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Flight Lieutenant Shivangi Singh, India's first woman pilot to fly the Rafale, on the IAF tableau at the R-Day parade. *Praveen Khanna*

Rafale pilot to contingent commanders: Women officers steal the R-Day show

KRISHNA KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

THE ENTRY of women into the armed forces has been a slow process, one that has even required judicial intervention. But at the Republic Day parade on Rajpath Wednesday, women officers, still few in numbers, stole the show.

While several women officers led marching contingents, one of the highlights of the parade was the presence of the first

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Rajpath during the Republic Day parade. *Praveen Khanna*

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



about Russia's "muscle-flexing" and external intervention in national matters, New Delhi does not want to jeopardise its equation with Moscow.

Almost 60 per cent of India's military supplies are Russian-manufactured, a significant factor when Indian and Chinese troops continue to be in a stand-off on the eastern border.

At the same time, the US and Europe, which are pushing back against Russia over Ukraine, are both important partners from India's strategic calculus. Many US platforms have been used for reconnaissance and surveillance along the India-China border.

Winter clothing for 50,000

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At meet led by Shah, BJP reaches out to Jats, sends feeler to Jayant

Balyan: If issues with state, Centre here

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

LED BY Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the BJP Wednesday reached out to Jat leaders ahead of the first phase of the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, saying the Centre was always there for them even if they had "issues" with the state government.

The Jats form a substantial

Home Minister Amit Shah at the meeting with Jat leaders on Wednesday. *Express*

share of the population in the seats which go to polls on February 10, and the closed-door

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Russia-China warmth makes Delhi walk the tightrope on Ukraine

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

ON JANUARY 19, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman called up Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and they discussed "Russia's concerning military build-up on Ukraine's borders". However, Delhi is yet to issue an official statement on the matter, choosing to closely monitor the developments as of now.

Officials here said that with key strategic partners on both sides, any hasty moves may shirk the already tight diplomatic space Delhi has.

So while there is concern

about Russia's "muscle-flexing" and external intervention in national matters, New Delhi does not want to jeopardise its equation with Moscow.

Almost 60 per cent of India's military supplies are Russian-manufactured, a significant factor when Indian and Chinese troops continue to be in a stand-off on the eastern border.

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Winter clothing for 50,000

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DECISION 2022

MAJITHIA TO TAKE ON SIDHU IN AMRITSAR
CONGRESS ADrift IN U.P., LEADERS HEAD FOR THE EXIT
PAGE 9

Padma Shri at 93, kalari ace says will teach 'as long as I am alive'

SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

REPUBLIC DAY began like all other mornings for Sankaranarayana Menon, the 93-year-old kalaripayattu exponent who has been conferred the Padma Shri for his contributions to martial arts. As has been the routine for as long as he could remember, he woke up at 5 am, bathed in the family pond, offered prayers at the courtyard



Sankaranarayana Menon

temple and stepped onto the *kalari* (arena) in Kerala's Chavakkad where his students

waited for him, ready for three hours of gruelling training of body and mind.

There was a brief round of applause for his achievement, announced by the Government on Tuesday night, but no excess celebration. "I am obviously glad that the Government has recognised me. But it's not the end. I will continue teaching students as long as I am alive. It's my duty," he says, in a soft but clear voice.

These days, his body can't

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DU college sets up cow centre: 'Not just research, will give milk, curd to students'

PAGE 1
ANCHORSUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

IT'S KNOWN as one of Delhi University's premier institutions, ranked 14 for colleges under the Government's National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). But this year, Hansraj College's bio has a unique addition that has already sparked a buzz — a cow protection and research centre.

Called *Swami Dayanand Saraswati Gau-Samvardhan Anusandhan Kendra*, the centre has been started with one

The centre at Hansraj College has started with one cow. *Express*

cow and, according to principal Dr Rama, will be expanded "if the research that is done proves to be useful and beneficial".

According to the principal, the centre will not just do "research on various aspects of the cow". It will also provide "pure

milk and ghee" for the students, and for the monthly "havan" (prayer ritual) conducted on the campus, she said.

"Ours is a DAV Trust college, and its base is the Arya Samaj. In line with that tradition, we hold a *havan* on the first day of every month, which may be attended by all teaching and non-teaching staff and students. During that (*havan*), we felicitate all the people who have their birthdays that month. For this, every month, we need to go to the market to buy the things that we need to offer to the flame, such as pure ghee. We can be self-sufficient now in this," she said.

Currently, the cow centre is an enclosure located by the

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NON TECHNICAL POPULAR CATEGORIES POSTS

Protests in UP, Bihar; Railways suspends recruitment exams

Sets up panel to hold talks with protesters

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

AMID VIOLENT protests for the third day in Bihar, where four empty coaches of a stationary train were set on fire in Gaya, and intelligence inputs that protesters were being mobilised via social media in other states too, the Ministry of Railways on Wednesday decided to put its recruitment drives on hold.

Reaching out to protesters, the Railways announced a high-level committee, headed by Deepak Peter Gabriel, principal executive director of industrial relations in the ministry, to engage with them. However, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw emphasised that the ministry's "employment notification has legal sanctity". So for those who have grievances, we will have to find a solution and deal with the matter with sensitivity," he said.

The climbdown came a day after the national transporter warned that job aspirants found involved in vandalism and "unlawful activities" while protesting "will be liable for police action as well as lifetime debarment from obtaining Railway job".

And of the 7 lakh shortlisted "applications", the two Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs) from Uttar Pradesh (Prayagraj and Gorakhpur) account for



A coach torched by aspirants at Gaya junction, Wednesday.

Bihar protests enter 3rd day, UP suspends 6 cops for student crackdown

Over 29% applicants from UP, Bihar

ASAD REHMAN & SANTOSH SINGH
LUCKNOW, PATNA, JANUARY 26

PROTESTERS SAY the system of one screening test across five pay grades is designed to favour those with higher qualification.

For instance, a graduate cannot be stopped from appearing for an exam where the minimum qualification is 10+2.

Candidates have also criticised the marking system.

EXPLAINED Common test a key issue

FACTORS SUCH AS NUMBER OF PHYSICAL FILES CREATED, COMPLAINTS RAISED AND CLEARED PER MONTH, AND INDUSTRY INTERACTIONS ORGANISED WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERED IN THE RANKINGS.

"The idea is to discourage creation of physical files for various obvious reasons. Government ministries at central level must accelerate the adoption of digital tools in their day-to-day work," an official said.

The parameters would fall into two buckets. Apart from these "important" parameters, there are also a set of "desirable"

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Govt plans ranking for ministries on ease of doing business

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

THE UNION government will likely come out with a system to rank ministries on facilitating ease of doing business by marking them on parameters such as single-window clearance of projects, time taken to clear files per department and the use of Digital India tools, among others, sources said.

These rankings, a senior government official said, are being prepared in extensive consultation with senior industrialists, industry bodies, trade and policy groups as well as representatives of startups and are likely to be announced shortly.

Apart from the number of single-window project clearances being facilitated by a ministry, the other parameters include the time taken for these approvals, the number of permits required to set up a new unit and the total percentage of budgetary allocation spent.

Factors such as number of physical files created, complaints raised and cleared per month, and industry interactions organised will also be considered in the rankings.

"The idea is to discourage creation of physical files for various obvious reasons. Government ministries at central level must accelerate the adoption of digital tools in their day-to-day work," an official said.

The parameters would fall into two buckets. Apart from these "important" parameters, there are also a set of "desirable"

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FROM PAGE ONE

UP suspends

1,06,579; Bihar's two RRBs (Patna and Muzaffarpur) for 27,373; and Rajasthan RRB (Ajmer) for 35,481.

In Bihar, where protests entered the third day on Wednesday, a group of protesters said they expected at least 1 lakh to qualify from the state, which accounts for 1,368 vacancies.

Protesters torched four empty coaches of a stationary train in Gaya and blocked rail traffic between Gaya and Jehanabad. Protests were also held in Patna, Bhagalpur and Sasaram.

While no fresh protests were reported in poll-bound UP, six police personnel were suspended a day after a crackdown on a group of students who allegedly tried to stop a train in Prayagraj on Tuesday. A case has also been lodged against three named and 1,000 unidentified protesters for rioting and stone-throwing.

Following the protest in Prayagraj, purported video clips of policemen entering the rooms of students by breaking down their doors, and beating them up were circulated on social media. Targeting the BJP government, both the Congress and SP tweeted about the alleged police action.

Prayagraj SSP Ajay Kumar said the suspended police personnel would face departmental action for "using unnecessary force". They have been identified as Inspector Rakesh Bharti, Sub-Inspectors Shailendra Yadav and Kapil Kumar Chahal, and Constables Mohammad Arif, Ache Lal, Devesh Kumar.

"On January 25, around 1,000 rioters gathered at the railway station. Police had received information that the railway track would be blocked, and a train engine set on fire... The students were made to leave the place... Some rioters among the students threw stones at police. After that, they went and hid in the lodges. The police team went to look for them and rounded up several of them. Two prime suspects, identified as Pradeep Yadav and Mukesh Yadav, were arrested," the SSP said.

"You may have seen a video where some police officials are using unnecessary force. They have been identified, suspended and will face strict action. On the other hand, the rioters who mingled with the students have been booked under 13 serious charges. Three have been named while around 1,000 are unidentified. Two have been arrested and are facing action. Another accused who spread rumours on social media and incited students has been identified as Rajendra Sachan, he will be arrested soon," he said.

"It has come to light that Rajendra Sachan is associated with and funded by some outfits or parties. He played the main role," he said, adding that investigations were underway to find out "which party and who was funding them".

The Indian Express spoke to

some students who attended the protest. "There was a protest call... Around 1,000 protesters gathered, and a decision was taken to stop the train. When we moved ahead, police lathicharged us, and some protesters threw stones at policemen. There was tension, and the students dispersed. Then, police entered around 10-12 lodges and beat up students," said Satyam Kushwaha, an MA student.

"They entered our rooms after breaking the doors. Innocent students were beaten up and abused," said another student who did not want to be named.

When asked about the police action, UP ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said: "It was excessive and we have taken action.

Policemen have been suspended... There was no need for policemen to enter lodges and beat up students."

Facing Opposition attack, the BJP went into damage control mode with Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya saying the incident was "unfortunate". "The guilty policemen will face action. We appeal to students to be patient. The Opposition should not indulge in politics over this.

Those people who hid among students and indulged in rioting will face action after an investigation. Every student is our family," he tweeted.

Meanwhile, students have called a protest at Lucknow University on Thursday against the police action in Prayagraj.

In Bihar, where protests continued for the third day, a group of students gathered at the Gaya railway station on Wednesday morning and reportedly threw stones at policemen when asked to move away. They torched an empty coach of a stationary train. Two hours later, three more coaches of the same train were set on fire.

"Nobody was injured. We are trying to identify the troublemakers. We have deployed additional forces at the railway station and some other vital points. We are also trying to counsel students through media," said Gaya SSP Aditya Kumar.

On Tuesday, an empty coach of a train was torched at Ara railway station.

Another group of students blocked movement of trains between Patna and Gaya via Jehanabad for nearly five hours. Similar protests were reported from Patna, Bhagalpur and Sasaram.

"We have identified some coaching institutions which provoked students to protest. We are also keeping a watch on some other coaching centres," said Patna District Magistrate Chandrashekhar Singh.

"We have booked six coaching centres. We have arrested eight persons (including some officials of coaching centres) in this regard," said Patna Senior Superintendent of Police, Manavjit Singh Dhillon.

The Indian Express spoke to

Protests in UP, Bihar; Railways suspends recruitment exams

Sources said the decision was taken in view of the worsening law and order situation in Bihar. "The situation was just going out of our hands and spilling over to other parts of India. They were mobilising through Telegram, WhatsApp and other social media," said a senior Railway official.

The immediate concern, according to sources, was the protest in Prayagraj on Tuesday, with the political dispensation fearing that the discontent would spread in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh. A bulk of the job aspirants are reported to be from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Bihar and Rajasthan.

The current recruitment drive for Non Technical Popular Categories (NTPC), for 35,281 vacant posts in various categories ranging from junior clerk, train assistant, guard, time-keeper to station master earlier this month, is at the centre of the ongoing protests.

The Railways had said that the number of qualifying candidates shortlisted for the next round would be 20 times the number of vacant posts. So, while over 7 lakh "applications"

were shortlisted, the actual number of candidates is around 3.84 lakh, as the same person may have been shortlisted for more than one post.

Of the 7 lakh shortlisted "applications", the two Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs) from Uttar Pradesh (Prayagraj and Gorakhpur) account for 1,06,579; Bihar's two RRBs (Patna and Muzaffarpur) for 27,373; and Rajasthan RRB (Ajmer) for 35,481.

Vaishnav's statement means that the 3.84 lakh candidates who qualified for the second round of the NTPC recruitment drive will remain qualified. A total of 1.25 crore candidates had appeared for the exam. The protesters are reported to be mainly candidates who could not qualify.

Addressing a press conference, Vaishnav said, "I urge the candidates to put forth their grievances formally. Our intention is to resolve this issue quickly. A committee has been formed and it will examine representations by the candidates."

He also urged protesters not to destroy public property. With 1.25 crore candidates

applying for these jobs, the Railways held a common test, called Computer Based Test-1 (CBT-1), between April-July 2020. The results were declared on January 14 this year. The second round of exams (CBT-2), as per "graded difficulty" wherein every level will have a separate exam, was scheduled to start from February 15.

Around 11,000 of these vacancies require 10+2 (Class 12 pass) as the minimum qualification. The rest are higher-pay posts that require graduation as the minimum qualification. The posts are spread across five pay grades—from level 2 to level 6.

The protesters are claiming that those with higher qualifications will get a shot at jobs meant for those with lower qualifications and spoil their chances. Sources said there is a possibility that some of the grievances, like the cut-offs being too high, may be looked into.

Individual Railway Recruitment Boards will reach out and create groups that include protesting candidates and those who qualified. "We will hear them out and also explain to them," said an official.

The ministry has also decided to suspend its Level 1 (Group D) recruitment drive as a pre-emptive measure. The ministry had decided to hold a two-stage exam, but had not mentioned this in its original notification, triggering protests.

Meanwhile, citing "inputs", the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has alerted some railway divisions that the Congress is supporting the agitation. In a letter to all four divisions of the West Bengal-based Eastern Railway on Tuesday, the zonal chief security commissioner said the party's National Students' Union of India had extended support to the "Rail Roko" by protesters on January 26.

"Inputs further indicate that activists from Indian National Congress may also support the movement," said the letter.

A top official of Eastern Railway said the RPF regularly issues such alerts, based on intelligence inputs from various agencies. He said there were fears that the agitation may spread to West Bengal.

The Congress spokesperson could not be reached for comment.

EXPRESS AUDIO

What RPN Singh's exit means for the Congress

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Today on the 3 Things podcast, we talk about whether Singh's exit will affect Congress' campaign in UP, and how the BJP is expected to benefit from it.

'Golden Arrows' Squadron in Ambala, stood on the deck of the IAF tableau as it rolled past the saluting base.

She was the second woman fighter pilot to participate in the Republic Day parade – the first was Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth who was on the IAF tableau last year.

From Varanasi, Singh joined the IAF in 2017 and belongs to its second batch of women fighter pilots. Initially commissioned to fly the MiG-21 Bison, Singh went through conversion training to fly the Rafale.

The Navy marching contingent was led by Lieutenant Commander Aanchal Sharma and also included Sub Lieutenant Avanthika Duraiswamy. Lieutenant Preeti and her colleague Lt Mayank Bhagour led the Indian Navy tableau.

Lieutenant Manisha Bohra led the Army Ordnance Corps contingent while the IAF contingent too had a woman officer -- Flight Lieutenant Imparnashree KY.

Women from the Border Security Force's Seema Bhawani motorcycle team displayed their skills, performing acrobatics and carrying a placard bearing the message of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

In the marching contingent of the Sashastra Seema Bal, the two Assistant Commandants were women officers.

The parade saw the largest flypast with 75 aircraft from all three services to mark 75 years of India's Independence. For the first time, viewers were given a glimpse of what the pilots of the aircraft see -- the pilot's view and cockpit's view were telecast.

A total of 24 tableaux were part of the parade including from the armed forces and the DRDO.

The Navy tableau was the first to come down Rajpath and had two main themes – one was a depiction of the 1946 naval uprising, and the other showcased "atmanirbarta" of the Navy, with a model of the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier which will be commissioned later this year and named INS Vikrant.

The IAF tableau, titled 'Indian Air Force, Transforming for the Future' had models of the MiG-21, Gnat – aircraft which played key roles in the victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war -- Light Combat Helicopter, Rafale and the Aslesha radar.

The DRDO showcased its major platforms titled 'Suite of Indigenously Developed Sensors, Weapons and Electronic Warfare Systems for LCA Tejas' and 'Air Independent Propulsion System' being developed for Navy submarines.

Padma Shri

take the rigours of demonstrating the intricate steps ("adavu") on a daily basis. So he restricts himself to reciting instructions in a metrical, singsong slang, almost like folk poetry, passed onto him by his forefathers.

Yet, Menon says he can still perform most steps "without breaking a bone or pulling a muscle". The movements are no longer muscle memory, but memory itself. "I have been practising those moves since I was seven, so it has become a part of me, like my mind. I feel I need to fine tune some of the steps," he says.

In the best traditions of kalaripayattu, Menon has a taut and supple frame. Says his son Krishnadas: "We don't look to build big muscles like pehewans, but rather compact muscles that give us flexibility and make reflexes stronger. My father had a perfect kalaripayattu physique and, in his prime, was known for his dexterous moves."

Times were different when Menon took baby steps in kalaripayattu in Tirur, now in Malappuram district. His family had commanders in the army of Vettathu Raja, a local chieftain. He was trained to fight, and not teach the combat art form. Those days, kalaripayattu practitioners were prosperous and powerful – even when fighting between the princely states reduced under British rule, they still flourished under royal patronage.

But the disintegration of princely states and the subsequent abolishing of royalty jeop-

ardised their livelihood. Soon, modern martial art forms such as karate and kung-fu started becoming popular in the state, and kalaripayattu lost its reach and resonance. There was romance in the art, but it did not keep the fire burning in the kitchen.

Menon and his family never gave up, though. "My father never thought of quitting. Neither did he quit his teaching nor make it expensive. Whatever the student could afford, is his guiding principle," says Krishnadas, who also heads the Kerala Kalaripayattu Association and is the go-to consultant for martial arts, an evergreen genre in the Malayalam film industry.

Upon the invitation of a pa-

tron, Menon shifted his base to Chavakkad in Thrissur district in 1957. Today, his school -- Vallabhatta Kalari, which follows the Kadathanadan tradition, with emphasis on footwork and body movements rather than armed combat -- has 137 students. The centre has also expanded with 17 branches outside the country, including in Brussels and Amsterdam, and twice as many in Kerala. There is interest from Punjab and Haryana, as well.

Krishnadas says the upturn of fortunes began with the tourism boom in the state. "In the mid-1980s, a man came from Belgium Igues, and after years of training under father, went home and opened a centre of his own. And then, more people began to come.

As a tradition, we permit only those who have trained under us to open branches anywhere in the world," he says.

Menon's sons are seasoned pros themselves, which allowed him to take a break from teaching.

But Unni Gurukkal, as Menon is fondly called, insists on teaching himself those who knock on the doors of his kalari. "It's not in our tradition to send them back. Those who come for knowledge shall get knowledge," he says.

The ancient martial art form has gone global, lost some of its feudal symbolism and association with bloodshed, and is now recognised as a sport in the country. And the Padma Shri is a recognition of this upward curve. But for Menon, award or not, all mornings will continue to begin in the same way they have for decades.

DU college

college gate for the men's hostel. But there's more to come. The principal says the college is working on a gobar gas plant, which can be supported by the centre.

"Apart from this, we can do research on various aspects of the cow. Another idea is that when the hostel opens, there can be pure milk and pure curd for the students," she said.

Delhi University officials are not sure if similar initiatives exist in other DU colleges. "I was not even aware of this particular project. It must be an initiative taken at the college's level," said Registrar Vilas Gupta.

But then, not everyone on campus is onboard.

The Hansraj College unit of the CPI(M)'s Students' Federation of India (SFI) has alleged that the cow centre has been set up on land earmarked for a women's hostel – the college currently has only a men's hostel.

"SFI Hansraj unconditionally condemns and protest the construction of a GauShala... at the very site which was reserved for a women's hostel whose construction has been on hold for many years now... We find it disgusting that our college administration prioritises the 'protection and promotion' of cows instead of struggling female students whose interests are being sidelined for such an absurd decision,"

read a statement issued by the Students' Federation of India.

Dr Rama, the principal, denies the SFI charge.

"In the first place, that area is too small for our plan for a hostel, which will accommodate at least 100 students. That site is not reserved for the hostel. We are going through many formalities to construct the hostel and are reworking the college's masterplan,

which will need to be approved by the municipal corporation," she said.

DEFENCE ESTATES OFFICE, AGRA CIRCLE, AGRA CANTT.

NOTICE INVITING E-AUCTION

E-auction for the disposal of scrap material (old disused material) at DEO Agra Circle

Online Bids (E-Auction) are invited on behalf of Defence Estates Officer, Agra Circle from the eligible Individuals/Agencies/Organization/Firms etc. for Awarding the Contract for the disposal of scrap material (old disused material) at DEO Agra Circle. Term of contract is for ten days from the date of issue of work order. Manual bids/ offers will not be accepted. The interested contractors/firms may visit the website <https://eauction.gov.in/eauction/>. No conditional bids will be accepted. The Defence Estates Officer Agra Circle reserves the right to cancel or withdraw the auction without any notice and the Defence Estates Officer Agra Circle decision in this regard will be final. Terms/Conditions, eligibility criteria and connected details can be seen in the website - <https://eauction.gov.in/eauction/>. Clarification needed, if any may be enquired/clarified from the office on any working day through telephone 0562-2225457.

Sl. No.	Activity	Date	Time in IST
i)	Date of Publication	27.01.2022	At 10:00 HRS
ii)	Start Date and Time for downloading of auction documents	27.01.2022	At 10:00 HRS
iii)	Submission Start date and time	27.01.2022	At 10:00 HRS
iv)	Submission End date and time	16.02.2022	At 13:00 HRS
v)	Payment/Approval Start Date and time	16.02.2022	At 14:00 HRS
vi)	Payment/Approval End Date and time	17.02.2022	At 17:00 HRS
vii)	Auction Start		

CORONA ISN'T OVER REMEMBER TO FOLLOW ALL COVID PRECAUTIONS



Wear a mask properly
Wear your mask before
stepping out of the house.



Wash your hands frequently
Wash your hands regularly with
soap or use sanitizer for atleast
20 seconds.



Practice social distancing
Avoid going to crowded places,
and remember to maintain a
minimum distance of 6 feet.

"According to experts, Omicron spreads very rapidly, but there is no need to panic. Continue to wear your mask and remember to follow all covid norms."

- Arvind Kejriwal



VACCINATIONS IN LAST 24 HOURS
70,783OMICRON CASES
549DELHI: TOTAL CASES
18,23,555Total HOSPITAL BEDS
15,420Vacant
13,208

	Jan 25	Jan 26
Cases	1,046	710
Deaths	1	2
GURGAON	2,030	2,261
Deaths	0	1

PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: 2,137
OXYGEN SUPPORT
VENTILATOR SUPPORTICU BEDS
4,451Total Cases
38,315*Tests
57,132

	Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Jan 25	6,028	9,127	31	57,132
Jan 26	7,498	11,164	29	70,804
Total	38,315*	17,46,972	25,710	346,47,550

Total active cases in Delhi

BRIEFLY

18-year-old boy stabbed to death, two arrested

New Delhi: An 18-year-old boy was stabbed to death by two youths while he was trying to save his friend from an attack. Police said they charged the accused under sections of murder. The accused and the victim knew each other. The incident took place in Northwest Delhi's Adarsh Nagar on Monday. The deceased has been identified as Gulzar. A group of boys were in a park when the two accused, aged 19 and 21, came and picked up a fight with Gulzar's friend Suraj, police said.

How many fined for 'victimising' trees, HC asks

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has directed the Conservator of Forests to inform the court about the number of cases where fines were imposed on people for 'victimising' trees. The court has also sought information about the amount collected from those penalised and status of the pending complaints.

Vaccination daily average falls in Delhi

New Delhi: With high vaccine coverage in the city, Delhi has seen fewer immunisations over the last week. Over 72,800 shots were administered daily on average over the last seven days in comparison to over 132,400 shots in the previous corresponding period. ENS

Fog formation in Dec-Jan lowest since 1991-92: IMD

New Delhi: The capital saw foggy conditions – with visibility levels below 1,000 metres – for just 252 hours in the December-January period this season, which is the lowest since 1991-92, according to the India Meteorological Department. The December-January period is known for peak fog formation over north India. The capital witnessed foggy conditions for 75 hours over 22 days in December 2021, which was the lowest in 40 years. Normally, the city sees 288 hours of fog over 26 days in the month. PTI

CAPITAL REPORTS 7,498 CASES

DDMA to take call today on Covid restrictions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

WITH DAILY Covid cases as well as positivity rate gradually dipping in the capital, curbs such as the weekend curfew and odd-even scheme for markets and malls could soon be lifted, said sources Wednesday.

The capital recorded 7,498 cases on Wednesday at a positivity rate of 10.59%, significantly lower than this wave's peak but higher than the figures on Monday and Tuesday. Delhi also recorded 29 fatalities Wednesday, taking January's total toll to 603, which is the highest since the 740 deaths reported in June when the delta variant-driven wave in the

city was waning.

"There is a meeting tomorrow. Weekend curfew, odd-even and opening of all shops in the markets and malls are expected to be lifted from next week but the exact dates will be discussed in the meeting by the CM and the L-G. Cinema halls and restaurants may also be allowed to function at 50 per cent capacity," the source said.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) will hold a meeting on Thursday at 12.30 pm to discuss Covid restrictions and the ongoing situation in the city. The meeting will be attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, DDMA Chairman and Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal and other



The L-G had rejected the Delhi government's proposal to lift the weekend curfew and odd-even scheme at markets and malls. Archive

As parents seek school reopening, Sisodia says much needed for well-being of students

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

FOLLOWING A meeting with a delegation of parents demanding reopening of schools on priority, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said the Delhi government will recommend it in the DDMA meeting scheduled for Thursday.

"Over the past two years, school children's lives have been confined to their rooms. Instead of going to schools and spending time on playgrounds, all their activities now take place only on mobile phones. The pandemic-induced school closures have not only affected their studies but also their mental health. During Covid, our priority was children's safety. But since various researches have now found that

Covid is not very harmful to kids, it is important to reopen schools, as now is the time for exams and related preparations," he said.

The delegation of parents he met on Wednesday had submitted a petition requesting the opening of schools and anganwadi centres for physical classes on priority as and when Delhi begins lifting its current set of Covid restrictions.

As many as 1,607 people, including doctors, drivers, lawyers, shopkeepers and homemakers, had signed the petition addressed to Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain, Union Department of School Education & Literacy secretary Anita Karwal, Delhi chief secretary Vijay Dev, National Commission



Deputy CM Manish Sisodia

to respect our children's constitutional rights to education, health, and life. As you lift Omicron-related restrictions, schools and anganwadis must be the first to open (for all classes). Attendance can be subject to parental consent. SOPs must be reviewed and updated in a timely manner based on current science – they must be realistic in order to restore normalcy to our children's lives and education," it states.

With the onset of the third Covid wave, schools were shut again on December 29 and were allowed to open for primary students for 18 days so far since the beginning of the pandemic.

In Maharashtra, schools opened for all classes including pre-primary this week. Apart from substantial learning losses, the petition also points to the

physical and mental health issues, risk of social isolation and developmental issues in children.

"Any decision requires an assessment of risks and benefits. Covid-19 is not the only risk to our children; the definition of 'health' must be expanded to mean more than the mere absence of Covid-19. The harms of prolonged school closures significantly outweigh the benefits. Experts have also concluded that younger children are at very low risk of severe or fatal Covid-19 and vaccination is not a prerequisite for opening schools..." it states.

This was echoed in a tweet posted by Sisodia after the meeting: "I agree with the parents' demands. We closed schools when it was not safe but excessive caution is now harming them. A generation of children will be left behind if we do not open schools now."

Rapid antigen tests proving more efficient in current omicron wave

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

WITH A bulk of Covid-19 infections in Delhi being caused by the new omicron variant, doctors have reported that the rapid antigen test is proving more efficient at picking up infections as compared to the previous wave.

Doctors in the capital have reported a positivity rate of 50-70% when symptomatic and contacts of positive cases were tested using the test, which is faster but less accurate than RT-PCR.

This, the doctors say, is likely because of the omicron variant preferring to replicate in the upper airways from where the samples are collected.

"During the current wave, we have seen that many of the people are testing positive on the rapid antigen test itself; many more as compared to the delta variant. We had to conduct confirmatory RT-PCR tests during the last wave. At present, we still do confirmatory tests for people going into surgery," said Dr Suresh Kumar, medical director, Lok Nayak hospital, which was the first government hospital designated for the treatment of patients with omicron infection.

The RT-PCR test, or other molecular tests such as CB-NAAT and TrueNat, are considered the gold standard for diagnosing Covid-19 as they amplify the viral genome from the patient samples to check whether a person has the infection. The rapid antigen tests, on the other hand, just test for viral particles in the patient sample without amplifying it. This results in higher false negatives when tested using a rapid antigen test.

For instance, at the peak of the surge in cases in Delhi in November 2020, when the peak RT-PCR positivity rate stood at 30.2%, the positivity rate with rapid antigen tests stood at 8.39%. A break-up of the positivity rate of RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen Test is not immediately available for both the delta and the current wave.

"At the time of hospitalisation (for patients with ailments other than Covid-19), we are using rapid antigen tests and the positivity rate is as high as 40 to 50%", said Dr Sumit Ray, medical superintendent, Holy Family hospital.

Dr Sandeep Buddhiraja, group medical director, Max healthcare, said, "The omicron variant reproduces well in the upper respiratory tract in contrast to the delta variant that affected the lungs faster. This means that patients with omicron infection have a higher viral load in their throat and nasal passage from where the sample is collected, so most patients test positive on the rapid antigen test itself."

He added, "If we test those with fever and other Covid-19 like symptoms or close contacts of patients who have tested positive, the RAT positivity rate stands at about 70%."

A study from the United States that compared RAT and RT-PCR positivity in 30 persons during their omicron wave in December found that the RAT test turned positive nearly three days after the RT-PCR test turned positive. "RAT has been a very useful screening tool this time," said Dr Buddhiraja.

False allegations of sexual harassment trivialise offence: HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

twist him into withdrawing a complaint which had been filed by his wife against the complainant's son.

The accused and the complainant are neighbours who have long-pending disputes, mainly pertaining to the residential property, the petition filed before the court reveals.

Opposing the petition seeking quashing of the FIR, police argued before the court that the accused and his wife are habitual complainants and that both of them have filed several complaints regarding the construction that has taken place in their neighbourhood.

The accused was dismissed from an RWA post for abusing his positions and the complaints were solely filed against the residents as he was angry about his removal, police said.

Justice Prasad said the contents of the FIR are sketchy and are void of any specifics on offences alleged against the accused.

Police launch e-FIR system for house theft, burglary cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

INA bid to save the public's time, Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana has launched an e-FIR application system for online registration of house theft and burglary cases. Currently, there is a similar system in place for lodging e-FIR in cases of theft of vehicles, simple theft and non-cognizable report, which was launched by the former police chief B S Bassi in 2015.

In an order Tuesday, Asthana stated: "Series of web applications have been developed by Delhi Police for the total transformation of the system to enable complainants to register FIR and receive a copy of the same, instantly, without going to a police station. An e-FIR application for registration of theft cases is being activated for registration of e-FIR in the crime categories of house theft and burglary from January 26, 2022. This activation will make the lives of citizens simpler through hassle-free reg-

istration, facilitate speedy investigation and systematic documentation."

"Immediate online lodging of the FIR for the property stolen in Delhi through web facilitates investigation officers to complete investigation steps and documentation and timely disposal of cases to reduce pendency at police stations and courts," he added.

The work on the online FIR application has been going on for the past several months and technical and legal aspects have been discussed with departments. In a recent evening meeting, the commissioner asked the Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Devesh Chandra Srivastava and Joint Commissioner of Police (Cyber and Technology) Prem Nath to examine if the offence of burglary or house theft can be added in the crime and criminal tracking network and systems (CCTNS) module so that such cases can also be registered through e-FIRs.

"The activation of the application will be implemented on

the occasion of Republic Day 2022 celebrations... The application will apply a section of law

for the registration of FIR with the combination of choices in the dropdown menu for the place of incident, type of incident, time of the incident, number of suspects, etc..." the Delhi police chief said.

The citizens can lodge an e-FIR on three conditions, Asthana said. "Offence should have been committed within the jurisdiction of NCT of Delhi, accused should not be known to the complainant or caught red-handed, and no one should have been injured or medico-legal case (MLC) made in the incident."

Asthana also directed all IOs to contact the complainant within 24 hours, conduct an investigation, inform senior officers, and update the complainant with the progress of the cases. "He has also directed all deputy commissioners to ask their division and beat officers to meet with the complainant within 24 hours of the registration of e-FIR," an officer said.

Currently, people have to exit and walk over a kilometre or take a rickshaw to reach the railway station or bus stand. Once the RRTS is completed, they can avail the interchange facility without exiting the premises.

At Jangpura, to facilitate public access to the RRTS station, a four-lane underpass has been constructed from Mathura Road towards the station. Work on the other stations of Delhi is also progressing rapidly.

NCRTC has completed about 80% of the foundation work of the elevated section. More than 1,200 piers have been constructed on a 30-km stretch, out of 82 km. About 16-km of the viaduct has been constructed, most of which is located on the priority section," said the official. The priority section starting from Sahibabad to Duhai Depot in Ghaziabad will have a total of 5 stations and are nearing completion.

Besides, the NCRTC is also constructing a 1.35-km-long bridge over the Yamuna in Delhi, which is expected to be completed by June 2023.

The length of the bridge over the river will be around 626 metres and the rest will be over the khadar area on both sides. It will have 32 piers; spans over these piers will be 44 metres. Work on laying the foundation for the bridge is underway.

New Ashok Nagar, which is an elevated station, will provide interchange facilities with the nearby Metro station. At Anand Vihar, preparations are on to launch a tunnel boring machine to construct underground parts of the corridor, said the official.

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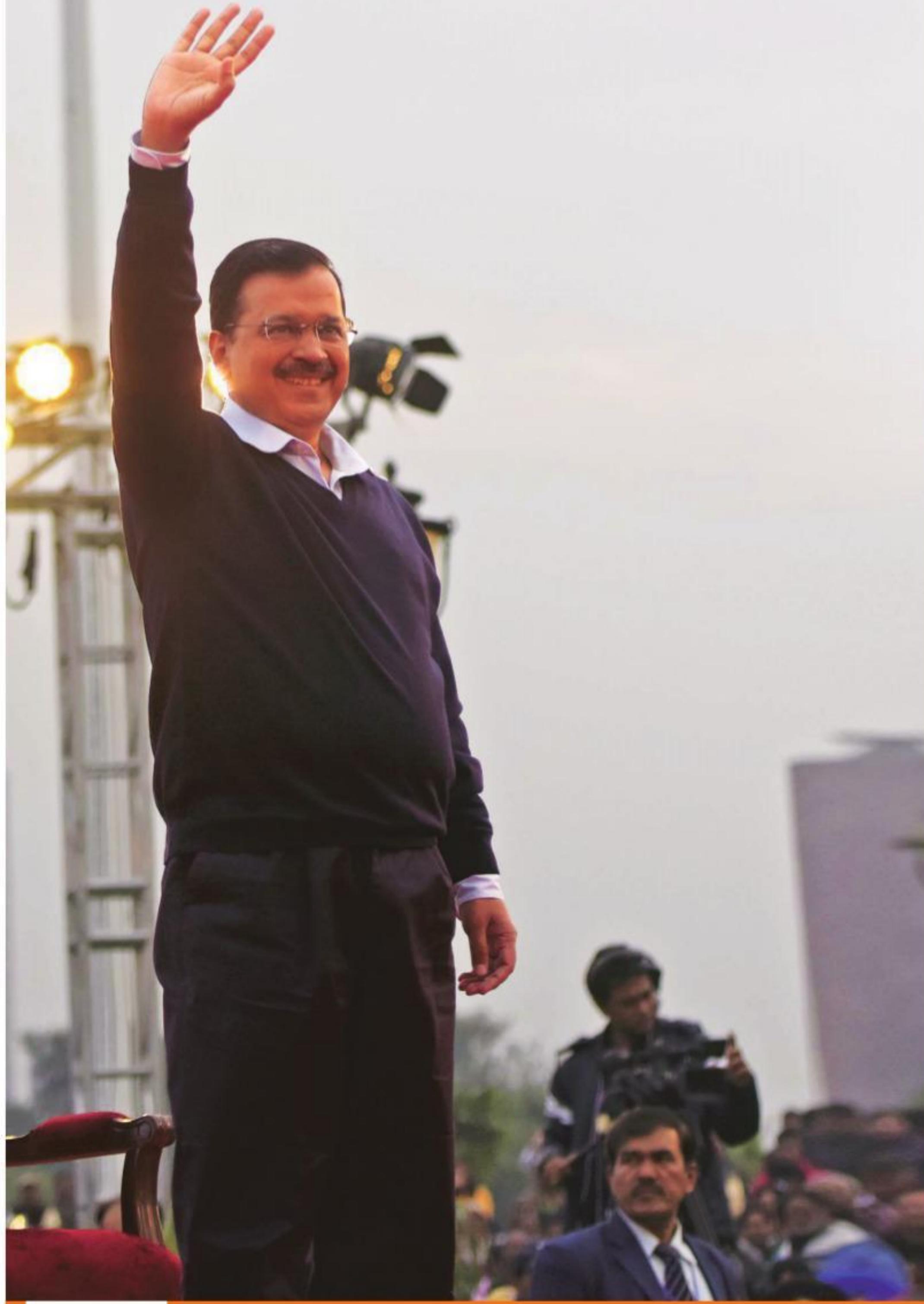
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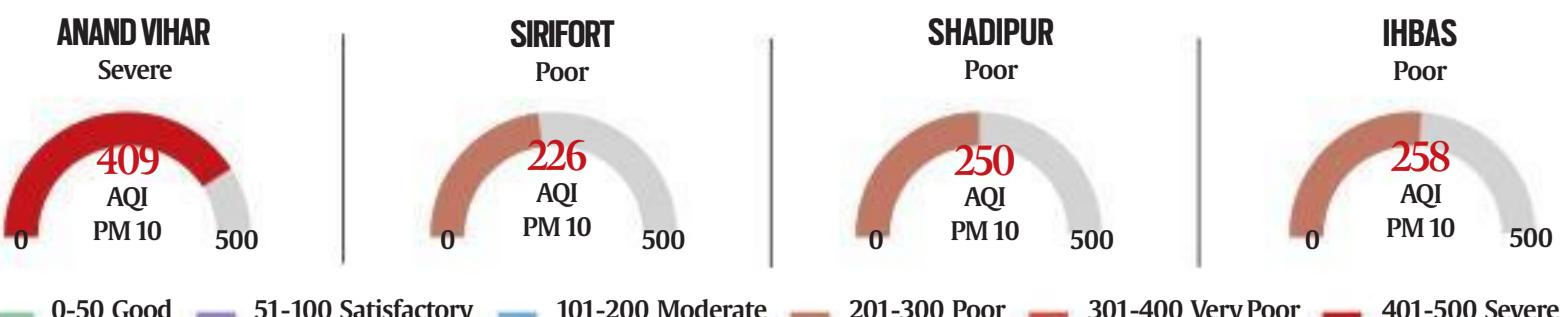
75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE LOCATIONS HOISTING THE TRICOLOUR

To celebrate the 75th year of independence, the tricolour will be hoisted at 75 locations

- The locations where the tricolour will be hoisted -

1. Delhi Govt. Officers Flat, Haiderpur
2. Govt. Co-ed Sr. Secondary School, Saraswati Vihar
3. Keshav Mahavidyalaya, Pitampura
4. Sarvodaya Co-ed Sr. Secondary School, ZP Block, Pitampura
5. Timarpur Crossing, BD Estate
6. GTB Police Chowki, Kingsway Camp
7. Model Town Metro Station
8. Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Kakrola Rd
9. Integrated Institute of Technology, Dwarka
10. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, B-3 Jwalaheri, Paschim Vihar
11. Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Rohini
12. Sarvodaya Sr. Secondary School, Sector-7, Rohini
13. Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies, Rohini
14. Sundar Vihar, Near Radison Hotel, Paschim Vihar
15. Pitampura Outer Ring Road, near Madhuban Chowk
16. Indra Gandhi Hospital, Dwarka
17. Dabri Mod, Ambedkar Chowk
18. Palam Dabri Marg, Dabri
19. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Madipur, Rohini Sec 9
20. Senior Secondary School, A-6 Block, Paschim Vihar
21. Vikaspuri, Near Flyover Pillar no. 10
22. Dwarka Court
23. B Block, Ramesh Nagar
24. Block C, Naraina, Beside Naraina Flyover, Ring Rd
25. Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Near BRO Headquarter, Ring Road
26. Roop Nagar Chowk
27. Ambedkar park, Jahangirpuri
28. Mall Road, Gol Chakkar, Near Azadpur Metro Station
29. Rajghat
30. IP Estate, Near Indian Oil Petrol Pump
31. Near Monastery Market, Civil Lines
32. Shantivan
33. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, East Vinod Nagar, Mayur Vihar
34. Mayur Vihar Ph 2 near Canara Bank
35. Opposite Akshardham Mandir, Near Yamuna Bank
36. School of Excellence, Khichripur, Mayur Vihar
37. Indra Gandhi Stadium, ITO
38. Signature Bridge
39. Ring Road, Swasthya Vihar, Laxmi Nagar
40. Apsara Border
41. Parmanand Special Surgery Hospital, Yamuna Bazaar
42. Vidhan Sabha
43. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Tuglakabad
44. Senior Secondary School, Badarpur
45. Senior Secondary School, Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, Badarpur
46. GBSS, Madanpur Khadar
47. Kalkaji Mandir, Kalkaji
48. Dhaula Kuan Enclave 2, Delhi Cantt
49. Mahatama Gandhi Marg, Dhaula Kuan
50. Nelson Mandela marg
51. PWD Park, Sheikh Sarai
52. AIIMS Round About
53. Rao Tularam Marg Corner, Outer Ring Road
54. DSOI, Dhaula Kuan
55. Girls Sr. Secondary School, Ambica Vihar, Paschim Vihar
56. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Jwalapuri, Paschim Vihar
57. Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Nikhil Vihar, Nangloi
58. Sr. Secondary School, JJ Colony, Nangloi
59. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Adhyapak Nagar, Ranholi
60. Mukandpur Gol Chakkar (Ring Road)
61. Wazirpur Industrial Area, Prem Bari Road
62. Prem Bari Pul Intersection, Ashok Vihar
63. Rajiv Gandhi Stadium
64. Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Nangloi Sultanpuri, Road
65. Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Nilothi Extn, Nangloi
66. Pillar no 102 Dhaula Kuan
67. Ghumerhera Bus Stand, Jhuljhuli
68. Darulla Border
69. Hasan Pur, Najafgarh
70. Khaira Village, Devtawala Mandir
71. Pandwanal Kalan, Najafgarh, Dwarka
72. Najafgarh Dauralla Rd, Kharkhari Nagar
73. Dhansa Bus Stand, Najafgarh
74. Mitraun Village, Najafgarh
75. Jharoda Border, Najafgarh Bahadurgarh Road





SCENES FROM RAJPATH

The Republic marches on

Freedom struggle to sporting spirit, state tableaux focus on past and present, with eye on future

KRISHNA KUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A TOTAL of 24 tableaux were part of the Republic Day parade, including a dozen from states and union territories, nine from departments of the Union Government, and three from the Armed Forces and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

Meghalaya was the first state to present its tableau, showing the importance of women-led cooperative societies and self-help groups, with bamboo and cane handicrafts, as it celebrated its 50th year of statehood.

Karnataka, too, highlighted traditional handicrafts, calling itself the "cradle of traditional handicrafts", and showcasing 16 artefacts like inlay carving, lacquerware toys and bronze statues, possessing the geographical indication (GI) tag.

Gujarat, like many others, highlighted the freedom movement, but through the role of the tribal population. It showcased the incident of the military killing around 1,200 people in March 1922 as Bhil tribes from Paal and Dadhwav villages gathered to protest against the land revenue system, under the leadership of Motilal Tejawat.

Punjab also brought out the state's "immense contribution" during the freedom movement, with Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Jajgar leading from the front.

While Goa showed symbols of its heritage, Haryana had a tableau with many sportsmen from the state on a "victory chariot", carrying the national flag. The idea was to highlight that though it occupies only 1.3 per cent of the country's landmass, and 2.09 per cent of the population, sportsmen from the state have brought maximum medals for the country in various international sporting events, including the Olympics.



Socially distant event sees 6,000 in attendance

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A FLYPAST with 75 aircraft, women officers performing stunts on bikes and a tableau with technology illustrating the 'metaverse' were among highlights at Rajpath as thousands watched the Republic Day parade.

Only 6,000 people were allowed and seats were placed a few metres apart to maintain social distancing.

Security agencies remained on high alert as intel was received about the possibility of terror attacks. And with the virus threat looming, testing booths, vaccination checking points and thermal screening centres were set up at all entries and exits.

Making an entry back into the parade was the motorcycle stunt show, cancelled last year in view of the surge in Covid cases. This year, women from the Border Security Force took the lead.

The audience cheered as the Seema Bhawani motorcycle team performed, especially when an officer held a magazine with the cover 'Women Power' on it.

The ceremony started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying homage to martyrs at the National War Memorial.

The parade included contingents of the Army, police teams and National Cadet Corps. A total of 24 tableaux participated.

In a first, a Lok Adalat tableau

by the Ministry of Law and Justice was presented. Named 'Ek Mutthi Asman', it showed the legal system helping different sections of society.

The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship presented a tableau with the theme 'Vedas to Metaverse'. While the front part of the tableau showed gurus and Vedas, the other portion had LED screens and digital books showing videos of innovation in the field with robotics, augmented reality and metaverse.

The ceremony was held at the revamped Central Vista ground. The red sandstone walkways, bridges, bigger lawn space, cleaner parks and bigger parking spaces are the new additions. However, some portion of the land is still not paved and work is yet to be completed.

Spectators said they wanted to bring their children but couldn't because they weren't vaccinated. Uday Narain Ojha (65), a resident of Delhi Cantt, visited with his wife, daughter and son-in-law.

"I loved the Indian Air Force parade and tableaus. We wish children were allowed here because the performance by dance groups and bikers shouldn't be missed. This was my first time. The Rafale aircraft were especially amazing," he said.

Kulwant Kaur, a government school principal, and her daughter Gul, said the Meghalaya tableau was their favourite.



In the Republic Day parade, 75 special aircraft were displayed. Praveen Khanna



The tableaux included a dozen from states and UTs, nine from departments of the Union Government, and three from the Armed Forces and Defence Research and Development Organisation. Praveen Khanna

Song, dance and art as cultural diversity is put on full display

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

AS INDIA celebrates Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav – the 75th year as an independent nation – culture played a leading role in the Republic Day parade.

The Parade, held under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence every year, also had the active participation of the Ministry of Culture this time. As the nodal ministry for Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, it organised Vande Bharatam in collaboration with the MoD as a countrywide dance competition, the winners of which got to perform at Rajpath as part of the main parade.

The Vande Bharatam Nitya Utsav saw participation in four categories: classical, folk, tribal and fusion/contemporary. A total of 480 dancers were selected from 3,870 in the all-India dance competition.

The musical piece for the 12-minute performance was composed by Grammy Award-winning musician Ricky Kej, in collaboration with Oscar contender tabla player Bickram Ghosh.

The performers were trained by four renowned choreographers, the Ministry of Culture said. These include Kathak dancer Rani Khanam, along with Maiytree Pahari, Tejaswini Sathe, and Santosh Nair, who trained 36 teams of dancers from different states.

In an open gallery on either side of Rajpath, the National

Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) showcased gigantic scrolls, each more than 750 metres long, painted by over 500 artists from across India. "The idea was to celebrate the unsung heroes, many of whom we have forgotten or don't know much about," said Adwaita Gadanayak, Director General of the NGMA.

Largely painted during art camps held over the last few months in Odisha and Chandigarh, apart from portraits and figurative narratives, the scrolls also reflect traditional art genres such as Pattachitra, Talapatra Chitra, Manjusha, Madhubani and Patua.

The scrolls also refer to the artwork in the Constitution, with margins on the panels inspired by the artwork of Nandalal Bose and his associates, who illustrated the handcrafted document. Culture Secretary Govind Mohan said that the scrolls will be taken to different parts of the country and exhibited there as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The Ministry of Culture's float is also a sign of things to come. As the country celebrated Subhas Chandra Bose's 125th birth anniversary between January 23, 2021 and January 23, 2022, the Ministry's float last year was dedicated to Bose. This year, as a 53-member committee was formed under Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently to mark Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary, the Ministry's float was dedicated to the life and times of the spiritual leader.

DCP wins 11th President's Medal for Gallantry

New Delhi: From heading a team in the Batla House encounter to busting the terror group of Indian Mujahideen, Delhi Police's Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav Tuesday received the 11th President's Medal for Gallantry for arresting two persons who had links with banned terror group Babbar Khalsa International. He has the highest number of President's medals for Gallantry in any force in the country.

The latest medal was bagged by the officer for an operation that was carried out in September 2020. Yadav took to Twitter and wrote, "With the blessings of Balaji, I am happy to share that I have been awarded

the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service. ACP Jasbir Singh and SI Ravi Tushir have been awarded Police Medal for Gallantry. ENS



Day parades, and has been at the top of the PBG team, considered the most senior regiment of the Indian Army. Guests cheered from the stands as top dignitaries met Virat and the Prime Minister patted him. On Army Day, January 15, Virat was awarded the Chief of Show Staff commendation for showcasing exceptional service and abilities for decades.

According to the Ministry of Defence officials, Virat is the first horse to receive a COAS commendation. Commandant Colonel Anup Tiwari accepted the commendation. Virat has

worked with several presidents through his career, and is known for its patience and agility. "It has been the most trusted steed over the years and was actively involved in Republic Day and Beating Retreat parades. Despite his old age, it performs very well and is quick. We call him a charger," said an official. Virat is

a Hanoverian horse, a breed that originates from Germany and is used mainly for competitive sports events. It was inducted into the PBG in 2003.

On Wednesday, Virat and 200 other horses first escorted the President to Rajpath and later back to Rashtrapati Bhavan with other troops, bodyguards and vehicles. Officials said the ceremonial escort is led by horses that have to be a minimum of 15.5 hands height. The horses are bred by Remount Veterinary Corps and looked after by 44 Military Veterinary hospital.

In an open gallery on either side of Rajpath, the National

AFTER SEEING 13 REPUBLIC DAY PARADES

Dark horse retires after parade amid a grand farewell

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

AS REPUBLIC Day celebrations came to an end at Delhi's Rajpath, one of the President's Bodyguards (PBG) was the centre of attention. The guard was none other than an elite dark-bay coloured horse named Virat, who retired soon after the parade.

President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh bid farewell to the horse, who has attended 13 Republic

Day parades, and has been at the top of the PBG team, considered the most senior regiment of the Indian Army. Guests cheered from the stands as top dignitaries met Virat and the Prime Minister patted him. On Army Day, January 15, Virat was awarded the Chief of Show Staff commendation for showcasing exceptional service and abilities for decades.

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In an open gallery on either side of Rajpath, the National



I HEREBY DECLARE



MOVABLE ASSETS	₹42,09,018
Self:	₹35,95,643
Husband (deceased):	₹6,13,375
IMMOVABLE ASSETS	
Self:	₹3,10,00,000
LOANS	
Self:	₹5,69,119
Husband:	Nil
TOTAL ASSETS	₹3,52,09,018
CRIMINAL CASES:	
PROFESSION:	
EDUCATION:	

HASHTAG POLITICS



• What's on the Badals' plate?

SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal posted a picture with his wife and former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal 'relishing chana-kulcha' at an eatery in Amritsar. He tweeted,

"Relished chana-kulcha with @HarsimratBadal_ at Bhai Kulwant Singh Kulcheyan wale near Harmandir Sahib on Virasti Marg in Amritsar. This food joint is famous for its exotic taste. Culinary diversity is the pride of Punjab."

366 LIKES, 109 RETWEETS IN 9 HOURS

• Rahul's virtual rally in Punjab

In a series of tweets, the Congress (@INC_Punjab) announced senior leader Rahul Gandhi will hold a virtual rally in Punjab on January 27.

One of the tweets read, "Congress party is committed to provide quality education to pave the path for a better future of Punjab. Our youngsters are our future and only good education will make them self-sufficient and independent to achieve new heights."

138K LIKES, 68 RETWEETS IN 9 HOURS

• Amit Palekar dares Goa CM

AAP leader Amit Palekar claimed that 'Goenkars are receiving high water bills.' In a short video posted on @AAP_Go, he said, "@DrPramodPSawant has blatantly lied to Goenkars about providing free water. I dare @BJP4Goa & Sawant to come out and justify these inflated bills."

186 LIKES, 99 RETWEETS IN 6 HOURS

Newest Jakhar on the block: A corporate honcho-turned farmer

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA

CHANDIGARH, JAN 25

Neighbouring the Badal family citadel of Lambi is Abohar, a town on the Punjab-Rajasthan border that has for long been associated with another political family of Punjab – the Jakhars, arguably the only Hindu Jat political dynasty in the state.

The biggest of them all was the late Balram Jakhar, who first contested from here in 1972, and

went on to become the longest serving Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Union agriculture minister during the Narasimha Rao government. His youngest son Sunil Jakhar, a senior leader of the ruling Congress in the state, was former PPCC president, Gurdaspur MP, and three-time MLA. Earlier, the senior Jakhar's eldest son Sajjan was agriculture minister in the Beant Singh government.

But this election, there's a new Jakhar on the block: Sandeep Jakhar, son of Sunil Jakhar's elder brother, the late Surinder Jakhar,

went on to become the longest serving Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Union agriculture minister during the Narasimha Rao government. His youngest son Sunil Jakhar, a senior leader of the ruling Congress in the state, was former PPCC president, Gurdaspur MP, and three-time MLA. Earlier, the senior Jakhar's eldest son Sajjan was agriculture minister in the Beant Singh government.

An alumnus of Mayo College, Ajmer, Sandeep studied for two years in Switzerland before graduating from Miami and working as head of Country Club in Florida. Abohar was then a speck on his horizon. But that changed after he became a father. "Having grown up in large families, my wife, who is Japanese, and I wanted the same for our daughter."

That was 12 years ago.

chairman of IFFCO. A corporate honcho-turned-farmer, Sandeep is fighting his debut election from

Abohar as the Congress candidate. Sunil Jakhar, who is helming the campaign panel of the party, has decided not to contest this time.

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Sandeep then returned to growing kinnows on his ancestral land in Punjab, a state he calls "the most secular in India".

"My grandfather (Balram Jakhar) was a visionary. Abohar used to be an infertile belt with sand dunes, but he transformed it by building the 42-km-long Abohar canal that brings water from the Sihri feeder," says Sandeep, adding he counts the work he did to reconstruct the canal as among his biggest achievements. Today, Abohar accounts for 60 per cent of kinnows

grown in the country.

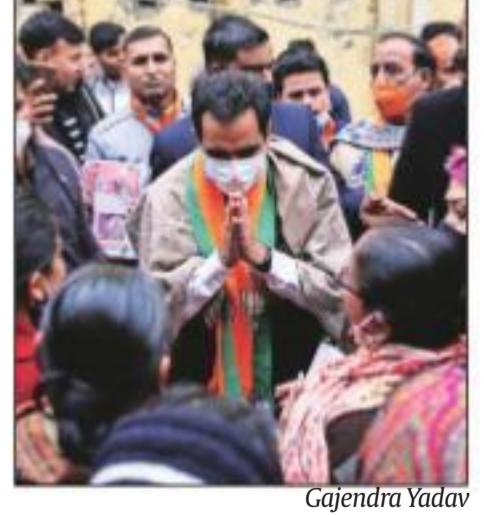
As a farmer, Sandeep says he has been giving diversification a push by encouraging farmers in Abohar to grow chillies and tomatoes that are processed at the Punjab Agro plant in Alamgarh.

"The plant that used to run only a few days a year during the Akali rule now functions 200 days a year and its chilli paste is imported to the Middle East, a market that Abohar farmers have captured from Mexico," he says.

FULL STORY ON [www.indianexpress.com](#)

PARTIES & RIVALS

As BJP looks to break 'jinx', Cong makes presence felt with 'youngest candidate'



Pankaj campaigns in Noida.

AMIL BHATNAGAR

NOIDA, JANUARY 26

DURING HIS recent visit to Gautam Buddha Nagar as part of the BJP's election campaign, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the party would beat the "Noida jinx" and come back to power.

Hitting out at the Opposition, he said he had visited Noida several times during his tenure, unlike his predecessors who avoided the district because they were worried more about "their life and position" than the lives of people of Noida.

He was referring to a superstitution in political circles that had kept past CMs Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav from visiting the seat for fear of losing power.

Hailed as a VIP seat and a BJP bastion since 2012, Noida is one of the three Assembly constituencies, besides Dadri and Jawahar, that make up the Gautam Buddha Nagar Lok Sabha seat.

The BJP's Pankaj Singh, son of

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and vice-president of the party's state unit, is the sitting MLA from Noida, having won the previous election with a margin of more than 1 lakh votes against the SP's Sunil Chaudhary. Chaudhary is the SP candidate this election too. Though Pankaj sailed through in 2017, this time, there is a semblance of a fight.

The Congress, which has fielded Pankaj Pathak, has entered the fray through some ag-

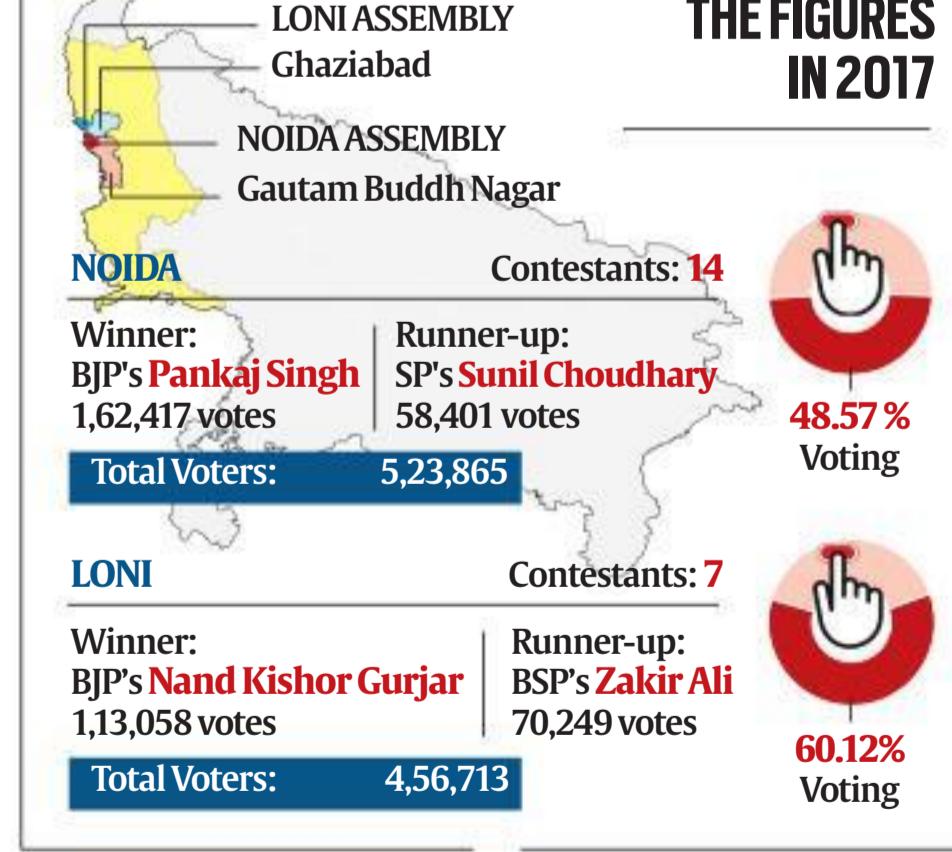
gressing local campaigning. At 29, Pathak is one of the youngest candidates in the fray.

A Delhi resident, Pankaj got into student politics while in Delhi University, joining the Samajwadi Chatra Sabha, the Samajwadi Party's youth wing.

She went on to become the state spokesperson for the SP, but quit three years ago following differences with the party, and joined the Congress.

Her husband, Anil Yadav, a Noida SP leader, also left the party, protesting against allegedly misogynistic comments against Pankaj. He too, joined the Congress.

With nearly 70% urban and 30% rural votes, one of the most prominent election issues here is related to homebuyers, ranging from delayed possession of flats to problems faced by housing societies. In fact, the president of the Noida Extension Flat Owners' Main Association (NEFOMA), Annu Khan, filed his candidature from Dadri as an Independent candidate.



A recent CAG report -- which highlighted several lapses on the part of the Noida Authority, which allegedly aided the housing crisis and led to defaulting by builders, is a talking point among Noida residents.

I have been part of several AOA and RWA protests. I have taken up their causes at several levels. Whether it's a problem of law and order or the issue of security guards in the buildings, I closely monitor the issues. The fact is that in this election, people will vote for a leader from among their own," Pathak said during a door-to-door campaign

in Harola on Monday.

Residents acknowledge that while the BJP remains a dominating presence here, the visibility of the Congress has gone up when compared to previous elections. "Earlier, it was a given that the BJP would win from the area, but now it seems that there is a contender," said Harinder Bhati, a resident of the Nayabans area, adding, "The vote for the ruling party is primarily for Yogi Adityanath. The local representative is merely a face and honestly, has not visited a lot. The BJP could have done more in terms of local development."

With unlike poll narratives Loni stares at a cliffhanger

SHIVNARAYAN RAJPUROHIT

LONI, JANUARY 26

"By 1 lakh votes." This prediction by BJP MLA Nand Kishor Gurjar for his victory margin in the coming elections in Loni is ambitious. He knows that two debutantes, a friend-turned-foe dairy owner and a "muscleman", are both snapping at his heels and may even run past him.

Yet, Gurjar seems confident. "This time, it will double to 1 lakh. For sure," the firebrand MLA says at his Ganauli farmhouse. A few members of the Azgar Sena, a cow vigilante group Gurjar founded in 1998, not in agreement.

In the 2017 polls, Gurjar had bagged 1,13,058 votes, followed by BSP candidate Zakir Ali's 70,249. RLD's Madan Bhaiya had got 42,518 votes. The SP and the RLD had fought separately then.

For the February 10 polls, Gurjar again sees his rival-in-chief in BSP candidate Akil. However, Bhaiya, the SP-RLD combine's "muscleman", and Independent candidate Ranjita Dhamma are no

pushovers either. Having quit the BJP after it refused her a ticket, Dhamma now threatens to disturb the SP-RLD's and the BJP's poll arithmetic.

While Akil is banking on "voters' anger against lack of progress in five years", Bhaiya, a four-time MLA out of power for 10 years now, waxes lyrical about restoring communal harmony. Dhamma has been seeking votes in return for her civic works. And for Gurjar, cow protection and a ban on meat shops are as important as the development needed to attain 'Ramrajya'. Known for his incendiary speeches, the Loni MLA was last week served a notice by the Election Commission.

On his way to the party office at Loni Tiraha, Gurjar stops to offer prayers at the temples of Hanuman and Lord Shiva at the Loni main market. "Do you feel safe now?" he asks a woman shopkeeper. Several shopkeepers praise a 'better' law and order. "This time, I have decided to bet on the BJP," says Baghira, a traditional BSP voter.

A few kilometres away in Lalbagh, Bhaiya's aides reveal they have no scruples in him being called a muscleman "because he is a positive one". "He has never bothered us," says Gulshan, who thinks the RLD leader could help her secure her widow pension.

At Naipura, Ranjita from the Jat community has caught the voters' attention. "For five years, nobody could build roads here. Only Dhamma completed it recently," says Deepak Sain, who favoured the BJP in 2017.

With several voters in Loni still weighing their options -- whether to choose development over community or party over candidate -- poll predictions could be a mug's game. But what seems indisputable is a possible cliffhanger.

FULL STORY ON [www.indianexpress.com](#)

THE BIG FIGHT



Majithia at a press conference in Chandigarh, Wednesday.

Majithia to take on Sidhu in Amritsar

To also contest from Majithia; Cong govt has targeted him, battle now in people's court, says Sukhbir Badal

ticket in 2012.

Accusing the Congress government of targeting its brother-in-law Majithia and registering a "false case" against him, Badal said, "Majithia is known to fight for the people. This was not to the liking of the Congress government. They have registered a false case against a Gursikh who is known to do 'nitnem' (reciting of Sikh religious text) for two and a half hours every day. Our workers also realised that the best way to seek justice for Majithia is the sitting MLA in Majitha.

Badal also announced that his father, former CM and party patron Parkash Singh Badal, would contest the Assembly election from Lambi, from where he is the sitting MLA. At 94, the senior Badal is likely to be among the oldest candidates this election.

The SAD president used the occasion to induct three-time Congress MLA Ranjit Singh Chajjalwadi and his son Satinder Singh into the party. Badal also announced that Satinder would contest from Jandiala.

Sidhu had sought a Congress ticket for Satinder from Baba Bakala, but the party gave the ticket to sitting MLA Santokh Singh Bhalapuri.

Meanwhile, former Union minister and Majithia's sister Harsimrat Kaur Badal said in Amritsar, "Today, I prayed at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib that if my brother Bikram (Singh Majithia) is involved in any way in the spread of the drug menace, may Guru Sahib inflict the most horrible punishment on each and every member of our family. But if it's not true, those who told brazen lies on this issue as well as on the painful subject of sacrifice of the Shri Guru Granth Sahib may also be made to face the same fate."

EXPRESS NETWORK

PLA RESPONDED POSITIVELY: UNION MINISTER

Rijiju: Bad weather delaying Arunachal youth's return

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26



Union minister
Kiren Rijiju

UNION MINISTER Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has responded positively to handing over Miram Taron, the Arunachal Pradesh teenager who went missing from his village on January 18, and that his return was delayed due to bad weather conditions.

"Hotline exchanged on Republic Day by Indian Army with Chinese PLA. PLA responded positively indicating handing over of our national and suggested a place of release. They are likely to intimate date and time soon. Delay attributed to bad weather conditions on their side," tweeted Rijiju, who is

tody," Rijiju tweeted.

He said the "Chinese side had assured that they would search for the individual and return him as per established protocol".

On Tuesday, the minister had tweeted that Taron, "aged 19 years", from Jido village in Upper Siang district, had gone missing on Jan 18 at Shiyang La in Bishing area. "Some people reported that Chinese PLA had taken him into their custody. Since the individual was missing from an area close to LAC (Line of Actual Control), Indian Army immediately approached Chinese side on January 19 asking for assistance in tracing and return of the individual, in case he had strayed into the Chinese territory or PLA has taken him in their cus-

We just want him back safely: family

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, JANUARY 26

FOLLOWING INDICATIONS on Wednesday that China has responded positively to handing over Miram Taron, the teenager's family in Arunachal Pradesh's Zido village is overjoyed. His father said they do not mind the delay due to the weather as long as he returns home safe.

"We don't want anything else but our son back. We want him back at the earliest. But if it takes a bit more time for weather, so be it. We just want him back safe, unhurt,"



Miram
Taron

Miram's father Opang Taron, a farmer, told *The Indian Express*.

Miram's mother Kutjat Taron, 43, fell sick recently with blood pressure issues, worrying about her son, who went missing eight days ago. She is better now and is waiting for her son to return, Opang said.

Opang lives with his wife, brothers and five sons, including Miram, in the small village in Upper Siang district, not far from China. The village is a

short distance away from a forest, where Miram, Opang's third-eldest son, went to hunt and collect herbs on January 18. He did not return.

According to Miram's friend Johnny Yaiying, who had accompanied him to the forest, Chinese troops had taken the teenager while he managed to escape and report the incident to the Indian authorities. Opang's family later filed a complaint with the nearby Tuting police station.

Opang said the Indian Army and local authorities had sought identification marks and other details to confirm Miram upon arrival.

Dr Anurag Agrawal to be guest at online Explained session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, JANUARY 26



INDIA HAS reported more than 52 lakh cases of Covid-19 this month. Though the growth curve of the disease is showing signs of flattening, the peak might still be some distance away. However, the most remarkable thing about the third wave in India so far has been the fact that it has been considerably less painful, both in human and economic terms, than the first or the second.

The nature of the Omicron wave has led many to proclaim that this might be the beginning of the end of the pandemic.

Differing arguments have been put forward to support this line of thought. While some have found parallels to the end of the Spanish flu a century ago, others have pointed to the weakness of the Omicron variant to suggest that future mutations are likely to be even weaker.

However, this is hardly the dominant view in the scientific community. Moreover, this pandemic has thrown up multiple surprises, and defied most predictions.

Are we therefore in an endless loop, or is there any hope in sight?

FIR filed against Google's Pichai

Mumbai: An FIR has been registered against Google CEO Sundar Pichai and five others based on a complaint by director-producer Suneel Darshan regarding alleged copyright infringement. The FIR was registered following a court order.

Darshan claimed that though he did not give anyone the rights

RSS chief unfurls Tricolour, invokes ancient Indian democracy

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, JANUARY 26

DEMOCRACY IN modern-day India must be glorified with the sense of democratic system of the country's ancient Ganarajyas such as Vaishali and Licchavi, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Wednesday, after unfurling the Tricolor at the Sangh-run Seva Dham ashram on outskirts of Agartala city, on the occasion of Republic Day.

Addressing a gathering at the ashram, Bhagwat, who is on a four-day tour of Tripura since Monday to review organisational activities, said: "In India's ancient Ganarajyas, the true sense of democracy was depicted in life and philosophy of the people then. Today's democracy in India must be glorified with that sense of democratic system (found in) India's ancient Ganarajyas such as Vaishali, Licchavi, etc."

Licchavis were a clan of people from northern India who settled on the north bank of the Ganga around 6th-5th century BC — in areas of present-day Bihar. They were a clan among the Vajji Mahajanapada of ancient India.

Vaishali, the capital of Licchavis, was also the capital of the Vajji mahajanapada. It was later occupied by Ajatashatru, the son of King Bimbisara.

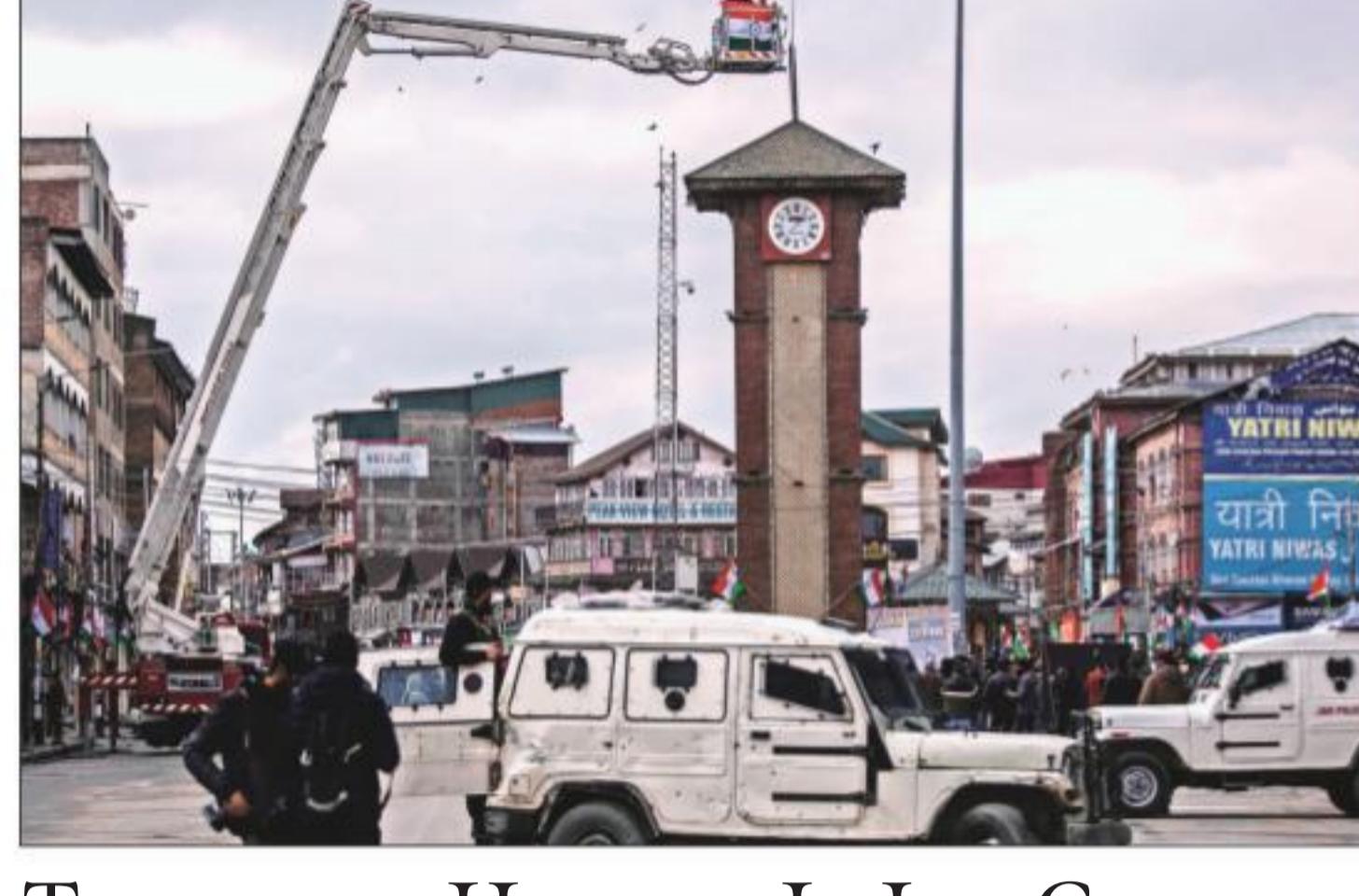
On the occasion, Bhagwat said the RSS is determined to establish democracy "in the true sense" in the present Republic through dignified behaviour and apply the practical philosophy of ancient Ganarajyas.

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The minister, who holds the portfolios of ports and archeology in the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, was the chief guest at the Republic

REPUBLIC DAY 2022



TRICOLOUR HOISTED IN LAL CHOWK

The national flag was hoisted atop the clock tower in Srinagar's Lal Chowk on Wednesday to mark Republic Day, 30 years after BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi did it for the first time. Activists Sajid Youssuf Shah and Sahil Bashir Bhat, along with dozens of supporters, organised the flag hoisting ceremony at the clock tower, locally known as Ghanta Ghar. A hydraulic crane was used to install the flag on top of the tower. AP

Kerala minister hoists national flag upside down, triggers row

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 26

KERALA MINISTER Ahamed Devarkoil triggered a row on Wednesday after he hoisted the national flag upside down in Kasaragod on the occasion of Republic Day. The BJP demanded the minister's resignation for "insulting the national flag".

The minister, who holds the portfolios of ports and archeology in the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, was the chief guest at the Republic

Day celebrations in Kasaragod district headquarters. After hoisting the national flag upside down, the minister inspected the parade held at the municipal stadium.

While the minister was delivering the Republic Day speech, media persons covering the day's ceremony at the ground pointed out the mistake. Subsequently, the Tricolour was brought down and was hoisted again by the minister, who belongs to CPI(M) ally Indian National League (INL).

Congress MP Rajmohan Unnithan, who represents Kasaragod Lok Sabha seat, three

legislators from the district, additional district magistrate A K Ramendran and district police superintendent Vaibhav Saxena were also present at the venue.

The ADM, who holds the charge of the district collector, ordered a probe after having a discussion with the minister.

Later in the day, the ADM said the probe revealed that two police officials — an additional sub inspector and a senior civil police officer — were responsible for the mistake.

Meanwhile, BJP state president KS Surendran demanded the resignation of the minister.

hovering around 20%. On Wednesday, the state recorded 35,756 cases out of 1,83,026 tests conducted with a TPR of 19.53%.

On Tuesday, out of the 1,72,498 tests conducted, 33,914 tested positive with TPR of 19.6%.

A day after reporting 86 Covid-19 deaths, on Wednesday, it dropped slightly to 79.

AFTER REGULAR MARKET APPROVAL Covishield, Covaxin doses likely to be capped at Rs 275

PAYAL BANERJEE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

THE PRICE OF Covishield and Covaxin, Covid-19 vaccines that are expected to soon get regular market approval from India's drug regulator, is likely to be capped at Rs 275 per dose plus an additional service charge of Rs 150, sources said.

According to sources, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has been directed to start working towards capping the price to make the vaccines affordable.

Presently, Covaxin is priced at Rs 1,200 per dose while Covishield costs Rs 780 in private facilities. The prices include Rs 150 service charge. Both vaccines are only authorised for emergency use in the country.

As subject expert committee on Covid-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation on January 19 recommended granting regular market approval to Covid vaccines Covishield and Covaxin for use in the adult population subject to certain conditions.

Prakash Kumar Singh, director (government and regulatory affairs) at Serum Institute of India, had submitted an application to the Drugs Controller General of India on Oct 25 seeking regular market approval for Covishield.

A couple of weeks ago, V Krishna Mohan, director at Bharat Biotech, submitted information on the chemistry, manufacturing and controls, along with the pre-clinical and clinical data while seeking regular market authorisation for Covaxin.

PTI

India at UN: 26/11 perpetrators continue to enjoy Pak patronage

YOSHITA SINGH
UNITED NATIONS, JANUARY 26

PERPETRATORS OF the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks continue to enjoy Pakistan's patronage. India has told the United Nations Security Council, saying that most terrorist attacks around the world have their origin, in some form or the other, in that country.

India strongly hit back at Pakistan after Islamabad's envoy to the UN, Munir Akram, raked up the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during an UNSC Open Debate on "Protection of civilians in armed conflict: Wars in cities – protection of civilians in urban settings" on Tuesday.

"Member-states are well aware that Pakistan has an established history of harbouring, aiding and actively supporting terrorists. This is a country which has been globally recognised as a sponsor of terrorism and holds the ignoble record of hosting the largest number of terrorists proscribed by the UN Security Council," counsellor in India's Permanent Mission to the UN, R Madhu Sudan, said.

"So much so that most terrorist attacks around the world today have their origin, in some form or the other, in Pakistan," he said.

PTI

Among unsung heroes in Padma list: paraplegic social worker, man behind EVM-VVPAT tech

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

A PARAPLEGIC who has dedicated her life to help the differently abled, a 102-year-old Gandhian still engaged in spreading the Mahatma's ideas, a pediatrician who quit a cushy job in the US to provide affordable healthcare in Gujarat, a physician from Maharashtra who dedicated his life to treating the poor of scorpion and snake bites, a Gujarati ghazal singer who sponsored education of the underprivileged as he could not study himself and the man behind India's EVM and VVPAT technology.

Majithia alleged this has come to the light in the leaked audio tapes, in which Chattopadhyaya, a pediatrician who quit a cushy job in the US to provide affordable healthcare in Gujarat, a physician from Maharashtra who dedicated his life to treating the poor of scorpion and snake bites, a Gujarati ghazal singer who sponsored education of the underprivileged as he could not study himself and the man behind India's EVM and VVPAT technology.

They are some of the unsung heroes who have been conferred the Padma Shri this year by the government for contribution to society or preserving dying art forms. A look at some of them:

KV RABIYA, 55

A social worker from Malappuram in Kerala, Rabiya is paralysed from neck below. Her citation calls her a "brave-heart who overcame unending personal tragedies, to serve others". In spite of being afflicted with polio at 12, being di-

agnosed with cancer, apart from being paralysed, Rabiya has relentlessly worked for the betterment of the differently abled, her citations says. She started six schools for children with special needs and trained and empowered more than 250 women through a small-scale manufacturing unit. "In over three decades of tireless efforts, she has inspired many and raised awareness on social issues like de-addiction, dowry and superstitions," her citation says.

SHAKTALA CHOUDHARY, 102

The Gandhian and freedom fighter from Kamrup in Assam has been "silently promoting the value of service for the last seven decades". Inspired by ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, Choudhary founded Gram Seva Kendras across North-East "which made sustainable efforts in the field of social work" and worked for "villagers, especially women and children, through Stree Shakti Jagaran movement even during adverse times", her citation says.

DILIP SHAHANI, 71

Engineer, academician and tech-

nocrat, Shahani is Chairman of Technical Expert Committee, Election Commission of India. He was conferred Padma Shri for "playing role in India's electronic voting machine technology platform". He is currently Emeritus Professor at IIT Delhi. "One of the finest Electronics Expert, Shahani has contributed towards designing and development of India's EVM and VVPAT technology platforms," his citation says.

KHALIL DHANTEJVI, 86

Famous for popularising Gujarati ghazals for more than half a century, Dhantevi started his career as a journalist. Bestowed with titles Sarangi, Sadagi, Sopan and Saugat for his literary work as Gujarati-Urdu poet, he has authored more than eight poetry books and nine novels apart from directing 20 films in Gujarati. "Due to financial difficulties he was not able to attend school after Class 4, so he vowed to sponsor the education of underprivileged children," his citation says.

LOUREMBAM BINI DEVI, 77

Veteran Applique artist from Manipur who revived the art of Leeba motifs. Coming from a humble rural background, she has single-handedly kept alive the fast-fading art of ornamental embroidery for five decades. "Her motifs represent the culture of Meitei community. Preserving the art by passing the knowledge to students which she herself has learnt from her mother-in-law," her citation says.

GAMIT RAMILABEN RAYSINGHBAI, 52

A tribal social worker from Tapi in Gujarat, Raysinghbai has been conferred the award for contribution in education, healthcare and sanitation. "Coming from a very humble background in Tapi, Raysinghbai worked at grassroots level to maximise effect. Her dedicated effort led to nine villages becoming open-defecation free. She created 300-plus sanitary units and held awareness events on open defecation and sickle cell in tribal belts," the citation says.

The general physician from Mahad in Maharashtra is widely known for his treatment for scorpion poisoning and snake bites. "Coming from a humble background, he started treating the poor for scorpion sting and snake bites in rural areas despite lack of resources. He discovered use of Prazosin in treatment which led the mortality rate to drop from 40% to less than 1%," his citation says.

HIMMATRAO BAWASKAR, 71

Nghaka has propagated Hindi language and education in Mizoram for more than six decades. "He built a cultural bridge between Hindi and Mizo language by drafting a Hindi-Mizo dictionary. As an interpreter, he was instrumental in bringing the government and Mizo people closer," his citation says.

V L NGHAKA, 91

A key figure in setting up Mizoram Hindi Prachar Sabha in 1954 for the promotion of Hindi language, Nghaka has propagated Hindi language and education in Mizoram for more than six decades. "He built a cultural bridge between Hindi and Mizo language by drafting a Hindi-Mizo dictionary. As an interpreter, he was instrumental in bringing the government and Mizo people closer," his citation says.

GIRDHARI RAM GHONJU, 72

Ghonju has worked towards promotion of Nagpuri culture for more than five decades. A Nagpuri litterateur and educationist from Ranchi, he has been working for uplift of regional language and culture of Jharkhand. "He has authored over 25 books and plays, especially on saving local heritage and identity of Nagpuri culture. He has spread awareness on rights of tribals and forests dwellers," his citation says.

LATA DESAI, 75

A pediatrician who along with her husband Dr Anil Desai quit her job in the US to provide affordable healthcare in rural Gujarat, she has dedicated five decades for tribal uplift through her initiative SEWA Rural, providing treatment to more than 24 lakh patients in 1



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

HONOURABLE RIVALS

It will be regrettable – but not a surprise – if NDA's attempt to reach across the aisle ends up as just yesterday's headline

THIS YEAR'S PADMA honours are not an unmixed bag. Covid vaccine makers who have helped the nation step up to an unprecedented health emergency and saved countless lives awkwardly rub shoulders with a former BJP chief minister who presided over an indelible stain on constitutional democracy in India, the demolition of Babri Masjid. But the day after, the BJP-led government's list of 128 seems to be touching off ripples, most of all, for the award to Congress veteran Ghulam Nabi Azad and CPM senior Buddhadeb Bhattacharya – the former has accepted it even as his party appears divided on the matter, while the latter declined within hours of the announcement, in keeping with his party line on state awards. This is not the first time, of course, that a government's awards list includes names from the Opposition. The Narasimha Rao government, for example, honoured Morarji Desai with Bharat Ratna and Atal Bihari Vajpayee with Padma Vibhushan. The Narendra Modi government itself has earlier honoured Pranab Mukherjee with Bharat Ratna and Sharad Pawar with Padma Vibhushan. And yet, such is the growing political polarisation today that the awards to Azad and Bhattacharya stand out. For the same reason, they are also welcome.

Of course, the Modi government's reasons for this outreach may be more than a little tactical. In honouring Azad, for instance, the ruling party at the Centre may be acknowledging not just the J&K leader's undoubted political eminence but also his growing and visible estrangement from his own party – the PM's emotional tribute to Azad when he retired from the Rajya Sabha last year may have been a prelude. By seeking to award Bhattacharya, it may also be showing down the TMC. Or, rubbing it in to the CPM that the Communist to be applauded is the one who tried to chart his own course and was sent out into the cold. And yet, in a political climate where it often seems that the BJP, seven years in power, is contesting elections 24X7, locked in a fight to the finish with the Congress and the Left, the gesture is still heartening. Such is the BJP's unrelenting aggression, even when it is winning, that even a bare acknowledgement of the political opponent seems a welcome departure from the hardening hostilities. During elections, but also in peace time in between polls, the party is perpetually othering its opposition and calling it names, with its government using the law and the agencies at its command to intimidate or target those who dissent and disagree. In this context, in their best version, the awards to Azad and Bhattacharya mark a moment.

As another crucial round of elections draws closer, the battle lines are sharpening once again. As they face off, all parties would do well to remember that the democracy game is bigger than its players, who must play with humility and abide by its rules and its courtesies. To expect the BJP to abandon its not-so-secret fantasy of an "Opposition-mukt" nation may itself be a fantasy. But reaching out across the aisle is what enriches a democracy and it will be regrettable if the NDA's attempt to do so, in the Padma honours list, ends up being just yesterday's headline.

EXODUS & OPENING

Exit of 'gen-next' leaders from Congress underlines that Rahul Gandhi's plans for the party need rethinking and renewal

EVEN IF THOSE leaving a sinking ship do not cover themselves in glory, for those at the ship's helm, this should provide cold comfort – after all, the ship is still sinking. In the backdrop of the approaching Uttar Pradesh election, RPN Singh's exit from the Congress may have limited impact: His sphere of influence is said to be confined to Padrauna and Kushi Nagar Lok Sabha constituency. Yet the former Congress MP, minister and AICC secretary's decision sends out a larger signal – that Rahul Gandhi's plans for the Grand Old Party's transition from an organisation dominated by the old guard to one that has a younger and more vigorous face, may be coming to nought. Singh is the third prominent leader – after Jitin Prasada and Jyotiraditya Scindia – of Rahul Gandhi's "chosen" team, the party's so-called "gen-next" leadership, to cross over to the BJP.

Singh, Scindia and Prasada are not politicians who have come up through the ranks. Each belongs to a political family with roots in the Congress. Each was given responsibilities in both the party and in Congress-led governments. That these leaders, who presumably had the ear of the party high command, have chosen to leave the Congress can be taken as a sign that they see little hope in the foreseeable future for the party's revival and the advancement of their own political careers through it. For the Congress as a whole and Rahul Gandhi in particular, their exits could mark the beginning of a further depletion of the party's second-rung leadership – more exits and the consequent sense of despondence and demoralisation among its members and supporters. Or, if the Congress can summon the agility and the will, this could also be a moment to begin a course correction and to nurture young leaders who have a greater presence at the grassroots, and a deeper commitment to the party.

Rahul Gandhi, as far back as 2008, tried – with limited success – to democratise the Congress by picking up young leaders for the Youth Congress who did not belong to the entitled elite. But that initiative slowed and floundered, as all Congress plans and projects do, in the absence of the leadership taking full ownership of them, or doing a sustained follow-up. Unless the Congress begins to provide opportunities to leaders to make their way up from the bottom – and the spaces for them to be heard within the party – its seemingly interminable slide is likely to go on.

THE EVER AFTERS

China's new finale for 'Fight Club' opens up tantalising possibilities. Other films could also do with a different ending

CALL IT FILM editing with Chinese characteristics. It seems that the authorities in China have cut the original ending of the David Fincher film *Fight Club* and replaced it with one that they like better. The 1999 film ended with the protagonist killing his imaginary alter ego and watching as multiple buildings that contain credit card records explode, thus setting the stage for a new era of "financial equilibrium". In the version that is now streaming in China, however, the final scene is replaced with a screen saying that the police found out about Project Mayhem just in time, managed to arrest the plotters and prevent the explosives from going off. A fictional revolution is thus averted and peace and stability preserved, even if over two decades late and at the cost of a film's artistic integrity.

The "new" ending may have upset film fans but, look again, and it could even be an opportunity. It's no secret that many otherwise enjoyable films have been a let down because of disappointing or baffling finales. So why not do it the Chinese way and simply change the endings? To begin with, by doing away with those that are "open to interpretation". Did that top stop spinning at the end of *Inception*? Does Saajan find Ila in *The Lunchbox*? What is the deal with that monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey*?

And how about tackling on completely new endings? Rose could make room for Jack on that door for a happy ending to *Titanic* and Charulata could be shown giving the boot to boring of Bhupati and going off with Amal in the Satyajit Ray classic. And, in keeping with the tone of the new *Fight Club* ending, Charles Foster Kane buys 'Rosebud' for an exorbitant amount at an auction and dies a happy, wealthy, not-at-all-lonely man. The end.

Do more by doing less



MANISH SABHARWAL AND RAJEEV MANTRI

Air India's homecoming provides a template for prioritising government resources

IN THE 1950S, first-time parliamentarian Atal Bihari Vajpayee asked about the Ashok hotel, then being constructed in Delhi: Why was the government building a five-star hotel and not a hospital? The standard socialist ideological response of inadequate private capacity was inapplicable: Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata had set up Mumbai's magnificent Taj Mahal hotel in 1903. Prime Minister Nehru replied that hospitals would be built from the profits earned by the luxury hotel. But Vajpayee's substantive question was about strategy, the trade-offs that reconcile unlimited aspirations with limited resources. Air India's sale is important for three reasons – priorities, resources, mindset – and is a template for the Indian state to do more by doing less.

First, priorities. If corporate strategy is the art of creating unfair legal advantages, no government can run hotels, automotive or steel companies competitively. Public commercial enterprises have unfair disadvantages in human resources. Air India had 12 trade unions, employees per plane were double global standards, and employee cost was an abnormal 20 per cent of revenues. Also, if commercial activity by the state generated prosperity, then Pakistan or North Korea would be thriving economies. The state's core job – security, primary healthcare and education, research funding, justice delivery, etc – suffered after Independence because scarce public resources were diverted to doing things that the private sector could do better. Air India's sale represents a welcome move by doing less.

Second, resources. In 1953, the Hungarian economist Janos Kornai warned that state sector firms indulge in "investment hunger" and don't fear losses because they know they will be bailed out. Around the same time, Air India cost the government only Rs 2.5 crore to buy, but it has incinerated Rs 1.1 lakh crore since 2009 (this could fund 15 years of school mid-day meals or used to be set up 660 medical colleges). Kornai termed this excessive money appetite as "soft" budget constraints. The Supreme Court agreed when it described Air India's 2007 purchase of 111 planes for Rs 67,000 crore as "unnecessary". Air India's nationalisation cost about Rs 20 crore in losses

In 1984 JRD Tata told the by then retired PN Haksar, 'I began my 55-year-old career as an angry young man because I couldn't stomach foreign domination... I end it as an angry old man... because the system of licences and controls not only discourages honest free enterprise but encourages a new breed of incompetents, bribe-takers, and tax evaders.' Titans like JRD surely go to peaceful places after they leave us, but we are sure he is smiling today as Air India returns home.

per day and its monopoly caused a 25-year delay in India becoming the third-largest civil aviation market.

The government's creativity and persistence in divesting Air India must be replicated with most of the remaining 360-plus central PSUs. In parallel, with state government finances also ravaged by the pandemic, states privatising over 1,500 poorly run state PSUs could ease fiscal woes. Federalism is also about being responsible with public funds provided by taxpayers and devoted by the Union government.

And third, the mindset. The 1970s government's belief in its omnipotence is captured by the PMO bureaucrat PN Haksar's response to an application for private scooter capacity expansion – reject it and set up Scooters India (another misadventure). The command, control and conquer mindset of the 1955 Avadi resolution – century-old second-hand ideas of a dead German guy – ignored our folk wisdom of *jahaan raja vyapari, vahaan praja bhikaari*. Who is responsible for Air India's capital bonfire? Politicians, bureaucrats, managers, or workers? Unfortunately, public sector governance mirrors Agatha Christie's *Murder On The Orient Express* – if everybody did something, then nobody can be held accountable. Counterintuitively, many individuals involved in the Air India disaster went on to greater career heights because of performance feedback mechanisms that value visibility, perception, and silence over tangible outcomes. The "fatal conceit" represented by Air India's seven-decade tragedy suggests we need better role balancing between the three pillars of team India – private, public, and nonprofits. Or what poet Brij Narayan Chakbast called *anasis mein zahir-e-tarteef* (orderliness among elements).

No civil servant running Air India could deliver the "tone from the top" that JRD Tata did. An employee recalls "JRD would walk the aircraft, checking furnishings for stains, toilets for cleanliness, curtains for fraying, and windows for dust". A note from JRD admonished "the tea served on board from Geneva is, without exaggeration, indistinguishable in colour from coffee. I don't know

whether this is due to the quality of tea leaves or excessive brewing". Some analysts believe the acquisition is unviable nostalgia by the Tata group, but the price feels right, consolidating three carriers creates synergies, and the 60 per cent market share of a competent competitor creates vulnerability. Most importantly, if entrepreneurial business houses like the Tatas don't make risky but industry-transforming bets like Air India, who will?

Under Deng Xiaoping and Zhu Rongji, China converted over two-thirds of its state-owned enterprises to private ownership, boosting productivity manifold. Under Xi Jinping, China is piling up debt, shovelling cheap credit to unproductive state firms, and attacking the private sector. China is powerful because of a \$14 trillion GDP fuelled by private entrepreneurs, foreign investors, and multinational companies. China is dangerous because it now accounts for half of Asia's military spending. India lost the 1962 war for many reasons, but public appeals to knit socks, gloves, and sweaters for our poorly equipped soldiers back then surely reflected a weak economy and poor policy prioritisation. Privatisation hardly means a weak or small state; a modern state is a welfare state. But the top ranks of Norway, Sweden, and Finland in government spending as a share of GDP are financed by their private efficiency. We hope India's tax to GDP rises from 18 per cent to 30 per cent in our lifetimes, powered by a large, dynamic, and inclusive economy that finances focused, accountable, and decentralised state spending.

In 1984, JRD Tata told the by then retired PN Haksar, "I began my 55-year-old career as an angry young man because I couldn't stomach foreign domination... I end it as an angry old man... because the system of licences and controls not only discourages honest free enterprise but encourages a new breed of incompetents, bribe-takers, and tax evaders". Titans like JRD surely go to peaceful places after they leave us, but we are sure he is smiling today as Air India returns home, 70 years after his 20-year-old was kidnapped.

Sabharwal and Mantri are co-founders of Teamlease Services and the India Enterprise Council respectively



AMIT BHANDARI

EUROPE'S PUSH FOR renewable energy at the cost of conventional fuel may end up causing a global food crisis. Since August 2021, Western Europe has faced a problem with renewable energy – the wind doesn't always blow when needed and the sun doesn't always shine. Countries such as UK, Spain and Germany are relying more on natural gas to make up the electricity shortfall, causing a crisis that will be felt worldwide.

What happens when renewable energy doesn't deliver the goods, and rich economies scramble to buy gas to make up the shortfall? The world is discovering now. Commodity markets across the world operate on a balance of demand and supply – even seemingly "small" changes in either side of a few percentage points can push the prices up or down sharply. Europe's sudden appetite for natural gas has pushed up the prices of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), the form in which gas gets traded globally. The LNG price published by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (Australia is one of the leading global LNG exporters) is at US \$30/mmbtu in January 2022 as against a long-term average of \$7.8/mmbtu. Higher gas prices have pushed up energy bills for households and are expected to impact household spending and consumption as well.

The sudden dependence on natural gas during winter has also made European coun-

GREEN PUSH TOO FAR

Europe is realising how transition to renewable energy can jeopardise food security

The crisis also holds lessons for India, which has ambitious plans for using renewable technologies but doesn't have the financial cushion available to the European nations. Cheap and reliable energy sources should not be abandoned until the alternatives have been stringently stress tested. India will be especially hard hit if oil prices spike as it imports close to 1.4 billion barrels of oil annually.

tries wary of upsetting Russia amidst the Ukraine conflict. Some European observers are blaming Russia for the high gas prices and for using its gas supplies as geopolitical leverage – the actual cause of the problem is underinvestment by European governments in reliable energy sources.

Natural gas is used to produce urea – if gas prices go up, fertiliser also becomes expensive. Urea prices are about three times the level of where they were a year ago. Expensive fertiliser means more expensive food – that will hurt the world's poor disproportionately. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) food price index is already at a 10-year high. Some poor and middle-income countries are already starting to face problems of fertiliser availability – there are reports from several Indian states as well. The impact of expensive fertiliser will be felt some months down the line as expensive fertiliser and reduced harvests push up food prices. India is relatively less affected as the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix is low but will still face problems due to high food prices. The food inflation will come at a time when the ongoing pandemic has disproportionately hurt lower income groups worldwide.

In 2007-08, when oil prices were high, there was a push to use "biofuels" led by the US and Europe. Land was diverted to cultivate crops that could be converted to

ethanol, leaving less for food crops. The effects of the 2008 food price crisis were felt around the world, especially by the poor. High price of food was one of the proximate causes of political unrest in the Arab world in 2011 – Libya and Syria continue to feel its aftereffects.

A blind push to demonise and shut down traditional sources of energy and move to less reliable "clean" energy can have second and third order effects. Europe is rich enough to be able to buy its way out of self-created problems, leaving others to deal with the consequences.

The crisis also holds lessons for India, which has ambitious plans for using renewable technologies but doesn't have the financial cushion available to the European nations. Cheap and reliable energy sources should not be abandoned until the alternatives have been stringently stress tested. India will be especially hard hit if oil prices spike as it imports close to 1.4 billion barrels of oil annually. However, fresh investment in developing new oil and gas reserves has been slowing down globally, in part due to climate action – and crude oil price is at a multi-year high.

The writer is senior fellow for energy, investment and connectivity studies, Gateway House, and the author of India and the Changing Geopolitics of Oil



JANUARY 27, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

RANGA'S PLEA

RANGA WHOSE EXECUTION is set for January 31 has filed another petition in the Supreme Court requesting it to review its latest decision. He has also sent another petition to the president seeking to do some hard work in the jail and requesting him to delink his case from that of Billa, the other accused in the gruesome Chopra murder case. In his fifth attempt to get a reduced sentence, Ranga has drawn attention to the role press played in the legal battle in this case. In November, Chief Justice YV Chandrachud at a special sitting in his house admitted Ranga's petition. There was a barrage of articles in the press criticising the move.

PADMA AWARDS

ATM PRAKASH, EMINENT surgeon of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, has been conferred the Padma Bhushan. Another recipient of the Padma Bhushan from the AIIMS is J S Bajaj. Ajit Ram Verma, director of the National Physical Laboratory, has also been given the award. Cricketer Syed Kirmani and world badminton champion Prakash Padukone have been conferred the Padma Shri. Honoured for putting men and women in newspaper pictures is Virendra Prabhakar of The Hindustan Times, who has been conferred the Padma Shri.

ASSAM STRIKE

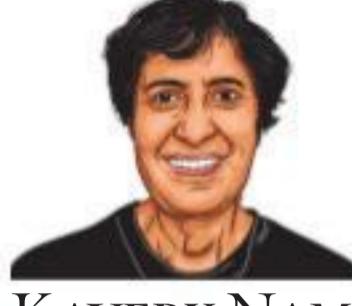
WHILE AGITATION LEADERS are going ahead with their plan to impose a 12 hour curfew on Republic Day, the new Congress(I) administration is making necessary preparations to meet its first major challenge. Saying that no government can tolerate the imposition of a curfew by a non-constitutional authority and that too on Republic Day, Chief Minister Keshab Chandra Gogoi appealed to the agitators to take back their decision.

There was no edition of this paper on January 27, 1982 on account of Republic Day. The above are edited excerpts of the paper on January 26, 1982.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Plan, prepare, prevent

Why this is my chant on the day after another Republic Day amid a pandemic



KAVERY NAMBISAN

TWO YEARS AGO, on January 31, I was at a party to celebrate the 60th birthday of my sister-in-law. My brother and their two daughters had pulled out all the stops to make it a memorable event. We chattered late into the evening over food and drink, until someone mentioned the "Chinese virus" that was rapidly infecting people, and killing many. It was quickly postulated that China, while actually trying to destroy us, Indians, had inadvertently infected their own people. Ha-ha.

Two years ago, on Republic Day, the Brazilian president Bolsonaro was the guest of honour at a ceremony of pomp and grandeur; five women motorcyclists and their team wowed the crowds; there were many other acts of glory, as there always are, on Republic Day.

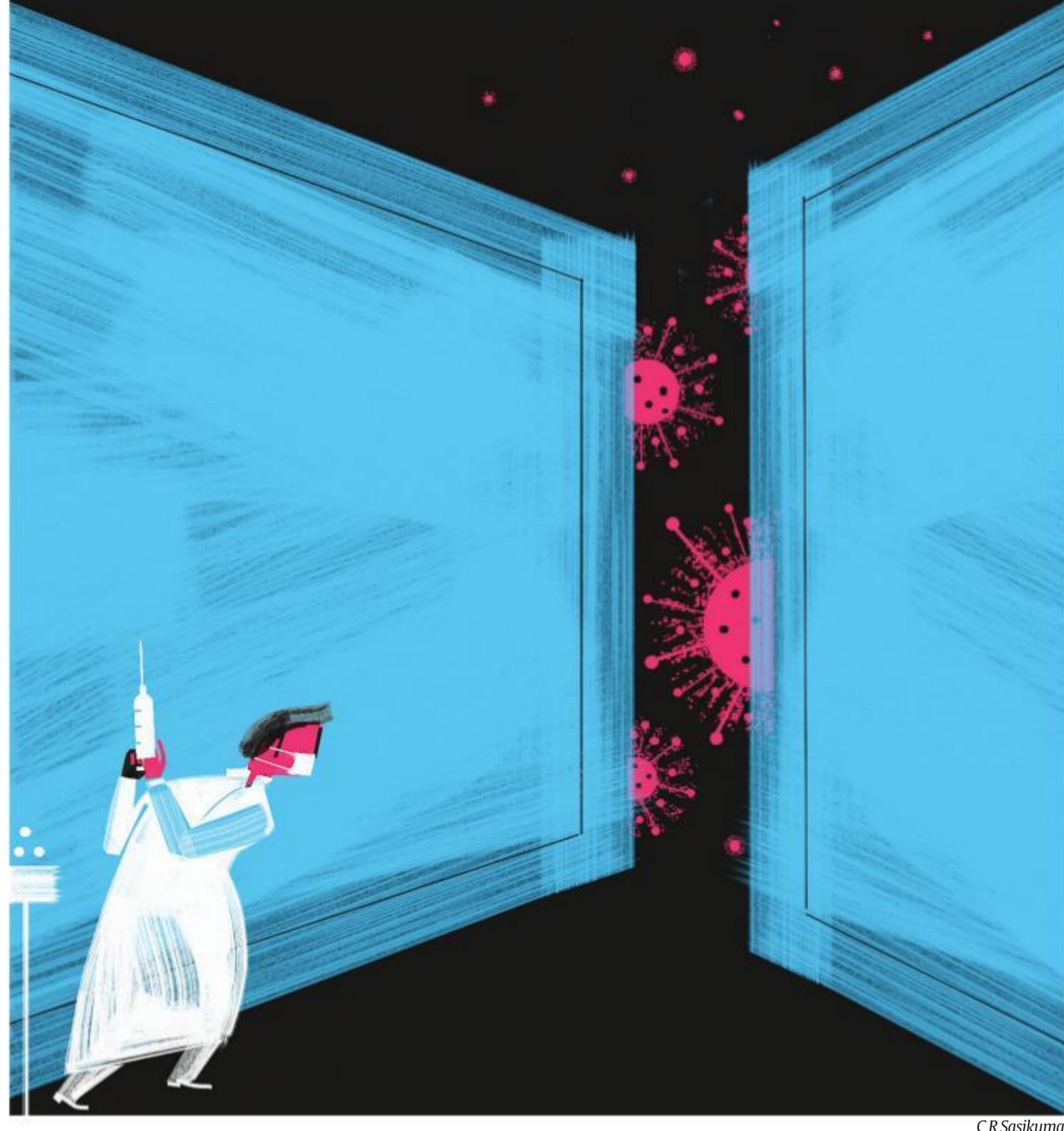
A month later, I was sitting in my clinic wearing my facial fig leaf, soaking my hands in an alcohol-based sanitiser and sermonising to my perplexed patients about the danger of the new virus. I cancelled holidays and neighbourly home-visits; except for a few defiant forays outward, I limited myself to home and clinic. Two years on, I am still wearing the fig leaf and following precautionary measures while praying hard that this third wave too will end. I do not need to dwell upon the course of events in the two intervening years, except to emphasise the absolute need to record every detail of those years, for posterity. So that we, and generations after us, can look again at the scourge and the devastation, applaud triumphs, accept failures and rethink the future. Forgive me then, for turning back the pages while looking and planning ahead.

Two years on, we are still hurting. Children are confused and depressed with the monotony of online classes, doctors and nurses are physically and mentally exhausted, the poorer sections of our society are struggling with joblessness and severe privation, the wealthy are bored and listless, celebrities cannot believe that their antics on screen are not at all a priority; and the VIPs of the country are disappointed that they have to put off their jet-setting for mega events and world conferences which come to nought.

As with every crisis, there are lessons here for everyone. Let us consider what they might be — for us as citizens; for the medical profession; for the government.

Does every citizen carry a responsibility? You bet. During the first phase of the pandemic, we made many mistakes — some small, others gargantuan. We did not properly heed the fundamental measures that we were repeatedly told to follow. Even leaders roamed mask-free. Had we all followed the basic precautionary steps diligently, it is certain that more than half the 4,00,000 plus deaths in our country could have been avoided. The basic preventive measures of masking, distancing and hygiene are still the most effective measures in fighting the virus.

Medical professionals worked away, trying hard to cope with the strange situation in which, for some terrible months, only Covid-affected patients dared to go to hospitals, for the risk of going to hospital seemed greater than not going. The number of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals who lost their lives in the process is difficult to come to terms with.



CR Sasikumar

The government did what it is good at — posturing. Enough has been said about this, the hasty knee-jerk reactions, the confusing signals and the catastrophe that followed. Sadly, those affected the most were those without adequate resources. We had to witness worthless spectacles like lighting lamps, beating thalis, showering flowers, playing music — Nero-like, as lives burned away for lack of the most essential commodity, oxygen.

After my retirement as a surgeon some years ago, I work in an independent clinic in my small rural town. Most of my work now boils down to general practice which I have learnt to enjoy. With no advice or guidelines coming my way, I took the only option — of educating myself about the new killer. Online medical information helped me understand the pathology and course of the disease; discussions with colleagues helped me set up my own protocol while using the guidelines issued by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences as a reference point. I found that a timely antibiotic, anti-histamines, ivermectin, immunity-boosting vitamins and minerals and at times other anti-inflammatory drugs like colchicine and diethylcarbamazine were immensely useful in treating mild to moderately severe cases. It was indeed possible to prevent a serious outcome in all but a few patients who required hospital care.

It is urgent and imperative that the medical community comes together to plan an ef-

fective strategy to cope with future crises such as this. What it means is that we need hospitals/wards/medical personnel who can be at the fore with immediate effect. For this, the government must take the necessary steps after conferring with medical experts. We have to stress the absolute necessity for such critical medical management at short notice. This is the time for us to come together, so our voice is heard.

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For every citizen of India like you and me, this is a good day to reflect: "Reflection" involves "looking at oneself" in the mirror with an unflinching gaze. Like what you see? Well, then. Be who you are and carry on. It is aptly termed "streaming along". Go unquestioningly with the flow and society will pull you into it. But if you can look in the mirror and ask yourself a few bold questions, you might find answers.

India is at a critical juncture: A small percentage of us live in comfort and ease while the rest struggle to live in modest dignity and several millions strive to satisfy their basic needs of food and shelter. Moreover, climate change will soon dictate its own terms, we cannot afford to be unprepared. My own, hopeful Republic Day chant for avoiding future catastrophes is: Plan. Prepare. Prevent.

*The writer is a surgeon and author of, most recently, *A Luxury Called Health* (Speaking Tiger)*



ALANKRITA SHRIVASTAVA

In stories we trust

Even in the darkest hours, the tales we tell light our way

I HARBOUR too much anger, too much pain. It threatens to swallow me up any day now. I can see that this is not the India of my childhood. I feel helpless. There is too much hatred. Everything has changed. Nothing has changed. This is, perhaps, who we were as a people. Just waiting for an opportunity to vent this hatred.

But then I think of both my grandfathers — one a freedom fighter, the other an active participant in the building of Nehruvian India. I think of my maternal grandmother, who still bears the pain of Partition in her heart, the invisible scars that have still not healed. She was not yet a teenager in 1947 when her family had to abandon their home and life and start over as refugees in India. Later, she was unable to finish medical school and perhaps had to bury the dreams she nurtured for herself. But she was a woman who never gave up. She always had hope. She worked when few women were allowed to, she travelled alone when few women dared, she made a life for herself and her family. She was the wind beneath my grandfather's wings. At almost 90, she is still the driving force in our lives. She had the audacity to educate my mother at an elite boarding school and send her off to IIM Ahmedabad to study management when the family could scarcely

afford it. "You must be fully educated before you marry," was her credo.

I think of my mother, who grew up as India was coming into its own. She didn't have to carry the burden of Partition, but it was always a presence. I don't know whether, when my parents were young, life in India seemed full of hope and possibilities. But when I was still in school, the economy opened up and there was hope and excitement and a buzz about what the future holds. The sound of the destruction that happened in the name of faith was loud and jarring, but it was lost in the cacophony of excitement about what we could buy and watch and who we could dare to be. I never imagined that that sound would become the sound of our collective future.

My mother's life threw up a series of challenges. She had to fight many battles. She has a quiet resilience that has seen us through the darkest of nights. She has worked all her life and shown us how to live with courage and grace. And she, like my grandmother, has nurtured hope. My mother was brave enough to let me do my thing — move to Bombay and become a filmmaker — no questions asked, no fears projected. I was able to follow my dream because I know she always has my back. My

mother never wondered why I couldn't follow a more tried and tested path. She just said, feel free to do your thing.

Just like me, there are so many women out there, following their dreams because their grandmothers helped their mothers run, and their mothers, in turn, helped them fly. So maybe there is a little bit of hope, filtering in and being passed on through the generations.

Sometimes I think of my grandfather languishing in jail for fighting our colonisers and I wonder what he would say about India today. Then I think that too much has been sacrificed for our freedom, that Mahatma Gandhi's life is in every Indian's genes, and that maybe we will turn to kindness and love and tolerance and this too shall pass. And maybe we will become better people. But, perhaps, we will never be the same again. We have been changed forever.

If there is one thing I wish for, for myself and my fellow citizens, it is hope. Hope for true equality. Hope for a real, felt freedom. A world and a time when everyone, regardless of religion, caste, class, gender, sexual preference, region will have equal rights and equal opportunities.

Sometimes I'm scared because I feel that the hope inside me is dying. And all I can see

is the abyss. But we are storytellers. Artists. Chroniclers of our time. And if we lose hope, what hope is there for society?

It is for us to decide whether we want to be court painters or we want to paint our pictures through the eyes of the common people — those on the margins, living in the shadows and often forgotten, and those relegated to the background, those who are crushed and crying silent tears.

It is for us to tell the tale, as we see it. It is for us to provide mirrors, offer dreams, challenge the status quo with our stories and do what little we can to nurture humanity. It is for us to remind people that there is another way of seeing, another way of being. To remind the world that defiance is an option and that conforming is not the only way. It is for us to remind people that kindness, grace and compassion are possibilities, even in the darkest of times.

And when we try to tell our stories, a little piece of hope comes alive in our hearts. For a little while, we feel that the tentacles of patriarchy, be it in the form of censorship, vicious trolls, systemic obstacles, don't matter. There is just the storyteller and her story. And that little flicker of hope.

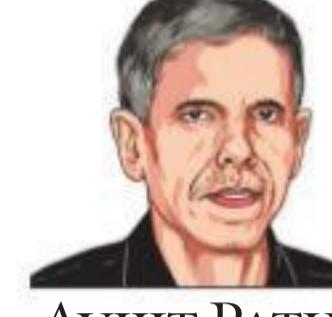
The writer is a screenwriter and film director

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The risks are high and rising. But an attack on Ukraine is not inevitable." — THE GUARDIAN

Monk of the moment

Thich Nhat Hanh's wisdom provides solace amid tyranny of the clock and calculations of productivity



AVIJIT PATHAK

"When we look at a chair, we see the wood, but we fail to observe the tree, the forest, the carpenter, or our own mind. When we meditate on it, we can see the entire universe in all its inter-woven and interdependent relations in the chair."

— Thich Nhat Hanh

AM I CAPABLE of invoking Thich Nhat Hanh — the Buddhist monk, who died on January 22, and whose engaged religiosity sought to illuminate our consciousness, and inspire us to live with mindfulness and the art of deep listening? I ask this question because I often fear that the age we live in — technocapitalism with its unlimited greed, militant nationalism with its inherent brute instincts — has made me incapable of living with love, peace and meditative calmness. I never visited Plum Village in France — the illuminating space that used to attract many modernists so that they could heal their wounded selves through his lessons of wisdom. However, over the years, Thich Nhat Hanh's books became my intimate companions. Neither Rene Descartes nor Karl Marx, neither Sigmund Freud nor Jean Paul Sartre could deprive me of the joy of his books. I forgot the "methodology" of social sciences, and I began to sing with him:

Breathing in, I know I am alive. Breathing out, I smile at life. Just sitting there and enjoying our in-breath and out-breath is already happiness. We are alive, and that is worthy of celebration.

This celebration does by no means indicate that we remain indifferent to the world — the violent world with hunger, malnutrition, war and terrorism. It would not be wrong to say that the monk who felt and experienced the violence of the Vietnam War gave us the lessons of engaged Buddhism — the quest for ending violence and moving towards a compassionate world. He was truly an apostle of peace. Was it, therefore, surprising that he always pleaded for mindful and compassionate listening? We must understand that most of us — mighty nation-states, or we with our inflated egos — have lost this art of communion and empathy. However, we should not forget that "the intention of deep listening and loving speech is to restore communication"; and once communication is restored "everything is possible, including peace and reconciliation".

Amid suicide bombers and carpet bombing, he could remind us that the foreign policy of the US is often characterised by the "lack of deep listening". No wonder, he could say: "If I were given the opportunity to be face to face with Osama bin Laden, I would try to understand all the suffering that had led him to violence." After all, peace is impossible without the redemption.

tive power of love and communication. We cannot negate this truth simply because our army generals, foreign policy experts, security strategists and politicians do not understand it.

Thich Nhat Hanh was a great teacher. With the rhythmic flow of his enchanting words and art of using metaphor, he could make us understand the meaning of living with the realisation of "interbeing". Nothing is discrete and insulated; everything is connected. For instance, the chair on which I am sitting is made of all "non-chair elements"; in a way, "the chair has no boundaries, no beginning, and no end". With the realisation of the "interdependent nature of all things", we could possibly overcome the violence implicit in our alienated, disengaged and fragmented existence. Even though I live in a world that normalises violence, and separates one from others, I allow myself to be possessed by his prophetic wisdom. "If someday I have to kill a caterpillar", I too might feel, "something of ourselves dies with the caterpillar".

It is true that the discourse of scientism and secularism has not succeeded in eliminating religion from the world. At the same time, we also know the discontents of the politics of religion — the way even today the non-reflexive priests of organised religions perpetuate all sorts of obnoxious practices; or the way, the gross emotions are often used by the alliance of spiritually impoverished fundamentalists and militant nationalists. Furthermore, in the age of instantaneity and consumption, we are also aware of the proliferation of all sorts of "self-help books". From life coaches to new-age gurus, the neoliberal industry is continually selling instant capsules of "enlightenment". However, this critical consciousness, for me, is not cynicism. Even in a desert, the flower, I believe, still blooms; and Thich Nhat Hanh was like this flower. With him, I too could echo with Walt Whitman, and sing: "I am large, I contain multitudes"; and I could also understand why even physicist David Bohm could say that "science must start from the wholeness of the implicate order to be able to see the real nature of each phenomenon".

As I write this piece, I begin to contemplate on the title of one of his books, *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment*. We know that we miss the moment. While the trauma of the past haunts us, the worry of the future causes stress. When we do not live "here and now", or when we miss this very moment, how can it be wonderful? But Thich Nhat Hanh reminded us of the "miracle of mindfulness". Amid the tyranny of the clock and calculation of "productivity", my restless soul is healed by his wisdom: "Don't drink your tea like someone who gulps down a cup of coffee during a work break. Drink your tea slowly and reverently, as if it is the axis on which the whole earth revolves — slowly, evenly, without rushing toward the future."

Yes, the monk has only changed his form: From a flowing river to floating monsoon clouds.

The writer taught sociology at JNU

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REPUBLIC & DIGNITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'What's at stake' (IE, January 26). Earlier this month, the news of a groom landing on a helicopter in Bijrad village, Barmer, Rajasthan was doing the rounds of social media. There was a similar news from UP last year. Despite two different parties holding office in these states, there is a consensus on the issues that must be resolved at the earliest. The next step is to erase any need for police protection.

Kirat Singh, Mohali

RAY OF HOPE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'We, the women' (IE, January 26). At present, there are 43.2 crore working-age women in India, of which 34.3 crore are not in paid formal work. According to estimates of McKinsey Global Institute, India could add \$770 billion to its GDP by 2025, simply by giving equal opportunities to women. I see a ray of hope in "the equal opportunity" provisions in the Code on Wages, 2019 in mitigating the inequality.

Jorawer Singh via e-mail

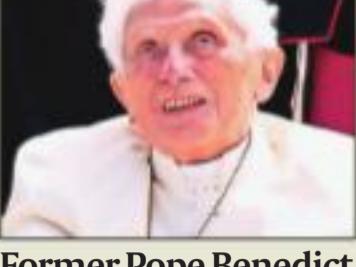
SIGN OF PREJUDICE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Her right to wear' (IE, January 25th). The decision of the government college in Udupi, Karnataka to not allow girls with hijab to attend classes is against constitutional norms. When youngsters are already under stress because of the pandemic, such prejudicial moves must be avoided.

Tushar Khedkar, Aurangabad

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE
WORLD



Former Pope Benedict XVI. Reuters

VATICAN

Critics of ex-pope scapegoating him over abuse: Vatican

Vatican city: The Vatican on Wednesday strongly defended Pope Benedict XVI's record in fighting clergy sexual abuse and cautioned against looking for "easy scapegoats and summary judgments," after an independent report faulted his handling of four cases of abuse when he was archbishop of Munich, Germany. The Holy See's editorial director, Andrea Tornielli, provided the Vatican's first substantial response to the report in an editorial that appeared in *L'Observatore Romano* where he recalled that Benedict was the first pope to meet with victims of abuse, that he had issued strong norms to punish priests who raped children and had directed the church to pursue a path of humility in seeking forgiveness for the crimes of its clerics. AP

UNITED STATES

Afghanistan 'hanging by thread': UN chief

United Nations: Afghanistan is "hanging by a thread," with millions suffering extreme hunger, education and social services on the brink of collapse and a lack of liquidity limiting the capacity to reach people in need, UNSC Antonio Guterres told the UNSC on Wednesday. "We need to suspend the rules and conditions that constrict not only Afghanistan's economy, but our lifesaving operations," Guterres told the 15-member council. REUTERS

FLORIDA

Capsized boat found; 1 dead, 38 missing

Miami: The US Coast Guard said on Wednesday that its crews recovered one body and continue to search for 38 other people in the ocean off Florida days after their boat left the Bahamas in a suspected human smuggling attempt. Capt. Jo-Ann F. Burdian said finding the other migrants alive is their priority. Searchers worked throughout the night after a solitary survivor was found Tuesday clinging to the overturned hull of a boat that capsized off the Florida coast during a suspected smuggling attempt. Crews already scanned a vast area about the size of New Jersey, Burdian said. AP

US-backed Syrian forces capture prison from IS

Beirut: US-backed Kurdish-led forces said they wrested control of the last section of a prison controlled by Islamic State militants and freed a number of child detainees used as human shields. It ended a weeklong assault by the extremists on one of the largest detention facilities in Syria.

"The whole prison is now under control," said Farhad Sham, a spokesman for the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, adding that about 3,000 inmates have surrendered. The militants had used child detainees as human shields slowing down the effort to retake the facility located in the northeastern city of Hassakeh, Kurdish officials said. The SDF said the total number of fugitives remained unclear. AP

Experts: Vaccine gap could set stage for new dangerous variant

THE NEW YORK TIMES
JANUARY 26

A CORONAVIRUS wave driven by the highly infectious Omicron variant may be cresting in parts of North America and Europe, but new cases are still climbing in less-vaccinated regions, and World Health Organization leaders warn that the global surge and the world's wide vaccine gap could set the stage for another dangerous variant.

Maria Van Kerkhove, the agency's Covid-19 technical lead, said in a livestream hosted on Tuesday that challenges existed in every country about reaching the most vulnerable unvaccinated communities.

"The fact remains that more than three billion people haven't received their first dose yet, so we have a long way to go," said Dr. Van Kerkhove, noting that about 21 million cases were reported to the agency last week. "There are many countries still in the middle of this Omicron wave."

New daily cases remain at record highs globally, averaging about 3.3 million — an increase of over 25 per cent over two weeks and a staggering rise compared with a rate of about 600,000 a day in early December, according to a *New York Times* database that uses data from Johns Hopkins University. Cases have continued to rise in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. And Omicron is still spreading in Eastern and Central Europe, where vaccination rates are lagging.

Although vaccine shortages are easing, only about 62 percent of the world's population has re-



About 21 million cases were reported to the agency last week, WHO said. Reuters

ceived at least one shot, and a striking divide between the rich and poor regions of the world remains. In low-income countries, only 10 per cent of the population has received at least one dose. In high- and upper-middle-income countries, 78 percent have received at least one dose.

The potential consequences of the vaccine gap have been underscored by Omicron, which was first identified in southern Africa. Low vaccination coverage creates conditions for widespread virus circulation and with that the possibility of new variants emerging.

During Tuesday's livestream, WHO officials again emphasised that the virus would continue to circulate and that Omicron would not be the last variant. The next one would need to be even more contagious to overtake Omicron, Dr. Van Kerkhove said, adding that the "big question" was whether it would be more severe. The agency said that without more equitable distribution and administration of vaccines, the pandemic would be prolonged. PTI

'Omicron lives much longer on plastic, skin than earlier variants'

Tokyo: The Omicron variant of coronavirus can remain alive on skin for over 21 hours, and more than eight days on plastic surfaces, which may be contributing to its faster spread compared with other strains, according to a study. The researchers from Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine in Japan analysed the differences in viral environmental stability between the SARS-CoV-2 Wuhan strain and all variants of concern (VOCs).

The yet-to-be-peer-reviewed study, posted recently on the preprint repository BioRxiv, found that the Alpha, Beta, Delta, and Omicron variants exhibited over two-fold longer survival on plastic and skin surfaces, than the Wuhan strain.

"The high environmental stability of these VOCs could increase the risk of contact transmission and contribute to their spread," the authors of study said.

On skin samples, average virus survival times were 8.6 hours for the original version, 19.6 hours for Alpha, 19.1 hours for Beta, 11 hours Gamma, 16.8 hours for Delta and 21.1 hours for Omicron, they said. There was no significant difference in survival times between Alpha and Beta variants, and they had similar environmental stability, which is consistent with the results of previous studies, according to the researchers. PTI

New ruling supported by Biden proposes startup visas to attract talent to US

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26

THE AMBITIOUS America COMPETES Act of 2022, which was introduced in the US House of Representatives on Tuesday, proposes to open up new vistas for talented individuals from across the world with a new startup visa.

President Joe Biden, who supports the legislation, said the America Competes Act, 2022 is an important step forward in advancing legislation that will make the supply chains stronger and reinvigorate the innovation engine of the country's economy to outcompete China and the rest of the world for decades to come.

The Act, among other things, amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to create a new classification of "W" non-immigrant for entrepreneurs with an ownership interest in a startup entity, essential employees of a

startup entity and also their spouses and children.

According to the provisions of the bill released by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the bill when signed into law directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish procedures for foreign nationals with an ownership interest in a startup entity to self-petition for lawful permanent resident status as an immigrant entrepreneur if the entity demonstrates a proven track record of success through job creation and significant revenue generation or receipt of investment capital.

It also directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish procedures for foreign nationals with an ownership interest in a startup entity to self-petition for classification as a W-1 non-immigrant and to receive extensions of such classification for up to eight years if the entity meets certain growth benchmarks. PTI

Senior civil servant Sue Gray could turn in her report to the government as soon as Wednesday. Johnson has previously promised to publish it in full and to address Parliament about its findings.

"When I receive it, of course I will do exactly what I said," Johnson said during a testy Prime Minister's Questions session in the House of Commons.

He batted away questions about the scandal and his future, saying he had "absolutely no intention" of resigning.

Asked by the opposition Labour Party Keir Starmer leader

Johnson refuses to resign as he awaits 'partygate' report

AP & REUTERS
LONDON, JANUARY 26

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson was braced for the conclusions of an investigation into allegations of lockdown-breaching parties, a document that could help him end weeks of scandal and discontent, or bring his time in office to an abrupt close.

Senior civil servant Sue Gray could turn in her report to the government as soon as Wednesday. Johnson has previously promised to publish it in full and to address Parliament about its findings.

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Asked by the opposition Labour Party Keir Starmer leader



MEANWHILE

MEET METHUSELAH, OLDEST LIVING AQUARIUM FISH

Meet Methuselah, the fish that likes to eat fresh figs, get belly rubs and is believed to be the oldest living aquarium fish in the world. In the Bible, Methuselah was Noah's grandfather and was said to have lived to be 969 years old. Methuselah the fish is not quite that ancient, but biologists at the California Academy of Sciences believe it is about 90 years old. Methuselah is a 4-foot-long, 40-pound Australian lungfish that was brought to the San Francisco museum in 1938 from Australia.

US willing to levy personal sanctions against Putin: Biden

Russia says 'destructive' sanctions will not hurt Putin personally

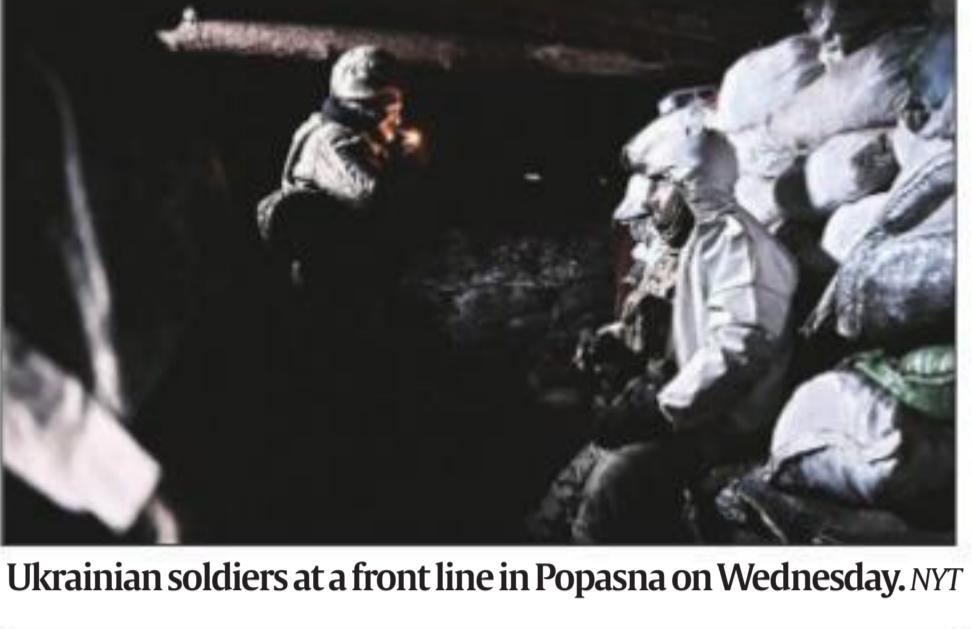
THE NEW YORK TIMES
JANUARY 26

WITH DIPLOMATIC talks seemingly stalled and the war of words between Washington and Moscow intensifying, President Biden says the US would be willing to impose personal sanctions against President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia if he directed Russian forces to invade Ukraine.

The threat to target the leader of a world power directly reflected both the Biden administration's intent to deter Russian aggression by conveying the high costs it would incur, as well as a recognition that Putin would most likely be the one who decides whether to invade.

Russia has said it has no intention of invading Ukraine, despite amassing forces along the country's borders to the north, east and south. Putin has not commented publicly on the crisis since December 23, a silence that has kept Western leaders unsure about his next move.

For weeks, the Biden administration has warned Russia that it would impose punishing economic sanctions if it invaded Ukraine. Asked on Tuesday whether those penalties could directly target Putin, Biden told reporters at the White House, "Yes, I would see that."



Ukrainian soldiers at a front line in Popasna on Wednesday. NYT

EXPLAINED How personal is personal?

WHILE IT was unclear exactly what measures Biden was referring to, the administration could move to seize an individual's assets and bar travel to the US by adding them to what is known as the Specially Designated Nationals list. But it is far from clear that such a move would matter to Putin.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said that threats of direct sanctions against the Russian

leadership would not have any serious effect financially or change its course of action.

"It wouldn't be painful politically — it would be destructive," Peskov said on Wednesday.

At a news conference last week, Biden said he expected that Russia would ultimately invade Ukraine. But he acknowledged on Tuesday how hard it is to read the Russian leader.

Britain's foreign secretary, Liz Truss, signaled on Wednesday that her government would also consider directly targeting Putin with sanctions. "We're not ruling anything out," she said.

Washington is expected to deliver a written response this week to Russian security demands. AP

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Justice Breyer retires, giving Biden chance to pick liberal judge

LAWRENCE HURLEY & ANDREW CHUNG
JANUARY 26

LIBERAL JUSTICE Stephen Breyer, at 83 the oldest member of the US Supreme Court, will retire at the end of the court's current term that runs through the end of June, NBC News and CNN reported on Wednesday, giving President Joe Biden the opportunity to appoint a successor who could serve for decades.

Breyer authored important rulings upholding abortion rights and healthcare access, helped advance LGBT rights and questioned the constitutionality of the death penalty but often found himself in dissent on a court that has moved rightward and currently has a 6-3 conservative majority.

He was appointed to the Supreme Court by Democratic President Bill Clinton in 1994. Only conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, one of two Black men ever on the high court, has served longer among the current justices, joining it in 1991.

Biden during the 2020 presidential election campaign pledged to nominate a Black woman to fill any Supreme Court vacancy, which would be a historic first. Biden's fellow Democrats hold a razor-thin majority in the US Senate, which under the US Constitution gets to confirm Supreme Court nominees.

Potential Biden nominees include Ketanji Brown Jackson, a former Breyer law clerk who was



Justice Stephen Breyer. NYT

confirmed by the Senate last June to serve on an influential US appellate court, and Leandra Kruger, who serves on the California SC.

A Biden appointee would not change the court's ideological balance, but would enable him to refresh its liberal wing with a much younger jurist in the lifetime post.

Biden's Republican predecessor Donald Trump appointed three justices during his four years in office, all of whom were young enough to serve for decades. The Senate, then under Republican control, confirmed Trump's appointment of conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett in 2020 after the death of liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

After Biden defeated Trump in the 2020 election, some liberal activists urged Breyer to step aside while Democrats control the Senate, concerned that if he does not do so, Republicans could block confirmation of his successor in the chamber or a future Republican president could be able to name his replacement and tilt the court even further to the right. REUTERS

US varsity system's trustees vote to include caste as protected category

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 26



California State University. NYT

system opposed such a move. The development impacts all the CSU systems over 23 campuses

and eight off-campus centres enrolling 4,85,550 students with 55,909 faculty and staff.

Notably, Cal State is the largest four-year public university system in the country.

"Caste oppressed students, community members, and the labour movement should shoulder to shoulder to tell our truths and secure this win," Thenmozhi Soundararajan, executive director of Equality Labs, a Dalit Civil Rights Organisation, said in a statement.

As many as 112 Cal State faculty, along with nearly 500 allied

academics, numerous civil rights organisations and labour unions submitted letters of support for the addition of caste to the Cal State Non-Discrimination Policy and to urge the Cal State trustees to ratify without delay the California Faculty Association's historic Collective Bargaining Agreement that includes caste protections and furthers caste equity for millions of CSU students, staff, faculty and workers.

"CFA members are in the process of voting on the agreement between CSU management and CFA. This agreement includes the inclusion of caste as a protected category. It is about non-discrimination not discrimination," said CFA president Charles Toombs.

Following these decisive actions, the inclusion of caste in the tentative agreement is another important move towards equality and nondiscrimination for some of the most vulnerable members of the CSU community, said Ruvani Fonseka, assistant professor, San Jose State University School of Social Work a signatory to the faculty letter. PTI

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value and can be traded freely. A non-fungible object, by contrast, has its own distinct value, like an old house or a classic car.

Cross this notion with cryptocurrency technology known as the blockchain and you get NFTs. They are effectively digital certificates of authenticity that can be attached to digital art or, well, pretty much anything else that comes in digital form — audio files, video clips, animated stickers, even a news article read online.

"We're trying to build a bridge between the NFT world and the fine art world," said Florian Picasso, the artist's great-grandson.

The artist's descendants are

playing close to the vest, to drum

up interest and protect — for now — a family heirloom. They're showing only a sliver of the underside of the work linked to the NFTs, a ceramic piece about the size of a large salad bowl. The exposed parts show forms like a thick yellow line, a dribbling green splotch, and a brushed-on number "58" at the base.

Marina Picasso says the cherished pottery piece dates to October 1958, when she was a child.

"Everything is evolving," said Florian Picasso, insisting that the NFT honors the great artist.

"I think it fits within Picasso's legacies because we are paying tribute to him and his way of working, which was always being creative," he said.

15

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 2022

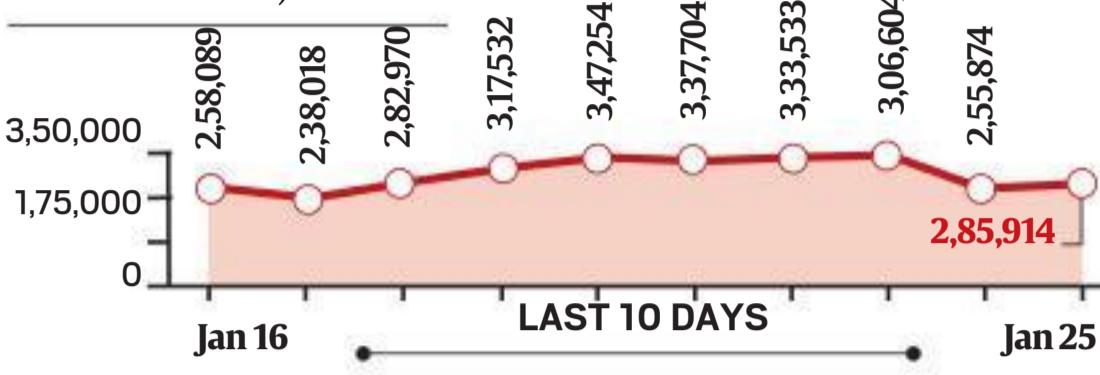
E. EXPLAINED

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON JAN 25

695 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN	New cases 2,85,914	Active cases 22,23,018	Deaths 665
Weekly CFR: 0.37% Overall CFR: 1.36% Total deaths: 4,91,127			

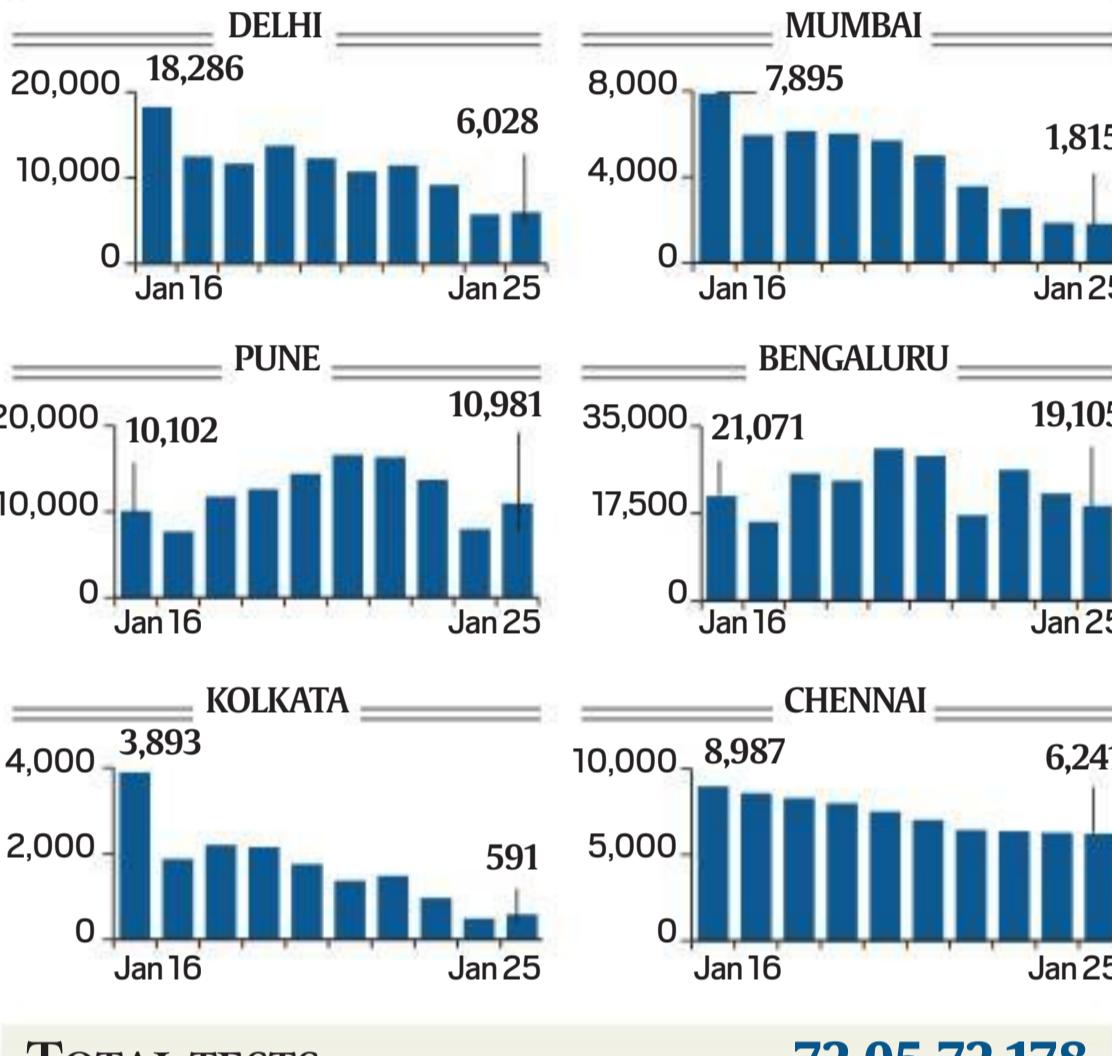
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON JANUARY 25			Weekly positivity
	New Cases	Active Cases	Deaths	
Kerala	55,475	2,86,077	154	43.85%
Karnataka	41,400	3,50,772	52	21.71%
Maharashtra	33,914	302,923	95	21.06%
Tamil Nadu	30,055	2,11,270	48	19.29%
Gujarat	16,608	1,34,261	28	15.22%

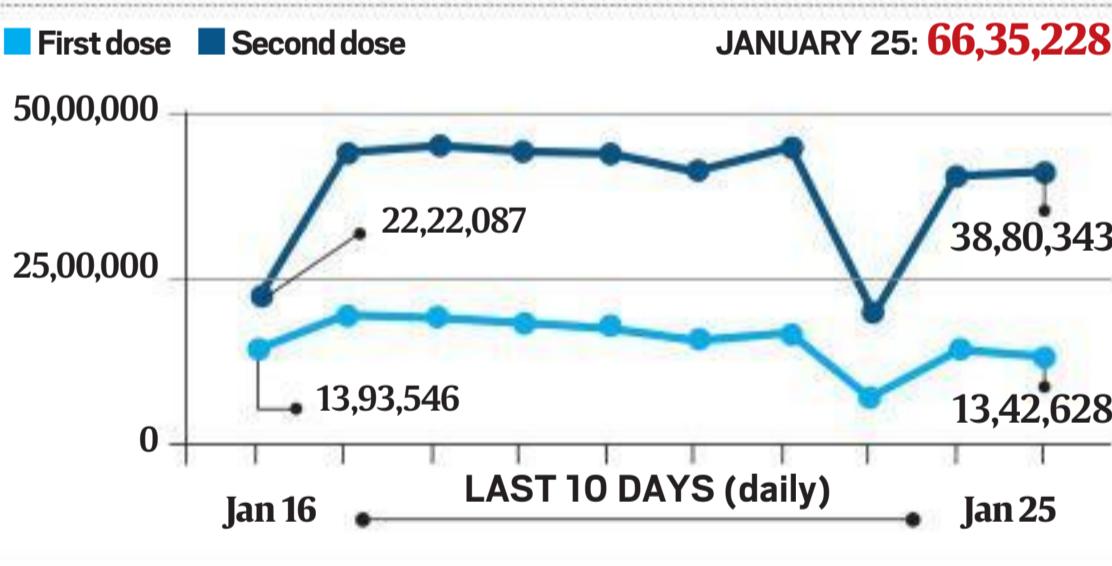
CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS



TOTAL TESTS

TESTS ON JAN 25	WEEKLY POSITIVITY	OVERALL POSITIVITY
17,69,745	16.61%	5.56%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES **163,58,44,536**
(Adults 1st dose: 88,92,64,142; adults second dose: 69,36,42,495;
15-18 age group first dose: 4,35,09,633; precautionary doses: 94,28,266)



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Why this winter has been colder, wetter and less foggy than usual

ANJALI MARAR

PUNE, JANUARY 26

FOR MANY people, especially in North India, the winter of 2021-22 is appearing to be unusually cold and unusually long. The days, in particular, have felt colder and chillier than normal. Why is this happening?

Have the days indeed been colder?

Since December 2021, maximum temperatures across the North, Northwest and Central India regions have consistently remained below normal, resulting in "cold day" conditions. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a "cold day" as one in which the maximum temperature falls below 16°C.

This January, Delhi has witnessed nine days (until January 26) when the maximum temperature remained below 16°C, with the lowest maximum temperature recorded at 12.2°C on Tuesday, reflected in the IMD's January 26 update for the previous 24 hours (see graph).

Similarly cold Januaries in recent years were felt in 2003, which saw 19 "cold days" in January, 2015 (11 days), and 2010, 2013, and 2004 (9 days each). There are several days still to go in January 2022, but it is unlikely that there would be many "cold days". On Wednesday, the maximum temperature at Sardar Jang was 16.4°C.

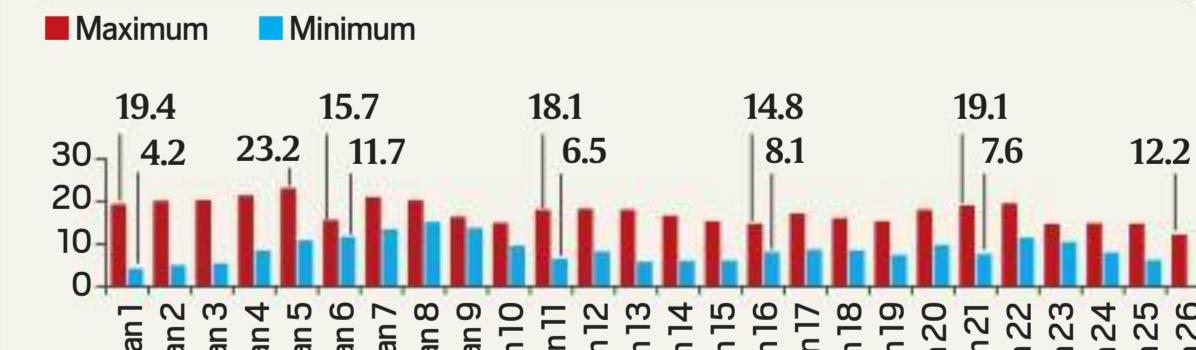
It isn't just Delhi. Since late last week, many places in Maharashtra have experienced "cold day" conditions as well. Maximum temperatures at several places in Madhya Maharashtra and Konkan, including Mahabaleshwar, Pune, Mumbai, and Nashik, have been 6°-8°C below normal.

"Cold days" often mean warmer nights. "Persistent clouding blocks out the rays of the Sun and heating during the day, but keeps the nights warmer than normal," said R K Jenamani, senior scientist at the National Weather Forecasting Centre, Delhi.

What weather systems are at play?

Winters over India are directly affected by the intensity and frequency of western disturbances – eastward propagating wind

DELHI: MAXIMUM & MINIMUM TEMP (°C) IN JANUARY



Note: Temperatures are for the preceding 24 hours (8:30 am on previous date to 8:30 am on given date) Source: IMD; readings for Safdarjung station

streams, capable of inducing rain or snow-bearing weather systems along their path.

Until January 26, seven western disturbances had passed over India. These caused hailstorms in northern Maharashtra, and heavy rainfall in Tamil Nadu.

"Frequent and higher numbers of western disturbances are associated with La Niña," said D Sivanand Pai, head, Climate

Monitoring and Services at IMD, Pune. At present, moderate intensity La Niña conditions are prevailing.

After a western disturbance crosses India, cold winds from the far north penetrate to lower latitudes, and can reach up to even Telangana and Maharashtra, leading to colder weather, and sometimes to cold wave conditions. Since consecutive western dis-

turbances were separated by 10 days earlier this month, it caused a prolonged cold spell in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Bihar between January 11 and 20.

How rainy has the winter been?

Precipitation, mostly snow and some rainfall, is common during winter over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh. This January, however, has seen widespread rain across the central, northwestern, northern, eastern, and northeastern regions. As many as 25 states or Union Territories have recorded rainfall varying from excess to large excess, the only exception being Mizoram, Tripura, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep.

Delhi is witnessing the wettest January in 122 years. The monthly rainfall recorded at the Safdarjung (88.6 mm) and Palam (110 mm) stations are 404% and 740% above normal respectively. Other states and UTs with large surpluses this month (until January 26) include Uttarakhand (106 mm), Chandigarh (207.7 mm), Himachal (172.1 mm), J&K (168

mm), and Punjab (104.6 mm).

Hasn't it been less foggy than usual?

Yes. Delhi in December normally witnesses 278 hours of fog – during which visibility falls below 1,000 metres – over 26 days, but December 2021 saw only 75 hours of fog spread over 22 days. This was the lowest for December since 1982.

In January too, Delhi remained affected by fog 252 hours against a normal of 292 hours – the lowest since 2008. The ongoing winter (until January 26) has recorded the lowest fog hours since 1991-92 over Delhi.

How has agriculture been impacted?

Farmers have been complaining about fungus attacks and lower yields: of grape in Nashik due to fog, and of chana in MP and mustard in Rajasthan due to occasional rain during the harvest season.

Rabi crops mostly are grown on soil moisture with little or no extra irrigation. However, sporadic rain has affected crops.

INPUTS: PARTHA SARATHI BISWAS



@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

How Padma Awards are given

Former West Bengal CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has turned down the Padma Bhushan. How are the awardees chosen, is their consent sought, and how often have others refused the awards over the years?

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

ONTUESDAY, the government announced the names of 128 people, ranging from veteran politicians, businessmen, scientists and doctors to artists and ordinary people engaged in public service, who have been selected for conferment of Padma Awards this year.

This was followed by controversy when former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee selected for the Padma Bhushan, turned it down. Singer Sandhya Mukhopadhyay's family, meanwhile, claimed that she was offered the award but did not accept it; the award list did not have her name.

Is the recipient's consent sought?

There is no provision for seeking the recipient's written or formal consent before announcing the selection. However, every recipient receives a call from the Ministry of Home Affairs informing him or her about the selection. If the recipient wishes to be excluded from the award list, the name is removed, ministry sources said.

In Bhattacharjee's case, they said, a call was made to his home on Tuesday morning. "However, since he was unwell, his wife picked up the call and she was informed about the conferment of the award. If he did not want it, he should have informed us," a ministry official said.

Is it the first such refusal?

Several politicians, journalists, artists and eminent personalities have refused to accept an award in the past, for a variety of reasons. Among the first to do so was freedom fighter and India's first education minister, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who refused to accept the Bharat Ratna saying those on selection committees for national honours cannot be given awards. He was later given the award in 1992, posthumously.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee joins several senior Left leaders who have refused Padma Awards. In the 1990s, the late CPM veteran E M S Namboodiripad, Kerala's first CM, had turned down an offer by the then P V Narasimha Rao government to award him the Padma Vibhushan. In 2007, the late Jyoti Basu, West Bengal's longest serving chief minister, had turned down a proposal to confer him the Padma Vibhushan. The CPM Politburo had cited party norms against accepting "state awards".



Before Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee (left), former West Bengal CM Jyoti Basu (right) had turned down a Padma award in 2007. Express Archive

public service is involved.

The categories in which the Padma Awards are given include Art, Social Work, Public Affairs, Science & Engineering, Trade & Industry, Medicine, Literature & Education, Civil Service and Sports. Awards are also given for propagation of Indian culture, protection of human rights, wild life protection and other categories.

The Padma Awards were instituted in 1954 along with the Bharat Ratna. At that time there was only the Padma Vibhushan, with three sub-categories — Pahela Varg, Dusra Varg and Tisra Varg. These were subsequently renamed Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri, respectively, through a Presidential notification issued on January 8, 1955. In 1978, 1979 and the years between 1993 and 1997, Padma awards were not announced.

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SENSEX: 57,858.15 ▲ 366.64 (0.64%) NIFTY: 17,277.95 ▲ 128.85 (0.75%) NIKKEI: 27,011.33 ▼ 120.01 HANG SENG: 24,289.90 ▲ 46.29 FTSE: 7,498.69 ▲ 127.23 DAX: 15,447.36 ▲ 323.49

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market as of January 25, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg. Crude oil (Indian basket) as of January 24.

Domestic equity, currency and bullion markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Republic Day; International market data till 1900 IST

CORPORATE WATCH
INSOLVENCY

Amid Amazon-FRL row, Future moving SC over repayments adds a fresh twist

KARUNJIT SINGH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 26

CASH-STRAPPED FUTURE Retail (FRL) on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court to challenge potential insolvency proceedings over missing loan repayments, even as independent directors of the company rejected a Rs 7,000-crore offer by US-based private equity firm Samara Capital backed by Amazon.

Litigation by Amazon has become the key roadblock in the completion of the sale of Future Group's retail, wholesale and warehousing assets to Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), with the US e-commerce giant claiming that the proposed sale violates an agreement that it signed with FRL in 2019.

The fresh developments in the case add to the web of legal challenges and twists in the three-way fight for control over the retail major.

Why is FRL challenging potential insolvency proceedings?

FRL missed a payment of Rs 3,494.6 crore due to lenders on December 31 as part of a one-time resolution (OTR) plan to resolve liabilities. The company had sought a 30-day review period to complete the payment but has now sought a relaxation in the review period and sought to restrain lenders from declaring the company a non-performing asset (NPA), which may open it up to insolvency proceedings.

Experts noted that FRL would likely rely on past cases in which courts had held that lenders should look at the overall health and standing of a corporation and that large corporations in particular should not be forced into insolvency proceedings just because they have defaulted.

Prashant Shivadas, partner at law firm Shivadas & Shivadas, said, "There are instances where courts have held that just because they have defaulted doesn't mean you can bring a large corporation which is a going concern to insolvency proceedings. You have to see balance sheets, financial performance, standing in the market."

Why has FRL failed to make payments to lenders in line with the OTR?

The company said in a regulatory filing that "due to ongoing litigations" with Amazon.com NV Investment Holdings LLC, the company was not able to complete the planned monetisation of the specified business as contemplated in OTR Plan."

The case has undergone multiple twists. Amazon, in 2019, signed a pact whereby it acquired 49 per cent stake in

₹3,494.6 CRORE

■ Future Retail (FRL) missed a payment of ₹3,494.6 crore due to lenders on December 31 as part of a one-time resolution (OTR) plan to resolve liabilities

Future Coupons Private Ltd. (FCPL). Then, Amazon-backed Samara Capital, in June 2020, signed a non-binding term sheet to acquire Future Retail's businesses for Rs 7,000 crore.

Two months later, in August 2020, the Future group announced a Rs 24,713-crore deal for sale of the retail and wholesale business and the logistics and warehousing arms to Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL), a subsidiary of RIL.

Amazon then moved the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) opposing the proposed sale of the retail businesses to RIL and won a stay, which was later upheld by the Supreme Court.

Amazon had cited covenants in the agreement it signed when it bought 49 per cent stake in Future Coupons in 2019, which gave it a call option on acquiring Future Retail – promoted by FCPL – within 3-10 years. FCPL holds about 10 per cent stake in FRL.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI), however, in December 2021, withdrew the approval for the original 2019 deal, claiming that Amazon "misled" the regulator to believe that its purpose was its interest in the business of FCPL and "suppressed" that the purpose of establishing a strategic interest in Future Retail and to get a "foot-in-the-door" in India's retail sector. The order by the CCI may void the agreement which Amazon has cited to oppose Future Group's plans to sell retail assets to RIL.

Amazon has challenged the CCI order before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT). It has also proposed to assist FRL raise funds to pay lenders through a Rs 7,000-crore deal from Samara Capital and asked the company to abandon its proposed deal with Reliance.

Amazon had sent a proposal to the independent directors of FRL, who have since rejected the offer "as an attempt to buy the company's assets on the cheap", noting that the offer would not be sufficient to cover Future Retail's outstanding liabilities.

Directors at FRL also raised concerns about the time it may take to finalise any deal with Samara Capital highlighting that the company needs funds to pay lenders urgently.

BRIEFLY

'Green' Budget

New Delhi: The Budget will go 'green' again, with documents available mostly digitally, officials said.

Kidwai resigns

New Delhi: Cipla said Naina Lal Kidwai has resigned as independent director on its board, effective March 31.

Jio-bp charging

New Delhi: Jio-bp opened one of India's largest EV charging hubs in Delhi.

Adani Wilmar

New Delhi: Adani Wilmar's IPO will open Thursday. PTI

ING REBATES to computer makers Dell, Hewlett-Packard Co, NEC and Lenovo for buying most of their chips from Intel.

The Luxembourg-based General Court, Europe's second-highest, criticised the EU competition enforcer's analysis and annulled the fine.

"The European Commission's analysis is incomplete and does not make it possible to establish to the requisite legal standard that the rebates at issue were capable of having, or likely to have, anticompetitive effects," judges said.

The court annulled the entire article of the contested decision which imposed a fine of 1.06 billion euros on Intel for the infringement. REUTERS

THE EUROPEAN Commission, in a global first, proposed a set of digital rights and principles on Wednesday that aim to protect people's rights, support democracy and ensure a fair and safe online environment.

Those rights and principles also cover digital devices, ensuring that the products support the bloc's sustainability and green transition goals, with details provided on their environmental impact and energy consumption.

The declaration of digital rights and principles "establishes once and for all that what is illegal offline should also be illegal online," EU industry chief Thierry Breton said in a statement.

The EU executive said the digital rights and principles, which

are based on European values, aim to provide a guide for policymakers and companies when dealing with new technologies.

An EU document outlines the bloc's commitment to strengthening the democratic framework for a digital transformation that benefits everyone and technological solutions that, among other things, respect people's rights and promote inclusion. EU digital chief

Margrethe Vestager said while Europe was not alone in this effort, it aimed to be the torchbearer.

"We see similar discussions happen in Australia, in India and in the United States," she told a news conference. "We aim to be in the forefront of this global momentum."

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IOC to meet Peng during Beijing Games



Peng Shuai is likely to meet IOC president Thomas Bach.

'AFC's organisation destroyed dream'

India's women's football coach questions Asian body's 'unprofessional way' in handling bubble breach

MIHIR VASAVDA
JANUARY 26

GETTING INTO the forensic details of the bubble breach like a cop that he once was, a visibly shattered India coach Thomas Dennerby blamed the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for 'destroying' his team's dream.

In a no-holds-barred interaction, the 62-year-old Swede said the continental body was 'unprofessional' in the manner in which the bio-bubble was handled, accused them of a delay in informing about the positive cases at the Indian team hotel and being unwilling to engage in a 'solution-oriented' discussion.

On Sunday, India were forced to withdraw from the Asian Cup after the team could not name at least 13 players, mandatory as per rules, for their Group A match against Chinese Taipei following a Covid-19 outbreak within the squad. As on Wednesday, Dennerby said 19 players and six officials were infected.

Speaking from his hotel room in Navi Mumbai, where the entire team is in isolation, Dennerby said the team and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) could've done nothing more in terms of taking precautions. "Honestly, we are not happy with the AFC's tournament organisation and lack of solution. In one way, it destroyed our dreams," he said.

The 12-nation competition is being held across three venues in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune. A Local Organising Committee was managing the on-ground logistics in the build-up to the tournament but it is learnt that the team hotels were chosen by the AFC following an inspection and the bio-bubble protocols, too, were set by them.

Dennerby gave a day-by-day report of the team's activities from the time they landed in Mumbai on January 13. The team had taken a commercial flight into Mumbai from Kochi.

Once all players tested negative, the team held its first training session on the evening of January 14. On January 16, the first case of Covid in a squad player who had entered the bubble by then, was reported within the team. Then, on January 18 when everyone had to undergo a mandatory pre-match RT-PCR test, the team's physio, strength and conditioning coach, and one player tested positive.

"She mentioned again that she is looking forward to a meeting with IOC President Thomas Bach and Emma Terho, the Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, to which we had invited her in the first conversation."

The IOC has had several phone calls with the player but international concerns over her safety and wellbeing have not been allayed. The Women's Tennis Association has suspended tournaments in China due to its concerns over Peng's safety.

China has not directly commented on Peng's initial post, but said after the WTA's move that it "opposes the politicisation of sports."

The Beijing Olympics will start on



The team had taken a commercial flight into Mumbai from Kochi and returned a positive for a player inside the bubble. File

REUTERS
BEIJING, JANUARY 26

THE INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee talked with Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai last week and will meet her in Beijing during next month's Winter Olympics, it said on Wednesday.

Peng's situation became a matter of concern in November when the former women's number-one doubles player alleged that a former Chinese vice premier,

Zhang Gaoli, had sexually assaulted her in the past. After that social media post, she was absent from public view for nearly three weeks.

Last month Peng said she had never accused anyone of sexually assaulting her, and that the post she made had been misunderstood. Zhang has not commented on the matter.

"Since the first call that the IOC held with Peng Shuai on 21 November 2021, the IOC team has kept in touch with her and had a number of conversations with her – the last one just the past week," an IOC spokesperson said.

"She mentioned again that she is looking forward to a meeting with IOC President Thomas Bach and Emma Terho, the Chair of the IOC Athletes' Commission, to which we had invited her in the first conversation."

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DENNERBY LISTS OUT DAY-BY-DAY EVENTS

The India coach provided a day-by-day account of the team's situation from their arrival in Mumbai on January 13 to the time they were forced to withdraw from the Asian Cup:

JAN 13: The team takes a commercial flight into Mumbai from Kochi. Players tested at airport, all negative.

JAN 14: First training session held under lights in Navi Mumbai.

JAN 15/16: Another round of testing; first positive case detected in the team.

JAN 17: Team hotel staff, who are a part of the bubble, undergo RT-PCR tests as per rules.

JAN 18: Players and team officials, undergo mandatory pre-match testing. The team's physio, strength and conditioning coach, and one player test positive.

JAN 19: Seven members of hotel staff test positive. According to Dennerby,

though, there was a one-day delay from the AFC's end in informing the hotel about the cases.

JAN 20: India play Iran. After the match, several players start showing symptoms.

JAN 21: Another round of Covid testing takes place on players and team officials.

JAN 22: Number of positive cases increase to 10. Two players, meanwhile, have fractures from injuries suffered in the first match.

JAN 23: Two hours before the Chinese Taipei match, at 5.30pm, players are tested again. Two more players test positive, taking the tally to 12. At 7.30pm, match is called off.

about the same. Eventually, the Asian federation called off the match at the kick-off time, 7.30 pm. "What was AFC waiting for? If AFC already sent us out of this tournament, why do it this painful way? No respect, no compassion, no empathy..."

On Monday, the AFC said that India's results would be considered null and void, marking a heartbreaking end for the hosts, who were playing in the Asian Cup for the first time after 19 years.

Dennerby said he tried holding an online meeting to talk with his players after the team had to withdraw but the poor internet connection in the hotel meant even that wasn't possible.

"Eventually, I sent a message on our group. It was a heartbreaking time," the former Sweden and Nigeria coach said. "This is my worst feeling as a head coach ever. Me and the team are devastated. Our dreams are forever killed."

In an emailed statement to *The Indian Express*, the AFC said they were deeply disappointed with the unexpected and sad turn of events' but did not address the allegations made by Dennerby.

"The AFC has successfully conducted major tournaments across Asia in the face of several challenges posed by the pandemic by implementing strict medical and health protocols that are in line with the host country's medical regulations," the AFC said.

"We will continue to focus on delivering the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 in close collaboration with the AIFF and the LOC by prioritising the safety, health and wellbeing of all the players, officials and stakeholders."

Indian women pipped 2-3 by Korea in semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUSCAT, JANUARY 26

THE INDIAN women's hockey team's hopes of defending the Asia Cup title went up in smoke as Korea secured a come-from-behind 2-3 win to qualify for the final of the continental event at the Sultan Qaboos Complex here on Wednesday.

India started brightly and took the lead in the 28th minute through Vandana Kataria before Korea made a brilliant comeback after the change of ends and scored thrice through skipper Enubi Cheon (31st), Seung Ju Lee (45th) and Hyejin Cho (47th) to stun the holders. India will now play the loser of the second semifinal between Japan and China in the third-fourth place play-off match on Friday.

If the first two quarters belonged to India, the Koreans dominated the game after the half time break. India earned a penalty corner early on in the first quarter but Gurjit Kaur's flick was saved by the Korean keeper.

Minutes later Shamila Devi's reverse hit from top of the circle flew inches over the goal. Lalremtsiami gave India the lead soon from close range but the goal was disallowed because of a foul inside the circle. Seconds from the end of the first quarter, Vandana's reverse hit try was saved from close range by the Korean custodian.

The Indians came close twice and were by far the better side on display but failed to translate their chances into goals. The Koreans looked dangerous on the counter but the Indian defence was up to the task.

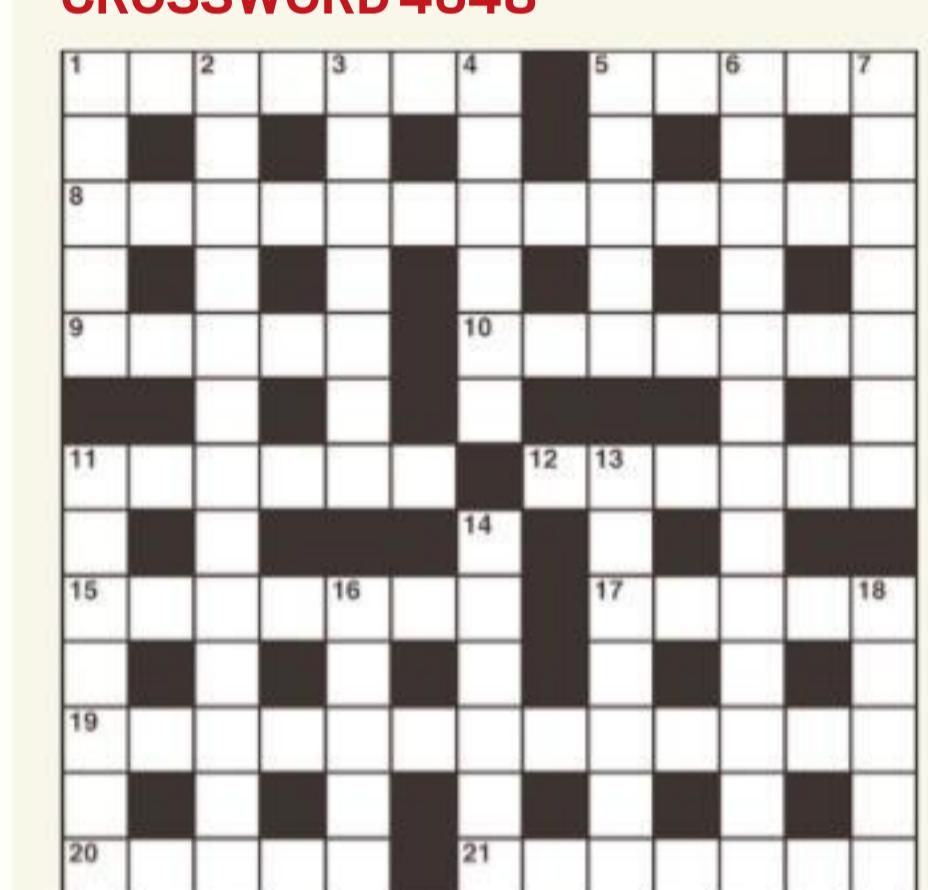
In the second quarter Korea secured their first penalty corner but failed to breach the Indian defence as skipper Savita produced a double save. Two minutes from the breather, India secured back-to-back penalty corners and Vandana this time scored with a rebound from the second set piece to give the defending champions a 1-0 lead at half time.

The Koreans came out a completely different side after the breather and drew parity in the 31st minute when Cheon scored a scrappy goal from a penalty corner after the initial shot was saved by Savita.

Poor penalty corner conversion cost India dearly as once again Gurjit was off target.

Just at the stroke of the third quarter, Korea surprised India by taking the lead through Lee as Savita made a mess of a routine save. Two minutes into the fourth and final quarter, Korea made it 3-1 in their favour when Cho pushed in the ball past an off-balance Savita after receiving a pass from Hyeyeong Shin. With time running out, Lalremtsiami reduced the margin for India six minutes from the hooter, guiding in Vandana's high ball but it was too little too late.

CROSSWORD 4648



ACROSS

- 1 Registers the fastest times yet (7)
- 5 Some broken nibs enrage a writer (5)
- 8 Style of architecture that may be dropped (13)
- 9 Settle without recourse to law (5)
- 10 Trooped out to see a naval weapon (7)
- 11 It's a struggle for an amphibian to get around (6)
- 12 Country letters (6)
- 13 Honest part of one's goal (7)
- 17 Discover and get rid of weeds perhaps (3,2)
- 19 Go out of your way to show how supple you are? (4,9)
- 20 Aim to include me? Correct (5)
- 21 Members of the orchestra who take a bow (7)

DOWN

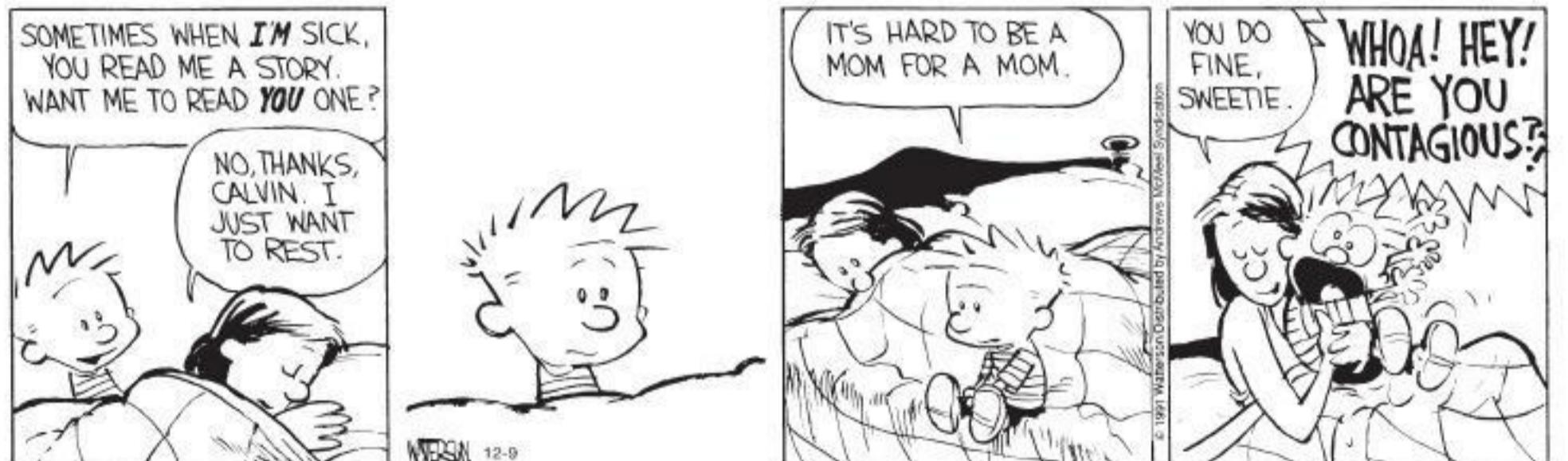
- 1 One knows them to be well-informed (5)
- 2 Is it measured in round figures? (13)
- 3 Appear on stage again or make another record (2-5)
- 4 A steed in not very frisky form (6)
- 5 Risk involved in uncertain cures (5)
- 6 Joining a club used by electricians (9,4)
- 7 Apprehensive over sun treatment (7)
- 11 Be equal to change in uniform (7)
- 13 His wife will be late (7)
- 14 Glues pieces of wood (6)
- 16 Mocked the wrong bid for example (5)
- 18 Sort of steps taken to get vermin (5)

Solutions Crossword 4647: Across: 1 Tempo, 8 Well done, 9 Cairn, 10 Windlass, 11 Cache, 12 Ill, 16 Jetson, 17 Appear, 18 Pan, 23 Wrists, 24 Cypress, 25 Sabre, 26 Derelict, 27 China. Down: 2 Emanated, 3 Purchase, 4 Menial, 5 Bladé, 6 Loyal, 7 Verse, 12 Imp, 13 Lap, 14 Approach, 15 Cast Iron, 19 Africa, 20 Acids, 21 Snark, 22 Psalm.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You're looking for more respect, naturally enough. You may have been pinning your hopes on developments in your career, or in whatever other area guarantees your public status, yet the chances are temporarily receding. You may need to wait for another few months.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You may make a clean sweep if family and domestic improvements are on the agenda, and be sure that relatives are in no doubt as to your true intentions. It's possible that someone is about to let you down. That should give you good reason to have a back-up plan.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

It's definitely time to get out and about and not worry too much about what other people are doing. You may hear news that affects plans to join in a creative and enjoyable activity, so don't hang around. The quicker you get going, the sooner you'll reap the rewards.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Some of you are much more affected by current tensions than others, but all of you should stay alive to possibilities that you're normally ignore or rule out of order. Some plans may need reconsidering, but others should take care of themselves. Your job is to take each case on its own merits.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You seem to be more concerned with public life than with private affairs. Career developments you thought were finished with long ago may require just a little more attention over coming weeks. In any event, it will be pleasant to go over old ground and return to former habits.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You should let your ambitions loose. Everyone should have their chance to sit at the top table, and now is your turn to grab the limelight, so please give in to a lack of confidence. If you are hit by the occasional doth, then summon expert assistance.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

So much that's important is taking place behind the scenes. The air is thick with conspiracies, but you'll be unable to keep anything secret for long. You may be encouraged to take a completely different approach at work from what is expected of you or considered normal.

JUMBLE WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

If it doesn't matter who wins or loses, then why do they ____? - Vince Lombardi (4,5)

PVEE



AKLSCS



AFYOR



EORRKP



SOLUTION: PEVE, FORK, SLACKS, POKER

Answer: If it doesn't matter who wins or loses, then why do they keep score?

SUDOKU 4727

Difficulty Level 5s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level
1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;
3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;
5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4726



BRIEFLY

Biennial Cup could prevent migrant deaths: Fifa prez

Athens: FIFA president Gianni Infantino said that increased revenues from a biennial World Cup would create opportunities for Africans who otherwise could migrate and find "death in the sea" crossing the Mediterranean. The idea of a World Cup every two years has been gathering steam with Infantino trying to get support from national federations, saying the switch would create an extra \$4.4 billion in revenues for the world body. "This topic is not about whether we want a World Cup every two years, but about what do we want to do for the future of football," Infantino said. "If we think about the rest of world and the vast majority of Europe, then we have to think about what football brings. Football is about opportunity, about hope, about the national teams. We cannot say to the rest of world give us your money, but watch us on TV. We need to include them. We need to find ways to include the whole world to give hope to Africans so that they don't need to cross the Mediterranean in order to find maybe a better life but, more probably, death in the sea." **REUTERS**

Martial leaves on loan to Sevilla

London: Sevilla have confirmed the loan signing of Manchester United forward Anthony Martial for the remainder of the season after the France international sealed his desired move away from Old Trafford. "Sevilla FC and Manchester United FC have reached an agreement which will see Anthony Martial join the club on loan until the end of the current season," the LaLiga side said. The 26-year-old has started only two premier league games this campaign with his final appearance coming off the bench in the 1-0 win over West Ham United. Martial joined United in the 2015/16 season and scored 79 goals in 269 appearances, but had grown into an increasingly peripheral figure this season. United interim manager Ralf Rangnick had praised Martial for the way he had conducted himself after the win over The Hammers, despite the forward making it clear he wanted to leave the club. **REUTERS**

Concussed Mane scores for Senegal

Bafoussam: Sadio Mane got up from a horrible clash of heads that left him dazed on the ground, possibly with a concussion, to score a goal and help put Senegal into the quarterfinals of the African Cup of Nations. Senegal won 2-0 against Cape Verde, which had two players sent off in the last 16 game in Cameroon's western city of Bafoussam on Tuesday. The second red card was dished out to Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha when he raced out of his area and tried to head a ball clear with Mane chasing it down. The players' heads clashed badly as they both leaped in the air and Vozinha clearly sustained a concussion as he tried to get up.

AP

TOP SEED Daniil Medvedev battled back from two sets down and saved a match point against Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime to reach the Australian Open semi-finals with a 6-7(4), 3-6, 7-6(2), 7-5, 6-4 victory on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old Russian had his back firmly up against the wall for much of an absorbing contest as Auger-Aliassime produced some stunning tennis on Rod Laver Arena.

But he simply refused to lie down as he overturned a two-set deficit for only the second time in his career to set up a Friday semi-final against Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas who he beat at the same stage a year ago.

It was the kind of resilience absent nine-time champion Novak Djokovic has trademarked and Medvedev, the reigning U.S. Open champion, said he had taken inspiration from the Serbian to get out of trouble.

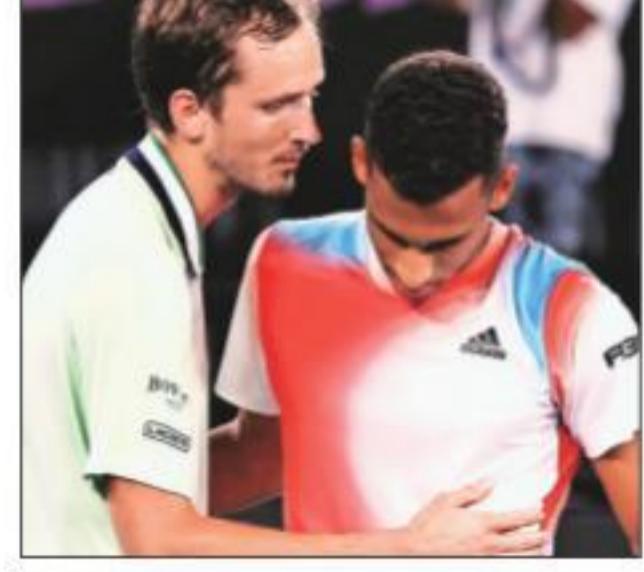
"At two sets down I was not playing my best and Felix was playing unbelievable, serving unbelievable, he was all over me to be honest. I didn't know what to do so I told myself 'what would Novak do?'" Medvedev said on court, prompting some boos.

"What came to mind, was that I thought if Felix wants to win he will have to fight for the last point."

"I managed to raise my level and when

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Medvedev summons Djokovic's fighting spirit



Daniil Medvedev (L) overcame a two-set deficit to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-7(4), 3-6, 7-6(2), 7-5, 6-4. AP

they closed the roof I felt the momentum and started serving better."

Ninth seed Auger-Aliassime, 21, was the dominant player in the first set and despite a wobble when serving at 6-5 he won a tiebreak courtesy of some Medvedev double-faults. The Russian later blamed on the sweaty conditions.

Serving beautifully and playing with composure and precision from the back of the court, Auger-Aliassime cruised through the second set with a single break with Medvedev looking subdued.

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DANIIL MEDVEDEV

Auger-Aliassime was one set away from a first career win against the Russian and a place in his second Grand Slam semi-final, but the night was still young.

Medvedev hung tough towards end of the third set as Auger-Aliassime sensed victory but he managed to force a tiebreak and closed it out after a shower caused the roof to be closed. Serve dominated the fourth set but in the 10th game Medvedev coughed up a double-fault to hand his opponent a match point. Medvedev barely blinked though and escaped with some powerful serving. He then pounced in the next game to break serve as Auger-Aliassime sent a forehand wide, before holding his own to extend the match into a decider.

With the match moving into its fifth hour, Medvedev finally seized control with an early break of serve but Auger-Aliassime did not crumble. The Canadian earned a break back point trailing 4-3 but Medvedev snatched away the opportunity with a timely

ace and then had Medvedev down 15-40 as the Russian served at 5-4. Medvedev dialled up his inner Novak once again, however, reeling off the next four points to claim an epic victory after four hours and 42 minutes.

Smooth sailing for Tsitsipas

After a phenomenal performance against Jannik Sinner on Wednesday, Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas feels as though he is in the zone to produce something special at the 2022 Australian Open. The fourth seed credited his 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 defeat of the Italian in just over two hours on Rod Laver Arena to adopting a more humble approach to tennis after some setbacks. Injuries, including the elbow problem that threatened his participation in Melbourne this year, and difficult defeats had taught him the importance of remaining grounded. "You know when you're dancing and when you're doing well, you tend to glorify yourself, as if you are untouchable," he told reporters. His tennis in the quarter-final was not perfect, but he did manage to leave a rival tipped to be a future Grand Slam winner helpless at times.

QUARTERFINAL RESULTS

Women's singles: 27-Danielle Collins (USA) bt Alize Cornet (FRA) 7-5, 6-1; 7-Iga Swiatek (POL) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 4-6, 7-6(2), 6-3. **Men's singles:** 4-Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) bt 11-Jannik Sinner (ITA) 6-3, 6-4, 6-2; 2-Daniil Medvedev (RUS) bt 9-Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN) 6-7(4), 3-6, 7-6(2), 7-5, 6-4

BALL TAMPERING INCIDENT

Netherlands fast bowler Vivian Kingma has been given a four-match suspension for tampering with the ball during his side's third one-day international against Afghanistan, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Wednesday. Kingma will miss his team's next four limited-overs games. **REUTERS**

Wrist spinners are back in business

Chinaman Kuldeep Yadav, leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi to complement Yuzvendra Chahal in ODIs; No place for Ashwin in shorter formats

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, JANUARY 26

INDIA'S LIMITED-OVERS squad selection for the upcoming home assignments against the West Indies marked the return of an old template, wrist-spin taking centre-stage again. After a long hiatus, Kuldeep Yadav is back to the 50-over fold to pair up with Yuzvendra Chahal, while Ravichandran Ashwin hasn't been included either in the ODI squad or for the T20Is. India will play three ODIs and as many T20Is against the West Indies, in Ahmedabad and Kolkata respectively, starting from February 6. Rohit Sharma has recovered from his hamstring injury to lead India in the series.

Ashwin was brought back to the white-ball fold before the T20 World Cup last year. Then, he was picked for the ODI series in South Africa as well. There have been talks about the senior off-spinner being ruled out due to an injury. But the BCCI press release didn't mention anything, although it confirmed that "Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami have been rested" and Ravindra Jadeja has been "undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury".

It is learnt that the selection meeting on Wednesday was lengthy, the Chetan Sharma-led committee dissecting India's 3-ODI series loss in South Africa and discussing the way forward. Both head coach Rahul Dravid and stand-in skipper for the South Africa series KL Rahul had spoken about a few changes going ahead and eventually, the selection committee decided to fall back on the wrist-spin pair that had contributed to India's white-ball recovery after the 2017 Champions Trophy.

Kuldeep underwent knee surgery in September last year and post his recovery, the selectors asked him to play a few practice matches in Gurgaon. It's not known if anyone from the selection committee tracked him there, but the fit-again chinaman bowler has been brought back to ODI squad. Kuldeep last played for India in Sri Lanka in July last year before going under the surgeon's knife.

That another leg-spinner, Ravi Bishnoi, has earned his maiden India call-up suggested that the selectors and the team management have seen wrist-spin as a wicket-taking option in the middle-overs, an area that needed serious shoring up after the failed T20 World Cup campaign and a 3-0 hiding to the Proteas.

Bishnoi, the 21-year-old from Rajasthan, has made the cut by dint of his performance for the Punjab franchise in the IPL.

Sundar back in the fold

After the South Africa series, Dravid had spoken about the right balance and all-round options. From that perspective, Washington Sundar's return is good news for the team.

He was India's first-choice off-spinner in the shortest format until he suffered a hand injury that had put paid to his T20 World Cup hopes. Then, the young all-rounder tested positive for Covid and was ruled out of the ODI series in South Africa. Washington was former India captain Virat Kohli's trusted option to bowl in the Powerplays and his ability to score quickly down the order contributed to the team's balance. Ashwin was brought back to the white-ball set-up after Washington had suffered the injury.

"Some of the guys who really help us balance the squad out and give us the all-round options at 6, 7, 8 are probably not here, not available for selection. So, hopefully when they get back, they probably give us the depth to play in a slightly different style,"



The BCCI release on team selection for the West Indies series didn't mention the reason for Ashwin's omission. File

Kuldeep underwent knee surgery in September last year and post his recovery, the selectors asked him to play a few practice matches in Gurgaon.

Dravid had said after the South Africa series.

Accordingly, another spin-bowling all-rounder, Deepak Hooda, has made the ODI cut for the first time.

Hooda bowls flatish off-spin and has the ability to go ballistic with the bat. Until Hardik Pandya is fit, the team will have to mix and match with the likes of Deepak Chahar, Shardul Thakur, Washington, Hooda and Axar Patel – "will be available for the T20Is" – for all-round options.

Venkatesh Iyer has been dropped from the ODI squad and it is learnt that for the time being, the selectors would consider him for the T20Is only. Excellent performance for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL last year saw Iyer's meteoric rise, but he didn't impress with his game awareness, especially in the ODIs in South Africa. After the series, Dravid didn't single out anybody but mentioned the game awareness issue. "South Africa, who batted first on two occasions, only scored 290 and 280. At the 30th over in both those games, I felt we should have chased them down. We didn't because we played some poor shots and we didn't play smart cricket in critical situations."

It is also learnt that the phasing out of Bhuvneshwar Kumar has begun. He has been picked only for the T20Is. As regards to batting, with Rohit coming back, Kohli available for the home series and Rahul – "will be available from the 2nd ODI onwards" – dropping down the order in the ODIs, an improvement is expected.

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DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, JANUARY 26

IT HAS been a rapid rise for Ravi Bishnoi. The boy from a humble background, who once had to work at a ground to make it fit for cricket training, starred at the 2020 U-19 World Cup, which prompted a big-money Indian Premier League contract with Punjab Kings, for whom he impressed greatly with his skills as well as temperament.

The last few days too have been quite eventful for the youngster from Jodhpur. He was among the three players acquired in the draft by the new Lucknow franchise of the IPL before next month's mega auction, his paycheque doubling to Rs 4 crore. And on Wednesday, Bishnoi made it to the India squad after being named in the ODI and T20 sides for the home series against the men from the Caribbean.

It is close to being a typical rags-to-riches story. A few years ago, Bishnoi broke down after being rejected in trials in the Rajasthan U-19 circuit. Those days, seemed a distant memory when he caught the attention of the cricketing world, helping India colts to a runner-up finish in South Africa two years ago. In fact, the turmoil within Rajasthan cricket, owing to the return of Lalit Modi, didn't help Bishnoi's cause, with BCCI sanctions coming their way.

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Ravi Bishnoi was a star of the 2020 Under-19 World Cup. He was picked by the new Lucknow IPL team. File

ing coach of Rajasthan Royals, to put in a look to the authorities to have a look at Bishnoi once again.

Bishnoi was called and he got a talented U-19 batsman of the state team twice in his first two balls. That fresh effort convinced that selectors that he does have talent.

In the first game of Vinoo Mankad Trophy, Bishnoi grabbed five wickets and hasn't looked back since.

Interestingly, Bishnoi says spin was never his first choice, he had wanted to become a medium pacer. His two coaches whom he addresses as brother – Pathan and Pradyot Singh – felt Bishnoi didn't have the physique to become a pacer. "They told me to bowl leg-spin, I started to bowl and soon they felt I

INS AND OUTS

ODI SQUAD INS: Rohit Sharma, Kuldeep Yadav, Washington Sundar, Avesh Khan, Deepak Hooda and Ravi Bishnoi.

APART FROM his role as an opener, Rohit's return will fill the much-needed leadership void. Avesh is a pacy replacement for Bhuvneshwar Kumar whose career is gradually moving towards the twilight zone. Kuldeep's return will see his reunion with Yuzvendra Chahal. Bishnoi's leg-spin is a strike option, while Hooda is there as a batting all-rounder.

ODI SQUAD OUTS: Jasprit Bumrah, Ravichandran Ashwin, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Ishan Kishan, Venkatesh Iyer and Jayant Yadav.

BUMRAH HAS been rested. Washington's a direct replacement for Ashwin. Yadav has been replaced with Hooda, while Kumar, Kishan and Iyer have been picked for the T20Is only.

T20 SQUAD INS: Ravi Bishnoi and Washington Sundar.

T20 SQUAD OUTS: Ruturaj Gaikwad and R Ashwin.

From preparing pitches to facing West Indies: Bishnoi's journey

REUTERS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 26

IT HAS been a rapid rise for Ravi Bishnoi. The boy from a humble background, who once had to work at a ground to make it fit for cricket training, starred at the 2020 U-19 World Cup, which prompted a big-money Indian Premier League contract with Punjab Kings, for whom he impressed greatly with his skills as well as temperament.

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should take this seriously," Bishnoi explains. Pathan explains his rationale: "There were hardly any leg-spinners in India around four-five years ago. We felt there were more chances for a leg-spinner to play higher cricket, especially a leggie who can bat. Leg-spin is an art and it takes time and perfection. At the same time, he was too small, he used to run like a medium pacer, he didn't have strong shoulder or strong legs."

Expert advice
A little bit of help from Rahul Dravid, now Team India's head coach, during his time at the National Cricket Academy too helped. Dravid advised against changing Bishnoi's action and that if any coach tries, ask them to speak to him first. Not only did Dravid tell the youngster that he was reminded of Kumble but also offered a suggestion.

"Rahul sir told me that try to make the ball come back to the batsman. As in, don't offer width outside off and allow the batsman to cut or use the pace and work in the gaps. Attack the stumps, keep it straight and make the batsman drive back to you," Bishnoi recalled. Or in other words, bowl the Kumble line.

For a boy who used to play at an RTO ground where ticketed (challaned) cars were parked, it has been a rapid rise. He even had to do manual labour to make it fit for cricket training. Since they didn't have much money to spare, the two coaches and the young cricketers laboured for



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