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THE WORLD

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WORLD



Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar: AP

MALAYSIA
Ibrahim sworn in as King in unique rotation system

Kuala Lumpur: The billionaire sultan who rules Malaysia's Johor state was sworn in as the nation's new king Wednesday under a unique rotating monarchy system. Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, 65, took his oath of office at the palace and signed the instrument of the proclamation of office in a ceremony witnessed by other royal families, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Cabinet members. A coronation ceremony will be held later. Sultan Ibrahim has an extensive business empire ranging from real estate to telecoms and power plants. AP

THAILAND
Court: Stop bid to change royal defamation law

Bangkok: Thailand's Constitutional Court ruled Wednesday that the progressive Move Forward party must cease advocating amending the law on royal defamation. The court's nine judges deemed it unconstitutional to advocate a change in Article 112 in the country's Criminal Code which protects the royal institution from criticism by imposing severe penalties on those found to violate it, including up to 15 years in jail. AP

POLAND
Govt softens stand on WWII compensation

Berlin: Thailand's Constitutional Court ruled Wednesday that the progressive Move Forward party must cease advocating amending the law on royal defamation — a decision that leaves the party vulnerable to being dissolved. The court's nine judges deemed it unconstitutional to advocate a change in Article 112 in the country's Criminal Code — also known as lese-majeste law — which protects the royal institution from criticism by imposing severe penalties on those found to violate it, including up to 15 years in jail per offense. AP

UNITED STATES
CEOs of Meta, TikTok, others testify in Senate

Washington: Sexual predators. Addictive features. Suicide and eating disorders. Unrealistic beauty standards. Bullying. These are just some of the issues young people are dealing with on social media — and children's advocates say companies are not doing enough to protect them. On Wednesday, the CEOs of Meta, TikTok, X and other social media companies went before the Senate Committee to testify as lawmakers and parents grow increasingly concerned about the effects of social media on young people's lives.

The hearing began with recorded testimony from kids and parents who said they or their children were

CONCERN REMAIN THAT ADDITIONAL U.S. STRIKES COULD FURTHER INFLAME REGION

Iran says will 'decisively respond' as Biden weighs Jordan strike payback

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, JANUARY 31

IRAN THREATENED Wednesday to "decisively respond" to any US attack on the Islamic Republic following President Joe Biden's linking of Tehran to the killing of three US soldiers at Jordan military base.

The US has signaled it is preparing for retaliatory strikes in the Mideast in the wake of the Sunday drone attack that also injured at least 40 troops at Tower 22, a secret base in northeastern Jordan that's been crucial to the American presence in Syria.

However, concerns remain that any additional American strikes could further inflame a region already roiled by Israel's ongoing war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on shipping in the Red Sea.

A US Navy destroyer in the waterway shot down an anti-ship cruise missile launched by the Houthis late Tuesday, the latest attack targeting American forces patrolling the key maritime trade route, officials said.

The Iranian warnings first came from Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's ambassador to the UN. He gave a briefing to Iranian journalists late Tuesday. The Iranian mission to the U.N. did not respond to requests for comment or elaboration Wednesday on Iravani's remarks.



Displaced Palestinians flee Khan Younis to Rafah as Israel hardens its strikes, Wednesday. Reuters

EU to launch Red Sea naval mission

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BRUSSELS, JANUARY 31

THE EUROPEAN Union plans to launch a naval mission in the Red Sea within three weeks to help defend cargo ships against attacks by Houthi rebels in Yemen that are hampering trade and driving up prices, the bloc's top diplomat said Wednesday.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he wants the mission to be up and running by February 17. Officials say that seven EU countries are ready to

provide ships or planes. Belgium has already committed to send a frigate. Germany is expected to do the same.

"This is the purpose: protection of the ships. Intercepting of the attacks against the ships. Not participating in any kinds of actions against the Houthis," Borrell told reporters.

EU defence ministers were expected to decide later Wednesday which country should lead the naval effort — France, Greece and Italy are vying for that role — and where the mission's headquarters should be based.

US URGES 'CHANGES' IN UN AGENCY FOR FUNDS

United Nations: The United States said on Tuesday that the UN agency for Palestinian refugees needs to make "fundamental changes" — including review of staff management to ensure those involved in crimes are held accountable — before restarting funding halted over Israeli accusations that some agency staff took part in the October 7 attack by Hamas militants. REUTERS



EFFORTS TO END GAZA, UKRAINE WARS IN LIST

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE NOMINATIONS CLOSE

THE DOORS closed Wednesday on nominations for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize, with peace activists connected to the wars in Gaza and Ukraine among the known entries. Attempts to end the war in Gaza have been a theme for some of the announced nominations.

AP

THIRD PRISON TERM SINCE 2022

Imran, wife get 14 yrs in jail for graft, day after 10-yr sentence

Denied cross-examination, says PTI chief Gohar Khan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 31

PAKISTAN'S FORMER prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were sentenced on Wednesday to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment each in a corruption case, a day after the beleaguered leader was given a 10-year jail term for leaking state secrets.

The verdict by an accountability court, which comes eight days before the February 8 general elections, has added to the legal woes of the 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician's bid to return to power. Khan is already serving a three-year term after being convicted of corruption in a separate Toshakhana case in 2022.

Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) faced numerous troubles before the election starting with the denial of its election symbol, the cricket bat,



Pak ex-PM Imran Khan, wife Bushra Bibi at Lahore High Court in July 2023. File

Mohammad Bashir conducted the hearing at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, where Khan is incarcerated.

In the Ishaikhana corruption case, he was accused of retaining expensive state gifts they received during his tenure as Pakistan's premier from 2018-2022.

Khan and his wife were also barred from holding any public office for 10 years and slapped with a fine of Rs 787 million each. Bushra Bibi, 49, did not appear

EXPLAINED
Impact of ruling on PTI

AS OF Wednesday's ruling, Khan cannot be prime minister again until 2034. Even if PTI-backed candidates win, as independents they are not bound to stay with the party and are open to joining other parties. Khan remaining in jail for the foreseeable future increases chances of this as the support of independent winners will be crucial for any party vying to secure the necessary numbers.

before the court on Wednesday.

Reacting to the verdict, PTI's current chief Gohar Khan said the judgment only served to lower the respect of the judiciary.

"The accused were not given time and the process was hurried to conclude the trial," he said, adding that defence was not given the right of cross-examination.

South Africa
says 5 countries confirm joining BRICS grouping

REUTERS
JOHANNESBURG, JANUARY 31

EGYPT, ETHIOPIA, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have confirmed they are joining the BRICS bloc after being invited last year, South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said on Wednesday.

The five countries were extended invitations along with Argentina at a summit in August in Johannesburg to join the bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa. Members say it would help reshuffle a world order they view as outdated.

Argentina has since declined the invitation to join, "and we accept their decision," Pandor told a press meet Wednesday.

Ukraine, Russia swap POWs amid tensions

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KYIV, JANUARY 31

RUSSIA AND Ukraine have exchanged about 200 prisoners of war each, the countries said Wednesday, despite tensions stemming from last week's crash of a military transport plane that Moscow claimed was carrying Ukrainian POWs and was shot down by Kyiv's forces.



A Ukrainian soldier released after the swap, Wednesday. AP

After the Jan 24 crash of the Il-76 plane in Russia's Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine, some Russian officials had publicly questioned the possibility of future POW swaps.

Russia's Defence Ministry said 195 POWs each were exchanged. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said 207 Ukrainians were freed. There was no immediate explanation for the different figures.

PUTIN VOWS VICTORY TO CAMPAIGN ACTIVISTS

Moscow: President Vladimir Putin vowed Wednesday to push back Ukrainian forces to reduce the threat of attacks on Russian territory as he met with activists running his campaign ahead of the March presidential election that he's all but certain to win. AP

Haley, 52, has consistently pitched herself as a "new generational leader" for her party and called for mental competency tests for candidates, 75 or older.

Her sharpest attacks have been against Biden, though she often tells her audiences that she is not being disrespectful.

She has been even less inclined to go after Trump. She directly criticized him as being in mental decline after he appeared to confuse her for Nancy Pelosi, the former House speaker. Days later, she said she believed he was "mentally fit" to be president.

DROUGHT HITS NORTHEAST SPAIN

La Beu reservoir near Berga, north of Barcelona at 21 per cent of its capacity on Tuesday. Barcelona and its surroundings in northeastern Spain's Catalonia region are preparing for tighter water restrictions amid a historic drought that has shrunk reservoirs to record lows. AP

Maldives govt, Opp trade barbs over assault on Prosecutor General

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MALE, JANUARY 31

TAIWAN'S MILITARY

on Wednesday simulated a scenario where China suddenly turns one of its regular drills around the island into an actual attack, on the same day China staged another "combat readiness patrol" near Taiwan.

Taiwan says China's armed forces routinely operate in the skies and seas around the island in an effort to pressure Taiwan to accept Chinese sovereignty.

Taiwan's defence ministry

says Chinese warplanes and

warships often carry out "joint combat readiness patrols". It reported another such patrol on Wednesday, involving 22 Chinese aircraft.

US braces for conflict

The US military is taking a

hard look at its own military

readiness as tensions rise, trying

to play catch-up in a critical area

— its logistics network. After the

Talisman Sabre military exercise

led by Australia and the US, They

helped create new stockpiles of

military equipment that were

left behind in Australia.

JAZMINE ULLOA
JANUARY 31

TWO CURMUDGEONLY old rivals, reclusive spendthrifts, are marching toward a showdown that a lot of people really wish wasn't happening. If that is the plot of a slapstick comedy, it's also the latest knock from Nikki Haley on former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden as she fights for oxygen before the Republican primary in South Carolina on Feb. 24.

In a new series titled "Grumpy Old Men," the Haley campaign on Wednesday plans to start unveiling online videos, digital ads and voter emails that will underscore the ways in which Haley has ar-



Nikki Haley. AP

gued that the two party front-runners are alike. The episodes, with titles like "Stumbling Seniors" and "Basement Buddies" take shots at, among other things, her rivals' signs of mental confusion, their light presence on the campaign trail and their economic policies leading to high inflation.

The push is part of a shift in strategy that Haley began after the Iowa caucuses, casting Trump, 77, and Biden, 81, as belonging to the same bygone era of politicians.

But the series, with its reference to a movie from 1993, could prove a risky bet as she looks to court a Republican base

that is largely graying, white and Christian. Polls show her trailing the former president by double digits in her home state. Attacks on Biden's age did not play well during the 2020 presidential primary.

teopath, who was walking his dog through the town's main street with his family on Sunday. "Their living conditions are difficult."

The farmers were following a deep-seated revolutionary tradition in France. Back in 1953, wine-makers, seeing their profits collapse, set their wooden carts across a national highway at the start of the summer holiday to demand government aid and offer tastings to waylaid drivers.

It worked so well that a model was set with farmers in the southwest following suit a couple months later, said Édouard Lynch, a professor of contemporary French history at Lyon 2 University.

JÉRÔME BAYLE HAD ENOUGH OF HARSHIPS OF FRENCH FARMING, SO HE BLOCKED HIGHWAY WITH FRIENDS. MANY FOLLOWED

French farmers' protests have become a wildfire: He was the spark

CATHERINE PORTER
CARBONNE, JANUARY 31

JÉRÔME BAYLE had spent seven nights on a major French highway, leading a group of aggrieved farmers in protest, when the prime minister arrived, dressed in his Parisian blue suit and tie, to thank them for "making France proud" and announced he would meet their demands.

Before camera flashes and outstretched microphones, Bayle told Prime Minister Gabriel Attal that he had seen the standoff as a match between two teams — the revolting farmers, led by Bayle, and the government, led by Attal.

Unsatisfied, the farmers say

they will continue the disruptions

to call attention to what they call the insufferable hardships of

growing food to feed the

French nation.



Farmers say they will continue the disruptions to call attention to what they call the insufferable hardships of growing food to feed the French nation. NYT

French nation.

It has been a terrible few years for local farmers. First they were hit by repeated droughts, and a collapse of consumer demand for organic food after many farmers had made the difficult switch. Then, a midge-carrying disease crossed over the nearby snowcapped Pyrenees from Spain and infected many of their cattle, causing death and miscarriages.

And that is just in Bayle's southwest corner of the country.

More broadly, not just in France but all around Europe, farmers are complaining about rising costs from inflation and the war in Ukraine. Those burdens have been exacerbated as the gov-



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LATE NIGHT MEETING AT KHARGE HOME; RAHUL CALLS AGENCIES 'ELIMINATE OPP CELL'

One more Opp leader falls: ED arrests Soren for 'money laundering', he quits as Jharkhand CM

Ruling JMM-led alliance proposes Minister Champai Soren as successor

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, JANUARY 31

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren was arrested in Ranchi Wednesday night after more than seven hours of questioning by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an alleged money laundering case involving ownership of a plot of land.

The arrest was made a day after the ED seized Rs 36 lakh in

cash and a luxury SUV from his Delhi residence.

Not long before his arrest, Soren submitted his resignation to Governor C P Radhakrishnan at Raj Bhavan.

"CM Hemant Soren has decided to resign. Champai Soren has been chosen as the new leader of the legislative party..."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Hemant Soren tenders his resignation as Jharkhand CM to Governor C P Radhakrishnan in the presence of Champai Soren, at Raj Bhavan in Ranchi on Wednesday. ANI

MORE REPORTS
PAGE 6

RBI curbs on Paytm: Can't take deposits, offer other services after February 29

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, JAN 31

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday barred Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits or top-ups in any of its key products – customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags and National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) among others – after February 29 in the wake of "persistent non-compliances and material supervisory concerns".

The RBI decision essentially bars Paytm Payments Bank from offering all its core services – including accounts and wallets – from March, effectively crippling the company's business. Given the significant customer base of Paytm – once the poster boy of India's fintech revolution – this could impact a large number of customers.

Neither Paytm Payments Bank nor its parent company, One97 Communications, commented on the RBI action.

"No further deposits or credit transactions or top-ups should be allowed in any customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags, NCMC cards, etc. after February 29, 2024, other than any interest, cashbacks, or refunds which may be credited anytime," the RBI said on Wednesday.

"Withdrawal or utilisation of balances by its customers from their accounts including savings

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AN EXPRESS INVESTIGATION-PART 2

Rs 163 cr BMC special fund follows party line: switch sides, get money

Rs 5 cr for ward after corporator switched from UBT to Shinde

PRATIPACHARYA
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

NOT JUST did the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) disburse Rs 500 crore from its coffers along party lines – only for projects proposed by ruling BJP-Sena (Eknath Shinde) MLAs and none for the Opposition – when it came to its contingency fund, it took this a step further.

In the 10 months between February 2023 and December 31, 2023, the BMC allotted

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY



Rs 163.29 crore from its Rs 900-crore contingency fund to 31 of the 227 "corporator wards" in Mumbai for carrying out civic works.

As many as 30 of these 31 wards are those where their corporators had switched their political allegiance from the Opposition parties. Their breakup: Uddhav Bal Thackeray Shiv Sena – 21, Congress – 6 and NCP – 3. One is from the BJP. All the 30 crossed over to the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde after he broke

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NATIONAL CREDIT FRAMEWORK

CBSE plan: 3 languages, 7 other subjects in Class 10; 6 papers in Class 12

R RADHIKA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is reported to have proposed significant changes to the academic framework for secondary and higher secondary education, including a shift from studying two languages to three in Class 10, with the requirement that at least two must be native Indian languages. Furthermore, students in Class 10 may now need to pass in 10 subjects, as opposed to the current requirement of five.

Similarly, for Class 12, the pro-

posed changes involve students studying two languages instead of one, with the condition that at least one must be a native Indian language. Overall, they would have to clear examinations in six subjects instead of five to graduate from high school.

According to a detailed plan reviewed by *The Indian Express*, the proposed changes form part of the CBSE's broader initiative to implement a national credit framework in school education. Creditisation aims to establish academic equivalence between vocational and general education, facilitating mobility

New IT Rules on fact check unit: HC gives split verdict

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

A DIVISION bench of the Bombay High Court on Wednesday delivered a split verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the amended Information Technology (IT) Rules which empowered the government to identify "fake news" on social media platforms through a Fact Check Unit (FCU).

While Justice Gautam Patel agreed with the petitioners' contentions and struck down the amendment, Justice Neela Gokhale upheld the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

UP gets its fourth 'acting' DGP; six more states, one UT have acting police chiefs

This action is part of an increasing trend of state governments not appointing regular chiefs of police despite eligible officers being available. At present, there are as many as seven states and one Union Territory with an acting DGP. These appointments are typically made by handing over the additional charge of the police chief's post to a DG rank officer in the state holding some other responsibility.

While Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, UP and Punjab have had such temporary DGPs for almost or more than a year, three



UP CM Yogi Adityanath with acting DGP Prashant Kumar on Wednesday. ANI

other states, Uttarakhand, Odisha and West Bengal, and the Union Territory of J&K, have recently appointed "acting DGPs".

Such action is in complete violation of the Supreme Court guidelines on DGP appointments in the Prakash Singh case and the guidelines issued by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The apex court has clearly said no temporary or ad hoc appointments of police chiefs must be made barring exceptional circumstances. UPSC guidelines say states must

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIA bloc rattled again, unsure if 'BJP vendetta' has echo on poll street

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

BARELY TWO months before the Lok Sabha elections, the embattled INDIA bloc Wednesday suffered another political blow – the late-night arrest of JMM leader Hemant Soren by the Enforcement Directorate on cor-

ruption charges minutes after his resignation as Jharkhand Chief Minister.

This comes days after Nitish Kumar's JD(U) walked out of the INDIA bloc and returned to the NDA, stunning the Opposition parties.

Stumbling from one crisis to the next, the Opposition alliance,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



GOVT & POLITICS

ARTICLE 370 TO RAM TEMPLE: PRESIDENT LISTS GOVT'S KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

PAGE 7

EXPLAINED
E The cellar, the claims

HINDU LITIGANTS call the cellar *Vyasi ka tekhana* and say idols were worshipped there before the practice was stopped in 1993. It is in the southern part of the Gyanvapi mosque complex. The mosque committee says no idols existed in the cellar, and no prayers were ever offered there.

EXPLAINED, PAGE 14

seven days."

Late Wednesday, S M Yasin, Joint Secretary of the Anjuman Intezamia Masajid Committee, which had opposed the plea for allowing puja in the southern cellar and said it would approach

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON
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ED arrests Soren, he quits as Jharkhand CM

All the MLAs are with us," Jharkhand Congress president Rajesh Thakur said. The JMM and Congress are allies in the state.

Champai Soren, state Transport Minister and a loyalist of Hemant Soren, told reporters, "We have staked a claim to form the new government with the support of 47 MLAs." Sources, however, said the Governor has told the ruling alliance he will revert on their proposal after considering the legalities.

The ruling coalition of JMM, Congress and RJD has 29, 17 and one MLA respectively. In the Opposition, the BJP has 26 and the AJSU three. The CPI (M-L) and NCP (AP) have one MLA each while there are two independents.

Late Wednesday night, Soren filed a writ petition in the Jharkhand High Court against his arrest. The matter will be heard at 10.30 am Thursday.

A letter Soren wrote to his MLAs earlier in the day was released after his arrest. It stated: "You are aware that yesterday, on 30.01.2024, in the meeting of the Party Legislature Party, this proposal was passed unanimously that if in any adverse circumstances, I have to leave my post of Leader of the Legislature Party,

then in that situation the new leader of the Legislative Party will be elected. The selection will be made by me, which will be universally accepted. The above proposal was also agreed to in the meeting of MLAs of all the coalition parties."

"Today I am going to appear in compliance with the summons of ED. If I am arrested... in such a situation, after due consideration, I have decided to nominate Champai Soren as the new leader of the legislature party. After formally electing him as the leader of the Legislative Party in the meeting of the Legislative Party, along with the leaders of all the allied parties, taking his letter of support, under the leadership of the new leader, all of you honorable MLAs will go before the Honourable Governor and stake claim for the formation of a new government. Showing their rock-solid unity, they will remain present in Ranchi till the formation of the new government," the letter stated.

Soren asked the MLAs that "in my absence, you all will take care of my family, my respected father Dishom Guru Shri Shibu Soren ji and mother who is not in good health and will also keep your love

for my younger brother".

In a couplet posted on social media following the arrest, Soren wrote that "life is a battle" and he "will fight every moment but not beg for compromise". He wrote that the "heartache of our people will not be in vain", and he will "not accept defeat". "Jai Jharkhand," he concluded.

Speculation over Soren's arrest was rife since 5.30 pm when two mini-buses were seen going inside the CM residence. Half an hour later, Chief Secretary L Khyangate and DGP Ajay Kumar Singh arrived at his residence.

The development caps days of drama between Soren and the investigative agency – from the ED searching his Delhi residence to his party lashing out over the move to "malign" his image.

The ED had been sending regular summons to Soren in connection with the alleged money laundering case, and he had repeatedly refused to appear before the agency. He had been questioned thrice. The first was in November 2021 in an alleged illegal mining case filed by the ED. The second and the third summons – on January 20 and 31 respectively – pertain to the alleged proceeds of crime connected to the sale and

purchase of Army land in Ranchi in which IAS officer Chhavi Ranjan is also an accused. In this case, the ED probe claimed to have uncovered illegal sale and purchase of another piece of 8-acre land in Ranchi's Bargain area. It is in connection with this plot of land that Soren was questioned.

In a letter to the ED earlier, Soren had clarified that the plot of land in Bargain was "wrongfully alleged to be owned" by him.

Hours before Soren's arrest, the Jharkhand Police had also lodged an FIR against senior ED officials under the SC/ST Act based on Soren's complaint regarding the searches at his Delhi residence. In his complaint, Soren alleged that the ED conducted the search operation to "harass and malign him and his entire community".

He also addressed ED's claims of a BMW car and cash being seized from the Delhi residence. "I am not the owner of the BMW... I do not own any illicit cash," he said, adding that the "aforesaid acts" of the ED were done to "intentionally humiliate me in public". The ED has so far arrested 14 people in the case, including Ranjan, who served as Director of the state's Social Welfare Department and Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi.

● INDIA bloc rattled again, unsure if 'BJP vendetta' has echo on poll street

however, hopes to project the arrest of the 48-year-old tribal leader as yet another "outrageous political" move by a "vengeful" and "dictatorial" BJP government to finish the Opposition and silence its critics. It is to be seen how the development will play out in Parliament, the Budget session of which began Wednesday.

Late in the evening, INDIA leaders including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, CPM's Sitaram Yechury, NCP's Sharad Pawar and DMK's T R Baalu met at Kharge's house to discuss the way forward.

Soren's arrest and the political turmoil in Jharkhand is a challenge to the INDIA bloc, both in terms of larger perception and electoral preparedness in Jharkhand.

On Friday, Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is set to enter Jharkhand. Nitish's exit, Mamata's declaration that her TMC will contest all seats in West Bengal, AAP's decision to go alone in Punjab and the strain in ties between the Congress and Akhilesh Yadav's SP in Uttar Pradesh – the sense of drift in the INDIA bloc is getting more pronounced.

The Congress slammed the

BJP government for Soren's arrest. "ED, CBI, IT etc are no longer government agencies... they have become the BJP's 'eliminate opposition cell'. The BJP, which itself is steeped in corruption, is running a campaign to destroy democracy due to its obsession for power," Gandhi said.

Kharge, too, was scathing. "Those who have not gone with Modi will go to jail. To put the ED behind Hemant Soren to force him to resign as CM... is an assault on federalism. After having made the provisions of the PMLA draconian, intimidating and scaring opposition leaders have now become part of the toolkit of the BJP," he said.

"Those who have gone through the BJP's washing machine have come out sparkling white... we will not be scared... we will fight from Parliament to the streets," he added.

Soren is just one among the several Opposition leaders who are facing probes. And the lists cuts across party lines and ideological divides: from Delhi Chief Minister and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal, Telangana's new Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, his Kerala counterpart and CPM veteran Pinarayi Vijayan, former Chhattisgarh Chief

Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the family members of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad, former Haryana Chief Minister and Congress veteran Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah and NCP chief Sharad Pawar, the list is long.

Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, too, face ED probe in the National Herald case.

But the question is whether the opposition's political argument finds resonance on the street. Last April, the Supreme Court declined to entertain a plea by 14 Opposition parties against misuse of Central agencies saying that it can intervene in individual cases but can't lay down "separate guidelines" only for politicians.

And in July, on the day of the INDIA meeting in Bengaluru, PM Narendra Modi called it a "conclave of the corrupt."

Opposition parties, accusing the BJP government of misusing investigative agencies, have often failed to speak in one voice when it comes to many of the cases because of inter-party rivalries and local compulsions.

Soren's case, in fact, could be

an exception since the Congress, the third force in the state, is an ally. The grand old party, for instance, shed few tears when former Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia was arrested in February last year in connection with the excise policy case. Sisodia has been in jail for nearly a year now. Kejriwal too is facing the agency's heat in the case with the fifth summons going out Wednesday. The AAP believes Kejriwal could also be arrested anytime.

The Congress never really targeted the Centre or the agencies over the cases against senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee either. The CPM, another key member of the INDIA bloc, has often targeted the ruling TMC over charges of corruption. The Congress's Kerala unit was upbeat when Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan came under ED radar. The AAP repeatedly spoke about the corruption charges and the ED probe against Bhupesh Baghel even as late as during the campaign for the Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh in November-December. The lack of camaraderie despite the shared belief that the BJP government is misusing the agencies to target the opposition could be a marker.

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Soren's case, in fact, could be

told this. "In my area, the councilors who were with me did not get funds. But now that they have shifted to the Shiv Sena (Shinde Group), they have. The decision of allocating funds to an area should be done through proper examination and reports, rather than being selective about where the councillor is from," she said.

Don't switch parties, don't get money

Gaikwad has reason to disagree. For, there are cases where corporators from wards next to each other sought contingency funds but money was disbursed to the one who had switched sides.

Some telling examples:

■ On July 28, 2023, UBT Sena's Mangesh Satamkar, corporator from the Sion municipal ward, joined the Shinde Sena. A month later, his ward officer sought Rs 5 crore which was cleared by the BMC. In contrast, in the adjoining ward, requests by its former corporator from Congress party, Ravi Raja, remain pending till date. This despite the fact that Raja has written a second letter to the BMC Commissioner and a third to the Guardian Minister.

■ UBT Sena MP from South Mumbai, Arvind Sawant, wrote to BMC chief on February 2, 2023, seeking Rs 6 crore under the contingency fund for carrying out civic works in a Sewri ward. Its sitting corporator is Sachin Padwal from the Sena UBT. However, the BMC is yet to allot funds to this ward. Sawant also sought funds for two other wards in south Mumbai where the former corporators are with Sena (UBT) and Congress; however, the BMC is yet to allot funds to these wards.

● Gyanvapi: Dist court allows puja

a higher court against the order, said, "The administration reached the mosque complex late evening. They cut the barricading towards the southern cellar. We were not informed about this, and we still haven't received a copy of the court order. We will move the Supreme Court tomorrow."

In a post on X, Akhilesh Yadav, SP chief and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly said: "Due process has to be maintained while following any court order. The Varanasi Court fixed a 7-day period for it. What we are seeing now is a concerted effort to go beyond due process and prevent any legal recourse that can be taken."

The cell, which Hindu plaintiffs call 'Vyasji ka tekhkhan' (Vyasji's cellar), is part of the mosque complex. Hindu litigants, appearing before the court, have claimed that the Gyanvapi mosque was built on the site of the earlier Kashi Vishwanath temple after its destruction in the 17th century. The existing Kashi Vishwanath temple stands adjacent to the mosque. The ASI report also stated that "the pre-existing structure appears to have been destroyed in the 17th century, during the reign of Aurangzeb and part of it was modified and reused in the existing structure".

In December, 1993, priest Vyasji was stopped from entering the area beyond the barricade. Hence, the prayers, raag bhog and other rituals were stopped. Vyasji used to perform puja there from the time of the British and that he had possession, and he prayed there until 1993. After that, the door to the cellar was removed. Several Hindu sculptures and puja material are still in the cellar. It is necessary to do puja of the idols there in a controlled manner," the order stated, quoting the plaintiff.

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The district court's direction came on the petition of Shailendra Kumar Pathak, head priest of the Vyas family ever did puja there. "Hence, there was no question of stopping puja in 1993. At the said spot, no idol was there. The plaintiff's claim that the Vyas family had possession of the cellar is false," the order quoted the mosque committee lawyers.

● CBSE proposal

between the two education systems, as proposed by the National Education Policy 2020.

At present, the standard school curriculum does not have a formalised credit system. As per the CBSE plan, an academic year would be made up of 1200 national learning hours, which would translate to earning 40 credits. Notional learning refers to a stipulated amount of time that an average student would need to spend in order to attain the specified outcomes. In other words, each subject has been allotted a certain number of hours so that, in a year, a student spends a total of 1200 learning hours to be declared pass. The hours will include both academic learning at school and non-academic or experiential learning outside the school.

The scheme of studies has accordingly been tweaked to mention teaching hours and credits earned against each subject. The credits earned by a student will be digitally stored in the Academic Bank of Credits and accessible through a linked Digilocker account. The credits, the plan states, will be "independent" of the marks obtained by a student, an official CBSE document states.

To operationalise this, the Board has proposed to increase the number of subjects studied in secondary and higher secondary education by adding multidisciplinary and vocational courses. So, for Class 10, where students currently have to pass five subjects (two languages and three main subjects of mathematics, science and social science), they would

have to clear 10 subjects (three languages and seven main subjects) under the creditised system.

While two of the three languages should be native Indian languages, the seven main subjects proposed for Class 10 are: mathematics and computational thinking, social science, science, art education, physical education and well-being, vocational education and environmental education. The three languages, mathematics and computational thinking, social science, science and environmental education would be assessed externally; art education, physical education and vocational education would be a mix of internal and external examination. But students would have to pass all 10 subjects to move on to the next grade.

For Classes 11 and 12, instead of the current five subjects (one language and four subjects or electives), students would have to study six subjects (two languages and four subjects with an optional fifth subject). At least one of the two languages has to be a native Indian language.

The plan was sent to all heads of CBSE-affiliated institutions late last year, to review and provide comments by December 5, 2023. According to an official, the CBSE has received favourable responses from school heads and teachers. However, one of the areas of concern that was flagged is the transition to the new curriculum.

It is not clear yet if the creditised system will be rolled out in the next academic year or the year after that.

Shiv Sena UBT leader Aaditya

Thackeray said, "Whenever any member from the Opposition side approaches the municipal commissioner, he is told that former corporators can't claim any fund. However, if any ex-corporator having affiliation with the ruling alliance approaches the civic authority then their demand gets approved within a fortnight. This clearly shows how the administration is working on the behalf of the ruling party."

Mumbai's 227 corporator wards constitute 24 municipal wards whose administrative head is a "ward officer," a BMC official of the rank of assistant municipal commissioner. Before their terms ended on March 7, 2022, the BMC had 88 corporators from the Shiv Sena (undivided), 80 from the BJP, Congress 31, NCP 9, MNS 7, AIMIM 2, Samajwadi Party 6. With BMC going without elections since then, the civic body has no sitting corporators. It's the ward officers who have been raising demands for grants to carry out various development works.

Switch sides, take money promptly

A detailed list of the 31 showing the date of crossing over to the Sena (Shinde) and disbursal is on [indianexpress.com](#). Consider these telling examples:

■ On August 26, 2023, Congress's five ex-corporators, Ganga Mane and her husband Kunal Mane, Babu Khan, Jyotsna Parmar and Bhaskar Shetty, from Dharavi joined the Shinde-led Shiv Sena. Three days later, on August 29, 2023, their ward officer put out four separate proposals of Rs 5 crore each, seeking funds for carrying out civic infrastructure works in the four wards

Slapped a fine of Rs 5.39 crore on Paytm Payments Bank due to deficiencies in regulatory compliances. According to the regulator, Paytm failed to identify beneficial owner in respect of entities onboarded by it for providing payout services, did not monitor payout transactions and carry out risk profiling of entities availing payout services, breached the regulatory ceiling of end-of-the-day balance in certain customer advance accounts, and even delayed reporting a cyber security incident.

Government sources said the matter was the prerogative of the RBI and no directions were issued by the finance ministry. "It is a supervisory action taken by the regulator... The finance ministry does not issue any guidelines on such operational matters which fall under the purview of the regulator," a ministry source said.

In its press release on Wednesday, the RBI said: "In press release dated March 11, 2022, the Reserve Bank of India... had directed Paytm Payments Bank Ltd to stop onboarding of new customers with immediate effect. The comprehensive system audit report and subsequent compliance validation report of the external auditors revealed persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in the bank, warranting further supervisory action."

According to the central bank's directions, the nodal accounts of Paytm's parent company are to be "terminated at the earliest", and latest by February 29. Settlement of all pipeline transactions and nodal accounts – in respect of all transactions initiated on or before February 29 – should be completed by March 15, and no further transactions shall be permitted thereafter.

In October 2023, the RBI had

challenged the constitutional validity of the Rules, terming them arbitrary, unconstitutional, and in violation of fundamental rights. The Centre had said it was not against any kind of opinion, criticism, satire or humour targeting the government, and the Rules were meant to only proscribe or prohibit peddling of fake, false and misleading facts on social media related to "government business".

However, Justice Gokhale said that alleging bias on the part of FCU members because they were government appointees was "unfair", and the recourse to courts of law was always open in case of any bias. The Rules "were not directly penalising" the intermediary or the user and "did not bring any chilling effect on their rights", he said.

The petitioners included stand-up comic Kunal Kamra, Editors Guild of India, News Broadcasters and Digital Association and Association of Indian Magazines. In accordance with the HC Rules, the bench directed its registry to place the petitions before Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya for referring it to a third judge.

Appearing for the Centre, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the HC that the FCU was not notified for 10 days.

In April last year, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) promulgated the 2023 Rules, which further amended the Information Technology Rules, 2021.

Under the new Rules, if the FCU comes across or is informed about any posts that are "fake", "false" or contain "misleading" facts pertaining to the business of the government, it would flag it to the social media intermediaries. The online intermediaries would then have to take down such content if they wanted to retain their "safe harbour" (legal immunity against third-party content).

The suggestion that the cen-

tral government most especially is in a particularly vulnerable position and cannot defend itself is hardly tenable. It has information. It has a reach. It can disseminate widely. For the one authority that can literally shut down the internet in a region, pull the plug entirely, to suggest this is hardly credible," he said.

Justice Patel noted that there are various "fertile grounds" for criticism of the government and this takes place on print as well as online/digital platforms. "After all, the fundamental rights are to protect the

EXAMINING SUMMONS: AAP; EXCUSES: BJP For fifth time, CM gets summons from ED



CM Kejriwal did not appear for the previous 4 summons

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has issued the fifth summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for questioning on Friday in the Delhi excise policy linked money laundering case, sources said on Wednesday.

While the national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) did not appear for the previous four ED summons — January 3, November 2, December 18, and December 21 last year — calling them "illegal", he sent written responses to the federal agency.

Following the summons, AAP national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar said the party's legal team was "examining" them. "The previous summons were illegal, and we had sought answers from the ED regarding them... The fifth summon is being examined by our legal team. Whatever it advises will be done within the ambit of the law," Kakkar said.

Reacting to the development, Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Narendra Sachdeva said that Kejriwal has "made a mockery of the Constitution" by refusing the previous four summons, "with different excuses

and should respect the law. Kejriwal has been avoiding the investigation... Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren avoided similar summons 10 times, but eventually, had to participate in the investigation," said Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

In his reply to the fourth summons, Kejriwal — taking exception to the ED's argument that "he (Kejriwal) believed that he was above the law" — is learnt to have written that he had never demanded any special treatment, and had not avoided a legally valid summons.

Kejriwal had also referred to his appearance before the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for questioning in April 2023 in the excise policy case to show that he was a "law-abiding citizen", an AAP leader had said earlier.

Meanwhile, the AAP announced it would stage a demonstration outside the BJP headquarters in Delhi on Friday — over the ED summons to Kejriwal that day. Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will be part of the demonstration, said the AAP, against the alleged manipulation by the BJP to win the Chandigarh mayoral polls on Tuesday.

In a letter, Kejriwal had called the summons "illegal", and said it was not made clear to him, in which capacity he was to appear — as a witness or an accused in the matter — before the ED.

"Fleeing from the law in this manner will not shield him from questions... The Chief Minister holds a constitutional position

Parking in NDMC areas to cost double till April 30

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

NEW DELHI Municipal Council (NDMC) has decided to extend its enhanced parking fees till April 30, in an attempt to discourage private transport in view of the rising levels of pollution in the capital.

Earlier, the fees, enhanced by two-fold last year with implementation of GRAP measures, was expected to be in force till January 31.

Usually, the per hour parking charges set by the NDMC are Rs 20 for four-wheelers and Rs 10 for two-wheelers; with the GRAP guidelines in place, the parking charges were enhanced to Rs 40 for four-wheelers and Rs 20 for two-wheelers.

The step has been taken in accordance with the statutory directions issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management's (CAQM) Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP-II) guidelines, according to which the air quality in Delhi is very poor at present.

"New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has decided to extend enhanced parking fees till April 30, 2024 or till GRAP-II guidelines are withdrawn. NDMC has taken the decision based on the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) order," the NDMC said in a public notice.

habiting came from Pakistan after losing all their wealth and fortune, is highly unfortunate," read the letter.

The letter also said that Aiyar should have understood that the Ram Mandir was built after 500 years and a 5-0 Supreme Court judgment. "You might take the cover of freedom of speech, but please remember, as per the Supreme Court, freedom of speech cannot be absolute. We request you to kindly follow the norms of a good citizen and do not provoke anyone by creating hatred and mistrust amongst people," said the letter. Kakar also said that he and the RWA understand that the Aiyars live in the Jangpura Extension house.

Reacting to the "terse letter" of the Jangpura Extension RWA, BJP leader Amit Malviya posted on X. "This should serve as a message for everyone, who think abusing Hindu beliefs is par for the course. The Jangpura Extension Welfare Association, in a terse letter, have asked Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar and his daughter to apologise for defiling the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at Ram Mandir, and leave the residential colony," where most residents in-

deserve better. Let us stop abusing each other and try something instead. Jai Hind!"

The letter signed by Dr Kapil Kakar, president of Jangpura Extension RWA, asked the duo to "move out to another residential colony, in case they believed what they did was correct".

The RWA has also asked Mani Shankar Aiyar to condemn his daughter's "act". "In case you still think what you have done in protesting against the consecra-

RWA NOT KHAP PANCHAYAT: EXPERTS



Mani Shankar Aiyar; Suranya

someone to move out of their house.

Under the Bhagidari scheme, several RWAs were registered with the Delhi govt and would participate in meetings with officials to foster participative decision-making.

tion of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya (is correct), we would suggest you kindly move out to another colony, where people and RWAs can turn a blind eye to such hatred," said the letter.

Calling it a "hate speech act", Dr Kakar said it was their "responsibility to ensure cordial relations between all residents". "A hate speech and act by a resident like you, Ms Aiyar, for announcing a three-day fast in a peace-loving locality, where most residents in-

the colony are Hindus, is unacceptable. Let us stop abusing each other and try something instead. Jai Hind!"

The letter signed by Dr Kapil Kakar, president of Jangpura Extension RWA, asked the duo to "move out to another residential colony, in case they believed what they did was correct".

The RWA has also asked Mani Shankar Aiyar to condemn his daughter's "act". "In case you still think what you have done in protesting against the consecra-

Maharashtra Agricultural Universities Examination Board
MCAER Building, Bhosale Nagar, Pune-411007
Phone No.020 25528519/25528119 Email: mauebpune@yahoo.co.in

PG-CET-2024 Notification

Online applications are invited by the Controller, Maharashtra Agricultural Universities Examination Board, Pune for PG-CET-2024 (Common Entrance Test for Masters, Degrees Admission during AY 2024-25) to be held on 30.03.2024 to 01.04.2024 in nine faculties at seventeen centres across four Agriculture Universities in Maharashtra. Online application process will be started from 01.02.2024 and the last date for submission of online applications is 27.02.2024. Candidates may visit the website <http://www.mcaer.org> for the further details or apply.

Place : Pune Date : 30.01.2024

Sd/- Controller
Maharashtra Agricultural Universities
Examination Board, Pune-7

IRCTC Invites bids for:-

1. Open E-Tender IRCTC/RN/Ambernath/Logistics/2023/2 for selection of agencies for transportation and CFA services of Rail Neer Packaged Drinking Water produced for a period of three (3) years at Rail Neer Plant, Ambernath (Mumbai).

Last Date for Submission : 15.02.2024 up to 15:00. E-mail : gpmrmail@irctc.com.

2. Open Tender (two bid system) Tender No. IRCTC/COT/RSM27/2021/Tourism/VISA SERVICES for engagement of Visa Service Provider. Pre-bid Meeting - 15:00 hrs on 13.02.2024. Last Date for Submission : 23.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs. E-mail : jaswinder6320@irctc.com.

3. Open e-tender for provision of onboard catering services in trains, for a period of 05 years further extendable up to 02 years for a cluster of trains.

Last date for submission : 22.02.2024 up to 12:00 hrs. E-mail : mobilicatg.tend@irctc.com

4. Supply of 5,00,000 Pcs of resealable boxes for packaging of 500 ml bottles of Rail Neer at Rail Neer Plant(National (New Delhi)). Last Date for Submission : 15.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs. E-mail : railneernanglo@irctc.com

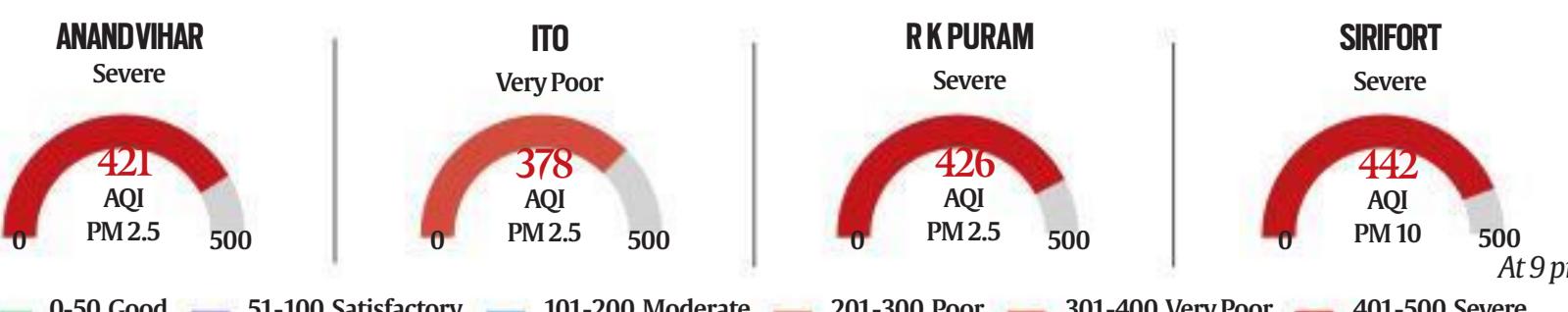
For details visit www.irctc.com for (1-4). www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC for (1-3) and [gov.in/cppp](http://www.gov.in/cppp) for (4). Tender document download & participation can only be done on www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC for (1-3) and [gov.in/cppp](http://www.gov.in/cppp) for (4).

Corrigendum/Addendum if any shall be published only IRCTC's website www.irctc.com for (1-4). www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC for (1-3) and [gov.in/cppp](http://www.gov.in/cppp) for (4).

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राज्य रेलवे कार्यालय



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: February 1
 Generally cloudy/sky. Dense to very dense fog in the morning. Possibility of very light rain/drizzle.
MAX: 19 3.3°C below normal | **MIN: 8** 0.4°C below normal

How a sprawling house in Greater Noida became a den to 'cook meth'

ARNABJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

Until six months back, a sprawling 600-yard house with a garden in Greater Noida's Estonia Estate used to house a gym. Later, the landlord rented out the house to four men — three from Nigeria and one from Kenya — at a monthly rent of Rs 25,000.

The neighbours had sensed something unusual with the inhabitants — they were only seen either early morning or late at night, and never interacted with other residents.

On Tuesday, the four men — Eze Uchenna James (49); Alitumofedi Shedrak (28); Ebzelle Emeka Chibuzo; and Ivo Osita — were arrested for allegedly manufacturing and supplying fine-quality Methamphetamine, said senior officers. Police recovered 445 grams of Methamphetamine and more than 20 kgs of raw material from the accused, apart from lab material, said DCP (Dwarka) Ankit Kumar.

Police suspect the accused used to supply the drugs to their associates who would further provide them at rave parties in Delhi-NCR or among the student population.

When *The Indian Express* visited the house on Wednesday, it looked like any other residential abode, albeit a little run-down, in the upscale, gated neighbourhood. The outer walls had yellowed, and paint could be seen falling off at many places. The garden hose, though, was found running, keeping the few plants dotted the premises alive.

Said Gudiya, 35, who lives on in the area, "The landlord gave the flat out to a gym which used to operate out of the premises till six months back... he recently gave it out to these four men... we never spoke to them and only saw them either during early morning or late night hours."

Senior officers said police are trying to trace the landlord.

"The accused men used to make the drugs inside one of the rooms using the seized equipment such as a heating mantle machine and other lab material... We have seized a green pipe which the accused men used to release any possible smell of smoke while making the drug... they had cut out a hole from one of the window's nets



The seizure was made by the police on Tuesday. *Express*

and used to place the pipe in it before removing it once the job was done," added an officer.

Another neighbour, requesting anonymity, said, "No one knew much about who lived inside the house even though it was located at a very prominent intersection in the locality, not away from the public eye..."

A senior police officer said the mobile phones of the accused persons have been sent for a forensic analysis to ascertain the customers they sold the drug to, and their intermediaries.

"The possibility of the drug being used in rave parties and among the student population is also being explored... efforts are on to trace the intermediaries, who are also from Africa," said another officer.

Added the officer, "The furniture and other items inside the house were intact, as if they had been freshly bought, and were well arranged... it did not seem that the house was being used as a drug manufacturing spot."

According to police, it was a tip-off on November 27 last year, received by the Dwarka unit's anti-narcotics cell, that alerted them about Uchenna's involvement in a drug syndicate.

Accordingly, a trap was laid and he was arrested; almost 70 grams of fine-quality Methamphetamine was also recovered. Officers said Uchenna had been previously arrested in a commercial drug case by the Narcotics Control Bureau of Punjab and had been convicted for 10 years by a court. He was later granted bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

BRIEFLY

5K residents have rooftop solar panels

New Delhi: More than 5,000 residential consumers have installed rooftop solar panels, under the Delhi Solar Policy 2016, shows data. According to the data collected by *The Indian Express*, 5,346 residential consumers and co-operative housing societies have installed the rooftop solar panels till January 2024. Officials said the key benefits of rooftop solar panels are reduced electricity bills and energy saving, and clean air.

HC: Rs 50K fine on govt for not replying to plea

New Delhi: In a plea regarding the shortage of forest guards, rangers, and other personnel as well as their protection, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday imposed a Rs 50,000 fine on the Delhi government for not replying to the plea, despite repeated directions. Observing that the "majesty of the court cannot be brought down", Justice Subramonium Prasad said, "It is unfortunate... replies are not being filed by the state government... Cost of Rs 50,000/- is imposed on the state government". *ENS*

NO RELIEF FROM FOG LIKELY THIS WEEK

And it finally rains in Capital, after two months

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

DELHI'S LONG, dry spell was finally broken on Wednesday, with the city recording 8.5 mm of rainfall during the day.

The day, however, was cold and grey, with the maximum temperature settling at 18.6 degrees Celsius, four degrees below normal. The minimum temperature was 7.3 degrees Celsius, a degree below normal.

Notably, January has been the second consecutive month of 100% rainfall deficit in the national capital.

Light rain is also expected on Thursday, with the temperature expected to be between 8 and 19 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature at Safdarjung, which is indicative of Delhi's weather parameters, was 18.6 degrees Celsius. Ridge and Palam were colder at 16.2 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively. The maximum temperature in Gurgaon, meanwhile, was 16 degrees Celsius.

The national capital, however, is not expected to get respite from the fog till Saturday, at least. According to IMD's forecast, while dense fog is expected on Thursday and Friday morning, moderate fog is expected on Saturday. There is a possibility of light rain over the weekend as well.

According to officials of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the reason behind Wednesday's rain was a western disturbance.

"There have been no strong western disturbances, over the past two months at least, that af-

fected Delhi. This was also why the hilly states did not receive snow. Delhi, which till now, was facing a 100% rain deficit, has managed to cover some ground on Wednesday. There are now two western disturbances that will bring rain to the region in quick succession. These are from January 31 to February 1, and from February 3 to February 4," an IMD official said.

The rain, however, had little impact on pollution levels, with the 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) settling at 392 at 4 pm. At 7 pm, it dropped marginally to 386.

"Wind speed, though it picked up a little around 2 pm, was not enough for the dispersal of pollutants. High humidity (ranging between 100% and 87%) and low temperatures, both result in more concentration of pollutants. Some improvement is likely starting tomorrow (Thursday)," another IMD official said.

IMD officials said that over the next five days, light to moderate rainfall and snowfall are highly likely over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. The rainfall activity will decrease thereafter.

Strong and chilly surface winds, at a speed of 30-40 kmph, are very likely over Punjab and Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi on Thursday, the IMD said in its official forecast.

Delhi has seen an unusually cold and more polluted January this year. The average maximum temperature in the month (till January 30), was 17.7 degrees Celsius, the second lowest in 74 years. The lowest — 17.6 degrees Celsius — was recorded in 2003.

"Cold weather conditions and pollution are linked to each other as cold air has a higher capacity to trap pollutants. It also reduced the area above the surface for the pollutants to disperse. In addition, fog and low



People enjoy a rainy day in Delhi, Wednesday. *Praveen Khanna*

wind speeds mean that pollutants keep getting accumulated over a period of time. Only strong winds and moderate to heavy rainfall can clear the air in a situation like this," an IMD official said.

Ashoka university row: Student group told to remove posters of Ayodhya documentary

VIDHEESHA KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

A SECTION of students at the Ashoka University have registered their protest against the university administration, alleging they were "forced to take down the posters" of the screening of a documentary 'Ram ke Naam' on January 22.

In a letter to V-C Somak Raychaudhury and faculty members on Monday, The Democracy Collective, and the "student government" of the varsity, wrote: "A member of the collective was called to meet an administrative official... they were ambushed by multiple officials... Eventually, the

collective was forced to take down the posters." Democracy Collective comprises students, faculty and staff members.

On Wednesday, students staged a protest against the alleged attempt to halt the screening where they were virtually joined by the director, Anand Patwardhan. A Masters' student said, "...On the other hand, students held religious celebrations in public spaces..."

Meanwhile, Raychaudhury wrote back, "No official spaces were provided to either event and restrictions on poster placements were applied to both... both events were held peacefully... With no restrictions or interference by the administration."

During a review of higher ed-



Children (left) who lived and studied at Behrul Uloom madrasa operating from the premises of Akhoondji Masjid, now demolished (right), told to pack up and leave early Tuesday. *Express*

Mosque razed, its keepers claim got no notice; DDA says illegal structure removed

UPASIKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

IMAM ZAKIR Hussain was getting ready for morning prayers early Tuesday when the police came knocking at his Mehrauli mosque. Children who live and study at the madrasa functioning from the premises were told to pack up and leave.

The Akhoondji Masjid and Behrul Uloom madrasa were, later, demolished by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on January 30. Locals claim the mosque was built during Razia Sultan's reign making the structure nearly 600-700 years old.

Though the premises had a mosque, madrasa and graveyard, the structure is not a notified heritage building. "We were barely given ten minutes to gather our things before the machines came and demolition started," said Hussain, the mosque's Imam for the last 1.5 years. He alleged the

authorities took away his phone, escorted him away from the site and cordoned it off, deploying CISF personnel along the perimeter; the rubble from the demolition was collected and disposed of almost immediately.

Shamstebrez Khan, whose wife Ishrat Nisa was buried in the mosque's graveyard in August 2020, alleged that the graveyard too wasn't spared with her grave too being desecrated.

"My wife died due to liver issues, and finding a graveyard was hard during the pandemic. This was the only place we could find a resting place for her despite living far away in Uttam Nagar," said Khan, (retired).

Parents of the children who lived in the madrasa were notified of the demolition only after it was done: Mohammad Sohail Sheikh arrived on Wednesday from Kashmir to meet his son only to find the madrasa gone and heavy police presence where it stood.

"I came to drop off some

clothes for my son because it's been so cold here lately but I couldn't find the madrasa," Sheikh said, tears brimming in his eyes. "I can't send my child to a fancy school or hostel so I sent him here instead," he said. Other students were sent to another madrasa nearby where they will stay for the time being.

DDA officials reasoned that the structure was in Sanjay Van, a reserved forest part of the Southern Ridge. As per the decision of Ridge Management Board, the ridge area should be free from all types of illegal encroachment, said DDA officials.

"Removal of illegal structures, religious in nature, was approved by the Religious Committee," the DDA said in a statement.

When *The Indian Express* asked about the alleged lack of prior notice to the mosque authorities, a DDA official said, "We have followed all due procedures."

IIMC gets deemed-to-be-university status

The institution for journalism & mass communication can now award degrees

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE INDIAN Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), a leading institution for Journalism and Mass Communication, has been granted the status of a deemed university, empowering it to award degrees rather than just diplomas, said officials on Wednesday.

"The IIMC has been declared as deemed-to-be-university under a distinct category. The declaration extends to IIMC New Delhi and its five regional campuses lo-

cated in Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir), Amravati (Maharashtra), Aizawl (Mizoram), Kottayam (Kerala), and Dhenkanal (Odisha). With this new status, IIMC is now authorised to offer degrees, including doctoral degrees," said an official, requesting anonymity.

The institute, established under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on August 17, 1965, is one of the premier institutions providing quality training in journalism and undertaking research in the field of media and mass communication.

The IIMC is also the training

academy for Indian Information Service (IIS) officers.

"A big thank you to the UGC for declaring Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi and its five regional centres as a Deemed to be University under distinct category. IIMC is committed to give its best to promote education, training, and research in mass communication," the institute wrote on X.

The idea to grant deemed university status to IIMC is not a new one. The Information and Broadcasting Ministry had approved the plan in 2016.

During a review of higher ed-

ucation institutes by the Niti Aayog in 2018, it was recommended that the IIMC be merged with either the Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Media Studies or Jamia Millia Islamia's AJK Mass Communication Research Centre. However, the institute, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and the Education Ministry (then HRD) had rejected the idea.

The "deemed-to-be" or "deemed university" tag is given to universities that were not originally established as universities, but granted the status later.

During a review of higher ed-

IN OUTER DELHI

How dashcam video, X post helped police crack this road rage case

ARNABJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

ON MAY 7 last year, a 40-year-old man, Praveen Jangra, was on his way back from his office, where he had stopped by on a Sunday for some urgent work.

On his way back, at Nangloi in Outer Delhi, four unidentified bike-borne men stopped his car and got into a scuffle with him. They proceeded to abuse and assault Jangra, slapping him in the middle of the road.

Jangra said he tried to reason with them, but they refused to listen and kept assaulting him.

While Jangra suffered minor injuries, the accused persons fled the spot on their bikes after the incident.

Police learnt the scuffle began after Jangra objected to one of the bikers using a high-beam on his Bullet bike's headlights. Jangra, who worked with a private firm, took to X, formerly

Twitter, and shared details about the road rage incident.

Delhi Police took cognizance of the matter and a probe began to identify and trace the accused persons.

Subsequently, CCTVs around the incident spot, at Nangloi Metro station, were checked. However, identifying the accused proved to be a tough nut to crack for the police.

"We checked several CCTV cameras, almost a 100, along the stretch but none of them managed to capture the faces of the accused persons clearly," said a senior official. Police then took note of the video of the incident, which was already uploaded by Jangra on his X post, and analysed it. Recorded on Jangra's dashcam (dashboard camera), the video showed the faces of two of the accused persons. The faces were clearly visible. They could be seen seated on their bikes and subsequently, moving out of the frame to abuse the victim... two of the accused persons were traced in the same area and subsequently, two others were arrested," said an officer, on the

condition of anonymity.

The arrests were made within three days, on May 10.

The officer said a voice-sampling test through a forensic lab was further carried out on the accused to corroborate their presence at the spot.

Their voices matched with the ones heard in the video, said police.

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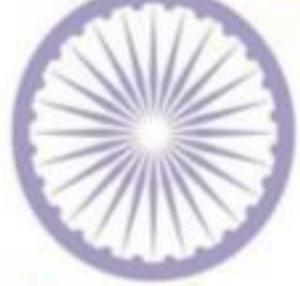
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ATI VISHISHT SEVA MEDAL, PRESIDENT'S TATRAKSHAK MEDAL & TATRAKSHAK MEDAL AWARDEES : 2023-24

Independence Day - 2023 (15th August 23)

IG Manoj Vasant Baadkar, TM - President's Tatrakshak Medal (Distinguished Service)

Comdt (JG) Anurag Shukla, Sultan Singh, P/Nvk (P) - Tatrakshak Medal (Gallantry)

DIG Manoj Bhatia, DIG KR Deepak Kumar, Deobrat Kumar Mishra, P/Adh (RP) - Tatrakshak Medal (Meritorious Service)

Republic Day - 2024 (26th January 24)

Director General Rakesh Pal, PTM, TM - Ati Vishisht Seva Medal

IG Bhisham Sharma, TM - President's Tatrakshak Medal (Distinguished Service)

Comdt Sunil Dutt, Comdt (JG) Saurabh - Tatrakshak Medal (Gallantry)

DIG Anil Kumar Parayil, DIG Jamal Taha, Dipak Roy, P/Adh (AR) - Tatrakshak Medal (Meritorious Service)

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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



STATUS CHECK

AT A time when the Trinamool Congress has made the withholding of Central funds a big political issue, party's senior leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay on Wednesday directly checked the status from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During a brief encounter in Parliament, Bandyopadhyay asked the PM why the funds were withheld and whether the state would get them in near future. According to sources in the TMC, the PM responded saying that the CAG reports on the use of funds by the state were not "right".

NEW RITUAL

A NEW ritual was added to the customary procession of the President to address the joint session of Parliament on Wednesday. Carrying Sengol, senior marshal in Lok Sabha Rajeev Sharma escorted the President to the Lok Sabha chamber. The Sengol, which was installed near the Speaker's chair in the Lok Sabha on May 28 last year, was kept at the centre as the President took her seat, and remained there while she addressed the members. The golden sceptre was kept back at its original spot after the President left the House.

OATH CORRECTION

AAM Aadmi Party's Swati Maliwal had to take oath as Rajya Sabha member twice on Wednesday as she initially read out the oath meant for 'nominated MPs', also ending it with 'Inquilab Zindabad'. Following this, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said: "This is a solemn occasion. There are instances when there were diversions on the oath and corrections had to be made. She is a young member of the House".



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in West Bengal's Malda on Wednesday. Partha Paul

Cong claims Rahul Yatra 'attacked', backtracks; Mamata slams Cong, CPM

ATRI MITRA & RAVIK BHATTACHARYA
MALDA, KOLKATA, JANUARY 31

ON A DAY that Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and her tour of northern West Bengal districts both criss-crossed Malda district, CM Mamata Banerjee indicated she was in no mood for letting up in her attacks on the INDIA bloc.

Tearing into the Congress, Mamata alleged that the party and the CPI(M) were working together to "clear the ground for the BJP" in the state, adding that only the TMC was fighting against the saffron outfit.

The Congress and TMC also had an exchange of words over the Yatra, with the Congress initially claiming that "anti-socials" had pelted stones at Rahul's vehicle, breaking its windshield.

The TMC leadership has been blaming Bengal PCC chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for the breakdown of the alliance, who, in turn, has kept up his attacks on the TMC. The Congress leadership, though, has said it has kept the door open for talks, with Rahul himself asserting that Mamata was an important part of INDIA.

Chowdhury continued to harp on the state government's "failings" Wednesday. Speaking about the incident involving Rahul's vehicle, he said: "The Bengal administration did not cooperate with us. I don't know whether the glass broke or was broken."

"Rahul Gandhi's yatra has gone through states like Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, Bihar and West Bengal, where the Congress is not in power. Everywhere, there were attempts to derail the Yatra..," Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said. FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Kovind panel weighing draft paper on macroeconomic impact of syncing polls

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE HIGH-level committee on One Nation, One Election, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, is discussing the potential implications of holding simultaneous elections on factors such as GDP growth, fiscal deficits, crime rates, and education outcomes, *The Indian Express* has learned.

In its last meeting on January 27, committee members were apprised of macroeconomic impact of holding elections to panchayats, municipalities, state Assemblies and the Lok Sabha together. This was done by way of a draft research paper presented by former Finance Commission chairperson

and committee member NKS Singh and economist Prachi Mishra. Former Rajya Sabha Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad, former LS Secretary General Subhash Kashyap, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner Sanjay Kathiari, and senior advocate Harish Salve, attended the meet, a Law Ministry statement said. Home Minister Amit Shah, a member of the committee, and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, a special invitee, were not present.

The paper, sources said, covers impact of simultaneous elections on various aspects like education, with teachers often assigned election duties, GDP growth and investment. Those in favour of the idea argue that development work is disrupted because of the

model code of conduct and government staff being posted for poll duty. The committee also discussed potential consequences on crime outcomes, given that a significant portion of security forces is deployed for elections.

N K Singh told *The Indian Express*, "Yes, a draft paper on the macroeconomic impact of syncing elections was presented to the committee last week. We have looked at what happens to GDP growth, investment, fiscal deficits, educational outcomes, crime outcomes, freebies, and how uncertainty affects the decision-making process." Singh and Mishra's paper would undergo changes based on the comments received from committee members.

On Wednesday, Kovind met NCP leaders Praful Patel and Sunil Dattatray Tatkare and Rashtriya Jok Janata Dal president Upendra Kushwaha, as part of the consultative process, the Law Ministry said in a statement. On Tuesday, Kovind had met former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court Pradeep Nandrajog.

The committee is scheduled to continue its discussion on the economic impact in its upcoming consultations later this week and next week. According to sources, representatives from the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India are expected to deliver presentations on the potential savings for corporates if polls were held once every five years.

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Chandigarh mayoral polls: No interim HC relief, AAP to move SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 31

THE PUNJAB and Haryana HC Wednesday refused to grant any interim relief to the AAP on its plea for setting aside the Chandigarh mayoral election, following which Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann said they will move the Supreme Court for an early hearing.

The AAP drew a blank in Kerala in both 2019 LS polls and 2021 Assembly elections. Looking to make inroads in Kerala, the AAP has been attempting to woo the Christians, who account for 18% of the state's population. The BJP sees George as a bridge to reach out to Christians, particularly its Catholic segment, in central Kerala. George's sway has however been limited to Poonjar, which he represented in the Assembly continuously from 1996 until 2015.

Subsequently, he parted ways with his party and fought from Poonjar as an independent candidate in 2016 Assembly polls and defeated the CPM and Congress candidates. In 2017, George formed the Kerala Janapaksham (Secular), which backed the BJP-led NDA in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. However, his party had then not joined the NDA as an ally.

Even after floating his outfit, George tried to join either of the two leading fronts – the CPM-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF – but could not succeed as both feared backlash from Muslims due to his tirades against the

community.

George, who once enjoyed the backing of Muslims in Poonjar, lost his seat in the 2021 Assembly elections – the first election he fought on his party's ticket after "antagonising" the community. George also did not get the support of the NDA as it fielded its own candidate from the constituency.

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community.

George has been at the centre of rows over his alleged anti-Muslim remarks. With a section of the Christian community having concerns over the Islamic fundamentalism, observers feel George's induction into the BJP would fuel its polarising politics that may yield electoral dividends.

The bench was hearing a plea filed by AAP councillor Kuldeep Kumar, meanwhile, said, "We will move SC. We will seek an early hearing... The murder of democracy which happened yesterday was captured in video. He [presiding officer Masih] is directly counting [the votes]."

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On Rahul's remarks at the Purnea rally, which was part of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, that they had made Nitish agree to do the caste survey, the CM said: "Nonsense. Everyone knows I got the resolution passed in 2019 and 2020 for conducting a caste survey in Bihar. When the Central government did not con-

'WAS AGAINST CALLING OPP BLOC INDIA'

Nitish hits out at Rahul on caste survey, Tejashwi for job push claim

SANTOSH SINGH

PATNA, JANUARY 31

A DAY AFTER Congress leader Rahul Gandhi broke his silence over the exit of Nitish Kumar from the INDIA bloc and attributed it to his "reluctance" to conduct a caste survey, the Bihar CM joined words with him.

In his first such remarks attacking his former partners, Nitish said it was "falta bat" (useless talk) on Rahul's part to try and take credit for the caste survey done by the Mahagathbandhan government led by him.

He also questioned former deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav saying it was his party's ministers who had led the job push under the Mahagathbandhan government.

In another swipe at the INDIA bloc, Nitish said it "had not achieved anything". "I have nothing to do with it now. In fact, I was against calling it INDIA. But they decided to go with this name. I had taken initiative to form it, but it did not do a single thing. Hence, I have walked out of it and joined the NDA. Ab yehi raha henge (I will stick to the NDA now)."

The acronym, standing for 'Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance', is believed to have been arrived at by the Congress and TMC jointly at INDIA's Bengaluru meeting, with other partners taken by surprise.

On Tejashwi comparing the achievements of the last 17 months of the Mahagathbandhan government to the 17 years Nitish has been CM, he said:

"When I took over the reins of Bihar, he (Tejashwi) was a child. Everyone knows all the major development initiatives have been taken after 2006. Where were government jobs before 2006? We started recruiting teachers and giving jobs in other departments later."



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar in Patna on Wednesday. PTI

duct it for some reasons, we decided to go ahead and held it in Bihar." Nitish, in fact, was talking of a caste census since before he switched over from the NDA to join hands with the Mahagathbandhan government.

On Opposition allegations that the Central government was on a witch-hunt against its leaders, through probes by agencies, Nitish said: "These agencies are investigating old cases. It is part of the process of investigation."

He also claimed that it was only after he took over as the CM in 2006, for the first time, that the state had embarked on the path of growth and development.

On Tejashwi comparing the achievements of the last 17 months of the Mahagathbandhan government to the 17 years Nitish has been CM, he said: "When I took over the reins of Bihar, he (Tejashwi) was a child. Everyone knows all the major development initiatives have been taken after 2006. Where were government jobs before 2006? We started recruiting teachers and giving jobs in other departments later."

OPP LEADER-SPEAK

Governments are being toppled one by one in all the states... Harassing Jharkhand CM Shri Hemant Soren ji by imposing ED and forcing him to resign is a part of this malicious campaign.

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

Whether it is EC or ED, IT, CBI, how all independent agencies... have become darbari in darbar of BJP... is sad for the country.

PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI SHIV SENA (UBT) MP

The arrest of Hemant Soren marks a brazen escalation of Modi regime's ongoing war on the opposition...

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA CPI (ML) LIBERATION GEN SECY

Soren's succession plan stalled, JMM-Cong coalition asks: 'What's Governor waiting for?'

ABHISHEK ANGAD

RANCHI, JANUARY 31

JHARKHAND POLICE Wednesday lodged an FIR against senior ED officers under SC/ST Act at the SC/ST police station in Ranchi based on a complaint by JMM leader Hemant Soren over searches by the agency at his Delhi residence. The FIR named ED Additional Director Kapil Raj, Assistant Director Deovrat Jha, and two other officials Anuman Kumar and Aman Patel, and unknown officials.

Soren alleged the ED searched his Delhi residence to "harass and malign him and his entire family".

He represents many things. A rally would be held in Kerala as part of the merger." After joining, George said he is ready to contest from Pathanamthitta seat in the LS polls. Union Minister V Muraleedharan said, "the merger of George's party with BJP has exposed the malicious propaganda in Kerala that BJP is anti-minority. The merger shows that even in Kerala people are convinced that Narendra Modi would retain power at the Centre again."

George had been a seven-time MLA from the Poonjar con-

sequently has led to some concerns in the JMM-Congress camp, sources said. Congress MLA Dipika Pandey Singh said the Governor did not meet legislators of the ruling alliance: "We were given time by the Governor and then disrespectedly told to go. After seeing our majority, we have been pushed out. The Raj Bhavan is acting like the BJP's agent and all elected leaders were asked to go."

Champai Soren, in a letter to the Governor, wrote: "I have been elected as the leader of the Legislative Party in the meeting of the Legislative Party of JMM. Subsequently, today itself, all the honorable MLAs of the alliance parties have unanimously elected me as the leader of the Joint Legislative Party. Along with this, I am attaching with this letter the letters of support from the leader of the legislative party, Indian National Congress, leader of Rashtriya Janata Dal, MLA and others. Thus, I have the support of 47 honorable members, which is more than the majority figure. Therefore, I respectfully request you to accept my claim and take action to appoint me as the CM for the formation of the new government."

Sources in the ruling alliance said the lack of a successor being appointed could lead to "a constitutional crisis". "We have the majority; what is stopping the Governor? As of now, there is not

anyone to take over. The Governor is not doing anything," said a source.

Champai Soren named the next Jharkhand CM. PTI

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anyone to take over. The Governor is not doing anything," said a source.

Champai Soren named the next Jharkhand CM. PTI

immediacy has led to some concerns in the JMM-Congress camp, sources said. Congress MLA Dipika Pandey Singh said the Governor did not meet legislators of the ruling alliance: "We were given time by the Governor and then disrespectedly told to go. After seeing our majority, we have been pushed out. The Raj Bhavan is acting like the BJP's agent and all elected leaders were asked to go."

Champai Soren, in a letter to the Governor, wrote: "I have been elected as the leader of the Legislative Party in the meeting of the Legislative Party of JMM. Subsequently, today itself, all the honorable MLAs of the alliance parties have unanimously elected me as the leader of the Joint Legislative Party. Along with this, I am attaching with this letter the letters of support from the leader of the legislative party, Indian National Congress, leader of Rashtriya Janata Dal, MLA and others. Thus, I have the support of 47 honorable members, which is more than the majority figure. Therefore, I respectfully request you to accept my claim and take action to appoint me as the CM for the formation of the new government."

Sources in the ruling alliance said the lack of a successor being appointed could lead to "a constitutional crisis". "We have the majority; what is stopping the Governor? As of now, there is not

anyone to take over. The Governor is not doing anything," said a source.

BUDGET SESSION ADDRESS

From Ram temple to Art 370 abrogation, President lists govt accomplishments

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

ASTRONG and stable government would ensure rapid development at the domestic level and could place the country as "vishwa-mitra" during the period of upheaval in the global scenario, President Droupadi Murmu said on Wednesday in her last address to the joint session of Parliament ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

In her nearly 90-minute speech, President Murmu, who listed the achievements of the two terms of the Narendra Modi-led government, said that January 22, the day Ram temple in Ayodhya was consecrated, was a defining moment. "There come junctures in the history of civilisations, which shape the future for the coming centuries. There have been many such defining moments in the history of India also. This year, on January 22, the



President Droupadi Murmu

plause and chants of "Jai Shree Ram". At one reference, even Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was seen thumping the desk.

According to the President, the construction of Ram temple and abrogation of Article 370 were significant in the country's efforts to overcome the past challenges and investing maximum energy for the future.

"Over the past 10 years, India has witnessed several such tasks being accomplished in the national interest, for which the people of the country were waiting for decades. For centuries, there was an aspiration to construct the Ram Mandir. Today it is a reality. There were doubts regarding the removal of Article 370 from J&K. Those are history now," she said.

It was the President's first address to the joint session in the Lok Sabha chamber of the new Parliament building.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

country witnessed a similar epochal moment. After waiting for centuries, Ram Lalla has now been enshrined in a grand temple in Ayodhya," the President said in her address.

"This was a matter of aspirations and faith for crores of our countrymen and the resolution of this has been accomplished in a harmonious manner... For centuries, there was an aspiration to construct the Ram Mandir. Today it is a reality," she added.

The references to the Ram temple received thundering ap-

Political speech to praise PM: Opp

New Delhi: The Opposition Congress Wednesday described President Droupadi Murmu's address to the members of both Houses of Parliament as a "political speech drafted only to praise the Narendra Modi government".

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said his party was happy that the President came to the new Parliament for the first time and addressed. "Though late, she received this honour. Everyone saw that the government did not consider it appropriate to invite her to the inauguration of the new Parliament building, although the President is an integral part of the Parliament," Kharge said in a statement.

"Propaganda and advertisement of Modi ji appeared in the speech and the entire speech was political. There was no vision in the speech. There was no mention of what the government is going to do for dalits, deprived sections and tribals," Kharge said. The President's address passed by the Union Cabinet was only a praise of the Modi government, he said.

CPI general secretary D Raja said the President's address has become an occasion to hide failures of the Modi government.

Murmu did not say anything on the issue of rampant unemployment, unbridled inflation and the deep chasm of growing inequality, Kharge said, adding this was because the Modi government has not done anything in the past 10 years towards solving these issues.

Kharge also said that the President could have at least appealed for restoration of peace in Manipur but there was no mention of the violence in her address. "For these reasons, with full respect to His Excellency the President, we reject this eulogising address written by the Modi government," Kharge said.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said, "It was a typical speech you expect from a government before the elections. They have written an election speech for the President to deliver... This is a one-sided narrative..."

CPI general secretary D Raja said the President's address has become an occasion to hide failures of the Modi government.

ENS

PM to Opp members on disruptions: Introspect in last session before polls

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31



PM Narendra Modi at Parliament House on Wednesday. Anil Sharma

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi, before the start of the Budget Session on Wednesday, hit out at Opposition members for their "habit of creating ruckus" and "disrobing democratic values".

On a day 146 Opposition MPs suspended in the last Parliament session for disrupting its proceedings returned to attend the Budget Session, Modi said no one remembers the names of those who consistently create ruckus.

"Gat dvarsho mein jisko ja raasta soojha usne sansad mein apna apna kaarya kiya. Lekin main itna zaroor kahunga ki jinko aadatn huddang karne kavsaabhaav ban gaya hai, jo aadatn loktantrik moolon ka cheeraan karte hain, aise mananya sansad aajab kahira satra mein mil raha hain tab zaroor atraa nirakshan karenge.

(In the past 10 years, each member of Parliament contributed in their own way. However, it is worth introspecting, especially for those MPs, who have become accustomed to creating disruptions and habitually disrobing democratic values.)"

He urged such members to introspect about their behaviour inside the House. "As they gather for the final session today, they should introspect what they have achieved in the last

decade. If you ask 100 people in your Parliamentary constituency, none will remember or even know the names of those who consistently created ruckus. Despite the sharpness of the Opposition's voice and the severity of criticism, a significant portion of the public still remembers those who enriched the House with constructive ideas," Modi said.

He said, "Even in the upcoming days, when people witness the discussions in the House, every uttered word by the members will be etched into the annals of history."

"Hence, despite the opposition, displays of intellectual prowess, concern for the common man's interests, or sharp reactions against us, I firmly be-

lieve that a substantial part of the country – comprising democracy enthusiasts and society at large – will appreciate such conduct. Conversely, individuals who contribute nothing but negativity, hooliganism, and mischief are seldom remembered," the PM said.

"However, the current Budget Session presents an opportunity for redemption and leaving a positive impact. I urge all honourable MPs not to let this chance slip away, to act in the best interest of the country, contribute their most valuable ideas to the House, and infuse the nation with enthusiasm and excitement," he said.

The Prime Minister also spoke about the celebration of showcasing the strength of women.

"Towards the conclusion of the inaugural session in this new Parliament building, a highly dignified decision was made – the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Subsequently, on January 26, the nation witnessed the strength, courage, and determination of women on the Kartavya Path. Today, the guidance provided by President Droupadi Murmu ji at the commencement of this Budget Session and the Interim Budget to be presented by Nirmala Sitharaman exemplify the power of women. In essence, this is a celebration showcasing the strength of women," Modi said.

Modi concluded his remarks with "Ram-Ram" greetings.

KANNADA USE ON SIGNBOARDS

Governor returns ordinance, Dy CM to table it during session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, JANUARY 31

KARNATAKA GOVERNOR Thaawarchand Gehlot sent back to the state government an ordinance mandating 60% space on signboards of businesses and establishments in Kannada, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar had confirmed Tuesday.

The Governor's office Wednesday in a statement said, "In this regard, it is clarified that the Governor has not rejected the said ordinance, rather the ordinance has been returned to the state government with the advice to present the said Bill before both the Houses of the state legislature for approval, since the notification for summoning both the houses has already been issued which is scheduled to commence on 12 February, 2024."

Shivakumar had said that the ordinance to amend the Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act, which got the Cabinet approval on January 5, will be taken up during the Assembly session. "It is unfortunate that the Governor has sent it back. It is a state subject and Kannada language is our identity and honour. I request the Governor to reconsider the issue. It is a progressive thought and there is a law which exists. Neither the political parties nor the citizens have objected to it. We will pass it in the Assembly. It was not right for him to send it back within 15 days," Shivakumar had said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Governor has sent the ordinance back to the government, and wants a bill to be placed before the Legislature and passed, considering that the Legislature session is round the corner. "... Though we (government) had sent the ordinance much earlier, by the time it came before him (Governor) for signing the session was called. So he has sent it back. He has not said anything else. It will be passed in the Legislature," Siddaramaiah said.

Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tandagadi said he had received the file Tuesday. "He (Gehlot) has put 'session' as the reason (to send back the ordinance). I don't want to politicise it as it is about the language's pride. I will table it during the Assembly session and send it to the Governor. I wanted to meet him regarding the issue Wednesday as I was touring other districts but he has sent back the file," he said.

WITH PTI INPUTS

LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD.

2nd Floor Biscouman Tower, Gandhi Maidan (West), Patna - 800001, Tel. No. - 0612 - 2332129

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Secured Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 6(2) & (8) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, WHEREAS the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of L.I.C. Housing Finance Ltd (LIC HFL), under Securitization & Reconstructions of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 had issued Demand Notice to following Borrowers/Mortgagors calling upon them to repay the outstanding due amount mentioned in the said notices. However, The Borrowers/Mortgagors having failed to repay the said due amount, the undersigned has taken PHYSICAL POSSESSION of the following properties in exercise of powers conferred U/s 13(4) and U/s 14 of the said Act read with the Rule 8 of the said Rules & will be sold through E-auction.

Sl. No.	Loan No./ Name of Borrower/Co-Borrower	Property Address and Flat Area/ UDS of land	Date of Demand Notice Reserve Price (Amount in Rs.) EMD (10% of Reserve Price)	Bank details (EMD to be transferred to)
1.	Loan No. - 211000000263 Name - Mr. Dilip Kumar	Individual House (GF + FF + SF) Carpet Area - 870 sqft / Each Floor, Plot No. - Part of 1879 & 1844, Circle No. - 194, Ward No. - 56/36/29, Thana No. - 21, Sheet No. - 254, Mauza - Dhawalpura (North of Bye Pass Road), P.S - Patna City Presently Chowk, Patna, Bihar, Pin- 800009	28.04.2018 Rs. 60,00,000/- Rs. 6,00,000/-	Account No. - HFLECEPB00263 IFSC Code - UTIB0CCH274 Beneficiary Name : LIC Housing Finance Ltd Branch Name : Axis Bank, Centralised Collection Hub
2.	Loan No. - 212500000909 & 212500000919 Name - Ms Shobha Kumari & Mr. Prem Pratap Ray	Flat No. 202 (1300sqft) & 203 (970 sqft), Chhath Dham Apartment, Patliputra Path, Rajendra Nagar, Plot No. - 9G, Thana No. - 04, Ward No. 12 (O) 32 (N), PS - Kadambuk, Patna, Bihar, Pin- 800020 Two Flat With Interconnected & Car Parking	26.09.2019 Rs.1,58,20,000/- Rs. 15,82,000/-	Account No. - HFLECEPB000909 IFSC Code - UTIB0CCH274 Beneficiary Name : LIC Housing Finance Ltd Branch Name : Axis Bank, Centralised Collection Hub
3.	Loan No.: - 220200002101 & 220200002147 Name : Ms Anju Soni & Mr. Anup Kumar	Individual House (Basement + GF + FF + SF + TF) Carpet Area - 578 sqft / Each Floor Super Area - 680 sqft, Khesra No. - 536 (P), Khata No. - 189, Ward No. - 06, Taazi No. - 5281, Thana No. - 14, Mauza - Paharpur, PS - Gardanibagh, Dist - Patna Pin- 800001	09.03.2021 Rs. 78,85,000/- Rs. 7,88,500/-	Account No. - HFLECEPB002101 IFSC Code - UTIB0CCH274 Beneficiary Name : LIC Housing Finance Ltd Branch Name : Axis Bank, Centralised Collection Hub

E-AUCTION Date	06 - MARCH - 2024 FROM 13:00 PM TO 17:00 PM
Last date of submission of e-Bid form	05 - MARCH - 2024
Date for Inspection of Property	04 - MARCH - 2024

Further to this PUBLIC NOTICE for E-Auction Sale of the above said Assets / properties (in terms and conditions of the SARFAESI, Act 2002 and rules thereunder) LIC HFL invites online mode to purchase the said properties on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS".

THE TERMS & CONDITIONS OF THE AUCTION SALE ARE AS FOLLOWS:-

- E-Auction is being held on 'As is where is Basis' and 'As is what is Basis', 'Whatever there is' and 'Without Any Recourse Basis', and will be conducted "Online". The E-Auction will be conducted through LIC-Housing Finance Ltd, approved E-auction service provider – www.C1India.com, Contact person – Mr. Mithalesh Kumar, Mo. No. 7080804466, E-mail-mithalesh.kumar@c1india.com.
- The intending bidders are advised to visit <https://www.bankeauctions.com/> for the details of the properties in the website and for taking part in the bid they should register their names at portal <https://www.bankeauctions.com/> and get their user-id and password free of cost. Prospective bidders may avail online training on E-Auction from the service provider C1India, Landline : 0124-4302000, support email id: mithalesh.kumar@c1india.com, Auction portal - <https://www.bankeauctions.com/>
- The successful bidder/s shall deposit 25% of the amount of sale price, adjusting the EMD paid already, immediately on acceptance of offer by the Authorized officer in respect of the sale, failing which the earnest money deposited shall be forfeited. The balance 75% of the sale price is payable within 15 days from the date of confirmation of the sale solely at the discretion of the Authorized Officer. In case of failure to deposit the balance amount within the prescribed period, the amount deposited shall be forfeited. The Authorized Officer shall not be required to give any further notice of forfeiture to the successful bidder.
- Bidding increment fixed for ₹ 20,000/- Twenty Thousand increment per Bid.
- Bidders are bound by the principle of "caveat emptor" (Buyer Beware) and advised to conduct their own due diligence to find any encumbrances, statutory liabilities, arrears of property tax, Income Tax, Excise Duty, Labour Dues, electricity and maintenance dues etc., of the firm or Secured Asset. The Successful bidders shall have to bear all outgoing i.e., municipal taxes, maintenance/society charges, electricity charges, water charges, stamp duty, registration charges, taxes, or any other dues, if any and all other incidental charges, cost including all outgoing relating to the respective properties other than the sale price.
- The L.I.C Housing Finance Limited reserves the right to CANCEL / ACCEPT / REJECT / ALTER / MODIFY / POSTPONE the TENDER SALE / AUCTION without giving any reason whatsoever or prior Notice.

Place : Patna - BO
Authorized Officer
LIC Housing Finance Ltd.

Will appeal against Mandal report if quota challenged, says Jarange

Pune: Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange Patil on Wednesday reiterated that he will challenge the Mandal Commission report if the reservation for the Maratha community is challenged by OBC leaders.

"If OBC leaders challenge our reservation, then I will also appeal against the Mandal Commission report, which granted reservation to OBCs," the activist said during an interaction with journalists

in the city on Wednesday.

Without naming Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal, Jarange-Patil said, "He (Bhujbal) knows the Mandal Commission report can be challenged in court. But we don't want to create hurdles for the poor among the OBC community. He should understand this, otherwise we will have no option but to challenge the report."

ENS

बिहार सरकार
बिहार तकनीकी सेवा आयोग
19, हार्डिंग रोड, पटना-800001

भाड़े पर वाहन रखने हेतु नियिदा आमंत्रण सूचना- BTSC/04/2023-24

1. विज्ञापनदाता का नाम एवं पदनाम :- उप सचिव, बिहार तकनीकी सेवा आयोग, 19, हार्डिंग रोड, पटना।

2. नियिदा जमा करने की तिथि एवं समय :- प्रकाशन के तिथि से दिनांक-28.02.2024, 1:00 बजे अपराह्न तक।

3. नियिदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय :- 2

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

No. 152-23-24

DIV. Rly. Manager, N.W. Rly. Bikaner for and on behalf of President of India invites open E-Tender for the following works up to 15.00 hours on 20.02.2024 as per its:

Tender No. : 152 Name of Work with its Location : Provision for RUB covering self-supporting shed at RUB No. 11 at Km 45/2-3 under the jurisdiction of ADEN/LBBKN. Approx. Cost of Work : Rs. 11466595.03 Earnest Money : Rs. 207300.00 Note : Other terms & conditions will be shown on the website www.ireps.gov.in 120-CO/24

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HC bars non-Hindus from TN temples' sanctum areas

Chennai: In a significant ruling, the Madras High Court, led by Justice S Srimathy, has ordered that non-Hindus are not permitted inside Tamil Nadu's Hindu temples beyond the kodimaram (flagpole) unless they profess faith in the deity and agree to abide by Hindu customs.

The judgment, with a potential to

trigger debates on religious freedom and sanctity of religious spaces, was on a petition by Senthilkumar, a toy shop owner near Dhayandhapani Swamy Temple in Palani. He argued that non-Hindus often treated temples like tourist spots, disrespecting their sanctity.

Incidents cited included non-Hindus consuming non-vegetarian food within temple premises and at-

tempting prayers from other religions, raising concerns among Hindu devotees about erosion of their religious spaces.

Justice Srimathy, addressing these concerns, said that temples are not tourist attractions but sacred spaces deserving reverence. She ordered the installation of boards at temple entrances, stating the restriction on non-Hindus entry beyond the kodimaram. **ENS**

Court acquits SP leader Azam Khan in dacoity case

Lucknow: A local court in Rampur has acquitted senior Samajwadi Party leader and former MP Azam Khan and six others in a dacoity case registered in 2019, around three years after the incident occurred in 2016.

District government counsel, Amit Saxena, stated, "The court acquitted Azam Khan and six others on the benefit of doubts. Few prosecution witnesses turned hostile." A total of 14 witnesses were examined.

Didn't surrender denominational character, AMU tells apex court

Muslim community on the passage of the Bill." Referring to various provisions of the Act including for imparting religious education, Dhavan said they show "continuation of the spirit of MAO".

"Existing students in the MAO College were to become the responsibility of AMU, this is the most important example of continuity," he said adding this can only be an argument of continuity and not surrender.

He termed the 1920 Act as "only a mechanism" to convert MOS College into a University. "There was no surrender at any point of time. This argument is entirely and totally a play on words and nothing more than that," he contended.

Senior Advocate Rajeev Dhavan appearing for the University told a 7-judge Constitution bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud that "the AMU Act 1920 read as a whole along with the statement of objects and reasons and the preamble, clearly reflect on the denominational nature of AMU".

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"The legislative debates... support this view", he told the bench also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Surya Kant, J B Pardiwal, Dipankar Datta, Manoj Misra and Satish Chandra Sharma.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had earlier told the bench which is hearing a reference on AMU's minority character that the University surrendered its denominational character at the time of its establishment by a 1920 Act of the British Parliament and could not claim the minority status now.

D

Dhavan said the then "education minister while introducing the AMU Bill narrated the entire history of how AMU came to being from the foundation of the Muslim Anglo Oriental College to negotiations with the Muslim University for its conversion into a Muslim university".

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He sought to underline that "the Governor General congratulated the

EXPRESS NETWORK

SC refuses to allow woman to terminate over 32-week pregnancy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE SUPREME Court on Wednesday denied a 26-year-old woman permission to terminate her over 32-week pregnancy, noting that the medical board had opined against it.

"It's a 32-week foetus. How can it be terminated? Medical board has also said it cannot be terminated. It is a matter of two weeks, then you can give it for adoption, if you want," a bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and P B Varale said.

Appearing for the woman, Advocate Amit Mishra Wednesday told the bench that she did not wish to deliver the baby and will have to live with the trauma if forced to do so.

The bench however said that the Delhi HC had considered all aspects. "The medical board has opined there is no abnormality and it is a normal foetus. We cannot go beyond the opinion of the board," said Justice Trivedi.

The court added it has also been pointed out that the woman too won't have any risk to health if she continues the pregnancy.

On January 4, the Delhi HC had allowed the woman, who had lost her husband in October last year, to terminate her then 29-week-old foetus, but recalled its order on January 23 following a plea by the Centre to consider protecting the right to life of the unborn baby. The HC had also said she can give the newborn for adoption if she so desired. It also asked the government to bear the delivery expenses.

Ex-govt pleader surrenders in sexual abuse case

Thiruvananthapuram: Two days after his anticipatory bail plea was dismissed by the Supreme Court, former senior Kerala government pleader, PG Manu, who is accused of sexually abusing a rape survivor, surrendered before the police Wednesday. His anticipatory bail plea had earlier been rejected by the high court also.

Ernakulam rural police in December last year had filed a case against Manu after which the state government removed him from the post. He was booked under IPC section 376 and relevant sections of the IT Act. Manu was a special prosecutor for the National Investigation Agency in Kochi before being appointed as the government pleader. ENS

Official, 8 beneficiaries booked for fraud in UP marriage scheme

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 31

AN FIR has been registered against an assistant development officer of the social welfare department and eight women beneficiaries on charges of fraud in connection with the state government's mass marriage scheme, police on Wednesday said.

It is alleged that several persons, who were already married, were married again in the mass marriage programme organised in Ballia on January 25, they said.

Under this scheme, a payment

Centre plans to introduce Bill to prevent unfair means in public examinations

It proposes 3-5 years of imprisonment; for cases of organised crimes, jail term will be 5-10 years

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE CENTRE plans to introduce the Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, during the ongoing session of Parliament.

The Bill is aimed at curbing cases related to paper leaks and organised cheating in public examinations, including the UPSC, SSC, and the Railways; and entrance examinations such as NEET, JEE, and CUET.

According to sources, the Union Cabinet has approved the draft of the Bill, and it is likely to be tabled in Parliament on Friday or on Monday.

The Bill proposes minimum three to five years of imprisonment, however, for cases of organised crimes, the Bill proposes imprisonment of five-10 years. For organised crimes, the Bill also proposes a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore. For service provider firms in examinations, a fine of up to Rs 1 crore, and recovery of proportionate cost of examination have been proposed as punishment. The firm will also be barred from conduct of public examination for four years.

For organised crime committed by any person, group of persons, including persons associated with service provider or examination authority, the Bill provides imprisonment of five-10 years, and a fine not less than

Rs 1 crore. For institutions involved in organised crimes, the Bill provides for fine not less than Rs 1 crore, attachment and forfeiture of property, and recovery of proportionate cost of examination. The Bill, however, provides protection to the candidates. "A candidate, as defined in the Bill, shall not be liable for action within the purview of the Bill and shall continue to be covered under the extant administrative provisions of the public examination authority concerned," said a source.

Addressing the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament, President Droupadi Murmu said, "My government is aware of the concerns of youth regarding irregularities in examinations. Therefore, it has been decided to enact a new law to deal sternly with such malpractices."

The Bill also provides for setting up a high-level National Technical Committee on Public Examinations, which shall look into developing protocol for insulating digital platforms, devising ways and means for developing fool-proof IT security system, ensuring comprehensive electronic surveillance of the examination centres and formulating national standards and service levels for both, IT and physical infrastructure, to be deployed for conduct of such examinations.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Given electric shocks, forced to admit Opp links: Accused in House breach case

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

FIVE ACCUSED in the Parliament security breach case moved an application in a Delhi court Wednesday, alleging that they were given "electric shocks," "tormented", and made to confess to association with opposition parties.

The application, moved by Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Lalit Jha, Amol Shinde and Mahesh Kumawat, also alleged that each of the accused was forced to sign about 70 blank pages by the police. "Accused persons were tortured/given electric shocks to sign and confess the commission of crime under UAPA and their association with national political parties... two accused persons were forced to write on the paper about their association with the political party/leader of the opposition political party," their application states.

Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur listed the matter for February 17 after the Delhi Police Special Cell sought time to reply to the application.

The Delhi Police Special Cell, during the court hearing, also sought extension of the judicial custody of the accused for a month, stating that they wanted to prevent them from committing

any further offence. The police also cited evidence tampering fears. ASJ Kaur extended the judicial custody of the accused till March 1 following the Special Cell's submissions.

The five accused had first been sent to police custody in December. During an earlier hearing, another accused, Neelam Azad, had told the court that a woman officer had forcibly obtained her signature on 52 blank pages.

Lawyer Amit Shukla, who is representing the five accused, opposed the extension of judicial custody. Manoranjan and Sagar had jumped inside the Lok Sabha hall from the visitors' gallery and opened smoke canisters on December 13. Azad and Shinde were arrested for opening smoke canisters outside the new Parliament building. Kumawat had allegedly contacted Jha, who police claim is the "mastermind", and the others via a Facebook group called Bhagat Singh Fan Page. Jha is accused of destroying the conspiracy.

"On January 13, when the court had asked each accused about similar allegations, they had all categorically denied any wrong doings by the Special Cell," Special Public Prosecutor Akhand Pratap Singh told *The Indian Express*.

Karnataka gave me award, home state honoured me by jailing, says Teltumbde

SANATH PRASAD
BENGALURU, JANUARY 31

CIVIL RIGHTS activist and scholar Anand Teltumbde was conferred the Basava Rashtriya Puraskara by Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru Wednesday for his work on delivering social justice and equality through his speeches and writings. After receiving the award, Teltumbde thanked Siddaramaiah and the Karnataka government for the award and said, "A Kannadiga friend yesterday was telling me that our state will be the first to honour me with an award before my state does. I said my state (Maharashtra) has done the greatest honour by putting me in jail." "This is not my personal award. It is actually an honour for all the faceless and countless activists who have been struggling for making this world better for people to live," said Teltumbde, an accused in the Bhima Koregaon case, who was granted permission by a NIA court in Maharashtra to visit Bengaluru for two days to receive the award.



Anand Teltumbde (second from right) with other awardees and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Express



People walk with umbrellas during snowfall in Manali on Wednesday. PTI

Northwest India experienced 2nd driest January since 1901: IMD

ANJALI MARAR
BENGALURU, JANUARY 31

NORTHWESTERN REGIONS of India experienced the second driest January since 1901, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. In January, the rainfall deficit was 91 per cent. During December and January, the region received only 7.8 mm rainfall.

The complete absence of snowfall, particularly over the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and neighbouring hilly terrains, has been a matter of great concern. It was only on Wednesday that a fresh western disturbance system

brought the season's first snow over some areas in the extreme northern regions like Ladakh, Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

The December rainfall recorded over northwest India was 6.6 mm against the normal of 18.9mm (-65 per cent) and January reported 1.2 mm against normal of 32.5 mm rainfall (till January 30, -96 per cent).

New Delhi, too, experienced a dry January and it was the driest January since 2016, the IMD said.

Since 2009, Delhi experienced dry January only in 2016 and 2024, the IMD data revealed.

(Anjali Marar works with the Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru.)

FEB FORECAST: LESS CHILL, MORE RAIN

In February, winter chills will remain largely absent over most parts of the country, the IMD has said in its monthly forecast. The condition will prevail in most parts of the country except over J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, northeastern India regions, where the minimum temperatures will remain close to normal. Rainfall over most of India, especially over north India, will remain above normal during February.

Girl caught in custody battle walks out of shelter home

DHEERAJ MISHRA
AGRA, JANUARY 31

"EK DIDI thi, jiske saath main ludo kheli thi, voh god chali gayi (I used to play ludo with a girl, but she has been adopted)", these were the first words of the nine-year-old, who walked out of the government shelter home, where she was staying for a year-and-a-half after being caught in a tripartite custody battle in Agra.

The Allahabad High Court Monday ordered that the custody of the child be given to Meena Devi (45), who fostered her since birth after she was found abandoned by a eunuch,

Anjali, in Farrukhabad in November 2014. The girl walked out of the home at 3 pm Tuesday.

For the nine-year-old, the phrase "god lenda", the meaning of which she doesn't quite grasp, is now etched in her memory formed at the Rajkiya Balika Griha when referring to friends who went "missing". The girl, mumblebling while she tried to fix the eyes of her old teddy bear, was dressed in a new cream-coloured sweatshirt and blue jeans. She had a boy's cut and was dressed by her foster mother Meena. She sat next to her father, Arman Khan, holding on to his hand tightly. As the bafled child tried to understand how she ended up in a shelter

home and why people were clicking her pictures, Meena caressed her hair.

"I have not only got my daughter back but I have also got a new life. I already had four children but the day she arrived at my doorstep in November 2014 wrapped in a towel and crying loudly she became our world....Today, she has got freedom after 18 months," said Meena sitting fingers crossed, as the next hurdle of the adoption process awaits her.

Meena and her family run an orchestra named Kamal Jagran Party for a living. "I was determined from the beginning that I will not let them take my daughter. I did every possible thing. There was not a single govern-

ment office in Agra where I did not plead before an officer....Everyday I used to go and stand outside the shelter home, like one stands outside a temple, in the hope that I would catch a glimpse of my daughter," she said.

While bidding goodbye to the people gathered at the house, the nine-year-old was asked, would she want to return to the shelter home, she replied, "never".

Khan still struggles to understand why his family had to go through this trial. "I am an illiterate person but the officers are well read. They have the knowledge of law. Was it too difficult to understand what was the right thing to do? Why did they cause so much pain to a father. If

economic condition is a parameter, then shelter homes must take in all homeless children. You would not believe how much she is dear to us. After so many days, I slept peacefully. She was beside me," he said.

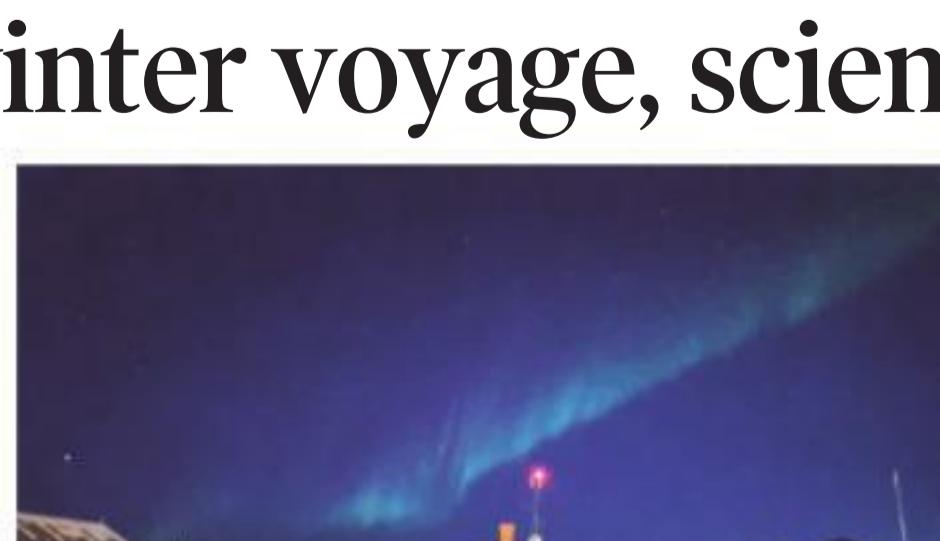
Anjali gave the child to Meena after her community told her that she was not allowed to raise a girl child. Eight years later, Anjali demanded the child back, citing their "old deal" and when Meena refused, she filed a complaint with Child Welfare Committee. The battle further complicated when Nitin Garg, an Agri-based businessman, filed an application claiming that the child could be his daughter "who went missing in November 2015".

Assam Cong chief appears before police in yatra case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 31

ASSAM CONGRESS chief Bhupen Borah appeared before Jorhat police Wednesday after receiving a summons for a case registered against the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

On Wednesday, he reported to the police station at 11 am accompanied by state Congress leaders. He left the police station after three hours and said he had been asked to report there again on February 12.



India has a permanent research station called Himadri, in Ny-Ålesund in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard in the Arctic region since 2008. Express

could confirm that the radiosonde had been successfully released when data started flowing in," she said. For the Indian contingent, a weekly day at Ny-Ålesund would typically begin with breakfast around 7.30 am after which the researchers would begin their day's tasks. Weekends were mostly off duty and they could travel to the Svalbard settlement area.

Girish, along with Principal Investigator Saurabh Singh, had proposed to conduct the characterisation of the radio frequency environment in the Arctic, the first attempt ever from this region. The experiments required the Indian researchers to drive an

electric car to the Gruevabed laboratory, located around 1.25 km from Himadri, India shares this lab with Italy and Japan.

Final year PhD student at IIT-Mandi, Prashant Rawat shared similar views. "It is teamwork that makes research possible while in Ny-Ålesund. But I really missed the Sun," he said.

The Norwegian hosts ensured that none of the researchers missed the Christmas and New Year celebrations. "...A Christmas tree was specially flown in from the mainland and we all decorated it together," said Girish.

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RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A TAINTED VICTORY

Inconsistencies that riddled mayoral poll process in Chandigarh threaten to reduce it to a charade, must be addressed

NEVER HAVE THE mayoral polls of the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation witnessed so much drama and such rancour. What started as a low-profile election held every year to elect a new mayor, a post more titular than powerful, was transformed into a high voltage battle once the Aam Aadmi Party joined hands with Congress for the three posts of mayor, senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor. The announcement, made three days before the elections were scheduled to take place on January 18, seemed to change the complexion of the electoral process. The numbers seemed stacked in favour of the newly-minted alliance with 13 AAP and seven Congress councilors pitted against 14 of the BJP. Senior AAP leaders predicted it would be the first win for INDIA, the anti-BJP alliance at the national level. But as things turned out, they had underestimated their opponent's will to win, at any cost.

The sequence of events bears recounting. The January 18 election was called off a few minutes before it could start. Reason: The presiding officer, a nominated councilor, who was also an office-bearer of the BJP, had apparently been taken ill. The Chandigarh administration tasked with holding these polls pushed them to February 6, citing among other reasons law and order and preoccupation with preparations for the Republic Day. Many were left wondering how an election that required the counting of a mere 36 votes could depend on the health or well-being of one individual when the deputy commissioner was the prescribed authority. Finally, an intervention of the Punjab and Haryana High Court led to the polls being held on January 30. On election eve, media personnel were barred from entering the Municipal House; the polling was beamed on an outdoor screen. Inside, amid chaos, the BJP pulled off a surprise victory with 16 seats, surpassing the alliance's 12, after eight of the latter's votes were invalidated. The mayoral candidate of the alliance has sought relief from the High Court, which has asked the UT administration to respond in three weeks.

A day after the debacle, amid charges and counter-charges, there is speculation about horse-trading, and allegations of alliance councilors being cloistered away in secret locations before the polls. The humdrum corporation has turned into a political minefield. At stake, above all, is the basic question of fairness and transparency. The inconsistencies that have riddled this poll process threaten to reduce it to a charade. They also raise apprehensions about deviations from, and distortions of, due process when the stakes are higher, in larger arenas.

MIND AND MATTER

Brain-computer interfaces, like the one tested by Neuralink, could be a paradigm shift. The pitfalls must be avoided

WITH NEURALINK, AS with so many of Elon Musk's ventures, it is important to separate science from speculation, product development from wishful thinking. Musk announced on X (formerly Twitter) on January 30 that "The first human received an implant from @Neuralink yesterday and is recovering well. Initial results show promising neuron spike detection." Given that Neuralink had received approval from the US Food & Drug Administration in September last year, the announcement was somewhat expected. Last year, there was controversy over the company's disclosures, which led to investigations into dead study animals and the transportation of hazardous materials. The surgery, however, marks an important milestone – the beginning of human-computer interfaces that can possibly address physical and cognitive limitations and disabilities. Moving forward, who controls the technology and how it is distributed will be important in determining its impact.

Neuralink is building on work done by laboratories and companies that came before it – the first Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) dates back to the 1970s. The wireless device implanted by Neuralink contains a chip and arrays of electrodes, which are meant to register thoughts related to movement. Eventually, if successful, the device should enable people with disabilities to move a cursor or type just by thinking about it. The initial users are likely to be people who have lost their limbs. But as with SpaceX and Tesla, the claims made by Musk around Neuralink's BCI make it seem like the science fiction future is now. Musk envisions a future where Neuralink's brain implants seamlessly merge with cognitive functions, offering a direct interface between the human mind and computers. Whether or not this comes to pass, it is important to approach the technological frontier with a discerning eye.

The first concern is around privacy. Who will control the data extracted from brains, and how can it be ensured that it is not exploited for nefarious purposes? As with AI, regulation must go hand-in-hand with the development of BCIs. Second, the development of significant medical technologies must not end up being a monopoly – publicly-funded research can help minimise the cost to the end user, who need not be only a customer who can afford the prohibitive cost of cutting-edge interventions. The Oxford Astra-Zeneca Covid vaccine, for example, was developed with public funds from multiple countries, and arguably reached far more people than its private-sector counterparts. Finally, if and when the technology gets closer to mass use, a dialogue involving experts, ethicists, and the public is essential to guard against its misuse, or even enthusiastic over-use. BCIs represent a potential paradigm shift in the relationship between people and technology. Its pitfalls, though, must be avoided.

FRÄULEIN LIESER RETURNS

A Klimt artwork has been found after nearly 100 years. It reiterates the Austrian artist's radical appeal

In June last year, Austrian artist Gustav Klimt's *Lady With a Fan* sold for a staggering \$108.4 million at Sotheby's, London, to become the most expensive artwork to be sold at an auction in Europe. It was one of the artist's two unfinished paintings, both portraits of young women, found in his studio in Vienna following his death from Spanish flu in 1918. The other, *Portrait of Fräulein Lieser*, commissioned by a wealthy Jewish industrialist, had been lost for nearly a century, its sole record a black-and-white photograph archived in the Austrian National Library from the time of its last exhibition in 1925. Now, the discovery of the latter in a private collection in Vienna has renewed anticipation of another blockbuster sale when the 31-by-55-inch portrait goes to auction in late April in the Austrian capital.

Portrait of Fräulein Lieser shows a clear-eyed young woman in a green dress and a richly embroidered blue coat. While the exact identity of the woman – and the fate of the painting during the period between 1925 and 1960, when it was acquired by the family of the present owner – remains unresolved, it is a classic Klimt, reminiscent of his later-era preoccupation with portraits commissioned by Austria's elite.

The excitement over the portrait is indicative of Klimt's larger legacy. He might be best known for *The Kiss*, an elaborate oil-on-canvas rendition of a couple in embrace, but as one of the leaders of the anti-establishment Vienna Secession movement that upended contemporary understanding of the purpose of art, Klimt's radical appeal lay in his melding together elements of craft and design in his art. The sumptuous and the sensual, the abstract and the everyday came together on his canvas in a rich riot of metallic hues and textured details. It had always driven up the price of his work, especially his portraits. In 2006, for instance, his 1907 portrait, Adele Bloch-Bauer I, sold for \$135 million. It remains to be seen if *Fraulein Lieser* has a similar fortuitous afterlife.



DHARMAKIRTI JOSHI

THE FIRST ADVANCE GDP estimates from the National Statistical Office indicate that the Indian economy will grow 7.3 per cent this fiscal year, faster than the Economic Survey's prediction of 6.5 per cent made in January 2023. The survey had then noted that the Indian economy appeared more upbeat than most.

India will continue to be the fastest-growing major economy despite a sharp slowdown in agriculture and various risks and uncertainties playing out globally. The Russia-Ukraine conflict and the intensifying Middle East crisis have so far not dented the country's growth trajectory. Most other macros are also broadly in balance, with current account deficit in the safe zone, the currency being stable, and headline inflation expected to nudge down over the next few quarters.

Economic policies, specifically fiscal policy, have played a key role in shaping the post-pandemic growth recovery. The fiscal policy transitioned from a focus on welfare during the pandemic towards a public investment-driven growth strategy to accelerate a buildup in infrastructure. This was achieved while staying on the glide path of a reducing fiscal deficit/gross domestic product (GDP) ratio.

This has helped raise the productive capacity of the economy. National accounts data shows that investment has grown faster than GDP (both in nominal and real terms), with its share in GDP rising to 34.9 per cent this year, from 31.6 per cent in 2019-20. That said, the government needs to start moderating its budgetary support to capital spending. Bringing down the fiscal deficit to the committed 4.5 per cent of GDP by 2025-26 will entail a hit of 1.4 percentage points to GDP over the next two years.

This would imply fiscal rectitude in an election year. To be sure, the budget to be presented tomorrow is an interim one and the final budget will be presented after the elections. But extrapolating the current government's past fiscal conservatism, fiscal numbers in the interim budget can be considered as final, assuming the government remains in power.

Delivering on this fiscal consolidation strategy is easy if growth remains strong. Amid the vicissitudes, the review report from the Finance Ministry expects the economy to grow close to 7 per cent next fiscal and

For sustained growth, interim budget should focus on macroeconomic fundamentals and reforms

suggests the possibility of India becoming a \$7 trillion economy by the end of this decade. Healthy medium-term growth prospects are also reflected in the forecasts of multilateral agencies. We expect GDP growth to moderate to 6.4 per cent next fiscal, before accelerating thereafter, due to slowing global growth and tighter financial conditions globally and at home.

That said, for faster and sustained growth, it is critical that the private sector picks up the investment baton from the government. This will be important to preserve the medium-term potential of the economy while moving along the fiscal normalisation path.

Improving capacity utilisation, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, a low-corporate-tax regime, and healthy balance sheets of medium and large-sized corporates augur well for a revival in capex, which has not seen a meaningful pick-up in the last decade. We believe that lowering compliance costs and providing stability in the tax regime can complement the existing favourable scenario in unleashing a broad-based revival of the investment cycle.

Unlike advanced countries, core inflation has corrected quickly in India and is at a comforting level of 3.8 per cent. Fuel inflation is -1 per cent. India's headline inflation is yet to be brought under control, solely due to high food inflation. The underperformance of the agriculture and rural economy, coupled with high food inflation in an election year, can be worrisome. Agriculture punches far above its weight in GDP because it influences food inflation, which has a 40 per cent weight in the consumption basket, and a large portion of the population still depends on agriculture. Curbing food inflation requires supply-side measures and falls in the domain of fiscal policy.

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Although central bank policy does not directly influence food inflation, it aims to prevent the transmission to other segments by keeping overall demand in check through interest rate hikes. Therefore, the RBI would be a bit wary of declaring an early victory on inflation and initiating quick rate cuts. This also implies that government policy will go into overdrive to bring down food inflation. We expect consumer inflation to settle at 4.5 per cent next fiscal, assuming normal monsoons and

crude oil prices at around \$80 per barrel.

Globally as well, inflation and interest rate cycles have peaked. However, the expectation regarding the timing and speed of rate cuts continues to evolve as the US and Europe are still grappling with high core and headline inflation and tight labour markets. We anticipate that both the US Federal Reserve and Indian central bank would initiate rate cuts in the middle of this year. Therefore, monetary policy is unlikely to become growth-supportive, particularly until the first half of next fiscal.

Last year marked the highest annual temperature in recorded history, reminding us of the escalating climate risk. India is among the most climatically vulnerable countries. The country experienced its second hottest year since 1901 and driest August in 2023, according to the India Meteorological Department. A recent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water highlights how monsoon patterns have changed in India over the last four decades, with increasing occurrences of excess and deficient rainfall.

This has wide implications, particularly for agriculture. India needs to step up research and development and take other complementary steps towards adapting to climate change, together with measures to limit it. And it must do so without hurting growth prospects. The review document also lists the "trade-off between energy security and economic growth versus energy transition" as a key challenge for the economy.

Over the near and medium term, domestic strengths such as healthy corporate and balance sheets, the government's policy focus on infrastructure build-up, and the noteworthy progress on digitalisation provide comfort on the growth front. External markers for the economy also remain resilient.

Historically, growth spurts in India have resembled sprints rather than marathons. To transform the current growth uptake into a marathon, it is important for policymakers to ensure sound macroeconomic fundamentals, fast-track skilling of the larger population to enable their participation in the growth process, engage in pragmatic management of energy transition, and focus on reforms. A tall order, indeed.

The writer is chief economist, CRISIL Ltd



TILAK DEVASHER

RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAN and Pakistan have been complex. Iran was the first country to recognise Pakistan in 1947. In the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Iran provided safe bases to the Pakistan Air Force. During the 1973-77 Baloch insurgency, the Shah's government provided Pakistan with 30 helicopters and pilots to strafe the Baloch.

Despite this, insurgencies of their ethnic Baloch populations have complicated relations. While there has been intermittent co-operation, both have also accused the other of sheltering insurgents. The Iran-Pakistan border has been a troubled one with skirmishes but these have been kept below the threshold of open hostilities. Over the years, mechanisms and channels of communication have been established to deal with these situations.

That was why the Iranian missile and drone attack on January 16 came as a surprise. The attacks targeted the village of Sabz Koh, about 60 km inside Pakistan, in Balochistan's Panjgur district, killing two children and injuring three other civilians. According to Iran, they had targeted a Pakistan-based Iranian Sunni terrorist group Jaish al-Adl that has carried out several attacks in Iran. Jaish al-Adl or Jaysh al-Dhu'lum as it is called in Iran, is a successor of the Iranian Baloch extremist group, Jundallah. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Shia Iran's severe treatment of the Baloch has fuelled Sunni radicalism in Sistan-Balochistan.

Pakistan saw the Iranian attack as a se-

ANATOMY OF A FLARE-UP

Pakistan response to Iran was determined by army's compulsion not to appear weak

Clearly, Iran miscalculated Pakistan's reaction. The one thing Pakistan cannot afford is an impression that despite being the Islamic world's only nuclear power, it is actually too weak to defend its sovereignty. Like Iran, the Pakistan army also has strong domestic compulsions. Its reputation had taken a beating during the past year due to the antics of Imran Khan. A military response was given, the only question being the scale of it.

For Iran, either escalating or not responding to the Pakistani attacks carried risks. The former would end up diverting its attention from the other conflicts in the Middle East that it was involved in. The latter risked inviting attacks from regional adversaries for whom the message would be that Iran could not sustain a direct conflict. Since both options were bad, it leads to the moot question of whether Iran had war-gamed the consequences of its actions against Pakistan.

Given the multiple crises in Pakistan – economic, political, security – Iran possibly assessed that it would not be in a position to retaliate and even if it were, it would avoid militarily confronting Iran. Moreover, Iran needed to signal domestically that faced with several attacks in Sistan-Balochistan, it had the capacity and will to target Jaish al-Adl ter-

rorists in Pakistan. The most consequential reason could well be the need to signal to its adversaries in the Middle East and the US that any attempt to harm it either directly or through proxies would be countered strongly.

Clearly, Iran miscalculated Pakistan's reaction. The one thing Pakistan cannot afford is an impression that despite being the Islamic world's only nuclear power, it is actually too weak to defend its sovereignty. Like Iran, the Pakistan army also has strong domestic compulsions. Its reputation had taken a beating during the past year due to the antics of Imran Khan. A military response was given, the only question being the scale of it.

Immediately after the attacks, both countries dialled down their hostilities, expressing a desire to work together. The ambassadors have returned. However, despite the diplomatic language, it is obvious that the relations have been damaged by the events.

While Pakistan seems to have gotten over this crisis, at least for the time being, domestic events are taking centre stage. Even as elections are a week away on February 8, Khan has been sentenced to imprisonment in two cases – 10 years in the cipher case and 14 years in the Toshakhana case. While these sentences would be appealed against, for the time being, they pose serious hurdles to his political career.

Devasher is an author and member, National Security Advisory Board. Views are personal



FEBRUARY 1, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

CENTRE-AKALI TALKS

THE CENTRE AND the top Akali leadership are exploring the possibility of a solution to the Punjab problem. Sources say there have been two separate meetings between senior Akali leaders and a central leader. Due to the meeting between a senior Akali leader and Rajiv Gandhi, Congress (I) general secretary, the Akali leadership did not announce any serious plan for the next phase of their agitation.

FIRING IN ALWAR

THE POLICE FIRED for the second day running

in the Alwar district of Rajasthan to disperse violent demonstrators. There has been continuing agitation against the alleged rape of a 24-year-old married woman by two policemen at Kotputli town and the death of three schoolboys in police firing on January 28. Six people, including four students, were injured in the firing at Naugawan.

BOMBAY BANDH

THE 24-HOUR Bombay and Thane-Belapur bandh called by opposition parties and trade unions was almost total and peaceful. BEST (Bombay Electricity Supply and Transport)

buses kept off the road as planned, though traffic plied according to schedule but carrying very few passengers. Air services operated fairly well but passengers had a tough time reaching their destinations.

PLI'S NEW POLICY

ONITS CENTENARY, Postal Life Insurance (PLI) has introduced a new and attractive anticipated endowment assurance policy for coverage of risk as well as quicker monetary returns for its clients. The scheme provides full protection throughout its currency and also ensures a flow of cash at regular intervals.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Caste, a Western construct

The formative literature on it dates to colonial times and is the work of writers with deep-rooted prejudices against Hinduism



THE SIDEBAR
BY J SAI DEEPAK

IN MY PREVIOUS article in this series on Dravidianism ('A truth forsaken', IE, January 15), I had discussed in some detail the "anthropological" mapping of Bharat's society undertaken by Christian European missionaries through the alien lens of "caste". Before I take this discussion further, a few important caveats are warranted lest my views are either misunderstood or misrepresented as a denial of the lived experience of affected groups, whoever they may be.

First, my objective is to understand the causes leading to the present, instead of falling prey to the common error of "presentism" that plagues contemporary discourse on issues such as "caste/tribe". This means the past must be understood in terms of the past, not to condone or glorify it, but to avoid the distortion caused by the lens of the present. Importantly, it would defy logic for a post-colonial society such as Bharat to not even examine the past and continuing religious, cultural and politico-legal impact of colonialism on itself.

Second, in the second part of this series ('The colonial-missionary roots of caste and tribe', IE, November 7, 2023), I had clearly qualified my position on the issue of "caste/tribe" that in attributing the introduction of these lenses to the missionary-colonial combine, the intent was not to deny the prior existence of the varna-jati complex, its hereditary nature and the identity silos associated with it. However, it is certainly my case, based on scholarly literature, that the application of the "caste/tribe" classifications by the Christian colonial establishment (especially through an official census-taking exercise) resulted in an artificial re-ordering of the Hindu society based on the European perception of it. Interestingly, the 1911 census of Bengal records the existence of at least 80 different castes even in the Muslim society. So much for monotheistic egalitarianism.

In other words, "castification" of the pre-existing varna-jati complex resulted in presenting an outside and incorrect view of how the complex operated, including its structure, rigidity and the scale of atrocities arising from "caste-consciousness". Such missionary-colonial distortion was not unique to the varna-jati structure; it was equally visible in representations of the Devadasi system, Sati and the Jagannath Rath Yatra. In fact, the European approach was no different in Africa, Australia or the Americas. No wonder, they are significantly Christian. One could go a step further and contend that the original template was crafted during the Christianisation of Europe itself against its pre-Christian societies, which was then applied during the colonial period in other continents. When understood against this larger backdrop, which reveals a commonality and continuity of thought, action and outcomes, it becomes evident that "caste", Devadasi, Sati and Jagannath Rath Yatra, *inter alia*, were tools in the hands of the missionary-colonial compact to malign the Hindu society to create the "humanitarian" justifications needed for religious, cultural and politico-legal intervention.

On how the Devadasis were branded and reduced to "temple prostitutes", *Women of*



CR Sasikumar

Pride: The Devadasi Heritage by Lakshmi Vishwanathan is a good read, and on Sati, I would strongly recommend Meenakshi Jain's seminal work *Sati: Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse*. As for the malicious vilification of the Jagannath Rath Yatra, the credit for it goes to Claudio Buchanan, a Scottish Missionary from the Church of England, who solicited contributions from his followers in England to save Hindus from their "bloody, violent, superstitious and backward religious system". Given these documented examples of vile misrepresentation of Hinduism and Bharat, whose underlying goal was dehumanisation followed by proselytisation, it is indeed surprising that there is stubborn resistance even from sections of the contemporary non-Left – and not just the Left – in Bharat to acknowledge that the varna-jati complex too has been subjected to distortion by the Christian West through application of the caste/tribe lenses.

Finally, to acknowledge this reality is not to present an apologia for casteism or caste-based discrimination either in the past or the present, but to understand the system as it existed prior to its distortion. This approach is more likely to throw up solutions which are original and practicable being rooted in the culture and realities of this land, instead of slavishly applying the Christian colonial template that has only worsened the caste discourse to the detriment of the Hindu society and to the advantage of vested interests. For all the so-called clarion calls for the "annihilation of caste" since before and after Independence, if anything, we are far from it and "caste" has become more deeply entrenched in politics, policies, social and electoral discourse in "independent Bharat" thanks to the perpetuation of the colonial approach. And yet, there is a mulish and anti-intellectual, perhaps even motivated, refusal to research and understand the distinctions between the varna-jati complex and caste/tribe classifications to address contemporary social challenges and the relentless anti-Dharmic pamphleteering.

I hope the above caveats serve to convey my position better, even to those who wish to disagree with integrity. I will now continue the discussion on the emergence of the caste/tribe categories and the mythical Dravidian identity from the "anthropological service" pro-

To acknowledge this reality is not to present an apologia for casteism or caste-based discrimination either in the past or the present, but to understand the system as it existed prior to its distortion. This approach is more likely to throw up solutions which are original and practicable being rooted in the culture and realities of this land, instead of slavishly applying the Christian colonial template that has only worsened the caste discourse to the detriment of the Hindu society and to the advantage of vested interests.

vided by Christian missionaries in Southern Bharat to colonial rulers. I had ended the last article with the reference to the publication in 1816 by the British East India Company of the "caste" scholarship compiled by French Catholic Missionary Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois, which was based on the earlier work of a Pondicherry-based French Jesuit Missionary Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (Père Coeurdoux). This work would go on to inform the Company's views on Hindu society and its subsequent administrative and social engineering policies, especially in Madras, for at least half a century. Interestingly, Max Müller, that patron saint of Indology, underscored the importance of Dubois' work and eulogised him as a "man singularly free from prejudice" and "a scholar with sufficient knowledge, if not of Sanskrit, yet of Tamil". But how free of prejudice was Dubois?

According to Nicholas Dirks, while Dubois attributed the achievements of the Hindu civilisation to the moral obligations imposed by the "caste system", he bemoaned that Brahmins were the primary roadblock to the Christianisation of the Hindu society. As for his views on the group previously known as the "Pariahs", propriety prevents me from repeating them and I suspect sympathisers of Dubois wouldn't want that either. Let's just say that Dubois' contempt for the aforementioned group was unvarnished and rivalled Aurangzeb's "love" of Hindus, so much so that Dubois felt that the mission to convert Hindus to Christianity would be a *failure* if it could attract only "untouchables" and not the Brahmins. If this was a "man singularly free from prejudice" according to the great Max Müller, I don't know who would qualify as a person with prejudice. Such were the people who put together the early formative literature on "caste" and "Indology" which academic and popular discourse parrots till date. I shall continue in the next article.

The writer is a commercial and constitutional litigator who practises as a counsel before the Supreme Court of India, the High Court of Delhi, the NCLAT and the CCI, and author of India that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution, and India, Bharat and Pakistan: The Constitutional Journey of a Sandwiched Civilisation

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Authorities must ensure alternatives for the long term, such as environment-friendly concrete blocks, which currently just meet five percent of construction needs. For our country to be free from pollution, the plague of illegal brick kilns must be eliminated."

— THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

One versus the other

Those who celebrate the temple and those who distance themselves — the rights of both need equal protection



FAHAD ZUBERI

ON JANUARY 22, the Ram Temple in Ayodhya was consecrated by the Prime Minister of India. The moment has been discussed as being phenomenal and as a watershed moment in Indian politics. In the conversation around the politico-religious significance of the consecration of the temple, however, the question of whose temple it is and who can safely distance themselves from it, remains unaddressed.

The ruling governments of India have made it clear that the Ram temple in Ayodhya is a national project. Since the Supreme Court judgment, the government has pushed a narrative of "national heritage" around it. The explanation of design and construction of the temple involved nationalist rhetoric. This included stories about material and labour sourced from across the country, the design being representative of all Indian cultures, the involvement of institutes of national importance such as IIT Roorkee and contribution from some of the biggest names in the construction industry.

The consecration conducted by the PM featured performances by some of the best known artists, and was attended by popular celebrities who are household names. Institutionally, weeks before the consecration, government employees were given leave on the 22nd to take part in the celebrations, some universities issued notices barring protests, and businesses were urged to stay closed. The phrase "Ram sabke hain" (Ram belongs to everyone) became part of a widely dispersed rhetoric.

The truth is, India is home to huge minority populations who do not believe in the divinity of Ram. Several traditions and sects – especially Dalit and Adivasi groups – do not believe in this nationalised homogeneous version of Ramayana, and the Ram temple might not be a site they identify with. For a large population in India, Ayodhya might be a site of fear, violence and destruction. We must recognise that the temple is a religious site for one religious group in India – a country that has a secular Constitution and is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world. We must remember that the land for the temple was recognised as a temple site in a court judgment over a title suit. That verdict did not grant it a national status and the socio-political constitution of India does not allow for it either.

Making the Ram temple a national project concretes Brahminism as the official doctrine of the Indian state. The nationalisation of the temple sends a message that those who do not identify with this partic-

ular narrative of Ram are not part of the nation. The consecration – conducted in this language of nationalisation – is the beginning of a paradigm where other faiths of India (especially Islam), belong to an inferior citizenry.

Over the last month, we saw this paradigm unfold in the built environment. Groups of volunteers went door to door distributing stickers, pamphlets and flags to mark homes and shops as assumed participants in the celebrations. Our cityscapes were painted saffron with flags and hoardings marking every structure. It was made to appear through markers in our neighbourhoods and streets that everyone in India is rejoicing in the consecration of the temple.

Here, it is important to remember social scientist Paul Brass. Brass had conceptualised the idea of "mini Ayodhyas" in cities of India. These are, according to Brass, small structures around which a narrative of conflicted claims is locally spun, and this mimics the national Ram temple-Babri masjid conflict. In Brass's mini Ayodhyas, micro-environments of confrontation, at local scales, are created through claims on mazars and mosques as being "originally" temples and social cleavages are manifested as violence. Violence is also produced through acts of provocation such as throwing bovine meat in the temple or pork meat in the mosque. Therefore, like in Ayodhya, conflict is generated through destruction and desecration of architecture.

Brass's mini Ayodhyas have come full circle. Government orders, national narratives, and saffronised cities are pushing a wedge in India's fault lines – this time through construction and consecration and not destruction and desecration. The site is the same and the object remains architectural, but while in 1992, it was acceptable to distance oneself from destruction, today, nobody can resist or deny being joyous and proud. Because if you do, you belong to the wrong group – the "other" of the nation state. Last month, our cities were marked to know who is not celebrating the consecration of the temple. Urban pockets, again, are mimicking Ayodhya, albeit this time in celebration. It was not the flag that marked houses, it was the absence of the flag that spatialised othering.

In this moment, we need to cultivate and protect a space where I can distance myself from the temple, where I can say that this is not my heritage, not the architecture I identify with, and where I feel safe in doing so. While the judgment of the Supreme Court is accepted and respected, we should resist the act of making a national icon of the temple in Ayodhya. We must protect the right to distance ourselves from the temple and still be identified as a citizen of India – no more and no less than those who participate in its celebrations. We must protect the right to say "not in my name" to the temple, and its consecration.

The writer is an architect and a graduate scholar of South Asia at University of Oxford

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A POLITICAL DECISION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Price of distortion' (IE, January 31). The government has decided to cap profit margins on certain fertilisers and regulate their maximum retail prices. While the intention to ensure taxpayer money benefits farmers is commendable, this move risks taking the fertiliser industry back to a full-control era. The nutrient-based subsidy system introduced in 2010 aimed at fostering innovation and balanced nutrition, but the recent measures may hinder progress. It is crucial to find a balance between controlling costs and encouraging innovation for the benefit of both farmers and the industry.

Zoya Ahmed, Bengaluru

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Price of distortion' (IE, January 31). The government's decision to put all the subsidised non-urea fertilisers in the price control regime is a regressive step. This will result in a further spike in fertiliser subsidies as traditional farmers tend to use nutrients based on their budget rather than the crop requirements and soil conditions. The cheaper supply of chemical fertilisers will attract fewer farmers to adopt organic farming. The Modi government's vision of reducing subsidy bills has miserably failed in an attempt to woo farmers. Rationalising the use of chemical fertilisers is important to contain the degradation in social fertility. Keeping this in mind the government is running a Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana to promote the use of natural manures. The move is the first of many politically motivated decisions before the elections.

Kiran B Ransing, Ahmadnagar

TIME FOR REFORM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After Niharika' (IE, January 31). The current situation reflects a troubling pattern where institutions and policymakers evade accountability in addressing challenges, echoing past occurrences of similar instances. The weight of unrealistic expectations thrust upon students is pushing them to desperation as a final recourse. Revamping both the educational curriculum and infrastructure is imperative at this juncture. Addressing society's entrenched stereotypes surrounding career paths and the relentless pressures accompanying them is overdue; it's high time for reform.

Archita Das, Bengaluru

ECONOMY BATTLE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Stay calm, build on strengths' (IE, January 31). Recent estimates put India's share in global GDP at around 10 per cent and China's at 18 per cent. To gain from Chinese slowdown, we require a massive increase in manufacturing output and service sector capabilities. These entail greater investments in manufacturing technologies, skilled labour, R&D, human capital, etc. Moreover, our own manufacturing sector, dependent on Chinese goods, will have to be insulated from the latter's slowdown. All these factors are crucial for growth, and regrettably, remain our biggest sore points. The bulk of the investment required will have to originate from the private sector. Yet, corporate investment from FY17 to FY22 grew at a meagre 4.9 per cent.

Nimmish, Mumbai



TARIQ MANSOOR

THE COUNTDOWN FOR the 2024 general elections has begun. In Indian psephology, the idea of the "Muslim vote" generally evokes interest, especially in the context of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is due to several reasons. First, the BJP's relationship with the Muslims has been historically contentious. Second, Muslims perhaps constitute the only social group that has been beyond the BJP's political reach so far. Further, the Opposition's "Muslim" politics is predicated on instilling a fear of the BJP. However, the election of 2024 is shaping up to be different. I analyse the six factors that have the potential to effect a turning point in the relationship of Muslims with the BJP and PM Modi.

One, the BJP and PM Modi have been repeatedly invoking issues of social justice to address anomalies within the Muslim community. The Pasmandas – a social sub-group representing the most backward Muslims constituting roughly 80 per cent of the Indian Muslim population – form the core of this strategy. The party's willingness to accommodate Pasmandas promises to end the hegemony of elites in Muslim politics. By making calls for greater democratisation and inclusivity in Muslim politics, the BJP seeks to address the key Pasmanda demand – not to view the Muslims as a monolith. Not only does this mark the first official attempt of the BJP to co-opt Muslims, but it is also the first time the Pasmandas are in the political spotlight.

Two, the Modi government has also prioritised issues of gender justice in certain community personal laws. The abolishing of the archaic practice of instant triple talaq, which incidentally is not prevalent even in Islamic nations, has found resounding support amongst nine crore Muslim women.

Three, PM Modi has sought to redefine welfare as a political duty covering a wide spectrum of human needs – food, housing, sanitation, gas, water, health, etc. The Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana fed 810 million Indians during the existential crisis of the pandemic. No home has been left out because of the name on the door. The Modi government has carved out a specific category of labharthis (beneficiaries) within the economically marginalised Pasmandas. In some cases, the Muslim labharthis have benefited in a proportion higher than their population. For instance, while Uttar Pradesh has a 19 per cent Muslim population, the beneficiaries under PM Awas Yojana, Ujjawala Yojana and Mudra Yojana range from 24-30 per cent. This has lent credence to the PM's promise of "sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas, sabka prayaas" and antyodaya (development without discrimination) among Muslims.

The introduction of the PM Vishvakarma scheme is a fillip to socially disadvantaged group-led enterprises and artisans such as tailors, barbers, weavers, etc. The 18 crafts listed under the scheme mirror the occupa-

tional profile of a large number of backward caste Muslims. Four, India's relations with the Islamic world are arguably undergoing their best phase. PM Modi has used his personal imprint on foreign policy to impart substance to ties. The transformation of ties – from being simple "trade partners" to "strategic partners" – reflects a growing convergence. The centrality of India in the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is a manifestation of this new partnership. In recognition of PM Modi's efforts to strengthen relations, many Islamic countries – the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Palestine, Afghanistan, Maldives and Egypt – have conferred their highest civilian awards on him. These gains would not have been possible if the Muslim world felt that the Indian Muslims were being discriminated against.

Five, no major communal riot has occurred since 2014. Analysis of data from the National Crime Records Bureau of riot cases registered since the 1970s reveals that India is at its most peaceful in 50 years, as riots have been on a decline. In a recent interview to the Financial Times, Modi invoked the success of the Parsis, a religious micro-minority residing in India, while stating that the Indian society does not discriminate against any religious minority.

Finally, and most importantly, the issue of national interest and security. The Muslim

The writer, former Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, is National Vice-President of the BJ

Classifieds

PERSONAL

It is for general information that I, Syed Rahber Hussain Zaidi, S/o Sayed Mazhar Hussain Zaidi, R/o T-98/1, Street-No. 2-Gautampuri, Delhi-110053, declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as S. Rahber Hussain Zaidi and M.H. Zaidi in my all documents. The actual name of mine and my father are Syed Rahber Hussain Zaidi and Sayed Mazhar Hussain Zaidi respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0040711179-9

It is for general information that I, Mustkum S/o Rafeek Khan R/o Village Dhunela (182), Gurgaon, Haryana-122103, declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as Rafeek Ahmad in my Secondary Certificate cum Mark Sheet and Senior Secondary Certificate cum Mark Sheet. The actual name of my father is Rafeek Khan, which may be amended accordingly.

0070886109-1

Trajesh Kumar Pandey, S/o Sri Kant Pandey R/o flat no-203, Greenwhich c grand Omraxe sector-93B, noida, Gautam Buddha-nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201304, have changed my name to rajesh Pandey, permanently.

0040711111-9

I, Vipin Khanna, S/o Madan Mohan Khanna R/o Flat- G1401, Aditya Urban Casa, Sector-78, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, have changed my name to Vipin Kumar Khanna.

0040711173-1

I, Vikrant S/o Vinod, R/o Village Nogawana, Jhajjar (Haryana), have changed my name to Vikrant Panghal, for all purposes.

0040711169-9

I, Vijay Kumar Ganeshdas Sachdev, S/o Ganesh Das R/o-16, Ground Floor, Lilac 2, Sector-49, Gurgaon (Haryana)-122018, have changed my name to Vijay Kumar Sachdev.

0040711101-7

I, Tribhuvan Kumar Yadav S/o Jayveer Singh Yadav R/o H.No-C-118, Sector-61, Noida (U.P.-201301) have changed my name to Tribhuvan Yadav for all purposes.

0040711091-8

I, Suraj Choudhary, W/o Nagji Ram, R/o CGD-156 DLF Capital Greens, Ph-1, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, Delhi-15, have changed my name to Suraj.

0040711195-1

I, Sukanya Roy, D/o Arvind Roy, R/o 2-A, Ground-Floor, Bhagwan Nagar, MLA Office, Ashram, South-Delhi, Delhi-110014, have changed the name of my minor son Ahaan aged 4 years and he shall hereafter be known as Ahaan Roy.

0040711173-6

I, Sauvik Chakravorty S/o Nishit Kumar Chakravorty, R/o, G-27, Ground-Floor, Janta Flats, Rohini Sector-16, North West-Delhi-110089, have changed my name to Sauvik Chakravorty.

0040711174-4

I, SHEILJA, D/O JAY RAM YWCA WORKING WOMEN HOSTEL POCKET-6, PLOT-NO.4 JOSALA SARITA VIHAR, DELHI-110025, changed my name to SHEILJA THAKUR.

0040711111-2

I, SANTOSH PRASAD S/O PRABHU NATH PRASAD R/O-F-188, MADIPUR COLONY, MADIPUR, DELHI-110063, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SANTOSH KUMAR PRASAD.

0040711169-7

I, S KAVITHA, W/O SATISH R.R./H.NO.451, KAMAN KOVIL STREET VILL- PADIRIKUPPAM DIST-CUDDALORE TAMILNADU-607401, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME, FROM S KAVITHA TO KAVITHA E VIDE-AFFIDAVIT IN- DL36010951800372W DATED- 31/01/2024, BEFORE NOT-DELHI.

0040711173-5

I, Ritesh Kumar, S/o Mehar Chand Jaiswal R/o-H.No.1/9315, A.Gali No.2/3, Pratap Pura, West-Rohas-Nagar, Shahdara, Delhi-110032, have changed my name to Ritesh Kumar Jaiswal, for all purposes. Ritesh Kumar and Ritesh Kumar Jaiswal, is one and the same person.

0040711169-10

I, Renu Vijaykumar Sachdev, W/o Vijay Kumar Sachdev, R/o 16, Ground-Floor, Lilac 2, Sector-49, Gurgaon (Haryana)-122018, have changed my name to Renu Sachdev.

0040711111-6

I, RADHA RANI, W/O SURESH KUMAR, HOUSE, NO.179, BLOCK C NEAR SBI BANK BRANCH, NEW SEEMAPURI, DELHI-110095, changed my name to ANURADHA.

0040711111-3

I, Poja Kailash Singhania W/o Vaibhav Kumar, R/o 9/951, Near DPS School, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad, have changed my name to Poja Srivastava.

0040711111-10

I, PANKUL D/o DINESH JUNEJA R/o-M-336, Ground Floor, Guru Harkishan Nagar Pachim-Vihar, New Delhi-110087 to PANKUL SEHGAL.

0040711169-2

I, Anshul Grover D/o Sh. Rajender Lal Grover W/o Sh. Ashish Rohatgi R/o D-2, Ganpati Apartment, 6, Sharmath Marg, Civil Lines, Delhi-110054 have changed my name to Anshul Rohatgi w/o Sh. Ashish Rohatgi for all intents & purposes.

0040711077-1

I, Naresh Kumar, S/o Om Parkash Bhutani R/o House No-1031, Sector-4, Gurgaon-122001, have changed my name to Naresh Bhutani, for all purposes.

0040711111-8

I, Mukesh Sachdev, S/o Ram Dutt Sachdev R/o B-113, Ashok Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-52, have changed my name to Mukesh Sachdeva.

0040711111-4

I, Mohd Shahvez s/o Mohd Husain, R/o 12A/147, Gali No-10, Vijay Mohalla, Majupur, Delhi-110053, have changed my Name To Mohd Shahvez, For All Future Purposes

0040711169-1

I, Medha Tyagi D/o Rakesh Tyagi R/o 53, Manak Vihar, Yojna Vihar, Delhi-110092, have changed my son's name from Ivaan Gupta to Ivaan Tyagi for all-purposes.

0040711173-8

I, Medha Tyagi D/o Rakesh Tyagi R/o 53, Manak Vihar, Yojna Vihar, Delhi-110092, have changed my son's name from Aarsh Gupta to Aarsh Tyagi for all-purposes.

0040711173-9

I, Mukesh S/o S/R AMRIT AVATAR GOEL, R/o FLATNO.76, POCKET-14, SECTOR-24, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MUKESH KUMAR GOEL.

0040711169-3

I, MOHAMMAD NAZIR S/o Mojibur Rahaman R/o-H.No.184, Kh.No.34/11, 35/15,6,Ground-Floor Block-B near, Ashu Dairy,walli,Gali Raja,Vihar Village,Lipaspur Delhi-110042, declare that the name of mine and my wife have been wrongly written as NAZIR and USHA in my minor daughter NAZBON aged-16,years in her 10th-class educational documents The actual name of mine and my wife are MOHAMMAD NAZIR and SAYARA BANO

0040711173-3

I, Kriti Sachdeva W/o Sonu Sachdeva R/o J-12/55 (FF) Rajouri Garden New Delhi have changed my name to Kriti Khanna.

0040711179-7

I, MAHOOBOO ALI S/O BABU ALI R/O D-261,4TH-FLOOR, JAHANGIRPUR, DELHI-110033, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO MAHABOOB ALI.

0040711179-5

I, Komal Alang, W/o Manpreet Singh Alang, R/o N-5/13, DLF Phase-2, Gurgaon, Haryana, have changed my name to Komal Sapra Alang.

0040711179-8

I, Joginder Singh, Son of Lt. Sewa Singh Pasricha, R/o House no-268, Gali no-4 Govind-Puri Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019, have changed my name to Joginder Singh Pasricha, Permanently

0040711169-5

I, JAVED S/O OJAHID ALI, HOUSE NO-2, SHAHUR PUR, SOUTH DELHI-110074, changed my name to JAVED ALI, for all, future purposes.

0040711179-1

I, Indersen S/o Banshi Dhar, R/o Village-Chang, Bhiwani-127027(Haryana), have changed my name to Inder Sain, for all Purposes.

0040711169-8

I, HEMLATA, wife of, MUKESH KUMAR SHARMA, Presently residing at VILL- CHHILARKI, PO- NOORGARH, DIST- GURUGRAM, HARYANA-122504, have changed my name, from HEMLATA to HEMLATA SHARMA, vide-Affidavit Dated-31.1.2024, at NEW-DELHI.

0040711173-7

I, Garima Jain D/o Ashok Kumar Jain R/o J-59, Third Floor, Lajpat Nagar-3, Delhi-24, have changed my name to Garema Jain, permanently.

0040711173-2

I, DALIP RAJ, S/O MOHAN, ADD-2/44, HARJIAN BASTI NEW ROHTAK ROAD, ANAND PARVAT, CENTRAL-DELHI-110005, changed my name to DALIP, for all, future purposes.

0040711173-9

I, Christina Horam Patar, D/o Kiron Kumar Patar, W/o Alladin Mohd Abuharab, R/o-131/A, Top-Floor F1, Ward No.9, Kishan Garh, Vasant Kunj, Delhi-110070, have changed my name to Christina Patar.

0040711173-5

I, Bhupender kumar, s/o Om Parkash, R/o-1801, Sector-12, Sonipat have changed my minor son name, from part to part arora, for all purposes.

0040711194-1

I, Bhag Singh, Son of, Subhash Chauhan, R/o House no-14, Chauhan Mohalla, Gali no-2 Jasola-Village, New Delhi-110025, Have changed my name to Manjal Paljor

0040711173-1

I, Ayeesha Firoz Khan, d/o Firoz Ahmad Khan, R/o-A/44, 2nd floor, Lane No.2, Johri, Harkishan Nagar, New Delhi-110025, have changed my name from Ayeesha Khan to Ayeesha Firoz Khan for future purpose. Ayeesha Khan and Ayeesha Firoz Khan are the same person.

0040711120-1

I, Renu Vijaykumar Sachdev, W/o Vijay Kumar Sachdev, R/o 16, Ground-Floor, Lilac 2, Sector-49, Gurgaon (Haryana)-122018, have changed my name to Renu Sachdev.

0040711111-6

I, RADHA RANI, W/O SURESH KUMAR, HOUSE, NO.179, BLOCK C NEAR SBI BANK BRANCH, NEW SEEMAPURI, DELHI-110095, changed my name to ANURADHA.

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I, Naresh Kumar, S/o Om Parkash Bhutani R/o House No-1031, Sector-4, Gurgaon-122001, have changed my name to Naresh Bhutani, for all purposes.

0040711111-8

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0040711111-4

I, Mohd Shahvez s/o Mohd Husain, R/o 12A/147, Gali No-10, Vijay Mohalla, Majupur, Delhi-110053, have changed my name to Md Shahvez Alam for All Future Purposes

0040711169-1

I, Medha Tyagi D/o Rakesh Tyagi R/o 53, Manak Vihar, Yojna Vihar, Delhi-110092, have changed my son's name from Ivaan Gupta to Ivaan Tyagi for all-purposes.

0040711173-8

I, Medha Tyagi D/o Rakesh Tyagi R/o 53, Manak Vihar, Yojna Vihar, Delhi-110092, have changed my son's name from Aarsh Gupta to Aarsh Tyagi for all-purposes.

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0040711111-4

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0040711111-4

I, Mohd Shahvez s/o Mohd Husain, R/o 12A/147, Gali No-10, Vijay Mohalla, Majupur, Delhi-110053, have changed my

SENSEX: 71,752.11 ▲ 612.21 (0.86%) NIFTY: 21,725.70 ▲ 203.60 (0.95%) NIKKEI: 36,286.71 ▲ 220.85 HANG SENG: 15,485.07 ▼ 218.38 FTSE: 7,679.98 ▲ 13.67 DAX: 16,959.41 ▼ 12.93



GOLD

₹63,350



USD RATE

₹83.04



OIL

\$82.45



SILVER

₹76,700

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of January 30

International market data till 1900 IST

Fiscal deficit at 55% full-year target at Dec-end 2023: CGA

PRASANTA SAHU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

THE CENTRE'S fiscal deficit came in at 55 per cent of the budget estimate (BE) in the first nine months of the current financial year, compared with 59.8 per cent of the respective target in the year-ago period, the data released by the Controller General of Accounts showed on Wednesday.

This increased the possibility of the government meeting the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for FY24 in the interim Budget to be presented today. Last year, the Centre had met the deficit target of 6.4 per cent.

While net tax revenues rose by 11.2 per cent on year in April-December 2023, in line with the required growth rate of 11 per cent to achieve the budget estimate of Rs 17.3 trillion, non-tax revenues expanded by 46 per cent to Rs 3.1 trillion (required rate 5 per cent) on the back of the robust RBI dividends.

However, the pace of rise in tax receipts slowed a bit in recent months—net tax receipts were up 15 per cent in April-September. Despite a lower nominal GDP size (8.9 per cent as per first advance estimate), as against 10.5 per cent the budget factored in, analysts are of the view that the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent of GDP will likely be met due to revenue performance and a likely shortfall in capital expenditure.

In December 2023, capex more than doubled on-year to Rs 87,985 crore, offsetting the tepid performance in the previous two months. The Centre's capex ex-

Core sector growth eases in December '23

New Delhi: The output growth of eight core industries eased to a 14-month low of 3.8 per cent in December from 7.9 per cent in November, on account of the statistical effect of a high base, data released by the commerce ministry showed on Wednesday. In December 2022, the core sector's output had grown 8.3 per cent. On a month-on-month basis, the core sector's output rose 5.9 per cent in December, slightly higher than the average 5.8 per cent sequential growth recorded between the two months in the last 12 years. **FE**

panded by 37.5 per cent in April-December FY24, marginally higher than the required growth rate to meet the FY24 target of Rs 10 trillion.

However, the capex achievement could fall short of the target due to likely lower utilisation by states from a special capex loan facility of Rs 1.3 trillion and a reduction in capital infusion into state-run oil firms.

"ICRA expects the government of India's capex to undershoot the FY24 BE by around Rs 0.75 trillion, which still implies a robust YoY growth of around 26 per cent," Icra chief economist Aditi Nayak said. **FE**

AHEAD OF UNION BUDGET

Import duty on smartphone components, inputs slashed

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AS MORE Indian companies join the fray to start local assembly of smartphones, the Centre has reduced the import duty on a number of components used in mobile phone manufacturing from 15 per cent to 10 per cent—addressing a part of a long-standing demand by smartphone companies and industry bodies representing them.

While some stakeholders believe the changes could result in a minor price drop in smartphones in the entry level segment, others said that the cut in these tariff lines may not yield any significant results in terms of mobile phone prices. Assertions have also been made that the cut in duties might not result in export competitiveness.

According to a notification by the Ministry of Finance—a day ahead of this year's Budget—the basic customs duty (BCD) has been rationalised on inputs of mobile phone for the following: mechanics and die-cut parts to 10 per cent, and all others' inputs of mobile phones classified as 'others' under HSN code 85177990 has been adjusted to 10 per cent. Further, there will be no duty on inputs of mechanics and die-cut parts.

It is worth noting that the BCD on the 'others' category was earlier raised from 5 per cent to 15 per cent in 2018 under the Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP).

Amid US-China tensions, India is potentially the only country which provides a big



Centre has reduced the import duty on a number of components from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. **File**

The components on which the import duty has been slashed to 10 per cent include battery cover, front cover, middle cover, main lens, back cover, and GSM antenna/antenna of any technology among other things.

Information Technology (IT) Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "This rationalisation of custom duties brings much needed certainty and clarity for the industry and in customs processes".

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on X,

"Reduction in certain input tariffs and rationalisation will help reduce costs, advance ease of doing business, and catalyse export led manufacturing".

Amid US-China tensions, India is potentially the only country which provides a big

internal market and a massive, educated labour force to produce devices for export.

"The adjustment of BCD to 10 per cent on parts of mobile phones and mechanics and die-cut parts and 0 per cent on inputs of mechanics represents the start of a paradigm shift in the policy orientation of the government towards export-led growth and competitiveness," said Pankaj Mohindroo, chairman of the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), which represents major smartphone manufacturers like Apple.

Tarun Pathak, research director with Counterpoint, said: "This will benefit the OEMs in reducing the cost, which will, in turn, be passed on to the end customer in the near term. This move can help to drop smartphone prices by 3-5 per cent,

The ICEA report had said that mobile phone exports from the country are expected to hit 30 per cent of the total production of \$49-50 billion in the current fiscal, but that requires matching China and Vietnam's competitive tariff regime in addition to other factors which impact competitiveness.

Three full-time, one part-time members of 16th FC appointed

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AFTER THE appointment of Arvind Panagariya as Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, the government has now announced the appointment of three full-time members and one part-time member of the Commission.

Former Finance and Expenditure Secretary Ajay Narayan Jha, who was also the member of 15th Finance Commission, has been appointed as one of the full-time members, along with Annie George Mathew, former Special Secretary in Department of Expenditure and Niranjan Rajadhyaksha, Executive Director, Artha Global.

Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India has been appointed as a part-time member in the Commission. Among the members, Jha, a former 1982 batch IAS officer of the Manipur cadre, has served in several positions in the earlier Finance Commissions. Before being a member of the 15th Finance Commission, Jha also served as Member Secretary of 14th Finance Commission, which was headed by former RBI Governor KV Reddy.

The Finance Commission mainly decides the tax sharing formula between the Centre and the states. The 16th Finance Commission is expected to submit its recommendations by October 31, 2025, covering an award period of five years beginning April 1, 2026. In November, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

had approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the 16th Finance Commission. As per the ToR, "The Finance Commission shall make recommendations as to the following matters: The distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them under Chapter I, Part XII of the Constitution and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds."

It shall also make recommendations on the "principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to the States by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues under article 275 of the Constitution for the purposes other than those specified in the provisos to clause (1) of that article," according to a statement issued after the Union Cabinet meeting on November 29.

Following this, Finance Secretary TV Somanathan had said that the ToR for the 16th Finance Commission are short but "all-encompassing" and that the ToR had been prepared after consultation with states. He had clarified that the terms are not limited or preliminary, and though they are shorter than recent commissions, they offer greater leeway to stakeholders so that their inputs can be taken into account.

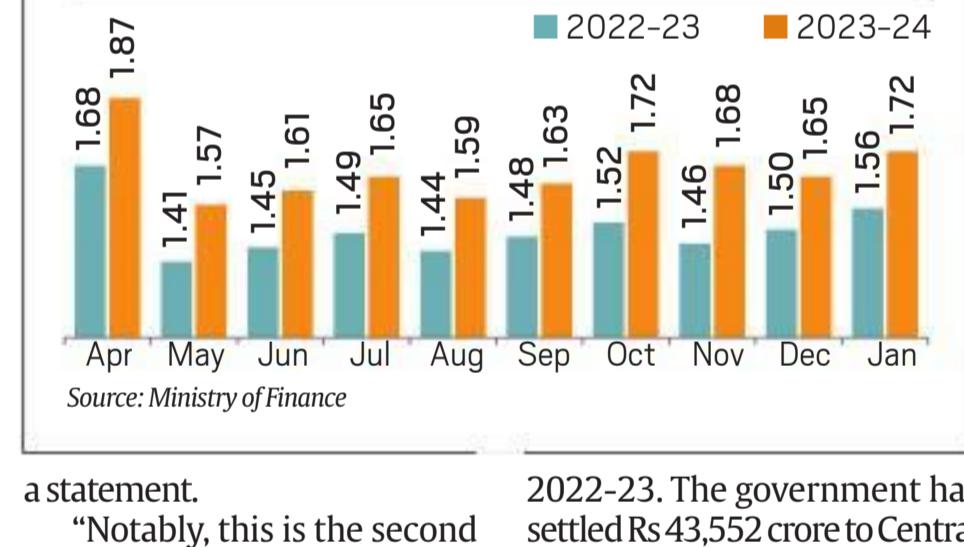
In December, the government had announced the appointment of Panagariya as Chairman, and Rituraj Ranjan Pandey, a 1998-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre, as Secretary of the 16th Finance Commission.

January GST collections hit ₹1.72 lakh crore, up 10.4% y-o-y; second highest since rollout

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

GROSS GOODS and Services Tax (GST) collections rose to Rs 1.72 lakh crore in January (for sales in December), up 10.4 per cent from the year-ago period, data released by the Finance Ministry on Wednesday showed. This is the second highest level of GST collections after the July 2017 roll-out of the indirect tax regime and marks the third instance of collections over the Rs 1.7 lakh crore mark in this financial year. The highest-ever monthly GST collection was recorded in April 2023 at Rs 1.87 lakh crore.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of January, 2024 (till 05:00 PM of 31.01.2024) is Rs 1,72,129 crore, which shows a 10.4% Year-on-Year (YoY) growth over the revenue of Rs 155,922 crore collected in January 2023 (till 05:00 PM on 31.01.2023)," the ministry said in



a statement.

"Notably, this is the second highest monthly collection ever and marks the third month in this financial year with a collection of Rs 1.70 lakh crore or more," it said.

With the latest print, GST revenue collections have averaged at Rs 1.67 lakh crore per month during April-January 2023-24, up 11.6 per cent from the monthly average of Rs 1.50 lakh crore seen during April-January

2022-23. The government has settled Rs 43,552 crore to Central GST (CGST) and Rs 37,257 crore to State GST (SGST) from the Integrated GST (IGST) collection.

The GST collections data was released a day earlier than the usual scheduled date of 1st of every month because of the presentation of the Union Budget for financial year 2024-25 in Parliament on February 1. State-wise data of the GST collections was not released by the ministry

this time as per the norm. The GST collection figures are likely to be revised later. "The data is as of 05:00 PM today (i.e. 31.01.2024). Final collection for the month would be higher," the ministry said.

Abhishek Jain, Partner & National Head, Indirect Tax, KPMG said, "The consistent growth in GST collections with this one being the second highest collection ever is a big cheer for the economy. One significant reason for this growth could be linked to voluntary payments by businesses for FY 22-23 during finalisation of annual returns and reconciliation statements in December."

Saurabh Agarwal, Tax Partner, EY said, "This consistent upward trend, evident in surpassing key milestones, reflects the effectiveness of improved tax administration and heightened taxpayer compliance. Overall, these positive indicators pave the way for continued economic expansion."

Burmans picks up additional stake in Religare Enterprises for ₹309 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

DABUR INDIA promoter Burman family on Wednesday increased its grip on Religare Enterprises after acquiring an additional 4 per cent stake in the financial services group for Rs 309 crore through open market transactions. M.B. Finmart, Puran Associates, and VIC Enterprises—the three entities of Burman Family—acquired a total of 1.32 crore shares, representing a 4 per cent stake in Religare Enterprises Ltd.

"With respect to the open offer and pursuant to Sebi's SAST (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeover) regulations, the acquisition of the equity shares of the Target Company (REL) by M.B. Finmart Pvt Ltd, Puran Associates Pvt Ltd, VIC Enterprises Pvt Ltd, VIC Enterprises Pvt Ltd" was done through the open market on January 31, 2024, Religare said in a regulatory filing.

M.B. Finmart, Puran Associates, VIC Enterprises picked up 44 lakh shares each of REL in the price range of Rs

233.93-233.98 apiece, the filing said. This took the combined transaction value to Rs 308.83 crore.

After the latest acquisitions, M.B. Finmart's shareholding increased to 5.49 per cent, while stakes of Puran Associates rose to 9.33 per cent, and that of VIC Enterprises to 7.47 per cent.

Also, the combined shareholding of M.B. Finmart, Puran Associates, VIC Enterprises and Milky Investment & Trading Company increased from 21.18 per cent to 25.18 per cent.

After the acquisition of shares, the deal will also trigger

a mandatory open offer in Religare Enterprises as well.

As per Sebi's takeover rules, entities acquiring 25 per cent or more stake in a listed company have to make an open offer to the company's shareholders. File

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RBI action against Paytm Payments Bank: probable causes, effects

SUKALP SHARMA & GEORGE MATHEW
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, JANUARY 31

In a huge blow to Paytm Payments Bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday barred it from offering all its core services — including accounts and wallets — from March, effectively crippling the company's business.

Paytm Payments Bank has so far not commented on the RBI order.

What does the RBI direction say?

The central bank has barred Paytm Payments Bank from offering practically all of its key services — accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags, National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), etc., after February 29 in the wake of "persistent non-compliances and material supervisory concerns".

"No other banking services...like fund transfers (irrespective of name and nature of

website, it has over 100 million know your customer (KYC) verified customers. "We are also the largest issuer of FASTag with over 8 million FASTag units issued," the bank's website says. Paytm founder and Chairman Vijay Shekhar Sharma is the part-time Chairman of the Bank.

Settlement of all pipeline transactions and nodal accounts—in respect of all transactions initiated on or before February 29—should be completed by March 15. No transactions shall be permitted thereafter.

What about customers' money?

According to the RBI, withdrawal or utilisation of balances by customers from their Paytm accounts, including savings bank accounts, current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags, NCMC, etc., are to be permitted without any restrictions "up to their available balance".

The RBI statement, however, does not mention a number of other services, like loans, mutual funds, bill payments, digital gold, and credit cards.

What likely led to the RBI move?

Paytm Payments Bank has been facing RBI scrutiny since 2018. While the central bank did not specify the exact reasons for the latest action, sources said it could be due to the RBI's concerns on KYC compliance and IT-related issues.

It is learnt that Paytm Payments Bank and its parent One97 Communications had come under RBI scrutiny for purported lack of requisite information barriers within the group, and data access to China-based entities that were indirect shareholders in the payments bank through their stake in the parent com-

pany. The failure to address these concerns at multiple levels over an extended period led to the latest action by the RBI, it is learnt.

Although Antfin, an affiliate of Chinese conglomerate Alibaba, has been reducing its stake in One97 Communications, it still is a shareholder in the company. As of December 31, Antfin held a 9.89% stake in the company, as per stock exchange data. Given the frosty relationship between India and China over the past few years, Chinese investments in firms have attracted intense scrutiny by Indian regulators.

What were RBI's earlier actions?

In October 2023, the RBI had slapped a fine of Rs 5.39 crore on Paytm Payments Bank due to deficiencies in regulatory compliance. In March 2022, the RBI had directed Paytm Payments Bank to stop onboarding of new customers with immediate effect.

The Comprehensive System Audit report

EXPLAINED SCIENCE

WHY BIRD FLU DEATHS OF ANTARCTIC PENGUINS IS A FLASHING DANGER SIGN



Penguins live in big colonies, have little existing immunity. *Wikimedia Commons*

A HIGHLY lethal form of bird flu has been detected in Antarctic penguins for the first time. The virus, H5N1, was confirmed in two gentoo penguins that were found dead on Sea Lion Island in the Falkland Islands, a British territory.

"But many more are dying," said Sally Heathman, the head of communications for the Falkland Islands government. As of Tuesday, more than 200 dead or dying gentoo chicks have been reported on Sea Lion Island, she said.

Why the deaths matter

Penguins are already under pressure. The birds are facing numerous threats, including climate change, pollution, and commercial fishing. Three Antarctic penguin species — emperor penguins, southern rockhopper penguins and macaroni penguins — are listed as vulnerable or near threatened.

Extent of the threat

Before H5N1 arrived in the Antarctic region last fall, highly pathogenic bird flu viruses had never been documented in the area. That means that the penguins are likely to have little existing immunity. And because they breed in large, crowded colonies, once one penguin is infected, the virus could spread rapidly, causing mass mortalities. As H5N1 spread through South America last year, Chile reported the deaths of thousands of Humboldt penguins.

The extent of the virus' spread in Antarctic penguin populations is unclear. The virus has not been confirmed in any other local penguin species, Heathman said, but testing of rockhopper penguins is on.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

At least one suspected case has also been reported in king penguins in South Georgia, another British territory. But that report was based on a single dead king penguin, and investigators have not seen a spike in penguin deaths at that location, said Laura Willis, the chief executive of the government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

Scientists are worried

Scientists have been worried about the spread of the virus in Antarctica. The virus, which first emerged in 2020, has taken an unprecedented toll on wild birds and mammals. After it was detected at the tip of South America last year, OFFLU, a global network of flu experts, warned that the pathogen could spread to Antarctica next.

The Antarctic region provides critical breeding territory for more than 100 million birds as well as seals, sea lions and other marine mammals. If the virus arrived in the region, its impact on those animals "could be immense", OFFLU said in a statement last August.

Just two months later, the virus was detected in brown skuas in South Georgia, the first cases in the region. Since then, infections have been confirmed in numerous other bird species, as well as in elephant and fur seals. These marine mammals also breed in large colonies, and they suffered major losses as the virus spread through South America, where tens of thousands of seals and sea lions were reported dead. Scientists worry that the same fate may befall Antarctica's seals as the virus spreads.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

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EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

What to watch in Budget

The Union Budget is the govt's annual financial statement. It is full of numbers, which make sense when seen in their contexts. Here are four aspects of govt finances key to understanding the Budget and its numbers

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for 2024-25 on Thursday. This is the interim Budget; a full Budget will be presented in July, after the Lok Sabha elections. As such, the Budget speech will likely focus on underscoring the government's achievements over the past year and decade — and the opposition will likely seek to find reasons to argue that these Budgets have failed the most vulnerable sections.

Here are four aspects of government finances to look out for in Sitharaman's Budget speech, in order to understand it better.

How money comes, and where it goes

The Budget provides two pie charts: (i) a source-wise break-up of each rupee that the government earns; (ii) details of where each rupee is spent. These charts give proportionate shares, not absolute amounts.

The charts show the current state of the government's financial health. Comparing pies for two or more years can show how the financial health has changed.

The earning pie for the current financial year (2023-24) shows 34 paise in each rupee — 34% of total income — came from borrowings by the government, and 15% each came from income-tax and corporation (corporate/company) tax.

The corresponding figures for earlier years show the government's dependence on borrowings has increased noticeably, while that on income and corporate taxes has reduced somewhat.

So, the share of borrowings, income-tax, and corporate tax for 2015-16 were 24%, 14%, and 20% respectively; these figures for 2016-17 were 21%, 14%, and 19%.

Comparing the pies for "where the rupee goes" shows the change in the government's spending priorities over the years. In FY17, Defence received 10 paise out of every rupee spent, and another 10 paise went for subsidies of various kinds. In FY24, by contrast, Defence got 8 paise, and subsidies 7 paise.

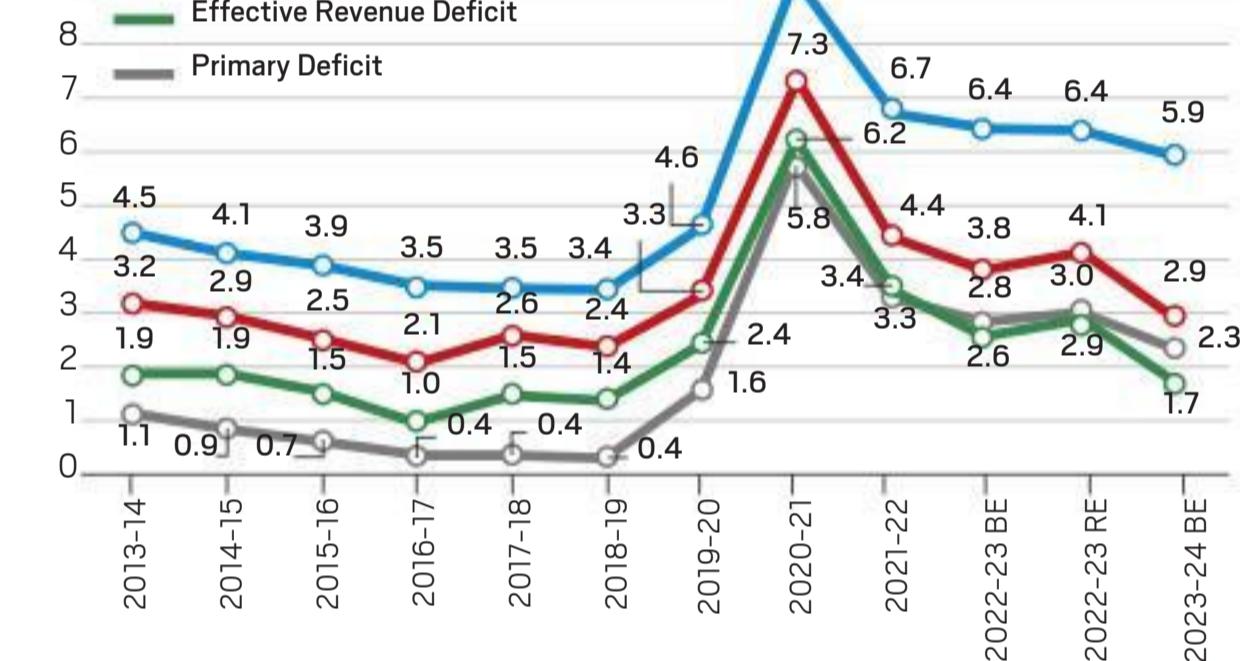
Nominal increase vs real increase

The Budget is full of numbers and percentages. It is important to know whether any number — be it absolute amounts or growth rate or increase/decrease in allocation — is 'nominal' or 'real'.

The difference between nominal and real changes is inflation. Your salary and annual increment are stated in nominal terms. However, what (say) Rs 30,000 per month can buy today is far less than what it would

TRACKING GOVERNMENT FINANCES

DEFICIT TRENDS (% OF GDP)



OUTLAY ON MAJOR SCHEMES (Rs cr)

Scheme	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 BE	2022-23 RE	2023-24 BE
MGNREGA	98,468	73,000	89,400	60,000
National Social Assistance Programme	8,152	9,652	9,652	9,636
Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities	1,428	1,810	530	610
Umbrella Programme for Development of Other Vulnerable Groups	1,745	1,931	1,921	2,194
Umbrella Programme for Development of STs	3,779	4,111	3,874	4,295
Umbrella Scheme for Development of SCs	4,979	8,710	7,722	9,409

have bought a decade ago. As inflation raises the general price level, the same amount of money can buy fewer and fewer goods with each passing year.

In terms of the Budget, a 7% increase in the allocation for a department may not mean much in real terms if inflation, too, has increased by 7% (Indeed, a nominal increase could work out to be a real decline.)

The nominal GDP growth rate, inclusive of inflation, is possibly the most important bit of data in the Budget since it forms the base for all other calculations. Since fiscal deficit (read borrowings) targets are set as a percentage of (nominal) GDP, if the nominal GDP is small, the amount of money that the government can borrow is also smaller.

The nominal GDP is the actual data that is observed in the economy; the real GDP and real GDP growth rates, etc., are derived from nominal data after removing the effect of inflation.

The dual stipulation — fiscal deficit at 3% and revenue deficit at 0% — is meant to ensure that all the money that the government

Fiscal Deficit vs Revenue Deficit

Fiscal deficit is essentially the amount of borrowing that the government is forced to have when it can't meet all its expenses with its income.

Each year's fiscal deficit adds to the pile of government debt. A high fiscal deficit is seen as a warning sign over the government's solvency situation.

India has set prudential limits for its fiscal deficit. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003 said the fiscal deficit of the Union government should not exceed 3% of GDP. It also said that the revenue deficit — the gap between the government's everyday expenses (salaries and pensions) and everyday earnings (taxes, cesses etc) — should be zero.

The table, sourced from last year's Budget, shows that the REs (Rs 530 crore) for the "Umbrella Programme for Development of Minorities" in 2022-23 were less than 30% of the original BEs (Rs 1,810 crore).

The BE for the current financial year (2023-24) was pegged at Rs 610 crore — which is an increase of 15% relative to the RE — and a decline of 67% compared to BE.

borrow is spent towards the creation of new productive assets.

However, in 2018, the law was amended, and targeting revenue deficit was dropped. This meant that India could have a scenario where even though the fiscal deficit was 3% of GDP, all of the borrowing could be going to fund the revenue deficit. This dented general fiscal prudence.

The chart on deficit trends, sourced from last February's Budget presentation, shows that of late, a large part of India's fiscal deficit has been in the form of a revenue deficit.

Budget Estimates vs Revised Estimates

Budget Estimates (BE) and Revised Estimates (RE) denote very different things.

The BEs — say, for the money to be spent by a particular Ministry, or the money to be collected via GST — for any year essentially show what the Finance Minister expects the value to be at the end of the financial year when she is presenting the Budget even before the financial year has actually started.

As the year goes by, data for income and expenditure come in. By the time the Budget for the forthcoming financial year is presented, the government also has the REs for the current financial year.

Comparing REs with BEs for the same financial year provides a good idea of how far the government came through on the promise it made before the start of the financial year.

To understand how much the government plans to spend on a particular scheme in the coming year, one can either compare the BEs of the two years (say FY24 and FY25) or the BE of the coming year (e.g. FY25) with the RE of the previous year (FY24).

The most apt comparison often depends on the context.

Say, the government allocates Rs 10,000 crore (BE) for a scheme in a particular year's Budget, but ends up spending only Rs 1,000 crore (RE). However, for the next financial year, it allocates Rs 2,000 crore (the new BE) for the same scheme.

So, the government can compare the BE of the second year to the RE of the first and claim that the budget for the scheme has been doubled. And the Opposition can compare BE to BE and claim that the Budget allocation has been slashed by 80%.

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The BE for the current financial year (2023-2

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, GWALIOR

Narayan Krishan Shejwali Bhawan, Near Taran Puskar, City Centre, Gwalior (M.P.) Tel : 0751-2438300, 4080352, Fax : 0751-2438249

No. /MPGMC/257/24/9/1/Sewerage Network/2024 Gwalior, Dated : 24.01.2024

Notice Inviting Tender

दिनांक 30-01-2024

 On behalf of Gwalior Municipal Corporation (GMC), Madhya Pradesh, online Percentage Rate bids are invited on website <http://mpetenders.gov.in> from registered Contractors and Firms of repute, fulfilling eligibility criteria.

Tender ID	Name of Works	Probable amount of Contract (in Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (in Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (in Rs.)	Time of Completion
2024 UAD 327943_1 dated 23.01.2024	Survey, design, preparation of drawings, providing, laying and commissioning of sewerage network in Satyaranjan Tekri, ward No. 02 & nearby areas of Gwalior Municipal Corporation	22807524.00	114037.62	15000.00	06 months including rainy season.

 NIT with all details of works to be executed and provisions of contract can be viewed on website <http://mpetenders.gov.in> and bid Document can be purchased from 10:30 AM dated 24.01.2024 to 5:30 PM dated 21.02.2024. (R.K. Shukla)

Executive Engineer, Gwalior Municipal Corporation

U.P.RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD HARDUAGANJ THERMAL POWER STATION, KASIMPUR (ALIGARH)
E-Tender Notice

Superintendent Engineer, Operation & Maintenance Circle-IV, Hdj. "E'TPS", Kasimpur.

1- E-Tender No.06/O&MC-IV/E/TPS/EMD-II/E/TPS/2023-24- Online e-Bids invited for the "Third party technical cum protection Audit of 1x110MW, 2x250MW & 1x660MW Generating Units along with 400/220/132kV Sub-Station, HTPS Kasimpur, Aligarh." as per scope of work, E-tender has been uploaded on 01.02.2024 at 18.00 Hrs. on <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Estimated cost Rs. 17,19,200.00, Time: Period: 12 Months, Earnest Money: Rs. 34384.00, Last date of Tender 05.03.2024 at 13.00 Hrs.

Superintending Engineer, ECMC, 'E'TPS', Kasimpur (Aligarh)

2- E-Tender No ET-06/ECMC/CMD-II/HTPS/2023-2024 , Online bids invited for "Request for Proposal (RFP) for Providing Consultancy services for Feasibility Study, DPR preparation, Transaction Advisory, Bid Process Management for Treatment of STP effluent and Reuse of Treated STP Effluent in Thermal Power Plants of Harduaganj, Distt Aligarh and Jawaharpur, Distt Etah of U.P."E-tender has been uploaded on 24.01.2024 on [https://etender.up.nic.in](http://etender.up.nic.in). Estimated cost Rs. 38,00,000.00, Time Period is 03 months. The Earnest money is Rs. 76000.00. The last date of submission of e-bids 15.02.2024 upto 14:00 hours.

SUPERITENDING ENGINEER, ELECTRICITY CIVIL MAINTENANCE CIRCLE, Kasimpur

3- Short Term E-Tender No. 09/ECMC/ECMD-II/HTPS/2023-25, Online e-bids are invited for the work of "Biennial Tender for Providing Food and Catering Services in Canteen (01 No.) along with pantry at Harduaganj Thermal 'D' Power Plant Kasimpur" E-Tender has been uploaded on 22.01.2023 on <http://etender.up.nic.in>, Estimated cost Rs. 2.40 Lac (GST Extra), Time period 24 months, Earnest money Rs. 4800.00, Last date of E-bid Submission 26.02.2023 (14:00 hrs).

4- E-Tender No. 10/ECMC/ECMD-II/HTPS/2023-24, Online e-bids are invited for the "Work of M&R of Motor /Starler and Pumps as well as round O'clock operation of Tube wells at New Colony in Harduaganj Thermal Power Station, UPRVUNL, Kasimpur, Aligarh, UTTAR PRADESH". E-Tender has been uploaded on 25.01.2024 on <http://etender.up.nic.in>, Estimated cost of work Rs. 27,97,070.00(GST Extra)Time Period 24 months, Earnest money Rs. 56,000.00 , Last date of E-bid Submission 17.02.2024 (14:00 hrs.)

Superintending Engineer, MMC, HTPS, Kasimpur (Aligarh)

5- E-Tender No : ET-05/MMC/EPD/CTPS/HTPS/2024, Online e-bids are invited for procurement of Lead acid batteries rating 200 AH, 12 V for Emergency Diesel Generator sets of EMD I ETPS, 1x660MW. Estimated cost: Rs 1,45,312.00+Taxes Extra, EMD: Rs 2906.00, E-bid submission starting date: 31.01.2024 (17.00 hrs). Last date for submission of e-bid: 27.02.2024 (14.00 Hrs).

6- E-Tender No : ET-06/MMC/EPD/CTPS/HTPS/2024, Online e-bids are invited for procurement of Fans and motor for HT Transformer cooling of EMD I DTPS. Estimated cost: Rs 2,40,000.00+Taxes Extra, EMD: Rs 4800.00, Last date for submission of e-bid: 27.02.2024 (14.00 Hrs).

7- E-Tender No : ET-07/MMC/EPD/CTPS/HTPS/2024, Online e-bids are invited for procurement of 220 KV Current Transformer & Capacitor Voltage transformer for EMD I, CTPS. Estimated cost: Rs 20,74,740.00+Taxes Extra, EMD: Rs 41,000.00, Last date for submission of e-bid: 27.02.2024 (14.00 Hrs).

8- E-Tender No : ET-08/MMC/EPD/CTPS/HTPS/2024, Online e-bids are invited for procurement of Distance Numerical Relay for EMD I, CTPS. Estimated cost: Rs 10,41,140.00+Taxes Extra, EMD: Rs 20820.00, Last date for submission of e-bid: 27.02.2024 (14.00 Hrs).

9- GeM Bid No: GEM/2024/B/4548793, online bids are invited for Supply of Procurement of electrical conductor/cables and wires for HTPS, Kasimpur. Estimated cost: Rs 11,86,670.00, Earnest money: Rs 23733.00 or 02% of Estimated value (as shown in GeM bid) of quoted items. Online bid submission starting date: 31.01.2024 (17.00 hrs). Last date for submission of bid 27.02.2024 (14.00PM).

10- GeM Bid No:GEM/2024/B/4524198, online bids are invited for Supply of Procurement of various types of LED lights & lighting material for HTPS, Kasimpur. Estimated cost: Rs 38,11,290.00, Earnest money: Rs 76225.00 or 02% of Estimated value (as shown in GeM bid) of quoted items. Last date for submission of bid 26.02.2024 (14.00 PM Eligibility Conditions: As per Bid Specifications. Note: - For further details please log on web site i.e. <https://gem.gov.in/>

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, OPERATION & MAINTENANCE CIRCLE-II, 'D'TPS, KASIMPUR

11- ET-23/O&MC-II/BMD-I/23-24, Online e-bids are invited for the "BIENNIAL CONTRACT OF "DAILY ROUND THE CLOCK ROUTINE MAINTENANCE & BREAK DOWN MAINTENANCE OF MAIN BOILER, PRESSURE PARTS, HP/LP VALVES & SAFETY VALVES OF UNIT # 7 'C' TPS", HTPS, KASIMPUR, ALIGARH for a period of 02 Year" E-Tender has been uploaded on 01.02.2024 on <http://etender.up.nic.in>, Estimated Cost Rs. 34,98,835.00, period 730 days, E.M.D. cost Rs. 65,000.00, Last date of Tender 04.03.2024 at 13:00Hrs.

Note- Tender No. ET- 05/ET-06/ET-07/ET-08 Eligibility Conditions: Only reputed Manufacturers/ their Authorized Dealer can participate in this tender.

Note- Total quantity of work, tender specification and other terms & condition is as per tender documents available on the e-portal. Corrigendum, Addendum, Extension if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time. Part-I shall contain Tender Cost/Earnest money and other necessary documents as per pre-qualifying conditions and Part -II will contain price bid as per bill of quantity. Tender specification may be downloaded from the website (<http://etender.up.nic.in>) and other specification details can be seen on Nigam website www.uprvunl.org. The contractors have to submit the hard copy before the schedule date/time in the concern office in sealed envelope containing details of the tender mentioned on the envelope. Tenders are advised to send their hard copy directly to the concerned tendering authority of the Circles/Division. Who reserve the right to unacceptable/cancel any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Superintending Engineer (H.Q.) पत्रांक : 06/अधिकारीप्रभु(पुरु) /विज्ञापन/ कैम्प-1(05) / 24 दिनांक 30.01.2024

Save Electricity Enhance National Productivity



UJVNL Limited
(An Uttarakhand Govt. Enterprise)
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharan Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866
Website: [www.ujvnl.com](http://ujvnl.com)

No. /MPGMC/257/24/9/1/Sewerage Network/2024

Gwalior, Dated : 24.01.2024

जनरेश्वर रोड, ग्वालियर

दिनांक 30-01-2024

Notice Inviting Tender

दिनांक 30-01-2024

On behalf of Gwalior Municipal Corporation (GMC), Madhya Pradesh, online Percentage Rate bids are invited on website <http://mpetenders.gov.in> from registered Contractors and Firms of repute, fulfilling eligibility criteria.

Tender ID

Name of Works

Probable amount of Contract (in Rs.)

Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (in Rs.)

Cost of Bid Document (in Rs.)

Time of Completion

Tender Notice

Dated 31/01/2024

Office of the Executive Engineer (Test), UJVNL, Ganga Valley, Haridwar invites sealed tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:

Tender No. 09 EE(Test)/GV/2023-24

Name of Work: Work of Main and Backup Numerical Distance Protection Relays and Annunciator work for Feeders emanating from Chilla Power House

Estimated Cost : Rs 2469000.00 (GST extra).

Date of availability of bid document on website: 01-02-2024 (11:00 Hrs)

Last Date for submission of tender : 22-02-2024 up to 16: 00 Hrs

For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. Tender documents can be downloaded from Nigam's website "www.ujvnl.com"

Executive Engineer

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

SEARCH FOR MISSING WOMAN
SEARCH FOR MISSING WOMAN

General public is here by informed that this woman namely Suman Kumar W/o Guddu Kumar R/o Village & P.S. Noshia, Distt. Nalanda, Bihar Age : 20 years, Height : 5'3", Face : Long, Complexion : Shallow, Build: Medium, wearing light pink colour suit-salwar and sky blue colour jacket, has been missing since 22.01.2024 from platform No. 16, New Delhi Railway Station, Delhi. In this regard DD 17-A dated 23.01.2024 has been lodged at P.S. New Delhi Railway Station, Delhi. Any person having any information or clue about this missing woman may kindly inform to the following:-

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Tel. No. : 011-23363622, 23744073,

Fax: 24368639, Tel.: 08750871305, 09311110764

DP/1021/Rly/24

SHO - P.S. New Delhi Railway Station, Delhi

75th REPUBLIC DAY—EIL

The 75th Republic Day was celebrated in EIL offices across the country with patriotic zeal & enthusiasm. Ms. Vartika Shukla, CMD, EIL along with the company's Functional Directors & senior officials unfurled the National Tricolour at EIL HO & Gurugram complex. On this occasion, as part of EIL's commitment towards Net-Zero, an 800 KWP On Grid Rooftop SPV System at EIL Gurugram Complex was launched.

**75th REPUBLIC DAY—OIL INDIA LIMITED**

Oil India Limited marked the 75th Republic Day with a spirited celebration at its corporate office in Noida. Dr. Ranjit Rath, Chairman & MD of OIL, unfurled the National Flag in the presence of Functional Directors, Chief Vigilance Officer, & company officials. In his address, Dr. Rath commended the dedicated efforts of the company's officials, acknowledging their integral role in shaping the nation's energy landscape. He expressed gratitude for their unwavering commitment.

INAUGURATION—NBCC

Kaushal Bhawan equipped with modern facilities & amenities befitting the M/o Skill Development & Entrepreneurship's mission to foster its initiatives across the Nation. It was inaugurated by President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu recently in the presence of Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister, M/o E & SD & Entrepreneurship, Rajeev Chandrashekhar, MoS, M/o Electronics and IT, SD & Entrepreneurship and Jal Shakti.

**MoU—REC**

REC has signed a MoU with the National Investment & Infrastructure Fund Limited to collaborate on a suite of funding solutions for Renewable Energy Projects as well as large-scale infrastructure projects in India. The MoU was signed in the presence of V.K. Dewangan, CMD, REC & R.Dhar, CEO & MD, NIIFL by D.S. Khatri, ED (Fin.), REC, & P. Gadkari, ED & CSO, NIIFL. A Choudhury, Dir. (Fin.), REC; V.K. Singh, Dir. (Proj.), REC.

HEALTH CHECKUP CAMP—CWC

CWC organized a one-day medical health checkup camp for their officials & staff. It's important to prioritize the health & well-being of employees. The camp conducted recently by Holy Family Hospital at the Corporate Office in New Delhi offered various facilities such as ECG, cardiology, consultation, nephrology, gynecology consultation, general medicine, communicable disease risk assessment, & blood sugar random check services.

**MoU—UCO BANK**

UCO Bank entered into MoU with M/s Poornatha & Company recently to launch "UCO Empower", an online training program for MSME customers in vernacular language under Bank's CSR activity. The MoU signed by P. Shankar Jha, GM, MSME Department & Suresh T. Partner, Poornatha & Company in August presence of VN Kamble, ED, M Kumar, GM, HRM, PSD, Training & OL, MK Anand, GM, Agriculture and Rural Business & R Nagar, GM, RBD.

VIBRANT GUJARAT—NHSRCL

Ashwini Vaishnav, Hon'ble Minister of Railways, visited the Bullet Train stall at Vibrant Gujarat 2024. Besides having a walkthrough of the stall, he saw a 1:10 scale model of Bullet Train and experienced a ride on the bullet train simulator.

**PERFORMANCES—DEO SOUTH DELHI**

Spectacular cultural performances were presented by School students of MM Public school, Pitampura Modern Public school, Shalimar Bagh and Himalaya Public school Rohini. All participants school Girls & boys Asha worker's etc were awarded by certificates of appreciation and participation. Apart from Nukkad Natak, puppet show & magic show on beti Bachao beti padhao were also presented.

14th National Voters' Day

Celebrated the 14th National Voters' Day with fervour & enthusiasm. On this occasion, the President & executive members of RAILKUNJ, unfurled the National Flag in the presence of residents. Kids presented few dance & singing performances.

Public Health Engineering Department

Public Health Engineering Division, Khagaria

SHORT RE-TENDER NIT No –MMNPY-02/PHED/KHG-2023-24 / (SBA/SBFe)
National Competitive Bidding
(Through e-procurement mode on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

1	Designation and Address of Advertiser	Executive Engineer, Public Health Division, Khagaria.
2	Date of issue of Tender Notice	29.01.2024
3	Period of sale (downloading) of tender Bid Document	08.02.2024 to 15.02.2024 up to 15:00 Hrs. through www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
4	Date, time & place of pre-bid meeting	10.02.2024 at 11:30 hrs. hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer P.H. Division, Khagaria.
5	Last date and time of receipt (uploading) of tender	15.02.2024 up to 17:00 Hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
6	Last date and time of submission of hard copy of EMD (in original).	16.02.2024 up to 15:00 hrs in the Following Office:- A. Executive Engineer P.H. Division, Khagaria. B. Superintending Engineer P.H. Circle, Begusarai C. Chief Engineer P.H.E.D. Bhagalpur Zone, Bhagalpur.
7	Date and time of opening of technical bid	16.02.2024 at 16:00 Hrs on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
8	Date and time of opening of financial bid	To be informed later after the approval of technical bid.

9. Details of works:

Group No	Name of Work: Design, Construction, Supply, Testing and Commissioning of Piped Water Supply Schemes for habitations left out under "HarGharNalRajAl" nischayojna in areas having ground water quality issues; with Electric Driven Pumps and Iron Removal Treatment Plant having Technology (Adsorption/ Ion exchange/ Membrane/ Nano Technology/ etc.) certified by CSIR or any other institute of national repute. In the District of Khagaria, Bihar on turn-key basis with 6 months Trial Run Period and Comprehensive Operation and Maintenance of 60 months under MukhyamantriGrameenPeyjalNishchay Yojna (Quality Affected); Under P.H. Division, Khagaria.	No. of schemes in a Group..	Estimated Cost (in Lakh)	Amount of Earnest Money (in Lakh)	Cost of Tender Document (non-refundable) in Rs.	BSEDC Bid Processing Fee (in Rs.)	Completion Period (in months)
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

Sl. No.	Block	Panchayat	Habitation	Ward No.
01		Cherakhera	Fulwanyam Sahari	16A
02	Alauli (iron)	Chandpurkhurd	Chandpurkhurd	7A
03		Shahsai	Musaharai ola	8A
04		Alauli	Musaharai ola	19A
05	Shaharbani	Shaharbani		2A

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

PR. NO. 016285 (PHED) 2023-24

विहार में शराब का व्यापार, जिन्हीं एवं सेवन अवैध है। इससे संबंधित शिकायत इस नंबर पर दर्ज करायें, आपकी जानकारी गुप्त रखी जाएगी।

टॉल फ्री नं- 15545 द्या 1800 345 6268

Executive Engineer
Public Health Division, Khagaria

CORPORATE BRIEFS**75th REPUBLIC DAY—GAIL**

GAIL celebrated the 75th Republic Day. On this momentous occasion, SK Gupta, CMD, GAIL unfurled the National Flag in the presence of top level management & employees. Addressing the gathering on Republic Day, Sandeep Kumar Gupta said "GAIL is in sync with the vision of GoI towards Natural Gas-based economy by developing infrastructure & business around Natural Gas. GAIL is committed towards the vision of Net Zero by taking sustainable development steps in this direction".

**75th REPUBLIC DAY—BHEL**

India's 75th Republic Day was celebrated with fervour and gaiety by BHEL at all its offices across the country. Koppu Sadashiv Murthy, CMD, BHEL, unfurled the national flag at a function in the company's township in Noida in the presence of Functional Directors on the Board of BHEL, and other senior officials. On the occasion, CMD, BHEL also addressed a gathering of BHEL employees and their families present at the function. A march-past, prize distribution ceremony and cultural programme was also organised at the event.

**75th REPUBLIC DAY—PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK**

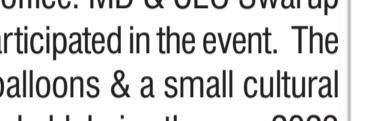
PNB celebrated the 75th Republic Day with fervour & enthusiasm at its headquarters in New Delhi. The celebration began with PNB MD & CEO Atul Kumar Goel unfurling the National Flag in the presence of EDs, CVO, CGMs & senior officials of PNB. Speaking on the occasion, Atul Kumar Goel, MD & CEO, PNB, said, "As we commemorate the 75th Republic Day under the theme India - Mother of Democracy & Viksit Bharat, PNB stands proudly as a symbol of financial growth, inclusion, & innovation."

**75th REPUBLIC DAY—THDCIL**

THDCIL has also established a benchmark in the Green Hydrogen production, by successfully implementing India's one of the First Pilot Project aligned with the National Green Hydrogen Mission. On the auspicious occasion of 75th Republic Day, the project developed at the office complex in Rishikesh was inaugurated by RK Vishnoi, CMD, THDCIL in the presence of Shallinder Singh, Director (Pers.) & Bhupender Gupta, Director (Technical), along with all other senior officers of THDCIL.

**PUNJAB & SIND BANK**

celebrated Nation's 75th Republic Day at its Gurugram office. MD & CEO Swarup Kumar Saha, ED Dr. Ram Jass Yadav, other Executives, Staff & family members participated in the event. The Unfurling of the flag was followed by rendition of National Anthem, release of balloons & a small cultural programme. Addressing on the occasion, Saha highlighted some special activities held during the year 2023 including India hosting G20 summit, launching of special Vishwakarma Yojna, Landing of Chandrayaan-3, Solar mission & many other schemes launched by the GoI.

**PROGRAMME—HUDCO**

The Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs, GoI, has delegated the task of promoting Hindi in 53 existing Public Sector Undertakings in Delhi to the HUDCO through the TOLIC, Delhi (PSU)-2. In line with this mandate, HUDCO efficiently coordinated the biannual meeting of TOLIC in New Delhi. Sanjay Kulshrestha, President of TOLIC & CMD of HUDCO, chaired the session & discussed the ongoing progress & initiatives aimed at promoting Hindi in the designated Public Sector Undertakings. The programme was also graced by the esteemed presence of notable individuals, including S.R. Narasimhan, CMD of Grid Controller of India Limited; M. Nagaraj, Dir. (Corporate Planning), HUDCO; A. Gupta, Jt. Secy., M/o Textile, D. Guhan, Director (Finance) at HUDCO and Dr. Jitendra Kumar, Managing Director of BIRAC.

**AGREEMENT—GAIL**

GAIL has successfully concluded a long-term LNG purchase agreement for purchase of around 0.5 MMTPA LNG from ADNOC Gas. This is pursuant to an MoU dated 30.10.2022 between GAIL & Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) P.J.S.C. wherein Parties agreed that, in potential areas of collaboration both parties shall explore opportunities including purchase of LNG by GAIL from ADNOC for a tenure ranging from short term to medium & long-term. This significant development between GAIL & ADNOC will reinforce the robust cultural & economic bonds between India & the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

**PETRONET LNG LTD**

During the current quarter ended 31st Dec, 2023, Dahej terminal processed 218 TBTU of LNG as against 154 TBTU during the corresponding quarter ended 31st Dec., 2022 & 210 TBTU during the previous quarter ended 30th Sept., 2023. The overall LNG volume processed by the Company in the current quarter was 232 TBTU, as against the LNG volume processed in the corresponding & previous quarters, which stood at 167 TBTU & 223 TBTU respectively. During the 9 months ended 31st Dec., 2023 (current 9 months), Dahej terminal processed 646 TBTU of LNG as against 532 TBTU during the corresponding 9 months ended 31st Dec., 2022. The overall LNG volume processed by the Company in the current 9 months was 685 TBTU, as against the LNG volume processed in the corresponding 9 months, which stood at 567 TBTU. The Company has reported PBT of Rs 1,597 Cr in the current quarter, as against Rs 1,586 Cr in the corresponding quarter & Rs 1,102 Cr in the previous quarter. The PAT of the current quarter was reported at Rs 1,191 Cr as against the PAT of the corresponding & previous quarters of Rs 1,181 Cr & Rs 818 Cr respectively. During the current 9 months, the Company has reported highest ever PBT of Rs 3,761 Cr as against the PBT of corresponding nine months of Rs 3,517 Cr. The PAT of the current 9 months stood at Rs 2,799 Cr as against Rs 2,626 Cr in the corresponding nine months. The robust financial performance of the current quarter and nine months was achieved due to higher capacity utilization of the Dahej Terminal.

CANARA BANK The bank's global business stood at Rs.22,13,360 Cr, grew by 9.87%, gross advances stood at Rs.9,50,430 Cr, grew by 11.69%, Net Profit for Dec 2023 stood at Rs.3,656 Cr against Net Profit of 2882 cr for Dec 2022, Net Interest Income stood at Rs.9,417 Cr, grew by 9.50% and NIM stood at 3.02% improved by 9 bps.

MKU Limited is joining forces with Team Forces, a UK-based charity organization dedicated to creating social impact within the armed forces community through sports & adventure. This partnership is born out of a shared commitment to uplift the lives of armed forces members, veterans, & their families. Taking a step beyond the battlefield, MKU acknowledges heroism in all its forms through this partnership. In a synergy of dedication to excellence, equality & inclusion, this collaboration is poised to deliver transformative experiences, break barriers & foster breakthroughs for soldiers in the UK.

DEO WEST The 14th National Voters' Day has been celebrated on 25.01.2024 as per the guidance/instructions of Dr. Kinny Singh (IAS), District Magistrate/District Election Officer (West) with ADM (West), & Dheeraj Sharma, SDM (Election), District West, Raja Garden. Almost 1200 people participated in this function, which included all the EROs/AEROS of the District-West & 600 Sr. Sec. School Students.

BLUEROSE PUBLISHERS Established by Syed Arshad in 2012, BlueRose Publishers stands as a formidable force in the self-publication sector, autonomously flourishing without external crutches. The company, driven by a resolute commitment to empower nascent writers, has evolved into a pre-eminent


कनारा बैंक Canara Bank
A Govt. of India Undertaking

सिडिकेट Syndicate

RECOVERY & LEGAL SECTION, CIRCLE OFFICE

3rd Floor, Luv-Kush Tower, Exhibition Road, Patna - 800001,
Ph. : 0612-2320180, Email : npacopat@canarabank.com

PROPERTY FOR E-AUCTION

E-AUCTION Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / hypothecated / Pledged / charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive / physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Canara Bank** will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on **17.02.2024**. Details are as under:

Sl. No.	Name / Add. Contact No. of the Branch	Name and Address of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Outstanding in Rs.	Details of Property	Reserve Price (Rs.) /EMD/Bid Multiplier Amt./Ac No./ IFSC Code
1	Begusarai Branch Near Vishnu Chowk, Deepshikha Rd. Begusarai Bihar - 851101 Mob. : 8210998582	Mr. Mukesh Kumar, S/o Lakan Paswan, Ward No. - 05, Kamruddinpur, Ulao, Begusarai, Bihar-851134	Rs. 5,36,847.18 as on 30.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	Deed No. - 1086 / 1996 Dated - 15.05.1996 All That Part And Parcel of Land and Building Measuring 372 Sqft Covered Under Tauzi No. - 9048, Khesra No. - 353, Khesra No. - 1663 & 46, Thana No. - 410. Situated At Mauza - Kamruddinpur, Dist - Begusarai in the name of Mr. Mukesh Kumar S/o Lakan Paswan. Boundary : North - Road, South - Late Lakan Sah, East - Lakan Paswan, West - Nij Seller.	Rs. 2,84,000/- Rs. 28,400/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0008362
2	Madhubani Branch Nariyal Bazar, Madhubani, Bihar Pin- 847211 Mob. : 8210998612	1. M/s Maa Lakhya Drug Agency, Prop. - Mrs. Sarita Kumari (Borrower) W/o Santosh Kumar, Vill - Nabhat, PS - Pandua Via - Lohat, Distt. - Madhubani, Bihar-847231 2. Santosh Kumar (Guarantor) S/o Sri Satydev Yadav, Vill - Nabhat, PS - Pandua Via - Lohat, Distt- Madhubani, Bihar-847231	Rs. 51,41,315.85 as on 30.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	Sale Deed No 6852 Dated 30.07.2012 All That Part And Parcel of Land Measuring 2.18 Decimal Khesra No-5461,5462(Old)/6 (new) Khata No. - X, Thana No.-62, Tauzi No.-6424, Situated At Singhiniya Chauk Locality Sangat Mohalla Ward No-23 Post & Dist-Madhubani in the Name of Mr. Santosh Kumar S/o Late Satydev Yadav Boundary : North - Niz Vendee & Road, South - Md. Ilyas Darji, East - Ram Chalitra Mishra, West -Road.	Rs. 16,32,000/- Rs. 1,63,200/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code: CNRB0008362
3	Genrabari Branch Prithvi Market, Genrabari Bazar, Korda, PO - Genrabari, Bihar-854108 Mob : 8210998596	(1) M/s Amisha Traders, Prop. Amod Kumar Singh, Mahinathpur, Sisia, District - Katihar, Bihar, Pin-854108 (2) Mr. Amod Kumar Singh (Borrower), S/o Ramesh Prasad Singh, Mahinathpur, Sisia, District - Katihar, Bihar, Pin-854108 (3) Mr. Subhash Kumar S/o Kuldev Singh (Guarantor in Housing Loan) House No: - 8, Mahinathpur, P.O - Shishiya, District - Katihar, Bihar-854108	Rs. 16,32,196.15 as on 30.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	1. Sale Deed No. - 7939, Dated - 11.06.2016 All that part and parcel of land Measuring 06 Decimal Covered Under Khata No. - 128, Khesra No. - 1270, Thana No. - 120, Tauji No. - 1/1309, Situated at Mauja - Mahinathpur, Thana + Anchal - Korha, Registry + Dist - Katihar, Bihar in the name of Mr. Amod Kumar Singh S/o Ramesh Prasad Singh, Boundary : North - Arbind Singh, South - Brick Soling Road, East - Niz Purchaser, West - Niz Seller. 2. Sale Deed No. - 4452, Dated - 11.03.2010 All that part and parcel of land Measuring 2 Decimal Covered Under Khata No. - 128, Khesra No. - 1270, Thana No. - 120, Tauji No. - 1/1309, Situated at Mauja - Mahinathpur, Thana + Anchal - Korha, Registry + Dist - Katihar, Bihar in the name of Mr. Amod Kumar Singh S/o Ramesh Prasad Singh, Boundary : North - Gayatri Devi & others, South - Brick Soling Road, East - Niz Purchaser, West - Niz Seller	Rs. 18,04,000/- Rs. 1,80,400/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0008362
4	Pachna Branch Mob. : 8210998560	Borrower - Sri Anmol Saw S/o Rameshwar Saw R/o - Mauza - Kaithama, P.S. - Sheikhpura, Dist - Sheikhpura - 811107. Smt. Feki Devi (Mortgagor) W/o Sri Rameshwar Saw R/o Mauza - Kaithama, P.S. - Sheikhpura, Dist - Sheikhpura-811107	Rs. 11,76,157.08 as on 05.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	The property is residential constructed building (Floor - G.F) situated at Mauza- Kaithama, Thana No - 224, Khata No- 82 & 81, Plot no- 1294 & 1293, Near- South Gramin Bank, Anchal - Sheikhpura, Dist Sheikhpura, Bihar in the name of Smt. Feki Devi W/o Sri Rameshwar Saw Extent Area- 05 Decimal Boundary : North - P.C.C Road, South - Mahendra Choudhari, East - 6' wide gali, West - Udit Narayan Singh	Rs. 8,69,400/- Rs. 86,940/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0001721
5	Faridpur Branch Mob. : 8210998541	Borrower - Mr. Yadunandan Yadav, S/o Late Kuldeep Yadav, jointly with Mr. Pintu Kumar S/o Yadunandan Yadav R/o Vill - Vihta, PO - Manana, P.S. - Sheikhpura, Bihar-811105	Rs. 6,16,536.30 as on 05.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	Freehold Residential Property situated at Mauza - Vihta, Khata No. - 15, Plot No. - 664, Dist - Sheikhpura, Bihar in the name of Mr. Yadunandan Yadav , S/o Late Kuldeep Yadav, Total Area - 9 Decimal Boundary : North - Niz Rasta Purchaser, South - Ramotar Yadav, East - Guleshwar Chaudhary, West - Lakra Yadav	Rs. 22,90,500/- Rs. 2,29,050/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0005469
6	Dehri Branch Mob. : 8210998538	Borrower :- Smt. Rubi Kumari W/o Guddu Kumar Soni And Co - Borrower - Sri Guddu Kumar Soni S/o Kashi Prasad Both Are Resident of Pani Tanti, Ward No- 26 , Dhantoliya, Mohalla - Dehri, Rohtas - 821307	Rs. 4,66,123.78 as on 29.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon	The Property is residential freehold land & under construction structure situated at Khata No-156, Plot No- 1356, Mauza- Dahaur P.S- Dehri, Sadar Registry Office & District- Rohtas, 821307, Extent of Area- 1361.25 Sqft. Boundary : North - Aahar, South : Niz, East : Niz, West - Panchayat bhawan Name of title holder - Smt. Rubi Kumari W/o Guddu Kumar Soni and Sri Guddu Kumar Soni s/o Kashi Prasad	Rs. 6,03,000/- Rs. 60,300/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0006337

Last Date of EMD 15.02.2024 For Detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in www.canarabank.com

Authorised Officer (Canara Bank)

ANDHRA PRADESH INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED
(Govt. of Andhra Pradesh Undertaking)
APIIC Tower, 9, 10&11th Floors, CFC-1, IT Park, Autonagar, Mangalagiri, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh-522503. Website: www.apiic.in Phone: 0863 - 2381850

APIIC has proposed for Setting up of Bulk Drug park, Nakkapalli, Anakapalli District, Andhra Pradesh on EPC mode. The tender documents (Request for Proposal, Concession Agreement and Price Bid) were submitted to Judicial Preview.

As a part of Judicial Preview and to ensure transparency, the tender documents were placed in the public domain of Judicial Preview website: www.judicialpreview.ap.gov.in on 31.01.2024 to invite the objections / suggestions from the general public and intending bidders. The objections / suggestions, if any, have to be submitted to the Judge, Judicial Preview on or before 08.02.2024, 05.00 PM through Judicial Preview official email ajjudicialpreview@gmail.com.

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER -III,
APIIC : Mangalagiri
Date: 31.01.2024

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala)
CIN: U40109PB2010SGC033813 Mobile No. 96461-18773

Tender Enquiry No. QQ-2346/PO-P

Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2nd Floor Multistorey Building, The Mall, Patiala, invites E-tender for Procurement of 4,60,000 Nos Galvanized Steel Pins of Steel head made by forging process, suitable for 11 KV Pin Unsulators, as per PSPCL specification No. QQ-2346/PSPCL/PO-P. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 31.01.2024 onwards.

NOTE: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. C77/24 31894/Pb

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala - 147001)
CIN: U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: www.pspcl.in
Mobile No. 96461-18721

Tender Enquiry No. QW-320/PO-W Dated: 24.01.2024

Chief Engineer/Stores & Workshops Organization, Sarabha Nagar, PSPCL, Ludhiana, invites E-tender of Repair of 3-phase, 50 cycles, outdoor type, oil immersed, naturally cooled, Stack core type construction, OWP Aluminium Wound Distribution Transformers (Type Conventional) of capacity 63 KVA with voltage ratio 11/0.433 KV conforming to ISS: 2026 (with latest amendments, if any) and 1180 part (2014) complete with a first filling of oil conforming to ISS:335/1993 (with latest amendments, if any)

Quantity = 15000 Nos.

For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 24.01.2024 from 1.30 P.M. onwards.

NOTE: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. C78/24 31897/PB

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM- III
E-Tender Notice No- 01ExamCBTBid2024Acct
Dated 16.01.2024

This is hereby notified that Northern Railway has decided to extend the last date of receipt of the bids to 05.02.2024 till 15:00 hrs and the received bids will be opened at 15:00 hrs on the same day.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 335/24

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala - 147001)
CIN: U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: www.pspcl.in
Mobile No. 96461-36398

E-Tender Enquiry No. 26/TL/BT/2023-24 Dated: 31.01.2024

Addl. SE/TL Division, D-119, Thermal Colony, Bathinda invites E-tender for Construction of 66 KV line from 220 KV Kot Karor to 66 KV S/S Mirze Ke (New) SC on DC line. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 31.01.2024 from 6.00 PM onwards.

NOTE: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. C-79/24 31900/Pb

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector - 6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) Tender Work:-

Sl. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (in Lacs)
1.	15/DGM (NTC)/Sr.M DGM(E&M)/2023-24	Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Surveillance Security System Work for Mahamaya Balika Inter College Sector-44 Noida	96.67

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 08.02.2024 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 09.02.2024 at 11.00 AM.

Office: Sector-39, Noida Dy. General Manager (NTC) NOIDA

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, HARYANA
"THE HARYANA COACHING INSTITUTES (CONTROL AND REGULATION) BILL, 2024".

The State Government has made the decision to create legislation governing private coaching institutes within the State. On 24th January, 2024, the draft bill has been uploaded on the Department of Higher Education's website <https://highereduhr.ac.in/>. It will be available for 15 days during which public and stakeholders may provide feedback and comments on the draft Bill through email id i.e. hechrynpa@gmail.com.

Director General Higher Education, Haryana Panchkula

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum
Ref.: I) Tender Notice No. 83/2023-24 ii) Tender No. 15235200A due on 29.02.2024 01. In reference to above tender new document has been attached. All other terms & conditions remain unchanged. The Corrigendum has been published on website www.reps.gov.in 326/2024 Serving Customers With A Smile

Doc. No. :- BRPNL/KHG/C 029/62

SHORT NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

(F2 Based)

(Only through e-tendering system on website (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Ltd (BRPNL), A Government of Bihar undertaking, invites Proposals for Construction and Erection of precast concrete boundary wall with gate and Mali shed cum sales centre etc from the contractors registered with BRPNL Ltd in Two Bid System (Technical and Financial) from eligible Firms/Contractors/Agencies or Companies for the following work on Percentage Rate Basis.

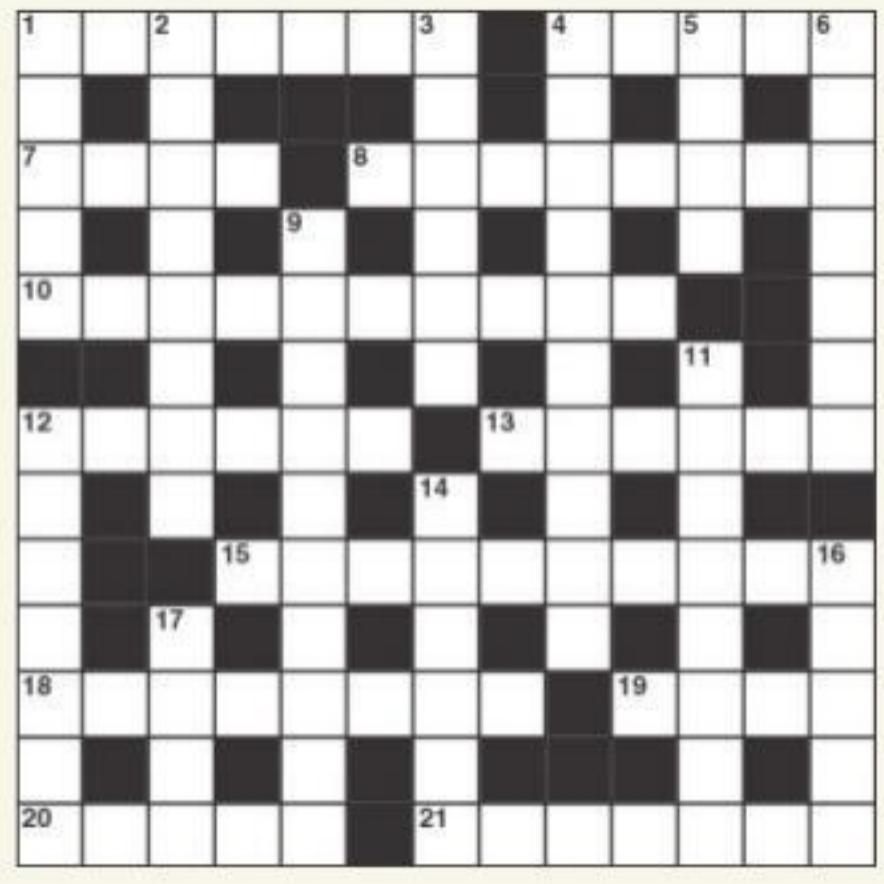
प्रत्येक का नाम

अनुमंडल का नाम

जिला का नाम

प्रायोगिक तरीका

CROSSWORD 5276



ACROSS

- 1 New mascot hard to put up with (7)
4 Go round for some clothing (5)
7 It floats right astern (4)
8 Banter becomes hurtful in time (8)
10 Capital example of craft in war (10)
12 Emigre beaten up by the authorities (6)
13 It's normally measured at arm's length (6)
15 Tell a friend off the record (10)
18 It moves slowly to get up to the centre (8)
19 The right time for fashion (4)
20 When the devil drives, they must (5)
21 Complete slice and a half of Edam (7)

DOWN

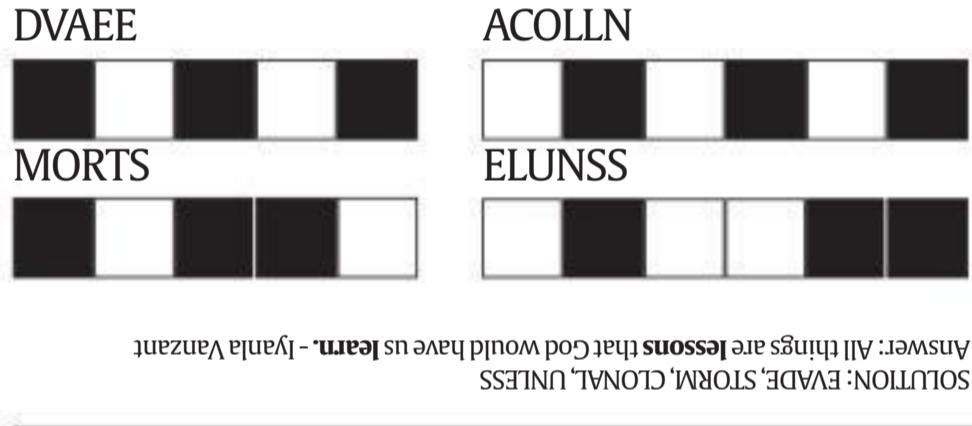
- 1 Brush and clean thoroughly (5)
2 Where prompt action may be needed behind the scenes (3-5)
3 Its passengers will be late (6)
4 A source of light at the seance? (6,4)
5 Scattered rain in the country (4)
6 It has wings and flies (7)
9 They fly some flag in trouble (10)
11 Mineral springs help? Hear, hear! (4,4)
12 Apply soothing balm or aggravate one's trouble (3,2,2)
14 He hopes to find you well (6)
16 Return from the capital (5)
17 Bank of Scotland (4)

Solutions Crossword 5275 Across: 1Proofreader, 9Richard, 10Putup, 11Visa, 12Narrator, 14Nether, 16Emnesh, 18Slattern, 19Mien, 22Askew, 23Forbade, 24Address book Down: 2Races, 3Okay, 4Redraw, 5Apparent, 6Entitle, 7Driving seat, 8Apprehended, 13Bestower, 15Thanked, 17Crafts, 20Idaho, 21Grub

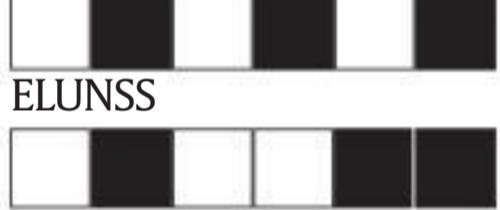
JUMBLE WORDS

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

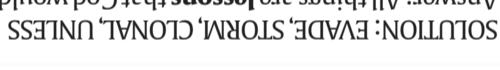
All things are ___ that God would have us ___ - Iyanla Vanzant (7,5)



ACOLLN



ELUNSS



SUDOKU 5459

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

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5458

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

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Indicative Notice
Railway Recruitment Cell/Northern Railway
Employment Notice No. RRC/NR 02/2024/CQ
RRC Website: www.rrcnr.org

Online Applications are invited from eligible Indian citizen for 02 vacancies in level 2 of Pay Matrix 7th Pay Commission against Cultural quota for the year 2023-24 in Northern Railway.

Important Dates	
Date of Publication of Detailed Notification on RRC Website	25.01.2024
Date & time of start of online Application	At 1200 Hrs. on 31.01.2024
Date & time of closing of Online Application	At 1200 Hrs. on 29.02.2024
Expected Date of Online Written Examination	09.03.2024

333/2024 Chairperson/RRC/LP/NR

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that one accused **Anuj Kumar Bishnoi**, Director/Manager/Authorised Signatory Ganga homes, At-School Block, Shakarpur, Near Laxmi Nagar Metro Station, Gate No.2, Delhi have Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **Case Reg. No. 13119/19 & 13118/19 u/s 138 NI Act** has been registered at **P.S. IP Estate, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Anuj Kumar Bishnoi** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Anuj Kumar Bishnoi** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Anuj Kumar Bishnoi** of **Case Reg. No. 13119/19 & 13118/19 u/s 138 NI Act** has been registered at **P.S. IP Estate, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 01.03.2024.

By Order

Sh Nitish Kumar Sharma
Metropolitan Magistrate-01,
NI Act, Room No.201, CBA-II,
DP/1127/CD/2024 (Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

SEE SECTION U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

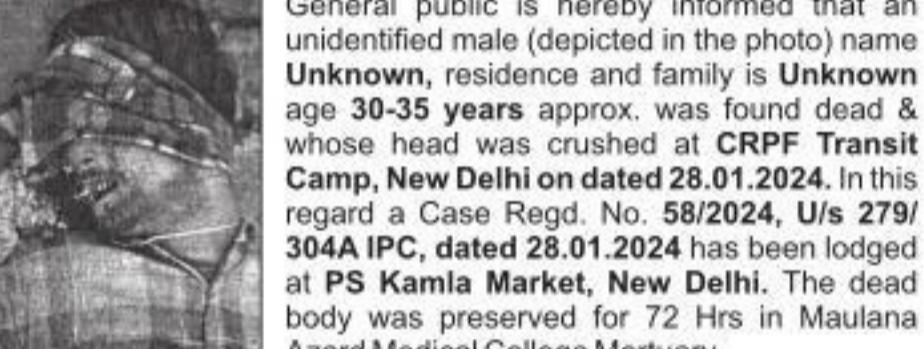
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Hemraj @ Ram**, S/o Ram Swaroop, R/o H.No.F-258, Sector-4, Industrial Area, Bawana, Delhi. has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **FIR No.48/10 U/s 457/380/411/34 IPC, P.S. Maurya Enclave, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused **Hemraj @ Ram** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Hemraj @ Ram** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Hemraj @ Ram** of **FIR No.48/10 U/s 457/380/411/34 IPC, P.S. Maurya Enclave, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 01.03.2024.

By Order

Ms. Vasundhra Chhaunkar
Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate
North West, Room No-101
Rohini, Courts, Delhi

DP/1134/NW/2024

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified male (depicted in the photo) name **Unknown**, residence and family is **Unknown** age 30-35 years approx. was found dead & whose head was crushed at **CRPF Transit Camp, New Delhi** on dated **28.01.2024**. In this regard a Case Regd. No. **58/2024, U/s 279/304A IPC**, dated **28.01.2024** has been lodged at **PS Kamla Market, New Delhi**. The dead body was preserved for 72 Hrs in Maulana Azad Medical College Mortuary.

His physical description is as under:-
Sex: Male, **Age:** 30-35 years approx., **Height:** 5' 6" ft., **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Hair:** Black hair with small beard, **Identification Mark:** He has a heart tattoo on his right hand with the "Sajan" written in it. **Wearing:** Check Shirt with brown colour Pant.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone numbers:-

SHO
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Tel. No.: 011-2230623, 23233743
Fax No.: 011-23014046, 23015218
DP/1243/CD/2024

PS: Kamla Market, Delhi
Ph: 011-22230623, 23233743
Mob.: 8750870424

DP/1220/WD/2024

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Neelam Sharma, W/o: Kapil Sharma, R/o: H.No. US 47 Railway Colony, Delhi**, has been missing/kidnapped since **29.11.2023** from 7.00pm, from Anand Vihar Bus Terminal the area of P.S. Patparganj Industrial Area, Delhi. The description of the missing person are as under:
Age: 60 years, **Built:** Fatty, **Sex:** Female, **Height:** 5'5", **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Fair, **Wearing:** Mehroon Colour Suit Salwar, Brown Sweater and Green colour Slippers in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax: 011-24368639
P.S. Patparganj Ind. Area, Delhi
DP/1162/ED/2024

SHO

Tel. No. 011-22146491, 8750870626
Fax No.: 011-23011334
DP/1220/WD/2024

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one male namely **Gulshan Gulati S/o: Ved Parkash Gulati R/o 14/134, Upper First Floor, Subhash Nagar, Delhi**, **Age:** 72 years, **Height:** 5'1", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Long, **Built:** Medium, wearing Grey colour Track Suit, Blue colour Cap and Black colour Lather Chappal, has been missing from his house since **27.01.2024** at 01:30 PM. In this regard a **DD No. 10A, dated 28.01.2024** has been lodged at **P.S. Rajouri Garden, New Delhi**.

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about him please inform undersigned.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in

Fax: 011-24368639
Ph. No.: 011-24368638, 24368641
P.S. Rajouri Garden, New Delhi
Ph: 011-25448855, 8750871127
DP/1220/WD/2024

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Many times you have earned the admiration of those who matter most by refusing ever to buckle under the strain. Now you can relish the fruits of your success. This looks like a smooth moment for love, although if you don't take a chance now, you may not have a second opportunity.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

If close companions are currently disagreeable, they will not remain so for long. You will win them over through the sheer power of your quite extraordinary charm. Put some distance between you and stressful situations, just enough to protect your sensitive soul.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Associates may not share all your aspirations, so do be prepared for negative responses and stony silences. Perhaps there is something missing in your presentation. A lack of fact, maybe? Still, however blunt you are, partners will be even more so.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You must stagger your workload if you are not to be snowed under. You would do well to delegate any tasks at home or at work to people who have the skill and experience to complete them on your behalf - if such people exist, that is.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Now that the planets have abandoned that area of your chart ruling domestic matters, concentrate on what is taking place on the home front. The point is that you are now in the driving seat. Yet you still have your doubts, so don't act until you're absolutely ready.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You may begin to feel that it is pointless going over any more old ground or churning yourself up emotionally for the sake of people who clearly do not value your remarkable gifts. Stick up for yourself for a change and don't let other people walk on your interests, even if they think they do have the right.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Although there are several reassuring aspects this week, you must still face up to certain onerous duties. Thus a buoyant mood will be kept in check by the realisation that your routine must be adhered to. For all creative and romantic Leos, new volcanic passions are about to stir.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You are probably right to refuse to be rushed, or forced to sign on the dotted line. You cannot make a firm commitment unless you are completely sure that other people hold your interests as dear as their own. You will soon find out that a rival is right, by the way, so be ready to back down if you have to.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Although there are several reassuring aspects this week, you must still face up to certain onerous duties. Thus a buoyant mood will be kept in check by the realisation that your routine must be adhered to. For all creative and romantic Leos, new volcanic passions are about to stir.

BRIEFLY

Shaw declared fit, to play Ranji Trophy for Mumbai

Mumbai: Opening batsman Prithvi Shaw has been cleared for fitness by the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru and will play Mumbai's next

Ranji Trophy game against Bengal in Kolkata from February 2. Shaw has been on the sidelines because of a knee injury and will be playing a competitive game after six months. Shaw had injured his knee in August while playing a one-day game for Northamptonshire. He was in fine touch after making 244 and 125 not out before injury struck. "He has been declared fit and can take part in the Ranji Trophy games. The BCCI has informed the MCA (Mumbai Cricket Association) about it," a BCCI official confirmed. Shaw has been batting in the practice nets at the NCA in Bengaluru. An MRI had revealed that Shaw had grade-II tear of posterior cruciate ligament. Shaw has played five Tests, six ODIs and one T20I.

DEVENDRA PANDEY

Jay Shah appointed ACC chairman

New Delhi: Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) secretary Jay Shah was on Wednesday appointed as the president of the Asian Cricket Council for a third consecutive term. Shah's extension was proposed by the Sri Lanka Cricket president Shammi Silva for the second time and the nomination was unanimously backed by all the members of the ACC at its annual general meeting. Shah assumed the role in January 2021, succeeding Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan. "I am grateful to the ACC Board for their continued trust. We must remain committed to ensuring the all-round development of the sport with a special focus on regions where it is still in its infancy," Shah said. PTI

PKL: Patna Pirates tie with Bengaluru Bulls

Patna: Patna Pirates shared points with the Bengaluru Bulls in a thrilling 28-28 tie during their Pro Kabaddi League meeting here on Wednesday. Sandeep Kumar (14 raid points) and Ankit (8 tackle points) were the star performers for the hosts. The Pirates had two reviews go their way and appeared to be walking away with a victory before Bharat came off the bench for the Bulls and landed a running hand touch on Krishan Dhull in the penultimate raid to tie the scores. Pirates became only the second side to remain unbeaten in their home leg this season, along with the Jaipur Pink Panthers. PTI

Sheoran bags ISSF World Cup bronze

Cairo: Paris Olympic quota winner Akhil Sheoran won his second career individual ISSF World Cup stage medal, clinching the men's 50m rifle 3 positions bronze here on Wednesday. Akhil shot 451.8 in the eight-man 45-shot final, after qualifying in second place with a score of 589. The seasoned Jiri Privratsky of the Czech Republic won gold with 462.9, while France's Romain Auffre bagged silver after finishing with 460.5. The effort meant that India concluded their engagements at the season opening World Cup stage with medals of every colour. PTI

Bengaluru FC sign Poojary

Bengaluru: Bengaluru FC, on Wednesday, announced the signing of defender Nikhil Poojary on a deal that keeps the India international with the Blues till the end of the 2027-28 season. PTI

India bring out the sweep, reverse sweep

Rajat Patidar and Sarfaraz Khan played the traditional version but others tried the reverse sweep too

VENKATA KRISHNAB
VISAKHAPATNAM, JANUARY 31

ATTEN minutes to 3 pm, Rajat Patidar finally walked out of the temporary canopies that were placed near the practice arena, which sits about 100 metres from the main playing arena at the Visakhapatnam stadium. With Rohit Sharma, Yashavji Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Kuldeep Yadav batting ahead of him, Patidar had sat alone for an hour-and-a-half with his thigh pads on, paying close attention to India's top three.

Even Washington Sundar, who was only drafted into the squad after Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul were out injured, would come in and straightaway have a go at the nets. It remains to be seen if Sundar gets the nod ahead of Patidar. As the clock kept ticking, Patidar would start tapping a ball, presumably enjoying the sound. A little later, Sarfaraz Khan and Saurabh Kumar – two other players who joined for the second Test here in Visakhapatnam, would join him after inquiring whether his turn was over. With the weather a tad hot, Jasprit Bumrah, Axar Patel, Washington and Jaiswal would seek shelter for a few minutes when the captain Rohit walked up. After gently chiding Jaiswal for relaxing and asking Sarfaraz and Saurabh to join the rest, Rohit had a short discussion with Patidar before the latter headed for his first outing of the day.

Awaiting him were R Ashwin and Axar and Patidar would dish out five sweeps of the first six deliveries he faced. A few deliveries later, the paddle-sweep came out, before a couple more sweeps materialised - front and behind square. This would continue for a while before he switched to an adjacent net, where he faced Ashwin exclusively, sweeping him almost every ball he faced. Only the odd ball was played with a vertical bat.

Much later, alongside Mohammad Siraj, Sarfaraz entered the batting nets to face Kuldeep and Washington.

He has been primarily in the squad for his sweep-shot prowess and because he is strong square of the wicket. Unlike Patidar, he didn't deploy the sweep as much, instead allowing the ball to come in and working around to the leg-side. Intermittently, he would employ the sweep shots, and his version was the most powerful among all Indian batsmen who had a hit on Wednesday.

The reverse-and-conventional sweeps, two shots which were missing in India's arsenal as England spinners targeted them with a stump-to-stump line, came out in full at the practice session. Only Patidar and Sarfaraz didn't dabble with the reverse; the rest did.

The disappearance or rather the reluctance of the current set of Indian batsmen to play the sweep has been a big mystery. Most of the current crop prefer to largely play from the crease. A couple like Jaiswal and Rohit like to advance. But the reluctance to use the sweep shot on low surfaces makes them live dangerously. Ollie Pope showed them the value of the reverse sweep in Hyderabad.

And with a similar pitch expected in this coastal city for the second Test, India showed refreshing signs of practising the sweep. There were signs of it coming, especially when India's batting coach Vikram Rathour spoke before the training session that while the reverse-sweep wasn't something their batsmen could master overnight, the conventional sweep remained a definite option.

"You need to be prepared for that by practising it. If you add more shots to your game, it's always beneficial. We played traditionally. We can keep doing that, and if we can add more shots and score through the square of the wicket, that's always an addition," Rathour said.



Shreyas Iyer practises at the nets in Visakhapatnam ahead of the second Test starting on Friday.

BCCI/Twitter

Dravid keeps a close eye on Gill

For a batsman who is struggling for runs in red-ball cricket and his spot no longer safe when Virat Kohli comes back for the third Test, Gill had an extensive session. Among the first batch of batsmen to take guard at the nets, Gill started off by facing the throwdown specialists, who troubled him at times. Later, he played a few attractive shots to the spinners though there was this one moment that led Dravid to move close to him for a better look. It came when Axar deceived him in the flight and hit the top of off stump with Gill still on the move. Dravid headed across, positioned himself right behind Gill, with the proceedings being captured on a camera. With Dravid suggesting him to go forward, Gill would then take long strides to defend and after a 45-minute session, he would take his helmet and head towards some shade, but only to change his gloves and go back to facing Ashwin.

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VENKATA KRISHNAB

Is Kuldeep capable of taming the Bazballers in Visakhapatnam?

SANDIP G
JANUARY 31

IT WAS not Kuldeep Yadav's turn to bowl. But he jumped the line; the shy and starstruck net-bowler whose turn it was did not raise an objection. The ball before, loopy and landing on good-length, his teammate and the hottest young batting talent in the country Rinku Singh had thunder-bolted Kuldeep over his head, the ball whistling into the distance like an arrow. Kuldeep wanted to serve revenge hot, even if it was only a routine net session on the eve of Uttar Pradesh's Ranji Trophy encounter with Kerala in Alappuzha a fortnight ago.

The haste did not ruffle him. With short, busy strides, he took off, watched keenly by head coach Sunil Joshi and a handful of students who had bunked the class to watch Kuldeep. Rinku hunkered down and uncoiled his body for the reverse sweep, but before he could bring his bat down fully across from leg side towards the off side, the ball crashed onto his forearm. Rinku smiled sheepishly, the crowd gasped in shock. It was not just a staple quicker one, but one that was seemingly 25kph faster than his regular pace.

There was a time when the left-arm wrist spinner was considered too slow; here is a time when he could bowl with the pace he whisms. The next ball was considerably slower—more classical in rendition—drifted away from Rinku and spun back a trifle, which Rinku, shedding adventure, defended stoutly on the back-foot. Joshi would advise him to bowl a yard fuller. He would demonstrate it to him too with a deliciously flighted ball. The latter is attentive to details, and Kuldeep in receiving the wisdom of a craftsman of the spin-art. Kuldeep would correct his length, Joshi is content.

"For a spinner, it's the length that matters more than the line. You can play around with the lines, but cannot compromise with the lengths. All great spinners have had absolute mastery over their lengths. It has been the most important aspect of his bowling we have been working on, and the reason he has been successful of late," Joshi says.



Kuldeep Yadav. Reuters

From plunging the depths of despair during the lockdown, he resurfaced as one half of India's potent spin pair (with Jadeja) in the World Cup. Now, with Jadeja injured for the 2nd Test, he could return to the longer format after 14 months. His Test career has been a tale of scattered appearances—eight outings in seven years, despite an impressive tally of 34 wickets at an average of 21, striking once every 37th ball, a four or more wickets in third innings. Even in his last Test—against Bangladesh in Chittagong—he snared eight wickets. But in the era of India's most prolific spin pair—Jadeja and R Ashwin—the dilemma of selectors is understandable.

For a long time, he was their understudy. Then during his downtime came along Axar Patel, whose superior batting numbers thrust him back to the domestic grind. "But he has made good use of it, picked up the pieces and fought back to the team. He has developed more control, got fitter and is confident of getting wickets. For a spinner that is important, confidence. I see no reason why he can't be successful in Tests. He has the confidence, the hunger and the variations," points out Joshi.

Whereas he seemed restrained about unleashing his full repertoire of trickery in the World Cup, at the nets and later in the match, he was the twinkle-eyed trickster that swallowed Steve Smith and Co in Dharamsala to hand India a series-winning victory. On a surface that was not the spinner's best friend, he

spun the ball both ways to the right-hander. The stock ball was the one that snakes back to the right-hander, but it is the one that breaks away that enhances his potency.

"It is a really difficult ball for the right-hander to negotiate if it's turning. It's difficult to read him off his hands, and if you depend on reading him off the pitch, the ball can really surprise you," explains Joshi, who has been involved in his comeback journey, first at the NCA and then with the Uttar Pradesh team.

By being a left-arm wrist-spinner alone Kuldeep offers a different proposition. The angles and trajectories he treads are different; as are his release points and lengths. Rare as his tribe is, most batsmen are unaccustomed to his ways. That's not all. The variations are eye-watering—there is the stock ball that comes in to the right-handed batsmen, the wrong one, the flipper, and the quicker that beat Rinku to the reverse-sweep. He could be the antidote to reverse-sweep-happy England batsmen. Now that he has conquered the art of modulating pace without any changes in variations, he could reclaim his stakes with the red ball.

But the biggest gift, Joshi emphasises, is his ability to turn the ball. "It's what spinners are supposed to do, aren't they? But not all can turn the ball on any surface. Kuldeep can, whether it is a turner or not, and that makes him really special," says Joshi.

Besides, the Bazballers have not yet been tested by a quality wrist-spinner in their march. It's worth noting that Abrar Ahmed did grab 17 wickets at an average of 27 in Pakistan two years ago. Pakistan's second highest wicket-taker too was a leg-spinner, Zahid Mahmood, who though leaked nearly seven runs an over. Wrist-spin is an old weakness of England, one that Ben Stokes' gung-ho group has not countered much in their march.

He is no stranger to them, though chiefly with the white ball in hand. He had harassed them so much in the white-ball series in 2018 that Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow sought the help of a specially-designed bowling machine Merlyn to help them out. The next game, he nailed them both and he would quip: "The machine doesn't have hands or fingers."

PLATE GROUP RUN FEST

Film director's son scripts dream run, scores 5 tons in 4 Ranji Trophy games

against Meghalaya

The 25-year-old has piled up 767 runs in four matches, with an astonishing average of 95.87. Agni's first love was cricket and not movies. "When I was seven or eight, I started playing cricket. I was not passionate about films. Nepotism does exist in the film industry. I am not talking about just actors but also as a producer. My father could have got me an entry pass, but my heart was never in it," Agni told *The Indian Express*.

Agni taking up cricket surprised his father, who loves the game and has produced "Ferrari Ki Sawaari," a movie on cricket.

"My dad used to say ye kiska beta hai, mera beta toh nahi ho sakta (Whose son is he, it is certainly not mine)."

But the director-producer father keenly follows his son's cricket career and even asks him about shot selection.

"He does ask 'why did you play that shot, how can you get out like this? The thing about cricket is that everyone is a



Agni Dev Chopra has scored 767 runs in four matches. Special arrangement

coach. Everybody knows cricket more than the cricketer does," Agni said.

The bowling attack in Plate Group isn't of the same quality as the Elite Groups but Agni, 25, was an accomplished junior bats-

man. He has led the Mumbai Under-19 team and was Mumbai's leading run-getter in 2019-20 CK Nayudu Trophy with 760 runs, including a double hundred.

In the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, he scored a 45-ball 76 against a Jammu and Kashmir attack that comprised Umran Malik, Yudvir Singh, Rasikh Salam and Abid Mushtaq. All of them with an IPL contract.

"I remember my 201. It was against Bengal in Under-23s at Dadoji Kondadev Stadium. It was a turner. I would have been dropped if I hadn't scored in that game. In the first three games, I had only scored a fifty. It was make or break for me," he recalled.

However, he couldn't break into the Ranji Trophy team.

"In July, Mizoram had trials at the National Cricket Academy. I went for the trial and I was lucky enough to be picked. It was tough to leave my city but this was the best opportunity to play in the List A and first-class cricket," Agni said.

Agni also had injury setbacks, a freak one two years ago saw him miss nearly three months of cricket.

A week before the Under-25 tournament, I was fielding at slips in a club match and a ball landed in front of me and I tried to catch it but it was a little too far. The ball hit me on the ring finger of my right hand. My nail had broken from the middle. I was out for two-and-a-half months," Agni said.

Two of his close friends, also cricketers, Arjun Tendulkar and Test capped Shubman Gill helped him cope during the difficult period. "Arjun and I have grown up together. We have played pretty much every

age group together. Both of them have had injury setbacks too. When I couldn't move my finger at all I was wondering how I was going to hold my bat or catch or bowl. They made me understand that it is something (injuries) that you can't control and it is just part of the game," Agni said.

In 2019, Agni made the big decision to move out of his parents' home. He moved in with Khushpreet Singh Aulakh, Gill's trainer. Khushpreet felt that it would do Agni a world of good if he moved out of his comfort zone. Agni said shifting homes helped him grow as a person. "I moved out because everything was too easy, and comfortable, everything was on a platter. I was becoming too laidback."

Agni is pragmatic and does not want to get carried away because of his run-scoring spree for Mizoram. "Yes, I have scored five centuries but it doesn't matter if we won't be able to qualify for the Elite, that's the aim."

Pairs eyeing Paris

Ashwini-Tanisha are ahead of Treesa-Gayatri in the qualification race, as they face off in Bangkok

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AFTER NOT having a single representative at the Tokyo Olympics, women's doubles badminton in India is entering an exciting final phase of Paris qualification. Two pairs are in the fray, battling it out against each other in a topsy-turvy race. Ashwini Ponappa and Tanisha Crasto, who only started playing together a year back, recently overtook Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly in the Race to Paris list.

On Thursday in Bangkok, there will be a round-of-16 clash between the two Indian pairs at the Thailand Masters Super 300 that promises to be an intriguing chapter in this race.

Ashwini and Tanisha currently hold the edge, occupying the 11th qualification spot among 16 pairs that will qualify for Paris. Treesa and Gayatri are trying to mount a comeback after a less-than-ideal finish to 2023 where the latter was managing an injury and results simply didn't fall their way. Whoever wins this second official meeting, is bound to get a shot in the arm. But all of them insist they will be happy for whoever qualifies ultimately.

"They are also playing well at the moment, and if any of us go to Paris, it will be a proud moment for India," Treesa, 20, said during the India Open. "We didn't have any women's doubles representation from India at the Tokyo Olympics. They are also working really hard, anyone goes it is fine, we will be happy for them. From our side, we need to play good matches and pull off good results in the next few tournaments, that's the aim. Every match, whether we win or lose, we are taking the learnings from it, there is a lot of improvement and experience we need to get."

"Likewise (we'd be happy if either gets to Paris)," said the veteran Ashwini, 34. "They are a strong pair, we definitely learn a lot from their matches. At the end of the day, it'd likely be them or us and it'd be great to see an Indian pair qualify for the Olympics. We are all fighting."

On the court and off it, the two pairs are quite contrasting. Treesa and Gayatri have been playing together on the tour since 2021, and are largely conventional in the sense that there is a steadiness about them. Treesa is the aggressor, the backcourt en-



Tanisha Crasto (L), 20, partners the experienced 34-year-old former Worlds bronze medallist Ashwini Ponappa. BAI

forcer, while Gayatri is the touch specialist from the front court. They are the same age, there is a bit of ice-and-fire in their approach to the game with Treesa being the fiery element and Gayatri, 20, maintaining a largely unruffled persona.

On the other hand, Ashwini and Tanisha, 20, bring more collective energy. Their movement on the court can often be chaotic, but both of them are good enough to take up any position, and it makes them potent. They have played together just for a year and have battled it out at the lower-level tournaments on the World Tour to build up their understanding and rhythm.

Purely on technique and aesthetics, the pair of 20-year-olds should be favourites, but what Ashwini and Tanisha have going for them is momentum, fitness, and a whole lot of experience that the 34-year-old brings to the table. In fact, Ashwini and Tanisha are a rare duo on the tour in that there is a 14-year age differential between them. Most of the top pairs in the world at

the moment are barely separated in that respect.

"That's what makes us a unique pair," Tanisha said. "I really don't think there like there is a huge difference on the court, didi is still one of the hardest hitters in the world and she is at least bringing me to that level. In fact, I feel she is more agile than me at times, she is all over the court."

For Ashwini, a reset this late in her career has brought about a new perspective and she is feeding off the youngster's unbridled enthusiasm. It makes her feel younger. "Partnering with someone who is just 20 and starting off, is very exciting," Ashwini, who won the World Championships bronze with Jwala Gutta in 2011, said.

I see things from a different perspective, I have been playing for a long time, and then when I see how she approaches events, she is excited. Like Malaysia Open was her first Super 1000 and her first tournament in Malaysia. I have played there for

so many years, and when I see her come for the first time, it is very exciting. For me, it's great that I get to share that experience with her as well as learn a lot from the energy she brings to the court. It keeps me going and gives me that buzz."

It is also not lost on Ashwini that for the first time in a while, India have two pairs in women's doubles pushing each other. "There has been a decade's gap where we didn't have a strong second pair. And now we have two good pairs from India, which is a big change. Ideally we need more, but it's nice to see the next rung of doubles players are already here," she said.

Mutual admiration aside, the match in Bangkok will indicate whether Treesa-Gayatri have the fight in them to return to the form they showed in early 2022 and 2023 with back-to-back All England semi-finals that made the world sit up and take notice.

Because on the other side of the court, Ashwini-Tanisha will bring the heat.

'Experience has been great... but we are in Pakistan for a purpose'

NAMIT KUMAR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 31

AN INDIAN tennis team has travelled to Pakistan for the Davis Cup for the first time in 60 years, for the upcoming World Group 1 playoff tie to be played on the grass courts of Islamabad between February 3-4. But given the tight security cover that has been granted to them, they are yet to experience the atmosphere of the city or judge the reception they will receive from the people.

"The experience has been great so far but we have been under very strict security conditions," Zeeshan Ali, India coach and captain for the tie, told The Indian Express over the phone from Islamabad. "We went from the airport to the hotel, and then to the practice venues and back to the hotel. We have not been moving around the city and have not gotten a chance to interact with anyone. What we have seen so far has been fabulous, the hotel is catering to our needs and the food is great. Can't expect more, really."

Sporting ties have been frosty between the two countries due to geopolitical tensions - when India were scheduled to play a Davis Cup tie in Pakistan in 2019, the tie was moved to the neutral venue of Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan; India's request for the same was denied this year. It remains rare for an Indian sports team or group of athletes to tour the country.

However, given the circumstances, the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) have ensured a security cover usually reserved for heads of state for the Indian contingent, limiting their movement around the city. A dinner held at the Indian Consulate on Wednesday will be the team's first outing away from the hotel and practice venue.

Ali says that the group is aware of the novelty of being able to play in Pakistan, and that the sporting rivalry between the two countries has resonance back home. But the team needs no extra motivation than the simple fact that they are playing in the Davis Cup for the country.

"We were aware of the security meas-

ures beforehand, so we came prepared. This has no impact on the players mentally. I know that, in some ways, this is a historic tie since we are coming here for the Davis Cup for the first time in 60 years.

"All of us are aware of that history and what that means. A match like this does not really happen very often."

"But at the same time, we are not here to sightsee, we are here with a purpose. The focus remains on winning the tie for India this weekend and if we can experience a good (atmosphere), that's a plus."

"India and Pakistan may not be playing much, but individually, the players are in contact with each other on the tour, and some of the Pakistani players have played in India as well. So, again, this is not a new experience for them," Ali added.

Among the familiar faces in the Pakistan camp are veterans Aqeel Khan and Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi. Qureshi, the 43-year-old doubles specialist who could feature in singles too, has a bigger connection with India, once reaching the men's doubles final of the 2010 US Open alongside Rohan Bopanna.

While speaking during an Idea Exchange with The Indian Express back in 2021, Qureshi lamented the breakdown of sporting ties between the two countries.

"It is disappointing that for political reasons, these things are not happening and sports are getting affected."

"Sports and arts, that's the beauty about it that we don't rate people because of the culture or religion or which country they belong from. And it should be left like that," he had said. "For me, it's disappointing that Indians can't come to Pakistan to play, or Pakistanis can't go to India to play either."

With their top-ranked singles players - Sumit Nagal and Saisikumar Mukund - opting out of the tie, and Bopanna retiring from Davis Cup duty after India's win over Morocco in Lucknow last year, India will field a second-string team, led by World No. 461 Ramkumar Ramanathan and doubles specialists N Sriram Balaji, Yuki Bhambri, and Saketh Myneni. Niki Poonacha is also in the squad.

Agarwal shares positive update after mid-flight health scare

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JANUARY 31

CRICKETER MAYANK Agarwal has given a medical update about himself, a day after he needed to be rushed to a hospital in Agartala.



The Karnataka Ranji Trophy team captain fell sick on board a New Delhi-bound flight on Tuesday, while on his way to Surat for Karnataka's next fixture.

It was learnt that Agarwal had apparently consumed a liquid a pouch in front of him thinking it to be water.

That led to him having swelling and ulcers in his mouth.

Agarwal, who has played 21 Tests for India, had led Karnataka to a 29-run victory over Tripura Tripura at the Maharaj Bir Bikram Stadium in Agartala, which started on January 26 and ended on Jan 29.

In his absence, vice-captain Nikin Jose is likely to take over the Karnataka team's captaincy in the next match.

The team is slated to take on Railways in Surat in a Ranji Trophy game starting from February 2.

Sharing two photographs of himself flying on a hospital bed, Agarwal posted the caption: "I am feeling better now. Gearing to comeback. Thank you for prayers, love and support, everyone!"

While it is not yet ascertained what was in the pouch, Agarwal has lodged a formal complaint with the police, who are now investigating the matter.

"(Mayank) while sitting on a flight saw a pouch in front of him and thinking of it as water, drank it. He had swelling and ulcers in his mouth.

"His condition is normal, and his vitals are stable. His manager has made a complaint. We are registering the complaint and will investigate the matter," Kiran Kumar K, Superintendent of Police of West Tripura, told PTI.

IndiGo Airlines issued a press release to address the incident.

"IndiGo flight 6E 5177 operating from Agartala to Delhi returned to origin due to a medical emergency onboard."

"The passenger was off-loaded and was rushed to the hospital for further medical assistance. The aircraft took off again for its destination at 1620h," it read.

Forest-dweller from Siddi tribe hopes to emulate Sushil

SHIVANI NAIK
PUNE, JANUARY 31

BEFORE SHE joined a sports hostel for wrestling, Leena Antho Siddi, one amongst 11 children but her father's favourite, would be thrilled when she heard someone in the neighbourhood or extended family was getting married. She loved wedding invites because it was a legitimate reason to leave their dwelling in the forests of Haliyal taluk of Karnataka's Uttara Kannada district, and eat to their heart's content at the feasts.

"My father would take us along so we could have a proper meal, after days. His struggle in my regard ended when I joined a sports hostel where I was fed well. When I watched Sushil Kumar win the Beijing Olympics bronze, he had decided that his next-born would join wrestling, compete at the Olympics, and never go hungry. Now I win village dangals and earn enough to feed my family," says the happy 68kg freestyle wrestler, who missed out on bronze at the suspended WFI's senior Nationals in Pune, but remains undaunted in pursuing her career.

The family subsisted on tilling tiny patches of land, and struggled because their forest dwellings were not considered their own. "Whatever we grow on the farm as labour, we have to share with people whose land it is. We don't own any land. It's why marriage feasts were looked forward to because income wasn't steady," she recalls.

"Earlier people from the Siddi community didn't leave the jungles, because we felt unwelcome. But after joining sports, I travel everywhere comfortably. I don't feel like the odd one out because even I'm a wrestler," says the 22-year-old Leena, possibly the first female from the community to take up wrestling.

"Watching me, other girls from Siddi houses have started getting into wrestling too."

India's efforts at engaging with the Siddi community - with lineage from north Africa and spread over Kerala, Karnataka, Konkan, Goa and Gujarat - and draw them into sport are age-old. The experiment to tap into their presumed athletic genes is not new either, but sports administrators either never persisted, or simply moved on without giving a thought to how they could make sport enjoyable for the Siddis rather than just mining their abilities for medals. Many Siddi pehelwans from Karnataka trained in Kolhapur in the 1970s and 80s, though it didn't make life easy for Leena, a rare girl smitten by the sport.

Her father loves kabaddi and kushti, but wasn't always welcomed by local clubs. "He loves these two sports. And when Sushil came back to win a medal through repechage in 2008, he was very inspired. It became a story of courage and comeback that he told us children, starting from 2008 to the 2012 silver, adding a lot of details like in a fairytale. He decided that even his daughter would compete at the Olympics like Sushil," she recalls. So Leena was



on her way to train in mud pits while only in Class 5.

At first, she hated it. And kept asking herself why she had to be there, fighting dangals in front of 100s of people staring at her, making her conscious of her thick cropped curls.

"We were very reluctant to leave our forests and come out. You have to understand we look different. Hum alag hain. People stare. They say, 'yeh baal kaise hai' (look at their hair). It's not nice when people look at you oddly. That's why we never came out," she explains.

Fluent in Hindi, English, Konkani, Marathi and Kannada, Leena says, wrestling had her heart at first sight, but competing drove her to tears. Her neighbourhood kids joined kabaddi teams, but going out there alone with everyone watching was a matter of dread for her.

"I'd think main kyu aayi idhar (Why did I come here)? People would taunt me saying 'tere baal dekh,' so I felt bad. My father and coach would explain that no matter what anyone says, you continue fighting and winning. Just don't listen. They would tell me stories of how Sushil pehelwan didn't bother about anyone saying anything, and I'd watch his videos on loop. I love how he stealthily attacks. His technique was amazing," Leena explains.

As she persisted, she started winning village dangals, and earning money to sustain her family. "With sport, I'll be able to get a job and make a living. All the awkwardness is in the past. Now I tell myself, people respect me and are glued to watching what I do in a fight, not because I look different." Leena's love for wrestling went beyond making money at dangals. "I wanted to improve on my weaknesses. I have strength like Sushil pehelwan, but my technique has to get better," she says. Her foot speed isn't bad either, but there's a naivete in her technique that will need smartening.

The Karnataka wrestler would lose to eventual 68kg champion Diksha Malik of Delhi, and run out of ideas in the bronze medal match against Vedantika of Maharashtra.

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