



THE TIMES OF INDIA

HAPPY HOLI

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INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Soon after the Moscow terrorist attack, Russian forces launch an air barrage against Ukraine, including a missile that briefly crossed into Polish airspace, while Kyiv's forces strike two Russian ships off the annexed Crimean peninsula

International Astronomical Union working group for planetary system nomenclature approves name 'Shiv Shakti' for the moon landing site of Chandrayaan-3's lander. The name was coined by PM Modi soon after the historic touchdown in lunar south pole last Aug

Indian student Cheista Kochhar, 33, from Gurgaon, pursuing her PhD at the London School of Economics, was killed after being hit by a lorry while cycling back home on March 19. Her husband, a techie, was a few yards ahead of her when the accident occurred

Rajasthan Royals (RR) skipper Sanju Samson equals Jos Buttler and Ajinkya Rahane for most fifty-plus scores for the franchise as he makes 82 runs N.O. off 52 balls and helps RR beat Lucknow Super Giants by 20 runs



Phone tapping: LOC against 2 ex-top cops & media exec

Sr BRS Leader
May Also Face
Action In Case

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Hyderabad: As part of its investigation into the destruction of evidence and phone tapping by the previous BRS govt, the Panjagutta police has issued a Look Out Circulars (LOC) against three people including former Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) chief T Prabhakar Rao and former deputy commissioner of police (Task Force) Radha Kishan. An LOC has also been issued against a senior executive of a regional media channel.

Neither of them has been

COPS IN THE LINE OF FIRE NOW

► LOC issued against former SIB chief T Prabhakar Rao, former DCP (Task Force) Radha Kishan and a senior executive of a regional media channel

► Police suspect all three are currently abroad. Neither has been shown as accused but they are wanted for questioning

► Prabhakar Rao allegedly instructed DSP Praneeth Rao, already arrested, and other cops in SIB to snoop on opposition leaders, including Revanth Reddy

► Radha Kishan allegedly threatened select individuals, while the media executive is accused of helping in the conspiracy

shown as accused in the case so far, but all the three are wanted for questioning. Police suspect that all the three are currently abroad. The LOC has been issued to all airports in the country.

Based on the confession of SIB's former DSP D Praneeth Rao, who has already been arrested, Prabhakar Rao, Radha Kishan and another person

are wanted for questioning in the case. As they are not available, LOC has been issued against them," said a source.

The police may also act against a top leader of BRS, who held a powerful post in the previous govt, for using the SIB, an anti-Naxal intelligence unit, to gather political intelligence.

Prabhakar Rao is accused

of allegedly entrusting Prabhakar Rao and several other policemen in SIB with the job of carrying out surveillance against opposition leaders – including Congress chief and Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy, his family and friends – and other individuals during the BRS' tenure. This included tapping their phones using various electronic devices. Senior BJP leaders such as former Huzurbad MLA Eatala Rajender, M Raghunandan Rao and others too were also tracked.

Radha Kishan is accused of threatening select individuals and the media executive is accused of furthering the conspiracy by sharing names of people to be kept under the radar.

► Continued on P3

KCR's nephew faces land grab case over plot worth ₹40 crore

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: A criminal case has been booked against former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao's nephew and Rajya Sabha MP J Santosh Rao and another person, Linga Reddy Sridhar, for allegedly grabbing 1,350 square yard prime land worth over Rs 40 crore in Banjara Hills.

According to a complaint filed by Navayuga Engineering Company Ltd (NECL) on Thursday, the duo allegedly grabbed the land on Road Number 14, Banjara Hills, belonging to the firm. The company claimed it got to know about the fraud recently after it found property tax being paid by the accused but with different door numbers.

ACP (Banjara Hills) S Venkat Reddy said prima facie a

"This is a politically motivated case to tarnish my image. I am ready to fight this case legally. I will also initiate legal action against all those spreading baseless rumours"

— J Santosh | BRS MP

case under IPC Sections 420, 468, 471, 447 and 120(B) was registered against the two.

Police said NECL representative Chinta Madhav lodged a complaint claiming the company purchased the plot at survey number 129/54 in July 2010 from a couple who owned the land in two parts, 970 sq yard and 380 sq yard.

► Continued on P3

Kangana, ex-judge of Cal HC & Jitin Prasada in BJP list

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New Delhi: With BJP basing in the glory of fulfilling one of its oldest promises of building Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Arun Govil, who played Lord Ram in the popular 'Ramayan' serial, is in the list of 11 Lok Sabha candidates announced Sunday.

Actress Kangana Ranaut, a staunch advocate of Hindutva, has been named from Himachal's Mandi. In Jharkhand, BJP benched sitting MP Sunil Soren after announcing his name from Dumka earlier. He has been replaced by ex-CM Hemant Soren's sister-in-law Sita Soren, who recently shifted to the saffron camp. Among 14 new faces in BJP list of 19 from Bengal is Calcutta HC

Jindal gets ticket hrs after quitting Cong

BJP fielded Naveen Jindal, chairman of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd, from Kurukshetra, hours after he switched over to the saffron party from Congress. The shift of Jindal, twice MP, is a blow to Congress as he was seen to be close to Rahul Gandhi. An accused in three 'Coalgate' cases, Jindal said he wanted to contribute to PM Modi's 'Viksit Bharat' dream. PT

ex-judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay (Tamiluk), Jitin Prasada will contest from Pilibhit.

► Continued on P6

Pak: Considering restoration of India trade ties

ED to probe Kejriwal 'order' from custody

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pakistan may resume trade ties with India after demands from local businesses, foreign minister Ishaq Dar said. Pakistan suspended trade ties over India's revocation of J&K's special status. Dar's statement comes weeks after PM Sharif thanked PM Modi for his congratulatory message. P8

In a "written note", handed over via his lawyer to the chief minister's office, Kejriwal directed minister Atishi, who holds the water portfolio, to resolve water and sewer-related problems in some areas of the city, the party said.

Reacting to the move, ED said it will probe the party's claim as no stationery is allowed for those in custody. Sources said Atishi will be questioned on the source of the purported "order", and who brought it and delivered it to her

► Continued on P7

Mobile charger sparks fire, 4 kids burnt alive

Krishna Chaudhary | TNN

Meerut: A short-circuit caused by a mobile charger snuffed out the lives of four children, aged 10 and below, after they suffered severe burns when their bed caught fire in Meerut on Saturday night. Their parents, who rushed to their help, were also severely burnt and admitted to hospitals, cops said.

The four children, Sarika (10), Niharika (8), Sanskar (6), and Anshu (5), were rushed to the hospital but could not be saved, cops said.

The incident took place at Janta Colony in Meerut's Palalpuram area. The children were asleep when the mattress caught fire due to the short-circuit caused by the

► The fire began from a short-circuit while a mobile was being charged

► The kids' bed caught fire while they were sleeping

► All four kids suffered severe burns and later succumbed in hospital

► Their parents, who rushed to help them, were also injured in the fire

mobile charger." SP (city) Ayush Vikram Singh said.

The mother, Babita, was battling for life at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi, while father, Johnny, was in a medical facility in Meerut, police said.

► Continued on P8

► Swati.Bharadwaj
@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: The world's first Mycobacterium tuberculosis vaccine (MTBVAC) from a human source has begun clinical trials in India to evaluate its safety, immunogenicity and efficacy. The live attenuated vaccine is for newborns, adolescents and adults, sources said.

The clinical trials in the most populated country in the world with the highest number of cases is key to continuing advancement of the vaccine, which has undergone over three decades of research, officials said.

A pivotal safety, immunogenicity and efficacy trial is also planned for 2025, compa-

► It's claimed to be world's first Mycobacterium tuberculosis vaccine (MTBVAC) from a human source

► MTBVAC is considered a more effective and potentially longer-lasting vaccine than the over 100-year-old BCG

► The live attenuated vaccine is meant for newborns as well as adolescents and adults

► Continued on P4

New TB vax clinical trials begin in India

Swati.Bharadwaj
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FIGHTING TB

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DANCE of DEMOCRACY

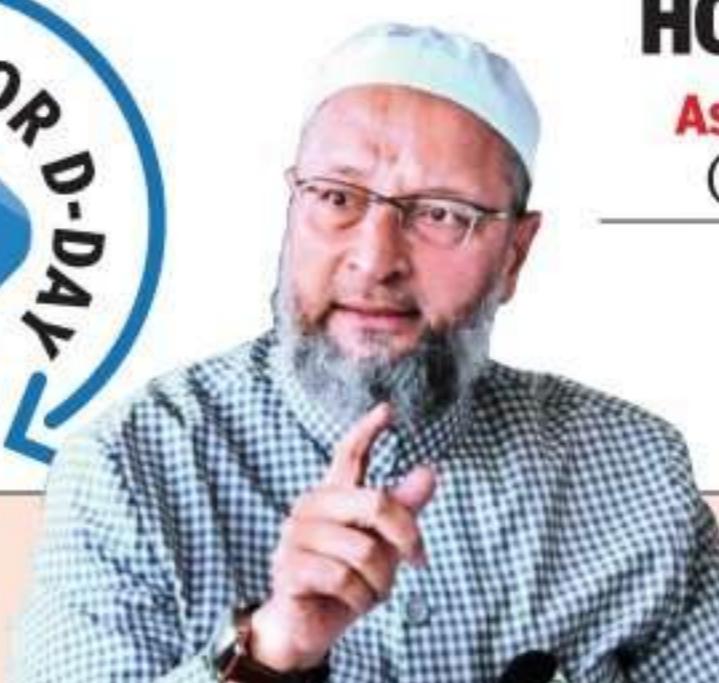
IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ASKED BY MP

• Whether the govt is aware that children are admitted in schools at very young age; whether the New Education Policy has suggested age for admission for class I as 6 years? (March 20, 2023)

• The reasons for agitation against Citizenship Amendment Act; persons killed, injured, detained for agitation and the states which refused to implement the Act or passed resolution against it? (Feb 4, 2020)

2 BATTLEGROUND TELANGANA

FOLLOW DANCE OF DEMOCRACY ON TWITTER @TIMESOFINDIA



HOW TELANGANA MPs FARED

Asaduddin Owaisi

(54) Hyderabad

DEBATES 60

QUESTIONS 366



PRIVATE MEMBER BILLS

Aug 5, 2022: The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2019 (Insertion of new article 371K) Pending

Aug 5, 2022: The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2019 (Amendment of article 84, etc.) Pending

Aug 5, 2022: The Right to Water Bill, 2020 Pending

—Compiled by Kaushik Gunuganti

AUGUST 5, 2022 | HYDERABAD, MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Hyderabad

Cong Faces 'Family' & Turncoat Dilemma ■ Voter Outreach Problems For BJP ■ Satish Madiga Quits Saffron Party LS Tickets: Parties Struggle To Get Equation Right

Roushan.Ali@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: Congress think tank is faced with the challenge of resolving 'family politics' before finalising candidates for Bhongir and Khammam Lok Sabha segments.

Though Nandini Vikramarka, wife of deputy chief minister Bhatti Vikramarka, is the front runner for the Khammam LS seat, political equations changed after the party gave Nagarkurnool ticket to Mallu Ravi, brother of Bhatti.

As a result, P Prasad Reddy, brother of revenue minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, or his relative Raghu Ram Reddy have emerged as front runners. Congress lost Khammam to TDP in 2009, YSRCP (Srinivas Reddy) in 2014 and BRS in 2019. Tummalay Yugandhar, son of minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, is also seeking Khammam ticket and the Kamma community, which is a dominant force in the constituency, is backing his candidature.

Congress along with its ally, CPI, won all seven assembly segments in Khammam in the recent polls and hopes to win the seat in the general elections. BRS has fielded its sitting MP Nama Nageswara Rao from Khammam.

Though Munugode MLA Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy has denied that they were seeking Bhongir ticket for his wife K Lakshmi, a senior AIIC leader said there was a lot of pressure on the party leadership to give the nod to her.

C Kiran Kumar Reddy, a confidant of Revanth Reddy, is also a front runner for Bhongir seat and has been working in the constituency for few years. Except Jangao assembly seat won by BRS, Congress has won six assembly seats under LS segment.

BJP too has to resolve family politics. It has Bharath, son of MPP Ramulu who quit BRS and joined BJP. Bangaru Sruthi, daughter of Bangaru Laxman, was denied Nagarjuna ticket.

CM'S ROADMAP FOR PARTY WIN

- Revanth Reddy held review meeting with Mahabubnagar & Nagarkurnool leaders on Sunday
- Discussed strategies with candidates, ministers, MLAs & MLCs for winning Lok Sabha seats
- Party leaders told to work in coordination and win the seats and Mahabubnagar MLC seat

- Leaders assigned responsibility for each polling booth & taking welfare schemes to people
- Candidates & workers told to explain Cong govt's guarantees implemented within 100 days

WHO WON KHAMMAM EARLIER

- Nama Nageswara (TDP): 2009
- Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy (YSRCP): 2014
- Nama Nageswara Rao (BRS): 2019

ASPIRANTS IN 2024

- Nama Nageswara Rao (BRS)
- Congress & BJP yet to name candidates
- Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy (Congress): 2009
- B Narsaiah Goud (BRS): 2014
- Komatireddy Venkat Reddy (Congress): 2019
- B Narsaiah Goud (BJP)
- Kyama Mallesh (BRS)
- Congress yet to name candidate

ASPIRANTS IN 2024

- Congress yet to name candidate

Pic: Suman Reddy

Roushan.Ali@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: Despite discontent brewing in Congress against the party's decision to give tickets to four recent turncoats, the think tank of the grand old party is seriously considering to nominate new entrants to at least a couple of the eight seats for which its nominees are yet to be announced.

While Congress first list of four candidates in Ch Vamshi Chand Reddy (Mahabubnagar), Balram Naik (Mahabubnagar), Suresh Shettar (Zahirabad) and K Raghuveer Reddy (Nalgonda) were all Congress loyalists, four of the five candidates announced in second list were those who rejoined the party recently.

G Ranjith Reddy (Chevella), Danam Nagender (Secunderabad), G Vamsi Krishna (Peddapalli), Sunitha Mahender Reddy (Malkajgiri) had quit BRS and joined Congress, and they were given the party tickets for the May 13 general elections.



NEW ENTRANTS HOLDING KEY

While Nehru-Gandhi family loyalist and veteran leader V Hanumanth Rao has appealed to TPCC president and chief minister Revanth Reddy not to ignore party loyalists for newcomers in the allotment of Lok Sabha poll tickets, TPCC senior vice president G Niranjana has urged the party leadership to consider nomination of those carrying the Congress flag high despite being implicated in cases during the previous BRS regime.

However, the Congress leadership is scouting for candidates with winning prospects, be it from Congress or the new entrants. Warangal sitting MP Pasunoori Dayakar, who recently quit BRS

and joined Congress, has emerged as a frontrunner for the Warangal SC reserved constituency. Congress leader Dommati Sambaiah, who had secured second place in the 2019 election, is also an aspirant for a ticket from the seat. Mahila Congress leader Singapuram Indira too has applied for a ticket for the Warangal seat.

"Congress leadership is scouting for a formidable candidate for Warangal seat. The grand old party has not won this seat since the formation of Telangana. But it won six of the seven assembly segments in the 2023 assembly polls. This is the best chance for the party to win this seat," an AIIC leader said.

Likewise, finalising a candidate for Medak parliamentary constituency has emerged as a challenge for the grand old party. Neelam Madhu, a candidate from the BC community (Mudiraj), is one of the front runners for Congress ticket to the Medak parliament seat.

Sources revealed that RSS had been advocating for Vinod Rao, who is from the Velama community, although the party initially sought a candidate from the Kamma community, a top leader at the Centre approved

Vinod Rao's candidacy on Saturday, indicating RSS influence.

Vinod Rao, described as a businessman, is notably the only candidate strongly endorsed by RSS in the entire list. The party also considered Jalagam Venkat Rao but deemed him in need of a stronger base for candidacy.

Despite initial concerns about A Ramesh's delay in joining from BRS, the party's top leaders approved his candidacy for Warangal seat due to his ability to attract local leaders promptly.

Sources noted that the decision for Khammam's candidacy wavered between Jalagam Venkat Rao, who shifted to BRS, and Vinod Rao.

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Discontent brews in Cong over turncoats bagging nominations

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BRS warns protests against Cong govt

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

BRS SEEKS JUSTICE FOR FARMERS

Hyderabad: Former finance minister and BRS MLA T Harish Rao has demanded the Congress govt to pay ₹25,000 per acre as compensation to farmers for crop damage caused by recent rains. He warned of 'Chalo Secretariat' protests if the govt fails to assist farmers.

Speaking to farmers in Palakurty on Sunday, Harish Rao said, "BRS will soon initiate another agitation for farmers. Due to the failure of Congress govt in water management, farmers in the state are struggling."

He criticised the govt, claiming, "Congress has not ful-

filled any guarantee efficiently. Over 180 farmers have died by suicide since the tenure of the Cong govt began, yet no minister has shown concern by visiting them. Such situations never happened during BRS tenure. The CM has time to meet opposition MLAs, but no time to visit farmers."

—Harish Rao | BRS WORKING PRESIDENT

the need for the govt to open the doors for farmers and not for the opposition MLAs. "The chief minister has time to meet opposition MLAs, but he has no time to visit farmers," Harish Rao emphasised

No T party without women, BJP brass told

The Telangana unit of BJP recently sent a list of possible new names for district unit presidents to their bosses in Delhi. But the file was returned promptly asking local leaders to ensure that at least 36% of the names were women. All BJP committees at the national, state, district and mandal level would reserve 36% posts for women, the leaders were told. It would mean that after JP Nadda's tenure as BJP national chief ends, new teams would be formed across states and eight to nine states would have women presidents. In Telangana, at least 12 districts would have woman presidents. This is one pre-set by the BJP that other parties can emulate.

Will SC bonds order squeeze out other hidden funds?

One would like to believe that the Supreme Court judgement on electoral bonds will not have an impact on the under-the-table funds that all candidates receive from their 'well-wishers'. But that is not how the judgement is playing out. From what we hear, candidates across parties are jittery that the issue will undermine the hidden cash too. The usual supporters of the candidates are ready to give only a fraction of what they 'donated' earlier, afraid that when the sleuths come sniffing and find even an informal scribble in a diary about money given to a politician, it can land them in trouble. Many of those who have been fighting to clean up the election process are now excited about the long-term impact of the bonds being declared unconstitutional.

TMREIS gets a new boss

Former IPS officer AK Khan who successfully headed the Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions Society (TMREIS), has been replaced with

Mohammed Faheemuddin Qureshi. Faheem, as he popularly known, is a senior Congress leader and a close aide of chief minister A Revanth Reddy. Interestingly,

Khan was director general of anti-corruption bureau (ACB) when Revanth was jailed in the cash-for-vote case. Though Khan is a close relative of former minister and advisor to the state govt, Mohammed Ali Shabbir, talk in Congress circles is that Revanth is in no mood to continue officers or even retired officers in posts they were appointed by the previous BRS govt.

Slow cash seizures upset cool Gupta

Director general of police, Ravi Gupta, who is otherwise known for being gentle in his public dealings, recently expressed his disappointment with enforcement ahead of the Parliament elections. He found that Jagtial and a few districts in erstwhile Mahabubnagar, showed zero cash seizures. Ahead of the 2023 assembly elections, the Election Commission had made critical comments on district officials not curbing the cash flow. Gupta has warned subordinates to not repeat the 2023 embarrassment.

Praveen jumps ship, BSP wants to see him sink

The BSP state unit has decided to field a strong candidate against their former president RS Praveen Kumar, who recently joined BRS and has been fielded by Nagarkurnool. Praveen, a former IPS officer, enjoyed the affection of BSP cadres but his switching loyalties has not gone down well with his one-time supporters. Manda Prabhakar, who took over as BRS state chief after Praveen, said there are already three aspirants for the Nagarkurnool seat and the list is being sent to party chief Mayawati. BSP, on the other hand, has fielded P Bharath, son of sitting MP P Ramulu, who quit BRS and joined BJR recently, and the Congress has nominated party loyalist Mallu Ravi. The big question is, do BJR have it in them to hurt Praveen? Many say the battle is tough and Praveen will have to contend with an additional force working against him.

Tailpiece

Barrelakka has a partner now, for life

Internet sensation from the 2023 assembly election, 26-year-old

Barrelakka, also known as Sirisha, is taking on more than one challenge in the Lok Sabha elections. Not only is she looking to contest from Nagarkurnool

as an independent, like she did in the assembly elections, she is also set to get married. The bridegroom is Venkatesh, who coordinated her campaign in November last year. We are told that the two are hitching up on March 28 at Pedda Kotapally

in Nagarkurnool. The couple says it is not going to be a grand political wedding. They are going to keep it small and personal. We say all the best to the couple, both in life and in politics.

Praveen jumps ship, BSP wants to see him sink

| RAMZAN TIMINGS | |
|-----------------|---------|
| Iftar (Monday) | 6.40 pm |
| Sehri (Tuesday) | 5.09 am |

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

Send in your views and suggestions to us at:
toi.timesconnect@gmail.com
or scan the QR code.
Last date for entries: March 26



48-year-old man dies in hit-and-run

Hyderabad: A 48-year-old man died in a hit-and-run accident at Kushtaguda on Sunday, when his bike was hit by a vehicle from behind. The deceased Shiva Kotaiah joined a private security agency after his retirement a year ago. "While he was returning from work in morning, he met with accident," cops said. TNN

34 firms in renewable energy sector bought EBs worth ₹170cr from Hyd

Nirupa.Vatyam
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Hyderabad: Be it wind, solar or hydropower, 34 firms working in the renewable energy sector purchased electoral bonds worth crores of rupees from the city, show ECI data.

The list includes companies from the Greenko Group, along with firms such as SEPC Power Pvt Ltd, Shreyas Renewable Energy Private Ltd, Skeiron Renewable Energy Amidiyala Private Limited, Khandla Wind Energy Private Limited, Sneha Kinetic Power Projects Pvt Ltd, Cygnus Power Infra Services Private Ltd, among others. Collectively, they purchased EBs for over ₹170 crore, which were credited to various political parties including BRS, YSRCP, Congress, BJP, and TDP.



sed ₹13 crore, BRS received ₹1 crore and YSRCP got ₹10 crore. Bonds from 18 of these firms went BRS' way. Mytrah Energy (India) Private Limited purchased 19 bonds of ₹1 crore each, of which six were credited into BRS' account. The KCR-led political party also received ₹4 crore from Achintya Solar Power Pvt Ltd that bought five bonds of ₹1 crore each, and ₹2 crore individually from RT Renewable Energy Pvt Ltd, Saroja Renewables Private Limited, Sanola Wind Project Pvt Ltd, and Vishvarupa Solar Power Private Limited, among others.

The highest collection for BJP, from EBs in the energy sector bought in Hyderabad, came from Mytrah Energy (India) Private Limited. Ten of the firm's 19 ₹1 crore bonds were credited into the party's account. Similarly, four bonds of ₹1 crore each out of 40 bonds of similar value purchased by SEPC Power Pvt Ltd are en-chased by BJR.

YSRCP, the ruling party in Andhra Pradesh, got ₹10 crore from Sneha Kinetic Power Projects Pvt Ltd, ₹7 crore from Skeiron Renewable Energy Amidiyala Private Limited, and ₹3 crore each from Divyesh Power Pvt Ltd, Elena Renewable Energy Pvt Ltd, Axis Wind Farms (MPR Dam) Private Ltd, and Tanot Wind Power Ventures Pvt Ltd, among various other energy firms.

Legally purchased land in '16: Santosh

► From P1

At the time of purchase, they had obtained encumbrance certificates (ECs) for the two plots for a period of 30 years. Recently they got to know that two rooms were constructed on the property and enquiry with GHMC revealed that tax was being paid by J Santosh Rao and Linga Reddy by allegedly fabricating door numbers.

NECL claimed it approached the sub-registrar at Banjara Hills and got a confirmation that the accused had created forged documents with the intention to grab the land. Subsequently, police registered a case against the two.

Denying the allegations of land grabbing levelled against him, MP Santosh issued a statement on Sunday stating he had legally purchased the land in 2016 and there was no dispute since then.

"There have been no disputes on the land for over past three decades and no construction has also been taken up after I purchased the land in 2016," Santosh added.

"If there are any disputes, first, a legal notice has to be issued, but without following any such process, an FIR has been issued alleging that I grabbed the land using forged documents," he added.

"This clearly shows that this is a politically motivated case and that it is done to tarnish my image. I am ready to fight this case legally. I will also initiate legal action against all those indulging in damaging my reputation by spreading baseless rumours against me," he added.

Praneeth destroyed data after BRS loss

► From P1

After BRS lost the 2023 assembly elections, Praneeth Rao and a few others, allegedly on the instructions of Prabhakar Rao, destroyed stored data and electronic instruments at the SIB office in Greenlands.

Two other additional superintendents of police – N Bhujanga Rao and Thirupathantha – who were part of this alleged conspiracy and reported to Prabhakar Rao were arrested on Saturday.

Meanwhile, with seven-day custodial interrogation coming to an end, cops produced Praneeth Rao and the two additional SPs before the magistrate on Sunday. Praneeth's judicial remand is up to March 27, whereas Bhujanga Rao and Thirupathantha have been sent to remand until April 6. On Tuesday, Panjagutta police is expected to move an application seeking Praneeth Rao's custody yet again besides moving a similar plea for the custody of the two arrested additional SPs for further interrogation.

15 PD orders cancelled by top courts in last 5 years

'PD Act Cannot Be Invoked Over Routine Law'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Telangana high court has dismissed 10 Preventive Detention (PD) orders invoked by Telangana police in the last two years. Similarly, Supreme Court had quashed five orders in the last five years.

Despite rapping on the knuckles by the two courts, Telangana police continue to invoke PD orders. In the latest instance Nenavath Buji, an alleged property offender who challenged the PD Act order invoked by the Rachakonda police, the SC quashed the PD order. The apex court, in its order, on Thursday said: "This is one more litigation going against Telangana".

Supreme Court advocate Mohith Rao, who defended Nenavath in the apex court, said the PD Act could be invoked in those cases where there could be potential public order disturbance and not routine law & order issues.

"For example, an accused involved in a theft is a law & order problem and not a public order concern. Similarly, two groups fighting and pelting stones at each other, then there is a situation where the public in the area fear about their safety. In such cases, the PD Act can be invoked against repeat offenders since they create terror with their actions. But this Act cannot be invoked with respect to snatching, theft and similar offences," Mohith Rao added.

COURT RAP ON COPS' KNUCKLES

- The Supreme Court came down heavily on advisory boards
- Advisory boards have to vet PD order sent by police to check its validity

ADVISORY BOARD

- Govt shall constitute one or more advisory boards for the Act's purposes
- Board consists of chairman and two members (judges or qualified to be appointed as high court judges)
- Advisory board confirmed the police order and kept Raja Singh in prison
- MLA challenged the order in HC and obtained relief



PD ORDERS DISMISSED BY COURTS

BJP MLA RAJA SINGH

- In 2022, HC scrapped PD order invoked against him by Hyderabad police, who cited different cases, including charges of allegedly making objectionable statements
- Advisory board confirmed the police order and kept Raja Singh in prison
- MLA challenged the order in HC and obtained relief

NENAVATH BUJJI

- 2 criminal cases against Nenavath to invoke PD Act

KHAJA BILAL AHMED

- Supreme Court quashed PD order against him in 2019

Multiple cases against him besides a history sheet at Rein Bazar police station

When it reached the scrutiny of the apex court, it was set aside since police cited stale incidents

Advisory board is constituted to ensure that no person is mechanically or illegally sent to preventive detention. Advisory boards are expected to play a proactive role. The advisory board is a constitutional safeguard and a statutory authority —SC

After considering the arguments of Telangana police and Mohith Rao, Supreme Court said: "The Saga continues... this is one more litigation going against the state of Telangana. We remind the state of what has been observed by this court in Mallada K Sri Ram vs State of Telangana".

While referring to another judgment in Ameena Begum case, the court recalled its observation: "Interference by this court with orders of detention, routinely issued

under the Act, seems to con-fine unabated. Even after Sri Ram Vs State of Telangana (2023), in another decision of fairly recent origin in Sk Nazneen Vs State of Telangana (2023), this court set aside the impugned order of detention dated Oct 28, 2021, holding that seeking shelter under Preventive Detention law was not proper remedy."

"We hope that Telangana takes this court seriously and see to it that the orders of PD are not passed in a routine manner without any application of mind," the court said.

"A review of all cases referred to invoke PD Act in the pipeline, will be done in the backdrop of the apex court order. We will observe due diligence while dealing with PD recommendations. Only offences which are grave and defined in the Act, will be considered while moving the proposals against the accused, who are repeat offenders," a senior Telangana police officer told TOI.

Excise court judge dies by suicide

Hyderabad: A first class judicial magistrate of Excise court in Nampally died by suicide on Sunday. A Manikanta, 36, resorted to the extreme step following an argument with his wife at his residence in Bagh Amberpet at noon. By the time his family members had rushed to the bed room, Manikanta was found hanging. Based on the complaint given by his father, a case was registered under section 174 (suspicious death) of the CrPC. TNN

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Co-op society fails to double amount, told to refund money

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission of Medak at Sangareddy has issued orders to Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society to pay compensation to a man who took a membership, and help him in getting the deposited money from the national portal.

The complainant, Mohamed Abdul Qayoom, a pensioner from Sangareddy, filed the petition against Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society and M Ramalingam, branch manager of Sahara Credit Cooperative Society at Sangareddy.

"Ramalingam approached me and requested to take membership in their cooperative society, promising to pay double the deposited amount," he alleged.

The complainant stated that he accepted Ramalingam's request and took mem-



bership in January 2016, on the promise that after 64 months a profit of ₹50,000 will be paid to him along with the deposited money.

Presently, payment only up to ₹10,000 is being disbursed to each genuine depositor against verified claims," the forum said. It directed the opposite parties to assist the complainant in filing and processing the claim with Central Registrar of Cooperative Societies and report periodically on the release of payment.

The forum also directed the opposite parties to pay compensation of ₹10,000 and ₹5000 for litigation costs within 30 days.

Amul Milk

HAPPY HOLI!

AMUL DOODH PEETA HAI INDIA

चुनाव का पर्व DESH KA GARV

LOK SABHA ELECTION 2024

Chief Electoral Officer Telangana

V.O.T.E

Lok Sabha Elections Polling Date: 13th May, 2024

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| | 5 Min | District Election Officer assigns complaint to Field Unit For verification | | | |
| | 15 Min | Field Team Arrives at Venue | | | |
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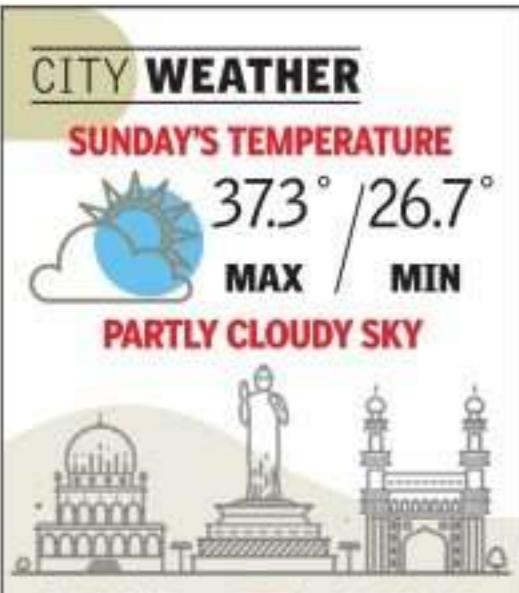
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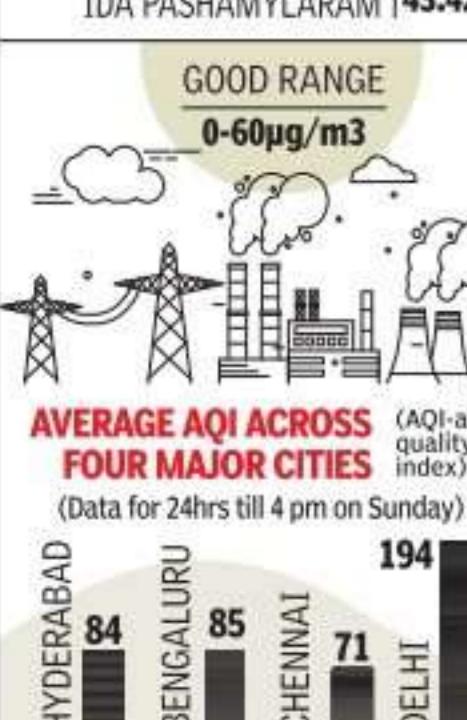


SUNRISE TUE | 06.15 AM
SUNSET MON | 06.28 PM
MOONRISE MON | 06.36 PM
MOONSET MON | 06.13 AM

MONDAY'S REPORT
AQI of Pollutant
WATCH PM 2.5. Reading as
on Mar 24 (7.35 pm)

**SUNDAY'S AVERAGE PPM
DATA | AVERAGE VALUE**

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| SANATH NAGAR | 38.11 |
| IDA BOLLARAM | 36.84 |
| ZOO PARK | 42.27 |
| ICRISAT PATANCERU | 26.76 |
| CENTRAL UNIVERSITY | 21.78 |
| IDA PASHAMYLARAM | 43.42 |



VEGETABLE PRICES

| WHOLESALE PRICES OF VEGETABLES PER KG | |
|--|----------------|
| TOMATO | LADY'S FINGERS |
| 10 - 15 | ₹40 - 50 |
| POTATO | BRINJAL |
| ₹27 - 32 | ₹25 - 35 |
| BOTTLE GOURD | GREEN CHILLIES |
| ₹10 - 15 | ₹50 - 60 |

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

CORRIGENDUM
No. PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/
CORRIGENDUM/24/06 Dated:
21.03.2024. The following Corrigendum of E-Tender is for supply of materials for manufacture of Electric Locomotive. The Prospective/likely suppliers are requested to look up the website www.ireps.gov.in for detailed instructions. These are E-Tenders only electronic offer bids shall be accepted. Sl. No.: [01]. Tender Notice no.: SI No. 035 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/12 Dated: 27/02/2024. Tender No.: 14242566. Tender Opening Date: Tender Opening Date is to be read as "09/04/2024" instead of existing entry.

PR3-355 PCMM/CLW/Howrah
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Summer yet to peak, but record spike in water tanker demand

3k Tankers Ply In Hi-Tec City Alone Everyday

Mungara.Sunil@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: With water tables in most parts of Hi-Tec Hyderabad dropping below the two to three metre-marks, pockets in the area are witnessing the highest tanker demand this summer season.

According to Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) records, places like Gachibowli, Madhapur, Manikonda, Kokapet and Hi-Tec City have flooded its metro customer care (MCC) lines seeking tankers. The daily count: anywhere between 2,500 and 3,000 per day.

Other areas seeing a similar trend: Banjara Hills, parts of Jubilee Hills, S R Nagar, Ameerpet, Khairatabad, Kukatpally and its surrounding areas, Patancheru, Ramachandrapuram, Quthubullapur, Uppal and L B Nagar.

Places like Asifnagar, Mehdiyapatnam, Moghalpura, Bahdurpura, and Charminar in the Old City too have been calling for tankers, said officials.

"In February alone the board received 1.12 lakh tanker bookings through MCC of which we have cleared over a lakh. Though we are making all efforts to clear the pending orders, it is tough since many customers have repeat bookings," said HMWS&SB director-revenue, V L Praveen Kumar. He added that the board has never received such a high count of orders since its inception in 1989. At least 60% to 80% of this came from the western corridor alone.

Till March mid-week, the water board had received 69,146 bookings – 60% of this from hi-tech Hyderabad. Residents agreed to the in-

DROP IN WATER TABLES LEADS TO CRISIS



We are forced to hire private tankers at triple rate, compared to govt tariff, due to inordinate delay (at least three days from booking) in delivery of a tanker

—Pushpendra Kumar | IT PROFESSIONAL FROM MANIKONDA

Venkat Rao M
● Water table dips 2-3 metres in Hi-Tec City, Gachibowli, Madhapur, Manikonda & Kokapet

● Water board officials fear that situation will worsen soon as groundwater level dropping further

● These areas witnessing highest tanker demand this summer season

● Calls from these area flood board's metro customer care lines seeking tankers

● Banjara Hills, parts of Jubilee Hills, S R Nagar, Kukatpally also see similar trend

● Parts or Old City too have been calling for tankers, said officials

Will book those using drinking water for other purposes: Board

Mungara.Sunil@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) has cautioned its consumers against the use of drinking water for gardening, fountains, swimming baths, animal baths, general cleaning of floors, roads, and construction purposes.

The water board will apply various sections of the HMWS&SB Act 1989 to issue restrictions and prohibitions on the use of drinking water for purposes other than consumption. "Without the permission of the HMWS&SB, no consumer should allow the

creased use of tankers," said HMWS&SB director-revenue, V L Praveen Kumar. He added that the board has never received such a high count of orders since its inception in 1989. At least 60% to 80% of this came from the western corridor alone.

Till March mid-week, the water board had received 69,146 bookings – 60% of this from hi-tech Hyderabad. Residents agreed to the in-

BOARD ISSUES WARNING AS CRISIS LOOMS

Book tanker by dialling 155313

HMWS&SB tanker tariff:

- 5,000-liter capacity | ₹500 (domestic)
- 5,000-liter capacity (commercial) | ₹850
- 10,000-liter capacity (commercial) | ₹1,200
- Tanker delivery time | 3-4 days from date of booking

Private tanker tariff (excluding tax)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ● 5,000-litre (domestic): ₹1,500 | ● 10,000-litre (commercial): ₹2,500 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

supplied water, intended for domestic purposes, to be used from his service connection for constructional or industrial purposes. If the board finds water being used for purposes

other than drinking, such consumers are liable for punishment under the provisions of the Act, through penalties or disconnection of water supply," warned an official

her apartment complex. "The RWA has increased the monthly maintenance charges from Rs 2,800 to Rs 3,500 for the 42 flats as it has been hiring private tankers for the past couple of months," she said.

Water board officials fear that the situation will get worse over the next few weeks with groundwater levels dropping rapidly. "We have opened six new filling stations at Gol-

den Tulip to meet the demand from Hafeezpet, Raidurg, Kismathpur, Manikonda, S R Nagar, and Erragadda. Apart from this, four or five other filling stations are being opened to take on the load of tanker bookings," Praveen Kumar said.

The board has also planned to increase operation timings from 6 am to midnight and add an additional 70 tankers to its existing fleet.

Clinical trials of vax in India big step as it has 28% of world's TB cases: Biofabri

► From P1

MTBVAC is meant as a more effective and potentially longer-lasting vaccine than the over 100-year-old BCG (Bacillus Calmette & Guérin) vaccine for newborns as well as for prevention of TB in adults and adolescents, for whom there is currently no effective vaccine, the manufacturers said.

The existing BCG vaccine is an attenuated variant of the bovine TB pathogen and has limited effect on pulmonary tuberculosis responsible for disease transmission.

MTBVAC is currently the only TB vaccine undergoing clinical trials based on a genetically modified form of the pathogen, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, which, unlike BCG, contains all antigens

present in strains that infect humans.

Biofabri CEO Esteban Rodriguez called it a "giant step to test in adults and adolescents in the country with 28% of the world's TB cases. Bharat Biotech executive chairman Dr Krishna Ella added: "Our quest for a more effective vaccine against TB received a big boost today with clinical trials in India."

Begum Razia of Baig Theatre Foundation dead

Hyderabad: Begum Razia Baig, a prominent figure in the world of theatre and chairperson of the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation, passed away on Sunday afternoon in Hyderabad. She was 73. Known for her pivotal role in the revival of theatre in the city alongside her husband Qadir Ali Baig, Begum Razia Baig leaves behind a legacy of theatrical excellence.

Recipient of numerous international accolades, Begum Razia Baig co-founded the Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation and played an instrumental role in nurturing the talents of her actor-director son, Mohammad Ali Baig. Following her husband's demise in 1984, she continued to champion theatre and in 2004, collaborated with the ministry of Information and Public Relations to further promote the art form in Hyderabad. TNN

The move has not gone down well with the scholars of 2023 batch who are demanding a complete roll back of the hike, alleging that Osmania University charges one of the highest fees for PhD students, even more than many of the central universities.

"Until 2023, PhD fees per semester (year) was only

₹20,000. Now, they have drastically increased it to ₹20,000 which is beyond the means of many students especially from the marginalised communities.

From the political science department and AISF council secretaries.

partly district. I have no source of income myself and can't ask them to pay ₹25,000 up-front in a year like this when farming is also not offering much yield. How can the administration introduce such a rule knowing so many scholars are first generation learners," he said. For the science and technology departments, the per year fee is ₹25,000.

from the political science department and AISF council secretaries.

A similar issue was raised by a PhD scholar from chemistry department, Anjanabai G, who along with his batchmates has decided to not pay the fees. "I am a first generation learner and my parents are farmers from Wan-

parthy district. I have no source of income myself and can't ask them to pay ₹25,000 up-front in a year like this when farming is also not offering much yield. How can the administration introduce such a rule knowing so many scholars are first generation learners," he said. For the science and technology departments, the per year fee is ₹25,000.

Fee hike for better facilities for scholars: OU

University officials said the fee hike was justified as it is to add basic facilities for the scholars.

"OU increased the PhD fees after 15 years in order to bring better facilities for students like getting industry specific guest lecturers," said a senior official.

As per the plan, Veerawamy for job by promising to pay him ₹3 lakh. Navya gave her

gold chain weighing 2 tola and Sathesh transferred Rs 95,000 to Satheesh as part of the sputari.

As per the plan, Veerawamy helped Eashwar by repairing his bike and developed friendship with him.

Oneday, he called up Eashwar to have alcohol and took him to Nalgonda in a car, where Naik and Sai joined him. When they were travelling, Naik and Sai strangulated him with a rope and dumped his body in a well.

Police arrested his wife Vanam Navya, 26, and her paramour Kanugu Sathesh, 30 and three others - Nakka Veeraswamy, 29, Dhana navath Hanuma Naik, 22 and Dhanavath Sai, 25.

Police said Eashwar was lured into an affair by Veerawamy.

Prathyush Joshi, a techie working in a private firm in Gachibowli said, "We, a group of five friends are heading to Goa in an SUV to unwind during the Good Friday break, a tradition to escape from our busy work routines."

From RGIA to Ayodhya, airfares have surged from ₹7,000 - ₹9,000 to ₹16,000 on March 29.

With regard to Tirupati, almost all trains are packed and hundreds of passengers are on waiting list. SCR is already run-

tees are also rushing to popular temples in Ayodhya, Tirupati, Trivandrum, Guwahati and to few other places. Airfares on March 29 from Hyderabad to Dehradun cost ₹15,542 up from ₹7,839. Dev-

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Beggars, cops clash at Nehru Bus Stand

Vijayawada: A group of beggars and vagabonds clashed with some on-duty police and RTC officials at Pandit Nehru Bus Stand here on early Monday morning. Although an outsourcing staff suffered minor injuries in the exchange, circle inspector Krishna Lanka informed that no formal complaint has been lodged and deemed the incident as a minor one.

According to reports, some drunk beggars and vagabonds had taken shelter at the bus station. They had been sleeping on the chairs and benches of the bus stand and had created unhygienic conditions for the passengers and locals.

Upon complaint from some passengers about the same, police and RTC staff intervened. They tried to wake the occupants up around 3am in order to shift them from the spot. This led to a violent confrontation between the two parties and later, the beggars and vagabonds attacked the on-duty officials. Outsourcing staff Sambasiva Rao sustained some minor injuries in the attack.

The incident led to panic among the passengers at the bus station. Police rushed to the spot with additional forces and took the attackers into custody. TNN

36-year-old dupes woman of ₹2.7 crore, arrested from Andhra

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



Hyderabad: A man who duped a customer on matrimonial website by collecting ₹2.71 crores was arrested by cybercrime police on Sunday. The man identified as Vamshi Krishna was arrested from Vijayawada. The 36-year-old used to earn money by cheating women registered on matrimonial websites, to play gambling, said cops.

According to police, the victim had registered herself on a matrimonial website to find a suitable groom.

"Vamshi who saw her profile, sent a request to her in the name of one Rishi Kumar. He claimed himself as an NRI from USA, working in a pharma company. After agreeing to get married, he informed the victim that he would initiate her visa process. Subsequently, he informed her that her CIBIL score is below the mandatory threshold and in the pretext of helping her, suggested her to raise loan and park the money in her account. He also assured to help her cousin land a job in a prominent MNC. The accused then informed the victim's cousin too, that she has to improve her CIBIL score. The accused then gained

confidence of the victim and took her banking credentials. Using it, he transferred the money from the victim's account to his account. Later, he became inaccessible to the victim," the cybercrime officials said.

Based on the complaint by the victim, Vamshi was caught in Vijayawada and brought to the city. The accused then confessed that he was addicted to online gaming, besides placing bets on horse races. Since, he was unemployed and had to meet his financial needs for gambling purposes, he hatched a plan with the support of a woman to cheat females registered on matrimonial sites.

PET MEET



A pitbull during a meet of pet owners at Necklace Road lawns on Sunday. The central govt has banned 23 breeds of dogs and issued guidelines for existing ones. However, some pet owners continue to bring dogs of such breeds out publicly

IIT-H PhD scholar loses ₹30L to cyber fraudsters

Hyderabad: A PhD scholar from IIT Hyderabad fell prey to cyber fraudsters, who trapped him in the name of a parcel containing drugs. Keeping him under fear that he and his family members are under risk from sleeper cells from terrorist groups and that his mobile phone and laptop have been hacked by terrorists, they duped him to the tune of ₹30 lakh.

The victim lodged a complaint with the Cyber Crime wing of Cyberabad commissionerate, who registered a case and started an investigation. Sharing the details of the victim, TSRTC MD VC Sajjanar took to 'X' asking people not to respond to such fake threats and report them to police immediately.

AP Forest Dept Officials Yet To Confirm Death Of Bear Angry villagers beat killer bear to death

Nalla.Babu@timesgroup.com

Visakhapatnam: Hours after a sloth bear killed two farmers and caused severe injuries to a woman at cashew orchards in Anakapalli village under Vajrapukotturu mandal in Srikakulam district on Saturday, the animal was allegedly beaten to death by angry villagers.

Sources said a group of angry locals later buried the animal at an isolated place in the outskirts of the village. However, the forest officials are yet to confirm the death of the animal.

The sloth bear killed Apikonda Kurma Rao (45) and Chidipalli Lokanatham (46) and caused severe injuries to Lokanatham's wife Ch Savitri on Saturday.

The forest officials said Lokanatham and Savitri were working in their cashew orchard, when the bear suddenly appeared and attacked them.

Kurma Rao, who was working in the nearby farm, reached the spot after hearing the couple's cry for help. The

'NO PROOF OF BEAR'S DEATH'

- Sloth bear attacked & killed two farmers working at cashew orchards, severely injured a woman
- Angry locals beat bear to death with stones & sticks
- Dead animal later buried at isolated place in outskirts of village to hide evidence, say sources
- No concrete evidence to confirm bear's death yet, says Srikakulam DFO



bear attacked him, too. On hearing the commotion, the villagers reached the spot and they managed to rescue Savitri. Kurma Rao and Lokanatham died on the spot.

A few hours after the death of the two farmers, the angry villagers reached the cashew orchard and attacked the bear with stones and sticks. Later, the locals allegedly buried the animal to hide the evidence, sources said.

Speaking to TOI, Srikakulam DFO Nisha Kumari said there is currently no concrete evidence to confirm the bear's death.

The forest department plans to conduct further in-

vestigations in Anakapalli and its surrounding areas in search of the animal. "If we get the carcass of the animal, we will declare the death of the bear," she added.

Sources said that forest and police officials will verify the facts. If the animal was killed, the teams will visit various places to seize the carcass and will shift it for autopsy.

If a wild animal attacks a person, he/she can kill it in self-defence. But, if anyone is involved in poaching of animals, legal action will be taken against the attacker as per the wildlife protection act, the officials added.

Bear attacks create panic in Srikakulam

Nalla.Babu@timesgroup.com

Visakhapatnam: The frequent raids by bears on cashew orchards have triggered panic among the farmers in Vajrapukotturu, Baruva and Kaviti mandals in Srikakulam district. Though the forest department officials claim they have taken steps to avoid human-animal conflict by creating awareness, locals say they have done little despite the frequent incursions of bears into human habitations.

It may be recalled that two persons were killed, and one woman seriously injured when a sloth bear attacked them while they were working in a cashew garden at Anakapalli village in Srikakulam district on Saturday. The deaths sparked a massive protest against the forest department.

"The forest officials have failed in preventing the man-animal conflict in Uddanam region of Srikakulam. They have failed to create awareness among the villagers. They would come to the field only when a bear attack is reported, and usually remain at their office otherwise," said the angry protesters.

Question of capital set to impact AP voters' choice

Krishna, Guntur Districts To See Heated Debate

Srikanth.Aluri@timesgroup.com

Vijayawada: The capital conundrum, sparked after YSRC's change of stand to three capitals formula, is likely to impact the election outcome in the combined Krishna and Guntur districts. This election is also going to be the litmus test for TDP's plan of world class capital city and YSRC's formula of decentralisation of capital.

Though Hyderabad was continued as common capital for both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for a period of ten years (not exceeding), establishment of new capital city for residuary state of Andhra Pradesh has become an essential requirement in time bound manner.

The TDP govt led by N Chandrababu Naidu proposed to build a green field capital city between Krishna and Guntur districts on the banks of the river Krishna. He envisioned it to be world class modern city that can propel economy of Andhra Pradesh (re-

LITMUS TEST FOR PARTIES

- Amaravati is surrounded by Pedakurapadu, Sattenapalli, Prathipadu, Guntur West, Guntur East, Ponnur, Tenali & Venuru constituencies in Guntur district
- Amaravati also impacts Nandigama, Mylavaram, Jaggaipet, three constituencies in Vijayawada city, Penamaluru, Gannavaram & Nuzividu constituencies in Krishna district
- TDP going to polls with promise to revive capital Amaravati as only capital of state, YSRC seeking mandate of people with three capitals idea



sidiary), which is largely an agrarian state. A mega plan was unveiled for the construction of capital Amaravati by introducing an innovative Land Pooling Scheme (LPS). With the consent of all political parties in the state, the capital works began with the masterplan given by the Singapo govt.

However, after YSRC came to power in 2019, chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy came up with the plan of three capitals, reducing Amaravati to just a legislative capital and proposed to shift executive to Visakhapatnam and Judiciary to Kurnool.

As this plan potentially undid the vision of world class city to which the farmers subscribed and parted

with their lands in the hope of better future, they moved high court claiming their rights and legitimate expectations.

While the capital area falls within Tadikonda and Mangalagiri constituencies, it is surrounded by 15 constituencies in the combined Krishna and Guntur districts. With the shifting of govt offices to Vijayawada and Guntur, there has been a sudden spurt in the economic activity in both the districts. Realty and construction sectors witnessed a boom in the TDP regime having a positive impact on everyone.

The scene reversed with YSRC coming to power as the works of Amaravati came to grinding halt.

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HARYANA CM NAYAB SINGH SAINI SAYS PREVIOUS CONG GOVT KEPT MEWAT REGION 'BACKWARD', BJP GOVT REMOVED LABEL



For 46 years, Odisha widow, now 91, waiting for pension

HC Gives District Collector 1 Month To Disburse Entitlement

Lalmohan Patnaik



The direction comes four months after HC asked the Kendrapada district collector to sanction family pension to the woman 'within a period of two months from the date of receipt of order'. As she did not receive her pension, she filed a contempt petition

Cuttack: Orissa HC has given Kendrapada district collector Suryawanshi Mayur Vikas one month to make arrangements for the disbursal of family pension to a 91-year-old woman whose husband, a school teacher, died 46 years back.

The direction comes four months after HC asked the Kendrapada district collector to sanction family pension to Hara Sahoo, whose husband passed away on Aug 26, 1977. The court asked for release of the pension from the date of entitlement "along with arrears within a period of two months from the date of receipt of order". The order was passed on Nov 15, 2023, but the woman did

not receive her pension.

After she filed a contempt petition, single-judge bench of Justice Biraja Prasanna Satpathy said on Friday, "This contempt petition is disposed of by granting one-month further time to the contemnor to comply with the order." He warned, "If the order is not

complied with within the extended time, it will be held as deliberate violation of this court's order."

The elderly woman stays with her son, a 60-year-old retired fisheries department employee, daughter-in-law, three grandsons and two granddaughters at Palei Dera-

kundi in Kendrapada district.

As per case records, she has filed several pleas to the school and mass education authorities in Kendrapada since 1991, but in vain. On Aug 21, 2023, the Kendrapada district collector rejected her representation for family pension, gratuity, and other service benefits on the ground that the case was not eligible for family pension as the scheme was introduced in 1980-81, while the husband died in 1977.

The woman filed a petition in HC on Oct 19, 2023. The court quashed the Kendrapada collector's order and said, had the husband been alive he would have retired in 1983, making him eligible for the pension scheme.

Chandrayaan-3 landing site now officially called 'Shiva Shakti'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Nearly seven months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that Chandrayaan-3's landing site will be called "Shiva Shakti", International Astronomical Union (IAU) approved the name on March 19.

"The IAU Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature has approved the name Station Shiv Shakti for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander," said Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature, which provides information about planetary names approved by IAU:

Modi had made the announcement at the Isro Telemetry Tracking and Command Network (Istrac) in Bengaluru on Aug 26, 2023, three days after Vikram's historic Moon landing on Aug 23.

"In Shiva, there's resolution for humanity's welfare and Shakti gives us strength to fulfil those resolutions. This Shiva Shakti Point of Moon also gives a sense of connection with the Himalayas to Kanyakumari," Modi had said. According to Gazetteer, the origin of the name is defined as: "Compound word from Indian mythology that depicts the masculine ("Shiva") and feminine ("Shakti") duality of nature."

Fifteen years before the Chandrayaan-3 soft-landing, India's Chandrayaan-1's moon impact probe (MIP) had touched the lunar surface on Nov 14, 2008. The site was called "Jawahar Point" or "Jawahar Sthal", as notified to IAU. Aside from Shiva Shakti, Modi had also announced last Aug that the point where Chandrayaan-2 left its footprints would be called "Tiranga". He had said it would serve as an inspiration for every effort that India made and serve as a reminder that failure was not the end.

Terming the "touchdown moment" one of the most inspiring moments of this century, Modi said the world had witnessed and accepted the strength of India's scientific spirit, technology and scientific temperament. Isro chairman S Somanath had said: "The PM was emotional about this historic event and all of us are very happy to know the naming of the two sites."

FM trashes Siddha govt claim of Centre not clearing ₹5.5k cr funds

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday denied claims by Karnataka's Congress govt that the Centre had withheld a special grant of Rs 5,495 crore recommended by the 15th Finance Commission.

Speaking at an event in the run-up to the LS polls, Sitharaman said the commission's final report did not contain any such recommendation, accused the Siddaramiah-led regime of "misleading" people and criticised "My Tax, My Right", a state govt narrative.

Siddaramiah hit back at the claims. "One expects the country's finance minister to speak the truth. Unfortunately, she has been consistently denying the written word," the Congress leader posted on X.

Earlier, Sitharaman admitted that Karnataka contributed significantly to the central tax pool but contended that expecting proportionately higher returns was "a state govt narrative.



Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman at an interaction program organized by Thinkers Forum Jayanagar in Bengaluru on Sunday

in its interim report and Rs 6,000 crore in its final report.

"The ministry of finance under the leadership of Sitharaman refused to accept these two recommendations, thus denying the rightful share for Karnataka," he wrote.

Sitharaman insisted that PM Narendra Modi's "guarantees" had been met nationwide, explaining that these were "not mere promises but actual deliverables" that had reached the people. Schemes announced by the Modi govt have evoked massive response, including in Bengaluru, she said.

narrow-minded approach". As an example, she said many people from other states like Chhattisgarh and Bihar work in Bengaluru, contributing to taxes. Citing this, she questioned the fairness of denying their home state development funds.

Sitharaman brushed off previous claims by Siddaramiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar on the state's share of taxes and funds, saying Karnataka had received every penny due, often "two months ahead of schedule". According to the finance minister, Karnataka's share of GST compensation of Rs 1.1 lakh crore has been fully paid, with no outstanding dues as of March 1, 2024.

Sitharaman insisted that PM Narendra Modi's "guarantees" had been met nationwide, explaining that these were "not mere promises but actual deliverables" that had reached the people. Schemes announced by the Modi govt have evoked massive response, including in Bengaluru, she said.

Usually on Holi, people wear old clothes so that colours do not ruin their new dresses. But this Holi is not for those who are worried about their clothes getting soiled. Holi is an ideal of society; on this day, it becomes even more special and sophisticated. You wear new clothes; you play with colours; you get soaked in them and no one feels bad that their dresses have been ruined. For Holi, Krishn would prepare colours well in time with pala flowers and rose petals. Even while applying these colours, there was no worry that the colour might get into the eyes and cause any harm; no fear.

This is about the external Holi. If you want to play this Holi within, with your mind, then apply the

THE SPEAKING TREE

HOLI NEVER ENDS

Holi truly begins in our lives when we start to immerse ourselves in divine love and meditation. And then, the festival of colours never truly

end, says ANANDMURTI GURUMAA

ARUNDHUTI DAS BASU

When we start to immerse ourselves in divine love and meditation, then, in the true sense, the festival of Holi begins in our lives. It is a festival that never truly ends. But is this festival of love and meditation like any ordinary Holi?

Meera Bai says there is no joy in the world that can make one want to dance, sing, and cry upon being attained in life. The joy of love and meditation is the only such colour, in which, upon immersion, the heart wants to cry, sing, and dance.

Usually on Holi, people wear old clothes so that colours do not ruin their new dresses. But this Holi is not for those who are worried about their clothes getting soiled. Holi is an ideal of society; on this day, it becomes even more special and sophisticated. You wear new clothes; you play with colours; you get soaked in them and no one feels bad that their dresses have been ruined. For Holi, Krishn would prepare colours well in time with pala flowers and rose petals. Even while applying these colours, there was no worry that the colour might get into the eyes and cause any harm; no fear.

This is about the external Holi. If you want to play this Holi within, with your mind, then apply the



soap of renunciation on your mind. Rub this mind cloth thoroughly and make it shine. Even cleansing of the mind cloth may not be enough; you will have to decorate it, too.

The Gurbani says that if you adorn your mind with humility, 'egolessness', sweet words, and purity, it will surely please your beloved, your partner, the divine. A spouse does not prefer someone who lacks adornment. Therefore, prepare yourself for your beloved.

First, illuminate your dark mind. Then, adorn it with the decoration of love, and put the veil of modesty over your head.

Without music, there is no Holi. Hinduism is a laughing, singing, dancing religion. Where the praise of God is sung, there is no silence, only lively sounds of musi-

cal instruments like the tabla, mridangam, and manjeera. The verses of the Vedas are sung. The verses of the Vedas are not prose lectures; they are songs to be sung. In the religion that has developed in India, nothing is neglected, nothing is shunned; there is no hatred. Instead, there is a lot of joy, enthusiasm, happiness, vastness, and openness. It is because of this openness that songs can be sung. So why not sing praises of the Supreme Being. Do not remain silent.

During the conventional Holi festivities, there is playing of drums, jingling of bells, and drinking of bhang. But in the Holi of the Guru, there are neither drums nor tinkling bells. Here, the sound of Anhad, the unstruck, resonates, and the nectar of divine love is consumed.

Unstruck means that which has no limits, no boundaries. Speaking, playing, and singing have their limits. But there are no limits to the unstruck. The Holi of the Guru is special in this regard.

This Holi begins with great difficulty, after much penance, yet once it starts in life, it never ends. In this Holi, there is a sound that never stops playing once it begins. In the Holi of this knowledge, the worldly music cannot play. That is why it is said the unstruck sound is being played. And who is playing this unstruck sound? No one. It is resonating from within. What kind of sound is the unstruck? The sound of silence. Have you ever heard the echo of your own silence? Those who have deeply experienced their own silence will be able to hear the echo of silence outside as well. For them, Holi festivities never end. □

Zoji La closure shorter by 33 days this yr

Reflects India's Growing Mountain Road-building Prowess

Sanjay Dutta | TNN



An army convoy travels towards Leh through Zoji La in this 2021 photograph in Ladakh

The road had seen intermittent traffic disruptions as winter set in in the last few months. It was closed for a few days around Dec 23 but was reopened soon.

stead of costly air freight. Homebound Ladakhis and guest workers will have a cheaper travel option than the prohibitively expensive flights that remain the only means when heavy snow snaps road connectivity.

The short closures of the difficult passes has demonstrated BRO's snow-clearing capability. Govt is capitalising this by boring a tunnel under Zoji La, set to be completed soon. Thermal tunnel will have major upside for defence preparedness, quality of life and tourism in the region by establishing connectivity throughout the year.

Two Manipur rebel camps busted, 13 arrested

Kangkan Kalita

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Guwahati: Security forces busted two militant training camps, rescued a captive, and arrested 13 members of banned Kangleipak Communist Party in Manipur's Imphal West on Saturday night, police said.

Three of the arrested militants are women in their 20s. Four carbines, two grenades with detonators, an AK rifle, an Insas rifle, among other arms & ammunition, 14 mobile phones, 7 vehicles were seized. Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group) is involved in kidnapping and extortion also. Manipur Police wrote on X. The raids were carried out by security forces at Kameng Sabal and Loitang Sandum areas of the district, police said.

After arrest of IIT-G student for 'IS links', hunt on for another

Mukut.Das@timesgroup.com

over from Bangladesh. They duo have been handed over to NIA.

A local court sent Tauseef to 10 days' police custody. Sarma said the family of the fourth-year BTech student from Delhi's Okhla area had been informed and central agencies alerted. "We believe there is another such student in the institute. Police are probing and will most probably find the student soon," the CM said.

Police said they had seized a black flag, purportedly similar to that of IS, from Tauseef. "Further investigation is under way to unearth other aspects and links," a police officer said. Missing from his hostel since Saturday, Tauseef was traced to Hajo, about 20km away, around 7pm.

7 of BSP's 16 nominees are Muslims; may hit Congress-SP alliance

Lucknow: In a move that may adversely affect the prospects of Samajwadi Party-Congress combine on several minority-dominated western UP seats, Bahujan Samaj Party on Sunday fielded seven Muslim candidates out of 16 names it announced in the first list. Out of 16 seats for which candidates were announced, BSP had won four in 2019. It has repeated just one of them -- Girish Chandra from Nagina. However, he has been shifted to Bulandshahr. Its candidate for Nagina reserved seat is Surendra Pal Singh.

The party has announced candidates for all eight seats of first phase, five for the second

phase, two for the third and one for the fourth phase.

One of the main reasons for SP to forge an alliance with Congress was to consolidate the Muslim votes in its favour. "However, if a Muslim candidate from BSP is able to take away a fraction of community vote, it will dent the chances of INDIA bloc candidates in west UP as it happened on several seats in 2022 assembly polls," says a political analyst. Later Sunday evening, the party released its second list with nine more names. It included Sarika Singh Baghel, who had become the youngest woman MP in 2009 Lok Sabha elections, but lost

Varun, Ashwini Choubey, Anant Hegde dropped

From P 1

Jitin Prasada, who replaced Varun Gandhi from Pilibhit, joined BJP from Congress before the last assembly polls in UP. Apart from Varun, another controversial leader Ankumart Hegde and Union minister Ashwini Choubey were dropped, while BJP fielded its Kerala unit president K Surendra against Raul Gandhi in Wayanad.

Son of former deputy PM Deve Lal, Ranjit Chautala, figured in the list from Hisar in Haryana, being rewarded minutes after joining the party.

Senior BJP leader and one of the prominent OBC faces of the party, Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan has been fielded from Sambalpur in Odisha, making a return to electoral politics after 2009. He was elected to LS from Deoghar in 2004, but lost



SIDELINED: Varun Gandhi

the seat in 2009 and was accommodated in Rajya Sabha. "I express my immense gratitude to respected Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, home minister Amit Shah ji and our party president J P Nadda ji and the central election committee for reposing faith in me to serve the people of Sambalpur," Pradhan said after his nomination.

Govil, who has replaced incumbent Rajendra Agrawal from Meerut, had contested Lok Sabha polls as a Congress nominee unsuccessfully against former PM VP Singh in Allahabad Rural by-polls in 1988.

So far, the BJP has released five lists with 398 candidates. Mithilesh Tiwari, state general secretary of the party and an ex MLA, has replaced Ashwini Choubey in Buxar while V K Singh has been replaced by MLA Atul Garg in Ghaziabad in UP. Ratna Devi and Chhedi Paswan are the other prominent omissions.

Ramesh Awasthi, a former journalist, who had recently organised Sanatan Yatra, has replaced Satyadeo Pachauri in Kanpur.

Unlike previous occasions, the BJP brass, however, has not sprung many major surprises as most sitting MPs have been repeated even as there was speculation that they might be dropped

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JD(U) releases list of 16, drops 2 MPs, picks pair of turncoats

Party's Nominations Mirror Findings Of Bihar Caste Survey

Manoj Chaurasia
@timesgroup.com



JD-U senior leaders release party candidates' list in Patna on Sunday

Patna: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's JD(U) dropped two sitting MPs and picked a pair of turncoats, both of whom joined the party recently, in a list of 16 Lok Sabha candidates announced on Sunday.

Former MP and gangster-politician Anand Mohan's wife, Lovely Anand, was fielded in the Sheohar seat within days of jumping ship. Vijayalaxmi Devi, who joined JD(U) on Saturday, got the ticket for Siwan.

JD(U) fielded Bihar legislative council chairperson Devesh Chandra Thakur in Sitanmarhi in place of sitting MP Sunil K Pintu, who had been critical of CM Nitish after the latter parted ways with BJP in August 2022 to form a new govt with RJD and Congress.

DMK mantri's rant against PM, Sanatan draws BJP fire

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Lashing out at the INDIA bloc for making derogatory remarks against PM Narendra Modi and 'Sanatan Dharma', BJP leader Anurag Thakur demanded an apology for the disparaging comment made by Tamil Nadu minister Anitha R Radhakrishnan and questioned the silence of senior Congress leaders.

BJP said it would approach the EC seeking action against Radhakrishnan after he used expletives against Modi at a public rally. Calling DMK MP Kanimozhai a pseudo-feminist as she was on the stage and did not protest, BJP leaders shared the clip on social media in which the minister purportedly used an expletive in Tamil.

Criticising Congress's 'hateful' politics and contrasting it with BJP's 'commitment to development', Thakur slammed Radhakrishnan for his 'nauseating act'. He added that DMK did not even hesitate to abuse Modi in their intent to end Sanatan Dharma.

"Yesterday, one minister of the IND Alliance, in front of a female leader of his party, used very derogatory remarks in a very objectionable language for the PM. The words he used are condemnable and there is no place for such things in a democracy. Democracy has no place for such abusive language. INDI must apologise for its minister's abusive comment. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge are silent on the incident. It proves they are trying to end Sanatan," Thakur said.

Protest against CAA brings together Akhil and Lurinjyoti

Rajib Dutta | TNN

Dibrugarh: Akhil Gogoi, president of Akhil Dal and MLA from Sivasagar, took to the streets of Moran in Dibrugarh district on Sunday to campaign for Lurinjyoti Gogoi, who is standing from Dibrugarh in the general election on Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) ticket.

The two prominent figures of the anti-CAA movement in the state, Akhil and Lurinjyoti, walked side by side engaging in conversations with locals, and showcasing a unified front.

The campaign received an overwhelming response from residents of Moran town, who gathered in large numbers to hear the two men speak. Local shopkeepers, vendors, and youth were seen listening and pledging their support for the AJP candidate.

Akhil, known for his grassroots activism and vocal criticism of the incumbent govt, brought his fiery energy to the campaign trail as he urged the people of Moran to rally behind Lurinjyoti and AJP. "Lurinjyoti represents a new hope for Assam. I urge all of you to support him in the elections. We have seen the challenges faced by the indigenous people of Assam. It is high time that we stand together and fight for our rights. Lurinjyoti Gogoi is the strong voice we need to take our concerns to the national stage," he told the gathering.

INDIA bloc plans rally on March 31 to 'save democracy'

Abhinav Rajput
@timesgroup.com



AP workers protest the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal at ITO in New Delhi on Sunday

New Delhi: The Opposition INDIA bloc will organise a mega rally at Ramlila Maidan on March 31 to protest against the arrest of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal by Enforcement Directorate in the excise policy case.

Delhi minister Gopal Rai urged all spiritual, business and political groups to join the public meeting as a protest against "oppression by the ruling BJP" and to "safeguard the country".

Rai was addressing a press conference, along with ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj and Congress leaders Arvinder Singh Lovely and Subhash Chopra. This is the second time that leaders of both parties were seen sharing the stage, the first being while announcing the alliance. CPM leader Rajiv Kunwar was also present at the joint briefing at Constitution Club.

Rai said there was anger among people across the country over the way Kejriwal was arrested. "Delhi CM has been arrested by adopting dictatorship and ending democracy in the country. Every person who loves and respects the Constitution and democracy is angry. One by one, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is misusing central agencies to file fake cases against every opposition leader," he alleged.

Lovely claimed that democracy was in danger in the entire country. "When such a big attack is being launched

by JD(U), it represents these two groups. The party chose Alok Kumar Suman for the Gopalganj seat, which is reserved for Scheduled Castes. Three candidates represent the upper castes – Rajiv Ranjan, alias Lalan Singh (Munger), Devesh Thakur (Sitanmarhi) and Lovely (Sheohar). The list includes a lone Muslim candidate.

Some of the contenders who made the cut are Sunil Kumar (Valmiki Nagar), Ramprat Mandal (Jhanjharpur), Dileshwar Kamat (Supaul), Mujahid Alam (Kishanganj), Dulalchandra Goswami (Katihar), Santosh Kumar (Purnia), Dinesh Chandra Yadav (Madhepura), Ajay Kumar Mandal (Bhagalpur), Giridhari Yadav (Banka), Kaushalendra Kumar (Nalanda), and Chandeshwar Prasad (Jehanabad).

to have cost him a ticket for re-election. "We have selected the list mirrors the findings of the caste survey in Bihar that identified extremely backward classes (EBCs) and other backward classes (OBCs) as the largest social groups in the state. The two communities together account for 63% of Bihar's population. Of the 16 candidates fielded

BJP: AAP leaders 'masters of gimmick'

► From P1

Acourt on Friday sent the AAP national convenor to the central agency's custody till March 28. This was Kejriwal's first "communication" to a minister since then.

"Where there is a shortage of water, arrange for tankers in adequate numbers. Give appropriate orders to officials, including chief secretary, so that people do not face any inconvenience. The problems of the people should be addressed immediately and properly," the CM wrote, as claimed by Atishi. "If necessary, also seek the cooperation of the lieutenant governor. He will also definitely help," he added.

Sharing the details of the "note" at a press meet, Atishi said she had tears in her eyes as she read the instructions. "I thought who else other than CM Kejriwal would be so concerned about Delhi's people in such dire circumstances... when he has been arrested and does not know when he will be released from jail," she said.

Hitting back, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said AAP leaders were "masters of gimmick" and Kejriwal's letter to Atishi was "nothing but a melodramatic effort to be in news".

Sources said the ED probe would also cover the possibility of the "order" being taken out through one of Kejriwal's lawyers and his wife Sunita Kejriwal, who have met him in custody.

— With inputs from Abhinav Rajput

IAF ex-chief Bhadauria in BJP on day VK leaves fray

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



Former IAF chief RKS Bhadauria joins BJP in the presence of Union minister Anurag Thakur and party general secretary Vinod Tawde in New Delhi on Sunday

jas fighter prototypes as a young test pilot and later led commercial negotiations for the Rs 59,000-crore deal for 36 French Rafale jets in Sept 2016 as IAF deputy chief, which emerged as a major bone of contention between BJP and Congress in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections in 2019.

Bhadauria, along with former MP from Tirupati Varaprasad Rao Velagapalli from YSRCP, were inducted into the party by BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde and Union minister Anurag Thakur at the party headquarters in New Delhi.

According to BJP sources, Bhadauria is being considered for an LS seat in Uttar Pradesh while Velagapalli has been named from the Tirupati seat.

The development came as V K Singh said he was opting

out of electoral politics. Later in the day, he was replaced for the Ghaziabad LS seat by MLA Atul Garg.

Singh, a third-generation officer of the Rajput Regiment who had topped both the commando course at the Infantry School in Mhow and the Rangers combat-leadership programme at Fort Benning in US as a subaltern, was Army chief from April 2010 to May 2012. He was the first serving military chief to controversially drag the govt (UPA-2) to court over his date of birth because he believed he had been wronged by the system and victimised by earlier Army chiefs Generals J J Singh and Deepak Kapoor.

There were also reports of the UPA-2 govt being "spooked" by the unauthorised movement of two Army units towards New Delhi in Jan 2012.

What's the excise case that landed Delhi CM in ED net?

The Delhi excise policy case has become a thorn in Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) side. Two senior AAP members have been in jail for months and chief minister Arvind Kejriwal landed in Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody on Thursday night. While ED is probing a money laundering angle in the case, CBI is investigating corruption charges. Atul Mathur explains:

Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22

The story begins with Delhi govt revamping its excise policy in Nov 2021 to check pilferage and increase revenue. Until then, liquor retail in Delhi was equally distributed between govt corporations and private players, and the excise department earned close to Rs 4,500 crore per year. With Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, govt aimed for a revenue of Rs 10,000 crore by completely privatising retail, and curbing excise evasion and illicit liquor sale. All of the city's 272 municipal wards were to have at least two liquor shops each.

Off To A Rough Start

The policy became controversial within months with Delhi chief secretary Naresh Kumar's July 2022 inquiry finding "deliberate and gross procedural lapses" and "undue benefits" to licensees. Lieutenant governor VK Saxena recommended a CBI probe, and some of the chief secretary's findings became part of the CBI FIR.

Deputy CM and excise minister Manish Sisodia, three bureaucrats and 11 others were accused in the case. The report alleged "substantial indications towards financial quid pro quo" at the top political level. It said Sisodia "got executed major decisions in violation of the statutory provisions" and notified the excise policy that had "huge financial implications".

But AAP govt said the policy had been prepared on the basis of a report of a group of ministers (GoM) formed by Delhi Cabinet in Feb 2021. The policy and its terms and conditions had been approved by the Cabinet. While most decisions were taken by deputy CM Sisodia, they were later approved by GoM. These were then compiled in a Cabinet note for 'ex post facto' approval of the Cabinet after ratification by finance and law departments.

The council of ministers approved the excise department's proposal. It was later approved by LG before the policy was rolled out in Nov 2021.

The CS report and the excise department's response on ratification of alleged lapses were placed before the Cabinet on July 14, 2022. Regarding the increase in wholesalers' commission, from 5% to 12%, govt said licence fees for opening of wholesale stores had been increased from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 5 crore and all other charges were summed in a lump sum profit margin.

Allegations Against AAP

AAP has been accused of funding and influencing assembly election campaigns in Punjab and Goa – held in early 2022 – with money received from liquor policy beneficiaries. AAP communications in charge Vijay Nair and Hyderabad-based businessman Abhishek Boopathy were arrested in Nov 2022.

Former deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who held finance and excise portfolios, was arrested in Feb 2023. Later, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh was also arrested.

Everybody knows that ED has conducted more than 500 raids in the excise policy case... more than 50,000 pages have been filed in the charge sheet. Despite that ED has not been able to recover a single rupee, or show any evidence. Case is continuing on

— SAURABH BHARDWAJ | AAP MINISTER (via X, translated from Hindi)

TOI Explains

Kejriwal maintained the ED summonses to him were being sent "at the behest of BJP" and were "vague, arbitrary and amount to a fishing and roving inquiry".

He argued ED did not state the capacity in which he was being summoned – as an individual, a CM or national convenor of AAP, and whether he was a "witness or a suspect".

In court on Friday, Kejriwal claimed the case was stitched together on the basis of statements of the co-accused and officers working under the control of Delhi LG. He argued there was "no evidence" to show any wrongdoing in policy formulation or any receipt of proceeds. He further said that despite investigating the matter for more than a year and conducting over 200 raids, no incriminating material showing his involvement in any crime was found. He alleged ED was misusing its powers and people were being coerced to give unsubstantiated statements.

Relaxation in coercive action against licensees for payment default.

Explanation | Not doing so would have led to large-scale cancellation of licences, contempt of high court, and huge loss of revenue. Besides, it wasn't a blanket relaxation.

Tendered licence fee of ₹144.4 crore waived on account of pandemic.

Explanation | Pro rata licence fee waiver was given to each licensee.

Licensees allowed to open additional shops in planned localities, in lieu of unauthorised colonies, without approval of competent authority.

Explanation | LG approved it, then changed his stance just two days before the policy was rolled out.

► No penalty against licensees for promoting liquor through social media, banners, hoardings.

Explanation | Govt stepped in, discounts were capped at 25% and action was taken against unhealthy trade practices.

► Zonal and retail licences extended without increase in licence fee or approval of competent authority.

Explanation | Extensions have always been granted by finance minister without Cabinet or LG's approval.

Steel magnate Jindal bags ticket hrs after joining BJP

Manash Gohain
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: BJP on Sunday decided to field Naveen Jindal, who heads steel and power giant JSPL, from Kurukshetra, hours after he switched over to the saffron party.

Jindal – an accused in the coal scam, which was a key election issue for BJP in 2014 – was twice elected to Lok Sabha from Kurukshetra. In 2014, he had finished third when BJP's Raj Kumar Saini won, and was not fielded by Congress in the 2019 polls. The youngest son of OP Jindal, he serves as chairman of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) and also leads lobby group Indian Steel Association. A keen polo player, Naveen Jindal is credited with ensuring that restrictions on flying the Tricolour were eased.

His father was power minister in Haryana govt, while mother Savitri Jindal also served as minister in the state till 2014.

Apart from being an accused in three 'Coalgate' cases, his company JSPL was also being probed by the Enforcement Directorate for foreign exchange related violations. In 2015, govt had also cancelled two coal blocks allocated to JSPL during an auction suspecting bid rigging.

Although there was a buzz of his joining BJP, the move is a setback for Congress as he was seen to be close to Rahul Gandhi, the former party president. The businessman said he wants to contribute to PM Narendra Modi's 'Viksit Bharat' dream. Jindal joined BJP in the presence of its general secretary Vinod Tawde, who said the steel tycoon's presence in the party will help govt's agenda of boosting the country's economy and prosperity.



UNDERHAND OR ABOVE BOARD?

Some of the points flagged by Delhi chief secretary in his report, and AAP's explanations for them

Earnest money of ₹30 crore refunded to unsuccessful bidder for Airport Zone licence after it failed to obtain 'NOC'.
Explanation | Obtaining NOC was a tender condition; bidder couldn't be termed 'unsuccessful' unless it got all approvals.

Formula to calculate rate of foreign liquor revised and levy of import pass fee – ₹50 per case on beer – removed without approval of 'competent authority'.

Explanation | An error in the formula caused a hike in wholesales price of foreign liquor. It was decided to change it and take ex post facto approval from GoM and Cabinet.

Relaxation in coercive action against licensees for payment default.

Explanation | Not doing so would have led to large-scale cancellation of licences, contempt of high court, and huge loss of revenue. Besides, it wasn't a blanket relaxation.

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REPLY NOTICE</h

Rajnath: Ladakh is India's capital of courage and bravery

Saleem.Pandit@timesgroup.com

Srinagar: Defence minister Rajnath Singh showered praises and gulaal on soldiers in Ladakh on Sunday, celebrating Holi with them and extolling their exemplary valour in bone-numbing conditions.

"Your commitment deserves applause. You perform your duties despite severe cold conditions in Ladakh. The nation is highly indebted to you," Singh said, accompanied by Army chief General Manoj Pande and other officers.

Singh was to celebrate Holi with soldiers in Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, but his visit was called off due to bad weather. "Today, it was not possible to go to Siachen. Therefore, I wish all soldiers there Happy Holi," Singh said. Later, he spoke with some soldiers in Siachen over the phone, extending Holi greetings and promising to visit them soon.

Singh laid a wreath at a War Memorial in Ladakh to pay tributes to martyred soldiers. He told soldiers, "Like we have the national capital in Delhi, the economic capital in Mumbai, and the technological capital in Bengaluru, Ladakh is India's capital of courage and bravery. When everyone wants to hide in their homes due to extreme weather, you are doing divine work, ready to fire at the enemy and take a bullet to your chest."

3 kids pass away in hosp, 1 recovering

► From P 1

The victims were first taken to LLRM Medical Hospital, where two of the children succumbed around 9:30 pm. The third child died early on Sunday while being shifted to another medical centre. Sarika passed away a few hours later. Johny, a daily wager, is recovering," Singh said.

Since the incident was reported as an indoor accident, no police action was initiated in the matter, the SP said.

Pak min: Our bizmen want to trade with India

Omer Farooq Khan | TNN



Islamabad/New Delhi: Pakistan's new govt may resume trade ties with India in deference to the demands of local businesses, the country's foreign minister Ishaq Dar said at the end of his UK-Europe visit.

Dar's statement about ending the nearly five-year suspension of trade over India revoking J&K's special status in August 2019 comes weeks after PM Shehbaz Sharif thanked counterpart Narendra Modi for his congratulatory message on X.

India, however, believes Pakistan must first reinstate its high commissioner in India before nursing any thought of a rapprochement. Pakistan had recalled its top diplomat from India and called off trade after India revoked the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Known to be a dove in India-Pakistan diplomatic parlance, Dar had only on Saturday accused Pakistan of promoting terrorism at "industrious level".

Pakistani businessmen

want to trade with India... the govt will examine the possibility by holding consultations with all stakeholders," Dar said at a presser at the Pakistan high commission in London on Saturday.

Pakistan could prioritise reviving the economy before considering normalising ties with India, he indicated even as he broached the Kashmir issue.

22 in Bengaluru fined over washing cars with potable water amid crisis

Chethan.Kumar
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Bengaluru: Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has collected Rs 1.1 lakh in fines in 3 days from 22 cases of violations related to using potable water from Cauvery river and borewells for car wash.

BWSSB issued a notice on March 10, informing the public of a fine of Rs 5,000 for each violation of potable water use for activities such as car wash, gardening and large construction projects

awareness until then. Between Friday and today (Sunday), we have booked 22 cases and collected spot fines from people," BWSSB chairman V Ram Prasath Manohar told TOI.

While there are six major activities that the board is looking at, the focus in the first phase of enforcement has been car washing, he added. "People are using sprays and hoses connected directly to taps and a lot of water is wasted. All cases were based on our spot inspections and complaints from local residents. We will continue with

Bengaluru water supply board issued a notice on March 10, informing the public of a fine of ₹5,000 for each violation of potable water use for activities such as car wash, gardening and large construction projects

our drive," he said. According to BWSSB, most cases came from board's southeast division — 13 cases worth Rs 65,000 — while the remaining are spread across east, north, northeast and southwest divisions.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, deputy CM and Bengaluru development minister DK Shivakumar, and officials from BWSSB and BBMP have been assuring fears of the city completely running out of water this summer, but none of them have denied the crisis at hand.

Mann meets kin of Punjab hooch tragedy victims, promises action

Bharat.Khanna@timesgroup.com

Patiala: Four days after the first deaths were reported due to consumption of spurious liquor in Gujranwala village of Dirba in Punjab's Sangrur district, CM Bhagwant Mann and finance minister

Harpal Cheema, who is Dirba MLA, visited the families of the victims on Sunday. The death toll has climbed to 21, while around 20 others are being treated at hospitals.

Mann promised to look after the families of the victims and requested people to share details of liquor and drug smugglers to avoid such tragedies. "I will take care of the families of the victims, but I also request that you reveal such things beforehand. I just came to know from villagers that chitta (drugs) is also being sold here," he said.

"Till the time I am CM, I won't let the fire in my kitchen stoves extinguish. If you don't like my work, you can remove me as CM," Mann added.

He announced Rs 5 lakh aid for victims' families.

Isro honoured with US Aviation Week Laureates Award

Surendra.Singh
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Chandrayaan-3 mission made India the first country to land on Moon's south pole

ognition of the name 'Station Shiv Shakti', stated, "Compound word from Indian mythology that depicts the masculine ('Shiva') and feminine ('Shakti') duality of nature; Landing site of Chandrayaan-3's lander. The approval was given on March 19."

New Delhi: Isro has received US's Aviation Week Laureates Award for its achievements in the Chandrayaan-3 mission, which made India the first country to land on Moon's south pole on Aug 23 last year. In another accolade for the space agency, International Astronomical Union (IAU) working group for planetary system nomenclature has approved the name 'Station Shiv Shakti' for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's lander. The approval was given on March 19.

Deputy ambassador at the Indian embassy in the US, Sripraya Ranganathan accepted the award on Isro's behalf. The Indian embassy later posted on X: "...The award noted Chandrayaan-3's landing at the lunar South Pole, its confirmation of the presence of water there, as well as the presence of sulfur nearby — all at a cost of \$75 million!"

The gazetteer of planetary nomenclature, on IAU's rec-

Gujarat man indicted in US in \$4,00,000 ponzi scam

Ashish.Chauhan
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Ahmedabad: A 23-year-old man from Gandhinagar has been indicted in a case of ponzi scam worth \$4,00,000 in Alabama in the US. The accused, Pathyam Patel, began selling securities without registration and kept collecting money after guaranteeing huge returns which he never invested in securities. Instead, he used them to meet his personal expenses.

According to officers of Alabama Securities Commission (ASC), Pathyam Patel, who is also known as Pat Patel and was staying in Alabama, was arrested on March 6, 2024, based on nine counts of securities law violations. "The indictment alleges that Patel sold in excess of \$4,00,000 in investment contracts to at least six investors," said a statement by ASC.

"Patel did not invest the investors' funds as communicated to them. Instead, he used them for gambling on sporting events, personal expenses and paying other investors. Patel had no ability to guarantee that the investors would not lose their principal (amount)," ASC said.

75-yr-old ex-armyman goes on Antarctica adventure

Pearl.DSouza@timesgroup.com



Kalyan was among 12 Indians who were part of the expedition

Bengaluru: At a time when Bengaluru is reeling under severe water crisis, a 75-year-old retired army officer strapped on his shoes and set off to live his dream 18,000km away amidst penguins and humpback whales on sheets of ice. On Feb 14, Lt Col (retd) Upendra Kalyan left his hometown for a rendezvous with Antarctic islands.

He was one of the only 10 from a group of 140 expeditioners to dare to back-dive into the frigid waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Kalyan was among 12 Indians who were part of the expedition gathering at St Francis Assisi Cathedral in Ernakulam on Friday, the statement said. TNN

One of the most memorable moments for the retired officer was on the evening of Feb 23, when the ship's captain invited volunteers to participate in the 'polar plunge' into the freezing Atlantic Ocean.

"Out of the 140 expeditioners, only 10 volunteered, and I bravely did a back dive into the ocean," Kalyan said.

main island of Antarctica, from where zodiac motor boats connected them to the island. This was followed by a trek of few hours braving extreme cold and strong winds, with penguins, seals and birds of the Antarctic ecosystem in plain sight. "Despite spending nights on the ship because of regulations, it was a lifelong ambition fulfilled at the age of 75. It was an unforgettable experience," said Kalyan.

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Ushuaia, a seaport at the southern tip of the South American nation.

The team crossed the Drake Passage, known for its tough sea conditions, between South America's Cape Horn and the South Shetland Islands of Antarctica. "The crossing took 36 hours, during which several passengers experienced seasickness," he said.

The ship anchored a few kilometres off the shore of the

UGC cautions students to choose universities wisely

The University Grants Commission in a recent notification has warned students to choose courses and universities for higher education in open, online, and distance education carefully. "Students must confirm the recognition status of the higher educational institute (HEI) offering Open & Distance Learning (ODL) and Online education for the session opted for admission on UGC DEB website, take note of prohibited programmes and prohibition of franchising arrangement and ensure that all activities are being conducted within Territorial Jurisdiction for ODL Programmes," the UGC stated.

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Medical students object to MCC debarring 242 doctors from NEET PG 2024 exam

The Committee has collected a seat-leaving penalty of Rs 1.21 crore from these medical students

Shuddhanta.Patra
@timesgroup.com

A total of 242 doctors who left their seats in the National Eligibility cum-Entrance Test Postgradu-

ate (NEET-PG) 2023 counseling have been debarred from appearing in the upcoming NEET PG 2024 exam, the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) stated. The MCC's statement came as a response to a

Right to Information (RTI) application filed by RTI activist Dr Vivek Pandey. The debarred students are planning to file a PIL to reinstate the opportunity to appear for the NEET exam scheduled in June.

Speaking to *Education Times*, a Health Ministry official says, "The MCC rule to disqualify such medical students has brought down the medical seat wastage under 300 which earlier used to range between 1000-1500. These 242 seats will lie vacant for the next three years and each medical seat costs crores of rupees to the government. The seats are blocked as per the candidate's preference. Despite choosing the seat himself, when the candidate is giving it up, he is not just giving up his/her chance to study that particular medical stream, but also not giving a fair chance to the other candidate who needs the seat. Candidates must choose the seats wisely."

Dr Aviral Mathur, presi-

dent, FORDA, says, "There must be some penalty for students flouting MCC rules but that must not go against the careers of the young doctors. These are the candidates blocking the seats as per their prefer-



ences, later changing their minds and not report to the allotted college. They are eventually wiping out the chances for the students who need those seats. The Committee must rethink the steps considering debarring the students from counselling. The students who are complaining about losing a year must have thought about the outcome before blocking seats. However, the MCC must contemplate reasonable penalties like increasing the seat-leaving fine or cancelling the candidate's state quota."

Dr Vivek Pandey told *Education Times*, "A few students approached me regarding this issue, and they wanted the government to remove this debarring criteria if someone is unable to take an allotted seat. MCC is debarring students in the form of punishment because they left their allocated seats after counselling."

"Excluding students from upcoming examinations and counselling amounts to a significant loss of a valuable academic year

Each question is followed by four choices. Select the word that is similar in meaning (synonym) to the main word and mark that as your answer.

- 1. Acumen
(A) Amalgamation
(C) Alacrity
- (B) Ignorance
(D) Insight
- 2. Benevolent
(A) Spiteful
(C) Boorish
- (B) Compassionate
(D) Malevolent
- 3. Doctrine
(A) Chronicle
(C) Credo
- (B) Conundrum
(D) Discrepancy
- 4. Indolent
(A) Slothful
(B) Indifferent
- (C) Vapid
(D) Insolent
- 5. Gregarious
(A) Raucous
(B) Sociable
- (C) Eloquent
(D) Craven

Each question is followed by four choices. Select the word that is opposite in meaning (antonym) to the main word and mark that as your answer.

- 6. Corporeal
(A) Assuaging
(B) Spiritual
- (C) Condoning
(D) Tangible
- 7. Exculpate
(A) Acquit
- (B) Exonerate
- (C) Absolve
- (D) Convict

Answer Key to last quiz:

1.D 2.A 3.D 4.C 5.A 6.C 7.D

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What is happiness? It's a moment before you need more happiness

-DON DRAPER OF MAD MEN

Phony Joys

When the young are less happy than the old, personal tech could be the reason

It's a near-universal phenomenon: The cult of youth. Books to movies and music, most countries' cultural indicators would have us believe that it is their young who are really living it up. While the elders are sighing it down. In reality, the picture is rather uneven. This is an interesting aspect of World Happiness Report 2024. It highlights a wider social science finding that there is divergence between countries on whether the young or the old report greater life satisfaction. India, interestingly, is an outlier among its income-group peers.

Happy old men | Generally, high-income countries report overlapping increases in age and life satisfaction. Highly representative of this income-group is US, with those under 30 seriously lagging those 60 and older. Many experts put the blame squarely on social media and an overall decline in "pro-social behaviour". India is at a very different stage of economic development. What would explain younger people already showing lower life satisfaction here?

Happier old women | Equally interestingly, higher levels of life satisfaction are reported for older Indian women than older men. Here, too, a crucial hinge is older women's wider and more diverse social networks, including more friends and confidants. Loneliness can be hydra-headed in its impact on perception and memory, leading one to attach more importance to the negative aspects of one's life.

Group pic | Thinking seriously about these fuzzy matters is quite important. Not to lock everyone into the same idyllic picture of youth or age. Or push some draconian mass treatment. Individual experience of well-being forms the bedrock of the collective experience. Policymakers need to learn the right lessons, to nudge the collective in the direction of greater overall well-being.

Young and stuck | The shortage of quality jobs has to be taking a toll. Fixing this is obviously imperative. But another reason Indian and US youth could be experiencing something similar despite living in different-stage economies, is that the smartphone became our nervevine at the same time. In both countries, influencers could be shaping unrealistic expectations of work-life balance to comparable degrees.

Holi-by-self | There will be infinite Holi selfies today. And these will tell us little about how much happy exchange of colours is taking place between family, friends and strangers. Watching cricket on a personal screen is one thing, playing it in the neighbourhood gully quite another, endorphins wise.

Piscean Story

Indians are eating more fish. Great. And more Indians are eating fish. Even better

Welcome to the blue foods club, said Coastal India, fabled lovers of all things fish, to India's new fish fry. In 2005-06, about 73cr Indians ate fish. By 2019-20, almost 24cr more are consuming fish – considered among the healthiest proteins. This was the finding of the recent 'Fish consumption in India: Patterns and Trends' study by WorldFish India in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research and other govt and global bodies.

Existing consumers of fish are eating more: per head they're consuming 12.3kg per year, up from 7.4kg in 2005-06. Of course, the India average of 9kg per head is still nowhere near the world average per capita fish and seafood consumption of 20.5kg, but, it is a healthy growth that's expected to continue. Fish on the menu has the additional advantage of being a low-emission animal protein, farm to finger.

The rise in demand is attributed to increasing incomes and availability. With farming, processing, and supply chains improving, availability in landlocked states in the country's north has expanded exponentially. Add to that the fact that a 2023 study by Central Marine Fisheries Institute found 91% of 70 species had healthy numbers. This was heartening given the global picture – 34% of stocks are overfished, 60% are being fished at maximum sustainable levels.

The trend of more men eating fish that the study reported is backed by widely observed anecdotal evidence. Men eat out more often – the daily working lunch for instance – and cleaning and cooking fish at home is not everyone's cup of tea, as it were. That said, the explosion of tips and tricks online, to flip fry that fish just right, has done great service in reeling in the fish, all the way to the dinner table. May the tribe grow.

Bygone brand

How expat fam lost its status

Bikram Vohra

In the early days when Indians were mad about 'phoren' goods it was so easy to give gifts on trips home and win the love and gratitude of sundry family members and friends. Packets of orange-flavoured Tang and huge tins of powdered milk were par for the course.

If one overlooked a fond relative, well, a little clever mixing of two used perfumes or colognes did the trick and if someone noticed the seal was broken, we could blame the nasty little Customs who, before the turn of the century, were heartily loathed for their hostility to us Gulfis. Open your bags, was a common airport mantra.

Then we bought cheap ripoffs of clothes, fake Belgian chocolates and 'branded' watches made in China.

Everyone was happy and even daughters-in-law were forgiven their trespasses because they came laden with gifts. If one of those was a gold disco chain, life was a double bed of roses. Even Quaker Oats, cornflakes and Cheerios were given a warm welcome as were tins of tuna and cheese of all sorts. Cheddar, Brie and Camembert were shared with inordinate pride, evidence that son had done well abroad. And, of course, clothes, especially jeans, were the cherry on the sundae. How could we not be showered with affection, for thoughtfully bringing in mayo in glass jars.

Cosmetics were another winner: Shampoos smelling of apples and lemons, foundations and creams, and lipsticks were distributed with zest like we were Santa on steroids. Everything was good enough.

That has all gone now. Expats find shopping for presents tedious and intimidating. What can we possibly take that will be welcomed with glee when it is all available at home, and it's fresh and of global standards. New gen fam members know fake from real and you can't play anymore con games by wrapping up seconds and passing them off. Unless you are buying real 24k gold or 18-year-old single malt or a 50-inch TV and a high-end mobile phone, no one is impressed. Gone are the days of fobbing off Meera aunty with a dollar spray or thinking you have got uncles Ramesh, Raj and Mani thrilled by the battery-powered razors that were 70% off as a set and you tore the thiol to make three separate gifts.

Actually, shopping has gone into reverse. Us Gulf types are the big shoppers back home, landing with half-empty suitcases and returning loaded with Made in India stuff. Way beyond 30kg per person. Way to go.



Columnist based in Dubai

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10

CONTRAPUNTO

What is happiness? It's a moment before you need more happiness

-DON DRAPER OF MAD MEN

Phony Joys

When the young are less happy than the old, personal tech could be the reason

It's a near-universal phenomenon: The cult of youth. Books to movies and music, most countries' cultural indicators would have us believe that it is their young who are really living it up. While the elders are sighing it down. In reality, the picture is rather uneven. This is an interesting aspect of World Happiness Report 2024. It highlights a wider social science finding that there is divergence between countries on whether the young or the old report greater life satisfaction. India, interestingly, is an outlier among its income-group peers.

Happy old men | Generally, high-income countries report overlapping increases in age and life satisfaction. Highly representative of this income-group is US, with those under 30 seriously lagging those 60 and older. Many experts put the blame squarely on social media and an overall decline in "pro-social behaviour". India is at a very different stage of economic development. What would explain younger people already showing lower life satisfaction here?

Happier old women | Equally interestingly, higher levels of life satisfaction are reported for older Indian women than older men. Here, too, a crucial hinge is older women's wider and more diverse social networks, including more friends and confidants. Loneliness can be hydra-headed in its impact on perception and memory, leading one to attach more importance to the negative aspects of one's life.

Group pic | Thinking seriously about these fuzzy matters is quite important. Not to lock everyone into the same idyllic picture of youth or age. Or push some draconian mass treatment. Individual experience of well-being forms the bedrock of the collective experience. Policymakers need to learn the right lessons, to nudge the collective in the direction of greater overall well-being.

Young and stuck | The shortage of quality jobs has to be taking a toll. Fixing this is obviously imperative. But another reason Indian and US youth could be experiencing something similar despite living in different-stage economies, is that the smartphone became our nervevine at the same time. In both countries, influencers could be shaping unrealistic expectations of work-life balance to comparable degrees.

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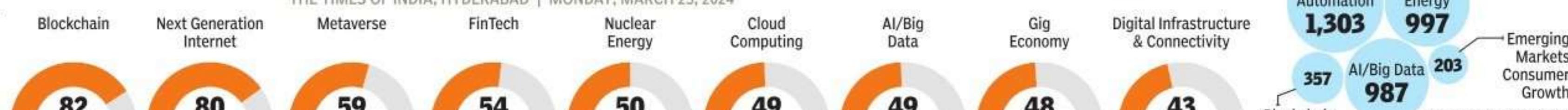
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With 82% returns in 2023, blockchain ETFs outperformed all other themes in the US as bitcoin prices witnessed sharp surge. ETFs focused on robotics & automation saw highest net flows amid wider deployment of these technologies across factories, healthcare, and transportation activities

INVESTMENT THEMES
(With highest returns (%) in 2023)



FY25 to greet car buyers with discounts as demand shrinks

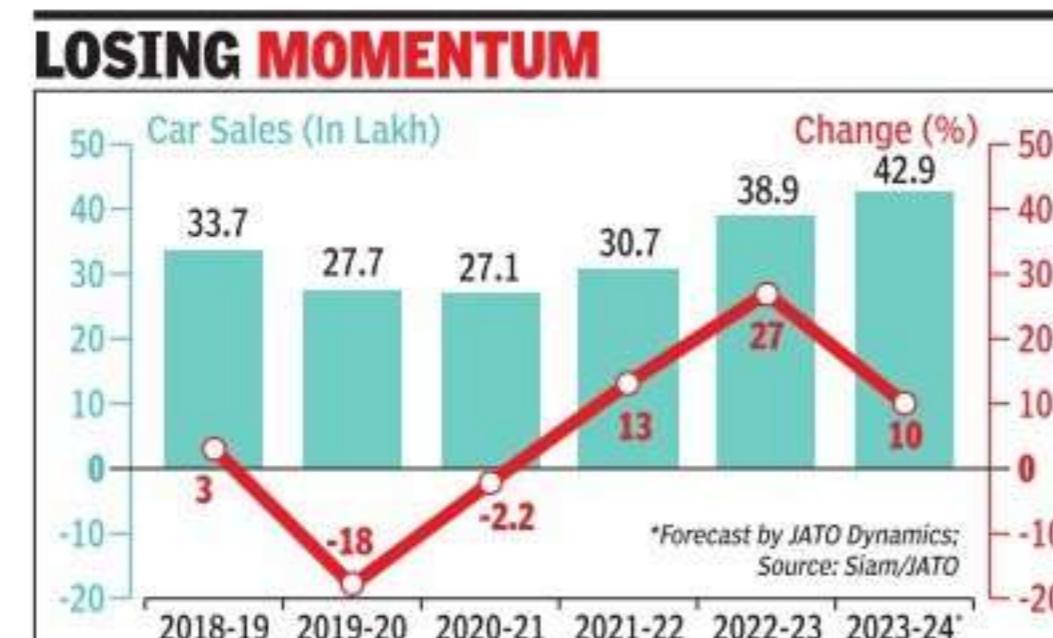
Growth Likely To Be Muted As Inventories Rise, Say Cos

Pankaj.Doval@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: After being made to wait for car deliveries during the years of production shortages and hyper growth in the Covid period, the customer finally makes a comeback and returns as the king, with lucrative discounts and attractive offers likely to come up in the new financial year. And, the era of frequent price hikes comes to an end.

So, 2024-25 could be the year when the car industry, which has been moving up strongly for past three years, witnesses muted growth as demand shrinks and inventories build-up at dealerships, industry officials and analysts told TOI.

According to experts, the car market, which is likely to close the current fiscal on record volumes of 42.9 lakh units, has developed a heavy base and may "see some time"



before it starts to grow fast again. Also, pace at which consumers booked and bought cars during last three years may now see a slowdown as the pent-up demand has been fulfilled and a breather comes.

"There are a variety of factors that will keep growth muted in FY25. Apart from a heavier base, the reasons also include cars getting expensive

during the previous years and Covid production shortfall being met subsequently," says Ravi Bhatia, president and director at research firm JATO Dynamics. "Also, used cars will take up a share from new car sales especially in the entry category."

After the initial worries around demand during the outbreak of Covid in March 2020, the pace of turnaround

in sales had taken almost everyone by surprise.

The phenomenon, which coincided with severe global shortages in supply of semiconductors, saw huge waiting periods across brands, with pending deliveries rising to as high as 7 lakh units at one point in time. With companies gradually ramping up production and semiconductor availability easing up, most of the pent-up demand has been fulfilled, leading to a situation where companies are now pushing models through special campaigns and discounts.

"Going by the current analysis, it looks like growth would be muted, or at best be in low single digit," Shashank Srivastava, senior executive officer (sales & marketing) at Maruti Suzuki, says.

Kunal Behl, VP (marketing & sales) at Honda Cars India, also says that going to get tougher for the industry.

GTRI: Push for EVs may lead to big entry of Chinese firms

New Delhi: Govt's push to boost domestic manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs) may lead to large-scale entry of Chinese auto firms in the local market, a report by think tank GTRI said on Sunday.

China's automotive industry, buoyed by substantial state support, has grown rapidly in electric vehicle technology, making it a leading exporter of EVs and related components, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

The renewed policy push to make India a hub for e-vehicle manufacturing and efforts of the private sector will lead to a sharp increase in dependence on auto component imports from China, the report said.

India's auto component imports were \$20.3 billion in 2022-23 of which 30% came from China. As the EVs are getting greater focus in the country, the auto component imports from China may increase further because it has a greater hold over the EV components' global supply chain. According to estimates, China has 75% of the world's battery production capacity and battery accounts for 40% of the cost of an EV. It also accounts for over 50% of global EV production and exports.

The report said that in the next few years, every third electric vehicle and many passenger and commercial vehicles on Indian roads could be those made by Chinese firms in India alone or through joint venture with Indian firms".

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said that Indian market entry provides a much-needed relief to Chinese firms. "China's EV exports to the EU and the US are declining due to anti-subsidy probes and increased trade restrictions," he said. AGENCIES

Auto players line up new EVs amid fresh govt push



fars) Rahul Bharti said the auto major is making serious investments in EVs. "We will start production of a high-spec EV designed-fresh as an EV with 550 km range in FY24-25 and will have about six EV models in the next 7-8 years," he said.

Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg noted that

as per multiple industry estimates, EVs are projected to contribute around 20% of India's automotive market by 2030. Hyundai plans to invest around Rs 26,000 crore over 10 years in Tamil Nadu. This investment will also include setting up a battery assembly plant in the state.

A Tata Motors spokesperson said that the company aims to have 10 EVs by 2026. The company plans to introduce four more EV models this year, including Curvv EV and Harrier EV.

Luxury carmakers are also gearing up to enhance their EV lineup. "We are invested in the market, having an aggressive product strategy with more than 12 new products planned for debut in 2024," a Merc India spokesperson said. AGENCIES

No GST on women hostels as end-use not commercial'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Pointing out that rentals attract GST only if the rented building is used for commercial purposes, Madras high court has quashed GST demand on hostels for working women and girls.

Justice Krishnan Ramaswamy, setting aside the GST demand notice, said: "While advertising to the imposition of GST on hostel accommodation, it has to be looked into as to whether the inmates of the hostel rooms are using the premises as their residential dwelling or commercial purpose since renting of residential unit attracts GST only

when it is rented for commercial purpose." Since the end-use of the property is for residential purposes, it would not attract GST, he ruled.

The court passed the order while allowing a batch of pleas moved by management of private hostels for working women and girls challenging an order passed by TN State Appellate Authority for Advance Ruling dated Aug 31, 2023, imposing 18% GST on such hostels. "In the present case, the imposition of GST on the hostel accommodation should be viewed from the perspective of the recipient of service and not from the perspective of service provider," the court said.

service and not from the perspective of service provider, who offers the premises on rental basis, the judge said.

The court has recently set up a subsidiary in the US and is showcasing its products to end customers there. "None of our critical subsystems come from geography of concern (read China) and that puts us in a unique position. We have given a stock and sell licence to our subsidiary there. Our products are used extensively for surveillance and mapping," Mehta said.

"We are very vertically

integrated in technology. We get (some) subsystems from geographies that are not of concern. The ability to ship from here as become real. North America has a very clear embargo on specific Chinese OEMs, as well as they have embargo on components coming from specific countries in the world. We are exploring some other markets also," he said.

Western geographies are moving away from China in critical areas due to many risks with respect to cyber security. The US had banned China-made UAVs in 2020 due to security concerns. Many other countries, including India, share the same. The rapid evolution drone ecosystem in India over the last two-three years has made desi UAVs acceptable in all such geographies.

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"Our drones are being extensively used for the Swamitva scheme in India that involves landholdings in all villages to give ownership titles," Mehta said.

Hiring of women in C-suite roles going up: Survey

Rupali.Mukherjee
Rupali.Mukherjee@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: This could be heartening news for women executives aspiring to reach the top as also for the diversity efforts being made by India Inc. The number of women hired in C-suite roles has moved up. Now around 16% of all women hired are CXOs, and 8% are CEOs or MDs, a survey by Executive Access, done exclusively for TOI, showed. A decade back the number of women CEOs was around 2%, while their percentage in CXOs was 7.8%.

Women are moving up the ladder in terms of top roles in marketing, project management and finance, where typically they have been largely absent so far. There has been an uptake in finance roles - a male-dominated territory. Women are coming up in finance roles, where those armed with MBAs can also fulfill. The diversity quotient is higher in senior roles related to sustainability and ESG, while earlier it was just CSR. There has been an improvement in senior leadership roles in manu-

ars, though much more needs to be done. With the momentum likely to grow stronger, the figure in next three-four years is likely to increase by minimum 50-60% because there are outstanding capable women waiting in the wings. There is no paucity of high quality women talent today," said Roshni Puri, MD, Executive Access (India).

The survey covered 1615 placements in over 1200 companies from January 2023 to mid-February this year.

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faturing and technical functions too. One of our plants in chemicals manufacturing unit in Gujarat is staffed entirely with women. We have started the journey with a special focus on hiring and grooming women for executive leadership." Sandeep Girotra, executive director & CHRO, DCM Shriram said.

Widening the talent pool, empowers women to access

leadership roles and creating a more inclusive work environment, can drive better business outcomes, said experts. "If we don't embrace diversity, we are missing half the talent pool. While the sectors like IT, ITeS, financial services, banking, telecom etc have high diversity quotient due to the nature of the work, the real litmus test of diversity is how inclusive and diverse the

sectors, like manufacturing, construction, projects etc are. Organisations will have to take concrete steps and make it attractive for women to work on the shop floor. The second metric we have to track is the number of women dropping out of the workforce after marriage and once they have children," Prem Singh, president - group HR, JK Organisation & president, National HRD Network said.

At JK Organisation, about 35-40% of the management trainees recruited each year are women, he added. Tractors and Farm Equipment (TAFE) chairperson and MD, Malika Srinivasan and Kinetic Green, the EV making arm of Kinetic group, led by Sulajja Firodia Motwani, are a few examples of women leaders in manufacturing companies. Recently, FMCG company Dabur set up an all-women production line at its largest-ever greenfield plant near Indore. According to research

from Harvard Business Review, women in leadership positions are perceived just as — if not more — competent as their male counterparts. In an analysis of thousands of 360-degree assessments, women were rated as excelling in taking initiative, acting with resilience, practicing self-development, driving for results, and displaying high integrity and honesty. In fact, they were thought to be more effective in 84% of competencies that we most frequently measure.

It is not surprising that a majority of the hires in corporate communications function are women (see graphic). They have a natural flair to this function as they are better communicators, Puri adds. Women have a natural instinct for finance but somehow seem to prefer HR, marketing and corporate communication. Technology and supply chain are other functional areas that saw hardly any women talent being hired at the top.



Global Infrastructure
Robotics & Automation
Nuclear Energy
Digital Infrastructure & Connectivity
Gig Economy
Cloud Computing
AI/Big Data
Blockchain

Emerging Markets Consumer Growth

Source: Visual Capitalist

Give your dreams a colourful start

Happy Holi



Vedanta plans to invest \$6bn across biz

New Delhi: Mining conglomerate Vedanta will invest \$6 billion across businesses that span from aluminium and zinc to iron ore, steel and oil and gas as it looks to add at least \$2.5 billion to annual EBITDA, its executives said in an investor meeting.

It has a pipeline of more than 50 active projects and expansions to drive growth, which is expected to generate incremental revenue of over \$6 billion and boost EBITDA from an expected \$5 billion in the current fiscal ending March 31 to \$6 billion in the next and up to \$7.5 billion by FY27, they added.

Vedanta chairman Anil Agarwal, according to a presentation made at the investor meet, said the company "will get to a different level in the next 25 years". His brother and vice chairman Naveen Agarwal gave details of the plans. AGENCIES

RBI to conduct special audit of IIFL Fin, JM Fin Starts Process For Appointment Of Auditors

New Delhi: IIFL Finance and JM Financial Products (JMFPL) will undergo a special audit to further probe their regulatory breaches, as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated the process for the appointment of auditors. The RBI has floated two separate tenders for the appointment of auditors for special audits of these two non-banking finance companies.

Audit firms empanelled by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for forensic audit can participate in the tendering process, and the last date for submission of bids is April 8, as per the tender document published by RBI.



FACING SCRUTINY

The selected firms will be awarded work on April 12, 2024, as per the bid documents. Earlier this month, the RBI put a curb on these two entities for non-compliance of regulatory guidelines.

The central bank barred IIFL Finance from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans after certain material supervisory concerns were observed in its gold portfolio.

The RBI had said an inspection of the company was carried out by it with reference to IIFL's financial position as of March 31, 2023.

A day after, the Reserve Bank imposed restrictions on JM Financial Products following the finding that the company indulged in various manipulations, including repeatedly helping a group of its own customers to bid for various IPOs by using loaned funds. AGENCIES

Drone co IdeaForge to enter new segment

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New Delhi: Indian drone major IdeaForge is now going to enter "logistics at scale" by developing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) that can carry payloads of up to 100 kg to a distance of 100 km. This, the company's co-founder & CEO Ankit Mehta says, could "potentially its foot in the door for developing urban air mobility solutions."

The company has recently set up a subsidiary in the US and is showcasing its products to end customers there. "None of our critical subsystems come from geography of concern (read China) and that puts us in a unique position. We have given a stock and sell licence to our subsidiary there. Our products are used extensively for surveillance and mapping," Mehta said.

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Western geographies are moving away from China in critical areas due to many risks with respect to cyber security. The US had banned China-made UAVs in 2020 due to security concerns. Many other countries, including India, share the same. The rapid evolution drone ecosystem in India over the last two-three years has made desi UAVs acceptable in all such geographies



TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD | MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024

POETRY IS MEANT
TO BE HEARD
—MARY OLIVER

JENNIFER GARNER DRAWS PRAISE FOR SAXOPHONE SKILLS AFTER ACTRESS POSTS JAZZY TRIBUTE ON REESE WITHERSPOON'S B'DAY

WILLIAM-KATE SAY 'ENORMOUSLY TOUCHED' BY PUBLIC SUPPORT AFTER CANCER REVELATION, REITERATE REQUEST FOR PRIVACY

Russia marks day of mourning for concert hall victims, toll 137

IS' Social Media Accounts Post Graphic Video Of Attack



People hold a vigil for the victims at a makeshift memorial in Moscow

Were gunmen from Tajikistan? Its prez says 'terrorists have no nationality'

The president of Tajikistan on Sunday condemned the Moscow attack in a call with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, amid allegations the gunmen were Tajik citizens. Russian media have alleged that the four suspected assailants were Tajiks. "Terrorists have no nationality," Emomali Rahmon told Putin. The statement contained no direct reference to the shooters' citizenship. The IS-K group is active in Tajikistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan. AFP

Russia was observing a national day of mourning on Sunday for victims of a fiery terrorist attack on a suburban Moscow concert venue, as the death toll climbed to 137 and questions lingered about the identities and motives of the perpetrators. People laid flowers and lit candles at a memorial set up outside the concert hall. Flags were lowered to half-staff at buildings across the country, and state media released a video of President Putin lighting a memorial candle in a church. The deceased included three children, and about 180 people were injured.

As rescuers continued to search the damaged building and the death toll rose as more bodies were found, some families still didn't know if relatives who went to the event targeted by gunmen on Friday were alive. Moscow's department of health said Sunday it has begun identifying the bodies of those killed via DNA testing, which will need at least two weeks. Islamic State group's Afghan-

nist affiliate, IS-Khorasan, claimed responsibility for the attack, but Putin has not publicly mentioned the Islamist militant group in connection with the attackers, who he said had been trying to escape to Ukraine. He asserted that some on "the Ukrainian side" had been prepared to spirit the gunmen across the border. Ukraine has denied any role in the attack.

Russian authorities arrested four suspected attackers on Saturday among 11 people detained over suspicion of involvement in the attack. Though no court hearing has been officially announced, there was a heavy police presence around Mosc-

cow's Basmanny district court. Footage released by Russia's Investigative Committee showed the suspected attackers being dragged while blindfolded into the state body's headquarters in Moscow. Officials have not named the shooters, but said they were all foreign nationals.

In video footage published by Russian media and Telegram channels with close ties to the Kremlin, one of the suspects said he was offered money to carry out the attack. "I shot people," the suspect, his hands tied and his hair held by an interrogator, a black boot beneath his chin, said in poor and highly accented Russian. When

asked why, he said: "For money". The man said he had been promised half a million roubles (a little over \$5,000). One was shown answering questions through a Tajik translator.

Also, a video lasting about a minute and half, apparently filmed by the gunmen, was posted on social media accounts typically used by IS, according to the SITE intelligence group. The video, which appears to have been filmed from the lobby of the concert venue, shows several individuals with blurred faces and garbled voices, firing assault rifles with inert bodies strewn on the floor and a fire starting in the background.

Russian investigators said that after walking through the theatre shooting spectators, they set fire to the building, trapping many inside who died from smoke inhalation. It was the deadliest attack on Russian territory since the 2004 Beslan school siege, when Islamist militants took more than 1,000 people, including hundreds of children, hostage. AGENCIES

Russia launches massive missile attack on Ukraine, one briefly enters Polish airspace

Kyiv: Russian forces launched an air barrage against Ukraine on Sunday, including a missile that briefly crossed into Polish airspace, while Kyiv's forces struck two Russian ships off the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Ukrainian air defence downed 18 out 29 missiles and most of 28 Shahed drones fired by Kremlin forces, the country's Air Force command said. Local authorities reported 10 missiles downed over Ukraine's capital and almost 20 missiles and seven drones aimed at the Lviv region in the country's far west, near the Polish border. The Russian cruise missile entered Polish airspace for 39 seconds, the country's military said. Authorities in Warsaw notified NATO allies about the incident.



Ukrainians rally in Kyiv on Sunday to raise awareness about the fate of their country's prisoners of war

The attack damaged energy facilities in west Ukraine. No casualties were reported.

While Ukraine continued to repel attacks along the 1,200km

Poland demands explanation from Russia

Poland demanded an explanation from Russia on Sunday after one of its missiles strayed briefly into Polish airspace. Armed Forces Operational Command of Poland, a member of Nato, said in a statement that there was a violation of Polish airspace at 4:23am (local time) by one of the cruise missiles launched by Russia against towns in western Ukraine. The object entered near Oserdow, a village in an agricultural region near the border with Ukraine, and stayed in Polish airspace for 39 seconds, the statement said. Polish defence minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz later told reporters in a televised news conference that the Russian missile would have been shot down had there been any indication that it was heading towards a target in Poland. Polish and Nato F-16s were activated as part of the strategic response. He said the missile penetrated Polish airspace about a kilometer or two as Russia was targeting the region around Lviv in western Ukraine. AP

frontline, they also took aim at targets inside Moscow-controlled areas. Kyiv's forces struck Russian vessels and military installations in annexed Crimea. Landing ships Yamal and Azov were struck, as well as a communications centre and other military infrastructure in Sevastopol. BLOOMBERG & AP

Israel has besieged 2 more Gaza hosps, demanding evacuations: Palestinians

Cairo: Israeli forces besieged two more Gaza hospitals on Sunday, pinning down medical teams under heavy gunfire, the Palestinian Red Crescent said, and Israel said it had captured 480 militants in continued clashes at Gaza's main Al Shifa hospital. Israel says hospitals in the Palestinian enclave, where war has been raging for over five months, are used by Hamas militants as bases. It has released videos and pictures supporting the claim.

Hamas and medical staff deny the accusations.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said one of its staff was killed when Israeli tanks suddenly pushed back into areas around Al-Amal and Nasser hospitals in the southern city of Khan Younis, amid heavy bombardment and gunfire.

Israeli forces began operating around Al-Amal, the mil-

Jaishankar dials Lavrov, conveys condolences on Moscow attack

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Following PM Narendra Modi's condemnation of the Moscow terrorist attack, foreign minister S Jaishankar also spoke to his counterpart Sergey Lavrov and conveyed his "deepest condolences" on the loss of lives in the "horrific terrorist attack in Moscow". According to a Russian readout, Jaishankar vehemently condemned the "inhumane" terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue, which claimed the lives of more than 130 civilians.

"He reaffirmed India's resolution to continue fighting terrorism in all its manifestations together with Russia. He offered words of support and asked to convey his sympathy to the families of the victims, and wished a speedy recovery to the injured," said the readout.

Modi on Saturday had condemned the attack, calling it a heinous terrorist attack. "We strongly condemn the heinous terrorist attack in Moscow. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims," he said in a post on X.

US denies Ukraine role; UK says Russia creating 'smokescreen'

Washington: Ukraine had "no involvement whatsoever" in the Moscow concert hall massacre, the White House said Sunday, after President Putin suggested a Kyiv connection.

"It bears sole responsibility for this attack," said White House national security council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson. "IS-Khorasan is actually, by all accounts, responsible for what happened," agreed Vice President Kamala Harris in an interview, referring to the IS's branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan. AFP

In London, UK finance minister Jeremy Hunt said the British govt had "very little confidence" in Russia's statements, accusing it of trying to "defend" its assault on Ukraine. "We know that they are creating a smokescreen of propaganda to defend an utterly evil invasion of Ukraine," he said. AFP

Russia scrambles jets

The Russian defence ministry on Sunday said it had scrambled a MiG-31 fighter jet after the approach of two US B-1B bombers towards the Russian border over the Barents Sea. The US bombers turned away from the Russian border after the approach of the MiG-31, the ministry said. Reuters

There has been no arrest and inquiries are on.

Cheista Kochhar died on the spot. Her husband, Prashant, a software engineer, was a few yards ahead of her on his bike when the accident occurred. He heard a loud thud and rushed back to help Cheista. Police officers and paramedics rushed to the spot and found her seriously injured. She died soon after. "The lorry, believed to be a garbage vehicle, stopped at the scene. The driver is helping police with the probe," police said.

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She studied economics at Delhi University, and later at the Universities of Chicago, Ashoka and Pennsylvania.

"Not only was she intelligent and hard-working, she was compassionate too," her father said. "Her good nature was infectious. She was popular and helpful and made a mark for herself at a young age. She was a nationalist. She was very clear in her mind she would get educated in the UK and then go back to India. We are here to see that we take her remains back to India," he said.

HAPPY HOLI!



People celebrate Holi in Nairobi, Kenya, on Sunday

'A Chinese-owned tanker hit by Houthis in Red Sea'

Dubai: A Chinese-owned oil tanker was attacked off Yemen Saturday by ballistic missiles fired by Houthi rebels, who have intensified strikes on Red Sea shipping, the US military said. The Panamanian-flagged, Chinese-owned and operated Huang Pu issued a distress call but did not request assistance, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said. "No casualties were reported, and the vessel resumed its course," the statement said. CENTCOM and the British navy's United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO) said a fire had broken out on board the ship but was extinguished within 30 minutes. The Marinetraffic tracking website later had the vessel sailing out of the Red Sea into the Gulf of Aden heading for its next port of call, which, according to maritime security agency Ambrey, was New Mangalore in India. AFP

ea. Landing ships Yamal and Azov were struck, as well as a communications centre and other military infrastructure in Sevastopol. BLOOMBERG & AP

Israel has besieged 2 more Gaza hosps, demanding evacuations: Palestinians

A man helps a child injured in Israeli bombardment at the al-Najjar hospital in Rafah

eli forces were now demanding the complete evacuation of staff, patients and displaced people from Al Amal's premises and were firing smoke bombs into the area to force out its occupants.

A displaced Palestinian was killed inside the hospital compound after being hit in the head by Israeli fire, the Red Crescent said in a later update.

The health ministry in Gaza said dozens of patients and medical staffers had been detained by Israeli forces at Al Shifa in Gaza City in the enclave's north that has been under Israeli control for a week. The Hamas-run government media office said Israeli forces had killed five Palestinian doctors during their seven-day-old swoop on Al Shifa.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on that report. Reuters

POETRY IS MEANT
TO BE HEARD
—MARY OLIVER

Ireland set to get its youngest PM as Simon Harris, 37, elected party leader

Simon Harris became Irish prime minister in waiting on Sunday, pledging to help small business, focus on law and order and tackle migration after his unopposed election to succeed Leo Varadkar as leader of the governing Fine Gael party.

Harris, a 37-year-old minister best known for helping steer the country's initial response to Covid-19, will be voted in as Ireland's youngest ever prime minister when parliament next sits on April 9 thanks to support from coalition partners.

He will have no more than a year to save the coalition from defeat at parliamentary elections. Polls for the last three years have put Sinn Fein, a left-wing party that backs unification with British-run Northern Ireland, as the favourite to head the next govt. "This is a moment for Fine Gael to reset," Harris told hundreds of members at a packed party event in the midlands town of Athlone.

Varadkar announced his departure to widespread shock Wednesday, catching even his closest allies by surprise, saying Fine Gael would stand a better chance of re-election under another leader. REUTERS

Indian dies in car accident in Pennsylvania

New York: In a tragic incident, a 24-year-old Indian professional was killed in a car accident in the US state of Pennsylvania. Arshia Joshi lost her life on March 21, the Consulate General of India in New York said in a post on X on Saturday, expressing deep condolences to her family. Joshi had completed her graduation last year.

The consulate said it is in touch with Joshi's family and local community leaders. "Extending all possible assistance to transport her mortal remains to India at the earliest," it said, without divulging more details about the deceased.

Volunteer-based nonprofit organisation TEAM Aid is assisting in sending Joshi's mortal remains to Delhi to her family. TEAM Aid's primary focus has been to help members of the Indian community who are either travelling or living abroad and face dire situations such as accidents, suicides, homicides or sudden death of loved ones. In the past week alone, TEAM Aid has sent the remains of five individuals to India and organised three local funerals, founder Mohan Nannapaneni said. PTI

AROUND THE WORLD



GET, SET, SERVE: Waiters take part in a 2-km race in Paris on Sunday where they have to single-handedly carry a tray bearing a coffee, a glass of water and a croissant. Speed is of essence in the race but points are deducted for spills. The race was first held in 1914

Hit by manpower shortage, German cities get students to drive trams

Satified before the tram's control panel, Benedikt Hanne, 24, deftly steered the red and white wagons, hours before heading to Nuremberg university to study for a social work degree. Squeezed by a serious manpower shortage, public transport operators like Nuremberg's city service VAG have had to find new sources to expand their pool of workers. The VAG needs to recruit 160 new drivers annually to run its metro, trams and buses.

The transport company put out an advert targeted at university students, offering a part-time job to drive trams outside school hours. To qualify, they need a regular driver's licence, be above 21 years of age, and be "reliable and suitable for driving and shift work". My

sectors in Germany, like other European countries, are suffering from a serious manpower shortage. Public transport operators have warned they may have to reduce the number of buses, trams or metros. Other German cities like Mannheim and Munich have also begun tapping students as part-timers to fill public transport gaps.

Japanese baseball fans bid farewell to 'lucky' KFC statue

A plastic statue of Kentucky Fried Chicken's founder Colonel Sanders that was a lucky charm for superstitious Japanese baseball fans has been "disposed of" 15 years after being dredged out of an Osaka river. Jubilant supporters of Osaka's Hanshin Tigers flung the effigy — and themselves — into Dotombori river in 1985 after winning Japan's version of the World Series. KFC said the statue was now "too dilapidated to maintain". A ritual "showing gratitude" was held at a temple and attended by baseball fans.

A rock fell from space into Sweden. Who owns it on Earth?

Stockholm: The iron rock's journey from the depths of space ended with a thud in a pine forest, north of Stockholm, on a Nov night four years ago. Its trajectory was caught on several cameras used to track meteoroids. That led to a week-long hunt and an even longer court fight over an unusual question: Who owns an unearthly object that falls to Earth?

Days after the rock landed, Anders Zetterqvist, a geologist, found the site where it first hit the ground. After several



Falls of iron meteorites are rare globally. Laws regulating the ownership of found meteorites vary from country to country. In Sweden, there are none. In France, the first to put his or her hands on it has ownership of it. In Denmark, they are the property of the state.

10th fresh-fall meteorite to have been found in Sweden, and one of only a handful of fresh-fall iron meteorites found in the world, Forsberg said. The men took the rock to the Swedish Museum of Natural History, where it has been held since 2020.

A week after the geologists went public with their find, the owner of the estate where the meteorite was found, Joachim Benzelstierna von Engstrom, sent a letter to the museum claiming ownership. Laws regulating the ownership of

meteorites vary from country to country. In Sweden, there are none. In France, "the first to put his or her hands on it has ownership of it. In Denmark, they are the property of the state.

In Dec 2022, the a district court ruled in favour of the geologists, deeming the meteorite movable property. Engstrom appealed. On Thursday, the appeals court in Stockholm ruled in favour of him. Judge Robert Green said the appeals court's ruling turned on two questions: whether meteorites could be

considered "immovable" property and the extent of a Swedish customary law, known as "Allemanstritten," that provides the right of public access.

"The point of departure regarding immovable property is that the landowner has the right to it," he said. The geologists have not decided whether to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Forsberg was disappointed.

"It's sad for all enthusiasts.

If people don't think they'll get a reward, how are we going to get people out searching?" My

TODAY'S FACE-OFF
RCB VS PBKS
PLAYED 31
TV TIME 7.30 PM
STAR SPORTS / JIOCINEMA



LAST FIVE MATCHES
PBKS W L L W L
RCB L L W W L
VENUE: CHINNASWAMY
PBKS ODDS 12/10 RCB 7/10

THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD
MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024

IPL 2024

"LAST SEASON I KEPT WICKETS IN A FEW GAMES, AND IT GAVE ME CONFIDENCE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO CONTRIBUTING MORE AS A WICKETKEEPER-BATTER. IT'S CLEAR THAT I HAVE TO BAT IN THE MIDDLE-ORDER."

—Anuj Rawat | RCB WICKETKEEPER-BATTER



TITANS APPLY CHOKE ON MI

Gujarat Pip Mumbai By 6 Runs In Marquee Clash

Sabu.Cherian@timesgroup.com

Ahmedabad: At 107/2 in 12 overs chasing 168 set by Gujarat Titans, five-time champions Mumbai Indians were looking to kill the chase with balls to spare. But, the Titans, like they have done in their previous two seasons, applied the squeeze by delivering tight overs and eking out a six-run win in their opening match of the 17th edition at the Narendra Modi Stadium, in Ahmedabad.

Left-arm spinner R. Sai Kishore (1/24) trapped a dangerous-looking Rohit Sharma (43 off 29b; 7x4, 1x6) in front in the 13th over. Veteran pacer Mohit Sharma (1/32) had Dwayne Bravo (46 off 38b; 2x4, 3x6) caught off his own bowling while Afghan leg-spinner Rashid Khan threw in two miserly overs to apply the choke on Mumbai Indians, who lost yet another opening match.

Afghan pacer Azmatullah Omarzai had earlier dismissed opener Ishan Kishan (0) and number three batter Naman Dhir (20) to leave Indians at 30/2. Sharma and Bravo stitched together a strokeful 77-run partnership for the third wicket to put the Indians in ascendancy before they lost their way in the middle overs.

Earlier, Mumbai Indians' pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah delivered four masterful overs of T20 bowling to stifle Gujarat in their much-anticipated clash. Bumrah showed what the five-time champions missed in the last edition as the local boy recorded figures of 3/13 to help restrict the Titans to 168/6 in 20 overs.

If not for southpaw Rahul Tewatia's 15-ball 22 (2x4, 1x6), which included an 18-run over off left-arm pacer Luke Wood, Titans were staring at a below-par total.

At the toss, Mumbai captain Hardik Pandya called correctly and elected to bowl first. Opening the proceedings, his first ball was cut to the point boundary by opener Wriddhiman Saha while new captain Shubman Gill

too clipped him neatly off his legs for another boundary in the opening over.

With the ball holding up in the pitch slightly, run scoring was difficult and the introduction of Bumrah in the fifth over saw the pacer clean up Saha for 19 (15b; 4x4) with a yorker.

Though Gill (31 off 22b; 3x4, 1x6) hit left-arm spinner Shams Mulani for a six and four in his first over, he was finding it difficult to up the ante and in a bid to break the shackles, he tried to loft leg spinner Piyush Chawla over the fence, only to be caught by Rohit Sharma.

Gill's middling contribution meant Titans were looking at a less than competitive total. New Afghan recruit Azmatullah Omarzai (17) was undone by the pace of South African Gerald Coetzee while Bumrah outfoxed David Miller (12) with a slower one.

Southpaw Saini Sudarshan, who held one end up with a vital contribution of 45, was also caught by Tilak Varma in the deep off Bumrah's bowling.

It was not until Tewatia, who smacked a six and two boundaries over the third man of the 18th over bowled by Wood, that Titans managed to cross 150. Coetzee (2/27) and Bumrah closed out the innings giving away just 14 runs from the two overs to keep the Titans to 168.

12 MI have lost their opening IPL fixture in twelve successive years – between 2013 and 2024.

3/14

Bumrah has produced his best bowling performance vs GT in the IPL. In his only previous game against them, he had gone wicketless in 2022.



Yogesh Chawda

OLD MATES! Hardik Pandya walks back after his dismissal as GT's Umesh Yadav and Shubman Gill look on

Skipper Samson shows the way as RR win their opener

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Jaipur: Rajasthan Royals tasked Sandeep Sharma with a tough job — to stop the growing partnership of 85 off 51 balls between KL Rahul (58 off 44 balls) and Nicholas Pooran (64 not out off 41 balls) as Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) needed 49 from 24 balls. The seamer did not disappoint and eliminated the threat in the 17th over with Rahul's wicket.

Ravichandran Ashwin followed it up with Marcus Stoinski (3 off 4 balls) scalp before Avesh Khan successfully defended 27 runs in the last over to ensure Royals opened their campaign with a 20 runs victory at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here on Sunday.

Pacers Trent Boult and Nandre Burgert got the Royals' defence off to a perfect start. Bowling in tandem, the duo reduced LSG to 3-11 in 3.1 overs.

Earlier, having elected to bat first, it was Royals skipper Sanju Samson who propped them up with a smartly curated unbeaten 82 off 52 balls, which included 3 fours and 6 sixes, to help set a solid target of 193/4 in 20 overs.

Since 2020, Samson has made it a sort of ritual to score at least a half-century in the opening game of the Royals. And



Sanju Samson in action on Sunday

“The game is built by perception. Sandeep (Sharma) has been an unsung hero. He stepped up for Prasidh (Krishna) last year. He (Sandeep) is a character; it's about the fight they have. A bowler for a fight is way more valuable than a bowler with a skill.” —R Ashwin | RR

82 Sanju Samson's knock is the highest individual score for Rajasthan Royals vs LSG in the IPL. The previous best was 59* off 36 balls by Shimron Hetmyer in Mumbai on April 10, 2022. Stats: Rajesh Kumar

runs with Riyan Parag (43 off 29 balls). It was a tricky rebuilding period after Royals were 49/2 in 5 overs and needed a partnership to flourish. Later, Samson joined hands with Dhruv Jurel (20 not out off 12 balls) in the 17th over as the duo thrashed 43 runs in collaboration.

Royals' plan to give Parag 'a perfect position to bat' this year paid dividends, at least in the first outing. Instead of sending him at the usual sixth or seventh slot, the Assam youngster was made to play at No. 4 and he responded well to the situation.

There was much hype around Royals openers, but they failed to click. Only two overs into the match and Jos Buttler (11 off 9 balls) was dismissed. On the other hand, Yashasvi Jaiswal failed to build his innings after getting off to an impressive-yet-woven 24 off 12 balls.

Sunday afternoon was no different.

In 2020, he logged 74 (32) against Chennai Super Kings, in 2021 it was 119 (63) against Punjab Kings, and in 2022 and 2023 he struck 55 (27) and 55 (32) versus Sunrisers. Throughout his stay, the 29-year-old never looked in a hurry or inclined to go for glory shots. Samson simply played his natural game.

The Royals captain took the crease in the second over. The IPL veteran first built a third-wicket partnership of 93

show in front of their home fans. It would also be fair to say that RCB, compared to last season, have better batting depth. Anuj Rawat's 25-ball 48 in the last game will inspire confidence, while the seasoned Dinesh Karthik is a proven good finisher. Green is another middle-order bat who has it in him to win matches single-handedly. Patidar will be itching to make an impact too.

On paper, a fascinating contest is on the cards between the RCB batters and the all-round Punjab bowling unit. In Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada and Arshdeep Singh, the away team has a potent pace attack. The spin duo of Rahul Chahar and Harpreet Brar provides balance.

Meanwhile, their new acquisition Harshal Patel, who was surprisingly released by RCB ahead of the last auction, brings an intriguing subplot. The death over specialist knows his opposition well and will be keen to prove a point on a ground where he has been successful.

On the other hand, the hosts must up their bowling game plan significantly. Mohammed Siraj's ability to take early wickets holds the key, but death bowling continues to be a pressing concern, where Alzarri Joseph needs to come good.

With such a below-par attack, Punjab batsmen Shikhar Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Jonny Bairstow among others will be eager to dominate.

SCOREBOARD (RR VS LSG)

GT: W Saha b Bumrah 19, S Gill c Rohit b Chawla 31, S Sudharsan c Tilak b Bumrah 45, A Omrza b Tilak b Coetzee 17, D Miller c Hardik b Bumrah 12, V Shankar not out 6, R Tewatia c Dhir b Coetzee 22, R Khan not out 4; **Extras:** (lb4, w7, nb1) 12; **Total:** (6 wkts) 168; **FOW:** 1-31, 2-64, 3-104, 4-133, 5-134, 6-161; **Bowling:** Hardik 3-0-30-0, Wood 2-0-25-0, Bumrah 4-0-14-3, Mulani 3-0-24-0, Chawla 3-0-31-1, Dhir 1-0-13-0, Coetzee 4-0-27-2.

MI: I Kishan c Saha b Omrza 0, R Sharma lbw b S Kishore 43, N Dhir lbw b Omrza 20, D Brevis c&b (Hooda) b Naveen 43, S Hetmyer c Rahul b Bishnoi 5, D Jurel not out 20; **Extras:** (lb1, w6, nb1) 8; **Total (4 wkts) 193;** **FOW:** 1-13, 2-49, 3-142, 4-150; **Bowling:** Mohsin 4-0-45-1, Naveen 4-0-41-2, Krunal 4-0-19-0, Bishnoi 4-0-38-1, Thakur 3-0-43-0, Badoni 1-0-6-0.

LSG: Q de Kock c Burger b Boul 4, KL Rahul c Jurel b Sandeep 58, D Padikkal b Boul 0, A Badoni c Buttler b Burger 1, D Hooda c Jurel b Chahal 26, N Poorn not out 64, M Stoinis c Jurel b Ashwin 3, K Pandya not out 3; **Extras:** (lb5, w9) 14; **Total (6 wkts) 173;** **FOW:** 1-4, 2-10, 3-11, 4-60, 5-145, 6-154; **Bowling:** Boul 4-0-35-2, Burger 3-0-30-1, Ashwin 4-0-35-1, Avesh 3-0-21-0, Chahal 3-0-25-1, Sandeep 3-0-22-1.

'Russell world's best on his day'

Archiman.Bhaduri@timesgroup.com

Kolkata: Andre Russell repaid the faith Kolkata Knight Riders had on him over the years at the Eden Gardens on Saturday. The knights were looking down the barrel against Sunrisers Hyderabad, having lost four wickets inside eight overs, but Russell's power hitting saw them end up at 208 for seven. Opener Phil Salt, who had played alongside Russell in Manchester Originals in The Hundred, was excited watching the West Indian hit seven sixes and three fours in his 25-ball unbeaten 64.

"He's a phenomenal ball striker. The best in the world on his day," Salt said after their four-run win. "So, to see him do what he did, obviously is incredible. Love watching it, but, you know, it's no surprise to me. I don't think it's a surprise to anybody on the ground. When he's on, he's incredible."

Sunrisers Hyderabad must have fancied their chance till Russell appeared with his sledgehammer. "You feel like you've some control, but because of the power and the skill, he (Russell) takes the game away," SRH coach Daniel Vettori said. "At this ground (Eden) in particular and how good the surface is, it's very tricky (to challenge Russell). Obviously, you get some chances when balls go in the air, but his power is second to none," Vettori added.

Ramandeep, Harshit make an impact:

The SRH coach felt it was young Ramandeep Singh who made a huge difference. The 26-year-old scored vital 35 runs off 17 balls but more importantly put together 54 runs with Salt that steadied the KKR innings. "Ramandeep's innings set up the platform for Russell," Vettori said.

"I don't think we underestimated him (Ramandeep), but the shots he played were fantastic and put the pressure back on us," the former New Zealand spinner said. "With Salt well set at the other end, it allowed him to play his game, and there was no pressure for him to take too many risks."

RCB seek home comfort

Play Next 3 Games In Bengaluru, Punjab First Up

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Bengaluru: A good start usually sets the tone for the season, and on that count the Royal Challengers Bengaluru got off the wrong foot. They lost their IPL season opener to Chennai Super Kings on Friday. But Faf du Plessis and his men have a golden opportunity to set things right as they play their next three games on home turf.

First up, they face Punjab Kings at the M Chinnaswamy stadium here on

Monday. The visitors will be high on confidence following their four-wicket win over Delhi Capitals on Saturday. If RCB, who won three of the seven games at the venue last season are to deliver in the 17th edition, they need to make their home advantage count at a venue which is primarily a batting paradise. RCB have the batters to exploit such conditions.

Virat Kohli, who batted for almost

30 minutes at the nets on Sunday, Glenn Maxwell and skipper Faf Du

RCB VS PBKS

65 Last season I kept wickets in a few games, and it gave me confidence. I'm looking forward to contributing more as a wicketkeeper-batter. The communication (from the team management) has been very clear – I have to bat in the middle order. —Anuj Rawat | RCB

Plessis form the fulcrum of the line-up. With Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar in the middle order, the trio, which showcased a rich form last season, can play freely. After falling to 78/5 against CSK, Bengaluru's top five will be determined to put up a good

show in front of their home fans. It would also be fair to say that RCB, compared to last season, have better batting depth. Anuj Rawat's 25-ball 48 in the last game will inspire confidence, while the seasoned Dinesh Karthik is a proven good finisher. Green is another middle-order bat who has it in him to win matches single-handedly. Patidar will be itching to make an impact too.

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Meanwhile, their new acquisition Harshal Patel, who was surprisingly released by RCB ahead of the last auction, brings an intriguing subplot. The death over specialist knows his opposition well and will be keen to prove a point on a ground where he has been successful.

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Twin ambitions for Rasmus

Highest-Ranked Player At Indian Open Aims To Join His Brother On The PGA Tour, And Secure A Fifth European Win

Mousumi.Bora@timesgroup.com

Guess which Hojgaard is coming to town? Identical twins Rasmus and Nicolai have been turning a few heads in Europe for a few seasons now. And while fans have been deceived by the appearances of the 23-year-old Danish golfers, their unique styles give the names away to the more discerning observer.

It will be Rasmus showing his skills at the Hero Indian Open in Gurgaon this week. Last year, it was Nicolai who made the journey. "I have spoken to my brother a little about the course and what to expect, but we don't tend to share 'tips' as we have very different games," the four-time winner on the European Tour shared in an e-mail interaction with TOI. "I've heard great things about the country, culture and the DLF golf course so I'm looking forward to visiting India for the first time," he added.

The success stories of the first brothers to win back-to-back titles on the European Tour have had a certain pattern.

Rasmus, the fastest Dane to a European Tour title at 18 years and 271 days, had been stealing the show but it was his twin who was a captain's pick for the 2023 Ryder Cup team and crossed the Atlantic with the coveted PGA Tour card.

"It was always inevitable our careers would develop at different stages," Rasmus explained, laying down the facts. "Nicolai started off strong with his second place at the KLM Open, then I managed to secure my card at Q-school and win shortly after, then he has had his recent success. We know we will probably never become completely separ-



te 'entities' as we look the same, but we try to look at our careers individually." Rasmus also got a taste of the European Tour vs US showdown as an assistant to Thomas Bjorn, but missed the American dream by a whisker. Swinging fortunes may have split their pathway, but Rasmus is confident that he will be joining his sibling soon on US shores. He understands there will be more ups and downs in golf

• SOUTHGATE UPBEAT DESPITE ENGLAND LOSS • WIRTZ SCORES GERMANY'S FASTEST GOAL

A fresh start

Endrick Makes History As Brazil Beat England In Friendly To Launch New Era

London: Real Madrid-bound Endrick became the youngest men's player to score an international goal at Wembley as Brazil beat England 1-0 in a friendly.

Endrick, who will move from Palmeiras to Madrid at the end of the season when he turns 18, struck nine minutes after coming on as a second half substitute.

"My family is here, my girlfriend, my agents. I am not much of a crier, I am holding myself, but this is something unique and I am very happy," he said.

Based on his second half cameo, Madrid has secured another major talent for the future.

Coming on for Rodrygo in the 71st minute, Endrick wasted little time to make his mark, firing into an empty net after Vinicius Junior was denied by England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford. Endrick could not hide his delight as he raced away in celebration and dropped to his knees — even though he did have to wait for VAR to confirm the goal following a check for offside.

It was his first senior goal for Brazil and, at the age of 17 years, 246 days, record for an international game at Wembley, according to statistician Opta.

He might have scored another, but could not beat Pickford with a late chance.

"All of this affected me a little at the end, the chance I had at the end. I will not lie," Endrick said. "I was just thinking about scoring. I could only think about that. I couldn't think about the match any longer."

Ultimately, his one goal was enough to win the match and end England's 21-game unbeaten streak at the national stadium.

"We know he's a dangerous player. He's managed to follow in for the goal," Three Lions manager Gareth Southgate said. "We should have defended the goal better than we did. It's a brilliant moment for him." AGENCIES



65 On only a few occasions has a Brazil side won in England which must say something about us. But we must not lose sight of the fact that this is just the start of our work."

— Dorival Junior, BRAZIL COACH

17 Endrick became the youngest player to score for Brazil since Ronaldo in 1994. He became the youngest male goalscorer for club or country at Wembley at just 17 years and 246 days.

Defeat a wake-up call for France, says Tchouameni

Lyon: France were completely outclassed by Germany in their 2-0 defeat on Saturday and should treat the loss as a wake-up call ahead of the European Championship, midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni said.

Florian Wirtz scored Germany's fastest international goal after seven seconds before the Euro 2024 hosts doubled their lead early in the second half through Kai Havertz to earn victory in the Lyon friendly. "I think we were outclassed in every department," Tchouameni told French TV network TF1.

"We couldn't put our game plan in place. We came up against a great team. We need to do better, individually and collectively. It's a wake-up call, but there's no need to overreact either. We are aware of and confident in our qualities."

Tony Kroos, coaxed out of international retirement for the upcoming European Championship, wasted no time with a precise pass for Wirtz, who let fly from outside the penalty area to score in off the crossbar after seven seconds. Kroos later confirmed they worked on the move in training.

The German soccer federation said it was the quickest goal ever scored in a national team game. The previous best was nine seconds by Lukas Podolski in a 2013 win over Ecuador.

"It was an important step forward," Kroos said after his first Germany game for nearly three years.

"It was clear to us with regard to the European Championship that we were getting to the last opportunities to build some confidence and we'll take that today." AGENCIES

FERGUSON FLUFFS PENALTY AS IRELAND DRAW WITH BELGIUM

Dublin: Ireland striker Evan Ferguson missed a first-half penalty as interim manager John O'Shea began his tenure with a 0-0 home draw against Belgium in a friendly on Saturday. The home side were awarded a spot-kick, but Ferguson's penalty was poor and Belgian goalkeeper Matz Sels saved it with his feet. Belgium have now gone 11 games undefeated under coach Domenico Tedesco since a disastrous 2022 World Cup campaign in Qatar.

6 SECONDS! BAUMGARTNER SCORES FASTEST GOAL FOR AUSTRIA

Austria's Christoph Baumgartner scored six seconds after kickoff in Saturday's 2-0 friendly win over Slovakia, the fastest recorded goal in international football. The 24-year-old sprinted from the centre circle and skipped past three challenges before firing a low shot from outside the box into the bottom corner. AGENCIES

Rampant Odisha claim maiden title

Sudeshna Ghosh
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Kolkata: It was a thriller of a finale to the seventh season of Indian Women's League (IWL) as Odisha FC clinched their first women's title by beating Kickstart FC 6-0 at Kalinga Stadium

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

in Bhubaneswar on Sunday. Odisha FC's ambition for the Indian top-tier title has been evident in their two years in the league.

From roping in Crispin Chhetri, who had guided Sethu FC to the final in 2022, at the helm to luring in the best performing Indian

This win is massive and Odisha deserves to be in AFC with all the infrastructure they are building," coach Chhetri told TOI from Bhubaneswar after the triumph.

However, with just two points separating them from Gokulam when they took field against Kickstart on the day, they could not afford a final-day

stumble and the Odisha coach knew the task at hand.

"Champions don't need to be asked to do extra work. They do it. They understand that excellence involves doing more than what's required," Chhetri wrote on the dressing room board ahead of the match.

And they responded like true champions by mustering the must-win scenario with ease as Lynda Kom (11', 66' 77') hit a hat-trick. Pyari Xaxa (13', 22') ended her season with eight goals including a final-day brace and Karthika Angamuthu (58') scored a screamer for the new champions.

players in the league — in the likes of Indumathi Kathiresan from defending champions Gokulam Kerala — and providing them with the top-class facilities, Odisha had left no stone unturned in their hurried quest for the women's crown.

Shubhankar finishes tied 7th

Shubhankar Sharma briefly shared the lead on the back nine of the final day, but the Indian dropped two crucial shots and finished tied-seventh at the Porsche Singapore Classic on Sunday. Sharma shot rounds of 68-69-68-71 for a 12-under total and ended five behind the eventual winner, Jesper Svensson, who beat Kiradech Aphibarnrat on the third play-off hole. For Sharma it was his first top-10 of 2024. AGENCIES

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Avani signs off tied 11th at Sage Valley

Augusta: Avani Prashanth, the country's leading amateur, shot a closing even-par 72 to finish a creditable tied 11th in the

GOLF Junior Invitational at the Sage Valley Golf Club near Augusta, USA, on Saturday. The 17-year-old Bengalurean finished with a tally of five-over 221 in a quality field. American Asterisk Talley shot a five-under 67 to for a six-shot victory over Rianne Mikaela Malixi (69) of the Philippines.

Churchill hold Sreenidi

Hyderabad: Sreenidi Deccan Football Club squared a two-goal lead to suffer a setback in their quest for the I-League championship as they were held to a 2-2 draw by Churchill Brothers at the Deccan Arena on Sunday. William Alves scored in the fifth minute while Lalromawia added the second five minutes before the halftime for the Sreenidi Deccan to give them a 2-0 lead. But Churchill Brothers rallied with the help of late goals from Stendly Fernandes and Lamgoulen to take a point from the draw. TNN

Fl: Sainz wins Australian GP after Verstappen retires early



Melbourne: Ferrari's Carlos Sainz surged to victory at the Australian Grand Prix Sunday to snap Red Bull's winning start to the season after three-time world champion Max Verstappen sensationally failed to finish.

The Spaniard, who had appendicitis surgery two weeks ago, took the chequered flag 2.3 seconds ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc, with McLaren's Lando Norris a bold third. It was his third grand prix win and first since Singapore last year. "I'm happy to be in a one-two with Charles here. It shows that hard work pays off," said Sainz, who missed the last race in Saudi Arabia and was bed-ridden for a week after appendicitis surgery.

"Life sometimes is crazy... the podium in Bahrain, then the appendix, the comeback, the win. It's a rollercoaster but I loved it and I'm extremely happy."

While he celebrated, it was a disastrous day for pole-sitter Verstappen, who limped out with smoke billowing from his car after being passed by front-row partner Sainz on lap two.

The Dutchman blamed a brake issue for his first retirement in two years. "What we can see so far from the data is that as soon as the lights went off the right-rear brake just stuck on," he said.

It was also a horror race for Lewis Hamilton in his inconsistent Mercedes, with the British seven-time world champion suffering engine failure on lap 17. To add to Mercedes' woes, teammate George Russell crashed heavily on the last lap with the car ending on its side.

Russell climbed out unscathed, with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso faulted for "potentially dangerous" driving over the incident and slapped with a 20-second penalty.

Lance Stroll elevated to sixth and RB's Yuki Tsunoda to seventh. Haas pair Nico Hulkenberg and Kevin Magnussen rounded out the top 10. AFP

with both a Red Bull 1-2, and was hot favourite to make it three from three.

He had been aiming to match his own record set last year of 10 consecutive wins — one more than Sebastian Vettel in 2013 — and was unbeaten in his last 18 starts from pole position. But while Verstappen was favoured to win, the Ferraris had proved highly competitive in practice and qualifying on the fast and flowing Albert Park track. Despite not being fully fit, Sainz, whose seat at Ferrari is to be taken by Hamilton next year, topped Q1 and Q2 to fire a warning shot.

Oscar Piastri in the other McLaren was fourth ahead of Red Bull's Sergio Perez. Alonso dropped to eighth after his penalty next year, topped Q1 and Q2 to fire a warning shot.

It was a horror race for Lewis Hamilton in his inconsistent Mercedes, with the British seven-time world champion suffering engine failure on lap 17. To add to Mercedes' woes, teammate George Russell crashed heavily on the last lap with the car ending on its side.

With the loss, India's challenge at the \$210,000 tournament has ended. The match marked Srikanth's first semifinal appearance in 16 months. He had last reached the last-four stage at the Hylo Open in November 2022. After taking the opener, Srikanth took an early 4-1 lead in the second game.

However, errors started to creep into the 2021 World Championships silver medallist's game and Srikanth lost the momentum to go down tamely in the next game with Lin, forcing a deci-

der. Srikanth did get his rhythm back in the decider with not much separating the two shuttlers, who fought hard for supremacy.

Arjun-Dhruv, Anupama win titles in Poland

Women's singles shuttler Anupama Upadhyaya and men's doubles duo of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila won the titles at the Orlen Polish Open International Challenge tournament in Warsaw on Sunday.

In the final, unseeded Anupama downed her compatriot eighth seed Tanya Hemanth 21-15, 11-21, 21-10.

Second seeds Arjun-Kapila

downed fourth seeds Christopher Grimley and Matthew Grimley of Scotland 20-22, 21-18, 21-9 in the summit clash. TNN & AGENCIES

Srikanth loses in semifinals



MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila with coach Manu Attri after their victory

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