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At 5.1% in Jan,
retail inflation
at 3-month low;
factory output
at 3.8% in Dec

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

RETAIL INFLATION slipped to a three-month low of 5.1 per cent in January primarily due to lower food prices after having risen to a four-month high in December, data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday showed. Separately released data by the NSO showed that the factory output, as measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), rose to 3.8 per cent in December from 2.4 per cent in November, but was lower than 5.1 per cent in the year-ago period.

The retail inflation rate, based on Consumer Price Index (Combined), slowed in January after having risen for the previous two months. While it marked the 52nd month of retail inflation staying above the 4 per cent mark in the 4+/-2 per cent band of medium-term inflation target set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the core inflation – non-food, non-fuel segment – fell to a 50-month low of 3.6 per cent in January.

Economists said the continued fall in core inflation indicated that RBI's monetary policy tightening is having an impact but elevated food inflation continues to be a worry. "This (core inflation) is a 50-month low and suggests that RBI's monetary

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IN CUSTODY SINCE AUG 2022; HANDED DEATH PENALTY, LATER COMMUTED

Qatar frees eight former Indian Navy men, PM will go to Doha tomorrow

7 have returned,
appreciate Emir's
decision to enable
release: Govt

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

MORE THAN three months after they were sentenced to death, eight former Indian Navy personnel have been released from custody in Qatar and seven have returned to India.

This was announced by the Ministry of External Affairs in the early hours of Monday. Hours later, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said Prime



Some of the former Indian Navy personnel after their arrival in New Delhi early Monday. PTI

Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Qatar on February 14 and meet Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, after com-

pleting his visit to the UAE that starts Tuesday.

Relieved families hailed the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Families got news once men had boarded flight home, say 'grateful to PM'

RITIKA CHOPRA & SHAJU PHILIP
NEW DELHI, KOCHI, FEB 12

FAMILY MEMBERS of the eight former Indian Navy personnel, in Qatar custody since August 2022, were informed of their release by the Indian government late Sunday after they had boarded flights to return home.

Of the eight, only Commander Purnendu Tiwari, whose

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED E. The road via Doha

WHILE THE release of the eight men and the PM's decision to travel to Doha underline the behind-the-scenes effort, it also charts the course for a new chapter in India-Qatar relations, more so because Doha is a key player in the Middle East.



Barricades being put up at Delhi's Ghazipur border on Monday. Praveen Khanna

FARM PROTEST 2.0, EXPLAINED, P17

Talks inconclusive, Punjab farmers to set out for Delhi today

Consensus on some issues, others need permanent resolution: Minister Munda

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 12

TWO YEARS after they forced the Centre to repeal three farm laws before ending their year-long protest at Delhi's borders, Punjab farmer unions announced late Monday night that farmers would set out for the Capital at 10 am Tuesday to press their demands, including a legal guar-

tee of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

The decision to march to Delhi – 'Dilli Chalo' – was taken after marathon talks in Chandigarh remained inconclusive, the farmer unions said.

Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) convenor Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ashok Chavan latest to quit Cong, says no call yet on joining BJP

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 12



Chavan after resigning from the Congress, in Mumbai on Monday. Sankhaeep Banerjee

RLD confirms:
Will join NDA,
faced injustice
in INDIA bloc,
pride at stake

LALMANI VERMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

ENDING SPECULATION, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief and Rajya Sabha MP Jayant Chaudhary on Monday confirmed that his party would join the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking to reporters at the party office here, after paying tribute to his father and party founder Ajit Singh on his birth anniversary, Chaudhary said: "I have spoken to all my party MLAs and workers, and have taken this decision after speaking to them. There has been no big planning behind the decision, it is not like

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

GOVT & POLITICS

GOVERNOR DELIVERS 'SHORTEST' ADDRESS IN TAMIL NADU PAGE 9 SENTHIL BALAJI RESIGNS AS TN MINISTER PAGE 9

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

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needed help with a software.

The challenges she faced sowed the seeds of the Indian Network for Dynamical and Unified Solar (INDUS) Physicists in her mind. Starting with a humble WhatsApp group, team INDUS launched a website on August 15 last year. Their online presence has only grown since then.

The voluntary initiative is led by Indian researchers pursuing PhD, postdoctoral studies and young scientists working in the field of solar and heliospheric

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Easy win for Nitish as 3 RJD MLAs, 'missing' JD(U) MLAs surface on his side

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, FEBRUARY 12

THREE RJD MLAs crossed over to the NDA while five absent JD(U) MLAs turned up with just a few minutes to go for voting, helping Chief Minister Nitish Kumar win the trust vote easily on Monday with 129 votes in his favour. There was no vote against, as the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Meanwhile, the non-farmer who knows whom to cultivate in this weather

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar outside the Assembly in Patna on Monday. ANI

AVANEESH MISHRA
HALDWANI, FEBRUARY 12

Clear message from our govt: CM Dhami

in which five people were killed and several injured.

The main accused in the case, Abdul Malik, was served a notice

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

It's sunny side up when a community of solar physicists unites to help, bust myths

PAGE 1

ANCHOR

ANJALI MARAR
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 12

WHILE RELOCATING from Finland's University of Helsinki to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) for her second post-doctoral studies in January 2023, solar physicist Anshu Kumari, 32, felt the absence of a support group within the scientific community when she



Around 50 INDUS members met recently at the 42nd meet of the Astronomical Society of India in Bengaluru. INDUS

needed help with a software.

The challenges she faced sowed the seeds of the Indian Network for Dynamical and Unified Solar (INDUS) Physicists in her mind. Starting with a humble WhatsApp group, team INDUS launched a website on August 15 last year. Their online presence has only grown since then.

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*Fares shown are per person for travel on Singapore Airlines from Delhi to Perth and include all associated taxes and surcharges. Promotion is valid until 19 February 2024 for travel from 1 April to 30 September 2024. Actual fares may vary between cities in India and are subject to currency fluctuation. Limited seats are available at the advertised fare. Premium Economy Class is available on select flights only. Contact your travel agent or Singapore Airlines Contact Centre at 1800 121 212 to book. Other terms and conditions apply.

• Ashok Chavan latest to quit Cong

few more MLAs will join Chavan – four-five names are already doing the rounds.

"It is my personal decision to quit the party and I am not a person who will make my grievances public. I have been with the Congress since birth and, till yesterday, I worked for the Congress honestly. But now it is time to look for other options," said Chavan, who attended the Maharashtra Congress core committee meeting on Sunday afternoon.

Asked about his next move, amid speculation that he would be fielded by the BJP for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections, Chavan said he had not taken a decision yet and was not aware about the BJP's working style with regard to giving RS tickets. "I have not spoken to any MLA to join me. I am not going to criticise anyone," he said. Chavan's decision comes days after the BJP-led government tabled a 'white paper' in Parliament on the economy under the Congress-led UPA government, which also mentioned the Adarsh housing society case.

"Adarsh housing society scam: This case involved irregularities in allotment of apartments in a defence land project. It is at the trial stage," the white paper said. Chavan stepped down as CM in 2010 for his alleged involvement in the Adarsh case.

On Monday, Chavan said his decision to quit the Congress was not linked to the white paper. There has been speculation

about Chavan's exit from the Congress for a few years now. In July 2022, Chavan and 11 other MLAs did not turn up for the trust vote sought by the Eknath Shinde-led government. They later claimed that they got caught in traffic. In June 2022, when cross-voting cost the Congress Rajya Sabha and Legislative Council seats, fingers had been pointed at Chavan. Congress sources said Chavan wanted to become the state unit president and had expressed this to the party leadership. "However, the party leadership wanted to stick with an OBC face ahead of general elections," said a senior party leader.

"The Congress has given a lot to many leaders. Today, when the party is fighting to save democracy and the Constitution, it is unfortunate that leaders who have got everything are leaving the party. Who is going where, for what? The public is watching them," Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole said.

The BJP was cryptic about Chavan joining the party. "Many good leaders from the Congress are in touch with the BJP. The way the Congress is functioning, many of its leaders with mass base are feeling suffocated. Many of them are interested in joining the BJP. A few big leaders will definitely join the BJP in the coming days... Aage aage dekhiji, hota hai kya (wait and watch what happens)," Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis said.

• RLD confirms: Will join NDA

we had decided it much earlier." The RLD is a key player in western Uttar Pradesh politics.

"We had to take this decision in a short period of time, considering the situation... We are overwhelmed that the Bharat Ratna has been conferred (on Chaudhary Charan Singh)," said Chaudhary, who is the grandson of Charan Singh. On February 9, responding to PM Narendra Modi's announcement of the Bharat Ratna for Charan Singh, Chaudhary had posted on X: "Dil jeet liya". Asked then if he was joining hands with the BJP, he had said, "Dekhiye koi karas rehti hai? Aaj mai kis muh se inkaa karoon apkas is sawal ko?" (Is there anything left? With which face can I deny this question today?).

Confirming his party's decision to join the NDA, RLD national spokesperson Mohammad Islam told *The Indian Express* on Monday: "This is final. A formal announcement will be made in a couple of days because our MLAs too have to decide about their

votes in the RS elections in UP." He said that modalities like seat-sharing were being worked out.

Asked why the RLD was leaving the INDIA bloc, Islam said: "RLD was involved in the INDIA bloc honestly. But we changed our mind when injustice started and our pride was at stake." He said the SP wanted to field some of its candidates on the RLD symbol. While the SP had said it would give seven seats to the RLD in western UP for the Lok Sabha elections, it reportedly insisted that two of these seats would go to SP candidates to be fielded on the RLD symbol.

Though the BJP had won western UP without RLD's help in 2019, having the party on its side will strengthen its winning prospects in these Jat-dominated seats where its sitting MPs are facing anti-incumbency. "RLD support will also help us in Rajasthan and Haryana. But the biggest advantage will be the psychological blow it will deliver to the Congress and Opposition alliance before the LS elections," said a BJP leader.

• Retail inflation at 3-month low

policy perhaps is working by compressing the demand. But the headline is still higher than the targeted 4% due to higher food inflation and continues to be a worry area for RBI because it has the potential of impacting the core inflation via wage-price spiral," a note by India Ratings' Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha and Senior Analyst Paras Jasrai said.

Food inflation, as measured by the Consumer Food Price Index, eased to 8.3 per cent in January as against 9.53 per cent in December and 6 per cent in the year-ago period. Urban food inflation moderated to 9.02 per cent in January from double-digit 10.42 per cent food inflation in December, while rural areas registered 7.91 per cent food inflation in January as against 8.49 per cent in the previous month. Inflation rate for the food and beverages segment, which carries a weight of 45.86 per cent in the CPI, eased to 7.58 per cent in January from 8.70 per cent in December. Cereals and products inflation marked the sixth consecutive month of decline, dropping to 7.83 per cent in January after remaining in double digits for 15 consecutive months during September 2022 to November 2023. Vegetables inflation inched lower to 27.03 per cent in January from 27.64 per cent in December, while pulses inflation rate eased to 19.54 per cent from 20.73 per cent. Miscellaneous inflation, which broadly indicates price change for services, inched lower to 3.82 per cent in January from 4.07 per cent in December. Fuel and light segment, though in negative territory, showed an uptick at -0.6 per cent in January from -0.99 per cent in December.

For the future inflation trend, economists projected a cautious outlook for rabi harvest and thus, expect a shallow rate cut cycle by the RBI. "While rabi sowing has caught up with last year's level, reservoir storage remains well below the year-ago levels in most regions, continuing to impinge caution into the outlook for the rabi harvest... we project the CPI inflation to ease below 5% in February-March 2024, and average at 5.3% in FY2024. Thereafter, we estimate the CPI inflation at

4.6% in FY2025, broadly in line with that of the MPC, based on the assumption of a normal monsoon. The MPC's expectations around the growth outlook and its forecast that the CPI inflation will moderate while remaining above the 4% target, reinforces our view of a likely shallow rate cut cycle," a note by India Ratings' Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha and Senior Analyst Paras Jasrai said.

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For the future inflation trend, economists projected a cautious

FROM PAGE ONE

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Qatar frees eight former Indian Navy men

efforts of the government and the personal intervention of the Prime Minister – Modi met the Qatar Emir on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai on December 1 – in securing the release of these nationals."

Kwatra too said, "Prime Minister has himself personally, constantly, supervised all the developments in this case and has never shied away from an initiative that would ensure the return of Indian nationals home." He said the Indian government is "gratified" by the decision of the Qatar Emir and the authorities.

The Indian Express has learnt that National Security Advisor Ajit Doval also played a big role in the release of the eight men, even making a quiet visit to Doha "to meet the relevant stakeholders". A team of officials in the MEA and PMO in Delhi and the Indian embassy in Doha also worked behind-the-scenes closely under the supervision of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar who was leading the diplomatic strategy.

Early Monday, the MEA, in a brief statement, said, "The Government of India welcomes the release of eight Indian nationals working for the Daha Global company who were detained in Qatar. Seven out of the eight of

them have returned to India. We appreciate the decision by the Amir of the State of Qatar to enable the release and homecoming of these nationals."

The Indians had been working in their private capacity with Doha-based Daha Global to oversee the induction of Italian small stealth submarines U212.

They have been identified as Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vasisth, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh.

Seven of them have returned to India and Commander Tiwari, the eighth person, sources said, will be brought back after some formalities are completed.

The eight men were taken into custody in August 2022. The charges against them were never made public by Qatari authorities.

According to a report in the UK daily *Financial Times*, they were charged with spying for Israel.

They were handed the death sentence in October. India had called it "deeply shocking", and Jaishankar had met their family members and assured them that the government attached "the highest importance" to the case.

In addition to government efforts, the families of the eight had also submitted a mercy plea to the Qatar Emir.

On December 3, for the first time since the death sentences, the Indian ambassador in Doha had met the eight in prison. Before that, Indian officials had got consular access.

The consular access to the Indian envoy and the subsequent commutation of the death sentence followed the December 1 meeting between Prime Minister Modi and the Emir in Dubai. The two leaders had discussed bilateral partnership and the "well-being of the Indian community" living in Qatar – this was read as a euphemism for discussing the situation regarding the eight men on the death row.

On Monday, Kwatra said the Prime Minister will travel to Doha on February 14 afternoon.

During the visit, Kwatra said, "The Prime Minister will hold bilateral meetings with the Emir of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and other high dignitaries in Qatar".

Modi had last visited Qatar in June 2016 and this will be his second visit.

"The bilateral relationship between India and Qatar that has

been steadily growing includes a comprehensive span, including political ties, trade and investment linkages, our strong energy partnership and ties in the field of culture, education and security," he said. He also recalled that following the recently concluded India Energy Week, Qatar and India signed an agreement for the supply of 7.5 mnmta (million metric tonne per annum) LNG from Qatar to India for 20 years. He said bilateral trade between India and Qatar currently stands at roughly \$20 billion and Qatar is also a significant investor in India, across a whole range of economies.

"PM's visit to Qatar will provide an opportunity for the top leadership of the two countries to discuss ways to further deepen and strengthen our multifaceted partnership as well as exchange views on different regional and international issues of mutual importance," he said.

Before heading to Qatar, Modi will visit the UAE on Tuesday where he will hold meetings with President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and address the Indian diaspora. He will also speak at the World Government Summit and inaugurate a Hindu temple. He will return home on February 15.

• Families say 'grateful to PM'

death sentence was commuted but received the harshest punishment of a 25-year jail term, hasn't returned yet. The Indian Express has learned. All others landed in New Delhi in the early hours of Monday. Commander Tiwari too is expected to be back in India soon.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, a family member of one of the eight men, said, "Our veterans are back. We are immensely grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his personal intervention, and also to the Emir of Qatar for agreeing to their release. We were told about their release and journey back home once they had boarded their flights late last night."

"We don't know the details of how this was made possible, just that the Emir agreed to their release," said a family member of another among the eight men.

The family of Sailor Ragesh G Kumar told *The Indian Express* that while they were hopeful the men would be released "one day", the development caught them off guard. The death sentence of Kumar, the only sailor among the eight men, was commuted to three years, the most lenient of the commuted sentences.

His father-in-law K Rajasekaran Nair said, "But for the intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, their release would not have happened so fast. We hoped that one day, they all would come out, but the timing of the release was totally unexpected. We join the entire country in saluting the Prime Minister, who took up our concern with the highest authority in Qatar."

Nair said that when the verdict of the Qatar court came, awarding a three-year sentence to Ragesh, he had already completed a year-and-a-half in prison. "He could have sought bail, but the Embassy wanted to bring out all eight persons together," he said.

Recalling the early days of Ragesh's imprisonment, Nair said that everyone in the family was shattered after the Embassy in-

formed them of the arrest. But following the active involvement of the Ministry of External Affairs, they regained hope.

While in jail, Ragesh could speak with his wife twice a week, for half-an-hour each time. This, Nair said, kept them going. Besides, she flew to Doha five or six times to meet him. All arrangements were made by the Indian Embassy – from the visa to the ticket. On reaching Doha, the Embassy took family members to the jail where the eight were lodged. "We are really indebted to the country, the External Affairs Ministry and the Prime Minister," he said.

One of the seven men who landed in Delhi told news agency ANI: "Without the intervention of PM Modi, we would not have walked free. We wouldn't be standing before you today had it not been for his untiring efforts and interventions at the highest levels to get us freedom."

One of the veterans also praised the Indian government's intervention in securing their release, saying, "We, as well as our anxious family members back home, had been waiting for this day for a long time. It all worked out because of PM Modi and his personal intervention in the matter. He took up our case with the highest levels of the Qatari government and eventually secured our release. I don't have enough words to express my gratitude to him and the Emir of Qatar."

The Indian nationals, all employees of the Doha-based company Daha Global, were taken into custody in August 2022. While the charges against them were never made public by Qatari authorities, they were charged with spying for Israel, according to a report in the UK daily *Financial Times*.

They were identified as Captain Navtej Singh Gill, Captain Birendra Kumar Verma, Captain Saurabh Vasisth, Commander Amit Nagpal, Commander Purnendu Tiwari, Commander Sugunakar Pakala, Commander Sanjeev Gupta, and Sailor Ragesh.

Monday, the Haldwani Municipal Corporation asking him to deposit Rs 2.44 crore to cover damage caused to government property during the violence.

Speaking at an event in Haridwar, Dhami said, "In Banbhupura (the locality in Haldwani where the demolition took place), there was a garden that had been encroached upon. That encroachment has been removed, and several acres of land was recovered. On that land, arson and stone-pelting took place, disturbance was caused, all laws were broken, and our journalist brothers were thrown into fire... From this holy bank of Mother Ganga, I announce that a police station will be built at that place."

Posting a clip of his speech on his X account, the CM also said, "This is a clear message from our government to the miscreants and rioters that no one who plays with the peace of Devbhoomi will be spared, there is no place for such miscreants in Uttarakhand."

Violence had erupted last Thursday after the administration conducted a drive during which a mosque and a madrasa were demolished in the Banbhupura area of Haldwani. District authorities said both structures stood on Nazool land – government land not officially mentioned in revenue records. As stones were pelted, cars torched and the local police station surrounded by a mob, the CM had issued shoot on sight orders. On Sunday, police said 30 arrests were made in connection with the violence, but the key accused, Abdul Malik, was not among those arrested.

Police have said that Malik was behind the "illegal constructions" at the Nazool land and that he also led the protests against the demolition. On

Monday, the Haldwani Municipal Corporation asked him to deposit the said amount in favour of Municipal Corporation Haldwani by February 15". The amount included Rs 2.41 crore for damage to 15 vehicles and Rs 3.52 lakh for damage to equipment.

The district administration has also suspended the arms licences of 120 people in the Banbhupura area until further orders. It said that on the day of the violence, miscreants attacked police and administration officials with licensed as well as illegal weapons.

Residents of Banbhupura had violated the conditions of the arms licence by misusing their licensed weapons, and in the future, if we run a campaign to remove encroachment from public properties, they will misuse the licensed weapons. Given this possibility, the District Magistrate has suspended 127 arms licences of a total of 120 arms licence-holders till further orders. The DM has ordered the Senior Superintendent of Police to ensure the possession of the suspended weapons and weapon licences within 24 hours," a statement issued by the administration said.

Confidence to answer questions before they face the audience," Kumari told *The Indian Express*.

To give back to society, INDUS fosters collaborations between members on projects and science outreach activities at local schools and educational centres. "I had once gone to a local school near the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER in Kolkata) to give a talk about my research work. The students were so excited that they left their mid-day meals unfinished and rushed to listen to my talk. That interaction taught me a lot," recalled Chitradeep Saha, a fourth-year PhD student from the Centre of Excellence for Space Sciences India (CESSI) at IISER, Kolkata.

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• Talks inconclusive, Punjab farmers to set out for Delhi today

among those present at the meeting with Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal, Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda



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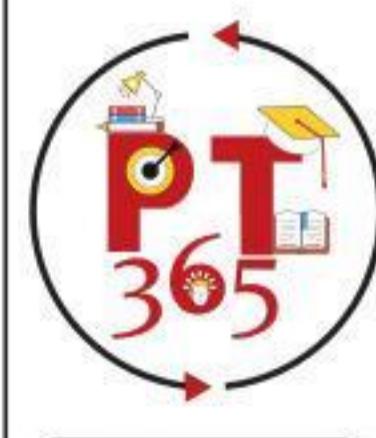
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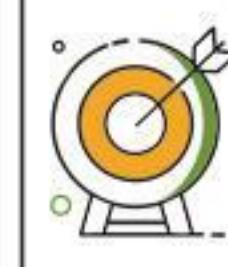
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UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand shifts its transport sector to next gear

From the Char Dham Highway Project and Rishikesh-Karnaprayag Rail Line to expansion of Pantnagar Airport and e-mobility initiatives, the state is working at full speed to improve connectivity



Uttarakhand, the picturesque state nestled in the Himalayan foothills, has embarked on a transformative journey in the realm of transportation. With a focus on improving connectivity, fostering economic growth, and ensuring environmental sustainability, the state government has launched several ambitious transport projects. These initiatives aim to enhance accessibility to remote areas, boost tourism, and create a robust infrastructure network that aligns with the region's topography and ecological considerations.

THE CHAR DHAM HIGHWAY PROJECT IS A MASSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE UNDERTAKING AIMED AT IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY TO PILGRIMAGE SITES

activity, the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag Rail Line project has been initiated. This ambitious endeavour seeks to link the spiritual town of Rishikesh with Karnaprayag, a significant confluence point of the Alaknanda and Pindar rivers. Once completed, this rail line will not only boost tourism but also serve as a crucial transport corridor, connecting remote areas with the broader rail network and facilitating the movement of goods and people.

AERIAL ROPEWAY PROJECTS:

To overcome the geographical challenges posed

by the mountainous terrain, the state government is investing in aerial ropeway projects. These projects aim to provide efficient and environmentally friendly transportation solutions, connecting remote villages and tourist destinations. A notable example is the proposed ropeway connecting Dehradun with Mussoorie, a popular hill station. Such initiatives not only reduce travel time but also minimize the environmental impact associated with traditional road construction in ecologically sensitive areas.

E-MOBILITY INITIATIVES:

In alignment with global trends toward sustainable transportation, Uttarakhand is actively



IN A BID TO OVERCOME GEOGRAPHICAL CHALLENGES POSED BY THE MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN, THE STATE IS INVESTING IN AERIAL ROPEWAY PROJECTS

of regional airlines. By improving air connectivity to remote areas like Pithoragarh and Chaukhutia, the state is ensuring that even the most secluded regions become accessible, fostering economic development and reducing travel time.

SMART TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS:

In an era of rapid technological advancements, Uttarakhand is incorporating smart transportation solutions to enhance efficiency and safety. Intelligent traffic management systems, real-time monitoring, and the integration of digital platforms for ticketing and information dissemination are being implemented. These innovations not only streamline transportation processes but also contribute to the overall mod-

ernization of the state's infrastructure. The Uttarakhand cabinet has approved the expansion of Pantnagar Airport's runway, signalling the state's aspiration to elevate the facility into an international airport. The existing 1,372-metre runway will be extended to 3,000 m to accommodate larger aircraft. The expansion necessitates the acquisition of 804 acres of land, with neighbouring lands belonging to various government departments.

Uttarakhand's commitment to enhancing transportation infrastructure reflects its vision for holistic development, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability. The ongoing and proposed projects signify a concerted effort to address the unique challenges posed by the state's topography while harnessing growth opportunities. As these initiatives come to fruition, Uttarakhand is poised to emerge as a model for sustainable and inclusive transportation, setting a precedent for other regions facing similar geographical constraints. Through these transformative transport projects, the state is not only connecting its people but also paving the way for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

Delhi-Dehradun e-way to reduce travel time to 2.5 hours

Stretching across a length of 210 km, the expressway has six to 12 lanes and features access-controlled infrastructure

The Delhi-Dehradun Expressway (NH 72A) is a currently ongoing express highway project managed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). Nitin Gadkari initiated the project by laying its foundation stone on February 26, 2021, and the Prime Minister reiterated this act on December 4, 2021. Stretching across a length of 210 km, the expressway is designed with six to 12 lanes and features access-controlled infrastructure. Its primary purpose is to establish a swift connection between Delhi and Dehradun. The estimated cost of construction is approximately Rs 13,000 crore, promising a reduction in both travel distance and time.

The expressway will traverse the states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, passing through the cities of Baghpat, Baraut, Shamli, and Saharanpur. To enhance connectivity with nearby cities, two spurs or link roads are planned. The first is the Saharanpur-Roorkee-Haridwar Expressway, spanning 50.7 km with six lanes. The second is the Ambala-Shamli Expressway, covering a length of 121 km with six lanes. The entire project is expected to be completed by December 2024. Commuters anticipate that the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway will significantly reduce the distance between the two cities to 210 km, allowing for a travel time of approximately 2.5-3 hours.

FEATURES OF THE PROJECT

Estimated Cost: Rs 13,000 crore
Project's Total Length: 210 km
Lanes: 12 lanes (Phase 1) and 6 lanes (Phases 2, 3 & 4)
Completion Deadline: December 2024
Owner: National Highway Authority of India (NHAI)
Project Model: EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction)
Distance to reduce to: 210 km from 235 km

Upon the completion of the highway project, the distance between New Delhi and Dehradun is set to be shortened from 235 km to 210 km, resulting in a reduced travel time of only 2.5-3 hours. A noteworthy aspect of this undertaking is the creation of a wildlife-friendly corridor, featuring a 12 km elevated road, six animal underpasses, two elephant underpasses, two large bridges, and thirteen smaller bridges. This initiative positions it as India's first highway with a wildlife protection corridor and Asia's longest wildlife elevated corridor, facilitating unrestricted movement for wildlife. The corridor will enforce a minimum speed of 100 km/h. To streamline toll payment, a closed toll mechanism will be implemented, ensuring toll fees correspond only to the extent of highway use.



The expressway incorporates 113 VUPs (vehicular underpasses), LVUPs (light vehicular underpasses), SVUPs (small vehicular underpasses), 5 ROBs (road over bridges), four major bridges and 62 bus shelters. In addition to the 76-km service road and 29-km elevated road, 16 entry-exit points are

currently under construction.

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Impact on People: This initiative aims to significantly reduce travel time between cities, thereby alleviating traffic congestion. It holds particular significance for senior cit-

izens, enabling them to easily visit Dehradun for religious purposes or to explore tourist destinations. Additionally, the project plans to enhance the traveller's experience by incorporating scenic views, including the establishment of a bird sanctuary and tree planting along the road. The improved connectivity

will reduce logistics costs and generate employment opportunities for the local population.

Environmental Implications: The expressway, constructed over the Rajaji National Park, is designed to be wildlife-friendly, marking a pioneering effort in India. This approach aims to minimize the risk of collisions between vehicles and animals, contributing to the conservation of wildlife habitats and regional biodiversity. Reduced interaction between animals and vehicles is expected to lower stress levels among wildlife.

Impact on Real Estate: The expressway is anticipated to end traffic jams in Northeast Delhi, leading to an expansion of real estate in the surrounding areas. Improved connectivity between Delhi and Ghaziabad is poised to boost the local market. Forecasts suggest a surge in residential development projects along the highway, attracting investments. The expected increase in Delhi-Dehradun trips is likely to spur the growth of hotels, restaurants, and cafes in the vicinity.

Current Status: As of April 6, 2023, Nitin Gadkari, the Road Transport Minister, inspected the 212-km, 6-lane Delhi-Dehradun expressway, which is being constructed at Rs 12,000 crore. The project aims to reduce travel time between the two cities from over 5 hours to 2 hours. It is projected to open to the public in 2024.

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UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand government to expand Pantnagar Airport

The State Cabinet has approved a substantial extension of the current 1,372-metre runway to 3,000 metres, accommodating larger aircraft

The expansion plan for Pantnagar Airport in Uttarakhand, recently approved by the State Cabinet, signifies a significant stride toward its transformation into a world-class airport. This approval involves a substantial extension of the current 1,372-metre runway to a length of 3,000 metres, accommodating larger aircraft. To facilitate this expansion, the acquisition of an 804-acre land parcel, which includes adjoining lands belonging to various government departments, is imperative.

A committee is tasked with determining compensation for these government departments affected by the acquisition. Upon successful acquisition, the allocated land will be handed over to the Civil Aviation Department, subsequently passing it to the Airports Authority of India. The timeline for this project spans three years and holds promise for enhancing the state's aviation infrastructure.

The Uttarakhand Cabinet has approved the expansion of Pantnagar Airport's runway, signalling the state's aspiration to elevate the facility into a world-class airport. The existing 1,372-meter runway will be extended to 3,000 meters to accommodate larger aircraft. The expansion necessitates the acquisition of 804 acres of land, with neighbouring lands belonging to various government departments.

A compensation framework for these departments will be established by the committee. Once

acquired, the land will be allocated to the Civil Aviation Department, which will subsequently assign it to the Airports Authority of India. The project is set to span three years and contribute to the state's aviation infrastructure enhancement.

Moreover, the Center has given preliminary approval for the construction of an airstrip adjacent to Pantnagar Airport, covering a 3-km area. This strategic move is anticipated to bring forth numerous advantages. The connectivity of this region to Pantnagar Sidcul, Kashipur Sidcul, and Sitarganj Sidcul, where several companies rely on international expertise for technical support, underscores the potential benefits. Given its proximity to Nepal and China, the airport's strategic significance is paramount.

In this context, for the expansion of Pantnagar Airport, the Center has already given in-principle consent to build an airstrip on an area of 3 km adjacent to it. There will be many benefits from the expansion of

Pantnagar Airport. This area is connected to Pantnagar Sidcul, Kashipur Sidcul and Sitarganj Sidcul. There are many companies in which experts are called from abroad in case of technical problems.

The state's border is adjacent to Nepal and China. Hence it is important from a strategic point of view. Khurpiya Farm Kichha has been included within the ambit of the Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor. Its survey has also been done.



The state government has also given information to the Center regarding Jolly Grant Airport.

The Center was also told that the elephant corridor adjacent to the airport would not be removed. Currently, Dehradun, Haridwar and

Rishikesh are close to Jolly Grant Airport. In such a situation, if this airport becomes an international airport, then tourists coming from abroad

will get a lot of facilities. The Civil Aviation officials said that positive steps are being taken to establish an international airport in Pantnagar. The hurdles regarding Jolly Grant are also expected to be removed soon. In August last year, CM Pushkar Singh Dhami met Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. He had put forward

the issue of developing two airports of the state as international airports before the Union Minister. During this, the Union Civil Aviation Minister had assured positive action.

The Panthagar Airport in Uttarakhand serves as a crucial infrastructural development for the state. An international airport in Panthagar would enhance connectivity within Uttarakhand and beyond. It would facilitate easier access for tourists, investors, and businesses, boosting economic growth. Uttarakhand is known for its scenic beauty and religious sites. The airport can significantly increase tourism by making it easier for both domestic and international tourists to visit popular destinations like Nainital, Jim Corbett National Park, and various hill stations. The airport can attract investment and promote trade by providing a more convenient way for businesses to access Uttarakhand. It opens up opportunities for exports, especially for products like horticultural produce, herbs, and handicrafts unique to the region. The development of an airport often generates employment directly and indirectly. It creates jobs in airport operations, tourism, hospitality, transportation, and related sectors, benefiting the local population. The presence of an international airport usually leads to the development of supporting infrastructure like better roads, hotels, restaurants, and other amenities, further enhancing the appeal of the region for visitors and investors. Overall, the Panthagar Airport has the potential to significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of Uttarakhand by improving connectivity, promoting tourism, attracting investments, and generating employment opportunities.

New Rishikesh-Karnaprayag Rail Line to connect hills to the valley

The new line will be a game-changer for the state as this will be the first time a railway line will go into the hinterland

The proposed Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line in Uttarakhand marks a significant stride in the state's efforts to enhance connectivity and accessibility to remote regions. Uttarakhand, nestled in the Himalayan foothills, has long faced challenges in transportation due to its rugged terrain. The initiation of the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail project underscores the commitment to overcoming these challenges, providing a lifeline for residents, promoting tourism, and fostering economic growth. This comprehensive discussion delves into the background, significance, challenges, and anticipated impact of the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE: The decision to establish a railway line from Rishikesh to Karnaprayag stems from the necessity to improve transportation infrastructure in Uttarakhand. The region, known for its spiritual significance, pristine landscapes, and challenging topography, often faced connectivity issues due to weather-related disruptions and difficult terrain. The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line, spanning a distance that covers various towns, addresses this need by providing an alternative and more reliable mode of transportation.

The proposed rail line aims to connect key towns such as Devprayag, Srinagar, Rudraprayag, Gauchar, and Karnaprayag, traversing five districts in Uttarakhand: Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal, Pauri Garhwal, Rudraprayag, and Chamoli. The strategic selection of these towns ensures that the rail line caters to both religious and economic interests, enhancing accessibility for pilgrims and promoting regional development.

PROJECT PHASES AND TIMELINE: The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line, which is estimated to cost Rs 16,216 crore, is being executed by the Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL) in multiple phases to ensure systematic development and timely completion. The first milestone was achieved with the commissioning of the initial 5.7 km section, known as the 1st Block, between the existing Virbhadra station and Yog Nagar Rishikesh station (PK-1A) in March 2020. This section serves as a precursor to the larger rail line, showcasing the commitment to progress.

The subsequent phase involves the completion of the remaining railway line from Yog



Nagari Rishikesh to Karnaprayag. According to the project timeline, this section is slated for commissioning by December 2024. The phased approach allows for careful planning, efficient execution, and the incorporation of the latest technologies to overcome the engineering challenges posed by the region's challenging terrain.

ENGINEERING MARVELS: TUNNELING WORKS AND CHALLENGES:

The terrain of Uttarakhand presents unique engineering challenges, with steep slopes, rocky landscapes, and ecological sensitivities. To overcome these challenges and ensure the timely completion of the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line, the project has incorporated tunnelling works as a critical aspect of its execution plan.

The total length of the tunnelling works spans a considerable distance, and to manage this effectively, the works have been divided into ten packages, each awarded for execution.

Tunnelling is a complex engineering feat, requiring precision and adherence to safety standards.

The division of tunnelling works into packages allows for specialised focus on each section, addressing the unique challenges presented by the varying geological conditions. This approach minimises the environmental impact, ensuring the safety of the construction teams, and allows for the integration of the latest tunnelling technologies.

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND TOURISM PROMOTION:

The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line holds immense economic potential for Uttarakhand, particularly in the promotion of tourism and regional



development. Improved connectivity translates into increased tourist footfall, benefitting local businesses, hospitality services, and transportation sectors. The rail line not only facilitates religious tourism but also encourages tourists to explore the natural beauty and cultural richness of the region.

The towns connected by the rail line, including Devprayag, Srinagar, Rudraprayag, Gauchar, and Karnaprayag, serve as gateways to various tourist attractions, trekking routes, and adventure sports destinations. The enhanced accessibility provided by the rail line is expected to contribute significantly to the growth of the tourism industry in Uttarakhand, creating job opportunities and promoting economic development in

the surrounding areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Uttarakhand is renowned for its biodiversity and ecological sensitivity. The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail project acknowledges the importance of minimising its environmental footprint and preserving the delicate ecosystems of the region. Environmental impact assessments have been conducted to evaluate the potential effects of construction activities on the flora, fauna, and overall ecology.

To mitigate the environmental impact, the project incorporates sustainable practices, including afforestation initiatives, waste management, and the use of eco-friendly construction materials. The tunnelling works, while challenging, are designed to minimize disruption to natural habitats, allowing wildlife to navigate through the region undisturbed. The emphasis on environmental conservation ensures that the rail line development aligns with Uttarakhand's commitment to sustainable growth.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS: The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line embraces technological innovations to overcome the engineering challenges posed by the region's topography. Geospatial technology is utilised for precise route planning, ensuring the alignment considers the geological and environmental nuances of the area. Additionally, the project incorporates advanced tunnelling technologies, including tunnel boring machines and specialised excavation methods, to navigate through rocky terrains efficiently.

The rail line also leverages digital platforms for real-time monitoring, ensuring the safety and integrity of the infrastructure. Intelligent traffic management systems and modern signaling systems contribute to the overall efficiency of the rail line, providing a seamless and secure transportation experience for passengers.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT:

The successful implementation of the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line relies on community engagement and collaboration with local residents. Awareness programs are conducted to involve the communities residing along the rail line route, addressing their concerns and garnering support for the project. The rail line is not just a means of transportation but a catalyst for local development, offering employment opportunities, skill development, and improved access to educational and healthcare facilities.

The rail line serves as a connective thread, fostering a sense of integration and shared progress among the communities it traverses. By involving local residents in the planning and execution phases, the project aims to create a positive impact on their lives and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the region.

FUTURE CONNECTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS:

The completion of the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line is poised to open new possibilities for further connectivity and development in Uttarakhand. The success of this project may pave the way for extending the rail network to other remote areas, creating an integrated transportation grid that connects the state more effectively with the rest of the country.

The rail line is anticipated to act as a catalyst for regional development, attracting investments, industries, and business opportunities to the towns along its route. As connectivity improves, the economic landscape is expected to diversify, leading to the creation of new employment opportunities and a more resilient and self-sustaining local economy.

The Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail line represents a transformative initiative that addresses the unique challenges and opportunities presented by Uttarakhand's topography. By connecting important towns and promoting sustainable development, the rail line contributes to the overall well-being of the region.

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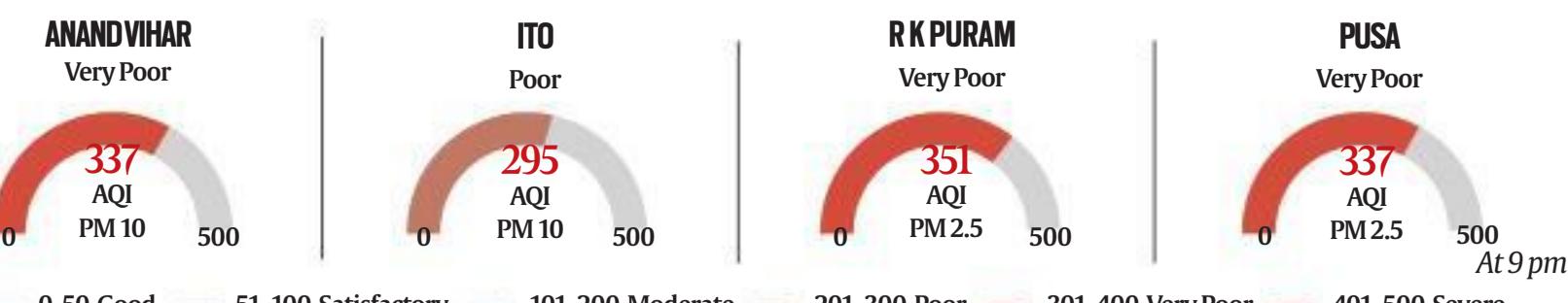
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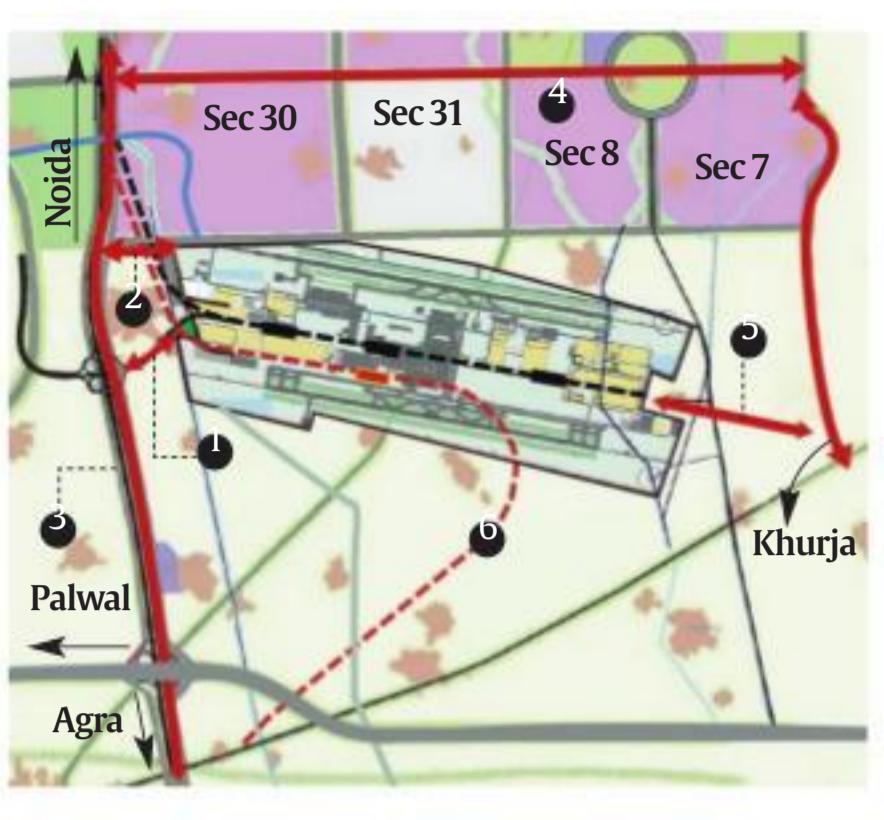
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S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: February 13
Partly cloudy sky. Possibility of very light rain/drizzle.
Shallow fog in the morning.

MAX: 24 °C | MIN: 9 °C
0.6°C above normal | 0.8°C below normal

CAPITAL CONNECT



- 1 Expressway interchange: Primary access for passengers
- 2 Secondary access to airport for emergencies and VIPs
- 3 Yamuna Expressway service road
- 4 North road connecting airport's west and east
- 5 East access to airport for air cargo and logistics
- 6 High-speed rail connectivity

High-speed rail, RRTS, buses: Multi-modal link for Noida airport

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 12

AS THE date for the operationalisation of the Jewar Airport inches closer, Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) has roped in multiple agencies to provide multi-modal connectivity to it through routes across road, trains, rapid rails and the Expressway.

Several agencies are part of the NIAL's bid to connect the project through various modes – such as the North Central Railway, National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC), National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) – but there are hiccups, too.

In a meeting with all the agencies concerned held on Friday, NIAL told the North Central Railways that it would not be able to go ahead with its proposed plan of connecting Chola in Bulandshahr and Rundhi in Haryana with the Jewar Airport. "Chola is on the Amritsar-Calcutta line and Rundhi is on the Mumbai-Delhi line. Jewar airport lies between both these railway lines; so, for connectivity with both the stations, Northern railway has prepared a plan and also done an initial survey. This is not the final alignment," said Dr Arun Vir Singh, CEO of NIAL.

According to Singh, NIAL had suggested that Chola be connected on the east side because of the shorter distance of 16 kilometers which would also open an area for logistics and warehousing and, simultaneously, also help to expand the Chola railway station.

"However, the railways have proposed to connect it through the south side. Because of this, it would affect our aviation hub and upcoming runways. This is not possible to accept. We have suggested that that railway line can pass along the periphery area of the aviation hub; if they want to follow the same alignment, they have to do it underground," he added.

There are, however, positive developments too: connectivity was being prepared.

NIAL ropes in multiple agencies to provide connectivity as operationalisation date for Jewar airport nears

with Ballabgarh (Delhi-Mumbai Expressway) to the airport will be completed by April 30 April along with other roadways.

"It will also be connected to Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) expressway. Along with this, work has been started to connect it with the Eastern Peripheral Expressway. After this, it will get connected with Manesar on one side and Dehradun on the other side," he said.

Apart from this, Singh said a 75-meter road on the north side of the airport, 750 meters extra VIP road on the west side, which can also be utilised for cargo movement, and another 60-meter road for the airport will be completed before the operationalisation of the airport.

Other modes of transportation, however, will take some time to be put in place; but connectivity through buses will be available from the very beginning. "It will take around two to three more years for the Rapid Rail and Pod Taxi, for which feasibility study has been completed and DPR is being prepared. We have also planned for the operation of buses from day one. It is yet to be decided whether this will be through private or UPSRTC buses, but 80 buses will ply from the first day of the operation of the airport," he said.

According to the Master Plan for the airport, a bay providing access to buses, tram, metro line, bullet train from within its premises will be constructed so passengers do not have to exit to travel to further destinations.

"Land for this has already been earmarked and it will provide multimodal connectivity underground... Passengers will not need to come out of the terminal," he said, adding that the DPR for an RRTS from the IGI airport in Delhi to the Jewar Airport is under way.

According to the Master Plan for the airport, a bay providing access to buses, tram, metro line, bullet train from within its premises will be constructed so passengers do not have to exit to travel to further destinations.

The Padma Bhushan awardee has designed a granite sculpture that is at the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial in Sripurumbar, Tamil Nadu.

Johny M L, art historian and a friend of Ramachandran, said, "He closely followed contemporary artists, and was very appreciative of artists doing new things and experimenting with new material... He had a lot of students. Some of his paintings featured the Lohar people as central characters. This brought

'DILLI CHALO' MARCH: FARMERS SET OUT FOR DELHI TODAY

Month-long ban on public meets, no entry for tractors & trolleys, watch on borders in Capital

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/NOIDA, FEB 12

EVEN AS representatives from the Centre and farmers' unions discussed the way forward regarding the latter's demands, prohibitory orders were clamped across the capital in anticipation of the 'Dilli Chalo' march on Tuesday.

In addition to the massive deployment of security personnel and crowd control measures at Delhi's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, the Delhi Police on Monday imposed a month-long ban on public meetings, along with the entry of tractors and trolleys and anything "capable of being used as weapons or tools of violence" in the city for a month in response to the proposed agitation. Intensive checking will take place at pickets along routes bordering the capital by the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Police with the latter advising commuters to utilise the metro to avoid congestion.

More than 200 farmers' unions were set to begin the 'Dilli Chalo' march from Punjab on Monday which is supposed to culminate in Delhi a day later; in addition to the march, farmers' groups have also announced a "Gramin Bharat Bandh" on February 16. In response to the development, in an order to this effect on Monday, Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora stated that prohibitory orders under Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) Section 144 would be in place in the city from February 12 to March 12, both days included.

The prohibitory order was imposed based on "well-founded apprehension" that those participating in the march may try to enter the city to "hold demonstrations to assert their demand". The order was being put in place "taking into consideration the past experience of farmer agitation organised in 2020" and intel inputs.

In addition to gatherings and agitations at public places, the orders said there would be "an absolute prohibition" on the organisation, convening, or participation in processions, demonstrations, rallies, or march on foot, whether for political, social, or any other purpose, within the geographical limits of Delhi and New Delhi.

A ban was also put in place on the entry of tractor trolleys, trucks, or any other vehicles transporting "individuals or materials" especially "sticks/lathis/dandas, swords, spears", firearms or anything else "capable of being used as weapons or tools of violence", the order said. This, even as barbed wire had been installed at the Singhu border and drones were being deployed at all border points to keep a close watch on any possible law and order situation in view of the protest.

Several layers of concrete blocks along with road spike barriers and barbed wire had already been installed at border points to prevent any infiltration into the city by farmers by Monday morning. Senior Delhi Police officers, including DCPs of districts along the capital's borders, are mounting surveillance around border areas with security personnel from various police stations of the district being deployed on the ground.

Adding that it had made law and order arrangements in coordination with its counterparts in Delhi, the Gautam Buddha Nagar Police on Monday issued a traffic advisory asking people to use the metro to avoid traffic congestion.

"Intensive checking will be done by the Delhi Police and Gautam Buddha Nagar Police by installing barriers on all the Delhi borders adjacent to Gautam Buddha Nagar," said the Noida Traffic police. "All types of goods vehicles will be restricted on the route from Yamuna Expressway to Delhi via Noida-Greater Noida Expressway and from Sirsa to Surajpur via Pari Chowk."



(Above) Police on guard as a worker installs a concrete barrier at the Ghazipur border, in Delhi on Monday; (below) A worker checks CCTV installation in the area. Praveen Khanna



Gurgaon: Monitoring centre to keep tab on all social media posts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 12

THE CYBERCRIME unit of the police has set up a social media monitoring centre in Gurgaon in a bid to track the posts on online platforms over the scheduled farmers' protest in the national capital, said police on Monday.

According to Sidhant Jain, deputy commissioner of police (South and Cyber), the centre has been set up to monitor all the content posted on social media platforms which could spread discord in the society.

"Many posts are being shared on social media regarding the farmers' protest, so, there is a need to monitor them. Everyone has the right to freedom of speech, but there are untoward elements that could peddle fake news and spread discord in the society or incite people. Emotionally driven people could fall for posts by rumour mongers. The social media monitoring cell will timely identify and flag such content on the social media, and remove them from the online platforms..." he said.

The monitoring cell has eight to 10 staffers along with private experts and state-of-the-art technology. The DCP said that this was set up in the starting of February in a bid to keep a tab on social media content in wake of the farmers' protest.

The equipment includes social media scrolling and algorithm-based searching among others, to scour for inflammatory posts on the stir.

The cell will write to social media platforms to take down such content, and later, the accused will be tracked by their IP addresses, which will then be shared with the local police for the further course of action, said the DCP.

SPLEEN WAS NEVER REMOVED Nine yrs on, consumer forum awards Rs 9L to kin of patient for 'negligence' by hospital

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

IN 2015, Savitri Sharma (57) approached Sir Gangaram Hospital to get her spleen removed. A procedure was performed on her in February that year, and she was sent home. After five months, while perusing her ultrasound report, the family of the woman, who suffered from cancer in the lymphatic system, found out that her spleen was never removed.

Vishwanathan, who worked with *India Today*, was found dead in her car on South Delhi's Nelson Mandela Marg on September 30, 2008. ENS

epicentres of the farmers' protest — Haryana, Punjab, northern Rajasthan, western Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi — will be in focus, said DCP Jain.

"We will also duly analyse other posts with certain key-words. So far, we have sent 35 notices under Section 69 of the IT Act to social media platforms regarding posts that are likely to spread communal disarray as well as rumours which could disrupt the law and order situation," he said.

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normal size in ultrasound reports when it was removed by doctors.

The commission pulled up the doctors for charging for a surgery which was "never performed". "I lost my mother...money can't change that. I wanted to bring out the truth..." Advocate Anil Dutt Sharma, representing his father before the commission, told *The Indian Express*. "The doctors were fighting among themselves... they had told us six months prior to the surgery that it was not needed and could be dangerous for the patient... The doctors didn't give us the medical reports that we had asked for..." Anil said.

The Commission also held that the family was not given the spleen status and bone marrow reports on time by the doctors.

Sharma said his insurance claim was rejected because of the "negligence of some junior doctors", adding that he is still fighting a criminal case against the doctors at Tis Hazari Courts.

Meanwhile, doctors from the hospital submitted that the complainant had made two complaints to the Medical Council of Delhi, which found no medical negligence in this case. Denying negligence, the doctors also submitted that they provided a standard level of care to the patient.

Family, aides, leaders bid adieu to artist Ramachandran

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

ARTISTS, FORMER students, gal-lerists, political leaders, friends, and family members paid their last tributes to late artist A Ramachandran on Monday — remembering the "teacher" for his art, wit and humour.

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, D Raja and Annie Raja of the CPI, Sitaram Yechury of the CPI(M) and Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan were among those who paid homage to Ramachandran at Travancore House, before his cremation.

Ramachandran, 88, suc-



A Ramachandran passed away in Delhi on February 10. He was 88. Credit: Manisha Gera Baswani

cumbed to kidney ailments on Saturday. He was born in Kerala, and moved to Delhi later, where he taught art at Jamia Millia Islamia from 1965 till 1992.

The Padma Bhushan awardee has designed a granite sculpture that is at the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial in Sripurambar, Tamil Nadu.

Johny M L, art historian and a friend of Ramachandran, said,

"He closely followed contem-

porary artists, and was very appreciative of artists doing new things and experimenting with new material... He had a lot of students. Some of his paintings featured the Lohar people as central characters. This brought

Artist Pooja Iranna, a friend of Ramachandran, who has known him since she was a child, said, "He was an inspiring teacher... My work is so different from his that it shows that he never imposed his style on his students. He taught a philosophy not a style. He would say don't take art so seriously..."

Sonia Ballaney at Vadehra Art

Gallery said, "He was witty and had a fantastic sense of humour.

He was one of the most brilliant

artists of his time, and his life's passion was art. We worked with him for 25 years and he was a friend of the gallery. He had a range of interests — he was very well read, and used to sing classical music."

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Sonia Ballaney at Vadehra Art Gallery said, "He was witty and had a fantastic sense of humour. He was one of the most brilliant artists of his time, and his life's passion was art. We worked with him for 25 years and he was a friend of the gallery. He had a range of interests — he was very well read, and used to sing classical music."

After paying his respects to Ramachandran, Kerala Governor Khan said, "It is a great loss to the world of art and particularly the family... We can only pray that the family has the strength to bear this irreparable loss..."

Meanwhile, doctors from the

hospital submitted that the com-

plainant had made two com-

plaints to the Medical Council of

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negligence in this case. Deny-

ing negligence, the doctors also sub-

mitted that they provided a

Differences over seats in other states cloud AAP-Cong alliance in Delhi

JATIN ANAND & GAYATHRIMANI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

AFTER THE Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is scheduled to take a call on its candidates for each of the seven Lok Sabha seats in the capital on Tuesday.

While both sides maintain they are "committed" to a seat-sharing agreement to put up a joint front against the BJP in Delhi, sources from the two parties admit that "posturing" from the other on Lok Sabha seats beyond the city is "delaying the matter".

Congress sources said the "AAP's insistence" on getting seats in other states did not bode well for the alliance. AAP sources said the Grand Old Party dragging its feet on "accommodating the AAP" on these seats was doing more harm than good.

In the meantime, while the Congress has finalised a panel of probables for Delhi's seven seats, the AAP, sources said, is scheduled to discuss names to be fielded in the Capital as well as other states, including Goa and Haryana, at a meeting of its Political Affairs Committee Tuesday.

"Talks around the finalisation of the alliance are stuck at the AAP's demand for the Bharuch Parliamentary seat in Gujarat, the Chandigarh Lok Sabha seat, and one seat in Haryana; why should giving up seats in other states to the AAP dictate a 4-3 seat-sharing agreement far away in Delhi?" a senior Congress leader said, adding that the final call would be taken by the party's high com-

mand "soon".

A senior AAP leader said, "We have proposed a seat-sharing arrangement; yes, it has seats in other states which is best not revealed right now. The Congress was supposed to come back to us with a counter offer, which is yet to arrive. Not just us, alliance partners across the country waited for similar clarity before opting out...time is of essence."

After announcing the AAP's decision to go it alone in Punjab, at a gathering in Ludhiana on Saturday, Kejriwal, a day later in Tarn Taran, triggered speculation by saying that the people of Delhi had decided to allot all the seven LS seats in the Capital to the AAP.

On Monday, AAP Delhi convenor Gopal Rai said, "AAP is part of INDIA alliance... But we believe that it is getting too late now...there is a need to make decisions fast on seat-sharing..." On Kejriwal's statement, Rai said, "...He meant that BJP is going to lose all the seven seats in Delhi..."

AP national spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj, at another press conference, said, "I believe the AAP will...win all seven seats even if the polls take place right now..." He further said alliance talks with Congress were still on.

Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely said, "We are committed to the alliance but, at the same time, prepared to contest the Lok Sabha elections in the Capital. The Congress is the only party to have conducted large public meetings on five seats already. We are not only firmly with the INDIA alliance but also ready to fight the BJP."

ARNABJITSUR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

EARLIER THIS year, a 23-year-old woman, married to a man of around the same age, went missing from her home in Ashok Vihar's Shaheed Sukhdev JJ cluster. Soon after, her husband too went missing. The mother of the woman, who had lost her child at birth only a few months back, grew worried and began frantically searching for her daughter.

A few weeks later, the missing woman's body was found in a pit, around 100 metres away from her marital home, wrapped in a quilt.

The deceased woman's husband was arrested on Saturday.

Police said the man, who worked odd jobs at a hotel, had strangled his wife on the night of December 25 last year following a scuffle over the death of their child due to anaemia. Police said the couple had been fighting over the issue since the tragedy in September but this time, things went too far.

Police said the man's 50-year-old mother and teenage brother were present at home when the



The pit where the woman's body was found. Amit Mehra

crime took place, adding the duo helped him get rid of the body.

Said an officer, "With the knowledge of his mother and 16-year-old brother, the accused hid his wife's body inside the house under a bed for one whole day on December 26...after midnight, around 2 am, the trio wrapped her body in a quilt and carried it out of the house towards the open field on the other side of the railway tracks on abutting their jhuggis."

With the minor holding the body from one end and the accused from the other, the broth-

ers carried the corpse towards the open field, around 100 metres away from their house, through the narrow lanes of the jhuggi and beyond the railway tracks, said police.

A concrete boundary wall separates the railway tracks from the open field, and, police said, the duo carried the body over this wall and further to a corner of the field.

Said DCP(Northwest) Jitendra Meena, "The accused and his brother then dumped the body in a pit at the spot...they piled mud, plastic garbage bags, and other

waste material on top of the body and fled the spot."

While the brother and mother of the accused stayed back at their house, the man fled to his village in Western UP after a few days.

After a few weeks, exactly a month after she had last heard from her daughter who stayed only a few houses away, the mother of the deceased decided to approach the police. She got a missing report lodged at the Ashok Vihar Police Station on January 25 regarding the disappearance of both her daughter and her son-in-law, after which several police teams were deployed to look for them around the area," said police.

How the body was discovered

On February 8, a group of children were playing in the open field when they heard a dog howling from another corner - It looked like the animal had got stuck in a pit. The children rushed to the spot and discovered the woman's body. A PCR call was made," said an officer.

Officers said that due to the

Court grants 3 days' interim bail to Sisodia to attend wedding

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

ADELHI court on Monday granted three days' interim bail to former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the excise policy case after he moved a plea to allow him to attend his niece's wedding in Lucknow on February 14.

Sisodia sought bail for five days arguing that he had to perform certain rituals as the family's only male member and that his niece was very close to him.

When special judge M K Nagpal asked senior advocate Mohit Mathur, representing Sisodia, whether it was alright to send security personnel with him to the function, the latter said, "I (Sisodia) don't want to humiliate my family with cops hovering around me." Mathur added that Sisodia would not be provided with security in a different state in the first place.

While the CBI opposed the bail plea stating that Sisodia was highly influential and could tamper with evidence, the ED took issue with the time period of five days stating that one day was enough to attend the wedding.

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Chavan latest blow, unease grows in Congress

MANOJ CG

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

AS THE Lok Sabha elections draw near, the challenges before the Congress and the INDIA bloc are mounting. The latest setback came Monday, with senior Maharashtra leader Ashok Chavan leaving the party – coming on the heels of the JD(U) and RLD walking out of the INDIA coalition, the Trinamool Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) announcing that they would go it alone in West Bengal and Punjab; and seat-sharing talks in Delhi coming under severe strain.

Chavan has become the ninth former chief minister of the Congress to leave the party in the past 10 years, joining the ranks of Amarinder Singh (Punjab), Ghulam Nabi Azad (Jammu and Kashmir), Vijay Bahuguna (Uttarakhand), the late Ajit Jogi (Chhattisgarh), S M Krishna (Karnataka), Narayan Rane (Maharashtra) and Giridhar Gamang (Odisha). (Gamang returned to the party recently.)

Chavan's resignation had been coming for a while, as he was known to be sulking. What many in the Congress expressed surprise over was the lack of efforts on the part of the high command to placate him. Sources

said that at least a month ago, AICC in-charge of Maharashtra Ramesh Chennithala flagged to the leadership that some leaders against whom there are cases were "facing pressure" to quit, and that the activities of such leaders should be monitored.

On Monday, as Chavan exited the party, the Congress chose to lay the blame on his and the BJP's doors, suggesting that the cases against him were the motivating factor. But, behind the scenes, the party is bracing for more trouble, with apprehension rife that some MLAs close to the ex-CM (sources put their number at half-a-dozen) could quit and potentially spoil the Congress's chances of winning a Rajya Sabha seat from the state in elections later this month.

Chennithala, who came to Delhi after the weekend in Maharashtra, is rushing back to Mumbai to meet senior leaders. The party has begun reaching out to all its MLAs. "How can we predict what they plan to do? After all, Chavan himself attended a meeting with Chennithala on Sunday," a senior leader said.

Officially, Chennithala maintained: "Chavan's exit will not affect the Congress."

Former Maharashtra CM Prithviraj Chavan said: "I do not think anyone from the Congress will follow Ashok Chavan. The



Ashok Chavan has become the ninth ex-CM of Congress to leave the party in 10 years

party is holding a meeting with all its MLAs in Mumbai on Tuesday to review the situation."

Congress leaders also admitted in private that the BJP design to "systematically" break up the INDIA bloc and force desertions from the party was clear. Chavan's exit came days after two other Congress leaders from Maharashtra – Baba Siddique and Milind Deora – quit, and the apprehension is that the BJP is succeeding in conveying the perception of an INDIA bloc in tatters and a Congress that is isolated.

In what is seen as a conscious strategy, the BJP has toned down its attack against the INDIA bloc, which it once dubbed 'Chambaniya' (arrogant) and 'INDI' alliance, and is focusing on the Congress. "Mamata Banerjee's announcement that her party would contest on its own came

just before Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra was to enter Bengal. Then came Nitish Kumar's exit from the INDIA alliance, the arrest of JMM leader Hemant Soren and the RLD's decision to walkout in Uttar Pradesh. We are expecting some desertions in Madhya Pradesh as well (where the Yatra is headed)," a senior leader said, adding that the NDA "is not on a strong wicket in Maharashtra" and hence the bid to break the Opposition parties.

Sources also said the BJP was using pressure tactics such as going probes by investigating agencies to throttle the INDIA alliance. Chavan is believed to have approached the party leadership over this as recently as Saturday, while a leader pointed to the Enforcement Directorate summons to National Conference president Farooq Abdullah for Tuesday, just when the party and Congress are "in advanced stages of finalising seat-sharing".

Another Congress leader claimed that the BJP was also at work to ensure that the alliance of the party with the AAP in Delhi does not happen. UP too has not been good going. Even before the RLD shock came, the Congress was taken by surprise at the SP's unilateral decision to announce 11 seats for it, and declare its own candidates in

16 seats. "In the end, we may end up with seat-sharing pacts in only states like Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Maharashtra and Jharkhand, where we were part of alliances even before the formation of the INDIA bloc," one leader said.

More and more Congress leaders now are raising questions about the timing of the Rahul Yatra. "It was ill-advised strategically. Had the party consulted the veterans... we would have said no. Just sit on the laurels of the earlier Yatra, focus on coordination with INDIA parties, organise big joint rallies in state capitals... at least one a week... that would have had far more impact," a leader said.

Another leader countered this, saying: "Rahul's plan to embark on a second yatra came up for discussion at the December 21 CWC meeting and almost every leader asked him to go ahead."

The Yatra is on till next month and the party fears exit of MLAs and allies is bad optics. On Chavan's exit, Congress communications head Jairam Ramesh said: "When friends and colleagues leave a party that has given them much – perhaps much more than they deserved – it is a matter of anguish. But to those who are vulnerable, THAT Washing Machine will always prove more attractive than ideological commitment or personal loyalties..."

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3 cases against Maharashtra ex-CM still pending in courts

Mumbai: Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, who quit the Congress on Monday, had been named in three cases in recent years. One of these was filed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), while another was filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Adarsh Cooperative Housing Society case dating back to 2011.

With a Supreme Court stay on the proceedings since 2018, the trial in the CBI case is yet to begin. The ED did not make any arrests in its case, nor has a chargesheet been filed.

The third relates to an alleged land grab case filed against 15 people including Chavan in Yavatmal. Here too, there has been no progress for many years. The ACB had filed an FIR in 2011 on various charges, including cheating, criminal conspiracy and forgery under the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. The initial list of suspects in the case were 13 persons including Chavan. ENS



PM Narendra Modi addresses the Rozgar Mela, Monday. PTI

expenditure in the Interim Budget 2024-25 to increase the pace of development, he said.

The Prime Minister also spoke about opening of new sectors and creation of opportunities for employment and self-employment for the youth due to the efforts of the government. He mentioned the Budget announcement about one crore rooftop solar plants, which will reduce the power bill of the families and help them earn money by supplying power to the grid. This scheme will create lakhs of new jobs also, he said.

Modi said paramilitary recruitment examination will be conducted in 13 Indian languages apart from Hindi and English.

PM: We gave 1.5 times more govt jobs in 10 yrs than UPA regime

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

CRITICISING PREVIOUS governments for taking a long time to conduct recruitment, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the BJP government "has provided almost 1.5 times more government jobs in its 10 years than the previous dispensation during its decade-long rule".

Addressing a Rozgar Mela via videoconferencing, PM Modi said, "Today, more than 1 lakh youths have been given appointment letters for government jobs."

"Previous governments used to keep a very long gap between issuing job advertisements and handing over appointment letters. Taking advantage of this delay, the game of bribery was also rampant during that time. We have now made the recruitment process completely transparent," he said.

"We try to finish the recruitment procedure within a set time frame so that everyone gets an equal opportunity to showcase his capabilities," he said.

The government has allocated Rs 11 lakh crore as capital

Facilitate release: Rahul writes to PM over MGNREGS funds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12



Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Korba, Chhattisgarh, on Monday. ANI

WADING INTO the political tussle that is brewing between the BJP-led Centre and the Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal over payment of MGNREGS wages, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking him to facilitate release of funds to clear pending wages.

Rahul's letter comes days after Banerjee announced that the Trinamool Congress would contest the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in the state alone and not as part of the INDIA bloc. Rahul's letter in a way justifies Banerjee's charge that the Centre was not releasing funds for payment of pending wages to MGNREGS workers. That the BJP government is discriminating against opposition-ruled states is a charge often made by the Congress too.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah and his entire Cabinet, along with MLAs and MPs of the Congress, had staged a protest at Jantar Mantar last week, accusing the central government of "injustice" to the state.

In his letter dated February 10 drawing the attention of the Prime Minister to what he called "devastating plight" of MGNREGS workers in Bengal, Rahul said lakhs of people have been denied work and wages under MGNREGS due to the stoppage of central funds to West Bengal since March 2022.

Talking about a meeting he

had with a delegation of MGNREGS workers during his yatra in Bengal last month, he said: "I was informed that many workers have not been paid for work completed in 2021 due to shortfall in funds."

"Moreover, there has been a drastic decline in the number of households availing work from 75 lakh in 2021-22 to under 8,000 households in 2023-24. This massive scale down has been brutal on the most vulnerable – women, and SC & ST households. The lack of MGNREGS work and pending wages have forced many to make hard choices, particularly distress migration," he said.

Earlier this month, Banerjee had staged a dharna in Kolkata against the BJP-led Centre over the alleged non-payment of dues to the state under various welfare schemes. She then announced that her government would pay 21 lakh MGNREGS workers.

Rahul's yatra commenced at 9 am from Korba and moved towards Ambikapur in Surguja. Rahul said he has come to hear people's Mann ki Baat. Addressing the crowd, Rahul asked a colliery worker and a former Army jawan from the crowd to sit next to him in the SUV. "Did you see anyone poor during the Ram Mandir inauguration?... Only billionaires were present," he said. ENS

'Saw rich at Ram temple on Jan 22'

Korba, Chhattisgarh: People are chanting Jai Shri Ram 24 hours but they are not being able to see that they are being looted every day by rich businessmen, Rahul Gandhi said during his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra here, claiming that even during the Ram temple inauguration on January 22, only the rich and celebrities were invited.

Rahul's yatra commenced at 9 am from Korba and moved towards Ambikapur in Surguja. Rahul said he has come to hear people's Mann ki Baat. Addressing the crowd, Rahul asked a colliery worker and a former Army jawan from the crowd to sit next to him in the SUV. "Did you see anyone poor during the Ram temple inauguration?... Only billionaires were present," he said. ENS

lagers work without pay. During protests, villagers gheraoed the Sandeshkhali police station and allegedly set ablaze three poultry farms owned by Hazra.

"Those who have instigated violence (in Sandeshkhali) have been arrested... The situation is being monitored closely and necessary steps are being taken," the chief minister told mediapersons on the sidelines of an event at Dumurjala in Howrah district.

On Sunday, police arrested three political leaders – suspended TMC leader Uttam Sardar, BJP observer for Basirhat Lok Sabha constituency Vikas Singh, and CPI(M) leader and former MLA Nirapada Sardar – on charges of arson, instigating violence among others.

Sandeshkhali has been tense since Wednesday after the violent protests where local villagers accused three local TMC leaders – Shahjahan Sheikh, Uttam Sardar and Shoboprasad Hazra of land grabbing and making vil-

will fight it out under the provisions of the Constitution, as per the law of the land and whatever is within my powers," Bose told mediapersons.

Police rule out communal angle

The police on Sunday maintained that there was no communal angle in the violence at Sandeshkhali and no rape complaint was filed by any woman in the area. The comments came hours after Union Minister Smriti Irani alleged that Hindu women are being raped in the area.

DIG (Barasat range) Sumit Kumar said a 10-member team headed by a DIG-rank woman officer has been formed to look into the complaints of women. The team will visit Sandeshkhali and speak to them.

Bengal Gov in Sandeshkhali, CM says those behind violence held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 12

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XPLAINED

Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay: The Calcutta HC judge at centre of activism vs propriety debate

APURVA VISHWANATH

KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 12

LAST WEEK, as the Supreme Court took note of the alleged "political bias" of Calcutta High Court's Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, lawyers of the Trinamool Congress and BJP legal cells battled it out in what's turning into a high-stakes election for the bar.

On January 25, the politically fraught Calcutta High Court witnessed dramatic scenes as, sitting in his Courtroom Number 17, Justice Gangopadhyay made allegations of impropriety against his senior colleague Justice Soumen Sen, accusing him of working for "some political party".

This, capped with his February 6 apology to the Advocate General for the heated exchange with him a week ago, were all too familiar scenes for those acquainted with the workings of the bar and the bench in the oldest High Court.

But if there's one courtroom that has witnessed more drama than any other in the High Court, it's that of Justice Gangopadhyay — from scuffles to boycotts, charges traded against lawyers and senior colleagues and apologies. Appointed to the High Court in 2018, Justice Gangopadhyay still has six months left before he retires on August 18.

With courtrooms routinely turned into political battle grounds in high-stakes cases, judges are no strangers to political attacks. But many see in Justice Gangopadhyay's frequent remarks against the ruling TMC and its leader Abhishek Banerjee signs of judicial activism at best and at worst, an open bias.

In a case in which a woman from North Bengal had moved the court seeking a job and compensation

sation after her husband's death due to Covid, Justice Gangopadhyay made an oral remark about a "baipo (nephew)" amassing wealth. This led to TMC MP Kunal Ghosh saying the judge should resign and fight an election against Abhishek Banerjee. A month later, at a public event, Justice Gangopadhyay said he met Ghosh in his chambers over a cup of tea and "became friends."

But it's his dogged pursuit of the school recruitment scam in West Bengal that has seen him being called "Aranyakab (Phantom)" and "crusader" while also being accused of playing into the hands of the BJP.

The alleged school recruitment scam is one of the biggest scandals to have rocked the state government, leading to the arrest of a senior minister in the Mamata Banerjee Cabinet and other senior Trinamool leaders. The case also saw Justice Gangopadhyay ordering CBI investigations and terminating more than 32,000 appointments of teachers. Justice Gangopadhyay's termination order was later stayed by the SC.

"No one has the right to do anything with the Constitution of India. I might have to ask the Election Commission to cancel the recognition of Trinamool Congress as a political party and withdraw its party logo," he had said in the teacher recruitment scam case, threatening to summon the entire Cabinet to court.

On December 3, at a function to mark World Disability Day, Justice Gangopadhyay shared the dais with CPI(M) leaders Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya and Kanti Ganguly, the former sports minister in the Buddhadeb Bhattacharya government. Incidentally, Bikash Ranjan, a Rajya Sabha MP, is the senior ad-



Justice Gangopadhyay had recently accused a senior judge of working for "some political party". Illustration: Suvajit Dey

vocate appearing before Justice Gangopadhyay on behalf of writ petitioners in the case seeking Enforcement Directorate probe against Abhishek Banerjee. If there were questions of impropriety about him sharing the platform with someone who appears before him in politically sensitive cases, it didn't seem to affect Justice Gangopadhyay.

Among those he has worked with, some swear by Justice Gangopadhyay's honest track record and non-partisanship, even if they question his methods. "He probably has a view that you have to adopt different methods to tackle corruption. But it's not that he has any love for one party. He quit his civil services job after seeing massive corruption under the Left government. But despite his intentions, this may not be the way to do things," said a former judge of the Calcutta High Court.

After the tug of war with the Bar and his senior colleague last month, Justice Gangopadhyay's roster was changed on February 4 to industrial disputes and labour matters — a relatively non-controversial subject — but the judge still made headlines, reportedly holding court until 10.30 pm on February 9 hearing provident fund cases.

Born on August 19, 1962, Gangopadhyaya, a graduate of Calcutta University's Hazra Law College, began his career as a Grade A officer of the West Bengal Civil Services. It is learnt that as a land revenue officer, when the judge acted on local corruption, he faced death threats which prompted him to resign and move back to Kolkata. He began his legal practice and was the panel lawyer for several insurance firms and the insurance regulator.

Some in the bar attribute the judge's overzealousness to populism rather than politics. Since the judge's courtroom is not virtual, journalists occupy the last row, which, lawyers say, Justice Gangopadhyay is "quite aware" of given his propensity for remarks

that are headline-grabbing.

In one heated argument in court with the Calcutta Bar Association President Arunava Ghosh in August 2022, Justice Gangopadhyay looked at the reporters in his courtroom and asked them to start recording the exchange on their phones. When Ghosh pointed out that videography was not allowed inside the court, Justice Gangopadhyay said that he would allow it in his court. "Your lordship is a very honest man, but my lord, don't turn the court into a bazaar.... This is earning a very bad name for you in the Bar," Ghosh said.

Though it was his unprecedented hour-long interview to *ABP Ananda* in September 2022 — when the judge openly questioned the financials of Abhishek Banerjee — that made news and which the SC took exception to, it is not unusual for him to speak to TV reporters outside the court on issues being heard in his court.

Unusually for a judge, TV news cameras swarm around him even during personal outings.

"How much money is the government spending in the Supreme Court to stop the investigation," Justice Gangopadhyay had said to journalists on West Bengal moving SC against a central probe in the school jobs case.

Justice Gangopadhyay is known to extend his "crusader" side beyond politics. Take, for instance, his order in August 2022, when hearing a family case in the Jalpaiguri bench of the Calcutta High Court. To patch up matters between a squabbling couple, Justice Gangopadhyay tried a rather unusual approach — a paid trip to Puri. "...this court should take a different gesture by sending the parties to a tourist spot for 5-6 days through

provident fund cases.

Some in the bar attribute the judge's overzealousness to populism rather than politics. Since the judge's courtroom is not virtual, journalists occupy the last row, which, lawyers say, Justice Gangopadhyay is "quite aware" of given his propensity for remarks

that are headline-grabbing.

Challenging this, Samad told the SC that the HC had failed to appreciate that the provisions of the 1986 Act, a special Act, will prevail over the provisions of Section 125 of CrPC, which is a general Act.

He contended that "the provisions of Section 3 and 4" of the

Kolkata," he ordered, while fixing an itinerary for the couple and directing the court registry to book the train tickets. "This court hopes and expects that the parties will lead a beautiful life hereafter and forever," the judge had recorded at the end of the order and even transferred the case to the Kolkata main bench for a report on whether the trip was successful.

However, on learning that the couple parted ways after spending just a day in Puri, the disappointed judge said that no further orders are required "when I find that my endeavour for settling the dispute has failed".

Justice Gangopadhyay's image has earned him a fair share of visitors to his chambers. Apart from journalists who routinely call on him, a young singer, a participant in reality shows, was invited by the judge and felicitated in his court chambers.

Like with everything else to do with the Calcutta High Court, the legal fraternity has mixed reactions to Justice Gangopadhyay's "judicial activism".

"What is happening is most unfortunate. Every judge has to behave in a dignified way and you are entitled to pass your orders but not publicly defend your orders," Justice Indira Banerjee, former Supreme Court judge whose parent High Court was the Calcutta High Court, told *The Indian Express*.

For BJP, Justice Gangopadhyay is a "people's judge". "It is not that his orders are helping BJP workers. They are for the common people. He is their judge. Justice must not only be done but also seen to be done," said Priyanka Tibrewal, advocate and secretary of the state BJP unit. Tibrewal also dismissed whispers in the Bar of a post-retirement political career for the judge as "baseless rumours".

It should also contain provi-

Report by law panel suggests plan to tackle epidemics

AOJY SINHA KARPURAM

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

THE 286TH Law Commission Report recommended the creation of an Epidemic Plan and a Standard Operating Procedure to address epidemics, underlining there is no clear demarcation between the powers of the Centre, state, and local authorities during an epidemic, which leads to uncoordinated responses.

Highlighting the limitations of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 (EDA), the 286th Law Commission Report states "the management, control and prevention of epidemic diseases cannot be restricted to a century-old law."

The report notes that the EDA was not designed to combat modern issues with the spread of infectious diseases. Globalisation and increased connectivity, it states, can result in infectious diseases rapidly turning into epidemics or pandemics.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the Law Commission suo moto decided to extensively examine the existing legal framework to tackle what it calls "significant deficiencies in addressing the containment and management of future epidemics in the country".

The report claims that as a colonial-era legislation, the EDA has great potential for abuse. Coupled with the lack of guidelines on important subjects, the report seeks to make comprehensive recommendations for the amendment of the EDA or the introduction of a new law altogether.

The most dramatic change suggested is the creation of an Epidemic Plan and a Standard Operating Procedure to address each stage.

FULL REPORT ON

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4 Maoists get life term for 2014 Sukma attack that killed 16

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

RAIPUR, FEBRUARY 12

A NATIONAL Investigation Agency (NIA) court at Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district on Monday sentenced four people to life imprisonment in connection with the 2014 Maoist attack in Sukma, in which 15 security personnel and a civilian were killed.

The attack took place on March 11, just weeks before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, in Sukma district's Tahalkwada village. A team of 45 personnel from the CRPF and state police were patrolling the national highway in the morning when they were ambushed.

"While over 100-150 Maoists were involved in the attack, the local police arrested four of them and registered an FIR," an NIA official said. The NIA took over the case and submitted a chargesheet. The trial began in 2016.

The four Maoists who were sentenced in the case are Mahadev Nag, Dayaram Baghel, Mani Ram and Kawasi Joga. They were convicted for murder and criminal conspiracy.

Maintenance for Muslim woman under personal law or CrPC? SC seeks views of amicus curiae

ANANTHAKRISHNAG

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

WOULD A Muslim woman be entitled to claim maintenance from her divorced husband under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 — as was affirmed in the Shah Bano case — or will The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986, enacted by the Rajiv Gandhi government to nullify the Shah Bano decision, prevail?

The Supreme Court will deal with the question after an amicus curiae appointed by it gives its views on it.

AIIMS, UK varsity ink pact for research in head, neck cancer

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

AMID RISING cancer cases, AIIMS, New Delhi, Monday signed a collaboration agreement with the University of Liverpool, UK, for translational research in head and neck cancer.

The collaboration will result in sharing of researchers and knowledge, and allow the insti-

tutes to access high-quality clinical datasets and tissue repositories of the ethnically diverse populations in which the cause of head and neck cancer differ significantly — from tobacco consumption in India to alcohol and HPV infection in the UK.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya presided over the signing of the collaboration agreement.

"The Prime Minister's dream

is that the country should become Ayushman, where health facilities become affordable, accessible and available to every citizen," Mandaviya said.

So far, the letter of intent has been put together where both the institutes have signed to work together and reduce cancer mortalities.

Dr Alok Thakkar, Professor of otolaryngology & head neck surgery and head of National Cancer

court in Telangana. The woman had moved the family court under Section 125 of the CrPC stating that Samad had given her triple talaq. He appealed to the High Court, which while disposing the plea on December 13, 2023, said that "several questions are raised which need to be adjudicated" but "directed the petitioner to pay 10,000 as interim maintenance".

Challenging this, Samad told the SC that the HC had failed to appreciate that the provisions of the 1986 Act, a special Act, will prevail over the provisions of Section 125 of CrPC, which is a general Act.

He contended that "the provisions of Section 3 and 4" of the

1986 Act "which starts with non-obstante clause, will prevail over the provisions of Section 125 CrPC, which has no non-obstante clause and as such the application for grant of maintenance by Muslim divorced women under Section 125 of CrPC would not be maintainable before the family court when the Special Act gives jurisdiction to First-Class Magistrate to decide the issue of Mahr and payment of other subsistence allowance under Section 3 and 4 of the Muslim Women (Protection on Divorce) Act, 1986".

The SC has not issued any notice on Samad's appeal.

Institute, AIIMS, Jhajjar, said the first thing would be a training exchange and exchanges in terms of our scientists.

"What we would like to work on is the problem of unraveling the genetic makeup of tobacco-induced cancer because our head and neck cancer is entirely tobacco-induced, unlike the developed nations where it is more of a HPV virus-induced cancer. That's why we require our own

research," he said.

The collaboration will build upon the pre-existing collaboration and links between the Liverpool Neck and Head Centre (LNHC), University of Liverpool and the Head and Neck Cancer Unit at AIIMS, New Delhi.

Dr Thakkar said the collabora-

tion is on head and neck cancer, which is the most common cancer in Indian men and on number three in Indian women.

graduation courses. Only unmarried girls will be eligible for benefits under the scheme and they will have to study in a government-run educational institution.

"This is to bolster the government's mission to eliminate child marriage. Apart from punitive and regulatory measures, we need to empower the girl child to decide about when to marry. If 10 lakh girl children are encouraged to study till graduation and post-graduation, this would also increase the percentage of girls educated beyond matriculation," said Neog.

More than 4,000 people were arrested by the Assam police last year in two major crackdowns against child marriage. On different occasions, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has stated that the government is working towards "completely eradicating" child marriage in Assam by 2026. The Mukhya

Mantri Nijut Moina scheme is the first major announcement of a step towards this goal.

The state government also announced the expansion of its Mukhya Manti Mahila Adyamitra Abhiyaan, under which women who are part of Self Help Groups in rural parts of the state are eligible for entrepreneurship funds, to SHGs in urban areas as well, which includes around 2.5 lakh women.

Another focus of the budget were tea garden workers. Last year, the government had announced the construction of 1.3 lakh houses under the Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana. Neog said on Monday that 10 per cent of these houses will be given to eligible beneficiaries from the tea garden communities. She also announced the earmarking of ₹75 crore to pay the electricity bill arrears of tea gardeners living in tea garden lines.

The idea is to provide high-quality education to children in their mother tongue," said Prof Kannan M. Moudgal, head of the Spoken Tutorial Project.

A PROMINENT figure within the local community whose family once helped the British, Abdul Malik, who Uttarakhand police say is the mastermind of the Haldwani violence, was also active last year when he provided free legal assistance to families facing eviction during a Railways demolition drive.

The mosque and madrasa, whose demolition spiralled into violence last week, were run by Malik. State police have so far refrained from commenting on his whereabouts.

Nainital Senior Superintendent of Police Prahlad Narayan Meena had earlier said that the "illegal construction" had been carried out by Malik, and he had also led the protests against the demolition.

High Court lawyer Ahrar

Baig, who is one of the two counsel in a family's petition against demolition, told *The Indian Express*: "Last year, when eviction notices were served to families in the Banbhopura area following an order by the Uttarakhand High Court, Malik provided free legal assistance to several people. That provided him huge public sympathy."

Hesaid the Abdulla building

Malik is a prominent figure in the local community.

AVANEESH MISHRA
HALDWANI, FEBRUARY 12

11

IIT-B project ties up with community radio platform for science lessons

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

THE SPOKEN Tutorial Project based in IIT Bombay has tied up with Community Radio (CR) Connect — a platform of functional and upcoming CR stations in India — to broadcast a series of 35 episodes on the science behind day-to-day observations. The series titled 'Science in Everyday Life' is based on the 6th standard CBSE science syllabus and seeks to make scientific concepts accessible through a dramatised format. It will be broadcast in Hindi three days a week on CR Connect's FM 107



FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BREAKTHROUGH

Resolution of Indian navy veterans' case in Qatar highlights Delhi's quiet, patient diplomacy, deepening bilateral ties

FROM THE MOMENT Qatar's Court of First Instance sentenced eight former Indian Navy personnel to death in October 2023, the challenge for India's foreign policy establishment was clear: To bring citizens back home while ensuring that the growing economic and strategic ties between New Delhi and Doha are not derailed in the process. It is to New Delhi's credit that it has risen to the challenge and the seven former officers and one seaman are to be reunited with their families at home. That this was achieved with quiet, patient diplomacy, supervised by the Prime Minister, despite the national and international media spotlight on the prisoners, makes it all the more impressive. The fact is that deep engagement with the monarchies of West Asia requires a different approach. The small ruling class in these countries is nearly all-powerful and runs international engagements directly — personal rapport of the sort PM Modi has with them can tip the scales.

The case against the Navy veterans was sensitive, and, to a large degree, opaque. All eight were employees of a Doha-based private company, Dahr Global, that provided training and support to Qatari armed forces. They were arrested in August 2022. While the charges against the Indian citizens were not made public, reports, including in the Financial Times, claimed that they were accused of spying for Israel. After the initial award of the death penalty, an appellate court commuted their sentences to prison terms in December. Throughout, New Delhi was careful in its tone and words. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told Parliament that the issue was "extremely sensitive" and his ministry did not jump the gun while assuring the families of the accused consular and legal support.

The episode — and, of course, its resolution — shows how deep and broad bilateral ties have become. There was a time when New Delhi viewed the Middle East only through the prism of Pakistan and to a lesser extent, Israel-Palestine. The strengthening of bilateral ties with willing partners in the Gulf has opened up the region for trade and provided more options for the country's energy basket: Earlier this month, a multi-billion dollar deal between the two countries has done much to secure the import of LNG from Qatar. In addition, with over 8 lakh Indian workers in the country, there is much that ties the two countries together. Given the fraught geopolitics of the region, especially in the light of the Israel-Hamas conflict growing wider, Delhi has done well to stay above the fray. However, the relationship with Qatar, like most others, has some points of contention. These include the anti-India propaganda from Qatar-based media outlets and support for religious radicals in India. Given the breakthrough moment in ties at the current moment, PM Modi could begin to address these issues when he meets Qatar Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani later this week.

A POLITICAL DOCUMENT

Government's White Paper focuses on mismanagement of economy by UPA, side-steps issues like jobs and wages

WITH NATIONAL ELECTIONS drawing closer, debate over the performance of the Indian economy has moved centrestage. Last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled a white paper in Parliament that compares how the Indian economy has fared under the BJP government (2014-15 to 2023-24) and the Congress-led UPA government (2004-05 to 2013-14). The tone of the document is explicitly political — it's an attempt to show how the economy was mismanaged by the UPA government. The white paper begins by saying that in 2014 the Indian economy was in a "fragile state", public finances were in "bad shape", and there was "widespread corruption". It then credits the BJP government for turning around the country's economic prospects and setting the economy on a "recovery and growth path".

Some of the criticism levied against the UPA government is fair: Inflation had surged during the UPA's term, banks were saddled with bad loans because of reckless lending, there was a high degree of policy uncertainty, retrospective taxation had dealt a blow to the country's image as an investment destination, and numerous corruption cases had come to light. At the same time, it is also true that the Indian economy grew at its fastest pace during the UPA government. The UPA government ushered in the MGNREGA and NFS which form the backbone of the country's social security architecture today. On its part, the BJP government has ushered in far-reaching economic reforms such as IBC and GST. It has utilised the JAM platform (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile) to deliver goods and services more efficiently, leading to less leakages. It has undertaken measures to increase the pace of formalisation and stepped up the budgetary allocation for capital expenditure. A greater share of the government's borrowings is now being used to finance capital expenditure.

Even as it seems too one-sided in its assessments, the white paper is also silent on several critical issues. Take, for instance, the matter of jobs. Under both UPA and BJP governments, the Indian economy has been unable to adequately generate more productive employment opportunities for the millions entering the labour force and those looking to move out of agriculture — yet jobs and unemployment find little mention in the report. Nor do the trends in poverty as conventionally measured through the consumption expenditure surveys. The issue of subdued wages is also side-stepped. At this critical juncture, the ruling party needs to break free of the game of one-upmanship and use its platform and opportunity to present a detailed and thought-through roadmap for India. That is necessary to meet the goal of becoming a developed economy by 2047.

THE ARTIST'S NATURE

A Ramachandran's vocabulary was rooted in India, borrowed from its diverse traditions, was inspired by nature

ARAMACHANDRAN NEVER failed to captivate — whether it was urging his viewers to respond to socio-political despondence through his stark oeuvre in the '60s and '70s, or through more vibrant and joyous depictions inspired by nature that became his leitmotif from the '80s. The artist-pedagogue, who died on February 10, followed his heart. He was celebrated as one of India's most politically-conscious artists, when he decided to radically alter his aesthetic.

Witnessing bloodshed on the streets of Delhi during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots might have been the immediate impetus, but Ramachandran also believed that the layers beneath a painted picture mattered as much as the foreground. Responding to criticism from within the art community, in an interview to *The Indian Express* in November 2023, he said, "The problem is we mix politics with art in an awkward manner. You can't sing a protest song and become Bhimsen Joshi. If you want to be Bhimsen Joshi, then you have to sing classical music with its own rhythm and pattern... There is a distinction between propaganda and art and a painting does not become great because of its subject. *Guernica* (Pablo Picasso, 1937) is not a great painting because of its theme of war but because of how it has been painted."

Unlike modernists of his generation, Ramachandran's artistic vocabulary was rooted in India. It borrowed from diverse traditions, from the female figures of the Ajanta murals to the Harappan dancing girl, the Rajput miniatures and Kerala murals that had mesmerised him as a child. The ideals of free expression and the intimate study of nature advocated by teachers at Santiniketan were lifelong lessons. So when he altered his syntax, it reflected his sincere belief that man could be, and ought to be, one with nature. The Bhil tribes of Rajasthan and their lotus ponds that became an integral part of this work in the latter years were also metaphors and means to find beauty in both nature and humanity.



SANJOY HAZARIKA

AT LENGPUI AIRPORT in distant Mizoram, not far from the Myanmar border, a fascinating drama played out recently. On the runway, a large white military transport plane waited, its sides painted with the distinctive Burmese script. Bedraggled Myanmar soldiers, some barefoot, others without knapsacks or full uniforms, none with weapons, sat on the ground outside, looking exhausted. A group of weapon-wielding and fit Assam Rifles soldiers stood guard.

The aircraft was waiting to take them home. The next day, as the transport plane attempted to take off, the aircraft slid off the runway and crashed on a slope, another sad chapter in the lives of those forlorn looking soldiers. No one was killed but the plane was a wreck. That day, the phone lines buzzed furiously between Delhi's top officials and the Mizoram government, the latter stunned by the unexpected turn of events.

The airport was closed for the rest of the day — the plane had to be made safe, the gasoline tanks emptied, the refugee-soldiers treated for injuries and a day later flown out in two military transport planes sent by Yangon.

This was not the first lot of soldiers who had fled battles in Myanmar's neighbouring Chin State from a combination of rebel groups, essentially the Chin National Army and the People's Defence Force. Not less than 500 are said to have escaped fighting in three separate events; 45,000 Chin refugees are sheltering in Mizoram after the 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy after it won a landslide victory.

Today, the Indian Government faces an unpredictable situation on its 1,640 km eastern border with Myanmar: The Myanmar army and authorities have disappeared from across the white-and-red-coloured bridge that marks the border in Zokhawthar over the river Tiau. Flags of Chin National Front were everywhere and entry was regulated by rebel groups. Large swathes of Chin State and Sagaing Region, which are on the border with Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland as well as Arunachal Pradesh, have fallen to rebel forces which are describing these as "liberated zones".

The CNF has announced an autonomous Chinland Council. With an eye to Delhi and issues in Manipur, it has promised to block ille-

gal trafficking in drugs and arms and non-interference in India's internal matters. "We were surprised by how quickly the army posts fell", said one opposition leader. He said that rebel advances in different parts of the multi-ethnic country showed a weakness in the army — it was greatly undermanned. But he acknowledged that it was unlikely that the military regime in Yangon would fall as it still had firepower and artillery to take back townships they had lost.

In the town of Paletwa, which fell to a swift campaign by another ethnic armed group — the Arakan Army — the army has hurled a fierce counter attack by ground troops backed by airstrikes and artillery. Paletwa is critical to the rolling out of India's ambitious Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project which seeks to connect Kolkata with the Sittwe port in Rakhine State. It is to be connected to Mizoram by road and the Kaladan river which flows by Paletwa. The Arakan Army is apparently seeking to push further to other strategic targets but may face a conflict with Chin rebel forces, for these are seen as Chin-majority regions.

Home Minister Amit Shah's statements on building a border fence and ending the Free Movement Regime (FMR) need to be viewed in the light of these escalating developments and as an effort to protect Indian security interests. The announcements have drawn fierce opposition from different states saying that it would break bonds between fraternal communities divided by a border drawn up arbitrarily by the British. The FMR permits people to enter 16 km into each other's countries. The idea is to enable families, small traders and others to maintain connections dating back centuries.

Government and even local groups agree that the facility has been misused to enable movement of armed groups and illegal shipments of weapons and narcotics across lightly guarded and tough forest paths as well as the prized areca nut which is in huge demand for making supari, pan masala, gutka. Calls for fencing the border have been strongest from the beleaguered Chief Minister of Manipur, N Biren Singh, whose state remains racked by violence, largely between Kuki and Meitei armed groups. Singh says that Kuki fighters

are moving people and weapons across the border although analysts point out that other insurgent groups from Manipur and Nagaland also have bases in Myanmar's frontiers.

The fence is a different proposition. It is a long-term project, hugely expensive and highly challenging given the difficult terrain. Work parties would have to deal with local resentments over efforts to sever old familial relations.

Meanwhile, China has been active on its southern border, having forced a truce between powerful Shan groups and the junta. Neither the military regime nor rebels are happy because China's main objective is to secure its large investments and infrastructure assets, especially in Myanmar's mineral, oil and gas-rich areas.

This raises an important issue — India too has economic interests in Myanmar, some in rebel-held areas. Recently, the Centre urged all Indians in Rakhine State, as the Arakan Army surged, to leave as it was highly unsafe. India has not retreated from its support to the army dispensation in Myanmar. Yet, Delhi needs to heed conditions on the ground: Rebel armed groups, some of which have been fighting the Myanmar army for over 70 years, are unlikely to be able to march on the capital of Naypyidaw, yet those controlling parts of Chin State are the new reality of the neighbourhood.

A senior security official says that the lack of cohesion among rebel groups also means that the junta is unlikely to collapse until replaced by a more sustainable system. Neither China nor India are likely to change their current policies till such a viable process is in place.

Although it is in this larger context that the Centre's announcement about the FMR has to be seen, yet the decision flies in the face of official policies of Neighbourhood First and Act East. Former Ambassador to Myanmar Gautam Mukhopadhyay warns against deciding complex issues in haste. He noted that "...the kinship and tribal ties are such that they will not be curbed by the measures. Rather, the same kinship that binds them to their fellow tribals in India could be turned against us."

Hazarika is an author and columnist based in the Northeast



KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

HAMNE DEKHI HAI un aankhon ki mehakti khushboo/ Haath se chhoo ke ise rishton ka ilzaam na do/Sirfheesaas hai ye, rooh se mehsos karo/Pyar ko pyar hi rehne do, koi naam na do...

Loosely transliterated, the opening lines of Gulzar's timeless classic from the 1969 film *Khamoshi* mean, "Let love be love. Don't diminish its innocence by giving it the tag of a relationship". It is true that language finds it difficult to do justice to what happens in the parts of the mind and heart that aren't governed by filial obligations, money or law. Words like romantic or platonic love, friendship, soulmate, companion, partner, desire, admiration, attraction, commitment, respect, betrayal, anger, acrimony are inadequate signifiers. Hobbes — Bill Watterson's walking-talking stuffed tiger, not the philosopher he is named after — came close to an apt description when he said, "If you are in a contract with me, you are not my friend". But even he could describe his relation with his spiky-haired six-year-old alter ego only in terms of what it wasn't.

"Honth kuchh kehte nahin, kaante hothon pe magar/ Kitne khaamosh se afsaane ruke rehte hain" — quivering lips hold back innumerable untold stories, Gulzar's song continues. This limitation of language doesn't sit easily on all sections of society. At the best of times, they reluctantly allow these stories space on the margins of their cultural fabric, their anxiety manifesting in laboured coinages such as live-in relationship. The moral police also demands its say, at times in violent ways.

LOVE WITHOUT A NAME

What the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code does not get

An argument could be — and is being — made that state sanction will remove the stigma attached to such arrangements: Formalisation will end the 'khamoshi' and alleviate the tension that stems from society's difficulty in coming to terms with an unwed couple living under the same roof. But the language of formalisation cannot comprehend the stirrings of the heart.

Governments can be even more difficult arbiters. Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a case in point. It asks "live-in" couples to register within a stipulated time frame or face the strong arm of the law. The Code's definition of a "live-in relationship" is interesting — "a relationship between a man and woman cohabiting in a shared household through a relationship in the nature of marriage". Strictly speaking, Uttarakhand is not the first in the country to define such a cohabitation arrangement between a man and woman. The Domestic Violence Act of 2005 extends to such relations and in *D Velusamy vs D Patchaiammal* (2010), the Supreme Court used the phrase, "nature of marriage". But these interventions did not require live-in couples to register their relationship in the presence of a government official.

An argument could be — and is being — made that state sanction will remove the stigma attached to such arrangements: Formalisation will end the 'khamoshi' and alleviate the tension that stems from society's difficulty in coming to terms with an unwed couple living under the same roof.

But the language of formalisation cannot comprehend the stirrings of the heart. As the *Khamoshi* song goes, "Pyar koi bol nahi, pyar awaaaz nahi/ Ek khamoshi hai, sunti hah kaha karti hai": Love is silence and it follows its own course. Finding meaning in the unsaid is sacred to love — in fact, to all relationships that are more than a formal contract. That's why

people seek privacy or flexibility, that laws like the Uttarakhand's UCC are insensitive to. Perhaps, that's also why the SC's landmark *Puttaswamy* verdict underlined that "the right to privacy is an element of human dignity..." Privacy recognises the autonomy of the individual and the right of every person to make essential choices that affect the course of life".

A remake of the 1959 Bengali film *Deep Jele Jaai, Khamoshi* was, at best, an amateurish rending of mental health issues. Much of the film's drama is set in a psychiatry ward headed by a former army doctor, who advocates a combination of electric shocks and the pretence of romantic love as a revolutionary therapy. But there is no denying love's centrality to one's well-being. Today, women and men often cannot afford to, or choose not to, rely on conventional families for solidarity, affection, understanding, or compassion — the gamut of emotions that language still struggles to express more than half a century after Gulzar wrote this song. It needs hardly any telling that thousands of youngsters make homes away from home — at times crossing boundaries set by faith, community or creed, ignoring threats of violence that brand their rebellion with labels such as "love jihad" — to find kindred spirits. The Uttarakhand government and those who framed the state's UCC should ask themselves if they are making life easy for such women and men.

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FEBRUARY 13, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

DAL TO JOIN TALKS

THE AKALI DAL decided to participate in the tripartite talks scheduled to be held on February 14 to solve the Punjab tangle. The party announced its decision after a meeting of the high command which was summoned urgently to discuss the invitation of Home Minister P C Sethi. The tripartite talks will be resumed after a year since the talks held last year ended in a deadlock.

JKLF BOMB THREAT

THE SO-CALLED KASHMIR Liberation Front announced in a poster issued by it that it had

planted "time bombs" on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway and warned people not to travel on the highway for nine days. The poster said that if anyone died or was injured in the blasts, the front would not be responsible.

SYRIA'S WARNING

SYRIA WARNED THAT it might retaliate against the United States if American naval ships off the Lebanese coast continued to shell its positions and those of Lebanese nationalistic forces in the mountains East of Beirut. This warning was given by Syrian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Farouk Shara. He said Syrian

forces suffered no losses in the shelling but about 50 Lebanese civilians had been killed.

NEXT SOVIET LEADER

TOP SOVIET OFFICIALS held a private meeting, but the Communist Party did not proclaim a leader. Attention is still focused on Konstantin Usherenko, the Politburo member who has taken the public lead, and other Politburo officials including some of the younger men on the ruling body. These included Grigory V Romanov, head of the party disciplinary body and Mikhail S Gorbachev, a technocrat whose power is said to have increased significantly under Andropov.

THE IDEAS PAGE

A science for us

It remains to be seen if SWATI, an initiative to address gender gap in science and technology, manages to break old habits



NANDITA JAYARAJ AND
AASHIMA DOGRA

ON FEBRUARY 11, a panel representing India's science academies launched SWATI, a portal to a database that they hope will someday include each and every woman in science in the country. This marks the latest in a list of initiatives by the academies to address the gender gap that began with a hard-hitting report published 20 years ago. It's pertinent to look back at some of these efforts.

The 2004 report by the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) stands out because it was likely the first such report to be supported by the government, and also because of its content. The 66-page document articulated ideas about the gender gap in STEM that were far from mainstream back then. It presented evidence of discrimination in the workplace, not just on the basis of gender but also caste. A full 10 pages were dedicated to solutions.

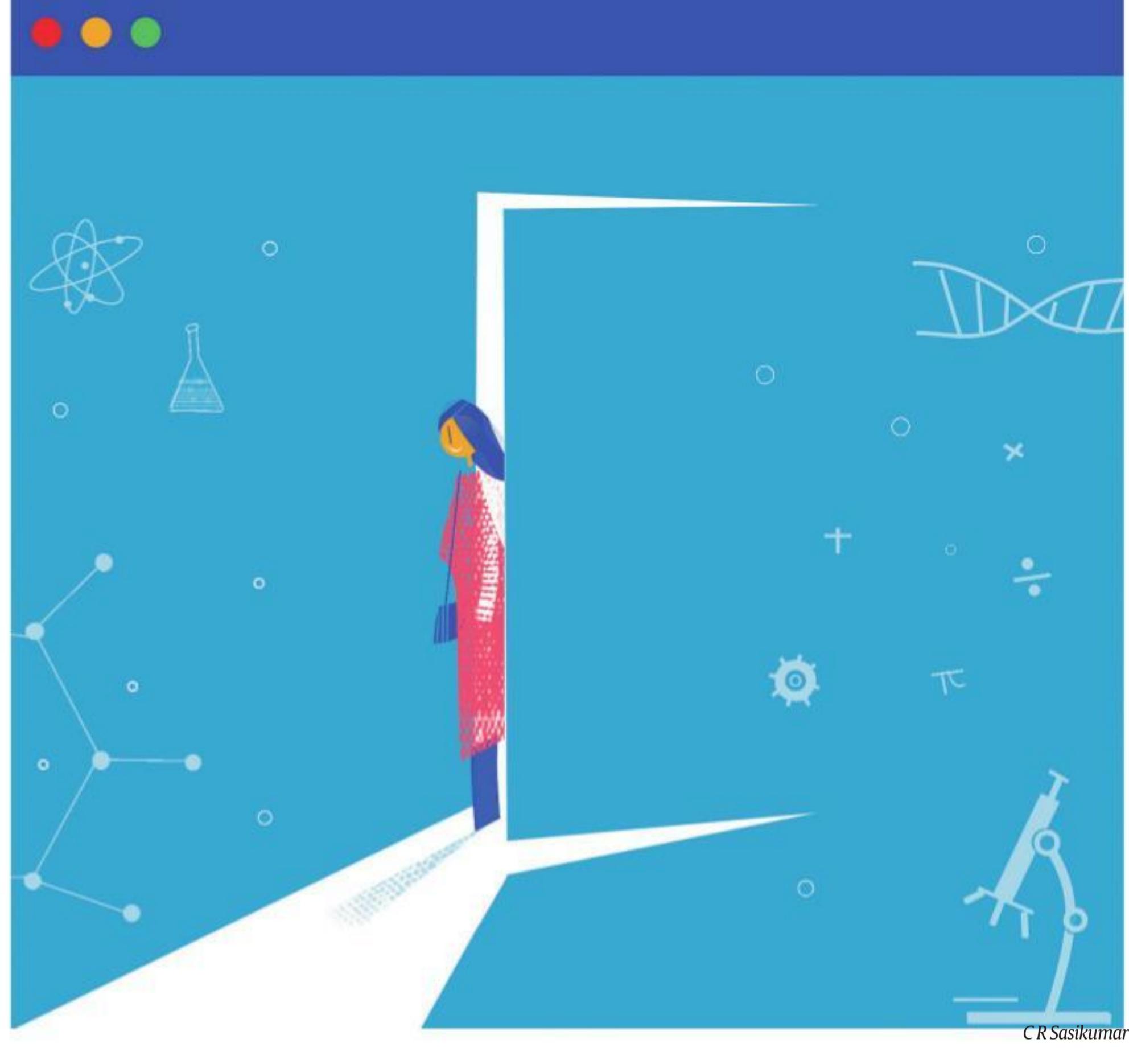
The high level of nuance in this report could be chalked down to it being a product of collaboration between scientists and social scientists. Though a social issue, the Indian scientific community rarely engages with social scientists on the gender gap plaguing it. Consequently, discourse on the topic largely relies on the fallacy that only marriage and motherhood are to blame.

A slew of other initiatives followed that first report by INSA. Highlights include the Indian Academy of Sciences' (IASc) compendium *Lilavati's Daughters* and a national conference featuring over a thousand women scientists. Both happened in 2008. The latter was organised by a Department of Science and Technology (DST) task force set up in response to the INSA report. The national conference is especially notable because it featured some groundbreaking announcements by then Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal: He promised women scientists flexible working hours, in-house creches, work-from-home options, research grants and residential accommodation.

Unfortunately, the standing committee set up to implement Sibal's promises never took off.

In 2010, another team of sociologists and scientists backed by IASc released a report that focused on why women scientists leave academia. A survey of about 800 scientists, both men and women, threw up several revelations. When asked why so many women drop out of science, most men pinned the blame on family and sociocultural factors. The women agreed but a significant proportion pointed out that the lack of opportunities and disabling organisational factors (flexible timings, logistics and infrastructure, discrimination, etc) were also setting them back. Expectedly, these were also the areas that the women felt needed improvement to enable them to stay in science. The men, however, believed that their female peers could also benefit from refresher courses, fellowships, awareness and sensitisation campaigns.

Uncovering gendered perceptions is tremendously helpful in understanding where policies come from and why they look



CR Sasikumar

the way they do. It explains why we see so many initiatives that "help" or "motivate" girls and women to stay in science — mentorship programmes, workshops, books about role models, and women-specific awards/grants. The subtext of this approach is that it is the females who need to be "fixed". This is a sore topic among many women in science, but what else can we expect from a top brass that has always been male-dominated?

While these initiatives may be needed, they're not enough. We also need rules and laws to address the unique challenges faced by women from multiple marginalities of caste, transgender identity and disability. Gender equity policies need to boldly state that discrimination exists, and engage with the idea of placing some accountability on the overrepresented in science — upper caste cis-men.

Newer initiatives like the Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) charter and the draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) 2020 have adopted more progressive language — for instance, they bring up transgender identities and gender-neutral parental leave. Unsurprisingly, as these policies involved a more inclusive group, comprising cis and trans women scientists and sociologists.

February 11 is celebrated worldwide as International Day for Girls and Women in Science. SWATI, or Science For Women: A Technology & Innovation portal, was launched on that day by a panel representing scientists from INSA, IASc and the third acad-

emy National Academy of Sciences India (NASI). An active inter-academy panel offers hope that the three academies' gender gap-related efforts will be more streamlined. Good intentions notwithstanding, it is prudent to be wary, considering how often new initiatives are launched with much hype, only to fizzle out soon after. SWATI itself has been victim to this. It was first announced on International Women's Day in 2021 by then Department of Biotechnology (DBT) chief Renu Swarup as a "portal dedicated to all Women Scientists in DBT and its Autonomous Institutions". There was no word about it after that until recently. Over the past few weeks, the panel has been soliciting women in science to sign up for SWATI's 2024 avatar through a Google form. However, there is no disclosure of how this personal information will be used and what it means to sign up for SWATI.

It remains to be seen if the inter-academy panel can break old habits and be more inclusive, transparent and efficient. There are a number of positive signs: The SWATI form is inclusive of all non-male genders, and does not seem to impose criteria such as PhDs. This acknowledges that cis-women are not the only marginalised gender, and that women work in science in various capacities with or without specific degrees. It is also refreshing to see that the panel is composed of men and women scientists — a nod to the fact that equity is not just a women's issue.

Jayaraj and Dogra are independent science journalists and co-authors of *Lab Hopping: A Journey to Find India's Women in Science*

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A unique modernist

A Ramachandran was open to the possibilities of tradition



R SIVA KUMAR

A RAMACHANDRAN, WHO passed away at 89 in Delhi on February 10, was an artist of great individuality and intellectual independence. As an artist, the range of his skills matched the diversity of his interests, and together, they made him a versatile and unique presence on the Indian art scene.

Born in Kerala in 1935, he began to paint and learn music simultaneously as a child and became an accredited Carnatic singer by the time he was 20 while continuing to paint on the side. Alongside, he also completed an MA in Malayalam literature and became close to the Progressive writers of the 1940s who had heralded a literary and social change in Kerala, and to contemporaries like G Aravindan and C N Sreekantan Nair who, like Ramachandran, would make a big splash in their fields. But a chance encounter with a reproduction of Ramkinkar Baij's monumental sculpture the *Santal Family* — which in his view embodied values similar to that of the Progressive writers — changed the course of his life.

In 1957, giving up his fledgling music career, he shifted to Santiniketan to study art under Baij. Here, he discovered that Baij himself was part of a larger vision of art that had grown under the educational programme for social and cultural change envisioned by Rabindranath Tagore and that Nandalal Bose and Benode Behari Mukherjee, too, were part

of it. Frequent visits to what was then Calcutta exposed him to the tragic aftermath of Partition and the human suffering it caused. An ardent reader of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, it shook him deeply, and he wanted to do in painting what the Russian modernist did in writing.

In 1964, he moved to Delhi, and as a struggling artist living on the edges of the capital alongside subaltern urban dwellers, he recognised their predicament was not significantly different from that of the victims of Partition he encountered in Calcutta. This prompted him to eschew the Western formalist modernism courted by his contemporaries and look towards alternative modernisms, like that of the Mexican muralists, to create hard-hitting images of human suffering, abjection, and angst. While this was largely an exception in art, it had parallels in literature and cinema. Similarly, even as he had his eyes fixed on contemporary social realities, he drew upon myths and ancient literature to forge metaphors to capture them.

In 1984, after berating human insensitivity towards fellow humans for 20 long years, faced with the violence unleashed against fellow citizens in his own city, he felt that his efforts as an artist had been futile. In a world afflicted by hatred and violence, he decided

to use his art to instil beauty, an element that modernist artists, including himself had negated. He found his models in the Bhil villages and landscapes around Udaipur. He was led to them by his study of the miniature paintings of Udaipur in relation to its setting. It led him to realise that the conventions of miniature painting were not arbitrary but based on local realities. They were as logical, inventive, and imaginative as any other tradition and can be repurposed for contemporary use.

Ramachandran approached the Bhil peasant tribes with the humility of an anthropologist, not as a condescending, all-knowing moderniser. Where modernists saw underdevelopment, he saw a lost way of life. The large village lotus ponds, which progress-mongers saw as potential real estate, taught him the basics of ecology and the interdependence of planetary life. Even sympathetic viewers, who noticed his artistic mastery, thought he was a late romantic and missed his message. But that did not perturb Ramachandran, used to ploughing lonely furrows. He kept reiterating the possibilities beyond the modernist model of progress.

The educator's stubbornness noticeable in Ramachandran's approach was not accidental. He taught at Jamia Millia Islamia for

27 years and, as a teacher, played a significant role in transforming the worldviews and life perspectives of his students. His pedagogic vocation also spilled into the brilliant books he wrote and illustrated for children. By using folk styles like Madhubani, Paithani, Warli and miniature paintings to illustrate them, he endeavoured to reconnect a new generation of Indians to their visual traditions.

Nurtured by the Progressive writers and the educational vision of Santiniketan, Ramachandran was an artist with a broad social and artistic vision and a desire to express them in as many ways as possible. He did mural-sized paintings, intricate miniatures, etchings, sculptures, book illustrations, and designed stamps with equal pleasure — nothing was above or below him as an artist. Ramachandran was a modernist, but one open to the unexplored possibilities of tradition. Unlike most artists who addressed social issues, he kept his sense of humour alive, even if it turned black occasionally. Above all, he believed in the continuity of human truths and valued it more than professional success. He also believed in living his life as an artist and worked every day for 65 years. This makes him a rare artist who needs to be remembered and celebrated.

The writer is a critic, art historian and curator

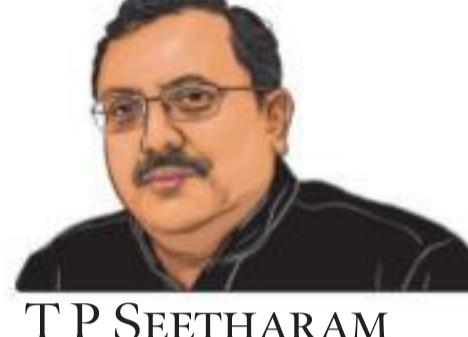
WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Strongmen in foreign nations promise reliability and order. But long-term stability rarely comes through military interference in politics. In the case of Pakistan, the army's unwillingness to cede control to civilians has created a fundamentally broken politics. This election is a reminder."

— THE WASHINGTON POST

Ten years on, India and UAE

Boost in bilateral trade, temple are proof of New Delhi's deepening engagement with Abu Dhabi



T P SEETHARAM

the stage for transforming the relationship. The warm welcome he received at the airport from then Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (now President of UAE) His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan set the tone for what turned out to be a hugely successful visit.

The Joint Statement of August 17, 2015, listed 31 agreed points, the first of which was: "Elevate the India-UAE relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership". Other points included significant initiatives against terrorism, the launch of a strategic security dialogue mechanism, creation of the Infrastructure Investment Fund of USD 75 billion, an increase in trade by 60 per cent in five years, UAE's participation in the development of India's strategic petroleum reserves, cooperation in space, nuclear energy, education sectors, etc. It's a document that deserves a close reading as it prepared the ground for all the projects and proposals that subsequently emerged.

The Joint Statement issued on July 15, 2023, during the PM's fifth visit to the UAE, indicates progress on various items listed in 2015. The two countries had signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in February 2022, which further boosted bilateral trade. UAE has become the fourth largest investor in India. An MoU was signed to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border transactions. Interlinking of payment and messaging systems was initiated. A campus of the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi is being established in Abu Dhabi, initially offering a Masters program in Energy Transition and Sustainability.

India's G20 presidency and the UAE's COP28 presidency provided additional opportunities for working together on global issues. The excellent personal rapport between the leadership of the two countries and the trust it has engendered over the past ten years, brought India and the UAE into an exemplary bond of mutually beneficial partnership. The Indian diaspora has meanwhile increased to over 3.5 million, cementing ties further.

Paragraph 12 of the August 17, 2015 Joint Statement reads: "The Prime Minister thanked His Highness the Crown Prince for his decision to allot land for construction of a temple in Abu Dhabi". This was in response to a longstanding request of the Indian community in Abu Dhabi. On the eve of the PM's visit, I was informed by Sheikh Nahyan that a positive decision had been taken and that he would himself convey it to the Prime Minister during his visit to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. I accordingly briefed the PM. But in all the excitement at the Grand Mosque, Sheikh Nahyan forgot to mention the decision. He, however, conveyed it to the PM as soon as we sat down for the State Banquet later that evening.

During his forthcoming visit to the UAE on February 13-14, besides addressing the Indian community summit "Ahlan Modi" (Hello Modi) on the first day, the PM is scheduled to attend a dedication ceremony at the BAPS Hindu Temple in Abu Dhabi on February 14. After ten years, one more point mentioned in the 2015 Joint Statement can be considered accomplished. May the relationship continue to flourish in the years ahead!

The writer is former Ambassador of India to the UAE (2013-2016)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

VISION TO ACTION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Three Ratnas' (IE, February 12). The BJP government has generously awarded the Bharat Ratna to individuals from across parties. These politicians-turned-reformers have significantly contributed to India's progress and prosperity. Chaudhary Charan Singh, a champion of India's peasants, was pivotal in highlighting rural issues. Narasimha Rao's liberalisation policies ended the License Raj and opened up India's economy to the world. The globally acclaimed agricultural scientist, M S Swaminathan, guided India towards food self-sufficiency. But the true impact of the award lies in implementing their ideas at the grassroots level. The country advances by translating visions into tangible measures.

Zaid Wazi, Varanasi

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After the poll' (IE, February 12). The Bharat Ratna to Chaudhary Charan Singh, P V Narasimha Rao, and M S Swaminathan is well-deserved, recognising their contributions to the nation. However, amidst the celebration, it's vital to reflect on their legacies. Narasimha Rao's economic reforms were groundbreaking, but challenges of inequality persist,

necessitating innovative solutions like direct income support. Charan Singh's agricultural policies were transformative, but current challenges demand reevaluation and modernisation. Swaminathan's agricultural research was crucial, yet sustaining his legacy requires revitalising research systems and infrastructure. Honouring these individuals is necessary, but it's more important to address evolving societal needs through innovation and proactive measures.

Ambi Dey, Bangalore

PAKISTAN'S FATE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'After the poll' (IE, February 12). The popularity of Pakistan's erstwhile PM Imran Khan is established with many of his party's candidates, fighting as independents, winning their seats. And this despite charges of rigging by the Pakistan Army to keep Tehreek-e-Insaf's supporters and sympathisers at bay. But now, with no party getting a clear majority, a coalition government is the most probable outcome. While a weak civilian government perfectly suits the Army, it must also be remembered that the fight between Imran Khan and General Munir is far from over.

Vijai Pant, Hapur



R SIVA KUMAR

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ANDHRA PRADESH TECHNOLOGY SERVICES LIMITED
3rd Floor, R & B Building, Opp. Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium, MG Road, Lalbipal, Vijayawada - 520 010, Andhra Pradesh, India
TENDER REF ID: APTE/2023/1002170/2023/1002170/13, DATED 02/02/2024.
Short Tender Notice for Procurement of 28,014 Nos. of 65" Smart TVs for the School Education Department, GoAP (2nd call).
For further details regarding detailed Tender Notification, specifications and digital certificate, please visit <https://www.aps.gov.in> and www.approcurement.gov.in
Sd/- Managing Director, A.P. Technology Services Ltd., Vijayawada.

ARMY PUBLIC SCHOOL DELHI CANTT
SADAR BAZAR ROAD, DELHI CANTT-110010
www.apsdelhicantt.com

TENDER NOTICE
Sealed Tenders are invited from interested parties for Procurement of Dual Desk (Qty 380). RFPs with specification can be downloaded from school website www.apsdelhicantt.com. Tender Form duly completed be submitted to APS Delhi Cantt by 28 Feb 2024 by 1000 hrs along with DD (Tender Form Fee & EMD) as per RFP. For any queries contact APS Delhi Cantt on 25693777 or 25692720.
Presiding Officer

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Rahul, S/o: Tej Pal, R/o: Anangpur Puchla Mohalla, Police Station Surajkund, Faridabad, Haryana** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 152/2022, U/s 160 IPC, P.S.: Pul Prahladpur, New Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Rahul** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Rahul** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Rahul** accused of **FIR No. 152/2022, U/s 160 IPC, P.S.: Pul Prahladpur, New Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before **27.03.2024**.

By Order

Sh. Himanshu Tanwar
Metropolitan Magistrate-10
Room No. 307, 3rd Floor,
South East District, Saket Court, Delhi

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 (1) **Vinod Sharma (2) Ambika Sharma (3) Vivek Sharma S/o Vinod Sharma all R/o H.No. F-246-B, Upper Ground Floor, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi** have Committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 30/2011 U/S 498A/406/34 IPC, PS Mansarovar Park, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said (1) **Vinod Sharma (2) Ambika Sharma (3) Vivek Sharma** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said (1) **Vinod Sharma (2) Ambika Sharma (3) Vivek Sharma** have absconded (or are concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused (1) **Vinod Sharma (2) Ambika Sharma (3) Vivek Sharma** of case **FIR No. 30/2011 U/S 498A/406/34 IPC, PS Mansarovar Park, Delhi** are required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **16.03.2024**.

By Order

Ms. Nidhi Bala
Ld. Metropolitan Magistrate (Mahila Court-03)
Room No. 08, Shahdara District
Karkardooma Court, Delhi

THE H.P. STATE COOPERATIVE WOOL PROCUREMENT AND MARKETING FEDERATION LTD.,

BLOCK NO. 23, S.D.A. COMPLEX, KASUMPTI, SHIMLA-171009.
Phone No.0177-2622837, Fax: 0177-2620981
Email- gmwoofed-hp@nic.in, Website - <http://himachal.nic.in/woolfed>

E-TENDER NOTICE

[TENDER No. HPWF/52/LS/SM/2024]

SUPPLY OF DAY OLD COMMERCIAL BROILER CHICKS

E-tenders under two bid system are invited for the supply of approximately 8,19,000 Day old Commercial Broiler Chicks on F.O.R. basis anywhere in H.P., including Tribal areas and against rate contract to be kept valid for one year from the date of contract. The interested parties may download the Tender Document containing the Technical Specifications, Terms and Conditions, Timelines, Application Form and other details etc. from the official portal <http://htptenders.gov.in> w.e.f. 12.02.2024 (effective 3.00 PM) to 11.03.2024 (up till 5.00 PM). The cost of the tender document is 590/- including GST. All the future notifications/ corrigendum/s, memorandum/s etc. in connection with this tender, if any, will be published only on the official portal <http://htptenders.gov.in> and will not be conveyed individually or published in newspapers etc.

Sd/-
Managing Director

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MAINPURI CIRCLE, P.W.D MAINPURI INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) (E-Tender)

Letter No. : 648/7M-Mainpuri Circle/2024 Date : 08.02.2024

1. The Superintending Engineer, Mainpuri Circle, P.W.D., Mainpuri (U.P.) invites for registered in P.W.D. "A" class contractor, item rate bids, online for the construction of work detailed in the table given below. The bidders are advised to examine carefully all instructions including addendum/amendments to ITB, conditions of contract, contract data, forms, terms, technical specifications, bill of quantities etc. in the Bid Document.

Sl. No	District/ Division	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lac)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of Document (in Rs.)	Time of completion
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Firozabad / C.D-2	Widening and strengthening work Tunda Kutukup Chandraswar Road (ODR) in District Firozabad.	1020.00	20.40	2000+300 +414= Rs. 2714.00	12 Months

2. Bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> from **14.02.2024 to 20.02.2024 upto 12:00 Hours**. Bids must be submitted online only at e-tendering portal of <http://etender.up.nic.in> on or before **12:00 Hours on 20.02.2024** Technical Bid received online will be opened on **20.02.2024 at 12:30 Hours**.

3. Bid Security of Column No. 5 and Cost of Bid Documents as per column No. 6 will be paid by Internet Banking of E-tender portal Account as per G.O. No.-317/23-2-2018-176 No./2006 T.C-1 dt. 10-04-2019.

4. Other conditions can be seen in Standard Bidding Document (SBD).

5. The tendering process by the bidder will be done through the Uttar Pradesh government Prahar App.

6. Price escalation according to the Government Order No.-13/2020/492/23-7-2020-19 (Sa0)/2019 dated 16.06.2020 and Engineer-in-Chief's letter no.142Camp/Chief Abhi/Mu01/2020 dated 18.06.2020 will not be payable.

7. The undersigned has full right to cancel the tender without assigning any reason.

(Kamla Kant) Executive Engineer

Construction Division-2, UPID No. 20988 Date: 11.02.2024 www.up.gov.nic.in

(Sunil Kant) Superintending Engineer

Mainpuri Circle P.W.D. Mainpuri

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA
COMMISSIONERATE OF HEALTH SERVICE, Mumbai.
e-mail - procurementcell@gmail.com
Procurement Cell, 6th Floor, Arogya Bhavan,
St.Georges Hospital Compund, Mumbai - 400 001.

TENDER NOTICE

Date :- 12.02.2024

Joint Director of Health Services (Procurement Cell), Mumbai invites tender in two envelope system from the eligible bidders for the Outsourcing of NAT testing services for Health Institutes under Commissionerate of Health Service, Maharashtra.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Name of Item	Type	Prebid Meeting	Period of sale, download & submission of bid	Bid Opening
1	E-12	Outsourcing of NAT testing services	Sale Period	Dt.15.02.2024 At 14.00 hrs	Dt. 12.02.2024 at 10.00 AM to Dt. 27.02.2024 upto 14.00 PM	Dt. 27.02.2024 at 14.30 hrs

1. For detailed information, the interested bidders may visit the website

<https://gem.gov.in>

2. The Lt. Director of Health Services, (P.Cell), Mumbai reserves the right to increase or decrease the quantity to be purchased and also reserves the right to cancel all the tenders without giving any reason to.

For e-tendering help/ information, please contact.

Website: - <https://gem.gov.in>

Contact No.- Toll free Number-18020-419-3436;1800-102-3436

Email-procurementcell@gmail.com

Joint Director
of Health Services
(Procurement Cell) Mumbai.

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA | CORRIGENDUM

Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP/AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD/CORP/AUTH.	NO/AL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1.	THE ROHTAK CO-OP MILK PRODUCERS UNION LTD	TENDER ID NO 2024-HBC_346051_1	TENDER ID NO 2024-HBC_346051_1 DATE EXTENDED UPTO 17.02.2024 (04.00 PM) AND OPENING ON 19.02.2024 AT 11.00 A.M.	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	vitarohat@gmail.com
2.	THE ROHTAK COOP MILK PRODUCERS UNION LTD	TENDER ID NO 2024_HBC_2024_346816_1	TENDER ID NO 2024-HBC_2024_346816_1 DATE EXTENDED UPTO 20.02.2024 03 MP AND OPENING ON 21.02.2024 AT 11.00 A.M.	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	vitarohat@gmail.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT: www.haryanaePROCUREMENT.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

24971/HP

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA | TENDER NOTICE

Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD/CORP/AUTH	NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER	OPENING DATE/CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT/EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD/CORP/AUTH	NO/AL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	THE ROHTAK CO-OP MILK PRODUCERS UNION LTD	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF ID, FD FANS AND DUCTING OF BOILER AT VITA MILK PLANT ROHTAK	14.02.2024 06.03.2024	AS PER DNIT	https://etenders.hry.nic.in	01262-276302 vitarohat@gmail.com

24958/HRY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT: www.haryanaePROCUREMENT.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

24971/HP

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)) (E-Procurement Module)

The Executive Engineer, Tissa Division, HPPWD Tissa H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the percentage Rate bids, in electronic tendering system, from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Cost of tender form (Rs.)	Class	Completion period
1	C/o Mini Secretariat/Combined office building Tissa at Bhanjari Distt Chamba (HP) SH: C/o Building portion including water supply and sanitary installation, septic tank, rain water harvesting system and site development and boundary wall etc.)	85813870.00	1716300.00	5000.00	A-Class	24 Months

1. KEY DATES:
1. Starting date for downloading 14-02-2023 at 10.00 AM
2. Deadline for submission of Bid 23-02-2023 at 11.00 AM
3. Date of Technical bid opening 23-02-2023 at 11.30 AM

The undersigned has right to extend or cancel the bids without declaring any reasons thereof.

The Bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in

5791/HP

Executive Engineer, Tissa Division, HPPWD Tissa Pin-176316, Email-ee-dis-hp@gov.in On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

Pin-176316, Email-ee-dis-hp@gov.in On behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

24958/HRY

ज्ञारखण्ड सरकार पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग

ई-प्रोक्योरमेंट सूचना

अति अल्पकालिन निविदा सूचना संख्या -CKP-05/2023-24 (द्वितीय कॉल) दिनांक - 12-02-2024

Name of Work:- Construction of 125/115 mm dia with. 70m/90m/120m mtrs deep drilled tube well with installation of India mark II (IS 15500 Part – 2/2004) Hand pump with 32 mm dia.GI Medium class riser pipe by Truck mounted DTH RIG machine with 125mm dia blue casing UPVC pipe with drain, platform under D.W.&S. Division, Chakradharpur for the Year 2023-24.

Sr. No.	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	C/o Mini Secretariat/Combined office building Tissa at Bhanjari Distt Chamba (HP) SH: C/o Building portion including water supply and sanitary installation, septic tank, rain water harvesting system and site development and boundary wall etc.)	85813870.00	1716300.00	5000.00	A-Class	24 Months

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, PRASHANT KUMAR S/O MUKESH KUMAR R/O 2927/218, VISHRAM NAGAR, TRINAGAR, DELHI-110035, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PRASHANT KUMAR MAHESHWARI. 0040713043-4

I, Bharat Sharma R/o K-14, S.Ext-1, Delhi have changed my son name from Bhavik Sharma to Bhavik Sharma for all purposes.

0070888458-1

I, Anil Garg S/o Beli Ram R/o L-15 Upper Ground Floor, Front Position, Gali-17 Vijay Vihar Phase-2 Rohini Delhi-110085 have changed my name from Anil Garg to Anil Kumar permanently.

0040713490-1

I, Deepika Rani Chauhan w/o yogendra Kumar Chauhan R/o flat no 1403, tower-D The hydepark sector-78, Noida Gautam budi nagar uttar Pradesh-201301, I have changed my name deepika Rani chauhan to deepika Chauhan for all future purposes

0070888522-1

I, Vijay Prakash alias Vijay Parkash S/o Sh. Hari Ram R/o 24, Gali No.3, Dr. Arbedkar Colony, Khera Khurd, North West Delhi, Delhi-110082 have changed my name to Vijay Parkash for all purposes.

0040713479-3

I, Shafali Mehra alias Shafali Srivastava D/o Sh. Satish Mehra W/o Sh. Saubh Srivastava R/o 81/70, Tower-13, Silver City, Sector 93, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201301 have changed my name to Shafali Srivastava for all purposes.

0040713479-2

I, Sagar S/o Sh. Sanjay R/o L-383, J.J. Colony, Shakurpur, Sarawasti Vihar, North West Delhi, Delhi-110034 have changed my name to Sagar Reeda for all purposes.

0040713479-5

I, Rakesh Sharma S/o Sh. Sat Narayan Sharma R/o Flat No. G-4301, Kingsbury Tower, G-4, Kundli, T.D.I. City, Nangal Kalan(43), Sonipat, Haryana-131023 have changed the name of my minor son from Jatin Narayan Vats to Jatin Sharma for all purposes. 0040713479-1

I, Kushal Jain Alias Kushalhaavin Jann S/o Kunal Jain R/o C-31 Ahinsa Vihar Sector-9, Rohini Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Kushal Raajvardhan Jann

0070888509-1

I, KM Sunita Pant D/o Satish Chandra Pant and W/o Anil Joshi R/o Sanjan Colony Avas Vikas, Near Vivekanand School, Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand-263139, have changed my name to Shakshi Joshi 0070888507-1

I, Jagdish Kumar Kanaujia S/O Shri J.P Kanaujia R/H No.: -140, Zamrudpur, GK 1, ND-48 I have to change my daughter's name from Tania Kanojia to Tania Kanaujia for all future purposes. 0040713555-1

I, IQRA GULWAIZ DAUGHTER OF MR. GULWAIZ & WIFE OF MR DURRAIZ AHMED, RESIDENT OF H.NO-D-93/94, GALI NO-9, VILLAGE, WAZIRABAD DELHI-110084, declare that "IQRA" and "IQRA GULWAIZ" is the same and identical person. That my father name was mistake written in X class certificate, MD GULWAIZ" and "GULWAIZ" is belong to one and the same person. 0040713479-6

I, Ekta D/o Raj Kumar Gupta and W/o Dinesh Garg R/o House-87, Sukhdev Nagar, Panipat, PO- Panipat, Dist- Panipat, Haryana-132103, have changed my name to Karuna Garg 0070888503-1

I, Debu Prasad Sarkar S/o M L Sarkar, Address: I-146, B, Sector-22, Noida, G.B. Nagar, UP-201301, I have changed my name Debu Prasad Sarkar to Devi Prasad Sarkar for all future purpose. 0040713329-2

I, Anshul D/o Sh. Tara Chand Sharma R/o A-6, Ashok Nagar Mandoli Road Shadharai Delhi 110093, India have changed My Name to Anshul Sharma as per Voter ID and Aadhar.

0070888492-1

I, Birendra Singh S/o Chander Singh Chauhan, R/O Y-6, 404, Eros Samoopnagar, Greater Noida West, 201306 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM Birendra Singh to Birendra Singh Chauhan FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES

0070888466-1

I, SUDESH KUMARI W/O BUJER R/O 224-A, SAINIK NAGAR, BAHADURGARH, JHAJJHA R, HARYANA-124507, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUDESH. 0040713565-2

I, hitherto known as AADITYA RATHOR alias ADITYA RATHOR, S/o CHHANNU LAL, residing at, House.No.1307-B,Gali No.13, Govind Puri, Kalkaji, Delhi-110019, have changed my name and I shall henceforth be known as AADITYA RATHOR.

0040713570-10

I, ZEESHAN AHMED, S/O SHAKEEL AHMAD, R/O HOUSE-NO-2883, GALI-CAPTAIN WALI, GOLCHA CINEMA, DARYA GANJ, NEW DELHI-110002, HAS CHANGED MY NAME SHAKEEL AHMAD, FOR ALL PURPOSE.

0040713570-6

I, Usha@Usha Kumari@Usha Rani@Usha Sharma,W/o Narendar Sharma,R/o Village Pahasor (Faizabad),P.O.Badli, Distt.Jhajjar (Haryana),have changed my name to Usha Sharma. 0040713570-3

0040713570-3

I, Usha@Usha Kumari@Usha Rani@Usha Sharma,W/o Narendar Sharma,R/o Village Pahasor (Faizabad),P.O.Badli, Distt.Jhajjar (Haryana),have changed my name to Usha Sharma. 0040713570-3

I, Tagun Nisha W/o Mohd Fakhrudin R/o H No-16/274/26,Gali No-16,Block-H, Sangam Vihar,Delhi-110062,have changed my name to JAIBUN NISA,Permanently.

0040713573-3

I, Sushil Kumar Jain S/o Shri Mahabir Parshad Jain, R/o RZB-101,Nihal-Vihar, Nangloi, West Delhi, Delhi-110041, have changed my name,from Sushil Jain S/o Shri Mahabir Parshad Jain,for all,future purposes.

0040713597-2

I, Suman Lata Misra,D/o Sh.Chander Prakash Sharma,R/o B-2/2,Ground-Floor, Dilshad-Colony,Jhilmil H.O.,East Delhi,Delhi-110095, have declare that Suman Lata and Suman Lata Misra are one and the same person,for all,future purposes.

0040713565-9

I, Sukhpreet Singh,s/o Surendar Singh,R/o Block-F-2,House N-7,Sangam Vihar,Deoli, Delhi,have changed my name,from prince. to Sukhpreet Singh,for all,future purposes.

0040713574-11

I, Suhana Parveen W/o Hanif Salmani,R/o F-20,3rd Floor, Jagat Puri,Parwana Road, Delhi-110051,have changed my name to SUHANA SALMANI,Permanently.

0040713573-7

I, Sheetal Gupta, S/o Shri Subhash Chand Gupta, R/o C-9/53, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name from Sheetal Chand Gupta to Sheetal Gupta.

0040713565-5

I, Shabana w/o Mohammad Arshad Mirza,R/o J-21,Third Floor,J-extension, Ramesh Park,Laxmi Nagar,Delhi-110092 have changed my name to Shabana Mirza.

0040713565-2

I, Sagar S/o Sh. Sanjay R/o L-383, J.J. Colony, Shakurpur, Sarawasti Vihar, North West Delhi, Delhi-110034 have changed my name to Sagar Reeda for all purposes.

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I, Jagdish Kumar Kanaujia S/O Shri J.P Kanaujia R/H No.: -140, Zamrudpur, GK 1, ND-48 I have to change my daughter's name from Tania Kanojia to Tania Kanaujia for all future purposes. 0040713555-1

I, Shabana w/o Mohammad Arshad Mirza,R/o J-21,Third Floor,J-extension, Ramesh Park,Laxmi Nagar,Delhi-110092 have changed my name to Shabana Mirza.

0040713565-2

I, Sheetal Gupta, S/o Shri Subhash Chand Gupta, R/o C-9/53, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name from Sheetal Chand Gupta to Sheetal Gupta.

0040713565-6

I, Shabna w/o Mohammad Arshad Mirza,R/o J-21,Third Floor,J-extension, Ramesh Park,Laxmi Nagar,Delhi-110092 have changed my name to Shabna Mirza.

0040713565-6

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**HIMACHAL PRADESH
JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG**
NOTICE INVITING E-PROCUREMENT BID

Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Dalhousie, on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh, invites the online Item Rate Contract bids from the eligible bidders of Indian Entity through online bidding system on or before 21.02.2024 at 17:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs) on the site <http://htenders.gov.in>

Sr. No.	Description	Estimated Cost	Bid security	Time	Cost of Bid
1	Name of Work :- Providing Flood Protection Work to Village Jatroon, Tirimath and Saloh in Tehsil Bhattiya Distt. Chamba (H.P). (Sub head:- C/O Crate work back side of Jeevan kumar house at RD 20 = 3.75 Rmt, 35 = 3.75 Rmt, 42 = 3.75 Rmt, 49 = 7.50 Rmt, 76 = 6.25 Rmt, & at RD 180 = 30.00 rmt = 55 Rmt (Total = 55.00 Rmt) & C/O Crate work at RD 128, Width = 10 Rmt, at RD = 220, Width = 10 Rmt, at RD = 235 = 10 Rmt, at RD = 250 = 10 Rmt, at RD = 365 = 6.25 Rmt, at RD = 295 = 10 Rmt & C/O Crate work at Saloh at RD = 20, Width = 10 Rmt, at RD = 90, Width = 12.50 Rmt, RD = 180, Width = 12.50) (Pili mitti Nallah) & C/O Crate work at Chou Nallah at RD 0 to 120 = 120 Rmt. & Construction of R/wall at Various RD's)	Rupees 1,56,95,24/-	Rupees. 1,89,452/-	One year	Rupees 1,500/-

1. Bid documents and other instructions can be downloaded or viewed online from the portal <http://htenders.gov.in>, by the Bidders registered on the website which is free of cost.
2. Accordingly, the bidder/firm must make all necessary provision for required qualified resource personnel, their time and other costs, and appropriate engineering / technical considerations in design, construction, erection, execution, commissioning process and trial run for the project; including necessary documentation and inspections.
3. Competitive Bidding for bidders shall be conducted in accordance with "Two Stage Two Envelope" Bidding Procedure. Eligibility information, Technical Bid and Financial bid should be uploaded online as per procurement method. The bids shall be submitted online electronically only.
4. **Bid evaluation criteria-** Eligible Technically Qualified lowest evaluated bidder (L1) shall be considered as a successful bidder. However, the acceptance of the proposal shall rest with the EMPLOYER who does not bind itself to accept the lowest proposal, and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the proposals received without assigning any reason.
5. As the bids are to be submitted online are required to be encrypted and digitally signed, the bidders are advised to obtain Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from suitable vendors or from any authorized agency at the earliest.

6. KEY DATES SHALL BE AS UNDER:-

A	Date of Online publication	From 12.02.2024 at 10:00 Hrs (GST +5:30)
B	Downloading of e-bid Documents	From 12.02.2024 at 10:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs) to 21.02.2024, at 17:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs).
C	Date of submission of e-bid	From 12.02.2024 at 10:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs) to 21.02.2024, at 17:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs).
D	Physical Submission of Original Bid Security (in case offline deposit of Bid security)	Up to 11:30 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs) on 22.02.2024
E	Date of opening of bids:	
1)	Cover-1 Eligibility Criteria and Technical bid	On 22.02.2024 at 12:30 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs)
2)	Cover-2 Financial Bid	Shall be intimated separately
F	Site Visit	Between 11:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs) dated 12.02.2024 to 17:00 Hrs IST (GMT + 5:30 Hrs) dated 21.02.2024 along with the Assistant Engineer/concerned Junior Engineer, Jal Shakti Sub Division Sihunta, Sihunta

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

1. The e-bid documents shall be uploaded online in 2 (two) covers:-

Stage-I

(a) Cover -1 shall contain Scanned copies of eligibility information.

Stage-II

(b) Cover-2 shall contain "Financial bid" on the prescribed form

2. Cover-1 shall contain scanned legible copies of following "Eligibility Information" (Scanned legible copies to be uploaded in pdf file).

(i) The Bid security in favor of Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Dalhousie, shall be submitted either through online mode (e-payment) or offline mode in the form of NSC/Time Deposit receipt/ Demand Draft of any nationalized bank duly pledged in favor of "Executive Engineer" Jal Shakti Division, Dalhousie. Exemption of Bid security shall not be allowed.

(ii) The cost of bid form as shown above shall be submitted online in favor of "Executive Engineer" Jal Shakti Division, Dalhousie or through offline mode in the shape of demand draft. Exemption of cost of bid form shall not be allowed.

(iii) Copy of Certificate of registration with Jal Shakti Vibhag or any other state/central Govt. department or Govt. Undertakings in appropriate class. In case successful bidder is not registered with HP Jal Shakti Vibhag the successful bidder should get himself registered in appropriate class with HP Jal Shakti Vibhag before award of work.

(iv) Copy of Certificate of EPF registration. If not registered then the successful bidder should get before award of work.

(v) Bid Form as per Chapter IV of Form - 12 duly accepted.

(vi) Pre-qualification criteria proof:-

A bidder/firm shall be considered pre-qualified for the work if he has

a) Similar Nature of Work:

Completed the similar work i.e providing & Execution of wire crate work not less than the value of Rs.12,50,000/- Lac as a single work in JSV Department

A certificate to this effect from the Engineer-in-Charge not below the rank of Executive Engineer of a state/Semi Govt. Department/Central Govt. Dept. or Govt. undertaking of India is mandatorily required. The bidder shall upload the award letter or related agreement to collaborate the experience certificate submitted.

c) The value of executed work shall be brought to current costing level by enhancing the actual value of work at simple rate of interest @ % per annum, calculated from the date of completion to previous day of the last date of submission of tender.

Note:- Completed work means either completed or completed to the extent of minimum 90% of awarded amount (including unpaid amount on account of paucity of funds)

d) Joint venture is not allowed. However, the firm shall be free to engage any number of specialist firms for execution of specialized component of Projects.

e.) COPY PAN (Permanent Account No.) & GST registration.

f.) Work done, Experience Certificates as per Pre-qualification criteria

g.) Bid capacity = (A *N*M - B)

Where:

A = Maximum value of civil engineering works executed in any one year during the last 5 years (updated to the price level of the financial year in which bids are received at simple rate of 7 percent a year) taking into account the completed as well as works in progress.

N = Number of years prescribed for completion of the works for which bids are invited (period up to 6 months to be taken as half-year and more than 6 months as one year).

M = Multiples factor is 1.5 (one and half)

B = Value, at the current price level, of existing commitments and on-going works to be completed during the period of completion of the works for which bids are invited.

Note: 1. The bidder shall submit statements showing the value of existing commitments and on-going works as well as the stipulated period of completion remaining for each of the works listed should be countersigned by the Engineer-in-Charge, not below the rank of an Executive Engineer or equivalent. These statements can also be submitted in the shape of legally valid affidavit.

2. The bidder shall calculate and online submit his Bid Capacity as given in above of Pre qualification documents. The financial offer of the bidder shall not be opened, whose bid capacity is exhausted or is lower than the probable amount of contract given in the NIT.

3. The bidder shall submit a list of works which are in progress or in hand on the proforma as below:-

Sr. No.	Name & Particulars of Division where works are being executed	Amount of Work	Position of works in progress	Remarks

i.) The work done certificate regarding the similar works from the Engineer-in-Charge not below the rank of Executive Engineer of state/Semi Govt. Department/Central Govt. Department or Govt. undertaking of India in mandatorily required. The bidder shall upload the award letter or related agreement to collaborate the experience certificate submitted.

j.) The authorization letter regarding digital signature certificate (DSC) of the person authorized by the registered bidder to upload the bid, be uploaded along with the other documents online.

(viii). A value of civil engineering work executed during the last five years updated to the price level of the current financial year.

(ix). A scanned copy of undertaking (as per chapter iv of form -12) that I have carefully studied all the terms and conditions stipulated in the contract document before quoting the rates.

Note: No physical submission of documents, except original Bid Security/bid cost deposited through offline mode, will be allowed. Any document / information found false / fabricated during scrutiny or later anytime, the bid is liable to be cancelled immediately. In such case 'Bid Security' shall be forfeited.

a) Cover-1 shall contain Scanned copies of Eligibility Criteria.

3. Cover-2 shall contain "Financial Bid" which shall be opened at a later date to be notified separately & shall be opened only of those bidders /Firms whose documents as per Eligibility Information "Cover-1" will be found in order. The Financial Bids shall contain only Financial Bid /Offer on departmental Schedule of quantity/BQW where bidder /Firms shall quote his /their offer for the item. The Non BOQ Items shall be paid as per Clause 59 of the PWD Form 12 and GCC & SCC.

4. Rates quoted must be in INR (Indian Rupee) and shall be inclusive of all taxes applicable at the time of opening of bids.

5. The bidder shall not be permitted to bid for the work in HP Jal Shakti Circle (responsible for award and execution of the contract) in which his near relative is posted as Divisional Accountant or as an officer in any capacity between the grades of Superintending Engineer & Junior Engineer (both inclusive). He shall also intimate the name of the persons who are working with him in any capacity or are subsequently employed by him who are near relative to any gazetted officer in the JSV department. Any breach of this condition by the bidder would render him liable to be removed from the approved list of bidders of this department.

6. Bid security of L1, L2 and L3 shall be retained till the finalization of the offer of the lowest bidder or 180 days whichever is earlier.

7. No subletting of work as a whole by the bidder is permissible however the bidder may subcontract the specialized components of the work e.g., Design & Drawings, Pumping Machinery, Automation.

8. In case, opening day is a holiday, the bids shall be opened on next working day at the same time.

9. The validity of the bid shall be kept open for 180 days or can be extended with mutual consent in writing.

10. Ambiguous/telegraphic/ Conditional bids or bids by Fax/E-mail shall not be entertained/ considered in any case.

11. Conditional bids are liable to be rejected without assigning any reasons.

12. The Executive Engineer, reserves the right to reject/cancel any or all the /bids without assigning any reason(s).

13. Any enquiry regarding bids can be obtained on e-mail of the divisional officer under e-mail address xeniphdu@yahoo.co.in

14. Rates should be quoted both in figure as well as in words in Indian Rupee (INR) shall be inclusive of all taxes including GST.

Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti Division Dalhousie
District Chamba (HP) 176304

NO. JSD-DLU-EA-I-NIT/2023-17122-17180, Dated: - 09.02.2024

5783/HP


JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED
(CIN – U40108JH2013-SCG001702)
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fax # 0651-2400483 e-mail : cesp.jscb@rediffmail.com
Notice inviting tender for procurement through rate contract

JBVNL invites online e-tender from reputed, technically experienced and financially sound manufacturers/ authorized supplier only for supply of following Material through rate contract :-

Sr.	NIT/Tender notice No. and description of item	Tender fee	Date of publication of tender on website	Document download start date & time	Online Bid Submission start date	Online Bid Submission end date	Technical bid opening date and time
1	444/PR/JBVNL/2023-24 11 KV, XLPE HT AB Cable i) 3Cx150+1x10 sq.mm ii) 3Cx95+1x70 sq.mm iii) 3Cx70+1x50 sq.mm	Rs 10000/- + GST	13/02/2024 from 13:00 Hrs.	13/02/2024 from 13:10 Hrs.	13/02/2024 from 13:20 Hrs.	06/03/2024 upto 18:00 Hrs.	07/03/2024 at 18: 00 Hrs.
2	445/PR/JBVNL/2023-24 Sub Main Distribution Board (SMDB)	Rs 10000/- + GST	13/02/2024 from 13:00 Hrs.	13/02/2024 from 13:10 Hrs.	13/02/2024 from 13:20 Hrs.	06/03/2024 upto 18:00 Hrs.	07/03/2024 at 18: 00 Hrs.
3	446/PR/JBVNL/2023-24 LT AB Cable Accessories i) Piercing connector (Type -I) ii) Piercing connector (Type -II) iii) Suspension Clamp assembly- complete with strap & bracket iv) Dead end assembly- complete with strap & bracket	Rs 10000/- + GST	13/02/2024 from 13:00 Hrs.	13/02/2024 from 13:10 Hrs.	13/02/2024 from 13:20 Hrs.	06/03/2024 upto 18:00 Hrs.	07/03/2024 at 18: 00 Hrs.

NOTE:- (i) Only e-tenders will be accepted. Further details can be seen on website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and may be contacted on Mobile No. 9431135523/ 9430348596, NIC helpline No. 0651-2400178

(ii) Tender fee & EMD must be paid through online mode.

(iii) Tender fee is non-refundable.

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Farmers' protest 2.0: How this agitation differs from 2020-21

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, FEBRUARY 12

A LITTLE more than two years after they called off their massive protest at the doorstep of Delhi, farmers are once again on the road to the capital. Three union ministers were meeting them in Chandigarh for a second round of talks on Monday evening. The talks were ongoing at press time.

In both its demands and leadership, the protest of 2024 is different from the yearlong agitation of 2020-21, during which the farmers succeeded in their main goal of forcing the central government to roll back its agricultural reforms agenda.

What is this farmers' protest about?

More than 250 farmers' unions under the banner of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM), which claims to have the allegiance of about 100 unions, and the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political), a platform of another 150 unions, have called the protest that is being coordinated from Punjab.

The two forums gave a call of "Delhi Chalo" at the end of December 2023 to re-

mind Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the promises to farmers two years previously.

The farmers were scheduled to march on Delhi on Tuesday. Tractor trolleys have been on the move, and barricades, nails and heavy equipment have been deployed to thwart them — even as talks have been ongoing, with the Centre claiming an "open mind" on their demands.

Are the leaders of 2020-21 active again?

No. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) is a faction that broke away from the original Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) in July 2022. Its coordinator is Jagjit Singh Dallewal, president of the Punjab-based Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKTU) Sidhupur farm union, who broke away from the SKM following differences of opinion with the leadership of the main organisation.

KMM, the other organisation in the current protest, was formed by Sarwan Singh Pandher, convener of the Punjab-based union Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC). The KMSC did not join the main protest against the farm laws in 2020-21, and had instead set up a separate stage at the

Delhi border at Kundli.

After the protests ended, the KMSC started to expand its base — and at the end of January, announced the formation of the KMM, comprising more than 100 unions from across India.

The SKM, the flagship body of more than 500 farmer unions of India, which led the 2020-21 agitation against the farm laws, is not involved in the ongoing protest. In Punjab, 37 farm unions, including the largest, BKU Ugrahan, are part of the SKM.

The SKM has given its own call for a Grameen Bharat bandh on February 16. While the SKM is not part of the Delhi Chalo agitation, the Morcha issued a statement on Monday evening saying there must be no repression of farmers who are participating. BKU Ugrahan too issued a statement criticising the Haryana government's efforts to stop the march.

What are the demands of the farmers?

The headline demand in the farmers' 12-point agenda is for a law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) for all crops, and the determination of crop prices in accordance with the Dr M S Swaminathan Commission's report. The other demands are:



Police place a container on NH44 at Singhu border to prevent farmers from marching to Delhi on Monday. PTI

trade agreements;

- Pensions for farmers, farm labourers;
- Compensation for farmers who died during the Delhi protest, including a job for one family member;
- Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 should be scrapped;
- 200 (instead of 100) days' employment under MGNREGA per year; daily wage of Rs 700, and scheme should be linked with farming;
- Strict penalties and fines on companies producing fake seeds, pesticides, fertilisers; improvements in seed quality;
- National commission for spices such as chili and turmeric;
- Ensure rights of indigenous peoples over water, forests, and land.

How has the government responded?

KMM and SKM (Non-political) emailed their demands to the Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce and Industry on February 6. On February 8, Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and MoS Home Nitin Gadkari met a 10-member farmers' delegation in Chandigarh. The meeting was coordinated by Punjab Chief

Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Mann was not involved in the second meeting (on Monday), where a delegation of 26 farmer leaders met the three ministers. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Congress have extended their support to the farmers. The BJP and Shiromani Akali Dal have been silent so far.

Even as the farmers and the ministers were talking, the Haryana government started sealing its borders with Punjab on February 8. As of Monday evening, a massive 12-layer barricade had been erected at the Shambhu Barrier on national highway 1 leading to Delhi, and multiple barricades had been set up at Fatehabad, Khanauna, Dabwali, etc. The Internet had been shut down in several districts.

Rajasthan sealed its borders with Punjab and Haryana on February 11, and imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC in Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh districts.

Haryana's security arrangements this time are very tight compared to 2020. On November 26, 2020, farmers from Punjab had broken through the barricades. Farmers riding hundreds of tractor-trolleys this time are said to be accompanied by cranes and other equipment to remove the barricades.

EXPLAINED CULTURE

HOW 'CHINESE' IS GOBI MANCHURIAN, AND WHY DID A GOAN FAIR BAN IT?

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, FEBRUARY 12

STIRRING QUITE the pot, North Goa's Mapusa Municipal Council recently passed a unanimous resolution banning the sale of gobi manchurian at roadside stalls during the five-day annual Bodgeshwar temple zatra (fair).

Why was gobi manchurian banned during the fair?

Councillor Tarak Arokhar, who drafted the resolution, said that the dish poses a serious health hazard as it is prepared under "unhygienic conditions in roadside stalls" during the fair.

"Vendors add synthetic colours, Ajinomoto [monosodium glutamate or MSG], and poor-quality sauces...made from a powder which contains reetha [Indian soapberry, often used in shampoos and detergents]," he said.

Some believe, however, that behind the dish being targeted may lie prevalent anti-outsider sentiments in Goas.

"A lot of vendors selling gobi manchurian are not natives of Goa...there is often a sentiment that the culture of another place may come and alter its character," Karan Manavalan, chef-owner of a restaurant in Goa, said. "There is no hygiene issue in the preparation of this dish," he added.

And what is gobi manchurian?

Gobi manchurian — fried cauliflower (gobi) florets tossed in a 'Manchurian' red chilly sauce — is an Indian-Chinese staple.

Vir Sanghvi, writer and food critic, referred to the dish as the vegetarian version of chicken manchurian, which restaurateur Nelson Wang claims to have invented.

Till that time, the idea of *teekha* (spicy) Chinese was unknown to Indians. Chicken



Gobi manchurian is especially popular in South India. Getty Images

manchurian made waves after reaching Delhi, where it then laid the foundations of the Punjabi-Chinese cuisine — basically spicy masala Chinese food in red sauce.

"Since it was so popular, people tried doing vegetarian variations. In Delhi, paneer manchurian was tried. But, in the South, gobi manchurian was the preferred alternative," Sanghvi said.

Thus, gobi manchurian probably came about sometime in the 1980s.

Is the dish 'Chinese'?

Like much of what Indians consume as 'Chinese' food, gobi manchurian is very much an Indian creation.

"I don't know whether they eat *gobi* in Manchuria," food historian Sohail Hashmi said. "They eat a lot of meat, at times cooking vegetables with it, but that does not look or taste like what is served in India... Gobi manchurian can be described as 'Chinjabi' — a mix of Punjabi and Chinese," he said. He suggests that Indian 'Chinese' has drawn more from north and north-east Indian food, than actual Chinese.

Sanghvi said: "Chinese people, when they come here, are freaked out when they learn about this dish."

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The bar for granting bail under the UAPA is higher than ordinary criminal law. Two Supreme Court Benches of the same strength have taken different views on what the 'prima facie test' for bail should be

AJURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

UNDERLINING THAT the oft-quoted phrase, 'bail is rule, jail is the exception', does not find any place in the stringent anti-terror Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), the Supreme Court on February 7 denied bail to Gurwinder Singh, an accused in an alleged "Khalistan module" case.

Singh was arrested when he was found hanging cloth banners with "Khalistan Jindabad" and "Khalistan Referendum 2020" on them in Punjab. He is now accused of being part of a larger conspiracy with Sikhs for Justice, a pro-Khalistan group banned by India.

While the bar for granting bail under the UAPA is higher than ordinary criminal law, there are some cases in which courts have granted bail.

How have courts interpreted Section 43D (5) of the UAPA? Why do courts deny bail in most cases despite some rulings that have raised the bar for the state to argue against the bail?

The law

Section 43D (5) of UAPA reads: "Notwithstanding anything contained in the Code, no person accused of an offence punishable under Chapters IV and VI of this Act shall, if in custody, be released on bail or on his own bond unless the Public Prosecutor has been given an opportunity of being heard on the application for such release.

Provided that such accused person shall not be released on bail or on his own bond if the Court, on a perusal of the case diary or the report made under section 173 of the Code is of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against such person is *prima facie* true."

The law essentially says that while relying only on the police version — the case diary and the police report — the accused must show to the court that it is unreasonable to believe that the accusations are *prima facie* true.

In shifting the onus on the accused, the cardinal principle of criminal law that a person is innocent until proven guilty is upheld in the framework of the UAPA.



(From left) Student-activists Asif Iqbal Tanha, Devangana Kalita, and Natasha Narwal. They were granted bail in a UAPA case in 2021. Express photo by Cajendra Yadav

Narrowing the room for bail

In 2019, a two-judge Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar ruled in *Zahoor Ahmed Shah Watali v NIA* that for granting bail under UAPA, courts must not examine the evidence but only accept it at face value. The SC in this case was hearing an appeal against a Delhi HC ruling by a Bench headed by Justice S Muralidhar granting bail to a Kashmiri businessman.

"The Court is merely expected to record a finding on the basis of broad probabilities regarding the involvement of the accused in the commission of the stated offence or otherwise," the apex court had said.

Once charges are framed in the case, the court in *Watali* said, effectively an accused "may have to undertake an arduous task to satisfy the court that despite the framing of charge, the materials presented along with the chargesheet do not make out reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against him is *prima facie* true" in order for the court to grant bail.

Legal scholar Gautam Bhatia wrote in his blog 'Indian Constitutional Law and Philosophy' that for the lawyer of an accused

in a UAPA case, arguing for bail would be "participating in a swimming competition with both arms tied behind their backs: they cannot deploy any part of the arsenal open to the defence team in a regular criminal trial, and they are only permitted to try and point out internal contradictions within the Prosecution's case, or show how even when you assume the Prosecution's case to be true, it does not meet the UAPA threshold." The *Watali* judgement "effectively tied a dumbbell to the defence's legs in addition to its arms being tied behind its back, when it further restricted what materials the Court could consider in a UAPA bail hearing," he wrote.

Post-Watali rulings

The *Watali* judgement effectively closed the window, especially for trial courts, to look at the prosecution's case critically while granting bail. If the prosecution's case is flimsy, courts cannot question it, raising concerns about the liberty of an individual.

Courts have, however, granted bail in several cases, including in some high-profile ones.

The Delhi High Court in 2021 granted bail

to three student activists — Asif Iqbal Tanha, Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal — in the anti-CAA protests in North East Delhi. The HC applied the *Watali* precedent but placed the burden of making out a *prima facie* case on the police, instead of the court itself having to make out a case.

The court said that specific individual charges must be made out by the prosecution and not broad speculations and inferences. The Court said it did not locate a "specific factual allegation" and said that it was "of the view that the mere use of alarming and hyperbolic verbiage in the subject charge-sheet will not convince us (the Court) otherwise." The SC, however, stayed the operation of this ruling as a precedent.

The Bombay High Court, in granting bail to Dalit rights activist Anand Teltumbde, simply referred to the material before it and found no specific link to an overt act by Teltumbde. "...prosecution needs to show the nexus and link of Appellant with the present crime or any specific overt act," the court said. The SC dismissed the state's appeal against this ruling.

In February 2021, in *Union of India vs NAJEEB*, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court headed by then CJN N V Ramana allowed bail under UAPA when the accused had undergone incarceration for a significant period. This, however, was carved out while acknowledging that bail under UAPA is an exception, but it needs to be balanced with the right to a speedy trial.

The Supreme Court in *Vernon Gonsalves v State of Maharashtra*, in July 2023, differed with the *Watali* ruling on how the "prima facie" test would apply. "In our opinion, however, it would not satisfy the *prima facie* test unless there is at least surface-analysis of probative value of the evidence, at the stage of examining the question of granting bail and the quality or probative value satisfies the Court of its worth," the Bench said.

However, since both the *Watali* and the *Gonsalves* ruling are by Benches of the same strength, it will have to be seen how future Benches apply the test. If there is substantial disagreement between different two-judge Benches, then a larger Bench will have to settle the law.

In the *Gurwinder Singh* case, the two-judge Bench relied on the *Watali* ruling entirely without considering the *Gonsalves* ruling.

Death in Wayanad: What is behind Kerala's rising human-animal conflict

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEBRUARY 12

WAYANAD IS on the boil after a radio-collared wild elephant chased a 47-year-old man and trampled him to death inside a gated property in a residential area. Local people have alleged inaction on the part of forest and revenue officials, and are demanding the capture of the elephant.

Kerala human-animal conflict

The incident underscores the continuing human-animal conflict in Kerala. Of the state's 14 districts, 13 have reported an increased incidence of wild animals — mainly elephants, tigers, bison, and wild boar — attacking humans. Wayanad, Kannur, Palakkad, and Idukki are the worst-hit.

Government data for 2022-23 recorded 8,873 wild animal attacks, 4,193 of which were by elephants, 1,524 by wild boar, 193 by tigers, 244 by leopards, and 32 by bison.

The elephant involved in the latest death in Wayanad had been captured and radio-collared by the Karnataka forest department in November 2023 before being released into the wild.

Fall in quality of Kerala forests

A 2018 study by Dehradun's Wildlife Institute of India and the Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation in Kerala found two major drivers of human-animal conflict in the state.

First is the decline in the quality of forest habitats, mainly due to the cultivation of alien plants such as acacia, mangium, and euc



Gerard Mestralle is well-connected in the energy industry. File

FRANCE

Energy group ex-chief named envoy for future Asia-EU corridor

FRENCH PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron named the former head of gas utility Engie as its special envoy to a multilateral rail and ports project linking the Middle East and South Asia tipped as an alternative to China's Belt and Road initiative. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was launched on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September last year and is part of Washington and Brussels's plan to counter China's flagship global infrastructure project. It aims to link West Asia by railway and connect it to India by port, helping the flow of energy and trade from the Gulf to Europe. US and European officials have said, by cutting shipping times and costs. **REUTERS**

PHILIPPINES

Landslide toll 68, window for survivors closing

THE DEATH toll from a landslide in the southern Philippines has climbed to 68 as officials said on Monday the window of finding more survivors is closing. Rescuers were looking for 51 more people in the wake of the February 6 landslide, which struck outside a gold mine in Maco town in Davao de Oro province and buried homes and vehicles that were supposed to ferry employees of the mining company. Disaster authorities plan to shift their focus from search and rescue to search and retrieval beginning Tuesday. **REUTERS**

USA

Texas church firing: 2 injured, attacker killed

A WOMAN was killed in Texas' Houston on Sunday after opening fire at a megachurch run by prominent evangelical Christian pastor Joel Osteen, the city's police chief said. Two people were shot during the shooting. Among them, a child aged about five is in critical condition while a man shot in the hip is stable. The shooter, a woman in her early 30s, was killed. The police believe the shooting was an isolated incident. **PTI**

CANADA

Indian-origin man wanted for father's murder

A 56-YEAR-OLD Indian-origin man was allegedly murdered by his son at their home in the Canadian province of Ontario, police said. Hamilton Police Sunday said Sukhaj Singh Cheema, 22, was wanted for the first-degree murder of his father Saturday night. Witnesses told officers that Cheema fled the residence after an altercation with the victim. Cheema is considered to be armed and dangerous, police said. **PTI**

THE WORLD



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

OIL SPILL SPARKS NATIONAL EMERGENCY

A large oil spill near the twin-island nation in eastern Caribbean has caused a "national emergency", coating numerous beaches on Tobago's southwest coast. Divers have not been able to contain the leak after a vessel overturned last week. - **AP**

OVER 12,300 MINORS KILLED IN GAZA STRIP SINCE OCT 7: MINISTRY

Israeli troops rescue 2 hostages in dramatic raid that killed 67 Gazans

Operation in Rafah threatens Israel's peace deal with Egypt

NAJIB JOBAIN, JOSEF FEDERMAN & SAMY MAGDY
RAFAH, GAZA STRIP, FEB 12

ISRAELI FORCES rescued two hostages early Monday, storming a heavily guarded apartment in Gaza Strip and extracting the captives under fire in a dramatic raid that was a small but symbolically significant success for Israel. Heavy airstrikes that provided cover for the operation killed at least 67 Palestinians, according to health officials in the beleaguered territory.

The operation, in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, unleashed another tragedy in a war that has killed 28,340 Palestinians in Gaza, displaced over 80% of the population and set off a massive humanitarian crisis.

Google pledges €25 mn to boost Europe AI skills

London: Google has pledged €25 million (\$26.98 million) to help people in Europe learn to use artificial intelligence (AI).

Announcing the funding on Monday, the tech giant said it had opened applications for social enterprises and nonprofits that could help reach those most likely to benefit from training.

The firm will also run a series of "growth academies" to support companies using AI to scale their companies and has expanded its free online AI training courses to 18 languages.

Last month, Google announced it would invest \$1 billion into building a data centre just outside of London, as it moves to meet growing demand for internet services in the region.

The data centre, located on a 13-hectare site bought by Google in 2020, will be located in the town of Waltham Cross, the Alphabet-owned company said in a statement. **REUTERS**

Fernando Simon Marman and Louis Hare, the two freed hostages, reunite with their families in Ramat Gan, Israel; (right) families of those killed in the rescue raid by Israel, in Rafah. **Reuters**

said they also hold Argentinian citizenship. They are just the second and third hostages to be rescued safely; a female soldier was rescued in November.

The airstrikes that backed up the Israeli forces during the raid killed at least 67 people, including women and children, Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Health Ministry in Gaza, said.

Netanyahu has said sending ground troops into Rafah is essential to meeting Israel's war goals. On Sunday, the White House said President Joe Biden had warned Netanyahu that Israel should not conduct a military operation against Hamas in Rafah without a "credible and executable" plan to protect civilians.

More than half of Gaza's 2.3 million population is now crammed into Rafah, where hundreds of thousands live in sprawling tent camps and overcrowded UN shelters.

Biden and Netanyahu spoke after two Egyptian officials and a Western diplomat said Egypt threatened to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if troops are sent into Rafah. **AP**



INDONESIANS PROTEST POLL MEDDLING

Protesters hold yellow flags traditionally used to symbolise mourning during a rally demanding fair elections, in Jakarta on Monday. Students and activists have criticised President Joko Widodo over his lack of neutrality after he threw his support behind frontrunner Prabowo Subianto, who has picked Widodo's son Gibran Rakabuming Raka as his running mate. Voting will be held on Wednesday. **AP**

Nepal PM's 'War Day' snub to SC as 2 pro-monarchy groups unite



YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, FEBRUARY 12

Has also warned ally Deuba of a review in ties. **File**

TROUBLE SEEMS to be on the horizon again in Nepal's political scene. In a snub to the judiciary, Maoist chief and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has announced Tuesday as 'People's War Day' to commemorate the day armed insurgency broke out against the monarchy 28 years ago.

Tuesday is also scheduled to witness a "massive rally" in Kathmandu by one of the two pro-monarchy, Hindu nationalist groups who have united to work on a common agenda, including holding Prachanda's government to account for "corruption".

Meanwhile, the PM, who's the chairman of the CPN-MC, has warned main ally Nepali Congress that it was time to review their 13-month-long collaboration, saying it had not been quite rewarding for his party.

Although Prachanda did not specify a deadline, senior leaders of his party have been pressing him to explore a deal with the main Opposition party, the CPN (UML), after cross-voting allegations against Nepali Congress.

Last year, the Supreme Court quashed the government's decision to observe a holiday on 'People's War Day', saying some tasks of the peace process were yet to be completed.

Although he did not mention the word 'holiday', PM Prachanda, speaking at a party event, said the day will be observed "no matter what the Supreme Court may have said".

Meanwhile, Durga Prasai, who heads a movement to restore monarchy, and is scheduled to hold a "massive rally" in Kathmandu, has joined hands with Rajendra Lingden's Rastriya Prajatantra Party. "We are keen to work with any force that stands for a Hindu Kingdom (of Nepal)," Lingden told *The Indian Express*.

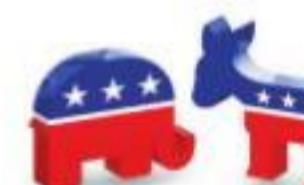
Trump's threat to abandon NATO allies draws scorn, from own party and rivals

RICHARD COWAN
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 12

SOME OF former President Donald Trump's fellow Republicans on Sunday lashed out at him for saying he would not want to protect NATO members from a future attack by Russia if those countries' contributions to the defence alliance were lagging.

"This is why I've been saying for a long time that he's unfit to be president of the US," former Republican presidential candidate Chris Christie told NBC.

During a political rally on Saturday in South Carolina, Trump complained about what he called "delinquent" payments



EXPLAINED RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

by some NATO countries and recounted what he said was a past conversation with the head of "a big country" about an attack by Russia on their countries.

"No, I would not protect you. In fact I would encourage them (Russia) to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay," Trump said he told the unnamed

leader.

The remarks prompted rebukes from the White House,

E Short of target

THE FAILURE of many of NATO's 31 members to meet a defence spending target of at least 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) has long been a source of tension with the United States. NATO estimates have shown that only 11 members are spending at the target level.

PTI

which called them "appalling and unhinged," as well as from other top Western officials.

Former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, who is Trump's lone remaining challenger for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, said: "The last thing we ever want to do is side with Russia."

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a close ally of Trump's, told Reuters he disagreed "with the way he (Trump) said it". "Russia didn't invade anybody when he was president and if he's President again they won't," he said.

A *Politico* report quoted Republican Senator Rand Paul saying that Trump's remarks were a "stupid thing to say." **REUTERS**

OVER A DOZEN PEOPLE INJURED IN WEEKEND BRAWLS BETWEEN ULTRA-ROYALISTS AND MONARCHY-REFORM ACTIVISTS

In row over royal carcade, Thai PM signals a detour: Safe spaces

REUTERS
BANGKOK, FEBRUARY 12

THAILAND'S PRIME minister has called for dialogue in "safe spaces" over the once-taboo issue of royal family motorcades, after more than a dozen people were injured in weekend brawls between ultra-royalists and monarchy-reform activists.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin's comments on Monday came amid a public row triggered earlier this month when monarchy-reform activist Tantawan "Tawan" Tuatulanon, the sister of King Maha Vajiralongkorn,

A royal motorcade drives past a group of anti-government protesters in Bangkok. **Reuters file**

on an expressway in Bangkok.

The police are considering taking legal action against Tantawan and fellow activist over the Feb. 4 motorcade incident, Police Chief Torsak Sukvimon told reporters on Monday.

Tantawan, who already is facing royal insult charges for previously discussing royal motorcade issue, apologised for driving recklessly on Feb. 4 in a Facebook post on Monday, and denied that her car was trying to harass or block the royal convoy.

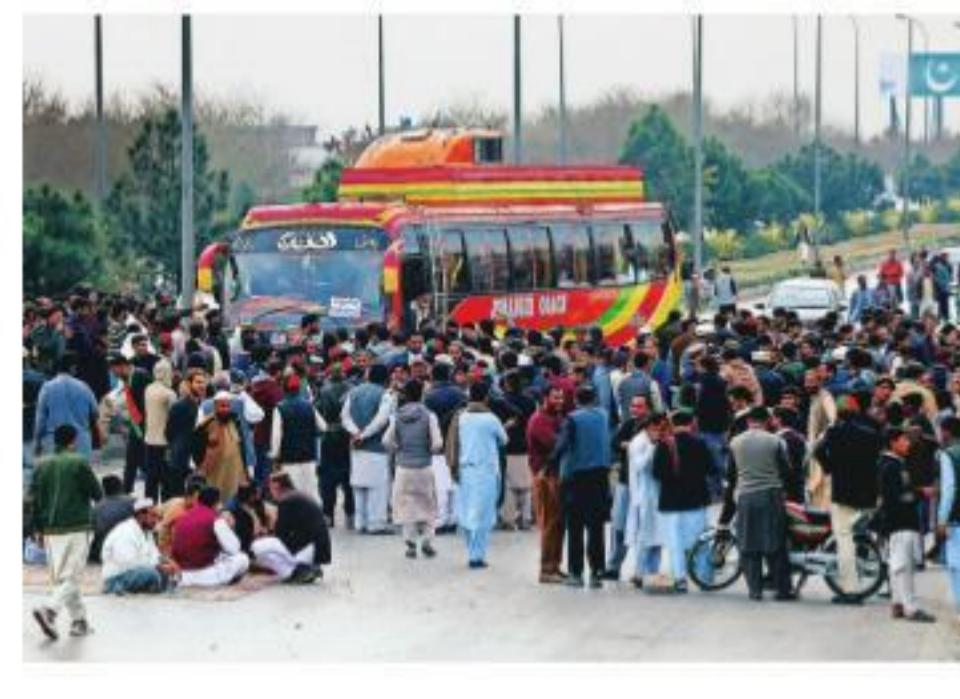
On Saturday, a group of ultra-royalists angered by the motorcade incident clashed with Tantawan and her fellow activists

with the police chief and other security officials.

Just a few years ago, even discussing royal motorcades in public would have been almost unthinkable.

A youth-led political movement that emerged in 2020 and broke traditional taboos by calling for the reform of the powerful monarchy has previously criticised the blocking of traffic for royal motorcades.

The Thai government in late 2020 said the king was concerned and the police had adjusted security protocols to reduce disruption for the public. **REUTERS**

Imran Khan's supporters block the Peshawar-Islamabad motorway to protest the poll results, in Peshawar. **Reuters**

As Nawaz, Bilawal thrash out alliance govt, Imran party says will sit in Opp

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 12

IMRAN KHAN'S Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party will not join hands with rival PML-N or the PPP to form a coalition government and would sit in the opposition despite having a majority in the newly elected Parliament, party leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has said.

Independent candidates, mostly affiliated with Khan's PTI, secured the most parliamentary seats in last week's general election. However, PTI does not have enough seats in the 266-member National Assembly to form a government on its own.

"We don't feel comfortable with both PMLN and PPP. It is better to sit in the opposition than to make a government [with them], but we think we have the majority," Gohar Khan told *Dawn News*.

The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced that independent candidates, a majority of them supported by the PTI secured 101 seats, followed by Nawaz Sharif's PML-N with 75 seats, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's PPP getting 54 seats, and MQMP bagging 17 seats.

Other parties got 17 seats while the result of one constituency was withheld.

Though the PTI initially claimed to form the government, but its chances looked grim from the beginning as at least 169 seats, in the house of 336, were needed to form the

government.

Meanwhile, sources said several open and behind-the-scenes meetings have been held between the leaders of PML-N and PPP and other parties.

The main hurdle is who will lead the government as both parties are pushing forward their candidates but some sort of middle ground may emerge, according to a PMLN leader.

An independent source said a new formula for dividing the five-year tenure between the two parties was being discussed and could be acceptable to both.

PTI

SENSEX: 71,072.49 ▼ 523 (0.73%) NIFTY: 21,616.05 ▼ 166.45 (0.76%) NIKKEI: 36,897.42 ▲ 34.14 HANG SENG: 15,746.58 ▼ 131.49 FTSE: 7,572.96 ▲ 0.38 DAX: 16,979.89 ▲ 53.39



GOLD

₹63,150



USD RATE

₹83



OIL

\$81.94



SILVER

₹75,400

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of February 9

International market data till 1900 IST

ONGC arm looks to pay in roubles for Sakhalin 1 project stake

REUTERS
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

INDIAN OIL company ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) is in talks with the Russian government to pay its contribution to the Sakhalin-1 abandonment fund in roubles, a company official said on Monday.

The contribution is a requirement for OVL to take a 20% stake in the project, which is operated by a new Russian entity.

"We are at an advance stage of trying to pursue Rosneft to accept the abandonment obligation of OVL for getting back its 20% share (in the Sakhalin 1 project)," Vinod Hallan, a finance executive at OVL, told an analysts' call.

An abandonment fund is used for decommissioning activities to ensure that wells are properly shut in and that the process would not affect the environment in future.

OVL, the overseas investment arm of India's top explorer Oil and Natural Gas Corp, and other state-run Indian companies have not been able to repatriate their dividends for stakes in producing Russian energy assets due to sanctions.

The overall pending dividends of Indian companies

OVL is looking at using pending dividend to pay for its share in the abandonment fund

amount to around \$500-\$600 million.

OVL is looking at using the pending dividend to pay for its share in the abandonment fund in roubles, Hallan said on ONGC's post-earnings call for analysts.

"Our application with Russian authorities is expected to be heard very soon and we hope to close the transaction of meeting the abandonment obligation," he said.

A raft of Western sanctions have made it difficult to transfer funds to Russia in dollars and payment in roubles require approval from the Russian authorities.

Last April ONGC got back its \$600 million contribution made to the previous abandonment fund for Sakhalin 1 from the foreign party administrator after ExxonMobil's exit from the project, ONGC said in May last year.

The Russian government has agreed to grant OVL a 20% stake in the new project operator Sakhalin-1 LLC provided it makes the contribution to the new accumulated fund.

MEETING OF RESERVE BANK'S CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

No review of action against Paytm Payments Bank: Das

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das during a meeting with the RBI's Central Board of Directors in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

THERE WILL not be any review of the action against Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) as the central bank takes any decision after much "consideration and deliberation," Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Monday. Speaking after a meeting of the Central Board of Directors of the RBI, Das said some FAQs (frequently asked questions) for Paytm customers would come out this week.

When asked if there would be an extension for the deadline for customers, Das said: "Wait for the FAQs".

"If you are expecting a review of the decision, let me say very clearly there is no review of the decision. The FAQs which we are proposing will deal with customer issues with FASTag holders, wallet users, etc. FAQs will address issues faced by the customers and the depositors. There is nothing on the table on the review of the decision (against PPBL)," he told reporters after the 606th meeting of the Central

Board of Directors of RBI, which was addressed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

"When a decision is taken, it is taken after much consideration and deliberation. Decisions are not taken in a casual manner. They are taken in a serious manner. When we make a decision we examine all pros and cons. We have given one month's time

so that there are no difficulties for customers," Das said.

For the overall fintech sector, he said, the RBI is not against any fintech but its prime objective is to protect the interest of customers and depositors. "RBI promotes and will continue to promote fintech. But customer interest and financial stability is of prime importance," he said.

On January 31, the RBI barred Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags and NCNC card after February 29, 2024, in the wake of persistent non-compliances and material supervisory concerns.

The crackdown on PPBL came after a comprehensive system audit report and subsequent compliance validation report of the external auditors, the RBI had said.

The RBI had directed that the Nodal Accounts of One97 Communications Ltd (OCL), which owns Paytm, and Paytm Payments Services Ltd are to be terminated at the earliest, in any case not later than February 29,

2024. Paytm Payments Bank has been facing RBI scrutiny since 2018. The RBI's recent action on PPBL came after it was found that the bank had violated KYC norms and also had linked the same PAN to multiple customers.

It was also observed that the bank was allowing transactions above the permissible limit, which raised concerns over money laundering. "How much (it will) stabilise I

SpiceJet may lay off 1,000 employees to reduce costs

ROHIT VAID
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

SpiceJet is eyeing ₹100 cr annual savings through the measure

FINANCIALLY TROUBLED low-cost carrier SpiceJet plans to bring down its annual cost by around ₹100 crore, mainly by laying off employees. Though the airline did not reveal the number of employees who will be asked to leave as part of manpower realisation programme, sources said that the number could be around 1,000. SpiceJet currently has around 9,000 employees.

"As part of our turnaround and cost-cutting strategy, following the recent fund infusion, SpiceJet has initiated several measures, including manpower rationalisation, aimed at achieving profitable growth and positioning ourselves to capitalise on the opportunities in the Indian aviation industry. Through this initiative alone, we anticipate an annual saving of up to ₹100 crore," a company spokesperson said on Monday.

Apart from facing financial headwinds, SpiceJet is also facing several legal battles. The company feels that it has excess manpower compared to the number of planes in service. A final decision on the quantum of layoffs is expected this week, sources said.

Currently, SpiceJet has a fleet of little over 30 aircraft apart from 10 planes that are on wet lease. During a meeting with the airline's senior officials last month, SpiceJet chairman and managing director Ajay Singh emphasised the importance of

judicious spending and that he will personally oversee all major expenditures.

The carrier will prioritise fleet upgrades, enhance on-time performance and cost-cutting measures will be implemented to streamline operations, according to an internal note last month. SpiceJet is also in the process of raising funds from various investors.

On January 26, the carrier said it has received ₹744 crore as the first tranche of the total ₹2,250 crore proposed to be raised through the issuance of securities on a preferential basis.

The airline has also availed funds worth around ₹1,000 crore under the government's emergency credit line guarantee scheme and Singh has committed to infusing ₹500 crore. FE

The layoffs are expected across departments and the final list is being prepared, sources said. People from the management and consultancy are working on chalking out the contours of the layoff plan, and all the departments have been asked to give their inputs, sources added.

Sources also said that SpiceJet has stopped operations on certain RCS (regional connectivity scheme) routes and at those stations, there is excess manpower, especially staff with lower salaries.

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BRIEFLY

Hockey: India women suffer 1-2 loss to China

Rourkela: The Indian women hockey team's disappointing run in the FIH Pro League continued as it lost 1-2 to China here on Monday. India took the lead in the seventh minute through Sangita Kumari's field goal but China equalised in the 14th minute through Gu Bingfeng (penalty corner), who then scored his second goal of the match in the 53rd minute through a penalty stroke. India had lost to China by the same 1-2 margin in their earlier match on February 3 in Bhubaneswar. India earned five penalty corners in the match -- as against four by China -- but as is their wont, they could not convert a single one. PTI

Deshwal takes Jaipur to PKL semis

Kolkata: Arjun Deshwal put up a magnificent performance as Jaipur Pink Panthers secured a Pro Kabaddi League semi-finals spot after a 67-30 victory over U.P. Yoddhas here on Monday. Deshwal top-scored with 20 raid points and defenders Sunil Kumar and Ankush contributed with High 5s. Mahipal picked up a couple of raid points as the Yoddhas inched 3-2 ahead in the fourth minute. Sumit tackled V Ajith Kumar and reduced the Panthers to just two members on the mat. However, Abhishek KS pulled off a super tackle on Gagan Gowda as the Jaipur side levelled the scores at 7-7 in the eighth minute. PTI

Gokulam Kerala FC win 3 in a row

Kozhikode: Gokulam Kerala FC eked out a hard-fought 2-0 win over Shillong Lajong FC in a crucial League match at the EMS Stadium here on Monday. For Gokulam Kerala, Sourav K (45+4) and Matija Babovic (72nd) were the scorers. This was the Malabarians' third victory on the trot after two big wins over Sreenidi Deccan FC and Inter Kashi on the either side of their Kalinga Super Cup campaign. The win helped Gokulam climb to the third spot in the I-League standings with 23 points from 13 matches. They have six wins, five draws and two losses. Lajong remained in the sixth spot with 19 points from 13 games, including five wins, four draws and losses each. PTI

Shanto named Bangladesh captain

Dhaka: Najmul Hossain Shanto has been appointed captain of the Bangladesh cricket team in all three formats for one year, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said Monday. Shanto replaces Shakib Al Hasan, who has been suffering from a vision problem caused by an issue with the retina of his left eye. "We discussed about captaincy at length...after the lengthy discussion we reached in consensus to appoint Najmul Hossain Shanto as the captain of Bangladesh in all three formats for this year," BCB president Nazmul Hassan said. AP

RAJKOT TEST

Hometown awaits Jadeja's turn

All-rounder has been enduring a relatively tough time, both on and off the field, but match at his home ground could offer revival

SRIRAM VEERA
RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 12

"RAVINDRA JADEJA, lekin voh idhar nahi pada (but he didn't study here)" the sentry at the gate of the famous The Rajkumar College in Rajkot, the alumni includes Ranjitsinhji, Duleepsinhji, Ajay Jadeja, five other Test cricketers and several first-class players, announces grandly about his favourite player in the Indian team.

The sun has begun to sink, the college has just shut for the day, and the man who will guard nothingness in the nights perks up: "Voh humare jaisey hain. (He is like us)." Not from the clan of rajas and the royals who once dotted the college, that is.

Jadeja, born in a one-room government flat to a nurse and a security guard, has risen in stature to being called 'Bapu', endearment for kings and mass leaders these days. The few around the guard bristle when it is put to them that Axar Patel is also called Bapu by some of his IPL teammates. "Jadeja is Bapu, not Axar".

But their Bapu, who hails from the Jamnagar, is in a spot of bother now. On and off the field. He usually shuts critics with grand performances when talks swirls against him, and his faithful seem pretty confident.

Jadeja's father recently gave a bruising interview, dragging mud all over. Jadeja responded against the interview in support of his wife, who incidentally is a rising politician from the ruling party BJP. "His father might have said stuff, but he is doing well - wife is in BJP; he is playing for India, he is loved here ... what else is needed?" says a young man at the college gate. The conversation drifts to suggestions on where the best Kathiawadi cuisine in the city is.

Lot on the plate

The big-picture view from the young man is right. But Jadeja, though, does have a lot on his plate. Especially on the field. His left-arm hasn't been as deadly with the ball and bat as before. He has even been involved in the unthinkable, run-out, jogging diagonally across, treading the longest way to the other end and found short by an under-arm flick from Ben Stokes.

The batting dip is a touch curious and involves his greater ambition of becoming a proper Test batsman that he achieved and is the reason he is played as the sole spinner in overseas conditions.

In 2018, in the turnaround tour of his career in England, he stunned everyone with his batting. He was more compact than before, better shot-selection, awareness of his off stump, greater knack in art of building an innings.

All those elements now seem to have curiously hindered him at home where possibly the younger Jadeja-like flamboyance could help more. Especially against England. Especially in the absence of Rishabh Pant. India's lower order is stellar and the main reason behind their success at home against Australia in the last series was Axar, Ashwin, and Jadeja soaking up the middle order's failures.

But that was Australia; against this



Rajkumar College in Rajkot, where the alumni include Ranjitsinhji, Duleepsinhji, Ajay Jadeja. Express

Bazball England, Jadeja probably needs a different approach. Axar tried in both games, got runs too and fell to soft dismissals. Ashwin, one susses, is trying to get more positive in his brief stays thus far. Jadeja too probably can try, but has seen so much success with his more patient style that he is perhaps confident he can still pull it off in that vein.

Missing bite

It's his bowling that India will need more to fire. This isn't the old England where they could seemingly roll their arm over and trigger chaos.

India's lack of trust in their own batting too has led them to sweat over their pitches ever so carefully: Rahul Dravid standing with his arms on his hip peering at the pitch will go down as the most recurrent visual of the two Tests.

At the end of every session, he walks past his incoming troop and rushes to have a look at the track before the groundsmen's brooms sweep the surface. The likes of Jadeja haven't got an akhada, a rank-turner yet.

"I am not the type of individual who feels the need to tell people daily how hard

I am working. Rather, I would, as I do on social media, keep showing my horse riding! Because no one knows how to do it. Koi kar hi nahi saktai! [in his farmhouse, Jadeja likes to ride on unsaddled horses at night]," he once told this newspaper.

It's time, then, for Jadeja to ride his return to bowling form and luckily for him, it can start at his home track

where he has conjured bucketful of wickets in domestic cricket.

Whenever he was out of the Indian team, it's here he would roar back to form with five-fors.

Once in 2015, the former curator Rasik Makvana, potbellied magician with a rake, produced sandpits where Jadeja grabbed 38 wickets in four games to storm back into the national team.

He knows the ideal length, trajectory, pace, and trickery needed. It's a series in India, but the best bowler has been Jasprit Bumrah. It's time a spinner rose to stop Bazball. Perhaps, it's Bapu's turn.



Patience has yielded rich dividends abroad for Ravindra Jadeja, but a more aggressive batting approach may help at home. Reuters

Rahul ruled out; Sarfaraz, Jurel expected to make debuts

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 12

ONE OF India's batting mainstays KL Rahul has been ruled out for the third Test match against England in Rajkot.

The senior selection committee, while naming the Karnataka batsman for the last three Test matches, had added a rider. On Saturday, while announcing the team, the BCCI statement had said that "the participation of Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul is subject to fitness clearance from the BCCI medical team".

The Indian Express understands that while Rahul wasn't found to be fully fit yet, Jadeja was given the green signal to take the field for the crucial third Test in the series which is tied 1-1. The medical team, it's learnt, has told the selectors that they would observe Rahul for one more week to take a call on his availability.

Rahul was earlier ruled out for the second Test at Vizag after he had complained of right quadriceps pain during the first Test match in Hyderabad. Injuries and withdrawals have impacted the Indian team in the ongoing series.

The biggest blow for the Rohit Sharma team was the absence of team's superstar, Virat Kohli, who has informed the Indian board that he was sitting out of the series because of personal reasons. This was followed by India's big

battling hope, Shreyas Iyer, losing his place in the side because of lack of runs.

Replacing Rahul in the Test squad will be another Karnataka batsman Devdutt Padikkal.

In his latest Ranji Trophy match, Padikkal had scored 151 with the chairman of selectors Ajit



KL Rahul also missed the 2nd Test. AP

Sarfaraz gets his chance

After averaging over 100 for three successive seasons, Sarfaraz Khan is all set to get a Test cap. With middle-order batsman KL Rahul failing to clear the fitness test, the Mumbai batsman is expected to be in the playing XI for the third Test at Rajkot.

"Sarfaraz will be making their debut. As KL has been ruled out for this Test, Sarfaraz will be getting his first game," a source confirmed.

Sarfaraz has been toiling hard since the past few years. Even though selectors picked Rajat Patidar ahead of him after Virat Kohli's withdrawal from the first two Tests, Sarfaraz didn't lose hope. A day after the selection day snub, he scored 161 against England Lions.

"I would get emotional about my wait to get into the team. My father always told me that keep working hard and you'll be unstoppable. Having self belief and patience is very important," he told the bcci.tv on his Test call.

"More than myself, I am happy for my father. In a country that boasts such a huge population, it is a proud feeling to be part of the Indian team," he added. The 26-year-old also delved further into the day when he found out about his call up. "I didn't believe it at first. Then I informed everyone at home but my father was not there. I called him at his native place and he also became emotional. My only dream has been to fulfil his (father) desire to see me playing for the country," he said.

Also making his debut for the Test starting on February 15 will be wicket-keeper batsman Dhruv Jurel. The 23-year-old Uttar Pradesh gloveman will replace KS Bharat, who was far from his best so far in the series.

RANJI ROUND-UP

Delhi get memorable win

DELHI'S ROLLER-COASTER of a domestic season continued as they secured a come-from-behind victory over hosts Himachal Pradesh in Dharamsala on Monday. After conceding a first-innings deficit, Delhi came back into the game through a solid second-innings batting performance to set a challenging target of 327 for their opponents. It was right-arm medium pacer Himanshu Chauhan who was the wrecker-in-chief in the fourth innings, returning figures of 5/63.

Fellow seamer Pranshu Vijayan provided the finishing touch after opening bowler Siddhant Sharma had scalped two important wickets. For Himachal Pradesh, only all-rounder Rishi Dhawan put up any significant resistance with a knock of 65.

BRIEF SCORES: Delhi 264 & 381/6 declared beat Himachal Pradesh 319 & 250 (Rishi Dhawan 65; Himanshu Chauhan 5/63, Pranshu Vijayan 3/44) by 76 runs

Dream outing for Jalaj

IT WAS a match that veteran all-rounder Jalaj Saxena will remember for a long time as he starred with both ball and bat to fashion a 109-run win for Kerala over Bengal at Thumba. Saxena had scalped nine wickets in the first innings and contributed 40 and 37 opening the batting as the visitors were set a target 449 runs to win in the fourth innings. Saxena added four more wickets, taking his match tally to 13 as Bengal fell well short, despite the efforts of Shahbaz Ahmed and Abhimanyu Easwaran.

BRIEF SCORES: Kerala 363 & 265/6 declared beat Bengal 180 & 339 (Shahbaz Ahmed 80, Abhimanyu Easwaran 65; Jalaj Saxena 4/104) by 109 runs

(The other) Jadeja wins it for Saurashtra

LEFT-ARM SPINNER Dharmendrasinh Jadeja spun a web as Rajasthan were bundled out for a mere 87 in pursuit of 306, fashioning a comprehensive win for visitors Saurashtra in Jaipur. Jadeja returned figures of 7/32 while off-spinner Yuvraj Singh Dodiya scalped the other three as Rajasthan were dismissed inside 29 overs, with only Sumit Godara and Mahipal Lomror getting into double figures.

BRIEF SCORES: Saurashtra 328 & 234/6 declared (Arpit Vasavada 74 not out) beat Rajasthan 257 & 87 (Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 7/32, Yuvraj Singh Dodiya 3/25) by 218 runs

Time runs out

IT WAS a thrilling end to the game between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in Chennai as the hosts ended proceedings eight wickets down in the fourth innings, 17 short of the victory target of 355. It was a 125-run partnership between Baba Indrajith and Vijay Shankar that brought Tamil Nadu back in the reckoning after they had lost half their side for just 199. But once that partnership was broken, via a run-out, they lost three wickets for six runs, including the two set batsmen.

BRIEF SCORES: Madhya Pradesh 454 beat Baroda 132 & 270 (Shashwat Rawat 102, Jyotsnil Singh 83; Kulwant Khejriwala 5/34, Kumar Kartikeya 3/77) by an innings and 52 runs

with Tamil Nadu 151 & 338/8 (Baba Indrajith 98, Pradosh Ranjan Paul 74, Vijay Shankar 60; Vijay Kumar Vyshak 3/71)

Vidarbha earn bonus point

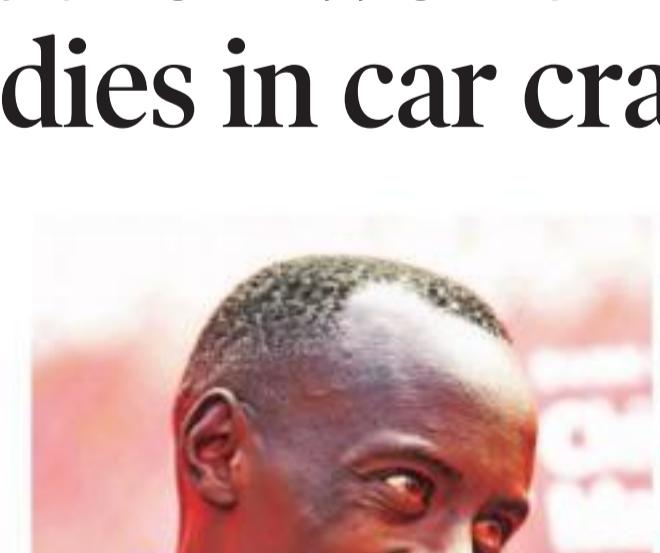
MEDIUM PACER Aditya Thakare took five second-innings wickets as Vidarbha thrashed Maharashtra by 10 wickets in Pune, thereby securing seven points from the game. Having taken a huge first-innings lead, Vidarbha dismissed the hosts for 371 before knocking off the 28 runs needed for victory without the loss of a wicket. It was a decent second-innings batting performance by Maharashtra, but they were so far behind in the game for it to make much of a difference.

BRIEF SCORES: Maharashtra 208 & 371 declared (Murtaza Trunkwala 86, Ankit Bavne 84, Digvijay Patil 68; Aditya Thakare 5/54) lost to Vidarbha 552 & 28 for no loss by 10 wickets

Khejriwala gets four in four

Not only did Madhya Pradesh seamer Kulwant Khejriwala bag a hat-trick against Baroda, he took four wickets in as many balls as the hosts romped to an innings victory and seven points in Indore. The left-arm medium-fast bowler, who cut his teeth at the first-class level at Delhi before switching teams, not only dismissed centurion Shashwat Rawat, but also ran through the lower order to end the Baroda resistance, as the visitors made a better fist of their innings while following on.

BRIEF SCORES: Madhya Pradesh 454 beat Baroda 132 & 270 (Shashwat Rawat 102, Jyotsnil Singh 83; Kulwant Khejriwala 5/34, Kumar Kartikeya 3/77) by an innings and 52 runs



Kelvin Kiptum died in car crash alongside his coach on Monday. USA TODAY/Reuters

veered off the road into a ditch, travelling for about 60 metres along it before crashing into a large tree.

Kiptum and Hakizimana died at the scene but the woman, 24-year-old Sharon Chepkurui Kosgei Keiyo, survived with serious injuries and was treated at a local hospital.

Tributes poured in from senior Kenyan politicians and fellow athletes.

"His mental strength and discipline were unmatched. Kiptum was our future," Kenya's President William Ruto said on social media platform X.

Kipchoge, who had been expected to race Kiptum at the Paris Olympics, said he was "deeply saddened" by the death of "rising star" Kiptum.

The athlete lost control of the vehicle and

writing on X, the 39-year-old said Kiptum was an "athlete who had a whole life ahead of him to achieve incredible greatness".

Kiptum, a product of the high altitude region of Kenya which has produced most of the country's world renowned distance runners, started his international career on the half-marathon circuit in 2019.

He made an explosive entry into the full 42.195km distance by running the then fourth fastest time on record (2:01.53) to win the 2022 Valencia Marathon on debut.

That race revealed his trademark approach to marathons, running with the pack for the first 30kms and then upping the pace and racing off alone for the remainder of the race.

The athlete lost control of the vehicle and

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Harmanpreet's prolific 200

With a goal-scoring record second to none, skipper key for Paris but team needs another quality drag-flicker

VINAYAKK MOHANARANGAN
FEBRUARY 12

THE WORDS of Dutch head coach Jeroen Delmee before the India vs Netherlands FIH Pro League match in Bhubaneswar and Hardik Singh after it had one sentiment in common: Harmanpreet Singh is pretty good at what he does.

Delmee said that for his side to keep India at bay, they needed to avoid conceding penalty corners. Hardik said he was always confident of his team making a big play if they could just get a penalty corner in time... which he did with two minutes left for Harmanpreet to fire a rocket to equalise at 2-2 against the world No.1 side.

The Indian captain had a weekend to remember at the Kalinga Stadium as he marked his 200th senior appearance with a game-saving goal against the Dutch, after a brace against Spain. "It's always a privilege to wear the Indian jersey and whenever I wear this, it feels like I'm wearing it first time," he posted on social media later.

I'm a Harman fan'

Someone who has seen Harmanpreet develop from close quarters is Rupinder Pal Singh, himself one of India's star drag-flick-

ers. "I have seen him from the time he began his career, in the junior team, in the Hockey India League, and so on. Honestly, I am a fan of Harmanpreet, the way he has remained consistent and how he is there for the team every match 100 percent," Rupinder tells The Indian Express. "These days, if you see, international teams' penalty corner defence has become strong. But even that hasn't made it difficult for him to score regularly."

At the start of an Olympic year, it augurs well for India that their talisman appears to be in good form. "More than 170 goals in 200 matches is just a phenomenal record," Siddharth Pandey, hockey commentator and FIH Level 2 certified coach, tells this daily.

The two drag-flicks he scored with over the weekend in Bhubaneswar also highlighted the variety he brings to the table. He has the wrists to go high or low, left or right. Beyond immense self-confidence, Rupinder adds a technical aspect. "His belief in his abilities sets him apart. The way he trains, and the rhythm he has, is one of the best. He has superb variety in drag-flicks, he knows how to use them. But also the way he is picking up the ball when it is being trapped is exemplary, he is barely taking any time to do that and the millisecond-



Harmanpreet marked his 200th appearance with a game-saving goal against the Dutch.

onds he saves there because of his speed, is helping him beat the defence."

While India have had some good flickers in the past, Harmanpreet stands out for being a complete package. "He has got a fantastic range of passes, whether it's aerial balls, 40m slap shots, or a deceptive slap pass, he's got it all," Siddharth adds.

Dependency on skipper

Even as India rightly celebrate his milestone, a concern remains that Harmanpreet has been India's top scorer by a wide margin in the last few years. In 2023, he scored 42 goals from 33 matches and that was followed by Mandeep Singh (18 in 31), Abhishek (16 in 27). In 2022, the corresponding numbers were 38 goals in 31 matches for Harmanpreet, followed by 13 in 28 for Mandeep and 11 in 28 for Abhishek.

Of course, Harmanpreet and India had a forgettable World Cup at home in 2023, and by his high standards, the captain didn't find his scoring touch often enough as his team would have liked.

"We are very dependent on Harmanpreet, yes, and that was exposed at the World Cup," Siddharth says. "He had a tough tournament, and India went on to have a bad tournament. And that experience will surely come in handy for him in Paris. But it is worrying because of what's coming behind him, there's not a lot. A few options going around but we genuinely lack a second world-class flicker, which is what I think got us the bronze in Tokyo."

Gulf in class

The lack of a reliable Plan B remains a con-

cern. Jugraj Singh's flicks are pacy and he is good when a plan is presented to him but as a defender, he seems to have mistakes in him. Sanjay is an upcoming young player, a solid defender but he may not quite be a world-class flicker in six months. India unleashed Amit Rohidas as a surprise drag-flick weapon at the Hangzhou Asian Games to good effect and perhaps that remains the best second best.

In addition to that, India's forwards are rather skillful but not quite prolific. Mandeep is a master at manipulating space, Lalit Upadhyay scores some memorable goals, Akashdeep Singh and Gurjant Singh offer flexibility, and there are others too who are sharp with their stick skills like Sukhjeet Singh. Their overall goal-scoring output, though, needs to go up.

"It will take a few months, but Abhishek could be a prolific goal-scoring forward. He has everything in his skillset to be one," Siddharth adds.

There are areas to work on before Paris for Craig Fulton and Co. For now, though, India can remain confident that they have one of the world's best goal-scorers in their ranks, leading the way. As Siddharth says, "It is no coincidence that India's most successful decade in the modern era has coincided with Harmanpreet Singh being an integral part of the team."

Mahomes leads Chiefs to comeback win over for Super Bowl title

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LAS VEGAS, FEBRUARY 12

PATRICK MAHOMES, Travis Kelce and Andy Reid have made the Kansas City Chiefs a dynasty. They're already thinking three-peat.

First, they had to become the first back-to-back Super Bowl champions in 19 years.

Mahomes made sure of it, leading another super comeback on the NFL's biggest stage in America's showcase capital.

Mahomes threw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Mecole Hardman in overtime, and the Chiefs rallied to beat the San Francisco 49ers 25-22 on Sunday, becoming the NFL's ninth repeat Super Bowl champs.

With pop star Taylor Swift watching boyfriend Kelce from a suite, the Chiefs captured their third title in five years, a run that puts them among the league's greatest franchises. "Well, you know the goal has always been to get three," Kelce screamed on stage after sharing a kiss with Swift. "But we couldn't get here without getting that two, and having that target on our back all year... How about that? We get a chance to do it three times in a row." The NFL's first Super Bowl in Las Vegas was a sloppy, mistake-filled affair that was mostly boring until the back-and-forth fourth quarter and OT. It was the second of 58 Super Bowls to be tied after regulation, and the first played under new overtime rules that ensured both teams got the ball.

Thomas Cup team reunites, Sindhu returns at BATC

SHIVANI NAIK
FEBRUARY 12

INDIA'S THOMAS Cup-winning squad from 2022 gets to flaunt their prowess and fix the odd chink in their armour at the Badminton Asia Team Championships starting on Wednesday.

At Shah Alam in Malaysia – where the men's team stocked up on groceries shopping together, posed poolside donning funky glares and matching hotel towels for Instagram shots, and were flanked by a strong, united coaching staff – the successful team seemed happy. The legacy of that Thomas Cup, which India will defend this May, was also a bunch of elite shuttlers, confident of themselves and happy for their teammates. Satwiksairaj Rankireddy-Chirag Shetty, HS Prannoy, Lakshya Sen and K Srikanth are formidable names over a 3 singles-2 doubles format; but they are also fun-spreading folk in team situations.

As such, with only Korea and Malaysia at almost full strength amongst men, India will back themselves as one of the favourites. But grouped with Hong Kong and China, with only two of the three making the quarterfinals, they must hit the ground running straightaway against the former on Wednesday.

India's enviable fist at the Thomas Cup packed a punch due to three formidable singles players in Lakshya, Srikanth and Prannoy. They will need an encore, with Prannoy tasked with playing the first men's singles (MS1) this time.

Hong Kong are no pushovers and their MS 1 & 2 are World No.1 Lee Cheuk Yiu and No.22 Ng Ka Long Angus, the most improved and most stubborn opponents on the circuit with a proclivity to annoy Indians. Chan Yin Chak, No.89, is their third singles player. Law Cheuk Him-Yeung Shing Choi (No.107) and Chow Hin Long-Lui Chun Wai (No.157) are their best doubles combines, and Indians hold a certain edge there.

Against China on Thursday, India will face their second string in Lu Guang Zu and Weng Hong Yang, no pushovers. Prannoy, ranked No.7 will likely be up against No.16 Weng in MS1. While Lakshya can be backed to nail down No.17 Lu in MS2, Srikanth will need to be on his toes against Lei Lanxi, who's far better than his No.35 rank suggests.

China have landed without their top two singles players, Shi Yuqi and Li Shifeng, as well as their top two doubles pairings. But their doubles pairings are always dangerous, and will need careful screening by India's doubles pairs.

Sindhu's return

India's women's team isn't particularly fear-inspiring beyond PV Sindhu and the energetic doubles of Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand and Ashwini Ponnappa-Tanisha Crasto. Yet, assured of a quarter-final spot by default and playing a group tie without the pressure of qualification, these five women can set the tone against China-lite.

Of greatest interest will be Sindhu's return from knee trouble that saw her freeze her ranking (No.11) for three months. She's back after training at Prakash Padukone's academy in Bengaluru, and will likely be thrust into attack against Chinese Han Yue, World No.8.

Sindhu first came to prominence as a 17-year-old running roughshod over mighty Chinese names, and the young Indian singles guns Ashmita Chaliha and Anmol Kharb will have no one better to inspire them. China haven't pulled their punches in the women's doubles, sending current World No.4, Sheng Shu Liu-Ning Tan, and the Indians will need to be at their best.

Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia have landed with their top women's pairings, and it's a tricky few knockout days for both Indian pairs.

Korean women have skipped the event altogether which means no An SeYoung. Many other top women's singles names - Chen Yufei, Tai Tzu-Ying, Ratchanok Intanon, Akane Yamaguchi - aren't in Shah Alam so Sindhu can perhaps ease her way back. Even as she takes her gingery first few steps on a comeback, the former world champ will be looked up to shoulder India's burden and make the last four for Uber Cup qualification.

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