

aPeace elusive without unanimity

WORLD history of the past 400 years shows that geographically large nations have been relatively benign or far less aggressive compared to countries with smaller territories. The latter have demonstrated a peculiar penchant for worldwide expansion — conquering, killing, plundering and profiting while redrawing maps and dividing weak nations. Take today's 10 biggest nations in terms of area — Russia, Canada, the US, China, Brazil, Australia, India, Argentina, Kazakhstan and Algeria. They are no match for nine particular countries/empires — Portugal, Spain, Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands — when it comes to overseas aggression and transcontinental imperial conquests. Barring the post-1945 hostile posturing of the US and the post-1949 Chinese belligerence, the 'big 10' have largely avoided any activity aimed at intercontinental usurpation. Today's Russia-Ukraine conflict, however, is an aberration; it is an exception to the rule owing to a combination of factors for which neither Russia nor Ukraine is solely responsible. Till 1991, both were part of the Soviet Union and never did their rulers resort to a ruthless assault on territories abroad. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was an aberration as well. Among the other constituents of the 'big 10', Australia and Canada were British dominions, whereas Argentina and Brazil were under Spanish and Portuguese empires for hundreds of years. Algeria came out of French clutches after being vanquished in the 19th century. India was partitioned by the British, while the 1991 breakup of the USSR led to the birth of landlocked Kazakhstan and other nations.

Contextually, one understands how and why the West felt the need for an overarching umbrella to launch a collective attack like that on Yugoslavia in 1999, and on Iraq and Afghanistan in the beginning of this century. Now, it is the bloc of nations under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union that is keen to prolong the Russia-Ukraine conflict at the behest of warmongers. In the midst of the war in eastern Europe comes the proposal to hold the Ukraine peace summit at Burgenstock, Switzerland, in June. On the face of it, this is good news, yet Russia's reported absence/non-participation makes the summit a potential non-starter because no peace move can fructify without the presence of all belligerents on the high table. Russia's exclusion would only result in a stillborn agenda. Germany, Europe's most populous and second largest country, is a key member of the anti-Russia front of the West. Berlin needs to recall its own humiliation at the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, when the German delegation was threatened that war would be resumed in five days if the draft treaty was not signed instantly. German signatories were not even allowed to sit with the Anglo-French delegates at the negotiating table. Germany must also not forget its bifurcation after World War II. Having been among the worst sufferers of 20th-century wars, Germany must put its foot down to abort any peace summit without Russia's participation and not provoke Moscow into causing mutually assured destruction. Of late, political stalwarts of the West have virtually stooped to the level of foul-mouthed street urchins while castigating their opponents. Germany, Europe's most populous and second largest country, is a key member of the anti-Russia front of the West. Berlin needs to recall its own humiliation at the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, when the German delegation was threatened that war would be resumed in five days if the draft treaty was not signed instantly.

Right to apprenticeship should be a priority in India

Skill policies and schemes need a big overhaul on the lines of Swiss and Germanic models, in which the youth and the industry take centre stage.

IN its manifesto for the 2024 elections, the Congress announced a right to apprenticeship (RA) for all post-secondary certificate/degree/diploma holders. It guarantees all under-25-year-olds the right to apprenticeship with firms where the youth can get training and work together, based on the duality principle of the Germanic skilling model (involving schooling and simultaneous work experience). India has always had a supply-driven vocational skilling ecosystem, where youth are getting educated but not 'skilled' in a true sense, where there is very little employer connect and no requirement for internship or apprenticeship. This calls for a scrutiny of the performance of the government's skill development initiatives in India and why reforms like an RA are a step in the right direction.

Vocational education and training (VET) has been neglected in India for over half a century until the 2000s (just as school education had remained neglected in India's planning strategy) — the costs of which we continue to pay today. In 1991, when India's economic reforms began, literacy was 51 per cent — or half of India's population was illiterate, mostly concentrated in the agriculture sector. Although school education received a new-found emphasis in public spending in the 1990s, VET still continued to be neglected (although that was not the case for technical higher education). The 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-12) was the first Plan that had a chapter on skill development.

The result is that India's manufacturing and services workforce still has very low levels of education. Worse, the National Sample Survey Office's Employment-Unemployment Survey (2011-12) says 2.2 per cent of the workforce had received formal VET. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data shows that the percentage of formally vocationally trained individuals decreased from 2.2 per cent (10.43 million) in 2011-12 to 2 per cent (9.14 million) in 2017-18, but in five years, rose to 3.7 per cent (21.05 million) in 2022-23. So, who have been added as 'vocationally trained'?

PLFS 2017-18 shows that 22 per cent of total vocationally trained undertook less than six-month courses, and that share has now risen to 37 per cent. More worryingly, in 2017, 29 per cent individuals used to take two-year or longer courses, now

reduced to 14.29 per cent. The VET duration of Skill India Mission courses is very short (in some cases, only 10 days). Since 1961, India has had the Apprentices Act, which requires all registered firms to accept apprentices for at least one year or more. Ten years ago, about 250,000 apprentices existed in registered non-farm enterprises. In August 2016, the government of India launched the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), worth Rs 10,000 crore. Though the objective was to train 50 lakh apprentices by 2020, only 20 lakh could be trained by 2022. Out of the envisioned Rs 10,000 crore, only around Rs 650 crore was disbursed to



states between 2017 and 2022. NAPS-2 was launched in 2023; no figures for the same are currently available. An International Labour Organisation study in 2022 concluded that the amendments to the 1961 Act have contributed to an increase in the number of apprentices in India. In a workforce of 570 million in 2022-23 (PLFS), the apprentices were just over a half million, a rise from 2.5 lakh 10 years ago. Clearly, the amendments have not worked wonders. This is not surprising, given that practically the entire private corporate sector has largely ignored the apprenticeship schemes. Only central and state public enterprises have tended to fulfil their obligations. MSMEs still continue to ignore the scheme. The result: Germany, with a 46-million workforce, has at least 6 million apprentices; India has, by contrast, half a million. The difference arises from the industry/employer involvement in pre-employment training — which makes India's approach supply-driven, but successful VET programmes around the globe have been demand-driven. What India's youth need

urgently, as 6 million or more join the labour force each year, and over 100 million wait in the wings as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), is a pathway to work from their education, whether the education is of a general academic nature or vocational or technical. This requires that the Central Government think seriously and urgently about involving employers/industry in the skilling process.

The urgency arises from the following facts: The India Skills Report 2021 argues that nearly half of India's graduates are unemployable. Open unemployment was barely 2.1 per cent in 2012 and had already nearly tripled to 6.1 per cent in 2018, the highest rate in 45 years of India's labour force surveys. The number of unemployed was one crore in 2012; it tripled to three crore by 2018. The youth unemployment rates went through the roof for those with middle school (Class VIII) education, rising from 4.5 per cent to 13.7 per cent; those with secondary education (Class X) from 5.9 per cent to 14.4 per cent; and with higher secondary (Class XII) education from 10.8 per cent to 23.8 per cent. Educated unemployment worsened sharply. For graduates, the unemployment rate rose from 19.2 per cent to 35.8 per cent; and for postgraduates from 21.3 per cent to 36.2 per cent (2022-23).

In the light of educated unemployment, a lack of takers of skill programmes, low-quality training and abysmal placement rate, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive overhaul of the skill ecosystem. India, suffering from unemployment among the highly educated, in the future is moving towards the problem of skill underutilisation and overeducation (or 'degree mania'). Mere rhetoric and inflated government statistics will no longer suffice. It is imperative that the government prioritises quality over quantity, ensuring that every individual emerges from these programmes truly equipped to contribute meaningfully to the workforce. Anything less would be a disservice to the aspirations of millions seeking a better future through skill development.

Skill policies and schemes have failed; they need a big overhaul on the lines of Swiss and Germanic skill models, in which the youth and the industry take centre stage. A Right to Apprenticeship for every youth should be an urgent priority.

Vaccine withdrawal

AstraZeneca can't evade responsibility

UK-based pharmaceutical major AstraZeneca has initiated global withdrawal of its Covid-19 vaccine, which was sold and administered as Covishield in India and Vaxzevria in Europe, amid a furore over its admission of a rare side effect, thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS), which can cause blood clots and a low blood platelet count. Citing commercial reasons, the firm has attributed its decision to a 'surplus of available updated vaccines'. AstraZeneca has claimed that the vaccine withdrawal is not linked to the court case it is facing and that the timing is just a coincidence. However, the move is being seen as a damage-control exercise reeking of desperation.

The company's legal troubles are not going to end anytime soon as TTS has been linked to at least 81 deaths in the UK as well as hundreds of serious injuries. Seeking damages, more than 50 purported victims and their relatives have moved the High Court of Justice in London. In India, the Supreme Court has



agreed to hear a petition pertaining to the AstraZeneca vaccine, which was manufactured here by the Pune-based

Serum Institute of India. The petitioner has sought that an expert panel be set up to investigate the side effect in question and that the government must provide compensation in cases where individuals died or became disabled after being inoculated.

It is not enough for AstraZeneca to assert that patient safety is its highest priority. Vaxzevria and Covishield undoubtedly played a major role in saving millions of lives and controlling the global pandemic, but the health problems caused by TTS cannot be overlooked. A thorough probe is the need of the hour. The regulatory authorities, which apparently failed to maintain stringent standards to ensure safe use of the vaccine, must also be brought to book. At stake is the people's trust in vaccine safety in general, besides the accountability and credibility of vaccine makers.

The enduring lesson of strategic restraint

Powerful nations employing disproportionate force to achieve tactical objectives need to introspect.

IN 1999, Pakistan's Kargil intrusions challenged India's territorial integrity. Emboldened by its nuclear tests conducted the year before, Pakistan aimed to internationalise Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint, assuming that its newly acquired capability would deter India from a full-scale military response, forcing early mediation and allowing it to keep the intruded territory across the Line of Control (LoC). To resolve the unprecedented crisis, India categorically rebutted any diplomatic efforts proposed by Pakistan until the intruders were completely evicted. A long period of diplomatic parleys would have afforded adequate time for the Pakistani intruders to consolidate their positions and indulge in excessive nuclear rhetoric to pressure India to accept the new alignment. Accordingly, the Cabinet Committee on Security instructed the armed forces on May 18, 1999, to clear the intrusions employing air power offensively but laying down a term of reference not to cross the LoC. India's declaratory self-imposed caveat of not crossing the LoC, reflecting its policy of 'strategic restraint', was aimed at garnering international acceptance of a responsible nation avoiding escalation and prioritising peace. This could also help lift sanctions imposed by the global community after it had conducted nuclear tests in 1998, though this stance left many questioning the policy. Not surprisingly, it created a paradox, wherein India wanted to evict the intruders from its territory but was not ready to enter Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), which was under Pakistan's illegal control since 1948. It was tantamount to accepting the LoC as the international border and abdicating its claim to PoK. This limitation bolstered Pakistan's belief that India feared escalation because of the former's nuclear capability. The restriction also caused tremendous

consternation among the Army and the Indian Air Force (IAF), as it involved frontal attacks along the expected approaches, causing larger Army casualties and curtailing the radius of the circuit of IAF combat aircraft. On being explained the adverse implications for the conduct of military operations, as the contingency might arise to cross the LoC, the National Security Adviser diluted the restriction, stating publicly that not crossing the LoC holds good today, but not sure what would happen tomorrow. The damage was, however, done, with Pakistan perceiving it as a meek military response.

Pakistan raised the spectre of a nuclear confrontation, with its Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, declaring its newfound confidence in countering an Indian attack on equal terms. Days later, Pakistan issued an official warning of retaliation, implicitly with its nuclear weapons. These threats were primarily aimed at the international community, especially the US and other Western nations, to pressure them to restrain India's military push. However, New Delhi dismissed these threats, well aware of Islamabad's limited nuclear capability — possessing only a few undeveloped nuclear weapons with restricted delivery systems sans a proper command structure for using them. Lt Gen Prakash Menon, former Military Adviser to the National Security Council Secretariat, aptly remarked: "It was with a non-existent capability around which Pakistan wove its paradigm of a nuclear umbrella, to prevent escalation as well as leverage the nuclear flashpoint card internationally."

The international community, initially swayed by Pakistan's rhetoric, saw through it as India presented concrete evidence of the Pakistani army's involvement in the intrusions. The shift in the narrative compelled Pakistan to tone down its rhetoric. Reacting to Islamabad's threats of more

incursions, New Delhi hinted at military action across the border. The Army's success in recapturing the intruded heights reflected the hollowness of Pakistan's nuclear rhetoric. India carefully calibrated strategic troops posturing close to the border and relocating naval assets to the Arabian Sea to create a strategic asymmetry along the entire Indo-Pak front to achieve escalation dominance, should there be a need for war. While the Western media overlaid



the nuclear threat, Pakistan's attempt to link its actions to a potential nuclear flashpoint failed. Instead, it came under intense international pressure to withdraw. As the Indian military operations gathered momentum, Pakistan sought an exit strategy. Its Prime Minister visited Washington in July 1999 to meet then US President Bill Clinton, who categorically rejected Pakistan's repeated pleas for direct US intervention in the J&K dispute and called again for withdrawal. Pakistan eventually agreed, and the Indian Army accepted a phased withdrawal on its terms and conditions. The Pakistani army withdrew by July 17, barring three areas, which were cleared by the Indian Army by July 25. On July

26, the Indian Army declared the successful conclusion of the Kargil War. The Kargil conflict marked a strategic shift in the international perception of India, whose measured response, exercise of strategic restraint and prioritisation of regional stability over escalation were viewed positively. The US unequivocally favoured India, with its Congress recommending the suspension of loans from international financial institutions to Pakistan until it withdrew its troops. The G8 countries and the European Union adopted a similar stance. Russia was more supportive, while Pakistan's trusted ally, China, maintained a neutral stand. Most of the other countries showed even-handedness, asking for restraint, while Saudi Arabia and Iran sought UN intervention. The saga of the unparalleled courage and bravery of Indian soldiers was superbly supplemented by politico-diplomatic initiatives bolstering India's international standing as a responsible country. Pakistan was humiliated not only on the Kargil battlefield, but also globally. The Kargil conflict highlighted the contrasting perspectives of India and Pakistan. India conceptualised a limited conventional war as an option below the nuclear threshold. Pakistan, however, believed that its newly acquired nuclear capability had deterred a stronger Indian response, emboldening it to continue using terrorism as an instrument of state policy, as evidenced by the terrorist attacks on Parliament in December 2001 and the Mumbai terror attack in November 2008. Whether an all-out war in 1999 could have prevented major terror attacks originating in Pakistan remains debatable. The strategy of restraint can be a powerful tool of a strong nation and not a sign of weakness, as it underscores a country's confidence in its long-term strategic approach.

Sensex, Nifty open in green; Bharat Petroleum shares gains 4%

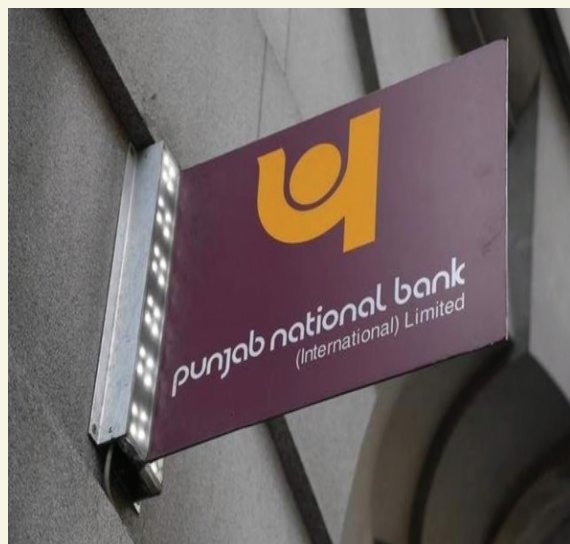
New Delhi Benchmark stock indices opened in green on Friday led by gains in auto stocks and a strong performance from Bharat Petroleum after its Q4 results. The S&P BSE Sensex added 523.61 points and rose by 0.4% to 72,927.78, while NSE Nifty50 gained 151.15 and climbed 0.69% to 22,108.65 points as of 10 AM. Shares of Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) saw a rise of 4% despite falling short of fourth-quarter profit expectations. The company's shares received a boost from its announcement of issuing bonus shares. The auto sector also saw a rise of 0.9%, with Bajaj Auto and Hero MotoCorp leading the gains with a jump of 2%. Although the Sensex and Nifty were up for the day, they have each dropped around 1.75% this week, with the Nifty remaining 2% away from erasing its gains for the year and the Sensex up by less than a percent so far in 2024. "Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) are playing safe and reducing their positions ahead of upcoming election phases and vote count," Deepak Jasani, head of retail research at HDFC Securities told Reuters. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) sold Indian shares worth \$1.2 billion in May, marking the highest FPI sale since January. Market technicals suggest weakness, with the Nifty50 slipping below its 100-day moving average for the first time in six months on Thursday before recovering on Friday. Ten out of thirteen major sectors saw gains on Friday. Energy stocks were up by 1%, led by a 3% increase in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited following its March-quarter results. "While BPCL missed its profit estimate, we expect the company to post better profitability than peers in fiscal year 2025 and 2026, due to likely margin improvement across refining and marketing segments," said Jefferies, reiterating its "buy" recommendation. BPCL was the top Nifty 50 gainer for the day.

Domestic mobile market heading towards premium segment

NEW DELHI. Domestic mobile market witnessed a significant shift towards the premium segment in Q1, 2024, as for the first time ever premium smartphones captured a remarkable 20% share in terms of volume and a 51% share of the overall market value. This reflects a growing consumer preference for high-end devices (priced at Rs 30,000 and above). As per the Counterpoint's Monthly India Smartphone Tracker, Samsung and Apple maintain their dominance in value segment, holding 25% and 19% market shares, respectively. "During the quarter, India's smartphone market reached its highest ever Q1 value. The growth was driven by the strengthening trend of premiumization, with consumers upgrading to higher-value smartphones across price tiers..." Factors driving this trend include affordable financing schemes, better value for trade-ins, and bundled schemes, along with the demand for top-tier features such as AI, Gaming, and imaging enhancements," said Senior Research Analyst Shilpi Jain.

PNB profit rises 160% to Rs 3K cr on NPA fall

MUMBAI: Third-largest public sector lender Punjab National Bank on Thursday said its net income for the March quarter zoomed 160% to Rs 3,010 crore on improved asset quality and higher loan disbursements. For the full year ending March 2024, the New Delhi headquartered bank reported a net income of Rs 8,245 crore recording a robust 228.8% growth from Rs 2,507 crore posted in FY23. In the reporting quarter, gross non-performing assets (NPAs) fell to 5.73% from 8.74% last year and from 6.24% a quarter ago, net NPAs plunged to 0.73% from 2.72% a year-ago and from 0.96% in the previous quarter, the bank management led by Atul Kumar Goel, the chief executive, told reporters in a concall. In absolute terms, gross NPAs declined by Rs 20,985 crore to Rs 56,343 crore from Rs 77,328 crore in March 2023 and net NPAs plunged by Rs 15,786 crore from March 2023 to Rs 6,799 crore as of March 2024, he said. While the net interest



margin stood at 3.25%, total yield on advances improved 50 bps to 8.44 percent in Q4 and by 112 bps to 8.28% in FY24. Net interest income increased to Rs 10,363 crore in Q4 from Rs 10,293 crore in Q3 and Rs 9,499 crore in Q4FY23 showing an improvement of 9.1% year-on-year. During FY24, the same rose 16.2% to Rs 40,083 crore from Rs 34,492 crore in FY23. Credit cost improved by 91 bps from 1.72% in Q4FY23 to 0.81% in Q4 FY24 and by 63 bps from 2.03% in FY23 to 1.4% in FY24, while the provision coverage ratio improved by 849 bps on-year to 95.39%, the slippage ratio improved on-year by 159 bps to 0.72 in FY24 from 2.31 in FY23.

Akshaya Tritiya 2024: Digital gold vs gold jewellery. Which sparkles brighter

New Delhi Akshaya Tritiya, a festival symbolising prosperity, is here again, and with it comes the customary tradition of purchasing gold. This annual celebration marks a time when many believe that buying gold will bring wealth and a secure future. In recent times, alongside the customary purchase of physical gold jewellery, the option of investing in digital gold has also become available. Several fintech platforms now provide the option of buying digital gold, offering an alternative to traditional gold purchases. This includes options such as Sovereign Gold Bonds, Gold ETFs, and Gold FOFs, where the option to purchase digital gold, starting from as little as Rs 1, is available. So, the question arises if you should invest in digital gold or stick with the timeless allure of gold jewellery, this Akshaya Tritiya? Investing in digital gold can serve as a stable hedge against

inflation and market fluctuations. It offers the same benefits as physical gold but without the additional expenses. Market expert Dr Ravi Singh told Business Today that investing in digital gold provides an alternative to traditional gold jewellery as it offers a convenient and secure way to avoid storage costs and the risk of theft. "Transactions occur at market prices, ensuring fairness. Sovereign gold bonds, with a fixed annual interest rate of 2.5%, add to its appeal," said Singh. However, Shivam Batra, CEO of Rajni Jewellers had a slightly different opinion and said that digital gold may suit individuals lacking



storage options or with short-term investment goals. "For those seeking enduring jewellery pieces that can be cherished for years, quality, handcrafted gold jewellery is unmatched," he said. "In India, gold signifies more than just an investment; it embodies our cultural heritage. It has

always represented prosperity and tradition. Despite this year's rapid price increases, it's crucial to view this positively. The rise in prices reflects not only market conditions but also the inherent value of gold as a tangible, enduring asset," Piyush Gupta, director at PP Jewellers by Pawan Gupta told Business Today. Ultimately, the choice between digital gold and gold jewellery hinges on individual needs and preferences. For Akshaya Tritiya, your decision will depend on your investment horizon, risk tolerance, and desire for a physical asset. Digital gold offers ease of purchase, storage, and potentially lower costs, while jewellery provides the tangible satisfaction of owning a physical piece.

Air India Express expects operations to normalise within next two days

New Delhi Tata-owned Air India Express operations began to improve on Friday as more cabin crew members returned to duty following the disruption caused by a recent strike, which has now been called off. A section of the cabin crew went on strike on Tuesday night, leading to the cancellation of over 170 flights. However, the strike was called off on Thursday evening, and the airline reinstated the 30 cabin crew members who earlier went on mass sick leave without notice. Air India Express, which normally operates approximately 380 flights daily, had to scale back operations due to the strike. An official told news agency PTI on Friday that normal operations are anticipated to resume within the next two days. The cabin crew members who



participated in the strike are now rejoining the workforce, and the airline is assisting them in obtaining the necessary fitness certificates required to resume their duties, the official told PTI. The official also said that most international flights are scheduled in the evening, and with more cabin crew available, operations in this segment are expected to improve starting from

Friday. The airline operates 120 international flights and 260 domestic services daily, though the number of flights may vary on certain days. In response to the cabin crew shortage, Air India Express had to cancel 85 flights on Thursday, which represents around 23% of its total daily capacity. Following the resolution of the strike on Thursday, the airline announced to restore its flight schedule and apologised to affected passengers for the disruptions caused. Air India Express, which is currently in the process of merging with AIX Connect (formerly AirAsia India), employs around 6,000 individuals, including over 2,000 cabin crew members.

Shift in Byju's strategy: Does away with sales target, offers incentives, cuts course fees

BENGALURU. Cash-strapped Byju's has slashed its product prices by at least 30%. Sources said the annual subscription for the Byju's Learning App is now available at yearly price of Rs 12,000, while Byju's Classes and Byju's Tuition Centres (BTC) are priced at Rs 24,000 and Rs 36,000, respectively, for a complete year. This comes after the company's founder Byju Raveendran took over daily operational responsibilities of Byju's after nearly four years. In a meeting with over 1,500 sales associates and managers, Raveendran announced a shift in the company's sales strategy. As per sources, the firm has completed its transition from a push-based to a pull-based sales model. Managers will now act as coaches, focused on supporting and enabling the sales team rather than enforcing strict call quotas. Associates will have the flexibility to work on



their own terms, with no tracking of the number of hours spent on calls, sources added. "If you can get results by spending half an hour a day, please do that. Want to only work on the weekends? Why not?" Byju has told sales associates. The edtech firm's sales associates will receive 100% of the sales closed directly into their accounts the next working day, with managers receiving 20% of the same from the company. "The average sales salary is Rs 40,000 per month. So, close a couple of sales, and you can get not just your salary but also clear your arrears. You can earn many multiples of your CTC through this model," Raveendran told staff. After clearing arrears, associates will receive 50% of sales closed, while managers will receive 10%. "I want you to understand what it means about the quality of our content and the power of our brand. So, your job is not to sell, but to counsel," Raveendran said.

Oil companies register 71 times profit in FY24

NEW DELHI. After a tepid FY23, the PSU oil marketing companies have turned the table and raked in record profits in FY24. The three state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) - IOCL, BPCL and HPCL - have together posted ₹2,500 crore standalone profit in 2023-24, 71 times the profit earned in the previous year. This is significant because these companies have been holding fuel price cuts citing low profitability. Experts cite robust double-digit gross refining margins (GRM) and healthy marketing margins on high speed diesel (HSD) and petrol for most part of the year. Prashant Vasisht, senior vice-president and co-group head, corporate, ICRA, also attributes high profitability to low base effect. "The profits were significantly weaker in FY23 owing to negative marketing margins on HSD and petrol for a large part of the year," he says. Stable crude oil prices have also helped the OMCs maintain their GRM, even

though they came down by a few basis points vis-à-vis previous year. Indian Oil Corporation, the country's largest oil marketing company,



achieved its highest-ever net profit of Rs 39,618.84 crore in 2023-24. However, quarterly profits saw a significant decline, in the January to March quarter, the company's net profit stood at Rs 4,837.69 crore, compared to Rs 10,058.69 crore the

previous year and Rs 8,063.39 crore in the preceding quarter. The company's gross refining margin (GRM) also dropped to \$12.05 per barrel in 2023-24 from \$19.52 a year ago, attributed to lower refining margins, a negative performance in the petrochemical segment, and price cuts despite rising crude oil costs. Currently, Brent Crude Future was trading at \$83.94 a barrel at 7.54 IST. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) also reported impressive financial results in FY24, with a record net profit of Rs 14,600 crore compared to a loss of Rs 8,974 crore in the previous year. However, HPCL also experienced a decrease in quarterly profits. In the January-March quarter, HPCL's net profit was Rs 2,709.31 crore, down from Rs 3,608.32 crore in the same period of the previous financial year.

JPMorgan: India index inclusion on track, most clients ready

NEW DELHI. JPMorgan Chase & Co is on track to include India in its emerging market debt index from June with most of its clients ready to trade, according to the firm's global head of index research. "Based on the annual Index Governance Consultation process, market feedback so far has been largely positive, with the majority of our index clients already set up to trade in the IGB market," managing director Gloria Kim said in an emailed reply to questions. "As always, there are still teething issues when entering a new market, however we have found these to be related mostly to the operational readiness and flexibility of counterparties and custodians rather than barriers to entry," she said, acknowledging the reforms made by the government. The difficulty in setting up to trade in India due to an elaborate documentation process has been one reason why foreign investors have been apprehensive about the nation's entry into global indexes. Last September, JPMorgan said it would include India in

its emerging market bond index, where it will have a maximum weight of 10%. JPMorgan estimates foreign inflows will be between \$20 billion and \$25 billion, assuming an index-neutral position, Kim said. The firm estimates its emerging-market bond gauge currently has \$216 billion of assets under management, she added. "We have seen in the past that assets tracking the index are relatively sticky in nature and generally remain consistent," Kim said. Indian sovereign bonds have seen about \$8 billion of inflows into the so-called Fully Accessible Route securities since the JPMorgan announcement, though there were some outflows in April amid a global debt selloff. A Bloomberg gauge of the bonds has outperformed major peers this year. The inflows from the long-anticipated index inclusion are leaving their mark on a variety of Indian assets,



with corporate bonds also besting peers and foreign exchange reserves hitting a record high. They have played a role in helping the rupee shrug off the impact of a broad strengthening in the dollar. Bloomberg Index Services Ltd will also start including India to its emerging markets index from January. Bloomberg LP is the parent company of Bloomberg Index Services, which administers indexes that compete with those from

other providers. Indian government authorities have made substantial market reforms for investors, according to JPMorgan. These include extending the trading window for foreign portfolio investors and streamlining the onboarding process through the introduction of a single application form, Kim said. The registration process was also simplified by accepting digital signatures and scanned copies for account registration, she said. There are also several India-dedicated bond exchange-traded funds and UCITS funds offering intraday liquidity to investors, Kim said. "These steps have improved the overall market accessibility and tradability for FPIs, making investors more comfortable with investing in the Indian government bond market," she said.

Covishield Side Effects: Doctors' Group Urges Centre To Review All Covid Vaccines

New Delhi: In the wake of pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca admitting in a UK court that its Covid vaccine can cause blood clots in rare cases, a group of doctors on Thursday expressed deep concern over the safety of the Covishield vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India.

At a press conference, the doctors, under the banner of the Awaken India Movement (AIM), urged the government to review the science behind all Covid vaccines and audit their commercialisation as well as implementation of active surveillance and monitoring mechanism to ensure vaccine adverse events are identified as early as possible. "The government has wholly ignored the rising number of cases of tragic deaths post-Covid vaccination all the while and continues to promote Covid vaccines as 'safe and effective', without scientific investigation and invoking epidemiology," Dr Tarun Kothari, a radiologist and an activist, said at the press conference. The world is learning about a side effect of the Covid vaccine called Thrombosis with

Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), he said. When the COVID-19 vaccines were being administered, not many people were aware that it was being done without the completion of phase-3 trials. Administration of COVID-19 vaccines was started without the manufacturers having complete information and data on the possible short-term or long-term side effects, or fatalities, said Dr Sujata Mittal, a gynaecologist and oncologist. There is an already low awareness around vaccine injuries, especially in India, she said. Thousands of women reported abnormalities in their menstrual cycles, which was confirmed much later as a side effect of the vaccine in a study published in September 2022, she added. "The Awaken India Movement (AIM) has been collecting details of Covid Vaccine deaths covered by media/social media in India and sharing them with various high authorities of the country since 2021, when the vaccination began. The government has failed to respond to our repeated requests to investigate deaths and debilitation from adverse effects of



vaccination," Dr Kothari said. The AIM urged the government of India to compensate all the victims of Covid vaccines, including their family members, through a mechanism that involves vaccine manufacturers as well. "We also demand establishing fast track courts and vaccine courts to provide swift justice to

the vaccine injured and their families," Dr Mittal said. Besides, active surveillance and monitoring mechanisms should be implemented to ensure vaccine adverse events are identified as early as possible and early treatment protocols must be created and widely publicised so that lives can be saved,

she stated. "Review science behind all Covid vaccines and audit their commercialisation," Dr Kothari said.

The United Kingdom-based AstraZeneca has started global withdrawal of its COVID-19 vaccine, which was provided in India as 'Covishield' in partnership with the Serum Institute of India, days after it admitted to rare side effects of blood clotting and lowering of platelet counts. The withdrawal has been initiated due to a surplus of available updated vaccines since the pandemic, the company said in a statement.

In India, the company's partner Serum Institute of India said it has stopped the manufacturing and supply of additional doses of Covishield since December 2021 while reiterating that it had disclosed all rare to very rare side effects, including TTS, in the packaging insert in 2021. Listen to the latest songs, only on JioSaavn.com

AstraZeneca had partnered with Oxford University to develop the COVID-19 vaccine, which was sold as Vaxzevria in Europe.

Convict Can't Get Parole To Just Maintain Relationship With Live-In Partner: High Court

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has held that Indian law, including the Delhi Prison Rules, does not permit the grant of parole to a convict solely for the purpose of maintaining a conjugal relationship with a live-in partner, especially when the convict is already legally married.

Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said that parole cannot be granted to a convict on grounds of having a child or maintaining conjugal relationships with a live-in partner when the convict has a legally wedded wife and children born from that marriage. Granting such parole, the court cautioned, would set a detrimental precedent. The court's observations came while dismissing a plea by a murder convict seeking parole to consummate his marriage with his live-in partner and to maintain social ties. The convict failed to disclose his existing marriage and children from his first marriage.

Justice Sharma said that a live-in partner, lacking legal recognition as a spouse, does not fall within the scope of the definition of "family" under the Delhi Prison Rules, which include grandparents, parents, siblings, spouse, children, and grandchildren. While acknowledging the personal choices and relationships of individuals, the court clarified that it doesn't interfere in the personal lives of adults unless there are criminal complaints. However, when such matters come before the court seeking legal relief, decisions are made based on existing laws and prison rules, devoid of personal or societal morality, it added.

"India Should Respect Pak As...": Mani Shankar Aiyar Hands BJP New Ammo

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar has come under fire after he said that India should engage in dialogue with Pakistan or the country could end up paying a heavy price. Mr Aiyar said that Pakistan has nuclear bombs which they could drop on India if our governments irked them.

In an interview that has gone viral, Mr Aiyar says, "India should give respect to Pakistan as it has an atom bomb! If we don't give them respect, they'll think of using an atom bomb against India." "You should talk to them. But instead, we are flexing our military might. And this is just increasing the tensions. And they have atom bombs. What happens if a 'madman' decided to launch bombs (at India)," he said. "We have them too, but if a 'madman' decides to drop a bomb on Lahore, it won't take 8 seconds for the radiation to reach Amritsar," he added. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has attacked Mr Aiyar for his remarks saying that this reflects the Congress's "ideology" for India. Union Minister Rajeev Chandrashekar, sharing the video on X, said "Rahul's Cong 'ideology' is fully visible in these elections. Support to and from Pakistan including offering to give up Siachen. Dividing people, Lies, Abuse and fake guarantees to mislead poor and vulnerable (sic)."

BJP leader and Bhojpuri actor Ravi Kishan also took a jibe at Mr Aiyar, saying that the Congress leader should get treated somewhere as Pakistan is currently struggling for food. At this time Pakistan is collecting foodgrains for itself. They are facing a food crisis... Mani Shankar Aiyar should get himself treated somewhere. This is not the India of Congress. Now, India is very powerful. This is the India of PM Modi," Mr Kishan said. The Congress leader's remarks come just days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several other top BJP leaders warned that Indian forces would enter Pakistan to kill any terrorist who escapes. "During the Congress regime, the news headlines were about India handing over another dossier to Pakistan about terror activities. It used to be big news. Today, India doesn't send dossiers. Aaj Bharat ghar mein ghus ke marta hai (Today, India eliminates terrorists on their home turf)," PM Modi said at an election rally in Maharashtra's Latur.

Pak spy posed as IBM employee, got Gujarat man to leak military drone data

New Delhi: A man has been arrested in Gujarat's Bharuch district for allegedly spying for a Pakistani intelligence agency, police said. Pravin Mishra, a resident of Ankleshwar in Bharuch, is accused of collecting classified information about the Indian Armed Forces and defence research firms for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). According to the Gujarat Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Mishra fell victim to a "honey trap" orchestrated by an ISI operative posing as a woman named Sonal Garg who claimed to work for IBM Chandigarh. The Pakistani operative used an Indian WhatsApp number and the fake Facebook ID of Sonal Garg to target and trap Mishra. "She honey-trapped one Pravin Mishra, who



worked in Hyderabad in an organisation which in turn worked with DRDO," said CID ADGP Rajkumar Pandian. "She got Pravin Mishra to extract India's defence-related information... Pravin Mishra shared some vital information," he added. Pandian said the information included details on drones manufactured by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The ISI

operative also reportedly attempted to install malware on Mishra's office server. "It was found that the information was being sent to an intelligence agency located in Pakistan," the CID said. The investigation began after a tip-off from Military Intelligence in Udhampur, which alerted authorities about attempts to target current or retired personnel of the Armed Forces, DRDO, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), and those involved in missile system development. A case has been registered against Mishra, the Pakistani operative using the fake identity "Sonal Garg," and any Indian officials who may have been involved in the conspiracy. Further investigation is ongoing.

Congress's Mani Shankar Aiyar says 'Respect Pak or they'll drop atom bomb'

New Delhi: Congress veteran Mani Shankar Aiyar courted controversy after saying that India should engage in dialogue with Pakistan and not flex its military muscles as it may irk Islamabad into deploying nuclear weapons against New Delhi. Aiyar, a former diplomat and vocal advocate of normalising India-Pakistan relations, stated that the government can talk tough to Islamabad if it wants to, but if it doesn't respect the neighbouring country, it may have to pay a heavy price.

"They have atom bombs. We have them too, but if a 'madman' decides to drop a bomb on Lahore, it won't take 8 seconds for the radiation to reach Amritsar," he warned. "If we respect them, they



will remain peaceful. But if we snub them, what happens if a 'madman' comes up and decides to launch bombs [at India]?" Aiyar asked. In a veiled dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Aiyar said, "In order to become the vishwaguru, no matter how serious our issues with Pakistan are, we have to show that we are working hard to resolve them. But in the last 10 years, there has been no hard work [to this end]." The Congress leader's remarks came against the backdrop of heightened tensions between India and Pakistan after PM Narendra Modi's famous ghar me ghus kar warning where he said Indian forces would enter Pakistan to kill anyone who escapes over the border. In the wake of the Prime Minister's remark, other senior BJP leaders have also dialled up the anti-Pakistan rhetoric. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh asserted that Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK) "was, is, and will remain ours", but India won't have to capture it with force because its people, on their own, would want to be part of India. National Conference (NC) chief and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah reminded Rajnath Singh of Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. "Remember, they (Pakistan) are also not wearing bangles. It has atom bombs, and unfortunately, that atom bomb will fall on us," he warned.

5 Indian sailors released from Israeli-linked vessel seized by Iran

New Delhi: Five of the Indian sailors on board an Israeli-linked vessel seized by Tehran were released on Thursday, the Indian Embassy in Iran confirmed. It also said the sailors had departed the country during the evening.

Sharing details of their release, the Indian Embassy also thanked the Iranian authorities for their close coordination with the Embassy and Indian Consulate in Bandar Abbas. In an X post, the Indian Embassy in Iran wrote, "5 of the Indian sailors on MSC Aries have been released and departed from Iran today evening. We appreciate the Iranian authorities for their close coordination with the Embassy and Indian Consulate in Bandar Abbas." The Israel-linked cargo ship was seized



by Iran on April 13, with 17 Indian nationals onboard. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy seized the container ship near the Strait of Hormuz and MSC Aries was last seen on April 12, sailing towards the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Dubai. On April 18, one of the 17 Indian sailors was released and returned home to Kerala.

Ann Tessa Joseph, a resident of Thrissur, was welcomed at the Cochin International Airport by government officials when she arrived from Iran.

Twist In Karnataka Sex Scandal, Woman Claims Was Forced To File False Case

The SIT officers are threatening the victims that if they don't make statements in favour of the Congress government, they will be charged with prostitution, the JDS leader claimed.

Bengaluru: In a twist to the sex video scandal in Karnataka involving JDS MP Prajwal Revanna, the National Commission for Women (NCW) said on Thursday that one of the woman complainants in the case has claimed that

she was forced by a group of people claiming to be cops to lodge a false complaint after being threatened with harassment.

Taking a cue from the NCW's allegation, former Chief Minister and JDS state President H.D. Kumaraswamy on Thursday night accused the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case of threatening the victims with prostitution to extract false statements. The SIT officers are threatening the victims that if they don't make statements in favour of the Congress government, they will be charged with prostitution, the JDS leader claimed.

The investigating officers are going to the doorsteps of the victims and threatening them. Tell us, isn't it a fact that the SIT officers are threatening the victims with false prostitution cases against them? Is this how the probe is being conducted," Mr Kumaraswamy questioned Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who earlier described the sex video scandal as the biggest sex scandal in the world.



"Where have you kept the rescued woman who was kidnapped? Why is she not being produced before the court? Do you support the act of distribution of private videos of the victims," Mr Kumaraswamy asked Mr Gowda. Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna is the grandson of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, and son of JD-S MLA H.D. Revanna, who has been arrested for his alleged role in the kidnapping of a victim of the sex scandal involving his son. Mr Kumaraswamy is the younger brother of H.D. Revanna. Stating that there is no question

of defending Prajwal Revanna, Mr Kumaraswamy said, "Everyone should respect the law and the guilty should be punished. H.D. Deve Gowda has four sons and two daughters. We have our own businesses and families. I had gone to Hassan only at the time of the Assembly elections." Meanwhile, Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara defended the SIT probe, saying that it is functioning efficiently. The state government doesn't need to reply to all the allegations being levelled by the JDS, he said. "The SIT is conducting a probe and the state government has taken the matter seriously," he added. "I can't answer everyone. If they have a complaint against the SIT, let them file it. The investigation is underway and once the report is submitted, all the details will be made available. If the victims are blackmailed over the videos, action would be initiated against the guilty," Mr Parameshwara said.

NEWS BOX

Bread taken off shelves in Japan after consumers find 'rodent' in them

Tokyo, UPDATE Loaves of bread have been taken off store shelves in Japan after the remains of "a small animal" believed to be a rat were found. Production of the bread was halted at a Tokyo factory, with 104,000 packages being recalled, according to Pasco Shikishima Corp. The company apologised and promised compensation. We will do our utmost to strengthen our quality controls so that this will never happen again. We ask for your understanding and your cooperation," it said in a statement this week. Japanese media reports said at least two people who bought the bread in Gunma Prefecture, northwest of Tokyo, complained to the company about finding a rodent in the bread. The bread had been sold in various areas, including Ibaraki, Niigata, Kanagawa, Fukushima, Aomori and Tokyo, according to Pasco.

The company, based in Nagoya city, central Japan, also makes rolls, bagels and muffins.

Japan boasts relatively high food safety standards. But the nation has been rocked by food woes recently, including 1,000 schoolchildren sickened by milk and two people who got sick after eating steak at a restaurant, both earlier this month. Widespread food poisoning from a health supplement product broke out in March and killed five people.

US refutes Russia's meddling charge: 'Don't involve ourselves in Indian polls'

World "No, of course, we don't involve ourselves in elections in India," US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said, refuting Russian allegations accusing America of meddling in the Lok Sabha polls.

A day ago, Russia had claimed that the United States was trying to interfere in India's parliamentary elections and "unbalance" the internal political situation in the country. In a media briefing, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova also said the US was yet to provide "reliable evidence" of the involvement of Indian citizens in the foiled murder plot against Khalistani separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun. "No, of course, we don't involve ourselves in elections in India as we don't involve ourselves in elections anywhere in the world. Those are decisions for the people of India to make," Miller said in a press conference.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow, Zakharova called it "Regular unfounded accusations by the United States against New Delhi." "We see that they groundlessly accuse not only India but also many other states of violating religious freedoms, which are a reflection of the United States' misunderstanding of the national mentality, the historical context of the development of the Indian state and disrespect for India as a state," Zakharov added. However, refusing to comment on the alleged plot to kill Pannun, Miller said "There is a publicly returned indictment that contains alleged facts. They are allegations until they're proven before a jury that anyone can go and read. I won't speak to them here because, of course, it's an ongoing legal matter, and I'll leave it at that."

Hillary Clinton terms US campus protests 'propaganda', 'lack of knowledge'



World Former US States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, has slammed campus protests across the country, over the Gaza war, saying the young people (students) do not know much about the history of the Middle East. Clinton also termed students ignorant and alleged they were being misinformed by propaganda on social media. In an interview with MSNBC, Hillary Clinton agreed with host Charles Joseph Scarborough, who said, "mainstream students were getting propagandised whether it's from their professors, or whether it's from the communist Chinese government, through TikTok, calling the President of the United States 'genocide Joe'. In response, Clinton said, "I have had many conversations, as you've had, with a lot of young people over the last many months now, and... they don't know very much at all about the history of the Middle East, or frankly about history in many areas of the world, including in our own country." "Propaganda is not education," she said, adding, "propaganda... whether it's TikTok, or in the classroom, is actually the opposite of education." "Anybody who is teaching in a university or anyone who is putting content on social media should be held responsible for what they include and what they exclude. So much of what we're seeing, particularly on TikTok, about what's going on in the Middle East is wilfully false, but it's also incredibly slanted, pro-Hamas, anti-Israel," Hillary Clinton said. "With respect to the Middle East, they don't know that under the bringing together for the Israelis and the Palestinians by my husband (former US President Bill Clinton), then-Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, the then-head of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation Yasser Arafat — an offer was made to the Palestinians for a state on 96 per cent of the existing territory occupied by the Palestinians with 4 per cent of Israel to be given to reach 100 per cent of the amount of territory that was hoped for," Clinton said. "This offer was made and if Yasser Arafat had accepted it there would have been a Palestinian state now for about 24 years. It's one of the great tragedies of history that he was unable to say, 'yes,'" Clinton laments. "My husband has a book coming out later this year in which he talks about how Arafat kept saying that he intended to agree, he wanted to agree, but he was pretty sure he'd be killed because Sadat was killed by extremists when he made peace with Israel."

US says 'so far satisfied' with Indian accountability on Pannun murder plot

World The United States is so far satisfied with India's moves to ensure accountability in connection with the alleged assassination plot against Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, its ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, has said. At a Washington event organised by the Council on Foreign Relations, a top American think-tank, Eric Garcetti also said many steps were yet to be taken, calling it a "red line for America" for which there must be consequences. Garcetti's remark came when he was asked what effect the recent discovery of assassination plots against Sikh nationalists in Canada and the United States could have on Washington's relations with New Delhi. When I was referring to a relationship that might have bumps along the road, this would be potentially the first big fight in a relationship," he told the Council on Foreign Relations. "So far, knock on wood, I would say the administration is satisfied with the accountability that we've demanded on this, because this is a red line for America, for our citizens, and a

core part of what we need to do," he added. Garcetti said a criminal case and indictment had been brought "and if there is any connection to state actors in that, there has to be accountability." "We expect that not only from our side, but we expect India to have that accountability."

The US Ambassador to India also noted that India had set up a commission of inquiry. "We expect, while we do the criminal case that is about American justice, that there need to be consequences and shared information. And so far... I have been satisfied with what they have done. I think the administration is, but we have many steps still to go," he said at the event.

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun. Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada. He has been designated as a terrorist by the Union Home Ministry under the anti-terror law



Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The allegations about the failed plot to kill Pannun came to the fore weeks after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia.

WHAT GARCETTI SAID ON DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Speaking at the event, Garcetti also dismissed concerns being raised in certain quarters about democracy in India

and observed that in many ways Indians are better than Americans. "Again, there are things that probably are worse and there are things that are better. They have a law, you can't go more than two kilometres to vote. So there'll be one guy who lives in the mountains as a monk (at someplace). They will walk for two days to bring the voting machine, execute the vote," he said, responding to a question expressing concerns over the status of democracy in India. He said that during election times in India, there are people who check trucks to make sure that nobody has cash going around. "There's probably walk-in money, as they call it in some cities here in the United States, Philadelphia, that's like a tradition where cash kind of gets you votes and things like that. So, I've been impressed with certain things they do that are better than us." "I 100 percent believe we can trust this relationship. It's going to be one of the defining relationships of the 21st century, the US and India together," Garcetti said on Indo-US ties.

Chinese zoo dyes dogs black and white to fool visitors into seeing pandas

World A zoo in China's Taizhou city unveiled a new exhibition on May 1, featuring "panda dogs", which later turned out to be Chow Chow dogs dyed black and white to resemble pandas. The authorities at the zoo were heavily slammed after videos of the dogs were widely shared on social media. Later, the visitors noticed the animals were Chow Chows - a dog breed known for its thick double coat of fur from northern China. The dogs had been dyed to resemble pandas. According to a report with Sky News, the zoo authorities also charged visitors 20 yuan (231.08 Rs in Indian currency) to watch the exhibition. However, a zoo worker denied such accusations and told The Global Times that this was "just a new display" they offered to visitors. He also said the zoo authorities did not charge anything extra. "We are not charging extra. The wording featuring chow chow dogs is correct and exactly describes what they are, so we are not cheating our visitors," he told The



Global Times. Per Jam Press, a zoo spokesperson also defended the panda exhibit by saying: "People also dye their hair. Natural dye can be used on dogs if they have long fur. There are no panda bears at the zoo, and we wanted to do this as a result," the report said. This was not the first time a zoo in China had been accused of faking

animals. Earlier, in 2023, Hangzhou Zoo denied claims some of its bears were people in costumes. The development came after a clip of a Malaysian sun bear - named Angela - walking on its hind legs went viral and sparked speculation that the animal was a human being in a badly-fitting bear suit.

US woman lived inside store signage for a year, extension cord exposed her

Michigan, US Contractors curious about an extension cord on the roof of a Michigan grocery store made a startling discovery: A 34-year-old woman was living inside the business sign, with enough space for a computer, printer and coffee maker, police said. "She was homeless," Officer Brennon Warren of the Midland Police Department said Thursday. "It's a story that makes you scratch your head, just somebody living up in a sign." Contractors curious about an extension cord on the roof of a Michigan grocery store made a startling discovery: A 34-year-old woman was living inside the business sign, with enough space for a computer, printer and coffee maker, police said. "She was homeless," Officer Brennon Warren of the Midland Police Department said Thursday. "It's a

story that makes you scratch your head, just somebody living up in a sign." Midland, best known as the global home of Dow Inc., is 130 miles (209 kilometers) north of Detroit. The Family Fare store is in a retail strip with a triangle-shaped sign at the top of the building. The sign structure, probably 5 feet (1.5 meter) wide and 8 feet (2.4 meters) high, has a door and is accessible from the roof, Warren said. "There was some flooring that was laid down. A mini desk," he said. "Her clothing. A Keurig coffee maker. A printer and a computer — things you'd have in your home." The woman was able to get electricity through a power cord plugged into an outlet on the roof, Warren said. There was no sign of a ladder. Warren said it's possible the woman made her way to the roof by climbing up elsewhere behind the

store or other retail businesses. "I honestly don't know how she was getting up there. She didn't indicate, either," he said. A spokesperson for SpartanNash, the parent company of Family Fare, said store employees responded "with the utmost compassion and professionalism." "Ensuring there is ample safe, affordable housing continues to be a widespread issue nationwide that our community needs to partner in solving," Adrienne Chance said, declining further comment. Warren said the woman was cooperative and quickly agreed to leave. No charges were pursued. "We provided her with some information about services in the area," the officer said. "She apologized and continued on her way. Where she went from there, I don't know."

You made this all up': Trump's lawyer grills Stormy Daniels at hush money trial

New York Donald Trump's lawyer sought to show inconsistencies in porn star Stormy Daniels' various tellings of a 2006 sexual encounter she has said she had with Trump, part of an effort on Thursday to undermine her credibility as a witness in the first criminal trial of a sitting or former US president. Her unflattering account of a sexual encounter with Trump in a Lake Tahoe hotel suite while he was married to his wife Melania riveted jurors on Tuesday and reminded US voters of some of the more lurid aspects of his 2017-2021 presidency as he campaigns to win back the White House this year. "You're trying to make me say that it changed, but it hasn't changed," Daniels told Necheles.

Trump, 77, has pleaded not guilty to 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up his former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen's \$130,000 payment to Daniels, 45, for her silence ahead of the 2016 US presidential election about the alleged encounter. Trump has denied ever having sex with Daniels. Trump, the Republican candidate challenging Democratic President Joe Biden in the November 5 US election, has called the trial a politically motivated attempt to undermine his campaign. Prosecutors

have said Trump's efforts to obscure the paper trail for the payment to Daniels corrupted the 2016 election in which he defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton by preventing voters from learning about a story that might have swayed their vote. After testimony ended on Thursday, Trump lawyer Todd Blanche once again asked Justice Juan Merchan to declare a mistrial on the basis of Daniels' testimony. Blanche argued that her detailed testimony about the alleged sexual encounter, including her statement that Trump was not wearing a condom, had veered into territory that was irrelevant to the case and would prejudice jurors against Trump. "This is not a case about sex," Blanche said. "This is not a case about whether that incident took place or didn't take place." Merchan denied the request, saying that because Blanche had argued in his opening statement on April 22 that the encounter never happened, prosecutors were allowed to try to rehabilitate Daniels' credibility. "Your denial puts the jury in a position of having to choose who they believe," Merchan said. The judge also denied a similar



request on Tuesday.

In addition, Blanche requested that a gag order restricting Trump's public comments about jurors and witnesses be loosened to let the defendant publicly respond to questions about Daniels' testimony. Merchan also denied that request, stating that other witnesses may see Trump's comments and become concerned that he would say similar things about them. Christopher Conroy, a prosecutor, suggested that the proper way for Trump to respond to Daniels would be to testify in his own defence. Trump before the trial told reporters he would testify, though it remains to be seen

whether he will do so. "There is a proceeding here that this (gag) order is designed to protect," Conroy said. "If somebody wants to respond to something that's said in this room, that can happen in this room."

The judge has fined Trump \$10,000 for running afoul of the gag order 10 times, and said further violations could land him in jail.

DEFENCE SAYS DANIELS 'MADE ALL THIS UP'

In nearly four hours of cross-examination on Tuesday and Thursday, Necheles asked Daniels about her earlier testimony of the alleged encounter compared with versions in a book she wrote and interviews she gave over the years. She asked Daniels why in a 2018 interview to Vogue magazine she did not mention that Trump's bodyguard had been outside the hotel room where the encounter happened. Daniels on Tuesday had testified that her awareness of the bodyguard's presence contributed to a power imbalance with Trump that left her feeling uncomfortable.



towns, a Reuters report said. The floods have destroyed infrastructure and bridges, blocking access to Porto Alegre, where supermarkets have been reported to be looted at night. As per initial estimates, Governor Eduardo Leite said, the flood damage is estimated at least 19 billion reais (\$3.68 billion). "The effect of the floods and the extent of the tragedy are devastating," he said on social media. In Brasilia, Brazil's capital, the federal government estimated the fiscal impact of the flooding at 7.7 billion reais (\$1.49 billion), mostly due to the injection of funds into a support program for small businesses hit by the floods. "This doesn't end here," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said at an event announcing steps to help the stricken Rio Grande do Sul state. Lula said the full extent of the state's needs would be known only when the water receded.

NEWS BOX

Doha Diamond League Live Streaming: Neeraj Chopra, Kishore Jena begin 2024 season

Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Jena will begin their 2024 season in the prestigious Doha Diamond League on Friday, May 10. The Olympic and former world champion, Neeraj, will be keen on starting the year on a high and laying down a marker ahead of the Paris Olympics. Neeraj is the defending champion in the Doha Diamond League, but he is in for a stern test in the season-opening javelin event in Doha. Neeraj Chopra will be up against the likes of Olympic silver medalist and Diamond Trophy winner from 2023, Jakub Vadlejch, and former world champion Anderson Peters. Giving him stiff competition is compatriot Kishore Jena, who will be looking to replicate the form that he showcased in 2023. Kishore, who has a personal best of 87.54m, was leading Neeraj in the Asian Games final last year before he finished with a silver medal. The 28-year-old also finished fifth in the World Championships last year.

Neeraj has high hopes for Kishore. The Tokyo Olympics gold medalist even said he would be super happy to share the Olympic podium with Kishore later this year in Paris. However, the star attraction at the Doha Diamond League will be Neeraj, who will return to action for the first time since winning the Asian Games Gold with a best effort of 88.88m in October last year.

WILL NEERAJ BREACH 90m BARRIER IN DOHA? Neeraj has trained in South Africa and Turkey in the lead-up to the 2024 season. The Olympic star was in good spirits as he addressed the press on the eve of the Doha



Diamond League meet. Neeraj opened up about the chatter around the much-awaited 90m throw, but stressed that he would be looking for consistency in the Olympic year. "This question, a lot of people have asked me since 2018 -- when I threw 88.06m in the Asian Games. But, then, lots of things have happened -- my elbow injury, surgery. I am stuck between 88m and 90m. But, I really want to break this barrier. Last year, I told in this press conference that Doha is famous for 90m. But, we were not lucky because of too much of a headwind. Yeah, maybe tomorrow, it will be good," Neeraj said. Yes, Doha has been one of the meets known for big throws. Thomas Rohler's 93.90m, the third-best-ever throw in men's javelin history, came in Doha in 2017. Anderson Peters' best effort of 93.07 came here in 2022. Jakub Vadlejch's personal best of 90.88m also came in 2022 in Doha. Neeraj won the Doha meet last year with a best effort of 88.67m.

PBKS assistant coach Brad Haddin rues dropped catches after 60-run loss against RCB

PBKS assistant head coach Brad Haddin rued his team's catch drops during Match 58 of the Indian Premier League 2024 against RCB, which led to their 60-run loss on Thursday, May 9 in Dharamsala. Notably, Punjab dropped five catches during the first innings of the game, which included two of Virat Kohli. The star batter was given reprieves on 0 by Ashutosh Sharma in the first over and later by Rilee Rossouw on 10.

To make matters worse for the hosts, Harshal Patel failed to hold on to an opportunity at



deep square from Rajat Patidar on just his second ball of the innings. As a result, the Sam Curran-led side was made to pay for the drop chances as Kohli went on to play a scintillating innings of 92 (47) while Patidar scored a quick-fire 55 (23) as RCB posted a massive score of 241/7 in their allotted 20 overs. Reflecting on the game during the post-match press conference, Haddin stated that the catch drops proved to be the turning point of the game as both Kohli and Patidar took the game away from Punjab with their remarkable batting. "Spot on 100%, I thought if we have a look through the game where we dropped the two guys, one got a hundred (92) and one got a fifty, both on a duck and that's where the game is won or lost simply. There wasn't much in the batting or bowling, I think from both teams. It was just the catches we put down cost us the game," said Haddin in the post-match press conference.

PBKS' playoffs dream shattered Following their loss, Punjab have been knocked out of the tournament as they're on the ninth spot on the points table with four wins from 12 matches having eight points to their name. Speaking about the positives from the season, Haddin lauded Shashank Singh who's been the find of the season for PBKS being the highest run scorer for his side (352 runs). "It's disappointing when you see it but it shouldn't be tough work to know to motivate the boys. This is one of the premier competitions in the world, it's a great opportunity to show your skills. We just got to look at Shashank what he's done this tournament and for players in the remaining two games, there's an opportunity, s

Europa League: Bayer Leverkusen set European record after last-minute Roma stalemate

UEFA Europa League: Xabi Alonso-managed Bayer Leverkusen clinched the European record for being undefeated for the most number of games, after their draw against Roma in the Europa League semi-final. Leverkusen defeated Roma by 4-2 on aggregate to secure their spot in the final against Atalanta.

Leverkusen. Xabi Alonso managed Bayer Leverkusen clinched the record for being the team who has gone undefeated for the most number of games after their thrilling stalemate against Roma in their UEFA Europa League semi-final second leg on May 10. With a 2-2 draw against the Daniel Rossi-managed Roma on Friday, Leverkusen are now 49 games unbeaten across all competitions, which is one more than SL Benfica's 59-year-old strong record. Having already won the first leg by a comfortable 2-0 margin, the results at the BayArena sealed the place for Xabi's side in the Europa League final against Atalanta on May 23.

Having conceded two goals from the penalty spot by Roma's Leandro Paredes, the match saw the German giants almost slip off their



phenomenal streak and also their treble winning hopes. However, Leverkusen yet again came in clutch and managed to keep their record intact due to a late own-goal from Roma's Gianluca Mancini and a stoppage-time goal from Josep Stancic. Leverkusen's pattern of grabbing late goals and extending their brilliant record, has been a constant sight for the football world this season, which has seen them turn from underdogs to heavyweights in an emphatic

fashion. **Treble hopes for Leverkusen** After completing their fairytale run of winning the 2023-2024 Bundesliga title, which was also their first-ever, the football world started anticipating Bayer Leverkusen's chances of extending their historic season by winning a treble. The German side has already secured their place in the DFB Pokal, where they will face FC Kaiserslautern on

May 25. Now, the Europa League final shot has well and truly sent those speculations and anticipations sky-high, and their phenomenal unbeaten record has only added further promise to Xabi Alonso grabbing a treble in his very first top-tier coaching stint. However, their opponents Atalanta have been in some impressive form themselves, which has recently seen the Italian Serie A side beat Marseille 4-1 on aggregate, to qualify for the final.

We're just focussing on next game: Cameron Green on RCB's playoffs chances

Australia and RCB all-rounder Cameron Green revealed that his team is just focused on the next game and things are going as per the plan right now. Green also revealed that he saw vintage Kohli in action



New Delhi. RCB all-rounder Cameron Green revealed that the team is just focussing on the next game after their 60-run win against PBKS in Match 58 of the Indian Premier League 2024. The Faf du Plessis-led side has kept their slim chances of playoffs alive by winning four matches on the trot.

The three-time runner-ups didn't start the tournament well by winning just one out of the first eight matches but have made a dramatic turnaround with four consecutive victories. Speaking about RCB's playoffs chances, Green stated that they're just focussing on the next game and things are going according to the plan at the moment.

"I think what we've done really well is just look at the next game and I think obviously at the start of the tournament you can always look what's coming up, where are

some other results to go their way to qualify to the playoffs. Meanwhile, further speaking ahead Green extolled Virat Kohli for his scintillating innings against PBKS and stated that Punjab dug their own grave by dropping him multiple times. He played like that vintage Virat that we all know: Green "That's the beauty of having Virat in your team. I think as opposition teams you can't give him that many chances. He's always going to make you hurt. Especially dropping him three or four times, early in his innings when he's trying to be aggressive. I think he looked like after a couple of dropped catches he didn't have much to lose and he played like that vintage Virat that we all know. Yeah, he was beautiful to watch from the other end," he added.

Kohli was the top scorer for RCB against PBKS with his knock of 92 (47) with the help of seven fours and six sixes. Following his innings, he further strengthened his position at the top of the leading run scorers list of the season. The RCB opener is the Orange Cap holder having 634 runs to his name from 12 innings at an average of 70.44 and a strike rate of 153.51 with one hundred and five fifties.

New Zealand's Colin Munro announces retirement from international cricket

New Delhi. A New Zealand left-handed batter Colin Munro announced his retirement from international cricket after a career spanning 123 matches for the Blackcaps across all formats. The 37-year-old has featured in 65 T20Is, 57 ODIs and a single Test for New Zealand, with his last appearance coming in their T20I home series against India back in 2020. With New Zealand announcing their pick of players for the upcoming T20 World Cup, Munro was one of the lot who did not make the cut. The usually explosive batter went on to cite his exclusion from the squad as the ideal window of opportunity to finally call time on his illustrious career.

At the end of Munro's international career, the batter finished sixth on the list of New Zealand's all-time leading T20I run-scorer with his 1,724 runs at an average of 31 and a strike-rate of 156.4. His prowess in the shortest format of the game saw three

brilliant centuries, which is also the highest by any batter to have played for his national side. Taking to his social media handles, Munro reflected on his time representing New Zealand and how he deems the time fit for his ultimate retirement from national team duties. "Playing for the BlackCaps has always been the biggest achievement in my playing career. I never felt prouder than donning that jersey, and the fact I have been able to do that 123 times across all formats is something I will always be incredibly proud of. I am today announcing my retirement from International cricket." Munro's post said. Munro went on to give his take on his absence from New Zealand's recent T20I fixtures, while reflecting on the reasons behind that. Although it has been a while since his last appearance, I never gave up hope that I might be able to return off the back of my franchise T20 form. I completely

understand the reasons why that never happened, but with the announcement of the BlackCaps squad for the World T20 now is the perfect time to close that chapter officially. I can't wait to watch the boys do their thing in the Caribbean. I look forward to continuing to ply my trade across the world in the franchise arena." Munro added. New Zealand Cricket chief Scott Weenink also reflected on Munro's career with the national side. Colin was one of our first players to embrace the aggressive, 360-degree style batting that is now accepted all around the world as best practice. He was one of the pioneers of the new game, an innovative batsman who took calculated risk-taking to a new level, and led what was to become a revolution in the way short-form cricket was played. We thank him for his amazing contribution in more than hundred international games.



IPL season, and the opening duo have been at the basis of their brilliance multiple times already. The post from Komal Sharma has gained quite some praise from the massive fanbase of SRH, and also that of Abhishek. "What an electrifying match it turned out to be! The sheer madness and excitement were palpable throughout. My brother Abhishek and Travis Head's performance was nothing short of legendary." The post read. "It felt like we were in the midst of a virtual game, with every ball being greeted with either a thunderous six or a blistering four. The synergy between the openers was awe-inspiring. Being able to witness such an extraordinary spectacle live is a memory I'll cherish forever -- it was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I savoured every moment of it. This year, this team has truly reached unprecedented heights. Heartiest congratulations to the entire team for their stellar performance.

BCCI will call applications for head coach role, Rahul Dravid can apply: Jay Shah

BCCI secretary Jay Shah revealed that they will soon begin the hunt for the new head coach of the men's team with Rahul Dravid's tenure ending in June.

New Delhi The BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) will soon begin the hunt for the new head coach for the men's team with the incumbent coach Rahul Dravid's tenure ending in June. While revealing the information, Secretary Jay Shah stated that Dravid could also apply for the role and didn't rule out the possibility of hiring a foreign coach as well. Other members of the coaching staff such as batting, bowling and fielding coaches will be appointed after the consultation with the new coach. Notably, Dravid's contract was extended in November

2023 till the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024 scheduled to begin in the West Indies and USA from June 02. "Rahul's tenure is only up to June. So if he wants to apply, he is free to do so. We cannot determine whether the new coach will be Indian or foreign. It will be up to the CAC, and we are a global body," Jay Shah said as quoted by Cricbuzz. Further speaking ahead, Shah shared his opinion about the much talked about impact player rule in the Indian Premier League which has aided free stroke play in the ongoing edition and allowed teams to post humongous totals. Speaking about the rule, Shah stated that it has allowed more Indian players to get an opportunity to play in the league. He also added that the board will discuss with all the parties involved before discontinuing the rule which he said was "not permanent".



Impact player was a test case: Jay Shah Impact

player was a test case. Two new Indian players are getting a chance in the IPL. We will discuss with the stakeholders - franchises and broadcasters - before deciding on the continuation of the Impact Player. It's not permanent, but no one has provided feedback against the rule," he added.

Shah also ruled out the possibility of having different coaches for different formats.

"That decision will also be made by the CAC. There are many all-format players, like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and Rishabh Pant, among others. Moreover, there is no precedent for such a situation in India," he added. Shah also quashed the reports of revival of the Champions League T20 but revealed that there might be discussions of holding the next final of the World Test Championship (WTC) outside of England. He also added that all-rounder Hardik Pandya who's been added in Grade A in Central Contracts will be playing white-ball domestic cricket. The BCCI secretary also disclosed that the domestic cricket structure will be unveiled soon and the High-Performance Centre at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru will be functional from August.

Ankita Lokhande

Dances Like No One Is Watching In This Viral Video, Fans React; Watch



Ankita Lokhande is undoubtedly a wonderful dancer and many times she has also shown her moves. Recently, she was seen dancing to Madhuri Dixit's song on the Dance Deewane reality show. However, Ankita has set social media abuzz with her recent dance video. In the video clip that has been circulating online, she can be seen dancing like no one is watching. In the video, shared by Instant Bollywood, Ankita is sitting in a restaurant with friends and her husband Vicky Jain. She is wearing a lavender colour dress and dancing to an English song. She is doing every step and is entertaining everyone. Fans have trolled her in the comment section.

Recently, News18 Showsha has exclusively learnt that the actress was recently offered Karan Johar's Student Of The Year 3. However, the 'Pavitra Rishta' star has rejected it. A reliable source close to the actress told us that Ankita was offered Student Of The Year 3, which will be a web series, but she turned down the opportunity to be a part of Karan Johar's project for reasons best known to her. "Yes, Ankita was approached for Student Of The Year 3.

I am not sure about the role she was offered but she was definitely asked if she could be a part of the SOTY franchise. However, she has rejected the offer and nobody knows the reason behind her decision," the insider informed us.

Several reports also claim that KJo is planning to cast Shanaya Kapoor and Ibrahim Ali Khan in the Student Of The Year 3. However, there is no official confirmation regarding this as of now. Meanwhile, Ankita Lokhande was recently seen in the film, Swatantra Veer Savarkar, which also starred Randeep Hooda in the lead. The film, released on March 22, is based on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and his contribution during the Indian Independence struggle. Besides this, Ankita's music video with her businessman husband, Vicky Jain was also released recently. It was titled Laa Pila De Sharaab.



Babil Khan Sits On Ranveer Singh's Lap, Shares Photos With Sanya Malhotra; Fans React



Babil Khan has been grabbing attention after his photos with Ranveer Singh from an event went viral. The actor today took to his social handle and shared two photos in which he is seen sitting on Ranveer's lap and having an intense discussion with Sanya Malhotra. The photos are again going viral and fans are reacting to it. Taking to his Instagram handle, Babil shared photos and wrote, "Finding friends." The trio is seen smiling and having a serious discussion. One of the fans wrote, "Oh God! You should definitely work with Ranveer. You both have the same kind of energy." Another wrote, "Hope you both - @ranveersingh and you - entertain us in the On Thursday a video surfaced in which Ranveer can be seen sharing a heartwarming moment with late actor Irrfan Khan's son, Babil Khan. In the viral clip, Ranveer is seen hugging and kissing Babil as greets the young actor. Interestingly, this comes on the day when Ranveer Singh's actress wife Deepika Padukone also penned down a heartwarming note to celebrate the 9th anniversary of her 2015 movie Piku. The film also starred Babil's late father Irrfan Khan along with Amitabh Bachchan.

The photo that Deepika shared featured Amitabh Bachchan and the late Irrfan. In the click, a production assistant was seen offering a platter of fruit to Big B as he pointed towards Deepika. Irrfan was also seen engaging in a conversation with them. "He loves telling everyone how much I eat! @amitabhbachchan@irrfan Oh how much we miss you," Deepika wrote in the caption. Babil then followed it up with another post a few days later which read as an open letter to his late father, Irrfan Khan. "You taught me to be a warrior, but engage with love and kindness. You taught me of hope and you taught me to fight for the people. You do not have fans, you have a family, and I promise you baba I will fight for our people and our family till you call upon me. I will not give up. I love you so much," he wrote.

Kylie Jenner 'Felt Like A Princess' At Met Gala 2024



There is no beating Kylie Jenner in the fashion game. Her attendance at the Met Gala 2024 stood as a testament to this fact. Held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the biggest fashion extravaganza witnessed the arrival of prominent personalities from the world of glitz and glam. Celebrities displayed their sartorial finesse, keeping in mind the theme - The Garden Of Time. Needless to mention, florals dominated the glittery night. Following the dress code, Kylie Jenner picked out a white satin gown dishing out major "princess" vibes. The beauty mogul recently treated us to some pictures from the gala ceremony on Instagram. "Felt like a princess," captioned Kylie Jenner, adding a bunch of emojis to the post. Crafted with perfection by the Oscar de la Renta label, the floor-sweeping evening gown was inspired by garden statues mentioned in English novelist JG Ballard's short story The Garden Of Time. It featured a strapless neckline with a cone-styled bustier cascading down into a cinched waist and forming a flared trumpet skirt. A pink rose hair accessory was tucked into Kylie's secured updo and rosy makeup made the diva look every bit the belle of the ball. She struck a bunch of poses for the camera, looking drop-dead gorgeous in the OOTD.

In the post, Kylie Jenner offered a glimpse of her walking the red carpet with a helping hand from her assistants. She waved at the paparazzi and smiled for the clicks. In one snap, makeup products from her beauty brand Kylie Cosmetics were showcased on a table underlining her usage of the same. In the last photograph, Kylie shared the same frame with her sister Kim Kardashian, who was also dressed to the nines for the Met Gala. Agreeing with Kylie Jenner's "princess" caption, her sister Khloe Kardashian commented, "You literally were and probably are". Kylie's mother Kris Jenner wrote, "STUNNING my beautiful PRINCESS". "Your dress was sensational," gushed one admirer.

Rashmi Gautam

Drops Glimpses From Her Birthday Trip And We Are Loving It



Rashmi Gautam came into the limelight for her outstanding anchoring skills in the popular Telugu comedy show, Jabardasth. The actress has been a part of the film industry for over 22 years, establishing herself as a seasoned artist. She made her debut at the age of 20 with the film Holi, and has never looked back ever since. Rashmi Gautam enjoys a massive fan following on social media and has become a household name, owing to her impressive anchoring skills and sense of humour. The actress, who always keeps her fans updated, recently posted some pictures from her birthday trip, which are gaining attention on the internet. Rashmi celebrated her birthday on April 27. In the post, Rashmi Gautam is seen sitting in a cafe. She wore a white top, which she teamed with a pink blazer and denim. She chose minimal makeup and tied her hair in a half-bun. Sharing the candid photos, she wrote, "Spoilt for choice."

The pictures went viral in no time. One of the users commented, "Beautiful picture." Another one said, "Lovely." Many dropped heart emojis in the comment box. Few days ago, Rashmi Gautam shared another couple of photos from her birthday vacation. In the pictures, Rashmi was seen in a casual avatar. She wore a white t-shirt, which she paired with sky blue joggers and white sneakers. In the photos, she chose no make-up and tied her hair in a



high-rise ponytail. In the photos, she is seen exploring the streets. "Colors #birthdaytrip 2024 #taxi #vacation" reads the caption.

Rashmi Gautam was last seen in a cameo appearance in the action film Bhola Shankar. This Telugu movie was directed by Meher Ramesh. It was a remake of the 2015 Tamil film Vedalam. It stars Chiranjeevi as the titular character, along with Tamannaah Bhatia, Keerthy Suresh, and Sushanth. She will soon be seen in the upcoming sci-fi movie Trishanku. It is written and directed by Sri Krishna Gorle.

