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PM Charge On Sam Pitroda's "Inheritance" Remark Takes Cue From LIC Tagline



Surguja (Chhattisgarh)

Leading the BJP's attack over senior Congress leader Sam Pitroda's comments, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today alleged that the Opposition party plans to tax inheritance passed down from parents to their children. The Congress has distanced itself from Mr Pitroda's remarks and said they do not reflect the party's position.

Addressing a poll rally at Chhattisgarh's Surguja, the Prime Minister said the Congress's "dangerous intentions are coming out in the open".

Referring to Mr Pitroda, he said, "The advisor of the prince of the Congress royal family had earlier said that the middle class should be taxed more. Now they have gone further ahead. Now the Congress is saying that it will impose an Inheritance Tax and tax the inheritance received by people from their parents."

"The wealth you accumulate with your hard work won't pass down to your children. The Congress's hand will snatch it. The Congress's mantra is 'loot during your lifetime, loot after your death'," the Prime Minister said, taking a cue from Life Insurance Corporation's "zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi" tagline.

"As long as you live, Congress's high taxation will make you suffer. When you are dead, they will put the burden of inheritance tax," he said.

Mr Pitroda, who leads the overseas wing of the Congress, is at the centre of a huge row after his remarks during an interview to news agency ANI. While targeting the Prime Minister over his allegations that the Congress plans to redistribute the nation's wealth and that will take property and jewellery if it comes to power, Mr Pitroda said the Congress's manifesto is well-drafted and accused the BJP of making up stories.

The Congress, he said, has always focused on the people at the bottom of the economic pyramid, whether they are OBCs, Muslims, Dalits or tribals. "Billionaires don't need our help. It is the poor people who need our help. Inequality has substantially increased in the last 10 years," he said.

"This doesn't mean that you are going to take your wealth and give it to somebody. This means to create new policies so that the concentration of wealth can be prevented. It's like a Monopoly Act," he said.

He then cited a US example that snowballed into a controversy. "In America, there is an inheritance tax. If one has 100 million USD worth of wealth and when he dies he can only transfer probably 45 per cent to his children, 55 per cent is grabbed by the government. That's an interesting law. It says you in your generation, made wealth and you are leaving now, you must leave your wealth for the public,

not all of it, half of it, which to me sounds fair," Mr Pitroda said.

It is worth pointing out that the US does not have a federal inheritance tax. In some states, such as Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, inherited assets are taxed. The payable tax depends on the amount of the inheritance and the relationship to the dead. This tax is only applied above a certain threshold and can go up to nearly 20 per cent of the inheritance.

Mr Pitroda said this is a policy issue. "Congress party would frame a policy through which the wealth distribution would be better. We don't have a minimum wage (in India). If we come up with a minimum wage in the country saying you must pay so much money to the poor, that's the distribution of wealth. Today, rich people don't pay their peons, servants, and home help enough, but they spend that money on a vacation in Dubai and London," he said.

Soon after the remarks started doing the rounds on social media, the BJP doubled up on its charge against the Congress. Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to the people to take Mr Pitroda's remarks seriously. "Their hidden plans have come out in the open. People should take note. And the Congress must withdraw the mention of survey from its manifesto," he said.

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Judges must act with dignity, not indulge in behaviour that would affect image of judiciary: Bombay High Court

Mumbai

Judges must act with dignity and not indulge in conduct or behaviour that would affect the judiciary's image, the Bombay High Court said on Tuesday, while refusing to reinstate a civil judge accused of coming to court in an inebriated state.

Aniruddha Pathak (52) had filed a petition in the high court challenging his removal from the post of civil judge junior division due to alleged improper behaviour and for coming to court in an inebriated state on several occasions.

Pathak challenged an order passed by the Maharashtra government's Law and Judiciary department in January 2022, removing him from judicial service.

The order was passed after a report was submitted by the principal district and sessions judge of Nandurbar.

A division bench of Justices AS Chandurkar and JS Jain dismissed the petition, noting that it did not find the removal order perverse or passed without any application of mind.

"It is a universally accepted norm that judges and judicial officers must act with dignity and must not indulge in a conduct or behaviour which is likely to affect the image of the judiciary or which

is unbecoming of a judicial officer," the court said.

If members of the judiciary indulge in a behaviour which is blameworthy or unbecoming of a judicial officer, then courts cannot grant any relief, it said.

"Judges, while discharging their functions, exercise the sovereign judicial power of the state and hence standards expected to be maintained are of the highest nature," the bench said in its order.

Pathak was appointed a civil judge junior division in March 2010, and he was posted in various districts till his removal.

The allegations against Pathak were of improper behaviour on the dais while presiding court, not following court timings, and arriving in court under the influence of liquor.

He was a judge at the Shahada court in Nandurbar district at the time.

"We find no reason to interfere with the impugned order, more so because the petitioner was occupying a post which is looked upon with high respect, and if the disciplinary committee has come to a conclusion of removal from service, then it cannot be said to be perverse," the court observed.

Goddess Bhavani will teach lessons to those who take her name but are dishonest

Shinde targets Uddhav Thackeray

Mumbai

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday hit out at Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray stating that the latter has abandoned Balasaheb Thackeray's values in pursuit of power and has become dishonest.

Attacking Uddhav over the use of 'Jai Bhavani' slogan in the Sena UBT's poll

said Shinde as he appealed to the people that they should answer the Opposition by voting for the Mahayuti candidate.

"The public will never tolerate the insult of Hinduism in this constituency, which was sanctified by the birth of Jijau. Goddess Bhavani will not forgive those who are using her name but are dishonest in reality. The public is well aware of



campaigning song, Shinde said Goddess Bhavani will teach lessons to those who take her name but, in reality, are dishonest.

Last week, the Election Commission (EC) issued a notice to the Shiv Sena (UBT) over the use of the words 'Jai Bhavani' in its campaign song stating that the usage of the word was objectionable. However, party chief Uddhav Thackeray dismissed the EC notice, calling it an "insult" to Maharashtra and said the party will not abide by the EC's direction to remove references from the song.

In 1989, Balasaheb had addressed a rally in Buldhana where he said the corruption-ridden Congress should be uprooted... Since then, people of Buldhana have been flying saffron here with pride and joy. In this election too, the public will teach a lesson to those who insulted Balasaheb," said Shinde who was campaigning for Mahayuti candidate from Buldhana Prataprao Jadhav.

Further taking potshots at the MVA, Shinde said the Opposition will lose fighting each other and the ruling alliance will not have to do much.

Reacting to Aaditya Thackeray's objectionable words against him, Shinde said, "Aaditya cannot stand that the son of a common farmer has become the Chief Minister. By insulting me, Aaditya has insulted the poor, the farmers' mothers and sisters and my community." "I will give him a befitting reply with my work,"

the sheeps walking around wearing tiger skins," said Shinde.

The Maharashtra CM further criticised Thackeray for adopting a language reminiscent of the Congress party, suggesting a departure from the principles championed by Balasaheb Thackeray. He accused Thackeray of abandoning Balasaheb Thackeray's values in pursuit of power, highlighting the government's efforts to uplift all communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians.

"The government has augmented the funds for Maulana Azad Corporation from Rs 30 crore to Rs 500 crore, striving to ensure justice for all communities. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians—all deserve equitable opportunities to thrive and integrate into the mainstream. The government's objective is their prosperity.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has initiated numerous schemes, benefitting the Muslim community at the national level. Conversely, the Congress historically exploited the Muslim community solely as a vote bank, perpetuating their impoverishment," said the Chief Minister.

Addressing allegations of constitutional changes by the Opposition, Shinde cited examples of collaboration across different administrations and affirmed that the government remains steadfast in its commitment to Maharashtra's development and unity.

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MSCB case closure report: 'No criminal offence', says EoW, clearing Ajit Pawar, wife Sunetra and nephew Rohit

Mumbai

In its closure report in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) case, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police has specified that there is no criminal offence in the transactions allegedly linked to Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, his wife Sunetra Pawar and nephew Rohit Pawar, who is part of the Sharad Pawar-led faction of the NCP, and others.

In the report, the EOW has said that no financial losses were caused to the bank and so far, Rs 1,343.41 crore have been recovered by the bank from the loans given.

The EOW filed a closure report in January, stating that no offence is made in the MSCB case, details of which were made available on Tuesday. The case relates to allegations that loans were given to sugar factories by the MSC Bank, without following procedures. After they turned into non-performing assets, they were sold to the kin of those linked to the bank's directors and others at lower than market price, it was alleged.

If the closure report is accepted, it will also affect the connected Enforcement Directorate (ED) probe, where two chargesheets have so far been filed.

The ED case cannot continue without a predicate offence, which is the EOW probe.

The 35-page report of the EOW refers to three key transactions and states that none of those show that there was any criminal offence or irregularities in the grant of loans or the sale of the sugar



factories.

The transaction relates to the sale of Jarandeshwar Sugar Sahakari Karkhana, a sugar factory that was operational in Satara. The ED probe said that the factory was sold to one Guru Commodity Services Ltd in 2010 at Rs 65 crore, after its finances deteriorated, despite taking loans from cooperative banks.

The ED alleged that loans were given

to the sugar factory by banks, including the Pune District Central Cooperative Bank, of which Ajit Pawar was the director from 1995, and after it became a non-performing asset, its sale was at a "throwaway price" with companies linked to his relatives.

It was alleged that the money to buy the factory was given to the buyer by two other companies — Jarandeshwar Sugar Mills (JSM) Pvt Ltd and Jay Agrotech. Pawar's wife Sunetra, who is the Lok Sabha contestant for his party from Baramati, was the director of Jay Agrotech till 2008 and his uncle, Rajendra Ghadge, was the director of JSM.

The ED has named Guru Commodity, JSM and a chartered accountant, linked to this transaction, as accused.

The EOW said that the sale of the factory was not at a throwaway price but was Rs 19 crore more than the reserve price. It also specified that when the transaction took place, Sunetra was not linked to Jay Agrotech as she was the director from April 1, 2004 to July 18, 2008 and not during the sale.

"Ajit Pawar's uncle Rajendra Ghadge was the director of Jarandeshwar Sugar Mills and his wife Sunetra Pawar was the director of Jay Agrotech, two years before

the sale transaction. However, the sale of the sugar factory was done as per orders of the Bombay High Court in 2010 and the SARAFESI Act," the EOW report states, ruling out any irregularities in the sale.

The ED is probing the sale of Kannad SSK by Baramati Agro Ltd in 2012. It has alleged that the Rs 50 crore used to buy the sugar factory was through various bank accounts. It claims that the amount instead of being used for its stated purpose of working capital, was used for buying the sugar factory.

The agency also claimed that one more company, which participated in the auction, was also given Rs 5 crore by Baramati Agro, alleging irregularity in the process.

The EOW has said that the perusal of the documents in the transaction showed that in 2011, an administrator was appointed by the government for the functioning of the bank after dissolving its board. "The sale was during the tenure of the administrator and as per the SARAFESI Act. Hence, there is no evidence that the sale was linked to relatives of the director of the bank," the EOW has said. It also said that the money was used from cash credit accounts to save losses on interest.

FIR lodged over deepfake video of Ranveer Singh criticising PM

Mumbai

The nodal cyber police station of Maharashtra Cyber Police Tuesday registered an FIR against an unidentified X account user for allegedly posting a deepfake video of actor Ranveer Singh.

The FIR was registered based on the complaint by Singh's father.

On Tuesday, Singh's father Jugjeet Singh Sunder Bhavnani recorded his statement before the state cyber police. He told police that on April 14 his son had participated in a fashion show in Varanasi where he had given an interview to a news agency.

On April 17, an X user posted a deepfake video of Singh, using clips from the interview, with an edited audio of him criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and favouring Congress. Bhavnani told the cyber police.

On Bhavnani's complaint the police registered an FIR under

sections 417, 468, 469, 471 of the Indian Penal Code and section 66D of the IT Act against the accused X user.

"The police have issued a notice to the accused user of the said X handle and are further investigating the matter," stated Maharashtra Cyber police DIG Sanjay Shintre in a statement.



Bombay High Court rejects PIL for 'sheer abuse of court process', asks petitioner to pay Rs. 50,000 cost to KEM Hospital

Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by a contractor challenging conditions of a tender issued by a government body and termed it to be a 'sheer abuse' of the court process. The High Court also imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on the petitioner to be paid within four months to the civic-run KEM Hospital in Mumbai.

A division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Arif S Doctor passed an order in PIL by one Nilesh Chandrakant Kamble. Kamble claimed to be a social worker and engaged in a similar business mentioned in the tender issued by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), said he was therefore aggrieved by the eligibility conditions in the bid.

The bench said it was 'unfortunate' to adjudicate in the petition with 'oblique motives' which is 'purportedly filed in public interest'.

Appearing for the petitioner, Advocate Indira Labde claimed that due to impugned

tender conditions, some of the contractors were not able to participate in the bidding process.

"In our jurisprudence, there has been a phenomenal rise of the PIL petitions being filed before the superior courts," the bench noted. The bench added rules related to who can file PILs had been relaxed by permitting any member of society or an organisation to espouse the cause of those in disadvantageous situations, poor or illiterate.

"However, permitting a contractor to file a PIL petition challenging the conditions of a tender, in our opinion, is nothing but a sheer abuse of process of Court and an effort to pollute the purity of the stream of Public Interest Litigation," the bench said.

The bench referred to the Supreme Court judgement in the State of Uttarakhand vs Balwant Singh Chaufal case, in which the top court ruled "frivolous PILs which intend to plead personal or any other extraneous cause should be discouraged and such PIL petitions should be nipped in the bud".

Ensure children below 12 seated with parents: DGCA to airlines



New Delhi

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has mandated airlines to allocate seats for children up to the age of 12 years with at least one of their parents/guardians, who are traveling on the same Passenger Name Record (PNR). The airlines are required to maintain a record of these seating arrangements. The development comes in the backdrop of numerous complaints from passengers travelling in groups about being seated separately, especially from their children, if they choose not to pay extra for seat selection on the flights.

In this regard, the aviation regulator has revised the Air Transport Circular titled, "Unbundle of services and fees by scheduled airlines". The DGCA said some unbundled services were provided on an "opt-in" basis by airlines and were not mandatory. "There is also a provision for auto seat assignment to the passengers who have not selected any seat for web check-in before scheduled departure," the statement said.

PM Modi waived off loans worth Rs 16 lakh crore of his billionaire friends: Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of waiving off loans worth Rs 16 lakh crore of his billionaire friends, and said the country will never forgive him for this "crime".

In a post in Hindi on X, he said this money could have been used to cure the pain of Indians but was spent on creating hype for the ilk of those like 'Adanis'.

"Narendra Modi has waived off the loans of his billionaire friends amounting to Rs 1,60,00,00,00,00,000 i.e. 16 lakh crore rupees. With this much money: 16 crore youth could have got jobs of Rs 1 lakh per year, by giving Rs 1 lakh per year



to 16 crore women, the lives of their families could have been changed. Countless suicides could have been prevented by waiving off the loans of 10 crore farmer families," he said.

"The entire country could

PM Modi opens new front against Congress, says it wants reservation based on religion

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday sharpened his anti-Congress pitch accusing the principal opposition party of violating the Constitution by pushing for religion-based reservation to benefit a "favoured community" when it was in power.

Opening a new front and promising to defend the constitutional provisions for reservation to SCs/STs and OBCs at a rally in Rajasthan's Tonk Sawai Madhopur on Tuesday, the Prime Minister said his "90-second reference revealing the truth had rattled the opposition party".

"I unveiled some truths in Rajasthan recently. Why is the Congress so afraid of the truth? I have only exposed its dangerous intentions of seizing people's property and redistributing it among favoured individuals..."

"In its manifesto, the Congress boldly states its intention to conduct surveys of people's property, going far enough to suggest assessment of the sacred 'Mangalsutra' worn by women. One of their leaders floated the absurd idea of conducting X-ray scans to uncover the stashed away wealth of people. They even



threatened to grab excess assets..." the PM said, repeating his "Congress will redistribute people's wealth" charge. In fresh jabs at the BJP's direct rival in Rajasthan, Modi recalled the erstwhile Congress-led UPA regime's attempts to bring religion-based reservation: "It is Modi's guarantee from a public platform today that reservation for Dalit, Backward and tribals will neither end nor be truncated in the name of religion."

The PM urged voters to ask the Congress why it attempted to carve out religion-based reservation from constitutionally mandated SC/ST/OBC pie in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka when it was in power.

"After forming the government at the Centre in 2004, the initial move of the Congress was to decrease the quota for SCs/STs in party ruled Andhra

Pradesh and introduce religion-based reservation for a favoured community (read Muslims). This was a pilot intended for a national scale-up. The Congress attempted this reservation in Andhra Pradesh on four occasions but due to legal challenges and a vigilant Supreme Court, it did not materialise," said the PM.

He also brought up a 2011 move of the UPA government to attempt a "religion-based quota policy nationwide", and said the Congress, by reallocating reservation meant for SCs/STs and OBCs, tried redistributing quota benefits to other groups in line with its vote bank politics. "This is 'Modi ki guarantee' that reservations for Dalit, Backward Classes and tribals will neither be eliminated nor divided on religious grounds," Modi said.

"We Can't Control Elections": Supreme Court During VVPAT Case Hearing



New Delhi

The Supreme Court today said it is not the controlling authority for elections and cannot dictate the functioning of Election Commission of India, a constitutional authority. The remarks came during the hearing on petitions seeking thorough cross-verification of votes cast on Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) with paper slips generated through the VVPAT system. The court has reserved the judgment for now.

The bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta said it cannot act on mere suspicion. Responding to concerns raised by Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner Association for Democratic Reforms, the court said, "If you are predisposed about a thought-process, then we cannot help you... we are not here to change your thought process."

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh accuses BJP of flip-flop on spectrum allocation

New Delhi

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Wednesday alleged that the BJP, which once opposed a first-come, first-served basis in spectrum allocation before coming into power, now wants the same policy to be implemented.

Addressing a press conference here, the AAP leader said that in 2012 the Supreme Court delivered a historic judgement, stating that the spectrum allocation and licensing should be auctioned rather than distributed on a 'first-come, first-served basis'.

"But PM Modi and his government

have now been exposed before the entire nation. When 150 MPs in 2023 were outside the Parliament, they passed the same policy that BJP opposed -- the first-come, first-served policy. This was passed after committing the murder of democracy by suspending 150 MPs," said Singh.

The Rajya Sabha MP said that now they (BJP) have reached the Supreme Court to seek permission to allocate the 5G spectrum on a first-come, first-served basis, i.e., based on administrative grounds.

Can't be import dependent for critical tech: Indian Army Chief General Manoj Pande

New Delhi

Indian Army Chief General Manoj Pande on Tuesday mentioned the need for developing critical technologies saying "if we are import-dependent for critical technologies, we must be very clear that we will always remain behind the technology cycle".

He shared his thoughts on 'Relevance of Hard Power in India's Rise, and how the Indian Army is shaping capabilities through self-reliance'. General Pande was speaking at the All-India Management Association (AIMA) national leadership conclave.

The Army Chief said the current geo-strategic landscape is characterised by change, taking place at unprecedented scale and speed. "Countries will not hesitate to go to war for their national interest," he added.

Military strength and capabilities are necessary to prevent war — to present a credible deterrence. The Indian Army, he

said, has taken unprecedented steps for the potential of disruptive technologies and is looking at four key drivers of Indian Army's transformation efforts.

The vision for the future is to transform into a modern, agile, adaptive, technology enabled and self-reliant future ready force, capable to deter and win wars in a multi-domain operational environment, across the full spectrum of operations, to protect our national interests, General Pande said.

The transformation has 'five pillars' — force restructuring and optimisation, modernisation and technology infusion, improving our

systems, processes and functions, human resource management and promoting jointness and integration with other armed forces.

The Army, he said, was pursuing 45 niche technologies, which have been identified for military application.



Government will continue to work to strengthen Panchayati Raj institutions: PM Modi

New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday greeted people on the Panchayati Raj Day, asserting that his government will continue to work to strengthen local body institutions.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj observes April 24 as National Panchayati Raj Day, marking the enactment of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, which came into force on this day in 1993 and paved the way for empowering of local bodies.

Modi said on X, "On Panchayati Raj Day, greetings to all those working at grassroots to



transform rural India and ensure a better quality of life for the people. Our Government will

continue to work to strengthen Panchayati Raj institutions and give wings to people's dreams."

Arvind Kejriwal, K Kavitha's judicial custody extended till May 7

New Delhi

A Delhi court on Tuesday extended the judicial custody of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Telangana leader K Kavitha in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam till May 7. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended the custody of Kejriwal and Kavitha after they were produced before the court through video-conferencing on the expiry of their remand. Kejriwal's plea challenging

his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate on money laundering charges is pending before the Supreme Court. It will be heard on April 29. Earlier, the Delhi High Court had rejected a similar plea, stating that the ED had provided sufficient evidence to support their claim that Kejriwal was allegedly involved in framing the now-scrapped policy and demanding a bribe of Rs 100 crore, which was allegedly used to fund AAP's election campaigns in Punjab and Goa.

Venkaiah Naidu, Mithun Chakraborty, Usha Uthup given Padma awards

New Delhi

Former vice president M Venkaiah Naidu, founder of Sulabh International Bindeshwar Pathak and a host of other prominent persons were conferred with Padma Awards by President Droupadi Murmu at a ceremonial function held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here on Monday.

Naidu, Pathak, who was given the award posthumously, and renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Padma Subrahmanyam were conferred with the Padma Vibhushan.

Actor Mithun Chakraborty, singer Usha Uthup, former Uttar Pradesh governor Ram Naik and industrialist Sitaram Jindal were conferred with the Padma Bhushan.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, among others, were present at the function.

Padma Awards, one of the highest civilian honours of the country, are conferred in three categories -- Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. The awards are given in various disciplines or fields of activities, viz, art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.

The Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, the Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order and the Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field.

BJP wins from Surat uncontested; Congress calls it 'fixed match'

New Delhi

The BJP on Monday registered its first Lok Sabha poll win as party's Surat candidate Mukesh Dalal won the segment uncontested after the nomination papers of the Congress rival were rejected and rest of the candidates pulled out of the race. Surat District Collector



Saurabh Pardhi handed over the certificate of election to Dalal and declared him elected. Gujarat BJP chief CR Paatil, in a post on X, said, "Surat has presented the first lotus to PM Narendra Modi." The Congress, however, slammed the BJP for what it called was a "fixed match". Congress MP Rahul Gandhi said: "Taking

away people's right to elect their representative is another step towards destroying the Constitution. I am reiterating that this is not just an election to form a government, but an election to save the country and protect the Constitution," said Rahul. AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked people to "catch the chronology of events in Surat".

Former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren moves Supreme Court, says High Court not pronouncing verdict on his plea against arrest

New Delhi

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court, saying the High Court is not pronouncing verdict on his plea challenging arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money-laundering case.

A Bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta was told by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Soren, that the high court had reserved its verdict on February 28 on his plea but still no decision has been delivered.

Soren was arrested on January 31 in the case after he resigned as the Jharkhand Chief Minister, and party loyalist and state transport

minister Champai Soren was named as his successor.

He was arrested after being grilled by the Enforcement Directorate



(ED) for seven hours in the case.

The ED is probing the alleged "huge amounts of proceeds of crime generated by manipulation of official records by showing dummy sellers and purchasers in the guise of forged/bogus documents to acquire huge parcels of land having value in crores".

Supreme Court seeks clarification from EC on functioning of EVMs, summons senior poll panel official

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought clarification from the Election Commission on certain aspects regarding the functioning of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), including whether the microcontrollers fitted in them are reprogrammable, and summoned a senior poll panel official at 2 pm.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which has reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), said it needs clarification on certain aspects as there was some confusion in answers given by the EC in its 'frequently asked questions' (FAQs) on EVMs.

"We went through the FAQs. We just wanted three-four clarifications. We don't want to be factually wrong but doubly sure in our findings and hence we thought of seeking the clarification," the bench told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati who was appearing for the EC.

It asked Bhati to call senior Deputy Election Commissioner Nitesh Kumar Vyas at 2 PM. Vyas had earlier given a presentation to the court on the functioning of the EVMs.

It flagged some points on which the court wanted clarification which relates to storage of EVMs, microchip in the controlling unit of EVMs and other aspects.

"First clarification needed is with regard to microcontroller. Whether it is installed in controlling unit or in the VVPAT. We were under the impression that the microcontroller is the memory installed in the control unit (CU). One of the questions in the FAQs indicates that it is also installed in the VVPAT," the bench said.

The bench said that the court was informed that VVPAT has a flash memory.

"The second thing which we wanted to know is whether the microcontroller is one-time programmable. It is because there are different types of microcontrollers. It is a stand taken by the EC that the microcontroller



is one-time programmable. Just confirm that," the bench told Bhati.

Justice Khanna said that third clarification relates to symbol loading units as to how many are available with the poll panel.

"We want to know how many are available with you (EC)," the bench said, adding that the fourth clarification is with regard to storage of EVMs for 45 days.

The bench said that it was told that the limitation period for filing of election petition is 30 days and hence the EVMs are stored for 45 days.

"When we checked section 81 of the Representation of People Act, we found that the limitation period for filing of EVMs is 45 days. So please confirm us because it is 30 days or 45 days storage. If the limitation period is 45 days, then the corresponding period for storage needs to be enhanced," the bench pointed out.

The bench said the last point on which it needs clarification is on storage and securing of EVMs.

"When we talk of sealing and securing of EVMs, we take both the control unit and VVPAT bear the seals and are not restricted to the control unit. Somewhere you use the word control units and somewhere you use EVMs. We take it, EVMs consist of three parts—ballot unit, the control unit and the VVPAT. All three units should be sealed together. We need clarification on this aspect," the bench told the poll panel.

Senior advocate Santosh Paul, appearing for one of the petitioners, said that source code of EVMs should also be disclosed for transparency.

The bench said, "No, the

source code cannot be disclosed as there is a chance of it to be misused."

The VVPAT is an independent vote verification system which enables electors to see whether their votes have been cast correctly.

On April 18, the top court reserved its verdict on the batch of pleas.

Underscoring the importance of voter satisfaction and trust in the electoral system, the top court had during the hearing told petitioners, who sought its direction to go back to using ballot papers, not to suspect the efficacy of EVMs and appreciate if the Election Commission does good work.

NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms' (ADR), one of the petitioners, sought reversal of the poll panel's 2017 decision to replace the transparent glass on VVPAT machines with an opaque glass through which a voter can see the slip only when the light is on for seven seconds.

On April 16, the top court had deprecated criticism of EVMs and calls for reverting to ballot papers, saying the electoral process in India is a "humongous task" and attempts should not be made to "bring down the system".

The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls began on April 19 and the second phase is slated to be held on April 26.

The ADR has sought matching the count in EVMs with votes that have been verifiably "recorded as cast" and to ensure the voter is able to verify through VVPAT slip that his vote, as recorded on the paper slip, has been "counted as recorded".

'My mother's mangalsutra was sacrificed for this country'; Priyanka Gandhi's blistering attack on PM

Bengaluru

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "gold and mangalsutra" remarks, saying her mother Sonia Gandhi sacrificed her 'mangalsutra' for the country.

"What talks are happening in this country? Two days back, there were speeches that the Congress wants to snatch your 'mangalsutra'. This country has been free for the past 75 years, and for 55 years the Congress was in power. Did the Congress ever snatch your gold or 'mangalsutra'?" she asked at an election rally here.

Priyanka was referring to Modi's allegations that the Congress plans to give people's hard-earned money and valuables to "infiltrators" and "those who have more children" -- alluding to Muslims in his campaign speech in Rajasthan -- and would steal the "gold of mothers and sisters" if voted to power.

In a sharp attack on Modi, Priyanka said: "When there was war, Indira Gandhi



(her grandmother and former prime minister) donated her gold." She said, "My mother's 'mangalsutra' was sacrificed for this country," referring to the assassination of her father and former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi by terrorists.

"Had Narendra Modi understood the importance of 'mangalsutra', he would not have spoken such unethical things," she added.

Priyanka said women's spirit of service is the foundation of all traditions of India.

"The women do not sleep until everyone is asleep in the family and when there is trouble in the family, women mortgage their ornaments," she said. "Women will prefer sleeping hungry rather than letting others sleep on an empty stomach."

"These people (BJP) do not know her struggle. When the farmer is in debt, his wife mortgages her mangalsutra. When there is a daughter's marriage or health problems in the family, the woman mortgages her jewels," she underlined.

Remarking that Modi does not understand the struggle of women, Priyanka asked where he was when women's savings were taken away and they were asked to deposit it in the banks because of his action of imposing the demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denomination notes in November 2016.

She asked where the prime minister was when migrant workers were stuck in many cities due to Covid-induced lockdowns without food, and women had to mortgage their jewels.

Rajnath Singh visits 'historic' Kumar post in Siachen, reviews security

New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh today visited Siachen Glacier to carry out a review of the security scenario. Notably, a part of the review was done at 'Kumar post' at more than 15,000 feet altitude. The 'Kumar post' is named after Col Narendra (Bull) Kumar, who led Independent India's first military expedition to Siachen in October 1978. The 'Kumar post' is at the spot which was called 'advanced base camp' established by Col Kumar and his team.

Col Kumar's expedition was followed by two more expeditions in 1980 and 1981 - all three mapped the Siachen glacier. Two more Army expeditions were carried out between June and September 1983 before the Army formally launched Operation Meghdoot to capture Siachen on April 13, 1984.

India Pakistan is not defined in the Siachen area, Pakistan had been claiming it as its territory.



Rajnath first visited Siachen memorial and laid a wreath. He said termed the success of Operation Meghdoot "as a golden chapter" of the country's military history.

"The success of Operation

Meghdoot is a matter of pride for all of us," Rajnath added. He interacted with soldiers deployed in the extreme weather and tough terrain. Army Chief General Manoj Pande, Northern Army chief Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar and 14 Corps commander Lieutenant General Rashim Bali accompanied the minister. He discussed aspects associated with the operational challenges with the commanders on ground. Addressing the troops, Rajnath said, "When the history of national security is written, the acts of bravery and the iron-clad will of our soldiers in the icy cold glacier is remembered with great pride." The minister said Siachen was not an ordinary land, but a symbol of India's sovereignty and determination. Rajnath had visited Leh on March 24 and celebrated Holi with the troops.

Panic in BJP camp after sensing defeat: Mamata

Raiganj

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said the BJP was in panic mode after sensing defeat in the first phase of polling last week and asserted the rout of the saffron camp across the country was imminent.

Addressing a rally at Raiganj, she described the controversy surrounding Sandeshkhali as a "pre-planned ploy" by the BJP to malign the state government at a time when the Lok Sabha elections are underway.

"Fear and panic have gripped the BJP. After the first phase of polling for



nearly 100 seats across the country, they have sensed defeat. That is why they are making baseless statements. The rout of the saffron camp is only a matter of time," she claimed.

TMC, Congress can't dare touch CAA, says Amit Shah



New Delhi

Daring the Congress and the Trinamool Congress (TMC), Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said these parties did not have the guts to touch the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and warned that all "goondas" of Mamata Banerjee would be "hung upside down and straightened" if the BJP was voted to power for a third time.

Addressing a rally in West Bengal, Shah said, "Vote for the BJP and Mamata Banerjee's goondas will be hung upside down and straightened." Shah was addressing the rally at Karandighi in Uttar Dinajpur district to bolster support for BJP candidate from Raiganj Kartik Paul.

The Raiganj seat was won by the BJP in 2019. The TMC has fielded Krishna Kalyani, an MLA, from the north Bengal seat. Raiganj votes in

the second phase on April 26.

Shah said the Bengal Chief Minister could not stop infiltration into the border state. "Can Mamata stop infiltration? She cannot. Only (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji can stop infiltration," he said. "You gave us 18 seats last time. Modi ji gave Ram Mandir. Give us 35 seats this time, we will stop infiltration," he said. The Home Minister also referred to the Sandeshkhali row, which has emerged as a big talking point in Bengal this election season. "In Sandeshkhali, Mamata allowed women to be tortured so that her vote bank is not affected. The High Court intervened and today the accused are in jail," Shah said. The island in Bengal's North 24 Parganas had made national headlines after local TMC leaders were accused of

land grab, extortion and sexual harassment. He also raked up the issue of scrapping of 25,000 appointments of government school staff over irregularities by the Calcutta High Court. "An amount of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh was paid for each job. An amount of Rs 51 crore was recovered from (former Bengal minister) Partha Chatterjee's home," Shah alleged. "Mamata came to power on the slogan of 'maa, maati, manush'. In Sandeshkhali, maa was tortured, maati was given to Bangladeshi infiltrators and manush have been suffering due to corruption," he said.

Accusing the ruling TMC of corruption, Shah said, "Look at TMC leaders' houses. Those who stayed in thatched roof houses today own four-storeyed houses, roam around in cars. This is your money."

Opposition moves EC over PM's Muslim barb in Rajasthan's Banswara

New Delhi

Several Opposition parties on Monday complained to the Election Commission demanding action against Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his reference to Muslims to attack the Congress in his election speech in Rajasthan's Banswara on Sunday.

The Congress lodged 16 complaints against the BJP, including over the PM's remarks for "using religion to ask voters to refrain from voting for the Congress while also making false and defamatory statements against the party and its leaders".

"The important complaint deals with extremely objectionable comments. We pray to him (PM Modi) with folded hands to withdraw this statement and to clarify. He

named a community and spoke about religion blatantly. He has violated Section 123 (3) of the Representation of the People Act," Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi told mediapersons outside the EC office.

Singhvi said irrespective of the status of the person who had done this, appropriate action, as in any other case, must follow shortly.

The CPI(ML) Liberation filed a complaint against PM Modi for allegedly promoting enmity and hatred on religious grounds. "In this widely reported speech, the PM, while referring to the Congress manifesto, engaged in blatant lies, crudity and communal dog-whistling against the Muslim community," the CPI(ML) said.

India successfully test-fires medium-range ballistic missile



Balasore

India on Tuesday successfully launched a new variant of a medium-range ballistic missile under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command here, a defence source said.

The launch has proven the operational capability of the Command and validated new technologies.

The missile was flight-tested from Abdul Kalam island off the Odisha coast and met the required parameters, sources said.

Railways offers meals at affordable prices for general class passengers



New Delhi

Train passengers travelling in unreserved compartments are now getting hygienic meals and snacks at affordable prices at stations under a new initiative by the Railways, an official said.

These meal counters are operational at over 100 stations and nearly 150 counters across Indian Railways, and the facility will be expanded further.

"Indian Railways along with Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is stepping up to serve passengers, particularly those in unreserved coaches, with a new initiative offering hygienic meals and snacks at affordable prices," the railway official said.

He added, "We anticipate a surge in passenger traffic during the summer months and recognise the challenges faced by those travelling in unreserved compartments (General Class Coaches), who may not always have access to convenient and

budget-friendly meal options."

According to Railways, to ensure easy access, these meal counters are conveniently placed near general second class (GS) coaches on platforms.

"There are two categories, the economy meal which costs Rs 20 and the snack meal which comes at Rs 50. Passengers can buy their refreshments directly from these counters, eliminating the need to search for vendors or venture outside the station," the official said.

He said the service was successfully piloted at 51 stations last year.

"Building on that success, Railways has significantly expanded the programme, with counters now operational at over 100 stations and nearly 150 counters in total. The initiative is slated for further growth, encompassing even more stations in the near future," the official said.

US Senate overwhelmingly passes aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan with big bipartisan vote

Washington

The Senate has passed USD 95 billion in war aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, sending the legislation to President Joe Biden after months of delays and contentious debate over how involved the United States should be in foreign wars.

The Bill passed the Senate on an overwhelming 79-18 vote late on Tuesday after the House had approved the package on Saturday. Biden, who worked with congressional leaders to win support, said in a statement immediately after passage that he will sign it on Wednesday and start the process of sending weapons to Ukraine, which has been struggling to hold its front lines against Russia.

"Tonight, a bipartisan majority in the Senate joined the House to answer history's call at this critical inflection point," Biden said.

The legislation would also send USD 26 billion in wartime assistance to Israel and humanitarian relief to citizens of Gaza, and USD 8 billion to counter Chinese threats in Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific. US officials said about USD 1 billion of the aid could be on its way shortly, with the bulk following in the coming weeks.

In an interview with The Associated Press shortly before the vote, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, said that if Congress had not passed the aid, "America would have paid a price economically, politically, militarily."

"Very few things we have done have risen to this level of historic importance," he said.

On the Senate floor, Schumer said the Senate was sending a message to US allies: "We will stand with you."

Schumer and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell made passage

of the legislation a top priority, agreeing to tie the Ukraine and Israel aid to help ensure passage and arguing there could be dire consequences for the United States and many of its global allies if Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression is left unchecked. They worked with House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, to overcome seemingly intractable Republican opposition to the Ukraine aid, in particular—eventually winning large majorities in both chambers.

McConnell said in a separate interview before the vote that it "is one of the biggest days in the time that I have been here".

"At least on this episode, I think we turned the tables on the isolationists," McConnell said.

In the end, 31 Republicans voted for the aid package—nine more than when the Senate passed a similar version in February, and a majority of the Senate GOP conference. The House approved the package in a series of four votes on Saturday, with the Ukraine portion passing 311-112.

The USD 61 billion for Ukraine comes as the war-torn country desperately needs new firepower and as Russian President Vladimir Putin has stepped up his attacks. Ukrainian soldiers have struggled as Russia has seized the momentum on the battlefield and gained significant territory.

Biden told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Monday the US will send badly-needed air defence weaponry as soon as the legislation is passed.

"The President has assured me that the package will be approved quickly and that it will be powerful, strengthening our air defence as well as long-range and artillery capabilities," Zelenskyy said in a post on

X on Monday.

In an effort to gain more votes, Republicans in the House majority also added a Bill to the foreign aid package that could ban the social media app TikTok in the US if its Chinese owners do not sell their stake within a year. That legislation had wide bipartisan support in both chambers.

The TikTok Bill was one of the several tweaks Johnson brought to the package the Senate passed in February as he tried to move the Bill through the House despite significant opposition within his conference. Other additions include a stipulation that USD 9 billion of the economic assistance to Ukraine is in the form of "forgivable loans"; provisions that allow the US to seize frozen Russian central bank assets to rebuild Ukraine; and Bills to impose sanctions on Iran, Russia, China and criminal organisations that traffic fentanyl.

Those changes appear to have brought some of the nine additional Senate Republicans on board, bringing support to more than half of McConnell's conference.

South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, a longtime hawk who voted against the foreign aid package in February because it was not paired with legislation to stem migration at the border, was one of the Republicans who switched their votes. "If we do not help Ukraine now, this war will spread, and Americans who are not involved will be involved," Graham said.

The package has had broad congressional support since Biden first requested the money last summer. But congressional leaders had to navigate strong opposition from a growing number of conservatives who question US involvement in foreign wars and argue

that Congress should be focused instead on the surge of migration at the US-Mexico border.

Ohio Senator J D Vance, a Republican who is a close ally to Donald Trump, said that despite the strong showing of support for funding Ukraine's defence, opposition is growing among Republicans.

"The United States is spread too thin," Vance said, "And that argument I think, is winning the American people and it is slowly winning the Senate, but it is not going to happen overnight."

The growing fault line in the GOP between those conservatives who are sceptical of the aid and the more traditional "Reagan Republicans" who strongly support it may prove to be career-defining for the two top Republican leaders.

McConnell, who has made the Ukraine aid a top priority, said last month that he would step down from leadership after becoming increasingly distanced from many in his conference on the Ukraine aid and other issues. Johnson, who said he put the Bills on the floor after praying for guidance, faces threats of an ouster after a majority of Republicans voted against the aid to Ukraine.

Johnson said after House passage that "we did our work here, and I think history will judge it well".

Opponents in the Senate, like the House, included some left-wing senators who are opposed to aiding Israel as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has bombarded Gaza and killed thousands of civilians. Senators Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, voted against the package.

"We must end our complicity in this terrible war," Sanders said.

Who would lead if US stepped off world stage? asks President Joe Biden

Washington

If the United States stepped off the world stage, who would lead the world, US President Joe Biden asked his fellow countrymen as he slammed his November challenger for making such an argument.

"Think of it this way—if the United States stepped off the world stage, like Trump wants us to do, who would lead the world? Who would lead the world?" Biden asked the gathering at a campaign event in Tampa, Florida.

Biden is facing his predecessor,



Donald Trump, in the November presidential election, which is a rematch of the 2020 polls.

"One of the things that is happening now is that ... every international meeting I attend with

other heads of state—whether it is the G7, the G20, all these international meetings—before I leave, literally, almost every one will walk up to me and wait to get me in a corner alone and grab

my arm and say, 'You have got to win'. Not because of me, but because of the alternative. And they say, 'Because my democracy depends upon it', meaning their democracy," Biden said.

"So the whole world is looking, and they are looking to see how we handle ourselves in this election—not just on whether we win or not, but how we handle ourselves. One of the things that for me, I got involved when I was a kid in electoral politics out of the Civil Rights Movement. It all got down to one person at a time organising," the President said.

Biden told his supporters that his campaign is doing great and has raised nearly half a billion USD so far.

"I am really excited. We have raised almost a half a billion dollars so far. But here is what excites me—so far, we have 1.6 million (16 lakh) contributors, 550,000 more than we had last time at this stage of the game. But here is the deal—of those 1.6 million contributors, 97 per cent contributed less than USD 200. Think of all the numbers that means," he said.

Iran-Israel conflict

STRIKING a defiant note, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that his country will decide whether and how to respond to Iran's April 13 airstrikes. Netanyahu has rejected calls for restraint from close allies, even as the US and 47 other countries have issued a statement unequivocally condemning the attacks on Israel by Iran 'and its militant partners'. Meanwhile, an intransigent Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has warned Israel against retaliation, while suggesting that Iran is capable of carrying out much bigger strikes than those witnessed over the weekend.

This aggressive posturing by both sides is worrisome not only for West Asia, which is already in the throes of the six-month-old Israel-Hamas war, but also for the world at large. The United

Nations has urged Israel and Iran to exercise 'maximum restraint', but the two nations seem to be in no mood to tone down their rhetoric. The US and



its allies have a crucial role to play in reducing hostilities. The West has been ambiguous about the Israeli strike that killed two Iranian Generals in a consulate building in Damascus, Syria, on April 1. Such provocative attacks should be

denounced categorically, irrespective of whether the perpetrator is a friend or a foe.

With Israel becoming increasingly isolated in the international arena due to its relentless bombardment of Gaza, it can ill afford to confront Iran militarily. The fact that there were no fatalities in the attacks carried out by the Iranians should make Israel see reason. UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron has rightly hoped that Israel will act against Iran 'in a way that is smart as well as tough and also does as little as possible to escalate this conflict'. There is a need for both sides to tread warily so as to avoid creating a new war zone.

// satyasya paramam nidhānam //

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

It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light.

-Aristotle

Bastar encounter

Sustained vigil against Naxalism needed

THE encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bastar division on Tuesday, resulting in the killing of 29 Maoists, underscores the government's efforts to contain the Naxal menace. While the operation marks a significant victory in the fight against Naxalism, it also serves as a reminder of the persistent threat posed by left-wing extremism. Continuous vigilance, especially in the light of the upcoming elections, is the need of the hour. The operation, conducted by a team of the District Reserve Guard and the Border Security Force, has shown the effectiveness of intelligence-driven strategies in neutralising Naxal threats. The recovery of a substantial cache of arms and



ammunition is a big blow to the Naxal network.

With Naxalism posing a significant threat to development, peace and the future of the youth in the affected areas, a concerted government campaign to tackle the problem is underway. It is evidenced by the steady decline in Naxal violence

over the past few years. A multi-pronged approach, encompassing security measures, development initiatives and community outreach, reflects a comprehensive strategy aimed at addressing the root causes of left-wing extremism. Initiatives such as the Aspirational Districts Programme

demonstrate a commitment to holistic growth in Naxal-affected regions.

However, the prevalence of improvised explosive devices remains a weighty threat, highlighting the need for relentless demining operations. Also, allegations of fake encounters conducted by security forces need to be probed. Proactive steps and sustained vigilance are needed to pave the way for long-term peace in the disturbed areas. As the nation braces for the elections, heightened security measures are imperative to ensure the safety of voters and the smooth conduct of the electoral process, particularly in regions vulnerable to Naxal violence.

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West Asia on the boil

Iran-Israel conflict impacts crude oil prices



ISRAEL launched a tit-for-tat attack on Iran on Friday, days after Tehran unleashed drones and missiles on Israeli territory. The development has raised the spectre of a wider West Asian conflict amid the prevailing hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hamas. The reverberations of the Iran-Israel confrontation are already being felt beyond the region, with the benchmark Brent crude price rising to above \$90 a barrel before falling a bit. This is a matter of concern for India, which imports over 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements. A steep hike in global oil prices could significantly raise the country's oil import bill and make the rupee depreciate due to the larger outgo of foreign exchange. It's the purchase of cheaper oil from sanctions-hit Russia that helped India reduce its import expenditure over the past year or so.

Supply disruptions caused by geopolitical turbulence have prompted India, the world's third biggest oil consumer

and importer, to firm up plans to build its first commercial crude oil strategic reserve. Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd, a special purpose vehicle created by the government, has invited bids for constructing an underground storage facility in Karnataka. However, the project is expected to be completed only by 2029-30. In the immediate future, India will continue to be heavily dependent on oil imports. The resilience demonstrated by the country in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war is now being put to the test by the shocks originating from West Asia.

India has been quick to express concern over the 'new emerging realities' and has noted that any escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran will threaten peace and security in the region. A global economic upheaval can be avoided if neutral countries like India impress upon both sides the vital importance of exercising restraint.

THE UN Security Council failed to recommend full UN membership for Palestine because the draft resolution was vetoed by the US last week. The resolution, introduced by Algeria, met with widespread support, with 12 of the 15 members voting in favour. The draft thus had crossed the threshold of nine votes for it to be approved. But the US used its veto power, arguing that this was a matter for direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine. If the resolution had been passed, it would have gone to the 193-member UN General Assembly, where it would have sailed through because about 140 of its members recognise the state of Palestine.

The push for Palestine's full membership came six months after Israel launched an all-out assault on Gaza, causing unspeakable misery to civilians. Peace could have got a chance with Palestine's inclusion, but the Western powers' carte blanche to Israel

The US argument that there should be direct Israeli-Palestinian talks won't work. Successive hardline governments in Israel have steadfastly refused to negotiate. Palestine is already a non-member observer state, which enables it to participate in proceedings of UN

US vetoes resolution

Palestine's full UN membership stalled

to inflict injustice with impunity will make it unattainable. A renewed effort to facilitate the two-state solution is the only option to end the dehumanisation of Palestinians.

Cut sugar & salt

A call for health-oriented action in food industry

THE renewed spotlight on significantly high sugar, salt and fat content in food has sparked a debate about public health and transparency. Some major business houses — Cadbury, Nestlé and IndiGo — find themselves at the forefront of this discourse, facing scrutiny and accountability. This affords an opportunity for the stakeholders

top of the business. However, the latest allegations about higher sugar content in its baby food in developing countries like India are worrisome and warrant an investigation. Adherence to regulations is crucial to rebuilding trust and nutritional integrity. Similarly, IndiGo's response to concerns about the sodium levels in on-board meals emphasises the need for transparency.

Consumer awareness is pivotal in shaping food choices and driving industry practices. As people become more informed about the health implications of their dietary decisions, companies face pressure to prioritise nutritious alternatives and provide accurate information about the ingredients. The



to reaffirm their commitment to consumer wellbeing.

Nestlé's responsive approach to reducing added sugars, sodium and saturated fats in its products and aligning with global dietary guidelines over the years reflects the market risk faced by a company failing to recognise the importance of providing healthy options. From revising sodium levels in Maggi Masala Noodles to cutting sucrose content in infant cereals, the FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) giant has been trying to foster healthier lifestyles to remain on

food industry must reassess its practices and the food regulators strengthen their enforcement strategies. This need is particularly significant in India, where the burden of nutrition-related non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular ailments, is rapidly escalating. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from consumers and the food industry to promote healthier eating habits. Initiatives such as the taxation of the addictive high-fat sugar salt foods offer a glimmer of hope.

avoid a political solution and provides it with the licence to continue with its depredations. Palestine's flag does fly outside the UN headquarters, but it is slightly separated from the flags of other countries due to the state's observer status. In the interests of peace, this distance must be reduced.



Yoga fee taxable

SC decision a step towards fairness

THE Supreme Court's recent decision to uphold an appellate tribunal's ruling on taxing yoga camps organised by the Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust marks a significant stride towards equity and accountability in the realm of service taxation. The verdict underscores the principle that no entity should be exempted from contributing to the public coffers when it comes to commercial ventures. In October last year, the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal had ruled that yoga camps conducted for a fee — even if in the name of 'donation' — by the trust constituted a 'health and fitness service' and were subject to service tax. It was a reasonable interpretation of the law as the tribunal rightly observed that the services rendered were akin to those provided by health clubs and fitness centres, falling within the taxable



category. The trust's argument that its services were aimed at curing ailments and, therefore, not taxable did not hold water.

The ruling follows a few similar

verdicts, such as the one given by the Kerala High Court in February. The HC held that the fee for yoga and meditation was subject to taxation under the Kerala Tax on Luxuries

Act. Uniformity in legal interpretation across jurisdictions reinforces the principle of equality before the law and ensures consistency in tax administration. This also highlights the broader issue of responsible advertising and consumer protection. The scrutiny faced by Patanjali Ayurved under the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act of 1954 makes it imperative for the firm to ensure that claims made in advertisements, especially those related to health and wellness, are truthful and substantiated.

Though undoubtedly beneficial for physical and mental wellbeing, yoga is increasingly becoming commercialised. It is imperative that our legal framework adapts accordingly, striking a balance between fostering entrepreneurship and safeguarding public interest.

Maldivian elections

Muizzu's win lends weight to his pro-China stance

THE results of the parliamentary elections in the Maldives are making waves in the Indian Ocean Region. At stake, in particular, are India's strategic interests amid China's aggressive outreach to smaller nations. The resounding victory of President Mohamed Muizzu's People's National Congress has implications for the Maldives' international alliances, notably with China. The shift towards China aligns with Muizzu's anti-India rhetoric and his administration's endeavours to bolster economic cooperation with Beijing, exemplified by major infrastructure projects awarded to Chinese companies. The decisive win grants Muizzu the political leverage to advance the pro-China agenda that he has been pursuing ever since he was elected President last year.

His tough stance is at variance with his predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's leaning towards India. The poll outcome will make it harder for New Delhi to improve its relations with the Maldives. The

diverging paths of Male and New Delhi were apparent in January this year, when Muizzu opposed Indian troops' presence in the Maldives.

India's response to these developments has been nuanced, balancing diplomatic engagement with strategic caution. While External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has emphasised the enduring significance of historical ties and geographical proximity between the two nations, New Delhi has also taken measures to recalibrate its relationship by safeguarding its interests. The imposition of restrictions on the export of essential commodities to the Maldives is reflective of India's awareness of the geopolitical dynamics. Spoiling relations with India could prove detrimental to the Maldives' economic progress as the tiny nation risks overdependence on China. Fostering constructive neighbourly engagement is crucial for sustaining regional stability and security.

Health insurance

Removal of age cap welcome, but job only half-done

IN an effort to make the healthcare ecosystem more inclusive and accessible, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has done away with the age limit of 65 years for persons buying health insurance policies. In a recent gazette notification, the insurance regulator has directed insurers to ensure that they offer health insurance products catering to all age groups. They have also been restrained from rejecting claims based on pre-existing conditions. The insurers cannot refuse to issue policies to persons with severe medical conditions like cancer, heart or renal failure and AIDS.

These guidelines are expected to make the elderly better prepared to withstand the shock of unforeseen medical expenses. This is significant in a country whose count of senior citizens is estimated to exceed 20 per cent of the total population by 2050, according to the UN Population Fund. Improved life expectancy, particularly of women, is another key factor that has a bearing on health

insurance.

However, there is a dire need to make the insurance products consumer-friendly. Potential customers are often put off by the jargon and the complexities. Trust deficit triggered by the fine print makes them reluctant to buy policies; even when they take the plunge, the policyholders are plagued by doubts and uncertainty. Misinformation or inadequate information about the benefits and risks makes them vulnerable to harassment. Transparency and a hassle-free claim settlement are no less important to win the confidence of customers. At the same time, a stronger mechanism is needed to effectively deal with unscrupulous elements. According to a Deloitte survey (2023), about 60 per cent of Indian insurance companies are witnessing a rapid increase in fraud, especially in the life and health insurance domains. Strict monitoring is needed to curb malpractices such as making false claims, inflating charges for services rendered and billing for medically unnecessary services.

'Apple may employ 5 lakh people in India in 3 years'

New Delhi

iPhone maker Apple through its vendors is expected to employ over five lakh people in India over the next three years, according to government sources.

At present, Apple's vendors and suppliers employ 1.5 lakh

(about 3.32 lakh crore) in the next four-five years.

According to market research firm Counterpoint Research, Apple led the India market with the highest revenue in 2023 for the first time, while Samsung topped the chart in terms of



people in India. Tata Electronics, which runs two plants for Apple, is the biggest job generator.

"Apple is accelerating hiring in India. At a conservative estimate, it is going to employ five lakh people in the next three years through its vendors and component suppliers," a senior government officer said.

When contacted, Apple declined to comment on the projection.

Apple has plans to scale up production in India by over five-fold to around USD 40 billion

volume sales.

The firm in its recent report said Apple surpassed the 10-million-unit mark in shipments and captured the top position in revenue in a calendar year for the first time.

Apple's iPhone exports from India rose sharply to USD 12.1 billion in 2023-24 from USD 6.27 billion in 2022-23, representing a massive surge of nearly 100 per cent, according to trade intelligence platform The Trade Vision.

Direct tax collections exceed estimates in FY24; jump 18 per cent to Rs 19.58 lakh crore

New Delhi

India's net direct tax collections surged by a massive 17.7 per cent year-on-year to Rs 19.58 crore in the fiscal year ended March 2024, surpassing even revised estimates by a wide margin, the tax department said on Sunday.

Net collections of income and corporate taxes, which make up for most of the direct taxes, in 2023-24 financial year exceeded the Budget estimates by Rs 1.35 lakh crore (7.40 per cent) and the revised estimates by Rs 13,000 crore.

While gross direct tax collections (provisional) for the FY 2023-24 rose 18.48 per cent to Rs 23.37 lakh crore, net proceeds (after accounting for refunds) surged 17.7 per cent to Rs 19.58 lakh crore, reflecting buoyancy in the economy and rise in income levels of individuals and corporates.

Refunds aggregating to Rs 3.79 lakh crore have been issued in FY 2023-24, the CBDT said in a statement.

"The provisional figures of Direct Tax collections for the financial year (FY) 2023-24 show that net collections are at Rs 19.58 lakh crore, compared to Rs 16.64 lakh crore in the preceding financial year i.e. FY 2022-23," it said, adding the Budget for 2023-24 fiscal had pegged the collections for



the year at Rs 18.23 lakh crore, which were revised to Rs 19.45 lakh crore later. "The provisional Direct Tax collections (net of the refunds) have exceeded the Budget Estimate by 7.40 per cent and Revised Estimates by 0.67 per cent," it said.

The gross collection (provisional) of Direct Taxes (before adjusting for refunds) for the FY 2023-24 stood at Rs 23.37 lakh crore, showing a growth of 18.48 per cent over the gross collection of Rs 19.72 lakh crore in FY 2022-23.

The gross corporate tax collection (provisional) in FY 2023-24 was up 13.06 per cent to Rs 11.32 lakh crore as compared to the gross corporate tax collection of Rs 10 lakh crore of the preceding year.

The Net Corporate Tax collection (provisional) in FY

2023-24 at Rs 9.11 lakh crore showed a growth of 10.26 per cent over the net corporate tax collection of Rs 8.26 lakh crore of the preceding year.

The Gross Personal Income Tax collection including Securities Transaction Tax (provisional) in FY 2023-24 at Rs 12.01 lakh crore was up 24.26 per cent over previous year's collection of Rs 9.67 lakh crore.

The Net Personal Income Tax collection including STT (provisional) in FY 2023-24 at Rs 10.44 lakh crore showed a growth of 25.23 per cent over preceding fiscal year's figure of Rs 8.33 lakh crore.

Refunds of Rs 3.79 lakh crore have been issued in the FY 2023-24 showing an increase of 22.74 per cent over the refunds of Rs 3.09 lakh crore issued in FY 2022-23, the statement added.

Zomato slapped with Rs 11.81 crore GST demand, penalty order

New Delhi

Online food delivery platform Zomato has received a goods and services tax (GST) demand and penalty order worth Rs 11.81 crore.

The order consists of Rs 5.9 crore in GST demand and a penalty of Rs 5.9 crore for July 2017-March 2021 period.

"The company has received an order for the period July 2017 to March 2021 passed by Additional Commissioner, Central Goods and Services Tax, Gurugram

raising demand of GST of Rs 5,90,94,889 with applicable interest (not quantified) and



penalty of Rs 5,90,94,889," Zomato said in a stock exchange regulatory filing.

Earlier this month, the food delivery platform had said it received notices from the tax authorities in Delhi and Karnataka over alleged short payment of GST in 2018 amounting to Rs 4.2 crore.

The company had said it would appeal against the tax demand notices.

Zomato registered Rs 125 crore in profit in the third quarter (Q3) of the last financial year (FY24) -- an improvement by Rs 390 crore as compared to the same quarter last year.

Will continue to engage with govt on demerger: Hindustan Zinc

New Delhi

Vedanta group company Hindustan Zinc will continue to engage with the Centre on its proposal to split the company into different entities, said Arun Misra, CEO, Hindustan Zinc.



The statement comes amid the mines ministry rejecting Hindustan Zinc Ltd's demerger plan. Misra said the matter had also come up for discussion in the

board meeting on Friday.

The government, the largest minority shareholder in Hindustan Zinc, owns a 29.54 per cent stake in the company.

What is Bitcoin halving and why does it matter?

New York

The “miners” who chisel bitcoins out of complex mathematics are taking a 50% pay cut — effectively reducing new production of the world's largest cryptocurrency, again.

Bitcoin's latest “halving” appeared to occur Friday night. Soon after the highly anticipated event, the price of bitcoin held steady at about \$63,907.

Now, all eyes are on what will happen down the road. Beyond bitcoin's long-term price behavior, which relies heavily on other market conditions, experts point to potential impacts on the day-to-day operations of the asset's miners themselves. But, as with everything in the volatile cryptoverse, the future is hard to predict.

Here's what you need to know.

WHAT IS BITCOIN HALVING AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Bitcoin “halving,” a preprogrammed event that occurs roughly every four years, impacts the production of bitcoin. Miners use farms of noisy, specialized computers to solve convoluted math puzzles; and when they complete one, they get a fixed number of bitcoins as a reward.

Halving does exactly what it sounds like — it cuts that fixed income in half. And when the mining reward falls, so does the number of new bitcoins entering the market. That means the supply of coins available to satisfy demand grows more slowly.

Limited supply is one of bitcoin's key features. Only 21 million bitcoins will ever exist, and more than 19.5 million of them have already been mined, leaving fewer than 1.5 million left to pull from.

So long as demand remains the same or climbs faster than supply, bitcoin prices should rise as halving limits output. Because of this, some argue that bitcoin can counteract inflation — still, experts stress that future gains are never guaranteed.

HOW OFTEN DOES HALVING OCCUR?

Per bitcoin's code, halving occurs after the creation of every 210,000 “blocks” —

where transactions are recorded — during the mining process.

No calendar dates are set in stone, but that divvies out to roughly once every four years.

WILL HALVING IMPACT BITCOIN'S PRICE?

Only time will tell. Following each of the three previous halvings, the price of bitcoin was mixed in the first few months and wound up significantly higher one year later. But as investors well know, past performance is not an indicator of future results.



“I don't know how significant we can say halving is just yet,” said Adam Morgan McCarthy, a research analyst at Kaiko. “The sample size of three (previous halvings) isn't big enough to say It's going to go up 500% again, or something.” At the time of the last halving in May 2020, for example, bitcoin's price stood at around \$8,602, according to CoinMarketCap — and climbed almost seven-fold to nearly \$56,705 by May 2021. Bitcoin prices nearly quadrupled a year after July 2016's halving and shot up by almost 80 times one year out from bitcoin's first halving in November 2012. Experts like McCarthy stress that other bullish market conditions contributed to those returns.

Friday's halving also arrives after a year of steep increases for bitcoin. As of Friday night, bitcoin's price stood at \$63,907 per CoinMarketCap. That's down from the all-time-high of about \$73,750 hit last month, but still double the asset's price from a year ago.

Much of the credit for bitcoin's recent

rally is given to the early success of a new way to invest in the asset — spot bitcoin ETFs, which were only approved by U.S. regulators in January. A research report from crypto fund manager Bitwise found that these spot ETFs, short for exchange-traded funds, saw \$12.1 billion in inflows during the first quarter.

Bitwise senior crypto research analyst Ryan Rasmussen said persistent or growing ETF demand, when paired with the “supply shock” resulting from the coming halving, could help propel bitcoin's price further.

“We would expect the price of Bitcoin to have a strong performance over the next 12 months,” he said. Rasmussen notes that he's seen some predict gains reaching as high as \$400,000, but the more “consensus estimate” is closer to the \$100,000-\$175,000 range.

Other experts stress caution, pointing to the possibility the gains have already been realized.

In a Wednesday research note, JPMorgan analysts maintained that they don't expect to see post-halving price increases because the event “has already been already priced in” — noting that the market is still in overbought conditions per their analysis of bitcoin futures.

WHAT ABOUT MINERS?

Miners, meanwhile, will be challenged with compensating for the reduction in rewards while also keeping operating costs down.

“Even if there's a slight increase in bitcoin price, (halving) can really impact a miner's ability to pay bills,” Andrew W. Balthazor, a Miami-based attorney who specializes in digital assets at Holland & Knight, said. “You can't assume that bitcoin is just going to go to the moon. As your business model, you have to plan for extreme volatility.” Better-prepared miners have likely laid the groundwork ahead of time, perhaps by increasing energy efficiency or raising new capital. But cracks may arise for less-efficient, struggling firms.

One likely outcome: Consolidation.

That's become increasingly common in the bitcoin mining industry, particularly following a major crypto crash in 2022.

In its recent research report, Bitwise found that total miner revenue slumped one month after each of the three previous halvings. But those figures had rebounded significantly after a full year — thanks to spikes in the price of bitcoin as well as larger miners expanding their operations.

Time will tell how mining companies fare following this latest halving. But Rasmussen is betting that big players will continue to expand and utilize the industry's technology advances to make operations more efficient.

WHAT ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

Pinpointing definitive data on the environmental impacts directly tied to bitcoin halving is still a bit of a question mark. But it's no secret that crypto mining consumes a lot of energy overall — and operations relying on pollutive sources have drawn particular concern over the years.

Recent research published by the United Nations University and Earth's Future journal found that the carbon footprint of 2020-2021 bitcoin mining across 76 nations was equivalent to emissions of burning 84 billion pounds of coal or running 190 natural gas-fired power plants. Coal satisfied the bulk of bitcoin's electricity demands (45%), followed by natural gas (21%) and hydropower (16%).

Environmental impacts of bitcoin mining boil largely down to the energy source used. Industry analysts have maintained that pushes towards the use of more clean energy have increased in recent years, coinciding with rising calls for climate protections from regulators around the world.

Production pressures could result in miners looking to cut costs. Ahead of the latest halving, JPMorgan cautioned that some bitcoin mining firms may “look to diversify into low energy cost regions” to deploy inefficient mining rigs.

Wipro's Q4 net profit falls 7.8% to Rs 2,835 crore



Bengaluru

IT service company Wipro on Friday reported 7.8 per cent year-on-year decline in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to about Rs

2834.6 crore, and cautioned that the macroeconomic environment remains “uncertain”.

For the Q4FY24, Wipro's revenue from operations slipped 4.2 per cent on-year to Rs 22,208.3 crore. The net profit (attributable to equity holders of the company) declined to Rs 2,834.6 crore in Q4FY24 from Rs 3074.5 crore in the year ago period, translating into a 7.8 per cent fall, according to BSE filing.

Yes Bank founder Rana Kapoor gets bail in fraud case

Mumbai

A special court here on Friday granted bail to Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor in the Rs 466.51 crore bank fraud case, paving the way for him to walk out of jail after four years.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Kapoor in March 2020 in a money laundering case, and he has been booked in eight cases related



to fraud at the bank. The banker has now secured bail in all the cases.

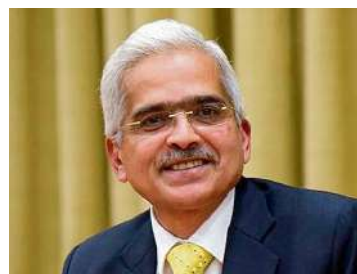
The court has granted bail to Kapoor in the Central Bureau of Investigation's case against him and Avantha Group promoter Gautam Thapar for allegedly indulging in criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust, cheating

and forgery for diversion of public money to the tune of Rs 466.51 crore.

Das emphasises price stability amid strong GDP projections

Mumbai

The success in controlling inflation has to be preserved and taken forward to achieve a 4 per cent inflation target on



a durable basis, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das stressed during the MPC meeting even as other members expressed concerns over the impact of geo-political developments on the price situation.

The RBI on Friday released the minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on Friday. It maintained status-quo on the benchmark lending rate (repo) at 6.5 per cent since

Govt to sample all spice brands for quality check

New Delhi

After Singapore and Hong Kong banned certain products made and marketed by Indian spice brands MDH and Everest, the Centre on Monday ordered food safety commissioners across states to sample spices of all brands for quality testing.

"All food safety commissioners of the country have been alerted. The process of sampling the spices has begun. In about four days, spice samples will be collected from all manufacturing units," FSSAI sources said.

They said samples of all brands and not just MDH and Everest would be taken and the quality report was expected in about 20 days. The Spices Board of India is also looking into the ban imposed by Hong Kong and Singapore.

February 2023 on concerns over inflation after the three-day MPC meeting held from April 3 to 5. Five of the six MPC members voted for the status quo in the policy rate.

MPC member Jayanth R Varma, however, advocated a reduction in the repo rate by 25 basis points as "high-interest rates entail a growth sacrifice".

According to the minutes, Das said the economic growth prospects of the Indian economy in 2024-25 look bright. He further said the baseline projections show inflation moderating to 4.5 per cent in 2024-25 from 5.4 per cent in 2023-24 and 6.7 per cent in 2022-23.

Forex reserves decline by \$5.4bn after 8-week rise

Mumbai

India's foreign exchange reserves fell by \$5.4 billion to \$643.16 billion as of April 12, according to the weekly data released by the RBI on Friday.

This is the first time in 8 weeks that the foreign exchange reserves have recorded a fall after having touched lifetime highs in the preceding weeks. Market analysts attribute the decline to the RBI actively releasing dollars in the market to curb the volatility in the rupee.

The Indian currency has tended to weaken as oil prices have been on the rise which has triggered an increase in the demand for dollars to finance costlier imports.



The data released on Friday showed that the foreign currency portion of the reserves fell by as much as \$6.51 billion in the week ended April 12. However, there

was an increase of \$1.24 billion in the value of gold assets held by the RBI which cushioned the fall of the forex kitty.

Ratan Tata receives prestigious KISS Humanitarian Award

Mumbai

Renowned industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata, Chairman Emeritus of the Tata Group, was honoured with the prestigious KISS Humanitarian Award 2021 on Monday.

The award ceremony was held at his residence in Mumbai, marking a significant recognition of his commitment to social development and exemplary corporate leadership.

The ceremony was attended by Tata Group Chairman N Chandrasekaran and three-time Grammy Award winner Ricky Kej, among others.

The award was presented by the Founder of KIIT and KISS Achyuta Samanta. Due to health reasons, Tata has been avoiding public appearances, leading to the private arrangement of the ceremony at his home.

Ratan Tata, usually reticent about



accepting accolades, agreed to accept this award following a personal request from

Achyuta Samanta, recognizing the importance of the KISS humanitarian honour.

The award was announced in 2021, but Tata was unable to receive it then due to the Covid pandemic.

Expressing gratitude towards KISS and its founder, Tata said, "I am extremely happy to receive this honour. This is the most significant moment of my life."

"Ratan Tata is a revered name in India. His social work and leadership has been influencing me since my childhood. Being able to honour him today with this award is a privilege for us," said Achyuta Samanta. Initiated in 2008 by Samanta, the KISS Humanitarian Award is the highest honour of KIIT and KISS dedicated to recognizing individuals and organisations that embody the spirit of humanitarian work worldwide.

India's GDP to pip US' by 2075: Goldman Sachs

New Delhi

India's economy is on track to surpass the US by 2075 to become the world's second-largest after China, according to a Goldman Sachs report.

India's GDP will rise to \$52.5 trillion by 2075, next only to that of China with \$57 trillion and leaving behind the US with \$51.5 trillion. India's growth story will be propelled chiefly by its labour force, technological advances and rising capital investment.

India is currently ranked fifth with GDP of \$3.74 billion and has a low per capita income of \$2,600 which

puts it in the 131st position globally. "India has made more progress in



innovation and technology than some may realise. Innovation and increasing worker productivity are going to be

important for the world's fifth-biggest economy. In technical terms, that means greater output for each unit of labour and capital in India's economy," noted Santanu Sengupta, Goldman Sachs's chief India economist.

There are also stumbling blocks in the form of high import duties, red tape, and dominance of domestic tycoons. "India's savings rate is likely to increase with falling dependency ratios, rising incomes, and deeper financial sector development, which is likely to make the pool of capital available to drive further investment," said Sengupta.

India's constructive revisionism

During the Raisina Dialogue 2024, The External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr S. Jaishankar reiterated India's perceptions of the current international system. He asserted that the post-1945 international order, while not broken, is certainly less effective and needs to be changed. However, changing the world order is often seen as revisionism—a taboo in the International Relations (IR) lexicon. It is often equated to the destruction of the existing international order, overshadowing the fact that revisionism can be constructive, and can usher in a positive change. In this context, this article focuses on how India, under the Modi government, is constructively changing the international order by making it more representative, legitimate, and solution-oriented.

Revisionism and its constructive side

The word revisionism in IR refers to a state(s)' intent to alter or reconstitute the international order to its benefit. The revisionism of the order is considered taboo because states pursuing such a strategy have, in the past and current times, sought the destruction of the existing order. While pre-1945 illustrations include Napoleonic France and the erstwhile Soviet Union, currently China and Russia are considered revisionist powers because of their aggressive actions threatening the norms of sovereignty and international law. This can be seen in China's grey-zone warfare in the South China Sea and against India, and Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war against Ukraine.

However, the destructive revisionist tendencies of these powers often overshadow the constructive side of revisionism. For example, India is not taking aggressive actions against the norms and institutions of the international order to promote its interests, which at the international level is to become a leading power of the Global South. Instead, India is trying to bring changes to the West-dominated order in a constructive manner so that it accommodates India's ambitions. Towards this end, India envisions changing the current West-led order into a multipolar one where India could act as one of the poles. In this endeavour, India is not only shouldering greater global responsibilities to showcase its capacities but also working with other states to make positive contributions to the world order. Thus, India is collaborating with like-minded countries to make international institutions more representative and evolve new mechanisms that can find solutions to challenges facing nation-states.

India's constructive revisionism

India's constructive revisionism was reflected during the early years of the Modi government when the international

discourse was filled with the crisis that the international order was facing. Prime Minister Modi and EAM's speeches at the United Nations in 2014 and 2015, respectively, conveyed India's problems with the international system, particularly the need to update the post-1945 architecture of the United Nations and its decision-making body—the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), making it more representative and legitimate. Even in the current times, the UN has failed to end the conflict in Ukraine or



between Israel and Palestine. Institutions of global economic governance have failed to cater to the developmental needs of the Global South when globalisation has increased wealth inequalities and created undesirable dependencies. Issues such as climate change, terrorism and nuclear security continue to be deprived of solutions and coordination. In view of the problems caused by the current order, it is countries like India that have expressed the need to rise above divisions and competition to work together for the global good. For example, India has made crucial efforts to combat terrorism through sponsoring the draft legal framework of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Institutions of global economic governance have failed to cater to the developmental needs of the Global South when globalisation has increased wealth inequalities and created undesirable dependencies.

India has also sought to create alternative systems and norms that benefit all stakeholders in the international system. Since no single country can alone create such systems, India has promoted or created coalitions/partnerships with like-minded countries on issues of mutual importance. Since 2014, India has joined or initiated 36 groupings in different domains. Against the power-centrism of the current IO, India seeks to build 'offering solutions to humanity's problems' as the new norm or agenda of these coalitions/partnerships. Through institutions such as G20, International Solar Alliance,

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), India is actively reconstructing the world order by offering sustainable solutions to challenges faced by humanity.

Regarding climate change and energy security, India and France launched the International Solar Alliance in 2015 to facilitate energy access, security and transition worldwide by providing clean electricity to all by 2030. This coalition of 90 member states has set

from Somali pirates.

On the front of building disaster resilience, India launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) in 2019 as a global partnership of national governments, multilateral agencies, the private sector, and academia, to promote climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure. This includes efforts for disaster response and recovery support, building upon India's stellar record in providing help to neighbours during disasters, such as the 2004 tsunami and Nepal earthquake in 2015. In 2021, CDRI created the Infrastructure for the Resilient Island States (IRIS) initiative to cater to the infrastructural resilience of 58 Small Island Developing States (SIDS). It has also launched projects to develop early warning capabilities and strengthen infrastructure capacities in Fiji, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Dominica, Maldives, and Haiti.

At its G20 presidency, India bridged divides by inducting the African Union (collectively integrating 55 African nations) as a permanent member of the group and mainstreaming the voice of the Global South in shaping global solutions. Working to reduce debt vulnerabilities, India's presidency of G20 made significant progress on debt restructuring of Zambia, Ethiopia, and Ghana through the Common Framework for Debt Treatments and of Sri Lanka through the Creditor Committee. India also revived multilateralism by generating consensus on implementing the 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on SDGs by setting up a New Collective Quantified Goal of Climate Finance from a floor of US\$100 billion a year. In this context, India also co-launched the Global Biofuel Alliance to expedite the global uptake of biofuels.

Indeed, the successful functioning of these organisations reflects the emergence of a multipolar order—where it will also be one of the poles. Through the above examples, India shows that when post-1945-built institutions failed to maintain order and cater to the development needs of developing countries, alternative systems for global governance could be established that provide solutions for critical issues facing humanity as a whole. India advocates that this solution-oriented action at the international level should be the new norm or agenda of institutions. The benefits of these alternative systems are already recognised in many forums in that they offer fair opportunities for hitherto marginalised states to satisfy their needs and share and contribute to global prosperity. It is the functioning of these coalitions of like-minded countries on issues of mutual concern that reflects the arrival of multiple poles in the international arena.

up Solar Technology and Application Resource Centres (STAR-C), which builds human capacity and skills within member countries to undertake energy transitions. At COP26, India and the UK partnered with ISA and the World Bank to launch the Green Grids Initiative—One Sun, One World, One Grid, which aims to connect 140 countries and develop infrastructure for clean energy.

India is also actively working to ensure maritime security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, and the Indian Ocean region in particular, which accounts for around 80 percent of maritime oil trade and around US\$10 billion tons of commerce. In line with its Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) policy, India has established the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), which provides real-time information to its partners to ensure maritime security. Moreover, the Indian Navy frequently conducts anti-piracy operations in the region extending from the Gulf of Aden to the Malacca Straits, the latest being operations to save MV Lila Norfolk and MV Ruen from Somali pirates. India is also working with countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, Mauritius, Kenya, and Mozambique to boost the Blue Economy by sustainably extracting ocean-based resources for the mutual development of regional economies.

The Indian Navy frequently conducts anti-piracy operations in the region extending from the Gulf of Aden to the Malacca Straits, the latest being operations to save MV Lila Norfolk and MV Ruen

Transforming manufacturing dynamics

A look into India's PLI scheme

Amidst its tech wars with the United States (US), there has been a growing trend towards derisking, decoupling, and diversifying away from China, a leading country in manufacturing and exports. Its hi-tech manufacturing has decreased: in 2023, its industry rose merely by 2.7 percent—"the lowest level of growth" since 2018. A related trend is that governments worldwide are reevaluating global supply chains and aiming diversify supply chains away from China. Instead, many of them are preferring countries in South and Southeast Asia.

India, too, is capitalising on this trend by advocating self-reliance in manufacturing through its Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Towards this, it introduced the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme in March 2020 to serve as a strategic tool by offering incentives for companies to invest in and expand their hi-tech manufacturing capabilities. This seeks to reduce reliance on external sources and bolsters the country's technological prowess across key sectors such as textile, agriculture, electronics goods, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals. According to the State Bank of India, in Fiscal Year 2021, imports from China amounted to INR 48.75 lakh crore, with approximately INR 3,950 crore comprising commodities and goods covered under the PLI scheme. If the scheme succeeds in decreasing dependency by 20 percent, it could contribute approximately INR 6 lakh crore to India's GDP.

PLI scheme explained

The PLI scheme was introduced to promote domestic manufacturing in strategic sectors of the economy. Under this scheme, eligible companies receive financial incentives based on incremental production over a specified base year. These incentives encourage companies to enhance their manufacturing capabilities, invest in new technologies, and expand their production capacities, which helps create job opportunities. By linking incentives to production volumes, the PLI scheme encourages companies to scale up their operations and contribute to the country's economic growth by adding to the local supply chains.

The PLI scheme is an important step in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plan to make India a US\$ 5-trillion economy by boosting the country's manufacturing potential, which is expected to have additional benefits.

When introduced, the PLI scheme covered three sectors; mobile manufacturing and electric components, pharmaceutical, and medical device manufacturing. Seeing its positive impact, in August 2023, the government announced its expansion to 14 key sectors critical for India's economic growth and industrial competitiveness, with an outlay of INR 1.97 lakh crore. This indicates that the minimum production is projected to surpass INR 3.75 lakh crore within five years. The PLI scheme is an important step in Prime Minister Narendra

chain disruptions, and economic uncertainties brought about by the pandemic had a significant impact worldwide. The PLI scheme, launched initially as a response to the government's broader strategy to boost the manufacturing sector, helped the country recover from the pandemic. However, the implementation was delayed, with most schemes mobilised in 2021-22. Given the five-year tenure for these, their full impact is yet to be assessed, however, the initial stages are looking successful. Till November 2023, the scheme has seen an investment of over INR 1.03 lakh crore, exports worth INR 3.20 lakh crore, and created over 6 lakh jobs, directly and indirectly. Beneficiaries of the scheme include Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as well as bigger businesses, and it



Modi's plan to make India a US\$ 5-trillion economy by boosting the country's manufacturing potential, which is expected to have additional benefits. Firstly, by offering financial incentives to manufacturers, the PLI scheme aims to attract domestic and foreign investment in key sectors, thereby stimulating economic growth and industrial development. Secondly, the scheme promotes export competitiveness by incentivising production for export-oriented industries. It seeks to increase India's share of global trade and reduce its dependence on imports. Finally, increased local manufacturing is also expected to increase employment in the country by creating approximately 60 lakh new jobs in the next five years.

Assessing PLI's performance

The scheme was announced right at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns, supply

has significantly reduced India's import reliance on raw materials in sectors such as pharmaceuticals. Given that electronic components manufacturing and pharmaceuticals were a part of the initial sectors, looking at their impact will be the most telling.

The PLI scheme, launched initially as a response to the government's broader strategy to boost the manufacturing sector, helped the country recover from the pandemic.

Electronics manufacturing

Electronics manufacturing has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by the rise in technology and electronic devices, and the PLI scheme for electronics aims to capitalise on this momentum. Since its introduction, several major players in the electronics industry have announced plans to set up or expand their manufacturing operations in India. The manufacturing

landscape in India is undergoing a profound transformation, particularly in smartphone manufacturing, semiconductor fabrication, and electronic components production. Major Apple contract manufacturers such as Foxconn, Pegatron, and Wistron have entered the fray, producing iPhones, iPads, and MacBooks within the country. This shift has also seen the establishment of semiconductor facilities, exemplified by the Vendanta-Foxconn collaboration in Gujarat, further bolstering India's foothold in large-scale electronics manufacturing. This transformation has attracted investments totalling INR 4,784 crore and has contributed to a total production value of INR 2.04 lakh crore, with exports reaching INR 80,769 crore. As of September 2022, large-scale electronics manufacturing has emerged as a standout sector, creating 28,636 jobs and driving a 139-percent increase in smartphone exports.

The allure of the PLI scheme, alongside India's expansive consumer market and skilled workforce, presents an enticing proposition for multinational corporations looking to broaden their manufacturing horizons. This confluence of factors underscores India's rise as a global manufacturing powerhouse, ushering in a new epoch of innovation and industrial advancement.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing

The pharmaceutical industry is a major beneficiary of the PLI scheme, leveraging India's prominent position as a global producer of generic drugs and vaccines. Historically, India has relied heavily on imports for critical components, leaving the pharmaceutical sector vulnerable to supply chain risks. One of the scheme's focal points is the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and key starting materials (KSMs). By January 2023, two projects for Bulk Drugs had been commissioned under the PLI scheme, attracting investments totalling INR 2,019 crore and employing 23,000 individuals. Since its inception, the PLI scheme has prompted numerous pharmaceutical companies to announce plans for expanding

their API and KSM manufacturing capacities. For example, Rusan Pharma inaugurated a new API manufacturing facility in Madhya Pradesh, investing approximately INR 300 crore.

Companies investing in novel drug formulations, process improvements, and product quality enhancements are poised to reap the scheme's benefits.

These investments are expected to bolster India's self-reliance in pharmaceutical production and enhance the availability of domestically and globally affordable medicines. Moreover, the PLI scheme has the potential to stimulate innovation through research and development. Companies investing in novel drug formulations, process improvements, and product quality enhancements are poised to reap the scheme's benefits.

Policy to practice

India has long aspired to become a global manufacturing powerhouse, but stiff competition and structural challenges hindered its progress. The PLI scheme represents a bold step towards revitalising the country's manufacturing sector and positioning it as a global powerhouse. By incentivising production, fostering innovation, and promoting investment, it holds the potential to unleash a new wave of industrial growth and economic prosperity. As India navigates the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the successful implementation of the PLI scheme will be crucial in realising the country's vision of becoming a leading manufacturing hub on the world stage. Currently, challenges such as the lack of uniform criteria, ambiguity in the reward system, and the absence of a centralised database create gaps in the implementation and transparency of the program. Another issue to address is the supply chain and the cost of raw materials. For example, container manufacturing in India is more expensive compared to China because the main material, corten steel, is cheaper in China. Continued policy support, infrastructure development, and regulatory reforms will be essential to sustain and amplify the benefits of the PLI scheme in the long run.

BRAHMOS FOR PHILIPPINES: A Symbolic Win In The Choppy Indo-Pacific

A new phase in India's defence ties with the Philippines commenced last week when the Indian Air Force handed the first batch of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines. Manila had first expressed its interest in 2019, with a \$375 million contract signed in 2022 for the supply of three batteries of the shore-based, anti-ship variant of the BrahMos to the Philippines by BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd, an Indo-Russian joint venture. Apart from two missile launchers, a radar and a command-and-control centre, the pact includes an integrated logistics support package and training for those manning the systems.

This is a major boost for Delhi-Manila ties. But the significance of this goes beyond the bilateral as India seeks to enhance its presence as a credible defence partner in Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific. Moreover, this also showcases the growing salience of India's domestic defence manufacturing base, which has been coming into its own as part of the wider 'Make in India' programme launched by the Modi government.

Philippines Is Building New Partnerships

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the Philippines is recalibrating its foreign policy priorities and moving away from the China-dominated outlook of his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte. Facing an aggressive China, Manila is reaching out and building substantive new partnerships that can give it enough space to manoeuvre. Manila is pursuing a multi-aligned foreign policy strategy, prioritising the strengthening and diversification of security and economic ties with both traditional and non-traditional allies. This approach is aimed at increasing its strategic options in a fluid regional and global geopolitical environment, particularly in response to increasing pressures from Beijing in the West Philippine Sea. Though the United States continues to be the primary security partner for the Philippines, it has now become imperative for Manila to broaden the ambit of its external partnerships.

Manila is pursuing a multi-aligned foreign policy strategy, prioritising the strengthening and diversification of security and economic ties with both traditional and non-traditional allies.

Underlining the acquisition of BrahMos cruise missiles as a "significant game-changer", the Philippines views them as essential in pushing back against



Chinese expansionist claims in the West Philippine Sea by bolstering the nation's coastal defence. Delhi and Manila are casting a relook at each other beyond defence transactions too. During his visit to Manila last month, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that prosperity in the region is "best served by staunch adherence to a rules-based order", highlighting the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as a foundational aspect of this approach. He said that "all parties must adhere to [UNCLOS] in its entirety, both in letter and in spirit" and reiterated "India's support to the Philippines for upholding its national sovereignty".

India's Aim Of Expanding Its Indo-Pacific Role

A new robust defence policy has been announced by Manila in recent months and it is enhancing defence ties with like-minded partners. Earlier this month, Manila, Washington and Tokyo announced joint drills in their first-ever trilateral summit and there are plans to negotiate a new status of visiting forces agreement with New Zealand. A strong partnership with India will also be an important aspect of this new foreign policy matrix of Manila as New Delhi too seeks a greater role and

voice in the wider Indo-Pacific.

India's role as a net security provider in the region is being crafted slowly but surely and India's defence supplies certainly enhance its credibility in this realm. Many regional players are looking at alternatives to the dominance of China and the US in the regional security calculus. India's naval presence and defence cooperation agreements extend its influence across the Indian Ocean and beyond. By engaging in joint exercises, capacity-building programmes, and humanitarian assistance missions, India asserts its commitment to fostering a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. New Delhi is an attractive partner given its history of defending strategic autonomy, but there have always been questions about its ability to deliver. The BrahMos delivery is an important turning point in this regard.

Many regional players are looking at alternatives to the dominance of China and the US in the regional security calculus. India's naval presence and defence cooperation agreements extend its influence across the Indian Ocean and beyond. There is another aspect of the BrahMos missiles that is quite interesting. This missile is also a statement on close defence ties between Delhi and Moscow -

the result of a joint venture between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya. And it has been sold to Manila, a close ally of the US, to manage the threat from China, an emerging strategic partner of Russia. New Delhi's unique role in contemporary geopolitics is reflected in this strange equation.

Evolving Defence Priorities

The sale of BrahMos also showcases how India's defence exports have surged in recent years, bolstered by the government's 'Make in India' initiative that is aimed at enhancing domestic defence production. By promoting indigenous capabilities and leveraging its growing defence industry, India aims to become a significant player in the global defence market from the world's largest arms importer, while simultaneously strengthening its national security and economic resilience.

Significant though it is, this one sale of BrahMos is neither going to resolve the defence challenges of Manila nor is it going to dramatically alter New Delhi's security profile in the region. But it highlights how Indian defence priorities are evolving rapidly amidst a wider regional flux.

Enhancing Cybersecurity in Outer Space

Recently, there have been several cybersecurity policy announcements relevant to outer space. The European Space Agency (ESA) came out with a policy document, *ESA Security for Space: Shaping the Future, Protecting the Present*, in November 2023. This was brought with the goal of “protect[ing] ESA critical space infrastructure.” In December 2023, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced *Space Security: Best Practices Guide* in order “to bolster mission cybersecurity efforts for both public sector and private sector space activities.”

This came against the backdrop of U.S. intelligence agencies warning that the U.S. space sector could be infiltrated by foreign spy agencies. In a directive issued in August 2023, the FBI, the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC), and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) raised an alert that certain foreign intelligence agencies were employing a series of measures, including cyberattacks and strategic investment (including joint ventures and acquisitions), to target the space industry. In terms of national security implications, the directive noted that cyberattacks or other means are aimed at “collecting sensitive data related to satellite payloads; disrupting and degrading U.S. satellite communications, remote sensing, and imaging capabilities; degrading the United States’ ability to provide critical services during emergencies; identifying vulnerabilities and targeting U.S. commercial space infrastructure during conflict.”

Earlier, in April 2023, a Cyberspace Solarium Commission (CSC) report made the case for identifying outer space as 17th critical infrastructure sector, with the goal of adopting enhanced cybersecurity measures among satellite operators. The 24-page report made stakeholder-specific recommendations including prioritizing the development of norms and standards in partnership with other like-minded partners.

Outer space security, even as it is equally critical, was less understood in terms of the vulnerabilities and gaps in securing outer space.

Cybersecurity on its own has become a serious issue for policymakers across different regions, especially those who have embraced digitalization at a rapid pace in the post-COVID period. Outer space security, even as it is equally critical, was less understood in terms of the vulnerabilities and gaps in securing outer space. But today with growing interconnectedness between different technologies, we are confronted with a combination of these threats playing out and possibly threatening our access to space.

In fact, the ESA document from November highlighted precisely the changing threat scenario. It stated that “the evolution of the threat landscape affects not only IT networks but the overall space ecosystem, including the space segment (satellites, launchers, etc.), ground segment (ground stations,

with the military as well, making the emerging space conditions quite complex. With the expanding civilian, commercial, and military use of space, any disruptions here can be quite consequential. The effects of any disruption are going to be felt across various domains including disaster warning and response, directional data, and financial transactions. Militaries

been employed quite effectively in the Russian war on Ukraine. An attack on the Starlink SpaceX terminal is a case in point.

As analysts note, cybersecurity in the context of space is essential for “maintain[ing] secure lines of communication, accurate navigation,



ground networks, payload data ground segment, etc.), and signal in space (SiS).” It adds that along with the evolution of technologies, there has been almost a simultaneous growth of the threats as well. The document noted that “even small, organized hacker groups or hacktivists are in the position to identify space systems vulnerabilities and launch hybrid attacks, usually driven by a willingness to experiment new hacking strategies or by public recognition and visibility.”

Further, infusion of major power competition and rivalry has exacerbated the complexities in outer space. Outer space seemed somewhat immune to great power rivalry for a couple of decades, after the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union ended at the conclusion of the Cold War. But lately, with the balance of power dynamics in a flux – which seems unlikely to settle anytime soon – space has become one more domain where this competition and rivalry are playing out.

There is also a growing interconnectedness between public and private sector players and the two interface

around the world will be affected as well in their ability to gather intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) data; position, navigation, timing (PNT) data, and possibly even space situational awareness (SSA) data that is so critical. All of these highlight the importance of ensuring the security of cyber systems in space.

The effects of any disruption are going to be felt across various domains including disaster warning and response, directional data, and financial transactions.

A cyberattack in the form of hacking into space systems also has the potential of criminals taking over and feeding erroneous data in a manner that allows the perpetrator to gain control over critical systems and take away confidential data. Jamming and spoofing have become quite attractive options for states and criminals alike to create disruptions and damages in space. Given that these methods are easy to execute, the low cost and plausible deniability are attractive qualities that have incentivized many perpetrators to pursue such options. Jamming and other cyber means have

and precise control.”

Making appropriate norms, standards, best practices, and regulations for ensuring better and more effective cybersecurity measures to prevent interference in satellite operations has begun to gain traction in recent years. But, as a World Economic Forum report of 2022 noted, the challenge is for policies and corresponding regulations “to keep pace with technology evolution.”

Clearly, this is not a unique problem for cyber/space security. While national level regulations may be relatively easier to develop, this is a much bigger challenge if one were to look at the state of global governance efforts. This is particularly hard given the major power rivalry and the inability to develop consensus among major powers that has come to be a major impediment in developing new rules. International partnerships especially those involving like-minded partners are also critical, for both developing new rules and measures but also in developing technological defenses against cyber threats and vulnerabilities in space.

Salman Khan firing case: Mumbai police recover two pistols, bullets from Tapi river



The Mumbai police's crime branch has recovered two pistols, magazines and bullets from the Tapi river in Gujarat during a search operation to recover weapons allegedly used in the firing outside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's residence, an official said on Tuesday.

The crime branch has recovered two pistols, three magazines and 13 bullets during the search that began on Monday, the official said.

A team of 12 officials, including 'encounter specialist' senior police inspector Daya Nayak, is still at the spot. The search is underway with the help of scuba divers, he said.

The two arrested accused, Vicky Gupta (24) and Sagar Pal (21), allegedly fired outside 58-year-old Khan's house at the Galaxy Apartment in the Bandra area of Mumbai on April 14 and then fled the spot on a motorbike.

Based on the technical surveillance, they were apprehended on April 16 from the premises of a temple at Mata No Madh near Bhuj town in Gujarat by joint teams of the Mumbai and Kutch police.

They were subsequently handed over to the Mumbai police for further investigation.

According to sources, the duo told the police during interrogation that they threw the weapon into the Tapi river from a railway bridge when they were fleeing to Bhuj in a train after reaching Surat by road from Mumbai following the firing incident.

Prima facie, the duo's main

objective behind firing outside Khan's residence was to create "terror", police had said.

The Mumbai police have declared jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and his younger brother Anmol Bishnoi as "wanted accused" in connection with the incident.

Gupta and Pal were allegedly receiving instructions from the two Bishnoi brothers, they have said.

While Lawrence Bishnoi is lodged in the Sabarmati central prison in Gujarat in another case, his brother is believed to be in Canada or the US, an official earlier said.

Supreme Court rejects Rakhi Sawant's bail plea, asks her to surrender in leaked video controversy

Bollywood sensation Rakhi Sawant finds herself in the middle of a legal battle, as her ex-husband Adil Khan Durrani revealed that the Supreme Court denied her bail request, ordering her to appear in person before a Mumbai court within four weeks.

Durrani took to his Instagram stories on Monday, providing an update on Rakhi's problems. The highest court purportedly made it clear that her bail request would not be considered until she surrendered. Presently, Rakhi is residing in Dubai, evading the legal proceedings in India.

Rakhi attempted to get a pre-arrest release, but the Supreme Court turned against her request.

The rift between Rakhi and Durrani dates back to their turbulent relationship. The couple

Academy changes rules for 2025 Oscars ceremony

Hollywood's most prestigious film awards, the Oscars, are undergoing significant changes as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences introduced updated rules and campaign protocols for its 97th edition, slated for March 2 next year.

In a bid to bolster traditional movie theatres, the Academy has revised the eligibility criteria for films, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

From now on, films must screen for at least one week in select metropolitan areas including Los Angeles County, New York City, the Bay Area, Chicago, Atlanta, and a new addition, Dallas-Fort Worth. Additionally, films must meet expanded theatrical standards in multiple US markets and international territories.

An interesting development is the convergence between the animated feature and international feature categories. Animated feature films submitted by foreign countries can now be considered for both categories, provided they meet eligibility requirements.

Composers are set to benefit from the changes as well.

The best original score category will now feature a shortlist of 20 titles instead of 15, and up to three composers can now receive individual statuettes for their contributions to a score.



Writers aiming for Oscars recognition must now provide a final shooting script, a move that may impact films with extensive improvisation.

Special awards presented during the Governors Awards ceremony are also undergoing modifications. The Irving G Thalberg Memorial Award will no longer be in the form of a bust but an Oscar statuette, while the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award has been redefined to honour humanitarian efforts promoting human welfare and addressing inequities.

Furthermore, two awards presented at the Scientific and Technical Awards have been renamed to honour technological contributions more effectively.

Key submission deadlines

have been announced, emphasising the importance of timely submissions for various categories including animated short films, documentary features, and international feature films.

The Academy has also updated campaign promotional regulations, outlining guidelines for promoting Oscars-eligible motion pictures and performances to its members.

These changes reflect the Academy's commitment to adapting to the evolving landscape of the film industry while maintaining the integrity and prestige of the Oscars. As Hollywood gears up for the 97th Oscars, anticipation is high for a ceremony that promises to celebrate excellence and innovation in filmmaking.

Sunny Leone begins shooting for her Malayalam film



Sunny Leone is super excited to be part of a Malayalam film. On Friday, she shared a glimpse of the muhurat ceremony on the sets. Taking to Instagram, Sunny posted a video featuring herself and team of the film. Sharing the video, she wrote, "I'm so excited to be part of this amazing #Malayalam film that I ended up burning my hands. Director: @pampally." Sunny Leone has left an indelible mark in Bollywood with her roles in various movies including Jism 2, Jackpot, Shootout at Wadala and Ragini MMS 2 among others. Most recently, she graced the screen in Kennedy, directed by Kashyap, alongside Rahul Bhat and Abhilash Thapliyal.

parted ways amidst several allegations from Rakhi, including accusations of extramarital affairs and domestic abuse against Durrani. On February 7, 2023, Durrani was taken from Rakhi's residence and placed under arrest. After being in jail for five months, he was eventually released. Presently, Durrani has tied the knot with former Bigg

Boss contestant Somi Khan.

According to reports by Bollywood Bubble, Durrani lodged multiple FIRs against Rakhi and threatened to have her imprisoned as soon as she arrived back in India. He asserted in March of this year that Rakhi's four-month stay in Dubai was a consequence of the legal battles he had initiated against her.

Kit Harington says he's 'not so interested' in playing heroic roles after 'Game of Thrones'

British star Kit Harington says it's tough to play a hero on screen and that's why he has consciously sought that he would enact 'anti-hero-ish' roles after Game of Thrones.

The actor rose to international prominence with his portrayal of the upright warrior Jon Snow, one of the pivotal characters in Game of Thrones, the HBO epic fantasy show that concluded in 2019 after eight seasons.

Ever since he wrapped Game of Thrones, Harington said he had lost interest in playing the classic hero. "I'm not so interested in heroic roles, and even if I am, they have to be pretty anti-hero-ish," he said.

The actor got his wish with Rod Blackhurst's Blood for Dust, a neo-Western crime thriller set



in snowy Montana. In his latest film, Harington plays Ricky, a sociopathic drug-slitting arms dealer sporting a handlebar moustache and gold chain.

"He's sort of a devil-on-the-shoulder character, the antagonist who's with you all the way through. He's like a good-time guy in a bad world," he said.

Big B plays Ashwatthama in mythological sci-fi epic 'Kalki 2898 AD'

After the recent poster featuring Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan, the makers of the upcoming mythology sci-fi film 'Kalki 2898 AD' unveiled a new video asset. The special video introduces the character of Big B as Ashwatthama.

The video was unveiled in a projection in Nemawar, Madhya Pradesh, along with an exclusive glimpse on Star Sports amid the ongoing IPL 2024.

The video features multiple Indian languages spoken, with Amitabh Bachchan in his Ashwatthama avatar speaking Hindi, alongside a child conversing in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada.

The video shows the



character of a child inquiring Big B about who he is. Big B who's shrouded in bandages has different wounds, one from a gunshot, and tells the kid that his time has come to fight the ultimate battle.

The film also stars Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and

Disha Patani in pivotal roles. The film, helmed by Nag Ashwin, made waves after its groundbreaking debut at San Diego Comic-Con last year.

The film is bankrolled by Vyjayanthi Movies and is a mythology-inspired sci-fi spectacle set in the future.

Ranveer Singh gives shoutout to Deepika Padukone's Lady Singham look, calls her 'sherni'

Deepika Padukone left everyone impressed with her new look as the lady Singham from Rohit Shetty's 'Singham Again'.

Husband and actor Ranveer Singh can't stop gushing over his wife and gave a shout-out to his 'sherni'. Taking to Instagram stories, Ranveer shared Deepika's poster and wrote, "Sherni".

Building more anticipation about the upcoming action thriller 'Singham Again', Rohit Shetty treated fans with a new glimpse of "Lady Singham" Deepika on April 19.

Rohit took to Instagram and shared a motion poster of Deepika.

The video captured Deepika, who is donning the role of fierce Shakti Shetty in the film, striking Ajay Devgn's iconic singham pose.

Sharing the poster, he wrote, "MY HERO... REEL MEIN BHI AUR REAL MEIN BHI LADY SINGHAM!!! @deepikapadukone." Last year, on the occasion of the first day of Navratri unveiled the first look of Deepika as the lady cop Shakti Shetty.

Taking to Instagram, Rohit

shared a couple of pictures which he captioned, "NAARI SITA KA BHI ROOP HAI AUR DURGA KA BHI... MEET THE MOST BRUTAL AND VIOLENT OFFICER OF OUR COP UNIVERSE... SHAKTI SHETTY... MY LADY SINGHAM... DEEPIKA PADUKONE." In the poster, Deepika donned the cop uniform for the first time.

She is seen sitting in front of what it seems like a burning vehicle and holding the guy with a gun in his mouth.

In the second post, the 'Pathaan' actor is seen holding a gun with a bandage on her hand and a smile on her face.

Helmed by Rohit Shetty 'Singham Again' also stars Kareena Kapoor Khan, Deepika Padukone, Akshay Kumar, Tiger Shroff, and Ranveer Singh in the lead roles. 'Singham Again' is the third instalment of the super-hit franchise and the film is all set to hit theatres on the occasion of Independence Day 2024.

'Singham' was released in 2011, starring Kajal Aggarwal and Prakash Raj in lead roles,



followed by 'Singham Returns' in 2014. Both projects were declared box office hits.

Meanwhile, Deepika will

also be seen in the sci-fi action film 'Kalki 2898 AD' opposite Prabhas.

Ranveer, on the other hand,

Ranveer will also be reprising his role of Simmba in Rohit Shetty's cop drama 'Singham Again'.

He will also headline Farhan Akhtar's 'Don 3'. Don 3' will arrive in 2025.

While announcing the film, Farhan requested the audience to give the same love to Ranveer as they showered on previous Don installments.

"In 1978, a character created by Salim-Javed and portrayed by Amitabh Bachchan with effortless elan, captured the imagination of theatregoers across the country. That enigmatic character was Don. In 2006, Don was reimagined and brought to life by Shah Rukh Khan in his own irresistibly charming way," he wrote.

"The time has now come to take the legacy of Don forward and joining us in this new interpretation will be an actor whose talent and versatility I have long admired. We hope that you will show him the love you have so graciously and generously shown to Mr Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan," the post further read.

That door is now closed: Sunil Narine rules out T20 World Cup amid purple patch in IPL

Kolkata

Former West Indies bowling all-rounder Sunil Narine, who is having a terrific IPL season, won't be reversing his retirement decision for the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and USA, insisting that the "door is now closed".

The 35-year-old last played for the West Indies in a T20 International in August 2019 before retiring from international cricket in November last year to focus on franchise T20 leagues around the world.

But owing to his sensational form with both bat and ball for Kolkata Knight Riders this IPL season, attempts were being made to convince Narine to reverse his decision for the T20 World Cup.

"I'm truly flattered and humbled that my performances recently have moved many people to publicly express their wish for me to come out of retirement and play in the upcoming T20 World Cup," Narine wrote in Instagram post.

He asserted that he has made peace with his decision and will be supporting the team from home.

"I have made peace with that



decision and whilst I never wish to disappoint, that door is now closed and I will be supporting the guys who take the field in June for West Indies.

"Guys who have worked hard over the past few months and deserve to show our wonderful fans that they are capable of winning another title. I wish you all the best," he added.

Narine, who has been a key member of KKR since 2012, is seventh on the list of leading run-scorers in the ongoing IPL season, having scored 286 runs, including an unbeaten century against Rajasthan Royals last week -- his maiden T20 ton.

With the ball, the off-spinner is KKR's joint-leading wicket-taker with nine scalps at an average of 22.11 and an economy rate of 7.10.

Narine's purple patch has compelled West Indies captain Rovman Powell to encourage the spinner to come out of retirement for the home World Cup.

"For the last 12 months, I've been whispering in his ears, he's blocked out everyone. Asked (Kieron) Pollard, (Dwayne) Bravo, (Nicholas) Pooran, hopefully before they select the team, they can crack his code," Powell had said last week.

Virat Kohli has capability of getting 40-ball-100; should open with Rohit : Ganguly

New Delhi

Virat Kohli is very much capable of getting a 40-ball-100 like Travis Head and he should open the batting with India skipper Rohit Sharma in the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas, former captain Sourav Ganguly said on Monday.

Kohli recently scored a 67-ball-100 against Rajasthan Royals but received flak because of his strike-rate at a time when openers from other teams are taking anything between 39 to 50 balls to hit the three-figure mark.

"Virat Kohli has got the capability of getting a 40-ball 100 also. As I said at the start, India, with the talent they have, you just need to go and hit. Mindset should be to hit and



then we'll see what happens after 5-6 overs," Ganguly told PTI during a select media interaction.

While Ganguly would like

the selection committee, coach Rahul Dravid and Rohit to take decisions in the best interest of the team during the T20 World Cup, he would ideally like to see the Kohli-Rohit opening combination.

"If you ask me and it's just my personal opinion and I'm not saying that the selectors should do it, because at the end of the day, it's their call, Rohit and Virat should open."

After a magnificent home Test series against England, has Yashasvi Jaiswal fallen off the radar in terms of T20 World Cup selection, taking his recent IPL form into account?

"I don't think Yashasvi's name has dropped too far down the ladder. He's a special player," Ganguly replied.

Virat Kohli fined 50% of match fees for IPL Code of Conduct breach



New Delhi

Star batter Virat Kohli was on Monday fined half of his match fees for showing dissent towards umpire's decision during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Kohli was given out after he was caught off a waist-height full-toss delivery Harshit Rana during RCB's one-run loss to KKR at Eden Gardens on Sunday.

The Hawk-Eye system that measures no-balls for height came into play. The delivery, which seemed to be dipping on the batter, was just above the waist when he made contact with the ball.

The star batter, who made 18 off seven balls, was standing just outside the crease at that moment.

TV umpire Michael Gough checked for the height and as per the Hawk-Eye tracking, the ball would have passed Kohli's waist at a height of 0.92 m had he been standing and upright at the crease.

Kohli left the field an

agitated man after having an animated discussion with the on-field umpire.

The frustrated Kohli knocked the waste-bin located near team dressing room in anger.

"Mr Virat Kohli, Batter, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, has been fined 50 per cent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during Match 36 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata on April 21, 2024," an IPL statement read.

"Kohli committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offence and accepted the match referee's sanction.

"For Level 1 breaches of the code of conduct, the match referee's decision is final and binding," the statement added.

A Level 1 offence under Article 2.8 of the IPL's Code of Conduct refers to "showing dissent at an umpire's decision".

D Gukesh creates history, becomes youngest Indian to win Candidates Chess tournament in Canada

Toronto

India's 17-year-old Grandmaster D Gukesh scripted history by winning the Candidates Chess Tournament here to become the youngest ever challenger to the world title, bettering a record created by the legendary Garry Kasparov 40 years ago.

Gukesh played out an easy draw with American Hikaru Nakamura in the 14th and final round to finish with nine out of a possible 14 points in the tournament that is held to decide the challenger to the world champion.

The triumph entitles Gukesh a clash against reigning world champion Ding Liren of China in the last quarter of the year.

The Chennai-based teen bettered Kasparov's record by quite a distance as the Russian great was 22 when he qualified in 1984 to clash with compatriot Anatoly Karpov.

"So relieved and so happy. I was following this crazy game (between Fabio Caruana and Ian Nepomniachtchi), and then I went for a walk with my second (Gregorz Gajewsky), I think that helped," Gukesh said after winning.

Gukesh also won a cash award of 88,500 Euros (approx Rs 78.5



lakh). The total prize fund of the Candidates was 5,00,000 Euros.

He became only the second Indian after the great Viswanathan Anand to win the prestigious tournament. Five-time world champion Anand's triumph came in 2014.

"Congratulations to @DGukesh for becoming the youngest challenger. The @WacaChess family is so proud of what you have done. I'm personally very proud of how you played and handled tough situations. Enjoy the moment," Anand posted on 'X' to congratulate the youngster, who like him, also hails from Chennai.

Needing at least a draw, Gukesh gave nothing away to Nakamura, a clear signal that the teenager is ready for the big stage and is going to be the next biggest star in the chess world.

The black pieces did not matter much as Nakamura was at sea in the Queen's Gambit Accepted and did not find any ways to pursue playing for an advantage.

Gukesh won a pawn and Nakamura had to find the path to equality in the ensuing rook and opposite coloured Bishops endgame. The game lasted till move 71 but the result was never in doubt.

With Gukesh ending on 9 points, all eyes were on the match between American Caruana and Russia's Nepomniachtchi.

"...those 15 minutes were probably the most stressful of this entire tournament, I was watching the commentary for sometime and then me and Gajewsky (his trainer) went for a walk and then my father came running," Gukesh revealed.

"Obviously the support system is huge, coming to my team I would not like to take their names but they know how grateful I am to them," he said.

The American outplayed Nepomniachtchi right from the opening and enjoyed a nearly winning position for several moves. However, the clock did the talking here as Caruana blundered on 39th move to allow a playable position.

Things were far from over though, Caruana built his position all over again and was close to winning a second time when again his clock deceived him and he failed to find the correct continuation.

The resulting position was a drawn queen and pawns endgame where Caruana kept pressing to no avail.

Had any of these two players

won, the tournament would have needed a tie-break as Gukesh and the winner would have ended up in joint lead.

Caruana, Nepomniachtchi and Nakamura all ended on an identical 8.5 points for the shared second place while Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa ended fifth on seven points defeating Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan.

Vidit Gujrathi played out a quick draw with Firouzja Alireza of France in the final round to end on the sixth spot with six points in all.

Alireza finished seventh on five points while Abasov ended last on 3.5 points in all.

Gukesh has been making waves for a while now after becoming the third youngest in chess history to earn the Grandmaster title at the age of 12.

Last year, he won a silver medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games.

The dates and venue for the world championship are yet to be finalised.

"I haven't really thought about it a lot I just got to know the result, the main strategy will be to play good moves. Really look forward to all the preparation and being there," Gukesh said.

Army rower Balraj Panwar secures Paris berth

New Delhi

Balraj Panwar secured India's first Paris Olympics quota in rowing by finishing third in the men's single sculls event of the World Asian and Oceanian Olympic and Paralympic Qualification Regatta in Chungju, South Korea, today. The 25-year-old, who narrowly missed out on a bronze medal in the Asian Games last year, clocked 7 minutes, 1.27 seconds in the 2000m race. The top five made the cut.

Ujjwal Kumar and Arvind Singh finished third in the men's lightweight double sculls, in

which India participated at the Tokyo Games, but failed to qualify for the Olympics as only



the top-two earned quotas.

Asian Para Games silver medallists Anita and Narayana qualified for the Paralympic Games in mixed double sculls event.

Maintaining weight will be a challenge: Vinesh Phogat

Bishkek

Locking the Olympics quota would put Vinesh Phogat at ease for a few days but the Indian wrestler said maintaining weight after having dropped to the lowest class of 50kg will be a huge challenge in the build-up to the Paris Games. Vinesh dished out an impressive show at the Asian Olympic Qualifiers, where she did not concede a single point in an easy draw and sealed her third consecutive Olympics quota.

Vinesh lost crucial time due to the protest against former Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. In that period, Antim Panghal secured a quota place in the 53kg



category — Vinesh's pet weight division. The 29-year-old had no option but to switch the weight category to ensure that she does not miss the bus to Olympics.

"I will have to manage my weight a lot better. I have brought myself down to 50kg after very long so I will try and maintain this

as much as I can," Vinesh said.

"It's not easy for me not to put on weight because my muscle mass is very high. Because of that, I gain weight easily. It doesn't matter how fit I am, I still gain weight because I have a lot of muscle mass. I have four months left and every day is very important. I am happy that I can go to the Olympics. Whether I go in the 50kg category or in the 53kg category, it will be decided in the trials," she added.

Vinesh suffered heartbreaks at the Rio and Tokyo Games where she was eliminated early despite being a medal favourite. "I just want to try my best. I just want an Olympics medal," she said.

अक्रॉस स्टेट एंटरटेनमेंट प्रस्तुत

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