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EDITOR IN CHIEF: SANJAY M. BHAIRE

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'Congress wanted to allocate 15% of budget to minorities' -PM Modi

Kalyan

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended large-scale events in Dindori and Kalyan, Maharashtra, where he assured the farmers of accelerated development and growth in the state. The PM discussed his vision for a Viksit Bharat. He said, "We have continuously worked on what work needs to be done and what decisions need to be taken in the first 100 days after the formation of the government."

Discussing the evolving political landscape PM Modi observed, "The NDA alliance is poised for a significant victory, as indicated by a prominent leader within the alliance. Recognizing that the Congress party won't secure enough seats to claim the Leader of the Opposition post, he has urged other alliance parties to close shop and merge with the Congress. It seems inevitable that the so-called Shiv Sena and the party claiming to be nationalist will eventually merge with the Congress. Balasaheb Thackeray's words appear to be prophetic, he once said, 'The day I sense that Shiv Sena has transformed into Congress, I will dissolve Shiv Sena.' Everything that is unfolding now is in accordance with Balasaheb's wishes."

Expressing his extreme disregard towards the opposition, PM Modi remarked, "The fake Shiv Sena has shattered every dream of Balasaheb Thackeray. His vision included building a grand Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and abolishing Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. While these dreams have been fulfilled, the fake Shiv Sena is showing the most disgust. Just like Congress, they rejected the invitation for the temple's consecration. While Congress members are spewing hate about the Mandir, the fake Shiv Sena remains silent. Their sinful partnership has been exposed to the entire state of Maharashtra."

"The fake Shiv Sena members are now carrying Congress on their heads, despite the fact that Congress continuously abuses Veer Savarkar ji. This betrayal has left the self-respecting and patriotic people of Maharashtra furious. However, the fake Shiv Sena seems unaffected



by this outrage. Shouldn't this fake Shiv Sena, which has surrendered to Congress, be punished?" the PM further interrogated the crowd.

PM Modi emphasized the inclusive nature of the BJP government schemes and exclaimed, "Today, Modi is providing free ration and permanent houses to the poor. Every household is receiving electricity, water, and Ujjwala gas connections. We've never discriminated based on religion; our schemes benefit everyone."

Taking an explicit dig at the Opposition, he mentioned, "But what has Congress's intention been? Today, I'm going to reveal this to all 140 crore countrymen for the first time. It's a serious topic that needs to be addressed. Congress believes that 15 percent of the government's budget should be exclusively allocated to minorities, essentially budget allocation based on religion. Many years ago, Congress approved this idea of budget allocation based on religion. Just imagine how destructive this idea is."

The PM also boldly highlighted Congress's divisive agenda, "For Congress, there's only one minority: its favored vote bank. I recall vividly, during my tenure as CM, when Congress proposed spending 15 percent of the budget exclusively on Muslims. I vehemently opposed it, and thanks to BJP's strong opposition, Congress failed in its attempt. Now, they're determined to revive these old agendas. Baba Saheb Ambedkar was against religious-based

reservation, yet Congress is adamant about taking away reservation from SC/ST/OBC and the poor to give it to Muslims. They're even considering confiscating your property to appease their vote bank. But Congress and its allies should know this, Modi will never allow budget allocation based on religion or reservation to be granted based on religion. Modi is the guardian of the rights of the deprived."

PM Modi spoke of the election's significance and the BJP's commitment to serving the nation, "We draw inspiration from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This election is not just about choosing an MP; it's about choosing a PM who can make tough decisions to strengthen India. India bravely fought and defeated the Corona crisis, with Bharti Pawar ji's dedicated service playing a crucial role. The government is tirelessly working for the welfare of the poor, from providing relief from sickle cell anaemia to ensuring children's vaccination."

The PM's relentless dedication to empowering every section of society is evident from every word that he utters, "Modi's focus is on empowering farmers, youth, women, and the poor. The farming community has experienced 10 years of Modi's governance. Previously, under decades of Congress-Nationalist rule, despite having a Maharashtra Agriculture Minister, farmers were neglected. Under Congress rule, false promises were made; no resources were distributed to the needy."

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2 more bodies located under debris; rescue operation continues at hoarding crash site in Mumbai



Mumbai

Two more bodies were located under the debris at the site of a giant hoarding collapse in Mumbai as the search and rescue operation continued on Wednesday, an NDRF official said.

The bodies were spotted on Tuesday night, but were yet to be pulled out, a civic official said.

Rescue teams had earlier recovered 14 bodies from the site, while 75 people were injured in the incident, as per officials.

A small fire broke out at the incident site in Ghatkopar during the search and rescue operation on Wednesday morning,

but it was immediately doused by the fire tenders deployed there, an NDRF official said.

"There was a small fire but it was extinguished immediately," the official said.

The search and rescue operation continued even 40 hours after the incident, officials said.

The illegal hoarding that stood on a piece of land in possession of the Government Railway Police crashed on a petrol pump in Chheda Nagar area on Monday evening when the city was hit by dust storms and unseasonal rains.

Accused in Mumbai hoarding crash named in 23 criminal cases; was arrested on rape charges



Mumbai

Bhavesh Bhide, the owner of the advertising agency which had allegedly put up the hoarding that crashed on a petrol pump in Ghatkopar area, has 23 criminal cases registered against him and was recently arrested on rape charges, police said on Tuesday evening.

After Monday's hoarding crash in which at least 14 people died, he has been absconding, while a case under IPC section 304 (causing death by negligence) was registered against him at Pantnagar police station in the city.

In January, Bhide was arrested in a rape case registered with Mulund police station, but later secured bail, a police official said.

Bhide, owner of Ego Media, had also contested the Maharashtra Assembly elections in 2009, he added.

According to BJP leader Kirit Somaiya, another firm of Bhide's had been blacklisted by the commercial department of the Indian Railways in 2017-18 after several complaints of installing illegal hoardings were filed against it.

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MVA and Mahayuti blame each other for allowing hoarding to be constructed

Mumbai

Following the incident involving a billboard collapse amid a dust storm and unseasonal rains in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area, which resulted in the loss of 14 lives, a flurry of accusations has emerged within the state's political arena. The leaders of the Mahayuti Alliance and the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi front have accused each other of allowing the structure to come up.

BJPs Kirit Somaiya, asserted that permissions for both the hoarding and the underlying fuel pump were granted during Uddhav Thackeray's tenure as Maharashtra

chief minister.

Maharashtra Cabinet Minister Uday Samant also released a photo of Uddhav Thackeray along with Bhavesh Bhide, owner of the company which had set up the hoarding and who has been booked by the police.

"Even Shiv Sena division chief Parameshwara Kadam filed complaints. However, over the past three and a half years, Bhide adamantly refused to remove the hoardings. The Uddhav Thackeray-led party held power in the BMC for 25 years, and Uddhav Thackeray himself served as the CM in the MVA government.

So, who empowered Bhide during this time?" Cabinet Minister Uday Samant said.

Hitting back at the BJP and Shiv Sena over linking the Sena (UBT) to Bhide, Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that there was an administrator in the BMC for the last 2.5 years and that this person was responsible for the mishap and loss of lives.

Hitting back at the BJP and Shiv Sena over linking the Sena (UBT) to Bhide, Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that there was an administrator in the BMC for the last 2.5 years and that this person was responsible for the mishap and loss of lives.

MahaRERA invitations provision for developers to submit self-declaration of project quality



Mumbai

MahaRERA is seeking input from stakeholders on a self-declaration draft regarding quality assurance, aiming to enhance the standard of housing for homebuyers.

This initiative proposes an annual self-assessment of quality assurance based on various parameters. According to officials at MahaRERA, the objective is to ensure that homebuyers receive residences of superior quality.

Under this draft regulation, developers are required to furnish detailed information on the technical aspects of their projects through a self-certification declaration. The draft is available for review on the MahaRERA website, and stakeholders are encouraged to share their feedback by May 23.

Initially, compliance with the new regulations will be voluntary. Developers who opt into the system will be listed

on the MahaRERA website, enhancing their reputation with potential homebuyers. However, eventually, compliance will become mandatory for all developers, as stated by MahaRERA officials.

The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 already includes provisions for defect liability, holding developers responsible for rectifying structural defects at their own expense within the first five years. To further safeguard home buyers' interests, the draft regulation aims to establish processes and standards to minimize the occurrence of defects.

These measures are intended to guarantee that construction projects adhere to high standards of quality and safety, benefiting homebuyers and bolstering the overall credibility of the real estate sector.

Former journo arrested for 'defamatory video' of politician

Mumbai

THE MUMBAI police Tuesday arrested former journalist Ketan Tirodkar in connection with the case involving a defamatory video about a senior political leader from Maharashtra.

He was produced before the court and remanded to police custody till May 17.

An officer said that last week Tirodkar had been arrested in an old case also pertaining to

a video on which he was alleged to have made some defamatory remarks. He was in judicial custody when the crime branch took his custody in connection with an FIR registered by the cyber police in connection with the video he had released earlier this month.

In the video he made allegations of links of government officials to drug networks. He also threatened to commit suicide.

Modi govt always pursued policies for welfare of lower and middle classes : Piyush Goyal

Mumbai

Piyush Goyal, the BJP and Mahayuti candidate for the North Mumbai Lok Sabha constituency alleged that the Congress government has consistently pursued policies that exploit the middle class. And that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the other hand, consistently made decisions aimed at providing relief to both the lower and middle classes. Goyal also assured that the Modi government will continue to implement various measures to benefit these classes in the future.

Piyush Goyal's Namo Yatra commenced from the Jain Temple on Chandavarkar Road in Borivali (West). Thousands of members from the Mahayuti participated in this Namo Yatra, which began with the Jan Ashirwad Prachar Ratha.

"Congress and its allies seek to introduce an inheritance tax that would burden the middle class. In



contrast, the Modi government is striving to empower the economically weaker sections and the middle class", said Piyush Goyal who also highlighted decisions on the past ten years regarding housing, healthcare, education, and food grains which benefited the middle class. He also mentioned that many more schemes will be implemented soon during interactions with citizens.

During this campaign round,

Goyal visited the Gavdevi Temple in Dahisar to seek the goddess's blessings. Subsequently, he received a warm welcome and support from the Axar Village Board (Gram Mandal), accompanied by MLA Manisha Chaudhary.

Various dignitaries, including MP Gopal Shetty, MLA Sunil Rane and Adv. Inderpal Singh of Ajit Pawar's NCP were present at the event.

Maratha quota agitation will resume from June 4, warns Jarange

Mumbai

Activist Manoj Jarange on Tuesday warned that the Maratha quota agitation will be restarted from June 4, the day the results of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections will be out.

A rally will be organised on June 8 to press the Maratha community's demand for reservations in government jobs and admissions to educational institutes, he said.

Jarange, who has been heading the agitation since last year, garlanded a statue of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj here to mark the 17th century ruler's birth anniversary.

"We want reservation for our kids.....We have been given ten percent reservation (under the economically backward category) which is of no use. This has been proved in the (ongoing) police recruitment," he told reporters afterwards.

"We will restart the agitation at 9 am on June 4 by holding an indefinite hunger strike. The agitation will take place peacefully," the activist said, adding that he hoped the government will deal with his

who were against us." But "never before" Prime Minister Narendra Modi had held so many campaign rallies in Maharashtra, he said.

"He had also never campaigned for different parties contesting on different symbols in

the past. But this time he did that. This happened because of four or five state BJP leaders who have hatred for Marathas and other communities," Jarange said. Among BJP leaders, deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Chandrakant Patil hate Marathas, he alleged,

adding, "Fadnavis

should shed this hatred as we were never against BJP." If the government did not grant Kunbi caste certificates to the relatives of the Marathas who have obtained such a certificate, "we will be in the fray for the coming assembly polls," Jarange warned.

The agrarian Kunbi community is part of the OBC



demands before that.

Preparations were in full swing for the rally at Narayangand in Beed district on June 8, he said.

Asked about the impact of the Maratha agitation on the Lok Sabha elections, Jarange said, "I was not involved and have not campaigned for anyone. I just said that people should defeat those

With Yogi by his side, PM Modi files nomination from Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency

Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi filed his nomination here on Tuesday, an event attended by several NDA leaders, including Union ministers and chief ministers, in a show of strength as he seeks a third term from the Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency.

Sporting a white kurta-pajama and a blue sadri, Modi reached the district collectorate after a busy morning, which included an aarti on the banks of the Ganga at the Dashashwamedh ghat and prayers at the city's Kaal Bhairav temple.

Immediately after filing his papers, the prime minister headed for the Rudraksha Convention Centre to address local party leaders and workers.

A local spokesperson of the BJP said Modi gave the party's



office bearers the “mantra of victory” and asked them to make people aware of his government's schemes.

Modi also told them to ensure that every booth records at least 370 more votes than it

did in the last general election, in celebration of the abrogation of Article 370.

After filing his nomination, Modi posted on 'X', “Filed my nomination papers as a candidate for the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat.

It is an honour to serve the people of this historic seat. With the blessings of the people, there have been remarkable achievements over the last decade. This pace of work will get even faster in the times to come.”

“I am honoured by the presence of our valued NDA allies in Kashi today. Our alliance represents a commitment to national progress and fulfilling regional aspirations. We will work together for the progress of India in the years to come,” he added.

In a separate post in Hindi, the prime minister said, “Heartfelt gratitude to my family members in Kashi... The love and blessings I have received from all of you in the last 10 years have inspired me to work with full determination. With your support and participation, I will continue to work with new energy for the all-round development of this place and the welfare of the people in my third term as well. 'Jai Baba Vishwanath!'”

BJP president J P Nadda and Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Hardeep Singh Puri, Anupriya Patel and Ramdas Athawale were among the leaders who flanked Modi as he emerged from the collectorate after filing his papers.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, his Meghalaya counterpart Conrad Sangma, NCP leader Praful Patel, TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan, Hindustani Awam Morcha-Secular founder Jitan Ram Manjhi and Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha were present at the collectorate.

Uttar Pradesh minister and NISHAD party chief Sanjay Nishad, Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief Omprakash Rajbhar, RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary, LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan, PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss, Tamil Maanila Congress chief G K Vasan, BJP leader Devanathan Yadav, BDJS president Thushar Vellappally and Asom Gana Parishad president Atul Bora were also there.

Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar did not attend the event due to health reasons.

Before he filed his nomination, Modi posted in Hindi on 'X', “My relationship with Kashi is amazing, inseparable and incomparable... all I can say is that it cannot be expressed in words!”

According to the spokesperson there were four proposers for Modi's nomination -- Pandit Ganeshwar Shastri, long-time RSS functionary Baijnath Patel, Lalchand Kushwaha and Sanjay Sonkar. All four, along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, were present at the collector's office when Modi submitted his papers.

The prime minister held a dazzling roadshow in Varanasi a day back and vowed to do a lot more to serve the holy city in his third term. He spent the night in the city.

Modi posted a clip from the roadshow on 'X' and said, “The love and blessings that my family members of Kashi showered on me during the road show has become an unforgettable moment in my life.”

In another post in Hindi, he said, “My day started with paying respects to Maa Ganga in Kashi... I prayed to Maa Ganga for happiness, prosperity and health for Kashi residents as well as my family members across the country. 'Jai Maa Ganga.'”

Voting in Varanasi will take place in the seventh phase of the Lok Sabha election on June 1. The Congress has fielded its state unit president Ajay Rai from the seat and the BSP has nominated Athar Jamal Lari.

PM Modi declares assets worth Rs 3 crore, doesn't own house or car

Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi possesses assets amounting to a little over Rs 3 crore, most of it in bank fixed deposits, according to his election affidavit.

As required, Modi submitted the affidavit while filing his nomination papers Tuesday as an election candidate from the Varanasi parliamentary constituency, a seat he has held twice earlier.

According to the affidavit displayed on the Election Commission website, his movable assets are worth Rs 3,02,06,889. Most of this amount is in the form of fixed deposits with the State Bank of India that total over 2.85 crore.

Other assets include four gold rings weighing 45 grams valued at Rs 2.67 lakh, cash in hand totalling Rs 52,920, National Savings Certificates worth Rs 9.12 lakh and income tax deduction of Rs 3.33 lakh for the past financial year.

Under “immovable assets”, the affidavit says “Nil”. Typically, land and houses fall under this category.



Jashodaben is mentioned as Modi's spouse. On assets held by her, the document says “Not known”. The two live apart.

No criminal case is pending against Modi, nor has he been convicted of any crime, according to the document. There are no liabilities due to the government.

The prime minister is described as a resident of Ahmedabad, and his profession as public life and political activity.

He did his SSC in 1967, got a BA degree from Delhi University in 1978 and an MA from Gujarat University in 1983.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Modi had declared assets worth Rs 2.5 crore including a residential plot in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, fixed deposits of Rs 1.27 crore and Rs 38,750 cash in hand.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, he disclosed total assets of Rs 1.65 crore.

The PM has a website and is on Facebook, microblogging site X, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp, according to the affidavit.

Arvind Kejriwal's PA misbehaved with Swati Maliwal at CM house, strict action will be taken: AAP's Sanjay Singh

New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant (PA) Bibhav Kumar "misbehaved" with AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal at the CM's residence, party leader Sanjay Singh said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference day after Maliwal alleged that a member of Kejriwal's personal staff assaulted her, Singh said AAP supremo Kejriwal will take strict action in the matter.

BJP demanded that Singh's statement should be the basis for immediate filing of an FIR by police and those guilty should be promptly dealt with.

Police, however, said they are still waiting for her to come and file a formal complaint, but added that they have not closed the DD (daily diary) entry as Maliwal had come to the police station on Monday and said she would return to lodge a case.

Calls and messages to Maliwal did not elicit any response.

National Commission for Women chief Rekha Sharma expressed concern over Maliwal's safety in a post on X. She wondered if Maliwal was under pressure not to lodge a police complaint and urged the AAP leader to "speak up".

During the press conference on Tuesday, Singh said it is a "highly condemnable incident" and added AAP is in solidarity with her during this hour.

"Yesterday morning, Maliwal had gone to meet Arvind Kejriwal



at his residence. While she was waiting to meet him in the drawing room, Bibhav Kumar came and misbehaved with her. This is a highly condemnable incident. Kejriwal has taken cognisance of it and will take strict action in the incident," he added.

Maliwal was earlier the chief of Delhi Commission For Women (DCW).

"Maliwal has done a lot of work for the country and society. She is a senior party leader. We are with her during this time. The party does not support those (who insult women). The whole incident has been taken seriously by Kejriwal," he said, adding that she had reported the matter to the police by calling on 112.

Maliwal on Monday went to the Civil Lines police station and alleged that a member of the Delhi CM's personal staff assaulted her at the CM's official residence, police officials had said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said AAP's silence regarding the incident on Monday reflects the mentality of the party.

"Sanjay Singh's statement that the party will take action in the matter is quite embarrassing..." he said.

"Sanjay Singh claims that Arvind Kejriwal was not there at the time, but we know through sources that this entire incident occurred at the behest of and in front of Arvind Kejriwal," alleged Sachdeva.

The Delhi BJP president questioned why so much pressure was put on Maliwal and why was she silenced.

He said that the CM's residence is famous for such incidents, whether it was the incident with the former chief secretary or misbehaviour with Maliwal.

According to a police officer, they can initiate action in the matter if the complainant herself comes to the police station and formally files a complaint or emails it to the police.

Even if the victim puts out a post on social media, the police can take cognisance of it, the officer said.

Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam grilled for over 9 hours by ED in money laundering case

Ranchi

Jharkhand minister and Congress leader Alamgir Alam was on Tuesday grilled by Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials here for over nine hours

Earlier in the day before entering the office of the federal agency, Alam said, "I abide by laws... I am here to face questioning."

The ED had last week arrested



in connection with a money laundering case.

Alam, the state's Rural Development minister, arrived at the ED office around 11 am and came out of the office around 8.30 pm.

"I have replied to whatever questions were asked," he told reporters after coming out of the ED office.

When he was asked if ED had called him again tomorrow, Alam said he would reply to this later.

Sources said he has been called for questioning again on Wednesday.

Alam's personal secretary and state administrative service officer Sanjeev Kumar Lal (52) and the latter's domestic help Jahangir Alam (42), following the seizure of more than Rs 32 crore cash from a flat linked to them.

Alam, 70, was asked to depose at the zonal office of the ED in Ranchi on Tuesday for recording his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The money laundering investigation pertains to alleged irregularities in the state's rural development department.

Can't End 27-Week Pregnancy, Foetus Has Fundamental Right To Live: Supreme Court

New Delhi

The Supreme Court today refused to entertain a plea of a 20-year-old unmarried woman seeking termination of her over 27-week pregnancy, saying the foetus in the womb also has a fundamental right to live.

A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai passed the order while hearing the woman's plea challenging the Delhi High Court's May 3 order refusing to allow termination of her pregnancy.

"We can't pass any order contrary to the statute," the bench, also comprising justices S V N Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta, told her counsel.

"The child in womb also has a fundamental right to live. What do you say about that?," the bench asked.

The woman's counsel said the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act talks about the mother only.

"It is made for mother," he said.

The bench said the duration of pregnancy was over seven months now.

"What about the right of the child to survive? How do you address that?" the bench asked.

The counsel said the foetus is in the womb and till the child is delivered, it is the right of the mother.

"The petitioner at this stage is under severe traumatic condition. She can't come outside also. She is taking classes for NEET exam. She is under highly traumatic condition. She can't face the society at this stage," he said. The lawyer argued that her mental and physical well-being should be considered. "Sorry," the bench said.

In its May 3 order, the high court had noted that on April 25, the court had directed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to constitute a medical board to ascertain the condition of the foetus and the petitioner.

"A perusal of the report (of medical

board) shows that there is no congenital abnormality in the foetus nor is there any danger to the mother to carry on with the pregnancy which will mandate termination of the foetus," the high court had said. "Since the foetus is viable and normal, and there is no danger to the petitioner to carry on with the pregnancy, foeticide would neither be ethical nor legally permissible," it had said. Before the high court, the petitioner had said that on April 16, she felt discomfort in the abdomen and got an ultrasound scan done and it showed she was 27 weeks pregnant, which was beyond the legally permissible limit of 24 weeks.

IMA chief faces tough questions from Supreme Court in Patanjali misleading ads case

New Delhi

Refusing to accept his unconditional apology, the Supreme Court on Tuesday posed some tough question to Indian Medical Association (IMA) president RV Asokan, over his “damaging” statements against the apex court in an interview where he answered queries about Patanjali Ayurved Ltd’s misleading advertisements case.

“You cannot sit on a couch giving an interview to the press and lampooning the court,” a bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah told Asokan, while making it clear that at this stage, the top court will not accept his affidavit tendering apology.

“We are the first one to uphold the freedom of speech, the right of free speech and right of thought but there are times when there has to be a self-restraint,” Justice Kohli observed, adding, “We did not see it in your interview, that is the point.”

Asokan, who was present in the court, offered an unconditional apology to the bench and prayed for clemency.

“Your conduct is not something which we can condone so easily,” the bench told him and asked him why he made the statements in a pending matter where IMA is the petitioner.

The bench said that with 45 years of experience in the profession and his role as the IMA president, he was expected to have more sense of responsibility while giving the interview.

“You can’t vent your internal feeling in the press like this. That too, against an order of this court,” Justice Amanullah said.

Terming his statements “very

unfortunate”, the bench said though he has unconditionally apologised, the other part was whether the court will accept such an apology after the “kind of damaging statements” he had made.

It said IMA was the one which dragged Patanjali Ayurved Ltd to the court claiming they were



taking the whole world for a ride, they were misrepresenting and denigrating the allopathy.

“You are aware of the fact that we took whatever you said seriously enough to call the other side and make them explain and their apologies did not impress us, not once, not twice, more than three times, because we thought it was not coming from the heart. We have the same to say for your affidavit,” the bench said.

“Just because we are indulgent does not mean that anyone can get away with saying anything,” it observed, while saying the court was not at all happy with Asokan’s affidavit.

It said he was leading a team of members of IMA which according to him has 3.5 lakh doctors across the country.

“What kind of example is this voluntary association’s president setting for the rest of his colleagues?” it said, adding, “And why you also did not give a public apology? Why did you wait till you had to come here?”

“After all, we have been able to uphold the Constitution to the best of our ability,” Justice Amanullah observed.

He said the judges do not react to the amount of criticism personally they face for the orders.

“For the simple reason that personally, they don’t have any ego. But when it comes to this institution, you have attacked the institution. Your comment was on the institution,” Justice Amanullah said.

“Personally, we are magnanimous, we don’t take it otherwise. We can do that because we are entitled to take action. But we don’t do that because we don’t have any ego,” he said.

The bench told senior advocate PS Patwalia, appearing for IMA, that at this stage, the court was not inclined to accept the affidavit of apology tendered by Asokan.

“We have taken a cue from what your lordships have observed. We need one chance, we will correct it,” Patwalia said.

The bench said, “We are not questioning his competence. We are not questioning any of his professional conduct. We are questioning something entirely different. He is a litigant before this court.

“Your intentions are shown only by your conduct. We don’t have any mechanism to know what is going in in your heart and mind.”

The bench said it was not too sure about his affidavit and his intent at this moment and “we don’t propose to accept it”.

“Probably too little too late,” it observed, and posted the matter for further hearing in July.

Mamata Banerjee’s offer to cook food for PM Modi stirs controversy

Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s offer to “cook food” for Prime Minister Narendra Modi elicited mixed responses from different political parties, with the BJP terming it a “political agenda” and CPI(M) dubbing it as an “understanding” between TMC and the saffron party.

Taking a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his recent allegation that RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav last month had fish during a period when some Hindus abstain from having non-vegetarian food, Banerjee on Monday said she was ready to “cook something for him (Modi)” if he wanted though she was not sure whether he would eat what she cooked.

Banerjee, at an election rally here, had made the remarks while taking a dig at BJP for allegedly interfering with the food habits of the people and had said she would be happy to cook food for Modi but is not sure “whether the PM will be ready to savour my cooked meal”.

“I have been cooking since my childhood days. People have praised my cooking. But will Modi ji accept my food? Will he trust me? I will cook whatever he loves,” she had said.

The TMC supremo had said, “I love both vegetarian foods like dhokla and non-vegetarian foods like macher jhol (fish curry). Different communities, and different sects among Hindus have their own unique rituals and eating habits. Who is BJP to

impose a diktat on an individual’s dietary habits? It shows the BJP leadership has little idea and concern about the diversity and inclusivity of India and its people.”

Banerjee’s offer to cook for the PM, who is a vegetarian, drew sharp reactions from the saffron camp.

“Mamata Banerjee wants to feed Modi ji with fish and rice cooked by her. Good proposal. But before that, why doesn’t she first offer pork chop to her lieutenant Firhad Hakim? It will serve three purposes, secularism will be asserted, it will show charity begins at home and the fritters will also be praised,” former BJP state president and ex-Tripura Governor Tathagata Roy posted on X.

BJP leader Sankudeb Panda claimed Banerjee had deliberately invited Modi knowing well that he is a strict vegetarian.

“This is nothing but her ploy to trap the PM. She knows on the one hand the PM will never eat fish or any non-vegetarian item. If she believes everyone should be allowed to eat what he/she loves to eat, then why is she twisting Modiji’s comments about one’s dietary habits? She is insulting devout Sanatani Hindus,” he added.

Reacting to Banerjee’s comments, CPI(M) leader Bikash Bhattacharya said, “Being Dada-Bon (brother and sister), Mamata didi can certainly offer to cook meals for the prime minister, do not know if it is to placate him.”

Former Bihar deputy CM Sushil Modi cremated with full state honours

Patna

Senior BJP leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi was cremated with full state honours in Patna on Tuesday evening.

The air reverberated with chants of ‘Sushil Modi Amar Rahein’, as surging crowds broke down barricades when the mortal remains of former deputy CM of the state were consigned to flames at Digha Ghat crematorium in Patna.

The last rites were performed by his sons Uttarkash Modi and Akshay Modi, who lit the pyre in an emotionally surcharged atmosphere.

BJP President J P Nadda, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister, Samrat Chaudhary and several other ministers also attended the funeral.

The body of the former BJP leader was kept at the party’s state office in Patna before it was taken out in a procession to the crematorium. During the procession, people chanted slogans like “Sushil Modi Amar Rahein” as the cortege made its way from the BJP headquarters to the cremation ground.

Nadda placed a wreath on the body of the late leader at the party office in Patna. Several Union ministers, and Bihar ministers, including deputy

CMs - Samrat Chaudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha -- offered floral tributes to the late leader.

Modi, 72, who was suffering from cancer, died in a New Delhi hospital on Monday evening.

Earlier in the day, the body of the former deputy CM was brought to Patna from New Delhi. The special flight carrying the mortal remains of the leader from New Delhi reached Patna airport in the afternoon. Several senior BJP leaders were present at the airport to receive the body. The body was taken to his residence in Rajendra Nagar area in the state capital.

BJP won't cross 230 seats: Kejriwal



Kurukshetra

AAP leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal today said while the BJP was claiming to win 400 plus seats, it won't get more than 230 in the Lok Sabha elections and won't be able to form the government at the Centre.

Kejriwal held roadshows at Pehowa, Shahabad, and Ladwa Assembly constituencies today in support of AAP state chief and INDIA bloc candidate Sushil Gupta for the Kurukshetra Lok Sabha constituency.

Striking an emotional chord with voters, Kejriwal said, "Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann is my younger brother and his in-laws are from Pehowa. I feel it's my right to say that not a single vote should go to the BJP. They sent me behind bars just to keep me away from campaigning. I made all medicines free in Delhi, but when I went to jail, I was not given insulin for 15 days though I am a diabetic patient. On the day of voting, if you push the lotus (BJP symbol) button, I will go to the jail but if you push the broom (AAP symbol) button, I will not have to go to jail. Now everything depends up to you."

Kejriwal said, "We have a small party and government in two states because we worked for the people of Delhi. The revolution in the country begins from Haryana, and the programme to remove

the dictatorship should start from Haryana also. The BJP is losing seats in all states and we should make sure that the INDIA bloc candidates win all 10 seats in Haryana."

Criticising PM Narendra Modi, he said, "Modi is giving fake guarantees. He failed to fulfil his guarantees of jobs, doubling farmers' income, giving Rs 15 lakh, and implementing the Swaminathan report. But, today I will give the guarantee of Kejriwal. The INIDA bloc will form the government and the Centre and I will make arrangements for 24-hour power, free education, mohalla clinics and make district hospitals better than private hospitals."

"Our Army is getting weakened and we will discontinue the Agniveer scheme. We will implement the Old Pension Scheme and the Swaminathan report. The washing machine of the BJP is a cause for corruption and we will break this washing machine," he added.

He said, "The BJP has challenged the people of Haryana by giving the ticket to son of the person who did wrong to our wrestler daughters. The farmers were not allowed to enter Delhi by the BJP government. Nails were installed on the roads and boulders were placed to keep them away from Delhi, now you should push the button to oust this BJP government from Delhi."

He also addressed a rally at Radaur in Yamunanagar.

I never said Hindu or Muslim, I talked about poor families: PM Modi

Varanasi

Clarifying his "infiltrators" and "those with more children" remarks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an interview with News18 said he did not talk only about Muslims, but about every poor family, adding that the day he starts doing Hindu-Muslim, he will be "unworthy of public life".

In an interview with News 18, PM Modi said he does not market love towards Muslims, "I do not work for a vote bank. I believe in 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'."

"I am shocked. Who told you that whenever one talks of people with more children, the inference is they are Muslims? Why are you so unjust towards Muslims? This is the situation in poor families too. Where there is poverty, there are more children, irrespective of their social circle. I didn't mention either Hindu or Muslim. I have said that one should have as many children as you can take care of. Don't let a situation arise where the government has to take care of your children," the PM said on Tuesday.

Referring to the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat when he was the chief minister of the state, the PM



said his opponents "tarnished" his image among the Muslims after 2002 (the Godhra riots).

"This issue is not about Muslims. Irrespective of how supportive individual Muslims are of Modi, there is a wave of thought that dictates to them, 'do this, do that'. In my house, there were all Muslim families around me. Eid was also celebrated in our house, and there were other festivals in our house. Food was not cooked in our house on the day of Eid. Food used to come to my place from all the Muslim families. Even today, many of my friends are Muslims. After

2002 (Godhra), my image was tarnished," he added.

Asked whether Muslims would vote for him in this Lok Sabha election, he said that the "people of the country will vote for me".

"The day I start doing Hindu-Muslim, I won't be entitled to live in the public domain. I won't do Hindu-Muslim. This is my pledge," Modi said.

Earlier, Modi, in a public rally in Rajasthan, alleged that the Congress wanted to take away the gold and property of people and distribute it among "those having more children".

Can't sue lawyers for service deficiency: Supreme Court

New Delhi

Holding that legal services rendered by lawyers do not fall under the ambit of the Consumer Protection Act, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that litigants cannot sue lawyers for "deficiency in service" to claim compensation.

"The legal profession is sui generis (unique in nature) and cannot be compared with any other profession. A service hired or availed of an advocate is a service under 'a contract of personal service', and therefore will fall within the exclusionary part of the definition of "service" contained in Section 2 (42) of the CP Act, 2019," a Bench led by Justice Bela M Trivedi said, terming the advocates' responsibility "onerous".

The Bench said an advocate was the only link between the court and the client and was expected to follow his client's instructions rather than substitute his (client's) judgment.

"A complaint alleging 'deficiency in service' against advocates practising legal profession will not be maintainable under the CP Act," it

said, overruling a 1995 verdict of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) which held that lawyers were covered under the Act. The NCDRC order was stayed by the Supreme Court in 2009.

The Bench, however, clarified that lawyers can be sued in courts for negligence and misconduct. "Undoubtedly, no professional — legal, medical or any other — enjoys any immunity from being sued or from being held liable for his professional or otherwise misconduct or other misdeeds causing legal, monetary or other injuries to his clients or the persons hiring or availing of his services. The fact that professionals are governed by their respective councils such as Bar councils or medical councils also will not absolve them of their civil or criminal liability arising out of their professional misconduct or negligence," it said.

The top court said its 1995 verdict in the Indian Medical Association vs VP Shantha and others, bringing medical negligence under the Consumer Protection Act, should be reconsidered.

Supreme Court orders release of NewsClick founder Prabir Purkayastha, declares his arrest 'invalid'

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the release of NewsClick founder Prabir Purkayastha as it declared as illegal his arrest by the Delhi police and his subsequent remand in a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

Noting that a copy of the remand application was not provided to Purkayastha or his counsel before passing the October 4, 2023 remand order, a Bench of Justice BR Gavai and Justice Sandeep Mehta held that his arrest and the subsequent remand orders were vitiated.

The top court ordered Purkayastha's release subject to him furnishing the bail bonds to the satisfaction of the trial court.

Purkayastha has been in custody under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, since October 3 2023 following his arrest by the Special Cell of the Delhi police.

According to the FIR, huge funds came to the news portal allegedly from China to "disrupt the sovereignty of India" and cause disaffection against the country. Purkayastha allegedly conspired with a group — People's Alliance for Democracy

and Secularism (PADS) — to sabotage the electoral process during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The Bench relied on the ruling in Pankaj Bansal's case in which the top court had indicted the Enforcement Directorate for arbitrary exercise of powers

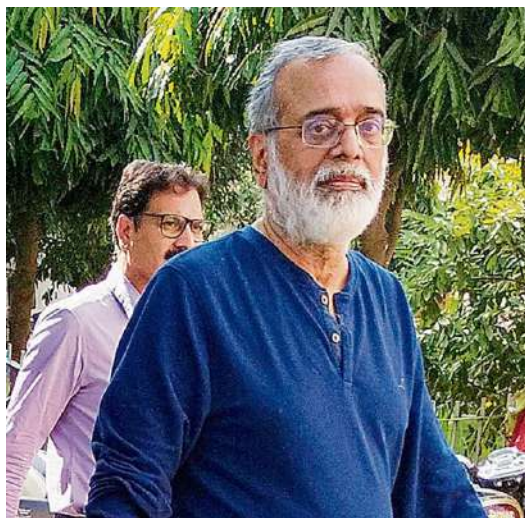
pronouncing the verdict.

While granting bail to Gurugram-based realty group M3M's directors Basant Bansal and Pankaj Bansal in a money-laundering case, a Bench of Justice AS Bopanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar had on October 3, 2023 ruled that it's necessary for the probe agency to furnish a copy of grounds of arrest to the arrested person "as a matter of course and without exception".

Citing Article 22(1) of the Constitution which provides that no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest, it had noted, "This being the

fundamental right guaranteed to the arrested person, the mode of conveying information of the grounds of arrest must necessarily be meaningful so as to serve the intended purpose."

The top court had said that the probe agency must act in a transparent and non-vindictive manner, conforming to pristine standards of fair play in its actions.



conferred on it under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

"Copy of the remand application was not provided to the appellant. This vitiates the arrest of the appellant following the Pankaj Bansal case. Though we would have released him without surety, but since a chargesheet has been filed, we release him with surety and bail bond," Justice Mehta said,

Congress chief: Modi wants to grab power, become country's dictator

New Delhi

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of harbouring dictatorial ambitions and undermining democratic principles. Kharge, a seasoned politician with over five decades of political experience, minced no words as he condemned Modi's leadership style.

"I have been in politics for the past 53 years. But I have never seen such a Prime Minister. Modi wants to grab the power to become a Hukumshah (dictator) of this country," said Kharge, asking people whether they wanted dictatorship or Constitution.

Addressing a rally in Maharajganj, Kharge emphasised the Congress party's unwavering commitment to democracy and the rule of law. "We will continue our fight for democracy and Constitution at any cost," he declared, cautioning that the failure to protect democracy would result in enslavement like British rule.

Taking a swipe at Modi's recent remarks about his own humble beginnings and surviving by begging for several years, Kharge said: "We are hardworking people and do hard work to earn a square meal, we don't beg."

Asserting confidence in winning the election, Kharge said, "On June 4, the INDIA bloc will win the election and we are going to implement all the guarantees promised in the Congress manifesto."

In an attempt to strike a chord with the voters of Amethi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi stirred sentiments by reminiscing about her family's contribution to the region's development. Addressing a rally in support of Congress candidate Kishori Lal Sharma, she invoked the legacy of her father, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who she said was often criticised for allegedly showing favouritism towards Amethi.

High Court lists for July 11 Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's plea against Enforcement Directorate summons in excise scam



New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday listed for hearing on July 11 Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's petition challenging the summonses issued to him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with its probe into the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

A bench headed by Justice Suresh Kumar Kait granted four more weeks to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, who was given interim bail till June 1 by the Supreme Court for campaigning in the Lok Sabha election, to file a rejoinder to the reply submitted by the ED.

The counsel for the ED has earlier said the petition against the summonses was infructuous after Kejriwal's arrest by the agency on March 21 in the money laundering case following the high court's refusal to grant him interim protection from coercive action.

On Wednesday, the agency's lawyer said the petitioner must choose the forum before which he would press his issues.

The court also observed that a single judge of the high court, while rejecting the AAP leader's petition against his arrest, has already dealt with his grievances and an appeal against the decision was pending in the top court.

"Take instructions. Nothing survives in petition," the bench, also comprising Justice Manoj Jain, said.

Senior advocate Vikram Chaudhary, appearing for Kejriwal, however, said the issues

raised in the petition with respect to the "reading down" of the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) have not been decided by the single judge and urged the court to grant more time to file the rejoinder.

"Counsel for petitioner seeks and is granted four weeks to file rejoinder," the court said.

On April 22, the court had given two weeks' time to Kejriwal to file his rejoinder.

The AAP national convenor had approached the high court in the wake of the ninth summons issued by the ED asking him to appear before it on March 21. The high court bench had on March 20 asked the ED to file its reply with respect to the maintainability of the petition.

The next day, it asked the ED to also respond to Kejriwal's plea seeking protection from arrest, saying "at this stage" it was not inclined to grant him any interim relief. Kejriwal was arrested by the ED later that evening.

The federal probe agency has alleged that other accused in the case were in touch with Kejriwal for formulating the now-scrapped excise policy that resulted in undue benefits to them and kickbacks to the AAP.

In his petition, Kejriwal has also challenged the constitutional validity of certain provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) with respect to arrest, questioning and grant of bail.

He has raised several issues, including whether a political party is covered under the anti-money laundering law. It alleged that "arbitrary procedure" under PMLA was being used to create a non-level playing field for the general elections to "skew the electoral process in the favour of the ruling party at the Centre".

Stating the petitioner is a "vocal critic" of the ruling party and a partner of the opposition INDIA bloc, the plea claimed that the ED, being under control of the Union government, has been "weaponised".

Israeli tanks push into Rafah as battle rages in Gaza's north



Cairo

Israeli tanks forged deeper into eastern Rafah on Tuesday, reaching some residential districts of the southern border city where more than a million people had been sheltering, raising fears of yet further civilian casualties.

Israel's international allies and aid groups have repeatedly warned against a ground incursion into refugee-packed Rafah, where Israel says four Hamas battalions are holed up.

Israel has vowed to press on into Rafah even without its allies' support, saying the operation is necessary to root out remaining Hamas fighters.

"The tanks advanced this morning west of Salahuddin Road into the Brzail and Jneina neighbourhoods. They are in the streets inside the built-up area and there are clashes," one resident said.

Palestinian residents of western Rafah later said they could see smoke billowing above the eastern neighbourhoods and hear the sound of explosions following an Israeli bombardment of a cluster of houses.

Hamas's armed wing said it had destroyed an Israeli troop carrier with an Al-Yassin 105 missile in the eastern Al-Salam district, killing some crew members and wounding others. According to Gaza health officials 82 Palestinians were killed in the past 24 hours, the highest death

toll in a single day in many weeks. — Reuters

World Court to hold hearings over Rafah

THE HAGUE: The UN's International Court of Justice will hold hearings on Thursday and Friday to discuss new emergency measures sought by South Africa over Israel's attacks on Rafah during the war in Gaza. The measures form part of an ongoing case South Africa filed at the ICJ in December last year.

Blame game over Crossing closure

- Israel said on Tuesday that it was up to Egypt to reopen the Rafah Crossing and allow humanitarian relief into the Gaza Strip, prompting Cairo to denounce what it described as an attempt to shift the blame for the aid blockage
- The Rafah Crossing is on the border between Egypt and southern Gaza, and a vital route for aid going into the coastal territory
- "The key to preventing a humanitarian crisis in Gaza is now in the hands of Egypt...I have spoken to British and German counterparts to persuade Egypt to reopen the crossing," Israel's Foreign Affairs Minister Katz said

In surprise visit to Kyiv, Antony Blinken reaffirms support to Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Kyiv

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday that American military aid on its way to Ukraine will make a "real difference" on the battlefield, as the top diplomat made an unannounced visit to reassure an ally facing a fierce new Russian offensive.

In increasingly intense attacks along the northeastern border in recent days, Moscow's troops have captured around 100 to 125 square kilometres (about 40 to 50 square miles) of territory that includes at least seven villages, according to open source monitoring analysts.

"We know this is a



challenging time," Blinken said in the Ukrainian capital where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"A strong, successful,

thriving, free Ukraine is the best possible rebuke to Putin and the best possible guarantor for your future," Blinken told Zelenskyy

Army whistleblower who exposed alleged Australian war crimes in Afghanistan is sentenced to prison

Melbourne

An Australian judge sentenced a former army lawyer to almost six years in prison on Tuesday for leaking to the media classified information that exposed allegations of Australian war crimes in Afghanistan.

David McBride, 60, was sentenced in a court in the capital, Canberra, to five years and eight months in prison after pleading guilty to three charges including theft and sharing with members of the press documents classified as secret. He had faced a potential life sentence.

Justice David Mossop ordered McBride to serve 27 months in prison before he can be considered for release on parole.

Rights advocates argue that McBride's conviction and sentencing before any alleged war criminal he helped expose reflected a lack of whistleblower protections in Australia.

McBride's lawyer Mark Davis said he planned to file an appeal against the severity of the sentence.

McBride's documents formed the basis of an Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC) seven-

part television series in 2017 that contained war crime allegations including Australian Special Air Service Regiment soldiers killing unarmed Afghan men and children in 2013.

Police raided the ABC's Sydney headquarters in 2019 in search of evidence of a leak, but decided against charging the two reporters responsible for the investigation.

In sentencing, Mossop said he did not accept McBride's explanation that he thought a court would vindicate him for acting in the public interest.

McBride's argument that his suspicions that the higher echelons of the Australian Defense Force were engaged in criminal activity obliged him to disclose classified papers "didn't reflect reality", Mossop said.

An Australian military report released in 2020 found evidence that Australian troops unlawfully killed 39 Afghan prisoners, farmers and civilians. The report recommended 19 current and former soldiers face criminal investigation.

Police are working with the Office of the Special Investigator,

an Australian investigation agency established in 2021, to build cases against elite SAS and Commando Regiments troops who served in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2016.

Former SAS trooper Oliver Schulz last year became the first of these veterans to be charged with a war crime. He is accused of shooting dead a non-combatant man in a wheat field in Uruzgan province in 2012.

Also last year, a civil court found Australia's most decorated living war veteran Ben Roberts-Smith had likely unlawfully killed four Afghans. He has not been criminally charged.

Human Rights Watch's Australia director Daniela Gavshon said McBride's sentencing was evidence an Australia's whistleblowing laws needed exemptions in the public interest.

"It is a stain on Australia's reputation that some of its soldiers have been accused of war crimes in Afghanistan, and yet the first person convicted in relation to these crimes is a whistleblower not the abusers," Gavshon said in a statement.

Decoding food labels

FOOD labels mention the contents of packaged products. But can they be taken at face value? Flagging the issue of misleading claims on labels that can adversely impact consumers' choices, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has issued a set of dietary guidelines.

It points out the glaring example of the deceptive nature of 'sugar-free' foods. While these products may seem like a boon for diabetics or those watching their weight, they could be loaded with fats, refined cereals and hidden sugars, significantly altering their nutritional profile. Similarly, packaged fruit juices may have a meagre 10 per cent fruit pulp, with the rest containing added sugars and other additives. The guidelines underscore the importance of scrutinising labels beyond the attractive health claims. Terms like 'natural', 'whole grain' and 'organic' may not guarantee such

qualities in the product. Manufacturers often exploit these terms to capitalise on consumer preferences for healthier



options, while the actual contents may fall short of expectations. The ICMR also questions the nutrition claims — terms like 'low calorie' or 'high fibre' are vague assertions unless backed with concrete

facts.

Unfortunately, the ICMR's advisory does not specifically address the needs of food allergy patients. For example, accurate labelling of gluten-free products is crucial to managing celiac disease and ensuring the wellbeing of the patients as even traces of gluten in foodstuffs can trigger adverse reactions in them. The medical body must advocate greater transparency and adherence to regulatory standards in gluten-free labelling. Misleading food labels contribute to the perpetuation of faulty dietary patterns, exacerbating obesity and other problems. The ICMR's call to action is clear: consumers must exercise caution and diligence while making healthier choices for themselves and their families.

// satyasya paramarṇ nidhānam //

We would like to hear from you. Please share your comments on editor.acrossstate@gmail.com

*Whoever is happy
will make others
happy too.*

-Anne Frank

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Russian oil

US climbdown vindicates India's stand

INDIA'S decision to buy highly discounted Russian oil despite Western sanctions has paid off in diplomatic as well as economic terms. Amid the Russia-Ukraine war, the US and its allies have realised that they cannot browbeat New Delhi, with its independent foreign policy, into toeing the Western line. US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti has claimed that Washington allowed New Delhi to buy Russian oil to 'ensure that the prices did not go up globally'. This is virtually an admission that the US chose not to antagonise its close ally and fellow Quad member. Garcetti's remarks are in consonance with US Treasury Assistant Secretary Eric Van Nostrand's statement last month that the US had not asked India to

cut Russian oil imports.

Resisting intense pressure, India has managed to strike a fine balance

than 85 per cent — New Delhi's approach has been guided by national needs. Commendably, India's

savings.

New Delhi has made it clear that it won't let its ties with the US and other Western nations impact its enduring engagement with Russia. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar put it plainly at the Munich Security Conference in February: 'Different countries and different relationships have different histories... We are not purely unsentimentally transactional...' This policy of eschewing unidimensional relationships in the emerging multipolar world order is expected to stand India in good stead. Moreover, it seems to have finally dawned on the West that India can't be taken for granted on any matter with international implications, be it the war in Ukraine or Gaza.



between its growing proximity to the US and its time-tested trade ties with Russia. With India being the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil — its import dependency is more

crude oil import bill fell to \$132.40 billion in 2023-24, down from \$157.50 billion in 2022-23. The purchase of Russian oil at a good discount largely helped the country make significant

Palestine's UN rights

US must pay heed to global support

THE UN General Assembly (UNGA) convened in New York on Friday for an emergency special session on the Gaza crisis and, by a large majority, passed a resolution upgrading Palestine's rights as an Observer State, without offering it full membership. The overwhelming global support for Palestine was accompanied by a request to the UN Security Council

member states in alphabetical order and can co-sponsor proposals and amendments. Palestinian representatives can also be elected as officers in the plenary and Main Committees of the UNGA. This move is of immense symbolic value, but it does not alleviate the prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people. Of pressing importance are a ceasefire in Gaza, a huge boost in humanitarian aid and the safe return of Israeli hostages.

The grant of full membership to Palestine should take place along with a ceasefire. The 25 nations that abstained and the nine, led by the US, that said 'no' failed to undermine the support extended

by 143 nations. The world, especially the Global South, cannot afford the blowback that is emerging from the recurring bouts of conflict in the region. Last month, the only opposition to a UNSC resolution on statehood for Palestine came from the US. With its university campuses in turmoil, America should see which way the wind is blowing domestically as well.

(UNSC) to favourably consider its request for full statehood. With this resolution, Palestine will enjoy more rights at the UN, though it will not get the right to vote or stand for elections to UN organs.

With effect from September 10, when the UNGA begins its next session, the Palestinian state will no longer be on the fringes. It will be seated with other

BY clocking over \$111 billion in inward remittances in 2022, India has firmly established itself as the world's largest recipient. This accomplishment not only underscores the crucial role of Indian migrant workers globally but also highlights the significance of remittances in sustaining economies. The International Organisation for Migration's World Migration Report 2024 lists India, Mexico, China, the Philippines and France as the top remittance recipient countries. India's steady ascent on this score reflects the enduring ties between the expatriates and their homeland.

While celebrating this achievement, it's imperative to recognise the challenges faced by migrants. The UN report highlights the risks of financial exploitation, excessive debt due to migration costs, xenophobia and workplace abuse that continue to plague migrant communities. In the Gulf Cooperation

Council states, where a significant number of Indian migrants reside, violations of rights persist. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerabilities of migrant workers, especially low-skilled labourers and those in the informal sector. Loss of jobs, wage theft and a lack of social security have plunged many into deep insecurity and debt. The phenomenon of reverse internal migration signals a significant shift in labour dynamics, impacting industries reliant on migrant

Kejriwal on poll trail

Fillip for AAP, Opposition amid campaigning

THE grant of interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Supreme Court on the eve of the fourth phase of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections is a morale-booster not only for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) but also the Opposition bloc INDIA. Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate

restrictions on his duties as CM. He has been prohibited from making comments regarding his alleged involvement in the excise policy case and accessing official files related to the proceedings. The SC's recognition of the peculiar circumstances surrounding Kejriwal's arrest and his role as a key Opposition

leader amid the ongoing electoral exercise reflects a balanced approach. It emphasises the importance of ensuring a level playing field. The ED action against him was not an isolated incident but part of a series of arrests of Opposition leaders, including AAP ministers. The INDIA bloc has repeatedly accused the BJP-led



on March 21 in the Delhi excise policy case. The timing of the move had led to questions about the impartiality of Central probe agencies in the run-up to the General Election. Kejriwal will be available for campaigning till the final phase of the elections. This is particularly significant for Delhi and Punjab, both AAP-ruled states, which will go to the polls on May 25 and June 1, respectively.

The court has imposed certain conditions on Kejriwal, including

Centre of misusing the state machinery for political gains.

The court's intervention serves as a bulwark against the erosion of democratic norms and underscores the judiciary's role as a guardian of constitutional values. The onus is now on the Opposition to make the most of this opportunity and up the ante against the ruling party. The BJP is expected to leave no stone unturned in countering Kejriwal's claims and assertions.

India's remittances

Record highlights opportunities, challenges



workers.

The report also reveals trends in international student mobility, with China and India emerging as key source countries. The changing landscape of migration

necessitates concerted efforts to protect the rights and wellbeing of migrant people. Addressing issues such as labour exploitation

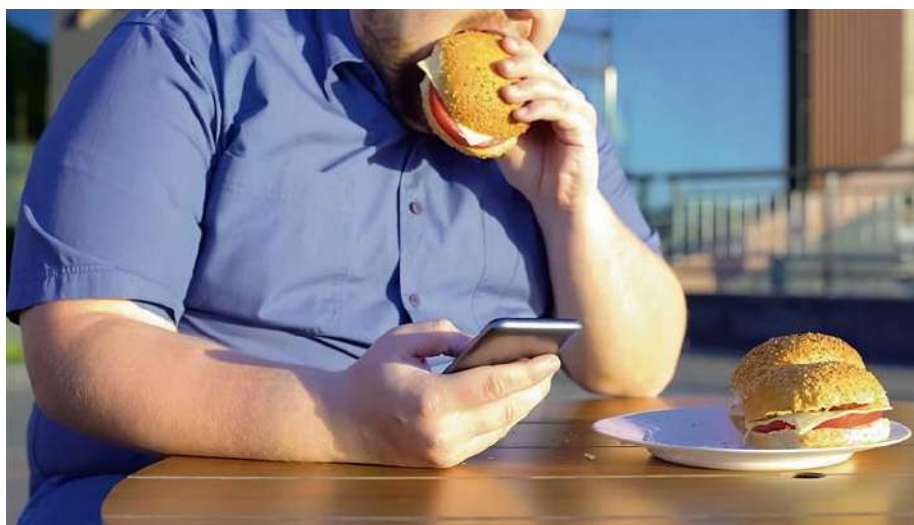
and access to social protection, and ensuring safe and orderly migration pathways are imperative for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

India's dietary crisis

Disease burden linked to unhealthy habits

INDIA is facing a health crisis, with 56.4 per cent of the total disease burden attributed to unhealthy dietary practices, according to the latest report of the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN). Unhealthy eating habits, including the consumption of processed foods high in salt, sugar and fats, have become alarmingly prevalent, with the proliferation of fast food chains and the easy availability of packaged snacks enabling a culture of convenience at the expense of health. A sedentary lifestyle, along with excessive mobile phone use, has exacerbated the problem, leading to a rise in obesity, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The consequences of these dietary trends are staggering.



Obesity rates are soaring, with about 25 per cent of the Indians now classified as overweight or obese; children and adolescents are also increasingly falling victim to unhealthy eating habits. The ICMR-NIN guidelines call for a return to

traditional, nutrient-rich foods and emphasise the importance of regular physical activity. Consuming fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains while shunning the intake of processed foods is essential to reshaping dietary behaviour.

However, concerted efforts are a must to facilitate access to nutritious foods. Policies that promote food security, regulate food advertising and incentivise the production and consumption of healthy foods are needed. Nutrition literacy programmes should be integrated into school curricula so that children focus on their health from an early age. A collective effort from policymakers, healthcare professionals, educators and communities can help combat the problem. By prioritising the promotion of healthy eating habits and addressing the socioeconomic factors driving poor dietary choices, we can stem the tide of NCDs and build a healthier future for all Indians. The time to act is now.

Air India mess

Protests by disgruntled crew hit operations

THE Air India Express, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, is facing turbulence, with over 90 international and domestic flights cancelled or delayed due to a sudden shortage of staff caused by cabin crew going on 'sick leave' in protest against management policies. The Civil Aviation Ministry seeking a report from the airline underscores the seriousness of the matter. With passengers left in the lurch and chaos reigning at airports, swift action is required to address the grievances of the crew hit by changes in human resources policies and the alleged mismanagement within the airline. These disruptions have coincided with the onset of the merger of Air India Express with AIX Connect.

The unrest comes on the heels of last month's scale-down of operations by Vistara, the Tata group's other carrier, after a number of pilots called in sick, purportedly to voice concerns over a new pay structure and the impending merger with Air India. The airline had to drop 25-30 flights per day, leading to airfares on key routes soaring by nearly 25 per cent.

These developments are symptomatic of the challenges facing India's aviation

sector, which is grappling with capacity constraints and heightened demand for flights. With major carriers like IndiGo and Go First contending with grounded aircraft and supply chain issues, the industry is under pressure to meet the needs of travellers. These challenges necessitate comprehensive solutions that prioritise both employee welfare and passenger experience. As Air India Express works to resolve its problems, the industry must strike a balance between addressing the current disruptions and implementing long-term strategies for sustainable growth. In a landscape fraught with uncertainty, collaboration between airlines, regulatory authorities and stakeholders is essential for charting a course towards stability and resilience.



India-Canada friction

Ottawa must rein in separatists

DAYS after the Canadian police arrested three Indian nationals in the Hardeep Singh Nijjar murder case, India's High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma has stated that Sikh separatist groups in that country are crossing 'a big red line'. He said this matter was a cause for concern for New Delhi as it pertained to its territorial integrity and national security. The India-Canada relations have been facing rough weather ever since Canadian PM Justin Trudeau announced in September last year that the alleged role of Indian government agents in the Nijjar case was being probed.

The two countries are trying to resolve the current issue, Verma said, but he hastened to add that Canada's misunderstanding of 'decades-old issues' was to blame for the deeper problems underlying the recent 'negative' developments. The latest provocation was the chanting of anti-India slogans by Khalistan supporters during a Sikh parade in Ontario last week. Late

last month, pro-Khalistan slogans had been raised at a public event attended by Trudeau and other leaders in Toronto, prompting India to reiterate that Canada was giving political space to 'separatism, extremism and violence'.

New Delhi is worried not only about the use of Canadian territory for anti-India propaganda but also the security of its diplomatic representatives in the Maple Country. The Ministry of External Affairs has stated that it expects the Trudeau government to ensure that the diplomats are able to carry out their responsibilities without fear. The ball is in Canada's court. Being a democratic country which respects the rule of law, Ottawa needs to crack down on rabble-rousers who glorify and incite violence. It should not allow itself to be intimidated by radical elements which are misusing freedom of expression. Antagonising an old ally like India, the fastest-growing major economy in the world, will be detrimental to Canada's geopolitical and economic interests.

Hinduja Group firm IndusInd International Holdings Ltd gets IRDAI nod on Rs 9,650-crore RCAP acquisition

Mumbai

Insurance sector regulator IRDAI has given conditional approval to Hinduja Group firm IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) for the takeover of debt-ridden Reliance Capital.

"We are happy to acknowledge the receipt of approval from IRDAI yesterday (May 10, 2024) on the auspicious occasion of Akshay Tritiya. The approval is subject to certain 'regulatory, statutory, and judicial' clearances/compliances," an IIHL spokesperson said in a statement.

IIHL stands committed to working towards obtaining the same as soon as possible and aims to close this transaction by the National Company Law Tribunal's (NCLT) stipulated date of May 27, the spokesperson said.

"We take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders including regulators and the administrator for their timely support," it said.

IRDAI approval is crucial for the transfer of insurance businesses of Reliance Capital i.e. Reliance General Insurance and Reliance Nippon Life Insurance, to IIHL. Reliance Capital is one of the promoters of Reliance General Insurance and Reliance Nippon Life Insurance.

NCLT on February 27, approved Hinduja Group firm IndusInd International Holdings Ltd's Rs 9,650-crore resolution

plan for Reliance Capital.

In November 2021, the Reserve Bank superseded the board of Reliance Capital on governance issues and payment defaults by Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group. The central bank had appointed Nageswara Rao Y as the administrator, who invited bids in February 2022 to take over the company.

Reliance Capital had a debt of over Rs 40,000 crore, and four applicants had initially bid with resolution plans. However, the committee of creditors rejected all four plans for lower bid values and a challenge mechanism was initiated in which IIHL and Torrent Investments participated.

In June 2023, the Hinduja Group firm was selected by the committee for its bid of Rs 9,661 crore upfront cash. Reliance Capital's cash balance of an additional Rs 500 crore would also go to the lenders.

The deal to acquire the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group's financial services arm for Rs 9,650-crore has already received all the other statutory approvals including from the banking and capital markets regulators and also fair play watchdog CCI.

IRDAI had reportedly expressed certain concerns about the deal including potential violations of foreign direct investment caps in

insurance companies, reliance on borrowings to buy insurance entities and also opacity in IIHL's structure.

A few days ago, chairman Ashok Hinduja had said that the Mauritius-based IIHL will pay off lenders within 48 hours of getting the IRDAI nod and had tied up debt funding of Rs 7,500-crore for the deal.

The rest of the Rs 2,000 crore will come in as equity from IIHL, which has investments from 600 high net individuals including a 9.9 per cent stake by the Hinduja.

A set of teams from IIHL are already interacting with RCAP businesses and formulating strategies, he had said, adding that all the talent at RCAP will be retained. There are retirements or end of terms of some senior officials in few of the entities within RCAP including board members, and the same will see replacements, Hinduja had said.

Once the takeover is complete, IIHL plans to divest the real estate investments which also come along with the transaction, Hinduja said, adding that this will fetch it around Rs 250 crore.

The near-term objective is to maximise the value for IIHL's shareholders, the chairman said, adding that he wants to grow the market cap of IIHL's listed financial services businesses to touch USD 50 billion by 2030.

India needs to focus on factor market reforms to propel growth to double digit: Asian Development Bank Chief Economist



New Delhi

India needs to focus on factor market reforms like land and labour to propel India's growth to a double-digit trajectory, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Chief Economist Albert Park has said.

"There are still concerns that the basic factor markets like land and labour in the formal sector of unemployment in India are still small. So, you really want to formalise those," he said in an interview.

The factor market reforms include land, labour, energy, and access to credit, among others, which are critical factors for production.

Labour reforms have been approved by Parliament in

2020, but they have not been implemented. In 2019 and 2020, 29 central labour laws were amalgamated, rationalised and simplified into four labour codes—the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code, 2020.

Labour is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution. Under the Labour Codes, rules are required to be framed by the central government as well as by the state governments.

Talking about other reforms, Park said further regulatory ease and ease of doing business and deregulation of tariffs by simplifying and reducing them will help increase India's share in the global value chain.

The government has set a target of USD 2 trillion in exports of goods and services to be achieved by 2030. In FY23, combined exports of goods and services reached an estimated USD 770 billion. Thus, considerable growth will be needed to reach the government's target.

Increasing goods exports requires India to integrate into global value chains, which must entail India specialising in stages of production, where it has a comparative advantage as opposed to necessarily looking to be present in the entire value chain, as per the recent ADO report released by ADB.

RBI likely to transfer Rs 1,000 billion to govt in FY25



New Delhi

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to transfer approximately Rs 1,000 billion to the government in FY25, according to a report by Union Bank of India.

The report highlights that RBI is anticipated to maintain a robust dividend payout for the fiscal year 2025 (FY25). This projection represents a slight increase from Rs 874 billion transferred in the previous fiscal year.

"The government has budgeted

the FY25 dividend for RBI and PSU banks & financial institutions at Rs 1,020 billion, vis-a-vis Rs 1,044 billion in FY24. In our view, a positive surprise is likely, similar to last year when initial budget estimate for overall dividend was only Rs 480 billion," said the report.

Despite several factors influencing RBI's dividend calculation, such as interest earnings and foreign exchange gains, analysts predict a continuation of strong dividend figures.



Tata Motors sees 3-fold jump in net profit at Rs 17,528 crore in Q4

New Delhi

Tata Motors on Friday reported over three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 17,528.59 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024, riding with all its three auto businesses delivering a strong performance, specially the British arm Jaguar Land Rover.

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 5,496.04 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal, Tata Motors said in a regulatory filing. Total consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,19,986.31 crore, as compared to Rs 1,05,932.35 crore in the year-ago period.

In Q4 FY24, Tata Motors said all three auto businesses delivered strong performance. The company's British arm Jaguar Land Rover had "another record-breaking quarter in Q4 FY24. Revenue for the quarter was 7.9 billion pounds, up 11



per cent versus Q4 FY23", Tata Motors said.

JLR's Profit After Tax (PAT) in Q4 was 1.4 billion pounds as against a profit of 259 million pounds in the same quarter a year ago, it added.

PB Balaji, CFO, Tata Motors Group said: "In FY24, the Tata Motors delivered its highest-ever revenues, profits, and free cash flows. The India business is now

debt-free, and we are on track to become net automotive debt-free on a consolidated basis in FY25."

The Board of Directors have recommended a final dividend of Rs 3 per ordinary share and Rs 3.10 per 'A' ordinary share and a special dividend of Rs 3 per ordinary share and Rs 3.10 per 'A' ordinary share subject to approval by the shareholders.

Industrial growth declines to 4.9%



New Delhi

India's industrial production growth slowed marginally to 4.9 per cent month-on-month in March 2024, mainly due to poor show by the mining sector, according to official data released on Friday.

The factory output growth, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), was 5.6 per cent in February 2024. However, it was 1.9 per cent in March 2023. For the fiscal 2023-24, IIP growth touched 5.8 per cent against 5.2 per cent in the preceding financial year.

India's IIP grew by 4.9 per cent in March 2024, according to a statement by the Ministry

of Statistics & Programme Implementation. As per the latest data, the mining output growth decelerated to 1.2 per cent in March against a 6.8 per cent expansion in the year-ago month.

The manufacturing sector's growth accelerated to 5.2 per cent in March compared to 1.5 per cent a year ago. The power generation increased by 8.6 per cent in March against a contraction of 1.6 per cent in the same month of the last year.

As per use-base classification, the capital goods segment growth fell to 6.1 per cent in March 2024 from 10 per cent in the year-ago period.

Tata Capital, 14 other NBFCs surrender licences

Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said 15 NBFCs, including Tata Capital Financial Services and Revolving Investments, have surrendered their certificates of registration due to various reasons.

Nine non-banking financial companies (NBFC) have ceased to be legal entities due to amalgamation, merger, dissolution, or voluntary strike-off.

These are Tata Capital Financial Services, Tata Cleantech Capital, Naperol Investments, USG Financial Services, Urja Capital, Vandana Dealers, ABRN Finance, Jodhani Management, and JDS Securities.

SBI profit grows 18% to Rs 21,384 crore in Q4



Mumbai

The country's largest lender SBI on Thursday reported 18.18 per cent growth in March quarter consolidated net profit to Rs 21,384.15 crore as against Rs 18,093.84 crore in the year-ago period. On a standalone basis, profit grew to Rs 20,698.35 crore from Rs 16,694.51 crore a year ago, the lender said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated net profit in fiscal year 2023-24 was up 20.55 per cent to Rs 67,084.67 crore

as against Rs 55,648.17 crore in FY23. In Q4 FY24, total income rose to Rs 1.28 lakh crore from Rs 1.06 lakh crore in the year-ago period, while operating expenses grew at a relatively slower rate at Rs 30,276 crore from the year-ago period's Rs 29,732 crore.

There was an improvement in gross non-performing assets ratio to 2.24 per cent as on March 31, 2024, as against 2.78 per cent in the year-ago period and 2.42 per cent at the end of December quarter.

Wholesale inflation rises for second month in a row in April at 1.26 per cent

New Delhi

The wholesale inflation rose for the second consecutive month in April to 1.26 per cent on account of rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables, along with fuel and power. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation was 0.79 per cent in April last year. In March 2024, it was 0.53 per cent. "Positive rate of inflation in April 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, electricity, crude petroleum and natural gas, manufacture of food products, other manufacturing etc," Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement on Tuesday. As per the data, inflation in food articles rose to 7.74 per cent in April as against 6.88 per cent in March. Inflation in vegetables was 23.60 per cent in April, up from 19.52 per cent in the previous month. In the fuel and power basket, inflation stood at 1.38 per cent in April, up from (-)0.77 per cent in March. The rise in April WPI is in contrast to the retail inflation data for the month. The RBI mainly takes into account retail inflation while framing monetary policy.

Retail inflation eased to 11-month low of 4.83 per cent in April.

The RBI last month kept interest rate unchanged for seventh time in a row and said that it remains vigilant towards upside risks to food inflation.

Retail inflation eases to 11-month low at 4.83%

New Delhi

Retail inflation eased to an 11-month low of 4.83 per cent in April as prices of some kitchen items declined though overall food basket firmed up marginally, according to a government data released on Monday.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation was 4.85 per cent in March. It was 4.7 per cent in April 2023. The previous low inflation was at 4.31 per cent in May 2023.

The inflation in the food basket was at 8.70 per cent in April, marginally up from 8.52 per cent in March, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

Inflation in egg, meat, spices, and 'cereals and products' was lower in April, while fruits, vegetables, and pulses were expensive. The index for 'fuel and light' in the CPI declined to 4.24 per cent in April on a



yearly basis.

The government has tasked the RBI to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. According to the RBI, which factors in consumer inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, food price uncertainties continue to weigh on the inflation trajectory going forward.

The central bank has projected the CPI inflation for 2024-25 at 4.5 per cent with the first quarter at 4.9 per cent; second at 3.8 per cent; third at 4.6 per cent; and the fourth at 4.5 per cent. The NSO data further revealed that inflation in urban areas was lower than the national average of 4.11 per cent and higher in rural India at 5.43 per cent.

Siemens India board approves demerger of its energy arm into separate listed entity

Mumbai

The Board of Siemens Limited, the Indian arm of the German technology group Siemens AG, on May 14 approved the proposal to demerge its energy business into a separate legal entity – Siemens Energy India Limited.

The new entity will subsequently be listed on the BSE Limited and National Stock Exchange of India Limited, the company said in a regulatory filing.

As per the scheme of arrangement, shareholders of Siemens Limited will receive one share of Siemens Energy India Limited for every one share of Siemens Limited.

Siemens Limited will continue to be a leading technology-focused company in industry, infrastructure and mobility while



Siemens Energy India Limited will focus on being energy technology company supporting its customers in transitioning to a more sustainable world, the company added.

The demerger will lead to the creation of two strong and independent entities which are able to better address their respective markets and customers with a more focused approach.

The process of demerger, including receipt of requisite approvals, and subsequent

listing of Siemens Energy India is expected to be completed in 2025, the company added.

Sunil Mathur, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Limited, said, "The demerger will enable both companies to pursue their specific strategies, focus on their core portfolios and take decisions on capital allocation. This will enable the full value of each of the businesses to be unlocked for the benefit of the shareholders."

FM Sitharaman cautions 'unchecked explosion' in retail F&O trading could create future challenges



Mumbai

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman appealed to decision makers at NSE and BSE to work closely with market regulator SEBI to create a stringent regulatory standard. She was speaking on the sideline of the "Vision for Indian Finance Markets" event at the BSE in Mumbai.

Any unchecked explosion in retail trading of F&O, she warned, could create future challenges not just for markets, but for investor sentiment and household finances.

"I would appeal to the BSE that you should work closely with Sebi in order to ensure stringent compliance and regulatory standard so that investor confidence grows further," the Minister said.

Sitharaman also spoke about the active role that household finances and participation from middle class investors has been playing in protecting the market from fluctuations. Hence, she said that there is a need to protect the

investors and their contributions. "Household finances have made a generational shift, we want to safeguard that, we want to ensure that it is not going to be shattered."

Talking about the role of BSE and NSE, Sitharaman noted that the stock exchanges should ensure market stability and mitigate systemic risks. She appealed to the exchange members to find ways to leverage technology, and adopt blockchain, artificial intelligence, along with big data to improve efficiency and transparency.

On the importance of the capital markets, Sitharaman had said that without capital, one cannot expect to see efficiency and production happening in the country. "Financial markets play a very very crucial role for not just capital mobilisation but also for capital allocation and the seamless way in which capital flows into places from where productivity can improve," she said.

HDFC Bank launches its first virtual credit card with Visa

Mumbai

The country's largest private sector lender, HDFC Bank, on May 14, launched PIXEL, its first virtual credit card with Visa's network. The card is available in two variants: PIXEL Play and PIXEL Go and allows users to build their own cards with personalised benefits, offers, etc. Customers can register for the cards on the bank's PayZapp mobile application which can be digitally managed. The PayZapp application will provide credit card users with features like card controls, rewards, EMI dashboard, notifications, statements, repayments, disputes, hotlisting, recent transactions, etc., the bank said in a press release. Swipe to pay and tap to pay will be enabled on the digital credit card, the bank said. Presently on the Visa network, Parag Rao, Country Head—Payments, Consumer Finance, Digital Banking and Technology at HDFC Bank, said that the bank will soon launch the card with other networks.

India's Defence Industry: Achievements and Challenges

An integral part of the acquisition reform is the government's effort to mandate higher indigenous content (IC)—including in parts, components, raw materials, and software—in various domestic industry-friendly procurement categories. The minimum IC required from the first four prioritised categories is 50 percent, significantly higher than the 30 percent demanded before the Make in India initiative was launched. The government is also confident that IC could be enhanced further in some categories. A clear indication of this was provided by the Indian defence minister who, in late 2023, instructed the CDS and the Defence Secretary to consult the industry and “work towards increasing” the IC of Indigenous Designed, Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) category—the first prioritised procurement category—projects to a minimum of 60-65 percent.

Apart from enabling the industry to take greater responsibility for manufacturing, the government has also tried to incentivise it to undertake R&D, an area historically dominated by the DRDO and, to a limited extent, by the DPSUs. The government has simplified and expanded the ‘Make’ guidelines of the DPP/DAP and launched two innovation-oriented schemes—innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Technology Development Fund (TDF).

Furthermore, Union Budget 2022-23 reserved 25 percent of the R&D budget for the industry, startups, and academia. After the announcement, the MoD has identified 18 major projects, the design and development of which are to be led by the Indian industry.

Ease of Doing Business Reform

Soon after assuming power in 2014, the Modi government took several steps to improve the ease of doing business environment, especially for the private sector. The government streamlined the industrial licensing process for the private sector so that the latter could easily obtain official permissions without bureaucratic hassles. This was soon followed by liberalising the defence foreign direct investment

(FDI) regime by enhancing the earlier foreign equity cap from a maximum of 26 percent under the automatic route, first to 49 percent and subsequently to 74 percent. The FDI liberalisation has led to an inflow of INR 57 billion (approximately US\$ 609 million) till 2024.

The government has also brought out a standard operating procedure to formalise the process of defence export authorisation; allowed the private sector to use government-run facilities to test their equipment; launched two defence industrial corridors; opened a single-window agency (the Defence Investor Cell) to address investors' queries; and announced a policy to facilitate the indigenisation of parts and components used in platforms being produced by the DPSUs. A dedicated web portal, SRIJAN, has also been created so that the DPSUs and the armed forces can upload previously imported items for indigenisation by domestic entities.

Performance of the Defence Industry

Following several reforms, the defence industry has made certain progress. The most visible indicator of the progress is the near continuous increase in production turnover, which reached INR 1087 billion (US\$13.5 billion) in 2022-23 (see Table 1). This, in turn, indicates that the Indian industry's growing capability to manufacture and supply a large number of defence equipment. Buoyed by the domestic industry's growing capability, the MoD is increasingly awarding complex projects to the industry, both private and public. In 2023, the MoD signed contracts with the domestic industry for medium power radar and an integrated electronic warfare system (Bharat Electronics), HTT-40 basic trainer aircraft and Dornier-228 aircraft (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited), cadre training ships (L&T), improved Akash Weapon System (Bharat Dynamics Limited), Offshore Patrol Vessels and Missile Vessels (Goa Shipyard Limited and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers), Fleet Support Vessels (Hindustan Shipyard Limited), and upgraded super rapid gun mount (Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited).

The government's reforms

have led to a visible improvement in defence exports, which reached an all-time high of INR 210.83 billion (approximately US\$2.63 billion) in 2023-24 (see Table 4). In the post-reform decade—from 2014-15 to 2023-24—defence exports totalled INR 883.19 billion (approximately US\$11 billion), representing a 21-times increase from the INR 43.12 billion (approximately US\$517 million) in exports in the preceding pre-reform decade (2004-05 to 2013-14). Encouraged by this success, the government has set an ambitious annual target of INR 500 billion (approximately US\$6.0 billion)

Part 2

in exports by 2028-29.

India is now exporting arms, ammunition, and related items to over 85 countries, with 100 Indian firms participating in international sales. Some of the major items exported include “Dornier-228, 155 mm Advanced Towed Artillery Guns, Brahmos Missiles, Akash Missile System, Radars, Simulators, Mine Protected Vehicles, Armoured Vehicles, PINAKA Rockets & Launchers, Ammunitions, Thermal Imagers, Body Armours, besides Systems, Line Replaceable Units and Parts & components of Avionics and Small Arms.”

Notably, most of the exports are driven by the private sector, while the DPSUs, the mainstay in India's defence production, have contributed little. However, most of the private sector's exports are in the form of parts, components, assemblies, and sub-assemblies, with few Indian companies exporting major systems. Among the major items exported by the private sector, Bharat Forge's export of 155mm artillery guns (worth US\$155 million) is notable.

Buoyed by the domestic industry's achievements and to support it further, the government has taken two crucial steps that are likely to deepen the involvement of the domestic industry in the coming years. In a move to procure more from the domestic industry, the government has been consistently

earmarking a greater share of its capital acquisition budget for procurement from the domestic industry. In 2023-24, the share was raised to 75 percent, up from 58 percent in 2021-22, indicating the government's confidence in the domestic industry's growing ability to meet the armed forces' requirements.

At the same time, the government is also keen to reinforce its faith in indigenous capability. This is evident from the high-value acquisition proposal being earmarked for execution by the Indian industry. In 2022-23, the MoD gave the acceptance of necessity (AoN)—the official approval to begin the formal procurement—to proposals worth INR 2710 billion (approximately US\$32.5 billion), 99 percent of which is meant for procurement from the domestic industry. In 2023, the value of AoN was INR 3500 billion (approximately US\$42 billion), the majority of which will eventually be manufactured in India. Some of the major items for which the government has accorded AoN include light combat helicopters, light combat aircraft MK 1A, medium-range anti-ship missiles, and the towed gun system. When these proposals, along with the 500 items identified in the positive indigenisation lists, are converted into contracts and further into actual production by the industry, the volume and share of the domestic industry in procurement are bound to increase substantially. The MoD estimates that the value of the domestic defence production will reach INR 3 trillion (approximately US\$36 billion) by 2028-29.

Challenges

Although the Indian defence industry is now on a much better footing, it faces several challenges. The foremost challenge is increasing production, at least to a level that meets India's procurement requirements. Despite the government's efforts and an ambitious production target of US\$26 billion by 2025, production has not grown significantly enough to meet the annual procurement requirements of the armed forces. As Figure 1 shows, the domestic share in the armed forces' capital

acquisition has hardly increased from 2014-15, the year the Make in India initiative was launched. The slow progress in India's defence production and an ever-increasing procurement budget have ensured that India remains dependent on external sources for critical defence hardware requirements.

On the export front, despite registering a noticeable increase in international arms sales, the industry is way off the target set by the government. The biggest challenge in meeting the government's export target comes from the DPSUs, which have been slow in rising to expectations. Some recent attempts to export major systems have not met with success. For instance, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the biggest defence company in India, could not win an international competition for its light combat aircraft Tejas fighter in Malaysia, which selected a Korean alternative. Previously, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers lost a big tender in the Philippines, indicating the difficulties faced by the DPSUs in arms exports.

Second, the Indian defence industry, despite having a large production and R&D base, lacks the technological depths to design/manufacture major systems and critical parts, components, and raw materials, which are eventually imported. The lack of technological depth is also one of the reasons why the Indian government still prefers to licence manufacture many major systems. Notably, licencing manufacturing has an overwhelming share of 58 percent in India's defence procurement, indicating the extent of India's external dependency.

Third, although the Modi government has announced many reforms to revitalise domestic production, many are yet to be implemented in full letter and spirit. This has created a condition where the time between reform announcements and their translation to actual contract, production, and delivery is unduly prolonged. Given India's bureaucratic system, overcoming the delays in implementation will remain a key challenge in the foreseeable future.

Maritime Security in the Bay of Bengal: Obstacles and Opportunities

The Bay of Bengal has long been viewed as a region with dual characteristics: it is both a vital socio-economic hub for neighbouring countries and a focal point of intense geopolitical rivalry, carrying significant implications for regional and global stability. Countries bordering the Bay—including India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka—are heavily dependent on it for maritime trade, fishing, and offshore resources such as oil and gas. The Bay littoral has fostered the development of industries, sustained livelihoods, and facilitated economic growth throughout the region.

However, the region represents a complex geopolitical landscape, characterised notably by intense competition between India and China. Both countries view the region as strategically critical, given its proximity to vital sea lanes and potential as a gateway to wider Indian Ocean access. The competition between India and China extends beyond mere economic interests to encompass broader geopolitical and security concerns. This rivalry has significant implications for maritime security, especially since India and China's pursuits of strategic interests have led to increased naval presence, coastal infrastructure development, and diplomatic engagements with Bay states. This competition is not limited to economic or military realms but also includes soft power diplomacy and efforts to shape regional institutions.

The Bay of Bengal's strategic significance is amplified by broader geopolitical dynamics, including the Indo-Pacific framework and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The region's importance as a geopolitical battleground underscores the interconnectedness of maritime security, economic development, and political stability. The approach of the Bay states has been to balance the region's socioeconomic importance with managing geopolitical tensions and fostering a spirit of peaceful coexistence. Regional countries have also sought to forge consensus by prioritising non-traditional goals, such as securing key trading routes, enhancing connectivity, and fostering economic cooperation. The common objective of combating irregular threats has helped construct a positive narrative.

India plays a crucial security role in the Bay of Bengal region,

with the Indian Navy serving as the primary security provider and partner for regional cooperation. The Indian Navy actively engages with neighbouring navies to enhance maritime security capabilities, maintain stability, and safeguard the vital sea lanes. However, India faces increasing challenges from China's growing maritime presence in South Asia, leading New Delhi to expand naval surveillance and strengthen bases along the eastern coast.

The key challenges in the Bay include resource-related and human security issues such as illegal fishing, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and armed robbery. The littoral is also



vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding and erosion, and water insecurity, highlighting the need for effective coastal management. India's security efforts have focused on marine governance and crisis response, but progress in many areas has been slow, particularly in the fight against illegal fishing, where flawed regulations and limited law enforcement capabilities have hindered the provisioning of effective security. The issue is compounded by inadequate data collection and cross-border tensions between neighbouring coastguards.

Illegal migration is another area of concern. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Rohingya refugee boats from Myanmar seeking safe havens in Southeast Asia. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2023, nearly 4,500 Rohingya took boats across the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, fleeing crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh or persecution in their native Myanmar. Reports indicate that approximately 569 individuals perished or vanished at sea, marking the highest number since 2014. Drug smuggling in the region has also surged, originating from the Golden Triangle and funnelling drugs into South Asia, challenging

multilateral efforts like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to address these issues effectively.

This paper seeks to assess the obstacles that hinder effective security collaboration in the Bay of Bengal. It argues that the essentialist notions of maritime security cooperation are inadequate to understand the realities of the Bay, where maritime challenges are complex and the priorities of regional states vary significantly. While they are willing to leverage partner strengths to make cooperation more enduring and sustainable, the Bay countries remain divided

and economic development. In this assessment, commerce, connectivity, and culture are the driving factors for regional cooperation in the Bay region; geoeconomics takes precedence over all else, with proponents highlighting the region as a 'bridge', a 'link', and a 'gateway' to prosperity. The objective of this approach is to minimise conflict over contentious matters and maximise cooperation in areas where regional states agree to engage.

The preference for a developmental approach is especially strong in policymaking circles, where leaders and government officials underscore

and implement appropriate response measures.

The second way of understanding maritime security in the Bay of Bengal is to situate the region within a larger strategic framework. Some scholars view the Bay as an important subsystem in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), where strategic contacts between regional governments serve the common security aim of safeguarding sea lines of communication (SLOCs) through strong security partnerships. This view holds that Bay of Bengal interactions should not be assessed in isolation, as several of the strategic players in the region are extra-regional powers. Proponents view China as having considerable leverage in the Bay region, with many regional countries dependent on Chinese aid and investments for infrastructure building. In this approach, although analysts recognise the challenges posed by Chinese maritime presence, they do not consider China's military capacity-building efforts or naval deployments in the eastern Indian Ocean as a serious threat to India. They believe that some aspects of China's outreach, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), fill a critical void in infrastructure financing in South Asia. Consequently, they believe that regional states have a case to declare the Bay of Bengal as a 'zone of peace'.

The third perspective views the Bay as a strategic buffer between the eastern IOR and the Western Pacific. Proponents of this view say that security dynamics in the Bay drive a larger contest between China and the United States (US). Analysts argue that the Bay's strategic location—at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia—makes it a catalyst for strategic contestation between Asia's powerful navies; therefore, the Bay, like its Pacific 'twin' (the South China Sea), becomes a key battleground in maritime Asia. Some see the Bay as straddling two major geopolitical blocs—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and BIMSTEC—thus becoming a potential flashpoint for military conflict. In contrast to the first viewpoint, which is concerned mainly with development and prosperity in the Bay, and the second perspective, which prioritises the balance of economic power, this third understanding of the Bay places geopolitics and power rivalry at the heart of maritime security.

over China's expanding presence in maritime South Asia. The level of collaboration among regional states in three key areas—capacity building, burden sharing, and maritime domain awareness (MDA)—remains limited and primarily focused on specific issues.

Understanding Maritime Security: Three Viewpoints

From a policy perspective, there are three ways of viewing the Bay of Bengal. The first is to view the region as a self-contained strategic system with unique dynamics, interplay, and interconnections. In this reading of security dynamics, maritime security in the Bay depends largely on institutional mechanisms to counter non-traditional human security challenges such as terrorism, trafficking, the environment, and climate change. Proponents argue that addressing illegal fishing, forced migration, marine conservation, and environmental security requires collaboration among regional governments. This perspective tends to downplay contentious state challenges—not with a view to deny state conflict but rather to focus on shared human security challenges. Analysts view the Bay as a coherent maritime space with organic interconnections facilitating connectivity, growth,

BIMSTEC's founding principles of "political independence, non-interference in internal affairs, non-aggression, peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and mutual benefit". However, many Bay states offer no pretext for their reliance on China for growth and investment. The reluctance to oppose Chinese presence in the Bay region stems from the seeming dependence of regional states on Beijing for economic development. Focusing on non-traditional threats in the Bay region also allows for better governance of the maritime commons.

Nonetheless, coordination between regional security agencies is not entirely smooth. Some Bay states are reluctant to undertake joint patrolling with foreign navies and coastguards within the exclusive economic zones (EEZs), with regional policymakers believing that granting foreign agencies access to the littoral is geopolitically risky. Additionally, sporadic and uneven information-gathering across large portions of the maritime domain creates challenges for law enforcement agencies. For example, data related to marine pollution, including oil spills and illegal dumping in the Bay, is often suboptimal, making it difficult to assess the extent of the damage

DIGITAL DREAMS, REAL CHALLENGES: KEY FACTORS DRIVING INDIA'S AI ECOSYSTEM

In recent years, the rapid pace of developments in the domain of artificial intelligence (AI)—spanning machine learning (ML), cloud computing, neural networks, and large language models (LLMs)—has forced the world to grapple with the disruptive potential of emerging technologies. These have significant ramifications for the economy and society, with the global economy standing to gain US\$15.7 trillion by 2030 through the integration of AI technologies in and for business processes, labour augmentation, and product enhancement. Of this US\$15.7 trillion projected value, US\$6.6 trillion is likely to come from increased productivity and US\$9.1 trillion from consumption-side effects. The potential for such economic opportunities has been heightened with the release of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Midjourney, and DALL-E. Generative AI is expected to add between US\$2.4 trillion and US\$4.4 trillion to the global economy by 2030.

However, such economic optimism is often tempered by the looming threat of job displacement, security concerns, and asymmetric wealth generation between high- and low-income countries. AI-related developments are expected to affect 15 percent of the global workforce by 2030, with a 23 percent structured change in the global labour market. This will result in a decline of 83 million jobs and a growth of 69 million jobs, with the fastest growth seen in technology-related roles and the sharpest drop in clerical and secretarial ones. While automation technologies have primarily affected low-skilled workers in the past, the development of generative AI will impact high-skilled 'white-collar' jobs. Economies with a higher proportion of cognitive-based, high-skilled jobs have a higher exposure to AI but are also likely to experience benefits from a greater synergy with AI platforms. This will have a disruptive effect on economies, impacting 60 percent of jobs in advanced economies, 40 percent in emerging markets, and 26 percent in low-income countries.

Further, AI engenders multiple interconnected risks, with the manipulation and distortion of information being the most severe short-term risks confronting societies globally. Misinformation and disinformation enabled by advanced AI capabilities, such as deepfakes, pose significant threats to democracy, stability, and social cohesion. The weaponisation of AI for military use and the criminal use of AI to mount cyberattacks pose longer-term critical risk scenarios. AI technologies used in military applications typically tend to be dual-use—with both

civilian and military applications. The deployment of dual-use technology in the military domain raises significant regulatory concerns. On the one hand, they remain outside the ambit of modes of governance for civilian uses, while on the other, they raise important questions under international law for armed conflict. These involve questions around the ability to delegate decisions of taking lives to machines, the responsibility of harm, particularly in cases of inadvertent casualties, and the ability of



AI and autonomous weapons to distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Governments worldwide are faced with the twin but opposing conditions of economic potential and social concerns that need to be negotiated to realise the digital dividends from AI and achieve sustainable and balanced growth. Mirroring global trends, projections for India indicate that AI can add US\$1 trillion to the economy by 2035. The adoption of generative AI can add between US\$359 billion and US\$438 billion in 2029-30 over and above baseline estimates, representing an additional 5.9-7.2 percent of GDP. This would translate to between US\$1.2 trillion and US\$1.5 trillion cumulated GDP over seven years (2023-24 and 2029-30), leading to an additional compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.9-1.1 percent for the Indian economy. Concurrently, India has also grappled with the adverse consequences of AI-driven transformations. These range from misinformation and disinformation fuelled by deepfakes to potential job displacement as a result of the restructuring of the labour markets due to automation. Additionally, market concentration occurs as a result of Big Tech firms controlling the AI pipeline (from data to computation in the form of cloud infrastructure). Moreover, cybersecurity concerns stem from AI-driven cyberattacks along with privacy infringements due to data scraping to train AI models, and bias and discrimination due to opacity and lack

of transparency. Tech leaders have asked for quick regulations to manage the deep social and economic transformations unleashed by AI. Concurrently, the need to institute mechanisms for fairness, accountability, and transparency is becoming increasingly important. The risks of adverse consequences of AI systems are unfolding within the context of increased industrial concentration and unequal distribution of critical AI resources. This highlights the need to understand the resources, conditions, and actors that drive AI innovation and the guardrails required for their responsible adoption and uptake.

This paper synthesises the policy and regulatory conditions, social and technical infrastructural requirements, and concerns around responsibility and safety that shape India's current AI ecosystem. Taking an ecosystem-level approach highlights the simultaneous importance of these diverse factors in balancing AI-driven economic growth and social transformation. The paper identifies key aspects of India's AI ecosystem and the current state of the field. It also presents recommendations on the way forward by contextualising India's approach against the backdrop of the two AI superpowers, the US and China. Finally, it proposes a 'collaborative self-reliance' approach to leverage global market offerings while building national competencies in AI.

India's AI Ecosystem: Key Drivers

The AI ecosystem involves a set of heterogeneous but functionally connected actors and institutions that operate based on a set of available knowledge, resources, and technologies, with complex relationships of interdependency. The evolution of the AI ecosystem is underpinned by the availability of resources in the form of computing power, data management, and processing. These resources support AI production and the development environment in the form of platform technologies such as Azure, Amazon Web Services (AWS), and Google TensorFlow, spanning AI libraries, visualisation tools, and protocols. These then form the platforms that help in AI consumption by experimenting and developing AI use cases that are then deployed in application scenarios and consumer-facing technologies. The concentration of resources among Big Tech companies combined with the need for the responsible deployment of AI systems necessitates enabling conditions. These include responsive policy and regulations, the availability of a skilled workforce, a supportive research and development environment, finance and investments, and

trust and security to promote trustworthy deployment and adoption. This highlights the role played by different actors in the ecosystem, such as the government in terms of policy, regulations, and public expenditure outlay, businesses in terms of critical AI resources, academia in terms of research and innovation, and startups for AI-driven solutions and applications.

AI production and consumption are closely linked because training a model involves the use of data to calibrate, leading to positive feedback loops. This increases the demand for computing power, which is provided by cloud computing and chip and microprocessing companies. Further, AI depends on quality data, a vital resource for innovators looking to enter the AI ecosystem. This privileges Big Tech companies that already have access to such a vital resource, highlighting the role of regulations in addressing issues of data access to increase competition. AI enablement and production, characterised by high capital intensity and economies of scale and learning, are controlled mainly by Big Tech, who are primarily concentrated in a single geography (the US). As a result, critical resources for AI development are unequally distributed globally. Big Tech companies have the capability to produce the AI they need for internal and external use. The ready availability of large and varied datasets also reduces the computational cost of training the model and improving accuracy, resulting in better returns and lower costs of developing AI models.

Given that a few firms have been central to the global AI ecosystem, it is important to understand the multiple drivers across AI development, deployment, and adoption that have implications for fostering an ecosystem of sustainability, collaboration, and self-reliance. This is particularly important for India as it attempts to push AI-led socioeconomic transformations. Understanding an AI ecosystem will involve comprehending the roles and responsibilities among participant actors and the conditions and trends in enablement, production, and deployment. An ecosystem approach highlights the interdependency imperative in scaling unequally distributed AI capabilities. The evolution and growth of AI ecosystems will come to depend on scale and scope, i.e., the cumulative advantages and opportunities of market entry and the ability to grow laterally and innovate in newer application areas. The following are the prevalent trends across key drivers in India's evolving AI ecosystem.

Ecological Disruption and Militarization of Antarctica will push the Planet Closer to Tipping Points

Antarctica, a continent about 40% larger than Europe in area, has also been called the world's largest desert and the coldest, windiest, loneliest continent. Such descriptions do not exactly make this the most attractive continent, but in keeping with our times, those looking for minerals and geo-strategic advantages can find their own allurements.

So far this continent has been among the relatively better managed places in the world, but this can change rapidly with the increasingly emerging fearful possibilities of ecological disruption and even militarization.

If such a drift takes place, this will be a tragedy much beyond this continent as Antarctica has a very important role in protecting the badly endangered ecology of the entire planet. The vast ice sheets which cover this continent almost entirely make an important contribution in maintaining heat balance by naturally deflecting sun rays, and this has an increasingly more protective role for earth. This continent contributes also by maintaining the water circulation system. The glaciers here are estimated to have 70 per cent of the freshwater supply of the world. This is a habitat for many species which are found only here, and some of the species found here, such as the larger whales, have important protective roles on their own. Although best known for its many species of penguins and seals, Antarctica is also home to its unique krills which provide food for many species apart from playing other ecologically important roles.

Although ecologists have been warning against increasing dangers of plastics, other pollutants and above all invasive species being introduced here in recent times as well as the threat posed by destructive fishing practices, on the whole the continent has been reasonably well protected so far in terms of any locally caused ruin. However in terms of the impact of the wider climate change and global warming, of course the fragile ecology of this continent has suffered in terms of heavy melting of ice and glaciers and habitats of several

species being threatened in the process.

However if future activities contribute much more heavily to local ecological ruin, then the vicious cycle will be completed as global warming melts the continent, also releasing more buried carbon, on the one hand and on the other hand local ruin disrupts the continent's protective role and contributes further to climate change

reasonably effectively so far because most of the involved countries were not motivated to disrupt it. Now with an increasingly more divided world which is more hawkish on exploring geo-strategic advantages and which is also getting greedier for certain rare minerals or other valuable natural resources, this can change.

While the systems on place have

over a wide area. The clear sky here may delight nature lovers, but those interested in space warfare research and satellite tracking may take a very different view of the possibilities.

The original treaty was signed by 12 countries. Seven out of these have claimed territories—Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and UK. No less important



and other serious ecological ruin, pushing the continent closer towards tipping points.

So far much harm could be avoided because of the systems put in place by the Antarctica Treaty System (ATS) created by the Antarctica Treaty of 1959/1961 which put in place a system of avoiding exploitation and exploration of minerals as well as banning military activities/militarization. This was strengthened further by the follow-up protocol framed in 1998 which beautifully agreed to preserve the Antarctica as an 'International Nature Reserve Dedicated to Science and Peace'. This protocol is supposed to last at least for 50 years up to the year 2048 when again hopefully this can be extended.

However this system could function

worked well here so far, their loopholes and susceptibilities will be exposed once the main actors involved become more aggressive. To give an example, the current system gives all exemptions for research stations, even some military personnel. This can be misused to get in more military personnel. Research is supposed to be for civilian purposes, but exploiting dual use possibilities as well as some hidden research, work of military importance can also be taken up. Similarly, research work can include secret mineral exploration work as well, which is most likely to lead to wider mineral exploration and ultimately mining work if the prospects are found to be very alluring.

There are prospects for lucrative fishing as well as for creating new sea routes. Domination of the sky here can lead to a big military advantage

is the reported fact that the USA, Russia and China have reserved rights to making future claims. Many more countries, over 30, have set up permanent research bases. Even efforts for dividing the region along imaginary lines have been discussed, making a mockery of existing treaty and protocol. However so far the treaty and the protocol are in place, and this is a saving grace.

However clearly many more efforts for strengthening the provisions of peace and ecological protection are needed. One option is to entirely do away with territorial claims and to hand over the continent to the United Nations for governing it entirely on the basis of complete peace and ecological protection as a common heritage of all humankind and forms of life.

Alia Bhatt Says She Won't Let Daughter Raha Move Out Of House In Early 20s



Bollywood star Alia Bhatt, who welcomed daughter Raha in 2022, in a recent interview opened up about the challenges of being a working mother, leaving home at a young age and more. Talking to The Nod Mag, the Gangubai Kathiawadi actress spoke about how she wouldn't want Raha to move out of home in her early 20s like she did. Talking about her decision to move out of her home in the early days of her career, Alia said, "I was barely 23 when I moved out of the house. I'd be away on long shooting schedules, and sometimes you wouldn't even know which city I was in. So that was a defining point in my life, and our relationship. But I do feel I left home too soon."

She however asserted that she wouldn't let her daughter Raha leave home like she did. She continued, "I won't let that happen with Raha. Believe it or not, usually I'm a forward-

thinking kind of person, but with Raha, I'm just taking each day as it comes. Papa recently told me: 'If you don't let Raha fall down, it will be the biggest mistake you'll make because she'll never learn how to pick herself up.'

Just a week after her stunning appearance at the Met Gala 2024, Alia Bhatt attended the new Gucci Cruise 2025 fashion show by Sabato De Sarno. The event was held at the Tate Modern in London, where Gucci unveiled its latest collection. Dressed in a strapless bodycon midi dress, Alia Bhatt looked stunning. Several photos and videos from the event have been doing the rounds on social media. In one of the pictures, Alia Bhatt is sitting alongside Demi Moore. Another snapshot captured her interacting with Thai actress Davika Hoorne. One of the viral images captures Alia Bhatt posing with South Korean actress Park Gyu-young.

Cannes 2024: 7 Indian Films To Be Screened

The 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival is set to be held in the French Riviera from May 14 with India set to make its mark on the canvas of the prestigious film festival, considered to be one of the biggest film festivals in the world. Seven films from India will be a part of the festival. One of the films, and India's big hopes comes in the form of the Malayalam film *All We Imagine As Light*. The film, directed by Payal Kapadia, will be screened at the festival on May 23.

All We Imagine As Light follows the story of two roommates who serve as nurses at a hospital. How love and self-discovery bring about a change in their perspectives forms the crux of the story.

The film will be the 1st Indian film in the main segment (Palme d'Or) of Cannes, the last was *Swaham* which was released in 1994.

Another film to be screened at the festival is *Santosh*. The film is directed by British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri and will be screened at the Un Certain Regard section of the 2024 Cannes Film Festival.

Santosh stars Shahana Goswami in the lead role and follows the story of a newly widowed woman who inherits her husband's job as a police constable in rural northern India.



Then there's the Kannada short film *Sunflowers Were The First Ones To Know* which will be screened under the Cinéfondation or La Ciné section of the Cannes Film Festival. The film is directed by FTII student Chidanand Naik.

Smita Patil and Naseeruddin Shah's film *Manthan*, which was released in 1976, is set to be screened under the Cannes Classics selection. The film also starred Girish Karnad and Kulbhushan Kharbanda.

Actress Radhika Apte's film *Sister Midnight* too has been selected under the Directors' Fortnight category at the Cannes Film Festival, this year.

The film, directed by Karan Kandhari, is about a wife who navigates the challenges of married life in a slum. Having suffered oppression, she aims to seek revenge.

In Retreat, directed by Syed Maisam Ali Shah, tells the story of a man who returns to his hometown after many years. The film is set to be screened under the Association for the Distribution of Independent Cinema Section.

The final film on the list is *The Shameless* directed by Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov. The film's story is set in India, and it has been shot across Nepal and India.

The Shameless follows the story of Rani, an Indian sex worker, who goes on a pilgrimage to a remote temple, where she confronts her past, including a love affair, who is imprisoned for murder in Bangalore.

The film will be screened under the Un Certain Regard section.

Shamita Shetty Undergoes Surgery For Endometriosis

Shamita Shetty has undergone a surgery after suffering from endometriosis. Shamita shared a video on her Instagram feed to share the news. The video was recorded by Shamita's sister Shilpa Shetty from the hospital. In the video, Shamita can be heard saying, "All the women out there, please google endometriosis. You need to know what the problem is all about. It's painful and uncomfortable." When Shamita is asked to share her last words before the surgery, she says, "When pain is there in the body for a reason, listen to your body and be positive." Sharing the video, Shamita wrote in the caption, "Did you



know that almost 40 % of women suffer from Endometriosis... and most of us are

unaware of this disease! I want to thank both my doctors, my gynac dr Neeta Warty and my Gp dr Sunita Banerjee for not stopping till they found out the root cause of my pain! Now that I've had this disease surgically removed I'm looking forward to good health and now more physically pain free days!"

Shamita's colleagues wished her a speedy recovery in the comments section. Bipasha Basu wrote, "Take care. Heal Fast." Dia Mirza wrote, "Love and healing Shamita." Krushna Abhishek wrote, "Get well soon." Anusha Dandekar shared a series of

heart emojis in the comments section. Deanne Pandey wrote, "Get well soon darling. see you soon."

In February, Shamita celebrated her 45th birthday with mother Sunanda Shetty, sister Shilpa Shetty and brother-in-law Raj Kundra. Shamita and her family members stepped out for a dinner date. Needless to say, they were dressed in their party best. Birthday girl Shamita Shetty opted for a pink off-shoulder dress. Shilpa Shetty made heads turn in a white ensemble. Raj Kundra sported an all-black look. Take a look at the pictures here:

Jennifer Lopez Is A Dev Patel Fangirl: "He's So Real And Truthful"

Hustlers actor Jennifer Lopez showered praise on Monkey Man actor and director Dev Patel in an interview with News 18. Jennifer was asked by News 18 to name her favourite Indian actor. Jennifer told News 18, "I love Dev Patel. [I just] love his work. Every time I see his work, I am just blown away. He is just so emotionally available, he's so real and truthful. [His eyes] are so engaging it just brings you in." Jennifer Lopez is currently promoting her upcoming film Atlas, slated to release on Netflix on May 24.

Last month, Sobhita Dhulipala, who plays a pivotal role in Monkey Man, gave a loud shout out to Dev Patel. She shared images from the special screening of the film. In the first photo, Dev and Sobhita can be seen posing for the camera. In the pictures, Sobhita can be seen dressed in a Gaurav Gupta



gown while Dev looks sharp in a suit. There are more snaps of Sobhita posing alongside the cast of Monkey Man. Sharing the pictures, Sobhita wrote a note for her co-star and director Dev Patel. She said, "So much love for this fellow right here. Look what you made, kid :) Monkey Man out now, in theatres worldwide."

Dev Patel made his big debut with the Oscar-winning film Slumdog Millionaire. He featured

in films like The Last Airbender, The Man Who Knew Infinity, Hotel Mumbai, Lion, The Green Knight, to name a few. He worked in series like Modern Love and The Newsroom.

In the recent years, Jennifer Lopez was seen in the film Hustlers. She served as an executive producer of the film. She was also seen in the action-comedy Shotgun Wedding and the romantic comedy Marry Me.

Zeenat Aman recalls how Dimple Kapadia stood by her during very difficult phase



Veteran Bollywood actress Zeenat Aman, who often shares anecdotes from her prime in cinema on social media, shared a word of appreciation for fellow actress Dimple Kapadia.

Zeenat shared that Dimple was by her side at the time when she was going through a lot.

On Tuesday, Zeenat took to her Instagram and shared a throwback picture of herself with Dimple and director Joy Mukherjee.

The actress penned a lengthy note in the caption as she took a stroll down memory lane.

Zeenat, who looks stunning in her western attire and smoking a cigarette in the picture, wrote, 'I can't recollect where this picture was taken, but it quite certainly had something to do with the film 'Chhailla Babu'. Perhaps it's a bts shot from the set. I say this because while the chairs scream 'production', I'm in my own clothes not a costume. With me are the director of the film Joy Mukherjee and the effervescent Dimple Kapadia, who must have been visiting the set as she was married to the lead actor (Rajesh Khanna).'

The actress further mentioned how filmmaker-actor Raj Kapoor played a significant role in boosting both her and Dimple's careers. She continued, 'Dimple and

I both got big career breaks thanks to Raj Kapoor. She, as a teenager, when she was cast in and as Bobby. Whereas I was able to deliver a blow to my "western image" thanks to 'Satyam Shivam Sundaram'.'

Zeenat then shared how Dimple stood by her during "a very difficult phase" in her life.

'This isn't a post about Dimple's talent though she has that in spades, it's about the little I saw of her character. During a very difficult phase in my life she was one of a mere handful of people who publicly stood by me. This despite the criticism and scrutiny of her own life that the decision invited! In those trying times she revealed to me a strength of character that I admire to date. I don't believe she is on Instagram, but perhaps @twinklerkhanna will pass on my love to her. Truly, a wave of appreciation washed over me when I found this picture some days ago,' she wrote.

The veteran actress also made a point not to influence her younger followers about smoking a cigarette in any capacity as she categorically mentioned, 'On another note, please don't be influenced by my smoking in this image! I'll admit I enjoyed a few cigarettes a day between my late teens and early 30s, but that all went out of the window the minute I became pregnant with my firstborn.'

Jackie Shroff moves Delhi High Court against unauthorised use of his name

Actor Jackie Shroff on Tuesday approached the Delhi High Court against the unlicensed use of his name and personality attributes by several entities for commercial gain.

Counsel appearing for the actor objected to the "misuse" of his personality and publicity rights through sale of merchandise, ringtones, wallpapers as well as "insulting" memes and GIFs and the use of artificial intelligence.

He also alleged infringement of his trade mark rights on Marathi slang "bhidu".

Justice Sanjeev Narula issued summons to the entities on the lawsuit and listed the matter for further consideration on Wednesday.

Shroff's counsel said individuals cannot be allowed to mislead consumers into buying products thinking they are endorsed by the actor who has worked in over 200 films.

"Jackie Shroff is so well known. People will think it is endorsed by him. He has a certain marketability to his name. It can't



be done without his consent," the counsel said.

The court was told that merchandise in nature of mugs, signed posters, bags were being sold on the Internet in violation of Shroff's rights.

The lawyer for the plaintiff also said certain derogatory and objectionable content was also available as memes, morphed images etc.

"All are using his name, images and earning huge money.

This is all defamatory stuff... there are distasteful dirty words in voice over. There is nothing legitimate about any of this," added the counsel.

The lawyer informed that certain defendants have now discontinued the unauthorised use of Shroff's personality traits.

In support of his case, Shroff's counsel relied on orders passed by the high court in similar lawsuits by actors Amitabh Bachchan and Anil Kapoor.

Paddler Manika Batra reaches career-high ranking of World No. 24

Shot at glory: Abha Khatua sets national record in women's shot put, Olympics qualification next target



Ace women's table tennis star Manika Batra rose to a career-best singles ranking of 24 following her success in the Saudi Smash, becoming the first Indian woman player to break into the top-25 in world rankings.

The 28-year-old Khel Ratna awardee, who was in the 39th spot before the tournament, jumped 15 spots following her run in Jeddah, where she reached the quarterfinals.

It was also the first time an Indian woman player advanced that deep in the tournament.

Batra's rise through the draw earned her 350 points, and she said the surge in her ranking would work as a confidence booster for her ahead of the all-important Paris Olympics in July.

"To break into the top 25 and achieve my career-best ranking just months before the Olympic Games is definitely a very potent boost to my preparations.

"As I look ahead to Paris 2024, I'm motivated more than ever to continue this performance and move upwards in the ranking to make my country proud. Improvement is a continuous process and I am committed to it," she said.

Earlier, in an Instagram post, Batra, who had made history by becoming the first Indian table tennis player to

reach the women's singles quarterfinals at the Hangzhou Asian Games, last year, thanked her coach Aman Balgu and sparring partner Kirill Barabanov of Belarus for her success.

"Thank you, everyone, for your blessings and support. Especially my coach @amanbalgu, my sparring partner @kirill_barabanov and my family for the constant support. Onward and upward towards Paris 2024," she wrote.

Batra, the 2018 Commonwealth Games gold medallist in individual and team categories, had shocked multiple-time world champion and Olympic gold medallist China's Wang Manyu (seeded second) on her way to the last eight in the Saudi Smash.

Shot putter Abha Khatua confesses that she is now a big fan of Ryan Crouser, the two-time Olympics gold medallist and three-time world champion. The only catch is that she has been watching his videos ever since she changed her throwing technique from gliding to rotation, sometimes also referred to as the spin technique.

Abha today bettered the national mark with an eye-catching throw of 18.41 metres at the National Federation Senior Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar. She had jointly held the previous record with Manpreet Kaur at 18.06m, which she achieved at the Asian Championships in Bangkok in July last year while winning silver.

Abha changed her throwing style much like her current favourite Crouser around 2022. This was because unlike other throwers in her category, Abha is not bulky, neither is she tall. As her progress could have plateaued due to the limitations in her old technique, which would have required relying only on power, coaches, including Gursimran Singh and Radhakrishnan Nair, helped her change her style.

"It is an old school of thought that you have to be big if you are competing in shot put. In today's times you need speed, you need to be flexible and strong. I use rotation, as my body type is not like girls who are competing against me. I only weigh 83-84 kilograms but I have explosive power," Abha, who was representing Maharashtra in the event, said.

Abha could have made the qualifying mark of 18.81m for the Paris Olympics. Her third attempt was pegged at 18.85m but was registered as a foul throw.

"My target is to register a throw of 19m. Unfortunately, I got to 18.85m but it was a foul throw. I am a little disappointed but I have some competitions before the cut-off date and hopefully



I can qualify," she said.

But while the technical shift is starting to bear fruit, it was anything but a seamless change. She threw a little over 14m at the National Games in 2023 and the change cost her dearly as she was injured before the last qualifying event for the Asian Games.

"Balance was the problem. I could not get my bearings right as to where my feet should be. It was a big decision. Had I continued with the old technique I would have easily made the mark of 17m to qualify for the Asian Games. But today's throw would never be possible with that old technique," she said.

In her first steps in track & field, Abha, who hails from Midnapore district in West Bengal, dabbled in sprints. When she entered college, she took interest in javelin and heptathlon. However, in her own words, she was average in high jumps and the event would cost her many points but something clicked in shot put.

"While doing heptathlon, I did shot put and threw 13.5m. In the 2019 Federation Championships, I bettered it to almost 15m after which I was picked in the national camp and I have never looked back," she said.

Gold in Olympics more important than 90m throw, says Neeraj Chopra's coach

India's Neeraj Chopra is keen to join javelin's elite 90-metre club but will happily settle for a shorter throw in Paris if it proves enough for him to hold on to his Olympics title, his coach said. Chopra is asked about the 90m mark in practically every media interaction, but defending the Olympics title remains his absolute priority, his coach Klaus Bartonietz said. "A medal is more important than a mark. The mark increases almost every year, but the medal stays," Bartonietz said. "Nobody asks Neeraj how far his throw reached in Tokyo. It was 87.58m and it was enough. If it's 85m and still gets you an Olympics gold, you should be okay with it." Bartonietz said it was tough for athletes

to produce personal bests at the Olympics because of the pressure that accompanies performing on the biggest stage in sport. Although the 90m mark has been surpassed 125 times by 24 athletes since the competition javelin was redesigned in 1986, only three of those throws have come in Olympics competition. "I'd be happy if Neeraj can produce his PB in Paris. It should be enough," Bartonietz said.

Bartonietz said he would not be surprised if the thrower from Haryana hits the magical mark in Paris. "I'd say he's close to the mark," the German said. "For several years, he has been throwing 87-to-high 88s consistently ... It will be nice to join the 90m club."



Rory McIlroy wins record 4th title



Charlotte (US)

Rory McIlroy has a full head of steam heading into the PGA Championship.

McIlroy won the Wells Fargo Championship for a record fourth time on Sunday with another dominating performance at Quail Hollow, easily overcoming a two-stroke deficit to beat Xander Schauffele by five shots.

No other player has won the event more than twice.

McIlroy closed with a 6-under 65, playing the final 11 holes in

6-under even with a double bogey on the 18th hole. He finished at 17-under 267 after four straight rounds in the 60s and won his second straight PGA Tour event after teaming with Shane Lowry to take the Zurich Classic two weeks ago in New Orleans.

That should give McIlroy plenty of momentum heading to Kentucky for the PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club, the site of his last Major win 10 years ago. "I really got some confidence," McIlroy said.

James Anderson to retire after Lord's Test against West Indies

London

Legendary pacer James Anderson on Saturday announced that the first Test against the West Indies this summer will be his final appearance for England, bringing down the curtains on an illustrious career spanning over 20 years. Regarded as one of the greatest bowlers of all times, the 41-year-old is England's leading wicket-takers and is one of only three bowlers to take over 700 Test scalps. "Hi everyone. Just a note to say that the first Test of the summer at Lord's will be my last Test," Anderson wrote on his Instagram. "It's been an incredible 20 years representing my country, playing the game I've loved since I was a kid. I'm going to miss walking out for England so much.

"But I know the time is right to step aside and let others realise their dreams just like I got to, because there is no greater feeling," he added. Anderson's announcement comes after England red-ball coach Brendon McCullum conveyed to the seamer that they are looking at the future, with an eye on the Ashes 2025-26 in Australia. Anderson made his Test debut back in 2003 and has since claimed a remarkable 700 wickets in a record 187 Test matches. His 700th wicket against India in Dharamsala in March. He currently ranks third on the all-time list of Test wicket-takers, trailing behind spinners Muttiah Muralitharan of Sri Lanka and Australia's Shane Warne. Affectionately nicknamed 'Jimmy', Anderson holds the record for playing the most Test matches by any England cricketer. He ranks second on the all-time list of Test appearances, with only India's legendary Sachin Tendulkar (200) ahead of him.



Elorda Cup: Nikhat Zareen starts with 5-0 win

Astana (Kazakhstan)

Reigning world champion Nikhat Zareen (52kg) made a rampaging start to her campaign with a convincing 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Rakhymberdi Zhansaya on the opening day of the Elorda Cup boxing tournament here today.

Minakshi (48kg) and Anamika (50kg) also made winning starts to their campaign. While Minakshi progressed to the next round with a 4-1 victory over Gassymova Roxana of Kazakhstan, Anamika defeated Zhumabayeva Arailym after the referee stopped the contest.

Ishmeet Singh (75kg) and Sonia (54kg), however, bowed



out after losing 0-5 against Kazakhstan's Armanuly Armat

and China's Chang Yuan, respectively.

IPL 2024: Gujarat Titans eliminated after rain mars match



Ahmedabad

Gujarat Titans' hopes of qualifying for the Indian Premier League playoffs was dashed today as rain washed out their must-win match against Kolkata Knight Riders without a ball being bowled.

It meant KKR were assured of a top-two finish with 19 points from 13 games and a place in Qualifier 1.

The toss didn't happen at

scheduled time of 7pm due to incessant lightning, which was followed by slight drizzle that became heavier as time passed by. The cut-off time for a five-over contest was 10:56pm but the officials decided to abandon the match, a first in this IPL.

'Storm in a tea cup'

Lucknow Super Giants assistant coach Lance Klusener today played down team

owner Sanjiv Goenka's public outburst while in conversation with skipper KL Rahul, terming it "storm in a tea cup". "I don't see any problem with some robust discussion between two cricket lovers. So for us, I guess it's just a storm in a teacup. We love a robust discussion. I think that's how teams get better. So, it's not a big thing for us," the South African said.

अक्रॉस स्टेट एंटरटेनमेंट प्रस्तुत

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संजय मंगेश भैरे
सुचिता संजय भैरे

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