

NEXT IAS

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हिन्दी

“सिविल सेवा परीक्षा की तैयारी के लिये NEXT IAS एक ऐसा संस्थान है, जहाँ शिक्षा की उत्तम गुणवत्ता एवं विद्यार्थियों की देख-रेख सर्वोपरि है। NEXT IAS में सिलेबस का सम्पूर्ण कवरेज सिविल सेवा परीक्षा के मानकों के स्तर पर होता है, जिसमें प्रारंभिक परीक्षा के एटीट्यूड स्किल्स एवं मुख्य परीक्षा में उत्तर लेखन की उचित विधि का विशेष ध्यान रखा जाता है। NEXT IAS में शिक्षकों का चुनाव बहुत सावधानीपूर्वक किया जाता है एवं यहाँ अनुभवी एवं विषयात् शिक्षकों द्वारा अध्यापन कार्य होता है। NEXT IAS में शिक्षकों की पहचान एवं सम्मान का विशेष ध्यान रखा जाता है। अंग्रेजी माध्यम में संस्थान के छात्रों की अपार सफलता के उपरांत अब हिन्दी माध्यम में भी शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता को उच्चतम स्तर पर ले जाने के लिए NEXTIAS ने पहल की है।”



सामान्य अध्ययन फ़ाउंडेशन कोर्स

सिविल सेवा प्रारंभिक व मुख्य परीक्षा 2025

1200+ घंटे का पाठ्यक्रम

**श्री बी. सिंह**Renowned Educationist,
CMD: NEXT IAS and MADE EASY GroupFormer Honourable Member of UPSC,
Chief Advisor to NEXT IAS & MADE EASY Group | **श्री भीम सेन बरसी**

के मार्गदर्शन में अनुभवी एवं प्रतिष्ठित शिक्षकों से सिविल सेवा परीक्षा की तैयारी करें।



हेमन्त झा सर

इतिहास, कला एवं संस्कृति



आलोक रंजन सर

भूगोल



आर.सी. सिंहा सर

रघुनंत्री के पश्चात् भारत



के.एम. पथि सर

नीतिशास्त्र (एथिक्स)



दीपेन्द्र अनमोल सर

भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था, विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी



कमल देव सर

इतिहास, अंतर्राष्ट्रीय संबंध एवं निबंध



मंजेश कुमार सर

भारतीय राजव्यवस्था एवं शासन



संजीव श्रीवास्तव सर

भूगोल एवं पर्यावरण



राहुल सेंगर सर

प्राचीन भारत का इतिहास, कला और संस्कृति



नीतीश शर्मा सर

आंतरिक सुरक्षा



प्रशांत सिंह सर

विश्व का भूगोल एवं आपदा प्रबंधन

प्रतिष्ठित और अनुभवी शिक्षक

- गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षण
- कॉन्सेप्ट बिल्डिंग
- व्यापक कवरेज
- करेंट अफेयर्स आधारित शिक्षण

सक्रिय प्रबंधन

- तकनीक एवं शिक्षण का समन्वय
- पढ़ाई का बेहतर वातावरण
- स्टूडेंट सेट्रिंग एपोच

समर्पित एकडेमिक कोच

- पढ़ाई में व्यक्तिगत सहयोग
- मेंटरशिप और उत्तर लेखन
- साप्ताहिक और मासिक क्लास टेस्ट्स

उत्कृष्ट कंटेंट टीम

- परीक्षा आधारित क्वालिटी शिक्षण सामग्री
- दैनिक व साप्ताहिक करेंट अफेयर्स का विश्लेषण और पीडीएफ
- मासिक करेंट अफेयर्स पत्रिका
- प्रारंभिक और मुख्य परीक्षा टेस्ट सीरीज़

दिल्ली:
ऑफलाइन
बैच

14 फरवरी 2024
से शुरू
11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

लाइव-
ऑनलाइन
बैच

14 फरवरी 2024
से शुरू
11:30 AM - 2:30 PM



आगामी बैचों
की घोषणा शीघ्र
एडमिशन प्रारम्भ

सेमिनार
at Mukherjee Nagar

Navigating Towards IAS

1st FEB | THURSDAY 11:30 AM

Venue : 1422 Main Mukherjee Nagar Road, Near Batra Cinema, New Delhi-110009

सेमिनार
पंजीकरण
के लिए
स्कैन करें

Delhi Centre :

Old Rajinder Nagar : 27-B, Pusa Road, Metro Pillar No. 118,
Near Karol Bagh Metro, New Delhi - 110060 | Ph : 8081300200Mukherjee Nagar : 1422 Main Mukherjee Nagar Road,
Near Batra Cinema | Ph : 9311667076

Bhopal Centre :

Plot No. 46,
Zone - 2, M.P. Nagar,
Bhopal - 462011
Ph : 8827664612

Jaipur Centre :

A-1, Lion's Colony, Sitabari,
Near The Theme Hotel,
Tonk Road, Jaipur - 302018
Ph : 9358200511

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THE WORLD

TOP OF THE
WORLD



Pita Limjaroenrat in Bangkok on Wednesday. AP

THAILAND

No rule violation, Pita can remain lawmaker: Court

Bangkok: Thailand's Constitutional Court ruled Wednesday that popular progressive politician Pita Limjaroenrat, who was blocked from becoming prime minister even though his party placed first in last year's election, did not violate the election law and can retain his seat in Parliament. Pita had been suspended from the legislature pending the court ruling. He was the executor of his father's estate which included stock in TV, a company that is the inactive operator of a defunct TV station. Move Forward Party now heads the opposition in Parliament. AP

PAKISTAN

Start campaigns or lose tickets, Imran to runners

Islamabad: Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has warned his party candidates to launch their poll campaigns peacefully, failing which their tickets to contest the February 8 elections will be cancelled, according to a media report on Wednesday. Asking his party's candidates to take out "massive rallies" and organise public gatherings to show the strength of the PTI in their constituencies, Khan warned that he would replace "inactive" nominees with "suitable candidates" if the party's electioneering did not pick up steam by Sunday. REUTERS

TURKEY

House nod to Sweden's NATO bid after delay

Ankara: Turkey's parliament ratified Sweden's NATO membership bid on Tuesday, clearing the biggest remaining hurdle to expanding the Western military alliance after 20 months of delay. Turkey's general assembly, where President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling alliance holds a majority, voted 287-55 to approve the application that Sweden first made in 2022 to bolster its security in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. All NATO members need to approve applications from countries seeking to join the alliance. REUTERS

GERMANY

Train drivers go on strike for 6 days, traffic hit

Berlin: Germany's train drivers brought rail traffic to a standstill again early Wednesday when they began a six-day strike to push their demands in a rancorous dispute with the country's main railway operator over working hours and pay. The strike by the GDL union will affect passenger services and freight trains operated by state-owned Deutsche Bahn until 6 p.m. on Monday. The union held a three-day strike earlier this month and two walkouts last year which lasted up to 24 hours. AP

BARBARIC ACT, SAYS RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY

Russia accuses Ukraine of killing 65 of its own PoWs by shooting down plane

All 74 on aircraft killed: Belgorod Governor

REUTERS
MOSCOW, JANUARY 24

RUSSIA ACCUSED Ukraine on Wednesday of deliberately shooting down a Russian military transport plane carrying 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers to a prisoner exchange in what it called a barbaric act of terrorism that had killed a total of 74 people.

The Russian defence ministry said six Russian crew members and three Russian soldiers had been on the Ilyushin Il-76 military transport plane shot down near the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border.

"The Ukrainian leadership was well aware that, in accordance with established practice, Ukrainian servicemen would be transported by military transport aircraft to the Belgorod airfield today to be exchanged," a ministry statement said. "...the Ukrainian leadership... disregarded the lives of its own citizens."

Russia's foreign ministry called the shooting down "a barbaric act".

Ukraine's defence ministry did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment. It was cited by the Interfax-Ukraine news agency as saying it did not have any reliable information for now but would share it when it did.



Flames rise from the site where the plane carrying prisoners of war crashed. AP

Ukrainian media outlet Ukrainska Pravda initially cited military sources as saying Kyiv had shot down the plane because it was carrying S-300 missiles, but later corrected the story saying that information had not been confirmed by other sources.

Vyacheslav Gladkov, governor of Belgorod region, said all 74 people on board the plane had been killed and that the plane had come down in the region's Korochansky district, northeast of the city of Belgorod.

House nod for law to seize property over fake news on Russian army

REUTERS
MOSCOW, JANUARY 24

RUSSIA'S STATE Duma on Wednesday passed the first stage of a bill allowing the confiscation of property from those convicted of a number of crimes including spreading "deliberately false information"

about the Russian army.

The measure will also apply to those found guilty of "discrediting" the armed forces, calling for sanctions against Russia or inciting extremist activity.

The Duma, parliament's lower house, passed the bill in the first of three required readings by 395 votes to 3.

It would allow the state to

seize the property of Russians who have left the country and have criticised the war in Ukraine, but who continue to rely on revenue from renting out their houses or apartments in Russia.

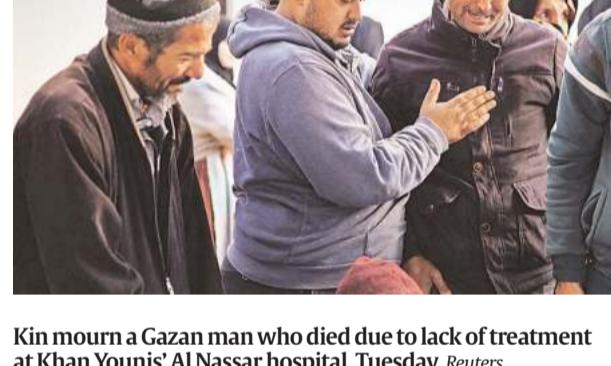
Since sending its army into Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has intensified a long-running clampdown on all forms of political dissent.



RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Hundreds stranded in Khan Younis hospital as fights escalate; US strikes in Iraq, Yemen

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RAFAH, JANUARY 24



Kin mourn a Gazan man who died due to lack of treatment at Khan Younis' Al Nassar hospital, Tuesday. Reuters

Health Ministry also said the hospital had been isolated.

Meanwhile, US struck three Kataib Hezbollah facilities in Iraq

and two Houthi missiles in Yemen.

Iraq PM Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said the strikes "blatantly violate Iraq's sovereignty," accord-

WORKING TO EASE RED SEA TENSIONS: CHINA

Beijing: China, the world's biggest exporter, says it is deeply concerned about tensions in the Red Sea that have upended global trade by forcing many shippers to avoid the Suez Canal. China has been in "close communication with all parties concerned and making positive efforts to de-escalate" the situation, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing on Wednesday. AP

Saudi Arabia to open first alcohol store for diplomats

Riyadh: Saudi Arabia is preparing to open its first alcohol store in the capital Riyadh which will serve exclusively non-Muslim diplomats, according to a source familiar with plans and a document.

Customers will have to register via a mobile app, get a clearance code from the foreign ministry, and respect monthly quotas with their purchases, said the document, which was seen by Reuters.

The move is a milestone in the kingdom's efforts, led by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to open the ultra-

Atomic scientists set 'Doomsday Clock' as close to midnight as ever

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24

ATOMIC SCIENTISTS on Tuesday kept their "Doomsday Clock" set as close to midnight as ever before, citing Russia's actions on nuclear weapons amid its invasion of Ukraine, nuclear-armed Israel's Gaza war and worsening climate change as factors driving the risk of global catastrophe.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, as they did last year, set the clock at 90 seconds to

midnight - the theoretical point of annihilation. Scientists set the clock based on "existential" risks to Earth and its people: nuclear threats, climate change and disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence and new biotechnology.

"Conflict hot spots around the world carry the threat of nuclear escalation, climate change is already causing death and destruction, and disruptive technologies like AI and biological research advance faster than their safeguards," Rachel Bronson, the

Bulletin's president and CEO, told Reuters, adding that keeping the clock unchanged from the prior year is "not an indication that the world is stable."

The Chicago-based nonprofit created the clock in 1947 during the Cold War tensions.

It said Tuesday that ominous trends continue to point toward catastrophe, including China, Russia and the US all are spending heavily to expand or modernize nuclear arsenals, boosting risk of nuclear war through mistake or miscalculation.

At that time, he was an em-

EXPENSIVE PRESENT LANDS PRESIDENT YOON, RULING PARTY IN DISARRAY AHEAD OF APRIL POLLS

S Korea first lady 'accepts' Dior bag as gift, gets likened to Marie Antoinette

JU-MIN PARK
SEOUL, JANUARY 24

HIDDEN CAMERA footage appearing to show South Korea's First Lady accepting a Dior bag as a gift has plunged President Yoon Suk Yeol and his party into a controversy that may threaten their bid to reclaim a parliamentary majority in April's election.

Some members of Yoon's conservative People Power Party (PPP) have urged the president and his wife, Kim Keon Hee, to apologise for the incident dubbed by local media "Dior bag scandal" and admit receiving the

purse was, at least, inappropriate, in the hope of putting the matter to rest.

Yoon's office said it had no information to share.

By opting to remain silent and, at the weekend, pushing for the party leader to resign due to a disagreement over some members' stance, Yoon risks creating a flash point that could end up costing PPP the April 10 election, analysts say.

"It is a political bombshell," said Rhee Jong-hoon, a political analyst. "The Kim Keon Hee risks are only going to get bigger."

Yoon won a close election in 2022 but his PPP is a minority in



Case surfaced in November when a YouTube channel aired a video recorded by a pastor as he gifted Kim the bag. Reuters

the parliament, which is controlled by the rival Democratic Party.

The president's supporters say Kim is the victim of an illegal plot to set her up and a smear campaign.

The case surfaced in November when a YouTube channel aired a video secretly recorded by a Korean American pastor with a hidden camera as he visited Kim and handed her the handbag.

The pastor, Rev. Abraham Choi, who has been involved in religious exchanges with North Korea and is an advocate of engagement with Pyongyang, said

Queen known for her profligacy.

Local news reports said Yoon was livid and wanted to remove the party's leader, Han Dong-hoon, marking at least a brief split between the president and an official widely seen as a protégé and close associate.

In a poll released by YTN cable news conducted this week, 69% of respondents said Yoon needs to explain his position regarding the controversy around the first lady.

"The general public thinks, 'Okay, it may be a trap, but why did she take it (the bag) anyway?'" said Shin Yul, political science professor at Myongji University. REUTERS

HALEY EYES HOME STATE SOUTH CAROLINA

Trump wins New Hampshire but fails to knock out Haley from race

REUTERS
MANCHESTER, NH, JAN 24

DONALD TRUMP didn't just want to win in New Hampshire, he wanted to beat Nikki Haley so badly that his sole rival for the Republican presidential nomination would drop out before the next competitive contest in South Carolina a month away.

The former president easily bested the former South Carolina governor on Tuesday, but his carefully crafted strategy to drive Haley out of the race fell short, denying Trump the chance, for now, to focus all his attention on Democratic U.S. President Joe Biden and the November general election.

Trump, 77, was full of fury after Haley, 52, vowed in a Tuesday night speech to fight on, just two days after the other leading Republican contender, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, ended his campaign.

"Who the hell was the imposter who went up on the stage before, and like, claimed a victory?" Trump asked a crowd of supporters, adding, "I don't get too angry. I get even."

As he campaigned in snow-covered New Hampshire over the past week, Trump kept his eye on South Carolina, 700 miles (1,100 km) to the south, which will hold the next large contested primary on Feb. 24.

The Trump campaign spent weeks planning a show of support aimed at knocking Haley out of the race before the South Carolina contest, said Jason Miller, a senior Trump campaign adviser.

She planned a Wednesday evening rally in Charleston, South Carolina, and campaign manager Betsy Ankney said this weekend they had locked in a \$4 million TV ad in the state with the first ads airing Wednesday.

Dean Lacy, a political science professor at Dartmouth College, said he could see Haley continuing her campaign if she has the backing of anti-Trump donors and given the prospect Trump's legal troubles could hobble him.

Eric Levine, a New York-based donor and fundraiser, said he was continuing to support her and raise money. "I expect the donor base will remain loyal," he said.

ILLICIT PROFIT OF OVER \$2,700 MADE

Indian-American man convicted of insider trading on Pfizer's Covid-19 drug trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24

A 44-YEAR-OLD Indian-American former Pfizer employee has been convicted for insider trading by a federal court in New York for his scheme to reap illicit profits by trading on information about the results of a COVID-19 medicine's clinical trials by the pharmaceutical giant.

Amit Dagar of Hillsborough in New Jersey was convicted of one count of securities fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit securities fraud last week, the Department of Justice said in a statement.

According to court documents, in November 2021, Dagar participated in an insider trading scheme to reap illicit profits from options trading based on inside information about the results of clinical trials of Paxlovid, a medicine used to treat COVID-19.

At that time, he was an em-

ployee of Pfizer and assisted in managing the data analysis in specific clinical drug trials.

On November 4, 2021, Dagar learned that a Pfizer trial of Paxlovid — a drug for mild to severe COVID-19 infection — had produced positive results. The results were confidential and meant to remain so until Pfizer publicised them the next day. Later that day, while the results remained confidential, he purchased short-dated, out-of-the-money Pfizer call options that expired days and weeks later.

The following day, Pfizer publicly released the results of its Paxlovid study before the market opening, and its stock price increased substantially, opening and eventually closing — more than 10 per cent higher than the previous day's closing price.

In the following weeks, Dagar sold his Pfizer call options for profits of more than USD 270,000, federal prosecutors alleged.



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CPC 22201/13/0217/2324

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Gyanvapi:
Rival parties
to get ASI
survey report

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 24

THE VARANASI district court Wednesday allowed copies of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)'s report on the survey of the Gyanvapi mosque complex to be made available to Hindu and Muslim litigants in the matter, observing that without copies of the report, it will not be possible for them to file objections.

Last month, the ASI had submitted its report on a scientific survey it had undertaken at the Gyanvapi complex. The district

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

EC to law panel: Model code is not a disruption

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

RESPONDING TO a question by the Law Commission of India if periodic elections lead to a policy analysis owing to the frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), the Election

EXPLAINED
E Simultaneous polls vs MCC

IMPOSITION of the model code is cited as a reason for pause in development programmes. While EC has not opposed joint polls, it has also defended the code.

Centuries-old dream fulfilled, spiritual satisfaction: Resolution

DIVYA A
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

CONGRATULATING PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on the consecration ceremony at the new Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Union Cabinet adopted a resolution Wednesday stating that while "the body of the country attained independence" in 1947, the "Pran Pratishta of its soul

was done on January 22, 2024", and "everyone experienced spiritual satisfaction".

The resolution, read out by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on behalf of the Cabinet, called the Wednesday meeting "historic... Cabinet of the Millennium" and said Modi had "fulfilled a centuries-old dream", one that "Indian civilisation had dreamt for five centuries".

"The love you have received

from the people has established you as a Jan Nayak. But, after the ushering in of the new era, you have also emerged as the pioneer of the new era," it stated.

Later, while briefing reporters on the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said, "At the beginning of the Union Cabinet meeting, on behalf of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

In Ayodhya on Wednesday. Vishal Srivastav

REPORTS, PAGE 10

Union minister, RS MP & MLAs attend meeting called by radical Meitei group

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 24

A UNION Minister, a Rajya Sabha MP and almost all of Manipur's Meitei MLAs attended a meeting at Imphal's Kangla Fort on Wednesday morning — in response to "summons" issued to them by radical Meitei group

Arambai Tenggol a day earlier.

Afterwards, the Arambai Tenggol claimed that the Meitei leaders had promised to convey the concerns of the community to the Centre.

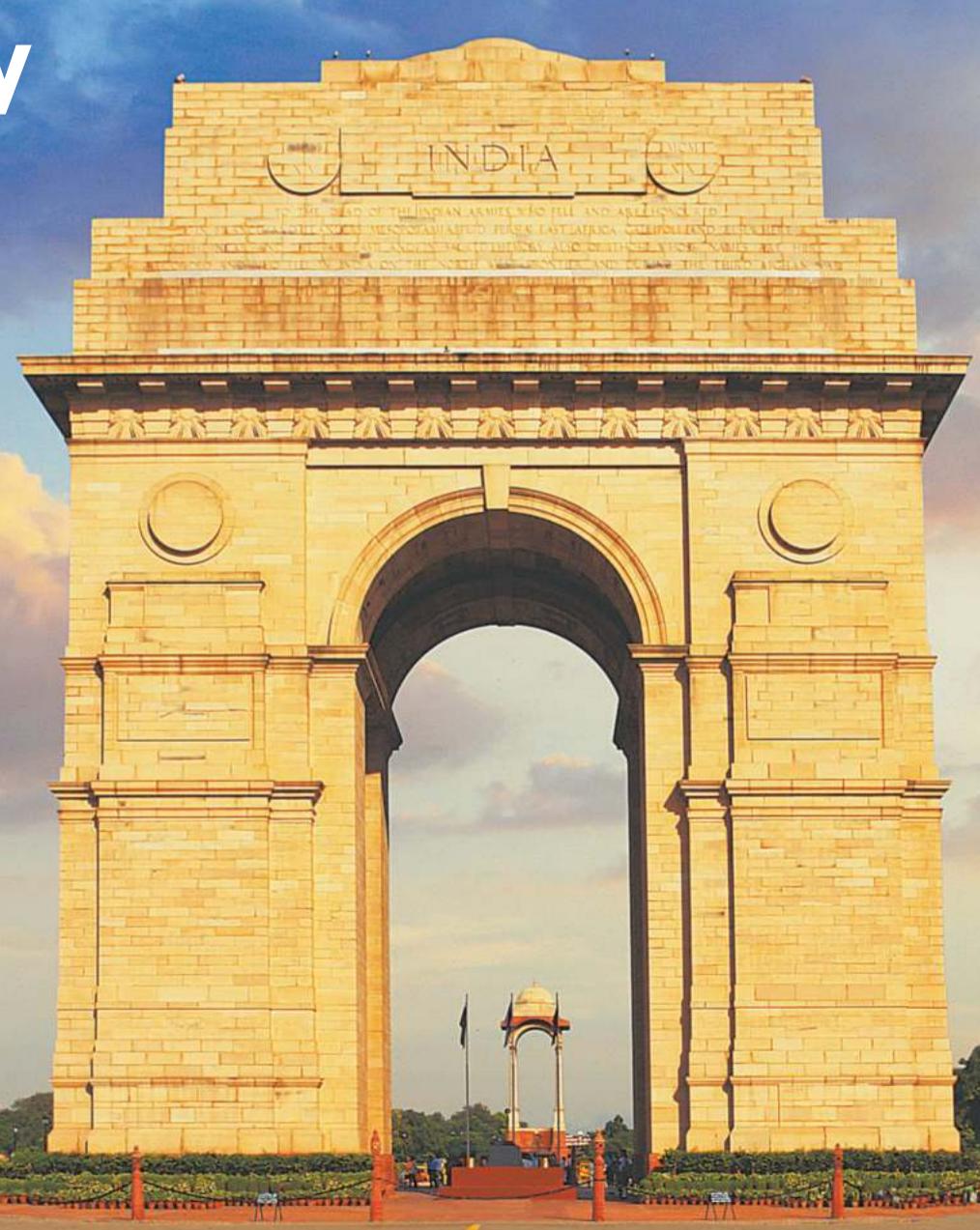
Demands by the radical group, which has thousands of members and claims to represent and protect Meitei interests, include the delisting of Kukis

from the Scheduled Tribe list, deportation of refugees to camps in Mizoram, border fencing, replacement of Assam Rifles with other paramilitary forces and revoking the Suspension of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

EXPLAINED
PAGE 20

Celebrating India's Republic Day



We celebrate India's history as the nation progresses to becoming Aatmanirbhar in aerospace and defence.

 BOEING



Election Commission of India

extends warm wishes to ~ 96 Crore voters on the occasion of

14TH National Voters' Day

January 25, 2024

Chief Guest

Smt. Droupadi Murmu

Hon'ble President of India

Guest of Honor

Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal

Hon'ble Union Minister of State (I/C)
for Law and Justice

Programme Details

- Best Electoral Practices Awards
- Unveiling of the Logo and Tagline of the Parliamentary Elections Campaign 2024
- Release of the Postage Stamp
- Screening of the Voter Education Short Film
- Presentation of the first copy of the book 'Election Commission of India's Initiatives for General Elections 2024'



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Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



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PARV 24

23rd - 31st January 2024

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Entry free. Please carry your identity proof.

Folk Dance | Crafts Bazaar | Armed Forces Bands | Studio Kitchen | Multi-cuisine Food Court
Cultural and Musical Programs

CBC 42/10/13/0007/2324

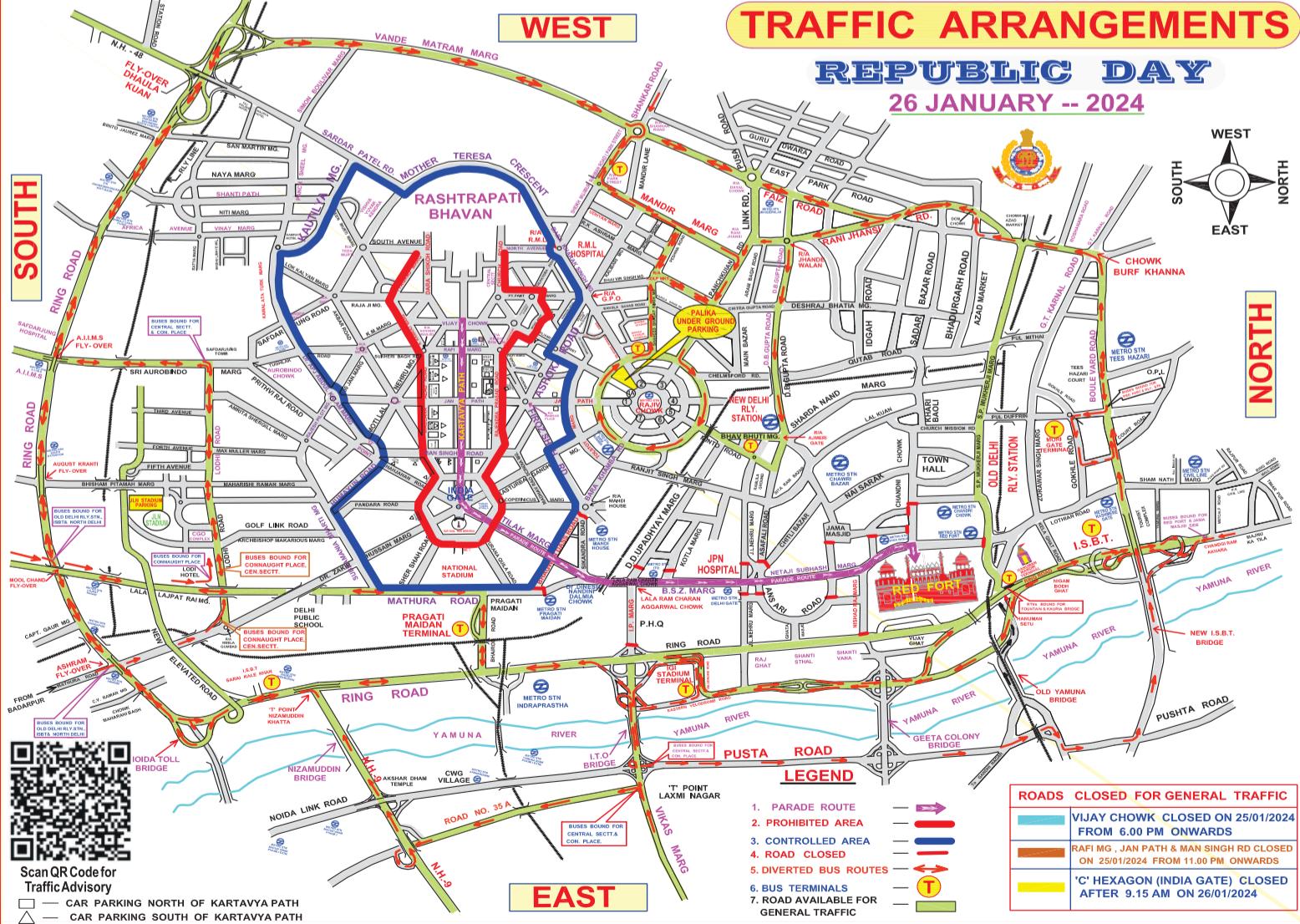


TRAFFIC ADVISORY

TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS - REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS ON 26th JANUARY, 2024

ROUTE OF THE PARADE: Vijay Chowk-Kartavyapath-C-Hexagon-R/A Statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose-Tilak Marg-Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg-Netaji Subhash Marg-Red Fort

Republic Day will be celebrated on 26th January, 2024. The Parade will start at 1030 hours from Vijay Chowk and proceed for Red Fort Grounds. There will be a related function at National War Memorial, India Gate at 0930 hours. There would be elaborate traffic arrangements and restrictions in place for smooth conduct of the Parade along the route.



INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL PUBLIC

In case, any unidentified object or suspicious person is seen, information must be conveyed to the nearest policeman on duty. Flying of small size powered aircrafts, quadcopters or para jumping from aircraft etc., are prohibited over the jurisdiction of National Capital Territory of Delhi till 15.02.2024.

General public and motorists are advised to keep patience, observe traffic rules & road discipline and follow directions of traffic personnel deployed at all intersections and remain updated through Traffic Police Facebook page, Twitter handle and Traffic Police Helpline. People are requested to plan their journey in advance and keep sufficient time in hand to avoid inconvenience.

General public and motorists may remain updated through Delhi Traffic Police Website <https://traffic.delhipolice.gov.in>, Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/dtptraffic>, Instagram page <https://www.instagram.com/dtptraffic>, WhatsApp Number 8750871493, and Helpline Numbers 1095/011-25844444.

TSR/TAXI

No TSR and Taxi will be allowed to enter or ply after 0700 hours on 26.01.2024 in the Area bound by:-

MOTHER TERESA CRESCENT-BABA KHARAK SINGH MARG-ASHOKA ROAD UP TO R/A PATEL CHOWK-SANSAD MARG UP TO TOLSTOY MARG-TOLSTOY MARG UP TO KASTURBA GANDHI MARG-KASTURBA GANDHI MARG UP TO FEROZESHARAH ROAD-FEROZESHARAH ROAD UP TO R/A MANDI HOUSE-BHAGWAN DASS ROAD-MATHURA ROAD-SUBRAMANIAM BHARTI MARG-HUMAYUN ROAD-A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM MARG-KAMAL ATA TURK MARG-KAUTIYA MARG AND SARDAR PATEL ROAD (EXCLUDING).

INTER STATE BUSES

Movement of the City Bus Services will be curtailed at the following points:

1. Park Street/Udyan Marg	2. Aram Bagh Road (Pahar Ganj)
3. R/A Kamla Market	4. Delhi Sachivalaya (IG Stadium)
5. Pragati Maidan (Bhairon Road)	6. Hanuman Mandir (Yamuna Bazar)
7. Mori Gate	8. ISBT Kashmiri Gate
9. ISBT Sarai Kale Khan	10. Tis Hazari Court

(I) Buses from Ghaziabad bound for Shivaji Stadium shall take NH-24, Ring Road and terminate at Bhairon Road

(II) Buses coming from NH-24 shall take right turn on Road No. 56 and terminate at SBT Anand Vihar

(III) Buses coming from Ghaziabad side will be diverted at Mohan Nagar towards Bhopra Chungi for Wazirabad Bridge

(IV) All Inter State buses coming from Dhaula Kuan side shall terminate at Dhaula Kuan.

HTVs/LGVs

No HTV/LGV will be allowed to enter Delhi from borders from 2300 hrs. on 25.01.2024 till the Parade is over. No HTV/LGV will be allowed to ply between I.S.B.T. Sarai Kale Khan and I.S.B.T. Kashmiri Gate on Ring Road from 0730 hrs. to 1330 hrs. on 26.01.2024.



REPUBLIC DAY 2024

Public visiting the Republic Day function at Kartavya Path are requested not to bring the following prohibited items

जनता से अनुरोध है कि कर्तव्य पथ पर गणतान्त्र दिवस 2024 के समारोह में निम्नलिखित वर्जित वस्तुएं साथ में न लाएँ:

Prohibited Items/वर्जित वस्तुएं

	Eatables, Ketchup, Sauce खाने—पीने की चीजें, केचप, सॉस
	Bag, Briefcase, Pens थैला, ब्रीफकेस, पेन
	Radio Transistor, Tape Recorder रेडियो ट्रांजिस्टर, टेप रिकॉर्डर
	Camera, Binocular, Handycam कैमरा, दूरबीन, हैंडीकैम
	Digital Dairies, Laptop, Computers, I-Pad डिजिटल डायरी, लैपटॉप, कंप्यूटर, आई—पैड
	Remote Controlled Car Keys रिमोट नियंत्रित कार चाबी
	Thermos Flasks, Water Bottles, Cans थर्मस प्लास्टिक, पानी की बोतल, कैन

	Cigarettes, Bidies, Lighter, Match Boxes, सिगरेट, बीड़ी, लाइटर, दियासलाई
	Alcohol, Perfume, Spray, Aerosol / Gel / Paste शराब, इत्र, स्प्रे, एरोसोल / जेल / पेस्ट
	Dagger, Sword, Saws, Drills, Hammer Sharp/Pointed Edged Material, Screw Drivers खंजर, तलवार, आरी, ड्रिल, हथौड़ा नुकीला हथियार, पेचकस, स्क्रू ड्राइवर
	Umbrella, Replica Fire Arms, Toy Gun, Ammunition छाता, खिलौना पिस्टॉल, गोला बारूद
	Knives, Scissors, Razors, Blades, Wires etc. चाकू, कैंची, रेज़र, ब्लेड, तार इत्यादि
	Arms & Ammunition, Fire Crackers, Gun Powder, Flares, any type of explosives हथियार और बारूद, पटाखे, फ्लेयर, किसी भी प्रकार की विस्फोटक सामग्री
	Inflammable Items, Disabling chemicals, Fuel and other dangerous items ज्वलनशील पदार्थ, रसायन, ईंधन और अन्य खतरनाक वस्तुएं

If any suspicious object is observed, kindly inform the nearest security personnel immediately
यदि कोई लावारिस वस्तु दिखाई दे तो उसे निकटतम सुरक्षाकर्मी के नोटिस में लाएं

Please co-operate with the police during searching/frisking.
कृप्या तलाशी के दौरान पुलिस के साथ सहयोग करें।

Please be alert to your surroundings.
कृप्या अपने आस-पास नज़र रखें।

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FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112 TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

GUIDELINES ISSUED LAST YR AFTER INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Registering IDs with police, NOC: Fest rules leaves DU colleges in fix

VIDHEEsha KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

PRE-REGISTRATION of each attendee and a Google Form with their details to be submitted to police, a no-objection letter to go ahead with the event: With fest season around the corner at Delhi University, student unions are grappling with the new guidelines issued by the varsity last year in the wake of several incidents of sexual harassment at women's colleges.

One of the guidelines in the 18-point advisory stated: "Entry for events should be through pre-registration like on Google Forms with details of event i.e date, venue, expected number of participants (to) be maintained and submitted to the police with a copy to other... departments.. Registration forms should include scanned copies of college IDs of participants." (see box)

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Jyotsna Singh, a second-year English Honours student and the central counsellor of the student union at Miranda House, said, "Implementation of these guidelines will depend on if we as a college decide to open up

No event where outside students are invited will be organised without police NOC. Advance security liaisoning meeting to be held with fire, police, college/university security

There should be multiple gates in the college and all gates must have working CCTVs. All gates should have a PA system for any announcements

REGISTRATION FORMS SHOULD INCLUDE SCANNED COPIES OF COLLEGE ID-CARDS OF PARTICIPANTS

our fest to outsiders this year or not. How is it possible to ensure students who have pre-registered are the only ones entering the campus?"

In October 2022, several men had allegedly jumped over the walls of Miranda House during a Diwali fair to enter the campus by bypassing security.

Singh further said these guidelines were "vague and unmanageable". "What is the point

safety and security of students. It is up to the colleges how many of these points they can implement or not." College officials also said they put up wires above the main gate during student elections to ensure protection.

At Shyama Prasad Mukherjee College, central counsellor Harshitha Sharma said while the guidelines are necessary for the safety of women students, "deciding the number of students who will be attending the fest etc. would be challenging". "How can we ensure that even registered students don't create any problems?" she questioned.

Sharma, however, pointed out that the crowd at SPMC's fests have always been low as they are not in North Campus.

At Jesus Mary College, students believe the implementation of the guidelines can help regulate the crowd. "Our college is located in the Embassy area.. We, fortunately, have never had any incidents like the ones at the North Campus colleges... I believe pre-registration and maintaining a record will reduce crowds as there will be a timeline to register, making it safer and manageable," said Alina Mariyam Benny, president of BA Programme department.

of introducing guidelines when they can't be easily implemented in the interest of students? There is still no justice for the events that took place at IPCW..." She was referring to the incident at Indraprastha College for Women last year where a few men allegedly scaled the walls and harassed students.

Miranda House Principal Bijayalaxmi Nanda said, "These guidelines are for ensuring the

station essentially amounts to the establishment of a greenfield airport at Hindon Airforce Station. It said this decision is inconsistent with the Centre's own policies such as the Policy on Airport Infrastructure, 1997, which mandates that a greenfield airport will normally not be allowed within an aerial distance of 150 km of an existing airport.

DIAL is a joint venture of the GMR-led consortium and AAI and manages the Indira Gandhi International Airport. It has claimed that the Ministry of Civil Aviation's October 2023 decision is arbitrary, unfair, unilateral and commercially unsustainable.

It has also sought quashing of a communication issued by AAI inviting various airline operators to increase flight operations and file their respective flight schedules for availing slots at the Hindon Airforce Station.

In its plea, DIAL said the decision fails to consider that there is already a greenfield airport being developed at Jewar, which is within 150 km from IGIA. It further

states that allowing the Hindon station to be used for scheduled commercial operations to cater to the same catchment area even before IGIA and the Jewar airport reach their saturation capacity would seriously impact IGIA's viability.

The plea also said the decision was taken without following due process of law in terms of the Airport Infrastructure Policy and the Greenfield Airport Policy, and said setting up of another greenfield airport ought to have been through a competitive bidding.



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Performance of BSF Band | Corona Warriors Memorial

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All are welcome to celebrate the Republic Day's Platinum Jubilee.

Ram Niwas Goel
Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly

Visitors are requested to carry their photo Identity Card to facilitate their entry in the Delhi Vidhan Sabha.

Delhi govt to hire 10,285 home guards, bonus points for civil defence volunteers

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE CIVIL Defence Volunteers who have been protesting their removal from service for two months will get relief as the Delhi government will hire 10,285 home guards over the coming months, and 'bonus points' will be given to them.

The application form for the posts has four sections under the 'bonus marks claim' head – NCC certificate, Home Guard volunteer, basic or advanced courses for instructors, and civil defence volunteers.

The removal of the volunteers, who were working as bus marshals in state-run buses, had become a political hot potato, with both the AAP government and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor blaming each other for removing them from service.

The revenue department and the finance department had



Following the protest by civil defence volunteers, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had directed the Revenue department to appoint them as home guards. Archive

were released after the L-G cleared the file in November.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, following the protest by civil defence volunteers, directed the Revenue department to come up with a proposal to appoint them as home guards and give them jobs as bus marshals. This was also proposed by L-G.

Himanshu, a former bus marshal, said, "I have not seen the form yet but I am happy that we have got some relief... Through this, we can get our job back."

Lalit Goyal, Deputy Divisional Commissioner, Civil Defence, said, "The volunteers will get some relief as nearly 10,000 of them just lost their jobs and many of them come from humble backgrounds."

The eligible candidates can apply online between January 24 and February 13. The forms are available on the website of the Directorate General of Home Guards.

raised issues over their appointment as bus marshals, saying that as per rules, they are supposed to be called in as volunteers during disasters and natural calamities and are to be given an honorarium. They can't be appointed on a regular basis and paid salaries, the depart-

ments had said. After this, services of around 8,000 volunteers who were deployed as bus marshals in DTC and cluster buses and in several other departments, were terminated on October 31.

Their pending salaries, in some cases of several months,

Noida Airport to get new master plan for expansion

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, JANUARY 24

TO STREAMLINE future expansion of the upcoming Jewar airport, the Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) is coming up with a separate master plan for all four phases spread across 6,200 hectares.

"The master plan is being prepared to streamline future expansion up to the final phase. This is necessary so problems don't arise in the future concerning the construction of facilities, its ownership, linking the airport with industries, and developing different modes of transportation such as Rapid Rail, Metro, pod taxi, roads, semi-high speed trains etc," said Dr Arun Vir Singh, CEO, NIAL.

NIAL is the implementing agency of the airport on behalf of the Uttar Pradesh government. Officials said the company is in consultation with Yamuna International Airport Private Limited, which is a subsidiary of

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e-Procurement Notice
e-Tender No.: IRCON/2024/SIVOK-RANGPO/S&T/TENDER/02 Date: 24.01.2024
e-Tender for and on behalf of Northeast Frontier Railway is invited from bidders meeting the qualifying requirements for the work of "Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Integrated Tunnel Communication including Railway General Telecommunication arrangement in Sivok-Rangpo New BG Rail Line Project of NF Railway."
Estimated Cost of the Work Rs. 156.13 Crores
Last Date and Time of e-Bid Submission 15.02.2024 up to 15.00 hrs (IST)

For further details and updates, please visit tender section on IRCON's e-tender website <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Amendment/Contingency, if any, would be hosted only on the website.

Chief General Manager/S&T, C-4, District Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017

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Regd. Office: C-4, District Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017, India
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Advt. No. – IRPL/C01/2024
The Company invites applications for following posts on Contract basis at a fixed all-inclusive salary; the details are tabulated as below:

Sl. No.	Post, Essential Qualification & Pay	Age Limit as on 01.01.2024	Minimum Post Qualification Experience
1	Finance Assistant on Contract, B. Com (Full time not less than 55% marks) OR M. Com (Full time with not less than 55% marks) OR CA Intermediate (ICAI)/CMA Intermediate (ICMAI) Total Posts - 1 (UR), Fixed Pay - Rs. 45,000/- p.m.	35 Years	4 Years
2	Company Secretary on Contract, Associate Member of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India Total Posts - 1 (UR), Fixed Pay - Rs. 48,000/- p.m.	30 Years	2 Years
3	Technical Assistant on Contract, Full time Graduate Bachelor's Degree with not less than 60% marks from recognized University/Institute approved by AICTE/UGC in any of the following specializations: 1. Electrical Engg. 2. Electronics Engg. 3. Electrical & Electronics Engg. 4. Electronics & Communication Engg. 5. Electrical & Instrumentation Engg. Candidate should have good Computer Skills. Total Posts - 2 (UR), Fixed Pay - Rs. 36,000/- p.m.	30 Years	1 Year

For detailed information, please visit our website www.ircon.org. The last date for receiving duly filled application form at IRCON's corporate office, New Delhi is 12.02.2024.



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National Cadet Corps is not about uniform or uniformity; it is about unity.

- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



Amrit Kaal
ki NCC



Prime Minister Rally
27th January 2024
Cariappa Parade Ground,
Delhi Cantt.

ACHIEVEMENTS : 2023

- 17 lakh cadets with 39-percent girl cadets.
- Over 1600 camps with 7 lakh cadets.
- Defence officers - 116, Agniveers - 8937, CAPF - 1390 selected.
- 27 trekking camps and 2 mountaineering expeditions.
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PROGRAMME

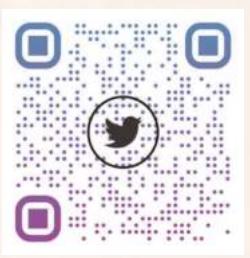
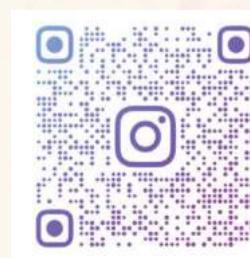
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(www.haryanarera.gov.in)

PROJECT DETAILS

1. Coloniser/Developer	Sternal Buildcon Private Limited									
2. Project Approval	Licence No. 17 of 2020 dated 17.07.2020. Building Plan Approved on 22.10.2020 Memo No. ZP-1425/SD(DK)/2020/18773.									
3. Location	Sector 37D, Gurugram, Haryana									
4. Provisions Project Area	4 no. of apartments available out of total 1,322 number of units in the housing scheme spread over 9.103 acres. Community Facilities: One Community Hall of 2000 sq.ft. and One Anganwadi-cum-creche of 2000 sq.ft.									
5. Apartment Details, Allotment Rates & Payment Terms	Apartment details									

Category(Type)	No of Units	Carpet Area sqm(approx)	Carpet Area sqft (approx)	Balcony Area sqm(approx)	Balcony Area sqft(approx)	Allotment Rate of Apartment (all inclusive)	With application Booking Amount 5%	On allotment 20%	Balance Amount as per CLP plan 55%
2BHK TYPE-02	3	54.74	589.243	7.47	80.45	30,42,755	1,47,310.75	6,13,378	16,73,515.25
2BHK TYPE-03	1	55.56	598.069	8.3	89.298	30,97,502.6	1,49,517.25	6,24,858.4	17,03,626.43

*Rate mentioned above does not include GST and other charges such as Stamp Duty, Registration Fees etc.

*Balance amount payable shall be equivalent to the amount payable as per the construction link payment plan of the project as applicable in terms of construction stage at relevant point of time

6. Parking	Two-wheeler parking with each apartment									
7. Broad Specifications of the Apartment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flooring: Rooms Vitrified Tiles, Kitchen Vitrified / Ceramic Tiles, Toilet Anti-Skid Ceramic Tiles, Balcony Anti-Skid / Matt Finish Ceramic Tiles. Windows: M.S. Sections as per IS Codes / Aluminium Powder Coated / UPVC • Doors Frame: Red Merandi / Mild Steel / Aluminium Powder Coated / UPVC • Wall Tile: Ceramic Tiles till 4 feet / 7 feet high & Oil Bound Distemper Above. Kitchen Counter: Top Green Marble / Granite • Wall: Oil Bond Distemper • Sanitary fitting: ISI marked CP Fittings, W.C & Washbasin • Electric Fitting: ISI Marked. Structure: RCC Frames Structure designed for SEISMIC forces as per latest IS code and NBC Recommendations. 									
8. Applications Timelines	(i) Apply Online at TCP website (https://edraw.tcpcharyana.gov.in/tcp-dms/home) for submitting application for allotment of dwelling units by e-Draw, starting from date 25.01.2024. For more information, call 7053-121-121 (ii) Last Date of submission of Applications is 09.02.2024.									

Eligibility: 1. The applicant should not be debarred from entering into legally binding contract under any prevailing law.

2. Any person can apply, however, the PMAY beneficiaries, which include their spouse or dependent children, identified by the Urban Local Bodies Department, Haryana under "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna-Housing for All" programme shall be granted preference in allotment. First priority shall be given to the identified beneficiaries of the said town followed by other PMAY beneficiaries of the State of Haryana. Thereafter, for the remaining flats, persons which include their spouse or dependent children who do not own any flat/plot in any HUDA developed colony/sector or any licenced colony in any of the Urban areas in Haryana, UT of Chandigarh and NCT Delhi shall be given next preference in allotment of flats.

3. An applicant can make only one application. Any successful applicant under this policy shall not be eligible for allotment of any other flat under this policy in any other colony. In case, he/she is successful in more than one colony, he/she will have choice of retaining only one flat.

4. Supportive Affidavit and certificate suggesting eligibility are mandatory to be uploaded at TCP website while submitting application for allotment. Applicant shall also upload ID Proof & Address Proof Le Adhaar Card & Pan Card.

Allotment Criteria: 1. The allotment of apartments shall be done through draw of lots in the presence of a committee consisting of Deputy Commissioner or his representative (at least of the cadre of Haryana Civil Services), Senior Town Planner (Circle office), DTP of the concerned district and the representative of coloniser concerned.

2. After fixation of date for draw of lots, an advertisement shall be issued by the Developer informing the applicants about the details regarding date/time and venue of the draw of lots in the same newspapers in which the original advertisement was issued.

3. For detailed criteria and time-frame to be adopted for scrutiny and allotment, the applicants may also refer to the details in the Affordable Group Housing Policy 2013 vide no. PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 & amendment thereof (available at the Department website, i.e., tcpcharyana.gov.in).



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EXPRESS AUDIO

Ram Temple's journey, Bharat Jodo Assam leg, & Mumbai demolitions

In 3 Things, we discuss the history of Ram Temple movement, the Assam leg of Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, and demolition of a dozen structures in Muslim-dominated Haidary Chowk area of Mira Road in Mumbai

Don't know Hindi, will call criminal laws by old names: Madras HC Judge

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JANUARY 24

JUSTICE N Anand Venkatesh of the Madras High Court has said he will continue using the original English names of key criminal laws even after they are replaced with Hindi titles "because I don't know that language".

Justice Venkatesh was talking specifically about referring to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act by their long-standing English names. This comes against the backdrop of a recent decision by the Parliament to rename these laws in Hindi: The IPC to Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023; the CrPC to Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023; and the Indian Evidence Act to Bharatiya Sakshya, 2023.

Despite the presidential assent to these changes, expected to take effect this year, the transition has sparked debates on linguistic accessibility and inclusivity in India's legal framework.

During the hearing on Tuesday, on a legal question per-

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON [WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](#)

Cabinet hails Modi

taining to the limitation period under Section 468 of the CrPC, Justice Venkatesh sought assistance from the Madras Bar Association (MBA). MBA secretary S Thiruvengadam, advocate Mohamed Riyaz, and Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) A Damodaran, among others, supported the court by referencing Supreme Court judgments and amendments to the CrPC.

At one point, when the APP attempted to mention a related provision in the newly named BNSS, 2023, he was seen struggling to pronounce the Hindi terms. Eventually, he started referring to it as the "new Act". Justice Venkatesh, in a lighter vein, asked APP Damodaran to name the new Act as he would struggle again to pronounce it. He remarked that the APP referring to the Act as a "new Act" was nothing but a clever move as he couldn't pronounce it, triggering laughter.

Justice Venkatesh acknowledged the linguistic challenge in these names, and told the lawyers that he would continue to refer to the three basic criminal laws by their original English names "because I don't know that language".

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement was the only movement in independent India that brought everyone together. Crores of Indians were emotionally attached to this movement and waited for this moment," it stated.

Hailing his 11-day anushthan for the consecration ceremony and the trips he had undertaken to visit pilgrim sites associated with Lord Ram, the Cabinet said this had "provided energy to national unity" and "we felicitate you for this not just as members of the Cabinet but also in our capacity as normal citizens".

"The people of this country have waited for this moment for centuries, and now a new era has been heralded with the construction of the grand Ram temple," it stated.

"Today, it has become a narrative-setting people's movement. This kind of anushthan can only be done at the hands of someone blessed by God," it said.

The resolution recalled Modi's remarks at the consecration ceremony where he said "thousands of years later, people will remember this date (January 22, 2024)..."

It's a blessing that all of us are living this moment and witnessing it" and said "it won't be an exaggeration to call today's Cabinet as the Cabinet of the Millennium.

Meanwhile, amid the heavy rush of devotees in Ayodhya for a darshan of the idol at the new Ram temple, Modi is learnt to have advised his ministers to defer their visits to the temple. Sources said Modi expressed concern over the inconvenience caused to the public by VIP visits to the temple.

Responding to a question on whether the entire Cabinet will visit the Ram temple, Thakur said that as of now, no member is going there. "There is no proposal by the Cabinet that the Cabinet ministers will go there," he said.

On a personal note, Thakur said, he would suggest that people visit Ayodhya keeping in mind the decisions taken and advisories issued by the Uttar Pradesh government due to the high footfall.

no talks were on with the Congress, her party would contest the coming Lok Sabha polls alone, and that the issue of a national alliance would be decided only after the elections.

"Amar kono kotha hoyni, amar karoro songe kotha hoyni. Kono charcha nei. Mithe kotha (I have had no talks, no talks with anyone... no talks at all. It's all lies). Absolutely wrong," Banerjee said, while adding that the Congress can fight 300 seats and the regional parties will fight in the rest. The Congress should not interfere there. But if it does, we will see what is to be done."

Mann said that the Lok Sabha candidates in Punjab will be chosen on winnability. "We have got a list of 40 probables, out of which 13 will be selected. We will get them surveyed."

The CM's statement came as a surprise as lately he had been giving indications of softening his stance on the issue, hinting that the high command would make the final decision on an alliance with the Congress. On January 1, in a show of support for the INDIA bloc, he said, "We are fighting for the country. If the Constitution is saved, then the country will be saved. If the Constitution is saved, then parties will be protected."

Recently, in another positive sign, the AAP and Congress came together for the mayoral elections to the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation, which

converged between the Congress (TMC) chief Mamata Banerjee. As for Punjab, the Congress leadership appeared resigned to the fact that an alliance with the AAP was difficult.

Hours after Banerjee declared that her party would contest the Lok Sabha polls alone in West Bengal, sources in the Congress said its top leadership was trying to get in touch with her, and asserted that there would be at least a tactical alliance in the state. Seeking to placate her, the party said it could "not imagine" the INDIA bloc without Banerjee. It also hung on to her remarks that she was determined to fight the BJP.

Banerjee's remarks came a day before Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is scheduled to enter West Bengal. The Election Commission's response to the Law Commission's questionnaire on March 17, 2023, is not its first. On at least one ear-

In its response dated May 12, 2018, the EC limited itself to presenting the factual position on the Model Code of Conduct. It clarified the code's purpose, emphasizing it only prohibits new projects, programmes, financial grants, or promises that could influence the electorate in favour of the ruling party. The EC had also highlighted that ongoing projects remain unaffected. Additionally, the EC reiterated that MCC restrictions are solely applicable to states undergoing elections.

In its March 2023 response, it is learned, the EC further states that the code's applicability depends on the cycle and frequency of elections, and that the Commission has evolved a strategy to keep the MCC imposition period to a minimum.

The Union Government had first referred the issue of simultaneous polls to the Law Commission in April 2018. The Centre had then on September 1, 2023, set up a high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind on the same.

The Election Commission's response to the Law Commission's questionnaire on March 17, 2023, is not its first. On at least one ear-

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"The ASI said that soft copies can't be issued because of the threat of cyber crimes," Jain said.

On May 16, 2022, a video-graphic survey of the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque was completed by a commission appointed by the local court.

During the survey proceedings, a structure which the Hindu side claimed was a "Shivling", and the Muslim side claimed was a "fountain", was found inside the mosque premises.

The matter has been listed for further hearing on February 6 "for disposal of other pending applications".

After hearing lawyers representing the two sides, the judge said, "I am of the view that in the interest of justice, it is necessary that (a) copy of the survey report be provided to the parties to the suit". He said without providing copies of the survey report to the parties, it will not be possible for them to file objections against it.

Earlier, Advocate Mumtaz Ahmad, representing the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, said, "The district judge has ordered that parties can submit applications, and that they will be provided a copy of the ASI report".

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, who represents the Hindu petitioners in the court, said, "A hearing happened today. An under-

• EC to law panel: Model code not a disruption

Commission described MCC as a "vital instrumentality" in providing a level playing field to everyone, and "integral to the design of conducting free and fair elections and credible electoral outcomes".

The EC's March 17, 2023, reply was in response to queries by the Law Commission regarding the feasibility and challenges associated with holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections. The response is significant since it is the first time that the poll watchdog has so staunchly defended the MCC stating "it would not be correct" to view its application as a "disruption".

The EC is further learned to have said it has consistently evolved a strategy to keep the time period of the Model Code of Conduct to a minimum.

The government's argument in favour of simultaneous elections rests significantly on the frequent imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during frequent elections, citing its impact on governance. According to the government, the imposition of MCC leads to a standstill in development programmes and activities.

Since, MCC is only a moral code and lacks any statutory backing, the EC, at best, can censure, advise or pull up the person found violating it.

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lier occasion, The Indian Express has learned, it had replied to a similar set of questions. However, in its earlier response sent in May 2018, the EC had not put up such a defence of MCC.

In its response dated May 12, 2018, the EC limited itself to presenting the factual position on the Model Code of Conduct. It clarified the code's purpose, emphasizing it only prohibits new projects, programmes, financial grants, or promises that could influence the electorate in favour of the ruling party. The EC had also highlighted that ongoing projects remain unaffected. Additionally, the EC reiterated that MCC restrictions are solely applicable to states undergoing elections.

In its March 2023 response, it is learned, the EC further states that the code's applicability depends on the cycle and frequency of elections, and that the Commission has evolved a strategy to keep the MCC imposition period to a minimum.

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• Meeting called by radical Meitei group

Operations agreement between the Centre and Kuki militant groups.

In a statement, the ITIL, a Kuki-Zomi body based in Churachandpur, said, "For the first time in history, a militia that led attacks on innocent civilians because of their ethnicity and which openly displays sophisticated weapons stolen from police armories was able to order state lawmakers, including the chief minister, to attend a meeting it had called and made the MLAs endorse their demands."

It added, "Manipur state police and central security forces remained mute spectators as Arambai Tengnol leader Korounganba Khuman arrived at the venue in Imphal in a police vehicle, and the militant group proceeded to administer an oath-taking ceremony to the MLAs. All these happened even as a special team sent by the central government is camping nearby in the city. Why did the world's largest democracy allow this... Today's events have shown that Manipur's government has submitted its authority to an armed militant group."

Those who attended the meeting also said the elected representatives took an "oath" inside Kangla Fort—a historic site which served as the royal seat of the Manipur kingdom till 1891. The meeting was not allowed inside.

The Indian Express reached out to several MLAs who were at Kangla, but they either did not respond to calls or declined to elaborate on what had transpired.

Speaking to The Indian Express, one of the state's 10 Kuki MLAs expressed surprise at how

the MLAs could heed the call of a radical outfit.

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After the meeting at Kangla Fort, Arambai Tengnol chief Korounganba Khuman addressed the public. PTI quoted him as saying:

"The legislators, including Chief Minister N Biren Singh, today assured to convey it (the outfit's demands) to the Centre. Our points included removal of Suspension of Operations, implementation of NRC, replacement of Assam Rifles and removal of Kuki illegal immigrants from Scheduled Tribe list to bring peace."

He claimed that the elected representatives have promised to act within 15 days. "What we wanted to show today is that ministers and MLAs are under the public," he said.

Quoting the legislators, he said, "If the Centre does not listen to our concerns, we (legislators) will take the movement to protect Manipur along with the people."

The meeting at Kangla took place under heavy security. In a statement on Tuesday, the Superintendent of Police, Imphal West, had said that the outfit "has summoned all the ministers and MLA belonging to the valley districts at Kangla at 10 am".

On Wednesday, thousands of volunteers from the group gathered in Imphal, while Meitei legislators began trickling into Kangla by around 9.30 am. The meeting ended around 11 am.

At the heart of the tussle between the Congress and TMC is the former's demand for at least six seats in West Bengal, and reluctance to part with any seats in Assam and Meghalaya.

The TMC sources said that in the last elections, the Congress recorded over 30% vote share in only two seats (Berhampore, Malda Dakshin), and added that the party could think of increasing the offer marginally if the Congress reciprocated in Assam

and Meghalaya.

The scrum between the Congress and AAP, too, is over the former's reluctance to enter into seat-sharing pacts in Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Goa. While the Congress had declined to thwart the BJP, Banerjee said it marked the beginning of electoral cooperation within the INDIA bloc.

However, the Punjab Congress unit never reconciled to any tie-up with the AAP, accusing the Mann government of unleashing a " vendetta" against its leaders. Recently, the Congress began meetings in different constituencies of Punjab reportedly for a feedback on an alliance with the AAP, after which its Punjab in-charge Devender Yadav is learnt to have conveyed to the party high command that the state unit was strictly opposed to any alliance.

However,

DELHI POLICE SECURITY PLAN FOR R-DAY

14,000 cops at venue, eye on vulnerable areas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

AROUND 14,000 security personnel will be deployed around Kartavya Path to ensure the safety of 77,000 invitees during the Republic Day parade, officers said.

According to Special Commissioner (Security) Deepender Pathak, vulnerable areas in the city are also being identified following the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya. "A professional, robust, and flawless security arrangement has been made for Republic Day," he added.

Special CP (Law and Order, Zone 2) Madhup Tiwari said the New Delhi district has been divided into 28 zones and sufficient deployment will accordingly be made. He added that a missing person's booth, first-aid kiosks, and facilitation booths where visitors can deposit their keys before the parade, will also be set up at Kartavya Path.

Police further said visitors will be expected to reach the venue on time and cooperate with se-



Quick response teams, PCR vans, and SWAT teams will be deployed at strategic locations at Kartavya Path. Praveen Khanna

curity personnel on ground.

Special CP Tiwari added that QRTs (quick response teams), PCR vans, and SWAT teams will be deployed at strategic locations earmarked at the venue and across the city. He also said elaborate frisking will be carried out at entry points to the venue.

"The force is on high alert to keep tabs on place with high footfall and areas bordering Delhi," he said.

On the traffic front, no vehicle

can be parked in parking lots at New Delhi, Old Delhi, Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar railway stations from 8 pm on January 25 to 12 pm on January 26.

Special Commissioner of Police (Traffic, Zone 2) HGS Dhaliwal said Delhi's borders will be sealed from 10 pm on January 25 for heavy vehicles. "Traffic movement will be restricted in the city as diversions will be put in place on January 26," said Dhaliwal.

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

WHEN AIRCRAFT zoom above Kartavya Path as part of the Republic Day flypast, the Indian Air Force needs to prepare for another presence in the sky – birds, more specifically, black kites. Their preparation draws from an old practice that's routine for some residents – meat tossing.

For the second year in a row, meat tossing is being attempted to draw black kites away from the flight path of aircraft participating in the flypast in Delhi, in an exercise that involves the IAF and the Department of Forests and Wildlife of Delhi.

Sources associated with the exercise, in the IAF and the Forest Department, said it would be similar to the effort made last year. While they would not disclose locations from where meat is being tossed or the duration for which the exercise is being undertaken, an official said it must be done for a while so the birds are accustomed to being fed in the area, which means that it is already under way.

Last year, the exercise was taken up at 10 locations and had begun ahead of the event. The official said it was found to be ef-

fective, with birds descending in a few minutes, and added that the tossing of meat attracts their attention, while also maintaining distance from the bird that then swoops down to grab it, rather than laying the meat on the ground and waiting for the bird to descend.

The IAF in an official response said the Republic Day flypast takes place over an area which is not a regular airfield, and therefore, specific anti-bird measures are put in place whenever the event is planned. "Over the past years, black kites have multiplied due to the absence of natural predators and easy availability of food in urban areas. Data collected since 2012 over Kartavya Path shows a 150% increase in population of black kites in the critical area of the air display. In January 2022, a temporary relocation of black kites was attempted. However, the birds did not relocate and old pattern of activity in urban areas continued as before," the IAF said.

In 2022, the first time an intervention was made to deal with black kites, 10 birds were captured ahead of the flypast and released on the evening of Republic Day, a source who was associated with the exercise said. In the exercise in 2022 and 2023,

At 6 pm



To mitigate bird strikes, the IAF also deploys bird watchers along the fly-past route that passes through NCR. Praveen Khanna

experts from the Wildlife Institute of India were involved.

"Bird strike incidents on fighter aircraft can result in minor damage to possibly catastrophic outcomes. While safety protocol and pilot training assist in mitigating risks, the potential damage and associated consequences underscore bird strike

ation with the community, using how quickly kites respond to meat tossing activity can help reduce the potentiality of some kites reaching the flight path in places where aircraft may descend to a low level for the event," said a source associated with the efforts.

On attempts made over the past few years to avoid bird strikes during the flypast, the IAF included "liaison with the MCD to ensure feeding of birds at various bird feeding points is not undertaken during January"; requesting the National Zoological Park to change feeding timings

for migratory birds at the zoo to afternoon hours so that birds congregate in the area when the parade and flypast are over; publicity through radio broadcasts for awareness on garbage disposal; and checking of authorised slaughterhouses by authorities concerned for compliance with solid waste disposal rules.

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Delhi has a high density of raptors, research shows. There are two subspecies of black kites in the Capital – the Small Indian kite which is a resident subspecies, and the Black-eared kite, a migratory sub-species that arrives in winter. It is native to, among other places, parts of Central Asia.

Nadeem Shehzad at Wildlife Rescue, an NGO that rescues raptors and birds of prey, among other birds in the city, pointed to the steady supply of food as a reason for the large population of black kites in Delhi. "Garbage is available in plenty in Delhi for scavengers, allowing them to thrive not just on waste, but also on rats near the garbage heaps. The city's landfills offer food to them, including animal remains that may be dumped at these landfills," he said.

Cracks in INDIA bloc, but Delhi offers hope for AAP and Congress

JATIN ANAND & MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

AMID SIGNS of the unraveling of the INDIA bloc, Delhi offers a ray of hope, according to sources from both the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress.

According to senior party leaders, talks on seat-sharing between the two parties are very likely to have a "positive" outcome for the city. The situation in Punjab, however, is not conducive to putting up a united front. "Both parties in Punjab have maintained since the beginning that they will not come together in the state. The state units are completely opposed to the idea. This, however, will not have a bearing on the talks in Delhi," said an AAP leader.

According to sources, the AAP wants to contest from the North East, Chandni Chowk, North West and West seats; the Congress from East, New Delhi and South.

"Not just in Delhi, but we are also willing to accommodate the AAP on one seat each in Haryana and Gujarat. The objective is to stop the BJP from taking advantage of a triangular contest in states," another Congress leader said.

In Gujarat, the AAP has already announced Chaitanya Vasava as its candidate from Bharuch.

The next meeting in regard to the alliance is likely to take place next week.



R-Day extravaganza: Tableaux, food, and more at Bharat Parv

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

FOR A GLIMPSE into the various cultures and traditions of India's states, people can head to Red Fort for the nine-day Bharat Parv. Being organised by the Ministry of Tourism from January 23-31 and launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday, the event has seven Republic Day tableaux showcasing different cultural tropes from Karnataka, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam, Tripura, and Jammu and Kashmir on display at the fort's lawns.

The diorama for Karnataka shows the tech-savvy Bengaluru airport perched upon the iconic Vidhana Soudha building. A statue of Kempe Gowda I, the Vijayanagara empire chieftain who founded and developed Bengaluru, is in front of the tableau.

The Himachal Pradesh tableau showcases the unique Kullu Dussehra festival. The description board informs that the festival dates back to the 17th Century when an idol of Raghunath (another name for Ram) was brought from Ayodhya on a throne and made the presiding deity of Kullu by local ruler

Raja Jagat Singh. Bordered with Kullu's famous knit-patterned border, the tableau has a wooden chariot with replicas of the deity and its consort adorned with bright red and yellow cloth.

While Assam showcased its tea cultivation and processing, the Jammu and Kashmir tableau advertises the state's handicraft industry and saffron cultivation.

Notably, Uttarakhand's tableau displays the "first village of India", Mana, located approximately 26 km from the Indo-Tibet border. It also displays the state's first Vande Bharat train connecting Delhi to Dehradun.

In addition, the food court includes cuisines from different states, culinary schools and the National Association of Street Vendors of India.

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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



SPORTS BOOST

TO GET a foothold among young voters, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Jayant Chaudhary is repeatedly making contributions from his Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds for development of sports infrastructure in western Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. On Tuesday, he wrote to Bulandshahr district magistrate stating that he is providing Rs 60 lakh for the development of a multi-purpose indoor stadium in a college. On January 18, he provided Rs 20 lakh to a college in Mathura for development of a hand-ball and tennis court on the campus, and Rs 40 lakh for development of a wrestling hall in Muzaffarnagar. RLD insiders said Chaudhary has so far provided Rs 35 lakh from MPLADS funds for development of sports facilities in Rajasthan too. A few weeks earlier, he had announced to give Rs 10 lakh to a college in Jaipur for the construction of an indoor stadium.

PROFESSIONAL STROKES

FOR FORMER bureaucrat Alok Srivastava, his first brush with watercolours was during the Covid-19 lockdown. But what started as a hobby has now turned into a profession. Srivastava, who is currently a technical member of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and a former law secretary, is exhibiting his paintings at a gallery in Delhi this week. The guest list for the exhibition includes NCLAT Chairperson Ashok Bhushan among others.

CELEBRITY RETURNS

A DAY after attending the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya as an invited VIP guest, Bollywood actor Anupam Kher visited the temple again on Tuesday for a darshan of Lord Ram, but this time he covered his face with a muffler. He spent hours in the queue outside the sanctum sanctorum waiting with other devotees to catch a glimpse of the Lord.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Assam's Bongaigaon district, Wednesday. PTI

Won't arrest Rahul now, will wait for LS polls to end: Himanta

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 24

ASSAM CHIEF Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Wednesday said the state police would arrest Congress leader Rahul Gandhi after Lok Sabha elections, a day after an FIR was registered against him and other Congress leaders following a confrontation between people taking part in the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and the Assam police. On Wednesday, Assam DGP G P Singh said the case has been transferred to the state CID and a SIT would be constituted "for a thorough and in-depth investigation". "We will arrest him after the Lok Sabha elections, if we do it now it will get very politicised. The SIT will do its investigation now... Yesterday there could have been a major incident going by how they had instigated the mob to break barricades. Before the Lok Sabha polls, we will not do much because we will be winning from Assam anyway..." said Sarma on the sidelines of an event Wednesday.

Tuesday was the sixth day of the yatra's Assam leg, which has been fraught with confrontations between the participants and the state apparatus. The yatra had been denied permission to enter Guwahati city, which it intended to do Tuesday. When they were met with barricades and police at the road entering the city from the highway, participants broke through the obstruction and were pushed back by the security personnel. The yatra eventually con-

RAHUL CALLS AIUDF 'B TEAM OF BJP'

Dhubri: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Wednesday claimed Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sharma is "remote-controlled" by PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Gandhi also slammed the Badruddin Ajmal-led All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), terming it as the "B team of BJP". Gandhi asserted that the Congress will defeat both the BJP and the AIUDF in the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls. PTI

tinued along the highway and did not enter the city.

Later that day, the police lodged a suo motu FIR under IPC sections. The FIR names "unknown" as the accused but names Rahul Gandhi, Jitender Singh, K C Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Srinivas B V, Kanhaiya Kumar, Gourav Gogoi, Debabrata Saikia, Bhupen Bora, Jakir Hussain Sikdar and Ramen Kumar Sarma as people who were heading the yatra as it entered Assam from Meghalaya.

"The crowd instigated, led and participated by senior INC leaders forcefully changed the course towards GS Road by breaking barricades and assaulted police personnel. Although police tried to persuade the leaders and the crowd... the leaders bluntly refused and incited the crowd with inflammatory words," states the FIR. It states that five police personnel were injured in the incident.

BJP: Mamata's decision to go solo 'natural' result of 'unholy alliance'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE BJP hit out Wednesday at what seemed to be an INDIA bloc threatening to unravel, calling West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee's announcement that her party Trinamool Congress would go alone in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in the state a "natural" result of an "unholy alliance."

"It is an unholy attempt for an unholy alliance, and its fate was destined. Keeping 'INDIA' as the name doesn't bring the spirit of India," Punjab BJP chief Sunil

Jakhar told PTI after Mamata's statement. Significantly, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann also announced that AAP would contest alone in the state. However, this drew no immediate reaction from the BJP. Party spokespersons in Delhi also did not respond to messages seeking reactions.

At a press conference in Delhi, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) chief and the party's Bengaluru South MP Tejaswi Surya said, "The INDIA alliance is an unnatural alliance like a snake and mongoose. So it is dying a natural death. In Bengal, TMC, CPM and Congress keep fighting. In

Kerala, the Left and Congress keep fighting. AAP and the Congress fight in Punjab and Delhi. It is a non-starter of an alliance."

"The (INDIA) alliance was not politically viable in Bengal because the CPM and Congress are contesting against TMC," said West Bengal BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar. "INDI alliance has broken apart. Without leaders like Mamata Banerjee, Nitish Kumar and Akhilesh Yadav, what is INDIA, and this bickering is against the policy and attitude of the Congress. It is a big setback for the Congress," former Karnataka CM Basavaraj Bommai told PTI.

He said simultaneous elections would reduce election-related expenditure, minimise the diversion of administrative personnel, security forces and re-

BCI chairman backs one nation, one poll, says it will reduce cost

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

BAR COUNCIL of India Chairman Manan Kumar Mishra backed the idea of simultaneous elections and told the 'One Nation One Election' committee in his response that the concept "warrants careful deliberation before becoming an integral part of the electoral framework".

He said simultaneous elections would reduce election-related expenditure, minimise the diversion of administrative personnel, security forces and re-

sources for election duty and allow political parties to focus on "comprehensive, long-term policy planning and implementation". The high-level committee, headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind, had written to Mishra on January 2. On January 16, Mishra in his reply said the "One Nation, One Election presents a promising stride forward for India. It is a very welcome step".

About the legal and administrative changes required to implement the idea, Mishra wrote: "The foremost imperative involves a Constitutional amendment to synchronise the tenures of state assemblies with that of the Lok Sabha. This entails the modification of Articles 83, 85, Articles 172, 174, and 356 of the Constitution, thereby adjusting the terms of state legislatures to align with the Lok Sabha's tenure."

Meanwhile, on Wednesday Kovind met former CJ of Allahabad HC Justice Dilip Bhosale and former CJ of Delhi HC Justice Rajendra Menon, "who gave their considered opinion on the subject", a Law Ministry statement said. Kovind also met ASSOCHAM president and SpiceJet CMD Ajay Singh, it said.

FULL REPORT

www.indianexpress.com

in the range of 15,000-20,000.

While addressing the media, the Maratha activist also said that he did not nurse any hopes of joining politics. "I am an ordinary human being. I do not want to enter politics. One needs a lot of money to make it into politics... I am fighting for the common man. We are fighting only for reservation," he said.

Jarange-Patil said the mammoth participation showed the mood of the crowd. "The government gave us the word but is not keeping it. We gave seven months' time to the government, but it failed to meet our demand. The government claims it has found lakhs of Kunbi records but is doing nothing to issue caste certificates. The government has said it will bring in a law for reservation but has done nothing. The OBC

community is not asked to produce any records but the government wants Kunbi records from Maratha community," he said.

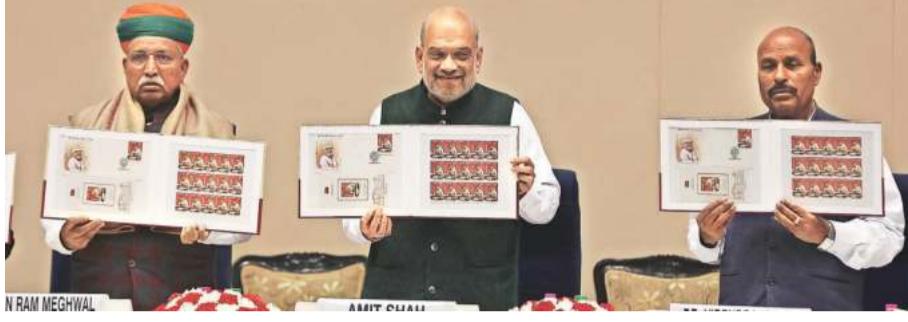
BHARAT RATNA TO KARPOORI THAKUR

Modi fulfilled long-awaited wish of crores of poor, deprived, says Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

TERMING THE central government's decision to confer Bharat Ratna on socialist icon and former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur (posthumously) as *garib kaa* (cause for the poor). Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday said with this move, PM Narendra Modi has honoured 70 crore poor people of the country.

In a separate event, Modi said Thakur's entire life was dedicated to social justice and upliftment of the underprivileged. "You all must have seen that yesterday the country has taken a big decision. This is the decision to give Bharat Ratna to Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur. It is very important for today's young generation to know about Karpoori Thakurji and learn from his life. It is the good fortune of our BJP government that it got the opportunity to honour Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur with Bharat Ratna," Modi said, addressing NCC/ NSS cadets. "Fighting challenges like extreme poverty and social inequality, he reached a very high position in national life. Despite this, he never gave up his



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Union Ministers Virendra Kumar and Arjun Ram Meghwal at an event in New Delhi on Wednesday. Anil Sharma

humble nature and worked for all sections of society..." he said.

Shah said that PM Modi fulfilled the dream of 500 years of devotees who wanted Ram Lalla to reside in a grand temple rather than a tent. "On January 23, he fulfilled the long-awaited wish of crores of poor, deprived, exploited, Dalits, tribals, that the people's leader (Jan Nayak), who made social justice a reality, get the Bharat Ratna award," Shah said.

"22 tarikh ko Modiji ne Ram kaai kiya, aur 23 tarikh ko garib kaa kiya, Ram aur garib ko jodne ka prayas kiya (Modiji completed Lord Ram's task on January 22

and by undertaking the cause of the poor on January 23, he tried to link Ram and the poor)," Shah said, adding that the poor are being honoured after so many years because "the son of a poor tea seller is the PM of the country".

Recalling Thakur's popularity as Jan Nayak, Shah said, "...It took ages to bestow on him the Bharat Ratna award. Many came (to power) but no one found it appropriate to confer Bharat Ratna on Karpoori Thakur." Today, on the 100th birth anniversary of Karpoori Thakur, Narendra Modi, born in a poor family like his (Thakur), has bestowed on him the Bharat

Ratna," Shah said. "Congress ne ek parampara kari thi ki ek parivar aaspas hi jan nayakon ka, lok nayakon ka aur sarvanjanik jivan ke etaon ka samman ho. Modiji ne wo parampara todi hai. (The Congress had started a tradition of honouring leaders of only one family. Modiji has broken that tradition)," Shah said.

"The more the decision of PM Modi to honour a man hailing from an extremely poor family who graced the CM position of Bihar, someone who fought for social justice - Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur is praised, the less it is..." said BJP chief P Nadda.

In balancing act, Nitish targets PM Modi, slams dynasty politics

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JANUARY 24

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar Wednesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his government's decision to confer the Bharat Ratna on socialist icon and former chief minister Karpoori Thakur.

At the same time, Nitish, however, also took a swipe at the Modi-led BJP government, saying that finally they (BJP) have also realised the importance of Karpoori Thakur.

At a meeting in Patna organised by the JD(U) to commemorate the birth centenary of Karpoori - Nitish said: "PM called up Rammath Thakur (Karpoori's elder son and JD(U)'s Rajya Sabha MP) to share the news (about Karpoori being awarded the Bharat Ratna). I got the news through Rammath ji. The PM did not call me. But I want to thank PM through press. Don't say he had given Bharat Ratna to Karpoori Thakur because of sustained demands from us. Let him take full credit."

The CM then said: "They (BJP) have finally realised that they cannot do without Karpoori Thakur. Unkijat karenge to unko bhi kuch mil jayega (if they respect him, they too will get something). As for me, I have been making the demand for Bharat Ratna for Karpoori Thakur since 2007 from whichever government came to power at the Centre. Finally, this government gave him the honour. We are very happy our long-pending demand has been fulfilled."

Speaking at the Karpoori Thakur centenary celebrations, Lalu said: "Abhi tak lyon nahi diya tha Bharat Ratna Karoorigi ko? Abhi kyon yaad aayi? Tejaswi-Nitish ne caste survey kiya aur quota badhaya to ye nirnay liya. Abhi chunav samne hai. (Why haven't you (BJP) taken a decision on giving Bharat Ratna to Karpoori Thakur before? Why are they remembering Karpoori Thakur now? Since Tejaswi and Nitish conducted the caste survey and hiked quota in state government)

"It was only after sustained demand from my father Lalu Prasad, CM Nitish Kumar and me that the Centre was forced to confer Bharat Ratna on Karpoori Thakur. We welcome it but the move is borne out of electoral constraints of the BJP. They were perhaps intimidated by our decision to hike the quota," Tejaswi said.

Lalu recalled how his politics was shaped and nurtured by Thakur's ideals. He also recalled how Thakur died "in his lap" while being taken to a Patna hospital.

Highlighting Karpoori's opposition to dynastic politics, he said, "Karpoori never promoted his family. It was only after his death,

Nitish's politics has been exhausted. He is a liability now".

The Bihar BJP, which also commemorated Karpoori's birth centenary, continued to distance itself from Nitish, with state BJP chief Samrat Choudhary saying that "There is no question of getting Nitish Kumar back in NDA".

There have been speculations over growing strains in Nitish's relations with INDIA bloc Senior BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi asked,

"Why did RJD chief Lalu Prasad, who had been Union Minister, not get Bharat Ratna to Karpoori Thakur?... As for Nitish, media should stop making speculations.

Nitish's politics has been exhausted. He is a liability now".



Manoj Jarange-Patil's rally gets rousing welcome in Pune, Wednesday. Pavan Khengre

MANOJ MORE
PUNE, JANUARY 24

THE TRAFFIC in several key areas of the city came to a standstill as Maratha activist Manoj Jarange-Patil, armed with his army of supporters and a barrage of vehicles, led the Maratha Aarakshan Morcha from Kharadi on the Pune-Ahmednagar road around 11 am on Wednesday.

The morcha received a rousing reception from not only the Maratha community but also from other communities. While around 15,000 people joined the morcha from other districts in Pune and beyond, scores of people joined the rally in the city as traffic moved at a snail's pace.

At every junction in the city, Jarange-Patil was felicitated, garlanded and showered with flowers. As the Maratha activist stood out of a black SUV and waved to the crowd, the traffic on Nagar

Road in Yerawada, Vimannagar, Kalyan Nagar, Pune station area and Khadki was affected.

Though the traffic in core city areas, especially on the Pune-

Ahmednagar Road, was badly affected, the Pune police played it down. "The morcha was stopping after few metres. The activist was felicitated and at some places, he also addressed the crowd... The traffic was affected in the areas through which the morcha passed," Police Commissioner Retesh Kumarr

told *The Indian Express*. An array of vehicles accompanied Jarange-Patil right from Antarwali-Saraati, where he started from on January 20. On the way, members from the Maratha community joined him in Beed, Ahmednagar and Pune districts. Many carried household items as Jarange-Patil asked his supporters to prepare for a long haul in Mumbai, where he will begin his hunger strike on January 26 to press his demand for Maratha quota.

The Pune police said the morcha was moving so slowly that it was supposed to reach Pune city area around 12 noon on Tuesday. "But it reached at 4 this morning," said police, adding that after taking a halt in Kharadi, the morcha started marching towards the city around 11 am.

While Maratha activists said lakhs participated in the morcha when it entered Pune city limits, police estimated the crowd to be

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024



सपने हो रहे साकार डबल इंजन की सारकार

जनपद बागपत, गाजियाबाद, गौतमबुद्ध नगर, हापुड़, बुलन्दशहर एवं मेरठ

की

₹20,700 करोड़ से अधिक की 46 विकास परियोजनाओं का लोकार्पण/शिलान्यास

डेडीकेटेड फ्रेट कॉरिडोर पर न्यू खुजाई एवं न्यू ट्रेवाड़ी स्टेशनों से मालगाड़ियों को हरी झंडी

नरेन्द्र मोदी प्रधानमंत्री द्वारा

गरिमामयी उपस्थिति

आनंदीबेन पटेल
राज्यपाल, उत्तर प्रदेश

ब्रजेश पाठक
उप मुख्यमंत्री
उत्तर प्रदेश

भूपेन्द्र सिंह चौधरी
सदस्य
विधान परिषद

जनरल डॉ. वी. के. सिंह (सेवानिवृत्त)
राज्य मंत्री, सड़क परिवहन एवं राजमार्ग
तथा नागरिक विमानन, भारत सरकार

दिनेश खटीक
राज्य मंत्री
जल शक्ति, उत्तर प्रदेश

योगी आदित्यनाथ
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

डॉ. अरुण कुमार सक्सेना
राज्य मंत्री (स्वतंत्र प्रभार), वन एवं पर्यावरण
जन्तु उद्यान एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन, उत्तर प्रदेश

डॉ. सोमेन्द्र सिंह तोमर
राज्य मंत्री, ऊर्जा एवं
अतिरिक्त ऊर्जा स्रोत, उत्तर प्रदेश

एवं अन्य गणमान्य महानुभाव

दिनांक : 25 जनवरी, 2024 | समय : अपराह्न 12:30 बजे | स्थान : पुलिस शूटिंग रेंज, चोला, बुलन्दशहर

लोकार्पण की जाने वाली प्रमुख परियोजनाएं

- ◆ बुलन्दशहर में कल्याण सिंह साजकीय स्वशासी चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय ◆ डेडीकेटेड फ्रेट कॉरिडोर पर न्यू खुजाई एवं न्यू ट्रेवाड़ी के मध्य निर्मित विद्युतीकृत डबल लाइन सेक्शन
- ◆ एनएच-34 पर अलीगढ़-कानपुर सेक्शन (अलीगढ़-भदवास) की फोर लैनिंग ◆ एनएच-709एडी पर शामली-मुजफ्फरनगर सेक्शन की फोर लैनिंग ◆ इंटीग्रेटेड इंडस्ट्रियल टाउनशिप ग्रेटर नोएडा
- ◆ एनएच-709ए पर शामली होते हुए मेरठ से करनाल बॉर्डर तक सड़क का चौड़ीकरण एवं सुधृदीकरण ◆ टूला-गौरिया पाइपलाइन परियोजना ◆ मथुरा एवं पलवल के मध्य चौथी रेल लाइन
- ◆ मथुरा सीवरेज परियोजना का पुनर्स्थापन एवं नवीनीकरण, एसटीपी एवं टीटीआरओ संयंत्र का निर्माण ◆ मुरादाबाद (रामगंगा) सीवरेज प्रणाली, सीवरेज नेटवर्क एवं एसपीएस (फेज-1) का निर्माण
- ◆ चिपियाना बुजुर्ग से दादरी के मध्य चौथी रेल लाइन ◆ नोएडा-ग्रेटर नोएडा एक्सप्रेसवे के 2.36 किमी चैनेज पर अंडरपास ◆ गौतमबुद्ध नगर पुलिस लाइन में 4 टावर का ट्रांजिट हॉस्टल ◆ मेरठ पुलिस लाइन में ट्रांजिट हॉस्टल
- ◆ मेरठ में डेडीकेटेड फ्रेट कॉरिडोर पर मेरठ-साहारनपुर रेलखंड के किमी-93 एवं दादरी-पीरपुर मार्ग पर सकौती-खतोली रेलवे स्टेशन के मध्य स्थित समपार संख्या-41 पर रेलवे उपरिगामी सेतु एवं पहुंच मार्ग
- ◆ ग्रेटर नोएडा वेस्ट में बालक इंटर कॉलेज से चारमूर्ति रोटरी एवं ब्रेंजिंगो रोटरी तक 60 मीटर चौड़ी सर्विस लेन का रिसर्फेंसिंग कार्य ◆ गाजियाबाद के डासना मुख्य मार्ग से अस्पताल मार्ग (धार्मिक स्थल मार्ग) का चौड़ीकरण एवं सुधृदीकरण ◆ नोएडा-ग्रेटर नोएडा एक्सप्रेसवे एवं प्राधिकरण के अन्य क्षेत्र में डेकोरेटिव लाइट्स, तिरंगा लाइट्स एवं फाउंटेन ◆ मेरठ के कंकरखेड़ा-पावली खुर्द-सरधना-मुल्हैया-बपारसी मार्ग के किमी 20.000 से 26.400 तक का चौड़ीकरण एवं सुधृदीकरण ◆ ग्रेटर नोएडा में 130 मीटर सर्विस रोड का रिसर्फेंसिंग कार्य एवं केपी-5 से डीएससी रोड तक अवशेष सर्विस रोड

शिलान्यास की जाने वाली प्रमुख परियोजनाएं

- ◆ बागपत में बड़ौत नगर पालिका परिषद पेयजल पुनर्गठन परियोजना ◆ ग्रेटर नोएडा वेस्ट में गौर चौक पर अंडरपास एवं 8 स्थानों पर फुट ऑवरब्रिज ◆ गाजियाबाद में आईटीएम इंटीग्रेटेड ट्रैफिक सिग्नल की स्थापना
- ◆ बुलन्दशहर में मेरठ-बदायूं मार्ग के शहरी भाग के किमी 72 से किमी 78 तक का चौड़ीकरण एवं सुधृदीकरण ◆ नोएडा के सेक्टर-116 में 35 एकड़ में आर्यमंडल थीम पर पार्क, सेक्टर-145 में 23 एकड़ में शहीदों की स्मृति में वीर रथ पार्क एवं 40 एकड़ में राज उपवन पार्क ◆ हापुड़ के गढ़मुकेश्वर एवं पिलखुआ नगर पालिका परिषद पेयजल पुनर्गठन परियोजना ◆ हापुड़ में मेरठ-बुलन्दशहर मार्ग का चौड़ीकरण एवं सुधृदीकरण
- ◆ मेरठ के 6वीं पीएसी कैंपस में 260-260 क्षमता की 2 बैरक एवं टाइप-2 श्रेणी के 106 नग आवास तथा 44वीं वाहनी पीएसी कैंपस में 200-200 क्षमता की 4 बैरक ◆ मेरठ में परतापुर-गोली तीर्थ चंदसारा फकुड़ा मार्ग का चौड़ीकरण एवं सुधृदीकरण ◆ नोएडा के सेक्टर-146 एवं 147 के मध्य 45 मीटर चौड़ी सड़क से हिंडन नदी पर निर्माणाधीन सेतु होते हुए ग्रेटर नोएडा नॉलेज पार्क-3 को जोड़ने वाला पहुंच मार्ग
- ◆ नोएडा के सेक्टर-112 में 11.7 एकड़ में राम वन गमन थीम पर पार्क, सेक्टर-62 में 18 एकड़ में डी-टाइप पार्क एवं सेक्टर-94 में 7 एकड़ में जापानी थीम पर पार्क ◆ गाजियाबाद के कविनगर जोन-1 में 24 घंटे पेयजल आपूर्ति परियोजना, डासना नगर पंचायत पेयजल पुनर्गठन परियोजना ◆ नौरा नगर पंचायत, बुलन्दशहर, अनूपशहर एवं शिकारपुर नगर पालिका परिषद पेयजल पुनर्गठन परियोजना
- ◆ गाजियाबाद में मधुबन-बापूधाम परियोजना के पॉकेट-1 में आरसीसी, नाली एवं सीवर लाइन का कार्य

SC cancels bail to DHFL's Wadhawans in loan fraud case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE SUPREME Court on Wednesday cancelled the bail granted to Diwan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL) promoters Kapil Wadhawan and Dheeraj Wadhawan, accused of cheating a consortium of banks after availing huge loans.

Deciding an appeal filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against the Delhi High Court's May 30, 2023, order which upheld a trial court's December 3, 2022, order granting them statutory bail, an Supreme Court bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Ujjal Bhuyan said the accused cannot claim default bail on the ground that the probe was still pending against co-accused.

An accused becomes entitled to statutory bail if the investigating agency does not complete the probe within the stipulated time and files the chargesheet.

The High Court, while upholding the trial court's order, said that the Central Bureau of Investigation chargesheet and terming the same as a final report under section 173 (2) of CrPC merely to ruse the statutory and fundamental right of default bail to the accused shall negate the provision under Section 167 CrPC and will also be against the mandate of Article 21 of the Constitution".

The Supreme Court, however, said "we have no hesitation in holding that the chargesheet having been filed against the respondent accused in the prescribed time limit and the cognizance had been taken by the special court of the offences alleged committed by them, the respondents could not have claimed the statutory right of default bail under Section 167 (2) of CrPC on the ground that the investigation for other accused was pending".

An FIR was lodged based on a complaint of the Union Bank of India, which led the consortium of 17 banks.

It alleged that the duo and others, in pursuance of a criminal conspiracy, induced the consortium to sanction huge loans aggregating over Rs 42,000 crore.



Demolished portions of nearly 40 'illegal' shops on Mumbai's Mohammed Ali Road on Wednesday. Amit Chakravarty

40 'encroachments' razed in Mumbai day after 15 shops demolished in Thane

NAYONIKA BOSE & PRATIP ACHARYA
MUMBAI, JANUARY 24

A DAY after the Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation (MBMC) razed encroachments from around 15 structures at Haidari Chowk on Mira Road in Thane district, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), in a similar exercise, on Wednesday razed encroachments from around 40 shops on Mohammed Ali Road in Mumbai.

The MBMC carried out the demolition on Tuesday in the same area where clashes had broken out between two communities on Sunday night. BMC officials said all the structures that were brought down on Mohammed Ali Road were illegal encroachments and were pulled down to free up space on the footpaths.

A visit to the area showed that almost all the structures that were demolished were awnings of existing commercial establishments, including shops, located on Ibrahim Mohamed Merchant Road and stalls of hawkers. While the BMC carried out the drive on Mohammed Ali Road, there were

Israel-Hamas conflict impacting our economic, energy interests: Top Indian diplomat to UNSC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24

THE ONGOING conflict between Israel and Hamas has been impacting the safety of maritime commercial traffic in the Indian Ocean, including in the vicinity of India, directly impacting the country's energy and economic interests, a top Indian diplomat has told members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

R Ravindra, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the UN, has made the remarks during a UNSC Open Debate on the Middle East, as Houthi rebels step up attacks on ships in the Red Sea.

"The ongoing conflict is also impacting the safety of maritime commercial traffic in the Indian Ocean, including some attacks in the vicinity of India... This is a matter of great concern to the international community and has a direct bearing on India's own energy and economic interests. This fraught situation is not to the benefit of any



It's a matter of great concern: R Ravindra, dy permanent representative of India to UN

party, and this must be clearly recognised," said Ravindra, without naming Houthi rebels.

The Houthi rebels have said the attacks have been in response to Israel's war in Gaza, and to show their support for the Palestinians.

Ravindra said the message that India has conveyed since the start of this conflict was clear and consistent — it is important to prevent escalation, to ensure continued delivery of humanitarian aid. Ravindra said that India welcomes the UN's efforts and international community.

"India has delivered shipments of relief material to the Palestinian people in Gaza. We have provided USD 5 million, including USD 2.5 million, we provided in December-end to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine refugees in the Near East..." he said.

Reiterating India's long-standing support for a "two-state solution" where the Palestinian people

are able to live freely in an independent country within secure borders — with due regard to

the security needs of Israel — Ravindra said that "India firmly believes that only a two-state solution... will deliver an enduring peace that the people of Israel and Palestine desire and deserve".

2-state solution only

guarantor of peace'

In her speech, Uzra Zeya, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights of the United States, called on Israeli leaders to take feasible precautions to minimise civilian harm in line with international law. She also emphasised Hamas' role in unleashing the conflict, and condemned at-

tacks in the wider region by Iran and its proxies. Saying that the "only guarantor of peace is a two-state solution" — with Israel's security guaranteed — Zeya called for a strong Palestinian authority in the West Bank and Gaza, even if this was "difficult to imagine".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council that "any refusal to accept the two-state solution by any party must be firmly rejected". "The only way to address the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians is through the two-state formula," said Guterres.

Riyad Al-Maliki, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates (State of Palestine), said, "Israeli leaders don't see our people as an empirical and political reality to coexist with, but a demographic threat to get rid of through death, displacement or subjugation."

'Difficult things for both the sides'

Israel's representative urged the council to shift its focus towards addressing the "real and

significant" security threats in the Middle East, which is "suffering from cancer" — the "continuous threat posed by Hamas", which exploits international aid to turn Gaza into a "war machine" and the "genocidal goals of annihilating Israel" pursued by Hamas during the October 7 events, where over 1,200 Israelis were killed.

Describing the council members' calls for a ceasefire "shocking", the Israel representative warned that "any such measure would leave Hamas in power, allowing them to regroup and rearm, while Israelis will face another attempted Holocaust".

Stephane Sejourne, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs (France), Council President for January, said that the council has two possible options. "The first is division, argument, and fanning the flames — The choice of those who invade their neighbour," said Sejourne. His choice, however, would be the second option — "to stand alongside both Israelis and Palestinians... which entails difficult things for both sides".

AMU MINORITY STATUS

How can Centre not accept 1981 amendment by Parliament: SC

ANANTHAKRISHNAG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE SUPREME Court on Wednesday questioned the Centre's submission that the 2006 Allahabad High Court ruling striking down the 1981 amendment made by Parliament to the Aligarh Muslim University Act seemed to be the more correct view, and said a government has to stand by Parliamentary amendments unless the same is reversed by Parliament.

A seven-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said that "irrespective of which government represents the cause of the Union of India, Parliament's cause is eternal, indivisible and indestructible".

It began with Justice Sanjiv Khanna, who was part of a seven-judge Constitution bench hearing the question of AMU's minority status, asking Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, whether he accepted the 1981 amendment. The bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant, JB Pardiwal, Dipankar Datta, Manoj Misra and Satish Chandra Sharma, is hearing a reference made to it by a three-judge bench in February 2019. "This is an amendment by the Parliament. Is the government accepting?" asked Justice Khanna. "I am not," the Solicitor General responded.

Expressing surprise, the CJI said, "How can you not accept an amendment by Parliament? Mr Solicitor, Parliament is an eternal, indestructible body under the Indian union. Irrespective of which government represents the cause of the Union of India, Parliament's cause is eternal, indivisible and indestructible... And I can't hear the Government of India say that an amendment which Parliament made is something I don't stand by. You have to stand by this amendment. You have an option. Go through the amending route and change the amending Act again."

Mehta said, "I am not arguing

a matter of Aversus B. I am before a seven-judge Constitution bench answering constitutional questions. The amendment in question was subjected to challenge before the high court and there is a judgment declaring that it is unconstitutional.

The CJI exclaimed, "This would be radical because a law officer would be then telling us that I don't abide by what Parliament has done. You have to stand by what Parliament has done... Can we hear any organ of the government say that notwithstanding a Parliamentary amendment, I don't accept this amendment?"

Mehta said he was supporting the 2006 judgment. The CJI asked, "How can you say I don't accept the validity of an amendment?" Mehta said, "Would a law officer be expected to say whatever amendments were made in the Constitution during Emergency were true only because they were made by the Parliament?... Here I have a judgment of the HC..."

At this point, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, for the AMU Old Boys Association, said, "I was sitting in the court when the Attorney-General Niran De was arguing that what is being done is right. I (Niran De) defend the Emergency provision. Why? Because he could not say otherwise."

In 1967, the SC in 'S Azeez Basha vs Union of India', held that AMU was not entitled to minority status as it "was brought into existence by the central legislature and not by the Muslim minority...". On Tuesday, the Centre argued the AMU had surrendered its denominational character at the time of its establishment by an Act of the British Parliament in 1920 and hence could not claim the minority status now.

FULL REPORT
www.indianexpress.com



TACTICAL TAMING

People take part in a bull-taming festival, Jallikattu, in Madurai, Wednesday. PTI

AYODHYA AFTER RAM TEMPLE CONSECRATION

Dhankhar: Temple testifies India believes in rule of law

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

IT IS a testament to the rule of law in the country that the Ram temple in Ayodhya was built in accordance with law, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Wednesday.

The consecration of Ram Mandir took very long. Every day was very painful. Still, in this land of Gandhi and Buddha, in this land, which has a civilisational depth of 5,000 years, it was in accordance with law," he said, adding this shows that "this nation believes in the rule of law."

Dhankhar spoke at the launch

of the Law Ministry's year-long pan-India campaign 'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman', to mark the 75th year of India as a Republic. Dhankhar also launched the Nyay Setu App, to provide a unified interface for legal information, advice and assistance.

The ministry said the event was envisaged to instill a sense of pride and responsibility to uphold the ideals outlined in the constitutional framework. Union Minister of Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal said it is important for citizens to know the Constitution. "Our Constitution is both rigid and flexible. Which is why it is important to know the Constitution," he said.

Dhankhar spoke at the launch

Darshan streamlined with entry-exit plan

MAULSHREE SETH
AYODHYA, JANUARY 24

WITH 8,000 lockers to keep cellphones and shoes, seven automatic luggage X-ray scanners, aarti timings streamlined, and an extensive entry-exit plan in place, the darshan time at the Ram Mandir was reduced to about 30 minutes on the second day of the temple's inauguration Wednesday, a day after a sea of people reached the site to pay their obeisance to the Ram idol.

The Ram temple Trust said that 2.5 lakh people visited the temple on Wednesday — around 5 lakh people had visited the temple on the first day. "Most of the things have been streamlined. We

are cooperating with the administration to put a proper system for the visitors in place... We have decided that the timing of darshan will be from 6 am to 10 pm. The curtains before the Ram idol will be brought down for about 15 minutes each, two times a day," Anil Mishra, a member of the Trust, told *The Indian Express*.

He said the temple got Rs 3.17 crore in donations on Tuesday.

DG (Law & Order) Prashant Kumar, who reached the temple premises at the start of the darshan around 6 am along with Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad, said, "Crowd control and better traffic management are the two things that we have ensured. The arrangements were made overnight, along with the Trust."

On Wednesday, when the temple opened at 6 am, and there were over 50,000 pilgrims waiting in line since 2:30 am. By 11 am, the long queues outside the Ram Janma Bhoomi Path melted away and the only queue left was inside the temple premises.

The pilgrims entering from the Ram Janmabhoomi Path were first stopped after 400 metres and were directed towards the facility centre where people were frisked and their bags and other belongings put through automatic X-ray luggage machines. From there, the pilgrims entered another facility centre, which is under construction. There are 8,000 lockers for the pilgrims to keep their belongings such as cellphones, e-gadgets and keys, and shoes. However,

Meanwhile, the construction of the temple, which was stopped on January 20, has not resumed.

'No devotee should go hungry': Godown turns hub of donations

LALMANI VERMA
AYODHYA, JANUARY 24

A MAKESHIFT godown of 1,500 square metre at Ramsevakpuram in Ayodhya — replenished with sacks of wheat flour and rice, tin containers of desi ghee, refined and mustard oil, roti-making machines, and water bottles — is acting as the feeder hub for lakhs of devotees pouring in at the temple town to have a darshan of the Ram Lalla.

Its purpose: No devotee should go hungry in Ayodhya.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) have received edible items, including grains, flour, vegetables, and spices in the form of donations from several North Indian states for running bhandaras and feed devotes and workers of the Sangh Parivar turning up at the town after the Ram Lalla consecration ceremony.

VHP national secretary Rajendra Singh Pankaj said nearly 4,500 volunteers were working to cook and serve meals at different bhandaras in the city. He said that a few lakh devotees were expected to turn up in Ayodhya after the inauguration of the Ram temple. "You can see the crowd turning up. No devotee should go hungry in Ayodhya. That is the objective of running these bhandaras. Several organisations are donating ingredients and vegetables," said Pankaj, who is supervising the bhandaras on behalf of the Ramsevakpuram godown is being supplied to the bhandaras as per their needs and demands.

As the footfall of devotees in the town started increasing ahead of the consecration ceremony, the VHP and various social organisations started running over 40 bhandaras in different parts of the town every day from morning to evening since January 14. These bhandaras will continue serving

food to the devotees up to February 26 in the first phase. But VHP leaders are considering extending it up to March 31 seeing the influx of devotees. Two bhandaras are running from mobile vans, which are moving on the streets in the town. In these bhandaras, people are served puri-sabji, daal-chawal, khichdi, sabi-roti, kheer, and sweets such as laddoos and doodh-jalebi. Tea with biscuits and rusk are served at different locations. It is estimated that over a lakh people were having meals at these bhandaras everyday for free.

Between January 24 and February 23, workers of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and

the BJP will be visiting Ayodhya according to a schedule for darshan of Ram Lalla. RSS volunteers from two prants (regional units), of 5,000 volunteers from each unit, will come daily from January 26. The RSS has 45 regional units across the country. RSS volunteers of Kashi and Kanpur prants will visit on January 30, and volunteers from Awadh and Gorakhpur region will arrive on February 1.

The BJP will also bring devotees and workers from states. The Sangh Parivar will be organising a guided tour of the Ram temple for people from across the country to ensure that the temple fervour does not die down, and the momentum remains the same even after the consecration ceremony.

"The arrangement for their stay, food, and temple visits will be arranged by the VHP and BJP workers. They will stay in the tent city setup by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. Three people can be accommodated in each tent," said

a VHP functionary. Social organisations in BJP-ruled Assam have sent tea, ginger, cinnamon leaf, and black pepper from Assam. The VHP has received 12 trucks of rice, three trucks of tomato, and two trucks of other vegetables, including cauliflower, and bottle gourd from the BJP-ruled Chhattisgarh. Rice and arhar dal have come from the BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh; three trucks of ghee, mustard oil, and refined oil from BJP-ruled state Rajasthan. Six trucks of sugar have come from UP's Lakhimpur and Gonda. Over 2,100 tin containers of mustard oil and 1,000 containers of refined oil from Gujarat. One truck of desi ghee came from Maharashtra. Pankaj, however, said donations were coming from the North Indian states only. "State governments are not sending. Only social organisations were sending donations," he said.

FULL REPORT
www.indianexpress.com



The makeshift facility at Ramsevakpuram in Ayodhya is acting as a pivot point for distribution of goods coming in as donations from social organisations. Lalmani Verma



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BHARAT'S RATNA

By honouring Karpoori Thakur, BJP marks a significant foray into the fraught and competitive politics of social justice

THE BHARAT RATNA to Karpoori Thakur is richly deserved and apparently politically timed. The award to the socialist stalwart, described by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "champion for the marginalised" and "beacon of social justice", comes 35 years after his death and less than three months before the next Lok Sabha election. In a storied career that began with the Quit India movement and saw him become chief minister of Bihar twice, Karpoori Thakur's achievements were several and influential, and they have endured – especially his contribution in shaping the public conversation on caste in the country. For the BJP, having just fulfilled its Mandir promise with the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the honouring of Thakur could be read as a significant foray into Mandal territory that lies ostensibly on the other side of the political fence – ostensibly, because the BJP is no stranger to caste politics, having successfully appropriated pieces of the Mandal vocabulary. In the run-up to the parliamentary election, with the Congress-led Opposition making the demand for a nation-wide caste census a primary plank, the Bharat Ratna to Thakur confirms the BJP government's inventive use of the award to make a political point – past recipients have included Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nanaji Deshmukh, Madan Mohan Malviya and Pranab Mukherjee – and to lay claim to the Karpoori legacy.

Karpoori Thakur laid the ground for the architecture of the affirmative action regime established after the Centre implemented the Mandal Commission Report in 1990. In 1978 in Bihar, the Karpoori government had accepted the Mungeri Lal Commission's recommendations and instituted a layered quota framework that recognised the cleavage within the backward castes and also acknowledged the need to address the disadvantages faced by women – of the 26 per cent quota, 12 per cent was given to the extremely backward castes or EBCs, 8 per cent to OBCs, 3 per cent to women and 3 per cent to the economically backward upper castes. Over the last several elections in Bihar and elsewhere in the country's north, the EBCs, for long relegated to the margins by the Backward versus Forward cleavage, have emerged as a critical constituency – the BJP has focused on the mobilisation of these castes as part of its strategy to court non-Jatav Dalits and non-Yadav OBCs. In Bihar, the Nitish Kumar government carried out a caste survey in October last year and an important finding was that the EBCs are the largest social bloc, accounting for 36.1 per cent of the state's population. To keep the issue alive ahead of Lok Sabha polls, JD(U) workers and leaders have been fanning out to conduct "Karpoori charchas" across the state's constituencies.

The BJP government's decision seeks to paper over the fissures between the politics of the Sangh Parivar and that of the stream Karpoori Thakur belonged to. Even as anti-Congressism brought them together – first in the Samyukt Vidhayak Dal and then the Janata Party government in Bihar – it was not enough to keep them together. Now, as a new election draws closer, however, a contest has begun that may draw upon history but will not be bound by it. In this moment, the Bharat Ratna by the BJP-led government to a socialist icon sends a signal that is bound to be decoded politically.

DAL, ROTI, CHEENI

Both producers and consumers would benefit from policy that is predictable and stable, not knee-jerk and reactive

INTERNATIONAL FOOD PRICES have eased considerably from their 2022 peaks. The benchmark FAO Food Price Index in December was 10.1 per cent below its level one year ago and 28 per cent down from its all-time high scaled in March 2022, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But this story of global deflation is contrary to the Indian situation, where the official consumer food price index inflation ruled at 9.5 per cent in December. The domestic inflationary pressures are coming from basic foods: Pulses, cereals and sugar. In other words, dal-roti-cheeni. It's not for nothing that the Centre is worried, especially with national elections due in hardly three months' time. Retail food inflation averaged just 0.2 per cent during the year leading to the last Lok Sabha polls in April-May 2019. The Narendra Modi government knows that food prices matter for voter sentiment.

The government's strategy to rein in food inflation has been a heterodox mix of export and trading curbs along with import liberalisation. Thus, exports of wheat, non-basmati white rice, sugar and onion have been banned, denying Indian farmers and agri-businesses the opportunity to benefit from high international prices, whether in 2022 (for the first) or now (for the other three). Stocking limits have been imposed in wheat and pulses for traders, processors as well as big-chain retailers. Curbs have been placed on sugar mills with regard to diversion of cane juice and intermediate-stage molasses for manufacture of fuel ethanol, industrial-grade rectified spirit and potable alcohol. Simultaneously, imports of major pulses and crude edible oils have been allowed at zero or very low duties till March 31, 2025. Notwithstanding all these supply-side measures, rice is retailing at an all-India average (modal) price of Rs 40/kg (Rs 35 a year ago), milled arhar (pigeon pea) at Rs 150/kg (Rs 110), chana (chickpea) at Rs 80/kg (Rs 68), sugar at Rs 45/kg (Rs 40) and onion at Rs 30/kg (Rs 25).

The government approach reflects an excessive pro-consumer policy bias. Such bias, apart from being anti-producer, isn't in long-term consumer interest either. Both producers and consumers benefit from policy that is predictable and stable, not knee-jerk and reactive. Indian agriculture has been a victim of short-termism, which has deterred much-needed investments in processing, cold storage, marketing and research. Such investments will unleash the productive potential of the farm sector, providing a more sustainable solution to food inflation. Post election, that should also be the focus of the next government.

TWIST IN THE TALE

If the Oscar nominations this year are rich in cinema, they are richer in irony

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF the nominations for the 96th annual Academy Awards might as well have been scripted by a Hollywood writer, one who knows just how to balance the predictable with a twist or two, in order to get a buzz going. And so, the nominees, across a slew of categories, include some of the biggest hits of 2023 as well as its most critically acclaimed: *Barbie*, *Oppenheimer*, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, *Past Lives*, *Anatomy of a Fall*, *Maestro*, *The Zone of Interest*, *Poor Things* and *The Holdovers*.

The big picture is of an industry that, after years of struggling against audience apathy for anything that is not a "tent pole" film (such as one from the Marvel Cinematic Universe), seems to be rediscovering its creativity. If the summer of 2023 belonged to the "Barbenheimer Effect", wherein two highly original, idiosyncratic films also manage to find a massive global audience, the rest of the year was peppered with smaller, but no less distinctive projects.

Yet, the nominations themselves send out a more mixed message. If this year marks the first time a Native American actor has an Oscar shot (*Lily Gladstone* for *Killers of the Flower Moon*) and has a solid representation from non-American cinema (*Anatomy of a Fall*, *Past Lives*, *The Zone of Interest* and *Poor Things*), there is also the snub to the two women behind one of the year's most successful films. For *Barbie* fans, director Greta Gerwig and lead actor/producer Margot Robbie were shoo-ins for their categories and the fact that they have been ignored, while male lead Ryan Gosling scored a nomination, only underlines the message of their film: In a male-dominated world, women are sidelined. If the Oscars this year are rich in cinema, they're richer in irony.



SUSHIL KUMAR MODI

JAN NAYAK KARPOORI Thakur was finally conferred the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour. The demand to confer this award on Karpoori, the often unacknowledged pioneer of India's social justice movement, was long overdue and much awaited. That the honour was conferred by the government led by Narendra Modi, another champion of social justice and backward classes, is a true tribute to the legend.

Karpoori belonged to the "Nai" community, among the most backward communities in Bihar. Back then, no one would have thought that a member of this community would take on the Congress, fight for the rights of the backward classes and end up becoming one of the first non-Congress chief ministers of Bihar in 1970, and then come back again as CM.

Karpoori studied only till the intermediate level. He had to cut short his education to join the country's freedom movement. But this was no hindrance for this son of the soil – Karpoori had learnt much through his experiences in poverty and backwardness.

Very early on, he realised that the benefit of reservation was being arrogated by the privileged backward classes. To undo this wrong, Karpoori provided a separate 12 per cent reservation to the EBCs. Powerful BC communities like the Yadav, Kurmi and Koeri were given only 8 per cent reservation. While the Congress vacillated on implementing the report of the Mungeri Lal Commission, in 1978, Karpoori showed courage and created quotas in government jobs for EBCs and BCs. The Karpoori Formula also gave women a share of 3 per cent and reserved another 3 per cent seats for the poor from the upper castes. It, therefore, tried to accommodate all sections of society.

The then Jan Sangh was a party to this decision – Kailashpati Mishra was the finance minister in Karpoori's government.

There were violent protests by those unsettled by the reservation formula. But Karpoori stood firm. This decision not only changed the socio-political scenario of Bihar decisively but also changed the way back-

The Jan Nayak

Karpoori Thakur stood by his ideals, in face of stiff opposition, a quality his disciples have forgotten

ward classes were looked at in India.

Karpoori's brainchild was later emulated at the Centre when the Moraji Desai government constituted the Mandal Commission in 1979. While Congress again backtracked after the report was submitted in 1980, it was only 10 years later, in 1990, that the National Front government led by VP Singh implemented the Mandal Commission report.

Not just the Mandal Commission. In fact, PM Modi's decision to grant 10 per cent reservation to EWS and 33 per cent reservation to women is inspired by the ideology which Karpoori preached and practised.

As chief minister, he ensured that he was always in *janta's darbar* – his house and office were always open to the public. He was always swarmed by people wanting to meet him – truly a *janta's CM*.

Karpoori was a staunch supporter of regional languages. As education minister in Bihar, when he realised that English was becoming an impediment in students passing the matriculation examination, he directed that English as a subject not be counted for passing matriculation. Liberals and the English-speaking gentry mocked this decision – they called it the "Karpoori Division". But Karpoori remained undeterred.

As an Opposition leader, it was Karpoori who set the trend of being the first responder. He was the first to reach accident sites in remote places in Bihar, irrespective of where he was. Such was his commitment and dedication to his people.

That Karpoori was the epitome of simplicity and honesty is well-known. This quality was evident in all aspects of his life. He wore his trademark half-sleeve thick kurta and dhoti, rode a motorcycle, roamed without bodyguards and never promoted family in politics. When Karpoori passed away, he left behind only an ancestral *jhopdi* and no vehicle or property and very little bank balance.

He took many other notable decisions, including abolishing *malguzari*, the government tax on unused land, prohibition of alcohol and free education till the

matriculation level.

The Opposition tried to pull him down and many of his policies were met with stiff resistance, but Karpoori's popularity only increased. After all, he was the common man's man.

Karpoori was a true socialist and someone who fought against the Congress's misrule. He lived up to the ideals and created ideals for others to follow. Unfortunately, his socialist disciples have now lost their way in the lust for power and have joined hands with the same Congress which Karpoori fought all his life.

Today in the hustle to garner support from backward classes, political parties remember Karpoori, every year on his birthday. But they also ensure that he is forgotten as soon as the anniversary celebration is over. So short is our memory. It is due to this that despite repeated demands from backward classes for Bharat Ratna for Karpoori, all political parties in power, to date, paid lip service to his ideals – and to such demands.

However, such great sons of the soil who have uplifted the most backward should never be forgotten. To recognise this contribution, a government which understands the pulse of the backward classes was needed. It is apt, therefore, that PM Modi, who has learnt from his struggles against poverty and backwardness, decided to finally honour Karpoori Thakur with the nation's highest award.

Karpoori's birthday is over and political parties may have already forgotten him. But the Bharat Ratna has finally placed Karpoori in the category that he always belonged.

PM Modi has ensured that principles on which Karpoori lived will now be etched in this nation's memory forever and will be followed. One hopes that his disciples, who have ventured away from his ideals and joined hands with the Congress, finally walk the talk, instead of merely remembering him next in the coming year.

The writer is a Rajya Sabha MP from the BJP and a former deputy chief minister of Bihar



PANKAJ SARAN

INDIA AND FRANCE are kindred souls on the global stage. They are both systemically important powers, with France being a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council. What they say and do matters. The relationship has attracted attention in all major capitals, from Washington to Berlin to Moscow to Beijing. This is not without justification.

The two countries complement each other in many areas. They do not carry historical baggage and do not have any major bilateral differences. Where such differences exist, the two sides have shown a remarkable ability to overcome them. Relations between them are tested in every sense of the term.

The visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India as the chief guest for the Republic Day exemplifies the natural bonds of friendship between the two countries. France occupies a unique position in India's strategic thinking. It is seen as a country that has stood by India through thick and thin – in 1998 when India went nuclear, its support to India on Jammu and Kashmir, its advocacy of India's claim to permanent membership of the UN Security Council, standing with India to counter Pakistan-sponsored terrorism or bolstering India's capabilities against China.

Its cooperation on security issues such as in defence production, nuclear and space sectors and intelligence sharing has been open-ended and has strengthened Indian hard power. France has not shied away from sharing the most advanced defence and civil technologies and building India's production and manufacturing base. It has promoted India's interests within the European Union without hesitation, becoming both the gateway for and

COVERING THE DISTANCE

India and France can bridge gulf between West and East, North and South

France's ability to look at India differently from the Anglo-Saxon world gives it immense advantage in dealing with India. For India too, the relationship with France exemplifies its policy of strategic autonomy without being labelled anti-Western. In doing so, both countries celebrate their commitment to multiculturalism and pluralism at the domestic and international level.

a strong partner of India in Europe. It has offered its biggest strategic asset, its vast Indo-Pacific territory, and equities in organisations such as the Indian Ocean Commission, to India. Indian Air Force planes have been deployed to Reunion Island. France has also refrained from commenting on India's internal affairs.

This is a remarkable record of cooperation between two countries. India has reciprocated by treating France as a dependable source of high-end defence equipment and technology that has led to military purchases worth billions of dollars.

There are good reasons for this to happen.

France values its strategic autonomy like India. France's ability to look at India differently from the Anglo-Saxon world gives it immense advantage in dealing with India. For India too, the relationship with France exemplifies its policy of strategic autonomy without being labelled anti-Western. In doing so, both countries celebrate their commitment to multiculturalism and pluralism at the domestic and international level.

The two countries have developed a culture of supporting each other. France was the co-founder of one of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship international initiatives, the International Solar Alliance. It was the first European country to accept the UPI payments system. Several mechanisms have been es-

tablished to strengthen the India-France partnership in the Indo-Pacific region even though France is not a member of the Quad. Bilateral strategic maritime cooperation between the two predates the Quad.

Every summit meeting between the leaders results in new areas of cooperation. The forthcoming one is expected to be no different.

Apart from exceptional protocol gestures, the visit is likely to result in new announcements in the area of military and technical cooperation, relating to engines, aircraft, submarines and space, digitalisation, cyber security and climate change.

President Macron's personal contribution to the India relationship cannot be overstated. This will be his third visit to India, and with it, France gets the unique honour of being the country that has been invited the highest number of times as chief guest for the Republic Day.

Furthermore, President Macron's role at this time of global tensions and uncertainty is even more important. He is the youngest leader to be sworn in as President of France since Napoleon, yet today, in his second and last term, at the age of 46, he is the senior-most leader in Europe. The world needs a bridge between the West and the East and between the North and the South. Prime Minister Modi and President Macron have a unique opportunity to harness their friendship to these ends.

France bet on India very early on. India fully reciprocated. Today, those bets are paying off.

The writer is member, National Security Advisory Board and former deputy National Security Advisor



JANUARY 25, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

PUBLIC SECTOR ISSUES

UNION FINANCE MINISTER Pranab Mukherjee agreed to convene a special meeting to discuss the ills of public sector units. He assured the trade unionists that the government would not hesitate to take over private sector units facing acute difficulties in the interest of maintaining employment as they had done in the case of textile mills in Bombay.

NO TALKS WITH ZIA

THE MOVEMENT FOR Restoration of Democracy (MRD), the opposition alliance in

Pakistan, is opposed to a dialogue with the Zia regime and would reject any overtures in this regard. This reaffirmation came from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), principal constituent of the MRD, amidst media reports that some leaders of the MRD had established contact with the military regime for a dialogue.

DHULE FRAUD CASE

ONE OF THE biggest corruption cases in Maharashtra in recent years underlines a petition that is currently being heard in the Bombay High Court. It relates to the Dhule district where a massive fraud regarding the em

ployment guarantee scheme (EGS) was uncovered by then Collector Arun Bhatia, and first published in *The Indian Express*.

AKALI DAL MORCHA

THE AKALI DAL will announce its new morcha intensification programme on the morning of January 27 instead of January 26, highly placed Akali sources said. They said the party leaders would discuss the morcha plan during the day on January 26. The high command would later meet on the night of January 26-27. It will announce the new action plan after an informal meeting on January 27 morning.

THE IDEAS PAGE

A GST less taxing

Union budget should provide for a dispute settlement scheme with a flat payment of a part of the disputed amount and a complete waiver of interest and penalty



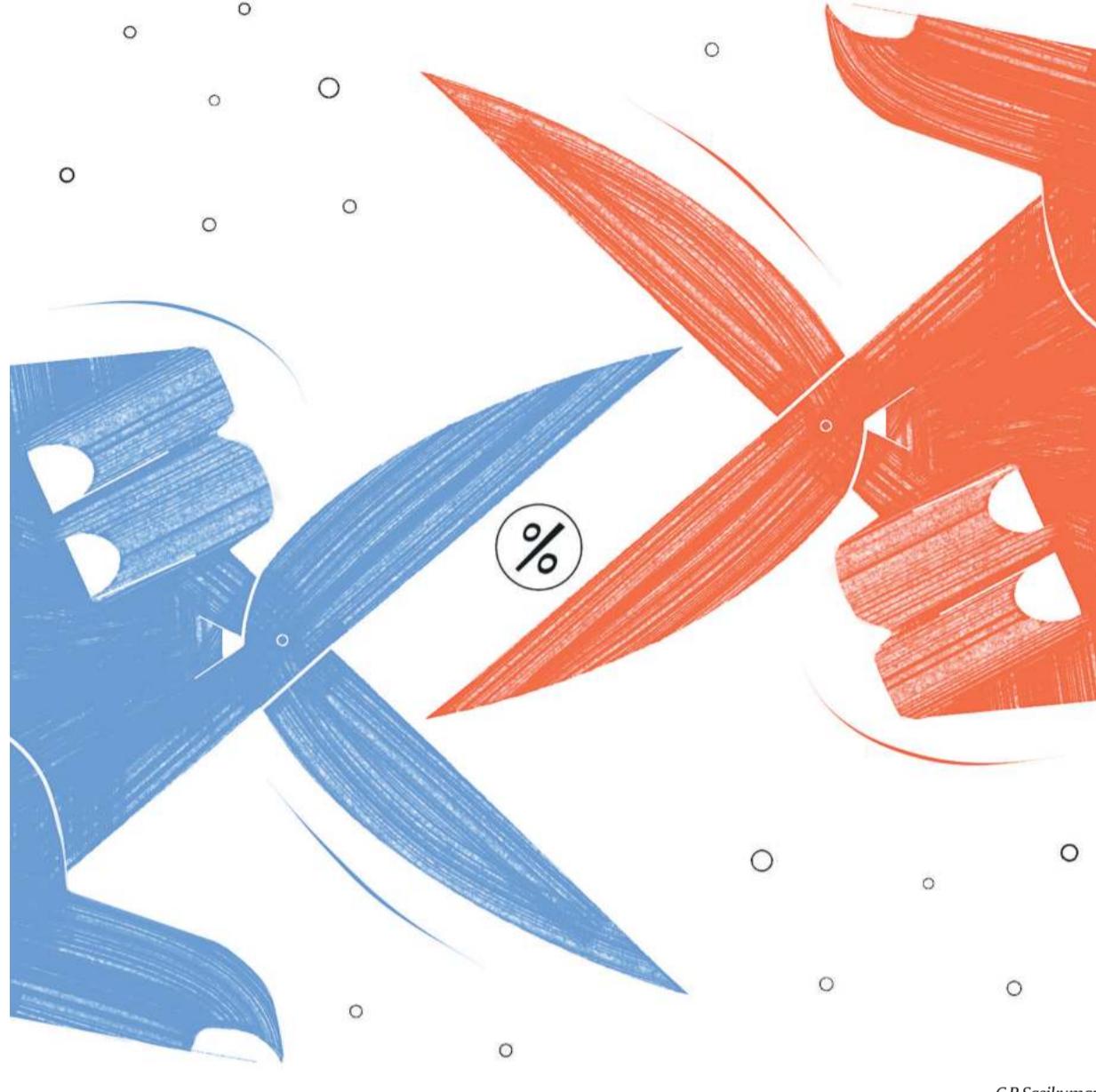
ARVIND P DATAR, K
VAITHEESWARAN AND
G NATARAJAN

THE GST REGIME will complete seven years in July. There has been a substantial increase in the number of show-cause notices and other recovery proceedings in the last few years. The timelines have been extended for the passing of orders and there has been an avalanche of orders just before the expiry of the timelines, creating various demands on issues such as mere reconciliation, return mismatches, input tax credit (ITC) denials for suppliers' defaults, time-barred ITC claims and ITC on account of blocked credit. Further, there are classification disputes arising out of differential rates of tax because of multiple notifications, many not fully aligned with customs tariff. Unfortunately, most of the demands pertaining to denial of ITC are based on a comparison of GSTR-3B and GSTR-2A which is not even legally permissible before January 1, 2022. A large number of disputes have also arisen because of a lack of understanding of the new law and procedures, numerous amendments and the impact of frequent portal glitches.

In many cases, the First Appellate Authority simply confirms the order of the lower authority and there is no GST Appellate Tribunal in place for relief to be obtained. The GST Tribunal is yet to be formed and the defective drafting of the relevant statutory provisions relating to the formation of this Tribunal has resulted in the repeated filing of writ petitions and the matter is still pending in the Supreme Court. Even though several amendments have been made, it would still take considerable time for the members to be selected and the infrastructure to be set up. The more practical step of increasing the strength of the existing CESTAT was, unfortunately, not accepted.

Several disputes were referred to the Authority for Advance Ruling and appeals have then been filed to the Appellate Authority for Advance Ruling. As most of these rulings are adverse to the assesses, the efficacy of this mechanism, which is manned only by officials, is also doubtful.

In the above context, it is worthwhile to consider a GST settlement scheme to enable assessees to pay a percentage of the disputed tax and bring thousands of pending proceedings to a close. Experience has shown that Samadhan or dispute settlement schemes are successful only when the percentage of taxes to be paid under the scheme is not high and there is a complete waiver of interest and penalty. The 2016 Direct Tax Settlement Scheme was not a success though it did facilitate the settlement of appeals and even disputes that arose on account of retrospective amendments to the Income Tax Act, 1961 to nullify the Vodafone decision. This was because assessees had to deposit the entire



C R Sasikumar

disputed tax plus a percentage of the interest and penalty. On the contrary, the Sabka Vishwas (Legacy Dispute Resolution) Scheme, 2019 was a roaring success and facilitated settlement of disputes under the erstwhile excise and service tax laws. The scheme provided for waiver of interest and penalty subject to payment of a reasonable percentage of taxes demanded or disputed. The unique feature of the scheme was its applicability to even cases where show cause notices were issued or demands raised at the pre-show cause notice stage.

The success of the Sab Ka Vishwas scheme paved the way for the Direct Tax Vivid Se Viswas Act, 2020. Unlike the simple nature of the settlement scheme for indirect taxes, this Act included not only the tax but interest, penalty and fees as well. It required a deposit of the entire tax in dispute plus an additional percentage of 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the disputed interest, penalty or fees.

Keeping in mind the conditions imposed in these schemes and their mixed success, it would be immensely beneficial if the Union budget provides for a GST dispute settlement scheme. It is suggested that the scheme should provide for a flat payment of 33 per cent of the disputed tax amount with

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a complete waiver of interest and penalty. This would make the scheme far more attractive and lead to the closure of several disputes. It would also considerably reduce the number of appeals that may come to be filed before the proposed Tribunal.

The GST dispute settlement scheme should cover not only matters pending in appeal but also cases where a show cause notice has been issued or where a demand has been made at the pre-show cause notice stage. The scheme must provide for the usual immunity from penalty and prosecution.

The GST regime has seen a number of retrospective amendments to the Act and Rules resulting in demands for the past few years. Unlike the 2016 provisions, which required payment of the entire disputed tax, the GST scheme must provide for a much lesser amount on account of any retrospective liability. It is suggested that if a demand has been created for an earlier period, on account of a retrospective amendment, the assessee must be given the option of settling the dispute by paying 25 per cent.

The writers are advocates and members of the Tamil Nadu Advisory Panel on GST. Views are personal



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELLOT

AFTER THE PRESIDENT awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, to Karpoori Thakur, Prime Minister Modi described him as "a beacon of social justice". Thakur certainly was one, but during his lifetime, the Sangh Parivar fought against him relentlessly — and vice versa.

Karpoori Thakur belongs to the Indian socialist tradition. He took part in the Quit India Movement as a Congress Socialist Party member in his home state, Bihar, the crucible of the socialist movement in India as well as of the leftist version of *kisan* politics. In fact, he was the joint secretary of the Bihar Kisan Committee between 1948 and 1952, the year when he was elected as MLA for the first time.

When the Socialist Party split, Thakur joined the Samyukta Samajwadi Party (SSP). He was a supporter of Ram Manohar Lohia who promoted positive discrimination or quotas for the lower castes. Thakur belonged to one of them. In contrast to most of his then comrades, he belonged to the *jati* of the *nais* (barbers). In 1967, he popularised the Lohiaite slogan "Socialists ne bandhi gath/Pichda pave sau me sath" (Socialists are now determined to get 60 per cent reservation).

That year, the SSP jumped from 6 to nearly 18 per cent of the votes and from 7 to 68 seats. The Opposition parties — the communists, the Jana Sangh and the socialists — formed a coalition called Samyukta

Vidhayak Dal (SVD, the united parliamentarian group), of which the SSP was the largest component. A former high caste (Kayastha) Congressman, Mahamaya Prasad Sinha, became the chief minister, but the deputy chief minister was no one else but Karpoori Thakur, who was also the education minister. In this capacity, he removed English as a compulsory subject for matriculation and promoted Hindi in order to democratise education. The SVD government, in five months, could take other significant measures, such as the abolition of land revenue.

Thakur became chief minister of Bihar in 1970, two years after the first OBC socialist CM in the state, B P Mandal. However, Thakur remained at the helm of the government of Bihar for only six months as the SVD coalition disintegrated: The Jana Sanghis and the leftists disagreed on too many topics and "anti-Congressism" — Lohia's motto — was not strong enough as a cementing force to surmount this division.

A similar scenario repeated itself in the 1970s — with many more lessons that are relevant today. In 1977, the Janata Party swept the polls in Bihar — like elsewhere in the Hindi belt — and Thakur became CM again. His government, for the first time in the state, had much more OBCs (42 per cent) than upper-caste members (29 per cent). In 1978, before the formation of the Mandal Commission, Thakur announced

new quotas for Bihar, on the basis of the Mungeri Lal Commission, that had been appointed by a Congress CM, Daroga Lal Rai, in 1971 and which had submitted its report in 1976. Following the Mungeri Lal Commission's report, Thakur distinguished between Other Backward Classes and Most Backward Classes for the first time. He introduced quotas of respectively 8 and 12 per cent for these two groups.

Upper castes immediately opposed this reform. Their demonstrations were supported by the Jana Sanghis who were supposed to support Thakur as a component of the Janata Party. They finally withdrew their support to Thakur's government on April 19, 1979, and provoked the fall of the government, with the help of a group of Scheduled Caste MLAs close to Jagjivan Ram, the then deputy chief minister. This episode illustrated the persistence of what American political scientist Paul Brass called the "coalition of extremes", that associated upper castes and Dalits who were both afraid of the rise of the OBCs/ MBCs.

This coalition immediately found another expression in the formation of a new government, headed by Ram Sunder Das (a Dalit), but comprising of 50 per cent upper caste and only 20 per cent of OBCs; not even one representative from Most Backward Classes (MBCs) was part of it. This government amended Thakur's reservation policy by deducting from the quo-

tas of the SCs, STs, OBCs and MBCs the posts that members of these groups got via the "General" category. But Thakur had prepared the ground for the reservation policy which was to culminate in V P Singh's Mandal moment, another occasion for the Sangh Parivar to criticise what The Organiser called "a Shudra revolution" and for the Hindu nationalist party, now called the BJP, to withdraw from a coalition party, the Janata Dal, in the name of social conservatism.

Ironically, today, Narendra Modi, the last incarnation of this school of thought is greeting Karpoori Thakur. Well, better late than never, but will the Modi government replicate his policy and, for instance, introduce a specific quota for the MBCs, a reform that would make a caste census even more necessary? So far only Bihar — again — has conducted such a survey. Will Bihar show the way to progressive politics again?

While Bihar remains imbued with the socialist ethos, socialist political forces have vanished — Thakur's career illustrates this trend very clearly. In 1980, he joined Charan Singh's Lok Dal before seceding for creating his own Lok Dal, the LD(K) and withdrawing in the background.

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BJP & Karpoori, it's complicated

Bharat Ratna to Thakur is befitting. But does Modi government respect his vision?

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELLOT

After the President awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, to Karpoori Thakur, Prime Minister Modi described him as "a beacon of social justice". Thakur certainly was one, but during his lifetime, the Sangh Parivar fought against him relentlessly — and vice versa. Karpoori Thakur belongs to the Indian socialist tradition. He took part in the Quit India Movement as a Congress Socialist Party member in his home state, Bihar, the crucible of the socialist movement in India as well as of the leftist version of *kisan* politics. In fact, he was the joint secretary of the Bihar Kisan Committee between 1948 and 1952, the year when he was elected as MLA for the first time.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Why — even after so many sensational scams — do our people still fall prey to these crimes or criminals?... we cannot ignore the systemic pitfalls. The blame must not solely fall on victims, but also on the prevailing financial insecurity, and lack of adequate financial governance."

— THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

Law sans safeguard

Telecommunications Act cements government's power to suspend internet services, does not establish independent oversight mechanism



RAJAT KATHURIA AND
ISHAA SURI

executive is complex but suffice it to say that such a separation in telecom is met much more in the breach.

The regulatory regime for telecom described above notifies subordinate legislation, enforces and adjudicates disputes — it performs the role of the executive and the adjudicator. One key safeguard for the protection of ordinary citizens is, therefore, already undermined. The separation of powers remains on paper and the exercise of authority through delegated rule-making ensures the government can intervene with little resistance.

In this background, TA 2023 poses challenges. Although undoing colonial-era laws is one of the stated goals, the re-purposing of some existing provisions and ambiguous drafting does little justice to that aim. For example, the definition of telecommunication services has been left open to interpretation. Internet-based services like WhatsApp and Gmail are, therefore, likely to fall under the Act's ambit. Provisions empowering the government to notify standards and conformity measures or ask for alternatives to end-to-end encryption such as client-side scanning could undermine privacy. Further requiring messages to be disclosed in an "intelligible format" is irreconcilable with end-to-end privacy engineering. Tinkering with end-to-end encryption for compliance could create potential points of vulnerability.

The grounds on which such information may be sought, outlined in Section 20(2) include sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state and public order. Prima facie these appear reasonable. However, the current phrasing leaves room for expansive interpretation by overenthusiastic enforcement machinery — it could go beyond the letter of the law to please political masters.

Research conducted in 2021 by Vrinda Bhandari and others found that many orders issued under the guise of public order restrictions would not qualify as legal *pervae*. The Act cements the government's power to suspend internet services (Section 20(2)(b)) and does not include procedural safeguards envisaged in the Supreme Court's Anuradha Bhasin judgment such as the proportionality test, exploration of suitable alternatives and the adoption of least intrusive measures.

Before contemplating this weighty query, let us set the narrative in context with a quick recap of the major markers in digital governance in India that have concluded, at least for the moment, in the passing of TA 2023.

The institutional regime for telecommunications dates back to the late 1990s and was created more by accident and less by design. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) became necessary because private sector investment came in when the public sector operator was both player and referee. Massive litigation followed, leading to the setting up of TRAI. Within a few years, the Telecom Dispute Settlement Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) was carved from TRAI to fast-track excessive litigation. In between, there was the dissolution of the first TRAI, only confirming who the "boss" was.

The desire to serve in regulatory regimes has surely been tainted by the goal of securing sinecures. This is not just an Indian phenomenon. For example, the Biden administration wish they continue in office for long. It is in the nature of such positions that many of those appointed will never again be in a position of authority. There have been few instances after its dissolution that TRAI has taken on the government. The relationship between the legislature and the

Kathuria is Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences and Professor of Economics at the Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence and Suri is Research Lead, CIS. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BALANCED APPROACH

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Keep it porous' (IE, January 24). The decision to secure fencing along the border with Myanmar should be reconsidered. Northeast India shares a complex border with neighbouring countries. Erecting a boundary without due consideration for the sentiments of the regional people is unacceptable. A comprehensive survey and an empathetic approach are crucial to resolving historical insurrections and ethnic strife while addressing the nation's security concerns.

Archita Das, Bengaluru

NOT MY LEADER

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The ideal ruler' (IE, January 24). The writer's assertion reinforces PM Modi's argument. He said that every citizen should focus on their duties for the next 25 years rather than fighting for their rights, which he claims has only weakened the country. An ideal ruler leads by example. The current rulers routinely extol the virtues of Ram and Ram Rajya, which scarcely connect people since their everyday conduct is seen as completely opposed to those tenets.

Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru

PROCEED WITH CARE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A limited growth' (IE, January 24). The positive outlook for our economy is encouraging. The growth is attributed to a shift from consumption to investment. But on the flip side, the challenges highlighted in the private corporate sector, such as the lowest levels of new investment announcements and a significant concentration of investments in the aviation sector, warrant attention. Policymakers need to address these challenges and implement measures that encourage a more diversified corporate investment landscape.

Tanisha Arora, Bengaluru

INDO-FRANCE TIES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Challenge for Modi-Macron' (IE, January 24). The relationship between India and France has always been based on democratic credentials, mutual respect for sovereignty, strategic situational awareness and commercial pragmatism. In times of geopolitical turbulence, the bilateral relations between India and France can be a beacon of hope for the beleaguered world. A "joint venture" of these two nations, to lead from the front in convincing warring parties to come to the negotiating tables, can be a game changer.

Manish Mishra, Bhopal