

BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY

New Year Resolution
not now,
closer
to poll
date:

Step out & vote.

Govt declares
Canada-based
Goldy Brar
a terrorist



Gangster
wanted in
Moosewala
murder case

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

GANGSTER GOLDY Brar, the alleged mastermind in the murder of singer Sidhu Moosewala, was on Monday declared a designated terrorist by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

A native of Fardikot in Punjab, Brar, whose real name is Satinderjit Singh, is currently based in Canada, where he had gone on a student visa in 2017. He is wanted in India in multiple murder cases.

A key member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, Brar had claimed responsibility for the murder of Moosewala. The popular singer was shot in Punjab's Mansa district on May 29, 2022.

In a gazetted notification issued Monday, Additional Secretary Praveen Vasista said Brar is currently residing in Brampton, Canada and is associated with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

As Kejriwal sets tone, Mann softens stand on AAP-Cong alliance

AAP cites need to 'save country' for new openness in Punjab and Delhi

KANCHAN VASDEV &
MALLICA JOSHI
CHANDIGARH, NEW DELHI,
JANUARY 1

WEEKS AFTER dismissing the question of an alliance with the principal Opposition Congress in Punjab for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Bhagwant Mann on Monday seemed to have softened his stand.

Both the Congress and AAP are constituents of the Opposition INDIA bloc formed to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls.

Responding to a question on the possibility of AAP's tie-up with the Congress, Mann said: "We will know at the next INDIA bloc meeting. We will know after discussions at that meeting. The meeting will be held soon."

"We are fighting for the country. If the Constitution is

saved, the country will be saved. If the Constitution is saved, the parties will be protected," he added.

On the Punjab Congress's opposition to an alliance with the AAP on the ground that it will damage its prospects, the CM said: "Otherwise, what state is the Congress in."

Taking a swipe at the Congress, he said, "In Delhi and Punjab, mothers would be able to tell the shortest story to their children. That would be - 'Ek thi Congress'."

Though Mann took potshots at the Congress, his posturing was seen as a "softening" of stance on the alliance issue.

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PAGE 1
ANCHOR

From actors to accused: Contributing to a Mumbai Police fund

MOHAMED THAVER
MUMBAI, JANUARY 1

BOLLYWOOD ACTORS, corporate houses, banks, lawyers and, in some cases, even those against whom Mumbai Police filed charge-sheets are in the list of people who contributed to the Mumbai Police Foundation (MPF) between May 2018 and March 2023, according to records obtained by *The Indian Express* under the Right To Information (RTI) Act.

According to the RTI response, a total of Rs 25.49 crore was received in contribution dur-

ing this period, mostly after the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

While the celebrity contributors included Akshay Kumar, Rohit Shetty, Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma, there is another set of contributors that raises questions as the MPF fund guidelines clearly state that there should be no conflict of interest or "perception" of conflict of interest while accepting money for the Foundation.

This set of contributors included agrochemical manufacturer United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL), which contributed Rs 1 crore to the MPF in April 2020. This came a year after the

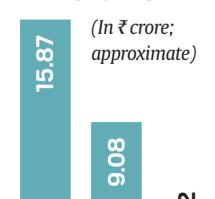
Mumbai Police registered an FIR against the firm for allegedly preparing electronic poll propaganda material for the BJP – an allegation made by the Congress.

The FIR registered on April 16, 2019 at Khar Police Station, North-West Mumbai, following a complaint by the Election Commission, named Raju Shroff, one of the UPL's directors, as accused.

At this point, the BJP-Shiv Sena government led by Devendra Fadnavis was ruling the state. When the UPL contributed to the MPF, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) was in power. An officer said the police eventually filed the charge-sheet in the case.

FUND FLOW DURING AND AFTER PANDEMIC

CONTRIBUTIONS IN LAST 3 YRS



TOP CONTRIBUTORS

- HDFC Bank: ₹4 cr (Nov 25 & Dec 31, 2020)
- Warburg Pincus India: ₹2.5 cr (Apr 28, 2020 & Apr 23, 2021)
- Akshay Kumar: ₹2 cr (Apr 27, 2020)
- United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL): ₹1 cr (Apr 29, 2020)
- Tata Sons: ₹1 cr (May 27, 2020)
- State Bank of India: ₹1 cr (Mar 15, 2021)

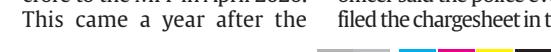
AMONG OTHERS

- Producer Rohit Shetty: ₹50 lakh (2022)
- Shapoorji Pallonji Finance Pvt Ltd: ₹70 lakh (2020)
- Serum Institute of India: ₹50 lakh (2020)
- Inox Air Products Pvt Ltd: ₹50 lakh (2020)
- SD Corporation: ₹25 lakh (2020)
- Godrej Seeds Genetics: ₹25 lakh (2020)
- Kamala Raheja Foundation: ₹25 lakh (2020)

Similarly, the MPF also received a contribution of Rs 10 lakh from India Infoline in April 2020. In 2015, the Mumbai Police, while probing the NSEL scam case, had arrested three top executives of prominent brokerage firms, including Chintan Modi, the then vice president of India Infoline Commodities Limited (IICL). Modi was subsequently charged with economic offences by the Mumbai Police in 2018.

While the MPF did not receive any contribution in the 22 months since its formation in May 2018, it witnessed a sudden spurt of flow beginning March 2020, coinciding with the onset of Covid-19 which started spreading across the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



ISRO's PSLV-C58 carrying the X-ray Polarimeter Satellite lifts off from Sriharikota on Monday. PTI

SECOND SUCH MISSION IN THE WORLD AFTER NASA'S IXPE

ISRO launches 'Gaganyaan year' with XPoSat, India's eye in deep space

PSLV-C58 places satellite in desired orbit, will track X-rays and celestial objects

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

THE INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) began the new year with the successful launch of its first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPOSat), which will study X-ray polarisation and its cosmic sources such as blackholes and neutron stars.

Lifting off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota Monday morning,

ISRO's popular launch vehicle PSLV-C58 put the XPOSat in a precise circular orbit of 650 km after a 21-minute flight.

The XPOSat is only the world's second such mission after the Imaging X-ray Polarimetry Explorer (IXPE) launched by NASA in 2021. It comprises two payloads, including Indian X-ray Polarimeter (POLIX) and X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing (XSPECT).

These have been built by Raman Research Institute and UR Rao Satellite Centre, both in

Bengaluru.

"On 1st January 2024 yet another successful mission of the PSLV has been accomplished. PSLV C58 has placed the primary satellite XPOSat in the desired orbit," said ISRO Chairman S Somanath.

"The deviation from the targeted orbit is hardly 3 km and inclination is 0.001 degree which is one of the excellent orbital conditions. The solar panel of the satellite has also been deployed successfully."

"This year has just begun and we are going to have many more launches. And, 2024 is going to be the year of Gaganyaan," he said referring to India's first human spaceflight programme. "As you all know, the TV-D1 mission happened last year and this year we are expecting two more such test flights of the Test Vehicle followed by the unmanned mission of Gaganyaan programme."

Somanath said there will be PSLV, GSLV, as well as its new

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THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WHY THIS HELPS US UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSE

BY BIMAN NATH
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EXPLAINED

SCIENCE WHAT IS XPOSAT MISSION

PAGE 12

MINIMUM SUPPORT
Prices can influence farmers' decision on choice of crops. Higher MSP, for example, for wheat has skewed procurement, and lower returns on seeds for edible oil, have necessitated imports. The Agriculture Ministry has said while it has a separate mission for crop diversification, it also has proposed a higher MSP for lentils.

the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, flagging concerns.

Concern 1: Import dependence

The Department of Food & Public Distribution said the MSP for oils has not delivered the desired result in terms of an increase in domestic production, and India is still dependent on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ministries flagged MSP concerns: Low returns to rising oil imports

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW
AN EXPRESS RTI APPLICATION

E Beyond MSP hikes

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

A HIGH minimum support price (MSP) for some crops and not for others is hindering crop diversification and benefiting a select few states, various Union ministries have said in response to the proposal to fix MSP for rabi crops for marketing season 2024-25, an RTI filed by *The Indian Express* shows.

On October 18, 2023, the Cabinet approved the proposal to increase MSP of rabi crops such as wheat, barley, gram, lentil, rapeseed and mustard, and safflower, for marketing season 2024-25. The maximum increase over the previous year was 7.08% for lentil and 7.06% for wheat.

Documents accessed by *The Indian Express* under the Right to Information Act 2005 show that several departments wrote to

dent were sparse, Chief Minister N Biren Singh, in a video statement, assured that the culprits would be tracked down. "We do not take this incident lightly. Manipur police have been pressed into action to nab the culprits. I appeal to the people, particularly from Lilong, to refrain from resorting to any form of violence. I assure you we will take stringent action against the culprits as per the law. Please cooperate with the government," he said.

"Due to developing law and order condition in the district and to prevent any untoward incidents and loss of life and property, and further as a precautionary measure, the curfew relaxation order dated December 31 stands cancelled and full curfew is imposed in all areas of Imphal West district with immediate effect," said an order issued by the district magistrate.

Similarly, curfew was re-imposed in Thoubal, Imphal East, Kakching and Bishnupur districts.

While details about the inci-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Manipur: 3 killed in valley district, curfew imposed

JIMMY LEIVON
IMPHAL, JANUARY 1

THE MANIPUR government on Monday re-imposed curfew across the state's valley districts after three persons were shot dead by armed men in Thoubal's Lilong area.

"Due to developing law and order condition in the district and to prevent any untoward incidents and loss of life and property, and further as a precautionary measure, the curfew relaxation order dated December 31 stands cancelled and full curfew is imposed in all areas of Imphal West district with immediate effect," he said.

"PTI quoted officials as saying that the gunmen, who are yet to be identified, arrived wearing camouflage clothes and opened fire, targeting locals. Five people were also injured and hospitalised. After the attack, enraged locals set some vehicles on fire.

On Saturday night, three commandos of Manipur Police were injured in a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) attack at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IIT-BHU assault: Cong flags photos posted by accused with BJP leaders

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 1

THE ARREST of three men for the alleged sexual assault of an IIT-BHU student on campus premises was at the centre of a political firestorm on Monday as the Congress shared purported photos of the accused with the Prime Minister and BJP leaders.

The BJP, meanwhile, dis-

tanced itself from the men — whose social media profiles suggest they are part of the party's IT cell in Varanasi — and said the police response to this case is in stark contrast to what would happen under previous governments.

Varanasi police had on Saturday arrested Kunal Pandey (28), Saksham Patel (20) and Abhishek Chauhan (22) for the incident, which took place on the

night of November 1. According to police, Chauhan was booked in 2022 too on charges of physical assault, threatening and rioting in Varanasi.

On their Facebook profiles, Pandey and Patel state that they are associated with the BJP — the former as the party's Varanasi (Mahanagar) IT cell coordinator and the latter as co-coordinator.

The two have posted several

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PRIME MINISTERS' MUSEUM

Modi gallery set to open next week: Ram Temple to Art 370 to Ujjwala

DIVYA A
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

AHEAD OF the inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya later this month, the 'Narendra Modi gallery' at the Prime Ministers' Museum will be opened to visitors in the second week of January, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Located on the ground floor

Modi gallery will showcase his major achievements over the last nine years.

These include the construction of the Ram Temple and rejuvenation of other temples as part of a section called "Sanskriti", his focus on science and technology, foreign policy, digital payment infrastructure, abrogation of Article 370, securing India's borders, defence

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



TMC leaders at party programme in Kolkata, Monday. Express

FUND FLOW DURING AND AFTER PANDEMIC



MODI SARKAR KI GUARANTEE

Ensuring smoke-free kitchens to women through Ujjwala Yojana

More than 10 crore free gas connections nationwide

Scan for more information

HAMARA SANKALP VIKSIT BHARAT

Cops: Man kills wife in Gurgaon, takes Metro, jumps to his death

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, JANUARY 1

HOURS AFTER he allegedly killed his wife, leaving their two-year-old son by the side of the body, a Gurgaon-based man died by suicide on Monday in Ghaziabad, police said. According to police, Gaurav Sharma (35) jumped off the road from a railing on the platform at Kaushambi Metro Station at 10.44 am. His wife was identified as Lakshmi Rawat (24).

As per police, late on Sunday night, Gurgaon police received information that a child's cries could be heard from inside a house in DLF phase 3. The main door of the house, on the first floor of a building, was closed, they added.

"Upon entering the house (around 11pm), we found a woman...bleeding on the bed, and a child crying beside her. Attempts to contact Gaurav were unsuccessful as his phone was switched off. Based on evidence, it seems that Gaurav Sharma, with the assistance of another man, committed

the murder and subsequently fled, turning off his phone," police said, adding that the woman was killed after she was hit with a brick. According to police, Gaurav took a Metro to Ghaziabad Monday morning. He had de-boarded a Metro from Delhi around 11.40 am. "After spending four minutes on the platform, he jumped from the second floor of the building. His uncle told us he has three sisters and his parents died by suicide when he was a child," a police officer at Kaushambi police station said.

Police said they are checking where Gaurav spent the night after killing his wife. "We found an Aadhaar card on his body which showed his address in Agra..." said the official. "Though he was taken to a private hospital, he was declared dead on arrival," Ghaziabad police said.

Police said the child is at Safdarjung Hospital with relatives. The kin of the deceased said the couple used to have frequent fights regarding returning to their village in Agra.

Boy, 11, uncle drown in Agra Canal on New Year's Eve

New Delhi: A 11-year-old boy and his uncle drowned in the Agra Canal in Southeast Delhi's Badarpur area on New Year's Eve, officials said Monday. The Delhi Police said multiple teams of divers and NDRF have been deployed to search for the bodies.

According to the police, the incident took place around 4 pm.

The boy, Yash Kumar (11), was playing alone near the canal

when he slipped and fell into the water. He couldn't swim and allegedly drowned.

He was spotted by his uncle, Sachin, who rushed to help Yash but could not find anyone nearby, police said.

Yash was a student of Class 3 at Nahar Nigam Bal Vidyalaya in Jaitpur. "The man jumped into the canal to rescue his nephew but he also drowned. The family

MORE THAN 10,000 COPS DEPLOYED TO MAINTAIN ORDER

Over 4k challans on NY's eve; cases of drink driving double

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

THE DELHI Police maintained a strict vigil on New Year's Eve to maintain law and order on the roads as well as to ensure smooth traffic in the city.

Officials issued more than 4,200 challans to those involved in drink driving, speeding, jumping red light and other offences.

Police said more than 10,000 personnel including traffic units were deployed to maintain law and order on the roads.

On Monday, heavy traffic congestion was witnessed around Kartavya Path, CP, ITO, Sansad Marg and Red Fort. Extra force was deployed in the areas around Defence Colony, GK, East of Kailash, Munirka and Hauz Khas to control traffic, the police said.

Police said the child is at Safdarjung Hospital with relatives. The kin of the deceased said the couple used to have frequent fights regarding returning to their village in Agra.



People at Lodhi Garden on New Year's day in New Delhi on Monday. Abhinav Saha

31 in 2023. Compared to previous years, the cases of drink driving and general traffic violations have almost doubled. Data shows that between December 16 and December 31 in 2022, more than 1,103 persons were booked for drinking and driving. While, in 2021, the number of offenders was only 274 for the same period.

A senior traffic officer said, "We have had double the number of challans issued this year due to active police presence on the streets. People were booked for improper parking, wrong-side driving and for not wearing seat belts. Traffic police was deployed around all major malls, markets, clubs and arterial roads."

Most offenders were caught in Sangam Vihar, Lajpat Nagar, Hauz Khas, Nafajgarh, Punjabi Bagh etc.

Badarpur, Kalkaji, Parliament and Sarita Vihar areas.

Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic) SS Yadav had said that more than 250 teams were specifically tasked to detect cases of drinking and driving during the festivities.

Over 549 people were booked for drinking and driving between December 30-31, in 2023. Most challans were issued in Kapashera (Southwest Delhi), followed by Nangloi, Sangam Vihar, Tilak Nagar and Nand Nagri.

As per the data, traffic police witnessed an eight-fold increase in the number of traffic challans from previous years. In 2023, a total of 16,173 cases of drinking and driving were lodged in comparison to 2,225 cases in 2022 and 2,831 cases in 2021. Police said it was due to active patrolling and picketing throughout the year.

Most cases were lodged in Southeast Delhi—Badarpur, Sarita Vihar, Lajpat Nagar, Hauz Khas, Nafajgarh, Punjabi Bagh etc.

Officials said that Sharma who was sitting on the back seat, on the left hand side, was hurt along with Ahlawat.

Out on patrol, SI killed as pick-up van rams into his vehicle in Noida

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NOIDA, JANUARY 1

A 54-YEAR-OLD Sub-inspector (SI) was killed on duty and another police personnel was injured after a pick-up van rammed into their vehicle around 2 am on Monday on New Year in Noida.

The police said that they have arrested the driver of the pick-up van, Brijesh.

The SI who died has been identified as sub-inspector Ram Kishore Sharma.



Both of them were taken to Kailash Hospital in Sector-27, where Sharma succumbed to his injuries.

Sharma was a 1991 batch personnel and was posted in Gautam Buddha Nagar around a month back.

He was previously in Saharanpur district.

Police said that a case under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 304 (punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 279 (rash driving) has been registered against the pick up van driver at phase-1 police station.

Officials said that after the post-mortem, the body was sent to his hometown in Meerut district.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Corps of Signals salutes its following Signallers who left us for their heavenly abode during the month of Dec 2023.

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| (a) IC-88573K | Captain | Robin Singh |
| (b) 15718001K | Lance Havildar | Sundar Giri |
| (c) 15715021M | Naik | Pilla Ravi Kumar |
| (d) 15711744K | Signalman | Ajit Singh |

On behalf of the Corps, we sincerely pray to Almighty for peace to the departed souls & strength to the bereaved families to bear this irreparable loss.

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Advt.No. IIITDM/Adm/C-6-2023

IIITDM Kancheepuram, located at Chennai (25km from airport) invites applications for the Ad-Hoc/Temporary Faculty on Contract in Department of Computer Science and Engineering.

Application form and detailed Advertisement is available at www.iiitdm.ac.in.

The last date for submitting online application is 10 January 2024.

Registrar

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Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, an autonomous body under Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India invites applications for appointment on regular basis to the following posts:

S.No.	Name of the Posts	Number and category of Posts	Pay Level of Pay Matrix
1.	Administrative Officer	1-UR	Group A, L-11, Rs.67700-208700
2.	Librarian	1-UR	Group C, L-6, Rs.35400-112400
3.	Guide	2 (1 OBC, 1 SC)	Group C, L-4, Rs.25500-81100
4.	Driver	2 (1 UR, 1 OBC)	Group C, L-2, Rs.19900-63200
5.	Safai Sevak	3 (1 UR, 1 SC, 1 OBC)	Group C, L-1, Rs.18000-56900
6.	Carpenter	1 UR	Group C, L-2, Rs.19900-63200
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Interested and eligible candidates are required to apply through online mode only by using the link <https://gandhismriti.gov.in/> or <https://gsdsrecruitment.in/>. Please visit GSDS website www.gandhismriti.gov.in/ for other details such as qualification, experience, terms & conditions, and Selection Procedure, etc. Any corrigendum/addendum/amendment will be displayed in GSDS website only i.e. www.gandhismriti.gov.in/. The last date of receipt of applications is 20.01.2024.

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Application Deadline:

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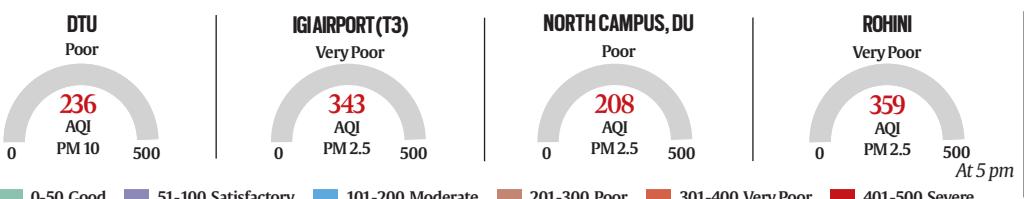
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VACANCY NOTICE

Advt. No. 29/2023/Estt.

S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Mode of Selection
1.	Consultant (Corporate Communication & Financial Strategy)	01	For the posts mentioned at S. No. 1 to 8, Walk-in-interview will be held at NBT, India from 02/01/2024 to 05/01/2024 between 02:00 p.m. and 05:00 p.m.
2.	Consultant (Media and Brand Communication)	01	Interested candidates may appear for the Walk-in-interview with a prescribed application available on the website i.e. www.nbtindia.gov.in .
3.	Consultant (Technology & Digital Content Strategy)	01	For the post mentioned at S. No. 9 NBT, India invites applications and Last date of receipt of applications is 12/01/2024
4.	Young Professional (Corporate Communication)	01	For the posts mentioned at S. No. 1 to 8, Walk-in-interview will be held at NBT, India from 02/01/2024 to 05/01/2024 between 02:00 p.m. and 05:00 p.m.
5.	Young Professional (Media & Brand Communication)	01	Interested candidates may appear for the Walk-in-interview with a prescribed application available on the website i.e. www.nbtindia.gov.in .
6.	Young Professional (Technology & Digital Content Strategy)	01	For the



BRIEFLY

Death at Metro station: Delhi Police registers FIR

New Delhi: Police has filed an FIR in connection with the death of a 35-year-old woman after being dragged by a train at the Inderlok Metro station last month, police said on Monday. The case under sections 279 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and 304 A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered at Netaji Subhash Place Metro Police station on December 20. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Metro) Ram Naik has confirmed the development and said the case was registered against unidentified person and investigation is already going on. Sources said police have collected the CCTV footage and are trying to ascertain under what circumstances the incident took place on December 14. PTI

Water supply to be hit in parts of Delhi

New Delhi: Water supply in several parts of the city will be affected on Wednesday and Thursday due to an interconnection work by the DMRC, Delhi Jal Board (DJB) said on Monday. Due to the interconnection work of 1,500 mm diameter South Delhi main line opposite to IGL gas station near Twin OHT, Paschim Vihar, Outer Ring Road and Peeragarhi near U-turn by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), the water supply will not be available or available at low pressure on Wednesday evening and Thursday morning, the DJB said. Residents are advised to store sufficient quantity of water in advance. PTI

Gurgaon: MCG commissioner replaced

Gurgaon: A little over a week after Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar fined MCG Commissioner P C Meena over the cleanliness in the city, the official was transferred out of the post. Meena was replaced by A Sreenivas from IAS 2004 batch who currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer, Faridabad Metropolitan Development Authority and the Managing Director of HARCO Bank. Sreenivas will take over as the Chief Executive Officer, Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority, Gurugram, in addition to his present duties. ENS

CONGESTED LANES, DANGLING WIRES, WATER SHORTAGE MAKE THE ELECTRONICS MARKET PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE

Over a year since fire gutted 200 shops, little has changed at Bhagirath Palace

SAMAN HUSAIN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

ON NOVEMBER 24, 2023, a massive fire gutted over 200 shops in Bhagirath Palace in Chandni Chowk, the heart of Old Delhi.

The intensity of the fire was such that it took firefighters five days to bring the condition under control. What made their job tougher was debris from multi-story buildings blocking the narrow streets and lack of space between two buildings in the area.

More than a year later, life is back to normal in what is considered one of Asia's biggest markets, and shops are decked up with lighting equipment of

various kinds — chandeliers, decorative tubes, bulbs, electric heaters, switchboards and selfie sticks. However, apart from a few additions, little seems to have changed in the area in terms of fire-preparedness.

At the time of the fire, an inquiry committee was constituted under the chairmanship of the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRDC) to look into the reasons that led to a delay in dousing the fire — shortage of water, structurally weak buildings situated in narrow lanes, and shops jam packed with electrical goods.

When *The Indian Express* visited the fire-affected area, shops were still covered with metal tins, encroachments were still visible in the narrow alleys, and structurally weak buildings



Shops are still covered with metal tins while encroachments can be seen in the narrow alleys. Amit Mehra

were still in use. The issue of dangling wires had also not been addressed.

To avoid future disasters, the

committee had also directed the MCD to operate as a nodal agency in creating 'Special Area Redevelopment Schemes' for all

traditional and clustered areas. "A redevelopment plan for the special area had been prepared by MCD and sent to Delhi government but not much has moved forward on that front," the MCD said. The civic body officials further said,

"Unauthorised construction needs constant enforcement. MCD keeps taking regular action as per DMC Act."

Meanwhile, officials of the SRDC, the body under whose chairmanship the inquiry report was developed, said that they are not updated on any further development in the matter.

The high-level report which was also submitted to L-G VK Saxena should be implemented to avoid similar disasters in future, the roads are full

of encroachments leaving little space on the already narrow pathways," said Sanjay Bhargava, President of the Chandni Chowk Sarv Vyapar Mandal.

Meanwhile, additional unauthorised structures have been springing up in the market. "Some 120 buildings needed to be rebuilt as they were completely destroyed after the fire, the MCD has refused to approve any new building plans...since then, many of us have been setting up stalls on the roads while some others are rebuilding their shops without permissions due to the lack of any other resort," traders in the area said on the condition of anonymity.

In March, Delhi BJP had written to the L-G asking to let

traders rebuild the shops destroyed in Bhagirath Palace. "The MCD should give permissions to rebuild buildings upto ground plus third floor that have been affected due to a natural calamity...the traders whose shops were destroyed are badly affected as the MCD has refused to authorise their building plans," Delhi BJP Spokesperson, Praveen Shankar Kapoor said.

Apart from the L-G Secretariat consistently monitoring various aspects, the L-G himself has visited the area on different occasions. The provisions of fire tender etc are in place. A long-term plan with the local shop owners is being put into place," L-G House sources said.

PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT IN AQI: AUTHORITIES

Construction can restart, BS III/IV cars can ply again

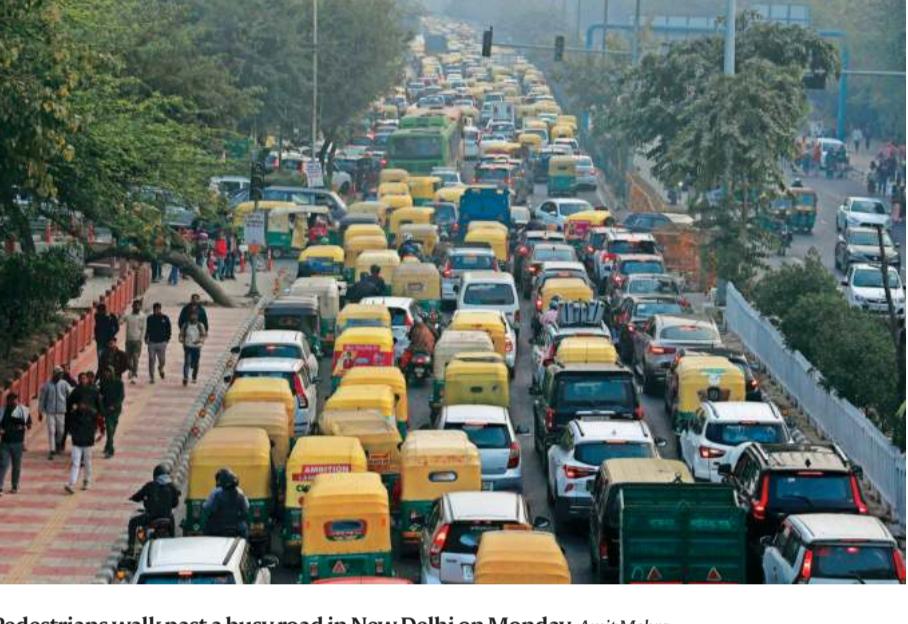
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

BAN ON construction, and driving BS III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars has been lifted on Delhi-NCR with slight improvement in air quality.

The Commission for Air Quality Management said Monday that the actions, which were invoked on December 22 under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), will be revoked after reviewing the weather and pollution forecasts for the city.

According to traffic police officials, between December 22 and January 1, challans and notices were issued to 330 vehicles. The challan for running a BS III petrol or BS IV diesel vehicle when GRAP Stage III is in force is Rs 20,000.

"AQI of Delhi has been progressively improving and has been recorded as 346 at 4 pm, which is about 55 AQI points below the threshold for invoking the GRAP Stage-III actions (Delhi AQI 401-450) and there is a likelihood of sustaining the improvement in AQI. The forecast by IMD/ IITM also does not indicate any deterioration further and there is a likelihood of the AQI improving while remaining in the Very Poor/Poor category in next few days," the



Pedestrians walk past a busy road in New Delhi on Monday. Amit Mehra

order issued by the commission said.

The order added that the construction and demolition project sites and industrial units, which were issued closure orders for violations or non-compliances of directions, or rules will not be allowed to resume operations without specific orders.

Actions under Stage I and Stage II of GRAP, however, will

remain in force.

Under stage I of the plan, when AQI is poor (201 to 300), all construction and demolition activities with plot size of 500 square metres or more which have not been registered on dust mitigation monitoring portals has to stop, mechanized sweeping has to start and offices have to encourage employees to start the unified commute.

In Stage II, when AQI is very poor (301 to 400), the use of coal/firewood in tandoors at hotels has to be stopped, use of diesel generator sets, except for essential and emergency services, has to stop, and parking fees has to be increased to discourage private transport. Despite the second stage of GRAP being in force for several weeks now, parking fees in the city have not been increased.

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) and BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) have met the peak power demand, providing 2,186 MW and 1024 MW, respectively, according to a press release by BSES. BSES discoms emphasised the importance of robust power arrangements, accurate demand forecasting, and a strong distribution network in ensuring a reliable power supply for nearly 50 lakh consumers and around 2 crore residents during winter.

To meet the surplus demand, BSES discoms plan to bank surplus power with other states, according to the release.

The ED has summoned Kejriwal for the third time for questioning in the case related to the now-scraped Delhi excise policy.

AP leaders said that the party reached out to 23.82 lakh houses under its 'Main bhi Kejriwal' door-to-door campaign from December 1 to 30.

AP Delhi Vice-President Kuldeep Kumar said the party will now launch a public dialogue campaign in every ward of Delhi on January 4.

WEATHER REPORT

TEMPERATURES ON JANUARY 1

Year	Min	Max
2024	10.1	17.0
2023	5.5	19.7
2022	4.2	19.4
2021	1.1	17.4
2020	2.4	14.7
2019	4.0	22.0
2018	6.0	24.0
2017	9.0	20.0
2016	7.0	25.0
2015	9.0	19.0
2014	2.0	17.0
2013	4.0	13.0
2012	11.0	23.0

FORECAST FOR COMING WEEK

Day	Min	Max
Tuesday	9	17
Wednesday	11	17
Thursday	11	17
Friday	10	18
Saturday	9	18



Arvind Kejriwal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

WITH THE Enforcement Directorate (ED) summoning him for questioning on Wednesday, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said Monday that its survey had shown overwhelming support for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. It said that nearly 90 lakh people were of the opinion that Kejriwal should not resign and if he is falsely implicated, he should run the government from jail".

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HC: Not mere printed papers, FIRs in cases of minors' sexual assault are trauma writ large

Express News Service
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

A victim should not be dealt with in mechanical manner by the courts, HC said

Justice Sharma further said that dismissing the girl's plea

solely on the basis that a different date had been earlier mentioned as date of the alleged incident by her, which was "prima facie due

to her adversely affected mental health as an outcome of the sexual assault, is undoubtedly unjust".

The HC was hearing the plea of a 16-year-old girl who was allegedly gangraped by her brother-in-law and his two friends. She had moved the HC against a trial court order which had dismissed her plea for preservation of CCTV footage and call data record (CDR) of the accused on the ground of discrepancy in her statements with respect to the date of the alleged incident.

A single-judge bench of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, in its December 12 order, observed, "...it is crucial to understand that the victim, who was experiencing mental trauma...may not have been in an optimal state of mind when providing the information and details of the incident in question. In such circumstances, where the victim herself places before the Court of law the proof of her being in mental trauma driven by the sexual assault, and that being a reason of her being unable to inform the correct date of incident to the police, the Court was duty bound to have exercised sensitivity and empathy."

"The FIR under IPC sections 354 (Assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 504 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), and 307 (Attempt to murder) and section 3(2)(V) of SC/ST Act has been registered in Binauli police station.

Baghpat Deputy SP Vijay Chaudhary said, "We have been told that the condition of the victim is stable and we will make sure the culprits get strict punishment for their despicable act."

"The FIRs in cases involving sexual assault and rape, committed upon minors, are not mere printed papers, but a trauma writ large (clear and obvious), experienced by a living human being, which is difficult to be portrayed on a piece of paper... In cases of sexual assault of minor victims... the extreme stressful situation and lifeturning experience faced by a victim should not be dealt with in mechanical manner by the courts," Justice Sharma said.

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GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



LONG WAIT

MAHANT BALAKNATH, who resigned as Lok Sabha member after winning the Tijara Assembly seat in Rajasthan, was in the race for chief minister's post. However, he has yet not found a place in the Bhajan Lal Sharma Cabinet. This seems to have upset Balaknath's followers who draw his parallels with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. They say the party did not do justice to Balaknath, who according to them, had set the tone for the Hindutva plank that helped the BJP win the state elections amid a stiff challenge from the Congress party.

BERTH PANGS

SIX MONTHS have passed since Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) president Om Prakash Rajbhar joined the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) but there is not a word on berth for him in the Yogi Adityanath Cabinet. On Friday last week, Rajbhar met BJP president J P Nadda in Delhi and Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow on December 22. Sources said Rajbhar flagged with Nadda the delay in his Cabinet induction. Sources also said Rajbhar has also sought time from Amit Shah for a meeting. The BJP decided to join hands with Rajbhar after a survey report indicated that SBSP can give the party an edge in at least 12 Lok Sabha seats in eastern UP.

Pinarayi targets BJP on Manipur, days after its Christian outreach

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JANUARY 1

DAY AFTER Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with Christian leaders on Christmas and BJP workers in Kerala delivered his seasonal message to Christian homes, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday raked up Manipur violence where, he said, 'minority community was targeted'.

Addressing Nava Kerala Sadas at Piravam in Ernakulam, which has a sizable chunk of Christians, Vijayan said, "Things have reached such a pass in Manipur that a segment of people... Christian community cannot live. There was no government intervention. We have seen the governments at the Centre and the state maintaining silence. That those holding responsible posts had not even uttered a word on the violence. Now, we have noticed intervention of certain persons who were not willing to stop the genocide. For votes, certain people are ready to wear disguises. Everyone can understand the motive behind this attempt to pretend friendship," he said.

Vijayan's attack on BJP Christian outreach programmes came a day after his cabinet colleague and a Christian face in the ministry, Saji Cherian, criticised bishops who met the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Christmas day.

JMM MLA quits, BJP says part of plan to make Soren's wife CM

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, JANUARY 1

IN A SURPRISE move, the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)'s MLA Sarfaraz Ahmad has resigned from his membership of the Assembly.

A notification issued by the Jharkhand Assembly secretariat Monday stated that the JMM legislator from the Ganey seat has tendered his resignation. However, neither Ahmad nor the JMM camp has cited any reason for Ahmad's move.

Ahmad was not available for his comment despite repeated attempts. Ahmad, however, told PTI, "I have tendered my resignation due to personal reasons." Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahato told *The Indian Express*: "I did not ask (Ahmad) for any reason as he is

NREGS PAYMENTS

Aadhaar-based system must now, Govt says may give exemptions on case basis

Cong accuses government of 'weaponising technology, especially Aadhaar'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

WITH THE Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) now mandatory for payment of wages to NREGS workers, the Government on Monday said it may consider exemptions on a "case-by-case basis" should any gram panchayat face "technical issues".

The announcement by the Rural Development Ministry came hours after the Congress attacked the Government, calling the ABPS Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "cruel New Year gift to exclude crores of the poorest and marginalised

Indians from earning a basic income".

Under APBS, workers' 12-digit Aadhaar numbers are linked with their job cards as well as their bank accounts.

The system was first made mandatory with effect from February 1, 2023 but, through several extensions, the Centre allowed until December 31, 2023 the mixed route — of ABPS and NACH, an interbank system used for bulk payments such as subsidies and salaries.

With no extension granted to states beyond December 31, the ABPS became mandatory from January 1, 2024.

"The Government of India has decided to make the wage

payment of unskilled workers through APBS to ensure the payment of beneficiaries into their bank accounts, even in case of frequent change of bank account by the beneficiary," the Ministry said in a statement.

"In case, if any gram panchayat of a district in the state is having either technical problem or Aadhaar-related problem, the Government of India may consider exemption from APBS on case-by-case basis till the resolution of the issue," it added.

Earlier in the day, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh accused the government of "weaponising technology, especially Aadhaar".

"Indian National Congress condemns the Prime Minister's cruel New Year gift to exclude crores of the poorest and marginalised Indians from earning a basic income through public works under MGNREGA," Ramesh said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

"Congress also reiterates its demands from 30th August, 2023 that the Modi government should stop weaponizing technology, especially Aadhaar, to deny the most vulnerable Indians their social welfare benefits, release delayed wage payments and implement open muster rolls and social audits to improve transparency," he wrote.



BOOK LAUNCH

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin with Congress leader P Chidambaram and actor Kamal Haasan releases poet Vairamuthu's book in Chennai on Monday. PTI

India, Pakistan exchange list of nuke installations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

INDIA AND PAKISTAN on Monday exchanged a list of their nuclear installations under a bilateral pact that prohibits the two sides from attacking each other's atomic facilities, continuing an annual practice that began in 1992.

"India and Pakistan today exchanged, through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, the list of nuclear installations and facilities, covered under the agreement on the prohibition of attack against nuclear installations and facilities between India and Pakistan," the MEA said in a statement Monday.

On Monday, the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council, a body of bishops in the state, came out against the statement of Cherian, who holds Fisheries and Cultural Affairs ministries in the Cabinet.

Council secretary Fr Jacob Palackappally said the statement was unbecoming of the position of a minister. "He has every right to criticise. But the minister should have used more decent words and language," he said.

Last week, CPI(M)-backed legislator KT Jaleel had also attacked the Catholic Church over inviting leaders of BJP and IUML for a Christmas celebration held by KCBC at its headquarters in Kochi.

last week, saying they enjoyed the wine and cake during the meeting, but failed to speak about the Manipur violence.

Addressing a CPI(M) function in Alappuzha on Sunday, Cherian said, "Certain Bishops have special excitement when they get an invitation from the BJP. Those who went to meet the Prime Minister did not have the uprightness to speak about Manipur. When they took the grapes' spirit and cake served by the BJP, the bishops forgot Manipur (violence). Manipur was not at all the subject of discussion for them (bishops)".

On Monday, the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council, a body of bishops in the state, came out against the statement of Cherian, who holds Fisheries and Cultural Affairs ministries in the Cabinet.

Council secretary Fr Jacob Palackappally said the statement was unbecoming of the position of a minister. "He has every right to criticise. But the minister should have used more decent words and language," he said.

... Cherian said on December 31, 1988, and came into force on January 27, 1991. The pact mandates the two countries to inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the agreement on January 1 of every calendar year. "This is the 33rd consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries," the MEA statement said.

It was done simultaneously through diplomatic channels in New Delhi and Islamabad.

The agreement was signed on

December 31, 1988, and came into force on January 27, 1991.

The pact mandates the two

countries to inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the agreement on January 1 of every calendar year. "This is the 33rd consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries," the MEA statement said.

India asks Pakistan to expedite release of 184 fishermen

DIVYAA A
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1

THE GOVERNMENT Monday called for an early release of civilian Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails, while also seeking the release and repatriation of missing Indian defence personnel and fishermen along with their boats from Pakistan's custody.

Pakistan was asked to expedite the release of 184 Indian fishermen who have completed their sentence. In addition, it has also been asked to provide immediate consular access to the remaining 12 civilian prisoners in Pakistan's custody, who are believed to be Indian, said a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Monday.

India and Pakistan Monday exchanged, through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, the lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen in their custody, the statement added.

Under the provisions of the

2008 Agreement on Consular

Access, such lists are exchanged twice every year — on January 1 and July 1.

Pakistan has shared lists of 47 civilian prisoners and 184 fishermen in its custody, who are Indian or are believed to be Indian, the MEA said. On its part, India has shared lists of 337 civilian prisoners and 81 fishermen in its custody, who are Pakistani or are believed to be Pakistani.

... Pakistan was asked to expedite the release and repatriation of 184 Indian fishermen, who have completed their sentence," the statement on Monday said.

Meanwhile, India has urged Pakistan to confirm the nationality of 65 prisoners, including fishermen, believed to be Pakistani, but whose repatriation is pending for want of nationality confirmation from Pakistan.

India shared the list of Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails with an officer of Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi, said the Pakistani statement. According to the list, there are 418 Pakistanis in Indian jails (337 civilian prisoners and 81 fishermen).

Rout served as a minister in

each of Navneet's first four terms.

He also courted controversies for

which he faced disciplinary action. Before his expulsion, Rout had made allegations of financial irregularities in the implementation of government schemes.

Sule says MVA seat shares final; Sena (UBT), Cong not on same page

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 1

EVEN AS opposition NCP leader and Barati Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule Monday said that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has finalised the seat-sharing formula for Maharashtra for 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the official announcement will be made in the next eight to 10 days, its MVA partners Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) spoke in differing tones with Sena stating that the seat-sharing has only been finalised with NCP and not with Congress.

"Congress also reiterates its demands from 30th August, 2023 that the Modi government should stop weaponizing technology, especially Aadhaar, to deny the most vulnerable Indians their social welfare benefits, release delayed wage payments and implement open muster rolls and social audits to improve transparency," he wrote.

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"Uddhav Thackeray (of Shiv Sena UBT), Sharad Pawar (of NCP) and Mallikarjun Kharge and Sonia Gandhi (of Congress) held a meeting in New Delhi a few days ago. The seat-sharing formula has been finalised and it has been informally accepted by all. The official announcement will be made in the next eight to 10 days," said Sule.

When asked about Sule's statement on seat-sharing, state Congress president Nana Patole told *The Indian Express* that the criteria for seat-sharing is electoral merit and winnability. "What is wrong in what she has said? She is telling the truth. The criteria for seat-sharing arrangements is electoral merit and ability to win elections. Congress party is ready with it. The announcement will be made at the



Barati Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule. File

right time," said Patole.

He said there is no fight within opposition over the number of seats to be contested. "It was Ajit Pawar who used to make seat-sharing a prestige issue. He is no longer in the alliance. It is a smooth process and we will share seats based on merit only," he said.

Meanwhile, a senior Shiv Sena (UBT) leader, closely associated in the seat-sharing talks, said the seat-sharing has been finalised only between his party and Sharad Pawar-led NCP and not with Congress. "The work is in progress. We will make the announcement at the right time. But I can tell you that Sena and NCP have finalised the seat-sharing arrangements," the Sena (UBT) leader said, requesting anonymity.

Last week, a major war of words had erupted between Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress over the seat-sharing in Maharashtra after Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said his party would contest on 23 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats and there was no question of compromising on the seat share. He said the talks with Congress would start from zero as Congress has not won any seat in the state in the last general elections.

Punjab buys thermal plant for Rs 1,080 cr in 'cheapest deal in India'

RAAKHI JAGGA & KANCHAN VASDEV
LUDHIANA, CHANDIGARH, JAN 1

PUNJAB CM Bhagwant Mann Monday said that his government had created history by buying a private thermal plant — Goindwal Sahib Thermal Power Plant — for Rs 1,080 crore, at the cheapest price in the country.

"We have created history. On January 1, 2018, the former Congress government and its finance minister Manpreet Badal had shut down the Bathinda thermal plant and two units of the Roopar thermal plant. Today, we have purchased a private thermal plant. This is the first time that a state has purchased a thermal plant. It is all about the intent," Mann said.

GVK power (Goindwal Sahib) was admitted for corporate resolution or insolvency last October; there were 12 companies, including PSPCL that had evinced interest in taking over GVK power — most backed out of litigation that the company had with PSPCL.

"We take care of people's money. From 2016 to November 2023, the government paid Rs 7,908 crore for 11,165 million units. Of this, Rs 1,718 crore was sustainability allowance. We had been buying power from GVK for Rs 708 per unit. Now, after purchasing the plant, it will cost us Rs 4,500 per unit. It will save us Rs 300-500 crore annually," he said.



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann. File

due to Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL), despite the government paying a huge subsidy of Rs 18,000 crore per year. Mann said, "This is the cheapest deal in the country. We have paid Rs 1,080 crore for a thermal plant of 540 MW. This means for each megawatt capacity, we have paid Rs 2 crore."

Giving examples of other such purchases, Mann said other power plants such as Korba West in Chhattisgarh, Jhabua in MP and Power and Lanco Amarkantak in Chhattisgarh of capacity 600 MW have been purchased at Rs 1804 crore, Rs 1910 crore and Rs 1818 crore, respectively.

"We take care of people's money. From 2016 to November 2023, the government paid Rs 7,908 crore for 11,165 million units. Of this, Rs 1,718 crore was sustainability allowance. We had been buying power from GVK for Rs 708 per unit. Now, after purchasing the plant, it will cost us Rs 4,500 per unit. It will save us Rs 300-500 crore annually," he said.

London's Madame Tussauds, these wax statues have earned frequent appreciation for their life-like appearance.

While Sunil is the artist and the creative brain, his siblings Subhash and Sujit manage the administrative and logistic aspects of the museums. The Kandalloor siblings hail from Kerala but live in Lonavala. Since the past four months, Subhash and Sunil have shifted base to Ayodhya.

Sunil said, "For Ayodhya, we have started making moulds for the first 80 statues. Five of my workers are making moulds based on my models, drawings and instructions. I will do the final shaping and painting on each of them." While the first phase, spread across 10,000 square feet, is devoted to Ram Katha, the second will be based on Krishna Katha. Later, he said, statues of

celebrities may also be added, besides parks, restaurants, etc. Of the Rs 7 crore, said Subhash, the first phase will cost Rs 5 crore.

Besides the five artists working on statue moulds, 20-25 people are getting the rest of the museum features together.

As far as references for the statues are concerned, Sunil said he spent a long time studying different books and scriptures to understand the descriptions, especially for Rama.

"Also, I have been in Ayodhya for the last few months. Everywhere I went, I saw pictures of Lord Rama, Laxman, Sita and Hanuman. These were also a part of my research and study," said Sunil, adding that the availability of a very advanced type of silicon that resembles the human skin helps him create life-like sculptures.



Artist's impression of the upcoming Ramayan Wax Museum in Ayodhya. Courtesy: Sunil Kandalloor

EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

JAMMU & KASHMIR

72 terrorists killed in J&K in 2023: Officials

New Delhi: A total of 72 terrorists, 50 of them of foreign origin, were killed by the security forces in J&K in 2023, officials said. As many as 91 terrorists are still active in the Valley, according to figures compiled by the CRPF. An official said out of these 91, 66 are foreign terrorists and 25 locals. "The data shows there has been 32 per cent decline in the number of active terrorists in J&K in 2023, while 91 terrorists are still active," the official said.

ENS

KARNATAKA

Not allowed to do photoshoot, student ends life

Bengaluru: Dejected for not being allowed to do a photoshoot at a mall on the New Year's eve, a 21-year-old student in Bengaluru allegedly died by suicide on Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Varshini, a BBA student and a resident of Sudhamanagar. According to a police officer, the incident came to light on Sunday morning when parents saw Varshini hanging from the ceiling fan. Varshini had completed a photography course.

ENS

UTTAR PRADESH

Row over 'caste slur', UP lawyer shot dead

Lucknow: A 36-year-old lawyer was shot dead allegedly by a security manager in Varanasi following a heated argument over a purported "casteist remark" during a New Year's Eve party he organised on Sunday. According to the police, Raghvendra Singh was shot dead by Hadenu Shekhar Tripathi, 48, who was offended by Singh's remarks. "We have arrested Tripathi, who claims he was intoxicated. He has been remanded in judicial custody," said Vidush Saxena, ACP, Varanasi. ENS

NEW DELHI
Plea in SC seeks review of new criminal laws

New Delhi: A petition challenging the enactment of three laws that seek to overhaul India's penal codes has been filed in the Supreme Court, claiming they suffered from many "defects and discrepancies". The Lok Sabha had on December 21 passed the three key pieces of legislations, which replace the IPC, CrPC and the Indian Evidence Act. The PIL filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari said they were enacted without any parliamentary debate as most of the Opposition members were under suspension.

PTI

GUJARAT
Four arrested for stealing vintage gold coins

Navsari: Four people, including the contractor behind the alleged theft of 240 gold coins dating back to the colonial era from an ancestral house demolished in Bilmora of Navsari district, have been arrested, a police officer said on Monday. A juvenile has also been detained. The police also recovered 199 of the missing sovereigns estimated to be worth Rs 92.25 lakh, which were reported missing five months ago after the accused allegedly found those hidden in a wall.

ENS

Vrindavan gets India's first all-girl Sainik School

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 1



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Mathura on Monday.

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Monday inaugurated the country's first all-girl Sainik School at Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district and termed it as a "golden moment in the history of women empowerment" since the institution would become a beacon of light for female students who aspired to join the armed forces to serve the motherland.

With a strength of nearly 870 students, Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School has been established under the initiative of opening 100 new Sainik Schools in partnership mode with NGOs/private/state government schools in all states/union territories, of which 42 have already come up, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Training at the CBSE-affiliated school will be given by ex-service men, officials said, adding that the institution will have 120 seats.

Speaking on the occasion, the Defence Minister said, "Under

the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government has given women their rightful place in the armed forces, which was neglected for years. They have the right to protect the nation just like their male counterparts. It was a golden moment in the history of women's empowerment when we approved the admission of girls to Sainik Schools.

Today, our women are not only flying fighter jets, they are also securing the borders."

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who also attended the inauguration ceremony, spoke at length about the "importance of empowering women, their dignity and self-reliance." A strong society is not possible without women's empowerment. For this, we all will have to

work together. The society will have to be brought out of its conservative mindset," he said.

The CM talked about his initiative to start enrolling girl students at Sainik School, Lucknow, in 2018. The Defence Minister in 2019 approved the admission of girl children to Sainik Schools from the 2021-22 academic session in a phased manner. The decision was taken following the success of the pilot project started by the Defence Ministry in Sainik School, Chhingchhip, in Mizoram.

The objective behind setting

up 100 new Sainik Schools is to provide quality education to the students in tune with the National Education Policy (NEP) and give them better career opportunities.

Meanwhile, Rajnath highlighted what he termed as a "significant contribution" of Hindu nationalist ideologue Sadhvi Ritambhara to the Ram Temple movement. Adityanath said "those hesitant in going to Ayodhya are now complaining about not receiving an invitation to attend the pran pratishtha (consecration ceremony) at the

Ram Temple."

"We have always known that the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple movement was going on in Ayodhya and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) provided it with the leadership under the RSS's guidance. At that time we all used to say that the people of India themselves would resolve the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi issue. The day every follower of Sanatan Dharma will shout Jai Shri Ram in unison, the path to Shri Ram's birthplace will automatically be paved," he said.

Citing the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Ayodhya, the CM said, "Earlier, the roads were in a poor condition and there was a single rail line. Today, we have provided four-lane connectivity from all sides. Four-lane and six-lane roads will be available not only outside Ayodhya but also in the city city."

A visit to Ayodhya after January 22 will remind one of the Treta Yug, he claimed. The government, he added, has initiated efforts to connect Ayodhya through waterways after having connected it through road, rail and air.

In J&K, reward up to ₹12.5 lakh for info on drug trade, militants

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1

for information about people who "incite" people to join militant ranks.

The police, in past, have announced cash rewards up to Rs 10 lakh for information about wanted militants. In the past, the police also used to give cash rewards to informants as they received a "source fund" according to their designation to manage relations with their sources. The money was unaccounted for.

The police on Sunday said they would give away rewards between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 12.5 lakh to anyone providing "actionable" information that leads to arrest or killing of militants, exposes people talking to militant handlers, helps bust narcotics smuggling modules, cross-border tunnels and provides information about the cross-border drone movement.

"Jammu and Kashmir Police has announced cash reward for the people who will provide information and intelligence on trans-border tunnels, drones, narcotics, terror activities and terrorists," J&K Police said in a post on X, while posting different cash rewards for different informants. "General public can share such information with district SSPs. The identity of the person will be kept secret," the police said.

The highest cash reward has been announced for the "specific information" that leads to the killing or arrest of a militant. While the information leading to "arrest or combat" of a category 'A' militant would be rewarded with Rs 12.5 lakh, the cash reward for a category 'C' militant has been set at Rs 2 lakh.

While this is not for the first time that the police have announced rewards for information leading to arrest or killing of a militant, they have for the first time announced cash rewards

In the past, while the government has rewarded officers in security forces with cash awards and promotions for killing militants, the move had come under severe criticism since there have been instances of staged encounters with civilians having been killed and branded as "foreign" militants.

Morbi illegal toll booths: 2 held after month-long hunt

GOPAL KATESHIYA
RAJKOT, JANUARY 1

AROUND A month after booking five men, including a local BJP worker, for allegedly setting up illegal toll booths on National Highway 8A and extorting money from motorists, the Morbi district police arrested two accused who had been allegedly hiding in the Bhavnagar district.

The duo were produced in a local Wankar court on Sunday. The court has sent them in police custody till January 3.

Ravirajsinh Zala and Harvirsinh Zala were nabbed by a team of the Local Crime Branch (LCB) of the Morbi district police from the Jesor taluka on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday. "Our crime branch nabbed the two men from Bhavnagar and brought them here," Superintendent of Police (Morbi) Rahul Tripathi told The Indian Express.

LCB Police Inspector Dipak Dhol said they detained Ravirajsinh and Harvirsinh as soon as they reached the place of one of their relatives in Jesor. "We had got some leads about them hiding in Bhavnagar. Our team tracked them down as soon as they reached the place of one of their relatives in the dead of night," Dhol said, adding the LCB later on handed over the duo to Wankar town police station where an offence had been registered against them. The Wankar town police formally arrested them late on Saturday.

These are the first arrests in the case registered against five

men on December 4 for allegedly setting up illegal toll booths on either side of the authorised toll plaza of the NHAI at the Vaghasia village in Wankar.

Besides Ravirajsinh and Harvirsinh, the three other men booked are Amarshi Patel alias Amarshi Vansjaliya, Dharmendrasinh Zala and Dharmendrasinh's elder brother Yuvarajsinh. Dharmendrasinh is a local BJP worker and is the husband of Varshabi Zala, a BJP member in the Wankar taluka panchayat. He is also the Sarpanch of the Vaghasia village. Amarshi is the son of prominent Paditar leader Jeram Vansjaliya, whose family owns White House Tiles Pvt Ltd, a ceramic factory adjoining the NHAI's toll plaza.

The police said the accused used the premises of the factory, located east of the NHAI's toll plaza, to create a passage around the toll plaza, diverted motorists on that passage and then extorted money from them. The accused also used to extort money by diverting motorists on another mud track passing through the Nava Vaghasia area of Vaghasia village west of the NHAI toll plaza.

At the unauthorised toll booths on either side of the NHAI toll plaza, the accused used to collect relatively lower "toll" than what a motorist would have to pay at the authorised toll plaza on the busy national highway, the police said. "Ravirajsinh and Harvirsinh were extorting money from motorists after diverting them towards the White House tiles factory," said Police Inspector N D Solanki.

'ACTIONABLE' INFORMATION, INTELLIGENCE

REWARD	INFORMATION
Rs 12.5 lakh	That leads to 'arrest or combat' of a category 'A' militant (Rs 2 lakh for category 'C' militant)
Rs 5 lakh	That leads to busting of cross-border tunnel used to 'transship terrorists, explosives and contraband consignments'
Rs 3 lakh	About sighting of a cross-border drone 'to drop narcotics or explosive materials and which leads to recovery of said dropped material'
Rs 2 lakh	That leads to busting of 'inter-state narcotics module'; About people who communicate with militant handlers across border 'or their agents' in J&K
Rs 1 lakh	About persons in masjids/madrassas/schools/colleges encouraging, inducing and inciting people to join terrorist ranks

Source: J&K Police

Six-month-old killed in crossfire between Maoists, security forces

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, JANUARY 1

A SIX-MONTH-OLD girl was killed while her mother suffered a bullet injury after they got caught in the cross-firing between Maoists and security forces in the forests of Bijapur district in Bastar region of south Chhattisgarh on Monday.

Two District Reserve Guards (DRG) constables — Niles Turkey and Umesh Patel — have also suffered injuries. A joint operation of area domination exercise was undertaken by DRG and CRPF. The team left from Kavagdaon police camp and the encounter took place when they had covered an area of four kilometre. The CRPF personnel were at some distance from DRG, who were solely involved in the encounter.

As per a police officer, the firing began suddenly and the woman, Masse Vadde (30) who was carrying her daughter, got scared and started running to take cover. "At this point the duo was hit by a bullet fired by Maoists. The girl died but the woman rushed back to the village. She is out of danger now," the officer said.

Toddler pulled out 8 hours after falling into 130-ft borewell, dies

GOPAL KATESHIYA & ADITI RAJAA
RAJKOT/VAJDODARA, JAN 1

SOON AFTER a toddler was pulled out in "an unconscious state" from a 130-feet-deep borewell at her home following an eight-hour massive rescue effort, she was declared dead at a hospital in Khamblalia. "After being rescued, she was first taken to a hospital in Khamblalia, and she was pronounced dead. Her body was brought to GG Hospital for post-mortem," Dr Nandini Desai, medical superintendent of GG Hospital, said.

ical superintendent of GG Hospital, said. She was stuck at a depth of 35 ft in the borewell, as per officials.

The incident took place around 1 pm. She fell into the pit while playing," Ashok Sharma, District Collector of Devbhumi Dwarka, said, adding a team of the Health Department rushed to the spot and started pumping medical oxygen in the borewell while firefighters launched a rescue operation.

Dwarka SDM Hitesh Bhagora said the child's cries were audible till 3 pm but could not be heard by 7 pm, triggering concern about her well-being.

Kerala CM launches K-SMART app for digital access to govt services

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 1

THE KERALA Government on Monday launched K-SMART (Kerala Solutions for Managing Administrative Reformation and Transformation), which will bring all services of the three-tier local self-government institutions on a unified digital platform.

Launching the digital project, CM Pinarayi Vijayan said this is the first such initiative in the country that the entire bouquet of services of a department is being made

available to the public on a digital platform. Kerala is showing the way in using modern technology.

Kerala is the first state in the country to declare Internet access a fundamental right. K-SMART would provide a major relief to expatriates who want to avail various services of the local bodies without visiting the offices. This initiative will reduce the digital divide in society," he said.

Initially, K-SMART application, developed by Information Kerala Mission of the state IT department, will be operational in corporations and municipalities.

Gradually, it will be rolled out in gram panchayats.

Officials said K-SMART adapts diverse technological disciplines, encompassing blockchain, artificial intelligence, GIS/spatial data, chatbot, message integration, API integration of various software, machine learning, data science, cloud computing, virtual and augmented reality, Internet of things among others. Under the digital initiative, building permits will be issued to the applicants without any delay, thanks to the digitisation of plot and building details using GIS technology.

Accused Suresh R and victim Dilli Babu

they questioned Babu's elder brother, Palani. "Palani said that Suresh used to visit their house often and that Babu used to stay with Suresh also. This led the police delving deeper into Suresh's movements before the fire incident.

As there was no progress in the missing person case, Babu's family filed a fresh complaint with the Avadi city police commissionerate, and also moved a plea in the court. Weeks later, police stumbled upon a significant clue when

Express News Service Mumbai, Jan 1

IN ITS latest chargesheet filed against six youths alleging that they are members of terrorist organisation Islamic State (ISIS), the NIA has said that the accused are 'technically sound', with two of them in senior positions in technology companies, claiming that they underwent radicalisation and were provoking gullible

Muslim youth. The agency has claimed that one of the accused found the email ID of ISIS online and contacted them in 2016.

On Thursday, the NIA filed a chargesheet against Tabish Siddiqui, Zulfikar Barodawala, Zubair Shaikh, Sharjeel Shaikh, Adnanali Sarkar and Aakif Nahan. The chargesheet states that Barodawala worked as a senior project manager in a multinational company with an annual package of Rs 31 lakh.

They found that Babu's phone had been near Suresh's hut in the days leading up to the fire," said RShivakumar, Inspector at the Acharapakkam police station in Chengalpet, 100 km from Ennore, who has been probing the case.

One Amutha said she had seen Suresh with three others around the time of the incident.

"A week ago, a new suspect emerged: Harikrishnan, a close associate of Suresh. Investigation led the police to Vellore in pursuit of Harikrishnan where his father said he hadn't turned up for several weeks. But the father was able to give the phone number Harikrishnan used to call

him many weeks ago," said Inspector Shivakumar.

Tracking the location of Harikrishnan's phone, police reached a house in Ar

Karnataka man held 31 years after Babri-linked violence, BJP alleges govt reopening old cases

Police say arrest 'routine', part of bid to clear pending cases

KIRAN PARASHAR

BENGALURU, JANUARY 1

THE BJP on Tuesday accused the Congress government in Karnataka of reopening old cases related to the Babri mosque demolition, after the police arrested a man for allegedly rioting during the Ram Temple agitation 31 years ago.

Police said Srikanth Poojary, 60, was arrested in Hubballi Friday as part of a "routine" exercise to "dispose of long-pending cases". According to the police, he was among 11 people booked on charges of rioting after violence erupted in the area on December 5, 1992, a day before the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished.

His son, Manjunath, told *The Indian Express* that Poojary was picked up by some policemen from his home on Friday. "They said they needed him for inquiry in some cases. I went to the police station with him. There I came to know that it was linked

to a rioting incident in 1992." Poojary was later produced before the court which sent him to judicial custody, Manjunath said.

Condemning the arrest, BJP leader and leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly, R Ashoka, accused the Congress of "terrorising" Hindu activists.

"The Congress government in Karnataka is reopening the 31-year-old case. It gives an impression that people are being hounded for taking part in the Ram temple agitation at a time when people are eagerly waiting for the historic occasion of the consecration of the grand temple in Ayodhya," Ashoka told reporters in Bengaluru.

The VHP's Hubballi unit chief, Sanju Badeskar, said the arrest was "nothing but a conspiracy of the state to arrest pro-Hindu activists". The incident took place 31 years ago and they did not care about it until now," he said.

Hubballi-Dharwad police commissioner Renuka Kumar told *The Indian Express* Poojary

was among 38 people arrested recently to clear off pending cases, including drug trafficking.

"It was a routine arrest made by the police to dispose of long pending cases. We have about 150 long pending cases and we have been able to arrest 38 persons in 37 various cases which include drug trafficking and others. Poojary's arrest was also made as the case was long pending," Kumar said, adding the case against Poojary's case was termed "long-pending" in 2006.

According to the police, of the 11 booked for rioting on December 5, 1992, three died and efforts were on to arrest others.

Meanwhile, condemning Poojary's arrest, BJP workers and other pro-Hindu activists asked the government to release him.

On Monday, BJP MLA Mahesh Tenginakai visited Poojary's family in Hubballi and assured them of all help in the case.

WITH PTI INPUTS



B.P. Mandal College of Engineering, Madhepura
At- Majrahat, Singheshwar Road, Madhepura - 852128

Website: www.bpmcmandhepura.org email: - bpmce2016@gmail.com

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR GUEST ASSISTANT PROFESSOR & GUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANT

B. P. Mandal College of Engineering, Madhepura is going to conduct a walk-in-interview for the empanelment of **GUEST ASSISTANT PROFESSORS & GUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS** in Department of Computer Science & Engineering for the current academic session. Interested and eligible candidates may appear for the walk-in-interview with all their original Academic Certificates, Category Certificates, Residential Certificate, 02 (Two) recent passport size photographs, a hard copy of CV & 02 (Two) sets of photo copies of original documents/certificates as per the following schedule.

Sl. No.	Guest Assistant Professor	Guest Technical Assistants	Date and Time of Interview	Venue
01	Computer Science & Engineering	Computer Science & Engineering	08.01.2024, 11:00 AM	B. P. Mandal College of Engineering, Madhepura

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar
PR-014412 (Sci. & Tech.) 2023-24

नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परियार से प्यार



REGIONAL OFFICE PATNA
Nasheman Bhawan, 1st Floor, Mazharool Haque Path, Frazer Road, Patna
(Contact : 7349052850, 9102404205, 9102403812, 8887829751)
Email: law.ropatna@unionbankofindia.bank, cmcrldropatna@unionbankofindia.bank

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY (Appendix IV A)

E-auction Sale Notice for sale of immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and proviso to the rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Union Bank of India, Sasaram Branch**, Near Sahu Cinema, G.T. Road, Sasaram, District- Rohtas - 821115 the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on **19.01.2024** for recovery of **Rs 14,11,310.37** (Rs. Fourteen Lakh, Eleven Thousand Three Hundred Ten and Thirty Seven only) as on 28.05.2022 with further interest, cost & expenses due to Union Bank of India Sasaram Branch, the Secured Creditor from Borrower, Co-Applicant and Guarantor - **Sri Sai Trading**, Prop. Ramjee Prasad Chaurasia, Vill - Budhwali, P.S-Karakat, Rohtas, Bihar - 802214, **Smt. Bindu Devi**, W/o Sri Ramjee Prasad Chaurasia, Vill-Budhwali, P.S-Karakat, Rohtas, Bihar - 802214, **Sri Ramesh Prasad**, S/o Sri Kashi Prasad, H.No. 219, Vill - Lakhnusarai, PO - Sasaram, Dist. - Rohtas - 821115. The reserve price will be Rs. 16,50,00/- and earnest money deposit will be Rs. 1,65,00/- with bid increment of Rs.16,500/-

Brief description of Property :- Land Admeasuring 3 Decimal Standing In The Name of **Smt. Bindu Devi** Wife of Ramjee Prasad Chaurasia Situated in Survey Khata No. 40, Municipal Khata 576, Survey Plot No. RS - 236, Municipal Plot No. 1602, Mouza - Mirzapur, Thana - Sasaram, Thana No. - 139, Anchal - Sasaram, And Bounded As : **North** - Plot No. 1590, **South** - Rasta Wide 6 Ft., **East** - Salkha Subham, **West** - Nij (vender)

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Union Bank of India's website i.e. <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in> and <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>

Date: 26.12.2023 Place: Patna Authorised Officer



REGIONAL OFFICE PATNA
Nasheman Bhawan, 1st Floor, Mazharool Haque Path, Frazer Road, Patna
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Brief description of Property :- Land and Building - Residential belonging to **Mr. Kaushal Kumar Verma** and **Mr. Gautam Kumar Verma** situated at - Mauza - Prithvipur, Lohanpur, P.S. - Kankarbagh, District - Patna bearing Thana No. - 5, Khetwati No. - 2/53, Khata No. - 226, Survey Plot No. - 19, Sheet No. - 57, M.S. Plot No. - 1144, Ward No. - 11 (Old), 36 (New), Circle No. - 19, Holding No. - 479/383 (Old), 479A (New) Area Admeasuring 374.28 Sq. Feet and **Boundary - North** - Road, **South** - Sri Bal Kishore Pandey, East - Sri Jugal Kishore Verma, West - Sri Jivan Saran

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Union Bank of India's website i.e. <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in> and <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>

Date: 26.12.2023 Place: Patna Authorised Officer



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Brief description of Property :- Land (alongwith construction thereon) admeasuring 3.125 Decimal (1361Sq Feet) in the name of **Smt. Asha Devi**, W/o Late Shri Bhagwan, situated at Khata No. - 136, Taizi No. - 5186, Mouza - Nawada, Thana No. - 110, Near Kurthal Bazar Patna Registry Office - Patna Sadar Registry Office **Boundary - North** - Maya Devi, **South** - Chinta Devi **East** - 9 Feet Wide Road, **West** - Shiv Narayan Singh

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Union Bank of India's website i.e. <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in> and <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>

Date: 26.12.2023 Place: Patna Authorised Officer

Mysuru sculptor's Ram Lalla idol chosen for Ayodhya: BSY

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, JANUARY 1



Sculptor
Arun Yogiraj

FORMER KARNATAKA chief minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday said that the 'Ram Lalla' idol carved by Karnataka's sculptor Arun Yogiraj has been selected for installation at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

While there has been no confirmation from the temple authorities in Ayodhya, Yediyurappa on X claimed that Yogiraj's work has been selected for installation at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

Yediyurappa wrote on X: "The idol of Lord Rama sculpted by

Arun Yogiraj of Mysuru has been selected for installation in the newly built temple in Ayodhya will take place at 12:20 pm on January 22, 2024.

Heartfelt congratulations to Shilpi@yogiraj.arun."

Yediyurappa's son B Y Vijayendra, who is also the BJP state president, shared the same.

However, Yogiraj told the media that he had not received any official communication on this.

Pran Pratishtha
at 12:20 pm on
Jan 22: Trust

Ayodhya: The consecration of Ram Lalla in the newly built temple in Ayodhya will take place at 12:20 pm on January 22, 2024.

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The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A LIGHT IN SPACE

ISRO's new observatory could help unravel some of the universe's deepest secrets and mysteries

SOME OF THE most exciting features of the universe, like black holes and neutron stars, remain mysteries to humankind. What scientists know is that because of their immensely strong magnetic fields, some of these celestial bodies emit highly energetic X-ray light. On Monday, ISRO marked the new year by venturing into this relatively uncharted realm of astrophysics. It launched a rocket carrying XpoSat, the country's first space observatory to study the polarisation of cosmic X-rays. This mission could help reveal a hidden picture of the cosmos, potentially transforming the understanding of the nature of the universe itself. The observatory could help scientists scout for emissions from black holes, neutron stars and active galactic nuclei. These cosmic rays are absorbed by the Earth's atmosphere. Scientists, therefore, need X-ray telescopes in space to understand them. XpoSat has two such payloads. It is the country's third space-based observatory after the recently launched solar mission Aditya-L1 and AstroSat launched in 2015. The Indian observatory is the world's second space mission to study the polarisation of cosmic X-rays, after NASA's IXPE, launched in December 2021.

Generally, light oscillates in every direction. But in certain parts of the cosmos, strong magnetic fields drive particles at incredibly high speeds, creating highly organised or polarised light. There have been a handful of experiments on X-ray polarisation. Most of them were balloon observations and short-duration experiments by NASA and its collaborators. Since the 1970s, imaging studies and spectroscopy have given scientists a fair idea of the energy, time and location of celestial X-rays. The introduction of polarimetry observations by IXPE marked the beginning of the endeavour to capture the degree and angle of light. It has provided early information on how radiation is produced in some of the most extreme environments in the universe. XpoSat operates in a frequency band different from its American predecessor. Experts believe that a combination of IXPE and XpoSat observations can help answer some of astrophysics's longstanding questions. For example, they can help unravel the contours of black holes in binary stars — two stars gravitationally bound to each other.

2023 marked a significant shift in gears for India's space programme. With the launch of Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-1, ISRO transitioned from an agency with capabilities in placing satellites in orbit to a planetary exploration agency. Later this year, India's premier space research agency will combine with NASA to send a mission to the International Space Station, the permanent laboratory in space about 400 km above the earth's surface. A test flight of the Gaganyaan, without astronauts, is also scheduled for this year. With every venture, ISRO has sent signals that it has the expertise and maturity to contribute to all aspects of planetary research. Many more great journeys await the agency.

THE HANGZHOU HAUL

For new year optimism, look closer at those who won medals, see how talent and determination can level the playing field

INdia had returned home from last year's Asian Games at Hangzhou, China, with its best-ever medal haul. Never before had 256 Indians stood on the podium of the continental event. To understand the unprecedented medal rush, The Indian Express launched a detailed investigation — and it threw up striking personal and professional arcs. These are success stories starring young men and women from rural and urban areas pushing themselves in arduous ways to achieve excellence and break through constraints via sport. There was good news, too, in the shrinking gender gap when it came to the medal winners — 43 three per cent of the medals indicated that more and more young women in India are turning to sport, successfully, to find upward mobility and recognition, liberation from confined spaces and financial independence. Farming families contributed the most, 62 medals, and 40 medal-winners were born to daily wagers. The Hangzhou haul proves that sports puts fewer hurdles than many other sectors in the way of those who strive to level the playing field and flatten it, often armed with nothing more than their talent and determination.

The levelling of the playing field is still a work in progress. Those from rural, underprivileged, marginalised or tribal backgrounds are still to gain a foothold, much less success, in big-money sports like golf, chess, tennis, squash or shooting. Even within sport, there exists a class-system. Those from humble origins are more visible in hockey, track and field, kabaddi and wrestling. The numbers also suggest that parents with steady government jobs don't yet consider sports as a career option for their children. Tracing the graphs of under-privileged athletes from rural areas shows that most of them accidentally stumbled upon sports. A more structured talent spotting system at the grassroots level would prove beneficial.

Even as there is still a dearth of entry points for those in the hinterland, there are heart-warming stories of young talent finding unsung mentors. Though there are a handful of children of doctors and engineers and IAS officers amongst the 256 medallists, there are many more cases of sons and daughters of those who didn't even complete their basic education medalling at Hangzhou. The Army has taken the lead to carve out champion rowing fleets out of men who had never even heard of the sport. Local coaches are carrying out scouting duties, with pitiful remuneration. India might still be in the single digits at Olympics, but sport is emerging as the greatest punt taken by the unseen in its small towns and villages.

SHAPESHIFTERS

In a system built around stars, character actors are often the ones who bring to life the world of a film

ISEE MYSELF as a utility player, the one who can do everything... I've always felt that actors should have a degree of anonymity about them," actor Tom Wilkinson once said in an interview to *The New York Times*. That Wilkinson, who died at 75 on Saturday, lived by this credo was evident in the degree to which he was able to embody the characters he played, from an out-of-work foreman who becomes a stripper in *The Full Monty* to a mob boss in *Batman Begins*. His astonishing range meant that while his name was not instantly recognisable to many, the career he built through mostly supporting roles was studded with honours and critical acclaim.

In a system built around "stars" taking up most of the oxygen — both in terms of film-making resources and public adulation — Wilkinson and others like him are reminders that acting, ultimately, is a craft. Unlike stars, who have the luxury to go from project to project, playing versions of themselves, the chameleon-like character actors in their various supporting roles often shoulder the burden of bringing verisimilitude to the world of a film or series. In Hindi cinema, for example, if 2023 marked the return of the star-fronted blockbuster, there were also quiet but powerful demonstrations of the craft of acting. Consider the two utterly different yet equally believable notes of romantic wistfulness struck by Jaideep Ahlawat in *Jaane Jaan* and *Three of Us*. Or Manoj Bajpayee's sublimation into the role of a tribal on the run in *Joram* and Amrutha Subhash's turn as a domestic worker with a secret in *The Mirror* (*Lust Stories 2*).

Cinema, for many, is an escape. Over a hundred years after the invention of motion pictures, it remains as absorbing as ever, much of the credit goes to actors like Wilkinson and Ahlawat delivering performances of such authenticity that they transport the viewer into other lives and other worlds.



BIMAN NATH

THE NEW YEAR for Indian astronomers came with real fireworks. As the world woke up to the first morning of 2024, ISRO's launch vehicle put into orbit a new X-ray payload (XpoSat, X-ray Polarimeter Satellite) for astronomical research. If all goes well, the instrument, totally indigenous in design and fabrication, will herald yet another milestone for Indian astronomers.

For the past 15 years, the main instrument aboard the payload, POLIX (Indian X-ray Polarimeter) has been built at the Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bangalore. Measuring roughly half a metre in all dimensions and weighing almost two hundred kilograms, it is not large, as typical astronomical detectors in space go. But its size belies the unique capabilities of the new apparatus, which aims to study a special property of X-rays in space.

X-rays, like ordinary light, are electromagnetic waves. These are generated by movements of electric charges when the electric and magnetic fields in its vicinity are disturbed. Just as molecules bob up and down in water waves, the electric field keeps changing as X-ray moves in space. The "direction" of its variation depends on the motion of the electric charge responsible for the wave. For an up-down motion of the charge, for example, the electric field in X-ray waves also fluctuates vertically.

It happens in the case of ordinary light as well. But the light we see from a bulb comes from the random motion of molecules. The "direction" of the variation is consequently mixed up in this case. Ditto for sunlight. But sometimes these variations acquire directionality, and we describe the light as "polarised". We use polarised sunglasses, for example, in bright sunlight. Its special material allows only vertically altering electric fields, and helps to decrease the glare from ground reflection, which consists of mostly horizontal polarisation. Reflection "polarises" the randomly varying sunlight into a single direction. Scattering of sunlight by air molecules also has a similar effect. When the Sun peeks above the horizon, these scatterings grace the sky with highly polarised light. It is no wonder that photographers routinely use polarisers for pic-

tures involving the sky.

Although stars like the Sun mostly emit unpolarised light, it is not the case with some peculiar objects in space. There exist stars with stupendous magnetic fields, sometimes a thousand billion times of what we encounter on the Earth. Electrons in those objects spiral around the magnetic field lines and emit X-rays. Their gyrating motion endows the X-rays with some directionality. Suppose the magnetic field lines are mostly aligned in some direction, then the electrons would twirl in the perpendicular direction. This would make the resulting X-rays polarised in the same direction. Clearly, measuring the polarisation of X-rays would then enable astronomers to gauge the directions of magnetic fields in these objects.

Pulsars are examples of such exotic stars. Typically the size of a city, they can pack as much mass as the Sun. Pulsars often shine in X-rays, and can also boast of whopping magnetic fields. Then there are regions around black holes, where matter spirals inward in the shape of a disc before finally falling prey to the monster. The immensely hot gas emits X-rays, which although unpolarised like starlight, acquires polarisation after reflection and scattering from the gas in the disc, just as sunlight becomes polarised after reflection on ground. If only one could examine the polarisation of celestial X-rays, the nature of these objects would be clearer to astronomers.

This is precisely what POLIX is designed to probe. But it is easier said than done. It is difficult enough to collect X-rays from space, firstly because their high energy makes it impossible to focus with lenses, like ordinary light, and secondly because the Earth's atmosphere absorbs most of it. Measuring the polarisation of abundant light is one thing, and the case of feeble radiation like cosmic X-rays is something else altogether. There have been attempts with balloon-borne and short-lived instruments in the past. It was only in December 2021 that the first such instrument (IXPE) was launched into space by NASA. The NASA instrument contains gas, whose atoms are stripped of electrons after interacting with incoming X-rays. Upon scrutiny, the direction

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of motion of these ejected electrons gives clues to the X-ray polarisation.

RRI's Biswajit Paul, however, had a rather unique design in mind. Hailing from North Bengal, he had worked in the 1990s for his PhD at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) at Mumbai, where he eventually became a member of its X-ray research group. The TIFR-X-ray group has zealously cultivated X-ray astronomy for decades, having built several instruments for space X-ray astronomy, and no doubt inspired Biswajit to think big and think differently. With POLIX finally up in space, his passion for building something new has finally paid off. He has also been fortunate in being ably assisted by a dedicated group of scientists, and being given a free hand by RRI in forging the new device.

POLIX is shaped like a cubical cylinder. At its core lies a disc of beryllium. Detectors kept along the walls collect X-rays after their scattering from the metallic disc. The scheme works on the principle of polarisation after scattering. The lighter the scatterer atoms, the better the signal. Lithium would have been better than beryllium but lithium is difficult to handle, so one had to settle for beryllium. If the electric field in the X-ray varies in the north-south direction, for example, then the detectors stowed in the east-west directions would receive a signal, just like sunlight from the horizon becomes polarised in the overhead direction after scattering in the atmosphere. The other instrument (XSPECT) aboard XpoSat will study timing and spectral properties of X-ray emitting objects in space.

Incidentally, POLIX's beryllium disc will let astronomers probe lower energy X-rays than what the NASA instrument is capable of. The Indian mission will complement NASA's device and the information gathered by these two instruments together will help astronomers to decipher the nature of pulsars and black holes. All eyes are now set towards XpoSat, waiting for it to start scanning the cosmos.

The writer is an astrophysicist at the Raman Research Institute, Bangalore



PARVATI SHARMA

IT IS AN odd thing about very famous works of art that the better they are known, the more they can surprise you with their brilliance. This is how it was for me when, a few months ago, I had the luck to see Michelangelo's David. In the flesh, or so it seems, because this is marble that very nearly breathes. You can almost see the fine hair upon his legs, as David stands in intense concentration, a coiled spring, a cat about to leap, his sling slung nonchalant over his left shoulder but the muscles of his right hand taut, ready to fling the pebble that will fell Goliath.

Afterwards, realising that I knew nothing about David except that he flung that pebble, I thought I might look him up. I expected to find a few beautiful verses, some begats and begots; instead, I found, in the two Books of Samuel that tell David's tale, a story of war and politics that sometimes had me rubbing my eyes in disbelief. In brief: God makes Saul king of the Israelites and, later, sends him on a mission to exterminate the Amalekites, one among many neighbouring tribes with whom the Israelites (and their God) are engaged in constant war. This Old Testament God is not a benign deity with a twinkle in His eye, disbursing mercy; his command is clear and bloodthirsty: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Saul falls afoul of God when he does, in fact, spare the Amalek king and some Amalek animals. The animals are meant for a sacrifice to God but He is not pleased and removes his favour from Saul, sending the prophet Samuel to find a new king. Enter David the shepherd

WHO IS DAVID, WHO GOLIATH?

A great perversion has infected the moral clarity of the Biblical tale

The story of David and Goliath evokes an empathy that any child will understand: We take the side of the weak, the poor, the dispossessed by instinct. But now, that instinct is quelled. To dare to empathise with a modern-day David is to evoke accusations of anti-Semitism, ironically, or anti-nationalism — of silly naivete, at best, unable to grasp grown-up geopolitics. Only children, if at all, may still weep.

boy from Bethlehem: First as a musician in Saul's court, then as the hero of the battle against Goliath the Philistine giant, and, for many chapters thereafter, a fugitive hunted by an increasingly antsy Saul, bent on killing his rival for the throne. David finds refuge in a Philistine kingdom that he betrays — going out every day to massacre villages of Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites, tribes with whom his people are at constant war — while pretending his sorties are against the Israelites. Later, as a king, having taken Jerusalem from its inhabitants, the Jebusites, David also takes another man's wife — Bathsheba — and has her husband killed. He is not, in sum, a perfect man, nor is his story one of moral edification — though it is riveting.

And yet, much like famous works of art, the famous story of David and Goliath surprises you with its urgent moral clarity. The Israelite and Philistine armies are arrayed against each other. Every day, for forty days, the Philistine champion Goliath — nine feet tall, wearing a helmet of bronze and a 60-kg coat of mail, carrying a bronze javelin and an iron spearhead — challenges the Israelites to one-on-one combat. Every day, the Israelite soldiers are "dismayed, and greatly afraid" at his call. Among them are some of David's older brothers and, on the forty-first day, David comes to them with bread from home. Hearing Goliath's taunt, David declares to Saul that he will fight the giant. Saul discourages him, "thou art but a youth", he cries, but when David insists, Saul gives the boy his own armour, a helmet and a coat of mail. Clad in such unfamiliar gear, a sword strapped to his side, David can hardly walk, and he takes it all off.

Instead, he picks five pebbles from a brook and, sling in hand, approaches Goliath. From his great height, Goliath looked upon his challenger with contempt, and says, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

David looks up at the giant — this is the moment Michelangelo captures in stone — a lithe young boy looking up at a great foe with such tense yet graceful concentration. "And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it" — and Goliath "fell upon his face to the earth."

In modern terms, Goliath is the world's first tank and David the first stone-pelting. Over centuries, their names have become shorthand for the struggle of the weak against the strong. And yet, in modern times, a great perversion has infected and inverted the virtues of their tale. Today, in our political and social discourse, it is the stone-pelting who is the aggressor, whether Palestinian, Kashmiri or Kurd, and the great armies with their missiles and phosphorus gas, the great states with their rational courts and bureaucratic bulldozers, who are victims. The story of David and Goliath evokes an empathy that any child will understand: We take the side of the weak, the poor, the dispossessed by instinct. But now, that instinct is quelled. To dare to empathise with a modern-day David is to evoke accusations of anti-Semitism, ironically, or anti-nationalism — of silly naivete, at best, unable to grasp grown-up geopolitics. Only children, if at all, may still weep.

Sharma is the author of *Akbar of Hindustan* and *Jahangir*



JANUARY 2, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

REGIONAL ECs

THE ELECTION COMMISSION has proposed the appointment of regional commissioners for the next Lok Sabha and assembly elections due in 1985. It would avail of the enabling provisions already available in this regard in the Constitution, it said.

NIGERIA'S NEW LEADER

MAJOR-GENERAL MOHAMMED BUHARI

emerged as Nigeria's new leader, promising a clean and efficient government after toppling what he called a corrupt, inept and in-

sensitive civilian administration in an apparently bloodless and successful coup. In a television broadcast 20 minutes into the New Year, Buhari said the new government would not tolerate corruption and inefficiency.

CALL FOR STRIKE

INFORMAL TALKS BETWEEN the military government and opposition reached a deadlock as neither party was prepared to move an inch from its declared stand. As the government was not ready to concede the opposition's demand of allowing open political activities immediately, the 22 parties of two

coalitions announced that they would go ahead with their programme of observing a country-wide general strike on January 4.

TULF DISSATISFIED

CONFLICTING REPORTS FROM Colombo on the proposed roundtable conference on the Tamils issue have caused confusion in the Tamil United Liberation Front leadership now for talks with Indian leaders. A report said the 14-point peace proposals presented by President Jayewardene were not the proposals of the government. These proposals had been criticised by the TULF leadership.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Want toehold in south? BJP needs to listen to Chennai music

It's a secure and confident music. Hinduism of the south shows how one can be deeply devotional without denigrating other faiths, steeped in one's own tradition while relishing the richness of others



RAMESH VENKATARAMAN

A GOOD WAY to understand what a confident Hinduism looks like and why the BJP's Hindutva and hyper-nationalism, so grounded in insecurities and resentments, do not — and may not — find much of an echo in the south is to attend the December "season" in Chennai.

Every year, roughly between late November and early January, scores of *sabhas* in this city play host to thousands of Carnatic music concerts, but also Bharatanatyam dance recitals, scholarly lectures and demonstrations, and other cultural and religious performances. While its roots lie in the freedom struggle (specifically in the music conference and concerts organised in 1927 to coincide with the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Madras), the Chennai Music Festival has become as much a social as a cultural event for the city and the diaspora. The "season" is now regarded as one of the largest cultural events in the world, all the more notable because it has developed organically, is entirely organised by patrons and connoisseurs, and owes nothing to any sort of government sponsorship.

The atmosphere in the festival venues is steeped in tradition and Hindu religiosity. Songs and dances are almost entirely devotional. Images of Saraswati and other Hindu gods and goddesses are highly visible on and around the stages. Silk saris and jasmine flowers in their hair for women and *kurtas* and *dhotis* for men are standard concert attire even for the young, and performers prominently sport *vibhuti* and other marks of their Hindu faith.

Against this backdrop, consider S Sowmya's sublime *kutcheri* at the prestigious Music Academy — one of a dozen that I savoured over these past two weeks in Chennai. Sowmya is amongst the top-flight of Carnatic vocalists today and at 50-plus is no thrusting radical. For her centrepiece ragam-tanam-pallavi, Sowmya chose Paraj, a ragam that she noted has roots in Persian and Arabian music. Her apposite Tamil pallavi (equivalent to the bandish in the Hindustani tradition) "paraspara anbinval vazhume uravugal valarum" cherished cross-cultural bonds based on mutual respect and love. As if to drive home her point, Sowmya rendered her *ragamalika* in ragas originating in the Middle East including Husen, Hejjaji, and Navroz.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, this recital was worth at least a few hundred. In one spellbinding hour, Sowmya showcased how a secure, fearless tradition confidently draws on other cultures without fearing for its soul. Over two centuries ago, Sowmya's forerunners had adapted the European violin into Carnatic music and the 18th century composer Muthuswami Dikshitar had experimented with western scales. No anxieties then in this staunchly Hindu classical genre over "colonial" let alone "Islamic" influences.



But the Chennai season displays more than just a robust openness to the world. By contrast to Hindutva champions whose cultural horizon often appears limited to the Hindi-speaking belt, and without meaning to gloss over its failings (notably, a Brahmin-centric elitism), the Carnatic world embraces a pan-Indian inclusiveness regardless of religion, language, or region.

Despite its staunchly orthodox flavour and the occasional episode of nasty bigotry, the Carnatic scene has featured Muslims (such as *nadaswaram* virtuoso Sheik Chinna Moulana) and Christians (Yesudas, the American Jon Higgins) in its highest ranks. Season concerts around Christmas Day will often include songs dedicated to Jesus (albeit a few years ago a Hindu fundamentalist outfit stoked a vicious social media campaign against Carnatic musicians who had dared to perform Christian devotional). Muslim *nadaswaram* players still play at the head of processions for many prominent temples in Tamil Nadu. Former President A P J Abdul Kalam relished playing Carnatic on the veena. Recently, leading Carnatic vocalist Sanjay Subrahmanyam released an album of Tamil Sufi songs jointly sung with a practising fakir.

The playlist of the average Carnatic *kutcheri* spans virtually every major South Indian tongue. Telugu is the most prominent (the famed trinity of Carnatic composers composed mainly in this language despite living in and around Thanjavur) but compositions in Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, and even Malayalam figure.

But what is remarkable is the extent to which Carnatic musicians routinely reach beyond the south. In her heyday, M S Subbulakshmi famously used to move audiences (including Mahatma Gandhi) with her rendition of Meera bhajans. *Kritis* in Hindustani composed by Swati Tirunal, the 19th century Maharaja of Travancore, feature in the Carnatic concert repertoire today, as do verses from the 12th century Cita Govinda of Jayadeva, a Sanskrit poet in the Oriya court, Marathi *abhangs* composed by the *varkari* saints, and even the occasional Rabindra Sangeet. In the concert mentioned above, Sowmya briefly sketched the Hindustani version of Paraj in her *alapanai* to contrast it to the Carnatic. (One has to go back more than a century to the legendary Abdul Karim Khan to find a north Indian musician of equivalent

Last week, I sat in the audience of the Narada Gana Sabha as the Trichur Brothers led the mostly Tamil audience in a full-throated rendition of the Bengali "Vande Mataram" in a Carnatic idiom to conclude their concert — a moving display of patriotism that had little whatsoever in common with the hard nationalism of the Hindu right.

C.R.Sasikumar
standing rendering Carnatic ragas, not to speak of actually singing in a South Indian language.)

Last week, I sat in the audience of the Narada Gana Sabha as the Trichur Brothers led the mostly Tamil audience in a full-throated rendition of the Bengali "Vande Mataram" in a Carnatic idiom to conclude their concert — a moving display of patriotism that had little whatsoever in common with the hard nationalism of the Hindu right.

Most Indians acknowledge that Hinduism in the south is more deep-rooted and "authentic" than anywhere else in the country. Even Narendra Modi has implicitly nodded to this by reaching for the symbolism of the Tamil *sengol* at the opening of the new Parliament complex and staging the Tamil Kashi Sangamams to burnish his regime's Hindu credentials. And yet it is precisely in the south that Hindutva is struggling to take hold.

The fact is, both Hindutva and its twin, chest-thumping jingoism, are rooted in insecurity and a lack of self-belief. Perhaps the experience of being overrun and ruled over by Muslim invaders for nearly 500 years and the traumas of Partition have scarred north Indian Hindus and left them with deep-seated anxieties over the vigour of their own religious and cultural traditions. Hence, the craving for government — or, sometimes, even the mob — to attack outside influences and fellow Indians who profess Islam or other creeds.

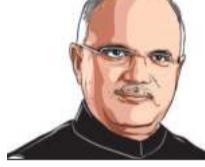
Of course, Hinduism in the south is not without its black spots. Social reform movements in the south have stalled after empowering the more privileged backward castes whereas Dalits and extremely backward classes seem to have travelled further along the arc of social justice in the north.

But what the Hinduism of the south manifests is that one can be deeply devotional without denigrating other faiths, steeped in one's own tradition while relishing the richness of others and welcoming their influence, and proudly patriotic without being aggressively jingoistic. Surely, BJP's Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai can arrange for some front-row seats for his northern counterparts, including the prime minister himself, to come down and listen to the strains of a more secure and confident music — and Hinduism.

The writer is a private equity investor and Carnatic music enthusiast

An Indic renaissance

In celebrations from Ayodhya to Vaikom, a new cultural spirit is rising



VINAY SAHASRABUDDHE

AS WE usher in 2024, India is on the cusp of a cultural renaissance. Apart from the consecration of Lord Rama's idol at the newly constructed Ram Temple, the 350th anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's coronation, the centenary of Mumbai's iconic Gateway of India and the centennial celebrations of the Vaikom Satyagraha — the first ever struggle against caste discrimination — are significant events this year.

The consecration of the Ram idol at the newly built Ram Janmabhoomi Temple at Ayodhya shouldn't be seen as a mere religious event. True, Hindus worship Ram. But just as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are India's national epics, Ram is our national hero. Visit any part of the country and you will find Ram in people's names — from Ramachandran, Ramanathan, Ramaya or Ramappa in the South to Rambhai, Ramsingh or Ramsharan in the North. While the debate around the historicity of the Ramayana will continue, it is a fact that Ram in particular and the Ramayana in general reflect the essentially Hindu/Indian belief that every individual has some elements of divinity within him/her — a foundational principle that Hindus often forget and so face the threat of fragmentation. Ram symbolises the core of the Indic value system that is founded on a humanitarian approach.

The Ram temple in Ayodhya is a turning point in India's cultural history. A society always at the receiving end of the injustice and

atrocities of aggressors will liberate itself. This temple is a symbol of our ability to protect our self-respect. The resurrection of the Ram Temple in 2024 can be compared only with the resurrection of the Somnath temple in the 1950s. What is being constructed in Ayodhya is not just a temple of brick and mortar but a monument saluting the civilisational journey of India. India, as once described by Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, is a country that is always ageing but is never old. This spirit finds its majestic manifestations in the temple that is currently getting its final shape. PM Modi has aptly appealed to countrymen to light a lamp on this day as the light of the eternally relevant message of Ram's life and mission reaches all.

Meanwhile, in observing the 350th anniversary of the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, we will be celebrating a philosopher king. For, Shivaji was much more than a warrior king or a great strategist. His era is a watershed in Indian history — a testament to the resolve of Indians to challenge aggressors. Shivaji Maharaj sowed the seeds of self-confidence amongst the masses while also emboldening the rajas and maharajas of the time to summon the political will to take on invaders. Protecting indigenous culture from the assaults of invaders is one of the key messages of his life. Shivaji Maharaj's life inspired many of our freedom-fighters, including Veer Savarkar.

For our cultural renaissance to attain its truest meaning we have to collectively rise above smaller identities, especially those related to caste and community. Therein lies the significance of the Vaikom Satyagraha whose centenary we will observe this year. It was remarkable because

The iconic Gateway of India in Mumbai marks the first-ever visit of a British monarch to India, then a colony of the Britishers. The monument today is a symbol of India's growing global influence.

While many in the West continue to struggle to effectively deal with multiculturalism, in India this is inbuilt in our traditions. The Dalai Lama had once said, "India's great tradition of religious tolerance can be a role model for the entire world". It is important to remember this at a time when mindless Westernisation/Americanisation is eroding the rich cultures of several small countries, especially in the southern hemisphere. Several developing countries with distinct cultures, traditions and values, different from those of the West, feel hopelessly dependent on the latter for economic development. In the process, they invite a cultural flattening of sorts. The Gateway of India's centenary should be a reminder that India needs to give a clarion call for what External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently described as "cultural re-balancing". Indigenous cultures must protect themselves from the threat of distortion.

For our cultural renaissance to attain its truest meaning we have to collectively rise above smaller identities, especially those related to caste and community. Therein lies the significance of the Vaikom Satyagraha whose centenary we will observe this year. It was remarkable because

of the large-scale participation of the so-called forward castes. On October 1, 1924, a group of people belonging to the forward castes submitted a petition to the Regent Maharanee Sethu Lakshmi Bayi of Travancore. The petition asking to open the doors of the temple to everyone carried about 25,000 signatures and Mahatma Gandhi had endorsed the demand of the petitioners. After much persuasion, the Maharanee relented.

From Vaikom to Ayodhya, the Hindu community has come a long way. In seeking the presence of the priests of the Valmiki and Ravi Das temple at the consecration ceremony slated for January 22 and naming the Ayodhya Dham Airport after Maharishi Valmiki, a loud and clear message of social assimilation, justice and harmony has gone out — this is what was envisioned by Babasaheb Ambedkar.

It is heartening to hear Farooq Abdullah say, "Ram doesn't belong only to the Hindus. He belongs to all". This is a great transformation indeed. It would have been wonderful if Babur had realised this as well. By destroying the Ram temple, he crippled the soul of Bharat, a land of *ekam sat vipra bahuda vadanti* (god is one but wise men describe him in different ways).

The writer is president, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, former national vice-president of the BJP and MP, Rajya Sabha

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Good governance will not be easy for the next administration. State institutions can take either of two paths: The first entails respect for the constitutional order and working to build a more progressive country; the second is to keep plodding along the same tired course, and prepare to face the consequences." — DAWN

The temples of justice

The Court must not be silent on the eclipse of an inclusive India



KAPIL SIBAL

account of their proximity to politicians or those close to the ideological moorings of the political party in power. The other problem is that meritocratic lawyers seldom become judges because they are not offered judgeships when they are young enough. While we do have judges who have and will in the future make us proud, the damage done by the chosen few is enough to give the judiciary a bad name.

For the judiciary to regain its glory, it needs to do more than just decide on cases. Its processes for delivery of justice on the administrative side need radical changes, changes that the respective Chief Justices of courts in India, I get the feeling, loathe to do. The assignment of cases in a non-transparent manner does no justice to the cause of justice.

Justice, social, economic and political, can only be delivered if the political class as a matter of policy shuns divisive agendas. The evangelist zeal with which temples have become central to the politics of today is an attempt to consolidate the Hindu vote and distance the state from a class of citizens who practise another faith. Taunting, targeting them, while the state looks on encourages acts of violence. Looking the other way when such acts are committed, whenever the BJP is in power, seems to be part of state policy. Any policy framework which seeks to cater to the needs or traditions of the minorities is considered appeasement.

Benefits to the majority religious denominations, customs and traditions have become an article of faith, justified as a matter of right. "Us" as opposed to the "other" breeds hatred. Violence against the "other", verbally or otherwise, is publicly justified. The paid army of trollers on social media platforms applauds such anti-social acts and incites hatred. Private individuals of a particular ideology act as gendarmes and openly perpetrate violence with impunity. The state machinery cooperates and occasionally collaborates.

We are slowly establishing a de-facto Hindu state, where the Hindu religion is given primacy in the established social and political order. Anyone opposing such an enterprise is anti-Hindu as well as anti-national. Open support for the expression of muscularity for the propagation of the Hindu faith is an act of patriotism. The Prime Minister's prime role in the inauguration of the temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi blurs the distinction between the state and religion. The two will henceforth be perceived to be two sides of the same coin; the state will use the Hindu faith for its political ends and the Hindu faith will be regarded as an intrinsic part of the state. Our forefathers' dreams will have been shattered; our constitutional goals realigned in a manner that a new idiom of Hinduism, alien to the values it propagates, replaces the preamble to our Constitution.

The Court, I am afraid, will silently watch the slow eclipse of an inclusive India.

The writer is a member of the Rajya Sabha

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

YEAR OF DECISIONS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Happy New Year' (IE, January 1). 2024 is the year of reckoning for the NDA and INDIA bloc. The line-up for the next 12 months looks promising. Elections are scheduled in seven states and the J&K and Ladakh union territories. And there is the mother of all battles slated for the summer of 2024 — the world's largest national elections. The BJP can be expected to milk the Ram temple's inauguration to the maximum for electoral gains and for the INDIA bloc, a disparate group of regional parties and an enfeebled Congress, the biggest task is thus to find a coherent and credible alternative to the BJP's big picture.

SS Paul, Nadia

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Happy New Year' (IE, January 1). It is ironic that PM Narendra Modi, who used derisive words like "revali" for benefits given to vulnerable citizens is now using this category of the "labharthi" or beneficiary to reconstitute citizenship for poor, youth, women and farmers. He called them the four biggest castes. This is political chicanery to deflect the sound and fury of caste census and the demand for social justice. This also contradicts his earlier narrative propounded on the occasion of the 2022 Independence Day emphasising the primacy of citizens' duties and responsibilities over the rights to entitlements and benefits. This dichotomy of duty vs right is evident from beneficiaries like those 80 crore citizens dependent on free ration, who have no opportunity to work (unemployed) or despite work, their earning is not enough for subsistence.

Vasant Nalawade, Satara

THE KISAN PROBLEM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The PM-Kisan model' (IE, December 30). The editorial rightly suggests the need for a Direct Income Support scheme and also provides how it can be feasible financially. However, the finances were never the primary hurdle. Rather, it was the political will. Agriculture in India is such a politically sensitive issue that even the strongest of governments will think twice before altering any policy related to it. For instance, the present government had to call back the farm laws even though it was determined to implement them. Thus, for cutting subsidies, the political leadership will need to bring consensus with the leaders of farmer unions first — only then can it move ahead successfully.

Nayan Rathi, Dewas





World population in 2023 grew by 75 mn. AP

On Jan 1, World population stood at 8 bn

The world population grew by 75 million people over the past year and on New Year's Day it will stand at more than 8 billion people, according to figures released by the US Census Bureau on Thursday. The worldwide growth rate in the past year was just under 1%. At the start of 2024, 4.3 births and two deaths are expected worldwide every second, according to the Census Bureau figures. The growth rate for the United States in the past year was 0.53%, about half the worldwide figure. In 2024, the United States is expected to experience one birth every nine seconds and one death every 9.5 seconds.

AP



Cracks on the ground in Wajima in Ishikawa prefecture after the massive earthquake on Monday. AP

7.6 quake rocks Japan, wreaks havoc

Nearly 100,000 residents ordered to evacuate, one killed in building collapse

REUTERS

TOKYO, JANUARY 1

A POWERFUL earthquake struck central Japan on Monday, killing at least one person, destroying buildings, knocking out power to tens of thousands of homes and prompting residents in coastal areas to flee to higher ground.

The quake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.6 triggered waves of about 1 metre along Japan's west coast and neig-

bouring South Korea.

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) initially issued a major tsunami warning - its first since the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that struck northeast Japan killing nearly 20,000 people - for Ishikawa prefecture. It later downgraded that and eventually cut it to an advisory.

The Japanese government said that as of Monday night it had ordered more than 97,000 people in nine prefectures on the western coast of Japan's main is-

land Honshu to evacuate.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters late on Monday that he had instructed search and rescue teams to do everything possible to save lives, even though access to quake-hit areas was difficult due to blocked roads.

It was the strongest quake in the region in more than four decades, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Army personnel were dis-

patched to help with rescue oper-

ations, government spokesperson Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

An elderly man was pronounced dead after a building fell down in Shika Town in Ishikawa, broadcaster NTV reported citing local police.

More strong quakes in the region, where seismic activity has been simmering for more than three years, could occur over coming days, JMA official Toshihiro Shimoyama said. Russia and North Korea also issued tsunami warnings for some areas.

5 KILLED IN UKRAINE SHELLING, SAY RUSSIAN OFFICIALS

Ukraine says hit by 'record' number of Russian drones, downed 87 of 90

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, JANUARY 1

RUSSIA LAUNCHED a record 90 Shahed-type drones over Ukraine during the early hours of the new year, the Ukrainian air force said Monday, while Russia also reported Ukrainian attacks.

Senator Rahamand Khan Tangi of the Pakistan Peoples Party had moved the resolution which acknowledged that a strong army and other security agencies are indispensable for the defence of the country, especially because of the hostile neighbourhood.

The resolution expressed concern over the "negative and malicious propaganda against the armed forces and other security agencies on various social media platforms". Radin Pakistan reported that the resolution further recommended that anyone involved in such a crime should be disqualified for ten years from holding public office.

Meanwhile, four people were killed and 13 more wounded following Ukrainian shelling on Russian-occupied areas of Donetsk, according to the area's Russian-installed leader, Denis Pushilin. Russian state media reported that a journalist was among the victims, but provided



A residential complex heavily damaged during a Russian drone strike in Odesa on Monday. Reuters

no further details.

One person was also killed and another wounded in shelling on the Russian border town of Shebekino, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

The aerial strikes follow a se-

ries of heavy aerial bombardments that began on Friday, when Russia unleashed an 18-hour attack. At least 49 people were killed in the bombardment. Ukraine's shelling in Russia's Belgorod Saturday killed 21 people, officials reported.

Judge Sultana ordered Yunus to serve six months of simple or non-rigorous imprisonment for violating the law as the Grameen Telecom chairman, along with three other executives of the social business company. She also slapped a Taka 25,000 fine on each of them, adding 10 more days in jail in case of a default.

Describing the judgment as "politically motivated", his supporters said the charges were filed to harass him. The verdict comes just days ahead of the January 7 general election in Bangladesh.

Yunus and three of his colleagues in Grameen Telecom - a firm he founded - were accused of violating labour laws when they failed to create a workers' welfare fund in the company.

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E. EXPLAINED

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024



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

XPoSat launch: what is ISRO's first mission of this yr

ANJALI MARAR

BENGALURU, JANUARY 1

THE X-RAY POLARIMETER SATELLITE (XPoSAT), which ISRO launched Monday, is the world's second satellite-based mission (after NASA's) dedicated to X-ray polarimetry measurements.

What exactly is XPoSAT?

The mission will allow astronomers to study the nature of X-ray emissions emanated by bright celestial sources in the medium energy band. It comprises two payloads, Indian X-ray Polarimeter (POLIX) and X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing (XSPECT), built by Raman Research Institute and URRao Satellite Centre, both located in Bengaluru. It has an estimated mission life of about five years, during which XPoSAT will observe sources that emit polarised X-rays. The observations will be done when the neutron stars

are in transit through the Earth's shadow – for instance, during the eclipse period.

What do the two payloads do?

POLIX is the world's first instrument designed to operate in the medium X-ray of 8 to 30 kilo electron Volt (keV) energy band. It consists of a collimator, which is the key component to filter light originating from bright sources in the field of view. Besides, there is a scatterer along with four X-ray proportional counter detectors. The XSPECT, meanwhile, is designed to conduct fast and high spectroscopic resolution in soft X-rays energy bands (0.8–15 keV). It will observe a variety of sources like X-ray pulsars, black hole binaries, low-magnetic field neutron stars, active galactic nuclei, and magnetars.

Why is the XPoSAT mission significant?

So far, only the timing and broad band spectroscopy of X-ray objects were per-



ISRO's PSLV-C58 lifts off from Sriharikota on January 1. PTI

formed, using, for example, India's AstroSat. But studies for X-ray polarisation measurements were not attempted. XPoSAT will be a gamechanger by facilitating X-ray polarisation measurements from bright sources in the medium energy band (8–30 keV) range.

The XPoSAT team has identified several sources radiating X-rays. XPoSAT will observe two kinds of sources – persistent sources (targeted and known sources), and transient sources (pulsars, magnetars).

Out in space, X-rays get polarised due to multiple causes, such as being subject to strong magnetic fields or due to interactions with material present around black holes. So, by studying the polarised X-rays emanating from excellent sources like magnetars, scientists can probe the nature of the radiations and the multitudes of processes involved in the generation of these radiations.

POLIX will undertake important measurements like the degree and angle of polarisation of X-ray photons from the environment surrounding black holes, neutron stars, and other such cosmic entities. These two additional parameters, along with the spec-

trographic, timing and imaging data, will aid researchers improve understanding about celestial bodies and ultimately unravel some of the mysteries of the universe.

But what is the polarisation of X-rays?

X-rays comprise electric and magnetic waves that are constantly in motion. Being sinusoidal waves, they do not follow a patterned direction of motion. However, a polarised X-ray is both organised and has two waves vibrating in the same direction.

When magnetars or black holes emit X-rays, they encounter a wide variety of materials in the universe. As X-rays pass through the thick cloud of materials, their electric component emits a photon in a changed direction, as it has now undergone scattering. In the process, the new photon has got polarised in a direction perpendicular to the

**EXPLAINED
SCIENCE**
EXPLAINED GLOBAL

WHY MANY US ALLIES HAVE NOT JOINED ITS RED SEA SECURITY OP

RISHIKA SINGH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 1



MV Chem Pluto was attacked by a drone on its way to New Mangalore on December 23. PTI

AS PART of a security initiative in the Red Sea named Operation Prosperity Guardian, the United States military said Sunday (December 31) its forces opened fire on Yemen's Houthi rebels. The Houthis confirmed 10 casualties.

The recent attacks on ships passing via the Red Sea, a crucial trade route that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, have prompted many businesses to pause the movement of cargo.

The Houthis have launched the attacks to protest Israel's military strikes on the Gaza Strip.

Operation Prosperity Guardian was announced on December 19. However, many US allies are yet to commit to the operation.

Initially, it was reported that nine countries were joining – the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles and Spain. Missing from the list are other major US partners, such as Australia, Japan, and most Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia.

Why has the Arab world kept away?

In the Middle East, it's about the stand on the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Ever since the creation of Israel in 1948, Arab countries have claimed a principled opposition to it and supported the cause of Palestine. Even as several countries have sought to normalise relations with Israel in recent years, its military action in Gaza has now drawn condemnation.

In this regard, the cause of Palestine has again gained centre stage. In October, various Arab countries – United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt and Morocco – condemned Israel's "flagrant violations of international law".

Joining a grouping against the Houthis' purported protest action could open these countries to criticism.

Saudi Arabia, in particular, has played a role in supporting the anti-Houthi

forces in the Yemen civil war. In around a decade since the war began, the Houthis have held onto power and Saudi Arabia now seems unwilling to invest further in the conflict. It is participating in peace talks. Simultaneously, it is pursuing closer ties with Iran, which is believed to be backing the Houthis. Thus, an explicit call against the Houthis would harm these efforts.

What about other partners?

Among other countries too, there is some reluctance to fully commit to the mission. Spain's defence ministry has said, "We will not participate unilaterally in the Red Sea operation." Italy is sending a naval frigate to the Red Sea "to protect its national interests in response to specific requests made by Italian shipowners".

This general lack of enthusiasm points to countries wanting to stay away from a war where Israel's actions are increasingly under question.

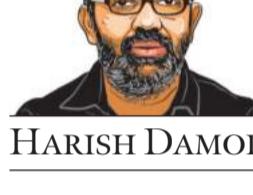
Australia has said it will not be sending a ship or a plane, but tripling its contribution to the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF). Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles told Sky News of the choice to focus more on its own strategic concerns, saying, "We need to be really clear around our strategic focus, and our strategic focus is our region – the north-east Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, the East China Sea, the Pacific."

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EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

Farm, food policy & Modi govts

Thanks to higher food price inflation, the Modi government has swung from pro-producer to pro-consumer in its second term. A shift in stance is unlikely till the Lok Sabha elections

**HARISH DAMODARAN**

THE NARENDRA Modi government's first term (Modi 1.0), from June 2014 to May 2019, was marked by low inflation. During this period, the general consumer price index (CPI) rose by an average 4.3% per year. The consumer food price index (CFPI) inflation was a full percentage point lower, at 3.3%.

The Modi government's second term from June 2019 till November 2023 (Modi 2.0), on the other hand, has seen CPI inflation average 5.8%, and CFPI inflation even higher, at 6.4%.

Another indicator of how sticky food inflation has been is its exceeding general retail inflation in 25 out of 52 months (there's no data for the two lockdown months of April and May 2020). During Modi 1.0, CFPI inflation ruled above CPI inflation in only 20 out of 60 months (see charts).

The year leading to the last Lok Sabha elections in April-May 2019 registered an average food inflation of just 0.2%, compared with the 6.3% during the 12 months ending November 2023.

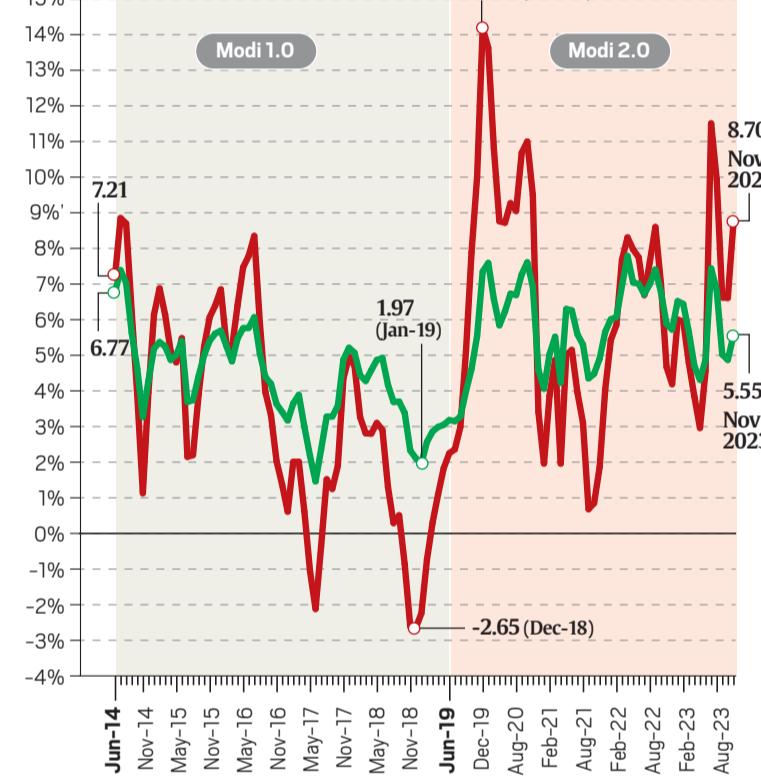
Policy response then...

Modi 1.0 and even the initial part of Modi 2.0 was a time of surpluses and low prices for most agricultural commodities. Record rice and wheat procurement at minimum support prices (MSP) resulted in their stocks in government godowns peaking at 109.5 million tonnes (mt) on July 1, 2021. Closing stocks of sugar with mills, too, touched an all-time-high of 14.3 mt in the 2018-19 season (October-September).

These surpluses, amid the Covid-induced economic shock, led the Modi government to double the monthly allocation of foodgrains under the public distribution system to 10 kg per person during April 2020-December 2022.

To enable sugar mills liquidate excess stocks and clear the cane dues of farmers, an incentive of up to Rs 10,448 per tonne was given on exports. The country shipped out unprecedented quantities – 5.9 mt, 7.2 mt and 11 mt – during the 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 seasons. Further, mills were incentivised to produce less sugar from their cane and more ethanol for blending with petrol. This was done by forcing oil companies to pay more for ethanol made from di-

CPI INFLATION (%YEAR-ON YEAR)



rect sugarcane juice/syrup or intermediate stage (B-heavy) molasses, as against the final residual (C-heavy) molasses.

The government also raised import duties on pulses and edible oils to boost realisations for domestic growers.

Prior to June 30, 2017, pulses imports attracted zero duty. On that date, a 10% import duty was levied on arhar (pigeon-pea) and masoor (red lentils). By 2017-end, there was a 30% duty on masoor and chana (chickpea), 50% on yellow/white peas, and annual import quantity restrictions (QR) of 0.2 mt on arhar and 0.3 mt on urad/moong (black/green gram).

In February-March 2018, the import duty was hiked to 40% for kabuli (large) chana and 60% for desi (small-sized) chana. In April 2018, yellow/white pea imports were subjected to an annual QR of 0.1 mt, followed by a minimum price of Rs 200/kg below which no consignment would be cleared in December 2019.

In edible oils, the basic customs duty was increased from 12.5% to 35% on imported crude soyabean and sunflower oil, and from 7.5% to 44% on crude palm oil, between September 2016 and June 2018. The duties for even their refined oils went up from 20% to 45% and 15% to 54% respectively.

The culmination of this period of surpluses was the Centre enacting its three farm reform laws in June 2020. The laws freed the trade in agricultural produce. Private agri-businesses could bypass government-regulated markets and buy directly from farmers. The large-scale entry of organised private players was expected to ease the government's burden, at least with regard to undertaking fiscally unsustainable MSP procurement operations.

...and now

The resurgence of food inflation, especially post Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, transformed the picture.

From around November 2020, the customs duty on crude palm, soyabean and sunflower oil was reduced in stages to nil. The same on their refined oils, too, was slashed to 12.5%. Even after adding a 5% agriculture cess and 10% social welfare surcharge, the effective duty is just 5.5% on crude oils and 13.75% on refined oils (which are exempted from the cess).

In pulses, the QRs on imports of arhar and urad were lifted on May 15, 2021. Their imports, and also of masoor, have been made duty-free. The Centre, late last month, announced the free imports of these pulses would continue till March 31, 2025. Earlier in the month, yellow/white peas imports were exempted from QR along with the 50% duty and Rs 200/kg minimum price condition. Currently, import of only moong is under QR and that of chana leviable to 40-60% duty.

There has been no liberalisation of imports in rice, wheat and sugar so far, one reason being their growers carrying more political voice. However, the government has banned exports of wheat and sugar since May 2022 and May 2023 respectively. In rice, only basmati and parboiled non-basmati shipments are permitted, subject to a \$950/tonne minimum export price stipulation and 20% duty respectively.

Sugar mills have been allowed to use cane juice/syrup and B-molasses for making ethanol only to the extent that 1.7 mt of sugar gets diverted during the 2023-24 season, down from 4.5 mt in 2022-23. Clearly, the government's priority today is to ensure that more cane goes for food (sugar) than for fuel (ethanol).

The road ahead

The changed supply situation from "surplus" to "tight" – public warehouses had only 62.8 mt of rice and wheat as on December 1, 2023, while sugar mills ended the 2022-23 season with six-year-low stocks of 5.7 mt – has meant that the Modi government's farm laws are dead both in letter (they were repealed in November 2021) and in spirit.

The last two years or more have seen export bans/curbs not just on wheat, rice and sugar, but even onion and de-oiled rice bran used as a cattle and poultry feed ingredient.

Stock limits – the quantity of produce that traders, processors or retailers can hold – have been clamped on wheat, arhar and urad.

With the latest annual retail food inflation number for November 2023 at 8.7%, while even higher at 10.3% for cereals and 20.2% for pulses, the restrictions are likely to remain, if not intensify, at least till the Lok Sabha polls. No ruling party would want dalroti to be foremost in the average voter's mind when it matters.

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How the Northeast was 'invented' 52 years ago, the 2 laws that created it

**SANJIB BARUAH**

TODAY, 'NORTHEAST India', or just 'the Northeast', is frequently used to refer to a diverse region, officially comprising eight states – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Siang, and Tripura.

Yet the term 'Northeast' took root only in the 1970s, after the enactment of two laws – the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act and the North-Eastern Council Act – by Parliament on December 30, 1971.

The Northeast

The eight states that officially make up the Northeast are a part of the North-

Eastern Council, a statutory advisory body that plays a role in development planning. Five of the eight – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram – were once a part of colonial Assam. Manipur and Tripura were princely states, with resident British political officers answering to the governor of Assam. Sikkim was judicially independent but under British paramountcy. It was annexed by India in 1975, and made a member of the North Eastern Council in 2001.

In 1914, the North East Frontier Tracts (modern-day Arunachal Pradesh and a part of Nagaland) was carved out, between the 'settled districts' of Assam, and the international border with Tibet and Burma.

Integration into Indian state

Thus, at the time of Independence, the region was unlike any other territory inherited from the British. Northeast India, as an official place-name, would be born out of the postcolonial Indian state's attempts to turn this imperial frontier space into the national space of a 'normal sovereign state.'

That the state of Nagaland was created a year after the China War is no accident. By making Nagaland into a state, Indian officials

hoped to create Naga stakeholders in the Indian dispensation that would help quell the Angami Zuphi Phizo-led rebellion. This would be the first step in upending the old administrative structure of the Northeast.

After 1947, 98 per cent of the region's borders became international (with China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Bhutan). A roughly 22 km wide land corridor in Siliguri, often referred to as the 'chicken's neck', became the Northeast's sole physical connection with the rest of India.

These concerns came to a head in the 1960s. India lost a border war with China in 1962, just as the movement for Naga independence was in full swing. India and Pakistan would then fight a war in 19

CLASSIFIEDS & TENDERS

13

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Nageshwar Sharma S/o Amar Nath Sharma R/o 1724, Arun Vihar, Sector-37, Noida(U.P) have changed my name to Nageshwar Kumar Sharma for all future purposes.

0040706204-1

I, Monica W/o Harish Kumar, R/o-B-268/2, First Floor, Derawala Nagar, Model Town-II, Delhi-110009, declare that I have changed my name from Monica, to Monica Sidana, Monica and Monica Sidana one and the same person. All concerns, please note.

0040706248-4

I, MAYA MAKWANA, wife of, Virendra Makwana, Presently residing at, New Aram Colony-Abhishhek Tenament, Opp. Krishna School Khodiyar-Colony, Jamnagar, Gujarat-361006, have changed my name from MAYA MAKWANA to MAKVANA MAYABEN, vide-Affidavit Dated-1.1.2024.

0040706249-9

I, MANU W/o, ANAND SINGH PRESENTLY, RESIDENT OF, VILLAGE-DEROLI JAT P.O.- DEROLI AHIR, TEHSIL-MOHINDERGARH, DIST-MOHINDERGARH STATE-HARYA NA, PIN-123028, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME, FROM MANU TO MANU BAI, VIDE-AFGIDAVIT, DATED 01-JAN-2024.

0040706249-8

I, hitherto known as SURENDRA KUMAR alias SURENDRA KUMAR VERMA, S/o Bhu Ram, R/o Flat, No.33, Plot No.99, Ras-Vihar Apartment, Indraprastha-Extn., Patparganj, Delhi-110092, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SURENDRA KUMAR VERMA.

0040706241-8

I, hitherto known as Rinku Pandey Alias Rinku Singh, D/o Sh. Shaileendra Kumar Pandey W/o Sh. Nilesh Kumar Ro Belan Bazar, Munger, Bihar-812101, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rinku Singh.

0040706255-11

I, Anish S/o Arun Kumar Sadh R/o 19110 Tower-7 Mahagun Mywood, Gaurcity-2, Sec-16C G.Noida have changed my name to Anish Sadh.

0070881254-1

I, Seema W/o, Suresh Pal R/o A-41/1, Garima Garden, Near Garimanjali School, Pasonda, ghaziabad, uttar Pradesh 201005 have changed my name to Seema Devi.

0040706202-1

I, Anish S/o Arun Kumar Sadh R/o 19110 Tower-7 Mahagun Mywood, Gaurcity-2, Sec-16C G.Noida have changed my name to Anish Sadh.

0070881254-1

I, hitherto known as SURENDRA KUMAR alias SURENDRA KUMAR VERMA, S/o Bhu Ram, R/o Flat, No.33, Plot No.99, Ras-Vihar Apartment, Indraprastha-Extn., Patparganj, Delhi-110092, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SURENDRA KUMAR VERMA.

0040706241-8

I, hitherto known as Rinku Pandey Alias Rinku Singh, D/o Sh. Shaileendra Kumar Pandey W/o Sh. Nilesh Kumar Ro Belan Bazar, Munger, Bihar-812101, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rinku Singh.

0040706255-11

I, Zarri Hasan, w/o, Khurram Suhaib Hasan R/o H.No.3078-B-3/F, Right-Side Pratap Street, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002, have changed my name to Zarri Hasan permanently.

0040706249-2

I, TAHIR S/o MOHD HAROON, R/o 525, MAIN-ROAD, BAZAR, CHATTA LAL MAIN VTC, DARYAGANJ, DELHI-110002, have changed my name to TAHIR MALIK.

0040706239-8

I, Suheb Hassan/Khurram Shoeb, s/o Zahid Hassan, R/o, H.No.3078-B-3/F, Right-Side Pratap Street, Darya Ganj, New Delhi-110002, have changed my name to Khurram Suhaib Hasan, permanently

0040706249-1

I, Shahi Rai, alias Suresh Rai, W/o Manoj Kumar Rai, R/o-A-218, Gali No.12/A, Om Nagar, Meethapur Badarpur, South East Delhi, New Delhi-110044, have changed my name, from Shahi Rai, alias Suresh Rai, to Suresh Rai, for all purposes.

0040706248-5

I, Dhiksha, D/o-Vikas Bansal, Address-B-71, National apartments, Dwarka sector-3, near MRV red light, plot no-4, Sector-3, Delhi 110078, changed my name to Dhiksha Bansal.

0040706239-6

I, Heena Dahya W/o, Subash Kumar R/o B 10 2nd Floor Rps Palms Sector 88 Faridabad, Haryana 121002 have changed my name to Heena.

004070617-1

I, Sakshi Aggarwal W/o Shri Shilen Aggarwal R/o-185, Second-Floor, Kohat-Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Sakshi Gupta.

0040706255-3

I, SONIA W/o AJAY KUMAR KOHLI, R/o-126, TARUN-ENCLAVE, PITAM-PURA, DELHI-110034, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SONIA KOHLI, FOR ALL, FUTURE PURPOSES.

0040706249-10

I, SAURABH S/o SANJAY KAPILA, R/o K-213-II-FLOOR, VIJAY VIHAR PHASE-2, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SAURABH KAPILA.

0040706239-4

I, SACHIN KUMAR, S/o SH.RAM SUDHAKAR, R/o-O-GALI.NO.4, BASAI, NEAR SRS HOSPITAL, SECTOR-70, NOIDA, DISTT.GAUTAM BUDDHANAGAR, U.P.-201301, changed my name to SACHIN SHUKLA.

0040706241-5

I, Ritika Talwar, W/o-Amit Takkar, Address-A-53, 1st-floor, malviya-nagar, New Delhi-110017, changed my name to Ritika Talwar Takkar.

0040706239-7

I, Ramandeep, S/o Kulvinder Singh, R/o House No.69A, Third Floor, Vihar, Nilothi Extn, Nangloi Delhi-110041, Have Changed my Name to Ramandeep Singh.

0040706241-1

I, Ritesh Jains/O, VEER KUMAR JAIN, R/o, 30, SECTOR-8, POCKET-C-7, ROHINI DELHI 110085, HAVE CHANGED THE NAME OF MY MINOR SON LAKSHAY JAIN TO DIVYANSH JAIN.

0040706241-4

I, Parshant S/o Bal Krishan R/o 262-B, DDA Janta Flats, Paschim Vihar Extension, New Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Prashant Kalia.

0040706255-4

I, Phoolan Rani W/o RAKESH KUMAR R/o HNO.344, G.T.K-DEPOT, SANJAY ENCLAVE, JAHANGIRPUR, DELHI-110033, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUNENA SHARMA.

0040706239-5

I, Nisha D/o Subhash Khanna, W/o M.Gaurav Sharma, R/o D-50, First Floor, Uppal Southend-Floors, Sector-49, Gurugram(HR), have changed my name to Nisha Khanna.

0040706241-3

I, Nageshwar Sharma S/o Amar Nath Sharma R/o 1724, Arun Vihar, Sector-37, Noida(U.P) have changed my name to Nageshwar Kumar Sharma for all future purposes.

0040706204-1

I, Monica W/o- Harish Kumar, R/o-B-268/2, First Floor, Derawala Nagar, Model Town-II, Delhi-110009, declare that I have changed my name, from Monica, to Monica Sidana, Monica and Monica Sidana one and the same person. All concerns, please note.

0040706248-4

I, Rajesh Pathak S/o Bishwa Nath Pathak (B.N. Pathak) residence-A-402, Homes-121, Sector-121, Noida-201307, have changed my name from Rajesh Kumar Pathak to Rajesh Pathak for all future purpose.

0040706200-1

I, Moncy C M/s/o Mathuray Chaprathu R/o C-203, F/Hari Nagar, Clock Tower, Delhi-110064 have changed my name to MONCY CHAPRATHU MALAYIL

0040706203-1

I, Mahender Singh Son of Rohtash Singh, Resident of VPO Ghamroj, Tehsil Sohna, District Gurgaon, Haryana-122102 have changed my name from Mahender Singh to Mohender Singh.

0040706226-1

I, Kunika Garg w/o Ankit Mittal R/o A-105, Prashant Vihar, Delhi-110085 have changed my name to KUNIKA MITTAL

0040706203-3

I, Kiran Khanna D/o J. C Khanna R/o C-22, Gaurav Apartment, Plot No.1, I. P. Extension, Patparganj, Delhi - 110092, inform that Kiran Khanna and Kiran are all the names of single and one person.

0040706247-1

I, MANINDER SINGH R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY CHILD NAME AJOONI KAUR TO AJOONEE KAUR.

0040706248-2

I, Juhi Kumari W/o Ranjit Kumar Singh R/o-0-3507/2, 3rd-Floor Narang, Colony Tri Nagar, Delhi-110035, have changed my name to Juhi Singh.

0040706242-1

I, HAROON S/o AKBAR ALI R/o 525, MAIN ROAD BAZAR, CHATTA LAL MAIN VTC, DARYAGANJ DELHI - 110002, have changed my name to MOHD HAROON.

0040706239-9

I, Hafeezuddin S/o BASHEERUDDIN R/o 755-756, GALI VAKEEL WALI, SUIWALAN, DARYA GANJ, NEW DELHI-110002, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO HAFIZUDDIN.

0040706255-2

I, Eswara Rao Madaka, father of M. JASWANTH SAI, Presently, residing at, cheering Enclave, Near COD-Gate, Naraina, New Delhi-110028, have changed my minor son's name, from M. JASWANTH SAI to MADAKA JASWANTH SAI.

0040706239-2

I, Dhiksha, D/o-Vikas Bansal, Address-B-71, National apartments, Dwarka sector-3, near MRV red light, plot no-4, Sector-3, Delhi 110078, changed my name to Dhiksha Bansal.

0040706239-6

I, Heena Dahya W/o, Subash Kumar R/o B 10 2nd Floor Rps Palms Sector 88 Faridabad, Haryana 121002 have changed my name to Heena.

004070617-1

I, Devraj Bhattacharya, S/o Deepak Kumar Bhattacharya R/o D-4/14, Gali no-4, Dyalpur, Delhi-94, declare that the name of my mother has been wrongly-written as Sushila Bhattacharya in my passport- Documents passport no-U1198349. The actual-my mother name is Susheela Devi Bhattacharya, for all the future purposes.

0040706239-3

I, Deekshi Arora W/o Maninder Singh R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO DEEKTI KAUR.

0040706248-3

I, Krishan K Sharma, S/o Brij Mohan Sharma, R/o E-245, SECTOR-27, NOIDA, have lost my original Lease Deed-1991 in Vol.No.707, as Document No. 169-170 Date: 15-01-1991 of Property No. E-245, Sector-27, Noida. If Found please Contact: 9891260011

0040706199-1

I, Shaguha chawla Mahajan w/o Arun Mahajan, R/o D404 Indian Institute of Public Administration Cooperative group Housing Society Ltd. Sector 6 Plot no. 26, Dwarka New Delhi 110075 have lost my original share certificate of Rs 100/- (document ref number sl No 49 as per the records)

0070881240-1

I, Krishan K Sharma, S/o Brij Mohan Sharma, R/o E-245, SECTOR-27, NOIDA, have lost my original Lease Deed-1991 in Vol.No.707, as Document No. 169-170 Date: 15-01-1991 of Property No. E-245, Sector-27, Noida. If Found please Contact: 9891260011

0040706199-1

I, Devraj Bhattacharya, S/o Deepak Kumar Bhattacharya R/o D-4/14, Gali no-4, Dyalpur, Delhi-94, declare that the name of my mother has been wrongly-written as Sushila Bhattacharya in my passport- Documents passport no-U1198349. The actual-my mother name is Susheela Devi Bhattacharya, for all the future purposes.

0040706239-3

I, Deekshi Arora W/o Maninder Singh R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO DEEKTI KAUR.

0040706248-3

I, Bhanwar Singh, S/o Prahlad Singh, R/o-E-38, BLOCK-E, SHAHISTRI-NAGAR, NORTH WEST, DELHI-110052, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHANWAR SINGH SHEKHAWAT.

0040706255-1

I, Azaan Moinuddin S/o Gulam Moinuddin Qureshi R/o, Flat-No. D-206, Friends-Circle, CGHS-Ltd, Plot-No.7, Sector-12, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075, have changed my name to Azaan Moinuddin Qureshi.

0070877719-6

I, Krishan K Sharma, S/o Brij Mohan Sharma, R/o E-245, SECTOR-27, NOIDA, have lost my original Lease Deed-1991 in Vol.No.707, as Document No. 169-170 Date: 15-01-1991 of Property No. E-245, Sector-27, Noida. If Found please Contact: 9891260011

0040706199-1

I, Deekshi Arora W/o Maninder Singh R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO DEEKTI KAUR.

0040706248-3

I, Bhanwar Singh, S/o Prahlad Singh, R/o-E-38, BLOCK-E, SHAHISTRI-NAGAR, NORTH WEST, DELHI-110052, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHANWAR SINGH SHEKHAWAT.

0040706255-1

I, Azaan Moinuddin S/o Gulam Moinuddin Qureshi R/o, Flat-No. D-206, Friends-Circle, CGHS-Ltd, Plot-No.7, Sector-12, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075, have changed my name to Azaan Moinuddin Qureshi.

0070877719-6

I, Deekshi Arora W/o Maninder Singh R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO DEEKTI KAUR.

0040706248-3

I, Bhanwar Singh, S/o Prahlad Singh, R/o-E-38, BLOCK-E, SHAHISTRI-NAGAR, NORTH WEST, DELHI-110052, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHANWAR SINGH SHEKHAWAT.

0040706255-1

I, Azaan Moinuddin S/o Gulam Moinuddin Qureshi R/o, Flat-No. D-206, Friends-Circle, CGHS-Ltd, Plot-No.7, Sector-12, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075, have changed my name to Azaan Moinuddin Qureshi.

0070877719-6

I, Deekshi Arora W/o Maninder Singh R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO DEEKTI KAUR.

0040706248-3

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0040706255-1

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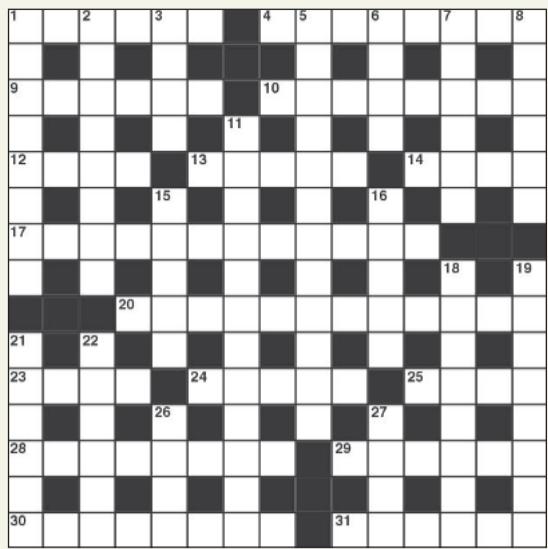
0070877719-6

I, Deekshi Arora W/o Maninder Singh R/o WZ-479, SECOND-FLOOR, STREETNO.25, SHIV-NAGAR, DELHI-110058, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO DEEKTI KAUR.

0040706248-3

I, Bhanwar Singh, S/o Prahlad Singh, R/o-E-38, BLOCK-E, SHAHISTRI-NAGAR, NORTH WEST, DELHI-110052, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHANWAR SINGH SHEKHAWAT.</b

CROSSWORD 5250



ACROSS

- 1 Basis of pancake for buffet (6)
- 4 Wooden horse (8)
- 9 Luggage returned to a place in Greece (6)
- 10 Tyres can burst in race (8)
- 12 Our gestures reveal a yearning (4)
- 13 Rough number (5)
- 14 A club with lofty aims (4)
- 15 Nostalgia seems not to need hospital treatment (12)
- 20 The same as complete agreement? (2,10)
- 23 Means of transport sometimes sprung (4)
- 24 Her home is the earth (5)
- 25 Not a square dance presumably? (4)
- 28 Many a creature seen in a wood (8)
- 29 Weapon needs new repair (6)
- 30 Regular correspondence between sides (8)
- 31 Produced in a dramatic way (6)

DOWN

- 1 The bogus arrangement asked for (8)
- 2 People take part in it on the side (4,4)
- 3 Consumes when tea's served out (4)
- 5 Extremely important parts of the body (5,3,4)
- 6 Dish from the Wild West (4)
- 7 A person's character aunt is upset about (6)
- 8 Intentionally exasperating? (6)
- 11 I can report it improved, doctor (12)
- 15 Turncoats of course (5)
- 16 Business attracting a lot of interest (5)
- 18 Fighting and winning (8)
- 19 Announced a number have cleared out (8)
- 21 Impressions of a country's postal service (6)
- 22 Possibly border on a criminal act (6)
- 26 Backward - hence a monster (4)
- 27 Lent; not lento (4)

Solutions Crossword 5249 Across: 1 Class, 4 Flouted, 8 Ass, 9 Intestacy, 10 Dosages, 11 Get-up, 13 Scatty, 15 Steppie, 18 Baton, 19 Allured, 21 Smugglers, 23 Wan, 24 Eclator, 25 Tares Down, 1 Czardas, 2 Assistant, 3 Swing, 4 Fetish, 5 On sight, 6 Tea, 7 Dry up, 12 Top drawer, 14 Tonight, 16 Endings, 17 Lear, 18 Baste, 20 Liszt, 22 Use

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

I'M THINKING OF WRITING A MEMOIR...

RJ, DO YOU REALLY THINK YOUR LIFE IS THAT INTERESTING?



...I'VE BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK!
ONCE.

CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

..SIGHH... THEY SAY NOBODY LIES ON HIS DEATHBED WISHING HE'D SPENT MORE TIME AT THE OFFICE.



WELL, I'D BETTER GET TO THE OFFICE.

THAT WAS OBVIOUSLY SOME SORT OF COMMENTARY.

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

I believe that one of life's greatest risks is _____ risk. - Oprah (5,6,2)

DAEER

AEEENNNT

PRIOR

IINDGV

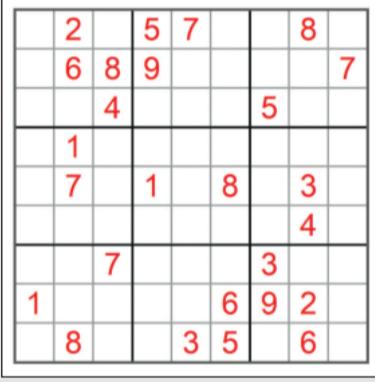
Answers: EARIER, PRIOR, NEUTER, DINING
SOLUTION: EARIER, PRIOR, NEUTER, DINING
Believe that one of life's greatest risks is never daring to risk. - Oprah

SUDOKU 5429

Difficulty Level 2

Instructions

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



Difficulty Level

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5428



SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



AMAR

General public is here by informed that this person (depicted in the photo) namely: Amar S/o Sh. Haripal R/o Gali No. 3, Salapur Khera, New Delhi, has been missing/kidnapped since 05.12.2023 at 05:00 PM from his house. In this regard DD No. 64-A, dated 20.12.2023 has been registered at P.S. Kapashera, New Delhi. Since efforts have been made by local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far.

His physical description is as under:-

Sex: Male, **Age:** 21 years, **Height:** 5' 6" ft., **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** White colour Shirt and black colour Pant.

Any person who has information or clue about this missing/kidnapping person may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Tel. No.: 011-24368638/24368641
Fax No.: 011-24368639

P.S. Kapashera, Delhi
Ph. No. 011-25063758
Mob. No. - 7065036226
DP/15057/SW/2023

Rural Works Department
RFP CORRIDENDUM

Corridendum No: RWD (HQ)/MSP/ET-2023-03

Ref no.: मु030-4(जु) विविध कार्य – 06 – 58 / 2023-6564

With reference to Invitation for Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of System Integrator (SI) Cum Master Service Provider (MSP) for Development, Maintenance & Operation Of Digital Project And Asset Management Information System (DAMIS) - Cum -Intelligent Rural Road Maintenance Monitoring System (IRRMMSS) in the state of Bihar, which was issued vide letter no. RWD (HQ)-MSP-01/2023-24, dated: 19.10.2023 ,Corridendum No: RWD (HQ)/MSP/ET-2023-01&Corridendum No: RWD (HQ)/MSP/ET-2023-02and published through advertisement PR No. 010642 (RWD) 2023-24,11632 (RWD) 2023-24 and 012937 (RWD) 2023-24 respectively, the earlier schedule of dates are being now modified as per column 4 of table below due to some unavoidable circumstances.

Schedule of Dates

Sl. No.	Description	Published Date & Time earlier	Modified Date and Time
1	Date of issue of RFP	18-10-2023	18-10-2023
2	Period of sale/downloading of RFP Document	From 27.10.2023, 11:00 AM IST to 29.12.2023, 3:00 PM IST	From 27.10.2023, 11:00 AM IST to 15.01.2024, 3:00 PM IST
3	Pre-Bid Meeting Date/Time	16.11.2023 at 03:00 PM IST in the Conference Hall of Rural Works Department, Government of Bihar, 5th Floor, Vishwesariya Bhawan, Bailey Road, Patna-800015.	No Change
4	Last Date and Time for Receipt of Proposal	29.12.2023 upto 3:00 PM	15.01.2024 upto 3:00 PM
5	Date and Time of opening of Pre-Qualification Proposal	29.12.2023 at 3:30 PM	15.01.2024 at 3:30 PM
6	Date and Time of opening of Technical Proposal	To be intimated	To be intimated
7	Date and Time of opening of Financial Proposal	Will be informed later on	Will be informed later on

NOTE- Pre Bid quarries can be view on departmental website (<https://rwdbihar.gov.in/NoticeBoard.aspx>)

All other terms & conditions other than mentioned in Schedule of Dates shall remain same. For any queries regarding e-tendering process kindly contact - Office of Chief Engineer-4, Rural Works Department, Government of Bihar, 5th Floor, Vishweshwariya Bhawan, Bailey Road, Patna -800015 or email atce4.rwd@gmail.com.

This information is available on www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar.aspx

PR. No. 014440 (RWD) 2023-24

(Amrendra Kumar Sinha)
Engineer-In-Chief -Cum-
Additional Commissioner
-Cum -Special Secretary
RWD, Bihar, Patna

नशे की मार, बबाद करे सुखी परिवार।

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Your heart may tell you one thing, your head another. You may feel like losing yourself in the crowd, but you seem to have a compulsion to push forward and take the lead. If you take a risk, on your own head be it: you can't expect other people to pick up the pieces.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Now is your chance to get down to basics. Planets in illuminating and inspired regions of your chart are showing you the way forward. News from overseas or far away may alter travel or family plans; perhaps because you'll see that a proposal might no longer work.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Circumstances at work could be hard to grasp, but it may be the financial angle which is most pressing. If you have heard unfortunate news about a purchase or investment, then it might still be possible to snatch a major victory from the jaws of defeat.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Any confusion that has been clouding your mind should now be dispelled. An obstacle could be blown out of the water and you should be completely free. Yet liberty, the philosophers tell us, is a terrifying thing, mainly because suddenly there's a world of choice opening out before you.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Swift action is vital, so no wasting time. You may do best to bring partners in on the act as quickly as you can, bearing in mind that a recently completed arrangement could have a great many rough ends to smooth out. Perhaps there are other people who can help with the loose details.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

The overwhelming planetary influence is on leisure and self-indulgence, intermingled with the odd cultural delight. Younger relatives may be in need of sympathy and support, so do your best. It actually makes you feel warm inside when you see how much people you love value your advice.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You may be quite justifiably hurt or upset by others' unsympathetic attitude. However, you are capable of giving as good as you get, and you might even be the cause of one or two social disturbances. You may soon convince other people that you are not to be messed around.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Difficulties in a family or romantic relationship may have surfaced. You will be too busy coping with life's essential tasks to bother with other people's inflated egos. It's time to leave someone to take responsibility for their own affairs.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

A recent argument or difference of opinion will be overtaken by events. Home and family pressures may occupy much more of your time, so you might have to turn down social possibilities. However, if a cancellation is necessary, make sure that you don't give the wrong impression.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You may pursue any proposals which will help you to deal with material problems. It may be another few days before you can see your way clearly through a financial or economic minefield. Once you've seen the future, you may realise that only radical and far-reaching solutions will work.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

If you are reeling under the force of events, you're nicely in tune with your stars. The current solar-lunar alignment challenges you to make a clean sweep, put the past behind you and straightforward relationships with people who should know better.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Your sensitive skills may be much undervalued, but anyone who knows what's good for them will listen intently to your special insights. Don't be blown off course by suspicions which are almost certainly unfounded, and which have nothing to do with you in any case.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You may be quite justifiably hurt or upset by others' unsympathetic attitude. However, you are capable of giving as good as you get, and you might even be the cause of one or two social disturbances. You may soon convince other people that you are not to be messed around.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER



INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)
02 January, 2024

ITBP salutes its brave hearts Sub-Inspector Narendra Singh of 21st Bn and Constable Deven Kumar of 14th Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2023 & 2004.



B-1526
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA,
"e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
WORKS DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL),
ODISHA, NIRMAN SOUDHA, BHUBANESWAR

E-mail: ceroads.bbsr@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-DPI & R-32/2023-24

- The Chief Engineer (DPI & Roads), Odisha behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Roadwork as mentioned below:
- Nature of work Road works
- No. of work 20 Nos.
- Tender Paper cost Rs.10,00,000
- Class of Contractor A Class/Special Class/Super Class
- Available of bid document From 10.00 A.M. of 05.01.2024 to 5.30 P.M. of 20.01.2024
- Date of opening of Bid Dt.22.01.2024 at 11.00 AM
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <https://tenderodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

OIPR-34111/11/0053/2324

Sd/-
Chief Engineer

(DPI & Roads), Odisha (I/C)

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER



More the merrier at Paris?

Should India send a large Olympics squad?

AT THE Tokyo Olympics, just two Indian athletes, Neeraj Chopra and discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur, reached the finals of their events among the 26 participants. This is not counting the race walk events where only direct finals are the norm. This may paint a dismal picture of Indian athletics and would naturally add muscle to the argument whether every qualified athlete should be sent to the Games in the first place.

But sports isn't always about stats and data. Steeplechaser Avinash Sable's national record-breaking effort wasn't good enough for a spot in the finals. Likewise, the 4x400m men's quartet couldn't make the cut for the finale despite running their hearts out to rewrite an Asian record. "Fastest in Asia but not quick enough" read the *The Indian Express* headline, summing up the situation. Since these athletes did not make it to the finals can their solid performances just be binned? Of course not.

Crystal-ball gazing is the most futile activity that "sports experts" engage in. Don't recall even a single athletics preview that backed Neeraj Chopra, an Olympics debutant, to finish on the podium. Qualifying for the Olympics in a measurable sport like athletics is no mean feat. The two-tier system-qualification guidelines and rankings - in athletics leaves little room for luck or any outside interference. Every athlete truly earns a spot and to deny them on the basis of their predictive potential is unfair. The experience athletes gain in such big-ticket events cannot be replicated in any training conditions.

The only exception that should be made is in the case of injuries or fitness issues. The federation has the complete right to ascertain if an athlete is fully fit and not hindering injuries just to make it to the Games and earn the tag of an Olympian. That being said, every athlete in track and field who has qualified for the Olympics deserves to be on the flight to Paris.

ANDREW AMSAN

Should Lakshya Sen switch to an attacking game?

A SEASON with 11 first-round exits from 22 international meets, and ending with a loss to an unheralded opponent at the Nationals means Lakshya Sen is staring at an uphill challenge in qualifying for the Olympics. His defense-heavy style, though dazzling with dives and reflex pickups, was always going to be punishing on the body in the long run. But are things so dire that he needs to switch to an attacking game?

Some of Sen's shots have gotten predictable, and opponents are reading him rather easily. His body language is misunderstood as being casual, when it is in fact his lack of attacking variations from the back that make it a technical issue more than a temperamental one.

It is evident that he will need to find offensive weapons to cut short the interminable rallies before he runs out of patience as is his wont.

The trouble with the switch is that the shoulder injury has seen him lose timing



Sen: Change of gear

MUMMY RETURNS

Osaka returns from a maternity break, wins her first match in Brisbane

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRISBANE, JANUARY 1

MOTHERHOOD HAS helped give Naomi Osaka a new mindset when things are getting tough on court.

In her first competitive match since September 2022, the four-time major winner was broken while serving for the match and needed three match points in the tiebreaker before converting a 6-3, 7-6 (9) victory over Tamara Korpatsch on Monday at the Brisbane International.

Osaka didn't play the Australian Open last year and later revealed she was pregnant. She and her partner, rapper Cordae, became parents to daughter Shai in Los Angeles in July.

"It's a big change overnight," former No. 1-ranked Osaka said of returning to the tour as a mom. "For me, I love it a lot because ... in

a way I would say (Shai) has helped me grow up so much so quickly."

"Off the court I'm more aware of people and I appreciate them a lot more — even my opponents and everything," she said. "On the court it's just helping me be strong and staying in the moment more." Every time she missed an opportunity to win the match on Monday, she composed herself and focused on giving herself another chance.

"I was super nervous the whole time," Osaka said. "A part of me felt like Shai was watching me. I wanted to do my best for her."

"While I'm playing, I'm aware of it in the sense that I want to be a good role model for my daughter. Other than that I think I'm pretty much trying to be the same old me." Before Monday, the first day of 2024, Osaka had only played one competitive match since her first-round exit at the 2022 U.S. Open.

But she has spent many months preparing for her return, including a renewed focus



Osaka and her partner, rapper Cordae, became parents to daughter Shai in July.

on living in the moment.

"The last couple years that I played before I had my daughter, I didn't return as much love as I was given," she told the crowd at Pat Rafter Arena. "So I really feel like that's what I want to do in this chapter." And, of course, she's paying more attention to the younger people in the crowd.

"I guess like towards the end when I was signing autographs, I was more aware of kids," she told a post-match news conference. "I see them differently now because now I'm a mom, too, and I can picture Shai being that age." Osaka will play a fellow former No. 1, three-time Brisbane International champion Karolina Pliskova, in the second round.

Persistent rain meant matches on outside

courts were suspended, confining matches to the covered main stadium.

In the men's draw, top-seeded Holger Rune rallied to beat Australian Max Purcell 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 after third-seeded Ben Shelton, the 21-year-old American who reached the US Open semifinals last year, lost 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-3 to Roman Safiullin.

The 26-year-old Safiullin is ranked 39th but had wins over Carlos Alcaraz and Alexander Zverev last year.

The Brisbane International is one of the key tune-up events for the Australian Open which begins January 14 in Melbourne. World's leading stars are expected to enter the year's first Grand Slam. Former champion Rafael Nadal, returning after injury, is expected to be the star attraction.

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Picking both the stars - Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli - risks being labelled conservative. But has not conservatism borne fruits in the T20 World Cup?

Should Rohit, Virat play T20 World Cup?

IT'S NOT about sentiments, to give Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli potentially one last shot at winning the T20 World Cup. But there is no reason to look beyond them. Kohli was the tournament's highest run-getter and played one of the all-time great T20 knocks by an Indian batsman. He hasn't played another T20I since India's semi-final exit in the 2022 World Cup, but enjoyed a prosperous IPL. The tally of 639 runs is his second-best run-haul ever, so is the

strike rate that is a nudge below 140. If any, he has only reinvigorated his T20 game and looks in no mood to slow down.

Rohit's recent T20I outings have not been quite eye-catching, but the freedom he displayed in the ODI World Cup is a reliable indicator of his mindset and method.

A cricketer like him should not be valued merely through the prism of numbers in a particular format, but his recent form, even if it is in other formats. Little doubt that

Rohit was India's tempo-setter in the 50-over World Cup, the pin-up boy of their gung-ho approach. Though a spate of openers have performed in recent T20Is — Sai Sudharsan the most promising of them — Rohit towers above them all with his body of work, as it is with Kohli.

Picking both risks being labelled conservative. But has not conservatism borne fruits in the T20 World Cup? A perfect case study is Australia's squad that won the

2021 World Cup in UAE. It was a supposedly old and worn-out group, but when the big moments came, their wisdom and experience made a telling difference. A young, dynamic-looking team might win you bilateral series, give you fleeting thrills, but for the big tournaments, you need the big names, the past masters, inspired to make a big splash before their sneak into the sunset.

SANDIP G

SHASHANK NAIR

Sreejesh or Krishan: Who should get the nod?

AT THE Tokyo Olympics, a long wait for Indian hockey came to an end. After 41 years, the Indian men's team returned to the podium. And crucial to that bronze medal was a moment that will go down in Indian hockey folklore. With barely any time left on the clock — 6.4 seconds to be precise — Germany got a penalty corner while trailing 4-5. The shot on goal was well struck, but Sreejesh got his left hand out in time and not just saved it, but palmed it away far enough to ensure there was no rebound. In those milliseconds, he ensured India's dream — his dream — was realised. He regards that as perhaps the most important save of his career.

Fast forward three years, and the 35-year-old is still very much in contention. But his position as India's No. 1 goalkeeper won't be straightforward this time around. The rise of Krishan Bahadur Pathak, nearly a decade younger than Sreejesh, is going to

make that decision tricky for the Indian management.

Under Craig Fulton, as we saw under Graham Reid, India have continued to rotate their two main goalkeepers each quarter irrespective of the magnitude of the match they are playing. That constant rotation has kept Sreejesh on his toes, but more importantly, has allowed Pathak to grow in confidence. Pathak has impressed in the chances he has received in recent times, with his ability to make reflex saves with the stick standing out in the Pro League. It will be the Pro League where once again presumably he will be given

the chances to stake his claim. India's Tokyo campaign ended with Sreejesh perched on top of the posts. He has maintained his high standards since too but whether he will be present in the posts between Paris is an interesting decision that awaits Fulton and Co.

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN



Sreejesh vs Krishan



Deepak Punia

Should India hire foreign coaches for wrestling?

WHAT'S THE one thing other than the obvious Olympic medals that links Sushil Kumar, Yogeshwar Dutt, Bajrang Punia and Ravi Dahiya?

The fabled Chhatrasal Stadium, where each of them mastered their art, yes. But there's another link that ties them all — their march to the Olympic podium was overseen by a foreign expert. Sakshi Malik remains an outlier in that she's the only medal-winning wrestler since Sushil triggered the unprecedented spree in 2008 to stand on the podium without having to rely on outside support.

For the rest, the foreign hand proved to be the ultimate difference. Sushil and Yogeshwar spent months together with Georgian Vladimir Merstervishvili before the London Games. Bajrang had Shako Bendinitis, also from Georgia, and Ravi had Russia's Kamal Malikov in their corners at Tokyo.

As Indian wrestling grappled with controversies on multiple fronts — with former

president Brij Bhushan Sharai Singh at the centre of them all — the needs of the wrestlers seem to have gone unnoticed. The Olympic hopefuls have been crying for professional help from abroad.

Foreign coaches open the wrestlers' eyes to modern techniques, expose them to the world of sports science and are better at improvising strategies during a bout and communicating them effectively from the side of the mat. It's something, wrestlers say, their Indian trainers haven't been able to do well.

Only Deepak Punia, one of the most consistent performers, has a foreign personal coach — Russia's Kamal Malikov, who was Ravi's coach in Tokyo. And it is learnt Bajrang will soon avail the services of another Russia-born wrestler, Ali Shabanov. Their arrangements have been done independently through their backers, not by the federation or the government.

MIHIR VASAVDA

which begins January 14 in Melbourne. World's leading stars are expected to enter the year's first Grand Slam. Former champion Rafael Nadal, returning after injury, is expected to be the star attraction.

BRIEFLY

Waugh slams SA board, BCCI & ICC for ignoring Test cricket

Sydney: Former Australia skipper Steve Waugh has slammed the International Cricket Council and top cricket boards, including the BCCI, for not caring about Test cricket after South Africa named a depleted red-ball squad for the tour of New Zealand, prioritising its T20 league over the longest format. Cricket South Africa (CSA) have named a second-string Test squad which has seven uncapped players, including a new captain, for next month's two-Test series against New Zealand. "Obviously, they don't care. It's going to happen if the South African cricket board are any indication of the future, keeping their best players at home," Waugh told the Sydney Morning Herald. "If I was New Zealand, I wouldn't even play the series. I don't know why they're even playing. Why would you when it shows a lack of respect for New Zealand cricket?"

PTI

Wrestling camps to commence in Feb

New Delhi: The national wrestling camps for men and women will commence in Sonipat and Patiala respectively from February 9, according to the IOA-constituted ad-hoc committee for the sport here on Monday. With the Asian Olympics Qualifying and World Qualifying tournaments around the corner, the camps will begin almost immediately after the conclusion of the senior National Championships in Jaipur on February 5.

PTI

Jena, Manu added to AIU testing pool

New Delhi: Asian Games silver medallist javelin thrower Kishore Jena and D P Manu have joined Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra in the Registered Testing Pool (RTP) of Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), the global track and field anti-doping watchdog. Chopra, who is also the reigning world champion and Asian Games gold medallist, has been there in the RTP for some time but Jena and Manu were new additions in the list announced by AIU for the first quarter of 2024, indicating the rise of Indian javelin throwers at the world stage.

PTI

Warner retires from ODIs as well as Tests

Sydney: Australia opener David Warner said on Monday he had decided to call time on his one-day international and test match careers to spend more time with his family. The 37-year-old, a key member of the Australia team that won the 50-over World Cup for the sixth time in India last year, will play his 112th and final test against Pakistan at his home Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) starting on Wednesday. "I said at the World Cup that I wanted to get through that... but I've decided to also announce my retirement from that format," Warner said. "It'll help the one-day team move along a bit... but if they need me, they know where I am," said an emotional Warner, with his wife and children also present. Warner scored 22 tons and 6,932 runs at an average of 45.30 over 161 one-day internationals after his debut in 2009, winning two World Cups in the format. Australia's victory against India in the Nov. 19 final of the World Cup last year remains Warner's last ODI outing.

REUTERS



TEST AT PARADISE

The scenic Newlands Cricket Ground in Cape Town, the venue for the second Test match between India and South Africa. PTI

Kohli prepares to face Burger, Iyer gets a long 'short ball' lesson at nets

CAPE TOWN: VIRAT KOHLI looked a million dollars as he did extensive simulation for South Africa's left-arm pacer Nandre Burger but Shreyas Iyer's problems seemed to continue while facing a barrage of short balls at nets here on Monday.

On the New Year's Day, it was business as usual for Kohli, who had an extended session lasting close to an hour. First, he was at the centre nets against bowlers and then he faced high-intensity throwdowns for about 20 to 25 minutes at outside nets.

Kohli is known to come to nets with specific purpose and on Monday, it seemed he wanted to extensively bat against a left-arm pacer. Since the Indian team's pace bowling roster doesn't include a left-armer, a net bowler was summoned and Kohli faced a good 25 to 30 deliveries from him in between playing against Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, R Ashwin and Avesh Khan.

Kohli was repeatedly seen putting in a big stride forward and at times walking a couple of steps to whip the bowler through mid wicket. However, the only problem here was that the youngster provided by Cricket South Africa (CSA) was at least 15 clicks lesser in terms of pace compared to Burger, who took seven wickets on debut in the opening Test at Centurion. The net bowler's lack of pace allowed Kohli to read the inswing and then walk down a couple of steps to flick him through mid wicket.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Swapping Federer for Steyn

Once harbouring ambitions to be on the ATP Tour, how Burger shed his childhood tennis dreams to become a promising fast bowler

RAHUL PANDEY
JANUARY 1

NEIL LEVENSON couldn't contain his excitement. The year was 2014 and the cricket coach at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) in Johannesburg thought he'd just seen the future of South Africa's pace bowling. He recognised that there was still a lot to work on - technical stuff such as the alignment from the landing foot to the release point - but all of that didn't matter.

The coach had seen enough - in one nets session - to be firm in his belief. And so, he made it known to the boy himself. "You could play professional cricket and bowl at 140kph." There was however one tiny matter of concern.

Nandre Burger didn't want to become a professional cricketer. The sport for him had been more of a pastime at WITS, while he pursued a degree in sports psychology. Playing what little club cricket he had until that point of time was a soothing comfort after his short romance with Tennis.

Harboring ambitions to be on the ATP tour, teenage Nandre would litter the YouTube with searches of Roger Federer's play compilations. With that and the coaches at his high school, Nandre had developed a nigh unplayable serve. However, it would be the unbecoming of his five-year obsession as the 15-year-old started developing back spasms and was forced into quitting the racquet sport.

Cricket hadn't been completely out of the picture. Growing up in Krugersdorp, a mining city in the Gauteng province, Nandre's initiation into it had been via the makeshift wooden stick and foil paper ball contests with his mother and granny. He'd played some amount of club cricket as well up until that nets session at WITS. But a future in which he played professional cricket and bowled 140kph just seemed too far off the grid when Levenson sug-



Back spasms forced Nandre Burger to quit tennis and pursue cricket. PTI

gested so. "I was very excited," the coach stresses as he recalls his first meeting with the 'raw' left-armer. "He had a lot of ability in the start. It just needed to be organized a bit better and be worked really hard at," Levenson tells The Indian Express.

It took almost a decade's time but Levenson's bet has finally come good and how. In less than three weeks time, Nandre Burger has gone on to debut across all formats for the Proteas, and earned himself a first IPL contract with Rajasthan Royals. His most recent exploits - seven wickets on a Boxing Day Test debut - was the moment of catharsis that both Levenson and Nandre had been working towards since that exchange at the WITS nets.

"From seeing him that first day all those years ago to seeing him sprint and do his thing (in Centurion) was incredibly satisfying. He's

now getting the fruits of his toil," says Levenson.

Burger's memory of the first meeting with Levenson is more vivid. "I remember he slapped his forehead with his hand and told me, 'you have so many bad habits you have to unlearn,'" Burger told Cricket Fanatics magazine. When the two first met, Nandre had been at best "bowling late 120s and early 130s." Levenson knew he had to slow cook the 19-year-old to forge the speedster out of him. It took two years before Nandre hit the first of their targets - consistently bowling 135 kph. But an even bigger priority, Levenson stresses, was to ensure that his pupil got used to his own bowling action and alignment.

"From a timing point of view, the action didn't work as efficiently as it does now. And the alignment was a big thing. He tended to

TRIUMPH OF THE UNORTHODOX

Nandre's is not the most textbook of bowling sequences - it hasn't been since coach Levenson first saw him bowl. The skip generated by the left-armer might be mistaken for a UFC fighter kicking his opponent. He has tried to shed that move a few times in the past, but would always come back to it. That however, never was a flaw as long as his overall form led to better alignment, believes his long time coach. He immediately refers to what former India coach Ravi Shastri had said on the comms in the first Test. "Bharat Arun, the former India bowling coach, saw a 15-year-old Jasprit Bumrah at the NCA and decided against forcing him to change his unorthodox run up." "Where would the Bumrahs of this world be if we tweaked every single thing as coaches," remarks Levenson.

push the ball a lot getting over his front leg, bracing it consistently while getting through the crease." Levenson shares.

Curse sorted by jugaad

Alignment as a whole was bound to be an issue given Nandre choice of bowling arm, his coach reckons.

A lot of the times left-arm quicks tend to line up almost as if they're bowling to a left-hand batter," Levenson explains. "When they're bowling to the right-handers, it's difficult for their body to get through - to activate the hips and get over their front leg. So a lot of the alignment in terms of the in the crease, run up

and where his body is - from where he takes off to when he is in the crease - is very important. It's easier for right-hand bowlers, the majority of your life you bowl to right-handed batters, so that alignment is naturally a little bit better. When they bowl to a southpaw, they go a little bit wide of the crease - running to the keeper. The issue left-hand bowlers face gets ignored sometimes. Their positions to the opposite side batters are not great at the crease."

This is where Nandre's new favorite YouTube search came into play. "He's a big fan of Dale Steyn and a lot of the great South African pacers we've had over the years have been right-arm bowlers. We used to watch right-arm seamers and flip the videos around, to mirror the image, to get the left-handed pov. Looking at the right-armed angles, the alignment was much easier to do."

But even having honed that aspect of his bowling over the years, came his Test debut, Nandre was indeed put to test. Struggling to swing the ball back into the right-handers (from over the wicket) - a shortcoming Levenson had pinpointed in his formative years - on Day 3, the left-armer resorted to age-old way out.

"When he struggled a little bit, he went round the wicket. There was a bit of a variable bounce as well, but as soon as he lined up, pace was good and he obviously had the skills to bring the ball back in and take it away." Both KL Rahul and Ravichandran Ashwin found themselves poking consecutive deliveries outside the off stump and South Africa's debutant quick had all but ensured an early win. A debut, a December not even his most staunch of backers saw coming.

However, Levenson suggests this isn't it for his pupil. "The next big target - even though he's touching it - we're calling it Project 150. To try and bowl it consistently. It's quite a task, I know, but he will be a 'nightmare' for any batting unit when he gets there." Who's to argue?

'24 promises more of '23: Ronaldo-Messi rivalry, Pep's evolution & more



Lionel Messi turns 37 in June and Cristiano Ronaldo becomes 39 in February.

Football and football watchers would not complain, for they have become an indispensable part of their footballing consciousness.

The man who continues to change, continues to add layers to his footballing vision, and continues to debunk his own theories, is Messi's Barcelona mentor, Guardiola. The man who conceived the idea of the False 9, making Messi its greatest exponent, the man

whose team practised the most intricate football-art forms, the tika taka, which he would rubbish as "ugly", the man who has built a football empire in Manchester, is now embracing something he has never done in his life. In the past, he has detested dribblers, preferring those with passing range and positional play rather than those prone to dribbles and such-like trickery.

This season he has torn that manual apart. All of his new signings in the transfer window—Jeremy Doku, Mateo Kovacic, Matheus Nunes and Josko Gvardiol are all good dribblers who could sneak in through a maze of legs and tip-toe through narrow spaces. All of them have been doing exactly that this season, carrying the ball upfield at a rapid pace rather than progressing forward with intricate passing patterns. It's perhaps the most direct style of play he has ever professed.

It's a direct response to teams employing the same Guardiola press-and-pass style to suffocate them. At a time when man-marking has become increasingly tight, having dribbling skills would help silencing past the opponents.

All of these aforementioned names have high ball progressive carry percentages this season, and are much better when taking players one-on-one than classical Guardiola players. Whether he would win a fourth straight league title or not, he has established a beautiful football empire.

As with all empires, one is built on the ruins of another. If Manchester City are soaring, their neighbours Manchester United are plummeting.

The much-maligned Glazers have sold 25 percent of their stakes to billionaire Jim

Ratcliffe, whose trusted men would now oversee sporting operations. Promising as this might sound, the rot at the club is so deep that it might take United several years to challenge City to wrestle for the title. Success would not be instant, and the supporters could be dragged through an unstable wave of ups and downs. That should not be an unfamiliar suffering, as they have already tasted this dish several times.

Some half-inevitabilities: England's wait for winning the continental tournament would continue. They were runners-up last edition, they have a stronger team this time, but they would still devise ways to implode.

City would, as they have in the past few years, stave off stern challenges from Liverpool and Arsenal to claim a fourth league title. Both Reds and Gunners have shown more defiance and quality this season, but are they not one City purple patch away from falling by the side?

It would not be different in Germany either. Former Bayern-man Xabi Alonso has parachuted Bayer Leverkusen to the top, but how many times have they snuffed fellow contenders at the finish line. In Spain, Girona threatens to topple the applecart. But for how long could they sustain their dream run?

Some things in football, it seems, are just meant to be. It's inevitable.

SANDIPG

JANUARY 1

SOME FOOTBALLING

inevitabilities of the New Year: The two ageless emperors of our times, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, would continue their journey into timelessness.

Pep Guardiola

would continue his

maniacal

obsession to

evolve,

to enrich

the game

with

more

than

just

trophies

and

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but

embellish

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with

something

truly

immortal;

Manchester

United

would

envision

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to

flounder

their

glorious

heritage;

Saudi

would

keep

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out

incredible

sums

to

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the

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of

Europe.

Messi

turns

37

in

June

and

Cristiano

Ronaldo

becomes

39