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ISRO THIRD AFTER NASA, ESA TO STATION SPACECRAFT AT L1 POINT

## Aditya-L1, ISRO's first mission to study Sun, in final orbit; another landmark: PM

Solar observatory has 7 payloads, 'mission lifetime' of five years

ANONNA DUTT,  
ANURADHA  
MASCARENHAS  
& ANJALI MARAR  
NEW DELHI, PUNE,  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 6

JUST OVER four months after the Moon landing, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) inserted its Aditya-L1 spacecraft – India's first mission to study the Sun – into its destination orbit

on Saturday afternoon, yet again demonstrating its capabilities to execute complex and advanced space missions.

Aditya-L1 moved into the 'halo' orbit around the L1 point in the Earth-Sun system, from where it will make observations of the Sun for the next five years.

L1, or Lagrange 1 point, is one of the five locations in the Earth-Sun system where the gravitational effects of the Earth and the Sun – into its destination orbit

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



ISRO's PSLV-C57 carrying Aditya-L1 lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Sept 2, 2023. PTI file

'ACTUAL OBSERVATIONS IN 3 MONTHS' **PAGE 8**

**EXPLAINED** E Next step: Gaganyaan

THE SUCCESS of Aditya-L1 reinforces ISRO's evolution into a space agency fully devoted to scientific and planetary exploration. ISRO already sent missions to Moon and Mars, and a mission to Venus is in the works. A human spaceflight mission is set for 2025 with Gaganyaan.



Crew of MV Lila Norfolk following their rescue by Indian Navy commandos who foiled a hijacking bid in the Arabian Sea. PTI

## Hijacking bid foiled, Navy hunts for pirates, probes vessels in area

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

carrying out "sanitisation" operations. The MARCOS team, however, did not find any pirates onboard.

"It is suspected that forceful warnings by the Indian Naval aircraft to the vessel and likely interception by IN (Indian Navy) warship, probably compelled the pirates to escape during the night hours," the Navy said in a statement on Saturday.

Giving details of the operation, it said that after the merchant vessel sent a message on **CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**



Will ensure locals' trust in govt is maintained, says L-G

NAVEED IQBAL  
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 6

IN HIS first comments since the killing of three civilians from Jammu's Topa Pir village, allegedly by security forces, on December 22, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manohar Sinha has told *The Indian Express* that those involved in the incident "will not be spared".

"The law will take its own course. No one will be spared, whoever they may be," he said, while speaking about the incident.

Responding to a query about the trust deficit between the local tribal population and the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

After temple visits, CJI flags 'dhwaja of justice' to district court lawyers

GOPAL KATESHIYA  
RAJKOT, JANUARY 6



CJI D Y Chandrachud, wife at Dwarkadish temple. PTI

DRAWING INSPIRATION from *dhwaja* or flags atop temples which bind "all of us together", Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud Saturday urged district court lawyers to function in a manner that the "*dhwaja of justice*" keeps flying for generations to come.

"In envisioning a society where every citizen is assured the right to justice, the district

courts emerge as the initial point of recourse for every citizen who

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

**DAY AFTER ATTACK BY TMC SUPPORTERS**  
'Saw ED officers beaten, CRPF men calling for calm with folded hands'

Gov tells police to arrest TMC leader

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & ATRI MITRA

AKUNJIPARA, SANDESHKHALI, JANUARY 6

A PALATIAL four-home cluster belonging to TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan and his three brothers was locked and abandoned on Saturday, shattered glass from Enforcement Directorate

(ED) vehicles the only reminder of the chaos that ensued in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali village a day earlier.

On Friday, when an ED team went to conduct searches at Shahjahan's home in North 24

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

**RELATED REPORT**  
**PAGE 9**

A colorful celebration across Delhi's sky

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- Cultural performances by folk artists
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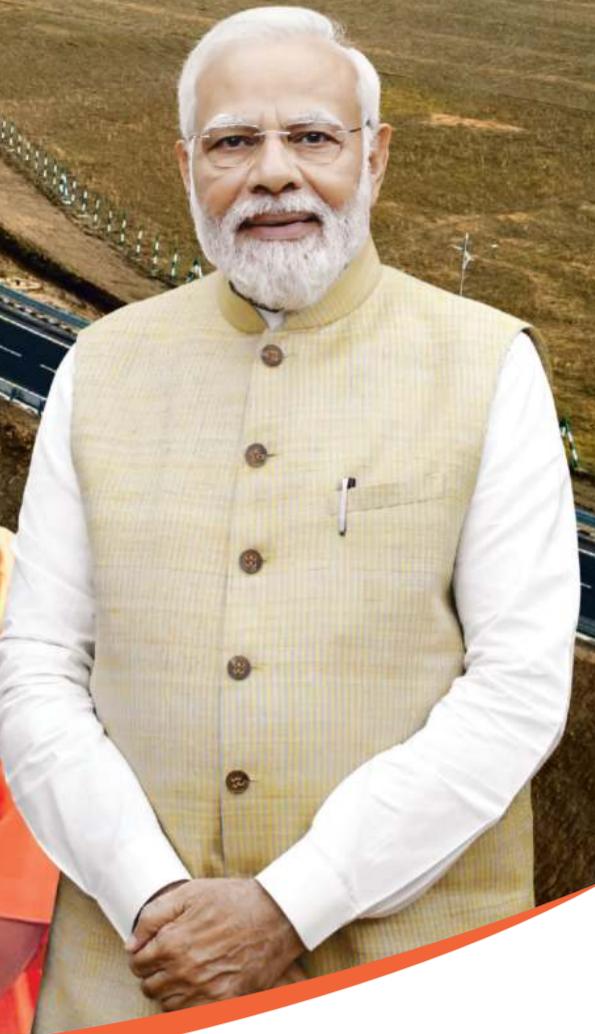
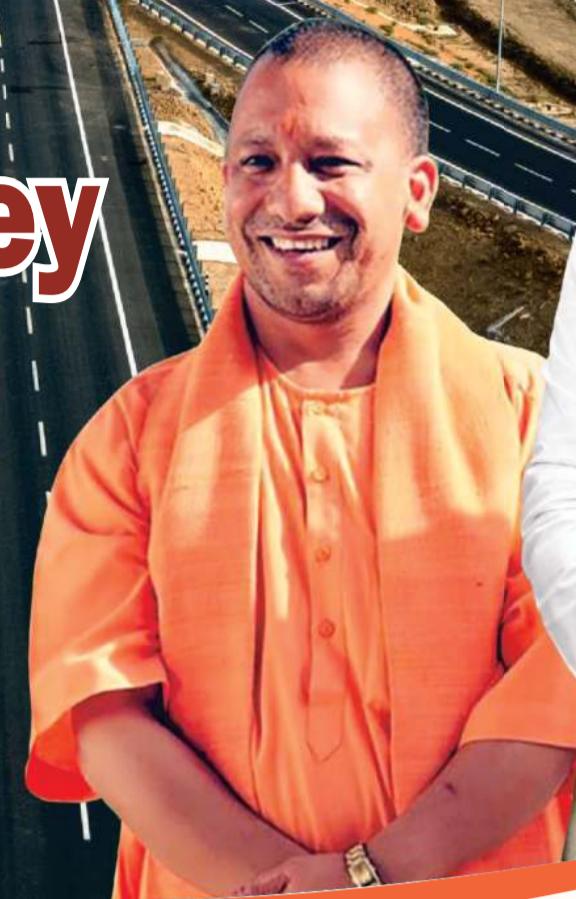
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# Advancing Toward the Summit of Progress Bundelkhand's Journey



CM Yogi Adityanath spearheaded a transformative initiative in Bundelkhand, ushering in substantial projects that effectively lifted this region from being one of the most underdeveloped areas in the state. The government established the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) to create an industrial city modeled after Noida in Jhansi. Concurrently, approval granted for the construction of the Bulk Pharma Park in Lalitpur.

A significant milestone in the region achieved with the completion of the Jal Jeevan Mission, emphasizing water security. Post the Bhoomi Pujan ceremony construction of unit of Bharat Dynamic Ltd. (BDL) has started at Defence Corridor project site under the Jhansi nod.

In the span of one year, various projects under the Smart City Jhansi initiative finalized. These accomplishments complemented by pivotal government decisions spanning tourism, agriculture, employment, sports, and more.



## Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority

- Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) to be established in 33 villages near Jhansi.
- Vision for an industrial city in Bundelkhand inspired by Noida's success.
- The roadmap is ready for land acquisition.

## Construction of Bharat Dynamic Limited (BDL) factory begins

- Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) unit in the Jhansi node is under construction.
- It is the sixth manufacturing unit of the Company and the first one in North India.
- Defence Corridor in Jhansi.
- UP government actively enhancing basic facilities in Garautha near Jhansi for the Defence Corridor.
- Major defence companies' presence is expected to generate abundant employment opportunities.
- Aim to curb youth migration for jobs outside Bundelkhand.

## Bulk Pharma Park in Lalitpur

- Bulk Drug Park in five villages of Lalitpur District, spanning 1,472 acres.

- The first phase focuses on developing basic infrastructure on 300 acres; DPR is in progress.
- The state government planning to establish Lalitpur as a generic drugs hub.
- Collaboration with reputed research institutions as knowledge partners for park development.

## Heritage Scheme to boost tourism

- Government seeks proposals for Bundelkhand's heritage under the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme. Interest from top hotel groups signals imminent transformation.
- 'Adopt a Heritage' seeks proposals for Barua Sagar Fort, Ram Janaki Temple, Temple Garautha, Banjari Temple, and Ber.
- 'Adopt a Heritage' beckons proposals for Lalitpur's rock-cut caves, Sumeragarh Temple, Somnath Temple, Khakra Math, Ranchhor Temple, Pracheen Baithak, Chandeli Temple, Shanti Nath Temple, Shiv Temple, Dashrath Ghat, and Khandeha Temples.

## Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission nears completion in all seven Bundelkhand districts.
- Mahoba is making strides with a remarkable progress rate of 98%.

- Jhansi is not far behind, boasting a commendable 97% progress rate.
- Chitrakoot is steadily advancing with a solid 93% progress rate.
- Banda is making significant headway, registering an impressive 96% progress rate.
- Lalitpur is excelling with a high progress rate of 98%.
- Jalaun is progressing well, with an 89% achievement rate.
- Hamirpur is also making strides, sharing the same commendable 89% progress rate as Jalaun.
- Accelerated efforts on significant projects percent urban drinking water.
- Success in resolving the drinking water crisis, impacting positive changes in people's lives.

## Work on Smart City projects

- A new park, dedicated to the memory of the late Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Singh Rawat, constructed at the foothills of Jhansi Fort and inaugurated.
- The public library underwent a successful renovation, enhancing its facilities and services.
- The Dhyan Chand Museum, honoring the legendary hockey player Major Dhyan Chand, built as part of the Smart City initiatives.
- Public Library and the newly constructed Dhyan Chand Museum renovated.

**Key development in the Bundelkhand region includes:-**

**Development of the Bundelkhand Expressway as a solar expressway**

**Approval of Rs. 550 crore for Defence Corridor in Bundelkhand**

**Ropeway facility for devotees and tourists in Chitrakoot**

**Construction of the 296 km-long Bundelkhand Expressway from Etawah to Chitrakoot**

**Construction work of Jhansi Link Expressway and Chitrakoot Link Expressway is in progress**

**Approval of airports in Jhansi and Chitrakoot**

**Construction of police training center in Jalaun on 79 acres worth Rs 350 crores**

**Approval of Rs 68.83 crore to promote natural farming**

**Formation of Shri Chitrakoot Dham Teerth Development Council**

**Establishment of the fourth tiger reserve of Uttar Pradesh in Ranipur, Chitrakoot**

**Construction of a 4-lane Jhansi to Khajuraho highway at a cost of Rs 1400 crore in progress**



# Awake & conscious, 5-year-old undergoes brain tumour surgery

Youngest patient in world to undergo  
awake craniotomy, claim AIIMS officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

A FIVE-YEAR-old girl underwent a brain tumour surgery at AIIMS Delhi on January 4 – while she was awake and conscious during the procedure. The institute claims she is the youngest patient in the world to undergo an ‘awake craniotomy’.

The procedure is a conscious sedation technique surgery for left perisylvian intraxial brain tumour. The surgery lasted three hours, including the time taken for giving local anaesthesia to the child by neuro anaesthetists, and the tumour was successfully removed.

AIIMS officials said the child had a history of seizures. An MRI of her brain showed a tumour in the left side of her brain adjacent to speech/language area.

Professor Mihir Prakash Pandia from the Neuroanaesthesia department and part of the team that conducted the surgery said ‘awake craniotomy’ can be a game-changer for future surgeries as it can prevent permanent damage to the brain. The risk during surgeries under general anaesthesia increases if the tumour is in the eloquent cortex of the brain.

Eloquent cortex refers to specific brain areas that directly control functions, like motor and speech, thus, damage to these areas generally produces major focal neurological deficits. “Every neurosurgical and brain tumour procedure we perform under general anaesthesia, but here we followed the conscious sedation techniques. The child remained awake throughout the surgery,” said Dr Pandia.

In the case of the five-year-old, the tumour was in the eloquent area of the brain. “Through awake craniotomy, we can continuously evaluate to see we are not possibly damaging any important function. We kept the child fully awake. Initially, we gave her 16 injunctions to block all nerves. After the surgeon reaches the brain’s eloquent area, we stop all the sedation and make the child fully awake,” Dr Pandia said, adding that during the surgery, they were talking to the patient, asking her to perform functions to evaluate motor function so that she doesn’t develop paralysis.

“In such surgeries, we show the patient videos, photos, ask them about school, parents etc. If something is getting impaired, we drop from that area,” he added.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

DELHI’S BUDGET will be presented in February and is likely to be above Rs 80,000 crore with a special focus on education, health, electricity, water, roads, infrastructure and more “gifts” for the people, said officials.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Saturday postponed his scheduled visit to Gujarat by a day to preside over the first meeting with ministers regarding budget preparations.

According to government officials, Kejriwal discussed sectors to be prioritised in the budget, which is expected to be tabled by the middle or end of February.

“The CM has directed all ministers to speed up budget preparations and decide their priorities. Next week, there will be a meeting of all ministers and officers under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, in which the priorities will be finalised,” officials said.

“After this, suggestions will be taken from all stakeholders and they will also be incorporated. This budget will also give many big gifts to the people of Delhi,” officials added.

Delhi Revenue Minister



According to government officials, CM Arvind Kejriwal discussed sectors to be prioritised in the budget

sented to the public in a better way and other states impressed by it should also follow it,” officials said.

According to the CMO, Kejriwal has directed Atishi and Bharadwaj, who also holds the health portfolio, to plan “new initiatives” in the fields of education and health.

Besides these, discussions were held in the meeting regarding water, roads, urban development and various development projects as priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

“After determining the priorities in the meeting of ministers and officers, suggestions from all MLAs will also be solicited. An analysis of all these suggestions will be done, and constructive suggestions in the public interest will be included in the budget,” it added.

During the meeting the CM, officials said, reiterated his commitment to pay special attention to education and health in the coming financial year, keeping in mind the people of all sections living in Delhi.

“The CM stressed on what new things can be done in the field of education and health in the coming financial year, so that this model can be pre-

# ‘Capital’s per capita income up by over 14% last fiscal’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

THE PER capita income in Delhi has seen an increase from Rs 3,89,529 in 2021-22 to Rs 4,44,768 in 2022-23, according to the recently released ‘Statistical Handbook-2023’ prepared for the national capital by the Department of Economics and Statistics.

According to the handbook, Kejriwal has directed Atishi and Bharadwaj, who also holds the health portfolio, to plan “new initiatives” in the fields of education and health.

This is above the national average per capita income of Rs 1,72,276, as per the handbook.

An average 41 lakh passengers commuted daily on state-run buses in 2023.

No. of electricity consumers increased by nearly 2.8 lakh compared to 2021-22.

## THE STATS

Delhi’s per capita income increased from Rs 3,89,529 to Rs 4,44,768 in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

An average 41 lakh passengers commuted daily on state-run buses in 2023.

No. of electricity consumers increased by nearly 2.8 lakh compared to 2021-22.

(Data from Delhi govt’s Statistical Handbook 2023)



This is above the national average per capita income of Rs 1,72,276, as per the handbook. Archive

who benefited from the Ladli Scheme, and 1,13,039 people with special needs who received financial assistance. Going by the communication from her office, Atishi said: “Despite various obstacles, the Arvind Kejriwal government has established new benchmarks in the public services sector in 2023.”

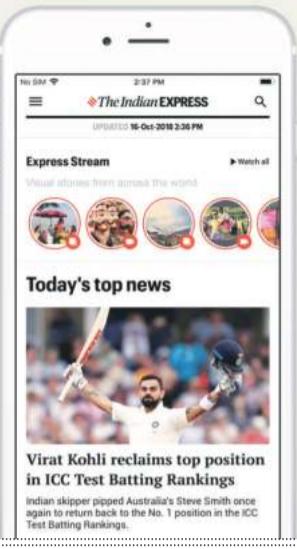
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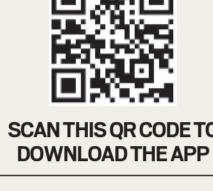
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## EXPRESS AUDIO

### Looking back at 2023: The top milestones in science and technology

IN 3 Things, we delve into the major scientific milestones that India reached and how AI changed the world of technology. We have Indian Express' Amitabh Sinha and Nandagopal Rajan

#### MONEY LAUNDERING PROBE

## ED searches 9 places, seizes digital data, documents in RFL fund diversion case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI,  
JANUARY 6

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) on Saturday concluded its searches in a money laundering investigation linked to alleged diversion of funds worth more than Rs 2,000 crore from Religare Finvest Limited (RFL).

Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL), RFL's parent company, said ED officials Friday collected information along with documents pertaining to the company's corporate loan book from its offices and that the agency's action was a result of a complaint made by the company.

"The information and documents, as advised, were provided/submitted to the officials of the authority," the company said in an exchange filing.

A company official said Religare had requested the ED to expedite investigations on money allegedly diverted by erstwhile promoters and their associates.

On December 23, 2023, RFL said it has commissioned an expert agency for a forensic investigation into alleged "siphoning-off" of funds from RFL by the erstwhile promoters of the company". The Burmans of the Dabur group own around 22% stake in Religare and have announced an open offer to buy an additional 26% stake. This is being stoutly opposed by the current management of Religare.

## In Goa for NY bash, Kerala youth found dead on beach

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PANAJI, JANUARY 6

A 19-YEAR-OLD teenager from Kerala, who had come to Goa to celebrate New Year, was found dead on a beach in North Goa on Thursday. The state police have registered a case of unnatural death and initiated inquest proceedings.

The deceased has been identified as Sanjay Santosh, a resident of Kottayam district in Kerala. Police said Sanjay, along with two friends, had arrived in Goa on December 29 and checked in at a guesthouse in Vagator area. The trio had gone to attend a party on New Year's eve at a club in Vagator, the police said.

"While his two friends returned from the party to their rooms, the victim could not be traced. His friends reported him missing the next day," said a police officer.

According to police sources, the victim was last seen dancing on a stage at a party and police are reviewing CCTV footage from clubs in the area as part of the probe.

## MP CM says girls missing from children's home safe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Bhopal, January 6

MADHYA PRADESH Chief Minister Mohan Yadav Saturday said the 26 girl inmates of a children's home, who were alleged to have gone missing, were safe, and directed officials that action should be taken against institutions which were operating illegally.

Earlier in the day, the state police had said a case had been registered in connection with the alleged disappearance of the girls from a children's home in Parwala area in Bhopal. It was suspected that they left after feeling homesick, said an officer.

Later, CM Yadav posted on X

## FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

## Aditya-L1, ISRO's first mission to study Sun, in final orbit; another landmark: PM

Sun, as also the centripetal force on any satellite placed there, roughly cancel each other out. It is a relatively stable point for a spacecraft to be parked, and observe the Sun. The L1 point is about 1.5 million kilometres from the Earth. This is just 1 per cent of the total distance between the Earth and Sun.

(PTI adds: ISRO Chairman S Somanath said Saturday's event was about only placing the Aditya-L1 in the precise 'halo' orbit. "It was moving towards the 'halo' orbit but we had to do a little bit of corrections to put it at the right place. So something like a 31 metres per second velocity had to be given cumulatively to the satellite to keep it at the right orientation," he told reporters.

"So in this new orbit, it had to be placed very precisely. If you don't do the correction today then it can escape from this point (L1). We will not allow it to escape. There are some contingencies but I am telling you mathematically it can escape. So it has been done very precisely," he added.

The ISRO scientists have achieved is exact placement based "on our measurement and very correct prediction of the velocity requirement." The space agency further said the orbit of Aditya-L1 spacecraft is a periodic one, on the continuously moving Sun-Earth line, with an orbital period of about 177.86 Earth days.

"This specific 'halo' orbit is selected to ensure a mission lifetime of 5 years, minimising station-keeping manoeuvres and thus, fuel consumption, and ensuring a continuous, unobstructed view of the Sun... The success of this insertion not only signifies ISRO's capabilities in such complex orbital manoeuvres, but it gives confidence to handle future interplanetary missions," ISRO said.

Placing the Aditya spacecraft in the 'halo' orbit around L1 point was not as simple as putting a satellite in an orbit around Earth, or any other planetary body like the Moon or Mars, which ISRO and other space agencies routinely do.

"Usually, satellites are put into orbits around physical bodies like Earth, Moon, Mars etc. In this case, at L1, there's no physical object. It is an empty space, just a location. Besides, closed orbits around celestial bodies are either circular or elliptical.

The four-month journey to its destination was also the second longest that an Indian spacecraft had travelled in space to reach its destination. The Mars Orbiter Mission had travelled about 11 months before entering the orbit around the red planet.

"It (the insertion) was something similar to a car speeding on the highway and then making a manoeuvre to enter into a side lane. A change of speed and direction was involved. It was great

### No one will be spared: L-G Sinha

administration after the episode, he said: "The J&K administration is making every effort to retain their trust and I will ensure that their trust is maintained." He added that the Army has also initiated a court of inquiry, and the J&K Police have filed an FIR in the case.

After a militant attack on an Army convoy on December 21 in which four soldiers were killed, the security forces had picked up at least nine civilians for questioning from Topa Pir village in Poonch. Of these, three men — Saeef Ahmed, Shabir Ahmed and Mohammad Showkat — were allegedly tortured to death during questioning. Five civilians were admitted with injuries to a government hospital in Rajouri.

On December 27, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with Chief of Army Staff, General Manoj Pande, visited Rajouri and met the families of the deceased civilians. The Defence Minister had, as per the families of the three men, assured them of justice.

Addressing troops the same day, Singh had also said that while fulfilling the responsibil-

ity of defending the nation, "you also have a bigger responsibility of winning the hearts of your countrymen". He said that while the aim is to win a war and eliminate terrorists, "our bigger aim shall be to win the hearts of our people".

The J&K administration has announced compensation of Rs 20 lakh for each family, a plot of land and a government job for a family member. The Army will also provide a compensation of Rs 10 lakh. Along with this, a compensation of Rs 3 lakh for each of the injured is also on the cards.

Of the nine men picked up for questioning on December 22, the oldest is believed to be over 80 years of age while the youngest is 15 years old.

After videos of the alleged torture leading to the death of three civilians emerged, the Army also effected changes in command in the area, moving some officers out.

As per the families, the bodies of the three men bore marks of torture including "deep cuts and bruises all along their torso".

"It was around 6.30 am when

that ISRO managed to do it in the first attempt itself. If not, more attempts could have been made, but that would have involved spending more fuel. The challenge is to enter into the orbit with minimal manoeuvring and firing of thrusters," Professor Dibyendu Nandi of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research at Kolkata said.

The spacecraft is carrying seven payloads, many of which were switched on for some time during its journey to the L1 point.

"Initial data show that they are all working as per expectations. Some of the payloads have already started detecting and monitoring activities on the Sun like solar flares. The most spectacular one has been the so-called New Year fireworks on the Sun, a flare that happened on the solar limb on December 31." Prof Ramaprasak, one of the lead developers of the SUIT (Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope) payload, said.

After the insertion, the payloads would be switched on sequentially. SUIT, seated on the top deck of the Aditya-L1, will be among the first to get operational once the spacecraft reaches L1.

"All the instruments will be checked for their health and calibration performed. Since these instruments are highly complex, the commencement of actual science observations may take another three months or so," Dipankar Banerjee, director of Nainital-based Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences, said.

Prof R Ramesh of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, explained why the instruments would not begin their observations immediately.

"When thrusters are fired to correct the trajectory of a spacecraft, or in this case to insert it into a desired orbit, some dust is generated in the vicinity. One of the reasons to study the Sun from space is to ensure that there is no distortion from dust particles. This is why the entrance aperture protecting the primary mirror of the main payload called VELC is still closed. ISRO will wait for the dust to settle for around two weeks before opening the aperture," he said.

He said the other payloads will undergo calibration in space during this time and the first results should start coming in by

the end of the month. "Since the aperture for VELC will be opened two weeks later, it will take some more time to calibrate it and start getting information," he said.

Ramesh said one of the most challenging aspects of the mission would be to keep the spacecraft in the desired configuration through the rest of its life.

"When we talk about the missions to Moon or Mars, the orbiters can take images of the celestial body from any direction. However, when it comes to VELC, the Sun has to be perfectly lined up behind the occulting disk. The solar corona is several times fainter than the surface of the Sun, and if the photosphere is even a little bit visible as a ring around the occultor, the instrument will not be able to study the corona," he said.

The range of experiments and observations that are planned to be carried out by the instruments on board Aditya are expected to provide completely new information about the dynamics inside the Sun, Banerjee said.

"The combination of instruments onboard Aditya are going to be operational for the first time ever at L1. No similar instruments have been present during previous missions (by other space agencies). Aditya has unique and different instruments with better capabilities... Aditya's coronagraph has the ability to look very close to the Sun. It has an X-ray spectrometer. In addition, there are instruments capable of performing multi-slit spectroscopy, spectro-polarimetry and taking full-disc near ultraviolet images. All of these are new elements on a solar mission," he said.

Aditya has seven scientific payloads of which the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC), Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT), Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS), High-energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS) are designed to directly track the Sun. The in-situ (on site) measuring instruments include the Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX), Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA), Advanced Tri-axial High Resolution Digital Magnetometers.

Anjali Marar works with the Raman Research Institute, Bangalore.

### • CJI flags 'dhwaja of justice'

seeks redress. Citizens don't come to the Supreme Court first and foremost. They come to the district courts. So in your work as members of the bar, you will generate confidence, or the lack of confidence in citizens. It is in our efficiency as district court lawyers that we will really ensure that this dhwaja of justice will keep flying in the generations to come." CJI Chandrachud said in Rajkot.

Referring to the dhwaja atop Dwarka and Somnath temples which he visited during his two-day visit to Gujarat, the CJI said, "I was inspired this morning by the dhwaja at Dwarkadishji, very similar to the dhwaja, which I saw at Jagannath Puri. But look at this universality of the tradition in our nation, which binds all of us together. This dhwaja has a special meaning for us. And that meaning which the dhwaja gives us is that there is some unifying force above all of us, as lawyers, as judges, as citizens. And that unifying force is our humanity, which is governed by the rule of law and by the Constitution of India," he said.

Justice Chandrachud said he had started visiting various states "inspired by the life and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi" to understand challenges facing the judiciary and to identify solutions, adding that his two-day Gujarat visit was part of the same effort. "I tried touring various states over the past one year so that I can meet judges of high courts and officers of the district judiciary, listen to their problems and thereby, we can find solutions to challenges facing the judiciary..." he said.

"We have set up a sewage treatment plant with a capacity to treat 2.5 lakh litres of sewage every day. Presently, we are able to supply average 1.25 lakh litres of treated sewage water for agriculture and horticulture. Similarly, we have also developed a facility for segregating solid waste. While we send biodegradable waste to our composting facility for preparing manure and vermiculture, other material recovered from the waste is sold for recycling. On an average, we prepare half-a-ton of manure and vermiculture daily."

The new court building on Jamnagar Road in Rajkot, constructed at a cost of Rs 110 crore, will house around 50 courtrooms, which so far were functioning from four buildings on three campuses. Chief Justice of Gujarat

High Court, Justice Sunita Agarwal, and state Law Minister Minister Rushikesh Patel, also attended the inauguration.

Addressing a public meeting later, Justice Chandrachud talked about his visits to Dwarkadish temple in Dwarka town and Somnath temple in Somnath in Gir Somnath district earlier in the day. He said he was "moved" by the waste disposal system at Somnath temple and urged courts in Gujarat to draw inspiration from the system.

"When I visited Somnath ji this morning, I was so deeply moved that this is the first temple in India that has a zero-waste facility. Let us be inspired by making every court system in the state a zero-waste facility. It is then that we will be truly inspired by the ideals of these great temples, which dot the landscape of Gujarat," he said addressing a gathering of lawyers, judges, judicial officers and common citizens in Rajkot.

The Shree Somnath Trust has developed a system for segregation and disposal of solid waste under the Union government-sponsored National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive scheme.

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His tour, he said, is also aimed at sharing with high court judges and officers of district judiciary the achievements of Indian judiciary.

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### • Navy hunts for pirates

the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) port — indicating that five-six unknown armed personnel had boarded it — the Navy responded immediately.

The merchant vessel was kept under continuous surveillance by a P-81 maritime patrol aircraft, Predator MQB UAVs and integral helos (helicopters on a ship), said the statement, adding INS Chennai, which was on anti-piracy patrolling duty in the region, intercepted the ship. A MARCOS team on the warship then boarded the merchant vessel and carried out thorough "sanitisation" of the upper

per decks, machinery compartments and living spaces, it said.

The MV *Lila Norfolk* crew is currently engaged in restoring propulsion, power supply and steering gear. "Thereafter, MV *Norfolk* will rejoin her passage to her destination under escort of the Indian naval warship," the Navy statement said.

According to sources, while the Navy has carried out several such anti-piracy operations earlier, this was a major one in recent times. The Navy began anti-piracy patrols in Gulf of Aden in 2008 and has increased deployments in Arabian Sea.

They were chanting slogans against the ED and in support of Shahjahan.

"Trouble started a little after 7 am when, with women in the front, the crowd started marching towards the ED team and the jawans, who requested them with folded hands to keep calm. I saw some youths grab ED officers by their collar. They were dragged to a garden area outside the house. I saw one of them pinned to the ground, being beaten up," said another resident who, like many others, wanted to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions.

"As they failed to get any response, two jawans tried to break open a collapsible gate. A small crowd had already started to gather nearby, but this grew to nearly a thousand people within the next 30 minutes, many from nearby villages," he said. "Had there been an attempt to arrest Shahjahan yesterday, there could have

# Agriculture

## Backbone of the Indian Economy

### Sowing Prosperity: Kuldeep Singh's Vision for HIL Aligns Agrochemicals, Seeds, and Technological Innovation



Can you provide an overview of HIL India Limited's current involvement in the seed industry?

HIL has been engaged in seed processing and marketing since 2012. We've recently started taking orders and are aiming for a turnover of ₹200 crores this year. Our focus is on producing quality seed and establishing a strong foundation for seeds in states like UP, Uttarakhand, and Rajasthan.

What are your plans to integrate technology into your seed-related operations?

We've invested in a state-of-the-art seed processing plant to improve seed quality. Additionally, we are in the process of acquiring seed plants to provide farmers with high-quality seeds enriched with nutrients.

How do you plan collaborations and partnerships in the seed industry?

We have signed MOUs with leading companies to provide hybrid seeds, especially in the vegetable segment. Leveraging our extensive dealer network, we aim to distribute these seeds across the country.

How will HIL positively impact farmers through its involvement in the

In an exclusive interview with **Mr. Kuldeep Singh, CMD of HIL (India) Limited**, we delve into the company's significant strides in the seed industry and its visionary plans for agricultural development. The conversation, conducted in a question-answer format, covers HIL's current involvement in seed processing, technology integration, collaborations, and the CMD's long-term vision for the organization.

seed sector?

By offering a comprehensive range of agricultural inputs, including seeds, under one umbrella, we aim to reduce input costs for farmers and boost their production. This approach is set to increase farmers' income and contribute to overall prosperity.



How do you plan to communicate your initiatives and progress to stakeholders, including farmers, investors, and the government?

We supply seeds under various government schemes and make them available to our dealer network across the country. We conduct regular dealer meetings and use other communication channels to keep stakeholders informed.

What is your long-term vision for HIL's involvement in the seed industry and how does it align with broader agricultural goals?

HIL's long-term vision includes expanding our business in agrochemicals and exploring export opportunities. Our goal is to align with the government's agricultural objectives and contribute to the nation's growth.

Mr. Kuldeep Singh's insights into HIL's strategic initiatives in the seed industry reveal a comprehensive approach aimed at transforming agriculture in India. With a focus on technology, collaborations, and a vision for future growth, HIL is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's agricultural landscape.

### HIL Limited's Green Revolution: Director Shashank Unveils Bio-Product Strategy and Tech Integration for Sustainable Agriculture



Can you elaborate on the collaboration with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the selected bio products for organic farming?

UNIDO is funding us to establish a strategic unit for Bio-products. We've chosen five bio products, including Pseudomonas and Trichoderma, to enhance our offerings. The collaboration aims to incorporate sustainable practices into our operations.

Are there additional collaborations or partnerships fostering growth and innovation?

Currently, we focus on in-house collaborations due to our lack of R&D capabilities. We have an MOU with different research institutions and collaborate with various agricultural scientific bodies in the country. These collaborations support us in seed production, new product innovation, and overall development.

How does HIL Limited plan to integrate technology into its operations, considering the era of technological advancements?

We're consolidating our three units into one hub at Rasayani, Mumbai, to enhance technical capabilities. This strategic move allows us to manufacture six molecules, promoting efficient logistics and facilitating our goal to expand into exports and contribute



In this extensive interview, **Shashank Chaturvedi**, Director of Marketing from HIL (India) Limited, formerly known as Hindustan Insecticides Ltd., provided comprehensive insights

into the company's endeavors and vision for the future of agriculture in India. The commitment to sustainable practices, technological integration, and the promotion of cost-effective solutions underline HIL Limited's role in shaping the agricultural landscape. In the exclusive interview, Shashank also shares insights into the company's initiatives and strategies for agricultural growth and innovation. It further sheds light on HIL Limited's collaborations, technological integration, and its role in the agricultural development landscape.

to the overall agrochemical market. Molecules, Malathion, Chlorpyrifos, Imidacloprid, Glyphosate, Pendimethalin & Mancozeb.

What are the short-term and long-term goals for export operations?

Our immediate focus is venturing into exports. In the long term, we emphasize promoting generic products to make agrochemicals more economical for farmers. Doubling

farmers' income involves incorporating these cost-effective solutions.

Can you explain the difference between innovative and generic products in the agrochemical market?

Innovative products are developed by MNCs in a long period and they are costlier. Generic products perform similarly but are more economical, contributing to cost reduction.

It's a gradual process, but with increased awareness and education among farmers, we see positive changes. The new generation is adopting technology, and as education levels rise, farmers are becoming more aware and receptive to innovations in agriculture.

Any specific message for our readers on Kisan Diwas and your company's vision?

At HIL Limited, our motto is 'protect, to prosper.' We aim to safeguard crops and ensure farmers' prosperity. As we celebrate Kisan Diwas, our commitment remains to protect and nurture agriculture for a prosperous farming community.

### HIL Promoting Eco-friendly Greener Technologies

GOVERNMENT of India is extensively promoting the research and development activities in the chemical sector including agrochemicals, which is crucial for the growth of crop protection sector and Indian agrochemical industry in global arena. HIL (India) Limited is also putting in efforts to strengthen the R&D capabilities by diversifying into safer and sustainable product line. HIL (India) Limited in collaboration with Central institutions like Institute of Pesticides formulation Technology (IPFT) and National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) is in process of commercialising the new innovative technologies and research products for the agriculture sector. It's an initia-

tive to take the technology from lab scale to commercial level and making it available to farming community at reasonable prices.

HIL is executing the project "Development and Promotion of non-POP alternatives to DDT" with the support of United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). The objective of the project is "To develop and introduce locally appropriate cost-effective and sustainable



alternatives to DDT for reduction and eventual elimination of dependency on DDT ensuring food safety, enhancing livelihood and protecting human health and environment". Under the project, NBRI has developed four varieties of neem dwarf cultivars using tissue culture technique. Farmers have traditionally used various components of the neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*) such as neem kernels/seeds, oils extracted from the seeds, leaves etc. as organic manure and soil amendment agent to enhance

the efficiency of nitrogen fertilizers by reducing the rate of nitrification and to inhibit soil pests including nematodes, fungi and insects; Neem leaves are used as mulch and green manure; to protect stored grains and legumes; neem leaves are mixed with the grain in storage etc.

HIL is commercialising various neem-based formulations. Neem formulations do not usually kill insects directly, but they can alter their behavior in significant ways to reduce pest damage to crops, and reduce their reproductive potential. The use of newer formulation of neem shall contribute in reducing reliance of chemical pesticides thereby minimising environmental impact.

### Compressed BIO-Gas - KEC Agritech

(A Billion Dollar Industry) with expected ROI of (35-40%) YoY.



Jitendra Narayan, CEO, Kec Agritech Pvt. Ltd.

KEC CBG Industrial park is a way forward as new business opportunity for new entrepreneur & businessman for entering in Biofuel. Where KEC CBG park offering critical resources as Providing Land, Raw material , buyer for Gas & other by product to ensure the continuous business , Getting 15 years buy back agreement with OMC's , Hand holding people to avail Govt subsidy , loans and other incentives in its CBG park. This is basically an Plug and play model ,

CBG Park can play important platform to make this vision achieve , KEC provide PMC & EPC Services as do Turnkey based project , Currently KEC is working for about 42 projects in Pan India basis , And

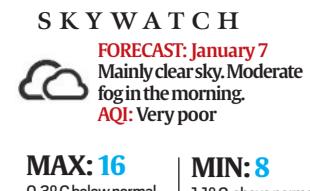
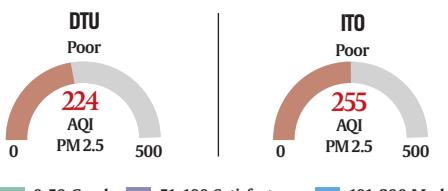
[www.kecbiofuel.com](http://www.kecbiofuel.com) , [www.kisanexperience.com](http://www.kisanexperience.com)  
[info@kisanexperience.com](mailto:info@kisanexperience.com)

For any queries please contact : 8527626868

also doing Joint venture projects with Uttarakhand Government and also launched 15 CBG park in India , So expecting an investment of about 2800 Crore in next 3 year.

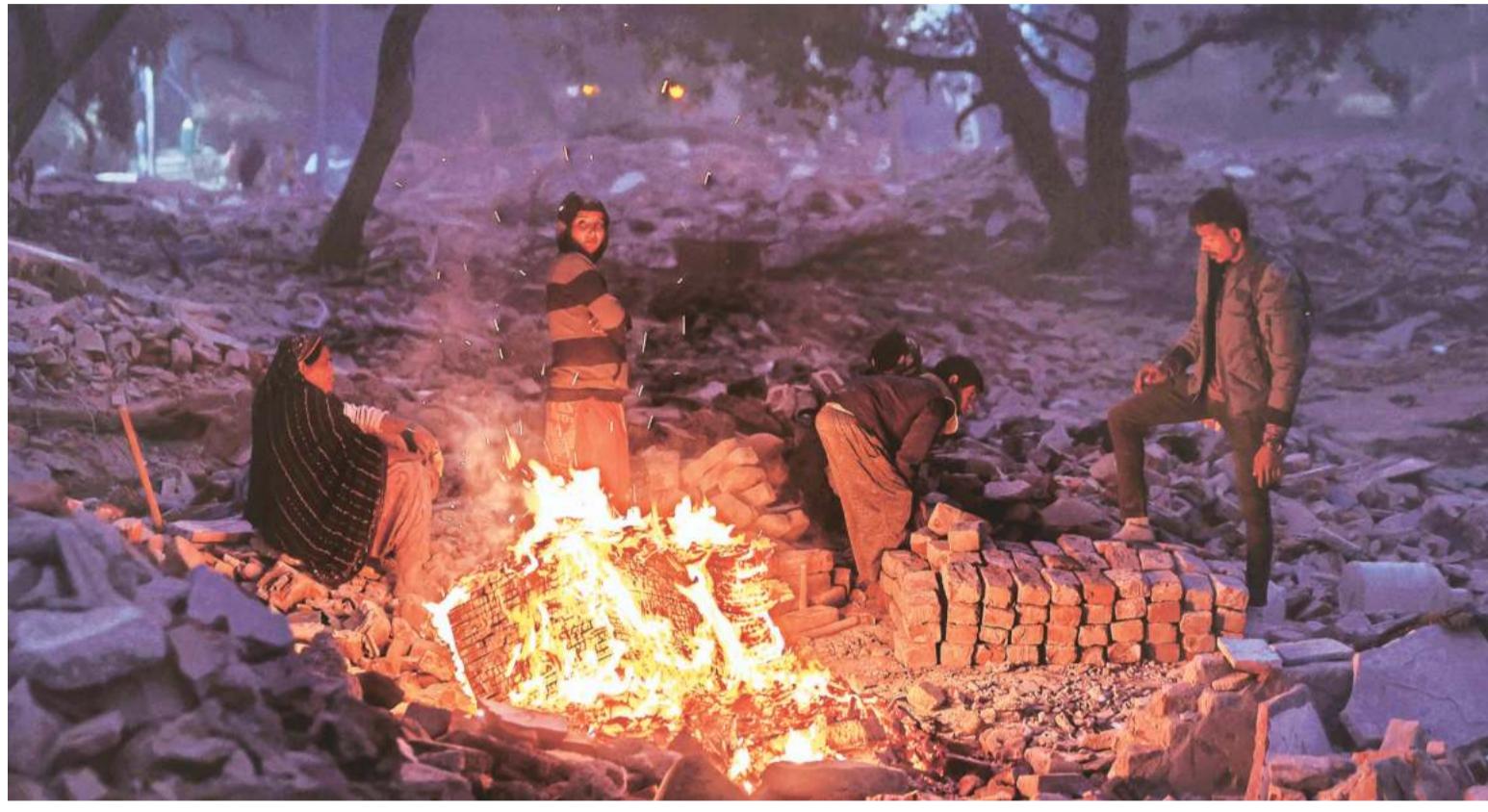
Going Forward new opportunity as Carbon credit will also become a addition income in the CBG park other then core products

"The government has an ambitious target to set up 5,000 commercial (CBG) plants by 2024-25 and produce 15 million metric tonnes of CBG, which will replace other gases which are being used in the country." Govt. is offering incentive Upto 40% & loan upto 80% under various schemes , So CBG Plant break even can be achieved in 3 year.



ANTI-POLLUTION CURBS IN PLACE, COULDN'T CARRY OUT DRIVE IN NOVEMBER: OFFICIALS

# Houses razed in demolition drives across capital, several left homeless in biting cold



Residents at Nizamuddin and Khirki Extension (left) live on the rubble that was their homes. Tashi Tobgyal

Amit Mehra

**SAMAN HUSAIN**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

THE ROOF over their heads demolished amid the biting cold of December, anti-encroachment drives over the last few weeks have forced several Delhi residents into huddles around small fires over the rubble of what used to be their homes.

At least two 'cold days', when the temperature was below normal maximum temperatures, were logged last week with no signs of the mercury letting up.

As per the weather forecast, the maximum temperature is expected to be around 16 degrees Celsius over the next week.

On December 21, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) demolished nearly 300 houses near DPS Mathura Road in Nizamuddin. Pointing to a bed covered in debris, 39-year-old Lalita Devi recounted the pain

and shock of witnessing the destruction of her home. "I had just returned from my parents' house when I saw bulldozers gathering to demolish our homes. I hurried to salvage what I could, but my home had turned to rubble."

What added to her anguish was the recent investment of their life savings into renovating the same house. "We had put everything we had into making our house better... We owned a perfume shop next to our house... it was our only source of income which we also lost during the demolition," she said.

MCD sources said 50 workers, eight trucks, and two anti-smog guns along with police personnel, were deployed to clear the settlement. The exercise, sources said, was carried out on the basis of satellite imagery indicating the absence of any settlement before 2006 in the area.

Asked why it was done during winter, sources in the civic

body said demolitions could not take place in November due to GRAP III guidelines (under which construction and demolition activities are barred) being in place to curb pollution. Since the guidelines were revoked, sources said some 300 structures have been demolished. "In many instances, people encroached upon agricultural land to build their houses. The main objective behind this action is to dissuade property dealers and to create awareness among the general public against buying such plots," sources said.

However, 22-year-old Moin Uddin claimed his family's ties to the land span nearly four decades. "They asked for our address proof just before Diwali. We provided it, but they still razed our homes... the first electricity meter was installed here in 1993, there were public toilets, roads were also maintained by the MCD and DDA on December 6.

"Five families have called this place their home for the past 40-45 years. While some returned to their villages, we have nowhere else to go, even the elderly are forced to sit without a roof in this

settlement," said Raj Kumar, who is currently in recovery from a heart attack he had last month.

"We had no clue the demolition would take place, I was cooking when bulldozers along with police personnel arrived... we didn't get the time to save our belongings..." Chandrawati alleged.

MCD sources said the settlement was cleared as it was encroaching on its land. The DDA PRO did not respond to calls and messages seeking comment.

Indu Prakash Singh, an activist who works for the homeless, said, "The Supreme and High Courts have earlier emphasised on not conducting demolitions during severe weather conditions. Moreover, DUSIB's 2015 policy clearly outlines the necessity to resettle affected individuals within a 5-km radius before any demolitions occur... Failure of the government to provide adequate housing is leading to encroachments..."

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# GOVT & POLITICS

'MATTER OF PERSONAL FAITH': CONGRESS CHIEF ON RAM TEMPLE INVITE

## INDIA meet in 10-15 days to decide key posts: Kharge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

**CONGRESS CHIEF** Mallikarjun Kharge Saturday said INDIA leaders will meet in 10 to 15 days to decide key posts in the Opposition bloc ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. He also broke his silence on the invite he received to the Ram temple consecration ceremony, saying he would soon take a call on attending it and that this was a matter of personal faith.

Addressing a press conference on the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in New Delhi Saturday, Kharge said the Congress was working on all Lok Sabha constituencies and had appointed observers for each but would finalise its number of seats to contest after discussions with INDIA allies. This statement comes two days after the Congress leadership was learnt to have told state units that the party would focus on 255 seats, signalling a readiness to contest in fewer seats than in the 2019 polls amid the bloc's pulls and pressures.

Asked about reports that he could be the chairperson of the INDIA bloc and JD(U) president



Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Jairam Ramesh and KC Venugopal during the launch of logo and anthem for the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

Nitish Kumar could be convenor, Kharge said: "Who will take which post, that will be decided in a meeting to be held 10 to 15 days later."

"We are working on all constituencies and have already finalised observers for the constituencies. They will go and assess each parliamentary constituency... The exact number of seats we will contest will be known after our seat-sharing talks with the INDIA alliance partners. But we are trying to put in our efforts everywhere," Kharge said.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the party contested in 421

seats and won 52. It was part of alliances in a handful of states — with the RJD in Bihar, NCP in Maharashtra, JD(S) in Karnataka, JMM in Jharkhand, and the DMK in Tamil Nadu. In Uttar Pradesh, it contested in 70 of the 80 seats.

The Congress is bracing for difficulties in seat sharing in some states, especially Delhi, Punjab, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

Commenting for the first time on the invitation to the January 22 consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, Kharge said: "It is a matter of personal aastha (faith). One who has faith can go today, tomorrow and the day af-

ter too." He said he will decide very soon.

Kharge and senior party leader Sonia Gandhi have been invited to the event and the Congress had earlier said that their decision would be conveyed at the "right time".

Kharge also unveiled the logo of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and its slogan — "Bharat jodo nyay yatra, nyay ka haq milne tak." He said the Congress has invited leaders of the INDIA bloc parties to join the yatra, which begins January 14.

Kharge targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the latter visiting Lakshadweep and other places in the country, but not violence-torn Manipur.

"An unfortunate incident happened in Manipur in May and the violence continued. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi gets photographs clicked while swimming in the sea and at newly constructed temples and places like Kerala and Mumbai... but why this mahapurush (great man) did not go to Manipur where people were being killed, and women raped... He is not going to ask about their condition. Why? Are they not part of the country?" Kharge said.

Former Union minister Salman Khurshid said that "Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb" is the real identity of the country. Congress national spokesperson Supriya Srinivas said the Yatra was not over, and will commence again with Rahul Gandhi's Nyaya Yatra. PTI

## Karnataka Cabinet clears law for 60% Kannada in signages

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 6

**DAYS AFTER** Kannada protesters went on a tear in Bengaluru, vandalising English signboards of business establishments, the Karnataka Cabinet has given its consent to a law to ensure that all signages across the state have 60 per cent Kannada text.

The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Act, 2024 will be introduced in the form of an ordinance to enable it come into force immediately, said Kannada and Culture minister Shivaraj Tangadagi. "Under the amended law there will be strict penalties prescribed for defaulters and not just notices," the minister said.

"The law is intended to ensure that signages and displays in the state are 60 per cent in Kannada. The cabinet has given its consent for introducing the law," Law Minister H K Patil said Friday after the meeting of the Congress government's cabinet.

The move follows recent protests by Kannada organisations against the use of English signages by shops and commercial establishments. On December 27, what was initially planned as an online campaign by a Karnataka Rakshana Vedike faction took a violent turn when more than 5,000 activists of the right-wing outfit created havoc, bringing business activity in the country's IT capital to a standstill.

Many investors, stunned by the wave of pro-Kannada vandalism,

expressed concerns about what they described as the "soft-handed" approach of the Karnataka government and the police on the issue.

Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president of the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry, had told *The Indian Express*: "It was really unfortunate that police could not protect businesses. Bengaluru is a globally noted city. We are speaking about 'Brand Bengaluru' and if the government doesn't act against such attacks, how can we even promote it?"

At the time, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah had announced that his government would introduce an ordinance to ensure that 60 per cent of the space on signboards and name plates is dedicated to Kannada, with the rest left to any other language. "Kannada is supreme in Karnataka and the government will take all steps to promote the language," he said.

Citing a circular on March 24, 2018, he said 60 per cent of signages needed to be in Kannada. However, when the by-law was amended, it became 50 per cent.

According to the Karnataka Language Comprehensive Development Act of 2022, the upper half portion of boards displaying the names of commercial, industrial and business undertakings, trusts, counselling centres, hospitals, laboratories, amusement centres and hotels, functioning with the approval and sanction of government or local authorities, shall be in Kannada and lower half can be in any other language.

Emphasising that more gurukuls should be established, Singh said that a new India needed new 'gurukulams' which combined traditional education with emerging and cutting edge technologies like AI while also preserving traditional education.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with yoga guru Ramdev, Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami and Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav in Haridwar on Saturday. ANI

## Rajnath: Gurukuls should once again represent India, its culture

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 6

**STATING THAT** moral values are eroding because people are imitating foreign culture, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh Saturday exhorted the gurukuls to come forward and impart modern education to the youth while preserving the moral values and the country's cultural heritage.

Emphasising that more gurukuls should be established, Singh said that a new India needed new 'gurukulams' which combined traditional education with emerging and cutting edge technologies like AI while also preserving traditional education.

"Gurukuls should act as guides for other educational institutions. In the times to come, they should once again represent the country and its culture and become the new identity of India," he said.

Singh inaugurated 'Patanjali Gurukulam' at Swami Darshan-anand Gurukul College in Haridwar in the presence of Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Yoga Guru Swami Ramdev. Singh also laid the foundation stone of 'Acharyakulam'.

"Macaulay was sent to India to enslave Indians even mentally by colonising their minds," Singh said, adding, "The education sys-

tem introduced by Macaulay spawned generations of Indians who grew up with a sense of inferiority about their own culture and traditions."

"About 1,500 years ago, there were many big universities in India, where the gurukul tradition was prevalent. After that, the country saw that the system was almost destroyed by foreign invaders. They developed a system that did not provide education to our youth in line with the cultural spirit of the country," he said.

Referring to the National Education Policy 2020, Singh reiterated the central government's resolve to inculcate moral values in youth since their primary education.

WITH PTI INPUTS

## Modi & Jan 22: Can Ram Temple usher in resurgence with reconciliation?

BJP thinks it has the answers, having merged the divine figure of Lord Ram with a symbol of good governance, to attract Hindus cutting across caste and age

**sync with the chants amid cries by the crowd, of "Har Har Mahadev", "Bolo Ganga Maiya ki Jai" and "Gobind bolo, Hari Gopal bolo".**

It was a gathering mostly of young people, with an occasional older face in the crowd. They had come from all over — Mumbai, Satara, Kolkata, Kota, Silchar, Ludhiana, Chennai.

I wondered if this is what Hindu resurgence was all about. And what would be its political fallout — in 2024, and in Modi's third stint, if he secures it?

A visit to the Prime Minister's constituency and to Ayodhya and Lucknow last week brought home the kind of echo the Ram Temple is getting a fortnight before the consecration of Ram Lalla — when a 51-inch idol, representing the deity as a five-year-old, will be installed in the sanctum sanctorum of the new temple, being built where the Babri Masjid once stood and was demolished on December 6, 1992. A date that's perhaps history for those in their 20s and up to the mid-30s, in other words, 65% of India.

Five years ago, I had watched the evening aarti at this very spot. Then, there were only a couple of thousand people present — and toilet smells in the background. Last week, there were many times that number, the stench no longer pronounced, colourfully dressed young priests swirled around in

ghat with his wife and daughter said they were there to "get this experience". A Class 9 student from West Bengal said she was there with her parents because she wanted to know about her roots, about "why Lord Shiva made Varanasi his abode", and why the Ganga is "my mother".

A 25-year-old engineer from Satara told me of "the immense peace" he had experienced at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple with its Shivaling. He added that while belonging to a traditional NCP family, he will vote for Modi next time — and "look after my father who is an auto rickshaw driver and my mother who have sacrificed so much to make me an engineer".

He stood at the now famous corridor leading to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, with no sign of the old narrow alleys with small shops on either side, which used to crowd the way to the temple. The adjacent Gyanvapi Mosque, with a grille around it, stood as a reminder of the battle that the BJP plans to wage next.

Public relations officers claimed a 10-fold increase in

footfall in Varanasi over the last two years since the corridor came into existence—and said that an estimated 20% of the pilgrims in Varanasi are from South India—and followers of Lord Shiva. Hoardings dotted the city of the PM welcoming them with the Tamil "Vanakkam", with a Kashi Tamil Sangamam now part of the city's annual calendar. It is one more way the Modi-led BJP is making its determined drive to the South.

The PROs added that "people are coming partly because of aastha (faith) and partly because of tourism".

It is now about "dharma (religion) and development", a young entrepreneur explained. "Younger people are becoming conscious of their identity, but they also want a good life."

Religious tourism, some of it facilitated by RSS workers, is set to get a massive boost next with the "Navi" Ayodhya now under way, across 1,450 acres. Leading up to the consecration, the PM inaugurated a new railway station and international airport for the temple town.

For Anuradha, 55, from Nashik, an exciting world has opened up in Ayodhya. She is here to see the under-construction Ram Temple, having boarded a "rail gadhi (train)" for the first time in her life, its clangy sounds keeping her awake all night. Both have a deep impression on her. While "bharpoor (totally) unhappy" with the BJP in Maharashtra, Anuradha says, they will support Modi.

So will a group of landless women from Ujjain, who were there seeking "mukti (nirvana)". Brought on a pilgrimage by a contractor, they are awed by Ram Lalla, if not with the BJP replacing Shivraj Chouhan as Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh.

Is it mainly the upper caste youth who have become "fervently religious" because they are way inclined towards the BJP — ask the analysts? Or is it a new-found consciousness about their religion and spirituality which has made them turn to the BJP? Are the OBC and Dalit youths as swept up in this fervour?

The BJP thinks it has the answers having merged the divine

figure of Lord Ram with a symbol of good governance, to attract Hindus cutting across caste and age.

The party's 700 vehicle-video mounted "Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra" will cover every village in UP by January 25, showcasing their 'labharti' everywhere and filling the forms of those who have not yet managed to get the welfare benefits.

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The BJP thinks it has the answers having merged the divine

identified with the BJP?

After 1992, when the Babri Masjid was demolished, the Ayodhya temple has not really influenced voter choices, even though it was included in the BJP's manifesto to keep its core supporters happy. Under Atal Behari Vajpayee, it was put on the backburner in the 1996, 1998 and the 1999 elections.

But unbound by coalition constraints, the Modi regime got over the last remaining hurdle in 2019, when the apex court handed over the site to the Hindu side to build a temple.

Will 2024 be a different story when it comes to the temple and elections? Be it the devout in Varanasi or the pilgrims in Ayodhya, they credit the PM for getting the temple built.

Hence, the Opposition's dilemma — to go or not to go to Ayodhya on January 22. Nitish Kumar, Mamata Banerjee, the Left parties and Tejaswini Yadav have made it plain that they are not going. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav tried to circumvent the issue, saying he will go to Ayodhya when "Ramji ka bulawa aayega (sum-

moned by Ram)". It is the Congress which is still undecided — its leaders, Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who have received an invite, "may decide individually".

Larger questions hang unanswered. Will Ram Lalla go on to redefine the fundamentals of the Indian Republic? Can the Hindu resurgence be a benign force for good, instead of a polarising force to divide? Can religious resurgence go hand in hand with reconciliation between all faiths and help young women and men tap into their best natures to fulfil and realise their potential?

These may seem philosophical questions but have deep political undertones, too. Sure, Modi will oversee the installation of the idol, how does he steer what follows will shape the future of the temple?

(Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, *The Indian Express*, has covered the last 10 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of *How Prime Ministers Decide*)

## On YouTube videos raising EVM doubts, now an EC disclaimer

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

STARTING EARLIER this week, YouTube has added a "Context" information panel, which serves as an Election Commission of India (EC) disclaimer, to videos that raise doubts about Electronic Voting Machines (EVMS).

Going forward, the information panel and link to the FAQs

"rigging" of machines designed to look like EVMs.

The EC's move comes just a few months before the Lok Sabha elections, and at a time the Opposition INDIA bloc has written to it several times to raise concerns over EVMs and VVPAT machines.

Underlining the "safeguards" in place to ensure "free and fair" elections, the information panel, right below the video, also provides a link to the EC's page on Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about EVMs and VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) machines.

The information panel, titled 'Electronic Voting in India', Election Commission of India', says: "The strong technical safeguards in electronic voting machines and elaborate administrative safeguards, procedures and security put in place by EC (Election Commission of India) ensure that the elections are transparent, free and fair."

Search results for "EVMT" on YouTube have also started showing the same information panel.

YouTube is learnt to have taken the action after the EC wrote to it recently, asking for the information panel to be added, along with a list of about 70 videos. EC sources said this is a part of the poll panel's attempts to address doubts over the use of EVMs and VVPATs.

When reached for comment, a YouTube spokesperson did not respond till the time of filing the report.

The video listed by EC includes those allegedly showing

or watch videos related to topics that are prone to misinformation, such as the moon landing, you may see an information panel at the top of your search results or under a video that you're watching. Information panels show basic background info, sourced from independent, third-party partners, to give more context on a topic... These information panels will be shown regardless of what opinions or perspectives are expressed in a video," YouTube says in its 'Why am I seeing this' tab on the information panel.

Speaking at an international conference last January, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar had asked social media companies to use algorithm and Artificial Intelligence to detect deepfakes. He said the spreading of "deepfake narratives" had become common during elections across the world.

In a memorandum to the EC on August 9 last year, the INDIA bloc had said EVMs seemed to be "susceptible to manipulation". Responding to this, the EC updated its "FAQs" section on August 23, to answer some of the questions.

Not satisfied with the response, the INDIA bloc has made repeated requests for a meeting with the EC, most recently by Rajiv Kumar on December 30. Last month, the Opposition alliance also passed a resolution demanding 100% counting of VVPAT slips, as opposed to the current 2% verification.

According to Ramesh on Friday, the EC said it had "full faith" in the EVMs and referred to its

# From rural TN, 3-girl BTS Army on Seoul trip makes it to Chennai before rescue

**ARUN JANARDHANAN**  
CHENNAI, JANUARY 6

THE PLAN, mooted a month ago, was simple. Take a train from Erode to Chennai. Get to Visakhapatnam somehow. Then a ship, all the way to South Korea. And all of this within a budget of Rs 14,000, scraped together from piggy banks.

Three 13-year-old girls from rural Tamil Nadu were determined to make light of the thousands of kilometres separating them and their idols in far-

away Seoul — BTS, the sensational K-pop group.

The girls didn't quite make it so far, reaching Chennai before the dream grew too distant to take them home.

The girls, who study in an English-medium panchayat school, come from lower middle-class families from a village in Karur district. One of the girls' mothers works as a teacher at a village lower primary school.

"One of the girls' fathers is mentally challenged, and another girl's parents are separated. Both their mothers are farm labourers. But they had phones at home with the

Internet. A combination of all these factors seem to have played a role in their addiction to BTS, and a decision to leave," said P Vedanayagam, Vellore District Child Welfare Committee Chairman who interacted with the girls.

It is unsurprising why they would be BTS fans. The band too rose from humble beginnings, facing financial hardships. Their lyrics address themes that resonate with teenagers. Self-doubt, societal pressure — and the idea of pursuing dreams.

At a long counselling session

on Saturday, the girls too told Vedanayagam that their fandom for BTS made them long for a life of dance and music.

Introduced to the band by a young neighbour, they tried to learn Korean. They used Google Translate to understand the Korean lyrics. "They even knew the abbreviation of BTS ("Bangtan Sonyeondan" — which is Korean for "Bulletproof Boy Scouts")." Vedanayagam told *The Indian Express*. They knew the names of every BTS member, their favourite hobbies, favourite outfit colours and

even food habits.

"They left home on January 4. First, they came to Erode, and took a train to Chennai. They tried two hotels for rooms in Chennai, and the third attempt was successful. They stayed a night there for Rs 1200," said Vedanayagam.

Meanwhile, police registered a missing complaint the same day and began searching for them in Karur and neighbouring districts, examining CCTV footage and spreading information through intelligence channels and local WhatsApp groups.

But after reaching Chennai, fatigue set in for the girls. They came back to the railway station the next day and caught a train. En route, they got down at Katpadi to buy food — and ended up missing the train.

Om Prakash, the police inspector who investigated the missing complaint of the girls' families, said railway police spotted them at the station at night and brought them to the police station. "Police handed them over to the Vellore District Child Welfare Committee," Prakash said.

The child welfare panel has decided to counsel the parents as well before sending the girls back home.

Said Vedanayagam: "Of the Rs 14,000, they were left with Rs 8,059 after two days' trip. All of them took money by breaking the 'piggy banks' at home. Even as they realise that it was a flawed plan, they have a clarity about what they did and what they imagined. They promised that they will not repeat this adventure again, neither did they cry during the long conversation with counsellors."

**SC verdict on pleas against remission to Bilkis convicts tomorrow**



Bilkis Bano. File

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

THE SUPREME Court on Monday will pronounce its verdict on petitions challenging the remission granted by Gujarat government to 11 convicts in the case of gangrape of Bilkis Bano and murder of seven of her family members during the 2002 Gujarat riots.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan had reserved its decision in the matter on October 12, 2023. The Gujarat government had on August 15, 2023 released the 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case under its 1992 remission and premature release policy. This came after one of the convicts, Radheshyam Shah, who was sentenced to life imprisonment by a CBI court in Mumbai in 2008, approached the Supreme Court after completing 15 years and four months in jail.

Petitions were filed in the SC challenging the decision, including by CPI (M) leader Subhashini Ali, Prof Roopkatha Verma, journalist Revati Lail and then TMC MP Mahua Moitra. The convicts, however, questioned their locus standi to intervene in a criminal case. Some of them contended that "none of" the petitioners "are related whatsoever to the said case and only happens to be either political activists or a third party stranger to the said case".

Moving the SC, Bano had said "the en masse premature release of the convicts... has shaken the conscience of the society".

Bano termed it "one of the most gruesome crimes this country has ever seen" and added that the premature release came as a shock not only to her, but to her daughters, family and the society at large. She said she was "shell shocked, completely numb..." after the convicts were released.

In a separate petition, she also sought review of the SC's May 13, 2022 order which said the government of Gujarat was the appropriate government to decide the prayer of one of the convicts for remission and as per the state's 1992 remission policy.

## Govt notifies new drug-making standards after overseas deaths

**ANONNA DUTT**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

AFTER A number of overseas deaths allegedly linked to India-made drugs, the Union Health Ministry has notified its Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) that aim to ensure the quality of drugs made in the country, directing pharmaceutical companies to implement them within a year.

The new GMP focuses on quality control measures, allows mechanisms for digitally maintaining records that cannot be tampered with and puts in place a system to recall drugs if necessary.

The notification comes months after the Union Health Minister urged pharmaceutical companies to begin implementing these standards, which are on a par with those set by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Large companies, which have a turnover of more than Rs 250 crore, will now have to implement the guidelines within the next six months. Small and medium manufacturers, which have a turnover of less than Rs 250 crore, will get a year. There are nearly 10,500 drug manufacturing units in the country. Of them, 2,000 large compa-

**EXPLAINED**

### Up to a year to implement rules

THE UNION Health Ministry has put in place an up to one-year timeline for the implementation of these manufacturing standards. But while most of the large pharma firms that export medicines are compliant with WHO standards, the bulk of India's manufacturers, which are relatively smaller in size, are not. It remains to be seen when — and if — these companies are able to put these norms in place.

nies that export medicines are already WHO-GMP compliant.

But an industry participant, who declined to be named, said: "We had hoped for a two-year window for small companies to comply with the requirements. A lot of infrastructure modifications that are capital intensive will be needed. As for the bigger companies, they are already WHO-GMP compliant." The draft guidelines were released in 2018. Ensuring compliance with international GMP standards was one of the recommendations made during a Health Ministry brainstorming session early last year following reports of a string of international incidents where Indian syrups and eye drops were allegedly

found to be contaminated.

The deaths of 70 children in the Gambia, 18 children in Uzbekistan, three people in the United States and six people in Cameroon have been linked to these products. A risk-based assessment of 254 manufacturing units and 112 public testing labs by the apex drug regulator found poor documentation and a wide range of deficiencies — in process and analytical validations, self-assessment, failure probe, internal quality review, testing of incoming raw material, infrastructure to avoid cross-contamination, professionally qualified staff and faulty design of manufacturing and testing areas.

The revised GMP guidelines

focus on quality control, proper documentation and IT backing to maintain the quality of medicines produced. It also creates a recall mechanism for drug manufacturing companies. "Recall operations shall be capable of being initiated, so as to effectively reach at the level of each distribution channel," said the notification dated December 28. The licensing authority also has to be informed of any intention to recall a product if it is suspected to be defective.

The new guidelines require companies to carry out regular quality reviews of all its products, verify consistency of the quality and the processes, thorough investigation of any deviation or suspected defect and implementation of any preventive actions. It also says that all changes that may affect the production or quality of the product must be validated first.

Companies now need to have GMP-related computerised systems, which ensure that there is no tampering of data related to the processes. The new schedule M also lists out the requirements for additional types of products, including biological products, agents with radioactive ingredients or plant-derived products.

### NIA attaches assets of Bishnoi gang members

**New Delhi:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday attached four assets allegedly belonging to members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The central agency said the seizures — three immovable properties and one SUV — were proceeds of terror and used for hatching terror plots and executing serious crimes.

"This action is another major step towards demolishing the terrorist-gangster-drug smuggler nexus in the country. The properties were attached in a coordinated action in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act," a spokesperson for the NIA said in a statement.

An official said they had made a presentation on Khalistan separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, but there was no discussion on him.

But this time, they have made a presentation on Pannu, another source said.

In August, a team of five NIA officers visited the US for the first time and recorded statements of security personnel and senior officials of the Indian Consulate in San Francisco.

They also collected evidence such as CCTV footage and shattered glass windows.

## NIA team heads to US: Attack on Indian Consulate, extradition of 26/11 accused on agenda

**MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6



Tahawwur Rana is an accused in 26/11 terror attack. File

A TEAM of four senior officers of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) would be going to the US on Saturday to meet FBI officials regarding various cases, including the attack on the Indian Consulate in San Francisco and the extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, a Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman, for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, US-based

gangster Darmanjot Singh Kahlon, who supplied weapons to eliminate Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala and Khalistan supporters who allegedly vandalised the Indian Consulate in San Francisco in March," a source said, requesting anonymity.

During his (Wray's) meeting at NIA headquarters, candid and wide-ranging discussions were held on a host of issues, including activities of terrorist-organ-

pated by NIA officials to discuss a range of issues including cases and evidence against Tahawwur Rana, a Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman, for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, US-based gangster Darmanjot Singh Kahlon, who supplied weapons to eliminate Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala and Khalistan supporters who allegedly vandalised the Indian Consulate in San Francisco and the extradition of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, a Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman, for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, US-based

gangster Darmanjot Singh Kahlon, who supplied weapons to eliminate Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala and Khalistan supporters who allegedly vandalised the Indian Consulate in San Francisco.

They also collected evidence such as CCTV footage and shattered glass windows.

"The attached properties include a flat at the Gomti Nagar Extension in Lucknow, which belonged to Vilas Singh. Two others in Bishanpura village in Punjab's Fazilka, owned by Dalip Kumar alias Dalip Bishnoi. Property belonging to Dalip Kumar was being used as a shelter for harbouring terrorist group members." ENS

The halo orbit is hundreds of

### How is a halo orbit around L1 point different from the Low Earth Orbit, where satellites are commonly inserted?

It's entirely different. The Low Earth Orbit (LEO), located at an altitude under 2,000 km is much smaller in diameter. Satellites and probes in the LEO make several orbits around the Earth within a day.

The halo orbit is hundreds of

thousands of kilometres larger in size and satellites moving in slow motion can typically take several months to complete one orbit. So, even if there are multiple missions in the halo orbit, they do not affect each other's operations. Another advantage of being at L1 is uninterrupted Sun viewing for extended periods.

### After the insertion, what is next?

Seeing the stability of the satellite, a majority of the instruments onboard Aditya have already started operations, though not continuously. Some of the instruments (on site observations) have remained turned on continuously and have been recording data. The X-ray payloads have monitored and captured the

Any efforts taken to strengthen the community of solar physicists in India?

In November, ARIES hosted a workshop 'Beyond Aditya L1 - Exploring the future of Indian Solar Physics from Space'. The community in India has already started discussions about the next solar mission from India along with the possible instruments.

There is consideration of missions to Lagrange point 5 or out of ecliptic orbit. We would also like a small satellite, like X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPOSat).

Anjali Marar works with the Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru

**Political motive': Ex-CM Baghel on ED naming him in chargesheet**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
RAIPUR, JANUARY 6

FORMER CHHATTISGARH Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has lashed out at the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for mentioning his name in its supplementary chargesheet (prosecution complaint), saying the move was part of a "political conspiracy" and the central agency was working "at the behest of its political masters".

The senior Congress leader alleged that the ED had "engineered the entire incident" and was "pressuring people" to give statements against him and his colleagues. His remarks came after the ED, in the supplementary chargesheet filed before a special PMLA court on January 1, said that a man arrested by the ED in connection with the Mahadev betting app case in Raipur in November had told the agency that he "stood by his original statement that he had allegedly been sent to deliver cash to Baghel". The chargesheet has been filed against five persons including Subham Soni, one of the promoters of 'Mahadev Online Book', and driver Asim Das.

Das, 38, was arrested on November 3, and the ED had seized Rs 5.39 crore from him. Das said in his statement to the ED that "Soni... had tasked Das to deliver Rs 5.39 crore to Baghel". The amount was part of "protection money" given by the Mahadev app accused to avoid his arrest.

Baghel wrote on X on Saturday, "The way the ED has written my name in its supplementary chargesheet, it is completely part of a political conspiracy."

## Tug at tail, a shower: How jumbo calf was reunited with herd in TN

**ARUN JANARDHANAN**  
CHENNAI, JANUARY 6

IN THE early hours of December 29, amidst the mist-wreathed highlands of Tamil Nadu's Anamalai Tiger Reserve, local tea plantation labourers spotted a lone elephant calf wandering near a bus stand. This serendipitous encounter set the stage for a five-hour rescue operation, until the calf was reunited with its mother and the herd.

"It was an estate vehicle driver who informed the forest department around 8:30 am," said A Manikandan, the forest range officer in charge of Manampallai Range in Anamalai Tiger Reserve who monitored the entire operation. "By the time we reached, people had tied its legs with a rope as it was a bit upset amid the crowd. We had no clue where it had come from, but our previous

day's elephant survey in the area gave the first clue about a herd spotted nearby." At the bus stand, near Pannimedu junction, a huge crowd had gathered. "We had to immediately move the calf to a quiet area to reduce the stress... We moved it to a quiet part of a tea estate, where the labourers were evacuated to ensure silence," said Ganesh Raghunathan, a 37-year-old forest conservationist and photographer with the Nature Conservation Foundation, who was at the spot.

Range officer Manikandan said it was the previous day's survey data, prepared by a team of biologists, guards, and vehicles for each zone, that played a key role in the rescue operation. The survey team assesses elephant movements and migration patterns and reports to higher-ups by 5 pm every day. Each herd has

names such as 'Padma Group' and 'Stephen Group' to help identification. When they spotted elephants near human settlements, forest officials visit ration shops in the area to alert them, as these shops are often targeted by the animals.

"This data includes details on calves, juvenile calves, and male and female elephants in each herd. We recognised the possible location of a herd spotted in the area and sent drones there as it had a calf the previous day. The drone footage showed that the calf was missing — it was almost certain that this one belonged to the same herd," Manikandan said.

The herd was located about 3 km away. "The calf's last meal was unknown, and at its age, it could only take mother's milk. Feeding it something like Cerelac could risk digestive issues. Making it walk for 3 km was impossible. It needed to be reunited quickly, as it was an unusually hot day. Each herd trans-

ported it in a small vehicle, then walked the last half kilometre," Manikandan said.

During the shifting operation, a crucial challenge was to ensure a human scent does not rub off on the herd. "Even a touch could lead the herd to reject the calf. We used ropes to control it. Luckily, a few metres near the shola (a lush patch of

tropical montane forest amidst undulating grasslands) where the herd was located, there was the Pannimedu river. We made it bathe in the river and covered it in sand and dirt to mask any human smell," he said. Elephants usually smear sand over their head and body to cool themselves and prevent mosquito bites.

It was around 1:30 pm that the team approached the herd's location. Hidden within the shola, the elephant herd was out of sight, yet perceptible. "It is a thick rainforest. Even if you are climbing up, you can't see where you are heading," conservationist Raghunathan said.

As the team reached a safe distance from the shola, they carefully untied the animal. "The next challenge was letting the mother know about the calf. To coax a cry from the young one, a call for its mother, we gently nudged its tail and elicited a loud, plaintive cry. The response was immediate and overwhelming. The entire herd, all 11 elephants, began trumpeting in unison. The sound was formidable, the kind that resonates deep within, a chorus of wild," Manikandan said.

Soon, the mother emerged, and the calf headed towards it. The two then trudged back into the shola. The forest team moni-

# Day after attack on ED team, its officials are booked in Bengal

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & ATRI MITRA

SANDESHKHALI, JANUARY 6

THE WEST Bengal Police Saturday registered three FIRs in connection with the attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials in Sandeshkhali area of North 24 Parganas district and booked the agency's officials for alleged "criminal trespass" and "intending to outrage a woman's modesty". The two other FIRs have been lodged against unknown persons, officials said.

On Friday, the probe agency's officials were attacked by a mob of men and women while the team had gone to search the house of TMC Zilla Parishad member Shahjahan Sheikh in connection with an alleged ration distribution scam.

According to police sources, one of the FIRs was lodged on the basis of a complaint filed by the caretaker of Sheikh's house, another on the basis of ED's complaint filed on Friday and the third was registered suo motu.

It is alleged in the complaint that the ED officials "attempted to force their way" into the TMC leader's residence "without showing any search warrant and in violation of the law", a source said.

The FIR against ED officials was registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 441 (criminal trespass), 379 (intention to commit theft) and 354



TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh's locked house in Sandeshkhali on Saturday. Partha Paul

(outraging a woman's modesty).

Officials said the other two FIRs were filed under IPC sections 147, 148, 149 (rioting) and 353 (assault on public servants).

"This is a very sensitive case. I cannot say anything about the FIRs. Anyway, presently I am outside the police station. So please don't call me," Officer in charge of Nyazat police station Subhasish Pramanik told *The Indian Express* over phone.

Calls made to Bashirhat police district SP J Thomas Saturday went unanswered. Sources added that though the police are yet to arrest anyone in connection with Friday's attack, three persons have been detained and are being interrogated.

Meanwhile, two ED officers, Ankur Gupta and Somnath Dutta, who were injured in Friday's alleged attack, were discharged from hospital in Kolkata. The third officer, Rajkumar Ram, who had sustained head injuries and was admitted to High Dependency Unit (HDU), is stable.

In a statement Friday, the ED had said a team of its officers reached Sheikh's house in Sandeshkhali in the morning. The house was locked and no one responded to calls. The ED alleged that Sheikh's "mobile (phone) location at that time indicated that he was inside" the house.

As the ED team waited, a large crowd, mostly supporters of Sheikh, gathered there and pushed away the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel accompanying the search team.

The crowd overpowered the of-

## WILL CUT OFF MY HEAD IF GRAFT PROVED: SHEIKH

**Kolkata:** TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh in a purported audio clip claimed the ED action was "political conspiracy". The voice can be heard saying: "Ami Shahjahan Sheikh bolchi (This is Shahjahan Sheikh speaking). I request party workers of Sandeshkhali to not be scared of ED or CBI. I am not connected to corruption or crime. I will cut my head off if anyone can prove it." ENS

ficers, vandalised their vehicles and blocked roads. The ED alleged that three of its officers were injured and their personal belongings and official items such as mobile phones, laptops and wallets were snatched.

### ED issues lookout notice for Sheikh

The ED issued a lookout notice for TMC Zilla Parishad member and the party convenor Shahjahan Sheikh and his four brothers on Saturday. Sources said that ED has alerted the Intelligence Bureau and Border Security Force indicating that Sheikh and his family "may try to sneak into neighbouring Bangladesh". **WITH PTI INPUTS**

## Declared dead week ago after identity mix-up, Odisha man succumbs to injuries in hospital

### ENS & PTI

BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 6

A MAN who was thought to have succumbed to burn injuries in an AC compressor blast at a private medical college in Bhubaneswar on December 30, was found alive and undergoing treatment at the same hospital a week later, died on Saturday. The wrong information about his death shocked his wife and she killed herself on January 1.

Dilip Samantray was initially declared dead because of misidentification. He was found alive and undergoing treatment at Hi-Tech Hospital on Thursday. The man, however, died on Saturday afternoon, said the hospital CEO, Smita Padhi. With Dilip's death, the toll in the AC compressor explosion at Hi-Tech Hospital has risen to three.

"We tried our best, but he couldn't be saved. The patient's heartbeat and oxygen level reduced drastically. As per the procedure, we will hand over the body to the police. If required, a DNA test

will be conducted. We will collect samples," Padhi told reporters.

The body of a contractual worker who died in the blast was incorrectly identified as that of Dilip, another worker, and handed over to his family, which cremated it. The incident happened at Hi-Tech Hospital where four staffers of an outsourcing agency were injured in the compressor blast. Two of the injured persons died while undergoing treatment, while two others were moved to the ICU of the hospital.

The hospital's CEO said after the blast, a staffer of the agency identified the injured persons and on the basis of the details given by them maintained the records.

"A person identified as Dilip Samantray (according to the records) died during the treatment on December 30 and as per protocol, we informed the police. His family members received the body after due procedures," Padhi told reporters on Friday.

On January 1, Dilip's wife Soumyashree Jena hanged herself after coming to know about her husband's death in the blast.

The hospital's CEO said after

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### BRIDGE

Dealer: East Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH		EAST	
♦ J7	♣ A642	♥ K52	♦ K7
♦ AK7	♦ K52	♦ AJQ5	♣ A642

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
TS ♠	3H ♥	4H ♦	pass
pass	pass	pass	pass

West leads the ten of spades and you win your ace, South dropping the king. What now?

It looks like you have a diamond trick and if only you could get your partner to lead a few clubs, you might get three of those. But that won't happen. Your partner is not getting in on this hand. It is up to you. What play, if any, might give you a chance to set 4H?

One thing is clear. South, when he gets in, will draw trump and will finesse a diamond into East. At this point East knows it is all over unless he has some tricks to cash.

If East has only one club to cash, 4H will make. What East has to do is win the ace of spades and lead clubs away from his AQJ. This feels terribly wrong, but if South has two diamonds and if he finesses into your hand, you may be able to take two club tricks. You do know that declarer has enough tricks if you don't get after yours, so this play is not as silly as it initially looks.

The West hand: S-10 9 5 3 H-4 D-9 8 5 C-10 7 6

The South hand: S-K-H-Q-J10 9 8 6 3 D-6 3-C-2 8 2

On the actual layout, this defense gives you an excellent chance of success.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If East plays the ace and queen of clubs, losing to the king, declarer has a nasty play available. He can ruff a spade in his hand, draw tricks ending in dummy, and then lead club toward his hand. East can not play that he has the ten and can get in with it. A lovely hand for the declarer.

Dealer: South Vulnerable: East/West

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ 10 9 8	♦ AK75	♥ K95	♦ K62
♥ A82	♦ A873	♦ K62	♣ Q93

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	pass	pass

The opening lead by West is the queen of diamonds. You are South and declarer. You count your sure tricks and find only six. You need three more tricks to make your contract. Where can you find the three needed tricks?

### JUMBLED WORDS

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

— is a vast early warning system - Norman Cousins (7)

FYTOR



DIMES



The opening lead by West is the queen of diamonds. You are South and declarer. You count your sure tricks and find only six. You need three more tricks to make your contract. Where can you find the three needed tricks?

## SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2459

### QUICK CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Utter suddenly (7)
- 5. Caused by motion (7)
- 8. Figure of speech (5)
- 9. One who fears foreigners (9)
- 11. Acting like a coward (10,3)
- 13. Small seal (6)
- 16. Attacked or assaulted (8)
- 18. Private (8)
- 19. Decimal system? (6)
- 24. Above reproach (13)
- 26. Take it : be submissive, in a way? (5,4)
- 27. Not our (5)
- 28. Sanctuaries (7)
- 29. Cry/made during fox-hunting (5-2)

### DOWN

- 1. Attracts or lures (7)
- 2. Shutting (7)
- 3. More or less vertical (5)
- 4. Blending, mingling (6)
- 5. Benevolence (8)
- 6. A fish related to salmon (5)
- 7. Anand's forte (5)
- 12. Of Indian or local origin (4)
- 14. Understanding response (1,3)
- 15. Wearing (7)
- 17. Satirises (8)
- 20. Heist (7)
- 21. Goodbye (7)
- 22. Hard, richly figured wood (6)
- 23. Greek letter (5)
- 24. Consolidate or merge (5)
- 25. Monopoly piece (5)

### CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS

- 1. One quit bad coaching for a dish of dumplings (7)
- 5. Topping Persian fairy to scold (7)
- 8. Reckoned total, and included an extra 500 (5)
- 9. Terms of admittance (9)
- 11. Agnostic? Goner, mixing in these groups! (13)
- 13. The farewell it takes such an age to say (2-4)
- 16. Period of maritime decline (3,5)
- 18. Substitutes for the top people in French politics? (8)
- 19. Junior in foreign office cross when a state article is dropped (3,3)
- 24. Spare lockers? (9,4)
- 26. Acutely distressing work for a farmer (9)
- 27. Put the fat on fire for a set turn, perhaps? (5,2)
- 28. Capricious means to provide protection (7)
- 29. Bridge opponents and bridge partners are to become entangled (7)
- 30. Looks briefly at the note on the old weapons (7)
- 32. Making a row during the examination getting you a third or fourth possibly (7)
- 33. Detective was endlessly in the drink! (5)
- 34. Assail the devil with a faulty gun (6)
- 35. Ten points adrift in finding the place (8)
- 36. What this is all about! (5)
- 37. Symbolically N and H, for instance (5)
- 38. At least three times how important one is to be there (4,3)
- 39. Live with a posh boyfriend (4)
- 40. Changed the abridged order and did some mining? (4)
- 41. A proton, perhaps, takes no charges? (3,1,3)
- 42. Contended fire had broken out inside, which was confirmed (8)
- 43. A division in a poem about a ruse being overturned (7)

### CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Species, 5 Mykonos, 9 Rolls, 10 Enforcing, 11 Argentina, 12 Akela, 13 Motor, 15 Exchange, 18 Condenser, 19 Artic, 21 Utal, 23 Respected, 25 Takes over, 26 Garri, 27 Creased, 28 Wheeble Down, 1 Sarcasm, 2 Enlighten, 3 Isbn, 4 Specimens, 5 Mafia, 6 Kamataka, 7 Naive, 8 Signals, 13 Re-enlists, 16 Corkscrew, 17 Gets tired, 18 Caustic, 20 Codeine, 22 Peles, 23 Raved, 24 Eagle

CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Request, 5 Mustang, 9 Arabs, 10 Not too bad, 11 Hairshirt, 12 Enni, 13 Grief, 15 Severally, 18 Mad Hatter, 19 Bible, 21 Godot, 23 Bolstered, 25 Harrowing, 26 Yetis, 27 Turns in, 28 Thunder Down, 1 Roadhog, 2 Qualified, 3 East's, 4 Thunder, 5 Motet, 6 Stone Crabs, 7 Alban, 8 Giddily, 14 Fractions, 15 Very-light, 17 Liberated, 18 Mugshot, 20 Enduser, 22 Durer, 23 Brian, 24 Toyoy

### Solutions to 2457

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Species, 5 Mykonos, 9 Rolls, 10 Enforcing, 11 Argentina, 12 Akela, 13 Motor, 15 Exchange, 18 Condenser, 19 Artic, 21 Utal, 23 Respected, 25 Takes over, 26 Garri, 27 Creased, 28 Wheeble Down, 1 Sarcasm, 2 Enlighten, 3 Isbn, 4 Specimens, 5 Mafia, 6 Kamataka, 7 Naive, 8 Signals, 13 Re-enlists, 16 Corkscrew, 17 Gets tired, 18 Caustic, 20 Codeine, 22 Peles, 23 Raved, 24 Eagle

CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Request, 5

Across  
THE AISLE

P CHIDAMBARAM

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The policies that guide the government are of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.

Even among the rich, the policies favour concentration of wealth and oligopolies if not monopolies. I think that the New Year may make some people happy but will leave major sections of the people unhappy

**THE HAPPY PEOPLE**

The government's economic policies lean toward low direct taxes, high and often oppressive indirect taxes coupled with coercive measures, capital investment in hard infrastructure like roads, railways, ports and airports (with insuf-

THIS IS the first column in calendar 2024 and I renew my good wishes for a Happy New Year. Happiness is a sum of many parts. There are 142 crore individuals in India belonging to different sections of the people and I have wondered who is happy and who is not.

In recent days, I have read a spate of articles that vociferously endorsed the government's claim that *everybody is happy*. Because, the authors claimed, India had witnessed *unprecedented* economic growth and the benefits have flowed to every section of the people. I do not deny that the economy has registered growth but it is certainly not unprecedented. The 'golden period of growth' was the three UPA years between 2005–2008 when GDP grew by 9.5, 9.6 and 9.3 per cent a year. Under Prime Minister Modi, the economy has grown in the last nine years by an average rate of 5.7 per cent. Adding the estimated growth of 7.3 per cent in 2023–24, the average rate will still be 5.9 per cent. That is *not* unprecedented or spectacular; it is satisfactory growth, but neither well-spread nor sufficient.

**THE DARK SIDE**

ficient allocation for education and healthcare) and subsidies to certain sections like women. The satisfactory growth rate has made some sections happy. I can count the satisfied sections: big and medium corporates; high net worth individuals; bankers; stock market investors, traders and brokers; purchasers of distressed assets; software professionals; big traders; professionals like judges, chartered accountants, doctors and lawyers; university and college teachers; government employees; rich agriculturists; and money lenders.

**THE DARK SIDE**

The dark side of the picture is that many sections of the people are left behind – some are even left out – and these sections account for the vast majority of the people. The first section comprises *82 crore Indians who are given free ration of 5 kg per person per month*. The free ration scheme is not a badge of honour to mark economic progress or prosperity. Free ration is a sign of widespread malnourishment and, in many places, of hunger. Why are over half the families in the country unable to afford staples like rice or wheat? The answer is because of low income and/or unemployment. Government has no policy to address these twin burning issues.

MGNREGS was intended to address the issue of low family income, and to supplement it, but the government's antipa-

thy to the scheme has been evident from the very beginning. Since April 2022, the government has deleted 7.6 crore workers from the list of registered workers. Of the current lists, over one-third of the registered workers (8.9 crore) and one-eighth of the active workers (1.8 crore) are ineligible due to the introduction of the Aadhaar Based Payment System. Absent support from MGNREGS, how are these individuals and families coping with life? Life is extremely difficult for them and, certainly, they are not happy.

**WITHOUT JOB, WITH INFLATION**

The other major section that is unhappy is *people without jobs*. The government no longer talks about creating jobs. It believes that it can delude the people by talking about the reported increase in self-employment. Self-employment, in a country where the average number of years that a child spends in school is 7–8 years, and with no skill training, means unemployment. The so-called self-employed young man or woman gets work irregularly and at a wage/income that is flat or lower net of inflation (compared to regular employment). There are no other benefits or security. Youth unemployment rate is 10.0 per cent and among graduates under the age of 25 years the rate is 42 per cent. Surely, they are not happy.

Another set of unhappy people are *those hit by inflation*. That includes everyone except the top 10 per cent that owns 60 per cent of the nation's wealth and earns 57 per cent of the national income. The average inflation in 2022 was 6.7 per cent. In 2023, inflation breached the upper limit of the 2–6 per cent band in four of the 12 months. In November 2023, inflation was 5.55 per cent. Food inflation, currently, is 7.7 per cent. According to the RBI's monthly bulletin of December 2023, "inflation will likely remain elevated relative to targets." Inflation has resulted in reduction in consumption and household savings, and household liabilities have increased. The government has abdicated its responsibility to control inflation and left the task to the RBI. It is averse to reducing indirect taxes (to lessen the burden of prices on the poor) because, I suspect, it is not sure if it will be able to meet the fiscal deficit target.

The modest growth achieved in the Modi years has not been shared by large sections of the people because the policies of the government have failed to deal with inflation and unemployment. Besides, the policies that guide the government are of *the rich, by the rich and for the rich*. Even among the rich, the policies favour concentration of wealth and oligopolies if not monopolies. I think that the New Year may make some people happy but will leave major sections of the people unhappy.

## Fifth

## COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter@tavleen\_singh

**Ayodhya as Hindutva's symbol**

IN THIS first week of 2024 if there is one thing on which there seems general agreement in India it is that the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is the most important political issue. The consecration ceremony is two weeks away, but it is hard to find a news bulletin that does not lead with the latest developments in the temple. Every minor detail of the ceremony is discussed repeatedly from who will be seated in the sanctum sanctorum and how the puja will be conducted to the Prime Minister's decision to fast on that day. Breathless TV pundits report that he always fasts before religious ceremonies because 'you have to be pure, really pure'. Adding that he is good at keeping long fasts since he is in the habit of living on water for nine days during Navratri.

Even those who do not approve of temples becoming political seem gripped by the religious fervour that has spread everywhere just now. On social media platforms people not usually famous for piety are busy posting their favorite Ram bhajans. And from Ayodhya come new pictures every day of the Saryu River and its ghats glistening in the light of laser shows. The excitement reached such a hysterical pitch that the Prime Minister personally appealed to people not to come to Ayodhya on January 22, but to light up their own homes instead on that day and celebrate as if it were Diwali. Having made the temple the most important political issue in the country Modi himself took off to Lakshadweep for carefully choreographed meanderings and musings on pristine beaches and for a spot of snorkeling. It was 'exhilarating', he said in a post on social media.

As someone who has seen the harm caused in countries where religion becomes a political ideology, I have watched the events in Ayodhya unfold with growing concern. But you cannot argue with the box office so I concede that Modi understands better than most political pundits and politicians that there is a rage over what happened in Ayodhya 500 years ago that can be tapped into for political purposes.

As someone who travelled on L K Advani's chariot 23 years ago, when it set off from Somnath for Ayodhya to demand a temple where the Babri Masjid stood, he knows how deeply Hindus feel about the desecration of Ram's birthplace. When the Rath yatra arrived in Delhi, I was among the reporters covering the story and remember that on one side of Advani sat Pramod Mahajan and on the other Narendra Modi.

The chariot was surrounded by people dressed as characters from the Ramayana and religious songs blared out of loudspeakers. Riots followed in the wake of the chariot because among those in costume were lots of rabblerousers and fanatics who were determined to make ordinary Muslims pay for what an Islamic marauder did many centuries ago. At the time of Advani's Rath yatra in 1990, moderate BJP supporters justified it as a necessary response to the divisions among Hindu castes caused by V P Singh implementing the Mandal Commission report. The eventual result was the demolition of the Babri Masjid and soon there will be a fine temple where it once stood.

There is not the smallest doubt that all this will work well for the BJP politically when the Lok Sabha elections come. But the question we need to ask is how well this will work for the future of India. Will hostilities between Hindus and Muslims deepen? Will jihadism increase? Will Hindutva now become an essential ingredient of India's political story? Will demands for the demolition of mosques in Mathura and Varanasi become more violent? Nobody has the answers to these questions. And no political party has so far come up with an idea or ideology that would be an appropriate response to Hindutva.

The man seen as Modi's main challenger has plans to take off on another Bharat Jodo Yatra in the week before Modi goes to Ayodhya for the consecration of the temple. Rahul Gandhi's new idea, if it can be called new at all, is a caste census across the country so that we can, in his view, ensure that those castes whose population is highest get the highest share of political power and national resources. Was this not exactly what the implementation of the Mandal Commission report sought to do? If things did not work out well then, why should they now?

As I write these words, I am overcome by a deepening sense of déjà vu. With one crucial difference. Narendra Modi has introduced into his version of Hindutva ideas of development, modernity, and progress. When he talks about the religious fervour created by the temple in Ayodhya he explains that it is a symbol of India's ancient heritage that he seeks to preserve so that a younger generation of Indians do not forget. This is a better reason than I have heard for openly mixing religion with politics, but it remains a mix that has ruined countries like Iran and Pakistan.

We must hope that at some point Modi remembers that this potion of aggressive nationalism infused with religious passion could end up impeding India's march to modernity instead of speeding us onwards. Meanwhile, who am I to say one word against the temple in Ayodhya, at a time when Ram himself seems to have become a player.

**Worli riots: How violence killed a Dalit movement**

Dalitality

SHWETA AHIRE

history  
**HEADLINE**  
DEEPTIMAN TIWARY



ON JANUARY 22, as a 51-inch stone idol of Ram Lalla is consecrated in the newly built Ram Temple at Ayodhya, it will replace a much smaller metal deity, of nine inches, that has reigned over the premises for the past 74 years. It was in 1949 that this idol of Lord Ram first made an "appearance" in the now demolished Babri Masjid of Ayodhya, changing the course of India and its politics in the decades to come.

This "miraculous appearance" of the Lord has been as disputed in history as the structure in which it was placed. For the Sangh Parivar, and later the BJP, the "appearance" of the idol on the night of December 22–23, 1949, under the central dome of the Babri Mosque, was a "divine" occurrence and a signal from none other than Lord Ram to Hindus to reclaim "his birthplace". Till date, the Sangh Parivar celebrates the day as Prakatotsav Diwas.

However, investigators and historians have believed it to be an elaborate conspiracy to whip up communal passions in a newly partitioned India, create an emotional ground for making a claim over the property and culturally connect Hindus beyond Ayodhya to the dispute.

According to the inquiry report prepared by the Liberhan Commission following the demolition of the Babri Mosque, the original Ram Lalla idol was placed under the dome of the mosque by Abhiram Das (variously spelt as Abhay Ram Das), a sadhu of the Nirnmoji Akhara. The report has quoted the FIR registered at the time to record how Das, along with others, placed the idol in the dead of the night on December 22, 1949.

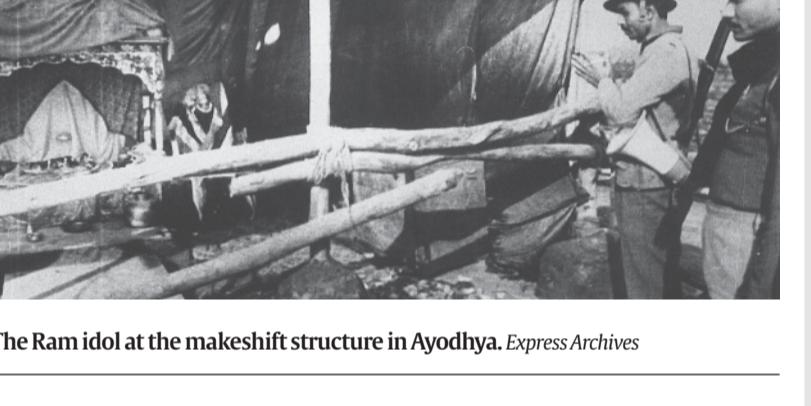
"No noticeable event took place between 1947 and the 23rd December, 1949. On that date, idols of Ram Chander Ji (Ram Lalla) with inscription of 'Sri Ram' were installed in Garb Grah. As a consequence, an FIR was registered against Abhay Ram, Sideshwari Rao, Shiv Charan Dass and 60 others," the report has noted.

According to the report, Ram Dubey, officer-in-charge of the police station concerned, recorded the following FIR: "At about 7 AM I reached Janam Bhoomi, I came to know from the constable Mata Pershad who was on duty, that in the night 50 to 60 persons had entered the mosque by breaking lock, scaled the walls, established the idols of Shri Ram Lalla, and written with geru and yellow colours on the wall 'Shri Ram'. Constable Hans Raj who was present on duty at that time told

"He once told me that when the Babri Mosque was demolished, he was again there. Someone rescued the idol from under the mosque and put it in his lap. The idol was then placed back at the birthplace of Shri Ram," VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal told *The Indian Express*.

Sharma joined the BJP and won the East Delhi Lok Sabha seat twice in 1991 and 1996. He died in 2022.

This idol, meanwhile, was placed in a

**Ayodhya's old Ram idol: A contested history**

The Ram idol at the makeshift structure in Ayodhya. Express Archives

them not to act in that manner but they failed to listen to him. The PAC force which was posted there was called, but by the time it reached there, they had already entered the mosque."

The Commission, however, clarified it has not gone into the veracity of the claims made in the FIR or those by the Hindus. It said it "need not go into the question whether idols were installed or they had miraculously appeared as some of hardcore fundamentalists and the protagonists of the movement claimed during the course of their evidence".

It noted, however, that "Puja and Bhajan were started" the same night by the Hindu side inside the mosque and even though the Centre and the state government took exception to the event, the idol was not removed.

According to sources in the VHP, its life-long member B L Sharma, who served in the armed forces, claimed to be present at the site when the idol "appeared" under the dome of the mosque. Sharma claimed to have seen a light coming from inside the mosque at 3 am. On further inspection, it was found the light was coming from the idol of Ram Lalla.

"He once told me that when the Babri Mosque was demolished, he was again there. Someone rescued the idol from under the mosque and put it in his lap. The idol was then placed back at the birthplace of Shri Ram," VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal told *The Indian Express*.

Sharma joined the BJP and won the East Delhi Lok Sabha seat twice in 1991 and 1996. He died in 2022.

This idol, meanwhile, was placed in a

make-shift structure under a *tirpal* where it stayed for about 28 years until after the November 9, 2019, Supreme Court verdict that gave the site to the Hindu side. On March 25, 2020, the idol was moved to the make-shift temple — the deity's wooden throne now replaced by a silver one.

In 1989, the idol, as Ram Lalla Virajman, would go on to become the chief litigant from the Hindu side in the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi title suit in the Supreme Court.

The Liberhan Commission Report, however, suggested the "appearance" of the idol may have been part of a conspiracy in which even the local bureaucracy was involved. It particularly picked out the role played by then DM of Faizabad KK Nayar.

It noted that Nayar had then said "the surreptitious removal of idols, though possible, would have raised a question of administrative consequences, and administrative bankruptcy and tyranny".

The Commission, however, noted that post 1949, Nayar and his wife and even his employee contested election on the ticket of Hindu organisations. Nayar was elected to the fourth Lok Sabha from Bahraich in UP on a Bharatiya Jana Sangh ticket, while his wife won the Kaisarganj constituency. He died in 1977.

"The stance adopted at the time, apart from the refusal to remove the idols, would constitute a clear signal that a war had started brewing in the minds of the people and diagonally opposite views had started to be formed on whether the disputed structure was a mosque or a temple. The seeds of future discord were sown by the District Magistrate," the Report said.

**Sindoor, mangalsutra or feminism?**She  
SAIDADRIJA  
ROYCHOWDHURY

late-night conversations with your single female friends in their 30s, judging all the women who, in our opinion, were making "anti-feminist" choices by posting endless photos of their wedding on Instagram.

Then there was the matter of the wedding rituals I had agreed to and ones that were a complete no-no for me. My father, a rebel himself, had already struck off kanyadaan (the ritual of giving away the bride) from the list. In fact, he even made a proud proclamation about the same on the wedding card. It did not take much to convince my parents to keep the ceremony less than one-hour long, but the two rituals that just could not be done away with were the applying of sindoor (vermillion) and the tying of the mangalsutra.

The fact that these are symbols of patriarchy passed down through generations of

women and should be done away with is something that the feminist in me had told myself for the longest time. Yet, there I was, a day after the wedding, standing in front of the mirror in my in-laws' house, wearing a bright saree and bangles, with a touch of vermillion on my forehead and the mangalsutra around my neck. Contrary to what my feminist instincts told me, I was shocked to see myself gloating at my reflection and thinking that I looked rather nice.

Over the next few days, I found myself wearing the sindoor and mangalsutra almost every day. Not that anyone asked me to do that. In fact, my mother-in-law and sister-in-law had very politely, or perhaps out of caution, told me that I need not feel pressured to wear the sindoor. But I had begun to quite enjoy the whole process of draping a saree, applying vermillion and

gazing at myself in the mirror.

And yet, it was impossible for me to ignore the fact that these standards of beauty had been largely defined by what I had seen my mother, aunts and grandmothers do as I was growing up. Finally, I was one of them, basking in privileges exclusive to married women in our society.

As I returned to Delhi with my husband, and back to the world of journalists and academics that I inhabit, the choice of whether or not to wear these symbols of marriage tormented me. Was I not being a feminist by choosing to wear the sindoor? Or could the mere act of wearing the mangalsutra mean that I was giving in to patriarchal norms? Why could I not feel happy about wearing the sindoor and the mangalsutra, and still be true to my feminist beliefs? Or should I just wear them to

prove a point to the feminists waiting to judge me?

As my head throbbed with these questions, I realised that Delhi winter was a way not ideal for wearing a saree everyday. The sindoor automatically fell out of favour since I did not think it teamed up well with Western wear. The mangalsutra continues to hang around my neck, much to the surprise of my friends and colleagues. Perhaps the onset of warmer weather and the return of ethnic wear will make me want to apply the sindoor again. Who knows?

Meanwhile, my mother, during a recent video chat, was quick to point out: "Why have you not applied the sindoor?"

National Editor Shalini Langer curates the She Said Column

NEW DELHI MUST PREPARE FOR LONG-TERM SHIPPING DISRUPTIONS: GTRI

# Freight rates have doubled due to Red Sea disruptions: Official

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

FREIGHT RATES to Europe — India's second largest export destination — via the Red Sea region have almost doubled due to rising attacks along the crucial shipping route, a senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

This comes after global shipping giant Maersk on Friday decided to extend its diversion of vessels from the Red Sea for the "foreseeable" future, sparking fears of a sharp rise in freight and insurance cost for Indian products.

"Multiple things are getting mixed here. Normally, the freight rates range from \$500 to \$600 through this route to Europe. But the peak season which is between January to March goes up to \$1,500. Exporters have informed that this rate has gone to \$2,000. Over and above there (war risk) surcharges being added which is taking the freight rates to nearly \$3,000," the official said.



India faces substantial economic and security risks from any disruption in Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. File

*The Indian Express* had earlier reported that exports of low-value products such as textile and agriculture could get hit as exporters are holding back the consignments due to rising freight cost. This comes at a time when Indian textile exports have been on the decline due to weak demand in the West.

Meanwhile, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that New Delhi must prepare for

long term shipping disruptions at the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.

"India's approach should include looking for alternative trade routes that bypass the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, negotiating contracts for oil and liquified natural gas with alternate suppliers, offering humanitarian aid to Yemen, negotiating freight with international shipping companies, and paying part of increased insurance expenses," GTRI said.

India, heavily reliant on the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait for crude oil and LNG imports and trade with key regions, faces substantial economic and security risks from any disruption in this area, the think tank said, stating that approximately 65 per cent of India's crude oil imports in FY 2022-23, valued at \$105 billion, from countries like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and others, likely passed through the Suez Canal.

"For overall merchandise trade with Europe and North Africa, about 50 per cent of imports and 60 per cent of exports, totaling \$113 billion, might have used this route. The conflict has necessitated India to consider alternative routes, such as going around Africa via the Cape of Good Hope, which could lead to increased energy costs. India might look to diversify its sources of crude oil and LNG, and explore alternative trade routes to reduce dependency on the conflict-prone Red Sea passage," the report said.

This conflict is leading to increased shipping costs (40-60 per cent) and delays due to rerouting (upto 20 days more), higher insurance premiums (15-20 per cent), and potential cargo loss from piracy and attacks, it added.

Asia-to-North Europe rates more than doubled to above \$4,000 per 40-foot container this week, with Asia-to-Mediterranean prices climbing to \$5,175, *Reuters* reported citing Freightos, a booking and payments platform for international freight. Moreover, some carriers have announced rates above \$6,000 per 40-foot container for Mediterranean shipments starting mid-January, and surcharges of \$500 to as much as \$2,700 per container could make all-in prices even higher, Judah Levine, Freightos' head of research, as per the *Reuters* report.

While rates have spiked, they remain far below 2021's pandemic-fueled record highs of \$14,000 per 40-foot container for Asia to North Europe and the Mediterranean and \$22,000 for Asia to North America's East Coast.

## CRUDE WATCH

## OIL PRICES SETTLE HIGHER

Oil prices settled higher on Friday as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken began a week-long sweep through the Middle East in an attempt to contain regional tensions stoked by the Israel-Hamas conflict. *REUTERS*

# DGCA orders Indian carriers to inspect emergency exits on Boeing 737 MAX-8 planes

SUKALP SHARMA  
NEW DELHI JANUARY 6

AVIATION SAFETY regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Saturday directed Akasa Air, Air India Express, and SpiceJet to conduct a "one-time inspection" of emergency exits on all Boeing 737 MAX-8 aircraft in their fleet by Sunday noon as an "abundant precautionary measure" following an incident involving an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX-9 in the United States (US).

At present, over 40 Boeing 737 MAX-8 planes are in operation across these three carriers in India, while there are no 737 MAX-9 aircraft in the fleet of any Indian airline.

"Pursuant to the Alaska Airlines incident involving Boeing 737-9 MAX aircraft, there have been no inputs/guidance from Boeing so far. None of the Indian air operators have Boeing 737-9 MAX as part of their fleet yet.

However, as an abundant precautionary measure, DGCA has directed all the Indian air operators to carry out a one-time inspection of the emergency exits immediately on all Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft currently operating as part of their fleet," a top DGCA official said. The DGCA asked for the inspections to be held during the aircraft's night halts so that flight schedules are not affected.

The carriers said that they are in touch with Boeing to get more information on the Alaska Airlines incident. They said that they will comply with the DGCA's directive on the one-time inspection of the aircraft's night halts so that flight schedules are not affected.

The carriers said that they are in touch with Boeing to get more information on the Alaska Airlines incident. They said that they will comply with the DGCA's directive on the one-time inspection of the aircraft's night halts so that flight schedules are not affected.

"Following tonight's event on Flight 1282, we have decided to take the precautionary step of temporarily grounding our fleet of 65 Boeing 737-9 aircraft. Each aircraft will be returned to service only after completion of full maintenance and safety inspections.

We anticipate all inspections will be completed in the next few days," Ben Minicucci, chief executive officer of Alaska Airlines, said.



Alaska Airlines plane's outer section, including a window, fell off mid-air on Friday. Reuters

in a statement after the incident.

"We are working with Boeing and regulators to understand what occurred tonight, and will share updates as more information is available. The NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board of the US) is investigating this event and we will fully support their investigation," Minicucci said.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Boeing said, "We are aware of the incident involving Alaska Airlines Flight #AS1282. We are working to gather more information and are in contact with our airline customer. A Boeing technical team stands ready to support the investigation". The incident comes a few days after Boeing asked 737 MAX operators to carry out inspections after a loose bolt was found in the rudder control system of one of the planes. Rudders are vertical flight control surfaces on the tail of the aircraft and are primarily used to change the airplane's yaw, or vertical axis rotation.

"We are aware of the recent incident involving a Boeing aircraft of Alaska Air. The aircraft involved is a different variant from the B737-8 operated by Air India Express. We are in touch with Boeing for more information regarding this, as well as with our regulators and will comply with any advisory," an Air India Express spokesperson said.

An Akasa Air spokesperson said, "Even though the incident has occurred with another airline in the USA, we are in contact with the aircraft manufacturer and regulators to proactively monitor developments and will follow any guidance issued by them. We confirm that, at present, Akasa Air does not have any 737 Max-9 aircraft in its fleet which was the aircraft type involved in the incident".

## VinFast to invest \$2 bn in Tamil Nadu for integrated EV facility

SAJAN CKUMAR  
CHENNAI, JANUARY 6

VINFAST, VIETNAM'S leading electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer, has committed a total investment of up to \$2 billion for an integrated electric vehicle facility in Tamil Nadu. The company inked an MoU with the Tamil Nadu government on the eve of Global Investor Meet (GIM), under which VinFast will invest \$500 million for the first phase of the project, spanning five years from the commencement date.

Tran Mai Hoa, deputy CEO of sales and marketing, VinFast Global, said in a statement: "The MoU demonstrates VinFast's strong commitment to the sustainable development and vision of a zero-emission transportation future."

"We believe that investing in Tamil Nadu will not only bring considerable economic benefits to both parties, but will also help accelerate the green energy transition in India and the region," Hoa added.

VinFast—a member of VinGroup—owns a state-of-the-art automotive manufacturing complex with globally leading scalability that boasts up to 90 per cent automation in Hai Phong, Vietnam. **FE**

The establishment of VinFast's integrated electric vehicle facility in Tamil Nadu is anticipated to generate approximately 3,000 employment opportunities lo-



## FM SITHARAMAN IN SIKKIM

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman attended the Credit Outreach Programme in Gangtok on Saturday. @nsitharamanoffc

## HDFC Bank loan book up at ₹24.69 lk cr in Q3

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

PRIVATE SECTOR lender HDFC Bank on Friday said its loan book increased to ₹24.69 lakh crore in the December quarter as against ₹15.2 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

The figures for the period ended December 31 include the operations of erstwhile HDFC Ltd, which amalgamated with and into HDFC Bank on July 1, 2023 and hence are not comparable with those of the corresponding period of the previous year, the bank said in a regulatory filing.

As per the bank's internal busi-

ness classification, domestic retail loans grew around 111 per cent over December 31, 2022 and around 3 per cent over September 30, 2023.

The bank's commercial and rural banking loans grew around 31.5 per cent over December 31, 2022 and around 6.5 per cent over September 30, 2023.

## Govt to bring more products under quality norm, says Piyush Goyal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

CONSUMER AFFAIRS Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said the government will bring more products under the mandatory quality norm as India moves towards becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing virtually the 77th foundation day of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Goyal said complying with high quality stan-

dards in products and services will help India achieve high goals and become a developed nation. Towards this direction, the BIS should become an ambassador of quality standards. "It should not just become an adopter of standards, but should be a pioneer of standards," he said. That apart, the BIS should frame quality standards comparable to international standards wherever possible. "For example in products like lift, air filters and medical devices, I think India can be a front-runner and set

international standards." He also urged for much greater stakeholder engagement for making quality standards and asked the industry to be more demanding to set labs for testing the quality.

Hailing the BIS efforts in creating a quality conscious nation, the minister said bringing more products under the mandatory compliance of quality norms issued through the Quality Control Order (QCO) has ensured availability of quality products/services to the consumers.

## BRIEFLY

### Unicommerce files draft papers with Sebi to raise funds via IPO

New Delhi: E-commerce focussed IT firm Unicommerce has filed preliminary papers with capital market regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The issue is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) aggregating up to 2.98 crore equity shares by the selling shareholders, according to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) filed with Sebi. Under the OFS, SB Investment Holdings (UK) Ltd, an affiliate of Japan's SoftBank, will offload 1.61 crore shares, promoter AceVector Limited (formerly known as Snapdeal Limited) will sell up to 1.14 crore shares and B2 Capital Partners will be selling up to 22 lakh shares. **PTI**

### Titan reports 22% revenue growth in December quarter

New Delhi: Leading jewellery and watchmaker Titan on Friday said it has registered a revenue growth of 22 per cent in the December quarter. During the October-December period, it added 90 stores across verticals, taking the group's retail presence to 2,949 stores, according to a Quarterly Update. **PTI**

### KALYANA KARNATAKA ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION Stores & Purchase Department, Central Offices, Sarig-Sadanam, Main Road, Kalaburagi-585 102. Tel. & Fax No. 08472-260502, Mobile No. 77606 86172 (COSP), 77609 92029 (S.O.). No. KKT/CO/COSP/09/2023-24

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER (THROUGH KPP MODE ONLY)

Tenders through KPP portal (pre-qualification & commercial) are invited for supply of following items.

No. & date	Tender nomenclature	Value	Last date for online submission
G-25/ 06.01.24	1000 * 20 Radial TTF sets. Tubeless tyres, Extra Tubes & Flaps	Rs. 20.00 Cr.	16.01.2024
G-26/ 06.01.24	Supply of Automotive Bulbs	Rs. 48.80 lakhs	23.01.2024
A-27/ 06.01.24	Supply of Head Lamp Assemblies & Accessories	Rs. 212.00 lakhs	09.02.2024
A-28/ 06.01.24	Supply of Gaskets	Rs. 187.00 lakhs	23.01.2024

All the details of Tender, Registration, Tender form documents etc. are available at <https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in> Mail to [cospnkrkt@gmail.com](mailto:cospnkrkt@gmail.com) or [support@eprochelpdesk.com](mailto:support@eprochelpdesk.com) for further information if required. Further, any addendum / corrigendum related to changes in terms and conditions of tender, specification and calendar of events etc. will be uploaded only through KPP portal.

Sd/- Controller of Stores and Purchases (Tender Inviting Authority)

DIPR/Kalaburagi/649/KSMC&A/2023-24

## CORRIGENDUM

## THE SPECIAL OFFICER AND COMPETENT AUTHORITY, (UNDER KPIDFE - IMA &amp; OTHER SCAM)

3rd Floor, Podium Block, V.V Tower, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-560001

## NOTICE/INVITATION FOR E-AUCTION FOR MOBILE ITEMS

POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CHANDIGARH CORRIGENDUM						
Ref: Global Tender Enquiry Notice No. PI(EP)/23-24/G/03 Following changes are made:-						
Sr. No	Equipment/Item Name	Original Bid submission Date	Revised Bid Submission Date	Original Bid Opening Date	Revised Bid Opening Date	Dept. Name
05	Laparoscopic Surgery Set with High Definition Camera for ATC	06.01.2024	13.01.2024	08.01.2024	15.01.2024	General Surgery
06	Laparoscopic Surgery Set with High Definition Camera	08.01.2024	15.01.2024	09.01.2024	16.01.2024	General Surgery
13	ECHO & USG Machine on Buy Back	09.01.2024	18.01.2024	10.01.2024	19.01.2024	Pediatrics
15	MSK USG Unit for Intraoperative Radiology on Buy Back Basis	09.01.2024	17.01.2024	10.01.2024	18.01.2024	Radiodiagnosis
16	256 Slice CT Scanner for R.No 9 Main Department Nehru Hospital (on buy back)	10.01.2024	17.01.2024	11.01.2024	18.01.2024	Radiodiagnosis
19	Integrated Automated Charting System upgradable for ICU Monitoring System	10.01.2024	18.01.2024	11.01.2024	19.01.2024	CTVS
23	Laparoscopic Surgery Set with High Definition Camera	11.01.2024				

TOP OF THE  
WORLD

Rishi Sunak and Akshata Murty. Twitter

UNITED KINGDOM  
Opp raises query on Sunak wife's liquidated firm

London: UK's Opposition Labour Party has got into campaigning mode for an expected general election later this year, by raising questions over his wife Akshata Murty's recently liquidated investment venture. Labour's national campaign coordinator and shadow minister, Pat MacFadden, posted a letter on social media dated January 4 that he wrote to Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden about Murty's Catamaran Ventures being wound up. It also questions the impact of the closure could have on government-backed education start-up Study Halls, and other firms it had shares in. PTI

JAPAN  
Quake toll rises to 110; snow, rain delay rescue ops

Tokyo: The confirmed death toll from the New Year's Day earthquake in Japan reached 110 on Saturday as a search for survivors in the rubble of collapsed buildings entered a sixth day. The magnitude 7.6 quake struck the west coast, destroying infrastructure and snapping power links to 22,000 homes in the Hukuriku region. Rain hampered efforts to sift the rubble for survivors as more than 30,000 evacuees awaited aid. The number of confirmed dead was 110 by Saturday noon. More than 200 people are still missing after the deadliest quake in nearly 8 years. REUTERS

SOUTH KOREA  
Seoul: N Korea fires more rounds near sea border

Seoul: North Korea fired more than 60 artillery rounds near a disputed maritime border with South Korea on Saturday, the South Korean military said. The action follows North Korea firing more than 200 artillery rounds on Friday in the same region, as tension continues to escalate between the two Koreas. The artillery was fired around the northwest of Yeonpyeong island around 1600-1700 KST, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement. The JCS "strongly urged" North Korea to stop acts that threaten peace on the Peninsula. REUTERS

MYANMAR  
Key city on China border seized by rebels, says junta

Bangkok: Myanmar's military government has acknowledged that it withdrew its forces from a key city on the northeastern border with China after it was taken over by an alliance of ethnic armed groups. It has been battling for months. The Three Brotherhood Alliance took control of Laukaing late Thursday after Myanmar military forces laid down their arms and were allowed to withdraw, both sides said on Saturday. Laukaing is the capital of the Kokang Zone. AP

## INCIDENT IN HEART OF DHAKA AHEAD OF ELECTIONS

## Bangladesh Opp leader among eight held over train arson that killed four

Most of train's 292 passengers were returning from India, say officials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DHAKA, JANUARY 6

DHAKA POLICE on Saturday arrested eight people, including a prominent leader of the opposition BNP, in connection with Friday's arson attack on a train in the heart of Dhaka that left at least four people dead, ahead of elections in Bangladesh boycotted by the opposition.

Four carriages of the Benapole Express that runs from Benapole, bordering West Bengal, were set on fire at around 9 pm on Friday at Gopibagh area, less than two km from its destination of the capital's Kamalapur Railway Station.

Of the four, three coaches were completely burnt. Railway officials said that most of the train's nearly 292 passengers were returning home from India.

The eight persons arrested include Dhaka south city unit BNP joint convener Nabi Ullah Nabi and five activists of Jubo Dal, which is the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party's youth wing.

*The Daily Star* said, quoting Detective Branch chief Harunor

Rashid that police have recovered clips of a video conference with the accused planning the arson. "One of them agreed to execute the arson attack on the train," he said.

Rashid identified the other six arrested and said, "The planners engaged known criminals for the arson attack. Detectives got their names and were trying to arrest them."

However, demanding a UN-supervised investigation into the incident, the BNP, led by former prime minister Khalida Zia, called it a "pre-planned" act of sabotage ahead of Sunday's polls, which the party has boycotted and given a call for 48-hour nationwide strike.

"There is no doubt that the Benapole Express train fire was an act of sabotage, leading to the loss of life," *The Daily Star* newspaper quoted BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi as saying and said the BNP leader called for a UN-supervised investigation into the incident.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habilul Awal Saturday said that the voting set for Sunday's general election lacked completeness since a major opposition party was not participating.



The train that was set on fire by unknown arsonists, in Dhaka on Friday. AP

## Two polling stations set on fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DHAKA, JANUARY 6

AT LEAST two schools designated as polling centres were set on fire by unknown arsonists in Bangladesh on Saturday as the country prepares to go for general elections on January 7.

Unknown arsonists set fire to the Nischinta Para Government

Primary School around 4:30 am in the Patenga EPZ area of Chittagong on Saturday, officials said.

"Arsonists set the school's headmaster's room on fire. New books which were kept in the room were burnt," Shakila Soltana, Deputy Commissioner, CMP Port Division, told *The Daily Star*. "Police are on the spot and investigating the incident," she said.

A fire was also reported at an-

other school being used as a polling station in Gazipur city. Authorities say the initial signs point to arson in both incidents.

Arsonists allegedly set fire to a cupboard in the office room of East Chandana Government Primary School, destroying books and documents inside, according to Abdullah-al-Arefin, deputy assistant director of Gazipur Fire Service.

A fire was also reported at an-



## STORMS, HEAVY RAIN IN BRITAIN

The flooded meadows in the aftermath of Storm Henk, at Henley-on-Thames on Friday. Reuters

Missing window and a side wall portion of an Alaskan Airlines flight that blew out midair on Saturday. Reuters

paths for evacuation.

However, those doors are permanently "plugged", or deactivated, on Alaska Airlines jets.

"While this type of occurrence is rare, our flight crew was trained and prepared to safely manage the situation," Alaska said.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it was investigating the depressurization incident. The Federal Aviation Administration also said the crew had reported a pressurization issue, and that it would investigate.

Social media posts also showed oxygen masks deployed and a portion of the aircraft's side wall missing.

The extra door is typically installed by low-cost airlines using extra seats that require more

Major rivers across Britain flooded on Friday after heavy rain, with government issuing over 300 flood warnings, travel agents announcing serious disruption and around 1,000 homes suffering damage so far.

A series of storms in recent weeks meant prolonged rainfall that started on Thursday fell on saturated ground and caused already-swollen rivers to burst their banks in England and Wales.

The River Trent in central England flooded and around 50 people were taken to safety by local authorities. More rain was forecast though not at the same intensity as seen, with drier weather expected to follow.

## Russian shelling kills 11 in Donetsk; Ukraine says it hit Crimean airbase

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KYIV, JANUARY 6

ELEVEN PEOPLE were killed Saturday in Russian shelling in Ukraine's partially occupied Donetsk province, according to regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin. Five children were among the dead and eight further people were wounded in the attack on the Pokrovsk district, he said.

Ukraine's military claimed

Saturday it successfully attacked the Saki military airbase in the west of the Russian-occupied Crimean peninsula.

Russia did not comment on the alleged attack, but Defense Ministry said in the early hours of Saturday that it had successfully downed four Ukrainian missiles over the peninsula overnight. Later on Saturday, the ministry reported that its air defense forces had shot down six anti-ship missiles over the Black Sea.



Rescuers at a Russian missile strike site in Donetsk region on Saturday. Reuters

## Window blowout leads to emergency landing, US airlines grounds entire fleet



REUTERS  
ALASKA, JANUARY 6

ALASKA AIRLINES has grounded dozens of Boeing 737 MAX 9 jets for safety checks after a cabin panel blowout forced a brand-new airplane loaded with passengers to make an emergency landing.

Airline CEO Ben Minicucci said in a statement the 65 similar planes would be returned to service only after precautionary maintenance and safety inspections, which he expected to be completed in the "next few days".

Flight 1282 had reached 16,000 feet bound for Ontario, California, before returning to Portland, Oregon, where it landed safely at 5:26 p.m. on Friday with 171 passengers and six crew, according to the airline and FlightRadar24.

"We'd like to get down," the pilot told air traffic control, according to a recording posted on liveatc.net.

"We are declaring an emergency. We do need to come down to 10,000," the pilot added, referring to the initial staging altitude for such emergencies, below which breathing is considered possible for healthy people without extra oxygen.

Social media posts also showed oxygen masks deployed and a portion of the aircraft's side wall missing.

The extra door is typically installed by low-cost airlines using extra seats that require more

However, those doors are permanently "plugged", or deactivated, on Alaska Airlines jets.

"While this type of occurrence is rare, our flight crew was trained and prepared to safely manage the situation," Alaska said.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it was investigating the depressurization incident. The Federal Aviation Administration also said the crew had reported a pressurization issue, and that it would investigate.

The new MAX 9 was delivered to Alaska Airlines in late October and certified in early November, as per FAA data.

Boeing said it was looking into the emergency landing.

Ukraine's military claimed

## LARGEST BUILDING IN CLASSICAL GREECE, PALACE OF AIGAI, WAS BUILT OVER 2,300 YEARS AGO

## Palace where Alexander the Great was made king opens after revamp

DEREK GATOPoulos & COSTAS KANTOURIS  
ANCIENT AIGAI, JANUARY 6

IT WAS the largest building of classical Greece: the palace where Alexander the Great was proclaimed king before he launched a conquest that took him as far as modern-day Afghanistan.

The Palace of Aigai in northern Greece was fully reopened Friday following a 16-year renovation that cost more than 20 million euros (\$22 million) and included financial support from the European Union.

It was built more than 2,300 years ago during the reign of

Alexander's father, Phillip II, who had transformed the kingdom of Macedonia into a dominant military power of ancient Greece. Aigai was its royal capital.

"After many years of painstaking work, we can reveal the palace ... What we are doing today is an event of global importance," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said at an inauguration event at the site Friday.

The palace contained column-rimmed courtyards, courts, places of worship, and spacious banquet halls, its floors decorated with patterned marble and intricate mosaics. The building covered a ground area



Findings reveal the sophistication of the ancient Macedonians, who had often been sidelined by the attention on Athens. AP

of 15,000 sq. meters (160,000 sq. feet), a little under the area covered by the U.S. Capitol building.

Shaped like two adjoining, unequally sized, square donuts, the Palace of Aigai was the administrative and spiritual center of the kingdom. The palace remains and nearby royal tombs are a United Nations World Heritage Site at the area next to the modern village of Vergina. Like a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, the marble columns were resurrected by fitting pieces of stone unearthed in the ruins together with replica replacement parts.

Some 65 kilometers (40 miles) southwest of the port city

of Thessaloniki, in northern Greece, Aigai drew international attention in the late 1970s during burials mound excavations in the area of rolling green hills with patches of wild poppies and daffodils.

The late Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos led the digs and discovered the royal tombs, recovering a gold casket and other gold artifacts as well as the bones widely believed to belong to Philip II.

The discoveries revealed the sophistication of the ancient Macedonians, who had often been sidelined in historical accounts by attention on Athens.

Angeliki Kottaridi was still an



Gazans displaced by Israeli bombing in makeshift shelters at a European Gaza Hospital in Rafah on Saturday. AP

## Hezbollah, Israel trade rockets as Gaza war enters fourth month

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIRUT, JANUARY 6

HEZBOLLAH FIRED dozens of rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel on Saturday, saying it was an initial response to the targeted killing of a top Hamas leader in Lebanon's capital Tuesday.

The attack came a day after Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said they must retaliate for Saleh Arouri's killing, the deputy political leader of Hamas, in a Beirut Hezbollah stronghold.

He said if Hezbollah did not strike back, all of Lebanon would be vulnerable to Israeli attack.

Hezbollah said it launched 62 rockets toward an Israeli air surveillance base on Mount Meron and that it scored direct hits. Israel said about 40 rockets were fired toward Meron and that a base was targeted, but made no mention of the base being hit.

Israeli airstrikes on southern Lebanon hit the outskirts of Kouthariyah al-Siyad village, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the border, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said, adding that there were casualties.

On Saturday, Gaza Health Ministry said 122 Palestinians had been killed over the past 24 hours, bringing the total since the start of the war to 22,722.

## Pak parties show rare unity against Senate bid to defer Feb 8 polls

Contempt petition filed as resolution goes against Supreme Court order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 6

SHOCKED AT a resolution passed by the Senate seeking a delay in the February 8 general elections and displaying a rare unity, all major political parties in Pakistan on Saturday demanded no change in the schedule.

A petition for contempt proceedings was also filed by a lawyer Ishaq Ahmed in the Supreme Court Saturday against the Senate chairman and its members after the resolution was adopted despite a top court order to hold the polls on Feb 8. The Senate Friday approved a non-binding resolution seeking delay in the general polls, citing cold weather and security concerns.

*The Dawn* reported that demanding that the Supreme Court take immediate notice of the resolution passed by the Senate, Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi who was at the Senate, said he did not get a chance to present his arguments. He made it clear that there were no directives from the prime minister or the federal cabinet regarding a delay.

The Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) seemed to be in a Catch-22 situation since the resolution wasn't opposed by its sole Senator in the House at the time of voting, leading the party to distance itself from its stance.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), too, categorically declared that it wants no delay in the February 8 polls.

Jamaat-e-Islami's emir Sirajul Haq said the resolution was a conspiracy against democracy.

Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi who was at the Senate, said he did not get a chance to present his arguments. He made it clear that there were no directives from the prime minister or the federal cabinet regarding a delay.

"What you discover is stones scattered in the dirt, and pieces of mosaics here and there... Then you have to assemble things and that's the real joy of the researcher," Kottaridi said.

The renovated site will open to the public Sunday. AP

**KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice**

Tender No: 161/2023-24/KWA/PHC/D1/TVM(RT)  
Urban Agglomeration-CWSS to Kadinkulam Mangalapuram & Andoorkonam Panchayath and Attingal Municipality-Urban Agglomeration -Construction of 18 MLD Lamella Type WTP & Supply, Installation of RW Pump & CW Pump, Laying of RWPM. EMD: Rs. 5,00,000/- Tender fee: Rs. 19,518/- Last Date for submitting Tender: 29-01-2024 03:00pm, Phone: 04712322303 Website: [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in)

Superintending Engineer  
PH Circle  
Thiruvananthapuram  
KWA-JB-GL-6-2007-2023-24

**GREATER VISAKHAPATNAM MUNICIPAL CORPORATION****Tender Notice**

Tender Notice No: 43/2023-24/CE/SE(P-II)EE(PD-I)/DB/GVMC Dt:06.01.2024

**Number of works 02, Value of works Rs. 45.94Crores**

Tender Opening Dt. 06.01.2024, Closing Date.27.01.2024

Note : Further details at <http://www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in>  
O/o the EE(PD-I) Cell No. 9848308824

Sd/- Commissioner, GVMC



**य.पी. प्रोजेक्ट्स कारपोरेशन लि.**  
(उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार का उपकरण) CIN : U15209UP1976SC004285  
संस्थापक महाप्रबन्धक, जौन-2, 14-वन्धुशेषनगर कालोनी, तुला शेरपूर,  
संस्थापक वाइपारा, रोड-243122. ई-मेल : gm2.uppcbilly@gmail.com  
पत्रांक : 710/पीसीएल/जी.एम./जौन-2/प्रकाशन दिनांक : 06.01.2024

**अति अत्यकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना**

जनपद रामपुर में नगर पालिका परिवर्त विलासपुर झील के सीढ़ीकरण कार्य हेतु आमंत्रित की गई अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना सं. 20/ PCL/GM/ZONE-2/BLY/2023-24 दिनांक 02.01.2024 जो दिनांक 18.01.2024 के पूर्वाहन 10:00 बजे तक डाउनलोड / अपलोड की जा सकती थी, को अपरिहार्य कारण से निरस्त कर दिया गया है।

महाप्रबन्धक, जौन-2, बड़ेली

ई-निविदा निरस्तीकरण सूचना

जनपद रामपुर में नगर पालिका परिवर्त विलासपुर झील के सीढ़ीकरण कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा सूचना सं. 20/ PCL/GM/ZONE-2/BLY/2023-24 दिनांक 02.01.2024 जो दिनांक 18.01.2024 के पूर्वाहन 10:00 बजे तक डाउनलोड / अपलोड की जा सकती थी, को अपरिहार्य कारण से निरस्त कर दिया गया है।

ई-निविदा से संबंधित अन्य विवरण, नियम एवं संरक्षण की वेबसाइट [www.uprojects.org](http://www.uprojects.org) पर दिनांक 06.01.2024 से देखी जा सकती है।

महाप्रबन्धक, जौन-2, बड़ेली



**कार्यालय,**  
**चास नगर निगम, चास (बोकारो)**  
आईटीआई मोड, NH-32, चास, बोकारो, पिन-827013  
E-mail:- [chasmunicipalcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:chasmunicipalcouncil@gmail.com)

पत्रांक-20 दिनांक — 06.01.2024  
— शुद्धि-पत्र :-

चास नगर निगम द्वारा दिनांक 30.12.2023 को दैनिक समाचार पर हिन्दुस्तान (PR 314571 Urban Development (23-24)D) में प्रकाशित निविदा जिसकी ई-निविदा सं. UDD/CMC/02/2023-24 है, को अपरिहार्य कारणवश अगले आदेश तक स्थगित किया जाता है।

प्रकाशक  
—सह-अप नगर आयुक्त  
चास नगर निगम।

PR.NO.315322 Urban Development and Housing(23-24)D

**कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय**  
ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमंडल, हजारीबाग**शुद्धि पत्र**

इस कार्यालय के द्वारा आमंत्रित ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या— RDD/SD/HZB/31/2023-24 पी0आर0 संख्या 314488 Rural Development (23-24)D में युग्म संख्या 04 प्रखण्ड चुरचू के उत्क्रमित उच्च विद्यालय जबरा के उन्नयन हेतु विविध निर्माण कार्य में जबरा के जगह पर "जरबा" पढ़ा जाय।

निविदा की शेष सार्ते यथावत् रहेंगी।

कार्यपालक अभियंता  
ग्रामीण विकास विशेष प्रमंडल  
हजारीबाग

PR 315305 Rural Development(23-24)D

“AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY”

S.H.O.  
P.S., New Usman Pur, Delhi  
DP/263/NE/2024 Ph. : 011-22172410, 8750870726

Any person having any information or clue about this male may kindly inform to the following.

By Order  
Sh. Valbhav Chaurasia, Ld. MM,  
North West, Court No.112, 1st floor  
Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/194/NW/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Surender S/o Shayan Lal R/o Mukesh Ka Makan, Vill. Bhadola, Azadpur, Delhi**, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under **ct.cases. 535930/16 U/s 324/34 IPC.**, has been registered at **P.S. Shalimar Bagh Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Surender** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Surender** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Surender Ct cases No.535930/16 U/s 324/34 IPC., registered at P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

By Order  
Sh. Valbhav Chaurasia, Ld. MM,  
North West, Court No.112, 1st floor  
Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/194/NW/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Inder S/o Rajesh R/o B-232, JJ Colony, Raghbir Nagar, Delhi** has Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 2350/20 U/S 379/411/34 IPC, PS Karol Bagh, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Inder** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Inder** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Inder of case FIR No. 2350/20 U/S 379/411/34 IPC, PS Karol Bagh, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

By Order  
Ms. Shipra Dhankar  
Metropolitan Magistrate, (Central District)  
Room No. 180, First Floor  
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

DP/140/CD/2024(Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Usha, W/o Ravi@Rancho, R/o H.No.360, 4th Floor H-3 Block, Sector 16, Rohini, Delhi** has Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in a Case **FIR No. 473/23 U/s 21 NDPS Act at PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Usha** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Usha** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Usha of FIR No. 473/23 U/s 21 NDPS Act at PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **24.02.2024**.

By order  
Sh. Dhirendra Rana  
Additional District & Session Judge  
Room No. 207  
Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/107/ON/2024(Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Lokesh @ Khaddu S/o Balwan Singh R/o H.No.327, Khatiy Wali Gali Vill Dichaon Kalan Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Lokesh @ Khaddu** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Lokesh @ Khaddu** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Lokesh @ Khaddu of FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

By order  
Ayush Sharma  
Metropolitan Magistrate (North-West)  
Room No. 113, 1st Floor  
Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/233/RD/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Lokesh @ Khaddu S/o Balwan Singh R/o H.No.327, Khatiy Wali Gali Vill Dichaon Kalan Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Lokesh @ Khaddu** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Lokesh @ Khaddu** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Lokesh @ Khaddu of FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

By order  
Ayush Sharma  
Metropolitan Magistrate (North-West)  
Room No. 113, 1st Floor  
Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/233/RD/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Komal @ Jitendra S/o Balwan Singh R/o H.No.327, Khatiy Wali Gali Vill Dichaon Kalan Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra of FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

By order  
Ayush Sharma  
Metropolitan Magistrate (North-West)  
Room No. 113, 1st Floor  
Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/233/RD/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Komal @ Jitendra S/o Balwan Singh R/o H.No.327, Khatiy Wali Gali Vill Dichaon Kalan Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra of FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

By order  
Ayush Sharma  
Metropolitan Magistrate (North-West)  
Room No. 113, 1st Floor  
Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/233/RD/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Komal @ Jitendra S/o Balwan Singh R/o H.No.327, Khatiy Wali Gali Vill Dichaon Kalan Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Komal @ Jitendra of FIR No. 723/21 U/s 380/457/411 IPC at PS: Kanjhawala, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **07.02.2024**.

**Classifieds****PERSONAL**

**I.Sawar** Arora S/o Sandeep Arora, R/o 1025, Sector-15, Faridabad, have changed my name to Sawar Raj Arora. 0040707177-7

**I.RAJBALA W/O YASHPAL** YADAV HOUSE NO F-2 606 SANGAM VIHAR NEW DELHI 80 MY CHANGE OF NAME RAJBALA YADAV. 0040707177-4

**I.Premanand** Bhageerathan S/o. Machingal Krishnan Bhageerathan/R.o.P no. 60, A/60 B, 3rd floor, flat no. 302, Nidhi vihar, Virpur Garden, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059, have changed my name to PRREMANAND permanently. 0040707189-2

**I.KESHAV SIWACH,S/O SAMUNDER SINGH** R/O.H.O.343,GIRDHAR ENCLAVE, SAHIBABAD, GHAZIABAD,UTTAR PRADESH-201005,declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as SAMUNDER which is SAMUNDER SINGH,which may be amended accordingly. 0040707189-5

**I.KAMLA DEVI W/O LACHHMAN RAM** R/O HNO.57,POCKET-B,SECTOR-3,ROHINI,DELHI-110085.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO KAMALA DEVI. 0040707189-4

**I.Jeevesh** Kumar chaudhary,S/o Braj Kishor chaudhary,H.no Texn-182 S/F-East south side,Block-T-Extn,Uttam nagar,Delhi-110059, INDIA, Have changed my name to Jivesh kumar chaudhary. 0040707189-1

**I.Jatinder** Kumar,alias Jatinder Chauhan,S/o-Krishan Lal Chauhan,R/o-178,Ekta Vihar, Baltana, Zirakpur,Sas Nagar, Punjab-140604 have changed my name to Jatinder Kumar Chouhan 0040707176-2

**I.Hitherto** known as Yash alias Yash Sharma,S/o,Sunil Vats, R/o-417-E Shastri Marg, Gali No.4,East Babarpur,Shahdara, Delhi-110032,have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Yash Sharma. 0040707181-5

**I.Hitesh** SHARMA,S/o DEVENDER KUMAR SHARMA R/o-E-473,DURGA GALI EAST BABARPUR SHAHDARA,DELHI-110032,HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO HITESH BHARDWAJ. 0040707181-1

**I.Gagandeep** Singh S/o- Kanwaljit Singh Sethi R/o 74, Narang Colony,Janakpuri, Delhi-58, have changed my name to Gagandeep Singh Sethi,permanently. 0040707181-9

**I.Ashish** S/o Suraj Arora R/o G-8/16, 3rd Floor,Sector-11, Rohini, Delhi-110085,have changed my name to Ashish Arora. 0040707177-2

**I.Asha** Aggarwal,W/o Ashok Kumar Aggarwal,R/o-248-249, 1st Floor,PKT-18, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085,have changed my name to Sunita 0040707176-4

**I.Aditya,S/o-Kamal** Kishore, R/o-156,Second Floor, Sultana Extension,near Kuki Shop Mehrauli,South Delhi-110030,have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Aditya Kumar. 0040707173-1

**I.Aastha** W/o Robin R/o AC-15-F/F/VIP-Floors, Escortsnagar, Faridabad (HR) have changed my name to Aastha Bharadwaj for all purposes. 0040707109-2

**I.S. D. Misra** S/o Pradeep Misra R/o Flat-104, Tower-6, Paras Seasons, Sector-168, Noida (UP) have changed my name to Shivditta Misra for all purposes. 0040707109-3

**I.Pritpal** Sodhi, S/o Balwinder Singh Sodhi R/o-T-18, Flat-103, Unitech Horizon, Sec-P12, Greater Noida have Changed my name to Pritpal Singh Sodhi permanently. 0070882103-1

**I.Parmod** Kumar s/o Goverdhan Prasad r/o C-55, DTC Colony, Hari Nagar, Delhi-110064 have changed my name to PRAMOD KUMAR 0040707121-1

**I.Diwakar** Kumar, S/o Upendra Shukla, R/o G-330, Windsor Paradise-II, Raj Nagar Extn, Ghaziabad, changed my name from Diwakar Kumar to Diwakar Kumar Shukla for all future purposes. 0130039294-1

**I.Vijay** Kumar Attaluri S/o Attaluri Gopal Rao R/o Flat No. 401, Plot 11 And 1-9/10, Sujana Srinivas, Arundonada Colony, Madhapur, K.V Rangareddy, Telangana-500081, have changed my name to Attaluri Vijay Kumar Choudhary 0070882147-1

**ASLAM** S/O SAGIR AHMAD R/O A-16, MAIN SHALIMAR GARDEN, SAHIBABAD, GHAZIABAD, UP-201005 CHANGED MY NAME TO MOHD ALSAM. 0130039275-1

**NASHIM** W/O MOHD ASLAM R/O A-16, MAIN SHALIMAR GARDEN, SAHIBABAD, GHAZIABAD, UP-201005 CHANGED MY NAME TO MOHD ALSAM. 0130039275-1

**I.PUNEET**,S/O VED PRAKASH, R/O E-209 SECOND-FLOOR TAGORE-GARDEN EXTN., NEW-DELHI-110027.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME PUNEET ARORA TO PUNEET,FOR ALL LEGAL PURPOSE. 0040707189-10

**I.Tarlochan** Singh Saggu,S/o/S. Hardyal Singh R/o NW-59A, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi-110013,have changed my name to Tarlochan Singh. 0040707177-5

**I.Virender** Kumar,S/o-Ved Ram,R/o-H.No.107/1,Sarai Kala khan,Hazrat Nizamuddin,South Delhi-110013,have changed the name of my minor son Vidha? aged 7-years and shall hereafter be known as Vidhan?Rajvir. 0040707173-2

**I.have** changed my name,from Raj Balaji Baswala or Rajbala Baswala to Raj Balaji W/O Ramesh Kumar,R/o M-170,G-Floor,Guru Harkishan-Nagar, Paschim Vihar,West Delhi, Delhi-110087,for all,future purporposes. 0040707189-8

**It** is for general information that I,SHIVAM SEHRAWAT, S/o, Manoj Kumar R/o H.no-564 B.Post Office-Mehruli, Saidulajab-South Delhi,Delhi-110030,declare that name of my mother has been wrongly written as Guddi Devi in my class-10th and class-12th marksheet and certificate educational. The actual name of my mother is Nirmala which may be amended accordingly. 0040707181-7

**IT IS FOR GENERAL INFORMATION** THAT I KUNAL YADAV S/O SH. SUNIL KUMAR YADAV H.NO.-395/6, HASTSAL VILLAGE, UTTAM NAGAR, NEW DELHI- 110059 DECLARE THAT NAME OF MY FATHER HAS BEEN WRONGLY WRITTEN AS SUNIL YADAV IN MY PAN CARD AND AADHAR CARD. THE ACTUAL NAME OF MY FATHER IS SUNIL KUMAR YADAV. 0040707130-1

**I.have** changed my name,from Ravinder Kumar Baswala to Ravinder Kumar,S/O Ramesh Kumar,R/o M-170, G-Floor, Guru Harkishan Nagar, Paschim Vihar,West Delhi, Delhi-110087,for all,future purposes. 0040707189-9

**I.** have changed my name,from Ramesh Kumar Baswala to Ramesh Kumar,S/O Late Nanak Chand,R/o M-170,G-Floor, Guru Harkishan Nagar, Paschim Vihar,West Delhi, Delhi-110087,for all,future purposes. 0040707189-6

**I.Rigzin Norboo,** Service No. JC-588696L, Rank: SUB: 5Ladakh Scouts C/o 56 Apo do hereby declare that my wife name has been wrongly written in Army documents as RigzenLadlo instead of correct name i.e. Rigzin Ladlo. 0040707106-1

**Zenab Saleem Qazi D/O Saleem S Qazi E-373/22, Gali No 22, Zakir Nagar, Jamia Nagar, South Delhi, Delhi- 110025 have changed my name to Zainab S Qazi for all future purposes.** 0040707149-1

**It** is for general information that I,SPARSH BAZZADS,S/O SANDEEP KUMAR,O/o Makroku Khurd 7(5)Rohit Haryana-124001,declare that name of my-father and my-mother has been wrongly-written in Army documents as Sandeep and Sushil in my class-10th and class-12th marksheet and certificate educational-documents.The actual-name of my-Father and my-mother are Sandeep Kumar and Sushila.Which may be amended accordingly. 0040707128-1

**I.Krishan Lal**,S/o Mangi Ram, R/o-178, Ekta Vihar, Baltana, Zirakpur, Punjab-140603,have changed my name to Krishan Lal Chouhan 0040707176-3

**I.MAMTA**,W/O PUNEET,R/o-E-209,SECOND FLOOR TAGORE, GARDEN EXTN.,NEW DELHI-110027.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME MAMTA ARORA TO MAMTA,FOR ALL,LEGAL PURPOSE. 0040707197-2

**I,MAYUR THAKRAL**,F/o PRIYANSHI R/o-H.NO-25/2, KAYSTHAN STREET PANIPAT HARYANA-132103, HAVE CHANGED MY MINOR DAUGHTER NAME TO PRIYANSHI THAKRAL. 0040707181-3

**I,MEGA** PRATEEK DUBEY,W/o ANUJ MATHUR,R/o-FLAT-NO-501,ASTER-5 SUPERSTRUCTURE EMERALD COURT SEC-93A, NOIDA GAUTAMBUDHA-NAGAR U.P.-201304,HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MEGA MATHUR. 0040707181-3

**I,Madhusmita** Khatua W/o Sambhunath Bera R/o PVC-15-504,Pavilion Court Tower-15,Jaypee Greens Wish-Town,Sector-128,Noida(U.P) have changed my name to Madhusmita Bera for all purposes. 0040707109-1

**I,Mohd** Ashfaque S/o,Abdul Qasim R/o-R-186/5,First-Floor, Jogabai-Extn., Jamia-Nagar, New Friends-Colony, Delhi-110025,have changed my name to Mohd Ashfaque Haider. 0040707177-2

**I,Mukesh** Goyal,S/o Prabhu Dayal,R/o-97-98,1st Floor, Block-A,Pocket-3, Sector-11,Rohini, Delhi-110085,have changed my name to Mukesh Kumar 0040707176-5

**I.NAM CHAND JAIN**,S/O PADAM SHAIN JAIN,R/O C-95, SECTOR-5, SUSHANT CITY, PARTAPUR, MEERUT, UTTAR PRADESH-250002,changed my name to NEM CHAND JAIN. 0040707189-3

**I.NEHA**,D/o PAVITRA MOHAN, ADD : RZ F-139, GALI NO 39, SADH NAGAR - 2, PALAM VILLAGE, NEW DELHI 110045, have changed my name to NEHA AWAL. 0040707181-4

**I.Neel** Kamal,S/o Megh Raj,R/o Flat,no.206, Tower Mark, Omaxe Heights, Sector-86, Faridabad have changed my name to Neel Kamal Sankal. 0040707177-6

**I.PUNEET**,S/O VED PRAKASH, R/O E-209 SECOND-FLOOR TAGORE-GARDEN EXTN., NEW-DELHI-110027.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME PUNEET ARORA TO PUNEET,FOR ALL LEGAL PURPOSE. 0040707189-10

**I.Tarolochan** Singh Saggu,S/o/S. Hardyal Singh R/o NW-59A, Vishnu Garden, New Delhi-110013,have changed my name to Tarolochan Singh. 00407082105-1

**I,Virender** Kumar,S/o-Ved Ram,R/o-H.No.107/1,Sarai Kala khan,Hazrat Nizamuddin,South Delhi-110013,have changed the name of my minor son Vidha? aged 7-years and shall hereafter be known as Vidhan?Rajvir. 0040707173-2

**RENU KUMARI W/O SHIV KISHOR SHARAN R/O FLAT NO.-A-2, PLOT NO.-B-202, SHALIMAR GARDEN ETN-2, SAHIBABAD, GHAZIABAD, UP-201005 CHANGED MY NAME TO RENU SHARMA.** 0130039274-1

**I.Chandan Kishore Sharma S/o Sh. Maheshwar Sharma R/o House No.36-A Kh No.-18/24/1, Street No.14-A, Block-A, 2nd, Sant Nagar, Burari, North Delhi, Delhi- 110084 have made correction in my name from Chandan Kishore Sharma to Chandan Kishore Sharma for all purpose under the oath taken by notary Rakesh Kumar Tiwari vide its Regn No.17820. 0070882090-1**

**I.BALJEET KAUR BHATIA** D/O TARLOK SINGH BHATIA R/O H.NO-40/52, CHITTARANJAN PARK, ND-110019 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO AMERIJIT KAUR TAKWAL FOR ALL PURPOSES. 0070882150-1

**I.Subhash Jesingh Lal Shah S/o Jesingh Lal Shah R/o B-82, Gujarat Apartments, Pitampura, Delhi have changed my name as Subhash Shah permanently** 0040707119-1

**I.Mohammad Faheem,S/o Mohd Shahid,R/o-1377,Gali No.4 Faiz Ganj Bahadur Garh Road Delhi-110006,Have changed my name to Mohd Faheem,for Future.** 0040707176-1

**VIKRAM** S/O RAMENDER MAHTO R/O H.NO.-252,GALINO-5, 12,ASHOK VATIKA,SAHILMAR GARDE,SAHIBABAD, GHAZIABA D,UP-201005 CHANGED MY NAME TO VIKRAM MAHTO. 0040706630-1

**Zenab Saleem Qazi D/O Saleem S Qazi E-373/22, Gali No 22, Zakir Nagar, Jamia Nagar, South Delhi, Delhi- 110025 have changed my name to Zainab S Qazi for all future purposes.** 0040707149-1

**It** is for general information that I,SPARSH BAZZADS,S/O SANDEEP KUMAR,R/o Makroku Khurd 7(5)Rohit Haryana-124001,declare that name of my-father and my-mother has been wrongly-written in Army documents as Sandeep and Sushil in my class-10th and class-12th marksheets and certificates educational documents.The actual-name of my-Father and my-mother are Sandeep Kumar and Sushila.Which may be amended accordingly. 0040707128-1

**I.Krushna** Khatou W/o Amjad Hasan R/o F-18/5, Shaheen Bagh, Abul Fazal Enclave-II, Jamia Nagar, Delhi-25 have changed my name to Krushnedha for all future purposes. 0040707128-1

**I.Raghv Raj,S/o-Ganga Ram Yadav,R/o-122,VPO Begum Pur,Nithari,Delhi-110086,have changed my name to Raghu Raj Yadav.** 0040707173-5

**I,Reeta** Shukla,W/o Pawan Kumar Shukla,R/o T-137, Sanatan,Dharam Mandir, Baljeet Nagar,Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008, declare that Rita Shukla and Reeta Shukla is the name of same-person and presently I am known as Reeta Shukla. 0040707177-3

**I,SHRESHTHA DHINGRA** alias SHRESHTHA D/O ANIL KUMAR, W/O HANISH DHINGRA R/O-D-2/33, JEEWAN-PARK PANKHA ROAD, UTTAM, NAGAR DELHI-110059,have changed my name to SHRESHTHA DHINGRA. 0040707197-3

**I,Sajjan Pincha**,W/o Hanuman Patel Pincha R/o H.No.B-193,First-Floor,Yojna Vihar, East,Delhi-110092,have changed my name to Sajjan Devi Pincha. 0040707171-1

**I,Sharmila Devi** Prasad,W/o Shri Sunderdev Kumar Prasad R/o-107,Tilak Khand,Giri Nagar,Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019,have changed my name to Sharmila Devi for all purposes. 0040707173-4

**I,Sunil Kumar Vats,S/o,Jagdish Prasad Vats R/o-H.No.417-E Shastri Marg,Gali.No.4,East Babarpur,Shahdara,Delhi-110032,have changed my name to Sunil Vats,for all purposes.** 0040707181-4

**PUBLIC NOTICE** This is to notify the public at large that my client Mrs. POONAM KAPOOR W/O SH. RAJEEV KAPOOR R/O 44, APNA GHAR SOCIETY, PITAM PURA, DELHI 110034, that she has severed all her relations with her son Sh. SAHIL KAPOOR, HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN and has disowned and disinherited them from all her movable and immovable properties due to their conduct, misbehavior and being out of their control. Any person dealing with them shall do so on their own risk and consequences if any person has objections against the same, objections may be raised within 10 days to the undersigned.

**Sd/-** JAIPAL GODARA ADVOCATE & LEGAL CONSULTANTS Ch. No. 420, Lawyers Chamber Building, Dwarka Court Complex, Dwarka, New Delhi-110006, India. Mob: 9818695891, Email id: jaipal.godara20@gmail.com

**PUBLIC NOTICE** Be it known to all concerned on the behalf of my client Mr. SHRI RAJEEV S/O SH. RAJEEV KAPOOR R/O 44, APNA GHAR SOCIETY, PITAM PURA, DELHI 110034, that he has severed all his relations with his son Sh. SAHIL KAPOOR, HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN and has disowned and disinherited them from all her movable and immovable properties due to their conduct, misbehavior and being out of their control. Any person dealing with them shall do so on their own risk and consequences.

## Warner's final act helps Aussies complete series sweep over Pak

**REUTERS**  
 SYDNEY, JANUARY 6

DAVID WARNER was denied the chance to score the match-winning runs in his final test but contributed 57 as Australia cantered to their victory target of 130 runs to beat Pakistan by eight wickets and sweep the series 3-0 on Saturday.

Pakistan, looking to end a run of 16 successive losses in Australia since 1995, had added 47 runs to their overnight tally at the cost of their final three wickets, to be dismissed for 115 an hour before lunch.

Playing his 112th match before retiring from the format, Warner shared a hug with opening partner and childhood friend Usman Khawaja at the boundary rope and was given a guard of honour by the tourists as he came to the crease.

Khawaja departed lbw for a duck in the opening over, but Warner played like a man on a mission and was soon cutting the ball through the covers in trademark style for his first four.

He brought up his 37th test half century with a single to square leg, and Australia went to lunch with the win all but in the bag on 91-1, 39 runs from their target.

Although not quite the pyrotechnics that featured in the early part of Warner's career, there were seven boundaries in his 75-ball innings before spinner Sajid Khan trapped him in front with Australia 11 runs from victory.

A crowd of more than 24,000 at his home Sydney Cricket Ground rose for a final ovation as Warner left the field, his part in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal that earned him a one-year ban from international cricket foreseen.

"It meant the world to me. I've given absolutely everything to play this game and to sacrifice a lot of things to be in the position that I am," Warner said of the ovation.

"I've had a lot of ups and downs through my career. I've had to come back and overcome adversity. I've done that, I think, very well. I think today just showed to me that I do have a lot of support, and I'm very, very grateful for that."

Warner's innings gave him a career tally of 8,786 test runs at an average of 44.59, making him the fifth most prolific Australian batsman of all time, behind Ricky Ponting, Allan Border, Mark Waugh and Steve Smith.

Marnus Labuschagne (62 not out) got the world test champions across the line with a single shortly after Warner's departure.

### Australia atop WTC table

**PTI adds:** Australia, following their eight-wicket win in the third and final Test against Pakistan at Sydney are on 56.25 percentage points and have pushed India to the second spot in the latest World Test Championship (WTC) standings issued by ICC on Saturday. Pat Cummins' side is 2.09 percentage points ahead of Rohit Sharma's India, who have 54.16 points.

India, though, have played just four Tests during the current WTC cycle, while Australia have played eight. India had taken the top spot following their memorable seven-wicket win against South Africa in Cape Town earlier this week, but Australia crushed Pakistan on Saturday at the SCG to displace India at the top.

Australia are the reigning World Test champions, having beaten India in the final at The Oval last summer. Australia will next play a two-Test series against the West Indies at home, while India will be up against England in five home Tests.

**Brief scores:** Australia 299 (Labuschagne 60, Marsh 54, Jamal 6-69) & 130 for 2 (Labuschagne 62\*, Warner 57) beat Pakistan 313 (Rizwan 88, Jamal 82) & 115 (Ayub 33, Hazlewood 4-16, Lyon 3-36) by eight wickets



● When the day started, with Pakistan batting, Australia skipper Pat Cummins let David Warner lead as the team walked out at the SCG.



● Warner scored 57 off 75 deliveries as Australia chased 130 with eight wickets to spare. Warner also played a switch-hit to spinner Sajid Khan.



● Warner was dismissed by spinner Khan, trapped lbw. Warner waved his bat at the crowd as incoming batsmen Smith and him hugged.

● Warner finished with 8786 runs in Test cricket – the fifth most by an Australian batsman. He also scored 26 Test centuries.

Pics-Reuters/AP

## WARNER'S LAST DAY IN TEST CRICKET

# Designer tracks, soiled hands

A difficult Cape Town Test track is different from one that offers undue advantage to Team India at home

**SANDEEP DWIVEDI**  
 JANUARY 6

AFTER WINNING the one-and-a-half-day Test in Cape Town, Rohit Sharma allowed some righteous anger to kick in. At the press conference after the series was drawn, he expressed the angst that Indian cricketers have lived with for long. Rohit called out those who credited Indian pitches for the team's incredible home record.

Rohit said that if a Test in India had got over on Day 2, all hell would have broken loose. He wasn't afraid to point at the ICC's double standards towards spin and the sub-continent. The Indian skipper made a strong plea: We should be allowed to prepare pitches that suit us and the visiting teams shouldn't start floating conspiracy theories if it starts turning on the first day. Didn't the ball jump at batsmen from a good length at Newlands from the first hour?

On the face of it, Rohit sounded convincing, his argument having strength. But was it also fire-proof? Maybe not.

Pitch-making isn't a tit-for-tat, black-and-white debate; a bit of nuance is needed when discussing this delicate matter. There are several layers of dirt that go into the making of a Test track. Playing on an extra spicy Newlands track without complaining was graceful but that doesn't give India the right to lay out designer diabolical spin tracks, like they have done in the past.

Rohit's long pitch monologue at the press conference was like the passionate disposition of a star witness in an intense court drama. "In India on day one, if the pitch starts turning, people start talking about 'Puff of dust! Puff of dust!' ... I think it's important that we stay neutral everywhere we go. Some of these match referees need to keep their eye on how they rate pitches."

Rohit was underlining an important point. If the world was fine with the ball tak-



Rohit Sharma said that there was an issue if only Day 1 spinner-friendly pitches get a bad rating.

ing off from the good length spot at Cape Town, eyebrows shouldn't be raised when spinners make the ball do the same from similar areas in India.

Point taken, but there is a catch. It is a thin line that separates home advantage from home 'undue advantage'. A difficult track is one thing, a wicked wicket another. Cricket should remain a test of skills and not a game of fate where your horoscope would decide how long you last on the wicket.

The big factor in the Cape Town Test getting over early was batsmen's lack of patience and skill needed to tackle bounce. India losing six wickets without adding a single run had less to do with the surface but more about the collective incompetence of the batting group.

### Pitch ploys

Natural variation in the surface is fine but engineering cracks isn't sport. All it takes is a

In India on day one, if the pitch starts turning, people start talking about 'Puff of dust! Puff of dust!' ... I think it's important that we stay neutral everywhere we go. Some of these match referees need to keep their eye on how they rate pitches."

**ROHIT SHARMA**  
 INDIA TEST CAPTAIN

bit of scuffing and a consciously missed watering session; this is enough for a pitch to go from good to bad to ugly. There was a classic case of subtle pitch management witnessed by us – a couple of journalists during the India-South Africa series in 2015. The venue and curator would remain unnamed but this is what happened.

It was a couple of days before the Test. The pitch was dry, the sun was beating down. The South Africans were through with their morning training session but the ground staff was still around. They were waiting for India's team management to arrive at the ground.

### Late evening operation

Late in the evening, they did. There was an exchange of pleasantries, followed by an extensive audit of every square centimetre of the area in front of the crease.

There was a long discussion and shaking of heads. Soon a 'ground hand' could be seen running to the central square with a 'coir scrubber' – like object in his hand. The curator would instruct the boy to rub the coir hard on a certain patch around the good length. Days before the toss, the pitch had a distinct wear and tear, the promise of a rough that the spinners could aim at was shaping. That Test was over early, with left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja making batting greats Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers look naive. It wasn't a fair pitch.

These are hush-hush operations and

the curators, coaches and captains never speak about them. However, there are rare occasions when the secret is out.

Once in Chennai, veteran curator K Parthasarathy was in a mood to talk. It was 2013 and India had beaten Australia in a tense game. It was a game where Indian spinners had taken 20 wickets but there was no outrage from the Aussies.

### Games curators play

Parthasarathy had sold them a lemon. "We started by making the entire pitch firm. After that, we watered it selectively. The areas on either side of the stumps were kept dry, and so turned out to be loose. The line of the stumps was watered and rolled, so it stayed firm through the Test," he says.

So the Aussie pacers who concentrated on the line of the stumps, hoping that the wear and tear would give them uneven bounce and thus LBW or bowled dismissals, failed. Meanwhile, the Indian spinners happily exploited the rough spots and got loads of wickets.

This had been done before. In the 1998 India-Australia series, the same curator, by his own admission, had negated Shane Warne by preparing a firm hard patch outside the right-handers' leg-stump.

"I kept the square patches outside the leg stump, on either side of the wicket, really hard. It was difficult to get turn from that part as there would be no rough there," he would say proudly.

Over the years, India have loved to fuss over the 22 yards. As recently as the World Cup, coach Rahul Dravid was seen spending hours on the central square days before every game. In the final, the pitch-ploy backfired; on a slow track, Indian batsmen lacked

England will be here this month for five Tests and pitches and curators will be in focus again. What Rohit is saying might be right but it is high time the team that can beat South Africa on a challenging track in Cape Town trusts its players and doesn't get its hands muddy and soiled over pitch preparation.

## 'Spin-friendly tracks will blunt India fast bowlers'

England wicket-keeper batter Jonny Bairstow said that if India tends to provide surfaces that spin from day one, they will suppress the threat their own pace attack has been posing in recent times with the red-ball.

"Look, I'm sure the pitches will turn: it's whether or not they'll turn from day one, which potentially negates a bit of their strength in their seam attack. We know how strong they are," he said on Sky Sports.

"India can produce different pitches: it doesn't have to turn. We've seen how potent their seam attack has been recently," suggested Bairstow.

The last time England toured India, there was severe criticism of the pitches provided. After losing the first Test in Chennai, India managed to win the series 3-1. However, the pacers did not have much to do because of the rank-turners.

"Obviously, the last time Axar and Ashwin played well. You forget that in that first Test match, the guys played really well, Root (Joe Root) got a double in the first Test match in Chennai and then conditions changed quite drastically," Bairstow recalled.

### Easwaran to lead India A

Bengal veteran Abhimanyu Easwaran was named captain of a 13-member India A squad for the upcoming four-day match against visiting England Lions which will be preceded by a warm-up fixture. The two teams will engage in a two-day warm-up match in Ahmedabad on January 12-13, followed by the 4-day match at the Modi Stadium from January 17-20.

**Full squad:** Abhimanyu Easwaran (c), Sai Sudharsan, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Pradosh Ranjan Paul, KS Bharat (wk), Manav Suthar, Pallik Narang, Navdeep Saini, Tushar Deshpande, Vidwath Kaverappa, Dhruv Jurel (wk) and Akash Deep.

ENS/PTI

# Fiery Gaurav demolishes Delhi on a nippy day

**PRATYUSH RAJ**  
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

GAURAV YADAV is not young anymore. He is 32, but the seamer still has the fire in his belly and has a point to prove after he left his home state Madhya Pradesh and joined Pondicherry as a professional.

Yadav, who was instrumental in Madhya Pradesh winning the Ranji Trophy in 2022, says he joined Pondicherry after having differences with MP's coach Chandrakant Pandit.

"Sahi nahi chal raha tha coach ke saath (it was not working out with the coach). They were not giving me a chance in the white ball, and I wanted to play all three formats. I approached them to play here. Actually, Venkatesh Iyer spoke to them for me. He told them about me and they had already seen me and agreed instantly," Yadav tells The Indian Express.

In Delhi's 62.5 overs in innings, Yadav bowled 26.5 overs in two spells -- 13 and 13.5 overs - and blew away Delhi with his seven-wicket haul. "I love bowling the longer spells. Especially in winter, the body heats up only after seven or eight overs. Bowling long spells is my strength and conditions were perfect for it as well," says Yadav.



Gaurav Yadav, who was instrumental in MP's 2022 triumph, has switched to Pondicherry now. Pratyush Raj

Delhi were bowled out for 148 runs, and in reply, Pondicherry were 113 for 2.

In Madhya Pradesh's run to the Ranji title in 2022, with 23 strikes in five games, Gaurav was the highest wicket-taker among all seamers. Yadav alongside Avesh Khan, Kuldeep Sen, Kumar Kartikey, Saransh Jain and Anubhav Agarwal, had formed a formidable bowling unit for the Madhya Pradesh. It is not only Gaurav, who has left Madhya Pradesh, Kuldeep Sen, who

made his international debut in December last year, is set to play for Tamil Nadu in the 2023-24 domestic season.

"It's not an easy decision to leave your home and play. We were doing good, were a champion team. I was the highest wicket taker among fast bowlers that season and took six wickets in the final," he says.

Yadav said the Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) did not allow him to travel with IPL teams as net bowler and didn't select him in white-ball squads.

"I had taken 23 wickets in nine games in the 2019-20 Vijay Hazare Trophy. Next season, I was not in any white-ball squads"

"CSK had called me so many times in 2021. They wanted me to join the team as a net bowler in UAE, but the association didn't allow it. CSK wrote a mail but the MPCA said I was not available. I said no to CSK. They were not allowing me to go on the trials," says Gaurav.

### Splendid effort

In his long spells, Gaurav showed that he still has the fire in him as he gave away nothing. The most fascinating part of his bowling was his ability to bowl onto the stumps as five of his seven wickets were bowled or leg before the wicket.

"Playing as a professional is a different kind of pressure. We won the toss and got

assistance from the pitch. We bowled well as a unit and got the reward," says Gaurav. "Even for Madhya Pradesh, you can check, we used to bowl as a pack. In cricket, you can't do anything single-handedly. I feel the same for Pondicherry and I strongly believe that this team can reach the knock-outs," he adds.

### Ishant, Navdeep fail to impress

If not for the valuable 45-run stand between Harsh Tyagi and Navdeep Saini, Delhi would have been in danger of not crossing the three-figure mark.

With the ball, Delhi's seamer led by Ishant Sharma, a veteran of 105 Tests, and India A regular Navdeep Saini lacked the discipline and failed to make the most out of the pitch, which had still a lot to offer.

Ishant picked the wicket of opener Akash Kargave, but lacked rhythm. On the other hand, Navdeep Saini was erratic and was bowling two or three balls on the leg stumps in every over. Debutant Himanshu Chauhan was impressive whenever he was pitching it up but was not consistent with his length.

**Brief Scores:** Delhi: 148 all out in 62.5 overs (Harsh Tyagi 34; Gaurav Yadav 7/49, Abin Matthew 2/28) vs Pondicherry: 113 for 2 in 29 overs (Paras Ratnarkhe 31 not out; Ishant Sharma 1/28)

## RANJI ROUND-UP

### Rinku on song for UP

Rinku Singh displayed his brilliance in red-ball cricket as well, scoring a smart 92, allowing Uttar Pradesh to finish on 302 in their first innings against Kerala in their Elite Group B match.

**Brief scores:** Kerala 220/6 (V Vinod 74; K Yadav 3/66) vs Uttar Pradesh: 302 (RSingh 92, DJurel 63; Nidheesh 3/68).

### Padikkal, Pandey hit tons

Devdutt Padikkal and Manish Pandey cracked attractive hundreds to power Karnataka to a commanding 461 for 6 against Punjab on the second day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group C match.

## BRIEFLY

Brazil legend Zagalo dies at age 92

Rio de Janeiro: Mario Zagalo, who won two World Cups as a player, one as a coach and another as an assistant coach for Brazil, has died. He was 92. The first person to win the World Cup both as a player and a manager, Zagalo is for many Brazilian soccer fans synonymous with patriotism, grit and glory. The only person to ever win four World Cup titles was also the last living member of Brazil's starting team in its first championship victory in the tournament in 1958. Zagalo died late Friday night of multiple-organ failure as a consequence of multiple comorbidities, Hospital Barra D'Or in Rio de Janeiro said in a statement. AP

## Deshwal powers

## Jaipur to win

Mumbai: Defending champions Jaipur Pink Panthers rode on skipper Arjun Deshwal's 'super 10' to overcome U Mumba 41-31 in their Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 match here on Saturday. Arjun and Ankush were the main contributors in Panthers' win, while for U Mumba, Guman Singh was the star performer. Playing on home turf, U Mumba struggled in the first half and relied on Guman's raids. He scored 10 of U Mumba's 13 points in the first 20 minutes as the defence managed just one tackle point. PTI

## Srihari upsets GM Savchenko

Chennai: Talented Indian junior Srihari LR, who is also a Grandmaster norm holder, continued his fine run as he upset Russian GM Boris Savchenko in the ninth round of the Chennai Open International Grandmaster Chess tournament here on Saturday. In a thrilling game, Srihari gave up his rook for a knight, ripping open Savchenko's king-side. Facing heavy loss of reinforcement on the board, Savchenko quit on the 42nd move. Srihari will now be playing for the title and face Belarus GM Alexei Fedorov in the final round on Sunday. Behind Srihari is Vietnamese Grandmaster Nguyen Duc Hoa at 7.5 points. PTI

SHIVANI NAIK  
JANUARY 6

GYMNAST DIPA Karmakar is often accused to her face, of getting old. As if the rest of the world doesn't. "Aap aged ho gaye ho. Gymnastics mein ab kya karna hai? Rio ke baad hi retire hona chahiye tha, (You should have retired after Rio)" she narrates the typical advice that flows freely towards her. Rampant ageism is only a fraction of what she has coped over the last few years. Even the sporting community that ought to know better, considering 48-year-old Uzbek Oksana Chusovitina is still going strong in the sport, throws in generous casual jibes at Karmakar. "It happens everyday. But what can be done?" she asks.

Not really setting out to prove a point, but doing it anyway, Karmakar won her sixth National Championships All Around title this last week, finishing ahead of the rest of the field, a full 14 years after she won her first gold in 2010. "Anyon can talk anything about athletes in India. But yes, thoda-sa prove kiya at the Nationals that I'm back," she laughs, after picking a gold and two silvers at Bhubaneswar.

Not many have returned to win the All Around - an aggregate of scores over floor exercise, beam, vault and uneven bars - after two ACL surgeries. "I had support of my family and coach through every up and down. Not many can return from two surgeries to compete on all apparatus. We don't even have a good physio in Tripura. If I could achieve this without any support, then surely I can do more in the future," she says, explaining why the title made her extremely happy after proving "thoda-sa", a little. "I'd been waiting for this day for long," she adds.

She was dropped from the Asian Games list despite topping the trials and has been shunned by central funding bodies. "Ab woh ho gayaa. I don't want to revisit that topic," she says, betraying no rage.

There's no beating around the bush, so you ask her if her two-year ban for doping could be the reason she was treated like a pariah, despite serving out her 24 month suspension.



Rio Games fourth-place finisher Dipa Karmakar won her sixth National Championships All Around title this last week. File

Hundreds of athletes serve out bans and legally return to the sport around the world. But could there be a moral taint whispered and imposed on her beyond the official punishment period that gets used to treat her badly?

"I don't think anyone thinks that way," she says. "But yes, if you want to constantly think negative, negative about an athlete, then there's nothing I can do about it. As an athlete, I had affection of supporters before and will always have it in future," she states. "I can only prove I'm good at the sport."

The Nationals were announced 25 days ago, and Karmakar went into prep mode straightaway. "It was crucial for future selection. First I thought I'll only do 1-2 events, but then decided on all 4, as I wanted to see for

myself where I stood," she says.

The Rio Games 4th place finisher and CWG medalist gulped down being ostracised and for better or worse, internalised being left rudderless. "For the last two years, no one supported me except my coach and family. Initially I was sad about it. But as a human, it's very normal in India to have one day when everyone is hailing you, and then later there's no one by your side. Then you stop feeling bad. All I focussed on was a strong comeback," she says.

Initially she coped with knee pain twice a week, then her favourite apparatus vault threw up several challenges. "Some days the coach would scream a lot. Other times he patiently explained. There weren't too many days when I didn't cry returning home from

practice. Without competition and exposure I was lost. So it's good to start the year with the ultimate national title," she says.

## Simple, clean execution

One of the biggest differences in Dipa 2014 when she won her last title and 2024 when she won her latest, was her choice of routines. "The Difficulty values weren't high this time. I focussed on simple vaults with clean execution. Just finishing all 4 events with no faults and 100 percent was a big high," she says. Globally, the most renowned gymnasts including Simone Biles don't go for risky manouevres all the time, but focus on executing basics seamlessly. As such, at these Nationals, Karmakar proved she can hit high scores even without trying wild adventures,

thereby mainstreaming her All around credentials, aligning them with top gymnasts.

She was especially pleased with the Balance Beam, a wickedly testing apparatus, post her surgery. "I will have to do a high D eventually, and am confident in training. Vault is my specialty, but here at the Nationals I didn't need to, to win a medal," she says. The upgrade from Tsukahara 360 (one flip) to Tsukahara 720(two flips) is underway in training, and she lost out on an uneven bars gold only on a tiebreaker. "I'll need to be aggressive going for gold to improve silvers. But each mistake teaches you something," she says.

She went in expecting little, and after being dumped for the Asian Games, she says she can only hope fairness is applied next time, and she gets a camp or help to participate for upcoming meets. Having proved she's India's best ahead of all the youngsters, the 30 year old can only hope. "I don't know if they'll send me or not. I just have to ensure a good performance," she says. The selection criteria are straightforward - a bunch of World Cups to qualify for Paris.

The country might or might not help her and acknowledge her merit but she loves the game to bits. "I'll never forget gymnastics, I didn't realise when this sport became my life. If I don't go to the gym one day, I feel like the day will be rotten. Itna ghus gayi hu isme, (I am immersed in it)" she says.

The country might dump her again without a thought, but Karmakar says she got her small thrills from teasing her coach BS Nandi that she had more National titles than him. "I think he has 4. I'm on 6 now - 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2024. Now I also have a record," she laughs heartily, proud of her longevity.

She works hard, trains harder and spends her Sundays shopping, and buys dresses often getting yelled at by her mother. And enjoys every morsel of food at sit-down meals. "I love food. Mujhe karele ka juice bhi pasand hai," she says, of a bottoms-up drink since her early days. A dash of bitter gourd juice is her vitamin fix. It even cleanses bad recent memories and reminds of happier ones, for Dipa Karmakar.

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# eye



TRAVEL, PAGE 2

**Down the Mekong**

Zac O'Yeah on his culinary trip across Southeast Asia, where seafood menus and the edible insect movement led to unexpected encounters



TRAVEL, PAGE 3

**Under the Terracotta Sun**

A photographer documents a changing Bengal, through its temples, bazaars and rituals and in the process revisits its ancient culture through the everyday

## ONE FOR THE ROAD

*As a new year unfolds, we look back on the journeys we took, the detours we made and the destinations we are headed to. First up, a writer on the romance of piling into an automobile and heading for the horizon*

**STEPHEN ALTER**

**I**N THIS day and age, when carbon emissions have been proven to cause climate change and fossil fuels are considered environmental toxins, I'm not sure it's a good idea to wax nostalgic about road trips. Yet, when I was a boy in the 1960s and early '70s, there was still a certain innocence and, yes, even some romance to piling into an automobile and heading for the horizon. India's highways were not as crowded then, as they are today, and most vehicles couldn't accelerate above fifty miles an hour. (Kilometres still lay in the future.) Major roads between cities were no wider than two lanes with large shade trees providing an overarching canopy of green foliage, sometimes so dense it felt as if we were passing through a tunnel of leaves.

Road trips were a family tradition for us. In the winter of 1933, long before I was born, my grandparents and their four sons toured north India in a Model A Ford, with luggage strapped on the back and tied to the running boards. The following summer, at the age of five, my father travelled to America for the first time with his parents and brothers. After taking a steamer from Karachi to Basra, they cruised up the Euphrates by boat and then hired a Nash convertible to drive from Baghdad to Jerusalem. There were no roads along this route and they joined a caravan of motor vehicles that drove across the open desert. After circling around the eastern Mediterranean and finally sailing from Genoa to Boston, my grandfather immediately purchased a second-hand Willy's Overland and drove the family all the way across the United States to San Francisco.

Those journeys should have cured my father of any wanderlust but, in fact, they only made him want to keep on driving. My

mother didn't have much choice, though she seemed to enjoy road trips herself. Our first family car was a Landmaster in which we travelled regularly from our home in Etah, on the plains of Uttar Pradesh, where my father was posted, to the hill station of Mussoorie, where my brothers and I went to school. It was a 12-hour drive by way of Delhi, where we often stayed overnight before proceeding via Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Roorkee and Dehradun.

If any route on the map is imprinted in my genes, it is the drive from Delhi to Mussoorie, though many of the landmarks I remember have disappeared and the highway is now six or eight lanes of high-speed traffic. One of our favourite stops along the way, where we often had a picnic lunch, was the canal bank next to the bridge at Khatauli. When I was nine or 10, a small restaurant called Cheetah sprang up on this site and quickly became a popular roadside halt.

After the Landmaster was sold, my father's obsession with internal combustion led him to purchase a 1954 army surplus Willy's Jeep that he bought from a *kabadiwalla* in Motia Khan, Delhi's second-hand market. We used to tease my father that his optimistic philosophy of life was reflected in this jeep—"Nothing is hopeless. Everything can be fixed!" He was a good mechanic, and the jeep was constantly in need of repair. The self-starter seldom worked. My brothers and I were enlisted to turn the crank, which had a nasty habit of kicking back like an ill-tempered mule. The fuel gauge didn't work either, but again the crank came in handy. We would dip it into the petrol tank to check the level.

Our family took many road trips in this jeep, to places like Kashmir, Kulu and Corbett National Park. Often, we travelled in summer, during our school holidays. Of course, the jeep had no air-conditioning, but then neither did it have any windows or doors. The canvas roof rolled up at the sides, so that while we were moving the breeze kept us relatively comfortable. At some point, my father put a makeshift aluminum cover on top in a futile attempt to protect us from rain during the monsoon. Five of us, along with our two cocker spaniels, fit snugly in the jeep while all of our luggage was packed in the trailer.



**Recently, though, I've lost any desire to drive long distances. Perhaps it's because most highways have become characterless ribbons of concrete or maybe there isn't the same sense of adventure**

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Driving from Mussoorie to Kashmir took us four days, stopping overnight in Ludhiana, Pathankot and Batote before finally reaching Pahalgam, where we camped on the meadows for two weeks. The journey was leisurely

and often interrupted by railway crossings where we had to stop to wait for a train to pass by. We didn't really mind these delays because there were vendors selling cold drinks and snacks. There were also regular stops because of flat tyres or a broken fanbelt. A section of our trip followed the Grand Trunk Road, which evoked a sense of history, retracing the past. Thirty-five years earlier, my grandparents had driven this route in their Ford. And then, in 1967, when we visited America, my father insisted on driving from New York to California and back again.

Ultimately, my brothers and I learned how to drive the jeep ourselves, more by trial and error than through any formal lessons. Sadly, I didn't inherit my father's mechanical skills or his patience with vehicles that

refused to start. Over the years, I have taken several road trips myself, more often on a motorcycle rather than in a car. Recently, though, I've lost any desire to drive long distances. Perhaps it's because most highways have become characterless ribbons of concrete or maybe there isn't the same sense of adventure, not knowing how many hours the drive will take or what obstacles and detours lie ahead. These days, you just punch your route into your phone, and it tells you where to go and how long it will take. The unpredictability and freedom of those journeys are gone.

Stephen Alter's forthcoming book, *The Cobra's Gaze: Exploring India's Wild Heritage*, will be published in February

**COUNTRY ROADS**

(Clockwise from top) Our 1954 Willy's Jeep on a forest road; Our Landmaster being inspected by my brothers and me; My grandparents' Model A Ford crossing a pontoon bridge in 1933

PHOTOS: R CALTER

## Sunset over the Brahmaputra

From the banks of Assam's great river to the wilds of Kaziranga, it's a rewarding journey of awe and wonder

**PHILIPP ACKERMANN**

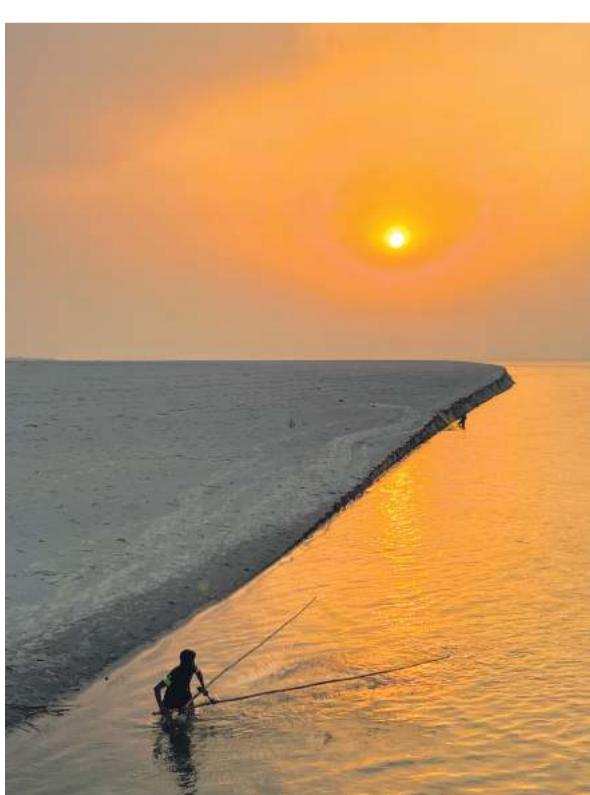
AMONG THE numerous trips I did last year, the most scenic one was to Assam. The Northeast is not as much on the agenda of European tourists as it should be. After having spent a week in Assam, I would highly recommend a trip to the banks of the Brahmaputra and to the hills and parks of the state; it is a unique experience.

First, it is the river itself that is breathtaking; its sheer size and its width are as stunning as its "wild" character. I spent two days on a wooden boat on the river. The water seemed to run slowly and peacefully, but unchanelling as it is, it changes its course regularly.

New sand banks appear; others disappear. Quite a challenge for the boatmen who have to manoeuvre the difficult current. During our boat ride, dolphins showed their noses every now and then, birds flew over the river and boats with fishermen crossed our way. The slow and majestic moving of the water had an impact on everybody — we became more and more relaxed and enjoyed the peaceful scenery. Chilling on deck! A dinner served ashore on a sandbank during sunset made the river trip one of the high points of my stay.

The second high was in Kaziranga. The natural reserve with its many wetlands attracts an enormous variety of birds. As I am a bird watcher, I was excited to see the great hornbill again (I had seen it in Periyar in Kerala before, where the species has a disjunct population). While there were different raptors and waterfowl, I encountered several red jungle fowl, the ancestors of our domestic chicken. I am always surprised how similar the wild one looks to the chicken we know from European farms, although domestication happened more than 8,000 years ago.

We drove with our naturalist through the

**PLANET EARTH**

A view of the magnificent Brahmaputra; Kaziranga's most popular resident — the one-horned rhino

dirt roads and it took only a very short time to discover the "signature" animal of Kaziranga: the Indian rhino. What an impressive mammal! The most striking characteristic are its

thick grey flaps of skin. They make the animal look like it wears a knight's armour. To see these animals grazing at a close distance was literally jaw-dropping. There are more than

2,000 of them in Kaziranga, which is more than 50 per cent of the world's population of this endangered species. I was reminded of the German artist Albrecht Dürer, who in 1515

made a woodcut depicting the Indian rhino — he had never seen one but read a description of it. Against this background, one has to say: it is pretty accurate.

The second big animal in Kaziranga, which is more widely spread in India and is nothing short of fantastic, is the elephant. We had walked for half a day through the hills when we suddenly had to freeze at the command of our rangers: 50 metres ahead, a big herd of elephants crossed our way, cows and calves and young bulls. I watched, fascinated. Later, in the car, our naturalist again made us wait near a wetland with high reeds. He suspected elephants in the reeds (how on earth could he have spotted them, I thought) and right he was. After a while, the elephants came out and crossed the dirt road, among them two very young calves. A fabulous view.

Outside Kaziranga, we visited tea plantations, where the tea grows in the plains and not on hillsides like elsewhere in India. Strolling through the tea bushes protected by the shade trees felt great. But Assam is way more than wildlife and tea: It has a great and interesting history. With our naturalist, we discussed the 600 years of history of the Ahom kingdom and the battles against the Bengali sultanates and the Mughals. We discussed the different layers and histories of Assam's considerable Muslim population. We saw beautiful Hindu temples. And we had fabulous Assamese food: not overly spicy (good for me) but very hot, full of chilies (not so good for me).

Assam, with its own language, history, crafts and skills, is a unique part of the sub-continent, a destination full of surprises.

The writer is German Ambassador to India and Bhutan





JANUARY 7, 2024



## Under a Terracotta Sun

A photographer's mission to document the changing nature of Bengal — through temples, bazaars and rituals — has shed light on an ancient culture



SANJAY DAS

**I**N 2021, I hired a local boatman and saw how badly the 21 Jain terracotta temples, at Telkupi in Bengal's Purulia district, had eroded over time. This area, along with most of the temples situated there, was submerged in 1959 because of the construction of a dam across the Damodar river at Panchet. It's a beautiful place and I wanted to draw people's attention to a piece of our culture we're losing. As a photographer I can't preserve such heritage, but if I can show it and move people, maybe someone will be able to.

As a travel photographer, I have been telling visual stories of different parts of India for more than two decades. My journey is ongoing and I've always tried to discover various known and unknown facets of this country. For that, one needs to walk off the beaten track. My objective is to create an imagery that tells a story — in texture, and in light and shadow — to form a unique blend, which is spiritually as well as mentally rewarding.

The camera became my constant companion around the time I joined Delhi's College of Art. I was also shaped by the cultural ambience I grew up in. We were a joint family of eight and I remember our house being this perpetual bustle of activities. The Kojagori Lakshmi Pujo was one of the bigger annual celebrations. And my maternal uncles were the founder members of Sreemoti Opera Jatra, one of Delhi's first folk-theatre groups. As an artist, my senses were shaped



THE BALLADEERS

(Above) The submerged terracotta temples in Bengal's Purulia district; (below) a folk performance

by these childhood experiences.

In 2011, I was invited to the Birla Academy Gallery to exhibit my works. I had never been to Kolkata before that. The experience of going around the city in a clicking frenzy was exceptional. I was just flowing where the buzzing streets, the North Kolkata bazaars, the worn-out mansions and the leisurely trams were taking me. This was exactly what I had always wanted to do! And the discovery had been purely accidental. Many before me had photographed Kolkata. I did not want to repeat those themes, so I continued to study for more avenues. That's when I chanced upon the terracotta temples of Bengal.

Whenever I travel, I interact with local people and never ask them to pose for me. That's why I go back so many times to take these photographs, and even eat and sleep with them sometimes — it's to get to know the people so that they are comfortable with me and aren't irritated by my presence. I do my research in Delhi and completely map the area and how I need to get to the area. In 2017, I visited Medinipur and saw performances dedicated to Manasa Devi, worshipped to grant protection from snakes during the monsoon. At night, the *palas* (folk ballads) are performed, one of which is depicted here.

Bengal has been a zone that has deeply inspired me time and again. It has been 12 years now and I keep going back to the region, almost always preferring to take the road instead of any other means, driving all the way from Delhi, taking local boats and animal carts to reach the nooks and crevices of the fascinating land that holds so many surprises still. Be it the landscapes, the waters, the people, the dialects, the architecture, the interiors, the crafts, the folk paintings, the cuisines, the textiles, or the festivals. Bengal is one place where culture gleams in the very way of life.

Sanjay Das is a Delhi-based photographer

## A Perfect Drive? Only in Your Dreams

When *Dil Chahta Hai* released in 2001, it distilled 'coolness' into two tangible aspirations: the Bombay-Goa pilgrimage and driving a luxury car



ROHAN BANERJEE

I HAD done little more than nudge the accelerator with my foot and the car bounded forward on the highway, its engine rumbling in delight. As the digital speedometer scuttled upwards, mirroring my rising panic, I took my foot off the pedal. The vehicles behind us honked their protest at our sudden drop in speed. Realising I should move to a slower lane, I gave the steering wheel a gentle twitch. Those who are well-versed in the norms of Indian driving etiquette would be familiar with this twitch. It is a declaration of intent, akin to dipping one's toe into a swimming pool to test the water. When you execute this

twitch, you do not mean to immediately infiltrate the neighbouring lane. Rather, you merely place the nose of your car upon its border and commence a battle of wills. If your opponent accelerates, you retreat into your own lane; if they slow down, you swoop in to claim victory.

Only this time, when I twitched the steering wheel, all 1.5 tonnes of our SUV lurched sideways, triggering another spate of agitated honking. Cursing the impressive steering sensitivity, I swung the car back into line. This, I muttered to myself, was not quite the blissful Bombay-Goa road trip that Sid, Sameer and Akash had promised us over two decades ago.

When *Dil Chahta Hai* released in 2001, it instantly became a benchmark not just for millennial male friendships but also the perfect road trip. Three guys driving an open-top convertible through idyllic tree-lined roads, their faces lit by dappled sunlight and freedom — this was the stuff of teenage dreams. For an entire generation of adolescents, the title track of the movie distilled the coveted notion of 'coolness' into two tangible aspira-



ROAD-TRIPPING

Anuskura Ghats offer a rich fodder for Instagram-chronicles

COURTESY: ROHAN BANERJEE



MEMORIES OF ANOTHER DAY

The family home is an old one, where Ghalib stopped over on his way to Calcutta

## Two weddings and a dollhouse

A family road trip across Uttar Pradesh — with unclean dhabas, rocky roads and an unwieldy toy



OMAIR AHMAD

Trying to find a shop to fix a tubeless tyre in interior Bundelkhand is no fun.

It is far safer and more comfortable to drive — or be a passenger, as Sabah and I switched every two hours — in a German automobile on wide open highways. But safety and comfort make for less fascinating stories. It is hard, now, to turn off from the expressways and explore, even if the vistas along the way are often magnificent. There are ruined tombs along the broken terrain of the Doab. There are orchards now out of reach, from which I have stolen fruit after being exhausted pushing a malfunctioning motorcycle.

Much of this nostalgia is, of course, based on the fact that I was a man having adventures. For women, travel earlier had often been a hellish experience, especially when it came to the lack of clean restrooms. These are now not so hard to find on the expressway towards Lucknow. Then we turned onto the Bundelkhand highway. Unlike on Yamuna expressway or the Delhi-Lucknow expressway, the dhabas and restrooms had still to be built.

In Banda, Sami, my Socialist American nephew, had to confront his feudal family roots. Our family home is an old one, where Ghalib stopped over on his trips to Calcutta trying to get his pension. It is still often referred to as Barrister Sahib ki Kothi, after my great-grandfather, who served as the deputy speaker of the Legislative Council. We ate and relaxed as Sami filmed family recollections, and then headed out to Gorakhpur, dollhouse still with us.

There is no expressway connecting my maternal home and my paternal home, and there was fog. Much shorter than the trip from Delhi to Banda, the trip from Banda to Gorakhpur — stuck in traffic, negotiating potholes — took twice as long. An electricity surge had shorted out the water pump in our Gorakhpur home, and getting ready for a wedding — and we had to attend two — requires bathing. But since our family has lived there for more than 300 years, we were surrounded by relatives helping us out as we somehow managed to make ourselves presentable. Two days later, we were on the road again, having left the dollhouse with a delighted Tooba. My middle-aged posterior luxuriated in the comfort of expressways again all the way to my aunt's house in Lucknow, and the next day, to Delhi.

Omair Ahmad is a writer and journalist. His most recent book is *Tall Tales by a Small Dog*

sport. When viewed through the window of a Maruti 800, these impudent vehicles invoked a feeling of awe. They seemed to belong to a different, fantastical world; a world one could only hope to encounter in books and films; a world of international travel, five-star-hotels and high-end fashion.

In later years, many aspects of this glamorous world would become a reality. Yet, the luxury car held fast to its aura; its air of being something that could not simply be owned but had to be earned. So naturally, when a friend conquered this final frontier and became the proud owner of a BMW SUV, it was cause for celebration. And what better way to celebrate, we figured, than emulating the three friends who made the Bombay-Goa road trip a national ambition.

As with life, in road trips too, convenience often comes at the cost of discovery. The multi-lane expressways traversing miles of featureless terrain can certainly shorten your travel time, but they leave no mark upon your memory. It is, instead, the winding ways offering glorious countryside views that remain etched in your mind. The Anuskura Ghats were our undisputed highlight.

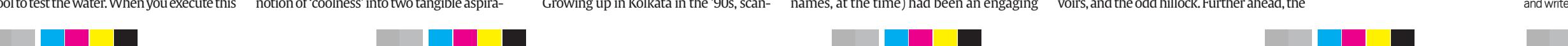
A little over a couple of hours from North Goa, the Anuskura Ghats offered rich fodder for the Instagram-chronicle of our drive. The narrow road snaked around lush green hills replenished by the retreating monsoons of end-September. After climbing to a height of a few hundred metres, we stopped at the shoulder of the road, brought out the thermos and settled down for a tea break in the most gorgeous of settings. In front us, stretching to the horizon, lay a stunning vista of emerald fields, azure blue ponds, water reservoirs, and the odd hillock. Further ahead, the

road — accompanied, on occasions, by a gurgling stream — meandered through rolling meadows and windmill farms. The charming sight of these gigantic monoliths serenely spinning their arms as if immersed in quiet reverie, engendered a sense of tranquility — which vanished within minutes of us descending to the plains and the drudgery of highway traffic.

I have always considered myself a good friend and one thing — the absolute minimum, some might say — that good friends take care not to do is wreck a pal's brand-new car. When driving the months-old SUV on the highway between Karad and Satar, all my attention was devoted to upholding this fundamental rule of friendship. This was no care-free, casual jaunt à la Sameer and gang. This could spell ruin. So deep were my levels of concentration that I was oblivious to the honking of other motorists and the invective they hurled in my direction passed by me as the idle wind. After a few hours, when I vacated the driver's seat, my heart had taken a beating but the car remained unblemished.

I thought about my juvenile yearning to drive a luxury car and how the flames of that desire had been doused in cold sweat. When we eventually stepped out of the vehicle — backs sore, necks stiff — after a 13-hour ride, I could not help but wonder how Sid, Sameer and Akash had miraculously completed the same road trip without encountering any traffic or displaying any signs of exhaustion. Perhaps some things, I thought to myself, are meant to remain in the realm of fantasy.

Rohan Banerjee is a Mumbai-based lawyer and writer



# HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

From childhood trips savouring simple fare along the way to a recent visit to Nagaland, travelling has given me a peek into the culinary traditions of India



NIYATI RAO

member the taste. I don't even know if the place still exists but the taste of that meal still lingers. It also taught me that great food can come from anywhere.

Another time we were driving from Pune to Satara, when the car broke down. There were endless fields of grains and crops and amidst it was a straw-clad hut. An elderly couple lived in it. The gentleman gave us some water to cool down the engine and then invited us for lunch. That meal has impacted me greatly. I can still literally taste the spices as I speak about it. It was a blistering spicy cauliflower curry with bajra bhakris and quarters of onions on the side. It is one of the simplest but most wholesome meals I have ever had. It had warmth, both physically and spiritually. Physically, as it was the cold month of December and spiritually, as it defined the word hospitality for a young person, which played a large part in who I am today.

My father loved driving. In those days, there was no GPS, hence taking detours came organically. The will to explore was not caged by technology. I remember the one time when I was about six or seven and we were driving from Chennai to Tirupati. The driver took a shortcut and somewhere on the way, we stopped for a water break. With a family of food lovers, the first thing my parents noticed was a 10-seater shack where the locals were relishing some delights. We had the softest idlis possible with hot sambhar, spicy chicken curry and a short grain rice biryani. It happened such a long time ago, but I still re-

**G**ROWING UP on Madh Island in Mumbai, I remember travelling with my parents and brother regularly. Those travels shaped a lot of who I am today.

My parents made our travels an extremely interactive experience, as we went appreciating the food, cultures, sites and people along the way.

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gion, not only with meat, but also with leafy vegetables. The herbs that would go in them would come from her own vegetable garden, which also boasted tiny aubergines, a variety of squash and pumpkins, cucumbers and roots and potatoes. For the salad, she served chayote and passion fruit tender shoots. She even made a spicy chutney to go along with the food, ground on a special pestle and mortar—I picked up one of these later on in the trip. The chutney consisted of special Naga

## THE PLATTER

(Clockwise from left)  
Pork stew, chayote and passion fruit shoots; Bayberries

My parents made our travels an extremely interactive experience, as we went appreciating the food, cultures and sites

We took the liberty of walking to the kitchen and asking her to acquaint us with the local style of cooking. She was kind enough to not only share her knowledge but also teach us her techniques. She made a stew using dried home-smoked beef jerky and yams. It was interesting to see how she smoked pork at home or her way of making a hearty stew that didn't need any extra spices or oil. It was interesting to see how water-based cooking is so prominent in the re-



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## ADVERTORIAL

from December to March, when the nights are longest. As our Tour Managers always tell us, the experience of seeing the auroras is often described as surreal and mesmerising, often being compared to a child seeing snow for the first time in their lives. Even today, it is on my bucket list and I'm really hoping to tick it off in 2024.

Let me now come to my final point. It is related to the photos that we click of the Northern Lights. Have you often heard your friends tell you that the Northern Lights are sometimes better seen in photos than the naked eye. Why is that so? So the reason for that is that the Northern Lights often appear more vivid in photos than to the naked eye due to the way cameras capture light. Cameras, especially those with long exposure settings, can accumulate light over time, which enhances the colours and brightness of the auroras. In contrast, human eyes perceive light instantaneously and may not detect the fainter colours, especially in low light conditions. Therefore, while the auroras are still visible and impressive to the naked eye, they often appear more dramatic and colorful in photographs. And if they are going to be the brightest in 2024, then I'm very very sure that your trip to see the Northern Lights is also going to be in 2024. Hundreds of tourists from all around the world are definitely going to tick this off their bucket list, so why not you?



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## The 2024 Northern Lights Brightest in 20 years!

There is a lot of chatter on the Internet about the Northern Lights in 2024! What's so unique about them this year? Lets find out...



Neil Patil  
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many viewing opportunities for the Northern Lights.

So what is special about the Northern Lights and 2024? This year, between January and October 2024, is when scientists expect to see the peak of solar activity. We often tend to hear more of the Northern Lights mainly because the landmass near the Arctic allows us to have

heightened activity, including an increase in sunspots, which emit more streams of the solar winds towards Earth. When these increased number of particles will interact with Earth's magnetic field, particularly at the poles, they will create even more stunning brighter auroras.

What does this mean for us as observers? The increased solar activity during the solar maximum means more charged particles, leading to more frequent and intense Northern Lights, potentially visible even at lower latitudes. And this seems to have already started - my cousin flying back to India from the US via Europe witnessed first-hand a stunning display of the Northern Lights in the night sky from his plane window.

The best places to see the Northern Lights during the upcoming solar maximum in 2024 and 2025 include Norway (especially in parts like the Lofoten Islands, Svalbard, and Tromsø), Swedish Lapland, Iceland, Rovaniemi and Finnish Lapland, and Canada. These locations offer great chances to witness the Northern Lights due to their high latitudes and dark skies, which are very important to view the Northern Lights.

The best time to view the Northern Lights is during the winter months, from late September to early April, when there are longer nights and darker skies, which are ideal for observing auroras. The peak season is often considered to be