

**INBOX**

**FINAL COUNTDOWN**  
ELECTION 2004

Heartfelt's cosy club: Netas help each other

A more educated LS

Naveen Patnaik banks on performance

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**Bush blasts BPO-bashers**

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush has hit out at the Democrats with an aggressive defence of his free trade policy which, by extension, is deemed to include outsourcing.

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**NIIT**

**HindustanTimes.com poll**

The Ind-Pak cricket series will be the best CBM between the two countries. Do you agree?

Yes: 18,148 No: 15,148

Today's Question: Can I say 2,978

The broader objective of Indo-Pak peace will be defeated if India is granted territorial rights for the cricket series. Do you agree?

**MARKETS**

BSE Sensex	5649.86	-109.43
NSE Nifty	1605.40	-26.95
Nasdaq (10 pm)	1961.79	-26.86
FTSE (10 pm)	4,459.20	-86.10
Doll	59.45	-0.04
Euro	11.060	+1.60
US dollar	45.27	+0.94
British pound	81.32	-1.04
Japan	85.27	-0.38

(Datafeed: Finance online, Source: PTI)

**WEATHER**

Meanly clear sky. Maximum and minimum temperatures will be around 31°C and 16°C.

Details, Page 4

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## House full everywhere

### DOORSRA

#### Even Junoon can't get tickets

Avirook Sen  
Karachi, March 11

FROM HIS 10th floor office in central Karachi, Shehryar Ahmed is trying to coax the person at the other end of the line to get him two tickets for the Big Game. It's not going too well. On the walls around Shehryar (Sherry to his approximately 11,000 friends), are album covers, concert posters and citations for Junoon—he's the guitar-playing manager of the band—for a while, Sherry sort of gives up: "I've given away thousands of passes for our shows, and look what I have to do for two lousy tickets."

Across town, Hasan Hamayun has just had a wonderful idea. Waiting at Karachi port are 20,000 litres of Haagen Dazs ice-cream. The consignment came in early—the brand was to launch in Pakistan on the 30th—and Hasan who is the franchisee, now wants his first concert in the stadium on match day. Provided it isn't simply too late, and provided the authorities are convinced that ice-cream does not pose a security hazard he'll have his shot.

India v Pakistan is Karachi's first international in 15 years, and everyone's interested. Legally, tickets were sold out within 48 hours of the counters opening on Sunday. Now even the black market is close to shutting shop. Tickets range from Rs 100 to 1,800 and you can safely multiply by five if you want one.

Do not try at the National Stadium: It was taken over by the paramilitary Pakistan Rangers on Thursday afternoon, Karachi may be short of tickets, but not of security. There will be about 3,000 of them in and around the stadium. Each of the 15-odd enclosures will have an SSP-rank of officer in charge. And Central Security Control will be located bang under the Indian dressing room.

But for the between 25-30,000 Indians in enchanting vagabondage about specifics like ticket sales/prices and hotel tariffs) who will have precious bar-coded tickets the gates open at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday.



IN VAIN: Rahul Dravid hits a four during the warm-up match against Pakistan A in Karachi on Thursday. India lost by six wickets.

## Visiting Pak? Carry a tent

### HT IN PAKISTAN

Kadambhari Murali  
Lahore, March 11

IF YOU are planning to visit Lahore, make sure you are carrying a tent, because the hotels here are putting up the house-full signs.

An Islamabad resident, whose company has a deal with one of Karachi's plush hotels, was asked to pay \$500 a night for a single room. That came down to \$250 as a special concession because he was a regular. The normal rate is usually around \$100.

"This is a great time for commerce," says Nadeem, who works at an agency specialising in arranging rooms for people. They bulk book hotel rooms

and offer them to customers at three or four times the rate. Lahore which is expecting a deluge of visitors from India for the twin one-dayers and the Test, is already prohibitively expensive. An employee of the Pearl Continental here says people are willing to pay anything. "We received a call for six rooms for a batch of Indians from England. We settled at Rs 22,000."

A journalist with a reservation at a leading hotel found her booking had been cancelled since they couldn't hold a room till she got her visa. Luckily she had made another booking and wasn't fazed, relatively speaking. She's paying Rs 5,500 a night for a single room.

When she asked why they were charging so much when the usual rate was Rs 3,500, she was told they wouldn't mind if she wanted to shift to another hotel. End of conversation.

## J&K Bill in cold storage

### Council adjourned sine die

Arun Joshi  
Jammu, March 11

THE CONGRESS got a respite from the sticky J&K Permanent Resident (Disqualification) Bill when the legislative council, which was debating the Bill, was adjourned sine die on Thursday night. It will be taken up whenever the council next meets, in all likelihood after the general elections.

The anti-climactic adjournment came at the end of a seven-hour debate polarised along regional and communal lines. House chairman Abdul Rashid Dar said his decision was based on the likely ramifications of the Bill both within the state and at the national level.

Parties supporting the Bill immediately denounced his decision. NC leader Omar Abdullah called it "shameful" and said he would bring an impeachment motion against the chairman.

But the Congress was content, as it had moved a motion to send the Bill to a select committee in order to buy time and not let it become a poll issue.

The debate on the Bill turned out to be a battle of words along regional and communal lines. Business began with PDP and NC members shouting the Bill be passed with a simple majority. Leader of the Opposition Abdul Qayyum said any hurdles in its passage would hurt Kashmiri sentiments and create problems in a state gripped by militancy.

The Congress, however, maintained it was a state constitutional Bill and required a two-thirds majority for passage. This became a major bone of contention, and remained unresolved when the council was adjourned.

The NC and PDP also rebuffed the view that the Bill had a gender bias. If girls from the outside J&K could marry permanent residents and become state subjects, where was the question of gender bias, they asked.



Rescue workers at a blast site.

## Train blasts kill 180 in Spain

Associated Press  
Madrid, March 11

TEN BOMBS exploded in three busy Madrid train stations during the height of morning rush hour on Thursday, killing at least 180 commuters and wounding more than 900 in Spain's worst terrorist attack over. The government blamed the blasts on the Basque separatist group ETA.

The bombings that started around 7:30 a.m. local time came days before Spain was to go to the polls. Campaigning was suspended after the blasts.

The Interior Ministry said the explosives used in the blasts were a kind of dynamite that ETA normally uses.

"ETA had been looking for a massacre in Spain," Interior Minister Angel Acebes said.

However, the leader of a party linked to ETA, denied it was behind the blasts and suggested "Arab resistance" elements were responsible. He said ETA always phones in warnings. The interior minister said there was no warning before Thursday's attack.

Related reports: P23

## Throw out NDA to feel good: Cong

HT Commentaries  
New Delhi/Mumbai/Kolkata, Mar 11

FIRING FROM all four corners of the country, the Congress on Thursday charged Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee with responsibility for the "saga of sins, seams and shame" that cost India Rs 49,657 crore during his tenure.

"The government's economic agenda was partisan, it communalised the polity, it sought to destroy the social fabric of India and political expediency was its guiding ideology," said Pranab Mukherjee and Chief Minister Uday Kumar in Delhi.

"(L.K.) Advani's yatra indicates how the RSS is calling the shots," Arjun Singh said in Kolkata. "And both Vajpayee and Advani... in order to downplay the Gujarat career, are



Manmohan Singh Pranab Mukherjee

now busy confounding the people by whipping up the anti-NDA fashion.

In Mumbai, Manmohan Singh warned against the danger to the stock market and banking. "If the interest rates start rising, the economy could get into trouble," he said.

And in Bangalore, Natwar Singh spoke of the over 2,000 farmers who had committed suicide in Andhra.

All senior leaders spoke while releasing the 55-page chargesheet, comprising a ready reckoner on 50 major disasters of Vajpayee's regime, and in- and out- by the four metros' blitz to counter the Poor Good, Bharat Uday Yatra, and India Shining campaigns.

The number-crunching included losses due to various scams and the sale "to favourites" of 31 PSUs, totaling Rs 11,290 crore. The chargesheet also touched upon communal riots, compromised national security, rising unemployment and rural poverty.

"The Congress was dismissive of the 'Aul' factor," the towering personality has feet of clay," said Arjun Singh. "In 1999, the BJP could manage only 182 seats, less than Rajiv Gandhi's 185 when he refused to form a government," said Mukherjee.

## Ministry sees a scam in IIMs

Nandini R. Iyer  
New Delhi, March 11

THE IRD Ministry has decided to audit the financial and administrative records of all the six Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), having "discovered" that hundreds of people have been granted memberships to IIM societies by paying donations.

"No rules have been framed for the entry of these new members and, anyone, even an unworlded don can gain entry," government sources said. They said the IIMs had been illegally building up their financial assets.

"All but the original nominees in the IIM societies have been granted membership on payments between Rs 25,000 and Rs 25 lakh," sources said. Though the Memorandum of Association (MOA) governing the func-

tioning of the societies has a clause for co-opting members in this fashion, it has to be done by framing bye-laws.

"There are no such bye-laws in the IIMs," a ministry official said.

In the IIMs' Alumni-based society for instance, the government believes that at least 135 of the 154 members have been joined by paying donations.

The ministry now realises it failed to exercise its veto over the past few hikes in the IIMs.

## B-School view



Summons from governors A number of IIM-A society says direction alone doesn't guarantee membership. Applications are scrutinised by Board of Governors

Fewer IIMs sources say over the years, number of new entrants in the donor category has tapered off

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