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Modi greets Shehzad,
first Indian response
on new govt in PakSHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN THE first Indian government response on the new dispensation in Islamabad, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday congratulated Shehzad Sharif, the new Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The brother of former Prime Minister and PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, Shehzad Sharif was administered the oath of office as Prime Minister — for the second time — Monday, nearly a month after an election marred by controversy, allegations of rigging, and protests by the party of the jailed PTI leader Imran Khan.

"Congratulations to @CM Shehzad on being sworn in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan," Modi posted on X.

This message from Modi is

EXPLAINED

Wait and
watch

FOR NOW, Delhi has a wait-and-watch policy on the new coalition in Islamabad where, with the Pakistan Army's backing, the PML-N and PPP have come to power to keep out Imran Khan's PTI amid protests, rigging allegations. India too is headed to polls and any movement on resumption of ties will happen only after the next government takes charge.

different from the one he posted in April 2022 when he said India desired peace and stability in a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



PM IN VALLEY TOMORROW

Preparations are underway in Srinagar for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit Thursday, his first to the Valley since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. He will be addressing a public rally at the Bakshi Stadium. ANI

MISSION GAGANYAN

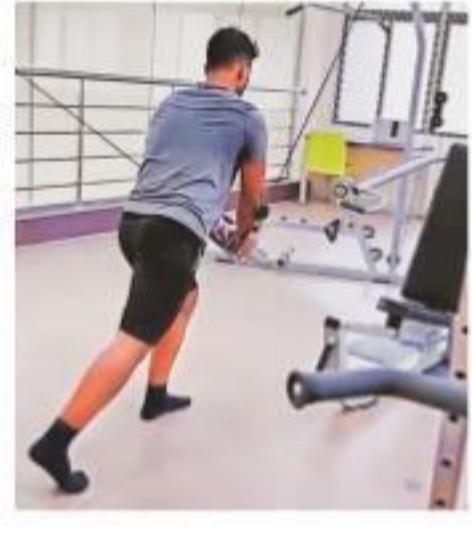
Training for space at ISRO: Survival lessons, simulators, yoga, engineering

After Russian leg, the four IAF officers are preparing for the mission in Bengaluru

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

LAST WEEK, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi bestowed them the "astronaut wings", the four Indian Air Force officers, Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla, were a picture of confidence and determination.

Behind this is a rigorous training regimen the four astronauts-designate for Gaganyaan, India's first crewed space mission, have been undergoing at the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) new astronaut training facility in Bengaluru. This includes training in engineering disciplines with a focus on spaceflight, propulsion and aerodynamics;



A video grab of one of the four astronauts at ISRO's Bengaluru facility

TWO-PHASE TRAINING

GENERIC SPACEFLIGHT TRAINING IN RUSSIA

- Training to get used to weightlessness, motion sickness, and living in isolation
- Parabolic flights — aircraft that fly up and down at 45-degree angles
- Survival training for terrains such as mountains, woodlands, the Arctic, and the sea

MISSION SPECIFIC TRAINING IN INDIA

- Training on four sets of simulators, including one that will mimic jerks, vibrations, acceleration, and shocks
- Basics of spaceflight, propulsion and aerodynamics
- Psychological and physical training, including yoga

yoga classes; and training on simulators that mimic the jerks, vibrations, acceleration and shocks that a space flight entails.

Currently, the astronauts are doing mission-specific training, as part of which they familiarise

themselves with the spacecraft and its operations ahead of the space mission, which is currently scheduled for next year.

This follows the training at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Russia's Moscow Oblast

that started in 2020 and continued through the pandemic. Sometime in 2021, the training at ISRO's Bengaluru facility followed.

ISRO officials described the training as a "continuous process".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Muizzu: No Indian troops, in uniform or civilian clothes, after May 10



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

DAYS BEFORE the deadline set for the withdrawal of the first batch of Indian military personnel, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has said that no Indian military personnel, whether in uniform or "civilian clothing", will be present in the island country after May 10.

"There will be no Indian troops in the country come May 10. Not in uniform and not in civilian clothing. Indian military will not be residing in this country in any form of clothing. I state this with confidence," Muizzu said, according to a Maldives news portal.

He was responding to the Opposition's criticism that the Indian technical personnel who are replacing the military personnel are actually military personnel without their uniform.

According to the report, while addressing the residential community of Eydhafushi during his tour across Baa Atoll on Monday, Muizzu said: "That these people (Indian military) are not departing, that they are returning after changing their uniforms into civilian clothing... We must not indulge such thoughts that instil doubts in our hearts and spread lies."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

JAN 5 ATTACK ON ED TEAM
CBI takes over Sandeshkhali probe, Bengal Govt goes to SC

Calcutta HC says police biased, orders transfer of probe, custody of Sheikh

ATRI MITRA & SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, MARCH 5

COMING DOWN heavily on the West Bengal Police, who it called "totally biased", the Calcutta High Court on Tuesday ordered the transfer of the probe into the January 5 attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials in Sandeshkhali, as well as custody of main accused Shahjahan Sheikh, to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Hours later, the state government moved the Supreme Court against the HC's order.

Meanwhile, taking over the investigation, the CBI registered an FIR in the case. A CBI team, escorted by paramilitary personnel, reached the CID office in Kolkata to take custody of Sheikh. But the police refused to hand him over, saying the matter was sub-judice.

In its order, the HC had directed that the custody of Sheikh, the suspended Trinamool Congress leader who was arrested by the West Bengal

Police refused to hand over Sheikh custody to the CBI

ED ATTACHES PROPERTIES

THE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE Tuesday said it has attached assets worth Rs 12.78 crore of suspended TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh, including bank deposits, an apartment, and agricultural and fishery land in Sandeshkhali and Kolkata, under PMLA. ENS

Police on February 29 in connection with the attack on the ED

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Will join BJP, says Gangopadhyay after quitting as HC judge

SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, MARCH 5

HOURS AFTER he resigned as a judge of the Calcutta High Court, Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay announced Tuesday that he will be joining the BJP on March 7 and it was up to the party to decide if he should contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

"I will join the BJP on March 7. It is the only national party which is fighting against Trinamool Congress's corruption," said the former judge, known for making critical remarks against the ruling TMC and its leader Abhishek Banerjee.

"I have been forced to take this step due to taunts by the ruling party. Their taunts and statements inspired me to take this step. The ruling party insulted me many times. Their spokespersons attacked me with unparliamentary words. I think they have a problem with their

education," he told reporters at his Salt Lake residence.

Responding to a question on when the BJP approached him and how long he took to take a call on joining politics, Gangopadhyay said, "I did not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DMK Raja's remarks on India, Ram:
BJP hits back, his allies urge restraintARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MARCH 5

DMK LEADER and former Union Minister A Raja has said India is not a nation in conventional terms with one language, one culture and one tradition. It was not a country, but a subcontinent, he said.

Addressing a function in Coimbatore to celebrate Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin's birthday on March 1, Raja said,



Raja: India a subcontinent, not a country

"One country means one language, one culture, one tradition. India was not a country but a subcontinent. Here, Tamil Nadu is a country, with one language, and one culture. Malayalam is another language and a culture... Keeping

them all together is what made India — this makes India a sub-continent, not a country."

Further, referring to supporters of the Bilkis Bano gangrape convicts chanting "Jai Shri Ram" when they were released, Raja said, "If this is the god you are talking about, if this is your 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', we will never accept your 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata'. Tamil Nadu cannot accept that. You go and tell everyone that we are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

HC acquits Saibaba,
others in Maoist case;
Maharashtra moves SCOMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, MARCH 5

NOTING THAT the prosecution failed to prove its case against former Delhi University professor G N Saibaba, sentenced to life in an alleged Maoist links case, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court Tuesday acquitted him and five other co-accused



Saibaba was sentenced to life term in jail

and allowed their appeals against their conviction in 2017. Hours later, the Maharashtra

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

youngest son works in the UAE. Sources in Israel said the injured men are out of danger. Nibin's body will be moved to Tel Aviv on Wednesday before being sent back to India.

The attack on farm workers in Israel led to panic among Indians employed there. "Most of the Indians in Israel are caregivers, working inside houses. They can run for cover at shelters when a siren is sounded. But those working in the farm sector are exposed to the attacks. Many Indians have joined the farms after people from other countries abandoned that sector in the wake of the war," said a source.

The Indian Embassy in Israel has issued an advisory for Indian nationals working in the country, especially in border areas, to relocate to safe areas within the country. The Embassy said they are in touch with the Israeli authorities to ensure the safety of all its nationals. The Indian Embassy also shared a helpline number and email address for any help.

In a post on X, the Israel Embassy wrote: "We are deeply shocked and saddened by the death of one Indian national and the injury of two others due to a cowardly terror attack launched by Shia Terror organization Hezbollah, on peaceful agricultural workers who were cultivating an orchard at the northern village of Margaliot yesterday early afternoon."

"Israeli Medical institutions are completely at the service of the injured who are being treated by our very best medical staff. Israel regards equally all nations, Israeli or foreign, who are injured or killed due to terrorism. We will be there to support the families and offer them assistance," it wrote.

Our countries, who are sadly well versed in civilian loss, stand united in hopes of a speedy recovery for the injured and solace for the family of the bereaved," it wrote.

THE PROSPECT of a better life in Israel ended bitterly for a family as a 31-year-old Kerala man was killed in a missile strike in the northern part of the country, leaving behind his pregnant wife and a five-year-old child.

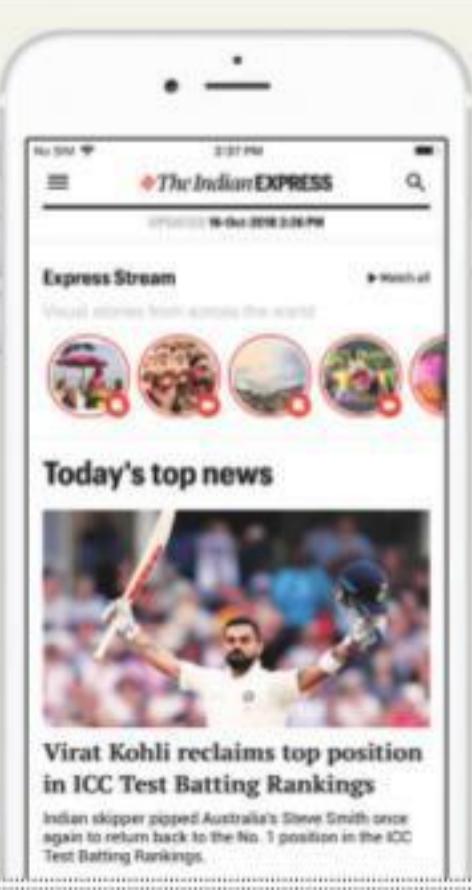
Nibin Maxwell, who came from Kaikulangara in Kerala's Kollam, was killed and two people from the state were injured on Monday when an anti-tank missile fired by Hezbollah hit a farm in Northern Israel where

they were employed. The incident took place at an orchard at Margaliot, a moshav (collective agricultural community), sources said.

The injured men were identified as Joseph and Paul Melvin. According to Nibin's father Antony, the incident took place in the afternoon. "My eldest son Nivin, who is also employed in Israel, informed me that Nibin had been injured in a missile attack. Later, his death was confirmed. Two weeks ago, Nibin had told us about an airstrike near their farm. I told them to move elsewhere, but since there were no other issues, they continued at the same



Nibin Maxwell, 31, was killed in a Hezbollah missile strike



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'THERE IS GREATER ACCEPTANCE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH'

Anisha Padukone, a former competitive golfer and actor Deepika Padukone's sister, says her experience as a caregiver taught her that being empathetic, understanding and patient was very helpful

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EXPRESS AUDIO

Gaganyaan mission, search of Dwarka Nagari, and TMC MLA Tapas Roy quits

In this episode, we talk about the challenges of the Gaganyaan mission, the archaeological attempts to locate Dwarka Nagari, and the resignation of TMC MLA Tapas Roy from his post

Adityanath expands Cabinet: Rajbhar, RLD Dalit leader among four new ministers

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, MARCH 5

IN THE first Cabinet expansion in his second term as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday inducted four more ministers keeping in mind the caste equation, regional balance, and alliance partners ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

The four ministers inducted into his Cabinet – the strength of which is now 56 – included ally Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, Dalit leader Anil Kumar of ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), and BJP leaders Dara Singh Chauhan and Sunil Kumar Sharma.

The four were sworn in by Governor Anandiben Patel in a simple ceremony at Raj Bhawan on Tuesday evening in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Out of the four new ministers, two are non-Yadav OBCs – SBSP chief and Zahoarabad MLA Om Prakash Rajbhar, and BJP MLC Dara Singh Chauhan, who has influence among non-Yadav voters in areas surrounding Ghosi, Azamgarh and Ballia. Both the leaders hail from east UP and were ministers in Adityanath's first-term Cabinet. While Rajbhar contested the last Assembly polls in alliance with Samajwadi Party, Chauhan had joined the main Opposition party before the 2022 Assembly elections.

The RLD, which too severed ties with Samajwadi Party recently and joined the NDA, got its one MLA inducted into the

FROM PAGE ONE FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

CBI takes over Sandeshkhali probe, Bengal Govt goes to SC

team, be handed over to the CBI by 4.30 pm on Tuesday.

The division bench of Calcutta HC Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam and Justice Hiranmay Bhattacharya set aside an earlier single-bench order, which had directed formation of a joint special investigation team of the CBI and state police to probe the attack.

Both the ED and the state government had filed separate appeals challenging this order. While the ED wanted the probe to be transferred to the CBI only, the state government asked for the investigation to be given to the state police only.

The division bench had earlier stayed the single-bench order and restrained the state police from proceeding with the investigation in the cases registered by them in connection with the attack on the ED team. The bench said on Tuesday that despite its order, a case was transferred to the state CID, which issued notices to ED officials.

"Thus, this act of the state police would be sufficient to hold that the state police are totally biased and every attempt is being made to delay the investigation in order to protect the accused who has been absconding for more than 50 days," the HC said.

"The then absconding accused (Sheikh) is stated to be a strongman in the locality and has very powerful connections in the ruling party, apart from having been elected as a karmadhaksha of zilla parishad, North 24 Parganas, having been fielded as a candidate of the ruling dispensation. The state police had played a hide-and-seek methodology, in all probabilities to shield the accused, who undoubtedly is a highly politically influential person, who has demonstrably shown that he is, and would be, in a position to influence the investigation if allowed to rest with the state police," it said.

"...Section 307 IPC was added only on 17.01.2024. As pointed out by the Hon'ble Supreme Court,

being the protectors of the civil rights of the citizens, the High Court has not only power and jurisdiction, but also an obligation to protect fundamental rights," the court said.

"The accused who has been apprehended on February 29, 2024 after being on the run for more than 50 days is not an ordinary citizen," it said. "He is an elected representative of the public, holding the highest office in a zilla parishad, he was fielded as the candidate at the elections held for the said post by the political party which is the ruling dispensation. Thus, it has become imperative and absolutely necessary for doing complete justice and enforcing the fundamental rights of the public in general, and the public of the locality, that the cases be transferred to the CBI for investigation and to proceed further," the court said.

"The custody of the accused (Sheikh) shall also forthwith be handed over to CBI. This direction

shall be implemented by 4:30 pm today," it said.

Hours after the HC order, Senior Advocate A M Singhvi, appearing for the state government, mentioned the matter before a Supreme Court bench presided by Justice Sanjiv Khanna. The bench asked him to place the papers before Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, who will take the call on listing it for hearing.

Sandeshkhali, in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, has been at the centre of BJP-TMC politics since January 5, when ED officials were assaulted while conducting a search at the home of Sheikh, a local strongman and TMC leader. The ED team had gone there in connection with an investigation into alleged irregularities in the state's public distribution system.

As Sheikh went on the run after the incident, women in the area raised allegations of sexual abuse by TMC leaders for years. The women said they were called

• Modi greets Shehzad, first Indian response on new govt in Pakistan

region free of terrorism. "Congratulations to H. E. Mian Muhammad Shehzad Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. India desires peace and stability in a region free of terror, so that we can focus on our development challenges and ensure the well-being and prosperity of our people."

The short greeting this time points to India's wait-and-watch policy on the new Pakistan coalition which is facing questions of legitimacy. With India going to polls sometime next month, there is no statement on what Delhi wants or looks forward to in terms of its ties with Pakistan.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Pakistan was at the centre of BJP's political campaign as the polls were held in the aftermath of the Pulwama terror attack and the Balakot air strikes.

As the new civilian government of PML-N and PPP, backed by the Pakistan Army, takes shape, moves are afoot in Islamabad to start a "low-key and low-risk" engagement with New Delhi.

Pakistan has just appointed a new charge d'affaires and is planning to hold its National Day celebrations in Delhi as part of the "low-key and low-risk approach" towards an engagement with India.

But India is likely to watch the new government in Pakistan at least until May this year when the Lok Sabha outcome will become clear. This also gives Delhi the space to assess the new government in Islamabad and its commitment to tackling terror – all this will shape the next steps.

• Will join BJP, says Gangopadhyay after quitting as Calcutta High Court judge

take much time. About seven days ago, I had a word with the BJP. I did not take much time to think."

Attacking TMC further, he said, "The TMC will not last until 2026. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Trinamool will be in the same position as CPM in 2009... All it takes is a few arrests and the party will crumble."

On senior advocate and TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee recently pleading before the Calcutta High Court bench that "all political orders" passed by him in the School Service Commission cases be struck down, Gangopadhyay said,

"He has some problem... he is known for his character."

"I think the TMC is a group of miscreants. I do not consider it a political party," he said.

When asked about the 2016 Narada bribery case, in which several TMC leaders, including Suvenu Adhikari, who is now with the BJP, were caught on tape purportedly taking cash, Gangopadhyay said: "Suvenu is a victim of conspiracy. Narada was a conspiracy where a man was planted." He also defended the other TMC leaders caught on camera. "Of course, they (TMC leaders) are also victims of con-

sideracy."

The former judge said TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee was the "mind behind" the Narada case, which is being probed by the CBI as well as the ED.

Later in the day, Banerjee questioned Gangopadhyay's actions, stressing that the former judge had in his own words said that he was in touch with the BJP even when he was delivering judgments.

"I have found one thing very interesting from whatever he has said. He has spoken out the truth. It was likely a slip of tongue. But I

thank him for telling the truth. He said, 'I approached the BJP, BJP approached me.' This is very interesting and you have to read between the lines. Hence, he clarified that he was in touch with the BJP during the time when he delivered his judgments. I leave the rest to the people to understand," said the TMC MP.

Referring to the former judge, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee said at a press conference: "He is the most useless judge of Calcutta High Court. He used the judiciary for political benefits."

Gangopadhyay, who joined the Calcutta High Court as an ad-

ditional judge in May 2018, had on Sunday said that he was quitting the judiciary and hinted that he would enter politics. "I have been challenged to come and fight on the field several times by the ruling party's leaders, so I thought of fulfilling their wishes," he said in an interview with Bengali TV news channel ABP Ananda.

On Tuesday morning, he submitted his resignation to President Droupadi Murmu, copies of which were sent to Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Calcutta High Court Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam.

simulator will also be the same as the actual crew module.

Then comes the dynamic training simulator that lets the astronauts experience the motions and sensations that are expected to be felt during the actual flight. It

will train the astronauts in jerks, vibrations, acceleration and shocks during the separation of rocket stages, parachute deployment, touchdown, or when the Crew Escape System gets triggered.

The first mission flight, Gaganyaan-1, an unmanned test flight to check technology readiness, is expected by the end of 2024. The manned mission, which will take a three-member crew into a low Earth orbit of 400 km altitude and return to Earth after three days, will follow.

In 1984, Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma became the first Indian in space when he flew to the Salyut 7 space station on a Soviet spacecraft. In 2006, India started work on an orbital vehicle mission that was later named Gaganyaan.

• Muizzu: No Indian troops, in uniform or civilian clothes, after May 10

Muizzu's statement comes days after the first team of Indian technical personnel reached the Maldives to take charge of one of the three aviation platforms stationed in the country. They will replace Indian military personnel, whose first batch is required to leave Maldives by March 10.

On February 2, the two countries had agreed that India would pull out all its 80-odd military personnel stationed in the Maldives by May 10.

While the first to leave are the Indian military personnel operating helicopters in Addu City, the military personnel present in Hanimaadhoo, Haa Dhaalu Atoll, and Kadhdhoo, Laamu Atoll, are also expected to pull out ahead of May 10. The Maldives defence ministry had said the first team of Indian civilians would take charge of the operation of a helicopter in Addu, the country's southernmost atoll.

Earlier, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said the two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft in the Maldives would be operated by "competent Indian technical personnel" who would replace the "present personnel".

Soon after coming to power in November 2023, Muizzu, who is seen as pro-China, asked India to withdraw its military personnel from the island country. Muizzu had defeated the incumbent, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, in the presidential election on the "India Out" plank.

On Monday, the Maldives Defence Ministry said the island country and China had signed an agreement on China's provision of military assistance gratis to the Republic of Maldives, fostering stronger bilateral ties.

"The astronauts are getting used to the various sub-systems within the crew module of the spacecraft or the Gaganyaan vehicle. They are trying these out, and working with our teams to make some changes. These trainings will continue till they fly the mission," an ISRO official said.

The astronauts are currently training on various sub-systems such as navigation systems and bio-toilets, said another official.

The initial part of the training took place in Russia because when the human spaceflight programme was announced, India did not have its own astronaut training infrastructure. Russia, on the other hand, sends astronauts regularly and has elaborate training facilities, which the Indians were able to access. Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian to go to space, and Ravish Malhotra, the astronaut who was on standby, too, trained at Moscow's Gagarin Centre in the 1980s.

In Russia, the four IAF officers chosen for the Gaganyaan mission did generic spaceflight train-

ing, which every astronaut going to space undergoes. This part involves acclimatising oneself with the environment in outer space and getting used to conditions like weightlessness.

At the Gagarin Centre, the astronauts practise living and operating in zero-gravity conditions, changes in atmospheric pressures, and surviving in complete isolation. They spent a lot of time in parabolic flights – aircraft that fly up and down at 45-degree angles so that passengers experience a period of weightlessness and increased gravity just like on a roller coaster. They also trained for surviving in extreme weather and climatic conditions such as mountains, woodlands, marshes, deserts, the Arctic, and the sea to prepare for different landing situations on their return to Earth after their spaceflight. Their training in Russia also included theoretical classes on orbital mechanics and astro-navigation (navigating using celestial bodies as markers).

Back in India, the astronauts are familiarising themselves with

the crew module of the spacecraft. With a capacity to house three astronauts, the crew module – the habitable part of the spacecraft – is attached to the service module that houses the spacecraft's propulsion system. Together, they make up the orbital module, which will be launched in the low-Earth orbit using the human-rated LVM3 rocket.

The mission-specific training at the ISRO facility in Bengaluru includes theoretical courses on engineering disciplines such as the basics of spaceflight, propulsion and aerodynamics, besides practical training on the Gaganyaan systems. The astronauts also undergo continuous physical and psychological training, including yoga. They are also undergoing aero-medical training as part of their course.

To train on flight procedures, the course includes training with at least four different simulators – the independent training simulator, virtual training simulator, static mock-up simulator and the dynamic training simulator.

Party of India (Maoist) and its frontal group Revolutionary Democratic Front.

According to police, many documents, a hard disk and pen drives were seized from Saibaba's residence.

Lodged in Nagpur Central Jail, Saibaba was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2017. On appeal, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court discharged him on October 14, 2022, saying there was no valid sanction for prosecution as required under the UAPA. It also acquitted four others in the case. Narote, the sixth accused, died in August 2022. In April 2023, the Supreme Court set aside the High Court order discharging the accused, and remanded the matter back to the High Court to

HC acquires Saibaba, others in Maoist case; Maharashtra moves Supreme Court

government informed the High Court that it had approached the Supreme Court with an appeal against the order. The High Court had turned down the state's request to stay the order.

A two-judge bench of Justices Vinay G Joshi and Valmiki S A Meneses said that the prosecution failed to prove electronic evidence and it was difficult to accept that the accused had conspired and made preparation to commit a terrorist act which was not spelled out in the case. Observing that procedural mandate was not followed in maintaining the case diary despite charges of serious offences levelled against the accused, it said the evidence could not be "free from doubt".

It also observed that mere possession of literature sympathetic to Maoist philosophy could not be an offence under the UAPA

citation failed to establish legal seizure of material and could not prove any incriminating material against the accused.

In its 293-page verdict, the bench held that the prosecution failed to prove electronic evidence and it was difficult to accept that the accused had conspired and made preparation to commit a terrorist act which was not spelled out in the case. Observing that procedural mandate was not followed in maintaining the case diary despite charges of serious offences levelled against the accused, it said the evidence could not be "free from doubt".

It also observed that mere possession of literature sympathetic to Maoist philosophy could not be an offence under the UAPA

decided afresh by a different bench.

After the order Tuesday, Advocate General Birendra Saraf, appearing for the Maharashtra government, informed the High Court that it had approached the Supreme Court with an appeal against the judgement. Saraf asked the High Court to stay the order for a reasonable time, but the bench told him: "Even though charges are serious, looking at the powers that the statute vests with us, we are not inclined to make any adventures. We have already acquitted the accused and directed their release forthwith if not required in another crime. We cannot stall said order, which may have an effect on the right of personal liberty. We reject the application of stay."



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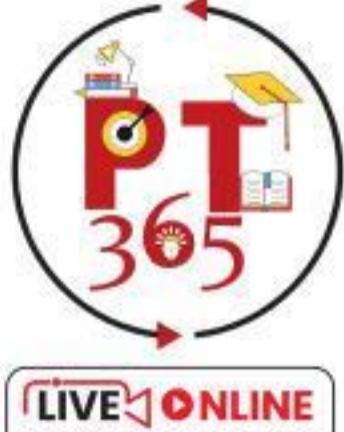
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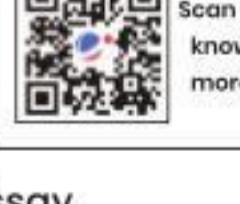
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S K Y W A T C H

FORECAST: March 6

Partly cloudy sky.

MAX: 25

2.4°C below normal

MIN: 11

2.4°C below normal

KEJRIWAL ORDERS CHIEF SECY TO TAKE ACTION IN 7 DAYS

L-G flags lack of public facilities to CM; he replies: 'playing role of oppn'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

WITH L-G V K Saxena accusing the Delhi government of "depriving people of basic public facilities", Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Tuesday said that despite holding a Constitutional post, Saxena was "playing the role of the opposition".

Saxena said in a post on X that local residents in South Delhi's Sangam Vihar had requested him to visit and complained about the living conditions. "Went to Sangam Vihar on Monday on the request of the local residents. Despite nine years of hardships, more than 20 lakh people living in the area are forced to live a life where they are deprived of basic public facilities. There are no roads, no

sewers, no garbage disposal," Saxena said in the post.

Attaching photos from the site to his post, Saxena said there are hanging electrical wires, adding that a rickshaw overturned in front of him and injured a woman.

"The country cannot imagine that overflowing drains, heaps of garbage and streets filled with stinking sewer water will be in the capital of India. All the departments concerned are completely under the Delhi government and the MCD is also under you. The chief minister is requested to pay attention to the problems," he wrote in another post.

Responding to the L-G, Kejriwal said he has ordered the chief secretary to take action in the matter in the next 7 days. "I am thankful to you that you pointed out our shortcomings. Earlier, you



Saxena shared photos from his visit to Sangam Vihar. LG Delhi/X

had also highlighted the shortcomings of Kirari and Burari. I am ordering the Chief Secretary to remove all these shortcomings in all these areas within seven days," he replied on X.

In his directions to the Chief Secretary, Kejriwal also asked him to give him a daily action

taken report. "The work you are doing should have been done by the opposition. It is the job of the opposition to point out the shortcomings of the ruling party... Therefore, you are forced to play the role of opposition despite holding the constitutional post of L-G," he said.

He also asked that action be taken against erring officers in the matter. "Regarding the shortcomings you have pointed out, strictest action should be taken against officers who had to do this work and did not do it. Services and vigilance come under your jurisdiction. If it were under me, I would not only immediately suspend such careless officers but would also take such action against them that no other officer would dare to commit such a careless act. I hope you will immediately suspend the most senior officers of these departments and give them exemplary punishment," Kejriwal wrote.

Northeast Delhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, meanwhile, also asked Kejriwal to visit his constituency to see the "pathetic situation" of roads, sewer and waterlogging being faced by people.

Manager of restaurant that served dry ice as mouth freshener held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

AFTER FIVE people were hospitalised on being served dry ice as mouth freshener at a Gurgaon restaurant in Sector 90, police said they arrested the manager on Monday.

The accused, Gagandeep Singh (30), had been working as the manager at Laforestta Cafe for the last three months and is a resident of Delhi's Kirti Nagar, police said.

Gurgaon Police spokesperson, Inspector Sudhir Kumar, said on Tuesday: "Police received information from Aary Hospital (in) Sector 90 regarding the admission of Neha Sabharwal, Manika Goenka, Deepak Arora, Pritika Rustagi, and Himani due to consumption of a 'mouth freshener'... offered by the restaurant staff after dining. Upon investigation, police found that the packet given to them by the restaurant staff contained dry ice with corrosive chemicals, resulting in discomfort and health issues. Despite their deteriorating condition, the restaurant staff did not provide assistance, prompting them to contact the police."

Police said Gagandeep was in charge of overseeing the operation (at the restaurant) and they are looking at the role of others. "We are checking if the owner is involved and will take necessary action if any wrongdoing is found," said a police officer.

Police had registered an FIR under IPC sections of causing hurt by means of poison and criminal conspiracy against the waitress who gave them the substance.

According to police, three out of the five affected individuals have been discharged from the hospital, while two remain under medical care.



CITY LINES

Labourers at work on the long-awaited extension of the Barapullah flyover, Tuesday. Gajendra Yadav

Work halted, power connection awaited: Report flags issues in 4 Delhi govt schools

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

CONSTRUCTION OF three new Delhi government schools at a standstill since March 2020, and newly constructed classrooms at one school awaiting furniture and electricity connection – this is the status of four out of six schools that are the subject of a case in the Delhi High Court, where the petitioner had said last November that students are being deprived of the benefit of these school buildings "for the past two years due to the inaction of the authorities."

The matter concerns schools at Mukundpur, Bakhtawarpur, Lancer Road – work has "not been taken up since March 2020" and "work has been foreclosed by PWD," according to the report. The buildings were meant to house 112 classrooms. The PWD will have to prepare fresh estimates and "fresh tendering, and completion of the work" will require four more months, as per the report.

The status report on the six schools, dated March 5, submitted by the Directorate of Education (DoE) to the Delhi HC, said that two (at Rani Bagh and Rohini Sector 7) of the six schools have been running since July 2022, but the Public Works Department (PWD) has "de-

manded additional amount to clear pending bills of contractors." The matter is slated to come up for hearing on Wednesday.

At the school at Punjab Khor, electricity connection and furniture are awaited – the DoE has issued sanction for the shifting of a high-tension wire passing through the school premises and a new electricity connection, while the PWD has to "make necessary estimates for purchase of furniture", going by the report.

At the three other buildings – at Mukundpur, Bakhtawarpur, Lancer Road – work has "not been taken up since March 2020" and "work has been foreclosed by PWD," according to the report. The buildings were meant to house 112 classrooms. The PWD will have to prepare fresh estimates and "fresh tendering, and completion of the work" will require four more months, as per the report.

The petition filed in the HC last November by NGO Social Jurist had sought directions to

the Delhi government to approve payment to the PWD so that possession of the six school buildings can be handed over.

In December, the HC had said that the matter "requires urgent decision" and directed that the government ensure the handing over of possession of the school buildings before the next date of hearing. In its most recent order, in February, the HC directed that its order along with the relevant files be placed by the Chief Secretary before the Chief Minister.

On March 1, Education Minister Atishi wrote to the Chief Secretary stating that the payment has not yet been made, "the file is shuttling between the Education and Finance Department," and asked the Chief Secretary to coordinate amongst these departments to ensure payment is released to the PWD by March 4 as the next date of hearing is March 6.

In his note to Atishi on the same day, the Chief Secretary had said that the matter of payment would have to be consid-

ered by the Cabinet, and the Education department and PWD were directed to submit a note for consideration of the Council of Ministers at the earliest. An application would be moved in the High Court seeking time of four weeks, he added.

Atishi, in turn, responded that it would "not be appropriate" for the Delhi government to ask for another four weeks, and said that all departments concerned need to "work on a war footing" to ensure payment to the PWD is released latest by March 6. She had written in her note that the cabinet note would have to be placed before the Minister by "forenoon" on March 2. On March 3, in another note to the Chief Secretary, she wrote that she had not received the cabinet note and directed the bureaucrat to convene a meeting of the departments the same day to complete the formalities.

Going by the DoE's status report submitted to the HC, the cabinet note is "under resubmission" to the Minister.

Sources said around a dozen names were being assessed from a panel of probables for the three Lok Sabha seats – Chandni Chowk, Northwest and Northeast – which constitute the Congress's share of the seven Parliamentary seats in the city. The AAP, its INDIA partner, has already declared candidates on four seats in Delhi. "The panel of possible candidates includes both current office bearers as well as former elected representatives; the party seems to be in favour of a mix of both. These are, of course, open to modification as per the high command's decision," a senior leader said.

The Congress screening committee, as per sources, is scheduled to meet over the coming days to assess candidates, which the party is likely to declare on the weekend following the nod of the Central Election Committee.

Sources said All India Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba, ex-MLA Harishankar Gupta and former MP Sandeep Dikshit were front runners from Chandni Chowk while Delhi Congress chief Arvinder Singh Lovely, former Delhi Congress chief Chaudhary Anil Kumar and senior Delhi leader Chhattar Singh were in contention from the Northeast Delhi seat. Former JNUSU president Kanhaiya Kumar, sources said, was also in the race.

From Northwest Delhi, according to sources, former Union Minister Krishna Tirath, ex-Delhi Minister Raj Kumar Chauhan, former MP Udit Raj, and ex-Bawana MLA Surender Kumar were under consideration.

A senior party leader said the Congress had the "highest hope" of securing the Northeast Delhi Lok Sabha seat where it was ex-

pecting, and hoping to counter polarisation along religious lines on the basis of former party president Rahul Gandhi's thrust on the OBC vote bank.

"From past electoral experience, we have reason to believe that the Northeast Delhi seat, which borders Uttar Pradesh, is likely to be polarised along religious lines, which can be remedied only by contesting the polls on the issue of OBC representation," the leader said.

"There is a sizable population of OBC as well as SC voters in areas which fall under the Parliamentary constituency; there is also immense support there that we witnessed during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. The party believes Rahul ji's push on the OBC issue can strike a chord with residents there," the leader added.

Transport minister takes the wheel, test drives prototype of mohalla bus

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

TRANSPORT MINISTER Kailash Gahlot inspected the 9-m long prototype of the much-awaited mohalla bus at Raj Ghat bus depot, drove the vehicle for a short period before taking the passenger seat to reach the Assembly to attend the budget session Tuesday. He said residents can expect to see some of these buses on roads by next month.

In last year's budget, the Delhi government had proposed to bring 100 mohalla buses by December 2023 to provide first- and last-mile connectivity in the most populated areas.

Gahlot wrote on X, "... Electric buses, especially the 9m compact ones under our mohalla bus scheme, will be a game changer, especially for our women drivers."

The buses, as against the



Gahlot said residents can expect to see some of these buses on the roads by next month. Abhinav Saha

standard 12-m vehicle, will have 23 seats of which six will be reserved for women. The government has set a target to intro-

duce 2,180 such buses by 2025. On delay in the rollout of the scheme, Gahlot said, "The prototype is being examined... the delay is because such buses have been ordered for the first time. The road-worthiness certification process takes time... But they will start rolling in from April..."

Vasantha said, "I'm extremely happy to hear the news of full acquittal for Dr G N Saibaba and others. After 10 long

years of struggle, justice is delivered. I only hope there are no future obstacles to his very well-deserved freedom. Thank you to the lawyers who have been working tirelessly for justice. Thank you to all human rights defenders, all the people who stood in solidarity for Saibaba."

She is all set to go to Nagpur along with her daughter to bring her husband back home, whom she last met in November 2023. "I will say the same thing which I told you last year. The first thing I am going to do is bring him back home and take him to a hospital to get him the right treatment. His health has deteriorated severely in the past few years..." she told *The Indian Express*.

The family of the former professor, whose services were ter-



Vasantha is set to go to Nagpur with her daughter to bring her husband back home. PTI

minated by DU's Ram Lal Anand College in 2021, had repeatedly demanded his release given his health condition, and as he is wheelchair-bound.

Recalling what she told *The Indian Express* last year, Vasantha stated that though they had been fighting for justice since 2014, she believed in the country's judiciary: "The truth has finally come out and he has been acquitted."

"I spoke to my husband today (over the phone) and all he said was that the truth has finally come out... We all knew and we were waiting patiently... There was no solid evidence against my husband and yet he had to do time... Questioning the rights provided to us as free individuals by the Constitution of our country is not a crime. To punish

someone for this is contradicting our own principles," she added.

She also claimed the family did not get full access to Saibaba's health report through his time in prison and that one of his hands is completely paralysed.

Two-judge bench of Justices Vinay G Joshi and Valmiki S A Menezes said the prosecution failed to prove the case against the accused and ruled that the sanction under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was null and void, and that the entire prosecution case had been initiated on account of invalid sanction to prosecute the accused. Hours later, the Maharashtra government informed the High Court that it had approached the Supreme Court with an appeal against the order.

IMPLEMENTATION LIKELY IN SEPT-OCT

Giving women a seat at the table: Atishi on Rs 1,000 aid

GAYATHRIMANI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

Finance Minister Atishi. Abhinav Saha

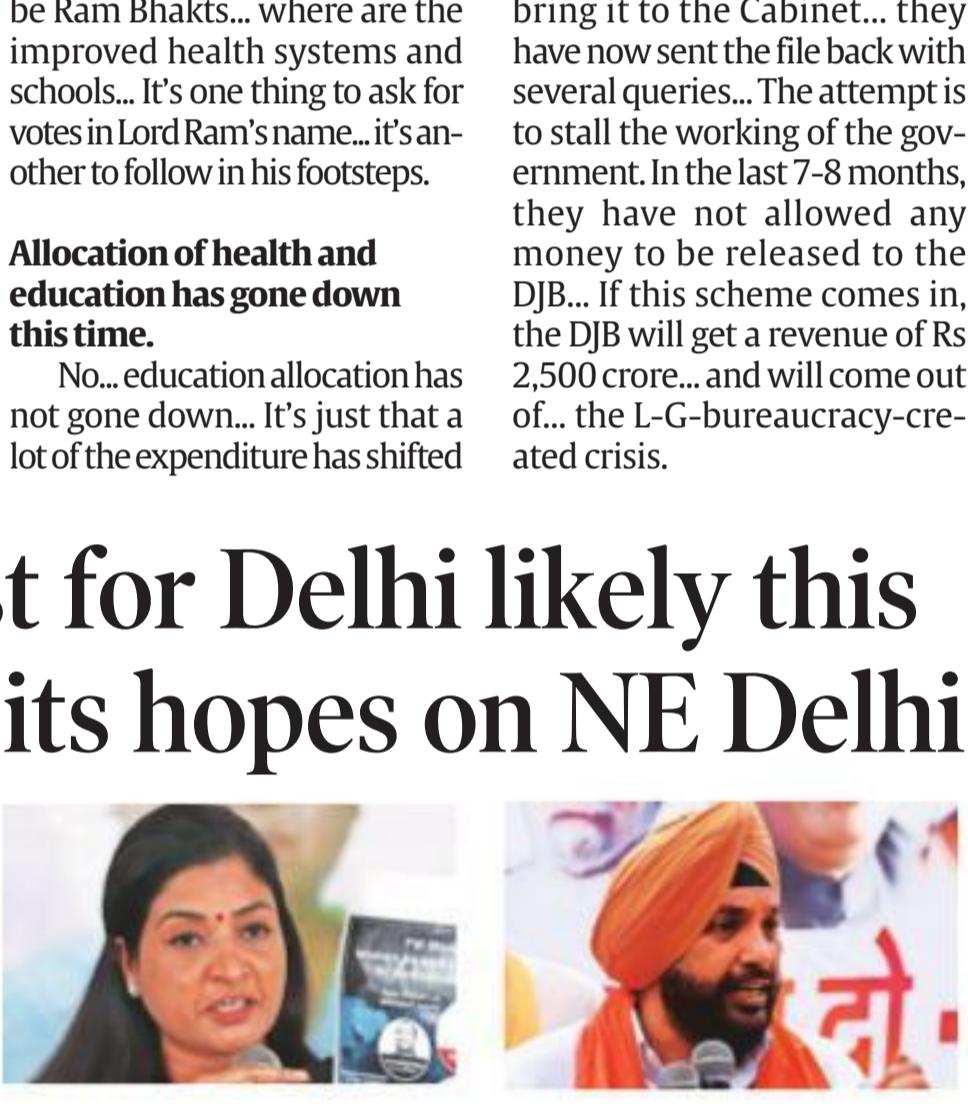
A DAY after presenting her maiden Budget, Delhi Finance Minister Atishi talked about the new scheme under which every woman over 18 years will receive an honorarium of Rs 1,000 a month, Ram Rajya, and the latest government-LG tussle over the water bill settlement scheme.

The big announcement this year was the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana. When is it likely to start?

The Model Code of Conduct will (kick in soon), so it will probably be notified after the Lok Sabha polls... sometime in June... the process will start and it will take a couple of months for the forms to be verified and linked with the payment and gateway of our government... So, you can estimate that maybe from September or October, the money will start going into people's accounts. Although, we will complete formalities like (clearing it) in the Cabinet (in the meantime).

What are the other big focus areas in this Budget?

This is our biggest focus area. The purpose of any budget is to improve quality of life of your citizens and drive economic growth. We are looking to do both. When it comes to women, particularly, one has to understand there is a strong social component to it. Even for the smallest expense, she has to rely on a man – be it their husband, father or son. We are giving women a seat at the table – if they have money of their own, they can spend it as they wish. Second, is the economic component. What you're doing is infus-



All India Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba and Delhi Congress President Arvinder Singh Lovely are frontrunners from Chandni Chowk and Northeast Delhi respectively

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

WITH THE imposition of the Model Code of Conduct for Lok Sabha polls around the corner, the process of finalising candidates for Delhi has gathered pace with an announcement to this effect likely by the Congress this week, sources said.

Sources said around a dozen names were being assessed from a panel of probables for the three Lok Sabha seats – Chandni Chowk, Northwest and Northeast – which constitute the Congress's share of the seven Parliamentary seats in the city. The AAP, its INDIA partner, has already declared candidates on four seats in Delhi. "The panel of possible candidates includes both current office bearers as well as former elected representatives; the party seems to be in favour of a mix of both. These are, of course, open to modification as per the high command's decision," a senior leader said.

The Congress screening committee, as per sources, is

EWS ADMISSION: HC MODIFIES ORDER

New income cap now Rs 21,000 per month

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

THE DELHI High Court, in an interim order Tuesday, said the threshold on annual family income for admission to schools under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category will be Rs 2.5 lakh (or Rs 21,000 a month) till further orders.

The division bench today issued notice to the school and the child in the DoE's appeal and listed it for hearing on August 5.

In doing so, a division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora modified a December 5, 2023, judgment of a single-judge bench which had directed the Delhi government to increase the threshold income for admissions under the EWS category from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh "with immediate effect".

The bench was hearing an appeal moved by the Directorate of Education (DoE). "Till further orders, there shall be a stay on the directions contained in paragraph 119 of the impugned judgment, except that the threshold income for admission under the EWS category shall stand increased from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2.5

lakh..." it said.

Last year, the single-judge bench had passed its directions on a plea against the cancellation of a student's admission under the EWS category for allegedly submitting false income and birth certificates.

The division bench today issued notice to the school and the child in the DoE's appeal and listed it for hearing on August 5.

Appearing for the DoE, advocate Santosh Kumar Tripathi said the sudden increase in income threshold will "adversely impact deserving candidates from the labour category" with an annual income of Rs 1 lakh, potentially leading to reduced chances of securing admissions meant for economically weaker sections. Tripathi stated that this "arbitrary increase" violates the fundamental right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution and imposes "unreasonable restrictions" on the right to education under Article 21A. He stated that the proposed increase of Rs 5 lakh will result in "injustice" and may hinder the intended purpose of providing free and compulsory education to economi-

cally weaker sections.

He emphasised that the "existing policy of relying on self-declarations is appropriate and does not require a change". He further submitted that even if the directions in the December 5 judgment have to be implemented, the state would require time to change the system.

The appeal further submits that the direction in the December order, asking the Delhi government to eliminate the "mechanism of self-declaration for income certificates and establish an appropriate framework", is factually erroneous since individuals who receive cash income daily, like labourers, "face practical challenges in obtaining income certificates without the provision of self-declaration".

In its December order, the single-judge bench had asked the government to decide expeditiously on increasing the threshold income to a "commensurate amount which corresponds to the living standards of the intended beneficiaries", adding that Rs 5 lakh would be the new cap till a decision is taken.

DU working on bridge courses to help students switch to 4-yr UG programme

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

DELHI UNIVERSITY is working on mapping out bridge courses to enable students enrolled in the Choice-Based Credit system to transition into the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP), following the guidelines released by the University Grants Commission (UGC) earlier this month.

In its notification on March 1, the UGC had said: "For the benefit of students, UGC hereby reiterates the provision given in the Curriculum and Credit

Framework for Undergraduate Programmes". Students who have already enrolled and are pursuing UG programmes as per Choice-Based Credit System are eligible to pursue 4-year undergraduate programme and the university concerned may provide bridge courses (including online courses) to enable them for transition to 4-year UG programme."

Earlier, UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar had told *The Indian Express*, Professor K Ratnabali, Dean, Academic Activities and Projects, said, "UGC has sent this notification and the university will adhere to this. We are working on mapping out the bridge courses

and are figuring out a structure to implement this soon. But, nothing is concrete yet." Another official at the varsity also stated that mapping out the bridge courses which could be taught, allotment of faculty, etc is a time-consuming process, adding DU will act on it and implement the UGC guideline as soon as possible.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Professor K Ratnabali, Dean, Academic Activities and Projects, said, "UGC has sent this notification and the university will adhere to this. We are working on mapping out the bridge courses

with a certificate."

SAMAN HUSAIN

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

WEEKS AFTER multiple properties in Connaught Place were sealed over non-payment of taxes, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), in its final meeting before the Lok Sabha polls, discussed a proposal to enable shopkeepers to repay their dues in installments.

NDMC vice-chairperson Satish Upadhyay said: "We discussed taxation and dealings... many proposals were discussed on how to make tax payment easy for property holders such as more transparency in tax calculation and the option to repay in installments."



Many shops sealed in CP over non-payment of tax. Amit Mehra

Meanwhile, 14 out of 15 agenda items were passed in the meeting.

The council has approved the implementation of a decentralised wastewater treatment so-

lution to improve water quality in Kushak Nallah on SP Marg. IIT-Kanpur's Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) has been appointed to clean the water, for which an STP will be set up.

"This is a big project of the NDMC... to conserve water in the NDMC area," said NDMC member Kuljeet Chahal. The council has accorded Rs 169.57 crore for execution and 12 years of operation and maintenance of the STP. "The ultimate goal is to ensure the water is clean enough for use at NDMC hospitals and hotels," sources said.

The council also approved a draft of its 'Right of Way' policy on telecommunication infrastructure to improve cellular network

in its jurisdiction. It will be setting up 156 Communication Cellular Mobile Towers on Wheels (CoWs).

An agenda to provide individual piped water connections to NDMC's 41 JJ clusters and unauthorised colonies, under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme, was also passed. According to Chahal, work has been initiated in Sanjay Gandhi Camp and Vivekananda Camp.

With an aim to provide freshly cooked mid-day meals to 7,000-8,000 students across six Navayug schools, a semi-automated kitchen is to be set up at Gole Market. Funds were also allocated to remove defective water meters in an attempt to improve billing.

ADVERTORIAL

False Rumors about spurious and fake pesticides in India

In India almost all the pesticide manufacturers have good quality control systems. More than 60% of pesticides manufactured in India are exported all over the world including in the developed countries like USA and Europe.

CCFI with Global Farm Policy Group has collected information under RTI from all over India and we found less than 2% of the pesticide samples do not meet the standards.

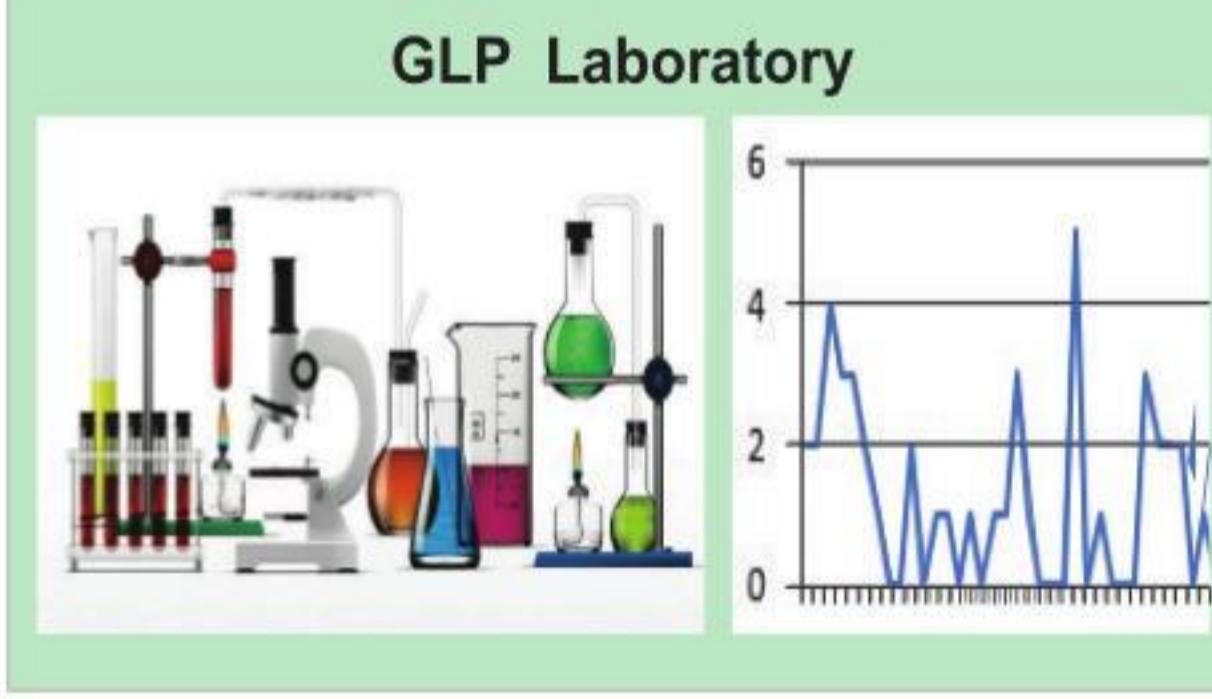
The then Hon'ble minister Shri Tomar Ji had replied in the parliament that according to the government of India record only 1.17 % of pesticide tested in government laboratories do not meet the standards. No spurious samples were detected.



The biggest problem the Indian pesticide industry facing is about false propaganda by some vested interest who want to import pesticides and restrict our Indian pesticide industry to manufacture pesticide in India.

We have collected information about pesticide residue in the other countries. In the year 2018 India was 2.2% USA was 3.2%, EU was 4.5% and UK was 6.4% of the sample above Maximum Residual Limit (MRL). So, we can prove that Indian food is very safe compared to other countries.

CCFI has taken these rumor mongers to the court. They say that more than 50% of pesticides in the Indian market are spurious.



With ulterior motives some industries in India are spreading lies about the quality of Indian pesticides. Some state authorities in agriculture departments are misguided by such false propaganda and instead of finding facts, they are bringing new laws to punish and harass the genuine Indian pesticide industry. As a result this only increases corruption.

CCFI has spent enough time and efforts in this matter, and they found that some spurious manufacturers are not pesticide manufacturers at all but they are some unregistered culprits who manufacture spurious pesticides. The local and state inspectors are **hand and gloves** with these culprits. Even local police stations protect these manufacturing sites and that's why industry has to go to the higher ups in the police department to organize raids at their manufacturing premises.

Some unscrupulous shopkeepers make money and that is the reason only farmers suffer and the good pesticide industry gets the blame.

Class X student suicide: Army Public School gets police notice

ARNABJIT SURI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

- Who issues the admit card to students?
- What is the process followed to let a student sit for examinations?
- What is the action taken in case of damage to property?

These are among 40 questions sent by police to Army Public School in Delhi Cantt last week, after a Class X student died by suicide. He was allegedly denied his admit card to sit for the board exam for "breaking a chair".

Policemen had booked the school for abetment to suicide following a complaint by the 16-year-old boy's father, an Indian Army havaldar. The father, in his complaint, had alleged that the principal and teacher "drove his child to suicide" after denying him his admit card and insulting his child and wife over the issue of a broken chair, despite his wife saying she was willing to pay Rs 10,000 for the damages.

A senior police officer told *The Indian Express*, "We issued a notice to the school management which consists of nearly 40 questions... (We asked them) who issues the admit card; the criteria for allowing a student to sit for the examination; the kind

The father of the boy had alleged that the principal and teacher "drove his child to suicide" after denying him his admit card

disciplinary reasons... this is being probed," added the officer.

Another officer said, "When asked about the process followed to not issue an admit card, the school laid out a variety of reasons, including failing in some of the previous examinations, misconduct, and other reasons... we have sought this in writing from the authorities."

The principal and teacher have denied making any statements that might have affected the child's mental health; the statements of the (other) students are yet to be recorded. Once they are done with their exams, they will be questioned to know more about the deceased child and the possible reasons why he took the step.. prima facie, the denial of admit card seems to be the only reason," said the officer.

Following the boy's death last month, several parents and children of the school protested outside the principal's house demanding action against her. The principal has not responded to questions seeking comment.

Meanwhile, police have formed a Special Investigation Team, headed by an ACP-rank officer, to probe the case. The Indian Army had also ordered an investigation into the incident.

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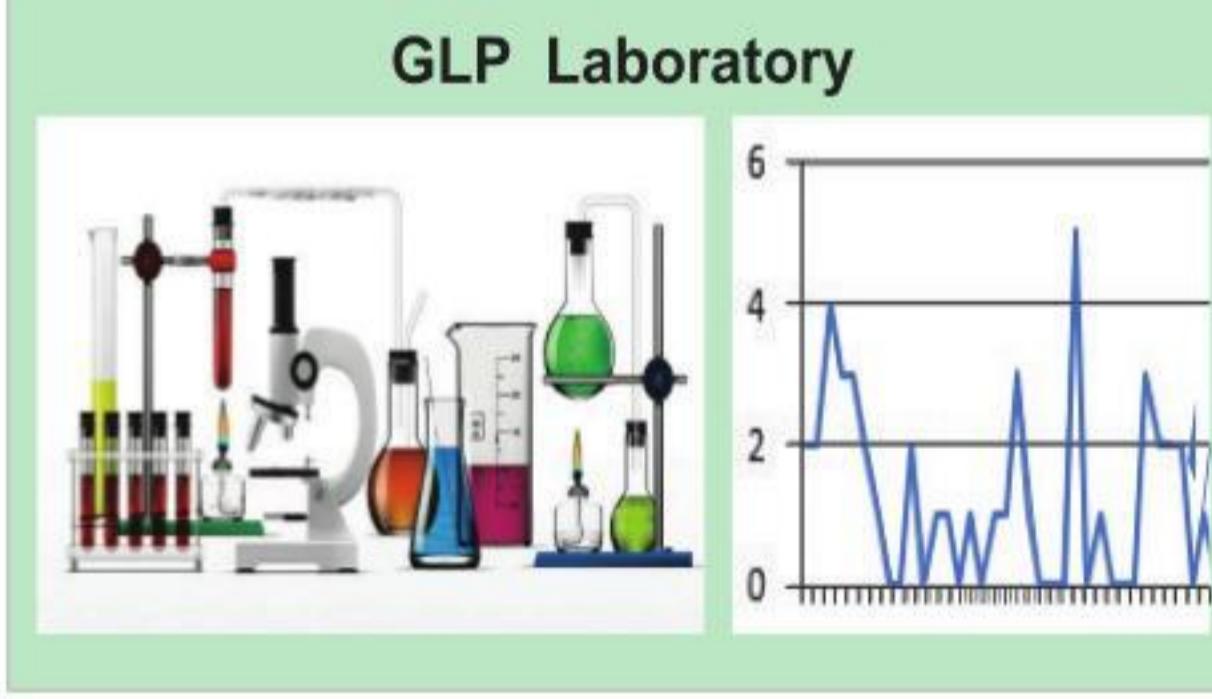
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With ulterior motives some industries in India are spreading lies about the quality of Indian pesticides. Some state authorities in agriculture departments are misguided by such false propaganda and instead of finding facts, they are bringing new laws to punish and harass the genuine Indian pesticide industry. As a result this only increases corruption.

CCFI has spent enough time and efforts in this matter, and they found that some spurious manufacturers are not pesticide manufacturers at all but they are some unregistered culprits who manufacture spurious pesticides. The local and state inspectors are **hand and gloves** with these culprits. Even local police stations protect these manufacturing sites and that's why industry has to go to the higher ups in the police department to organize raids at their manufacturing premises.

Some unscrupulous shopkeepers make money and that is the reason only farmers suffer and the good pesticide industry gets the blame.

With the help of police headquarters, CCFI had raided and visited these illegal places. They found a number of fake factories without any legal permissions. They are supported by some corrupt officers.

We have experience that local police instead of helping the industry, restrict and support the manufacturers of spurious pesticides. When we found some corrupt shopkeepers selling these pesticides to our farmers, they claimed ignorance about the material. The local insecticide inspectors are mostly aware of these activities but not interested in taking samples from shops selling these spurious pesticides.

We suggest that the government and the industry should work together. If proper actions are taken against shopkeepers who know suppliers, we can locate manufacturers.

If a few of shopkeepers go to jail, we can control spurious pesticides going to the farmers. Even the suppliers of other ingredients including packing material should be punished.

We are very confident that within one year the total spurious business will be stopped. Finally, the most important harassment to the genuine pesticide industry will not occur.



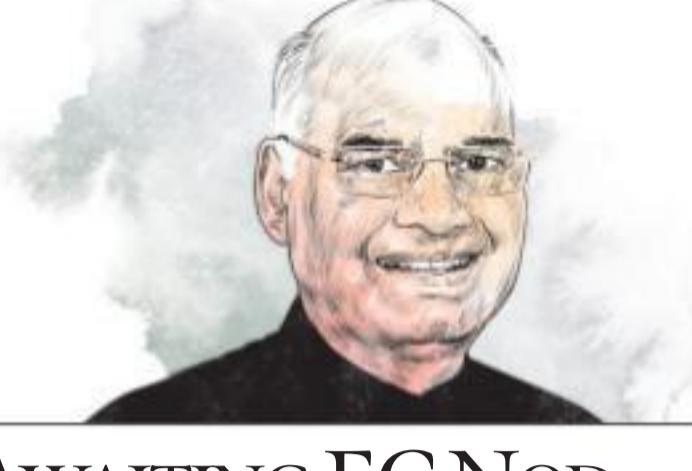
**GLOBAL FARM POLICY GROUP
MUMBAI**

Reg. No.: 1498/2022

349, Business Point, Western Express Hwy., Andheri (E) Mumbai-400 069



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



AWAITING EC NOD

THE ONE nation, one election committee, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, had written to the Election Commission earlier this year, seeking time for a meeting to hear its views on simultaneous polls. The commission didn't allocate time for the meeting and instead sent its response in writing. According to sources, this decision was made because the poll panel's stance on the matter hasn't changed over time, and hence its earlier responses to the Law Commission on the matter were reiterated in the reply to the Kovind committee. Now, the committee has once again written to the EC seeking time for a meeting.

TRANSFER SURPRISE

THE TRANSFER of Kerala-cadre IAS officer Manoj Joshi from Secretary, Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, to Secretary, Department of Land Resources in the Rural Development Ministry, on Monday left many wondering if more rejig may be in the pipeline ahead of the LS polls. The surprise transfer came just days after Joshi, at a press meet on February 29, announced the ministry's first-ever Pey Jal Survekshan Awards, which were to be given out by the President on Tuesday. He had said that out of the 485 cities from where water samples were taken, only 46 had a 100% pass rate. Just two days later, the Ministry announced the awards would be rescheduled.

₹10-cr startup fund in each seat, scholarship: Cong's poll promises for youth likely today

MANOJ CG

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

A RS 10 crore startup fund for every Lok Sabha constituency to boost young entrepreneurs, a Rs 10,000 per month scholarship for 50 lakh budding sports persons under the age of 21 besides a promise to make apprenticeship a legal right and provide monetary compensation for those hit by paper leaks — the Congress is set to announce its first tranche of manifesto promises for youth Wednesday.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi are likely to announce these promises at a public meeting in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh. The Congress committee, which was tasked with drafting the manifesto, finalised the document at a meeting Tuesday. The document, drafted by panel chairman and former Finance Minister P Chidambaram and Praveen Chakravarty, All India Professionals' Congress chairman, with inputs from all members, will now be placed before Congress Working Committee for approval.

While the BJP government has a Startup India Seed Fund Scheme providing financial assistance to incubators and startups for Proof of Concept, Prototype Development, Product Trials, Market Entry and Commercialization, the Congress believes its promise

would be different given that it

will be available for youth under 40 in every Lok Sabha constituency — urban or rural. The fund will be disbursed over a period of five years.

"Now degrees will get respect, problems would be solved and everyone will get work...there will be a big announcement tomorrow," Rahul said on X. The sports scholarship, sources said, will be for budding talent across all disciplines.

While the party is yet to work out the nitty gritty of the monetary compensation that it plans for those impacted by paper leaks, it hopes the promise will strike a chord with the youth given the repeated instances of paper leak across almost all states. "There is a need to ensure accountability at all levels by ending the criminal nexus of a negligent government, corrupt officials, 'cheating mafia' and private printing presses," Rahul said.

He said there were over 70 paper leaks in last seven years which shattered the dreams of more than two crore students.



Rahul Gandhi in Ujjain on Tuesday. ANI

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SEOUL TALK

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy in Seoul on Tuesday. "India and South Korea have a growing responsibility to contribute to reshaping of the global order. The era when a few powers exercised disproportionate influence over that process is now behind us," he said in his address. ANI



Govt considers 'Art 371-like' shield for Ladakh

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN THE backdrop of protests across Ladakh, the Centre is mulling granting Article 371-like protection to the Union Territory.

Sources said during a meeting of the representatives of the region — Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance — with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday, the minister told them that all their concerns about land, jobs and culture would be addressed through special provisions under Article 371 of the Constitution.

Shah, sources said, made it clear that it would not be possible for the government to accommodate the region's demand to be included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Centre is also learnt to have

EXPLAINED
E Art 371 and Sixth Schedule

ARTICLE 371 of the Constitution includes special provisions for 11 states, including six of the Northeast. The Sixth Schedule of Constitution under Article 244 has provisions for formation of autonomous administrative divisions within a state, with certain legislative, judicial and administrative autonomy.

turned down the request for a legislature. Unlike J&K, Ladakh is a UT without a legislature.

The minister was sympathetic to the concerns of the peo-

ple on land, jobs and culture and said these can be addressed through special provisions under Article 371. He said the government was willing to reserve up to 80% of the jobs in the region for local people," a Ladakh leader, who was part of the discussions, said.

The representatives of the region met top officials of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), including Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla.

Recently, Ladakh witnessed massive protests demanding statehood, legislature and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, apart from concerns about environmental degradation due to possible industrialisation. "Right now people have no say in the administration of the region. Everything has become bureaucratic. One of the key demands of the region is public representation through a legislature. However, there is no commitment from the Centre on

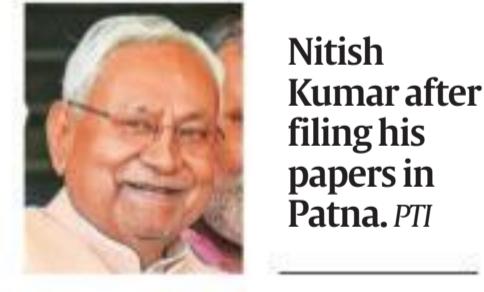
that," another leader said.

Sources said while turning down the demand for a legislature, Shah assured the delegations from Leh and Kargil that the government would ensure representation and participation of the local people through hill councils.

"He said hill councils could also be given enough powers and their budget would be as good as a state," one of the leaders of the delegation said.

A government-appointed high-powered committee is already looking into these demands from the region. Sources in the ministry said the government was inclined to provide protection for culture, language, land and jobs for Ladakh but not in the way that representatives seek.

Sources among the Ladakh leaders said they would continue to push for their demands through democratic means.



Nitish Kumar after filing his papers in Patna. PTI

colleague Santosh Suman and JD(U) MLC Khalid Anwar.

The other MLCS whose term is ending are former CM Rabri Devi and Ramchandra Purve of RJD; BJP's Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain, Sanjay Paswan and Mangal Pandey; Congress's Prem Chandra Mishra, JD (U)'s Rameshwar Mahto and Sanjay Kumar Jha.

needs, financial assistance, etc."

Chandrasekhar's major challenge would be familiarising himself with his constituents, whereas his two opponents have already been known faces in the belt. His nomination came on the eve of the polls even as several state BJP leaders had been vying to get it. The BJP has never been able to win a Lok Sabha seat in Kerala. In the Assembly polls, the party won only once from Nemam in Thiruvananthapuram district, where O Rajagopal had won in 2016.

The BJP's apparent delay in deciding Chandrasekhar's ticket and the possible lack of support from the local BJP unit might undermine his prospects, sources said.

Chandrasekhar's moderate image also took a beating as he was accused by both the Left and Congress leaders of polarising the discourse in the wake of the blasts

that killed two and injured over 50 followers of Jehovah's Witnesses in October last year. But Chandrasekhar, whose slogan is "In Karyam Nadakkum" (Now things will work), is optimistic that every voter in the constituency wants to be part of Modi's "developed India project". "Every Malayalee is deeply aware of the last 10 years of transformation that has happened under PM Modi – that took the country from the fragile five to top five... I am placing on record development that India has seen, but unfortunately both Kerala and Thiruvananthapuram lagged behind across the wide spectrum of the economy, from technology to agriculture to tourism. The inept handling of the Kerala economy by the current state government has further aggravated the situation in this constituency," he said.

Naveen Lokpriya CM, Odisha has key role in building economy: PM

SUJIT BISOI
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 5

EVEN THOUGH BJP and BJD leaders in Odisha are denying a possible tie-up between the two erstwhile allies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence on Naveen Patnaik's rule at a rally in the eastern state on Tuesday fuelled the speculation. Modi targeted the Congress and the INDIA alliance over corruption, scams, governance and "parivarad" (dynastic rule).

The Prime Minister, who addressed a "Modi Ki Guarantee" rally at Chandikhol in Jajpur district, his second this year, exuded confidence of a record victory in the upcoming polls. Modi said the enthusiasm and energy shown by people at the venue was an indicator that NDA would surpass 400 seats in Lok Sabha.

He, however, did not mention anything on the BJP's plan in Odisha despite the state going to the polls simultaneously along with the Lok Sabha election.

"This huge congregation shows the mood of the East. Odisha's resolution is clearly visible from the crowd. The resolution



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in Chandikhol, Odisha, on Tuesday. PTI

to surpass 400 seats," Modi said. "The resolution to cross 400-seat mark is to make India the third largest economy of the world. The resolution is to once again make a strong and decisive government in the country. The resolution is to transform the lives of farmers, youth, women and poor. The eastern part and Odisha will have a significant role in it," the PM said. Before addressing the rally, Modi dedicated development projects worth around Rs 20,000 crore for Odisha in a separate meeting attended by CM

Naveen Patnaik among others. While Patnaik lauded Modi for "setting a new direction for India" and for taking India on an accelerated drive to make the country an economic powerhouse, Modi addressed Patnaik as "Lokpriya" (popular) CM.

"India is now the 5th largest economy. Marching forward to be the number 3 in a few years. I thank the Prime Minister for his focus on the development of Odisha. I seek his support in the endeavour of 4.5 crore people of Odisha," Patnaik said. Both

Patnaik and Modi were seen exchanging greetings and pleasantries on the dais.

As Modi's visit coincided with the 108th birth anniversary of former CM and BJD's political ideologue Biju Patnaik, Modi also hailed the legendary leader for sacrificing his life for the nation.

"Despite BJP being the principal opposition party in Odisha and eyes to wrest power from BJD, the PM did not utter a single word on Patnaik's rule. The PM not even once mentioned about the double engine government in Odisha. He must have considered the BJD as a trusted ally at the Centre because of which he did not want to upset the BJD leadership," said a senior BJP leader, without wishing to be named.

"The PM is the best judge of the public mood. He must be realising that the state unit of BJP has not gained the strength to take on BJD in Odisha. Patnaik has also admitted that he has "cordial relations" with the Central government. Given the support Patnaik's party has extended to Modi government in the past, the PM might have decided not to continue the cordial relations with the BJD in Odisha," the BJP leader said.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Akola, Maharashtra. PTI

LS polls not about Modi or BJP but Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat: Shah

Opp leaders serving vested interests: Union Home Minister in Maharashtra

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, MARCH 5

FROM DRAWING poll strategies, constituency reviews to addressing seat-sharing hiccups among alliance partners, Union Home Minister Amit Shah set in motion the stage for big battle ahead of the Lok Sabha elections during his day-long visit to Maharashtra on Tuesday. Shah embarked on a swirling tour, hopping Akola, Jalgaon, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar and Mumbai to motivate and mobilise the party cadre in the state.

"Those who are so tied up with family's vested interests cannot uphold democracy. Whereas, Modi's leadership which is relentlessly striving for the well-being and future of 130 crore people of India will alone ensure that democracy thrives and gets stronger," he said.

At a public rally at Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar late on Tuesday evening, Amit Shah also urged people to uproot AIMIM from the sacred land which had the blessings of great saints and seers.

"The entire Marathwada region was under the Nizam rule. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel liberated Marathwada from Nizam, and now it is time to liberate Sambhaji Nagar from the new Nizams," Shah said.

"In Modi, we have a visionary who is determined to make India a world leader through development and self-reliance," Shah said.

"Congress leader Sonia Gandhi wants to make Rahul

Nitish files papers for re-election as MLC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

PATNA, MARCH 5

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday filed nomination papers for re-election as a Member of Legislative Council.

Elections to 11 MLC seats are due on March 21. The tenure of these 11 MLCS, including Kumar, who has been a member of the upper House since 2005, is ending in May. The Bihar CM is most likely to be elected unopposed due to favourable numbers for the BJP-led NDA in the Assembly.

Besides Kumar, nomination papers were filed by his cabinet

from a backward community.

"Raveendran is an underdog, and he could surprise others by emerging as a winner between the clash of the so-called titans," said a Left leader.

Some Left leaders say Raveendran could also capitalise on the perceived disenchantment among a section of coastal area residents against Tharoor and the BJP-led Centre over the Adani Vizhinjam port project. The coastal communities, including Christian and Hindu Nadars, have been upset with Tharoor for supporting the project.

But sources close to Tharoor said he has already reached out to the community. On his part, he said, "No other MP has spoken for the fishermen community as I have done. I have raised their issues over 20 times in the Lok Sabha. I have taken up the issues like coastal erosion, fisherman

when he was faced with one of his toughest challenges in the wake of his wife Sunanda Pushkar's demise, Tharoor managed to retain his seat.

Although confident that his track record as an MP since 2009 will be his biggest asset in this election too, Tharoor said he would not be complacent. "I took the seat in 2009 from the Communists who had won two previous elections and held it against the BJP, which came second. Now it's a three-cornered election and I do not take any election for granted," Tharoor told *The Indian Express*.

Tharoor also says he is not worried about the resources the BJP and Chandrasekhar would mobilise for their campaign. "I have been outspent by the BJP in 2014 and 2019. They are very well-funded and I know I will be

outspent this time too. But the fact is that at the end of the day, people are swayed by the appeal of the candidates, not by money alone. I am proud of my record of delivering various development initiatives to my constituency and the daily responsiveness to hundreds of constituent petitions and requests."

Raveendran has an image of a commoner. While both Tharoor and Chandrasekhar are upper-caste Nairs, the LDF candidate is

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Rajnath: India ensured no one has hegemony in Indian Ocean

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANJAI, MARCH 5

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said India has ensured that no one has a hegemony in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Indian Navy has proved that no country can threaten the sovereignty of its friendly nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

Speaking at the inauguration of the new administrative and training building – named 'Chola' in a homage to the maritime empire of the Chola dynasty – at the Naval War College in Goa, Singh said, "We have ensured that a rule-based maritime order is strengthened in the Indian Ocean Region. Today, India is ensuring that all the neighbouring countries and stakeholders in the IOR... they are provided assistance in safeguarding their autonomy and sovereignty. We have ensured that no one has a hegemony in the Indian Ocean. Our Navy ensures that in the Indo-Pacific region no country, on the basis of its overwhelming economic and military power, can suppress our friendly countries or threaten



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Goa CM Pramod Sawant, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar and other dignitaries at Naval War College, Goa, on Tuesday. ANI

their sovereignty."

The Minister's remarks come amidst growing concerns about China expanding its footprint in the IOR in recent times. "The increasing naval power not only protects us from our adversaries, but also provides an environment of security to other stakeholders in the Indian Ocean," he said.

Singh said earlier the governments focused only on strength-

ening the land borders and did not give much importance to maritime threats. "In view of the increased movement of our adversaries in the IOR and the commercial importance of the region, it was necessary to reassess our threat perception and accordingly rebalance our military resources and strategic attention. Under the Prime Minister's guidance, we not only reimagine

ined India's role in the IOR, but also strengthened it. Due to these efforts, India has today emerged as the first responder and preferred security partner in the IOR."

He said India was once known as a "landlocked country with sea shores", but now it can be seen as an "island country with land borders".

"The total land area of India is more than 32 lakh square kilometres. But, India is surrounded by the sea on three sides. So, under maritime laws, if we also add the exclusive economic zone, then an area of more than 20 lakh square kilometres of the exclusive economic zone comes under the jurisdiction of India. If we focus only on land areas and their security, we will be ignoring the security of an area of more than 20 lakh square kilometres of exclusive economic zone. This entire region is full of resources and there are opportunities available in this region," he said.

Singh praised the Indian Navy's role in strengthening the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region and generating goodwill for India on a global canvas through its anti-piracy and anti-trafficking operations.

Blow for INDIA in J&K: NC to contest all 3 Valley seats, PDP still holds out hope

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, MARCH 5

IN A setback to the INDIA alliance of Opposition parties ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, the National Conference (NC) has decided to contest all three Lok Sabha seats in the Kashmir Valley. This will pit the NC and the Peoples Democratic Party, the Valley's two major mainstream parties, against each other. This also places a major question mark over the Peoples Alliance for the Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), an alliance of political parties in the Valley that was formed in 2020 to fight for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

"Yes, we are contesting all the three seats in the Valley," NC's provincial president Nasir Aslam Wani told *The Indian Express* on Tuesday. "We have had consultations with the Congress after which we have decided it." Asked if there were any consultations with the Peoples Democratic Party, Wani said they were talking "only with the Congress".

Sources said the Congress wanted the NC to contest Srinagar and Baramulla and leave Anantnag for PDP president Mehbooba Mufti. The Congress had even offered the Ladakh Lok Sabha seat to the NC. But the Farooq Abdullah-led party was adamant about contesting all three Valley seats, citing its 2019 winning record. It currently holds all three constituencies.

Akhtar said the PDP was ready to "sacrifice the party's interests in the interest of the people of J&K". "We stand for unity. We still hope that the NC will decide in the interest of the people of J&K," he said.

Searches at Soren home in Delhi: Cops summon four TV journalists

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, MARCH 5

THE JHARKHAND Police has summoned reporters of four New Delhi-based TV news channels in connection with their coverage of the ED searches at ex-CM Hemant Soren's house in the Capital.

The four journalists were the first to report the seizure of a BMW car and Rs 36 lakh cash during the searches in Delhi on January 29, sources said. Though police did not disclose the reason behind the summons, sources said the four journalists will be questioned about the source of their reports.

Soren was not present in Delhi on the day the ED conducted the searches. He was arrested two days later in Ranchi, after he resigned as CM. Hours before his arrest, Soren filed a complaint with the Ranchi police, alleging that ED officials had informed the media of the searches to

create a "media spectacle" and cause disrepute to him.

The search operations were meant to "harass and malign me and my entire community", he further alleged. "The local coverage in the media... is designed against me as a member of ST," he said in his complaint.

Ranchi SSP Chandan Kumar Sinha said the summons were issued to reporters of "News18, Zee News, Aaj Tak and News24". "We had asked them to come to Ranchi for an investigation, however, they have replied that they won't be able to come. So we will go to them," SSP Sinha said.

However, on the reason for the summons, Sinha said, "This is an ongoing probe. We can't reveal anything further." The FIR named ED's Additional Director Kapil Raj, Assistant Director Deovrat Jha, and two other officials Anuman Kumar and Aman Patel, besides some unknown officials. The ED officials have challenged the FIR in the Jharkhand HC.

Navy aids drone-hit vessel, sends warship

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN THE latest in a series of attacks on commercial vessels in the western Arabian Sea since December last year, a Liberian-flagged commercial vessel came under a drone strike Monday in the Gulf of Aden drawing swift assistance from the Navy.

On X, the Navy said the Liberian-flagged vessel, while transiting approximately 90 nautical miles southeast of Aden, reported a fire due to drone/misile attack.

It said that INS Kolkata, a mission deployed in the region for maritime security operations, promptly arrived at the scene by 2230 hours. A specialised firefighting team of 12 personnel from INS Kolkata embarked the vessel early morning hours of March 5 to assist in firefighting

efforts. A specialist explosive ordnance disposal team also boarded the vessel, it said.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began in October, a series of drone and missile attacks on commercial ships have taken place in the Red Sea, especially on those bound for Israel. The attacks have been reportedly perpetrated by Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Last month, a Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker Marlin Luanda came under a missile attack and another drone strike was reported on another Marshall Islands-flagged vessel, MV Genco Picardy. The Navy has rendered assistance in both incidents.

In December, a Liberia-flagged merchant vessel, MV Chem Pluto, carrying a crew of 22, of which 21 were Indians, came under a drone attack about 220 nautical miles southwest of Porbandar, while on its way to New Mangalore.

Prison radicalisation case: NIA searches 17 locations in 7 states

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

and West Bengal this morning. They have recovered 25 mobile phones, six laptops and four storage devices, besides various incriminating documents, and cash, apart from the currency notes of various countries," an NIA spokesperson said.

The Bengaluru city police had originally registered the case on the basis of inputs from central agencies and indicated that jails, where people hardened by long sentences in terrorism cases are lodged, were being used to radicalise new criminals to take up crime in the name of religion.

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गांधी दर्शन (समीप राजघाट)

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5000 बच्चों की अद्भुत पेंटिंग्स के साथ

मुख्य अतिथि: श्री विजय गोयल

उपाध्यक्ष, गांधी स्मृति एवं दर्शन समिति

शनिवार, 9 मार्च, 2024; प्रातः 11 बजे

आप बच्चों सहित साढ़ेर आमंत्रित हैं।

* हर बच्चे को एक गांधी काँपी दी जाएगी।

प्रदर्शनी: 9 से 16 मार्च तक प्रातः 10 से 5 बजे

पाठ्यक्रम विवरण: इस प्रदर्शनी में गांधी की जीवनी, विचार, और उनकी अद्भुत पेंटिंग्स का दर्शन किया जाएगा। यह एक विशेष उद्घाटन है जिसमें बच्चों को गांधी की स्मृति एवं दर्शन का अनुभव मिलेगा।

प्रदर्शनी का उद्देश्य: गांधी की स्मृति एवं दर्शन का अनुभव देना और बच्चों को गांधी की जीवनी और विचारों का अनुभव करना।

प्रदर्शनी का उद्घाटन दिन: शनिवार, 9 मार्च, 2024।

प्रदर्शनी का समय: प्रातः 11 बजे से शाम 5 बजे तक।

प्रदर्शनी का स्थान: नामो एक्सिबिशन केंटरी, राजघाट।

प्रदर्शनी का विवरण: इस प्रदर्शनी में गांधी की जीवनी, विचार, और उनकी अद्भुत पेंटिंग्स का दर्शन किया जाएगा। यह एक विशेष उद्घाटन है जिसमें बच्चों को गांधी की स्मृति एवं दर्शन का अनुभव मिलेगा।

Delimitation puts Assam's three Cong MPs in a fix over LS seats

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, MARCH 5

EVEN AS THE BJP Saturday announced 11 candidates for Assam's 14 seats for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the wait for the Congress to declare its nominees is only getting longer as last year's delimitation process weighs heavily on all its three sitting MPs from the state.

The last delimitation exercise was carried out across the country in 2002, except in the north east states and Jammu and Kashmir due to law and order issues. In March 2020, the Centre constituted the Delimitation Commission and the poll panel went ahead with the exercise in Assam last year after receiving inputs from the Centre that the law and order situation in the state had "significantly improved".

The delimitation had caused fissures within the BJP too, with former Union minister and four-time Nagaon MP Rajen Gohain stepping down from his position as Assam Food and Civil Supplies Corporation Limited Chairman. He alleged that his seat had been made "minority-dominated" with four Assembly segments added to it from the Kaziranga seat.

The Election Commission finalised the delimitation of Assam's parliamentary and Lok Sabha constituencies, in August last year, amid protests by Opposition parties as well as various community organisations,

the first such exercise since 1976. One of the most contested points was the Opposition's allegation that constituencies had been altered in such a way that minority voters had got concentrated in a few seats, hence reducing the number of segments where they could play a significant role.

Bhupen Borah told *The Indian Express*, "Three-and-a-half Assembly seats from Kaliabor (as Kaziranga was called previously) were merged into Nagaon, while another three-and-a-half segments from Nagaon were merged with Kaziranga, leading to reshuffling in both seats. Gogoi and Bordoloi are committed to the party's ideology and the party leadership will take a final decision on who will contest from the seat... Personally, I want them to contest from the two seats."

Borah dismissed speculations about the Dhubri seat, and said the leadership had zeroed in on a candidate. The seat, currently represented by AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, has seen many minority-dominated Assembly segments from Barpeta – which usually elects minority candidates – added to it, thus spreading it over a huge geographical area.

Khalique's keenness on changing his seat likely stems from the fact that the minority community would no longer play a decisive role in Barpeta. The MP argues that redrawing of constituencies means Dhubri is his native seat now.

Assam Congress chief

Plea seeks repairs in Gyanvapi cellar, cites 'vibrations by namaz crowd'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MARCH 5

CLAIMING THAT A "sudden increase in people coming to offer namaz" is causing the roof to vibrate, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust has filed an application at Varanasi District Court seeking directions for repairing the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque where a priest has been performing puja for the past one month.

The court will hear the application on March 19.

In his application, CEO Vishwa Bhushan Mishra has said that on February 15 a stone was dislodged from the roof (of the cellar) and fell due to vibrations caused by the crowd offering namaz."

"There was a possible threat to the life of the priest performing puja inside the cellar. So, I approached the court seeking directions. I am considering submitting an application to expedite the hearing of our plea,"

said Mishra.

On January 17, the Varanasi court had appointed the District Magistrate (DM) as the receiver of the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque, also known as Vyasji Ka Tehkhana.

Additionally, on January 31, the court allowed puja inside the same cellar. The southern cellar was opened the same night and a priest performed puja.

On February 16, Mishra said,



On January 31, the Varanasi District Court had allowed puja inside the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque. File

ously close to the idol platform", the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust CEO stressed the imminent risk of serious injury to priests and said that there was an "urgent need for internal roof repairs to prevent unpleasant incidents".

Additionally, due to the roof's deteriorating condition, it is necessary to regulate the gathering of a large number of people on the roof, he said.

According to Mishra, the priest who performs puja at the Gyanvapi cellar had previously submitted a plea in this regard to the District Magistrate, Varanasi. "However, after receiving no direction, the priest subsequently filed an application to him," he said.

On January 31, the Varanasi district court directed that a priest be allowed to perform puja in the southern cellar of the mosque complex after the Archaeological Survey of India in its report stated that "there existed a Hindu temple prior to the construction" of the Gyanvapi mosque.

Former MP, aide convicted in 2020 kidnapping case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MARCH 5

A SPECIAL MP/MLA court in Jaunpur on Tuesday held former MP Dhananjay Singh and his aide guilty in a kidnapping and threatening case. The case was filed by a project manager of Jal Nigam at the Line Bazaar police station, Jaunpur, in 2020.

The judgment comes as a significant blow to the political aspirations of Dhananjay Singh, who had earlier announced on social media his plan to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in Jaunpur.

After the judgment was pronounced, Singh and his aide Santosh Vikram Singh were taken into custody and sent to jail. The two were out on bail.

"The court has scheduled Wednesday for the pronouncement of the sentence," said District Government Counsel, Jaunpur, Satish Kumar Pandey.

The court held Dhananjay Singh and Santosh Vikram guilty under IPC sections 364 (Kidnapping or abducting in order to murder), 386 (Extortion by putting a person in fear of death or grievous hurt), 504 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy), added Pandey.

The case stemmed from an FIR registered on May 10, 2020, on the basis of a complaint by the project manager of Jal Nigam, Abhinav Singh, one of the accused, had summoned Singh to meet Dhananjay Singh at his residence in Jaunpur. Singh further alleged that Vikram and his two accomplices abducted him at gunpoint and took him to Dhananjay Singh's residence, where he was held captive for over an hour and threatened at gunpoint.

Dhananjay Singh, who won the 2002 Assembly elections as an Independent from the Rari seat in Jaunpur, retained it in 2007 as a JD(U) candidate. In 2009, he joined the BSP and secured victory in the parliamentary election from Jaunpur but was expelled from the party before the 2012 Assembly polls.

President withholds nod to 4th Bill passed by Kerala Assembly

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 5



Sources say it's one of the seven Bills Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan had referred to Rashtrapati Bhavan in November last year.

IN ANOTHER setback for the Kerala government, the President Tuesday withheld the assent to Kerala Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill, which seeks to give voting rights to nominated members in Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (MILMA).

This is the fourth Bill on which the President has withheld assent. Last week, the President had withheld assent to 3 other Bills passed by the Assembly, including one which aims to divest the Governor from the post of Chancellor of Kerala universities. However, the President cleared the Kerala Lokayukta Amendment Bill, 2022, which gives the state government power to reject or accept the ombudsman's report.

After the Kerala Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill was

Raj Bhavan sources said this was one of the seven Bills Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan had referred to Rashtrapati Bhavan in November last year. Over the last 2 years were pending with the Raj Bhavan. The government in November last year moved the SC over delay in clearing Bills after Khan neither gave his assent nor referred them to the President. Subsequently, Khan gave his assent for one of them – the Kerala Public Health Bill. The rest he referred to the President.

DA of Tripura govt employees, pensioners increased by 5%

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, MARCH 5

AHEAD OF the Lok Sabha elections, Tripura's BJP-led government on Tuesday announced 5 per cent Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief (DR) for employees and pensioners, reducing the gap of DA among central and state government employees from 26 per cent to 21 per cent.

In an unscheduled announcement in the ongoing Assembly session, Chief Minister Manik Saha said: "I hereby announce DA and DR, with retrospective effect from January 1, 2024. This will incur additional annual expenditure of Rs 500 crore. A total of 1,06,932 employees and 82,000 pensioners would be benefited due to this."

The DA announcement is in continuation with previous announcements of DA and DR, including 3 per cent DA on March 1, 2021, 5 per cent in 2022 and 12 per cent in December 2022.

"Many states held back salaries during pandemic but we never did in Tripura. Many gave cash in lieu of LTC. We maintained steady salary flow. We believe that slow and steady

wins the race. There is no need to initiate any movement. We announced the DA today without any movement or demand. We could have given 1 or 2 percent DA, but we provided 5 per cent in one go. This speaks about the intention of the government," Saha said.

Opposition leader Animesh Debbarma welcomed the decision, but said 21 per cent DA is still pending. "We want to know as to when state government employees may come on a par with central employees as far as DA is concerned," he said.

The CM said the decision was taken despite the extra fund pressure and it should be appreciated.

The hike in employees' salary by granting 7th Central Pay Commission (CPC) and clearance of pending DA were among crucial promises of the BJP prior to the 2018 Assembly elections.

Soon after the BJP-IPFT combine assumed office in March 2018, the government announced 7th CPC benefits for state government employees and announced 3 per cent DA.

While no DA was announced in the next three years, a series of DA announcements have come in the last three years.

RAJASTHAN STATE HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY, JAIPUR
(Govt. of Rajasthan)

Short Term Notice Inviting Bid (47/2023-24)
Bids for collection of user fee on "Jodhpur-Marwar Junction-Jojawar (SH-61&61A) Length Km.119.095" are invited from interested bidders upto 11:00 AM on 11.03.2024. Other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state. The estimated value of Annual Remittance is ₹ 5.37 Cr. UBN: PWD2324SLOB2011

Sd/-
(V.L. Dhankhar)
Member (W, C & O)
RSHA, Jaipur

DIPR/C/2028/2024

Punjab MP, 2 ex-MLAs held after scuffle with police

Ludhiana: The Ludhiana police on Tuesday arrested several Congress leaders, including Lok Sabha MP Ravneet Singh Bittu, former minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu and former MLA Sanjay Talwar, after a minor scuffle outside the city police commissioner's office.

Ludhiana police commissioner Kuldeep Singh Chahal said those arrested were produced before a local court and sent to judicial remand for 14 days. They have been shifted to Nabha jail, Chahal said.

Bittu, Ashu, Talwar and other Congress leaders gathered outside the commissioner's office to give their court arrest in connection with an FIR against them in connection with the ruckus outside the Ludhiana Municipal Corporation headquarters last month. ENS

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (ROADS), PUBLIC WORKS
ROADS DEPARTMENT, ASSAM, GUWAHATI-03

No. CE/DEV/TB/741/2023-24/21

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 invites Bids on behalf of Governor of Assam for 2 (Two) nos of Package for Construction of Roads and Bridge projects under SOPD-G for the year 2023-24 in Golaghat District of Assam amounting to Rs. 2.40 Crores (approx.) including GST etc. from approved & eligible Contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.

Details may be seen from 08.03.2024 at website www.assamtenders.gov.in. Amendment /Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

In this connection it may be mentioned that, the tender invited earlier vide Press Notice Inviting Tender No. CE/DEV/TB/741/2023-24/16 dated 24.02.2024 is hereby cancelled.

The schemes are not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non-sanction of the schemes, the bids may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders.

Note: - N.I.T Value is inclusive of GST (12%), Labour cess (1%) etc.

Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD,
Assam Chandmari, Guwahati-3

JANASANYOG/CF/6266/23/6-Mar-24

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (ROADS), PUBLIC WORKS ROADS DEPARTMENT, ASSAM, GUWAHATI-03

No. CE/DEV/TB/1343/2023-24/02

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 invites Bids on behalf of Governor of Assam for 1 (One) no. of Package for Construction of Road and Bridge projects under SOPD-G for the year 2023-24 in Kamrup District amounting to Rs. 697.04 Lakhs (approx.) including GST etc. from approved & eligible Contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.

Details may be seen from 08.03.2024 at website www.assamtenders.gov.in. Amendment /Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Note: - N.I.T Value is inclusive of GST (12%), Labour cess (1%) etc.

Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD,
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

After Bengaluru
cafe blast, email
to CM warned of
more explosions

ENS & PTI
BENGALURU, MARCH 5

KARNATAKA DEPUTY Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said Tuesday that a day after the blast at Bengaluru's Rameshwaram Cafe on March 1, an email threatening of multiple blasts in various locations if the demand for \$2.5 million (nearly Rs 20 crore) is not met was sent to Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, him and other senior ministers and officials.

Shivakumar said that the email has been sent to police officers and the cybercrime police are probing to trace the sender after registering a case. According to Shivakumar, the sender has also shared another email ID for future communication.

The NIA Monday had lodged an FIR in connection with the low-intensity IED blast which left nine people injured.

The email, sent from an account of one Shahid Khan at 2.48 pm Saturday with the address Shahidkhan10786@proton-mail.com, read, "What are your thoughts on the movie trailer? If you don't provide us with 2.5 million dollars, we will cause large explosions on buses, trains, temples, hotels and public areas throughout Karnataka."

Gujarat: Day after resignation as MLA, Modhwadia joins BJP

PARIMAL DABHI & KAMAAL SAIYED
GANDHINAGAR, SURAT, MARCH 5

A DAY after he resigned from the Congress MLA from Porbandar, Arjun Modhwadia joined the BJP in Gandhinagar on Tuesday. Soon after, he attacked the Congress, stating that he was a first generation politician without any political background and in Congress, there are "kalami amba" (grafted mango trees), who have "not undergone the pain of germination".

Modhwadia joined the BJP along with former Congress MLA Ambarish Der, Navsari district Congress general secretary Dharmesh Patel, and several other party leaders and workers in the presence of state BJP president CR Paatil.

Addressing mediapersons, Modhwadia said, "I am a first generation politician. I joined politics so that I can bring some change in my constituency of Porbandar and to Gujarat. I tried to fulfill this dream while staying in Congress for 40 years. But today, Congress has almost lost its connect with people."

Maintaining that he has joined the BJP to contribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of Viksit Bharat, he said: "I have decided to make contribution like a squirrel who contributed in building the Ram Setu of Lord Ram." He assured that as a BJP worker, he would double the efforts he put in Congress. "We have not inherited politics. We are not kalami amba. We came into politics from poor family while doing a lot of hardwork to make some contribution. That contribution was not possible in the party I was in (Congress). Now, it has got a NGO-like form..." he added.

Replying to media queries about his criticism of BJP in the past, Modhwadia said, "What could be more... than BJP giving me entry despite my such criticism? It shows their generosity. The difficulty was where I was (Congress). There, you had to wait for five to seven years for a meeting. The chief minister of Assam has talked about it in detail... (Here in BJP) a tea-maker becomes the PM, it wasn't inherited."

"Not me, but the chief minister of Telangana (Revanth Reddy) has said that Modi is a big brother and we all should follow the Gujarat model. What could be bigger certificate than this..." he told mediapersons.

Modhwadia rejected claims that Opposition leaders join BJP under pressure of investigating agencies or because of some enticement. Der, meanwhile, said he was associated with VHP, Bajrang Dal and youth wing of BJP between 2003 and 2009.

UP man sets self on fire near SP office, rescued

Lucknow: A 45-year-old man allegedly attempted suicide outside the office of district police chief in Shahjahanpur on Tuesday afternoon following a dispute with his business partner. Police said the victim, identified as Tahir Ali, set himself on fire by pouring petrol over his body, but the police in a prompt action extinguished the flames, and rushed him to the hospital. Ali suffered 40 per cent burn injuries and doctors said his condition to be stable.

The video circulating of Ali's son calling out to his father engulfed in flames has also gone viral.

According to the police, Ali was embroiled in a dispute with Umesh Tiwari and around a month ago had filed a police complaint against Tiwari who was illegally keeping the custody of two pick-up vehicles registered in his name and sought police help to get the matter solved. However, when the police summoned Umesh Tiwari presented documents supporting his claim that Ali's complaint was false. Shahjahanpur SP Ashok Kumar Meena said that the police had advised Tahir Ali to approach court. Meena also directed the Additional SP to conduct a detailed inquiry into the matter to identify the persons who might have instigated the man to take such a step.

'Where did he go?' Family of missing sailor holds on to hope as Navy continues search

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, MARCH 5



Sahil Verma, a seaman from Jammu, went missing from the naval ship on Feb 27

went missing.

"It was a Sunday. Sahil spoke to our mother three or four times... It was a routine talk about chores and daily routines. He mentioned that he was sailing the next morning and would only call after three days, when the ship returns," said Shivam.

He said their family was informed about Sahil's disappearance on February 29 evening, more than 50 hours after he went missing.

He said the family was not satisfied with the inquiry. "All we want is clarity. The CBI should probe the circumstances leading to his disappearance."

On Tuesday, on the sidelines of the inauguration of a new building at the Naval War College in Goa, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, responding to a question on the sailor's disappearance, said, "Sahil Verma has been on board for more than a year. He was last seen around 6.30-7.30 am when physical fitness training normally takes place. Later, at the time of muster for work around 9 am, he was missing. The usual norm is to search for three days, but we have continued the search and also deployed other patrol aircraft. We hope he is safe and we are able to recover him."

The six MLAs — Rajinder Singh Rana, Sudhir Sharma, Chaitanya Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Inder Dutt Lakhpal, and Davinder Bhutto — had cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha election in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan, who won by draw of lots after a tie of 34 votes each in the 68-member Assembly.

They were not disqualified for cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha election, which does not attract provisions of the anti-defection law, but for defying the party whip as per which they were supposed to be present on the floor of the House at the time of voting on cut-off motions on demands and the Finance Bill.

The MLAs are learnt to have

said in their plea that they were

not given sufficient time to re-

spond to the show-cause notice

issued to them on the petition

moved by Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Harshwardhan

Chauhan, seeking their disquali-

6 Himachal Cong
MLAs move SC
against their
disqualification

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

SIX HIMACHAL Pradesh Congress MLAs have approached the Supreme Court, challenging Assembly Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania's decision to disqualify them last week under the anti-defection law.

The six MLAs — Rajinder Singh Rana, Sudhir Sharma, Chaitanya Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Inder Dutt Lakhpal, and Davinder Bhutto — had cross-

voted in the Rajya Sabha election in favour of BJP candidate Harsh Mahajan, who won by draw of lots after a tie of 34 votes each in the 68-member Assembly.

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moved by Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Harshwardhan

Chauhan, seeking their disquali-

In blow to Sukhu govt, HC strikes down water cess on hydel projects

SAURABH PARASHAR
SHIMLA, MARCH 5

IN A major setback to the Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress government, the Himachal Pradesh High Court Tuesday declared the water cess levied on hydropower generation unconstitutional. With this, the government will have to forego annual revenue of around Rs 2,000 crore it was hoping to make by levying the cess on hydroelectric projects.

A division bench of Justices Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Stayen Vaidya said that the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Generation Bill, 2023 exceed the state's legislative competence as per Articles 246 and 265 of the Constitution of India, rendering it ultra vires.

Sections 10 and 15 of the

Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower

Electricity Generation Act, 2023, dealing

with fixation and liability to the exist-

ing projects, are declared to be un-

constitutional and stand quashed,

the bench said.

The court, in the 100-page verdict, also ordered that the sum of

money recovered from the petitioners under the provisions of the Act should be refunded within four weeks from March 14, last year and passed on March 16, replacing the Ordinance. It proposed a cess of 10 paisa/cubic metre up to 30 m; 25 paisa per cubic meter for 30-60 m; 35 paisa per cubic metre for 60-90 m, and 50 paisa per cubic meter for above 90 m.

The state government had then set up the Himachal Pradesh Water Cess Commission, which issued notices to 173 hydro-power-producing companies to collect cess amounting to Rs 871 crore for the period March to July 2023. While three private power companies complied, public sector companies challenged the order in the high court.

Earlier, the Centre, had said it was beyond the jurisdiction of the states to impose any additional charges or duties on power generation.

The Punjab and Haryana governments too had opposed the levying of water cess and passed resolutions in their respective Assemblies in this regard.

Agra Gets a Secure, Fast, Reliable, Comfortable & Eco-Friendly Urban Transportation System

Inauguration of Agra Metro Rail Project
(Priority Section from Taj East Gate to Mankameshwar)

By Narendra Modi
Prime Minister
(Through Video Conferencing)

In the August presence of

Anandiben Patel
Governor
Uttar Pradesh

Yogi Adityanath
Chief Minister
Uttar Pradesh

Hardeep Singh Puri
Minister, Petroleum & Natural Gas
Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India

Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel
Minister of State, Health & Family Welfare,
Government of India

Kaushal Kishore
Minister of State, Housing & Urban Affairs,
Government of India

Baby Rani Maurya
Minister, Women's Welfare, Child Development & Nutrition, Uttar Pradesh

Dharmveer Prajapati
Minister of State (Independent Charge), Jail & Home Guard, Uttar Pradesh

Rajkumar Chahar
MP, Fatehpur Sikri

Naveen Jain
MP, Rajya Sabha

6 March, 2024 | 09:45 AM | Taj Mahal Metro Station, Agra

Priority Section

First Corridor (14.0Km)
Second Corridor (15.5Km)

Taj East Gate | Capt. Shubham Gupta | Fatehabad Road | Taj Mahal | Agra Fort | Mankameshwar

Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited | LIVE TELECAST | DD NEWS & YouTube.com/DDNEWS and YouTube.com/dduttarpradesh | UPGovtOfficial | CMUttarpradesh | CMOfficeUP | Information & Public Relations Department, Uttar Pradesh



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

PROTECTING DEBATE

In overturning JMM verdict, SC makes a course correction. It must lead to expanding, not constricting, deliberative space

BRIBERY IS NOT protected by parliamentary privilege," the Supreme Court said on Monday, setting aside its 1998 judgment in *PV Narasimha Rao v State*. The 3-2 split ruling in that case — also known as the JMM bribery verdict — had held that lawmakers enjoy immunity from prosecution even if they take money to vote or make a speech in Parliament or a state legislative assembly. The majority in that bench had based its conclusion on Articles 105 and 194 of the Constitution, which deal with the powers and privileges of MPs and MLAs. Disagreeing with their reasoning, the SC has applied a welcome corrective, anchored in constitutional principles of equality and probity. "Corruption and bribery of the members of legislature erode the foundation of Indian parliamentary democracy. It is destructive of the aspirational and deliberative ideals of the Constitution and creates a polity which deprives citizens of a responsible, responsive and representative democracy," CJIDY Chandrachud, who headed the seven-judge bench, said.

In 1993, JMM leader Shibu Soren and five of his party colleagues were accused of taking bribes to vote against the no-confidence motion against the PV Narasimha Rao government; Janata Dal's Ajit Singh was also accused of accepting a bribe to abstain from voting. Five years later, the SC cited Article 105(2) to argue that "MPs must be allowed to exercise their freedom of speech in Parliament and their votes must be treated as an extension of this freedom". But bribery and corruption as, Monday's verdict pointed out, take away the "free will and conscience to enrich the functions of the House". The judgment draws on a broader notion of parliamentary privileges and reiterates the argument that, unlike members of the UK's House of Commons, Indian lawmakers do not have "undoubted rights", wrested after a struggle against a monarchy. Privileges for MPs and MLAs, it ruled, must be interpreted in ways that "fit with the larger ideals of the Constitution". In other words, as the SC pointed out, privilege "must be such that without it, they [lawmakers] cannot discharge their duties". It would thus be a travesty if graft is accepted as a necessary condition — even if inadvertently — for discharging a lawmaker's responsibility. The bench's ruling is also significant because it engages with the issue of quid pro quo associated with bribery: "The mere acceptance or attempting to obtain an undue advantage with the intention to act... in a certain way is sufficient to complete the offence".

Affirming the Right to Equality, the SC said, "it would be a violation of Article 14 to create a class of public servants, which is afforded extraordinary protection". Going ahead, however, a note of caution is in order: Monday's ruling should not end up making Opposition legislators more vulnerable, especially in times when the space for debate and disagreement is embattled in the House and governments armed with decisive mandates do not hesitate to weaponise central agencies to target political opponents. In coming months and years, the litmus test for the executive and judiciary would be to heed the Court's words that best encapsulate the spirit of the verdict: "Create a fearless atmosphere in which debate, deliberations and exchange of ideas take place in Parliament and state legislatures".

DECISION IS HERS

Amid global reversals on reproductive rights, France sets a welcome precedent by making abortion a constitutional right

IN HER AUTO-FICTION *Happening*, first published in an English translation in 2021, Nobel laureate Annie Ernaux writes of the ignominy of getting an abortion in France in 1963. She was 23 at the time, a working-class student. In her narrative, Ernaux refuses to name her pregnancy, referring to it as "that thing" or "it" — a reminder of the threat that hangs over her in a state where abortion is illegal and seeking it can lead to imprisonment or death. Ernaux survived the ordeal but others were less fortunate. Ahead of France's historic 780-72 vote that led to women's right to abortion being enshrined in the French constitution, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal invoked the suffering and struggle of these women: "Today, the present must respond to history. To enshrine this right in our constitution is to close the door on the tragedy of the past and its trail of suffering and pain... We're sending a message to all women: Your body belongs to you and no one can decide for you."

The amendment, France's first since 2008, is historic not merely because the right to abortion has had a stormy history in the country — it was only legalised in 1975 — but because, across the world, there has been a dangerous backsliding on hard-won freedoms relating to a woman's autonomy over her body. The French amendment is an explicit response to the trend seen in countries like Hungary, which, in 2022, placed significant bureaucratic hurdles before women seeking an abortion, and Poland, where a near total ban was imposed in 2021. The 2022 overturning of the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v Wade* (1973) set alarm bells ringing.

While the global movement of abortion rights has largely been towards greater liberalisation — Ireland in 2018 and Mexico in 2023 — these developments underline the continued vulnerability of women's right to bodily autonomy in a society that remains stubbornly patriarchal. In India, where the legal framework on reproductive rights has incrementally moved in favour of women's autonomy, the test of "foetal viability" is a new factor that could potentially set back progress made over the years. In 2023, this was seen in the case of a woman seeking medical termination of her 26-week pregnancy, citing physical and mental incapacity. The SC denied her the abortion in the interest of the rights of the unborn child. Such decisions also point to the moral value ascribed to what is, in essence, a deeply personal matter. France's amendment, therefore, sets a welcome precedent, in which neither patriarchy nor morality gets to have a say in what is, essentially, a woman's decision.

IT'S SWIFT'S WORLD

Diplomatic row over her music tour is proof that everyone else is just living in it

THE LAST TIME a pop act caused a diplomatic row this big was in 1966 when The Beatles refused to meet Imelda Marcos, the first lady of the Philippines, resulting in a rough send-off from the country. Now, pop star Taylor Swift's surprise Eras Tour has resulted in a war of words between Singapore and some of its Southeast Asian neighbours. The former's exclusive deal with Swift — which makes it her only stop in the region — has got Thailand, Philippines and others asking why they should be left out. The tour has meant a financial bonanza for every city — and nation — that has hosted it so far. So why should they not get a share of the pie?

Few artistes have captured the public imagination like Swift has. The 34-year-old is not just seen as a reliable revenue generator, but has also become a subject of study in the hallowed halls of Harvard and New York University. Her concerts are so well-attended that in at least one case, the crowd generated seismic activity equivalent to a 2.3 magnitude earthquake. Across cultures and economies, Swift seems to have left a mark.

Of course, Swift is not the first star to inspire fervent devotion. From the Beatlemaniacs to the Beliebers and BTS Army, music history is dotted with examples of crying, screaming fans and the cold, hard cash they are willing to spend on their idol. Swift is no Kardashian — she can actually sing. But stardom, these days, is no longer just a function of talent. It requires social-media management and mythmaking in real time. From singing about her exes to an alleged genealogical connection to the poet Emily Dickinson, the musician evidently knows how to train the spotlight on herself. The recent diplomatic tension is proof that this is Swift's world. Everyone else is just living in it.



T C A RAGHAVAN

THE CONTOURS OF the post-election political and governance architecture in Pakistan have crystallised. A coalition of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), along with smaller parties, has formed the government at the Centre, with Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister. In Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's daughter is the new chief minister, with the PPP forming the government in Sindh. Independents, in effect representing the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of the jailed Imran Khan, are forming the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This structure resembles the 18-month long coalition arrangement following the ouster of Khan as PM in April 2022. The major continuity between the two coalitions is the military's backing. But there are important differences. For one, there are changes of incumbency in high constitutional posts. As part of the agreement between the PML-N and PPP, Asif Ali Zardari will be the next President of Pakistan. He will replace a Khan acolyte who had operated in an openly partisan manner. Similarly, the earlier Supreme Court Chief Justice who had shown a clear partiality towards Khan, has since retired.

This makes it less likely that the new government of the PML-N and PPP will confront legal or constitutional challenges on account of Khan loyalists in key constitutional posts. Zardari becoming President for a second time after his 2008-13 tenure underlines both the repetitive nature of Pakistani politics as also his personal qualities that make him such a formidable player of a relatively weak hand.

Even more significant are the changes in the political landscape of Pakistan since 2022-2023. Most prominent is Khan's visible demonstration of his power as an independent political force. The question of whether he can survive without military backing has been erased and the February 2024 elections proved that reports of his charismatic appeal were not exaggerated.

Surprisingly strong showing of Imran Khan in Pakistan election has left all other players feeling vulnerable

In fact, the overall results have been a vindication of Khan's position, most clearly for his defiance of the military establishment. The latter had accused Khan of orchestrating attacks in May 2023 on its installations and landmarks. That effort to drum up public outrage against him failed quite spectacularly and may even have backfired.

Khan has displaced Nawaz Sharif from his pedestal of being the leading political voice against the military in Pakistan. That Nawaz Sharif stood aside in favour of his brother to be prime minister reflects both his own declining political standing as well as the PML-N's equally disappointing electoral performance.

This reiterates a surprisingly contradictory feature of Pakistan's politics: The existence of a significant anti-military narrative space. The party that commands this space reaps the electoral harvest as Khan did this time.

The momentum he has generated also strengthens the general sentiment that the PML-N and PPP coalition lacks both mandate and credibility. That the new government is going to be both brittle and fragile is evident; no surprise then that there is already speculation about its longevity.

Perhaps more than anything else, mutual suspicions and distrust will prey on all the stakeholders. Notwithstanding the greater acceptability of Shehbaz Sharif, as compared to Nawaz Sharif, the residual suspicions of the PML-N within the military establishment should not be underestimated. The same applies to the PPP-military relationship. The PPP-PML interface is also going to be friction-ridden, with both sides feeling that the other has got more out of the coalition agreement. The PPP's delay in clarifying whether it will be part of the PML-N cabinet or just support it from outside reveals the significant fissures between the two parties. The PML-N will remain suspicious of a possible PPP-Khan deal in the future or even a Khan-military rapprochement. The point is that the surprisingly

strong showing of Khan in the election has left all other players feeling vulnerable.

The military's image is certainly dented but it remains the principal political player in Pakistan. There seems to be so far no rethink about its approach to Khan and he may continue to be in jail. A popular leader imprisoned, a restive public and a shaky coalition forming the government may appear to be a leaky ship for the Pakistan military to be trying to sail. But it has navigated such situations before and may well feel confident that it can do so again despite the turbulent seas on the way.

Politics aside, this coalition will face the full portfolio of problems that it encountered in its earlier incarnation and some of which have become even more formidable. The economy is obviously the most important of these and also the most intractable. Pakistan's neighbourhood relations are also deeply troubled. Relations with Afghanistan have deteriorated sharply. Pakistan finds itself in great frustration that on issues vital to its interests, the Taliban government is no different from its predecessor. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan poses a major internal security threat and the recent spike in terrorist attacks is deeply damaging to public morale. Relations with Iran are in an uncertain phase as the recent missile and drone attacks show.

In India, expectations that a return of Nawaz Sharif would open up new possibilities for some normalisation with Pakistan will now have to be tempered. In the foreseeable future, Pakistan is going to be even more self-absorbed in what is already a very sombre phase of its contemporary history. Nevertheless, India-Pakistan relations rarely follow a predictable or linear path for any length of time. Even in the most unusual of situations opportunities exist and arise unexpectedly, and good neighbourhood diplomacy also means being on the lookout for these.

The writer is a former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan



SWATI BHASIN

IN A COUNTRY where women's safety is a perennial concern, travelling alone is an act of rebellion. Often, the excitement of exploring the unseen and unheard is tainted by past experiences of unsought glances and comments. At worst, one has to put up a fight against unsolicited advances. But why should a woman always be prepared to put up such a fight? Why should she always have her guard up?

"Something has happened to us that we would not wish on anyone". Last week, a Spanish vlogger reported that she was gang-raped in Jharkhand's Dumka. The woman — who has almost two lakh followers on Instagram — also put out a video message. "Seven men raped me, and they have beaten us and robbed us, although not many things (were taken) because what they wanted was to rape me. We are in the hospital with the police, it happened tonight in India... They attacked us, beat us, put a knife to our necks, and said they were going to kill us," she said in Spanish. The woman was on a bike tour with her husband. When the incident occurred, they were camping because they could not find a hotel.

Along with outrage, insensitive comments flooded social media after the incident was reported. Some implied that the couple "should have known better", and avoided venturing to a deserted spot.

As a solo woman traveller in her thirties, the incident shakes my confidence yet again.

A WOMAN TRAVELLING ALONE

Concerns for safety often mar what should be an experience of freedom

A few years ago, during an impromptu trip to Prayagraj, an auto driver asked me,

'Why are you travelling alone? It's not safe.' It was about 11 in the morning. But the question was not surprising. Nothing untoward happened on that particular trip, but in my years of travel, oglers have often made their unpleasant presence felt at bus stands, railway stations, coffee shops, or other places. Walks on the beach have been disrupted by men seeking attention with a random "hello", raising the volume until they are snubbed. Goa may be a tourist hotspot, but that does not mean a female traveller can enjoy solitude without a care.

Is travelling alone for leisure, as a woman, an invitation to trouble? "Will this hotel or homestay be safe?" "Should I take a late-night cab to the airport?" "Should I take an overnight bus or train, or not?" The second-guessing can be overwhelming.

A 2018 Thomson Reuters Foundation survey, which ranked India as the world's most dangerous country for women, ahead of Afghanistan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, was severely criticised by the government. However, last year, another international survey by The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security placed India in the 128th spot in a list of 177 nations.

But experiences say more than numbers. A few years ago, during an impromptu trip to Prayagraj, an auto driver asked me, "Why are you travelling alone? It's not safe". It was about 11 in the morning. But the question was not surprising. Nothing untoward happened on that particular trip, but in my years of travel, oglers have often made their unpleasant presence felt at bus stands, railway stations, coffee shops, or other places. Walks on the beach have been disrupted by men seeking attention with a random "hello", raising the volume until they are snubbed. Goa may be a tourist hotspot, but that does not mean a female traveller can enjoy solitude without a care.

Last year, after reaching Haldwani in Uttarakhand, I approached the women's cell

at one of the local police stations to inquire about cabs to Nainital. It was 7:30 pm. There were no government buses scheduled till the next morning, I was told. The woman police officer looked concerned. She asked a question I have come to expect: "Why are you travelling alone?" She took my number and told me about a local cab stand. Her concern was not unreasonable. But the question, coming from a police officer, was unsettling. Tourists only get a slice of what locals experience every day. Women reclaiming space in small towns after sunset is still unheard of.

While exploring Kerala last month, I made friends with a traveller from Tamil Nadu who shared similar experiences. She was travelling solo for the first time. She was unnerved when she was repeatedly asked why she was not accompanied by her husband as co-travellers noticed her wearing vermilion and a nuptial chain.

When I returned to Delhi after that trip to Haldwani and took a cab home, the driver made an unannounced stop near a tea vendor. It was past midnight. He returned after 10 minutes. I was angry. I argued with him over the "just a tea break" response and warned him that I would report it on the ride-hailing app. But I was relieved that the ride resumed. As a woman traveller, I realised, there's little freedom without a sense of safety.

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MARCH 6, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO PACT WITH ISRAEL

PRESIDENT AMIN GEMAYEL'S administration cancelled Lebanon's troop withdrawal pact with Israel, a government official said. The statement said the cancellation decision was taken in an extraordinary session of Prime Minister Shafik Wazzan cabinet held under Gemayel. The statement came after the announcement that Gemayel asked the PM to withdraw the resignation of the cabinet submitted early last month.

PM ON LAW REFORM

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said that

there was a need for a "great movement for judicial reform" initiated by the legal community itself on how to make justice expeditious and inexpensive, how to reduce arrears, and to keep in step with the changing situation. Mrs Gandhi acknowledged India was nowhere near the level of social justice it had aimed for. One of the crucial issues of social change is redistribution of land, she said.

INDO-SOVIET TIES

THE SOVIET DEFENCE Minister, Marshal Dmitri F Ustinov met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in her office at Delhi. No aides were

present at the meeting where both leaders reportedly expressed their desire to strengthen relations between India and the Soviet Union. Ustinov is believed to have conveyed to Mrs Gandhi the Chernobyl regime's desire to continue and develop "close economic cooperation" with India and assist it in the defence field.

FANS RUN RIOT

SUPPORTERS OF KANNADA matinee idol Raj Kumar indulged in arson and violence and stabbed a Tamil youth in Bangalore. Trouble broke out when a procession organised by Raj Kumar Fans' Association was disbursed. frenzied mobs set fire to vehicles.

THE IDEAS PAGE

The middle ground in Moscow

It is high time to look beyond the Manichean categories of democracy versus authoritarianism. And to search for a ground between aggression and capitulation



SUBRATA MITRA

AN INVITATION TO participate in the Eurasian Philosophy Congress in Moscow revealed an aspect of the current situation in Russia which is quite different from the images that we get in the media. It has made me partly reconsider my explanation of the frozen conflict in Ukraine in this newspaper ("A Long War", *Indian Express*, November 17, 2022).

I had then argued that long drawn out wars are caused by strategic depth of the belligerents, diffuse targets, moving and incompatible war objectives, and the induction of third parties with a stake in keeping hostilities alive. My exposure to what is really going on in Russia, carefully shielded from us by the global media, showed me how a deeper layer of collective memory and resolve to protect what people consider sacred, can pull elites and masses together, and magnify the incentive to keep on with war efforts.

It was refreshing to see the spirited arguments in the Congress among philosophers from Europe, different parts of Russia and Asia, on how diverse folks sharing the same living space can achieve a common, collective identity. Drawing on the "Russian idea" of Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Berdyaev, the Russian contributors came up with the concept of "Eurasian identity" which, they argued, unites the diverse folks of the vast country that spreads across Europe and Asia. This raised general, comparative and cross-national questions and spilled over to discussions of India, Sri Lanka and the "Arab mind".

Both the general tenor of the conversations and the insights that emerged were striking. How might we achieve a meaningful dialogue between adversaries, when the *Self* and the *Other* are locked in battle without shared terms of discourse? What might incentivise opponents to engage with one another? Which resources – ontological, epistemological, material and communicative – might constitute the level playing field for a dialogue?

The general drift of the conversations was an important takeaway from the Congress. A meaningful dialogue between adversaries becomes possible when they recognise, and accept the sacred beliefs of one another. Conflating ontological realism regarding cultural diversity, and its epistemological construction in terms of a unified vision of society, is a necessary condition for legitimate order in diverse societies with multiple faiths and regional identities. Whether "Eurasian philosophy" offers a cohesive set of beliefs and underpins Russian society is open to deeper empirical investigation.

While the Russian philosophers struggled to define Russian collective identity, I ventured out to look for social resonance of the Eurasian identity, and to see how Russian people were coping with the mundane problem of getting by in their everyday lives. I could get the sense of a society coping with, and living side by side with a war of attrition. The sanctions have given a boost to local industry and commerce among and across different regions of the far-flung country. Some sanctioned Western commodities are finding their way into Russia through a circuitous route. "Isn't there a war going on?" I asked my guide. Her answer – "Sometimes one has to fight to keep what belongs to one" – concentrated my mind.

She, like millions of Russians, has been brought up on the heroic stories of the bat-



CR Sasikumar

ties of Kursk, Leningrad and Stalingrad. The Second World War cost 27 million Russian lives. It affected practically every family. These sentiments that unite the elites and masses of Russian society today are eerily similar to what had prolonged the Second World War. Reports about how ordinary people in Ukraine are coping with war show a development of national solidarity and resilience in that war-torn country, akin to what I saw in Russia. The symmetry feeds into a frozen conflict which, other things being equal, is likely to endure.

There is a valuable lesson here for Western backers of Ukraine who have reduced the complexity of protracted war and its deep psycho-historical underpinnings to absurd simplicities of "sanctions, ammunition and cash". The grim history of conflict shows how, when ideology gets the upper hand over realism, and conflicts of interest and perceptions are boiled down to the clash of ideologies, the consequence becomes horrendous. By some calculations, between 70 to 85 million people paid with their lives "to make the world safe for democracy" in the Second World War. Its outcome, the Cold War had its own "Good-vs-Evil", leading to mass slaughter: The Korean war (1950-53, approximately three million casualties), Vietnam (1955-75, 3.8 million war casualties), and closer to date, Afghanistan (2001-2021, 1.76,000 casualties).

Demonising adversaries can actually become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is high time to look beyond the Manichean categories of democracy versus authoritarianism which are much in evidence in global

Western backers of Ukraine have reduced the complexity of protracted war and its deep psycho-historical underpinnings to absurd simplicities of 'sanctions, ammunition and cash'. The grim history of conflict shows how, when ideology gets the upper hand over realism, and conflicts of interest and perceptions are boiled down to the clash of ideologies, the consequence becomes horrendous.

platforms such as the moribund United Nations Security Council, the European Union, or the annual security conference in Munich. One finds little evidence in their deliberations of the search for a middle space between aggression and capitulation, where adversaries could negotiate their legitimate interests, leading to a win-win solution. Attempts in this direction by smaller powers lead to the predictable American veto. What one hears mostly is the blatant language of war-mongering, by political and military leaders and public intellectuals, far away from the killing fields.

The search for a middle ground between capitulation and aggression – in Ukraine, Gaza and other intractable local conflict regions of the world – has never been more important than now. The real challenge in our digital age when complex issues are boiled down to soundbites, is to expose the interests of powerful states and corporations that profit from war mongering. Just underneath the lurid media images and alluring ideological slogans about the promotion of liberal democracy lurks their ruthless quest for power and profits.

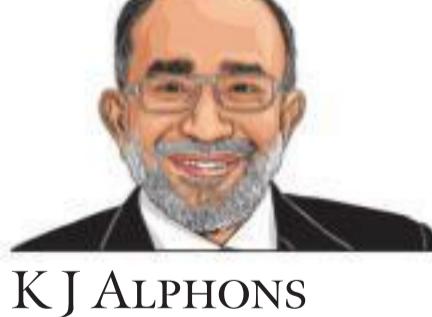
They take the focus off the real danger of the conflict spilling out beyond the region,

and escalating into nuclear war. In these dangerous times, the nuanced approach of Indian diplomacy to seek the middle ground between polarised positions is the best way forward.

Mitra is an emeritus professor of Political Science at Heidelberg University, Germany

A death on campus

J S Sidharthan case points to culture of impunity for politics of violence in Kerala



K J ALPHONS

COLLEGES STOPPED BEING centres of education and higher learning in Kerala a long time ago. They were seen by political parties as breeding grounds for party cadres. The party cadre had to be tough. Therefore, they encouraged pitched battles to produce foot soldiers. They didn't want them to be soft and sophisticated. They wanted them to be baptised in blood. These foot soldiers beat up fellow students, teachers and principals in the most ruthless manner. Their political masters always protected them.

Kerala's universities have long been witness to violence and killing. The latest and the most ruthless has been the death of J S Sidharthan, a 20-year-old second-year student of Veterinary College, Pookot in Wayanad, under the Kerala Veterinary University, on February 18. He was stripped naked and beaten up by his classmates and seniors in broad daylight. It didn't happen in some closed hostel room. The kangaroo

court took place over three days in the middle courtyard of the hostel. It was alleged that Sidharthan finally committed suicide, unable to take it anymore. The post-mortem report revealed extensive injuries, including to internal organs. The assault reportedly took place in full view of several onlookers, many of them supposedly his friends. None of them, reportedly, tried to stop the attacks.

Cases have been registered against the accused for abetment to suicide. The accused claim that Sidharthan committed suicide in the toilet, a claim that seems dubious to many. There are also doubts about how well the Kerala police – generally very competent – will handle the case, given the stakes for the ruling dispensation in the state. I think it is best to entrust it to CBI.

One thing is certain – all 18 accused who have been arrested belong to the Students Federation of India (SFI), the stu-

dent wing of the CPI(M), which governs Kerala. Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has suspended the university's vice-chancellor, M R Sasendranath, which has been applauded. He has also ordered a judicial inquiry by a retired Supreme Court or high court judge. The Governor has been engaged in a battle against the rampant criminality in the state's universities. The dean and hostel warden too have failed in their duties. The entire campus, it seems, is run by SFI.

Was there a communal angle to the tragedy? I hope that these are rumours. Kerala has been the most literate state in the country for a long time. I was in some way responsible for the final act of glory: When Kottayam became the first town in India with 100 per cent literacy, I was the District Collector there. The people of Kerala are well-read. The state is home to a multi-religious society where the people

have lived together peacefully since time immemorial. There was a fraying of that fabric when fundamentalism knocked at the state's door about 25 years ago. Therefore, God forbid, the Sidharthan saga has a communal angle to it.

All 18 accused have been arrested. From even a cursory look at the list of the accused, one thing is evident: These students belong to every community and religion of Kerala. All of them are in the age group of 20-25 years.

Why did these young men, who should be full of hope for the future, attack one of their own in such a brutal manner? Most of us won't understand this – unless we understand the politics of Kerala.

The writer is a former Union minister. He currently practices in the Supreme Court and was a 1979 batch officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"If the BJP manages to form the next government, will it continue the politics of polarisation and hatred, painting Indian Muslims as the eternal 'other', to either be converted to Hinduism or live as second-class citizens in the *rashta*? The evidence, unfortunately, supports this likelihood."

—DAWN, PAKISTAN

For the Gaya Lals of today

Tenth Schedule must be replaced to ensure that anyone who changes party affiliation resigns and seeks re-election



ABHISHEK SINGHVI

ruling party and almost never rises above his party affiliation. He dithers endlessly and does not decide the pending complaints if they are from the Opposition and in relation to those who have defected to the ruling party to which he himself belongs. This enables the defectors to reap the benefits of their defection by voting against their original party.

Third, the Speaker decides the complaint with lightning speed if the complainants are from his own party and disqualifies the defectors promptly, maintaining his party in power through an artificial majority created by him.

Fourth, a more recent innovation involves the potential defectors (say A), a day prior to defection, clandestinely filing an application with the Election Commission, claiming to be the real party and seeking the symbol of the party from which they have defected (say B). While the disqualification dispute is delayed by a friendly Speaker, the EC hearings are fast-tracked. The EC, especially under the influence of a domineering central government, eventually applies only the legislative majority test to hold A to be the real party. It needs no rocket science to see that a test based on counting legislators is patently fallacious since they include all the defectors. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of the rank and file continue to support the original party. Had the organisational test been applied, as mandated by the SC in *Shiv Sena*, the original party alone can get the name and symbol. By applying only the legislative party test, the EC actually sanctifies the defection, giving the party name and symbol to the defectors.

Fifth, engineered resignations of legislators in a ruling dispensation by any desperate opposition promising them lucrative ministerships if they ensure that the Opposition comes to power, has its own charm. These "toppling agents" are entitled to at least six months as ministers in the new government, even if they fail to get re-elected in that period.

The common man is disgusted with such duplicity. I would, therefore, advocate complete abolition of the 10th Schedule and its replacement with a one paragraph law – anyone who changes party affiliation must mandatorily resign and seek re-election. Second, such a person should be prohibited from holding ministership without re-election. Third, there would be no need for a Speaker in such a simple system. If a Speaker is necessary for any adjudicatory role, let us stop the use of such oxymorons like impartial or independent umpire.

The Speaker's umbilical cord with his party can never be wished away and judicial homilies to the contrary must stop. The only solution is to make it an unchangeable convention and if necessary, solidify it by constitutional amendment. Under this, all political parties or a majority of them will select a Speaker before the elections and declare that no party will put up a candidate from his/her constituency. This alone can impart a degree of credibility, moral and political authority to the Speaker, conspicuous by its absence today.

Let us all join together to see that the law is not called an ass except very, very rarely.

The writer is a jurist and national spokesperson, INC. This article is the second in a series marking 75 years of India's Independence

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR A HEALTHY INDIA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A big fat problem' (IE, March 5). The alarming rise in obesity among children and adults calls for immediate preventive measures. The Lancet study indicates that 12 million children and 70 million adults are overweight. This trend is on the increase because more and more people are now living a sedentary lifestyle. Nutritional food, daily exercise must be integrated across the country. The consumption of processed foods and sugary beverages should be regulated. The government should make disclosure of nutrient value mandatory.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

BIG FAT WEDDING

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Shaadi Number One' (IE, March 5). On the one hand, we have the wealthiest wedding ceremony of the year and on the other, 80 per cent of Indians can't afford two square meals a day. Soon, the middle classes will start measuring the success of their wedding functions against this new benchmark. "They" – the rich – set the example; the classes below them emulate them even if the bulging budget leaves behind a burden of debt. This is a concerning culture.

Narendra Dani, Lucknow

IN THE RIGHT HANDS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A fair deal for farmers' (IE, March 4). Even if the government strikes a deal with the agitating farmers, it must check whether the benefit of the MSP will really go to the farmers. Of the 93.09 million agricultural households in India, 82 per cent belong to small and marginal farmers, while the agitators are mostly rich, tractor-owning farmers from Punjab and Haryana. The government buys selected produce at MSP rates from farmers through NAFED and FCI but not every village has access to them. These schemes must reach those who need them most.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

TRAIN TO GROWTH

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Going places by train' (IE, March 4). The BBIN initiative has come a long way and will certainly prove lucrative in boosting economic growth for its member nations. A sound railway transport network will assist in regional integration. The recent move by Indian Railways, connecting complex terrains from Baramulla to Udhampur ensures our railways reach new heights. India must continue to expand on this front.

Diya Khatri, Baran

MVA leaders not willing to commit they won't switch to BJP: VBA chief

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, MARCH 5

VANCHIT BAHUJAN Aghadi (VBA) chief Prakash Ambedkar has questioned the reliability of the MVA and said the leaders of the alliance's constituent parties were not willing to give a written undertaking that they would not switch over to BJP-led NDA after Lok Sabha polls.

Ambedkar said this in an open letter to NCP (SP) MLA Jitendra Awhad, who had urged the VBA chief to take decisions to save democracy. The MVA has been trying to make sure VBA stays with it for LS polls.

According to Ambedkar, during a seat-sharing meeting, the VBA had asked the MVA leaders to give in writing to voters that there will be no compromise or joining hands with the BJP after polls.

Ambedkar claimed that except for Awhad, none of the leaders showed willingness to give this in writing. Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut bluntly refused to give any such undertaking, he said.

SC: 14-yr-old girl can't be treated as 'chattel' in custody battle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

OBSERVING THAT A 14-year-old child cannot be treated as "chattel", the Supreme Court has set aside an order of the Orissa High Court allowing the biological father of a girl her custody, saying she was living happily with her paternal aunt.

The SC, while hearing an appeal by the paternal aunt (father's sister) against the high court order, said the stability of a child is of "paramount importance".

It noted that the child, born in March 2014, has been living with the sister of her biological father since she was around three months old. "It is not a case in which any of the parties is claiming adoption which otherwise is not permissible under Mohammediyan law. Guardianship is also not being claimed. It is only the dispute regarding custody of the child," a bench of Justices CT Ravikumar and Rajesh Bindal said.

In the judgment pronounced on Monday, the bench said it interacted with the child, who said she was happy living with the present family and that she did not wish to be "destabilised".

The SC noted when the child's custody was given to the man's sister, she was unmarried, but now she has two children.

This, however, was not a deterrent to the court's verdict as the child categorically voiced her desire to continue living with her aunt. "Keeping in view her age at present, she is capable of forming an opinion in that regard... She cannot be treated as a chattel at the age of 14 years to hand over her custody to respondent No 2 (biological father) where she has not lived ever since her birth. The stability of the child is also of paramount consideration," the SC said.

The mother of the girl had given birth to twins in 2014. While the couple kept one of the two babies with them, they handed over the girl to her maternal grandmother. The maternal grandmother kept her for 3 months before handing her over to her aunt.

R RADHIKA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

FIVE EDITORIAL board members of the Harvard University's Murty Classical Library of India (MCL) have alleged to have been "summarily dismissed" by Parimal Patil, the chair of the oversight board, without a cause or explanation. The allegations came in even as Patil has said the editorial members were "transitioned off" due to "administrative reasons."

Whitney Cox of the University of Chicago, Maria Heim of the Amherst College, Rajeev Kirna of the Northwestern University, Francesca Orsini of SOAS, University of London, and Archana Venkatesan of the University of California, in a statement issued on March 2 said that they were

MARCH 1 INCIDENT IN DUMKA, JHARKHAND

Threatened with dagger, kicked, raped: Spanish vlogger to police

Police say all seven accused arrested; biker couple on world tour leave state

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, MARCH 5

THREATENED WITH a dagger, kicked, punched and raped – the Spanish travel vlogger allegedly sexually assaulted by seven men in Jharkhand's Dumka on March 1 has detailed her ordeal in her complaint to the police, based on which an FIR has been registered. The woman has also alleged that the entire incident lasted two and a half hours.

The incident took place when the woman and her partner had pitched a tent in a forested hilly area around one kilometre from the main road.

Her statement was recorded at 2.05 am on March 2 at the community health centre, and an FIR was registered under IPC sections 376D (gangrape) and 395 (dacoity).

The FIR states that at first, three men started quarrelling with her husband before assaulting him and tying his hands. She alleges that the other four forcefully picked her up "after showing me a dagger".

She alleges that she was thrown on the ground, kicked, punched and raped repeatedly by all seven men.

"All of them seemed to be slightly drunk. This incident took place from around 7.30 pm to 10 pm," the FIR quotes her as saying.

The couple had set out on a world tour on motorbikes and entered India mid-July last year from Pakistan. The FIR states that two weeks ago, the couple re-entered India after spending a brief time in Sri Lanka.

"In the course of our journey, we reached Kumrahat village Dumka... As it was quite late, we

decided to establish our temporary makeshift tent at night for our overnight stay in a nearby forested hill road... Around 7 pm, while we were inside our tent, we heard some suspicious voices. As soon as we came out of the tent, we saw two people talking on the phone. Around 7.30 pm, a few people came on two motorcycles. They stopped at the tent and murmured 'Hello friends'. We came out of our tent by lighting our head torch and saw five people rushing towards us and two more people moving towards our tent. They were talking in the local language and were also using a few English words in between," the FIR states.

The FIR states that all seven also snatched their belongings – a Swiss knife, a wristwatch, a platinum ring with diamond, a silver ring, black earpods, a black

purse, a credit card, around Rs 11,000, 300 US dollars, a steel spoon and a fork.

"One of them was 28-30 years old, wearing white scarf, and white T-shirt, while the rest were young adults," the FIR states, adding that after the crime, "they ran away towards the village". "After the incident, we took our motorcycles and somehow came to the main road. At 11 pm, a night patrolling party of Hansda police sighted us and came for our assistance," it states. The two were taken to a nearby community health centre for primary medical treatment and their statements were recorded.

Meanwhile in Dumka, the police held a press conference where they said they have arrested all the accused. The husband and wife bikers left the state on Tuesday.

UP POLICE RECRUITMENT BOARD CHIEF REMOVED

Lucknow: Days after it cancelled the police constable recruitment exam over allegations of paper leak, the UP government removed Renuka Mishra, chairperson of the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment & Promotion Board (UPPRPB), which had organised the exam.

Additional Director General (ATS & SOG) V K Singh told reporters, "16 SI probationers have been questioned by the Special Operations Group (SOG). Among them, the crime of 14 has been confirmed while investigation is on regarding the other two."

The trainee SIs were undergoing training at the Rajasthan Police Academy, Jaipur, and at the Rajasthan Police Training Centre in Kishangarh, Ajmer. As per the list shared by the SOG, most of the accused are from Sanchore while others hail from Jodhpur, Barmer and Churu. "There were two others – Rajendra Yadav and Ashok Nathawat – who were selected as probationer sub inspectors but did not join. They are already in custody in other cases," Singh said.

The police had lodged a fresh case in the 2021 paper leak case. CM Bhajan Lal Sharma had said Monday on X, "Modi ji's guarantee means guarantee that the guarantee will be fulfilled! Paper leaks are being controlled on them."

Minister Kirodi Lal Meena, who met ADG Singh Tuesday, said he shared details of the scam in the past and alleged that 300-400 among those selected had managed to qualify through fraudulent means.

The SI examination, conducted by Rajasthan Public Service Commission, was held between September 13 and 15, 2021. A total 3.83 lakh had appeared for 859 vacancies. The RPSC recommended 3,079 of them.

Mann govt Budget proposes 'schools of brilliance, happiness'



Harpal Cheema at Vidhan Sabha, Tuesday. Kamleshwar Singh

AAP GOVT'S 3RD BUDGET (₹ lakh Cr)

2022-23	1.56
2023-24	1.96
2024-25	2.05

government has budgeted Rs 100 crore in FY25 for this purpose.

Besides, 100 government senior secondary schools will be transformed as 'Schools of Brilliance', he said, adding that an initial allocation of Rs 10 crore has been earmarked. This scheme aims to elevate the quality of education and transform rural schools into centres of learning from Class 6 to 12, Cheema said.

The Budget has earmarked Rs 9,330 crore towards power subsidy for the agriculture sector and Rs 7,780 crore for providing free electricity of 300 units per month to domestic consumers. Cheema allocated Rs 575 crore for various crop diversification schemes. He said Rs 13,784 crore has been earmarked for the agriculture sector and Rs 16,987 crore for the education sector.

He said 118 government schools will undergo a transformation to become state-of-the-art 'schools of eminence', whereas 14 schools of eminence have already been started. The

FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](#)

Renaming places in Manipur without govt nod punishable offence

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, MARCH 5

has been asserting the use of name Lamka instead. The Bill instead provides for a "places name committee" that "will give recommendations regarding the names of places subject to the approval of the government".

Two key resolutions were passed on two of the most hotly contested issues in the ongoing conflict. On the session's second day, the House "unanimously" passed a resolution to urge the Centre to abrogate the Suspension of Operation (SoO) pact with 25 Kuki militant groups even as talks on extension of agreement is still going on, on the grounds that rules of the pact have been violated by the groups.

While the Kuki-Zomi MLAs have been silent on the rest of the proceedings in the Assembly, they called it a "one-sided resolution". The other resolution passed was a reaffirmation of the Assembly's 2022 resolution to urge the Centre to implement a National Register of Citizens in the state.

BIG CAT RESCUED IN PUNE

The eight-year-old male leopard in a cage after it was rescued on Tuesday. Arul Horizon

■ Thermal imaging drones, trap cages, high-end trap cameras, sky lift ladders and over 200 people – all of this deployed for Sachin, an 8-year-old male leopard rescued Tuesday night.

■ Search ended over 40 hours after Sachin escaped from a cage near Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park in Katraj. It was brought from Atal Bihari Vajpayee Zoological Park, Hampi as part of an exchange programme.

■ Due to its predominantly nocturnal nature, it remained in hiding during the day and mostly moved around at night that helped us capture leopard, said zoo's Deputy Director Suchitra Suryavanshi.

5 editorial board members of Harvard's classical library of India 'dismissed'

dismissed from the role of editors at MCL in the last week of January. Those dismissed were responsible for editing and supervising the translation and publication of 43 books under contract in different Indian vernaculars.

MCL, a brainchild of Rohan Murty, son of Infosys founder Narayana Murthy, was established in 2010 at the Harvard University with an aim to translate pre-modern classical Indian texts in English. When reached out to comment, Murty declined stating he has not been a part of this board for over 10 years now.

The Indian Express reached out to the five scholars as well as Patil through email. In response to the queries, Venkatesan said Patil dismissed the members on either Zoom call or via email without giving a reason. "Prof Patil dis-

missed us from the Editorial Board in individual phone or Zoom calls. One colleague confirmed their firing over email. We are not clear on reasons for our dismissal," wrote Venkatesan in response to this newspaper's queries.

In a note shared with members working on MCL translations after the dismissal of editorial members, Patil cited "administrative reasons" for "transitioning off" 44 members without mentioning Venkatesan. "Each of these editors are remarkable scholars who made invaluable contributions to the series... Their transition off the MCL Editorial Board at this time was for administrative reasons... The MCL Oversight Board made the decision to refresh the Board in consultation with the Provost's Office at Harvard, the Harvard University

Press Board of Directors, and HUP," the note that Patil shared with The Indian Express states. Patil said in response to this newspaper's questionnaire he was in touch with "many" MCL translators before the statement was issued. This newspaper sought clarity over administrative reasons, however, did not receive any reply from Patil at the time of publication. The statement by scholars alleged Patil viewed five editorial board members responsible for "breakdown of trust" and "lost confidence in mission of MCL". Venkatesan said the comments were made to members during calls with Patil, however, no concrete reason for their termination was provided. "We utterly and completely reject any accusation that we have lost faith in the mission of MCL," Venkatesan said.

Policemen facing probe for 'bid to rape girl' in UP

Amethi: Police are probing a complaint against some policemen, including the SHO of the Jamo Police Station, for allegedly attempting to rape a girl and misbehaving with her mother.

According to the mother's complaint, the SHO and some other constables allegedly forced her into her home and assaulted the woman and her daughter, SP of Amethi Anup Kumar Singh.

The woman has accused them of tearing her clothes, "performing obscene acts" on her and trying to rape her daughter, Singh said. The woman has also accused the cops of taking away her mobile phone during the incident, he said. The alleged incident happened around 11 pm on Monday when the girl's father was not home, the official said. PTI

government has budgeted Rs 100 crore in FY25 for this purpose.

Besides, 100 government senior secondary schools will be transformed as 'Schools of Brilliance', he said, adding that an initial allocation of Rs 10 crore has been earmarked. This scheme aims to elevate the quality of education and transform rural schools into centres of learning from Class 6 to 12, Cheema said.

With the aim of creating a nurturing learning environment for students aged 3 to 11, the budget has proposed to transform 100 primary schools into "schools of happiness". The focus will be on providing well-ventilated classrooms, dedicated play areas, resource rooms and activity corners. For the scheme, Rs 10 crore has been provisioned.

FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](#)

Bengaluru staring at water crisis this summer: Borewells dry, tanker prices up

KIRAN PARASHAR &
SANATH PRASAD
BENGALURU, MARCH 5

FACED WITH depleting groundwater levels and a drought in the Cauvery basin, Bengaluru is bracing for a severe water crisis this summer, pushing up tanker costs and forcing the government to step in to regulate supply.

On March 2, Deputy CM D K Shivakumar announced the state government would take control of all tankers distributing water sourced from borewells. The move is aimed at addressing water scarcity in Bengaluru, particularly in the 110 villages on the outskirts and periphery of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) zones. Following

a failed monsoon, in September last year, the state had declared a drought in 195 taluks, including parts of Bengaluru. Later, the number went up to 216 of the 236 taluks in Karnataka. This includes Mandya and Mysuru districts, from where Bengaluru sources water.

Bengaluru has two major sources of water: 1,450 million litres per day (MLD) of surface water from the Cauvery and another 700 MLD from borewells dug by the BBMP from time to time and which are later handed over to the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) for supplying water. With the Cauvery V Stage project set to be commissioned in April, the city was expected to get another 775 MLD. But an

acute shortage of rainfall in the Cauvery basin may have derailed those calculations.

According to the BWSSB, the "water input" to the city has fallen by 50 per cent. According to Shivakumar, 6,997 of the 16,791 borewells in Bengaluru have run dry. While the BWSSB claims to have anticipated the crisis, it failed to find solutions in time for the summer months.

BWSSB chairman Ram Prasath Manohar told The Indian Express, "We did anticipate the water crisis in Bengaluru because of the drought situation. However, we cannot increase water supply overnight. It is very challenging. Hence we have to address the demand side by urging people to use water judiciously," said Manohar. He said

running short of groundwater supply in 110 villages, especially in the east zone regions of Varthur, Bellandur etc," said Manohar.

Apartments in the city too have been massively hit. Vikram Rai, general secretary of the Bangalore Apartment Federation, says besides inconsistent water supply and dried borewells, tanker prices too have doubled. A tanker with water capacity of 12,000 litres, which earlier cost about Rs 1,200-Rs 1,300, now comes for Rs 3,000.

"Apartments built in the peripheral areas of Bengaluru are dependent on their own borewells which have also gone dry due to shortage of groundwater resources. Overall, we are facing a deficit of 50% in ground water supply," Rai said.

Akhay Bharadwaj, a resident of East Bengaluru, said, "We do have Cauvery water supply in our apartment complex but it is inconsistent these days. We have urged residents to use water ju-

diculously and at the same time, we have increased maintenance costs since tanker prices have shot up." Many of the apartments have banned washing of vehicles and temporarily shut down their swimming pools.

Vinay TV, a resident of an apartment complex in East Bengaluru, said, "Last year, we got water supply at Rs 800 for 7,000 litres of water through water tankers. We had an agreement with water tanker owner and paid him in advance for this year's supply too. We are getting at least 50 loads of water every month but at the cost that was decided as part of the agreement last year."

Tanker owners deny they are overcharging and say the scarcity has tied their hands. Ambareesh, who owns seven



Office of the Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle, P.W.D., Nainital -263002

Phone/ Fax:- 05942-235728/ 232030 E-mail: sepdntl@rediffmail.com

Letter No 1090/41-M-2/22-23 Date:- 05.03.2024

National Competitive Bidding(E-Tendering)

Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle Public Works Department Nainital on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites e-tender (two bid system). For further details please log on to <https://www.uktenders.gov.in> from 07.03.2024.

Sl. No	Name of work	Earnest Money (in Lakh Rs.)	Cost of Tender	Validity of tender	Period of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	One time maintenance work of Bhorsha Pinro motor road transferred form PMGSY in the constituency of Bhimtal, Distt Nainital	4.50	5000+ 18% G.S.T.	120 Days	09 Month	Category "A/A+" for road work in any State/ Govt. of India or Govt. undertaking

Himachal Pradesh.

JSV Department

NOTICE RE-INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Kullu (HP) invites tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following works through Online Process:-

Sr. No.	Name of Work.	Estimated Cost.	Earnest Money	Time of completion.
1	Capacity Enhancement (0.58 MLD to 1.50 MLD) and Technology Up gradation of STP Badah at Kullu, in Tehsil and District Kullu.	6,25,06,867	6,57,570	Two Years
2	R/D for providing LWSS to NC/PC habitation Bhullang & Barahar in GP Bhullang and Barahar in Tehsil Bhanur Dist. Kullu (SH- C/O RCC wall for Protection work - 35 Rmts)	7,99,609	16,000	2 Months
3	Restoration of rain damages to C/O LWSS Phatti Peep Phatti Kharhal in Tehsil and District Kullu (H.P) SH- Construction of 1/No foundation, Modular steel water storage tank 30,000 Lit. Capacity at near village Buai, Laying, jointing and testing of G.I pipe 40mm dia - 250 Rmts)	7,03,986	14,100	2 Months
4	Restoration of rain damages Sewerage Scheme Bhular Town in Tehsil Bhanur Distt. Kullu (SH- Dismantling/ refitting/relaying of DI pipes, Construction of sewerage manholes, supporting pillars at various RD's.)	49,19,128	81,290	4 Months
5	Retrofitting of existing STP for identified GP's having Semi/peri urban status set page management (SH- Construction of sludge drying bed and raw sewage holding/ collection tank at STP Sharabai in Tehsil Bhanur and Distt. Kullu (H.P)	18,50,790	35,270	3 Months

Last date of submission of tender:-

The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be obtained from the website <https://htptenders.gov.in> or from office of JSV Division, Kullu upto date specified above.

HIM SUCHNA AVAM JANSAMPARK
Executive Engineer
JSV Division Kullu

6684/HIP

आराखण्ड राज्य ग्रामीण पथ विकास प्राधिकरण (JSRRDA) एक०एक०पी० भवन, तुरीय तल्ला, थूरा, रौंची -834004, आराखण्ड

आति अत्यकालीन ई-पुनर्निवाद आमंत्रण सूचना (2nd Call)

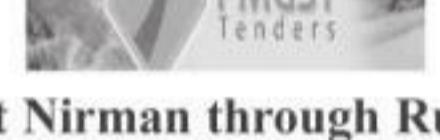
PR No.- 318242 Dated : 08.02.2024

अति अल्पकालीन ई-पुनर्निवाद संख्या:- 369/2023-24 दिनांक :- 04.03.2024

मुख्य अभियंता, जै०एस०आर०आर०डी०ए०, रौंची द्वारा निम्नविवरण के अनुसार e-procurement पद्धति से निवादा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र. सं	आईएन-टीफिकेशन संख्या	प्रखण्ड का नाम	प्रावकलित राशि		कार्य का नाम	
			अंक में (लाख में)	अधर में (रुपये में)		
1	JH-M-SIM-09 / 2023-24	जलडेगा 1	जलडेगा से केटुगा पथ का सुदूरीकरण कार्य। (लं० - 3,000 किं०मी०)			
		जलडेगा 2	से खरागरार से पथ का सुदूरीकरण कार्य। (लं० - 6,300 किं०मी०)	1486.983	चौदह कोड दियारी लाख अंठानवे हजार तीन सौ रु. मात्र	
		जलडेगा 3	पंधरीपानी जलडेगा आर०इ०ओ० पथ से सिलिंगा भारा प्रियोरिको पथ का सुदूरीकरण कार्य। (लं० - 4,100 किं०मी०)			
		जलडेगा 4	बांगा से पोमिया भारा बैंडारुङ्गा पथ का सुदूरीकरण कार्य। (लं० - 11,025 किं०मी०)			
			2. वेबसाइट मे निवादा प्रकाशन की तिथि	-06.03.2024		
3. ई-निवादा प्राप्ति की अवधि तिथि एवं समय						
4. निवादा खोले की तिथि एवं समय						
5. निवादा आमंत्रित करने वाले प्राधिकारी का नाम एवं पता- मुख्य अभियंता का कार्यालय, जै०एस०आर०आर०डी०ए०, रौंची -834004, आराखण्ड।						
6. ई-निवादा प्रकाश का दूरभाष सं-.....						
विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट jharkhandtenders.gov.in मे देखा जा सकता है।						
मुख्य अभियंता						
जै०एस०आर०आर०डी०ए०, रौंची।						

PR.NO.321504 Rural Work Department(23-24):D



Bharat Nirman through Rural Roads

Chief Engineer (Shimla Zone) HP PWD Nirman Bhawan Nigam Vihar

Shimla H.P., 171002

UNDER PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY-III)

Notice Inviting Tender

I The Superintending Engineer, 11th Circle, HP. PWD., Rampur Bushahr District Shimla HP-172001 on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana -III of 2023-24 for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with CPWD, HP PWD, P&T, Railway and other State Govt. or Central Govt. Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

District	Package No.	Name of the work	Estimated Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Total Cost (Rs. Lakh)	Period of Completion (in days)	Bid Security (Rs. Lakh)	The bid security is two percent of the total cost rounded to the nearest thousand
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Shimla	HP-09-710	Up-gradation of Narkanda Doza Madhwani road Km 0/00 to 6/360	5,17,6079	38,22,360	5,55,98,439	540	11,12,000

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 06.03.2024

3. Cost of Bid Form: Rs. 500/- only per package (non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Kumarsain Division, HP.PWD, Kumarsain.

4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission: The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website www.pmgsytenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in PMGSY may obtain the same from the website: www.pmgsytenders.gov.in.

Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

* Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

5. Submission of Original Documents: The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4B(a)(ii) of IT B with Superintending Engineer, 11th Circle, HP.PWD., Rampur Bushahr, on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand.

6. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering: 12.03.2024 up to 1700 hours.

7. The site for the work is available.

8. Only online submission of bids is permitted; therefore; bids must be submitted online on website www.pmgsytenders.gov.in The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 1100 hours on 13.03.2024 by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bid as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.

9. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the Bill of Quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.

10. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than ninety days after the deadline date for bid submission.

11. Bidders may bid for any one or more of the works mentioned in the Table above. To qualify for a package of contracts made up of this and other contracts for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.

12. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

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

Signature and Designation of the authority inviting bids for and on behalf of Governor of H.P.

Superintending Engineer
11th Circle HP PWD,
Rampur Bushahr Distt. Shimla (HP)
Fax: 01782-233167 Tel: 01782-233044

6716/HP

कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, ग्रूपट-31, कन्सट्रक्शन इंड डिजिटल सोलारीजन
उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (बाहरीय)
(३० प्र सरकार का उपयोग)
एस. बी.-३०, शाही नगर गाँवियावाद 201002
प्रावन कर्यालय : दो. सी.-३८ बी., विरुद्धीखेड़, इंडियन अंडर्सन, लखनऊ।
Visit us at: [www.cdsunj.org](http://cdspunj.org)
email : cspunj31@gmail.com

निवादा सूचना सं. 482/vivid/12/129
दिनांक 04.03.2024

ई-निवादा सूचना

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम, की ओर से अंगोलारी द्वारा जनाये गए निवादा विवरण में विवरण की विवरण का विवरण दिया गया है। इन विवरणों के अनुसार उत्तर प्रदेश

OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHED DIVISION

RAJGARH

No.:5360-77

Date:26.02.2024

NOTICE INVITING BID (NIT NO. 171/2023-24)

Bids for Work of Transportation of drinking water by Tankers at UWSS Rajgarh District Alwar are invited from interested bidders upto 06:00 PM on Date 10.03.2024. Other particulars of the Bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://spptt.rajk.nic.in>) of the state and <https://phedwater.rajasthan.gov.in> in departmental website.

UBIN- PHE2324WSRCI3804

Sd/-
DIPR/C/1776/2024 Executive Engineer

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

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

1 GeM Bid Number	GEM/2024/B/4701559 Dated: 04-03-2024
2 Name of the work : Implementation & certification of Integrated Management System (IMS) of ISO 9001:2015 or latest-Quality Management system (QMS), ISO 14001: 2015 or latest Environmental Management system (EnMS), ISO 45001: 2018 or latest - Occupational Health and Safety management system (OHSAS), ISO 50001:2018 or latest-Energy Management System (EMS) and 5'S'at EMU Car Shed, Ghaziabad for the period of 03 years	
3 Tender cost	Nil
4 Approximate cost	Rs. 3,23,983.32 inclusive of GST
5 Earnest Money	Rs. 6500 (payment mode available on GeM website)
6 Completion period	3 Year(s)
7 Validity of offer	60 days
8 Date & Time from tender advertised on GeM website	04.03.2024
9 Date & Time from tender submission start and end	04.03.2024 to 26.03.2024 (14:00 Hrs.)
10 Tender closing Date & Time	26.03.2024 (14:00 Hrs.)
11 Date & Time of tender Opening (immediately when tender submission ends)	26.03.2024 (14:30 Hrs.)
12 Publication cost allocation	06041132

Note 1: All participant Tenderers/Tenderers will submit their requisite documents along with their tender offer. "No post tender correspondence for submission of additional document shall be entertained after opening of the Technical & Commercial offer. Even suo-moto post tender letters of the tenders shall be treated as null & void".

Note 2: Duplicate documents should not be enclosed/uploaded.

Tender Notice is available on website of www.gem.gov.in

GEM/2024/B/4701559 Dated: 04-03-2024 696/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Anand Golhani, S/o Shri D.N. Golhani, R/o Flat-No.802, Railway Officers Enclave, Chankaypuri, New Delhi-110021, have changed my son's name from Aryan Anand Golhani to Aryan Golhani.

0040718083-1

I, ANCHAL ANAND W/O-MANISH KUMAR R/O,FLAT.NO.-1C,P-7/3, DAHIYA X-RAY WALI GALI, PANI UDHYAN, NARELA, MAMOORPUR, DELHI-110040, have changed my name to ANCHAL SURI.

0040718109-1

I, ALIQ AHMAD,S/O/SAFIQ AHMAD, HOUSE, NO-4929, B/1, GALI NO-1, SARTAJ MOHALLA EAST OLD-SEELAMPUR, GANDHI-NAGAR EAST-DELHI-110031, changed my name to ALEEQ AHMAD, for all future purposes.

0040718135-4

I, AFZAL BAIG,S/O SARDAR BEIG,R/o 3617 KATRA DIN A BEG LAL KUAN,DELHI-110006, have changed my name to AFZAL BEG.

0040718109-6

I, Yogender Sangwan S/O Sukhbir Singh R/O B-3, 1st Floor, Trivir Housing Society, Jyoti Park, Gurugram (Haryana) have changed my minor son's name from Jaiaditya Singh Sangwan or Jaiaditya to Jaiaditya Sangwan.

0070892362-1

I, Vipin Khanna /V.K. Khanna, S/o Late Madan Mohan Khanna R/o G-1401, Aditya Urban Casa, Sector-78, Noida, UP, have changed my name to VIPIN KUMAR KHANNA for all future purposes.

0070892399-1

I, Vinay S/o Gopal Krishan R/o B-177, near Ram Mandir, Patel Nagar D-22, Ghaziabad, UP, confirm that in my school records my and my father name has been wrongly mentioned as Vinay Adlakha and G.K. Adlakha instead of Vinay and Gopal Krishan respectively. The correct name of mine and my father is Vinay and Gopal Krishan. My 10th Index Number is T/5244/149 & 12th Unique ID is 5651210. Mob No is +91-8802108288

0070892410-1

I, Tushita Kalra, D/o Harjit Singh Kalra and W/o Inderjeet Singh Arora, R/o-House No-22, Second-Floor, Road-No-65, Punjabi Bagh, West-Delhi-110026, have changed my name to Tushita Kaur Arora, Permanently.

0040718066-2

I, Shaheen D/o Shakeel Khan, R/o E-3/50, New-31, Chankya Palace Part-1, Uttam Nagar, West Delhi, Delhi-110059, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Zoya

0070892359-1

I, Sadaf D/o Ikmammuddin R/o X-21-C, DDA Flats, New Ranjeet Nagar, Delhi-110008, have changed my name to Sadaf Parveen.

0040718134-5

I, Rajender Sharma S/o Sh. Swarupa Nand R/o Krishna Niwas Dogra Building Engneghar, Sanjuli, Shimla HP declare that my name in other documents have wrongly entered as Rajender Sharma whereas my correct name is Rajender Sharma, Concerned note.

0040718075-1

I, Parmod Kumar Gupta/P.K. Gupta S/o Mahavir Prasad R/o Q-13, Plot No.52, Parvana Vihar, Sec-9, Rohini, Delhi-85 have changed my name to Parmod Kumar.

0040718064-1

I, Neeru Kwartia D/o Sh. Gokal Chand Kwartia W/o Sh. Pradeep Chatha R/o 1-29, Sector-41, Noida have changed name to Neeru Chatha for all purpose.

0040718153-1

I, Mohd Bilal S/o Mohd Yunus R/o 2253/B/7/J Shadi Khampur, Nr Masjid Ranjeet-Nagar Delhi-110008 changed my name to Mohammad Bilal.

0040718134-1

I, Sachin S/o Atar Singh R/o 255, Kaushambi, Bhopal, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Sachin Kumar.

0070892420-1

I, Meenu Bansal, W/o Sachin Jain R/o 2 K 136 Shivaji Park Alwar Rajasthan-301001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Megha Jain

0070892360-1

I, MAHESH SINGH, S/o Man Singh, R/o Flat No.1026, Ward No.12A, Sector-37, Noida, Dist-G.B.Nagar, U.P.-201303, have changed my name to MAHESH

0040718109-3

I, KANHIYA AHUJA, S/O DAULAT RAM AHUJA, R/O N-140 B PITAMPURA, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110034. Have changed my name to KANHIYA AHUJA for all future purposes.

0070892397-1

I, Inderjeet Singh, S/o Bhupinder Singh R/o House No-22, Second-Floor, Road-No-65 Punjabi Bagh, West-Delhi-110026, have changed my name to Inderjeet Singh Arora, Permanently.

0040718066-1

I, Hafeez Ahmed S/o Mohammad Shafiq R/o 207, Basti Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi-110013 have changed my name from Hafiz Ahmed to Hafeez Ahmed, for all future purposes.

0040718069-1

I, Gajendra Singh S/o Amrit Singh Choudhary R/o A/3, 227, IIrd Floor, SS Moti Singh Road, Janak Puri, Delhi-110058, have changed my name to Gajendra Singh Panwar for all purposes.

0040718070-1

I, Devendri W/o Gajendra Singh Panwar R/o A/3, 227, Ground Floor, SS Moti Singh Marg, Janak Puri, Delhi-110058, have changed my name to Devendri Panwar for all purposes.

0040718070-2

I, DUKE S/o Shekhar Das, R/o Flat No.1603,Tower-A,16th Floor, J.M Florence, Tech Zone-4, Greater Noida West, Dist.-G.B.Nagar, U.P.-201009, have changed my name to DUKE DAS.

0040718109-4

I, Chander Mohan S/o Sh. Balram Singh R/o J-81, Sector-25, Jalvaya Vihar, Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, R/o-201301 have changed my name to Chander Mohan Singh

0040718087-1

I, CHANDRIKA VORA W/O RAMESHCHANDRA VORA R/o B-16, GUJARAT APPT, PARWANA ROAD, PITAM PURA, Delhi have changed my name to CHANDRIKA BEN VORA

0040718062-3

I, Barkha Narula W/o Sh Vijay Narula C-4/E/34 Janakpuri New Delhi-110058 have changed my Name From Barkha Arora to Barkha Narula (after Marriage) for all Future Purpose.

0040718068-1

I, Attar Singh S/o Jai Singh R/o 255, Kaushambi, Bhopal, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Atar Singh.

0070892447-1

I, Anshu Goel W/o Mukesh Kumar Singh R/o M-41, Sec-12, Pratap Vihar, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Anshu Singh.

0070892430-1

I, Ankit Singh s/o Shiv Shankar Singh R/o 116, Vidyavihar Apartment, Sector-9, Rohini, Delhi-110085 have changed my daughter's (DOB: 21/05/2015) name from AASHNA to KRISHIKA GUPTA.

0040718052-1

I, Amit Budhia, S/o Sh. Mahesh Kumar Singh R/o 4/365, Vaishali, Ghaziabad, U.P. 201010, I have changed my minor daughter's name from Kashvi Budhia to Aashvi Budhia for all future purposes.

0040718061-1

I, ASHYRAF JAHAN,W/O GULZAR ALAM,R/O FLAT.NO-L-302,VVIP ADDRESSES,RAJ NAGAR EXTENSION,GHAZIABAD,UTTAR PRADESH-201017, changed my name ISHRAT JAHAN.

0040718187-1

I, Ishan Singhal S/o Mukesh Kumar Singh R/o M-41, Sec-12, Pratap Vihar, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Ishaan Singhal.

0070892428-1

I, A VALLI,MOTHER OF,GNANAVEL A/R-O-562/565,NEAR-SINGHAL FARM-HOUSE RAJOKARI, NEW DELHI-110038, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME A VALLI TO VALLIYAMMAL A VIDEE-AFFIDAVIT IN- DL53943394914808W, DATED 05/03/2024,BEFORE NCT-DELHI.

0040718109-1

I, Ithitherto known as Bimla Sharma,W/o-Om Parkash Sharma, residing at-GF-75, 76,Pocket-26, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Bimla Devi.

0040718051-1

I, Varinder Singh S/o Manjeet Singh R/o WZ-159, Sri Nagar, Rani Bagh, Shakur Basti, Delhi have changed my name from Varinder Singh to Virender Singh

0040718062-2

I, Tanushree Pabbi w/o Kunal Sharma R/o C-92, Sector-44, Noida, UP-201301. I have changed my name to Tanushree Sharma for future purposes.

0070892358-1

I Sahida Khatun W/o Mohd Yunus R/o 2253/B/7/J Shadi Khamphur, Ranjit Nagar, Delhi-110008, have changed my name to Sayeeda Khatoun

0040718134-3

I Purav Arora S/o Sh. Anil Arora R/o House No.471, DA Block, Shalimar Bagh, New Delhi-110088 have changed my name to Eshaan Ajith Arora for all purposes.

0040718050-2

I Md Yunus S/o Mohammed Kasim R/o 2253/B/7/J Shadi Khamphur, Ranjit Nagar, Delhi-110008, have changed my name to Md Yunus.

0040718134-2

I Manjot Singh S/o Hazura Singh R/o WZ-159, Sri Nagar, Rani Bagh, Shakur Basti, Delhi have changed my name from Manjot Singh to Manjeet Singh.

0040718062-1

I Madhusudan S/o Hanumata R/o #116, Muddappa Garden, Cox Town Jeevanahalli, Bangalore North, Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560005, have changed my name to Madduraiah

0040718082-1

I, Meenu Bansal, W/o Sachin Jain R/o 2 K 136 Shivaji Park Alwar Rajasthan-301001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Megha Jain

0070892360-1

I, MAHESH SINGH, S/o Man Singh, R/o Flat No.1026, Ward No.12A, Sector-37, Noida, Dist-G.B.Nagar, U.P.-201303, have changed my name to MAHESH

0040718109-3

I, KANHIYA AHUJA, S/O DAULAT RAM AHUJA, R/O N-140 B PITAMPURA, NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110034. Have changed my name to KANHIYA AHUJA for all future purposes.

0070892397-1

I, Inderjeet Singh, S/o Bhupinder Singh R/o House No-22, Second-Floor, Road-No-65 Punjabi Bagh, West-Delhi-110026, have changed my name to Inderjeet Singh Arora, Permanently.

0040718066-1

I MD Sajid S/o Namuddin R/o 38C/520, CD Park, Jahangir Puri, Dist. North West Delhi, Delhi-110013 have changed my name to MO Sajid for all purposes.

0040718050-4

I, Haramrit Singh Babbar S/o Sh. Satwant Singh R/o B-284, Second Floor, Derawal Nagar, Delhi-110009 have changed my name to Haramrit Singh for all purposes.

0040718050-3

I, ATSFAR S/o Mukhtar R/o F-110-Punjabi Basti,Baileet Nagar,Patel Nagar,delhi-110008 have changed my name to Mohammad Atsfar for all purposes.

0040718064-2

I, HARINDER SINGH DAGAR S/o JAI PAL SINGH R/o C-16 PARAMOUNT GOLFORSTE SITE-C EXTENSION PHASE-1, SURAJPUR, GREATER NOIDA, UP-201306, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM HARINDER SINGH DAGAR TO HARENDR SINGH DAGAR. HENCEFORTH I WOULD BE KNOWN BY THE NAME OF HARENDR SINGH DAGAR FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES

0040718109-4

I, T, CHANDRIKA VORA W/O RAMESHCHANDRA VORA R/o B-16, GUJARAT APPT, PARWANA ROAD, PITAM PURA, Delhi have changed my name to CHANDRIKA BEN VORA

0040718109-6

I, T, BARKHA NARULA W/O SH. BALRAM SINGH R/o 4/28/14 Janakpuri New Delhi-110058 have changed my name to BARKHA NARULA

0040718109-3

I, T, PRADEEP KUMAR GOSWAMI S/O BIJENDER SINGH GOSWAMI,H.NO-45, SHAHID BHAGAT SINGH GALI SUSHILA GARDEN MANDOLI,NORTH EAST-DELHI 110093,changed my name to PRADEEP SINGH GOSWANI,for all,future purposes.

0040718109-1

I, T, ATTAR SINGH JAI SINGH R/o 255, Kaushambi, Bhopal, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Atar Singh.

0070892447-1

I, T, BUNTY ALIAS BUNTY NAYYAR S/o Om Parkash R/o House No.-372,Shahbad Mohammmed Pur, South West-Delhi,Delhi-110061,have changed my name to Satender Solanki.

0040718141-6

I, T, SANJAY KUMAR S/o Krishan Lal Handa R/o-12,Humkuni Apartment Plot,No.8 Sector-14,Rohini-110085,have changed my name to Sanjay Kumar Handa

0040718141-4

I, T, JAVED AHMED S/o Muhammed Javed,R/o Flat-No.1407, Tower-I, 14th Avenue, Gaur City-2, Greater-Noida West,GautamBudh Nagar,U.P-201009,have changed my name to Sana Javed.

0040718139-7

APTRANS CO:: VIJAYAWADA NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The APTRANS CO invites bids online for 1) Spec. No. PMMIT-e-08/2024: Supply of 33kV Solid core insulators-2000 Nos. 2) Spec. No. PMMI1-e-09/2024: Supply of Lot-1:132kV Solid core insulators (6KN, 25mm/KV creepage)-500 Nos. Lot-2:132kV Solid core insulators (6KN, 31mm/KV creepage)-200Nos. 3) Spec. No. PMMI2-e-10/2024: Supply of 33kV Vacuum Circuit Breakers-289 Nos. 4) Spec. No. PMMI2-e-11/2024: Supply of Lot-1:33kV CTs(2000-1200-800/1-1-1A)-108 Nos. Lot-2: 33kV CTs (400/1-1A)-271 Nos. & Time of availability of above tenders: 06.03.2024 at 5:00PM, Website: www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in. Contact No. CE/Transmission: 0866-2429230.

No: 2754PPCL/ADVT/I/1/2021-22 Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER, TRANSMISSION

ADDENDUM

Name of Work: - Work under PM-Devin Scheme: (i) Setting up of Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for drug addicts at Bishramganj, Sepahijala District, Tripura

PNIET No.: 23/E-E-BRG/PWD/2023-24

DNIET No.: CE (Buildings)/PWD/AE/Project unit/DNIET/69/2023-24

Tender ID No.: 2024_CEPWD_47550_1

The pre-bid meeting for the above mentioned tender published in e-procurement portal https://tripuratenders.gov.in will also be held through on-line mode as per details and link mentioned below:-

(i) Pre Bid Meeting: Work under PM-Devin Scheme Setting up of Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for drug addicts at Bishramganj, Sepahijala District, Tripura

(ii) Date & Time: Tuesday, 5 March 11:30am - 1:30pm

(iii) Time zone: Asia/Kolkata

(iv) Google Meet joining info:- Video call link: https://meet.google.com/trz-fsuq-fnx

Other conditions regarding pre-bid meeting will remain unchanged.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer,
Bishramganj Division, PWD (R&B),
Bishramganj, Sepahijala: Tripura

ICA/C/4993/24

REQUEST FOR BIDS (RFB)

E-Procurement Notice

(Two-Envelope Bidding Process with e-Procurement)

NATIONAL OPEN COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT

Dated: 16-02-2024

The address for communication is as under:

Executive Engineer, Khowai Division, PWD (R&B), Khowai, Khowai District, Tripura Pin Code: 799202,

Email: pwdkhwh@gmail.com

TABLE

RFB No.	Name of Work	Bid Security (Rs.)	Cost of Document (Rs.)	Period of Completion
IN-PWD(B)-36262-CW-RFB-2	Infrastructure Development of Bachaibari H.S. School at Tulashikar Block, Khowai District, Tripura (2nd Call).	Rs. 20,60,000/- (Rupees twenty lakh sixty thousand only)	Rs. 10,000/-	780 days

Note: The bid forms and other details including online activities should be done in the e-procurement portal <https://tripuratenders.gov.in>

Sd/-

Executive Engineer,
Khowai Division, PWD (R&B),
Khowai, Khowai District, Tripura.

ICA/C/5015/24

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (ROADS), PUBLIC WORKS ROADS DEPARTMENT, ASSAM, GUWAHATI-03

No. CE/DEV/TB/1340/2023-24/02

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 invites Bids on behalf of Governor of Assam for 1(One) no of Package for construction of Roads and Bridge project under SOPD-G for the year 2023-24 in Barpeta Districts of Assam amounting to Rs 10.46 Crores (Approx.) including GST etc. from approved & eligible Contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.

Details along with packages under each district may be seen from 04.03.2024 at website www.assamtenders.gov.in. Amendment /Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Note: NIT Value is inclusive of GST (12%), Labour Cess (1%), etc.

Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD,
JANASANYOG/CF/6246/23/6-Mar-24
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER JHARKHAND BHAWAN, GOVT. OF JHARKHAND NEW DELHI-110057

NOTICE FOR HOUSEKEEPING & CATERING SERVICES IN JHARKHAND BHAWAN, NEW DELHI

Sealed tenders are invited from reputed parties having relevant experience for "Round the clock Housekeeping, Gardening, Cleaning, Catering and maintenance of Reception Desk, General Pest Control & Rodent Control at Jharkhand Bhawan," guesthouse at Kusumpur Pahari, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi – 110057, from the date of agreement for a period of 2 years. The Jharkhand Bhawan includes 20 standard rooms, 2 Executive suites, 2 VIP suites and the office of the Resident Commissioner, Jharkhand.

Prescribed tender forms along with NIT, terms and conditions, scope of work, qualification criterion, etc can be obtained from the office of the Secretary, Department of Cabinet Secretariat and Vigilance (Co-ordination), Govt. of Jharkhand, Project Building, Jharkhand Sachivalay, Ranchi, or from the office of the Resident Commissioner, Jharkhand Bhawan, Kusumpur Pahari, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi from 11.03.2024 on all working days during office hours.

Cost of the form is Rs. 1000/- and to be paid in cash or through Bank draft drawn in favour of Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Jharkhand payable at New Delhi.

MSMEs are exempted from payment of Tender document fee and EMD as per Government policy.

Filled up tender form, along with bank draft of Rs. 50,000/- drawn in favour of Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Jharkhand towards refundable Earnest Money should be submitted in two separate sealed covers each containing technical bid and financial bid respectively in the office of Chief Administrative Officer, Jharkhand Bhawan, Kusumpur Pahari, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi – 110057 (Tel. No. 26739000) latest by 5 PM on 21.03.2024. Tender is not transferable.

Each page of the tender form should be signed by the bidder. The technical bids shall be opened at 11 A.M. on 22.03.2024, at Jharkhand Bhawan, New Delhi in presence of the bidders or their authorized representatives with valid ID Card and authorization letter. Due to unforeseen circumstances, if the tender is not opened on the stipulated date, the same will be opened on the next working day at the same time i.e., 11 A.M.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
JHARKHAND BHAWAN,
NEW DELHI-110057

PR 312526 Cabinet(23-24).D

MORADABAD NAGAR NIGAM

Address: Pili Koti, Civil Lines, Moradabad-244001 (U.P.)

Phone: 0591-2315786, Email: moradabdnagarnigam@gmail.com

RFP/NIT No.: 23/IT-Cell/NNM/2023-24

Date: 05-03-2024

TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited for the following Work. Tender forms may be purchased online by the Bidder / Consortium, having relevant experience.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form (Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)	Time allowed for Completion
1.	Online Public Grievance Redressal System with integration of various app and Portal with integrated Call Center Solution.	2500/- + GST (18%)	2.85 Lakh	03 Months

Key Dates:-

S.N.	Description	Date and Time
1.	Start date for Purchase of Tender (Online)	06/03/2024 at 10.00 AM
2.	Last Date for submission of Tender (Online)	27/03/2024 at 04.00 PM
3.	Technical bid opening (Online)	28/03/2024 at 05.00 PM

Note:-

* Tender Document and other details shall be available on : - Website <https://etender.up.nic.in>

* Amendment to NIT, if any would be published only on website <https://etender.up.nic.in>

* The EMD & Tender Fee shall be submitted online in the account mentioned below.

* Tender Call notice in two bid systems (part-I: general & technical bid and part-II: financial bid/price bid/BOQ) from intending Bidder/Consortium fulfilling the eligibility criteria mentioned in this notice and other qualifying requirements mentioned in this RFP.

* Amendment to NIT, if any would be published on website only.

* Note: After award of contract Bidder/Consortium will have to submit performance security of 10% of contract value.

Bank Details for online payment-

A/C Holder Name - NAGAR NIGAM MORADABAD E-TENDERING/A/c

A/C No - 27050100020717

Bank Name - Bank of Baroda

Bank IFSC code - BARB0BLYMOR (5th Character is Zero)

Additional Municipal Commissioner
Moradabad Nagar Nigam

प्रियदर्शन जानकारी state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

PR-018744 (Planning) 2023-24

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

से जाकरी है।

16

संस्कृत भाषा में लिखा है।

THIS WORD MEANS

METHANESAT

A satellite that will name and shame the worst methane emitters on Earth

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

METHANESAT, a washing machine-sized satellite that will track and measure methane emissions on a global scale, was launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon9 rocket from California on Monday.

Where does MethaneSAT score?

Historically, tracking the source of methane emissions and measuring them has presented a challenge. Satellites that can provide high-resolution data can often only scan specific, pre-targeted sites; others can examine larger areas and detect large emitting events, but not "smaller sources that account for the majority of emissions in many, if not most, regions," EDF said. Due to these limitations, global methane emissions are about 70% higher than levels reported by national governments, according to a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

MethaneSAT is expected to fix this problem. It is equipped with a high-resolution infrared sensor and a spectrometer, and can track differences in methane concentrations as small as three parts per billion in the atmosphere – which enables it to pick up smaller emissions sources than the previous satellites. MethaneSAT also has a wide-camera view of about 200 km by 200 km, allowing it to identify larger, so-called "super emitters".

According to a report in *The New York Times*, "the new satellite is also designed to track releases over time, to see whether they're increasing or decreasing, and by how much".

The collected data will be analysed using cloud-computing and AI technology developed by Google – the company is a mission partner – and will be made public through Google's Earth Engine platform, *The NYT* report said.

EXPLAINED CLIMATE

FOURTH MASS CORAL REEF BLEACHING EVENT SOON: WHAT NOAA SAID

THE WORLD is on the verge of a fourth mass coral bleaching event that could see wide swathes of tropical reefs die, including parts of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has said.

Marine biologists are on high alert following months of record-breaking ocean heat fuelled by climate change and the El Nino climate pattern.

"It's looking like the entirety of the Southern Hemisphere is probably going to bleach this year," said ecologist Derek Manzello, the coordinator of NOAA's Coral Reef Watch which serves as the global monitoring authority on coral bleaching risk.

"We are literally sitting on the cusp of the worst bleaching event in the history of the planet," he said.

Triggered by heat stress, coral bleaching occurs when corals expel the colourful algae living in their tissues.

Without these helpful algae, the corals become pale and are vulnerable to

starvation and disease.

Coral bleaching can be devastating for the ocean ecosystem, as well as fisheries and tourism-based economies that depend on healthy, colourful reefs to attract scuba divers and snorkellers.

The last global mass coral bleaching event ran from 2014 to 2017, during which time the Great Barrier Reef lost nearly a third of its corals.

Previous global bleaching events occurred in 2010 and 1998.

For an event to be deemed global, widespread bleaching must occur in three ocean basins – the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian.

Scientists assess sea surface temperature data and satellite imagery to determine whether reef pixels are passing key thresholds of bleaching.

To merit a global mass bleaching event, a certain percentage of reef pixels need to reveal a level of heat stress in each ocean basin.

REUTERS

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Israel's Hezbollah problem

On October 8, 2023, a day after the coordinated Hamas raids in southern Israel, Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Lebanese Shi'ite political party and militant group, fired a barrage of rockets inside Israel in solidarity with the Palestinian militants.

The attacks have continued ever since, and Israel has responded with air and artillery attacks along much of its 120-km border with Lebanon, killing about 50 civilians and 200 Hezbollah fighters, *Aljazeera* reported at the end of February.

Hezbollah have killed a dozen Israeli soldiers and five civilians, the report said. According to the UN body International Organization for Migration, more than 87,000 people have been displaced from southern Lebanon as a result of the fighting since October 8.

Hezbollah, which was founded during

EXPLAINED GLOBAL



Israeli soldiers on the country's northern border with Lebanon. *The New York Times*

the Lebanese Civil War (1975-90), is driven by opposition to Israel and to Western influence in the Middle East. It runs an extensive security apparatus, political organisation, and social services network in Lebanon, and many of its goals are similar to those of the hardline Sunni Hamas.

Israel is seen as trying to create a buffer



Minicoy straddles vital Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) – the world's main maritime highways – including the Eight Degree Channel (between Minicoy and Maldives) and the Nine Degree Channel (between Minicoy and the main cluster of Lakshadweep Islands). In consequence, the Lakshadweep Islands are also vulnerable to marine pollution.

INS Jatayu naval base

The existing Naval Detachment Minicoy, which is under the operational command of the Naval Officer-in-Charge (Lakshadweep), will be commissioned as INS Jatayu.

A naval detachment has administrative, logistics, and medical facilities. INS Jatayu will be upgraded to a naval base with additional infrastructure such as an airfield, housing, and personnel, after obtaining the requisite environmental and other clearances.

While the fragile ecology of the island may pose challenges for the construction of a jetty, there are plans to construct a new airfield that will be capable of operating both military and civil aircraft.

EXPLAINED DEFENCE

Teeth to Navy operations

The basing of an independent unit with requisite infrastructure and resources will enhance the overall operational capability of the Navy in the islands. The establishment of the base is in line with the government's focus on comprehensive development of the islands.

The Navy has also said that the base will enhance its operational reach, facilitate its anti-piracy and anti-narcotics operations in the western Arabian Sea, and augment its capability as the first responder in the region.

With the commissioning of INS Jatayu, the Navy will add to its strength on the western seaboard. The proposed airfield will allow operations for a range of aircraft, including P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft and fighter jets, and extend the Navy's reach and operational surveillance capabilities at a time when India is seeking to counter the growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region.

This has an immediate bearing at a time when India's relations with the Maldives have come under strain since the election of the pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu.

Kerala man killed on Lebanon border: the story of Indian workers in Israel

ARJUN SENGUPTA & SHAJU PHILIP

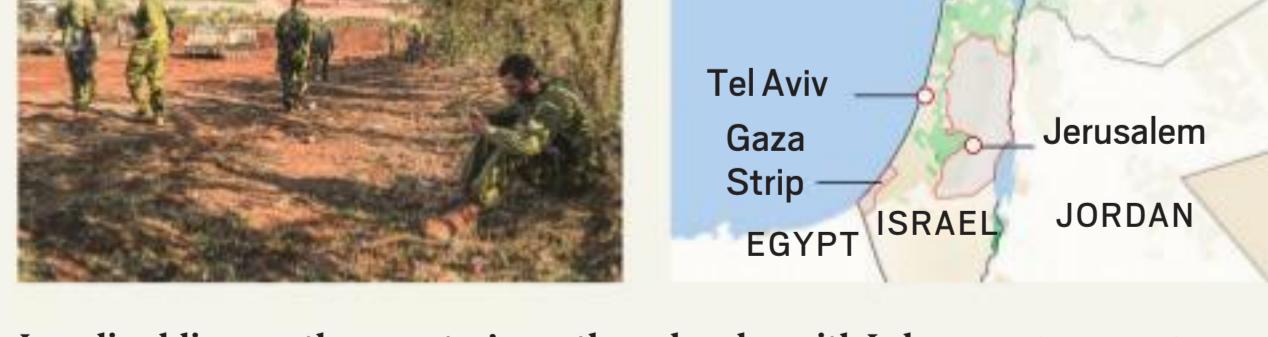
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

NIBIN MAXWELL, a 31-year-old man from Kollam, Kerala, was killed and two other Indians, Joseph Melvin and Paul Melvin, were injured after an anti-tank missile allegedly fired by Hezbollah from Lebanon struck a moshav (agricultural community) close to the border in northern Israel on Monday afternoon.

The Israeli Embassy in New Delhi wrote on X that Hezbollah had launched a "cowardly terror attack" on "peaceful agriculture workers who were cultivating an orchard at the northern village of Margalit" (map).

As Israel continues with its campaign against Hamas in Gaza in the south, its border with Lebanon in the north too has seen frequent attacks and bombardment.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL



LEBANON Margalit SYRIA
Tel Aviv Gaza Strip Jerusalem ISRAEL JORDAN EGYPT

between its border and the Lebanese population as part of efforts to insulate itself from continuing Hezbollah attacks.

Indian workers in Israel

Israel, with its relatively small population, has historically struggled to meet its demand for labour, especially for blue-col-

lar, manual work. Prior to the October 7 attacks, Palestinians and Arab migrants made up the majority of this work force, with some 80,000 Palestinians working in the Israeli construction industry alone.

After the attacks, Israel suspended the work permits of thousands of Palestinians, while many other foreign workers left the country. This triggered a large labour shortage – which Indians are now filling.

Israel started to offer visas for employment in the agriculture sector in November 2023. About 800 Indians, mainly from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, had moved to the country to take up agri-sector jobs by December, according to unofficial estimates.

While recruitment in the agriculture sector has now been paused due to the lean agricultural season in Israel, recruitment for other kinds of jobs is ongoing. Drives for recruitment of construction workers have received huge response in several North Indian states.

Employment in healthcare

The presence of Indian workers in Israel is not new. Of the estimated 18,000 Indians working in the country last October, the vast majority – around 14,000 – were caregivers for elderly Israelis.

In aging countries such as Israel, nursing has long offered well-paying career opportunities for Indians. A caregiver visa can cost up to Rs 10 lakh including various fees and charges levied by agencies; however, care workers can earn well over Rs 1 lakh per month, along with benefits including free food and accommodation, healthcare, and overtime pay.

A non-caregiver visa is cheaper, and can cost around Rs 4 lakh including agents' fees, etc., some workers from Kerala who are now in Israel told *The Indian Express*. Agriculture work is also more hazardous, as the death of Nibin Maxwell shows, than caregiving, where the worker is mostly inside a home in a highly-protected city.

TOP OF THE
WORLD

A Chinese ship near a Philippine ship. Reuters

Philippines,
China vessels
collide in South
China Sea

Manila: Chinese and Philippine coast guard vessels collided in the disputed South China Sea, and four Filipino crew members were injured Tuesday in a series of confrontations as Southeast Asian leaders gathered for an Asian summit where alarm over Beijing's aggression at sea was expected to be raised. The Chinese coast guard ships and accompanying vessels blocked the Philippine coast guard and supply vessels off the disputed Second Thomas Shoal and executed dangerous maneuvers that caused two minor collisions between vessels, Philippine officials said. The BRP Sindangan of the Philippine coast guard had minor structural damage from the collision. AP

CHINA
'Peaceful Taiwan
reunification'
remark dropped

Beijing: China will boost its defence spending by 7.2% this year, fuelling a military budget that has more than doubled under President Xi Jinping's 11 years in office as Beijing hardens its stance on Taiwan, according to official reports on Tuesday. China also officially adopted tougher language against Taiwan as it released the budget figures, dropping the mention of "peaceful reunification" in a government report delivered by Premier Li Qiang at the opening of the National People's Congress, China's parliament, Tuesday. REUTERS

SOUTH KOREA
North Korea
issues threat
over joint drills

Soul: North Korea called the ongoing South Korean-US military drills a plot to invade the country, as it threatened Tuesday to take unspecified "responsible" military steps in response. The North's warning came a day after the South Korean and U.S. forces kicked off their annual computer-simulated command post training and a variety of field exercises for an 11-day run. This year's drills were to involve 48 field exercises, twice the number conducted last year. AP

BELGIUM
EU targets new
system to boost
bloc's defence

Brussels: Top European Union officials on Tuesday outlined ambitious plans to boost its defense industry at an unprecedented pace as the bloc seeks to respond to the threat posed by Russia and a trans-Atlantic partner that could be wavering on its commitments to Europe. For decades, EU nations have slumbered under the protective nuclear cover of the US through the NATO alliance while their defense spending withered. A first warning under Trump's presidency highlighted a lack of coordination that would be needed. AP

Ball in US court, says Hamas as Gaza
truce talks extended before RamadanREUTERS
CAIRO/RAFAH, MARCH 5

People protest at Israel's Nitzana border crossing with Egypt in southern Israel on Tuesday against the delivery of aid to the Gaza Strip until all hostages are released. AP

UN report finds evidence of sexual
violence during Oct 7 Hamas attackASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, MARCH 5

A UNITED Nations report has found credible allegations that sexual assaults took place during the October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel.

A team led by the UN special envoy for sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Patten, found "rea-

sonable grounds" to believe Hamas committed rape and "sexualised torture". Patten presented the report Monday at the United Nations.

The UN team did not meet with any victims of sexual violence "despite concerted efforts to encourage them to come forward", and Patten said much of the evidence was circumstantial. The team conducted interviews

with survivors and witnesses of the October 7 attacks, released hostages, health providers and others, Patten said.

The report comes nearly five months after the October 7 attacks, which left about 1,200 people dead and some 250 others taken hostage. Israel's war against Hamas has since laid waste to the Gaza Strip, killing more than 30,000 people.

In January, Pakistan received over USD 700 million second tranche from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the existing USD 3 billion Stand-by Arrangement (SBA) agreed towards June last year when Pakistan was slowly drifting towards default.

Pakistan has not completed the last USD 6.5 billion IMF bailout package, and therefore, the first task of the new government will be to sit with the Washington-based global lender to get the last loan tranche of USD 1.2 billion.

The official handle of the

China: Ties with
Maldives not to
target anyonePRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, MARCH 5

CHINA TUESDAY vowed to work with the Maldives to build a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership with the island nation and underlined that normal cooperation between the two does not "target" any third party and will not be disrupted by any 3rd party.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning referred the media to "competent Chinese authorities" for details.

"More broadly, China is committed to working with the Maldives to build a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership," she said. "Normal cooperation between China and the Maldives does not target any third party and will not be disrupted by any third party" Mao said. Her statement came a day after China signed a defence cooperation agreement with the Maldives to provide free military assistance to foster "stronger" ties weeks after President Mohamed Muizz set a deadline for the withdrawal of the first group of Indian military personnel to leave the island nation.



Residents flee as the government declared state of emergency amid violence, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Tuesday. Reuters

In Haiti, violence leaves thousands homeless

REUTERS
PORT-AU-PRINCE, MARCH 5

RAGING VIOLENCE in Haiti triggered by a top gang leader's push to overthrow the prime minister has forced more than 15,000 people to flee their homes, many of which have been destroyed.

"Armed gangs forced us to

leave our homes. They destroyed our houses, and we're on the streets," said Nicolas, who is living in a camp after abandoning his home, sleeping in such cramped conditions he says he feels like an animal.

The situation escalated over the weekend with Prime Minister Ariel Henry's trip to Kenya to tie up a deal for the de-

ployment of foreign troops in Haiti. On Sunday, Haiti's government declared a state of emergency after inmates escaped in two major prison breaks and heavy gunfire spread across the capital. Henry's arrival date back in Haiti remains unclear.

Meanwhile, multiple embassies have recalled their staff and neighboring Dominican

Republic has said it will never accept setting up refugee camps.

The United Nations' immigration office said during the weekend at least 15,000 people had been displaced due to violence. Since Henry came to power after the assassination of Haiti's last president in 2021, violent gangs have expanded their territory.

Super Tuesday contests
poised to move Trump,
Biden closer to rematchASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, MARCH 5

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump are poised to move much closer to winning their party's nominations during the biggest day of the primary campaign on Tuesday, setting up a historic rematch that many voters would rather not endure.

Super Tuesday elections are being held in 16 states and one territory — from Alaska and California to Vermont and Virginia. Hundreds of delegates are at stake, the biggest haul for either party on any single day.

While much of the focus is on the presidential race, there are also important down-ballot contests. California voters will choose candidates who will compete to fill the Senate seat long held by Dianne Feinstein. The governor's race will take shape in North Carolina, a state

that both parties are fiercely contesting ahead of November. And in Los Angeles, a progressive prosecutor is attempting to fend off an intense reelection challenge in a race that could serve as a barometer of the politics of crime. But the premier races center on Biden and Trump.

And in a dramatic departure from past Super Tuesdays, both the Democratic and Republican contests are effectively sealed this year. The two men have easily repelled challengers in the opening

rounds of the campaign and are in full command of their bids — despite polls making it clear that voters don't want this year's general election to be identical to the 2020 race.

Neither Trump nor Biden will be able to formally clinch their party's nominations on Super Tuesday.

The earliest either can become his party's presumptive nominee is March 12 for Trump and March 19 for Biden.

RACE FOR
THE WHITE
HOUSE

rounds of the campaign and are in full command of their bids — despite polls making it clear that voters don't want this year's general election to be identical to the 2020 race.

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The earliest either can become his party's presumptive nominee is March 12 for Trump and March 19 for Biden.

Ukraine war: German officer used hotel Wi-Fi
for conference call, Russia hacked & leaked itASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, MARCH 5

A GERMAN military officer used an unsecured phone line at a Singapore hotel to join a conference call that was hacked by Russians and leaked to the public, Germany's defense minister said Tuesday.

The fallout from the leaked audio tape, which features four high-ranking German air force officers discussing hypothetically how Taurus long-range cruise missiles

could be used by Kyiv against Russian forces, has embarrassed the German government and further increased tensions between the two countries. "Not all participants adhered to the secure dialing procedure as intended," German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said as he briefed reporters in Berlin on the initial results of an ongoing investigation.

The minister said that the officer in question, whose name he did not give, had participated in the Singapore Air Show, which was attended by high-ranking

military officers from across Europe, and then dialed into the WebEx call using the hotel's Wi-Fi but not a secured line as is considered mandatory for such calls.

"For the Russian secret services, it was a real find... Targeted hacking took place in the hotels used across the board," Pistorius said. "It must therefore be assumed that the access to this (phone) conference was a chance hit." Pistorius said the investigation was ongoing, overall security had been increased and prelimi-

nary disciplinary proceedings were being considered, but that severe personal consequences were unlikely.

"I will not sacrifice any of my best officers to Putin's games, to put it very clearly," he said, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The 38-minute audio leak was posted by Margarita Simonyan, chief editor of the Russian state-funded television channel RT, on social media on Friday, the same day that Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was laid to rest.

Prachanda, a former guerilla leader, forged a new alliance with

the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) — the second-biggest party — led by former premier KP Sharma Oli on Monday following which three ministers took the oath of office.

After forming the new alliance on Monday, the four political parties reached an 8-point agreement. As per the deal, the four parties have agreed to support the Maoist Centre candidate in the election of the National Assembly chair while they will back a UML candidate for the vice-chair.

As the power-sharing deal

among the members of the ruling alliance could not be materialised, Prime Minister Prachanda failed to distribute ministerial portfolios to the cabinet members even 24 hours after the new alliance government was formed. The four parties have a combined strength of 142 seats. "we are trying to include other smaller parties including CPN-Unified Socialist (10), Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (6), in the alliance to get a comfortable majority," Bishnu Rijal, central member of CPN-UML, told PTI.

The Shenyang where Shuang was born in 1983 was the biggest city in China's most urbanized, prosperous region. State-backed factories churned out steel and heavy machinery, and their workers basked in the promise of lifelong job security. Shuang's parents dropped him off each day at the factory preschool; the 7,000 employees enjoyed a factory hospital, movie theater and auditorium.

Then, in the 1990s, as Chinese leaders began allowing private companies to compete with the state-run behemoths, that idyllic collapsed. Shuang's mother began peddling tea eggs on the street. Determined to earn a steady income, Shuang studied law at university, then joined a bank. But he soon grew bored. As a teenager, he had found solace in Ernest Hemingway's and J.D. Salinger's lost young men. He started writing secretly at night, about his own lost young men.

Shuang's prose is vernacular, and he doesn't shy away from the unsavory choices his characters make to survive. There are murderers and drunks. Shuang is not religious, but he said he was fascinated by believers' searches for meaning. NYT

SHUANG XUETAO CHRONICLES A TRAUMATIC CHAPTER OF CHINESE HISTORY: THE MASS LAYOFFS IN ITS NORTH-EAST IN 1990S
Murder and magic realism: A rising literary star mines China's rust beltVIVIAN WANG
MARCH 5

FOR A long time during Shuang Xuetao's early teenage years, he wondered what hidden disaster had befallen his family.

His parents — proud workers at a tractor factory in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang — stopped going to work, and the family moved into an empty factory storage room to save money on rent. But they rarely talked about what had happened, and Shuang worried that some special shame had struck his family alone.

It was not until later that he learned about the mass layoffs

that swept northeastern China in the 1990s, during the country's shift from a planned economy toward a market-based one. The region had been China's industrial heartland, but suddenly millions of laborers were left unemployed. Crime and poverty rose. Even today, the region, sometimes called China's Rust Belt, has not fully recovered.

The legacy of that communal suffering animates the writing of Shuang, now 40 and one of China's most celebrated young authors. For his short stories chronicling the economic decline of his hometown, and the mass disillusionment that followed, he has been hailed for bringing attention to a time and people that China's public imagination had long written off.

His stories also dwell on individuals' isolation within that collective experience. His characters disappear from their neighbors' lives without saying goodbye, or



Shuang Xuetao is one of China's celebrated young authors. NYT

in one of his trademark magical realist twists, they trek through the northeast's heavy blizzards and find themselves in a cell at the bottom of a lake.

The question of how to understand the region's history has become especially relevant lately, as a wave of art about the northeast, known in Mandarin as Dongbei, has found widespread popularity. A television drama about a faded factory town was China's top-rated show last year, and songs by Dongbei musicians have gone viral. Last month, Shuang published a new story collection, and a star-studded film adaptation of one of his novellas is due this year.

Cultural commentators have

declared a "Dongbei Renaissance." Some have suggested that young people see resonance between that time and China's current economic slump.

The Shenyang where Shuang was born in 1983 was the biggest city in China's most urbanized, prosperous region. State-backed factories churned out steel and heavy machinery, and their workers basked in the promise of lifelong job security. Shuang's parents dropped him off each day at the factory preschool; the 7,000 employees enjoyed a factory hospital, movie theater and auditorium. Then, in the 1990s, as Chinese leaders began allowing private companies to compete with the state-run behemoths, that idyllic collapsed. Shuang's mother began peddling tea eggs on the street. Determined to earn a steady income, Shuang studied law at university, then joined a bank. But he soon grew bored. As a teenager, he had found solace in Ernest Hemingway's and J.D. Salinger's lost young men. He started writing secretly at night, about his own lost young men.

Shuang's prose is vernacular, and he doesn't shy away from the unsavory choices his characters make to survive. There are murderers and drunks. Shuang is not religious, but he said he was fascinated by believers' searches for meaning. NYT

IMRAN'S PARTY PLANS MARCH 10 PROTESTS
Shehbaz orders talks with IMF to tide over Pak crisis

We have got the mandate to improve economy: New PM



MARYAM AS PAK PUNJAB CM A MILESTONE: U.S.

Washington: The selection of Maryam Nawaz as the chief minister of the Pakistan Punjab province is a milestone in Pakistani politics, the US has said, asserting that it looks forward to cooperating with Islamabad on integrating women more fully into the country's political life. PTI

Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) president on Monday posted in Urdu on X that a few hours af-

ter the swearing-in of Prime Minister Sharif, a meeting was held regarding "the restoration of the country's economy". He was briefed by the finance secretary on the occasion.

"We have got the mandate to improve the economy of the country and that is the top priority of our government. Our government will work hard to promote investment in the country and provide facilities to the business community," he said. Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) came second in the February 8 elections. However, his party, along with the PPP formed a coalition government with the help of several other parties.

PTI party on Tuesday announced that it will launch nationwide protests on March 10 against the "stealing" of the mandate. "We will unite all political forces and will launch a movement within the law and Constitution," said former National Assembly speaker and senior PTI leader Asad Qaiser.

19

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2024

ECONOMY

SENSEX: 73,677.13 ▼ 195.16 (0.26%) NIFTY: 22,356.30 ▼ 49.30 (0.22%) NIKKEI: 40,097.63 ▼ 11.60 HANG SENG: 16,162.64 ▼ 433.33 FTSE: 7,639.43 ▼ 0.90 DAX: 17,711.54 ▼ 4.63



GOLD

₹65,000



USD RATE

₹82.89



OIL

\$83.88



SILVER

₹74,900

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of March 4

International market data till 1900 IST

SECTOR WATCH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Govt's AI advisory: What to make of the clarification amid a backlash?

SOUMYARENDRA
BARIK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

AFTER SEVERE backlash, the Centre has clarified that its advisory for generative artificial intelligence (AI) services was directed towards "significant" platforms and not start-ups. The clarification helped calm some nerves, but also pointed towards some of the pitfalls in the commentary that emerged from the fallout.

On Monday, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in a post on X: "(The) advisory is aimed at the significant platforms and permission seeking from MeitY is only for large platforms and will not apply to start-ups... it is aimed at untested AI platforms from deploying on the Indian Internet."

He added that the process of seeking permission, labelling of platforms that are under testing and consent-based disclosure to users is an "insurance policy to platforms who can otherwise be sued by consumers".

What the advisory said

With Lok Sabha elections set to be announced soon, the IT Ministry had on Friday sent an advisory to generative AI companies like Google and OpenAI and to those running such platforms — including foundational models and wrappers — that their services should not generate responses that are illegal under Indian laws or "threaten the integrity of the electoral process".

Platforms that currently offer "under-testing/unreliable" AI systems or large language models to Indian users must explicitly seek permission from the Centre before doing so and appropriately label the possible and inherent "fallibility or unreliability of the output generated".

The advisory had faced backlash from some startups

in the generative AI space, including those invested in the ecosystem abroad, over fears of regulatory overreach of the yet nascent industry by the Indian government.

Aravind Srinivas, founder of Perplexity AI, called the advisory a "bad move by India", while Martin Casado, general partner at the US-based investment firm Andreessen Horowitz, had termed the move a "tragedy", which was "anti-innovation" and "anti-public".

Why both the government and its detractors could be missing the mark

Following the clarification, the crux of the advisory seems quite clear: it appears to be more of a tool of political messaging than something that could have any consequential legal ramifications.

With the advisory, the government attempted to send a message that it was willing to play an arbiter's role to protect Indian internet users from some of the pitfalls of generative AI platforms — even if its actual effectiveness or legal basis remained unclear.

What seems to have ticked off a lot of people was the requirement to seek government approval before deploying "untested" AI services in India, there was also something missing in the commentary from those questioning the intent of the government: very few of them, at least publicly, actually acknowledge the problems that accompany such services, and why missing the regulatory bus here — especially for a country of India's proportions — could be counterproductive.

As most matters of policymaking go, here too, the solution will need to lie in the middle, with lawmakers and companies having to make tradeoffs.

**FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com**

THE INCLUSION WILL HAPPEN FROM JANUARY 31, 2025

After JP Morgan, Bloomberg to include Indian bonds in EM index

HITESH VYAS

MUMBAI, MARCH 5

AFTER JP Morgan Chase & Co, Bloomberg on Tuesday announced inclusion of Indian bonds in the Bloomberg Emerging Market (EM) Local Currency Government Index and related indices from January 31, 2025.

The inclusion of India Fully Accessible Route (FAR) bonds in the Bloomberg EM indices will happen in a phased manner spread over a ten-month period, it said.

Last year in September, JP Morgan Chase & Co announced the inclusion of Indian government bonds to JP Morgan GBI-EM Global index. The inclusion will be staggered over a 10-month period starting June 28, 2024, through March 31, 2025, JP Morgan had said. "India's FAR bonds will be included in the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index, the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index 10% Country Capped Index, and all related sub-indices.

According to Michael R Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg, the inclusion is a reflection of India's growing importance to the global economy.



India is expected to join China and South Korea as markets that reach the 10 per cent cap. File

percent of their full market value every month over the ten-month period ending in October 2025, at which point they will be weighted at their full market value in the indices, Bloomberg said.

The indices in scope for inclusion include the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index, the Bloomberg EM Local Currency Government Index 10% Country Capped Index, and all related sub-indices.

Once completely phased into the Bloomberg Emerging Market 10 per cent Country Capped Index, India is expected to join both China and South Korea as markets that reach the 10 per cent cap. Within the market cap weighted version of the index, India is expected to be the third

tance to the global economy. "India's continued emergence as a global financial center promises to be one of the most significant economic developments of this decade, and Bloomberg is committed to bolstering it by connecting more investors to India," he said.

Once completely phased into the Bloomberg Emerging Market 10 per cent Country Capped Index, India is expected to join both China and South Korea as markets that reach the 10 per cent cap. Within the market cap weighted version of the index, India is expected to be the third

largest country after China and South Korea.

Using data as of January 31, 2024, the index would include 34 Indian securities and represent 7.26 per cent of a \$6.18 trillion index on a market value weighted basis, Bloomberg said.

Bloomberg indices will create an ex-India version of the EM Local Currency Government Index and can also create other standard and custom versions of the index.

Inclusion of domestic bonds to global indices will help bring in dollar inflows into India and ensure a stable financing of the current account gap of the country.

After JP Morgan had announced inclusion of Indian bonds to its emerging markets bond index, analysts had estimated a direct inflow of around \$20-25 billion into the country over the next two years.

"Inclusion of India in the Bloomberg Bond Index is expected to attract investment exceeding \$5 billion. This comes on top of the expected investment of around \$20 billion in the JP Morgan EM Bond Fund," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

FTA talks: India begins hard bargain on non-tariff barriers with European Union

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN AN effort to get non-tariff barriers eliminated in the ongoing free trade agreement negotiations with the European Union, Indian negotiators have prepared an elaborate list of such roadblocks in key sectors such as pharma, engineering, electrical and agri items and have begun taking it up with their European counterparts, two people aware of the developed told *The Indian Express*.

This comes as India-EU concluded their seventh round of negotiations last month dealing with goods, services, market access, investment protection agreement (IPA) and a separate proposed pact on geographical indications (GIs). India and the EU had relaunched the negotiations in May 2021 after a gap of over nine years, at a time when western firms are looking at India as an alternate supply chain source to China.

The talks on non-tariff barriers (NTB) come in a backdrop of multiple environment and labour regulations brought by EU such as Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Deforestation-free Regulation (EUDR) which is threatening to obstruct about 8 to 10 per cent of the Indian agri, steel and aluminium exports going into the 27-bloc union.

Barring Indian petroleum exports, India's exports to EU — a key trading partner — have seen little gain over the last five years largely due to a slew of non-tariff barriers in tea, agriculture, engineering and electronic items.

"The problem is that what we call the non-tariff barriers are referred to by them as non-tariff measures. They say that as a society we have high standards. Sometimes these standards are at par with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and sometimes they are WTO plus. They say that it's an internal lookout that EU manufacturers are subjected to those high standards and are not meant to target India," senior government official said.

**FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com**

Google allows Indian apps back on Play Store temporarily

New Delhi: Google will temporarily reinstate all Indian apps that it had removed from its Play Store along with their billing systems, the company said on Tuesday, marking a momentary break in the fallout between the firm and the country's start-ups. The company will continue to raise invoices for the service fee these apps owe but will seek that at a later date which it has not clarified.

Google's statement came after a meeting with IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw where impacted start-ups were also present. "We have spoken to both Google as well as the startup community. Google has agreed to re-list the apps with the same status as on Friday, 1st March, 2024. Google and India's startup community will engage with each other to find a long-term solution to all issues in consonance with India's legal framework..." Vaishnaw said in a statement. **ENS**

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As most matters of policymaking go, here too, the solution will need to lie in the middle, with lawmakers and companies having to make tradeoffs.

**FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com**

RBI bans JM Financial Products from financing against shares, debentures

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, MARCH 5

THE RESERVE Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday barred JM Financial Products Ltd (JMPL) from financing against shares and debentures, including sanction and disbursal of loans against initial public offering (IPO) of shares as well as against subscription to debentures.

The RBI said the action was necessitated due to certain serious deficiencies observed in respect of loans sanctioned by JMPL, is a systematically important non-deposit taking non-banking financial company (NBFC) for IPO financing as well as non-convertible debentures (NCD) subscriptions.

The RBI carried out a limited review of the books of the company on the basis of the information shared by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

"During the limited review it was observed that the company (JMPL) repeatedly helped a

group of its customers to bid for various IPO and NCD offerings by using loaned funds," the RBI said in a release.

The banking regulator also found the credit underwriting was perfunctory, and financing was done against meagre margins.

The application for subscription, the demat accounts and the bank accounts, all were operated by the company using a power of attorney (POA) and a master

agreement obtained from these customers without their involvement, whatsoever, in the subsequent operations.

"Consequently, the company (JMPL) was able to effectively act as both lender as well as borrower. The company also acted as the arranger of bank account opening as well as operator of the said bank accounts using the POA," the release said.

The RBI said that apart from being in violation of regulatory guidelines, there were serious concerns on governance issues in JMPL, which are detrimental to the interest of the customers.

The regulator is separately examining the regulatory violations and deficiencies, if any, on the part of the bank(s) in this regard. The business restrictions imposed on JMPL will be reviewed upon the completion of a special audit to be instituted by the RBI and after rectification of the deficiencies to the satisfaction of the regulator.

The application for subscription, the demat accounts and the bank accounts, all were operated by the company using a power of attorney (POA) and a master

gold loan business amounted to Rs 24,692 crore, which is 32 per cent of the overall asset under management of Rs 77,444 crore as of December 2023. IIFL Finance has over 2,721 dedicated gold loan branches spread across 25 states and Union territories, manned by 15,000 employees.

On Monday, the RBI said certain material supervisory concerns were observed in the gold loan portfolio of the company, including serious deviations in assaying and certifying purity and net weight of the gold at the time of sanction of loans and at the time of auction upon default.

The RBI also noticed breaches in Loan-to-Value ratio, significant disbursements and collection of loan amount in cash far in excess of the statutory limit, non-adherence to the standard auction process and lack of transparency in charges being levied to customer accounts.

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, MARCH 5

A DAY after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday barred IIFL Finance Ltd from sanctioning or disbursing gold loans or assigning or securitising or selling any of its gold loans in the wake of several regulatory violations by the company, shares of the company crashed by 20 per cent to Rs 478.50 on the stock exchanges on Tuesday.

In its December quarter investor presentation, the company said it's among top two NBFCs in the country in the gold loans segment, having grown at a five-year CAGR of 39 per cent over FY2019-23. The RBI ban is likely to impact its business as nearly one-third of its business is from the gold loan segment," said an analyst with the company.

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Singapore's competition watchdog approves Air India-Vistara merger, but with riders

SUKALP SHARMA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

SINGAPORE'S COMPETITION watchdog Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) Tuesday granted its conditional approval to the proposed merger between Air India and Vistara, the latter being a joint venture between Tata (51 per cent stake) and Singapore Airlines (49 per cent). The Competition Commission of India (CCI) had approved the merger in September and the CCCS's nod was among the last pending competition-related approvals for the merger.

The CCCS had identified some competition concerns pertaining to the merger, specifically the majority market share Singapore Airlines, Air India, and Vistara cumulatively hold on four direct flight routes between Singapore and India—from Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Tiruchirappalli. The airlines have given capacity-related commitments to the CCCS to address its concerns, and the approval is contingent upon the commitments.

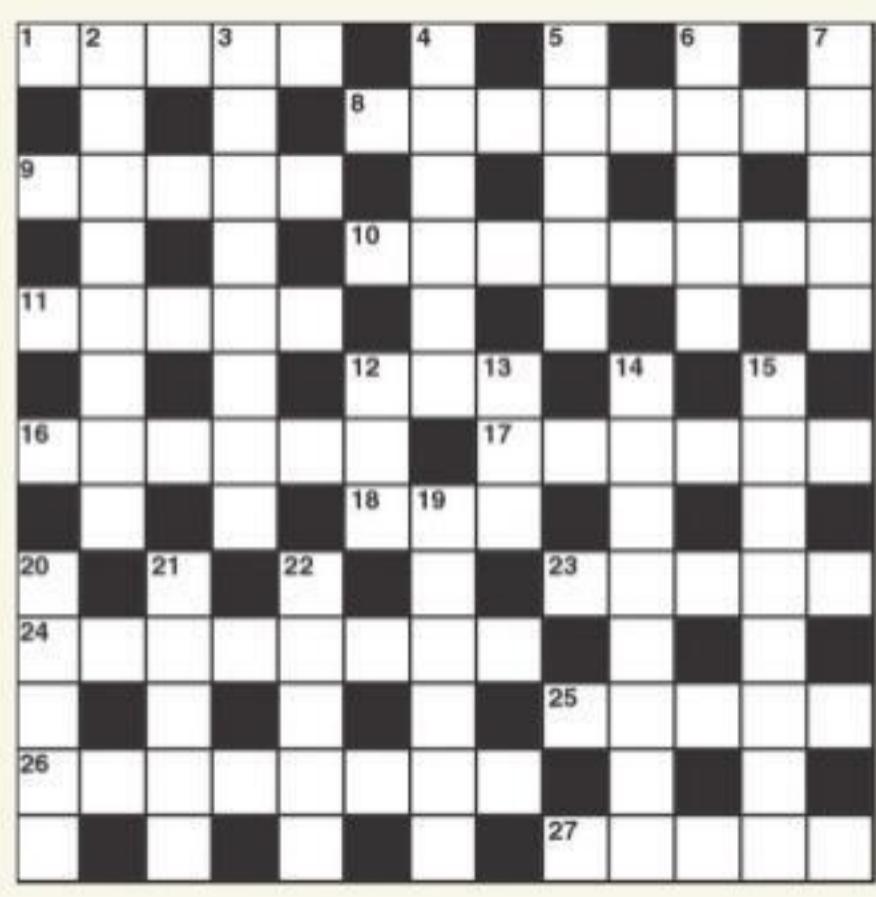
"Even though a number of competing airlines provide air passenger transport services on these routes, the parties have

sustained substantial market share in recent years. CCCS also found that the price and capacity coordination between the parties arising from the confluence of the transactions would significantly restrict competition on the affected routes," Singapore's competition watchdog said in a statement.

The commitments given by the airlines include keeping deployed capacity on these four routes at 2019 levels, and appointing an independent auditor who will monitor compliance with the committed capacity levels for every three weeks of non-fulfilment in a report year," the CCCS said.

From December 8 to February 1, the CCCS conducted a market testing exercise on whether the proposed commitments "would sufficiently address the competition concerns". According to the regulator, most relevant stakeholders did not raise any concerns with the commitments, except for one who made suggestions to refine the commitments. <

CROSSWORD 5305



CROSS
1 Criticism upsets Mabel (5)
8 Excellent act deserving an encore (4,4)
9 Keep away; there's nothing to get greedy about (5)
10 Hold a show trial (8)
11 Unusually staid entrances (5)
12 A quiet work in the charts? Probably not (3)
16 Object I've put into the salad (6)
17 News about wine (6)
18 I turn out otherwise in Brazil (3)
23 One keeping careful watch in misuse of sugar (5)
24 This sort of clue is included in the French game (8)
25 A blow for Conservatives (5)
26 Rows about stray dogs (8)
27 Three animals in the lead (5)

DOWN
2 Romance over for sweetheart (5,3)
3 Claim is not commonly seen in the main (8)
4 Additionally morose maybe (4,2)
5 A summer snake (5)
6 Change of route that means deviating from normal (5)
7 Table of contents gets Enid upset and cross (5)
12 For each childless person (3)
13 Not against a professional (3)
14 It proves wildly frolicsome (8)
15 Should doctors go around in very dry periods? (8)
19 New rents I introduce (6)
20 South American flower of unusual petal design (5)
21 Cut a number (5)
22 Concrete idols get shattered (5)

Solutions Crossword 5304 Across: 1 Lock-keeper, 6 Fine, 10 Green, 11 Greetings, 12 Straight, 13 Lures, 15 Strewed, 17 Reactor, 19 Custard, 21 Nitrate, 22 Offal, 24 Sicklist, 27 Offensive, 28 Irony, 29 Yo-yo, 30 Aggregates Down: 1 Logs, 2 Creatures, 3 Kenya, 4 Engaged, 5 Erector, 7 Inner, 8 Easy Street, 9 Stalwart, 14 Psychology, 16 Weaklink, 18 Transport, 20 Dashing, 21 Nuclear, 23 Fifty, 25 Lying, 26 Eyes.

JUMBLE WORDS

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

(7) — is a sort of fever in the mind, which ever leaves us weaker than it found us. — William Penn

IMXAO ATXYNS DDEENP

ELWIS

SOLUTION: AXIOM WILLIS SNTAX DEPENDS

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



Difficulty Level 4

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

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 5492



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Make the most of friendly business planets, and cash in on current goodwill. You must believe that new opportunities are there for you and should act now to broaden your social contacts and encourage new connections. Only when partners agree will you be free to act.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23) You may feel reasonably justified in expecting a response to a recent interview or at the very least an answer to an important question. However, planetary activity over the coming days is due to muddy the waters even further.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Any changes that you are anxious to put into effect may people than at first thought. This is why you must grit your teeth and discuss even your personal plans with friends and acquaintances. On the other hand, when partners are so reluctant, do you really need their support?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

It is at the most trivial level that your grand plans are capable of coming unstuck. So, issues of principle are all very well, but you would be advised to focus on routine and mundane details. Plus, there'll be time enough for flights of fancy next month.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

RESTLESS conditions may make it difficult to settle down, so it may be better to get around and explore fresh possibilities. Is there a legal complication to resolve? If so, get on to it without delay. Even though you have strong opinions, by the way, that doesn't mean that you're right.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The whole mood of the day encourages formal settings, traditional behaviour and conservative values, so do try to fit in. It may even be fun to enter into the fantasy of living in a past age. Over the next few months, you'll be growing ever more nostalgic for the past.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Long-standing money problems may be coming home to roost. Yet rather than feel sorry for yourself, or dwell on what might have been, adopt an attitude of business as usual and compensate for any losses. You are well on the way to a surprise success.

PICTURES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

WHETHER your concerns are professional or strictly private do not expect life to run smoothly today. Even if you do your best, someone else is bound to come along and stir things up, defeating all your efforts to restore peace and harmony, but only until you recover your composure.

CORPORATE BRIEFS

WORKSHOP — SCOPE

SCOPE in association with Competition Commission of India organized a workshop on 'Public Procurement: Issues & Challenges and Sharing of Experiences of Best Practices,' which was inaugurated by Smt. Ravneet Kaur, Chairperson, CCI in the presence of Ms. A Anand, Secy, CCI & Atul Sobti, DG, SCOPE in Shillong, Meghalaya. Senior officials from CCI, GeM & various PSEs across the country were also present. The meet was attended by 85 participants of 31 PSEs from diverse sectors. In her inaugural address, Smt. Ravneet Kaur said that amidst globalisation, the need for a robust market system that supports competition & also discourages any anti-competitive practices has been magnified, & the aim of Competition Law is to create an ecosystem where competition thrives.



LOGO TO MARK 75 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC TIES BETWEEN INDIA & FINLAND

A second-year student of the Sonipat-based World University of Design had emerged as the winner of the logo-design challenge organized by the Embassy of Finland, to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Nordic country & India. More than 40 talented students from the varsity responded to the challenge, contributing over 70 designs. Ambassador Kimmo Lähdervirta personally approached the University to run the challenge with their talented students. Graphic Designer Pia Kaikonen & 2nd Secretary Rauli Kostamo from the embassy gave the brief to the students encouraging them to explore & highlight any aspect of the longstanding & multifaceted relationship between the two countries. Aman Narayan won the contest & was honored with a prize of Rs 50,000 at the Embassy of Finland.



BEST RISING COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD PRESENTED TO GSL

Nikhil Mukund Wagh, Public Relations Goa Shipyard Ltd has been recently presented with the "Best Rising Communicator of The Year Award" by the Media Federation of India. This award was received from a renowned international media personality Dr. Sandeep Marwah and the National President of Media Federation of India Arun Sharma. Distinguished TV Journalists, including Rubika Liyat from news18 India, Shrivardhan Trivedi from ABP News, & Sayeed Ansari of Aaj Tak were among the esteemed recipients of the award for their contribution to the media field. The coveted award in recognition of GSL's persistent effort in the field of Public Relations is applauded.



SMPP — DEFENCE DELEGATION VISIT TO ZAMBIA

Indian Defence delegation paid a courtesy call on Minister of Commerce, Trade & Industry of Zambia, Chipoka Mulenga. MIL, BEL, Bharat Forge and SMPP are part of the delegation. Joining the distinguished Indian Defense delegation for a courtesy call with Zambia's Hon. Minister of Commerce, Trade & Industry, Chipoka Mulenga, was an exciting event for SMPP. Numerous conversations demonstrated the two nations' dedication to international cooperation.



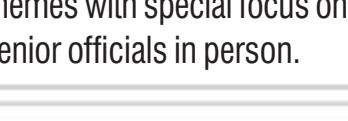
EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS IN THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

On February 25, 2024, Belarusians elected 110 deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the eighth convocation & 12,514 deputies of local councils of deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation. Registration of candidates for deputies ended on 30 January. The campaigning period lasted from 31 January to 24 February. The newly-elected House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus is set to hold its first meeting in the second half of March. The agenda of the session will include the election of the speaker and the formation of standing committees and working bodies of the House of Representatives.



SESSION — SCOPE

As part of furthering its capacity building interventions & creating unique opportunities of dialogue, SCOPE organized an interactive session between EPFO & Public Sector Enterprises at SCOPE Complex, New Delhi. Atul Sobti DG, SCOPE; Brajesh Kumar Upadhyay, Vice Chairman, SCOPE & CMD, Goa Shipyard Ltd. and EPFO team led by RM Meena, ACC (HQ) addressed the session. The engaging interactive session between PSEs & EPFO officials was also webcasted live, & deliberated upon fostering a transparent, collaborative approach in managing employee welfare schemes with special focus on EPS 95. The session was participated by over 1000 participants virtually & 150 Senior officials in person.



DIVIDEND — LIC

Siddhartha Mohanty, Chairperson, LIC, presented the cheque of Rs.2,441,44,91,- 124/- being Interim Dividend to Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister. Dr. Vivek Joshi, Secy, Financial Services, M/o Finance, GOI, MP Tangirala, Additional Secy., Financial Services, M/o Finance, GOI were present along with J.P.S.Bajaj, ZM (I/C), Northern Zone on this occasion.



FESTIVAL — HUDCO

Under the Chairmanship of Sanjay Kulreshtha, CMD, HUDCO, a two-day 'Official Language Festival & Exhibition' was organized by the Nagar Rajbhasha Implementation Committee (NARAKAS), Delhi, PSU-2, jointly with member offices (DMRC, ITPO, EESL, NEEPCO, AIC & FCI, Regional Office, Delhi) recently at the Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi.



INSPECTION — NHSLCL

Vivek Kumar Gupta, Managing Director/NHSLCL, inspected the bullet train construction sites in Surat including casting yard, under construction Surat bullet train station, steel bridge launching sites & track construction activities".



POWER FOUNDATION OF INDIA organized a conference on "Distributed Renewable Energy for Sustainable Development" at The Ashok, New Delhi, recently. The Conference was organized in collaboration with Climate Policy Initiative. The Conference brought together key stakeholders from the Government, Private & Public sectors, & policy think tanks. Notable participants included BS Bhalla, Secy, M/o NRE, SCL Das, Secy, M/o MSME, Gurdeep Singh, CMD, NTPC & Dr. Tripta Thakur, DG, NPTI.

RUSSIAN EMBASSY IN INDIA invites all citizens of Russia, permanently residing or temporarily residing in the territory of India, to participate in the elections of the President of the Russian Federation at the polling stations established by the Embassy & Consulates-General of Russia in India. The voting will take place on March 17, 2024, from 8:00 to 20:00 hrs. It is necessary to have an original document certifying the identity of a Russian citizen.

SECI successfully commissioned India's largest Battery Energy Storage System with an installed capacity of 152.325 megawatt per hour (MWh) & dispatchable capacity of 100 MW AC (155.02 MWp DC) solar photovoltaic plant with 40 megawatts (MW)/120MW BESS in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh. The offtaker of the power is the state of Chhattisgarh which will contribute towards meeting its peak energy demand using green electrons & to contribute towards its renewable purchase obligations. The solar PV with battery project signals a monumental leap forward in renewable energy generation and its use.

Ice Make Refrigeration announced a significant 23.50% increase in its consolidated revenue for Q3FY24, reaching Rs 82.52 cr compared to Rs 66.81 cr in the same period last fiscal yr. Standalone revenue also saw a substantial rise, increasing by 28% to Rs 81.75 cr. However, despite the impressive revenue growth, the company witnessed a decline in quarterly consolidated net profit for Q3FY24, primarily due to change in sales mix; some big project and low margin vertical contribution in top line are substantial in Q3FY24, which stood at Rs 2.01 cr compared to Rs 4.43 cr in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal yr. Standalone profit for the quarter was reported at Rs 2.21 cr compared to Rs 4.45 cr in FY23.

WPL: Lanning, Jemimah star as DC thrash MI

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN A pre-tournament video where WPL captains are made to pick a chit and ask each other questions, Alyssa Healy is told to pick between **Meg Lanning's** square cut or Smriti Mandhana's cover drive. "If I could bottle both, that would be great," she says. Speaking to this daily after Lanning's retirement, Aussie legend Lisa Sthalekar had no hesitation in saying "You can't go past that square drive of hers" when asked what she'd remember the most about Lanning's career.

Her international career might be behind her now, but Lanning showed on Tuesday night at the Arun Jaitly Stadium just how good her game on the offside is. During her 38-ball 55 against Mumbai Indians, Lanning peppered the offside boundary during a clinic on finding gaps. However, Jemimah Rodrigues' knock later on managed to overshadow Lanning's genius.

Lanning's artwork

Riding on those two knocks, Delhi Capitals posted 192/4 as Lanning's DC handed MI their first-ever defeat while chasing in the WPL, as Harmanpreet Kaur and Co were restricted to 163/8 and lost by 29 runs.

Three shots by Lanning in the 12th over bowled by leg-spinner Amelia Kerr can be preserved in a cricket museum. With the fielders stationed inside the ring, Lanning rocked back to punch one through point.

Four. Now a fielder was pushed back to the fence, but Lanning went aerial this time, a square drive off her front foot. Six. The best was yet to come though, as next ball she pressed forward, then transferred weight to her backfoot, to square-cut. The ball this time went to the left of the deep fielder. Four. Geometric precision that would have made Euclid proud.

Not long after, Rodrigues would go on to play her best knock in the WPL. Starting steadily, as she came into the match with somewhat of a lean run, the Mumbaikar shifted gears steadily. The standout shots of her knock too were square of the wicket on the offside, moving around the crease to use the slice and inside-out drives to great effect. The 33-ball 69* powered DC to a winning total.

The MI chase barely got going as DC struck early and frequently, to break the back of a strong top order. Lanning's team stayed on top of the table while MI suffered their second defeat of the season and slipped to third due to a dip in their Net Run Rate.

Meanwhile, MI's Shabin Ismail bowled a delivery clocked at 132.1 kmph, the fastest ball recorded in women's cricket.

BRIEF SCORES: **Delhi Capitals** 192/4 (Jemimah Rodrigues 69*, Meg Lanning 53) beat **Mumbai Indians** 163/8 (Amanjot Kaur 42; Jess Jonassen 3/21) by 29 runs

21

SPORT

LILLARD LIFTS BUCKS PAST CLIPPERS

Milwaukee: Damian Lillard scored a game-high 41 points to lead the Milwaukee Bucks to a 113-106 victory over the visiting Los Angeles Clippers on Monday. Bobby Portis added 28 points and 16 rebounds off the bench for the Bucks. **REUTERS**

England's Kryptonite

Jasprit Bumrah has demystified the cult of Bazball, crushing their philosophy with his ego, angst and subtle taunt

SANDEEP DWIVEDI
DHARAMSALA, MARCH 5

JASPRIT BUMRAH rarely gives interviews. Even when he does, he rarely opens up. Don't read too much into that ever-present toothy smile, those giggly post-match interviews or his over-polite public school manners. There is more to him.

It's his cryptic posts, candid comments picked by the stump mic, stray thoughts he shares with team mates on long podcasts and insights shared by those close to him that give a better idea about the Real Bumrah — the man responsible for demystifying the cult of Bazball and returning for the final Test after a break.

Under coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes — England seemed to have achieved the impossible. They had convinced their fans, and other stakeholders that entertainment, and not winning, was the true essence of sport. That was until they landed in India and bumped into a proud bowler who had survived early rejections and toxic social media slander to be a one-of-a-kind modern day great pace bowler.

In the early part of the series, for the first-time since they got together, R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja seemed to have been mastered by a touring team. SOS was out, the panic button was about to be pressed. But just in time, Bumrah stepped up. And it wasn't just him quickening his pace and sharpening his skills. What stopped the march of cricket's newest hipsters was the ego and angst of Bumrah.

Polite but proud

Those at Mumbai Indians have seen his growth. They know him pretty well.

"He is the most polite player around and friendly too. But he is a bowler with a big ego. If he gets hit, expect a bouncer soon. He is very sensitive. He in his own silent way knows how to make a point," says a franchise old hand.

This isn't a new trait, it is something he had in him since the time he was just another young boy in Ahmedabad spending his evenings playing tennis ball cricket with friends.

Five years back, while profiling Bumrah, *The Indian Express* had spoken to one of his childhood friends Preet Mehta. He spoke about his pal's usual counter-strike.

"If we hit him for four or six, the next ball would either be a bouncer or beamer," Mehta, an IT professional, had said.

Over the years, he has evolved. At 30, Bumrah is seen as a thinking pacer. He isn't that naïve or one-dimensional to fall back on his oldest weapon, the yorkers, every time he is under pressure. But in this series, there was one yorker that will be remembered for long. It was easily the comeback moment of the series, one that will be talked about for years to come.

After his match-winning 196 at Hyderabad in the first Test, Ollie Pope had given England the momentum. India can



Jasprit Bumrah's dismantling of Ollie Pope, Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow on the second day of the second Test hastened England's series loss. PTI

be intimidated by aggression, believed the England dressing room. The world also saw Stokes as a pioneer, the messiah who had shown the way to those who failed on slow-low turning sub-continent tracks.

India's Man Friday

However, the notion lasted for just a Test. On the second day of the second Test, Bumrah bowled a special spell around tea time. He first shattered Pope's stumps with a reverse swinging yorker that followed the

trajectory that was once famously charted by Waqar Younis. Pope was on 23. Since that dismissal his scoring sequence has been 39, 3, 23, 23, 1.

In a spell that read 6-4-3-3, his other two wickets were Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow. At that point, the series took a turn, India had extinguished the flame that had threatened to burn down their Fort. Bumrah was also making an important point. When fit, he was India's Man Friday. Those doubting him either didn't know

him or hadn't made an effort to.

As is his wont, Bumrah, on that day at Vizag, didn't yell in the face of Pope, Root or Bairstow to tell them how wrong they were in assuming that India had been caged. He was smiling, busy celebrating with his team mates. Even after the game, he preferred to stay dignified. Bumrah believes in pinning his opponent into submission. Rubbing the nose in the ground, that's not his style. His ego would have got hurt after the Hyderabad loss but the sight of flying stumps on the barmy Vizag day had healed it. That's how Bumrah plays his sport.

Making Bazball sweat

Even when he makes a point, Bumrah is subtle.

At Rajkot in the third Test, England were chasing 557 in the fourth innings. The Bazball demon still hadn't been slain, the bravado and swagger hadn't yet left Stokes and his believers.

Opener Ben Duckett had made the outlandish remark of Yashasvi Jaiswal learning attacking cricket from them. James Anderson was taking pains to tell the media that the team's philosophy was still about winning at all costs, that is losing included. He shared with the media that the Baz in Bazball, coach McCullum, had told the team that even if England had to chase 600, they would go for it.

Fate had granted them the wish, at Rajkot they would get a target in that range. But England were unable to walk the talk. They would have a nightmarish start. They were 28/3 and the game was just 11 overs old.

Now Bumrah had Joe Root in front of him. He didn't seem in an adventurous mood. Bumrah, maybe anticipating some Root innovative hit, bowled an off-cutter. The batsman, instead, would defend it. Bumrah was amused, he looked at this captain and said: "Ab toh maar hi nahi raha hai" (They are not looking to hit now).

The voice amplified by the stump mic would reach around the cricketing world. An important statement was being made in the most casual and deferential tones. This was Bumrah passing a judgment — the pulse was low, Bazball was breathing heavily.

During the series, in his moment of triumph, Bumrah would show bitterness, expressing his disappointment in the way he has been treated. It was clear, in his mind, he didn't replace Rohit Sharma as captain. That privilege went to Hardik Pandya, who MI re-drafted from Gujarat Titans. It was around this time, Bumrah would write another puzzling post - "Silence sometimes is the best answer."

A man of few words, Bumrah's real communication with his fans and others is through his bowling. Those yorkers, the kind he got Pope with, are loud and direct taunts to his fickle fans and those doubting his skills. In the final Test here, the pacer has a chance to end debates about commitment and caliber.

Six years back Bumrah had made his Test debut under the Table Mountain to ratte a strong South African batting line-up. Now under the gaze of snowy Dhaula Dhal in Dharamsala, he has a chance to further undermine Bazball's street cred. Flanked by the enchanting yet echoing hills, he can also carefully whisper to the world a reminder that they shouldn't celebrate just his peaks.

Captain arrives in a chopper, visitors feeling at home, & Jadeja preparing for a long innings at Dharamsala

FEELING AT EASE

After their net session, the England players ditched the team bus and took to the road. The pleasant Tuesday morning was perfect for a stroll or jog through the hill town. It was a pleasant surprise for the locals, who got busy taking pictures. The English fans too have been swarming the city and can be seen at pubs and eateries. A group of English fans, not far from the stadium, was getting a feel of rural life. With the help of a farm lady, they were operating the wheeled machine used to cut cattle feed. Around 5,000 English fans are expected in the city during the Test. The conditions are English, the town has English fans; for Ben Stokes and his team, the final match of the series would remind them of home.

ROHIT'S BATTING TIPS

There is a famous video from Sarfaraz Khan's debut Test in Rajkot. As teary father Naushad stands near the boundary rope watching his son get a Test cap, captain Rohit walks up to him. Having played most of his early cricket on Mumbai's maidans, Rohit knows the effort Naushad has put in his son's cricket. He would appreciate Naushad's hard work and shake hands with him. The father would get emotional and say, "Uska dilyan rakhna" (Take care of him). Rohit would nod his head. Today after a long batting stint, Sarfaraz and Rohit were seen having a long chat. The youngster has scores of 62, 68 not out, 14 and 0 in this series. A big knock here can see him cement his place in the Test squad.

BUMRAH'S PITCH PREDICTION
It was a day when every player would get a long batting stint. The bowlers too padded up and faced the throwdown specialists and top pacers. Bumrah, after his bowling spell, started batting. He would be hungrily re-



Rohit Sharma arrives in Dharamsala via helicopter. HPCA

DRAMATIC ENTRY

The serene atmosphere on the foothills of the snow-capped mountain range was disturbed by the whirring sound made by a helicopter's blades. In a first of sorts, India captain Rohit Sharma and coach Rahul Dravid landed for the team's net session in a chopper. The two were special invitees at the Himachal Pradesh khel mohotsav in Bilaspur, about 150 km from here. Sports minister and former BCCI president Anurag Thakur has organised the annual event that attracts thousands of schoolchildren. Rohit, in sharp aviators, would soon join the team for an intense training session. With the

conditions wet and gloomy over the last few days, the players seemed keen to get into the groove ahead of the final Test of the series.

Jasprit Bumrah, returning after skipping the fourth Test, was among the first to reach the nets. For the coldest Test of the series, he took his time to loosen up. He would start by bowling without a run-up. Gradually, he would increase the number of steps and before going to the top of his run-up and bowling at full tilt. Besides the sound of the chopper earlier in the day, the other cracking sound was that of Bumrah's thunderbolt hitting the middle of Shubman Gill's bat.



Sarfaraz Khan at nets ahead of the fifth Test between India and England. PTI

Bumrah is preparing for every eventuality for the fifth Test.

JADEJA'S BATTING HUNGER

Ravindra Jadeja had two batting stints at the nets. Despite the coaches asking him to end his session and others pleading him to move, the all-rounder made a "few more balls" request. Dharamsala is likely to test Jadeja's fitness and flexibility. After the Test in chilly conditions, Jadeja will be moving to dry Chennai for the Super Kings camp. It is not easy being a 3-D player in all three formats.

TEAM DINNER

The Indian team management had organised a last team dinner before the final Test at the team hotel. It's a ritual where each member, alongwith their family members, is invited.

DEVENDRA PANDEY

low as he faced batting coach Vikram Rathore's throwdowns. "I am working to keep out the balls that really keep low," he

says. Was that a clue to the nature of the pitch? This is said to be a slow turner but will have uneven bounce. Even if it wouldn't,

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

DHARAMSALA, MARCH 5

"WE'RE NOT doing anthems so that's a good thing. But it will be an emotional week ... I'm proud, you know what I'm like, an emotional guy so yeah, get the tissues ready," said Jonny Bairstow on the eve of his 100th Test.

Along with India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, Bairstow will be playing his milestone Test in Dharamsala.

His family and friends will also be at the ground to watch the 34-year-old in his special game. His father David committed suicide when Bairstow was just 8 and it was his mother Janet, who brought up his sister and him. Janet also battled breast cancer.

"The strength and courage she's shown to bring us both up, support us through the journey is huge. Without her, we wouldn't be here today," he said. "It's a special occasion for everyone who has been there on the journey, from the guys at the Yorkshire academy through to Baz and the guys here — everyone has had an input," Bairstow said.

Bairstow will become the 17th Englishman to get a 100th Test cap when the fifth and final Test of the series begins on Thursday.

"It means a hell of a lot. Every young kid that sets out on a journey playing professional cricket wants to try and play 100 Test matches. You look back to 2012 when I made my debut at Lord's, if 12 years later you'd said I'd be playing 100 Test matches, you'd snap your hand off for one but also pinch yourself as well," he said.

Bairstow has not had a great run in the series. He does not have a fifty to his name and his highest score in eight innings is 38.

He hasn't scored a Test hundred in over 18 months but came close with an unbeaten 99 against Australia in Manchester last July. Bairstow said he would be gunning for a big score.

"It would be nice... Like in every game, you put your best foot forward. No matter what it is, I'll be going out there, chewing



Jonny Bairstow will become the 17th Englishman to get a 100th Test cap. PTI

my gum, puffing my chest out and trying to have a good time with the other 10 blokes out there. Whatever the situation is, we'll be going out there with smiles on our faces, like we have done in the whole series."

Bairstow was also asked to look back at his career and pick his three favourite Test matches.

"It's difficult. One of my favourite games where we didn't get over the line was the game at Lord's, Strauss' last game which was incredible to be a part of. To play against that South African team at their park was special."

The Cape Town hundred in 2016 was a special time again for the family and myself. Maybe not the first one... it's difficult

EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE: ASHWIN'S WIFE PRITHI ON THE OFF-SPINNER'S JOURNEY TO 100 TESTS

'His unmatched work ethic stands out... be it his YouTube channel or playing chess online'



PRITHI ASHWIN

MY HUSBAND, R Ashwin, is standing on the verge of 100 Tests and our marriage is 98 Tests old. We got married immediately after his debut. Even before leaving for Dharamsala when we were talking, I could only recall a couple of his wickets. Five years ago, I kept a tab of those but after that, the bandwidth reduced. I don't want to be obsessed. The 99 Tests have sped past rapidly.

The lifestyle of a professional cricketer is far different from what people assume it to be from outside. Since there was no dating in our pre-marriage life, he didn't prepare me for married life. As soon as we got married, we were off to Kolkata to play a Test the next day against the West Indies. I wasn't aware there would be so much media attention. I remember this instance when he was tying the wedding Thali (like a mangalsutra), all I could see was photographers around both of us. And we couldn't spot the one we had hired for the wedding. It was the first taste of what it meant to be around a cricketer all the time.

I didn't want the attention that came with this. I was particular about having my identity and didn't want to get into the web where I'd no control over what was happening around me. I was clueless, starting from packing a kit-bag. I knew what a net session was, but didn't know training meant additional gym sessions too!

Since he was part of all three formats, and moving from one city to another, I never felt settled at any place. It's not glamorous. Sure, we are in really nice hotels, but that is pretty much it. The amount of time you get to spend with this person inside that hotel room is very limited and if you are playing at home, you can't think about stepping out. The crazy schedules and all the commitments take a huge toll.

I don't know how much of the fact that I love the game contributed to overcoming it. I know I love him but if I didn't like what he was doing, would I have done what I'm doing today? I don't have a problem putting him first. But I was very unsettled the first

few years, not in the marriage but in how much this profession was taking away from what I could be building with him. First, it was surprise, then shock, then denial. Then it was pure misery. When we had children, I was sacrificing all our time. It took time to understand that if you want to succeed at the highest level, it always comes at a cost, either not spending time with his parents, or with his wife and children.

This sport took over his life from the time he was seven and I took time to realise that sometimes they don't know anything else. There is no fuel in the vehicle to put into another relationship or another presence in your life.

■ ■ ■

It was Covid that really got us together. In a way, it was a blessing in disguise because we all suddenly realised that he is probably never going to play cricket again. So what is our life about? That's probably eight-nine years into a marriage when we really lived together under a roof like a normal couple.

It was during Covid that Ashwin realised that family can also be a part of his life. So he expanded a little bit to give us space which gave him more happiness and stability to deal with a lot of things on the field. That is why he has had a detached attachment over the last few years.

The big turning point in his career was 2017. In March of that year, he told me I'm working on this leg-spin. If it doesn't come off, I will be out. I didn't actually put so much thought into what he said because he was adjudged ICC Player of the Year and ICC Bowler of the Year only a few days ago. And in that 2016/17 home season, he had a stellar performance. But in the middle of the year, he was not part of the white-ball team. Those were really hard days for him.

He is someone who seeks clarity and because that was not there, it was very hard for him. He didn't know if he was dropped or rested. If someone told Ashwin, 'come here, you are not good enough', he would get out and work on it. But when he was not told why he wasn't there, I saw him struggling. And at that point, my plate was full. I had two tiny children. So it was hard for him to actually open up to any of us.

It is probably the only time when he didn't. And he did seek help from outside, going through counselling. There was a tough pe-



Ashwin will become the 14th Indian cricketer to play 100 Tests in Dharamsala this week. PTI

riod and it was something none of us could help him with. And he needed someone who was from the fraternity who could help him. It took him a year to accept that he was not in the scheme of things. After that he was a different person. Not once was he thinking of comebacks, it was always about being on top of his game.

■ ■ ■

While he's very meticulous on the field, off the field, thankfully he isn't! At home, we

are so used to not having him that when he comes in, it feels like someone has come into your space. And it is the same for him. I always tell him that after he retires, we have to figure out how it's going to be. As a father of two children, he is very dutiful. He enjoys school runs with the kids. He has taught them to bat. Maybe after the IPL, he will teach them how to bowl as well. The Tamil film boy he is, has started to spoil them with movies. He has introduced them to all Tamil cult classics and Vadivelu comedy tracks. So when he is at home, the kids get extended

TV time.

Unlike the excitement around his 100th Test, as a family we were very cocooned when he was on 499 wickets. That was because Ashwin did not talk about it. During Rajkot, the kids had just got back from school when five minutes later, he got to 500. And soon, all of us were on the phone answering all the congratulatory messages.

It was then that I heard a sudden scream from aunty as she collapsed, and in no time we were at the hospital. At that point, we had decided not to tell Ashwin because there

wasn't good flight connectivity between Chennai and Rajkot.

So I dialled Cheteshwar Pujara and his family were of great help. And once we found a way out, I called up Ashwin because after the scans, the doctor suggested it was better to have her son around. Over the phone, he sounded so broken and hung up. It took another 20-25 minutes to process what I told him and for him to call back. And thanks to Rohit (Sharma), Rahul (Bhai) (Dravid) and the others in the team and the BCCI — who followed up all the way till he reached here — he got here late at night.

It was a very emotional moment for him to see his mom in the ICU. And after she stabilised, we asked him to rejoin the team. Given his personality, he would never leave a game like that. And he would have an extreme amount of guilt if he didn't win the game for his team. Through those couple of days, I realised his yearning for time with his parents is a lot more now and it is coming with age and maturity.

■ ■ ■

Lately, we are talking about life after retirement every now and then. I think the post-retirement topic becomes very important because whether you like it or not, it will give a certain purpose to life after cricket.

We started talking about it 4-5 years ago that he needed to build a set of hobbies that have nothing to do with the game, because you have to have something else that you love. Over the years, it's become more important that we drive that into him. However, he still hasn't found anything else (laughs).

As he stands on the cusp of a landmark, his unmatched work ethic and unwavering and insatiable commitment stand out. I'm hundred percent sure he got it from his parents and I watch in wonder when he extends that to everything he does — be it his YouTube channel or playing chess online. I write this as we make our way up to Dharamsala and realise what a pleasure it has been. Congratulations Ashwin. We have come through 99 Tests together. We are so proud of all those that you played and those you didn't. It has been a beautiful journey and I hope the rest of it gives you as much happiness.

(Prithi Ashwin is R Ashwin's wife. She spoke to Venkata Krishna B.)

BRIEFLY

Ranji Trophy semis: Vidarbha close in on thrilling win over MP

Nagpur: Vidarbha took command of their Ranji Trophy semifinal with the key wicket of Yash Dubey (94) late on day four as they inched closer to a thrilling victory over Madhya Pradesh here on Tuesday. Heading into the final day on Wednesday, hosts Vidarbha are a mere four wickets away from setting up a date in the summit clash with Mumbai, while Madhya Pradesh, who still need 93 runs to win, will hope their tailenders can produce an inspired fightback. **PTI**

BRIEFSCORES: Vidarbha 170 & 402 in 101.3 overs (Yash Rathod 141; Anubhav Agarwal 5/92) lead Madhya Pradesh 252 and 228/6 in 71 overs (Yash Dubey 94; Akshay Wakhare 3/38) by 93 runs.

CAS clears Halep for immediate return

Geneva: Former Wimbledon and French Open champion Simona Halep had her four-year doping ban cut to nine months by the top court for global sport on Tuesday, making the former world number one eligible to return to competition immediately. Halep was initially banned for four years for two separate anti-doping rule violations. But the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled that her suspension should be reduced to nine months, a period she has already served. **REUTERS**

Pragg beats leader Abdusattarov

Prague: Indian Grandmaster R Pragganandhaa defeated overnight sole leader Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan to stake his claim for the top honours at the Prague Masters chess tournament here. Winning with the black pieces, Pragganandhaa came within striking distance of the sole leader in the ten-player round-robin event that still has three rounds remaining. Things worked out even better for Pragganandhaa as the second-placed Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran went down to Nguyen Thai Dai Van of the Czech Republic. **PTI**

Satwik's net play may need tweaking before Olympics

SHIVANI NAIK

MARCH 5

SATWIKSAIRAJ RANKIREDDY didn't quite know until a hoot of a video interaction about their memes with the Bridge website recently, what the comic-book staple 'kryptonite' implied.



Confidence is their cape. And vulnerabilities don't exactly loom on his and fellow-superson Chirag Shetty's legend easily, as they forge ahead with eternal 'apna time aayega' optimism. In beating Malaysians Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 21-13, 24-22 to kick off the French Open, there was little cause for concern at the Porte de LA Chapelle arena.

Yet, like the jagged, green kryptonite, there is an awkward, pointy part of the formidable Satwik's game, that can suddenly cut short their flying. It's not a particular opponent. And nothing insurmountable for the hugely talented 23-year-old. It might only need the tiniest technical adjustments sorted out by canny coach Mathias Boe. But having lost three consecutive tournament finals at China, Malaysia and India, and with a good chance of running into Aaron-Soh or Kang-Seo in the semis at Paris, the Indians might want to cover their bases against the wretched green thing. It's Satwik's racquet-work at the net, especially playing the angled returns and the round-the-heads.

Like kryptonite, Satwik's shot making at the net only marginally weakens what is an otherwise exceptionally strong and fearsome all-court game. His big smash can shut down every single chirping of any team. His mid-court placement lobs to the opponent's back court, drops and drives are highly dependable as Plan B if he can't rain down pure hailstorm. Perhaps the duo's inimitable and uncounterable combination attack is the S-C 1-2: a thunder smash from Satwik that strains and drains out opponent's defensive wits so much in digging it out, that the Chirag follow-up smash, equally booming, buries all resistance. But time and again, opponents and the game of doubles demand that Satwik is summoned to the net for front court marshalling. That's where the problem begins.

That he even proactively is learning to take charge at the net, and allow Chirag to hover from the back, is a sign of the big beast

willing to step out his comfort zone. No one has an attack as grand as Satwik in the world. The net responsibility even cramps his style. But the Indian pairing is chasing complete well-roundedness and in doing that, the big lad needs to hunker down and go about skirmishing with covering-fire snipes and pokes.

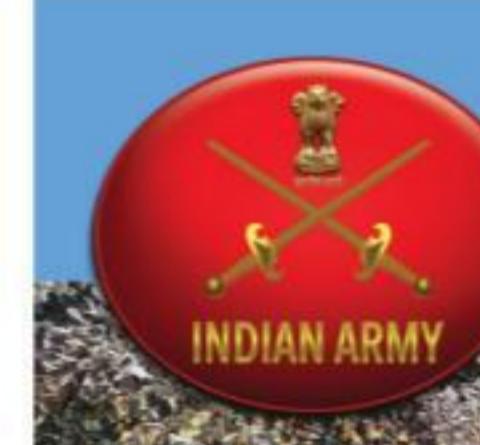
Satwik rolls the racquet for a switch in backhand forehand grip fast enough. The stopper straight racquet backhand blocks, taps and pushes too flow seamlessly. But it's when he's trying to manoeuvre the shuttle around with the forehand in net exchanges, that he can flounder. Either his wrist locks awkwardly or the bird rushes on him as he sticks his racquet out or the wrist can't guide it precisely into gaps.

A very visible difference between Satwik at the net, and someone like Seo Seung-jae or Aaron Chia or even Chirag is their receiving stance. The Koreans and Malaysians as well as Chirag tend to stand diagonal - one foot ahead of the other and the body at an angle. It not only reduces the torque pressures on the body in imparting angles on the shuttle. But the hypotenuse-like playing position also aids quicker lateral striding movement to the back of the court if need be. The diagonally flexible fleet-footedness frees up the floating around the court.

Satwik though, plonks himself at the net with an open stance - both feet firmly in a straight line, parallel to the net. It forces him to contort severely for the round-the-heads at the net which come at him at blitzing pace, and shorten his reaction time window. He scrambles, and gets the shuttle back. But not with venom of power, pace or placement that the net-killers do.

The tall big built shuttler also commits his weight balance to defend at the net. He got into that position with feet parked from 17-11 onwards in the second set, and the Malaysians sniffed a chance. To his credit, in the longest rally at 9-8, it was a Satwik net winner that put India ahead. But the desired mobile half-side-on stance, standing angled at 45 to the net, might give him better court coverage and variety on his stroke options.

Satwik's default setting is attack from the back. And it might only be a matter of confidence before he matches Chirag in scything at the net with the same venom, with tweaks to footwork, and horizontal racquet skills.



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