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2023 KVIC

HC orders NIA probe into Ram Navami violence in Bengal

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, APRIL 27

THE CALCUTTA High Court Thursday ordered a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into violence during Ram Navami processions in several West Bengal localities including Rishra in Hooghly district, Shibpur in Howrah, and Dalkola in South Dinajpur.

The High Court was hearing a PIL filed by BJP's Suvedu Adhikari who is Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly. Adhikary has alleged that several bombs were hurled, leaving many injured, including police personnel.

A division bench, headed by Acting Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court T S Sivagnanam, ordered: "The writ petitions are disposed of by directing the police concerned to ensure that all FIRs, documents, materials, CCTV footage, etc be immediately handed over to the authority of

E Boost to BJP attack on govt

THE ORDER will put further pressure on the state government, which has been facing opposition heat over its handling of the Ram Navami violence. It also comes as an indictment of the state police, and will provide fresh ammo to the BJP.

the NIA, who on receipt of all the entire materials shall commence investigation and proceed in accordance with the law."

The bench gave the police two weeks to comply.

"The Hon'ble Supreme Court has time and again dealt with the issue under what circumstances the investigation can be transferred from the state investigating agency to any other independent investigating agency

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Security personnel conduct a route march at Dhankoi near Kaliaganj on Thursday. Partha Paul

In tense Kaliaganj, resident killed, family says police shot him

SWEETY KUMARI
RADHIKAPUR (KALIAGANJ), APRIL 27

AMAN was shot dead, allegedly by police, in Kaliaganj in West Bengal's North Dinajpur early Thursday morning, sparking a fresh war of words between the BJP and the ruling TMC.

The victim, Mrityunjay Barman (30), was a resident of Chandgaon, a village under the Radhikapur gram panchayat in Kaliaganj. According to his family, he was shot dead outside his home between 2 am and 2.30

am, allegedly by a policeman who was part of a search team.

His killing comes a day after a police station in Kaliaganj was set on fire by a mob, prompting a police crackdown. The village has been on edge ever since a 17-year-old girl died last week, and her family alleged that she had been raped. Since then, protesters have clashed with police on two occasions, including on Tuesday when 17 personnel were injured and the police station set ablaze.

Police have not commented on Barman's killing so far — calls

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'FRANK DISCUSSIONS' WITH GENERAL LI

Violation of pacts eroded basis of bilateral ties: Rajnath to China

Defence Minister says LAC disengagement will be followed with de-escalation

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

IN A strongly-worded public articulation of the state of Sino-Indian bilateral ties, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told General Li Shangfu, the visiting Chinese State Councillor and Minister of National Defence, Thursday that Beijing's "violation of existing agreements has eroded the entire basis of bilateral relations".

Referring to the nearly three-year military standoff along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, Singh said "all issues at the LAC need to be resolved in accordance with existing bilateral agreements and commitments" and "disengagement at the border will logically be followed with de-escalation".

The sharply-worded public



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his Chinese counterpart Li Shangfu in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

statement that "the entire basis of bilateral relations" has been "eroded" is not common during bilateral meetings between Defence Ministers of the two countries.

The last time, when Singh met the then Chinese Defence

Minister General Wei Fenghe in September 2020, he had said that actions of the Chinese troops, including amassing a large number of troops, their aggressive behaviour and attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo, were in violation of bilateral agreements.

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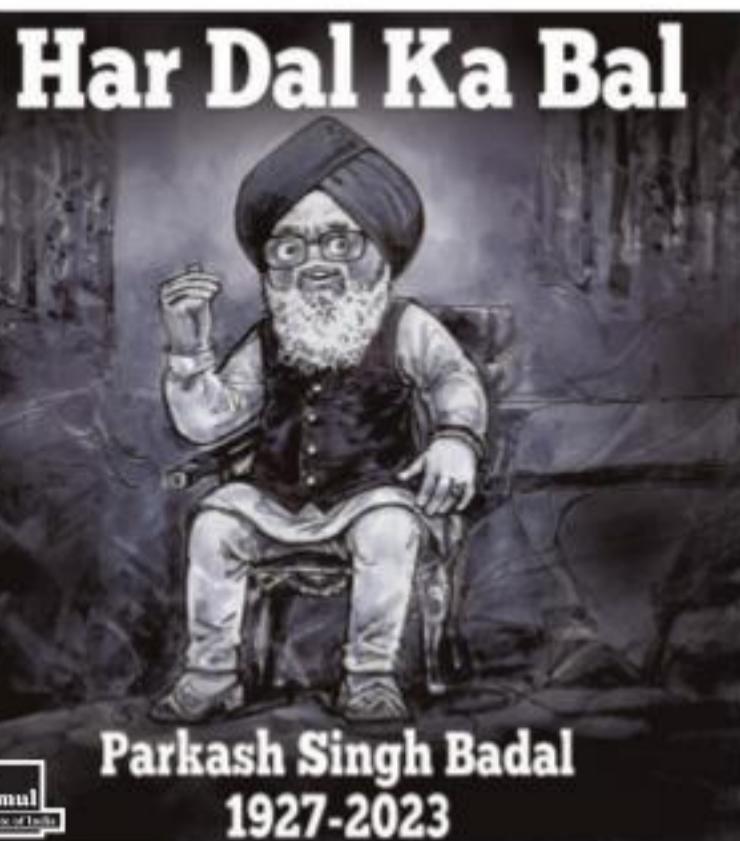
In a statement after the bilateral meeting in New Delhi Thursday, the Ministry of Defence said that the two ministers had "frank discussions about the developments in the India-China border areas as well as bilateral relations".

It said Singh "categorically conveyed that development of relations between India and China is premised on prevalence of peace and tranquillity at the borders".

Singh told Li that "all issues at the LAC need to be resolved in accordance with existing bilateral agreements and commitments," the Ministry stated.

"He reiterated that violation of existing agreements has eroded the entire basis of bilateral relations and disengagement at the border will logically be followed with de-escalation," it said.

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WRESTLERS' PROTEST

Vinesh asks why top cricketers, others silent: 'Are you so afraid of the system?'

They backed Black Lives Matter... may be worried about effect on brand deals'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27



Pained: Vinesh Phogat

Idea Exchange

Edited transcript to appear on Monday, May 1

AGITATION NOT GOOD FOR SPORT: P T USHA

PAGE 14

Showed their support. Don't we deserve even that much," she asked.

Vinesh said she and Bajrang had written open letters and posted videos, requesting sportspersons to speak up. "But we don't know what they are afraid of. I understand that they may be concerned that this could affect their sponsorship and brand endorsement deals. Maybe that's why they are afraid to associate themselves with athletes who are protesting. But it pains me," she said.

"You do come forward to congratulate us when we win

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Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel at the funeral of the security personnel killed in the Maoist attack in Dantewada. PTI

Maoist who gave up gun after 3 years, to jawan enlisted last month: Chhattisgarh bids farewell

JAYPRakash Naidu
DANTEWADA, APRIL 27

AT THE Karli police lines in Dantewada Thursday, as Chhattisgarh bid farewell to 10 personnel of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and their driver killed a day earlier in an IED blast triggered by Maoists, Boti Ram Mandavi couldn't help

recall how cousin Hariram Mandavi, one of the jawans killed, had abandoned Mao barely four years ago to emerge from the jungles and enlist with the police.

Hariram, his cousin said, was in the Maoist ranks for three years. Fearing death, he surrendered to police. He joined the force and was with the DRG (the state anti-Naxal force) for three years," Boti Ram said.

year-old from Dantewada joined the force in 2020.

"Death was always a possibility for him, never mind which side he chose to be on. He had joined the Naxals fearing that police would arrest him. He later fought with the Naxals and surrendered to police. He joined the force and was with the DRG (the state anti-Naxal force) for three years," Boti Ram said.

At the police lines where the force gave the last salute to the slain personnel, Hariram's wife was inconsolable. He leaves behind a daughter and two sons.

The story of Raju Ram Kartam, a 24-year-old also killed in the Maoist attack, is quite similar. Kartam surrendered to police in 2021 and joined the force a year later. A family member

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Kharge says Modi 'like a poisonous snake', then clarifies; BJP hits back

AKRAM M
GOKAK (KARNATAKA), APRIL 27

CONGRESS PRESIDENT M Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "like a poisonous snake", triggering sharp reactions from the BJP even as he sought to clarify that his remarks were against the BJP ideology, and it wasn't a personal attack on any individual. Addressing an election rally

in Ron, in Gadag district, Kharge said in Kannada: "Modi is like a poisonous snake. Don't try to lick this snake to check whether it is venomous or not. If you taste it, you are dead."

He later issued a clarification, saying he meant that the BJP was like a snake. "I did not call him (Modi) that. I have said earlier that I do not make personal attacks. What I said was that the (BJP) ideology was poisonous. If

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge at an event in Gadag, Karnataka, on Thursday. PTI

'Conman' held in UP duped people by faking PMO access, got Rs 6 cr donation from industrialist: FIR

ASAD REHMAN & JIGNASA SINHA
LUCKNOW, NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

SANJAY RAI 'Sherpuria', the alleged conman arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) on Wednesday, claimed to live at "1, Beside Race Course, Safdarjung Rd", used photos of the Prime Minister and Union Ministers to flaunt his connections, and collected Rs 6 crore from a prominent Delhi industrialist as donation for a trust, according to an FIR filed by

the police.

A case against Rai was lodged

at Lucknow's Vibhuti Khand police station on Tuesday, and he was arrested by the STF on Wednesday over allegations of collecting money worth crores from people and organisations by forging documents that falsely showed a connection to the Prime Minister's Office.

The FIR was lodged based on a complaint by Inspector Sachin Kumar. Rai has been booked under IPC Sections 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery of valuable security, will, etc), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 469 (forgery for purpose of harming reputa-

tion) and under the Information Technology Act.

According to the FIR, Rai told the police during questioning that the Youth Rural Entrepreneur Foundation, which he promoted on social media, received Rs 5 crore (January 21, 2023) and Rs 1 crore (January 23, 2023) in its bank account. This money was reportedly received from Dalmia Family Trust Office, the family office of industrialist Gaurav Dalmia.

Sources close to the trust office told The Indian Express the

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PAGE 1
ANCHOR

After jail relief, cold feet: Anand Mohan gets quiet, 3 am release

Heads to undisclosed location as supporters wait in Bihar village

SANTOSH SINGH
SAHARSA, APRIL 27

GIVEN all the brouhaha around it, murder convict Anand Mohan Singh's premature release from Saharsa jail was expected to be a "grand affair". Ironically, it was this brouhaha that finally forced the authorities' hand, pushing them to keep it as low key as possible.

While opposition BJP has made some polite noises, con-

sious of Anand Mohan's clout as a Rajput leader, IAS officers' association apart from Dalit organisations and BSP chief Mayawati have been vocal in questioning the tweak in the state jail manual that allowed Anand Mohan to walk out in the midst of a life term awarded to him in 2007 for the killing of Dalit IAS officer G Krishnaih.

On Thursday, the Mahagathbandhan government chose discretion as the best form

of valour. First, to beat the crowds, Anand Mohan was released in the dead of night, around 3 am. After his release, Anand

with the media earlier led to believe that he would be walking out of jail only around 11 am. Sources said the state government had directed the

Saharsa administration to impress upon Anand Mohan not to carry out any procession to mark his release, and consequently not even posters were seen around town welcoming him. Anand Mohan's wife and son are both leaders of the RJD — which is part of the Mahagathbandhan government — and Anand Mohan reportedly wanted to make a round of Saharsa town with family members and supporters.

What also appears to have forced the change in government stance was the heavy presence of media at Saharsa — eager to capture the return of one of Bihar's most famous muscle-

men-politicians.

Anand Mohan's son and RJD MLA Chetan Anand, who briefly met the media, said his father was scheduled to visit their native village Pachgachhia, 13 km from Saharsa, next.

This set off hundreds of supporters on the road between Saharsa and Pachgachhia, seeking updates on him.

But by 5 pm, it was clear that

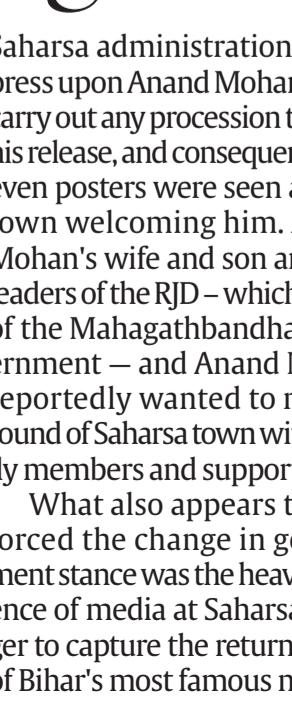
Anand Mohan was not coming. A supporter consoled himself, saying: "There could be security concerns as well... The kind of incident (Atiq Ahmed's killing) that happened in Uttar Pradesh has raised alarm among

public figures."

Sources said Anand Mohan might not stay at Saharsa either and leave for Patna on Thursday night, with clear instructions by top leaders of the Mahagathbandhan to him to "completely avoid media". Mohan is likely to leave for Dehradun via Delhi on Friday.

Over at Patna, the Bihar government fielded Chief Secretary Amir Subhani to explain the government's stand over the release of Anand Mohan and 26 others. "Giving remission has always been a healthy precedent and it is often ratified by courts as well.

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Jaipur

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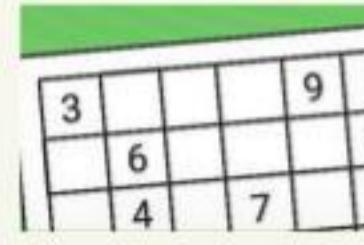
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RICHARD MADDEN ON CITADEL, WORKING WITH PRIYANKA CHOPRA AND LIFE POST GAME OF THRONES: 'I AM UNDER PRESSURE ALL THE TIME'

Richard Madden gained worldwide popularity with the fan favorite character Robb Stark on Game of Thrones. He will be next seen in Citadel, co-starring Priyanka Chopra.

TECHNOLOGY**WE TOOK MG COMET EV ON A DELHI DRIVE**

The tiny car certainly comes with perks and advantages

PUZZLES AND GAMES

ENJOY DAILY CROSSWORDS AND SUDOKU FROM THE INDIAN EXPRESS

EXPRESS AUDIO
For marriage equality, Badal's legacy, and Bihar tweaks jail rules

In 3 Things today, we discuss the arguments that have been made in the favour of marriage equality, former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal's legacy and why Bihar tweaked its jail rules

FROM PAGE ONEFULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INIANEXPRESS.COM**• Anand Mohan gets quiet**

In the last six years, 698 people have been released after following the standard and set process of law. As for Anand Mohan, he has spent 15 years, nine months and 25 days in jail," said Subhani, who was accompanied at a press conference by Home Department Additional Chief Secretary Chaitanya Prasad and IG (Prisons) S K Ashok.

Reacting to opposition to the "special waiver" given to Anand Mohan, by dropping a clause in the jail manual that said accused "in murder of civil servants on duty" could not be eligible for remission before 20 years, the Chief Secretary said: "A civil servant does not mean only an IAS officer but all government employees."

It was only close to his Pachgachia village that there were visible signs welcoming Anand Mohan. A banner put up by 'Friends of Anand, Bihar' read: "Suswagatam shere-Bihar (welcome, lion of Bihar)". It went on to paraphrase Ernest Hemingway, in Hindi: "Satya pareshan ho sakta hai, parajit nahin (Truth can be harassed, not defeated)".

There were sundry vehicles carrying garlands and displaying banners of "Sher-e-Mohan", who returned disappointed after realising Anand Mohan was not coming.

Violation of pacts eroded basis of bilateral ties: Rajnath to China

According to government sources privy to the conversation, Singh told Li that India wants to improve relations with China, but military cooperation between the two countries can progress only if peace and tranquillity are established at the boundary.

Singh, sources said, conveyed that after disengagement at the LAC, there should be movement towards de-escalation, and that he is hopeful of a positive response.

That didn't mean there couldn't be a feast. Hence, hundreds of supporters, who had been visiting Pachgachia since Wednesday evening, were treated to puri-subzi, ladaos and rosogollas.

Pawan Kumar Gupta, who came from a neighbouring village, said: "We wonder at those who are calling Anand Mohan anti-Dalit. My family is an EBC (extremely backward class), but we have been his supporters for three generations

• In setback to TMC govt, HC orders NIA probe into Ram Navami violence

like CBI. It has been held that the power of transferring such investigation must be in rare and exceptional cases, where the court finds it necessary in order to do justice between the parties and to instil confidence in the public mind, or where investigation by the state police lacks credibility and (where transferring the probe is) necessary for having 'a fair, honest and complete investigation', and particularly when it is imperative to retain public confidence in the impartial working of the state agencies," the bench said.

"In the cases on hand, we prima facie find that there has been a deliberate attempt on the part of the police concerned not to register any offence under the provisions of the Explosives Substances Act," it stated.

Clashes over three days were reported from Hooghly and Dalkhola district as well. In Rishra, the mob allegedly hurled

crude bombs at local trains and police vehicles.

The court noted from a report by the police that the situation in Rishra had deteriorated to such an extent that internet services had to be suspended. The BJP welcomed the High Court's decision, with state unit president Sukanta Majumder tweeting, "These riots were pre-planned and instigated with the support of TMC govt. It was triggered by the inflammatory speech of the CM."

BJP state co-incharge Amit Malviya, in a Twitter post, said: "Let us not forget that communal violence broke out on Ram Navami after Mamata Banerjee delivered a provocative speech. She then absolved the minority community of transgression, prejudicing the law enforcement

agencies. However, no violence was reported on Hanumanotsav, after Central forces were deployed. Mamata is burning down Bengal to further her repressive politics of appeasement."

Adhikari, the petitioner, said "the Guardian of the Constitution had instilled confidence in the public once again". TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, meanwhile, said "Central agencies always safeguard the BJP".

Earlier too, the NIA has taken over probes in the state. An investigation by the agency was ordered into the Momimpur riots in October last year. The Home Ministry had also ordered an NIA investigation into a bomb attack at Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh's house in September 2020.

• Vinesh asks why top cricketers, others silent'

something. Even the cricketers tweet when that happens. *Abhi kya ho gaya?* (What has happened now?) Are you so afraid of the system? Or maybe there's something fishy going on there too? (*Unke daal mein bhi kaala hai, yeh maan ke chale hum?*)," she said.

Saying that the responsibility of "cleaning up the system" lies with the country's leading athletes, for the benefit of the next generation, the two-time World Championship medalist said the "entire system will collapse if all the athletes sit here in protest" and those running it "won't be able to sleep peacefully".

"But if the big athletes remain silent, then what's the point of anything at all? Every sports federation has a problem and many athletes are my friends as well. But there should be no pretensions. I go for their

brand collaborations... can't you put one post saying there should be justice for us. That's all we request," she said. "If we don't deserve their support in these times of struggle then, God willing, if we win a medal tomorrow - and we will work very hard for it - don't come to congratulate us. Don't say you had faith in our abilities because you didn't - that's why you are doubting us now," she said.

While politicians and khap leaders have made their way to the protest site at Jantar Mantar, the wrestlers have received little support from the sporting fraternity.

On Thursday, former India cricket captain Kapil Dev posted a picture of the three wrestlers on his social media handle, with a caption: "Will they ever get justice?"

A day before, Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra ex-

• Chhattisgarh bids farewell

said Kartam used to run a general store in his village Kawasipara under the Badegudra panchayat in Dantewada.

"There were allegations that he was helping the Naxals. On the other hand, there were whispers that he was a mukhlbir (police informer). He felt threatened, that he would be killed if he continued to live in the village. He left his parents and came to Dantewada city where he surrendered. His parents still live in the village. He married last year and has a son," Raju's uncle Gangaram Sodi said.

Another jawan, Joga Sodi, 33, who died in the attack, had joined the DRG in 2017. His brother is in jail for allegedly taking part in Naxal activity. Joga is survived by his wife, twin sons born earlier this year, and two daughters of age 6 and 3.

Joga's brother, a graduate, is in jail. "A few months ago, police caught Sonida in Sukma and said he bought some products online which were used by Naxals," his wife Hirima Sodi said.

Among the dead was a civilian

driver, Dhaniram Yadav. The 35-year-old had driven vehicles carrying police personnel multiple times in the past. Bhojraj Yadav, his uncle, said, "He was the sole breadwinner. He is survived by his wife, a 12-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. We hope the government grants a job."

Another jawan, Dulgo Mandavi, 22, joined the DRG on March 6 this year. Married three years ago, he leaves behind his wife and son.

Thirty-four-year-old Santosh Tamio is survived by his wife and a two-year-old son. He had been with the DRG since 2017. "He studied till SSC. He had told his parents he would get married only after he gets a job," recalled his son Ranjeet Tamio.

Twenty-three-year-old jawan Jagdish Kowasi, also killed in the attack, had joined the force in March last year. "We were celebrating his birthday on May 10. We were also thinking that we should get him married. He is survived by his parents and two brothers," his relative Rakesh Kowasi said.

His wife Gauri (30) said: "We reached on Sunday for a wedding in the family. After having dinner on Wednesday night, we were sleeping when we heard people shouting. My husband stepped out and soon someone told me that he had been shot dead. He

received a bullet injury to his chest. He was lying motionless at the gate."

The death came a day after police started a crackdown on those they believe were involved in Tuesday's arson at the Kaliaganj police station.

Internet services have been suspended for at least three days in Kaliaganj, where CrPC section 144 is already in force.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, the victim's father, Rabindranath Barman (65), said: "Is this what you call politics? Killing innocent people? Police shot my son and left him in hospital. They came in five vehicles but didn't help us take him to the hospital."

Mritunjay had been working at a construction company in Siliguri since 2011 and would often visit his village.

His wife Gauri (30) said: "We reached on Sunday for a wedding in the family. After having dinner on Wednesday night, we were sleeping when we heard people shouting. My husband stepped out and soon someone told me that he had been shot dead. He

• 'Conman' held in UP duped people by faking PMO access: FIR

group has made donations of over Rs 100 crore to charity organisations over the last 6-7 years. They said while Rai had introduced them to the Youth Rural Entrepreneur Foundation, he had claimed he was not formally associated with it.

The complainant, the inspector has alleged that for several years, Rai has been accumulating money through fraud and cheating. The complaint states that Rai has been the director of several companies that have defaulted on bank payments.

"He created multiple fake IDs under different names as well as dummy companies, and kept his trusted people as directors in these companies," reads the complaint.

The complaint says that "his primary work is to collect money by telling them (his alleged victims) that he has reach in government and with senior officials". "He is also involved in money laundering, hawala, and tax evasion," reads the complaint.

The complaint alleges that Rai would post photos of himself on social media with the Prime Minister and Union Ministers, and made material gains using these posts.

The complaint states that Rai was arrested from Kanpur railway station and brought to the STF office in Lucknow.

The FIR states that when Rai's belongings were checked, it was found that he was carrying two Aadhaar cards. "While one Aadhaar had the address of DLF phase 3, Gurgaon, the other had an address of Central Delhi - House number 1, Near DID Safdarjung Road, Delhi Riding Club, Central Delhi," reads the complaint.

His website, however, lists his address as "1, Beside Race Course, Safdarjung Rd". When The Indian Express visited the listed address, it found carts and cycles which police said he gave to vendors to sell food and drinks. Guards outside the house said they had not seen him for a fortnight and that he often travels for work.

The FIR also states that Rai had membership cards of Delhi Gymkhana Club, YMCA International Centre, and Club 19, and a movement pass with the stamp of a Deputy Commissioner of Police.

"A total of Rs 50,980 was recovered from him and the mobile phones recovered from him showed different social media accounts being used, and there were photos on these accounts with several important persons," states the complaint, adding that photos and posts of Rai on social media with UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, which police said is morphed.

Last week, the UP STF lodged an FIR against Kashif saying he had been posting misleading content for over two years and that the "reputation of the Prime Minister and other central ministers is getting damaged".

His location was traced and he was arrested while driving a black Mercedes and carrying three iPhones.

"It was during the search and interrogation that we found a modus operandi that was similar to Rai's. He said they are associates and Rai guided him on how to make money," claimed an STF officer.

The FIR mentions that Kashif forged invites to lunches, ceremonies and exclusive events hosted by the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers and other leaders. During interrogation, he revealed that his father used to run a music and news channel a few years ago which suffered losses. To recover, he told police he started "editing" his photos with leaders and posting them to dupe people.

post, said, "Trigger happy 'Mamata' police raided the house of a BJP Panchayet Samiti Member Bishnu Barman at 2:30 am but did not find him. They brutally shot dead a Rajbanshi young man named Mrityunjay Barman. This is tyranny and state terror at its worst form and Mamata Banerjee is merrymaking like Emperor Nero while the state is burning and sliding into a phase of civil unrest."

"Last afternoon during a press conference, Mamata Banerjee had declared a war against the people of Kaliaganj and within hours, the police complied with her. She will have to take ownership of this brutal murder by the state. The people should rise democratically by raising their voice against such internecine violence and bloodshed," he said.

On Wednesday, Chief Minister Banerjee had blamed the Opposition BJP for the vandalism of the police station Tuesday and alleged that outsiders had been brought to foul

ment trouble.

Classifieds**EXPRESS EDUCATION****LAW AMBITION LAW INSTITUTE****JUDICIARY****Offline Morning : 25 April****Online Evening : 27 April****Weekend Morning : 21 May****Offline Evening : 20 June****8800660301 / 2140****www.ambitionlawinstitute.com****Contact for Advt. Booking: M/s Friends Publicity Service****(M): 9212665841, 9212008155**

'Made coffee using toilet water': actor recounts prison life in Sharjah

MOHAMED THAVER
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

BORIVALI-BASED ACTOR Chrisann Pereira, 27, who was lodged in a Sharjah prison in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after she was framed in a drugs smuggling case, in a letter recounted the harrowing time she went through.

She said during her 26 days in jail, she washed her hair with detergent powder Tide and made coffee using toilet water. The actor was released on Wednesday evening and is expected to reach India soon.

"Dear Warriors, It took me three weeks and five days to find pen and paper in jail. After I washed my hair with Tide and made coffee using toilet water, I watched Bollywood movies, sometimes with tears in my eyes knowing my ambition brought me here. I sometimes smile at our culture, our movies and the familiar faces on TV. I feel proud to be an Indian and belong to the Indian film industry," the letter read.

The actor thanked her family, friends, police, churches, media and those who believed in her innocence for giving her hope. "You are the real warriors while I am just a pawn in this dirty game played by these 'Monsters'. I am forever grateful to everyone who tweeted and reshared my story to arrest the real criminals facilitating international organised crime. We are a great powerful nation and I cannot wait to return home," she said in the letter.

"Thank you for saving my life and the lives of other innocent people who fell prey to this scam," she concluded.

Pereira was put behind bars in Sharjah on April 1 after a Borivali-based bakery owner, Anthony Paul (35), allegedly framed her in a narcotics case.

Sacrifice won't go in vain: CM Baghel vows to intensify fight against Maoists

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DANTEWADA, APRIL 27

CHHATTISGARH CHIEF Minister Bhupesh Baghel said Thursday that the sacrifice of the 10 personnel of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and a private driver will not go in vain as he vowed to continue the fight against Maoists with more intensity.

Chief Minister Baghel made the remarks as he attended the final salute ceremony for the DRG personnel and the driver, who were killed in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast carried out by Maoists Wednesday. The 11 people were returning to the Dantewada district headquarters after conducting an anti-Maoist operation when they were killed in the IED blast on Aranpur road, around 50 km from the headquarters. Around 40 to 50 kg of explosives were used and the impact shattered the vehicle leaving a 20-foot-wide crater on the road.



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel talks to relatives of police personnel, who were killed in an IED attack by Maoists, during a wreath-laying ceremony in Dantewada on Thursday. PTI

The final salute ceremony was held at the Karli police lines where Baghel along with other officials carried the coffin of one of the jawans on his shoulders and placed it in an ambulance to be taken to his residence. The family members, including the wives and over a dozen children, of the deceased jawans were also

present during the ceremony.

After the ceremony, Baghel told reporters, "Our men died fighting. Their sacrifice will not go in vain and we will now intensify our fight against them (Maoists)."

The chief minister said the Maoists are frustrated as the police are entering deep inside the

jungles of South Bastar like Jagargunda and Dornapal leaving them no place to hide. "These places (Jagargunda and Dornapal in Sukma) were seen as the headquarters of their leader Hidma. The national park area here is under our control. Now, they have no safe places left to go and are surrounded by all sides. They have no areas to hide in Dantewada, Sukma and Bijapur. Whenever we get information on Naxal's presence, we have acted on it," said Baghel.

"The IED blast took place after two years. Last time, too, our jawans died fighting ... but the Maoists had suffered more damage. This time it was a matter of opportunity," he said.

The chief minister pointed out the government is constructing small roads, police camps, Public Distribution System (PDS) schools, and Anganwadis. "So, the trust of people has increased towards government and Maoists are getting pushed to a corner," he said.

Ex-Hindu College ad hoc lecturer dies by suicide, students protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

A 33-YEAR-OLD displaced ad-hoc teacher from Delhi University (DU) allegedly died by suicide at his residence in Delhi's Rani Bagh Wednesday. Police said the teacher was identified as Samarveer. His family alleged he was upset after being removed from the job this year.

Samarveer used to teach philosophy at Hindu College and lost his job in February when interviews for permanent positions were held.

As students protested his death on Thursday, police said no foul play has been detected yet. PTI reported that Samarveer hailed from Molki village in Rajasthan's Baran district.

He was reportedly dismissed



On Thursday, students and teachers protested at DU.

the spot and took samples from the room. "On enquiry, his cousin revealed that the deceased was working as an ad-hoc lecturer at Hindu College. Recently, another lecturer was appointed in his place. He was upset over this... The post-mortem will be conducted at BJRN hospital Thursday," the DCP added.

For the past several months, DU has been hiring permanent teachers in place of ad hoc staff.

In the process, several ad hoc teachers have been left without jobs despite working at the varsity for several years.

In January, former Deputy CM

Manish Sisodia had written to the DU Vice-Chancellor over the alleged displacement of over 70% of ad hoc teachers at DU. He asked for their absorption and/or recruitment as permanent professors.

On Thursday, students and teachers protested at DU's North Campus, expressing shock at Samarveer's death, saying that teachers who have been teaching at the university as ad hoc lecturers for several years should be given preference during hiring.

"If appointments (to permanent positions) are being made like this, a good university will be lost. Ad hoc teachers are being displaced in all colleges, almost entirely in the departments like the Ramjas history and statistics departments," DU Professor Abha Dev Habib said.

"There needs to be an inquiry. Teachers who have taught for 10 years are being displaced on the basis of a 2-minute interview," Habib added.

Former Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) president Nandita Narain said, "When the Left was in power (in DUTA), we tried to ensure ad hoc teachers are retained... without looking at political affiliation. Now teachers with experience are being thrown aside, and others are being appointed."

Up to 2k Indians out of Sudan conflict zone, situation volatile: Foreign Secy

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

APPROXIMATELY 1,700 to 2,000 Indians have been safely moved out of the conflict zone in Sudan so far this week, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said on Thursday.

These include people who have reached India as well as those waiting at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and Port Sudan, those on way to Port Sudan from various locations of Khartoum and surrounding areas.

"Our effort is to get every stranded Indian out of harm's

way to an area of relative safety, and from there to Port Sudan and back here," Kwatra told the media during a briefing on the progress of 'Operation Kaveri'.

Earlier this week, the Navy's INS Sumedha evacuated 278 Indians from Port Sudan. This was followed by the evacuation of 121 and 135 passengers on two sorties of the IAF's C-130J Super Hercules aircraft.

On Wednesday, 297 Indians sailed out on INS Teg. The two C130J aircraft placed there evacuated another batch of 264 Indians to Jeddah, taking the number of Indians evacuated to these aircraft to 520.

Flight Lieutenant Har Raj Kaur Bopari, the first and only woman pilot to fly the C-17 air-

craft, is part of the mission. Approximately 495 Indians are currently in Jeddah and around 320 Indians are in Port Sudan, even as additional buses are moving from Khartoum to Port Sudan, it was informed.

Forty-two Indian nationals have been moved to South Sudan for evacuation, he said.

Kwatra said there are approximately 3,500 Indian nationals and 1,000 people of Indian origin in Sudan, concentrated in pockets of Khartoum city. They have presence in other cities such as Omdurman, Al Fashir, Kassala and Port Sudan, he said.

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Cong seeks FIR over Shah speech: 'If it wins, state will see riots'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, APRIL 27

THE CONGRESS Thursday lodged a police complaint against Union Home Minister Amit Shah over a recent speech in Vijayapura where he said that if people voted for the Congress in the May 10 Assembly polls, the state would see communal violence.

Congress in-charge for Karnataka Randeep Surjewala filed the complaint under Sections 153 A, 505 and other provisions of IPC.

The speech by Shah on April 25 "was shockingly riddled with flagrantly false statements aimed at tarnishing the image of Congress", Surjewala said, adding that what was worse, "more worryingly coming from the Union Home Minister himself", was that if the Congress won, "Karnataka will be afflicted with communal riots". Surjewala said Shah was trying to mislead people into voting for a party, "punishable under the Representation of the People Act".

While electioneering in Vijayapura two days ago, Shah claimed that as chief minister, Congress leader Siddaramaiah had released all Popular Front of India leaders in custody and the Congress has promised to lift the ban against the PF if it won.

The BJP's campaign in Karnataka is centred around being a deterrent to communal violence. On Wednesday, Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath stated there would be no rioting and curfew under a double-engine government of the BJP at the state and Centre.

The BJP has often accused the Congress of withdrawing 176 cases against nearly 1,700 activists of the PFI during its 2013 to 2018 tenure.

During the four years of its tenure from 2019 to 2023, the BJP government in Karnataka ordered the withdrawal of 182 cases filed against right-wing activists for incidents of communal violence, hate speeches, cow vigilantism that occurred during the Congress tenure from 2013 to 2018, an RTI filed by The Indian Express showed.

Cong puts all hands on deck for 70-odd 'touch-and-go' seats

BJP won 28-odd of them in 2018, Cong 23 seats, several with slender margins; observers deployed seat-wise to sort issues; Gandhis to campaign extensively



Rahul Gandhi at a public meeting at Kapu in Udupi district on Thursday. PTI

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

THE CONGRESS'S campaign in Karnataka this time is relying heavily on micro-management, with the party's central leadership putting special focus on 70-odd "touch and go" seats and making last-mile interventions to ensure that the word of its promised "guarantees" (the centerpiece of its manifesto) reach every household. On Thursday, Rahul Gandhi announced the party's "fifth guarantee": free travel for women in state run buses if voted to power.

This is backed by an extended campaign by the Gandhi siblings in these seats — Rahul Gandhi is expected to spend a total of 12 days in the state — and a narrative centered around local issues, with focus on allegations of corruption against the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government.

Sources said three internal surveys have helped the Congress identify 70-odd seats across the state which the party believes can be won with "a little bit of extra effort", helping it win the prestige battle for the state. The Congress central leadership has deputed AICC observers — drawn from across the country — to each of these constituencies.

The Indian Express has a list of 63 of the 70-odd seats identified by the AICC where Assembly-level observers have been sent. Of these, the BJP won 28 in 2018, the Congress 23, the JD(S) 11 and the BSP 1. Moreover, the Congress won many of these seats with slender margins, including Pavagada, Kundgol, Hirekerur, Sringeri, Bellary, Jamkhandi and Badami.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has covered four of these seats already in a two-day campaign. The Assembly-level observers sent to Karnataka include former Madhya Pradesh home minister Bala Bachchan, Chhattisgarh minister Kawasi Lakshma, Rajya Sabha MP Ranjan Ranjan, former Gujarat Leader of

Cong promise for fishermen

RAHUL GANDHI Thursday promised Rs 10 lakh insurance cover for fishermen, alongside a Rs 1 lakh interest-free loan to fisherwomen and Rs 25 subsidy per litre of diesel up to 500 litres per day if voted to power.

Interacting with mem-

bers of the fishing community at Kapu in Udupi, he said corruption and price rise were hurting the fisherfolk and getting bank loans had become difficult. "Fish population is decreasing, operation cost is going up... That's why we want to help you," he said.

While handling disgruntlement among local leaders comprises a big part, their job includes "ensuring that the war room is functioning", and finding out if "any scope for special operations".

The special operations, he explained, largely meant targeting "specific voter groups... be it caste, community or linguistic". Take Rahul Gandhi's interaction with representatives of the fishermen community at Kapu.

Another task is ensuring that the Congress's "guarantees" reach every household in the form of a card — these include unemployment allowance of Rs 3,000 for graduates and Rs 1,500 for diploma holders for two years, or Yuva Nidhi; 200 units of free electricity for all families or Graha Jyothi; Rs 2,000 per month for the female head of a family, or Graha

Lakshmi; 10 kg rice for BPL families, Anna Bhagya; and now, free bus rides for women.

In Bengaluru, which has a sizeable population from other states, Lok Sabha MPs from Tamil Nadu Karti Chidambaram and Jothimani have been deployed to reach out to Tamilians; Kerala MP Benny Behanan and some other leaders from the state to tap the Malayali population; N Raghuveera Reddy to campaign among Telugu-speaking voters; and Sanjay Nirupam to woo North Indians.

On Wednesday, it roped in more leaders — Avinash Pande, A Chella Kumar, Manickam Tagore, Ajoy Kumar and Mohan Prakash — and appointed them as regional observers.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has been crisscrossing the state — with much at stake since Karnataka is his home state — while AICC in-charge of organisation K C Venugopal has been camping in Bengaluru to deal with issues such as unhappiness over ticket distribution and ironing out inter-party tussles.

Apart from the Gandhi siblings, the Congress's three chief ministers, Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel and Sukhdev Singh Sukhu, will spend extensive time in the state.



CM Basavaraj Bommai, ex-CM B S Yediyurappa among those listening to PM Modi's address to BJP workers across 58,000 booths, via video-conferencing in Bengaluru, Thursday. Express

No meaning of guarantees from a party whose warranty expired: PM tells BJP workers

Calls Cong govt a guarantee of corruption, dynastic rule; says BJP thinks of future, but gives "freebies" too if needed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, APRIL 27

LAUNCHING A scathing attack on the Congress at his virtual meeting with BJP workers across 58,000 Karnataka booths ahead of the elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday dismissed its pre-poll guarantees for the poor as "lies".

"There is no meaning in the guarantees of a party whose warranty has expired," PM Modi said to a question from a worker on strategies to counter the Congress's poll guarantees, which are said to be getting traction.

"The Congress means guarantee of lies, Congress means guarantee of corruption, Congress guarantees dynastic politics of brothers and cousins. They cannot give proper guarantees and youths know that the Congress warranty has expired long ago," Modi said.

The Congress has announced five poll guarantees, pledging their implementation right after it came to power.

When a worker hinted that the guarantees were winning it support from people affected by the rising cost of living, Modi said that providing freebies is "short-sighted" and a burden on the exchequer, claiming that the BJP provides some freebies on a temporary basis when the situation

warrants it.

"I want to warn the youths that the people who are distributing freebies are trying to fool you. The youths must think of their future and the future of their children. In the path that we have taken as a country, the benefits will accrue to Karnataka and not to the poor as well," the PM said.

He added: "In our country a few parties have reduced politics to an avenue of power and cor-

building of India. Some will cross the railway tracks even when there is a pedestrian walkway and a sign that says 'shortcut will cut you short'." he quipped.

Modi added: "We do provide some freebies to deal with temporary challenges. We give help to the poor and it is the duty of the government. During Corona, we gave free vaccines and free rations. However, to take the country forward we have to be free from this culture of freebies," the PM said.

The BJP is focusing on building modern, technological and social infrastructure for the current and future generations, he said, claiming that its governments' focus was on roads, railways, airports, ports, solar power, housing for the poor, drinking water, gas pipelines, AlIMS, IITs and IIITs.

Lastly, the PM called upon BJP workers to ensure that their voters get to booths on polling day. "You have to take voters to the booths. Irrespective of how strong the wind is, cycle tubes do not get filled on their own. There is a need for pumps. There is a storm and blessings, but it is necessary to take voters to booths. Strength at booths is a guarantee of victory," Modi said.

As the last stretch begins, the PM is set to undertake a series of visits to Karnataka to campaign April 29 onwards.

ruption. To obtain this they are willing to go to any extent. There is no regard for the future of the country. Due to the politics of freebies, many states are incurring huge expenditures to maintain their political standing."

Modi said: "Governments cannot exist on the basis of day-to-day living, but need to work on creating wealth so that lives of people are secured in the future as well. The BJP does not take shortcuts... but works for the

chance, Mahadev Prasad feels Manjunath will cut into BJP votes. Congress worker Girish H S says their candidate had been working in the constituency for the last three-and-a-half years and enjoys public goodwill.

BJP district president R Sundar dismisses reports of anti-incumbency, while falling back on "drinking water schemes of the Centre and state".

Healthcare is an issue that continues to figure among voters' concerns. At the height of the Covid-19, the death of 36 patients admitted to Chamaramangalur district hospital was attributed to oxygen shortage.

Among those who lost their kin was Shivanna, from Nenekatte in Gundlupet. Shivanna blames the death of his father on "state negligence" and is now working for the Congress.

Gundlupet also has a sizeable tribal population. But most work in Kerala now. At Kalavani haadni near Gundlupet town, 25-year-old Kongall's family is the only one left. "We do not have electricity, proper drinking water, and no consistent earnings," he says.

BALLOTIN



Gowda sets pace: 42 places, 11 days

FORMER PRIME Minister and JD(S) supremo HD Deve Gowda Thursday said he will campaign for his party at 42 places in the next 11 days, taking a break once a week to keep his health in check.

"This is a tentative programme. I will take rest once in a week keeping health in mind. I have to take an injection once a week," Gowda, set to turn 90, said. He added that Telangana and West Bengal Chief Ministers have promised to campaign for JD(S).

PTI

Will BJP roar again in 'land of tigers'? Rebels, anti-incumbency dog it

KIRAN PARASHAR
GUNDLUPET, APRIL 27

A STRONG Lingayat base and a former Congress stronghold that the BJP breached in 2018, Gundlupet is worrying the ruling party, due to anti-incumbency and internal friction, with one rebel now an Independent.

Gundlupet, in Chamrajnagar district, is a gateway to both Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It is known as the "land of tigers" and houses the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. In his campaign stop here Monday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a 3-km, two-hour roadshow.

"Internal survey reports have been disappointing. The roadshow was held to retain the Lingayat base, a decider in the seat," said a local BJP leader.

"Internal survey reports have been disappointing. The roadshow was held to retain the Lingayat base, a decider in the seat," said a local BJP leader.

Gundlupet was synonymous with five-time legislator H S Mahadeva Prasad, who won the seat for the Janata Dal, and subsequently the JD(U) and JD(S), from 1994 onwards. After Siddaramaiah left the JD(S) in 2005, Prasad followed him to the Congress. As a result, the JD(S) collapsed in Gundlupet and the BJP's rise began. After Prasad died in 2017, his wife Mohan Kumar won the bypoll, but the following year the BJP's Niranjan Kumar won the constituency for the party for the first time.

While the BJP has fielded Niranjan Kumar again, the Congress has given the ticket to Prasad's son Ganesh, and the JD(S) has fielded the incumbent MLA's ex-associate Kadabur Manjunath. Another of Kumar's former aides, M P Sunil, is contesting as an Independent.

"Internal survey reports have been disappointing. The roadshow was held to retain the Lingayat base, a decider in the seat," said a local BJP leader.



NIRANJAN KUMAR,
(BJP) 94,151 votes
Runner-up:
MC Mohan Kumari,
(Congress) 77,467 votes
BJP won the seat for the first time in 2018

Of the seat's 2.09 lakh voters, 40% are Lingayats, followed by 25% SC voters, and 10% Kurubas who are OBCs. All the three major candidates are Lingayats.

JDS' worker Mahadev Prasad said: "I too voted for the BJP last time, but we were let down. Niranjan Kumar, who fought against crushers in forests started the same business and became inaccessible." Though the JD(S) does not have a winning

real estate, education, and quarrying. As per the election affidavit, he has pending income tax dues of Rs 227 crore.

Apart from the wealth linked to Global Malls, the Congress leader has also reported obtaining a loan of Rs 147 crore from HDFC Bank against rent from Lulu International Malls Ltd.

The KPCC chief owns as many as eight apartments at Purva Midtown valued at over Rs 8 crore. He owns four flats in Salarpuria Sattva, amounting to Rs 3.20 crore. In Delhi, he has three properties valued at Rs 5.25 crore. He has reported Rs 14.67 crore in his bank accounts.

The Congress leader has reported owning nearly 86 acres of land around Bengaluru by way of inheritance from his family. He has shown payment of Rs 73 crore as loans and advances to his family members.

Shivakumar's wealth has surged since 2013. In the five-year period between 2013 and 2018, Shivakumar had reported a massive Rs 589 crore increase in his wealth (a rise of over 250%). He was a Congress minister in this five-year period.

In 2017, Shivakumar was the subject of an investigation by Income Tax officials, with Shivakumar and his associates accused of IT evasion of over Rs 300 crore.

After investigations with regard to alleged laundering of Rs

8 crore by Shivakumar and associates, the ED said the Congress leader "while holding a public office in the Government of Karnataka, generated a huge amount of unaccounted cash".

Based on the findings of income-tax department searches carried out in August 2017 at around 70 premises linked to Shivakumar, the CBI filed an FIR in October 2020 against him. Shivakumar was arrested by the ED in September 2019 in connection with the money laundering case and released on bail in October 2019. He became the KPCC chief in 2020.

The cases against him are ongoing.

Sitting Karnataka MLAs: A report card

TOP PERFORMER



NA Haris,
Congress
(Shantinagar)

Questions 591
Attendance 84%

SECOND-BEST ATTENDANCE



GB JYOTHIGANESH,
BJP (Tumkur)

Attendance 99%

Top in terms of questions asked after Haris



Yashwanthrayagouda Patil,
Congress (Indi)

Attendance 99%

TOP ATTENDANCE



KS Lingesh,
JD(S) (Belur)

CM Nimbannavar,
(BJP) Khalaghatti

Attendance 100%

MAOIST REMINDER

The movement is in decline but killings in Dantewada suggest that there can be no lowering of the guard

THE MAOISTS HAVE struck in Chhattisgarh after a lull of two years. Ten jawans of the District Reserve Guard, a special unit of Chhattisgarh police recruited locally, and their civilian driver were killed Wednesday when the extremists triggered a blast using an improvised explosive device in Dantewada district. The security forces will track down the killers for sure, but the deaths are a reminder of how any deviation from the standard operating procedures (SOPs) in Maoist-affected territories is fraught. Complacency can extract a heavy price. The Dantewada incident is of a piece with previous Maoist attacks on security forces – the same season, terrain, and a similar pattern of attack, wherein a convoy tracking intelligence information is targeted with precision and a prior plan.

By all accounts, the Maoist movement in India is shrinking. From being “the greatest internal security threat to our nation” – as the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described it in 2009 – the Maoist movement is now restricted to pockets, mainly in Chhattisgarh. As per Home Ministry records, Maoist violence has come down by 77 per cent since 2010, and deaths of security forces and civilians have declined by 90 per cent. The number of Naxal-affected districts has come down from more than 200 in the early 2000s to 90, with violence mostly reported from 25 districts. The Maoist movement is hardly a force now in states such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bihar, once its strongholds. However, the Maoists have taken advantage of the Southern Chhattisgarh geography, a forested terrain bordering Maharashtra, Odisha and Telangana with poor transport and communication facilities, to build a base. In recent years, security operations have turned the heat on the movement and impaired its ability to recruit and operate freely. With the emphasis on violence, the Maoist movement has also hollowed out as a political project and seems hardly in a position to expand its cadre base. At the same time, the state has not only expanded its security muscle but has also built both physical and social infrastructure in left-wing extremism-affected districts and worked on development projects.

The combination of policing, rehabilitation packages and welfare succeeded in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and other states, where Maoism had peaked in the 1970s and 80s. Chhattisgarh has been a late entrant in anti-Maoist operations. It wasted precious time on civilian militias like Salwa Judum before course correcting to train its police force and expand the welfare outreach. This is the right path as evident from the sharp decline in Maoist attacks and killings. The task is to pursue with the strategy – without lowering the guard.

CARE AND CURE

Move to increase nursing colleges is the right step. Efforts must also be made to enhance skill sets of these professionals

THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION to set up 157 nursing colleges is a step in the right direction. Despite the proven capabilities of the country's nurses, the profession hasn't always received its due. The move will add more than 15,000 nursing seats. More than 40 per cent of the country's nursing colleges are located in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. With Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh getting a major share of the new nursing colleges, the skew towards the southern states will be addressed to an extent. Much more will, however, need to be done to equip the country's healthcare facilities with the caregiving expertise they regularly fall short on. The government has rightly been giving emphasis on setting up hospitals and medical colleges, including AIIMS, in places that are in desperate need of such infrastructure. The private sector has also been increasing its footprint in the healthcare sector. These hospitals will require a regular supply of nurses.

The WHO recommends three nurses for a population of 1,000 people. According to official estimates, India currently has less than two nurses for 1,000 people. But this is a conservative figure. A FICCI-KPMG report last year reckoned that the number of allied healthcare professionals needs to go up eight times to meet the country's needs in the next 25 years. Increasing the number of nursing professionals is, however, just one part of addressing this imperative. An equally important requirement is equipping these caregivers with the skill-sets required in a medical set-up which keeps throwing up new challenges even as old problems remain unresolved. For instance, a lot of the acrimony between patients and healthcare professionals, that keeps surfacing every now and then, can be resolved if the nursing cadre is given proper communication training. Equipping caregivers with knowledge of the rapidly changing technologies in medical care is another imperative. Of course, addressing many of these challenges is part of on-the-job training. But given the pressure on frontline workers in the country's hospitals, it is important that nurses are taught to work autonomously of physicians in several aspects of patient care. Experts believe that institutes in the country currently do not provide nurses with adequate training to take up leadership positions.

Migrant nurses – most of them from the Southern states – have been, for many decades, a major source of remittance. These professionals are much sought after in hospitals in Europe, the Americas and West Asia. Investing in nursing education will only enhance the revenue-generating capacity of potential migrants. The new colleges announced by the government on Wednesday should be seen as a beginning in this endeavour.

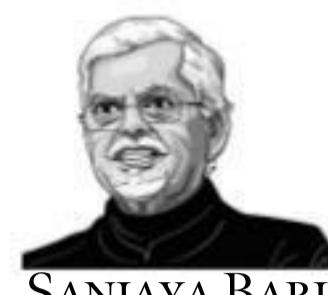
BELAFONTE'S LEGACY

The singer and actor's commitment to activism only burnished his stardom, adding credibility to glamour

IN 1956, HARRY Belafonte made history when his album ‘Calypso’, featuring hits like *The Banana Boat Song (Day-O)* and *Jamaica Farewell*, became the first ever to sell a million copies. No eyebrows would have been raised if he had decided to solely refine his art and pursue professional success. That Belafonte, who died this week at 96, instead chose to fight larger political battles from the late 1950s onwards, ensured a rich legacy that went beyond the musical.

The distance afforded by time might make it hard to remember how groundbreaking Belafonte's stardom, in music and later, in cinema, was. America, in the 1950s and '60s, was a place where even those who enjoyed a rousing rendition of *Man Smart (Woman Smarter)*, might object to a fictitious mixed-race romance, such as the one featuring Belafonte and Joan Fontaine in the 1957 movie *Island in the Sun*. In 1960, a television special saw controversy when singer Petula Clark touched Belafonte, leading to objection from one of the sponsors. In this environment, the outspoken activist in Belafonte trumped the gifted performer – famously, he turned down the film adaptation of the hit George Gershwin opera *Porgy and Bess*, citing its troubling attitude to race and publicly criticised friend Sidney Poitier, another actor of colour, for taking it on.

Belafonte was the first Black actor to win an Emmy and a Tony, but increasingly, it was his political consciousness that drove him. He marched with Martin Luther King Jr and helped lead the civil rights movement. Over the decades, other battles found in him a staunch backer – he supported Nelson Mandela, brought together some of the era's biggest stars for the 1985 charity single *We Are The World* to raise money for famine-struck Ethiopia. Despite the occasional controversy – like when he referred to then US president George W Bush as a “terrorist” – Belafonte's commitment to activism only burnished his stardom, adding credibility to glamour.



SANJAYA BARU

A STANDARD TOPIC at college debates in the 1970s, when I was a student, used to be ‘Population: Bane or boon’. The almost celebratory manner in which many reacted to the news that India has now become the world’s most populous nation, overtaking China, stands in sharp contrast to a widely-shared view in our student days that rapid population growth was India’s biggest problem. Certainly a bane, not a boon.

From institutions like the Population Council to the World Bank, from the erstwhile Planning Commission politicians of all hues, from western aid agencies to religious bigots, everyone was convinced that if only successive governments had stepped in to arrest population growth, India would have been better off. During the Emergency years, an attempt was even made to force compulsory sterilisation. From Rotary and Lions Clubs to Congress Party politicians, everyone was running a vasectomy or tubectomy camp in the larger interests of the nation.

When China declared its One Child policy, many among the Indian elite campaigned in favour of such a policy at home. While the government of the day rejected the “one-child” policy, it launched “Do Ya Teen Bas” followed by “Hum Do Hamare Do” campaigns. Communal politics thrived on blaming the Muslim community for India’s population growth. Mass poverty, it was declared, was a consequence of excessive breeding by the poor. The latter view was pervasive till studies showed that families of the poor are larger because each child brings in additional income that may be marginally more than the food and other necessities consumed. So larger families are a response to poverty, not the cause.

The change in the population discourse began when both fertility and birth rates began to fall in the socially-advanced states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Research related the decline with literacy, education and health status of women, among other factors. If the rest of India can mimic Kerala, it was argued, then India’s population problem will become manageable. Indeed, that has begun to happen.

In May last year, it was reported that the fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) had shown that the total fer-

A country that cannot offer proper education to all will forever find population growth a bane

tility rate (TFR) – an average of the number of children that would be born to any woman in her lifetime – had declined to 2.0 in 2019-21. This was marginally below what is called the “replacement level fertility rate” – of 2.1 – that is, the level at which a given population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, and so results in zero net growth of population.

The pattern of population growth has had many consequences for economic policy, including for trade policy, internal and external migration, political demographics, demand for public services, the use of natural resources and inter-regional variations in growth. Almost all these challenges were addressed within the wider framework of population growth being a bane rather than a boon. India’s multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral trade agreements have been demanding access to overseas jobs, employment visas and so on, in the relentless pursuit of overseas employment opportunities. India remains a strong advocate of out-migration, even as the present political dispensation opposes in-migration.

So, where does the celebratory response to India’s new status as the world’s most populous come from? Clearly from the feeling that in a world of declining population growth, especially among the developed economies, Indians would spread out and remain the diaspora over whom the sun would never set. Without doubt, out-migrating Indians have become assets for many developed economies – from the US to Australia, from Portugal to Japan. The question is when would all Indians become assets for their homeland?

The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Milton Friedman, answered that question in a 1955 note to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru had invited Friedman to study the Indian approach to planning and offer his views. Friedman was not in favour of public investment in manufacturing, but strongly advocated public investment in education. Titled “A Memorandum to the Government of India 1955”, Friedman said, “the present writer is convinced that the fundamental problem for India is the improvement of the physical and technical quality of her people, the awakening of a sense of hope, the weak-

ening of rigid social and economic arrangements, the introduction of flexibility of institutions and mobility of people, the opening tip of the social and economic ladder people of all kinds and classes.”

Friedman’s key observation, based on his study of American economic history, was that “in any economy, the major source of productive power is not machinery, equipment, buildings and other physical capital; it is the productive capacity of the human beings who compose the society. Yet what we call investment refers only to expenditures on physical capital; expenditures that improve the productive capacity of human beings are generally left entirely out of account. In the United States, for example, only about one-fifth of the total income is return to physical capital, four-fifths to human capital.”

Hence, Friedman wrote to Nehru, invest in human capital. Convert people from being liabilities into assets. An ill-educated, ill-equipped, socially and culturally backward people are an economic liability. Educated, healthy, productive and capable people are a national asset. Indeed, an asset to humanity.

Yet, even today we do not have a socially and economically relevant education policy except in patches. The best schools are increasingly putting out students into the global market. Out-migration of students has risen sharply over the past decade. If this is one end of the spectrum, at the other end provincial and communal politicians are obsessed about history and language, not worried about basic learning skills and the creation of a knowledge-based economy and society.

What we are left with is a skewed educational system that on the one extreme produces pupils for the global market and, on the other, puts out poorly educated, linguistically limited, bigoted and chauvinistic youth who have to be retrained to be employed. Into the vacuum created by inadequate public investment in school education, the private sector is rushing in and now boldly demanding a change of policy that will allow for-profit educational institutions. A nation that cannot offer proper education to all will forever find population a bane rather than a boon.

The writer is a policy analyst



IRENA AKBAR

IN AN INTERVIEW published in *The Indian Express* on April 22, Tabassum Shaik, the Arts stream topper of the Class XII exam held across pre-university colleges in Karnataka, said, “Between education and hijab, I chose education. We will need to make some sacrifices to accomplish bigger things.”

In January 2022, the Karnataka government prohibited the wearing of the Muslim headscarf across government PUCs (pre-university colleges) after protests erupted over a group of Muslim students being barred from their classroom for coming in their hijabs. Within a month, the Karnataka High Court upheld the ban. Tabassum, who till then would wear a hijab to school, had to decide what to prioritise – wearing her hijab, or going to college. “I decided to give up the hijab and pursue my education,” the 18-year-old said in the interview.

Tabassum’s “choice” was not born out of privilege, but circumstance. The ban on the hijab forced her into making a choice. When circumstances force you to make a choice, is it really a choice? Is it a choice made out of “free will”, or against it? In Tabassum’s own words, her “choice” involved “sacrifice”, that is, sacrificing the hijab, a symbol of religious identity for many Muslim girls and women. She would wear a headscarf till the gate of her college, and then had to remove it in a room before she could enter the classroom.

Choices that involve sacrifices or compro-

A FORCED CHOICE

Tabassum Sheikh succeeded despite the hijab ban, not because of it

In this larger picture of anti-Muslim politics in Karnataka, and by extension, India, it’s important to question why Tabassum had to make a choice at all. Even as Tabassum’s success story is worthy of celebration, it must not be used to disprove the discriminatory nature of the hijab ban or worse, justify it.

One may ask: Why didn’t other Muslim students follow Tabassum’s example? But here’s a clutch of counter-questions: Why should a Muslim student be burdened with such difficult choices? Why should their right to practise their faith be pitted against their right to study? Why does a Muslim student

have to be exceptionally brilliant and strong, and make it to the headlines? Why do they not have the freedom to be average, to not be strong enough to “sacrifice” a symbol of their faith, their identity in tender teenage years?

Tabassum’s parents are visibly Muslim: Her mother wears a burqa, and her father a thick beard and topi. But the parents advised their daughter to suspend her visible religiosity at college to follow the “law of the land”.

In the last two years, the BJP-led state government has passed laws that are designed to put Muslims in the dock: The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act 2020 to “fight cow slaughter”, the Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act 2021 to “fight love jihad” and the 2022 hijab ban rule under the Karnataka Education Act. As Karnataka heads for elections next month, there have been increasing calls by Hindu right-wing groups to ban halal meat and azaan and boycott Muslim shops near temples. In this larger picture of anti-Muslim politics, it’s important to question why Tabassum had to make a choice at all. Even as her success story is worthy of celebration, it must not be used to disprove the discriminatory nature of the hijab ban or worse, justify it. Tabassum’s feat is her own, and she achieved it despite the hijab ban, not because of it.

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Acbar is an entrepreneur and freelance writer

APRIL 28, 1983, FORTY YEARS AGO

SETHI TO AKALIS

HOME MINISTER P C Sethi, made a fervent appeal to the Akali leadership to shun violence and to hand over terrorists, like the Khalistan protagonist Balbir Singh Sandhu and the assassin of the DIG of Police, A S Atwal. The home minister was responding to an adjournment motion on the failure of the government to ensure that places of worship like the Golden Temple are not used to aggravate the law and order situation.

FISCAL CONCESSIONS

FINANCE MINISTER PRANAB Mukherjee, an-

nounced fiscal concessions amounting to Rs 50.15 crore in his taxation proposals for 1983-84, while moving the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha. Bulk of the concessions – as much as Rs 40 crore – has been given in the sphere of direct taxes, while marginal adjustments have been made in indirect taxes.

J&K WEALTH TAX

THE JAMMU AND Kashmir High Court has quashed the levy of Central wealth tax to the state. A division bench consisting of Chief Justice Mufti Behauddin Farooqi and Justice I K Kotwai observed in its judgment that Parliament had enacted the Wealth Tax Act in

1957 under a constitutional provision not applicable to Jammu and Kashmir. About 230 writ petitions had been filed in court challenging the operation of the Act to the state.

NAM MEET

THE TWO-DAY MINISTERIAL meeting of 11 non-aligned countries will begin in New Delhi to discuss strategy to persuade developed nations to take emergency action to meet the serious international economic crisis and revive global negotiations. External Affairs Minister P V Narasimha Rao hopes it would lead to North-South issues receiving adequate attention at the later meeting to be held in the US.



THE IDEAS PAGE

The sleeping state

Lack of action in sexual harassment complaints against former WFI president despite protest by decorated sportspersons sends out a discouraging message



JAGMATI SANGWAN AND
INDU AGNIHOTRI

THE FACT THAT the SC had to issue a notice this week to the Delhi police for refusing to lodge an FIR on the complaint of sexual harassment by seven women wrestlers — including a minor — against the former WFI president and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh for over three days is extremely telling of the present scenario. The lack of response compelled a galaxy of top national- and international-level wrestlers to once again sit on a protest dharna at Jantar Mantar in the heart of the capital. This sequence of events underscores a point the women's movement in India has been making for decades now: The State and its agencies are the biggest violators of the law, especially the laws enacted to ensure the rights of women, and the obstacles faced in initiating the process of seeking justice are so daunting that the majority opt out after their initial foray. Today this is compounded by the blatant misuse of official position and use of muscle power by the accused to intimidate and silence those speaking up.

The main factor underlying this state of affairs is the utter lack of political will to implement the law on the part of the state. This ensures that justice is neither certain, nor speedy and almost routinely denied. The result is that perpetrators of violence against women are never punished, nor are those responsible for implementing the law held accountable for their actions and inactions.

The on-going protest at Jantar Mantar highlights the state of affairs in the institutional set up of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). In January 2023, a set of wrestlers first protested against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the chief of the WFI citing incidents of sexual harassment, while also drawing attention to other irregularities. The government sought to defuse the situation by setting up an Oversight Committee which was to submit its report by the end of February. Until the wrestlers resumed their dharna on April 23, the findings of this report had not been shared with the complainants. A physiotherapist, Paramjeet Malik, has now said that three junior women wrestlers had confided in him about their ordeal and he had shared the information with the then women's coach, Kuldeep Malik, but no action was taken. If raising their voices by some of the most high-profile sportspersons meet with such a fate, the message that goes out to those not-so-powerful is loud and clear: Never speak up. It is this that the intervention by the Supreme Court may hopefully challenge.

Interestingly, in January the protestors appeared to not "politicise" the issue. This is itself ironical, given that the top sports bodies in India are dominated by politicians or their scions, the most notable being the BCCI. The violators, both in the WFI case and that of the Haryana athlete who complained against BJP MLA and former Haryana minister, Sandeep Singh, in December, are themselves visible political faces and continue to hold positions in the party and the legislatures. As per reports, they continue to use their political clout to bully the complainants into silence,



with several speaking of threats to life, character assassination and everyday harassment and disrespect in their place of work. This is in clear violation of the 2013 POSH Act and was taken cognisance of by the Supreme Court as far back as 1997 when the Vishaka Guidelines were issued. Undoubtedly, the establishment, with all its might, stands behind the accused in such cases.

Some of these aspects become clear from the trajectory of the complaint made by the Haryana athlete against Sandeep Singh: In his defence, the Chief Minister of Haryana went on record to state that such "allegations" do not make a person guilty; in the Assembly the Speaker observed that allegations are made only to be followed up with a compromise; while the Chairperson of the State Women's Commission said the charges appeared "unbelievable". All this while the Chandigarh police was still in the midst of its investigations! The media silence failed to register that after the accused minister publicly announced that he would probe the complainant's character, the DGP Haryana, on December 24, on the basis of a complaint received from the accused himself, constituted an SIT. Further, what remains hidden from the public is the daily harassment — amounting to re-victimisation — that a victim undergoes at her workplace and in her

When complaints lodged by top-level national and international players who have won laurels for the country meet with such a fate, the signal that goes out to other women who suffer such violation of their rights is to remain silent. If this is not to happen, the issues raised by the wrestlers need wider support, failing which the few who have spoken up may once again be silenced and marginalised.

daily life, subsequent to lodging a complaint of sexual harassment. Is all this being done as per POSH 2013? The nation truly needs to know.

When complaints lodged by top-level national and international players who have won laurels for the country meet with such a fate, the signal that goes out to other women who suffer such violation of their rights is to remain silent. If this is not to happen, the issues raised by the wrestlers need wider support, failing which the few who have spoken up may once again be silenced and marginalised.

As political leaders show up at Jantar Mantar in their support, it is time to realise that the battle for women to live and work in dignity is as critical to the idea of India as that at the hustings.

Will the women sportspersons seeking justice in India witness a show of solidarity as displayed by the Iranian footballers who protested the death of Maha Amini and stood with their sisters in struggle, against the imposition of the veil?

Sangwan, a Bihari Awardee and former international volleyball player, is vice-president, AIDWA. Agnihotri retired as director, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It should be noted that since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the US and Western public opinion has thrown a lot of mud on China. As time goes by, those accusations are self-defeating, and the image of China as a peaceful builder is becoming clearer and clearer."

—GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

The good fight

In asking for marriage equality, queer Indians are not demanding special rights, only what other citizens already enjoy



ZERO HOUR
BY DEREK O'BRIEN

EVEN BEFORE I became a Member of Parliament, I was a signatory to a petition in 2006 seeking to strike down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Among the 100-plus signatories of that document were Jhumpa Lahiri, Shyam Benegal, Vikram Seth, and Kaushik Basu, to name a few. In 2018, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court unanimously decriminalised consensual sex among adults of the same sex.

The story of Vikram and Alok: Last week, while the hearings on same-sex marriage (or more correctly "marriage equality") were on in the Supreme Court, I spoke with many friends from the gay community. Among them were Vikram Doctor, a keen quizzard and journalist, and his partner Alok Hisarwala, a lawyer.

This is their story. "When we met, being gay was illegal and we couldn't imagine an India where we could live openly as a couple, pretty much fully accepted by our families. Twenty-four years later, that's what we're doing in Goa. It's both so amazing, yet also seems so normal, we have to keep reminding ourselves of where we were when we started and how lucky we are to be here."

In all this, marriage never seemed even a remote possibility, so it was never something we contemplated. But we're well aware that this doesn't and shouldn't apply to queer people today. Why on earth does a young queer person have to do the slog we did for 18 years to come to the point that we are at now? The whole point of decriminalisation was never special rights, but just the normal rights that everyone enjoys, which should include marriage rights for those who want them.

Perhaps the silliest of all the arguments presented against marriage equality was that homosexuality will mean the end of the human race because we won't have children. The lawyer raising that seemed oblivious that he was doing so in the same week when India became the most populous nation in the world!

We respect the fact that many queer people genuinely want to raise children, and again this underscores the normality of this urge. It seems obvious that adoption is an answer, with the safeguards that should apply in adoptions of any kind — and yet adoption is what seemed to get people on the opposing side charged up.

The one thing that also seems totally bogus is the government's contention that this was a matter for urban elites. In our experience, it is exactly the opposite. Over the years we were fighting for decriminalisation, the demand for marriage always came from the less economically privileged people. Those with the means can always take care of themselves, but it is exactly those who cannot who need the legal protections."

Not about urban elites: This is not about urban elites. Far from it. Take the well-

documented story of Leela and Urmila. They were two policewomen stationed in Bhopal, who decided to get married in 1987. They were immediately suspended and also locked up for 48 hours. This is emblematic of the prejudice and persecution that LGBTQ+ people have to face in society. Even today, reports of couples from the community committing suicide are widespread, mainly due to emotional or physical violence inflicted on them, and the inability to lead a life with the person they love.

Nivedita Menon, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, adds, "the stories of violence against inter-caste/religious marriage and lesbian suicides" are not part of separate histories of inter-caste marriage and lesbianism in India, but a common "history of compulsory heterosexuality and [with] marriage as the institution that best represents it".

Extend Special Marriage Act to queer Indians: The petitions for same-sex marriage are not demanding special rights. They are only asking for the right to marry for those who want it. Using the word "spouse", instead of "husband" or "wife" in the Special Marriage Act of 1954, will be a promising first step.

Siddharth Dube, writer and development expert, and a gay friend of mine who has fought for these rights along with countless others told me, "I know with certainty that same-sex marriage will become the law across India very soon. I say this because we have genuine jurists still. They know what justice means and will override unvarying and obscurantist bigotry. And I say this also because at my age of 60-plus, I know that the overwhelming majority of Indians are absolutely decent-hearted and not bigoted. They want an India where all Indians can love and live freely as equal citizens". I take heart from his optimism.

The legislature in any democracy is the pulpit which is supposed to echo the voice of its citizens. But politics often prevents legislatures from upholding the essential rights of the people. In the 1960s in the USA, interracial marriage was a vote loser. So the courts had to step in to repeal the ban on interracial marriage. A similar scenario can be seen playing out in India. This is why the Supreme Court has had to step in.

An important fall-out of this debate is that a section of India's LGBTQ+ individuals, who clung on to the hope that they could flourish in an India ruled by the Sangh Parivar, have woken up to a harsh reality. They were deluding themselves. It's foolish to imagine that a party that thrives on demonising all kinds of Indians — whether Christians, Dalits, Muslims, free-thinking women or others — will somehow act humanely towards any minority. Of course, they should have realised this from the outset but then some people are fooled until it becomes a matter of self-interest.

I can also sense the simplicity of "loving". My wife Tonuca and I, a Bengali Hindu and an Anglo-Indian Roman Catholic, were married under the Special Marriage Act in 2006, an impossibility were it not for this radical piece of legislation which we cannot wait to be extended to queer Indians.

The writer is Member of Parliament and Leader, All India Trinamool Congress Parliamentary Party (Rajya Sabha)



NANDITESH NILAY

Apple and its gravitational pull

Steve Jobs sought his spiritual self in India. What would he make of today's queues?

IF AN APPLE showed Newton the power of gravity, the gravitational pull of Apple with an upper-case 'A' is there for all of us to see — on full display as Tim Cook dropped by. When our identities are fused with the phone we carry and defined and shaped by our feeds and posts on social media, groups and messages, from Good Mornings to Pearls of WhatsApp wisdom, the device is a powerful instrument of expression.

For one, it's slick, efficient, pricey. When Siri, Alexa, and ChatGPT are learning faster than us, when a person is a product and a product resembles a person, the Apple Store is our Garden of Eden where the forbidden fruit is available, even if some of us have to take it on EMI.

That's why the gravitational force led to long lines snaking around the malls in Mumbai and New Delhi. In our country, given that we are now the most populous, there are lines and there are lines but this line is comforting. This isn't the line of people at the bus stop during the lockdown, this is also not the line of angry passengers at New Delhi's T3 tweeting to the Civil Aviation Minister to come and fix their problem — this is the line of people, with money to spend, with a desire to upgrade, standing politely, no chaos, no hustle-bustle. These are not the poor who have slipped into the mall to catch the air conditioner — it is safe to assume that almost everyone in that line has an AC at home.

Let's not judge anyone, because, at one level, this marks a visible, tangible empowerment. People looked happy and emotional. It was a proud moment. Now India will not be just a growing market but also a manufacturing place for Apple products. It will be Made in India. In a market where smartphones range between a few thousand to a lakh plus, such lines are the emblem of aspiration. The variables of high cost, purchasing power, need, desire and the dream to be part of a resourceful and resource-full class is ubiquitous. To buy an Apple phone or a laptop is to prove a point to ourselves as much as to others.

As for Steve Jobs and his legacy, it's secure under Cook's watch. An empowered community which lives, talks, walks, sleeps, and feels, with the brand is brand committed at its highest.

Technology is a leveller. Infosys's N R Narayana Murthy once talked about the power of anonymity when a domestic worker and her employer both use their ATM card to withdraw cash. There is no bank teller who will discriminate. That's technology as a means. A smartphone can help flatten many inequities of class, caste, community as the user, riding on 4G or 5G, can access websites that teach, and links that inform. Of course, the circumstances of the user define her use. However, today, while opportunity may still be skewed in favour

of the well-off it is flatter than it ever was. That's technology as means.

Commitment to a brand is when technology becomes an end in itself. The fact is that however disruptive technology can be or will be, whether through machine learning or AI, the one brand that marks us out is humanity. Our empathy, the ability to think beyond self-interest, is what distinguishes Brand Human from any other. But when Brand Human becomes so defined and shaped by a product; when it needs a product to prop it up, are we letting technology become an end in itself?

Let's not forget that long before Cook, Steve Jobs, as a backpacker barely out of his teens, visited India. Not as a market but as a place to seek his spiritual self and to meet Neem Karoli Baba. He used to walk seven miles every Sunday to find a free meal at one of the ashrams of Hare Krishna. In his biography of Jobs, Michael Moritz wrote about how "the hot, uncomfortable summer, made Jobs question many illusions he had nursed about India. He found India far poorer than he had imagined." Later, in his biography of Jobs, Walter Isaacson talks about how Jobs was struck by an insight from India: Intuition and "experiential wisdom," the art of slowness and the capability to comprehend the big picture were all more common and powerful than intellect or the power of reason that is so celebrated in the "craziness"

of the Western world.

Part of what Jobs was saying is part of the cliché of the Western view of the Orient. But there's no escaping the fact that the Apple Store in India will, because of the world outside the store, be a different space from the one in Times Square in New York or Covent Garden in London. For, at walking distance from the Saket mall are countless homes where the cost of an iPhone will be more than the monthly household income.

So, looking down at the Saket store, what would Steve Jobs have made of it, what would he have told Tim Cook? Perhaps, he would have told him to visit Apple's manufacturing facility in India and maybe get the cameras there. So that he could stand in line, along with the women and men, who line up for their shifts to assemble Apple products.

The gleaming Apple store with aesthetic designs of Mughal-era gates makes for a vivid photo-op or Insta reel, but Tim Cook taking a selfie with the workers on the shop floor in a Tamil Nadu manufacturing unit may also have been a good visual. Compassionate capitalism shot on an iPhone!

Nilay is the author of Being Good, Aaiye, Insaan Banaen and Ethikos: Stories searching happiness. He teaches and trains courses on ethics, values and behaviour.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRIBUTE TO BADAL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Leader & Healer' (IE, April 27). With the passing of Prakash Singh Badal, an era in the contemporary political history of Punjab has ended. The secret to his political legacy is his solid grassroots connection with ordinary workers. He was liked by all the political parties irrespective of their ideology. His contribution towards the welfare of the people of Punjab will be remembered for years to come.

Bal Govind, Noida

FOR DEMOCRACY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'It's about hearts, not votes' (IE, April 27). There is no provision in the Constitution that states the duties or responsibilities of elected representatives. The EC should consider the recommendations of the Indrajit Gupta Committee. In particular, the Right To Call Back, which will empower people, allowing them to make decisions about their representatives. This will uphold the principles of democracy.

Ismail Wafa, Maledgaon

GREEN SOLUTIONS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Keeping it cool in summer' (IE, April 27). A heat action plan is the need of the hour in Indian cities today. Ahmedabad's example should be followed to reduce heat wave-related illnesses. Global organisations have also pointed out changing urban micro-climate which causes the "urban heat island" effect. Long-term solutions like increasing urban canopy and having white rooftops would help reduce the impact of urbanisation on. Cities need coordinated plans built on sustainability to protect the environment. The environment is also part of urban development and has multifaceted effects on sustainable development.

H Upadhyay, via email

PEOPLE'S LOSS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'It's about hearts, not votes' (IE, April 27). The writer should introspect on what caused his party's disconnect with the voters, instead of downplaying its loss of its national party status. The CPI was once a dominant player in the political life of the nation. Communists led kisans and students in anti-imperial movements in the colonial period. It is electoral performance that gives a party the chance to raise pro-people issues with renewed zeal. A party gets the opportunity to serve the toiling masses thanks to an electoral victory. The EC must rein in muscle power and hate speech, the issues raised in the article and CPI must course correct.

SH Quadri, Bikaner

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2023

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE
WORLD

Joe Biden and South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol. Reuters

SOUTH KOREA
US to share nuke planning details to deter N Korea

Washington: The United States on Wednesday pledged to give South Korea more insight into its nuclear planning over any conflict with North Korea amid anxiety over Pyongyang's growing arsenal of missiles and bombs. The announcement, which included a renewed pledge by Seoul not to pursue a nuclear bomb of its own, emerged from White House talks between US President Joe Biden and South Korean leader Yoon Suk Yeol that covered issues including North Korea, semiconductor chips and trade, and the Ukraine war. **REUTERS**

PAKISTAN
Seven killed in fire on passenger train in Sindh

Karachi: At least seven people were killed after a car on a moving passenger train caught fire overnight in southern Pakistan, officials said Thursday. Railways official Mohsin Sial said the train caught fire in Khairpur, a district about 500 kilometers north of Karachi, in the capital of Sindh province. He said six people were killed in the blaze while a woman died when she jumped from the window of the moving train. The blaze also badly damaged several other cars in the train, he said, and the cause remained unclear. **AP**

SRI LANKA
Governor gets US sanctions for violation of rights

Colombo: The US has sanctioned former senior Sri Lankan Navy Commander Wasantha Karannagoda for "gross violation" of human rights during the brutal conflict with the LTTE, evoking a strong reaction from Colombo which said the "unilateral" move was "counter-productive". The 70-year-old ex-Navy commander from 2005-2009 is second defence official of such stature to be sanctioned by US for human rights violations during the battle with LTTE in 2009. He was appointed country's Ambassador to Japan and presently is a governor of a province. **PTI**

IRAN
Marshall Islands oil tanker seized in Gulf of Oman

Dubai: Iran's navy seized a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman on Thursday amid tensions over Tehran's nuclear program, the latest such capture in a waterway crucial for global energy supplies. Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet identified the vessel as the Advantage Sweet. Satellite tracking data showed it in Gulf of Oman just north of Muscat. It had just come from Kuwait and listed its destination as Houston. The Advantage Sweet issued a distress call at 1:15 p.m. while in international waters as Iran seized the vessel, the Navy said. **AP**

DAY AFTER CHINA, UKRAINE LEADERS SPEAK ON PHONE

Russia welcomes Xi-Zelenskyy call, but says no change in its Ukraine aims

Communication between two nations is their sovereign matter, says Kremlin

REUTERS
MOSCOW, APRIL 27

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov

The Kremlin said on Thursday it welcomed anything that could bring the end of the Ukraine conflict closer when asked what it thought of a phone call a day earlier between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

But the Kremlin said it still needed to achieve the aims of what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia was familiar with the details of what the two leaders had discussed and said their stances on the conflict were well known.

"We are ready to welcome

anything that could hasten the end of the conflict in Ukraine and Russia achieving all the goals it has set itself," Peskov said of the call.

"That they communicated – that is a sovereign matter for each of these countries and a question of their bilateral dialogue."

The Chinese and Ukrainian leaders on Wednesday spoke for the first time since Russia sent its troops into Ukraine in February last year, fulfilling a longstanding goal of Kyiv which had publicly sought such talks for months.

Philippines confronts China over dispute in South China Sea

JIM GOMEZ
APRIL 27

A Chinese Coast Guard ship blocks a Philippine's ship as it enters the sea. AP file

A CHINESE coast guard ship blocked a Philippine patrol vessel steaming into a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, causing a frightening near-collision in the latest act of Beijing's aggression in the strategic waterway.

The high seas face-off Sunday between the larger Chinese ship and the Philippine coast guard's BRP Malapascua near Second Thomas Shoal was among the tense moments it and another Philippine vessel encountered in a weeklong sovereignty patrol in one of the world's most hotly contested waterways.

The Philippine coast guard had invited a small group of journalists, including three from The Associated Press, to join the 1,670-kilometer patrol for the first time

as part of a new Philippine strategy aimed at exposing China's increasingly aggressive actions in South China Sea, where an estimated \$5 trillion in global trade transits annually.

In areas occupied or controlled by China, the Philippine patrol vessels received radio warnings ordering them to leave Beijing's "undisputed territories". **AP**

Australia proposes immigration system overhaul to ease entry

Migrant wage threshold of temporary skilled workers to also rise

AGENCIES
SYDNEY, APRIL 27

AUSTRALIA PROPOSED on Thursday overhauling its immigration system to speed up getting highly skilled workers into the country and smoothing the path to permanent residency.

The federal Labor government said the current system used to select skilled migrants – the points test – will be modified to identify people with the correct skill sets the Australian economy needs going forward.

"Our migration system... is broken. It is failing our businesses, it is failing migrants themselves. And most importantly, it is failing Australians. That cannot continue," Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said in a speech at the National Press Club.

AUSTRALIA HAS been competing with comparable countries to lure more skilled migrants, with the surge in demand exacerbated by an ageing population. In September, Australia raised its intake of permanent migrants to 195,000, up by 35,000, to help battle staff shortages and pledged funds to speed up visa processing.

The government said the visa process for high-skilled professionals will be made quicker and easier, while steps will be taken

NATO allies have given Kyiv 1,500 combat vehicles, 230 tanks, says Stoltenberg

LORNE COOK
KYIV, APRIL 27

NATO COUNTRIES have delivered more than 98% of the combat vehicles promised to Ukraine amid its war with Russia, the military alliance's chief said Thursday, giving Kyiv a bigger punch as it appears poised to launch a counteroffensive.

Along with more than 1,550 armored vehicles, 230 tanks and other equipment, member nations have sent Ukraine "vast amounts of ammunition" and also trained and equipped more than nine new Ukrainian brigades, NATO Secretary-

General Jens Stoltenberg said.

More than 30,000 troops are estimated to make up the new brigades.

"This will put Ukraine in a strong position to continue to retake occupied territory," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels.

Stoltenberg said the 31 NATO allies were committed to shoring up Ukraine's military.

He said taking back land occupied by the Kremlin's forces would give Kyiv a stronger negotiating position if peace talks take place at all.

The Kremlin gave a lukewarm response to the call between Xi and Zelensky. **AP**



AFTER 20 YEARS ABROAD

PANDA YA YA WELCOMED HOME

Ya Ya the panda landed Thursday afternoon in Shanghai after departing from the Memphis Zoo in the US where she spent the last two decades, marking end of a 20-year loan agreement. **AP**

Damaged car and buildings at a market during clashes between two warring factions in Sudan's capital. **Reuters**

Airstrikes back in Khartoum as US pushes for extending truce

KHALED ABDELAZIZ & NAFISA ELTAHIR
KHARTOUM, APRIL 27

THE UNITED STATES and African nations raced to secure an extension of a ceasefire in Sudan on Thursday, with the Sudanese army saying it had given an initial nod to an African proposal calling for talks even as heavy fighting continued.

Hundreds of people have been killed in nearly two weeks of conflict between the army and a rival paramilitary force – the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – which are locked in a power struggle threatening to destabilise the wider region.

An RSF statement accused the army of attacking its forces on Thursday and spreading "false rumours", making no reference to the proposal which the army said came from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an African regional bloc.

The sound of air strikes and anti-aircraft fire could be heard in the capital Khartoum and the nearby cities of Omdurman and Bahri, witnesses and Reuters journalists said.

The existing three-day ceasefire brought about a lull in fighting, without completely halting it, but is due to expire at midnight.

The army late on Wednesday

said its leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, had given initial approval to the plan to extend the truce for another 72 hours and to send an army envoy to the South Sudan capital, Juba, for talks.

The military said the presidents of South Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti worked on a proposal that includes extending the truce and talks between the two forces, whose conflict derailed a transition to civilian democracy after a 2021 military coup.

"Burhan thanked the IGAD and expressed an initial approval to that," the army statement said.

IGAD reaffirmed an earlier call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, de-escalation and a return to the negotiating table. A statement by the bloc made no mention of Juba's fate.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat discussed working together to create a sustainable end to the fighting, the State Department said on Wednesday.

At least 512 people have been killed and close to 4,200 wounded by the fighting since April 15. The crisis has sent growing numbers of refugees across Sudan's borders. The UN refugee agency has estimated 270,000 people could flee into South Sudan and Chad alone. **REUTERS**

Studio assistants retouch a new waxwork representation of Britain's Queen Consort Camilla as it stands next to a wax statue of King Charles as part of a new attraction ahead of the monarch's coronation celebrations, at Madame Tussauds in London. **Reuters**

Pak govt, Opp hold talks to end deadlock over holding elections

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 27

PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL leaders on Thursday held talks to end the deadlock over holding elections in the country and decided to continue the parleys on Friday to resolve the issue.

The government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the main opposition party led by Imran Khan, have been wrangling over the issue of whether to hold elections on the same date in the country or first go for polls in the provinces of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa only.

The first round of talks held on Thursday went on for two hours. Yusuf Raza Gilani, a key member of the government, told media after the first round that the talks would resume on Friday. **PTI**

Both political parties and their donors have reached consensus on what benefits them and they actively collude to shut down any conversation about

FIRST APPEARANCE SINCE QUITTING NETWORK

Ex-Fox anchor Carlson surfaces again, targets US media, politics

DAN WHITCOMB
APRIL 27

FORMER Fox News star Tucker Carlson surfaced publicly on Wednesday for the first time since abruptly leaving the network this week, releasing a video statement in which he criticized the state of public discourse on US television.

Carlson in the statement did not address his departure from Fox, where he hosted the highest-rated news program in the key demographic on the most-watched US cable news network.

Instead, he took aim at American media and the US political system.

Despite signing off the roughly two-minute long clip Carlson posted on his Twitter handle



Screenshot from the roughly two-minute long clip Carlson posted on his Twitter handle

it, "Carlson said, "Suddenly the United States looks very much like a one-party state. That's a depressing realization, but it's not permanent," he said.

Despite signing off the roughly two-minute long clip with the words "see you soon," Carlson did not give any hints of his next move. **REUTERS**

FOX TO HAND FILES FOR SECOND POLL LAWSUIT

New York: Fox News agreed to hand over thousands of documents to voting machine company Smartmatic, which is suing network for defamation in a case similar to Dominion Voting Machines' lawsuit. Smartmatic says Fox bears responsibility for airing false allegations that the company rigged the 2020 presidential polls against Donald Trump. Last week, Fox agreed to pay Dominion nearly \$800 million to avert a trial, although the cost to company is likely to be lower. Smartmatic wants a \$2.7 billion judgment, which far exceeds \$1.6 billion Dominion sought in suit. **AP**

KENJI NAGAI WAS FILMING PROTESTS WHEN HE WAS SHOT; HIS VIDEO CAMERA WAS RECOVERED WITH ORIGINAL TAPE

15 yrs after journalist's killing in Myanmar, his camera is found

JERRY HARMER
BANGKOK, APRIL 27

A VIDEO camera that had been missing for more than 15 years after it was dropped by a Japanese journalist who was fatally shot during a street protest in Myanmar was handed over Wednesday to his sister at a ceremony in Bangkok.

Kenji Nagai was recording the demonstration on September 27, 2007, in downtown Yangon – part of a peaceful anti-military uprising known as the Saffron Revolution – when soldiers arrived, dispersing the crowd with

Aye Chan Naing (left), of Democratic Voice of Burma, hands over the video camera of slain Japanese journalist Kenji Nagai to his sister Noriko Ogawa, in Thailand. **AP**

comes as Myanmar is in the grip of upheaval far worse than that of 2007. A widespread, determined armed resistance has sprung up in response to the overthrow of Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government by the military in 2021.

According to tallies kept by journalists in Myanmar, three of their local colleagues have been killed by the authorities since the army takeover and more than 150 detained. A handful of foreign journalists were also detained and later deported.

The camera when found still had the original tape inside it. Its contents were screened at Wednesday's event.

The images showed protesters and monks in the street close to Yangon's ancient Sule Pagoda, singing and chanting, with police blocking their way. Trucks full of soldiers then arrived, prompting Nagai to turn the camera on himself.

The images then appear to show people scattering. The video cut off before the fatal moment.

However, video recorded by the Democratic Voice of Burma caught the moment of Nagai's death, as he fell down and was then apparently shot at close range by a soldier. A photo of the incident taken by Adrees Latif of

the Reuters news agency won a 2008 Pulitzer Prize.

Exact details of when and how Nagai's camera was found and where it was kept in the intervening years remain vague. Aye Chan Naing said only that it had gone through a series of people before getting out of Myanmar.

Nagai's sister said she hoped an analysis of the tape would disprove the Myanmar government's claim that he had not been deliberately targeted. "I hope I can reverse the Myanmar military's claim that my brother's death was an accident," she said. **AP**

Jaipur

Godrej to acquire Raymond consumer biz for Rs 2,825 cr

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

GODREJ CONSUMER Products Ltd Thursday said it has signed an agreement to acquire the FMCG business of Raymond Consumer Care Ltd for Rs 2,825 crore.

Raymond Consumer Care primarily operates in the deodorant and sexual wellness categories with two key brands — Park Avenue and Kamasutra.

It is selling its FMCG business to Godrej Consumer along with the trademarks of Park Avenue (for the FMCG category), KS, KamaSutra and Premium through a slump sale, Godrej said in an exchange filing.

"This acquisition allows us to complement our business portfolio and growth strategy with under-penetrated categories that offer a long runway of growth," Godrej Consumer's Managing Director and CEO Sudhir Sitapati said.

Per-capita consumption (USD) of deodorants in India is 0.4x that in Indonesia, 0.05x that in Brazil and 0.04x that in the

India wants non-financial assets included in OECD info exchange framework

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

WITH AN aim to promote tax transparency and check evasion, India is in favour of widening the scope of the common reporting standard (CRS) at the G20 to include non-financial assets like real estate properties under the automatic exchange of information among OECD countries, Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra said on Thursday.

Addressing the meeting of the 'Asia Initiative of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes', Malhotra said there is also a need to broaden the scope of AEI so that the information could be used not only to check tax evasion, but also for other non-tax law enforcing purposes.

"We would also like expansion of the CRS from financial to new other non-financial accounts and assets, because the risks are not only in financial assets... there is a risk of tax evasion in non-financial and real assets, properties etc... these will be our priorities as part of the G20,"

Malhotra said.

Flow of information has helped us in increasing tax collection and revenue buoyancy has increased, he added.

In August 2022, the OECD also approved the Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework which provides for the reporting of tax information on transactions in crypto-assets in a standardised manner, with a view to automatically exchanging such information.

India currently has an information sharing framework with 108 jurisdictions and with 79 jurisdictions on automatic basis.

As per the OECD's Tax Transparency report, amid the current geopolitical and debt crisis, there is a pressing need to check tax evasion and illicit financial flows, especially by Asian nations which are estimated to have lost €25 billion in 2016.

Quoting a study, the OECD report said 4 per cent of Asia's financial wealth amounting to €1.2 trillion was held offshore, leading to a potential annual revenue loss of €25 billion for the region in 2016.

JioCinema new home of HBO, Warner Bros

ALOKANANDA CHAKRABORTY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

WARNER BROS. Discovery and Viacom18 Thursday announced that JioCinema would be the new streaming home of HBO, Max Original and Warner Bros. content starting May 1. The partnership includes exclusive content rights across digital and linear and under this arrangement, HBO Original, Max Original and Warner Bros. Television series will premiere on JioCinema on the same day as in the US.

Wipro expects sequential drop in IT services revenue

REUTERS
BENGALURU, APRIL 27

IT SERVICES provider Wipro Ltd said on Thursday revenue from its mainstay IT Services unit would drop sequentially in the current quarter, after rising expenses offset deal wins in the three months ended March.

Wipro is the latest among major IT services exporters to warn about a drop in future performance as clients in western countries either delay, rethink, or cancel deals.

Net profit for Wipro fell 0.4 per cent to Rs 3,075 crore for the quarter ending March.

HOTSTAR'S LOSS, JIOCINEMA'S GAIN

■ Disney+Hotstar announced last month that it was dropping HBO content beginning Mar 31.

■ JioCinema is already the streaming partner of IPL. Analysts say it is attempting to disrupt the ecosystem

JioCinema is already the streaming partner of IPL. Viacom has deep pockets and they are trying to disrupt the ecosystem, say analysts. "This partnership goes to show that JioCinema has emerged as a serious player in the OTT business in India," said

Karan Taurani, senior VP, Elara Capital. "They already have the IPL, which is the most expensive sporting property in the world at the moment, and JioCinema has 10-12% of the OTT market in India. They can potentially become the largest video player af-

ter YouTube."

India's OTT market size stands at \$2 billion (AVOD or advertisement-based video on demand + SVOD or subscription-based video on demand). Pureplay SVOD market leader is Netflix with 35% of the market. Till IPL moved addresses, Hotstar was the AVOD market leader primarily because of IPL, which could have been 50-60% of its revenue in India as per analyst estimates. The Jio-Warner deal includes current and future seasons of HBO's globally acclaimed shows such as *The Last of Us*, *Succession* and *The White Lotus*.

FE

CAPITAL REGION URBAN TRANSPORT

Plot No. 548/1452, Patia, Kalarahanga, Bhubaneswar, - 751024, Odisha, (India), Phone : 0674- 3501580, E-Mail :- crutbbsr@gmail.com,

Notice No. 1070/CRUT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL Date: 26/04/2023

SELECTION OF BUS OPERATOR FOR PROCUREMENT, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF AC FULLY BUILT PURE ELECTRIC BUSES AND ALLIED ELECTRICAL & CIVIL INFRASTRUCTURE ON GROSS COST CONTRACT BASIS FOR 200 E-BUSES (9M-10M) FOR A TENURE OF 12 (10+2) YEARS.

- Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) invites Proposal from interested agencies for the above mentioned purpose. Please refer the RFP document for details.
- The RFP document shall be available from 27/04/2023 onwards in following web portal: www.capitalregiontransport.in. Any further intimation (i.e. Corrigendum/ Addendum/ Responses to the queries / Clarifications) shall be uploaded in the above website only.
- Applicants are required to submit duly filled Proposal as per the prescribed formats on or before 31/05/2023 by 3:00 PM. The Proposals received shall be opened at 4:30 PM on 01/06/2023.
- In case of any queries/clarifications, email at crutbbsr@gmail.com
- CRUT reserves the right to accept or reject bid process without assigning any reasons thereof.

General Manager (P&A),
Capital Region Urban Transport

Looking at banks' models more closely: Das

'Over-aggressive growth strategies are a precursor to future problems'

HITESH VYAS

MUMBAI, APRIL 27

have raised questions over the business models of individual banks that have faced challenges.

"These business models sometimes can create risks in certain parts of the balance sheets of banks which, going forward, can blow up into a bigger crisis. Therefore, we are focusing now on the business models adopted by banks," he said.

Last month, the collapse of two US-based lenders — Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Banks, and one European bank — Credit Suisse, raised concerns over the health of the financial sector across the globe, including India.

He said financial resilience is



RBI Governor
Shaktikanta Das

gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of banks have declined to 4.41 per cent as of December 2022, down from 5.8 per cent as on March 2022 and 7.3 per cent as on March 31, 2021.

The macro stress tests for credit risks indicate that domestic banks would be able to comply with the minimum capital requirements even under severe stress situations and policymakers in India have maintained a position so far that there will not be a spillover of the crisis unfolding in the US and Europe.

Das said the recent events in the banking landscape of the US and Europe suggest that risks for an individual bank could crop up from segments of its balance sheet which might have been considered relatively safer.

"Our approach is to flag deficiencies in this area to the senior management or to the board of directors of individual institutions for remedial action," he said.

bank to continually assess the financial risks and focus on building up adequate capital and liquidity buffers even beyond the minimum regulatory requirements. This is required for continual resilience and sustainable growth of each individual bank and financial entity," the Governor said.

Das said the RBI does not interfere with the business decision making of any bank or any regulated entities, he said. It only emphasises that the regulated entities must demonstrate the adequacy of internal controls and loss absorption capacity to match the risk that their business models may generate.

A sharp rise in commodity costs through last year has cast a cloud over FMCG makers even as they sought to shrug off the effects via price increases and reduced package sizes.

HUM reported a nearly 11 per cent jump in expenses to Rs 11,708 crore for the quarter ended March 31, with gross margin dipping to 48 per cent from 49 per cent a year earlier. "The decline is basically a reflection of two years of cumulative inflation that commodities have seen," Chief Financial Officer Ritesh Tiwari said.

The margin decline came as growth in product prices slowed to its lowest in more than a year to 7 per cent, while sales volumes expanded 4 per cent, down from 5 per cent at the end of December.

At present, online gaming platforms pay 18 per cent GST on platform fees and not on the full value including prize money. A Group of Ministers, under Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, had in December last year submitted a report on GST on online gaming to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. In its last meeting in November, the GoM had agreed on a 28 per cent GST on these segments. However, in absence of consensus on whether the tax should be levied on only the fees charged by the portal or the entire consideration, including the bet amount, received from participants, the GoM had decided to refer all suggestions to the GST Council for a final decision.

FinMin weighing different GST rates for games of skill, chance

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

ANGEL TAX: I-T DEPT TO SOON NOTIFY RULES

THE FINANCE Ministry is considering differential tax treatment for online gaming for the categories of games of chance and games of skill.

Online games in the nature of betting or gambling are likely to attract 28 per cent GST while those involving some amount of skill will likely be taxed at a lower 18 per cent, an official said.

The matter is expected to be taken up for discussion by the GST Council in its next meeting, which is likely either in the month of May or June.

"All online games are not games of chance and are not in the nature of betting or gambling. Many options are being considered, nothing is off the table. We

are also going through the rules for online gaming brought out by MeitY. The Finance Ministry will be presenting its view before the council," the official said, adding

that the task would be to differentiate between what should be a game of skill and what can be called a game of chance.

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Mutual fund investments: big change in the small towns



SANDEEP SINGH

THE 100 per cent jump in Sensex over the past three years, between March 31, 2020 and March 31, 2023, witnessed some big changes across the country, especially in terms of investor behaviour and investor outlook towards equities. In this three-year period, while the aggregate number of demat accounts with CDSL and NSDL jumped 2.8 times to over 11.44 crore, the number of outstanding SIP accounts doubled from 3.11 crore to 6.28 crore and the monthly SIP contribution across the mutual fund industry rose from around Rs 8,500 crore

to over Rs 14,000 crore. However, one of the biggest changes as far as the economy and the way India saves is concerned has been the rise and rise in the share of small cities in the mutual funds assets under management (AUM).

Categorised as 'Other cities' by the Association of Mutual Funds in India, these are a group that fall beyond the top 110 cities across the country (in terms of contribution of the industry AUM). These cities account for 17.44 per cent of the industry AUM, i.e. Rs 6.87 lakh crore out of the aggregate industry AUM of Rs 39.42 lakh crore, as of March 2023. Their share has risen sharply from 10.99 per cent in March 2020 and from a low of 2.55 per cent in June 2014.

How has the amount changed?

As these smallest cities increased their weight in mutual fund investment over the past three years, not only have they eaten into the share of the large metros (share of top 5 cities came down from 62.4 per cent to 54.5

	SHARE OF CITIES		
	June 2014	Mar 2020	Mar 2023
Top 5 cities	73.4	62.43	54.47
Next 10	13.12	12.59	12.51
Next 20	5.7	5.04	5.35
Next 75	5.23	5.37	6.23
NRI and overseas	N/A	3.55	3.97
Other cities*	2.55	10.99	17.44
Industry AUM**	974,715	2,226,202	3,942,030

*Cities beyond the top 110; ** In Rs crore; Other figures in per cent

per cent), they have also stabilised the flow of funds for the fund houses when the market movement is adverse.

In fact, while the share of top 35 cities came

down from 80 per cent in March 2020 to 72.3 per cent in March 2023; the share of the next 75 cities rose from 5.37 per cent to 6.23 per cent in the same period. Their share in June 2014 stood at 5.23 per cent.

However, the biggest change came at the bottom of the pyramid in the 'Other cities' – semi-urban and rural areas. Individually, they are contributing 0.01–0.03 per cent of the industry AUM or even lower, but together have created a big change.

What does it mean?

Many within the industry feel this is an indication of the deepening of Indian equity markets, and also a reflection of the democratisation of equity culture in the country. While it tells the story of an aspirational India looking for higher returns on their investments and a better future, it also shows the faith and confidence that the small investor in the smaller towns has on the steps taken by the regulator to protect investor interest. Besides, this is a re-

sult of the paradigm shift in the ease of investment over the past few years.

While investing in equities does carry some risk, especially if the investment is for the short-term, the positives are many – from contributing to the India growth story to higher long-term return on investments. Fund houses say that SIP investors from smaller cities are more diligent about their monthly

SIPs and the flows do not stop with markets witnessing adverse movement.

EXPLAINED YOUR MONEY

Why should MFs be part of every investor's portfolio?

Many investors are often anxious about investing in the best performing scheme. It is, however, more important to start early and go with a decently performing fund than to stay away. For example, over the past 10 years, in the large cap category, while the top performing fund generated a compounded annual return of around 14 percent, many others

generated a return of around 12 per cent. The idea must be to beat the returns generated by conventional saving instruments (fixed deposits and small saving schemes) and inflation. In the above case, even the average fund that generated around 12 per cent would have outperformed the returns from fixed deposits by around two times.

Investors must also understand that the benefit of compounding is significant over a long period of time.

For example, if two individuals are investing Rs 10,000 a month for 20 years, there would be a big difference in their corpus depending upon where they invest at the end of the 20 years. While at 6 per cent, in a conventional saving instrument, an investor would end up with a corpus of Rs 46.2 lakh, the other investor, getting 10 per cent CAGR on his equity fund investment over the 20-year period, would see his corpus rise to Rs 75.9 lakh.

THIS WORD MEANS

RAPID SUPPORT FORCES

The fighting between Rapid Support Forces and Sudan's military has led to the crisis in the country

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

INDIA IS in the process of evacuating people from Sudan, where a fierce battle between the military and paramilitary forces since April 15 has left over 400 dead. The clashes follow months of heightened tensions between the Army Chief Lt Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Force (RSF) head General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemetti.

The generals are at loggerheads as they fight for control of Sudan's major institutions. But this wasn't always the case. Burhan and Hamdan joined forces to oust authoritarian President Omar al-Bashir in 2019. One reason for their fallout, according to experts, is the growing ambitions of Hamdan to lead Sudan. In recent years, he has amassed vast amounts of wealth, making his RSF stronger and a serious challenger to Burhan's army.

Who are the Rapid Support Forces?

Although formally established in 2013, the RSF can trace its roots to the Janjaweed militias, drawn from a group of Arab tribes primarily based in western Sudan, including Darfur. They were first armed and organised in the early 1980s to help the government expand its influence in neighbouring civil-war-torn Chad.

Janjaweed militias came into global prominence in 2003 when they helped the Sudanese government quell a rebellion by peasants in Darfur. While the military attacked using air force and heavy weapons, the Janjaweed perpetrated violence against the rebels and civilians in isolated areas.

According to the United Nations, an estimated 300,000 people were killed in the conflict between 2003 and 2008. In 2007, the US government termed the vi-



People pass damaged buildings in Khartoum on Thursday. Reuters

olence in Darfur "genocide", perpetrated by the government and its allied forces, including the Janjaweed. Subsequently, the International Criminal Court opened investigations into the violence, indicting Bashir on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity in 2009.

Despite the backlash, the Janjaweed continued to grow, helping Bashir rule the country with an iron-fist. The President gave the group an institutional veneer in 2013, as per the NYT, when it became the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Hamdan was appointed its head.

How did the RSF become powerful?

Soon after its formal constitution, the RSF began to expand, owing to its proximity to Bashir. In 2015, the paramilitary forces along with Sudan's Army began supplying troops to fight in the war in Yemen to support Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In return, Hamdan received money and weapons.

Two years later, the forces partnered with the Russian mercenary Wagner Group to mine the vast gold reserves in Sudan. This further helped RSF and Hamdan expand their political, economic and political influence – resulting in a conflict with the country's army chief Burhan.

The Bench agreed with the Centre that an absolute statement that the state can have no interference in regulating personal relationships might not be correct. CJI DY Chandrachud in an oral observation gave the example of a parent-child relationship that is regulated by the state. "The state requires the child to be educated. The parent cannot say I have absolute control over the child," he said.

APURVA VISHWANATH

NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

THE SUPREME Court heard arguments on Thursday on behalf of the government from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta in the case seeking legal recognition of same sex marriage.

While urging the Court to leave the issue to Parliament, Mehta argued that the law cannot be re-drafted again to allow same-sex marriage.

Here are six key arguments of the Centre.

Definitions of marriage

The Centre's first submission was that various religions have always recognised marriage only between a man and a woman. Mehta argued that if a new idea of marriage has to be imagined, then it must be Parliament and not the Court which can create it.

"It is essential to note that marriage, even under the so-called secular Special Marriage Act, 1954, originates in personal law. The said secular enactments were enacted not as a means to create a new social legal institution, but rather as a means to overcome some limitations of religious personal laws," he said.

'Legitimate' interest of state

Responding to the argument of the petitioners that the state can have no role in regulating personal relationships, Mehta argued that the state has a 'legitimate' interest in regulating marriage.

"The right to marry is not absolute and is always subject to the statutory regime provided by the competent legislature," he argued.

He also cited several aspects of marriage which the state has regulated, such as age of consent to marriage, prohibition of bigamy, prescription of prohibited degrees of marriage (which means one can't marry their linear ascendants, such as parents, grandparents, etc.), judicial separation, and divorce.

"The state can claim legitimate interest to regulate, when to marry, how many times to marry, whom to marry, how to separate, etc." The Centre argued.

Mehta told the Court that if the petitioner's argument were to be accepted, the law on bestiality or incest can also be challenged on the same grounds that the state cannot regulate personal relationships.

It is submitted that consenting sex between two adults is in the sphere of privacy within the intimate zone. However, recognising the relationship between the very same two individuals as marriage falling in the public zone has a necessary and inevitable public element."

TUSHAR MEHTA
SOLICITOR GENERAL



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Parliament must decide

The Centre has repeatedly said that the decision on same-sex marriage can only be made in Parliament. The argument essentially is that there exists a democratic right of people to regulate themselves and that it cannot be mandated by a Court.

Mehta on April 26 had cited a string of rulings from the US Supreme Court, including the 2022 *Dobbs v Jackson* case, on the limits of judicial review. In the Dobbs ruling, the US Supreme Court held that abortion neither finds express mention in the US Constitution nor is deeply rooted in the nation's history and tradition, and therefore cannot be a protected constitutional right.

The Centre also argued that the Court will be venturing into unknown arenas if it legislates on same-sex marriage, and that could raise several unintended consequences in law.

"As per the information available in public domain, there are a total 72 categories of genders falling within the LGBTQIA+ community. This would mean several permutations and combinations of marriage and fact specific peculiar problems arising therefrom. It will be impossible for the Court to conceive all such permutations and combinations

upon whom the socio-legal recognised relationship of marriage would be converted and provide for detailed mechanism/provision to deal with such situations," the Centre argued.

Interpreting the law

The key argument of the Centre is that the Court cannot interpret the Special Marriage Act to include same-sex marriage in a meaningful way.

Mehta argued that the Court will have to examine the entire architecture of the Act rather than examine a few words like husband, wife, etc., mentioning several instances where simply replacing the words wife and husband with person would not be compatible with the rest of the legislation.

Mehta cited instances where the law provides specific rights to a wife. For example, he argued that "the law says that the wife acquires the domicile of the husband upon marriage. So who will be the wife in a same-sex marriage?"

Another example he cited was on the issue of divorce. Under the Special Marriage Act, a wife may seek divorce on the ground that her husband has, since solemnisation of the marriage, been guilty of rape, sodomy, or bestiality.

Mehta said, "This is a right specifically given to the wife. In case of a gay marriage who would get this right? The petitioners' argument is that the court must allow both the parties to have this right. But there is a problem there... can the court allow a right to one party in a gay marriage and not to the other in a heterosexual marriage?"

Effect on personal laws

The Centre argued that personal laws will inevitably be affected even if the Court only looks at the Special Marriage Act. Last week, before the arguments began, the Court made it clear that it will restrict the scope of the challenge only to secular laws and not religious laws.

However, Mehta argued that it might not be possible for the court to interpret the Special Marriage Act in isolation without touching personal laws. Under Section 19 of the Special Marriage Act, the parties married under the secular law lose their right to family property, although they will continue to be governed under their personal laws in all other aspects such as divorce, inheritance and adoption.

Kumari vs Govt of UP and ors. The main issue before the Supreme Court in this case decided in 2013 was whether the police officer is bound to file an FIR for information received of a cognizable offence or does the officer have the power to conduct a 'preliminary inquiry' before the FIR.

The Constitution bench concluded that registration of an FIR under section 154 CrPC was mandatory if information of a cognizable offence is received. "... Other considerations are not relevant at the stage of registration of FIR, such as, whether the information is falsely given, whether the information is genuine, whether the information is credible etc," the court said.

It also said, "The scope of preliminary inquiry is not to verify the veracity or otherwise of the information received but only to ascertain whether the information reveals any cognizable offence."

It gave an illustrative list of categories of cases where such an inquiry can be made, including family disputes, commercial offences, medical negligence, corruption cases, or cases where there is an abnormal delay in reporting the matter. The court said this inquiry should not exceed seven days.

Wrestlers in SC: What law says on FIR in sexual harassment cases

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

THE SUPREME Court Tuesday issued notice to the Delhi Police on a petition filed by seven wrestlers seeking an FIR against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president and BJP MP, on allegations of sexual harassment. On Wednesday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta submitted to the court that the Delhi police feels there is a need to "conduct a preliminary inquiry" before the FIR.

What is the law on FIR after a sexual harassment complaint?

Section 154 (1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure enables the police to register an FIR after information is received about a cognizable offence. A cognizable offence/case is one in which a police officer may make an arrest without a warrant. Indian Penal Code Sections pertaining to sexual harassment and sexual assault fall within the category of cognizable offences. The registration of an FIR is the first step to

wards the probe.

The law also has provision for the registration of a 'Zero FIR', where even if the alleged offence has not been committed within the jurisdiction of the police station approached, the police can file an FIR and transfer it to the police station concerned.

Is failure to register an FIR an offence?

The Report of the Committee on Amendments to Criminal Law, popularly known as the Justice JS Verma Committee, formed in the aftermath of the December 16, 2012 Delhi gangrape case, recommended insertion of a section where if an officer-in-charge of a police station refuses "or without reasonable cause" fails to record information related to a cognizable offence, he shall be punished.

Based on the recommendation, section 166A was inserted in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. The section states that if a public servant fails to record any information given to him in relation to a cognizable offence, rigorous imprisonment for a term of minimum six months and maximum two years can be given, and he shall



From left: Wrestlers Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat, and Bajrang Punia at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday. Amit Mehra

Sindhu, Prannoy,
Satwik-Chirag in
QF of Badminton
Asia C'ships

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

APRIL 27

IF THERE ever was an ideal mindset to go into a match with An Se Young for PV Sindhu, this would be it. A dominant 21-12, 21-15 confidence-fortifying win over Han Yue of China to take her head to head brag to 4-0. Sindhu will need every ounce of that belief if she has to overturn a career 0-5 record against the Korean in the Badminton Asia Championship quarterfinal.

Against Yue, Sindhu was at her attacking best, using her vertical advantage, striking the shuttle at a high point, moving into position early. Fast cross-drops, long lifts and high tosses were her arsenal to harry the Chinese, even as Yue was overpowered by the regulation smashes. Sindhu took the lead early getting to 11-6 in quick time, and kept widening the gap to breeze to the first game.

Yue got a word in edgeways at 8-7 in the second, but her lead was short lived, as Sindhu kept consistent pressure on her with a cross-attack that never waned. From 12-11, Sindhu pulled away never to be reined back, winning in 33 minutes.

Prannoy beats Chico

India's most consistent shuttler HS Prannoy, seeded 8th at the tournament, got the better of Indonesian Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo, 21-16, 5-21, 21-18 in 64 minutes.

Having won the opening game, Prannoy seemed to be taking a breather in the brief second, readying for the third. Up and running in the decider, the Indian built up a 12-6 lead, but saw Chico catch up at 15-15. The rally exchanges were at a frenetic pace by now, but it was after receiving some medical attention that Chico came out guns blazing.

But Prannoy was prepared for the upping of the ante, and continued to pepper his opponent with body smashes that worked well for the Indian. The victory came on the second match point, as he set up a quarters clash with Japanese Kanta Tsuneyama, ranked No 15.

Prannoy, ranked No. 9, leads him in head to head 3-2, though the last match went Tsuneyama's way.

Kidambi Srikanth, however, could not shake off Kodai Naraoka, and went down 21-14, 20-22, 21-9 against the young Japanese.

Satwik-Chirag vs Daddies

India's star doubles pairing, Satwicksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, set up a clash against Mohammad Ahsan- Hendra Setiawan, the Daddies, after making the Last 8 in Dubai. It was a swift victory, 21-13, 21-11 in 32 minutes against Koreans Yong Jin and Sung Seung Na in a Round 2 match.

The Daddies lead the match up 3-2, though the Indians won the last encounter on the way to the India Open title in 2022. The two pairings haven't faced each other since last January.



HS Prannoy beat Indonesian Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo, 21-16, 5-21, 21-18.

With superior performance in the first six overs of both innings, RR complete double over CSK and knock them off the top spot

SYNOPSIS

It was Rajasthan Royals all the way, from the moment Yashasvi Jaiswal teed off to the bowlers strangling CSK's batsmen

VENKATA KRISHNAB

APRIL 27

THIS WAS a contest that was done and dusted in the powerplay. If their openers laid a platform for Rajasthan Royals while batting first, their bowlers never really allowed Chennai Super Kings to get off the blocks in the chase of 203. The end result was that Rajasthan became the first team in the ongoing Indian Premier League to make it two out of two against Chennai—which is no easy feat considering their form – as they moved top of the table with a resounding 32-run victory.

If their spinners had given them a famous win in Chennai while defending a par total, on Thursday, their batting unit returned the favour. Winning the toss, Sanju Samson read the conditions perfectly and batted first.

With dew not a factor in Jaipur, as humidity was less than 50 percent in the evening, on a pitch where it was getting slower through the night, Samson knew he could bank on their spin trio of R Ashwin, Yuzvendra Chahal and Adam Zampa to tie down any total that is above par on a big outfield.

The pacers too did their part. Sandeep Sharma, Kuldip Yadav and Jason Holder denied Chennai's in-form openers Devon Conway and Ruturaj Gaikwad a flying start by giving away only 25 runs in the first overs. The job was half done and then the spinners took over. By the time Conway was dismissed off the last ball of the powerplay to Zampa, Chennai had only 42 on board – their lowest total in the powerplay this season – as they desperately sought momentum.

Spinners do the trick

However, in the next six overs, four of which were bowled by the spin trio, Rajasthan conceded only 43 runs. Vitally, af-



Yashasvi Jaiswal gave Rajasthan Royals a superb start, scoring a 43-ball 77 which included four sixes.

Sportzpics/BCCI

ter Zampa nailed Ruturaj Gaikwad – who was beginning to loosen the screws with a 29-ball 47 – Ashwin took over. Having already been at the receiving end of Ashwin in the first round in Chennai, the Super Kings were not willing to take any risks against him, preferring to work around for singles and twos. There were five doubles and just one boundary in the 19 runs he conceded off his first two overs.

But Chennai were in a position where they had to shift gears. Forced by circumstances, Ajinkya Rahane jumped out, but Ashwin slowed it down a bit and made the ball drift into him. Just a subtle variation in

the air, but good enough to account for Rahane, who managed to find Jos Buttler at long-on. As Ambati Rayudu came in, Ashwin started with a quick one before delivering one outside the off-stump, making the batsman fetch for the ball. The ball being full, Rayudu's eyes lit-up and he went for a slog sweep, only to find the fielder at mid-wicket. CSK reeled to 85/4 at the end of the 12th, and it was too much for the middle and lower-order to pull off a heist. Even though Shivam Dube and Moeen Ali tried to revive the visitors with a 51-run partnership off just 25 deliveries, Zampa had the latter as his third victim, and effectively as-

sured two points for his team.

No stopping Yashasvi

With every passing outing this season, Jaiswal is moving ahead in the pecking order among openers waiting in the wings for India's call-up. After smashing centuries in Duleep Trophy, Ranji Trophy and Irani Cup, the left-hander has been showing through the IPL that switching formats isn't challenging for him. On Thursday, it was his carnage that set the tone for Rajasthan's win. After starting the innings with successive boundaries off the first two deliveries, he had six fours and two sixes by the end of

STANDINGS

Team	Played	Won	Lost	Pts	NRR
RR	8	5	3	10	0.939
GT	7	5	2	10	0.580
CSK	8	5	3	10	0.376
LSG	7	4	3	8	0.547
RCB	8	4	4	8	-0.139
PK	7	4	3	8	-0.162
KKR	8	3	5	6	-0.027
MI	7	3	4	6	-0.620
SRH	7	2	5	4	-0.725
DC	7	2	5	4	-0.961

powerplay as he put on 64 in the company of Butler, who was prepared to play second fiddle.

This was not just another knock, but one that would give him further confidence. With Jaiswal being comfortable against pacers, MS Dhoni turned to spinners and though he showed a bit of respect to Maheesh Theekshana, he greeted Ravindra Jadeja with a reverse-hit that sailed over point. At that stage, Rajasthan were going at 10 runs an over (85/0 after eight). It was also the period that Dhoni would rue in the end.

CSK made a comeback of sorts—conceding 61 runs in the next eight overs and accounting for three wickets, as Theekshana removed Shimron Hetmyer off the first ball of the 17th over. With Samson also gone, and Matheesha Pathirana still having two overs up his sleeve, Chennai fancied restricting Rajasthan around 180 and avoid being the first team to concede 200 runs in an IPL fixture at the Sawai Man Singh Stadium. At the start of the 18th over, the score at 153/4, the first 200-score looked distant.

Instead, Devdutt Padikkal managed to get some part of the bat to Pathirana's workers as he picked two boundaries via outside edge and inside edge. Then Dhruv Jurel – one of the finds of the season playing ahead of Ryan Parag – provided the perfect finishing touch, pillaging 34 runs off 15 balls. And how crucial those runs turned out to be.

BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals: 202-5 in 20 overs (Y Jaiswal 77; T Deshpande 2/42) beat Chennai Super Kings 170-6 in 20 overs (S Dube 52, R Gaikwad 47; Adam Zampa 3/22)

Chawla, the ageless leggie who is still deceiving batsmen

PRATYUSHRAJ

APRIL 27

IT WAS something said by Gujarat Titans' Abhinav Manohar, who went after Mumbai Indians' Piyush Chawla in one over, that captures how the opposition view the veteran legspinner in the IPL.

"In our pre-game batting meeting, Hardik Pandya told us that we should target Mumbai's best bowler Piyush Chawla," Manohar said, adding how it would then affect the other bowlers. And so, Manohar tool calculated risks to pull it off; it hasn't always paid off for all teams in this IPL. At 34, he is still foxing the batsmen with 11 wickets in seven matches at an economy of 7.11. With that cherubic face that's always clean shaven to ensure no grey hairy remnants stick out, Chawla has been superb this IPL. Not that he would be surprised.

On a chilly winter Delhi afternoon in December last year, Chawla had walked into the media box at the Arun Jaitley Cricket Stadium and had an hour-long discussion with a handful of journalists about this and that – how he can still be a matchwinner in T20. He wasn't picked in the 2022 IPL but had just made the comeback to Mumbai Indians.

"Look, I don't play four-day cricket anymore. I know my body can't take it. But I had played Syed Mushtaq Ali for Gujarat, did reasonably well, and I still feel in this format I am still a match-winner," he said. He is walking the talk.

For long, considered the lucky charm of Indian cricket – he has been part of several world cup winning teams across formats from junior-group cricket, Chawla is charming the pants off legspin connoisseurs this season.

Chawla's run to bowl is a peculiar sight. Unlike most leggies, who like to spin the ball from the right hand at top of their mark, he just keeps tossing it from one hand to the other as if juggling a dice or how the gloved wicketkeepers' handle the ball. Then mid-run, he tosses the ball and just about grips before he reaches the crease.

The world knows that his main weapon is the googly – the back-of-the-hand version

when he wants to spin it more and slower and the quicker finger version that slides out from the side of the palms when he wants pace and camouflage. But he has wedged in the other bits rather nicely to concoct wholesome spells of smarts this season. The angles of release have caught the eye (wide of crease, wider of crease, close to stumps and from

mid-point, he traverses all forms of entry); so has the different pace and the use of the conventional leg breaks, and of course that stinging googly.

Against Delhi, he returned with figures of 3 for 22, and took the wickets of Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell and Lalit Yadav. The mode of dismissals was different: Pandey was thwarted by the leg break, holing out; Powell was stung by a sharp googly, and Lalit Yadav went for the inside-out drive but lost his leg stump by the wrong'un.

In the post-match presser, Chawla would say: "Everyone knows that PC is coming he's gonna bowl a wrong one but still I end up getting wickets on wrong ones; so I am more than happy doing that."

Against Punjab Kings, Chawla's battle with Liam Livingstone was the highlight. The 8th over was a struggle for Livingstone, facing a dipping full one, a slower googly that beat his charge, a slider that came in quickly, the outside-off googly that thwarted him. Just one run came in that over, and Chawla, surprisingly, struck in his next. Livingstone was off the blocks too early, and Chawla slid it down the leg for a stumping. Against Hyderabad, he had the dangerous Heinrich Klassen holing out with a googly that peeled off the surface ever so slowly.

Chawla has last played a first-class match in 2020 for Gujarat, but he still plays the white-ball tournament. In last year's Syed Mushtaq Ali, he bagged six wickets in as many matches, with an excellent economy under seven. He had said playing domestic white-ball tournaments helped him to stay competitive. "I'm not playing much of cricket like domestic or competitive cricket but I make sure whatever game I play I put my more than 100% and body on the line," he said.

"If you talk about watching cricket, then I don't watch much cricket to be very honest, because I feel if you bowl a good ball it's a good ball in any format and for any batter, so I just prepare myself," he had said in that chat.

In his first couple of T20s in IPL way back



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Chawla has last played a first-class match in 2020 for Gujarat, but he still plays the white-ball tournament. In last year's Syed Mushtaq Ali, he bagged six wickets in as many matches, with an excellent economy under seven. He had said playing domestic white-ball tournaments helped him to stay competitive. "I'm not playing much of cricket like domestic or competitive cricket but I make sure whatever game I play I put my more than 100% and body on the line," he said.

"If you talk about watching cricket, then I don't watch much cricket to be very honest, because I feel if you bowl a good ball it's a good ball in any format and for any batter, so I just prepare myself," he had said in that chat.

In his first couple of T20s in IPL way back

mid-point, he traverses all forms of entry;

so has the different pace and the use of the conventional leg breaks, and of course that stinging googly.

Against Delhi, he returned with figures of

3 for 22, and took the wickets of Manish Pandey, Rovman Powell and Lalit Yadav. The mode of dismissals was different: Pandey was

thwarted by the leg break, holing out; Powell

was stung by a sharp googly, and Lalit Yadav

went for the inside-out drive but lost his leg

stump by the wrong'un.

In the post-match presser, Chawla would

say: "Everyone knows that PC is coming he's gonna bowl a wrong one but still I end up getting wickets on wrong ones; so I am more than happy doing that."

Against Punjab Kings, Chawla's battle with Liam Livingstone was the highlight. The 8th over was a struggle for Livingstone, facing a dipping full one, a slower googly that beat his charge, a slider that came in quickly, the outside-off googly that thwarted him. Just one run came in that over, and Chawla, surprisingly, struck in his next. Livingstone was off the blocks too early, and Chawla slid it down the leg for a stumping. Against Hyderabad, he had the dangerous Heinrich Klassen holing out with a googly that peeled off the surface ever so slowly.

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Protesting wrestlers tarnishing country's image: IOA chief Usha

Grapplers hit back: Our democratic right to protest; Unfortunate Usha can't understand pain of women athletes

ANDREW AMSAN

NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

ON THE day an ad-hoc committee took over wrestling administration, Indian Olympic Association president PT Usha said sportspersons "protesting on the streets" amounted to indiscipline and were tarnishing the image of the country. This came after Sports Minister Anurag Thakur had insisted that "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's govt has always stood with players" and "sports and athletes are their priority".

Speaking to reporters after the IOA's Executive Committee meeting that nominated Wushu Association of India president Bhupendra Singh Bajwa, former shooter Suma Shirur and a retired High Court judge to run the wrestling body and hold elections, Usha said: "The IOA has an athletes' commission. Instead of going on the streets, they could have come to us. The wrestlers themselves suggested an ad-hoc committee and we have formed one."

The IOA president said the protesting wrestlers should have approached the IOA before escalating the matter.

"They should have come to us. If they didn't get a solution, they could have gone everywhere. Straightaway going to the streets is not good for sports. We don't want any problems with our sportspersons. We want our athletes to participate in the Asian Games."

"This kind of agitation is not good for the country's image and amounts to indiscipline. This negative publicity is not good for the country. We want to be with any athlete who has represented India, but under the rules, regulations and law of the land."

Sports minister Thakur said the government has always stood with athletes. "We wanted an independent probe. Anyone who wanted to speak in front of the oversight committee, was given the chance to speak. There was no restriction. The time



Protesting wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phoghat and Sakshi Malik. Amit Mehra

'FEEL LET DOWN BY HER'



"They should have come to us. If they didn't get a solution, they could have gone everywhere. Straightaway going to the streets is not good for sports. We don't want any problems with our sportspersons. We want our athletes to participate in the Asian Games."

PT USHA, IOA PRESIDENT

"I have looked upto PT Usha ma'am and idolised her, but today I feel disappointed and let down by her statements. It is unfortunate that she couldn't understand the feelings of fellow women athletes. As athletes, we don't have an iota of indiscipline."

SAKSHI MALIK,
RIO OLYMPIC MEDALLIST WRESTLER

period of the probe increased because of them, we allowed that. There were 14 meetings of the oversight committee. Police has said it will do a preliminary en-

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ANURAG THAKUR,
SPORTS MINISTER

quiry before lodging FIR," he said.

The statements made by the former sprint queen didn't go well with the wrestlers protesting at Jantar Mantar. "I am

extremely disappointed with PT Usha making such statements, being a woman and former athlete. It's unfortunate that as a woman she is not able to understand the pain these women are undergoing," Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia said.

'Looked up to ma'am'

Rio Olympics medalist Sakshi Malik too sounded disappointed by Usha's comments. "I have always looked upto PT Usha ma'am and idolised her, but today I feel disappointed and let down by her statements. It is unfortunate that she couldn't understand the feelings of fellow women athletes. As athletes, we don't have an iota of indiscipline in our blood. We win medals and bring honour to the country only because we are disciplined," she said.

World Championship medalist Vinesh Phoghat said that instead of chastising the wrestlers, the IOA should have come to them to listen to their grievances. "We are not on the streets, we are on the soil of India. It is our democratic right to protest. If you feel it is 'indiscipline' or insulting, why don't come here and solve our problems?" she asked.

When asked about the findings of the committee to look into the allegations of sexual harassment levelled against Wrestling Federation of India president Brij Bhushan Sharang Singh, All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey, who addressed the media along with Usha, said the investigation was still on.

"The ad-hoc committee has got a list of witnesses, who will be invited to depose before it," he said.

Vinesh responded by saying that the list with the IOA would include those who Singh would want. "They didn't talk to us all this while, before we sat in on our protest. Brij Bhushan's people have been made witnesses. We also have witnesses, athletes and coaches, please make them witnesses too. We only trust the Supreme Court."

Chaubey said the probe panel formed with boxing legend MC Mary Kom as its head was a "very good committee". "It has very dependable and renowned individuals. If we can have a little patience, because these are very serious allegations... We cannot make any decisions in haste. We have to see what comes out of this committee."

It's advantage Ding as Game 13 ends in a draw



PRAVIN THIPSAY

With just the final game to go in the World Chess Championship, it's advantage Ding Liren as his opponent Ian Nepomniachtchi failed to win with White pieces in Game 13 at the St Regis in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Thursday.

Ding is known to leave his best for last as he did in the Candidates Tournament last year, and playing with White in Game 14, he will definitely have the edge.

Frankly, I'm a bit surprised with the way Nepo played on Thursday. Agreed he had a devastating loss on Wednesday and had no time to recover, but this is the World Championships! Aside from Magnus Carlsen, Ding and Nepo are supposed to be the best chess players in the world. They should be ready for any sort of challenge.

Nepo's best shot at getting an outright win was Game 13. He had to play to his strengths and use variations which he's familiar with. But on the 10th move, he chose a variation that hasn't been popular. Actually, from the past 115 years at least, it is known that Bishop to e3 is not a good move. It's played only by amateurs. It's quite well known that this variation gives the opponent the edge. There's no way that Nepo wasn't aware of this.

The Russian followed up the move with a premature central Pawn break on move 14. This gave Ding, who was supremely confident after the win on Wednesday, the upper hand.

What's shocking is that Nepo didn't sense that he had not put himself in a good position and continued playing weak and weakening moves which enabled Ding to prepare for a central Pawn break which he activated on move 19. By move 20, Nepo was in an untenable position. As has been the case in most games, it was Ding's turn to play inaccurate moves. On move 21, he missed an opportunity to prepare for an assault against Nepo's position by supporting his Queen-side Bishop, thereby releasing his Knight for Kingside action. All he had to play on the move was Rb81, protecting the Queen Bishop, thereby threatening to move the Knight from d5 to f4 from a position in centre towards Nepo's King. This

if coupled with Black Queen joining the attack, could have been extremely dangerous for Nepo.

He then continued his poor run by playing pointless moves thereby enabling Nepo to get out of danger. It was here that Nepo's 'sense of danger' came back and he began to play accurate moves to get out of trouble.

In a roughly equal position, Ding decided to 'sacrifice an exchange' (giving away a Rook for a minor piece) to create what looked like a fortress. Nepo could have retained some winning chances with a Knight maneuver on move 36 but decided to make a Rook move instead, which enabled Ding to force a draw with three-fold repetition. The match now seems to be tilting towards Ding as he will play with White pieces in the last game to be played on Saturday. The rest day on Friday will offer him an opportunity to improve over the 12th game which he played with White. Of course, Nepo is going to play a solid system and we are more likely to see a Queen's Gambit Declined on Saturday, rather than the Indian Defence.

If these 13 games have shown us anything, it is that both these players have tremendous scope for improvement. It's extremely important for both of them to get into the details of their shortcomings. Specific shortcomings can be cured by specialist experts. For example, opening variations. There are experts who will deal with only that.

Earlier World Championships contenders had a very strong strategic base, I think that is missing here completely. Ding's tactics are good and Nepo's strategic knowledge is good but both these players lack that in-depth knowledge. Don't get me wrong, they are still the best players. They have come this far because of their ability to calculate better. Their vigour and risk-taking ability are also superior to their contemporaries. They have a lot more to do, though.

(PRAVIN THIPSAY IS AN INDIAN GRANDMASTER AND A RECIPIENT OF THE ARJUNA AWARD)

Moves (Game 13)

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1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0
B7 6.d3 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Bb7
10.Be3? Na5 11.Bc2 c5 12.Nbd2 Re8 13.a4 h6!
14.d4! exd4 15.cxd4 cxd4 16.Nxd4 Nc4
17.Nxc4 bxc4 18.f3 Bf8 19.Bf2 d5! 20.exd5 Nxd5
21.Be4 Re5?! 22.Rc1 Rc8 23.Ne2 Qe7?
24.Qd4! F5! 25.Bg3! Rxe4 26.fxe4 Qxe4
27.Qxe4 fxe4 28.Rfd1 Nb4 29.Rd7 Bc5+ 30.Kh2
B6 31.Rc7 Rx7 32.Bxc7 Bd5 33.Nc3 Nd3
34.Rc2 Bg6 35.a5 Kf7 36.Re2?! Nc1 37.Rd1 Nd3
38.Re2?! Nc1 39.Re1 Nd3 40.Re2?! Game
drawn by 'Threefold Repetition'.
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Bundesliga title race heats up with Dortmund top

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, APRIL 27

FIVE MATCHES for a "salad bowl." The Bundesliga title race looks set to go to the final day of the season with only one point separating league leader Borussia Dortmund and 10-time defending champion Bayern Munich. The winner will receive the "Meisterschale" (champion's bowl), which is commonly referred to as the "salad bowl" because of its appearance.

In recent years, Bayern has usually had the bowl in the bag by now. With the exception of 2019, the title race hasn't been this close at this stage since 2010, when Louis van Gaal's Bayern team had just taken a one-point lead over Schalke with a 2-1 win over the then-league leaders in Gelsenkirchen.

This time, the Bavarian powerhouse is in the unaccustomed role of being a point behind. Bayern enjoyed a 4-2 win over Dortmund in Munich on April 1 but has been misfiring since. It was one of only two wins

Napoli on verge of first Serie A title in three decades



Banners and writings in support of Napoli in downtown Naples. AP

REUTERS
APRIL 27

RUNAWAY SERIE A leaders Napoli could seal their third Scudetto in record fashion this weekend if they beat lowly visitors Salernitana and second-placed Lazio drop points at Inter Milan. Victory on Saturday would move Luciano Spalletti's side to 81 points and they will become the first team to win the title with six matches remaining unless Lazio earn their first win away to Inter in more than four years on Sunday.

Spalletti urged his Napoli players not to get ahead of themselves despite being tantalisingly close to ending the city's 33-year wait for the Serie A title since Diego Maradona led the team to two championships in 1987 and 1990. "I don't like to celebrate in advance," he said. "If we all do it together there will be twice as much joy."

It would be unthinkable for Napoli to blow their 17-point lead at this stage but Spalletti's caution is understandable given a tough April in which his team managed two wins in six games in all competitions.

With no other silverware to play after

with the distraction of a Coppa Italia final and Champions League semi-final with Milan ahead, Lazio have not lost on the road in the league since the start of January, a run of five wins and two draws in which they have scored 11 goals and conceded one, although they suffered a dispiriting 1-0 home defeat by Torino last week.

Ciro Immobile played 36 minutes against Torino days after fracturing a rib and hurting his back in a car crash, but Lazio have shown they are not dependent on Italy's forward's goals, so manager Maurizio Sarri is almost certain not to start him. Injury-ravaged AS Roma, who are fifth, host fourth-placed Milan on Saturday in another key match in the race for the top four with both teams on 56 points.

Defender Diego Llorente and forward Paulo Dybala are doubtful while Rick Karsdorp, Chris Smalling and Gini Wijnaldum have all been ruled out for Jose Mourinho's Roma side, who were pushed out of the Champions League table after an eight-game unbeaten run.

Inter slump

Simone Inzaghi's Inter have slipped to sixth place after Juventus won an appeal against a 15-point deduction that sent the Turin club back up to third in the standings.

Inter are only two points off the top four but have one win in their last six Serie A games

Arsenal no match for De Bruyne's outrageous finesse and beauty

SANDIP G
APRIL 27

KEVIN DE BRUYNE, his manager Pep Guardiola appraises, is born to make assists. No Manchester City player ever has assisted more goals in the league than the Belgian's 103. This season alone, he has masterminded 27 goals in 42 games across all competitions.

A De Bruyne assist is often an event it itself—veering into spaces, the shock of ginger-blonde hair standing on its edges, the face red, eyes calm and still, the hands whirling and the legs bristling, the ludicrously flexible body spinning and weaving past confounded defenders, before he, with not so much of a pause as a momentary sideways glance slips to the perfect ball to the perfect space at the perfect time. So much so that he seems like a master of space and time, blessed with an extra path of vision.

What often goes unsung is his goal-scoring prowess—though he has netted 95, the joint-third for his club in the premier league era after Sergio Aguero and Raheem Sterling. It's an aspect of his game that Guardiola has asked him to focus more, not because he is incapable, but because he is often content be-

ing the provider than an executor, as though stifling his own goal-netting gifts.

Memorable finish

But against Arsenal, De Bruyne decided to be the destroyer himself, as he so often does against them, scoring two goals of outrageous finesse and beauty. The first one merits a standalone place in the album of City's season-defining reels of the 2022-23 season. It's his finish that would remain stamped in memory—the ball fizzing off the instep of his right-boot, the spin he imparted making the ball curving away and then into the lunging Arsenal goal-keeper Aaron Ramsdale from

25 yards out. A freeze-frame of the exact moment he sweet-spots the ball is instructive of his balance and technique, the left-toe balancing the coiled-up frame, the right-foot raised knee-high in follow through, the arms swinging back in the ferocity of his shot, and the body and head in the direction of the ball. But once he was in control of the shot, once he manufactured time and space, you knew the inevitable outcome.

But it is the beginning that captures the drive and determination of de Bruyne. The moment John Stones swung a lofted cross from the deep, from the right side just out-

side the box, to Erling Haaland near the half-line, de Bruyne tore off. He is not the quickest, even when he was younger than 31, but he runs spiritedly and cleverly. It was like the start of a 100 meter-race. The gun is popped, and he bursts through Thomas Partey and referee Michael Oliver, and then he drifts to the left, processing the best channel for Haaland, in the clutches of Rob Holding, to release him.

By the time the Norwegian flicked the ball to him, de Bruyne is ahead of Haaland, receives the ball, then accelerates, too fast for Partey and Co, then swerves to the right, further drifting away from the four chasers, two behind and two converging from the left, takes an intentionally heavy touch that takes the ball wider from Gabriel Magalhaes, before he turns his body the other way slightly and stings the shot.

The idea of Arsenal's defenders was to make him take the ball wider so that he is compressed of space to shoot and he would eventually look for a passing outlet, but such is the vision of de Bruyne that he knew the precise moment to uncork the shot. He shrewdly gunned the near post, which surprised Ramsdale, who was anticipating the City talisman to aim for the far post. De Bruyne also targeted the bottom-corner, and not the top-corner, as Ramsdale would have to bring his six feet two inches frame down to parry his shot away, and hence more difficult.

From gathering the ball from De Bruyne

to shooting for the goal, he made five touches, each perfect and how he wanted it to be. The first three were soft, anything heavier and the Arsenal shirts would have latched onto it. The fourth was intentionally heavier, anything less would have denied him the space to shoot. Watching the ball nestle into the nets, he spun towards the corner flag and spread his arms wide. At the touchline, Guardiola was leaping wildly, and he would offer his appreciation on the goal later.

"Kevin is... always I push him and have a feeling he can do better," he said, before drifting into tactical details. "In this shape (he can) move with more freedom, long balls, second balls with Erling up front, is so dangerous for the opponent."

A tactical tweak enabled this. Usually, Guardiola tunes up his team in a 4-3-3 formation in which one holding player sits at the base of the midfield, between two more advanced playmakers. Here, they were more of a 4-2-3-1, with Ilkay Gundogan sitting alongside Rodri. This was to repel the efficiency of Arsenal's man-to-man pressing, and this in turn offered De Bruyne more freedom in advanced central areas. The first goal originated from the space left by Granit Xhaka, who had to tussle with the extra central midfielder in Gundogan. This was the eighth goal of the season, and he would add one more to cap off a title-defining night, one where De Bruyne the goal-king shone brighter than the assist-master.



Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne scored a brace against Arsenal. Reuters