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APARNA
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Cong names
turncoat Kavya
for Warangal
Lok Sabha seat

A day after BRS leader Kadiyam Kavya joined the Congress along with her father and Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari, the party high command on Monday nominated her as its candidate from Warangal (SC) reserved constituency. With this, the Congress has announced the names of candidates for 14 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. Sources said candidates for three crucial seats of Karimnagar, Hyderabad and Khammam will be announced in a day or two. "If not, the central election committee (CEC) of the party will meet again on April 9 to finalise the names," a source said.

FULL REPORT: P2

No coercive action against Cong till polls: I-T dept to SC

Don't Want To Create Problem, Dept Tells SC

AmitAnand.Choudhary
@timesgroup.com

'HOPE FROM COURT'

► Cong says it got relief after it moved courts against 'tax terrorism'. Says with SC intervention, it can 'now expect a level playing field' for Lok Sabha elections
 ► Tax demand on Congress rose to ₹3,567 crore as of Saturday, more than 2.5 times its cash and assets declared as of March 23
 ► Cong has accused the govt of 'crippling' it ahead of LS elections and 'rigging' polls. I-T denied freezing accounts

New Delhi: Days after issuing notices to Congress raising demand of around Rs 3,500 crore, income tax department on Monday assured Supreme Court it would not take any coercive steps to recover the amount as it did not want to create any problem for the party during elections.

At the outset of the hearing on Congress's appeal against a Delhi high court order, solicitor general Tushar Mehta told a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih that he wanted to make a statement on behalf of I-T department. He said no further action would be taken against the opposition party during

the ongoing general elections. He said the case could be posted for hearing after June 4 when the results of Lok Sabha polls would be declared. He said he would oppose Congress's claim then.

"Since elections are going on, we do not want to create any problem for the party. We will not take action for recovery of the amount and the case could be heard in the second week of June," he told the bench.

The bench was hearing an appeal filed by Congress in 2018 against a 2016 judgment of Delhi HC. In the appeal, the party had moved an interim application seeking stay of the demand notices issued by I-T department in March.

► Continued on P14

IN THE COURTS

► SC seeks affidavit from CBI on slow progress in cases of alleged quid pro quo and laundering against Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, says one's position as CM mustn't hinder progress of criminal trials | P5

► Right to remain silent a fundamental right, probe agency can't seek extension of custody of PFI member due to accused not giving satisfactory replies: Telangana HC | P4

► Allahabad HC fixes April 4 for hearing a plea regarding maintainability of a suit seeking 'removal' of Shah Idgah mosque in Mathura that stands adjacent to Krishna Janmasthan temple | P6

Delhi court sends Kejri to Tihar jail till Apr 15

Will Influence Witnesses If Released: ED

Vineet.Upadhyay
@timesgroup.com

ED: CM REFUSED TO GIVE PASSWORDS

► ED told court that Kejriwal had told them that co-accused Vijay Nair didn't report to him but to Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj. At press meet, AAP says Nair had said same thing 1.5 years ago
 ► Agency says CM did not provide passwords of his digital devices. AAP says ED wants passwords as it wants

rabin Bharadwaj, now AAP ministers.

"We are asking for judicial custody, subject to the right of asking for further custody, as per SC judgment in the Senthil Balaji case," submitted additional solicitor general S VRaju, who appeared for ED. Raju also claimed that the CM had not provided passwords to his

digital devices.

In its application, ED said Kejriwal was highly influential and there was every likelihood that he would influence witnesses and tamper with evidence if released. This could hamper the ongoing investigation, it said.

► Continued on P8

Pinarayi targets Rahul for fighting CPI in Wayanad

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday said it was "inappropriate" for Congress to field sitting MP Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad against CPI's Annie Raja. "What is the justification for contesting against LDF, which is part of the INDIA bloc?" Vijayan said at a presser. He also said Congress played a "key role" in levelling corruption allegations about AAP govt's liquor licence policy in Delhi "that led ED to go after Arvind Kejriwal".

DMK agreed to island handover, but made a show of protest: PM

Need to secure fishing rights: Jaishankar

External affairs minister S Jaishankar said govt would open negotiations with Sri Lanka over implementation of the India Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Act and a subsequent deal based on which Colombo is stopping Indian fishermen from operating in waters near the island.

"We should get fishing rights. We need to sit with Sri

Lankan authorities and sort it out. Katchatheevu island was given away in 1974 and fishing rights were given away in 1976," he said. The basic reason for losing the island, the minister said, was indifference shown by central govt and prime ministers of the day and connivance of DMK govt with Congress regime of the time. P7

False narrative to divert from China: Cong

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said PM Modi was spinning a "false narrative" on Katchatheevu to divert focus from his silence in the face of Chinese provocations, and occupation of 2,000 sq km of Indian territory.

The party also released RTI information of 2015, in which foreign ministry, under then foreign secy S Jaishankar, said there was no question of ceding the island as the area was not demarcated and under the agreement signed later, it lay on the Lankan side. "Is Jaishankar disowning the reply?" Jairam Ramesh asked. Congress's P Chidambaram said the EAM had somersaulted from a "liberal foreign service officer" to "a spokesman of BJP-RSS". P7

MLC poll counting deferred to June 2

U.Sudhakarreddy
@timesgroup.com

ut, with approximately 99.86% of eligible voters casting their ballots. Out of 1,439 voters, only two did not vote.

The candidates in the fray include Naveen Kumar Reddy of BRS, M Jeevan Reddy of Congress and Sudershan Goel, an independent. The polling was conducted across 10 polling stations in Mahabubnagar and some areas of Ranga-reddy and Vikarabad districts.

The BRS currently enjoys a significant majority in the local bodies, with 71% of the public representatives in its ranks. The Congress holds a mere 16.67% voter share and BJP has 8.23%.

The by-election was necessitated following the resignation of Kasireddy Narayan Reddy, who quit his MLC post.

78-yr-old falls into water board trench, dies

A 78-year-old man died after falling into a trench dug up by the water board for laying sewer lines at Aditya Nagar in Tolichowki. Though he was pulled out alive from the trench with the help of an earth mover, he succumbed to injuries in the early hours of Monday. On Sunday evening, Ghulam Mohammad, a resident of Gulshan Colony, Shaikhpeta, came out of a local mosque after performing namaz.

The elderly man, who was riding a scooter, tried to check the ongoing sewer works at Aditya Nagar. However, during the process, he lost balance and fell into the nearly five-metre deep trench, dug up portion of the road. P4

Make economy 'atmanirbhar', take Re global, PM tells RBI

Mumbai: PM Modi on Friday said RBI should take steps to ensure fast, inclusive & sustainable (atmanirbhar) progress even while insulating the economy from problems faced by other nations, & internationalise the rupee.

Speaking at an event to mark RBI's 90th anniversary, the PM asked the central bank to assess the credit needs of emerging sectors and take proactive steps to prepare banks.

"RBI will have to think out of the box, and governor Shaktikanta Das is an expert in that. Particularly, in emerging sectors," he said. The PM said RBI, with its success in managing inflation and growth despite the pandemic and two wars, can be a role model for other central banks. P11

SC declines to stop puja of deities in Gyanvapi cellar

Dhananjay.Mahapatra
@timesgroup.com

Bhojshala survey will continue: SC

S on Monday allowed ASI to carry on with a survey of Bhojshala temple-Kamal Maula mosque complex in MP's Dhar but directed that no action would be taken on the basis of the survey report without its nod. It also directed ASI not to carry out any excavation. P6

After a one-and-a-half-hour long hearing on the plea of Gyanvapi mosque management committee, a bench of CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said since carrying out puja and other rituals by Hindus in the cellar did not interfere with the offering of namaz by Muslims. To Anjuman Intezamia Masjid management committee's objection to the puja, SC said allowing puja had not resulted in obstructions for namaz.

► Continued on P14

Probe needs & privacy rights must be balanced: CJ

Dhananjay Mahapatra & Rajshekhar Jha | TNN

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Monday disapproved of "unwarranted" confiscation of personal devices during raids by law-enforcing and investigating agencies, saying the need for searches and seizures for investigation had to be balanced with an individual's right to privacy, reported Dhananjay Mahapatra & Rajshekhar Jha.

Instances of raids conducted and incidents of unwarranted confiscation of personal devices highlight pressing need to strike a balance between investigative imperatives and privacy rights... the delicate balance... stands at the cornerstone of a fair and just society — CJ D Y Chandrachud

The CJ also praised the newly enacted Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam for built-in safeguards against misuse. Chandrachud was delivering the 20th DP Kohli Memorial lecture, an annual event organised by CBI in memory of its first director.

The topic this year was 'Adopting Technology to Advance Criminal Justice'.

"In the realm of criminal justice, the delicate balance between search and seizure powers and individual privacy rights stands at the cornerstone of a fair and just society," Chandrachud said.

"At the heart of this balance lies the need to uphold due process while ensuring the effective functioning of law-enforcement agencies."

► Continued on P14

Police: SIB ex-chief handpicked cops to help BRS in '23 elections

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



Hyderabad: The Panjabgutta police, probing the illegal phone tapping case, in their remand report said Special Intelligence Bureau former chief T Prabhakar Rao had handpicked cops belonging to a particular community and also banked upon his trusted officers to ensure BRS party's third straight win in the Nov 2023 assembly elections.

Police also accused Task Force former DCP Radha Kishan of facilitating movement of cash belonging to an MLC, whose family owns an infrastructure company, in the 2023 elections. Radha Kishan was arrested last week in connection with the alleged

conspiracy to illegally tap phones of opposition leaders.

In the report, police also said two sub-inspectors of Task Force were made to sit in the vehicle belonging to the MLC to make sure it was not checked until it reached a hospital in Secunderabad. "Apart from this, on seven different occasions, Radha Kishan had allegedly facilitated movement of cash for the BRS," the report said.

In the remand report, po-

lice mentioned how Prabhakar Rao was appointed by former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao on the basis of his caste.

The officer, in turn, deployed officers of a particular community -- former DSP D Praaneeth Rao, retired DSP Venugopal Rao, non-cadre SP Radha Kishan, additional SP N Bhujanga Rao -- besides his trusted men like additional SP M Thirupathantha in key posts for surveillance on opposition leaders, it alleged.

The report also cited examples of elections since 2018, when persons linked to the opposition leaders were targeted and cash seized based on the intelligence inputs by Praaneeth Rao.

► Continued on P5

GST Mar tally 2nd highest at ₹1.8Lcr, ₹20Lcr+ for year

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Goods and services tax collections rose 11.5% to Rs 1,78,484 crore in March, the second highest monthly mumpup, pushing up 2023-24 collections past the Rs 20 lakh crore mark for the first time. "FY2023-24 marks a milestone with a gross GST collection of Rs 20.2 lakh crore, an 11.7% increase compared to the previous year. The average price per kg was Rs 6,500, up from Rs 5,800 in the previous year.

On Instagram, these deals were being negotiated in the comments section of the two teams' fan pages. The average price per kg was Rs 6,500, up from Rs 5,800 in the previous year.

For instance, a west ground ticket that would officially cost a spectator Rs 4,283 was up to Rs 4,500 for the previous year.

When this TOI correspondent, posing as a customer, rea-

ECO WATCH

► Passenger vehicle sales at record high in FY24 as dispatches cross 42L

► Indian Railways records highest ever freight loading of 1,591 MT in 2023-24

► UPI transaction value hits close to ₹20Lcr in Mar

P11

In March, overall collections during the month were driven by domestic demand as central and state GST collections grew 16.9% and 17.2%, respectively.

► Related report P11

Pre-merger woes force Vistara to cancel 50 flights

ROUGH WEATHER

► Many Vistara pilots have been reporting sick in recent months. Crew unavailability, among other reasons, has led to poor punctuality and high cancellations

► Airline to deploy wide-body Dreamliners and Airbus A321s to clear backlog

► Deluge of flyer complaints

ers and Airbus A321s on domestic routes in a bid to clear the backlog of affected passengers.

► Continued on P6

Black marketeers use X, Insta to cash in on frenzy around SRH-CSK clash in city

Donita.Jose@timesgroup.com

Watch out! Fraudsters selling fake tickets for SRH-CSK match in Hyd

T he Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has issued an advisory to fans, urging them to guard against fake IPL tickets being sold for the match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings, being played at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium on April 5. There are reports of fake IPL tickets for the SRH vs CSK match @HYDERABAD (HCA) circulating on social media. If you come across any suspicious individuals selling tickets, please inform us," posted HCA president A Jagan Mohan Rao on X.

social media platforms with posts asking prospective buyers to DM them for tickets. Of course, the offer came with exorbitant price tags

DANCE of DEMOCRACY



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ASKED BY MP

• Whether the govt has received any proposal from Telangana for the establishment of a Horticulture University? Whether portion of sanctioned funds are yet to be released by the Union govt to Telangana for the project? (Aug 1, 2023)

• Whether the govt proposes to establish Tribal Universities in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh? Whether the govt has received any proposal from Telangana govt? (Sept 31, 2023)



HOW TELANGANA MPs FARED

Bheemrao B Patil

DEBATES 68

Zahirabad

QUESTIONS 269

Zahirabad

ATTENDANCE

80%

70% National average

79% State average



• Whether it is true that restaurants, hotels, shops and establishments can't levy service charge in addition to GST on a customer? The grievance redressal mechanism available for a customer to report the violation. Whether the govt helpline for consumers has received complaints; if so, the number of such complaints received? (Sept 27, 2022)

—Compiled by Kaushik Gunuguntla

2 BATTLEGROUND TELANGANA

FOLLOW DANCE OF DEMOCRACY ON TWITTER @TIMESOFINDIA

THE TIMES OF INDIA | HYDERABAD, TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024

POLL PLAYERS ON GROUND, GAME ON IN T

Congress Nominates Kavya, Yet To Name 3 Others

Roushan.Ali@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: A day after BRS leader Kadiyam Kavya joined the Congress along with her father and Station Ghapur MLA Kadiyam Srihari, the party high command on Monday nominated Kavya as its candidate from Warangal (SC) reserved constituency.

With this, the Congress has announced the names of candidates for 14 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. Sources said candidates for three crucial seats of Karimnagar, Hyderabad and Khammam will be announced in a day or two.

"If not, the central election committee (CEC) of the party will meet again on April 9 to finalise the names," a source said.

The leadership is believed to be waiting for a former minister to join the Congress.

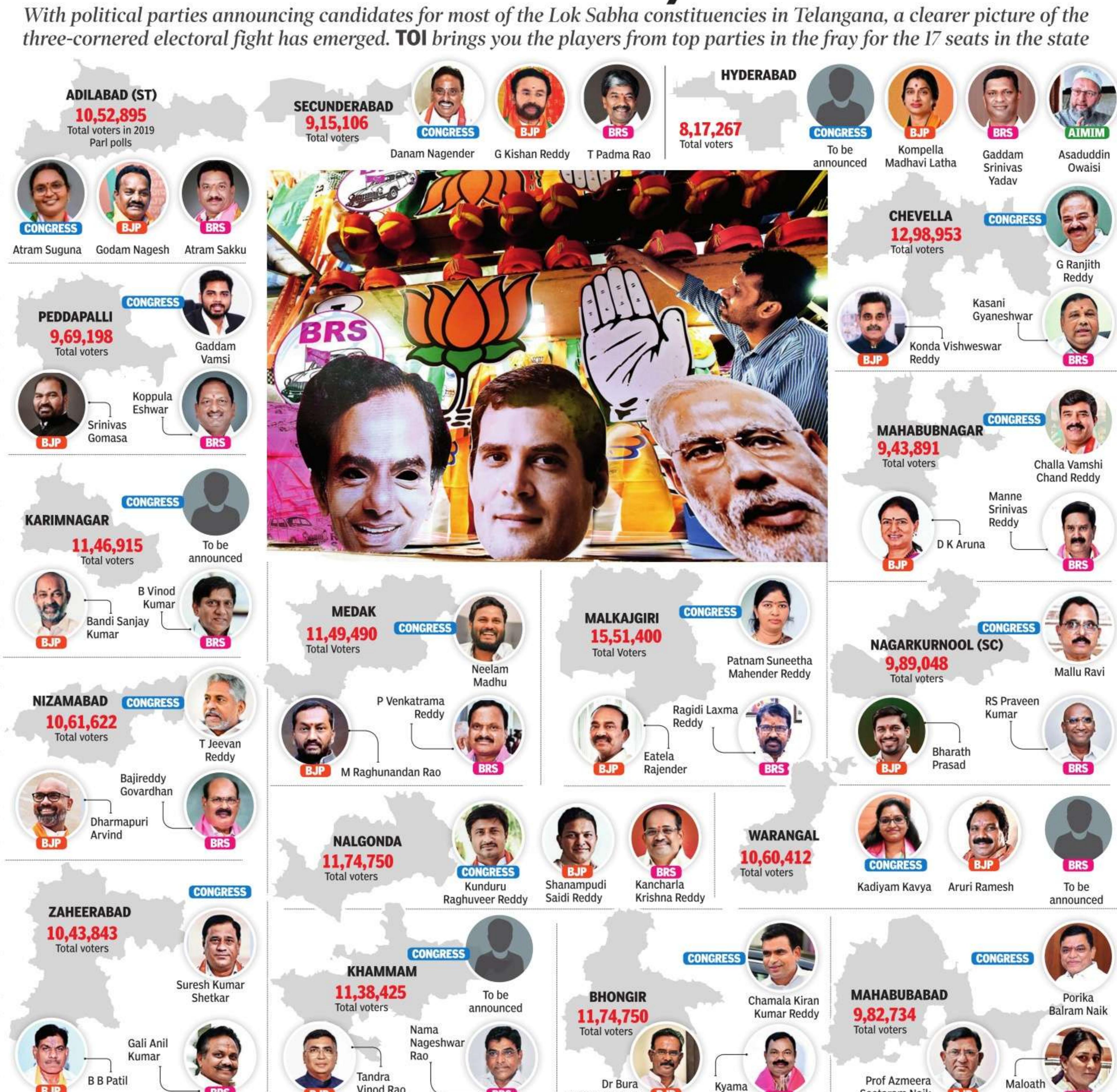
"If it happens, the Karimnagar ticket will be given to the ex-minister," sources said. Teenmar Mallanna, among others, however, continues to be a frontrunner for the ticket.

Kavya was nominated by BRS from Warangal but she surprised the party by withdrawing her candidature and later quit the party also. Srihari said he did not want his daughter, contesting her first election, to enter electoral fray from a losing party like BRS.

However, Kavya's nomination is likely to upset Madiga community leaders within the Congress, who were expecting the ticket for one of its leaders. "Though Kavya is an SC, she is not a Madiga," said a senior Madiga leader.

A senior AICC leader said the state leadership will do justice to Madigas by either accommodating one of the leaders in the state cabinet when the expansion will be taken up to fill up six vacant berths. There is also possibility of a prominent Madiga leader being given the post of an advisor to the CM or govt with a cabinet rank, a source said.

"Finalising the candidate for Khammam seat has become a challenge for the high command as there is huge pressure from various quarters with family members of three ministers being in race for the ticket. R Raghurami Reddy, grandson of party ex-MP R Surender Reddy, and Ponguleti Prasad Reddy, brother of revenue minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, are among the frontrunners. Raghurami Reddy is a close relative of the minister also," a source said.



Cong chalks out poll plan for state & AP

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Top Congress leaders on Monday discussed the names of Lok Sabha candidates for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Sonia Gandhi along with senior party leaders from the respective states were present during the central election committee meeting at the AICC headquarters.

Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy and APCC chief YS Sharmila were present during the separate meetings, besides AICC general secretary K C Venugopal.

After the CEC meeting was over by Sunday afternoon, chief minister A Revanth Reddy and deputy chief minister Bhatti Vikramarka went to the residence of AICC general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal in the evening and discussed about the finalisation of candidates. They also discussed on the strategy to be adopted for the ensuing elections in Telangana and arrangements being made for the public meeting at Tukkuguda where Rahul Gandhi will release the Congress election national manifesto and address the gathering.

Where's star power? Telugu actors missing in action in LS poll arena

T'GANA STARS SHY AWAY FROM POLL LIMELIGHT

STAR POWER ABSENT

• Except for comedian Babu Mohan, no major film actors are trying to get ticket in Lok Sabha polls

• Film producer Bandla Ganesh & actress Vijayashanti considering political roles but faced challenges

• Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan emerges as prominent face, focusing only on rallies in Andhra Pradesh

ra Pradash for his candidates as well as alliance partners, TDP and BJP. Currently, some of the actors and actresses who starred in Telugu films have managed to get BJP tickets from other states.

Two popular actresses from the Telugu film industry are actively in the electoral race but not from Telangana. Radhika Sarathkumar is contesting from Virudhunagar constituency in Tamil Nadu on a BJP ticket, while Sumalatha is contemplating contesting as an independent

from Karnataka's Mandya seat again. She had won the seat as an independent in the 2019 elections. She wanted to enter the fray as a BJP nominee but JD(S) was allotted the ticket by the BJP in the alliance.

Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, who acted in one Telugu film with actor Prabhas, is contesting from Mandi in her native state of Himachal Pradesh. Bhojpuri actor Ravi Kishan, who has acted in several Telugu films, is the BJP candidate from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.

ACTORS IN OTHER STATE POLLS



Sumalatha | Independent, K'taka
Radhika Sarathkumar | BJP, Tamil Nadu

ACTORS NOT IN LS POLL RACE



Vijayashanti
Babu Mohan

Cong LS in-charges' meeting to discuss strategy for election

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Newly-appointed in-charge ministers and key Congress leaders for 17 parliamentary constituencies in Telangana will meet on Tuesday to discuss the strategy for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections and crowd mobilisation for public meet.

The high command had appointed chief minister A Revanth Reddy as in-charge of Chevella and Mahabubnagar constituencies in Dec 2023 and deputy chief minister Bhatti Vikramarka as in-charge of Secunderabad and Hyderabad seats. In the revised list of in-charges for 17 constituencies announced on Sunday, the names of Revanth Reddy and Bhatti Vikramarka were excluded.

Instead, AICC secretary SA Sampath Kumar was made in-charge of Mahabubnagar and CM's close aide and advisor Vem Narendar Reddy was given the responsibility of Chevella.

Secunderabad was given to minister Komatireddy Venkata Reddy and Hyderabad to Obaidullah Kothwala.

TIMES CITIZEN MY SPACE

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

Send in your views and suggestions to us at:

toi.timesconnect@gmail.com

or scan the QR code.

Last date for entries: April 2



Seat Seen As Launchpad For Kicking Off Election Campaigns In T 'Chevella sentiment' on mind, all eyes on seat in run-up to LS battle

Koride.Mahesh
@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: With a booming real estate business and a thriving IT corridor, Chevella Lok Sabha constituency has emerged as the new battleground for political parties in the upcoming elections. After Congress organised a public meeting in Chevella last month, the BRS is likely to hold a public rally in Chevella on April 13.

For that matter, Chevella has always been seen as a 'sentiment constituency' for organising public meetings. It is touted as a launchpad for kicking off election campaigns, especially for Congress. Former chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy even invoked 'Chevella chellamma' sentiment while launching his padayatra and successful poll campaign in 2004 from the segment where former minister P Sabitha Indra Reddy hails from.

She was considered YSR's

THE FIGHT AHEAD

PREVIOUS WINNERS
2019 | G Ranjith Reddy (Incumbent)
2014 | Konda Vishweshwar Reddy

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Congress organised public meeting in Chevella last month
- BRS likely to hold public rally in Chevella on April 13
- BJP plans public meet in Vikarabad or Chevella. Likely to be addressed by PM, say sources

SEAT'S SIGNIFICANCE

- Chevella has been seen as launchpad for kicking off election campaigns
- YS Rajasekhara Reddy launched his successful poll campaign in 2004 from segment
- Last year, BJP convened meetings in Chevella twice ahead of assembly election

File photo of YS Rajasekhara Reddy's 2004 poll campaign launch from Chevella

lucky mascot.

Sitting MP G Ranjith Reddy, who quit the BRS and joined the Congress, was immediately rewarded by the grand old party which fielded him from Chevella for the May 13 polls. The BRS fielded

Kasani Gnaneshwar, while the BJP nominated ex-MP Konda Vishweshwar Reddy from the constituency.

The BRS had planned to hold a public meeting either in LB Stadium or other places in the city, but changed its

mind and decided to hold the rally in Chevella now.

BRS president and former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao kicked off his campaigning last months by holding a public meeting in Karimnagar and this will be

Failure to repair Medigadda damaged lakhs of acres: KTR

Koride.Mahesh
@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: Demanding immediate relief for distressed farmers, BRS working president KT Rama Rao has said the drought in the state was brought by Congress and was the result of mishandling of the agricultural sector.

He said farmer issues were not a priority for the Congress govt. He accused CM Revanth Reddy and his cabinet colleagues of lacking sincerity as they did not visit farmers nor gave any assurance. KTR alleged that as many as 200 farmers had died by suicide due to mismanagement of the agriculture sector by the Congress govt.

The Congress leaders are attributing drought-like situation in the state to nature, but these conditions were brought by Congress govt," KTR said at Mushampally village in Nalgonda. He met and interacted with farmers Ganjeboina Malliah Yadav and Borla Ram Reddy, who sunk six borewells in a month, at their village along

with former minister G Jagadish Reddy on Monday. He gave ₹1 lakh to Malliah Yadav with one lakh rupees, who lost his eight acres of crop due to lack of water and power supply.

KTR said to cover up their failures, the Congress govt was trying to portray KCR as a failed leader by labelling the Kaleshwaram irrigation project's mega motors, started lifting water from the Gayatri pump house and releasing it to farmers in Karimnagar. Similar efforts should have been made earlier, he added.

KTR demanded assistance of ₹25,000 per acre for farmers who had lost their crops due to lack of power and irrigation water supply.

Excise case: Bail plea of Kavitha moved to April 4

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: The Rouse Avenue Court has postponed the hearing into BRS MLC K Kavitha's interim bail plea to April 4. This decision followed a request by Kavitha's lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi, seeking time to file a response to the Enforcement Directorate's rejoinder.

The court has allowed the filing of the reply by April 3 and scheduled the next hearing for 2.30 pm on April 4. Kavitha has sought interim bail to accompany her sons during their examinations until April 6.

Kavitha was sent to judicial custody until April 9 by CBI special judge Kaveri Badweja in the alleged Delhi liquor scam case. The Supreme Court had previously dismissed her bail plea on March 22.

The ED arrested Kavitha on March 15 after a search at her Hyderabad residence. The ED accused her involvement in a money laundering scheme linked to the Delhi excise policy 2021-22.

During the investigation, the ED confronted Kavitha with statements from other accused and also examining her mobile phone data for tampering of evidence, if any. Kavitha, however, denied knowledge of her nephew's business dealings when questioned by ED sleuths.

Kavitha claimed innocence and dubbed the case 'politically motivated' and said it was an 'illegal case.'

The ED accused her of using Indospirit company for kickback recoupment and implicated her in the transfer of ₹100 crore to AAP leaders. Kavitha and the 'South Group' members were alleged to have conspired with AAP leaders, providing kickbacks in exchange for favours in the excise policy.

Cong govt uses Kaleshwaram pump to save crops in state

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Facing drought-like conditions in various regions due to dwindling groundwater levels, the Congress govt has sprung into action, lifting water from the Laxmipuri (Gayatri) pump house from Sunday evening.

Utilising the Yellampally reservoir as a water source, water was transported to Nandimendaram via a gravity canal and subsequently lifted by Bahubali motors at the Gayatri pump house. The water was then released

into the flood flow canal to address the pressing needs of farmers in the region, catering to both irrigation and drinking water requirements.

Despite the absence of water reserves in the Sundilla, Annaram, and Medigad-

da barrages under the Kaleshwaram project, Yellampally reservoir offered a viable solution. Farmers and BRS leaders had been demanding the Congress govt release the water to safeguard their crops, particularly through the flood flow canal of SRSP.

Responding to govt directives, irrigation officials commenced water extraction from the Gayatri pump house. "Recent actions underscore the significance of the KLIS," BRS leaders said

into the flood flow canal to address the pressing needs of farmers in the region, catering to both irrigation and drinking water requirements.

Despite the absence of water reserves in the Sundilla, Annaram, and Medigad-

'Rythu Bandhu only to those who cultivate'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Agriculture minister Tummala Nageswara Rao on Monday said the govt will give Rythu Bandhu only to those who cultivate. He said modalities will be discussed in the state assembly.

Speaking to newsmen in Khammam, he said it has come to the notice of the govt that some real estate ventures and big land owners have also received Rythu Bandhu despite their land not being un-

der cultivation. The minister said that Rythu Bandhu amount was given to 64 lakh farmers and Rs 5,574 crore was distributed.

"We have distributed the money to all the farmers who own less than five acres. They constitute 95% of the beneficiaries. We will give benefits to rest of the farmers also," the minister said.

Assuring that a decision on loan waiver will be taken soon, he said the govt is holding talks with the bankers to fix the guidelines. "We will come out with a decision on this soon. Farmers should not worry," he said.

Utilising the Yellampally reservoir as a water source, water was transported to Nandimendaram via a gravity canal and subsequently lifted by Bahubali motors at the Gayatri pump house. The water was then released

into the flood flow canal to address the pressing needs of farmers in the region, catering to both irrigation and drinking water requirements.

Despite the absence of water reserves in the Sundilla, Annaram, and Medigad-

₹37L cash seized from TN trader

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Government Railway Police (GRP) confiscated ₹37.50 lakh in unaccounted cash from a Tamil Nadu-based trader at the Secunderabad railway station on Monday.

During routine checks at the station, GRP teams along with Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel noticed a person, 45-year-old P Laxman Ram from Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, carrying a bag on platform.

On thorough inspection of the bag, they discovered ₹37.50 lakh cash. As Laxman Ram failed to produce any documents related to the cash, the authorities seized it over to the income tax department for further investigation, according to additional director-general (Railways) Mahesh Bhagat.

Patil reaches out to quell dissent within BJP ranks

Sribala.Vadlapati
@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: In his first friendly outreach to party leaders amidst talk of divisions with the rank, Telangana BJP's Lok Sabha poll campaign in-charge Abhay Kumar Patil sought to bring all of them on the same page to help the party increase its LS tally.

Patil especially urged all contestants/winners of recent assembly polls to go the extra mile to work for the victory of party's LS candidate from their area.

Earlier, leaders had also been reprimanded by party affairs in-charge Sunil Bansal about Telengana being at the bottom in outreach with beneficiaries.

BJP has given a target of five meetings each in polling centres across the state on April 5 as part of 'tiffin bhaitaks'. Women, youth, farmers, intellectuals and locally influential people are to be part of these meetings.

On Sunday, Patil also spo-

AIM TO INCREASE LS TALLY

- Abhay Kumar Patil asks contestants, winners of recent polls to go extra mile
- Urges them to work for victory of party's LS candidate from their area
- On Sunday, Patil spoke to Goshamahal MLA T Raja Singh
- Asked him to cooperate in campaign for Hyderabad LS seat

tion between leaders to get more Lok Sabha seats this time," a source said.

Earlier, leaders had also been reprimanded by party affairs in-charge Sunil Bansal about Telengana being at the bottom in outreach with beneficiaries.

"Since long party leaders have been worried about the poor outreach with beneficiaries. Several targets were set for leaders to meet the beneficiary families but they were not met. He also emphasised on the need for interac-

tion between leaders to get more Lok Sabha seats this time," a source said.

Earlier, leaders had also been reprimanded by party affairs in-charge Sunil Bansal about Telengana being at the bottom in outreach with beneficiaries.

BJP has given a target of five meetings each in polling centres across the state on April 5 as part of 'tiffin bhaitaks'. Women, youth, farmers, intellectuals and locally influential people are to be part of these meetings.

On Sunday, Patil also spo-

2023 assembly polls: Tall leaders, but poll expenditure still 'humble'

KCR Spent Least In Kamareddy, KV Ramana Highest

Srinath.Vudali@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: With a high profile face-off between BRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao and TPCC chief A Revanth Reddy, the Kamareddy assembly constituency was in the spotlight during the 2023 assembly elections and in the end it was BJR's Venkata Ramana Reddy who won. But, the election expenditure statements submitted by these candidates show that KCR had spent least with just ₹12.8 lakh followed by Revanth with ₹13.5 lakh and it was Ramana Reddy who, with ₹27.8 lakh, spent the highest among the three.

Though the 2023 assembly election was considered to be a high-stakes one with money allegedly playing its role, the official declaration of expen-

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'Big heads' will soon roll in phone tapping case: Uttam

Roushan.Ali@timesgroup.com



'Dip in water at key reservoirs'

Hyderabad: Irrigation and civil supplies minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday said that 'big heads' might face legal consequences in the ongoing phone tapping investigation. He highlighted the focus on determining who authorised the tapping of politicians' phones, emphasising the gravity of the offence.

"Phone tapping is a grave offence, and even my phone was tapped. Inquiry is in progress in alleged Kaleshwaram scam too and who are involved will come out in the report. BRS MLC K Kavitha is already in jail in Delhi liquor scam case," minister Uttam said, during an informal exchange with the media.

During the investigation, the ED confronted Kavitha with statements from other accused and also examining her mobile phone data for tampering of evidence, if any. Kavitha, however, denied knowledge of her nephew's business dealings when questioned by ED sleuths.

Kavitha claimed innocence and dubbed the case 'politically motivated' and said it was an 'illegal case.'

The ED accused her of using Indospirit company for kickback recoupment and implicated her in the transfer of ₹100 crore to AAP leaders. Kavitha and the 'South Group' members were alleged to have conspired with AAP leaders, providing kickbacks in exchange for favours in the excise policy.

'BRS will soon vanish from state'

Hyderabad: Telangana BJP chief G Kishan Reddy on Monday hit out at BRS, predicting that BRS will soon vanish from the state. He said there was no need to focus on a party which remained in power to loot the state and indulged in scams.

"Even though KCR lost the election, he is under the assumption that he is still the chief minister. BRS thought that it could influence the assembly election with money but people have voted against it," he said. "Telangana is suffering because of the misdeeds of KCR and his son KT Rama Rao," he said. He also came down heavily on Congress govt, accusing it of ignoring its poll promises. "On April 5, BJR will organise 'rythu satyagraha' in all district headquarters," he said. TNN

Resign from seat won on BRS ticket: Harish to Kadiyam

Hyderabad: Former finance minister T Harish Rao on Monday hit out at State Ghanpur MLA Srihari who joined Congress

along with his daughter on Sunday – and told him to resign from his MLA seat as he had won it on a BRS ticket.

Harish Rao said Srihari owed an answer to the people as he earlier declared he would never defect. He called upon BRS workers to teach a lesson to Srihari and his daughter Kadiyam Kavya in the LS elections for betraying the party.

Speaking at the Warangal BRS party workers meeting on Monday, the ex-minister said the BRS govt had taken

up several projects in Warangal such as medical colleges, super-specialty hospital and mega textile park. He urged people to take Congress govt to task for not fulfilling their promises despite completing over three months in office.

"Under Congress govt, 200 farmers and 38 auto drivers ended their lives. CM Revanth Reddy did not have time to console them," the ex-minister claimed. He also flagged the Congress govt's move to remove Kakatiya Thoranam from state emblem. Taking potshots at BJR, Rao said the norm was there would be 'jodi' (friendship) if you are with the BJP, but would face ED if you are not with them. He also dismissed allegation of BRS-BJP partnership and said that if that was the case then MLC Kavitha would not have been arrested.

DECLARATIONS MADE

Costliest public meeting	EXPENSES OF KEY LEADERS
₹7L	KT Rama Rao ₹33.6L
Costliest public meeting by Nalgonda MLA Komatredy Venkat Reddy when he invited Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge	T Raja Singh ₹25.5L
Eatala Rajender ₹22.2L	Eatala Rajender ₹22.2L
Bandi Sanjay ₹21.1L	Bandi Sanjay ₹21.1L
M Gopinath ₹19.3L	M Gopinath ₹19.3L
Akbaruddin Owaisi ₹14.3L	Akbaruddin Owaisi ₹14.3L

diture by candidates tells a different tale. Candidates across parties, including tall leaders, have submitted humble numbers and declared that they in fact saved money, even though the Election Commission of India permitted each candidate to spend up to ₹40 lakh.

Among all star campaigners who toured the state, PM Narendra Modi's campaign in Gajwel, where he campaigned

campaign. Secunderabad MLA Padma Rao and Jubilee Hills MLA M Gopinath declared that KTR's tour in their constituencies cost them ₹4 lakh and ₹2.1 lakh. BJR's Gopal Reddy and M Gopinath declared that UP CM Yogi Adityanath's campaign for him led to expenditure of ₹2.

Watch out! Fraudsters selling fake tickets for CSK-SRH clash

Fans Concerned Over IPL Ticket Hoarders In City

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) has issued an advisory to fans, urging them to guard against fake IPL tickets being sold for the match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Chennai Super Kings, being played at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium on April 5.

"Beware! Don't fall for it! There are reports of fake IPL tickets for the SRH vs CSK match @HYDERABAD (HCA) circulating on social media. If you come across any suspicious individuals selling tickets, please inform us immediately or lodge a police complaint," posted HCA president A Jagan Mohan Rao on X.

"I have information that four people were held by Uppal police for reselling tickets during the Mumbai Indians match. We're monitoring social media posts for the SRH-CSK match because the demand for tickets is just crazy," Rao told TOI on Monday. HCA has no control over ticket sales as each IPL franchise has its own online partner, which in SRH's case is Paytm Insider. But such has been the demand for this match that tickets were sold out within 20 minutes after they went on sale last week.



COPS STEP UP SURVEILLANCE

- Cops said "IPL tickets" are being sold by some people on social media
- There are reports of fake IPL tickets for the SRH vs CSK match
- Cyber fraudsters are using this opportunity to exploit people, said cops
- Rachakonda cops cautioned cricket lovers of cyber fraudsters
- Fraudsters posing as persons authorised to sell tickets online, they said

POLICE ADVISORY

- Don't click on unknown links & don't pay through QR codes
- To report cybercrime, call 1930 or visit cybercrime.gov.in

With match day nearing, fans are concerned over many tickets being cornered by hoarders. Social media is flooded with posts of tickets of various denominations being offered. The price for this match varies from Rs 750 to Rs 30,000.

IPL format mandates 14 matches for each of the 10 teams divided into two groups.

It is Sunrisers' turn to host the match this season. Wanting to see Dhoni in action one last time could be a reason for the mad rush for tickets. Another reason could

be because the tickets are dynamically priced. More the demand, the more expensive the ticket. Match tickets for the game between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Punjab Kings were priced at a low of Rs 5200 and a high of Rs 55,000. Similarly, SRH have their most expensive tickets at Rs 30,000 — the second costliest in the league — in the matches against CSK and RCB on April 25, when the rush will be on to see Virat Kohli in action.

In keeping with the format SRH and CSK can play only one match. CSK hosted the match last season, when fans thronged every venue where CSK played to be part of MS Dhoni's supposedly last game in their city.

It is Sunrisers' turn to host the match this season.

Aurobindo Pharma commissions Pen-G facility, three other plants

Swati.Bharadwaj
@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: Aurobindo Pharma on Monday said it has commissioned four manufacturing facilities, including its Penicillin-G plant under the Centre's production linked incentive scheme for the promotion of domestic manufacturing of critical key starting materials, drug intermediates and active phar-

maceutical ingredients. These four facilities have been commissioned through the company's wholly-owned subsidiaries, Hyderabad-based Aurobindo Pharma said on Monday. Aurobindo said it has commissioned a 15,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA) Pen-G plant along with a 1.8 lakh MTPA glucose plant, for use as feedstock for Pen-G produc-

tion, under Lyfius Pharma at Kakinada SEZ area in Andhra Pradesh. It has also commissioned a 3,600 MTPA plant for manufacturing Pen-G forward derivative 6-Amino Penicillanic Acid (6-APA), which will be used for manufacturing Amoxicillin bulk, at Kakinada SEZ.

Sources said full-fledged production at the Pen-G and derivatives facility will begin from this month.

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tender & notices

TENDERS

E AUCTION NOTICE

FIRE AFFECTED APPROX. 4519 MT OF VARIOUS TYPES OF METAL SCRAP, ETC.

Interested Buyers are invited to participate in the e-Auction for the disposal of "Fire Affected Approx. 4,500 MT of Mild Steel, approx. 10 MT of Stainless Steel, approx. 3 MT of Copper & approx. 6 MT of Aluminium".

The subject salvage will be sold on "As is Where is", Whatever there is" and "No Complaint" Basis and belongs to Ms. Unicharm India (P) Ltd.

The subject materials can be inspected at Plot Nos. 1041-1045, 1053, 1054, Industrial Estate - GIDC, Sanand-II, Virochan Nagar, Gujarat - 382170 on working days only between 02 - 04 - 24 to 15 - 04 - 24 between 10 AM to 5 PM. Kindly contact Mr. Rohit Srivastava at 8588857899 for inspection.

E-AUCTION WILL BE HELD ON 16-04-24.

Kindly contact Mr. Bibhu Jha at 8369652088 to obtain the form containing terms & conditions of e-Auction or download from website https://www.sealthedead.co.in/

Auctioneers: Seal The Deal having registered office at 148, Pocket C2, Sector 5, Rohini, Delhi - 110085.

LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION OF FORM & END DEMAND DRAFT IS 15-04-24.

17:00 hours

Last Date and Time for Bid Submission - 11.05.2024

16:00 hours

For other details and downloading of RFP document, please visit Bank's website www.unionbankofindia.co.in or visit GeM portal https://bidplus.gem.gov.in/bidlists for participation in the e-tender.

E-Tender Notice

Union Bank of India invites e-Tender from reputed, established and experienced vendors for following items.

Tender Ref - UBU/RMD/2023-24/ESG/02

GEM BID No : GEM/2024/B/4819850

Item / Job Description -

"Request for Proposal (RFP) to Procure End-to-End Software Solution for Climate Risk Management and its Implementation".

Date and time of bid publication - 30.03.2024

17:00 hours

Last Date and Time for Bid Submission - 11.05.2024

16:00 hours

For other details and

downloading of RFP document, please visit Bank's website www.unionbankofindia.co.in or visit GeM portal https://bidplus.gem.gov.in/bidlists for participation in the e-tender.

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Union Bank of India invites e-Auction Notice for the disposal of

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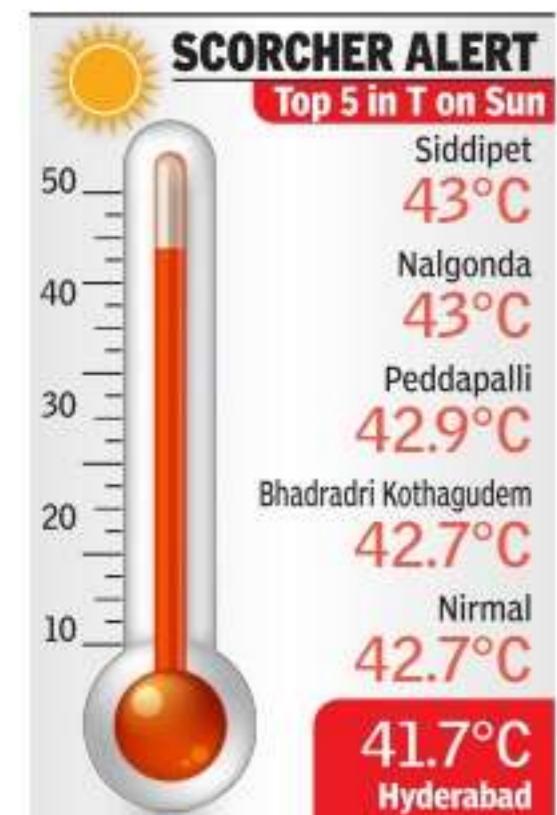
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Steel, approx. 3 MT of Copper &

approx. 6 MT of Aluminium".



SC seeks affidavit from CBI on slow progress of Jagan cases

Rebel MP Seeks
SC To Revoke
Jagan's Bail

Srikanth.Aluri@timesgroup.com

Cheating case:
Ex-ASP gives
police the slip

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: A former ASP on Monday allegedly escaped when CCS sleuths went to nab him in connection with a cheating case. Shivanand Reddy, was wanted in a cheating case registered by CCS in connection with a land in Budvel.

"When our policemen went to arrest him at Kurnool, our officials were stopped by locals and he managed to escape," cops said, adding that Kanishk, Prashant and Uma Devi were also declared as accused.

CCS officials also filed a complaint against the obstructors before Kurnool district police. Shivanand took voluntary retirement several years ago and had started a construction firm.

T govt begins buying rabi paddy

Hyderabad: The state govt has started procuring rabi paddy from 2023-24 season and has already bought 1.21 lakh metric tonnes up to March 30.

Farmers have been told to sell their paddy directly at these centres at the minimum support price (MSP), which is ₹2,183 per quintal for common variety paddy and ₹2,203 for Grade A.

The Congress govt plans to open 7,149 procurement centres as against 7,037 in the last rabi season.

Also, the targeted procurement this time is 75.4 lakh MT paddy as against 66.84 lakh MT procured last time. TNN

The crew for now has been

interacting only with investigating agencies which have been boarding the vessel since the incident.

Andrew Middleton, director, Apostleship of the Sea, which ministers sailors coming through the port, told TOI they had sent the SIM cards to the crew. The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) on the other hand has provided the seafarers Wi-Fi hotspots.

"We are providing any assistance we can," Middleton told TOI.

The crew for now has been

'ACCUSED HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL'

- Position of individual as chief minister shouldn't hinder criminal trials, observed Supreme Court
- Questioned prolonged trial in quid pro quo & money laundering cases
- Apex court expressed displeasure over poor progress by CBI



- Narsapuram MP approached SC with plea to revoke Jagan's bail
- Points out several adjournment pleas by accused as abuse of process of law
- Contends delay in starting trial may cause witnesses to turn hostile
- Claims accused are in highly influential office
- Next hearing of matter scheduled for the week commencing on August 5

abusing the process of law, he contended that because of the delay in starting of trial there is every chance that the witnesses may turn hostile as the accused are in highly influential office. The SC previously issued notices in this regard.

During the hearing on Monday, the bench of Justices Sanjeev Khanna and Dipankar Datta questioned the CBI

about the prolonged trial period. The CBI, represented by additional solicitor general SV Raju, attributed the delay to multiple discharge petitions filed by the accused.

Reiterating that neither political considerations nor the accused's high rank should slow down the trial, the bench directed the central agency to file an affidavit with

hin four weeks explaining the reasons behind the delay in starting the trial. Additionally, the bench mentioned that a separate petition by Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, requesting transfer of the trial to another state, would be considered alongside the bail cancellation plea.

The next hearing has been scheduled for August.

Dali crew gets SIM cards to talk to kin

Sushil.Rao@timesgroup.com



The crew for now has been interacting only with investigating agencies which have been boarding the vessel since the incident

interacting only with investigating agencies which have been boarding the vessel since the incident. The SIM cards will now help them get in touch with their loved ones, though in a limited manner.

The incident is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). As per NTSB chair Jennifer Homendy, there was electricity on board. The crew reportedly also has access to some leisure activities, a television set and magazines on board.

1st Hyd-Ayodhya flight sends demand for tickets soaring

Sunny.Baski@timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: As direct flights from the city to Maharishi Valmiki International Airport in Ayodhya are set to commence operations from today (April 2), months after the Ram Mandir was thrown open to devotees, there is a huge demand for air travel between the two cities.

Several pilgrims from Hyderabad are approaching travel agencies to book air tickets to Ayodhya and enquiries are being made for availability of seats till April end. While some pilgrims are booking tickets through portals, many others are approaching agents.

Travel agencies in the city said that they had already booked air tickets for Tuesday as soon as the tickets were made available. "Since direct flights are being made available to Ayodhya for the first time, there is a lot of enthusiasm among pilgrims to visit the Ram Mandir as they

could reach the temple from Hyderabad in 2 hours," said Moez Meghani, owner of Sky Bookerz, a city-based travel agency.

Earlier, those going to Ayodhya had to either spend 30 hours by a train from Secunderabad railway station or had to travel 5-10 hours through a connecting flight via Delhi/Kolkata that too by paying ₹10,000 to ₹15,000. Now, fares have been made affordable at ₹7,000-₹9,000 by SpiceJet, which operates a direct flight thrice a week.

Earlier, several requests

DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM TODAY

- Direct flights from city to Ayodhya to begin from today
- People rush to book tickets to visit newly opened Ram Mandir
- Enquiries being made for availability of seats till Apr end
- Travel agencies in city say they booked air tickets for Tuesday as soon tickets were made available
- Several requests were made by passengers seeking direct flights between Hyderabad & Ayodhya



T witnesses 10% growth in GST figures for 2023-24

State Registers 19% Growth In SGST Figures

Sribala.Vadlapatla
@timesgroup.com

LOWEST GROWTH IN SOUTH STATES

- ₹40,650cr GST collection of Telangana for financial year 2023-24 10% higher than previous fiscal
- ₹20,012cr SGST component 19% higher from SGST figure of 2022-23
- ₹791cr GST compensation settlement also released by Centre

GST component was ₹20,012 crore, which represented an increase of 19% from the SGST figure of 2022-23 at ₹16,876 crore.

Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) figure stood at ₹20,638 crore this year, registering a 2% growth from last fiscal's ₹20,150 crore.

Officials said that these figures assume more significance as there was no growth in VAT, especially from petro sales. Despite stagnant VAT figures, Telangana collected ₹15,415 crore in 2023-24 compared to ₹15,342 crore in

2022-23.

Telangana also received a GST compensation settlement from the Centre on the last day of the 2023-24 financial year. "With a lot of pursuance from the state authorities, Centre released the pending amount. In all, we have received ₹791 crore in compensation, significantly lower than the previous year's ₹5,033 crore. Additionally, we trimmed the GST refund claims by ₹264 crore which helped us witness good growth and check the leakages in the system," said an official.

Praneeth was chosen by Prabhakar: Ex-DCP

► From P1

As reported by TOI on March 23, the remand report confirmed how opposition leaders and rebels within the BRS were targeted.

"Praneeth joined the Intelligence wing due to his acquaintance with Prabhakar. Further, Radha Kishan said he knew Praneeth was specially chosen by Prabhakar to head the newly-created Special Operations Team in the SIB, which was exclusively formed with the purpose of carrying out surveillance on targeted political leaders and their associates in other political parties, rebels and dissidents within the BRS and to induce potential political leaders of other parties to join the BRS, which was clearly against the mandate of the SIB," the remand report said.

Meanwhile, there are also no regular trains from the Twin Cities to Ayodhya, Lucknow and Gorakhpur. At present, railways is operating only weekly or special trains during the festivals to these destinations.

TARGETED CASH SEIZURES

Dubbaka by-election | In 2020, intel shared with Task Force team lead to seize ₹1cr in Begumpet belonging to associates of BJP candidate

Munugode by-election | Task Force team intercepted 6 associates of Komtireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, the then BJP candidate & seized ₹3.5cr

doing surveillance on leaders of opposition parties, family members, associates, supporters, businessmen, critics of BRS and also on persons within the BRS to keep them under tight control of BRS and its supremo, the report alleged.

"The communication between Prabhakar and his associates was done using Signal or Snapchat," it said.



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I WON'T ABUSE.



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Self-medication with antibiotics may lead to the development of Antimicrobial Resistance, wherein antibiotics lose their effectiveness. As a result, one may stay ill for longer or in life-threatening situations, antibiotics may not work at all.

As a responsible mother, I will not give my child the antibiotics prescribed for me.

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#TimeToFightAMR

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR)

Use antibiotic only when prescribed by a doctor | Always complete your antibiotic course, even if you feel better | Don't share your antibiotics with others | Never use leftover antibiotic



CHANGE Begins Here

EAM: Will start talks with SL to get fishing rights off Katchatheevu

Earlier PMs
Indifferent On
Katchatheevu:
Jaishankar

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Amid disclosures through RTI that India did not try hard enough to keep Katchatheevu, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said govt will open negotiations with Sri Lanka over implementation of India-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Act and a subsequent deal based on which Colombo is stopping Indian fishermen from operating in waters near the island.

"We should get fishing rights. We need to sit with Sri Lankan authorities and sort it out. Even today, our fishermen are being arrested and vessels are being seized. Katchatheevu island was given away in 1974 and fishing rights were given away in 1976," Jaishankar said as he held Congress and DMK equally responsible for "ceding claim without putting up resistance". He said the most basic



Jaishankar said people have a right to know how Katchatheevu was given to Sri Lanka and why even fishing rights were given up

reason was indifference shown by central govt and the Prime Ministers of the day (Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi) and connivance of DMK govt with Congress regime of the time.

"We know who did it but people of the country should be told who hid it. In May of 1961, PM Nehru wrote that he attaches no importance at all to this little island and he would have no hesitation in giving up claim to it. He wrote that he doesn't like matters like this being pending indefinitely and being raised again and again in Parliament. He saw it as a nuisance," Jaishankar said, reading out from documents on the agreement and preceding debates

In past 20 years, 6,184 Indian fishermen have been detained and 1,175 Indian fishing vessels seized, detained or apprehended by Sri Lanka, Jaishankar said as he called out DMK and Congress for making it appear that the issue has emerged out of thin air and they were not responsible for the island being ceded to Sri Lanka.

Katchatheevu issue has unmasked DMK's double standards: PM

►From P 1

New details emerging on Katchatheevu have unmasked DMK's double standards totally," the PM posted on X, along with the TOI report.

He targeted Congress for the second day running over the controversial decision.

"Congress and DMK are family units. They only care that their own sons and daughters rise. They don't care for anyone else. Their callousness on Katchatheevu has harmed the interests of our poor fishermen and fisherwomen in particular," he said. On Sunday, he had said, "Weakening India's unity, integrity and interests has been the Congress's way of working for 75 years and counting."

The PM's remarks come in the wake of growing scrutiny of the agreement between India and Sri Lanka, signed during the tenure of

the Indira Gandhi govt in 1974. The TOI report was based on an RTI reply received by Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai to his queries on the matter.

Annamalai reiterated that Congress and DMK colluded to give away Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka.

"This is part of the expose of the betrayal of DMK in the ceding of Katchatheevu," Annamalai said at a press conference, adding, "Former CM Karunamidhi was consulted twice before ceding Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka and he said for obvious political reasons he would not take an open public stand in accepting the Centre's decision."

He further said, "But he assured the foreign secretary that he would keep the reaction low-key and not allow it to be played up. MK Stalin (TN chief minister) has to apologise unconditionally to our fishermen."

Kharge: PM building false narrative on island

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said PM Modi had manufactured a "false narrative" on Katchatheevu" to divert focus from his silence in the face of Chinese provocations and occupation of 2,000 sq km of Indian territory after he gave a "free pass" to the belligerent neighbour.

Party general secretary Jairam Ramesh, releasing RTI information of 2015, said under then foreign secretary S Jaishankar, who is now EAM, the ministry had clearly stated

that there was no question of acquiring or ceding the island as the area was not demarcated and under the agreement signed later, it lay on the Lankan side of India-Sri Lanka international maritime boundary line. "Is Jaishankar disowning the reply given by MEA on Jan 27, 2015?" he asked.

Taking potshots at the minister, Congress leader P Chidambaram said Jaishankar had somersaulted from a "liberal foreign service officer" to "spokesman of BJP-RSS". He said fishermen have been detained by Sri Lanka during all govt's, including Vajpayee and Modi regimes, and all have negotiated their release.

Author quits Sahitya Akademi over 'political interference'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: Noted litterateur from Kerala C Radhakrishnan on Monday resigned as eminent member of Sahitya Akademi as a mark of protest after Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal inaugurated this year's literary festival a few weeks ago. Radhakrishnan, who sent his resignation to Sahitya Akademi secretary K Sreenivasarao, felt the minister's move amounted to "politicisation of cultural affairs".

"The festival was inaugurated by a cabinet minister of the Government of India, a person without any known credential whatsoever in literature. Strange that the Akademi wanted this person so badly that it waited till it became clear that the declaration of general elections would not make the Akademi

demi out of bounds for him," wrote Radhakrishnan, who is a recipient of several awards, including Sahitya Akademi award, Ezhuthachan award, Vayalar award and Kerala Sahitya Akademi award.

The author said this is the first time that such a thing happened in the long-chequered history of Sahitya Akademi "which consistently upheld its autonomy against the pressure exerted by those with political clout". "Last year, a lesser official, a minister of state, had taken part in the inaugural session of the festival, inviting protests from all of us. Assurance was given that this will not repeat. Hope you remember the unrelenting struggle we put up against the efforts to influence the Akademi politically while I was a member of the executive committee for five years," he wrote.

NHAI halts toll fee hike till June 1

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: In a temporary relief to crores of commuters, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday deferred for two months the annual toll rate hike, which comes to effect from April 1 every year. The authority issued instructions to all regional offices (ROs) to continue with the old toll rate after getting a go ahead from the Election Commission of India.

In its letters issued to ROs, the NHAI said, "...it has been decided to maintain status quo in respect of user fee rates (read toll charge) i.e. to continue with the rates prevalent for FY 2023-24 (without revision) at NH plaza till date of poll." This would mean that the old rates will continue till June 1.

This is perhaps for the first time NHAI has deferred the implementation of the annual hike in toll charges, considering the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha polls.

PM: Poll bonds' issues could have been fixed

Surendra Singh & Manash Gohain | TNN

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Sunday justified his govt's decision to bring in electoral bonds and said they were an important first step in tackling influence of black money in electoral politics and any imperfection in it can be taken care of in due course of time.

In an interview to Thanthi TV channel which he posted on X, PM also dismissed opposition's protests against ED and PMLA and said neither are 'creation' of his govt. He was unfazed by the volley of criticism over electoral bonds and said they are an improvement on the earlier system where there was no trail of cash flow to parties. He said every system has its flaws that can be rectified while dismissing the notion that bond controversy had a negative impact on his govt.

"People who are protesting against electoral bonds will soon regret it. Before 2014, there was no trail of funds given to political parties during polls. Thanks to electoral bonds, we can now trace the source of funding," Modi said in his first remarks over the issue since

SC's decision of Feb 15 striking down EBs. He dismissed the allegation of weaponisation of ED and other central agencies for partisan ends. "ED functions independently and central govt does not interfere in its work," he said. He added that the agency had seized thousands of crores of black money post-2014 and had "already returned Rs 17,000 crore to citizens who deserved it". "Neither do we stop them nor do we send them," he said.

Modi said vested interests are trying to thwart ED, and pointed out that more than 150 petitions have been filed challenging the provisions of PMLA. "Did our govt establish ED? Did we introduce PMLA? They were there before our govt was formed. ED is an independent agency and it is working independently," he added.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act was passed by Parliament in 2002 during the first NDA govt to prevent money-laundering while the Act and the Rules were notified and came into force with effect from July 1, 2005, under the Congress-led UPA. PMLA was passed by Parliament in 2002 during the first NDA govt to prevent money-laundering while the Act and the Rules were notified and came into force with effect from July 1, 2005, under the Congress-led UPA.

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ED: CM said Nair didn't report to him but to Atishi, Bharadwaj

From P1

Since the investigation of the case is stated to be pending qua role of the arrestee, for unearthing further proceeds of crime and identifying other persons who may be involved or connected with the above, the accused is remanded to judicial custody till 15.04.2024 with directions to the concerned jail superintendent to produce him through video conferencing at 2pm," said special judge Kaveri Baweja.

ED told the court that "on being asked about the extent of interaction and reporting of Vijay Nair to the arrestee, he (CM) stated that Nair didn't report to him but to Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj and (that) his interaction with Nair was limited. However, the statements of Nair himself reveal that he stayed in a cabinet minister's bungalow and worked from the camp office of the



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal arrives at Rouse Avenue Court on Monday

ED said in its application that Kejriwal had questioned the authenticity of the digital evidence shown to him and did not reveal passwords, which would hamper evidence collection and also showed his "non-cooperation".

The agency said the CM also claimed he was unaware when shown evidence of more than 10 meetings Nair had with the co-accused in the liquor business, including manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and even middlemen like Dinesh Arora and Abhishek Boimpally.

He was asked to explain the authority under which Nair attended these meetings.

"It is clear that a senior functionary like Vijay Nair who closely worked with the arrestee wouldn't be able to assert himself without the sanction and approval of the head of the

party. This is also because the ultimate benefit of these conspiracies/meetings was reaped by AAP in the Goa election campaign," ED said.

It claimed that Kejriwal was shown evidence of hawala transfers to the tune of about Rs 45 crore which was corroborated with CDR (call details record) locations, call records, IT-seized data of a hawala firm in Goa, proof of payments being done and WhatsApp (messages) showing this arrangement.

The agency claimed that the CM was also shown multiple statements of witnesses who worked on the AAP campaign in Goa and who had received cash from one Chanpreet Singh who was working for the campaign. He had collected and facilitated collection of Rs 45 crore in cash through hawa-

la and also received Rs 2,20,340 directly in his bank account from AAP, ED claimed.

The agency alleged that Kejriwal said he was unaware of all this and even gave false and contrary evidence vis-à-vis other members of AAP. When confronted with the statements given by his own party leaders, he called them "confused", said ED.

ED gave the example of national treasurer of AAP N D Gupta (Rajya Sabha MP) who had in his statement said that Kejriwal as national convener of the party appoints the state election in-charge/prabhami who is supposed to manage all poll campaign-related matters.

In the case of Goa elections, Durgesh Pathak was the man. Atishi, Bharadwaj, Gopal Rai and Kejriwal's wife, Sunita, were present in court.

The agency pointed out that Nair was not a small-time volunteer of AAP but its head of media and communications.

'Spectacular,' says min as def exports cross ₹21,000cr

New Delhi: India's defence exports have crossed Rs 21,000 crore mark for the first time in 2023-24 financial year, defence minister Rajnath Singh said Monday, adding that it represented a "spectacular growth" of 32.5% over the previous fiscal.

"Defence ministry has taken several initiatives to spur India's defence manufacturing and exports. Our defence industries, including the private sector and defence PSUs, have registered a commendable performance in the recent years. Congratulations to all stakeholders on crossing the new milestone in defence exports," the minister said.

The defence ministry, in turn, said arms exports have grown by 31 times in the last 10 years to stand at Rs 21,083 crore (\$2.6 billion) in 2023-24. **TN**

Neighbours kill man in Agra for objecting to 'aggressive' pet dog

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Jackie Baghel's family said the neighbours' dog would often 'target' passers-by. He went to raise the matter with the owners. But they beat him with sticks and rods. He died on the way to hospital

The victim's body was handed over to his family after a post-mortem. The situation is under control."

Following Baghel's death, a clash broke out between his family members and the neighbours who fled after police arrived at the scene. A PAC was later deployed as a pre-

IIT KGP to offer just bachelors to '24-25 batch

Hemali.Chhapia
@timesgroup.com



TECH A CHANCE: Studying at least one AI/ML elective will be made mandatory for all the students along with several other electives

Mumbai: In a major rejig of its academic offerings, IIT Kharagpur (KG) has decided to only offer bachelors programmes to freshmen entering the campus from 2024-25. Doing away with all dual-degree or the five-year bachelors-plus-masters courses at the entry level, students will get an opportunity to opt for them only after the second and third year of their study.

For students across the country aspiring to join IIT KGP, admission to all UG programmes will be for four-year BTech and BS levels only. Students can choose a five-year dual-degree programme in their parent department or choose Interdisciplinary Dual

Degree Programmes (IDDP) offered by several schools and centres of the institute. This is expected to create possibilities such as a BS (Hons) in Economics with MTech in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning or a BTech (Hons) in Civil Engineering with MTech in Financial Engineering, and so on.

These changes will facilitate the students to make informed choices after spending a few semesters at IIT KGP for dual degree, instead of making the choice before they join in the institute. Students can simultaneously earn a double major along with the BTech (Hons) or BS (Hons) degree in the departments in which

Country will reply to dictatorship: Sunita

New Delhi: After chief minister Arvind Kejriwal was remanded to 15-day judicial custody by a special Rouse Avenue court, his wife, Sunita, questioned the logic of the ruling. Talking to reporters outside the courtroom, Sunita said, "If the investigation was over, why has he (Arvind Kejriwal) been sent to jail? The people of the country will give answer to this dictatorship." She added: "He was questioned for 11 days and the court did not say he was an accused."

While walking out of the courtroom, Kejriwal said: "Whatever the PM is doing is not good for the country."

Addressing a press conference later, AAP leader Jasmine Shah said, "They (ED) questioned him for 11 days and still did not find any evidence against him. They could have released him now. But their aim was never to question him, their main objective was to put Arvind Kejriwal behind bars." **TNN**

ED said in its application that Kejriwal had questioned the authenticity of the digital evidence shown to him and did not reveal passwords, which would hamper evidence collection and also showed his "non-cooperation".

The agency said the CM also claimed he was unaware when shown evidence of more than 10 meetings Nair had with the co-accused in the liquor business, including manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and even middlemen like Dinesh Arora and Abhishek Boimpally.

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Shahjahan sent to ED custody till April 13

Subrata Chattoraj & Rohit Khanna | TNN

Kolkata: PMLA court on Monday remanded Sandeshkhali strongman Sheikh Shahjahan in Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody till April 13. ED had taken Shahjahan's custody on March 30.

His counsel Jakir Hussain pleaded with the court to ascertain whether ED taking the accused in custody was in compliance with Section 19 of PMLA that empowers investigators to arrest persons based on the material in their possession. Hussain argued that all charges slapped on Shahjahan were under IPC sections. "There is no charge... under the FEMA or other acts," he said.

ED counsel Arijit Chakraborty submitted to court that the agency had enough evidence to take Shahjahan in custody under PMLA. He asked for another 14 days of custody.



Why Pakistan's tryst with terror is boomeranging

Pakistan's under attack - from Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) that operates out of Afghanistan. Sachin Parashar analyses the problem and its implications for New Delhi and Islamabad

After repeatedly warning the Taliban dispensation in Kabul of consequences for not reigning in TTP, which is waging a war against the Pakistan govt and military in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – especially in the parts therein that were earlier known as FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) – Pakistan recently launched targeted strikes on alleged hideouts of a TTP splinter group in the Paktika and Khost provinces of Afghanistan.

While Pakistan claimed the air strikes were in retaliation to a cross-border terrorist attack, Kabul accused Pakistan of violating Afghanistan's sovereignty and fired in response at Pakistani troops along the border. The Pakistan air strikes were not unprecedented and tension had been building up between Kabul and Islamabad for more than a year over the activities of TTP, which wants strict implementation of the Sharia law in Pakistan.

However, this latest and perhaps most ominous flare-up seems to have thrown into disarray Pakistan's pursuit of strategic depth in Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban to Kabul in Aug 2021.

TOI Explains

Cut From Same Cloth

The fall of Kabul in 2021 was seen as nothing short of a victory for the ISI, which had continued to support the Taliban while ostensibly also backing the US war on terror. However, Pakistan probably failed to allow for the blowback that could ensue from the Taliban's complex relationship with TTP.

The Pakistani Taliban was formed in 2007 to fight the Pakistan military but it remains an ideological cousin of the Afghan Taliban – it pursues similar objectives like overthrowing the govt and imposing its interpretation of the Sharia law. Its leaders have also spoken about establishing an Islamic Caliphate in Pakistan.

Earlier this year, a UN report said the Taliban remain "generally sympathetic" to TTP's aims and, barring a few cosmetic measures like the offer to relocate TTP members away from the border, have cared little about Pakistan's repeated calls to prevent cross-border terrorist attacks. Apart from allowing TTP sanctuaries in Afghanistan, some Taliban members reportedly even joined TTP in attacking Pakistan as a "religious obligation".

There are other reasons too for the Taliban being soft on TTP, whose contribution in the fight against the US-led coalition forces has not been forgotten by the regime in Kabul. Even as they desperately seek international recognition, the Taliban know that alienating TTP could see many Pakistani Taliban fighters joining the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) terror group, which remains a major threat for the

Taliban have also stressed the need for Pakistan to set its own house in order first, saying the TTP terrorism issue predates their return to Kabul. The Taliban leadership have condemned Pakistan's move to expel Afghan refugees. The latest escalation seems to suggest that Pakistan's eureka moment of August 2021, when the Taliban took control of Kabul, is turning into a nightmare.

However, whether it will be enough to also get the fiercely independent Taliban to toe their line on TTP remains anybody's guess for now. In an apparent sign of desperation, Pakistan has been publicly attacking the government in Kabul and urged the UN Security Council earlier this month to get the Taliban to sever their links with TTP.

India will watch out for any attempt by Pakistan to undermine the Taliban dispensation if the security situation between Afghanistan and Pakistan deteriorates further, as that could also imperil regional security. For India, as of now, Pakistan proclaiming itself as a victim of cross-border terrorism is nothing short of retributive justice, as India has long accused Pakistan of perpetrating the same across its border. It is significant that while the security situation has improved in Afghanistan since the return of the Taliban, it has worsened in Pakistan provinces like

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Like many, India believes Pakistan is only reaping the harvests of its longstanding policy of using terrorism for the attainment of political goals and that Islamabad can no longer run with the hounds.

Pakistan believes it has been let down by the Taliban. India, however, has no such complaint yet. Based on the Taliban's repeated assurances in meetings with Indian authorities that it won't allow groups like LeT and JeM to target India from Afghan soil, and its own historical ties with the country, India has built a strong working relationship with the Islamic Emirate, even without officially recognising it.

That the Taliban are looking at the possible use of the strategic Chabahar port in Iran by Afghan traders is another incentive. The Taliban have also been very appreciative of the humanitarian aid sent by India, including the 40,000 tonnes of wheat supplied through the land border with Pakistan, and India is currently considering Taliban's request to resume work on its economic/community projects in the country.

SPATE OF ATTACKS IN PAK'S KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

March 2024 | Five Chinese nationals among six people killed in a suicide attack. No group claimed responsibility, but Islamist militants linked to TTP have previously targeted Chinese interests in Pakistan

Jan 2024 | At least six policemen escorting an anti-polio campaign killed in a terror attack claimed by TTP

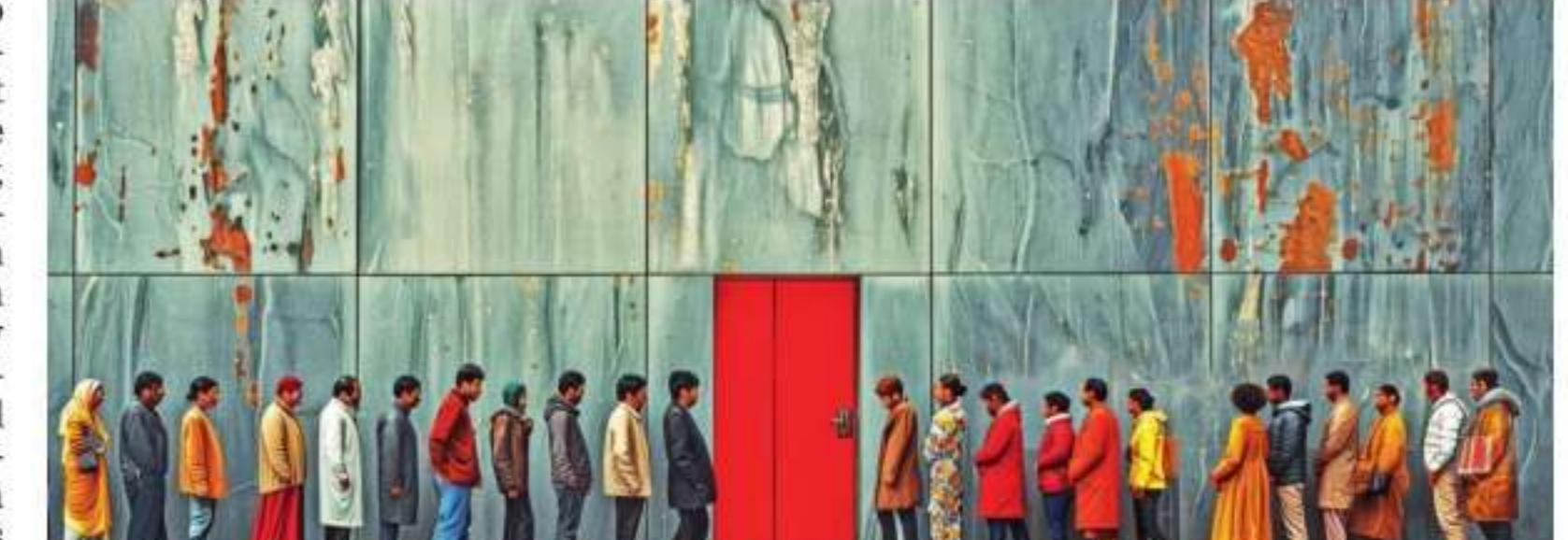
Dec 2023 | At least 23 Pakistani soldiers killed and dozens injured in an attack by TTP at an army base

Aug 2023 | Nine soldiers killed and five others injured in a TTP attack



ILO reaffirms what we all knew: Indians are crazy about govt jobs

Illustration: Al



WAITING FOR THE DOOR TO OPEN

Problem with most non-govt jobs

Regular private sector jobs with monthly salaries & benefits like paid leave are scarce. Even in cities and towns, just about 50% of jobs offer regular salaries. Of these, just 47% offer jobs with paid leave.

It gets worse. Working conditions are even worse in 430 million unorganised sector jobs. And, while govt jobs data includes unpaid household work and self-employment as employment, it stands to reason many thus employed would prefer a regular job.

And in this, govt (Centre + states) jobs number 14 million. So, 2 out of every 100 jobs in India are sarkari.

Only our 1.4 of 100 working age could be sarkari

This is when LFPR in India is 49.9%, or roughly half of the 972 million working age people in India. Labour force participation rate is the proportion of working-age people who are available for work.

Additionally, studying at least one AI/ML elective will be made mandatory for all the students along with several other electives

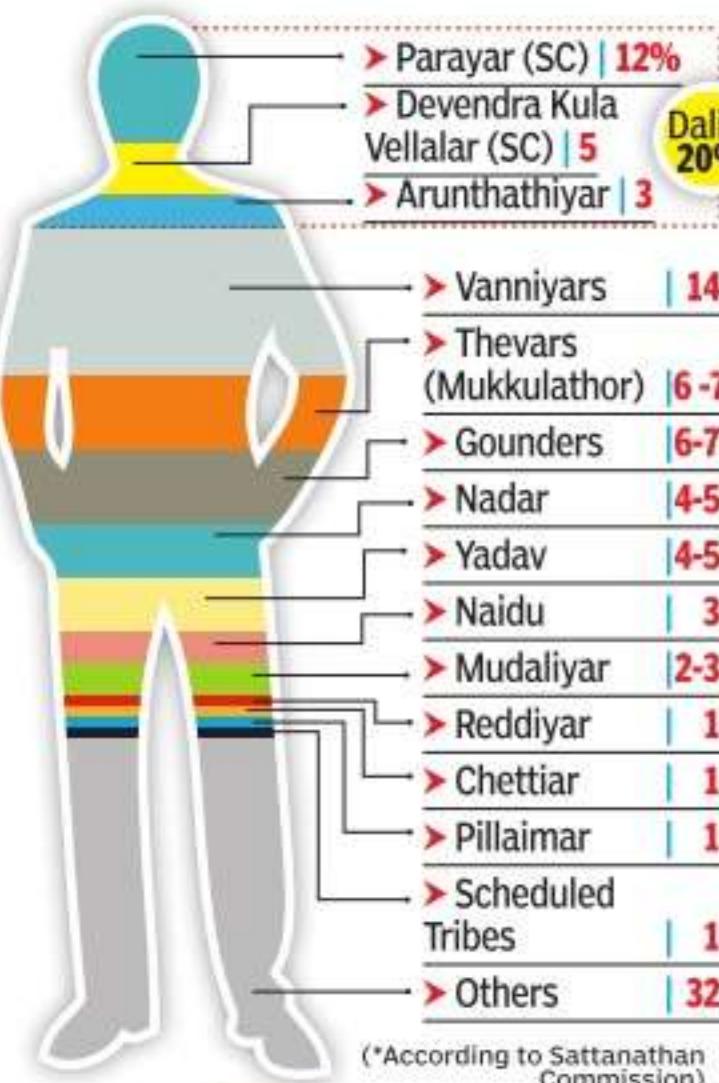
they take admission. Depending on their interest and aptitude, students can register for a major in a discipline after the first year.

V

NOT CAST IN STONE? IN TN POLITICS, IT PERHAPS IS

PMK & VCK AS ALLIES EMBODY SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTE-BASED PARTIES

THE ARITHMETIC



Bosco.Dominique@timesgroup.com

Electoral politics in Tamil Nadu is, among other things, a jamboree of ironies. What else can explain the eagerness of virtually every party that vows to strive for a casteless society putting caste on high priority while choosing allies and candidates? While each of the three major alliances this time tried to keep caste-based vote banks happy, two parties stand out as embodiments of caste politics – PMK and VCK.

Anbumani Ramadoss's PMK, with a strong Vanniyar vote base, and Thol Thirumavalavan's VCK, a Dalit party, have been in demand in the alliance market (Dalits constitute about 20% of the state's population, while Vanniyars are estimated to be around 14%). VCK stayed loyal to the DMK alliance; PMK negotiated simultaneously with BJP and AIADMK before finally deciding to sail with the saffron.

Both the parties have strong bases in the northern districts. And they are in a direct fight in the reserved constituency of Villupuram where VCK general secretary D Ravikumar seeks re-election. AIADMK, meanwhile, has tied up with K Krishnaswamy's Puthiya Tamilagam which represents the devendra kula velalar sect that constitutes about 5% of Dalits in the state (paraiyars, who Thirumavalavan represents, account for 12%, while arundhatiyars constitute 3%). DMK also has in its fold Kongunadu Makkal

Desai Katchi, which has a support base among gouders in some western pockets.

PMK's decision to align with BJP is seen as the party's strategy to work for a coalition govt in TN without DMK and AIADMK in 2026. "That's why thalaivar (Anbumani) isn't contesting this time," said an insider. In the fray in Dharmapuri is his wife Sowmiya Anbumani. Anbumani has been trying to shake off PMK's image as a 'caste party', but the party's bottom line remains the support of vanniyars – something that makes it desirable for alliance leaders.

VCK has been a dependable ally of DMK. Besides his call to defeat 'fascist forces', Thirumavalavan feels his community stands to gain more by aligning with the winning side in the state than the one at the Centre. Hence his stand that this election is 'not between the INDIA bloc and the BJP-led NDA, but between the people and Sangh Parivar'. A challenge for VCK would be that it hasn't got its preferred 'pot' symbol.

VCK members find comfort in the fact that AIADMK and PMK are not together this time. "Votes of vanniyars will be split between AIADMK and PMK, giving us an edge," said a VCK functionary. "PMK joined an alliance led by BJP, which has completely different ideologies. PMK demands the conduct of a caste-based census while BJP is against it. Similarly, the stance of the two parties on NEET and reservation and several other issues are contradictory," he said.

The parties have strong bases in the northern districts. And they are in a direct fight in the reserved constituency of Villupuram where VCK general secretary D Ravikumar seeks re-election. AIADMK, meanwhile, has tied up with K Krishnaswamy's Puthiya Tamilagam which represents the devendra kula velalar sect that constitutes about 5% of Dalits in the state (paraiyars, who Thirumavalavan represents, account for 12%, while arundhatiyars constitute 3%). DMK also has in its fold Kongunadu Makkal

Desai Katchi, which has a support base among gouders in some western pockets.

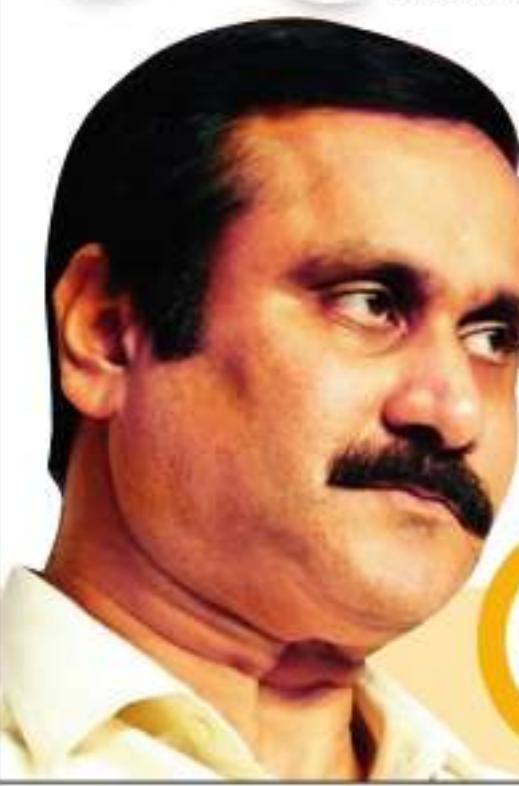
PMK & VCK AS ALLIES EMBODY SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTE-BASED PARTIES

1998 | Contested 5 seats and won 4
1999 | Contested 7 seats and won 5
2004 | Contested 5 and won all 5 seats

2009 | Runner up in all 6 seats contested
2014 | Contested 8 seats, only Anbumani won
2019 | Lost all 7 seats contested



BATTLEGROUNDS
TAMIL NADU



PMK
IN LS

SC notice to EC on PIL for complete VVPAT count

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to Election Commission on a PIL filed by activist Arun Kumar Agrawal seeking complete count of voter verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) paper slips in elections as opposed to the current practice of verification of only five randomly selected electronic voting machines (EVMs) in each assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency. Citing that similar petitions are pending and under consideration of the apex court, a bench headed by Justice B R Gavai tagged Agrawal's plea with them.

The petitioner alleged that if simultaneous verification is done and more officers are deployed for counting, the complete VVPAT verification can be done in matter of 5-6 hours.

The petition further argued that while govt has spent nearly Rs 5,000 crores on purchase of nearly 24 lakh VVPATs, presently slips of only about 20,000 VVPATs are verified. Given that questions are being raised by experts on VVPATs and EVMs and a large number of discrepancies have been reported, it is imperative that all VVPATs' slips are counted and the voter is given an opportunity to verify that his vote as cast in the ballot is also counted by allowing him to physically drop his/her VVPAT slip on the ballot box, it argued. TNN



Volunteers create a 'rangoli' during a competition organised to create voter awareness ahead of upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Chikmagaluru on Monday

EC raps Ghosh, Shrinivas for 'low-level personal attacks'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

BJP seeks EC action against Rahul for 'match-fixing' comment

Taking strong exception to Rahul Gandhi's "match fixing" remark at the opposition INDIA bloc rally, BJP Monday urged Election Commission to take the "strictest action" against Congress and issue directions to lodge an FIR against Rahul. BJP also urged EC to direct the Congress leader to tender an "unconditional public apology" to the nation and PM Narendra Modi for levelling "false allegations" against him.

Addressing INDIA bloc's rally on Sunday, Rahul accused Modi of trying to do "match-fixing" in Lok Sabha polls and warned if BJP won the election through this endeavour and "changed" the Constitution, the country would be "finished".

Trinamool Congress, meanwhile, appealed to EC Monday to restrain central agencies like ED, CBI and I-T dept from taking action against candidates, leaders and workers of parties opposed to BJP till the conclusion of the polls. TNN

Ruling that the imputed statements by the politicians were "low-level personal attacks" and thus in violation of model code of conduct, EC, in separate orders, warned them to be careful with their public utterances.

Specifically condemning the disrespectful post made from Shrinivas's handle against Ranaut, EC said the former being chairperson of Congress's social

media and digital platform at national level, "is expected to know sensitivities of wider communication".

EC on Monday also marked to the party chiefs a copy of its warning notice to Ghosh and Shrinivas. The purpose, sources said, is to get the party heads to sensitise their functionaries to be careful while communicating in the public domain and

refrain from making any derogatory comments or violating MCC guidelines.

While the posts from Shrinivas's social media handles had taken an undignified dig at Ranaut's candidature from Mandi (Mandi being a slang associated with immoral traffic), Ghosh had stirred the hornet's nest by commenting on Mamata's parentage at a press meet.

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BJP's campaign strategy was evident immediately after its state president Manohar Samal announced that the party would go it alone in Odisha. Pandian, an IAS officer who quit the bureaucracy to join BJD last year, became the target of the party's social media meme fest focused on his allegedly frequent heli-

copter rides.

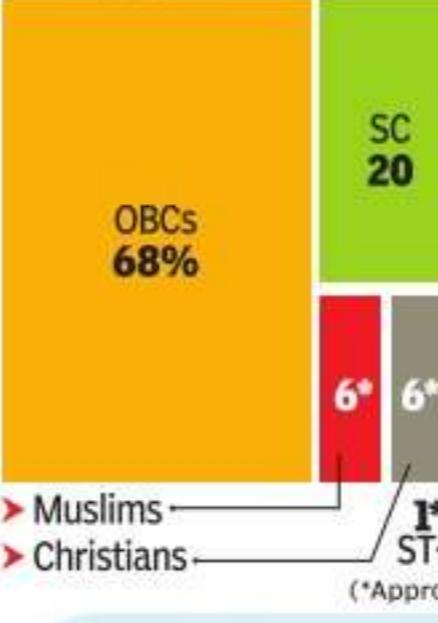
BJP also questioned "unnecessary security cover" for Pandian, citing information acquired through RTI and alleging that all of this was "at the expense of the Odia people's hard-earned money".

BJD's take on "Odia asmita" came across in a message from CM Naveen, who said "self-respect" was the essence of the state's quest for development.

"Odisha continues to inscribe its proud history, flourishing with the commitment of every Odia

BREAK-UP

> Total population | 7.2 cr



VCK IN LS

- > Thol Thirumavalavan lost thrice (1999, 2004 and 2014)
- > Won twice (2009, 2019)
- > Ravikumar is contesting in LS polls for the second time
- > He is a sitting MP from Villupuram



Influential Naga outfit threatens to abstain from poll process

Prabin.Kalita@timesgroup.com

Guwahati: Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO), the apex body of seven major tribes of Nagaland, has written to the chief election commissioner reaffirming its decision to abstain from the Lok Sabha elections in protest against non-creation of a separate "Frontier Nagaland Territory". ENPO says Centre had promised the separate zone, with greater autonomy, before the announcement of the model code of conduct.

ENPO has been demanding that the zone be carved out of the state's six eastern districts — Mon, Kiphire, Longleng, Tuensang, Shamator and Noklak. Centre has proposed an alternative autonomous council with legislative, executive, administrative, and financial autonomy. These six districts are home to seven of the 17 tribes of the state, including the Konyak, Chang, Yimkhuang, Sangtam, Phom, Khiamnang and Tikhiri.

The entire state is one Lok Sabha constituency (Nagaland) comprising 60 assembly segments. Twenty of these segments are in the six eastern districts. These districts together have nearly four lakh voters, which would be about 30% of the state's total electorate.

In its letter, ENPO said MHA had on Dec 7, 2023, "offered and assured" to settle the creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory before LS poll model code. "Despite numerous reminders through letters and mass public rallies, MHA turned a deaf ear... which is why the Eastern Nagaland populace feels compelled to take this course of action as a means of expressing our collective discontent," it wrote. ENPO emphasised its decision was not intended as an act of defiance against the electoral machinery or principles of democracy.

Shah began his day with a meeting of the party's core committee of the Jodhpur division with CM Bhajan Lal Sharma and Rajasthan BJP co-in-charge Vijaya Rahatkar. Later, he held a rally to

galvanise efforts towards securing all 25 LS seats in Rajasthan for a third consecutive time and surpassing the target of 400 seats nationwide.

Drawing comparisons between the 10 years of UPA govt and NDA's decade since 2014, Shah criticised the Congress-led coalition for "plunging the country into darkness" and perpetuating a culture of dynastic politics in familial ambitions.

"Our fight is against dynastic politics. This 'ghamandia' coalition (INDIA bloc) has no concern for the country except their families. Sonia Gandhi wants his son Rahul to be PM. (Ashok) Gehlot wants his son to be CM. Mamata (Banerjee) wants his nephew to be CM. Lalu Yadav wants his son to be CM. Stalin wants his son to be CM. Uddhav Thackeray wants his son to be CM," Shah said. He was addressing an audience comprising party workers from Jodhpur, Pali, Jallore-Sirohi, and Jaisalmer-Barmer Lok Sabha constituencies at Polo Ground in Jodhpur.

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Rahul's Wayanad fight inappropriate: Vijayan

Accuses Rahul Of Double Standards For 'CAA Silence'



ALLIES OR OPPONENTS?

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kozhikode: Fault lines in the INDIA bloc split wide open in Kerala on Monday after CM Pinarayi Vijayan declared it was "inappropriate" of Congress to field sitting MP Rahul Gandhi in Wayanad against CPI's Annie Rajeshwari, defeating the alliance's professed aim of taking on BJP-led NDA.

"Can Rahul Gandhi say he has come here to contest against NDA? He has come here to fight LDF, which is the major political power. What is the justification for contesting against LDF, which is part of the INDIA bloc, and that too against Annie Rajeshwari, who is a nationally recognised Left leader?" Vijayan said.

Accusing Rahul of "double standard", the CM questioned why the former Congress president remained silent on CAA throughout his tenure.

"Congress played a key role in levelling corruption allegations linked to the AAP govt's liquor licence policy in Delhi that led ED to go after Arvind Kejriwal. When deputy CM Manish Sisodia was arrested, Congress complained why Kejriwal was not being taken into custody," Vijayan said.

Vijayan, who attended a campaign rally for Annie Rajeshwari at Thiruvambadi in Kozhikode, said it was also intriguing that Congress wasn't taking a stand against central agencies hounding non-Congress opposition leaders.

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Vijayan, who attended a campaign rally for Annie Rajeshwari at Thiruvambadi in Kozhikode, said it was also intriguing that Congress wasn't taking a stand against central agencies hounding non-Congress opposition leaders.

"In stead of giving up in such situations, they should have the courage to fight."

Cong brass overrules Maha unit, names Ambedkar rival

Sanjay Sahay | TNN

Ranchi: Fissures have appeared in INDIA bloc in Jharkhand, with Left parties announcing candidates in eight of the state's total 14 Lok Sabha seats despite a tentative "seat-sharing plan" formulated by the alliance.

The move by CPI, CPM, CPI-ML and MCC comes amid claims that they find themselves "almost left out" in the "seat-sharing" contours drawn up so far. If the Left goes ahead and eventually contests in these eight seats, that will leave only six for the senior members of the INDIA bloc, JMM and Congress.

CMP state secretary Prakash Vipul and CPI's Ajay Singh blamed JMM and Congress for not talking to them on seat-sharing. To complicate matters further, RJD, another INDIA ally, has demanded two seats, Palamu and Chatra, saying these are home to its traditional voters.

CPI has named candidates for four LS seats — Palamu, Lohardaga, Chatra and Dumka. CPI has fielded nominees in Rajmahal and Chatra. MCC has done so from Dhanbad. CPI-ML claims it has been assured of one seat, Koderma.

Suchandana.Gupta | TNN

Bhopal: Chhindwara mayor Vikram Ahake, another Kamal Nath loyalist, quit Congress and joined BJP on Monday, just three days after party Amaravati MLA Kamlesh Shah defected to the saffron camp, in Madhya Pradesh.

Ahake, a young tribal leader, was given primary membership of BJP by chief minister Mohan Yadav and state BJP president VD Sharma at CM House in Bhopal.

More than former CM Kamal Nath, Ahake was known to be the discovery of his son Nakul Nath, the Chhindwara MP fielded by Congress for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Drawing comparisons between the 10 years of UPA govt and NDA's decade since 2014, Shah criticised the Congress-led coalition for "plunging the country into darkness" and perpetuating a culture of dynastic politics and appeasement. Responding to Congress's allegations of democracy being in peril under NDA govt, Shah rebuffed: "It was your grandmother, who sent slinkhals behind bars and invoked a ban on political parties. You have no moral right to talk about democracy." He was alluding to Congress PM Rahul Gandhi's accusations of BJP stifling democracy.

Highlighting central funds allocated to Rajasthan for development projects, Shah asserted that the state received Rs 161,000 crore during UPA's tenure, while Modi govt sanctioned Rs 624,000 crore. Challenging Gehlot, Shah challenged him for a debate on these details once the former CM was free from campaigning for his son Vaibhav Gehlot, the Congress candidate for Jalore LS seat.

**A thought for today**

We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by military-industrial complex

DWIGHT D EISENHOWER

Global War Inc

Why do so many wars carry on and on? Because the political-military-industrial complex wants them to

Over the weekend tens of thousands of Israelis began four days of demonstrations against their govt over its handling of the Gaza war. But is Netanyahu listening? No. In ports across the world some dock workers and others have protested shipments of military cargo to Israel. Has that halted Israel's offensive? No. This dissonance between decision makers and increasingly vocal popular opinion shows why it's really difficult to stop conflicts today.

The political-military-industrial complex | Arms companies benefit from wars. Generals, who don't usually die fighting, like weapons. Therefore, they like arms companies. But the influence of arms companies on political leadership is less discussed. Per SIPRI, Europe is witnessing record defence spending with companies like Germany's Rheinmetall and France's Dassault Aviation witnessing 36% and 89% growth, respectively, in share prices. Almost all politicians like companies that are doing well, they like jobs being created, and they respect their generals. Plus, wanting to be macho is a universal political weakness. Hence the political-industrial-military complex.

Joe's finessing | Look at Biden. Despite protests from young Democrats, he continues to ship weapons to Israel. He also says protesters have a point. But he fears cutting off weapons supplies to Tel Aviv might jeopardise his re-election campaign – American arms firms like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and General Dynamics are big political financers. And generals want weapons to be tested.

Tail wagging the dog? | Africa is awash with weapons and multiple conflict zones. Little wonder, all top weapons manufacturers have a presence on the continent. Russia is a leading arms supplier in the sub-Saharan region. China is close behind in second spot, while US and France continue to have new and legacy weapons platforms. This again begs interesting questions: Would disputes such as the one over the Moroccan Sahara continue if Russia hadn't been a major supplier of arms to West-backed Morocco's rival Algeria? Was the war against Gaddafi's Libya a move to open up new markets for arms producers? Is Sudan a test bed for Western and Russian weapons?

These questions are asked because many wars around the world just go on and on. Mad dictators are only one part of the answer. Who supplies the weapons? The global arms industry today is more powerful than ever. And when its interests align with those of politicians, whether in democracies or in autocracies, war becomes big business – and deaths become statistics.

Freeloading & Freedom

Sticky-fingered journoes are an embarrassment to the profession. Repressive regimes are a threat to it

US govt is asking journoes who travelled on Air Force One to – discreetly – return items filched from the prez's ride. Indian journoes are known to have flicked towels, cutlery, even ketchup sachets and toothpaste during their work trips. Journoes are only human. And some of them are susceptible to petty follies. The nature of journalism can bring reporters and editors proximity and access to exalted situations and things. Some folks help themselves to goodies, just as some scrupulously do not. Sticky-fingered journoes should face the same penalties anyone else would. No journalist can deny there are a few rotten apples in the basket.

But, seriously, what journalists need is not the ability to freeload, but the ability to speak and write freely. Pressure from heavy-handed regimes is cramping journalists around the world. Russia has detained hundreds of journalists since it started the war. Israel, until recently a thriving democracy with flourishing press freedom, has not only denied access and security to journalists, its security forces seem to have intentionally targeted them – more journalists have died in Gaza than during the two-decade Vietnam war.

Journalists are being harassed and censored when they try to be a check on power. Around the world, various regimes delegitimise the media. Journalists have been called traitors, prostitutes and liars. Professional questioning is often branded 'fake news', while real fake news flows freely. A free press is crucial, if we are not to be torn apart by tribal interpretations of the world. Journalists need the freedom to report facts as they see them, to disclose their biases and then proceed fairly. Yes, even when reporting or commenting, journalism isn't perfect. But the answer to that is calling out imperfections of the press, not filching the freedom of the press.

However brawny the bots

On AI bestsellers, Rushdie's bite has it right

Shinie Antony

 Halt all ye writers preparing your Booker speeches – AI won't just write your speech for you, it will write your book! Naively you thought AI was here to do your housework, watching fondly as you type an award-winning masterpiece. Instead, GPT-5 is all set to mimic your personal writing style; 'co-written by AI' is going to be a common byline. While you stare out of the window pondering over the nature of existence and drunk-text an ex, AI is busy going clickety-clack. Put in all the words you know, press button, sit back for bestseller.

Salman Rushdie did pooh-pooh this AI threat, dismissing as 'a bunch of nonsense' what an AI tool came up with as his style. He says it has no humour or originality. No backstory or childhood trauma either. AI does not drink itself silly in middle age because its dad missed a school play. AI's mom did not fat-shame it through puberty. My kids accuse me of the terrible damage I wreaked on them as foetuses – they don't share my interest in Punjabi rap – but what will AI ever tell a therapist?

The Writers Guild of America went on strike because writers wanted to play hero, with AI cast as a research extra. Rie Kudan's novel *Tokyo-to Dojoto-to* is 5% AI-generated; Stephen Marche's novella *Death of an Author* is 95% AI-generated. As far as publishers are concerned, no fat advances, no writer's block, no fancy book launch, no tantrum after a bad review. Pulp fiction writers will be jobless sooner; it will take longer – maybe 20 years – to erase the critically-acclaimed lot.

But human input will remain key even in the new AI-verse. Machine can never know more than man. Could Robert Browning's *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, which has been my earliest religious text with its bawdy, tawny, rumbling, tumbling rhymes, be replicated by anyone? Bots go by patterns. Press releases, yes; poems, no.

What about when no words are spoken? That pause when a silent look is exchanged in a story. AI can write 'his eyes met hers' all it wants, but has it ever met an eye? ChatGPT is like an over-talkative uncle who knows everything about everything but in a dull second-hand way. Books written by non-AI authors will become an underground movement one day. Future readers will then go: Fie, foh and fun, I smell the blood of a real writer.

Don't Lose Sleep Over Inequality

Bihar has the lowest consumption inequality among the largest states, Kerala highest. Migrants from the more equal to the less equal state underline what matters in a developing country: Fighting poverty

Arvind Panagariya



Unlike poverty, which many countries, including India, have successfully combated through the instrumentality of growth and anti-poverty programmes, inequality lacks easy solutions. Those who have made careers out of sounding the alarm about rising inequality have rarely succeeded in doing anything about it. Not only is combating inequality inherently difficult, but the form of inequality on which alarmists focus often does not resonate with the public, denying them policymakers' ear.

A common measure of inequality on which experts focus is the Gini coefficient. For those unfamiliar with it, Gini is an index that takes a value of 0 when income (or wealth) is equally divided among the members of a group and 1 if it concentrates in the hands of a single member. A rising value of the index indicates rising inequality.

In India, we have periodically conducted large-scale consumption expenditure surveys of representative households, which allow us to track the value of this Gini coefficient over time, nationally and for individual states.

Nationally, value of this index was 0.30 in 1993-94, 0.35 in 2004-05, 0.36 in 2009-10 and 0.36 in 2011-12. While hundreds of millions experienced the joy of exiting extreme poverty during these years, hardly any of them were even aware that inequality had risen at the same time.

The common man knows what his consumption is; he may also know what his neighbour's consumption is. But he has little knowledge of or interest in what the national Gini is.

During my lecture on inequality in the Indian economy course at Columbia in the 2000s, I would challenge students in the class to name the Indian state among the larger ones that exhibited the highest consumption inequality, as measured by Gini. I would give them three guesses, which they quickly exhausted by picking states such as Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, or Bihar.

I would then tease them by telling them they would likely get it wrong even if I gave them another ten chances. The correct answer – Kerala – was simply contrary to the common impression that having been governed by left-of-centre parties throughout its post-Independence history, the state had to be among the most equal.

The outcome in these classes was not very different when I asked students to name from among the larger

states the one exhibiting the lowest consumption inequality. The answer in this case was Bihar, which they rarely guessed correctly in three tries.

To drive home the point that people cared a lot more about poverty than inequality, I would then remind students that they migrated out of Bihar to Kerala; that is to say from the poorer but more equal to the richer but less equal state.



Poverty reduction requires wealth creation. Until 1990, wealth creation in India was minimal, dollar billionaires were rare, and extreme poverty persisted. Today, billionaires are ubiquitous, but extreme poverty is history

The latest trend among inequality alarmists is to focus on the rising share of the top 1% of the population in total national income or wealth. But even this form of inequality elicits little opprobrium from the masses.

A personal experience illustrates the point. Last June, WSJ published an article on the "Billionaires' Row", narrating the recent rise of a group of ultra-luxury residential skyscrapers near the southern end of Central Park in Manhattan, New York. The penthouse apartments in some of these buildings had fetched the owners a quarter billion dollars each. If the alarmists were right, reading this story should have left me enraged. Minimally, I should have lost at least one night's sleep over it. Instead, the thought of billionaires living in my backyard only amused me. I smiled and went about my business as usual.

The inequality that bothers individuals the most is the one they experience within their immediate social context. Michael Bloomberg adding another billion to his wealth matters little to me since he is not a part of my immediate social circle; I am not in competition with him. But if a Columbia colleague is awarded a significantly larger salary increase than me, I am bound to rush to knock on the door of my school's dean.

The same holds true for a villager in India. She hardly cares if Mukesh Ambani adds another five billion to his wealth in a given year. But if her neighbour's wealth rises sharply while she struggles, she has sleepless nights.

In a developing country, fighting poverty trumps the pursuit of equality. Poverty reduction, in turn, requires wealth creation. If those who create wealth keep even a tiny proportion of it, their share in the total wealth and income quickly spikes. Until 1990, wealth creation in India was minimal, dollar billionaires were rare, and extreme poverty persisted. Today, billionaires are ubiquitous, but extreme poverty is history.

Alarmists recommend a hefty tax on wealth as the solution to the inequality they bemoan. But they forget that while the wealthy may indulge in some ostentatious consumption, they allocate most of their wealth to high-return investments. If the same wealth ends up in the hands of govt, it is unlikely that it would be similarly invested.

Equally, the fear of future wealth being taxed away will put brakes on new entrepreneurship and investments. This is especially true of first-generation entrepreneurs who want to see their next generation escape the hardships they suffered.

The writer is chairman, Finance Commission

Politics Is Tough. But Women Have It Tougher

From Mamata to Smriti to Jaya and others across parties, how women politicians have been subjected to treatment men seldom face

Nandita.Sengupta@timesgroup.com

When Kalpana Soren and Sunita Kejriwal faced the cameras for the first time in political avatars – Kalpana early Feb and Sunita in March – to protest the imprisonment of their spouse-CMs, it took barely minutes for contempt to be heaped upon them. Sly comments flew of wives 'eyeing the CM post', of going the 'Rabri way', a reference to the time when then Bihar CM Lalu Prasad's wife was vaulted into the CM's seat.

Kalpana (48) and Sunita (58) remained unfazed by the chatter. At Sunday's opposition rally in the capital's Ramila Maidan, both addressed crowds, without any stage fright. Kalpana is set to contest in the upcoming polls, Sunita, not yet, though that may be always a matter of 'when', than 'if'.

It's always encouraging to see more women turn to politics, though electoral politics demands a tough hide. Women are in Parliament in small numbers. But in no small measure, they helped India take giant strides to realise rights for women – from the anti-dowry act to inheritance rights, to name two legislations of many.

Bring them in | Thirty years since constitutional amendments reserved one-third of seats for women in local administration, women hold over 40% seats in local bodies, and 20 states have expanded reservations in panchayati raj institutions to 50%, per an ORF report.

Reservation for women is more often pitted as sharing of power, but it is in fact bringing in women's perspectives to policy-making. At the state level, Jayalalithaa's welfare schemes focused on women. Back in 1990s, women in a Yavatmal panchayat even got officials suspended for manipulating village funds. Health and education are often considered soft issues – the two sectors where India still struggles. More women in Parliament will not only focus on 'women's issues' such as health and education, but will also

hopefully reduce the other disease: relentless toxicity.

From everywhere | Women enter politics from all walks of life, via family networks, via cadre-based recruitments like in Left parties, through parivar politics into BJP, such as veterans Sushma Swaraj and minister Smriti Irani, or via the temple movement such as Uma Bharti, Rithambara and Pragya Thakur – all of whom have been elected representatives.

An ever-expanding pipeline is of career politicians ever since reservations in panchayat bodies. But the



pain point is that regardless where they come from, for decades women politicians have had it tough – at multiple levels. Kerala's communist leader KR Gouri Amma had said she faced, in 1960s and 1970s, "extreme harassment within the party" from then CPM (male) leadership.

Never enough | For starters, they're held to higher standards of a nebulous 'merit'. While that's the case across sectors, medical science to media, computer science to PhD labs, the difference for a woman in public life is that she's judged more on 'conformity to tradition', which passes off as 'merit'.

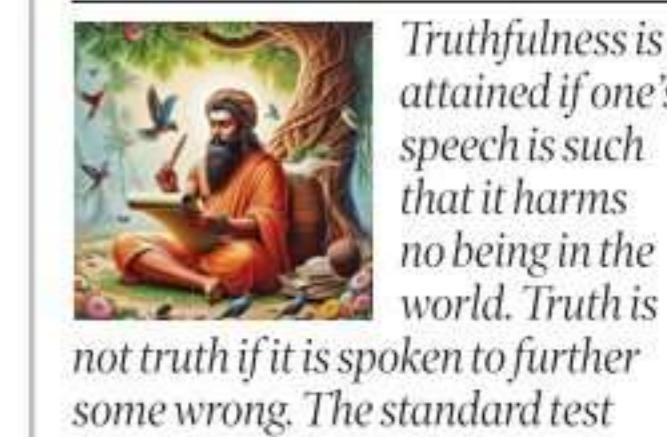
We love aggro, but... | Indian male netas have often gushed at machismo politics. Whether Indira Gandhi ever took the fawning 'only man in cabinet' comment as a compliment was never even debated. It was taken as given. That men approved some aggro geopolitics was sufficient.

But even aggressive women netas in later years didn't have it any easier. Take Mayawati or Mamata or Jayalalithaa. They persevered despite physical assaults by men from parties in power – Jayalalithaa was even attacked in TN assembly, her sari was pulled. When Mayawati years later tied up with SP for the Gorakhpur bypolls, which the alliance won, her character was again put through the slander machine, derided for allying with her attackers. There were whisper campaigns against Smriti Irani, of a kind that male politicians never face.

Toxic plus | Social media has made toxicity an always-on phenomenon. A 2021 study found that women in politics face 27 times more online abuse than male counterparts. Sometimes it's women against women. Congress's Supriya Shrinivas apologised for a base post against BJP nominee Kangana Ranaut. But the actor herself has doubled down since, on her old post denigrating Urmila Matondkar.

For women in politics, it's a quick jump from being in the news to being under the microscope. Men in politics should remember – it's far tougher being a woman politician.

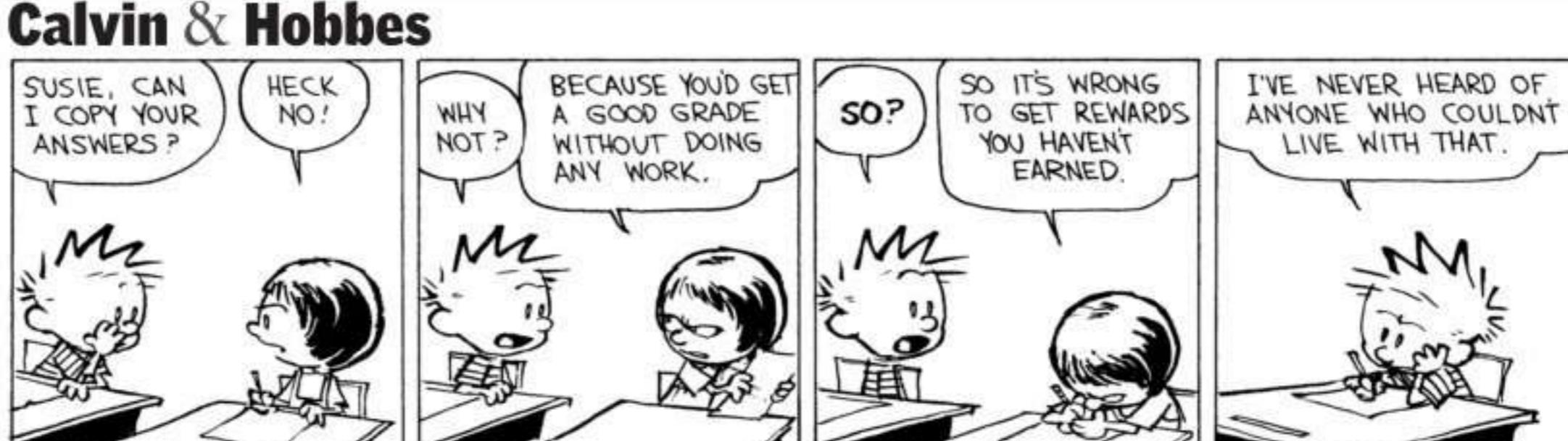
Sacred space



Truthfulness is attained if one's speech is such that it harms no being in the world. Truth is not truth if it is spoken to further some wrong. The standard test for right conduct including truthfulness is harmlessness...

Thiru Valluvar

Calvin & Hobbes



Mantra For Evolution: Arpan, Tarpan, Samarpan

Meena Om

Our breath is like a conveyor belt. It carries into the universe our thoughts, words, actions, and intentions. It also draws to us directives, messages and the energy from the Universe for creative living and for fulfilling our purpose of existence.

Whatever we do, has to be like arpan – an offering to the Divine. This way one does not get tied to the karma, that is, get caught in the cause-and-effect cycle of karma, action.

Since everything we do has to be like an offering, we can offer negativity,

complaints, criticism, abuses to the Divine? No. Whatever we throw into the Universe via breath comes back to us manifold; this is true for pious thoughts as well as impious ones. Since everything is a prasad for the Divine, we need to be

careful that we are offering only the best – righteous actions, thoughts, and speech. For all the existing burdens of the soul, imperfections of the body, polluted thoughts of the mind, we should do tarpan, oblation. Like we do tarpan for our ancestors, wishing them well for their journey ahead and delinking ourselves from them, as part of the final rituals.



THE SPEAKING TREE

Whenever troubling thoughts arise, past incidents surface in the mind, and realisation dawns that we have acquired some substandard habits, or are nurturing some vices, do their tarpan. Visualise that you are releasing them into the Universe, offering them to the Divine for recycling, and are getting rid of them. There is no better way to cleanse our subconscious minds than tarpan.

Continue doing this repeatedly until the

bothersome and undesirable thoughts

stop surfacing or troubling.

For the situations and people that come in front of us, be in samarpan, in surrender to the Divine's will. No complaining, no brooding. Know that everything – situation or people – that comes, is meant to cut our past karma; take us forward; help us evolve further; spiritually; indicate the path ahead; illuminate our man and buddhi, mind and intellect; awaken us from Sushupiti – slumbering state; and show us what karma to give up, which one to continue performing. Every action should be done to the best of one's abilities and capacities.

Supreme Intelligence knows every-

thing and is omnipresent. It arranges

everything according to our karmas.

Truth is present in each and every molecule. The one who does the sadhana of Truth, is truthful in his words, thoughts, and deeds. Satyeshwar – Truth as Supreme Entity – uses that person's medium to absorb the highest jnana and makes him a medium to reveal its truth to all. His teachings become the source of courage and energy for all in their future endeavours and illuminate their paths ahead.

We slot all happenings in our life as good or bad and then suffer. By living each one of them to the fullest, going

Focus On Bitcoin in Q1 Eclipses Broadening US ETF Landscape

The birth of spot bitcoin exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and the quest for new ways to invest in AI overshadowed other trends in the broader ETF market in the first quarter, but analysts say other themes like single-country ETFs and bond ETFs are likely to play out through 2024. Here are some of the trends for the second quarter and beyond...

Source: Reuters, Refinitiv

TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD | TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024

Bitcoin is up 59% since the start of the year



Japan's Single-Country ETF Surge

Investors are flocking to single-country ETFs focused on Japan, which attracted \$3.3bn inflows in Q1 — over half the \$6.2bn they attracted in 2023 as a whole

Moving Beyond Magnificent 7

Beyond mega-cap tech stocks, other sectors are gaining traction as well. While tech-focused ETFs pulled in \$9bn in the first three months of the year, energy ETFs attracted \$1.2bn, industrial funds \$1bn, and real estate \$2bn in Q1

New Players on the Rise

While BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street dominate, newer players are growing rapidly. The Fidelity Wise Origin Bitcoin Fund — with \$10bn in assets — triggered a surge in Fidelity's overall ETF assets



In a 1st, GST collections top ₹20 lakh cr mark in a fiscal

Rise 11.5% To ₹1.8L Cr In March, 2nd Highest Monthly Mop-Up

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: GST collections rose 11.5% to Rs 1,78,484 crore in March, the second highest monthly mop-up, pushing up 2023-24 collections past the Rs 20 lakh crore mark for the first time.

FY2023-24 marks a milestone with a gross GST collection of Rs 20.2 lakh crore, an 11.7% increase compared to the previous year. The average monthly collection for this fiscal year stands at Rs 1,68,000 crore, surpassing the previous year's average of Rs 1,50,000 crore," the finance ministry said in a statement.

Overall collections during March were driven by domestic demand as central and state GST collections grew 16.9% and 17.2%, respectively. Integrated GST mop-up, levied on inter-state transactions and imports, rose 6.1% to Rs 87,947 crore. A key reason for

BETTER COMPLIANCE



this was a fall in the revenue from imports, which were down 5.1% at Rs 40,322 crore.

"Record collections exceeding Rs 20 lakh crore during FY24 demonstrate the economic resurgence across sectors and was possible due to the various measures taken by the GST authorities to improve compliance and stamp out evasion. The big focus on comparison of taxpayer behaviour across tax and corporate databases has also convinced businesses on the need to be compliant not only on their activities, but also keep track of their vendors' tax behaviour and ensure that the entire value chain becomes compliant. Since all major states have re-

corded double digit growth in GST collections, GST collections being also a barometer for economic activities as it's a transaction based tax, it can be reasonably inferred that the growth is across regions and sectors," said M S Mani, partner at Deloitte India.

In March, barring Mizoram (29% fall) all states and Union territories with legislatures reported sharp increase.

On an overall basis, tax experts see this trend continuing. "The double-digit growth continues in monthly GST collections over last year. With this trend, it will not be surprising if the target for FY25 is revised when the main Union Budget is presented after the formation of the new govt. Also, the collections may pave the way for the next wave of GST reforms including rate rationalisation," said Pratik Jain, partner PwC India.

Re less volatile than other currencies: FM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the rupee has exhibited greater stability compared to its counterparts even as yields in govt securities market have stabilised, thanks to RBI's measures building investor confidence.



adopted and deployed a conventional and unconventional range of instruments to provide liquidity and to promote growth and ensure financial stability."

Sitharaman cited the moratorium on loan repayments and the infusion of liquidity. "RBI was among the earliest to recognise the non-transparent nature of inflation and front-load interest rate hikes," she said, adding that forex management is also an area where RBI has done exemplary work by building up reserves.

She emphasised the global recognition of RBI's contributions by citing the acknowledgement from the Bank of International Settlements. This recognition specifically commended RBI's role in anchoring inflation expectations through its effective communication policies.

Byju's delays salaries for second mth

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Troubled edtech startup Byju's is struggling to make salary disbursements to its employees amid a severe cash crunch. The company, which failed to make disbursement of full salaries for Feb to most of its employees, has also not been able to pay March salaries to its staff on time.

The move by a few select investors to disable the company from using the funds raised through the rights issue has delayed the payment of salaries, the company's management said in a letter to employees on Monday. "... we are following a parallel line of credit to ensure that you receive your salary by the 8th of April," the firm said.

ABFRL looks at demerger of Madura Fashion

Mumbai: Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail will evaluate vertical demerger of Madura Fashion & Lifestyle business into a separate listed entity, the company said in a statement on Monday. The MFL portfolio includes lifestyle brands Louis Philippe, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, Peter England etc. TNN

Sanofi to strengthen India footprint, product pipeline

Rupali.Mukherjee
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Drug biggie Sanofi, with marquee brands including pain and inflammation relief drug Combi-flam, anti-infective Allegra and anti-diabetic Lantus, is accelerating its "lean-in" strategy in India, by fast-tracking a robust pipeline, which includes expanding its core diabetes portfolio in India. Sanofi is implementing an accelerated growth plan, 'India for India' to gear up for the future and strengthen its India footprint, Rodo Hrosz, the company's managing director said.

Unlike certain MNCs, it has no plans to divest legacy

brands in the country, he told TOI in an interview, adding, "India is important for us, we value the talent pool and innovation (here)".

The comments are significant, coming close on the heels of Sanofi's recent back-to-back partnerships with three domestic firms—Cipla, Emcure and Dr Reddy's—for its legacy brands and vaccines. The deals raised speculation about the company's future in India, coming at a time when MNCs are reducing exposure and divesting core therapies in the over Rs 2 lakh crore domestic market.

With the renewed strategy, the nearly Rs 3,000 crore company, which has been

"under-represented in India" could match the pace of the market, and even grow faster than the industry, he added. Sanofi India grew only a strong-single-digit in the past.

"Though we have established a robust footprint over the last 68 years (in India), it isn't the one we need for the future, hence we decided to reset it in the beginning of 2023 to enable growth," Hrosz said.

"The renewed strategy focuses on two objectives—first, maximising access to Sanofi's existing established portfolio in India... Second, "fast-tracking a robust product pipeline by bringing best-in-class innovations into India," he added.

Bankers said that UPI transactions usually spike during festive months.

Gold touches record high of ₹68,450

Mumbai: Gold prices on Monday surged by Rs 1,850 to hit an all-time high of Rs 68,450 per 10 grams in Mumbai amid a rally in the precious metal in global markets, where it touched a record of \$2,262 per ounce. Gold had closed at Rs 66,600 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver prices also jumped by Rs 1,000 to Rs 74,700 per kg. In the previous trade, it had closed at Rs 73,700 per kg.

The US Federal Reserve is getting closer to cutting interest rates, which is adding momentum to a rise in bullion prices.

On an overall basis, tax

experts see this trend continuing.

"The double-digit growth continues in monthly GST collections over last year.

With this trend, it will not be surprising if the target for FY25 is revised when the main Union Budget is presented after the formation of the new govt. Also, the collections may pave the way for the next wave of GST reforms including rate rationalisation," said Pratik Jain, partner PwC India.

In the overseas markets, spot COMEX gold prices climbed as much as \$2,266 per ounce. AGENCIES

Sensex, Nifty hit new lifetime peaks

Mumbai: Stock markets started the new fiscal on a high with the sensex and Nifty scaling fresh peaks in intra-day trade before settling in the green on Monday, backed by firm trends in Asian markets and foreign fund inflows.

Extending its winning momentum to the third day in a row, the sensex jumped 363 points to settle at 47,015. During the day, it zoomed 603 points to hit its record intra-day high of 74,255. Nifty climbed 135 points to 22,462. During the day, it jumped 203 points to hit the all-time peak of 22,530.

"The Indian market boarded on a strong trajectory at the onset of the new financial year, with indications pointing towards a continuation of this favourable momentum, in the near term. This confidence is supported by a global rally in expectation of a Fed rate cut in June," Vinod Nair of Geojit Financial said. AGENCIES

UPI volume rises 55% YoY to new high

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: UPI transactions touched an all-time high of 1,344 crore in March 2024, recording a 55% increase year-on-year and 8% more than in Feb. At the current level, the number of UPI transactions average to 43.3 crore a day.

The National Payments Corporation of India is preparing for a transaction volume of 100 crore a day in a couple of years.

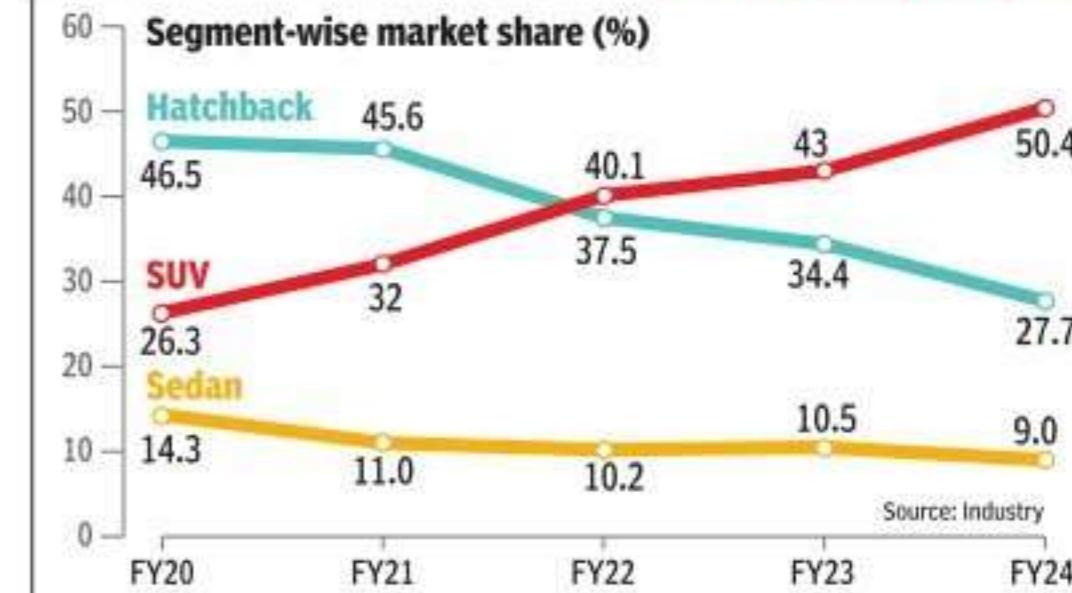
Bankers said that UPI transactions usually spike during festive months.

Share of SUVs scales 50% of sales in FY24

Hatchbacks Skid To 28% In Last Fiscal, With Price Increasing 65% Over Past Few Years

Pankaj.Doval@timesgroup.com

SUV MKT SHARE NEARLY DOUBLES IN 4 YRS



for most affordable mini cars, now gets almost 22% of its sales from SUVs (this was 11% at the close of FY23). With

push towards electrics.

For example, M&M is having a line-up of off-roaders in its portfolio and has mandated the SUV body style for its soon-to-be-launched new electric vehicles. Hyundai has 12 SUVs in its portfolio.

As hatchbacks fight a battle for survival, the story has been even more challenging for sedans. Share of sedans in car sales slipped to single digit in FY24. They closed the year at 9% against 14.3% at close of FY20.

Companies are cashing in on the trend. Mahindra & Mahindra, Hyundai and Tata Motors and even luxury players, such as, Audi and Mercedes-Benz have been launching new SUVs and also earmarking them for the

Railways sees record freight, revenue in '24

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The railways earned around Rs 2.6 lakh crore in 2023-24 from freight and passenger movement, which is its highest-ever revenue earnings, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday in a social media post. Its earnings totalled Rs 2.4 lakh crore in the previous year.

The railways recorded its highest-ever freight loading of 159 million tonnes (MTs) in 2023-24, almost 5% more than the previous FY. The earlier maximum loading of cargo was 152 MT in FY23. Data show that FY24 freight loading surpassed the revised estimate of 180 MTs.

Sources said in 2023-24, the railways achieved loading of 787.6 MT of coal, 181 MT of iron ore, 154 MT of cement and 114.4 MT, among others. "We have done better than the revised target and hope to repeat in 2024-25 as well," said a source.

Govt has estimated 1,650 MT freight loading during the current FY. Revenue from freight movement is the mainstay of railways finances, which helps it for cross-subsidisation of passenger fare. Officials said that rail electrification, laying of new lines and track replacement also set new records during the last fiscal.

From day of swearing-in, much work has to be done, says PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Addressing a gathering here to mark the 90th anniversary of RBI, PM Modi said the situation had changed vastly since he addressed the bankers 10 years ago at the 80th anniversary. The banking sector, which struggled with NPAs then, has been transformed and is now generating profits and showing record credit growth, he said.

"The economy and the GDP depend on coordination between fiscal and monetary policy... The transformation in the last 10 years was possible because of the change we brought about in motives, policies and decisions," said Modi. If the motives were right, the outcomes would also be proper, he added.

Describing the developments in the last decade as only a 'trailer', Modi said there was a lot of work left to be done to take the country forward. "I am busy with the elections for the next 100 days. You take the time to prepare now. From the day after the swearing-in, there will be a lot of work to be done," he told bankers.

"We must have a clear vision of the goal for the next 10 years. We have to expand digital transactions, keep sight of the changes that are taking place because of digital (transformation), and improve efforts on financial inclusion and empowerment," said Modi.

The PM said RBI — with its success in managing inflation and growth despite the pandemic and two wars — can be a role model for other central banks. Pointing out that other countries have debt twice the size of their GDPs, Modi said RBI should study this and ensure that India's credit growth is sustainable.

The PM said the banks were cleaned up through recognition of bad loans, recapitalisation with Rs 3.5 lakh crore and resolution of non-performing assets. The IBC alone has resolved Rs 3.3 lakh crore loans. Over 72,000 applications, adding up to over Rs 9 lakh crore defaults, were resolved even before admission to the IBC. This shows the capability of the new system," said Modi.

A correction

In the report, 'Torrent's Mehtas join philanthropy club', published on April 1, the photograph of Sudhir Mehta of Pinnacle Industries was inadvertently carried instead of Sudhir Mehta of Torrent Pharma. The error is regretted. TNN

India can be 2nd largest lodging mkt

Saurabh.Sinha
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Indians are all set to become the second largest globetrotters — from being in the top five as of now — and their travel trends are influencing not just menus but also hotel designs. While Chinese remain the biggest group of world rovers, the hospitality industry is more bullish on India as "consumer confidence is not so strong" in the former. Alan Watts, president of Asia-Pacific at US hospitality major Hilton, says given its rising economic prowess and population, "India has the potential to be the second largest lodging market (after US) in the world".



KIRSTEN DUNST CALLS SPIDER-MAN'S UPSIDE DOWN KISS 'MISERABLE': 'TOBEY MAGUIRE COULDN'T BREATHE, IT WAS LIKE RESUSCITATING HIM'

GWYNETH PALTROW SAYS 'NO' TO POLYAMORY RELATIONSHIP: 'NOT FOR ME BUT HAVE NO JUDGMENT. I'M A ONE-MAN KINDA GAL'

Syria: Part of Iran's Damascus consulate flattened in air strike

Blames Israel; Tehran Media Says Iranian Military Adviser Among Killed

Damascus: An Israeli air strike has destroyed the consular section of Iran's embassy in Damascus, killing or wounding everyone inside, Syrian state media said Monday.

Syria's defence ministry said "the attack destroyed the entire building, killing and injuring everyone inside, and work is underway to recover the bodies and rescue the wounded from under the rubble".

The Iranian Arabic-language state television Al-Alam and pan-Arab television station Al-Mayadeen, which has reporters in Syria, said the strike killed Iranian military adviser Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, who led the elite Quds Force in Lebanon and Syria until 2016.

Iranian ambassador Hossein Akbari condemned Israel and said as many as seven people were killed, but first responders were still searching for any other bodies under the rubble. He said two police officers who guard the building were wounded.

The ambassador later said that "the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate shows the reality of the Zionist entity which recognises no international laws and does all that is inhumane to achieve its goals".

Akbari told Iranian state TV that "at least 5 people were killed in the attack which was



Smoke rises after what the Iranian media said was an Israeli strike on a building close to the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Syria, on Monday

Who are Iran's Revolutionary Guards?

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is Iran's dominant military force. It was set up shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution to protect the Shia clerical ruling system and provide a counterweight to the regular armed forces. It answers to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The IRGC has an estimated 125,000-strong military with army, navy and air units. It also commands the Basij religious militia, a volunteer paramilitary force loyal to the clerical establishment that is often used to crack down on anti-government protests. The Quds Force is the IRGC's foreign espionage and paramilitary arm that heavily influences its allied militia across Lebanon to Iraq and Yemen to Syria. Its members have fought in support of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's civil war and have backed Iraqi security forces in their battle against IS militants in recent years. Its top commander, Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, was killed by the US in a drone attack in Iraq in 2020. The IRGC has been branded a terrorist group by the US. The IRGC also oversees Iran's ballistic missile programme, regarded by experts as the largest in West Asia. REUTERS

carried out by F35 fighter jets".

Iranian state television said the Iranian ambassador's re-

SANA, citing an unnamed military source, said the building in the tightly guarded neighbourhood of Mazzeh was levelled.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment. Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in govt-controlled parts of Syria in recent years. Such air strikes have escalated in recent months against the backdrop of Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza and ongoing clashes between Israel's military and Hezbollah on the Lebanon-Israel border.

Though it rarely acknowledges its actions in Syria, Israel has said its targets bases of Iran-allied militant groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has sent thousands of fighters to support Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces.

The Damascus strike was fifth in eight days to hit Syria. It came three days after Britain-based war monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported Israeli strikes that killed 53 people in Syria, including 38 soldiers and seven members of Hezbollah. It was the highest Syrian army toll in Israeli strikes since the Israel-Hamas war began, it said.

"Syria and Lebanon have become one extended battleground from the Israeli perspective," Riad Kahwaji, head of the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, said. "Israel warplanes hit targets in both countries almost daily in a sustained effort to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure and to also tarnish its image." AP & AFP

Israeli troops exit al-Shifa, leaving rubble & bodies

Israel: Israeli soldiers withdrew from al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza after a two-week raid in which they killed around 200 Palestinians and arrested hundreds of others, the Israeli military said Monday. The troops left widespread devastation in their wake after extended firefights with Palestinian militants.

Taysir al-Tanna, a long-time vascular surgeon at al-Shifa, said many of the hospital's main buildings, including the emergency, obstetrics and surgical wards, had been badly damaged in the fighting. "Now it looks like a wasteland," he said.

The Israeli military said the roughly 200 Palestinians it had killed were militants, and that



The damaged building of al Shifa hospital after Israel's withdrawal

its soldiers had arrested around 900 people it suspected of being militants at the Shifa complex over the past two weeks, including senior commanders

in groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. It said two Israeli soldiers were killed and eight were wounded in the raid. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli

military spokesman, blamed the destruction on the militants, saying they had fortified themselves inside hospital wards, fired on soldiers and refused calls to surrender. The WHO said over 20 patients died and dozens were put at risk during the raid.

Israel OKs bill on Al Jazeera ban Israel's parliament passed a bill giving top ministers the authority to bar from Israel the broadcasts of news channel Al Jazeera. PM Netanyahu vowed to move immediately. "The terrorist channel will no longer broadcast from Israel," he said. Israel has accused the station of agitating against it among Arab viewers. NYT & AGENCE

multiple raids carried out by authorities. CTD sources said authorities arrested Hazrat Bilal, the mastermind of the attack who brought the suicide bomber from Afghanistan.

Bilal is also wanted in prior attacks on the Chinese.

The report said the explosives-laden vehicle was brought through the Chaman border to Dara Zinda town in Dera Ismail Khan district for Pakistani Rs 0.25 million. Two facilitators were arrested from Balochistan, the report said. The report said some of those arrested had links with TTP militants in Pakistan and that raids were still ongoing across the country. PTI

The case against Imran

In Afghanistan, old land mine found by children explodes, killing 9

Kabul: Nine children were killed in a blast in southeastern Afghanistan that was caused by a landmine laid during the country's decades of conflict, a provincial official said Monday.

The mine went off as a group of young boys and girls were playing with it in the Geru district of Ghazni province on Sunday, said the provincial head of the information and culture department, Hamidullah Nisar.

"An unexploded mine left over from the time of the Russian invasion went off when they were playing with it," Nisar told AFP.

Police said the children — five girls and four boys — were aged from four to ten years old.

Swathes of Afghanistan are littered with unexploded mines, grenades and mortars from decades of conflict, spanning from the Soviet invasion in 1979, the civil war that followed, and the 20-year Taliban insurgency against foreign-backed govs.

Also on Sunday, another child died and five other people were wounded when unexploded ordnance went off in Herat province, local police said on social media platform X. AFP

Sunak faces revolt from his party over bill to criminalise homelessness

London: British PM Rishi Sunak faces a potential revolt from within his party ranks over new legislation that is set to criminalise homelessness and hand police powers to crack down on rough sleepers on the country's streets.

According to a report in 'The Times' on Monday, several Conservative Party MPs have warned that they will vote against the measures in the Criminal Justice Bill, which is currently going through the House of Commons and set to become law before a general election expected later this year.

The bill is designed to present the Conservatives as tough on crime as it prepares for a grueling election campaign, with the odds stacked against it due to intense anti-incumbency sentiments. The proposals within the legislation include expanding police powers to test suspects for drugs on arrest. It would also give probation officers the power to administer lie-detection tests to sex offenders and terrorists after their release from prison and also increase sentences for some offences. However, party leaders are concerned the bill will be overshadowed by controversies such as the homelessness debate. NYT

Furry slippers and sweatpants: Young Chinese embrace 'gross outfits' at work

Seoul: When the weather turned cold in Dec, Cindy Luo started to wear her fluffy pajamas over a hooded sweatshirt at the office. Wearing cozy sleepwear to work became a habit and soon she didn't even bother to wear matching tops and bottoms.

A few months later, she posted photos of herself to a "gross outfits at work" thread that had spread on Xiaohongshu, a Chinese app similar to Instagram. She was one of tens of thousands of young workers in China to proudly post pictures of th-



SLEEPWEAR IS THE NEW FORMAL:

As China's growth slows, many young people are choosing to 'lie flat', the approach to an easy life

emselves showing up at the office in onesies, sweatpants and sandals with socks. The just-rolled-out-of-bed look was shockingly casual for most Chinese workplaces. "I just don't think it's worth spending money to dress up for work, since I'm just sitting there," said Luo, 30, an interior designer in Wuhan.

Defying expectations for proper work attire reflects a growing aversion among China's youth to a life of ambition and striving that marked the past few decades. As the count-

ry's growth slows, many young people are choosing instead to "lie flat", a countercultural approach to seeking an easy and uncomplicated life. And now even those with steady jobs are staging a quiet protest.

The intentionally lackluster outfits became a social media movement when a user named "Kendou-S" posted a video last month on Douyin, the Chinese sibling service of TikTok. She showed off her work outfit: a fluffy brown sweater dress over plaid pajama pants with a

pink light-quilted jacket and furry slippers. In the video, she said that her supervisor at work told her several times that her outfits were "gross" and that she needed to wear better clothes "to mind the image of the company." The video took off; it got over 735,000 likes and was shared 1.4 million times. The hashtag "gross outfits at work" spread across multiple Chinese social media platforms and it unleashed a competition of whose work dress was the most repulsive. On Weibo, the

topic generated hundreds of millions of views and sparked a wider discussion about why young people are not willing to dress up for work nowadays.

People's Daily, the Communist Party's mouthpiece, criticized young people for "lying flat" in a 2022 editorial, but it has refrained from scolding youth for what it called "being ugly" at work. Xiao Xueping, a psychologist, said that might be because the outfits are a form of responsible protest as people are still doing their jobs. NYT

Russian military intelligence unit may be linked to 'Havana syndrome': Report

Kremlin Denies 'Baseless, Unfounded' Accusations By Media



The US embassy in Havana. The report said the first incident of 'Havana Syndrome' symptoms may have happened in Frankfurt, Germany, when a US govt employee stationed at the consulate there was knocked unconscious by something akin to a strong energy beam

or expressed any convincing evidence of these unfounded accusations anywhere. Therefore, all this is nothing more than baseless, unfounded accusations by the media."

Symptoms of the ailment have included migraines, nausea, memory lapses and dizziness. The Insider report said the first incident of "Havana Syndrome" symptoms may have happened earlier than 2016. It said "there were likely attacks two years earlier in Frankfurt, Germany, when a US govt employee stationed at the consulate there was knocked unconscious by something akin to a strong energy beam".

US Congress passed the Havana Act in 2021 authorising state department, CIA and other US govt agencies to provide payments to staff and their families who have been affected by the ailment during assignment. REUTERS

Der Spiegel also reported that senior members of Unit 29155 had been placed at the scene of reported health incidents involving US personnel. The year-long Insider investigation in collaboration with US network CBS' 60 Minutes and Germany's

Pak arrests mastermind, 12 others for terror attack on Chinese, say officials



The crime site in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. A probe has blamed the banned TTP militant group for the assault

Islamabad: At least 12 people, including the mastermind, have been arrested in connection with last week's suicide bombing that killed five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, officials said on Monday.

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), which launched a probe into the attack, blamed the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group for the assault.

No group had claimed responsibility for the terror attack that took place when the Chinese engineers were en route from Islamabad to their camp in Dasu, the headquarters of the Upper Kohistan district of the province, when a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-rigged car into their vehicle in Bisham area of Shangla district.

A report submitted by CTD on Monday said over a dozen militants and facilitators of the attack were arrested in

multiple raids carried out by authorities. CTD sources said authorities arrested Hazrat Bilal, the mastermind of the attack who brought the suicide bomber from Afghanistan.

Bilal is also wanted in prior attacks on the Chinese.

The report said the explosives-laden vehicle was brought through the Chaman border to Dara Zinda town in Dera Ismail Khan district for Pakistani Rs 0.25 million. Two facilitators were arrested from Balochistan, the report said. The report said some of those arrested had links with TTP militants in Pakistan and that raids were still ongoing across the country. PTI

The case against Imran

Court suspends jail term for Imran & wife in Toshakhana case, but they won't be freed



Imran Khan and wife Bushra Bibi are accused of retaining state gifts received when he was PM. Imran will not be released as he has been convicted in 2 other cases

and his wife was filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Pakistan's anti-corruption watchdog, last Dec accusing the couple for retaining a jewellery set received from the Saudi crown prince against an undervalued assessment. NAB claimed Imran and his wife received a total of 108 gifts from various heads of state and foreign dignitaries when he was PM from 2018 to 2022. In the case at hand, Imran is also accused of not disclosing assets from alleged sale of such state gifts valued at more than Pak Rs 14 crore.

HC said the Toshakhana sentences would remain suspended until it decided Imran's appeal case after the Eid holidays that begin in 10 days. "No evidence backs up this conviction," Imran's lawyer Ali Zafar told reporters, explaining why HC put the sentences on hold at the appeal's first hearing itself.

The trial court had also barred Imran and Bushra from holding any public office for 10 years and slapped a fine of Pak Rs 787 million (\$2.8 million) each.

The case against Imran

AROUND THE WORLD



POTLUCK: Marijuana campaigners in Germany lit celebratory fireworks on Monday as the country liberalised rules on cannabis. The new law legalises possession by adults of up to 25 grams of marijuana for recreational purposes and allows individuals to grow up to three plants on their own. Germany now has some of the most liberal cannabis laws in Europe, alongside Malta and Luxembourg, which legalised recreational use in 2021 and 2023, respectively.

Japan's royal family debuts on Insta as the oldest monarchy tries to woo youth



A QUEST FOR LIKES

Japan's imperial family made an Instagram debut with a barrage of posts on Monday, hoping to shake off their reclusive image and reach out to younger people on social media. The Imperial Household Agency, a govt agency in charge of the family's affairs, posted 60 photos and five videos showing Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako's public appearances over the past three months. The agency said they wanted the public to have a better understanding of the family's official duties. By Monday evening, their verified account Kunai-

cho_jp had more than 2,70,000 followers. So far, the images are limited to the family's official duties and do not include private or candid moments.

The Japanese imperial family's social media debut comes 15 years after Britain's royal family joined X, formerly Twitter, in 2009. Naruhito's father, Emperor Emeritus Akihito — who abdicated the throne in 2019 — and his wife were popular during their time. But currently, the royal family's fans largely belong to older generations.

US YouTuber released after being kidnapped in Haiti

An American YouTube personality who was kidnapped two weeks ago by a gang leader in Haiti was released over the weekend and was on his way home to the US on Monday. Adisson Pierre Maalouf, 26, had travelled from the neighbouring Dominican Republic to interview Jimmy Chérizier, a former police officer and gang leader known as Barbecue. Maalouf said online that he had been abducted by a rival gang leader and held in a "concrete shack surrounded by barbed wire".

TODAY'S FACE-OFF
RCB VS LSG
TV TIME: 7.30 PM
STAR SPORTS / JIOCINEMA

PLAYED 4



LAST FIVE MATCHES
VENUE: BENGALURU
ODDS
7/10 5/4

TIMES SPORT | THE TIMES OF INDIA, HYDERABAD

TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024

IPL 2024

“IT'S INSPIRATIONAL, NO QUESTION ABOUT IT. TO THINK THAT RISHabh HAD THE ABILITY TO DO THIS TONIGHT, AFTER THE INJURIES THAT HE SUSTAINED, IS UNBELIEVABLE. YOU'RE NOT A HUMAN BEING IF YOU'RE NOT INSPIRED BY HIM.”
—Shane Watson I
On Rishabh Pant's innings

A ROYAL THRASHING FOR MI

Boult, Chahal, Parag Star As Mumbai Suffer Hat-trick Of Losses

Gaurav.Gupta@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Smashing Gerald Coetze for back-to-back sixes over cover and then to mid-wicket, before sealing the chase with a top-edged four, Riyan Parag, following up on his scores of 43, 84 not out, finished with a sizzling 54 not out off 39 balls. Playing some regal shots while hitting five fours and three sixes, Parag made the difference in a low-scoring game, guiding the Rajasthan Royals to an emphatic six-wicket win over the Mumbai Indians on Monday night at the Wankhede Stadium. Parag's second fifty on the trot ensured that RR, who initially looked shaky while chasing 126, reached home with as many as 27 balls to spare.

Meanwhile, in a season which is turning out to be miserable for them with every match, MI having now lost their first three games in the season and are languishing at the bottom of the 10-team pool, with their net run rate a shoddy -1.423. In stark contrast, the Royals, having won all their three games so far, are now topping the table.

Thriving on a spicy pitch with pace and bounce, RR's left-arm pacers Trent Boult (3-22 in four overs) and Nandre Burger (2-32 in four overs) left MI limping at 20/4 in the fourth over; before seasoned leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal (3-11 in four overs) snuffed the life out of the latter half of the hosts' innings, which was restricted to 125/9.

125/9

Mumbai Indians' score is the lowest by any team in this edition of the IPL. The previous lowest was 143/8 by Gujarat Titans vs CSK in Chennai on March 26.

20

Yuzvendra Chahal has emulated Jasprit Bumrah's tally of 20 three-wicket hauls in the IPL.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar



ON FIRE! Trent Boult leaps after dismissing Rohit Sharma on Monday

KK Choudhary

wicket partnership in 36 balls between skipper Hardik Pandya (34, 21b, 6x4) and Tilak Varma (32, 29b, 2x6).

Put in to bat on a juicy pitch, the hosts were blown away right at the start by a fiery spell by Boult, whose triple strike in his first two overs revived memories of a similarly destructive spell that triggered India's defeat in the 2019 World Cup semifinal at Old Trafford, Manchester.

With the fifth and sixth ball of his first over, Boult scalped MI's former captain Rohit Sharma (caught brilliantly by RR captain Sanju Samson diving to his right) and Naman Dhir, who fell lbw while playing down the wrong line to an inswinging ball he had no clue about, for 'golden ducks.'

Boult now has taken 25 wickets in his first

over in the IPL—the maximum along with Sunrisers' pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

Rattled by the early blows, MI, in a poor decision caused more by panic perhaps, sent Dewald Brevis as an 'Impact Player' No 4, but the South African became the third MI batter on the night to be out for a first-ball duck, leaving his team tottering at 14 for three in the third over. Brevis played a poor stroke, throwing his bat at an outgoing Boult delivery to be caught at short third man.

The tall Burger then joined in the fun, having Ishan Kishan (16 off 14 balls) caught behind. At that point, MI looked to be in danger of being shot out for an embarrassing total, before Pandya and Varma saved them the blushes. However, that was when Chahal began to weave his magic.

Pandya can take heart from the fact that several star India cricketers, including Virat Kohli — during an IPL match in 2013 — and Harbhajan Singh, and on one occasion in a season in Ahmedabad and Hyderabad.

Pandya once Manjrekar announced his name. Even Rohit was seen asking the crowd to refrain from the booing. To Pandya and MI's relief, the crowd did cheer for the 30-year-old when he hammered six fours in his 21-ball 30-run cameo after MI were asked to bat first by the Royals. Since he took over the MI captaincy from Rohit, Pandya has been booted by the crowds in MI's first two matches of this IPL season in Ahmedabad and Hyderabad.

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F1 owner buys MotoGP

Liberty Media Strikes \$4.5 Bn Deal, May Draw Scrutiny From Antitrust Regulators

Paris: Formula One owners Liberty Media have agreed to buy MotoGP on Monday in a deal valued at around \$4.5 billion, the American company said.

MotoGP said in a statement that Liberty Media would acquire "approximately 86 percent" stake from Spain-based owners Dorna in a deal valued at 4.2 billion euros (\$4.5 billion).

The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024 subject to clearances and approvals by competition and foreign investment law authorities in various jurisdictions.

The deal may draw scrutiny from antitrust regulators. The buyout firm CVC Capital Partners Ltd. was forced to put MotoGP up for sale nearly two decades ago to gain antitrust approval from European regulators for its takeover of Formula 1 in 2005. MotoGP is planning to host 21 races across 17 countries in this year's season, according to the company statement.

Liberty will not be the first company to own both Formula One and MotoGP. Private equity firm CVC Capital Partners had owned both F1 and MotoGP but was forced to sell the motorcycle series to buy F1 after EU competition regulators raised objections.

"Liberty Media Corporation has announced an agreement to acquire MotoGP. MotoGP is the



MOTORSPORT MOGUL: Greg Maffei

pinnacle of two wheels," read a statement issued by MotoGP.

"Liberty Media will acquire approximately 86 percent of Dorna, with Dorna management retaining approximately 14 percent of their equity in the business.

"The transaction reflects an enterprise value for Dorna/MotoGP of EUR4.2 billion and an equity value of EUR3.5 billion, with MotoGP's existing debt balance expected to remain in place after close." Liberty were not the only company interested in acquiring Dorna.

According to a report last week in the Financial Times Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), owners of French champions Paris Saint-Germain, and TKO Group Hold-

ings, which comprises mixed martial arts organisation UFC and World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), had also held talks with Dorna.

However, it was Liberty who emerged the winners.

"We are thrilled to expand our portfolio of leading live sports and entertainment assets with the acquisition of MotoGP," said Greg Maffei, Liberty Media President and CEO.

"MotoGP is a global league with a loyal, enthusiastic fan base, captivating racing and a highly cash flow generative financial profile. Carmelo and his management team have built a great sporting spectacle that we can expand to a wider global audience."

THE NEW FORMULA

- US-based company buys 86% stake for \$4.5bn from Dorna
- Takeover subject to clearance and could attract scrutiny
- Canada Pension Plan Investment Board bought a 39% stake in Dorna from Bridgepoint in 2012

● The remaining shares were owned by Dorna management, whose stake has dropped to 14% following the takeover

Long serving CEO Carmelo Ezpeleta will remain in the post he has occupied since 1994 with the business headquarters remaining in Madrid. Ezpeleta said he was looking forward to the 21-race global championship evolving even further. AGENCIES

Sinner gets third-time lucky

Beats Dimitrov In Straight Sets To Win The Title

Miami: Jannik Sinner said he is enjoying every moment of his sensational start to the 2024 season after winning the Miami Open on Sunday for his third title of the year. The Australian Open champion Sinner previously finished as runner-up in Miami in 2021 and 2023.

The Italian thoroughly outplayed Daniil Medvedev in the semis and Grigor Dimitrov in the final to improve to 22-1 on the year and rise to a career-

MIAMI OPEN

best world No. 2. "This is a special moment," Sinner said after beating Dimitrov 6-3 6-1 in the final for his second Masters 1000 title.

"You never know if this is the last time or not. So you have to enjoy this for one day, and now a new chapter is coming, clay-court season is coming, so completely different."

"Let's see how I will play from now on. But for sure, the hard-court season until now has been very good."

Behind an improved serve and textbook shot-making, Sinner has been on a roll this season, winning the Australian Open in January for what is expected to be the first of

many Grand Slam titles. His only loss of the year came to Carlos Alcaraz in the semis at Indian Wells but after his triumph in South Florida, the Spaniard will now be looking up to his rival in the rankings come Monday.

"Being number two, it's an amazing feeling," Sinner said. "I never thought to come to this point. I come from a very normal family. My dad is still working, as my mom, too. For me sport is one thing and life is different." Sinner's coach Darren Cahill said that the 22-year-old was loving life but also staying grounded.

"He appreciates every single moment that is happening to him." —REUTERS



66 I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE NUMBER TWO IN THE WORLD. IT IS JUST A NUMBER, FOR ME THE MOST IMPORTANT IS TRYING TO EXECUTE MY GAMEPLAN AND I MANAGED TO DO THAT." —Jannik Sinner

TIMES NATION

By changing name, you can't own Arunachal: EAM to China

This Is The 4th Time China Has Released Names



If I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was an Indian state, is an Indian state and will remain so in the future, said EAM S Jaishankar

This is the fourth time China has released a list of new names for villages in the north-eastern state. After China objected to PM Modi's visit to the state earlier this year, India has repeatedly reminded China that such baseless claims won't change the reality that the state is and will always be a part of India.

The official website of the Chinese ministry posted 30 additional names for the region. Set to take effect from May 1, the implementation measures stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization".

The Chinese civil affairs ministry released the first list of "standardised names"

India investigating info shared by US: EAM on Garcetti's Pannun remarks

New Delhi: Without revealing anything about the outcome of the probe into the US murder-for-hire charges, foreign minister S Jaishankar reiterated on Monday that India is investigating the information shared by US authorities because it involves India's own "national security interests". Jaishankar was responding to US ambassador Eric Garcetti's remarks on the issue a day earlier in which he had said that no govt or govt employee can be involved in the alleged assassination of "one of your own citizens". That's just an unacceptable red line, he had said.

The US has blamed an identified but unnamed Indian official for the foiled plot to assassinate Khalistan leader and US national Gurpartwan Singh Pannun.

Asked about Garcetti's comments, Jaishankar said, "I will speak about the position of our govt."

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FREE-KICKS

RODRIGO SCORES A BRACE IN VINICIUS' ABSENCE, POWERS REAL

Madrid: Rodrygo thrived in the absence of Vinicius Junior as Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 2-0 to keep an eight-point lead over Barcelona in the Spanish league.

Rodrygo scored both goals and Madrid maintained their comfortable lead at the top after Barcelona had won 1-0 at Las Palmas on Saturday. Vinicius didn't play because of a suspension over yellow cards. Jude

Bellingham set up Rodrygo's second goal in Madrid's third straight league win.

Rodrygo's opener came with a beautiful shot into the top corner

from just outside the area eight minutes into the match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. "He played very well, made the difference with some high-quality plays," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said about Rodrygo.

VITINHA AND RAMOS STRIKES SECURE 2-0 WIN FOR 10-MAN PSG AT MARSEILLE

Marseille: Vitinha and Goncalo Ramos scored in the second half as 10-man Paris St Germain overcame early jitters to secure a 2-0 win and hand Marseille their first home loss of the season in Ligue 1 on Sunday.

PSG's league double over their rivals took them to 62 points and put them 12 points clear of second-placed Brest, who won 1-0 at Lorient earlier in the day.

"Yes, I'm happy with the result, because it's a classic," PSG manager Luis Enrique said. "We know it's special for our supporters. We knew the pressure in this stadium where they were undefeated.

"There's always this desire to be unpredictable for opponents," Enrique said.

"I liked what I saw in terms of occupying space. If you don't know where my players are going to play, it's a surprise."

CHELSEA BOSS HAYES HITS OUT AT ARSENAL'S EIDEVALL OVER 'MALE AGGRESSION'

London: Chelsea manager Emma Hayes criticised Arsenal counterpart Jonas Eidevall for displaying "male aggression" after he had a heated exchange with midfielder Erin Cuthbert during the Women's League Cup final.

Cuthbert exchanged words with Eidevall when the Chelsea midfielder went over to the touchline to take a throw-in extra time as she side chased the game at Molineux. Arsenal's Stina Blackstenius' goal in the 116th minute secured the 1-0 victory for Eidevall's team.

"I think there's a way to behave on the side of the pitch and not for the first time, I've been in women's football a long time and I don't think we should tolerate male aggression like we did today," said Hayes, who appeared to push the Arsenal manager away as they shook hands after the final whistle. —AGENCIES

Kohinoor
BIRYANI KIT

Make Restaurant Style Biryani at Home

CITY SPORT

Double delight for Arun Kumar

Arun Kumar won the 40+ singles and doubles titles in the 17th Hyderabad Open tennis tournament at the Lake View Academy on Monday. Arun defeated CV Anand 10-4 in the singles final. Arun and Anand downed L Srinivas and Raju 10-7 in the doubles final.

Results (finals): 30+: Surya Pavan bt Manjunath 10-5. Doubles: Manjunath/Suresh bt Nikhil/Shriram 10-6. 40+: Arun Kumar bt CV Anand 10-4. Doubles: CV Anand/Arun Kumar bt L Srinivas/Raju 10-7.

50+: Narasimha Reddy bt Manikandan 10-9. Doubles: Ajay/Rahul bt Murthy/Manish 10-5. 60+: Ram Reddy bt Meher 10-3. Doubles: Anand Swaroop/Srinivas bt Ramana/Meher 10-6. 70+: Sairam/Pavan bt Gajapathy 10-7. Doubles: Gajapathy/Sairamambu bt Madanmohan/Satyaranjan Singh 10-5.

Bharat Kumar triumphs

Bharat Kumar Reddy won the 6th one-day rapid prize money chess tournament at the Race Academy, Madhapur. The FIDE rated player secured six points.

Shilpa bags silver
Shilpa Diggai of Telangana bagged silver in the 40-44 age group and 90kg category at the World powerlifting congress national championship in Noida.

Shilpa lifted 85kg squat, 40kg benchpress and 102.5 deadlift. Ruchi of Delhi bagged gold.

National masters TT
The UTT 30th National Masters table tennis championship will be held at the Saroor Nagar Stadium from April 3 to 8. Telangana State TT association, TTFI and the Indian veterans table tennis committee will be conducting this tournament for age groups of 39+ to 79+ in team events, singles, doubles and mixed doubles.

Mumbai City trounce Hyderabad FC

Hyderabad: Mumbai City FC strengthened their position at the top of the Indian Super League table with a clinical 3-0 victory against Hyderabad FC at the Gachibowli Stadium on Monday. The Islanders have gotten to 44 points from 20 games with this victory, five ahead of the second-placed Mohun Bagan Super Giant (39 from 18 matches). The visitors swept aside the challenge by Hyderabad FC pretty convincingly, who must have been buoyant after notching their first win of the campaign following their 1-0 victory against Chennaiyin FC in their previous fixture. Vikram Partap Singh was the provider by rounding off a breath-taking counter by the Islanders in the 16th minute. As the 90th minute approached, Vikram earned a spot-kick, which Diaz stepped up to take and convert. PTI

No coercive steps against Cong over tax demand: I-T

From PTI

Initially, solicitor general Tushar Mehta said notices had been issued for recovery of Rs 1,700 crore but senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi said the total amount was around Rs 3,500 crore which was accepted by the SG. Singhvi appreciated the I-T department for its gracious approach. The court noted I-T department's stand; the matter has been listed for hearing on July 24.

The SG said although the present appeal was not related to the recent tax notices issued to Congress, I-T department has decided to defer coercive steps in view of impending elections.

The court also clarified that the concession by I-T department was made without prejudice to the right and the contention of the department and the Rs 3,500 crore demand was not strictly relatable to the controversy in this appeal.

The I-T department's stand comes following protests from Congress which alleged that its accounts were frozen — a charge the I-T has department has denied — as part of BJP's conspiracy to rig elections by financially crippling the opponent. The I-T department has justified its move to recover tax arrears and interest by citing Congress' failure to file returns and not following the appeal process.

Recording the SG's statement that the department would keep its order in abeyance till the next date of hearing, the bench said in its order, "The issues which arise in these appeals are yet to be adjudicated upon but having regard to the situation now, the (income tax) department does not wish to precipitate the matter and (says) that no coercive steps will be taken with regard to Rs 3,500 crore approximately. List the matter on second week of July."

This Is The 4th Time China Has Released Names

TNN & AGENCIES



If I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was an Indian state, is an Indian state and will remain so in the future, said EAM S Jaishankar

This is the fourth time China has released a list of new names for villages in the north-eastern state. After China objected to PM Modi's visit to the state earlier this year, India has repeatedly reminded China that such baseless claims won't change the reality that the state is and will always be a part of India.

The official website of the Chinese ministry posted 30 additional names for the region. Set to take effect from May 1, the implementation measures stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization".

The Chinese civil affairs ministry released the first list of "standardised names"

India investigating info shared by US: EAM on Garcetti's Pannun remarks

New Delhi: Without revealing anything about the outcome of the probe into the US murder-for-hire charges, foreign minister S Jaishankar reiterated on Monday that India is investigating the information shared by US authorities because it involves India's own "national security interests". Jaishankar was responding to US ambassador Eric Garcetti's remarks on the issue a day earlier in which he had said that no govt or govt employee can be involved in the alleged assassination of "one of your own citizens". That's just an unacceptable red line, he had said.

The US has blamed an identified but unnamed Indian official for the foiled plot to assassinate Khalistan leader and US national Gurpartwan Singh Pannun.

Asked about Garcetti's comments, Jaishankar said, "I will speak about the position of our govt."

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CJI lauds BNSS as crucial step towards modern justice system

From PTI

"Instances of raids conducted and incidents of unwarranted confiscation of personal devices highlight the pressing need to strike a balance between investigative imperatives and individual privacy rights," the CJI said, in the presence of home secretary Ajay Bhalla, CBI director Praveen Sood, CVC P K Sriv