just a regular note, one not cleared by the cabinet, which is the norm.

Dasoji Sravan told TOI that he sought updates from the govt and Raj Bhavan but got no response. "I filed an RTI application with both the govt and Raj Bhavan," he said. While govt officials said they could not nominate the same names again because the governor had taken a legal opinion, Raj Bhavan said the file was not with them. "The new governor may take more time to review files," a source said. "It will be a tough decision."

with the state cabinet's advice. The court nullified the new Congress government's names to replace them with M Kodandaram and Amer Ali Khan.

tting that the party's national manifesto carries the same spirit of 'six guarantees' promised by it in Telangana.

AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi will release the Telugu version of the national manifesto at a public meeting in Tukkuguda in April first week.

Chief minister A Revanth Reddy has directed the party to take the Congress LS manifesto to every door while also explaining how the state govt is now accessible to the common man.

"Every leader, including seniors, have to abide by the party leadership's decisions. If they have any objections or suggestions, they can raise them in internal party meetings. Stringent disciplinary action will be taken against those violating these directions irrespective of their seniority in the party," he said.

In a statement, Telangana Congress working president and MLC B Mahesh Kumar Goud said disciplinary action would be taken against the leaders speaking against the party decisions in public fora.

He alleged that Congress party cheated on people by making false promises in the Nov 30 assembly elections and now getting ready to seek votes in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The former minister said if the Congress fulfills its promise now, the BRS would not complain to Election Commission on violation of model code of conduct.

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# City's air quality improved in 5 years, but still above WHO limit, says study

In '23, Hyd PM2.5 Was Eight Times More Than Limit

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**Hyderabad:** Pegging the average PM 2.5 levels in Hyderabad at 39.9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$  in 2023, a recent study indicated an improvement in the quality of air, when compared to the last five years. PM2.5 levels in the city were at 42.4  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$  in 2022, as per the study.

Shared by the Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB), the study was conducted by IQAir; a Swiss-based air quality technology company. It took records between 2019 and 2023. While an improvement in certain parameters is undeniable, a thorough ana-

**LET HYD BREATHE**

lysis shows that the PM 2.5 levels in the city continue to be nearly eight times above WHO's acceptable standard of 5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$ .

The study also compared pollution levels across six different cities, which highlighted that Hyderabad's PM2.5 levels are higher in comparison to other southern counterparts like Bengaluru (28.6) and Chennai (28.6) and only marginally lower than Mumbai (43.8).

"Hyderabad's figures are



## POLLUTION PATTERNS IN STATE



**PM 10 LEVELS**

Cities	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24*
Hyderabad	101	98	97	87	83
Patancheru	86	75	77	81	80
Nalgonda	57	51	57	54	57
Sangareddy	85	78	84	80	78

Note: All values are expressed in  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  | \* till date

### 'Road infra, e-transport in focus'

**Hyderabad:** While acknowledging high pollution levels, the TSPCB highlighted there has been an improvement over the previous years. Senior social scientist Prasanna Kumar said, "Measures being taken include targeting hotspot areas, improving road infrastructure, increasing mechanical road sweeping to reduce silt load, developing green belts, and managing construction and demolition waste effectively. Additionally, efforts are underway to transition from diesel buses to e-buses in GHMC, and install Adaptive Traffic Control System (ATCS) and pelican signals." **TNN**

particularly concerning when compared to cities like Mumbai and Bengaluru, known for traffic congestion and urbanisation. Also, the report lacks clarity on the specific parameters considered in reaching this conclusion such as traffic, industrial emissions, burning practices, and ongoing construction activities in IT parks etc, even in districts which are undergoing rapid development," said S Gutti kunda, an urban air pollution expert.

In the case of PM 10, figures for the state were found to be over five times the permissible limit of 15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$ . As per the study, the average PM 10 levels in Nalgonda, Patancheru, Sangareddy, and Hyderabad, were 57, 80, 78 and 83 respectively. PM 2.5 and PM 10 are tiny airborne particles that can deeply penetrate the lungs, posing serious risks to health.

Experts highlighted that the numbers appear much lower than TSPCB's Ambient Air Quality's monthly data, complicating assessment. For instance, as per TSPCB's data, in areas within the city such as Madhapur, Jubilee Hills, Old City, Abids, Kompally, Jeedimetla, Kukatpally, Uppal etc., the average PM 10 has soared to an average of 120. In locations like Gachibowli and Sanathnagar, it has exceeded 200. Icrisat region of Patancheru had an average PM 10 ranging from 130 to 180 over recent years. Meanwhile, Sangareddy and Nalgonda have seen ranges between 60 and 80.

In case of PM 2.5 levels too, the TSPCB data showed no change in trend with levels remaining high. Nalgonda and Sangareddy experienced moderately high levels, averaging between 30 and 40, while Patancheru's average ranged from 40 to 60. Hyderabad's levels were between 40 and 80. "There are 14 continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations in Hyderabad, while the rest of the state has none. We need more stations, especially in developing cities like Warangal, Adilabad, Karimnagar," said environmentalist Sai Bhaskar Reddy.

**Techie duped of ₹5.6L over H-1B visa**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** A software engineer from the city lost ₹5.6 lakh after transactions on a fake website of a reputed agency promising to provide sponsorship for H-1B visa. In his complaint, the senior software engineer in a tech firm, said he came across an ad on Facebook in July 2023 offering visa transfer services. He contacted them on

## Parts of T on orange alert, temp to touch 45°C in next few days

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert for various districts in Telangana from March 27 to March 29. These areas are expected to witness very high heat levels, with temperatures here likely to shoot up to 45°C.

According to the alert, on Day 1 – that is March 27 – Adilabad, Nirmal, Nizamabad,

Jagtiyal, Rajana Sircilla, Karimnagar, Mancherial, Asifabad, Pedapalli will be on orange alert. The heat condition will persist on March 28 and spread to east and south Telangana to districts like Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Warangal, Hanumakonda, Mahabubnagar, Bhadrakali, Khammam, Suryapet, Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar, Narayanpet.

"Maximum temperatures are likely to rise by 2 to 3 deg-

## 14-yr-old boy riding pillion dies as minor driving scooter crashes it into divider

**Hyderabad:** A 14-year-old boy riding pillion with his 16-year-old friend on two-wheeler died in a road accident at Mehdi patnam on Monday morning. The boys were returning home after offering 'namaz' at a mosque in Asif Nagar, Humayun Nagar police said.

According to police, the

14-year-old boy, a resident of Gudimalkapur, went to offer 'namaz' on his father's scooter on Monday morning. After completing the prayers, he met his friend and they started home on the scooter. His friend was riding and the boy was riding pillion on the two-wheeler. En route, they were riding at high spe-

ed and, in an attempt to avoid hitting a bus in the front, they lost control and rammed into the divider. Both of them fell off the bike, received multiple injuries and were rushed to Osmania Hospital, where the 14-year-old died undergoing treatment around 11am. His friend is undergoing treatment. **TNN**



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Colours, gujiya and thandai make their mark during Holi celebrations across Hyderabad



## JOY & COLOUR SPILL ON STREETS

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### COMMUNITY CONNECT

The city sported a vibrant look as residents immersed themselves in Holi colours on Monday. The revelries began early morning with

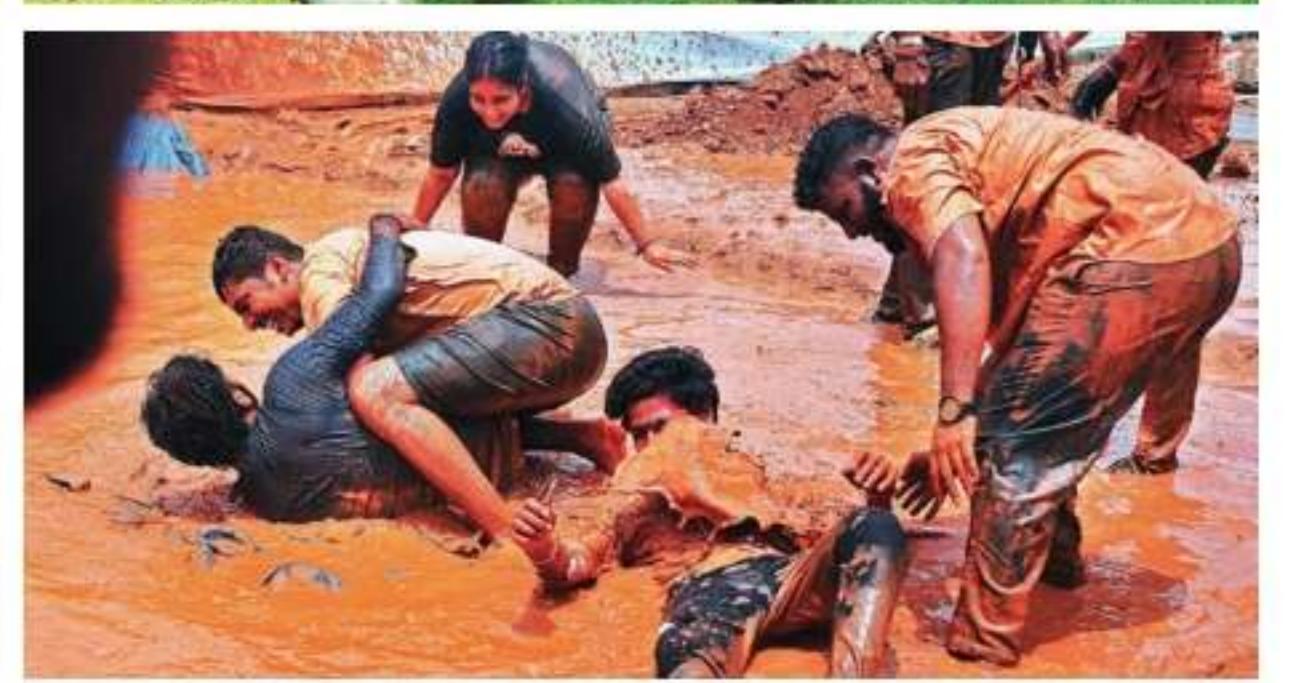
lively gatherings and 'Happy Holi' greetings, as people — led by children and youngsters — splashed colours and water at each other. The remnants of the previous night's Holika dahan were still visible at various street corners, emitting wisps of smoke.

For many families, gujiya, thandai and jalebi are an integral part of Holi celebrations. "We usually make gujiya, thandai, jalebi, mathari and other such snacks a week before the festival," said Srimanasi Ahuja, a professor from Somajiguda.

Anand Aswale, a techie from Gachibowli, said: "The Holika symbolises triumph of good over evil. During this period, individuals unite, letting go of past conflicts."

While Holi celebrations were organised at some venues in the city, groups of people, mostly youngsters, flocked the streets playing colours. "This festival reminds us of our country's vibrant, colourful, and joyful culture," said Nidhi Tewatiya, a 17-year-old student from Begumpet.

"Even as we celebrated Holi, we remained mindful of not wasting water in the midst of all the fun," said Avinash Baghel, a civil engineer from Kukatpally.



### RAMZAN TIMINGS

Iftar (Tuesday) 6.36 pm  
Sehri (Wednesday) 5.08 am

### Infant found abandoned on roadside

**Hyderabad:** An infant girl child was found abandoned on the roadside at Uppal on Sunday night.

Locals who saw the child crying, alerted police and health officials, who rescued the child and handed over her to the women and child welfare department for further care.

According to cops, locals found the 2-month-old infant wrapped in a cloth lying on the road near Kurma Nagar. Police said the girl looked healthy and that a probe has been initiated to find those who abandoned the child and the motive behind the act. **TNN**

### Event held to support children with SMA

**CureSMA Foundation of India**, in collaboration with Syntex, on Sunday, held an event aimed at supporting children affected by Spinal Muscular Atrophy. **TNN**

## 500 trees axed for new HC, claim agri varsity students

'100 Acres Home To More Than 400 Species Of Plants'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Amid protests by students of Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University in Rajendranagar, the state govt has started clearing land for construction of a new high court building. Students claimed that about 500 trees — both big and small — were axed without the authorities even bothering to translocate them.

Students alleged that the govt, which allocated 100 acres of varsity land for the court building, sent men and machinery to first clear 10 acres on a war footing. The 100-acre land is home to over 2.5 lakh trees and has over 400 species of plants and 200 species of birds, they said.

"The land near the school of agricultural business management was cleared overnight. We tried to stop chopping down the trees, but the officials did not pay heed to our request," Raj Kumar, a research scholar, bemoaned. A majority of the trees which were cut were As-

### TREES CLEARED OVERNIGHT

500 trees — big & small — axed without authorities even bothering to translocate them, say students of Agricultural University

100 acres of varsity land allocated for court building by State govt  
100-acre land home to over 2.5L trees & over 400 species of plants and 200 species of birds

Men & machinery sent by govt to first clear 10 acres on a war footing, claim students

Land near school of agricultural business management cleared overnight, say students

hoka and oil palm trees. There were some medicinal plants as well, he alleged.

B Surrender, a PhD scholar, said the chopped trees were cleared overnight. "This exercise seems to be an effort to show that there are no trees in the allocated land. But that's not the case. There are many trees on the allocated land," he said.

After the govt allocated land for the high court, students started protesting, claiming that giving away 100 acres of land would disturb the flora and fauna, which have a severe impact on their research work. They said the exercise of cutting down the

trees was stopped after they asked the officials to show them the govt order or permission copy issued to clear these trees. The students said that once an order copy is provided, they are planning to approach court to stop the construction as using the university land will not only create environmental imbalance but also affect their research.

The allocated land houses an agri biodiversity park, the newly-inaugurated drone academy, butterfly park and medicinal and aromatic plants, among others, the students claimed. However, repeated attempts to reach university officials went unanswered.

**Hyderabad:** Upset over being allegedly harassed in the name of love, a 16-year-old girl died by suicide at her residence in Meerpeta on Sunday. Meerpeta police registered an abetment of suicide case against the boy, Sunny, and started an investigation.

Police said that the girl, a resident of SCB Colony in Meerpeta, was studying Intermediate I year at a private residential college at Kuntloor. After completion of her final examinations, she returned home.



Meanwhile, Sunny, who stays in the neighbourhood, started harassing the girl in the name of love. Despite the girl avoiding him, he continued harassing her.

Allegedly upset over this, the girl took her life, her parents told police. Following a complaint from the parents, police started a probe. "A hunt is on to nab Sunny," police said. **TNN**

Under investigation. A case under Section 174 of the CrPC has been registered at the Koutala police station.

### Teen kills self over harassment

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## All four youngsters were drunk, none knew how to swim: Police

**From P1**  
2 drowned while bathing in river at Maheshwaram

**Hyderabad:** Two persons met with watery grave as they went to take bath in a pond in Maheshwaram after playing holi, on Monday.

Police said that S Jagan and K Suresh, both aged 30

are amateur swimmers, and after playing holi went to take bath along with friends.

After swimming for some time, Jagan got tired and sought Suresh's help. When Suresh went to hold Jagan, both started to drown. The onlookers alerted police, but by the time police reached, both of them had drowned to death.

Police then pressed in swimmers and recovered the bodies. A case was registered under section 174 (suspicious death) of CrPC. **TNN**



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### 'Book cases for atrocities on tribals'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Expressing anguish over the Chengicherla incident, Union minister, Telangana BJP chief G Kishan Reddy demanded that police book cases for atrocities committed against tribals.



He visited the area after the violence and interacted with those who were injured.

"This kind of harassment against women of a particular community has become routine here. We will go to any extent if justice is not delivered. We will complain to the Election Commission," he said.

He also alleged that double-bedroom houses were not allotted to locals but outsiders from other states and other areas were given.

"Videos have gone viral on how violence took place while police remained silent," he said and added that police must book non-bailable cases.

Hyderabad Lok Sabha constituency BJP candidate Komella Madhavi Latha alleged that many foreigners were living illegally in the Chegicherla area.

## Chengicherla: Loud music triggers clash between two groups

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Scuffle broke out between members of rival groups and stones were pelted. Several persons, including women, were hurt in the melee. The entire incident was caught on camera.**

under control. Following the incident, security was beefed up anticipating more trouble.

On Sunday evening, members of a community were celebrating by playing loud music. Members of another community took objection, claiming that it was disturbing as it was prayer time.

Members of both communities came face to face and an argument ensued. Within no time, a scuffle broke out between the members of the rival groups and stones were also pelted. Several persons, including women, suffered injuries in the melee. The entire incident was caught on camera.

On learning about the disturbance, Medipally police rushed to the spot and tried to bring the situation

**TIMES inter act**

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## City techies spot rural school in need, make a sporting gesture

Duo Provide Sport Equipment, Plan More Support

Donita.Jose@timesgroup.com

**Hyderabad:** A government primary school tucked away in a remote village called Ghanapur in Vikarabad district has been brimming with activity for the past few weeks. The 60 students, all below 10 years, are an enthused lot, excited to try their hands at the new sporting equipment they have received. Their Samaritans? Two IT professionals from Hyderabad with a motto to give back to the society.

The initiative was taken up by 60-year-old Subrahmanyam Neerukonda, who was reached out to by his friend Rajendra Tunuguntla with a request for a desktop for a school.

"My friend Rajendra had previously helped a school. So the headmaster of Ghanapur primary school reached out to me through him seeking a desktop. We both took my old desktop for the kids. There we noticed how bright and energetic the kids were, and how they were eager to learn more," said Subrahmanyam.

The IT professional was highly impressed by the headmaster's drive to give wholesome education to his students. "The children there in fact had also won some innovation and science challenges, which moti-



vated me to try my best for them," he said.

With an amount of ₹10,000, the two friends got the students four carrom boards, badminton equipment, cricket kits and tennis kit rings. "Schools in Hyderabad often have someone helping them, but rural schools have no such support. Since I had helped a school before, this headmaster reached out to me, and I told him in touch with Subrahmanyam," said Rajendra Tunuguntla, CEO of an IT company, and a social worker. The two professionals are now looking to coordinate and get more support for

the school, which is in need of five green chalk boards and additional sport equipment.

"When professionals, that too from the IT field and from the city, visit rural and remote schools, it enthuses the students with a lot of encouragement towards studies," said Boddu Gopal, headmaster of the school.

"After their visit, not only did their contribution help us with material items, but also helped in encouraging parents to send their wards to the school. Since, many children are first generation learners with their parents working as shepherds and agricultural labourers, this is a huge push for them."

## Harassed for sex, labourer kills pal

**Hyderabad:** A labourer who was allegedly harassing a man for sex was killed by the latter at Ghatkesar on Sunday.

Police said that the accused, who works as a labourer in Kondapur, had approached the victim a while back for work. Both later became friends, but the accused decided to murder him due to constant harassment for sex, police said. On Sunday, the accused lured him to have drinks and then stabbed him to death, cops said. **TNN**

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## CITY OF ANGELS

them, but rural schools have no such support. Since I had helped a school before, this headmaster reached out to me, and I told him in touch with Subrahmanyam," said Rajendra Tunuguntla, CEO of an IT company, and a social worker. The two professionals are now looking to coordinate and get more support for

Retired jawan arrested for illegal sale of defence liquor

Vijayawada: Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) officials in Ananthapur district raided the house of a retired BSF jawan in Anantapur and seized 303 bottles of defence liquor. The officials said that the retired jawan named N Hanumantha Reddy (36) had sourced liquor from his former army colleagues at Bangalore Army canteen and was reselling them at higher prices in his locality. Liquor worth about ₹5.5 lakh was confiscated from Reddy.

G Rama Krishna, additional SP, SEB told TOI that they received a tip-off stating Reddy had unauthorised storage of liquor at his home in Shilpa Lekshmi Nagar. Acting on the information, they raided his house.

Initial investigation revealed that he was procuring defence liquor from an army canteen in Bangalore, a limit of six bottles for a person as per the rules. He also used to purchase more liquor bottles from his former colleagues at a little higher price than the canteen's. He sold them in Anantapur at even higher prices for easy money. TNN

### Cyient founder to speak at UoH

Cyient founder chairman BVR Mohan Reddy will be delivering a lecture at the University of Hyderabad (UoH) on Tuesday.

The lecture will be part of a series of 25 distinguished lectures, which is being organized by the university to commemorate the golden jubilee of UoH and the School of Management Studies silver jubilee celebrations. TNN

# Snoopgate accused & probe officer were up for promotion

### Both Were Addl SP Rank Officers During KCR Rule

Srinath.Vudali@timesgroup.com

**Hyderabad:** A common link between Special Intelligence Bureau additional SP (administration) D Ramesh, who was the complainant in the sensational case of data destruction and illegal phone tapping, and the recently arrested additional SP N Bhujanga Rao was that both were considered for accelerated promotion but ran out of luck with the defeat of BRS in the Nov 2023 assembly election.

Nearly four months after the election results, the fortunes swung swiftly with Bhujanga Rao, who was part of CM Secret Cell, landing be-

### COLLEAGUE TURNS PLAINTANT

- Addl SP N Bhujanga Rao was part of CM secret cell earlier
- Another addl SP, D Ramesh, was his colleague in SIB
- Both were aspiring 'accelerated' promotion
- 4 months after KCR lost polls, Bhujanga landed behind bars
- Unexpectedly, colleague Ramesh became complainant against Bhujanga
- Top intel officials had asked TDS to complain against Bhujanga
- Based on Praneeth's confession, Bhujanga Rao was arrested on both charges



hind bars, while his SIB colleague Ramesh emerging as a complainant.

A few months prior to the assembly elections, a file was put up for accelerated promotion of a list of officers who

were recommended by the top police brass, sources said. Bhujanga Rao and Ramesh were among them. They were hoping that they would be elevated to the rank of non-cadre superintendent of police.

Officers in the list (different ranks) were also hoping that the govt would issue an order before the elections since Bhujanga Rao's name had figured, a source said.

The file, which reached former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's office, however, was not taken up since KCR was reportedly busy in campaign for the elections. With change in the govt, Bhujanga Rao was eased out of SIB and posted to Bhupalpally district.

Following the instructions of top police officials, Ramesh, being the head of intelligence administration wing, was asked to file a complaint in Panjagutta police station for the alleged destruction of intelligence data in electronic gadgets besides destruction of devices and illegal tapping of phones of opposition leaders.

# City sees 2.9m sq ft office leasing between Jan & Mar

### Hyderabad Now A Market leader, Along With B'luru

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Office space absorption in the city kicked off on a high note in the first quarter of 2024 with leasing activity reaching 2.9 million square feet (sqft) — a 123% surge over last year.

According to Colliers' report, this spike reflects a positive sentiment, which is usually low during the first three months of a year.

Along with Hyderabad, Bengaluru too emerged as leading contenders for Grade A office space demand in Q1 2024 —January to March—jointly accounting for over half of India's leasing transactions.

The report also highlighted Hyderabad's impressive momentum, showing a 2.2 times increase in space uptake compared to the same period last year, driven by the healthcare, pharma and technology sectors.

"Hyderabad continues to strengthen its role as a prominent commercial office market in Q1 2024. Of the 2.9 million sqft uptake, over 80% of the demand was concentrated in these three localities, the report added.

### HEALTHCARE, IT BEHIND BOOST

- Cities usually see low growth during Q1
- 123% surge in office space uptake in Hyd reflects positive sentiment
- This is 2.2 times increase in space uptake compared to same period last year
- Hyd & Bengaluru emerged leading contenders for Grade A office space demand in Q1
- Both cities jointly accounting for over half of India's leasing transactions



Both cities jointly accounting for over half of India's leasing transactions

compared to other markets," said Arpit Mehrotra, managing director, office services — India, Colliers.

Within Hyderabad, the three locations — Hi-Tec City, Gachibowli and Madhurapuri — continued to drive leasing activity in Q1 2024. Of the 2.9 million sqft uptake, over 80% of the demand was concentrated in these three localities, the report added.

### 7 face arrest in crackdown on ganja sale

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Siddipet police busted a gang of seven members supplying ganja. The gang procured the contraband from Bhadrachalam, police said.

The accused have been identified as B Swamy, K Mahesh Babu, G Raju, B Raju, P Anil, D Krishnamurthy and K Vamshi.

Dry ganja weighing 825 grams has been seized from them and the accused have been sent to judicial remand, said ACP, Gajwel division, K Purushotham Reddy.

During vehicle checking at Thoguta, police intercepted the accused moving suspiciously on five motorbikes and found ganja in their possession. Police said the accused were addicted to consuming ganja.

They travelled to Kandigudem village in Bhadrachalam Agency area, purchased one kg ganja and came back with a plan to sell some of it to make easy money and also for self-consumption. They sold a pack of 10 grams at ₹300 in Gajwel and in surrounding areas, police said.

### Trio supplying alprazolam held

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

#### 1 KG DRUGS SEIZED

**Hyderabad:** Cyberabad Special Operations Team (SOT) sleuths nabbed three persons and seized a kilogram of alprazolam, a psychotropic substance, worth ₹15 lakh from them at Shamshabad on Monday. Police said the suspects procured the psychotropic substance from a supplier in Nagarkurnool district and supplied it to their clients in the city and surrounding suburbs.

Claiming ignorance of any narcotics in the consignment received from Brazil, Sandhya Aqua stated that the container was cleared by the ministry of agriculture in Brazil on Jan 17. However, TDP raised suspicion over the timing, as records show that the container departed from Santos port in Brazil on Jan 14. TNN

According to officials, a gram of alprazolam can be used for adulterating 600 litres of toddy and the seized quantity could have been used to adulterate six lakh litres.

With this seizure, they have prevented six lakh litres of adulterated toddy from entering the toddy compounds in and around the city, SOT officials said.

Based on a tip-off, SOT Shamshabad zone sleuths kept a watch on the gang and caught them at Kotur town when they were travelling in a car and seized the substance from three persons — Anil Goud, owner of a fertiliser shop in Mahabubnagar district, Sharath Babu, who runs a toddy compound in Nagarkurnool district, and Sudhakar, a real estate agent from Mahabubnagar district.

Police said that the accused had procured alprazolam from a supplier in Nagarkurnool district, and supplied the same in the city, suburbs and the neighbouring districts.

### Girl turned into ganja addict, raped by minor & two others

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Jagtial police on Monday arrested two persons on the charges of turning a teenage girl into a ganja addict and allegedly raping her. They also apprehended a minor boy, who was also allegedly committing the heinous offence.

Police said the three accused themselves were addicted to ganja. They were forcing the girl to consume ganja and allegedly raped her on multiple occasions in different locations of the town. Police seized 140 grams of ganja from the accused.

Police said the girl dropped out of school a few months ago owing to financial problems in the family and confined herself to home. Recently, her father noticed abnormal behaviour on her part and confronted her. He found out that she was addicted to ganja and that she was raped by

three persons.

Police said when she was in school in 2022, one of the accused befriended her, professing his love, and allegedly sexually exploited her.

Later, he started giving her ganja & raped her frequently.

Later when he dumped her, another accused did same to her



After 2nd accused dumped her, teen boy trapped her under guise of supplying ganja & raped her

ing ganja and allegedly was raping her.

In the last two years, the three accused took turns and were raping her, police said. When the girl became an emotional wreck, she was admitted to a de-addiction centre and later shifted to a care home where she is currently lodged.

The two accused have been remanded in judicial custody, while the minor boy has been sent to a juvenile home. "Further investigation is on," said a police official.

### 'Include wildfire in disaster mgmt'



Personnel from forest department trying to douse forest fire

#### ►From P1

Telangana principal chief conservator of forests RM Dobriyal said often those who come for fishing in the river start fires while cooking food. Even local tribes such as Chenchus collecting mahua flowers for making country liquor or medicinal purposes burn trees to make it easy to collect flowers the next day, he said.

"Sometimes, the fire spirals out of control, like in Tad-

vai, and it is difficult to tame it," he said.

Beed leaf contractors also pay workers to set the forests on fire. It is difficult to keep a watch on them. We are conducting awareness campaigns," Dobriyal said.

Referring to their limited resources, the top forest official said they have requested the government to include forest fire control in disaster management. "This would allow us to take help from disaster teams," said Dobriyal.

AP govt has reportedly sought a 52% share in the funds of the university along with sharing of assets at the varsity's main campus in Jubilee Hills. Though AP govt wrote about the division of assets to Telangana a couple of months ago, Telangana maintained that it cannot consider their request as the bifurcation of Schedule X institutions has not been completed yet. "The campus is spread over 48 acres in Jubilee Hills, the market value of which would be over Rs 5,000 crore. As the buildings are in Hyderabad, the question of considering the request does not arise," a senior

govt official said.

Ambedkar Open University has three types of funds — campus development fund, pension fund, and corpus fund. "The campus development fund is used to develop infrastructure facilities that cannot be shared. The pension fund also cannot be given as the university has been paying pension to former employees who earlier worked in regional study centres in AP as permanent staff. The balance is corpus fund, which can be finalised only after bifurcation of Schedule X institutions is done," said the university official.

He further said AP govt's claim seeking 52% share of university funds cannot be entertained as out of the average 1.50 lakh students who are enrolled every year in

both Telangana and AP, only 40-42% come from AP. "The university has some regional centres in AP. Those buildings may be given to them as part of the bifurcation promises," he added.

Students of the two Telugu states pursue distance education at the university, which operates through 72 study circles to support students enrolled for different courses. Govts of both AP and Telangana bear the maintenance cost of the study circles, including the salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff. The fee paid by the students goes into the university's central account in Hyderabad. As of now, the university has 16 regular faculty and 500 part-time staff. The university makes around Rs 20 crore through student fees.

Police said the girl dropped out of school a few months ago owing to financial problems in the family and confined herself to home. Recently, her father noticed abnormal behaviour on her part and confronted her. He found out that she was addicted to ganja and that she was raped by

three persons.

Police said when she was in

school in 2022, one of the accused befriended her, professing his love, and allegedly sexually exploited her.

Later, he started giving her ganja & raped her frequently.

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**ARREST OF DELHI CM KEJRIWAL TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM ELECTORAL BONDS SCAM, SAYS KERALA CM VIJAYAN**



**HOLI IS SPECIAL FOR EACH AND EVERY DEVOTEE OF LORD RAM THIS YEAR DUE TO TEMPLE INAUGURATION: AMIT SHAH**

## Man burns wife, 2 minor daughters alive

Santosh.Sonawane1  
@timesgroup.com

Nashik: A 45-year-old farmer killed his wife and two daughters—a 14-year-old and a toddler—by trapping them in their home and setting it ablaze in an Ahmednagar village on Monday morning.

Police have arrested the

farmer, identified as Sunil Landge. The incident took place at Pimpalgaon Landga village. The victims have been identified as his wife Lalita (35), and children Sakshi (14) and Khushi (1). They were all charred to death.

Assistant inspector Pralhad Gite said, "At 10:30am, Sunil Landge bolted his house

from the outside and poured petrol in through the window. He then set the house ablaze."

"By the time the neighbours heard the screams of the woman and children trapped inside, the house was up in flames," the officer added.

Sunil did not attempt to escape and stayed put at the spot until the police arrived.

Sunil has three other children—two daughters and a son—who live with his elder brother and mother, about 100m from his own house. Gite said, according to information gathered from the villagers, the accused doubted his wife's character and would often assault her. On Saturday night, Sunil had quarrelled with his wife.



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#### SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical/symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of the Bank/Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of its dues due to the Bank/Secured Creditor from the respective borrower(s) and guarantor(s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties.

#### SCHEDULE OF THE SECURED ASSETS

Lot No.	Name of the Branch Name of the Account Name & addressess of the Borrower/Guarantors	Description of the Immovable Properties Mortgaged/Owner's Name (Mortgagors property/ies)	A) Of Demand Notice u/s 13(2) of SARFESI Act 2002 B) Outstanding Amount as on Date u/s 13(4) of SARFESI Act 2002 C) Possession Symbolic/Physical/ Constructive	A) Reserve Price B) EMD C) Bid Increase Amount	Date/ Time of E-Auction	Details of the encumbrances known to the secured creditors
1.	Sangareddy Branch (Sd Id: 658700) Borrower:Smt Koheer Vanitha H.No.1-1, Kandi Village, Sangareddy, Dist. Medak-502285	All that the open Plot bearing no. 2,3 and 4, each plot admeasuring an extent of 295.55 Sq. Yds. The total admeasuring area comes to 886.65 Sq.Yds or 741.23 Sq.Mts in Survey No. 159/221, situated at Pothireddypally Village and G.P., Sangareddy Mandal at SRO Sangareddy and bounded by: East : Slipa Mohan Reddy Plot, West : 40'-0" Wide Road, North : 30' Road, South : 20' Road Property stands in the name of Ms. Koheer Vanitha W/o Sh. K. Rama Krishna Reddy Property being sold on as is where is basis, bidders are strictly advised to make their own due diligence regarding the extent and boundaries of land, and no dispute regarding the same will be entertained thereafter	A) 16.11.2022 B) Rs. 55,84,958.39 + future interest + charges etc thereon as applicable. C) 24.01.2023 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 1,73,95,250/- B) Rs. 17,39,600/- C) Rs. 1,00,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
2.	Balanagar Branch (115310) Mr. P Ravindrachari (Borrower)& Mrs. P. Umarami (Co-Borrower),Flat no.-205, 2dn Floor, Sairam Plaza, Nizampet Village, Qutubullapur, 500090, Rangareddy	All that the Flat no.:205 in the 2nd floor of "Sai Ram Plaza" in the name of Mr Ravindra Chary Palaju with plinth area of 1535 Sq.Ft (including common area) together with an undivided share of land admeasuring 37 Sq.Yards or 30.93 Sq.Mtrs (out of 800 Sq.Yards) on plot no.: 65, 66, 67 & 68 in S/o. No. 4, 37, 38, 364, 378, 374, 386, 391, 395 & 406, 4C, 385, 389 & 393 situated at Nizampet village & Gram Panchayat, Qutubullapur Mandal, RR Dt. Telangana State Boundaries for Flat:North : Open to Sky, South : Open to Sky, East : Corridor, West : Open to Sky	A) 02.03.2020 B) Rs. 20,15,818.06 + future interest + charges etc C) 17.12.2020 D) Symbolic Possession	A)Rs. 37,80,000/- B)Rs. 3,78,000/- C)Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
3.	Khamman Branch (484700) Sri Lakmi Ganapathi Enterprises Partners- Sh. B. Srinivas Rao & Smt. G. Lalitha Harkara Well Road, Khamman, Hyderabad- 507003	<b>Property 1 details:</b> Residential Plot No. 7, Sy No. 63/A/21 & 64/A/22, in an extent of 232.00 Sq. yards situated at Yedlapuram Gp, Yedlapuram Village, Khamman with the following boundaries: East : 30' Feet Wide Road, West: Plot of others, North: Plot No. 8, South: Plot No 6 The property is in the name of Popuri Lakmi Narasimha Rao <b>Property 2 details:</b> Residential Plot No. 8, Part No. 63/A/21 & 64/A/22, in an extent of 142.19 sq. yards situated at Dhasalapuram of Khamman Municipal limits of Khamman Town with the following boundaries East : Agriculture land of M. Srinivas Rao, West: 30' Feets Wide Road, North: Plot No. 7 part, South: Plot No. 8 part The Property is in the name of Popuri Lakmi Narasimha Rao	A)16.08.2021 B)Rs. 29,28,189.32+ future interest + charges etc C)23.03.2022 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 35,50,000/- B) Rs. 3,50,000/- C) Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
4.	Warangal Branch (157720) M/s Alex Logistics, 55-2-473/A, Bheemaran, Hasanparthy, Hamankonda, Warangal-506155 Sri. Sangal Babu, H. No- 55-2-473/A, Bheemaran, Hasanparthy, Hamankonda, Warangal-506155 Shri Gaddikkoppula Issac, H. No-19-48- Karimkars, Bhuparly, Warangal-50615 Shri Sangala Vijay Kumar, H. No- 2-473, Hasanparthy, Bheemaran (Rural), Warangal-506015	"All that R.C.C. Residential Building consisting Ground + 2 Floors bearing its G.P.H. No. 2-473 corresponding its G.W.M.C. H. No. 55-2-473/A, constructed in an open plot admeasuring 445.50 sq. yards, (or) 171.40 sq. mtrs, situated at Bheemaran Village, Hasanparthy Mandal, Warangal City & District (Urban), and within limits of Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation and within the Registration District, Warangal and within the Jurisdiction of Join Sub Registrar Office, Warangal (Urban) and bounded by: East: 20'-0" Wide Road/West: House of Yona, North: Open Place of Issak, South: House of Purushothaman The Property is in the name of Sangala Babu and Sangala Vijay Kumar THE PROPERTY IS ALSO MORTGAGED IN THE HOUSING LOAN AVAILED BY SHRI SANGAL BABU AND SRI SANGALA VIJAY KUMAR WHICH HAS ALSO BECOME NPANo.01.03.2022	A) 05-05-2021 B) Rs. 27,10,806.02 + Interest+ charges etc C) 02-11-2021 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 61,00,000/- B) Rs. 6,10,000/- C) Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
5.	Nizamabad Branch (086210) Borrower : M/s. Sri Yogeshwara Trading Co (Proprietor: Sh. Chintu Ravinder)7-1-48/15B, Mirchi Compound, Nizamabad 503001 Borrower: Sh. Chinta Ravinder S/o Chinta Venkatesham Guarantor: Sh.Chinta Venkatesham S/o Sri Nagabhusanam.	Property 1: All the part and parcel of residential building (double storied house at D No: 2-8-709-06 admeasuring 133.62 Sq.yards or 111.72 sq.mts situated at Amberpet, Nizamabad within the municipal limits of Nizamabad and bounded by: North: House of Vendor South: Municipal Lane East: Common Passage, West: Property of Dr. Babu Property 2: All the part and parcel of residential building (double storied house at D No: 2-8-709-06 admeasuring 133.62 Sq.yards or 111.72 sq.mts situated at Amberpet, Nizamabad within the municipal limits of Nizamabad and bounded by: North: House of Vendor South: Municipal Lane, East: Common Passage, West: Property of Dr. Babu Property Stands in the name of Sh. Chinta Venkatesham S/o Sri Nagabhusanam.	A) 18-05-2023 B)Rs. 56,07,844.29 P.s. As on 16-05-2023 plus Future interest + expenses thereon as applicable C) 19-08-2023 D) Symbolic Possession	A)Rs. 1,26,47,000/- B)Rs. 12,65,000/- C) Rs. 1,00,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior to Bidding
6.	Sangareddy Branch (658700) Borrower:Smt K.Ramakrishna Reddy Co-Borrower: Smt. K.Vanitha H.No.1-1, Kandi Village, anareddy District Medak - 502285	All that part and parcel of Residential House no: bearing 1-1, admeasuring area of 266.66 Sq.yds or 222.92 Sq.mtrs., (Out of 533.33 Sq.Yds or 445.66 Sq.Mtrs.), with Plinth area of 180'ft, at basement level, situated at village and G.P. Kandi Mandal, Sangareddy District T.S. MPP Kandi, ZPP Medak at Sangareddy, Registration Sub-District Sangareddy, Registration District, Sangareddy and Bounded by North : Road, South : House of Chandra Reddy,East : House no : 1-1/par of K. Narasimha Reddy & K. Madhava Reddy Property stands in the name of Mr. Koheer Ramakrishna Reddy S/o. K.Narasimha Reddy	A)01.03.2023 B)Rs. 1,00,25,849.99 P.s.+ future interest Charges thereon as applicable. C) 01.05.2023 D) Symbolic Possession	A)Rs. 1,29,66,750/- B)Rs. 12,97,000/- C) Rs. 1,00,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
7.	Khamman Branch (135910) M/s. Sri Venkata Sia Traders Proprietor: Mr. Ketheneni Venu Guarantor: Ms. Ketheneni Kalyani	<b>Property 1:</b> All the part and parcel of residential house at Hno: 1-145 admeasuring 231.93 Sq.yds situated at Sy.no: 207/A, Thangampadu Revenue Village, Khamman Rural, Khamman District and bounded by: North: Temple,South: House of Devartha Krishna Murthy Le Hno: 1-134, East: House of Sri battu Sangaiha Le Hno: 10-134, West: Property Stands in the name of Sh. Ketheneni Kalyani (W/o Ketheneni Venu) <b>Property 2:</b> All the part and parcel of Open Plot to an extent of 446.66 Sq.Yds or 373.46 Sq.mts situated at Survey No. 207/A, Plot no: 10, Pollepalli Gram Panchayat and Revenue Village, Khamman Rural, Khamman Dist, and bounded by: North : Plot No:11, South: 30'-0" Wide Road, East: 30'-0" Wide Road, West: Neighbours Plot Property Stands in the name of Sh. Ketheneni Venu S/o.Ketheneni Kalyani	A) 20-05-2023 B)Rs. 51,14,058.10 P.s. as on 17-05-2023 plus Future interest, Charges thereon C) 07-08-2023 D) Symbolic Possession A) 20-05-2023 B)Rs. 51,14,058.1 P.s. as on 17-05-2023 plus Future interest, Charges etc. from thereon C) 07-08-2023 D) Symbolic Possession	A)Rs. 15,19,000/- B) Rs. 1,52,000/- C) Rs. 25,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher A)Rs. 60,30,000/- B) Rs. 6,03,000/- C) Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM 29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
8.	Sangareddy Branch (658700) Borrower&Mortgagor Shri. Goudi Prasad, H.No. 6-11/1/D, Raghavendra Nagar Colony, Sadashivpuri, PIN-502291.	All that the House bearing no. 6-3-11/1/D in sy no 491/13, Plot no 2 Situated at sadashivpuri ward no 6, Block no 3, Raghavendra Nagar Colony, Under Sadashivpuri municipal limits, Sangareddy dist North : 10' Wide Road, South: Open Plot no 3, East : 15' Wide Road, West: Govt Kaluva Property owner: Sh. Goudi Prasad S/o.Mallesham	A)16.01.2019 B)Rs. 48,85,248. 51 P.s. + future interest + charges thereon. C) 09-09-2022 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 40,40,000/- B) Rs. 4,04,000/- C) Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
9.	Khamman Branch (211220) Borrower & Mortgagor: Sh. Bayaneni Sridhar Co-Borrower: Mrs Udayani R/o 15-8-304/1, Rotari Nagar, Road No-4, Near Urban Police Station, Khamnapur Haveli (Rural), Khamman- 50702	Semi finished Flat No 203, in First Floor, with built up area of 970 Sq.Ft (including common areas) together with UDS of land admeasuring 24.56 Sq.Yds along with one car parking, in the Stilt Floor on the premises of the mansion renamed as: "LOTUS TOWERS", in Plot No 27 & 30 at SAI PRABHAT NAGAR, within the revenue limits of Edlapuram Village, Peddahampanchayat, Khamman Rural, Mandal and Dist. Telangana. Boundaries: North: Corridor, South: Open to Sky, East: Open to Sky, West: Open to Sky Property Stands in the name of Shri. Bayaneni Sridhar S/o.B.V.S.Vara Prasad	A) 04.07.2019 B)Rs. 24,49,351/- Charges thereon as applicable from date of 13(2) Notice 04-07-2019 C) 08.11.2019 D) Symbolic Possession	A) Rs. 19,68,578/- B) Rs. 1,97,000/- C) Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due diligence prior Bidding.
10.	Nizamabad Branch (211620) (Sh.Taduri Praveen Kumar (Borrower) H.No.10-9-500, Santosh Nagar colony, Varni Ward, Nizamabad-503001 Taduri Purna Chander Rao (Co-Borrower)H.No.4-4-52, NSL Quarter No.56, situated at NSL Devi Galli, Shakhar Nagar, Bodhan NIZAMABAD-503184	Equitable Mortgage of the NSL Quarter bearing No. TRT 96, MPL No.4-4-52, constructed with MT & AC sheet roof house with mud & mortar admeasuring 50X32' or 1600 Sq.Ft or 177.77 Sq.Yards or 148.64 Meters out of which MT & AC roofed plinth area 533.67 Sq.Ft, situated at NSL Shankar Nagar,Mandal Bodhan , Nizamabad Zilla Parishad, under jurisdiction of Registration District Nizamabad, sub district Bodhan, Pin-503185, State Telangana. The land is bounded by: East: 20'-0" Road, South: Quarter No. TRT 95 of NSL West: Quarter No. TRT 102 of Dashedarath, North: Quarter No. TRT 97 of Ramesh Godiy Property owner Shri.T.Purnachander Rao	A) 13.02.2019 B) Rs. 11,12,773/- "Future interest from thereon i.e. from date of (13/2) Notice 13-02-2019 C) 06.06.2019 D) Symbolic Possession	A)Rs. 22,65,000/- B)Rs. 2,27,000/- C) Rs. 50,000/- "Bidding shall start from one notch higher	29.04.2024 11:00 AM- 04:00 PM	The Authorized Officer is not having such information. Pertaining to the said property It is requested that Bidders should do their own due

# Amid MVA seat-sharing talks, Sharad Pawar meets Uddhav

## Nomination Deadline 2 Days Away

**Mumbai:** With consensus eluding Maha Vikas Aghadi on an agreeable seat-sharing formula for Lok Sabha polls, NCP (SP) leader Sharad Pawar on Monday met Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray at his residence in suburban Mumbai.

Pawar was accompanied by Jayant Patil, who heads the Maharashtra unit of the Nationalist Congress Party (Shradchandra Pawar). Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut was also present at the meeting held at Matoshree, the private residence of Thackeray. Notably, the deadline for filing nominations for the five seats going to polls in the first phase on April 19 is just two days away.

The talks assume significance as MVA is yet to declare a seat-sharing formula and candidates for the first phase, apparently due to overlapping claims on certain seats.



Sharad Pawar-Uddhav Thackeray talks assume significance as MVA is yet to declare a seat-sharing formula and candidates for the first phase, apparently due to overlapping claims on certain seats

candidates for the first phase, apparently due to overlapping claims on certain seats.

One of the MVA members, Congress, has so far declared 12 candidates for Maharashtra, which sends 48 members to Lok Sabha, in seats where there is no tussle with its alliance partners, whereas Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) are yet to formally declare their nominees. Thackeray had indicated

that Amol Kirtikar (Mumbai North-West), Chandrapatil (Sangli) and Anant Geete (Raigad) will be the candidates of Shiv Sena (UBT) from these constituencies. With March 27 being the deadline for filing nominations for the first phase, the parties which have not yet declared nominees for the five constituencies have to expedite the process. PTI

## Sena (UBT) to announce 1st list today

**Mumbai:** The Shiv Sena (UBT)'s first list of candidates in Maharashtra for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections will be formally declared on March 26, party leader Sanjay Raut said on Monday.

The list of the Uddhav Thackeray-led opposition party, a constituent of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state, will feature up to 16 names, he said.

"The Shiv Sena (UBT)'s first list will be declared on March 26. We will declare candidates for 15-16 seats," the Rajya Sabha MP said. CM Eknath Shinde-led Sena is likely to release its first list in a day or two, party leader and Lok Sabha MP Rahul Shewale said. Maharashtra, which has 48 Lok Sabha seats, the second highest after UP (80), will vote in five phases starting from April 19. PTI

## RLP: Beniwal to contest Raj's Nagaur as INDIA bloc candidate



Beniwal had won the seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls but it fell vacant as he resigned as MP after being elected MLA from Khinwasar in Nagaur district last Dec

**Jaipur:** The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) announced on Monday that its convenor Hanuman Beniwal will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections from Rajasthan's Nagaur seat as an INDIA bloc candidate.

The Congress, which is also part of the opposition INDIA bloc, on Saturday announced candidates for two more Lok Sabha constituencies in Rajasthan but left Nagaur seat for the RLP.

Beniwal had won the seat in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls but it fell vacant as he resigned as MP after being elected as MLA from Khinwasar in Nagaur district in December last year.

The RLP chief is pitted against BJP candidate Jyoti Mirdha, both Jai leaders. LS polls in Rajasthan will be held in two phases—on April 19 and 26. A former BJP ally, Beniwal parted ways with the NDA in Dec 2020 over farmers' protest. PTI

## Assam Cong MLA Narah quits after wife fails to get LS ticket

**Guwahati:** Bharat Chandra Narah, the MLA of Nowbocha in Assam's Lakhimpur district, resigned from the Congress on Monday.

The resignation comes two days after Congress announced Uday Shankar Hazarika as its candidate for the Lakhimpur Lok Sabha seat. Narah was hopeful that his party would nominate his wife Ranee Narah, a former Union Minister, for the seat.

He sent a one-line resignation letter, which he shared with PTI, to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. "I do hereby resign from the Indian National Congress with immediate effect," the MLA said in the letter. On Sunday, Narah resigned from the post of the chairman of Assam Congress' media cell. PTI

## 'Wayanad won't be cakewalk for Rahul, it'll be a tough fight'

BS.Anilkumar@timesgroup.com

**Thiruvananthapuram:** BJP leadership's decision to field party's Kerala president K Surendran against Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad is aimed at ensuring a tough fight for the Congress leader who had won the constituency with a thumping majority of over 4.31 lakh votes in 2019.

"As the NDA candidate in Wayanad, I will try my best to expose the ineptness and double standards of Rahul Gandhi. It's true that I was reluctant to become a candidate in this Lok Sabha election. But my leaders wanted me to be in the battlefield and as a dedicated party worker, I am obliged to accept their decision wholeheartedly. You can vouch my words that Wayanad will no longer be a cakewalk for him. It will be a tough political fight," Surendran told TOI.

Both Surendran and party vice-president KS Radhakrishnan, NDA candidate in Ernakulam, had informed sources said Surendran's candidacy was the decision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. BJP, which aims to retain power winning over 50% of the total votes being polled in the election this

## CPM approaches EC against minister for 'misusing' deity's image on banner

**C**PM on Wednesday accused senior BJP leader and Union minister V Muraleedharan of misusing the picture of a deity of a temple in his election banner and approached the Election Commission seeking appropriate action. Muraleedharan is the BJP candidate from Attinal constituency. Senior CPM leader C Jayan Babu pointed out that a flex board featuring Muraleedharan along with PM Narendra Modi has been erected within the famed Janardhana Swami Temple located in Varkala. Moreover, it also includes the official poll symbol of BJP and urges voters to support the party candidate. Meanwhile, Muraleedharan claimed he had no knowledge about CPM's complaint and said a reply would be given if EC seeks it. AGENCIES

the leadership of their wish to keep off from electoral fray this time. However, the leadership had different plans. Both Surendran and Radhakrishnan had increased BJP vote share significantly in the last assembly polls.

Sources said Surendran's candidacy was the decision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself. BJP, which aims to retain power winning over 50% of the total votes being polled in the election this

time, has decided to give a strong competition to bigwigs of Congress party across the country. The candidacy of Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar against sitting MP Shashi Tharoor in Thiruvananthapuram was also the decision in this line by Modi, sources said.

Even though Surendran will be concentrating in Wayanad during the election, he is expected to visit other constituencies as well to coordinate the campaigning.

## Women at centre of Cong's '30L new jobs' LS poll pledge

Subodh.Ghildiyal  
@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Congress's promise of creating 30 lakh new jobs in the central govt is part of an elaborate plan the party has worked out for women's empowerment.

The 'Yuva Nyay' of 2024 manifesto pledges that if voted to power, Congress govt will create 30 lakh new jobs besides giving "assured first job" to youth below 25 years through year-long apprenticeship in private and public companies.

The party has identified 10 lakh vacancies in various central govt departments, and promised to fill them according to a calendar that will be worked out. The rest of the 20 lakh new jobs would be exclusively for women at various levels.

Sources said govt will create 14 lakh additional posts of 'anganwadi' workers, and each village with a population above 2,500 persons will be allocated an additional ASHA worker, which will result in four lakh new posts.

Similarly, more midday meal workers will be deputed, taking the total number to 20



IN FRONT SEAT

## Congress fields tribal face from Bastar

**C**ongress has nominated its senior tribal leader and former minister Kawasi Lakhma to contest the Bastar (ST) seat in Chhattisgarh, replacing its sitting MP Deepak Baij, who is also the president of state Congress unit. With the nomination of Lakhma (71) from Bastar, Congress has announced its candidates for seven constituencies out of the 11 Lok Sabha seats in the state. TNN

lakh. As per the calculations, the new posts will cost the Centre an additional monthly expense of Rs 1,200 crore.

Besides, every gram panchayat will create positions of 'Adhikar Maitri', which will be manned by women

who would provide para legal services to women about their legal rights. There will be a total of 2.5 lakh such posts across gram panchayats, and they will receive honorarium from panchayats.

Amid cries of 'Lal Salaam' and 'Jai Bhim', the winning students were hailed by supporters.

Avijit Ghosh from the Students' Federation of India (SFI) defeated ABVP's Deepika Sharma by 927 votes to win the vice-president's post. Ghosh received 2,409 votes against Sharma's 1,482. PTI

The safety of women on

"The safety of women on

## JNUSU gets 1st Left Dalit prez after 3 decades

**New Delhi:** The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union (JNUSU) has elected its first Dalit president from the Left-backed groups after nearly three decades. The United Left panel on Sunday effected a clean sweep in the JNUSU elections, defeating its nearest rival the RSS-affiliated ABVP.

In the polls that were held after a hiatus of four years, Dhananjay from the All India Students' Association (AISA) won the JNUSU president's post by securing 2,598 votes

### THE WINNERS

- **President:** Left candidate Dhananjay (AISA) wins, beats ABVP's Umesh Ajmeera
- **Vice-president:** Left's Avijit Ghosh (SFI) defeats ABVP's Deepika Sharma
- **General secy:** Left-backed BAPSA's Priyanshi Arya beats ABVP's Arjun Anand
- **Joint secy:** Md Sajid (SFI) defeats ABVP's Govind Dangi

against the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad's (ABVP)

Umesh C Ajmeera, who secured 1,676 votes.

Dhananjay hails from Gaia, Bihar and is the first Dalit president from the Left after Battu Lal Bairwa, who was elected in 1996-97.

Dhananjay said, "This victory is a referendum by the students of JNU that they reject the politics of hate and violence. The students have once again shown their trust in us. We will continue to fight for their rights and work on issues that concern students."

"The safety of women on

Mahayuti will win all seats in east Vidarbha, says Fadnavis

**Nagpur:** Maharashtra Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said youths who praise Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be "slapped" as the BJP govt has failed to provide 20 crore jobs in 10 years,

adding "BJP thinks that they can fool the public for another term". Speaking at a meeting of Congress workers in Karatagy, Shivraj alleged that Modi came to power by "lying".

"BJP is seeing a favourable mood in east Vidarbha going to polls in the first phase on April 19. He claimed people will vote for the saffron alliance on account of the work done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last ten years.

"BJP is seeing a favourable mood in east Vidarbha going to polls in the first phase. In Nagpur, a very strong candidate like Nitin Gadkari is contesting again,"

Fadnavis said.

He said Mahayuti comprising BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCPCR by Ajit Pawar will do a clean sweep in the first phase. The BJP has reached out to the last man at the booth level in the last four to five years, Fadnavis said. He said a decision on the Lok Sabha seat to be allocated to RSP leader Mahadev Jankar will be announced after holding discussions. "We have decided to give him one seat," he added. Maharashtra, which sends 48 members to Lok Sabha, will vote in five phases starting April 19.

Voting will be held for Nagpur, Gadchiroli-Chimur (ST), Bhandara-Gondiya, Chandrapur, and Ramtek (SC) in the first phase.

Kozhikode: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday said Sangh Parivar, insists that citizenship should be denied to people with Muslim names and also trying to erase cultural history of the country, should realize that it was Azimullah Khan, a Muslim, who coined the slogan 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'.

Inaugurating the anti-CAA rally organised by CPM at Malappuram, Vijayan said Sangh Parivar was not only trying to turn Muslims into second-class citizens but was also viewing them as a section that should be ousted from the country. "We have seen some Sangh Parivar leaders coming and asking people sitting in front of them to chant the slogan Bharat Mata Ki Jai. Has the slogan been coined by the ruling Shiv Sena. PTI

The Congress has fielded former Zilla Parishad president Rashmi Barve from the Ramtek (SC) constituency. The seat is likely to be contested by the ruling Shiv Sena. PTI

Hesaid state govt would be in the forefront in resisting laws like the CAA, which violates the principles of Constitution.

## Youth who chant 'Modi Modi' should be slapped: K'taka min

### TN min booked for remarks against PM

A case has been registered against Tamil Nadu fisheries minister Anitha R Radhakrishnan for his alleged derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a recent meeting of the DMK party workers, police said on Monday. A case under section 294 B of the IPC (uttering obscene words in public) has been registered following a complaint by the BJP Thoothukudi south district president R Sidhrangathan, a senior police official said. According to Sidhrangathan, the minister made the remarks against the PM at the DMK party workers meeting held at Thandaputhu in Tuticorin district on March 22. "I filed a complaint with the district election officer and collector G Lakshminath demanding appropriate action against him and the police registered a FIR on Sunday," he said. Radhakrishnan's uttering was "disgusting and despicable and he criticised the Prime Minister for lauding late chief minister Kamaraj," Sidhrangathan said. PTI

India. Where are they? Name one. He is smart, he dresses well, he gives smart speeches. He keeps changing his outfit. Then a stun by the PM; he goes into the depths of the ocean and there he does puja. Is this the kind of work a PM should do?" Shivaraj said.

Further, he asserted that he will provide 2 crore jobs to the youth every year.

"They think they can fool

for another 5 years. PM Modi

promised 100 smart cities in

## K'taka Congress hopes netas foot kin's poll bills

Bengaluru: Congress nominees, daughters and relatives of top functionaries and ministers in Karnataka for the Lok Sabha elections may have come in for severe flak, but sources suggest it is a shrewd move given the serious financial crunch the party is facing.

Of the 24 candidates named so far, eight are close relatives of ministers and another four of top functionaries, reports Sandeep Moudgal.

The party had initially planned to field ministers themselves, but the move was met with stiff resistance. Now, Congress is facing allegations of dynastic politics, but functionaries say the party is hoping seniors will foot the campaigning bill of their kin. "The leadership has given in-charge ministers the responsibility of ensuring win for kin and the party," said a senior functionary. "An added insurance is that they will spend time and money."

We expect they will raise funds locally and not be dependent on the party which is facing financial crunch," said a party functionary.

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## A thought for today

Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's inexorable imperative

HG WELLS

## Time To Step Back

RBI's policy interest rate is out of sync with data. It needs to be lowered

The last time RBI's monetary policy committee increased its policy rate (repo) was in Feb last year. Since then, it's been stuck at 6%. The economy in the meantime has seen two positive trends, growth has trended upwards while inflation rate is moderating. It raises the question if MPC needs to reconsider its stance on interest rate when it meets next week.

**What forecasts say** | RBI's main mandate is to keep inflation within the target set by GOI. It's in a comfortable position now. In the current month's bulletin, the central bank has forecast that average inflation rate in 2024-25 will be 4.4% and GDP will expand at 7.4%. So, RBI's view is inflation will moderate even as GDP expands at a relatively fast pace.

**Wrinkles in the data** | India's GDP data presents policy makers with two challenges. Supply in the economy is measured by gross value added (GVA). Growth rate of GVA is an indicator of what's happening to producers. This measure has moved in a direction at odds with the better-than-expected growth of GDP. In the first three quarters of 2023-24, GVA growth rate trended downwards to record 6.5% in the Oct-Dec period. GDP, during the same period, trended upwards. Separately, private consumption growth has remained weak.

**What's driving inflation** | RBI's analysis on inflation shows that it's largely been supply side factors that contributed to inflation in the last two years. MPC commentary indicates the committee remains wary of food price shocks pushing inflation.

**It doesn't add up** | Food price surges in the recent past have largely been caused by perishables with relatively short production cycles. There's nothing RBI can do about that. What does matter is that these surges haven't led to the overall inflation remaining sticky at levels beyond RBI's mandated level of tolerance. Moreover, RBI expects the overall inflation rate to head downwards in the next year.

**Case to lower interest rates** | Recent price trends, RBI's inflation forecast and factors causing inflation do not justify interest rates at the current level. MPC should consider rolling back its rate increases. Liquidity needs to be adjusted in line with it. A rate cut now will benefit India's producers and consumers. Monetary policy is meant to be data driven. The message is clear. It's time to begin the process of lowering policy interest rates.

## Broken Politics

Kerala and Karnataka take judicial route against GOI. Political channels seem shut

Over the weekend, Kerala and Karnataka approached Supreme Court to file complaints against GOI. Kerala challenged the President's action to withhold assent to four bills cleared by the legislature after the state's governor referred it to her. The President is guided by GOI's advice. Separately, Karnataka filed a writ petition alleging that the state has been denied assistance under drought management rules. Relations between GOI and opposition-administered states have been rocky. But these two cases take us into dangerous territory.

**Centre first but states matter** | The Constitution places Centre above states and gives it special powers such as deciding state borrowing limits. But states are, by constitutional design, integral to governance. They have authority over fundamental governance functions such as provision of law and order.

**Division of powers** | Legislative powers between the two levels of government are divided on the basis of a union list, state list and a concurrent list, where power is exercised jointly. Since mid-1950s, there's been creeping centralisation. Union and concurrent lists have expanded through constitutional amendments, while the state list has shrunk. Now, in a political environment marked by distrust, this is a source of Centre-state conflict.

**Money problems** | One area where the conflict plays out prominently is in share of revenue. The last finance commission said GOI raised 63% of resources but incurred 37% of expenditure. Therefore, FCs play a role in finding a balance between resources and expenditure of the two levels of govt. Recent face-offs have been about whether GOI is following the spirit of FC recommendations.

Friction in a federal set up is not unusual. But the risk today is that political channels of resolution have broken down. These matters shouldn't go to court. That they do shows the failure of politics.

## Sparkling H2O to none

Bengaluru socialites now brag about showers, not LVs

Shinie Antony

Bengaluru is that crow in a fable who drops pebbles into a pot to raise the water level. As the city emerges blinking into the harsh sunlight, dry-mouthed and parched, the forecast is dystopian. At first the taps had coughing fits, then they spat out a thin black liquid, running dry thereafter with a death rattle. Tanker trucks are sloshing through the city streets with 'Drinking Water' written on them. They are stationed in even the poshest colonies with their hose sticking out. Investment advisers have shifted portfolios from money to water: how to save H2O. Once you carried a Louis Vuitton bag, now you brag about a shower.

In most parts of India, the weather swings between two extremes – in a sweat today in a sweater tomorrow. Crops die because there is too much water or too little. And no one seems to be in charge of rainwater harvesting or monitoring groundwater. Out of the 14,781 borewells in Bengaluru, 3,297 are katti. Water has gone from still or sparkling to nil and none. Supply only meets half the demand. Posters in apartments are begging everyone to bathe once in two days. Soon they will provide sponges. Tenants are banned from carwash and Holi outsourced to hotels. Time's right for someone to turn wine into water!

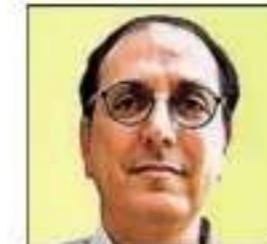
Kempe Gowda, the city's 16th-century founder, got us the cascading lakes – but only after we promised to name a future airport after him. Today many lakes have either evaporated or filled up with sewage. Brokers used to sell flats with a 'Cauvery water available', which changed to 'Cauvery-tank mix'. Now they forward location map of the river in case anyone insists on Cauvery water. While Iblr lake and Agara lake demurely provide 'lakeview' status to nearby buildings, bad-boy Bellandur lake foams throughout the year and occasionally catches fire. The Land of a Thousand Lakes has applied for a name change. 'Dune: Part 3' is one of the suggestions.

Water has officially entered the black market. No more headlines about the IT sector or jazzy new startups from this city – it is all about water scarcity. Monsoons are late and mercury the highest it's been in five years. No puddles for little kids to jump into and adults are sentimental about the last time they added water to their drink. We are now spending water like money.

## A Bridge Stranger Than Any Fiction

Mumbaikars recently found themselves with two flyovers where they would need to jump 2 metres to get from one to the other. Here is a brief but telling account of how BMC managed this feat

Zoru Bhathena



Mumbai is blessed to have a fantastic local rail network. The curse is to find a way to cross these tracks. Andheri, in the suburbs, has the population of a mini city, and just one bridge to cross the railway lines. The now infamous Gokhale Bridge, which has given a fillip to stand-up comedy like no other.

This is thanks to Mumbai's municipal corporation, BMC. Which works in very strange ways. Here is a brief sketch of how it delivered the Gokhale Bridge fiasco to us.

**First came a collapse** | Gokhale Bridge was serving the east-west commuting needs of Andheri residents for decades, when on one ill-fated day in 2018, the pedestrian pathway along this bridge collapsed. Killing several people. The collapse was symbolic for all that BMC stands for: Ill-maintained urban infra loaded beyond capacity.

● BMC, in their ever-wise wisdom to spend maximum public money, decided to demolish and reconstruct the entire bridge.

● As the bridge was being rebuilt, railways directed BMC to build the new bridge 2 metres higher, to enable taller local trains to run below, in the future. Sidebar: Won't this future demand raising the heights of *all* the bridges?

**Then a demolition** | As this was a critical east-west bridge that could not be shut down, BMC was forced to carry out the bridge reconstruction in phases, allowing traffic to flow across in single lanes.

● One half side of the bridge was demolished and the east and west side-bridge access ramps were built during the period 2019-2022. Now the main bridge across the railway lines remained.

● Instead of using their engineering skills to build the new bridge, BMC used its wit. The moment Morbi Bridge collapsed in Gujarat, our dearest BMC declared Gokhale Bridge unsafe and shut it down. Despite written certification from IIT & VTI declaring it as safe.

**Next came promises** | Having shut the bridge down, BMC made bold statements that the new bridge would

be completed in six months.

● But six months later, Mumbaikars found that the steel hadn't even been ordered, let alone fabricated.

● Absurd excuses were shared that the steel factory had gone on strike and that the girder fabrication factory had flooded.

**Band baaja followed** | Finally, in end July 2023, different parts of the bridge arrived in Mumbai, duly welcomed by BMC with a celebratory bazaar-

End Oct 23 for bridge assembly, end Nov 23 to push the assembled bridge across the tracks, end Dec 23 for bridge opening (Phase-1).

2023 came and went, and Mumbaikars were left breathless – by the lack of work pace. So, some of us decided to get on to the ground and check what was going on. And, what a shock it was!

**Heart-breaking anti-climax** | BMC had built the western access ramp for Gokhale Bridge. But they hadn't connected the adjoining flyover. There was a 2-metre gap at the sky-junction of these two bridges.

● On the eastern side, another brand new flyover had developed cracks, without a single vehicle ever using it.

● The road below the new flyover was just one-lane wide and was in terrible condition.

● The pedestrian pathway across Gokhale Bridge was just 1.5 persons wide. Making it impossible for two people to pass each other whilst walking across!

**Shambles and slumber** | A bridge that was six years in the making was nearing completion, and every access around it was in a shambles!

● BMC finally awoke from their slumber and made superficial repairs to get the Phase-1 motor car ready.

● But, no sign of any work on Phase-2.

● No sign of fixing the 2-metre bridge-mismatch.

● No sign of proper to & fro



MIND THE GAP: People on Gokhale Bridge look down at Barfiwala flyover

Imaging: Ish Kumar

type band.

● These different parts of the bridge were to be assembled together at a sky assembly site. Yet, the sky-assembly site was not kept ready.

● Few weeks later, after the assembly site was finally ready, BMC found that they didn't have ground space for crane movement.

● So, they set about to demolish the structures adjoining the bridge work site. In true JCB-govt style, demolition of the adjoining homes and offices happened in a record three days. Mumbaikars heaved a sigh of relief.

**Aspirational timeline** | In Sep 2023, BMC arranged a public meeting at the work site where citizens were able to discuss the ongoing work. Final dates were given.

access.

Yet, BMC opened up Phase-1 with a grand inauguration, with the top honchos of govt and BMC celebrating their 'Grand-Success'. Seriously BMC, what were you celebrating? That, despite your incompetence, you all were able to half-open half a bridge?

One month later, have you moved an inch further? Have you started work on Phase-II? Have you fixed the Barfiwala flyover mismatch? Have you opened up the exit to Telli Gully? Or the pedestrian access to the station? Oh yes, you have got some expert opinion on how to 'lift up' Barfiwala flyover. Please get down to the real work and stop making content for stand-up comedy.

The writer is an environmentalist and part of a citizens group that tracks BMC project work

## Carnatic Musicians Are Out Of Tune

An artiste questioned poor practices in India's robust classical traditions. But that's not attacking the art

Malini Nair

Some artistes in the Carnatic universe rose in mutiny against awarding of Music Academy's prestigious Sangeeta Kalandhi award to vocalist TM Krishna. His criticism of the Carnatic ecosystem and its discriminatory practices vilified its artistes and institutions, they said, as they pulled out of academy performances this season. One artiste returned his Sangeeta Kalandhi, a legendary percussionist's son returned his late father's award.

The king Akbar adorned the throne at a time when there were auspicious planets all around. Even wicked people started serving the king by holding his umbrella. His kingdom is like a heaven...The king removes all...suffering. Tanasena – the composer – blesses the king for having such fortune.' That was Tansen's eulogy to his employer Akbar, translated by ethnomusicologist Bonnie Wade.

That pro-establishment paean came from one of the earliest and greatest superstars of the classical firmament. Nothing much has changed across five centuries, as is evident from the backlash against Krishna. With few exceptions, Indian classical musicians tend to pick reverence and adoration over questioning and inquiry of their icons and systems. Anything that's 500 years old can't be up for assessment, right?

There are two common responses when our high arts run into excesses of the establishment: claim the ivory tower's protection, because a spiritual practice cannot afford to get its hands dirty. Or jump right into it and compose adulatory songs or choreographies. In-between lies the possibility of sitting back and introspecting, which, somehow, is simply not acceptable.

**Calvin & Hobbes**



Jaya Row

A beggar used to beg outside a busy train station. One day a man approached him and offered to buy his beggin bowl for ₹2,000. The man then offered ₹10,000. The beggar refused. After a few days the man convinced the beggar to sell it for a princely sum of ₹25,000. The beggar was happy as he would not have to beg any more. The man was ecstatic. He had obtained an antique bowl worth millions.

We are like the beggar, oblivious of our real worth. We waste our lives in petty, insignificant preoccupations when we are sitting on a goldmine. We find pleasure in little acquisitions, unaware that we are heir to infinite bliss. We are content with incremental progress. We need to take that mighty leap and commit ourselves to exponential growth.

When your mind is focused on the body, you experience the lowest quality of joy. You can enjoy sense objects only as long as there is contact with them. Move to emotional thrills and physical inconveniences no longer matter. When a teenager falls in love, she becomes indifferent to food. Identify with an intellectual ideal and you experience much greater joy. A sportsperson dedicated to tennis celebrates an opponent's brilliance as if it were his own. And when you identify with the Spirit within you attain infinite Bliss.

Begin by expanding your mind. Rise above paltry issues and espouse a higher cause. Think big. Become a giver, not a taker. An automobile component manufacturer decided to improve the quality of their products. They won the coveted Deming Prize. The following

year they helped eight other companies to improve their quality. Thus, India became the hub for automobile component manufacture! Selfishness leads to failure. Rise above thought of self and excellence flows from you. The law is that all takers are unhappy. Givers are the happy ones. And you grow into a towering personality.

Enlarge your circle of love. Go beyond the narrow confines of your family to accommodate your community, country, the world. The whole world becomes your family – vasudhaiva kutumbakam. The higher you go, the more successful you become. Oneness makes for astounding results. Cooperation yields much better results than competition. Your happiness multiplies.

Understand the futility of worldly pursuits. Then you develop munukshatva, the desire for

liberation. Plato describes people living in a dark cave. One day a young man told his peers that there had to be something beyond the cave. The elders said there was nothing beyond their little world. He decided to explore and walked away. He reached a point where he was in pitch darkness. His conviction helped him continue. Finally, he came out into the open. He saw the sun, moon, stars, breathed ethereal air, and he was in bliss!

We are trapped in the world, ignorant of the Beyond. Do you visualise an exhilarating life beyond the daily grind? The Bhagavad Gita speaks to you. It takes you step by step from mediocrity to Excellence. From drudgery to revelry. And from mortality to Immortality. Break free from your self-imposed prison and take off into the world of the Spirit.

For more inspiration from Jaya Row, visit [www.vedantavision.org](http://www.vedantavision.org)



THE SPEAKING TREE

## Sacredspace

Happiness... is not something that can be demanded from life, and if you are not happy you had better stop worrying about it and see what treasures you can pluck from your own brand of unhappiness.

Robertson Davies





NISSAN TO LAUNCH 30 NEW MODELS BY 2027, BOOST GLOBAL SALES VOLUME BY 1 MILLION VEHICLES



## SP Group to sell Odisha port to Adani co in ₹3.3k cr deal

**Debt Reduction Move: Next In Line Is IPO Of Group Co Afcons**

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**Mumbai:** Shapoorji Pallonji Group is set to sell its 56% stake in Gopalpur Port in Odisha to Adani Ports for an enterprise value of Rs 3,000-3,300 crore, of which the equity consideration is Rs 1,300 crore.

In Dec 2023, the construction-to-real estate group, led by Shapoor Mistry, had sold its 50% share in Dharmaraj Port in Maharashtra to JSW Infrastructure. After the latest deal, SP will be left with an under-construction port in Chhara, Gujarat.

The share sale in Gopalpur is part of SP's strategy to divest non-core assets to pare debt of Rs 20,000 crore. Over the last few years, the group has sold assets worth Rs 11,000 crore to strengthen its balance sheet. Next on the cards is



**The deal with Shapoorji Pallonji Group will help Adani Ports to expand its play, which in Q3FY24 handled 109 million metric tonnes of cargo**

to sell a part of its interests in engineering major Afcons Infrastructure through an IPO. Afcons, which SP had acquired from ICICI Bank, and which today is worth over \$2 billion (Rs 16,685 crore), has been preparing itself for an IPO in recent months.

SE, which has built the Sultan of Oman's palace and the Atal tunnel, had acquired Gopalpur Port from metal trader Sesa International and entrepreneur Mahimananda Mishra of Orissa Stevedores in 2017. It subsequently turned the port's performance around.

## Cocoa is more expensive than copper

**C**ocoa extended its surge — surpassing \$9,000 a ton for the first time ever — as a supply crunch grips the market and chocolate makers grapple for beans.

Futures are up about 50% this month alone and have more than doubled already this year. Poor harvests on the back of bad weather and crop disease in West African growers, where most of the world's cocoa is grown, and little sign of production relief elsewhere have left the industry in a bind. The rally has sent prices toward \$10,000 — a level that seemed unthinkable only a few months ago — and even made cocoa more expensive than bellwether industrial metal copper. BLOOMBERG

## Irdai drops plan to ease insurance surrender fees

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**Mumbai:** In a relief for life insurance company investors, Irdai has retained most existing surrender charges in the revised product regulations.

However, policyholders who cancel their policies will not get as much as what was proposed under the draft exposure norms, which were aimed at curbing mis-selling in Dec 2023.

Life insurance companies' stocks had taken a major knock after Irdai had released the draft norms. The industry, including public and private sector companies, had lobbied with the regulator,

stating that the proposed norms would hurt growth. Under the new norms, boards have the responsibility of ensuring fair pricing.

"As far as the surrender charges go, the status quo (pre-exposure draft) has been largely maintained.

There has been a revision of the special surrender charges which benefit the policyholder to the extent of 10-15%," said an industry source.

The source added that the benefit would be to policyholders who surrender their policies after five years.

In the draft, the regulator had sought to cap the maximum surrender charges that would be borne by a policy-

holder for exiting a policy prematurely. Higher surrender charges were expected to curb mis-selling as insurance companies would lose money if a policy was discontinued.

This would force them to claw back commissions from distributors who would, in turn, sell only to those who had the capacity to pay. Insurance firms had, however, argued that life insurance policies are long-term and the biggest buyers of long-dated govt securities with a duration of up to 40 years. The new norms would force them to remain liquid or liquidate long-term securities, which would be detrimental to all stakeholders.

Consumers moved beyond Holi essentials to even order apparel items from instant delivery platforms. Zepto, for instance, saw a spike in orders for white T-shirts, said co-founder Aadi Patilica.

## Quick comm cos make a splash with colour sales

**Mumbai:** Zomato's Blinkit and Swiggy's Instamart seem to have made brisk business on Holi as Indians took to quick commerce platforms to shop for gulaal (colour), pichkari (water gun) and flowers for the festival.

"We hit our all time high orders, OPM (order per minute), and almost every other metric on the board," Albin Dhindsa, founder of Blinkit posted on X on Monday.

Instamart claims to have sold five times more flowers this Holi compared to last year.

The firm's OPM on Monday morning surpassed that of the previous morning with a user from Gurgaon having spent more than Rs 5,000 on the platform for Holi essentials. "Gulaal orders had started pouring in as early as 6 am. We saw a peak of 444 gulaals per minute. Almost every order today on Instamart includes a packet of gulaal," said Phani Kishan A, head of Instamart and co-founder at Swiggy. The platform which had already hit its highest orders of 2024 on Choti Holi (Sunday) seemed poised to touch another high at the end of the two-day festivities.

Consumers moved beyond Holi essentials to even order apparel items from instant delivery platforms. Zepto, for instance, saw a spike in orders for white T-shirts, said co-founder Aadi Patilica.

Quick commerce or 10 minute deliveries as a concept started gaining ground in India in 2021. The convenience of speedy door step deliveries brought forth a shift in consumer mindset and they were fast to take to apps and services like Blinkit, Instamart and Zepto. "In quick commerce, it is not a discount war anymore," analysts said.

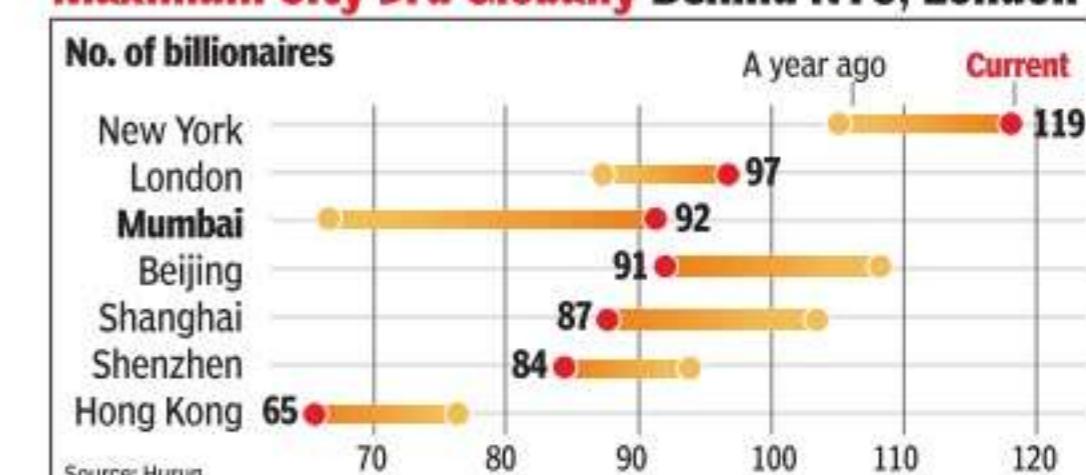
Data from analysts show that Blinkit leads the local quick commerce market with a 45% share, followed by Instamart with a 27% share and Zepto with 21%.

## Mumbai pips Beijing, is Asia's billionaire capital

**With 92 Billionaires, Indian City Overtakes Chinese Capital As Its Tally Drops To 91**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

### Maximum City 3rd Globally Behind NYC, London



Source: Hurun

wealth amounts to \$265 billion, a 28% decrease.

Mumbai's wealth sectors include energy and pharmaceuticals, with billionaires like Mukesh Ambani experiencing significant gains. Real estate player Mangal Prabhat Lodha (and family) was Mumbai's biggest wealth gainer in percentage terms (116%).

In the global rich list, Indian billionaires have seen a slight drop in world ranking; Mukesh Ambani maintains his stronghold at 10th position with a substantial increase in wealth, primarily attributed to Reliance Industries. Similarly, Gautam Adani's remarkable surge in wealth propelled him up

eight positions globally to the 15th rank.

HCL's Shiv Nadar and his family witnessed a notable ascent in both wealth and global ranking (up 16 places to 34). Conversely, Serum Institute's Cyrus S Poonawalla experienced a modest decrease (down 9 places to 55) with total wealth of \$82 billion.

Further contributing to India's billionaire cohort's dynamics are Sun Pharmaceuticals Dilip Shah (61st position) and Kumar Mangalam Birla (100). Radhakishan Damani's modest yet steady wealth growth, fuelled by DMart's success, has seen him move up eight places to 100.

## Private lenders expand ATM network, PSU banks reduce

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

1,36,173 machines, while private banks added 3,502 ATMs, taking their network to 79,225.

HDFC Bank has said that it plans to add 1,500 branches during FY25. Other private banks too have announced plans for branch expansion.

The reduction by PSBs has been largely in offsite ATMs, which have shrunk to 93,381 from 96,243 a year ago and 87,160 two years ago. Bankers

said that they are going slow on offsite deployment because the cap on charges does not

make it profitable to acquire customers of other banks. There is also uncertainty about new regulations that may push up the cost of operations.

The average number of transactions per ATM is around 2,400 and the average withdrawal amount is Rs 4,918 per transaction.

## Indian talent key to GCCs' product roadmap

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**Bengaluru:** Global capability centres (GCCs) in India are building a product mindset that underscores collective ownership of solutions and greater accountability. As GCCs sharpen their product management playbook, they are augmenting their product teams by offering competitive salaries for roles across entry, mid, and senior levels. Historically, product manager positions were close to customer bases and global headquarters. However, they are now gaining firm ground in India. This shift is driven by technology, access to skilled specialists, and value creation.

A report by the global management and strategy consulting firm Zinnov showed that entry-level product managers in India start with a median salary of Rs 8 lakh a year, while senior product development engineers receive an annual compensation of Rs 13 lakh to Rs 16 lakh. At the mid-level, a senior product management lead earns anywhere between Rs 28 lakh to Rs 34 lakh. At the senior level, a director of product management takes home anywhere between Rs 66 lakh to Rs 85 lakh, respectively.

and as a senior director of product management, they earn between Rs 91 lakh and Rs 1.2 crore.

Pari Natarajan, CEO and co-founder of Zinnov, said, "Product management has evolved remarkably over time, adapting to changing

continuous feedback loops. It has transitioned to a dynamic approach to product management focusing on the iterative development of the build-measure-learn feedback loop. Currently, the spotlight is on a data-driven product management ap-

ture, NCR, and Mumbai accounting for two-thirds of the product management talent. Take RapidAI, for instance. The company has over a dozen FDA-approved models in vascular and neurovascular disease treatment, serving over 2,200 hospitals across 100 countries. RapidAI has analyzed over 11 million scans with a 30% year-on-year increase in volumes. RapidAI set up its GCC in India in 2022, driving product design and development for its hybrid technology platform, Rapid Edge Cloud. Edge Cloud's hybrid architecture, combining on-premises and cloud capabilities, addresses the issue of cloud outages by allowing essential AI services to continue, thus ensuring continued patient care.

Natarajan said that some of the GCCs are creating a new product innovation playbook from India. "The Japanese e-commerce platform Mercari India's team has been integral to creating an intuitive platform that connects buyers and sellers nationwide and comprises platform engineers, backend engineers, and mobile developers." Among the recent innovations are Merpay, a mobile payment service

seamlessly integrated within the Mercari Marketplace app; Mercoin, dedicated to exploring services revolving around cryptocurrency assets and blockchain technologies; and Shops, an e-commerce platform empowering individuals to launch their own online stores using their smartphones.

Companies are drawn to India for tech talent also because of the scale and diversity of skill sets. "Many companies used to look at Eastern Europe. And Ukraine's cost was comparable to India. Over time, Poland and Romania have become too expensive. We did a study for one of our customers, and we found that there is more negative unemployment in tech because everybody who can be deployed is deployed. Customers are wary of the war situation in Eastern Europe.

Many companies have GCCs also in manufacturing, industrial engineering, and automotive companies have a large presence in China. They want to de-risk China. It's almost like China Plus One in manufacturing and India Plus One in GCCs. India Plus One is Latin America. But India is gaining prominence for product talent," Natarajan added.

## Boeing CEO to quit in overhaul sparked by Max safety crisis

**B**oeing announced sweeping changes to its leadership, including its chief executive officer, after a safety crisis spiraled in recent months.

CEO **Dave Calhoun** will exit at the end of 2024, while chairman Larry Kellner will not stand for re-election, Boeing said in a statement Monday.

Stan Deal, who leads Boeing's commercial airplanes division, will also retire immediately.

COO Stephanie Pope will take on Deal's role, the company said.

The overhaul reflects growing customer frustration with Calhoun and Deal as the crisis centering on the planemaker's manufacturing quality and safety shows no signs of receding.

Kellner, Calhoun and Deal mark the highest-profile departures after a near-catastrophic incident in January involving its 737 Max jetliner plunged Boeing into an ever-deepening turmoil.

Suspicion over whether Calhoun and Deal would keep their jobs started bubbling up after the Alaska Airlines incident, but questions over their leadership reached a crescendo last week when CEOs of

major airlines sought to bypass Calhoun and meet with the board of directors directly.

"This is probably a wise move by the Boeing board of directors," Robert Stallard, an analyst with Vertical Research Partners, told clients Monday. "Many of Boeing's customers, suppliers and other stakeholders have arguably lost faith in the company, while its relations with the FAA and NTSB are clearly strained."

A sweeping audit of Boeing and its suppliers by the US Federal Aviation Administration raised concerns about the company's safety culture, the agency's top official said last week. BLOOMBERG

## Royal Enfield maker sets up Dutch unit

**T**he maker of Royal Enfield motorcycles has incorporated a unit in the Netherlands with plans for a warehouse in the EU, after Brexit made it more difficult to move parts to mainland Europe. Eicher Motors set up the Dutch arm to reduce its dependency on the UK and is in talks to establish a warehouse, potentially in Germany or France, to speed up the supply of non-motorcycle products like spare parts and branded merchandise. "Brexit has made it challenging to move materials to and from the UK to Europe," Arun Gopal, Royal Enfield's international head, said. "Also, the UK is not geographically close to some parts of Europe, so we needed a warehouse that could serve that region more effectively."

Founded in the UK at the start of the last century and with motorcycles that were used in both World Wars, the company imports bikes and other parts into Europe from India and sells them through local distributors. The business is growing quickly in the EU and the new warehouse will cut lead times to two weeks from 90 days currently, he added. BLOOMBERG

## Behind the plot to break Nvidia's grip on AI by targeting software

**San Francisco:** Nvidia earned its \$2.2 trillion market cap by producing artificial-intelligence chips that have become the lifeblood powering the new era of generative AI developers from startups to Microsoft, OpenAI and Google parent Alphabet.

Almost as important to its hardware is the company's nearly 20 years' worth of computer code, which helps make competition with the company nearly impossible. More than 4 million global developers rely on Nvidia's CUDA software platform to build AI and other apps. Now a coalition of tech companies that includes Qualcomm, Google and Intel plans to loosen Nvidia's chokehold by going after the chip giant's secret weapon: the software that keeps developers tied to

Nvidia chips. They are part of an expanding group of financiers and companies hacking away at Nvidia's dominance in AI.

"We're actually showing developers how you migrate out from an Nvidia platform," Vinesh Sukumar, Qualcomm's head of AI and machine learning, said in an interview with Reuters. Starting with a piece of technology developed by Intel called OneAPI, the UXL Foundation, a consortium of tech companies, plans to build a suite of software and tools that will be able to power multiple types of AI accelerator chips, executives involved with the group told Reuters. The open-source project aims to make computer code run on any machine, regardless of what chip and

hardware powers it.

"It's about specifically in the context of machine learning frameworks - how do we create an open ecosystem, and promote productivity and choice in hardware," Google's director and chief technologist of high-performance computing, Bill Hugo, told Reuters in an interview. Google is one of the founding members of UXL and helps determine the technical direction of the project, Hugo said.

UXL's technical steering committee is preparing to nail down technical specifications in the first half of this year. Engineers plan to refine the technical details to a "mature" state by the end of the year, executives said. These executives stressed the need to build a solid foundation to include contributions from multiple companies that can also be deployed on any chip or hardware.

Beyond the initial companies involved, UXL will court

technical contributions from third parties that include foundation members and outsiders keen on using the open-source technology, the executives involved said. Intel's OneAPI is already useable, and the second step is to create a standard programming model of computing designed for AI.

UXL plans to put its resources toward addressing the most pressing computing problems dominated by a few chipmakers, such as the latest AI apps and high-performance computing applications.

Those early plans feed in to the organization's longer-term goal of winning over a critical mass of developers to its platform. UXL eventually aims to support Nvidia hardware and code, in the long run.

When asked about the interest in unseating Nvidia through a potential weakness in software has ramped up in the last year, and startups aiming to poke holes in the company's leadership gobbled up just over \$2 billion in 2023 compared with \$580 million from a year ago, according to the data from PitchBook.

Success in the shadow of Nvidia's group on AI data crunching is an achievement that few of the startups will be able to achieve.

**Nearly 100 startups** The UXL Foundation's plans are one of many efforts to chip away at Nvidia's hold on the software that powers AI. Venture financiers and corporate dollars have poured more than \$4 billion into 93 separate efforts, according to data compiled by PitchBook at Reuters' request.

Nvidia's CUDA is a compelling piece of software on paper, as it is full-featured and is consistently growing both from Nvidia's contributions and the developer community. "But that's not what really matters," said Jay Goldberg, chief executive of D2D Advisory, a finance and strategy consulting firm. REUTERS



OSCAR WINNER OLIVIA COLMAN SAYS SHE WOULD BE MAKING "A LOT MORE" MONEY IF SHE WERE A MALE ACTOR

ANYONE WHO KEEPS THE ABILITY TO SEE BEAUTY NEVER GROWS OLD.  
— FRANZ KAFKA



COMEDIAN KEVIN HART JOINS AN ELITE GROUP HONOURED WITH THE MARK TWAIN PRIZE FOR AMERICAN HUMOUR

## Reining in: EU begins probe into app store rules of Google, Apple

### Browser Practices And Meta Fees Too Under Radar

Apple, Alphabet's Google and Meta Platforms face the risk of potentially hefty fines as the European Union opened a full-blown investigation into the firms' compliance with strict new laws reining in the power of Big Tech. The European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's executive arm, said Monday that Apple and Google's app store rules will be targeted in the first probes under the bloc's Digital Markets Act (DMA), while Google search results might unfairly preference its own services and how Apple may make it harder for users to choose alternatives to its Safari browser.

New subscription fees for Meta's Instagram and Face-



CLOSING IN: For Apple, the EU probe comes as a one-two punch with a sweeping antitrust probe in the US, where the justice department and 16 attorneys general sued the firm last week

book platforms will also be targeted by the probe, which could hit firms with fines of up to 10% of global revenue, or up to 20% in the case of repeated breaches. "We suspect that the suggested solutions put forward by the three companies do not fully comply with the DMA," EU antitrust chief Margrethe Vestager sa-

id. She added that the probes involve "serious cases."

The commission also warned about further scrutiny on Apple's new fee structure for alternative app stores and Amazon.com's ranking practices on its marketplace. The DMA that took full effect earlier this month is a broad rulebook that targets Big Tech "ga-

tekeeper" companies providing "core platform services."

An Apple spokesperson said the company is confident it complies with the DMA, while Google's director for competition, Oliver Bethell, said the firm has made significant changes to its services in Europe and that it will "continue to defend our approach in the coming months." Meta said it designed its offerings to comply with various regulatory obligations, including DMA.

For Apple, the EU probe comes as a one-two punch with a sweeping antitrust probe in the US, accusing the iPhone maker of violating antitrust laws by blocking rivals from accessing hardware and software features on its popular devices. The EU also recently hit Apple with a €1.8 billion (\$2 billion) fine for blocking music streaming apps from informing users of cheaper deals. BLOOMBERG

## UK sanctions a front company & 2 actors

► Continued from page 1

The UK has held the commission's email, control systems, and copies of the electoral registers used to enable permissibility checks on political donations. The registers also included the name and address of anyone in Britain who was registered to vote between 2014 and 2022. On Monday the UK government said that the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is a part of GCHQ, assessed the Electoral Commission, which oversees elections and regulates political finance, was highly likely

compromised by a China state-affiliated cyber entity. NCSC also assessed it is highly likely that the China state-affiliated cyber actor APT31 conducted reconnaissance activity against UK parliamentarians in 2021.

The UK has sanctioned a front company and two actors involved in the operations of APT31. UK PM Rishi Sunak said: "China is behaving in an increasingly assertive way abroad, authoritarian at home and it represents an epoch-defining challenge, and also the greatest state-based threat to our economic security."

## Macron: Intel shows IS was behind attack

Moscow: France on Monday joined the United States in saying intelligence indicated Islamic State was responsible for an attack on a concert hall outside Moscow that killed 137 people, while Russia continued to suggest that Ukraine was to blame. Islamic State said it was responsible for the attack.

French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters: "The information available to us...as well as to our main partners, indicates indeed that it was an entity of the Islamic State that instigated this attack." This group also tried to commit several actions on our own soil," he said during a visit to French Guiana. REUTERS

## Russia refuses to comment on IS link

The Kremlin refused to comment Monday on the Islamic State group's claims that it was behind the deadliest attack in Russia in two decades, as rescuers searched for bodies amid the rubble of the burnt-out Moscow concert hall. Eleven people have been detained in connection with the attack, which saw camouflaged gunmen storm into Crocus City Hall, open fire and set the building ablaze, killing at least 137 people.

Islamic State jihadists have said several times since Friday they were responsible. "The investigation is still ongoing. No coherent version has yet been voiced," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday when asked why



Cops patrol on the Trocadero square near the Eiffel Tower on Monday as part of the 'Vigipirate' security plan as France raises terror alert warning to the highest level

Russia had not addressed IS's claimed involvement.

In a series of late-night hearings in Moscow that ran into the early hours of Monday, four of the suspects —

### Russian massacre suspects' homeland plagued by poverty and religious strife

**Tallinn (Estonia):** The four men charged with the massacre at a Moscow theater have been identified by authorities as citizens of Tajikistan, some of the thousands who migrate to Russia each year from the poorest of the former Soviet republics to scrape out marginal existences. Along with grinding poverty, Tajikistan is rife with religious tensions. Hard-line Islamists were one of the main forces opposing the government in a 1990s civil war that devastated the country. The militants claiming responsibility for the Moscow massacre that killed 137 people — a branch of the Islamic State group in neighboring Afghanistan — reportedly recruit heavily from Tajikistan. As many as 1.5 million Tajik migrants are estimated to be in Russia after fleeing the poverty and unemployment that plague their landlocked, mountainous country. AP

with bruises and cuts on their swollen faces — were dragged in. FSB officers wheeled one into the hearing on a gurney, his eyes barely open. Peskov refused to comment on

reports and videos on social media that showed bloody interrogations of the suspects after they were arrested on Saturday. Two of them pled guilty, the court said. REUTERS

## US announces \$6 billion to clean up heavy manufacturing

**The project is one of 33 set to receive grants worth as much as \$500 million each as part of an energy department program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in energy intensive manufacturing industries and to revitalize industrial communities**

sions by an estimated 75%.

Domestic production of aluminum, used in solar panels, semiconductors and fighter jets, has been steadily declining for years. That's happened even as demand increased, partly thanks to President Joe Biden's signature climate law that's lifted consumption of materials needed for the energy transition.

"It is difficult to overstate

the significance of what this award will mean for the domestic aluminum industry," said Joe Quinn, a vice-president with SAFE, a Washington think-tank that advocates for US energy independence.

"A new domestic smelter puts the US back in the game and reverses our dangerous, decades-long decline in primary aluminum production," Quinn said. BLOOMBERG

## Ties with Philippines at crossroads: China

**Manila:** China warned the Philippines on Monday to behave cautiously and seek dialogue, saying their relations were at a "crossroads" as new confrontations between their coastguards over maritime claims deepened tensions.

It was the second such warning by the Chinese foreign ministry in three months. The message was delivered by Chinese vice-foreign minister Chen Xiaodong during a phone call with Philippine counterpart Theresa Lazaro amid worsening friction over altercations at the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea. Lazaro relayed Manila's "protest against the



The Philippines accused China's coastguard of using water cannon against a civilian boat supplying troops on Saturday at the Second Thomas Shoal.

aggressive actions" by the China Coast Guard and maritime militia against a Philippines' resupply mission in the South China Sea. REUTERS

## Farmer protests shelve Europe's climate plan

**Brussels:** A major European Union plan to fight climate change and better protect nature in the 27-nation bloc has been indefinitely postponed Monday, underscoring how farmers' protests sweeping the continent influence politics ahead of the June EU parliamentary elections.

China is planning to raise the retirement age in phases. The retirement age currently stands at 60 for men, and younger still for women. REUTERS

moment and with the upcoming European elections, it won't be easy to get out of this position," said Dutch climate minister Rob Jetten. The Nature Restoration plan is a key part of the EU's European Green Deal that seeks to establish the world's most ambitious climate and biodiversity targets and make the bloc the global point of reference on all climate issues.

The bill aims for Europe to become the first climate-

neutral continent by 2050, demanding short-term changes and sacrifices from all parts of society to reap the benefits in a generation.

Even if the plan had a rough ride through the EU's complicated approval process, the watered-down version was supposed to sail through the final vote. Under the complicated voting rules, whereby a qualified majority representing 15 of the 27 member states and 65 % of

the population was needed, it was long thought that threshold was safe, until Monday. The change of heart follows weeks of relentless protests from farmers across the bloc who have argued that reforms of environmental laws governing the way they work are driving them toward bankruptcy at a time when food security and self-sufficiency are becoming essential again as the Russian war on Ukraine wages on. AP

TODAY'S FACE-OFF | PLAYED 5  
CSK VS GT | TV TIME 7.30 PM  
STAR SPORTS / JIOCINEMA



LAST FIVE MATCHES	
CSK	W W W W L
GT	W L W L W
VENUE: CHENNAI	ODDS
CSK	GT
7/10	12/10

# TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024 **IPL 2024**

“SHUBMAN LED THE TEAM VERY WELL. IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE HE WAS LEADING FOR THE FIRST TIME. EVEN TO ME AS A SPINNER, THE INPUTS THAT HE GAVE WERE FANTASTIC.”

—Sai Kishore |  
ON GT SKIPPER SHUBMAN GILL



## Kohli crushes Kings' hopes

**Opener, Karthik Pilot RCB To Four-Wicket Victory**

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**Bengaluru:** Between the last edition of the IPL and now, Virat Kohli hasn't been a regular in T20 cricket. With a T20 World Cup berth at stake, he did not fire against Chennai Super Kings in the opener. But on Monday, as Royal Challengers Bengaluru began their home stretch of the competition, the opener signalled his return to form with a sparkling 49-ball 77 (11x4; 2x6) against Punjab Kings. Kohli laid the foundation for the 177-run chase, but RCB did not finish the four-wicket win without stretching it to the last over.

As Kohli brought up his 100th T20 half-century in 31 deliveries, there were no celebrations, instead the seasoned campaigner focused on the run chase.

Asked to bat first, Punjab were restricted to 176/6. The home team reached the target with four balls to spare. With 23 required off the last two overs, Dinesh Karthik grabbed the spotlight with an unbeaten 10-ball 28 (3x4, 2x6), including the winning four.

It was not an error-free Kohli innings with the right-hander given life on two occasions. Jonny Bairstow (first over) and Rahul Chahar (sixth) dropped the batter on 0 and 33 respectively. However, the 35-year-old looked in majestic touch. He hit eight fours in powerplay, and the runs continued to flow freely as he set up the pathway for his team's first win of the season.

But, at the other end, he was running short of partners after Faf du Plessis, Cameron Green, Rajat Pati-



SETTING IT UP: Virat Kohli top scored for RCB with 77 off 49 balls

### SCOREBOARD

**PBKS:** Shikhar Dhawan c Kohli b Maxwell 45, Jonny Bairstow c Kohli b Siraj 8, Prabhsimran Singh c Rawat b Maxwell 25, Liam Livingstone c Rawat b Joseph 17, Sam Curran c Rawat b Dayal 23, Jitesh Sharma c Rawat b Siraj 27, Shashank Singh not out 21, Harpreet Brar not out 2; **Extras:** (b 1, lb 1, w 6) **8: Total:** (for 6 wickets, 20 overs) **176;** **Fall of wickets:** 1-17, 2-72, 3-98, 4-98, 5-150, 6-154; **Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 4-0-26-2, Yash Dayal 4-0-23-1, Alzarri Joseph 4-0-43-1, Cameron Green 2-0-19-0, Mayank Dagar 3-0-34-0, Glenn Maxwell 3-0-29-2

**RCB:** Virat Kohli c Brar b Patel 77, Faf du Plessis c Curran b Rabada 3, Cameron Green c Sharma b Rabada 3, Rajat Patidar b Brar 18, Glenn Maxwell b Brar 3, Anuj Rawat lbw Curran 11, Dinesh Karthik not out 28, Mahipal Lomror not out 17; **Extras:** (b 2, lb 9, w 7) **18: Total:** (for six wickets, overs 19.2) **178;** **Fall of wickets:** 1-26, 2-43, 3-86, 4-103, 5-130, 6-130; **Bowling:** Sam Curran 3-0-30-1, Arshdeep Singh 3-2-40-0, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-23-2, Harpreet Brar 4-0-13-2, Harshal Patel 4-0-45-1, Rahul Chahar 1-0-16-0

**Result:** RCB won by four wickets  
**Player of the Match:** Virat Kohli

dar and Glenn Maxwell made hasty retreats to the dugout.

With RCB needing 71 from 42, it all boiled down to Kohli and new man Anuj Rawat. But both of them fell in a matter of three balls. But Mahipal Lomror and Karthik joined hands to ensure Kohli's innings did not go in vain. The duo put together a match-winning 18-ball 48-run partnership. For the visitors, slow left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar's (4-0-13-2) brilliance went in vain.

Earlier, RCB's left-arm pacer of

It was Jitesh Sharma (27, 20b, 1x4, 2x6) and Sam Curran (23, 17b, 3x4), who brought their team back into the game with a fifth-wicket partnership of 52 runs. A late flourish by Shashank Singh (21; 8b, 1x4, 2x6), helped them put up a decent total.

Chennai Super Kings being the defending champions. The title-holders get to host the opening and the final game of the tournament as per established convention.

The other two marquee playoff matches will be hosted by Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium on May 21 and 22 respectively.

Delhi Capitals, who will play their first two home games in Visakhapatnam on March 31 and April 3, will have five games at their actual base—Arun Jaitley Stadium. These matches are scheduled for April 20, 24, 27, May 7 and 14. PTI

Chennai has been awarded the final by virtue of Chennai Super Kings being the defending champions. The title-holders get to host the opening and the final game of the tournament as per established convention.

“The tournament is long, and the guys are coming in and understanding what is needed at this level. We will get it right,” Pollard said.

Skipper Hardik Pandya was equally optimistic. “Not an issue, 13 games to go,” he said. They sounded exactly like captain Rohit after losing the opening games during his captaincy tenure.

**MUMBAI HAVE NOW LOST 12 CONSECUTIVE OPENING GAMES IN THE IPL**

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**D**o you remember the things around you when Mumbai Indians last won the opening match of their IPL campaign vs Chennai Super Kings on April 4, 2012 at the Chepauk?

Narendra Modi was still CM of Gujarat, Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister of India, the Sensex was 17486, the Nifty was 5322, Harbhajan Singh was captain of the franchise that had Sachin Tendulkar and Lasith Malinga still playing, Rohit Sharma had only two ODI hundreds and was a middle-order batter and hadn't played Test cricket. Virat Kohli was yet to captain India. Rahul Dravid had just retired from international cricket a fortnight ago and VVS Laxman was still an active cricketer. And the world still looked at you in awe if you carried a BlackBerry. To make it short, it's been a while.

And when Kieron Pollard, the current batting coach of the five-time winners addressed the media in Ahmedabad after their stunning six-run loss to Gujarat Titans, his words rang a bell.

“The tournament is long, and the guys are coming in and understanding what is needed at this level. We will get it right,” Pollard said.

Skipper Hardik Pandya was equally optimistic. “Not an issue, 13 games to go,” he said. They sounded exactly like captain Rohit after losing the opening games during his captaincy tenure.

**SAMPLE THIS:**  
**2014 vs KKR:** “I hope the guys stay positive and enjoy

**BUILDING BRIDGES:** Former MI skipper Rohit Sharma (L) chats with current captain Hardik Pandya during their match against Titans on Sunday

each other's company. It's a long tournament.”

**2015 vs KKR:** “I'm sure our guys can learn from the mistakes we made.”

**2016 vs RPSG:** “Just the start of the tournament, not to panic.”

**2017 vs RPSG:** “This is our first game and there is a lot of learning from this. I am sure we will bounce back.”

**2018 vs DC:** “Good learning for all of us.”

**2019 vs DC:** “First game is always a bit of a challenge for most of the teams. We have to learn from our mistakes and come back positively next time.”

**2020 vs CSK:** “Something for us to learn. Still early days.”

**2021 vs RCB:** “Winning the championship is important, I guess, not the first game.”

**2022 vs DC:** “We always come prepared, whether it's the first game or last game, we want to try and win. Disappointed, but it's not the end.”

**2023 vs RCB:** “A lot of the guys haven't played IPL before. First game of the season, lot to look forward to.”

To give it to MI though, despite being poor starters, they have won the title five times. In fact in 2015, they won it despite losing four of their first five games. The year before, they qualified despite losing their first five games. They may do so again, but Sunday's loss had disturbing pointers.

**Bumrah's late introduction:** When you have a bowler in

MI'S FIRST MATCH RESULTS	
2008	Lost To RCB by 5 wickets
2009	Beat CSK by 19 runs
2010	Beat RR by 4 runs
2011	Beat DC by 8 wickets
2012	Beat CSK by 8 wickets
2013	Lost To RCB by 2 runs
2014	Lost To KKR by 41 runs
2015	Lost To KKR by 7 wickets
2016	Lost To RPSG by 9 wickets
2017	Lost To RPSG by 7 wickets
2018	Lost To CSK by 1 wickets
2019	Lost To DC by 37 runs
2020	Lost To CSK by 5 wickets
2021	Lost To RCB by 2 wickets
2022	Lost To DC by 4 wickets
2023	Lost To RCB by 8 wickets
2024	Lost To GT by 6 runs

the bowling form that Jasprit Bumrah is in now, it makes no sense to make him wait for three overs. Hardik, despite not bowling competitively for a while, chose to open the bowling and leaked runs. Bumrah's instant success in his first over proved that the move to make him wait was a wrong one.

**Brevis as impact player:** Make no mistake, Dewald Brevis played a useful knock of 46 (38 b, 2x4, 3x6). However, he was chained by Sai Kishore and Rashid Khan, scoring only 22 runs in the 23 balls he faced off them. The attacking left-handed option of Nehal Wadhera, who impressed last year, would have been a better choice with the ball turning into him.

**Hardik batting lower than Tim David:** We all know Tim David struggles against spin and Shubman Gill having a short leg to Rashid Khan against the Aussie indicated that. With 40 needed off 25 balls, the skipper, who hasn't been involved in a finishing role and had been batting at No. 4 for The Titans for the last few years, promoting David ahead of him, was a poor tactical move. Was he protecting himself against Rashid?

### NUMBERS GAME

**1404** Runs scored by Shubman Gill (average 46.80, 3x100s, 8x50s, 34 innnings, strike rate 147.63) to remain the first and only Gujarati batter to amass 1000-plus runs in IPL.

**4** Rashid Khan (46 at 21.65 runs apiece in 34 matches) needs just four wickets to become the first Gujarati bowler to complete 50 wickets. If he takes two more, he would be emulating Mohammed Shami's tally of 48 wickets at 21.04 runs apiece in 33 matches.

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

**Stop blaming Hardik for everything: Pollard**

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**Ahmedabad:** Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard defended the decision to bat captain Hardik Pandya 11 (4b; 1x4, 1x6) at No. 7 and said it was a collective move taken by the team management. MI finished at 162/9, falling short by six runs in their IPL opener against Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

No decision is made on full autonomy, so we can't say it is his decision. As a team, we have plans. We talk about setting entry points for batters. The top order batted deep into the game, and we also had two power hitters to go in the back end. Usually, if you look at it over time, Tim (David) has finished games for us, and Hardik has done it over the years.

“So, at any point, any one of them can resurrect the situation. It didn't happen tonight, so there will likely be a chat about who should have gone earlier. But all those things are in hindsight, and as a team, we make decisions, so let's put a stop to that.”

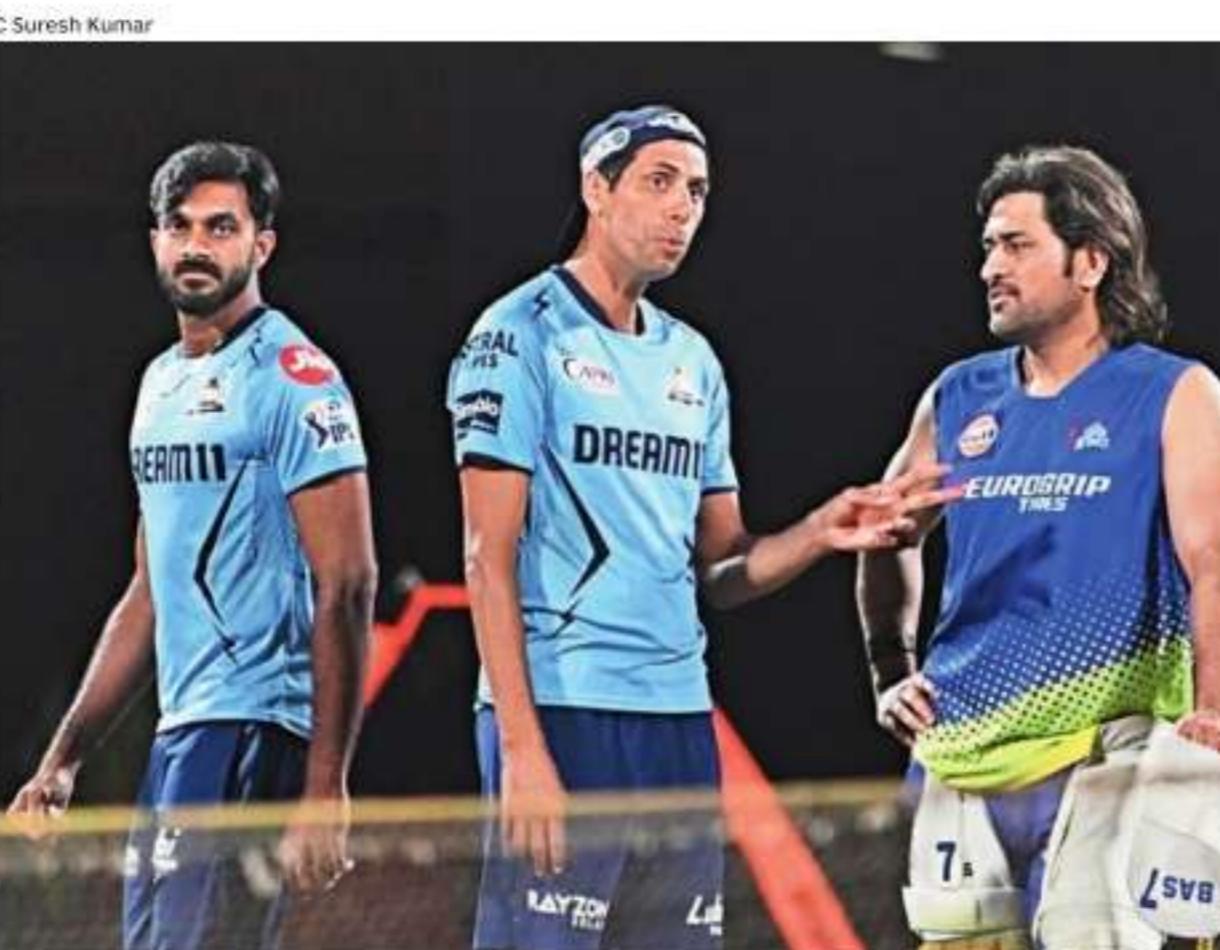
“Hardik made a decision, Hardik did this, Hardik did that. We are a team. We make

decisions collectively as one,” he said.

When asked if one among the top three batters should have batted throughout the innings to avoid a collapse like the one suffered on Sunday, the former West Indian all-rounder said, “Obviously, in an ideal world, that's what you want (to win). But when you are playing real cricket against professionals, they will have their plans. In the last quarter while we were batting, we let it slip and ended on the losing side. So, a couple of things to look at. The tournament is long, and the guys are coming in and understanding what is needed at this level. We will get it right.”

Pollard also defended Pandya opening the bowling. “Hardik has also bowled with the new ball for Gujarat over the last couple of years. He swung the new ball and bowled it well,” said Pollard.

“Hardik made a decision, Hardik did this, Hardik did that. We are a team. We make decisions collectively as one.” —Kieron Pollard | MI BATTING COACH



DEEP DISCUSSION: Gujarat Titans coach Ashish Nehra (C) speaks to Chennai Super Kings' MS Dhoni while GT's Vijay Shankar looks on



Iga Swiatek of Poland returns to Linda Noskova of the Czech Republic at the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami on Sunday

staying power proved decisive as he ran out 6-7(1/7), 7-5, 6-3 winner.

Hungarian Fabian Marozsan upset world No. 7 Holger Rune with a 6-1, 6-1 triumph in the second round. The convincing victory, in just 59 minutes, was a third win against a top-10 opponent in a Masters event for the 57th-ranked 24-year-old. Marozsan will face Alexee Popov in the third round after the Australian Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

France's Caroline Garcia progressed to a fourth round match on Saturday. Ben Shelton kept the Star Spangled flag flying in Florida with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Spanish teenager Martin Landaluce. In the third round, Shelton will be against 23rd seed Italian Lorenzo Musetti, who defeated Russian Roman Safin 7-5, 6-1.

Fifth-seeded American Leylah Fernandez 7-5, 6-4 to set up a fourth round clash with in-form compatriot Emma Raducanu. AFP

**Treesa-Gayatri duo & Srikanth miss out**

► From P 1

WITH the Madrid Open offering only 7000 points for the winners, Treesa-Gayatri have 44,714. Even if Treesa-Gayatri win the Madrid Open, the 3600 points they bag there will not be enough to overtake Ashwin-Tanisha, who will stay on 51,010 even if they lose in the first round.

Srikanth reached the semifinals of Swiss Open. But Lakshya's good show over the last three weeks clinched him the Olympic berth. With Lakshya making the semifinals of French Open (Super-750) and All England (Super-1000), Srikanth's chances suffered.

# INDIA SEEK SOLUTION TO SCORING WOES

**Ahead Of Chhetri's 150th Game, Stimac Says 'Will Leave' Post If Team Fails To Reach Rd 3**

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Kolkata: "I am honoured and privileged. After this, let's not make tomorrow (Tuesday) about this, and only about India versus Afghanistan," skipper Sunil Chhetri said at the beginning of the press conference in Guwahati on Monday.

However, it is difficult for anyone associated with or interest in Indian football to overlook the fact that the 39-year-old is set to achieve when India take on Afghanistan in the return leg of the Fifa World Cup 2026 Qualifier at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium on Tuesday. Chhetri is expected to be the first Indian to play his 150th international match for the Blue Tigers. To put it into perspective, only 40 players in the world have been able to reach the milestone.

While AIFF has planned a felicitation for the Indian skipper ahead of the crucial game, the fans would love nothing more than to see their captain mark the occasion by hitting the back of the net, as Chhetri had done in a 2-1 win when the teams last met in India in an AFC Asian Cup Qualifier in Kolkata two years ago. Or as he had done in the last game India played at the Guwahati venue – a 2-1 defeat to Oman in a World Cup qualifier almost five years back.

India lie second in the group behind two-time reigning Asian champions Qatar after being held to a goalless draw by a depleted Afghanistan in the away leg in Saudi Arabia last week. Chhetri and Co. realise the importance of a victory on Tuesday, which will make a draw against third-placed Kuwait at home in June enough for a historic passage into the third round of the qualifiers.

And coach Igor Stimac is aware of the significance of taking his 117th-ranked team that far for the first time, so much so that the former Croatia international seems ready to pay the ultimate price should he fail. "If I don't take India to the



WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

If I don't take India to the third round I will leave, with my pride, with my honour on everything that was done here in the five years of work. I will leave my position to someone else.  
— Igor Stimac | INDIA COACH

third round of the qualifiers, I will leave my position to someone else," Stimac, whose contract was extended to 2026 ahead of the Asian Cup, announced at the press conference.

However, he also stressed the role of individual players in making his dream come true, especially in the final third, where India's woes were glaring in the last game despite Stimac using all of his attacking ammunition. Vikram Partap Singh received his international debut, with Chhetri, Manvir Singh and Lallianzuala Chhangte all featuring in the starting 11 before Liston Colaco, Mahesh Singh and Brandon Fernandes were sent

on later in search of a goal.

With Sahal Abdul Samad, who scored the winner in Kolkata in 2022, set to miss the home leg too, India will hope that one or more of the available attackers will be able to find a breakthrough against the Zohib Islam Amiri-led Afghans and end a five-game goalscoring drought. But the experienced Amiri — expected to play his last match for his side — and Ashley Westwood — with his years of experience coaching Chhetri and Bengaluru FC — will again be out to complicate India's task despite them again missing all but three of their first-team players due to a protest against their association.

## ALVES PAYS BAIL, CAN LEAVE SPANISH JAIL, SAYS COURT

Barcelona: Former Brazil international footballer Dani Alves, convicted of rape in Spain, has paid his bail of one million

euros and can leave jail pending his appeal, a court said Monday.

One of the world's most decorated footballers, Alves, 40, was last month sentenced to four-and-a-half years in jail for raping a young woman in the VIP bathroom of a Barcelona nightclub in the early hours of December 31, 2022.

But in a surprise move, a Barcelona court agreed last Wednesday to his request for provisional release while his appeal is heard on condition that he post bail of a million euros (\$1.08 million), hand over his Spanish and Brazilian passports, remain in the country and present himself to court "on a weekly basis". It took him until Monday to present the funds, meaning he remained in jail while his entourage tried to raise the money. "We hereby inform you that the deposit of Daniel Alves' bail has been registered in the accounts of the 21st section of the Barcelona Court," the court said in a statement. AFP

changes to the lineup from Thursday's 2-1 win over Venezuela, which was the first of the two matches on the US tour, giving more players a chance to prove themselves before the Euro 2024 finals in Germany.

"Our mission and goal here are to show that we are still alive, that we are still fighting against the Russians, that we need Europe's help."

Rebrov, a former Tottenham and West Ham striker who made 75 international appearances, took over in June last year but could not lead Ukraine to automatic qualification. Iceland have not reached a major tournament since the 2018 World Cup. A spot in Group E at the Euros, with matches against Belgium, Slovakia and Romania, is up for grabs. AFP

## SUNIL CHHETRI: THE MILESTONE MAN

93

The number of goals Chhetri has scored so far in 149 matches. He is the third top international goalscorer among active footballers, behind Cristiano Ronaldo (125) and Lionel Messi (104).



86

The number of matches Chhetri has captained India in international football

### 4 HAT-TRICKS

Of his 93 goals for India, Chhetri has netted hat-tricks 4 times — vs Tajikistan (AFC Challenge Cup final, 2008), vs Vietnam (friendly, 2010), vs Chinese Taipei (Intercontinental Cup, 2018) and vs Pakistan (SAFF Cup, 2023)

Sunil Chhetri is set to play his record-extending 150th international match when India will host Afghanistan in the World Cup qualifiers in Guwahati on Tuesday. Bhaichung Bhutia is a distant second having played 88 times for senior India team. Chhetri is the only player to have scored in his debut as well as Match No. 25, 50, 75, 100 and 125. Here's a look at some of his achievements.

**DEBUT:** Vs Pakistan in Quetta on June 12, 2005 (Friendly, result 1-1)

**50TH MATCH:** Vs Malaysia in Kolkata on Nov. 16, 2011 (Friendly, result 3-2)

**100TH MATCH:** Vs Kenya in Mumbai on June 4, 2018 — (Intercontinental Cup, result 3-0)

**125TH MATCH:** Vs Nepal in Malle on Oct. 16, 2021 — (SAFF Cup, Result 3-0).

Compiled by Gautam Roy

## Sukhi sir turned the little boy in me into a man: Chhetri

**Guwahati:** Sunil Chhetri did not need anyone to tutor him on what he had to do on a football pitch but the same can't be said of the talismanic Indian striker when it came to things he was not supposed to do as a player in his early days.

That's where the role of Sukhwinder Singh, the former India player and Chhetri's first coach in international football, assumed significance. On the eve of his 150th match for India, the veteran recalled the contributions made by the affable Sukhwinder who "turned the little boy in me into a man."

"I think when I played under him, that was the right time to do so for me. Again, with the benefit of hindsight, I think I did the right thing. I learned a lot as to what not to do as a player on the pitch, and Sukhi Sir has had a massive role in teaching me things. He allowed me to do the things that came naturally to me," Chhetri told *the-aiff.com*.

The 39-year-old might be an ice-cool presence on the field now, but Sukhwinder played a big role in instilling that calmness in him.

"I wasn't exactly the thing that a lot of people associate with me today. They call me 'Captain Cool', but I wasn't always so cool and calm. I was quite mischievous, I was quite playful."

"I tried a lot of things on and off the pitch. He helped me understand what serious football is, and with the help of others who came later as well, he had a massive role in turning that little boy in me into a man."

In the two decades since making his international debut against Pakistan in Quetta, Chhetri has gone on to become one of India's all-time greatest footballers, though he is not the fearless player he once was. "There are a lot of differences, but that probably comes because of my age and the number of games I've played. I'm more experienced now. I know what works for me and what does not."

"Also, many of my mistakes on the pitch have made me wiser. In hindsight, I think I was more fearless back then. The onus was not on me. Everything is different now, probably because I've played so many games," PTI

## Sreeja clinches WTT Feeder Beirut singles title



SPLENDID SHOW: Akula Sreeja

New Delhi: Indian paddler Sreeja Akula clinched the women's singles title while Manav Thakar and Manush Shah reigned supreme in the men's doubles event at the WTT Feeder II in Beirut, Lebanon.

The world no 47 Indian came from behind to pull off a 6-11, 12-10, 11-5, 11-9 win over the lower-ranked Sarah D Nutte of Luxembourg at the Al Kawthar Secondary School on Sunday.

The 25-year-old, Commonwealth Games mixed doubles gold medallist, had defeated

top seed world No. 36 Suh Hyo Won of South Korea earlier. It is Sreeja's second WTT singles career title. She had won the Feeder Corpus Christi in January.

However, Sreeja couldn't make it twin victories as she lost in the women's doubles final. Partnering Divya Chitale, the Indian duo went down 4-11, 11-9, 11-7, 11-6 to Doo Hoi Kem and Zhu Chengzhu of Hong Kong.

In the men's doubles summit clash, which was an all Indian affair, Manav and Manush defeated compatriots Mudit Dani

and Akash Pal 11-7, 11-5, 9-11, 11-6. Poymanteer Baisya and Akash Pal upset the experienced duo of Sathyan Gnanasekaran and Manika Batra 11-9, 7-11, 11-9, 11-0 to win their maiden mixed doubles crown.

Sathyan, who had lifted his first-ever men's singles WTT title in Beirut last week, saw his 10-match winning streak snap as he lost men's singles semifinal to world No. 43 Kazakhstan's Kirill Gerassimenko.

The Kazakh beat the 103-ranked Sathyan 3-0 (11-9, 13-11, 11-9). PTI

## Giannis leads Bucks over Thunder

Giannis Antetokounmpo sparked Milwaukee Bucks over Oklahoma City in a Sunday showdown of NBA contenders while James Harden lost his first meeting with Philadelphia since the 76ers traded him.

**Results:** New Orleans 114, DETROIT 101. Philadelphia 121, LA CLIPPERS 107. MIAMI 121, Cleveland 84. MINNESOTA 114, Golden State 110. MILWAUKEE 118, Oklahoma City 93. LA LAKERS 150, Indiana 145. AFP

Registration No. APENG/2000/03128 Published for the proprietors, Bennett, Coleman & Company Ltd, by P. Manikantan, at "Times House", 8-2-351, Road No 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034, and printed by him at "Times Press" Plot No 5A, Road No 1, DA, Nacharam, Hyderabad 500 076, Ranga Reddy Distt Tel No: (040) 23254000, Fax No (040) 23254300. Registered Office: Dr. D. N. Road, Mumbai 400 001. Editor (Hyderabad Market): Robin David - responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher is prohibited.

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## Ukraine eye first major tourney since invasion

**Paris:** Ukraine will bid to qualify for a first major tournament since Russia's invasion of the country when they take on Iceland in a Euro 2024 play-off final on Tuesday, while Georgia target history against Greece.

Serhiy Rebrov's Ukraine missed out on the 2022 World Cup, losing in the play-offs to Wales, but will be favourites against Iceland in Wroclaw, Poland. They appeared set to miss out when trailing Bosnia and Herzegovina late on in Thursday's semifinal, but

kept their hopes of reaching the

tournament in Germany alive with goals from Roman Yaremchuk and Artem Dovbyk. "I told the players before the game that I hoped they would bring a bit of happiness to the people in Ukraine right now," Rebrov told reporters.

"Russia attacked Ukraine with 30 missiles last night. Missile attacks are happening every day."

"Our mission and goal here are to show that we are still alive, that we are still fighting against the Russians, that we need Europe's help."

Rebrov, a former Tottenham and West Ham striker who made 75 international appearances, took over in June last year but could not lead Ukraine to automatic qualification. Iceland have not reached a major tournament since the 2018 World Cup. A spot in Group E at the Euros, with matches against Belgium, Slovakia and Romania, is up for grabs. AFP

# THE TIMES

INCLUSIVE OF HYDERABAD TIMES (FOR METRO ONLY)



WAYANAD LOK SABHA ELECTION WILL NO LONGER BE A CAKEWALK FOR RAHUL GANDHI, SAYS BJP CANDIDATE K SURENDRA **7**

## Holi revelry: 4 youth drown in Asifabad river

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Hyderabad:** Holi revelry took a tragic turn for a group of four youngsters after they drowned in Wardha river in Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district on Monday. Police said the youngsters entered the river not knowing its depth and, in the process of rescuing one of them, all the four drowned.

Police have identified the deceased as Uppula Santosh, 23, P Kamalakar, 25, A Sai, 22 and Elmula Praveen. Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district SP K Suresh Kumar told TOI that the five youth of Nadeemabad village in Koutala mandal celebrated Holi and partied.

► Continued on P4

## A RIOT OF COLOURS AND KULFI ON HOLI

Venkat Rao M



Daubed with colours, a young woman poses for a photograph savouring a kulfi during Holi celebrations at the Malasiyan Township in KPHB on Monday | **More photos, P4**

## Prannoy, Lakshya & Sindhu sitting pretty in race to Paris qualification

Treesa-Gayatri,  
Srikanth May  
Miss The Bus



HS Prannoy, PV Sindhu and Chirag-Satwik will make the Olympic cut

Manne.Ratnakar

@timesgroup.com

With the April 28 deadline for the Olympic qualifying looming, it is now clear that three singles players and two doubles teams from India will make the cut. India's hopes hinge on HS Prannoy, Lakshya Sen, PV Sindhu, Satwicksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty and Ashwini Ponnappa-Tanisha Crasto at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

A country can field a maximum of two players or teams in each category at the Olympics. In singles, players need to be in the top-16 of Olympic qualification rankings to qualify. Prannoy is currently No. 9 and Lakshya is No. 12. The Madrid Open beginning on Tuesday is the only tournament left before the Games and since it is a super-300 event, a major change in rankings is unlikely.

At No. 11, Sindhu will most likely be the sole Indian competitor in women's singles as the next best, Aashrithi Kashyap, is ranked No. 40.

In doubles, one team will qualify if it is in top-16 and two teams can make the cut if both are in top-8. The world No. 1 pair of Satwik-Chirag are No. 2 in the qualifying list for men's doubles. In women's doubles, Ashwini-Tanisha are No. 12 in

the Olympic list, while Treesa-Gayatri are No. 26 in world rankings and over the cut list in Olympic rankings.

In all probability, the women's duo of Treesa-Gayatri and Kidambi Srikanth are out of the Olympic race.

Treesa-Gayatri, regarded as one of the best emerging pairs in the world, have missed some tournaments last year due to injuries. During this period, their practice partners Ashwini-Tanisha did well and moved ahead in the world rankings. At international level, the two pairs played three matches against each other. Treesa-Gayatri won two and lost one.

► Continued on P11

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# China: Arunachal ours, India's stance illegal

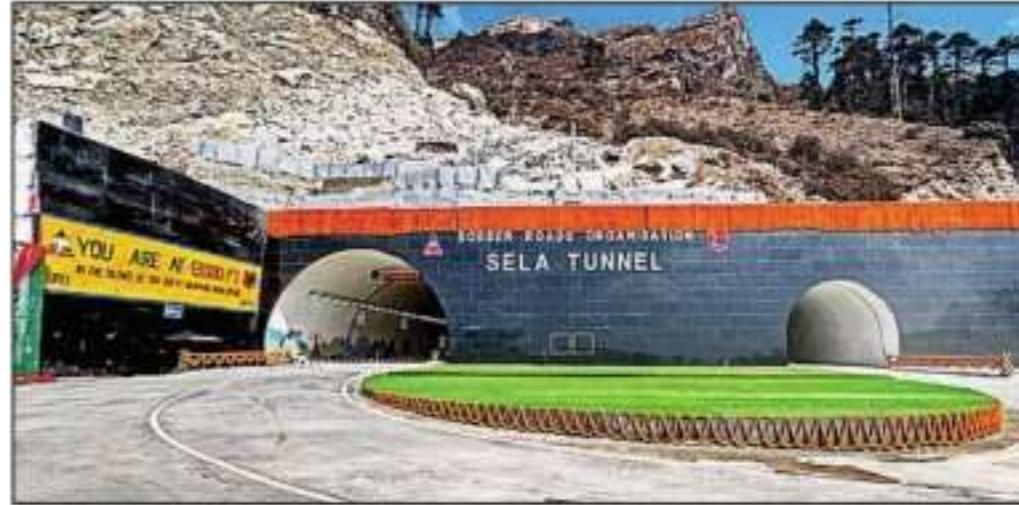
## Pushes Back As EAM Calls Their Claim 'Absurd'

**Beijing:** China on Monday continued to claim that Arunachal Pradesh has "always been" its territory, notwithstanding India dismissing Beijing's claim as "absurd" and "ludicrous".

On Monday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian reiterated China's claim while reacting to external affairs minister S Jaishankar's assertions on Saturday, dismissing China's repeated claims on Arunachal Pradesh as "ludicrous" and that the frontier state was a "natural part of India".

"Zangnan (the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh) in the eastern sector has always been China's territory," Lin said. China had all along exercised effective administrative jurisdiction over the area "until India's illegal occupation", he said, claiming this as a "basic fact that cannot be denied".

On Saturday, Jaishankar



China has lodged a diplomatic protest over PM Modi's March 9 visit to Arunachal to launch the strategically significant Sela tunnel

had said in response to a question: "This is not a new issue. I mean China has laid claim, it has expanded its claim. The claims are ludicrous to begin with and remain ludicrous today."

"So, I think we've been very clear, very consistent on this. And I think you know that is something which will be part of the boundary discussions which are taking place," he said at the Institute of South Asian Studies of the National University of Singapore.

Lin, replying to a question from the official media seeking his reactions to Jaishankar's comments, said the border between India and China has never been settled. "The China-India boundary has never been

delimited and is divided into the eastern sector, the middle sector, the western sector and the Sikkim sector," he said.

"In 1987, India formed the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' on China's territory under India's illegal occupation. China issued a statement right then to firmly oppose it and stress that India's move was illegal and null and void. China's position remains unchanged," Lin said.

This is the fourth time this month China spoke about its claim over Arunachal. Beijing said it had lodged a diplomatic protest with India over PM Narendra Modi's visit to the state on March 9, reiterating its claim over the area. AGENCIES

**Man loses ₹1.5cr on bets, wife ends life over 'harassment'**

Rajiv.Kalkod@timesgroup.com

**Bengaluru:** The lure of online cricket betting took a horrific turn in Karnataka's Chitradurga, where a man ran up debts of around Rs 1.5 crore to fund his get-rich-quick endeavour, followed by his wife ending her life amid threats from moneylenders.

Ranjita V., the wife of Darshan Balu—an assistant engineer with the state minor irrigation department—was found dead in her bedroom in Holakkere on March 19. Ranjita is survived by her husband and their two-year-old son.

Police said Ranjita left behind a suicide note, where she alleged harassment from the men who had lent money to her husband, pushing her to take the extreme step. Ranjita's father Venkatesh M filed a complaint against 13 men, who had allegedly lent money to Darshan. Based on the complaint, a case of abetment to suicide under IPC 306 has been filed against the 13 suspects, three of whom have been arrested. Venkatesh said they suspect Darshan had lost Rs 1.5 crore in online cricket betting, but repaid most of the money he borrowed. As per sources, Darshan still owed Rs 54 lakh.

## Jaishankar meets Singapore PM, ministers to boost bilateral ties

**Singapore:** External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar on Monday called on Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and other senior ministers and discussed ways to further the strategic bilateral ties, and the situation in the Indo-Pacific and West Asia regions.

Jaishankar is on a three-day visit to Singapore and reached here on Saturday. He addressed the Indian diaspora on Sunday and met with investors on Saturday.

"Honoured to call on Prime Minister @leehsienloong



External affairs minister S Jaishankar with Singapore PM Lee Hsien Loong on Monday

at The Istana. Conveyed the personal greetings of PM @narendramodi. Valued his perspectives on the current state of the world," Jaishankar posted on X.

"His positive sentiments on India-Singapore relationship have always been a source of strength for our ties," Jaishankar said about PM Lee's support the bilateral relationship.

Apart from foreign minister Balakrishnan, Jaishankar held separate meetings with Minister of Trade and Industry Gan Kim Yong and Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean.

He also met finance minister Lawrence Wong and Minister of Home Affairs & Law K Shanmugam.

"Delighted to meet Singa-

pore FM @VivianBala. Reviewed the progress of our bilateral cooperation. Spoke about preparations for the next ISMR meeting. Discussed marking 60 years of our diplomatic ties," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Exchanged views on the Indo-Pacific and West Asia," he wrote.

"Always a pleasure to welcome my good friend Indian External Affairs Minister @DrJaishankar to Singapore," Balakrishnan wrote on X.

Jaishankar will also visit the Philippines and Malaysia. prn

## She was stabbed 140 times. A hair landed killer in jail after 30 yrs

London Police Found Hair On Victim's Ring In 2008, But DNA Tech Wasn't Good Enough At The Time. A Review In 2022 Cracked The Case

Abhilash.Gaur@timesgroup.com

**A**ugust 7, 1994 was a Sunday and Marina Koppel went out in the evening. Just 5 feet tall, she was still very attractive at 39, with a firm jaw and a head of blonde-streaked curls. Her first stop was a poker tournament at London's famous Victoria Sporting Club casino. Then she saw a client at a hotel in Heathrow, and returned late to her flat on posh Chiltern Street.

The two-bedroom flat, set two blocks behind Sherlock Holmes' Baker Street, had been newly repainted and redecorated for Marina, who had moved into it less than a fortnight earlier, on July 26.

### Alone In A Big City

Marina lived alone in London and visited her husband David Koppel at his Northampton home every weekend. This particular Sunday she had stayed back because of a "trivial" argument with David. After 11 years of marriage, their arguments were often about her work.

When she had arrived in Britain from Colombia, Luz-Marina Gomez de Rubio had found a cleaning job in a hotel. She was a hotel chambermaid when she and David met at a casino and married in 1983. But later, Marina had started working as a masseuse, and then as an upmarket prostitute. She had a regular clientele of about 100, including "successful people, businessmen, a doctor, and even a politician".

### Last Day Of Her Life

Although David had partied in a huff on July 31, he had kept in touch on phone through the week. On August 8, Monday, they spoke several times, "mainly about television programmes", before 1pm. Then Marina visited Midland Bank on Baker Street, where she was seen on camera at 1.42pm. It was her last recorded movement outside home.

David called her again through the afternoon, but she didn't pick up. By 9pm, he was on the road to London. He reached Chiltern Street "shortly before 11.30 that night", entered the flat and went to the second bedroom that Marina kept for clients.

"The mattress was askew and there was a dark stain on the carpet and the mattress," he told police in 1994. It was Marina's blood. Floor, bedclothes, furniture and walls were all bloody. Marina's body, clad only in "black lacy lingerie", was on the floor. Investigators



placed the time of her death between 5pm and 10.30pm.

### Brutal, Vicious, Merciless

While sentencing Marina's murderer Sandip Patel on Feb 16 this year, Justice Cavanagh described the killing as "brutal, vicious and merciless".

Patel, who was 21 when he killed Marina, stabbed her 140 times with a "single-sided blade", probably a kitchen knife. To drive the knife harder, he pressed his left foot against the skirting board of the room and stabbed her on her face, neck, chest and back, rupturing her subclavian artery and almost severing her left jugular vein.

Forensic pathologist Dr Stuart Hamilton, who gave evidence at Patel's trial, said, "It would have taken well over two minutes to inflict all of the injuries on Ms Koppel."

### Cold Case For 28 Years

Patel slipped out of Marina's flat unnoticed and went scot-free for years. Why wasn't he caught sooner? His fingerprints were in fact found on a plastic bag in Marina's kitchen during the initial investigation, but they weren't considered "significant evidence" because the bag had come from his father's newsagency, Sherlock Holmes News, where he worked. The bag could have passed through his hands there, investigators thought.

In 2008, London police reexamined the case evidence. That's when a scientist found a small hair on the ring that Marina had been wearing. DNA technology at that time was not sensitive enough to get a reliable profile from a single hair, so the ring and the



Marina Koppel and Sandip Patel (above) in 1994, and in police custody in 2023

hair were preserved.

### A Costly Mistake

Even with a hair DNA profile, police couldn't have caught Patel because his DNA was not on their record. But on Sep 14, 2013, he punched his girlfriend, causing cuts and bruising. Police were called, he was convicted of causing bodily harm, and his DNA became part of their database.

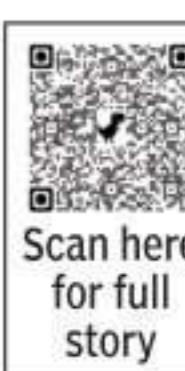
In 2022, when the Marina Koppel file was reviewed again, DNA techniques were sharp enough to extract a profile from a single hair. Luckily, as London police's media and communications manager Rebecca Lowson told TOI, the hair attached to Marina's ring had its root intact, which is crucial for DNA analysis.

Police now had a profile, and it tallied with Patel's. It seems that Marina had grabbed his hair while defending herself. He didn't save her life but ensured he was brought to justice eventually. Patel was arrested on Jan 19, 2023 as a suspect. Police took his footprints, and the mark on the skirting board of Marina's room turned out to be from his left foot. It became a watertight case after that.

### Why Did He Kill Her?

While pronouncing a sentence of at least 19 years, Justice Cavanagh said he had "a strong suspicion" that Patel killed Marina because he could not perform sexually: "...after booking an appointment with a sex worker, you found yourself unable to perform sexually and in your humiliation and embarrassment you lost your temper and killed Ms Koppel".

But nobody knows for sure because Patel refuses to speak. He told police he had no recollection of Marina, her address or the murder: "I have no idea how my fingerprint came to be on this carrier bag or how a hair of mine was present."



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