

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



EXPRESS NETWORK



FASHION DESIGNER ROHIT BAL DIES AT 63

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TUNNEL BORING MACHINES

Machines for India delayed, German firm flags bottleneck at Chinese customs

Herrenknecht says 'extraordinary circumstances' in customs clearance

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

GERMAN MECHANISED tunnelling major Herrenknecht, which was at the centre of a recent conversation between Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Germany's Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, has said it has been facing "extraordinary circumstances" with Chinese customs clearances in delivery of tunnel boring machines (TBMs) to India from China. This, the company said, is hampering its efforts to deliver the TBMs to its Indian customers.

"For several months now, we have been observing extraordinary circumstances in the customs clearance processes for machines to be delivered from China to India. These are hindering us from fulfilling our delivery obligations as expected and, in some cases, entirely," a spokesperson for Herrenknecht

DISENGAGEMENT AT TWO FRICTION POINTS ALONG LAC

Patrolling resumes in Ladakh's Demchok, will commence soon in Depsang Plains

In line with agreement between two sides, patrols are being coordinated

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

MOVING SWIFTLY after completing the process of disengagement at the friction points of Demchok and Depsang Plains along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, Indian troops have resumed patrolling in the Demchok area.

Indian Army sources con-

firmed that "coordinated patrolling" began Friday in the Demchok area and would soon commence in the Depsang Plains. This is in line with the agreement between India and China, announced on October 21, two days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping held talks on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Russia to repair bilateral ties.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Chinese soldiers watch as Union Minister Kiren Rijiju visits Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. PTI

E. First step taken

THE DISENGAGEMENT and restoration of patrolling rights in Demchok and Depsang Plains mark the first step in what is likely to be a long three-step process – disengagement, de-escalation and de-induction of troops massed at the LAC.

MODI FLAGS HIMACHAL, TELANGANA

Karnataka free bus travel scheme sparks row: PM vs Kharge on 'fake' promises

After Kharge snubs Shivakumar on 'relook' at scheme, PM targets Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, NOVEMBER 1

PM Narendra Modi; Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge

Opposition (in the state)." Kharge said the Congress's central leadership had asked its Maharashtra unit to consider financial viability before announcing guarantees in its manifesto for the November 20 polls. "I

have said they should not announce multiple guarantees but they should announce based on the available budget. Going beyond the budget will lead to financial problems. If there are no funds for roads people will be angry," Kharge said, adding that the party was keen on ensuring that guarantees announced before the polls were "realistic".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

10 of its herd dead, lone tusker guards a mass burial in Bandhavgarh reserve

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, NOVEMBER 1

THE FUNERAL was interrupted by the powerful trumpet of a lone elephant, flapping its ears, stomping its feet, and charging at wildlife officials who were burying its family.

Days after 10 elephants died, ostensibly after eating large amounts of kodo millets, the 20-year-old lone surviving male from the herd of 13 elephants is struggling to reconcile with the loss.

At the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, where the deaths took place, a JCB machine poured sand and salt into an open pit, while wildlife officers placed flowers inside the grave, bidding farewell to the gentle giants.

Adjacent to the burial pits is a makeshift post-mortem facility, where veterinarians can hear the lone elephant's sorrowful mourn. A veterinarian, exhausted from conducting autopsies of the dead tuskers for the past two days, choked with emotion: "Everyone is heartbroken. We could not conduct the post-mortems properly as the elephant would charge at us, thinking it can still save its family. We had to chase it away with JCB machines."

Pushpendra Nath Dwivedi, a former wildlife warden who has worked closely with the elephants since they arrived in Bandhavgarh in 2018, has been



In Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, the 20-year-old lone surviving male tusker from the herd of 13 is struggling to reconcile with the loss. Express

supervising villagers to set up guard posts, and advising them to burn chilli smoke to chase away the lone elephant.

"Elephants came to this area in 2018... calves, mothers and lone bulls, everyone called Bandhavgarh their home. They were a close knit family and are mourning the loss. The bull keeps returning to the pits where the elephants are buried, hoping to see its family one last time. It should leave for food in some time,"

Dwivedi said.

The other survivors are a 10-year-old female elephant and a two-year-old calf. They are being closely tracked by the wildlife department, which has now begun destroying kodo millets and promised to compensate the farmers.

According to experts, elephants roamed freely across Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh centuries ago, when they would be captured by the Mughal

army for use in battle. According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, "a small population of elephants migrated from Jharkhand and Odisha into what was then Madhya Pradesh" due to habitat destruction by mining, logging and industrialisation. This explains why elephants in this corridor had to undertake long-distance migrations seeking refuge in small patches of forest.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Violence on Hindus, other minorities in Bangladesh barbaric, total chaos: Trump



Donald Trump at a Tucker Carlson Live Tour show in Glendale, Arizona. AP

Border, but we will Make America Strong Again and bring back Peace through Strength," he said.

"We will also protect Hindu Americans against the anti-religion agenda of the radical left. We will fight for your freedom. Under my administration, we will also strengthen our great partnership with India and my good friend, Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi," Trump said.

Hindu American groups applauded Trump for promising to protect the human rights of Hindus across the world.

Utsav Sanduja, founder and chairman of Hindus for America

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Militants open fire at two migrants from UP in J&K; fifth attack in a fortnight

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 1

One of the injured migrants in a Srinagar hospital. Express

TWO MIGRANT workers were shot at by suspected militants in the Magam area of Jammu and Kashmir's Budgam district Friday evening. Both are undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital and are in stable condition.

The two workers were identified as 20-year-old Usman Malik and 25-year-old Sofiani, both from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Sources said the Magam area, in central Kashmir, has been cordoned off.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and National Conference presi-

dent Farooq Abdullah expressed deep sorrow over the attack and strongly condemned the act of violence, the party said.

The Valley has seen a number of attacks against migrant

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

US alerts India on Bishnoi's brother, Mumbai cops move for extradition

SADAF MODAK &
MOHAMED THAVER
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1

IN A boost to efforts to curb activities of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, US authorities have alerted Mumbai Police about the presence of Anmol Bishnoi (25), younger brother of Lawrence, in their country.

Following this, the Mumbai Police have begun the process of seeking his extradition and, to this effect, the Crime Branch approached a special court here last month.

On October 16, the Mumbai Police submitted before the court that they intend to initiate Anmol's extradition in connec-

tion with the Salman Khan house firing case, a senior official told *The Indian Express*.

With Lawrence behind bars, major operations, including the firing outside Khan's house in April, was alleged to have been carried out by Anmol.

Anmol's name also cropped up in the recent murder of NCP (Ajit Pawar) leader and former MLA Baba Siddique with allegations that Anmol had spoken to the accused who fired at the leader.

Last week, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh on Anmol. The agency said that the fugitive has 18 cases registered against him, including one where he allegedly provided

weapons and logistics support to the accused who killed Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala in 2022.

An official told *The Indian Express* that in the Khan chargesheet, Anmol was identified as a wanted accused following which a Red Corner Notice (RCN) was issued.

"Based on the RCN, US authorities reached out to us a few months ago alerting us about Anmol's presence in the US," the official added.

Officials said that there was no clarity on whether Anmol is currently detained by US authorities but his possible location within the country may have been traced.

Following the miscellaneous

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THE WORLD

DAY AFTER U.S. TRUCE PUSH, ISRAEL STRIKES LEBANON, GAZA STRIP

PAGE 12

and puerile. But so am I, transient and puerile, a dot that might have been wiped off. In that event, what would have happened? A few condolences, perhaps even from important people. "Irreparable loss." Perhaps a posthumous Padma Bhushan or Padma Vibhushan. A few obituaries. What will they mention? Trade work of the 1980s, law reform of 1990s, State work of 2000s, railway reforms of 2015, even resignation from Rajiv Gandhi Institute in 2005? Who remembers? Nothing seminal about such work. Had a role in the rat race, was temporarily read and passed into oblivion, buried in journal archives.

Perhaps the Purana Project, left incomplete. Manmatha Nath Dutt was reborn, to finish the Purana work. I will be reborn. But I hope not for this. Irreparable loss at the age of 70, when life's productivity is as good as over? In another ten years, what social value will I bring? Can it be measured, quantified, imputed for? I give up the thought, too complicated. There are lives my life has touched, improved, even bruised. If they get to know, they may remember, with fondness

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

He wrote his obit: There's a world outside... what if I am not there?

Scholar-economist Bibek Debroy, who headed the PM's economic council, passed away Friday. A columnist for *The Indian Express*, he sent this piece on October 28

AFTER MORE than a month in the cardiac care centre (CCU) and a private room in AIIMS, I am discharged. My wife, Suparna, has performed a modern-day Savitri-Satyavan, aided by the skills of the doctors. As time goes, a month is fleeting. But being virtually wiped off the face of the earth is not. I manage to get the daily limericks going from the hospital. So people don't necessarily notice. My frequent co-au-

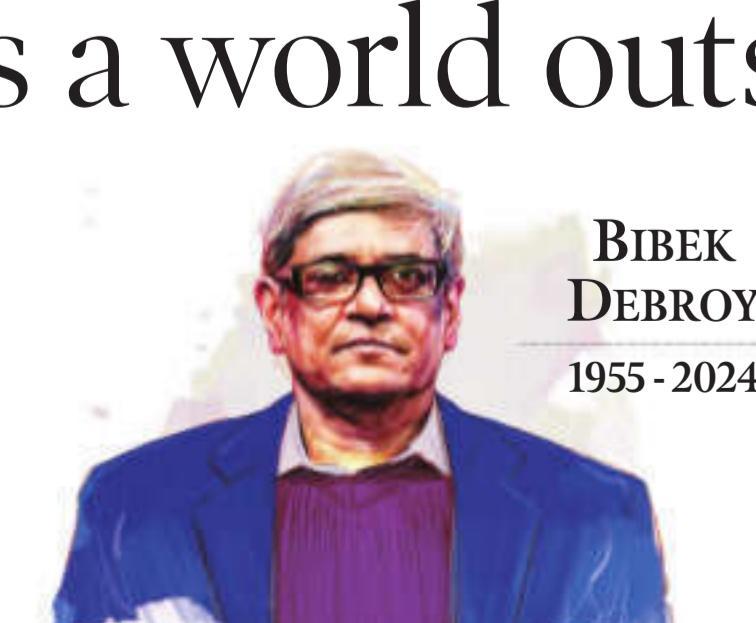
thor, Aditya Sinha, keeps some of the columns going. More people don't notice.

For me, the external world is restricted to a thin sliver of a window (in the room). I can see a pipe in the building outside. A monkey religiously climbs up every morning. It is restricted to counting the IV drops as they pass through the cannula. Drip, drip. It is restricted to requesting Harish to bring the urinal or

commodate. Sometimes, the bed gets soiled. Just a lump of flesh stretched out, stripped of normal norms of shame and modesty. Sometimes, in a wheelchair or a hospital trolley, I am carted from one building to another, passing through the melee, through the sun shining, through the birds chirping on the green trees. There is a world outside that exists. What if I am not there? What indeed?

"A new book has arrived. Would you like to read it?" asks Suparna. The book happens to be "100 places to see after you die," by Ken Jennings. We smile at each other. How singularly inappropriate! I don't feel like reading, even when I can. I don't feel

like watching TV, even when I can. The same boring news, the same boring high-decibel debates. It all seems so transient



BIBEK DEBROY

1955 - 2024

'Dr Bibek Debroy Ji was a towering scholar, well-versed in diverse domains like economics, history, culture, politics, spirituality..

Beyond his contributions to public policy, he enjoyed working on our ancient texts, making them accessible to the youth'

PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI

RELATED REPORT

PAGE 6

Agencies find RPG shells made in Pak at attack site in Gulmarg

MAHENDERSINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

AFTER LAST week's terror attack near the Line of Control in Kashmir's Gulmarg sector killed four persons, including two soldiers, central intelligence agencies visited the spot and found unexploded RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) shells that were made in Pakistan, sources said.

Last Thursday evening, militants targeted an Army vehicle near the Nagan post at Bota Pathri, around seven kilometres from Gulmarg town. Bota Pathri is close to the LoC, and civilian movement in the area is restricted. Two Army soldiers and two civilian porters working with the Army were killed in the attack, and three soldiers were injured.

According to sources, multiple central agencies, including the National Investigation Agency, visited the spot after the attack and found that the militants had tried to use RPGs that were made in Pakistan but had misfired. "After visiting the spot, they (the agencies) found that the militants fired sophisticated weapons as well as RPGs that had misfired," a source said. The source also said that a number of local residents were questioned by central agencies

With 23 national targets, India submits biodiversity action plan to global body

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

AS PART of its commitment under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), India submitted its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) spelling out its 23 national biodiversity targets during the conclusion of the annual United Nations conference on biodiversity in Cali, Colombia.

India's 23 targets are aligned with the three broad themes of the KM-GBF treaty — reducing threats to biodiversity, meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing, and tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming.

The KM-GBF was adopted in 2022 at the 15th meeting under the Convention on Biological Diversity and 196 countries agreed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 to achieve a nature-positive world.

Under its goals to reduce threats to biodiversity, India's NBSAP has stated it will prioritise effective restoration of at least 30 per cent of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems. This will help to enhance biodiversity and

ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity. India harbours nearly 8 per cent of the world's known plant and animal species and 9.24 per cent of globally known plant species. It is home to 3,532 species of fish, 450 amphibian species, 738 reptilian species, 1,346 bird species and 436 mammals.

The NBSAP provides a framework for biodiversity conservation, enables focus on sustainable use of biological resources, and ensures fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from them, the government's action plan stated. "The updated NBSAP aims to support both national and global conservation agendas. It seeks to effectively address key national challenges such as water crisis, food insecurity, unsustainable livelihoods, growing human-wildlife interactions, pollution, emerging diseases, disaster risks, and the overall vulnerabilities of communities and ecosystems," the NBSAP stated.

Around eight of the 23 targets centre around reducing threats to biodiversity. They pertain to land and sea use change, pollution, species overexploitation, climate change, managing the threat of invasive alien species and ecosystem restoration.

Bengal: 3 children killed in fire sparked by crackers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 1

THREE CHILDREN were killed in a fire sparked by bursting of crackers in Howrah district on Friday evening, police said. The incident took place in Uluberia's Bazarpur area, they added. The police identified the victims as Tania Mistry (14), Ishaan Dhara (6) and Mumtaz Khatun (8).

According to an officer, some local residents, including children, were bursting firecrackers in ward number 27 of Uluberia municipality when the sparks

ignited more firecrackers kept nearby, causing a blaze that led to a cylinder explosion in an adjacent house and trapped the family members — including three children — who were inside. The three were soon taken to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared them dead.

According to sources, two other children were seriously injured in the fire and are under treatment at Uluberia Medical College and Hospital. The house belonged to one Kajal Sheikh and one of the three children belonged to his family while others were neighbours.

Though it may take some

time to get the final survey report, preliminary consultations suggest that there are no more secret tunnels. The survey was, however, helpful to find out in detail the cracks inside the Ratna Bhanda.

The ASI will adopt a permanent solution to repair the cracks," Harichandan told reporters.

Amid speculations over the existence of a secret tunnel inside the treasure trove and demands for a detailed inspection, the state government allowed ASI to carry out the technical survey.

Following a request from the Shri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), the ASI conducted the technical survey in mid-September. The technical

survey team also comprised scientists from CSIR and NGR.

While first the laser scanning of the treasure trove was conducted, the team also conducted mapping of the treasury and generated data. The data collected by the team is being analysed and processed following which the final report will be out, said officials. The Odisha government on July 14 opened the inner Ratna Bhanda of the 12th Century shrine after 46 years. Subsequently, the ornaments and other valuables of the sibling deities stored inside the treasure house were shifted to a temporary Ratna Bhanda opened inside the temple premises.

Though it may take some

FROM PAGE ONE | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Patrolling resumes in Ladakh's Demchok, will commence soon in Depsang Plains

Relations between the two countries plunged after Chinese incursions in eastern Ladakh were detected in May 2020, triggering a military standoff along the LAC.

The resumption of patrolling in Demchok came a day after the two armies exchanged sweets at border points along the LAC Thursday, also the Diwali day.

Earlier, the Chinese PLA had cut off Indian access to patrolling points (PPs) 10 to 13 in the Depsang Plains. In the Demchok area, Chinese troops had been squatting at the Charding Nullah.

In keeping with the agreement reached, talks are taking place at the level of local commanders — Brigadier rank and below.

This agreement is important because the Chinese side, until a

year ago, showed reluctance to even discuss Depsang Plains and Demchok while it agreed on disengagement at other friction points — PP 14 (Galwan valley), PP 15 (Hot Springs), PP 17A (Gogra), north and south banks of Pangong Tso.

The disengagement process in Demchok and Depsang Plains also involved removal of temporary structures.

It marks the first step of a three-step process — disengagement, de-escalation and de-induction of troops in the border areas.

In Beijing, the Chinese military said Thursday that troops of India and China are "making progress" in implementing the agreement to disengage from the friction points. But it declined to comment on reports that the

disengagement had been completed.

Zhang Xiaogang, spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defence, told a media briefing in Beijing that "China and India have reached resolutions on the issues concerning the border areas through diplomatic and military channels".

"The frontline troops of the two militaries are making progress in implementing resolutions in an orderly manner," he said, reiterating the Chinese Foreign Ministry's comments Wednesday.

He, however, declined to comment on reports that Indian and Chinese troops had completed disengagement in Demchok and Depsang Plains and patrolling is set to commence.

On the bilateral agreement to

disengage troops, Colonel Zhang said President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the margins of the BRICS summit in Kazan.

"Both sides have agreed that China and India should view and handle the bilateral relations from a strategic and long-term perspective and make sure that the differences on specific issues will not affect the overall relationship," he said.

"We hope the Indian side will work together with China to take important common understandings between the two leaders as guidance and continuously implement the above-mentioned resolutions and jointly safeguard peace and tranquillity along the border areas," he said.

— With PTI from Beijing

• Karnataka free bus travel scheme

Kharge further said, "We received a report 15 days ago and we will make an announcement in Nagpur or Mumbai."

Congress leader and former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, and other senior Congress leaders also reacted to the PM's post and listed their governments' "achievements".

Deputy CM Shivakumar said his comments have been taken out of context. "My statement has been twisted. I only said that many economically empowered women working in the IT sector and MNC companies have expressed interest in paying for tickets as they get conveyance allowance from their companies.

I said I would discuss this with the Transport Minister. I never said that the guarantee scheme would be stopped," he said on Thursday after Kharge raised the matter.

"There is absolutely no question of withdrawing any of the five guarantee schemes. But we cannot force the guarantee schemes down the throats of people who do not want it.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a public appeal to voluntarily give up LPG subsidy. I only said that something similar could be done. As the KPCC president and the Deputy CM, I reiterate that none of the schemes will be withdrawn at any cost. These schemes will continue not only for the next three-and-a-half years but also for five more years in the next term of the Congress government."

On Friday, Shivakumar said, "Karnataka's guarantee model has become a model at the national level. Even the BJP-ruled states have copied our models. This is a matter of pride for us."

Targeting the Congress, BJP spokesperson Ravi Shankar Prasad said at a press conference in Delhi on Friday, "The Congress president has said that guarantees should be announced only on the basis of availability of budget and financial provisions. The BJP would like to ask a very clear and categorical question to the esteemed Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge that today you are realising that you should not make reckless announcements and that only those with financial and budgetary provisions should be made.

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah also hit out at Modi saying he should "take a hard look" at the BJP's "disastrous legacy" in the state. "We are fulfilling every promise we made to our people... BJP left Karnataka plagued with 40% commission corruption, draining resources that could have transformed lives... What was your 'achievement' here? Empowering corrupt practices, leaving Karnataka debt-ridden,

"It's going to be difficult to destroy all kodo farms. This is a danger to all elephants in Bandhavgarh. We are tracking down all kodo plants and burning them. As for the remaining survivors, they should join a new herd. But they are extremely emotional animals and have a great memory. They will never forget what happened to their family," Dwivedi said.

In response, Kharge wrote on X, "Lies, Deceit, Fakery, Loot & Publicity are the 5 adjectives which best describe your Govt! Your drumbeating regarding a 100-day plan was a cheap PR stunt!" The Congress president questioned the Modi government, among other things, over unemployment, its promise to create "2 crore jobs per year", inflation, and alleged corruption.

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• Militants open fire at 2 migrants

workers in recent weeks.

Seven people, six of whom were from outside Kashmir, were killed on October 20 when militants opened fire at a camp for employees of a construction company that was building a tunnel near Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district.

On October 18, a migrant worker was killed by militants in Zainapora village of south Kashmir's Shopian district. And, on October 24 morning, a migrant non-local worker was shot at and injured by militants at Batagund village of Tral in south Kashmir. On October 24 evening, there was also a militant attack targeting an Army vehicle, in which two soldiers and two civilian porters were killed.

Friday's is the fifth militant attack since the Union Territory of J&K got its first elected government on October 16.

Reacting to the Budgam attack, Srinagar MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi of the National Conference said, "Saddened by the news of the terrorist attack on the civilians... My sympathies and prayers are with the victims and their families. The BJP regime (at the Centre), which is directly in control of security in J&K, should be held accountable for these repeated failures. Also want to ask — why this sudden rise in these attacks immediately after the recent elections?"

J&K Pradesh Congress Committee chief Tarig Hameed Karra said the attack was "most unfortunate and highly condemnable". He urged the government to take effective measures to contain such "inhuman, shameful and cowardice acts".



Security personnel keep vigil after two persons from UP were shot at by militants in J&K's Budgam. PTI

Except when, under local anaesthesia, some surgical process is going on. The sub-conscious mind or hallucination? For a fleeting moment, amidst a blaze of lights, you seem to be whirled around the stellar system, separate from the body. A delirious moment of bliss. A moment you would like to recreate and replicate, but can't. It is not time for erasure. The body will heal in due course. I am not sure about the beating the mind has taken, I think for the better.

(Bibek Debroy was a columnist for The Indian Express and Financial Express. On October 28, he sent this piece with a note: "Unusual Column. Short of a requiem.")

and using propaganda to cover up your failures?" Siddaramaiah wrote on X.

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I said I would discuss this with the Transport Minister. I never said that the guarantee scheme would be stopped," he said on Thursday after Kharge raised the matter.

"Check any state where the Congress has governments today — Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana — the developmental trajectory and fiscal health is turning from bad to worse. Their so-called

Guarantees lie unfulfilled, which is a terrible deceit upon the people of these states. The victims of such politics are the poor, youngsters, farmers and women, who are not only denied the benefits of these promises but also see their existing schemes diluted," the PM wrote.

Modi urged people to be "vigilant against the Congress sponsored culture of fake promises". He said there was a growing realisation across India that a vote for the Congress would be a "vote for non-governance, poor economics and unparalleled loot".

In Karnataka, Congress is busier in intra-party politics and loot instead of even bothering to deliver on development. Not only that, they are also going to rollback existing schemes. In Himachal Pradesh, salaries of Government workers are not paid on time. In Telangana, farmers are waiting for the waiver they promised. Previously, in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan than they promised certain allowances which were never implemented for five years. There are numerous such examples of how the Congress works," Modi wrote.

In response, Kharge wrote on X, "Lies, Deceit, Fakery, Loot & Publicity are the 5 adjectives which best describe your Govt! Your drumbeating regarding a 100-day plan was a cheap PR stunt!" The Congress president questioned the Modi government, among other things, over unemployment, its promise to create "2 crore jobs per year", inflation, and alleged corruption.

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In response, Kharge wrote on X, "Lies, Deceit, Fak

Autorickshaw driver killed after being hit by car driven by constable

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

AN AUTORICKSHAW driver was killed on Thursday night after a head-on collision with a car driven by a Delhi Police constable on Trilokpuri road.

The police identified the deceased as Harsh (24), who was allegedly coming from the opposite side of the road when his autorickshaw collided with constable Varun Yadav's Hyundai i10.

When the police reached the spot, they found the damaged vehicles. While Harsh had already been taken to a hospital, the constable – posted with Mayur Vihar police station – was present at the spot, an officer said.

"The windshield of the autorickshaw was found to be broken and there were blood stains on it. The throat of the deceased was found slit from broken glass," the officer added.

Harsh was rushed to the Lal Bahadur Shastri hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries during treatment.

DCP (East) Apoorva Gupta said the constable underwent a breath analyser test and was not found under the influence of alcohol. "Still, we have collected his blood sample and sent it to the forensic science laboratory for further analysis. Departmental action would be initiated as per the report," he added.

Police said a case has been registered against Yadav and further investigations are underway.

Man walking dog threw cigarette butt, triggered blast in Rohini: Probe

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

THE EXPLOSION that took place outside the CRPF School in Delhi's Rohini on October 20 may have been caused by burning cigarette butts – thrown by a man walking his dog – coming in contact with industrial waste in a garbage dump, according to investigators.

Based on circumstantial evidence, Delhi Police and other central intelligence agencies probing the blast have not found any "terror angle" yet, it is learnt.

At 7.47 am on October 20, a loud explosion took place near the CRPF School in Prashant Vihar area of Rohini's Sector 14, prompting police and a bomb squad to rush to the spot, along with the fire brigade.

The explosion, initially believed to have been caused by a crude bomb, damaged the school wall and shattered the windows of a car parked nearby. Forensics experts after visiting the spot had hinted that traces of potassium chlorate, hydrogen peroxide and some electrical wires were found at the site.

Forensic experts and technical experts of National Security Guard are being consulted by Delhi Police to ascertain the exact identity of all the traces/powders recovered from the spot, but they are yet to submit their re-



Site of explosion outside CRPF School in Delhi's Rohini. File

port. As of now, the detonator hasn't been found," a senior police officer said.

After scanning footage of a CCTV camera installed near the spot, the investigators zeroed in on around 10 people who were questioned.

"Among the 10 suspects, a North Delhi-based businessman was also questioned as he was found to be present around five minutes before the explosion. He is a resident of Prashant Vihar and came on Sunday morning to walk his dog. The CCTV footage shows that he was smoking and after questioning him, it came to the fore that he left lit cigarette butts before leaving the spot," the police officer said.

The spot, where the explo-

sion took place, an officer said, was usually used for dumping garbage and has a public urinal.

"Preliminary investigation after questioning all the suspects, scanning the CCTV footage, and based on the circumstantial evidence, so far there is no foul play... There is no terror angle as of now... Prime facie it appears that some industrial waste materials were dumped in the garbage and got ignited due to the lit cigarette butts... But we are still waiting to get the final report of the FSL and NSC," the officer said.

After the explosion, a pro-Khalistan group had posted CCTV footage of the incident on Telegram along with a message "warning" India.

Chhath: Public holiday on Nov 7, says CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

EVEN AS the AAP government in Delhi, the Lieutenant Governor's (L-G) Secretariat and the Delhi BJP jostled for credit over the issue, a public holiday was declared on November 7 on account of Chhath Puja.

The announcement from Chief Minister Atishi came after L-G VKS Saxena, in a letter, urged her to declare a public holiday on the third day of the festival, November 7. Saxena wrote that the third day of the four-day festival, when offerings are made to the setting sun, had already been designated a restricted holiday. "I urge you that the government declare November 7 (Thursday) as a full (public) holiday and the file related to this be moved at the earliest," the L-G wrote to the CM.

In an order issued on Friday evening, Atishi issued directions declaring November 7 as a holiday. "Chhath Puja is an important festival for the people of Delhi. Therefore, the Delhi government has decided to declare a public holiday on November 7..." the order stated.

Following this, in a post on X,



Chhath Puja preparations underway at ITO Ghat on Friday. Amit Mehra

Atishi said, "I am pleased to announce that the Delhi government has decided to observe a holiday on November 7 for Chhath, so that all Purvanchali brothers and sisters can celebrate the festival with enthusiasm."

Welcoming the move, Delhi president Virendra Sachdeva said that it was for the first time in 2014 that Chhath was ob-

served as a holiday in Delhi due to the joint efforts of then Delhi BJP president Satish Upadhyay, MP Manoj Tiwari and other party leaders.

"But after that the Arvind Kejriwal government has been observing Chhath as a restricted holiday every year. BJP believes that the people of Purvanchal are the backbone of today's econ-

omy and their great festival Chhath should be declared a public holiday. I support and welcome the proposal letter sent by Honorable Lieutenant Governor Shri Vinay Kumar Saxena to the Chief Minister!" Sachdeva said in a post on X.

Chhath is a major festival celebrated in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

File status report on Advocates Protection Bill: HC to Delhi govt

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

THE DELHI government Tuesday told the Delhi High Court that it will file a status report about the progress made in drafting the Advocates Protection Bill, following which the HC listed the matter on December 16.

In an earlier status report dated September 20 filed by the Department of Law, GNCTD, it was submitted in court that a draft bill has been prepared and placed for consideration before the chief secretary and Delhi law minister. It was also submitted that the Bill has been pending the minister's approval since September 13. The report stated that the Bill will require approval from the council of ministers, after which it will be referred to the L-G for his nod.

"After receipt of approval from the Central Government (L-G), the draft Bill may be laid before the Legislative Assembly of Delhi for its consideration. In case the Bill is passed by the Legislative Assembly of Delhi, the same is required to be referred by Hon'ble Lt Governor for seeking assent of His Excellency, the President of India..." said the status report.

Delhi, meanwhile, is set for

ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

L-G eases govt job criteria for victims

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (L-G) VKS SAXENA Friday approved a relaxation in educational qualifications for various government jobs meant for victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, terming the violence "a blot on Indian democratic traditions". The minimum educational qualification for various government posts has been relaxed from 10th grade to 8th grade.

The move, which his office said was pending for decades due to "procedural delays and insensitive red tape", will enable a larger

pool of candidates to secure employment; it comes after a comprehensive review of cases which revealed that applicants had been denied employment despite meeting the eligibility criteria.

According to Saxena's office, various groups, public representatives, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, and a delegation of the victims themselves had met the L-G and appealed to consider all eligible applicants, including those who may have aged or passed away.

His office said the government had previously nominated 564 individuals for compassionate appointments, with 133 securing

positions in the 1990s; while age relaxation was granted in subsequent years, qualification relaxation was seen to have remained a hurdle for many.

He issued directions to view the victims of the anti-Sikh riots as a special category of persons allowed full relaxation in required education qualification to various government posts, to the remaining applicants identified by the Revenue Department earlier. "...Saxena has directed the department/s concerned to explore the possibility of providing employment to the children of deceased or aged applicants on humanitarian grounds," the L-G's office said.

7-year-old boy resists sexual assault, killed

New Delhi: A man was arrested on Friday for allegedly murdering a 7-year-old boy after he resisted sexual assault on Diwali night in Delhi. The accused is in the process of being booked under the POCSO Act, the police said.

The police said a PCR call alerted them about the body of the child lying at an under-construction building. Upon reaching the scene, the police found the body with head injuries. He was rushed to hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

"The accused confessed to attacking the boy with bricks after he resisted sexual assault," said DCP (Southeast) Ravi Kumar Singh. ENS

RELIGARE
Values that bind

Presents

The Indian EXPRESS AQDA

WHERE
NEWSMAKERS
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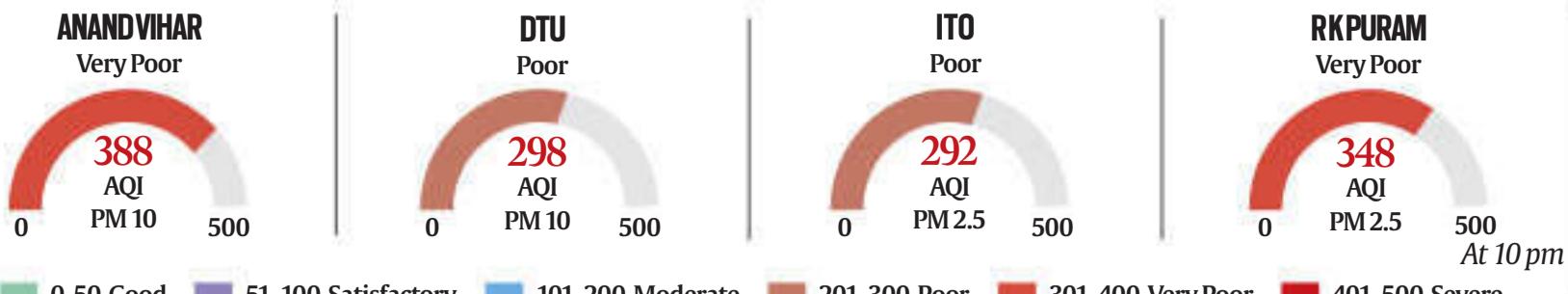


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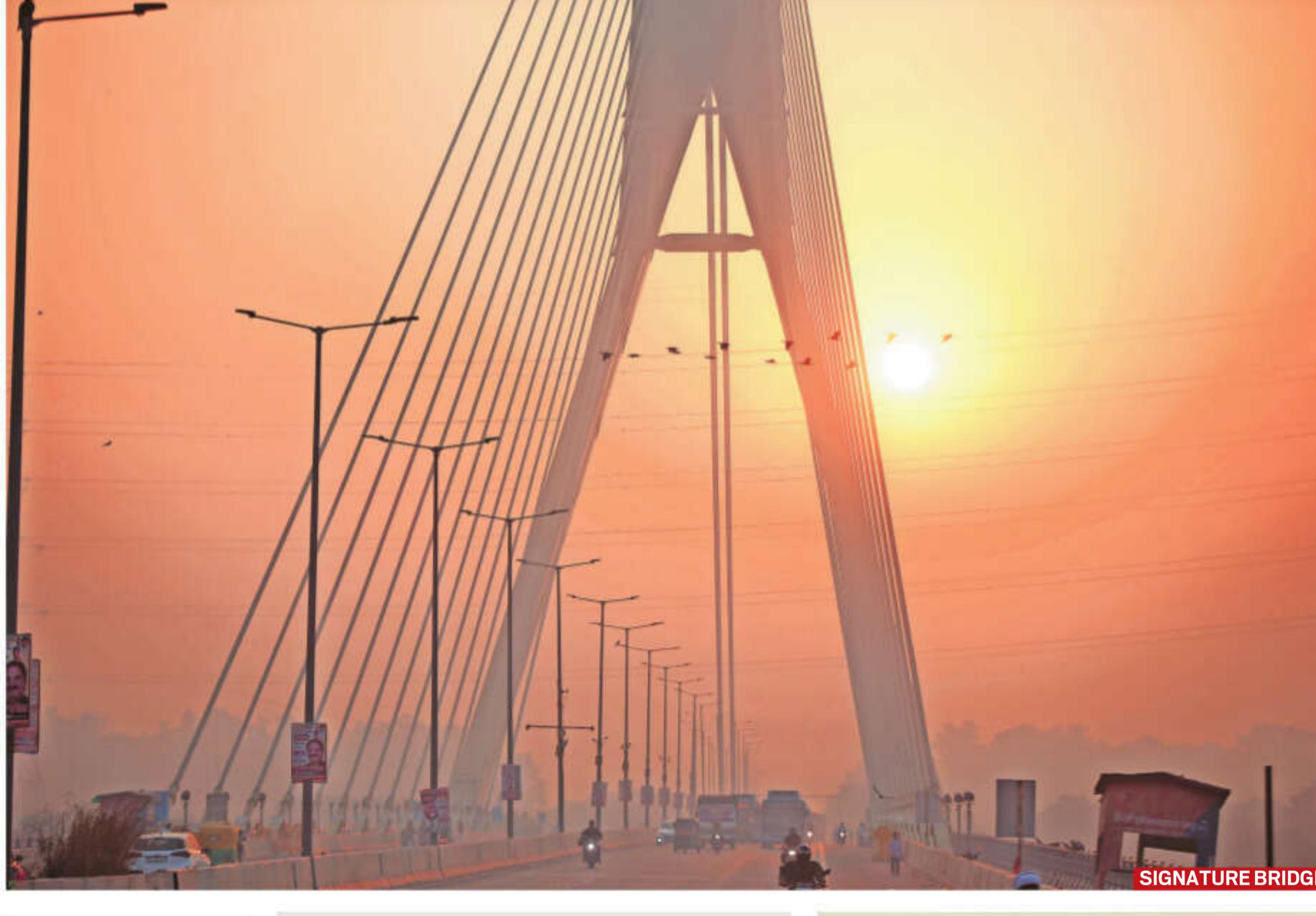


S K Y W A T C H
November 2
Mainly clear sky

MAX: 34 4°C above normal | MIN: 19 3.7°C above normal

PM 2.5 LEVELS SOAR – INDICATIVE OF FIRECRACKER CONTRIBUTION, SAY EXPERTS

Delhi gasps: Worst Diwali air quality since 2022



SOPHIYA MATHEW
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

THE AIR quality on Diwali this year was worse compared to the last two years – the 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) was in the ‘very poor’ category at 328, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. However, data shows that the air was less polluted a day after the festival compared to last year because of favourable meteorological conditions such as strong wind speed and warmer temperatures.

CPCB data shows that on Diwali day last year, the AQI was 218 (‘poor’) while it was 312 (‘very poor’) in 2022. This year’s pre-Diwali AQI was also worse than the last two years. (see box)

A day after Diwali this year, the AQI was 339 – better compared to previous years since 2015, (barring 2022).

The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPPC), in its report, said PM 10 levels saw an increase of 11% while PM 2.5 levels dipped by 4% on the day of Diwali compared to last year.

PM 2.5 levels shoot up

On October 31, several monitoring stations saw high levels of PM 2.5 – an “indicator” of firecrackers, as per experts. Despite a strict ban imposed by the Delhi government on the production, storage, and sale of firecrackers, the Diwali night sky was lit with colours while high-decibel firecrackers were also heard rumbling throughout the evening.

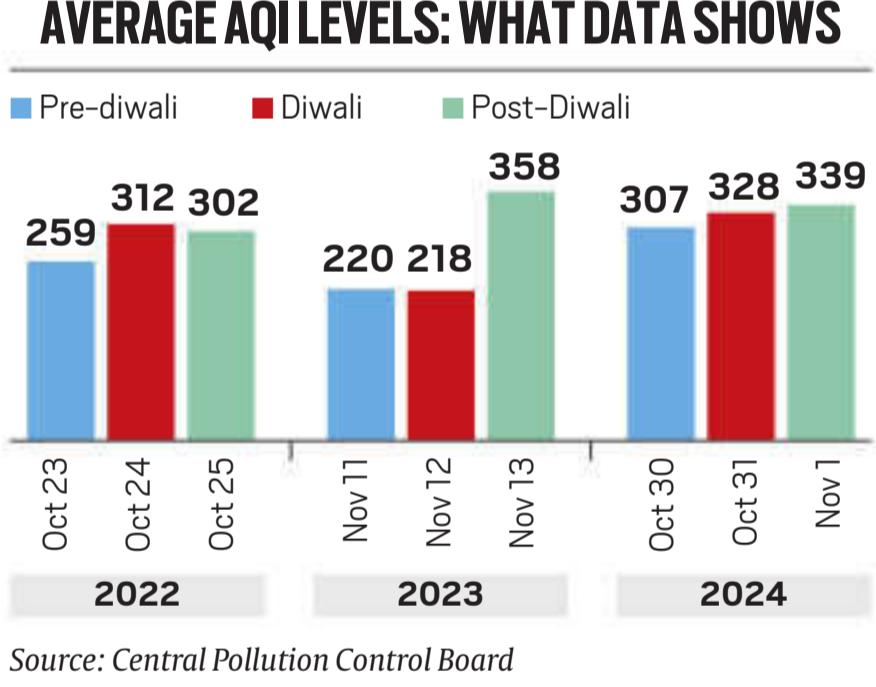
Sunil Dahiya, founder and lead analyst at Envirocatalysts, said, “A crude way of inferring the contribution of firecrackers from pollution levels is to check the PM 2.5 peak levels and compare it with last year. In 2023, Diwali was celebrated in November when cooler conditions had set in, but the average



A layer of smog over the Capital on Friday morning. The AQI was 339 (very poor); the air was less polluted a day after the festival compared to last year. Praveen Khanna



AKSHARDHAM TEMPLE Amit Mehra



PM 2.5 pollution levels then were around 600 µg/m³ during peak hours. This year, even with warmer temperatures, we found that the PM 2.5 levels during peak hours on Diwali was the same as last year. The peak was reached after an increase on an hourly basis from 100 to 120 µg/m³ at 6 pm to around 1 am the next day, with a few stations like Nehru Nagar crossing 1,500 µg/m³. This shows that the firecracker ban didn’t really work.”

Asked about important indicators to check contribution of firecrackers, Anumita Roychow-

dhury, Executive Director, Research and Advocacy, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), explained, “Normally several parameters including PM 2.5, NOX, SO₂, CO are looked at. But PM is an important parameter and is also an indicator of toxicity.”

Dahiya also said PM 2.5 levels are a better indicator than PM 10 because the PM 2.5 level has a more hazardous effect, with the particles penetrating deeper into the respiratory system.

According to CPCB data, the 24-hour-average PM 2.5 level was 144.3 µg/m³ at 8 pm on Thursday,

said Pratul’s sister Mansi (23).

The Nijhawans had shifted to their home in June. “Our pet, cash and gold of around Rs 7 lakh, everything is gone now,” said their father Satinder Kumar Nijhawan.

Saurabh Chahal (34), a BSF personnel posted in Assam, had come home a few days ago to celebrate Diwali with his wife Shivani and their 4-year-old daughter. “We rushed back when we saw the fire in our 17th floor flat but could not extinguish it. The fire sprinklers and other safety

systems were useless, we were trying to douse the flames with buckets of water... No one in the maintenance department was taking our calls...”

Umesh Koli (43), a resident, alleged, “We had complained about the faulty fire equipment, but no action was taken... At the time of the fire, sprinklers were not working, the fire hoses were locked and not connected to the water line. We had to break them open ourselves, and bring hose pipe from another building.”

The residents said no RWA had been constituted in the society.

Despite repeated attempts, a representative for the builder could not be contacted for a comment. A fire department officer said they came to know of the blaze around 10.45 pm and two fire tenders were dispatched to the society. The cause of fire is yet to be ascertained, he added.

According to police, the juvenile, allegedly a distant relative of the victim, claimed during questioning that he had a dispute with Akash involving Rs

DEATH BY BREATH

which increased to 168.4 µg/m³ by midnight. Even at 7 am Friday, it was as high as 209.1 µg/m³. By 4 pm, it reduced to 198.1 µg/m³.

Similarly, the average PM 10 levels saw a steep increase on an hourly basis from 8 pm Thursday – it was as high as 288.6 µg/m³ by midnight. By 6 am, owing to calm wind conditions, it touched 322.6 µg/m³. It then dipped to 308.1 µg/m³ by Friday noon.

This year, the highest PM 2.5 level was recorded at Vivek Vihar – 1,853 µg/m³ at midnight. The highest PM 10 level was in Jahangirpuri, with the peak touching 1,906 µg/m³ at 11 pm.

These levels were 30 times more than the national prescribed standard of 60 µg/m³ for PM 2.5 and around 20 times more than the national prescribed limit of 100 µg/m³ for PM 10.

DPPC data also showed that at several AQI monitoring stations, the PM 2.5 and 10 levels

soared after 8 pm, peaked at midnight, before a gradual drop from 4 am onwards. For instance, at India Gate, the PM 2.5 level peaked at 3 am at 703 µg/m³ and the PM 10 load was the highest at 2 am at 1,101 µg/m³.

Stubble-burning adds to pollution load

On Diwali day, stubble-burning contribution increased significantly to 27.61%, according to data from the Decision Support System developed by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) Pune. This indicates that the PM 2.5 mass concentration in Delhi increased due to stubble burning contribution as well.

According to data from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Punjab recorded 484 stubble-burning events on Thursday – the highest count in a day so far from September 15 onwards.

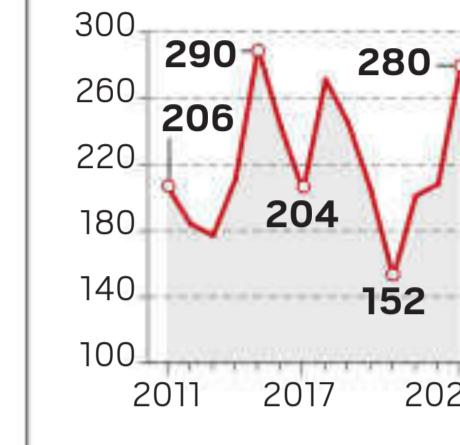
Among regional sources, the transport sector was the second-most significant pollutant with a 13.35% mean contribution to PM 2.5 levels on Diwali day.

Meanwhile, IITM’s forecast shows that the AQI is likely to be in the upper end of the ‘very poor’ category till Monday (November 4).

“Some people burst firecrackers; I want to request them, just like entire Delhi is engaged in observing festivities alongside saving people’s lives, if you, too, had cooperated, the level of pol-

CALLS TO FIRE SERVICES ON DIWALI

THE UPTICK



Total Calls 318*
Calls about fire 280

*Highest in 13 years

Calls received between
4 pm and 9 pm 78
6 pm and 11.59 pm 176
12 am and 6 am 144

Most calls received between
5 pm on October 31 and 5 am on November 1

Source: Delhi Fire Services

GURGAON (5 pm on Oct 31 to Friday morning)

Bhim Nagar fire station	13 calls
Sector 29 fire station	17 calls
Sector 37 fire station	11 calls
Manesar fire station	6 calls
Udyog Vihar and Pataudi fire stations	5 calls

GURGAON: 57 calls FARIDABAD: 28 calls



Praveen Khanna

280 CASES OF BURNS IN HOSPITALS (approx)

Safdarjung Hospital: 117 on October 31, 18 patients on October 30

AIIMS Burns and Plastics Department: 48 – 19 patients in ICU, 27 suffered major burns

AIIMS: 35 cases from Delhi, 5 from outside NCR and 8 from NCR, including 5 from Gurgaon

RML Hospital: 44

Lok Nayak Hospital: 19

GTB Hospital: 30 to 35

Capital sees its warmest October in 73 years; IMD now forecasts a warm November

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

DELHI THIS year reported the warmest October in 73 years, as per India Meteorological Department (IMD) data since 1901.

At Safdarjung observatory, the monthly maximum and minimum averages this month were recorded at 35.1 degrees Celsius and 21.2 degrees Celsius, respectively. This is the fourth highest monthly day temperature and the sixth highest monthly night temperature recorded in October since 1901. As per IMD records, since 1901, the highest-ever average day temperature for October was recorded in 1951 at 36.2 degrees Celsius. The highest-ever average night temperature was recorded at 22.3 degrees Celsius in 1915 and 1951. The other warm years were in 1907 when the average maximum settled at 35.5 degrees Celsius.

India as a whole also experienced its warmest October since 1901, with mean temperature recorded 1.23 degrees Celsius above normal, IMD said on Friday. It predicted a warmer November, giving no indication of the upcoming winter.

Addressing mediapersons, IMD Director General Mrityunjay Mohapatra attributed the warmer weather to the absence of western disturbances and influx of easterly winds due to active low-pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal. He said the temperatures will continue to remain 2-5 degrees above normal in the north-western plains at least for the next two weeks, before a gradual decline towards normalcy.

According to IMD, October 1930 and 1938 recorded an average maximum temperature at 35 degree Celsius in Delhi. WITH PTI INPUTS



Mobile anti-smog guns launched on Friday. Praveen Khanna

Fire engulfs 3 flats in Greater Noida society, family loses pet

HIMANSHU HARSH
GREATER NOIDA, NOVEMBER 1



The family's dog, Tinnu. Express

A FIRE broke out at Supertech Eco Village 1 in Greater Noida Thursday, causing damage to three flats and leading to the death of a pet dog that suffocated.

The blaze, which reportedly originated on the 17th floor of Tower J, around 10.30 pm, rapidly spread to the 18th and 19th floors. Residents alleged fire safety systems were non-functional and inadequate.

Pratul Nijhawan (30), whose flat on 18th floor was damaged, said, “We had gone downstairs for only 10 minutes before we noticed the fire at our flat.” By the time the family rushed back, the whole flat was on fire and their 14-year-old dog, Tinnu, was inside.

“My brother and I tried to save Tinnu, but the fire was intense...”

systems were useless, we were trying to douse the flames with buckets of water... No one in the maintenance department was taking our calls...”

Umesh Koli (43), a resident, alleged, “We had complained about the faulty fire equipment, but no action was taken... At the time of the fire, sprinklers were not working, the fire hoses were locked and not connected to the water line. We had to break them open ourselves, and bring hose pipe from another building.”

The residents said no RWA had been constituted in the society.

Despite repeated attempts, a representative for the builder could not be contacted for a comment. A fire department officer said they came to know of the blaze around 10.45 pm and two fire tenders were dispatched to the society. The cause of fire is yet to be ascertained, he added.

According to police, the juvenile, allegedly a distant relative of the victim, claimed during questioning that he had a dispute with Akash involving Rs



LITMUS TEST FOR EKNATH SHINDE, UDDHAV THACKERAY

Which is the more powerful Shiv Sena? 49 seats will decide who gets bragging rights

Mumbai, where Shinde Sena won one LS seat, is the main battleground for Bal Thackeray's legacy

VALLABHOZARKAR
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1

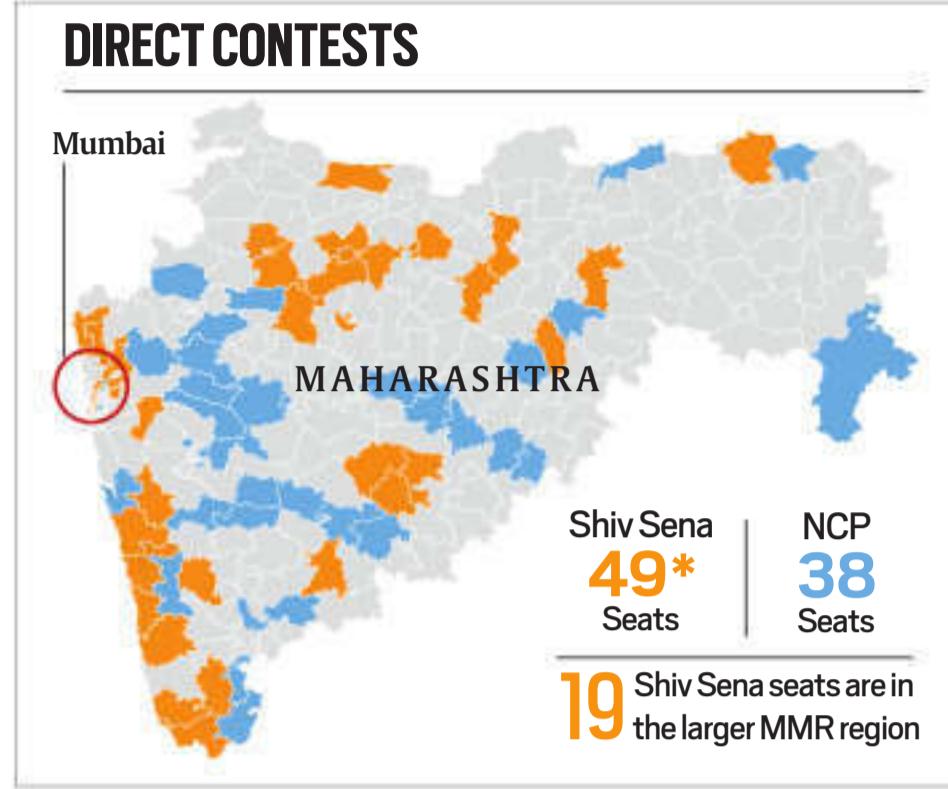
THE BATTLE lines drawn, the two Shiv Senas are taking on each other in at least 49 seats in the Maharashtra Assembly elections on November 20. Nineteen of these constituencies are in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), the undivided Sena's core belt. Of these, 12 are in Mumbai City.

The two parties will also take on each other in eight seats each in the Marathwada and Konkan regions; six in Vidarbha; four in North Maharashtra; and four in Western Maharashtra. With the Assembly elections the first since the split of the Sena in June 2022, these contests will be crucial in establishing who will be the claimant to Bal Thackeray's legacy in the eyes of the voters.

In the recent Lok Sabha polls, the two Senas faced off against each other in 13 seats. Of these, the Sena (UBT) won seven seats, while the Shinde-led Sena won six seats.

The MMR region will see the most prominent fights, including the high-profile battle in Thane's Kopri Panchpakhadi, where Shinde will face his late political mentor Anand Dighe's nephew Kedar who has got a Sena (UBT) ticket.

In Mumbai's Worli, Uddhav



Thackeray's son and former minister Aaditya is taking on Rajya Sabha MP Milind Deora who is contesting for the Sena. Sena's senior leader and sitting MLA Sada Sarvankar is up against Mahesh Sawan of Sena (UBT) in the Mahim seat.

Mumbai will be a challenge for Shinde as the party managed to win only one of the three Lok Sabha seats in the city in the recent Lok Sabha polls. The Sena (UBT), which still retains support in the city, won Mumbai South, South Central. The Shinde Sena only managed to win Mumbai North West, that too by just 48 votes, indicating that the party is still struggling in Mumbai.

The Konkan belt is also important for the Sena because of the undivided Sena's base in the region. In the recent Lok Sabha polls, the Shiv Sena (UBT) was completely wiped out here, losing all the five seats it contested.

In Konkan's Kudal seat, Union Minister Narayan Rane's son

Nilesh is in the fray on the Shiv Sena ticket against the Sena (UBT)'s sitting MLA Vaibhav Naik. The latter is a staunch opponent of the Rane family.

State minister Uday Samant and his brother Kiran are contesting from Ratnagiri and Rajapur respectively against the Sena (UBT)'s Bal Mane and Rajan Salvi, the Rajapur MLA. In Sawantwadi, state minister Deepak Kesarkar will face the Sena (UBT)'s Rajan Teli.

In Marathwada, which was once considered a stronghold of the undivided Sena, Abdul Sattar, MLA Sanjay Shirsat, and Santosh Bangar will contest against Sena (UBT) candidates in Sambhaji Naga West and Kalmamuni seats, respectively. Two Sena ministers are in the fray in Vidarbha. While Tanaji Sawant is in the fray from Paranda taking on Sena (UBT)'s Rahul Patil, Sanjay Rathod is in the fray from Digras against Pawan Jaiswal of Uddhav's party.

From Baramati to sugar belt: It's NCP vs NCP in 38 seats

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1

IN 38 of the 52 Maharashtra Assembly seats that Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is contesting as part of the ruling Mahayuti alliance, the party is in a fight against uncle Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP).

At 20, most of the contests between these parties are concentrated in Western Maharashtra. While the NCP has fielded most of its sitting MLAs, the NCP (SP) has relied mostly on newcomers.

One of the most significant battles will be in the Pawar family's traditional stronghold of Baramati, where Ajit's challenger will be his nephew Yugendra Pawar, contesting on an NCP (SP) ticket. Yugendra, son of Ajit's brother Shrinivas, is the Pawar family's third generation to enter politics and was involved in his father's business before the NCP (SP) handed him his poll debut. Ajit has won Baramati consecutively since 1991.

Another significant battle will be in the neighbouring Indapur constituency, where Ajit's trusted aide Dattatray Bharme will take on seasoned politician and former minister Chhagan Bhujbal and the NCP (SP)'s Maratha leader Manikrao Shinde in the Yeola constituency will be keenly



Ajit and Sharad Pawar. File

watched, particularly given the Maratha-OBC polarisation in the state stemming from the ongoing reservation agitation.

In the state's remaining regions, from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and the Konkan belt in the west to the central Marathwada to the eastern Vidarbha, there are just five seats where the two NCP factions will face-off. While the NCP's Agriculture minister Dhananjay Munde will take on NCP (SP) newcomer Rajesahab Deshmukh in Marathwada's Parli seat, Vidarbha's Morshi seat will see Independent MLA-turned-NCP candidate Devendra Bhuyar contest against the NCP (SP)'s Girish Rangrao Karale.

In Mumbai, two debutants are in the fray from Anushakti Nagar. While Ajit's NCP has fielded Sana Malik, daughter of controversial sitting two-time MLA Nawab Malik who has often been targeted by the BJP for his alleged ties to Dawood Ibrahim, Sharad Pawar has fielded the Samajwadi Party's Fahad Ahmad, a former youth leader and husband of actress Swara Bhasker, on an NCP (SP) ticket.

Three of the NCP-versus-NCP fights are located in the Nashik district. The contest between OBC leader and state Cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal and the NCP (SP)'s Maratha leader Abu Asim Azmi and former Cabinet minister Nawab Malik.



Congress general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal (left) and the party's Jharkhand in-charge Ghulam Ahmad Mir play the dhol after arriving in Ranchi on Friday. PTI

'For 10 yrs, BJP used irrigation scam to blackmail Ajit Pawar'

THE MAHARASHTRA elections on November 20 are a critical test for the Nationalist Congress Party (SP), which is looking to avenge the split in the party last year. In an interview with ALOK DESHPANDE, NCP (SP) Maharashtra chief JAYANT PATIL addresses the speculations of disagreement within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the Maratha agitation, and Ajit Pawar's recent statements on an alleged irrigation scam. Excerpts:



Will disagreements over seat-sharing damage the MVA?

During seat-sharing negotiations, each party put forward its point of view. We chose the best among those suggestions. In this process, there was some push by some people on five to six seats. But all that has been resolved. There is no discussion of friendly fights as well. We will take care of it. MVA's momentum will not be damaged.

You travelled across Maharashtra in the last two months. What are the real issues in this election?

Despite the split in our party, we received a tremendous response because we are Sharad Pawar's party. People are angry over inflation, agrarian issues, and policies on farming... There is unemployment and increasing atrocities against women.

To add to this, (NCP chief and Deputy CM) Ajit Pawar's despicable statement on late (former NCP minister) R R Patil has created more anger among the voters. Ajit Pawar was targeted by the BJP for being part of the alleged Rs 70,000 crore irrigation scam. Addressing a rally at Sangli district's Tasaon Assembly seat, from where late R R Patil's son Rohit is making his electoral debut on an NCP-SP ticket against the NCP's Sanjaykaka Patil, Pawar said after the BJP won in the 2014 Assembly elections, Devendra Fadnavis, who took over as CM, showed him a file signed by R R Patil that recommended the open inquiry against him in the case. "I was very upset... This is because R R Patil was a close colleague who resorted to backstabbing," Ajit said.

It was extremely unfortunate. We all worked together for many years. We do not speak ill about Ajit dada because we have worked together. Talking against a person who cannot defend himself now is terribly wrong.

What are your promises if you win?

Our manifesto will be released soon. But we are planning to create a price stabilisation fund to help farmers if prices fall. We will also offer a double bonanza to the people of Maharashtra.

That includes steps to help farmers, curb inflation, and welfare schemes for women.

Will the Maratha agitation and anger among OBCs impact the MVA's electoral prospects?

We want to take Maharashtra forward by taking everyone with us. We are against any split between Marathas and OBCs and think that everyone should get the deserving rights.

I do not think it (the Maratha reservation demand) will have any effect as people vote based on local scenarios. However, people will surely express anger against those who have made promises but not fulfilled them... The inflated confidence due to the Ladki Bahin scheme will soon be flattened.

Why has the MVA not produced a CM candidate?

This is not the tradition in Maharashtra. Instead of thinking about the CM candidate, it is important to bring a majority for the MVA.

I HEREBY
DECLARE



EKNATH SHINDE, 60,
Chief Minister and Shiv Sena's Kopri-Pachpakhadi candidate

TOTAL ASSETS

₹28.56CR (2024)

₹11.56 CR (2019)

Movable assets ₹9.22 Lakh
Immovable assets ₹28.47cr
Liabilities 15.29 cr
Criminal cases 9 FIRs
Education MA,
University of Pune

DECODE POLITICS

Hemant Soren's proposer caused a stir after meeting BJP leaders. Facebook

Code of Conduct as it did not video record the episode or follow other procedures.

What is the proposer's role?

Proposers, who are electors registered in a particular Lok Sabha or Assembly seat, are required to sign the nomination papers of candidates. Candidates put up by recognised national or state

parties need one proposer, while Independents or those of unrecognised parties need 10 proposers, as per the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The proposer need not be a member of the party. When the nomination papers are presented to the Returning Officer (RO), the candidate or the proposer has to

be present. The RO has to make sure that the name and electoral roll number of both the candidate and the proposer are correct. A candidate can file up to four nomination papers for the same constituency; only one can be accepted. The same proposer can sign more than one nomination paper of the candidate.

Candidates usually select prominent electors from their constituency to act as their proposers. In the case of Soren, Murmu is a descendant of the leaders of the 1855 Santhal rebellion Sidho Murmu and Kanhu Murmu. For his nomination from Varanasi for the Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose members from the Brahmin, OBC, and Dalit communities. One of them was the Vedic scholar Ganeshwar Shastri David, who was responsible for deciding the auspicious time for consecrating the Ram Temple in Ayodhya in January.

Rejection process

While scrutinising the nomination papers, the RO can reject the nomination if it is not delivered within the deadline or if it is delivered by anyone other than the candidate or the proposer. The nomination can also be rejected if the signature of the candidate or proposer is found to be fake. A proposer meeting with rival parties or even joining another party will not have any impact.

Is there any precedent?

In the Lok Sabha elections, the important role of the proposers came into the limelight when three proposers of Congress's Surat candidate Niles Kumbhani said they had not signed the papers when the RO asked them. Kumbhani's nomination was rejected and the BJP candidate, Mukesh Dalal, went on to be elected unopposed. The incident led the Congress to allege that the BJP had pressured the proposers to withdraw their support.

To add to this, (NCP chief and Deputy CM) Ajit Pawar's despicable statement on late (former NCP minister) R R Patil has created more anger among the voters. Ajit Pawar was targeted by the BJP for being part of the alleged Rs 70,000 crore irrigation scam. Addressing a rally at Sangli district's Tasaon Assembly seat, from where late R R Patil's son Rohit is making his electoral debut on an NCP-SP ticket against the NCP's Sanjaykaka Patil, Pawar said after the BJP won in the 2014 Assembly elections, Devendra Fadnavis, who took over as CM, showed him a file signed by R R Patil that recommended the open inquiry against him in the case. "I was very upset... This is because R R Patil was a close colleague who resorted to backstabbing," Ajit said.

It was extremely unfortunate. We all worked together for many years. We do not speak ill about Ajit dada because we have worked together. Talking against a person who cannot defend himself now is terribly wrong.

Despite the split in our party, we received a tremendous response because we are Sharad Pawar's party. People are angry over inflation, agrarian issues, and policies on farming... There is unemployment and increasing atrocities against women.

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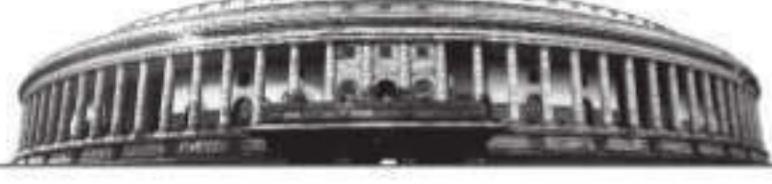
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6 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



MEETING MYSTERY

SUSPENSE PREVAILS over the presence of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi in his constituency Rae Bareli where he is expected to chair the District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting on Tuesday (November 5). Rahul, who won from Rae Bareli Lok Sabha seat, his family's turf, in June this year, will be in Wayanad on Sunday (November 3) to campaign for his sister and party candidate Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. As per norms, the MP of a parliamentary constituency is appointed the DISHA chairperson. It will be Rahul's first DISHA meet as Rae Bareli MP if he attends it on Tuesday.

WAIT & WATCH

CENTRAL PUBLIC Works Department's director general Rajesh Kumar Kaushal retired on Thursday but his replacement is yet to be named. A proposed amendment in the recruitment rules (RR) for the post has added to the uncertainty over who will be the next DG of the department. In March, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs floated a draft RR to open up the position to officers from outside CPWD, including railways and defence. It is learnt the new RRs are yet to be approved, adding to the speculation of who will lead the 170-year-old organisation. The CPWD DG not only leads the Central government's construction agency but also functions as the technical adviser to the Union government.

ORDER DISORDER

THE BUREAUCRATIC circles in Delhi are abuzz with speculation over the Centre's decision to reverse its own order and recall two senior IAS officers transferred out of the capital. Eight IAS officers were part of an MHA reshuffle earlier this month and three among them were transferred out of Delhi. The officers in question are learnt to have told their colleagues that they were transferred on the basis of their own request to the MHA. A day later, however, according to sources, the MHA "quietly reconsidered" its decision, internally attributing it to "miscommunication", and recalled two of the officers. The capital's bureaucracy is now scratching its heads over who brought the "miscommunication" to the MHA's notice — its own officials or the bureaucrats themselves.

Goa Speaker junks plea to disqualify 8 ex-Cong MLAs who joined BJP

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, NOVEMBER 1

THE SPEAKER OF Goa Legislative Assembly Ramesh Tawadkar Friday dismissed a disqualification plea against eight "rebel" MLAs who had switched from the Congress to the BJP in 2022.

Girish Chodankar, former Goa PCC chief had filed a plea seeking disqualification of Michael Lobo, Digambar Kamat, Aleixo Sequeira, Sankalp Amonkar, Delilah Lobo, Kedar Naik, Rajesh Faldeesa and Rodolfo Fernandes under Tenth schedule of the Constitution.

In the plea, Chodankar had submitted that the eight MLAs had incurred disqualification as they had voluntarily given up the membership of their original political party [Congress], on whose candidature they had contested the Assembly polls.

On September 14, 2022, the eight MLAs, claiming to form two-third of the Congress legislature party, had declared a "merger" with BJP and sought protection under the Tenth Schedule.

Chodankar argued that there is no valid merger because the twin requirements for merger of a party to be agreed by two-thirds

of the members of the Legislature Party is not satisfied. He submitted that Para 4 of Tenth Schedule does not contemplate merger of a party with Legislature Party and that such a merger is contrary to the object of Tenth schedule.

The advocate representing the eight MLAs submitted that the Tenth Schedule does not contemplate the acceptance of the merger by the other political party. The advocate said that the merger was accepted by BJP "as the respondents are sitting in the Assembly as BJP members".

Dismissing the plea, Speaker Tawadkar observed that the facts and the factual issues in the plea are identical to another disqualification plea recently heard by him. On October 14, Tawadkar had dismissed a disqualification plea filed by one Dominic Noronha against the eight MLAs.

In the order Friday, the Speaker said, "Even legal issues involved in both the cases are identical. I cannot have a different order than what I had passed in Noronha's case." Chodankar told *The Indian Express* the order amounted to "encouraging defections". He said, "If you term the Tenth schedule as anti-defection law, then this order is not in line with it..."

NEW STRESS POINT IN TIES BEFORE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

US puts 19 Indian firms on sanctions list, says helped Russia with materials, tech

Sanctioning nearly 400 entities and individuals across countries for enabling Russia's illegal war: US State Dept

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

ADDING A new stress point to bilateral ties, the US Wednesday put 19 private firms from India and two Indian nationals on a list of "nearly 400 entities and individuals" from several countries that will face sanctions for their alleged role in aiding Russia's war efforts in Ukraine.

This is not the first time that Indian firms have been targeted by US sanctions, but the latest move was the "most concerted push so far against third-country evasion", a US State Department official told *Reuters*.

The US action comes at a time when bilateral ties with India are already under stress over allegations of an Indian national's role in a plot to assassinate Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil. Raising the stakes last week, the US said it would not be fully satisfied until there is "meaningful accountability" resulting from India's investigations into the alleged plot that failed.

On Wednesday, while announcing the sanctions linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the State Department said: "The United States is today sanctioning nearly 400 entities and individuals for enabling Russia's prosecution of its illegal war. In this action, the Department of State is imposing sanctions on more than 120 individuals and entities. Concurrently, the Department of the Treasury is designating more than 270 individuals and entities. The Department of Commerce is also adding 40 entities to its Entity List."

It said the move aims to disrupt sanctions evasion and target entities in multiple countries, including China, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey and the UAE, apart from India, for selling "items and other important dual-use goods to Russia, including critical compo-

EXPLAINED E Limited effect

THE US sanctions have had a limited impact on the Russian war machine. In this context, the latest move is being seen as an attempt to target Moscow with an eye on domestic constituents in the US with presidential elections on November 5.

nents that Russia relies on for its weapons systems to wage war against Ukraine".

"Those items include microelectronics and computer numerical control items (CNC) on the Common High Priority List (CHPL), as identified by the US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) alongside the European Union (EU), United Kingdom (UK), and Japan," it said.

"The United States will continue to use all tools at its disposal to disrupt support for Russia's military-industrial base and curtail the Kremlin's ability to exploit the international financial system and generate revenue in furtherance of its war against Ukraine...the Department seeks to disrupt the networks and channels through which Russia procures technology and equipment from entities in third countries to support its war effort," it said.

The US State Department also detailed the charges against four Indian firms on its list of 120: Ascend Aviation India, Mask Trans, TSMD Global and Futevo.

It alleged that Ascend Aviation "sent over 700 shipments to Russia-based companies between March 2023 and

March 2024", including "over \$200,000 worth of CHPL items, such as US-origin aircraft components" while naming the firm's directors.

The State Department claimed that Mask Trans was "involved in the supply of over \$300,000 worth of CHPL items such as aviation components to Russia-based and US-designated S 7 Engineering LLC from June 2023 to at least April 2024".

The other two Indian firms were among those that were designated for allegedly "operating or having operated in the technology sector of the Russian Federation economy".

The State Department said "TSMD Global private limited is an India-based company that shipped at least \$430,000 worth of CHPL items to Russia-based companies, including Electron Komponent and the US-designated companies: Limited Liability company VMK, Alfa limited liability company and joint stock company Avtovaz".

It alleged that "these shipments, which occurred between July 2023 and March 2024, included US- and EU-origin BIS CHPL Tier 1 and 2 items such as electronic integrated circuits, central processing units, and other fixed capacitors".

The State Department accused Futevo of being "involved in the supply of over \$1.4 million worth of CHPL items such as electronic components to Russia-based and US-designated Limited Liability Company SMT-LOGIC, the manufacturer of Orlan drones with Russia-based and US-designated Special Technology Center". The shipments were from January 2023 to at least February 2024," it said.

The two Indian nationals sanctioned are Vivek Kumar Mishra and Sudhir Kumar, the directors of Delhi-based Ascend Aviation.

Entities based in the PRC (China), India, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Türkiye, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), among other countries, continue to sell these (CHPL) items (critical

Electronic, aircraft parts: Most Indian firms on list supplied dual-use goods

SUKALP SHARMA & RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

OF THE Indian entities — 19 companies and two Indian nationals — sanctioned by the US Wednesday for allegedly aiding Russia's war against Ukraine, the US Department of State said in a release on Wednesday.

Delhi-based aircraft spare parts company Ascend Aviation and two of its directors — Vivek Kumar Mishra and Sudhir Kumar — have been sanctioned by the US Department of State for shipping CHPL items to Russia, including US-origin aircraft parts.

Another Indian company — Mask Trans — was sanctioned for supplying CHPL items, including aviation components, to a Russian firm already under sanctions. The department also sanctioned two India-based companies — TSMD Global and Futevo — for supplying electronic components to sanctioned Russian companies.

While a few India-based companies were sanctioned earlier by the US as part of its Russia-related sanctions regime, the number of firms targeted in the latest move is unusually high.

The Indian government has so far not commented on the development. A questionnaire sent to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry did not elicit a response.

A number of sanction designations pertain to export of dual-use goods — that can be used for both civil and military applications — to Russia. Many such items are part of the Common High Priority List (CHPL) made jointly by the US, the EU, Japan, and the UK.

The CHPL lists numerous items that Russia "seeks to procure for its weapons programmes".

The two Indian nationals sanctioned are Vivek Kumar Mishra and Sudhir Kumar, the directors of Delhi-based Ascend Aviation.

to Russia's military-industrial base) and other important dual-use goods to Russia, including critical components that Russia relies on for its weapons systems to wage war against Ukraine," the US Department of State said in a release on Wednesday.

Following the complaint and protest by Shaina and her supporters at Nagpada police station, police have registered an FIR against Sawant for allegedly using inappropriate words.

In her statement to the police, Shaina said, "Around 8 am on Friday, my PA Amit Ramjilal Yadav informed me over the phone that a video defaming me had gone viral on social media. He sent me the video on WhatsApp, and upon watching it, I saw that Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant was speaking to the media during which he commented that 'maal nahi chalega', original 'maal chalega'."

A senior police officer overseeing the investigation said, "We have registered a case based on the complainant's statement." Sawant has been booked under Section 79 (intending to insult a woman's modesty) and Section 356(2) (defamation) of the BNS."

After the FIR was registered, Shaina said, "We are all aware that 'Maha Vinash Aghadi' (opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi) doesn't respect women... But Ma Mumbai Devi's blessing is with me. I am a woman, daughter of Mumbai and not 'maal'." "If you are going to make derogatory remarks against any woman, such FIR will be registered against you and the law will take its course," she said.

Sawant, however, said, "Where did I take her name? My statement has been misrepresented. The FIR has been registered... because we are in the opposition."

CM Shinde said on X, "The statement made by a Sena (UBT) MP on Shiv Sena candidate Shaina NC is insulting to all women and shows the ideological level of Sena (UBT)..."

FULL REPORT www.indianexpress.com

'Objectionable' remark: Shaina files complaint against Sena UBT MP, FIR lodged

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1

MAHARASHTRA CM Eknath Shinde-led Sena candidate from Mumbai Shaina NC on Friday filed a police complaint against Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and MP Arvind Sawant over his alleged objectionable remark against women, targeting her.

Following the complaint and protest by Shaina and her supporters at Nagpada police station, police have registered an FIR against Sawant for allegedly using inappropriate words.

In her statement to the police, Shaina said, "Around 8 am on Friday, my PA Amit Ramjilal Yadav informed me over the phone that a video defaming me had gone viral on social media. He sent me the video on WhatsApp, and upon watching it, I saw that Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant was speaking to the media during which he commented that 'maal nahi chalega', original 'maal chalega'."

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MP on Shiv Sena candidate Shaina NC is insulting to all women and shows the ideological level of Sena (UBT)..."

Kerala ex-BJP man's claims on robbery heats up Kerala bypolls

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOV 1

A HIGHWAY robbery ahead of 2021 state polls at Kodakara town in Thrissur district has sparked renewed allegations from Congress and CPI(M) against BJP, and each other, after a former BJP worker said the money was meant for the party.

On Friday, Congress's V D Satheesan said "the failure of the state police as well as central agencies to look into source of funds, shows the nexus between BJP and CPI(M)". Law Minister P Rajeev said the chargesheet "clearly stated that the money was meant for BJP election fund".

Satheesan told the media the money had allegedly been brought to the office in bags under guise of poll campaign material.



KANNADA RAJYOTSAVA

Students in yakshagana attire perform during the 69th Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations at Bengaluru's Sree Kanteerava Stadium on Friday. PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Bibek Debroy.

including translations of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the puranas, the four vedas and 11 major Upanishads.

Debroy was a full-time Member of NITI Aayog from its constitution in 2015 until June 2019. A prolific author, Debroy authored and edited several books,

body, and managed to attract talent from not just independent think tanks but also the private sector. The PM-EAC, which interacted frequently among itself, met the PM on crucial economic issues at least once a year.

Debroy studied in Ramakrishna Mission School, Narendrapur, and Presidency College, Kolkata. He then went to the Delhi School of Economics and Trinity College, Cambridge. In one of his columns in 2022, Debroy mentioned how, on being asked to revise his dissertation for PhD by his supervisor at Cambridge, he decided not to do so in a "fit of juvenile anger, pride and insolence", he said. "If you term the Tenth schedule as anti-defection law, then this order is not in line with it..."

Debroy was a towering scholar, well-versed in diverse domains like economics, history, culture, politics, spirituality and more". Through his works, he left an

indelible mark on India's intellectual landscape. Beyond his contributions to public policy, he enjoyed working on our ancient texts, making them accessible to the youth," he wrote on X, expressing condolences.

"I have known Dr Debroy for many years. I will fondly remember his insights and passion for academic discourse. Saddened by his passing away. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti," the Prime Minister wrote.

Debroy was awarded a Padma Shri in 2015 and the Lifetime Achievement Award by the US-India Business Summit in 2016.

He had undertaken substantive research in the areas of legal reforms, manufacturing competitiveness, reforms in the Indian Railways, income and social inequality, and infrastructure financing.

"I had the privilege of inviting him to Pune to deliver a talk, not on economics, but as titled 'An economist's journey through the epics'. His vast output of translations of Sanskrit texts and epics is not just prolific, but a great service to young readers. We will greatly miss him. It is perhaps poetic that his first job after coming back from England was at Gokhale Institute, and four decades later he returned as its Chancellor," he said.

"Bibek was a close friend for more than two decades. He had a sharp mind and a sharp tongue, and he always liked to call a spade a spade. One could have very open and frank conversations and fierce debates with him. His caustic words could sometimes be difficult to absorb. One could disagree with him but he was never disagreeable," Ranade said.

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Haryana Assembly polls: After EC rejects EVM allegation, Cong says 'clean chit no surprise'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

DAYS AFTER the Election Commission (EC) termed the Congress's allegations over "irregularities during the counting of votes" in Haryana Assembly polls "baseless", the party Friday said it was "not surprised" that the EC had "given itself a clean chit".

A Congress delegation had met the poll panel on October 9 to express concerns over vote counting in Haryana, alleging that EVMs that had 99% battery during counting showed BJP wins, while those at 60-70% registered Congress victories.

On Friday, the Congress, in a letter to the CEC Rajiv Kumar, signed by party general secretary in-charge (organisation) K C Venugopal, former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda, party's communication in-charge Jairam Ramesh and other senior leaders,

said "the answer given to the question of the machines' fluctuating batteries seeks to confuse rather than clarify".

About three weeks after the Congress delegation met the EC, the panel wrote to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge Tuesday, saying the allegations had the potential to cause "turbulence". On the EC's reply, the letter said, "At any rate, the EC's reply is nothing more than a standard and generic set of bullet points on how the machines function rather than a specific clarification on specific complaints. In short, while our complaints were specific, the EC's response is generic and focused on diminishing the complaints and the petitioners."

"The tone and tenor of the EC's response, the language used, and the allegations made against the INC compel us to submit the counter-response," it said.

According to an EC source, the poll panel had received the letter.

The Congress had not contested the EC's specific rejection of the allegations in each of the constituencies and its candidates had not filed election petitions to challenge the results, the source said.

It also said "the recent tone of the Commission's communications to the INC is a matter that we refuse to take lightly anymore". "Every reply from the ECI now seems to be laced with ad-hominem attacks on either individual leaders or the party itself," Ramesh said. Alleging that the EC's reply is written "in a tone that is condescending", it said, "If the current EC's goal is to strip itself of the last vestiges of neutrality, then it is doing a remarkable job at creating that impression".

"We challenge the EC to fact check... since it finds the INC's misgivings to be based on phantoms. We have many such examples, far more than the same 2-3 examples the EC seems adamant on repeating," read the letter.

INDIA opposes EC order to remove 2 Jharkhand officers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RANCHI, NOVEMBER 1

THE INDIA bloc in Jharkhand held a press conference Friday opposing the EC's orders to remove Deoghar SP Ajit Peter Dungdung and Ranchi Deputy Commissioner Manjunath Bhajantri.

"On 29 October 2024, your office suddenly issued an order for the transfer of Ajit Peter Dungdung, SP Deoghar, without any reason, which seems very shocking and harsh. Even before this, an order was passed to transfer Manjunath Bhajantri, an officer posted as Deputy Commissioner in Ranchi, without giving any reason... Such an order on the tribal and Dalit officials posted in the state indirectly protects the

administrative support of a particular political party in the elections," said the letter. Such orders "seem to be aimed at destabilising the administrative system" during elections, the letter said. "We jointly register our displeasure before you," it said.

In 2021, the EC had ordered disciplinary action against Manjunath Bhajantri based on the complaint of Godda MP Nishikant Dubey. The poll panel's order was challenged in the High Court, which gave relief to the officer. The EC then appealed before a division bench in the High Court which reversed the single bench order.

The EC then wrote to Jharkhand's Chief Secretary reiterating its position to initiate disciplinary proceedings "for major penalty" against Bhajantri.

UP: Businessman, wife, maid choke to death in house fire on Diwali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KANPUR, NOVEMBER 1

A PROMINENT businessman, his wife and their domestic help died allegedly of suffocation inside their house in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh following a fire that broke out from a earthen lamp early Friday, police said.

The couple had installed an electronic lock on their bedroom door but as the blaze erupted, they failed to enter the correct unlocking code in panic and remained trapped, a senior officer said. Sanjay Shyam Dasani (49), his wife Kanika (45) and their domestic help Chhavi Chauhan (24) died in the fire.

DCP (Central Kanpur) Dinesh Tripathi said the fire began around 3 am, after the family performed late night prayers, leaving the lamp burning in the temple, made of wood.

"Dasani, his wife and their maid had all retired to their bedrooms and were asleep when the fire spread rapidly through the house," he said. "When local officials, including fire brigade, were alerted, they reached the spot and the trio was rushed to the Regional Hospital where they were declared dead by doctors."

Around 4 am, their son Harsh returned home after Diwali celebrations and discovered the house filled with thick smoke and flames. He alerted neighbours, who then contacted the police and fire department. Further investigation is on.

However, at the function, she said she dropped in while "passing by". It was also alleged that she obtained the video of her speech at the function, during which she raised corruption charges against the ADM, and circulated it widely.

Divya had claimed that Prasanth, a CPI(M) worker who applied for an NOC for a fuel outlet, had complained to the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) raising bribery charges against the ADM.

On Wednesday, a day after she surrendered to police, the prosecution submitted to the District Sessions Court in Thalassery that her "insult" of the ADM was done in a planned manner and that her corruption charges against him were baseless.

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE UN-LIFTED GRAIN

Tardy procurement of paddy in Punjab speaks of poor short-term planning, and a long-term failure of policy

THE SLOW PACE of paddy procurement in Punjab and resultant farmer anger are a reflection of both short-term official incompetence and long-term policy failure. Last year, during the marketing months of October and November, government agencies bought 185.3 lakh tonnes (lt) of paddy. This time, they have purchased just 71.6 lt so far, mainly due to lack of storage space for the new crop. That, in turn, has been because of 119 lt of rice, out of the total 124.1 lt milled grain from last year's procured paddy, still remaining in Punjab as on October 1. With the Food Corporation of India (FCI) not moving this rice out of the state, Punjab's warehouses have little capacity to accommodate fresh grain. Millers, too, are hesitant to lift the paddy brought by farmers that they process on behalf of state agencies. They aren't sure the latter would take timely delivery of their custom-milled rice.

The most immediate sufferers of tardy procurement — as has also been reported from Haryana — are farmers. Heaps of un-lifted grain lying in the wholesale mandis has prompted them to also slow down harvesting of their already-ripened paddy in the fields. Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi has assured farmers that the Centre "will procure each and every grain" from them "by November-end". But the more the procurement gets extended, the narrower would be the window for sowing the next wheat crop. Given that farmers need to sow before mid-November in order to harvest by early-April before temperatures start soaring, they may now take greater recourse to stubble burning to clear their fields. Delayed paddy procurement could, then, cause collateral damage to air quality in north India, including the national capital.

But it isn't just poor short-term planning — someone has to answer for the FCI's inability to move out last year's rice procured from Punjab and Haryana — that is to blame. Equally, if not more, serious is the policy failure to wean the two states away from paddy cultivation. Unlike wheat, there is no dearth of other states — whether in the north, south, east or central India — that can grow rice enough to meet the country's consumption requirement, and also in a more environmentally-sustainable way. The fact that the paddy area in Punjab and Haryana touched a record 32.4 lakh and 16.4 lakh hectares respectively this time only testifies to the absence of political will to address the real problem. India is today producing too much rice, which is borne out by the all-time-high opening stocks of 386.8 lt in government warehouses as on October 1. The solution to this problem has to start from Punjab and Haryana. Creating more storage space is a short-term expedient at best.

READING THE SANCTIONS

Delhi should neither take offence at curbs on dual-use goods suppliers, nor ignore them as decision of outgoing US President

ON WEDNESDAY, THE US imposed sanctions on about 400 entities and individuals across the world, including 19 Indian firms and two Indian nationals, for allegedly helping Russia's war efforts in Ukraine. Most of the Indian entities sanctioned are suppliers of electronic components, a few supply aircraft parts and machine tools and components, among other items. The US State Department says that the move aims to address evasion of sanctions and target entities in multiple countries, including China, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey and the UAE, apart from India, for selling "items and other important dual-use goods to Russia, including critical components that Russia relies on for its weapons systems to wage war against Ukraine". Dual-use goods can be utilised for both civil and military applications. Many such items are part of the Common High Priority List (CHPL) made jointly by the US, the EU, Japan, and the UK. The CHPL lists numerous items that Russia "seeks to procure for its weapons programmes".

In the aftermath, while there may be a temptation to grandstand against the US sanctions, it would help to understand their context, and to assess their consequences for India's domestic interests. There is a war raging in Europe and there is a growing sense that it is likely to escalate. As such, the West is tightening sanctions to prevent Russia's military capability from growing. The second critical aspect is that the sanctions have a broad sweep, across several countries. India or Indian firms have not been specifically targeted or singled out. The third key point is that while India has differences with the US on Russia, it is also true that India has a strong partnership with the US when it comes to China.

The Indian government should neither take offence at the sanctions, nor ignore them as the decision of an outgoing US President. It should, instead, treat them as a caution. In the past, when it came to crude oil sanctions, the US had provided India some relief but the current restrictions refer to goods the US views as directly boosting Russia's military capability. Delhi would do well to focus on the need to protect Indian businesses from getting caught in the crossfire. India had set up export control mechanisms as part of the nuclear deal with the US — it is time to update them. The government needs to educate industry about the export restrictions, and possibly even licence some of the critical items, to ensure that Indian businesses are not adversely affected by the ongoing conflict.

A PERMANENT LOSS

Bibek Debroy had the ability to communicate the esoteric with ease. He did so without sacrificing depth and nuance

WHEN BIBEK DEBROY died on November 1, this newspaper was among the many who felt bereft. From sparrows to spreadsheets, from the discontents of India's arcane laws and bureaucracy to what makes a conducive environment for businesses and bees — the sheer breadth of Bibek Debroy's expertise and interests were on display in his columns and articles in *The Indian Express* for over two decades. Unlike many economists and policy experts, Debroy had the ability to communicate what is esoteric with ease. He did so without sacrificing nuance and depth.

It is easy, in retrospect, to see that the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the 1990s was necessary and needed. At the time, however — and in some senses, even today — it went up against a governmentality that viewed the bureaucrat and the sarkar as the very visible hand guiding the economy. Debroy was among those who consistently argued for government to be rationalised, and urged reforms across sectors — law and judiciary, Railways and trade. He did so from within the system, in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, NCAER and the Rajiv Gandhi Institute, for example, as well as from outside, in his stint at the Centre of Policy Research. Since 2016, he was the chairman of the PM's Economic Advisory Council. The breadth of Debroy's knowledge was matched only by its depth.

His abiding passion was the translation of classical Indian texts. The task was Herculean, more suited for an entire university department than an individual. Mastering Sanskrit, he introduced the world, afresh, to the Mahabharata, Puranas and Upanishads. This desire to revive a shared literary heritage was not accompanied by chauvinism or revisionist ideas, as is so often the case with similar endeavours today. In fact, despite having served under different political dispensations, Debroy remained above the fray. Days before he died, Debroy sent in his final column to this newspaper. He wrote about illness and mortality and what it means to be remembered. He wrote that with one exception, his would be "no permanent loss". An instance of the columnist getting it wrong.



E SOMANATHAN

"THERE IS ALWAYS a well-known solution to every human problem — neat, plausible, and wrong." So wrote H L Mencken in his book *Prejudices, Second Series*, over a century ago. In the case of Delhi's air pollution, the "well-known solution" is to crack down on crop-residue burning in Punjab and Haryana, along with some expenditure to help farmers find alternative disposal methods or uses for the residue. The problem is that while this source contributes about half of Delhi's pollution, this is true for only three weeks or so at this time of year. On an annual basis, it contributes about 3 per cent of annual PM 2.5 (fine particulate matter) according to a review of scientific studies by Sarah Guttikunda and co-authors last year. So, while the effort to reduce stubble burning is justified, it is only a small part of the overall problem. The truth is that for the rest of the winter when air pollution is particularly acute, and for the rest of the year, there are other, much larger sources. These include residential burning of firewood and dung for cooking and heating, industries, including coal-fired power plants, construction dust and dust from roads that are dug up and not cordoned off from traffic, vehicle exhaust fumes, and waste burning. Many of these sources are outside Delhi. Pollution from power plants is statistically detectable for a thousand kilometres downwind, as my own research shows.

A second important point is that Delhi's air pollution is not a recent phenomenon. It has built up over several decades. It is unrealistic to expect to solve it within a year or two. Nevertheless, other countries' experiences show that air pollution can be reduced to very low levels with proper institutions and action. London, in the late 19th century, was one of the most polluted cities in the world, due to a high population that was burning coal and firewood to keep warm. Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson famously went after criminals in swirling fogs that

Solution to Delhi's pollution woes lies in institutional reform that empowers existing agencies

It is hardly surprising if central and state governments fail to implement the regulations or orders of the new commission when these will be deeply resented by those on whom they are imposed, with political blowback for the governments. Without scientific justification and transparency, any regulation is bound to be arbitrary since regulators lack data to make informed decisions. And such justification is impossible without a large budget and in-house scientific capability to monitor and publish data on thousands of sources, and conduct suitable studies.

were actually smog. As late as December 1952, 4,000 people died of air pollution in London when a temperature inversion held the pollution in the city. But within a few years, this disappeared as coal heating was replaced by gas and other measures were taken to clean the air. Today, London is among the cleanest big cities in the world.

In 2021, prodded by the Supreme Court, the Government of India issued an ordinance creating a Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas. This was soon made into a law. Unfortunately, those who framed the ordinance didn't ask why the Central and State Pollution Control Boards, who already have the mandate to tackle air pollution, had failed to control it, and what weaknesses in the legal and institutional framework had led to this situation. Had they done so, they would not have created a new institution that also lacks a significant budget and a large scientific staff. The laws do not require either the old or the new institutions to commission and publish scientific studies or do cost-benefit analyses justifying any regulation they produce.

It is hardly surprising if central and state governments fail to implement the regulations or orders of the new commission when these will be deeply resented by those on whom they are imposed, with political blowback for the governments. Without scientific justification and transparency, any regulation is bound to be arbitrary since regulators lack data to make informed decisions. And such justification is impossible without a large budget and in-house scientific capability to monitor and publish data on thousands of sources, and conduct suitable studies.

So, what do we need to solve the problem? An amended law that will not create yet another toothless and bankrupt institution, but rather empower our existing pollution control boards and the CAQM and give

them the money and autonomy to actually diagnose the problem. Autonomy must go with accountability, of course. The regulators must be obliged to collect data and do cost-benefit analyses, all in the public domain, followed by public comment, all to be published before they can change or issue a new regulation.

The most important criterion, that of political and public acceptability, suggests a requirement in the law that no new regulation can abruptly raise costs for any class of individuals or firms without compensation. While it is essential that polluters be forced to pay, any such costs should rise gradually, giving people and industries time to adjust and make new investments in cleaner technologies. Such a provision will go a long way in reassuring legislators that the newly empowered regulator will not make them unpopular.

Finally, it is important to allow regulators flexibility to tailor regulations to the problem at hand. They should be allowed to charge pollution fees in addition to issuing pollution standards (but not to keep the revenue — their budget should come from the government, otherwise they will have a clear incentive to make money, not end pollution). They should be allowed to establish pollution permit trading schemes. These can be valuable to prevent lobbying by industry to stop action. With a trading scheme, the more efficient and cleaner parts of an industry stand to make money from the regulation by selling permits by reducing pollution in excess of the requirement. This gives a section of industry a financial stake in pollution control.

The courts should stop telling the executive that they should implement harsh orders. Instead, they need to push to reform the institutional structure of pollution control to make it more effective and less threatening.

The writer is professor, Economics and Planning Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi



LYLA MEHTA AND HARIPRASAD V M

THE SWACHH BHARAT Mission (SBM) completed 10 years last month. The country also has an urban Swachh Bharat Mission. However, every year, rains lay bare the inadequate state of sanitation, sewage and drainage in India's cities and towns. Poorly constructed toilets, septic tanks and drains get choked or overflow, becoming a breeding ground for disease and exacerbating the risks faced by poor residents, migrants and sanitation workers. While urban wastewater hazards are most visible in the monsoons, in reality only 28 per cent of India's urban sewage is treated, with the rest released in rivers, seas and streams.

Sanitation is a human right, a public good and critical for health and productivity. It is also one of the most off-track Sustainable Development Goals, with 43 per cent of the world's population lacking access to safe sanitation. In India, as in many parts of the Global South, centralised and capital-intensive sanitation and waste management systems are largely restricted to the mega-cities with towns and smaller cities disconnected from networked treatment plants and sewage systems. This makes safely managed sanitation and waste management in urban areas one of India's most compelling challenges.

In the 2024-2025 budget, drinking water and sanitation received an allocation of Rs 77,390.68 crore, a meagre increase of only 0.5 per cent from the 2023-2024 allocation, with 90 per cent of money allocated to the National Rural Drinking Water Programme. The flagship sanitation programmes SBM Urban and SBM Gramene received no increase in funding. Funding for the AMRUT and Smart Cities Mission has been reduced from Rs 13,200 crore to Rs 10,400 crore.

Until 2014, India had the world's highest

INVISIBLE SANITATION WORKER

Programmes like Swacch Bharat need to pay more attention to the labourers

These challenges can be an opportunity to reimagine off-grid urban areas for decentralised innovations that are people-centred, sustainable, equitable and contribute to economic growth. A circular economy approach of resource recovery and reuse holds the promise of converting the sludge to biogas or fertiliser — "brown gold". However, numerous hurdles exist, not least due to the inability of authorities to collect and safely dispose of the sludge and the lack of attention to the critical roles performed by marginalised formal and informal sanitation workers.

Over 65 per cent of urban India relies on onsite sanitation systems such as pits and septic tanks. A workshop organised at IIT Bombay in March looked at the challenges for FSM across the country. While there has been significant progress in faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs), especially in Odisha and Maharashtra, many are underutilised in other parts of the country or do not function properly.

While manual scavenging is officially banned in India, problems in the system often increase reliance on these workers. Many policies promote machine cleaning, yet existing septic tank designs are often not suitable for machines. Manual scavengers and other informal sanitation service providers continue to provide cheap labour for the maintenance of the sanitation system. Data from 2018 to 2023 reveals that over 400 people died while cleaning septic tanks and sewers. Yet, authorities routinely deny the existence of manual scavengers and informal sanitation workers.

The current budget does not have any provisions to rehabilitate manual scavengers or sanitation workers. While the 2022 NAMASTE

scheme by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment mentions rehabilitation as one of the objectives, the emphasis is on providing safety and skill training to the workers. This fails to address the historical injustices faced by these communities.

These challenges can be an opportunity to reimagine off-grid urban areas for decentralised innovations that are people-centred, sustainable, equitable and contribute to economic growth. Faecal sludge is rich in organic compounds. A circular economy approach of resource recovery and reuse holds the promise of converting the sludge to biogas or fertiliser — "brown gold". However, numerous hurdles exist, not least due to the inability of authorities to collect and safely dispose of the sludge and the lack of attention to the critical roles performed by marginalised formal and informal sanitation workers.

To avoid disease burden, contamination of water bodies and further marginalisation of poor urban dwellers, especially vulnerable women, workers and migrants, national, state and local authorities need to roll out systematic solutions and pursue a holistic approach, incorporating long-term planning and appropriate financial mechanisms. Transparent data regarding the entire sanitation chain, including the invisible manual workers, robust institutional and regulatory frameworks as well as community participation in policy formulation and long-term action research specific to local dynamics are critical.

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NOVEMBER 2, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

SHOOT-AT-SIGHT ORDERS

THE ARMY WAS called out, in indefinite curfew clamped in Delhi except in the New Delhi police district and shoot-at-sight orders were issued after 60 people were killed and 1,000 injured in communal violence following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The dead are almost equally divided between Hindus and Sikhs, according to official hospital records. Unofficial sources put the number at over 100.

FAREWELL, MRS GANDHI

NOTHING STOPPED PEOPLE from making their way to Teen Murti House to pay their last respects to Indira Gandhi — not the rioting, nor the lack of public transport, nor their age, nor a physical handicap, nor even the chill that descended on the capital. From the young to the old, from the healthy to the infirm and handicapped, they were all there streaming in from early in the morning, waiting patiently in a queue that extended for well over a mile, to pay their last respects to the assassinated leader.

APPEAL FOR UNITY

THE PRIME MINISTER, Rajiv Gandhi, and 15 Opposition leaders made a joint appeal to the people to end the "madness" of violence un-

leashed following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Making an earnest appeal to restore sanity and harmony, the government and Opposition leaders said the "world's eyes are on India. India must come out of this test with credit."

CHANDIGARH CENSORED

PRE-CENSORSHIP OF THE press is being imposed in the Union Territory of Chandigarh, it was officially learnt. Under the pre-censorship order being issued, newspapers will be barred from publishing reports relating to violent incidents in the country following the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

WORDLY WISE

THE BUSINESS OF THE STATISTICIAN IS TO CATALYSE THE SCIENTIFIC LEARNING PROCESS.

— GEORGE BOX

THE IDEAS PAGE

His own person

In a city like Delhi, where intellectual life has a lot of glittering surfaces, Bibek Debroy always seemed to have unplumbed depths



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

WHEN BIBEK DEBROY resigned from the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies and PHDCCI, the Centre for Policy Research smelled an opportunity. I immediately called him up and offered a professorship. He was gracious enough to accept it. But he had one concern. He said he was planning to devote much of his time to the translation of the Mahabharata. He would continue to do policy work. But he needed space for this project. I was in awe of his audaciousness. I said something to the effect that this made him even more attractive to the Centre for Policy Research (CPR). But I told him I had one concern. Since the 19th century, no one who had attempted an English translation of the whole of the Mahabharata had lived to see it completed. I did not want him to tempt fate. He replied, "I feel I was born to do this. I will defy the odds." He joined the CPR immediately.

Much will be written about Bibek's intellectual brilliance, his preternatural grasp of almost all subjects, his photographic memory, his command of factual detail, his artistry in photography, and his myriad contributions to public policy. The word polymath seems to only circumscribe the range of his achievements, not describe it. What struck me most in that conversation about the Mahabharata was his character: His extraordinary tenacity, a sense of being possessed, as if he were following some inner law of his own being. By sheer determination, he defied the odds and how, not just producing a translation of the Mahabharata, but even more ambitiously, the Puranas. For those who saw him up close, the sheer physicality of this project was daunting: Producing thousands of words per day for almost two decades. Even in meetings he was typing away on his BlackBerry or phone, awkwardly drawn close to his already strained eyes. The sheer grit of the project would deserve an award all its own.

But ultimately, he could not defy the calling of Yama. I had a wonderful Diwali message from him at 9.15 am, the day before he passed on, the day he called, "panchotsava." But you got the sense, at least from the outside, that it was an ultimate call he was in no mood to defy, leaving us much too soon at the age of 69. I saw little of him the last few years since both of us moved on from the CPR. He had been seriously ill last year, but had recovered. At our last meeting a few weeks ago he was talking almost as if he had a premonition that he might be moving to a higher station. At least on that occasion, he had a sense of radiant calm at the prospect.

We were discussing one topic that we had incessantly touched on for years. Texts were important to the recovery of Indian traditions, and he had done more in this vein than anyone in his generation. But we also had a sense, in different ways, that dealing just with texts was not enough. The sense of these texts was clear, but the references were not. It was a bit like reading philosophy of science texts, without any sense of what the



CR Sasikumar

practice of science might be like. It is like reading a meta discourse about an object without experiencing the object itself. He took off from that point to say that he was practising a new form of Shiv Aradhana, and was beginning to finally have a sense of luminescence. Hope he finds it.

To reveal this is not to betray any confidences. But it is to point out that in a city like Delhi, where intellectual life has a lot of glittering surfaces, Bibek always seemed to have unplumbed depths. You peel one layer off and another emerges. I did not know him as well as many others, and did not regularly hang out with him. But as you grow older you realise what matters is the quality and depth of encounters, not their frequency. I almost got the sense that it was impossible to really know Bibek; there was something enigmatic about him that the encyclopedic knowledge of facts, droll humour, policy wonkishness, his love of pens, photography and dogs, can do about people, the torrent of written words was only disguising.

It is a measure of Bibek's achievement that his towering feat of translations will stand out for the ages. Many five-star economists have got more credit for India's economic reforms. But few had the kind of impact in changing our default sensibility to economic liberalisation as Bibek did. There is no aspect of economic reform which was not touched by his intellectual prowess: Trade reform, legal reform, regulatory reform and his shepherding of the committee of reform of the Railways. He was one of the rare economists who consistently maintained a liberalisation-oriented outlook, but could really dive into arcane details of law and regulation.

We used to tease him by saying that he secretly had a bureaucratic mind: No one

It is a measure of Bibek's achievement that his towering feat of translations will stand out for the ages. Many five-star economists have got more credit for India's economic reforms. But few had the kind of impact in changing our default sensibility to economic liberalisation as Bibek did. There is no aspect of economic reform which was not touched by his intellectual prowess: Trade reform, legal reform, regulatory reform and his shepherding of the committee of reform of the Railways. He was one of the rare economists who consistently maintained a liberalisation-oriented outlook, but could really dive into arcane details of law and regulation.

outside the bureaucracy could remember sub-clause X of clause Y of sub-section Z of thousands of statutes and dig them up when necessary. In retrospect you can see the continuity with his translation work: He had a *shastric* mind, a practitioner of the mnemonic arts who could absorb whole bodies of texts. It is also extraordinary to think that there was a moment in Indian intellectual life when the most brilliant constellation of economic liberalisers was with the Congress and a Bibek Debroy was heading the Rajiv Gandhi Institute.

Bibek's outlook was broad-minded. His political allegiances were always enigmatic. It was his co-authored report while at the CPR where he laid a lot of the intellectual groundwork for decimating the Left's economic model in Bengal that helped pave the way for the TMC. Even when he joined this government, except for the awkward spectacle of having to defend demonetisation, he managed the artful feat of staying above the fray: Writing more between the lines. But more miraculously, unlike almost everyone in this government, he did not succumb to the path of rank communalism to prove his allegiances. In both partisan alignments, first with Congress and then the BJP, he managed to remain his own person, as evidenced in the outpouring for him.

His own person he remained: Self-driven, mysterious, funny, but always industrious. He could also be, on occasion, quite exasperating, making no room for norms other than his own; his silences could sometimes be strategic. But the magnitude of his impact is easy to miss, paradoxically because it was so far-reaching across so many domains.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

Don't blame it on the EVM

That is what the Election Commission of India has said to Congress



RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

CALLING IT A "rap on the knuckles" would be too mild. What the Election Commission of India (ECI) did to the Indian National Congress, for its senseless allegations and conspiracy theories, can be described as "hauling over the coals", an idiom referring to the medieval punishment of dragging heretics over red-hot coals. The Commission's response to the allegations levelled by Congress president, Mallikarjun Kharge, regarding the battery charging levels of EVMs in some constituencies in Haryana, was not only unusually long – running into nine pages – but also "in your face".

Describing all the complaints as "too general", "baseless" and "false narratives without any evidence whatsoever", the Commission noted that they look "as if candidates filed these under some 'common' direction".

"Your communication placed in public domain in the middle of the ongoing election process" is "highly undesirable and one that appears designed to create confusion/misdirection/impediment to the conduct of smooth, free and fair elections," the ECI wrote, lambasting Congress over its complaints of slow counting and reporting of results. "Unheard of in the rich democratic heritage of the country", "far from a legitimate part of free speech and expression", "frivolous and unfounded", "disconcerting when it emanates from a reputed National Political Party" – these were some other strong words that the Commission used to reprimand

Congress. In the end, it "urged" Congress to "take firm and concrete steps", behoving the party's "long and illustrious standing", to "amend their forestalled approach".

The only reason to quote extensively from the ECI's unprecedently stern response is to highlight the unacceptably low levels to which the grand old party is descending in its blind hatred of the Narendra Modi government. Instead of looking inwards to account for its electoral failures, the Congress leadership has been trying to discredit the electoral system. The frivolous nature of the complaints can be gauged from the fact that just before the Lok Sabha elections, Congress complained that the ECI had "deployed EVMs which were previously deployed for elections in South Africa".

"Various sources informed the party that these EVMs have been received directly back from South Africa without going through the process of re-validation and re-verification," it claimed. The reality is that no EVMs were ever sent to South Africa nor were EVMs ever imported from any other country. A senior Congress leader had made another similarly startling accusation two days before the counting of votes in the general elections, alleging that the Union Home Minister called up 150 district magistrates or collectors to put pressure on them. When the Commission sought details from the party, they were never provided.

Even the party's complaints about EVMs in the Haryana elections were so ridiculous

that the Commission had to explain in technical detail that the display of battery charging levels has nothing to do with the votes cast. It was repeatedly affirmed, not just by the ECI, but even by the courts in more than 40 different cases, that EVMs are tamper-proof. In fact, the batteries are used only to avoid connecting the machines to any power source so that each one remains an independent unit. There are no ports in EVMs to connect to any external sources. Moreover, there is no sequencing of the machines, and they are deployed in a random manner at the time of the elections, making it impossible to tamper with any specific machine or a set of them.

Not that the Congress leadership would be unaware of all this. Usage of EVMs began in 1982 during a by-election in Kerala. On a larger experimental basis, they were used in 16 assembly segments in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi in November 1998. They were finally deployed fully in the general elections in 2004. Interestingly, it was Congress that won in all these elections. If there was any chance of tampering with the machines, it was during those initial stages when the technology was just evolving. But the BJP, as a responsible party, never blamed the EVMs for any of its electoral defeats.

The problem with Congress is its preoccupation with protecting its leadership from being blamed for electoral failures. In doing so, it doesn't mind casting doubt on the country's electoral process itself. As pointed out

by BJP spokespersons, Congress had no problems with EVMs when the party or its allies won elections in Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and even in Jammu and Kashmir where the elections were held at the same time as Haryana. But where it lost, it blamed EVMs and the ECI.

Cynical Westerners often circulate a joke about China and democracy. A Chinese citizen walks up to Xi Jinping and demands that democracy be introduced in the country. Xi asks him which democracy? The one like in the US, where the candidate securing highest votes may not become the president, the one in UK, where the guy in the opposition secures almost same number of votes but becomes the ruling party, or the one in France, where the party with the highest vote share is made to sit in the opposition because the other two ganged up against it? Democracies may not be perfect. But Indian democracy has matured over decades to remove many such flaws. That's why the joke doesn't include India, although it is the world's largest democracy.

For the Congress Party, it is instructive to read the citizen's response to Xi, pointing to the real lesson of democracy. Irrespective of the flaws that Xi found in those democracies, the man says that he can still vote to change those leaders after five years.

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"While implementing structural reforms across various sectors, including the economy, the interim government must prioritise restoring political stability and business confidence."

— THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

Lessons from my mentor

For those who worked with him in PM's Economic Advisory Council, Bibek Debroy's commitment to deep reform will be a guiding light



NEELKANTH MISHRA

He found time to author a book published in 2022 about the history of fountain pens in India, and how their story captured the depletion of India's manufacturing prowess. All this while chairing the EAC-PM, which was very active with policy advice during a period of significant macroeconomic turbulence both in India and globally. Add to that his daily limericks, which, going by the response on social media platforms, were quite popular. I was not surprised when I heard that he could complete a thousand-word column in no time while participating in a seminar.

There was much to learn from his understanding of the process of economic reforms, and the subtle and complex flow of information that lay beneath it. He was careful with words, and his multiple decades of seeing policymaking in action were visible in careful consideration of longer-term implications.

As much as his deft handling of differences of opinion between strong-willed and vocal members of the council, it was his decision to not impose his own views that got the best out of us. In several meetings he would just hear us out, and one of us would then compile the inputs, and send it across, without any impositions from him. To me, this showed remarkable leadership. He had strong opinions that he did voice on important policy matters, but only where it mattered. The only time I recall him sounding upset was when one member openly contradicted another in a meeting that had many outside participants.

As researchers working in the private financial sector, some of us were initially impatient. I recall losing my cool on one issue just a few months into our first term, and how he heard me out, and explained the context. With him, I never felt uncomfortable voicing my opinions openly, and I always got honest answers, even where he disagreed.

Working with him helped me understand the multiple viewpoints that a democratic government had to incorporate, the merits of patience, and a focus on the long term. Often, we learned, it was not just decision-making that was the constraint, but its execution through the bureaucracy. If not for his persistence on the need to improve India's statistics, for example, the improvements we are beginning to see may not have started. There are many more that he worked on, and whose impact we should see in the coming years.

More than the chairman of a council of which I was a member, I will remember and miss him as a guide and a mentor, who perhaps did not realise many of the lessons he imparted.

The writer worked with Bibek Debroy in the EAC-PM for five years

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOCUS ON POTENTIAL

MONEY MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Neighbour's envy' (IE, November 1). It is unfortunate that the Tata-Airbus project at Vadodara is bringing the dormant Maharashtra-Gujarat rivalry to the fore. Despite Maharashtra attracting substantial FDI, issues like agrarian distress and unemployment linger, giving the Opposition political ammo to target the ruling party. Of note is how political narratives can either foster or fracture inter-state relations. Can Maharashtra leverage its strengths to bridge such divides and focus on collective growth, or will the rivalry overshadow the potential for collaboration?

Vijai Pant, Hempur

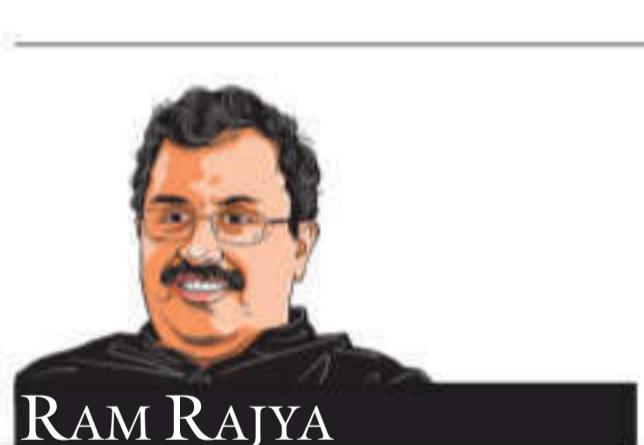
GREEN COSTS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The task at Baku' (IE, November 1). The consistent reluctance of developed nations to operationalise the Loss & Damage Fund or changing their domestic laws and regulations to reduce GHG emissions is evident. The focus, again, is on developing nations. Developing nations' requirements are different and they lack the technologies and funding for a shift to greener policies. Developing- and lower developing nations need a gradual transition. Due to the voluntary nature of goal attainment under the Paris Agreement, the Global North has not owned their role even after close to a decade. Climate change has no boundaries but some are more vulnerable than others. The world's largest democracy, India, is one such nation. The Indian government has made significant strides in renewable energy, especially solar power, and is aiming to become a net-zero nation by 2070. However, the transition must be just and inclusive, ensuring that no one is left behind. The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the BJP. Views are personal

Harshita Upadhyay, via email

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Hypocrisy in Tel Aviv' (IE, October 31). By banning UNRWA from operating in Gaza and the West Bank, Israel has exacerbated the crisis while also weakening the United Nations. The humanitarian agency employs 13,000 people in Gaza. The UN has responsibly handled matters of political infiltration by dismissing 12 such suspects. Israel's second problem arises from the UNRWA's decades of supplying aid in Gaza, which, it argues, has made Palestinians over-dependent, as if they were refugees, and hindered their integration and self-reliance. The Palestinian issue has evaded political settlement even after decades of violent conflicts, and the UN agency's obligation to deliver humanitarian relief to Gaza's defenceless people stems from that awful reality. Now that most of Gaza has been destroyed, the UNRWA's mission has become even more crucial.

Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru



RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

CALLING IT A "rap on the knuckles" would be too mild. What the Election Commission of India (ECI) did to the Indian National Congress, for its senseless allegations and conspiracy theories, can be described as "hauling over the coals", an idiom referring to the medieval punishment of dragging heretics over red-hot coals. The Commission's response to the allegations levelled by Congress president, Mallikarjun Kharge, regarding the battery charging levels of EVMs in some constituencies in Haryana, was not only unusually long – running into nine pages – but also "in your face".

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Illustration: Komal

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FOSTERING

1 Visit the CARA website, fill out the self-registration form for foster care. Applicants will have to attach the documents asked for, including proof of residence, income and "two references from individuals of good standing in the community for verification"

2 The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) shortlists prospective parents for children who are eligible for foster care. Carries out its own investigation and submits details on the child and the prospective parent to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

3 DCPU, where the child resides, matches the child with prospective parents, with the approval of the CWC

4 Once matched, CWC passes order of foster care placement and the family signs an undertaking

5 CWC conducts a monthly inspection of foster families. CWC can issue orders extending the foster care for a year at a time, until the child turns 18

6 After two years of foster care with the same family, if the child is legally free for adoption, the foster parent can adopt the child

she chose to foster the second time around since she was by then in her late 40s and realised she may not "have the time to wait the few years it might take to adopt a child". According to CARA's eligibility criteria, the maximum age a single prospective adoptive parent can be is 55 years for a child between the ages of 8 and 18 (110 years for a couple).

For an elderly couple in Maharashtra, the first foster parents in their district, the decision to go in for fostering was prompted by a tragedy — the death of their 26-year-old son, who was then working in the US.

"Our son died from cardiac arrest five years ago. We were in shock; he was our only son. A friend suggested that we bring a child home. By that time, we had crossed the age for adoptive parents," says the foster father, 61, who retired from a multinational corporation.

"When we applied for foster care, the CWC had a lot of questions. They asked me how we would take care of the child since I wasn't working. We had to convince them that we were getting rental income and had other investments. In 2022, we met three boys at an institution. We told them they were going to stay with us, and we have only two conditions — they should study, and do something good with their life," he says.

Of their 12-year-old foster son, he says, "He told us his mother was no more and that his father used to drink all the time and beat them. He was in an institution and nobody from the family had gone to meet him there. It will take time for him to adjust... He was studying in a Marathi-medium school earlier but is now able to go to an English-medium one. Our hope is that he will be able to complete his graduation," he says.

While the couple has applied to foster another child, an official in the district said that they were no longer eligible considering the age limit.

"Age should not be a factor... if somebody is mentally, physically, financially fit, they should be able to foster. They could be a little more liberal with the age limit," says the foster father.

An official with one of the District Child Protection Units in Maharashtra said the district now has one other foster family, apart from the 61-year-old and his wife. On the process they follow before placing a child in foster care, the official says, "An enquiry into the family is done before they are matched with a child. Also, before the

child goes to the home, the counsellor and superintendent at the institution prepares her. Once the child has gone to a foster home, we verify and monitor how the child is doing. The CWC can issue orders extending the foster care for a year at a time until the child turns 18."

The 40-year-old chef says the temporary nature of fostering has never deterred him. "I know people who have been on the adoption waitlist for eight years or longer, but have not been able to adopt a child yet. I know foster care is not a permanent setup, but if the child lives with us for a month, two years, 10 years... the child has a family," he says.

The retired airport manager in Rajasthan agrees. "Strangers would often ask me, the younger child (her foster daughter) does not resemble me, does she resemble her father? I usually say yes without giving any explanation. But sometimes, I would tell them about my fostering journey, in the hope that they might tell somebody else and others would be inspired to take it up."

FOSTER PARENTING IN INDIA

Bringing a child home

Nearly 17,000 children in the 7-18 age group are in institutional care in India, without a family to go home to. While adoption sees a long queue of prospective parents, foster care has been slow to take off. As a new set of guidelines attempts to change that, ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND maps the journey of foster parents — from having to shave off a beard to unrelenting questions:

'why doesn't your child look like you?'

meant to be temporary."

Shilpa Mehta, founder at Foster Care Society, an NGO that works with the Rajasthan government in implementing the foster care programme in the state, says, "In India, parenthood is about having 'ownership' of the child, parents want to be able to do things like give the child their surname. This is a major challenge."

WCD officials said the recently revised Model Foster Care Guidelines, 2024, is an attempt to facilitate fostering and streamline the existing process.

For one, the process is now centralised, where prospective foster parents can register online through CARA — until now, they had to approach District Child Protection Units (DCPU) in individual states to apply.

The new guidelines also allow anyone aged 35–60 years to foster a child, regardless of their marital status — earlier, only married couples could foster a child. The new rules also make it easier to transition into adoption — a child in foster care, provided she is legally free for adoption, can be adopted by the family after two years instead of the earlier five years.

Since January this year, when CARA opened its online portal for registration for foster care, 209 prospective foster parents have applied. According to the WCD Ministry, the caregiver family, if eligible, is entitled to a monthly grant of Rs 4,000 per child.

Shy child to being the 'boss'

The 40-year-old chef in Rajasthan says his fostering journey was full of new discoveries. Though he tackled his beard early on, more challenges were to follow. "She was in a child care institution where they served non-vegetarian food. But where we were staying on rent, the condition was that we couldn't cook non-veg at home. When the

ADOPTION vs FOSTER CARE	
ADOPTION: The adopted child is permanently separated from biological parents, becomes lawful child of adoptive parents with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities that are attached to the biological child.	Family gets a monthly grant
SHORT-TERM FOSTER CARE: Child is placed with a family for a period of not more than a year	
LONG-TERM FOSTER CARE: Placed for more than one year. This can be periodically extended by the CWC till the child turns 18	
END OF A JOURNEY	
As per Model Foster Care Guidelines, 2024, foster care can be terminated when:	
(1) the child's biological parent requests the Child Welfare Committee for custody of the child. This may happen in cases where the biological parent was unavailable "due to imprisonment or institutionalisation for treatment of mental illness"	(2) a suitable adoptive family is found for the child above the age of six
	(3) when the child attains the age of 18
	(4) a complaint is made and investigation finds that child has stopped going to school/has been subjected to abuse/is engaged in labour etc

child came home, she wouldn't eat. We would feed her with great difficulty. Once, we secretly smuggled in some eggs and boiled them. She saw the eggs and squealed in delight... *anda, anda*. We then started taking her out for non-vegetarian food," he says.

The couple also had to move house. "When she started going to the playground, there were rumours... people would say, 'where is this child from; we don't know her, don't play with her'. When we got to know of this, we moved out to a new place," he says.

Despite the early hiccups, he says they watched the child go from being a "reserved child" to somebody who is now the "boss" among her group of friends. "She was so reserved that I would ask her to be a little more mischievous. But now she has opened up... she skates, she paints."

Yet, there are times when he is reminded of his foster parent status. For instance, he says, he can't take his daughter along when he travels abroad. "We have not been able to get a passport made for her... because her parents' name is not on the document. Also, fostering doesn't allow us to give our surname to the child."

Satyajeet Mazumdar, Director-Advocacy at Catalysts for Social Action, a non-profit organisation that works in the child protection

space in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Goa and Karnataka, says that while the new guidelines are a step forward, much needs to be done.

"The new guidelines don't make any mention of preparation and orientation of the prospective foster family — what they can expect, what issues they might face, and how to address these. Also, a system to address issues of documentation has not been put in place... getting a passport (for the foster child) has been an issue. Since the objective of foster care is temporary care, the guidelines also don't say anything about what the system is doing to strengthen the biological family... particularly in cases where the biological family is dealing with financial difficulties," he says.

Elsewhere in Rajasthan is a 56-year-old who is a single parent to two girls — an 18-year-old she adopted in 2006 as a six-day-old and a 13-year-old foster daughter.

A retired airport manager, she says that when she met her foster daughter at an institution in 2017, the child was eight. "She was at an age where she was already aware of everything, so she took time to adjust. She had been in an institution and had not seen family bonding. Also, since her early education was inadequate, I put her in a school where she had to learn from scratch," says the 56-year-old, adding that she always wanted to be a mother. "I don't have a big family... only two sisters. I wanted somebody to call me *ma*," she says of her decision to adopt and foster.

Though foster care was an option only for married couples until the recently revised guidelines came about, what helped people like the 56-year-old to become a foster parent was a concession in the earlier guidelines that said states could adopt or adapt the guidelines.

She says that after adopting her first child,



Rapper Young Thug

UNITED STATES

Rapper Young Thug pleads guilty to drugs, gun charges

Atlanta: Rapper Young Thug pleaded guilty in Atlanta to gang, drug and gun charges and will be released from jail, though he could be put back behind bars if he violates the terms of his sentence. The 33-year-old Grammy-winning artist, whose given name is Jeffrey Williams, entered his pleas without reaching a deal with prosecutors after negotiations between the two sides broke down, lead prosecutor Adriane Love said on Thursday. That left the sentence completely up to Fulton County Superior Court Judge Paige Reese Whitaker. Young Thug's plea comes two and a half years after he was arrested and charged and nearly a year after the prosecution started presenting evidence in the problem-plagued trial. AP

AUSTRALIA

Senator's 'go to Pak' remark broke law: Judge

Melbourne: An Australian judge ruled on Friday that anti-immigration party leader Sen. Pauline Hanson breached racial discrimination laws by crudely telling Pakistan-born Sen. Mehreen Faruqi to return to her homeland. Faruqi sued Hanson in the Federal Court over a 2022 exchange on the social media platform X, then called Twitter, under a provision of the Racial Discrimination Act that bans public actions and statements that offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate people because of their race, colour or national or ethnic origin. AP

MAURITIUS

Govt suspends social media till Nov 11 for polls

Johannesburg: The government of Mauritius on Friday banned access to social media websites ahead of parliamentary elections on Nov 10. Social media sites will be banned until Nov 11, the day after the election. The unprecedented social media ban follows a scandal which rocked the country last month when recorded conversations of politicians, business people, and members of civil society were leaked on social media. AP

THE WORLD

3 DAYS TO GO FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Harris says Trump remark on women 'offensive to all', his team hits back

THE NEW YORK TIMES
WASHINGTON DC, NOVEMBER 1

VICE PRESIDENT Kamala Harris attacked former President Donald Trump Thursday for claiming a day earlier that he would protect American women "whether the women like it or not." Her campaign sought to pounce on a new remark Trump made stating that his son Robert F Kennedy Jr would "work on women's health" in his administration.

The Trump campaign, put on the defensive, lashed out at billionaire Mark Cuban, a top Harris surrogate, for insulting the intelligence of women close to Trump.

Harris said Trump's comments were "very offensive" to all Americans. Within minutes, the Trump campaign fired back: "Why does Kamala Harris issue with President Trump wanting to protect women, men, and children from migrant crime and foreign adversaries?" said Karoline Leavitt, a campaign spokesperson. "This is the same man who said women should be punished for their choices," Harris said.

Trump did not respond to the criticism at rallies Thursday, simply stressing that women were a part of his coalition.

Arguing that Cuban "thinks he's 'hot stuff' but he's absolutely nothing," Trump wrote on X that the billionaire was "very wrong. I surround myself with the strongest of women — With the understanding that ALL women are great, whether strong or not strong."

Trump sued CBS on Thursday over an interview of his Democratic rival Kamala Harris aired on its "60 Minutes" news programme in early October. The complaint alleges the network aired two different responses from Harris responding to a question about the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.



Donald Trump and Melania Trump at a rally in New York; Kamala Harris at a rally in North Las Vegas, Nevada. AP/Reuters



WHAT US THINKS

Who will be President?

■ KAMALA HARRIS

■ DONALD TRUMP



Who'll handle economy better? Weak Oct jobs report gives political fodder

ALAN RAPPEPORT
WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 1

A WEAK jobs report that was depressed by storms and labor strikes quickly became political fodder on Friday as Republicans and Democrats injected the numbers into their arguments over whether former President Donald Trump or Vice President Kamala Harris would be better at managing the economy.

Figures released by the Labor Department showed that job creation stalled in October, with employers adding only 12,000 positions in a month that included a major strike and two destructive hurricanes. Unemployment remained steady at 4.1 percent.

The Biden administration tried to signal this week that the

appearance of sluggishness in the labor market was a temporary mirage caused by unusual factors. However, economists noted that there were other indications of softness, with hiring slowing in sectors that would be unlikely to be affected by extreme weather.

President Biden said in a statement that "America's economy remains strong," and noted that the US has had the lowest average

unemployment rate of any administration under his watch. He claimed that the trade policies being pitched by Republicans to increase tariffs would cost the country thousands of jobs.

White House economists argued in a series of posts on social media that the labor market was healthy, pointing to the fact that

the number of people not at work because of bad weather increased by 460,000 in October. They also highlighted that earnings growth was slightly stronger than expected and that nominal wages were up 4 percent on a yearly basis.

Representative Jason Smith, Republican of Missouri and chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, called the report "more

evidence of the stunning incompetence of the Biden-Harris Administration."

The Trump campaign also used the weak jobs numbers to blast Harris, saying in a statement that the jobs report was a "catastrophe" that "reveals how badly Kamala Harris broke our economy."



Smoke rises following Israeli strikes in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, on Friday. Reuters

Truce hopes fade as Israel strikes Gaza, Lebanon

At least 64 killed in Gaza; Netanyahu says Israel will act 'as necessary'

Lebanon on Friday.

Medics in Gaza said about 64 people were killed and dozens more injured overnight and into Friday morning in Israeli strikes on the city of Deir Al-Balah, the Nuseirat camp and the town of Al-Zawayda, all in the central area of Gaza as well as in its south.

Fourteen people were killed by an Israeli strike at the gate of a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Nuseirat. Another 10 were killed in a car in Khan Younis in the south of Gaza.

The Israeli military said its troops had killed what it called armed terrorists in central Gaza and the northern Jabalia area. It had no immediate comment on the reported school strike.

Netanyahu, addressing graduating troops on Thursday, said: "Agreements, documents, proposals are not the main point.

"The main point is our ability and determination to enforce security, thwart attacks against us and act against the arming of our enemies, as necessary and despite any pressure or constraints". His office said he relayed this message to US envoys Amos Hochstein and Brett McGurk in Israel on Thursday. Israel meanwhile pressed on with its military offensives against Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Hezbollah in

Will back Russia until its victory in Ukraine: N Korea

REUTERS
MOSCOW, NOVEMBER 1

NORTH KOREA will back Russia until it achieves victory in the Ukraine war, Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said Friday at talks in Moscow with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

"Our traditional, historically friendly relations, which have travelled the tested path of history, today ... are rising to a new level of relations of invincible military comradeship," she told Lavrov, praising the role played in this by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Meanwhile, North Korea flexed its military muscle with the test of a huge new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile dubbed Hwasong-19, state media said on Friday, amid international uproar over its troops deployed to aid Russia in Ukraine. The launch on Thursday flew higher than any previous missile, according to the North as well as militaries in South Korea and Japan that tracked its flight deep into space before it splashed down in the ocean between Japan and Russia. KCNA lauded it as "the world's strongest strategic missile".

Botswana votes out ruling party after 58 years

REUTERS
GABORONE, NOVEMBER 1

BOTSWANA'S VOTERS delivered a shock defeat to the party that has ruled them for nearly six decades, registering their anger over economic stagnation linked to a decline in the diamond trade by handing victory to opposition presidential candidate Duma Boko. The 54-year-old, of the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) coalition, will replace President Mokgweetsi Masisi, who on Friday conceded defeat after his Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) lost by a landslide for the first time in 58 years.

Masisi said, "You count on me to always be there to provide whatever guidance you might want ... We will retreat to being a loyal opposition."

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but ethnic Baloch terrorists and Taliban terrorists often attack the security forces in the province.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti condemned the blast, saying it was "inhumane" to harm schoolchildren.

Botswana's economy has largely depended on the export of diamonds.



Volunteers and locals help to clean up in Paiporta, near Valencia, Friday. Reuters

Spanish floods death toll rises to 205 as shock turns to anger

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CHIVA, NOVEMBER 1

THE DEATH toll from flash floods in Spain climbed to 205 people Friday, with many more believed to be missing, as the initial shock gave way to anger, frustration and a wave of solidarity.

Spanish emergency authorities said 202 of the victims were in the eastern region of Valencia city. "We need machinery, cranes, so that the sites can be

reached. We need a lot of help. And bread and water."

Chiva received more rain in eight hours on Tuesday than it had in the preceding 20 months. So far, 205 bodies have been recovered — 202 in Valencia, two in neighboring Castilla La Mancha and one in Andalusia in the south. Members of the security forces and 1,700 soldiers from the emergency unit are searching for an unknown number of missing people.

COLM MCLOUGHLIN RAN DUBAI DUTY FREE FROM 1983 UNTIL HE RETIRED EARLIER THIS YEAR

Irishman who led Dubai Duty Free to an airport retail giant dies at 81

JON GAMBRELL
DUBAI, NOVEMBER 1

COLM MCLOUGHLIN, an Irishman who landed in the deserts of the United Arab Emirates and helped lead Dubai Duty Free into becoming an airport retail behemoth generating billions of dollars, has died. He was 81.

McLoughlin ran Dubai Duty Free from 1983 until he retired earlier this year, a span of over 40 years that saw Dubai grow from a creekside trading port into a

modern metropolis, home to the world's tallest building and other attractions. And all the millions of passengers coming into Dubai International Airport, now the world's busiest for international travel, saw the rows of electronics, cigarettes, cigars, alcohol and other goods available duty-free at his stores, hawked by a salesforce in green suit jackets, yellow ties and conversing in multiple languages.

"It's a very Middle Eastern kind of thing," McLoughlin told the Los Angeles Times in 1987 as he showed off its gold market.



(From left) Colm McLoughlin, his wife Breeda McLoughlin, and Irish politician Enda Kenny in Newcastle, County Down, Northern Ireland in 2016. AP

spirit have left a lasting legacy," Sheikh Ahmed said in a post on the social platform X.

Born in Ballinasloe, Ireland, in 1943, McLoughlin joined Shannon Airport's first-in-the-world duty-free operation in 1969. In July 1983, he came with a 10-man team to Dubai to set up the sandy airport's duty-free operation. His six-month contract ended up stretching into 40 years.

Like the rest of the aviation industry, Dubai Duty Free took a hit during the years of the coronavirus pandemic and airline

groundings. But sales have since bounced back. In 2023 alone, under McLoughlin, Dubai Duty Free sold 6 million cans of beer, 2.3 million bottles of whiskey, 2.3 million cartons of cigarettes, 10.2 million cigars and 3.3 million bottles of perfume.

One big segment has been Chinese travelers, after Dubai Duty Free worked to accept their credit cards, had staff speaking Mandarin and put in goods they wanted. "We would be silly if we didn't take advantage of it and try to serve them," McLoughlin told AP in 2012. And many a

bleary-eyed traveler in Dubai's cavernous airport tried their luck at the constant raffles being offered, whether for \$1 million, a luxury automobile or a racing motorcycle. McLoughlin also was known for Dubai Duty Free's sponsorship of tennis and golf tournaments, as well as his work supporting Dubai's Irish community. He received the Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Award in 2014.

McLoughlin is survived by his wife Breeda, son Niall, daughters Tyna and Mandy, and their families.



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

Warmer, windier: why post-Diwali Delhi air was cleaner this year

SOPHYA MATHEW
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

THE 24-HOUR average air quality on the day before Diwali and Diwali — Wednesday and Thursday respectively — in Delhi this year was worse than in the last two years. However, on Friday morning — the day after Diwali — the pollution level was the lowest since 2015, barring 2022.

The post-Diwali 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) was 339 on Friday, which was better than 358 on the day after Diwali in 2023 (November 13), according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data. The worst post-Diwali air quality day was recorded in 2021, with the AQI at 462.

Why were pollution levels low on Friday?

Several factors played a role, but meteorological conditions had the biggest impact.

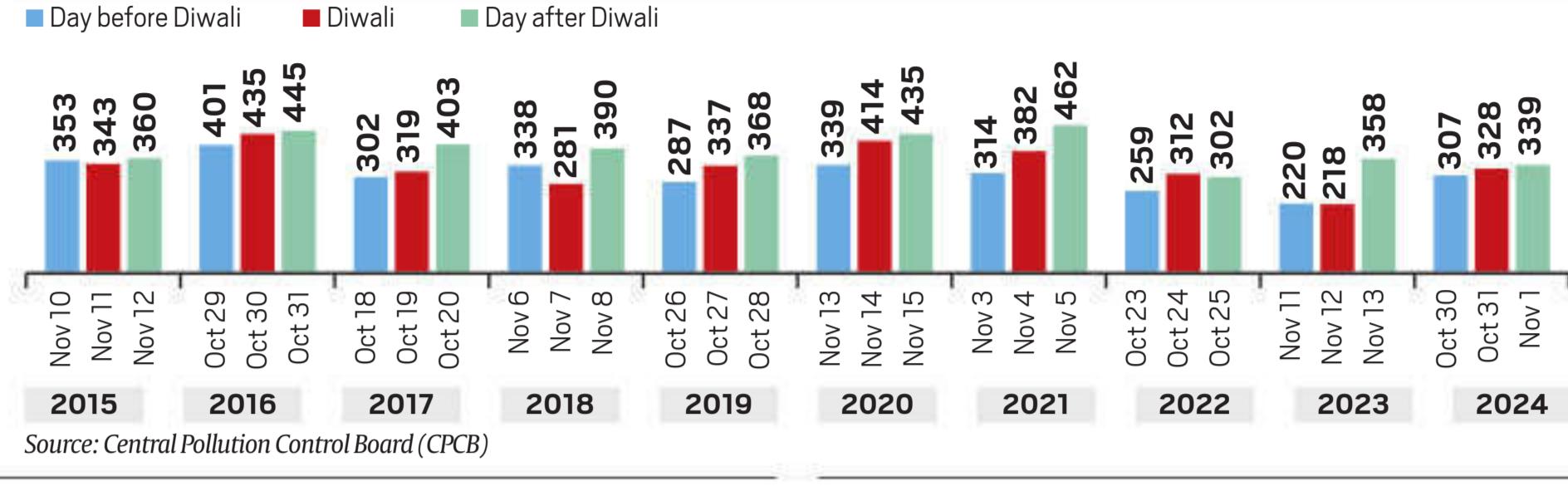
EXPLAINED AQI

WARMER TEMPERATURES: Last year, Diwali was in November, when the temperature conditions were much cooler — the monthly average minimum was 13 degrees Celsius and the maximum was 27.8 degrees Celsius.

This year, however, the festival was celebrated in late October, when temperatures were much warmer. In fact, this October was the warmest in 73 years, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The monthly maximum and minimum averages recorded at the city's Saffdarjung weather station in October were 35.1 degrees Celsius and 21.2 degrees Celsius respectively. This was the fourth-highest monthly day temperature and the sixth-highest monthly night temperature in the month recorded since 1901.

This is significant, as cooler temperatures mean increased pollution levels. As temperature dips, the inversion height — which is the layer beyond which pollutants cannot disperse into the upper layer of the atmos-

WHERE DELHI'S AQI STOOD BEFORE, ON AND AFTER DIWALI, 2015 TO 2024



sphere — is lowered. The concentration of air pollutants increases when this happens.

STRONG WINDS: Another factor was high wind speeds, which led to a better dispersal of the pollution post-Diwali.

According to IMD, westerly winds of speed as low as 3 to 7 kmph were observed

until Friday early morning, and they touched 10 kmph by 9 am. The wind speed increased to 15 kmph from noon onward. An average wind speed of 10 kmph is considered favourable for the dispersal of pollutants.

Due to the stronger winds, levels of tiny pollutants such as PM2.5 and PM10, which

had spiked on Thursday likely due to the bursting of crackers and stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, dropped the next day.

For instance, the 24-hour average PM2.5 level was 144.3 micrograms per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) on Diwali at 8 pm, but had increased sharply to 168.4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ by mid-

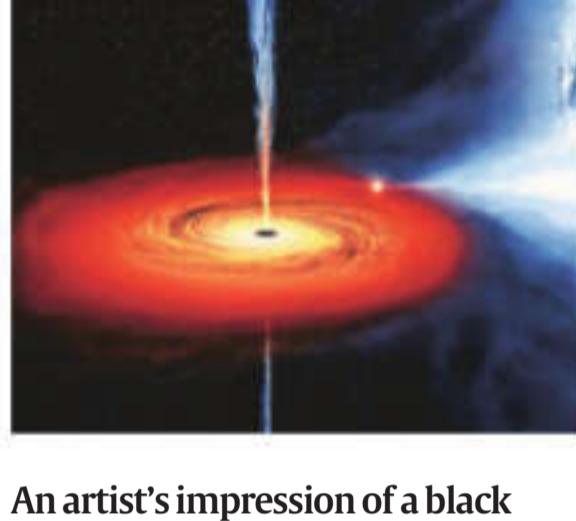
night. It gradually increased further until 7 am on Friday to 209.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, as recorded by the CPCB, and then reduced to 198.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ at 4 pm.

The average PM10 level was recorded at 288.6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ on Thursday at midnight, and jumped to 322.6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ on Friday at 6 am. However, it dropped to 308.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ by noon.

Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director, Research and Advocacy at the Centre for Science and Environment, told *The Indian Express*, "This time, Diwali was in October, when cooler meteorological conditions had not settled in yet. The wind speed was also favourable to help dissipate the pollution build-up after Diwali midnight. Till afternoon on Diwali day, the air quality remained 'poor' and then worsened to 'very poor' in the evening. Severe AQI levels were observed at midnight and persisted till 7 am in many stations. The night-time pollution related to Diwali caused a high buildup in PM2.5 levels. Though we cannot quantify the contribution of firecrackers specifically, several sources came into play."

EXPLAINED SPACE

FIRST 'BLACK HOLE TRIPLE' SYSTEM DISCOVERED: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



An artist's impression of a black hole, pulling matter towards it. The pull of gravity in a black hole is so strong that nothing — not even light — can escape it. X/NASA

[black hole triple] is almost certainly not a coincidence or accident... We're seeing two stars that are following each other because they're attached by this weak string of gravity. So this has to be a triple system."

'Failed supernova'

Burdge and his colleagues have proposed that V404 Cygni has two stars around it as the black hole did not arise from a supernova, which typically kicks away outer stars in the explosion.

A black hole is a region in space where the pull of gravity is so strong that no matter or light can escape it. Astronomers believe most black holes are formed after massive stars explode at the end of their lives — known as a supernova. However, the triple system suggests a gentler process.

The study, 'The black hole low-mass X-ray binary V404 Cygni is part of a wide triple', was carried out by researchers at the California Institute of Technology and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was published in *Nature* last month.

The triple system

Many black holes discovered until now have been part of binary systems, consisting of a black hole and a secondary object (such as a star or another black hole). But the black hole triple not only has one star which orbits the black hole about every 6.5 days, but also a more far-off star which orbits it every 70,000 years.

Situated in the constellation of Cygnus, the system features one of the oldest known black holes, the V404 Cygni, which is nine times as big as the Sun in our solar system. Researchers accidentally discovered the distant star while looking through a repository of astronomical observations taken by telescopes.

Kevin Burdge, a research fellow at the MIT Department of Physics and one of the study authors, told *MIT News*, "It

is a very interesting system, and it's

still a mystery how it formed."

However, the black hole triple will not

have three members forever, as V404 Cygni is consuming the nearer star. This

suggests that some already discovered

binary systems could have been triple

systems at some point, with the black

hole later devouring one of its members.

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 1

OVER THE past few days, several observers of the Indian economy have noted that urban India, especially the mega cities, are the new areas of concern when it comes to economic activity, while rural India is witnessing an uptick. This means that people in urban India are not consuming as much (of cars, household goods, cereals, etc.) as companies expected them to — even as people in the rural areas seem to be buying much more than earlier.

The Finance Ministry's monthly review of the economy for September states that "Rural demand continues to strengthen in H1 of FY25". H1 FY25 refers to the first half (or the first six months) of the 2025 financial year.

"The improvement in rural demand is reflected in rising Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sales reported by Nielsen IQ, which grew by 5.2% (volume growth) in Q1 of FY25, higher than the 4% growth in the corresponding quarter of the previous year," the review says. Q1 refers to the first quarter of the financial year. (See Charts 1 and 2, sourced from the Finance Ministry's review).

But here's what to note: A big reason why urban India seems to be doing worse than rural India is high food inflation. As *The Indian Express* has reported, executives at Tata Consumer Products Ltd have flagged concerns over "softness" in urban demand, and those at Nestle India have pointed to mega cities and metros as pressure points — and blamed the " muted demand" partly on high food inflation.

But a close look at inflation data shows that high food inflation impacted rural households more than urban ones. Here's how.

Table 1 shows two things one needs to know to determine who is getting hit by food inflation more. The first is the rate of food inflation. The second is the weightage that food inflation has in calculating overall inflation in rural and urban areas.

Weightage differs from person to person. For instance, if you walk to work and don't own a car, then higher car price inflation will have no effect on you. Similarly, those who don't have children will not be impacted by high educational inflation. But someone who drives to work, and has a couple of school-going children, will be impacted.

The broader point is that your consumption pattern affects your inflation rate. So, in rural areas, food inflation tends to have a greater bearing on overall inflation, while it accounts for less in urban areas.

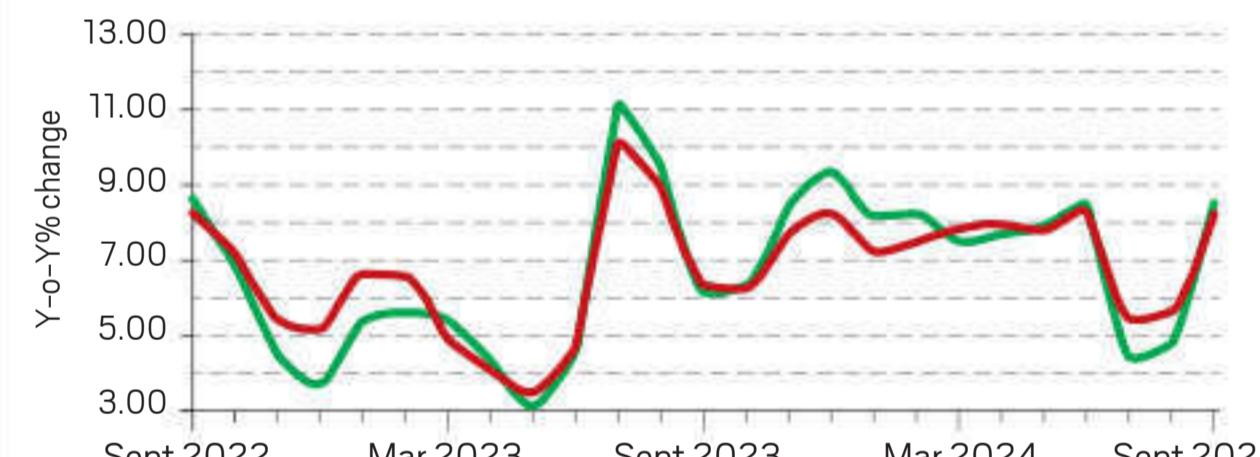
As Table 1 shows, for September, when inflation rose sharply, even though food &

TABLE 1: INFLATION IN RURAL AND URBAN INDIA (%Y-O-Y)

September 2024	RURAL		URBAN	
	Weight	Inflation	Weight	Inflation
General Index	100	5.87	100	5.05
1. Food and beverages	54.18	8.25	36.29	8.55
Food	47.25	9.08	29.62	9.56
Non-alcoholic beverages	1.37	2.33	1.13	3.03
Prepared meals, snacks, sweets, etc.	5.56	2.95	5.54	4.29
2. Pan, tobacco and intoxicants	3.26	2.32	1.36	2.94
Clothing and footwear	7.36	2.54	5.57	2.92
4. Housing	0	—	21.67	2.78
Fuel & light	7.94	-0.33	5.58	-3.25
6. Miscellaneous	27.26	4.07	29.53	4.09
Household goods and services	3.75	2.15	3.87	3.09
Health	6.83	3.94	4.81	4.38
Transport and communication	7.6	2.92	9.73	2.54
Recreation and amusement	1.37	2.22	2.04	2.45
Education	3.46	3.62	5.62	3.94
Personal care and effects	4.25	8.81	3.47	9.3

Source: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's Economic Outlook

CHART 3: CONSUMER PRICE INDEX IN F&B, RURAL VS URBAN



beverages inflation in rural India was a little lower than in urban India, its effect would be more because its weightage (in the rural consumption basket) is considerably more.

"Food inflation contributed 73.1% to the headline rural inflation... [but] only 56.1% of the headline urban inflation. This is because of the disproportionately higher weight food holds in the rural consumption basket," the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy's (CMIE)'s Economic Outlook said in a research note.

Take another example: vegetable prices. If they go up by, say, 10%, how does it matter whether you are in urban India or rural India?

Vegetable inflation contributed the most to overall headline inflation. In rural and urban areas vegetable inflation was almost the same at 36% and 35.9% respectively. But the stings is different," the CMIE note said.

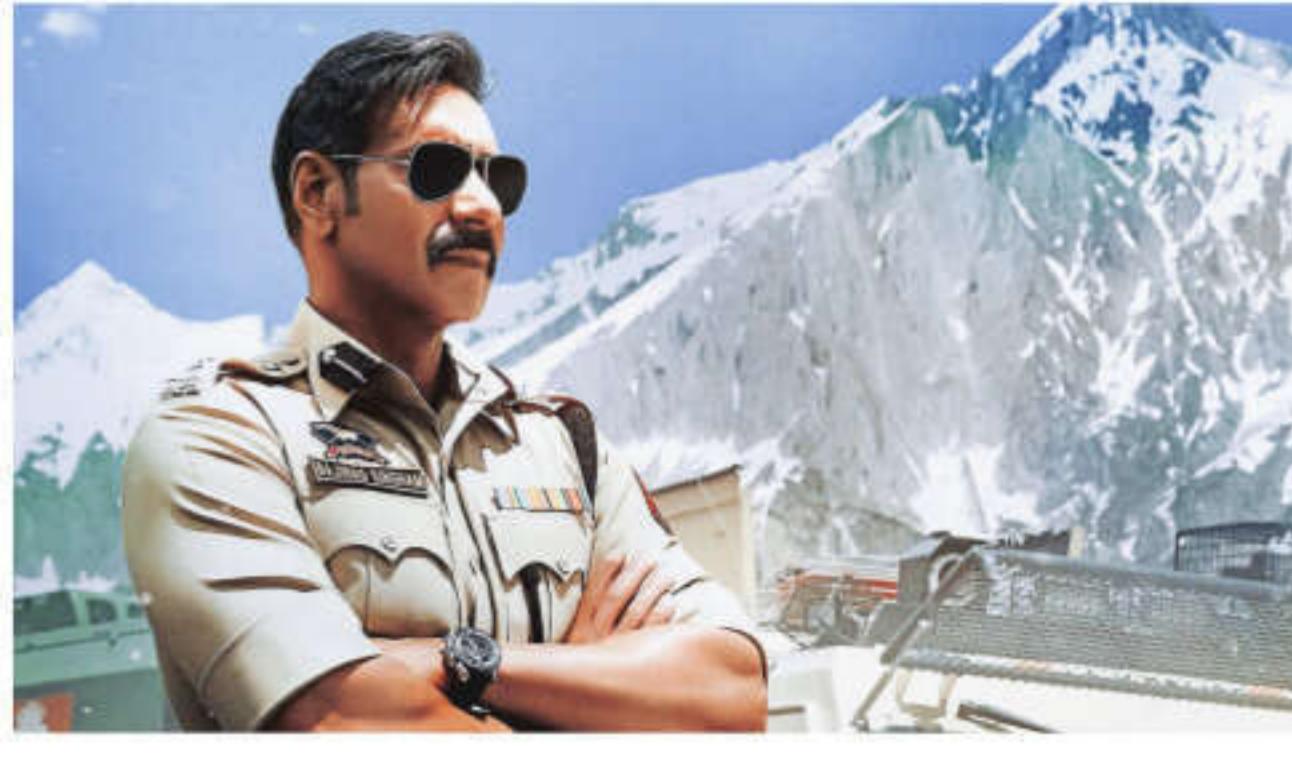
"Vegetables have a weight of 7.5% in rural

CPI and 4.4% in urban CPI. Due to the relatively

larger importance of vegetables in rural con-

sumption, it contributed to 45.8 per cent of the headline rural inflation. In contrast, veg-

All the Same



SHUBHRA GUPTA

THEY SAY that the fount of all Indian fiction are the two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Rohit Shetty seems to have taken this old saying to heart because Ajay Devgn's eponymous Bajirao Singham is none other than a latter-day Maryada Purushottam Ram, his wife Avni (Kareena Kapoor Khan) is the faithful Sita, and all the other characters play their parallels in this version of *Kalyug-ke-Ram Ki Katha*.

The result is loud and tedious, and instantly forgettable.

It's not as if the earlier cop flicks have been music to the ears. Shetty's films embrace cacophony heartily, whether they are comedies, actioners, or a mix of both. But the one cardinal thing that this film seems to have forgotten is that your villains have to be, well, villainous. And if there's one thing that Arjun Kapoor's chief baddie doesn't have is a single menacing bone in his body.

Hacking heads off is so not his thing: why this piece of hopeless miscasting?

It doesn't help that he goes by the name Danger Lanka: he is dangerous, and his lair is literally in Sri Lanka, okay? Subtlety is not this director's suit. Of course, this is just a sobriquet. His real name is Zubair Hafiz, and he is, gasp, 'not a *jihadi*'. We have to say that that's really forward of Shetty.

Zubair is doing all this bad stuff in India

SINGHAM AGAIN

★★

Director: Rohit Shetty
Cast: Ajay Devgn, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Arjun Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone, Jackie Shroff, Ravi Kishan

have to say that he does try. Akshay Kumar shows up last minute, as expected, for his own uniform-slo-mo-strut.

But it's all so same-old that even the new locations don't help. Neither does all the blatant-referencing-and-copy-pasting of the great epic, whose scenes can act as pointers when someone else tries their hand at a Bollywood Ramayana in New India.

What next? A Lady Singham solo?

Going Downhill

MITHYA: THE DARKER CHAPTER

★★

Director: Kapil Sharma
Cast: Huma Qureshi, Avantika Dassani, Naveen Kasturia, Rajit Kapur, Indraneil Sengupta, Avantika Akerkar, Anindita Bose
Streaming on: Zee 5

SHUBHRA GUPTA

THERE WAS enough intrigue in the first season of *Mithya*, in which a troubled author is left on the edge of a sharp wedge, for us to want to return for another round.

However, the new season, which comes from the same production house (Applause Entertainment) but a different director (Kapil Sharma) is everything that the first wasn't: contrived, unconvincing, and, the worst sin, dull.

The hills are still as picturesque, making you want to go off immediately to Darjeeling to explore all those winding trails, and lovely red-bricked houses. A new character is added into the mix: Naveen Kasturia plays Amit Chaudhari, an aspiring author who accuses newly-published writer Juhu Adhikari (Huma Qureshi) of plagiarism. The P'word raises its ugly head again (copying charges were bandied about last time round), and we are all set for some more twists and turns.



Avantika Dassani is back as the combative Rhea Rajguru, whose desire to make Juhu's life miserable is stronger than ever. She keeps popping up at all kinds of inconvenient junctures, keying up a dodgy fellow who has grown even more so in the interim, to do her dirty jobs for her, including a kidnap and murder. The rest of the cast also reprises their roles: Juhu's loving father Ankit Tyagi (Rajit Kapur) continues to keep his secrets close to his chest. And a key character comes to a bloody end.

The first season wasn't perfect, but it had a degree of freshness. Qureshi's sari-and-coat-clad Hindi literature teacher used the language well; her diction was pleasing to the ear. Dassani dug her claws into Juhu Adhikari's vulnerable pelt with relish, and we were given a rivalry which felt like it would reach a satisfactory conclusion.

It's strange how, with nearly the same cast, you can come up with a show which is such a drag. Whatever happened to the more or less zesty writing of the first season?

Caught in the Moment

DON'T MOVE

★★

Director: Adam Schindler, Brian Netto
Cast: Kelsey Asbille, Finn Wittrock
Streaming on: Netflix

ROHAN NAATAR

A YOUNG woman grieving the death of her child treks to the cliffside spot where he died. She intends to jump herself. Played by Kelsey Asbille, the woman is approached by a mysterious stranger, played by Finn Wittrock. He recognises immediately that she's one step away from falling to her death. The stranger doesn't attempt to talk her down from the ledge, but he makes enough of an impression for her to reconsider. They walk back together to the parking lot, where things take a sudden turn. The man injects her with some kind of paralytic substance, revealing that he isn't a good Samaritan after all. Thus begins *Don't Move*, a high-concept thriller that producer Sam Raimi probably thought was going to turn out like his knockout 2016 film *Don't Breathe*. It didn't.

These movies have nothing in common beyond Raimi's involvement, and that gentle nudge of a title. *Don't Move* appears to be so pleased with its premise — it's a survival thriller featuring an immobile protagonist — that it forgets it needs to sustain this early momentum.

— that it forgets it needs to sustain this early momentum. The movie succeeds in drawing your sympathies for its heroine, Iris, but struggles to put her in interesting scenarios after this pre-credits sequence.

She is told by her captor that she has about 20 minutes before her entire body will shut down. The stranger intends to take her to his secluded cabin in the woods, and implies that he's done this to several women in the past. You'd imagine that a person caught in Iris's situation would use her will to attempt an escape. But *Don't Move* projects her as either hyper-skilled or completely inept. Nothing in between. Somewhat surprisingly, the movie allows her to escape in the first act itself, while she still has some control over her movements. But she does this simply by pulling out a Swiss knife from her pocket and slicing her way out of her plastic handcuffs. As if he's read your mind, the kidnapper kicks himself for not checking her pockets.

But *Don't Move* often finds itself resorting to contrivances such as this, as it tumbles along from one set piece to another. In the very next scene, a now-inert Iris rolls into a downward stream in a fresh attempt to give the stranger a slip. She cannot move at all by this point; the drug has taken full effect. How will she survive, you wonder. As it turns out, a log will magically appear in her path, and she will suddenly find the ability to move



her arms just enough to latch on. It's basically a *Deus Ex Machina* moment. So what if Jesus himself didn't appear to save her? The blessed log was probably around back when he was a carpenter.

Speaking of *Deus Ex Machina*, Iris somehow finds herself in a field of some kind not too long afterwards — her movement appears and disappears purely on the basis of what the plot requires. An old man spots her, and wheels her into his house. For a moment it seems as if she has been saved. But just as

he's about to summon the police, the stranger comes knocking on his door. This scene repeats itself with another character around 20 minutes later — once again, it seems as if Iris is going to be rescued, only for the stranger to kill the would-be hero most violently.

But for someone who is able to commit murder this easily — the stranger seems to be quick on his feet in high-pressure situations, and resourceful enough to use everyday objects as weapons — he is utterly incapable of

Don't Move appears to be so pleased with its premise — it's a survival thriller featuring an immobile protagonist — that it forgets it needs to sustain this early momentum

either capturing or killing Iris. And she doesn't even have to outsmart him. Hilariously, she's sitting right next to him in a car during the film's final act, and somehow, she's still breathing. *Don't Move* has a wobbly relationship with its internal logic, which is quite apparent when you consider just how lackadaisical it is about the kidnapper's intelligence and Iris' skillset. They become what the script needs them to become.

It makes for a frustrating experience, and your patience is likely to be worn thin even before the film's Ripley-esque final showdown, in which, you guessed it, Iris has regained full control of her movements. It feels like a cop-out, honestly; as if the movie was written by an AI that kept resorting to cheat codes. It is odd, because that's the one thing that *Don't Move* had going for it. Sure, it's also about a suicidal woman regaining her will to live — so what if she needed a serial killer to give her a kick up the backside and not a spiritual guru — but by the time the movie circles back to its emotional core, you'd probably have forgotten all about it.

STREAMING WATCH LIST

BY ALAKA SAHANI



THE SUBSTANCE

MUBI

THE BODY horror satire on ageing is written, directed, co-produced and co-edited by Coralie Fargeat. It features Demi Moore as Elisabeth Sparkle, a former A-lister past her prime and fired from her fitness TV show. She is then drawn to the opportunity presented by a mysterious new drug: *The Substance*. All it takes is one injection and she is reborn — temporarily — as the gorgeous, 20-something Sue (Margaret Qualley). The only rule? Time needs to be split: exactly one week in one body, then one week in the other.



MARTHA

NETFLIX

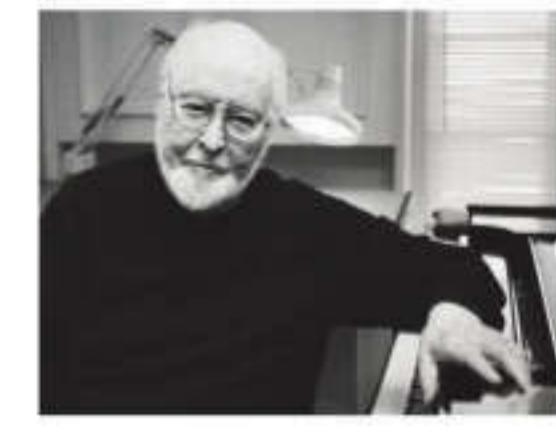
RJ CUTLER'S film charts the rise of lifestyle mogul Martha Stewart. A celebrated homemaker, America's first self-made female billionaire, personal friend to Snoop Dogg, or even the queen of Instagram selfies — Stewart, for more than 50 years, has shaped America's culture in both big and small ways. The Netflix website notes that the documentary features "intimate interviews" with Stewart herself as well as personal archives, including never-before-seen photographs, letters and diary entries.



THE LAW ACCORDING TO LIDIA POET

NETFLIX

THE SERIES follows a suspended lawyer named Lidia Poet, who, along with a crew of like-minded malcontents, seeks to help the falsely accused who struggle for absolution in a rigid, patriarchal legal system. Each episode explores a new mystery. In real life, Poet was Italy's first woman attorney. She practiced law for three months before being disbarred by the monarchy's attorney general, who claimed that women had no place in a courtroom. At the age of 65, she was readmitted to the bar.



MUSIC BY JOHN WILLIAMS
DISNEY+HOTSTAR
THE DOCUMENTARY focuses on the life and career of John Towner Williams, an American composer and conductor. In a career spanning seven decades, he has composed critically-acclaimed scores for movies such as *Jaws*, *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* and the *Indiana Jones* franchise. "See and hear maestro John Williams' own story, with insights from filmmakers, musicians, and others he has inspired, complete with rare behind-the-scenes looks at the making of movie history," said the press statement.



Lt Col S Srana, Ashok Chakra
In proud memory of Lt Col S Srana, AC (3 BIHAR) who made the supreme sacrifice in the finest traditions of the Indian Army on 2 Nov 1996, in Kupwara. Leading his troops from the front, in a gallant and swift strike, he destroyed a series of well fortified bunkers which contained a large quantity of explosives, arms and ammunition and killed all the militants in them, with utter disregard for his personal safety. We, the fraternity of VeerBharis salute him.

The Bihar Regiment Association
CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE

2 November 2007



Shaheed SI Navin Chand
50-BN
15-12-1953 To 02-11-2007



Shaheed HC/Ftr
P.N. Tiwari
50-BN
05-10-1972 To 02-11-2007



Shaheed Head Constable A.D. Barma
50-BN
10-06-1969 To 02-11-2007



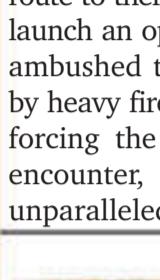
Shaheed HC/Dvr
Anil Kumar Rai
50-BN
25-01-1967 To 02-11-2007



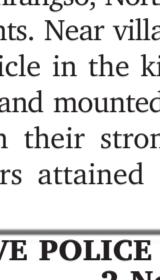
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50-BN
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Shaheed Constable Prashantha Bora
50-BN
01-07-1988 To 02-11-2007



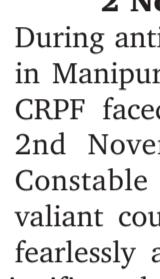
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77-BN
25-05-1969 To 02-11-1997



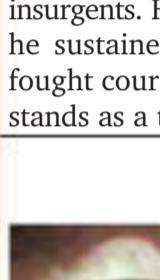
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133-BN
04-03-1945 To 01-11-1997



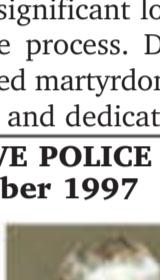
Shaheed Head Constable L/Nk Damu Tudu
133-BN
10-01-1956 To 01-11-1997



Shaheed Head Constable L/Nk Sunil Kumar
133-BN
18-04-1964 To 01-11-1997



Shaheed Head Constable Shahid Jagbir Singh
133-BN
08-10-1962 To 01-11-1997



Shaheed Head Constable U.S. Mishal
133-BN
17-05-1972 To 01-11-1997



Shaheed Head Constable Anil Kumar Kapri
133-BN
21-12-1975 To 01-11-1997



Shaheed Head Constable Naik S. Sivadasan
64-BN
10-04-1951 To 02-11-1992



Shaheed Head Constable Sukhdev Singh
64-BN
04-01-1971 To 02-11-1992



Shaheed Head Constable Ravinder Singh
77-BN
06-05-1964 To 01-11-1991



Shaheed Head Constable Zahid Khan
133-BN
10-12-1965 To 01-11-1997



Shaheed Head Constable Amresh Choudhary
133-BN
15-05-1972 To 01-11-1997



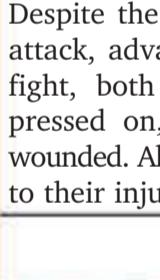
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133-BN
01-11-1991



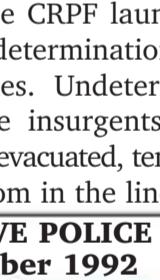
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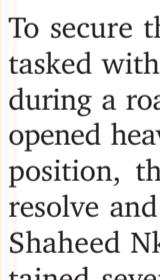
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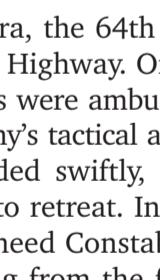
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15-05-1972 To 01-11-1997



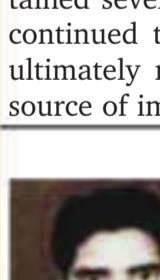
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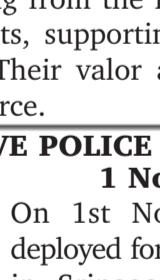
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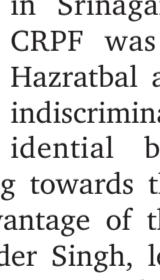
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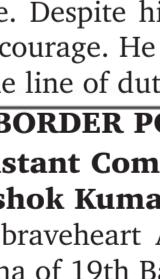
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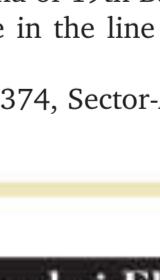
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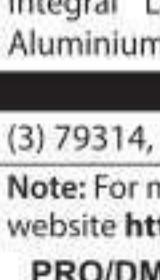
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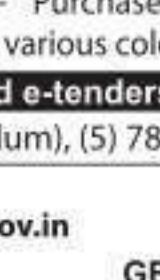
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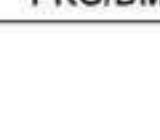
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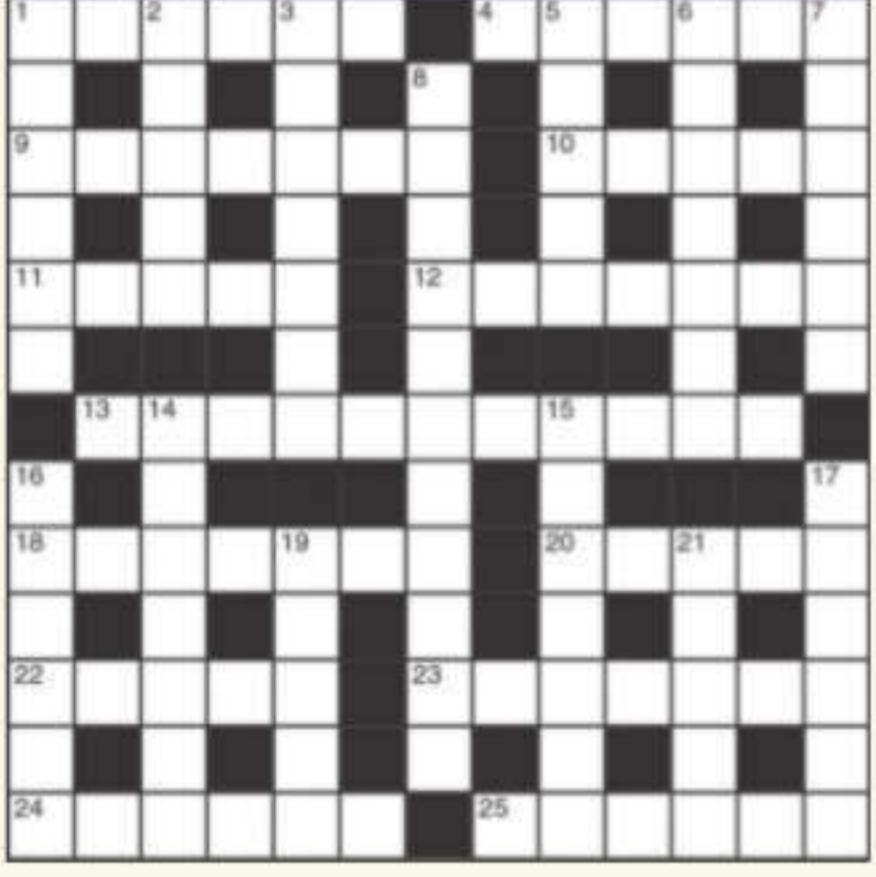
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133-BN
10-12-1965 To 01-11-1997

CROSSWORD 5511



ACROSS

- 1 Old saw that's lost its cutting edge (6)
 4 Right to support monarch (6)
 9 Old Egyptian gambling game, it's said (7)
 10 Imprisons many for a long time (5)
 11 Record score (5)
 12 Substitute one fabric with another (7)
 13 Fit to take possession (11)
 18 Protected from shock but still broken-hearted (7)
 20 Very bright Roman figures (5)
 22 A measure of the gold standard (5)
 23 A betrayal that will pack the theatre (4-3)
 24 Soul mate of Eros (6)
 25 King of fitted wardrobes (6)

Solutions Crossword 5509 Across: 1 Evens, 8 Negative, 9 Fiend, 10 Gradient, 11 Unite, 12 Ago, 16 Ascend, 17 Falter, 18 Oaf, 23 Agent, 24 Alfresco, 25 Tamil, 26 Provided, 27 Strew Down: 2 Vainness, 3 Nineties, 4 Red rag, 5 Hand, 6 Mined, 7 Testy, 12 Ado, 13 Off, 14 Flagrant, 15 Meantime, 19 Archer, 20 Warps, 21 Afoot, 22 Felix

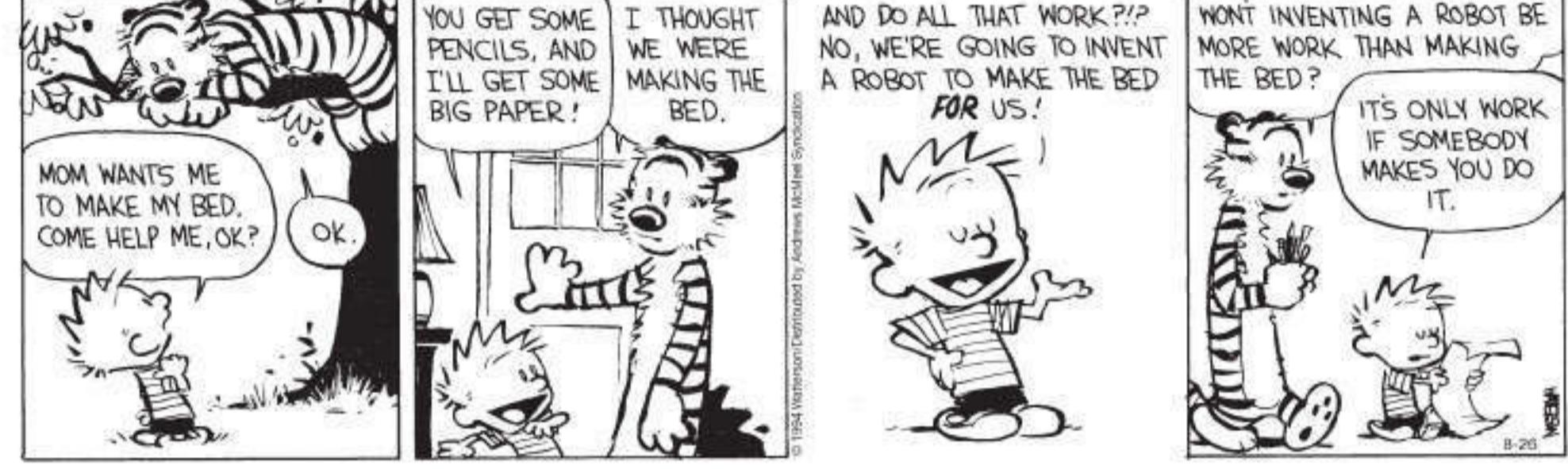
DOWN

- 1 Contending successfully with a course of masonry (6)
 2 Camouflage paint is out of place (5)
 3 What to do if she's cold? (7)
 5 Accountant taken in by traveller's summary (5)
 6 Show age in a symptom of exhaustion (7)
 7 Possibly resort a duty list (6)
 8 Qualified corn dealer? (11)
 14 Show a harbour light (7)
 15 Such an argument can be inadvisable if baseless (7)
 16 Storm centre in domestic service (6)
 17 New deed includes it when revised (6)
 19 Outcome of shell bursts (5)
 21 Orsino's favourite musical instrument (5)

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 5762
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.

6	9	4	5	1				
2	6	7			6			
7								
4	1			8	3			
6	5			9	4			
2					8			
				5	1	9		
				4	3	2	8	7

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5760

4	5	1	8	3	2	7	6	9
6	9	8	5	4	7	2	3	1
2	3	7	9	6	1	4	5	8
5	1	2	4	9	8	6	7	3
3	7	4	2	1	6	9	8	5
8	6	9	7	5	3	1	4	2
9	8	6	1	7	5	3	2	4
7	4	5	3	2	9	8	1	6
1	2	3	6	8	4	5	9	7

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

One powerful planetary aspect follows another. Right now there's an intense solar alignment coming up, so expect storms. The disruption in your energy pattern at such times always makes other people slightly erratic and you may have a great deal to put up with.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Your travel stars are still strong, so there's good luck in store if you are planning to get away. However, you may decide that you'd rather stay at home, after all! Can this be arranged? If so, please make sure that partners are happy with the new plans.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Everything should be moving this weekend. For one thing, it looks as if a foreign connection or travel arrangement should be completed, finalised or terminated. For another, you're entering a new professional phase. You'll know next steps.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Mars' impact on the work and professional angle of your solar chart is bound to keep you busy.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Hopefully you will keep yourself in check at this turbulent time. Normally in such circumstances I'd advise you to make sure that your head rules your heart, but the situation now seems too complex for such simple advice.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Mercury's witty wanderings in your chart are maintained for a little while longer, and helping you to stay one step ahead of the field in terms of your ideas and proposals. However, I don't think you can escape today's general undercurrent of unreason.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Certainty alternates with uncertainty, and what takes place over the next few days will shake up your ideas. You may also be enabled to make up lost ground. A social engagement may be affected by what can only be described as mysterious or inexplicable developments.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

With the Moon as sensitively influenced as it is today, you must make culture, leisure, pleasure, romance, fun and relaxation your priorities. Contacts with younger relatives should improve. Young-at-heart Pisceans will thrive.

JUMBLE WORDS

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.

Children see things very well sometimes - and even better. - Lorraine Hansberry (9)

VVAEI

EOPRLT

NRUIS

DANCES

Hansberry Children see things very well sometimes - and even better. - Lorraine

SUDOKU 5762

Difficulty Level 6s
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

6	9	4	5	1				
2	6	7			6			
7								
4	1			8	3			
6	5			9	4			
2					8			
				5	1	9		
				4	3	2	8	7

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5760

4	5	1	8	3	2	7	6	9
6	9	8	5	4	7	2	3	1
2	3	7	9	6	1	4	5	8
5	1	2	4	9	8	6	7	3
3	7	4	2	1	6	9	8	5
8	6	9	7	5	3	1	4	2
9	8	6	1	7	5	3	2	4
7	4	5	3	2	9	8	1	6
1	2	3	6	8	4	5	9	7

WESTERN RAILWAY - VADODARA DIVISION

CONSTRUCTION OF FOOT OVER BRIDGE e-TENDER NOTICE NO.DRM-BRC 096 OF 2024-25 Sealed Tenders for and on behalf of the President of India are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (WA/C). Western Railway, Pratapnagar, Vadodara-390 004 for the following works. Tender No : DRM BRC 096 of 2024-25. Name of Work :

Samlaya - Construction of Foot Over Bridge at Samlaya Station under Sr DEN (East). Approximate cost of the work (in Rs.) : ₹8,88,27,025.94 Bid Security to be deposited (In Rs.) : ₹5,94,100.00 Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender : Tender is to be submitted on 19.11.2024 before 15.00 Hrs, and is to be opened on same date at 15.30 Hrs. Web side particulars and notice for location where complete details can be seen & Address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased : Divisional Railway Manager (WAC)/Western Railway Pratapnagar, Vadodara-4 Web site www.reps.gov.in

Like us on : facebook.com/WesternRly

Important: For Prospectus, detailed information etc. please visit the website www.aiimsexams.ac.in. All applicants are required to visit the website regularly since all subsequent corrigendum/ addendum/uploads will be uploaded on the website only.

Sd/- ASSISTANT CONTROLLER (EXAMS) CBC-17112/11/43/2425

TENDER CALL NOTICE
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, PRANANATH COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) KHORDHA

CAD-1506

No.:19152904/2024-25/OHEPEE/03/ DATE: 30.10.2024

Sealed tender are invited from registered firms/ agencies/ suppliers with up to date VAT/GST clearance certificates to supply and install "FURNITURE IN 500 SEATED LECTURE HALL". The detail terms and conditions, guidelines, etc. are available and can be downloaded from the college website www.pnautonomouscollege.in. The sealed envelope containing the tenders in the prescribed format super scribed on the top of the envelope "FURNITURE IN 500 SEATED LECTURE HALL" should reach the office of the undersigned on or before 19/11/2024 by 05.00PM through registered/Speed post only.

The undersigned reserves the right to reject or cancel any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof and the authority will not be held responsible for any postal delay.

Sd./Principal

Prananath College (Autonomous), Khordha

OIPR- 11127/11/0008/2425

By Order,

Sh. Navdeep Gupta

Judicial Magistrate First Class

Room No. 109, Rohini Courts, Delhi

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr.P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Vijender @ Bala, S/o Lt. Sh. Bhagwan Singh R/o H.No. J-135, Vijay Vihar, Ph-1, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No.128/2019 u/s 33 Delhi Excise Act, P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Vijender @ Bala cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Vijender @ Bala has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Vijender @ Bala of FIR No.128/2019 u/s 33 Delhi Excise Act, P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 18.1

SA looking to sneak into WTC Final after series win over B'desh



Kagiso Rabada's five-wicket haul ensured a win for South Africa. File

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOVEMBER 1

WHILE NEW ZEALAND are keen on maxing the mathematical chance they have of qualifying for the World Test Championship, India needs at least 4 wins out of 6 Tests - including at Mumbai - to keep other chasing teams at bay.

However South Africa have entered the ring climbing one spot in the points table, after registering an innings and 273 runs win in the second Test against Bangladesh on Thursday, their biggest victory in the history of Test cricket. It pushes them to 4th spot, with chances of shooting up even further. With a points percentage of 54.17, the Proteas went past Kiwis who are at 50 per cent.

India and Australia are perched at the top with 62.82% (8 wins from 12 matches) and 62.50% (8 wins from 13 matches) respectively. The Border Gavaskar series will be a straight shoot-off, as India need 4 from 6 atleast, including the Mumbai Test and Australia require 5 off 7 to seal the top spot.

New Zealand though will fancy their chances, given Australia and India need to fight each other off, and take points off each other. But the Kiwis need to win in Mumbai and whitewash England at home 3-0 to entertain WTC hopes.

It's reminiscent of last time Black Caps won the WTC in 2020/21. They had then needed to beat West Indies and Pakistan in four successive tests, reports NZ Herald, and managed to make Finals where they beat India at Southampton.

NZ head coach Gary Stead was quoted by Herald as saying, "For the World Test Championship itself, there's no doubt that one more win would certainly help us. I remember the first time we were in this situation, we had to win four tests on the bounce and managed to."

However with South Africa whitewashing Bangladesh away from home 2-0 at Chattogram on Thursday, the Proteas have steadily climbed to a points percentage of 54.17%. South Africa have never made the final of WTC, but could be a surprise package with a late charge. They take on Sri Lanka in a two-match Test series this November end, and that is followed by two Tests against Pakistan starting Boxing Day at home.

If South Africa win all four matches, they will have pushed their points percentage close to 70 almost while even three wins and a loss will see them go past 60, and get into a three-way scuffle with India and Australia.

Sri Lanka are currently third with 55.56% with 5 wins from 9 matches, but they have lost all the other 4. They will need upsets against South Africa on the road.

England have the most wins - 9 - in this WTC cycle where they have played 19 Tests (next best is India's 13), but the Bazball era slow over rates have meant England have coped 19 deductions, pushing them to 6th. Besides, they got hammered by Pakistan.

FIVE-FOR HERO

Precise Jadeja rediscovers joy of bowling to put on a retro show

SANDIP G
MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1

ARMS ALOFT and spread, eyes shut skywards, Ravindra Jadeja soaked in the sunlight and spotlight at the Wankhede. He claimed his first five-for of this series, his second in 26 innings, busted the stoic resistance of New Zealand's batsmen as well as the suspicions about his waning prowess. There was something more about him on Friday, him rediscovering the joy of bowling, him time-travelling to the spunky days of youth, and him lurking like an invincible reality.

His 21-1-62-5 stalled New Zealand's progress at 235, a robust though not indomitable total on a surface that is already throwing up a few tricks, but could transform into a full-blown evil turner in a few sessions. This was the brand of surface where Jadeja once scythed through attacks, a surface with bounce, adequate pace and sharp turn. But somewhere in his cycle of evolution, he had lost the art of skinning batting line-ups on helpful surfaces.

He became more condition-proof, more layered and subtler, but Jadeja lost something that made Jadeja. He lost the art of taking wickets on excessively helpful conditions. On pitches that needed the Jadeja

Dusk-time drama, 10 wild minutes

Jaiswal's ill-advised shot, Siraj's brain fade, Kohli's misjudged run combine to give New Zealand edge at end of play on Day 1



After a solid start, batting with the maturity of a veteran, Yashasvi Jaiswal lost his wicket playing a reverse sweep shot in a snap-of-the-moment misjudgement to lose his wicket, which triggered the wild collapse. Amit Chakravarty

SCOREBOARD

INDIA vs NEW ZEALAND

WANKHEDHE STADIUM, MUMBAI

Toss: New Zealand won, chose to bat

NEW ZEALAND:

T Latham b Washington	28 (44b, 3x4)
D Conway lbw b Akash Deep	4 (11b, 1x4)
W Young c Rohit b Jadeja	71 (138b, 4x4, 2x6)
R Ravindra b Washington	5 (12b)
D Mitchell c Rohit b Washington	82 (129b, 3x4, 3x6)
T Blundell b Jadeja	0 (3b)
G Phillips b Jadeja	17 (28b, 1x4)
I Sodhi lbw b Jadeja	7 (19b, 1x4)
M Henry b Jadeja	0 (2b)
A Patel lbw b Washington	7 (16b, 1x6)
W O'Rourke not out	1 (1b)
■ Extras (b1, lb3, nb9)	13
■ Total (all out; 65.4 overs)	235
■ Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 6-0-16-0, Akash Deep 5-0-22-1, Ravichandran Ashwin 14-0-47-0, Washington Sundar 18.4-2-81-4, Ravindra Jadeja 22-1-65-5.	

INDIA:

Y Jaiswal b Patel	30 (52b, 4x4)
R Sharma c Latham b Henry	18 (18b, 3x4)
S Gill not out	23 (31b, 2x4, 1x6)
M Siraj lbw b Patel	0 (1b)
V Kohli run out (Henry)	4 (6b, 1x4)
R Pant not out	1 (1b1)
■ Extras (nb2)	2
■ Total (19 overs)	86/4
■ Bowling: Matt Henry 5-1-15-1, William O'Rourke 2-1-5-0, Ajaz Patel 7-1-33-2, Glenn Phillips 4-0-25-0, Ravindra Ravindra 1-0-8-0.	

Thought that I would never lose a series at home: Jadeja

DEVENDRA PANDEY

MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 1

RAVINDRA JADEJA had a wish that as long as he remains part of the Indian squad, they will remain unbeaten in a Test series at home. After all, he made his Test debut in Nagpur in 2012 against England, and that was the last time India had lost a Test series in their own backyard (even though that Test ended in a draw). From there on, India had won 18 series in a row.

But, after defeats in Bengaluru and Pune, the streak was broken by New Zealand.

"I was afraid of this. Personally, I had thought that as long as I played for India, I didn't want to lose a single series at home. But this also happened," Jadeja said.

He added with a chuckle that he didn't want to think about such things and jinx it now. "Whatever I think about, it happens suddenly."

The Saurashtra all-rounder said that India have raised expectations by their consistent performances. "When you raise your expectations so high and then you lose a series after 12 years, it looks very different. These things happen, but as a team, it is a lesson. We need to pick up positives from this and deal with what situation comes next," he added.

Personally, Jadeja had found a good bowling rhythm in New Zealand's second innings in Pune and carried that form into Mumbai and was the best Indian bowler on display on Day 1 after the visitors opted to bat.

He finished with figures of 5/65 and picked up his 14th five-wicket haul in Tests.



After average displays in the first two Tests, Ravindra Jadeja picked up his 14th five-wicket haul. Amit Chakravarty

Jadeja explained that he hadn't changed much with this bowling, but sometimes luck plays a factor on turning pitches.

After bundling out New Zealand for 235 runs in the first innings, the Indian team were placed in a comfortable position... until the last 15 minutes of play.

A stunning collapse saw them lose three quick wickets in 10 minutes, including the big ones of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Virat Kohli. Jadeja said, "It happened, in a team game, you can't blame anyone."

"Everyone makes small mistakes but our remaining batters will have to make small partnerships. If the upcoming batsmen make small contributions, it will be good."

Within two overs, game swings towards NZ

It was all looking rosy for India at the end of a hot day in Mumbai. They had put in the hard work on the field after losing the toss, and were all set to finish proceedings with a firm grasp on the match... and then, as Ravi Shastri put it on air, "harakiri" followed.

■ 17.2: Yashasvi Jaiswal 30 (52) b Ajaz Patel, India 78/2:

Once more, Jaiswal looked good in the middle and seemed to have things under control when he decided to bring out the reverse sweep to a ball from Ajaz Patel that pitched outside his leg stump.

A conventional sweep would have served him better but he had made up his mind so much in advance that he went through with it. The ball sneaked underneath and crashed into the stumps.

■ 17.3: Mohammed Siraj 0 (1) lbw Ajaz Patel, India 78/3:

Firstly, a strange choice for a night-

watchman. The primary role for someone sent up the order is to save the batter to follow. Siraj might be a hard-working cricketer but why the management thought he could handle these conditions even for 10 minutes is hard to fathom. And then, to top it all, he used up a review as well after being hit plumb in front.

■ 18.3: Virat Kohli 4 (6) Run Out Matt Henry, India 84/4:

And then the big brain fade. Virat Kohli was already involved in a poorly-judged run out in Pune where both he and Rishabh Pant were too eager for a quick single, ending in the dismissal of the latter, just when India would have fancied their chances in the run-chase. On Friday, he plotted his own downfall, taking off after tapping the ball to Matt Henry at mid-on. His dive wasn't the cleanest either and Kohli shot himself in the foot.

It was so tiring that the batsmen refused doubles even when there was an opportunity. Kohli would wipe the sweat off Jadeja's hands with a towel. "It was difficult to grip the ball. The ball kept slipping out of my hands," the left-arm spinner admitted. It tested their physical and mental reserves. "It was the first hour after lunch with me and Will Young batting, it was seriously warm and without breeze. We were just trying to be switched on when batting and switching off between deliveries, so that we could conserve our energy," Daryl Mitchell, the visitors' top-scorer, said.

The moment tea was called, Mitchell jumped into an ice bath and sat quietly for 10 minutes. The sun grew milder as the evening unfolded, before it all turned pleasant in the end. But Mitchell warned of an Indian backlash, while Jadeja emphasised on the need to build "chota mota partnerships" and take the game deep. But those ten minutes of dusk-time drama would be revisited and retold a few times in the future.

yet to reach its full fury. It could be the reward for their toils on an excruciatingly hot and humid afternoon. Soon after lunch with me and Will Young batting, it was seriously warm and without breeze. We were just trying to be switched on when batting and switching off between deliveries, so that we could conserve our energy. In the hour-break, purple umbrellas with giant leaves and plastic chairs were dragged into the middle. Between overs, New Zealand batsmen slumped to the red-hot earth. The squad members wrapped ice packs around them. The spectators in the front row retreated to the upper tiers. Exhausted, they preserved their voice only to celebrate the wickets.

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He harnesses the bounce, adequate pace and sharp turn. But somewhere in his cycle of evolution, he had lost the art of skinning batting line-ups on helpful surfaces.

duced an edge trimmer (93.7 kph) to eject Young. The latter's discretion outside the off-stump was immaculate. But Jadeja, unlike R Ashwin, made him play at most balls. A couple of times, the edgy interventions of the bat saved him at the last moment. So he committed to a ball that landed on off-stump, which spat away marginally. It took his edge en route.

Had it turned a centimetre more, the ball would have escaped the ball. But this was knitted to perfection. He harnesses the bounce too, imparting more over-spin, letting the ball rip off his hands and bounce awkwardly at them. The wicket energised him. He laid the trap for Tom Blundell even before he took his guard. Two slower full-length balls on off-stumps, two dissatisfied shrugs as Blundell comfortably defended those, he flung in a fuller, faster ball on middle stump. Blundell pushed forward, he was not to the pitch of the ball. Then it ragged across him to hit the stump. This was the only wicket that Jadeja owed to the side-spinning ball.

Not that he couldn't or didn't turn the ball, but he realigned the ball that turned only provided theatrical flourishes. Often, batsmen negotiated them by playing inside the line, not committing to the ball and taking the bottom hand off. Just before lunch, he unearthed a ripper that screamed past Young, forcing acrobatics from Rishabh Pant to deny byes. But it was not serving the purpose of getting the wickets. Ravi Ashwin too would realise this; Washington Sundar had already illustrated the virtues of the ones that didn't turn on a turner. Both Tom Latham and Rishabh Pant were dispatched up the stairs of Wankhede thus.

So he returned to the values that once made him—unremitting precision, supreme control, the wits to resist the lure of the turn, and the know-how to trap batsmen with simple and subtler than grand tricks. It was not the most spectacular spell he had bowled, but one that would fill him with immense joy. And a five-for for old times' sake.

security. Then he suckered him into a lazy front-foot defence with a yawning crease between his bat and pad. The wicket of Phillips, the score at 187/5, exposed an uncommonly long lower-order to a surface gnashing its fangs. He rapidly got Ish Sodhi

(90 kph) and Matt Henry (90.6) to fashion a turnaround.

It began with Jadeja too. Minutes after the first drinks break, just when Will Young and Daryl Mitchell were terrified to drag the match beyond India's reach, he pro-

BRIEFLY

United confirm Amorim as manager

Manchester: Manchester United hired Ruben Amorim on Friday, gambling on a manager unproven in Europe's top leagues to turn around the fortunes of the fading English power. At age 39, Amorim, who has joined from Portuguese champion Sporting Lisbon, will be the youngest person to coach United since the 1960s and the sixth permanent manager since the retirement of Alex Ferguson in 2013. Amorim will take charge on November 11, after completing his commitments to Sporting and has signed a contract until June 2027, with United having an option of an additional year. "Ruben is one of the most exciting and highly rated young coaches in European football," United said. United, the record 20-time English champion, hasn't won the Premier League since Ferguson's final season in charge. **REUTERS**

Malvika, Ayush reach Hylo Open semis

Malvika Bansod made the semifinals of Hylo Open at Saarbrucken, Germany, after taking the initiative early against World No 31 Nguyen Thuy Linh, to win 21-15, 21-17 in 45 minutes. The 23-year-old Indian, ranked No 34 searching for her first title at this level, runs into a Last 4 crowded by the top Danes – including Mia Blichfeldt and Line Christoperson. First up will be the fast-rising Julie Dawall Jacobsen who muscled her way past Indian Rakshitha Ramraj 21-12, 21-17 in 31 minutes. In the men's singles section, Ayush Shetty, ranked No 51, beat No 55 Kalle Koljonen of Finland 21-18, 21-18. He will need to get past French Christo Popov, ranked No 28 to get into the finals, and the tall Bangalorean will need to keep his nerve at the net. **ENS**

Rybakina hires Ivanisevic as coach

Paris: World Number five Elena Rybakina has hired Novak Djokovic's former coach Goran Ivanisevic for the 2025 season, the Kazakhstan player said on Friday. Djokovic ended a five-year partnership in March with Croat Ivanisevic, who helped the Serbian claim nine of his 24 Grand Slam titles. Ivanisevic also won Wimbledon in 2001 when he became the first wild card to win a major tournament. Rybakina, 25, will start working with Ivanisevic during the pre-season. The 2022 Wimbledon champion split from her long-time coach Stefano Vukov just days before the U.S. Open. "I'm really looking forward to this partnership," Rybakina told reporters ahead of the WTA Finals which begin on Saturday in Riyadh. **REUTERS**

East Bengal beat Nejmeh, enter QF

Thimphu: Dimitrios Diamantakos' brace fired East Bengal FC into the knockout stage of the AFC Challenge League 2024-25 as the ISL side edged past Nejmeh SC of Lebanon 3-2 in their final Group A match here Friday. East Bengal finished as the Group A winners on seven points to seal progression. The Red and Golds had won 4-0 against Bashundhara Kings (Bangladesh) and drawn 2-2 with Paro FC (Bhutan) in their first two fixtures. East Bengal, who trailed Nejmeh by two points heading into this encounter, took the lead in the eighth minute when Madil Talal's corner kick was inadvertently headed into his own net by Baba Musah at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu. **PTI**

LA LIGA

Flick's Barcelona laid the perfect trap to ruin Mbappe's Clasico debut

SANDIP G

NOVEMBER 1

AT THE stroke of 30 minutes, Kylian Mbappe skated to the corner flag, roared, spread his arms and struck the pose for cameras and fans to soak. He had just authored his first El Clasico goal—a sumptuous strike at that. He lured the goalkeeper, Inaki Pena, towards him and swept his shot over and across him into the bottom left corner. But his celebrations turned to anguish when semi-automatic offside technology judged he was marginally offside. He had bisected the gap between the centre-backs Inigo Martinez and Pau Cubarsi but mistimed his run by millimetres. In disbelief, he held his hands over his mouth.

This was not an exception; rather the theme of the night at the Bernabeu. The regimented and devastating high line of Barcelona caught Real Madrid's attackers offside 12 times. Mbappe, the jewel in the Madrid crown, fluffed his lines eight times

Will CSK's purse be enough to buy Pant?

IPL retentions raise quite a few questions: Will KKR break the bank for marquee signings? Can Punjab get their rebuild right?

VENKATA KRISHNAB
CHENNAI, NOVEMBER 1

THE INDIAN Premier League (IPL) retention window ended largely on expected lines. Barring a few names being thrown into the auction pool, the sum that franchises were prepared to pay to keep hold of their prized assets did raise eyebrows.

With less than a month to go for the auctions, teams will now go back to the drawing board to build a squad around those who are retained.

Here is a look at how each team looks at the end of the retention period.

Chennai Super Kings: No surprises that they preferred continuity. CSK need a new face for life after MS Dhoni and core group, and Rishabh Pant is up for grabs. But CSK didn't deviate from their success formula and stuck to what works for them: continuity. Compared to the rest, their retentions – Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ravindra Jadeja, Matheesha Pathirana, Shivam Dube, Dhoni – seems weak on paper, but it is one franchise that knows what it is up to. With only Rs 55 crore available, they may struggle to keep up with the bidding for Pant and even if they get him, they need to be smart with their other buys to put a strong squad on paper. Spending Rs 18 crore and Rs 12 crore on Jadeja and Dube seems expensive.

Delhi Capitals: It is a franchise that has seen several players who have been deemed surplus and released into the auction pool go and become big names. Though they desperately tried everything to retain Rishabh Pant he looks set to join the likes of Gautam Gambhir, AB de Villiers, David Warner who all reached great heights with other franchises. Delhi have Rs 73 crores available to build a squad that will complement Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Tristan Stubbs and Abhishek Porel.

In 2018 they went after big Indian names and in 2022 they went for young talents. What direction they take in 2024 only time will tell. At the auction, they need a core batting group and most importantly, a captain with Shreyas Iyer being a potential target.

Gujarat Titans: From the time they came in, they have been clear cut about their needs and wants. So, Rashid Khan, Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan, Rahul Tewatia and Shahrkhan Khan – who all perform different roles – have been retained. They also have one Right to Match (RTM) option to use on David Miller or Mohammed Shami. With Rs 69 crore in the bank, GT would feel confident of putting together a strong squad. What has stood out about them is how meticulous they have been in acquiring uncapped Indian talents who will complement the proven overseas players who may not be in the target list of many franchises. So, GT's first target would be to assemble a strong XI and possibly an X-factor player



CSK need a new face for life after MS Dhoni and will be tempted to go for Rishabh Pant. **BCCI**

and build their squad from there.

Kolkata Knight Riders: They lost Rs 69 crore from their auction purse even though they spent only Rs 57 crores to retain six players – the maximum number any team could retain – due to the retention rules. It looks like good business when Sunil Narine, Andre Russell, Varun Chakravarthy – three X-factor players are retained – to go with a rare finisher in Rinku Singh and two uncapped players in Harshit Rana and Ramandeep Singh. With Rs 51 crore remaining, they can afford to break the bank on one or two players and then rely on budget buys. It is a model that has worked for them and who knows if they get Mitchell Starc or Phil Salt, they can still assemble a good squad. With Shreyas Iyer not around, they are in need of a captain – possibly a big Indian name.

Lucknow Super Giants: Apart from Nicholas Pooran and Ravi Bishnoi, Lucknow have taken a huge leap of faith in retaining Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan and Ayush Badoni. With Rs 69 crore and one RTM option available, LSG need to find their core at the auction table including an Indian face who can be the captain. If not, they can always go back to Pooran to lead the side. With three of their retentions in the developmental stage and Mayank being injury prone, they need at least 8 names who can walk into the XI. It is not im-

possible to get, provided they ration their budget accordingly. If they spend a big sum on a player, then they may struggle to find the balance. A lot needs to be done at the auction table.

Mumbai Indians: Have the strongest retention team on paper and also have the luxury of using one RTM. Their core – all of them Indians – means, Mumbai will head to the auction confident of putting together a title-winning squad. Because they spent huge sums on four of their retentions, they head to the auction with only Rs 45 crore. Going for any other big names could ruin their auction unless they come within their budget. As usual, they will look for an overseas middle-order batsman and a couple of fast bowlers to walk into the XI. And once that is in place, they would rely on their talent scouts to give them the missing pieces in the puzzle. Having one will make them formidable again.

Punjab Kings: Having retained only a couple of uncapped players, Punjab Kings will head to the auction with a whopping Rs 110.5 crore available, the most for any team. So, getting Rishabh Pant, Jos Buttler, Shreyas Iyer, Mark Wood, Jofra Archer, Mitchell Starc are not beyond their means. For the nth time, Punjab are in for another overhaul under a new coach in Ricky Ponting. They are without a captain, which means they have to build a squad from

scratch. How and where they begin is the key because with a huge sum available, other teams end up hiking the prices to land their targets at a later stage. With four RTMs available, they can use them to buy back Liam Livingstone, Sam Curran, Arshdeep Singh and Kagiso Rabada.

Rajasthan Royals: Their core of young Indian players who can serve them for long remains intact. That they have spent Rs 14 crore each on Risan Parag and Dhruv Jurel – who are maturing into match winners on their own – shows the faith the franchise has on them. And with Shrimon Hetmyer also retained, RR have five of their top 7 in place. So at the auction table, with only Rs 41 crore (the least among all) to spend, all they need to do is go after batsmen who can come at a reasonable cost and compliment the top five. But with Sandeep Sharma being the lone seamer retained, whether they manage to get more than a couple of quality fast bowlers – who tend to cost high – remains to be seen. The same with the spinners as well.

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Retained Virat Kohli for Rs 21 crore, making him the highest-paid Indian player. That RCB were in for an overhaul was evident as that was the reason they brought Andy Flower and Mo Bobat – two names who were part of England's domination in the past – to their ranks to get a hang of the

franchise. Having cleared all the deadwoods, the challenge for RCB is to put a balanced squad, which they have failed at in the past. With Rs 83 crores available to spend, they have the means. They are in need of a potential captain as well with KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer among their targets alongside Rishabh Pant. Unless they crack the auction code, it would be hard for them to win the title.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: With Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Heinrich Klaasen, Pat Cummins and Nitish Kumar Reddy retained, SRH's target will be to look for as many Indian names as possible. And then look for three overseas players who can be rotated based on the conditions. Doing that will give them a strong overseas core that has been their biggest strength over the years. They have not spent huge sums on big name Indian players and options for those in the mix. And the story looks set to continue this time as well since they have only Rs 45 crore to spend at the auction, will be looking for budget players and then use the next auction to fill the holes. Have one RTM option to use on T Natarajan or Washington Sundar.

How Mumbai retained Hardik, Surya, Rohit and Bumrah

SANDEEP DWIVEDI
NOVEMBER 1

HOW MUMBAI INDIANS were able to retain their most-sought-after stars after a nightmarish season is a fascinating IPL retention story. Keeping their core together – a collection of proven leaders – at a time when other teams were desperately looking for captains was a coup of sorts for the MI's backroom staff.

This wasn't easy. Those in the know say that the franchise, at one point during the last couple of months, had even discussed leadership change. It was understandable. The team under new captain Hardik Pandya had finished last in 2024 and MI had exceptional leadership options in Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah.

It was a string of meetings, long honest conversations, large-heartedness of players and a general consensus among players of putting collective goals ahead of team hierarchy resulted in MI putting on



Jasprit Bumrah was retained by Mumbai Indians for Rs 18 crore. **BCCI**

The order of retention shows a fine balance and nuanced signaling. The world's best all-format bowler Bumrah is clearly the MVP, he gets the highest retention pay of Rs 18 crore.

paper names the following names and figures – Jasprit Bumrah (Rs 18 crore), skipper Hardik Pandya (Rs 16.35 crore), Suryakumar Yadav (Rs 16.35 crore), Rohit Sharma (Rs 16.30 crore) and Tilak Varma (Rs 8 crore).

The order of retention shows a fine balance and nuanced signaling. The world's best all-format bowler Bumrah is clearly the MVP, he gets the highest retention pay of Rs 18 crore. The two captains – Hardik for MI and Surya for India's T20Is – are on par at Rs 16.35 crore. As for Rohit, who retired from T20 cricket after leading India's to

World T20 title, he gets Rs 16.30 crore.

Sources involved in MI retention discussions say that it was actually Rohit who made the complex task of grading their equally-important players easier for the franchise. "He was the one who said that Bumrah, Hardik and Surya play for India so they need to be in the top three," he said.

When it came to deciding the top retention player, it was the three batsmen – Rohit, Surya and Hardik – who agreed that it had to be Bumrah. "It has a lot to do with the respect Bumrah has in the team and his importance to the side," said a source.

The talk on captaincy wasn't that simple. Last season, Hardik had replaced Rohit within days of India's exceptional 50 overs World Cup showing where it finished runners-up. The Baroda all-rounder wasn't a popular choice, he was booed by fans during games.

There were threadbare discussions where nothing was left unsaid. There was talk about mistakes made by the captain and even team management.

This was followed by an idea exchange

on the remedial measures that needed to be put in place.

Finally, the core group thought that captaincy change was not the solution.

"If we had made a change, it would have been three captains in three years. That wouldn't have worked," said a MI source. Incidentally, Surya was the last to sign up for the MI. More than one franchise team had been chasing him with tempting offers. But he decided to stay back.

"Not just that, he has told us that he will take it upon himself to keep the dressing room atmosphere perfect. At the end of the day these players have been together for a long time and they wanted to join forces to make amends for last season," he said.

In a nutshell, what worked for MI to retain its best was a bunch of wounded players keen to bring back glory to the city that has won the most 5 IPL titles.

As Rohit would say in a statement after retention: "I have played so much cricket here. This is the place where I started my cricket career. So, this is a very, very special city and I'm happy to be here."

alone. His first five touches raised the assistant referee's flag. Twice, it came as a relief as he had flayed his shot wide. But this one hurt, he had scored, celebrated and then chalked off. It was undeniably the moment that the momentum shifted to the visitors.

The tactic—chiselled to perfection—has defined the era of Hansi Flick. Teams have averaged 6.5 offsides per La Liga game this season against him, the best in Europe and twice more than the best of Pep Guardiola's Barcelona (3.74 in 2010). He has fused German cutting-edge with Catalan tactical purism. He idolises Johan Cruyff, counts his predecessor Xavi as his friend, but maintains the German ideals of tactical flexibility and directness. From the first game of the season, Barcelona have maintained a dangerously high defence line, with the backline and central midfielder slotting themselves into what almost resembles a straight line, high up the pitch.

The full-backs would be slightly more forward than the centre-backs: 17-year-old Curbarsi and Martinez, who is twice his age.



Madrid's Kylian Mbappe was unable to make an impact against Barcelona. **AP**

The midfield line is almost breathing on them, so much so that they shrink the field to half its size. They spread out like a human

chain to cut out the holes. So did Pep, who also laid clever offside snares, but never so systematic or rigorous like Flick's set up. The players had to be supremely fit and young. Six of his starting eleven were under-21s. Fitness and discipline had been emphasised since the first day. Slower players like Ilkay Gundogan were asked to move on.

For this radical offside trap to succeed, defenders need flawless coordination. Timing is everything. Defenders must step up together, creating a straight line that pushes attackers offside. Curbarsi and Martinez have settled into a pair that could communicate telepathically. But any hesitation or missstep can allow the opponent to stay onside and threaten the goal. A few times, they reacted late and nearly paid the price, saved by Madrid's sloppy finishing. Even the VAR-chalked off goal could be viewed in two ways -- clever defending or reckless reaction.

Holding shape is primary. In case someone advances with the ball, another promptly occupies the space. Unlike the Pep era, the defenders are more in your eyes. Rub

your eyes too—they top the chart in completing more tackles in the final third of the pitch (33). The word itself was considered ugly during Guardiola's time.

Fundamental to the ploy's success is the communication of the defenders, ensuring everyone moves at the same time. But footbal is no choreographed dance. They err too--Barcelona have leaked 10 goals in 11 games, a figure neither impressive nor shameful.

On several instances on Saturday, it looked as though Mbappe was mistiming his run. He was, but not because he ran too early, but the defenders didn't fluff their own lines. High defensive lines entice forwards to get off the blocks too early. The space behind lights them up. A well-weighted needle-eyed pass is what they require to tee off into acres of space. And Mbappe has unmatched pace to burn. Here, his biggest strength was a barrier too. He might have been over-eager. It was his supposed statement-making game. His first El Clasico at home. Madrid dominated the first half, but they were the most frustrated.

In the second half, they switched through

the gears and cut the Madrid backline to ribbons. Barcelona's twinkle-toed forwards wove mysterious patterns around the men in white and struck four delightful goals. The soul of their game is their forward-play, tricksy forwards buzzing back and forth. But title-winning seasons are founded on robust defences.

Flick's is not the only proponent of laying offside nets, though the most efficient one. Aston Villa's Unai Emery too spins darts offside webs. Last season, they lured an average of 4.2 offsides a game. It's no coincidence that the scheme has become more prevalent after the introduction of VAR, which has sided with defenders in case of marginal offside calls.

Like all strategies, an antidote would be found out. And an antidote to the antidote too. But what is magnificent is that Flick has turned a ragged, underperforming footballing giant into a thrilling, winning proposition. Vanquishing both Bayern and Madrid in four days time, they are retracing their paths to lost glory.