

China-Pak roadblock looms large

WHILE there are critics of India's economic policies, it is now internationally recognised that the country's growth rate increased rapidly with the advent of economic liberalisation and the end of what was known as the 'Licence, Permit, Quota Raj'. The principal architect of these reforms was Manmohan Singh, who served as the Finance Minister and later became the Prime Minister. India is now the fastest-growing major economy in the world. Even as India moves to attain higher rates of growth, it must be borne in mind that its position and influence in the world will be determined largely by its economic and technological progress. Given these imperatives, India has no choice but to strengthen its ties in its immediate neighbourhood to ensure security and peace in the area extending from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to its West to the Straits of Malacca to its East. The main challenges India faces beyond its borders arise from the expansionist ambitions and policies of China.

India has also for long sought to develop closer ties with the oil-rich Gulf region, comprising Iran and the Arab states, where around six million Indians live. India has built good ties with Saudi Arabia, while simultaneously reinforcing its already strong relationship with the UAE. India also played an important role in restoring a cordial working relationship between the US and Saudi Arabia after intemperate comments made by President Biden about the Saudi monarchy were deeply resented by the Saudis. The UAE's National Security Adviser (NSA), Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, also participated in talks between his US counterpart Jake Sullivan and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The talks were facilitated by India's NSA Ajit Doval. An agreement for promoting cooperation between the UAE, US and India was also finalised and signed shortly thereafter. The stage is set for India to play an increasingly positive and cooperative role across the western shores of the Indian Ocean, together with Gulf nations. India-US relations have grown significantly after Washington decided that Delhi can and will endeavour to balance the growth of Chinese power across its Indian Ocean neighbourhood. Despite pretensions of friendship, China's policies remain committed to limiting and containing Indian influence. China continues to strengthen Pakistan's missile and nuclear weapons' capabilities. It also works in close collaboration with Pakistan along and across India's western borders with Afghanistan. New Delhi's recent moves for strengthening ties with Iran, including the construction of the strategic Chabahar port, give it increasing economic and maritime access to Central Asia and limit space for Pakistan to hinder India's access to Afghanistan. While the US had objected to India's growing ties with Iran, it now appears reconciled to Delhi going ahead with the project for a transport corridor linking India to Afghanistan and Iran. Predictably, Pakistan is not pleased with this transportation corridor, as it prevents Rawalpindi from hindering India's access to Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. This corridor, therefore, becomes a key gateway for India's access to the International North-South Transport Corridor, which, in turn, would go on to link India to Central Asia and Russia, and ultimately to Europe by sea, rail and road.

One important factor that has cast a shadow on India-US relations is the constant criticism of the alleged curtailment of the freedom of speech in India by the US media. There is a widespread feeling that this media flak enjoys the support of the Biden administration. There is also a feeling that such criticism may be muted should Donald Trump, who has been friendly to India, emerge victorious in the presidential elections later this year. India may be among the few countries whose leadership and people found Trump friendly and blunt during his visit to India. Trump has no illusions or expectations about China and has little inclination to even think about Pakistan.

Unlike the Biden administration's practice, then President Trump delivered no sermons about democracy in India. Nevertheless, relations with the US have grown steadily, with considerable cooperation for strengthening maritime links. This has been an important development amid the tensions and piracy in the high seas across the Indian Ocean that have accompanied.

Empower the poor to mitigate effects of climate change

The present model of economic development perpetuates inequalities and fails to reallocate and redistribute resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL conservation and climate issues were consigned to oblivion by various political parties in the recent Lok Sabha elections, despite a heatwave sweeping through many parts of the country. Delhi is making headlines over its drinking water crisis. The AAP government has claimed that the Capital is facing a water shortage of 50 million gallons per day. The most polluted capital city in the world is struggling to cope with the heatwave. The weather conditions have hit poor people the hardest; they lack access to basic needs, such as food, water, health, housing and electricity, to fight or adapt to heatwaves. The impact of climate change is not the same for the rich and the poor. Societal inequalities exacerbate the effect of heatwaves on the poor, whereas the rich can afford to adapt to them. Over 80 per cent of the street vendors surveyed in Delhi reported a decline in customers amid the heatwave in April and May, and around 50 per cent experienced significant income loss, according to a report by think tank Greenpeace India and the National Hawker Federation.

While the rich contribute to climate change, it is the poor that suffer its negative effects, such as high temperatures or heatwaves. Rising temperatures cause a multitude of problems, such as health issues, water scarcity and food adulteration. Heatwave-related morbidities like dehydration, weakness, restlessness, headache, diarrhoea, skin rashes, heatstroke and sleeplessness continue to affect people, especially children, the elderly, women and those with comorbidities.

Climate change has adversely affected the adequacy, accessibility and affordability of drinking water, with an increase in demand for it in Delhi. Residents, especially those in slums, continue to grapple with water shortage. The fundamental right to access clean water is denied even as the government proclaims the success of the Jal Jeevan Mission for an assured supply of rural drinking water and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation for the universal coverage of drinking water supply in urban areas. Further, the past two months have seen a high demand for climate adaptation appliances like fans, air coolers, air conditioners and refrigerators in India. And there has been a huge surge in the consumption of electricity. Frequent incidents of fire



are reported amid high temperatures and a corresponding increase in the consumption of electricity to ward off the heat. The NCR has around 750 slum settlements, housing 3,50,000 families with a total population of 20 lakh. Poverty, sweltering heatwaves and an inadequacy of water have worsened the living conditions of slum-dwellers. With limited economic resilience, the poor are unable to adapt to the climate. The poor seek relief from the excessive heat inside their homes — which have plastic and asbestos roofs — in open spaces like footpaths, parks and the areas under flyovers. Children, the elderly and women remain the hardest hit. The rich, on the other hand, can adapt to the heatwaves, as they have access to water and air conditioners. These unsustainable human lifestyles and the extractive and exploitative use of common property resources can create problems for the common man in India. Governments are hardly prepared to face the greater developmental challenges posed by climate change. There is an urgent need to economically empower the poor to battle climate change. Sunstroke is not treated as a natural disaster in policy forums, and there are no rehabilitation centres or livelihood support for the poor who suffer because of heatwaves. There is an

urgent need to assess urban climate risks for each city for a holistic climate resilience policy in India. The urban climate risk and vulnerability assessment — in terms of the number of people vulnerable to climate-related disasters, the damage to humans and infrastructure and the financial support needed to rebuild — is important for climate resilience. The system requires three kinds of resources to fight climate change at the city level: natural (forest and water), man-made (infrastructure) and human (technology and employment). Without them, an individual's capacity for climate resilience is highly limited. Climate resilience largely relies on the sustainable development of cities through practices like rainwater harvesting, replenishing groundwater and the conservation of urban forests, land, biodiversity, lakes, rivers and trees. Indian cities lack modern and sustainable infrastructure. Most of the infrastructure is old, and it cannot support the growing demands, for example, multimodal public transport, 24x7 water supply, sewage and solid waste management, green energy, urban housing and public hospitals and schools.

It is also imperative to improve the human capital through education, technology, health, jobs and a decline in poverty and income inequality. Inclusive development, such as social protection, acts as an insurance against climate change. The poor need financial, technical and institutional support in the form of poverty reduction programmes, social security schemes, etc, to improve their quality of life and develop climate resilience. Indian cities need to have institutional capacity to adapt to climate change. Systemic wealth and income inequalities have exacerbated the impact of climate change on the poor. The present model of economic development perpetuates inequalities and fails to reallocate and redistribute resources. Economic inequality and climate change are intricately linked to an unequal distribution of income and resources, limiting the economic resilience of the poor to fight climate change. Therefore, there is an urgent need to restructure economic and environmental governance systems to achieve inclusive development and strike a balance between ecological and economic stability to tackle climate change in India.

J&K terror attacks

India's response must be firm and forceful

A series of terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir has prompted Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tell officials to deploy the 'full spectrum of counter-terror capabilities'. Terrorists have struck in Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts within a week, killing nine civilians and a CRPF jawan. The Reasi incident, in which gunmen opened fire on a bus carrying pilgrims when it was en route to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine on Sunday, coincided with the swearing-in ceremony of the new government at the Centre. The worrisome security situation poses a big challenge to the Modi dispensation, which is planning to hold Assembly elections in the state-turned-UT later this year. The Centre has also promised to restore J&K's statehood and consider the withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

The encouraging turnout in Kashmir in the recent Lok Sabha elections has sent out a clear message that the people of the trouble-torn Valley have faith in the



democratic process. However, terrorists and their handlers are unleashing violence in a bid to undermine the

turnaround. Accusing Pakistan of trying to disturb peace in the UT through its mercenaries, J&K DGP RR Swain has asserted that the country's security forces would give a befitting reply to the enemy. He has also warned local agents of the hostile neighbour not to support militancy. It's this local assistance that is spurring infiltrators from across the border to execute terror strikes with apparent ease.

Amid these attacks comes the reappointment of Ajit Doval as National Security Adviser. He played a key role in two major counter-terror operations — the surgical strikes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after the Uri attack of 2016 and the Balakot airstrikes in the wake of the Pulwama suicide bombing in 2019. Doval will be called upon to help the PM deal with the current situation in a firm and forceful manner. All eyes will be on India's military and diplomatic response.

Wrong to tar a community with the same brush

India is too big a country to tolerate parochial thinking. Magnanimity will take the nation forward.

A CISF constable, Kulwinder Kaur, slapped newly elected BJP MP Kangana Ranaut at the Chandigarh airport last week. The constable was upset over controversial remarks made by the actor-turned-politician about the women who had participated in the farmers' agitation at Delhi's borders in 2020-21. Punjab's farming community had spearheaded the year-long stir against the three farm laws, which were eventually repealed by the Centre. Soon after the recent incident, Kangana expressed concern over a 'shocking rise in terror and violence in Punjab'. Misconduct by an on-duty uniformed officer can neither be defended nor justified. It's a case of gross indiscipline deserving the due process of legal action. Whatever the grievances or grudges of any Indian in any state, no one can be allowed to resort to an act which demoralises his/her unit, force and those whose duty it is to ensure that safety and security in sensitive operational areas are not breached. Unfortunately, the keepers of the law brazenly failed to do that. Having said that, let us dispassionately and objectively go beyond the 'slapgate' and dig deep into history and polity to remember not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Brutal facts of Indian history are often forgotten or ignored. Bengal in the east and Punjab in the north-west were the two biggest provinces of British India. Had India not been partitioned in 1947, both Bengal and Punjab would have sent more than 100 MPs each to the Lok Sabha, far more than Uttar Pradesh's 80.

Ironically, the two 'biggest' provinces were dismembered. To the misfortune of post-1947 Punjab, a reorganisation took place in 1966. The shrinking of territory, however, was followed by epochal events which created chronic problems. It happened due to the lapses of India's ruling class, which, in turn, contaminated the psyche of a sizeable proportion of the people. The latter, though apolitical, were nevertheless lured into harbouring animosity towards Bengalis from the 1960s and then Punjabis (particularly Sikhs) since the 1980s.

Seeing is believing, it's rightly said. The Mao Zedong-led Communist Party of China and the People's Liberation



Army did not stop their machinations even after invading India in October 1962. First, they penetrated the entire North-East and followed it up with an assault on the truncated state of West Bengal, which witnessed the Naxalbari firing on May 24, 1967. A few thousand Hindu Bengalis, 'brainwashed' by leftist ideology and unscrupulously nurtured by local traders, politicians and intellectuals as well as propped up by Chinese money, caused untold damage to the eastern state for over 10 years. The result — it gave birth to 'racial/ethnic profiling', an 'effective' way to prevent even the best and the brightest minds from moving forward. Virtually

every Bengali was a 'communist' in the eyes of all outside the state, especially in the national capital. In March 1972, this author was asked by a UPSC member: "Oh, you are a Bengali! Are you a Naxalite?"

After the Bengali 'racial/ethnic profiling' came the turn of the Sikhs in the 1980s amid the Khalistan movement. The vilification was also seen during the 2020-21 farmers' agitation, when some political leaders branded protesters as Khalistanis and anti-nationals.

Since one has had the experience of gross humiliation and the choicest of unprovoked abuse on several occasions, including in an office of the Government of India at least

twice in 35 years, one has invariably taken pains to ensure that the ignominy one faced without any reason must not be inflicted on our countrymen from Punjab for the fault of a few. 'Ethnic profiling' and reckless public abuse of a community must be eschewed by all, however high or mighty. Else, anything can happen, as witnessed at the Chandigarh airport.

Indeed, one must never forget that 1.4 billion Indians constitute a bewildering variety of people. Hence, there is a need for circumspection, sensitivity, understanding and empathy. Ignorance cannot be an excuse for an Indian even if he/she is not conversant with the language of a state where his professional work takes him/her. It's time to make efforts to identify oneself with the people of the state where one works, and vice versa. Thus, every non-Punjabi in Punjab would be a Punjabi; every non-Tamil in Chennai a Tamil; every non-Marathi in Mumbai a Marathi; and every non-Bengali in Kolkata a Bengali. It's axiomatic that people en masse learn to respect fellow Indians from other states and avoid making unprovoked remarks dripping with communal venom.

The point is simple: The Constitution needs to be thoroughly studied to understand the spirit and ethos of the country. This nation can never be governed by anyone on the basis of a make-believe scenario. Every province/state is unique and different from others. Hence, a few or one individual's crime or error doesn't make the entire state a den of criminals. And such mistakes are creating and increasing tension, animosity and hatred in the society and polity of India.

It's time to learn lessons from historical blunders to avoid recurrence of the Chandigarh episode. If one uniformed officer is charged with dereliction of duty, that does not give anyone the licence to tar an entire state or community with the same brush. It happened in Chandigarh. It could easily have been Kanpur, Kolkata, Kannur, Jammu, Jodhpur or Delhi. It's time for justice, fair play and objectivity, not impulsive provocation. India is too big a country to tolerate parochial thinking. Magnanimity will take India forward.

Petrol, diesel to get costlier in Karnataka

NEW DELHI. Karnataka government on Saturday hiked sales tax on fuel, making petrol and diesel costlier.

As per official sources, petrol price will now go up by `3 and diesel by `3.5 a litre. The Finance Department notification showed the government has increased sales tax on petrol by 3.92 percentage points, from 25.92 to 29.84%. On diesel, the hike is 4.1 percentage points, from 14.34 to 18.44%.

This notification shall come into force with immediate effect, it said. The decision comes days after the Lok Sabha poll results, in which NDA got 19 out of 28 seats in Karnataka, with BJP winning 17 and JD(S) with 2. The ruling Congress in the state has won nine seats.

The move, aimed at resource mobilisation, comes after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is also the finance minister, reviewed the state's revenue generation and fiscal position. During the meeting, the CM asked officials to work harder towards meeting revenue collection targets.

WhatsApp now allows video calls with 32 people, screen sharing with audio

New Delhi Mark Zuckerberg-led Meta has started rolling out a new update for WhatsApp that brings new features for its video calls, which is aimed at making it easier and better for video calls with a larger group, according to Business Insider India.

Users can now share their screen with audio, making it perfect for watching videos together. You can add up to 32 people on a video call. Another feature is the speaker spotlight, which will highlight the speaker



automatically, making them more prominent on the screen, said tech news site Gizbot.

The updates will be available to all users over the coming weeks. The messaging app recently launched MLow codec to improve call reliability. Calls on mobile devices now benefit from enhanced noise and echo cancellation, making easy conversation in noisy environments. Video calls have higher resolution for users with faster connections. Audio is crisper, even with poor network connectivity or older devices, the report added.

Bajaj Housing Finance's Rs 7,000 cr IPO to shake up industry valuation

MUMBAI. The Bajaj Group, which is entering the primary capital markets with a bumper offer of Rs 7,000 crore after nearly two decades, is set to shake up the industry that has been going through dull moments since the exit of the industry leader HDFC last July from the scene following its reverse merger with its sibling commercial bank, according to analysts.

Bajaj Housing is entering a universe, which is dominated by Indiabulls Housing Finance, LIC Housing Finance, Piramal Capital and Housing Finance, PNB Housing Finance in the pecking order of average AUMs for FY22 and FY23 with over Rs 50,000 crore. Bajaj Housing is already in the upper layer of this. As per the investment bankers who are not working on the issue, Bajaj Housing Finance is likely looking at a valuation of a \$10 billion, which would make it the largest in the cluttered industry. According to an analyst, the Pune-based company whose sister concerns Bajaj Auto and Bajaj Capital lead the industry in terms of price-to-earnings ratios and are the most profitable in these terms. Bajaj Auto, in fact, is the most profitable auto company in the world in terms PE ratios.

The same analysts pegs Bajaj Housing to ask for a price band of whopping Rs 830-844 per share or a market capitalisation of about Rs 50,000 crore on listing. Parent Bajaj Finance has a market capitalisation of Rs 5 trillion (Rs 5 lakh cr), and Bajaj Housing's valuation represents about 10% of that. Even if Bajaj Housing was to exceed expectations by 50% on listing, it will translate into just about a 5% upside to Bajaj Finance's valuation. Therefore, some brokerages such as Motilal Oswal are not enthused about Bajaj Finance's prospects and see limited upside catalysts for the stock. "Management's guidance for FY25 is below its long-term guidance on multiple metrics such as AUM growth, credit costs, return on assets and return on equity," said a Motilal analyst in their Q4FY24 review report. Last week, Bajaj Housing filed draft red herring prospectus with Sebi for a Rs 7,000 crore share sale. This will be the first public issue from the Pune-based group founded in 1926 after Bajaj Fiserv, which is the parent of the issuer and its holding company of the group's financial services vertical, went public in May 2008 and Bajaj Finance, another promoter of the issuer that hit market way in 1994. Bajaj Auto has been listed for decades and is the most profitable auto maker in the world in terms of price to earnings. The issue among the largest from the housing finance space and the largest so far this fiscal, comprises of Rs 4000 core of fresh issue and Rs 3,000 crore of offer for sale by promoters --Bajaj Finance and Bajaj Fiserv, both listed entities. Blackstone-backed Aadhar Housing (Rs 3,000 cr issue last month) and the Westbridge-backed India Shelter Finance (Rs 1,200 cr in Dec 2023) were the two IPOs from the home finance side this year. As per the DRHP, only Bajaj Finance is participating in the offer for sale of up to Rs 3,000 crore though Bajaj Fiserv is also a promoter. The DRHP filing came two days after the board approved the IPO early June. It proposes to use the proceeds to augment the capital base to meet future business requirements and for onward lending. Bajaj Housing Finance is identified as an upper layer NBFC by the RBI since September 2022 under the scale-based regulations which mandate such firms to go public within three years, that's by this September.

No land to Adani group, Dharavi land transfer to Maha govt depts; Adani only a developer: Sources

Trying to clear misconceptions over the project, sources said as per the tender, the land remains allocated to DRP/SRA at rates decided by the government.

MUMBAI. The multi-crore Dharavi slum redevelopment project involves no land transfer to the Adani group but to the Maharashtra government's departments, and the Ahmedabad-based conglomerate, as a project developer, will build houses that will be handed over to the same departments for allotment to residents of Asia's biggest slums, sources said.

Denying allegations of land grab made by MP Varsha Gaikwad, sources close to the project said land parcels are to be transferred only to Dharavi

Redevelopment Project/Slum Rehabilitation Authority (DRP/SRA) of the state government's housing department. Adani Group, which won the Dharavi slum redevelopment project in open international bidding, will build tenements - housing and commercials - through its joint venture company Dharavi Redevelopment Project Private Ltd (DRPPL) with the Maharashtra government, again hand them over to DRP/SRA of the Maharashtra government for allocation as per survey findings. Trying to clear misconceptions over the project, sources said as per the tender, the land remains allocated to DRP/SRA at rates decided by the government. DRPPL has to pay the government as per demand just for the development. While DRPPL gets development rights, the state support agreement, which is part of the tender document, clearly says that the state government will support the project by giving land to its own DRP/SRA department. On the issue of allocation of railway land, where the first rehabilitation



units are to be built for the first set of Dharavi residents, sources said it was allocated to DRP even before tendering, for which DRPPL has paid a whopping premium of 170 per cent to the prevailing ready reckoner rates. Calling allegations that Dharavikars will be thrown out of Dharavi and rendered homeless as pure fictional and a mere figment to create anxiety amongst the masses, sources said the government's 2022 order provides for a condition that each and every tenement holder of Dharavi, eligible or ineligible, will be given a home. No Dharavikar will

be displaced under the DRP/SRA scheme, they insisted. Holders of tenements in existence on or before January 1, 2000, will be eligible for in-situ rehabilitation. Those existing between January 1, 2000, and January 1, 2011, will be allotted homes under PMAY outside Dharavi anywhere in MMR for just Rs 2.5 lakh or via rental housing. The tenements -- which exist post January 1, 2011, till the cutoff date (to be declared by the government) -- will get homes under the state government's proposed affordable rental home policy with an option of hire-purchase. The Dharavi redevelopment, they said, is a unique provision compared to the regular SRA scheme, wherein only eligible tenement holders were provided a house of up to 300 square feet. Under the Dharavi redevelopment projects, a flat measuring 350 sq ft, 17 per cent more than other SRA schemes in Mumbai, will be allocated. The Dharavi Redevelopment Tender is one of the most progressive in terms of its outlook towards informal settlers of Dharavi, sources said.

New Tax Regime vs Old Tax Regime AY 2024-25: How to Choose Best Option for Filing ITR

New Delhi. With the release of Form 16, employees can now file their income tax returns (ITR) for Assessment Year (AY) 2024-25. The e-filing process is in full swing, and taxpayers must choose between the new and old tax regimes. Each regime offers distinct benefits and tax rates, making it essential to understand which option aligns best with your financial situation. Also Read: How to File ITR Online for FY24? A Step-by-Step Guide. In the latest Budget 2023, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced significant changes to the new tax regime, increasing the income tax exemption limit by Rs 50,000 to Rs 3 lakh. Additionally, the rebate under Section 87A has been raised, meaning individuals earning up to Rs 7 lakh annually do not have to pay any income tax under the new regime. This update aims to simplify tax calculations and provide relief to middle-income



taxpayers. Note: For senior citizens (above 60 years of age), the income tax under the old regime is exempt up to Rs 3,00,000; while for super senior citizens (above 80 years), income up to Rs 5,00,000 is exempt. Key Features and Differences Between the Tax Regimes: New Tax Regime: Expert Recommendations: Choosing the Right Tax Regime: Tax professionals recommend a thorough evaluation of your financial status, including taxable income, potential deductions, and

available exemptions, before selecting a tax regime. The new tax regime is particularly beneficial for individuals with fewer savings and investments, while the old regime might be more advantageous for those who can maximise deductions through various tax-saving instruments. For those earning up to Rs 7 lakh, the new tax regime is straightforward and beneficial as it results in zero tax liability," experts suggest. Here are some examples to illustrate which regime might be more beneficial for different financial situations: Low-Income Earners: If your income is up to Rs 7 lakh with minimal deductions, the new regime offers simplicity and zero tax liability. High-income earners with Investments: If you have significant investments in tax-saving instruments, the old regime could reduce your taxable income effectively.

Vizhinjam gets customs nod to operate as international seaport

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. In a significant development, the Vizhinjam International Seaport received customs clearance to operate as an international seaport. The clearance under Section 7A of the Customs Act allows the unloading of imported goods and loading of export goods. A gazette notification for the same has been issued. Now clearances under Sections 6 and 45 in addition to the Port Code are pending. With the customs nod under Section 7A, Vizhinjam will have major chances to become an international transshipment hub, said Ports Minister V N Vasavan.

The customs issued its nod to Vizhinjam Port after it completed the requirements set by the Union Customs Ministry.

The 12 criteria set by the customs include necessary office requirements, buildings, a computer network and server room facility, among others. The Vizhinjam port was able to meet



the guidelines within the prescribed time frame, said the minister. He said work for other clearances too has been completed. The port has already received clearance from the Union Shipping Ministry to operate as a transshipment terminal. With this,

goods coming from small ports across the country can be transshipped to mother ships from here, to be sent to other ports across the globe. Similarly, goods coming from different parts of the world can be transshipped to regional ports from Vizhinjam.

Data protection rules Centre's top priority, consultation soon: Ashwini Vaishnaw

Last year, Parliament passed the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 after several previous iterations of the bill went through a number of deliberations over the span of over half a decade.

New Delhi The Centre is in an "advanced stage" of finalising the much awaited, and crucial, data protection rules and will soon release the subordinate legislation for public consultation, a top IT Ministry official said. The rules are crucial to operationalise the Digital Personal Data Act, which was passed by Parliament last year. "Releasing the rules are among our top priorities. We had started working on the rules around December of last year, well before the Lok Sabha elections. Right now, the drafting of the rules is at an advanced stage and we will shortly begin consultations soon... We won't rush through with it," Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union IT Minister, told reporters Saturday. He did not offer a specific

timeline for releasing the data protection rules. Under the recently formed National Democratic Alliance's (NDA's) coalition government, Vaishnaw has retained the ministries of IT and Railways and has been given the additional charge of heading the Information and Broadcasting ministry. Last year, Parliament passed the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 after several previous iterations of the bill went through a number of deliberations over the span of over half a decade. However, while the law has been passed, it is yet to be enacted. At least 25 rules to operationalise the law are also yet to see the light of day. The law has been controversial, over its relatively easy norms for the private sector and major exemptions it offers to the government and its agencies. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 has also addressed two key long-standing demands of the industry -- by allowing relaxations around the age of consent for children, and by significantly easing cross-border data flows, both of which was reported by The Indian Express earlier. One of the key flailings of earlier



iterations was that they were seen as too compliance-intensive by the industry, especially smaller businesses.

The law, while laying down consent norms for entities' collecting personal data of individuals, also allows for a leeway for certain "legitimate uses," both by the government itself, and private entities. "Our overall legislative framework for the tech sector, of having a privacy law, the telecom act and the Digital India Act (successor to the Information Technology Act, 2000) remains intact," Vaishnaw said.

On the electronics manufacturing side, Vaishnaw said that the government's next

Elon Musk wins USD 56 billion pay vote but is it downhill from here?

NEW DELHI Elon Musk has hogged corporate headlines in recent days over his \$56 billion payout package; and he once again proved he never fails to surprise! The Tesla chief executive had given himself corporate America's largest pay packet in 2018 of \$56 billion, but it was struck down by a Delaware judge earlier this year. She called it "an unfathomable sum" and an amount unfair to shareholders. Not deterred, Musk called for a shareholders' vote.

The controversy accelerated when Norway's \$1.7 trillion sovereign wealth fund operated by Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIMM), said it will vote against ratifying the pay package. The Fund, the 8th largest investor in Tesla, said it while it appreciated "the significant value generated under Mr. Musk's leadership since the grant date in 2018, we remain concerned about the total size of the award, the structure given performance triggers, dilution, and lack of mitigation of key person risk." But egalitarianism and socialism be damned. Small investors, who make up the bulk of Tesla's large investor base, had other ideas. Though several US pension funds joined the Norwegian fund in calling on shareholders to reject the pay package, Elon Musk sailed through. For small shareholders, Musk became a cause; and social media was abuzz with calls to "remedy the injustice" and vote "Yes" for Musk. What resonated with shareholders was Elon Musk's success story of building the company from scratch to a capitalization of \$650 billion, and the largest seller of EVs in the world. The company's pitch that without the package, Musk -- crucial to Tesla's future -- might quit, worked. There is still a legal question mark on his humungous pay package, but Musk now knows, the bulk of the investors are behind him. What's behind the \$56 billion package? Musk was given 10 years of performance targets, which when reached would result in a payout of stock options linked to a set of targets based on market capitalization, income and revenue. When Tesla hit \$650 billion in market value in late 2020, it met all earnings milestones. This released Musk's stock options that roughly translate to \$56 billion. As one business commentator described it, the package was essentially Musk's bet on himself to take Tesla's stock from \$60 billion to \$650 billion, a 983% rise. He was given 10 years to reach that target. He achieved it in 3 years.

Competition sharpens

But hereon, the story might go cold. Facing intense competition, especially from Chinese electric car makers like BYD, and a less-than-expected rise in demand for EVs, Tesla reported its first 2024 first quarter earnings plunged 48%, falling short of lowered Wall Street forecasts. The company reported a 9% drop in total revenue, and its profit margin declined by 2 percent.

big move will involve encouraging developing a local components ecosystem while scaling up the industry as a whole. The government has nearly exhausted its \$10 billion semiconductor manufacturing incentive fund, after it approved four projects in the space, including a \$11 billion foundry by the Tata Group and a packaging facility by the US-based Micron Technology, both of which are coming up in Gujarat. Under the scheme, the central government will pay 50 per cent of the capex needed to set up these factories. Just before the elections, the previous Union Cabinet had also cleared the Rs 10,000 crore IndiaAI Mission would also need to be operationalised. Under the scheme, the government will allocate funds towards subsidising private companies looking to set up AI computing capacity in the country, among other things. While still a blueprint, the approval could spur investments in this sector -- with private companies setting up data centres in the country, and allowing startups access so they can test and build their generative AI models.

Actor Darshan not married to Pavithra Gowda, just 'friends', claims his lawyer

Lawyer Anil Babu dismissed reports suggesting that Pavithra Gowda is Darshan Thoogudeepa's second wife or partner. He stated that Vijayalakshmi is the actor's legally wedded wife, and that Gowda was only a co-star and friend.

New Delhi: Pavithra Gowda, one of the prime suspects in the murder of a fan of popular Kannada actor Darshan, is only a friend of the actor and not his wife, clarified Darshan's lawyer, Anil Babu. Earlier this week, Darshan, Pavithra Gowda, and 14 others were arrested for allegedly murdering Renukaswamy, a 33-year-old resident of Chitradurga. Speaking to India Today TV, Anil Babu categorically denied reports suggesting that Pavithra Gowda is Darshan Thoogudeepa's second wife or partner. He stated that Vijayalakshmi is the actor's legally wedded wife, and Pavithra Gowda is merely a co-star and friend.

Pavithra Gowda being the second wife, that is utterly false. She is just a friend. They used to be co-stars and now they have a friendly



relationship, nothing else. The only wife [of Darshan] is the first wife, Vijayalakshmi. No second marriage happened at any point of time," Anil Babu said. Babu further stated that Darshan had no connection with Renukaswamy and was not involved in the alleged murder. Addressing CCTV footage showing Darshan's car near the scene of the crime, Babu said the actor was not in the car

and that police have not provided any evidence proving his presence there. CCTV footage accessed by India Today showed a red Jeep belonging to the actor at the murder spot. The Jeep was seen following a Scorpio car that was reportedly used for dumping the body. Both cars were seized by the police. Anil Babu said, "The first question is whether that car belongs to Darshan, that is yet to be established. Secondly, the police have to say that Darshan was present inside the car, that is the most important."

Asked about police allegations that the actor paid off the other accused to get rid of Renukaswamy's body and hush up the matter, Anil Babu stated, "Darshan is not at all involved in this case. So no question arises whether he paid anyone or how much was paid. He doesn't know anything about that matter."

In a related development, two more individuals,

Jagadish and Anukumar, were arrested on Friday in connection with the Renukaswamy murder case.

Police sources told news agency PTI that they were taken into custody from Chitradurga by a team led by Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Dinakar. The two are reportedly involved in kidnapping Renukaswamy from Chitradurga. Darshan, known as the "Challenging Star," and 12 of his close associates were arrested on Tuesday for the murder of Renukaswamy. The victim, an autorickshaw driver and a member of Darshan's fan club in Chitradurga, was found dead at Sumanahalli Bridge in Bengaluru. He had allegedly sent derogatory messages to Pavithra Gowda. On Saturday, the police custody of actor Darshan along with his friend Pavithra Gowda and eleven other accused was extended after the investigation team requested the court that crucial evidence and equipment used to torture the deceased needs to be recovered.

Opposition's All-Out Attack On Centre Amid Nationwide NEET Protests

New Delhi: Opposition leaders have targeted the Centre over the massive row surrounding the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) -- an all-India examination for admission to medical courses -- that has triggered protests by aspirants in several parts of the country. The DMK, which has been opposing NEET ever since it was introduced, has slammed the National Testing Agency for destroying the exam's sanctity and said the Centre was a nothing more than a "spectator" and backing coaching centres. The Congress has questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" and demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe.

Results for the medical entrance examination, which was taken by 24 lakh students on May 5, were declared on June 4, when counting of votes for the 2024 Lok Sabha election was held. In the aftermath of the results, allegations of paper leak surfaced. As many as 67 students scored the perfect score of 720/720. The cut-off has gone up exponentially, leaving many wondering if they would get a medical college seat at all.

Another issue that has come under the scanner is the award of grace marks to several students to compensate for loss of time at the exam centre. The protesting students allege this is responsible for the inflated marks. The matter is before the Supreme Court, and the Centre has told the court that it had cancelled the grace marks given to 1,563 candidates. They now have the option to take a re-test or forgo the grace marks. But a section of students has said this is not enough and the exam must be repeated for all students.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said there is no evidence of paper leak and claims of corruption in NTA are unfounded. "All the facts related to this are before the Supreme Court and are under consideration. The kind of politics being done on this issue is only an attempt to spread confusion and it affects the mental peace of the students," Mr Pradhan said. Targeting the Centre over the raging issue, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said grace marks are not the only problem.

Atishi seeks water pipeline patrolling as BJP continues to blame AAP for crisis

New Delhi: As Delhi continues to reel under the severe water crisis, Water Minister Atishi on Monday wrote a letter to Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora seeking patrolling of water pipelines in the national capital. She urged the commissioner to deploy police along the major water pipelines and increase patrolling in the national capital for the next 15 days.

Seeking Delhi Police cooperation, Atishi writes, "I am writing to request the deployment of police personnel to patrol and protect our major pipelines for the next 15 days."

"This would be very important for putting a stop to miscreants or people with ulterior motives from tampering with our water pipelines, which have now become Delhi's lifelines. At this juncture, any foul play and sabotage will worsen the already difficult water shortage being faced by the people of Delhi," she added.

Meanwhile, AAP MLAs reached the residence of Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil in Delhi. Speaking with news agency ANI, AAP MLA Rakhi Birla said, "It is unfortunate that we gave a letter to Minister CR Patil yesterday, and today our delegation visited his residence to meet him, but we are getting the information that he is not at his residence. We want to request that the minister pay attention to the issue of water shortages in Delhi."

Accusing the AAP government over the raging water crisis in the national capital, BJP MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat from West Delhi said that the residents of Dwarka have been complaining about the water shortages as private tankers are costing more money, and "they are unable to avail government tankers." Taking a potshot at AAP, she said, "The Delhi government is blaming other state governments for the water shortage, whereas the problem lies within their department... I request Atishi not on humanitarian grounds, but as a minister in the Delhi government, she needs to take care of her department."

Manipur Chief Minister says convoy attack 'shameful', orders high-level probe

New Delhi: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh has called the June 10 attack on his convoy "a matter of shame". "Yes, it is a matter of shame for me that my security convoy was attacked in my own state and I feel the worst about this, Singh told India Today TV, upon being asked about the safety arrangements in the state amid the ongoing violence, and how he plans to keep the people of the state safe. "The Chief Secretary has been asked to carry out a high-level probe in connection with the attack on my convoy," the Chief Minister said.

"How the militants got information about the passage of the convoy is a matter of investigation," he said. The Chief Minister's convoy was ambushed by suspected militants in Kangpokpi district, leaving one injured. The incident happened while the convoy was on its way to violence-hit Jiribam district. Multiple

gunshots were fired at the vehicles of the security forces, who retaliated. The driver of one of the convoy vehicles suffered bullet injuries on his right shoulder, and was admitted to a hospital.

A YEAR OF VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR

Manipur has remained gripped by recurring bouts of violence since ethnic clashes between Kuki and Meitei communities erupted on May 3, 2023. Over 219 people have been killed in the violence. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. Even after a year of violence, the incidents of violence have only reduced, but have not been curbed. In a ground report, India Today also questioned Chief Minister

Biren Singh about the overall security situation in the state, to which he asserted that the situation had improved after the centre deployed security forces in the state.

He also said it would take time to stop incidents of violence entirely. "The situation in Manipur has remained tense since the past, when the violence first erupted. However, after the deployment of security forces, the situation in the state has improved," he said. "It would take time to entirely stop violence in the state, a political dialogue is necessary," he added. "Sporadic incidents of violence have recently been reported in some places," the Chief Minister acknowledged. The Chief Minister also asserted the violence in Manipur is between illegal immigrants and terrorists from Myanmar, who were illegally settling in Manipur and were involved in drug businesses.

From getting ditched to writing a book: How Rajasthan man became a millionaire

New Delhi: Kailash Manju, the son of a small farmer from Rajasthan, shot to fame after he wrote a novel about his failed relationship. In the book, like every other tragedy embroiled within a love story, a boy meets a girl, they become friends, they fall in love, and then society steps in and everything fades away; yes, even love. Titled "UPSC Wala Love Collector Sahiba," the book became a bestseller, with over 150,000 copies sold so far. With the sale of the book, Manju earned around Rs 2.5 to 3 crore, thus becoming a millionaire. He has also received film offers for the book.



Speaking with India Today, Kailash Manju said that "UPSC Wala Love" reflects the struggles of millions of UPSC aspirants, including the protagonist of his novel, a girl with a rural background who shifts from Hindi to English, prepares for the UPSC, and becomes a successful IAS

officer.

The book is inspired by real events, with characters named Girish and Angel mirroring aspects of Manju's own life. The narrative describes how Girish and Angel first connected with each other via email, met in Delhi, and navigated their relationship amid UPSC preparations. The girl eventually clears the exams and secures a high-ranking post for herself.

Following that, she starts receiving many marriage proposals. The pressure from her family eventually leads her to part ways with Girish. Manju emphasises that despite the breakup, he harbors no ill feelings and hopes for Angel's success.

Palaniswami's party to boycott Vikravandi bypoll, Chidambaram alleges proxy battle

P Chidambaram has slammed AIADMK for the party's decision to boycott the Vikravandi by-election, accusing them of supporting the NDA candidate through a proxy strategy.

New Delhi: Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram has slammed Tamil Nadu's principal opposition party, AIADMK, for its decision to boycott the July 10 bypoll to the Vikravandi Assembly constituency. Referring to the centre, Chidambaram, in a social media post, alleged the party had received such instructions from the 'top', and that the party, along with the BJP,

were "fighting the battle through a proxy." "AIADMK's decision to boycott the Vikravandi by-election is clear evidence that it has received instructions from the 'top' to facilitate the electoral chances of the NDA candidate (PMK). Both BJP and AIADMK are fighting the battle through a proxy (PMK)," Chidambaram tweeted.

Assembly constituency. The party also alleged that the ruling DMK will unleash 'violence' and not allow people to vote 'independently.' Ramadas, founder of the Pattali Makkal Katchi, a constituent of the BJP-led NDA in Tamil Nadu, announced that his party's vice-president C Anbumani, would contest the Vikravandi bypoll. Palaniswami, also the leader of the opposition, alleged that the state ministers and DMK workers, apart

from misusing power will also flex their money and muscle power and unleash violence and lawlessness and not allow people to vote independently. Hence, the



bypoll will not be fair and free and considering such factors, the "AIADMK will boycott the July 10 bypoll to the Vikravandi Assembly segment." The AIADMK general secretary, in a

statement, cited several allegations made in the past against the DMK including the 'Thirumangalam formula' and 'Erode East formula,' of confining people in 'sheds' like cattle to prevent opposition from reaching out to them and to somehow win the votes through allurements. The ruling party had, however, dismissed all such allegations as false. Palaniswami expressed confidence in returning to power in Tamil Nadu by winning the Assembly election to be held in 2026.

Thirumangalam formula is a reference to the opposition's allegation of inducement/cash for votes in Thirumangalam Assembly segment in a bypoll held in 2009 during the DMK regime. Bypoll to Erode East Assembly constituency was held in 2023 and DMK's ally Congress party's senior leader EVKS Elangovan won.

2 Rajkot civic officials 'forged' game zone documents after fire, arrested: Cops

New Delhi: Two employees of the Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) have been arrested for allegedly making certain changes in documents pertaining to a game zone after a fire there last month claimed 27 lives, police said on Sunday. With this, 12 persons, including six government employees, have so been arrested in connection with the May 25 incident at the TRP game zone in Gujarat's Rajkot city, they said. The city crime branch on Saturday arrested RMC's assistant town planning officer Rajesh Makwana and assistant engineer Jaideep Chaudhary for their alleged involvement in making changes in an official register after the fire incident, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime, Parthrajsinh Gohil said.

"They made certain changes in government documents related to the TRP game zone after the fire incident. They also forged documents," he said. "So far we have arrested six government employees and six other persons in connection with the TRP game zone fire," Gohil said. The four government employees arrested earlier include Rajkot's Town Planning Officer MD Sagathia, assistant TPOs Mukesh Makwana and Gautam Joshi, and former station officer of Kalavad Road fire station Rohit Vigora. A co-owner of the game zone, Ashoksinh Jadeja, surrendered before the police on Thursday evening. Jadeja is one of the six owners of the TRP game zone. Five of them have been so far arrested and one died in the May 25 fire.

A manager of the game zone has also been arrested in the case. During a probe into the incident, it was confirmed that one of the co-owners of the game zone, Prakash Hiran, who was named in the FIR and was missing since the tragedy, died in the deadly fire as he was inside the facility when it was gutted, according to police. A CCTV camera footage showed the fire started after sparks fell on thermocol (polystyrene) sheets during welding work on the ground floor. Though workers present there tried to douse the blaze with fire extinguishers, it spread quickly and eventually engulfed the game zone. According to police, the game zone was being operated without a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the RMC's fire department. After the Rajkot incident, several game zones and other recreation hubs were sealed across the state and FIRs were also filed against the owners for running such facilities without requisite permissions.

NEWS BOX

10, including children, injured in shooting at water park in US, suspect at large

World As many as 10 people were shot and injured at a water park near Detroit, the largest city in Michigan in the United States. The incident happened on Saturday evening.

The suspect was at large. However, the police said they believed he was cornered in a house nearby, news agency Reuters reported. The gun used by the suspect was recovered from the scene, news agency Reuters reported. Addressing a press conference, Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said a man got out of a vehicle in front of Brooklands Plaza Splash Pad park, in Rochester Hills, Michigan, at about 5 pm (2100 GMT) and fired about 30 shots from a 9mm semi-automatic Glock. He reloaded several times, the official said.

Rochester Hills is about 30 miles (50 km) north of Detroit. The neighbouring community, Oxford Township, also in Oakland County, was the scene of a 2021 mass school shooting where student Ethan Crumbley, then 15, killed four students and wounded six other students and a teacher at Oxford High School.

Rare flesh-eating bacteria that can kill in 2 days spreads in Japan

World A disease caused by a rare "flesh-eating bacteria" that can kill people within 48 hours is spreading in Japan after the country relaxed Covid-era restrictions, Bloomberg reported on Saturday. Streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (STSS) is an aggressive illness that can be fatal within 48 hours of infection. As many as 977 cases of STSS have been reported in Japan this year by June 2, higher than the record 941 cases reported last year, according to the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, which has been tracking incidences of the disease since 1999. Group A Streptococcus (GAS) typically causes swelling and sore throat in children known as "strep throat," but some types of the bacteria can lead to symptoms developing rapidly, including limb pain and swelling, fever, low blood pressure, that can be followed by necrosis, breathing problems, organ failure and death, according to Bloomberg.

"Most of the deaths happen within 48 hours," said Ken Kikuchi, a professor in infectious diseases at Tokyo Women's Medical University. "As soon as a patient notices swelling in the foot in the morning, it can expand to the knee by noon, and they can die within 48 hours," he said.

People over 50 are more prone to the disease.

Kikuchi added that at the current rate of infections, the number of cases in Japan could reach 2,500 this year, with a "terrifying" mortality rate of 30%. Group A Streptococcus (GAS) typically causes swelling and sore throat in children known as "strep throat," but some types of the bacteria can lead to symptoms developing rapidly, including limb pain and swelling, fever, low blood pressure, that can be followed by necrosis, breathing problems, organ failure and death, according to Bloomberg.

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Eight-year-old critically wounded in Detroit suburb splash pad shooting; nine others suffer injuries

ROCHESTER HILLS. Nine people were injured, including two young children and their mother, after a shooter opened fire at a splash pad in a Detroit suburb where families gathered to escape the summer heat Saturday. Law enforcement tracked a suspect to a home, where the person died by suicide, authorities said. An 8-year-old boy was shot in the head and in critical condition Saturday night, Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard said during a news conference.

The boy's mother also was in critical condition after being wounded in the abdomen and leg, and his 4-year-old brother was in stable condition with a leg wound. Authorities initially said they believed as many as 10 people had gunshot wounds from the shooting in Rochester Hills, but that number was lowered later on after they checked with area hospitals.

The other six victims, all 30 or older, were in stable condition, Bouchard said. They included a husband-and-wife couple and a 78-year-old man. The shooting happened just after 5 p.m. at a city park featuring a recreation area with a nonslip surface where people can turn on sprays and fountains of water to play in.

Bouchard said the attack appeared to be random, with the shooter driving up to the park, walking to the splash pad and firing as many as 28 times, stopping multiple times to reload. At least one witness reported that the shooter appeared to use two hand guns during the attack, but that has not yet been confirmed, the sheriff said. In the chaos, "People were falling, getting hit, trying to run," Bouchard said. Terrible things that unfortunately all of us in our law enforcement business have seen way too much." The gunman was apparently in no rush just calmly walked back to his car," the sheriff said. Police heard the 911 call reporting the shooting as it came in, Bouchard said, because the agency uses a service that simultaneously sends emergency calls to first responders.

An officer was at the scene within two minutes, he said. Bouchard said the first deputies who arrived immediately began providing first aid including tourniquets. Officers also were able to quickly come up with a likely address, and a car matching the suspect's vehicle was at the residence. Deputies surrounded the home and tried to make contact with the suspect inside, to no avail, Bouchard said. They sent a drone inside the home and then entered to find the suspect was dead. Another weapon was found inside.

Thousands protest against far right in France ahead of snap polls

Thousands of people marched in several French cities, including Paris, to protest against National Rally ahead of snap election after opinion polls projected the far-right party winning and forming the next government.

Paris Thousands marched in Paris and cities across France on Saturday to protest against the far-right National Rally (RN) ahead of upcoming elections to the French Parliament. Following the RN's surge in last Sunday's European elections, police said 3,50,000 people were expected to march and 21,000 officers had been mobilised after labour unions, student groups and rights groups called for rallies to oppose the anti-immigration, eurosceptic party. In Paris, where police said 75,000 people turned out, a march set

off at 1200 GMT (5:30 pm IST) from Place de La Republique, in the east, going through the Bastille Square to Nation.

According to the CGT union, cited by BFM TV, 2,50,000 marched in Paris and 6,40,000 in total across the country. Police said they had arrested seven people in Paris. The police said there had been 2,17,000 demonstrators across France.

peaking at Place de La Republique, hard-left CGT union leader Sophie Binet told reporters, "We are marching because we are extremely worried that (the RN's head) Jordan Bardella could become the next Prime Minister. We want to prevent this disaster." Carol-Ann Juste, a 22-year-old student taking part in the Paris march, said it was the first time she had taken part in a protest. She said she was "worried because people believe the lies of this party that has a truly racist heritage", a reference to the National Front, a forerunner to the RN, whose leader Jean-Marie Le Pen was fined for remarks seen as anti-Semitic or xenophobic.



Juste said she wanted to "fight to preserve a country of human rights, freedom, and tolerance".

NEXT GOVERNMENT

On the same march, Cecilia Lormeau, a 34-year-old teacher who said she plans to vote for the Popular Front, an alliance of left-wing parties, said, "It is important to show we are mobilised and that the RN is not the majority of the people."

President Emmanuel Macron called a snap legislative election, to be held in two rounds on June 30 and July 7, after his

centrist alliance was trounced by the RN in last Sunday's European Parliament ballot. A first series of opinion polls projected that the RN could win the election and be in a position to form the next government. An OpinionWay-Vae Solis poll conducted for Les Echos and Radio Classique published on Saturday forecast RN would lead in the first round of the parliamentary election with 33 per cent of the votes, ahead of the Popular Front on 25 per cent.

Macron's centrist camp was on 20 per cent. At least two polls have put the left not far behind the RN and ahead of Macron's group. In Tours, western France, where hundreds of protesters were taking part in a march, a banner read, "For liberties, for rights, for a social and democratic republic, against far-right ideas and against racism". Several banners read, "Young people hate the FN (the RN's former name), while a pensioner carried a banner that read, "Old people also hate the RN".

Sweden and Iran conduct prisoner swap in Oman-mediated deal

This incident is a latest in a string of mass killings in Mexico. Two warring militia groups, likely backed by drug cartels, are battling for control of the town. Chiapas and Guanajuato, both hit by bloody gang turf battles, border Guatemala.

Stockholm. Sweden and Iran carried out a prisoner exchange on Saturday, officials said, with Sweden freeing a former Iranian official convicted for his role in a mass execution in the 1980s while Iran released two Swedes being held there.

The prisoner swap was mediated by Oman, the country's foreign ministry said in a statement. "Omani efforts resulted in the two sides agreeing on a mutual release, as those released were transferred from Tehran and Stockholm," it said. Sweden freed former Iranian official Hamid Noury, who had been convicted for his part in a mass execution of political prisoners in Iran in 1988. Iran's official IRNA news agency published footage of Noury arriving at Tehran's Mehrabad airport where he was welcomed by his family on a red carpet. Meanwhile, Swedish

citizens Johan Floderus and Saeed Azizi, who had been detained in Iran, were freed and flown back to Sweden, where they arrived late on Saturday.

Sweden Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said the pair were in good condition given the circumstances and had been



reunited with their families. "Iran used them both as pawns in a cynical negotiations game with the purpose of getting the Iranian citizen Hamid Noury released from prison in Sweden. He was convicted of serious crimes committed in Iran in the 1980s," Kristersson said in a statement. "As Prime Minister, I have a special responsibility for Swedish citizens' safety. The government has therefore worked intensively on the issue, together with the Swedish security services, which negotiated with Iran."

Israeli military announces 'tactical pause' in attempt to increase flow of aid into hard-hit Gaza

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military on Sunday announced a "tactical pause" in its offensive in the southern Gaza Strip to allow the deliveries of increased quantities of humanitarian aid. The army said the pause would begin in the Rafah area at 8 a.m. (0500 GMT, 1 a.m. eastern) and remain in effect until 7 p.m. (1600 GMT, noon eastern). It said the pauses would take place every day until further notice.

The pause is aimed at allowing aid trucks to reach the nearby Israel-controlled Kerem Shalom crossing, the main entry point for incoming aid, and travel safely to the Salah a-Din highway, a main north-south road, to deliver supplies to other parts of Gaza, the military said. It said the pause was being coordinated with the U.N. and

international aid agencies. The crossing has suffered from a bottleneck since Israeli ground troops moved into Rafah in early May. Israel's eight-month military offensive against the Hamas militant group has plunged Gaza into a humanitarian crisis, with the U.N. reporting widespread hunger and hundreds of thousands of people on the brink of famine. The international community has urged Israel to do more to ease the crunch.

From May 6 until June 6, the U.N. received an average of 68 trucks of aid a day, according to figures from the U.N. humanitarian office, known as OCHA. That was down from 168 a day in April and far below the 500 trucks a day that aid groups say are needed. The flow of aid in southern Gaza declined

just as the humanitarian need grew. More than 1 million Palestinians, many of whom had already been displaced, fled Rafah after the invasion, crowding into other parts of southern and central Gaza. Most now languish in ramshackle tent camps, using trenches as latrines, with open sewage in the streets. COGAT, the Israeli military body that oversees aid distribution in Gaza, says there are no restrictions on the entry of trucks. It says more than 8,600 trucks of all kinds, both aid and commercial, entered Gaza from all crossings from May 2 to June 13, an average of 201 a day. But much of that aid has piled up at the crossings and not reached its final destination. A spokesman for COGAT, Shimon Freedman, said.

Trump slams Biden over inflation, crime at Detroit church to court Black voters

Detroit, Donald Trump ventured on Saturday (local time) where few Republican presidential candidates tread – the city of Detroit, attending a community forum as part of a push to peel Black voters from President Joe Biden ahead of November's election.

Trump's appearance at a Black church drew a mix of curious local residents and die-hard supporters, but little in the way of protest. Both Trump and Biden, a Democrat, have targeted Michigan as a must-win state where every vote may make a difference, and the Trump campaign argues an opportunity exists to win over Black voters, particularly men, who may be attracted to the former president's economic and border-security policies. But Detroit is also a place Trump denigrated four years ago as "corrupt" as he argued the 2020 election results there could not be trusted. At the 180 Church on the west side of the city, Trump sat on stage at a table flanked by a panel of members of the local community, including small-business owners and activists. The event was moderated by US Representative Byron Donalds of Florida, a contender to be Trump's vice-presidential pick. Trump focused on his core messages, blasting the Biden administration over high inflation, crime

and illegal migration, which he said had harmed Black Americans in particular.

"They're coming into your community and they're taking your jobs. We have to get them out," Trump said, without presenting evidence. Trump said crime was "most rampant here, in African-American communities", adding that the "Black population wanted law enforcement more than any other".

He also vowed to revitalise the local auto industry in Detroit by slapping tariffs on vehicles built in Mexico and elsewhere.

The church's senior pastor, Lorenzo Sewell, credited Trump for showing up by comparing him to Barack Obama, America's first Black president.

"President Obama never came to the 'hood. So, thank you," Sewell said.

MAKING AN APPEAL

Wearing a "Make Black America Great Again" T-shirt, Sewell spent time in the hours before the event directing and helping visitors find parking in the hardscrabble neighbourhood that surrounds the church. The event felt unlike a typical Trump rally. While some fervent, MAGA cap-adorned supporters waited for hours to get in, the line numbered in the hundreds, not thousands, and some attendees said they had just



happened upon the scene by chance. As the event began, the church was not at capacity. It held a diverse audience of Black and white people. The street in front of the church was blocked by police, but there was no sign of protests. A dental clinic on the corner looked to take advantage of the crowd, having an employee hold a sign aloft that read, "Make your smile great again". Asked whether she was glad Trump was there, the employee responded, "I'm glad if anybody comes here." Angelo Brown, 61, of southwest Detroit, said he wanted to come see Trump "close-up" and was undecided between Biden and Trump. "I'm still listening. I want more of a focus on America, our school system, the medical system," Brown said. "I'd like to see them fix the immigration problem

and not just bicker about it," he said. Tamika Markham, 46, of Detroit, said she was open to voting for Trump. "You never know," she said. "We are just getting by," Markham said of her and her teenage son. "It's hard for a lot of people. I see a lot of people struggling. Not everyone in the neighbourhood was happy to see Trump. Mae Thomas rolled down the window of her SUV as she drove by the scene outside the church and said she was a life-long Democrat and would be voting for Biden."

A quick visit to Detroit by Trump wouldn't persuade her, Thomas said. He had not done anything for her community as president. "Now if he walked up to me right now and did something for our neighbourhood, make everything beautiful, then it's different, then we might talk about it," she said. "But just to come in, I haven't seen any improvement in the neighbourhood."

AN UPHILL CLIMB?

Trump was convicted in New York last month on 34 felony counts of participating in a scheme to cover up his payment during the 2016 election to a porn star with whom he had an alleged affair.

NEWS BOX

Overcoming rain, Favour from Australia: England's rollercoaster ride to Super 8s

New Delhi. If there is a team that is the happiest in the Caribbean, it would be England. These were the words from the commentary team after Tim David hit a monstrous six to seal the win for Australia against Scotland in a nervy run-chase, that saw the game go down to the last over. Scotland posted 180 in their innings and bowled bravely against the Aussies, who seemed to be off the boil a bit in the match.

In the end, a bit of inexperience with bat, ball and in the field saw Scotland's incredible campaign end and England qualify for the Super 8s by the skin of their teeth. Jos Buttler and Co. did their bit and got the win against Namibia, but things could have been far worse for the defending champions. They would have been feeling the heat on June 16, Sunday as it seemed Scotland could pull off the win against Australia. But now, they will be sleeping a bit better and look forward to continuing their World Cup title defence. It has been a journey that has seen England face the challenges from rain and get a favour from their arch-rivals to reach the next phase.

Rain ruins the start

England faced Scotland in their first game and were hoping to get off the blocks quickly. However, the defending champions looked sloppy and poor on the field and with the ball as Scotland openers made full use of the opportunities they got. However, rain came in to halt proceedings and reduce the game to a 10-over game as Scotland scored 90 for the loss of no wicket and setup a 109-run target for England via DLS method.

But the persistent rain completely put a stop to things as England had to settle for one point.

Australia loss pushes England into chaos

The second game against Australia was supposed to be the one where England showed their true mettle. With bragging rights at stake, the Aussies got off to a perfect start and ensured they kept attacking the English bowler and keep them under the pump. The England openers did well but the middle-order just crumbled as Australia won the match by 36 runs as questions started to be raised about Buttler and Co. The fans were dreading the worst as the prospect of a second failure at defending their crown seemed to be a possibility. Adding to this, Scotland were absolutely flying at the other end as they racked up wins against Namibia and Oman to put themselves in the driving seat.

Thrashing Oman

England were utterly ruthless when it came to the match against Oman. Having their backs against the wall, the bowlers stepped up massively as they bundled out Oman for just 47 runs. The aim was now to push their net run-rate up and the batters went into overdrive and finished the game in 3.1 overs.

Marcus Stoinis missed team meet: Memes flood after Australia gift England Super 8 qualification

New Delhi. The fans on social media were left buzzing after Australia beat Scotland in order to gift England a Super 8 qualification. The high-intensity match-up between Australia and Scotland was of great importance from a qualification point of view. Had Scotland won the match, they would have created history to make it to the Super 8 stage. However, Australia continued their domination and spotless records against associate nations as they registered a nervy win by 5 wickets at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium, St. Lucia on June 16, Sunday. Marcus Stoinis turned out to be the chief tormentor against the Scotland team. While chasing a competitive target of 181 runs, Australia stuttered early on as they were reeling at 60/3. However, the 80-run partnership between Travis Head and Marcus Stoinis



had ensured that Australia stayed ahead in the chase. Despite losing both the batters, Australia held their nerves to complete the chase with 2 balls to spare. Stoinis continued his brilliant form in the tournament as he scored a quick-fire 59 from just 29 balls. He was adjudged as the Player of the Match for his innings against Scotland. However, the fans on the internet chose to hail Stoinis in a unique style. The Australian team made headlines when Josh Hazlewood said that they might look to go easy against Scotland ahead of the match. However, Pat Cummins and coach Matthew Mott regarded this as a joke by Hazlewood. The internet praised Stoinis by saying that he missed the team meeting and hence played such a brilliant knock.

"It was easier to hit due to breeze"

Stoinis revealed how he planned to take the chase and his partnership with Head. "The plan was to get yourself in and hit it hard along the ground. And then access from there. There was a strong breeze, which meant that the end was easier to hit from. The pitch was also very good. Head picked his bowlers and pretty much turned the game in that over with three sixes even though he got out. I have been fortunate to play consistently for the last 3-4 months.

AUS vs SCO: Australia break Scotland hearts, help England to qualify for Super 8

Travis Head and Marcus Stoinis broke Scotland hearts as Australia defeated them by 5 wickets on June 16, Sunday. This meant that England were able to edge past Scotland to qualify for the Super 8 stages.

New Delhi. Australia secured a thrilling win over Scotland in St Lucia to break Scottish hearts and allow England to qualify for the Super 8 stages on June 16, Sunday. Australia won the match by 5 wickets after a stunning partnership from Travis Head and Marcus Stoinis took the game away from Scotland. The duo put on 80 runs as Head scored 68 and Stoinis hitting 59. England's win against Namibia early in the day meant that they needed the Aussies to beat Scotland, as they would progress on a better net run-rate. However, the Scotland side didn't make things easy for the Aussies and seemed to be the best side at many points during the game. Scotland were put into bat by Australia and there was instant success for Mitchell Marsh and Co. Ashton Agar, playing his first game of the tournament, dismissed Michael Jones in the very first over. Just as it seemed

like the Aussies would control things, McMullen and George Munsey launched a counterattack that rattled the 2021 champions. McMullen, in particular, was very aggressive in his approach and used the win blowing across the Daren Sammy stadium to his advantage.

McMullen scored his 50 off just 26 balls and he got great support from George Munsey, who scored 35 off 23 balls. McMullen scored 60 off 34 balls with 6 sixes in it as Scotland raised to 92 runs in just 9 overs. However, the wickets of Munsey and McMullen in quick succession would derail the momentum a bit for the Scottish side. However, they started to keep a high run-rate as slowly wickets also started to tumble. Captain Berrington played a fine knock of 42 from 31 balls as Scotland ended up posting 180 runs in their 20 overs. This was their highest total in T20 World Cups.

The run chase got off to the worst possible start for the Aussies as David Warner was dismissed early on by Brad Wheel. While Travis Head played a couple of good shots, Scotland bowlers were right on the money and it forced the wicket of Mitchell Marsh to fall as well. Head was given a lifeline by Jones, who dropped a tough catch. The



opener was looking for support from the other end, and Glenn Maxwell was unable to deliver that as Mark Watt delivered a beauty to dismiss him. Scotland looked to be right on top as the squeeze was applied by the bowlers, forcing Australia's run-rate to go up and be close to 12. However, much like the Oman game, Stoinis changed gears in the 14 over as he hit 2 sixes and a boundary off Michael Leask. Stoinis got 2 boundaries in the following over as the required equation came down to 60 off 30 balls. Head, after reaching his fifty, hit 2 consecutive sixes off Sharif, before getting another one as Australia took hold of the momentum in the game. Or so we thought. Sharif would get his

revenge and Head departed with the required run-rate falling below 10. Stoinis ended the over scoring his fifty with a boundary as the Sharif over yielded 24 runs. The all-rounder brought up the 150 with another boundary and followed it with a reverse sweep, a hallmark of his innings. But it would prove to be one too many as Watt cleaned him up to put the game on a knife edge.

Tim David got 3 boundaries in the 18th over, which more or less ended the contest as Australia needed 13 off the last 2. Scotland pushed it into the final over, but Sole dropped another big catch as Australia finally got over the line as David hit a six.

Scotland remain impressive despite exit

After England had secured the win against Namibia, it seemed like that it was done for the Scots. No one gave them a chance against the rampaging Aussies, but they provided a punch to them that had the 2021 champions rattled. McMullen showed his class with the bat as he took on the Australia spinners. The Scottish bowlers showed great discipline as well and made the run chase ever so harder for the Aussies. They aren't a finished product yet as there were a few issues in all the three departments.

Australia wanted to respect 'improved' Scotland team: Mitchell Marsh after nervy win

New Delhi. Australia captain Mitchell Marsh praised the Scotland team for challenging them in a closely-contested match at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium on June 16, Sunday. Marsh hailed the Scotland team for improving with time and bringing their best game. However, Australia broke Scotland's heart as they went onto win the match by 5 wickets. Australia's win meant that Scotland could not qualify for the Super 8s and it was England who made it to the next stage of the tournament. The stakes were high for the Group B clash between Australia and Scotland as there was a tussle between the England and Scotland team to seal the Super 8s spot. Scotland battled like bravehearts and showcased their battling spirits against all the odds. As an associate nation, they managed to scare 2 cricketing giants, Australia and England, in the Group B stage. Hence, they can head back with their heads held high after putting up a tough fight.

Australia survives Scotland's scare

Marsh, while speaking to the broadcasters at the post-match presentation, suggested that the Australia team wanted to showcase their respect for the Scotland team. "We knew that

Michael Vaughan shuts Pakistani troll: Looking forward to the Super 8s, are you?

New Delhi. Former England cricketer Michael Vaughan shut down a Pakistani troll after England qualified for the Super 8s of the T20 World Cup 2024. The England team heaved a sigh of relief as Scotland's 5-wicket win against Australia favoured them. Australia gifted England a place in the Super 8s as they pulled off a nervy win over Scotland, who also stood a chance to advance into the next stage. However, England, alongside Australia, have become the 2 teams reach the Super 8 stage from Group B. Vaughan took to 'X' to slam a Pakistani troll by answering his tweet. The Pakistani troll had put up a picture of rain from the Antigua Stadium and said, "Karma is real." After England qualified, Vaughan replied to the 'X' user and made a cheeky remark that he is looking forward to the Super 8s, but is that the case with him as a Pakistani supporter as well? Vaughan had recently



called out Babar Azam for his T20I captaincy and had mentioned that he did not see Babar as skipper in the shortest format of the game. The Pakistani exam failed to qualify for the Super 8s amid a forgetful outing in the T20 World Cup. Vaughan took a hilarious jibe at the troll whose remarks actually backfired. As eventually, despite the rain, England played the match against

Namibia which was reduced to 11 overs per side. Another rain interruption in the middle of the innings led to the match being further reduced to 10 overs per side. England went onto post 122 runs in their 10 overs as Harry Brook's 47 (20) and Jonny Bairstow's 31 (18) proved to be crucial. England managed to restrict Namibia at 84 runs and won the match by 41 runs (DLS method). However, that would not have been enough as England eagerly awaited the result of Scotland and Namibia's game.

However, had the game been washed out, England would have marked an early exit from the tournament, irrespective of the result of the Australia and Scotland game. The Scotland team battled like bravehearts and challenged the Australian team. However, the Mitchell Marsh-led team chased down 181 runs with 2 balls to spare and gave Scotland a heartbreak.

England triumphs over Namibia in rain-affected match, eyes Scotland-Australia result

ANTIGUA. England's defense of the Twenty20 World Cup title lived on for a few more hours after a must-win over Namibia in a rain-affected match on Saturday.

To reach the Super Eight, England first had to beat Namibia in their maiden T20 match. Persistent showers almost ruined the chance, but the match started three hours late and was reduced to 11 overs, then 10 overs after another heavy shower.

England was made to bat first and rallied to 122-5. Namibia, given a rain-adjusted target of 126, managed only 84-3 and lost by 41 runs. England did what it had to, then had to wait a few more hours and hope Scotland lost to Australia in Saint Lucia to be sure of advancing from Group B. England was anxious for most of the day, thanks to the weather. It had already suffered one washout — its opener against Scotland — and a second washout in four group games would have sent it home. Because of what was at stake, the umpires waited as long as possible at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium to get play underway. England lost the plot early. Only one run was taken from the opening over bowled by 39-year-old David Wiese; captain Jos Buttler was bowled for a duck by fast bowler Ruben Trumpelmann; and



Wiese returned to nick out the other opener, Phil Salt.

England was 13-2 after 13 balls.

Jonny Bairstow and Harry Brook counterattacked. Bairstow made 31 off 18 balls just before the last rain delay. Brook finished with an unbeaten 47 off 20, and had late support from Moeen Ali and Liam Livingstone, who both contributed to taking 21 runs off the last over. Namibia's chase was relatively fast but not fast enough. Opener Michael van Lingen, after 33 off 29, was pulled out under the pretense of retiring hurt, and Wiese inserted to up the run rate. He duly delivered 27 off 12 but it was too late.

It was the last international for allrounder Wiese, captain Gerhard Erasmus said. Wiese started with South Africa in 2013 but

after five years off he debuted for Namibia in the 2021 T20 World Cup and was invaluable. "Inspired us to new heights," Erasmus said. Australia wins toss and bowls

At Gros Islet, St Lucia, Group B leaders Australia won the coin toss and chose to bowl against Scotland in a match which will determine whether Scotland or defending champions England bow out of the tournament. After England's 41-run victory over Namibia in a rain-affected match earlier Saturday saw it jump into second place in the group standings, Scotland will need to beat Australia to advance to the Super Eight stage. Australia have already qualified for the Super Eights after dominant victories against Oman, England and Namibia in its first three matches. Scotland beat Namibia and Oman after its first match against England was not completed due to rain. Australia have rested pace bowlers Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, with Mitchell Starc and Ashton Agar coming into the side. Scotland named an unchanged team from its seven-wicket defeat of Oman. The weather forecast at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium is for warm, dry conditions.



we had qualified. We spoke about sticking to our plans. Scotland is a good team, they have improved a lot, and we certainly wanted to respect them. We just wanted to stay consistent and if we fail, we fail our way," Marsh said.

"Being challenged gets the best out of Australia" Marsh also pointed out that being challenged brings the best out of the Australian team and that is what happened on the field on Sunday. "Whenever our team is challenged, it brings the best out of us. Today we were challenged, and it was a good experience and a good game of cricket. We start fresh now. T20 is a hard format, and you need to stay focused at all times. (On chat about England) It was all more externally than internally, we won today. That's all that matters," Marsh added.

Scotland posted a competitive total of 180 runs on the board. Australia lost their top-order early on in the chase. However, Marcus Stoinis and Travis Head's 80-run partnership ensured Australia won the match and remained unbeaten in the group stage.

How PCB sabotaged Pakistan's T20 World Cup 2024 campaign

Pakistan were knocked out of the T20 World Cup 2024 in the group stage. While many blamed captain Babar Azam and the senior members of the team, the real fault possibly lied with the Pakistan Cricket Board, who sabotaged the whole campaign.

New Delhi. 2022 runner-ups Pakistan have been knocked out of the tournament in the group stage of the T20 World Cup 2024. Pakistan, who came into the tournament in all sorts of drama, fell to an agonising exit after rain washed out the Group A match between the USA and Ireland at Fort Lauderdale in Florida on Friday, 14 June. Famed for some terrific luck in the ICC tournaments - popularly dubbed as 'Quadrat ka Nizam' - things seemed to have gone horribly wrong for Pakistan as even the rain

Gods decided to forsake the team's cause. Pakistan captain Babar Azam was slammed left, right and centre by the fans and former Pakistan players for the team's horrible showing at the World Cup. To be fair, Pakistan lost to the USA in their tournament opener - a team that is playing the T20 World Cup for the first time. The team lost to India despite some heroic efforts by their bowlers in New York. The game was a new low for Pakistan as they failed to chase down the target after bundling out Rohit Sharma's side for just 119 runs. Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi, sitting at the Nassau County Stadium in New York, informally spoke to the reporters present at the game and made a bold statement - that it was time for him to do a major surgery in Pakistan cricket.

What surgery?

If Mohsin Naqvi introspected, he probably would realise that PCB would do well to reflect on the build-up to the T20 World Cup, and how they, and they alone, were responsible for sabotaging Pakistan's campaign in the tournament. World Cup 2023 Drama



Pakistan cricket were in the doldrums after their group-stage exit in the ODI World Cup 2023. After leading the side to semi-finals and finals in back to back T20 World Cups, Babar Azam was sacked by the Pakistan Cricket Board under the leadership of Zaka Ashraf. To put it in politically correct terms, Babar Azam 'quit' captaincy and the reigns were handed to Shaheen Shah Afridi in the white-ball formats. Along with Babar, the Pakistan coaching staff was let go. Mohammad Hafeez took charge as the director of cricket, while Wahab Riaz was named as the head of the selection committee. The PCB, at the time were so conscious of their image that they appointed

Salman Butt as the consultant to Wahab Riaz and sacked him within hours of the announcement. These were the early signs of PCB going back on their word, the second they thought that the public opinion was against them. "Salman Butt isn't on any PCB panel. For me, he is a good cricketing mind who understands cricket and has been covering domestic cricket for the past 2-3 years. He was made my consultant just to get his opinion, based on which some media houses and people started doing propaganda," Wahab was quoted as saying in a press conference. "As a chief selector, it's my decision as to who will work with me and whose support I need. But people started discussing nepotism and dosti, due to which I am reverting this decision. I have already spoken to Salman Butt and told him that he cannot be a part of my team," he had added at the time.

Australia Tour and Sacking of Mohammad Hafeez

A new Pakistan team under the captaincy of Shan Masood (Tests) and Shaheen Shah Afridi (ODIs and T20Is) toured Australia and New Zealand. In both series. 1



Shama Sikander

Leaves Fans Jaw-Dropped With Her Hottest Ever Photos



Hotness Alert! Shama Sikander never fails to impress all with her gorgeous looks. Each time the actress drops her photos online, she leaves everyone completely stunned. On Saturday afternoon too, Shama took to her Instagram handle and shared a series of pictures, which are now setting fire online. In these latest clicks, Shama Sikander was seen posing in a cheetah-printed monokini. She was seen flaunting her curves as she posed in the backdrop of a swimming pool.

Needless to say, Shama's photos left her fans jaw-dropped. Soon after the pictures were shared, fans rushed to the comments section to compliment the actress for her looks. "Tujhe sooraj kahu yaa phir chand Tere chehre mee dono dikhai dete hai ♥️", one of the fans wrote. "Uff Bs kro ab Hotness Overload ♥️", added another. "You deserve to be on the cover of a magazine!", "a third comment read." "Extremely Lovely – Fantastic Looks ♥️", wrote another user.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Shama Sikander has worked in several shows including Baal Veer, Ye Meri Life Hai and Maaya: Slave of Her Desires among others. Even though she has been away from television screens for quite some time now, she often stuns fans with her impeccable fashion sense. Previously, in an interview with News18 Showsha, Shama shared that she wants to work in web series and films only now and does not want to return to television. She revealed that she has not watched TV shows for over six years now and added, "I'm looking at only web series and feature films. I believe in doing different kinds of cinema, stories that matter. I want to do characters on screen that can add to people's lives. I feel that content can be used for great purpose for the well-being of everyone in all its art and glory. So I want to do meaty roles, and powerful performances as I am a performer and I deserve the best," she told us.

When Arjun Kapoor Revealed Why His Relationship With Sonakshi Sinha Didn't Last: 'Some Equations...'



If you saw the All India Bakchod (AIB) roast, you probably noticed the jokes aimed at Arjun Kapoor and Sonakshi Sinha as a couple. It seemed that sparks flew between the two during the filming of Tevar, but they reportedly ended their relationship soon after the movie wrapped up. When interviewed by Mumbai Mirror, Arjun was asked about what went wrong with Sonakshi. He responded, "Some equations last. Others don't go beyond the making of a film because after it is over, people go their separate ways. I am still really fond of her as an individual. Unfortunately, it is always made to seem like we do not acknowledge each other at parties, which is not the case. We always make it a point to greet each other. There is no pressure on either of us to maintain an equation beyond a certain amount of time." According to a report in DNA, a fundamental difference in their personalities was the main reason for their split. A source mentioned, "Sonakshi is a very emotional girl. She doesn't hide her feelings for those she cares about. Arjun, on the other hand, is more low-key. He obviously couldn't handle her strong emotions." "Sonakshi, like most girls, wanted to be around him all the time. He was feeling a little stifled by the constant togetherness and the calls. It was just happening all too fast for him. You can't blame either for this split," another source quipped. Sonakshi Sinha will tie the knot with her longtime beau, Zaheer Iqbal on June 23, 2024. Recently, their wedding invite also went viral on social media. Recently, Sonakshi's 'mama' Pahlaj Nihalani, who is very close to the Sinha family and has been friends with Shatrughan Sinha since 1977, also confirmed the wedding. "I'm Sonakshi's mama. All my blessings to her and Zaheer. They are finally getting married. I send them all my good wishes," he told Zoom. Prior to this, veteran actress Poonam Dhillon also confirmed receiving Sonakshi's wedding invite when told Instant Bollywood. "Boht pyara invite bheja hai usne. I have known her since she was a little girl, uski poori journey dekhi hai toh bhagwaan kare boht khush rahe."

Dalljiet Kaur Reacts As Karishma Tanna Slams Nikhil Patel: 'This Man Has Done Wrong To Her...'



Amidst the ongoing turbulence in the relationship between Dalljiet Kaur and her estranged husband Nikhil Patel, the couple has consistently made headlines. Dalljiet's social media posts have been rife with accusations of infidelity against Nikhil, while he has publicly acknowledged the end of their relationship and has also issued a legal notice to her. Though Dalljiet has refrained from making an official statement concerning the rumored separation, fresh reports indicate that she has now taken legal action against Nikhil Patel. The stay order filed by Dalljiet prevents Nikhil from forcing her to leave their shared residence or disposing of her belongings. This development has created a significant buzz online today. In a show of solidarity, actress Karishma Tanna took to Instagram to express her unwavering support for Dalljiet. Sharing the news on her Instagram story, Karishma called out Nikhil for his alleged wrongdoing and reassured Dalljiet of her steadfast loyalty. She wrote, "Whatever happened shouldn't have happened. My full support is with my dearest friend @kaurdalljiet. This man has done wrong to her and I will stand by her till the end. Strong women do not seek revenge. They move on and allow karma to do the work!!" Reposting Karishma Tanna's supportive message on her Instagram Stories, Dalljiet Kaur expressed her gratitude towards the actress. She wrote, "One day as it comes, KT. Thank you!"

Amid Dalljiet Kaur's cryptic posts on her Instagram, Nikhil Patel gave an interview to ETimes, offering his perspective on the situation. He clarified that their marriage, conducted according to Hindu rituals, held cultural but not legal significance. Nikhil further explained that Dalljiet struggled with his lifestyle in Kenya, leading to numerous cultural clashes that strained their relationship. He noted that Dalljiet's return to India marked the end of their marriage. Previously, Dalljiet had shared a screenshot of one of Nikhil's gym posts in her Instagram Stories, pointing out the initials 'SN' visible in the photo.

Rashmika Mandanna

Shares Vijay Deverakonda's Dear Comrade Post, Calls The Film 'Super Special'

Actor Vijay Deverakonda posted a throwback photo with actress Rashmika Mandanna from the sets of 'Dear Comrade' on his official Instagram. The post commemorated the film's big achievement – that of surpassing 400 million views on YouTube. Despite its underwhelming box office performance, the movie garnered a large audience on YouTube. Sharing the news with his fans, Vijay wrote, "400 million of you saw it. Dear Comrade – from the sadness we felt on the day of release in 2019 to the immense love we have for the film till today. Dear Comrade is a film I loved making, a story I loved telling."

And now, the film's female lead and Vijay's rumoured girlfriend Rashmika Mandanna has reacted to it. Re-sharing the photo, she wrote, "400 mil love. Dear Comrade was and will always be super special to me!!" Check out the post here: Recently, Rashmika Mandanna called Vijay Deverakonda's younger brother, actor Anand Deverakonda, her "family" during an event. They were seen having a candid conversation during the pre-release event of Anand's film 'Gam Gam Ganesh'. He asked Rashmika about her favourite co-star. To which, Rashmika jokingly answered, "Anand, you are like family to me; how can you put me on the spot like this?". Later, Rashmika said that her favourite co-star is Vijay Deverakonda. She called him the "Rowdy Boy."



After the video went viral, fans commented that with this "family" statement, Rashmika Mandanna has confirmed her wedding rumours to Vijay Deverakonda. Previously, rumours about Vijay Deverakonda getting engaged took the internet by storm. However, he denied the speculation by saying, "I'm not getting engaged or married in February. It feels like the press just wants to get me married every two years. I hear this rumour

every year. They're just walking around waiting to catch me and get me married. In April this year, Vijay and rumoured girlfriend Rashmika Mandanna reportedly celebrated her birthday together in Abu Dhabi. Even though the actors did not confirm their vacation, netizens noticed that Vijay Deverakonda dropped a video on his Instagram stories from the same location from where Rashmika also shared her pictures."

