

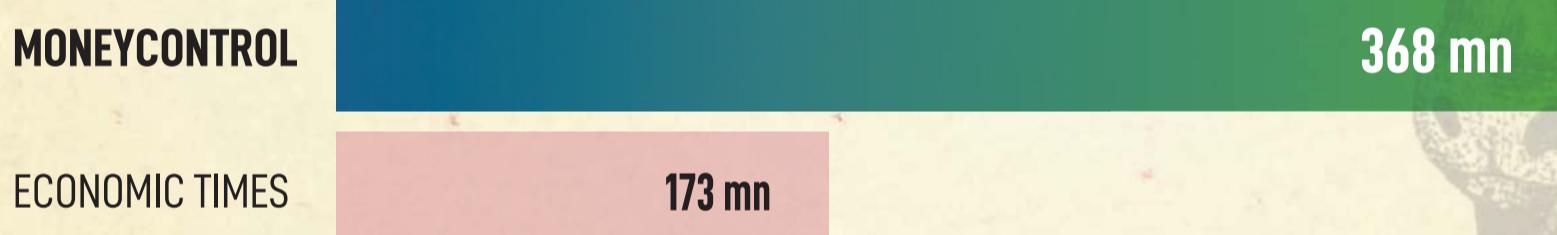
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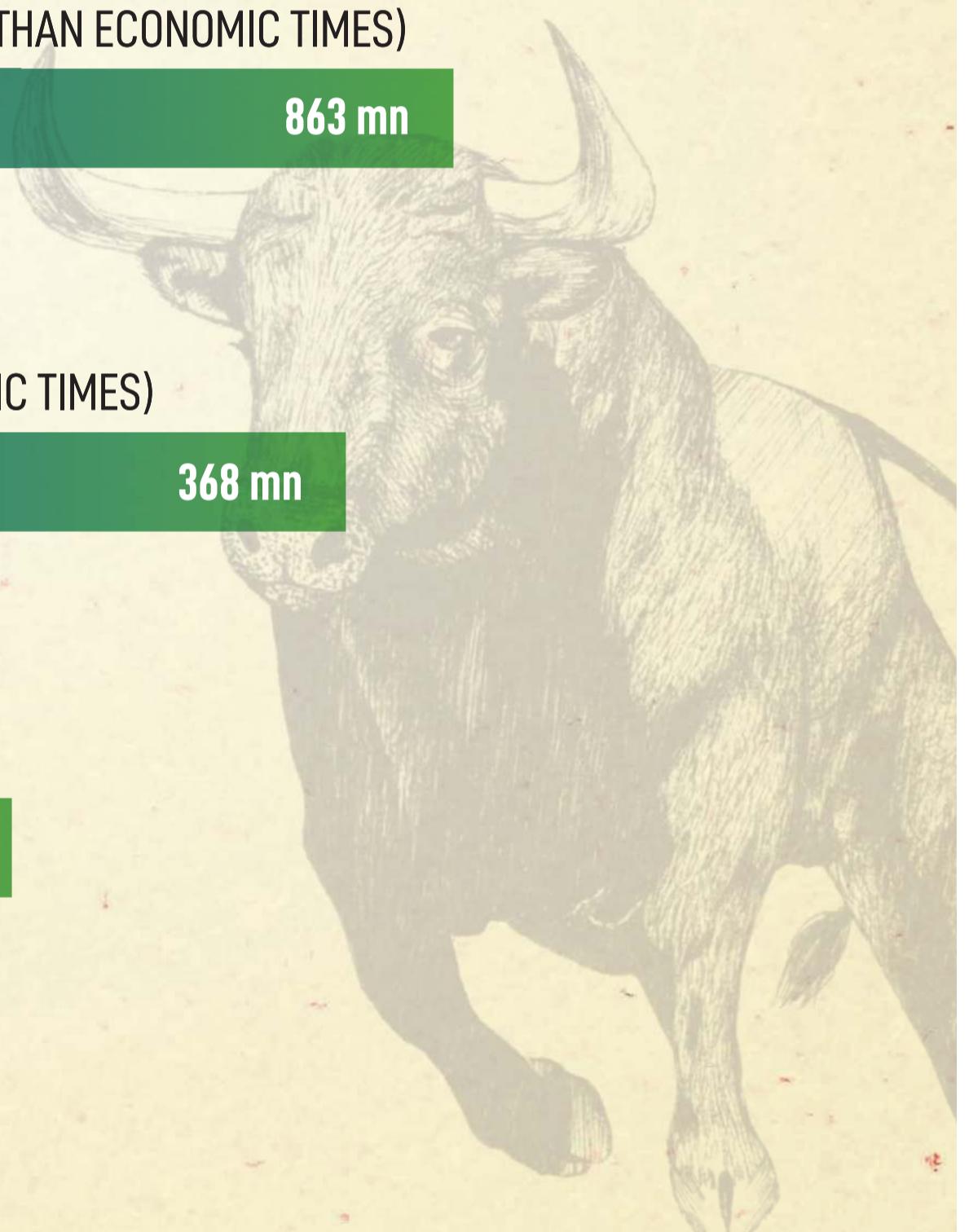
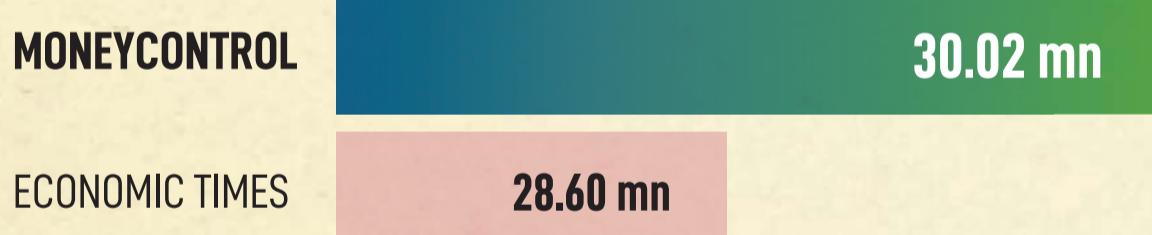
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BUSINESS/FINANCE NEWS CATEGORY, DECEMBER 2023, INDIA

# THE WORLD



**PROTESTING LACK OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM  
CLIMATE ACTIVISTS HURL SOUP AT MONA LISA**

Two climate activists hurled soup Sunday at the glass protecting the "Mona Lisa" and shouted slogans advocating for a sustainable food system. "What's the most important thing?" they shouted. "Art, or right to a healthy and sustainable food?" "Our farming system is sick. Our farmers are dying at work," they added. Paris police said that two were arrested.

## TOP OF THE WORLD



Iran's Simorgh satellite carrier. Reuters

### IRAN

In a first, Tehran launches three satellites at once

**Dubai:** Iran simultaneously launched three satellites for the first time on Sunday using the Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite carrier rocket developed by the Ministry of Defence, state media reported. One satellite weighing 32 kg (70 pounds) and two nano-satellites of less than 10 kg each were sent to a minimum orbit of 450 km (280 miles), with the two smaller devices aimed at testing narrow-band communication and geopositioning technology. The larger satellite, named "Mahda" and built by Iran's Space Agency, is meant to test the accuracy of the Simorgh rocket in delivering multiple cargoes to space. **REUTERS**

### TUVALU

Pro-Taiwan leader loses seat in national polls

**Sydney:** The pro-Taiwan leader of the Pacific Islands nation of Tuvalu, Kause Natano, lost his seat in an election closely watched by Taiwan, China and the U.S., results showed on Saturday. Tuvalu, with a population of about 11,200 spread across nine islands, is one of three remaining Pacific allies of Taiwan, after Nauru cut ties this month and switched to Beijing, which had promised more development help. Natano had pledged to continue support for Taiwan, an ally since 1979. **REUTERS**

### CHINA

'Japan fishing vessel enters territorial waters'

**Beijing:** The Chinese coast guard said a Japanese fishing vessel and several patrol boats illegally entered the territorial waters of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) islands, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported on Saturday night. In accordance with the law, the Chinese coast guard took the necessary control measures against them and warned them away. China calls the islands Diaoyu while Japan calls them Senkaku. **REUTERS**

### BANGLADESH

Nobel laureate Yunus gets bail in labour case

**Dhaka:** An appeals court in Bangladesh on Sunday granted bail to Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who was sentenced to six months in prison for violating the country's labor laws. The court also agreed to hear an appeal against his sentencing. Yunus pioneered the use of micro-credit to help impoverished people, especially women, file the appeal seeking bail on Sunday morning before it was granted. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in 2006. The 83-year-old economist and three other officials of the telecommunications company were sentenced to six months in prison on Jan. 1, but they were immediately granted 30 days of bail to appeal the verdict and sentence. **AP**

## FIRST DEADLY STRIKE AGAINST U.S. FORCES IN GAZA WAR SPILLOVER

# Drone strike kills 3 US soldiers in Jordan, White House blames Iran-backed groups

'Message to US': Hamas senior official links strike directly to war in Gaza

**REUTERS**

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 28

THREE US service members were killed and dozens wounded during an unmanned aerial drone attack on U.S. forces stationed in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border, President Joe Biden and U.S. officials said on Sunday.

Biden blamed Iran-backed groups for the attack, the first deadly strike against U.S. forces since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in October, sending shock waves throughout the region.

"While we are still gathering the facts of this attack, we know it was carried out by radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq," Biden said in a statement.

At least 34 personnel were being evaluated for possible traumatic brain injury, a U.S. official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. Two different officials said some wounded U.S. forces were medically evacuated from the base for further treatment.

A senior official with the Iran-backed Palestinian militant group Hamas, Sami Abu Zuhri,

directly tied the attack to Israel's campaign in Gaza.

"The killing of three American soldiers is a message to the U.S. administration that unless the killing of innocents in Gaza stops, it must confront the entire nation," he told Reuters. "The continued American-Zionist aggression on Gaza is capable of exploding the situation in the region."

The U.S. military said the attack occurred at a base in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border. It did not name the base. U.S. military activity in Jordan can be a sensitive issue, particularly at a time of heightened tensions of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

A Jordanian government spokesman told state TV that the militants targeted a different base, outside Jordanian territory.

Washington has given Jordan around \$1 billion to bolster border security since Syria's civil war began in 2011, and has recently sent more military aid to that end, Western intelligence sources say.

It is unclear which Iran-backed group may have carried out the attack but several U.S. officials said they did not believe that Iranian military forces themselves launched the attack drone.

Palestinians wait to collect drinking water amid shortages in Rafah on Sunday. **Reuters**

for some two million people in Gaza was at stake.

At least nine countries, including top donors the U.S. and Germany, have paused funding for UNRWA refugee agency after allegations by Israel that a dozen of its 13,000 staff in Gaza were involved in the October 7 rampage.

"I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended

their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Sunday, promising to hold to account "any U.N. employee involved in acts of terror".

He said this could include criminal prosecution - a rare move since most staff enjoy immunity, though he can waive it.

# Ukraine officials looted \$40 mn for purchase of arms, says govt

Russian drones, missiles targeting critical infrastructure, says Kyiv

**REUTERS**

KYIV, JANUARY 28

UKRAINE'S SBU security service said on Saturday it had uncovered a corruption scheme in the purchase of arms by the country's military totalling the equivalent of about \$40 million.

The announcement of mass procurement fraud, confirmed by Ukraine's Defence Ministry, will have a huge resonance in a country beleaguered by Russia's nearly two-year-old invasion. The fight to root out endemic corruption remains a major issue as Ukraine presses its bid to secure membership in the European Union.

The SBU said an investigation had "exposed officials of the Ministry of Defence and managers of arms supplier Lviv Arsenal, who stole nearly 1.5 billion hryvnias in the purchase of shells."

"According to the investigation, former and current high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Defence and heads of affiliated companies are involved in the embezzlement." The embezzlement involved the purchase of 100,000 mortar shells for the military.

The SBU said a contract for the shells was clinched with Lviv Arsenal in August 2022 and payment was made in advance, with some funds transferred abroad.

But no arms were ever provided, the statement said, with funds then moved to other foreign accounts. The statement said five individuals had been served "notices of suspicion" - the first stage in Ukrainian legal proceedings -

An industry destroyed after a Russian strike in Sloviansk, Ukraine, on Saturday. **Reuters**

## FINNS VOTE TO ELECT NATO-ERA PRESIDENT

Helsinki: Finland elects a new president on Sunday to lead the country in its new role within NATO after it broke with decades of non-alignment to join the Western defence alliance in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The country's admission to NATO last year drew threats of "counter measures" from its vast Russian neighbour. In December, Finland closed its entire Russian border due to a surge in migrants. **REUTERS**

both in the ministry and the arms supplier. One suspect, it said, was detained while trying to cross the Ukrainian border.

Corruption within the military has been a particularly sensitive issue in Ukraine as it tries to maintain wartime public morale and present its case to join the 27-nation EU.

## 'Some not happy': China minister's veiled attack on India over Nepal ties

**YUBARAJ GHIMIRE**

KATHMANDU, JANUARY 28

A SENIOR Chinese politician said Sunday that some countries are not happy with the existing cordial relationship between Nepal and China and that the two neighbours must seek a prosperous future together.

Vice Minister Sun Haiyan who concluded her three day visit leading a delegation of the international liaison department of the Communist party of China, had intensive and 'candid' discussions with leaders of various parties including Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

"Nepal and China have very cordial relationship and some countries are not very happy about it," she was reported said by sources privy to the talks.

Vice Minister Haiyan did not name any country but the fact that her visit comes a month after India's Foreign Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's Nepal visit indicates whom she was referring to.

China, she said, will provide 150 scholarships to Nepali students in 2024. Jaishankar, in his visit had noted that India's offering scholarships to Nepali students would cement the bilateral ties.

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Vice Minister Sayan is known as a tough diplomat conveying messages sternly, sources said.

She met leaders from all political parties, appealing them to make the bilateral ties better.

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Vice Minister Haiyan did not

## OPPORTUNITY TO BREAK NEW GROUND: CHINA PRESIDENT

# Days after Macron visit to India, Xi offers to boost ties with Paris

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

BEIJING, JANUARY 28

CHINESE PRESIDENT Xi Jinping has offered to "break new ground" to give a fillip to the China-France ties, days after French President Emmanuel Macron's high-profile visit to India during which the two countries unveiled an ambitious defence roadmap besides intensifying cooperation in the strategic Indian Ocean and the Indo-Pacific region.

Macron's visit to India also coincided with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France.

In his message on the occasion, Xi said "...China and France should jointly open up a path of peace, security, prosperity and progress."

Xi said China attaches great importance to the development of bilateral ties and he stands ready to work with Macron to take the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations as an "opportunity to uphold fundamental principles,

break new ground, build on past achievements, open up a new future, and make China-France... partnership more solid and dynamic," official media reported.

China has offered to step up French imports to the country, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said.

China prioritises ties with France as Macron is pushing Europe to become a third bloc.

Beijing kept a wary watch on Macron's India visit as Paris is emerging as a key defence partner to New Delhi.

The launches followed a separate round of North Korean cruise missile tests last week and a Jan. 14 test-firing of the country's first solid-fuel intermedi-

## Seoul says N Korea missiles flew near navy shipyard

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

SEOUL, JANUARY 28

ate-range ballistic missile. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said they detected the missiles over waters near the North Korean port of Sinpo, where the North has a major shipyard building key naval vessels, including missile-firing submarines.

The South's military didn't im-

mediately provide specific launch details, including the number of missiles fired, how far they flew and whether they were launched from land or naval assets.

Tensions on the Peninsula have increased in recent months as Kim continues to accelerate his weapons development.

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**NITISH TAKES OATH AS CM FOR 9TH TIME, BJP PICKS 2 DEPUTY CMs**

# Patna powershift again

Things were not going well... no question of going back now: Nitish

**SANTOSH SINGH**  
PATNA, JANUARY 28

SWITCHING SIDES for the fifth time in just over a decade, JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar returned to the NDA on Sunday, less than 18 months after he left the alliance, and took oath as the Bihar Chief Minister for the ninth time.

BJP leaders Samrat Choudhary and former Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha, named as Deputy Chief Ministers, were among the ministers sworn in. Six other ministers, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) leader Santosh Kumar Suman, Independent Sumit Kumar Singh, BJP's Prem Kumar, and JD(U)'s Vijay Kumar Choudhary, Bijendra Prasad Yadav and Shrawan Kumar, also took oath.

Speaking to reporters after the swearing-in ceremony, Kumar said: "I have come back where I was earlier. Now, there is no question of going back."

Earlier in the day, citing the reason for his decision, which is seen as a big setback for the Opposition INDIA bloc ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, he said "things were not going well".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha during the swearing-in ceremony in Patna, Sunday. PTI REPORTS, P6

## Nitish exit undermines Opp's 2024 caste pitch, sharpens anti-Cong plank

**VIKAS PATHAK**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

FOR THE BJP, Nitish Kumar's entry into the NDA fold couldn't have been better timed.

The architect of the Bihar caste survey, he was the one who provided the basic template for the Opposition's caste census call and social justice pitch against the BJP in 2024. Nitish was also the one who chaired the

first meet of the Opposition (INDIA) bloc in Patna in June 2023.

His crossing over, therefore, in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections, has both symbolic and substantive impact beyond just the possible bump-up in the NDA tally from Bihar.

It puts a question mark on the Opposition's bid to counter Hindutva with social justice — a strategy that has been its political commonsense since the early 1990s,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



"Nitish Kumar seems to have a problem with me getting the credit for many achievements of our government. It should ring alarm bells for the BJP," quipped Yadav, adding that he had "made" Nitish work towards fulfilling the RJD's 10 lakh jobs election promise.

Steering clear of directly attacking Nitish, Yadav underlined the "work" the RJD-JD(U) government had done in the 18 months before it fell because of the break-up of the alliance.

"Nitishji is a respectable leader. He used to mock me when I was in the opposition for promising 10 lakh jobs during the 2020 state elections. I made

### 'GAME'S JUST BEGUN'

Nitish tired, had problems with us getting credit: Tejashwi

**SANTOSH SINGH**  
PATNA, JANUARY 28

CALLING Nitish Kumar a "respectable" but "tired" leader who has "problems" with him and his party RJD getting credit for the work done so far, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav Sunday said that the JD(U) would be "finished" in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

"Nitish Kumar seems to have a problem with me getting the credit for many achievements of our government. It should ring alarm bells for the BJP," quipped Yadav, adding that he had "made" Nitish work towards fulfilling the RJD's 10 lakh jobs election promise.

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**Shri Alok Kumar Sinha IAS (Retd.)**  
\* Ex-chairman : Bihar Public Service Commission  
**Shri Anil K. Sinha IAS (Retd.)**  
\* Former Executive Director NIDM & Former Advisor, International Recovery Platform/UNDP, Kobe, Japan  
**Dr. G.C. Srivastava IAS (Retd.)**  
\* Ex-member Secretary 12th Finance Commission  
\* Vice Chairman Central Administrative Tribunal  
**Shri R. Srinivasan IES (Retd.)**  
(Former Advisor to the Govt. of India)  
**Shri Skand Ranjan Tayal IFS (Retd.)**  
\* Former Ambassador of South Korea, Uzbekistan  
**Ambassador Ashok Kumar IFS (Retd.)**  
Former Head of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) & Former High Commissioner to Cyprus.  
**Shri K.K. Agarwal IRTS (Retd.)**  
\* Former Member Traffic Railway Board  
\* Ex. Officio Secretary to Govt. of India  
**Shri Anil Kumar Upadhyay IFS (Retd.)**  
Former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, M.P  
**Mrs Sangeeta Gupta, IRS (Retd.)**  
Chief Commissioner Of Income Tax.  
**Dr. Bala Prasad IFS (Retd.)**  
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Freedom of speech to social justice, SC has strengthened democracy: PM



P Narendra Modi with CJI D.Y. Chandrachud in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the Supreme Court's continuous efforts to protect the principles of freedom, equality and justice, saying this has strengthened India's democracy and given a "new direction to its socio-political environment".

Delivering the inaugural address at the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Supreme Court, Modi said the makers of the Indian Constitution dreamt of a free India based on freedom, equality and justice, and the Supreme Court has continuously tried to preserve these principles.

"Whether it is freedom of expression, personal freedom or social justice, the Supreme Court has strengthened India's vibrant democracy," he said. Pointing out that the SC has taken many

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## England give the world formula to solve the good old India spin puzzle

**SANDIP G**  
HYDERABAD, JANUARY 28

ENGLAND'S DARING brand of cricket broke India's staggeringly successful streak at home on Sunday. The 28-run win in the first game of the five-Test series at Hyderabad was a triumph of coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes's unflinching faith in their brave system that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



England won the first Test by 28 runs, lead series 1-0. PTI

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**SACHIN PILOT**  
CONGRESS GEN SECY  
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Apple's \$3,500 Vision Pro offers a glimpse into how the company plans to transform AR/VR into a mainstream product category in the years to come.

**EXPRESS AUDIO**

## Why Indian women's hockey team miss the Paris 2024 cut?

They came 4th at the Tokyo Olympics, but could not even qualify for Paris. In this episode, hosts Mihir Vasavda and Amit Kamath are joined by Vinayakk Mohanarangan to discuss what went wrong.

# Artist who explored the feminine force through colours

VANDANA KALRA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28



GOGI SAROJ PAL  
1945-2024

ONE OF the several lanes in Delhi's East of Kailash led into a basement studio that was always open for young artists. Filled with the chatter of freewheeling conversations, for artist couple Gogi Saroj Pal and Ved Nayar this was their way of extending support to young artists. "Young artists often find it difficult to afford a studio," stated Pal in an interview to *The Indian Express* in 2014. Known to have supported several artists in different ways possible and also exploring the feminine force through her works, Pal passed away in Delhi on January 27. She was 79.

"To me, she was Gogi amma. Always encouraging young artists, she would give them an honest opinion," recalled artist Kanchan Chander, who worked at Garhi Artist Studios in Delhi at the same time as Pal in the '80s. Born in 1945 in Neoli in Uttar Pradesh, the postgraduate from College of Art in Delhi, who worked in a variety of mediums, was constantly questioning gender bias and stereotypes through her oeuvre, with an intention of both depicting unequal realities and also empowering women. Exhibiting strength, her protagonists were often inspired by myths and fables, from 'Kinnari', the mythical bird-woman, to 'Kamdhenu', the wish-fulfilling cow. Her voluptuous 'nayikas' were sensual and brazen.

Sharing her own struggles of pursuing a career in art, in an interview to *The Indian Express* in 2011, she had stated: "When I informed my father that I wanted to pursue art, he wrote back saying that I'm responsible for my own decision and have to prove it right... I haven't failed bad... I never wanted to adhere to rules."

Recalling the initial years of her career, the 1990 Lalit Kala

Akademi National Award winner had added, "The initial few years were difficult. Several galleries backed out after agreeing to show my work."

Bewailing her untimely demise, the National Gallery of Modern Art posted: "One of the pioneering feminist voices in Indian art, she went beyond the conventions of picture making, often interweaving fantasy and reality to delve into the societal reality of womanhood within which they navigate. Moreover, her expressions were not confined to flat canvas but found an equally powerful home in diverse mediums. Gogi Saroj Pal's ineffable vision shall endure as a radiant milestone in the annals of Indian art."

Credited with over 30 solo exhibitions, some of her acclaimed series include "Young Monks", inspired by the solitary life of monks, and "Aag ka Dariya" that highlighted the rampant practice of female foeticide. She responded to the 2012 Delhi gang-rape case with a series dedicated to Nirbhaya, depicting an angry woman with sickles. "Her works were beautiful and portrayed strong women, but she was stronger," notes Chander. She adds how Pal was actively working till the last days, fulfilling the endeavour that she often expressed: "wanted to give Indian mythology some new 'nayikas' to introspect."

## FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON  
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

## Patna powershift again

"I have resigned and put an end to (Mahagathbandhan) government... Things were not going well. Everyone was in favour of breaking this alliance... we had forged a new alliance (in August 2022) but it too was not working well. I had been working a lot for Bihar and also worked for the new alliance (INDIA bloc) but it too, had not been working out well," Kumar said.

Though he did not name the INDIA bloc, several JD(U) leaders said the party would target the Congress for not "valuing" Kumar, and the INDIA bloc "not being a serious initiative".

Congratulating Kumar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X: "NDA government formed in Bihar will not leave any stone unturned to fulfil people's aspirations and work for the state's development. I congratulate Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha for becoming Deputy CMs. I believe this team will work with commitment to serve our people".

With Samrat Choudhary, a

Kushwaha leader, and Vijay Kumar Sinha, a Bhumihar leader, the BJP has decided to go for an OBC-upper caste combination in its choice of Deputy Chief Ministers.

Bihar BJP sources said Modi is likely to address a rally in Sugauli in East Champaran on February 4, which Kumar is likely to attend in a show of solidarity. The PMO, however, is yet to confirm the date for the rally.

BJP president JP Nadda was among those who attended the swearing-in ceremony, which saw supporters raising slogans of "Jai Shri Ram".

In a gesture that appeared to be aimed at placating the fears of smaller coalition partners, he brought along Chirag Paswan, a staunch NDA ally but a vocal critic of Kumar.

Addressing a press conference later, Nadda said Kumar was a "natural" alliance partner. "The people of Bihar had given the mandate in the last Assembly polls to our natural alliance with Nitish Kumar. Bihar has gained whenever we have been in power

together, be it in terms of law and order or economic development," he said.

"Bihar will again see growth propelled by a double engine, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm at the Centre," he said.

"We are confident that the NDA will sweep the Lok Sabha polls and win all the 40 seats in Bihar. We will also form the next government in the state after the Assembly elections," he added.

Since 2013, this is the fifth time that Kumar has changed sides. After snapping ties with the BJP in 2013, Kumar got outside support from parties like the Congress, CPI, and a disgruntled faction of the RJD.

A year later, though, he stepped down, taking moral responsibility for the JD(U)'s drubbing in the Lok Sabha elections.

In less than a year, he was back as Chief Minister, elbowing out his rebellious protege Jitan Ram Manjhi, this time with ample support from the RJD and Congress. The Grand Alliance that

came into being with the JD(U), Congress and RJD coming together, won the 2015 Assembly polls, but came apart in just two years.

Kumar returned to the NDA in 2017, hoping to get some traction after taking a stand against the corruption taint on his then deputy Tejashwi Yadav.

In August 2022, he again snapped ties with the BJP, accusing it of trying to "split" the JD(U), and joined the Mahagathbandhan. He formed a new government with a multi-party coalition that included the RJD and Congress.

In the current 243-member Bihar Assembly, JD(U) has 45 MLAs and the BJP 78. Kumar also has the support of one independent member, Jitan Ram Manjhi-led Hindustani Awam Morcha, which is already a part of the NDA, four MLAs.

The RJD (79) along with the Congress (19) and the Left parties (16) have a combined 114 MLAs, eight short of a majority.

-WITH PTI INPUTS

## • Nitish tired, had problems with us getting credit: Tejashwi

him work in that direction", said Yadav. He added, "Whatever may be the excuses Nitishji makes for switching sides, his JD(U) is all set to be finished (khatam hona wala hai) in Lok Sabha polls".

In the days leading up to Nitish's revolt Sunday, Yadav, who also lost his deputy chief ministership in the process, warded off pressure from several party MLAs who wanted him to stake claim to form the government by virtue of the RJD being the single-largest party in the Assembly, with 79 MLAs in the 243-member House.

He is said to have rejected the suggestion arguing that his party would "rather go to the people and tell them what we did during the one-and-a-half-year tenure (2022 till now) of the Mahagathbandhan government".

On Sunday, Bihar woke up to a full-page advertisement in local

daily by the RJD apart from a social media campaign crediting him for development in the state, particularly in working towards the 10 lakh jobs promise.

"It is about taking credit for creating four lakh jobs in Bihar in a brief period of one-and-a-half years. Nitish was forced to adopt our 2020 slogan of providing 10 lakh jobs in the state despite criticising it in the run-up to the Assembly polls asking where the money would come from," RJD spokesperson Mritunjay Tiwari said.

The advertisement in the dailies on Sunday "thanked" Yadav for "fulfilling his promises" by "providing four lakh jobs". "You did what you promised and you alone can fulfill more promises," it said, in Hindi.

The advertisement also listed other "achievements" of the RJD like the caste-based survey car-

ried out by the Mahagathbandhan government, raising of the job quota for OBCs, EBCs and SCs from 50% to 60%, the provision of state government employee status to over 3.5 lakh teachers, "improvement" in education and healthcare, construction of new roads, bridges and bypasses, introduction of a new tourism policy and an increase in tourist influx.

Road construction, education, health and tourism departments were held by RJD leaders in the outgoing Mahagathbandhan government. Tejashwi posted on X an interview of his to PTI underlining this, saying that the RJD's goals always were jobs, justice, education, making people's lives better, and Bihar's development. Going on to list the achievements mentioned in the RJD advertisement, he said: "We have 79 MLAs, they (the JD-U) have 45, the min-

isters were ours, the departments were ours, the work was ours, why should we not take credit?"

Tejashwi added that "khela (the game) had only begun now", that there was a lot more to come, and that the RJD would keep its cards close to its chest.

An RJD leader said that the party would be taking the social justice plank that has been its base to the realm of economic justice. "The 2020 Assembly poll results showed that with our 10 lakh jobs slogan we expanded our social base and added youth across caste lines. Now, we will make voters aware of what we have done in recent times at the panchayat level. This time, we will not allow Nitish to run away with the credit and will also not disturb his government while waiting for him to falter on his own. He cannot blame us this time," the leader said.

chose to train his guns at the Congress rather than the RJD after Kumar resigned.

He said that the Congress had been arrogant, trying to pressure regional parties into giving it more seats than it deserved, and inviting Opposition leaders to a yatra projecting Rahul Gandhi, as if they were Congress workers.

This renewed pitch of anti-Congressism – reminiscent of the 1960s and '70s when the socialists and the Jana Sangh would come together against the Congress – puts additional pressure on the Congress even in its negotiations with remaining allies like Akhilesh Yadav.

The BJP had contested just 17 seats out of 40 in Bihar in 2019 and won them all. Had it contested 34 seats this time, it might have even bettered its individual tally.

The real importance of Nitish in the NDA – other than the seats JD(U) may bring to the table in 2024 – is the symbolic heft he offers at a time when the Opposition was trying to corner the BJP on social justice and for its winner-takes-all approach to other parties.

Indeed, last June, when Nitish chaired a meeting of 17 Opposition parties in Patna to take on the BJP unitedly in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, TMC chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that whatever starts from Patna becomes a public movement.

Six months later, the terrain has shifted.

Nitish, who chaired that meeting, is with NDA; Banerjee has said the TMC will contest all seats in West Bengal; AAP has said it would go alone in Punjab, and Akhilesh Yadav sprang a surprise Saturday by announcing just 11 seats to Congress that was thinking of contesting on 20. Mayawati is silent in UP and Opposition unity has crumbled in Bihar.

Significantly, JD(U) leader and Nitish's trusted aide KC Tyagi

## • SC strengthened democracy: PM

important decisions on individual rights and freedom of speech, he said, "these decisions have given a new direction to the socio-political environment of the country".

Modi also underlined the need for laws to reflect both Indian ethos and contemporary practices. "The convergence of Indian values and modernity is equally essential in our legal statutes. The government is actively working on modernising laws to align with the present situation and best practices," he said.

He highlighted the government's initiatives in introducing new legislation like the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam to replace the Indian Evidence Act.

"Through these changes, our legal, policing, and investigative systems have entered a new era," he said, adding, "the transition from old laws to new ones should be seamless, which is imperative."

"Today's economic policies of India will form the basis of tomorrow's bright India. The laws being made in India today will further strengthen tomorrow's bright India," Modi said.

Saying that the world is looking at India, the PM emphasised the need to capitalise on all opportunities, and said the top priorities now are ease of living, ease of doing business, travel, communication and ease of justice.

"Ease of justice is the right of every Indian citizen and the Supreme Court of India is its medium," he said.

Noting that the entire justice system in the country is administered and guided by the Supreme Court, Modi said the priority was to make the apex

# Physical standards falling, Army introduces new fitness protocol

HINA ROHTAKI  
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 28

TO ADDRESS the "declining physical standards among officers" in the Indian Army and the "rise of lifestyle diseases", a new policy has been implemented. This policy not only imposes punitive action for overweight personnel with "no improvement within 30 days" but also introduces additional tests to the existing ones, requiring the maintenance of an Army Physical Fitness Assessment Card (APAC) for each individual.

The recent change designates a Brigadier rank officer as the presiding officer, replacing the previous structure where a Commanding officer handled quarterly tests, and each personnel maintained an APAC card.

According to sources, a letter sent to all commands outlined that this new policy aims for uniformity in the testing process, addressing issues like officers being physically unfit or obese during courses, foreign postings, and the rise of lifestyle diseases.

Officers up to the rank of Brigadier will preside over the Board of Officers, conducting quarterly assessments. In addition to existing quarterly BPET and PPT, a 10-km speed march and 32-km route march every six months have been added, along with an annual 50-meter swimming test. All personnel will maintain an APAC, and test results

THE NEW RULES			
Age group: 28 to 32 years			
Height	Weight	Min	Ideal
170	55.8	62.0	68.2
172	57.2	63.5	69.9
174	59.0	65.5	72.1
176	60.3	67.0	73.7
178	61.7	68.5	75.4
180	63.5	70.5	77.6
Age group: 33 to 37 years			
Height	Weight	Min	Ideal
170	57.6	64	70.4
172	59	65.5	72
174	61	67.5	74
176	62.1	69	76
178	63.5	70.5	78



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## ISSUE OF TRANSFER OF POWERS

## Delhi Mayor moves SC over working of key panel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

Shelly Oberoi

DELHI MAYOR Shelly Oberoi has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction that the "House of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)" be permitted to perform the functions of its Standing Committee pending a decision on the power of the Delhi Lieutenant Governor to nominate members to the Committee.

The plea said that the legality of the appointments made by the L-G to the Committee are pending adjudication by the SC, which had reserved its judgment in the matter on May 17, 2023.

It pointed out that "the Standing Committee could not be constituted yet" as "the adjudication of the legality of the nominated persons' appointments will directly and substantially impact the election of 12 out of 18 members of the Standing Committee."

The functions of the

Committee include "granting approval for the Commissioner of the MCD to enter into any contract involving an expenditure greater than Rs. 5 crores (ref Section 202(c) DMC Act); granting approvals for any exercise of power entailing expenditure that would be incurred in the following year, beyond the current year (ref Section 71 DMC Act); appointing MCD officers immediately subordinate to the Municipal Secretary or the Municipal Chief Auditor (ref Section 92(1) DMC Act)" and recommending to the MCD any revisions to budget grants within the year (ref Section 110(1) DMC Act).

The plea said that "the prevailing situation has affected a range of governance functions of the MCD, from the procurement of textbooks and medical supplies for MCD's schools and health centers, to the maintenance of public parks, public toilets, and other amenities".

i.e. it will directly determine the special majority within it".

The plea added, "while this Hon'ble Court will pronounce its judgment at an appropriate time, the present issue is that the functions to be performed by the Standing Committee are at a halt".

In view of this, it urged the court to issue "a direction that the functions of the Standing Committee — pending the adjudication of the legality of the process of appointment of its electors — be exercised by the House of the MCD, i.e. the 'Corporation' composed of all the elected councilors as defined in Section 3(3)(a) of the DMC Act".

The functions of the

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## Teen detained for throwing chemical at girl in North Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

## How was the teen caught?

A 16-YEAR-OLD boy was detained Sunday for allegedly throwing caustic soda mixed in water at a girl in North Delhi's Burari, police said. The incident took place on Wednesday when the girl, a Class 11 student, was on her way to pick up her 10-year-old cousin from school when the boy came on foot and threw the chemical at her.

Police said that the victim suffered injuries on her face, nose and neck and has been discharged after treatment.

The girl's family registered a police case on the same day under IPC sections 326B (acid attack) and 341 (wrongful restraint). As per the complainant, the girl was attacked by a stranger.

According to the police, the boy did not know the girl, but expressed a general dislike for girls. He claimed to have randomly chosen the girl and committed the crime.

Police said it was a hard catch since the site of the crime did not have any surveillance cameras.

DCP North Manoj Meena said, "The first team focused on profiling the girl, mapped her social media, past contacts, recorded details about her and the incident. The second team scanned CCTV footage from the six roads that lead to the spot and the third team was stationed in plain clothes near the schools." In the CCTV footage, a boy was found running away from the scene of crime on a road, that was 10 minutes apart, police said. "...The face was not visible, but the boy matched the description provided..." DCP Meena said.

The accused was wearing blue trousers, Adidas tracksuit, a white handkerchief (as a mask) and had a backpack at the time of crime. Police said the boy confessed to the crime and that they recovered the chemical, his clothes, his mask and bag.

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# A great nation One grand celebration

**BHARAT 20  
PARV 24**

23rd - 31st January 2024

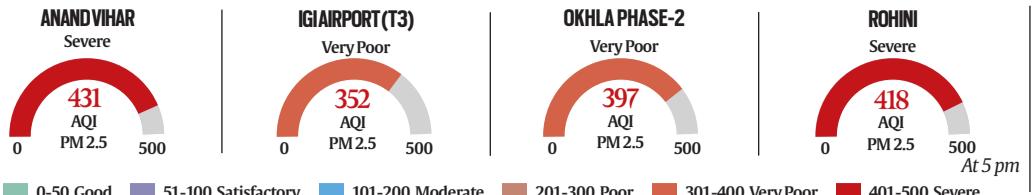
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S K Y W A T C H  
FORECAST: January 29  
Mainly clear sky. Shallow to moderate fog in the morning.  
AQI: Very poor

MAX: 22 | MIN: 7  
0.1°C below normal | 1.4°C below normal

17 INJURED; ACCIDENT OCCURRED AS CROWD SWELLED DURING SINGER B PRAAK'S PERFORMANCE

# Woman dead as stage collapses at Kalkaji temple jagran

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

A 45-YEAR-OLD woman was killed and 17 others left injured after a makeshift stage at a *jagran* collapsed in Southeast Delhi's Kalkaji Mandir on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

Police said the organisers had not taken permission for the event, adding that 1,500-1,700 people were present at the gathering.

The incident took place when popular singer B Praak began singing and people gathered around the central stage to take a closer look, said police.

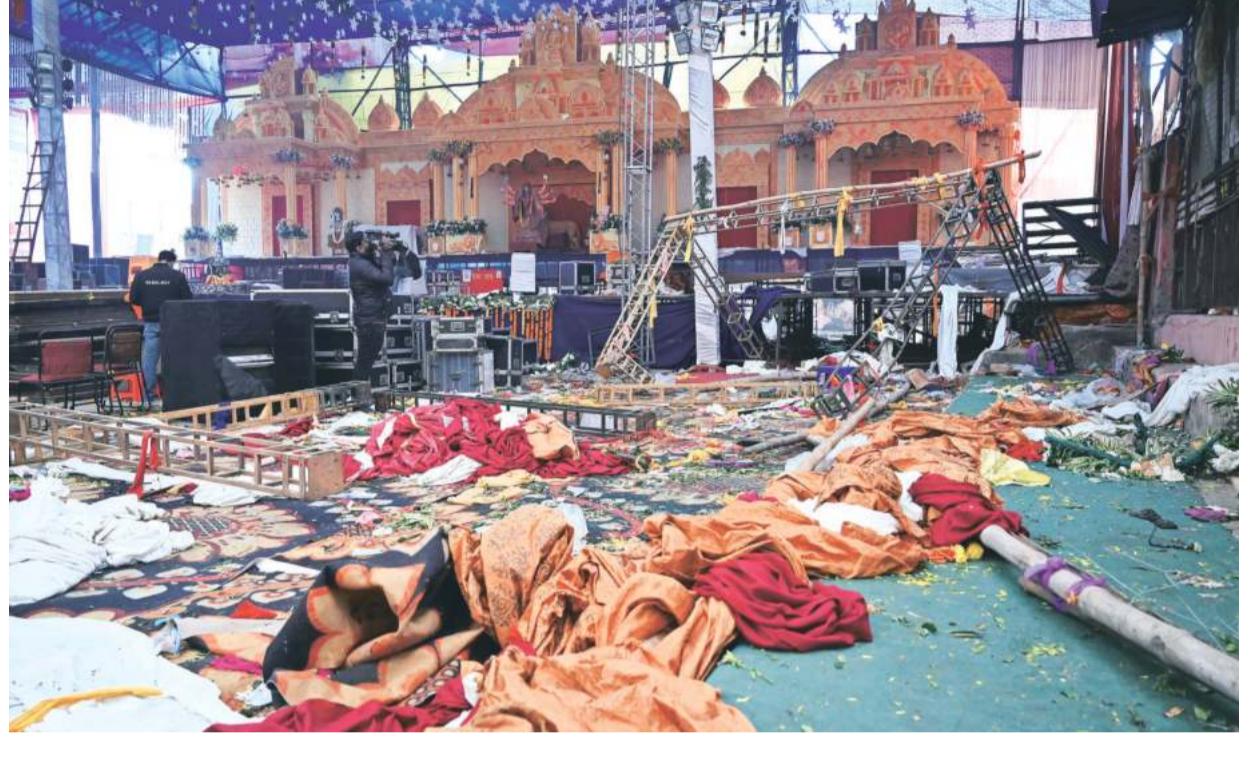
In a video of the incident, B Praak and other dignitaries could be seen sitting on the central stage while an adjacent stage collapsed. Some people could be seen sitting under the makeshift stage.

According to police, the incident took place around midnight during the *Mata Jagran*, which the temple has been hosting annually for the last 20-25 years. Police said no permission was granted for the event. "However, sufficient staff was deployed to maintain law and order. There was a gathering of around 1,500-1,600 people at around 12.30 am," Rajesh Deo, DCP (Southeast), said.

Reacting to the incident, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said:

"The accident that happened last night during the *jagran* of Kalkaji temple is very sad. A woman has died in the accident, may her soul rest in peace. I wish for the speedy recovery of the 17 injured people. I appeal to all the people of Delhi to take special care of the security standards in any kind of big event and make arrangements in such a way that no untoward incident happens."

Police said an elevated platform was put up near the main stage to seat the families of the organisers and VIPs. "At about 12.30



The incident took place around 12-12.30 am, said police. Gajendra Yadav

am, the elevated platform collapsed as it could not bear the weight of people sitting/standing on this stage. Some people were sitting under the platform as well," Deo added.

The injured are being treated at the trauma centre at AIIMS, Safdarjung Hospital and Max Hospital.

The DCP said Tina Prakash, a resident of Tughlakabad Extension, was declared "brought dead" by Max Hospital. She is survived by her husband, who sells vegetables, and three sons.

A case under sections of causing death by negligence is being registered against the organisers.

B Praak said via a post on Instagram: "This is the first time I've seen something like this hap-

pen before my eyes... and I'm deeply saddened by it... I hope all the injured persons recover soon."

He added, "I would like to say that management at such events is very necessary... I understand it (the gathering) was your love for *Maa* and me. However, we must be careful next time. We must take care of children and the elderly..."

## 'Crowd went out of control'

Attendees said B Praak arrived at the event around 12-12.30 am and within minutes, people started gathering around the central stage and tried climbing up the VIP stage.

Sunil Sunny, the head priest at

the temple, told *The Indian Express*: "We have been doing these *jagrans* for years now. Nothing like this has ever happened before... The devotees got excited seeing B Praak. We tried to control them but nobody stopped." He further said, "I was there when the stage collapsed. Everyone started screaming and running. It was chaotic... There was one bamboo (pillar of the stage) which was shaking when people started climbing up. We tried to stop everyone but they were 'out of control'."

Sunny said the temple has all the fire safety clearances and NOCs. "We are not doing anything illegal," he added.

Atul Garg, Delhi Fire Services (DFS) Chief, said they received a

call around 1.20 am and rushed to the mandir with three fire tenders. "We helped pull out 8-10 persons who were trapped under the stage. The injured were aged between 5 and 81."

Garg said the temple has all the necessary fire clearances, adding inspections were recently conducted on the premises.

However, the VIP stage was set up only two to three days prior to the incident and no NOC was issued since the pandals and the stage are temporary structures.

Said DCP Deo: "They had asked for permission but it was only for loudspeaker use. While we denied it, we can't stop the event because the congregation can't be physically contained. So, we provided security for it."

Shivam (23), a social worker,

"Saw people rushing towards stage when B Praak came... could only hear the screams"

JIGNASA SINHA AND GAYATHRI MANI  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

"I SAW people rushing towards the stage when B Praak came. They all wanted to record videos of him and take photos. The stage suddenly collapsed and people were stuck..."

Sandeep Nagar (19), a student, shudders as he recalls what transpired at the Kalkaji Temple late Saturday night, when a woman was killed and 17 others injured after a makeshift stage collapsed during a *jagran*.

"There was no space to sit or stand. No security could be seen around us," Nagar further added.

Another attendee was Hardik Gupta, a corporate employee.

"There was a huge crowd. When B Praak came... the *sewadars* (volunteers) were trying to control the crowd but nobody was listening.

The stage was shaking and within seconds, it collapsed. Many of our neighbours and acquaintances were sitting under the stage and so were we but the crowd was such that we could not control..."

said a 40-year-old man, who works as a commando at the temple.

Requesting anonymity, he said, "People started climbing on to the stage and soon, the platform that could only accommodate 15-20 people had 100 people."

Mahant Surendranath Avadhoot from the temple said, "The jagran is organised every year following a 50-day-long bhajan-kirtan and small programmes. The jagran is organised by Shri Kalkaji Sajja Sevadar Mitra Mandal for the country's peace,



(Left) A videogram of the incident; (above) singer B Praak said he was deeply saddened by the mishap

wellness and happiness... it (the incident) is very unfortunate..."

Sagar Malik, a local resident, said, "This is complete mismanagement on the part of organisers and the police..." Lakhi, who attended the jagran with 23 members of his family, said, "We were all sitting on the floor... when the stage fell, my two sisters got stuck, one suffered head injury and another got her leg fractured..."

BJP councillor from Kalkaji, Yogita Singh, who visited the temple on Sunday, said, "I also visited the temple yesterday (Saturday) around 6-6.30 pm... the organisers, the police, the temple management and we need to be careful so that the incident does not happen again in the future."

AAP minister Somnath Bharti posted on X, "It is the third stage which because of overburdening much beyond the capacity it could bear collapsed... One of my friends witnessed the entire thing..."

Express visited the premises, labourers could be seen removing iron poles and other material even as devotees continued to pour in for a *darshan*. "A large number of people came in to listen to singers B Praak and Kanhaiya Mittal... everything happened so suddenly... It was a stampede-like situation... The police were there and so were we but the crowd was such that we could not control..."

said a 40-year-old man, who works as a commando at the temple.

Shivam (23), a social worker,

said, "We never expected this to happen. I was near the stage and was lucky as my friend pulled me... we got injured during the stampede."

Kusum Mourya, 42, a housewife, said, "The stage fell right on me and I was trapped under all the wooden pillars and metal... After 10-15 minutes, I was pulled out... My left hand is fractured."

On Sunday, when *The Indian*

Express visited the premises, labourers could be seen removing iron poles and other material even as devotees continued to pour in for a *darshan*. "A large number of people came in to listen to singers B Praak and Kanhaiya Mittal... everything happened so suddenly... It was a stampede-like situation... The police were there and so were we but the crowd was such that we could not control..."

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On Sunday, when *The Indian*

# Power, sewage, schools: Residents air their woes as DMs, other officials spend weekend at Delhi's villages

UPASIKA SINGHAL  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

FROM GARBAGE disposal and choked drain to lack of medical and education facilities: This weekend gave residents of villages across 11 districts of the capital a chance to narrate their woes directly to senior officials, including the District Magistrates.

The exercise was part of Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan under which officials, including Senior Nodal Officers, DMs, and representatives from key departments such as the DDA, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), and Public Works Department (PWD), stayed overnight at designated villages on January 27 and 28.

The purpose of the visit was to foster direct engagement with villagers and gather insights.

On January 2, Lieutenant Governor (L-G) V K Saxena, following a Samvaad session at Raj Niwas with delegates from 180



Visits were part of Dilli Gramodaya initiative. Gajendra Yadav

villages, had announced that DMs would spend nights in villages within their respective districts.

Following this, on January 7, all 11 DMs had stayed overnight at a few villages.

On Friday, government officials visited 11 villages, including Madanpur Dabas, Neelwal, Dallupura, Burari, Aali, and Rangpuri. The stay comprised site inspections to areas that need renovation along with open dis-

cussion with villagers and village leaders on civic issues. The officials also visited villages situated close to the designated ones, sources said.

In Dallupura, the biggest problem raised by residents was drains overflowing due to the PWD pipes being choked with garbage. "Whether it rains or not, the streets are sometimes ankle-deep in drain water. All the shop owners have to keep a spare

wiper at hand to constantly push the water back into the open drains," said Dharmendar Kumar (45), a hardware shop owner in Pratap Chowk, Dallupura.

For Binni Kumar (39), whose family has lived in Dallupura village for generations, the chronic issue of sewage has become a source of embarrassment. "We have complained multiple times to the MCD and the PWD to clean our streets but our complaints fall on deaf ears. Now, we choose to keep our drains and streets clean ourselves. We have no other choice, we can't keep it that way when our friends and family come to visit," Kumar said.

In Aali village, the biggest worry for the residents were the narrow streets obstructing movement, and the lack of medical and school facilities. "During emergencies, the patient has to be taken to the main road, situated a kilometre away, before they can be put in an ambulance. This is because our roads are so narrow that cars cannot turn back around once they enter the lanes," said

Adil Ali (38), a resident. While the village has a primary school, the residents also expressed the desire to have a senior secondary school close by the village. They also put forth the demand of having a government dispensary.

During the Samvaad in Aali, South East DM Santosh Kumar Rai said he would look into land options for the school from the DDA and will also inform the Education Directorate about the issue. In Dallupura, MCD councilor Munesh Dediha said all the works shall begin by the first week of February and be completed by the end of the month.

In Burari, North East DM Manoj Tiwari attended the Samvaad Sunday. Here too, the residents talked about sewage and drainage issues.

Tiwari also highlighted the issue of residents not being able to get new electricity connections due to DDA's land-pooling policy which requires residents to get an NOC from the authority while applying for a new connection.

## Expect light rain, shallow to moderate fog this week: IMD

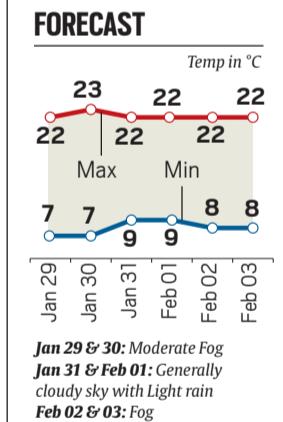
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

DELHI IS expected to see light rain on Wednesday and Thursday, even though the maximum temperature is expected to be around the 20 degree Celsius mark, according to IMD.

On Sunday, the maximum was recorded as 18.6 degrees Celsius, three degrees below normal. The minimum temperature was 6 degrees Celsius, also three degrees below normal.

The city has not seen any rain since December. It has also seen the lowest average temperature in at least 12 years. So far, there have been five 'cold days' this January, when the maximum temperature was 4.5 degrees or more below the normal. Five cold wave days, when the minimum temperature was significantly below normal, were also seen.

According to IMD, the mini-



mum temperature will remain between 7 and 9 degrees Celsius over the coming week. Shallow to moderate fog is expected to persist in the mornings.

Delhi's AQI, meanwhile, remained at 384 in the "very poor" category according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Shah Umair, a numismatist and amateur historian, said, "The name Rajon comes from the masons who were living at the baoli and using its water. They were called Raji Mistri, hence the baoli is called 'Rajon Ki Baoli'. In the 20th century, when people from different parts of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana started shifting to Mehrauli, it was ghettoised and a lot of people started living on the baoli premises."

Narrating the history of the baoli, Umair further said, "Daulat Khan was the governor of Punjab during the era of Ibrahim Lodhi, he built this baoli in Mehrauli... this man was also the person who invited Babur to invade India. Babur promised him that if he wins, Khan will be given Punjab to rule. However, Babur had other plans... Daulat Khan was later sent to exile where he passed away..."

Built in 1516, the baoli was one among several monuments revamped and inaugurated by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Saxena at the park in October last year.

He further said, "There is a mosque and a grave on the pre-

ises of the baoli but we don't know who is buried in the tomb."

In 2022, a study conducted by Jamia Millia Islamia's Faculty of Architecture and Ekistics, under 'Mission Amrit Sarovar - Jal Dharohar Sanrakshan' to protect traditional water bodies, de-



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



## SELFIE REQUEST

WHEN 200 women scientists from ISRO met with Union Science Minister Jitendra Singh earlier this week, they wanted to click a selfie with him. Singh, however, said the request for a selfie should come from him as they [scientists] were the celebrities for having accomplished missions such as Chandrayaan-3, Aditya-L1, and Chandrayaan-2.

## DIFFICULT TASK

AT THE Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Supreme Court on Sunday, Bar Council of India chairman Manan Kumar Mishra heaped praises on Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was present on stage. There were isolated rounds of applause from the audience. Delivering the inaugural address a short while later, the PM said his government had approved the third phase of the e-Courts Mission Project with a four-fold increase in funding as compared to the second phase. In a lighter vein, he told the audience that they could clap as it was their subject. A round of laughter followed as the PM said he understood how difficult it was for them to applaud when Mishra was speaking.

## JNU CONNECTION

ONE of the ministers in the new Nitish Kumar Cabinet in Bihar has a JNU connection. As photographs of Nitish and his new team of nine ministers with the Governor appeared on the TV screens, people identified the man on the extreme left as Sumit Singh, an independent MLA. Sumit was a student of the Japanese Centre at School of Languages in JNU. He joined the ABVP in JNU and later shifted to Bihar to join politics full-time. Son of veteran Rajput politician Narendra Singh, Sumit won the 2020 Assembly election as an Independent from Chakai, bordering Jharkhand.

## Rajasthan, MP, Centre sign MoU for modified river linking project

New Delhi: An MoU was signed by Rajasthan and MP with the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti Sunday for implementation of the Modified Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal-ERCP (Modified PKC-ERCP) Link Project. The project envisages integra-

tion of original PKC river link project with Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project to implement it as an inter-state river linking project under the national perspective plan of inter-linking of rivers (ILR) programme of the Government of India. ENS

# Rahul resumes yatra: Responsibility of all in Bengal to unite against hate

ATRI MITRA  
JALPAIGURI, SILEGURI, JAN 28

BENGAL MUST show the way for India to stand unitedly against hatred, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Sunday in West Bengal's Siliguri as the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra resumed following a two-day break.

"It is the responsibility of everyone in Bengal to stand united against hatred. Everyone should stand united, and Bengal must show the way," Rahul told the assembled crowd after the yatra reached Siliguri from Jalpaiguri. He delivered his speech from his vehicle after the local administration did not give permission for the public meeting that the Congress had scheduled in Siliguri.

In his address, Rahul did not mention Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, whose JD(U) earlier in the day left the Opposition INDIA bloc and joined the BJP-NDA, or West Bengal CM and

Agitation until all Marathas get reservation: Patil

MANOJ MORE  
PUNE, JANUARY 28

A DAY after the Maharashtra government accepted all demands of the Maratha community and also issued a gazette notification for expanding the scope of OBC category, quota activist Manoj Jarange Patil Sunday said his agitation will continue until Kunbi caste certificates are issued to all Marathas.

"The agitation will continue till notification issued by the government is implemented. The agitation will continue till the last Maratha gets the Kunbi caste certificate," Jarange Patil told mediapersons in Jalna district.

"Marathas have won this battle 100%. There is no reason to doubt government intention. But until all Marathas get reservation, our agitation will go on," he said.



Rahul Gandhi in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri, Sunday. Partha Paul

TMC chief Mamata Banerjee.

There was a different tone to the Jalpaiguri-Siliguri portion of the yatra. In Cooch Behar, where the West Bengal leg of the yatra began on January 25, participants faced protests in several places, with many protesters holding pro-TMC placards.

On Sunday, however, the yatra saw big crowds lining the streets to greet the Congress leaders and workers.

While one of Congress's INDIA bloc allies — TMC — chose not to take part in the yatra, another — CPI(M) — joined in.

CPI(M) supporters carrying red flags joined the Congress yatra in Siliguri and announced full support. "We are giving full support to Nyay Yatra. We (the CPIM) had said that if TMC stays away from the yatra, we would participate. I came here to give solidarity to Rahul Gandhi and his fight

## DAY AFTER SHINDE GOVT RELЕНTED ON MARATHA QUOTA

# Bhujbal says Kunbi tag to Marathas 'attack on OBCs', calls for protests

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 28

LEADERS OF the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) met at Maharashtra cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal's residence in Mumbai on Sunday evening, where three resolutions were passed opposing the state government's decision to grant Kunbi caste certificates to all eligible Marathas along with their families to avail of reservation benefits. It was also decided to hold a mega rally of OBCs at Ahmednagar on February 3.

In the meeting, convened by Bhujbal for what he called as the "backdoor entry" of Marathas into the OBC category, the leaders passed resolutions seeking scrapping of the Justice Sandeep



Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal. File

Shinde Committee, which they claimed was unconstitutional. They also demanded that the issuance of Kunbi certificates to the Marathas should be scrapped.

After the meeting, Bhujbal appealed to the members of OBC categories to take out marches to their nearby public representatives and government offices to press for their demands.

"I appeal to the members of the OBC category to take out rallies to the public representatives and other administrative offices, to oppose including Marathas under OBC quota."

pressing our demand to oppose the inclusion of Marathas in OBC. The mob attack of Marathas on OBCs took place today. Tomorrow, it can be on another community and hence it should be opposed by coming together. I appeal to all the other communities, including Scheduled Castes, to come together defend ourselves from this mob attack," Bhujbal said.

He further said, "On February 3, a mega Elgar rally of OBCs will be organised at Ahmednagar to oppose the inclusion of Marathas into the OBC. State Maharashtra Yatra of OBCs will also start from February 16."

Bhujbal also said the OBCs will approach the court if the notification is not cancelled and they will use all legal remedies to oppose including Marathas under OBC quota.

## MANN KI BAAT

# PM: Ram's rule inspired makers of Constitution

Consecration of Ram Lalla idol bound crores of Indians together, says Modi



Praises 'women power' at R-Day parade

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

TERMING THE Indian Constitution as a living document, as it completes 75 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said "Prabhu Ram ka Shasan (Lord Ram's rule)" was a source of inspiration for the makers of the country's Constitution.

In the 109th episode of his monthly radio program "Mann Ki Baat", Modi said, "This year our Constitution is also attaining the completion of 75 years... The Constitution of India has come into being after such intense brainstorming that it is called a living document."

"In part three of the original copy of this very Constitution, the fundamental rights of the citizens of India have been described and it is noteworthy that at the beginning of part three, the makers of our Constitution had allotted due space to the pictures of Bhagwan Ram, Mata Sita and Lakshman ji. Prabhu Ram ka Shasan (Lord Ram's rule)" was also a source of inspiration for the makers of our Constitution and that is why on January 22 in Ayodhya, I had talked about 'Dev se Desh'... I'd referred to 'Ram se Rashtra'," Modi said, referring to the consecration of Ram Lalla idol at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

The PM said, "The occasion of Pran Pratishtha in Ayodhya seems to have bound around a common thread, scores of people of the country together. Everyone's feelings are unanimous, everyone's devotion is in unison... Ram is in everyone's words, Ram is in everyone's heart..."

"On the evening of January 22, the entire country lit Ram Jyoti and celebrated Diwali. During this time, the country saw the power of togetherness, which is also a major basis for our resolutions of a developed India," he said.

Speaking about the cleanliness campaign, Modi said, "I had requested the people of the country to run a cleanliness campaign from Makar Sankranti to January 22. I felt good that lakhs of people joined with devotion and cleaned the religious places of their area... This power of collectivity will take our country to new heights of success."

Referring to the Republic Day parade, Modi said, "This time the parade of 26th January was awesome, but the most discussed element was seeing women power in the parade... This time, out of the 20 contingents that marched in the parade, 11 were of women... India of the 21st century is thus moving ahead with the mantra of women-led development." About the Arjuna Award held a few days ago, Modi said this time 13 women athletes have been honoured with the Arjuna Award. On Padma awards, Modi said the system of Padma awards has completely changed in the last decade. "Now, it has become the people's Padma... People have a chance to nominate themselves now. This is the reason why this year 28 times more nominations have been received compared to 2014," he said.

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JDU-BJP GOVT RETURNS IN BIHAR AS NITISH DOES SECOND VOLTE-FACE IN LESS THAN 18 MONTHS

'Nitish walked out of INDIA as Cong conspired to finish off regional parties'



**THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW**

WITH  
**K C TYAGI**  
JD(U) NATIONAL  
SPOKESPERSON

**frustrated with the INDIA bloc, you could have come out, spoken to other leaders and formed a separate bloc.**

Slowly everyone will come out. I am telling you today there will be no alliance between the Congress and Mamata Banerjee (in Bengal), Samajwadi Party (in UP)... Not even in Tamil Nadu (with the DMK). We have been in the NDA before... The BJP is more moderate than the Congress in working style. We have ideological differences with the BJP – be it on Article 370 or UCC – which we will not compromise on. Even on Ram Mandir, we had said the court will decide...

**You are saying the INDIA bloc is not able to fight the BJP and hence we are leaving it to join the NDA. How is it a convincing argument?**

That is a local arrangement in Bihar. We have gone with the RJD too... and remained uncomfortable. But there is nothing uncomfortable in working with the BJP...

**You are saying the INDIA bloc will break and some more parties not comfortable with the Congress will come out. Is it possible that Nitish will rally those parties?**

No it is not possible now. We have maintained contacts with the SP, NCP... many parties. All of them are unhappy. The question today before the Congress is of survival... Instead of looking for survival, they are hoping for a revival. They should have made sacrifices for survival...

**FULL INTERVIEW ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)**

**Your larger objective was to defeat the BJP. If you were**

**Nitish Kumar is known for his political somersaults at regular intervals. It is unfortunate he has decided to quit INDIA. People will give a befitting reply to such political opportunism.**

**SOUGATA ROY, TMC MP**

**The way MLAs are bought across the country and governments are broken using agencies and money, it is dangerous for democracy...**

**RAGHAV CHADHA, AAP RAJYA SABHA MP**

**BJP has never been so weak as it has become today. Today, a new record of betrayal has been made. The public will give a befitting reply.**

**AKHILESH YADAV, SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF**

**Whatever happened in Patna, such a situation was never seen before in such a short period... it was Nitish Kumar who had called all the non-BJP parties to Patna... Don't know what happened suddenly, but the public will definitely teach him a lesson.**

**SHARAD PAWAR, NCP CHIEF**

**Nitish used to say Owaisi is B-team of BJP, but now he is 'shamelessly' sitting in the company of that party. The three parties (JDU, RJD and BJP) together have betrayed the people of Bihar on issues they spoke about, the promises they made and (they) talked about their political ideology.**

**ASADUDDIN OWAISI, AIMIM PRESIDENT**

## Numbers show it has always paid JDU to join hands with BJP in LS

ANJISHNU DAS  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

ON A day Bihar CM and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar snapped his ties with the Mahagathbandhan and rejoined the NDA, JD(U) national spokesperson KCTYAGI speaks to MANOJ CG on a range of issues related to Nitish's move and its ramifications for the INDIA bloc. Excerpts:

The attitude of the Congress from day one had not been very positive. We came out of the NDA with 16 MPs in 2022, not to gain anything but to contribute. At that time there was no positive mention of the Congress anywhere in the country and talks about a Third Front were on with (West Bengal CM) Mamata, (Delhi CM Arvind) Kejriwal, (BRS chief) K Chandrasekhar Rao and (SP chief) Akhilesh Yadav as the "sutradhars" (anchors). In September 2022, a large number of Opposition leaders had gathered in Hisar to mark Chaudhary Devi Lal's birth anniversary. It was here Kumar demolished all talk of a Third Front, saying there can be no front without the Congress. This increased the acceptability of the Congress, a phenomenon which was visible in (the Opposition meeting at) Patna.

Kumar made the impossible possible... He (Kumar) then went to meet Sonia Gandhi with Lalu Prasad and asked her to take the lead. However, nothing happened for four months. Nitish came back to Delhi, persuaded everyone and took them to Patna for the first meeting of the Opposition. The chances of fielding one common candidate against the BJP in 400-odd seats and a tough fight were bright after the Opposition meetings in Bengaluru and Mumbai. The Congress then let the momentum slip and no meeting was called for three months. Nitish and Akhilesh repeatedly questioned about delay in seat-sharing. The Congress said there would be no seat-sharing in Haryana, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Karnataka... They will let the BJP win all seats but will not give us any but want seats disproportionate to their strength in Bihar; UP, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu... They wanted to finish all of us non-Congress parties as part of a conspiracy.

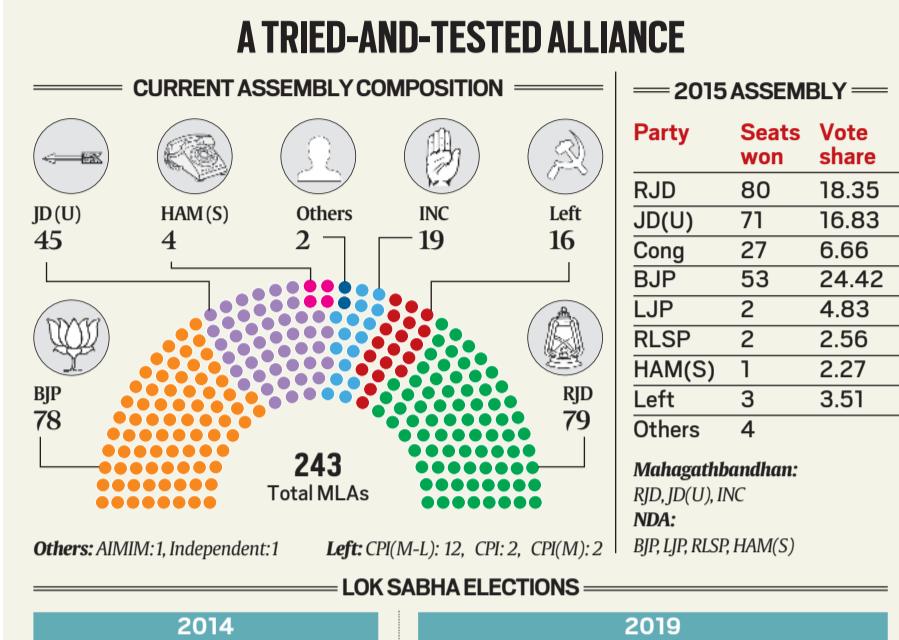
No it is not possible now. We have maintained contacts with the SP, NCP... many parties. All of them are unhappy. The question today before the Congress is of survival... Instead of looking for survival, they are hoping for a revival. They should have made sacrifices for survival...

**FULL INTERVIEW ON  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)**

BJP STATE president and MLC Samrat Choudhary was Sunday chosen the leader of the BJP's legislature party, paving the way for him to become deputy CM.

In March last year, the then LoP in the Bihar Legislative Council had been picked by the BJP as its Bihar president. Choudhary (54), a Kushwaha OBC leader, was given the task to deliver the 2025 Assembly polls for the party.

Choudhary is one of the few BJP leaders who has regularly taken on Nitish Kumar. He often criticised the JD(U) supremo on "administrative lapses", even when the BJP was part of the ruling alliance. Choudhary also used to back ideological positions of the BJP at the time, even at the expense of inviting the wrath of the JD(U).



Others: AIMIM:1, Independent:1 Left: CPI(M-L): 12, CPI: 2, CPI(M): 2

Source: Election Commission

Vote share in %

2014 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

2014				2019			
Party	Alliance	Seats won	Vote share	Party	Alliance	Seats won	Vote share
BJP	NDA	22	29.86	BJP	NDA	17	24.06
LJP	NDA	6	6.5	JD(U)	NDA	16	22.26
RLSP	NDA	3	3.05	LJP	NDA	6	8.02
RJD	UPA	4	20.46	Cong	Mahagathbandhan	1	7.85
Cong	UPA	2	8.56	RJD	Mahagathbandhan	0	15.68
NCP	UPA	1	1.22	RLSP	Mahagathbandhan	0	3.66
JD(U)		2	16.04	HAM(S)	Mahagathbandhan	0	2.39
Left	Left	0	1.47	VIP	Mahagathbandhan	0	1.65
				Left	Left	0	3

Source: Election Commission

Vote share in %

2014 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Party Alliance Seats won Vote share



## GULMARG TAKES WHITE COVER

Tourists at a resort in Gulmarg on Sunday. Snowfall was also reported in Tangmarg, Gurez, Sonamarg and many areas of Kupwara district of Kashmir. Met officials predict snowfall in the Valley up to the first week of February, ending largely snowless winter in Kashmir. PTI

Woman techie shot dead in Pune hotel room, friend arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
PUNE, JANUARY 28

A 26-YEAR-OLD woman who was working for Infosys was allegedly shot dead by her friend inside a hotel in Pune's Hinjewadi Saturday night, following which the police arrested the accused. The deceased, identified as Vandana Dwivedi, was found dead in a pool of blood in a room of hotel Oyo Townhouse located off Marunji Road in Hinjewadi around 9 am Sunday.

The accused, Rishabh Nigam (30), was arrested by Pimpri Chinchwad police Sunday night and will be produced before the court on Monday. According to police, the murder seems to be the fallout of a strained relationship between the two.

A footage retrieved from a CCTV camera installed in the hotel shows the accused walking out of the room minutes after the incident, police said. Officials said that the probe suggests that Nigam shot Vandana dead around 9.30 pm on Saturday and then took a cab to Mumbai.

Nigam was detained by the Navi Mumbai police along with the gun with which he had allegedly shot her in the head.

The deceased and the accused, both hailing from Lucknow, were in a relationship for the last 10 years. Some time back, she had moved to Pune," a police official said. According to police, recently, the accused was attacked by some persons and he doubted that the attacks were done at her behest, police said.

## Uttarakhand Waqf Board to teach story and values of Lord Ram in its madrasas

AVANEESH MISHRA  
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 28

GOING BEYOND fulfilling his promise of modernising madrasas by implementing NCERT syllabus and introducing Sanskrit, the Uttarakhand Waqf Board has now announced that they will also teach the story and values of Lord Ram in the madrasas.

According to board chairman Shadab Shams, they will implement the changes in four madrasas from March this year and later extend it to all 117 madrasas under them. One madrasa each from Dehradun, Haridwar, Udhampur, and Nainital will implement the curriculum initially.

"The way the entire country is celebrating the consecration of Shri Ram in Ayodhya, we thought we should teach Shri Ram in the four modern madrasas we are starting from the March session. There is even a quote attributed to Allama Iqbal (a renowned poet and philosopher) in which he refers to Lord Ram as 'Imam-e-Hind (Leader of India)'. Indian Muslims should follow Ram because we are not Arabs. We are converted Muslims who changed our way of worship but we cannot change our ancestors," Shams said.

"Shri Ram belongs to everyone. Who does not want a son like Ram who left everything to fulfil his father's promise? Who does not want a brother like Laxman or a wife like Sita? On one side we have these characters and on the other hand we have characters such as Aurangzeb, who killed his brother and jailed his father. We will not teach Aurangzeb at any cost but teach Shri Ram and Mohammad Sahab," he said.

Confirming that the four modern madrasas will start functioning from March, Shams said that the Uttarakhand Waqf Board will start looking for qualified teachers for the curriculum from February. According to Shams, in these madrasas, classes from 8 am to 2 pm will be run just like any other modern school.

"In the model madrasas, namaz will be offered five times a day. After the early morning namaz offering around 6.30 am, one hour will be designated for Quran studies. From 8 am to 2 pm, the madrasas will run like a normal school. During that time, a school uniform will be mandatory just like any English medium school," Shams had told *The Indian Express*.

Claiming that the seer community is favouring the implementation of Sanskrit in the madrasas, he appealed to the Hindu seer community to adopt the financially weaker madrasas of Uttarakhand.

## KARNATAKA CM SEES CONSPIRACY, BJP PLANS PROTEST TODAY

## Tension in Mandya over hoisting saffron flag 'after nod for Tricolour'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 28

TENSION PREVAILED at Keragodu village near Mandya in Karnataka over hoisting a saffron flag in a 108-ft-tall flag post. On Sunday, authorities removed the saffron flag bearing lord Hanuman's portrait from the flag post.

A large contingent of police personnel was deployed as a precautionary measure when people from the village and its surroundings, along with members of the BJP, JD(S), and Bajrang Dal, gathered to protest against the removal of the flag. In order

to quell the unrest, police resorted to a mild lathi charge. Subsequently, the police and administration replaced the Hanuma dwaja with the national Tricolour on the flagpole.

The BJP, meanwhile, announced a padayatra in Keragodu on Monday, after which the party said it would lay siege to the Deputy Commissioner's office.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah alleged that the tension was the result of a premeditated act by the BJP and Sangh Parivar. "Hoisting a Hanuma flag in a pole meant for national flag by violating rules and staging a protest against the government is not accidental," he said.

in an X post, sharing the permission letter issued by the Keragodu grama panchayat to Sri Gowrisankar Seva Trust.

The permission letter dated January 18 said only national flag and state flag should be hoisted in the pole and that any religious or political flag will not be allowed.

"There is no doubt that BJP leaders have hatched a conspiracy to cause communal riots in Mandya ahead of the Lok Sabha elections," Siddaramaiah said in the X post.

Leader of the Opposition R Ashok, who visited the village on Sunday, said that BJP would intensify the protest in the state over the issue.

### COURT NOTICE

In the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad Original Jurisdiction  
Company Application No. 26 of 2021

In

Company Petition No. 27 of 2007

In the matter of M/s Incan Group of Companies (In Liquidation)

Regd. Office at Incan Bhawan, B-1/37, Aliganj, Lucknow

To,

Smt. Pragya Agarwal

C-87, Surya Nagar, Ghaziabad - 201011

And

Smt. Pragya Agarwal

C/o M/s Sunvision Equipments LLP

87, Sidharth Enclave, Ashram, New Delhi - 110014

Please take notice of the directions dated 09.01.2024 passed by the Hon'ble High Court of Judicature at Allahabad in above mentioned case, on the application filed by the Official Liquidator Uttar Pradesh, 9th Floor, Sangam Place, Civil Lines, Allahabad, against the allotment of landed property situated at Plot No. B 3, Sector - 81, Phase II, NOIDA, Gautambudhi Nagar by the NOIDA on 27.02.2019 to Smt. Pragya Agarwal and fixed the date as 12.03.2024 for appearance.

In view of the above, you being the party of the impugned allotment is required to remain present before the Court of Hon'ble Company Judge, High Court of Judicature at Allahabad on the date fixed i.e. 12.03.2024, either in person or through an advocate or any other person authorized by law, to act on your behalf, failing which the application will be heard in your absence and decided on its' merit by the Hon'ble Court.

Given under my hand on this day of ..... 2024.

(Kunal Ravi Singh)

Advocate

Counsel for the Official Liquidator  
U.P., Allahabad

No.OL-Alld/Incan/212/Date: 24.01.2024

# Centre clarifies de-reservation policy after uproar over UGC draft guidelines

Centrally funded universities will not de-reserve any reserved faculty positions: Education Ministry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE EDUCATION Ministry and the University Grants Commission (UGC) clarified on Sunday that centrally funded universities will not de-reserve any reserved faculty positions after an uproar over UGC's draft guidelines suggesting the possibility of opening unfilled vacancies for SC, ST, OBC candidates to general candidates in "rare and exceptional cases".

On December 27, the higher education regulator had shared draft guidelines on implementing the reservation policy in higher education institutions for public feedback by January 28. This draft, prepared by a four-member committee headed by the director of the Institute of Public Administration, Dr H S Rana, had a chapter on de-reservation of unfilled quota posts meant for teachers, officers, and employees of a university.

The chapter stated that while there is a "general ban on de-reservation of reserved vacancies in case of direct recruitment", in exceptional circumstances it can be done if the university can provide adequate justification for it.

The draft guidelines specify that proposals for de-reservation

concerning job positions designated for Group A and Group B posts should be submitted to the Education Ministry, while proposals for Group C and D posts should be forwarded to the Executive Council (the top decision making body) of the university for special permission. The proposal would have to provide information such as the designation, pay scale, name of the service, responsibilities, required qualifications, efforts made to fill the post, and why it cannot be allowed to remain vacant.

In current academic practice, reserved faculty positions are not converted to recruit general candidates. While the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) permits de-reservation in exceptional circumstances exclusively for Group A posts, according to sources, this provision has not been put into effect in universities. Unfilled quota positions undergo re-advertisement, and universities organise special recruitment drives until suitable candidates are identified, without opening these positions to the general category.

The draft guidelines were seen to be paving the way for de-reservation in faculty positions in universities, which sparked an uproar. "The constitu-

tional provisions related to affirmative action are not mere words but expressions of a constitutional commitment... UGC seeks to topple whatever growth made in this direction since independence. The proposition to introduce de-reservation is a preposterous act in itself. The de-reservation provision will open a window of discrimination against reserved category candidates," read a statement jointly signed by former president of Delhi University Teachers' Association Aditya Narayan Misra and four members of the Delhi government's OBC Commission.

On Sunday, UGC chairman M Jagadesh Kumar posted on X, "This is to clarify that there has been no dereservation of reserved category positions in Central Education Institutions (CEI) in the past, and there is going to be no such de-reservation. It is important for all HEIs to ensure that all backlog positions in reserved category are filled through concerted efforts."

Reiterating that the proposal had nothing to do with de-reservation of any posts, Kumar told *The Indian Express*, "What is put out is just a draft and anything related to de-reservation will be taken out of it while making the final document."

Proposals for Govt aid: NAAC accreditation, NIRF ranking, 75% teachers as per quota

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE UNIVERSITY Grants Commission (UGC) in its new draft guidelines has proposed to make participation in NAAC or NBA programmes, NIRF ranking, and 75% of sanctioned teaching posts filled, to be crucial criteria to receive grants from the Centre. If approved, the draft guidelines "UGC (Fitness of Colleges for Receiving Grants) Rules, 2024" will replace 1975 UGC guidelines that cover all institutions recognised by the commission. The new rules, aligned with the National Education Policy 2020, will be applicable to every college affiliated to universities that are established by a central or under a state act under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956.

Expanding the scope of the earlier guidelines, the UGC has proposed that universities should either have accreditation awarded by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) or have at least 60% of the programmes, in case a college offers more than three programmes accredited by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA). In case a college offers less than three programmes, then each of the eligible programmes must have been accredited, the guidelines states. In case the educational institutes does not have both NAAC or NBA accreditation, then they should be ranked in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) at least thrice after participating five times or at least twice after participating thrice. To be eligible, the draft states, colleges that not only charge a reasonable fee prescribed by the appropriate authority at the Central or state government but also do not take capitation fees or any unauthorised fees will be considered for receiving grants. Colleges will be required to have at least 75% of the total sanctioned teaching posts filled and duly follow reservation policy, the draft states. The teachers will have to be paid according to the UGC policy as well.

## SPECIAL AMNESTY SCHEME FOR CONDONING DELAY IN FILING GST APPEAL

### Who can apply under this Amnesty Scheme?

- 👉 The taxable persons who could not file an appeal, within the specified time period, against the demand order passed by the proper officer on or before the 31.03.2023, and
- 👉 The taxable persons whose appeal against the said order was rejected solely on the grounds that the said appeal was not filed within the specified time period

To avail this Amnesty Scheme, you can now file an appeal in Form GST-APL-01 against the said order on or before 31.01.2024, subject to the payment of:

- 👉 Admitted liability (tax, interest, fine and penalty) arising out of the impugned order
- 👉 A sum equal to 12.5% of the remaining amount of tax in dispute, out of which at least 20% should have been debited from electronic cash ledger

### Please Note

- 👉 No refund shall be granted on account of this amnesty scheme till the disposal of the appeal
- 👉 No appeal under this amnesty scheme shall be admissible in respect of a demand not involving tax

Seize the moment!

An exclusive chance awaits taxpayers who may have missed the appeal deadline.

For details please refer,

Notification No. 53/2023-Central Tax dated 02.11.2023



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# THE EDITORIAL PAGE

## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

### NITISH'S NTH SWITCH

His political promiscuity points to limitations of Mandal in face of Mandir plus Mandal. Tejashwi has his task cut out

**N**ITISH KUMAR HAS switched sides again, for the second time in two years, his fifth crossover in a little over a decade, preceding his ninth time as chief minister. What he said against the BJP, after he left it again to join hands once more with Lalu Yadav in 2022, his statements against Yadav-led RJD after he broke, in 2017, the JD(U)-RJD Mahagathbandhan that swept to power in Bihar in 2015, his public disagreement with the NDA's decision to anoint then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi its prime ministerial candidate, which led to his exit in 2013 from a 17-year-old alliance with the BJP — these are not the point. As eye-catching a figure as Nitish is, it may be more useful in this moment to look beyond him. For all his dramatic somersaults, Nitish is not the hero of this story whose central theme, and question, is this: In the face of a dominant Hindutva, and a Mandir politics that is aggressively Mandalising itself, what does the politics of social justice mean, what is its USP? What happens, going ahead, to the erstwhile flag-bearers of Mandal? Nitish's political promiscuity in Bihar underlines the vulnerability of Mandal forces in Bihar and elsewhere, if they are not able to add layers to their core pitch, if they continue to rely only on bareknuckled caste math, if they don't join it to vocabularies of governance.

Because Nitish's nth switch in Bihar points, most of all, to an RJD that, despite the seminal political achievements of Lalu Yadav, is looking unprepared for the future. It was the charismatic Yadav, who, almost singlehandedly, upended the caste-driven politics in a state of raging inequalities in the 1990s, and ensured that the more numerous backward castes would no more be denied their due share of political representation and power. Yadav's political mobilisations rewrote the power game in his state. And yet, as his rivals and opponents adopted his lexicon and appropriated it, and as Nitish joined backward caste politics with an agenda of governance, Yadav himself became more and more mired in corruption cases while his family took over his party. His son Tejashwi has promised a make-over — in the last assembly election, he spoke of economic justice alongside social justice, and if the RJD becoming an A-to-Z, not just an M-Y, party — but it is a work in progress, much remains to be done. For now, Nitish, with a shrinking party of his own, is able to remain chief minister by re-joining a BJP that is casting its net wide in Bihar, and both can hold aloft a promise of "good governance" that the RJD is not seen to credibly make, shored up by a social coalition which includes backward castes and is broader than the RJD's.

The loneliness of the RJD in Bihar and the BJP's steady and sure progress towards emerging as the strong second pole in the state bear a larger message ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The bid by the INDIA platform — which has also taken a body blow with Nitish's flip-flop — to resurrect "social justice" as a plank needs to take into account the BJP's inroads into that domain as well. It is no longer Mandal vs Mandir. It is also Mandal vs Mandal, and Mandir plus Mandal. And, both real and projected, good governance.

### GROWTH WITH CAVEATS

Incomes and consumption aren't rising as much as GDP. This raises questions on sustainability of growth story

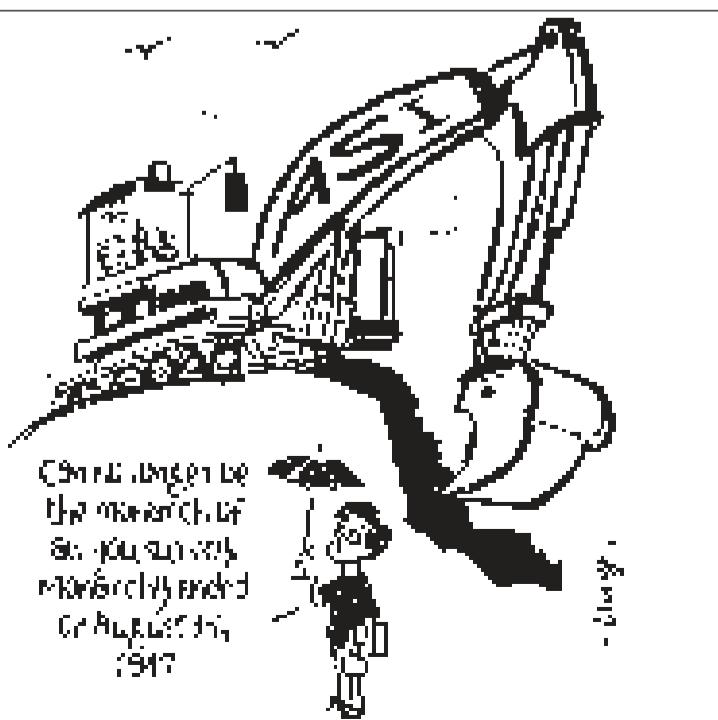
**I**NDIA'S GDP IS projected to rise 7.3 per cent in 2023-24, but private final consumption growth is at just 4.4 per cent. The latter figure — for an economy that, unlike China, has traditionally been consumption-based as opposed to investment-driven — is corroborated by other data. Hindustan Unilever, the bellwether for India's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, reported a 0.4 per cent year-on-year decline in sales revenue for the October-December 2023 quarter, with a mere 2 per cent underlying volume growth. Even within FMCG, there is a divergence between the premium-luxury and the price-sensitive mass segments, with the former products continuing to fly off the shelves. Also, the demand fragility seems more in rural than in urban areas. This is reflected in tractor sales falling 4.1 per cent in April-December 2023 over April-December 2022. Two-wheeler sales are up, but will still end the fiscal with numbers way below that of 2017-18 and 2018-19.

At the core of all this are incomes, which aren't growing enough. The problem, again, is with lower and middle class households, especially in rural areas. Rural wages, according to economists at UBS Securities, increased 5.8 per cent year-on-year in October and November 2023. The growth, in nominal terms without adjusting for inflation, was even lower at 5.3-5.4 per cent for non-agricultural wages. Another indicator is MGNREGA. The flagship rural scheme has generated about 260 crore person-days of employment so far in 2023-24. With more than two months remaining, the fiscal is set to register the highest ever employment under the scheme after 2020-21 and 2021-22. For an economy that has supposedly fully emerged from the pandemic-induced shocks of those two years, the continued robust demand for MGNREGA work is striking.

If incomes and consumption aren't rising as much as recorded GDP, it raises obvious questions on the sustainability of India's current growth story. The Narendra Modi government can rightfully claim credit for its welfare schemes — public provisioning of essential private goods such as LPG and electricity connections, housing, drinking water, toilets and bank accounts — that have helped lift millions out of so-called multidimensional poverty. But as Ashok Gulati, a columnist with this newspaper, has pointed out, all these measures have no meaning if not accompanied by a reduction in poverty based on income and real wages. Without jobs and incomes, there can be no consumption or savings to fuel growth, investment and poverty reduction on a sustainable basis. With a per capita GDP of hardly \$2,500, India's focus should be on boosting investment, jobs and incomes.

### FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



MANISH SABHARWAL AND ASHISH DHAWAN

# Shaastra and Shastra

Proposed National Security Strategy must include goal of 10 Indian universities in global Top 100

THE BOOK *THE Allure of Battle* (2017) by Cathal Nolan argues that while most military history explains winners and losers through decisive battles and strategic genius, what matters is endurance and technology. India's first National Security Strategy document is being written and will propose accelerating domestic defence production. However, the ongoing Ukraine and Israel conflicts confirm Nolan's thesis that *Shaastra* (knowledge) and *Shastra* (weapons) are siblings; the distinction between civilian and military technology erodes with drones, satellite internet, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and clean energy. We make the case that the strategy must include the goal of 10 universities in the top 100 global university rankings by India@100.

India confronts changing geopolitics. America accelerated China's global economic integration, but rural and manufacturing American workers without degrees should have shot down the Pakistan Air Force plane that secretly took Henry Kissinger to China for reconciliation talks in 1971. But America has changed its mind; its National Security Advisor aims to hobble China's capabilities by placing "foundational technologies behind a high fence". Even "friendshoring" is threatened; the White House Economic Council Director recently suggested that a Japanese company with Chinese operations buying US Steel may impact national security. China is responding by banning Tesla cars and Apple phones from army bases because of sophisticated cameras, mics and cloud backups. Xi Jinping's dual circulation now "means use Chinese when we can, foreign only if we must". And Pakistan's garrison state refuses to abandon their so-called 1,000-year war on India declared by Bhutto 60 years ago despite it poisoning their republic.

American universities have had deep military partnerships; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) contributions to World War II included radars for planes, ships, guns, airports, and the long-range navigation (LORAN) system. Crucial to this partnership was Vannevar Bush, the first dean of MIT's School of Engineering, who left in 1939 to become chairman of the National Defense Research Commission and the Office of Scientific Research and Development. It's hardly a coincidence that

Global rankings matter

Among universities, 71 per cent have a ranking goal, 68 per cent use them as a tool for management, and 50 per cent use them for publicity. Indian institutions currently engage with five rankings [NIRF, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Shanghai, US News, and Times]. Reverse engineering the QS Top 300 universities suggests what matters is size (average 25,000 plus students with 2,600 plus faculty), budgets (the top 100 have \$2 billion, double the next 100, triple the next 100), age (youngest is 40 years old), and internationalisation (19 per cent of students).

Bush's first MIT doctoral student, Frank Terman, long-time dean of Stanford's engineering school, midwifed Silicon Valley and its deep military connections.

Are global university rankings a helpful goal? The criticism is that they are popularity contests (peer surveys), unreliable (variables are poor proxies for quality), incomplete (teaching quality missing), ideological (one-size fits all), and unequal (top 10 countries account for 60 per cent of top 500). Rankings make value judgements: Valuing learning for living or earning, equating the value of education with the graduate's salary, and the language of customers in universities. Isn't it impossible to decide which disciplines matter more: The sciences that lengthen our lives or the humanities that make those longer lives worth living?

But global rankings matter. Among universities, 71 per cent have a ranking goal, 68 per cent use them as a tool for management, and 50 per cent use them for publicity. Indian institutions currently engage with five rankings [NIRF, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Shanghai, US News, and Times]. Reverse engineering the QS Top 300 universities suggests what matters is size (average 25,000 plus students with 2,600 plus faculty), budgets (the top 100 have \$2 billion, double the next 100, triple the next 100), age (youngest is 40 years old), and internationalisation (19 per cent of students).

tutions in 2015 and catapulted to reach Rank 1 in continental Europe and Rank 15 globally in ARWU). Third, scale and concentrate government research funding to universities (America's \$48 billion National Institute of Health and \$8.6 billion National Science Foundation give 80 per cent to Universities; 40 universities get more than \$250 million each, and all have top global rankings).

Fourth, incentivise corporate research at local universities (200 per cent tax deduction for research when at least 25 per cent of the R&D budget is spent at Indian universities). Finally, performance-based funding (Rs 1,000 crore annual fund to grant untied money to departments/institutions with the most significant improvement in research metrics and rankings). India is fertile soil — many IITs, central universities and private universities like Ashoka and Premji are reaching tipping points in research, budgets, and students.

India's security space is already transforming with intelligent procurement, spending shift to capex, lower average soldier age, integrated commands, cross-border strikes, abrogation of Article 370, QUAD partnership, etc. The proposed Defence Technology Council is a great idea; chaired by the Prime Minister, it will have an executive committee chaired by the Chief of Defence Staff and will include the Principal Scientific Advisor, three service chiefs, academics, and industry representatives. Partnering with universities will also improve project management; the CAG recently flagged that 67 per cent of the 178 defence projects evaluated didn't adhere to timelines.

India is improving at building companies, but better choreography between universities and government will help us build industries. Thoughtful military leaders have always recognised the foolishness in the poem by Alfred Tennyson that glorified "charging into the valley of death" and known that *Shaastra* and *Shastra* are siblings; Field Marshal Rommel believed, "sweat saves blood, blood saves lives, but brains save both". Targeting imperfect global university rankings for national security is debatable, but inevitable. Let's do it.

Sabharwal is co-founder of Teamlease Services and Dhawan is co-founder of Ashoka University



TULIKA SETH

AS A HAEMATOLOGIST, I regularly examine patients with anaemia. One of the many causes of anaemia or low haemoglobin is iron deficiency. It primarily impacts children and women. It's common knowledge that good nutrition is critical for overall health, but what's not as well-known is the two-way relationship between nutritional deficiencies and certain disorders. Consistent intake of food lacking in essential micronutrients can lead to iron deficiency anaemia and Vitamin A, and zinc deficiency, and impair immunity. Conversely, conditions such as celiac disease and infections like *H. pylori* or worm infestations can disturb the digestive system, leading to nutrient deficiencies. Malnutrition caused by micronutrient deficiency has intergenerational impacts — anaemic mothers are known to give birth to anaemic babies.

Government programmes like Anemia Mukt Bharat (AMB) are among the biggest targeted measures to tackle the disorder. It involves administering iron and folic acid (IFA) tablets and other prophylactic measures. The Mid-day Meal Scheme for school children is another such intervention. However, challenges of effective implementation persist.

The burden of malnutrition is complex and needs to be addressed through multiple interventions. Diet plays a significant role. In pre-industrial times, a diverse and balanced diet was the norm. The traditional *thali* comprises a balanced quantity of cereals, pulses, and vegetables seasoned with spices and herbs.

### THE BURDEN OF MALNUTRITION

Government initiatives to tackle nutritional deficiencies need effective execution

About 46 per cent of the population in South Asia lacks access to an affordable balanced diet, as per FAO data. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2023, around 74 per cent of India's population could not afford a healthy diet, and 39 per cent fell short of a nutrient-adequate one.

Consuming fruits, seeds, nuts and dairy options has historically been regarded as an effective means of maintaining a balanced diet. Today, dietary patterns have shifted from seasonal and varied foods to processed and sugar-laden alternatives, which are calorically dense but nutritionally deficient. The onus seems to be on people to recognise that reducing consumption of processed foods is a crucial step towards ensuring better health outcomes.

The bigger challenge is that about 46 per cent of South Asia's population lacks access to an affordable balanced diet, as per FAO data. According to *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, 2023, around 74 per cent of India's population could not afford a healthy diet, and 39 per cent fell short of a nutrient-adequate one. Recent government interventions such as Large-Scale Food Fortification (LSFF) are timely. These could augment the ongoing efforts at individual and community levels. LSFF, when aligned with micronutrient supplementation programmes, diet diversity promotion and measures to induce behavioural change has immense potential to improve the efficacy of existing initiatives. Food fortification may not be the ideal remedy. However, it is a vital first step. Many countries adopted universal food fortification several years ago. India lags behind here.

At the same time, fortification in India is not a completely novel strategy. The adoption of iodised salt under the National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme in

1992 significantly reduced goitre rates. The country's food fortification programme now includes adding micronutrients to staples such as wheat flour, rice, edible oils, and salt.

Awareness is critical to the acceptance of fortified foods among the targeted beneficiaries. The appearance and texture of such foods — fortified rice kernels, for instance — often create misgiving. Addressing such concerns requires an intensive information, education and communication (IEC) campaign. An important step in this direction is to inform the beneficiaries about the stringent standards of fortification. Research also shows no danger of iron toxicity from such food — the quantity of iron in fortified foods is similar to that of the naturally occurring nutrient. In any case, the body's homeostasis in people with normal health prevents excess iron absorption.

Multiple awareness strategies can be adopted to foster greater awareness. This includes utilising communication channels such as community radio, videos and door-to-door outreach. Messages in vernacular languages ensure that the information is easily understood and also helps dispel misconceptions and build trust. The way forward involves not just adoption of healthier dietary practices at the individual and community levels but also strategies by the state such as LSFF.

The writer is professor of haematology at AIIMS Delhi



JANUARY 29, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

#### VIOLENCE IN PUNJAB

IN A FRESH spurt of terrorist activity in Punjab, three persons were killed in a bomb explosion at a cinema hall and five railway stations were set on fire. The violence follows the announcement of the Akali Dal's new action programme as supporters of JS Bhindranwale accused Longowal of letting down the party and announcing a weak programme.

#### ZIA ON KASHMIR

PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ HAS said Pakistan cannot "forsake or forget" Kashmir but will

continue to "argue peacefully", knowing that "India will not hand it over to a platter". Describing Kashmir as Pakistan's "nation issue", he asserted that no party or government, civil or military, in Pakistan could forget it.

#### CPI DROPS SHOWCASE

THE CENTRAL SECRETARIAT of the Communist Party of India dropped proceedings against Yogendra Sharma, the CPI leader who sent Mrs Gandhi's controversial letter to Soviet President Yuri Andropov. Sharma, who has been campaigning for an understanding between the CPI and Mrs Gandhi's Congress

party, has been thrown out of the party's policy-making bodies. He was served a show-cause notice to explain why he publicly criticised the CPI leadership's settled policy.

#### SOHRAB MODI NO MORE

VETERAN FILMMAKER AND actor Sohrab Merwanji Modi died of cancer after a prolonged illness. Modi, 85, is survived by his wife, Mehtab, a former film star, and two sons. The grand old man of Indian cinema was a producer, director and actor all rolled into one. He had made the first technicolour film *Jhansi Ki Rani* (1953).

# THE IDEAS PAGE

## City and its monuments

In an era of smash-and-grab real estate capitalism and ideological extremism, Ahmedabad's modern buildings need to be restored in a way that preserves their authenticity while allowing for new uses



WILLIAM J R CURTIS

ONCE UPON A time, the city leaders in Ahmedabad constructed institutions for the public good. Today, they knock down great buildings to suit short-term interests such as land speculation and private profit. Ahmedabad is home to architecture of universal value, both ancient and modern. Not just timeless creations of the past such as the Adalaj Stepwell (Vaghela Dynasty, 1498) and the exquisite Sidi Saiyyed Mosque (1573), but also a string of modern masterpieces, such as the Millowners' Association Building, Shodan and Sarabhai Houses, and the Sanskar Kendra City Museum (1954), all designed by Le Corbusier in the early 1950s; the Indian Institute of Management by Louis Kahn (1963); the Gandhi Ashram Museum (1962) and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Cricket Pavilion by Charles Correa (1963); or the School of Architecture (1966), and Sangath studio (1980) by Balkrishna Doshi.

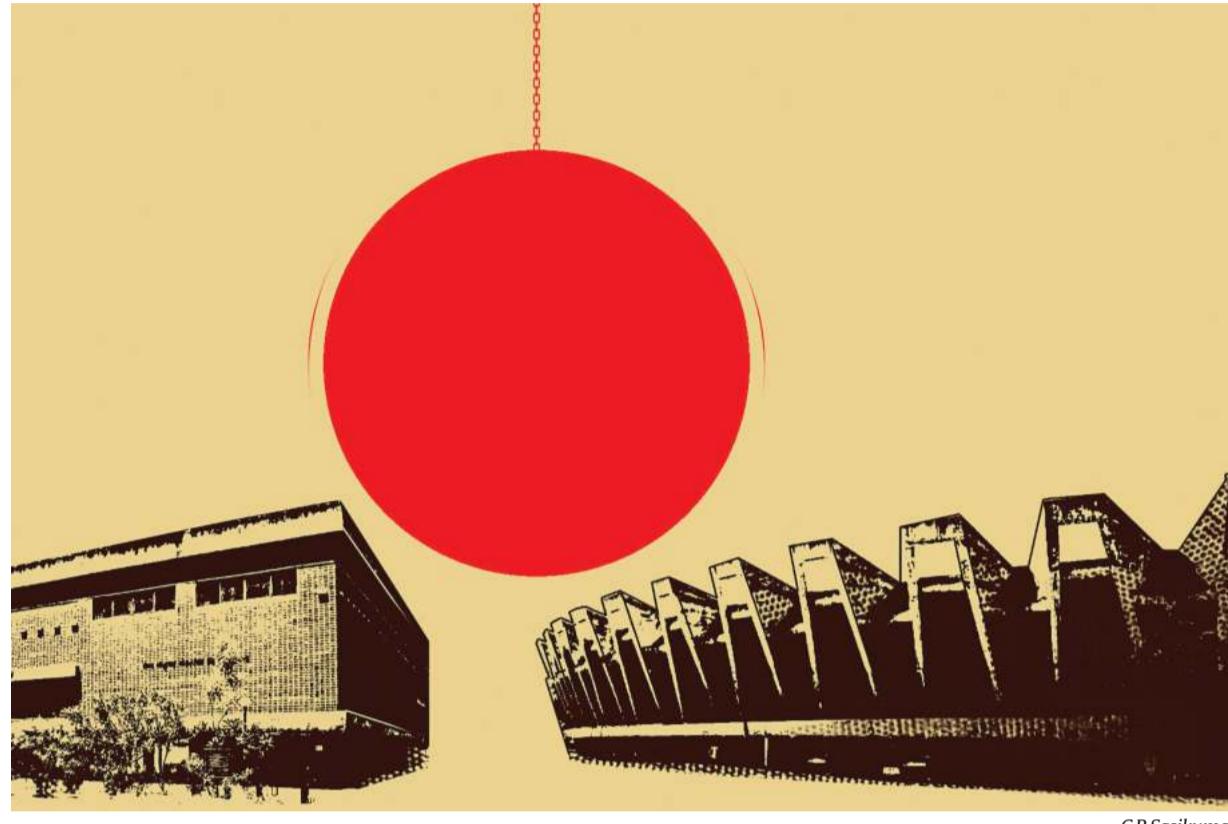
One has to go to Paris, Chicago or Los Angeles to find an equivalent collection of such fine modern examples. But whereas works in India predating the 20th century enjoy the title and protection of "heritage", the modern ones do not, and this leaves them vulnerable to demolition, especially in an era of smash-and-grab real estate capitalism and ideological extremism which tags them as undesirable leftovers from the Nehru era. In addition to their outstanding architectural quality, these works reflect the progressive social ethos and secularism of post-colonial India in the years after Independence. In effect, Ahmedabad is a living museum of remarkable modern architecture adjusted to the climatic and cultural conditions of the place; truly a fusion of the local and the universal, the traditional and the modern.

In mid-December 2020, the director and governing board of the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad (IIMA) announced that they intended to tear down most of the student residences of that magisterial citadel of learning designed by Louis Kahn in the early 1960s. I issued a "red alert", published strong objections in the *Architectural Record* (NY), the *Architectural Review* (London) and the Indian press, including *The Indian Express*. Others took up the cause world-wide. The IIMA board soon retracted. The complex still stands but continues to deteriorate and its future remains unclear. Raj Rewal's magnificent Hall of Nations (1973) in New Delhi was not so lucky, being demolished six years ago in dubious legal circumstances to make way for a vulgar commercial centre. In neo-liberal India, it is the price of everything and the value of nothing.

In September 2023, the Ahmedabad Municipal Council (AMC) announced that it intends to knock down the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Cricket Stadium by Correa of 1963 and is also considering demolishing Corbusier's Sanskar Kendra City Museum, but without giving good reasons for doing so. There is loose talk of replacing these buildings with "state of the art facilities", of "building Ahmedabad's brand image and the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Sanskrit Kendra City Museum, designed by Corbusier, is another fine public amenity that can be restored and revived at reasonable expense. When the architect first came to India in the spring of 1951 it was to plan Chandigarh as the new state capital of the Punjab. The Millowners' Association of Ahmedabad promptly invited him to design a museum of painting, sculpture and archaeology for a site on the banks of the Sabarmati River. Le Corbusier expanded the idea to a "Museum of Knowledge" presenting archaeology, local ethnography, and science as well as art. It was to be a sort of showcase of the city's history, geography and culture – truly a civic monument.

Corbusier envisaged a square structure lifted up on a grid of concrete pillars with the public space passing underneath. A ramp



transforming the city into a modern metropolis while preserving its heritage". When you have the real thing, there is really no need for flashy projects of uncertain long-term quality and value. Buildings which fit short-term agendas soon go out of date, whereas timeless works mark a moment in history, then go on to add to the stock of collective memories.

The Patel stadium occupies a position in the legends of cricket in India. Designed entirely in reinforced concrete by Correa and the engineer Mahendra Raj between 1959 and 1963, the building achieves a complete fusion of architectural thinking and structural expertise. Like a modern version of an ancient amphitheatre, it establishes a clear figure in the cityscape, both as a public monument and a generous open-air space. From the air, it resembles a wheel, not unlike that at the centre of the Indian national flag. A World Monuments Fund study has demonstrated that it is feasible to restore the concrete structure and activate areas around the stadium for retail. The original idea of adjacent badminton courts, a skating rink and tennis could be realised. If Ahmedabad stages the Olympics, the stadium may serve for athletic events.

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The writer is an artist and a historian

rose from the courtyard to the upper-level galleries which were open in plan and top-lit through skylights. The main façades were clad in textured red brick and the building was crowned by a cantilevered parasol to protect it from sun, heat and rain. Corbusier even imagined a water garden on top, rich in vegetation, inspired by Mughal and Rajput gardens. The plaza surrounding the building was conceived as a cultural landscape of free-form shapes, including an open-air theatre, a multi-functional miracle box, and places for transient events such as traditional dance performances and markets for handicrafts. Nothing of this was built, leaving the museum incomplete.

When I first visited the place in 1983 it was already suffering from a lack of maintenance and from a mediocre set of displays. In recent years, the deterioration has continued, concrete has cracked in places and water has leaked in, but the damage is relatively superficial and can be fixed. The free plan grid permits updated installations without threatening the integrity of Corbusier's overall idea. The surroundings can be transformed into a park shaded in greenery for impromptu cultural events. Temporary structures such as tents and pavilions can be used for day time and night time festivities.

These outstanding modern buildings in Ahmedabad need to be restored in a way which preserves their authenticity while allowing for new uses. To destroy them would be the height of folly, a form of cultural vandalism. In the era of sustainability, re-use is more energy efficient than destruction followed by new construction. The AMC and IIMA are temporary guardians of treasures which must be handed on to future generations. Indian heritage laws urgently need changing to protect buildings constructed within the last 100 years. The modern masterpieces of Ahmedabad deserve nothing less than UNESCO World Heritage Status as universal patrimony.

The writer is an artist and a historian

## Red lines in neighbourhood

On Maldives' ties with China, India must send out a clear message



VIVEK KATJU

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA'S ties with Maldives, following the election of Mohamed Muizzu as President in November last year, profile the country's difficulties in dealing with its neighbourhood. These problems with neighbouring countries are not new but they have been exacerbated because of China's persistent assertiveness in the region. India has sought to broadly counter China's activities by seeking to bring in many neighbouring countries within the fold of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "sabka saath, sabka vikas". However, the neighbours are clearly finding it impossible to overlook Chinese overtures even while emphasising their links with India. The neighbourhood situation does not present a comforting picture for India, including in the security sector.

India needs a cogent and enduring framework of engagement with its neighbours which harmonises its interests and theirs.

Muizzu, who has a reputation for being close to China, contested the election on the plank that he would ensure the removal of Indian defence services contingents from Maldives soil.

After his victory, he was quick to assert that he would fulfil this pledge. Two days later, after meeting PM Modi, on the sidelines of COP28 in Dubai on December 1, 2023, Muizzu said India had agreed to withdraw its "military personnel" from Maldives. The Indian statement on the meeting was silent on the question of defence services personnel. Instead, it emphasised the two leaders' decision to set up a "core group" to

strengthen "people-to-people linkages, development cooperation, economic relations, climate change and sports".

Modi visited Lakshadweep early this month. He extolled its natural beauty and called on Indian tourists to visit the islands. Perhaps, some Indians while echoing Modi, need not have said that Indians should go to Lakshadweep instead of the Maldives. However, even if they did so, there was no reason for Maldivian ministers to abuse Modi and India. The Indian outrage was natural and Muizzu quickly dismissed the ministers but the damage was done. It added to the unease caused by Muizzu's demand on Indian military personnel.

Muizzu visited China on January 8-12. He was warmly welcomed by the Chinese leadership led by President Xi Jinping. The China-Maldives relationship was elevated to the status of a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership". Clearly, China is playing the Maldives card with gusto and, in Muizzu, has a committed partner who is willing to make "snide" remarks about India.

On his return from China, Muizzu said, "We may be a small country, but that does not give you a licence to bully us". It does not require any great imagination to comprehend who "you" refers to in this context.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar met his Maldives counterpart Moosa Zameer recently in Kampala on the sidelines of the NAM summit. Jaishankar tweeted, after the meeting, that he had "a frank conversation on India-Maldives ties". The core group set

up by Modi and Muizzu has also met. The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson said that both sides are working to find "mutually workable solutions" to "enable continued operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medevac facilities to the people of Maldives". These platforms are of the Indian Air Force and the military contingent in Maldives is for their operations.

It is good that Jaishankar has had a candid conversation with his Maldives counterpart. It is not difficult to estimate the message that Jaishankar would have given. He would have stressed that India respects Maldives sovereignty. He would have also emphasised that India would be a reliable development partner. However, what India will not be able to accept is for a neighbour like Maldives to become a base from where its security comes under threat. It is natural for a country like India to draw such a red line not only in the context of Maldives but also in respect of other neighbours. It is precisely here that the Chinese are showing no regard for Indian concerns in the immediate neighbourhood.

For over six decades, China has used Pakistan as a cat's paw against India, including through assisting it with the development of Pakistan's strategic weapons and delivery systems. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor with its special focus on the Gwadar port has further strengthened Pakistan's client status. It is not feasible to consider that China will permit Pakistan, even if saner elements within it so wish, to normalise ties

with India. China is also seeking to build ties with the Taliban regime to utilise the mineral wealth dormant in the Hindu Kush for industries in its western regions. India has made openings with the Taliban regime but there is a reluctance to move forward. Besides, India's current visa regime for Afghanistan is counter-productive for its interests. The Chinese are actively moving ahead in Nepal, putting pressure on Bhutan and have their talons in Sri Lanka. Sheikh Hasina's government in Bangladesh considers that it has a coincidence of interests with India but some segments of society and polity do not share that view.

For over three decades, India's other neighbours have witnessed this country becoming unable to take decisive action to successfully combat Pakistani terrorism. That did not send a message of strength. Again, during these decades, the Indian economy grew substantially but China outstripped it by a factor of six. That too sent out a message. The Chinese are showing no regard for Indian concerns in the immediate neighbourhood.

Modi's Balakot action of 2019 displayed a determination to use coercive elements of national power to counter terror. A red line was drawn. Quietly and subtly, a series of Indian security red lines have to be enunciated for the region while emphasising the Modi doctrine of "sabka saath, sabka vikas" and of non-interference in the neighbours' internal affairs. If the red lines are breached, forceful action will have to be undertaken.

The writer is a former diplomat

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"A well-planned restructuring, keeping the principle of producing creative, well-formed minds, would go a long way in making Nepal's education more suited to our needs. This would minimise the need for students to flock to tuition centres for rote learning... before the final exams."

— THE KATHMANDU POST

## UPA & NDA, spot the difference

On the economy, despite assertions to the contrary, there are remarkable similarities between the BJP government and its predecessor



ISHAN BAKSHI

IN A FEW months from now, the Narendra Modi-led government will complete 10 years in power. Whether in action or in rhetoric, the BJP government has repeatedly sought to differentiate its policy approach and style of governance from that of the Congress-led UPA alliance which was in power the decade before.

The differences between the governments may simply be due to the very structure of the two political formations. The ruling dispensation is helmed by a single party with a commanding majority, which apparently provides policy stability. In comparison, the earlier dispensation was held together by a loose alliance of parties, where policy was often hostage to coalition compulsions. The differences could also be due to their contrasting ideologies which are reflected in the differing policy priorities. For instance, the BJP government can claim to have implemented far-reaching economic reforms such as the IBC and the GST, while the Congress-led UPA ushered in NREGA and the Right to Food, which form the backbone of the country's welfare architecture.

The differences may also arise from the ability of the ruling dispensation to galvanise the administrative machinery more efficiently and effectively to meet its ambitious targets. This reflects in the accelerated public provision of essentially private goods and services, less leakages from the system and greater welfare gains. There may well be other points of differentiation. However, there are also some remarkable similarities between the two decades in matters of the economy and the government's place therein. It would seem that the more things have changed, the more they have remained the same.

Perhaps, the greatest anomaly between rhetoric and reality lies in economic growth. Between 2004-05 and 2013-14, when the UPA alliance was in power, the Indian economy grew at an average of 6.8 per cent per year. In comparison, growth during the BJP decade has been lower, averaging 5.9 per cent. However, the Modi government can claim, and rightfully so, that had it not been for the pandemic, growth under its tenure would have been considerably higher. On its part, the UPA government can also claim that the global financial crisis depressed growth during its term.

It may just be a fascinating coincidence, but excluding the years of the global financial crisis and the pandemic, growth rates over the two decades are identical. During the UPA years (excluding 2008-09), growth averaged 7.2 per cent per year, while during the BJP years (excluding 2020-21), it stands at 7.2 per cent. Strangely enough, these two decades have seen consumption booms and busts, investment activity surge and sink, trade rise and fall, strong and frail corporate and bank balance sheets, coalition and ma-

jority governments, and certainty and uncertainty on both political and policy fronts. Yet, the end result has been the same. Will the coming decade be any different?

Next, take the capacity of the government to raise resources. This is not only a measure of the efficiency of the tax administration, but it also determines government spending. On this as well, the two decades are broadly comparable. During UPA's term, the Centre's gross tax revenues to GDP ratio averaged 10.5 per cent. For the BJP years, it works out to 10.8 per cent.

In recent years, however, there has been a surge in both direct and indirect tax filers, in part a consequence of greater formalisation and the shift to GST architecture that incentivises compliance and allows for greater traceability of transactions. This has pushed up the tax-to-GDP ratio, but only slightly. The revenue gains from the expansion in the tax base have been limited due to deep cuts in both direct and indirect taxes. Considering that tax giveaways are ideology agnostic, the question now is: As India traverses from a lower to an upper-middle income status economy over the coming decade, as the tax base expands further, will the odds that the next government continues with the policy of tax giveaways change?

On privatisation, the track record of the BJP government is only marginally better. This is disappointing, considering the apparently stark ideological divide between the two dispensations, most succinctly captured by the phrase that the government has no business to be in business. To be fair to the current government, it has indeed taken some bold steps — for example, selling off Air India and LIC's stake sale, among others. But, these have been few. Stripped of all the hyperbolic rhetoric, there isn't a coherent privatisation strategy. There was much talk about selling off some public sector banks. But that has gone nowhere. It would seem that neither the ideological leanings nor the political capital vested with the ruling government seem to matter enough. Perhaps, the Indian state is simply unwilling to cede control.

This near stagnation in resource mobilisation shows in government spending. Under the UPA, central government spending to GDP averaged 14.9 per cent, while under the BJP it is marginally lower at 14.2 per cent. But, what has changed is spending priorities. The Centre's capital expenditure, after averaging just under two per cent of GDP, has begun to edge upwards, touching 2.5 per cent in 2021-22 and 2.7 per cent in 2022-23. And if this year's spending target is met, then the capex-to-GDP ratio would have risen to 3.4 per cent. Alongside this concerted redirection of spending, a greater portion of the Centre's borrowings is now being used to finance capital expenditure. The question is whether this will continue over the coming decade.

These trends do suggest that irrespective of the ideological leanings of the next government, whether it is helmed by a single party or a coalition that is held together more by compulsion than conviction, the forward march of the Indian economy and the state is perhaps more likely to rhyme with its past. Ruptures are likely to be few.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INDO-FRENCH TIES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Building on trust' (IE, January 27). With French President Emmanuel Macron visiting for India's 75th Republic Day celebration, the discussion on increasing the number of students to 30,000 and giving them post-study work visas stands as an attractive offer to the aspiring youth. With the expected increase in student visa applications for higher educational institutions in France, the problem still lies in making people from humble backgrounds avail these international courses — and not only those who can afford it. To broaden the base for Indian students, it is important for French institutions to collaborate with Indian universities or introduce programs so that knowledge sharing becomes wider and promotes cross-cultural understanding.

Tanisha Chakraborty, Bengaluru

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Building on trust' (IE, January 27). The defence industrial roadmap was part of a number of agreements between India and France that were sealed on January 25. The roadmap with France that prioritises co-designing, co-development, co-production is similar to India's joint efforts with the US for co-design and co-development of military systems. However, with France, the depth of the strategic partnership is reflected in the

co-design efforts and France's willingness to transfer jet engine technology that only a handful of countries possess. India-France ties have strengthened by Macron's acceptance of Modi's Republic Day invitation. This was Macron's third visit to India and the sixth time a French President has been invited to Republic Day, the maximum number for any country. Such frequent meetings are a clear reflection of the importance attached by both the leaders to this partnership, as also the intensity of high-level supervision and direction to the relationship.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

**WORRYING NEWS**  
THIS REFERS TO the report, '55 Hindu deity sculptures found inside Gyanvapi complex: ASI' (IE, January 28). The ASI report comes at a time when there is clamour to look for temples beneath mosques, particularly in North India. If such surveys are taken up as per the beck and call of "interested parties", then there will be no end to the matter. One wonders what happened to the SC advocated Places of Worship Act that called for the maintenance of status quo on all places of worship prior to 1947. Opening old wounds would cause grave damage to India's communal harmony and brotherhood.

SS Paul, Noida

## NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2cc

Signal &amp; Telecommunication (Construction)

E-Tender Notice

For and on behalf of the President of India Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (C) North Western Railway, Bikner invites E-Tenders against Tender no. SNT/C BNK/23-24/01 (Two packet system).  
1. Name of work with its location: Part supply of material and execution of indoor - outdoor work for provision of Electronic Interlocking-MSDAC based Automatic Block Signalling system between Ratangarh Jn and Churu Jn in connection with doubling of CUR-RTGH section of Bikner Division of North Western Railway. The work involves provision of new Electronic Interlocking at Ratangarh Jn, Molar, Joharpura and Depalsar stations along with six numbers of auto signalling units and modification in existing HITACHI make El at Churu Jn. Provision of MSDAC along with associated works like trenching & laying of signalling and Telecom cables in pre-fabricated ducts/DWC/GI pipes, supply-installation of point machines, Apparatus cases, Electric Lifting Barrier Gate, Signals, Track circuit equipment, Earthing material, Data loggers, ELD, Fuse alarms, fire alarms, IoT based remote diagnostic system, Passenger Information System Items etc.

**2. Approximate cost of the work:** Rs. 60,16,21,638.67  
**3. Earnest money (Rs.):** Rs. 31,58,100.00  
**4. Date & Time for submission up to on www.ireps.gov.in:** 23.02.2024 up to 15.00 Hrs. 5. Website particulars and notice board location: www.ireps.gov.in and Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom Engineer (Const.) BNK, office, Kotli no. 30, Civil Lines, Opposite Hotel Dholha Maru, Bikner-334001, Rajasthan

110-DG/24  
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## AAP to go alone for Haryana polls, fight LS with INDIA bloc

SUKHBIR SIWACH  
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 28

Arvind Kejriwal (right) and Bhagwant Mann at a rally in Jind on Sunday. Express

DELHI CHIEF Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday declared that his party will contest all the 90 Assembly seats in Haryana on its own, but will fight the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in the state as a part of the Opposition INDIA alliance.

The Lok Sabha polls are due in April-May while the Haryana Assembly elections are slated for later this year, in October.

Kejriwal's announcement came days after Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader and former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda told The Indian Express that he was not inclined on an alliance with the AAP in the state for the Lok Sabha polls. There are 10 parliamentary seats in the state.

Addressing the "Badlav Jansabha" in Jind, Kejriwal said the AAP would contest all 90 Assembly seats in the state. It would be the first time that the party would contest all the seats. In the 2019 Assembly

elections, the Kejriwal-led party had contested 46 seats but drew a blank with a vote share of 0.48%.

"The entire state is looking for a big change. Today, people have faith in only one party – AAP," Kejriwal said.

He claimed that the AAP has the largest organisation in the state with each village having a committee of 15-20 members.

"Nearly 1.25 lakh persons have become AAP office-bearers in the state over the past six months. Why did this happen? People are upset with all other parties as they

have seen them over the past 75 years," he said.

Citing the instances of Delhi and Punjab, the AAP chief promised round-the-clock free electricity in Haryana if his party was voted to power. Both Delhi and Punjab are ruled by the AAP.

Kejriwal also slammed the Manohar Lal Khattar-led BJP government over its plans to send 10,000 youths from the state to Israel for jobs. Claiming that his party's government had created 42,000 government jobs in neighbouring Punjab, Kejriwal said, "The Haryana government is planning to send the youth of the state to Israel, where there is an ongoing war and no guarantee of life. Khattar sahab, leave the kursi (chair) if you cannot give jobs to the youth. We will give them jobs but do not send them to Israel to die," the Delhi CM said.

Hitting out at the Centre over the "misuse" of probe agencies, Kejriwal alleged that the central government has put its agencies such as the CBI, ED, Delhi Police and I-T department to arrest him.

J&K student held, expelled from varsity over social media post

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
JAIPUR, JANUARY 28

THE CHITTORGARH police in Rajasthan have arrested a Mewar University student from Jammu and Kashmir after he allegedly made an objectionable post on social media. Mewar University Director Harish Gurnani said B Pharmacy student Sohrab Qayoom has been expelled from the university and that "all the possible punishments have been initiated" against him.

According to Gangar police station SHO Jayesh Patidar, Qayoom, 21, had posted some objectionable comments as an Instagram story. An FIR was lodged based on a complaint filed by a local resident on January 25 under IPC sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc) and 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs).

First, we must emerge out of the adjournment culture to a culture of professionalism; second, we have to ensure that the length of oral arguments does not interminably delay judicial outcomes; third, the legal profession must provide a level playing field for first generation lawyers – men, women and others from marginalised segments who have the will to work and the potential to succeed, and fourth, let us begin the conversation on long vacations and decide, of course in consultation with the Bar, whether alternatives such as flexitime for lawyers and judges is possible."

He said "in near future, we must address the structural issues affecting the judiciary, such as pendency of cases, archaic procedures, and the culture of

adjournments. Our effort in our work as Judges and administrators must be to ensure dignity to the district judiciary, which is the first point of contact for citizens."

PM Narendra Modi was the chief guest for the occasion. Speaking about the improvements in the working of courts, CJ Chandrachud said, "Just as we make our courts tech-savvy, we must also realise India is going through a period of social and demographic transformation... Now, women can be seen in important positions. There is a focus on greater inclusion of the marginalised sections. Equally inspiring is the confidence of the younger population to succeed in their professional lives."

Times have changed, the CJ said, with women, traditionally underrepresented in the profession, now comprising 36.3% of



CJI DY Chandrachud at an event in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

the working strength of the district judiciary. Over 50% of the candidates selected in the Junior Civil Judges exam were women, he said, adding, "in the Supreme Court, we hire law clerks-cum-research associates to assist the judges, and of them, 41% of candidates are women this year".

"Before the beginning of 2024, only 12 women were designated as senior advocates in the history of the Supreme Court. Last week, the Supreme Court designated 11 women as senior advocates at one selection..." the CJ said.

Addressing the ceremonial bench convened to recall the first sitting of the SC, the CJ spoke about independence of the judiciary. The CJ said the Constitution entrenches several institutional safeguards, however "...An independent judiciary does not merely mean the insulation of the institution from the executive and the legislature branches but also the independence of individual judges in the performance of their roles as judges". Referring to pending cases, he said there are 65,915 registered cases pending before the SC. "We need to ask hard questions on what needs to be done. There has to be a radical change in the approach to decision making..." FULL REPORT

[www.indianexpress.com](#)



Union Minister for Ayush Sarbananda Sonowal at a gathering organised to lay the foundation stone for the Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy, along with a 100-bed yoga and naturopathy hospital, in Assam's Dibrugarh. Express

## Couple, 3 kids killed in house fire

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
MEERUT, JANUARY 28

A COUPLE and their three minor children were charred to death at their residence in Bareilly district on Saturday, police said.

The police suspect that the fire may have been caused by a short circuit in the room heater or electric wiring. The police identified the deceased as Ajay Gupta, 35, Anita, 34, Divyansh, 9, Daksh,

3, and Divyanshi, also a minor.

"We are probing all possible angles but prima facie it seems that the fire might have been caused by a short circuit. The neighbours, however, told us that the room in which the fire broke out was locked from outside. The door did not have a latch inside. We are probing this further," said Mukesh Chand Mishra, Superintendent of Police, Bareilly (Rural).

Another officer said, "The reasons behind the matter are being investigated. The family's relatives are being questioned."

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## INSURERS TO ADOPT ED STRUCTURE SIMILAR TO PSU BANKS

## PSU insurance top brass to undergo an overhaul, ED posts to replace GMDs

GEORGE MATHEW  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 28

THE TOP-LEVEL structure of public sector insurance companies is set to undergo an overhaul with the selection process and interviews for filling up the nine posts of executive directors (EDs) in place of general managers and directors (GMDs) expected to be completed soon.

The ED structure for PSU insurers, which will be introduced for the first time, will be on the lines of PSU banks. Unlike a GMD who used to continue with the same salary which he or she was drawing as a general manager, an ED of PSU general insurance company will now receive a higher salary which will be finalised by the government.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) finally approved the proposal of the Department of Financial Services (DFS) for framing of guidelines for appointment of EDs in PSU general insurance companies including GIC Re, New India Assurance (NIA), National Insurance Company (NIC), Oriental Insurance Company (OIC), United India Insurance



Currently, nine posts of EDs have to be filled up after completing all official exercises. File

Company (UII) and Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC) who are members of the GIPSA, the official coordinating agency for all these six companies, said a notification by the ACC.

PSU insurance companies will have two posts of EDs each. Currently, nine posts of EDs—two each in GIC Re, OIC, NIC, AIC and one in UII—have to be filled up after completing all official exercises. The government had appointed 10 GMDs in the PSU gen-

eral insurance companies in November 2022 before switching over to the ED structure.

While the proposal to convert the post of GMD into ED was initiated years ago, the government notified the resolution only recently after the ACC's approval. Going by the new appointment framework for EDs, all general managers of PSU non-life insurance companies, who have served for a minimum service of one year and have a residual serv-

ice of at least one year on the date of vacancy of the ED post, are eligible to be considered for appointment as ED in such companies, the government notification said. The minimum service and residual service requirement may be relaxed with the approval of the Finance Minister, if sufficient candidates are not available in the zone of consideration, the notification said.

According to sources, all future posts of chairman and managing director (CMD) in the PSU general insurance industry will be filled up by promoting officials who will become EDs and unlike earlier occasions, CMDs will not be eligible for the CMD interviews.

The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB), which selects top officials of PSU banks and insurance companies, will also select the EDs. The recommendation of FSIB will be valid for a period of up to one year or as per orders issued by the Government of India, and maybe extended with the approval of the ACC, the notification said.

The government has roped in consultant Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India for the preliminary scientific evaluation of eligible officials for the posts of nine

executive directors in the PSU general insurance industry before they are interviewed by its head-hunting agency FSIB.

At the end of the programme, Deloitte will give some grades to each of the officials which will be taken into account for the selection by the FSIB at the time of final interview.

FSIB has already shortlisted some GMs, who were promoted in 2022-23 (FY23) and also in FY24, though they have not completed one year as GMs. Seven GMs from New India Assurance (NIA), the largest non-life company in the country, have received letters from FSIB for getting their consents.

The DFS has also shortlisted five general managers (GMs) from different PSU insurers to fill up the two forthcoming vacancies of CMDs at Chennai-based United India Insurance and New India Assurance, the largest multinational general insurer in the country. The five GMs are—BS Rahul, Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC), Sunita Gupta, Oriental insurance Company (OIC), Hitesh Joshi along with two of his other colleagues V Balkrishna and his spouse Jayshree Bala from GIC Re.

In a freewheeling interaction with SUKALP SHARMA, Kataria provides insights into the GBS technology, purported advantages over conventional LNG terminals, and updates on the Kakinada project's progress. Edited excerpts:

## What exactly is a GBS?

It is essentially a concrete structure with a ballast section at the bottom with empty concrete blocks. The section acts as a balloon when empty, helping the structure float. At the location where you want to base it, you fill it up with gravel, making the structure heavy enough to sink and sit on the seabed. So, it is not bolted or held by cables. Gravity is holding it. It is engineered in a way that it sits there for 40-50 years without budging even an inch. The LNG terminal is built over that GBS. GBSs have been utilised mostly for upstream oil projects. So far, only one has been built for LNG—Adriatic LNG—in Italy. And the only liquefaction facility (which converts gas to LNG) would be Russia's Arctic LNG 2.

## Apart from round-the-year operations, what are the advantages of GBS units vis-à-vis FSRUs and land terminals?

There are quite a few. GBS units offer a safer working environment because sea wave volatility does not affect its structural stability. The other advantage is no extra pressure on ports. It has

## MARKET WATCH

## MCAP OF 7 OF TOP-10 COS ERODES

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued companies eroded by Rs 1.16 lakh crore last week, with HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest laggard. PTI

## 'Gravity-based structures are the future for offshore LNG regasification units'



In terms of project costs, how does a GBS regasification unit compare with other types of LNG terminals?

If a land-based terminal costs \$120, a GBS unit would cost \$100, and an FSRU's core cost would be \$70-80. For an FSRU, there will be additional costs like breakwater. All costs, including those needed to make conditions benign for FSRUs, would be much higher. For land-based terminals, dredging may be required from time to time—an additional ongoing cost. GBS units don't have these overheads.

  
THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW

WITH  
SWAPNA KATARIA  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
CROWN LNG

an offshore landfall point and the pipeline to land is from under the seabed. So, it doesn't need a large footprint on land. A GBS unit can be hauled to another offshore location and handed over to another operator. So, the economic life of the asset is much longer and it can be evacuated to a new market if, for any reason, it cannot continue to operate at the initial location. For international financiers, this is an attractive proposition.

Which companies have shown interest in using the terminal? At what stage are the negotiations?

I cannot name any potential customer at this stage, just that they include India's oil and gas majors and we would have a mix of government and private companies. Talks with government companies could take longer as there may be some approvals required. We are obligated to maintain 15 per cent capacity for spot and short-term cargoes, which means we can offer about 6.1 mtpa. We plan to place about 3.5-4 mtpa on 20-year contracts, and the rest on 10-year contracts.

We are only giving regasification as a service, and not buying the molecule (LNG) and then selling it. FULL INTERVIEW ON [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## About 4,000 FPOs join ONDC platform so far; 6,000 likely by March

SANDIP DAS  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THOUSANDS OF farmers' collectives across states are now selling a host of agricultural products, including rice, pulses, honey, millets, mushrooms, spices and value added product, on the government's e-commerce platform—Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

Since farmer producer organisations (FPOs) started joining the ONDC platform in April last year, 4,000 such bodies have sold 3,100 varieties of value-added agricultural products using the facility.

Officials said the target is to bring 6,000 FPOs onto the pan-India digital marketplace by the end of FY24. The platform is being promoted by the government as an alternative to global e-commerce majors such as Amazon and Walmart to support small enterprises.

ONDC supports and trains FPOs in developing and digitising product catalogues, generating shipping labels, identifying delivery partners and facilitating digital payments so that they leverage the platform to market their products.

The network has 30-odd dig-

ital applications, including Mystore, Paytm, Magicpin and Dellivery, ranging from intercity logistics providers to platforms for buyers and sellers, and more. While ONDC has collaborated with the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium, a body under the agriculture ministry to support FPOs, officials said the aim is to support small and micro enterprises as FPOs face challenges in accessing markets nationwide.

"After getting on board ONDC earlier this year, we are expecting our sales to cross Rs 5 million in the current fiscal, and the target is increase sales to Rs 10 million in FY25," Tapas Kumar Pati, chief operating officer, BASIX Krishi Samruddhi, a group which has helped 59 FPOs join ONDC in Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Pati said initially, FPOs only used India Post to deliver products given its large network.

However, other logistics partners have been added, ensuring quicker delivery of products to consumers.

In the last couple of months, Rich Returns, an FPO based in Baran, Rajasthan, has sold chana and garlic papads and millet-based products worth Rs 3 lakh through Mystore. FE

## As many as 431 infra projects show cost overrun in Dec

Reasons for time overrun include delay in land acquisition, in obtaining environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and linkages



848:	Number of delayed projects	202:	Overall delays in the range of 1-12 months	200:	Delayed by 13-24 months	323:	Projects delayed by 25-60 months	123:	Delayed by more than 60 months
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■ The report also cited state-wise lockdowns due to Covid-19 as a reason for the delay in implementation of these projects

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation/PTI

## Midcap IT firms' employee count went up in Q3

SAMEER RANJAN BAKSHI  
BENGALURU, JANUARY 28

FIVE MID cap IT firms increased their net headcount during the October-December quarter, despite it being traditionally a weak quarter for the sector. The top four firms saw a decline of more than 21,000 in their employee headcount during the period.

Birlasoft's headcount went for the third consecutive quarter during which it added more

Tata Elxsi and Cyient DET (Digital, Engineering and Technology)—added to their headcount for the fourth quarter in a row. While Tata Elxsi added 1,614 employees to reach a total of 13,221 at the end of Q3, Cyient DET added a total of 985 employees, thus reaching a total staff strength of 15,678 at the end of the December quarter.

Birlasoft's headcount went

for the third consecutive quarter during which it added more

than 160 employees to reach a total count of 12,356.

The other two to have increased headcounts are Persistent Systems and Tata Technologies. While Persistent Systems added 494 in Q3, with its total strength going up to 23,336, Tata Technologies' total headcount saw a marginal jump of 172 to reach a total of 12,623. While many IT companies struggled to improve their utilisation ratio, these five successfully navigated the fur-

loughs, and even brought down their attrition rates.

Analysts said some some mid cap IT firms are hiring because they did not over hire in the last three years, and hence their employee to revenue metric is more in balance, unlike the larger firms which went on an hiring overdrive earlier.

The smaller firms are also not seeing the same level of decline in discretionary spends as their larger counterparts have projected.

## State revenue grows 5% till Nov against 17.4% budgeted for FY24: Icra Ratings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE GROWTH rate of the combined revenue receipts of the 16 largest states has fallen by almost 80 per cent to 5 per cent during April-November from the budgeted 17.4 per cent for the current fiscal, according to a report.

The states have so far borrowed over 37 per cent more than they did last fiscal and given these poor numbers, they will have to borrow heavily this fiscal to service their debt and pay salaries and pensions.

The plunge is due to a contraction in sales tax and lower-than-budgeted growth of state goods and services tax collections (SGST), excise duty and stamps and registrations during the period, restricting the growth of states own tax revenue (SOTR) to 11 per cent.

Another reason for the poor numbers is the steep decline in Central grants, Icra Ratings said in a report.

The agency, though, expects an upside in tax devolution in the fourth quarter, its quantum may not be adequate to fully offset the shortfall in grants.

Moreover, even if a sizeable portion of the grants is released to the states in Q4, it will narrow the pace of contraction, and the combined revenue receipts growth may slightly exceed the modest 5 per cent in the first eight months while remaining well below the targeted 17.4 per cent.

"Central grants to 13 of the 16 states contracted year-on-year during the reporting period, resulting in a combined decline in grants of 31 per cent in the sample states, while they have budgeted for a whopping 19.8 per cent growth. While we expect the actual tax devolution to exceed the amount budgeted for FY24 by Rs 30,000 crore, it will not be adequate to offset the shortfall in grants," the agency said.

If a sizeable portion of the expected grants is released to the states in Q4, it will narrow the pace of contraction, and the combined revenue receipts growth may slightly exceed the modest 5 per cent in the first eight months while remaining well below the targeted 17.4 per cent.

With a 50 per cent share, the SOTR is the single largest revenue head of state, followed by tax devolution of 25 per cent, Central grants of 17 per cent and states own non-tax revenue of 8 per cent.



The norms were announced to prevent the possible round tripping by certain promoters using the FPI route. File

group. Such concentrated investments raise the concern and possibility that promoters of such investee companies/ corporate groups, or other investors acting in concert, could be using the FPI route for circumventing regulatory requirements such as that of disclosures under Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers Regulations, 2011 (SAST Regulations) or maintaining Minimum Public Shareholding (MPS) in the listed company. The norms were announced to prevent the possible round tripping by certain promoters using the FPI route.

## What additional details are required from FPIs?

Sebi said granular details of all

entities holding any ownership, economic interest, or exercising control in the FPI will have to be provided by FPIs. While economic interest means returns from the investments made by the FPI, ownership interest means ownership of shares or capital of the entity or entitlement to derive profits from the activity of the entity.

## Are all FPIs required to provide additional disclosures?

No. Sebi has said FPIs holding more than 50 per cent of their Indian equity AUM in a single Indian corporate group or holding over Rs 25,000 crore of equity AUM in the Indian market are required to disclose details.

## What is the timeline to meet the disclosure norms?

According to the standard operating procedure (SOP) issued by FPI custodians on additional disclosure norms, existing FPIs, which are in breach of the investment limits as on October 31, 2023, would be required to bring down such exposure within 90

calendar days i.e. January 29, 2024 (settlement date), unless they fall under any of the exempted categories. However, sources said that FPIs will get seven more months to liquidate their holdings if they do not meet the January-end deadline to disclose data about their investors.

"There is no immediate deadline or cliff for FPIs to liquidate any holdings," sources said.

If FPIs continue to meet the criteria for enhanced disclosures as of January end, they would have an added 10/30 working days to provide the additional details required, they said.

"Even thereafter, if they fail to provide any details, they would have a further 6 months to reduce their holdings," sources said.

Some experts say that the recent withdrawal by FPIs from the domestic market may partly be to meet the end January deadline of Sebi. So far in January, FPIs

have sold Rs 24,734 crore worth of domestic shares, according to data from National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL).

FULL REPORT ON

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# Why Delhi HC reaffirmed the ban on 'sapinda' marriages

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 28

THE DELHI High Court last week rejected a challenge to the constitutionality of Section 5(v) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA), which prohibits marriage between two Hindus if they are "sapindas" of each other – "unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two".

In its order passed on January 22 on a petition filed by a woman who had been trying for long to have this section struck down, the court said, "If the choice of a partner in a marriage is left unregulated, incestuous relationship may gain legitimacy."

**What is a sapinda marriage?**

A sapinda marriage is one between individuals who are related to each other within a certain degree of closeness. Sapinda relationships for the purposes of the HMA are defined in Section 3 of the Act.

"Two persons are said to be sapindas of each other if one is a lineal descendant of the other within the limits of sapinda relationship, or if they have a common lineal ascendant who is within the limits of sapinda relationship with reference to each of them," Section 3(f)(ii) says.

Under the provisions of the HMA, on the mother's side, a Hindu individual cannot marry anyone who is within three generations of them in the "line of ascent". On the father's side, this prohibition applies to five generations.

In practice, this means that on their mother's side, an individual cannot marry

their sibling (first generation), their parents (second generation), their grandparents (third generation), or an individual who shares this ancestry within three generations. On their father's side, this prohibition would extend up to their grandparents' grandparents, and anyone who shares this ancestry within five genera-

Hindus in a local area, tribe, group, or family, such that it has obtained "the force of law".

A custom may not be protected even after these conditions are fulfilled. The rule in question must be "certain and not unreasonable or opposed to public policy" and, "in the case of a rule [that is] applicable only to a family", it should not have been discontinued by the family".

## EXPLAINED LAW

### Are there any exceptions to the prohibition?

Yes, the sole exception is when the customs of each individual permits sapinda marriages.

The definition of the word "custom" is provided in Section 3(a) of the HMA. It states that a custom has to be "continuously and uniformly observed for a long time", and should have gained enough legitimacy among

### Why was the law challenged?

In 2007, the woman's marriage was declared void after her husband proved they had entered into a sapinda marriage, and that the woman was not from a community where such marriages could be considered a custom. This ruling was challenged before the Delhi HC, which dismissed the appeal in October 2023.

The woman then approached the HC again, challenging the constitutional validity of the prohibition on sapinda marriages. She argued that sapinda marriages are prevalent even when there is no proof of custom. Hence, Section 5(v), which prohibits such marriages unless there is an established custom, violates the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

The petitioner also argued that the marriage had received the consent of both families, which proved the legitimacy of the marriage.

### What did the HC say?

A Bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora held that the petitioner did not provide "stringent proof" of an established custom.

The Delhi HC also held that the woman did not present any "cogent legal ground" to show that the prohibition against sapinda marriages was violative of the right to equality.

### Are similar marriages allowed in other countries?

In several European countries, the laws on relationships considered incestuous are less stringent than in India.

In France, the crime of incest was abolished under the Penal Code of 1810, so long as the marriage was between consenting adults. Portuguese law also does not criminalise incest. Under Italian law, incest is a crime only if it causes a "public scandal".

In the United States, incestuous marriages are banned in all 50 states, though consensual incestuous relationships are allowed in New Jersey and Rhode Island.

## EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

# Subsidies under Modi 2.0

Covid-19, war and now elections have forced a reversal of the rationalisation of subsidies of the 3Fs – food, fertiliser and fuel – that was undertaken during the Narendra Modi government's first term.



HARISH DAMODARAN

FROM NEW Welfarism to a renewed emphasis on subsidies and transfers – this is pretty much what has changed between the first and second term of the Narendra Modi government.

The Modi 1.0 period (2014-15 to 2018-19) saw a plethora of schemes launched for ensuring universal access to housing, toilets, drinking water, bank accounts, electricity and cooking gas connections.

Even as public funding for these normally privately provided, yet essential, goods and services went up – what the Modi government's former chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian termed "new welfarism" – the Centre's subsidy bill fell, both in absolute and relative terms.

Between 2013-14 (the last year of the previous United Progressive Alliance government) and 2018-19, the Centre's spending on major subsidies – the 3 Fs of food, fertiliser and fuel – dropped from Rs 244,717 crore to Rs 196,769 crore. Relative to GDP, it more than halved from nearly 2.2% to just over 1%. Even after adding outlays under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), a UPA legacy scheme) and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan, introduced in the last year of Modi 1.0), the decline was from 2.5% to 1.4% of GDP.

### Making a comeback

Modi 2.0, however, has witnessed a reversal of the above trend.

The accompanying chart shows the major subsidies soaring from 1% of GDP in 2018-19 to 3.6% in 2020-21, and from 1.4% to 4.4% along with MNREGA and PM-Kisan transfers. While these have since dipped to 1.9% and 2.5% in 2022-23 (the current fiscal's numbers are budget estimates that may overshoot), they are more or less at the levels when the Modi government took over.

In absolute terms, too, the 3F subsidies peaked at Rs 707,707 crore in 2020-21 (Rs 879,866 crore with MNREGA and PM-Kisan expenditures). Even at Rs 530,959 crore (Rs 680,359 crore) in 2022-23, they were over two-and-a-half times their corresponding levels of 2018-19.

### The drivers: Modi 1.0

During Modi 1.0, the subsidy bill reduction

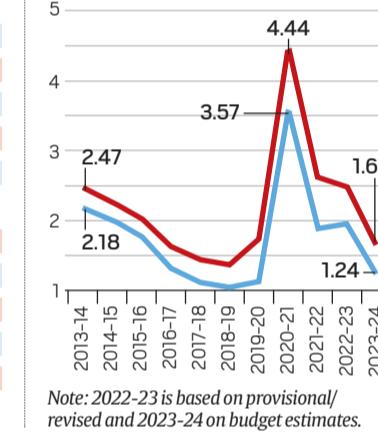
### HOW THE SUBSIDIES BILL HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS

#### Spending under Centre's major subsidies and transfer schemes (Rs crore)

	Food	Fertiliser	Fuel	Total	MNREGA	PM-Kisan
<b>MODI 1.0</b>						
2014-15	117671.16	71075.62	60268.82	249015.60	32463.40	-
2015-16	139419.00	72415.17	29999.00	241833.17	37340.71	-
2016-17	110172.96	66312.93	27538.71	204024.60	48214.95	-
2017-18	100281.69	66467.57	24460.49	191209.75	55166.04	-
2018-19	101327.00	70604.80	24836.95	196768.75	61815.09	1241.13
<b>MODI 2.0</b>						
2019-20	108688.35	81124.33	38528.78	228341.46	71686.70	48713.84
2020-21	541330.14	127921.74	38454.64	707706.52	111169.53	60989.90
2021-22	288968.54	153758.10	3422.60	446149.24	98467.85	66825.11
2022-23*	272802.38	251339.35	6817.38	530959.11	89400.00	60000.00
2023-24#	197350.00	175099.92	2257.09	374707.01	60000.00	60000.00

\*Provisional estimates; revised estimates for MNREGA and PM-Kisan. #Budget estimates.

### Centre's subsidy bill (% of GDP)



Note: 2022-23 is based on provisional/revised estimates for MNREGA and PM-Kisan. 2023-24 is based on budget estimates.

came primarily from benign international oil and fertiliser prices. The cost of crude imported by Indian refiners averaged \$60.84 per barrel during 2014-15 to 2018-19, as against \$96.05 in the preceding five financial years.

The Modi government, perhaps wisely then, did not pass on the full benefit of lower global prices to Indian consumers. Instead, it raised the excise duties on diesel, petrol and other fuel products.

In 2012-13 and 2013-14, the Centre's subsidy outgo on petroleum products, at Rs 96,880 crore and Rs 85,378 crore respectively, exceeded its corresponding excise revenues of Rs 63,478 crore and Rs 67,234 crore from the same. But by 2017-18 and 2018-19, the subsidy on fuels (Rs 24,460 crore and Rs 24,837 crore) stood far below the collections from excise (Rs 229,716 crore and Rs 214,369 crore).

In short, the Modi government used the easing of international crude prices to not just trim its fuel subsidy outlay, but also mobilise additional resources that could now finance other expenditures, including the "new welfarism" schemes. The petroleum subsidy was henceforth limited only to sales of LPG cylinders and providing connections to poor/lower income households, while diesel and petrol turned into significant revenue sources for the government.

It was almost likewise with fertilisers. The gains from lower landed costs of imported finished fertilisers and raw materials were pocketed by the Centre – in the form of subsidy savings – and not farmers.

The war's impact was mainly on international fertiliser prices. The average landed price of imported urea surged from roughly \$263 per tonne in 2020-21 to \$661 in 2021-

spending outgo on subsidies and transfers during the Modi government's second term.

The first was a policy decision to fully provide for the food and fertiliser subsidy. Prior to 2020-21, the Centre wasn't wholly funding the difference between the Food Corporation of India's (FCI) economic cost – what it incurred in procuring, distributing and storing grain – and its average issue price, multiplied by the quantities handled. The same applied to fertiliser firms selling nutrients at prices below production or import cost. To bridge the gap, these entities had to borrow heavily, whether from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) or banks.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman making a one-time provision, to help FCI repay some Rs 339,236 crore of outstanding NSSF loans and also clear dues to the fertiliser industry, resulted in the Centre's overall subsidy tab spiking in 2020-21.

The second driver was Covid and the Russia-Ukraine war.

The pandemic-induced economic distress led to record outtake of rice and wheat through the public distribution system (PDS), with the Modi government doubling the monthly grain quota for beneficiaries from April 2020 to December 2022. MNREGA spending rose as well. An all-time-high 389.09 crore and 363.19 crore person-days of employment were generated in 2020-21 and 2021-22, compared with 267.96 crore and 265.35 crore in 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively.

The war's impact was mainly on international fertiliser prices. The average landed price of imported urea surged from roughly \$263 per tonne in 2020-21 to \$661 in 2021-

22 and \$627 in 2022-23. The corresponding increases were from \$369 to \$741 and \$805 per tonne for di-ammonium phosphate and \$239 to \$359 and \$590 for muriate of potash.

With the Modi government choosing not to allow pass-through of the higher costs to farmers, the net outcome was a near-doubling of the fertiliser subsidy from Rs 127,922 crore to Rs 251,339 crore between 2020-21 and 2022-23.

### The road ahead

The maximum retail price of urea remained at Rs 5,360 per tonne since November 1, 2012. The only change that has taken place is companies being permitted to charge 5% extra (Rs 268) for coating urea with neem oil, which has been made fully mandatory from May 25, 2015.

The PDS issue price was fixed at Rs 2/kg for wheat and Rs 3/kg for rice following implementation of the National Food Security Act from July 5, 2013. The Modi government has, far from increasing, slashed these to nil with effect from January 1, 2023. Retail prices of petrol and diesel were cut on May 22, 2022 and have not been revised thereafter.

The Interim Budget for 2024-25 is unlikely to tamper with the above prices. If anything, the Centre could hike the annual direct benefit transfer under the PM-Kisan scheme from the existing Rs 6,000 to, say, Rs 9,000, ahead of polls.

Any rationalisation of subsidies – most economists favour targeted DBT or income support payments over supplying goods and services at below cost – may have to wait for the next government.

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It (One Nation, One Election) seems impractical. We have so many elections at multiple levels and to put them together is probably an attempt to centralise the election system. It may not be practical for a country as large as ours



## WHY SACHIN PILOT

Member of the Congress Working Committee and the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh, Sachin Pilot was president of the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee from 2014 to 2020. He also served as the deputy chief minister of Rajasthan from 2018 to 2020.

Known to be close to former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, he is expected to play a key role for the Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The youngest Member of Parliament in 2004, when he was elected in the 14th Lok Sabha from Dausa constituency, he has been advocating for new faces to be given a chance in elections



Ram is not limited to one temple, one location. Ram is everywhere. To try and limit him to a particular location or a particular day is confining, and you can't have someone take ownership of somebody as universal as Ram

**Manoj CG:** The BJP has posed a political challenge in the form of opening the Ram Mandir. How will the Congress counter this?

If the BJP in the last 10 years had shown some stupendous performance in terms of governance or development, and the report card was a stellar one, and you weigh the performance of the UPA government of the last 10 years, and then say that we have been given a political challenge, I will take that. But by using a religious occasion, and for you to say that that's a political challenge, I don't agree. Secondly, everyone is obsessed about how this will become political, and it shouldn't be. The construction and the inauguration of the temple is done by a due judicial process. The highest courts of the land have given their opinion that stands now respected by one and all, everybody welcomed the decision and also the construction of the Ram temple. There may be attempts to try and politicise it but I think we have to be very clear that politics is about governance, delivery and performance, and religion is a matter of home and heart. One must not try to mix the two.

**Manoj CG:** Three of the top Congress leaders — party president Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury — decided to stay away from the consecration ceremony, the argument being that it's a political event, a Narendra Modi event. Had it not been, in your terms, a political event, had Mr Modi not been there, had the RSS sarsanghchalak not been there, would the Congress have gone?

That's a speculative question because that's not how it was. It was a religious occasion, but yes there was an attempt to do all this just before elections. And why should someone be setting criteria about who can be invited and who can't? About 5,000 people were invited. How do you select whether one qualifies to be invited or not? Opposition leaders have had different reasons to go or not go but from what I saw, even the BJP president was not there. So, the fact that an X party president was not there, is irrelevant. You go when you want to go, when you hear a calling.

**Manoj CG:** We saw Shashi Tharoor tweeting a photograph of Ram Lalla, with the caption 'Siyav Ramchandra ki jai'. The Himachal Pradesh chief minister had his official bungalow lit up. Are you, as a believer, happy that a temple has come?

Yes, as a believer, one should be happy. But Ram is not limited to one temple, one location. Ram is everywhere. Ram is omnipresent. To try and limit him to a particular location or a particular day is confining, and you can't have someone take ownership of somebody as universal as Ram.

**Liz Mathew:** It is a fact that politics in this country has changed and the line between religion and state doesn't exist now. How can the Congress counter this?

It's wrong to assume that there is no line. In any nation-state, when the lines get blurred, that's not a happy occasion. The country's institutions and governments have to be above religious considerations.

**Vandita Mishra:** Does the Congress believe that what happened on January 22, the consecration ceremony conducted by the PM, with him being the chief person doing the rituals and the state mounting the whole show, dissolves the line between religion and state?

I'm not here to pass judgments on that particular event. This whole concept of selective invitations, and then reducing the event to certain people only, is not appropriate. You have personal beliefs, religious sentiments, which are very important. India is a country full of faith. You can practise and follow any religion, and yet the state remains above all of that.

**Liz Mathew:** How happy are you with your new role in the Congress? Do you have any clarity on your future in the Congress?

In politics, you don't have much clarity on who will fight elections or who will win. But I'm very satisfied with the last 23-odd years that I've been in public life. Now I've been made general secretary of the party. It's an important position to discharge your role and Chhattisgarh is an important state for us. I do believe that no hard work goes to waste and the coming together of the INDIA alliance is a positive development.

**Manoj CG:** During the UPA, you and some of your friends — Jyotiraditya Scindia, Milind Deora — were always considered a part of team Rahul, who had great access to him. Now, they have left the party. Why are such leaders

# 'It's an open secret that raising funds for anybody except the ruling party is tough... the Govt knows exactly who's getting what'

The Congress general secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh, Sachin Pilot on the need to separate religion and politics, the INDIA alliance, and the party's poll losses in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. This session was moderated by Manoj CG, chief of National Political Bureau



(Right) Sachin Pilot, AICC general secretary in-charge of Chhattisgarh, with Manoj CG at The Indian Express office in Noida Praveen Khanna

#### leaving the party?

You should be asking them this question. I don't think accessibility is a problem, but each one is free to choose what ideology they're comfortable with, and how they want to proceed in their political career. Time will tell whether their decisions were right or wrong.

**Ritika Chopra:** What went against the Congress in Rajasthan? Do you think the stand that you had taken against the government ended up hurting the party's prospects?

I took a public stand on what I thought was important for the people and for the party in government. If I felt that young people were not feeling that they're getting justice, that they were disenchanted with the system, I raised those points so we could do course-correction at the right time. Don't forget, in Rajasthan every five years there is a government change. Just in terms of numbers, we got almost 70 seats this time. I did take a stand. Was that good or bad? I'll let the data speak for itself. The election before that, there were 21 seats. I wasn't taking any stand at that time. And then, before that, we got 50-52 seats. So, this time we were hopeful that we'll break that trend — BJP for three decades and then Congress for the same length. We worked hard and I'm saddened that we were not able to repeat ourselves.

We lost Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The latter, especially, was a bit of a shocker. But the vote share of our party in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh is unchanged. So, it's not that we lost support from the people. Looking back now, out of the ministers in Rajasthan, three didn't contest elections, 25 did, and 18 of them lost. In my opinion, because the success rate of incumbents is always low, had we changed some of the sitting legislators, perhaps we could have done a lot better.

**Rahul Sabharwal:** What is the assessment of the Chhattisgarh loss?

We had a very good majority in Chhattisgarh and our policies were quite well-received but we lost. We didn't do well in the tribal and urban areas. For Lok Sabha, we've already formed committees, we're getting feedback from the ground, block/district level up. So we are well-prepared and the cadre is enthused.

**Ritika Chopra:** The BJP has increased its vote share and seems to be eating into others' vote share. What is it that

#### BJP is doing right?

My analysis is that the new voters, some of the other "votes" that the BJP was able to get, didn't come that much to us. The vote share difference between the BJP and Congress in Rajasthan is about one-and-a-half percent, so it's not a lot. I think in Lok Sabha we can mount a formidable challenge in all these north Indian states.

**Hamza Khan:** Why is the Congress averse to tying up with smaller parties? In the Lok Sabha, do you plan to tie up with them?

It's very easy to say that in hindsight. Did the smaller parties eat only into the Congress votes or did they also damage the BJP? Equally? It's difficult to say in a triangular contest. You can do the math, but it's not math, it's chemistry. In Lok Sabha, we already have the INDIA alliance. And where there's bipolar politics, Congress vs BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, the ultimate decision will be taken by the INDIA alliance.

**Ritu Sarin:** Some of your colleagues have joined the ruling party. Have you been approached with any feelers from the ruling party? Secondly, do you apprehend that before the elections some more leaders from the Congress or fence-sitters may join them?

I can't say because there are a lot of pressures in today's politics. To answer your first question, no. I guess they know who to approach or not to approach... commitment to ideology is important.

Now to have agencies go after you... 95 per cent of all enforcement directorate notices, raids and action is done to leaders

of the Opposition. It's open now, what's happening. For example, in Assam the chief minister is openly threatening. Who is the CM to say, launch an FIR (against Rahul Gandhi)? He's saying I'll arrest you in three months. When you have an open threat to a senior leader of the party, they're basically telling the smaller ones that you better toe the line. There is fear-mongering, pressure, misuse of agencies and all sorts of tactics adopted to corner leaders of the Opposition.

**Mohammad Qasim:** The BJP fielded some of its Lok Sabha MPs to Rajasthan for the Assembly elections last year. Will you fight Lok Sabha elections?

They took MPs to the ground, they went kicking and screaming. No one went because they wanted to. In BJP, they boss around. In our party, we discuss, debate and decide. I was asked to fight in Vidhan Sabha, I did that. I was entrusted with Chhattisgarh, I'm working there... New people must get an opportunity. In Vidhan Sabha, of the new people given a chance, most have won. When a youngster of 25-30 years of age gets a chance, it enlivens (things). In the Lok Sabha, I hope people will bring forward good, new, educated, motivated youngsters.

**Rahul Sabharwal:** You had some unhappy news on the INDIA alliance from Mamata Banerjee.

Ms Banerjee is a very senior leader but I believe that the INDIA alliance partnership will prevail. In every state, every party wants to have its own political space, which is understandable. There has to be a give and take. I think Mr Kharge and Mrs Gandhi will work out a solution to the seat-sharing.

**Rahul Sabharwal:** Ms Banerjee and Nitish Kumar pointed out that they were not kept in the loop about the Yatra coming through their states. Is this about Brand Rahul versus INDIA alliance? Is there a contradiction?

There's no versus. The first Bharat Jodo Yatra, almost every state, our then-UPA alliance partners and our allies were there for almost the entire duration of the Yatra. This Yatra is not about just one party. There are stakeholders, young people, NGOs and civil society. It's for coming together with people who have been disenfranchised.

**Liz Mathew:** Do you think before embarking on this Yatra, Rahul Gandhi should have had meetings with leaders such as Nitish Kumar, Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee or Arvind Kejriwal?

These meetings have happened at successive intervals. It's not that when Mr Gandhi is doing this Yatra, nothing else is happening. There is a committee that is talking about seat-sharing in every state. For INDIA alliance meetings, Mr Gandhi is there, Mrs Gandhi is there, and Mr Kharge is there. It's all of us working together.

**Manoj CG:** Congress is planning to have alliances in five-six states, including West Bengal, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra. Instead of forming a committee and asking parties to negotiate with it, why couldn't Mrs Gandhi speak directly to the leaders?

There is a due process. Every leader has appointed leaders of the party to talk to. Every nitty-gritty cannot be discussed by Mr Kharge and Ms Banerjee. She has deputed individuals of her party to talk to our leaders. I'm sure the finality of it will come when the top names you suggested sit together and sign off on it. But there's preparatory groundwork, give and take, there is data. Every partner of INDIA alliance, irrespective of size of state or number of MPs, has an important role to play. When the Opposition vote is undivided, it's far stronger than the BJP-NDA vote.

**Amitabh Sinha:** Do you think it would have been better if the INDIA alliance had the opportunity to get itself tested in the Assembly elections, before the Lok Sabha elections? On the Election Commission and EVMs, do you think the EC hasn't done enough?

If all questions were satisfactorily addressed, then there should be no more

doubt in anyone's mind. Anybody who's asking a question is within his own right to ask questions, and the EC should clarify. What I'm not in favour of is how you choose election commissioners. There's been an amendment to that. That, again, causes doubts as to the transparency and the sanctity of the position that the EC occupies. The perception today is that for seven decades all institutions that were nurtured by various governments of different colours and shades have been systematically eroded.

These three states that we had elections, it was a bipolar contest... In some states we had that arrangement, but here it was one-to-one between BJP and Congress. So, there was no scope of testing the INDIA alliance.

**Sukpal Sharma:** Do you see One Nation, One Election as an attempt to make the electoral exercise more efficient or as an attempt to centralise the process and move towards a more quasi-presidential system, brushing away regional politics and issues?

I tend to agree with the latter. They have a committee that's been formed and are discussing it. But it seems impractical because we have so many elections at multiple levels — from panchayat, corporation, Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha — and to put all of them together is probably an attempt to centralise the election system. It may not be practical for a country as large as ours. We have 40 different political parties and different term cycles.

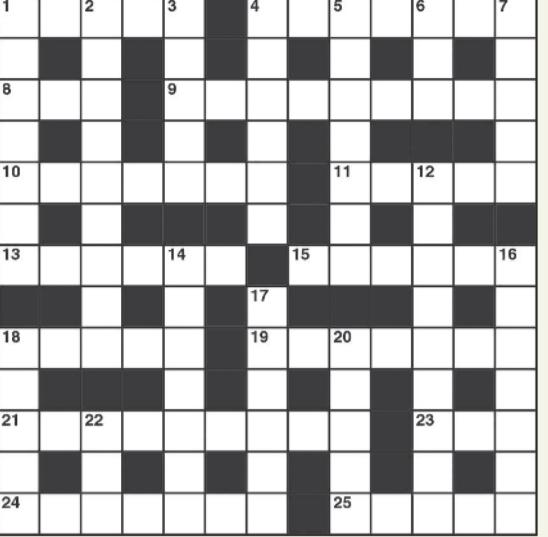
**Ritu Sarin:** With elections around the corner, do you think funding and donations are areas of concern for the Congress? Does the ruling party have an edge in infrastructure and funding?

It's an open secret that raising funds for anybody except the ruling party is a very tough task because of various pressures and by overtly undermining the resource collection for the other political parties. With regard to electoral bonds, there's a lot of fear in the corporate sector that if you help anybody except the people that the ruling dispensation wants, you will get into trouble. The Government of India knows exactly who's getting what and where. It's not a level playing field. That's why the Congress is doing crowdsourcing and public funding. Raising funds for the Congress has become a challenge. I've seen many elections and people are not willing to come forward because they fear a backlash.



It's wrong to assume that there is no line. In any nation-state, when the lines get blurred, that's not a happy occasion. The country's institutions and governments have to be above religious considerations

## CROSSWORD 5273



- ACROSS**
- A writer long out of fashion (5)
  - Singular-looking giant (7)
  - Second one is included in the notice (3)
  - Tiny trace maybe but you can bet on it (9)
  - Catty female (7)
  - Hint that's simply pointless (5)
  - Responds by breaking up crates (6)
  - Stipulates conditions (6)
  - Machine that turns out bilingual articles (5)
  - Their work is bound to receive public attention (7)
  - Sad bearer of news indeed (9)
  - Wonder how it's a sound alternative (3)
  - A gem of a green (7)
  - The rate at which oceans turn round (5)
- DOWN**
- Mercy for only one in four (7)
  - Angry perhaps to be dining out with a worker (9)
  - Cruel possibly and often fitly (5)
  - Pet shows anxiety when on a ship (6)
  - Talk about port transport (7)
  - Have one's winnings notified initially (3)
  - It's a bit fishy lying in such a nervous way (5)
  - The custom is two men at a time (9)
  - There is a short girl here (7)
  - Stay and use the money going round the States (7)
  - Hesitated to have father taken advantage of (6)
  - Deposit for a house (5)
  - Varied diets for various seasons (5)
  - Bird that is quietly perched on top (3)

**Solutions Crossword 5272 Across:** 1 Centimetre, 8 Ellen, 9 Flyover, 10 Adverse, 11 Hosts, 12 Gentry, 14 Spiced, 17 Rhoda, 19 Lebanon, 21 Tending, 22 Units, 23 Pirate flag  
**Down:** 2 Erliven, 3 Teror, 4 Mifred, 5 Toyshop, 6 Eaves, 7 Presidents, 8 Exaggerate, 13 Reader, 15 Candida, 16 Plight, 18 Ownup, 20 Bluff

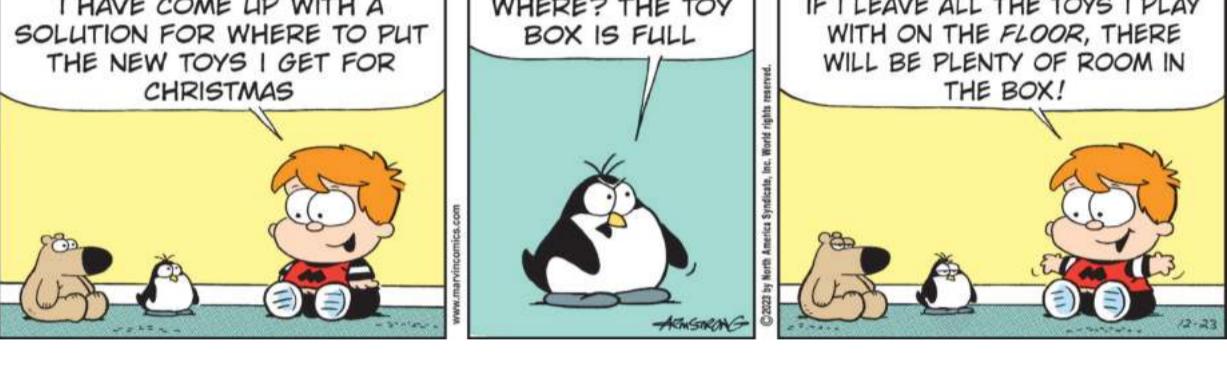
## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry &amp; T Lewis



## CALVIN &amp; HOBBES by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



## Difficulty Level 2s

## 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.

			7	8	2				
7	2	4			8				
9			3	1					
2	6				3				
3			5		8				
8				4	6				
4	2				5				
1			5	3	9				
	3	9	8						

## Difficulty Level

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

## SOLUTION SUDOKU 5455

8	4	3	5	6	7	1	9	2
2	9	6	3	1	4	5	8	7
7	5	1	2	9	8	3	6	4
6	2	4	1	7	9	8	5	3
5	7	8	6	4	3	2	1	9
1	3	9	8	2	5	4	7	6
4	8	7	9	3	1	6	2	5
9	1	2	4	5	6	7	3	8
3	6	5	7	8	2	9	4	1

## 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.

— is intangible, and therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it. — Omar Bradley (10)

LTAEE



EGINDL



PYIRS



STUYHP



ANSWER: Leaderless, Leaderless is intangible, and therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it. — Omar Bradley (10)

## SUDOKU 5456

## Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;

3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;

5s = Very Hard;

6s = Genius

ANSWER: LEADERLESS, LEADERLESS IS INTANGIBLE, LEADERLESS IS INTANGIBLE, TYPHUS

SOLUTION: LEADERLESS, LEADERLESS IS INTANGIBLE, LEADERLESS IS INTANGIBLE, TYPHUS

## Office of Superintending Engineer

## PWD Bulandshahar Circle, Bulandshahar

## Short Term E-Procurement-Inviting Tenders

No. 969 /96M/E-TENDER/BSR CIRCLE/2024-24

Dated 18.01.2024

On behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Superintending Engineer Bulandshahar Circle, U.P.P.W.D., Bulandshahar invites following percentage rate bid online through <http://etender.up.nic.in> from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with P.W.D. class as per column no. 10 below Work Category as applied from Date 31.01.2024 to 07.02.2024 upto 12:00 Noon as per the prescribed T-2 of Govt. of U.P. The technical bids will be opened online on dated 07.02.2024 at 12:30 P.M. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day, at the same time any validity of bid will be considered from the original date. The date and time of opening of the financial bid shall be notified by the website.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lakh)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lakh)	Time of Completion work including rainy season	Tender document fee including GST (In Rs.)	Address of Executive Engineer executing the work	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer	Category (Road)
1	Renewal work with General Repair on Modinagar - Hapur Road (MDR) in Km. 1 to 6 of Ghaziabad District in the year 2024-25	132.00	8.60	4 Months	Tender Cost Rs. 300+200+18% G.S.T.+ Rs. 414.00 = 2714.00	CID-2 PWD Ghaziabad	Bulandshahar Circle, P.W.D., Bulandshahar	Chief Engineer Meerut Zone, P.W.D., Meerut	A.B (Road)
2	Renewal work with General Repair on Modinagar Niwadi Raghunathpur Road (ODR) in Km. 1 to 4 of Ghaziabad District in the year 2024-25	88.00	6.40	3 Months	-do-	-do-	-do-		A.B (Road)

1. The Bid Security and Tender Document fee must be deposited through Internet Banking only.

2. All registered contractors have to upload Turnover certified by C.A. of last 5 years and details of maximum cost work satisfactorily completed in last 5 years on Chanakya Software before submission of tender.

Details of e-tender uploaded on <http://etender.up.nic.in> shall also be uploaded on UP PWD Chanakya software, before last date & time of submission of bid.

3. Terms & other conditions related to bid are available on <http://etender.up.nic.in>

4. In PWD technical evaluation of tenders is to be done by Prahari Software URL for Prahari is <http://wms.uppwd.gov.in/Prahari/>.

5. Bid security will be as per the prevailing rules/orders at present

Executive Engineer CD-2 PWD, Ghaziabad

UPID-201693 Date 27/01/2024

[www.upgov.nic.in](http://www.upgov.nic.in)

Superintending Engineer Bulandshahar circle, PWD Bulandshahar

## SALUTE THE SOLDIER

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)

Constable Bhoop Singh

28 January, 2024

ITBP salutes its braveheart Constable Bhoop Singh of 35th Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Chhattisgarh in 2011.

Resident of : Vill- Pacheri Chhoti, Distr.- Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

## NOTICE OF LOSS OF SHARES OF HINDUSTAN UNILEVER LIMITED (Formerly Hindustan Lever Limited) Regd. Off. Hindustan Unilever Limited, Unilever House, B D Savant Marg, Chakala, Andheri (East) Mumbai 400 099.

Notice is hereby given that the following share certificates have been reported as lost/misplaced and the Company intends to issue duplicate certificates in lieu thereof, in duplicate course:

Any person who has a valid claim on the said shares should lodge such claim with the Company at its Registered Office within 15 days hereof

Name of share holder Follo. No. No. of shares (Rs.1/-Ls.) Certificate No Distinctive number[s]

Swarn Sahni 1929180 500 5104506 94036361 94036660

Place : Delhi Date: 29-01-2024

Expression of interest EOI No. C.491/GCT Dated : 25-01-24

Expression of interest (EOI) is invited from interested individual/parties/Agencies/companies willing to develop terminals over jurisdictions of Ajmer division. EOI should be submitted upto 15.02.2024 at 15.00 hrs in this office or on email ID: [srdtmajmier@gmail.com](mailto:srdtmajmier@gmail.com)

Ministry of Railways Govt. of India has issued new Master circular on "Gati Shakti multimodal cargo terminal (GCT)-2022", vide Railway board's letter number 2021/TC/FGM/18/23 date

06.02.2022 to boost investment from industry in development of additional

terminals for handling Rail Cargo. The policy is available on Railway Board's website. <https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic-comm/Freight-Marketing-2022/GCT%-20-2022.pdf> and North Western Railway's Website [https://nwr.indianrailways.gov.in/Tender\\_cpp.jsp?lang=&0&id=0\\_3](https://nwr.indianrailways.gov.in/Tender_cpp.jsp?lang=&0&id=0_3)

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Divisional Commercial Manager, Divisional Railway Managers office (Commercial Department), Ajmer - 305001 or on Mobile No. 9001196900 (Sr.DOM), 9001196950 (Sr.DCM).

108-DG/24

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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY G20

Expression of interest EOI No. C.491/GCT Dated : 25-01-24

Expression of interest (EOI) is invited from interested individual/parties/Agencies/companies willing to develop terminals over jurisdictions of Ajmer division. EOI should be submitted upto 15.02.2024 at 15.00 hrs in this office or on email ID: [srdtmajmier@gmail.com](mailto:srdtmajmier@gmail.com)

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For other details in this respect communication can be made to the office of Sr.

Divisional Commercial Manager, Divisional Railway Managers office (Commercial Department), Ajmer - 305001 or on Mobile No. 9001196900 (Sr.DOM),

I think with where we are and who we're playing against, this victory is 100%, definitely our greatest triumph since I've been captain.

BEN STOKES, ENGLAND CAPTAIN

# Bazball: Believe the hype

After Pope's epic 196, debutant spinner Hartley takes seven wickets as Stokes' England script 28-run heist in Hyderabad

VENKATA KRISHNAB  
HYDERABAD, JANUARY 28

THE HUSHED silence from the locals and the increasing decibel levels of the Barmy Army's lead trumpeter from the east stand at the fall of every Indian wicket in Hyderabad sounded like a death knell for the hosts. If they needed a wake-up call about the enormous task that lies ahead of them to bring the Bazballers from England down, Sunday provided them with plenty. Having watched haplessly as England recovered from conceding a 190-run lead and set a target of 231 to win the first Test, India fell short by 28 runs. After Ollie Pope's game-changing 196 with the bat that set the tone, debutant left-arm spinner Tom Hartley (7/62) ran through India's batting line-up to bag only the second five-wicket haul of his first-class career. Like in 2021, when they began the Test series with a win, England have started on a similar note this time, but the road to recovery isn't going to be easy for India.

This being only India's fourth Test loss at home since 2013 may not sound alarming. But three of them have come after the advent of the pandemic, and two in their last three home Tests. And as they head to Visakhapatnam seeking a quick turnaround, India have plenty of concerns to address with Ravindra Jadeja heading back clutching his hamstring being a major worry. For a team that is already missing Virat Kohli, not having Jadeja as well could only add to their trouble with the bat, more so because of how brittle this batting order looked in the second innings.

From the moment England extended their lead to 230 in the first session on Day 4, with Pope being the final wicket to fall at the stroke of lunch, India had a stiff challenge to overcome. Although the pitch had undergone the usual wear and tear that one associated with a Day 4 track, it was by no means one filled with demons. With an inexperienced attack to face, especially the spinners, all that India had to do with the bat was put them under early pressure like they did in the first innings en route to 436. Instead of being pragmatic with their approach, they were a bit tentative to start with, which played into the hands of England's spinners as they scripted a win that would be part of Bazball's proud legacy. "To be honest, 230 was a pretty challenging score on this wicket in the fourth innings," head coach Rahul Dravid said. "It's always going to be challenging in India to score 231. Today the pitch was turning and we probably shouldn't be chasing 231. A truly exceptional innings got us to chase that many. In fact, if anything, I thought we left probably 70 runs on the board in the first innings."

## Difference in approach

While India's spinners seldom attacked the stumps and let England dictate the pace, it wasn't the case with Hartley, Jack Leach, Joe Root and Rehan Ahmed. Shortly before India's second innings began, during the lunch break, all four went about attacking the stumps in the practice nets, giving enough glimpse of what their plans were. On a slow track, with the odd ball keeping low, especially from the low patches on the full-length area, their plan was rather simple: attack the stumps as much as possible and let the natural variation do the trick with some assistance from the track.

## NUMBER PLATE

4

Sunday's defeat was only India's fourth Test loss at home since 2013, but its scars will linger long. It was the first time India lost a Test at home despite securing a 100-plus lead, and its second defeat ever, anywhere, after leading by 190 runs.



Like in 2021, when they began the Test series with a win, England have started on a similar note this time, but the road to recovery isn't going to be easy for India. PTI

## Young guns yet to learn art of defensive batting

VENKATA KRISHNAB  
HYDERABAD, JANUARY 28

TWO DEFEATS at home in three Tests with no win in between. And in between two sensational collapses in South Africa. For a team that has one of the best technicians as head coach in Rahul Dravid, India's lack of application with the bat across conditions is unbecoming of a side that was ranked No.1 for the major part of the last decade. While conditions in South Africa were challenging for batsmen, even at home there is one common factor in their struggles. After Steve O'Keefe, Ajaz Patel, and Matthew Kuhnemann, Sunday saw debutant Tom Hartley – another left-arm spinner with limited skill set – run all over them.

Having let England take a 126-run lead on Day 3, India let them dictate the pace on the fourth morning as well. It was a session when, despite taking the second new ball, India's attack lacked the bite it is known for in these conditions. The intent and the aggression that this team had shown in the past was hardly in sight here as England managed to stretch their lead beyond 200. And when India's innings began, it was once again Pope who played a part, coming up with two special catches at short-leg and silly point in the 12th over. While 231 was definitely a manageable target given the batting depth India have in their ranks, losing Yashav Jaiswal and Shubman Gill in one over opened the door for England. From there on, Hartley and England were all over them.

Six overs later, Rohit fell LBW to Hartley, a price he paid for playing for the turn when there was not much on offer. With the debutant spinner all over them, India would respond by promoting Axar Patel to No.5. It seemed every bit an inspired move as for the first time in the afternoon, KL Rahul and Axar looked in control, knocking off runs with minimal risk as India took tea at 95/3. But in the first over of the third session, Axar played a loose shot, giving Hartley a return catch. And in the next 10 overs, India would lose Rahul, Jadeja and Shreyas Iyer as they slipped to 119/7.

From there on, R Ashwin and KS Bharat delayed the inevitable, before Hartley completed the job he started in the extended final session with Mohammed Siraj falling at 5.30 pm.

"To be fair, there have been challenging wickets as well," Dravid said. "We have been playing on pretty challenging wickets over the last few years. And it's been a bit of a challenge



Shubman Gill was dismissed for 0. PTI

for some of our young batsmen to adapt. A lot of players are quite young, in a sense that a lot of these guys do play a lot of white-ball cricket and also maybe don't get a lot of time to play first-class cricket." That the current crop of batsmen doesn't necessarily get the chance to play first-class cricket is an issue of a lot of domestic coaches have been voicing their concern about, especially when they struggle against overseas spinners. And despite the Ranji Trophy beginning in the first week of January, barring Shreyas, no other India batsmen featured in it and came into the Test series on the back of T20Is against Afghanistan. "I wouldn't say this was a flat wicket by any stretch of imagination. It turned through the course of the game. I think using your feet to the left-arm spinner in these kinds of conditions is fraught with risk, probably you have to play a little bit more square of the wicket," Dravid said.

Having been troubled by Hartley here, India could also have a fully-fit Jack Leach at Visakhapatnam. Given their past struggles against left-arm spinners, and not having an X-factor batsman such as Rishabh Pant, India have a real task at hand to neutralise Hartley and Leach. To add to their worries, there is a strong chance England will bring in off-spinner Shaheen Shah Afridi – who linked up with the squad here on Sunday – another tribe that has troubled them.

## SCORECARD

INDIA vs ENGLAND

RG STADIUM, HYDERABAD

Toss: England, chose to bat

ENGLAND 1st INNINGS 246

INDIA 1st INNINGS 436

ENGLAND 2nd INNINGS

Z Crawley c Sharma b Ashwin 31 (33b, 4x4, 1x6)

B Duckett b Bumrah 47 (52b, 7x4)

O Pope b Bumrah 196 (278b, 21x4)

J Root lbw b Bumrah 2 (6b)

J Bairstow b Jadeja 10 (24b, 1x4)

B Stokes b Ashwin 6 (33b)

B Foakes b Patel 34 (81b, 2x4)

R Ahmed c Bharat b Bumrah 28 (53b, 3x4)

T Hartley b Ashwin 34 (52b, 4x4)

M Wood c Bharat b Jadeja 0 (7b)

J Leach not out 0 (0b)

■ Extras (b 16, lb 10, nb 6) 32

■ Total (10 wickets; 102.1 overs) 420

■ FoW: 1-45 (Crawley, 9.2 ov), 2-113 (Duckett, 18.5 ov), 3-17 (Root, 20.6 ov), 4-140 (Bairstow, 27.4 ov), 5-163 (Stokes, 36.5 ov), 6-275 (Foakes, 66.6 ov), 7-339 (Ahmed, 82.3 ov), 8-419 (Hartley, 100.1 ov), 9-420 (Wood, 101.6 ov), 10-420 (Pope, 102.1 ov)

■ Bowling: J Bairstow 16.1-4-41-4, R Ashwin 29.4-126-3, A Patel 16.2-74-1, R Jadeja 34.1-131-2, M Siraj 7.1-22-0

INDIA 2ND INNINGS

R Sharma lbw Hartley 39 (58b, 7x4)

Y Jaiswal c Pope b Hartley 15 (35b, 2x4)

S Gill c Pope b Hartley 0 (2b)

KL Rahul lbw Root 22 (48b, 3x4)

A Patel c & b Hartley 17 (42b, 3x4)

S lyer c Root b Leach 13 (31b, 1x4)

R Jadeja run out Stokes 2 (20b)

S Bharat b Hartley 28 (59b, 3x4)

R Ashwin st Foakes b Hartley 28 (84b, 2x4)

J Bumrah not out 6 (18b)

M Siraj st Foakes b Hartley 12 (20b, 1x4)

■ Extras (b 4, lb 14, nb 1, w 1) 20

■ Total (10 wickets; 69.2 overs) 202

■ FoW: 1-42 (Jaiswal, 11.4 ov), 2-42 (Gill, 11.6 ov), 3-63 (Sharma, 17.5 ov), 4-95 (Patel, 29.4 ov), 5-107 (Rahul, 32.4 ov), 6-119 (Jadeja, 38.1 ov), 7-119 (lyer, 40.2 ov), 8-176 (Bharat, 61.6 ov), 9-177 (Ashwin, 63.2 ov), 10-202 (Siraj, 69.2 ov)

■ Bowling: J Root 19.3-41-1, M Wood 8.1-15-0, T Hartley 26.2-6-67-7, J Leach 10.1-33-1, R Ahmed 6-0-33-0

## AUSTRALIA BRUSH INDONESIA ASIDE

*Al Rayyan:* Australia beat Indonesia 4-0 in the first game of the Asian Cup knockout stage on Sunday to advance to the quarter-finals at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium. Indonesia had not beaten Australia in 43 years and it was Graham Arnold's side who prevailed when they converted their chances. REUTERS

## Anatomy of a collapse

How the Indian batting unravelled against spin on a Sunday to forget

YASHASVI JAISWAL

Used the feet to Tom Hartley, but ended up spooning a catch to short-leg. The attacking instinct he showed in the first innings was clearly missing.

SHUBMAN GILL

A harmless, tossed-up full delivery on off-stump, which he could have driven along the carpet. Instead, a tentative prod meant he played into the hands of silly point.

ROHIT SHARMA

As Hartley kept attacking the stumps with full deliveries, he kept playing him from the crease. It meant that in case of vicious turn or a straight one, there was less time to adjust. Was adjudged LBW to a straight one.

AXAR PATEL

One that started a mini-collapse. Having looked comfortable in his brief stay, he ended up giving a return catch to Hartley off a delivery he could have put anywhere else.

KL RAHUL

With Joe Root trying to get him with straighter ones from around the wicket, instead of going forward, Rahul ended up playing this one on the back foot. Was adjudged LBW.

RAVINDRA JADEJA

With India already in deep trouble, he was supposed to play the rescue act. Instead, went for a tight single and Ben Stokes, despite being half-balanced, managed a direct hit.

SHREYAS IYER

Arguably the best player of spin, his role is to take them down with an aggressive approach. As Jack Leach sent one full away from the off-stump, he went for a loose drive and was grabbed at slip.

KL BHARAT

Was undone by a delivery that turned sharply. It could have taken out most batsmen, but had he used his feet to get down the track or taken a long stride, it could have been defended.

RASHWIN

Having run out of partners, Ashwin, who until then used a long stride, and having missed a few long hops that kept low, charged down the pitch to Hartley and missed it altogether.



Rohit Sharma was caught leg before by a straighter one from Tom Hartley. PTI

## How Shamal Joseph used bottles, fruits as balls; brought life to WI cricket

RAHUL PANDEY

JANUARY 28

UP UNTIL a fortnight ago, the maroon village of Baracara in Guyana was unknown to much of the world. Standing by the Canje Creek in the northeastern region of the Caribbean country, only accessible by water, and a two-hour boat ride from the nearest big city – New Amsterdam – the village is home to no more than 400 people. What are the odds, as West Indies became only the second side to beat Australia at their fortress Gabba since 1988 – three years after India did so – that it was one of Baracara's sons who led the way.

Shamal Joseph, who had to be carried off the field on Saturday after Mitchell Starc's toe-crushing yorker cut short West Indies' innings, came back on Sunday to rip through the Australian batting and notch seven second-innings wickets as West Indies won a nail-biting Test by eight runs, their first in the country since 1997, that helped them draw the two-match series.

Last week, his opening burst in Adelaide – that saw him deceive one Steve Smith off his

very first delivery – had pitched him up alongside the sport's finest debutants. However, less than a year ago, Joseph wasn't even a first class cricketer. Turning the clock back to 2021, he was working as a security officer in Berbice. Cut to January 2024, he's a firm contender for ICC's Test cricketer of the month honor.

How did that happen? Orlando Tanner, Joseph's cousin, takes us back to their early days growing up in Baracara.

"The village that we're from, the only thing that we know in terms of sport is Dominoes and cricket. We used to play cricket right in front of Shamal's residence. That was by the waterfront. We used to call it jungle-land cricket," Tanner tells *The Indian Express* over phone from Tucker Park Cricket Club in New Amsterdam. It's the club where he coaches and where Joseph played in his formative years. While the new West Indies pacer may have looked a natural with the red and the pink ball in his debut series, they weren't the luxuries he or any of the Baracara kids could afford back in the day.

"At times, we used fruits. Because of the distance and because it's a remote area, we hardly used to get taped balls. So, we used any-



Shamal Joseph took a 7-fer at the Gabba, guiding WI to a famous win. AP

thing that looked like a ball. Sometimes, we'd melt the plastic from bottles and turn it into a ball and play cricket with that," Tanner tells.

Despite the unabated passion for the sport, Joseph and Tanner – much like the rest of their

group – were dissuaded by their parents from

# At suspended WFI nationals; wrestlers in fix, venue infested by mosquitoes

**SHIVANI NAIK**  
PUNE, JANUARY 28

PLAYERS FORCED to pick a side or risk their health straddling back-to-back events. A defiant federation's loyalists frothing in rage at being restrained by the Sports Ministry. And a competition venue infested with mosquitoes. Indian wrestling continues to remain chaotic as a hurriedly held Senior Nationals at Pune by the suspended Wrestling Federation of India that had the erstwhile wrestling chief Brij Bhushan Singh's loyalist Sanjay Singh at helm, is flying in the face of the government-mandated one at Jaipur three days later.

The January 29-31 meet being conducted at Pune has failed to attract the top names of the country in any weight category, the ace wrestlers showing a preference for the February 2-5 Nationals of the government-appointed ad-hoc committee later. Maharashtra's Atish Todkar, who beat Ravi Dahiya in the Asian Games trials in July 2023,

is the only notable name.

Wrestling powerhouses Railways, Services and Punjab are amongst those to give the WFI president Sanjay Singh a cold shoulder, completely depleting the field. "There aren't any big names in the fray here as Railways and Services aren't coming," said a top official on the eve of the WFI Nationals, as registrations confirmed a weak turnout.

But factions from 24 state bodies have sent in entries across Greco Roman and women's and men's freestyle categories, in a haphazardly show of strength for Singh, who minutes after his election had called on former WFI president Brij Bhushan, presently facing sexual harassment charges from India's top women wrestlers.

Most states, barring Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Assam are also sending a full team to Jaipur where the medal winners will proceed to a national camp and be considered for trials. The Sports Ministry has warned WFI that certificates from the unrecognised meet will hold no value for job recruitments. However, it



Wrestlers on the mat in PUNE. Express

is the wrestlers who are being torn in different directions, unsure of which Nationals can ensure a pathway to camps and selection in this Olympic year. Some plan to finish competing in Pune and rush to Jaipur. Dropping weight twice within 5 days will see them starve and dehydrate for close to a week.

Karnataka's 72 kg grappler, Asna Sareen said she came prepared to put herself through hell in this week turning up at both. "While our

state association will do everything to make travel to Jaipur smooth for us as soon as we finish in Pune, we are worried about dropping weight twice. Maintaining body weight for 4-5 days by not eating or drinking water is not something I'm looking forward to," she said.

Most wrestlers were wracked by similar concerns, and forced to choose one of the two. Some Maharashtra wrestlers went through the torture during the state trials mid-January, as two factions conducted selections within 3 days at Katraj and Lonikand respectively.

A coach who doesn't wish to be named says there's pressure from both groups to show up, and he is worried for his charges. "For a weigh-in at 8 a.m. on 30th, the girls will starve on 29th, then fight whole day. And instead of recovery and eating normally to replenish body, they'll travel to Jaipur and then starve and dehydrate again. If you go by rail for two days, then you can't sweat and lose weight in travel. Then you are again taking rash measures and are left with no energy to fight a second time. Because who knows after two months, which of the

two governing bodies will hold sway," he said.

The previous ad-hoc Nationals dates for Jaipur were January 2-5, but after elections and suspension of the federation, they were pushed to February 2-5. WFI got furious and to stay relevant, announced their dates, ahead of Jaipur as January 29-31. Wrestlers from Haryana who arrived in Pune have already attended two state trials, a district trial, and the state body sent the top finishers to Jaipur and the third placed to Pune. 55kg talent Jyoti from Hissar said it's been a nightmare. "Players were left to make a hard choice. It was very confusing. Hum bachhe phas gaye, (we were in a quandary)" said the 20-year-old.

Allotted accommodation in Pune 2 km away from the Pathare Krida Sankul and expected to walk to Kharadi gaon, the Haryana lot were forced to spend from their pockets and look for a PG, as they weren't satisfied with what was offered. "There was no water in bathrooms there. And here, the mosquitoes are going to make wrestling very difficult," said another wrestler from the state. A wrestler was

seen pausing a neck hold, swatting away mosquitoes and scratching at his exposed ankles as evening descended.

"Inka apas mein lajdaa tha. Par nukasaan hua wrestlers ka (Because of internal fights, we are suffering)," said a coach from a northern state, who's worried the certificates will be useless. Not everyone is deterred and cagey though. Janardhan Singh, a senior coach of Madhya Pradesh, says his state body had no qualms turning up at Pune. "The government has no right to stop our Nationals. In fact the world body UWW should tell them to stop interfering in our affairs. This is dadagiri of the Ministry. The thing about our certificates not being valid is just rumours spread by Ministry. Ad Hoc body is only temporary. After the Lok Sabha elections, the WFI will become permanent body. If they have guts, they should go to court and stop us. They can't. They can at most stop our funding. But Brij Bhushan sir has enough money to fund travel of our wrestlers for Internationals," roared the man who's been coach since 1978.

## BRIEFLY

### U19 Cricket WC: India record 201-run win over the United States

**Bloemfontein:** Arshin Kulkarni slammed a century before pacer Naman Tiwari's grabbed four wickets as India recorded a 201-run win over USA in their final group game of the U-19 World Cup on Sunday. With the win, defending champions India continued their unbeaten run in the tournament. India, who had already sealed a super six berth having won their opening two games, head to the next stage as leaders of Group A. Left-hand opener Arshin (108) starred with the bat with number three Musheer Khan (73) playing the perfect second fiddle as India piled on 326 for five after being asked to bat. The bowlers, led by left-arm pacer Tiwari (4/20), then complemented the Indian batting unit, stopping USA to a paltry 125 for 8 in 50 overs. PTI

### East Bengal crowned Super Cup champions

**Bhubaneswar:** East Bengal were on Sunday crowned champions of the Super Cup after emerging 3-2 winner in a thrilling final against Odisha FC with Cleiton Silva scoring the decisive goal here. Despite both sides having multiple chances to score, neither could convert as the match ended 2-2 after regulation time and also after the end of the first half of extra-time. Brazilian recruit Cleiton struck the winner for East Bengal in the 111th minute of the match, leaving his team in a state of frenzy and the opponents shocked. The victorious East Bengal team will be nominated to play in the Asian Champions League 2 preliminary stage of AFC 2023-24 season. PTI

### WTT Goa: Lebrun, Cheng I-Ching win

**Mapusa:** World No. 8 Felix Lebrun of France and Chinese Taipei's Cheng I-ching registered stunning victories to clinch the singles titles in their respective categories at the World Table Tennis Star Contender Goa here on Sunday. Lebrun lost the first two games before making a magnificent comeback to beat the World No. 7 Hugo Calderano by 4-2 (9-11, 9-11, 13-11, 11-0, 15-13, 11-7) in an enthralling men's singles final. Meanwhile, in the women's singles final, Cheng I-ching had an easy outing as she defeated Germany's Nina Mittelham 11-8, 11-8, 17-15, 11-6. PTI

Players born in the 2000s - Alcaraz and Sinner - now have more Majors than players born in the 1990s - Medvedev, Thiem

**NAMIT KUMAR**  
JANUARY 28

DESPITE THE hype that swirled around his evident ability as a pure shot maker even when he was a teenager, Jannik Sinner, as other tennis prodigies, did not burst onto the scene immediately. He needed more time to grow into his body, make steady improvements, develop a well-rounded game and gain experience to develop greater mental resilience.

His mild-mannered and understated reaction to making history on Sunday should not fool anyone though. Sinner's breakthrough on the big stage and arrival to this sport's elite took place in entirely sensational, record-breaking fashion.

The 22-year-old World No. 4 from Italy came back from a two-set deficit to defeat Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 to claim a first Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, becoming the first male player from his country to do so, and only the third to win a Major. He is the youngest Australian Open champion since Novak Djokovic in 2008.

In red-hot form after spearheading a Davis Cup triumph late last year, the Italian tore through the draw at Melbourne Park, losing just one set and becoming the first person to defeat 10-time champion Djokovic in a semi-final at the event where he was on a 33-match winning streak. It was his physical fitness and mental freshness – afforded to him by a dominant tournament – that allowed him to complete the turnaround win on Sunday having spent six less hours on court than his opponent heading into the final.

Sinner becomes just the seventh player to overturn a two-set deficit in a Major final, but also the fourth to do so in the last 14 Grand Slams, a statistic that would make grim reading for Medvedev, who becomes the first player to lose two finals from that position after being on the wrong side of Rafael Nadal's fairytale win at the Australian Open in 2022.

Medvedev is joined by Stefanos Tsitsipas



Jannik Sinner overcame Daniil Medvedev 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 to claim the Australian Open. Reuters

(2021 French Open) and Alexander Zverev (2020 US Open) on that list, each of whom were the high-profile members of the much-touted generation that was meant to take over from the aging trio of Djokovic, Nadal, and Roger Federer but on various occasions across different surfaces, succumbed under pressure and failed to deliver on the big stage.

#### Winning generation

Instead, it has been the generation that has come after them, led by Sinner and two-time Major winner Carlos Alcaraz, that have shown both the attacking shot-making talent and athleticism, as well as the courage and self-belief, to play with freedom and truly take control of big moments on this stage. Both Sinner and Alcaraz have now defeated Djokovic at a Major, and won a title by holding their nerve in the fifth set of a final.

Sinner's victory on Sunday came in unlikely fashion, but he did not have to battle back from the brink of defeat as the scoreline may suggest, exposing best-of-five sets tennis for being as much about riding momentum, staying fit, and winning the big moments, as it is about consistently being the best player in the contest.

Sinner won 142 points in the match com-

pared to Medvedev's 141, only meaningfully led the contest for about the final 15 minutes, and was neither the better server nor returner. But after Medvedev blew past him in the first two sets, he allowed his opponent's level to fall and elevated his, finding more zip on his deep, penetrative groundstrokes, taking control of the baseline exchanges, and producing his best form in the crunch moments both while protecting his serve, and attempting to break his opponent's.

Medvedev came out of the blocks firing, while Sinner was tense. The Russian has strengthened his credentials as one of the best hardcourt players in the world thanks to his defence-first playing style, but instead showed he is not quite the one-dimensional player he is known to be, adopting a more attacking baseline strategy, ripping forehands and backhands, and bombing down first serves, while covering every inch of the court to suffocate Sinner who was feeling the heat of playing his first Grand Slam final.

Medvedev's 6-3, 5-1 lead seemed more daunting by Sinner's expression than it did on the scoreboard, as the Italian cut a desperate-looking figure on court, engaged in animated discussions with his team looking tormented and shocked by his opponent's new attacking

tactics, even once telling them he was "dead" during the second set.

It was in that moment that the Russian let his form dip, and given the massive time, and peaks and troughs, that best-of-five sets tennis allows, Sinner turned his fortunes around.

The Italian locked in on serve, losing just 9 points on his first serve the entirety of the last three sets. He stayed with Medvedev until the final game of the third set, when the Russian blinked thanks to his rising error count, and Sinner stepped up to take control.

From there, the momentum turned astonishingly, the crowd got behind Sinner, the patterns of play began to favour the Italian entirely as he stepped inside the baseline to unload his heavy groundstrokes, and the match was almost like a fresh contest.

#### Target: Djokovic

Sinner would crush a massive forehand down-the-line to force a decider, and unload on the wing on the same shot nine games later on match point. Unlike in 2022, Medvedev was never ahead, and never choked, but Sinner's remarkable turnaround was a result of both his patience and his opponent's lapses.

Medvedev had come into the match after back-to-back five-setters, come back from a

## EXPLAINED

### E. Medvedev flipped the script, Sinner dug deep

In 9 previous meetings, Medvedev won the first six encounters. The Russian's elite defence had always been the ultimate foil to the big groundstrokes that Sinner uses. However, after making vast improvements on serve and return, Sinner developed the ability to shorten points and take control of the rallies early. It allowed him to beat Medvedev in each of their last three matches, over a two-month period late last year. Sinner won 57.7% (538/931) of the points with 8 shots or less prior to the final, Medvedev won 50.3% (685/1361). The Russian won 57.4% (170/296) of the points with 9 shots or more, the Italian won 50.5% (90/178). But Medvedev flipped the script, rushing points, attacking more, and playing with greater serve and return efficiency. Of the 112 points in the first two sets, 79 were 8 shots or less, and Medvedev won 52 of them. Sinner was forced to dig very deep, finding momentum by improving his own serve and waiting for Medvedev's lapses in order to take control and overcome the tactical plan.

two-set deficit twice in this tournament itself, and ended up spending more than 24 hours across 31 sets throughout this fortnight – both being a men's singles Grand Slam record. Once the momentum turned, he simply ran out of steam to fight back.

Men's tennis now finds itself at an interesting, inter-generational juncture. Players born in the 2000s have now won more Majors (Alcaraz and Sinner have a combined three) than players born in the 1990s (Medvedev and Dominic Thiem have one each). All that while, the player to beat remains the 36-year-old Djokovic, with Nadal, set to return for the clay season, still an entity that cannot be ruled out.

Sinner has taken the opportunity that this transitional moment has presented by producing dominant performances throughout this fortnight, and showing the mental wherewithal to deal with setbacks and break through to the top of the sport, a leap he has always been expected to take, even if he took his own time to get there.

## WORLD RECORD BROKEN

# Divyansh Singh Panwar breaks 10m air rifle WR, wins ISSF World Cup gold

**NITIN SHARMA**  
JANUARY 28

DURING LAST year's Asian Games in Hangzhou, Divyansh Singh Panwar watched from the sidelines as China's Sheng Lihao became 10m air rifle champion with a world record of 253.3. With only two Indian shooters eligible for the eight-man final, Panwar was behind compatriots Rudrankksh Patil and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar.

However, on Sunday at the ISSF World Cup in Cairo, the 21-year-old Panwar broke Lihao's world record with a final score of 253.7.

"Coming into the final, I was confident about the process and technique and my aim was to focus on my scores and shooting. It feels good to see the hard training reaping dividends," Panwar told ISSFTV.

Hailing from Rajasthan, where his father Ashok Panwar works as a senior nursing staff at the Sawai Man Singh Medical College, Panwar came to the spotlight with multiple medals at the ISSF Junior World Cups in 2019 before he claimed a Tokyo Olympics quota place with a silver medal

at the ISSF World Cup in China. The subsequent two years would see him becoming the 10m air rifle champion at the ISSF World Cup final in Putian apart from winning a bronze at the ISSF World Cup in Delhi as well as an Asian Championships gold.

The youngster, who had shot a then-world record score of 253.1 in one of the national trials five months prior to the Tokyo Olympics, was once ranked world number one, and was expected to make the eight-shooter final in Tokyo, but finished a distant 32nd.

A disappointed Panwar would take a break from shooting and spend some time with personal coach Deepak Kumar Dubey in Delhi before undertaking a vipassana course in Rishikesh for two weeks.

Divyansh understood that he is young and setbacks like these can happen to anybody. The vipassana course let him gather his thoughts after what happened in Tokyo. Once he was able to do that, he shot more freely and did not worry about his place in the Indian team," says Dubey.

Four months after the disappointment in Tokyo, Panwar became the junior and sen-



Divyansh Singh Panwar smashed the World Record in Cairo with a score of 253.7, a record previously held by China's Sheng Lihao. ISSF

ior national champion. He also returned to competing at the junior level in 2022. With shooters like Rudrankksh Patil, Arjun Babuta and Aishwary Singh Tomar in the Indian team, Panwar would often compete in Ranking Points Only (RPO) category in World Cups with a ninth place finish in the Baku World Cup last year being his only appearance in the competitive category. He shot a score of 633.1 to miss a berth in the final.

He had another score of 633.0 in the Cairo World Cup competing in the RPO category before making it to the Asian Games team last year. "We worked on changing his back-bending position and once he changed his

rifle, he adjusted well to it. We also have him shoot 100-110 shots on off-competition days to let him relax," says Dubey.

On Sunday, Panwar topped the qualification with a score of 632.4. In the final, he led after the first series and lost his lead only once to Lazar Kovacevic of Serbia in the second series before getting it back.

Panwar scored 10.5 or more on 18 out of his 25 shots in the final, with three 10.9s, to end up with the world record and the gold medal.

"He had a sound technique right from his junior days. During the last one year, we worked on some of the technicalities of his shooting apart from instilling the belief of being a world-beater once again in his mind. He shot with a free mind today and that's what we want," said Indian team's rifle coach Suma Shirur.

While Panwar was ranked fourth behind Patil, Tomar and Babuta in the national rankings last month, the youngster will have to be in the top five for the Paris Olympics trials later this year. "Having such competition works well for each of these shooters and each one of them is ambitious. So it gives them a much-needed motivation," says Shirur.