

BEATING RETREAT

The Army, Air Force, Navy and Central Armed Police Forces bands performed at the Beating Retreat ceremony, marking the end of Republic Day celebrations, in New Delhi on Monday. Amit Mehra

Consultant Raj: 1,500, including from Big 4, in 44 govt depts; annual spend Rs 302 crore

SHYAMLAL YADAV
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

AS MANY as 44 departments in the Government of India have 1,499 consultants from external agencies, including the Big Four (Ernst & Young, PwC, Deloitte and KPMG), working with them. Together, these departments incur an annual expenditure of Rs 302 crore on these consultants, according to data obtained

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diture under the Union Ministry of Finance, said 76 departments provided information about those taken on contract — these could be consultants working with external agencies. Young

Professionals, independent consultants, domain experts, personnel taken through outsourcing agencies, executives from PSUs, state-owned banks and regulatory bodies on loan, retired government employees, and those hired for housekeeping, multitasking, and data entry functions. On October 4, in the run-up to Budget 2024-25, as *The Indian Express* had reported, the Department of Expenditure had

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Rajasthan BJP MLA objects to hijab in school, minister says will talk to CM

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, JANUARY 29

THE BJP MLA from Rajasthan's Hawa Mahal, Balmukund Acharya, has objected to girls wearing the hijab at a government school, prompting Cabinet minister Kirodi Lal Meena to say he will talk to Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma about enforcing a ban on the head covering in all government and private schools in the state.

On Monday morning, Acharya visited the Government Girls Secondary School in Jaipur's Gangpol locality. In a video that surfaced afterwards, he can be seen pulling up a school administrator over some students wearing the hijab. In another video, he is seen asking school authorities to stop students from wearing the hijab in school, which has a mix of Hindu and Muslim children.

In another video, he is seen on stage, leading the students in chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Saraswati Mata Ki Jai". He can also be heard saying, "Kuch bachiyan nahi bol rahin, kya baat hai, mana kiya kya? (Some girls are not saying it. Have you been asked not to?) He is also seen walking through the school and leading students in chanting "Jai Shri Ram".

Later, Muslim students gheraoed the Subhash Chowk police station, demanding that the MLA stop "vitiating the

Govt brings non-urea fertilisers under price control, fixes profit margins

HARISH DAMODARAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE NARENDRA Modi government has brought di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), muriate of potash (MOP) and all other such fertilisers that receive nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) support un-



PM Narendra Modi at the Pariksha Pe Charcha event. ANI

Parents should not treat child's report card as visiting card, says PM

RADHIKA R
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

INTERACTING WITH students at the seventh edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday motivated them to "compete with yourself and not with peers" and urged parents not to treat their children's report cards as their own visiting card.

"Sometimes parents compare their children and the seeds of competitiveness are sown early in [student's] life. I urge all parents not to compare two children and compare their own child's achievement with other's," the Prime Minister said.

"We have also seen that those parents who have not been very successful in their lives have nothing to say or want to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Mummy, papa, I can't do JEE': Teen kills self in Kota

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, JANUARY 29

AN 18-YEAR-OLD girl died by suicide in Rajasthan's Kota in the early hours of Monday, leaving behind a note that said she was taking the extreme step as a last resort because she "can't do JEE".

Deputy Superintendent of Police, Kota, Dharamveer Singh said the teenager, Niharika Solanki, was living with her parents and preparing for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), scheduled for January 31.

A purported note left behind by her reads, "Mummy papa, I can't do JEE so I (commit) suicide. I am a loser. Worst daughter. Sorry mummy papa. Yahi last option he (This is the last option.)"

According to the police, her father works as a security guard at a bank, and she was the eldest of three daughters. The incident took place under Borkhera police station limits in Kota, infamous

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Long before Oscar nomination, a father's fight for justice in a Jharkhand village

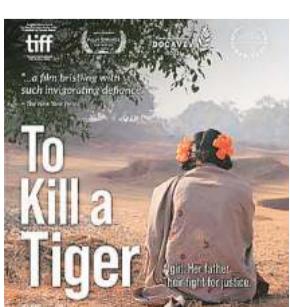
PAGE 1
ANCHOR

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, JANUARY 29

"ISN'T IT just a five-minute video?" asks one villager.

"No. It is a movie, more than one hour long," replies another.

A crumpling *akhra* (raised platform) built around a massive fig tree in a Jharkhand village is the last place one would expect to overhear a discussion on *To Kill A Tiger*, an Oscar-nominated doc-



To Kill a Tiger is directed by Indian-origin documentary filmmaker Nisha Pahuja

umentary made by Indian-origin filmmaker Nisha Pahuja. Though the locals have only seen clips from the documentary, either online or on WhatsApp, they cannot fathom why the story of a 13-year-old's gangrape by three of her relatives in their tiny village in May 2017 would interest an international audience.

Besides casual discussions on sunny weekdays, the *akhra* also doubles as the spot for all important village-level meetings. But for the father of the victim, now 20, it is a grim reminder of the marathon meetings held to "ne-

gotiate the problem" of his daughter's gangrape at a relative's wedding late on May 9, 2017, in the village.

Breaking down while speaking to *The Indian Express*, the victim's father, 45, recalled, "My daughter said she would prefer dying over settling the matter."

The father, who is a daily-wage mason, said the accused were related to them — two of them were his daughter's cousins and one nephew, all in their early 20s then.

He adds, "All those relationships died that day. I remember

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'REVIEW' AHEAD OF BUDGET

Finance Ministry: GDP to grow at 7%-plus, touch \$5 tn in 3 years

CEA flags risk of geopolitical conflicts

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE INDIAN economy is likely to grow at over 7 per cent in the coming years and is expected to become the world's third-largest economy in the next three years, with a GDP of \$5 trillion, driven by domestic demand along with supply-side measures such as investment in infrastructure and measures to boost manufacturing, the Ministry of Finance said in a report on Monday.

The report, titled "The Indian Economy – A Review", has been prepared by the office of the Chief Economic Adviser.

"It now appears very likely that the Indian economy will achieve a growth rate at or above 7% for FY24, and some predict it will achieve another year of 7% real growth in FY25 as well. If the prognosis for FY25 turns out to be right, that will mark the fourth year post-pandemic that the Indian economy will have grown at or over 7 per cent. That would be an impressive achievement, testifying to the resilience and potential of the Indian economy. It augurs well for the future," Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said in the preface.

He, however, clarified that this was not the Economic

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED
E Challenges ahead

WHILE FLAGGING the three future trends — end of hyperglobalisation in global manufacturing, energy transition challenge, and advent of Artificial Intelligence — the Finance Ministry has said the Indian economy is better placed to take on these challenges because of the policies adopted over the last decade.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY

 Like the interim budget, observe this day as a pre-pol formality.

'Like Putin in Russia': Kharge says this will be last polls if Modi wins

SUJIT BISOYI
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 29

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Mallikarjun Kharge Monday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he would bring "dictatorship" and end the electoral process if voted back to power in this year's Lok Sabha elections.



Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge at a public meeting in Bhubaneswar, Monday. PTI

GOVT & POLITICS
CONG TARGETS TMC, SAYS TRIED TO DISRUPT YATRA **PAGE 8**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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SC: Shun practice of mentioning caste, religion of litigants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE PRACTICE of mentioning caste or religion of litigants in court cases must be shunned, the Supreme Court has said while directing its registry and all other courts to stop it immediately.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah directed all high courts to ensure that the caste or religion of a litigant does not appear in the memo of parties in any petition filed before HCs or subordinate courts under their jurisdiction.

"We see no reason for mentioning the caste/religion of any litigant either before this Court or the courts below. Such a practice is to be shunned and must be ceased forthwith. It is therefore deemed appropriate to pass a general order directing that henceforth the caste or religion of parties shall not be mentioned in the memo of parties of a petition/proceeding filed before this Court, irrespective of whether any such details have been fur-

nished before the courts below," the bench said.

The top court passed the order while allowing a transfer petition in a marital dispute pending before a family court in Rajasthan.

The apex court expressed surprise that the caste of both the husband and wife was mentioned in the memo of the parties.

The counsel for the petitioner informed the court that if the memo of parties as filed before the courts below is changed in any manner, the Registry raises an objection, and in the present case, as the caste of both the parties was mentioned before the court below, he had no option but to mention their caste in the transfer petition.

The top court directed that its order shall be brought to the notice of the members of the Bar as well as the Registry for immediate compliance.

"A copy of this order shall be placed before the Registrar concerned for perusal and for circulation to the Registrar Generals of all the High Courts for strict compliance," the bench said.

There is a need to lower logistics costs and invest in product quality to hold on to and expand market share in areas where India has an advantage, he said. "The era of hyper-globalisation in global manufacturing, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the energy transition challenge.

"It is a reality that, in the short run, there is a trade-off between economic growth and energy transition. In a growth-challenged post-Covid global economy, countries can ill afford to sacrifice the former for the latter. India is walking the fine line between the two more skilfully than other nations, with installed non-fossil fuel-

FROM PAGE ONE ■ FULL REPORTS ON
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GDP to grow 7%-plus: Finance Ministry

Survey of India prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs, and that would come before the full Budget after the general elections. Usually, the Economic

Survey for the ongoing financial year is presented in Parliament a day before the presentation of the Budget for the next financial year on February 1.

Only the elevated risk of geopolitical conflicts is an area of concern, the review said. Noting that the global economy is struggling to maintain its recovery post-Covid because successive shocks have buffeted it, the review said some of these shocks, such as supply chain disruptions, have returned in 2024. "If they persist, they will impact trade flows, transportation costs, economic output and inflation worldwide," it said.

Nageswaran listed three trends for the coming years: the end of the era of hyper-globalisation in global manufacturing, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the energy transition challenge.

There is a need to lower logistics costs and invest in product quality to hold on to and expand market share in areas where India has an advantage, he said. "The era of hyper-globalisation in global manufacturing, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the energy transition challenge.

"It is a reality that, in the short run, there is a trade-off between economic growth and energy transition. In a growth-challenged post-Covid global economy, countries can ill afford to sacrifice the former for the latter. India is walking the fine line between the two more skilfully than other nations, with installed non-fossil fuel-

place in the last few decades. So, an alternative to the globalisation of supply chains will take much longer to emerge, if it ever does. However, that will not deter governments from pursuing on-shoring and friend-shoring of production with a consequent impact on transportation, logistics costs, and, hence, the final prices of products," he said.

With the emerging use of AI, it poses profound and troubling questions for growth in services trade and employment since technology may remove the advantage of cost competitiveness that countries exporting digital services enjoy, he said.

For energy transition challenge, he said concerns over rising temperatures have led to a single-minded focus on reducing carbon emissions, which has led to persistent demands from international organisations and advanced nations on developing nations to wean themselves off fossil fuels and switch to greener energy even as technological and resource obstacles remain and are not on offer from developed countries.

"It is a reality that, in the short run, there is a trade-off between economic growth and energy transition. In a growth-challenged post-Covid global economy, countries can ill afford to sacrifice the former for the latter. India is walking the fine line between the two more skilfully than other nations, with installed non-fossil fuel-

55 per cent of them are women. In Dec 2019, household financial assets were 86.2 per cent of GDP; liabilities were 33.4 per cent of GDP. In March 2023, these numbers were 103.1 per cent and 37.6 per cent, respectively. So, Net Financial Assets of households were 52.8 per cent of GDP in Dec 2019, and by March 2023, it had improved to 65.5 per cent of GDP," he said.

He singled out two things – the government's Covid management and the vaccination record – for being instrumental in the quick recovery by the economy. "Similarly, the debt management of the crude oil supply at reasonable prices in the last two years is noteworthy. Humans are not capable of appreciating the unseen – the mistakes not made and the risks avoided – but the counterfactuals are all around us. They cannot be missed," he said.

As the government resolves longstanding problems such as deficient infrastructure and financial exclusion, aspirations rise, and expectations shift higher, he said.

The financial sector is healthy. Its balance sheet is stronger, he said, adding that it is willing to lend and is lending. Non-food credit growth, excluding personal loans, is growing at double-digit rates.

The pursuit of inclusive development finds Indian households in good financial health. "Fifty-one crore bank accounts under Jan Dhan Yojana now have total deposits of over 22.1 lakh crore. Over

• Consultant Raj: 1,500 in 44 depts

written to all departments and ministries seeking this information stating this was "required for meaningful discussion for allocation of Budget under the Professional/ Office expenses/ Salary head".

The top six departments which have most consultants from external agencies working with them are: Health and Family Welfare (203), Rural Development (166), Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (149), Ministry of Housing and Urban Administration (147), Women and Child Development (112) and Road Transport and Highway (99). Together, they account for 876 or 58 per cent of the total 1,499. The total expenditure of these departments/ministries (barring Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, which has not provided the information) on consultants from external agencies is Rs 130 crore or 43 per cent of the total Rs 302 crore.

Among Young Professionals (YPs) hired on contract, NITI Aayog tops the list with 95 such YPs, followed by Commerce – 87 YPs and Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade – 78 YPs. Among independent consultants hired on contract, the top three are: Agriculture and Farmers Welfare – 86, NITI – 52, and Road Transport and Highways – 41. Among Domain Experts hired

on contract, the top three are: Agriculture and Farmers Welfare – 92, Civil Aviation – 70, and Rural Development – 45.

While departments and ministries, barring Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, provided information on remuneration paid to consultants from external agencies working with them, it is not clear about other positions. RTI data shows Young Professionals are mostly being paid around Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000.

Independent consultants and domain experts appointed by ministries and departments could be paid in the range of Rs 1 lakh to Rs 4 lakh a month. The Ministry of Labour, for instance, said it paid Rs 7.5 lakh a month jointly to two consultants. Those hired by the Department of Commerce get between Rs 1.45 lakh and Rs 3.30 lakh per month; those hired by NITI Aayog get up to Rs 3.30 lakh a month.

After the government abolished Group D (peons, data entry, housekeeping, etc) recruitment, the personnel for such jobs are hired through outsourcing agencies, mostly through government-run GEM portal. There are 20,376 such personnel working in 76 departments – these include 3,877 housekeeping staff, 5,136 data entry operators, 6,478 multi-tasking staff and 4,885 others.

• Fertilisers under price control

January 18, issued detailed guidelines for the evaluation of "reasonableness" of the MRP for all non-urea fertilisers covered under NBS.

The guidelines have mandated fertiliser companies to "self-assess" unreasonable profits, based on the cost auditor's report along with audited cost data approved by their board of directors. This report and data has to be furnished to the DoF by October 10 of the following fiscal year. The DoF will then scrutinise the "reasonability of MRPs", as submitted by the companies, "by 28th February for each completed previous financial year (i.e. for FY 2023-24 by 28th February 2025)".

Following that, it will finalise a report on unreasonable profits earned, if any, to be recovered from the companies.

An industry source told The Indian Express that the new guidelines basically extend the regime of detailed cost monitoring and price control currently applicable on urea to other fertilisers. The MRP of urea has remained at Rs 5,360 per tonne since November 1, 2012. The only change that has taken place is companies being permitted to charge 5% extra (Rs 268) for neem-coating of urea, made mandatory from May 25, 2015.

"Non-urea fertilisers are already under informal price control, which will definitely continue till the Lok Sabha elections are over. We have been advised to fix the MRPs at Rs 27,000 per tonne for DAP, Rs 33,100 for MOP, Rs 29,400 for 12:32:16 and 10:26:26 NPK, and Rs 25,000 for 20:20:0:13 NPKS fertilisers," the source said.

• Last polls if Modi wins: Kharge

elections, nor will he allow it to be held."

"Russian Putin kajo presidential election hota hai na, waise hi hote chale jayega (Like Putin's presidential election in Russia, the same will happen in India). There will be no election. They will use their might to rule the country. They will get elected and

get 200, 300, 400 and 500 (seats). They will even take the number to 600," said Kharge, who is on his first visit to Odisha – which will hold Assembly elections alongside the Lok Sabha polls – after becoming Congress president.

"You can save democracy if you want... But if you want to be a slave like under the British regime, it's up to you," Kharge said.

Referring to Nitish Kumar joining hands with the BJP, but without naming him, Kharge said, "You are seeing, they have taken away an INDIA alliance leader. People are leaving out of fear – some are leaving friendships, some the party, some the alliance."

"Like the country can't be weakened by the departure of one person, the alliance has also not been weakened by the exit of one or two leaders. We will emerge stronger and work unitedly... We will work together to defeat the BJP and (Odisha Chief Minister Naveen) Patnaik," Kharge said.

Many senior party leaders took part in the rally as the Congress eyes a revival ahead of the elections.

Kharge also hit back at criticism regarding the Congress's contribution to the country in the past 70 years. "If Congress

has not done anything in 70 years, Modi would not have even become chief minister. We saved the Constitution and democracy, because of which you (Modi) became what you are today. You are now finishing democracy and the Constitution," he said.

He accused the BJP and RSS of trying to rule by creating division, and said Congress leaders like Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi made supreme sacrifices to keep the country united.

"The RSS and BJP are like poison... They are snatching our rights, one after another... The rights of women, STs and SCs are being violated... hundreds of vehicles and houses have been burnt. Where is Modi? Go and show your face in Manipur and Nagaland," said Kharge.

Targeting the CM, Kharge said Patnaik cannot be like his father, Biju Patnaik, who, he said, helped the state prosper during his chief ministership. He also accused the CM of running the government through officers and took a dig at Patnaik for inducing an officer from Tamil Nadu into the party – an apparent reference to former IAS officer PK Pandian.

"Are the people in Odisha not capable enough or are they not alive? Officers of Odisha and leaders of Odisha can become 'mardarshak' (path finder) for the country, but you need outsiders for mardarshak?" Kharge asked.

During his one-day visit, Kharge also met Congress leaders to discuss the party's strategy for the 2024 polls.

• Kota suicide

for the large number of suicides by those preparing for competitive exams.

Her cousin Vikram Singh, who lives nearby, told The Indian Express that at the time of the incident, her father was at work. "She, one of her sisters, their mother and grandmother were at home," he said.

Vikram's brother, Hemant, said that sometime between 9-10 am, "Her mother called out for her, but she didn't respond." When her sister went to check on her, the door was locked from the inside.

The family feared the worst on seeing a cloth on the other side of the roshandaan window (transom window), above the door.

Eventually, other family members and neighbours gathered outside her door. "We broke a glass on the roshandaan above the door... and broke the door open," said her cousin.

He said the teenager had scored 70 per cent marks in the RBSE Board but needed 75 per cent to be eligible for JEE, so she was studying for Class 12 exam again.

It reflects that X (the child) had grown up in the knowledge that the petitioner was her mother. In the absence of any adverse circumstance or report, that fact may have been enough to allow for foster care to have been allowed in favour of the petitioner. Considering the trauma being faced by X (at that stage) CWC had rightly restored the custody over X to the petitioner," the court added.

The District Probation Officer's report dated October 20, 2022, is "wholly vague and extraneous", the High Court bench ruled, adding that "only generalised observations have been made to consider the petitioner's eligibility".

tributed quotes to him. He has written that he was not contacted by The Indian Express, and that he had not given any statement, nor was he authorised to speak on the issue.

Our correspondent replies: The report was based on, and quoted from, a document The Indian Express had seen.

• Don't treat child's report card as visiting card: PM

tell the world about their successes and achievements, make the report card of their children their visiting card. Whenever they meet someone, they will tell them the story of their children," he said, urging parents not to do it.

Addressing a query from a student from a school in Andaman & Nicobar Islands on peer pressure and competition, the Prime Minister said that there is a need for competition in life for inspiration. The idea, he said, is to have a healthy competition. He said, "A student can score 100 marks in an exam. You and your friend both have the opportunity to score 100 marks, then how can you say he is your competition?"

Pariksha Pe Charcha, an annual interaction with students, aims to help students deal with exam stress, especially for those in Class 10 and 12. In its latest chapter, the Prime Minister interacted with nearly 3,000 participants at the newly inaugurated Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The event saw registration of 2.26 crore participants on the MyGov portal this year.

Motivating students to have a positive competitive attitude, the Prime Minister said: "Instead of competing with your friends, compete with yourself. Do not let jealousy get the better of you."

On the role of teachers in helping students deal with exam stress, Modi emphasised on building and further developing mutual trust with students. Teachers must ensure that they do not take their responsibilities as just not jobs but an opportunity to help shape students' lives. From day one, teachers should try to build a relationship with students and by the end of the year, this relationship should deepen," he said.

Responding to questions on dealing with external pressure and stress as the Prime Minister, Modi gave tips to manage expectations of parents and teachers and deal with stress. "Stress is something that you should deal with by strengthening your own mind when dealing with challenges. We should deal with them head-on. However, I will not ask you to stretch your strength to a level that it eventually weakens your will power," he said.

"When parents do not trust children, it causes them depression. It is important that mutual trust is built between members of a family so that they know that you are working hard," he said.

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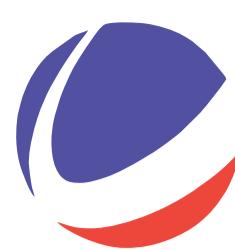
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21 AIR SHIVAM YADAV PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	22 AIR G V S PAVANDATTA ABHYAAS, MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS CLASSES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	23 AIR VAISHALI PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	25 AIR SANKHE KASHMIRA KISHOR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST SERIES	26 AIR GUNJITA AGRAWAL LAKSHYA, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	27 AIR YADAV SURYABHAN ACHCHHELAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, ETHICS CASE STUDIES	28 AIR ANKITA PUWAR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	29 AIR POURUSH SOOD ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	30 AIR PREKSHA AGRAWAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	31 AIR PRIYANSHA GARG ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PT 365, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	32 AIR NITTIN SINGH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	33 AIR THARUN PATNAIK MADALA ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, ESSAY TEST SERIES
34 AIR ANUBHAV SINGH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES	37 AIR CHAITANYA AWASTHI ABHYAAS	38 AIR ANUP DAS ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	39 AIR GARIMA NARULA FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAAS	40 AIR SRI SAI ASHRITH SHAKHAMURI ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	41 AIR SHUBHAM ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS	42 AIR PRANITA DASH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	43 AIR ARCHITA GOYAL LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	44 AIR TUSHAR KUMAR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES	46 AIR MANAN AGARWAL FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAAS	48 AIR AADITYA PANDEY PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	49 AIR SANSKRITI SOMANI ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAAS

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DELHI: 16 JAN, 9 AM | 9 FEB, 1 PM | 23 FEB, 9 AM | 28 FEB, 5 PM

हिंदी माध्यम

दिल्ली: 17 जनवरी, 9 AM | 20 फरवरी, 1 PM

AHMEDABAD 8 JAN	BHOPAL 3 JAN	CHANDIGARH 3 JAN	HYDERABAD 5 FEB	JAIPUR 8 FEB	JODHPUR 8 FEB	LUCKNOW 16 FEB	PUNE 20 NOV	मोपाल 21 फरवरी	जयपुर 8 फरवरी	लखनऊ 21 फरवरी	गोपेपुर 8 फरवरी
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हिंदी माध्यम | 23 फरवरी, 5 PM

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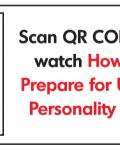
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EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER CONDITION OF GOVT HOSPITALS

'The equipment must work, what kind of a hospital is this?': HC

MALAVIKA PRASAD
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE DELHI High Court Monday asked the Delhi government to ensure equipment in its hospitals are working, while expressing its concern about the condition of government hospitals in the national capital.

A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora — while hearing a 2017 suo motu plea concerning a news report in which a newborn died as an ICU bed was not made available to him in any government hospital in the Capital — orally said to Delhi government's counsel, "In GTB hospital, the CT scan machine should start working. The equipment must work. What kind of a hospital is this?"

Meanwhile the Delhi government counsel informed the bench that an "inquiry was taking place".

Earlier this month, the bench had asked the government to state the amount spent on the health sector in the last five years, after taking note of a report by *The Indian Express* about a man, injured after jumping out

a PCR van, who was denied admission in four government hospitals in the city and later died.

Advocate Ashok Aggarwal, appointed as amicus curiae in the matter, mentioned on Monday that "nine Delhi government hospitals do not have ICU beds".

The bench asked the government counsel to "seek instructions", while indicating it intends to pass an order, and asked the Secretary of Health GNCTD to ensure all equipment is functional in a month.

In the previous hearing, Aggarwal had said the man was first taken to Jag Pravesh Chandra (JPC) hospital and then to the Guru Teg Bahadur hospital (GTB) in an ambulance. GTB hospital, however, did not admit him on the grounds of "non-availability of CT scan", and Lok Nayak hospital on the grounds of "non-availability of ICU or ventilator bed".

Thereafter, RML hospital refused to admit the man "without any justification", and then, on being brought to the JPC hospital, he was "declared dead on arrival" at 5.45 am on January 3.

Apart from RML hospital, the other three hospitals fall under the jurisdiction of the Delhi government. In its short affidavit, had said that between April 1, 2017, and January 24 this year, the total Budget expenditure for all its hospitals was Rs 21436.80 crore. The Centre in its note has submitted that it has "no objection, in principle" to the establishment of a Central portal to provide information on real-time bed availability.

overnment.

"Please speak to your secretary. March 31 is approaching... Please ensure money spent on this is in the budget," the bench orally said, adding that in case the officer concerned had any suggestion, it could also be incorporated.

Noting that the Delhi government's inquiry was underway, the bench asked the Centre's counsel to state whether any inquiry is being conducted with respect to the RML Hospital — a Central government-run healthcare facility.

It also asked Aggarwal, the counsel appearing for Delhi government and Centre to submit their suggestions on the matter by Tuesday. Listing the matter for Wednesday, the bench directed the Secretary of Health GNCTD to join the proceedings through virtual conferencing.

The Delhi government, in its short affidavit, had said that between April 1, 2017, and January 24 this year, the total Budget expenditure for all its hospitals was Rs 21436.80 crore. The Centre in its note has submitted that it has "no objection, in principle" to the establishment of a Central portal to provide information on real-time bed availability.

Not paid in 10 months, OT staff on contract at Lok Nayak go on strike

ANKITA UPADHYAY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

NOT PAID his salary for the last 10 months, Pradeep, who works as an OT technician at Lok Nayak Hospital, has been surviving on his father's pension and loans from friends and relatives. "I'd applied here after a friend told me there was a vacancy; I worked during the most crucial time of the Covid pandemic. Now we are not being paid despite working," said the 36-year-old, who is married with two children.

On Monday, the employees went on strike, affecting services at three out of the nine operation theatres at the biggest Delhi government hospital. A senior doctor from the surgery department, on condition of anonymity, said a single OT sees 3 to 4 surgeries a day. Due to the strike, almost 10 had to be rescheduled.

Hired in 2021 during the pandemic, the 47 contractual technicians part of the strike, including OT and lab technicians, claimed they had not received their payment for the last 10 months despite writing to Medical Director Dr Suresh Kumar several times. "We



Employees stood outside the Medical Director's office with placards to protest against the salary delay. Express

haven't been paid since April last year," said Harsh Madhukar, an OT technician working with the hospital for close to three years.

The staff are deployed to assist doctors with surgeries in OTs and ventilators in ICU wards, and look after patients administered anaesthesia before surgery. The hospital has a total of 120 permanent OT technicians.

Pradeep said in December 2022, a termination circular was issued by the state health department. "We moved the Central Administrative Tribunal against the termination order

and it put a stay on it in January. However, despite that, our salaries are on hold," Pradeep said, alleging that the termination order came despite vacancies at the hospital.

He has been working with the hospital for almost three years. He added that almost all technicians have taken personal loans to sustain themselves.

The technicians later said they met the medical director who sought 10-15 days to resolve the issue, adding that they will resume work Tuesday.

A senior doctor at the hospital

said the hiring of these technicians was done as per the requirement and against the vacancies in 2021. "In fact, there is a shortage of technicians and paramedical staff at the hospital," he added.

When contacted, Dr Kumar said he is looking into the matter and a decision will be taken soon. "As the matter is being heard in court, I cannot say much," he added.

A Delhi government spokesperson, meanwhile, said salaries of technicians have not been paid as the finance department has been stopping funds to various departments for the last few months.

"It has been raising multiple objections to files and this, in turn, has led to stoppage of salaries, payments to contractors, and many other problems. The file for their (OT technicians)

salaries is also with the finance department. With control over all officers now in the hands of the central government, there is no action against officers who are wilfully causing hurdles in the working of departments of the Delhi government. This is causing pain and suffering to the people of Delhi," the spokesperson added.

Delhi's AQI set to turn severe today



Tuesday morning is expected to be foggy. The sky is expected to clear up during the day. Tashi Tobgyal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DELHI'S AIR quality is set to deteriorate to the 'severe' category on Tuesday, the Commission for Air Quality Management said. On Monday, the air quality index was 356, in the very poor range.

"As per the air quality forecasts by IMD/IITM, Delhi's average AQI is likely to move to 'Severe' category tomorrow... the CAQM Sub-Committee on graded response action plan (GRAP) called a meeting today to take stock of the current air quality scenario and forecast for meteorological conditions as well as the air quality index made available by IMD/IITM. The Sub-Committee noted that spurt in Delhi's average AQI projected for tomorrow is likely for a short duration before returning to 'Very Poor' category owing to improved meteorological conditions, including gusty winds with a probability of rain. The Sub-Committee decided not to invoke Stage III of GRAP at this stage," the commission said.

The city, meanwhile, saw a warm day, with the maximum temperature being recorded as 22.6 degrees Celsius, a degree above normal. The morning, however, remained cold with the mercury touching 6.8 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal.

According to IMD officials, Tuesday morning is expected to be foggy. The sky is expected to clear up during the day, and the maximum temperature is expected to be around 22 degrees Celsius. The minimum will be around 8 degrees Celsius.

Light rain is expected on Wednesday and Thursday.

Major bureaucratic reshuffle in Delhi; 17 IAS, 13 IPS officers transferred by MHA

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

IN A major bureaucratic reshuffle, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Monday transferred 30 officers across the AGMUT cadre. This includes 17 IAS and 13 IPS officers. While four IAS and seven IPS officers have been transferred out, three IAS and five IPS officers transferred to the Capital.

Among the officers trans-

ferred is the 2009-batch officer Amarnath Talwade against whom an FIR has been registered by the Delhi Anti-Corruption Branch on charges of allegedly demanding money from the Capital's liquor vendors. Delhi I-GVK Saxena had ordered the registration of the FIR and recommended disciplinary action to the MHA against Talwade who has denied the allegations against him.

In another development

three senior AGMUT cadre IAS-of-

ficers were posted to senior positions in three Union Territories, including the national capital.

One of the transfers will finally give Chandigarh an Advisor to the Administrator — a post equivalent to Chief Secretary in states — which was lying vacant since the retirement of Dharampal, a 1988-batch IAS officer, in October last year.

According to an order issued by the MHA Monday, Rajeev Verma, a 1992-batch IAS officer who had been serving as Chief Secretary of Puducherry since May 2022, was transferred as Advisor to the Administrator, Chandigarh. Verma will be replaced by 1994-batch IAS officer Sharat Chauhan, who was so far Principal Secretary, Finance, Planning and Investment in Arunachal Pradesh, as CS of Puducherry.

Navin Kumar Choudhary, a

e-Tender Notice
e-Tender No. IRCON/MECH/P&E/MSME/F&F/724 Date: 29.01.2024
e-Tenders for and on behalf of IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED is invited from bidders meeting qualifying requirements for work of 'Design, Supply, Installation, Commissioning & Training of Various types of Fragrance & Flavour Equipment's for MSME Training Center located at Manipur (on turnkey basis).
Last Date & Time of e-Bid Submission 20.02.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.
For further details, visit website <https://www.etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app.CGIMechanical>
C-4, District Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank Zonal Office, Gaya(e-AB), South Bisar Talab Road, Gaya, Bihar-823001
(Rule-8(1)) POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property)

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice u/s 13(2) on the date noted against the account as mentioned hereinafter calling upon the borrower(S) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower(S) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(S) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 and 9 of the said rules.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank) or an amount and interest thereon. Along with legal expenses and other expenses already incurred/to be incurred by the bank

Name of the branch: GAYA MAIN
Name of the accounts: Sri Pappu Yadav, S/o-KapilDeo Yadav & Mrs Biranj Devi, W/o- Sri Pappu Yadav both resident of Mohalla-Bageswari ,Near Kali mandir, Thana-Delha, Dist-Gaya-823002
Name of the Proprietor / Guarantor/ Mortgagor: Sri Pappu Yadav, S/o-KapilDeo Yadav, Mohalla-Bageswari ,Near Kali mandir, Thana-Delha, Dist-Gaya-823002
Date of Demand Notice: 19.10.2023 Date of Possession Notice: 25.01.2024
Amount Outstanding as on the demand notice: Rs. 10,40,123/- (Rupees Ten Lakhs Forty Thousand One Hundred Twenty Three Only) as on 19-10-2023 along with legal and other expenses incurred & to be incurred by the bank.

Detailed description of the Property: Equitable mortgage of land and building along with present and future construction thereon in the name of Sri Pappu Yadav , S/o-KapilDeo , located at Mouza-Kandi Nawada, Mohalla- Chotki Nawada, Thana-189, Thana-Delha, Ward No-1, Anchal- Chandauli, Gaya-Bihar Khatra No-147(O), Plot No-933(O), Area-1.567 Decimal (i.e 682 sqft) .Bounded by (as per deed): North: 4 Feet Proposed Gali;South: Rameswar Prasad,East: Rashmi Devi,West: Parti Land of Sonar
Date: 30.01.2024
Place: GAYA
Sd/- Authorised Officer (Indian Bank)

1994-batch officer serving as the Principal Secretary of the General Administration Department in the Mizoram government, has been transferred to Delhi. Sources said he is likely to be appointed "in a senior position" either in the Delhi government, Municipal Corporation of Delhi or New Delhi Municipal Council with senior bureaucrats posted in all three due to empanelment at the Centre.

They said Choudhary's appointment was likely to have a ripple effect on postings in the Government of India, which currently has more than one vacancy including that of Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The reigj is part of a larger exercise necessitated by the recent retirement of several senior IAS officers across the cadre which presides over appointments in Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, and the UTs.

VMRDA, Visakhapatnam has submitted the Bid Documents for "Development of Convention Centre & 5 Star Category Hotel / Resort with other Waterfront Entertainment Facilities on prime land along Beach Road at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India on Public Private Partnership (PPP) Basis" to the Judicial Preview Committee. All Stakeholders, including aspirant bidders and the general public are requested to provide their advice, comments, remarks and objections, if any, to the Judicial Preview Committee through the following online website or email on or before 06-02-2024, upto 5 PM. The public can view the Bid documents at <https://judicialpreview.ap.gov.in> and <http://vmrda.gov.in>, Email ID : apjudicialpreview@gmail.com
Sd/-Metropolitan Commissioner, VMRDA

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR,
NORTHERN RAILWAY CENTRAL HOSPITAL,
BASANT LANE, NEW DELHI-110055
ENGAGEMENT OF SENIOR RESIDENTS

File No. E/Med/SR/74/CH/2024 Advt No. NRCH/SR/2024/01
Applications are invited from eligible candidates for engagement to the post of Senior Resident under Senior Residency Scheme at Northern Railway Central Hospital, New Delhi.

Detailed advertisement with VACANCY STATUS, Terms & Conditions, Format of Application form is available on Northern Railway website www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in under head News & Recruitment Info.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR
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BASANT LANE, NEW DELHI
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

305/24
Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav
Asset Recovery Department, Gaya Zone

CORIGENDUM
With reference to the E-auction Notice of NPA Account-Royal Manufacturing & Technologies PVT LTD Pertaining to Bank of India (Gaya) Published on dated 25.01.2024, page no. -5 In The Indian Express, Area Published 31.00 Decimal to be read as 46.00 Decimal, rest remain unchanged.

Authorised officer
Bank of India

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Open Tender through E-Tendering
G20

CWMI/Carriage & Wagon workshop North Western Railway Bikanaer acting for and on behalf of the president of india invites E-Tender No. 10-MECH-BKNW-TP-23R Closing dated 20.02.2024, 1. Name of the

work and its location : Retrofitment of Twin Pipe Air Brake System in wagons on Carriage & wagon Workshop, NWR, Bikanaer 2. Estimated cost of work : Rs. 2,50,68,483.00. 3. Earnest Money : Rs. 2,75,400.00. 4. Last Date and time for submission and opening of E-tender : 20.02.2024 up to 14:30 Hrs. E-tender will be opened at 15.00 Hrs. on same day 5. Website particular where complete details of e-tender can be seen : www.irps.gov.in

106-DG/24
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Zonal Office, Gaya(e-AB), South Bisar Talab Road, Gaya, Bihar-823001
(Rule-8(1)) POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property)

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 read with rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice u/s 13(2) on the date noted against the account as mentioned hereinafter calling upon the respective borrower/s to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of notice/s/date of receipt of the said notice(s).

The borrower/s having failed to repay the amount, notice(s) is hereby given to the borrower/s and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules.

The Borrower/s/Guarantor/Mortgagor's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

The borrower/s in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank) or an amount and interest thereon.

The borrower/s in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of Punjab National Bank for the amount and interest thereon.

Name of the branch: BHABHUA
Name of the accounts: M/s Bajrang Ply & Glass Centre, Prop. Sri Sanjay Singh, Patel Chowk, Chainpur Road, Dist-Kaimur Bhabhua-821101</



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'Who is answerable for my mother's death?': Son of lone victim killed in Kalkaji Mandir stage collapse

ARNABJIT SURI

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

"MY BROTHERS and I told her not to stay so late at the jagan... I kept calling her around midnight, but her voice kept breaking so I thought it must be due to the crowd," recalled Vikas (24), the eldest son of 45-year-old Tina who was killed after a makeshift stage at a jagan collapsed in Southeast Delhi's Kalkaji Mandir on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

Tina was a resident of Tughlakabad Extension. She is survived by four family members — husband Ved Prakash, who is a vegetable seller, Vikas, Barun, an e-rickshaw driver,

and Sunny.

According to police, 17 people were injured in the incident.

A day after the incident, Vikas, who works with a private firm, told *The Indian Express*, "My mother, who was a housewife, was a very religious person and used to attend jagrans at the Kalkaji Mandir regularly. Most event organisers and priests knew her... In the days preceding the event, she was very excited and told us that this time, B Praak will perform at the jagan... We told her not to attend the jagan so late, but she along with a few neighbours went to the temple on Saturday."

According to Barun, Tina's youngest son, he had called his mother at least twice — at 12



Tina was a resident of Tughlakabad Extension. She is survived by her husband and three sons

am on Saturday and then 30 minutes later — but he could

not hear her because of the loud background music. "Her voice kept breaking, so I called up a few of our neighbours attending the event, but none of them picked up my calls... Whenever she used to go to jagrans, she would return after midnight, so I thought this time too, she would return early. So, I fell asleep," he said.

On Sunday morning, when Barun, his father and his brothers could not contact Tina who had not returned home after the jagan, they started panicking.

"We received a call around noon from a person, who said that my mother had met with an accident after a stage collapsed inside the temple during the jagan..." said Vikas.

According to police, Tina's

postmortem was carried out at the AIIMS Trauma Centre on Monday.

Vikas also said, "This is negligence on the part of the temple authorities... How could they hold such a big event without safety measures in place? Who is answerable for my mother's death? She was simply a devotee who wanted to be part of the jagan, like she used to every week."

On Monday, the Delhi Police said that they had received an application from one Satish Kumar on behalf of the organ-

isers — Sri Kalkaji Sajja Sevadar Mitr Mandal — to organise the jagan at the Kalkaji Mandir.

"There are several other members of the Mitr Mandal. The jagan was held in the area called Mahant Parishar, thus, the land owner of Mahant Parishar, tent house owner, promoters, and performers among others are being examined, to identify the main organisers for fixing the liability," said DCP (Southeast) Rajesh Deo.

Police had filed an FIR under the charge of negligence against unknown persons.

44-yr-old advocate jumps off Saket court building

New Delhi: A 44-year-old advocate allegedly committed suicide by jumping from the Saket Court building Monday night.

Police said the deceased, Om Kumar Sharma, was suffering from a liver ailment and left a suicide note at the spot.

As per the police, they received a call around 8 pm about the incident. Staffers at the Saket court said they saw an advocate

jump from the lawyer's chambers and had died.

Ankit Chauhan, DCP (South) said, "We rushed to the spot... he was lying near the parking area."

"On Monday evening, he went to a hospital with his wife and later came to court. He left his wife at the main gate and went inside. Around 20-30 minutes later, his wife found out about the incident," said the DCP. ENS

In discussion for MCD Budget: Councillor fund for parks, medical scheme for workers

SAMAN HUSAIN

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

COUNCILLOR FUND for park maintenance, scheme for workers to help with medical expenses: With the Budget session of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi set to begin this week, these are some of the proposals that will be highlighted by Leader of Opposition, BJP's Raja Iqbal Singh, who will be initiating the general discussion on Tuesday.

"I will be proposing the accommodation of a councillor's development fund of Rs 2 crore that can be used by the elected councillors to deal with the issues in their respective wards," Singh told *The Indian Express*.

Singh also said he would push for a councillor fund for park maintenance. "Most MCD parks currently lack horticulture equipment, lights and proper pathways," he said.

Additionally, Singh plans to urge for a cashless scheme for MCD workers, which will help them with their medical expenses. "MCD employees are not being entertained by the civic body's hospitals as the corporation takes too much time to clear their medical expenses. I will propose a cashless scheme under which MCD employees can easily avail free health checkups at the hospitals maintained by the civic body," he said.

Singh also plans to push for schemes that provide tax relief to citizens.

The budget discussions will take place February 5, 6 and 7.

Leader of the House Mukesh Golwala will then present the final budget in the House after amendments on February 8. Corporation Commissioner Ganesh Bharti had earlier presented the budget in the House for approval in December.

"There will be a detailed discussion on the budget," the Mayor's office said in its statement to the press.

Meanwhile, Tuesday's monthly house meeting ended within 20 minutes after a ruckus broke out as soon as the session started. This resulted in agendas being passed without any discussion.

BJP councillors burst into slogans, even as Mayor Shelly Oberoi urged them to take their seats and to respect the dignity of the house. As the BJP councillors continued to raise slogans, the mayor passed the agendas and adjourned the house.

Out of the 25 proposals put forward in the meeting, 7 proposals have been postponed, one rejected while one proposal has been referred back.

Pushpa Singh appointed Delhi Mahila Cong head

New Delhi: The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has appointed Pushpa Singh as the president of Delhi Mahila Congress Monday.

A resident of Mehrauli, Singh had earlier served as an MCD councillor and had also received the 5th best councillor award in 2016. According to party sources, DPPCC President Arvinder Lovely was in favour of Singh's appointment.

"As Rahul Gandhi's soldiers, we are going to work hard and strengthen the Mahila Congress in Delhi... the upcoming Congress Workers' convention on February 3 will be the first big event under my leadership, for which the Mahila wing will provide full support to make the event bigger and better, I hope that I can strengthen the women's wing further," Singh told *The Indian Express*. ENS

भारतीय कंटेनर लिंगम लिमिटेड
Container Corporation of India Ltd.
A Navratna Undertaking of Govt. of India
Regd. Office & Investors Relation Centre: CONCOR Bhawan,
C-3, Mathura Road, Opp. Apollo Hospital, New Delhi – 110001.
CIN : L63011DL1998G01030915, e-mail : investorrelations@concorindia.com,
Tel. Nos. : 41673093-96, 41222500/600/700 website : <https://www.concorindia.co.in>

NOTICE OF RECORD DATE FOR 3RD INTERIM DIVIDEND FOR FY 2023-24
Notice is hereby given that 07th February, 2024 (Wednesday) has been fixed as the Record Date for the purpose of determining the entitlement of members to Interim Dividend @80% (Rs 4.00 per share on equity share of Rs. 5/- each), declared by the Board in its meeting held on 24.01.2024 for the financial year 2023-24. Further, Interim dividend will be paid:

- (i) to those Members whose names will appear in the Register of Members of the Company, after giving effect to all valid Share Transfers in physical form lodged with the Company and its Registrar on or before 07th February, 2024; or
- (ii) in respect of Shares held in electronic form, to those "deemed members" whose names appear on the Statements of beneficial ownership furnished by National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) and Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL), at the end of business hours on 07th February, 2024.

In order to avail the facility of payment of dividend through Electronic Clearing Service (ECS), members of the Company, holding their shares in Demat mode are requested to submit the duly filled in ECS mandate form to their Depository Participant and those holding physical shares to Company's Share Transfer Agent and Registrar: M/s Beetal Financial & Computer Services (P) Ltd., BEETAL HOUSE, 3rd Floor, 99, Madangir, Behind Local Shopping Centre, Near Dada Harshkdas Mandir, New Delhi – 110062. ECS instructions once furnished by the member will supersede all her previous bank mandates/details. ECS mandate form is available on Company's website: www.concorindia.co.in.

For Container Corporation of India Ltd.
Place: New Delhi
Date : 24.01.2024

यूको बैंक UCO BANK
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e-mail : zokanpur.rec@ucobank.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable property) APPENDIX-IV [Rule 8(1)]

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized officer of the UCO Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice dated (details mentioned here in below) calling upon the borrower(s)/guarantor(s) (details mentioned herein below) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being (details mentioned herein below) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower(s)/guarantor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s)/guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on this (details mentioned here in below) of the year (details mentioned here in below). The borrower(s)/guarantor(s) in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank for an amount of (details mentioned herein below). The borrower's, legal heir's and/or guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section 8 of section 13 of the act in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Sl. No.	Name & Address of Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) and Name of Related Branch	Description of Property & Possession Date	Balance O/S (Rs.) & Demand Notice Date
1.	Borrower(s): Mrs. Ma Adshakti Saree (Prop. Shri Sonal Nagariya) R/o 26, Jawahar Chowk, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh 284002. Prop. Shri Sonal Nagariya S/o Sh. Santosh Nagariya R/o L-42, Lahar Gird Road, Lahar Gird, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh -284003 Guarantor(s): Late Shri Santosh Nagariya S/o Sh. Motilal Nagariya through legal heir(s)	All that part and parcel of the property consists of Land & Building measuring (712 sq. ft.) 86.14 sq Mtr as per Bahi No. 1, Zild No. 232, Page No. 377-384/419-420, SI. No. 2547 registered on 19.07.1999 at Sub- Registrar Jhansi situated at Mauzu Lahar Gird, Nagar Nigam Allotment No. 42, Jhansi standing in the name of Late Shri Santosh Nagariya S/o Shri Motilal Nagariya resident of 868, Hewat Ganj, Gwal Toli, Hansari, Jhansi	Rs. 21,17,653.89/- (Rupees Twenty-One Lakhs Seventeen Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Three and Paise Eighty Nine Only) inclusive of interest up to 12.07.2023 as on 30.10.2023 which includes Cash Credit Limit (Ac No: 03100510000953) having Outstanding Balance of Rs. 21,17,653.89/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakhs Seventeen Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Three and Paise Eighty Nine Only) inclusive of interest up to 12.07.2023, plus further interest thereon at the contractual rate, costs, charges and expenses etc. till date of payment.
	1. Smt. Awadhesh Nagariya W/o Late Shri Santosh Kumar Nagariya, 2. Shri Sonal Nagariya S/o Late Shri Santosh Kumar Nagariya 3. Ms. Surbhi Nagariya D/o Late Shri Santosh Kumar Nagariya Branch Name: Bada Bazar, Jhansi (3010)	Date of Possession: 24.01.2024	Date of Demand Notice: 31.10.2023

Date : 30.01.2024 Place : Jhansi Authorized Officer (UCO Bank)

Model Hospital Bapunagar Employees' State Insurance Corporation
(Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India)
Near Hardasnagar Police Chowky, Rajiv Nagar, Bapunagar, Ahmedabad-380024 (ISO 9001-2015 Certified) Phone: 079-22772587 Email: ms-bapunagar@esic.nic.in; Website: www.esic.nic.in

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 01/2024**WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR RECRUITMENT OF DOCTORS ON CONTRACT BASIS**

Walk-in-interview will be held at ESIC Model Hospital Bapunagar, Ahmedabad in the chamber of Medical Superintendent on 15.02.2024, 16.02.2024 and 20.02.2024 from 09:30 AM onwards for following posts:

Post	Speciality / No. of Posts
Senior Residents (Under 3 Years Residency Scheme) extendable every year	General Surgery-02, Paediatrics-03, ICU-02 and Orthopedics-02
Senior Residents against GDMO (01 years)	General Medicine-01, Obs & Gynaec-01 and Microbiology -01
Full Time Specialists	Orthopedics-02, Pathology-01 and Radiology-01
Full Time/Part Time Super Specialists	Cardiology-01 & Gastroenterology-01
Part Time Physician	Homeopathy Physician-01

Interested candidates may visit ESIC Website: www.esic.nic.in under tab 'Recruitment' for schedule, detailed vacancy position and terms & conditions.

-Sd/-

MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT

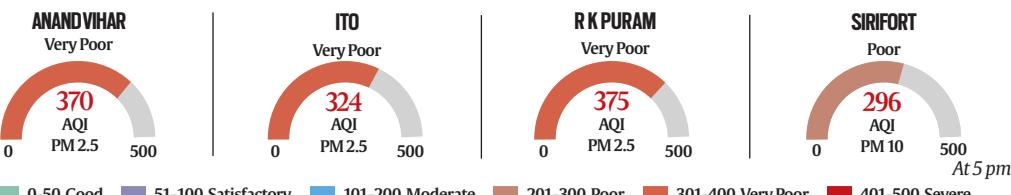
POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)
(For Immovable Property) Rule 8(1)

WHEREAS
The undersigned being the authorized officer of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) having its Registered Office at 52/60, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Mumbai 400001, and one of its offices at 25, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice dated 10.07.2023 (published in newspapers on 28.07.2023 u/s 13(2) of the captioned Act, calling upon *M/s MILKY Fashion Clothes Pvt. Ltd.* (Borrower) having office at B-68, Chanakya Place, Janakpuri, New Delhi – 110058 and Mr. Rakesh Kumar (Guarantor/Mortgagor) and Mrs. Manish Kumar (Guarantor): to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice being Rs. 8,91,22,002.17/- (Rupees Eight Crore Ninety One Lakh Twenty Two Thousand Two and Paise Seventeen Only) as on 30.06.2023 together with interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt and/or publication of the said Notice.

The borrower, guarantor(s)/mortgagor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, guarantor(s)/mortgagor and the public in general that the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of HSBC has taken physical possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the captioned Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 23rd day of January of the year 2024.

The borrower, guarantor(s)/mortgagor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of HSBC for an amount of Rs. 8,91,22,002.17/- (Rupees Eight Crore Ninety One Lakh Twenty Two Thousand Two and Paise Seventeen Only) as on 30.06.2023 along with interest thereon.

The borrower, guarantor(s)/mortgagor attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: January 30
Mainly clear sky becoming partly cloudy towards evening. Shallow/moderate fog in the morning.
MAX: 22 0.1°C below normal
MIN: 8 4°C below normal

Three minors 'sexually assault' boy over petty fight, post video online

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

A TEENAGER was allegedly sexually assaulted and harassed in South Delhi on Saturday evening by a group of minor boys, who also recorded a video of the incident and threatened to post it on social media platforms if the victim narrated the ordeal to anyone.

The purported video showed the complainant licking the shoes of the boys, who then allegedly sexually assaulted him and beat him up. In the video, the boy was seen crying and begging for help.

Based on a complaint filed by the boy's mother, who watched the video posted on Instagram as a "story", an FIR was registered and police launched an investigation on Sunday.

DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan said that the victim has been sent for counselling and medical examination. "The victim said that around 6.30 pm on Saturday, he was returning home after playing... when three boys stopped him."

The juveniles allegedly took the victim to a spot and one of them pointed a vegetable knife at the latter.

All the boys know each other and live in the same locality. Police said the boys had some petty fight a few days ago and wanted revenge.

"The complainant said that the boys... recorded the incident on his cellphone, and threat-

In the purported video, the three accused could be seen pointing a knife at the victim and kicking him

ened him not to tell anyone... The accused, however, posted the video on Instagram as a story. Another friend of the victim (also a minor) watched the story and sent it to the victim's mother. She then approached the police," said DCP Chauhan.

In the video, the boys could be seen pointing a knife at the victim and asking him to do "murga", and also kicking him.

A case under unnatural sex and criminal intimidation sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act has been registered, and all three boys have been apprehended and questioned, said police.

"We will contact Meta and ask about the video for more details", said police, adding that they have also approached the forensic science lab to examine the said video to confirm the details of the juveniles and the complainant.

"We have questioned them (three accused). They are all young boys... This is just ego-tussle over a petty issue. We do not know why they took such a drastic step. Both parties have known each other for years," said an officer.



Party leaders having 'prasad' on Monday. X/@Pandajay

BJP meets local leaders to 'gauge mood' of its seven Delhi MPs

JATIN ANAND

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE BJP is one step closer to appointing a senior leader to oversee the party's preparations for the Lok Sabha elections in the national capital, days after several "important" party units from Gujarat, Telangana, and northeast states among others failed to be on a list of election in-charges and co-incharges, said sources on Monday.

According to sources, the process to appoint a senior leader gathered steam following a get-together at a city temple on Sunday evening. This senior leader will act as the link between the party's state unit in the national capital and its national leadership for the general elections 2024, and among other functions, preside over the meeting of the State Election Committee which will suggest names of potential candidates to be fielded.

At the get-together, organised at the Jagannath Temple in Hauz Khas by BJP national vice-president

dent Baijayan Panda — who was appointed the election in-charge for Uttar Pradesh on Saturday — traditional prasad was served to around 100 senior leaders from the Delhi BJP unit and the city chapter of the RSS.

While several leaders in attendance said it was a "farewell" for Panda, given his new responsibility; others mentioned it was intended to "gauge the mood" regarding the performance of Delhi's seven incumbent MPs. "The event was pre-scheduled as Panda ji has family ties with the temple. The aim was to honour his association with it... There is nothing between the lines," said a senior Delhi BJP leader who attended the Monday event.

According to a party source, the gathering — unprecedented in the city in the run-up to the elections — however, had assessment at its core. "This was for the first time that so many senior leaders from Delhi had a common interface. Learnings regarding the mood within the party's sitting MPs will lead to several important decisions related to the polls," the source said.

FOR 'BETTER IDENTIFICATION' OF COLOUR

Silver to Gold: Delhi Metro changes colour code of much-awaited line

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE DELHI Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on Monday announced a change to the colour scheme of its upcoming Delhi Aerocity — Tughlakabad Metro corridor.

The Phase 4 corridor, originally designated with a 'silver' code, will now sport a 'golden' colour instead. The decision to shift from 'silver' to 'golden'

comes as a measure to ensure better identification of the colour on the Metro trains.

DMRC officials said the silver colour tended to blend with the stainless steel body of the trains, which could potentially cause confusion for passengers. By opting for a golden shade, the corporation aims to enhance visibility for commuters.

Usually each corridor features a prominently displayed coloured strip indicating its designated colour code.

DELHI SOLAR POLICY 2024

Install rooftop solar panels and get zero electricity bills: CM announces new policy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

Installing rooftop solar panels may help you get 'zero' electricity bills, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Monday. Those who opt for the scheme will also earn around Rs 700-900 a month, the Chief Minister said.

Explaining the contours of Delhi Solar Policy 2024, a senior Delhi government official said, "The scheme is linked to power production. If, for example, you are using 400 units of power per month and you have installed a 2 kilowatt solar panel, which generates around 220 units of solar power. These 220 units will be adjusted against your consumption through net metering."

"This means that your net consumption will now be 180 units. Those who use under 200 units don't get a power bill in Delhi in any case. Apart from this, you will also be paid for the 220 units that you are generating at Rs 3 per unit," said the official, requesting anonymity.

Ultimately, your power bill will depend on the consumption as well as the solar power generation. The policy was approved by the Cabinet a few days ago and has received the Lieutenant Governor's go-ahead.

Under the policy, the government will pay Rs 3 per unit if the solar plant is up to 3 kilowatts and Rs 2 per unit for plants between 3 and 5 kilowatts for five years.

One key difference between the 2016 scheme and the new scheme is the generation-based incentive (GBI). In the 2016 scheme, one had to produce at least 1,000 units to get paid.

"There is no conditionality of minimum generation to receive

CAPITAL'S POWER PUSH

2016 SOLAR POLICY

1,500 mw

Total power generation

250 mw

of rooftop solar plants

7.2%

of Delhi's annual electricity demand met

NEW SOLAR POLICY

GENERATION-BASED INCENTIVE OF ROOFTOP PLANTS

₹3 per unit for small plants (up to 3 kW)

₹2 for larger plants (3 to 10 kW)

CAPITAL SUBSIDY TO RESIDENTIAL CONSUMERS:

Rs 2,000 per kW of installation, up to Rs 10,000 per consumer

No minimum generation required

This is over and above the Centre's capital subsidy

Industrial consumers will also get incentive of Re 1 per unit for the first time

AN EXAMPLE

360 units

The power consumption of a user

₹90,000

The consumer installs a 2kW rooftop solar plant

Consumer to get zero bill as power units produced by solar power will be adjusted against bill and bring consumption under 200 units, which is free

HOW CAN ONE GET SOLAR PANELS INSTALLED AND HOW WILL IT WORK?

Delhi govt will soon upload a list of authorised vendors on its website

Download the list, select any vendor, call them and get your rooftops solar panels installed

Once panels are installed, discoms will install a 'net meter', which will keep a tab on units generated, units used by consumer, and units unused

Following this, electricity bills will be sent to the consumer. Units they generate will be adjusted against their consumption; if extra power is produced, money will be credited to the user's account

No need to submit any documents

Few incentives, high cost: What govt learnt from its old policy

GAYATHRI MANI & MALLICA JOSHI

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

WITH ITS new solar policy, the Delhi government is trying to rectify the challenges posed by its previous policy launched in 2016. User interest and power generation in the previous policy remained low, with consumers installing a capacity of only around 250 megawatts.

Further, officials said the capital cost for installations is high.

"For instance, under the current electricity subsidy, people get the benefit of only Rs 800 a month. Most of the consumers who get zero bills use only 200 units; most of them do not use AC or heavy electrical appliances. Also, a good quality solar panel costs Rs 40,000 to Rs 1 lakh and above. One small panel will not generate a lot of power... We hope that the additional subsidy and the generation-based incentive are going to attract more people..." said an official.

Another official said the government could look at an EMI option for installation.

"A common middle-class person buys a TV, refrigerator, washing machine, and even a mobile phone on an EMI basis... if there is any such method, maybe people would come forward... Not many can pay the entire cost upfront."

Officials added that camps will be set up to explain the benefits of installing panels in the longer run.

BRIEFLY

Gurgaon: Man killed in fight in subway; 3 held

Gurgaon: A 21-year-old youth was stabbed to death in a subway on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway during a clash between two groups of friends over "a love affair", said police on Monday. The victim, Akash, was a native of Bihar's Begusarai and lived in a rented accommodation in Naharpur Rupa village with his cousin Suraj. Akash, who was preparing for competitive exams, was stabbed by one Krishna, a school friend, on Sunday. The victim's cousin, Suraj, said in his complaint, "...Krishna and his friends (Around 10) were pelting us with stones, some of which hit us... Then, two of the friends caught my brother, and Krishna stabbed him with a knife several times and then fled." Akash was taken to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead, said police.

2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

Justice Shankar said that it is a "matter of considerable regret that, almost daily", the High Court is encountering cases in which schools and the Directorate of Education (DoE) are at odds on the aspect of a mission of students belonging to the EWS category.

The High Court said in most of these cases, the school is unwilling to admit EWS students against "carry forward vacancies" of previous years which remained unfilled.

It thereafter said the student shall continue to study as an EWS student in Class 1 in the school till the end of the present academic year.

It also said the DoE will ensure she is admitted to Class 2 in a neighbourhood school in 2024-2025 as an EWS/DG candidate, and will continue to receive an education there till she turns 14 years old as per the RTE Act. It further said the DoE shall bear the student's fees as per the legal provision.

In case no school in the immediate neighbourhood has a vacancy, the DoE will ensure the student is admitted to Class 2 in a school as close to her residence after concurring with the petitioner, the High Court said.

200+ vehicles destroyed in 'malkhana' fire

New Delhi: Nearly 200 two-wheelers and 45 four-wheelers — all case properties — were damaged on Monday after a fire swept through a vehicle pit (malkhana) in Delhi's Wazirabad Police Training School (PTS). Joy Tirkey, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northeast) said that the fire was reported at 12.35 am in the vehicle pit. "The fire was extinguished by 2.30 am on Monday. A large number of vehicles, part of case property of Outer district, were damaged..." said Tirkey, adding that the cause of the fire is being ascertained. "A case under relevant sections has been registered at the Sonia Vihar police station," said Tirkey.

ENS

No-detention policy out this year, teachers flag concerns

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29



Now, students of classes V and VIII can be held back if they are unable to secure at least 33 per cent marks in each subject, and at least 25 per cent marks in the mid-term and annual exams in each subject. File

are from outside Delhi and may be out of town for a few weeks, might lose out. Students have been made aware they can be detained, so they are not casual about it anymore."

On interventions being made to prevent detention, Murari Jha, mentor teacher, said, "Interventions are made not keeping in mind that the policy has been revoked... it is already going on in terms of preparing students to read grade-appropriate texts as part of 'Mission Buniyadi'. This is the first year, so we will know how it has impacted students in April."

He added, "I am worried and wish the policy could have con-

tinued. Even if a small percentage of students are affected, their families may not be able to deal with an extra year of education... for girls, it is even more disastrous since there is a threat of being withdrawn from school or forced into marriage."

Sudha Acharya, Principal, ITL Public School, said, "The purpose (of doing away with the policy) is that before the child enters senior school, we should know if they are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need... The first term gave us some impression of which children need support... Parents have been oriented (about the change)."

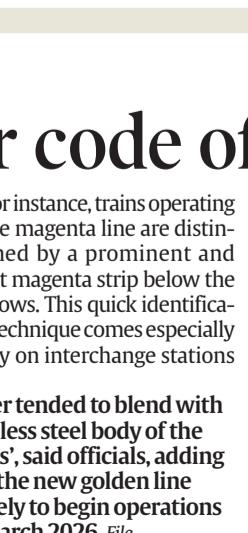
For instance, trains operating on the magenta line are distinguished by a prominent and bright magenta strip below the windows. This quick identification technique comes especially handy on interchange stations.

'Silver tended to blend with stainless steel body of the trains', said officials, adding that the new golden line is likely to begin operations by March 2026. File

that have over one line merging and diverging at a single station.

The Aerocity — Tughlakabad Metro corridor, spanning 36.62 kilometres with 15 stations, holds strategic significance in expanding connectivity across Delhi. Scheduled to link the Kashmere Gate — Raja Nahar Singh Violet Line with the Airport Express Line, this corridor promises increased accessibility to locales in the southern region of the national capital.

Officials said the new golden



Navy rescues crew of 17 from hijacked Iranian fishing vessel

New Delhi: Responding to a distress call from a hijacked Iranian-flagged fishing vessel, Indian Navy rescued 17 crew members by sending a warship to the area.

As per the Navy, INS Sumitra—a warship on Anti-Piracy Operations along the East coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden—responded to a distress message regarding hijacking of an Iranian flagged Fishing Vessel (FV) ENS

Iman. The vessel had been boarded by pirates and the crew has been taken as hostages.

In a statement, the Navy said INS Sumitra intercepted the vessel, acted in accordance with established SOPs to coerce the pirates to safely release the crew along with the boat and ensured successful release of all 17 crew members along with the boat. The vessel was subsequently sanitised.

SHRI LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI NATIONAL SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY
(Central University)
B-4, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi-110016
F.7(134)/LBSNU/UWD/2023-24 Date: 18.01.2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed percentage rate tenders are invited for the under mentioned work from the approved and eligible CPWD contractors. NIT No. 06/2023-24/LBSNU/UWD (T.I.D. No.2024_SLBS_742313_1) Upgradation of electrical facilities in residential & non-residential buildings of the University during 2023-24 (S.H. P/o additional power points and R/o LT cables at SS, SJS, etc. complete). Estimated cost - Rs.23,69,396/-, Earnest Money Rs. 47,388/-, Time Allowed (30) Thirty Days, Tender Fee - Rs. 1180/- (Non-Refundable). Last date & time of receipt of applications: 30/01/2024 up to 4.00 PM. Last date & time of issue of tenders: 30/01/2024 up to 4.00 PM. Last date & time of Submission of tenders: 01/02/2024 up to 3.00 PM. Date & time of opening of tenders: 01/02/2024 from 3.30 PM. For eligibility criteria, other details & corrigendum, if any, please visit websites: www.slbsrvs.ac.in & www.eprocure.gov.in

CBC 21371/12/0005/2324 REGISTRAR

EXPRESS Careers

**SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY,
KOLHAPUR**
ADVERTISEMENT NO. 18/2024

Applications are invited in the prescribed form available online on Shivaji University website www.unishivaji.ac.in (URL www.unishivaji.ac.in/recruitments) for the following Teaching Posts under provisions of Section 102 of Maharashtra Public Universities Act, 2016 to be filled in unaided departments/course conducted from University funds.

Post	Department/Course and Number of Posts
Assistant Professor	Food Science and Technology - 1 Chemistry- (For Industrial Chemistry Course) – 1 Computer Science - 2

The details of Posts, Qualifications, Pay Scale and emoluments, process of online application and instructions therein etc. are available on the university website www.unishivaji.ac.in (URL www.unishivaji.ac.in/recruitments).

Kolhapur Dr. V. N. Shinde Date : 24/01/2024 Registrar

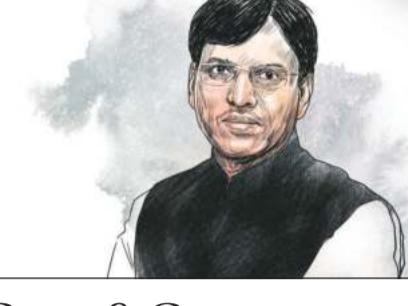
"A++" Accredited by NAAC (2021) with CGPA 3.52

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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



CARE & CONCERN

AT THE foundation stone laying ceremony of a cancer hospital in Gujarat last week, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said while it was the government's job to make new hospitals, he hoped that no one needed them. The minister said one of the ways that people could stay away from hospitals was to stop using tobacco. Every year tobacco consumption kills around 80-lakh people globally, equivalent to the population of some European countries, he said.

PREPARING FOR POLLS

AS THE Lok Sabha elections inch closer, BJP MP (North-east Delhi) Manoj Tiwari has organised back-to-back events in his parliamentary constituency to bolster public connect. In addition to inviting religious leader Dharendra Shastri to preside over a three-day event, Tiwari has invited over 30,000 women to be part of a 'kalash yatra' across areas in the segment on January 31, especially in areas hit by the 2020 riots.

ED questions Lalu, Hooda, team camps at Soren's house in Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, RANCHI, JAN 29

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) on Monday questioned former Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad in Patna and former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda in New Delhi in separate cases. A team of the central agency also visited the house of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren in Delhi but the latter was not present there.

The ED questioned Lalu for over nine hours in connection with the agency's money laundering probe into the alleged land-for-jobs scam, officials said.

Prasad, accompanied by his daughter Misa Bharti, arrived at the ED office in Patna around 11 am and left at 8.50 pm, sources said.

The investigating officer of the case recorded Lalu's statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

A team of ED officials from Delhi reached Patna on Sunday to question the RJD leader in connection with the alleged



RJD chief Lalu Prasad arrives at the ED office in Patna. PTI

scam, the sources said. The central agency had on January 19 issued fresh summons for questioning Lalu and his son Tejashwi Yadav.

The notice was handed over by the ED at Lalu's wife and former Bihar CM Rabri Devi's residence. Both were asked to appear before the ED officials on January 29 and 30, respectively.

Senior Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda was questioned for around seven hours by the ED in connection with a money laundering investigation in an alleged land fraud case. But he was not present.

alleged irregularities in land acquisition at Manesar during 2004-07. Several farmers and landowners had alleged that they had been cheated to the tune of about Rs 1,500 crore in this land acquisition case.

Hooda was first summoned on January 17 and his statement was recorded under the provisions of the PMLA.

Meanwhile, a team of ED visited the South Delhi residence of Soren to question him in connection with a money laundering investigation in an alleged land fraud case. But he was not present.

at his home. The ED teams will be at the residence till Soren returns, sources said, adding that authorities are also keeping a vigil at the Delhi airport.

The ED had issued a fresh summons to Soren asking him to confirm his availability for questioning on either January 29 or January 31, the sources said. Soren had sent a communication to them but had not confirmed the date and time for questioning, according to the sources.

JMM's general secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya said: "ED's spontaneous arrival at the official residence of the CM...with hundreds of armed soldiers does not appear to be legal. What was the hurry that ED officials could not wait even for two days for the interrogation and that too when seven hours of interrogation had already taken place a week ago?"

JMM added that it was an insult to the honour and respect of a CM as well as to the 3.5 crore people of the state.

BJP state chief Babul Marandi said Soren went underground due to fear of the ED.

RAM TEMPLE CONSECRATION CEREMONY

No order to stop telecast, attempt to portray TN govt as anti-Hindu: DGP

Of 288 applications, 4 cleared before court intervention: Affidavit in SC

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE TAMIL Nadu Director General of Police (DGP) told the Supreme Court on Monday that the "allegation" that Chief Minister M K Stalin had "orally instructed not to allow any ceremony or function" on January 22 — to celebrate the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya — was "totally false".

According to the affidavit, while 25 applications were for processions, 22 were for live-streaming in outdoor/public places, 15 for live-streaming in temples and other indoor places, and 226 for bhajans, annadhanams and special pujas in public places.

In the first round, 23 applications for procession were rejected while two were kept "pending for verification"; all 22 applications for bhajans, annadhanams and special pujas were rejected; 7 of the 15 applications for live-streaming in temples and other indoor places were rejected while 8 were kept "pending for verification"; 4 of the 226 applications for bhajans, annadhanams and special pujas were rejected, and the rest were kept "pending for verification". But later, 15 processions were conducted and live-streaming was allowed in all the 15 indoor places, the affidavit said.

The same day, the Madras High Court and its Madurai bench too intervened in the matter. On Monday, the DGP said the petitioner approached the court "under an illusion and on false interpretation of reality". Terming the plea as "politically motivated", the DGP said, "he has come with imaginary claims and has challenged a non-existing order".

On January 22, the SC had asked authorities in Tamil Nadu to act in accordance with the law and not based on any oral instructions on "banning" special prayers and live telecast of the Ram temple consecration ceremony in temples in the state. It was hearing a plea filed by Vinoj P Selvam, a state BJP functionary, seeking quashing of an alleged "oral order" banning live telecast of the ceremony.

In all the 252 places where the events were conducted on 22.01.2024, police produced sufficient bandobust..." it said. The DGP cited "prevailing local issues" as the reason for rejecting 146 applications received till January 20.

On January 22, the SC bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta had sought data on the number of applications received, and the reasons for rejecting them.

The SC adjourned the matter, giving the TN government two more weeks to file its response.

As Union MoS talks CAA, Mamata slams BJP: 'Harping for votes'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JANUARY 29

A DAY after Union MoS Shantanu Thakur said the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was enacted in December 2019, will be implemented across the country in the next seven days, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said the BJP has again started harping on the citizenship law for votes since the Lok Sabha elections were around the corner.

"We were the ones who hit the streets to protest against the NRC (National Register of Citizens). Our Rajbangshi friends are citizens already. They (the BJP) are now screaming CAA again to do politics before the elections," Banerjee said at a programme in Cooch Behar.

On Sunday, addressing a public meeting at Kakdwip in South 24 Parganas district, Union Minister of State for Shipping,

Ports and Waterways said, "Ram Temple has been inaugurated and I can guarantee that in the next seven days, not just in West Bengal, the CAA will be implemented across India. The law will be implemented in every state".

Thakur belongs to the Matua community in Bengal. The amendment, which promises speedy citizenship to immigrants from neighbouring countries which are minorities there (effectively leaving out only Muslims), can swing votes in Bengal, which houses a large number of migrants from Bangladesh, including the Matuas.

Thakur's statement followed a similar commitment by Union Home Minister Amit Shah a month ago. However, it is not the first time that the BJP has given this assurance, particularly ahead of elections, even as the Centre has availed nine extensions so far for framing of rules of the law, with the latest one set to expire in March.

Decide by Feb 15 disqualification pleas against Ajit Pawar faction: SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE SUPREME Court on Monday gave Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar time until February 15 to decide the disqualification petitions against Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and others arising out of the faction fight in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

In October last year, the SC had given Narwekar time until January 31 to hear and decide the nine disqualification petitions against the Ajit camp.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the bench presided by CJ D Y Chandrachud that Speaker Rahul Narwekar was not dealing with the NCP matter earlier, as he was dealing with disqualification petitions arising out of the rift in the Shiv Sena. He said Narwekar would close the NCP matter for a final order on January 31 and, thereafter, require three more weeks to dictate the order.

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Referring to seat-sharing in Bengal, he said: "Mamata Banerjee says she is with INDIA. She also says she will fight the BJP and the RSS alone on all 42

Cong: TMC tried to disrupt yatra, but seat-sharing doors still open

Cong made no progress despite reminders since June: TMC

ATRI MITRA & SWEETY KUMARI
KISHANGANJ-ARARIA, KOLKATA, JANUARY 29

EVEN AS he accused it of attempting to disrupt Rahul Gandhi's yatra, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said Monday his party's doors were "still open" for the TMC to discuss the seat-sharing for Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal.

The TMC on the other hand blamed the failure in sharing of seats on the Congress, with party MP Abhishek Banerjee saying the party made "no progress" despite repeated reminders over the last seven months.

Speaking during Rahul Gandhi's yatra at Toopamari village of Bihar's Kishanganj, Ramesh said: "Our friend Trinamool Congress tried to disrupt the yatra, tore down posters and flex of Rahul Gandhi. But they failed. People came out in huge numbers... We are making it clear that whoever may try to disrupt the yatra, it will be successful."

Referring to seat-sharing in Bengal, he said: "Mamata Banerjee says she is with INDIA. She also says she will fight the BJP and the RSS alone on all 42

seats of West Bengal. We haven't closed any doors. Our door is open, any type of dialogue is welcome."

TMC chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee last week announced her party would be fighting the coming Lok Sabha polls alone.

Abhishek accused the Congress of delaying the seat-sharing talks. "We have been repeatedly asking to discuss seat sharing for the last seven months but nothing has happened. In the last meeting in Delhi, our chairperson (Mamata) clearly gave a deadline of December 31st... today is January 29...no progress," he told reporters at Diamond Harbour, his

Lok Sabha constituency.

Abhishek also came down heavily on Congress's Bengal unit chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for his comments against the TMC. "There is a limit to our patience... he is challenging the TMC chairperson, while the Congress claims TMC is their most important ally. How many times have they criticised the BJP or supported us on issues we are fighting against the Centre," he said.

Meanwhile, Rahul's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entered Bihar from West Bengal on Monday. All eyes are now on the Mahagathbandhan event in Purnea Tuesday, where INDIA hopes to put up a show of unity.

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Lok Sabha constituency.

Exerting that the people of Bihar had given a mandate to the NDA in the last Assembly polls in 2020 Choudhary said, "That government is back now. As far as the job promises are concerned, the NDA government has been ready with a proposal to provide 1.75 lakh jobs. We will fulfil our promise of giving 10 lakh jobs."

Sinha said: "The Central leadership of BJP helped Bihar from slipping into another phase of misrule, as the RJD had the mentality to create a rule of anarchy... Now, we have come together with Nitish Kumar, we have to work for all-round development of Bihar."

Choudhary recalled how he had been part of the Samata Party formed in 1994 to dislodge the RJD's "government of misrule" and it was eventually in 2005 when the NDA brought

Some cheer for Opp: DMK lets Cong have 9 seats

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JANUARY 29

number of seats the party contested in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Last time, the Congress had won eight seats and lost only in Theni, which had gone to the AIADMK. Congress ally DMK had won all the 20 seats it had contested from. The Congress had a 12.6% vote share, while the DMK polled 33.5% of the votes.

In all, the alliance led by the DMK in the state, which comprises the Congress, CPM, CPI, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and other smaller

parties, had won 38 of the 39 seats in the state.

On Sunday, a team of Congress leaders, headed by Congress general secretary Mukul Wasnik, who is the convenor of the National Alliance Committee (NAC), former Union minister Salman Khurshid and Congress Tamil Nadu chief K S Alagiri, held the talks with the DMK side, which was represented by party MPT R Balu.

This alliance, Wasnik said, "is crucial to combat divisive forces and safeguard democracy".

The Congress demand for

nine seats mirrors its previous election strategy of focusing on constituencies in the southern part of the state, which include Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar, Sivaganga, Ariani, Tiruvallur or Kanchipuram, Trichy, Karur.

DMK sources said that while nine seats were "guaranteed" for the Congress, "adjustments in the constituencies were possible".

The DMK is yet to commence talks with its other alliance partners.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Day after Nitish's return with BJP, his Deputy CMs say: Establishing rule of law, good governance now priority

BJP's Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Sinha in Patna. PTI

were sworn in on Sunday and a full-fledged government was much needed.

Choudhary told reporters here: "We decided to form a government with Nitish Kumar after instructions from the central leadership of the party... I am a committed worker of the party. I had donned a turban on my head after the death of my mother, and I had later impulsively said that I had donned the turban to remove Nitish Kumar as CM. But now that the central leadership has given me a new responsibility, I am committed to fulfil it with sincerity under Nitish Kumar's leadership. Our priority now is to establish rule

of law and good governance."

Echoing Choudhary, his fellow Deputy CM Sinha said: "We had been part of the Samata Party formed in 1994 to dislodge the RJD's "government of misrule" and it was eventually in 2005 when the NDA brought

down the Lalu Prasad regime and formed the government."

Targeting the RJD, Choudhary said: "For the past 17 months, democracy was put to shame as RJD had been talking of finishing JD(U) after the 2024 polls." He was referring to former Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav's statement on Saturday where he spoke of "the JD(U) disintegrating after the 2024 polls because of BJP's designs".

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EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

MADHYA PRADESH

Man smothers SDM wife to death, arrested

Bhopal: A sub-divisional magistrate from Dindori district was allegedly smothered to death by her husband because she didn't name him her nominee in her service book, insurance, and bank account, police said. Manish Sharma (45) allegedly suffocated SDM Nisha Napit (51) with a pillow Sunday, sat near the body for 6 hours, and took it to a community health centre, but doctors there alerted the police. Sharma had also washed her blood-stained clothes and the pillow, police said. Sharma, who was arrested on Monday, is reportedly unemployed. **ENS**

ODISHA

Govt withdraws decision on tribal land transfer

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government on Monday decided to withdraw the "controversial" decision to amend a 67-year-old regulation to allow transfer of tribal land to non-tribals in scheduled areas that had triggered state-wide protests. "The decision created confusion among tribals, while the Opposition tried to provoke them with ill-intention..." said a senior officer. **ENS**

UTTAR PRADESH

J&K student of AMU-run school found dead

Meerut: A Class 12 student of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)-run Sir Syed Hamid Senior Secondary School was found dead at his rented room in UP's Aligarh district Sunday. Police said the student, Adnan Altaf Maglu, 17, was from J&K's Baramulla district. "The doctors told us the student had died 6 to 7 hours before his body was brought to medical college. We have recovered a few medicines and an empty bottle from the room," said Deputy SP (3rd) Ashok Kumar Singh. **ENS**

KARNATAKA

Four students killed in accident

Bengaluru: Four students were killed and 20 others injured after the school bus they were travelling in collided with a tractor in Bagalkot Sunday. The deceased have been identified as Govind Jambagi (13), Shweta Patil (13), Sagar Kadakol (17) and Basavaraj Kotagi (17). Two were Class 9 students and the others were studying PU at Vardhamana Mahavira School near Alur. "It seems the driver was speeding and did not notice the tractor as there were no lights," a policeman said. **ENS**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, JANUARY 29

THE BJP, JD(S), and a few Hindu right-wing organisations took out a padayatra from Keragodu village to Mandya DC's office Monday after a controversy erupted over hoisting a saffron flag featuring Lord Hanuman at the village near Mandya, and demanded action against Mandya DC.

The controversy erupted on Sunday after district administration officials arrived at the village to remove the flags featuring Lord Hanuman hoisted atop a 108-foot pole by Sri Gowrisankar Seva Trust. This was based on a complaint that the trust had hoisted the saffron flag even though the gram panchayat had granted permission only to hoist either the national or state flags.

On Monday, participating in a protest in front of Mandya DC's office, JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy said, "Your (Congress) leaders have created this situation", and accused the district officials of instigating the controversy. BJP leader C T Ravi demanded the state government publicly apologise and allow the

Police block protesters in Karnataka's Mandya, Monday. **PTI**

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publicly apologise and allow the

flag to be hoisted.

CM Siddaramaiah in Tumakuru

accused the BJP of resorting

to such tactics keeping polls in

mind. "If they (the trust) acted as

permitted, why would the dis-

trict administration interfere?

The trust had said they would

hoist either the national or state

flag," he said.

But the BJP's top leaders re-

membered the lessons from the

party's defeat in 2004 – it lost

despite few expecting it to – to not

take the overall atmosphere for

granted. Many in the party often

cite party's reliance on the good-

will factor and not going deep into

the state combinations as the rea-

sons for the failure of the Atal

Bihari Vajpayee-led government

to return to power in

2004 despite the "positive"

atmosphere in favour of the BJP and

NDA". A BJP leader said, "The current leadership does not want to repeat that mistake and does not want to take any chance."

While the developments in

Patna last week hinted at the BJP's

approach to key states, party lead-

ers said politics in other swing states such as Maharashtra and

Karnataka could witness "stun-

ning instances". They said elec-

toral outcomes in Bihar, Mahara-

shtra, Karnataka, and West

Bengal were crucial and the lead-

ership was focussing on these

states to ensure NDA gets as close

to 400 seats as possible. In 2019,

all these states contributed 123

seats to the alliance's tally.

When the JD(U) walked out

of the alliance in August 2022,

the NDA lost 17 MPs.

With ground surveys in-

dicating a huge loss for the

BJP – hinting that the party could end up

winning only 24, as well

as the JD(U) – its assess-

ment is its tally would

not have gone beyond five to six

while with the Opposition – it

made sense for the two parties

to get back together. For the BJP,

it was of paramount importance

to transform Bihar, a key Hindi

heartland state, from a swing

state to a stable one and it struck

at the opportune moment.

BJP leaders argued more than

the surveys, done before the Ram

Temple consecration, it was the

party's political future in the state

that helped Modi decide in favour

of the BJP and JD(U) getting back

together. BJP sources said Modi

took the initiative and spoke to Ni-

tilish Kumar, inviting him back to

NDA. The BJP leadership assessed

that the JD(U) with its around 15%

vote base in Bihar could disinte-

grate post-Nitish and if the BJP did

not keep the party close, the RJD

could take over at least a large por-

tion of its support base once

Kumar's leadership ends. "This is

a long-term plan while breaking

the INDIA bloc could be the imme-

diate outcome..." said a senior

BJP leader in Bihar.

BJP leaders said the end of the

INDIA bloc would percolate into a

political situation in other states

too, including UP, where the party

is now eyeing at least 10-15 seats

to its current tally of 62. The NDA's

current position there is 66 in the

LS, while the BSP has 10 MPs, the

SP three, and the Congress one).

The BJP is also into hectic par-

leys in Karnataka, where the party

won 25 of 28 seats in 2019 to con-

solidate its position that has faced

disintegration with the spectacu-

lar Congress win in last year's

Assembly polls. While almost a

dozen leaders walked out of the

BJP, the party already got the most

prominent of them, Jagdish She-

ttar, back into its fold last week.

Although the BJP has earned

the upper hand in optics in Mah-

arashtra by bringing in Eknath Sh-

inde and Ajit Pawar of the NCP, there

is "hunger" for more. "The continu-

ing disintegration of Congress cou-

ld throw more opportunities for the

BJP in several states and Mahara-

shtra is one of them..." said a

BJP leader, adding many promi-

nent faces could join the party in

coming days.

FULL REPORT

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EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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INTERIM TAKEAWAYS

Interim budget will provide indications of government's assessment of the economy, and the contours of its fiscal position

IN A FEW days from now, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the interim Union budget for 2024-25. While the final budget will only come once a new government is in place after the national elections, this budget will provide an indication of the government's assessment of India's economy, and the contours of its fiscal position. It will be read closely for what it says on several questions.

First, at what pace does the government expect the economy to grow in the coming financial year? The last budget assumed that the economy would grow at 10.5 per cent (in nominal terms) during 2023-24. However, as per the first advances estimates, growth is expected to be slower at 8.9 per cent. Some indications of the government's thinking can be found in a finance ministry report titled "The Indian Economy: A Review", released on Monday. According to the report, the economy is likely to grow at 7 per cent in the coming year (in real terms), with growth being driven by healthy domestic demand and supply side measures. It restates the expectation of India becoming the third largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$5 trillion in the next three years, and says that it can aspire to become a \$7 trillion economy by 2030. Second, will the government stick to the path of fiscal consolidation? The Centre has managed to bring down its fiscal deficit from 9.2 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 to 6.4 per cent in 2022-23, and considering the trends in revenues and spending so far, most analysts expect it to meet the deficit target of 5.9 per cent this year. In her budget speech of 2021-22, the finance minister had stated her intention of bringing down the deficit to below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. Staying with this path of consolidation implies a steep reduction in the deficit of 1.4 percentage points over the next two years. Third, over the past few years, the government has ramped up its capital spending, expecting that it would help crowd-in private sector investments. Its capex has risen from Rs 5.9 lakh crore in 2021-22 to Rs 10 lakh crore in 2023-24 (BE). As per the finance ministry report, overall public sector capex has risen from Rs 5.6 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 18.6 lakh crore in 2023-24 – an increase of 3.3 times. The question is whether, or not, public capex will see such a sustained momentum in the coming year.

Considering that national elections are just a few months away, there are expectations in certain quarters of a greater focus on specific constituencies, such as youth, farmers, and women. While political compulsions may well hold sway now, in due course of time the focus must be on pushing through reforms, including in areas such as skilling, learning outcomes and health, as outlined in the finance ministry report, to put the economy on a high growth trajectory that can be sustained.

NO LOOKING AWAY

ICJ's interim judgment on Israel's actions in Gaza comes with moral heft, urges international community to do the right thing

THE INTERIM JUDGMENT by the UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Israel's actions in Gaza signals a moral victory for Palestine and those demanding an end to Israel's retaliatory violence after Hamas's October 7 attack. Even though the Court stopped short of calling for a ceasefire in embattled Gaza, its interim ruling, endorsed by a majority of its judges, is a strong censure of Israel in the genocide case brought by South Africa. The ICJ stated that "at least some of the acts and omissions alleged by South Africa to have been committed by Israel in Gaza appear to be capable of falling within the provisions of the [Genocide] Convention", and asked Israel to refrain from, and act against, incitement to genocide and acts of destruction, and ensure distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza. The ruling also ordered the immediate repatriation of hostages by Hamas. Since the beginning of the Israeli offensive in October, the Palestinian enclave has witnessed over 25,000 deaths, a majority of them women and children. The war has also displaced nearly 85 per cent of Gaza's population.

While Israel's compliance with the interim ruling is not mandatory – the Court's order is legally binding but the ICJ has no enforcement mechanism – it signals an important moment. Over the course of the last three-and-a-half months of war, allies such as the US and the UK have repeatedly upheld Israel's right to self-defence over accountability for its violation of humanitarian laws. Soon after October 7, President Joe Biden had participated in an Israeli war cabinet discussion on Israel's retaliation strategy. The UK's foreign secretary had recently dismissed South Africa's charge of genocide at the ICJ as unhelpful. Both the US and the UK, alongside others, have stopped their funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Palestine, amid Israel's charges of complicity against 12 of its staff members in Hamas's attack on Israel. Even though the final verdict may take years to come, the interim judgment creates a moral pressure on these nations, making it harder for them to look away.

The ICJ's interim verdict came on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In part, the Genocide Convention had come up after World War II as a reaction and possible deterrent to catastrophes such as the Holocaust. It imagined a recalibration of the international community that would uphold human rights and push one another to do the right thing. The ICJ's ruling might lack enforcement authority but it comes with that moral heft.

THE NEW CHAMPIONS

Jannik Sinner's first Grand Slam title speaks of a sport going through a transitional moment

FOllowing JANNIK SINNER'S 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 comeback win over Daniil Medvedev to win a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open on Sunday, men's tennis players born in the 2000s have now won more majors (three) than those born in the 1990s (two). Sinner, the unassuming 22-year-old World No 4 from Italy, joins 20-year-old Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz – who won two majors over the past year – as members of the generation that has captured tennis fans' imagination and leapfrogged the generation of players above it.

The sport is unquestionably going through a transitional moment. The fading of the Federer-Nadal duopoly – the Spaniard will still be planning one last big push for the French Open where he is a 13-time champion this year – has allowed Novak Djokovic to establish himself as the best player in the world. But now at 36, the Serb is facing physical and technical issues of his own, and while the generation below him, including Sunday's finalist Medvedev, who became the first player in history to fail to win a major final from a two-set lead twice, has failed to take advantage of his lapses, Gen Z are facing no such issue. Sinner defeated Djokovic in the semifinal in Melbourne this week, while Alcaraz defeated him in a memorable Wimbledon final last year. Both have well-rounded attacking games, and both showed the mental resilience to deal with the pressure of playing five sets in a Grand Slam final.

Djokovic remains the leader of this pack. He lost his first Wimbledon match since 2017 against Alcaraz in the final last year, and bounced back to end his year on a record high. As 10-time champion of Melbourne Park, unbeaten there since 2018 until Sinner took him down this year, expect him to return with a similar fury. Also expect the fiery Spaniard and the laid-back Italian to resist.



GIRISH KUBER

IN JUNE 2022, when it engineered a split in its longstanding partner, the Shiv Sena, the BJP wouldn't have imagined, even in its wildest dreams, that the man it entrusted with the responsibility of Maharashtra's chief ministership would plan to build his vote bank and extend his use-by-date. For the BJP, Eknath Sambaji Shinde, when he was handed over the reins of the prized state of Maharashtra, was someone who could be fed its political agenda. But looks are deceptive, especially in politics.

Around two-and-a-half years later, Shinde has not only succeeded in rallying the politically strong Marathas behind him but also challenged the BJP's traditional OBC base. Last week, he announced the inclusion of Marathas in the OBC category.

In June 2022, when the BJP split Shinde and others from the Shiv Sena, the plan was pretty simple: Dethrone Uddhav Thackeray who, according to the party, was a traitor who deprived the BJP of Maharashtra by joining hands with Sharad Pawar-led NCP and Congress, after the 2019 assembly elections. The BJP eyed Shinde for two reasons: One, he was Uddhav's right-hand man and knew the Sena's working inside out. Always an organisation man, Shinde till then had been a low-profile leader and was not seen as being ambitious.

The second reason was Shinde's strong Maratha credentials. Though his "area of operations" has always been Mumbai's suburb of Thane, Shinde hails from Satara in the foot-hills of the popular tourist destination, Mahabaleshwar, in western Maharashtra that has produced several Maratha leaders. Like every other strong Maratha leader, Shinde too likes to portray himself as a son of a poor farmer – and poor he was – never mind the current five-star status of his farmland that produces strawberries and houses a helipad. For the BJP, Shinde had the right pedigree and profile the saffron party lacked.

The Maharashtra BJP stands on two pillars – OBCs and upper castes (read Brahmins). The politically-dominant

By approving OBC reservation for Marathas, Eknath Shinde has upset BJP's calculations

Marathas were historically aligned with Congress and later NCP. The warrior community that boasts of serving Chhatrapati Shivaji has historically stayed away from the Jana Sangh, and later the BJP. To offset the Congress's Maratha-Muslim-minority coalition, the BJP concentrated on OBCs, who are around 33 per cent of the state's population, roughly the same as Marathas. While this resulted in the BJP making major inroads among OBCs, it also exposed its lack of a Maratha face.

In comes Eknath Shinde, a Maratha from the Shiv Sena who was no stranger to the saffron camp and was not averse to wearing saffron robes. A near-perfect candidate to lead the Shiv Sena-BJP combine. A fast learner and astute politician, Shinde was not to be the chief minister BJP wanted. Initially perceived as a mere pawn in the BJP's hands, Shinde soon realised the importance of having his own vote base.

It is far from coincidence that around the same time, Manoj Jarange, an obscure activist from far away Jalana in Marathwada, launched an agitation demanding reservations for Marathas. Interestingly, this wasn't his first fast for the demand. Till then confined to the district, Jarange's stature rose manifold when in September last year, the police, for reasons unknown till now, lathicharged his supporters and bundled their leader to the hospital.

It was intriguing then – less so now – that it wasn't the home ministry led by Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis that ordered the police to act against Jarange. The activist didn't miss the opportunity to blame Fadnavis, a Brahmin, for the police action. It is hardly a surprise that Jarange and his fellow Maratha leaders haven't uttered a word against CM Shinde and have been blaming only his deputy. With Shinde in the saddle, it was a perfect opportunity for the till-then novice activist to spread his wings and push for the popular demand for Maratha reservation.

While this is not the first time that

WORDLY WISE

YOU HAVE TO FIGHT AND WORK FOR EVERY POINT, AND THAT'S WHAT I TRY TO DO ON THE COURT.

— JANNIK SINNEN

The quota gambit

By approving OBC reservation for Marathas, Eknath Shinde has upset BJP's calculations



AAKSHI MAGAZINE

FIGHTER IS BOLLYWOOD'S Republic-Day release on a Republic Day that did not feel like one. On the drive to Central Delhi where I saw the Siddharth Anand-directed film on January 26, the tricolour was less visible than the rows and rows of saffron flags. The latter were everywhere, announcing their presence aggressively. Walking around Connaught Place, I looked for the Indian flag and barely found it. For those of us brought up on a healthy dose of scepticism towards overt displays of national symbols, this is perhaps the first time in our adult lives that spotting the Indian flag felt like an assurance.

Eventually, I found a flag – in the film. An extended sequence with a looming tricolour, meant to invite applause and awe. In itself, the moment appeared surprisingly old-fashioned and out-of-touch with the immediate world outside the theatre. Soon, though, conventional jingoism followed. Fictionalising the events around the 2019 Balakot strike by the Indian Air Force, Fighter is set among a bunch of IAF pilots that include the stylish Shamsher Pathania "Patty" (Hrithik Roshan) and Minal Rathore "Minnie" (Deepika Padukone) among others. In contrast, the Pakistani characters look like stereotypes that came to life. Their dialogues, motivation and styling are as unimaginative as they are stale.

THE MOVIE WE DESERVE

'Fighter' is another war film that builds a case for violence, revenge, aggression

The hyper-masculine action film, with its obsession with fathers and enemies and often traitors, even when professing better politics like Jawan or Anand's previous *Pathaan*, is an inherently limited genre. It is also a limiting genre colonising our ideas of what an entertaining film looks and feels like.

Fighter, which is also a war film, appears more calculative. There is an old-style 'good' Indian Muslim character whose sacrifice seems to be necessary to establish his loyalty. Would he otherwise always be under suspicion? (the running couplet about the flag being the most beautiful kafan/shroud is strategically placed). There

Not surprisingly perhaps, the tricolour scene is a set-up for a brutal massacre of CRPF jawans that follows, inspired by the 2019 Pulwama attack. That is its use in the film. As the film revealed the scale of the number of deaths, the people sitting behind me in the theatre were very vocal in their expressions of shock. The narrative was building a case for the aggression that is required to put Pakistan "in its place" – show them who the *baap* (father) is, goes one dialogue – and it seemed to be working. The logic is that the memory of the massacre would ensure that no remorse is felt. That we will "enjoy" the brutal bombing of the enemy that is to follow even more. Truly, we get the films we deserve.

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is a sub-plot of gender disparity to remind us that casting Deepika Padukone as a fighter plane pilot is a statement of progressive politics. There are some dialogues about making a distinction between the Pakistani state and its people. None of this can hide the film's hollowness as it builds a case for violence, revenge and aggression. So what if it tries to do it stylishly?

There is one moment though which stood out. The arrogant Patty struggles with reconciling personal ambition with his team's interests. He is now demoted to the role of a trainer in a local Air Force academy. On the first day, he saves the life of a student and guides her to safety. This is the opposite of what he has been doing till then. It is a moment when he is not at the centre of the action but his presence is meaningful. There is a hint of a different kind of purpose and fulfilment. This is a brief, muted, inward-looking moment, but soon the film takes over with its dangerous claims about winning the war being more important than playing by the rules. Earlier, it claimed that revenge and justice are the same thing. Perhaps, the film forgot that the world does not need this lesson. It has enough of it already.

The writer is a film scholar and critic based in Delhi



JANUARY 30, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

AKALI DAL'S WARNING

AKALI DAL PRESIDENT Harchand Singh Longowal has warned the Centre that the consequences of not accepting the party's demands, including an amendment to Article 25 of the Constitution to "recognise the separate identity of the Sikhs", could be serious. He said if the demands were not met by February 27, the government would be responsible for the consequences.

FARMERS COURT ARREST

MORE THAN 2,000 farmers courted arrest as the "rail and rasta roko" agitation of the Karnataka Farmers Association entered the

fourth day, taking the total number of arrests since the agitation began on Republic Day to over 21,000. Rail and road traffic between Mysore and Bangalore continued to be paralysed. The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation also suspended its services on the route. Traffic in other parts of the state was near normal.

INDO-PAK CLASHES

AT LEAST FIVE Pakistanis are known to have been killed in a series of border clashes with Indian security forces in the Mendhar area of Poonch district during recent days according to an official source. There was no casualty on the Indian side. He was obviously denying un-

official reports that two Indian personnel were killed in the incidents. During the past three weeks, Mendhar witnessed intermittent exchange of fire.

BANGLA FRONT

A NEW NATIONAL alliance of 11 political parties, led by Bangladesh's oldest politician, 80-year-old former chief minister Ataur Rahman Khan, called for an immediate withdrawal of martial law and the lifting of restrictions on open political activities. The group, named National Front, comprises political parties and groups that came together for a dialogue with the military rulers to work out national consensus on the future form of government.

THE IDEAS PAGE

A promise fulfilled

Consecration of Ram temple is end of a long journey for the god and his devotees. It's an inspiration to strive for the well-being of all



SRI M

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi has fulfilled his commitment to reinstate Shri Ram to his rightful place at the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in Ayodhya. Ram Lalla's *pran pratistha* on January 22 was a historic moment. As Lord Ram ascended his throne, Prime Minister Modi broke his 11-day *vrat anushtan* (fast) by receiving *charanamrit* from Swami Govind Giri Devji, the treasurer of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Kshetra. Swam Giri Govind Devji has acknowledged that he advised PM Modi to keep a fast for three days. But PM Modi observed the longer fast.

In the run-up to the consecration, the streets of Ayodhya wore a festive look. The residents of the city were celebrating Diwali – after all, Shri Ram was back at his *janmabhoomi*. Devotees from around the world had waited for 500 years for this day, the day when their god returns to his grand *raj mahal* from a tent. The consecration thus marked the end of a journey for both the god and his devotees.

The attention to detail at the site, especially the artistic depiction of Lord Ram as a five-year-old standing on a lotus, resonated deeply with observers. Many hailed the statue as a symbol of cultural and religious pride and appreciated the artistic representation of the revered deity. Reverence for Shri Ram was writ all over Ayodhya.

Righteousness, duty, and devotion are the hallmarks of the Sanatani worldview. In the calendar of every Sanatani, the day when PM Modi fulfilled his promise by establishing the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is sure to have a prominent place. The Supreme Court's 2019 verdict validated the Hindu claim, leading to the temple's construction. PM Modi's leadership ensured meticulous planning and execution. The prime minister has constantly emphasised inclusivity and talked of uniting India's diverse population. The consecration reflects a significant blend of cultural, religious, and spiritual aspects of the country. Under PM Modi's leadership, Sanatan, the eternal way, also echoes the truths that connect us to our spiritual roots.

In Hindu philosophy, Ram Rajya means an ideal and just rule. PM Modi brought this idea to reality. He has established Ram Rajya by taking everyone into consideration – just like Prabhu Shri Ram. Not just in India; Ram Rajya has acquired worldwide resonance thanks to PM Modi. The youth of the country and those residing outside it idolise PM Modi for his righteous actions.

On the occasion of the *pran pratistha*, PM Modi said, "Ram Bharat ki aasta hai, Ram Bharat ka aadhar hai, Ram Bharat ka vichar hai, Ram Bharat ka vidhan hai, Ram Bharat ki chetna hai, Ram Bharat ka chintan hai, Ram pratistha hai aur pratap hai Bharat ke" (Ram is the faith of Bharat, Ram is the basis of Bharat, Ram is the thought of Bharat, Ram is the law of Bharat, Ram is the consciousness of Bharat, Ram is the contemplation of Bharat, Ram is the practice and glory of Bharat.) Prime Minister Modi has followed the path of Shri Ram to guide citizens. He connects with all sections of society and



C R Sasikumar

works for the welfare of the remotest part of the country.

In Ram Rajya, there is great emphasis on the ethical and moral aspects of governance. It is believed that the ruler is guided by virtues like righteousness (*dharma*), justice, compassion, and fairness. Harmony, prosperity, and well-being of all citizens are fundamental to such a rule. PM Modi governs in this vein. He has constantly underlined harmony, prosperity, and the well-being of all as the fundamental credo of his government. Antyodaya, the well-being of the last person in the line, is a key part of the Modi government's development paradigm. PM Modi has made sure to take care of all the sections of society like Lord Ram – his slogan, Sabka Saath Sabka Vishwas, is testimony to this principle.

One hallmark of Ram Rajya is an emphasis on social justice. Unlike systems that perpetuate inequality, this vision of governance seeks to bridge the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged. It strives to create a society where opportunities are not exclusive to a select few but are accessible

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to every citizen. This commitment to inclusivity resonates with the essence of democracy, where the voice of the weakest is as significant as that of the strongest. Moreover, Ram Rajya recognises the interconnectedness of various segments of society. It understands that a nation's true strength lies in the well-being of all its citizens. By prioritising the needs of the weakest, it ensures that the entire social fabric is robust and resilient. This approach stands in stark contrast to ideologies that fragment society, create fissures and weaken the nation's collective strength.

The construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is an enduring symbol of a peace-loving community's unwavering commitment to resolving a longstanding religious issue through democratic and constitutional means. Dialogue and reconciliation were the abiding principles that went into the making of the Ram mandir. The consecration on January 22 is a vindication of the democratic process.

The writer is a spiritual guru and thinker

This may all seem rather esoteric. By contrast, disputes over structures and locations of worship can seem more "real". The fiery storms they unleash do destroy lives as minds and hearts are consumed by hatred. But the forces of darkness are actually not any one group or identity. Darkness is a frame of mind which traps us into feeling that hatred and cynicism can be more effective than goodness. Yet it is "hari se badda hari ka naam" that endures. Towards the conclusion of *Ramcharitmanas*, in verse 112 of *Uttarkand*, Goswami Tulsidas explains why this is so. To love Ram is to be without desire, pride and anger. One who thus loves Ram sees the whole of creation as Ram. Since there is no "other", how can there be enmity?

Then and now, the question is not how many people are fully able to live this truth. "Hari se badda hari ka naam" inspires because it reminds us of truths that are above and beyond current disputes and turmoils. Who knows how this might energise our political strivings?

The writer is the founder of the YouTube channel Ahimsa Conversations and author of the soon-to-be-released book Vivekananda and Our Times: The Journey from Fear to Love

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Macron's two-term presidency, which once aspired to take France 'beyond left and right', is instead culminating in a climactic struggle to keep Le Pen's extreme nationalism at bay. A Le Pen victory in June would be a setback."

— THE GUARDIAN

The always CM

BJP and RJD, two poles in Bihar, have tried to make Nitish Kumar irrelevant. But no broad social coalition can be imagined without him



RAHUL VERMA

THAT THE BIHAR Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is a perennial political survivor is a foregone conclusion. With his multiple flops in the past decade, he has become a laughing stock in some circles. There are two ways of analysing Kumar's political adventures. In one version, Kumar is "Palturam" and is not to be taken seriously. He is no longer the "Sushasan Babu" and his schizophrenic behaviour is both a cause and consequence of fast-depleting political capital.

Second, it is true that any challenge to the BJP's ability to form the next national government depends on the party's performance in Uttar Pradesh (and in states where it is in direct contest with the Congress). If the BJP's performance in north and west India remains as it was in 2014 and 2019, then the party would be in striking distance of power. It doesn't matter much what happens in the remaining states then. In that sense, Bihar becomes important, where the chances of the BJP winning more seats than 2019 would have been difficult. It could have actually lost a few seats. With JD(U) joining the NDA, the chances of the BJP increasing its tally in the state have increased.

Third, as the results from 2019 and 2009 confirm, the JD(U), too, has benefitted in Lok Sabha elections by aligning with the BJP. It did very poorly in 2014 when the party contested alone. There is no point speculating about the next assembly elections in Bihar at this point as it is almost 18 months away. But Kumar possibly sensed the odds increasing in favour of the BJP post the assembly election results in December 2023 – even women voters are more likely to vote for the BJP than ever before. After all, he was one of the first movers to nurture this constituency through various policies since 2005. Survey data indicates that Kumar carries the women voter with him only when he contests with the BJP, and not with the RJD.

Women voted more for the BJP-JD(U) combine in 2019 and 2020, but not in 2015 when JD(U) contested with the RJD. Fourth, Kumar's decision to join forces with the BJP further dents the Opposition's hope of using the demand for a nationwide caste census as an issue. Though the chances of this platform yielding electoral benefits to the Congress were slim, it had not stopped the party from campaigning on this issue in the recent round of assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Furthermore, the data from the Bihar Caste Survey has shown that the EBCs are numerically large and that the Yadavs seem to have benefitted the most from government programmes such as the OBC reservation. In that sense, the survey has given Kumar a better bargaining position. The Modi government's decision to confer the Bharat Ratna to Karpoori Thakur should be seen as part of this emerging politics in which Kumar wants to be the sole claimant of Karpoori's legacy.

Finally, Kumar's politics of the last decade holds an important lesson. Parties that are completely dependent on a single face and do not have a large social base or organisational resources are likely to get squeezed as politics become polarised. The BSP in Uttar Pradesh, and JD(S) in Karnataka are examples of this emerging phenomenon. This politics, perhaps in slow motion, is playing out in Maharashtra, too. As for now, Nitish Kumar remains the median of Bihar politics. He is as much needed by the BJP and the RJD as he needs them to remain in power.

The writer is fellow, Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi. Views are personal

To love Ram

For those who do, as Gandhi did, there can be no bitterness, no 'other'



RAJNI BAKSHI

"*Harise baddaa hari ka naam, ant mein nikla yeh parinaam.*" ("The name, the essence, of the Lord is greater than the Lord – that is what we discover in the end.")

IT WAS IN the mid-1960s that my father learnt this *bhajan* from a group of Ramayan devotees in Bangalore. At the age of eight, I did not understand the devotees' recitation of Ramcharitmanas. But the joy, fervour and lyrical beauty seeped in.

The *bhajan* goes on to say that we are lovingly remembering Ram even though we have never seen him. Eventually, one day, bound and pulled by our love, Ram will come.

Even as a child, I felt that this was a call for Ram to fill our hearts. The next stanza recalls that Ram could not cross the ocean without a bridge but Hanuman leapt across the same ocean just by the power of *Ram naam*.

To cultivate, be blessed with, such faith is a timeless striving. The difficulty lies in knowing if and how this striving can make us more creative in grappling with the turmoils and conflicts of our time.

My father, Sant Dass, seemed to find his answer by instinct. He grew up in Lahore and lived through the trauma of Partition with not a trace of bitterness. In 1948, when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's bullet-riddled body was being carried to the cremation site, my father was in the crowd of two million mourners who lined the streets of

Delhi. He carried the searing grief of Partition and of Gandhi's murder with dignity and a resolve to stand against the darkness that inflicts such pain.

Later, while working as an officer in the Reserve Bank of India, he brought up three children to feel as much joy at a temple or gurdwara as in a mosque or church. Along with my mother, he went on all the major pilgrimages in India — from Kedarnath to Rameshwaram — and visited the Vatican with the same reverence.

In the worldly domain, Sant Dass was known as an international expert in agricultural credit systems and in 1982 became the first managing director of the National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). But to his family and friends, he was the anchor person for the much loved "Hari se baddaa hari ka naam," which he sang in his mellifluous voice. No wedding or *punya* in the family was complete without his singing this *bhajan*.

Towards the end of his life, when he was afflicted by Alzheimer's, he remembered this *bhajan* even after he was unable to recognise any family member. Most of the attendants who helped care for him also began humming the *bhajan*.

The *bhajan*'s beauty lies in the simplicity with which it reiterates a truth that reverberates through the ages. Our faith in goodness — in the higher human faculties of

love, compassion, resilience — is more powerful, truer than any material manifestations of divinity. "Hari se baddaa, hari ka naam" is like a compass unerringly focusing our attention on the essence of divinity.

This is why *Ram naam* was the life-breath of Mahatma Gandhi. On the world stage, Gandhi is probably the best-known example of how this frame of mind can empower you to creatively grapple with the energies of darkness. Of course, Gandhi's story also painfully illustrates the grief that can accost a person on this path. Towards the end of his life, Gandhi was getting a deluge of hate mail from those who accused him of being anti-Hindu, who either rejected or failed to understand what *Ram naam* meant to him. Yet, Gandhi remained steadfast, he refused to hate the hater.

This energy, this latent possibility of the light within all of us, is what "hari se baddaa" reaffirms. One of the most moving manifestations of this has been how one of my nephews has slightly, and significantly, altered the final stanza. The *bhajan*, as learnt by my father, concluded by saying that those who don't carry *ram naam* in their hearts will drown, while even stones with Ram written on them will float. His grandfather has tweaked that to say "doob na jayen vo dilwale jin mein nahin hai naam" / "Let it not be that those who lack Ram's name drown." This slight alteration infuses hope that no soul is

fully or irretrievably lost. It expresses concern, rather than condemnation, for those who can't feel the essence.

This may all seem rather esoteric. By contrast, disputes over structures and locations of worship can seem more "real". The fiery storms they unleash do destroy lives as minds and hearts are consumed by hatred. But the forces of darkness are actually not any one group or identity. Darkness is a frame of mind which traps us into feeling that hatred and cynicism can be more effective than goodness.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA'S CHALLENGE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Nitish's nth switch' (IE, January 29). Nitish had initiated the plan to forge unity among Opposition, aspired to become the convenor of the alliance and to be declared the prime ministerial candidate. But all his hopes were dashed when TMC and RJD suggested Mallikarjun Kharge's name and the Congress readily accepted the same without consulting all INDIA bloc participants. There seems to be hardly any cohesion, cooperation and coordination among the Opposition bloc.

Sidelining Nitish proved to be harmful for INDIA's plans to fight PM Modi. It would be better to stitch a proper integration of all constituents if the Opposition desires to pose a challenge to Modi in the next general election.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

INCLUSIVE POLICIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Growth with caveats' (IE, January 29). The question on sustainability of growth arises when there is a marked difference between GDP growth, earnings, and consumption in India. It can be linked to a variety of issues, including unequal wealth distribution, growing inflation, and labour market problems. To overcome this issue, policy should prioritise equitable economic growth, job creation, and social safety nets. MGNREGA

(Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) plays an important role in creating rural employment, but its performance might be improved through better execution, higher budget, and expanding its reach to urban areas. Prioritising inclusive economic policies can help to lift the middle and lower income levels.

Tanisha Chakraborty, Bengaluru

CASE FOR CENSUS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A political ratna' (IE, January 27). The Modi government conferring the Bharat Ratna on ex-Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur just a few months ahead of the Lok Sabha polls is certainly a shrewd move to trump forces of social justice. It is meant to appeal to the percentage of Extremely Backward Castes (EBCs) who represent the biggest social group amongst all castes as per latest Bihar caste survey. This report boosted demand for nationwide OBC caste census, which was virtually condemned by the PM Narendra Modi as divisive. An award can't paper over caste contradictions and inequities particularly when the BJP-led Centre is opposed to the idea of OBC census. Because only the census could provide required information for effective implementation of affirmative welfare schemes for the EBCs, not only in Bihar but all over India.

LR Murmu, Delhi