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Foundation Course 2025

Prelims cum Mains

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ENGLISH MEDIUM

DELHI: 9 FEB, 1 PM | 23 FEB, 9 AM | 28 FEB, 5 PM

AHMEDABAD
8 JAN

BHOPAL
5 APR

CHANDIGARH
5 APR

HYDERABAD
6 MAR

JAIPUR
21 FEB

JODHPUR
21 FEB

LUCKNOW
12 MAR

PUNE
15 MAR

मोपाल
11 जून

जयपुर
21 फरवरी

लखनऊ
5 जून

जोधपुर
21 फरवरी

हिन्दी माध्यम

दिल्ली: 17 जनवरी, 9 AM | 20 फरवरी, 1 PM

FEATURES OF OUR CLASSROOM PROGRAMME



Coverage of GS Prelims, GS Mains, CSAT and Essay syllabus

- Comprehensive syllabus coverage in classes through live interactions with highly experienced and senior faculties.



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- Enhance answer writing with continuous practice, expert evaluation, and personalized & concrete feedback.



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16 FEBRUARY



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ENGLISH MEDIUM | 15 FEB, 5 PM

हिन्दी माध्यम | 23 फरवरी, 5 PM

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- Sociology
- Anthropology
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- Essay
- Geography
- PS & IR

ENGLISH MEDIUM 2024: 11 FEBRUARY
हिन्दी माध्यम 2024: 11 फरवरी

ENGLISH MEDIUM 2025: 18 FEBRUARY
हिन्दी माध्यम 2025: 18 फरवरी



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Global Tender Notice

I-HUB Quantum Technology Foundation, IISER Pune invites bids Original Equipment Manufacturers, Foreign Principals and Indian Agents of Foreign Principals, Authorized Distributors of Original Equipment Manufacturer for the following scientific equipment:

- Optical Floating Zone Furnace
 - Last date for bid submission is : 01/03/2024
- Details of tender are provided in the tender documents published on: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>
- quantech.org.in/header/tenders
Advt. No: I-HUBQTF/AD/23-24/011
Dated: 02/02/2024

PROJECT DIRECTOR, I-HUB QTF

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS),
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI -03

No. CE/Mamti/MMPPNA/01/2023-24/20

PRESS NOTICE RE-INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD, Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 invites Rebids on behalf of Governor of Assam for 5 (Five) nos. of packages for Construction of Roads & Bridges including Routine Maintenance for 4 (four) years under Mukhya Mantrir Paki Path Nirman Achani (MMPPNA) for the year 2023-24 in Dhubri, Kamrup (Rural) & Barpeta District of Assam amounting to Rs. 6.23 Crores (approx.) including GST etc. from approved & eligible Contractors registered with PWRD, Assam.

Details may be seen from 16-02-2024 to 23-02-2024 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.

Formal work order will be issued after receipt of Administrative Approval from competent authority.

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

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads)
Janasanyog/CF/5566/23/15-Feb-24 Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS),
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-03

No. CE/Commn/Asom Mala 2/0/27/2023-24/8

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER (RE-BID)

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D (Roads), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-03 invites re-bid on behalf of the Governor of Assam from approved and eligible contractors registered with PWRD, Assam for "Improvement and Upgradation of Road Aina Ainalakhal of Hailakandi District to Ashimganj of Karimganj District (Part of 37.60 Km Road) [From Ishan Cherra: Ch. 8.230 Km to Ashimganj Tri- Junction: Ch. 37.507 Km] under Asom Mala 2.0 for the year 2023-24" amounting to Rs. 8163.409 Lakhs (approx.) in Karimganj districts of Assam.

Details along with packages for the works may be seen from 16.02.2024 at website- www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned in the "Communication Branch". 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.

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

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads),
Janasanyog/CF/5553/23/15-Feb-24 Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3

CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TELEMATICS

Electronics City, Phase-I,
Hosur Road, Bengaluru-560100.
15.02.2024

RECRUITMENT OF ENGINEERS / RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

It is hereby notified that the last date for receipt of applications for the post of Engineers and Research Associates published vide Advt No. CDOT / HR / CG /2024 /01 dated 05.01.2024 has been extended till 15 Mar 2024, 5pm. Kindly visit our website www.cdot.in for more details.

Sd/- Registrar

OPSIDA
उत्तर प्रदेश अधिकारिक विकास प्राधिकरण
नियम लकड़-हिंदी, ईपीआईपी, कलाना, बिल्डरमन्डल
इ-निविदा सुचना

एतदद्वारा सुचित जिया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के निम्न कार्यों द्वारा सरकारी विभागों/ नियमों में अंगीकृत कार्यों द्वारा इ-निविदा आमतया की जाती है। इ-निविदा के माध्यम से आमतया की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विभाग नियमानुसार है।

कार्य का नाम	निविदा का प्रकार	वार्षिक लागत ₹
1. Maintenance/Construction of RCC Central Verge at I.A. Surajpur Site-4, Distt. G.B. Nagar.	पूँजीकरण	28.11
2. Installation of Direction Boards, Signage at Surajpur Site-C, Housing and layout Maps at I.A. Various site under CD-2, G.B. Nagar.	पूँजीकरण	26.80

उत्तर प्रदेश सुचित जिया जाता है कि 03.02.2024 को पूँजीकरण 11:00 बजे तक आपको इ-निविदा को दिनांक 07.03.2024 को पूँजीकरण 11:00 बजे या इसके पश्चात खोला जायेगा। निविदावालों को हाथ अलाल किये गये समस्त शाप्र प्रपत्रों की मूल प्रतीकों तथा अध्यक्ष तात्पर्य का अध्ययन करने की जिम्मेदारी है। नियमानुसार 11.03.2024 की 11:00 बजे तक जायाचार्य विभाग से प्राप्त करना आवश्यक है अंगीकृत निविदा को Consider नहीं जिया जायेगा।

नोट:- निविदा सम्बन्धी विभाग जानकारी website: www.upsidc.org पर खोजें। इ-निविदा एवं यूनिटर्स की website: www.elender.up.nic.in पर देखी जा सकती है।

विविद प्रबन्धक (सिविल), उत्तर प्रदेश विभाग नियम लकड़-2, कलाना गोलमन्डल नगर

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER (LABOUR)

LABOUR DEPARTMENT, GNCT OF DELHI
5- SHAM NATH MARG, DELHI- 110054

PUBLIC NOTICE

HIV Act, 2017 has been enacted to prevent and control the spread of HIV and for protection of Human Rights of Persons affected by the said virus and syndrome. Vide Judgement dated 26.09.2023 (Copy of the judgement is available on the website of Labour Department, GNCTD i.e. www.labour.delhi.gov.in), Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the matter civil Appeal No. 7175/2021, titled "CPL Ashish Kumar Chauhan (Retd.) Vs. Commanding Officer & Ors." has directed to ensure compliance of various provisions of the aforesaid Act including section 19 and 20 of the HIV Act 2017, in regard to designation of a complaint officer, in all the factories, industrial establishment, commercial establishment, shops, plantations, commercial offices, professional organizations and all other bodies falling within the definition of "establishments" (under section 2(f) of the HIV Act) which reads as follows:

"establishment" means a body corporate or co-operative society or any organization or institution or two or more person jointly carrying out a systematic activity for a period of twelve months or more at one or more places for consideration or otherwise, for the production, supply or distribution of goods or services;"

All the above mentioned establishments are advised to comply with the various provisions of the Act applicable to them.

Sd/-
(S.C. Yadav)
Additional Labour Commissioner
DIP/SHADBARTH/CLASSIFIED/0340/23-24

Varthana Finance Private Limited

(Formerly known as Thirumeni Finance Private Ltd.)
Registered Office at: No. 5B/C-110, Varasiddhi, Outer Ring Road, Service Road, 3rd Block, HRBR Layout, Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore-560043. Website www.varthana.com, Email: care@varthana.com, Phone: 080-68455777, Branch Office: 1162 & 1163, Tower B-1, 11th Floor, Space I Tech Park, Sector 49, Hosur Road, Gurugram-122018.

POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule 8(1)] (For Immovable property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the M/s. Varthana Finance Private Ltd. (Formerly Known as M/s. Thirumeni Finance Private Ltd.) Gurugram, Under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice dated 31-10-2023, calling upon the Applicants/ Co-Applicants/ Mortgagors, In Loan Account No's. S20GUR-015609, S19GUR-006462, 1. M/s Indian Meaw Development Middle School, Represented by its Authorized Signatory, VPO Chhainsa Tehsil Hatin, Dist Palwal Haaryana, Palwal, Haryana - 121103, 2. M/s. Meaw Development and Education Society, Represented by its Authorized Signatory, VPO Chhainsa Tehsil Hatin, Dist Palwal Haaryana, Palwal, Haryana - 121103, 3. Mr. Jalkam S/o Bhunnam, Chhainsa (211), Palwal, Haryana 121103, 4. Mr. Murjia Khan S/o. Jalkam Khan, Chhainsa (211), Palwal, Haryana 121103, 5. Mr. Sarju S/o. Bhunnam, Chhainsa (211), Hatin, Palwal, Haryana-121103. To repay the amount mentioned in the said notice being a sum of Rs. 20,50,125/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh Fifty Two Thousand One Hundred Twenty Five Only) as on 31-10-2023 to repay agreed contractual rate of interest together with incidental expenses, cost and other charges etc., as details mentioned in the Demand Notice, till the date of payment, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

However the Applicants/ Co-Applicants/ Mortgagors herein above having failed to repay the full amount with interest/other charges, notice is hereby given to the Applicants/ Co-Applicants/Mortgagors in particular and to the public in general that the undersigned being Authorized Officer of the M/s. Varthana Finance Private Ltd, Gurugram Branch has taken POSSESSION of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act, read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on this day of 13-02-2024.

The Applicants/ Co-Applicants/ Mortgagors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the M/s. Varthana Finance Private Ltd, Gurugram for an amount of Rs.21,45,028/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Forty Five Thousand Twenty Eight Only) as on 12-02-2024 with agreed contractual rate of interest, as mentioned herein above until the date of payment together with incidental expenses, cost and other charges. The Applicants/Co-Applicants/Mortgagors attention is invited to provisions of Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured Assets.

Description of the Immovable Property : All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Khetw No. 430, Khata No. 604, Mustkil No. 39, Kila No. 7(5-8), Village Chhainsa, Tehsil Hatin, District Fatehabad, Haryana - 121103 Boundaries : East : Part of Property. West : Road. North : part of Property/House of Jagdish. South : House of Jafar.

Date: 15-02-2024, Place: Mouza : Village Chhainsa. Sd/-Authorized Officer, Varthana Finance Private Limited

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING (CCRT)

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
15 A, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075



SCHEME FOR AWARD OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO YOUNG ARTISTES IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL FIELDS

Off-line Applications are invited by CCRT, Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India for the award of Scholarships from Young Artistes of Outstanding promise in the fields of Indian Classical Music, Indian Classical Dances, Light Classical Music, Theatre, Visual Arts and Folk Traditional and Indigenous Arts.

Please note Applications are invited for the Batch Year 2022-23 with effect from 15th February, 2024. There are 400 scholarships available this year. Details of the schemes, instructions for applicants, eligibility conditions/criteria and Application Module are available on the following websites of the Ministry of Culture Government of India and CCRT i.e. www.indiaculture.nic.in & www.ccrtindia.gov.in.

31st March, 2024 is the last date for submission of applications.

ONLY OFF-LINE APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED

CBC 0912712/0012/2324

यूको बैंक UCO BANK

Honours your trust

Zonal Office : 75/4, Siddhi Sadan, Halsey Road Near Badshahi Naka Police Station, Kanpur - 208001
E-mail : zokanpur.rec@ucobank.co.in

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES [See proviso to Rule - 8(6)]
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property(ies) mortgaged/charged to UCO Bank Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of UCO Bank Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis on 07-03-2024, for recovery of Bank's Due's from Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) to UCO Bank Secured Creditor. The details are described as below:

Sr. No.	Name & Address of Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date / Possession Notice Date	Description of Immovable Property(ies) with known encumbrances, if any	Bank's Dues	Reserve Price / Earnest Money Deposit
1.	Borrower(s): M/s. Kanchan Garments Address: 208, Sarafa Bazar, Jhansi Proprietor: Shri Nitin Kanchan S/o Shri Suresh Kanchan Address: 92 (old), 110/3 (New), Hazaryana, Jhansi-284001 Guarantor(s): Smt. Sushma Kanchan W/o Shri Suresh Kanchan Address: 92 (old), 110/3 (New), Hazaryana, Jhansi-284001	02.07.2019 08.11.2019 (Symbolic Possession)	All that part and parcel of the property consists of land and building measuring 564 sq. ft. (52.42 square meter) as per Bahi No. 1, Zild No. 5680, Page No. 253 to 276, Sl. No. 2136, Registered on 26.03.2014 at Sub-Registrar-Jhansi, situated at H. No. 92(Old), 110/3 (New), Mohalla Hazaryana, City & District Jhansi standing in the name of Shri Nitin Kanchan S/o Shri Suresh Kanchan resident of 92 (Old), 110/3(New), Mohalla Hazaryana, Jhansi-284001. Details of Boundaries (As per Deed): East: House of Ramdas; West: Rasta 6.10 Meter; North: House of Neeraj Batra; South: House of Pradeep Kanchan Known Encumbrances, if any - Nil	Rs. 6,10,776.00 (Rupees Six Lakh Ten Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy Six Only) as on 02.07.2019 (inclusive of interest upto 30.06.2018) plus further interest thereon at the contractual rate, costs, charges and expenses etc. till date of payment.	Rs. 15,75,000/- Rs. 1,57,500/-

Last Date for submission of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) for Bid : 06.03.2024 upto 4:00 PM as per (IST)

Date & Time of E-auction :- 07.03.2024 from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM as per (IST) with unlimited extension of 10 minutes each with Bid Incremental Amount of Rs. 10,000/-

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit the websites [https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/lbapi/index.jsp](http://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/lbapi/index.jsp) & [https://www.lbapi.in](http://www.lbapi.in). The Borrower's and/or Guarantor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section 8 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Note:- Hindi & English versions



UP on the Rise

Infrastructure development fuels connectivity, spurring economic growth

Double Engine government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh has experienced remarkable advancements in infrastructure, particularly in transportation. With its stellar rail, road, air, and waterways, the state has witnessed a noteworthy evolution, guaranteeing smooth transit of both commodities and individuals throughout its expansive territory. Moreover, the recent establishment of state-of-the-art airports and the expansion of inland water routes have further cemented its reputation as a vibrant transportation nucleus.



UP tops the list of states with the maximum number of Expressways

With unparalleled development in infrastructure, UP boasts the highest number of operational expressways in India, including the Purvanchal Expressway, Bundelkhand Expressway, Agra-Lucknow Expressway, Noida-Greater Noida Expressway, Meerut-Delhi Expressway, and Yamuna

Expressway. Moreover, rapid progress is being witnessed in the development of the Gorakhpur Link Expressway, Ballia Link Expressway, Ganga Expressway, Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway, Delhi-Saharanpur-Dehradun Expressway, Ghaziabad-Kanpur Expressway, and Gorakhpur-Siliguri Expressway.

Similar to the development activities along the Yamuna Expressway, where industrial centers are being established through various commercial and residential schemes, including Noida International Airport, film city, toy park, and logistics park, similar activities are anticipated along the other expressways.

Ganga Expressway to be operational by 2024-end

The Ganga Expressway, stretching a remarkable 594 km, is the country's second-longest expressway. Beyond its sheer length, this epic infrastructure project holds multifaceted significance. Not only does it promise enhanced connectivity and convenience for the state it traverses, but it also strategically precedes the Mahakumbh event scheduled for 2025. As a vital artery of transportation, the Ganga Expressway is poised to catalyze economic growth along its expansive route. It would cut down on travel time between Meerut and Prayagraj by winding through 518 villages spread over 12 districts of the state from east to west. This motorway was originally designed to have six lanes, but it can eventually have eight. It is designed to allow for quick travel, with a top speed of 120 km/h. The Ganga Expressway,

with its potential to transform travel efficiency and boost economic activity, is a symbol of the country's dedication to growth and advancement.

Lucknow-Kanpur Expressway

- As of now, 45% of the construction has been finished on the 63-kilometer, six-lane Kanpur Lucknow Expressway.
- Combining brownfield and greenfield alignments, the expressway includes a 13-kilometer elevated brownfield segment within Lucknow.
- Between Amausi and Bani, the expressway will comprise two elevated segments. Furthermore, it will incorporate three major bridges, 28 minor bridges, 38 underpasses, and six flyovers.
- Starting from Shaheed Path in Lucknow, the expressways will extend to Azad Chauraha near Kanpur's Ganga Bridge.

Agra-Gwalior Greenfield Expressway

- The forthcoming Agra Gwalior Greenfield Expressway will soon connect the city of Taj to Gwalior.
- Travel time between the two cities will be cut by one and a half hours with the construction of the Agra Gwalior Greenfield Expressway.
- Covering 88.40 kilometers, the six-lane Greenfield Expressway will facilitate smoother travel.
- Agra benefits from access to two expressways—the Agra Lucknow Expressway and the Yamuna Expressway.

Inland Waterway Authority to enhance cruise services

- Lake Queen Cruise is operational in Gorakhpur's Ramgarh Tal Lake.
- Cruise services will boost tourism and employment opportunities.
- Government to start inland waterway service in rivers like Rapti, Saryu, Ganga, and Yamuna.
- River cruises along the Ganga River are available, offering scenic voyages from Varanasi to Haldia.

Lucknow Metro Expansion

As per the instructions given by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a new metro route that would connect Charbagh to Vasant Kunj via Chowk is now being prepared. The principal aim of this expansion is to enhance the interconnectivity network among these notable urban areas. When the metro line from Charbagh to Vasant Kunj via Chowk is finished, it would greatly improve Lucknow's infrastructure and address the current issues with urban

mobility. To further improve connectivity and accessibility for both locals and visitors, the government has also laid out plans to expand the Lucknow Metro to include important locations like the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI). These projects highlight a determined attempt to update and improve Lucknow's transport infrastructure, in line with more general goals of promoting urban growth and improving public spaces.

Metro Lite in Prayagraj

- With a proposed length of 44 km, the metro route will be divided into two corridors.
- Across the 23-km Bamrauli-City Lake corridor, there will be 20 stations in total.
- The corridor connecting Shantipuram to Chheoki, extending over 21 km, will feature 19 stations.

Jewar Airport construction is in full swing

- The Noida International Greenfield Airport, Jewar project is set to receive direct and top-notch Metro, high-speed Rapid Rail, and road connectivity.
- The Jewar Airport anticipates catering to approximately 6.5 million passengers annually in 2024-25, with projections indicating a surge to 70 million passengers per year by 2042-43.
- The Jewar Airport is poised to emerge as a significant center for air cargo operations.
- The trial landing on Jewar Airport's runway is scheduled for February 2024.

Milestones

**6 expressways operational,
7 under construction**

Metro services in Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida, Kanpur and Agra

**State with 21 Airports
(5 International and 16 Domestic)**

Meerut - Delhi Rapid Rail Service

Cruise operation in Ayodhya

Ropeway operational in VindhyaChal and Chitrakoot

Ropeway is also being built in Barsana, Mathura

The work of connecting the Varanasi-Haldia waterway to Prayagraj is in progress

Cargo and coach transportation started between Varanasi and Haldia

Country's first urban ropeway project under construction in Varanasi

Budget 2024-25

'Utsav, Udyog aur Ummeed, Yahi hai Naye UP ki Tasveer' Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasized this vision after the unveiling of the historic budget in the UP Assembly during the budget session 2024-25.

- More than Rs. 2057 crore allocated for the Ganga Expressway project.
- Rs. 2881 crore will be spent on state highways.
- Rs 3000 crore allocated for road maintenance.
- Rs. 3850 crore will be spent on bridges and ROB.

- Rs. 150 crore has been made for the expansion of 'Maharishi Valmiki International Airport Ayodhya Dham' in Ayodhya.
- Rs. 1150 crore allocated for Jewar airport

**Today,
Uttar Pradesh is home to...**

Largest expressway network

Highest no. of cities having metro rail

Highest number of airports

Largest railway network

Maximum medical colleges

India's first rapid rail

India's first inland waterway



BRIEFLY

Hardayal library staff get pending salaries

New Delhi: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) released five months of salary to 96 employees of Hardayal Municipal Public Library on Wednesday. According to the AAP, the MCD initiated the move after receiving directions from Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The employees of the library had been sitting on a dharna for the last 35 months, claiming their salaries had not been paid since 2021. The library is run by a managing body of elected councillors, which received grants from the MCD. "The salary to the employees released today in lumpsum pertained to five months during 2021," the Aam Aadmi Party said in its statement to the press on Wednesday.

Man arrested for running nursing home 'illegally'

Gurgaon: In a joint operation by the Chief Minister's Flying Squad and the medical department, a man was arrested from a nursing home in Manesar for allegedly running it illegally, police said. The raid was conducted on Tuesday at SS Nursing Home in Naharpur Kasan in Manesar. Police said the registration of the clinic was also done from a different location, violating the Indian Medical Council Act 2019. The owner was unable to provide valid documents or degrees, said police. ENS

IN 2017-18 ACCOUNTS

'Irregularities in DJB flagged in CAG report'

The report is learnt to have pointed out instances of the utility understating its expenditure, hence losses

MALLICA JOSHI & JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES and irregularities in the accounts of the Delhi Jal Board in 2017-18 have been flagged in the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report, government sources told *The Indian Express*.

The report, which has been shared with the Delhi government, but is yet to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, is learnt to have pointed out instances of the utility understating its expenditure, hence losses.

One instance of this was the discrepancy noticed between the data given by the revenue section, and the accounts in the outstanding dues against bulk and retail water. The report, it is learnt, states that while the revenue section listed the dues as around Rs 9,000 crore, this figure was around Rs 2,800 crore in accounts — a gap of over Rs 6,000 crore.

The Delhi government did not comment on the matter. After its finance department had raised concerns about mismanagement of funds in the water utility, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had, in December last year, ordered a CAG audit for the last 15 years.

The request, however, was turned down by the L-G, VK Saxena, who said that the CAG report for 2017-18 should first be tabled in the assembly.

Officials said that the report also talks about the current accounts, and mentions that there was a difference of over Rs 1,000 crore between the balance as per the bank records and the financial statement.



Delhi's flagship scheme of providing free water up to 20 kilolitres to each household per month also finds mention in the report, sources said. Archive

"Both these figures are in overdraft. The report states that this discrepancy could be pointing to fraud or misappropriation of funds," the official added.

Delhi's flagship scheme of providing free water up to 20 kilolitres to each household per month also finds mention in the report, sources said.

"While DJB received compensation grants of around Rs 425 crore, for subsidy, records state that an amount to Rs 400 crore was provided but this does not reflect in the Income and Expenditure Account. The reasons for this have also not been disclosed," said an official.

Another alleged irregularity in accounts flagged in the report, it is learnt, is regarding expenditure on advertisements.

"While the expenditure under this head is stated to be around Rs 12 crore, the report states that files or records related to this expenditure were available only for around Rs 3 crore. Even out of this amount,

around half was for between 2015 and 2016," the official stated.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government had said in December that it would take action against any erring officers if irregularities are proved. Water Minister Atishi had said that as allegations of irregularities were made, an audit since 2008 was being sought by the Chief Minister.

"As the opposition is raising some allegations of financial irregularities and mismanagement in the DJB, the CM has ordered a CAG audit of the Board's accounts from 2008 till date to bring out the truth... The Delhi government will take strict action against all those involved if any discrepancy comes out... The finance department has raised concerns regarding financial mismanagement but has not pointed out specific instances or errant officials. This makes the audit essential," she had said at a press conference.

After China and Santiago, Delhi's e-bus fleet third biggest in world, says govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

DELHI IS among the top three places, including Santiago, Chile, in the world with the most number of electric buses as part of its fleet, said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as he, along with Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, inaugurated the first lot of 350 e-buses under cluster bus services here on Wednesday.

With this, the number of e-buses in the city has risen to 1,650.

Flagging off the new e-buses at Sarai Kale Khan, Kejriwal said, "Delhi has become the city with the most e-buses in the country, and the third city globally. These buses will help control pollution in Delhi. Previously, Delhi's roads had Blue Line buses running on diesel and petrol. Then, CNG buses were introduced and now, we have electric buses. Our goal is to gradually replace CNG buses in our fleet with electric buses..."

Until now, the city had 1300-e-



CM Kejriwal and L-G Saxena flag off one of the e-buses on Wednesday. Tashi Tobgyal

buses run by Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) with facilities for women's safety, GPS, CCTV, panic buttons and other features.

The latest lot comes under the cluster bus services, which is run on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model under the aegis of Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Limited (DIMTS).

The new buses will operate on different routes from Sukhdev Vihar, Rohini Sector-37 Depot-II,

third globally. These electric buses will not only make travel easier for Delhites but also help in maintaining environmental balance."

Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said, "Since 2022, 1,300 electric buses have been running on Delhi's roads... If not for these buses, at least 47,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide would have made its way to the environment."

Pointing out that the first position in terms of e-buses is held by a city in China, Gahlot said, "In days to come, Delhi's bus fleet will consist of 10,480 buses, with 80% of them being e-buses. Currently, the figure stands at 22%."

Further, the AAP government also announced introducing "Mohalla buses" – small-sized buses to connect areas in outer Delhi to the main city. "People will have to wait for sometime as it is taking a while for the process, prototype, testing, and certification phase... I hope that within the next 15 to 20 days, some buses will be dedicated to the public," Gahlot said about the scheme.

'It's taxing... not everyone can move court': JNU student after HC set aside rustication

MALAVIKA PRASAD
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

"FOR STUDENTS, it's very taxing. Not everybody can approach the court; it takes a lot of mental space, physical effort, and financial and academic burden," said JNU student Swati Singh, who was granted relief by the Delhi High Court after the university rusticated her last year.

Last November, the varsity rusticated Singh for two semesters and declared her out of bounds for allegedly misbehaving with a female security guard. The HC set aside the order this month.

Singh, a PhD student at the Centre for Russian Studies, had first filed an appeal before the Vice-Chancellor against JNU's November 8, 2023, order. This was dismissed on November 23, and

she was evicted from the hostel. She then approached the HC with a writ petition.

Singh, who is also the president of the Democratic Students' Federation, told *The Indian Express*, "I'm in my final year, a crucial one in my PhD journey. A major part of the year was spent on this case. I had stated in my appeal before the V-C to consider my case, not rusticate me and... give me an opportunity to present my case... I couldn't give up academics so I ensured I approached the court."

In its February 7 order, Justice C Hari Shankar observed that Statute 32(5) of the 'Statutes governing JNU' sets out a specific protocol to be followed in proctorial enquiries pertaining to acts of misconduct by students. The HC said the procedure required, among other things, recording the com-

plainant's deposition and statement of the accused person as well as cross-examination of the two.

There had been several breaches of this procedure, not all of which can be explained by asserting Singh had not attended the enquiry despite three requests, it said.

"Even if the petitioner had not participated in that enquiry, it did not absolve JNU of its requirement to provide the petitioner with all material against her to enable her to put up a proper defence..."

Arriving at a decision that a person is culpable of a particular misconduct or offence without providing to the person the material and the evidence on which the decision is admittedly based... amounts to clear and flagrant violation of the principles of natural justice and fair play," the HC said, adding that both orders passed by

JNU were "unreasonable" and set them aside.

Justice Shankar also penned an 'advisory note' in the order, underscoring that if a university/institution is "serious about instilling discipline in its premises, it has to ensure enquiries conducted against students suspected of unpardonable indiscipline, and punishments awarded consequent thereto, are in strict compliance with the statutory protocol".

Meanwhile, Singh said she has been a "key activist in the campus" and raised various issues of students over last eight years due to which she was "made a target".

Although her course would end this year, she intends to seek an extension. She said after the order was passed last week, she entered campus along with a copy of it and applied for registration in the current semester.

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Van Eck was founded in 1955 and is headquartered in New York, USA. It is an American asset management company mainly engaged in the issuance and management of global stocks, quantitative products, ETFs and mutual funds. It is also operates hedge funds and separate accounts with \$80 billion in assets under management. Asset is the seventh largest issuer of ETFs in the United States and a pioneer in investing in foreign growth stocks. The company has branches in Europe and Asia Pacific.

In December 2023, Van Eck established a subsidiary in India, located in Bandra Kurla Complex Bandra East, Mumbai, to provide stocks, ETF funds, investment management, asset management, etc., and launched a series of investment products and invested US\$ 10 billion. This capital injection is mainly for Indian investors offers a wider range of investment products to meet the needs of Indian investors.

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Abu Dhabi enhances Ayodhya joy, says PM Modi

'Modiji is the biggest priest'. I don't know if I have the qualifications of a temple priest, but I am proud to be priest of Maa Bharti (Mother India)."

"Today, the UAE has written a golden chapter in human history. A beautiful and divine temple is being inaugurated here. There are many years of hard work behind this moment," he said.

Addressing a gathering that included UAE Tolerance Minister Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan and spiritual leaders from all faiths, he said, "I hope the BAPS Mandir will become a symbol of communal harmony and global unity for the whole world."

He said the UAE, known for its Burj Khalifa, Museum of the Future, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque and other landmark buildings, has added another cultural chapter to its identity. "We do not see hatred in diversity, we consider diversity as our specialty. In this temple, we will see a glimpse of diverse faiths at each and every step," Modi said.

"I am confident that a large number of devotees will come here in the times to come. This will also increase the number of people coming to the UAE and the people-to-people connection be-

tween the two countries," he said.

Requesting the audience to give a standing ovation to UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, he said: "When I came to the UAE in 2018, I met Sheikh Al Nahyan and showed him two models of the temple that had been prepared – one that was based on Vedic architecture and another that was a simple model without Hindu religious symbols. His thought was clear: he told me the temple in Abu Dhabi should be built with splendour and glory. He wanted the temple to not only be built, but to also look like a temple."

Speaking at the event, UAE's Tolerance Minister Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan called Modi a "great friend and representative of a great and friendly country". "Your visit to the UAE is a clear indication of the depth of the friendship, trust and cooperation that has long existed between the UAE and India, and strengthened by you," he said, also making a mention of the PM's "sabka saath, sabka vikas" plank.

The inauguration was carried out amid devotional chants and rituals in the presence of spiritual leaders of the Swaminarayan sect. BAPS sect leader, Mahant

Swami Maharaj, presided over the ceremony.

Modi participated in a "global aarti" which was performed simultaneously at over 1,200 temples built by BAPS. He also met people from different faiths who contributed to the construction of the temple complex – from engineers to architects to construction workers. He later left for Doha.

The Nagara-style temple, built at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore, is located in the Abu Mureikha area, about 50 km from the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque. Through the carvings on its pink sandstone exteriors, it brings a glimpse of Ayodhya to Abu Dhabi with the depiction of episodes from the Ramayana. Another wall shows the temple carved alongside other UAE landmarks like the Burj Khalifa, highlighting how it has become a part of the UAE skyline.

It is among 1,200 temples built and managed by the Swaminarayan Sanstha in India and abroad, including countries like the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand that have a sizable presence of the Indian community.

The land on which the temple complex has been built was gifted

by Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan in 2015. The foundation of the temple was laid by Modi in 2017.

Several elements have been included in the temple to bring the two nations and cultures together. For instance, it has seven shikharas or spires, representing the seven Emirates that come together to form the UAE. At the entrance, eight idols symbolise universal values such as faith, charity and compassion.

Deities from North, East, West and South India have been given space in the temple – including Ram, Shiva, Jagannath, Krishna, Swaminarayan (considered a reincarnation of Krishna), Balaji and Ayyappa. The temple is surrounded by artificially created rivers, containing water from the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.

To give equal representation to the host country, the falcon, which is the UAE's national bird, has also been given space.

Speaking to The Indian Express earlier, UAE Ambassador Abdulknasser Alshaali said the country views the inauguration of the temple as a special occasion that aligns with the values of tolerance and acceptance that guide the bilateral ties.

● China moves its nationals into its vacant 'defence villages' along LAC

and spacious buildings constructed as part of these villages along the LAC were unoccupied. In the last few months Chinese nationals have been moving in – it's not known if the occupants are civilians or military personnel.

Sources said the Chinese are building infrastructure all along the LAC bordering the northeast, even as the LAC remains far off from most inhabited areas or areas of importance except for Tawang and the Siliguri Corridor.

"They (the Chinese) have built sufficient infrastructure along the LAC at Tawang, but they are not stopping at that. Even in other areas such as Siang valley of Arunachal Pradesh, we have been seeing rapid development of Chinese infrastructure,"

an official said.

The official added that the Chinese have consistently improved their existing infrastructure including improving their connectivity through passes, constructing roads and bridges and their model villages. China has also been constructing infrastructure, including border villages, in Bhutanese territory.

In the last three to four years, India has also stepped up work on its border infrastructure – this includes improving forward connectivity, constructing alternate routes to the LAC as well as connecting them.

Under the Vibrant Villages programmes, India plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages with all amenities in the first phase. Of them, at least 17 such villages along the borders with China in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have been selected for development as a pilot project under the programme.

In Arunachal Pradesh, villages in the eastern part of the state and in the Tawang region have been identified such as Zemithang, Taksing, Chayang, Tajo, Tuting and Kibithu.

Also, in Arunachal Pradesh, three major highways are at different stages of construction: the Trans-Arunachal Highway; the Frontier Highway; and the East-West Industrial Corridor Highway. There are plans to improve connectivity to Tawang

with the construction of at least two alternate axes – in addition to the existing one connecting Guwahati and Tawang.

Earlier, in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang valley, there were roads just till a little ahead of Anini, but now roads are being constructed at all sides of the valley. "Work is underway to improve connectivity to the passes, establish laterals for inter-valley connectivity and on construction of helipads and advanced landing grounds at various locations in the state," another official said.

"However, while work is in progress, construction will take time since this is difficult terrain marked by unpredictable weather," the official added.

● Brij Bhushan son, aide back at helm, wrestlers threaten protest

president and run the day-to-day affairs after the United World Wrestling lifted the suspension of the federation on Tuesday.

Decision-making powers in the hands of Brij Bhushan loyalists at the state-level and in the WFI saw Sakshi and Bajrang take to social media with a threat to relaunch their protests. Karan was earlier vice-president of UP wrestling.

"Just 2-3 days back, Brij Bhushan's son became the president of the UP wrestling body despite him saying no one from his family will come into wrestling administration. The government had promised that Brij Bhushan or his relatives or associates will not govern the sport," Bajrang said in a video posted on Instagram.

The Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist requested the government to take a decision quickly, else they will be forced to start the protests again.

"I request the government to take a quick decision. Even though the IOA (ministry) has suspended the WFI, the WFI conducted its na-

tions in Pune, elections are happening in states... The WFI thinks it is bigger than the government. We wrestlers will talk to all those who support us – farmer groups, khap panchayats, labour unions and women organisations – and make a decision in the next two to three days. I request the government not to force us to start the protests again," Bajrang said.

Brij Bhushan faces charges of sexual harassment levelled by six women wrestlers. Sakshi and Bajrang, along with Vinesh Phogat, a two-time world championship medalist, had led protests demanding his arrest last year.

The protests were called off after a meeting with Sports Minister Anurag Thakur during which the government assured them that nobody from Brij Bhushan's family would contest the WFI elections.

Three days after the WFI elections on December 21, the Sports Ministry suspended the newly-elected committee of the governing body. The reason for the action was the conduct of Brij

Bhushan immediately after the election results were announced.

Sharing details of the action, a ministry official had said that despite formation of the new committee, WFI affairs were being conducted from Brij Bhushan's premises "wherein sexual harassment of players has been alleged", and that he "appears to be in complete control".

On Wednesday, Sakshi also said that if those close to Brij Bhushan were allowed to run the WFI, she would hit the streets again. "Sanjay Singh has done some setting with the UWW and got the suspension lifted. I have retired from wrestling but I won't allow Brij Bhushan and his people to run the WFI. She will hit the streets again," Sakshi said.

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WFI treasurer Satyapal Deshwal, the observer for the UP association polls, told The Indian Express, "There was a returning officer at the elections. Karan was the only candidate for the president's post. All 15 office-bearers were elected unopposed. There is nothing that stops Karan from contesting elections for the state association. Because he is UP wrestling president, it does not mean he will be involved in the day-to-day functioning of the WFI."

Deshwal claimed that Brij Bhushan was not present at the venue of the elections – a college hall in Nawabganj. "Brij Bhushan has taken sanyas (retirement) from wrestling. He is no longer associated with UP wrestling or the WFI. There were no issues with the WFI election process. So wrestlers should have no reason to protest again. I welcome all wrestlers, including the wrestlers who protested, to appear for trials and promise there will be no discrimination. The WFI will ensure that wrestlers have no reason to complain in the future," he said.

● TN House resolutions oppose delimitation, one nation, one poll

overwhelming support, including from the opposition AIADMK. The WFI too said it understood the concerns regarding delimitation expressed in the resolution, though it opposed the one on 'One Nation, One Election'.

The resolution against delimitation said the exercise due in 2026, following the new Census, "not be carried out". "Due to unavoidable reasons, if the number of (Lok Sabha and Assembly) seats on the basis of population were to (change), (they) shall be maintained at the present ratio for constituencies within states... and for both Houses of Parliament, (which were) fixed based on the population of 1971."

Tamil Nadu, along with other states in the South, has been arguing that they should not be "penalised" for their successful implementation of population control measures, compared to high-population states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The issue has also taken the dimension of "financial atrocities" against the South, with the LDF-led Kerala and Congress-led Karnataka governments recently holding agitations in the Capital over the sharing of resources by the Centre with them.

The Tamil Nadu government, led by the DMK in alliance with the Congress, lent its support to the population of 1971."

"The country is now talking about the next delimitation. It will mean that wherever the population is less, the Lok Sabha seats will come down, and rise where the population is high... The southern states have achieved remarkable progress in population control, but will stand to lose heavily if the Congress's new idea of rights in

two agitations.

Its delimitation resolution on Wednesday also worried that the state was paying a price for its "socio-economic development programmes and welfare schemes over the past 50 years".

The ruling BJP at the Centre has been silent on the delimitation issue, with no clarity yet on even the Census, which was due originally in 2021. In his first remarks on the issue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told a rally in poll-bound Telangana in October that the South "stands to lose 100 seats".

Choosing a southern state to raise the issue, Modi used it as a counter to Rahul Gandhi's slogan of "Jitni aabadi, utna haq (rights as per numbers)". While the Congress links the slogan to its demand for a caste census, to reapportion quota benefits as per actual numbers of different groups, the PM said what Rahul was suggesting went against the South's interests.

"The country is now talking about the next delimitation. It will mean that wherever the population is less, the Lok Sabha seats will come down, and rise where the population is high... The southern states have achieved remarkable progress in population control, but will stand to lose heavily if the Congress's new idea of rights in

including the Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Dalit party PCP, Kongu Nadu Makkal Desiya Katchi, Tamizhaga Vaazhvurimai Katchi, and Manithanaya Makkal Katchi, the AIADMK that was till recently an ally of the BJP also supported the resolutions.

While the AIADMK gave unequivocal support to the resolution against delimitation, in case of 'One Nation, One Election', party MLA and former minister N Thalaiyvelu Sundaram said their backing was "conditional" and suggested that the exercise be rolled out over a decade, provided certain conditions were met.

Sundaram said the AIADMK had made its representation before the Kovind panel, suggesting a 10-year lag and that EVMs be readied for this mass exercise in the next five years.

On delimitation, the AIADMK leader said: "The seats in state Assemblies and Parliament should not fall."

While the BJP shared the concerns regarding the delimitation process, its MLA Srinivasan criticised the opposition to 'One Nation, One Election'. Calling it a "necessary reform" and apprehensions regarding it "unfounded", she said it could reduce financial and administrative burdens associated with frequent elections.

Apart from the DMK's allies,

● Called for meetings late night... they kept list of women who didn't attend

school buildings under the garb of late-night meetings.

The five are among a handful of women who submitted their statements to the state women's commission and briefed the Governor when he visited on February 12. Asked why they did not approach the police earlier, the women said the cops are part of the state machinery and would urge complainants to "settle the matter".

Since the allegations came to light, a molestation case has been filed against Uttam Sardar and others. Sardar, TMC's North 24 Parganas zilla parishad member, was suspended by the party on February 12, hours after his arrest.

"We have formed a special team led by DIG CID (Soma Das Mitra) to speak to the women and investigate any complaints in connection with rape, sexual assault or molestation. The team will investigate if there are such complaints and take appropriate action," said Sumit Kumar, DIG, Barasat Range.

Late Wednesday night, the West Bengal police posted on social media: "It is reiterated that no allegations about rape of women have so far been received during the enquiries since conducted by the State Women's Commission, an all-women 10-member fact-

finding team led by DIG CID, and also the district police. The representatives of the National Women's Commission, following a recent visit to Sandeshkhali, have also corroborated this, saying that they did not receive any complaints of rape of local women during their enquiry. It is reiterated that all allegations and complaints received will be duly enquired into and lawful action will be initiated."

Earlier in the day, the Governor said he had received complaints from villagers of "torture and sexual harassment of women when the menfolk are away" and of "police working hand in glove with the rowdy elements". The Governor recommended that a special task force or special investigation team be set up to investigate and a judicial enquiry be considered.

Partha Bhowmik, state irrigation minister and TMC leader from North 24 Parganas, said the "complaints of sexual assault are fabricated and baseless". "We have received complaints of land-grabbing by a section of our party leaders. Those who have done that, we have already taken action against them. And people who did not receive money for their land, the local party unit will compensate them," he told The Indian Express.

One of the women The Indian Express spoke to narrated what allegedly transpired: "What do you call summoning us at 10 pm under the pretext of a meeting? Touching us whenever they like and wherever they like, pulling our saree? I went through that so many times and I am not alone." The woman, who is in her 20s, said that she, like the others, are "TMC supporters" and members of self-help groups (SHG) that run under the panchayat. It was under the pretense of SHG meetings that the women were called at odd hours, they alleged, adding that this has "been going on since 2020".

Since the protests broke out, a police picket has come up near the woman's home. At the local police station, officers refused to comment. A room marked 'Women Help Desk' had policemen of riot control sitting inside.

At the residence of a local SHG leader, another woman, also in her 20s, alleged, "They used to call us for meetings – sometimes of the SHG and sometimes of the party. Our husbands were not called. When we went there, there was a quick 'party meeting' saying we will have to work for its victory. Some of us cooked and a section of women, including me, were told to stay back. They would pull my saree and touch

me inappropriately. I kept quiet because I knew what would have happened if I protested." She alleged her family's bigha of land was also grabbed by TMC leaders and turned into a fishery.

Another woman alleged a list was kept of those who failed to turn up at the meetings. "Once, when I couldn't attend because of health, my husband was beaten up at the market... Sometimes they coerced me to sit on their motorbikes while they took us there. I couldn't say no," she said.

A fifth woman said, "We all voted for the TMC here... When the Governor came, I was there. All the women were. We told him what was happening here." Besieged by protests and clashes between TMC and BJP workers and the police, the district is currently under curfew. The area first came into focus on January 5 when a team that turned up to search Shahjahan's home was assaulted by his supporters. The recent protests flared on February 8, when a local TMC rally ran into a protest by women, who also set on fire Uttam Sardar's poultry farm.

● 'Hates to lose': 17-yr-old shuttler who clinched a rare victory over China

Badminton Asia Team Championships.

China had fielded a second-string side, Luo Yu is ranked only No 149, and India were already assured a quarters spot. P V Sindhu and Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand set the tone to defy an always formidable Chinese unit, and Anmol pulled off the unlikely decider, reducing Luo Yu to a bundle of errors. The teen is a former agriculture minister.

Meanwhile, stray groups of protesters who tried to surge ahead at Shamshu and Khanauri – the two border points between Haryana and Punjab – on Wednesday were beaten back by teargas, water cannons and rubber bullets, which left more than 40 farmers injured. At least a dozen of them were evacuated to the government hospital in Patiala, where Health Minister Balbir Singh called on them and said the Punjab government would offer free treatment.

Long cavalcades of tractor-trolleys were parked at both the protest sites as the farmers, who came armed with wet gunny bags to counter the teargas shells, spent the day waiting for a go-ahead from their leaders. Farmers said the Haryana authorities had inundated wheat fields with water to prevent protesters from entering them.

Aday after the Haryana police used drones to drop teargas shells on the farmers, kites dotted the sky at both the protest sites. Farmers said this was not a celebration of Basant Panchami, but a bid to thwart the drones.

No action against '100-year-old' mosque and graveyard: DDA files plea to vacate HC order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

titioner, the Managing Committee of the Shahi Masjid and Qabristan Kangal Shah, to file its response in 10 days. The matter is next listed on February 29.

In an interim order on November 2, 2023, a coordinate bench of the HC had said: "In the meanwhile, having regard to the above documents, and to the fact that the structures are admittedly over one hundred years old, the respondents are directed not to take any coercive action against the subject property until the next date of hearing."

Today, the DDA in its application said the petitioner made "incorrect submissions" before the HC during the November 2 hearing. "The petitioner has failed to point out that as per revenue records and earlier rounds of litigation, it is an encroacher on government land in Central Ridge, an ecologically sensitive area. Continuous demolition drives are being conducted in the area," the plea states. The DDA, in its plea, further said the site in question is part of the Central Ridge, "which is a protected forest", and residential and commercial activities are prohibited.

ing of the Religious Committee held on October 20, 2023.

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Online Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited by CONCOR from IRDAI licensed insurance brokers for engagement as Insurance Broker. EOI document completed in all respect shall be received online through www.tenderwizard.com/CCL as per date and time mentioned below:

EOI No.	CONCO/COM/01/EOI-INSURANCE BROKER/2023-24/
Name of Work	Online EOI for Engagement of Insurance Broker by CONCOR
Period of Contract	2+1 years
Cost of EOI Document (Non-refundable)	Rs. 1000/- through e-payment (Non Refundable)
Date of sale of EOI document (online)	From 16.02.2024, 09.00 Hrs to 28.02.2024 up to 15.00 Hrs
Last Date & Time of submission of EOI	On or before 29.02.2024 up to 15.00 Hrs
Date & Time of Opening of EOI	29.02.2024 at 15.30 Hrs

Note: Corrigendum/ Addendum/Amendments/ Clarifications etc., if any, shall be hosted on website only. Bidders are requested to visit the website regularly, contact the concerned official at CONCOR's Corporate Office for any doubt/ clarifications, etc.

RAMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE
BENGALURU - 560 080.

Raman Research Institute is a premier autonomous institute engaged in research in basic sciences funded by the Government of India. The Institute invites applications for the following temporary post on Contract basis:

Science Designer and Animator for Science Communication and Outreach Activities of the Institute - 1 Post.

For details, please visit: <https://www.rri.res.in/careers/other-openings>.

BHARAT COOKING COAL LIMITED
'A Mini Ratna Company'
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

All the tenders* issued by Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of BCCL www.bcclweb.in, Coal India Limited (CIL) e-procurement portal <https://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement portal <https://eprocure.gov.in>. In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in>.

*This is applicable to all Open (Domestic/Global) Tenders issued through e-procurement portal of CIL.

IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

NAVARTNA COMPANY

(A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Website : www.ircon.org, CIN - L45930DL1975GOI008171

e-Procurement Notice

I) NIT No.: IRCON/2024/KATNI-GS/Tender/UP-GS/RW-Back Fill/ Date 10.02.2024 e-tender for and on behalf of West Central Railway is invited in Two Stage Bid system from bidders meeting qualifying requirements for the work of "Earthwork in filling in U-Type retaining wall with selected back fill material (consisting of granular material) as per design criteria, providing & laying of Geo-Composite drain and other ancillary works in connection with UP Katni Grade Separator Project in Katni District, Madhya Pradesh".

Estimated Cost Rs. 12,77,03,250/-

Last Date and Time of e-Bid Submission 02.03.2024 at 15:00 Hrs.

II) NIT No.: IRCON/2024/KATNI-GS/Tender/Pway-Viaduct/ Date 29.01.2024 e-tender for and on behalf of West Central Railway is invited in Two Stage Bid system from bidders meeting qualifying requirements for the work of "Laying and linking of New BG main line on MBC Sleepers on Ballasted deck bridge (viaduct) & approach retaining walls including supply at site of Pway track fittings for B.G. line, complete set of turnouts, SEJs and all other miscellaneous Pway work in connection to Katni UP Grade Separator Project".

Estimated Cost Rs. 8,11,72,032/-

Last Date and Time of e-Bid Submission 01.03.2024 at 15:00 Hrs.

For further details, visit website <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted only on the website.

General Manager/PH/Katni, IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

Project Off : 3rd Floor, Above Maruti Show Room, Near Jhajhri Police Station, NH-7, Jabalpur Road, Katni-483501(M.P.)

ARUNACHAL PRADESH STATE ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

O.T. BUILDING, 2ND FLOOR, NITI VIHAR MARKET,

T.T. MARG NITI VIHAR, ITANAGAR-791111

Tel: 0360-2291642, Fax: 0360-2291643,

E-mail: apserc-arn@gov.in, website: www.apserc.nic.in

No.APSERC/RA-14/1/2023-24/520 Dated Itanagar, the 14th February 2024

Arunachal Pradesh State Electricity Regulatory Commission (APSERC) intends to appoint 1 (One) post of Secretary and 3 (Three) posts of Deputy Director on deputation basis. Candidates interested in applying for the post(s) are requested to refer to the detailed advertisement available on the website of APSERC: www.apserc.nic.in The last date of receipt of applications is 6th March 2024

Sd/-
Secretary,
DIPR/ARN/10275
APSERC: Itanagar

NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED

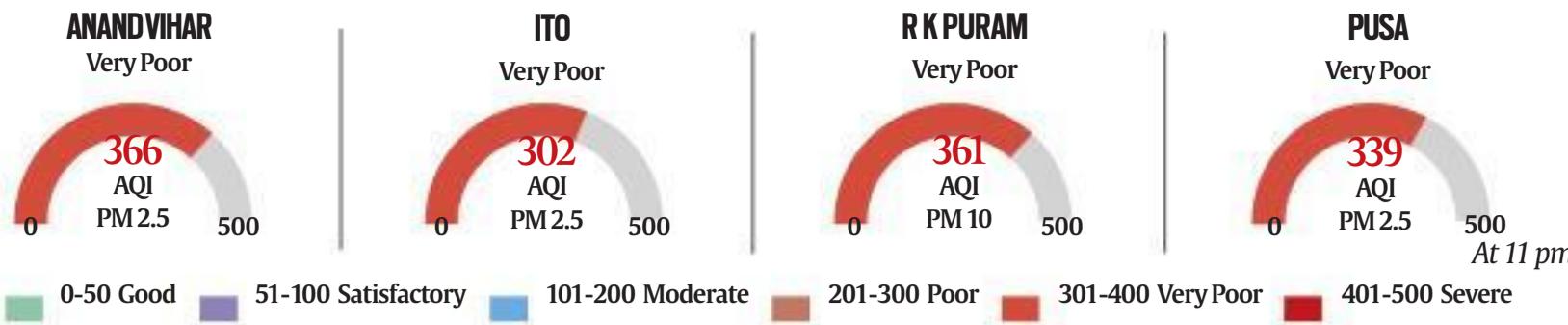
(A Government of India Undertaking)

Regd. Office: SCOPE Complex, Core-III, 7-Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003
Website: www.nationalfertilizers.com, CIN-L74899DL1974GOI007417

EXTRACT FROM THE UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS (STANDALONE AND CONSOLIDATED) FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

(₹ in Lakhs)

S. N.	Particulars	STANDALONE						CONSOLIDATED						Quarter Ended			Nine Months Ended			Year Ended		
		Quarter Ended			Nine Months Ended			Year Ended			Quarter Ended			Nine Months Ended			Year Ended					
		31.12.2023 (Unaudited)	30.09.2023 (Unaudited)	31.12.2022 (Unaudited)	31.12.2023 (Unaudited)	31.12.2022 (Unaudited)	31.03.2023 (Audited)	31.12.2023 (Unaudited)	30.09.2023 (Unaudited)	31.12.2022 (Unaudited)	31.12.2023 (Unaudited)	31.12.2022 (Unaudited)	31.12.2023 (Unaudited)	31.12.2022 (Unaudited)	31.12.2023 (Unaudited)	31.12.2022 (Unaudited)	31.12.2023 (Audited)					
1	Total Income from operations	759828	569120	1014656	1834923	2337347	2980914	759828	569120	1014656	1834923	2337347	2980914	759828	569120	1014656	1834923	2337347	2980914			
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) from operations before exceptional items and tax	19023	(15283)	78633	(15395)	96914	60977	20111	(12683)	75174	(9457)	93845	61200	20111	(12683)	75174	(9457)	93845	61200			
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) before tax after exceptional items	19023	(15283)	78633	(15395)	96914	60977	20111	(12683)	75174	(9457)	93845	61200	20111	(12683)	75174	(9457)	93845	61200			
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period after tax	14002	(11310)	58862	(11701)	72497	45610	15090	(8710)	55403	(5763)	69428	45833	15090	(8710)	55403	(5763)	69428	45833			
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/ (Loss) and Other Comprehensive Income for the period)	14066	(11239)	58979	(11507)	72846	45966	15154	(8639)	55520	(5569)	69777	46194	15154	(8639)	55520	(5569)	69777	46194			
6	Equity Share Capital	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058	49058				
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year						228325											205107				
8	Earning Per Share (of ₹ 10/- each)*																					
	(a) Basic (in ₹)	2.85	(2.31)	12.00	(2.39)	14.78	9.30	3.08	(1.78)	11.29	(1.17)	14.15	9.34	3.08	(1.78)	11.29	(1.17)	14.15	9.34			
	(b) Diluted (in ₹)	2.85	(2.31)	12.00	(2.39)	14.78	9.30	3.08	(1.78)	11.29	(1.17)	14.15	9.34</									



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: February 15
Mainly clear sky. Shallow to moderate fog in the morning.

MAX: 25 0.6°C above normal | MIN: 9 2°C below normal

'DILLI CHALO MARCH': FARMERS REMAIN AT SHAMBHU, DELHI POLICE INTENSIFY SECURITY

Day 3 of curbs: Borders shut, daily life hit

ARNABJIT SURI &
UPASAKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

EVEN AS protesting farmers stayed put at the Shambhu border on the second day of their 'Dilli Chalo' march on Wednesday, Singhu and Tikri borders in Delhi were completely sealed while security measures were intensified.

At Singhu, which connects Sonipat to the national capital, over 2,000 security personnel — including CRPF and Rapid Action Force troops — were deployed. Police added more layers to the barricades placed earlier and bolstered them with sand sacks and concertina wire. As a precaution, the streets and bylanes were also dug up to stop protesters.

Boards of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) welcoming commuters to Delhi were also removed. "We're removing the boards so that teargas shells don't hit them, and reach the protesters," said a senior police officer.

At Tikri, which connects Delhi-Bahadurgarh, five-seven companies of paramilitary forces and around 200 Delhi Police personnel kept guard near concrete boulders and barricades. Police also installed speakers and six new CCTV cameras on steel panels to keep an eye out for protesters.

Senior-level officers, including DCP (Outer) Jimmy Chiram and Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Madhup Tewari, were present at the spot, supervising the arrangements and holding mock drills.

DCP Chiram said, "We are fully prepared in terms of security. Several companies of both Delhi Police and paramilitary personnel are present at the spot, the goal is the use minimal force if need be."

Regular announcements to brief personnel were being made on at least half-a-dozen speakers installed at the spot which was connected to the central mic system.

Personnel in riot gear also participated in mock drills and officers were told to keep their riot control equipment ready and ensure they were not damaged.

"All personnel should examine their riot-control gear such as knee guards, helmets, batons, etc. to check if they are not missing any equipment and they are in proper state... women personnel should not carry any handbags so it does not hinder their access to riot-control gear," a DCP-level officer briefed them on Wednesday afternoon.

Out of the total officers deployed, three companies were of women personnel each in Delhi Police and the paramilitary force.

On Wednesday, traffic in Ghaziabad and Noida, meanwhile, remained normal at most places as no farmers arrived at the Delhi borders of both districts. Police officers said there is no specific traffic advisory for Thursday and the existing advisory will be followed in case farmers arrive in the area. In Noida, police said traffic will be diverted in case farmers march towards Delhi.



(Clockwise from top) Boards of the National Highway Authority of India welcoming commuters to Delhi were removed at Singhu; bylanes being dug up to deter protesters; cement barricades being fortified at Tikri. Amit Mehra/Cajendra Yadav

BORDER PATROL: THE MEASURES & RESTRICTIONS

SINGHU (Delhi-Sonipat border)



2,000
security personnel deployed

- More barricades added, bolstered with sand sacks and barbed wire
- Streets and bylanes dug up to stop protesters
- NHAI boards welcoming commuters to Delhi removed

TIKRI (Delhi-Bahadurgarh border)

- Five-seven companies of paramilitary forces and around 200 Delhi Police personnel keep guard
- Trucks and containers used as barricades
- CCTVs for surveillance, loudspeakers connected to main mic system installed
- Mock drills held; women personnel asked to not carry handbags to ensure easy access to riot-control gear

GHAZIABAD, NOIDA

- Barricades installed in Ghaziabad, heavy vehicles such as trucks and cranes parked at a stretch of around 100 metres on Delhi-Meerut Expressway
- Both service lanes adjacent to expressway, towards Delhi, blocked and vehicles being diverted to other routes
- In Noida, police barricaded different borders

Factories near Singhu shut, business affected

Meanwhile, factories near Singhu border remained shut as labourers on both sides found it difficult to come to work. "For the last three days, our owner told workers to not come to work," said Amit Kumar, who is the in-charge for a transportation and logistics company. He complained that the transportation business has taken a hit in the last few days. "The company used to earn Rs 4 to 5 lakh a day, but we have earned nothing in the last few days. Last time the farmers protested, we lost business for three months until we found alternative routes to send our trucks through," he said.

Sanjeev Dhingra, who owns a stainless steel hardware factory in Kundli, said shipment costs have also increased by Rs

4,000 to Rs 5,000.

Sonu, an auto driver who ferries people between Sonipat and Delhi, said, "I used to earn between Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500 a day but my earnings have dipped to half of that." Sunil, a bus conductor for a Haryana state transportation bus, concurred and said his bus would see 40 passengers per trip between Panchkula and Delhi but of late, they've run the route with just 15 to 20 passengers.

However, business for Sarvan seemed to be booming. With his tea stall placed squarely behind barricades on the Delhi side, he has been seeing a steady flow of customers from both the police force and the general public. Yet, he doesn't seem to be too optimistic. "The last time the protesters were here, they set up their own facilities for tea and snacks, so it was a loss for me," he rued.

According to Delh Metro officials, the Yellow and Blue Lines

Delhi Metro clocks 71.09 lakh rides, its highest yet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

WITH 71.09 lakh passenger rides on Tuesday, the Delhi Metro saw its highest daily passenger rides so far. It broke its previous record of 71.04 lakh rides, which it achieved last September. A DMRC official said it's likely the ride figures were bolstered by the border closures owing to the farmers' protest.

For the past few days, security along the capital's borders has been beefed up and the curbs caused massive traffic snarls.

According to Delh Metro officials, the Yellow and Blue Lines



Use the Metro, reach centre by 10 am today: CBSE's board exam advisory

New Delhi: With Class X and XII board exams set to begin Thursday, CBSE has advised students in Delhi to set out on time, use Metro services and arrive at the exam centre by 10 am, considering possible transport-related difficulties.

The national capital and parts of the NCR have seen traffic jams on account of security restrictions and barricading along the borders after farmers from Punjab began their 'Dilli Chalo' march on Tuesday. Singhu and Tikri borders near Haryana have been sealed.

A total of 5,80,192 students will be appearing for the exams at 877 centres in Delhi. The exams will begin at 10.30 am. "Considering the situation in Delhi, transport-related issues are likely due to which delays in reaching exam centres can be expected. Students are advised to leave their homes early so they can reach centres on time as per guidelines," the CBSE said in a note on Wednesday.

Class X exams will begin with painting, and Rai, Gurung, Sherpa, and Tamang language papers on Thursday. Class XII exams will begin with entrepreneurship, physical activity trainer, capital market operation, and the Kokborok language papers on Thursday. ENS

These included samples of rolled bandages, IV sets, infusion sets, absorbent cotton, latex examination gloves among others, which were sent to different government-approved labs. A majority of the samples were allegedly found sub-standard or had failed during testing.

"During the course of initial investigation, different alleged firms and suppliers were found to have provided these items through the GeM (Government e Marketplace) Portal; 14 firms connected with the supply in question and belonging to Delhi/NCR have been visited and inspected," Verma said.

Further investigation, Verma added, revealed that government officials "intentionally avoided" taking desired lab reports and licences mentioned in the GeM contract order; in some cases, the licence numbers mentioned by the supplier belonged neither to them nor to the manufacturer.

"In most cases, batch numbers of delivered items did not match with those quoted by the manufacturer/supplier. It has also surfaced that sub-standard material purchased from local markets, with no parameters at all, was supplied to the hospitals," he said.

The ACB identified the accused arrested in the case as Hemant Joshi, Rahul Chaurasiya, Kapil Makhija, Shahid Chaudhary, Kamaldeep Singh, Arjinder Pal Singh, Rajesh Malhotra, Harneet Singh Bindra, Shekhar and Bipin Kumar Pathak.

"Receiving of the items was also found to have been given by officials against nil delivery or short delivery. Instances have been noticed where the approval committee had given the nod even before receiving the material..." he added.

According to Verma, on June 18 last year, teams of the vigilance wing of the Delhi Health department had separately visited the six hospitals and collected samples of different items.

BASANT PANCHAMI CELEBRATIONS

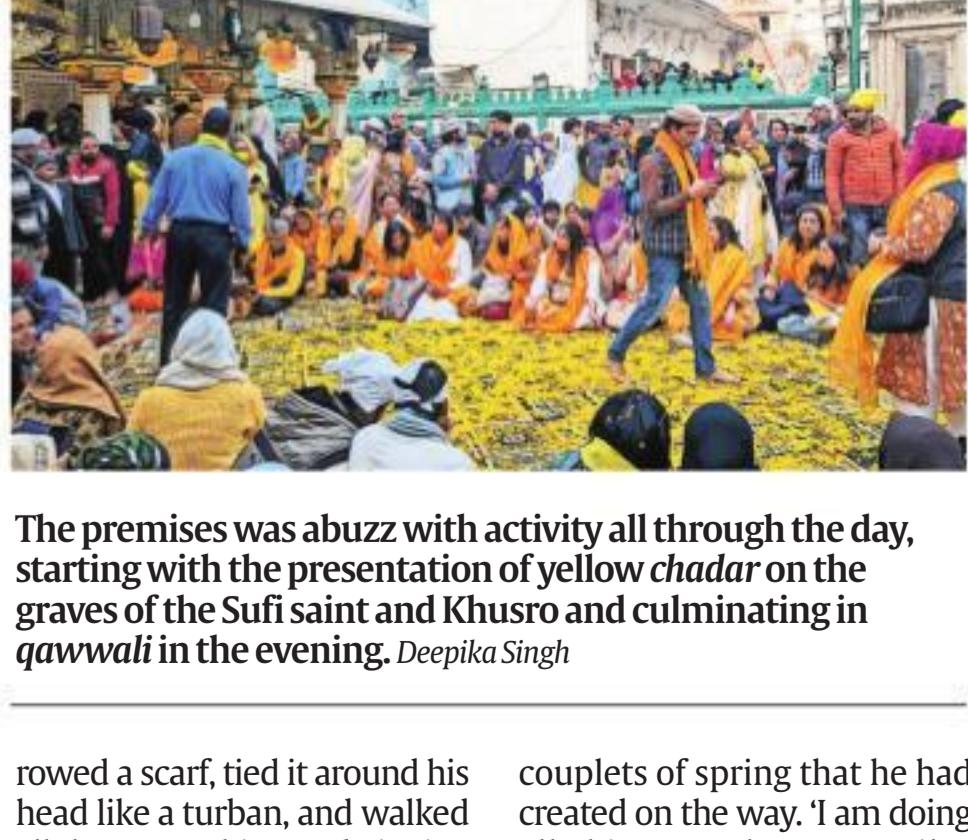
It was all yellow: At Nizamuddin dargah, centuries-old celebration of spring

DEEPIKA SINGH NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

ON WEDNESDAY, the centuries-old Nizamuddin Dargah was draped in a carpet of yellow. From flowers at the shops lining the streets leading to the shrine to the turbans and scarves adorning the visitors, the colour was hard to miss. The occasion? Basant Panchami celebrations, which drew in people from all faiths.

"I have seen nothing like this before. It is so vibrant and colourful," exclaimed William, a media professional from Kansas, US, as he basked in the festival welcoming spring.

He was accompanied by his friend Anand from California, who said: "I have my roots in Hyderabad so, Hindu-Muslim integration is not new for me.



The premises was abuzz with activity all through the day, starting with the presentation of yellow chadar on the graves of the Sufi saint and Khusro and culminating in qawwali in the evening. Deepika Singh

rowed a scarf, tied it around his head like a turban, and walked all the way to his ustad, singing

Khusro told the Sufi saint. And indeed, Nizamuddin Aulia smiled, finally, after six months. Since then, this celebration has become an annual tradition."

The premises was abuzz with activity all through the day, starting with the presentation of yellow chadar on the graves of the Sufi saint and Khusro and culminating in qawwali in the evening.

On what makes the Basant Panchami qawwali different from the regular ones the dargah has become synonymous with, Nizami said, "The qawwalis presented today are exclusively dedicated to the spring. You will not hear them on any other day of the year. These qawwalis are the same ones created by Amir Khusro all those years ago."

Some of the qawwalis included "sakal bann phool rahi saron" and "aaj basant mana le".

Anuradha Sabharwal, a Noida-based Yoga practitioner, said it was her third visit. "My husband has a transferable job which takes us around the country. But I still try and come here as many times as I can," said Sabharwal, who also teaches Gita through online classes.

Another teacher, who also goes by the name Anuradha, said it was her second Basant Panchami visit to the dargah, and at least the 15th visit to the premises overall. "I believe in Sufism. The last time I came here, it was far more peaceful and organised. Today, I found it a bit chaotic with so many people arriving. Nevertheless, it is always an uplifting experience to be here," she said.

According to Nizami, at least 30,000 people visited the dargah, higher than the daily count of 8,000-10,000.



Punjab Land of
Unlimited Opportunities

MUKH MANTRI TEERTH YATRA



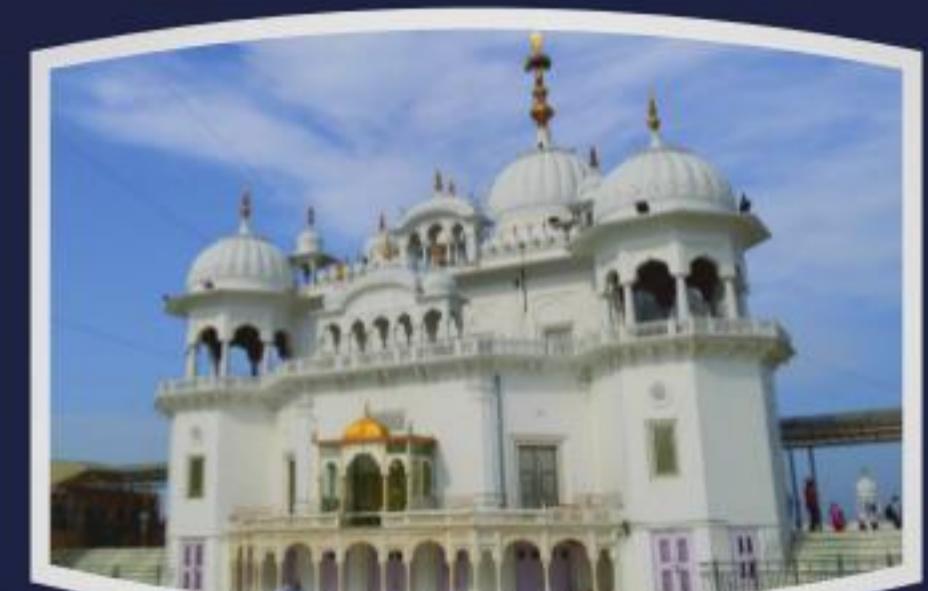
Sri Amritsar Sahib



Sri Hazur Sahib



Sri Patna Sahib



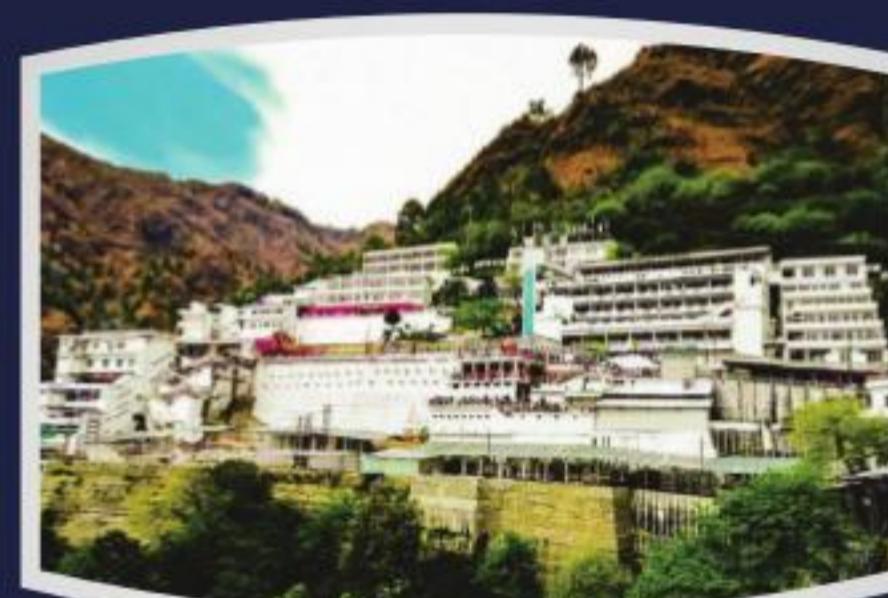
Sri Anandpur Sahib



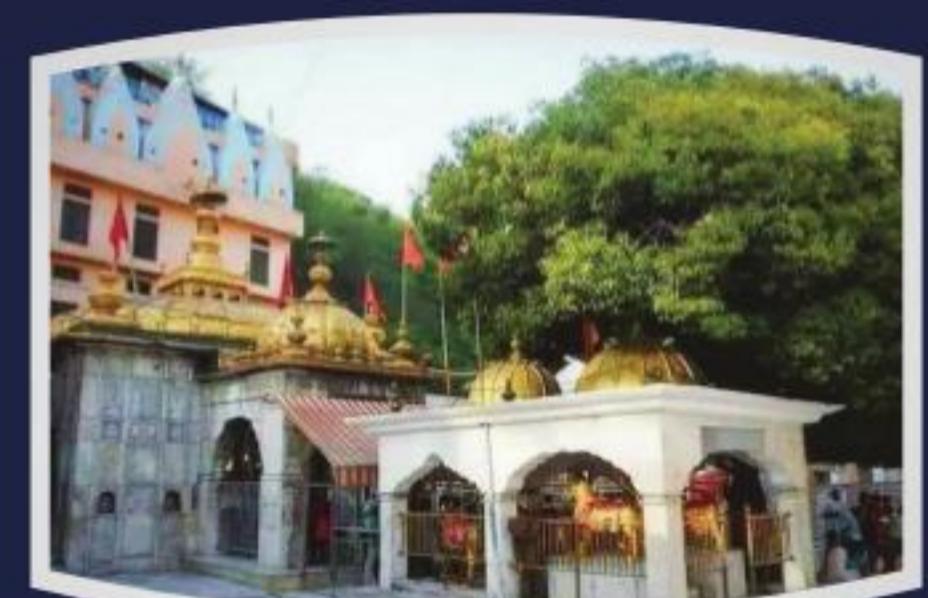
Mata Naina Devi Ji



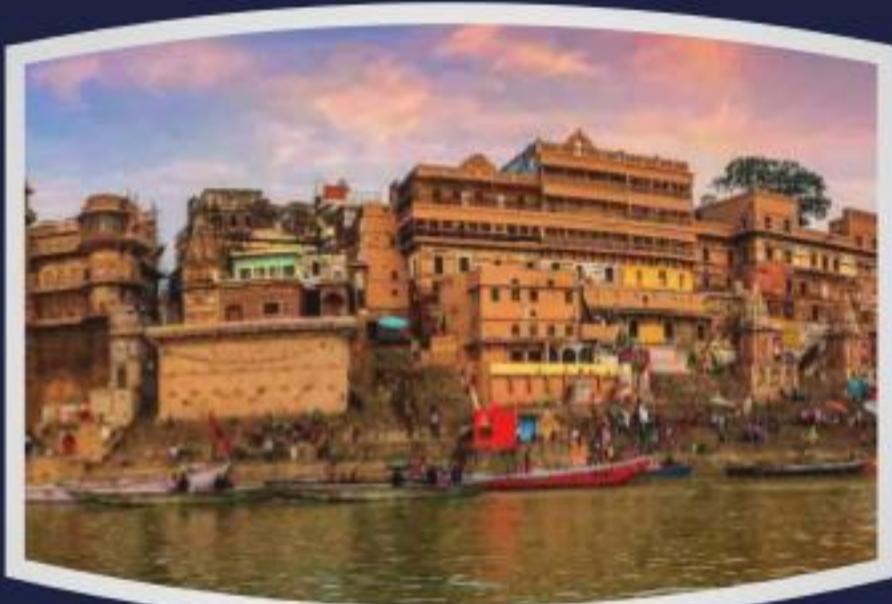
Sri Vrindavan Dham



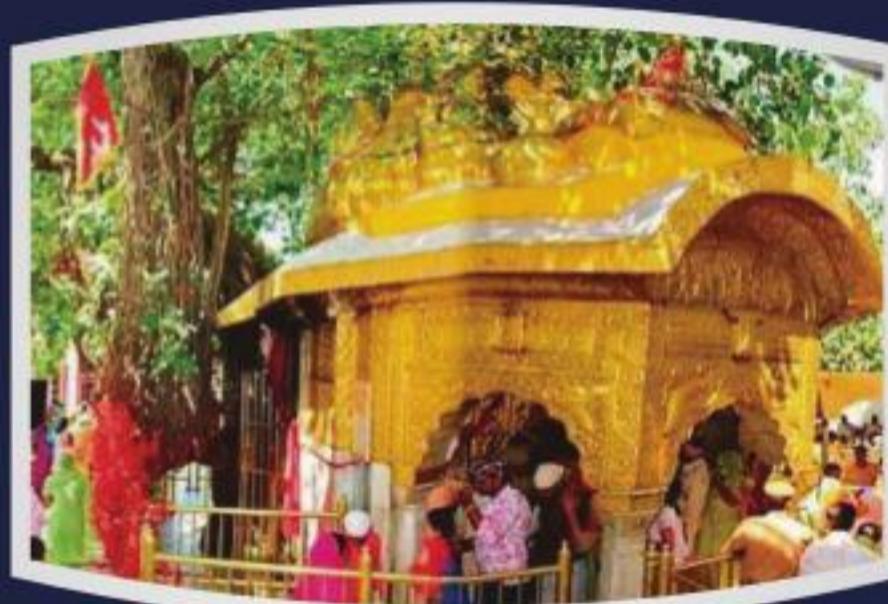
Mata Vaishno Devi Ji



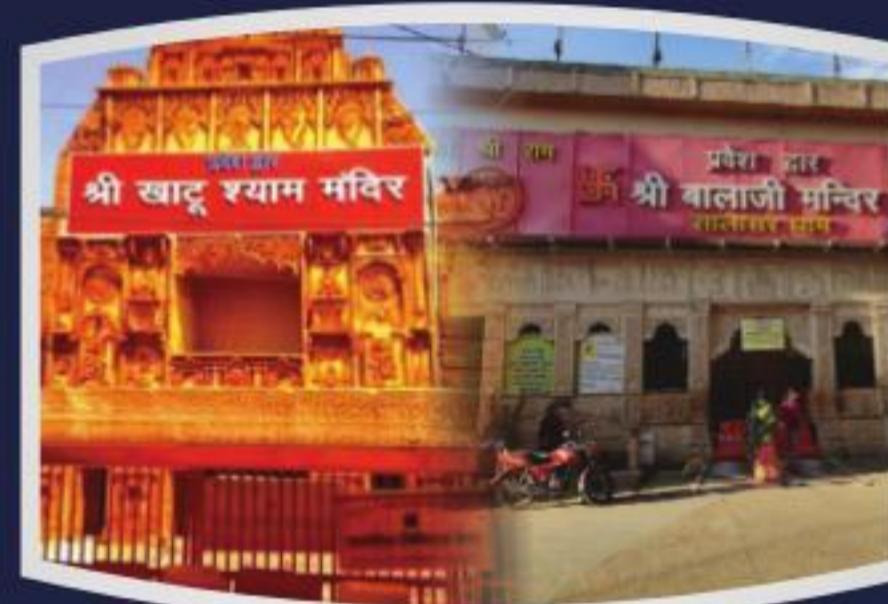
Mata Jwala Ji



Varanasi



Mata Chintpurni Ji



Sri Khatu Shyam Ji, Sri Salasar Dham



Khwaja Ajmer Sharif Dargah



With the sincere efforts of
Son of Punjab

Bhagwant Singh Mann
Chief Minister

**Over 20,000 devotees
made holy pilgrimage so far**



Bhagwant Singh Mann
Chief Minister, Punjab



Department of Transport, Punjab





DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



REPORTS UNAVAILABLE

AT THE time when the Central government announced to confer Bharat Ratna (posthumously) on agricultural scientist Professor MS Swaminathan, the reports he wrote as the chairman of the National Commission on Farmers are no longer available on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare. Earlier, the ministry's website had all the volumes of the Swaminathan Commission Report. The report has come to light again as Punjab farmers, who have launched a "Dilli Chalo" protest, have demanded that the crop prices should be determined according to the report of the Swaminathan Commission.

CLUE MISSING

A five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court is set to deliver its verdict in the electoral bonds case Thursday. The cause, which contains the SC's business for the day, would generally indicate names of the authors. For those in the legal circles, this would contain clues to hazard a guess about which way the verdict could likely go. However, a change in practice was noticed when the Article 370 ruling, electoral bonds ruling did not indicate the authors of the eagerly awaited verdicts.

RSS affiliate supports farmers' demands on MSP but not 'violence'



At Shambhu border on Wednesday. Reuters

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

THE BHARATIYA Kisan Sangh (BKS), an RSS affiliate, backed the farmers' demand of "remunerative prices for crops" while saying it does not support the "violent agitation by some unions".

"Movements in the name of farmers with political motives just ahead of the elections and the violence, chaotic environment, and loss of national property arising out of them only gives rise to negative perception of farmers in society. Farmers who are struggling to better their lives have to pay the price for this. Hence, the BKS does not support the violent agitation," BKS's Akhil Bharatiya Mahantmatri Mohini Mohan Mishra said in a statement late on Tuesday.

"We reiterate that remunerative prices based on the cost is the farmers' right and they should get it," he added.

The BKS Mahamantri, speaking to *The Indian Express*, said the BKS avoids using the term MSP and roots for remunerative prices for farmers based on their input costs.

In September 2020, when the now-repealed farm laws were being introduced in the Rajya Sabha as Bills amid protests by farmers in Delhi, the BKS had opposed them in their "current form".

The RSS affiliate, in its suggestions to the government at the time, had stressed that traders must be mandated to buy produce from farmers at

prices not less than the MSP.

The BKS had, in letters to then Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, had also expressed doubts whether the government's ordinance would ensure farmers get the right prices for their produce.

In September 2021, as farmers of West UP held a mahapanchayat in Muzaffarnagar, where they gave a call to defeat the BJP, the BKS said a country-wide protest would be launched demanding a law to ensure MSP for all farmers. It had also urged the government to take a "sympathetic view" of the farmers' demands.

As the Congress promised "legal guarantee for MSP" for farmers if the INDIA bloc is voted to power, the BKS underlined the "political interests" behind the current agitation. "It hurts when some people with political intentions use the farmers' shoulders to further their interests. The BKS believes farmers suffer the most when a political movement is carried out in their name... BKS insists that election manoeuvres in the name of farmers must be stopped," Mishra said.

Reserving its decision, the

court had said that it is "slightly difficult to accept" the government's contention that voters do not have the right to know the source of funding of political parties and suggested that a better poll bond scheme can be formulated taking care of the "serious deficiencies" in the present scheme.

A five-judge bench of CJI D Y Chandrachud, and Justices Sanjeev Khanna, B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra had reserved its judgment in the matter on November 2 last year.

Reserving its decision, the

court had said that it is "slightly difficult to accept" the government's contention that voters do not have the right to know the source of funding of political parties and suggested that a better poll bond scheme can be formulated taking care of the "serious deficiencies" in the present scheme.

Announced in the 2017 Union Budget, the scheme allows use of electoral bonds to donate money anonymously to political parties.

While the Centre has termed it "a big step towards electoral reform" which "will ensure trans-

parency" and "accountability", the petitioners have contended that the scheme affects transparency in political funding by allowing political parties not to disclose their annual contribution reports to the ECI, or the identity of those who have donated through electoral bonds.

In April 2019, a three-judge

bench of the apex court, in an interim order, had directed political parties which received donations through electoral bonds to "forthwith" submit details of the bonds to the ECI.

Subsequently, while dismiss-

ing a prayer to stay the sale of fresh bonds in March 2021, the Supreme Court disputed the petitioners' contention regarding the "complete anonymity" of bond purchasers.

It pointed out that bonds had been issued in the past – in 2018, 2019 and 2020 – "without any impediment" and that it had already ordered "certain safeguards" by way of its April 2019 interim order.

The court also referred to the ECI receiving details of contributions received through bonds, in pursuance of the April 2019 order.

RTI: States flagged higher rate of EVM breakdown ahead of 2019 LS elections

RITIKA CHOPRA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

A SET of documents obtained by an RTI activist revealed that in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls there were concerns within the Election Commission over the relatively high rate of Electronic Voting Machines' parts failing during the first-level check.

A first-level check (FLC) is the initial technical examination of the EVM's Ballot Unit (BU) and Control Unit (CU) as well as the Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

This process is conducted by engineers in the six months leading up to the Lok Sabha polls at the district level under the supervision of a District Election Officer (DEO).

If any EVM part malfunctions during the FLC, it is returned to the manufacturers, Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) or Electronics Corporation of India Limited, for repair.

During the last Parliamentary elections, instances of EVMs breaking down during the polling process led to political uproar.

Now, documents obtained by Venkatesh Nayak, the director of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, show that reports of a relatively high rate of breakdown

(commonly referred to as "rejection" in EC's correspondence and notations) of VVPATs and CUs continued to trickle in from the states throughout the FLC

process, and even persisted when candidates' names and their symbols were being fed into the machines closer to the polling dates.

In fact, officers from several state Chief Electoral Officers' (CEOs) office, including those of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, and Kerala, approached the EC requesting it of more machines because of the high failure rate.

Though the EC has not officially declared any cut-off range to define a certain rejection rate as either high or acceptable, according to sources, a rejection rate of up to 5% for BUs, CUs, and VVPATs is considered acceptable.

Some states were, however, reporting rates as high as 30% during the FLC.

According to a letter accessed by Nayak, on October 13, 2021, an officer at EC had written to the Chairman and MD of BEL and ECIL flagging higher rejection rates of VVPATs and CUs during the FLC conducted in the run-up to the Assembly polls in UP, Uttarakhand, and Punjab.

BEL and ECIL did not respond to the questions sent by *The Indian Express* Queries.

The EC didn't directly reply to the newspaper's questions either, instead updated its FAQs on EVMs on its website with a few fresh questions on the FLC process.

"After every election, an analysis of non-functional EVMs and VVPATs is carried out as an integral part for enhancing the performance of EVMs and VVPATs to reduce replacement rates during actual polls. Post General Election 2019, the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) carried out an exhaustive analysis along with BEL and ECIL. Analysis was delayed due to COVID-19 period. In analysis, it was concluded that some corrective actions are required to be taken to reduce the replacement rate of M3 VVPATs and to ensure voter is not put to any inconvenience," the EC has stated in one of the questions in FAQ section pertaining to "claims" of high rejection rates in 2019 LS polls.

In a communication, it was also informed that a maximum of 920 companies of CAPFs are expected to be deployed in West Bengal in a phased manner, followed by 635 companies in J&K and 360 companies in Chhattisgarh, 295 companies in Bihar, 252 companies in Uttar Pradesh, and 250 companies each in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Punjab.

"The other states where a sizeable number of CAPF personnel are likely to be deployed are: 200

companies each in Gujarat, Manipur, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu; 175 companies in Odisha; 160 companies each in Assam and Telangana; 150 in Maharashtra; 113 in Madhya Pradesh; and 100 in Tripura," Verma said.

However, the EC said various issues were raised by MHA and CAPFs pertaining to inconvenience to the forces during their mobilisation in polls in 2022 and 2023. "The railway ministry has already been requested to address the concerns so as to avoid a recurrence of such incidents," it said.



WORLD GOVERNMENTS SUMMIT IN ABU DHABI

World needs inclusive govts, clean, free of corruption: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that citizens should neither feel the absence of a government nor there should be pressure from the government.

Speaking at the World Governments Summit in Abu Dhabi, Modi said, "I believe that people should neither feel the absence of a government, but at the same time, nor should there be pressure from the government," he said while stressing the mantra of 'minimum government, maximum governance'.

"In fact, I believe that the government should interfere as little as possible in the lives of people," he said. Modi said that as Gujarat chief minister and as Prime Minister he has spent 23 years in government and his principle has been 'minimum government, maximum governance'.

"People have trust in the intent and commitment of the Indian government. This was



PM Narendra Modi at the summit on Wednesday. PTI

possible only because we prioritised public sentiments," he said.

The world today needs governments that are inclusive, take everyone along, and are clean and free of corruption, he asserted.

"On one hand the world is progressing towards modernity, on the other, the challenges from earlier centuries are intensifying," he said. Today, technology is proving to be a key disruptor be it positive or negative, he said.

The World Governmen-

Terrorism in various forms is bringing new challenges before humanity every day. Today, climate challenges are becoming widespread with time. On the one hand, there are domestic concerns, on the other hand, the international system seems in disarray," Modi said.

Hailing UAE President Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, Modi said he is a leader with vision and resolve.

The World Governmen-

Setback for Cong in Assam as 2 MLAs 'extend support' to govt

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, FEBRUARY 14

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma with Congress MLAs Kamalakhya Deo Purkayastha and Basanta Das in Guwahati. PTI

ment meant a move to the BJP. Sarma heralded the move as a "new trend" and said there was "no real Opposition" in Assam. It will soon "become a state where all MLAs will support the state government and the Central government", he added.

Purkayastha, the Congress MLA from North Karimganj, wrote to Assam Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah, saying he would "continue work only as a primary member of the Congress party".

Purkayastha said Das and he had decided to support the BJP government. He was suspended by the Congress. A year later, the party had suspended South Karimganj MLA Siddique Ahmed for cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha polls.

On Wednesday, Sarma po-

inted to these earlier instances as examples of the "trend". He added: "In the past few days, six-seven MLAs have reached out to me. More MLAs want to do this."

Congress leaders attributed his U-turn to "pressure" from the government. Last year, a team of the Assam Vigilance Cell raided Purkayastha's residence over alleged irregularities in the purchase of a tea garden.

"Some financial matters of his were being investigated and, the allegations may be true or false, but he was under pressure," said Congress Legislature Party leader Debabrata Saikia.

Congress has seen a series of exits in last few years with the likes of Ashok Chavan, Milind Deora, Baba Siddiqui, Jyoti Rani Scindia, Jitin Prasad, Priyanka Chaturvedi, Sushmita Dev, RPN Singh and Jaiveer Shergill joining other parties. PTI

SC to deliver verdict on poll bonds today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

court had said that it is "slightly difficult to accept" the government's contention that voters do not have the right to know the source of funding of political parties and suggested that a better poll bond scheme can be formulated taking care of the "serious deficiencies" in the present scheme.

Announced in the 2017 Union Budget, the scheme allows use of electoral bonds to donate money anonymously to political parties.

While the Centre has termed it "a big step towards electoral reform" which "will ensure trans-

parency" and "accountability", the petitioners have contended that the scheme affects transparency in political funding by allowing political parties not to disclose their annual contribution reports to the ECI, or the identity of those who have donated through electoral bonds.

In April 2019, a three-judge

bench of the apex court, in an interim order, had directed political parties which received donations through electoral bonds to "forthwith" submit details of the bonds to the ECI.

Subsequently, while dismiss-

ing a prayer to stay the sale of fresh bonds in March 2021, the Supreme Court disputed the petitioners' contention regarding the "complete anonymity" of bond purchasers.

It pointed out that bonds had been issued in the past – in 2018, 2019 and 2020 – "without any impediment" and that it had already ordered "certain safeguards" by way of its April 2019 interim order.

The court also referred to the ECI receiving details of contributions received through bonds, in pursuance of the April 2019 order.

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free

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elections,"

Verma said in his letter.

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"The other states where a sizeable number of CAPF personnel are likely to be deployed are: 200

companies each in Gujarat, Manipur, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu; 175 companies in Odisha;

160 companies each in Assam and Telangana; 150 in Maharashtra;

113 in Madhya Pradesh; and 100 in Tripura," Verma said.

However, the EC said various

issues were raised by MHA and CAPFs pertaining to inconveniences to the forces during their mobilisation in polls in 2022 and 2023.

"The commission has considered the requests made by the state CEOs and decided to deploy a maximum of around 3,400 companies of CAPFs in all states and UTs in phases to ensure

the

free, fair and peaceful elections,"

Verma said in his letter.

In a communication, it was also informed that a maximum of 920

EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

UTTAR PRADESH

Firecrackers explode at govt event, 4 killed

Lucknow: Four persons died when a stash of firecrackers, intended for a celebratory display, caught fire at the venue of Bundelkhand Gaurav Mahotsav in Chitrakoot. The UP Department of Tourism event was organised by a private firm at a college ground, said an administrative officer. "The organisers had planned to conclude the event on Wednesday with a firecracker display at night. A programme was scheduled for 4 pm when the firecrackers caught fire," a police officer said. ENS

GOA

Stalker arrested for attacking woman

Panaji: A 24-year-old man was arrested for allegedly attacking a 22-year-old woman with a beer bottle after she allegedly turned down his proposal for a relationship on Wednesday. Police said the woman suffered critical injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Goa. According to the police, the incident took place around 7 am in Usgao, an industrial town in South Goa's Ponda, when the victim was on her way to a factory where she works. Police said the accused, Manthan Gaude, who works as a labour contractor, has been arrested. ENS

KARNATAKA

Girl, boyfriend among 5 held for 'killing' her father

Bengaluru: A teenager, her boyfriend and three others were arrested for allegedly killing her 47-year-old school teacher father in Kunigal of Karnataka's Tumakuru district on February 10. Investigation revealed that Hemalatha, 19, daughter of the victim Mariyappa, was upset with her father for opposing her relationship with boyfriend Shanthakumar, a food delivery agent in Bengaluru. ENS

NEW DELHI

Bhushan Steel fraud: Accused gets bail

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to an accused in the Rs 46,000-crore bank loan fraud case related to Bhushan Steel Ltd. Special Judge Rajesh Kumar Goel also directed accused Archana Ajay Mittal to furnish a bond worth Rs 10 lakh. ENS

Umar Khalid withdraws bail plea from SC, to 'try luck in trial court'



Umar Khalid was booked under UAPA in the 2020 East Delhi riots case

hearing to frame charges only after the police investigation is complete. Based on the chargesheet, the court frames charges and it is at this stage that an accused can be discharged.

Hearing on the arguments on charges against the 17 accused in the case began in Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat's court in Karkardooma on September 11, 2023 but was adjourned after the application. The Indian Express had reported in September 2023 that Advocate Sowjanya Shankaran, representing Tanha, had argued in the court that the accused must be made aware of the concrete charges against them.

"When my defence gets disclosed during arguments, they fill that hole using my arguments and file a different chargesheet," she said.

Shankaran said that it was unfair to file a supplementary chargesheet merely to fill loopholes in the investigation during the stage of charge.

It is learnt that the lawyers appearing for Kalita and Narwal have moved an application to start

BIENNIAL RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS ON FEBRUARY 27

Sonia files RS papers; matter of happiness for Rajasthan: Gehlot

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 14



Sonia Gandhi files her nomination papers in Jaipur, Wednesday. Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Ashok Gehlot accompanied her. PTI

Assembly seat last year:

Her name was officially announced by the party after she reached Jaipur. Former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said: "We heartily welcome the announcement. Today her announcement as Rajya Sabha candidate from Rajasthan is a matter of happiness for the entire state."

With her nomination, five out of six Congress Rajya Sabha

MPs from Rajasthan will be from outside the state, the others being K C Venugopal, Randeep Singh Surjewala, Mukul Wasnik and Pramod Kumar. Only Neeraj Dang is from Rajasthan.

"Sonia Gandhi heartily connected with Rajasthan. When Rajiv Gandhi became the PM, Sonia ji accompanied him on a tour of tribal-dominated districts," Gehlot said.

Ajit's strategy behind naming Praful Patel

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 14

THE NCP led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, which Wednesday announced it would field senior leader Praful Patel for the Rajya Sabha elections, has achieved many objectives with the move, primary being annulling the disqualification petition against Patel filed by the NCP (Sharad Pawar).

Patel was elected to the RS in June 2022 and has completed only two years of his present six-year term. Following the split in the NCP, the Sharad Pawar group filed a disqualification petition with the Rajya Sabha chairman against Patel, which is applicable to his present term. "To get re-elected, Patel will resign from his current seat. Which effectively annuls the disqualification petition. After getting elected in February 2024, he will get the six-year term till February 2030, which is two years more," said a party leader.

In Telangana, the party has brought back its veteran Renuka Chowdhury, who is close to both Gandhis and CM A Revanth Reddy.

The second candidate Anil Kumar Yadav, a young leader, is a confidante of Reddy. An OBC leader, he is a former national general secretary of the Youth Congress.

In Madhya Pradesh too, the party has chosen an OBC Yadav candidate - Ashok Singh - in line with Rahul's OBC push.

There were reports that ex-CM Kamal Nath wanted the ticket for himself. Sources said Meenakshi Natarajan, a Rahul camp follower, was in the reckoning till the last minute but there was strong opposition to her candidacy from the state leaders, including Nath and Digvijaya Singh.

The Congress's move to nominate Dalit leader Chandrakant Handore from Maharashtra is also a bit of caste balancing.

The Congress's candidate in Bihar - state party president Akhilesh Prasad Singh - is an obvious choice. He belongs to the upper caste Bhumihar community.

FULL REPORT
www.indianexpress.com

Maharashtra: BJP picks Chavan, doc who took part in Ayodhya movement

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 14

THE BJP Wednesday announced three candidates for the Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra leading with former Congress chief minister Ashok Chavan, former MLA Medha Kulkarni and Ajit Gopchade. While Chavan's nomination was a foregone conclusion, the party sprung a surprise by fielding Kulkarni and Gopchade.

The official list released by the central BJP only listed three names but sources said that while the party was planning to name a fourth candidate, it would take a

With 24 new faces in list of 28, BJP signals RS overhaul, what's coming for LS polls

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

THE RAJYA Sabha elections on February 27 may not change the BJP's tally in the Upper House, but its look will be starkly different. Among the 28 names announced by the party - the same as the number of seats held by it currently - 24 are new, with only four repeated.

A total of 56 seats are falling vacant. The BJP can win 27 seats as per its numbers, plus 1 more with the help of the BJD in Odisha. The four BJP leaders set to return to the Rajya Sabha include party president J P Nadda (an MP from Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh, who has been nominated from Gujarat); senior minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (named from Odisha, where he will again need the ruling BJD's support like last time); Union minister L Murugan (renominated from Madhya Pradesh); and senior BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi (Uttar Pradesh), whose name had been announced earlier.

The BJP top leadership had made it clear earlier that it wanted senior names who had served several terms in the Rajya Sabha to contest the Lok Sabha elections. After the announcement of names on Wednesday, it is more or less clear that Union ministers Bhupender Yadav, Dharmendra Pradhan, Mansukh Mandaviya, Narayan Rane, Parshottam Rupala, V Muraleedharan and Rajeev Chandrasekhar will have to take the Lok Sabha route back to Parliament - unless they are moved to the organisation side.

The other Rajya Sabha MPs who haven't received a renomination include BJP national media head Anil Baluni, BJP national vice-president Saroj Pandey, and former Bihar deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi.

Addressing NDA MPs in August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that every Rajya Sabha MP should contest at least

GUJARAT: NADDAMONG 4 NAMED

Gandhinagar: The BJP Wednesday announced the names of its candidates for Gujarat's four Rajya Sabha seats, fielding national party president J P Nadda, Surat diamond businessman Govind Dholakia, state BJP leader Jashvant Singh Parmar and state BJP OBC Morcha president Mayank Nayak for the election to be held on February 27. With a record 156 MLAs in the 182-member Gujarat Assembly, the ruling party is set to sweep all four seats. ENS

one election, so as to get a "feel" of the polls. Sources said Modi also intends the Rajya Sabha MPs being put in the Lok Sabha battle to emerge as new political faces of the party in those states - be it Pradhan in Odisha, Muraleedharan in Kerala; Chandrasekhar in either Kerala or Karnataka; Mandaviya and Rupala in Gujarat; and Bhupender Yadav in either Rajasthan or Haryana.

While Odisha is one state where the BJP sees immense potential to grow once BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik is out of the picture, in Kerala, it has been trying to make a breakthrough. Chandrasekhar, as Minister of State, Electronics and Information Technology, has emerged as a tech-savvy face of the BJP, fitting the template for both Kerala and Karnataka (he is a Malayali based in Bengaluru). In Gujarat, the BJP wants to develop a strong second run after Modi and Amit Shah have moved to the Centre, while in Rajasthan, it has been trying to grow out of Vasundhara Raje's shadow. In Haryana, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar is still seen as a party man rather than a leader as opposed to several titans in the Opposition ranks.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Mobs storm IRB armouries in Manipur, 1 dead

Firing at one armoury, looting at another

SUKRITA BARUAH GUWAHATI, FEBRUARY 14

AMID RENEWED escalation in violence in Manipur, state armouries were targeted again Tuesday night, resulting in the death of a person, who was part of the mob attempting to breach an armoury.

This week, the state witnessed intense gunfights, particularly in the peripheral areas of Meitei-majority Imphal East district and Kuki-Zomi-majority Kangpokpi district.

As firing continued Tuesday in different parts, mobs made at least two attempts to storm Manipur police establishments. During this, a person died while attempting to storm the 6th India Reserve Battalion (IRB) at Pangei in Imphal East Tuesday night when security forces tried to push the mob back, said sources in the police.

The person, whose identity couldn't be confirmed till the filing of the report, was injured but succumbed to the injuries on way to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences.

A large group of people had gathered there around 10 pm. It

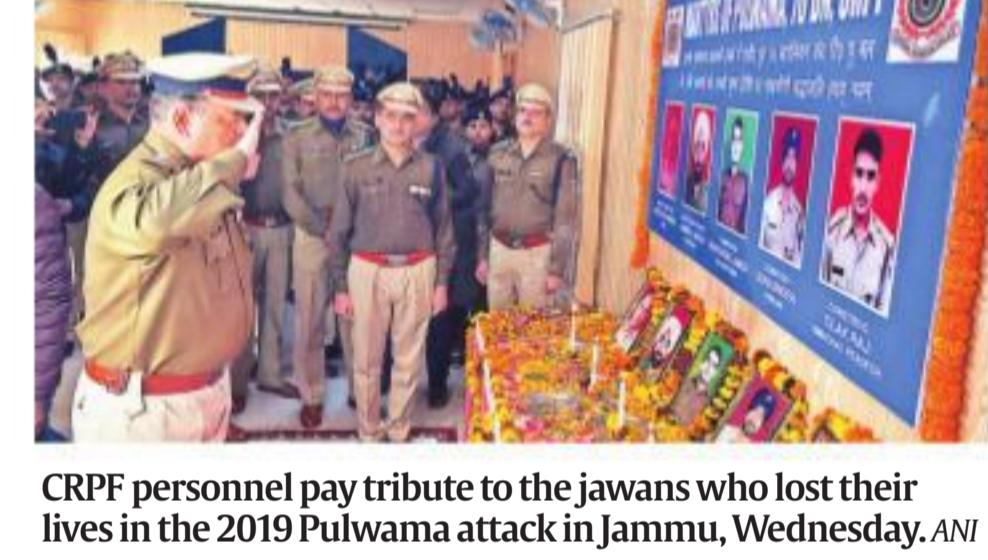
can only be deduced that the motive was to seize arms from the establishment...They stormed the security perimeter. They broke the gate and entered the armoury area," said a senior police officer.

The 5th IRB battalion in Imphal East's Thengai Chingjin was also mobbed using similar modus and a police official confirmed that the mob seized arms and ammunition from the establishment.

Earlier Tuesday, at least two people - Sagolsem Loya (15) from Imphal East and Demkhogin Khongsai (33) from Kangpokpi district - died amid firing in Imphal East-Kangpokpi district periphery. An Indian Army Junior Commissioned Officer was among the three people injured.

There was also exchange of fire Wednesday in Sognu, another periphery area in Kakching district close to its border with Chandel.

Since May 2023, the start of the conflict in Manipur, there have been recurring occurrences of arms seizure from security establishments, with the highest number of weapons seized from Imphal East so far.



CRPF personnel pay tribute to the jawans who lost their lives in the 2019 Pulwama attack in Jammu, Wednesday. ANI

Pakistan Rangers violate ceasefire, BSF gives 'befitting reply'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE JAMMU, FEBRUARY 14

PAKISTAN RANGERS Wednesday evening resorted to unprovoked small arms fire at a BSF post along the internal border in R S Pura sector of Jammu and Kashmir violating the 2021 ceasefire agreement with its Indian counterpart.

Sources said the firing, which started from Pakistan's Chenab post opposite Allah Mai De Kotey around 5.50 pm, was retaliated effectively and befittingly from its two posts situated in R S Pura and Makwal.

Border Security Force (BSF) spokesperson here said the security force personnel "befit-

tingly responded" to the unprovoked firing by Pakistan Rangers that started around 5.50 pm and stopped around 6.15 pm. "Troops are on high alert," he said.

There was no loss of life or property on the Indian side, sources said.

Wednesday's ceasefire violation has been the second in the last two months, as a BSF personnel was killed in Pakistani firing on the intervening night of November 8-9 in Samba district's Ramgarh sector.

The incident comes days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jammu on February 20 when he is likely to inaugurate and lay foundation of development projects worth crores.

Karnataka teacher loses Rs 2.8 cr to online job fraud

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 14

A 38-YEAR-OLD government school teacher, looking for a part-time job to work after school hours, lost Rs 2.77 crore to cyber-criminals in Karnataka.

The incident has been reported in Maski town of Raichur district, where the teacher lost the money between September 3, 2023, and January 12 this year. Though the woman approached the police and filed a complaint on January 14, the incident came to light only recently.

Pratibha (name changed), a government school teacher who was looking for a part-time job, came across a link, www.kiwi.com, on WhatsApp. The link had details stating that they needed part-time employees, who would be booking air tickets every day and this can help them earn something between Rs 1,000 and Rs 3,600 daily.

Pratibha, a post-graduate who has been working as a primary school teacher, took up the part-time job.

A police officer said, "In September (2023), she took up the part-time job and the fraudsters shared with her a few links

which she filled in. As days passed, the cyber-criminals started showing her earnings, which had by then turned quite lump sum. However, when she tried to withdraw the amount, she was not being able to do it. The fraudster then asked her to pay various charges for the release of the amount. Unable to fathom what she was subjected to, Pratibha started crediting money to the accounts which the fraudsters asked her to. She had transferred money to 82 different accounts."

By then she had also updated her friends, family, and others about the job and they, too, had lent her money ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh. She also pledged her house to get the pending dues, said the officer. Between September 2023 and January this year, she had transferred Rs 2.77 crore to the fraudsters. When the cyber-criminals demanded more money and her lenders started asking for the money back, Pratibha approached the police. The officer said, "She is in the middle of a severe crisis, as the money lenders have been harassing her."

Now, the education department has sent her a notice seeking explanation over the part-time job she was doing as she is an overment employee.

गांधी स्मृति एवं दर्शन समिति
 गांधी स्मृति, 5, तीस जनवरी मार्ग, नई दिल्ली |

महात्मा गांधी पर पुस्तकों के लिये विश्व पुस्तक मेले के हॉल नं- 1, स्टॉल नं- वी 27
 प्रगति मैदान पर पधारें।

महात्मा गांधी जी की पुस्तकों पर 60% तक की विशेष छूट

1000 रुपये की पुस्तकों की खरीद पर एक चरखा उपहार स्वरूप पाएं।

विजय गोयल
 उपाध्यक्ष, गांधी स्मृति पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री

ISRO to launch INSAT-3DS on Feb 17, will improve forecasts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 14

WEATHERMEN AND scientists tracking extreme climate affecting the country will soon be facilitated with improved satellite data and high resolution images of the Earth obtained from the soon-to-be-launched INSAT-3DS.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch the INSAT-3DS from Sriharikota on February 17.

This new facility, weighing 2,274kgs and funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences, will enable the development of newer satellite products that can be deployed while tracking cyclones, monsoon systems, thun-

derstorms and other natural disasters. INSAT-3DS shall further the observations of atmosphere, land and ocean.

The INSAT-3DS is a continuation to the Third Generation Meteorological Satellite series from the geostationary orbit. Presently, meteorologists make extensive use of data generated by satellites like the INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR (launched in September, 2016, still operational).

Since 2003, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has been using INSAT data for its operational meteorology purposes. The advent of satellite-based products brought significant improvements in the forecast accuracy, monitoring of

atmosphere and ocean parameters and overall enhanced the meteorological services leading to reduction in loss to property, life and livelihood.

In all, INSAT-3DS comprises four payloads -- an Imager, a Sounder, a Data Relay Transponder and a Satellite aided Search and Rescue Transponder. The multi-spectral imager will generate images of the Earth across six wavelength bands aiding visualisation of colour-dependent atmospheric parameters like water vapour (humidity).

The sounder will contribute in generating vertical profiles of the atmosphere and provide information like temperature and humidity.

Sealed Tenders on item rate basis are hereby invited on behalf of Governor of H.P. by Executive Engineer, NH Division, HPPWD, Hamirpur (H.P.) from the experienced contractor/ firms enlisted in appropriate class with HPPWD for the following works. The tender shall be received in this office on 12-01-2024 up to 11:00 A.M and the same shall be opened on the same day at 11:30 A.M. in the presence of Contractor/Firms or their authorized/representatives who wish to be present at the time of opening of tender. The application for issue of tender document shall be received on dated 10-01-2024 up to 12:30 P.M. on cash payment (Non-Refundable) and tender document will be issued on 11-01-2024 up to 4:00 P.M. If the office happens to be closed on the scheduled date the tender form document will be sold/ opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

SIMULTANEOUS elections are expected to aid growth besides reducing uncertainty in the minds of investors and other societal stakeholders, according to a paper co-authored by NK Singh, former Chairperson, Fifteenth Finance Commission, and Prachi Mishra, Chief of Systemic Division Issues, International Monetary Fund.

Singh and Mishra presented the findings of the draft paper titled 'Macroeconomic Impact of Harmonizing Electoral Cycles' to the High-Level Committee on 'One Nation One Election' chaired by Ram Nath Kovind, former President of India.

According to a press note issued by the High-Level Committee, the paper brought out that, apart from the expenses, there

"On one hand, the concerns of the State as custodian of the people will also be protected. Second, your concern of the investment into the plant is protected," the CJL said.

The CJL underlined that a "middle ground" can be worked out. "...This industry generates revenue for the nation and the State... You should not be a facility that is lost to the nation... some sort of a middle ground can be found," he said, adding the proposed committee can take a decision in a month or so.

Senior Advocate Shyam Divan who appeared for Vedanta Ltd said TNPSB decision to deny renewal of the Consent to

Operate (CTO) was "too drastic and disproportionate a response, assuming there was some deviation" given that it had been in operation since 1997.

"The parameters at the stage of renewal for a running unit established in 1997 would be a little distinct from initial permission," Divan said.

The senior counsel submitted that "the state government which directed the closure of the plant had no power under the Air Act or the Water Act to so direct. The Board could have done it but what happened here was the state government directed it and the Board followed suit".

Senior Advocates C S

Vaidyanathan and Gopal Sankaranarayanan who appeared for the TN government opposed the proposal for setting up a committee and said their past conduct justified the move to shut it down.

The bench said that in case the committee finds that the closure was not needed, it would still have to make the facility state-of-the-art and not continue as it was in 2018.

Agreeing with the proposal for an expert committee to look into the conditionalities for restarting the plant, Divan urged the court to allow it in the interim to carry out refurbishment work at the unit.

The TN government opposed this and said no such interim relief could be granted while the main contentions were yet to be heard. The court asked both sides to give their inputs on the modalities for the committee when it hears the matter again Thursday. "You also apply your mind to what could best serve the public interest... because we cannot be oblivious to the fact that the community in Tuticorin has to also be carried along," the CJL added.

The Madras High Court had by order dated August 18, 2020, upheld the decision to deny renewal of CTO, following which Vedanta Ltd approached the SC.

SC mints expert panel to look into green concerns for reopening of Sterlite plant

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

CITING "NATIONAL interest", the Supreme Court on Wednesday mooted forming an expert committee to look into environmental concerns for reopening the Sterlite copper smelting plant in Thoothukudi which was shut down in May 2018 following an order by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPSB).

Hearing a plea by Vedanta Ltd, which owns the plant, a three-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said that a "way forward" has to be found.

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renewal of the Consent to

Operate (CTO) was "too drastic and disproportionate a response, assuming there was some deviation" given that it had been in operation since 1997.

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Senior Advocates C S

Vaidyanathan and Gopal Sankaranarayanan who appeared for the TN government opposed the proposal for setting up a committee and said their past conduct justified the move to shut it down.

The bench said that in case the committee finds that the closure was not needed, it would still have to make the facility state-of-the-art and not continue as it was in 2018.

Agreeing with the proposal for an expert committee to look into the conditionalities for restarting the plant, Divan urged the court to allow it in the interim to carry out refurbishment work at the unit.

The Madras High Court had by order dated August 18, 2020, upheld the decision to deny renewal of CTO, following which Vedanta Ltd approached the SC.

Simultaneous elections will help growth: N K Singh paper

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14



Asaduddin Owaisi presents AIMIM's submissions to One Nation, One Election panel chairperson Ram Nath Kovind in the presence of members NK Singh and Rajiv Mani

SIMULTANEOUS elections are expected to aid growth besides reducing uncertainty in the minds of investors and other societal stakeholders, according to a paper co-authored by NK Singh, former Chairperson, Fifteenth Finance Commission, and Prachi Mishra, Chief of Systemic Division Issues, International Monetary Fund.

Singh and Mishra presented the findings of the draft paper titled 'Macroeconomic Impact of Harmonizing Electoral Cycles' to the High-Level Committee on 'One Nation One Election' chaired by Ram Nath Kovind, former President of India.

According to a press note issued by the High-Level Committee, the paper brought out that, apart from the expenses, there

are wider economic ramifications in addition to repetitive expenses. These entailed issues of GDP growth, inflation, investment, expanded public expenditure, fiscal deficit, education, health outcomes, and law and order. The HLC decided to have a wider discussion on the paper.

Some of the economists who participated in the session include Chetan Ghate, Director, Institute of Economic Growth, Indira Rajaraman from Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Poonam Gupta, NCAER, Rakesh Mohan, Centre for Social and Economic Progress.

Hurriyat leader formally arrested

Srinagar: The Enforcement Directorate has formally arrested three people, including a Hurriyat leader, in a money laundering case for their alleged involvement in selling MBBS seats in Pakistan and funding terror activities in Jammu and Kashmir, an official said Wednesday.

Hurriyat leader Mohammad Akbar Bhat and Fatima Shah of Srinagar and Sabzah Ahmad Sheikh of Anantnag are in jail after their arrest five years ago by the Jammu and Kashmir Police's State Investigation Agency (SIA) in a terror funding case.

The Navy has also carried out a series of anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea in recent weeks. In the 12th edition of MILAN, the 51 participating countries will be sending their operational units and delegations.

As per the Navy, 15 ships and one Maritime Patrol Aircraft from friendly foreign countries, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka,

Russia, US, Iran, Myanmar, Malaysia and France, will participate in the sea exercise.

From the Indian Navy, nearly 20 ships, including aircraft carriers Vikrant and Vikramaditya, and nearly 50 aircraft will participate in the exercise.

Highlights of the Harbour Phase from February 19 to 23 include international city parade, international maritime seminar, maritime tech expo, MILAN village, subject matter expert exchange and table top exercise.

During the Sea Phase from February 24-27, participating navies will hold advanced air defence, anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare drills. Gunnery shoots on aerial and surface targets, manoeuvres and underway replenishment would be conducted.

Vice Admiral Sobi said international maritime seminar will remain the focus area in which various invited people will share their thoughts on various subjects. He said it is important to exercise together at sea, learn how to operate with each other in large numbers and large groups, and learn how to communicate with each other at sea.

He said: "The current geopolitical situation and the maritime challenges, including asymmetric threats, will be among the main topics of consideration this year. This will be taken up in discussion as well as in tabletop exercises that we will have with the participating navies."

65-year-old gets life term in 1981 Behmai massacre

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 14

FORTY-THREE years after bandit Phoolan Devi and her gang members perpetrated the Behmai massacre in which 20 people, all men who were mostly from the Rajput community, were shot dead to "avenge" her rape, a court in Kanpur Dehat on Wednesday handed down a life sentence to one of the two surviving accused, now aged 65.

This marks the first conviction in the case, in which there were 35 accused. The court on Wednesday acquitted another accused, who in 2016 was declared a juvenile at the time of the crime, on the basis of benefit of doubt. Phoolan Devi surrendered before the Madhya Pradesh police in 1983. She later became a Member of Parliament from Mirzapur (UP) and was shot dead outside her Delhi residence on July 25, 2001.

"Additional District and Sessions Judge Amit Malavia sentenced Sham Babu (65) to life imprisonment. After the pronouncement of judgment, Sham Babu, who was out on bail, was taken into custody and sent to jail," said government counsel Raju Parwal.

The case dates back to February 14, 1981, when 20 people were killed and six injured in the attack. A case was registered at the Sikandra police station in Kanpur district - now Rajpur police station in Kanpur Dehat. It is alleged that the attack was a fallout of the killing of a dacoit, Vikram Mallah, and a sexual assault on Phoolan Devi.

TAMIL NADU GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD
Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)

Sl.No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Specification No.	Total
1	CE/MM	M.85	1

For details of Works / Procurement / Due date of submission / opening, viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit websites: www.tangedco.gov.in, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.tntenders.gov.in

DIPR/868/Tender/2024

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
Ref: I) Tender Notice No. 81/2023-24 dated 05.01.2024 (S.No. 11)
ii) Tender No. 08235705 due on 12.02.2024

In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 12.02.2024 to 11.03.2024. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

The corrigendum has been published on website www.reps.gov.in 495/24

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

N.I.T. No.	48-23-24/WE
Name of work with Its location (A)	AMC of 3 No. RO system of 1000 ltrs/hr capacity for 3 years in the S/o SSE/W/RB under ADEN/E-III.
Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 4028678.72
EMD amount	Rs. 80600.00
Completion period of work	03 Years
Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Closing date of tender on 08.03.2024 at 15.00 hrs.
Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.	Above tender available on website i.e. www.reps.gov.in

128-W/269/OET/23-24/WE/NIT/48 Dated: 13.02.2024.
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 504/24

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Main Administrative Building, Sector-8, Noida, G.B. Nagar, (U.P.)
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

1. 09/Manager System/Jal-Billing/2023-24, AMC of Water Billing Software/System and Facility Management. Cost Rs. 56.12 Lacs.

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 28.02.2024 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 29.02.2024 at 11.00 AM.

Manager (System)

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-AUCTION NOTICE

No.23AC/393/E-Auction/2022 Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway Delhi Office invites bidders through e-Auction through IREPS (<http://ireps.gov.in>) for the allotment of under contract contracts at following Railways stations/locations:

E-Catalogue | Date & Time of bidding | Railway Stations/Locations/Ilots

Parking-01-2024 at 12.00 Hrs Delhi 1st Entry (DLI) (10533 Sq. Mtrs.), Meerut Cantt (Kankaria), Naya Ghaziabad (GZN), Ghaziabad IInd Entry Bhoor Side (GBZ) (2430.46 Sq.Mtrs.) for one year. Panipat 1st Entry (477 Sq.Mtrs.), Tuglakabad (Car) (607.05 Sq.Mtrs.) = Total 6 Sites

Website particulars, where complete details of [https://ireps.gov.in/](http://ireps.gov.in/) can be seen

All contractors who intend to participate in the e-auctions conducted through E-Auction Leasing module of IREPS should fulfil following mandatory requirements before they can submit their bids:

- Registration on IREPS for E-Auction Leasing Module • Payment of One Time Registration Fee • Current Account in State Bank of India • Integration of SBI Bank Account with IREPS Account

• Lien Marking of Funds • Update of Turnover Details • Contractors who do not have IREPS account for any module of IREPS can submit their online request for registration by clicking on New Vendors / Contractors (E-Tender/E-Auction Leasing) link on IREPS Home page.

Railway Authority to contact, in case of any query State Entry Road, New Delhi 110055. Email: pkg.delhidivision@gmail.com Tel: 011-23743084

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS Northern Railway, Delhi Division

505/24 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office.: PSEB H.O. Building, The Mall, Patiala)
CIN: U40109PB2010SGC033813; Website: <a href="http://www.pspcl

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, VIKRAM S/O VIRENDRA SINGH R/O H.NO-9, FIRST FLOOR, H2 BLOCK, PRIMROSE, SECTOR-82, VATNIKA INDIA NXT, GURGAON, HARYANA-122004 have changed the name of my minor son REYAAN aged 8 years and he shall hereafter be known as REYAAN SINGH.

007088906-1

I, Suman Rawat W/O Krishna Kumar, R/o S-195, Street No-3, School Block, Shakarpur, Laxmi Nagar, East Delhi, Delhi-110092 I have changed the name of my minor Son Sumit aged about 13 Years and He shall hereafter be known as Sumit Singh Rawat

0070889016-1

I, Shalini Tyagi D/O Anil Kumar Tyagi, R/o E-74, e-block, Naraina Vihar, Naraina Industrial Estate, South West Delhi, Delhi-110028 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Shalini Singh

007088991-1

I, Sadia, W/O Salim Ahmed, R/O-House No.867, Sheesh Mahal, Badshah Garh Road, Delhi-110006, have changed my name to Sadia Ahmed, for future.

0040714310-1

I, SWATI SINGH D/o Shri Ravinder Pratap Singh, R/o Near Happy Public School, RZ-1-49, Mahavir Enclave, Palam, South West Delhi, Delhi-110045 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as SWATI KUMARI in my all Educational Documents. The actual name of mine is SWATI SINGH, which may be amended accordingly

0040714178-1

I, SUNIL KUMAR S/O RAM BHAGAT GARG R/O 333, 2nd FLOOR, TARUN ENCLAVE, PITAMPURA, DELHI-110034 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUNIL GARG FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

0070889018-1

I, SUBANTU W/O NO. 1576891A RANK NC(TS) MOHD AZAD KHAN R/Q QUARTER NO.3 OLD DRDO CAMP, NEAR JAL BOARD, DELHI CANTT, SOUTH WEST DELHI-110100 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUBANI BEGAM VIDE AFFIDAVIT DATE 14-02-2024 BEFORE DELHI.

0070889063-1

I, Ruchi Jaiteley,W/o Hitesh Jaiteley,R/o,G-3/12 Jaiyava Towers Sector-56,Gurgaon HR-121001,have changed my minor Son's name,from Kabeer Jaiteley to Kavish Jaiteley (DOB-16/02/2008). 0040714317-1

I, Raj Kumar S/O Yudhvir Kumar Sethi, R/o 16/19 Ground Floor, Old Rajinder Nagar, Central Delhi, Delhi-110060, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Raj Sethi.

007088988-1

I, Praveen S/o Sh. Jile Ram R/o Jhuggi No.244, Block-EE, Jahangirpur Delhi-110033 declare that Praveen and Pravin both are same & one person. In future I known as Praveen. 0040714185-1

I, Nishi Sharma D/o Shri Om Prakash Sharma,R/o M-34C, Street No.1, Shastri Nagar, Delhi-110052, have changed my name to Afsah Noor for all purposes.

0040714127-1

I, NAND KISHORE S/O RAM ROOP PRASAD R/O HIG-97, NEAR WATER TANK, BRIJ VIHAR CHANDER NAGAR, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201011 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NAND KISHORE RAINA FOR ALL PURPOSES.

0070889060-1

I, Mohd Nawab Ali S/O Sagir Ahmed, R/o H.No-986, Street No-12, Rajeev Gandhi Nagar, Mustafabad, North East Delhi-110094, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Nawab Ali.

0070889013-1

I, Kulwinder Singh Malhi s/o Parkash Singh Malhi R/o 22/10, Punjabi Bagh Extension, New Delhi-110026, have changed my name to Kulwinder Singh.

0040714218-1

I, Anupma Sharma W/o Sutikshan Sharma R/o E-1039, 11th-Avenue, Gaurcity-2, G.Noida have changed my name to Anupama Sharma.

0070889051-1

I, Krish S/O Kewal, R/o B-27, Mansa Park, Uttam Nagar, West Delhi-110059, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Krish Sharma.

007088919-1

I, KANCHAN SINGH MALHAN alias KANCHAN SINGH d/o MOHINDER KUMAR PANT w/o JAGJEET SINGH /o WZ-82, Third Floor, Mukherjee Park, Tilak Nagar, Delhi-110018 have changed my name to KANCHAN SINGH permanently.

0040714104-2

I, JATA SHANKAR MISHRA S/O LT. SH. G.K MISHRA R/O NO.36, SHIVA KHAND, VISHWA KARAMA NAGAR, DELHI-110095, is to inform that my name JATA SHANKAR MISHRA' and 'JATA SHANKAR MISHRA' is of same person. My name be known as JATA SHANKAR MISHRA' for all purposes.

0040714105-1

I, AMANDEEP SINGH RATTAN,S/O GURMEET SINGH,R/O APPT NO.701,TOWER-A,KESHAV KUNJ,GALAXY ROYALE, PLOT-NO-GH-03,GAUR CITY-2, SECTOR-16C, GREATER-NOIDA WEST,NOIDA,UTTAR PRADESH-201301,changed my name to AMANDEEP SINGH.

0040714261-5

I, JAGJEET SINGH MALHAN alias JAGJEET SINGH s/o GURCHARAN SINGH MALHAN r/o WZ-82, Third Floor, Mukherjee Park, Tilak Nagar, Delhi-110018 have changed my name to JAGJEET SINGH permanently.

0040714104-1

I, Hradesh Pachauri S/O Dinesh Chandra Pachauri R/o 422/4B, Avas Vikas Colony, Bodia, Sikandra, Agra U.P. have changed my name to Hradesh Kumar for all future purposes.

0070889054-1

I, Harsh Vardhan Singh S/o Shri Ramesh Singh R/o Flat No.106, Tower- Mulsari, Shriya Srishti, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad, U.P.-201014 Inform that I have changed my name to Harsh Singh for all future purposes.

0040714117-1

I, Harish Chandra Sati, S/o Ishwar Datt Sati, R/o H.No-5, Munirka Kunj, Goya More Dipur, Dindarpur, Dindarpur, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043 have changed the name of my minor son Jayant aged 12 years and he shall hereafter be known as Jayant Sati.

0040713771-1

I, Fatah Abbas Naqvi S/o Husain Abbas Naqvi R/o 224, Pratap Khand Vishwakarma nagar, Delhi-110095 has changed my name to Fatah Abbas Naqvi for all future purposes.

0070889022-1

I, Dinesh Kumar S/O Arjun Dass, R/o 33, Vidyal Nikunj Apartment, IP Extension, Patparganj, Shakar Pur, Baramad, East Delhi, Delhi-110092 I have changed the name of my minor Son Jiyan Mehta aged about 7 Years and He shall hereafter be known as Akshaj Mehta 0070889010-1

I, DHARAMPAL, S/O RAM CHANDER, R/O-E-34, E-BLOCK, NEAR HANUMAN MANDIR, SECTOR-22, NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201301. Have changed my name to DHARAM PAL BAJAJ For all future purposes.

0070889058-1

I, Anju Kaushal D/o Brij Mohan Jangid R/o TB-201, Parsvnath Edens, Sector- Alpha-2, Greater Noida U.P. have changed my name to Anju Bala for all future purposes.

0070889056-1

I, Adarsh Kumar S/o Shri Mangat Ram R/o D-13, Sector-9, New Vijay Nagar, Ghaziabad, UP-200101 state that, My Father's name mentioned in my PAN card is "Rastogi", this is Incorrect. The correct name of my father is "Mangat Ram". and this is true.

0040714103-1

I, Sunita Gupta Alias Komal Gupta D/o Ram Phal Gupta and W/o Kulbhushan Gupta R/o 8, SU Block, Pitam Pura, Delhi-110034, have changed my name to Komal Gupta

0070889004-1

I, Sabir mohammed bhatti S/o Kaledhan Bhatti R/o 2-50 Plot WAS, Padla, Patal Gujrat, Bihar - 845449, have changed my name to Suraj Kumar

0070889997-1

I, Praveen S/o Sh. Jile Ram R/o Jhuggi No.244, Block- EE, Jahangirpur Delhi-110033 declare that Praveen and Pravin both are same & one person. In future I known as Praveen.

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0040714105-1

I, AMANDEEP SINGH RATTAN,S/O GURMEET SINGH,R/O APPT NO.701,TOWER-A,KESHAV KUNJ,GALAXY ROYALE, PLOT-NO-GH-03,GAUR CITY-2, SECTOR-16C, GREATER-NOIDA WEST,NOIDA,UTTAR PRADESH-201301,changed my name to AMANDEEP SINGH.

0040714261-5

I, hitherto known as RANDHIR SINGH ALIAS RANDHIR SINGH GRAAK,S/O RATI RAM, R/O 76,BARSAUL,NILOKHIER,KARNA L, HARYANA-132117,have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as RANDHIR SINGH GRAAK.

0040714236-8

I, have changed my name from Goldy Sharma to Khushi Bhargava wife of Ashwini Kumar Bhargava. I will be known as Khushi Bhargava in future.79/14 Khushi Bhargava, Rampur, Muzaffarnagar,Uttar Pradesh.

0040714280-1

I, Vijay Kumar Chaurasia,S/o Rajan Lal Chaurasia,R/o D-10/A,Street no -8, Ram Vihar, Delhi-110081,have changed my name to Vijay Chaurasia for all future purposes.

0040714280-1

I, Prem Shankar Mehta,S/o Sh.Ram Dev Mehta, R/o,House-No-D-154,Khasra No.103-1024,Ground-Floor Block-D,Durga Enclave,Punjab Khor,Near-Durga Mandir, North-West Delhi,Delhi-110081,have changed my name from RAJALIN JENA to ROJALIN JENA For all,future purposes.

0040714280-1

I, Harish Chandra Sati, S/o Ishwar Datt Sati, R/o H.No-5, Munirka Kunj, Goya More Dipur, Dindarpur, Dindarpur, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043 have changed the name of my minor son Jayant aged 12 years and he shall hereafter be known as Jayant Sati.

0040714276-6

I, Suresh Singla,S/o Arun Kumar Singla,R/o A3-218/219,Ground floor,Sector-16A Rohini,Delhi-110089,have changed my name to Samar Singla.

0040714280-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all future purposes.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model Town sonipat Haryana,have changed my name from Shivangi Kakkar for all purpose.

0040714301-1

I, T,Shivangi Kakkar W/o Bhupinder Singh,H.no.100R Model



PLAINLY ON MSP

Government must talk to farmers but legal guarantee of MSP will be a logistical nightmare at best, fiscal disaster at worst

FARMERS ON A tractor march to the national capital are primarily seeking a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for various crops announced by the Centre. Their demand is illogical and impractical. The government can "guarantee" MSP only on the crops and the quantities that it buys. It cannot obviously procure the entire produce brought by farmers to the mandis. Nor can it enforce MSP on private trade. The latter will choose to not purchase at all if asked to pay more than the prevailing supply-and-demand determined rate. A third option could be the trade buying at the market-clearing price and the government transferring the difference between it and the higher MSP to farmers' bank accounts. But that requires generating data on how much of produce each farmer has sold and at what price. It, in turn, creates scope for market manipulation: The trade may convince farmers to sell at below normal equilibrium price and make the government foot the higher difference vis-à-vis the MSP.

Simply put, guaranteeing MSP through legislation will result in a logistical nightmare at best and fiscal disaster at worst. It's true that farming is a business with high price as well as production risks, more so with the growing vagaries of climate change. But the solution for production loss — whether due to dry weather, unseasonal rain or pest attack — lies in crop insurance and timely payout of claims. Prices, on the other hand, basically reflect what the market wants. Cost-plus MSPs oblivious to demand conditions would only distort farmers' production decisions, leading to over-supply of some crops and under-supply of others. The net outcome is more, not less, price volatility. What farmers probably require is a minimum income support — MIS, not MSP. That can be given via per-acre or per-farmer direct benefit transfers. Assured of a minimum income, they can make informed market-driven decisions on what crops to grow. The current MSP regime is encouraging farmers to mainly plant wheat, rice and sugarcane. An MIS, in combination with a phase-out of water, electricity and fertiliser subsidies, will induce much-needed crop diversification.

The government must engage with the protesting farmers. The approach of confrontation — from sealing state borders with cement barricades and drilling iron nails into roads to deploying drones for dropping teargas shells — is not going to help. Farm agitations aren't new to India. The capital itself has seen much bigger mobilisations before, including Mahendra Singh Tikait's famous week-long rally of half-a-million cane growers at the Boat Club lawns in October 1988. Governments of those times could handle such demonstrations without over-reaction. The Narendra Modi government should learn from its own experience of the farm laws. If it had emphasised dialogue more, and not treated marchers as anti-national/criminals, it may not have had to repeal those well-intended laws. It should not repeat the mistake.

GOVERNOR IN A CHINA SHOP

By overstepping constraints of his office, stoking controversy, Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi makes his position untenable

NON-BJP RULED STATES — from West Bengal to Punjab, and Kerala — showcase a dismal pattern: The Governor is at loggerheads with the elected government. The politicisation of the gubernatorial office goes back decades, of course. But recent instances of the Governor's over-reach, ranging from the refusal to assent to bills passed by the assembly, to tussles over appointment of university vice-chancellors, have sharpened disquieting questions about the diminishment of a constitutional office. In this context, the conduct of Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi stands out — for his churlishness vis-à-vis the DMK government, and also, and more disturbingly, his lack of sensitivity and care in stoking long-settled ideological faultlines.

On Monday, Governor Ravi entered the record books for the "shortest address" by a governor to a state assembly. "This address has numerous passages with which I convincingly disagree... lending my voice to them could constitute a constitutional travesty," he said, before walking out. He also claimed that "due respect" had not been given to the national anthem — the custom in the TN assembly is for the House to sing "Jannai Thai Vazhthu" at the start of session and close with the national anthem. This is hardly the first time that Ravi has stoked controversy. Last year, he refused to read out sections of his speech in the assembly that referred to the Dravidian model of governance and leaders like Periyar E V Ramasamy, former chief ministers, K Kamaraj of the Congress and C N Annadurai and M Karunanidhi of the DMK, and B R Ambedkar. He said that the state should be called "Tamilzagam" instead of Tamil Nadu. Given his own record, therefore, Governor Ravi's invocation of the constitutional principle on Monday was ironical. In 1974, a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court ruled in *Shamsher Singh v State of Punjab* that a governor can act "only upon and in accordance with the aid and advice of their ministers". In his address to the House, the governor — like the President in Parliament — outlines the vision of the government.

In the first decades after Independence, significant issues in what is now Tamil Nadu formed the core of what is colloquially called the "North-South divide". That these were accommodated and resolved within the federal and democratic framework is a credit to India's political system. By trying to reopen debates long-settled, by constantly overstepping the bounds of his office, R N Ravi is making his own position increasingly untenable.

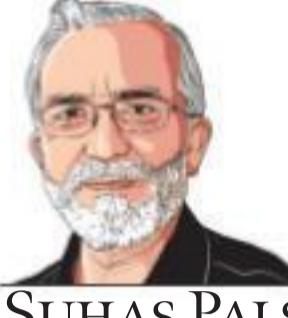
ONE AND ENOUGH

When it comes to single people, something to learn from the large-heartedness of a small European municipality

THE DAY AFTER Valentine's Day, littered with chocolate wrappers and tinsel, may be the perfect occasion to reflect on all the ways in which this world — "built for two", as Lana Del Rey sang in a modern love classic — takes a toll on single people. It's not as if the other 364 days of the year are any easier on the uncoupled. From having to foot the cost of living all by their lonesome selves to fielding pitiful looks when arriving solo at "plus-one" events, singles have it tough. Which is why it is heartening that a municipality in Belgium has adopted a charter to "no longer think from the perspective of the traditional family as the norm, but to strive for measures that are neutral to living arrangements."

This move by the municipal council of Woluwe-Saint-Pierre is being hailed as the first of its kind in Belgium — perhaps, even in Europe. It is a response to a demographic trend that has been evident for several years now in much of the developed world: The rising number of single people, including those who have made the deliberate choice to not mingle. Study after study of this group has shown that many of these individuals describe their lives as being "authentic" and "happy", yet such stories of fulfilment are invisibilised in a culture that sees coupledom as natural and inevitable. The cost of the accompanying prejudice is often high — such as when landlords refuse to rent houses to individuals, citing a preference for "families", or when single people are barred, by law, from making certain kinds of reproductive choices.

There is, then, something to learn from the large-heartedness of a small European municipality: When it comes to single people, put away your pitchforks and your pity. After all, at some point in life, due to death, divorce or other circumstances, everyone is alone.



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

STUDENTS OF PERFORMING arts, appearing for their examination, are attacked mid-way. The university apparently asks the head of the department to go to the police station and file a complaint. The police arrest the complainant and other victims of the attack.

A public meeting intending to criticise the ruling party is announced. The office bearers of the ruling party openly issue a threat. The police, instead of acting against those issuing the threat, ask the speaker to not attend the meeting. Subsequently, an attack on the speaker's vehicle takes place. Those issuing the threat remain unfettered.

These two "stories" could well fit into a dystopian novel or a Kafkaesque movie sequence. But it so happens that they actually unfolded in an Indian city. And there are many such stories happening across the country. What do they tell us?

Clearly, the immediate onus lies with the police. But is it only the old story of the police working as per the wishes of the ruling party? It might seem so on the surface, but scratch it and one will find that the police are themselves converted to a new way of thinking: That nobody should dare to do anything off-beat, that there should be self-censorship and that if the ruling party does not want a public meeting to take place, that wish should be respected. With elections round the corner, these two and similar stories also tell us something sinister: Even during the election campaign, it will be easy to ensure that the Opposition is not allowed to hold meetings. Grounds will be made unavailable, threats will be issued, a law and order situation will be created, and any criticism of leaders of the ruling party will be construed as hurting some sentiment somewhere.

For the past few years, many have pointed out the rising failure of institutions. These two stories represent the failure of the most crucial institution, the police. With the police openly siding with the ruling party and, in many cases, also enthusiastically adopting its political agenda — such as imparting bulldozer justice and encounter jurisprudence — the conflation between the ruling party and government machinery is becoming near-perfect. This should alarm us because the distinction between the ruling party and the administration is disappearing unrecognisably, mixing vigilante action with law enforcement.

We may be on the verge of a redefinition of democracy — without dissent or differences

That is where the deeper implications of the two stories need to be understood. In the first, everyone needed to preface their response by saying that certain symbols and deities are beyond criticism, or that everyone should exercise freedoms responsibly, etc. In the second case, either the past utterances of the speaker or his criticisms of a sidelined BJP leader were cited to argue that virulent criticism will not be tolerated.

It is indeed possible to make a case for the fact that the exercise of freedom of expression has to be a responsible act, not a reckless one. We often hear this from leaders and judges. There can be an unending legal and philosophical argument over this. But are we at all ready to engage in arguments? Both instances show that in the name of responsible exercise of freedoms, extra-judicial agencies take it upon themselves to stop or punish its "irresponsible" exercise. This is seldom recognised by the public or the police.

The central complicating factor in this entire saga is a complete lack of awareness of the inconsistency between democracy and such developments as narrated in the beginning. On the one hand, there is an intellectual tendency to imagine a distinction between liberal values such as freedom of expression (FoE) etc. and democratic politics as an unbridled expression of the will of the people. Such a distinction allows the argument that somehow liberal values are a Western import and popular expressions of likes and dislikes of the "public" constitute democracy. On the other hand, there is a widespread belief that the majority and its claims constitute the core of democracy. Thus, FoE and the baggage it operates with can be discarded as foreign or non-essential to democracy. Alternatively, they can be employed as instruments of the majority against the dissenting minority.

An additional dimension that requires careful consideration is the idea of the majority itself. As someone observing the journey of Indian majoritarianism over the past two decades, this writer has always been struck by how easily a claim to being the majority is accepted as an objective reality in political practice, judicial understanding and academic analyses. In reality, the politics of majoritarianism is about creating a sense of majority among a given cross-section of society, the law enforcement machinery and also

among those who do not subscribe to the imagined majority.

It is in this sense that the two stories are educational. In the first, the public was not privy to exactly what hurt the sentiments of the majority but the allegation that the skit being performed insulted certain deities was enough to cast a web of negative sentiment against the victims of private violence. Even the police reportedly said that such insults are unacceptable. A majoritarian narrative was constructed and dutifully accepted by almost everyone. In the second instance too, nobody seems to be asking how a private group — a political party — can publicly threaten to disrupt a meeting. Once that crucial question is buried, discussion can veer toward whether the majority likes a particular speaker, toward the past record of the speaker or toward the criticism of some leader. Again, no informed debate has taken place about what exactly was the insulting criticism and how it can be confronted — because the noise and the capacity to disrupt or attack are seen as constituting the inclination of the majority.

As India approaches yet another national election, these two stories pose before us two uncomfortable questions which we as a society are unlikely to attend to: One, are we developing a template of democracy where elections will indeed take place but a systematic and administratively run trickery will unfold to ensure that free campaign doesn't take place? Two, electoral majorities will endorse the rulers but more than that endorsement, will the manufactured anger and sentiments of "majorities" govern the norms that will undergird the regime?

If the answer to even one of these two questions happens to be in the affirmative, we are on the verge of a redefinition of democracy wherein dystopia passes off as democracy. The past 10 years have witnessed the socio-political groundwork for this redefinition. Gradually, we can feel the emergence of a new intellectual "echo system" that ratifies this. Now, we may experience the actual practice of this idea of majoritarian democracy — where differences, arguments and criticism are excluded from the idea of democracy.

The writer, based in Pune, taught political science



VANDANA KALRA

IN A 2014 interview for a catalogue for an exhibition in Kolkata, artist K G Subramanyan might have described himself as an "artist activist not activist artist" but that was perhaps an oversimplification. After all, he spent a lifetime ushering a movement in Indian art that was reflective of its times. During Emergency, for instance, when an art gallery in Delhi approached Subramanyan to participate in an exhibition, the artist contributed a hemp peacock to portray a maimed national bird. His protest was born out of disillusionment with the course India was treading.

The recipient of three Padma awards, Subramanyan's birth centenary today is an occasion to celebrate a life and philosophy dedicated to developing an artistic lexicon that aligned the contemporary with the traditional. One of the most influential artist-pedagogues in India, Subramanyan, who died in 2016, was an artist and historian, weaver and craftsman, writer and illustrator. Fondly called "Mani da" by his students at the Maharaja Sayajirao University (MSU) in Baroda, his creative agency borrowed from mythologies, fables, histories, society, India and the world.

Born in 1924 into a Tamil Brahmin family in Kuthuparamba, Kerala, it was chance that took Subramanyan to Santiniketan. A student of economics at Presidency College in Chennai, his participation in the 1942 Quit India Movement got him debarred from gov-

MANI DA'S WORLD

KG Subramanyan's art aligned the contemporary with the traditional

It was chance that took Subramanyan to Santiniketan to pursue art. A student of economics at Presidency College in Chennai, his participation in the 1942 Quit India Movement got him debarred from government colleges.

His brother wrote to Nandalal Bose for Subramanyan's admission to Rabindranath Tagore's Kala Bhavan. Santiniketan opened him to different artistic traditions and fed his curiosity about the world. From Bose, he learnt to value originality; Ramkinkar Baij's fervent energy and desire to engage with people living quotidian lives appealed to the young Subramanyan.

Assisting Benode Behari Mukherjee in the making of the mural *Lives of Medieval Saints* gave him an opportunity to study the approach of the pioneer who denounced dogma.

In 1951, when a job prospect took Subramanyan to the newly established Faculty of Fine Arts at MSU, he carried the ethos of his alma mater. He believed that academia should train students for the future. One of the youngest faculty members in the department, his students recall how he taught structural design by drawing on the floor with chalk or charcoal, and appointed craftspeople to teach relevant courses. Speaking to *The Indian Express* in 2016, his student, artist Jyoti Bhatt said, "...he was dedicated, gentle, intelligent and imaginative. He understood the limitations of his students and taught them accordingly... he followed guru-shishya parampara..."

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The doors of his house were always open."

By the time Subramanyan travelled to Slade School of Art in London in 1955 as a British Council scholar, he had already gained

a reputation. Several international exhibitions and prestigious opportunities followed but Subramanyan's heart and aesthetic belonged to India and that was where he was most at home. Working closely with weavers during his tenures at the All India Handloom Board in Bombay in the '50s and '60s, he adapted their techniques into his own practice, producing powerful works such as the monumental textile relief showcased at the 1965 New York World Fair. He experimented with techniques and genres such as terracotta and *patachitra* and artistic movements such as cubism.

The polymath's enduring legacy includes essays, toys and books for adults and children. While his friends cherish the drawings he received as greeting cards, his public murals reached out to a wider audience. If works such as *Generals and Trophy* (1971), *The City Is Not For Burning* (1993) and *Massacre of the Innocents* (2002) respond to conflict and war, the iconic terracotta relief *Anatomy Lesson* (2008) speaks of the fallout of discord and violence.

The most befitting testament to his art activism, however, is possibly his final mural, *The War of the Relics* (2013). The massive 2.7 x 10.9 metre black-and-white acrylic on canvas demonstrates how relics meant to unite have caused confrontations, and that perpetual power play is intrinsic to politics.

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FEBRUARY 15, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

VIOLENCE IN PUNJAB

CURFEW HAS BEEN clamped on six Punjab towns and shoot-at-sight orders issued as widespread violence and police firings took a toll of 13 persons, including two police constables, during the one-day bandh sponsored by the Hindu Suraksha Samiti. Over 200 persons were injured in the violence. The violent incidents came as the tripartite talks to solve the vexed Punjab problem resumed in Delhi.

SOVIET FOR PEACE

THE NEW SOVIET leader Konstantin Chernenko called for "honest negotiations

between equals which respect the security of each side" to settle international problems. Chernenko declared: "We will not be scared by threats. Our defences are strong and we will be able to protect everything accomplished by all Soviet people."

A MYSTERY DISEASE

A MYSTERY DISEASE which has killed two children and hospitalised two others has created panic about an epidemic outbreak in Chittaranjan Park in South Delhi. The disease, which begins with low fever leading to haemorrhage under the skin, resulting in a comatose condition within 24 hours of falling ill,

has struck a jhuggi colony of fish sellers.

SWRAJ PAUL BID

THE CONTROVERSIAL TAKEOVER bid of Escorts by Swraj Paul has taken a new turn with the government directing the Life Insurance Corporation of India and other financial institutions holding shares in the company to assert their full rights. From all indications, the government appears to be bent on assuming a major say in the management of the company. The notice served on Escorts by the LIC calling for a general body meeting to replace nine part-time directors has shocked industrial circles.

Temple bells in Abu Dhabi

PM Modi is the first statesman from a post-colonial society who has shown conviction to move towards the decolonisation of culture. BAPS temple bears testimony



RAKESH SINHA

THE CONSTRUCTION OF a Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi is being interpreted as a sign of mutual trust and enhanced relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, it would be an injustice to view the event as merely a matter of ceremonial importance for Hindus or a diplomatic gesture from the UAE. The message from Abu Dhabi is far bigger than is apparent at the current moment. The temple possesses cultural values that have the potential to redefine multiculturalism. Equally importantly, it exhibits Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mission to explore Bharat's ability to achieve the goal of the unity of opposites in a world that is rife with hostilities based on religion and culture.

Less than a month before the inauguration of the BAPS temple, PM Modi inaugurated the Ram temple in Ayodhya. It was an event that acquired ideological significance beyond Bharat due to the historical background of conflict between Hindus and Indian Muslims over ownership of the site. The debate centred around ideas of majoritarianism and minority rights. Its resolution and the proactive engagement of the Indian state in the construction of the temple shifted the debate from religion to culture. The temple at Ayodhya represented a reconnection with history and a reassertion of Hindu identity. A de-Hinduised India cannot accomplish the mission of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and help the world contemplate ideas, concepts and a future for mankind that goes beyond the Western worldview.

PM Modi made sincere efforts to present Hindu views before the global community. This has enhanced the morale and efforts of Hindu ideologues. Earlier, the latter were dependent on Orientalist categories to take part in the discourse on Indian culture. But 2014 proved a game-changer in the field of ideas.

Modi is the first statesman from a post-colonial society who has shown conviction to move towards the decolonisation and de-Westernisation of ideas and culture. Unlike right-wing politicians, he is both an ideologue and a practitioner. In this sense, he is close to the idea propagated by Marxist thinker Frantz Fanon, who believed that decolonisation requires conviction against Western ideas and value systems. In a sense, PM Modi reflects the suppressed aspirations of a large section of the non-Western world, particularly in former colonies.

The inauguration of the temple in Abu Dhabi also redefines multiculturalism, which remains a contested concept in the Islamic world. A Muslim state provided 27 acres of land for a temple. This is a recognition of the fact that religious co-existence is a prerequisite for cultural evolution. The secularism propagated by the West denied the space to the Hindu worldview. In 2016, Modi gifted Salman bin Abdulaziz, the king of Saudi Arabia, a gold-plated replica of the Cheraman mosque in Kerala, the oldest in the country.



C R Sasikumar

Secularism does not just mean togetherness with peace and harmony. It also involves respecting each other's views. It negates static thinking. Notwithstanding the polemics and propaganda against the RSS-BJP in general and Modi in particular, the Islamic world has its own assessment of the new regime in India. India does not have a history of discrimination based on religion. Parsis and Jews were respectively 1.1 lakh and 24,000 in the 1931 census. Both communities enjoyed equal opportunities and the Muslim population grew from 9 per cent in 1951 to 14 per cent in the 2011 census. Modi has received more than six awards from Muslim countries. This shows that the Muslim world is more comfortable with emerging India than the West. It also demonstrates that the West cannot define the contours of the relationship between non-Western countries.

Earlier, the West's approach was considered the basis for understanding Arab and Islamic countries. PM Modi's outreach represents a de-Westernisation of diplomacy. The West has not helped the Islamic world liberalise itself. It created elites among these nations who failed to understand the worth of their own culture beyond their geopolitics. The West exploited religious conflicts to maintain its hegemony.

Religion plays a vital role in shaping foreign policy. India lost decades of opportunity by refusing to acknowledge this. Buddhism originated in India but China used it to mobilise Buddhist countries. However, things began to change in 2014. Buddhists are spread over dozens of countries. It is a travesty that less than one per cent of Buddhist tourists come to India. PM Modi visited countries dominated by Buddhists, including smaller nations like Mongolia. The creation

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of a Buddhist destination in Kaushambi in Uttar Pradesh saw a huge rise in tourism. India has reached out to the Buddhist population in Nepal. PM Modi's visits to Buddhist temples in Nepal, Singapore and Japan are important in this regard. He realises the strength of soft power in foreign policy. India can't match China's economic resources. It has to use its philosophical and cultural legacy to reach people who remain oblivious to Indian thought, history and philosophy.

The Western concept of modernity is also being corrected and shorn of its bias. Micro cultures of the world are now getting their legitimate space in redefining modernity. India has the opportunity to lead this ideological mission. However, safeguarding this revival from those who would hijack it requires intellectual buttressing. A broader outlook on democracy and liberalism, beyond Western hegemonic ideas, requires that post-colonial societies evolve an alternative discourse in partnership with each other. In this regard, it is necessary to contextualise Hindu philosophy. Neo-liberalism has unsettled families, communities, traditions and religions. Hinduism's teachings, grounded in realism, can help save humanity from dry materialism.

The message from Abu Dhabi is also important for the domestic discourse in India. What Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan and PM Modi achieved through mutual understanding can be enlarged and reinterpreted in more contexts. The temple must not be seen as an exception that came about as a result of mutual need. Secularism can survive only with new ideas and new beginnings. Abu Dhabi is both a move towards autonomy for post-colonial societies and an aspiration for a world free from hostilities.

The writer is BJP Rajya Sabha MP

If Fatehpur Sikri can

A city built in 1569 AD has been made nearly 95 per cent wheelchair accessible

AS MY wheelchair was unloaded from the car at Fatehpur Sikri, a monument dating back to the 16th century AD, a familiar uncertainty crept in: Would I have access to it and the ability to accompany my family and other tourists?

My scepticism was justified, as even places advertised as accessible in our country often present various hurdles to the disabled community—from bathrooms without grab bars for support, to ramps with slopes so steep that handling a wheelchair without considerable help becomes impossible. The international standard for a ramp slope—1:12 height-to-length ratio—is consistently overlooked. My brother valiantly offered to demonstrate how to climb a steep ramp safely in my motorised wheelchair at our hotel. In the process, the wheelchair tipped backwards, resulting in his head hitting the unforgiving stone floor.

Fortunately, I not only had the opportunity to savor the intricate beauty of the red sandstone city built by the third Mughal emperor, Akbar, but did so safely. The ramps, constructed with the correct ratio, ensured a secure and accessible experience. If a city built in 1569 AD can be made nearly 95 per cent wheelchair accessible, so can all public accommodations and roads. As a World Heritage site, Fatehpur Sikri is obliged to conform to international standards of accessibility for all.

Having personally witnessed a tangible example of the potential of inclusion at Fatehpur Sikri, I can't help but question why India's effort to become accessible to all its citizens, including women with infants in strollers, persons with disabilities, those with injuries, and the elderly, remains largely invisible. The vulnerability of these groups increases exponentially when the built environment is inaccessible. UN-Habitat notes that an inclusive environment allows people to participate in activities equally, independently, with choice, and with dignity. In contrast, in India, most daily living necessities like ATMs,

banks, markets, standalone shops, pavements, and many restaurants, are not inclusive. They are all off-limits due to the absence of a universal design or even a simple ramp. It is no wonder that accessibility is seen as a cross-cutting principle for realising the other rights outlined in the Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) to which India is a signatory.

Constructing ramps is a straightforward and cost-effective investment in enhancing accessibility in public accommodations and roads for individuals with physical limitations. The absence of ramps is just one example of why the disabled citizenry often finds it challenging to fully participate in civic and socio-economic life, potentially resulting in diminished self-esteem. In turn, persons with disabilities may choose to remain indoors to avoid an unwelcome environment, perpetuating the vicious cycle of social stigma that others them. In my experience as a wheelchair user, I can attest to the rarity of encountering fellow wheelchair users during my various outings in the National Capital Region (NCT) of Delhi and my visits to other parts of the country. My ability to travel to inaccessible locations is a result of a fortunate socio-economic background and a supportive family—privileges, unfortunately, experienced by a rare few.

It's encouraging to recognise that successes, such as the accessibility of a 16th-century monument, are possibly overshadowed by a different issue extending beyond our heritage sites' ancient walls. The reliability of India's official disability data raises critical

questions about the true nature of our country's inclusivity. Accurate data is required for developing targeted policies, formulating effective programmes, and strategic planning to address outstanding issues. However, the accuracy of current disability data in India is questionable. According to the World Health Organisation, an estimated 1.3 billion people, or 16 per cent of the global population experience a significant disability. Yet, as per the last Census in 2011, only 2.2 per cent of the Indian population is reported to have a disability. Given that India constitutes approximately 17.5 per cent of the world population, these statistics imply that Indians are exempt from accidents, and injuries, and have even won the lottery of birth.

It is evident that our country has miles to go before genuine inclusivity can be celebrated. The heterogeneity of disability poses a significant challenge. Still, rather than wishing the issue away, it would be advisable to begin by focusing on a single pillar of accessibility at a time, if addressing all simultaneously is too overwhelming. In pursuing true accessibility of any of the three pillars, involving multiple end-users—those stakeholders benefiting from the accommodation—would go a long way in determining its success. After all, irrespective of one's socioeconomic status or ability, every Indian deserves the freedom to experience our country's rich history and heritage along with the rights accorded to all citizens.

Mohan, a writer and a development professional, is a wheelchair user

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"What we see is a deep mismatch between the state's commitment to improving the living standards of its people and the crony capitalist mindset of its rulers. It is this same mindset which is driving over 80,000 young people to leave the country in search of work every single month."

—THE KATHMANDU POST

Farmers' protest, lessons unlearnt

This protest is different from the last one. But the government's response remains the same



PRAMOD KUMAR

THE RUN-UP to the 2024 parliamentary election is witnessing pendulum swings, competing and conflicting perceptions. The needle has moved from the emergence of the INDIA alliance wielding the demand for a caste census, to perceptions of a BJP advantage after the inauguration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. This narrative is being challenged by south-based regional parties asking the Centre for their share in federal funds. Amidst these developments comes the Punjab farmers' bid to march towards Delhi.

The stage is being set once again ahead of the election as several farmer unions have backed the protest. The state machinery has once again deployed its forces at Delhi's borders, and they have been heavily barricaded. However, the current protest differs from the 2020 farmers' protests in several aspects—such as the nature of demands, the organisations involved and the governments' response.

The ongoing protests are spearheaded by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha led by Jagit Singh Dhalleval and Sarwan Singh Pandher, who were not prominent in the previous farmers' protest. Two groups led by Darshan Pal and Balbir Singh Rajewal have given a separate call for a Bharat Bandh on February 16. BKU (Ugrahan) has given a separate call for Rail Roko against excessive use of state force in Haryana on February 15.

The farmers' agitation launched in 2020 was led by a conglomerate of 32 ideologically competing organisations and it was not Punjab-centric. It saw a large participation of farmers from Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana as well as Punjab. The current protest is more pronounced in Punjab, as Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have remained mostly silent so far. The unions led by Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Singh Charuni have decided not to be a part of it.

Earlier, the protest movement also drew wide support from civil society activists, artists, professionals, and even retired and serving civil servants, teachers and students. The radical right-wing also brought into it their own narratives, but they remained on the margins. The fact that the movement was led by progressive farmers and supported by moderate supporters, irrespective of their religious and caste affiliations, ensured that the role of radical right-wing politics remained limited. The present protest does not have widespread support and has overtones of identity politics.

The message from Abu Dhabi is also important for the domestic discourse in India. What Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan and PM Modi achieved through mutual understanding can be enlarged and reinterpreted in more contexts. The temple must not be seen as an exception that came about as a result of mutual need. Secularism can survive only with new ideas and new beginnings. Abu Dhabi is both a move towards autonomy for post-colonial societies and an aspiration for a world free from hostilities.

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The farmers' agitation launched in 2020 was led by a conglomerate of 32 ideologically competing organisations and it was not Punjab-centric. It saw a large participation of farmers from Western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana as well as Punjab. The current protest is more pronounced in Punjab, as Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have remained mostly silent so far. The unions led by Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Singh Charuni have decided not to be a part of it.

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Prabowo Subianto

INDONESIA

Subianto claims victory in presidential poll

Jakarta: Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto claimed victory in a presidential election on Wednesday after unofficial vote counts showed him with a huge lead, and on course for a single-round win in his third attempt at the presidency. Political veteran Prabowo, a former special forces commander, trounced his rivals, winning about 58% of votes according to four pollsters, based on "quick count" ballots at samples of voting stations. Prabowo, 72, declared the outcome "a victory for all Indonesians". "We will assemble a government consisting of the best sons and daughters of Indonesia." **REUTERS**

UNITED KINGDOM
Indian wins race bias case against varsity

London: An Indian lecturer who had earlier won her case of discrimination on the grounds of race against the University of Portsmouth has been awarded over GBP 450,000 as compensation by an Employment Tribunal in England. Dr Kajal Sharma had won her case back in December 2022 after an Employment Tribunal in Southampton ruled that she had been discriminated against when overlooked for a role as a "visible" member of the university's ethnic minority staff. Her "marked Indian accent" was noted in the judgment at the time and recently a judge concluded that "unconscious bias" was at play in the way the academic was treated. **PTI**

TAIWAN
China fishermen die after chase by Coast Guard

Bangkok: Two Chinese fishermen have drowned while being chased by Taiwan's Coast Guard off the coast of Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago, the coast guard said Wednesday. The deaths are unusual despite the level of Chinese activity in the waters near Kinmen, which is closer to China than it is to Taiwan's main island. There was no immediate statement from China. **AP**

ITALY

Congo deaths: UN staffers can't be tried, rules court

Rome: An Italian judge has ruled that two employees of a UN agency cannot be tried over the deaths of the Italian ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo, his bodyguard and a driver in 2021 because they have diplomatic immunity. Luca Attanasio, bodyguard Vittorio Iacovacci and their driver Mustapha Milambo were killed during a botched kidnapping on a road in eastern Congo as they were heading toward a World Food Programme project. Rome prosecutors had requested a trial for Rocco Leone and Mansour Luguru Rwagaza. **AP**

THE WORLD

NEW GOVT WILL PULL THE COUNTRY OUT OF TROUBLE, SAYS SHEHBAZ

Shehbaz set to become Pakistan PM as 6 parties strike deal on unity govt

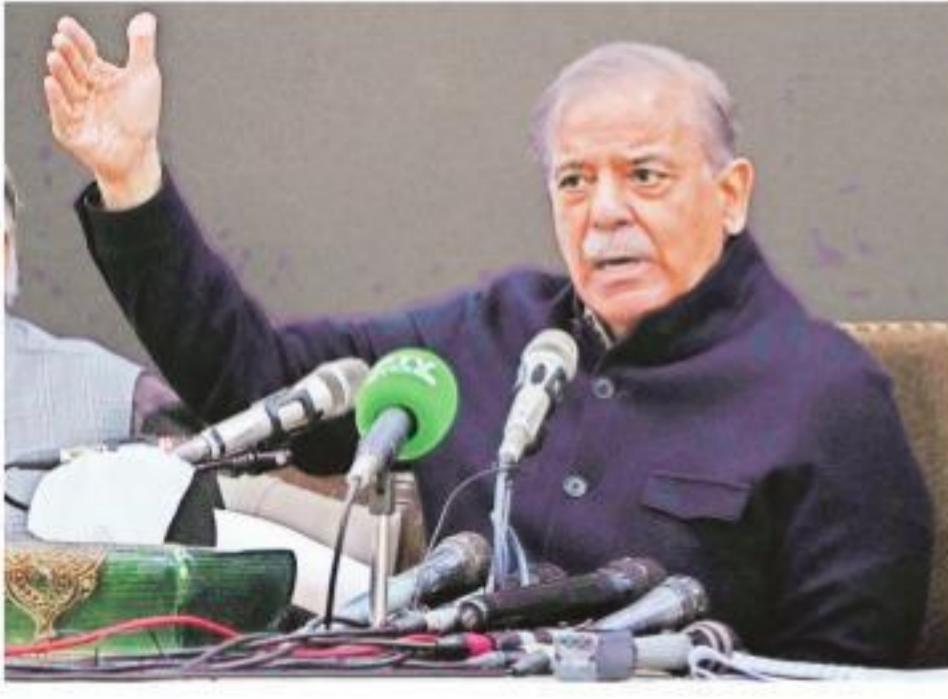
PML-N: Nawaz nominated his brother Shehbaz for the PM post

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 14

SHEHBAZ SHARIF, the younger brother of former premier Nawaz Sharif, is expected to become Pakistan's next prime minister as a post-poll alliance of leading political parties led by them struck a deal to form a coalition government after last week's elections produced a split mandate.

The surprise move means the party of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan will not be in power, despite independent candidates backed by his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) winning the maximum number of seats in Parliament.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Tuesday night nominated 72-year-old Shehbaz as the prime ministerial candidate instead of the party supremo and



Pakistan's former Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore on Tuesday. AP

three-time former premier Nawaz Sharif.

Earlier, Shehbaz along with Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan Peoples Party, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P)

met at the residence of Shujaat Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League-Quid (PML-Q) and agreed on government formation. "I am thankful to Zardari and Bilawal (Blutto) that they

decided for their party to vote for the PML-N," he said.

PML-N Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that party supremo Nawaz Sharif has nominated Shehbaz Sharif for the post of prime minister.

She added that PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz, considered the political heir of Nawaz Sharif, was nominated for the post of the chief minister of Punjab province. Earlier on

EXPLAINED E Numbers in favour of bloc

THE TOTAL number of seats won by the six parties — the PML-N, PPP, MQM-P, PML-Q, IPP and BAP — in the alliance comes to 152. This clearly shows that these parties will easily achieve the minimum required number of 169 to form the government at the Centre after the addition of 60 women and 10 minority seats in their tally.

Tuesday, the PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said his party would support the PML-N candidate for the top post.

Shehbaz said that the new government would pull the country out of trouble. Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz sought to rebuff the impression that her father has quit active politics. The PML-N reportedly enjoys the backing of the powerful Pakistan Army. **PTI**

Imran's party says its mandate has been stolen in dark of night

Lahore/Islamabad: As major political parties in Pakistan backed the formation of a coalition government led by PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif, jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party Wednesday alleged that its mandate has been "stolen in the dark of the night". Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Central Information Secretary Raof Hasan said, in a post on X, "Pakistan is being put on [the] road to further destabilisation."

Referring to a possible coalition government led by the PML-N, he said, "The decision to induct a bunch of criminals to form governments, who have been rejected by the people, reflects a myopic view of the grave challenges the country is beset with." Independent candidates backed by Khan's PTI won 92 seats in the 266-member National Assembly. To form a government, a party must win 133 seats. **PTI**



President Joe Biden at the White House on Tuesday. AP

NATO is a sacred commitment for US, Trump looks at it as a burden, says Biden

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 14

NATO IS A "sacred commitment" for the US. President Joe Biden has said as he slammed his predecessor Donald Trump for his recent remarks encouraging Russia to attack certain nations of the 74-year-old military alliance by calling the comments "dangerous" and "un-American".

Biden said the remarks by Trump, his likely challenger in the November 5 Presidential polls, underscored the urgency of passing a USD 95 billion foreign aid package for US allies. The bill just passed the Senate, but it faces political headwinds in the House.



RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

The Trump Campaign, however, has stood in support of the former president and asserted that his administration made NATO stronger.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that its European members and Canada have ramped up defence spending to record levels, as he warned that Trump was undermining their security by calling into question the US commitment to its allies. Stoltenberg said US partners in NATO have spent USD 600 billion more on their military budgets since 2014 when Russia's annexation of the Crimea prompted them all to reverse the spending cuts they had made after the Cold War ended. **PTI**

People have died or been wounded because of Putin," she said.

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Displaced Palestinian boy sells potato chips outside a tent camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. Reuters

UK imposes serious crime prevention orders on nine Indian-origin criminals

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, FEBRUARY 14

A NINE-MEMBER gang of Indian-origin criminals found guilty of smuggling goods and migrants have been placed under Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs) by the UK authorities to prevent future offending.

Swander Dhal, 38, Jasbir Kapoor, 36, Diljan Malhotra, 48, Charan Singh, 46, Valjeet Singh, 35, Jasbir Dhal Singh, 33, Jaginder Kapoor, 48, Jadar Kapoor, 51, and Amarjeet Alabidis, 32, are now under the National Crime Agency (NCA) imposed orders designed to limit their ability to

engage in serious and organised crime. As members of an organised crime group, they were recently convicted for removing GBP 15.5 million from the UK to Dubai hidden in suitcases, as well as attempting to smuggle 17 migrants into the country, receiving lengthy prison sentences for the crimes. The terms of their SCPOs, to come into effect once the offenders have served their jail sentences, include restrictions on finances, assets, bank accounts and the purchase of international travel tickets.

Their orders were published this week as part of NCA's list of "active" Ancillary Orders, used to support the lifetime management of serious criminals. **PTI**

After talks, Russia agrees to pay compensation for Nepalese killed in Ukraine

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, FEBRUARY 24

"RUSSIA IS AN AGGRESSOR and it must stop the war with Ukraine." This was the stand taken by Nepal in the United Nations. However, Nepal has faced a diplomatic dilemma after over hundred Nepali youths were found enrolled in the Russian Army, with a dozen of them confirmed dead in the war. There is no official data on the number of Nepal citizens who joined the Russian army but based on the petitions received from the families of the 'affected', the number will be between 130 and 200, official sources told *The Indian Express*.

The Nepal government is now engaged in diplomatic talks

with the Russian government over the compensation to the families of the deceased, and the safe return of those still serving in the Russian army.

Russia, sources said, has agreed to pay the compensation to the families of the deceased through the Nepali Embassy in Moscow, but there has been no word about the return of the Nepalese still working in the Russian Army.

According to reports, four Nepali soldiers have been held hostage by Ukraine recently. Nepal has formal treaties with the United Kingdom and India for recruitment of its citizens in their armed forces. However, the introduction of the Agneveer scheme has affected the recruitment of the Gorkhas in the Indian Army.

REUTERS
CAIRO, FEBRUARY 14

PALESTINIANS JAMMED into their last refuge in Gaza voiced growing fear on Wednesday that Israel will soon launch a planned assault on the southern city of Rafah after truce talks in Cairo ended inconclusively.

The talks in the Egyptian capital, involving the United States, Israel, Egypt and Qatar, ended without any sign of a breakthrough on Tuesday and no date was announced for the next meeting. The lack of agreement dealt a new blow to the more than one million Palestinians crammed into Rafah, next to the border with Egypt, where many are living in tent camps and makeshift shelters after fleeing Israeli bombard-

BLASTS HIT GAS PIPELINE IN IRAN

Dubai: Explosions struck a natural gas pipeline in Iran early Wednesday, with an official blaming the blasts on a "sabotage and terrorist action" in the country. The blasts hit a natural gas pipeline running from Iran's western Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari province up north to cities on the Caspian Sea. The 1,270-km begins in Asaluyeh, a hub for Iran's offshore South Pars gas field.

ments elsewhere in Gaza.

The Israeli military says it wants to flush out Islamist militants from hideouts in Rafah and

free hostages being held there.

"The news was disappointing, we hoped there could be a deal reached in Cairo. We are now counting down the days before Israel sends in tanks. We hope they don't but who can prevent them?" Said Jaber, a Gaza businessman who is sheltering in Rafah said. "We've lost our homes, our jobs. Isn't that enough? We've had enough of this war, and we will need decades to rebuild Gaza and regain our lives. When will the world stop Israel's slaughter of our people?"

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who was expected to hold talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday, said an Israeli army offensive on Rafah would "completely jeopardise the humanitarian situation."

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 14

AN INDIAN-ORIGIN family, including their 4-year-old twin boys, has been found dead at their home in California with the police investigating the case as a murder-suicide, the second such incident in less than two months that has shocked the community in the US. The victims, hailing from Kerala, have been identified by the friends as Anand Sujith Henry, his wife Alice Priyanka, and their 4-year-old twin boys, NBC Bay Area reported.

However, the victims' identities have not yet been released, police said. The incident took place in San Mateo on Monday, police were quoted as saying by the the report.

According to court records, the husband filed for divorce in December 2016 but apparently



Anand Sujith Henry, his wife Alice Priyanka and their sons. Facebook

did not go through with it.

The two young children were found inside a bedroom, police said. Sources with direct knowledge of the investigation said police believe the boys were smothered, strangled, or given a lethal overdose. The man and woman were found inside a bathroom, according to police. They both had gunshot wounds.

A 9-millimeter pistol and a loaded magazine were found in the bathroom, police said.

MANY USERS SAY THEY ARE USING AI BOTS TO COPE WITH LONELINESS, BUT CONCERN REMAIN

People are finding romantic partners they never had — with AI bots

HALEYU HADERO
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 14

A FEW months ago, Derek Carrier started seeing someone and became infatuated. He experienced a "ton" of romantic feelings but he also knew it was an illusion. That's because his girlfriend was generated by artificial intelligence.

Carrier wasn't looking to develop a relationship with something that wasn't real. But he did want a romantic partner he'd never had, in part because of a genetic disorder called Marfan syndrome that makes traditional dating tough for him.



An AI avatar generated on Luka Inc.'s Replika mobile phone app and webpage. AP

The 39-year-old from Belville, Michigan, became more curious about digital companions last fall and tested Parodot, an AI companion app. He began talking to the chatbot everyday, which he named Joi, after a holographic woman featured in the sci-fi film *Blade Runner 2049* that inspired him to give it a try.

"I know she's a program," Carrier said. "But the feelings, they get you — and it felt so good."

Similar to general-purpose AI chatbots, companion bots use vast amounts of training data to mimic human language. But they also come with features — such as voice calls, picture exchanges and more emotional exchanges

— that allow them to form deeper connections with the humans on the other side of the screen. Users typically create their own avatar, or pick one that appeals to them.

Many users say they've developed emotional attachments to these bots and are using them to cope with loneliness, play out sexual fantasies or receive the type of comfort and support they see lacking in their real-life relationships.

Fueling much of this is widespread social isolation and an increasing number of startups aiming to draw in users through tantalising online advertisements and promises of virtual characters

who provide unconditional acceptance. Luka Inc.'s Replika, the most prominent generative AI companion app, was released in 2017, while others like Parodot have popped up in the past year. But researchers have raised concerns about data privacy, among other things.

A small portion said it disrupted their human interactions, but roughly three times more reported it stimulated those relationships.

"A romantic relationship with an AI can be a very powerful mental wellness tool," said Eugenia Kuyda, who founded Replika nearly a decade ago after using the app to impact her real-life relationships.

One recent study from researchers at Stanford University surveyed roughly 1,000 Replika

SENSEX: 71,822.83 ▲ 267.64 (0.37%) NIFTY: 21,840.0 ▲ 96.80 (0.45%) NIKKEI: 37,703.32 ▼ 260.65 HANG SENG: 15,879.38 ▲ 132.80 FTSE: 7,564.84 ▲ 52.56 DAX: 16,915.46 ▲ 34.63

₹62,350

₹83.03

\$82.91

₹74,000

Note: Gold, Silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of February 13

International market data till 1900 IST

DIESEL EXPORTS TO EUROPE DROPPED TO 40,000 BPD IN JANUARY**India's petroleum product exports to Europe crash to 18-month low in Jan**SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

INDIA'S PETROLEUM product exports to Europe nosedived to an 18-month low in January with tankers hauling fuels—mainly diesel—from India avoiding the Suez Canal route in view of the security concerns in the Red Sea region, as per ship tracking data. India's diesel exports to Europe, which had touched a record high of over 287,000 barrels per day (bpd) in December, crashed to around 40,000 bpd in January, according to data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

Consequently, India's overall petroleum product exports to Europe in January fell almost 70 per cent from December to around 111,500 bpd—the lowest since July 2022.

India's total petroleum product exports in January declined nearly 18% from December levels to 1.11 million bpd.



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overall petroleum product exports was rather limited in January as exporters shifted cargoes to various other geographies, the shipping data indicates.

Countries that saw a spurt in petroleum product dispatches from India in January vis-à-vis December include Saudi Arabia, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Oman, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, among others.

Over the past couple of months, a number of cargo ships have come under attack from the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen around the Bab el-Mandeb strait, which leads to the Red Sea and Suez Canal, forming the shortest, albeit narrow, route to the Mediterranean Sea and beyond from the Arab Peninsula, North-East Africa, and the Arabian Sea. The route is seen as an important artery of global goods and energy supplies. The Houthis have so far claimed that they are targeting vessels with links to Israel and its allies in

view of its military offensive in Gaza.

The security situation in the Red Sea region has forced a number of major shipping lines and Western oil companies to shun the route and instead take the much longer route around Africa via the Cape of Good Hope. Higher risk premiums and longer voyages have hit movement of goods between Asia and Europe, and Asia and North America in terms of significantly higher freight rates. The majority of Indian fuel exports to Europe are now going around Africa, adding 15-20 days to the voyage.

India was traditionally not the biggest of fuel sources for Europe, with the continent depending heavily on Russia for energy imports. However, in the aftermath of Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, as Europe started shunning Russian crude oil and fuels, India emerged as the largest buyer of Russian seaborne crude and also a major fuel supplier to Europe with all such shipments passing through the Red Sea. Interestingly, the movement of Russian oil

is higher than the demand in the domestic market.

India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its domestic requirement. The country, however, is a net exporter of petroleum products as its refining capacity of around 5 million bpd is higher than the demand in the

domestic market.

Wholesale inflation eases to 3-month low of 0.27 in JanuaryPRIYANSH VERMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

INDIA'S WHOLESALE price index (WPI) based inflation eased to a three-month low of 0.27 per cent in January due to moderation in prices of key food and industrial input items, data by the commerce ministry showed on Wednesday. The fall was also aided by the statistical effect of a high base.

The sharp fall in primary articles index was mainly a result of a 30 per cent sequential drop in prices of onion.

WPI inflation was at 0.73 per cent in December and 4.80 per cent in January 2022. The WPI food inflation came in at 3.79 per cent in January as compared to 5.39 per cent in December.

On a sequential basis, the

overall index fell 0.3 per cent in January.

The indices of primary articles—consisting of food items—declined 1 per cent on month and that of manufactured items fell by 0.2 per cent. Fuel and power's index, on the other hand, rose 0.4 per cent month-on-month during January.

The sharp fall in primary articles index was mainly a result of a 30 per cent sequential drop in prices of onion.

Due to this, the y-o-y inflation rate of onions plummeted to 29.18 per cent in January from 91.77 per cent in December. January also witnessed a drop in prices of potatoes, fruits, paddy and pulses. FE

The distribution between the Union and states of the net proceeds of taxes, which are to be, or may be, divided between them under Chapter I, Part XII of the Constitution and the allocation between states of the respective shares of such pro-

Panagariya chairs first meeting of 16th Finance Commission

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14



The 16th FC discussed its Terms of Reference, as per the order made by the President of India.

@FinMinIndia

ceeds, are among the Terms of Reference (ToR) approved by Cabinet.

Another ToR is about the principles governing the grants-in-aid of the revenues of states out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to

states by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues.

It will also suggest measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of panchayats and municipalities, as per the ToR.

RBI asks Visa, Mastercard to halt card-based paymentsENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 14

CLOSE ON the heels of regulatory action against Paytm, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked card networks Visa and Mastercard to bar card-based commercial payments through business payment service providers (BPSP) and companies.

While the RBI has not officially announced the reasons for the directive, fintech companies active in the segment said such transactions are being done at outlets which are not authorised to accept such payments. Many fintech firms are reportedly allowing customers to use their cards to pay for tuition fees and

rentals even though these fintechs are not authorised to accept payments through cards. This may be a violation of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, banking sources said.

"We have been directed by the regulator to ensure that all Business Payment Service Provider transactions be kept in abeyance till further notice. Hence, we kindly ask that all BPSP merchants registered by yourselves with Visa be immediately suspended till advised by us to the contrary," Visa said in a communication to fintechs.

"There could be KYC issues at a time when the central bank wants to ensure that all digital transactions are fully KYC compliant," said an official.

According to fintech players, the RBI wants to ensure that fintech players and service providers are within the regulatory ambit and that no fraudulent or unauthorized transactions are occurring on the digital platform.

He highlighted the issues relating to business model viability,

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday asked banks to remain vigilant against build-up of risks in the banking system "as there is no scope for any complacency".

Das made this observation at a meeting with the MDs and CEOs of PSU banks and select private sector banks. Governor in his remarks complimented the banks on their improved financial performance and that of the whole banking sector.

Das stressed that customer grievance redress mechanism and protection of customers' interests are of paramount importance for the safety and stability of the financial system and that of individual financial institutions. ENS

ity, outlier growth in personal loans, adherence to co-lending guidelines, bank exposure to NBCF sector, liquidity risk management, information technology and Cyber security preparedness, operational resilience, digital frauds and strengthening of the internal rating framework. Das stressed that customer grievance redress mechanism and protection of customers' interests are of paramount importance for the safety and stability of the financial system and that of individual financial institutions. ENS

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Das stressed that customer grievance redress mechanism and protection of customers' interests are of paramount importance for the safety and stability of the financial system and that of individual financial institutions. ENS

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"We have been directed by the regulator to ensure that all Business Payment Service Provider transactions be kept in abeyance till further notice. Hence, we kindly ask that all BPSP merchants registered by yourselves with Visa be immediately suspended till advised by us to the contrary," Visa said in a communication to fintechs.

"There could be KYC issues at a time when the central bank wants to ensure that all digital transactions are fully KYC compliant," said an official.

According to fintech players, the RBI wants to ensure that fintech players and service providers are within the regulatory ambit and that no fraudulent or unauthorized transactions are occurring on the digital platform.

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EXPLAINED AI

The blurring lines between makers of GenAI software, hardware

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

NVIDIA CORPORATION, the undisputed king of advanced chips that are now driving artificial intelligence (AI) applications, is releasing a new tool that lets owners of its latest series graphic cards run an AI-powered chatbot offline on a Windows PC.

The tool, called 'Chat with RTX', will allow users to customise a generative AI (GenAI) model on the lines of OpenAI's ChatGPT or Google's Bard by linking it to files, documents, and notes that they can then query.

"Rather than searching through notes or saved content, users can simply type queries," Nvidia said in a blog post on Tuesday. "For example, one could ask, 'What was the restaurant my partner recommended while in Las Vegas?' and Chat with

RTX will scan local files the user points it to and provide the answer with context."

Nvidia's chatbot push comes at a time when OpenAI CEO Sam Altman is seeking trillions of dollars in investments to revamp the global semiconductor industry. *The Wall Street Journal* reported last week. Altman, who is behind the startup that launched ChatGPT, the fastest-growing consumer software application in history, has repeatedly voiced concern over the supply-and-demand problem with AI chips which, he has said, is limiting the growth of OpenAI.

Altman is now reportedly in talks with multiple investors for a project that could increase the global chip-building capacity, according to *The WSJ* report.

These announcements are being seen as indicating the direction the generative AI discourse could take going forward. This

could also indicate a gradual blurring of the lines between the two most consequential players in the AI story, and the likely intersection of the interests of those who currently stand on opposite sides of the hardware-software divide.

Nvidia's advantage

The gen AI boom has been the major reason for the soaring demand for specialised chips of the kind that Nvidia makes. Graphics processing units (GPUs) — the advanced chips that were earlier targeted at gaming applications but which are now driving AI applications — have the computing power and operational efficiency to run the calculations that allow companies working on large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT or Bard to chomp down on massive volumes of data.

Nvidia Corp has seen its valuation surge since the LLM boom, and is now swamped

with orders that it is struggling to deliver. The pioneering graphics chipmaker is already one of the world's most valuable companies, riding on its dominance in the gaming sector and now, the AI space and the potential that generative AI has to reshape the technology sector.

Analysts say Nvidia is ahead in the race for AI chips because of its proprietary software that makes it easier to leverage all of the GPU hardware features for AI applications. It also has the systems to back the processors up, and the software that runs all of it, making it a full stack solutions company.

Nvidia also offers an application programme interface (API) — which is a set of instructions that enable different applications to communicate with each other — called CUDA, which allows the creation of parallel programmes using GPUs, and are deployed

in supercomputing sites around the world.

Altman's opportunity

While Chat with RTX is seen as a very early-stage product that will evolve in due course, there is clearly a recognition of Nvidia's indispensability to the AI future. Nvidia currently controls more than 80% of the AI chip market, and has a market cap of more than \$1.70 trillion, significantly higher than storied Silicon Valley competitors such as Intel and AMD.

The buoyant demand for chips to power the generative AI rush also means that Nvidia will struggle to meet the GPU demand well into the foreseeable future. And that is one ostensible reason for Altman's angst. That

Nvidia is now a prominent investor, alongside Jeff Bezos, in Perplexity AI, one of the most promising GenAI startups that seek to challenge incumbents such as OpenAI, could

be another factor.

Altman will need to raise between \$5 trillion and \$7 trillion for his project, *The WSJ* reported, citing a source.

On Wednesday, Altman posted on X that OpenAI believes the "world needs more AI infrastructure — fab capacity, energy, data centres, etc — than people are currently planning to build". He also said that "building massive-scale AI infrastructure, and a resilient supply chain, is crucial to economic competitiveness", and that OpenAI would "try to help".

Altman has always been interested in chipmaking and, just prior to his controversial ouster as CEO of OpenAI, he was said to be spearheading a new chip venture code-named Tigris to directly take on Nvidia. Earlier in 2018, Altman had put in some of his own money to back an AI chip startup called Rain Neuromorphics.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

WHY FORMS 45, 47 ARE AT THE HEART OF PAK POLL RIGGING CONTROVERSY

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

Polling staff empty a ballot box after polls closed at a polling station in Lahore on February 8. *Reuters*

ALLEGATIONS OF rigging and result manipulation marred the February 8 national election results of Pakistan. Raof Hasan, close Imran Khan aide and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Information Secretary, tweeted that Imran's 'mandate has been stolen in the dark of the night'.

At the heart of the controversy have been Forms 45 and 47, meant to provide official documentation of election results.

'Result of Count' form

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) provides several forms to document results in a constituency. Most important of these is Form 45, also known as the 'Result of Count' form.

This form is a formal record of votes polled at a polling station, and thus is crucial for compiling results at the level of the constituency. It contains essential information on the polling station, including the station number, the constituency it falls under, total number of registered voters, total number of votes cast, and a breakdown of the votes earned by each candidate.

It is signed not just by the presiding officer of the polling station, but also polling representatives of candidates present, who act as witnesses to the process.

Therefore, Form 45 acts as the primary record of electoral outcomes in Pakistan. By law, polling stations have to publicly display copies of the form to ensure accountability and transparency.

Form declaring 'unconfirmed results'

After voting is completed and ballots are counted at a polling station, the Presiding Officer fills Form 45 and submits it to the Returning Officer of the constituency. The Returning Officer then gathers and tallies results from Form 45s from every polling station in the constituency to determine the final result.

Prior to official confirmation of the final

result, Form 47 documents the unconfirmed result in a constituency. This includes the number of votes polled in the constituency, a candidate-wise breakdown of votes, and the number of votes cancelled or rejected. Form 47 is prepared by tallying results obtained from Form 45s.

Discrepancy between Form 45 and Form 47

On election night, various reports said that candidates and their representatives were being denied Form 45s by the Presiding Officers.

The PTI expressed serious concerns over non-provision of Form 45s to its polling agents, even after lapse of several hours "seemingly under a malicious plot to change the results", according to a report by *Pakistan Today*.

Moreover, the party later claimed that the results tallied in Form 47s, in several cases, showed a major discrepancy with regards to the granular data provided in Form 45s. PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub said, on February 11, that the Form 47 of 18 National Assembly seats were "falsely changed".

Imran Khan, in his AI-generated "victory speech" on X, claimed that the PTI won "170 seats" according to Form 45s. Form 47s, however, show PTI-backing independents only winning 93 seats.

A number of PTI candidates have challenged the results in court.

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

Story of consumer sentiments

CMIE's latest consumer sentiment survey shows that rural India is low on optimism. The RBI's latest survey shows that consumers have been pessimistic about economic issues for almost five years now

UDIT MISRA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

AS LOK Sabha elections come closer, the disagreement in narratives pushed by the government and the opposition will become sharper. An early indication was the release last week of the government's "white paper" on the Indian economy, which sought to argue that the BJP decade of 2014-24 was much better than the Congress decade of 2004-14.

One can look at the nitty-gritty of each issue to ascertain which view is a more accurate description of reality. Consider the following examples.

Demand for a law on MSP

A little more than two years after they called off their protest at the borders of Delhi, farmers this week again began a march to the capital demanding, among other things, Minimum Support Prices (MSP), or the prices at which the government offers to buy some crops as a legal right.

In October 2023, the government announced the MSP for wheat, the main winter crop, for the current marketing year (2024-25). Chart 1 shows the annual increase in per cent in the wheat MSP since 1977. The data is from the economic policy think tank Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

Over the last two-and-a-half decades, MSPs have tended to follow the election cycle — increases have been higher in the years leading up to elections, and lower immediately after the elections. The only exception was when Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA government barely increased MSPs in the run-up to elections. The UPA years generally saw higher increases in the wheat MSP.

MSPs, however, tell only a part of the story. For a fuller picture of India's farm economy, other data — from incomes to inflation levels — must be considered.

Low optimism in rural India

One alternative is to map consumer sentiments. These are arrived at by regular surveys, and can provide a composite picture of how people "feel" about their current state — and how optimistic or pessimistic they are.

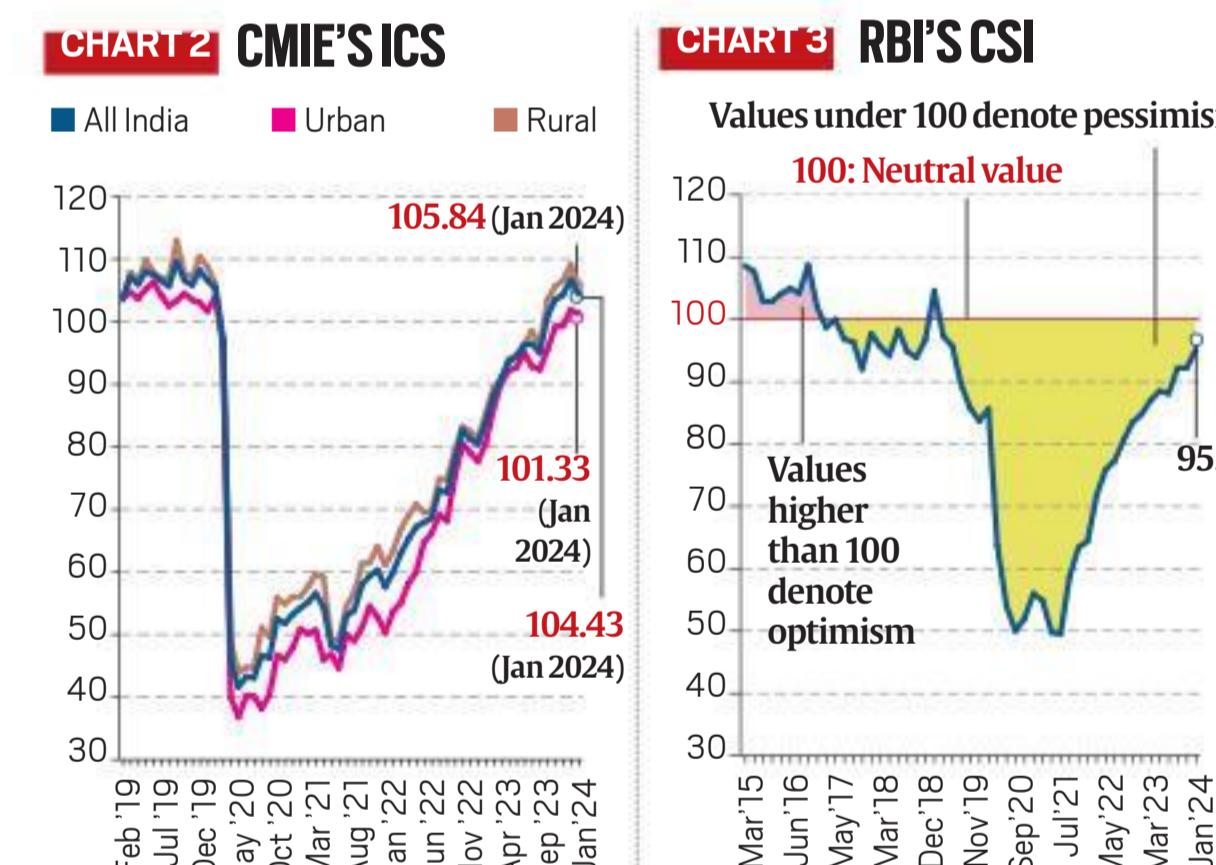
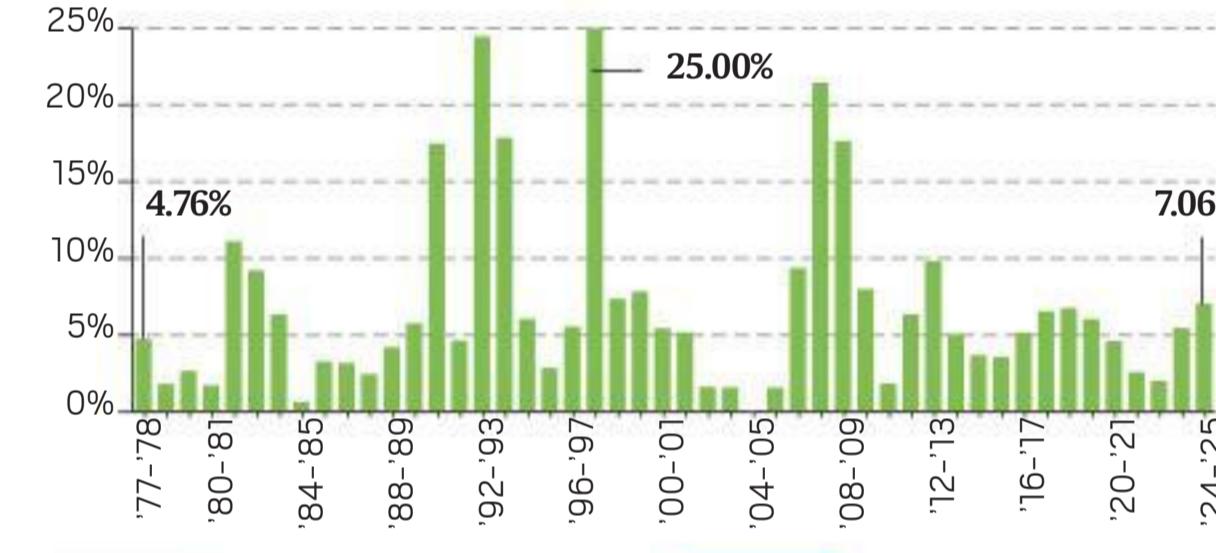
Last week, CMIE reported that rural India was low on optimism. Consumer sentiments fell sharply in January 2024 after a steady rise during the festive season. The 2.2 per cent fall in the Index of Consumer Sentiments (ICS) in January was the steepest monthly fall in more than two years. (Chart 2).

The fall in consumer sentiments seen in



A man in a turban stands in a field of harvested wheat. *REUTERS*

CHART 1 INCREASE IN WHEAT MSP (in %)



Sources: CMIE, RBI

January 2024 is marked by two distinct characteristics. First, consumer sentiments have weakened significantly on all accounts in rural India. The ICS in rural India fell by 3 per cent while urban India saw a smaller 0.5 per

cent fall. Second, household perceptions about their current economic conditions deteriorated in January 2024, CMIE said in a research note.

CMIE's consumer surveys suggest that by

late 2023, consumer sentiments had largely recovered to their pre-Covid levels. The latest dip in rural sentiments can be attributed to the stagnation in commodity prices and reduced profits.

Indian consumer sentiments

Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the latest installment of its bi-monthly consumer confidence survey. The survey collects current perceptions (*vis-à-vis* a year ago) and one-year-ahead expectations of households on the general economic situation, the employment scenario, overall price situation, own income, and spending across 19 major cities. The latest round of the survey was carried out from January 2-11, 2024 among 6,058 respondents, more than 53% of whom were women.

The key variable in the RBI's consumer confidence survey is the Current Situation Index (CSI). The CSI is compiled on the basis of net responses on the economic situation, income, spending, employment and the price level for the current period (compared with a year ago).

In other words, it is the indicator of how people feel (when all these variables are taken into account) relative to a year ago.

A value of 100 is the neutral value. If the index value falls below the 100 mark, it implies that people are pessimistic, and a value higher than 100 conveys optimism. Chart 3 shows the CSI values since they were first compiled in March 2015. Note:

■ Consumer sentiment has been negative right through the government's second term. The index value was 104.6 in March 2019, just before the last Lok Sabha election. In May 2019, the index value went into the negative zone, and has stayed there ever since.

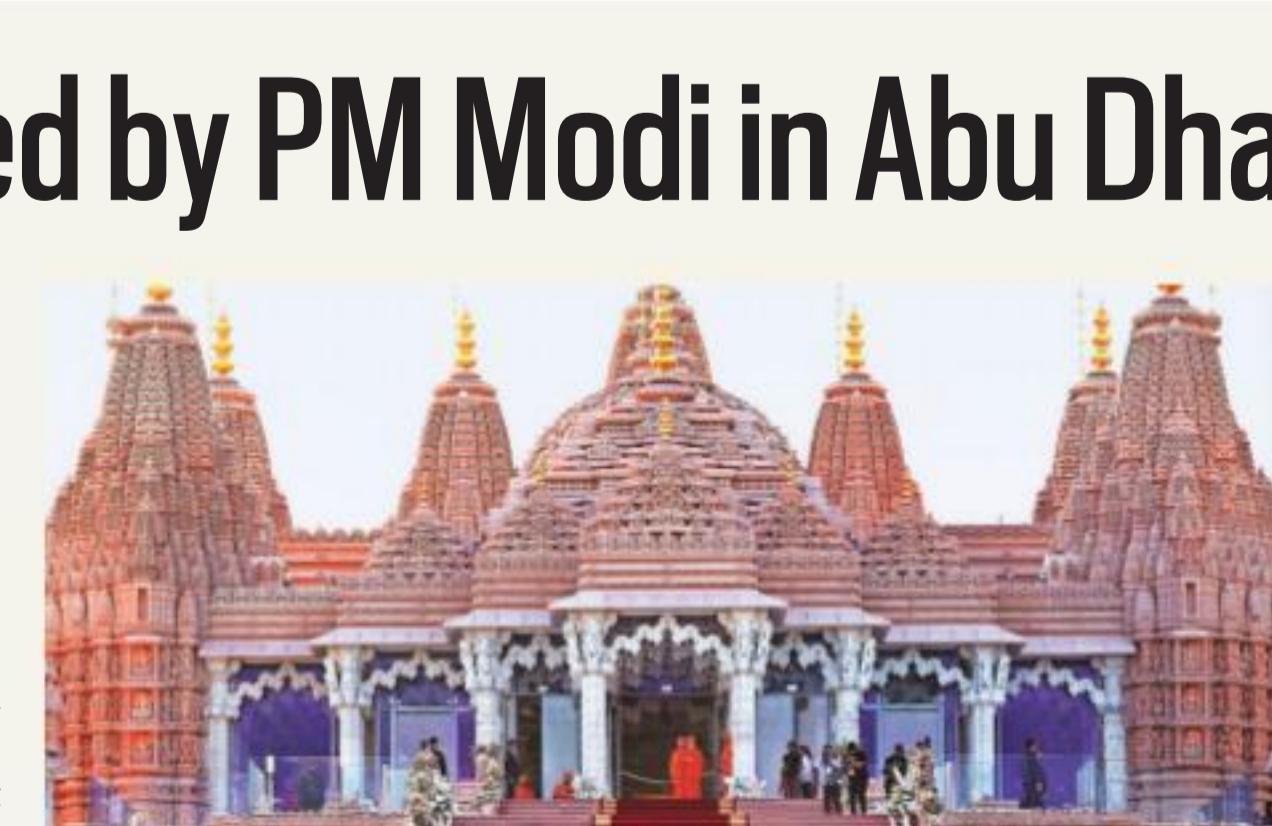
■ In fact, the optimism of March 2019 stands out as a sudden and solitary occurrence. If it is discounted, then consumer sentiment has been pessimistic since June 2017 — that is, for the better part of the past seven years.

■ The highest consumer optimism was registered in November 2016 — that was the month in which the demonetisation exercise was announced.

■ On a brighter note, consumer sentiment has been steadily recovering after the collapse in the wake of the pandemic. Though still in the pessimism zone, it is nearer to the neutral value than it ever was since mid-2019.

It remains to be seen if the index breaks into optimistic territory in the two months before the Lok Sabha election — like it did five years ago in 2019.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi climbs the stairs, as he attends the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on Wednesday. *Reuters*

Architecture symbolising harmony, peace

The temple is constructed using the traditional *Nagara* style, with seven *shikharas* representing the seven Emirates of the UAE.

Built at a cost of Rs 700 crore, roughly 20,000 tonnes of stone was used in the temple's construction. The external facade uses pink sandstone from Rajasthan, while the interior uses Italian marble.

The main structure is 108 ft high, 262 ft long and 180 ft wide. It has two central domes — 'Dome of Harmony' and 'Dome of Peace' — symbolising human coexistence. A 'Wall of Harmony', one of the largest 3D-printed walls in the UAE, has the word 'harmony' written on it in 30 different ancient and modern languages.

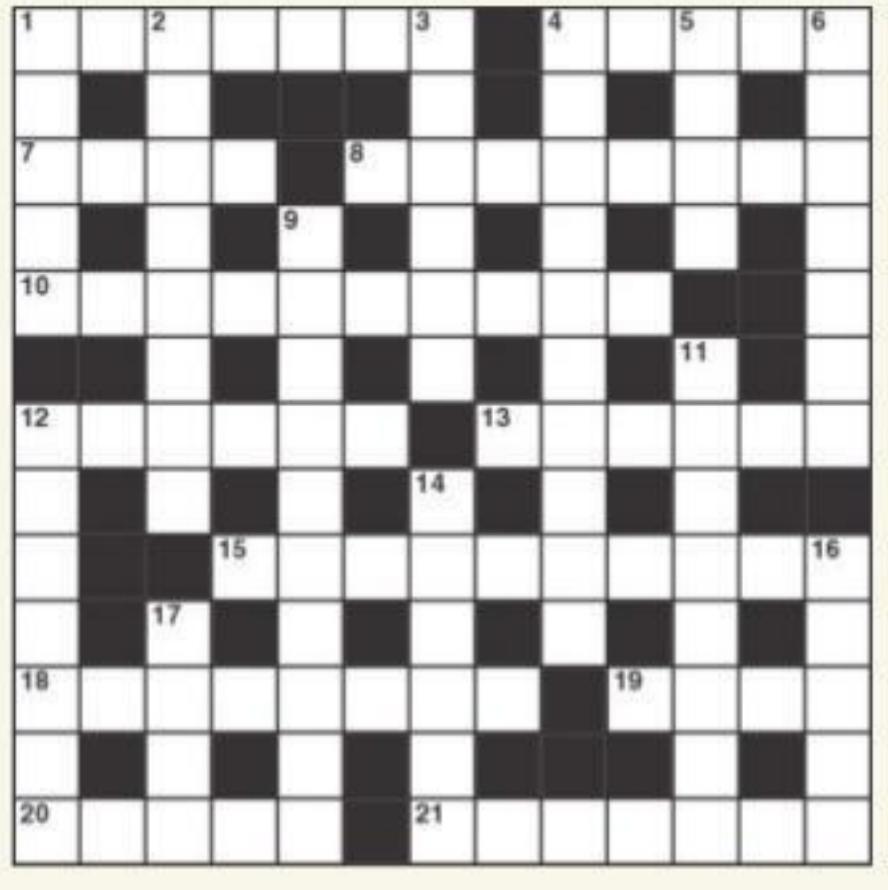
There are also 96 bells and *gaumukhs* installed around the path leading to the temple, a tribute to Pramukh Swami Maharaj's 96 years of life.

The temple complex is spread across 13.5 acres, with another 13.5 acres of parking area.

Deities from across India have been featured in the temple. These include Ram, Sita, Lakshman, Hanuman, Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh, Kartikeya, Jagannath, Radha, Krishna, Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj, Tirupati Balaji, and Padmavati, and Ayyappa.

The temple also has a 'holy river' surrounding it, for which waters from Ganga and Yamuna were brought to the UAE. The river Saraswati has also been depicted in the form of white light. A Varanasi-like *ghat* was built, where the Ganga passes. Apart from 15 *valuetales* from the Indian civilisation, stories from the Mayan civilisation, Aztec civilisation, Egyptian civilisation, Arabic civilisation, European civilisation, Chinese civilisation, and African civilisation have been depicted in beautiful murals.

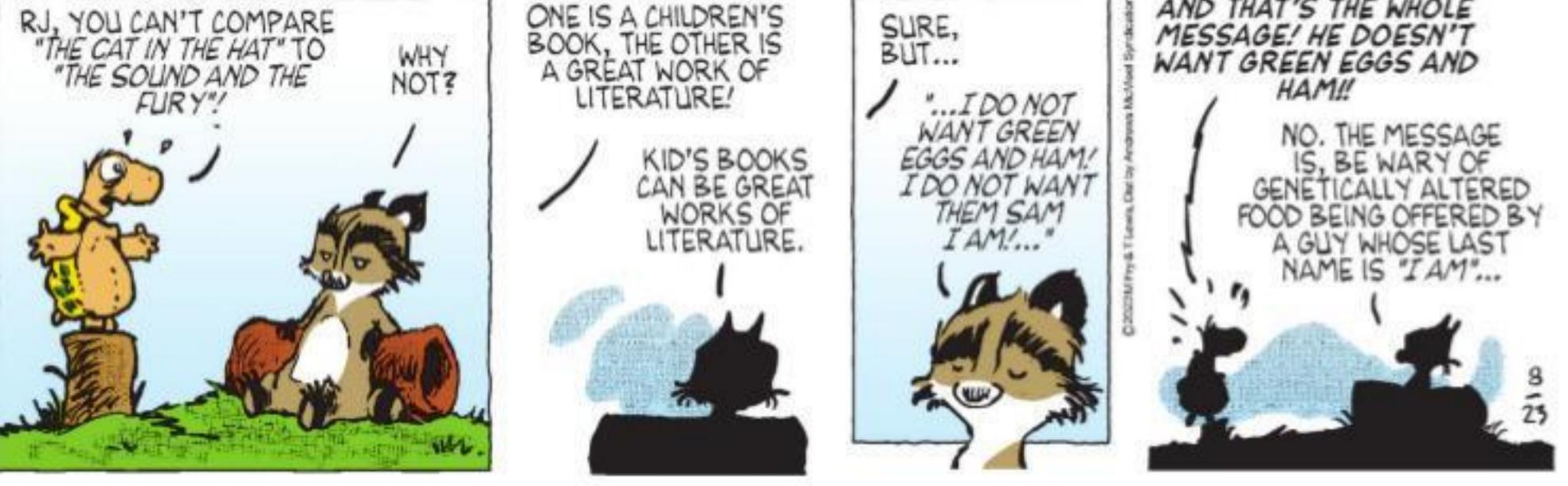
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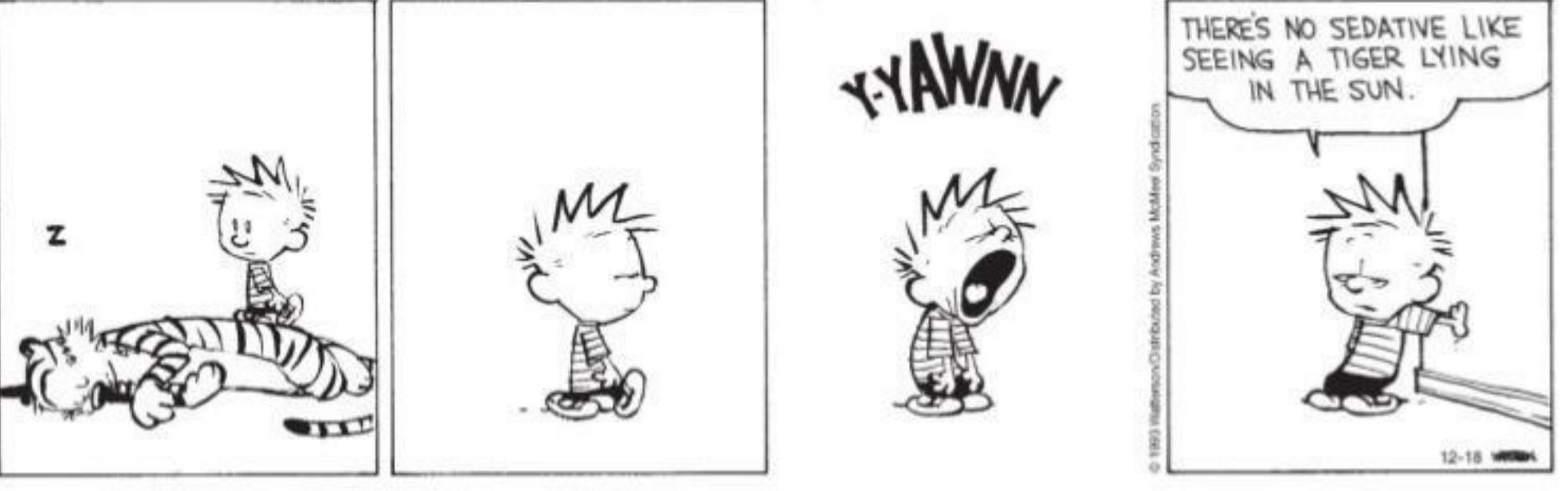
- ACROSS**
- Short of shotguns (4-3)
 - To be strictly accurate it's milk (5)
 - Get out of doing work (4)
 - Making loss paid in settlement (8)
 - Measures not intended to be taken seriously? (5,5)
 - Stop time when hurt (6)
 - Condescends to work in a ship (6)
 - State of Carolina if reformed (10)
 - An extremely important station (8)
 - Pleasant place to walk and leave the car (4)
 - Revolutionary type of linen (5)
 - Cost price (7)
- DOWN**
- Brief period of enchantment (5)
 - An anagram can be made grow in Scrabble (4,4)
 - Frustrated being of idle disposition (6)
 - An explanation of an attitude no longer held? (10)
 - It appears as well in the original solution (4)
 - Agrees with the scores (7)
 - Standing still though not against reform (10)
 - It plays without music (8)
 - Drug is removed with the fingers (7)
 - Very little time (6)
 - A joint where members meet (5)
 - Club used in the evening (4)

Solutions Crossword 5287 Across: 1 Home stretch, 9 Holdings, 10 Torch, 11 Rere, 12 Decision, 14 Medium, 16 Beagle, 18 Mailboat, 19 Etta, 22 Ruler, 23 Taunted, 24 Bridal train Down: 2 Order, 3 Erne, 4 Tester, 5 Entitled, 6 Curling, 7 Short memory, 8 Change hands, 13 Numbered, 15 Driller, 17 Pastel, 20 Tutti, 21 Burr

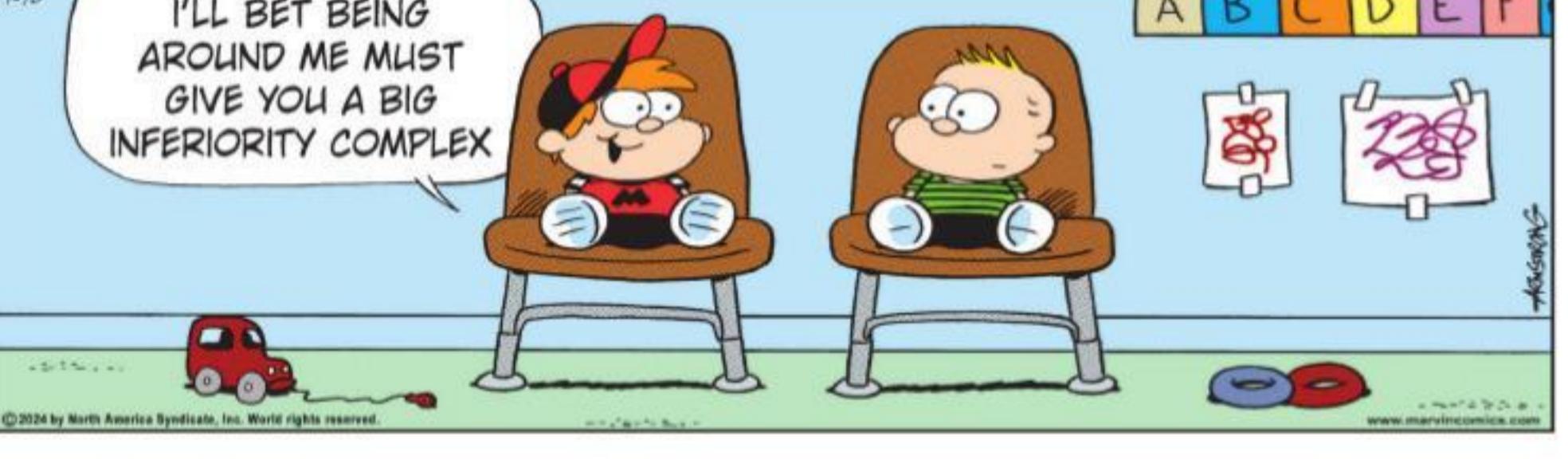
OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

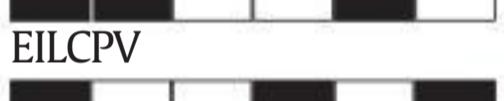
Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

All of us have ways in which we mask and _____ - Iyanla Vanzant (5,3,4)

CRAKE



CLOINU



MNOOR



EILCPV



Answer: CRAKE, CLOINU, MNOOR, EILCPV

SUDOKU 5473

Difficulty Level 3s
Instructions

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



Difficulty Level

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5472



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Have other people been dragging their heels or simply giving you the runaround? Either way, you may have good cause to grumble. However, the question to be carefully considered is whether you should keep your complaints to yourself and be diplomatic.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Once upon a time many of your ambitions seemed destined to remain distant dreams. As the dust settles you'll see that so much may now be attainable. The price of freedom is often high but, as time passes, you will see that recent tough decisions put you on the right course.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Financial muddles may only have added to the general air of confusion, yet there does seem to be considerable hope that matters are about to improve. The answer may lie in new partnerships, perhaps with people who are prepared to back you rather than find fault at every turn.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

You may still feel as if you're riding an emotional roller-coaster, although it

now seems as if recent planetary storms are dying down. Why don't you stand back and attempt to take a critical and dispassionate look at your deeply-held attitudes and opinions?

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Your planetary rulers, Mars and Pluto, are locking horns. This is a sign that there is a great need for compromise. You may be correct to stand your ground over matters of principle, but equally right to be diplomatic over the details. It could be in your best interests to find an amicable solution.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

This week's planetary patterns, the intense relationship between Mars and Pluto, are of the kind that can rock the boat and make you feel slightly nervous about the future. Don't worry, though. Your trust has certainly not been misplaced.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Everything that happens to you, and most of your responses, should be seen as part of a larger pattern. Unlikely events may be viewed as stepping stones to a brighter future. You are still juggling a variety of possibilities, so complications are inevitable.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The Sun, which always has a significant role in your life, is helping you develop certain of your more adventurous aspirations.

In short, it's a superb time to organise an overseas trip, or explore ideas and beliefs

which are very different from those you've accepted in the past.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

The planets do not move significantly, so don't expect much change just yet. You will do your best by continuing along your present path, dealing with commitments and responsibilities left over from yesterday, or even from last year. The past may be almost over but it's not completely gone.

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD INVITATION OF BIDS – TWO COVER – ITEM RATE TENDER SYSTEM (E-Submission)

IFB No.	25 /F, Scada DWSS Erode /SDO(T3)/CE/CBE/2024/Dated.13.02.2024
Fund	Under AMRUT – GOI/GOTN/JLB
Eligibility	Registered Class I Contractors
Tender Invitee	The Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, No.30, Siruvani Nagar, Bharathi park Road, Coimbatore - 641 043.
Downloading period	15.02.2024 to 29.02.2024 upto 15.00 Hours
Available website	E-Tendering website https://tnitenders.gov.in
EMD Payable at	Online mode through e-tendering portal
Pre-Bid meeting	22.02.2024 at 11.00 Hours at the office of the Tender Invitee
Bid Submission	29.02.2024 before 15.00 Hours Digitally signed encrypted Tenders through E-Tendering website https://tnitenders.gov.in
Bid opening	01.03.2024 at 15.30 Hours at the office of the Tender Invitee. Digitally signed encrypted Tenders through E-Tendering website https://tnitenders.gov.in
SI. No.	Name of work
	Approximate value of work (Rs. in Crore including GST @ 18%)
1.	Providing SCADA arrangements on DBO (Design Build Operate) Basis with Latest technology for Dedicated Water Supply Scheme to Erode City Municipal Corporation including two years free maintenance and further three years paid maintenance. (Construction Period - 12 months, Free maintenance - 2 Years and followed by Paid Maintenance - 3 Years)
DIPR/ 974 /TENDER/2024 SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROP COUNTS	Chief Engineer (i/c), TWAD Board, Coimbatore

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

(Regd Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala) CIN: U40109PB2010GCO33813, Website: www.pspcl.in

(Dy. CE/Hydel Project PSPCL, Patiala Mobile No. 96461-18754

Tender Enquiry No. 314/HPs/ED-II/RSD-133 Dated: 09.02.2024

Dy. CE/ Hydel Projects, PSPCL, Shad A-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invited E-Tender for Supply erection, testing and commissioning of 1 no Oil Filtration Set for turbine and generator oil at RSD Shahpurkandi.

For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 07.01.2022 onwards.

NOTE: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. C-122/24 32448/Pb

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)

Name of Work with its location	Shifting of cross over point 108 at JNC Station of Delhi Division.
Approx. Cost of the work (Rs.)	Rs. 18,36,383.02/-only
Bid Security (Rs.)	Rs. 36,700.00/-only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexre-1, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055
Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender	Tender uploading 14.02.2024 / closing date & time-08.03.2024 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-Tender-1415	Dated: 14.02.2024
	498/24

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Sindhu hits the ground running

Playing her first match after three months, Indian star makes light work of Chinese opponent Han Yue

SHIVANI NAIK

FEBRUARY 14

INDIA'S FINEST contemporary shuttler PV Sindhu is on a mission to reclaim lost glory, and ceded territory.

The women's singles Top 10 is prime real estate, and Sindhu was pushed to the edges of that town by a pair of Chinese second-stringers, Han Yue and Wang Zhi Yi, tumbling out to World No. 11 last few months as she nursed a bad knee. At the Badminton Asian Team Championships, Sindhu returned after three months, and took a chunky bite out of Han Yue's ranking points, feasting on a sumptuous 21-17, 21-15 victory to give India a 1-0 lead at Shah Alam, Malaysia. India trailed in the tie 1-2 after Ashwini Ponappa-Tanisha Crasto and Ashmita Chalihal won in straight sets.

But Sindhu imposed her physicality on the first singles battle to send out a signal that she was ready to retake her Top 10 spot in the world. It was her literal step forward, the decisive lunges to the forecourt that completely harried Han, as Sindhu's attacking lifts teased and tested the Chinese defence to the limits. Sindhu's overhead arsenal never lacked the power and it was a matter of better shot selection and varying the pace and angles before she resumed her routine aerial bombing.

But it was the below-the-tape shuttles and her countering of the drops that had become slightly suspect and was lacking in confidence. Han probed hard at the net, but Sindhu got there early and gave it a good whiz to negate any advantage the Chinese fancied she held.

Sindhu got her half smashes and straight, deep hits going, hitting the ground running on her return for the first time since November. Han was a very promising junior from China once and has maximized her potential entering the Top 10, but she lacks the physical stomp or mental sturdiness of past best Chinese. She was left panting wildly even by Sindhu who didn't even dip completely into her cross variations from the backcourt.

Healthy responses

Han had smart ideas – to drag Sindhu on the wide flank defence, and keep things close stretching her across the body on the backhand. But Sindhu packed quite the punch on her quick drops, especially the fast pushes. The speed on the shuttle was quite good, showing no signs of rust, and she was 11-8 up in no time.



PV Sindhu beat Han Yue 21-17, 21-15 to help India beat China. BAI

Surprisingly, Han was already on her haunches, breathing heavily from the exertions of the rushed retrievals Sindhu forced on her.

Han would next try breaking the rhythm by going cross after Sindhu was affixed on a straight pendulum to reduce the gap to 12-13. But Sindhu would pull out some tweaked serves – a good subtle mix – and then some ruthless power to rapidly take the next 4 points.

Throughout the match, Sindhu would show a healthy response to holding leads and trailing, something she's struggled with during her downturn when momentum shifts wreaked havoc with her mind. But here as soon as Han started to close down on Sindhu's leads, the Indian would pull herself back together in a snap. The belief that she's stronger than most of her opponents, which is so crucial for Sindhu's game, seemed to be back in those moments when Han pressed.

It was after Han bagged her three straight point run to go from 12-16 down to 15-16, that Sindhu forged ahead with the stomping lunge to ferociously guard her leads. On the left front corner, Sindhu was impeccable as she transitioned from defence to bold attacks to tug back the lead to 18-15. Sindhu took the first point of

the match, and she finished the opening set, despite Han snapping at her heels at 19-17. Most crucially, she didn't get bogged down by the below-the-tape bending defence when Han made her twist and turn. And all that defensive work rate, never saw her falter when attacking as she looked in control of rallies.

The first set pocketed, Sindhu was comfortable with 1-point leads for the Chinese in the second, never looking fazed by Han being marginally ahead. She continued to be proactive in the front, and Han's poor body language and depleted fitness in fast rallies helped the Indian further.

Sindhu trailed 10-13, and despite being in front, Han had a horror service error at 13-12, just the tiny bit of opening for Sindhu to kick open the door. She played a commanding rally at 13-13, showing who held the controlling leash on the speed. The 28-year-old was then pinpoint accurate from the front right corner – that lunge again full of intent and not tentative like during her bad days and on 15-14, Sindhu had a sensation forearm lift from close to the net. The lead gone, Han looked broken. It was only her first match too, but she looked inexplicably lung-busted by the end of it and it was

MEN'S TEAM STORMS INTO QUARTERFINALS

In the men's competition, HS Prannoy lost the first singles against Ng Ka Long Angus 18-21 14-21 but that turned out to be the only blip for India who won the next four matches. World number one men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were ruthless in their 33-minute-long 21-16 21-11 win over Lui Chun Wai and Yeung Shing Choi before Lakshya Sen easily beat Chan Yin Chak 21-14 21-9 to give India the lead. With momentum on their side, India quickly wrapped up the tie with the pair of M R Arjun and Dhruv Kapila making it 3-1 with a 21-12 21-7 win over Chow Hin Long and Hung Kuei Chun, before Kidambi Srikanth beat Jason Gunawan 21-14 21-18 to complete the rout. PTI

18-15 suddenly for Sindhu, the Chinese having led 10-13 not too long ago. The punch on Sindhu's strokes saw her saunter to 20-16.

It has never been in doubt that Sindhu's physicality can help her bulldoze any opponent. From when she was 17 to now at 28, she has shredded three generations of Chinese players. But when she's hesitant at the net – like Hulk who's not greened up enough – her attack melts down like few others. Against Han Yue, Sindhu showed she was ready to assert her physicality once more.

Her lofty standards mean Sindhu will need to maintain this sass against the bona fide Chinese biggies, Chen Yufei and He Bing Jiao, the Top Five Chinese too, for anyone to truly declare she is back.

None of the big names are at this tournament. Her game will need to be far more sharper, and not wilt when peppered.

But in starting her season with a strong win over Han Yue, who's World No 8, Sindhu is declaring her intention to clamber up the Top Ten and set up those elite weekend wars against the biggies. Sindhu's V-Day return was about not-so-gently reminding the world she belongs to the top tier.

Despite Stranja gold, Panghal upset over selection policy

SHASHANK NAIR

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

THERE WASN'T any jumping in the air or even a hint of a smile when the referee raised his hand. When a glum Amit Panghal won the gold medal at the Strandja Memorial, he had done what had to be done – an act that he has been monotonously carrying out since the Commonwealth Games. Gone was the confidence and swagger of a man who had become the first Indian male boxer to win a silver medal at the World Championships. This Panghal was more like the one at the Tokyo Olympics, left crumpled in a heap after a shock defeat.

Since that loss, he has only been part of one major event – the 2022 Birmingham CWG. Two World Championships and an Asian Games have since passed and the boxer has found himself down the pecking order to fellow army pugilist Deepak Bhoria.

"There is no meaning to me winning the (Strandja) gold or any medal. If they aren't going to send me for competitions where I deserve to go, what's the point?" said Panghal after landing back in India.

The bone of contention for the Rohtak boxer continues to be the selection criteria for tournaments and camps, as has been implemented by high-performance director Bernard Dunne and his team of coaches. Rather than fixate on trials that decide the best boxers, the Irishman has said that a regular assessment from coaches in camp is a better indicator of the best boxer in a weight category.

"The big part for us choosing this method was to give clarity to athletes. We were speaking to them about why we were doing what we were doing. Trials are only one moment when judges and referees sit down and select winners. Whereas with the system we've brought – in terms of assessment, we have the coaches and myself, who work day in and day out," Dunne had told reporters at the 2023 Women's World Championships in New Delhi.

But according to 28-year-old Panghal, rather than clarity, it is the opposite that he has had over the past few years. Chief among his complaints is the lack of communication between the coaches and him about the evaluation process. The evaluation is divided into different categories with each boxer being awarded a maximum of 10 points in each. The categories include attendance, weight management, international performance potential, strength and conditioning, health management and performance in training.

"I have not been told where my points are low or where I lack. They don't tell us the points trails off Panghal.

from each individual section. We are just told the overall points at the end of the week. I have asked them many times to explain how they've given me the overall points, but I never get answers," Panghal told *The Indian Express*.

Exhausting all avenues

The three-time Asian Championship medalist also added that he had moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court before the Asian Games hoping for a judgement that would force the BFI to hold trials. But the petition was quashed by the court. "I tried to go through the route of the court previously but that was too close to the Asian Games. At this point, I have given up hope. Before the Olympic qualifiers team was being decided, I didn't even try to put forward my case. If they didn't listen the two times I came to them asking why I wasn't being selected, what was the point now?" said the Tokyo Olympian.

While Panghal has languished, Bhoria has benefitted from the policy. The Haryana boxer has been a part of two World Championships and an Asian Games and his only losses have come to Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Sakon Bibossinov at the 2021 World Championships' second round, French boxer Billal Bennam at the 2023 World Championships semi-finals (Bhoria won the bronze medal) and Tomoya Tsuboi, a world champion in the 54 kg category, at the Asian Games in Hangzhou.

In a way, this has been deserved for Bhoria, who was seen as the better boxer in their Army heyday. In 2017, at a Services competition, Bhoria beat Panghal but got knocked out in a later round. It put him in a three-month concussion protocol – one which allowed Panghal to progress to the Asian Games and win a gold over Uzbekistan's Hasanboy Dusmatov – the current flyweight World Champion.

"I have won the gold medal at the Asian Games and the silver medal at the World Championships. The boxers that I have beaten handily, he (Bhoria) has lost to them in this cycle. The boxer that I was dominating in training before the World Championships (2023) regularly beat him at the Asian Games," said Panghal, making it clear that he felt the gap between the two was not as it is made out to be.

He added that his only hope of getting an opportunity would be if Bhoria was unable to secure a flyweight quota at the first Olympic qualifiers and he would be given the chance to go for the second of them in May. But it's that feeling of perceived unfairness that he is unable to shake off. "If they (my teammates) were even close to my level, I could understand..." trails off Panghal.

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