













## Chance for Pakistan to raise its UN profile

PAKISTAN's recent election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with the overwhelming support of the community of nations would have bewildered Indians had it been widely reported in this country. With India caught up in the Lok Sabha election results and their far-reaching repercussions, the news of Pakistan's seat at the UN high table got little traction in the country. The election, in which 182 of the UN's 193 member countries voted in favour of Pakistan, offers a major foreign policy challenge for the Narendra Modi government during its third term.

With the election of Pakistan and Somalia, which will join the UNSC on January 1, 2025, for a two-year term, the UN's highest decision-making body will have five members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). That is half the number of elected members of the only UN arm whose decisions are legally binding on the entire world. It is another matter that such decisions are often pre-empted by a veto, exercised by one or more of the five permanent members of the Council, the P-5, also known as the Big Five. Some UN member countries defy the decisions of the UNSC. The Council can impose sanctions on errant states, and in extreme cases, authorise the use of force under the UN Charter.

None of the above means that India faces any imminent diplomatic threat merely because the UNSC doors are now open to Islamabad. Threat, no. Challenge, yes. Therefore, India cannot be complacent. To start with, the post of India's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York is vacant. The Pakistani counterpart is the forbidding and redoubtable Ambassador Munir Akram, who has been holding the post for the past almost five years. He did the same job earlier for six years from 2002. It was Akram whose covert diplomacy nearly succeeded in getting Kashmir on the agenda of the UN Human Rights Commission in 1994. The following year, he was formally appointed Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva and remained on this post for seven years. So, the new government must immediately appoint a successor to Permanent Representative Ruchira Kamboj, who retired in the midst of the Lok Sabha election campaign.

Next year, the counter-terrorism document will be back at the UN for its biennial review, the text of which will be of critical importance to India as a victim of cross-border terrorism. A universally acceptable definition of terrorism has eluded the UN in the General Assembly because of recalcitrant states like Pakistan, which has used terror for many decades as an instrument of state policy. Together with the dubious presence of Somalia at the epochal horseshoe table, the influence of the duo could spill over to the General Assembly and corrupt the counter-terrorism document during its review.

Another risk which India will have to guard against is the possibility — indeed, likelihood — that the five Security Council members belonging to the OIC will together work to list an Indian as a UN-designated terrorist. They will obviously look for a Hindu to be listed as a terrorist under the Security Council's famous Resolution 1267. Adopted in 1999, this resolution's most notorious designee hitherto was Osama bin Laden. A Hindu nationalist government in New Delhi is potential fodder for the OIC in this objective. A lot will depend on how the new Modi government behaves at home during the remainder of 2024 and next year. Ambassador Akram is widely known in Turtle Bay, the site of the UN headquarters, to be still nursing his hurt over India's successful drive — jointly with the US — in listing Abdul Rehman Makki as a 'global terrorist' via a Sanctions Committee set up through Resolution 1267. Pakistan's hurt was compounded by the designation's description that Makki was responsible for terror acts in Jammu and Kashmir. He is the brother-in-law of Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed. After India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, Pakistan managed only to have 'consultations' in the Security Council. Such a procedure meant in-camera discussions among Council members, of which there is no record and nothing at all in the public domain. Once Pakistan enters the Security Council with the support of four other OIC members, it may attempt to move the needle on Kashmir in its favour.

## Go ahead with J&K Assembly polls despite terror attacks

The absence of violence is not peace. But it would be unfair to bill Baramulla's electoral verdict as one driven by separatist sentiments.

The results of the Lok Sabha polls in Jammu and Kashmir have been interesting. One of the things everyone is looking for is a signal for the conduct of the Assembly polls, based upon a Supreme Court direction to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to hold the polls before September 30. There was a time when it was contemplated that the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls could be conducted simultaneously. That would have been an ambitious step. The ECI's decision was sound — in that the Lok Sabha polls would restore confidence in the conduct of peaceful elections with an encouraging turnout. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar recently said, "We will very soon start the poll process in J&K. We are very enthused by the voter turnout... J&K recorded the highest turnout in four decades at 58.58 per cent overall, and 51.05 per cent in the Valley".

The poll results, however, have been followed by a series of terror attacks. The June 9 Reasi attack on a bus carrying pilgrims was meant to send out a message that the Assembly polls would be targeted. While decrying this and urging the security forces to undertake a large-scale offensive to dominate Pir Panjal and neutralise the terrorists, there must be no climbdown on the Assembly polls, which are due in three months. A few issues came to the fore with reference to the J&K polls. Each constituency in Kashmir has an interesting dynamic, and delimitation added to the suspense. The inclusion of Rajouri and parts of Poonch with Anantnag constituency gave a unique opportunity to the National Conference (NC) to exploit the Gujjar surge. Mian Altaf Ahmad of the NC, the virtual spiritual leader of the Gujjar community, was tailor-made for the fight there. He won comfortably against People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Mehbooba Mufti, who also belongs to south Kashmir and is extremely influential in its prime locations at the Valley end, Bijbehara, Anantnag and Kulgam. The Srinagar constituency includes Ganderbal in the north, Pulwama-Shopian in the south and Budgam to the west. The southern belt is where stone-throwing was most intense in 2014-19, and the terror incidents were the most marked there. The radical footprint remains dormant, biding its time for another opportunity.

The Srinagar seat has been won by Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, a cleric from a prominent Shia family of Budgam. Mehdi is an old NC hand who has represented Budgam in the J&K Assembly. He identified 'dignity' and 'identity' as his core concerns. This sentiment was mostly about Article 370 being an article of faith, the Kashmiri not ever being anti-national and the need for the restoration of statehood. Mehdi's victory against Waheed Para — the young, intelligent and well-respected youth leader of the PDP — could be a surprise for some, as support for a Shia may have been unexpected. Waheed belongs to Pulwama



and Mehdi to Budgam. So, both are not hardcore Srinagar representatives. The NC's organising capability and 'cadres in depth', however, do usually spell advantage for its candidates. That capability will be an advantage in the Assembly polls too.

But the same 'cadres in depth' and the party's excellent organising skills have been unable to put former CM Omar Abdullah in the driver's seat in Baramulla. If I know any part of Kashmir the best, it is Baramulla — both the city and the constituency — having commanded a brigade and a division in the area. I was a little surprised to see Omar enter the fray there. Of course, no party can claim ownership of Baramulla. It's the gateway to the Valley from Muzaffarabad, and it has been so for centuries, while the main route lay through Uri along the Jhelum Road to Baramulla. The constituency is spread far and wide, including Gurez, Bandipora, Machil, Keran, Kupwara, Handwara, Tangdhar, Uri and Gulmarg. The outlying areas in the higher mountains along the LoC are populated by Pahadis, who have benefited from reservation, which was initially 4 per cent but subsequently raised to 10 per cent.

These areas are sparsely populated, although the communities there are all pro-India. There is no grey zone there. It's the Valley floor with the townships of

north Kashmir, where the separatist sentiment was high at one time. The decline in violence does not necessarily alter the sentiment. I have often reminded observers that 'absence of violence is not peace' and it's not a change of heart either. However, it would be unfair to bill Baramulla's electoral verdict as one driven by separatist sentiments. The Assembly polls will tell us more.

Engineer Rashid, the man who defeated former CM Omar Abdullah by over 2 lakh votes, is known as a separatist. He fought the election while lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail through a two-week campaign managed on a shoestring budget by his sons. I have known Engineer Rashid for a long time. He once came calling on me in a rickety Maruti 800. I was aware of his popularity among the poorer segments of Langate in Rafiabad; that is what made him famous all over the Baramulla constituency.

It is believed by some that Rashid managed to get the support of non-voters (those who traditionally kept away from voting) in the hope of conveying that they backed his separatist stance. What is important for the establishment is that the Assembly polls are conducted, and in time. The people's verdict aimed at development and welfare needs to be adequately reinforced against any persisting sentiments of separatism, which no doubt still thrive.

## G7 summit

Commitment on corridor big takeaway for India



approach on China. The summit statement said the G7 was not trying to harm China or thwart its economic

The G7 summit in Italy has demonstrated that India continues to be a key player in this elite group's scheme of things. The summit witnessed the participation of the seven member countries — the US, UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan and France — as well as the European Union, while India was present as an 'outreach country'. In his address at this major platform, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the nations of the Global South were bearing the brunt of uncertainties and tensions. Reiterating the stand that marked India's G20 presidency last year, the PM said the country had assumed responsibility for highlighting the priorities and concerns of developing countries on the world stage. Modi's words prompted German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to assert that the G7 was not an exclusive club. "We want a partnership from which everyone benefits," Scholz declared, though it's obvious that this is easier said than done. The ground reality was summed up by the Group of Seven's reluctance to adopt a combative

development; instead, it sought 'constructive and stable' relations with China and recognised the 'importance of direct and candid engagement to express concerns and manage differences'. The G7's stress on cooperation rather than confrontation left no room for doubt about China's indispensability to the international community. Beyond the optics of PM Modi's interaction with several world leaders days after he assumed office for a third term, a big takeaway for India was the commitment made by the G7 to promote infrastructure initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This ambitious project, which envisages a vast road, railroad and shipping network connecting Asia with the West, is seen as a counter to China's multi-modal, multilateral Belt and Road Initiative. However, the IMEC's fate hangs in the balance amid the ongoing turbulence in West Asia.

## 'Neighbourhood first' policy presents challenges

Greater sensitivity in handling India's relations with neighbours will lead to a better entente with them.

In his recent meetings with visiting leaders of the neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean Region — Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Seychelles and Sri Lanka — on the sidelines of his swearing-in ceremony, Narendra Modi reaffirmed the 'neighbourhood first' policy he enunciated at the beginning of his first term as Prime Minister in 2014. According to a Ministry of External Affairs press release, Modi promised to work for regional peace, progress and prosperity in close partnership with neighbours. He called for deeper people-to-people ties and more connectivity. Connectivity is indeed the key to regional cooperation and integration, as it promotes sustainable and better-distributed growth across a given region. It encompasses a range of public goods, including investment in inter- and intra-regional projects, across trade, transportation, information and communication technologies, energy and people. All these, underpinned by appropriate infrastructure, facilitate the free and unfettered flow of goods, services, investments, persons, ideas and technology. India shares its land or maritime boundaries with China, the South Asian countries of the Indian subcontinent and Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. Its neighbourhood extends on its land frontiers to the Hindu Kush in the west to the Irrawaddy in the east. In the oceans, it stretches from Suez in the west to Shanghai in the east.

Beyond its immediate circle, India's interaction extends to much of the Indian Ocean littoral, from Aden to Singapore, encompassing Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar; Iran, the Transoxiana Central Asian Republics and Gulf states; and members of the Association of South East Asian Nations. India's periphery now includes the expanse of the Indo-Pacific, stretching from the countries of the East African seaboard right up to the Pacific coasts of North and South America. Good relations with neighbours are a priority for India's foreign policy. An unstable contiguity is distracting and bad for business, and it encourages

meddling by outside powers. "It is our neighbourhood," said Modi at the Combined Commanders' Conference in December 2015, "that is most critical for our future and our place in the world." This was manifest in India's active pursuit of 'neighbourhood first', Act East, Connect Central Asia, Link West policies; its participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the I2U2 Group and in conceiving the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor; and its determination to commit to security and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean. Modi paid bilateral visits to Kathmandu and Colombo, not visited by previous Prime Ministers for 17 and 28 years, respectively. His first visit was to Bhutan, and by about mid-2015, he had completed visits to some Indian Ocean countries and to all Central Asian Republics.

However, during Modi's tenure as PM, in contrast to India's relations with the great powers and its leadership in the Global South, there has been an overall regression in India's relations with its immediate neighbours, despite New Delhi continuing its development partnerships, accelerating project implementation, extending grants and loans and providing humanitarian and technical assistance. The cultural closeness of South Asia — people speaking the same languages or belonging to the same ethnicity or religion on both sides of India's boundaries — has counterintuitively reinforced a sense of distinctiveness of its neighbours from India. Psychological partitions of perception and identity have reinforced the physical fractures of South Asia. On its margins, the subcontinent is bristling with terrorism and insurgencies. India's neighbouring countries diverge in many ways: geographically, socially, economically, demographically, and most of all, politically. Many of them suffer from endemic social strife and political instability. It does not help that they are significantly



more unequal in growth, resources, population and size than neighbouring countries in any other part of the world. While there is likely to be more continuity than change in the substance and style of Modi 3.0's foreign and security policies, there is scope for improvement concerning South Asia. Greater sensitivity in handling India's relations with neighbours will lead to a better entente with them.

Coalition politics might compel the BJP to temper Hindutva, which has caused misgivings in many parts of South Asia, such as Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan and even Nepal, an erstwhile Hindu kingdom and now a secular republic. The stability of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) depends upon two staunchly secular leaders, Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar, who have a considerable Muslim support

base. Although the primary players in the Indian Government remain the same and the BJP's partners are not invested in foreign policy issues, the optics of the NDA coalition will improve India's standing in the neighbourhood. Without actively courting Pakistan, the NDA government might respond to friendly overtures and re-engage with the caveat that intractable bilateral issues can only be resolved as a function of improved mutual perceptions and relations, not the other way around. Nawaz Sharif's congratulatory message to Modi, appealing to "replace hate with hope", is a positive portent. Adversarial relations between India and China are likely to persist, as Beijing seems in no hurry to restore the status quo ante in eastern Ladakh. Yet, India will not view China as an enemy to be fought militarily. India, with its friends, will try to rein in China's assertiveness and persuade it to follow international rules and rebalance relations peacefully.

The time has come to revive the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which has had just 18 summits, the last one in Kathmandu a decade ago. That summit had given the go-ahead to national, regional and sub-regional measures and arrangements. Both the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Initiative and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation must be re-energised. The objectives outlined in Modi's 'neighbourhood first' policy are ambitious, and the impediments are many. Getting things right with neighbours is an arduous process, often with uncertain results. There is no alternative to trying, however. India cannot walk unfettered on the global stage without better relations in its contiguity.

## Defence stocks rally: Major gains for Paras Defence, GRSE, and HAL

**NEW DELHI.** Defence stocks saw a rally in early trade on Tuesday morning, with major gains witnessed by Paras Defence and GRSE. The shares of Paras Defence surged 19%, reaching a new 52-week high of Rs 1,373.80 on the BSE, following a block deal of 3.29 lakh shares.

GRSE, a public sector defence stock, also experienced a rise of around 12%. Other companies like Mazagon Dock, Cochin Shipyard, and Astra Microwave saw their shares climb by 5-8%. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), known for producing the Tejas fighter jets, saw its shares surge by 5.5% to an all-time high of Rs 5,484.20 on the BSE.

This rally in came after the Ministry of Defence issued a request for proposal to procure 156 Light Combat Helicopters from the company. The value of this tender is around Rs 50,000 crore, making it the largest single order for helicopters to an Indian company.

Defence stocks have seen a rally and been in the spotlight since Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced a target to generate Rs 50,000 crore worth of military exports annually. He also promised to speed up initiatives under the 'Make in India' programme for defence production. "Defence exports reached a record Rs 21,083 crore in the financial year 2023-24. It was historic. Our aim is to export over Rs 50,000 crore worth of defence equipment by 2028-2029," said Singh after taking charge last week.

The spike in defence stocks comes amid news that India has more nuclear weapons than Pakistan, as per a report by a Swedish think-tank. An analysis by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) found that nine nuclear-armed nations, including India, Pakistan and China, continued to modernise their nuclear arsenals. According to previous estimates by Nomura, the share of defence capital expenditure is expected to rise to 37% of the total budget by FY30, up from 29% in FY25. This increase implies a cumulative capital outlay of Rs 15.5 trillion from FY24 to FY30, compared to Rs 7.8 trillion from FY18 to FY24.

## Sensex, Nifty hit record highs in early trade as energy stocks gain

**New Delhi.** Benchmark stock market indices reached record highs in early trading, driven by gains in energy stocks following a reduction in the windfall tax on crude.

The S&P BSE Sensex was 0.22% to 77,180.69 at 9:16 am, while the NSE Nifty50 gained 0.25% to trade at 23,523.30. Energy stocks rose by 0.5%, with ONGC leading the way with a 1.2% gain after the government reduced the windfall tax on petroleum crude from 5,200 rupees to 3,250 rupees per metric ton, effective June 15. Wipro saw a 3% increase following the announcement of an extended digital transformation partnership with Hanesbrands, making it one of the top five gainers in the Nifty 50. Public sector enterprises rose by 1%, poised to continue their post-election rally for the ninth consecutive session, while state-owned lenders increased by 0.5%.

Som Distilleries fell by 11% after Indian police launched an investigation into the company following reports by the government's child rights agency of children working at a distillery.

## FPIs turn cautious, pull out Rs 37K cr in FY25

**NEW DELHI.** After a massive inflow of over Rs 2 lakh crore in the financial year 2023-24, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have turned cautious on the Indian equity market in FY25 owing to its premium valuation and a not-so-desired general election result.

The National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) data shows FPIs have pulled out over Rs 37,000 crore in the first two-and-a-half months of FY25. During this period, domestic equity market benchmarks - BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty - have gained over 4% each.

As per Sunil Damania, Chief investment officer at MojoPMS, the valuation of Indian markets is high, with the trailing twelve-month (TTM) price-to-earnings (PE) ratio exceeding 25x and a market capitalisation-to-GDP ratio of 140%. "Such high valuations provide little incentive for FPIs to invest. There is also uncertainty surrounding the upcoming budget... As a result, FPIs are waiting to see until the budget is presented," said Damania. Manoj Purohit, Partner and leader - of FS Tax, Tax and Regulatory Services, BDO India feels for global investors, the formation of a coalition government is a concern as they believe it could impact the pace of India's growth story. Purohit said on the macro front, there are multiple triggers that have made FPIs shift their gears temporarily to other markets. "High yielding rates of bonds in the US, deferment of US Fed interest rate cuts, better-than-expected performance of Chinese stocks coupled with the ongoing geopolitical conflicts in the Middle East has made FPIs to divert from the Indian market," he added. FPI holdings in Indian equities (in total m-cap) came down to 16.3% at the end of January 2024, which is a decadal low, from 16.6% as of November 2023. While FPIs still maintain a significant weight, the emergence of retail investors in the stock market has played a crucial role in counterbalancing the impact of FPI outflows. Damania said FPIs are redirecting their investments towards China and Taiwan as these markets have seen major inflows due to their relatively low valuations and the prospects of economic reforms that could boost their economies. Purohit believes that with the recent development and stability, the confidence of FPIs that India will continue the growth momentum has instilled back a positive framework and FPIs would return to India with numbers in green. FPIs made a strong comeback with a net inflow of Rs 11,730 crore in the week ending June. This contrasts sharply with the net outflow of Rs 14,794 crore recorded in the preceding week from June 3-7.

"After the roller coaster ride in the first week of June, stability has returned to the market as indicated by the sharp fall in India VIX from 27 on June 4 to 12.82 on June 14. This fall in India VIX indicates the return of stability and a likely consolidation phase in the market... The resilience of the market and eagerness of retail investors to buy every dip will force FPIs to reduce their selling which was sustained in May," said V K Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

# Explained: Why Fitch is bullish on India's growth amid global slowdown

**Fitch's bullish forecast for India contrasts starkly with subdued global growth predictions. Know why the international ratings agency is optimistic about India's growth despite the global slowdown.**

**NEW DELHI.** Fitch Ratings has revised India's growth forecast for the current financial year to 7.2% from the previous 7%, driven by rapid investment growth observed in recent quarters. According to the June Global Economic Outlook released on Tuesday, India's economy

expanded by 7.8% in the final quarter of FY24, surpassing Fitch's expectations, and posted an overall growth of 8.2% for the fiscal year.

The rating agency highlighted that falling indirect taxes, net of subsidies, have contributed to higher GDP growth relative to gross value-added at basic prices, which provides a better indication of underlying economic momentum, currently growing at just over 7%. Fitch anticipates that investment will continue to rise during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term, albeit slower than in recent quarters. Additionally, consumer spending is expected to recover due to high consumer confidence.

An 'above normal' monsoon forecast for June-September is expected to mitigate risks of food price spikes. Fitch projects that headline inflation in India will decrease to 4.5% by the end of 2024, averaging 4.3% in 2025 and 2026.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) aims to



reduce retail inflation to around its 4% target. Despite the RBI's focus on curbing retail inflation, Fitch expects only one rate cut this year, bringing the lending rate to 6.25%. This contrasts with Fitch's March forecast, which predicted a 50 basis points reduction in rates this year.

### Global growth slowdown in 2025

In contrast, Fitch forecasts a slowdown in global growth in 2025 despite monetary easing expected in 2024. The global monetary policy cycle is transitioning to a

phase where rates will decline slowly but remain at levels that restrict demand.

Fitch predicts the European Central Bank (ECB) will implement two more rate cuts this year, while the US Federal Reserve is expected to begin reducing rates in September, with another cut in December.

This adjustment is later than previously anticipated, reflecting a stall in disinflation momentum in the first four months of the year. However, US wage growth is gradually cooling. Fitch noted that central banks remain cautious about rapidly loosening policy, particularly due to high services inflation driven by rising labor costs, housing rents, and the normalization of relative price trends. These factors are maintaining elevated services inflation, necessitating a cautious approach from monetary authorities.

## TCS shares in focus after Rs 1,600 crore fine. Details here

**New Delhi.** Shares of Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) are in the spotlight today after the IT firm announced that a United States District Court imposed a penalty of approximately Rs 1,600 crore (about \$194.2 million) on it. The court found TCS guilty of multiple charges alleging misappropriation of trade secrets. TCS shares ended 1.17% lower at Rs 3,831.95 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) on Friday. The stock had opened higher at Rs 3,885 earlier in the session. The market capitalisation of TCS dropped to Rs 13.86 lakh crore. A total of 0.67 lakh shares were traded, amounting to a turnover of Rs 25.68 crore on the BSE. TCS stock has a one-year beta of 0.4, indicating low volatility over the past year. The relative strength index (RSI) of TCS stood at 49.4, suggesting that the stock is neither overbought nor oversold.

The stock is trading above its 10-day, 20-day, and 200-day moving averages but below its 30-day, 50-day, 100-day, and

150-day moving averages. Over the past year, TCS shares have rallied 18%, and they have risen by 19.33% over the past two years.

"We hereby inform you that the



Company has received an adverse judgement passed by the United States District Court, Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division," said TCS in a statement to the stock exchange.

Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), now DXC Technology Company (DXC), had filed the case against TCS, alleging that the Indian IT firm

misappropriated its trade secrets.

The court ruled that TCS is liable to pay CSC \$56,151,583 in compensatory damages, \$112,303,166 in exemplary damages, and \$25,773,576.60 in prejudgment interest through June 13, 2024. Despite the ruling, TCS stated that it has strong arguments to counter the judgement and plans to defend its position through a review petition or an appeal to the appropriate court. The company received the court order on June 14, 2024. TCS assured that the judgement will not have a major adverse impact on its financials and operations.

The company is taking necessary steps to protect its interests and address the legal challenges presented by this ruling.

"The company believes that it has strong arguments in the matter and intends to defend its position through a review petition or appeal to the appropriate court," said TCS.

## Ixigo shares list at 48% premium. Should you hold or sell

**Ixigo stock market listing:**

**The shares opened at Rs**

**138.1 on the National Stock**

**Exchange (NSE), up 48.5%**

**from the issue price of Rs 93.**

**New Delhi.** Le Travenues Technologies, the operator of the travel platform Ixigo, made a strong debut on the stock exchanges on Monday. The shares opened at Rs 138.1 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), up 48.5% from the issue price of Rs 93.

On the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the stock listed at Rs 135, reflecting a 45.16% premium. "Le Travenues Technology Ltd., the company behind popular travel platforms Ixigo and AbhiBus, defied even pre-listing

expectations with a stellar debut on the stock market. The company is listed at Rs. 123.5 per share, a remarkable 48.49% gain over its issue price of Rs. 93," said Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth, Swastika Investmart Ltd. The



Ixigo IPO saw an overall subscription of 98.10 times. The public issue was subscribed 53.95 times in the retail section, while the Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIB) category was subscribed 106.73 times. The Non-Institutional Investors (NII) lead the

public issue with a subscription of 110.25 times by June 12, 2024 (Day 3). She further added that the impressive listing aligns with the overwhelming investor response during the IPO, which saw a subscription rate of a staggering 98 times.

Should you hold or sell Ixigo shares?

"Le Travenues' AI-powered operations provide a competitive advantage. The company caters to various travel needs, offering a strong foundation, and its impressive revenue and profit growth demonstrate a promising future," said Nyati. "Le Travenues' strong listing is a positive sign, showcasing investor belief in its long-term growth prospects within the online travel sector. The investors are advised to hold their position with a stop loss of 111," advised Nyati.

## Mumbai is India's most costly city for expats, Delhi and Chennai follow: Report

**Mercer's 2024 Cost of Living survey has ranked Mumbai as the most expensive city in India to live in and 136th on a global parameter. Mumbai is followed by cities like Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru and Pune.**

**New Delhi.** Mumbai, the financial capital of the country and home to the Hindi film industry, still remains the most expensive city in the country for expatriates, according to a survey conducted by HR consultancy Mercer. Mumbai is notably expensive in terms of personal care, energy and utilities, transportation, and housing rentals, as per Mercer's 2024 Cost of Living survey.

Globally, Hong Kong retained its position as the most expensive city. Mumbai, the financial capital of the country and home to the Hindi film industry, has climbed several spots to become costlier, a trend also seen for Delhi. In the list, Mumbai has jumped 11 places to rank 136, while Delhi has risen by four spots to 164. Conversely, Chennai has dropped five



places to 189. Bengaluru has decreased by six spots to 195, and Hyderabad remains unchanged at 202. Meanwhile, Pune saw a jump of eight spots to 205, and Kolkata has moved up four spots to 207. In Asia, Mumbai stands as the 21st most expensive city with Delhi in the 30th position among surveyed locations.

"Despite the global economic challenges, India has shown resilience in our 2024 Cost of Living Survey. Even though

Mumbai's ranking has increased, the overall affordability of Indian cities remains a significant draw for multinational organisations or Indian companies aiming to attract global talent. Our strong economy, driven by domestic demand and a robust services sector, provides a stable environment for global talent. As global housing costs and inflation rise, India's growth story and improving living standards make it an

attractive destination for international assignments," Rahul Sharma, India Mobility Leader at Mercer said.

Delhi experienced the highest increase in housing rentals, with a 12-15 per cent rise for expats. Mumbai saw a 6-8 per cent increase, Bengaluru 3-6 per cent, and Pune, Hyderabad, and Chennai 2-4 per cent, the report stated.

Transportation costs, including those for automobiles and auto parts, are most expensive in Mumbai, followed by Bengaluru. On the other hand, Kolkata offers the most economical prices for milk and dairy products, bread products, beverages, oils, fruits, and vegetables, with Pune following. Alcohol and tobacco items are least expensive in Delhi. In terms of personal care products, Mumbai is the most expensive, followed by Chennai, with Kolkata being the least expensive. Energy and utility costs are highest in Mumbai, followed by Pune.

On the global stage, the top five cities in terms of cost of living have seen no changes in rankings. Hong Kong maintains the top spot, followed by Singapore, Zurich, Geneva, Basel, Bern, New York City, London, Nassau, and Los Angeles.



employer on behalf of the employee. Form 26AS: Form 26AS is a consolidated Annual Information Statement that summarizes all tax-related information available with the Income Tax Department for a particular financial year. It includes details of TDS, taxes paid, refunds received, and other tax-related transactions.

### How to check for discrepancies?

Compare Form 16 with Form 26AS: Upon receiving Form 16 from your employer, the first step is to cross-verify the details with Form 26AS available on the income tax department's e-filing portal. Ensure that the income and tax details reported in Form 16 match those reflected in Form 26AS. Identifying mismatches: If there are discrepancies such as mismatches in TDS amounts or incorrect reporting of income, it is crucial to rectify them promptly to avoid complications during the tax filing process.

### How to rectify mismatches?

Inform your employer: If you identify any discrepancies, inform your employer immediately. The employer can rectify these errors by filing a revised TDS return with the tax authorities. Verification and confirmation: After the employer makes corrections, verify that the revised details reflect accurately in Form 26AS.



# NCERT deletes Azad Pak, adds China's aggression reference in Class 12 textbook

**The NCERT has made final changes to its Class 12 Political Science textbook syllabus for the upcoming academic year, including a revision in reference to India's border situation with China, Azad Pakistan, Article 370 and more.**

**New Delhi:** The NCERT has made final changes to its Class 12 Political Science textbook syllabus for the upcoming academic year, including a revision in reference to India's border situation with China, Azad Pakistan, Article 370 and more. Reference to "Azad Kashmir" removed while "Chinese aggression" has been added, as seen in the final changes in the Class 12 NCERT Political Science textbooks published for the coming academic year.

**CHINESE AGGRESSION**  
In the Class 12 Political Science textbook, reference to India's border situation with China has been changed. As part of Chapter 2, in the book Contemporary World Politics, under the paragraph titled India-China relations, the existing statement has been altered. Earlier, in the textbook on page 25, the existing sentence read - "However, military conflict over a border dispute between the two countries marred that hope." This sentence has now been changed to - "However, Chinese

aggression on the Indian border has marred that hope." India Today has earlier reported about these proposed changes in April this year, which have now been finalised.

**AZAD PAKISTAN CHANGED TO POJK**  
Not just India-China relations, but in the textbook 'Politics In India since Independence - Class 12', the words "Azad Pakistan" have been changed to "Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir". On page 119, the existing version of the textbook reads, "India claims that this area is under illegal occupation. Pakistan describes this area as 'Azad Pakistan'." Now, the version has been changed to - "However, it is the Indian territory which is under illegal occupation of Pakistan called Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK)." The NCERT's rationale for these changes earlier stated, "The change which has been introduced is in complete concurrence with the latest position of the Government of India in regard to Jammu and Kashmir."



## ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

The abrogation of Article 370 is mentioned in the new updated textbooks on page 132. The earlier version in the textbook read - "While most of the states have equal powers, there are special provisions for some states like J&K and the states in the North-East." It has been changed to - "While most of the states have equal powers, there are special provisions for some states like J&K and the states in the

North-East. However, Article 370, which contains special provisions for J&K, was abrogated in August 2019." The NCERT has provided the rationale behind the change, "The special provision, Article 370 of J&K was revoked in August 2019 by the President of India. A link to the updated information has been given."

These changes are in line with a series of other deletions and changes brought forward to the new curriculum. The earlier changes saw references to the Gujarat riots as Anti-Muslim riots, controversies regarding the emergency imposed during former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's reign, and certain references to Gandhi's assassination removed in 2023. Final and more elaborate changes came in the form of Babri Masjid as a "3-dome structure". Ayodhya dispute being called an amicably solved issue is completely altered from the Class 12 Political Science textbook which is now out in the market with marked publication in March 2024.

## Woman's stunt ends in death, man filming reel screams as car falls into valley

**New Delhi:** A 23-year-old woman died on Monday after she mistakenly pressed the accelerator of the car while the vehicle was in reverse gear, and it plunged into a valley in Maharashtra, a police official said. The incident happened on Monday afternoon in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, earlier known as Aurangabad, when her friend was recording a reel of her behind the wheels. Shweta Survase didn't know how to drive, and she attempted it for the first time. Her friend Shivraj



Mule was recording a video as the 23-year-old woman tried her hand at driving a white sedan.

A video of the incident has been shared widely on social media, showing Shweta Survase rotating the steering wheel as the car was in reverse mode. The vehicle then picks up speed after reaching the edge of the cliff and plunges into the valley as her friend screams. "Survase tried her hand at driving while her friend Shivraj Mule was shooting a video. She accidentally pressed the accelerator while the car was in reverse gear. The vehicle slid back, broke a crash barrier and plunged into the valley," a police official told news agency PTI. He added that it took an hour for rescuers to reach the 23-year-old woman and the vehicle. She was declared dead on arrival at a nearby hospital, the police official said.

## Dubai-bound plane from Delhi gets hoax bomb threat via email: Report

**New Delhi:** A Dubai-bound plane from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI Airport) received a bomb threat via email on Monday, news agency ANI reported, citing the police. However, upon checking the aircraft, it turned out to be a hoax as nothing suspicious was found. The email was received by the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) at the IGI Airport on Monday at 9.35 am. "On June 17 at 9.35 am, an email was received in DIAL (Delhi International Airport Limited) office, IGI Airport, with the threat of a bomb inside a Delhi to Dubai flight. Accordingly, necessary legal action has been taken and nothing suspicious was found," the Delhi Police told news agency ANI.

Earlier this month, an Air Canada flight en route to



Toronto in Canada from Delhi received a bomb threat via email. Later, the police found out that a 13-year-old boy sent the mail from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh. He told the police that he got the idea of sending the email after learning about a bomb call to a Mumbai flight in the media. Meanwhile, the Delhi airport on Monday suffered a brief outage that disrupted operations. Though no flights were affected due to power disruption, passengers took to social media platforms to complain about feeling "choked" at Terminal 3 because of waiting in long queues.

## Curfew in Odisha's Balasore after clash between groups

**New Delhi:** Curfew was imposed in Odisha's Balasore after a clash between two groups over the blood of animal sacrifice on road during Bakrid on Monday. Internet services were also suspended in several sensitive areas of the town. The curfew is in place from the midnight of June 17 to midnight of June 18. The conflict began when a group of people staged a sit-in protest against the blood of an animal sacrificed on the road. The animal was sacrificed as part of the Bakri Eid rituals.

Another group allegedly threw stones at the protesters, leading to the clash.



Several people, including police, were injured in the clashes. The police said that at least 20 vehicles were damaged. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi spoke with Balasore collector Ashish Thakare on Monday, urging

immediate measures to control the situation. Additional Director General of Police (Law & Order) Sanjay Kumar also reached the town, and the police conducted a flag march in Balasore. "Curfew has been clamped in the Balasore municipality area. All commercial establishments and shops have been asked to remain closed," Balasore SP Sagarika Nath said, as quoted by PTI.

"No person shall leave their homes or move on foot, by vehicle, or travel except for emergency medical aid," police also said. A police officer assured that adequate arrangements were in place and the situation was being brought under control.

## Man sexually assaulted, beaten with belt by 4 men in UP hotel, kills self

**New Delhi:** A 23-year-old man in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur died by suicide on Friday, allegedly hours after being sexually assaulted by four men, police officials said. The victim reportedly knew one of the accused through social media. According to Superintendent of Police (North) Jitendra Kumar Srivastava, the victim befriended Karan (alias Ashutosh Mishra) online a month ago. Karan then invited him to his house in Chiluatal.

On Thursday, Karan allegedly took the victim to a hotel in Rail Vihar where three of his associates joined them. Police said the four men then held the victim hostage, sexually assaulted him,



and beat him with a belt. They also allegedly recorded the assault and threatened to post it online if he didn't pay them money.

SP Srivastava further stated that the accused used the victim's phone to transfer money via UPI and buy beer. The victim reportedly attempted

to file a complaint at the Shahpur Police Station but due to jurisdictional issues, the FIR was not immediately registered. An FIR was finally lodged on Friday under sections of the Indian Penal Code pertaining to unnatural offences, extortion, criminal intimidation, and other relevant charges. Later that night, the victim spoke to his nephew and then allegedly died by suicide. His family found his body on Saturday morning and informed the police. Police have arrested three of the accused - Karan alias Ashutosh Mishra (26), Devesh Rajnand (24), and Angad Kumar (21). A search is underway to apprehend the fourth suspect, Mohan Prajapati (20).

## Kanchanjunga accident: Toll rises to 10, train operations resume at crash site

**The train operations at the site where a Kanchanjunga Express was hit from behind by a goods train on Monday, returned to normal after more than 20 hours of restoration work. Both the up and down lines at the site are currently operational, and the crash site has been cleared.**

**New Delhi:** Train operations resumed after over 20 hours at the site in Bengal's Siliguri where a Kanchanjunga Express was hit from behind by a goods train on Monday. Meanwhile, the death toll in the tragedy has increased to 10. Both the up and down lines on the site are now operating normally, and the restoration work has been completed. Several trains, however, have been cancelled or diverted

due to the tragedy that also injured several others. The Kanchanjunga Express reached its destination in Kolkata's Sealdah at 3.16 am on Tuesday after undergoing restoration work. The mangled compartments remained at the crash site, which was removed by teams as part of the repair work.

Initially, the Railway Board said the goods driver overshot the signal, causing the massive collision. However, internal documents later showed that the automatic signalling system on the stretch where the accident occurred wasn't working since Monday morning, and the driver was cleared to cross red signals. Here are the latest developments in the Kanchanjunga train tragedy in Bengal:

Passengers, who survived the deadly collision, were seen breaking down as the Kanchanjunga Express reached Sealdah in the early hours of Tuesday. Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim was seen consoling a male passenger who cried profusely.

Hakim also interacted with other passengers as they departed the station. Train services resumed on both the up and down lines at the accident site in



Phansidewa area of the Darjeeling district in Siliguri subdivision. A Kamakhya Express train was seen passing on the up line earlier in the day, and later the down line was also restored. Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Katihar Northeast Frontier Railway, Subhendu Kumar Choudhary said that the restoration work has been going on at the crash site since

**India Has More Nuclear Weapons Than Pak, China Far Ahead: Report**  
**New Delhi:** Nine nuclear-armed nations including the US, Russia, France, China, India and Pakistan, continued to modernise their nuclear arsenals and several of them deployed new nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2023, a Swedish think-tank said on Monday. In its analysis, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said China's nuclear arsenal increased from 410 warheads in January 2023 to 500 in January 2024, and it is expected to keep growing. The report said some 2,100 of the deployed warheads were kept in a state of high operational alert on ballistic missiles, and nearly all of them belonged to Russia or the US. However, for the first time China is believed to have some warheads on high operational alert, it said. The SIPRI said nine nuclear-armed states -- the US, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel --



continued to modernise their nuclear arsenals and several deployed new nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2023. Of the total global inventory of an estimated 12,121 warheads in January 2024, about 9,585 were in military stockpiles for potential use, it said. An estimated 3,904 of those warheads were deployed with missiles and aircraft -- 60 more than in January 2023 -- and the rest were in central storage, it said. "Around 2,100 of the deployed warheads were kept in a state of high operational alert on ballistic missiles. Nearly all of these warheads belonged to Russia or the US, but for the first time China is believed to have some warheads on high operational alert," the report said. According to the think-tank, India, Pakistan and North Korea are all pursuing the capability to deploy multiple warheads on ballistic missiles, something Russia, France, the UK, the US and more recently China already have. This would enable a rapid potential increase in deployed warheads, as well as the possibility for nuclear-armed countries to threaten the destruction of significantly more targets, it said. The SIPRI said Russia and the US together possess almost 90 per cent of all nuclear weapons.

yesterday, and it is expected for operations to go back to normal today itself. Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar hit back at Mamata Banerjee over her remark on anti-collision device being installed during her time as the Railways Minister. "This is not the time for politics... Being a Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee claiming that she has introduced the anti-collision device is absolutely ridiculous," Majumdar told news agency ANI on Monday after meeting the injured passengers. Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who visited the injured passengers admitted at the North Bengal Medical College and Hospital (NBMC) in Siliguri, slammed the Centre for neglecting the Railways, saying they only engaged in publicity of Vande Bharat trains. She added that when she was the Railways Minister, she "ensured the anti-collision device was prepared and started" having seen "2-3 major train accidents".

## NEWS BOX

## US Secret Service agent robbed at gunpoint during Biden's Los Angeles trip

**Los Angeles** A US Secret Service agent was robbed at gunpoint as President Joe Biden was visiting Los Angeles for a fundraising event over the weekend, officials said.

The agent was returning from work Saturday night when he was accosted in a residential community in Tustin, about an hour's drive southeast of Los Angeles, according to the US Secret Service. Someone called the Tustin Police Department shortly after 9:30 pm to report the robbery. Police said the agent had his bag stolen at gunpoint. The agent, who was not injured, fired his gun during the confrontation, police said. The Secret Service said they did not know if anyone was shot. Tustin Police said Monday they had not found a suspect. Officers did find some of the agent's stolen belongings in the area. Police reported a silver Infiniti FX35 was seen leaving the scene. Biden and former President Barack Obama held a star-studded fundraising event in Los Angeles on Sunday that brought in more than \$30 million for Biden's reelection campaign.

## Putin to visit North Korea for first time in 24 years

**Seoul.** Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit North Korea on Tuesday and Wednesday for the first time in 24 years, the two countries said, underscoring Moscow's burgeoning partnership with the nuclear-armed state since the invasion of Ukraine. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un extended an invitation to Putin during a visit to Russia's Far East last September. Putin last visited Pyongyang in July 2000. In Washington, the White House said it was troubled by the deepening relationship between Russia and North Korea, and the US State Department said it was "quite certain" Putin would be seeking arms to support his war in Ukraine. Putin's foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov said Russia and North Korea may sign a partnership agreement during the visit that would include security issues. He said the deal would not be directed against any other country, but would "outline prospects for further cooperation, and will be signed taking into account what has happened between our countries in recent years - in the field of international politics, in the field of economics ... including, of course, taking into account security issues." Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Putin's point man for energy, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, will be part of the delegation.

After North Korea, Putin will visit Vietnam on June 19-20, the Kremlin said. Both visits had been expected, although the dates had not previously been announced.

Russia has gone out of its way to publicise the renaissance of its relationship with North Korea since the start of the war in Ukraine, causing alarm among the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia. Washington says North Korea has supplied weapons to Russia to help it fight in Ukraine, though Pyongyang and Moscow have repeatedly denied this. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller repeated charges on Monday that North Korea had supplied "dozens of ballistic missiles and over 11,000 containers of munitions to Russia" for use in Ukraine.

He said the United States had seen Putin "get incredibly desperate over the past few months" and look to Iran and North Korea to make up for equipment lost on the battlefield. Washington says North Korea has supplied weapons to Russia to help it fight in Ukraine, though Pyongyang and Moscow have repeatedly denied this.

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## French parliamentary election campaign starts with President Macron facing struggle

**PARIS.** France began a frantically short election campaign Monday, with President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance facing an uphill struggle to avoid a new defeat at the hands of the far right.

Macron called the snap parliamentary elections three years early in a dramatic gamble to shake up politics in France after the far right trounced his centrists in EU elections. But with less than a fortnight before the vote, a new poll underlined fears his alliance risks being squeezed by new coalitions on the left and right.

According to the Ifop poll for the LCI TV channel, the far-right National Rally (RN) would take 33 percent of the vote, the New Popular Front left-wing alliance 28 percent and Macron's ruling centrists just 18 percent. Many in France remain baffled over why Macron called an election just weeks before the country hosts the Olympics, risking the RN leading the government and 28-year-old Jordan Bardella becoming prime minister. "Emmanuel Macron, who triggered this dissolution to trap the parties, has ended up trapping himself," said Le Monde daily, warning that the RN risked winning the election. Candidates had until Sunday evening to register for the 577 seats in the lower house National Assembly ahead of the official start of campaigning from midnight. The first round of voting takes place on June 30, with the decisive second round coming seven days later.

'Exemplary' Mbappe

The political tremors have reached the Euro 2024 football tournament in Germany, where France's star player Kylian Mbappe said he was "against extremes and divisive ideas" and urged young people to vote at a "crucial moment" in French history. "I hope I will still be proud to wear this shirt after July 7," he said. While some on the right rounded on Mbappe for wading into the controversy, Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera lauded his comments as "exemplary." Macron's dissolving of parliament after the French far right's victory in the EU vote has undoubtedly redrawn the lines of French politics. The aim is to create a new parliamentary majority, former prime minister Edouard Philippe, who leads a party allied to Macron's bloc, told BFMTV. But perhaps to Macron's surprise, a new left-wing alliance—the New Popular Front that takes in Socialists, Greens and hard-leftist France Unbowed (LFI)—has emerged.

## US reporter's espionage trial in Russia to be held behind closed doors

**Moscow** Russia's espionage trial of detained Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who denies charges of collecting secrets for the US CIA, will be held behind closed doors, the trial court said on Monday. Gershkovich, 32, was detained by the Federal Security Service on March 29, 2023, in a steak house in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, 1,400 km (900 miles) east of Moscow, on charges of espionage that carried up to 20 years in prison.

The first American journalist to be detained on spy charges in Russia since the Cold War more than three decades ago, Gershkovich has denied the charges. The Journal says Gershkovich was doing his job and denies he is a spy. The FSB, the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, said Gershkovich was trying to collect secrets about Uralvagonzavod, a Russian defence enterprise that is one of the world's biggest battle tank producers, for the CIA. "The process will take place behind closed doors," the Sverdlovsk Regional Court in Yekaterinburg said.

"According to the investigation authorities, the American journalist of The Wall Street Journal, Gershkovich, on the instructions of the CIA, in March 2023, collected secret information in the Sverdlovsk region about the activities of

the defence enterprise JSC NPK Uralvagonzavod for the production and repair of military equipment."

The first hearing is scheduled for June 26, the court said. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters the U.S. was concerned that the trial was to be held behind closed doors.

"We have a concern about that. We are going to attempt to attend the trial - don't know if that will be possible," he said. The White House has called the charges "ridiculous" and President Joe Biden has said Gershkovich's detention is "totally illegal." Russia said Gershkovich was caught "red-handed". President Vladimir Putin has said there has been contact with Washington about potentially swapping Gershkovich but that such negotiations should be held away from the media.

The Journal said Gershkovich was on a reporting assignment when detained and that his fate illustrates the threats journalists face trying to report on the front lines of major global stories. It has demanded his release. "This latest development means a sham trial is imminent. We expect that all parties will work to bring Evan home now. Time is of the essence," the Journal said.



"The Russian regime's smearing of Evan is repugnant and based on calculated and transparent lies. Journalism is not a crime, and Evan's case is an assault on the free press."

SWAP FUND?

Gershkovich's arrest illustrated how far relations between Russia and the West have deteriorated over the Ukraine war since hopes of friendship were raised after the Cold War ended with the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

There are now almost no U.S. reporters in Russia. U.S. diplomats say that Gershkovich was not a spy and was detained by Russia's FSB to build up a store of arrested U.S. citizens who could later be swapped for Russians detained in

the West. Among the detained Americans is Paul Whelan, an ex-Marine arrested in Moscow in 2018 and sentenced to 16 years in prison on spying charges in 2020.

Putin suggested in February that Gershkovich could be swapped for Vadim Krasikov, convicted of the 2019 murder of a Chechen dissident in Berlin, although he did not mention Krasikov by name. Putin said in March he had agreed the idea of potentially swapping Alexei Navalny a few days before the

opposition leader died in unexplained circumstances at a Russian prison on Feb. 16. A fluent Russian-speaker born to Soviet émigrés and raised in New Jersey, Gershkovich moved to Moscow in late 2017 to join the English-language Moscow Times, and subsequently worked for the French news agency Agence France-Presse. It was unclear whether Gershkovich, on his reporting trip to the Urals, was planning to report on Uralvagonzavod, based in Nizhny Tagil. The enterprise sits at the heart of the Urals region, where Russia conducts some of its most secret weapons production and research. It is part of Rostec, Russia's vast defence corporation run by Putin ally Sergei Chemezov.

## US midwife pleads guilty to destroying 2,600 Covid vaccines, issuing fake cards

**Kathleen Breault, 66, of Cambridge, admitted in a New York court that she destroyed over 2,600 Covid-19 vaccines and issued fake vaccination record cards while working from 2021 to 2022.**

**New York.** An upstate New York midwife pleaded guilty on Monday to federal fraud charges for her role in giving out thousands of Covid-19 immunisation cards to people who never received the vaccine, prosecutors said. Kathleen Breault, 66, of Cambridge, admitted in Brooklyn federal court that she destroyed more than 2,600 coronavirus vaccines and issued a corresponding number of fraudulent vaccination

record cards while working at Sage-Femme Midwifery from 2021 to 2022. The Albany facility was an authorised site for Covid-19 vaccine administration at a time when many government agencies and private companies were requiring their workers to be immunised against the



virus. US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace's office said Breault and her co-conspirators also made over 2,600

false entries into a state database that tracked Covid-19 vaccine distribution.

Among those who were issued the fraudulent immunisation records were minors ineligible at the time to be vaccinated, as well as Canadian citizens who were not present in the country when they were purportedly vaccinated, according to prosecutors.

Breault agreed to repay more than \$37,000 (approx Rs 30.90 lakh) in restitution for the destroyed vaccines and faces a maximum of five years in prison at her sentencing, Peace's office said. Breault's lawyer said Monday that his client acted out of a "sense of profound concern" about the impact of the vaccination requirements.

"She believes that her actions were justified by moral necessity though she knows that she violated the law by defrauding the government," Michael Sussman said in an emailed statement.

## Top US official bats for tobacco-style warning labels on social media apps

**US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said a warning label alone will not make social media safe for young people but that it can increase awareness and change behaviour as shown in evidence from tobacco studies.**

**Washington** US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy on Monday (local time) called for a warning label to be added to social media apps as a reminder that those platforms have caused harm to young people, especially adolescents.

In an op-ed in The New York Times, Murthy wrote that a warning label alone will not make social media safe for young people but that it can increase awareness and change behaviour as shown in evidence from tobacco studies. The US Congress would need to pass legislation requiring such a warning label. Young advocates and lawmakers have long

accused social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat of what they say is a harmful effect on children, including shortened attention spans, promoting



negative body images and making them vulnerable to online bullies and predators. "It is time to require a surgeon general's warning label on social media platforms, stating that social media were associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents," Murthy wrote on Monday. TikTok, Snap and Meta Platforms, owner of Facebook and

Instagram, did not respond to requests for comment. The CEOs of those three companies, along with social media platform X and messaging app Discord, were grilled by US senators in January

during a hearing about online child safety, with Republican Senator Lindsey Graham accusing the leaders of having "blood on your hands", for failing to protect young users from sexual predators. Some US states have been working to pass legislation to safeguard children from the harmful effects of social media, such as anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses as a result. New York state lawmakers this month passed legislation to bar social media platforms from exposing "addictive" algorithmic content to users under age 18 without parental consent. In March, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a bill that bans children under 14 from social media platforms and requires 14- and 15-year-olds to get parental consent.

## 3, including suspected gunman, dead in shooting near daycare centre in Toronto

**Toronto.** A man and woman were shot to death and a male suspected as the attacker also died Monday at a north Toronto office space near a daycare centre and a school, authorities said. The shooting prompted a lockdown of both the daycare facility and the Catholic all-boys elementary school, and parents rushed to the area to pick up their children. Detective Sgt. Al Bartlett said the man and woman who were killed worked together in what he described as a financial transaction business. It's our belief at this point that the altercation that took place is in relation to that business," Bartlett said. "The person that we believe to be responsible is among the deceased," he added.

He withheld the identities of the victims and the shooter, saying officials first had to notify their



families. Bartlett declined to comment on whether the suspect killed himself or died in some other way, saying it was still under investigation. Bartlett said no child was injured. He said there was no access within the building between the daycare centre and the business.

Shahrokh Biniaz, a graphic designer and photographer who has a studio in the building where the shooting happened, said he heard a loud bang and people arguing in the reception area. "I didn't know what it was, thought it was maybe a circuit breaker or something because it was really loud," he said. I came out of my office and I heard some arguments in the reception ... I went back to my desk and sat down, and I heard the second bang after two minutes."

He said he walked out of his office again, heard more quarrelling and then left the building through a back door. "I called 911. Police came quite fast," he said, adding he then heard another round of gunshots. Relieved parents were seen hugging their children tightly after they were reunited just outside the police tape at St. George Mini School daycare. A supervisor told the crowd of parents gathered that everyone inside was safe.

## 11 migrants killed, 64 missing after 2 ships sink off Italy coast

**Ten suspected migrants were found dead when their ship capsized off Italy's tiny Lampedusa island while another ship caught fire and overturned off Calabria. One migrant died later and 64 others were still missing at sea after the separate incidents.**

**Rome, UPDATED** Sixty-four people were missing at sea after a shipwreck off the Italian southern coast on Monday, while 11 were rescued and taken ashore to a Calabrian town, United Nations' agencies said in a statement.

In a separate shipwreck, rescue workers found 10 bodies of suspected migrants trapped below the deck of a wooden boat off Italy's tiny Lampedusa island, the German aid group Resqship wrote on



Monday on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter. In the first shipwreck, which took place about 200 kilometres off Calabria, a boat that had set off from Turkey eight days earlier caught fire and

overturned, the UN agencies said, citing survivors. The search and rescue operation started following a Mayday call by a French boat, the Italian Coast Guard said in a statement. The boat was

sailing in a border area where Greece and Italy carry out search and rescue operations. Survivors and people still missing at sea came from Iran, Syria and Iraq, the UN agencies said.

The Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre immediately diverted two merchant vessels sailing nearby to the scene of the rescue. Assets from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex also helped. The survivors were brought to the Calabrian port of Roccella Jonica, where they were disembarked and entrusted to the care of medical personnel. One of the migrants died soon after, the coast guard said. In the second shipwreck, the crew aboard Resqship's boat, the Nadir, found 61 people on the wooden boat, which was full of water. "Our crew was able to evacuate 51 people, two of whom were unconscious. The 10 dead were in the flooded lower deck of the boat," it added.

## NEWS BOX

## WI vs AFG: West Indies decimate Afghanistan to finish group stage unbeaten

**New Delhi.** West Indies continued their dream run in the T20 World Cup 2024 after beating Afghanistan by 104 runs in the T20 World Cup 2024 Group C match. On Tuesday, June 18, Rovman Powell's men made sure that they finished the group stage unbeaten with a top-place finish. The Afghans, in the meantime, defeated New Zealand, Uganda and Papua New Guinea without having to break a sweat, but had to face a heavy defeat at the hands of the co-hosts.

WI vs AFG, T20 World Cup 2024 Updates

The decision to field first backfired for Afghanistan as the co-hosts scored 92 runs in the powerplay, the most in the history of the T20 World Cup. Azmatullah Omarzai bore the brunt of some powerful hitting after



he leaked 36 runs in his second over. After Brandon King departed early, Nicholas Pooran and Johnson Charles put on 80 runs for the second wicket. On the back of his knock, West Indies put up a huge score of 218 for 5 on the board. Noor Ahmad was the pick of the Afghan bowlers as he finished with figures of 4-0-20-0. Shai Hope and Andre Russell chipped in with useful knocks of 25 and 26 respectively. Hosein, McCoy strangle Afghanistan

Chasing the huge target, the Afghans found themselves in trouble as Rahmanullah Gurbaz failed to get off the mark. Ibrahim Zadran scored 38 runs off 28 balls with 5 fours and a six to inject some momentum into the innings. But once Obed McCoy accounted for his wicket, it all went downhill for the Afghans. McCoy was the standout bowler for the Caribbean after he picked up 3 wickets for 14 runs. Azmatullah Omarzai tried to make amends for his horrendous showing with the ball while batting. But Akeal Hosein cut short his stay after he scored 23 runs off 19 balls.

Hosein and Gudakesh Motie picked up a couple of wickets apiece. In the end, West Indies bowled their opponents out for 114 in 16.2 overs. As far as Afghanistan are concerned, they have their task cut out before their Super 8 clash against India.

## Belgium's Tedesco not stressing over Lukaku disallowed goal: Want to be a fair loser

**New Delhi.** Belgium head coach Domenico Tedesco does not want to think too much about the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) ruling out Romelu Lukaku's equaliser in the side's defeat to Slovakia at UEFA Euro 2024 on June 18. Tedesco explained that Belgium will continue to put faith in the FIFA-licensed referees Euro 2024 and VAR, rather than complain about the disallowed goal. Belgium were handed a shocking 1-0 defeat in their tournament opener after conceding an early goal to Slovakia from Ivan Schranz's 7th minute strike. The side were not able to find their way back into the match despite multiple attempts on goal in the second half.

An all-out attacking second-half from Belgium saw two of Lukaku's equaliser attempts get ruled out by VAR, once for offside and then the handball incident. The second disallowed goal from the Belgium number 10 on the 87th minute mark was something that has been a talking point in the football world since last night. In the buildup to the late goal, Lois Openda brushed his fingers on to the ball while being pressed by Slovakia defender Denis Vavro. The decision has



faced some fire from fans since the initial VAR check on the goal was for a possible offside, only for it to go back on the Vavro handball. Speaking at the post-match press conference, Tedesco did not criticise VAR and the match referees and chose to reflect on his own side's performance instead. "It's tough for me to speak now... If we would have won, I could probably share my opinion a little more. But we lost and I want to be a good or at least a fair loser; we shouldn't be talking about VAR. We trust these guys, we trust the VAR and the referees and if they blow and say it's handball we have to trust and accept it and that's that," Tedesco said. Tedesco also went on to defend Lukaku and brushed off the criticism talk that has fallen on the player since. "He [Lukaku] has been playing for Belgium for a long time and knows very well how to score goals... He's a top-class player, a great character and he doesn't need any help on that score. Everyone is disappointed, but I think you can harness that and make use of this defeat.

# France without Kylian Mbappe are not the same: Deschamps rues injury vs Austria

**France captain Kylian Mbappe broke his nose in the team's first match at Euro 2024 against Austria. Mbappe had to be subbed off after he was left bleeding due to an aerial clash late in the match.**

**New Delhi.** France captain and one of the best attackers in the world - Kylian Mbappe - suffered a broken nose against Austria on Monday, 17 June. Mbappe was taken off late in the game after he was left bleeding due to an aerial clash. Coach Didier Deschamps rued the player's injury after the game and said that the team would not be the same in case Mbappe is not able to play the next few matches. Mbappe, who was making his first appearance as captain in a major international tournament, had a mixed night. He created several chances, including the one that led to the own goal, but also missed some glaring opportunities. His night took a turn for the worse when he collided with Austria's Kevin Danso, resulting in a facial

injury that left him writhing in pain. The severity of the injury was confirmed by the French Football Federation, which stated that Mbappe had broken his nose and would require a protective mask. Deschamps expressed his concern over the injury, acknowledging that the team without Mbappe was significantly different. "He's got a really bad nose," Deschamps said. "We'll have to wait and see, the medical staff are dealing with it. We'll have to see what's going to be done and then how long it will take. It's very bad news for us tonight. Obviously, the French team with or without him, this is not the same thing. I hope he can be there." Euro 2024: France vs Austria Match Report

France secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Austria in their opening Group D match at Euro 2024, but the win came at a significant cost as captain Kylian Mbappe suffered a broken nose. The injury, which occurred late in the game, left Mbappe in agony and forced his substitution, casting a shadow over an otherwise historic night for manager Didier Deschamps, who recorded his 100th victory. The match was far from a vintage performance for France, but they managed to edge past Austria thanks to an own goal by Maximilian Wober shortly before halftime.



Despite the win, the French team's reliance on Mbappe was evident, and his absence was deeply felt.

Mbappe's injury has raised concerns about his availability for France's upcoming matches, particularly their next encounter against the Netherlands on Friday. The French team will be hoping for a swift recovery for their star striker as they aim to make a deep run in the tournament.

### RANGNICK'S AUSTRIA WORK HARD

Austria coach Ralf Rangnick had promised his in-form side, with one defeat in their last 16 matches, would go toe-to-toe with France

and they were as good as his word.

Their relentless high-pressing and tackling never wavered and with their red-clad fans roaring them on they were in the contest until the end of a lengthy period of stoppage time. "All in all the French earned the win, but that we were chasing the equaliser throughout speaks for the performance of our team," Rangnick said.

Austria could even have taken the lead shortly before France scored when captain Marcel Sabitzer cleverly touched a Michael Gregoritsch cross into the path of Christoph Baumgartner whose shot was deflected wide by France keeper Mike Maignan.

The French were more dynamic after the interval with Pentz saving well from Marcus Thuram but too often the pre-tournament favourites were wasteful when in promising positions. While Mbappe's injury cast a shadow over the victory, a huge bonus for France was the sight of 2018 World Cup winner Kante, a surprise pick for the squad after a two-year absence, producing a majestic display at the heart of midfield. For all their graft and possession, Austria struggled to create many clear chances and more often than not it was man-of-the-match Kante who blocked their path.

## German YouTuber faces ban after exposing Euro 2024 security lapse with mascot prank

A German YouTuber faced a Euro 2024 stadium ban from the UEFA after entering the field disguised as a mascot. Marvin Wildhage uploaded a video on his YouTube channel, where he showed himself entering the Munich stadium last Friday dressed in a fake costume. He made it all the way to the field before being escorted out by the security staff. Wildhage revealed in the video that he brought a fake bear costume from China for 32 Euros and made fake credentials based on the design from pictures posted on the social media of Euro 2024. The YouTuber's credentials did not work when scanned. However, he was brought in by a security guard after showcasing a fake parking pass which he had created. As per the video, he danced on the corner of the field before he was detained by the security in the detention area. He was released after Germany's 5-1 win against Scotland. Wildhage's ability to make it to the field revealed the lapses and flaws in the tournament's security. The UEFA would likely review and re-evaluate the security measures moving forward to avoid such

## WI vs AFG: Rashid Khan not fussed by Afghanistan's heavy defeat before Super 8

**New Delhi.** Rashid Khan said that the heavy defeat at the hands of West Indies would not affect Afghanistan before the Super 8 of the T20 World Cup 2024. On Tuesday, June 18, the Afghans slumped to a 104-run defeat at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium, Gros Islet, St Lucia. After being asked to chase down a target of 219, the Afghans were bowled out for 114. The game was a dead rubber since both the teams had already made their way through to the second round. Afghanistan finished the group stage at second with 6 points and a net run rate of +1.835 thanks to wins in 3 out of 4 games. Rashid said that the loss could turn out to be a blessing in disguise for Afghanistan. "Don't think so. We've achieved what we wanted - to get Super Eight. The different pitches coming up... we'll adjust to them. Good learning this loss happened at this stage, not in a do-or-die



game," Rashid said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

"Hope to not repeat mistakes"

Rashid also lauded Noor Ahmad for his economical spell of 4-0-20-0, although the left-arm wrist spinner failed to make a

breakthrough. "We take the positives with us, like fielding, middle-overs bowling and Noor's spell," Rashid said. Rashid admitted that after West Indies scored 92 runs in the powerplay, it was tough for Afghanistan to bounce back.

"The way they batted, scoring around 90 runs in the powerplay, it is tough to come back from that. But in the middle overs we did well and it was good to restrict them under 200.

But this game is good to understand mindset and strategy. Hope to not repeat," Rashid added. Afghanistan's first Super 8 match is against Rohit Sharma's India on Thursday, June 20 at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados.

## Gautam Gambhir to be interviewed for India coach job in Mumbai on Tuesday

**New Delhi.** Gautam Gambhir will appear for an interview for the role of the head coach of the Indian men's cricket team on Tuesday, June 18. The Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) will take his interview in Mumbai. Along with Gambhir, another candidate will also be interviewed for the role of the selector. The interview is set to start at 12 pm IST. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is currently looking for Rahul Dravid's successor and Gambhir is one of the frontrunners to replace him. Dravid's tenure with the Indian team ends after the ongoing T20 World Cup in the West Indies and United States of America (USA). Earlier, Dravid himself confirmed that he would not stay as the head coach after serving the national team from November 2021, since Ravi Shastri stepped down.

As far as Gambhir is concerned, he made a name for himself in the administrative world after he mentored KKR to their third Indian Premier League (IPL) title earlier in April. Thereafter, reports of BCCI going into talks



with the 2011 World Cup winner emerged. The BCCI had invited applications previously, the deadline of which was May 27, 2024.

"Gautam Gambhir is capable"

Legendary leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who also worked as the India head coach, said that Gambhir needs to be given some time to settle down.

"You will have to give him (Gambhir) time. He certainly is capable. We have seen

**Former Indian cricketer Gautam Gambhir will appear for an interview for the role of the head coach of the Indian men's cricket team on Tuesday, June 18. Gambhir recently mentored KKR to their third IPL title.**

Gautam handle teams, he has been a captain for India, for his franchise. He has all the credentials to be that. But, Indian team coaching is slightly different. So you will have to give him time to settle in," Kumble told Star Sports. As far as Dravid is concerned, he would be looking to finish on a high as India are looking to win their first ICC title in 11 years since last winning the 2013 Champions Trophy. The Men in Blue are already through to the Super 8 after topping the points table in Group A.



incidents.

### UEFA's statement on the issue

UEFA also released a statement after the video garnered over a million views. UEFA informed that 3 people have suffered a ban from entering the stadiums that will be hosting the Euro 2024.

We can confirm that there was an incident with a fake mascot costume at the match in Munich ... between Germany and Scotland," UEFA said in a statement. "Three people have gained unauthorised access." UEFA has assessed the situation and initiated the necessary organisational measures. Three individuals have been banned from entering stadiums hosting UEFA Euro 2024 matches. Please understand that we cannot provide any further information due to the ongoing proceedings of the investigating authorities."

## Rohit Sharma eager for 'hectic Super 8 stage': Everyone wants to make a difference

**Rohit Sharma hypes up India team before Super 8 stages**

**India are unbeaten in the tournament so far**

**India play Afghanistan in their first Super 8 game**

**Barbados.** India captain Rohit Sharma is really excited for the Super 8 stages in the T20 World Cup 2024. Speaking ahead of the team's first match against Afghanistan, Sharma said that the Indian team wants to do something special in the next stage of the tournament. Speaking via a BCCI video, the Indian captain said that everyone in the Indian team wanted to make a difference in

the tournament. India have not lost a single match in the group stage of the tournament. They played against Ireland, Pakistan and USA and won in all three of them. The team's final group-stage match against Canada was washed out by rain.

"There is real keen-ness in the group to go and do something special. It clearly shows that everyone wants to make a difference and we take our skill sessions quite seriously. There is something to achieve in every skill session that you do. Once we play the first game, we are going to play the next two in 3-4 days. It is going to be a little hectic but we are used to all of this. We travel and play a lot so that is not going to be an excuse," Rohit Sharma said in a video uploaded by the BCCI.

T20 World Cup Coverage | Points Table | T20 World Cup 2024 Schedule | Player Stats India arrived at Barbados several days ahead



of their first Super 8s match. They spent a little off time on the beaches of the island and since then have been back to their training regime. Sharma said in the video that the players knew what they needed to do as they had played before in these conditions.

Barbados. Then they head to Antigua to face Bangladesh, two days later before ending the Super 8 stage with a mouthwatering clash against Australia at St Lucia on June 24. All of India's matches will start at 8 PM IST.

"We will look to focus on our skill and what we need to do as a team. We have played a lot of games here. Everyone understands what they need to do. Everyone is looking forward and are excited at the same time," concluded Rohit.

### SUPER 8: INDIA'S FULL FIXTURES

India will begin their campaign on June 20, against Afghanistan at



# Kriti Sanon

**Wants To 'Play Complex Characters':  
'Don't Want Resemblance Between  
Myself And The Character'**

**K**riti Sanon has come a long way in showbiz with rich content driven and commercial films. The actress is currently basking in the success of her recently released film Crew. Surely, the National Award-winning actress has cemented her status as one of the hottest and most bankable stars in Bollywood. As she continues to scale new heights, Kriti's aspirations and choices reflect her approach to her craft. In a recent interview with Femina, Kriti shared her thoughts on portraying distinct characters, expressing a desire to explore more complex roles. "I'd love to play a complex, grey character – a departure from my own goody-two-shoes persona. So that, in the future, when asked if there's a resemblance between myself and the character I've portrayed, I can confidently say, 'I don't think there is any' – that's something I'm eager to embrace," she revealed. Kriti's passion for the creative process extends beyond acting. Discussing her experience of turning producer with 'Do Patti', which also features the veteran actress Kajol, Kriti explained, "I wanted to be a producer because I love the creative process of filmmaking. In a few of my films as an actor – ones that I felt very passionate about – I realised I wanted to be involved in every aspect. It propelled me into production."

Her journey into production signifies a new chapter in her career, one where she can shape stories. "Being a producer allows me to have a say in the narrative, to influence the storytelling process, and to bring my vision to life," she added. With her eyes set on portraying multifaceted roles and her hands in the creative processes of filmmaking, Kriti is undoubtedly set for even greater success in the future. Coming to Do Patti with Kajol, the teaser opens with an aerial view of Manali and Kajol is seen as a cop riding a bike. Her voice can be heard in the background throughout the video. She is talking about wrong and right situations in life. Kriti Sanon's character is also shown as a glamorous one. She is seen in a grey shade. Looks like it is a murder mystery but still nothing is clear. The film will surely keep you on the edge of your seat.



**Vijay Sethupathi Expresses  
Admiration For Jr NTR, Says  
'He Is My Favourite Actor'**



**I**n a recent fan interaction, celebrated actor Vijay Sethupathi, who is currently basking in the success of his latest film 'Maharaja', openly expressed his admiration for 'RRR' star Jr NTR. Sethupathi, in a heartfelt moment, revealed that the 'Devara' actor holds a special place in his heart and is undoubtedly his favourite. When asked about his favourite actor, Vijay Sethupathi didn't hesitate for a moment before replying, "NTR Garu is my favourite." This heartfelt admiration comes at a time when Sethupathi's milestone 50th film, 'Maharaja', is captivating audiences in theatres. Released on May 30, 'Maharaja' marks a significant achievement in his illustrious career. Meanwhile, during one of his recent interviews, that is doing the rounds on Reddit, Vijay Sethupathi turned emotional, recalling tough phase of his life. When asked whom he misses the most, Vijay named himself. He said, "I miss myself. There was a guy who was very innocent, didn't have any dreams, he didn't even know what he's going to do in his life. When he was studying in first year of college, he didn't know the second years syllabus also. My friends were like 'this is second years syllabus' – I didn't even know." He continued, "I was not good in sports studies or anything. I don't talk to any girls also when I was in college, I don't talk to any. I was very shy. But still, this guy wanted to be big in something in life, but he didn't know how to become big. He didn't have big dreams also. He just wanted to come out of this poverty. That's all. He was very cute. I miss myself." Recently, during the press meet of Maharaja, he revealed that he got an accountant job before he entered the light-camera-action world. Vijay initially thought his life would be transformed after getting a job in Dubai, but it didn't go as expected. The actor struggled hard to fulfil the basic needs of his family. Helmed by Nithilan Saminathan, Vijay Sethupathi starrer Maharaja is one of the much-anticipated action dramas boasting an ensemble cast including Vijay Sethupathi, Natty, Anurag Kashyap, Bharathiraja, Abhirami, Singampuli, Mamta Mohandas, Aruldoss, Munishkanth.

**Rajinikanth, Jackie Shroff  
Attend Aishwarya Arjun-  
Umapathy Ramaiah's  
Wedding Reception**



**M**any celebrities, including Rajinikanth, his daughter Aishwarya, Jackie Shroff, and Prabhu Deva, attended the wedding reception of Aishwarya Arjun and Umapathy Ramaiah. Aishwarya is the daughter of Arjun Sarja, and Umapathy is the son of actor-director Thambi Ramaiah. According to Pinkvilla, Lokesh Kanagaraj, Vijay Sethupathi, Dhruva Sarja and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin with his wife Durga Stalin, were also present, according to HT. The reception took place at the Hotel Leela Palace in Chennai on June 14.

For the event, Rajinikanth wore a white kurta and vesthi. Aishwarya Arjun wore a white and golden saree. Jackie Shroff chose a white kurta and pyjama with a black coat. Prabhu Deva wore a printed shirt and black pants. The bride, Aishwarya, wore a pink saree, while Umapathy Ramaiah wore a white shirt, black jacket, and matching pants. Aishwarya and Umapathy got married on June 10 in a private ceremony at the Hanuman Temple in Gerugambakkam, Chennai, with family and friends. They later shared photos from the wedding on Instagram. Arjun Sarja posted a video on Instagram. He wrote, "Words cannot express the joy and happiness we feel as we witnessed our beloved daughter AISHWARYA marry the love of her life, our dearest UMAPATHY. It was a day filled with love, laughter, and unforgettable memories. Watching you step into this new chapter has filled our hearts with pride and overwhelming emotion. Here's to a lifetime of love, joy, and countless blessings. May your journey together be as beautiful as the love you share. We love you both dearly! Appa Amma Anju Junee and truffyy @aishwaryaarjun @umapathyramaiah @neetuarjun14 @anj204."

# Sonali Bendre

**Reveals How The First Paycheck Pushed Her  
Into Showbiz: 'I Was Like This World Exists?'**

**S**onali Bendre did not harbor dreams of becoming an actor like many starry-eyed individuals. It was pure fate that led her to the city and set her on the path of acting. Coming from a background where her father, an 'honest' central government employee, faced constant transfers, Sonali witnessed her parents' financial struggles firsthand. It was during her teenage years when her father was transferred to Mumbai that her story took a new turn. Sonali Bendre recently shared in an interview how receiving her first paycheck and realizing the potential earnings significantly shaped her decision-making process at that time. Upon receiving her first paycheck in the early 90s, Sonali was astonished to find out that the contract amounted to Rs 25000, a considerably large sum at that time. This revelation sparked her realization of the promising financial prospects that a career in the show business held for her. She told Mid-



Day, "Thing that changed for me was when I saw the contract. Whatever you give and what they said they will give was also like 'what! I can make this and that got me thinking. So, I said, this world exists? And that's when I told my father, look at my age. I have the time. I have it on my side. I promise you, give me three years. If this doesn't work out, I will do what you're saying, but look at the amount of money. If it works out, I can use that for life.'" Describing the financial challenges her family faced at the time, Sonali viewed her entry into the entertainment industry as a means to uplift her family from those circumstances. Reflecting on her motivation, Sonali added, "If my father was not going through that kind of a struggle, and if I was not seeing how my

parents were struggling and what they were feeling, I would have probably not stood up and said, 'I'm doing it.' Having begun her career as a model in her teenage years, Sonali transitioned into Bollywood after working on numerous advertisements. She gained recognition for her roles in films like Diljale(1996), Duplicate(1997), Major Saab(1998) and Dhai Akshar Prem Ke (2000). Recently, milestones were reached as her movies Sarfarosh and Hum Saath Saath Hain celebrated their 25th anniversaries earlier this year. Following a break due to her battle with cancer, Sonali marked her return to acting with the web series The Broken News (2022). Her most recent appearance was in the second season of the mentioned web show, signifying her ongoing dedication to her craft and connection with her audience.

