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Ex-envoy: ISI tipped off India in 2019 about Qaeda plot to hit Kashmir

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

PAKISTAN'S SPY agency ISI had tipped off India through the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad about an al-Qaeda plot to carry out an attack in Kashmir in June 2019, which turned out to be genuine, former Indian envoy Ajay Bisaria has revealed in his latest book.

In his book, titled "Anger

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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FROM PAGE ONE ■ FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

'Abuse of power': SC scraps release of 11 Bilkis case convicts

sentenced, is the appropriate government to pass an order of remission" and not the one where the crime took place or where the convict was imprisoned.

Bilkis Bano was gangraped and her three-year-old daughter was among the 14 people killed by a mob including the 11 men, on March 3, 2002, during the riots in Limkheda taluka of Gujarat's Dahod district. She was pregnant at the time.

The 11 men were convicted in 2008 by a CBI court in Mumbai. The Supreme Court had transferred the trial in the case from Gujarat to Maharashtra in 2004 citing "exceptional circumstances".

Following the writ petition of one of the convicts – Radheshyam Shah, who had completed 15 years and 4 months in jail, the Supreme Court had on May 13, 2022, ordered that the Gujarat government was the appropriate government

to decide his remission plea in accordance with the state's 1992 remission and premature release policy.

Following the Supreme Court's May 13, 2022, order in Shah's case, the Gujarat government had on August 15, 2023, released the 11 convicts under its 1992 remission policy. It had cited a "unanimous" recommendation of the Jail Advisory Committee (JAC) to grant the convicts remission on grounds of "good behaviour".

Castigating the state of Gujarat for not filing a review petition seeking correction of the May 13, 2022, order by another bench of the Supreme Court, the bench comprising Justice Nagarathna and Justice Bhuyan, said, "Had the state of Gujarat filed an application seeking review of the said order and impressed upon this court that it was not the appropriate government, but the state of Maharashtra...ensuing litigation would not have arisen at all. On the other hand...the state of Gujarat has usurped the power of state of Maharashtra and

passed the orders of remission based on the order of this court dated May 13, 2022 which in our view is a nullity in law."

"This is exactly what this court had apprehended at the previous stages of this case and had intervened on three earlier occasions in the interest of truth and justice by transferring the investigation of the case to the CBI, and the trial to the Special Court at Mumbai," the bench said Monday.

The bench, which perused the remission order in the case of Shah, said it reflected "complete non-application of mind". It added "all" the remission "orders dated 10.08.2022 are stereotyped and cyclostyled orders".

The Supreme Court held the May 13, 2022 judgement "nullity and non est in law" since it said "the order was sought by suppression of material facts as well as by misrepresentation of facts and therefore, fraudulently obtained at the hands of this Court". Consequently, "all proceedings taken pursuant to the said order also stand vitiated and are non est in the eye of law", it said.

The Supreme Court bench rejected the prayer of the convicts to protect their liberty and said allowing them to remain out of jail "would be an instance of this

Court's imprimatur to ignore rule of law and instead aid persons who are beneficiaries of orders, which in our view, are null and void and therefore non est in the eye of law".

The Court said even if the convicts wanted to seek remission afresh in accordance with the law, "they have to be in prison as they cannot seek remission when on bail or outside the jail".

According to the Supreme Court, Radheshyam Shah who had earlier failed to get any relief from the Gujarat HC had "surreptitiously filed the writ petition before this court seeking to consider his case for remission without revealing the full and material facts before this court" and "relief was granted by this court by conferring jurisdiction on state of Gujarat which it did not possess...in the guise of consideration for remission on the basis of the 9-7-1992 policy which stood cancelled in the year 2013".

The bench said it "cannot be unmindful of the conduct of respondent Nos.3 to 13, particularly respondent No.3 who has abused the process of law and the court in obtaining remission... Therefore, in complying with the principles of rule of law which encompasses the principle of equal protection of law as enshrined in Article 14 of the

Constitution, we hold that 'deprivation of liberty' vis-à-vis respondent Nos.3 to 13 herein is justified in as much as the said respondents have erroneously and contrary to law been set at liberty... the said respondents were all in prison for a little over fourteen years (with liberal paroles and furloughs granted to them from time to time). But, they were released pursuant to the impugned remission orders which have been quashed by us. Consequently, the status quo ante must be restored".

The bench pointed out that when Radheshyam Shah's plea was being heard by another bench of the apex court in 2022, the Gujarat government had "correctly submitted...that the appropriate government in the instant case was the state of Maharashtra and not the state of Gujarat" though this was ultimately rejected in the May 13 judgement. The bench of Justices Nagarathna and Bhuyan wondered on Monday why the Gujarat government had not approached it seeking correction of the May 13, 2022, order given its earlier stand.

While upholding the maintainability of Bilkis Bano's petition, the Supreme Court did not rule on the maintainability of other PILs filed in a criminal case and left the question open to be decided in an appropriate case.

• Today is my New Year... this is what justice feels like: Bilkis

my children... I thank the honourable Supreme Court of India for giving me, my children and women everywhere this vindication and hope in the promise of equal justice for all," she said.

She also thanked those who had stood in her support: "I have said before, and I say again today, journeys like mine can never be made alone. I have had my husband and my children by my side. I have had my friends who have given me so much love at a time of such hate, and held my hand at each difficult turn. I have had an extraordinary lawyer, advocate Shobha Gupta, who has walked with me unwaveringly for over 20 long years, and who never allowed me to lose hope in the idea of justice."

Reliving the moments of despair following the remission, she said, "A year-and-a-half ago, on August 15, 2022, when those who had destroyed my family and terrorised my very existence were given an early release, I simply collapsed. I felt I had exhausted my reservoir of courage.

Until a million solidarities came my way. Thousands of ordinary people and women of India came forward. They stood with me, spoke for me, and filed PIL petitions in the Supreme Court. 8,500 people from Mumbai and 6,000 from the rest of the country wrote appeals; 10,000 people

wrote an open letter, as did 40,000 people from 29 districts of Karnataka. To each of these people, my gratitude for your precious solidarity and strength. You gave me the will to struggle, to rescue the idea of justice not just for me, but for every woman in India. I thank you. Even as I absorb the full meaning of this verdict for my own life, and for my children's lives, the dua (prayer) that emerges from my heart today is simple -- the rule of law, above all else, and equality before law, for all."

Yaqub Rasool, her husband, told The Indian Express that the family was "happy and thankful" that the SC delivered justice. "The SC order has reinstated our faith in the judiciary of the country and it gives us consolation that justice is alive... But, we know that the convicts will prepare to apply for remission from the other state... We are thankful to the SC that they will be sent back to jail for now," he said.

A source close to the family added that Bilkis, her husband and their children have been living at an undisclosed location since remission was granted to the convicts by the Gujarat government in August 2022.

Advocate Gupta, who represented Bilkis in the Supreme Court, told The Indian Express that the apex court had considered the long periods of parole

granted to the convicts during their stay in Godhra sub-jail, while also "indicating the Gujarat government" for using the order of one convict to release all 11.

"Bilkis and the family are extremely happy. It is indeed a very good judgment, considering that only one person came and the Gujarat government considered the order to be applied to all 11... The SC has made it clear that the convicts must return to jail and also noted that Radheshyam Shah had 'concealed facts' that the authorities in Maharashtra, where the case had been tried, had submitted negative reports when he had approached the Bombay HC earlier," she said.

Gupta added that the court took note of the fact that the convicts had enjoyed "leniency" while serving their sentence in Godhra sub-jail, being granted frequent paroles. "The court has considered their jail records and noted the fact that they were granted frequent paroles... They have been asked to turn themselves in within two weeks, failing which, the Gujarat police will have to start looking for them," she said.

The Indian Express had in August 2022 reported how the convicts made frequent petitions for parole, spending up to 90 days on parole in a single year.

• Indian tourists in Maldives near double to 11% in 5 yrs

the Maldives government suspended the three.

According to The Indian Express's analysis of data from the tourism ministry in Maldives, Indian residents in 2023 accounted for 11.2 per cent of the total tourist arrivals—18.42 lakh—in the island nation, with Russia being a close second with a share of 11.1 per cent. The share of Indian travelers to the Maldives was just 6.1 per cent in 2018, but jumped over the next few years, partly due to changes in travel flows during and after the pandemic. In 2020, 2021, and 2022, India topped the list of source markets for the Maldives, with Indian tourists having a share of 11.3 per cent, 22.1 per cent, and 14.4 per cent, respectively.

Aviation consultancy CAPA India said that the Maldives's tourism industry would be "concerned" about the potential impact of this controversy. Although the Maldives has acted against the three ministers by suspending them, social media in India are replete with calls to boycott the tourism-dependent island nation as a holiday destination. The consultancy said that given the fast news cycle of social media, which quickly moves on "to the next controversy", the actual impact of the boycott calls on actual travel may be "ephemeral". "Unless of course the negative sentiment esca-

lates to a level where Indian travellers genuinely feel unwelcome in the Maldives," CAPA India added.

At least one major online travel booking portal—EaseMyTrip—has suspended sale of flight tickets to the Maldives. There are close to 60 flights per week between India and Maldives, of which, Indian carriers operate around 50 flights. IndiGo, Air India, Vistara, and Air India Express currently operate flights between India and Maldives. So far, no Indian carrier has indicated changes to its Maldives schedule due to the controversy.

According to CAPA India, this controversy underscores the probability of travel and tourism being drawn into geopolitical and economic affairs as India's outbound travel grows further. "...the current situation does highlight how tourism can be drawn into geopolitical and economic affairs, especially in cases where a destination has significant dependence on key source markets. India will increasingly be one of

those source markets," the consultancy said. Outbound travel by Indians is growing at a rapid pace and is estimated to grow at the rate of 15 per cent per annum through the end of this decade, it said.

"In this case, the calls for a boycott in India have been led by public opinion. A similar popular groundswell was seen in China in relation to Thailand in 2018 (following the capsizing of a tourist vessel off the coast of Phuket in 2018) and in relation to Malaysia in 2014 (following the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines MH370)," CAPA India said.

India is the largest source market for a number of destinations, especially in its neighbourhood, including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan, as well as Dubai. And it ranks in the top five for several others, such as Thailand and Singapore, CAPA India said, adding that more countries are likely to join their ranks in time as outbound travel by Indians grows further.

• Ball in Maharashtra Govt's court

inclined to seek remission in accordance with law, they have to be in prison as they cannot seek remission when on bail or outside the jail," it said.

It has also clarified that it is the Maharashtra state which is the appropriate government to decide on the remission applications of the convicts. This means that the convicts can approach the Maharashtra government in the future for remission and that it will depend on the remission policy of the state among other factors.

A counsel for one of the convicts was not available for comment.

While the convicts pleaded they be allowed to remain outside and their liberty be protected, the Supreme Court said this cannot be accepted since they have lost that right once convicted and sentenced to imprisonment.

The judgment shows that one of the convicts, Radheshyam Shah, had in fact approached the Maharashtra government earlier and the special CBI judge in Mumbai and the CBI, both of whom had opposed his early release.

The GR further gives two sets of categories, describing 29 types of nature of offences. One of the categories that the special CBI court said would apply on these convicts would be the offences related to crimes against women and children, where the crime is committed with exceptional violence, which has the minimum imprisonment to be undergone as 28 years, before they can apply for remission.

On August 1, 2019, Shah had approached the Maharashtra government—the BJP-Shiv Sena coalition led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Shah wrote to the Secretary, Department of Home Affairs, which was then led by Fadnavis, seeking early release.

The government sought the opinion of the CBI, which was the investigating agency, and that of the presiding judge of the special CBI court in the Mumbai City Civil and Sessions court, under whose jurisdiction the trial was held and the men convicted in 2008.

In a report dated August 14, 2019, the CBI had recommended that Shah "should serve his sentence fully and no leniency should be given to him", noting that he had actively participated

• Ex-envoy: ISI tip-off in 2019

Management: *The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan*, published by Aleph Book Company, Bisaria says that the Indian envoy was used as a channel since ISI was taking no chances and wanted no repeat of Pulwama, and it wanted to make it clear at a political level that it was not involved with the revenge attack being planned.

The Pulwama attack took place in February 2019, in which 40 Indian security personnel were killed, prompting air strikes by India at Balakot, and a military response by Pakistan air force.

Shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi was re-elected for a second term in office in 2019, Bisaria writes, "A few days later in June, I received a phone call in Islamabad at two in the morning. My caller was a contact close to the ISI and I assumed he was calling me simply because he was up late like most folks in Islamabad awaiting the sehri meal in the month of Ramzan. The call had a more serious purpose, it was to tip me off with a specific input about al-Qaeda planning an attack in Kashmir. On 23 May, a terrorist, Zakir Musa, had been killed in the town of Tral in Kashmir's now famous Pulwama district."

He said that Musa, whose funeral drew more than 10,000 mourners, had been an associate of slain terrorist Burhan Wani, but had split from the Kashmir-focused militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen, to declare his allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2017. Al-Qaeda was apparently about to avenge Musa's killing.

Another surmise was that "General (Qamar Javed) Bajwa, the army chief, through the ISI, was trying to improve the atmosphere in the relationship in the run-up to the Bishkek summit of 14 June, hoping that Pakistan's sincerity about trying to better relations would register on the Indian side. Perhaps coincidentally, a day before the attack, the ISI chief, Asim Munir, lost his job."

Bisaria served in Pakistan as India's High Commissioner from 2017 to August 2019 – when he was expelled by the Pakistani government in response to the abrogation of Art 370. His book, which is part memoir and part history, and is a study of the diplomatic engagement between India and Pakistan, hit the bookstores on Monday.

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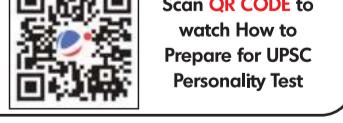
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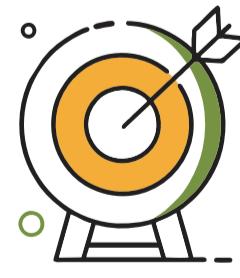


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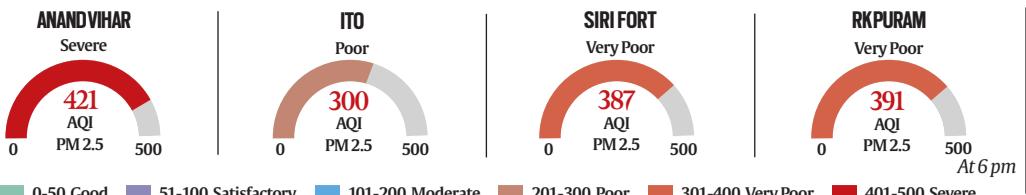
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BRIEFLY

Parliament breach case: 5 accused taken to Gujarat for polygraph, narco tests

New Delhi: The Delhi Police Special Cell said five of the six accused in the Parliament security breach case were taken to Gujarat Monday to conduct polygraph and narco-analysis tests. The accused are — Sagar Sharma, Manoranjan D, Amol Shinde, Lalit Jha, and Mahesh Kumawat. As per police, the accused have been evasive during questioning. While the sixth accused, Neelam Azad, has refused to undergo any tests, police said the others agreed in the court. A Delhi court permitted the tests.

Two arrested for customs clearance fraud

New Delhi: Police arrested two people, including a Nigerian woman, part of an international racket that used to deceive people on the pretext of customs clearance and RBI fee, officers said. The woman was identified as Benita Gift Agene while her co-accused, also a Nigerian, was identified as Izunna Paul Uzomo. They were arrested last week. ENS

Divya Pahuja murder: Woman held for helping dispose of weapon

This is the 4th arrest; hotel owner & staff were nabbed earlier



27-year-old Divya was shot dead inside a hotel in Sector 14 in Gurgaon on Tuesday. Her body is yet to be found

AISWARYA RAJ

GURGAON, JANUARY 8

DAYS AFTER former model Divya Pahuja (27) was murdered in a Gurgaon hotel, police Monday made their fourth arrest in the case — a 20-year-old woman who allegedly helped the accused dispose of the murder weapon.

Last week, the owner of City Point Hotel in Sector 14 where Divya was killed, Abhijeet Singh (56), and hotel staff Omprakash and Hemraj, who helped him move the body, were arrested.

According to police, the woman, Megha, works as a delivery executive and is a resident of Mira Extension in Delhi's Noida. ACP (Crime) Varun Dahiya said she knew Abhijeet through an old friend. During questioning, she revealed that she allegedly helped him dispose of the weapon used in the murder and the deceased's documents and personal belongings.

DCP (Crime) Vijay Pratap said they identified her from the hotel's CCTV footage. "We sought her police custody and will question her to get more details on the weapon," he said.

A senior police officer said that they also used call records details and the disclosure statement of the main accused to track Megha. ... She was employed by Abhijeet to carry out



Senior AAP and Congress leaders in Delhi, Monday. Anil Sharma

JATIN ANAND & MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

AFTER THE AAP and the Congress held their first discussion Monday on forging an alliance for the Lok Sabha elections, leaders said the discussions were "positive and fruitful" and revolved around "cooperation".

AAP sources said the party had sought to make a strong case to stake a claim to Northeast Delhi and was in favour of contesting four of the seven Parliamentary seats in the capital and leaving the rest to the Congress.

Congress general secretary Mukul Wasnik said that a detailed discussion took place. "Over 2-2.5 hours, discussions took place on different issues. This included plans to contest different seats. Discussions will continue and we will hold another meeting soon, after which the final shape of seat-sharing will be decided," Wasnik told reporters after the meeting.

From the AAP's side, national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj took part in the meeting. AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann are campaigning in Gujarat and the party's Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab

Raghav Chadha is not in the country. All three have been part of the INDIA bloc meetings in the past.

AAP sources said that the meeting was "positive and fruitful" and that seat-sharing was not discussed in detail, but that a clear decision to work together to make the alliance work was reiterated.

A senior Congress leader who was part of the meeting also said a seat-sharing arrangement was not discussed. "They (the AAP) were positive towards the suggestions given and the queries posed by us today to which they will get back to us. The question of discussing seats did not arise because the leaders representing the AAP who were part of the meeting today do not have the mandate to do so; this was already conveyed to us," the leader said.

According to the Congress leader, the discussions mainly revolved around "cooperation" in different Parliamentary segments in the capital and how each ally could help the other when it came to "weaknesses".

"We (the Congress) have suggested the creation of a common secretariat from the point of view of contesting the polls. This will not only send the right message in terms of cooperation between us both but also to our respective cadres," the leader said.

Sources said the seat-sharing arrangement was likely to come up for discussion during the second meeting, which is expected in the coming days.

"Today, we only discussed how to help each other in different constituencies and the candidates we field. Another meeting is scheduled likely for January 10 or 11," the leader added.

According to the Congress

AAP MPs Singh & Gupta, ex-DCW chief Maliwal file RS poll nomination

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

AMID POLICE security, AAP MP Sanjay Singh, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case related to the excise policy, stepped out of jail Monday to file his nomination for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls at Civil Lines. Former DCW chief Swati Maliwal and AAP MP Narain Dass Gupta also filed their nominations.

The AAP on Friday nominated Maliwal as its pick for the Upper House, and rechristened Singh and Gupta for a second term.

According to the affidavits submitted by the leaders, Sanjay Singh and his wife have combined movable assets of over Rs 31 lakh in their bank accounts. The affidavit also mentions 17 pending criminal cases against Singh and one conviction.

Maliwal has total movable assets of over Rs 19 lakh. She has three criminal cases pending, as per the affidavit. Gupta has movable assets of Rs 3.86 crore, including a Mercedes Benz and a Kia Seltos. His family has assets amounting to Rs 27 lakh. There are no criminal cases pending against him.

Singh has been with the party since its inception. Currently, he is also the AAP's Uttar Pradesh in-charge. A Delhi court had allowed him to physically visit the office of the returning officer to file his nomination.

Posting a video of Singh stepping out of the police van, AAP posted on X, "Public Leader Sanjay Singh



(Above) AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and (left) Swati Maliwal and ND Gupta after filing their nomination for the Rajya Sabha polls, Monday. Praveen Khanna



Azad will again raise the voice of the public in the house..."

Anita said.

"The party and the workers trust my son... Sanjay was arrested for speaking the truth... I thank the party and workers for choosing him against the ongoing dictator..." Dinesh Singh said.

Meanwhile, Maliwal, if elected, will be the first woman Rajya Sabha MP of AAP. A core member of the India Against Corruption movement, she has

been an active advocate for women's rights and social issues.

"... I want to thank CM Arvind Kejriwal and party leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh for choosing a common woman like me for the Rajya Sabha... The agitation which we started from the slums of Nand Nagri in 2006 will go to Parliament... In the last 8 years, I have worked hard for the rights of women, and protested to get rules changed... This will now be taken up in the Rajya Sabha..." she said.

As per the EC's schedule, polling will take place from 9 am to 4 pm for state assemblies and counting of votes will be at 5 pm on January 19.

NCCSA writes to CM, seeks date to discuss renovation of his official residence

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

FORWARDING THE original file related to the renovation of his official residence to his office, the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA) has requested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to provide a date and time for the next meeting of the authority where the issue

would be discussed.

The renovation of Kejriwal's Civil Lines residence is among eight agendas that the authority wants to discuss, and for which it had written to the CM on December 26 last year.

According to the letter, a regular meeting of the authority has not been held since September 20, 2023. The letter stated: "As regards the present request for original file related to the agenda... it is stated there is a conflict of interest of Hon'ble CM and others in the matter which pertains to illegalities in respect of demolition/construction of residence of the Hon'ble CM who happened to be the Chairman of NCCSA as well..."

Further, certified copy of the said file was made available to the Office of the CM..."

In the letter, the authority pointed out that it had been trying to send the document to the CM since September but his e-office has not been activated yet. The copy of the file was then made available through pen drive on January 2, it added.

Alluding to the CM office insisting on the original file, as against a certified copy, the letter read, "It is to state there is no difference between the original file and a certified copy... Even courts take decisions on the basis of certified copy of the files. In this case, the certification of the file was done by an officer of gazetted rank of Directorate of Vigilance. The non-activation of e-office in the O/o the Hon'ble CM, GNCTD, coupled with insistence for original file raises possible apprehension/suspicion regarding the safety of such an important and sensitive file being dealt (with) by the Directorate of Vigilance..."

The authority further said the officer receiving the original file shall be personally responsible for its safe custody, adding it should be returned to the authority intact once the meeting concludes.

AHEAD OF RAM MANDIR CEREMONY IN AYODHYA

As part of outreach, RSS, BJP deliver packages to homes in Delhi

UPASIKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

A PICTURE of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, a pamphlet with instructions on how they can participate in the celebrations despite not being a part of the temple's consecration ceremony on January 22, and a small packet of rice — across Delhi, several housing societies have received a package containing these three items.

These part of the door-to-door campaign also encouraged people to light at least five diyas in their homes, make rangolis, and conduct an aarti at 12.40 pm.

The postcard-sized picture



Residents received the package containing a picture of the Ram Mandir, a pamphlet with instructions on how they can participate in the celebrations despite not being a part of the temple's consecration ceremony on January 22, and a small packet of rice. Express



of the temple given to residents has the deity's face emblazoned across it, looking down benevolently at the temple while the pamphlets outline the temple's dimensions. The latter are also

accompanied by small, token bags of rice called pujit akshat, which are generally used for Hindu rituals.

Meanwhile, reactions across residential societies have been mixed. In W-1 Desu Road Colony in Mehrauli, the RWA was enthusiastic in its response. "We will buy laddoos and distribute them in the society. We have also planned a screening of the event and an aarti," said Sharad Vashisth, who is part of the colony's RWA.

In Sarita Vihar's Pocket L, the RWA refused to be a part of the activities.

"Few residents have taken the onus to distribute the pamphlets but as an RWA, we are not

partaking in any activity," said an RWA member, who did not wish to be named.

Residents in Sarita Vihar's Pocket C and New Friends Colony were unaware of the pamphlets being distributed.

Maharaj Singh Verma, who lives in New Friends Colony, said that while he hasn't noticed any pamphlet distribution, his society's RWA is currently taking suggestions from residents on how to appropriately celebrate the consecration.

In Pocket C, some residents have organised a rath yatra from a local Ram temple to celebrate "500 years of continuous struggle and intense waiting".

www.indianexpress.com

12 get stuck in lift at Rajinder Nagar pub, rescued after 3 hrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

AS MANY as 12 people were stuck for nearly three hours after a lift at a restaurant cum bar in West Delhi got stuck due to overloading, officers said, adding the rescue operation, which involved cutting open the roof of the lift, lasted till 6am Monday.

The incident took place during the wee hours of Monday when the restaurant's patrons got stuck in the lift of the building housing Illume Bar at Pusa Road, Rajinder Nagar, DCP (Central) Sanjay Kumar Sain said, adding the lift had got jammed between the 1st and 2nd floor.

No FIR has been filed in the case. A representative of the bar, meanwhile, said no such incident took place on their premises.

"Around 3 am, we received a PCR call at Rajinder Nagar Police Station. The police staff reached the spot and tried to rescue the persons stuck in the lift but



Rescue personnel had to cut open the roof of the lift to rescue the stranded people. Videograb

couldn't do so. Thereafter, assistance was sought from Delhi Fire Service (DFS)," he added.

Said the police, "Throughout the period they were stuck in the lift, the police team and others kept interacting with them regularly to give them courage and patience... prima facie, it emerged that the malfunction was caused

due to overloading of passengers."

While the resto bar had shut down at 1 am, it took some time for the last batch of customers to leave, which is when the incident occurred, officials said.

Meanwhile, DFS chief Atul Garg said that after they received the call, three fire tenders were

rushed to the spot. "It took around three hours for the rescue operation to be completed and the roof of the lift had to be cut open," Garg added.

Garg said the building had the required fire certificate but in light of the incident, they will send a notice to the club to shut operations. "We will send the notice on Tuesday to shut down the club so that we can carry out an inspection along with police and municipal authorities," he added.

In July last year, as many as 10 persons were stuck overnight inside a lift at a club, Code Club, in South Extension. At that time too, DFS had written to shut the club to carry out an inspection of the building premises.

More recently, in December 2023, five people were injured after a lift at a Noida high-rise crashed from the eighth floor. Before that, in September, nine people were killed after a service lift at a construction site in Greater Noida came crashing down.

Viksit Bharat event in 7 Delhi areas; people raise housing, water woes

SAMAN HUSAIN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

DAYS AFTER the scheme completed 50 days of implementation, the Guarantee Wali Gaadi, as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY), rolled into the Janta Camp in southeast Delhi's Jangpura on Monday.

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) senior leadership, including party's national president Jagat Prakash Nadda, was part of the event where he congratulated beneficiaries of Central government's welfare schemes in Pratap Camp area.

Party leaders addressed the gathering which was followed by an interaction and speech from PM Modi through video conferencing.

Union Ministers, BJP MPs and MLAs who were part of the gathering included Jyotiraditya Scindia, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Gautam Gambhir, Bhupender Yadav, Arjun Munda and Virendra Sachdeva. The party had organ-

ised gatherings at seven different locations, including Patel Nagar, Uttam Nagar and Nehru Nagar, simultaneously with the aim to spread awareness about Centre's schemes.

"We have highlighted the issue of starvation and lack of proper housing being faced by the residents of the Jhuggi," said Janta camp resident Mohammad Shakir.

"The water supply is contaminated leading to many diseases, especially amongst kids," 65-year-old Khajan Singh Hingwala said.

Raju, another resident, said he broached the issue of in-situ rehabilitation. "In 2013, some 350 residents of the Jhuggi had submitted Rs 90,000 to avail flats in Dwarka under a housing scheme but we have not received the flats yet," he added.

Meanwhile, many complained that parties thought of them only when elections were approaching. "Our MLA has not visited the camp even once in the last one year... when elections are approaching, they're here to campaign," said Mahendra, a resident.

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Estimated Cost of the work ₹ 0.237.62,500.00 (Including GST)
Last Date and Time of e-Bid Submission 27.01.2024 up to 1500 hrs.

For further details and updates, please visit website www.etenders.gov.in/procure/app. Amendments/Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted only on the website. Chief General Manager/Civil C-4, District Chamber, Saket, New Delhi-110017

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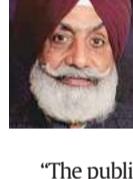
THE NOMINATION of Sikkim legislator D T Lepcha for the lone Rajya Sabha seat from the state has come as a big relief for a section of the BJP. Lepcha, along with nine other MLAs, had quit the Sikkim Democratic Front soon after the 2019 Assembly elections and joined the BJP. When senior BJP leader Ram Madhav, who was in-charge of the party's affairs in Sikkim in 2019, facilitated Lepcha's entry, it ended the 25-year rule of former CM Pawan Kumar Chamling. The BJP was looking forward to forming its government in the state, but later changed its plan and joined hands with Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's Prem Singh Tamang, who became the Chief Minister. This change had left many BJP leaders in the region worried, but now with his RS nomination, they feel Lepcha has finally "got his due".

HOLY MISSION

DAYS AFTER Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an appeal on December 30 for cleanliness drives to be undertaken at temples and pilgrimage sites, officials of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, which is responsible for the Swachh Bharat Mission in cities, on Monday launched #MandirSafaiKaSankalp via social media. Secretary Manoj Joshi posted on X: "This week, I am taking part in Swachhata Hi Seva as we encourage more cleanliness and hygiene around holy places to welcome Ramlila in Ayodhya on January 22. Come forward as we achieve yet-another historical milestone towards #ViksitBharat." The official handle of the ministry, too, posted several messages on X, including one saying "This pledge shall ensure a new direction for @SwachhBharatGov, and the movement will add up to the grand welcome of Lord Ram in Ayodhya."

Rajasthan: Setback for BJP as minister loses poll to Cong

HAMZA KHAN
JAIPUR, JANUARY 8



Surendrapal Singh lost by a margin of over 11,000 votes

A LITTLE over a month after it came to power in Rajasthan, the BJP on Monday suffered a setback as one of its newly inducted ministers, Surendrapal Singh, lost the Assembly election from Karanpur constituency to his Congress rival.

Singh, who was inducted as a Minister of State with independent charge and given four portfolios even before getting elected to the Assembly, submitted his resignation to Governor Kalraj Mishra later in the day.

The election for the Karanpur seat could not be held along with the other Assembly seats on November 25 last year due to the death of MLA Gurmeet Singh Kooner, who was the Congress candidate from there.

On Monday, his son Rupinder Singh Kooner, who was fielded by the Congress for the January 5 election, emerged as the winner, defeating Surendrapal Singh by a margin of 11,283 votes.

With this win, the Congress's tally in the Assembly has gone up to 70 against the BJP's 115 seats.

In a post on X, former chief minister Ashok Gehlot congratulated Kooner and dedicated the victory to the public service work of his father. He said that the people of Karanpur "have defeated the pride of the BJP".

its chances against the Left and the Congress. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP fielded actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi from the seat and garnered 28.2% of the vote share as against veteran party leader K P Sreesan's 11.15% in 2014, showing that his "star status" can help the party bump up its vote share.

The BJP has strongly hinted that Gopi, a former Rajya Sabha MP, will be its candidate from Thrissur. Apart from banking on the actor, who accompanied Modi on his roadshow, the BJP is also expecting a significant chunk of Christians in the constituency to vote for it, especially after the recent outreach programmes.

Another parliamentary constituency where the BJP fancies

VIKSIT BHARAT YATRA: PM ADDRESSES SCHEME BENEFICIARIES

Generations had unfulfilled dreams, that's why we are working hard: PM

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

ADDRESSING BENEFICIARIES of government welfare schemes over teleconferencing on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the purpose of the Viksit Bharat Yatra was to ensure that no eligible person is deprived of the benefits of such schemes.

He said it was his resolve to make India a developed country by 2047. Timed right before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the yatra that has reached 11 crore people in 50 days, is touring villages across the country to spread awareness about the government's welfare schemes so that more people can apply for the benefits.

PM Modi said, "Sometimes people are not aware of the schemes. Our government sees reaching out to villages across India as our responsibility. About 12 lakh new applications for Ujjawala have been received since this yatra started; 2 crore health check-ups have been done during this yatra. About 1 crore TB check-



PM Modi addresses the beneficiaries via video conference, Monday. PTI

ups and 22 lakh sickle cell anemia check-ups have been done."

He added, "These are rural, Dalit, backward, and Adivasi people. Earlier, they found reaching doctors difficult, now doctors are reaching them for check-ups. Up to Rs 5 lakh insurance, free kidney dialysis, and cheap medicines are now available for them. The yatra has proved a boon for the poor."

Modi said, "People who spent their lives awaiting government assistance are now reaping the benefits. Who had thought officials and political leaders would reach their doors and ask whether they got benefits from govern-

ment schemes or not? People are satisfied with this."

Stating that "Modi's guarantee" was now being discussed across India and the world, he added, "On a mission mode, the government is reaching out to each labharthi (eligible beneficiary). Why are we working so hard? In our country, many generations have lived with unfulfilled dreams. They thought lack of development was their destiny. Our government wants the present and future generations to be free from the difficulties their parents and grandparents faced. That is why we are working so hard."

He said, "We are focusing on the future of our four castes – the poor, women, farmers, and youth. If they are strengthened, the country will be strengthened. The biggest goal of the yatra is that no eligible person should be left out of the benefits of government schemes."

"Ten crore sisters have joined women's self-help groups in the last decade. Many have become lakhpatti didis. It is my dream that the country should have 2 crore lakhpatti didis," he said.

Modi wishes Hasina after her 4th straight win

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday called his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina and congratulated her for securing a historic fourth consecutive term in Sunday's general elections.

Modi reiterated India's commitment to further strengthen the "enduring and people-centric partnership" with its neighbour.

After the phone call, Modi posted on X, "Spoke to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and congratulated her on her victory for a historic fourth consecutive term in the Parliamentary elections. I also congratulate the people of Bangladesh for the successful conduct of elections..."

Hasina won Sunday's poll with a landslide victory even as the main opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) had boycotted the polls.



Maldives envoy Ibrahim Shaheeb (left) at South Block. ANI

Remarks on PM Modi: MEA calls Maldives envoy, raises concerns

Remarks do not represent views of Muizzu govt: Male to Indian diplomat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

THE MINISTRY of External Affairs Monday called the High Commissioner of Maldives to India Ibrahim Shaheeb and conveyed its strong concerns over disparaging social media posts against Prime Minister Narendra Modi by three now-suspended ministers, as the backlash over the remarks continued for the second day.

In Male, the Maldivian government conveyed to the Indian High Commissioner, Munu Muahawar, that the remarks against Modi do not represent its views. Though the Maldivian media reported that Muahawar was summoned to the foreign ministry, the Indian High Commission said he had a "pre-arranged" meeting with Ambassador at Large Dr Ali Naseer Mohamed.

"High Commissioner Munu Muahawar had a pre-arranged meeting with Dr Ali Naseer Mohamed, the Ambassador at Large, at MoFA, Maldives, today to discuss bilateral issues," it said in a post on X.

As the row escalated, India's leading travel platform EaseMyTrip said it has suspended bookings to the Maldives. The Maldives government of President Mohamed Muizzu, whose party rode to power last year on an "India Out" poll campaign, suspended three ministers Sunday for making derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the people of India.

Ministers Mariyam Shiuna, Malsha Shareef, and Mahzoom Majid were suspended with immediate effect, hours after the Maldives government distanced itself from the remarks made by the ministers and MPs who joined a social media spat over Lakshadweep vs Maldives in the wake of Prime Minister Modi's photographs from his Lakshadweep visit last week.

Sources said that the Indian High Commission in Male expressed concerns about the comments made in regard to Modi by certain ministers in the Maldives government with the foreign office Sunday.

President Muizzu was leaving for China Sunday on a state visit at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Without naming its ministers or Modi, the Maldives government in a statement Sunday said, "The Government of Maldives is aware of derogatory remarks on social media platforms against foreign leaders and high-ranking individuals. These opinions are personal and do not represent the views of the Government of Maldives."



AFFORDABILITY OF GENERIC DRUGS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and MoS Home Ajay Mishra at a conclave on 'Primary Agricultural Credit Societies as PM Jan Aushadhi Kendra', in New Delhi, Monday. They distributed Jan Aushadhi store codes to PACS from 5 states/UTs. Shah said about 241 PACS have opened such Kendras, which will ensure rural poor and farmers avail benefits of generic medicines at affordable rates. ANI

WITH THE Lok Sabha polls round the corner, the constituents of the Opposition INDIA bloc are looking to step up their seat-sharing exercise. In West Bengal, however, the already strained ties between the ruling TMC and the Congress have become more hostile. State Congress chief and party's leader in Lok Sabha ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY recently targeted CM Mamata Banerjee over reports that the TMC was inclined to offer his party only 2 seats in Bengal. He speaks to MANOJ CG. Excerpts:

The notice was issued under Section 3B of the Act, which enables an estate officer to ask anyone who was allotted residential accommodation and is in "unauthorised occupation" to show cause within three working days "why an order of eviction should not be made".

The section also enables the officer to take possession of the premises using "force", if necessary, if the person does not comply with the eviction order.

Moitra had moved the Delhi HC to challenge the cancellation of allotment, but last week withdrew the plea, saying she would approach the Directorate of Estates.

She has also moved the Supreme Court against her expulsion from Lok Sabha. The apex court on January 3 declined to grant interim relief to Moitra, while asking the Lok Sabha Secretary General to reply to her plea.

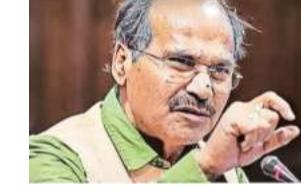
You have been critical of the TMC government over the recent attacks on ED officials.

There is nothing called law and order in West Bengal. An entire machinery of corruption is in collusion with the ruling dispensation.

The Congress, and other Opp parties, have always argued that agencies like the ED, CBI and the Income Tax Dept are being misused by the Centre?

We know the ED and the CBI are not impartial. We also say that the agencies are often misused by the central government.

They try to save some and frame some others, especially political



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW
WITH
ADHIR RANJAN
CHOWDHURY
CONG BENGAL CHIEF & LEADER
OF CONGRESS IN LOK SABHA

opponents. But this case is different because the investigation is being conducted at the behest of the court.

You have sought President's rule in the state after the Sandeshkhali incident.

That was in response to the BJP, which had been clamouring for an NIA probe. I said if the BJP has enough guts, they can impose President's rule.

The BJP in Bengal is trying to cash in on the attacks by giving a communal colour to them. The BJP alleged that Rohingyas were part of the mob which attacked the ED officials. If Rohingyas were present... who is responsible for it? The central government and the home ministry.

Given the acrimony between the Congress and the TMC,

how is it possible for the two parties to enter into alliance?

Mamata Banerjee does not want an alliance. That is why she has let it known that she was willing to give two seats (that the Congress currently has) to the Congress. Her statements on alliance have no credibility.

Had she been sincere, she should have expressed regret on the attacks that had been taking place on the Opposition (in Bengal).

Two seats is not acceptable?

How can it be? For me, it is not acceptable.

I can fight it alone against Mamata Banerjee and the BJP because I have proved it. My colleague and I can fight in both the seats on our own. We don't require any grace from Banerjee to retain the two seats.

BJP picks and chooses in Kerala, hopes riding on a handful of LS seats



BJP supporters during the 'Shree Shakthi Modikkoppam' Mahila Sangamam in Thrissur, Kerala, last week. PTI file

its chances against the Left and the Congress. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP fielded actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi from the seat and garnered 28.2% of the vote share as against veteran party leader K P Sreesan's 11.15% in 2014, showing that his "star status" can help the party bump up its vote share.

The BJP has strongly hinted that Gopi, a former Rajya Sabha MP, will be its candidate from Thrissur. Apart from banking on the actor, who accompanied Modi on his roadshow, the BJP is also expecting a significant chunk of Christians in the constituency to vote for it, especially after the recent outreach programmes.

Rajagopal is a popular leader and managed to garner votes from outside the ambit of the

votes but again lost out to Tharoor who polled more than 41% of the votes.

Another constituency the BJP focussed on in 2019 is Pathanamthitta in central Kerala because of the Sabarimala protests. The Congress's Anto Antony has been winning the seat since 2009. The BJP in 2019 fielded its state president K Surendran, who was at the forefront of the protests, from the constituency. Though he finished third, he managed to increase the party's vote share from 15.95% in 2014 to 28.97%.

The constituency has around 35% Christian voters, a large number of whom are non-Catholics, while 58% of the voters are Hindus. Of the Hindus, 20% belong to the upper-class

Nair community. The BJP will likely strategise to reach out to Christians there. In an indication that Christians have largely shifted their allegiance to the Left from the Congress, the CPI(M) in 2019 won all seven Assembly segments that fall under the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha seat.

The fourth focal point for the BJP in Kerala has over the years roped in several prominent bureaucrats, actors and sportspersons who have helped to increase the vote share but electoral victory has eluded the party. Also, the party does not boast of a strong grassroots structure in the state like their rivals, especially the CPI(M). The BJP's ally Dharmajana Sena is led by the Ezhava community, which has traditionally sided with the CPI(M).

Education Department, Bihar has invited following short e-tender. All prospective bidders are requested to refer <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/EPSPV2Web> for further detail regarding the e-tender. The e-tender list with primary information is given hereunder.

SI No	Tender Notice No	Name of the work	Last Date of bid Submission
01	Furniture schools/Education/2023/01 Dated: 03-01-2024	RFP for empanelment of vendors for supply of furniture at Government Schools	18-01-2024, 4:00 PM

Bidders may download the RFP from the link <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/EPSPV2Web>. The Additional Secretary, Education Department reserves the right to amend or withdraw any of the Terms and Conditions in the bid document or to cancel / reject all the tenders received without giving any notice or assigning any reasons thereof.

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar
PR-014983 (Education) 2023-24

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



ANIMAL & FISHERIES RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

BIHAR LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, PATNA

Sealed very short term items are invited for rate contract for two years (from the date of agreement) to supply the mentioned items (in table given below) in Bihar Livestock Development Agency, Patna from reputed manufacturers/ suppliers in two bid system i.e. Technical and Financial in two separate sealed envelopes duly superscribed with "TECHNICAL BID" AND "FINANCIAL BID" and name of firm. Both the sealed envelope is to be put in bigger envelope duly sealed and superscribed with "OFFER FOR RATE CONTRACT".

Purchase order will be given time to time during validity period as per requirement.

SI.No.	Name of Item	Description
1	Measuring tape	15 meter length
2	Spring Weight Balance	5 Kg Capacity
3	Spring Weight Balance	25 Kg Capacity
4	Plastic Jar	1 Litre
5	Plastic Sample Bottle	50 ml
6	Povidin-Iodine Solution 10%	500 ml
7	Ear Tag Applicator with Pin	Compatible with Ear Tags approved by GoI

The tenderer will have to deposit EMD of Rs. Rs. 50,000/- (Fifty thousand) in the form of a Bank Draft of Scheduled Bank in favour of Project Director, Bihar Livestock Development Agency, Patna, Payable at Patna.

Bid is to be submitted to Project Director, B.L.D.A. (Bihar Veterinary College Campus), P.O.- Bihar Veterinary College, Patna-800014, till 12.00 Noon on or before 18.01.2024.

The detail of Tender's offer, Terms & condition may be seen on the department website—<http://state.bihar.gov.in/>ahd>

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

PR. No. 014911 (Animal) 2023-24

Project Director
BLDA.Patna

नशे की मार, बर्बाद करे सुखी परिवार।

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE					
S.R. 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
1	HSAMB ROHTAK	PDG. 2 NOS. HIGH MAST LIGHTING INSTALLATION IN NGM AT HATHIN + 1 WORKS	05.01.2024 12.01.2024	12.10 LACS	https://etenders.hry.nic.in 9812100311 xenelectrota2023 hsamb@gmail.com

24007/HRY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT: www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in



Rural Works Department

Short Notice Inviting Tender (No.-RWD/PMGSY/HQ/ET/-23-24/31)

Rural Works Department, Bihar invites Percentage rate Tender on behalf of Governor of Bihar (through e-procurement system) from bona fide, approved and eligible Contractors registered with RWD/RCD/CPWD/MES/ Railways/Other State/Central Govt. departments for the following PMGSY-III works including maintenance for five years after construction of roads and Bridges.

Sl.	District	Block	Packag e No.	New Technology/ Bridge	Name of Road / Bridge	Length (in Km)	Package wise Amount (Rs. in Lakhs)	Earnest Money (Rs. in Lakhs)	Amount Payable to Works Division	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Kishanganj	Bahadu rganj	BR18P 3R16	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL13-PATHAR BASTI TO PAWNA (TOI) VIA GUABARI, DESYA TOLI, MOHAMMADNAGAR	9.40	529.42	31.72	11.25	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
2	Kishanganj	Kishan ganj	BR18P 3R17	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL10-MAHESH BATHNA TO KOLHA SONTHA TOLA	6.56	466.16	23.74	9.82	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
3	Kishanganj	Kishan ganj	BR18P 3R18	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL41-KISHANGANJ BLOCK CHOWK TO GOBINDPUR	7.05	688.32	35.13	14.51	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
4	Kishanganj	Kishan ganj	BR18P 3R19	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL40-T02 to Chhagalia Via Kulamani Insanpur	5.52	322.07	14.86	6.76	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
5	Kishanganj	Koch Dham a	BR18P 3R20	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL42-T01 (PATKOI HAT) TO GANGI HAT VIA KALKALI	6.01	429.21	19.33	8.99	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
6	Kishanganj	Koch Dham a	BR18P 3R21	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL40-PIPLA CHOWK (T11) TO CHARAIYA VIA HIMATNAGAR	5.64	381.12	23.18	8.11	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
7	Kishanganj	Koch Dham a	BR18P 3R22	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL49-Bahikol via Balia to Titia Chowk	6.81	432.88	27.83	9.24	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
8	Kishanganj	Koch Dham a	BR18P 3R23	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL41-BHAWANIGANJ TO SHAHPUR	8.66	549.80	33.11	11.69	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
9	Kishanganj	Koch Dham a	BR18P 3R24	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL28-DUBRA TO MASTALIYA	5.07	422.28	23.08	8.93	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
10	Kishanganj	Terhag achhi	BR18P 3R26	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL2-RCD ROAD KALIYAGANJ TO GHANIPULSARAI	14.61	969.01	70.24	20.84	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-1
11	Kishanganj	Dighalb ank	BR18P 3R30	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL41-KURHALI - PATHARGHATTI - LAKSHPIMPUR- FAUDAR PALSA PATH	14.95	1488.7 5	68.85	31.23	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
12	Kishanganj	Pothia	BR18P 3R36	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL36-BIRPUR TO MOLMAGACHI PACHIM TOLA	11.50	600.32	49.79	13.03	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
13	Kishanganj	Pothia	BR18P 3R39	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL51-Sitjhari to paharkatta	5.30	270.25	21.29	5.85	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
14	Kishanganj	Pothia	BR18P 3R42	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL47-Babandoba halda gown to mohgarh bich tola	8.80	558.54	27.79	11.76	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
15	Kishanganj	Thakur ganj	BR18P 3R46	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	T03-THAKURGANJ COLLEGE MORE TO CHURLI BENGAL SIMA TAK	16.54	971.26	50.42	20.48	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
16	Kishanganj	Thakur ganj	BR18P 3R48	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL42-OLD MECHI (MANGLI CHOWK) TO KARUAMANI	14.25	1297.3 6	54.70	27.11	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
17	Kishanganj	Thakur ganj	BR18P 3R53	Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL15-CHURLI CHOWK TO BAZAR BASTI BENGAL SIMA TAK	6.35	395.31	25.72	8.44	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2
18	Kishanganj	Thakur ganj	BR18P 3R55	Cold Mix Technology/ Panelled Cement Concrete/ Surface Dressing	MRL41-NH327E (PIPRITHANJ) TO GOELDANGI BENGAL SIMA TAK	14.91	1455.9 7	58.85	30.37	EE, RWD, Works Division, Kishanganj-2

Date and Time for Downloading of Bidding Documents : From 12.01.2024 (09:30 AM) to 19.01.2024 (12:00 Noon)

Last date and Time of Online Bid Submission : 19.01.2024 up to 15:00 Hours.

(including Scanned copy of Affidavits)

Online Bid Opening Date and Time : 19.01.2024 at 15:30 Hours.

Place, date and time of Pre-Bid Meeting : 16.01.2024 from 15:00 Hours.

(Office of Respective Works Circle, RWD)

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

PR-014834 (RWD) 2023-24

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

8 EXPRESS NETWORK

JANUARY 22 RAM TEMPLE CONSECRATION

Doctor who lobbied for US visa to Modi among 100-odd foreign guests

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

A US-BASED oncologist who lobbied for visa clearance for Narendra Modi in early 2014, a senior fellow at the Nokia Bell Labs in Indiana, a Norwegian MP, a New Zealand scientist, a Fijian industrialist and saints who have established Hindu schools in the Caribbean.

These are among the 100-odd international guests who have been invited to attend the January 22 Ram temple inauguration in Ayodhya. Guests from as many as 53 countries, including the US, the UK, Europe, Australia and Africa, are on the VHP guest list for the event.

The highest number of invitees, almost one-third of the guest list, have been sent to the US. Five people have been invited from Hong Kong, three each from South Korea, Malaysia and the UK, and two each from Germany and Italy. The rest of the countries have one invitee each.

One of the key guests is Dr Bharat Barai, who lobbied with the US government to sanction Modi's visa just ahead of the Lok Sabha polls in 2014. Till then, the BJP leader was facing a 10-year visa ban imposed by the US government.

"We wanted to invite key officials from other countries too. In some cases, there were PMs and other senior dignitaries



A mural being painted on the wall of an overbridge in Ayodhya. PTI

from foreign governments who were on the list. However, the Central administration advised against it given the security protocol required for such a list. Maybe a separate visit for such dignitaries will be organised later," said Swami Vigyananand, joint general secretary of the VHP.

Another key invitee from the US is Dr Abhay Asthana, a fellow at Nokia Bell Labs-CTO in Indiana, who also serves as the president of World Hindu Council of America, known as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America.

SC VERDICT ON BILKIS BANO PLEA AGAINST REMISSION



WHAT THE PARTIES SAY

"The Gujarat government was behind the release means that the Supreme Court judgment today is a hard slap on the face of the Gujarat government."

BRINDA KARAT,
CPI(M) POLITBURO MEMBER

"I want to congratulate the apex court for it as the decision (of the Gujarat government) was wrong."

FAROOQ ABDULLAH,
NATIONAL CONFERENCE CHIEF

"With this order, the veil over the anti-women policies of the BJP has been removed... Congratulations to Bilkis Bano for continuing her fight bravely."

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA,
CONGRESS GENERAL SECY

"I am grateful to SC for taking this strong and bold judgment. It proves that the rapists were moving freely..."

MAMATA BANERJEE,
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

"It appears that justice is being delivered to Bilkis Bano finally after two long decades. The brutality of gang rapes and mass murders can't be brushed aside and the perpetrators remain unpunished."

SITARAM YECHURI,
CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY

"Today the Supreme Court's decision has once again told the country who is the 'patron of criminals'."

RAHUL GANDHI,
SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

"The BJP government in Gujarat and the BJP government in Centre... should apologise to Bilkis Bano. This is the minimum that can be done by BJP."

ASADUDDIN OWAISI,
AIMIM PRESIDENT

"It is a significant victory for the rule of law and sends a clear message that justice cannot be compromised under any circumstances."

MAULANA MAHMOOD ASA'D MADANI,
JAMIAT ULAMA-I-HIND CHIEF

"This judgment sends a powerful message: The unwavering commitment to women's integrity. Justice prevails."

K KAVITHA,
BRS MLC

'SC order very encouraging': Retired judge who ordered 2008 conviction

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, JANUARY 8

Express after the Supreme Court pronounced its order.

RETIRING JUSTICE UD Salvi, who had in 2008 delivered the judgment sentencing 11 men to life imprisonment for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano and murder of her family in the 2002 communal riots, said on Monday, that the Supreme Court's decision to cancel early release of the convicts was "very encouraging".

"I would like to say the decision is very encouraging. People will have faith in the judiciary," Justice Salvi told The Indian



Retired Justice UD Salvi in 2008 had delivered the judgment sentencing 11 men to life imprisonment.

since the trial was held here in Mumbai. The detailed judgment will have the reasons. The court has also particularly spoken

about the fraud committed,"

Justice Salvi said.

The Supreme Court stated in its order that the May 2022 order by another bench asking the Gujarat government to decide on the remission based on the 1992 policy, was obtained by concealing facts and perpetrating fraud upon the court.

The 11 convicts sentenced to life imprisonment by Justice Salvi, when he was the trial court judge in Mumbai, were granted remission by Gujarat government and subsequently released on August 15, 2022. They were also felicitated at the time of

their release.

Justice Salvi had then said that felicitation by local leaders was wrong since they were convicted by the trial court and their punishment was upheld by Bombay High Court and Supreme Court.

"The felicitation (by locals) was wrong. It was a display of their stupidity," he said on Monday. He had also said in August 2022, asking for a reconsideration of the release, that the "law must carry justice with it". On Monday, he said the court's order could be seen as having done that.



The Supreme Court on Monday said whenever the state fails to perform its duties, the court will step in 'to ensure that the rule of law prevails over the abuse of the process of law'. ANI

Rule of law vs right to liberty: What Court said

KHADIJA KHAN
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

WHILE QUASHING the Gujarat government's decision to grant remission to the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case, the Supreme Court on Monday acknowledged the importance of personal liberty as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution, but also sought to address the question of whether the rule of law can prevail over it.

It also addressed the issue of whether the convicts should be sent back to prison or given the benefit of liberty, despite the orders forming the basis for their release being declared "illegal" and "wholly without jurisdiction".

Defined by the architect of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, John Adams, as "a government of laws and not of men", the rule of law is a concept that acts as a check to the executive's lawlessness, by ensuring that no official or administrator can arrest or detain a person without legislative sanction.

In the present case, the court explained the concept to mean that whenever the State fails to perform its duties, the court will step in "to ensure that the rule of law prevails over the abuse of the process of law". Such abuse could stem from inaction, arbitrary actions of protecting offenders, or failure of different authorities to discharge obligations according to the law, the court said.

Adding that breaching the rule of law amounts to negating equality, as prescribed by Article 14, the court said that "equality" before law would itself become an "empty" word if its violation was not a matter of judicial scrutiny, and if courts didn't enforce the rule of law. "Judiciary is the guardian of the rule of law and the central pillar of a democratic State," the Bench said.



"Everyone within the framework of the rule of law must accept the system, render due obedience to orders made, and in the event of failure of compliance, the rod of justice must descend down to punish," it said. The existence of the rule of law and the fear of being brought to book operate as deterrents "to those who have no scruples in killing others if it suits their ends," it said.

Citing the words of the late Justice V R Krishna Iyer, the court said, "the finest hour of the rule of law is when law disciplines life and matches promise with performance", adding that justice "should remain loyal to the rule of law". Referring to Justice H R Khanna's dissenting judgment in ADM, Jabalpur vs. Shivakant Shukla (1976), the court said "rule of law is the antithesis of arbitrariness".

Rejecting the convicts' plea for protection of liberty, the court held that the rule of law must prevail and the orders of remission be set aside.



(Clockwise from top left) Residences of Govind Nai, Pradip Modhiya and Radheshyam Shah, three of the convicts in the case, at Singvad in Dahod on Monday. Nirmal Harindran



LOCKED DOORS and a policeman on guard is the sight that greets one at the twin villages of Randhikpur and Singvad where nine of the 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano gangrape case lived, and are now, "missing".

When *The Indian Express* visited Singvad on Monday, hours after the Supreme Court verdict that overturned their August 15, 2022 remission granted by the Gujarat government, their relatives were reluctant to say where the nine men were. The two villages are located side by side, with villagers using both the names interchangeably.

Claiming that his son was innocent, Akhambhai Chaturbhaji Raval (87), father of one of the convicts, Govind Nai (55), blamed the conviction on "political vendetta of Congress". Raval said Govind had left the house "a week ago".

A local policeman said that Govind left home on Saturday (January 6). His ailing parents emphasised that they are a "Hindu faith-abiding family, incapable of committing the crimes" that have been alleged against their son as well as Akhambhai's brother Jashvant Nai, another convict in the case.

"I wish and pray that he (Govind) gets to doseva(service) at the (Ram) mandir pratishthan in Ayodhya. It is better to do seva than to do nothing and roam around everyday. He has not been able to do anything since he was released (from jail). Going back to jail is not a big deal and it is not that he was out of jail unlawfully. He was released with due process of law and now the law has told him to go

back, so he will go back. He spent 20 years in jail so it is not something new," Akhambhai said.

Among all the residences of the convicts, Govind's residence is the farthest from where Bilkis used to live in 2002.

Bilkis and her family had left their house in Randhikpur on February 28, 2002, soon after the train-burning incident in Godhra the previous day. On March 3, 2002, she was gangraped and 14 members of the family, including her three-year-old daughter, were killed by a mob in Limkheda taluka of Dahod. The bodies of six were never found.

The 11 convicts were sentenced to life imprisonment by a CBI special court on January 21, 2008.

Govind's single-storeyed house, adjacent to his parents' kutch house, was locked from the outside with a Randhikpur police station constable standing guard.

Another convict, Radheshyam Shah, has not been home "since the last 15 months", said his father Bhagwandas Shah. This, even as neighbours and shopkeepers at the busy village square attest that nearly all the convicts were publicly seen until Sunday, including Radheshyam. Bhagwandas claimed that he "doesn't know where Radheshyam is... he went with his wife and son".

Outside each of these locked houses are stationed a lone constable, a part of the police bandobast in light of Monday's verdict. Sub-Inspector G B Rathva, in charge at Randhikpur police station, said, "We arranged for bandobast as we did not want any untoward incident, either from the convicts' side, their family and relatives, or from the other side who may want to celebrate the verdict."

FULL REPORT ON

www.indianexpress.com

Man accused in 2018 Siyana violence made BJP zonal chief in UP



SHO Subodh Singh was shot dead on Dec 3, 2018.

ATTACK ON ED TEAM
Bengal DGP vows strict action, ED says 'charges in FIR are weak'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JANUARY 8

because I was seen in the photos and videos. Like me, several other residents of my village have been falsely booked in the case."

"This is the only police case against me. I suffered a lot due to it. I have been appointed president of BB Nagar Mandal because of my hard work and long association with the BJP," said Ahlawat, who is also the pradhan of Mahav village, and has a business of farming and dairy.

It has been alleged that Ahlawat had called up the prime accused, then Bajrang Dal convenor Yogesh Raj, and told him about the alleged cow slaughter case in his village. Soon, a mob gathered at the spot and went on a rampage demanding action.

According to his lawyer, Ashok Dagar, police filed chargesheet against 44 people, including Ahlawat, in the case. Ahlawat said that he spent three months in jail after his arrest before he was released on bail. Calls to BJP's state unit president Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary went unanswered.

Two persons, including Siyana SHO Subodh Kumar Singh, were killed in the violence that took place on December 3, 2018.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* on Monday, Ahlawat said that he has been falsely booked in the case. "I had gone to the spot to find out what was happening as it took place in my village Mahav. I was then BJP's Siyana Mandal secretary. I was standing and watching the protest from a distance and a few people present at the spot were taking photographs and making videos. Police booked me

as a suspect in the case."

THE TWO-DAY Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2024 that concluded in Chennai on Monday saw the state receive investment proposals worth an unprecedented Rs 6,64,180 crore, Chief Minister M K Stalin announced.

These potential investments

As Stalin lays out red carpet for investors, TN attracts proposals worth Rs 6.6 lakh cr

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JANUARY 8

THE TWO-DAY Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2024 that concluded in Chennai on Monday saw the state receive investment proposals worth an unprecedented Rs 6,64,180 crore, Chief Minister M K Stalin announced.

These potential investments could directly lead to 14,54 lakh jobs and indirectly to another 12,34 lakh jobs across various sectors.

Over the last two years, the CM said, Tamil Nadu has attracted investments worth Rs 90,803 crore, creating employment for

2,80,600 people. A breakdown of the proposals that came in during GIM 2024 revealed a diverse interest in Tamil Nadu's economy:

The Industries Department bagged a significant portion of the total potential investments, getting proposals worth Rs 3.79 lakh crore that could lead to over 8 lakh jobs. The energy sector got proposals worth Rs 1.35 lakh crore, expected to generate 14,609 jobs.

The housing and urban development sector attracted proposals worth Rs 62,939 crore, with the promise of 2,65 lakh jobs. The IT and digital services sectors got proposals worth Rs 22,130 crore, foreseeing over 1 lakh jobs.

The handloom and textiles sector, with Rs 572-crore proposals, showed potential for 9,100 job opportunities.

GIM 2024, the first such investors' meet under the Stalin government, served as a platform for the state to present its roadmap to achieve the DMK

government's stated goal of making Tamil Nadu a \$1-trillion economy by 2030. The event had nine partner countries and more than 30 participating nations.

Highlights of the event included announcements regarding Qualcomm's expansion in Chennai with a new design centre, significant investments by Tata Electronics and Pegatron in iPhone assembly units, and VinFast's decision to set up an electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing facility in Thoothukudi.

A senior bureaucrat said the state's essential focus is on attracting global value chains and fostering economic transformation.

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According to Bisaria, in the book, 'Anger Management - The Troubled

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Kashmir – and his insistence on a formulation linking progress on all issues with progress on Kashmir

had led to the unravelling of the summit."

"Prima facie, we are not inclined to interfere with the order passed by the high court," the bench said, while dismissing the plea.

"In April 2023, the high court discontinued the monitoring, saying it cannot be 'perpetual'."

PTI

Advani's hardline approach.

This is what Ambassador Ajay

Bisaria, who served as a key aide of Atal Bihari Vajpayee when he was the prime minister, said in his upcoming book while throwing light on various dramatic details of the historic Agra Summit.

On the second day of the summit, Musharraf met with editors of major newspapers and TV networks for a breakfast conversation during which he "let loose" his hawkish position on Kashmir

and equated terrorists with freedom fighters, Bisaria recounts.

According to Bisaria, in the book, 'Anger Management - The Troubled

Diplomatic Relationship Between India and Pakistan': "Musharraf's overreach in terms of publicly broadcasting hawkish positions on

Kashmir – and his insistence on a formulation linking progress on all issues with progress on Kashmir

10



THE INDIAN EXPRESS, TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL



INDIRA JAISING

PULL BACK FROM BRINK

Blame for avoidable row with India lies with Maldives. But it also frames dangers of hypernationalism on both sides

FEW WOULD HAVE thought that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lakshadweep — only the second such visit by an Indian PM to the long-neglected islands — would kick up a tsunami of controversy engulfing relations between India and Maldives, already under considerable strain. While both sides have reasons to manage the fallout from the entirely avoidable episode, it highlights the dangers of hypernationalism for two South Asian neighbours with much at stake in wide-ranging cooperation. It is also a reminder to the new rulers of Maldives that small nations must exercise prudence in dealing with their neighbours. Needless provocations can trigger consequences that could, in the end, hurt the smaller neighbour a lot more. While Delhi's official reaction has been tough and correct in communicating its outrage through diplomatic channels, India's thin-skinned social media warriors have made a bad situation worse. The managers of these warriors must know that you can't bully your neighbours into submission; they must also recognise that hypernationalists do more harm to India than to the target of the day. Above all, they constrain the freedom of action for Indian diplomacy and alienate many of Delhi's friends and partners in the neighbourhood.

There is no question that the blame for this controversy lies at the door of Maldives — it began when three brash deputy ministers used offensive language against PM Modi's posts on a social media platform about his trip to Lakshadweep last week, celebrating the natural beauty of the islands and its potential attractions for the Indian tourist. As two former presidents — Ibrahim Solih and Mohamed Nasheed — strongly condemned the ministers' remarks, the incumbent president, Mohamed Muizzu, moved quickly to suspend the three deputy ministers. But make no mistake, the sentiment in the tweets represents real hostility against India. Having come to power on an anti-India platform in the elections last year, the new government of Maldives has wasted no time in asking Indian military personnel to leave the country and ending the agreement with the Indian navy for a hydrographic survey of its waters. Muizzu had ostentatiously chosen to travel to Turkey on his first official visit late last year; is now on a state visit to China and appears confident that he can diminish India's salience in the island republic.

But if the episode underlines a bristling ultranationalism in Maldives, the social media response in India has also been over the top. The trending hashtag "boycott Maldives" is self-defeating — China is well-positioned to step in. There are various other sources of tourist inflow into Maldives, including Europe and Russia. The social media claim that Lakshadweep is an alternative to Maldives is delusional; India is far from developing the necessary infrastructure in Lakshadweep and connectivity to the islands. PM Modi's visit to the islands was an important first step that requires sustained follow-up action. Boycotting Maldives in any form will only reduce India's leverage in the islands. Delhi should instead double down on a firm but patient engagement with Maldives that will rally friendly forces in the country and remind the ruling party of the dangers of pushing too hard against India.

SHEIKH HASINA AGAIN

Her fourth term as PM promises stability in Bangladesh, augurs well for India. But her record on democracy is a concern

THE VICTORY OF Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League in Bangladesh's parliamentary election was all but guaranteed after the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), decided to stay away from the polls. The party's leader, Khaleda Zia, is ailing and under house arrest on corruption charges, which her supporters claim to be politically motivated. The government had rejected the BNP's demand for a neutral authority to oversee the polls. Zia's party has accused the Awami League of propping up dummy Opposition candidates and alleged that more than 20,000 BNP members were arrested in the run-up to elections. The government has disputed these allegations. But a barely 40 per cent turnout in the polls — it was about 80 per cent in 2018 — should be indication enough for the PM that she begins her fourth consecutive term in office in a deeply troubled political landscape.

Hasina's legacy has to a great extent been shaped by Bangladesh's economic success in the last decade and a half, fueled by infrastructure, poverty alleviation and energy projects. She has also dealt with militancy with a firm hand, often inviting accusations of high-handedness. Post-pandemic, however, the country has been hard hit by inflation. The taka has depreciated by over 40 per cent against the US dollar and Bangladesh has negotiated loans with the World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank. Already notorious for poor standards on freedom of speech, the Hasina regime is seen to have become more authoritarian in the strained economic circumstances. It has been criticised for weaponising the judiciary and resorting to mass arrests of political opponents. Those affiliated with the ruling party — especially its youth wing, the Juba League — appear to enjoy impunity for violent attacks. In the run-up to elections, the US imposed visa restrictions on a large section of Bangladesh's political class and bureaucracy in order to "restore the democratic system".

Hasina has skilfully balanced ties with Bangladesh's powerful neighbours — India and China. It has joined the Belt and Road Initiative, attracted Chinese investments in infrastructure projects and is among the major importers of Chinese weapons. At the same time, Hasina's crackdown on anti-India elements has eased Delhi's security concerns in the East. With the situation in Myanmar deteriorating, the partnership between the two countries that share a 4,100 km long border is crucial to peace in South Asia. But the Hasina regime must also realise that without meaningful democracy, political stability will remain precarious.

ROLL UP THE RED CARPET

Once a platform to discover cinematic gems, award ceremonies are becoming predictable and irrelevant

THERE WERE SOME good — even great — moments at the 2024 Golden Globe awards. For one, Lily Gladstone, who played an Osage woman whose family is murdered as part of a larger conspiracy in *Killers of the Flower Moon*, won the Best Actress in a Motion Picture (Drama) award. This made her the first indigenous person to win the honour. Another landmark was Ali Wong's Best Actress win for the limited series *Beef* — the first for a woman of Asian descent.

In a ceremony largely devoid of surprises and clouded by awkwardness thanks to host Jo Koy's poorly-written opening monologue, these wins were among the few moments to remember. Not for the first time, the event brought up questions of whether the annual tradition of the glamorous award ceremony had run its course, particularly as year after year, there are reports of falling viewership ratings. The biggest problem, by far, is the predictability. Was there ever any question, for example, that *Oppenheimer* would score big at the Globes — as indeed it did, winning Best Picture, Best Actor and Best Director among other awards? Or that the fourth season of *Succession* would add to its already impressive collection of awards?

This is not to say that the winners were not deserving, but merely that the elements of surprise and discovery — once a big draw for viewers — are waning. Awards like the Globes were a platform to come across gems that the masses might have missed, but this function is now performed far more effectively by social media and the recommendation algorithms of streaming services. For the Globes, the fact that it was able to finalise a host only 10 days before the event — after high-profile hosts like Chris Rock had declined — should also have been a warning. It may be time to roll up the red carpet.

An extraordinary judgment

Bilkis Bano verdict, quashing remission to 11 convicts, is a reassertion of the Supreme Court's lost power



INDIRA JAISING

WE LIVE IN extraordinary times, when extraordinary solutions are to be found. Hence it is that the Supreme Court of India has given an extraordinary judgment in the Bilkis Bano case, declaring its own previous decision a nullity, something that has happened perhaps only once before.

The Court held that the state of Gujarat "usurped" a power which it did not possess to grant remission to the 11 convicted persons for the rape of Bilkis Bano during a period of communal violence.

There is a difference between "usurpation of power" and "abuse of power". Opinions may differ on whether power was abused in a particular case and the Court may leave it to the decision-maker to take a call on a borderline case. But the very absence of power renders the decision void.

These men were all convicted for life, which means for the rest of their natural life. There is, however, the power of the state government within whose jurisdiction the trial takes place to grant a remission after completion of 14 years for good conduct or for other good reasons. Since the trial took place in the state of Maharashtra, it was Maharashtra alone that had the jurisdiction to grant remission, if at all it was to be given.

Standing in the way of deciding the case was a previous decision of two judges of the Supreme Court itself, that took the view that the appropriate government is the state of Gujarat. This judgment was clearly *per incuriam* since a larger bench of the Supreme Court had held that remission can only be granted by the state in which the trial took place. If that judgment held the field, the Bilkis petition could not be allowed.

It is here that the Court declared that its judgment was to be set aside since it was

procured by fraud on the part of the petitioners. Bilkis Bano was not made a party to the previous petition. The petitioners suppressed the fact from the Supreme Court that prior to the grant of its judgment, a bench of the Gujarat High Court had held that the appropriate government was the state of Maharashtra.

They also suppressed the fact that they had already appealed to the state of Maharashtra and that the trial court had recommended rejecting the grant of remission, on the ground that what had happened was a crime against humanity. The CBI, which was the investigating agency, was consulted and had recommended against remission.

Gangrape is a crime against humanity. This crime was perpetrated against a Muslim family in Gujarat in 2002 during widespread violence targeting the community. The Statute of the International Criminal Court prescribes a sentence of 30 years for crimes against humanity with no remission.

On conclusion of arguments, the Supreme Court deals with the plea of the convicts not to be sent back to prison since liberty is precious. To this the judges respond by saying liberty is precious when it is obtained by due process law. I might add, it is also precious when it is taken away without due process of law, as we see happening all too often these days. To a plea that the Court should exercise its extraordinary power under Article 142, the court holds that it is the power to do justice and justice is the rule of law, hence there is no question of allowing the convicts to remain out of prison anymore. The status quo ante has to be restored if justice is to be done.

In recent judgments of the Supreme

Court, we have noticed a tendency that even when the declaration of law is in favour of the petitioners, the final order is not. This has happened, for instance, in the case relating to the disqualification of an MLA in Maharashtra and in the Article 370 case. It is not my purpose here to discuss the merits of the two cases but rather to insist that the court respect its own decisions.

They also suppressed the fact that they had already appealed to the state of Maharashtra and that the trial court had recommended rejecting the grant of remission, on the ground that what had happened was a crime against humanity. The CBI, which was the investigating agency, was consulted and had recommended against remission.

The Court also held that the state of Gujarat had contended that it was the appropriate government and yet they did not file a review against the previous decision. In that, they were "complicit" with the petitioners.

I started by saying that we live in extraordinary times. It is a time in which power is being "usurped" by decision-makers. What does this mean for us? It means that power is being exercised extra-constitutionally by those who govern us, under cover of leaving the law to "take its own course".

In the final analysis, this is the triumph of the will of Bilkis Bano to fight for justice and the collective contribution of the women's movement which has worked tirelessly in supporting her and articulating their vision of justice.

The writer is a former Additional Solicitor General of India. She appeared in this case on behalf of Mahua Moitra



AAKSHI MAGAZINE

LIVING IN A SUIT-BOOT WORLD

'12th Fail' is a reminder that there is space for those who stay true to themselves

VIDHU VINOD Chopra's moving film, *12th Fail*, has a much-talked-about ending. Set in the competitive world of UPSC examinations, the film is based on real-life Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Manoj Kumar Sharma's struggles to make it to the civil services.

The powerful moment comes towards the end of the film when Manoj finds out that he has cleared the final interview. In some ways, this is an obvious moment. The actor knows he has to be impactful here. And yet, Vikrant Massey creates something unexpected — he conveys the intensity and depth of the character's internal journey just through his body language.

But let's rewind and focus our attention on an earlier moment — also an actor's moment. It is the day of his final interview. Manoj is so nervous and intimidated that he doesn't even hear his name being called out. This is the biggest day of his life, but he is not feeling like himself. He is wearing formal shoes that do not fit. He is wearing a tie that he did not want to wear. This is the unfairness of a system where he has to win by not being himself, by not revealing too much of himself — to convince the elite interviewer that he belongs to this other world, even though his strength is that he does not.

And he almost doesn't win. Manoj's answer is too honest for the interview board. He is asked to step out for a bit.

Government civil service jobs are coveted by lakhs of people in India as a means to a better way of life in a deeply unequal society. Not everyone has a happy ending like the real and reel life Manoj. In fact, most don't. Reportedly, in 2022, 11.52 lakh applicants applied for the preliminary examination and 13,090 candidates qualified. In the previous year, after the final round, the UPSC selected 4,119 candidates. The candidates who do make it, often do so at great toil and expense, mental as well as financial.

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In an interview, Vidhu Vinod Chopra said that the crucial thing about this film is to show that you can make it big while staying honest. And that the dialogue about Manoj making it without any kind of infrastructural support — "without oxygen" — is very important. In this moment, though, *12th Fail* acknowledged something even bigger — the humanity of the character. He is not just someone who has to make it through a competitive exam. He does not

have to be exceptional for us to see him in all his complexity. He is that already. Government civil service jobs are coveted by lakhs of people in India as a means to a better way of life in a deeply unequal society. Not everyone has a happy ending like the real and reel life Manoj. In fact, most don't. Reportedly, in 2022, 11.52 lakh applicants applied for the preliminary examination and 13,090 candidates qualified. In the previous year, after the final round, the UPSC selected 4,119 candidates. The candidates who do make it, often do so at great toil and expense, mental as well as financial. The burden becomes more pronounced since many do not come from privilege.

In a just society, this would be seen as cruel. We celebrate it.

12th Fail's final act — the moment when Manoj does find his name on the list — is a culmination of everything he wanted to be. This is the gift they give you.

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The writer teaches film studies at Ashoka University and has co-edited ReFocus: The Films of Zoya Akhtar. Views are personal



JANUARY 9, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

ELECTION ACTION PLAN

THE THREE-DAY NATIONAL council session of the Bharatiya Janata Party concluded with sounding an election alert to its units throughout the country. The council has given a seven-point action programme to gear up the party organisation for polls. It has called upon all party units to remain in a state of election throughout this year because it feels that "the possibility of a snap poll cannot be ruled out".

BJP-LOK DAL SEATS

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE, president of the Bharatiya Janata Party, categorically denied that a decision on the number of Lok Sabha

seats his party and the Lok Dal would contest had been taken or the exercise had even been started. He described "totally baseless" reports that had appeared in a section of the press to this effect. He said the state units of the BJP had been asked to start looking for candidates in consultation with lower units of the party.

COCHIN AS DRUG CENTRE

HOW THE PLIGHT of an international yachtsman, an Australian, stranded in the South Indian port of Cochin, and his accidental acquaintance with an alleged illusive drug smuggler, James Charles Howard, resulted in the haul of a \$100 million worth of hashish, has come to light. It makes some

interesting revelations — one of which is that there is a possibility that Cochin is turning into a fast-growing conduit for a spectrum of hard and soft drugs, particularly those from Afghanistan.

FEAR OF ARREST

AKALI DAL PRESIDENT Harchand Singh Longowal has advised party leaders and activists to "go underground" to evade possible arrest before January 27. He expressed fear that they may be rounded up by the police because of the "revolutionary" action of the party to be followed after he announces the new programme on January 26 for pressing their demands. However, he told them to work wholeheartedly and intensify their efforts.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Mind the cereal gap

There is a large and growing mismatch between cereal production and the known uses for it



JEAN DRÈZE AND CHRISTIAN OLDIGES

INDIA PRODUCES ABOUT 300 million tonnes of cereals every year, but people's consumption requirements are barely 200 million tonnes. What is going on?

Before addressing this question, we should substantiate the figures. According to the official *Foodgrains Bulletin*, cereal production (mainly rice and wheat) crossed 300 million tonnes for the first time in 2022-23, reaching 304 million tonnes to be precise. If we take a three-year average of annual production in the most recent years for which data are available (2020-21 to 2022-23), it comes to 292 million tonnes – still pretty close to 300 million.

What about consumption? The latest estimates of per capita cereal consumption (PCCC) pertain to 2011-12: 11.6 kg per month according to the second India Human Development Survey (IHDS-2), and just 10.7 kg per month according to the National Sample Survey (NSS). We also have IHDS-1 and NSS figures for 2004-5: 11.8 kg and 11.6 kg per month respectively. If the 2011-12 estimates are still valid today, and if India's population is now around 140 crore, then aggregate household consumption of cereals is less than 200 million tonnes, and possibly even below 180 million tonnes.

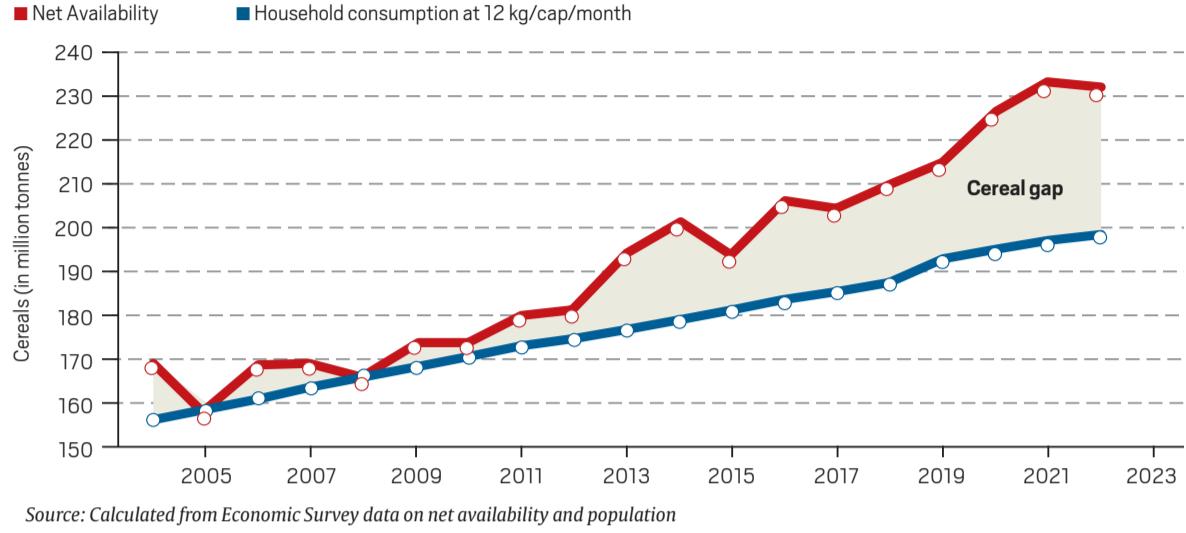
It is possible that PCCC is, in fact, lower today than in 2011-12. Indeed, PCCC has been declining steadily from the late 1970s onwards. In rural areas, for instance, monthly PCCC declined from 15.3 kg in 1977-78 to 11.3 kg in 2011-12 according to NSS data. Due to the suppression of the 75th NSS Round (2017-18) by the Indian government, survey data on cereal consumption are not available beyond 2011-12 at the national level. A state-level report for Maharashtra based on the 75th Round, however, suggests that PCCC continued to decline there between 2011-12 and 2017-18. This may or may not be true at the national level, but it is unlikely that the declining trend has been substantially reversed.

The downward PCCC trend is sometimes attributed to rising poverty, but this is a misunderstanding. For one thing, there is clear evidence of slow but steady poverty decline in India from the 1970s until 2011-12 (after that, the jury is still out). For another, the bulk of the PCCC decline is taking place among better-off sections of the population, who are certainly not getting poorer. Instead, the decline seems to be driven by urbanisation, rising education levels, diversification of food intake, and perhaps some reduction of activity levels. That is why there is no reason to assume that the declining PCCC trend has been reversed, with one minor qualification mentioned below.

In short, the figures cited in our opening paragraph are credible. How does one account for the difference of about 100 million tonnes between production and consumption?

Cereals, of course, have other uses than household consumption. The Government of India's annual Economic Survey traditionally deducts 12.5 per cent for seed, feed and wastage (SFW) to infer "net production" from gross production. Then it calculates "net availability" by adding net imports and deducting changes in public stocks. In both 2004-5 and 2011-12, net availability per capita more or less matched the IHDS and NSS consumption

Production vs Consumption



CR Sasikumar

estimates. In recent years, however, a large gap has emerged between net availability and household consumption.

To see this, let us take 12 kg as a plausible upper bound for monthly PCCC from 2011-12 onwards. If we combine this with the Economic Survey's population estimates, we find a growing gap between net availability and household consumption during the last 12 years. The gap reached 36 million tonnes in 2020-21 and 33 million tonnes in 2021-22, despite record exports in both years: 23 million tonnes in 2020-21 and a whopping 32 million tonnes in 2021-22. The trend is illustrated in the accompanying chart. If we replace the 12 kg norm for monthly PCCC with the NSS estimate of 10.7 kg for 2011-12, then the cereal gap was more than 50 million tonnes from 2019-20 onwards.

Quite likely, the Economic Survey's "net availability" estimates are inflated by an insufficient SFW allowance. The traditional allowance of 12.5 per cent consists of 5 per cent for seed, 5 per cent for feed and 2.5 per cent for wastage. Independent experts have argued for some time that the 5 per cent norm for feed is too low. If we double the feed allowance, from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of gross production, that would reduce the cereal gap by 15 million tonnes or so. A large gap would still remain.

The cereal gap is quite a mystery. Is cereal consumption actually increasing, possibly due to the expansion of the public distribution system? Does animal feed absorb much larger quantities than previously thought? Have industrial uses of cereals, to make beer and biscuits, for instance, shot up in recent

The cereal gap, however, is not just a statistical puzzle. It also raises important policy issues related to the rapid growth of cereal production — nearly 3 per cent per year in the last 10 years. Is it time to plan for a major diversification of agricultural production, away from rice and wheat? If so, what are the possibilities, and how are they to be promoted? If not, what are the proposed outlets for enhanced cereal production in the near future? For instance, would it be feasible and desirable for India to expand cereal exports?

years? It is hard to tell, for lack of data.

The central government, for one, seems to be in the dark. Indeed, the Economic Survey oddly reduced the SFW allowance from 12.5 per cent to 10 per cent or so in the last few years, when an opposite adjustment was called for. This is yet another symptom of the confusion that seems to pervade Indian statistics today. The disarray of the statistical system is rapidly turning the Indian economy into a ship without a rudder.

The cereal gap, however, is not just a statistical puzzle. It also raises important policy issues related to the rapid growth of cereal production — nearly 3 per cent per year in the last 10 years. Is it time to plan for a major diversification of agricultural production, away from rice and wheat? If so, what are the possibilities, and how are they to be promoted? If not, what are the proposed outlets for enhanced cereal production in the near future? For instance, would it be feasible and desirable for India to expand cereal exports?

The need to address these questions arises from the fact that cereals are not traded in a competitive market that clears through price adjustment. For cereals, there is a well-defined policy of ensuring remunerative prices for Indian farmers. This commitment makes it necessary to ensure that there is adequate demand at the said prices. It is not at all clear where we are in this respect.

Drèze is Visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Ranchi University. Oldiges is Senior Economic Affairs Officer at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The aphorisms of Jit Uberoi

His written work will enter history. His insights in conversation are heritage



DIPANKAR GUPTA

THE LEGACY OF Professor J P S Uberoi will indeed live through his many profound and, this must be said, difficult books. That is a gift he left behind for those who did not know him personally. But those who did, received something more precious. These were priceless aphorisms he carelessly strewed in casual conversations, not to be found anywhere in print.

There are many Jit Uberoi aphorisms I have collected over the years while sharing cups of dark brown liquid in the Delhi School of Economics coffee house. I shall relate a few here only to acknowledge how rewarding it was to be in his company. His written work will enter history but his aphorisms have a special quality and may be called his "heritage".

To spend time with Jit is to come away feeling enlightened, but you don't quite know why. It is a rare experience for anybody to step out just for a chat and return with an intellectual nugget. He was such a charmer outside the classroom with friends, but he could be a fiendish taskmaster as a teacher. I have seen both sides of the man.

What is remarkable about his aphorisms is that they are all profoundly intellectual but

were delivered with casual ease. It will immediately be evident that all of them are stunning for their theoretical insights. This is much like a lightning that blinds one and the lesson reverberates gradually as the words begin to sink.

Aphorism 1: On the sociology of religion, here is a Jit gem: "There is nothing two Hindus can do which one Hindu cannot." This immediately alerts us to the fact that, unlike Abrahamic religions, Hinduism doesn't really need a congregation as "moksha" is gained through inner correction. This is true for other Indic religions, but not Sikhism, which centralises the "sangat".

Aphorism 2: For those who prize English education in India, ponder over this Jit aphorism. "The fundamental of English education in England is to be taught in your mother tongue." This will sadden snobs for they really did not get an English education in the English medium schools they went to in India. Not only does such an observation shake past prejudices but it impacts policy too.

Aphorism 3: It is common for educationists to envy those in the corporate sector for being better paid. Another Jit gem should help correct this perception. For Jit: "The remuner-

ations for a pastoral job, such as that of a teacher, soldier or priest will never equal their contribution to society." How can you reward a soldier for giving his life, a priest for saving your soul or a teacher for opening your mind?

Aphorism 4: Jit Uberoi had written extensively on science and modernity and his views on this subject are often not easy to grasp. There is help coming with another of his aphorisms. It goes this way: "Pure science collaborates but applied science competes." In a nutshell, it tells us that knowledge develops across nations but is susceptible to enclosures by capital and profit.

Aphorism 5: Thorstein Veblen's concept of "conspicuous consumption" of the leisure class is widely known. On this note too, Jit had a complementary observation on "conspicuous pomp" and that deserves recognition as well. This is best brought out in his aphorism: "A pretender is known by the escorts he keeps." Now we know why dictators romp about the way they do.

Aphorism 6: Jit wrote extensively about western aesthetics, Europe's unfair occupation of modernity, and schism in Christianity, but he was also an Indian sociologist. His quest was to make the acquisition of knowl-

edge a commitment and not a pastime made up of stories and narratives. This is why he said once: "When a subject gets easy, its students get sloppy."

After I read his *Other Mind of Europe*, I hesitated a while before I told him that it was not an easy read. Jit, to my surprise, was delighted and said: "If it was not easy for me to write the book, it should also not be easy for you to read it." I never always fully understood what Jit said and wrote at first blush, but he always lit up my brain in areas I did not know existed.

I first met Professor Uberoi when I was a callow student in 1969 and he was my tutor for three terms out of four. This was rather unusual, for tutors changed every term and I then took my forced tutelage under him as a punishment. I had to relearn how to construct simple sentences for he deducted one mark each time I wrote "however" in my assignments.

From those early days till now, as far as I am concerned, "however" will forever be suspect or whatever, whenever. However, it will be hard to forget Professor J P S Uberoi in the years left to me.

The writer is a sociologist

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"That India has not been included in the list of countries 'of particular concern' in the context of religious freedom by the US appears to be... coloured by geopolitics... With the upcoming elections likely to return another pro-Hindutva government, things are unlikely to improve for minorities..." —DAWN, PAKISTAN

Diplomacy in the digital public square

Dichotomy between India's position and brash social media campaigns underline challenge for foreign policy in changing times



NISHTHA GUPTA

EMERGING FROM THE post-New Year haze, with thoughts turning to vacations, numerous Indian social media users are taking a decisive stand. They are collectively eschewing one destination: The Maldives.

This trend, widely known as "Boycott Maldives", erupted following derogatory comments by Maldivian officials about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The incident has swiftly escalated into a significant digital movement, casting a spotlight on the increasing power of social media to influence international relations and public choices in diplomacy.

The "Boycott Maldives" hashtag has been trending on X (formerly Twitter) since Modi visited Lakshadweep, an Indian archipelago in the Arabian Sea. The prime minister extolled the "stunning beauty of its islands and the incredible warmth of its people", and many Indian users saw it as an opportunity to pit Lakshadweep against the neighbouring Maldives.

Tensions between India and the Maldives have been on the rise over the past few years. The archipelagic nation has accused India of interfering in its domestic affairs, causing its "India First" policy to be eclipsed by a strong "India Out" movement. President Mohamed Muizzu, who came to power in November, has persistently called on India to withdraw its military personnel from Maldives. India also fears that Muizzu, who bucked the longstanding tradition of Maldivian presidents coming to New Delhi for their first official visit, has been cosying up to China (Muizzu is scheduled to visit Beijing between January 7 and 12).

The simmering embers of political tension burst into flames on social media as Maldivians derided comparisons with Lakshadweep. The situation escalated rapidly when government figures joined the fray, notably Maldivian Deputy Minister of Youth Empowerment, Information and Arts Mariyam Shiuna posting controversial tweets about Modi. This ignited widespread outrage, fueling a digital wildfire that led to the "Boycott Maldives" movement. Many Indians, including celebrities, began calling for a boycott of the Maldives. They expressed their discontent by cancelling their planned trips to the island nation.

The Maldivian government, on its part, distanced itself from these comments, stating that the remarks made by Shiuna were her personal opinion and not representative of the government's stance. It also suspended three deputy ministers including Shiuna and her colleagues Malsha Shareef and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid.

In today's social media-driven world, the art of diplomacy is increasingly vulnerable to the waves caused by off-the-cuff remarks from public figures. The turmoil in the Maldives-India relations serves as a poignant example. The digital outcry underscores a growing disconnect between India's official foreign policies and public sentiment.

Once confined to the hushed halls of embassies and the strategic roundtables of seasoned diplomats and bureaucrats, foreign policy has now burst into the bustling,

unfiltered world of social media. This once staid and measured field is now dancing to the unpredictable tempo of tweets, hashtags, and viral posts. In this new digital agora, the intricate tapestry of international relations is being coloured not only by the pens of policymakers but also by the keyboards of the masses. Diplomatic dialogue, once the preserve of closed-door meetings and formal communiques, now unfolds in real-time, subject to the scrutiny and sway of a global audience.

With India, a parallel phenomenon is emerging: Social media users vocally declaring where India "stands" on critical global issues. This trend was evident in early 2022 during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In India, social media platforms buzzed with hashtags like #1StandWithPutin and #1StandWithRussia, in stark contrast to the government's official neutral stance. These accounts, found to be predominantly supporters of PM Modi and the BJP, reflect not only grassroots expressions of foreign policy opinions but also the political leanings and right-wing ideology shaping these discussions. The intersection of domestic politics and international relations in India is becoming increasingly evident through social media, illustrating the growing influence of right-wing ideology in both realms.

After Canada accused India of involvement in the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Delhi denied the charges. However, Indian social media users alluded to India's responsibility, aligning with the assertive "ghar mein ghus ke maarengi" (strike from within) doctrine. This narrative transformed the dispute into a combative triumph for India, with users claiming India "thrashed" Canada, putting Trudeau "in his place".

When public opinion, often swayed by viral trends and momentary emotion, starts dictating diplomatic stances, it risks alienating long-standing allies whose policies might temporarily diverge from the popular narrative. This could result in India finding itself in a precarious position, having to choose between sustaining strategic alliances and appeasing domestic public opinion. Such a scenario could diminish India's diplomatic leverage and ability to navigate the complex web of international relations, potentially leading to a more isolated stance on the global stage.

Elsewhere, Indian social media users have also been found spearheading the pro-Israel disinformation campaign. Amid Israel's bombardment of Gaza, there was a significant emergence of right-wing and Hindu nationalist accounts in India on social media, amplifying anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic disinformation. These Indian right-wing accounts, often juxtaposing the Indian flag with the Israeli one, have been vocal in their support for Israel.

This is all occurring in contrast to India's official stance, which has called for a humanitarian pause and extended aid to Palestine. The dichotomy between India's formal diplomatic position and the actions of right-wing social media accounts underscores the complex and often contradictory nature of foreign policy in the digital age. While the government adopts a more balanced approach, the nationalist narrative on social media drives a completely different agenda, illustrating the widening gap between official policy and public sentiment.

The writer is a masters student in Public Policy and Global Affairs at University of British Columbia

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOLLOW DUE PROCESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, The rule of the mob (IE, January 8). The latest incident of manhandling of the ED team by followers of TMC's strong man, Shahjahan Sheikh, exposes the gap between Mamata Banerjee's criticism of the Modi-led government about the centralisation of power by one man and his government's passivity when it comes to managing undisciplined activists. Banerjee has a vicious grip on the administration to toe her dictates and is unwilling to curb dadagiri by her ardent followers even against central government officials.

Her handling of the incident has been objected to by the Congress which is aiming at displacing the Modi-led government. This is not good for her image as a prospective PM.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, The rule of the mob (IE, January 8). The mob assault on a team of ED officials who had raided the home of the TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh has exposed, once again, the terrible law and order situation in West Bengal. The current crisis is a result of the unbridled power enjoyed by TMC-backed local goons. A TMC minister and

another spokesperson have childishly tried to defend the indefensible by saying this is a "conspiracy" theory by the Centre. Even if the TMC cadres think that the ED's investigation is a witch hunt, they cannot take the law into their own hands. Nothing short of prompt arrest of the absconding leader will suffice.

S S Paul, Nadia

IN INDIA'S INTEREST

THIS REFERS TO the article, At stake in Dhaka (IE, January 6). The stage was set for Sheikh Hasina, since the BNP boycotted the 2024 elections. It is in the best interest of



Pope Francis. Reuters

VATICAN CITY
Pope calls for universal ban on surrogacy

Rome: Pope Francis called Monday for a universal ban on the "despicable" practice of surrogate motherhood, as he included the "commercialization" of pregnancy in an annual speech listing threats to global peace and human dignity. In a foreign policy address to ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, he said 2024 dawned at a time when peace is "increasingly threatened". Citing wars in Ukraine, Gaza, migration, climate crises and the "immoral" production of nuclear and conventional weapons, Francis delivered a list of the ills afflicting humanity. AP

BANGLADESH
Opp rejects polls, questions low voter turnout

Dhaka: Bangladesh's main opposition BNP, which boycotted Sunday's general elections swept by Sheikh Hasina's party, on Monday demanded the cancellation of the "dummy election" and the prime minister's resignation, questioning the accuracy of the voter turnout. The party also renewed its demand for a fresh election under a non-party poll-time government to establish a legitimate and accountable government. Hasina's Awami League party won 223 seats in the 300-seat Parliament. REUTERS

GERMANY
Farmers block roads protesting subsidy cuts

Berlin: German farmers blocked roads with tractors on Monday, kicking off a week of protests against plans to phase out agricultural subsidies with nationwide action that ministers have warned could be co-opted by the far-right. convoys of tractors and trucks, some adorned with protest banners reading "No beer without farmers" and posters from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, gathered on German roads in sub-zero pre-dawn temperatures. Police said roads and highway slip roads were blocked in multiple locations. REUTERS

AUSTRALIA
Ban on Nazi salute, terror group symbols

Sydney: Laws banning the Nazi salute and the display or sale of symbols associated with terror groups came into effect in Australia on Monday as the government responds to a rise in antisemitic incidents following the Israel-Gaza war. The law makes it an offense punishable by up to 12 months in prison to publicly perform the Nazi salute or display the Nazi swastika or the double-sig rune associated with the Schutzstaffel (SS) paramilitary group. The sale of these symbols too is prohibited. REUTERS

AS ISRAEL SHIFTS FOCUS TO TARGETED OPERATIONS AMID GAZA WAR

Senior Hezbollah commander killed in Israeli strike in south Lebanon village

Group identifies commander as Wissam al-Tawil, didn't give details

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, JANUARY 8

AN ISRAELI airstrike killed an elite Hezbollah commander in southern Lebanon on Monday, the latest in an escalating exchange of strikes along the border that have raised fears of another Mideast war even as the fighting in Gaza exacts a mounting toll on civilians.

The strike on an SUV killed a commander in a secretive Hezbollah force that operates along the border, according to a Lebanese security official.

Hezbollah identified the slain fighter as Wissam al-Tawil without providing details.

He is the most senior militant in the armed group to have been killed since Hamas' October 7 attack into Israel triggered all-out war in Gaza and fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, which has escalated since an Israeli strike killed a senior Hamas leader in Beirut last week.

Israel says it has largely wrapped up major operations in northern Gaza and is now focusing on the central region and the southern city of Khan Younis.

The offensive has already killed over 23,000 Palestinians, devastated vast swaths of the Gaza Strip, displaced nearly 85% of its population of 2.3 million and left a quarter of its residents facing starvation.



Palestinians who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes ride into Rafah in southern Gaza on Monday. Reuters

Israel strikes targets in Syria to cut Iran's weapons lifeline to proxies

REUTERS
BEIRUT, AMMAN, JANUARY 8

ISRAEL IS carrying out an unprecedented wave of deadly strikes in Syria targeting cargo trucks, infrastructure and people involved in Iran's weapons lifeline to its proxies in the region, six sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The sources, including a Syrian military intelligence offi-

cer and a commander in the regional alliance backing Damascus, said Israel had shifted strategies following the October 7 rampage by Hamas fighters into Israeli territory and the ensuing Israeli bombing campaigns in Gaza and Lebanon.

Although Israel has struck Iran-linked targets in Syria for years, including areas where Lebanese armed group Hezbollah has been active, it is now unleashing deadlier, more

frequent air raids against Iranian arms transfers and air defence systems in Syria, the sources said.

The commander in the regional alliance and two additional sources familiar with Hezbollah's thinking said Israel had abandoned the unspoken "rules of the game" that previously characterised its strikes in Syria, and seemed "no longer cautious" about inflicting heavy casualties on Hezbollah there.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK, ISLAMABAD, JAN 8

THE US has designated China, North Korea and Pakistan as "Countries of Particular Concern" for engaging in and tolerating "particularly severe violations of religious freedom."

Announcing the Religious Freedom Designations, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that advancing the freedom of religion or belief has been a core objective of US foreign policy ever since Congress passed and enacted the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998.

As part of that "enduring commitment", Blinken said last week that he has designated Burma, China, Cuba, North Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as "Countries of Particular Concern for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom." In Islamabad, Pakistan Foreign Office on Monday rejected what it called the "biased" assessment by the US to designate it a 'country of particular concern.'

Meanwhile, Blinken said further noted that significant violations of religious freedom also occur in countries that are not designated.

"Governments must end abuses such as attacks on members of religious minority communities and their places of worship, communal violence and lengthy imprisonment for peaceful expression, transnational repression, and calls to violence against religious communities, among other violations that occur in too many places around the world," Blinken said.

"We categorically reject

Pakistan's designation as a 'Country of Particular Concern' by the US State Department. We are deeply dismayed that the designation is based on biased and arbitrary assessment, detached from ground realities," the FO said.

It said that Pakistan strongly believes that the contemporary challenge of religious intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia can be best countered through constructive engagement and collective efforts based on mutual understanding and respect.

With a similar spirit, Pakistan has bilaterally engaged the US and its concerns about the designation are being conveyed to the US side, the FO added.

He designated al-Shabab, Boko Haram, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Houthi, ISIS-Sahel, ISIS-West Africa, al-Qa'ida affiliate Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin, and the Taliban as "Entities of Particular Concern." The top US diplomat further

noted that significant violations of religious freedom also occur in countries that are not designated.

"Governments must end abuses such as attacks on members of religious minority communities and their places of worship, communal violence and lengthy imprisonment for peaceful expression, transnational repression, and calls to violence against religious communities, among other violations that occur in too many places around the world," Blinken said.

RELIEF TO NAWAZ, IMRAN

Pakistan top court scraps lifetime ban on lawmakers from holding public office

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 8

PAKISTAN'S SUPREME Court on Monday quashed the lifetime disqualification for lawmakers, ruling that parliamentarians would be barred from holding office for five years, a landmark ruling that provided huge relief to top politicians, including former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan, ahead of the February 8 elections.

A seven-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Monday, ruled that no person can be barred for a lifetime from running in elections if they are disqualified under Article 62(1)(f).

The bench with a 6 to 1 split judgment went against the judgment of its five-member bench which in 2018 had ruled in favor of lifetime disqualification.

Justice Afridi differed from the other six judges of the bench and wrote a note of dissent in favor of life-long disqualification.

The verdict has determined the controversy around the period



Former Pak Prime Ministers Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif

of disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) of Constitution and the Elections Act 2017.

Sharif, the 74-year-old former prime minister and also a frontrunner for the fourth term in the February 8 general elections, was disqualified in the Panama Papers case in 2017. His rival Imran Khan, who was disqualified in the Toshakhana corruption case last year, also was hit by the same law.

The verdict has decided the political future of both Sharif and Khan among many others.

The order also concurred with amendments to the Elections Act that provide for a five-year ban as a result of any judgment, order or decree of any court.

China says British spy 'who collected state secrets' arrested

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, JANUARY 8

CHINA SAYS it has detained a person accused of collecting secrets for Britain BEIJING (AP) — China says it has detained an individual accused of collecting state secrets on behalf of Britain's foreign intelligence agency MI6.

The Ministry of State Security posted on social media Monday that Britain had been cooperating since 2015 with the person, who it said was a citizen of a third nation and had the surname Huang.

The ministry said Huang had received training in intelligence gathering, was provided with equipment and had collected numerous state secrets on repeated visits to China.

No further information on the intelligence gathered was given, nor did the ministry say when he or she had been detained or where they were being held.

The British government declined to comment, in keeping with its longstanding policy on intelligence matters.

China's allegations follow a deterioration of relations between the sides sparked in part by British opposition to Chinese investments in the country, especially in the power and communications.

Muizzu, who is regarded as "pro-China", met provincial officials in Fujian on the first day of



Japan Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa with Ukrainian officials in a bomb shelter in Kyiv on Sunday. Reuters

power grid, Russia is now aiming at Kyiv's defense industry, they say. The frequent strikes have hit civilian areas multiple times.

Monday's attacks struck a string of urban areas, including housing and a shopping mall, across Ukraine.

JAPAN MINISTER IN KYIV BOMB SHELTER, PLEDGES FUNDS

Kyiv: Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, forced into a bomb shelter by an air alert in Kyiv on Sunday, pledged millions of dollars to NATO to help Ukraine avert Russian drone strikes and announced donations of generators and transformers. Kamikawa said Japan would allocate \$37 million to a NATO Trust Fund for drone detection systems. "Japan is determined to continue to support Ukraine so that peace can return," she said in a press meet.

REUTERS

Russia fires hypersonic missiles on Ukraine

AP & REUTERS
KYIV, JANUARY 8

RUSSIA LAUNCHED its latest barrage of hypersonic and cruise missiles against Ukrainian targets early Monday, striking near the front lines of fighting in the east as well as in central and western parts of the country, officials said. At least four civilians were reported killed and at least 30 injured.

Western officials and analysts had previously warned that Russia was stockpiling its cruise missiles in preparation for a strategy of winter bombardment, as bad weather keeps the 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line largely static after 22 months of war.

Unlike last winter, when the Kremlin's forces targeted Ukraine's

his five-day visit, a day after he fired three ministers over derogatory remarks against PM Narendra Modi resulting in a major diplomatic row with India which assisted Male with a host of projects.

Indians constitute the largest number of tourists in the tourism-dependent Maldives.

While China is yet to release his official itinerary, the foreign ministry here said earlier that he is due to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping

and sign several agreements.

In his meeting with senior officials of the China Communications Construction Company Limited which has done projects in the Maldives, Muizzu underscored the significance of China as a valued ally", a press release issued by his office in Male said.

He expressed aspirations to enhance bilateral relations to new heights and enhance collaborative efforts in various areas of mutual interest, the readout said.

The verdict has determined the controversy around the period



Mohamed Muizzu arriving in Beijing on Monday. PTT

BARBIE WINS TWO AWARDS, CILLIAN MURPHY WINS BEST ACTOR, LILY GLADSTONE WINS BEST ACTRESS

Oppenheimer triumphs at Golden Globes as Hollywood parties again

LISA RICHWINE & DANIELLE BROADWAY
CALIFORNIA, JANUARY 8

HISTORICAL DRAMA "Oppenheimer" dominated the Golden Globe awards on Sunday, and gothic comedy "Poor Things" upset summer blockbuster "Barbie," as Hollywood threw its biggest party since labor disputes shut down much of show business last year.

"Oppenheimer," about the making of the atomic bomb, landed five honors, including the coveted best movie drama prize and acting awards for actors Cillian Murphy and



Actors Cillian Murphy and Robert Downey Jr at the 81st Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California on Sunday. Reuters

charts and went into the night with a leading nine nominations. Stone also was named best actress in a movie comedy or musical.

"Barbie" went home with just two awards, for Billie Eilish's song "What Was I Made For" and for a new category called cinematic and box office achievement, created for widely seen films.

The winners were chosen by roughly 300 entertainment journalists who voted on the honors as a part of a new organization created after an ethics and diversity scandal among Globe voters.

Lily Gladstone, best actress winner for her role in "Killers of the Flower Moon" began her acceptance speech by introducing

herself in the Native American language she learned in school.

"This is an historic win," Gladstone continued in English.

"It doesn't belong to just me. I am holding it right now with all my beautiful sisters."

She thanked director Martin Scorsese as well as Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro, her co-stars in the story about the murders of members of the Osage Nation in the 1920s. "You are all changing things," Gladstone said.

The glitzy ceremony at the Beverly Hilton kicked off Hollywood's annual awards season, which culminates with the Oscars on March 10, and brought top stars together for the first

time after six months of strikes by actors and writers in 2023.

The event gave performers the chance to mingle and to publicize their movies and TV shows after months when red carpets and other promotion was prohibited.

Known as a boozy celebration more relaxed than the Academy Awards, the Globes nearly disappeared. A 2021 Los Angeles Times report revealed ethical lapses and a lack of diversity among the roughly 80 members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the group that previously voted on the Globes. The 2022 ceremony was scrapped while the organization made reforms. REUTERS

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024

ECONOMY

SENSEX: 71,355.22 ▼ 670.93 (0.93%) NIFTY: 21,513.00 ▼ 197.80 (0.91%) NIKKEI: 33,377.42 ▲ 89.13 HANG SENG: 16,224.45 ▼ 310.88 FTSE: 7,676.80 ▼ 12.81 DAX: 16,622.28 ▲ 28.07



GOLD

₹ 63,200



USD RATE

₹ 83.14



OIL

\$ 77.99



SILVER

₹ 76,300

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of January 5

International market data till 1900 IST

Sensex, Nifty slide nearly 1% ahead of US inflation data

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, JANUARY 8

DOMESTIC STOCK markets on Monday declined by nearly one per cent as latest United States (US) economic data raised fears of a delay in rate cuts and prospects for a rise in bond yields again. The benchmark Sensex fell by 671 points, or 0.93 per cent, to 71,355.22 and the NSE Nifty Index lost 198 points to 21,513 ahead of the release of the inflation data in the US. Analysts said 11 out of 13 sectors were in the red with public sector banks, fast-moving consumer goods and metal sectors falling the most.

"Investors fretted across Asian and European markets, as US bond yields crossed 4 per cent again that spiralled into a large-scale correction in domestic equities. While rising valuations were beginning to raise concerns, investors resorted to profit-taking as weakness in banking, information technology (IT) and oil & gas stocks saw the Sensex end below the 72,000 mark," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior Vice-President (Research), Mehta Equities.

"The market witnessed widespread selling as the euphoria over early rate cuts may diminish due to the better-than-expected non-farm payroll data from the US and

the consequent rise in the US 10-year yield," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. US bond yield which was below 4 per cent at 3.91 per cent recently has crossed four per cent to 4.04 per cent.

Markets were hoping that US rate cuts could start as early as March and be more extensive than the Federal Reserve has suggested. With the US payroll data coming in above expectations, markets have realised that there's resilience and strength in the economy. "In the near term, investors' trade positions will be more inclined towards the upcoming result season. While there are lower expectations about the IT sector, the overall forecast for earnings growth remains optimistic, projecting double-digit figures," Nair said.

"Markets were also reacting to reports suggesting that the interim budget to be presented on February 1 is likely to increase the tax rebate under the new personal income tax regime," said Avdhut Bagkar, Technical and Derivatives Analyst, StoxBox. Domestic markets ignored the National Statistical Office's first advance estimates that projected India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 7.3 per cent on-year for this fiscal.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

ONGC starts oil production from KG basin project

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

OIL Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has started crude oil production from its massive deep-sea project in the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin block KG-DWN-98/2, which was hit by multiple delays and deadline extensions over the past few years. The project is expected to help the state-owned oil and gas behemoth to arrest the decline in its overall oil production from its mature fields.

"ONGC announces the successful commencement of 'First Oil' from the deep-water KG-DWN-98/2 Block, situated off the coast of Bay of Bengal. This 98/2 project is likely to increase ONGC's total Oil and Gas production by 11 per cent and 15 per cent respectively," the public sector oil company said in a statement.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "This is a remarkable step in India's energy journey and boosts our mission for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat. It will have several benefits for our economy as well". Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that the project is expected to add 7 per cent each to India's current production of oil and natural gas.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

BRIEFLY

GCMMF launches Sagar Skimmed Milk

New Delhi: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. (GCMMF), the largest food products organisation responsible for marketing of 'Amul' and 'Sagar' Brand, announced the launch of Sagar Skimmed Milk across India, a statement said on Monday. **ENS**

IRB infra reports toll collection growth of 26%

New Delhi: IRB Infrastructure Developers Limited and its associate IRB Infrastructure Trust have reported toll collection growth of 26 per cent in the month of December 2023 over the corresponding month of FY23. The toll collection for December reported is Rs 4,880 million, as against the toll collection of Rs 3,880 million in December 2022. **ENS**

Income inequality declines, says SBI research unit countering K-shaped eco recovery claims

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

INCOME INEQUALITY has declined in India with a higher tax base and a shift in taxpayers from lower income to higher income tax bracket, the Economic Research Department of the State Bank of India said in a report released Monday. Terming the claims of K-shaped recovery as "prejudiced" and "ill-conceived", the report also cited the transition of small firms into larger firms and consumption trends such as the rising trend of ordering from food ordering platforms such as Zomato of being indicative of "vanishing inequality".

About 36.3 percent of taxpayers have moved from lower income to higher income tax bracket resulting in 21.3 per cent additional income, the report said adding that the top 2.5 percent of



About 36.3% of taxpayers have moved to higher income tax bracket. File

taxpayers' contribution in income declined from 2.81 per cent in FY14 to 2.28 per cent in FY21. The income-tax returns (ITRs) filed by individual taxpayers earning between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, climbed by 295 per cent between the assessment years (AY) 2013-14 and AY 2021-22, showing a positive trend of migration

to a higher range of gross total income, the report said.

On the share of top taxpayers in income, the report said that in FY14, the combined income of 23 individuals with income of more than Rs 100 crore was 1.64 per cent of the total income of FY14. Even though the number of such individuals increased to 136 in FY21, the share of their combined income fell to 0.77 per cent.

Also, 19.5 per cent of small firms have transitioned into larger firms through MSME value chain integration and consumption of the bottom 90 per cent of the population has increased by Rs 8.2 lakh crore post pandemic, the report said.

"Growth is seen in all income classes but its skewedness has been decreasing with convergence of income towards the middle from both top as well as bottom," the report said.

The report said the claim of K-

shaped recovery, which implies divergent rate of recovery with one section recovering positively and other section declining, seems "at best flawed, prejudiced, ill-concocted and fanning interests of select quarters to whom India's remarkable ascendance, signalling more the renaissance of the new global south, is quite unpalatable".

"Income inequality captured through the Gini coefficient (one of the most widely used measures of income inequality) of taxable income has declined significantly from 0.472 to 0.402 during FY14-FY22," it said.

The report also talks about the decline in sale of two-wheelers, stating that it is "foolhardy to claim that declining two-wheeler sales is a proxy for distress in the rural economy" and people are substituting two-wheelers with four-wheelers. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com

Thali prices decline by 3-5% in Dec: Crisil

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, JANUARY 8

THE COST of a representative, home-cooked vegetarian and non-vegetarian thali, declined by three per cent and five per cent, respectively, in December 2023 when compared to November, a report by CRISIL M&A Research said on Monday.

The easing was due to a 14 per cent and 3 per cent on-month decrease in prices of onion and tomato with the festival season coming to an end. The cost of the non-vegetarian thali declined faster due to a 5-7 per cent on-month decline in the price of broilers, which account for 50 per cent of the cost, the agency said.

On an on-year basis, however, the cost of the vegetarian thali rose 12 per cent, while that of the non-



vegetarian thali declined 4 per cent. The rise in vegetarian thali cost was led by substantial increases of 82 per cent and 42 per cent in prices of onion and tomato, respectively. Prices of pulses, which account for 9 percent of the vegetarian thali cost, also increased 24 per cent on-year, it said. The decline in the cost of the

non-vegetarian thali was due to 15 per cent on-year decline in broiler prices amid higher production, CRISIL said.

The average cost of preparing a thali at home is calculated based on input prices prevailing in north, south, east and west India. Monthly change reflects the impact on the common man's expenditure. The data also reveals the ingredients (cereals, pulses, broilers, vegetables, spices, edible oil, cooking gas) driving changes in the cost of a thali, according to the rating agency.

A vegetarian thali comprises roti, vegetables (onion, tomato, and potato), rice, dal, curd, and salad. For non-vegetarian thali, the constituents remain the same but for dal, which is replaced by chicken. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com

Akasa Air, SpiceJet, AI Express complete 737 MAX-8 inspections on DGCA directive

SUKALP SHARMA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

AKASA AIR, SpiceJet, and Air India Express "satisfactorily" completed the inspection of all over wing emergency exits on their operating Boeing 737 MAX-8 aircraft by Sunday on the directions of India's aviation safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), a top DGCA official said. Following the mid-flight cabin plug door blowout incident on an Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 MAX-9 aircraft in the United States (US) on Friday, the DGCA on Saturday directed the three carriers



DGCA on Saturday directed the three carriers to conduct a "one-time inspection".

ers to conduct a "one-time inspection" of emergency exits on all of their Boeing 737 MAX-8 aircraft.

Akasa Air, SpiceJet, and Air India Express are the only Indian carriers that have the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft in operation. Although none of the Indian carriers have the MAX-9 variant that was involved in the incident, the DGCA asked Indian carriers to inspect the aircraft as an "abundant precautionary measure", given that the MAX-8 and MAX-9 are part of the same aircraft family and have numerous similarities. The DGCA directive required the three Indian carriers operating the 737 MAX-8 to complete the inspection by noon on Sunday.

These checks have been satisfactorily performed on the oper-

ational fleet of Boeing B737-8 Max aircraft by Air India Express (4), SpiceJet (8) and Akasa (20). Akasa Air fleet includes one B737-820 (high-density variant of the 737 MAX-8) aircraft which has a mid-cabin door on which the operational check has been completed satisfactorily, the DGCA official said. There are 44 737 MAX-8 aircraft with Indian carriers currently, as per fleet databases, but not all of them are presently operational. Akasa Air's entire fleet of 22 planes currently comprises 737 MAX-8 aircraft. Of the 65 planes in SpiceJet's fleet, 13 are 737 MAX-8 aircraft. **FULL REPORT ON**
www.indianexpress.com

DGCA revises duty time limitations norms for flight crew

New Delhi: Aviation safety regulator DGCA on Monday came out with revised Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) norms for flight crew, entailing increased weekly rest periods to 48 hours, extension of night hours, and limiting the number of night landings to only two as against six earlier.

These regulations have been instrumental in managing fatigue-related aviation safety risks for over a decade now, an official statement said. **PTI**

After Oct spurt, credit card spends moderate in Nov

HITESH VYAS

MUMBAI, JANUARY 8

WHEN CONSUMERS went on a spending spree using credit cards during the festive month of October 2023, card transactions spurted by Rs 36,000 crore to Rs 1.78 lakh crore from September's Rs 1.42 lakh crore. However, card transactions declined to Rs 1.60 lakh crore in November when most festival offers ended, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data shows.

As retail companies and e-commerce majors like Amazon and Flipkart offered discounts during the month, consumers splurged heavily, adding to card outstanding.

being the quarter end. Expectedly, liquid funds witnessed the highest net outflows during the month," said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director – Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India Pvt Ltd.

Net outflows from the liquid funds were Rs 39,675.27 crore as against outflows of Rs 644.73 crore in November. Ultra short duration and low duration fund witnessed outflows to the tune of Rs 6,029.75 crore and Rs 9,432 crore respectively.

Net inflows into hybrid schemes stood at Rs 15,009.30 crore in November.

Net inflows into large and mid-cap funds were Rs 2,338.86 crore in December as against Rs 1,847.45 crore in November.

Inflows into mid-cap funds declined to Rs 1,393.05 crore from Rs 2,665.73 crore.

Inflows into multi-cap funds stood at Rs 1,851.87 crore and into flexi cap funds were Rs 1,087.45 in December. Debt mutual funds saw outflows of Rs 75,559.93 crore as against outflows of Rs 4,706.75 crore last month.

The huge net outflow in December could be attributed to the advance tax requirement that corporates need to meet with it

credit, declined after the festive season neared its end, which can be seen by the sequential drop in online payments. However, the point of sale (PoS) transactions have witnessed an increase.

"The credit card segment might see some moderation after the RBI increased the risk weights," said a CareEdge Ratings report.

On November 16, the RBI increased the risk weights on the exposure of banks towards consumer credit, credit card receivables and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) by 25 per cent up to 150 per cent. The move is aimed at discouraging lenders from aggressively lending to these segments of loans. The central bank increased the risk weights for NBFCs by 25 percentage points to 150 per cent and 125 per cent for commercial banks and NBFCs.

On October 6, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das cautioned banks and NBFCs about the high growth in the personal loan segments for any signs of stress. The RBI said certain components of personal loans are recording a high growth. In credit card accounts, the amount spent is billed to the card users through a monthly statement with a definite due date for repayment.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

'Switzerland's decision to eliminate import duties limits FTA utility for India'

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

SWITZERLAND'S POLICY to allow tariff-free entry for all industrial goods from all countries significantly limits India's prospects of gains from India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) free trade agreement (FTA) that is currently being negotiated, a report by think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said on Monday.

The government began discussing the inclusion of its securities as far back as 2013 but restrictions on foreign investment in domestic debt hampered the process. In April 2020, the Reserve Bank of India introduced securities that were exempt from foreign investment restrictions under a "fully accessible route" (FAR). **REUTERS**

Notably, EFTA countries are not part of the European Union. EFTA comprises Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland which is an intergovernmental organization for the promotion and intensification of free trade. India's exports to EFTA

countries during 2022-23 stood at \$1.92 billion as against \$1.74 billion in 2021-22. Imports aggregated at \$16.74 billion during the last fiscal as compared to \$25.5 billion in 2021-22.

"Industrial goods, which account for 98 per cent of India's \$1.3 billion merchandise exports to Switzerland in FY2023, are directly impacted. Additionally, exporting agricultural produce to Switzerland remains challenging due to the complex web of tariffs, quality standards, and approval requirements. EFTA, including Switzerland, has shown no inclination to make agriculture tariffs zero on most basic agricultural produce. Consequently, with zero industrial tariffs and the difficulty in exporting agricultural produce to Switzerland, India's prospective gains in merchandise exports are effectively nullified," the think tank said.

The trade imbalance between India and Switzerland further complicates the scenario, GTRI said. In FY2023, India's imports from Switzerland stood at \$15.79 billion, in stark contrast to its exports of \$1.34 billion, leading to a substantial trade deficit of \$14.45 billion.

KRIBHCO

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THIS WORD MEANS

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION TAG

Seven products from Odisha have bagged the coveted geographical indication (GI) tag, which recognises their exclusivity to the state



(Clockwise from top left) Kapdaganda shawl; Lanja Saura painting; Khajuri Guda; a red weaver ant, used in Kai chutney. Odisha State Tribal Museum, Wikipedia

A GI tag is a sign assigned to products that have a specific geographical origin, and possess their intrinsic qualities due to said origin. They assure consumers of the quality and authenticity of the product, while protecting interests of local producers.

In India, GI tags are awarded by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. GI registration is given to an area, not a trader. Those dealing with a GI tagged product can apply to sell with the GI logo. Authorised traders are then each assigned a unique GI number. Crucially, unauthorised traders can be prosecuted under The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.

Here are seven products from Odisha which bagged the GI tag last Thursday.

Kapdaganda shawl

The distinctive shawl is made by the women of the Dongria Kondh tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi districts. Embroidered with red, yellow and green threads, motifs comprise lines and triangles. The shawls, worn by both genders, are presented during courtship as a sign of formal commitment.

Odisha Khajuri Guda

This jaggery which originates in Gajapati district is extracted from the sap of date palms. Traditionally prepared in a trapezoidal form called *patali gur*, it is dark brown in colour and has a unique taste, different from sugarcane jaggery.

well-being of the community. The artwork features humans, trees, animals, birds, and celestial objects.

Similipal Kai chutney

Made by manually grinding red weaver ants on *asil batta* (grinding stone), this delicacy comes from Mayurbhanj district. The particular ants are found in the jungles of Mayurbhanj, including Similipal – Asia's second largest biosphere. The chutney is a highly nutritious food source, rich in protein, and a number of vitamins and minerals. Consumption is believed to boost immunity and prevent diseases.

Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal

With prickly thorns all over the plant, this variety of brinjal is known to be resistant to insects. It contains more seeds than other genotypes, and is famous for its relatively short cooking time. Cultivated in Nayagarh district, historical records suggest that the locals got the brinjal from nearby hilly areas and started cultivation nearly 100 years ago. The variety yields around 200 kg of fruit per hectare.

Dhenkanal Magji laddu

Dhenkanal Magji laddu is a sweet-meat made from buffalo milk *chhena* (cottage cheese). Said to have originated from the Mandar-Sadangi area, it can be found across Dhenkanal district today. The region became a hub of buffalo milk production during British times, and *chhena* was the third largest produce – after milk and curd. It is prepared by draining all moisture from the *chhena*, then frying it, and finally forming balls of the mixture

Lanjia Saura painting

Also known as *idital*, the art form belongs to the Lanja Saura community, a PVTG largely residing in Rayagada district. Traditionally adorning the exterior mud walls of residences, the paintings comprise white figures on a crimson-marrow background. Through the artwork, the Lanja Sauras show gratitude to their deities and forefathers, and pray for the

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EXPERTS EXPLAIN

AJIT KEMBHAVI & DURGESH TRIPATHI

A LITTLE over four months after its launch, the Aditya-L1 spacecraft, on a mission to study the Sun, has entered the halo orbit around the L1 point of the Earth-Sun system.

To begin with, why study the Sun?

The Sun produces heat and light through nuclear fusion inside its core, which provides the energy needed to sustain life on Earth. Every energy source on Earth can ultimately be traced back to the Sun's energy.

The yellow disc in the sky is the Sun's outer layer, known as photosphere, which is at a temperature of about 6,000 degrees Celsius, and emits the visible and infrared light that is key to our existence. Above the photosphere is the chromo-

sphere, and higher still is a layer known as the corona.

The photosphere is much cooler than the Sun's core (which is about 15 million °C), but the chromosphere, somewhat surprisingly, is, at about a million degrees, hotter than the photosphere. The corona is even hotter (up to 2 million °C) – so there must be some energy source responsible, but the processes involved are not yet understood.

The corona emits ultraviolet and extreme ultraviolet radiation, and X-rays, which would be lethal to life on Earth but for the presence of the Earth's atmosphere. Only a small fraction of ultraviolet radiation penetrates the stratosphere and governs the chemistry of ozone and oxygen; an even smaller fraction reaches the ground, and is responsible for causing skin cancer.

What else is ejected from the Sun?

In addition to the radiation, there is a continuous stream – known as Solar Wind – of electrically charged particles, which can be electrons, protons or ions. These charged particles produce the spectacular aurorae, known as the Northern and Southern Lights, which are seen close to the North and South Poles of Earth, and on other planets such as Jupiter and Saturn.

There are also sudden, spectacular emissions of charged particles, which collectively form a plasma, into interplanetary space. These are Solar Flares and Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) – each eruption can have a thousand billion tonnes of plasma, and there could be several such eruptions during a high solar activity phase.

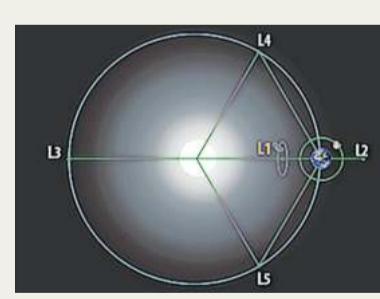
These eruptions, which are very difficult to predict, directly affect space weather and space-reliant technologies such as satellite communication networks, and can lead to electric power blackouts in regions located at higher latitudes on Earth.

Why is the Aditya-L1 mission important?

We need to monitor the solar atmosphere and the corona continuously over a wide range of radiation, from the visible to ultraviolet to X-rays, as well as the eruptions on the Sun, and study the properties of charged particles in the Solar Wind.

This has to be done from outside the Earth's atmosphere, and far away from the Earth in the direction of the Sun. It will then be possible to get early warning of solar eruptions, and to initiate actions to minimise the disruption they may cause.

Aditya-L1 has seven instruments for the



The five Lagrangian points for the Sun-Earth system. L1 and L2 are on the line joining the Sun to the Earth. ISRO

observations of all radiations and charged particles. It is located at L1, which is 1.5 million km from Earth towards the Sun, and allows uninterrupted observations. The mission is therefore ideal for our requirements.

What is L1? What is so special about it?

L1 stands for the first Lagrangian point. There are five such points – L1 to L5 – associated with the motion of one astronomical body around another, for example, the Earth around the Sun. These points were theoretically discovered by the Swiss math-



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

EXPLAINED LAW

Remission quashed, what now?

The Supreme Court has ordered the convicts in the 2002 Bilkis Bano gangrape case back to prison. On what grounds? What legal option do these 11 men, who walked free in August 2022, have now?

Bilkis Bano case file: Key milestones, 2002-2024

THE CRIME, 2002

FEB 28: Bilkis and family fled their home in Randhipur, Dahod district, after riots began in the aftermath of the Godhra train burning the previous day.

The men, who had been granted early release on August 15, 2022 after serving 14 years in jail, were directed by the top court to surrender within two weeks.

On what grounds did the Supreme Court strike down the remission given by the Gujarat government in 2022?

The Bench of Justice B V Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said that the Gujarat government did not have the authority or jurisdiction to consider the remission applications of the convicts, to reduce their sentence.

This was because the trial in the case was transferred from Gujarat – where the crime was committed – to Mumbai, Maharashtra, in 2004 by the Supreme Court after concerns and apprehensions were raised of evidence tampering, and the absence of a conducive situation for a fair trial in Gujarat.

Following the trial, a special CBI court in Mumbai convicted and sentenced the 11 men in 2008.

The Supreme Court said that as per the provisions of Section 432 of the Code of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973, an application for remission can only be before the government within whose territorial jurisdiction the applicant was convicted, in this case, Maharashtra, and not where the offence took place, in this case, Gujarat.

Under Section 432 of the CrPC, state governments do have the power to suspend or remit a sentence. But the court noted that Section 7(b) of the law clearly states that the appropriate government is the one in whose jurisdiction the offender is sentenced.

The court said that the state of Gujarat had "usurped the powers of the state of Maharashtra which only could have considered the applications seeking remission".

The court also noted that the convicts were considered for an early release on the basis of a policy of the state of Gujarat dating back to 1992, which could not have been applied to them.

That policy allowed for an early release of prisoners who have completed 14 years of imprisonment – but it was subsequently cancelled, and substituted by another policy in 2014 which barred the grant of remission to convicts of heinous crimes.

The court also said that the convicts had not fulfilled the condition of paying a fine ordered by the trial court to be considered for remission.

How did the question of remission reach the Supreme Court?

In 2022, one of the convicts in the Bilkis Bano gangrape case, Radheshyam Shah, approached the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Gujarat government for premature release citing the 1992 policy for convicts who had completed at least 14 years in jail.

In an order dated May 13, 2022, a Supreme Court Bench of Justice Ajay Rastogi and Justice Vikram Nath asked the Gujarat government to consider Shah's application for premature release "within a period of two months", as per the state's 1992 remission policy.

Based on this, a government panel recommended the convicts' release, and they walked out of a Gujarat jail on August 15,

VERDICT & APPEAL

AUG 2004: SC moved the trial from Gujarat to Mumbai after Bilkis faced death threats;

directed the central government to appoint a special public prosecutor.

JAN 21, 2008: Special Judge in Mumbai convicted 11 and sentenced them to life imprisonment for murder, rape.

2009-2011: Both the convicts and the CBI went in appeal; the CBI sought enhancement of the sentence for three convicts to death, and appealed against the acquittals of other accused.

MAY 2017: Bombay HC upheld conviction of the 11 by trial court, refused to enhance punishment from life imprisonment; set aside trial court's acquittal of 5 police officers and 2 doctors.

FEB 1-2, 2004: Bodies exhumed, no skulls found. Bombay HC later observed, "It appears that at some point heads were cut off."

APR 2003: SC transferred the investigation to the CBI.

DEC 6, 2003: SC transferred the investigation to the CBI.

FEB 1-2, 2004: Bodies exhumed, no skulls found. Bombay HC later observed, "It appears that at some point heads were cut off."

APR 19, 2004: CBI filed chargesheet before CJM Ahmedabad against 20 accused, including 6 police officers and 2 doctors who performed autopsies on Mar 5, 2002.

SEPT 2022: Bilkis Bano approaches

SC challenging the premature release of the 11 convicts.

JAN 8, 2024: SC quashes Gujarat government's decision to grant remission to 11 convicts.

conviction, which was in 2008.

Radheshyam Shah had approached the state of Maharashtra on August 1, 2019 after the Gujarat High Court said that the state was the appropriate government for his case.

At that time, the Maharashtra department had sought the opinion of the presiding CBI judge as per the provisions of Section 436 CrPC. The judge had given a negative report, and had objected to the premature release on January 3, 2020.

The judge had cited the remission policy of Maharashtra, studying guidelines issued in 1978, 1992, and 2008. The court said that the Government Resolution (GR) dated April 11, 2008 would apply to the convicts, as it had superseded the other guidelines.

This GR states that a minimum imprisonment of 28 years would have to be undergone for a convict found guilty for offences related to crimes against women and minors where the crime is committed with exceptional violence, before they can apply for remission.

In this case, the convicts have completed

more than 14 years in prison.

Seeking a clear view of the Sun: Why does Aditya need to be at L1?



EXPERTS EXPLAIN

AJIT KEMBHAVI & DURGESH TRIPATHI

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Rakesh Kumar, S/o Sh. Hanuman Dass, R/o D-701, D-BLOCK, NR, SARAL DIAGNOSTIC, SARASWATI-VIHAR, DELHI-110034. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAKESH KUMAR GOYAL. 0040707315-3

I, Harshal S Kumar S/o Sh. Suresh Kumar R/o 43, Gurmandi, G.T.Road, Opposite Jani Colony, Delhi have changed my name to Harshal Suresh Kumar for all purposes. 0040707250-4

I, Astha Rathor D/o Sh. Hemant Kumar Rathor W/o Sh. Deepak Negi R/o B-32, Dronacharya Apartment, Mayur Vihar Phase-1 Extension, East Delhi, Delhi-110091 have changed my name to Astha Deepak Negi for all purposes. 0040707227-11

I, Rajiv Wadhawan, S/o PREM KUMAR WADHAWAN, R/o C-313, S/F, Greenfields Colony, Faridabad, Haryana-121010, hereby declare that RAJIV WADHAWAN and RAJEEV WADHAWAN both names pertain to one and the same person. 0040707227-11

I, Rajeev Kumar S/o RATTAN SINGH R/o HNO.1932, NEW SABJI MANDI, ALIPUR, DELHI-110042. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAJIV KUMAR. 0040707285-1

I, Rajpal S/o SANT RAM, R/o PLOT NO. 647, GALI NO. 1, SAINI-VIHAR, MUNDKA, DELHI-110041, have changed my name to RAJPAL SAINI. 0040707280-6

I, Pramod Singh, S/o Bindra Van Singh, R/o C-23, 2nd Floor, Back Side, Vishwakarma Colony, Puri Pehlajpur, New Delhi-110044, declare that Pramod Singh and Pramod Singh Shakya is the name of same person and presently I am known as Pramod Singh. 0040707289-3

I, Anumika w/o, mahavir singh, R/o JP-99, third-floor, pitampura delhi-110034, have changed my name to Anamika, for all purposes. 0040707289-2

I, Achint S/o Mr. Brij Bhushan Gupta, H.No. 177, Friends-Enclave, Sector-29, Faridabad 121008, Haryana, have changed my name to Achint Gupta, for all future purposes. 0040707289-3

I, Ameera Devi, W/o-Sant Lal aodh, Address, C-150, Sanjay-colony, bhatti mines new delhi-110074, changed my name to Ameera Bai. 0040707320-4

I, Anju Sachdeva D/o ROSHAN LAL SACHDEVA W/o AVINASH ARORA R/o 15, FIRST-FLOOR, NEW-MARKET, RAMESH-NAGAR, DELHI-110015. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ANJU ARORA. 0040707315-2

I, Poonam Singh, D/o, Fateh Bahadur Singh, address-169, Umanj Ma O no. 1, Se-97 Gunjan dhaba, Dabhanji, Dandi, Prayagraj, Utta r Pradesh-211008, changed my name to Kumari Poonam Singh, Permanently. 0040707315-5

I, Ponam W/o GUNJAN SAXENA, R/o C-168, C-BLOCK, RESETTLEMENT-COLONY, KHAYALA, VISHNU-GARDEN, DELHI-110018. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO POONAM SAXENA. 0040707315-1

I, Pardeep Kumar, R/o-553, UPPER GROUND FLOOR, SEC-9-A, GURUGRAM, HARYANA, INFORM THAT MY SON'S NAME LOVE KUMAR AND LOVE SHARMA BOTH NAMES ARE SAME PERSON. 0040707316-1

I, Nisha W/o Rahul Chawla R/o G-88/99, Vijay Chowk, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092, have changed my name to Natasha. 0040707316-5

I, Naresh Kumar Balyan alias Naresh Kumar S/o Shri Jeet Singh R/o-141 C-Block New,Gopal,Nagar Extn,South,of Dhasa Road,Najafgarh,Delhi-110043, have changed my name to Naresh Kumar. 0040707311-3

I, Naveen Kumar S/o N- SAILU, R/o H.NO-10 GRAM SABHA SEWAK PARK UTTAM-NAGAR, DELHI-110059, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NADIMINTI NAVEEN KUMAR. 0040707320-1

I, Mohd Nadeem Ahmad Khan, S/o- Mobin Ahmad Khan, R/o H. No.-792, Upper Ground Floor, Back Side, Gali No.-7, Zakir Nagar, Jamia Nagar, Okhla, South Delhi-110025, have changed my name to Nadeem Ahmad Khan, for all purposes. 0040707289-1

I, Sugandha Beri, W/o Rahul Beri, R/o Flat No SF-2, Plot No-718, Shakti Khand-3, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201014, have change my to Sugandha Sehgal, for all future purpose. 0040707320-3

I, Md Taiyab Jamal S/o Abdul Hannan, R/o F.A-26, First-Floor, Abul-Fazal Enclave Part-1, Jamia Nagar, Delhi-110025, changed my name to Taiyab Jamal. 0040707289-9

I, Mohd Nadeem Ahmad Khan, S/o- Mobin Ahmad Khan, R/o H. No.-792, Upper Ground Floor, Back Side, Gali No.-7, Zakir Nagar, Jamia Nagar, Okhla, South Delhi-110025, have changed my name to Nadeem Ahmad Khan, for all purposes. 0040707316-6

I, Shobha Choudhary W/o Pradeep Chowdhury, R/o G-228, G/F, Vikas Puri, New Delhi-110018, have changed my name to Shobha Chowdhury for all purpose. 0040707316-3

I, Satish Juneja, Son of, Doulat Ram Juneja, R/o House No-B-36A Second Floor Kalkaji New Delhi-110019, Have Changed my name to Satish Kumar Juneja, Permanently. 0040707289-1

I, Sudesh Singh, wife of, VIJENDER SINGH presently residing at H.no.141,B-BLOCK EXTN, GOPAL-NAGAR, NAJAFGARH, NEW DELHI-110043, have changed my name from, SUDESINGH to SUDESINGH KUMARI, vide affidavit dated -08.Jan.24. 0040707285-8

I, Seema W/o RAJPAL SAINI, R/o PLOT NO. 647, GALI NO. 1, SAINI VIHAR, MUNDKA, DELHI-110041, have changed my name to SEEMA SAINI. 0040707280-7

I, Saubh Singla, S/o BHARAT BHUSHAN SINGHAL, R/o K-2, 2ND FLOOR, MODEL TOWN-3, DELHI-110009, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SAURABH SINGHAL. 0040707315-4

I, Roshi Lalvani D/o, Rajdeep Lalvani W/o, Asmaan Moiuddin Qureshi R/o, Flat No-D-206, Friends-Circle, CGHS-Ltd, Plot No.7, Sector-12,Dwarka, New Delhi-110075, have changed my name to Roshi Lalvani Qureshi. 0040707316-4

I, Rajesh Kapoor S/o Surjit Singh R/o, 358, S.F. Ashoka Enclave Main Sector-34, Amarnagar Faridabad, Haryana-121003, changed my name to Rajesh Kapoor Saini. 0040707280-1

I, Imran S/o Mohammad Yusuf R/o 716, Gali-4, Islam Nagar Ghaziabad have changed my name to Mohammad Imran. 0070882243-1

I, Rakesh Kumar, S/o Hanuman Dass, R/o D-701, D-BLOCK, NR, SARAL DIAGNOSTIC, SARASWATI-VIHAR, DELHI-110034. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RAKESH KUMAR GOYAL. 0040707315-3

I, Dhiraj W/o Pawan WADHAWAN, R/o 223 JHILMIL COLONY, SHAHDARA DELHI-110095, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO VANDANA WADHAWAN. 0040707280-2

I, Bharat Bhushan Singla, S/o Garib Chand R/o K-2 2ND-FLOOR MODEL TOWN-3 DELHI-110009, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHARAT BHUSHAN SINGHAL. 0040707280-1

I, Anumika w/o, mahavir singh, R/o JP-99, third-floor, pitampura delhi-110034, have changed my name to Sunny Gupta for all purposes. 0040707250-1

I, Sonu Vij W/o Anil Bhalla R/o W-2124, Rani Bagh, Delhi-110034 have changed my name as Sunanda Bhalla permanently 0040707285-1

I, Achint S/o Mr. Brij Bhushan Gupta, H.No. 177, Friends-Enclave, Sector-29, Faridabad 121008, Haryana, have changed my name to Achint Gupta, for all future purposes. 0040707289-3

I, Ameera Devi, W/o-Sant Lal aodh, Address, C-150, Sanjay-colony, bhatti mines new delhi-110074, changed my name to Ameera Bai. 0040707320-4

I, Anju Sachdeva D/o ROSHAN LAL SACHDEVA W/o AVINASH ARORA R/o 15, FIRST-FLOOR, NEW-MARKET, RAMESH-NAGAR, DELHI-110015. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ANJU ARORA. 0040707315-2

I, Sushil Kumar, S/o-Phagun Lal Ahuja R/o C-63/B, Keshav Puram, Delhi-110035, have changed my name to Sushil Kumar Ahuja. 0040707318-1

I, Amit S/o Jitender R/o-908B, NEW RASHTRIYA APARTMENT PLOT NO-15, SECTOR-18A, DWARKA, DELHI-110075, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO AMIT DUHAN. 0040707320-2

I, Akash Midha S/o Dr. Surender Midha Present Address Flat, No. 1, First Floor, Royal, Green, Apartment Block-C Mehrauli New, Delhi-110030, Permanent Address 160, Ashapura Nanomax, Shikhar Jodhpur, Rajasthan-342001 have changed my minor son name to ARUSH MIDHA aged 6 years to ARUSH MIDHA. 0040707311-2

I, Vinita W/o HARISH VERMA R/o D-41 SECTOR-15 NOIDA UP, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO VINITA VERMA. 0040707280-4

I, Tahira W/o Jamruddin R/o 52, Ghafoor Nagar, Okhla, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025 have changed my name from Taheera to Tahira for all purposes. 0040707252-1

I, Sugandha Beri, W/o Rahul Beri, R/o Flat No SF-2, Plot No-718, Shakti Khand-3, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201014, have change my to Sugandha Sehgal, for all future purpose. 0040707320-2

I, Shabnam W/o Mohammad Imran R/o 716, Gali-4, Islam Nagar Ghaziabad have changed my name to Shabnam Qureshi. 0070882245-1

I, Sarif Khan S/o Rasid Khan, R/o H.No.-10, Kakrala Khawaspur, Sector-80, Noida-201301, have changed my name from MD SHAREEF KHAN to SARIF KHAN for all future purposes. 0070882250-1

I, Manoj S/o Sunil Kumar R/o H.No.81, Mandi Wali Gali, Govt. High School, Sukhrali, Gurgaon (122001), have to changed my name to Manoj Kumar. 0040707285-1

I, Lalit Kumar Jain S/o Shyam Lal Jain, R/o B-5/238, Sector-5, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Lalit Jain. 0040707289-7

I, Lakshya Jain S/o Lalit Jain, R/o B-5/238, Sector-5, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Lakshya Jain. 0040707289-8

I, Krishan Lal S/o Mangal R/o C-318, Inderpuri, Budh-Nagar, New Delhi-110012, have changed my name to Krishan for all purposes. 0040707315-7

I, Kanika D/o Ramesh Kumar R/o, FLAT NO.123, block-D, max height metro view sector-35, Jatheri-soni pati Haryana, have changed my name to Kanika Tayal, for all purpose. 0040707280-8

I, Karm Vir Singh S/o Ramjit Singh R/o H. No. E-434, Gali No. 18, Khaooji Khas Colony, Karauli Nagar, North East, Delhi-110094 have changed the name of my minor son Vishnu aged 12 years and he shall hereafter be known as Vishnu Singh. 0070882203-1

I, Daljeet Shokeen S/o Sh. Inder Singh Shokeen R/o H. No. 283/B, Mangolpur Kalan, Opp. Sector-2, Pkt. 5, Rohini, Delhi-85, have changed my name to Daljeet Singh Shokeen for all future purposes. That Daljeet Shokeen & Daljeet Singh Shokeen is the one and same person. 0040707287-1

I, Bagisha Marwah w/o Sanjiv Mehta R/o 89 Vasant Enclave, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-110057 have changed my name to Bagisha Mehta. 0050234054-1

I, Paribhashita Mehta D/o Bhasker Mehta W/o Krish Kalra R/o C-119, Naraina Vihar, Naraina Industrial Area, South West Delhi, Delhi-110028 have changed my name to Paribhashita Kalra for all purposes. 0040707262-1

I, Geeta Rani Gautam, W/o Harihar, R/o S-538 K/880, Sitapur Road, Triveni Nagar-II, Nirlala Nagar, Lucknow, U.P.-226020, have changed my name to Gita Rani. 0040707289-6

I, Rahul Nayyar, S/o-Bharat Bhushan Nayyar 8577-16, DCM School-Road-New-Rohit Road Karol-Bagh Delhi-110005, have changed name of my minor daughter Samyra Nayyar to Samyra Kaur. 0040707311-1

I, Imran S/o Mohammad Yusuf R/o 716, Gali-4, Islam Nagar Ghaziabad have changed my name to Mohammad Imran. 0070882243-1

I, Fateh Singh, S/o Armandeep Singh Ahden, Address-Near-Rama park, H.no-23 sewak park extn uttam nagar Delhi-110059, changed my name to Fateh Singh Ahden. 0040707320-5

I, Dhiraj W/o Pawan WADHAWAN, R/o 223 JHILMIL COLONY, SHAHDARA DELHI-110095, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO VANDANA WADHAWAN. 0040707280-2

I, Bharat Bhushan Singla, S/o Garib Chand R/o K-2 2ND-FLOOR MODEL TOWN-3 DELHI-110009, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BHARAT BHUSHAN SINGHAL. 0040707280-1

I, Anumika w/o, mahavir singh, R/o JP-99, third-floor, pitampura delhi-110034, have changed my name to Sunny Gupta for all purposes. 0040707250-1

I, Sonu Vij W/o Anil Bhalla R/o W-2124, Rani Bagh, Delhi-110034 have changed my name as Sunanda Bhalla permanently 0040707285-1

I, Sunny Pondwal S/o Sh. Rajkumar Pondwal R/o House No.C-10/22, Gali No.10, Buddh Bazaar, Rahul Garden, Bahaita Jaipur-110012 have changed my relations with their son Ajay Sabana and daughter in law Shalu Chauhan being not dutiful & obedient. My client's have discontinued them from all their movable and immovable properties. Whosoever, shall be doing so at his/her own risk and responsibility. My client's shall not be responsible for same. 0040707274-1

I, Vijay Kumar S/o Satya Narain Gupta R/o 2454, Mahna Chowk, Bathinda, Punjab-151001 have changed my name as Vijay Kumar Gupta, permanently 0040707272-1

I, Manu Minisha Advocate Chamber # 438, Western Wing, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54

I, Achint S/o Mr. Brij Bhushan Gupta, H.No. 177, Friends-Enclave, Sector-29, Faridabad 121008, Haryana, have changed my name to Achint Gupta, for all future purposes. 0040707289-2

I, Meera Devi, W/o-Sant Lal aodh, Address, C-150, Sanjay-colony, bhatti mines new delhi-110074, changed my name to Ameera Bai. 0040707320-4

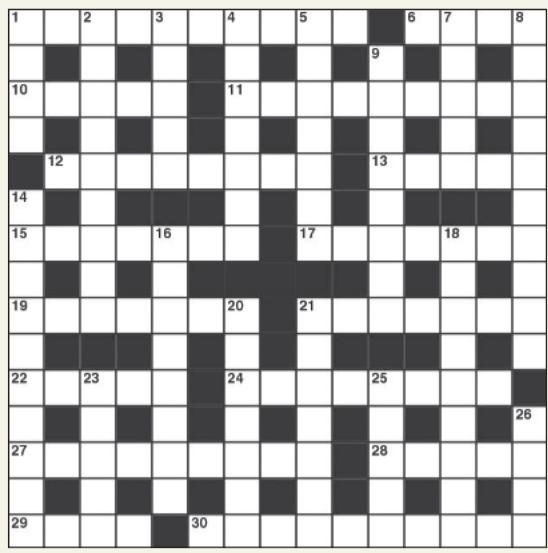
I, Anju Sachdeva D/o ROSHAN LAL SACHDEVA W/o AVINASH ARORA R/o 15, FIRST-FLOOR, NEW-MARKET, RAMESH-NAGAR, DELHI-110015. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ANJU ARORA. 0040707315-2

I, Sushil Kumar, S/o-Phagun Lal Ahuja R/o C-63/B, Keshav Puram, Delhi-110035, have changed my name to Sushil Kumar Ahuja. 0040707318-1

I, Amit S/o Jitender R/o-908B, NEW RASHTRIYA APARTMENT PLOT NO-15, SECTOR-18A, DWARKA, DELHI-110075, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO AMIT DUHAN. 0040707320-2

I, Meena Kumari, have lost/misplaced all my original ownership documents i.e.GPA,ATS, Possession Letter, Affidavit, Receipt & WILL dated 19/12/2005 of Plot measuring 26-1/2 Sq.Yds.out of Khasra No.18/1/1/2, B-Block, Gali No.11, Nathu Colony, Nanthup

CROSSWORD 5256



ACROSS

- 1 Nine crates of mixed fruit (10)
- 6 Advertise an electrical fitting (4)
- 10 Rex splits us up to seize control (5)
- 11 Pretend to be ill we hear to get a drink (9)
- 12 Rises to announce the exhibition's ready for opening? (6,2)
- 13 Start talking back in a foreign language (5)
- 14 A hundred girls in school (7)
- 17 A poster about grass (7)
- 19 Colours blended in Dresden (7)
- 21 Puts on something saucy? (7)
- 22 Maybe Poe's a past expert at telling fabulous tales (5)
- 24 A bitter blow is wanted badly (4,4)
- 27 Obviously not in the pink (3-6)
- 28 Allude one way or the other (5)
- 29 It's heavy though possibly a light attachment (4)
- 30 Late here, in heavenly guise (10)

Solutions Crossword 5255 Across: 1 Rosette, 5 Rondo, 8 In the soup, 9 Ned, 10 Scam, 12 Designer, 14 Butter, 15 Behind, 17 Compacts, 18 Eyes, 21 Out, 22 Even money, 24 Tong, 25 Penance Down, 1 Rails, 2 Set, 3 Thee, 4 Elopes, 5 Repaired, 6 Nonentity, 7 Ordered, 11 Automaton, 13 Legatees, 14 Backout, 16 Strep, 19 Style, 20 Omen, 23 Nun

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLE WORDS

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

Faith is about trusting God when you have _____ questions. - Joel Osteen (10)

CSAEE

AATVNU

AANRS

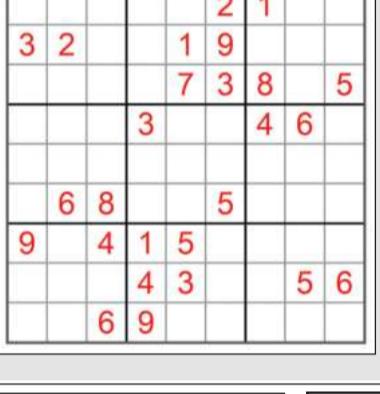
AEPRDW

-Joel Osteen
Answers: Faith is about trusting God when you have unanswered questions.

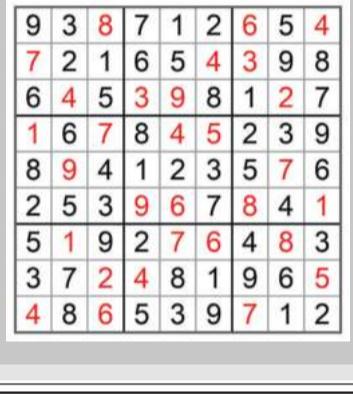
SOLUTION: CSAEAN AVANTIAUTT WAPREDNA

Difficulty Level 3s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 5435



NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DEE/EMU/GZB for and on behalf of President of India, Invites open e-tender for the under noted work:

1	GeM Bid Number	GEM/2023/B/4398438 Date: 27.12.2023
2	Name of the work	Hiring of 06 six nos welder for utilization of welding work at EMU Car Shed at Ghaziabad for a period of 01 One Year
3	Tender cost	NIL
4	Approximate Cost	Rs. 22,29,861.05 inclusive of GST
5	Earliest Money	Rs. 44,600 (payment mode available on GeM website)
6	Completion period	01 Year(s)
7	Validity of offer	90 (Days)
8	Date & Time from tender advertised on GeM website	27.12.2023 12:00:00
9	Date & Time from tender submission start and end	27.12.2023 12:00:00 and 18.01.2024 11:00:00
10	Tender closing Date & Time	18.01.2024 (11:00 Hrs.)
11	Date & Time of tender Opening (immediately when tender submission ends)	18.01.2024 (11:30 Hrs.)

Note 1: All participant Tenderer/Tenderers will submit their requisite documents along with their tender offer. "No post tender correspondence for submission of additional document shall be entertained after opening of the Technical & Commercial offer. Even suo-moto post tender letters of the tenders shall be treated as null & void". Note 2: Duplicate documents should not be enclosed/uploaded. Tender Notice is available on website of www.gem.gov.in.

No. GEM/2023/B/4398438 Date: 27.12.2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

74/24

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

N.I.T. No.	41/23/24-W-2 Dated 21.08.2023
1 Name of work with its location	
NIT- Provision of Covering at LHS No. 69, 74, 80, 81, 83, 85A, 85B, 87, 88, 92, 94, 95, 40 101, 102, 104, 106, 111, 118, 120, 125, 129, 141 & 144 + 23 nos along with boring & cleaning of sump well, hump & water proofing in the section of ADEN/SMQL.	
NIT- Provision of Covering at LHS No. 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 20, 21, 22A, 29, 34, 42, 50, 51, 41 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 64, 65, 66, 67 & 68 = 25 nos along with boring & cleaning of sump well, hump & water proofing in the section of ADEN/SMQL.	
2 Approx. Cost of work NIT-40, 41/23/24-W-2 As per IREPS Notice	
3 Earnest Money NIT-40, 41/23/24-W-2 As per IREPS Notice	
4 Completion period of Work NIT-40, 41/23/24-W-2 As per IREPS Notice	
5 Cost of tender on cash/by post NIT-40, 41/23/24-W-2 As per IREPS Notice	
6 Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender 16.01.2024 to 31.01.2024 upto 15:00 hrs Opening of tender 31.01.2024 at 15:00 hrs.	
7 Similar nature of Work NIT-40, 41/23/24-W-2 As per IREPS Notice	
8 Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be used etc. Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in	
NIT-40, 41/23/24-W-2 Dated : 08.01.2024	

77/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Head Office Virar

Virar (E),
Tal.- Vasai,
Dist.- Palghar,
Pin-401 305.

Tel. : 0250-2525101/02/03/04/05/06

Fax : 0250-2525107

e-mail :

vasaki@virarcorp@yahoo.com

Outward No. : VVCMC/WS/815/2024

Date : 08.01.2024

VASAI-VIRAR CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION Sewerage Department, Head Office, Virar East Corrigendum

BLANK Tender Forms for Providing Underground Sewage System and Construction of Sewage Treatment Plant at Nalasopara in Vasai-Virar City Municipal Corporation area under AMRUT-2.0 Scheme, on the official web site https://mahatenders.gov.in will be available from 11.01.2024.

Please Visit our official web site (<http://mahatenders.gov.in>)

Sd/-

Additional Commissioner (S)
Vasai-Virar City Municipal Corporation



Urban Development & Housing Department,

Vikas Bhawan, Patna

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of Agency for Implementation of public awareness campaign through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) in the state of Bihar for ATAL MISSION FOR REJUVENATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION (AMRUT 2.0)

NIT

Urban Development & Housing Department (UD&HD) invites application from experienced and reputed technical firms/agency for "Selection of Agency for Implementation of public awareness campaign through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) in the state of Bihar for ATAL MISSION FOR REJUVENATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION (AMRUT 2.0)" as given below

Sl.no	PARTICULARS	DETAILS
1	Website for submission of proposal	www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in
2	Mode of Submission	Online submission through eproc2 portal (www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in) and at the same time submission of Hard copies at UD & HD office
3	Last date and time for Submission of Technical & Financial proposal on www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in	31-01-2024 by 07:00 PM
4	Last date and time for Submission of Hard Copies (along with Technical Bid with payment proof and original copy of affidavit/Black listing form) for RFP document, EMD and affidavits will submit in hard copy (Only Technical proposal to be submitted No financial Proposal)	02-02-2024 by 03:00 PM
5	Date and time of opening of Technical Bids	02-02-2024 at 03:30 PM
6	Date and time of opening of Financial Proposal	Will be intimated later to successful bidders
7	Date of Pre-bid meeting	16-01-2024 by 11:30AM
8	Method of Selection	Quality cum Cost-Based Selection (QCBS) Method

- Agencies/ Firms may download the complete Request for Proposal (RFP) Document, from website: <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> or <https://state.bihar.gov.in/urban>.
- For participating in e-RFP process, the applicant shall have to get them registered to get user ID Password and digital Signature. This will enable them to access the website: www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in and participate in e-tender. Those who are not registered in e-tendering systems, they may contact "e- procurement HELPDESK, Mjunction Services Limited ,RJ Complex, 2nd Floor, Canara Bank Campus, Khajuraho, Ashiana Road, P.S.-Shastri Nagar, Patna - 800014" (Toll Free Number:18005726571, Email:eproc2support@bihar.gov.in) for registration

Project Officer-cum-Additional Director

Urban Development & Housing Department,

Vikas Bhawan, Patna

PR. No. 014909 (Urban) 2023-24

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

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



जल संसाधन विभाग

शोध एवं प्रशिक्षण अंचल, खगोल, पटना

अल्पकालीन पुनर्जीविता आमंत्रण सूचना सं-04/2023-24

(आईटीएम रेट टेंडर)

राज्य/राष्ट्रीय स्तरां हेतु

1. कार्य का विवरण:-

क्र. सं.	कार्य का नाम	अग्रदृश की राशि (₹ में) (आंतराल-अवधि अंकलालीन मोड में भूगत्ते)	बीड़ का कार्यालय का गृह (अप्रत्येक वर्षीय) (₹ में) (क
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KLAASEN ENDS TEST STINT

South African wicketkeeper-batter Heinrich Klaasen has announced his retirement from red-ball cricket, bringing curtains to his brief stint in the format. Having made his debut against India in Ranchi in 2019, the 32-year-old played four matches in his brief Test career.

PTI

SANDIP G

JANUARY 8

NOT ALL days belong to Mohammed Siraj. But on those days that belong to him, he is the storm in the September Colombo air; or the scorch in the January Cape Town Sun.

Dazzled batsmen cannot pick the cues, cannot spot the difference. He bowls as he always bowls. As if every ball is his first, final and only ball, with the same perturbed face of a rebel, the same energetic strides of a man on the run, the same gung-ho leap of a tiger as he reaches the crease and the same primal scream at the follow-through. If you want to capture the incredible energy it requires to hurl a sphere of leather across a 22-yard strip, just watch Siraj coil, and uncoil, at the crease.

Siraj is often pure theatre, a blur of loose limbs whirling and whirling — like the batsmen of Hyderabad seem to have elastic limbs — twisting the ball this way and that. If the zippy run-up is dramatic enough, the expressions that flicker across his face make you wonder whether he could be trained into an actor.

But he draws the line, for he is expressive without bordering on arrogance, ebullient without being hysterical, emotional though not melodramatic, ever-smiling but not over-friendly. He does not brood over what he has lost but picks up new tricks — he once lost his ability to bowl out-swing but quickly developed the wobble-seamer.

Some days are his; some days less so. But on those days that are his, he becomes the master of quick kill. In 16 balls, he grabbed five wickets and sunk Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup; in 54 balls, he drowned South Africa in Cape Town. Not that his form fluctuates wildly. In 10 of his 42 outings, he has picked three or more wickets; one in every four ODIs, he picks a minimum of three wickets. But the impression remains that he picks his wickets in heaps and piles; and thus a false impression that he endures barren spells between bursts of bounty.

Some of his early coaches too swear by his skill to pick wickets in haste. "I was not surprised when he took six wickets against Sri Lanka," Mohammed Mahboob Ahmed, secretary of his first club, says. "He was a terror for batsmen in the club circuit. When he strikes rhythm, he runs through the sides in no time. I remember another bowler asking me, why does he always take the edge, while I end up just beating batsmen?" Ahmed's answer was simple yet the ultimate truth of bowling: "He hits the perfect length."

In both Cape Town and Colombo — and let you not forget Brisbane and Lord's — his lengths were magnificent, landing the ball just a smidgeon from where the good-length area starts. He then toys with the line, teasing and taunting batsmen to commit to a stroke, often a feeble defensive thrust outside the off-stump.

The feast-or-famine misinterpretation only embellishes his aura. It's more exciting to watch a volatile fast bowler than a steady one. If Mohammed Shami tickles the aesthetics, if Jasprit Bumrah titillates the sense of wonderment, then Siraj assaults your cardiac rhythms. It could beat both mildly and wildly.

Like all three, he is a natural too — unstained by conventions, a product of the milieu, society and culture he grew up in, groomed by wise men who knew how to harness his potential.

■ ■ ■

Hyderabad, the city Siraj grew up in and the spirit he embodies does not wear its love and adulation on the numerous billboards of politicians and film stars that dot the crammed roads. There is Chiranjeevi peering at you from most bends; the gaze of NTR or YSR is inescapable. Not even the sport-shops hang his posters. Even the lanes that lead to his old house in Tolichowki — where now his brothers stay — are disturbingly quiet. His passing mention, though, would break the ice even among absolute strangers. The residents, leaving aside their stories, would offer a verbal biography of their beloved "Sira."

Yet, whenever Siraj comes to bowl, the city stops, the city bleeds, the city soaks in his energy. Even celebrities and politicians leave their chores aside to watch him bowl. Excitement gushes in the voice of Asaduddin Owaisi, the Member of Parliament from Hyderabad. "He is one of the bowlers who looks like picking a wicket every other ball. He keeps us hooked on him. We get a feeling that anything could happen at any time, be it the first or the last over," says Owaisi.

Siraj is unputdownable, Owaisi says. "Everything about him is touching, the story of his life we all know, the mental toughness he showed when putting his country above his personal loss. It moves me to tears every time I read about his story," he says.

The story is well-documented — the son of a rickshaw driver who started playing tennis-ball cricket for a living becoming a million-dollar IPL player and then emerging as one of the most trusted cross-format bowlers of his country.

But it is the hardships that made and now define him. "The best thing about him I believe is that he did not have any formal training. It could have ruined him. There is no greater teacher than experience, and he must have learned a lot when playing tennis-ball cricket on the streets and maidans of the city," Owaisi says.

No one tried to curb the naturalness of Siraj. A natural, that was his first formal coach Arshad Ayub's initial impression of Siraj. "It took me just 10 minutes to find that spark in him and understand that he is natural. I don't

■ ■ ■

think I have seen any bowler from Hyderabad who could bowl as fast as Siraj could, ever in my life," he says.

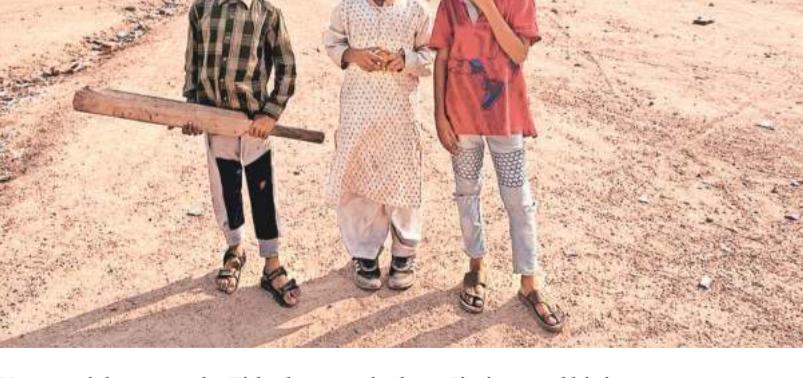
The hardships he endured toughened him up. "Even when he was at the academy, he used to play hard tennis ball games for money, so that he could support his family. Later, we had to tell him to focus entirely on the leather ball. He did," remembers Ayub.

The virtues he imbibed from the tennis-ball circuit remain undisturbed. "He developed the fighting spirit as well as the ability to learn things fast. He had an eye for picking new variations and the commitment to polish it," he says.

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Man as a product of the environment reverberates in both Siraj and Hyderabad cricket. Myths and legends blend and whirl through the glassed skyscrapers of the new city and intricately-sculpted minarets of the old town, where the grandeur of the past blends seamlessly with the ornateness of the present.

The names of the greats from the erstwhile princely state roll out of Owaisi's tongue like a stream, before he pauses at one. "Pataudi, Jaisimha, Baig... of course Abid Ali." The medium-pace-bowling all-rounder, he of a splendid toothbrush moustache and lustrous, long sideburns, was one of his idols.



Young cricketers at the Eidgah ground where Siraj started his journey. Sandip G

"Oh, what a cricketer!" he exclaims.

Ali, fondly called Chicha (father's younger brother literally and a friend figuratively), snaffled six wickets on debut, among them were Bob Simpson and Bill Lawry, scored six half-centuries, hit the winning runs in the Oval Test of 1971, used to keep wickets for his domestic team and club and was an agile fielder. He had a lethal variation the locals called 'sirra', one that shot along the ground.

One of his spiritual heirs, the off-spin-

wielding all-rounder Arshad Ayub remembers that ball. "Don't know how he managed them, but the ball just skidded on. He bowled just the medium pace, but that ball was often unplayable and got a lot of wickets with that," Ayub says.

After him, there was Mumtaz Ali, who could bowl both left-arm orthodox and left-arm wrist-spin, the wrong'un and armer. Before him was the stylish off-spinner Ghulam Ahmed. His twirly successor, Ayub bowled the

one that spun away. "Cut away," he emphasises, "because it was nothing but a leg-cutter."

The batsmen square-cut through covers, cover-drove with a semi-horizontal blade, fetched the ball from sixth stump to square leg, coaxed the ball on leg-stump through extra cover. It was as though they followed a different code of cricket, as though their bones bend and willows curve and crook to the whim of the mind.

In these days of cricket star manufacturing, they merely churn out naturals. Hyderabad is cricket's eternal non-conformists. The characteristic wristiness originates from the matted wickets used here. The bounce off matting wickets could be wayward, so the batsmen end up using their wrists to douse the bounce.

The ball bounced nice and true with the new ball that Ali had to discover the sirra. The wrist is at the heart of Siraj's wobble-seamer too. He locks the wrists during release so that the ball is not pushed out of his hand and the ball wobbles.

That he is the most eminent manipulator of this fad in his country could not be merely a twist of fate. Who else could master the dark and the outrageous arts more expertly than someone from Hyderabad? There could be the historic rationale behind their artistry — in the heyday of Nizams, performing artists, sculptors, artists and musicians flocked to the city. The city oozes with romance because it

SIRAJ'S STREAKS

6/15

JANUARY 03, 2024, CAPE TOWN TEST

ON A wickedly bouncy deck, he scythed through South Africa's top order in only 54 balls, wherein he took out six wickets in an inspired first spell of pure red-ball fury. He found both bounce and sideways movement, cleverly mixed his plans, hit the perfect length and breathed dread in one of the most clinical eviscerations of a batting unit. The figures 9-3-15-6 capture some of the story, for the full picture you had to watch him bowl.

6/21

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023, COLOMBO ODI

UNDER GREY skies, in the Asia Cup final he made the white ball swing as eloquently as it could. Jasprit Bumrah took the first wicket, in the first over itself, but then it turned into a Siraj show. He killed the game in the fourth over itself, nabbing four wickets with a concoction of swing, aggression and planning. By the sixth over, he had picked up his fifth scalp and the hosts would be bundled out for 50 soon.

4/17

NOVEMBER 22, 2022, NAPIER T20

THE KIWIS were cruising at 130 for 2 when Siraj steamed in to bowl the 16th over. With the fifth ball, he expelled the rampaging Glenn Phillips. With the first ball of the next over, he consumed the dangerous Jimmy Neesham for a blob, and with the fifth he ejected Mitchell Santner. He would eject Adam Milne to complete a comeback, and India would go onto tie the rain-halved game.

was founded on a tale of love.

The story goes that a young Muslim prince met a Hindu girl, fell in love with her, married her and named the city Bhagyanagar (her name was Bhagyamati). It later became Hyderabad. And the virtues that made the city manifested itself through a fast-bowling craftsman of rare artistry and rarer personality.

■ ■ ■

Dust blows from the ragged Eidgah Maidan in the First Lancer locale of Old Hyderabad. It's literally a dust-bowl. Columns of expressionless houses, the navy-blue paint peeling off the walls, dot either side of the grounds. At the entrance, or what the locals call the entrance, is the tomb of a 19th-century saint who supposedly was a miracle healer.

His ghost still roams in the night, snatching goats and chickens in the neighbourhood, the locals believe. But the tattered brown tiles of his tomb are strewn with cigarette butts. Most

times of the day, the ground is vacant, except for teenagers on bikers without silencers. When evening dawns, the ground gradually fills. Some are on the way to a mosque in the neighbourhood, but most are there to play cricket with a hard tennis ball, sometimes taped, sometimes not. One rectangular maidan becomes maidans for many. People of all age groups converge, from children who are only as tall as the stumps, or those with thinning grey hairs.

Almost everyone has a Siraj story, either he is a friend of a friend of a friend or the cousin of a cousin. Or the boastful one that claims he was the only batsman Siraj dreaded. But every story starts and ends with Siraj.

On this ground, though, Siraj honed his bowling skills. "It's the ground that made him, and made our friendships," says his close friend Mohammed Shafi, who now works with The Golconda Mandal Revenue. He vividly remembers those days when they used to squeeze into packed buses from their homes in Khaja Nagar. "We spent most of our teenage years here, playing cricket, talking cricket, talking life, seeing life," he says.

Watching a match unfold here, you realise the ground is to bowl. It's neither matted nor concrete, just loose black soil. Bowlers expend all their energy just to see the ball die sin-high.

On this wicket, though, Siraj found means to make the ball bounce, Shafi says. "I don't know how he did all these but he somehow managed things that others did not. He used to bowl all the time, and when a variation caught his imagination, he would practice it until he mastered it."

When there was no match in the locality, they would travel to the neighboring towns to play tennis ball cricket tournaments. There was nothing for him beyond the game. With the money he saved from winning games, Siraj finally bought a bike, a Bajaj Platina. "I remember the evening we rode this bike to the ground," he says.

Later, Shafi would quit the game, but not the friendship with Siraj.

He was often the first person he would call and break some news. He watched him play his first game in Hyderabad; he was beside him when Sunrisers Hyderabad was picked him in 2017.

One evening, when he returned to India after his coming-of-age tour Down Under, Siraj called Shafi and the pair visited the old ground, one where it all began for him. Here, at the Eidgah Ground in First Lancer, all days belong to Siraj.



Mohammed Siraj during his 6 for 15 in the first innings against South Africa in Cape Town. PTI

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'The Emperor' is no more

Beckenbauer, who stopped Cruyff as a player & strangled Maradona as a manager, passes away aged 78

SANDIP G
JANUARY 8

FRANZ BECKENBAUER not just embodied the ideals of German football, its fabled tenacity and indefatigability. But he was German football itself.

One of just three men to have lifted the World Cup as both player and manager, he was arguably the greatest footballer his country has produced, the man who reinvented the role of a defender in the game. He was arguably the greatest leader on the football pitch his country has churned out, whose single-minded defiance upset one of the greatest football teams of all time, the Total Footballers of Johan Cruyff; he was also a legendary manager too, the spiritual figurehead of a raft of managers from his country. A bigger nod to his personality could be that he stopped Cruyff as a player, and strangled Diego Maradona as a manager.

Stories behind the nickname

He owned the most fitting of sobriquets in the game. Der Kaiser. The Emperor. On the field, he exuded an emperor-like aura, in utter control of his men, in absolute mastery of his opponents. Every move was measured; every action was gauged. Even the most rebellious of teammates would listen to his words, as though enamoured by his personality. There are several tales of how he got the moniker.

One of them was that it first came on the cover of a magazine that said he looked like the Bavarian emperor Ludwig II, known as the Fairytale King for his altar-boy look and frizzy curls. There is another spin-off that some of his teammates bestowed the name after a photograph with the bust of former Austrian emperor Franz-Joseph Kaiser.

A more practical tale goes that he, when playing for Bayern Munich, once fiercely marked Schalke's attacker Reinhard Libuda, who was then known as the King of Westfalen, that his teammates began to call him Kaiser, for only a king could surmount an emperor. Whatever the etymology be, it could not have been apter. As a sweeper alone, his legacy in football is immortal.



Franz Beckenbauer lifting the World Cup in 1974. In 1990, he led Germany to the coveted trophy again as a manager. AP

Inventing sweeper role

In an era where sweepers hung back and content repelling waves of attack, he was not merely content with merely tackling or intercepting a ball. But he was involved in play-making and ball-carrying, the prototype of the modern-day sweeper. That he is still regarded as one of the finest in this position is a testament to how good a player he was. He excelled in the dual role, was both silk and steel. He would snatch the ball off the opponent's feet with the faintest of touches and with equal felicity thread a gorgeous pass upfield. He could impose himself on the most physically im-

'Der Kaiser was the most beautiful of footballers who won it all with grace and charm'

-GARY LINEKER

posing of strikers; he could outwit the brainiest of playmakers too. Germany's masterstroke in the 1974 World Cup was deploying him as the libero, in front of the back four, covering his defenders but with licence to go forward, link with the midfielders and set up attacks.

In Germany, he would become both a pop and cult figure. He was the first German professional with an agent. He was the first who regularly did adverts. He made records. Some of his songs are played at the Allianz Arena, home of Bayern Munich, like true friends can't be separated. Regarded as one of the greatest players

of all time, he was asked to compare himself with Pele, widely considered to be the greatest to have ever kicked the ball. His answer was detailed and summed up the man and footballer that he was. 'Look,' he said, 'Pele was a soloist, the best player of all time. I've always been a team player, a playmaker, the guy who puts the others in position to score. I made the team move - I can make a team move. Pele cannot do that. But he was a killer,' he elaborated.

Incidentally, he began his career as a centre forward before shifting to left-wing then to central midfield. To every role, he brought energy and creativity. His inspiration was Germany's 1954 triumph, the Miracle of Bern. Beckenbauer, the son of a postal worker, was nine and he would later recall that he listened to the radio commentary wearing the shirt on which his mother, Antonie, had stitched the No. 10 of Germany's victorious captain, Fritz Walter. He would then pour into the streets of Munich to share the homecoming of the heroes.

The tales of his courage are legendary. In the 1970 World Cup semi-final against Italy, he dislocated his shoulder during the game. But having exhausted the quorum of substitutes, he had to be on the field. He didn't flinch either. His right arm strapped to his body and his hand resting below his heart, he fought on. Though Germany lost what was dubbed "The Game of the Century" 4-3, his courage won hearts. His legendary adversary Geoff Hurst, the late England striker, would say: 'Beckenbauer showed his character, and still could probably play as well with one arm as most people could with two.' That summed up the spirit of Beckenbauer.

The career was not without the odd sprinklings of grey either. In 2014, he was banned from football for 90 days by Fifa for refusing to cooperate with the inquiry into corruption over the allocation of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar. The suspension was lifted when he agreed to participate in Fifa's inquiry, though two years later he was fined 7,000 Swiss francs for his initial refusal. Nothing though could tarnish the spirit he embodied and how that would come to define German football. Der Kaiser, there would not have been an apter sobriquet.

"We should have been a little bit more tough. I think the idea should have been to play the spells out in the second innings. That's where we lacked. Of course, it is a tough loss

Pondicherry make light work of clueless Delhi

PRATYUSH RAJ
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8

DELHI'S 2023-24 Ranji Trophy campaign started on the worst possible note. Pondicherry handed a nine-wicket drubbing to Delhi, only their second win while playing in the Ranji Trophy elite group.

It was a formality for Pondicherry on a nippy Day 4 as Gourav Yadav and Abin Matthew removed Delhi's overnight batsmen, Harsh Tyagi and Ishant Sharma, early as they folded for 145 runs in their second innings. Pondicherry needed 50 runs to win and chased down the total in 13.1 overs with nine wickets to spare. Delhi failed to cross 150 runs in both of their innings. Delhi's best batsman Harsh Tyagi, who bats at No. 8, Tyagi scored 34 and 28, respectively in both the innings.

Delhi's openers, Yash Dhull and Lakshya Thareja, looked all at sea in both innings against the new ball. Dhull was batting way outside of the crease in both the innings to combat the swing but he forgot that he was playing at Kotla and not in Manchester. In both the innings, he was undone by the seam-up deliveries.

Ayush Badoni and Hrithik Shokeen swung their bats like they were playing an IPL match, while the seasoned campaigners Vaibhav Rawal and Himmat Singh would not want to see replays of their dismissals. If Delhi's batting was poor, the bowling unit led by Ishant Sharma, a veteran of 105 Tests, and Navdeep Saini, an India Test hopeful, looked ordinary on a surface where Pondicherry's seamers ran riot. It was indeed a good toss to win for Pondicherry, and their bowlers made the most of it, but in Delhi's second innings, the home team's batting unit buckled under pressure and fell away like nine pins. Delhi coach Devang Gandhi blamed his side for not being "tough enough."

"The preparations were good. They played really well in all the departments and outplayed us. When they bowled in the first innings, the conditions were really good, it was a fresh wicket. So, they got a lot of help on the first day and they bowled in the right areas," said the former Bengal batter-turned-coach.

"We should have been a little bit more tough. I think the idea should have been to play the spells out in the second innings. That's where we lacked. Of course, it is a tough loss

Dhull sacked as skipper, Himmat to take over

New Delhi: Hours after Delhi suffered an embarrassing nine-wicket loss to Pondicherry in the Ranji Trophy, the selectors sacked Yash Dhull from the captaincy. Middle-order batsman Himmat Singh will replace Dhull for the rest of the tournament. "It was the selectors' call. To me, Yash getting runs is the most important thing. He is the future of Delhi cricket and maybe Indian cricket. He needs to be taken care of. Anything that helps him concentrate on his batting and getting runs should be prioritised. He doesn't need distractions off the field," Delhi coach Devang Gandhi told The Indian Express. ENS

to swallow," he added. On a pitch where Pondicherry seamers Gourav Yadav, Saurabh Yadav and Abin Matthew picked up 20 wickets, Delhi's most successful bowler was off-spinner Hrithik Shokeen, who picked four in the first innings. Ishant picked up one in the match, while Saini got two. The youngster Himanshu Chauhan was the most impressive among the three Delhi pacers. Pondicherry's Gourav Yadav finished the match with a ten-wicket haul, while Abin Matthew bagged his maiden fivefer.

"I think we could have handled them (Pondicherry bowlers) better. They bowled well, I'm not taking away any credits from them but we could have batted better than we did actually," said Gandhi. Delhi will travel to Jammu on Tuesday for their next round match.

"I think, Ishant (Sharma) is not available for the away games. We will have to see. There are youngsters in the squad. The selectors will be able to give you a better idea about who is going to replace them. "We will have to come back with a stronger resolve, I feel. We can make some changes. At the moment, I'm not being able to tell you that but we need to show a lot of more character," he said.

Brief Scores: Delhi: 148 & 145 (Harsh Tyagi 28; A Matthew 5/39, G Yadav 3/49, S Yadav 2/43) vs Pondicherry: 51 for 1 (Akhangave 23; Himanshu Chauhan 1/1)

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