

S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: January 22
Clear sky. Dense to very dense fog in the morning. Cold day
AQI: Very poor

MAX: 17 | **MIN: 05**
3.3°C below normal | 2.5°C below normal

BRIEFLY

GST officials booked for demanding Rs 5 cr bribe

Ghaziabad: Ghaziabad police Saturday registered an FIR against five officials of the Directorate General of Goods and Services Tax Intelligence (DGGI) for allegedly demanding a Rs 5 crore bribe from a Ghaziabad-based businessman. The officials, who have been booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act, were posted in the DGGI Gurugram office. ACP Kavindra Abhishek Srivastava said that the matter is being investigated and the statement of the plaintiff is yet to be recorded and legal action will be taken as per the evidence. Complainant Arun Kumar Som, director of SKS Electricals, said that his company office in Ghaziabad was raided by the GST team on July 5, 2022, under alleged allegations of violating GST rules. One of the directors was arrested without any warrant. ENS

After L-G order, DDA disburses Rs 460 crore to 2300 bidders

New Delhi: Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has disbursed over Rs 460 crore to more than 2300 bidders, aligning with L-G VK Saxena's directive to credit Earnest Money Deposits (EMDs) within 15 days. The L-G had earlier requested the DDA to release the EMDs by adhering to a 15-day timeframe and to ensure bidders don't have to combat bureaucratic hassles to get their refund. According to officials, almost all bidders have received their EMDs and the remaining 50 will receive them soon. ENS

Roads in west Delhi to get facelift: Atishi

New Delhi: PWD minister Atishi has approved projects to strengthen and upgrade roads in west Delhi, an official statement said on Sunday. These roads include Rohtak Road's (NH-10) service lanes from Metro pillar 109 to 273, Road No. 41, 77 and road from Paschim Puri Chowk to New Slum Quarters in Multan Nagar, it said. Atishi said, "The approved projects in west Delhi exemplify the Delhi Government's commitment to providing world-class road infrastructure for the citizens." PTI

KUCHA PATI RAM WAS ONCE HOME TO WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN

Amid Old Delhi chaos, a quiet street marked by crumbling, abandoned havelis

VIDHEESA KUNTAMALLA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

AMID THE bustling and noisy streets of Sita Ram Bazar in Old Delhi lies Kucha Pati Ram – an eerily quiet neighbourhood marked by abandoned, crumbling havelis.

Once home to a thriving community of wealthy businessmen, the *kucha* (street) now lies forlorn, with its original inhabitants long gone and their descendants having moved out to more "modern" parts of the capital.

Still, the street boasts of a few old-timers who have refused to let go of its old-world charm. One of them is Shanti Swaroop Khandelwal, 94, who has spent all his life in Kucha Pati Ram. Pointing out to an old *haveli* at the end of the street, he said, "That is where it was said that Pati Ram

used to live. He was said to be a man who was at the rescue of everybody in this neighbourhood, someone who protected everyone and solved their problems. This is why this lane is believed to have been named after him. None of us are certain which time period this was, though."

Another remarkable building here is the 300-year-old Haksar Haveli where Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, got married.

According to M.L.Pandit and T.N.Pandit's book *Kashmiri Pandits: A Contemporary Perspective*, "Moti Lal Atal moved to Delhi around 1850, and purchased the large mango garden and the retreat belonging to a courtesan of the court of Bahadur Shah Zafar, which later came to be known as Hauz Qazi area including the present Bazar Sita Ram area... The biggest plot sold off was pur-



The street is located inside Sita Ram Bazar. Amit Mehra

chased by Seth Sita Ram, around 1865, who developed, perhaps Delhi's first Urban Colony,

Bazar Sitaram." Sitting next to his *haveli*, a three-century-old structure

marked by intricate designs on the facade, a pastel-green weather-beaten wooden door

lending character to the setting, and a wooden railing, Khandelwal rues that "people don't seem to know the history of where they live". "Although these *havelis* have been within families for generations... They are not sure how their street got this name... I also believe that old Delhi is losing its charm because of the growing urbanisation," he added.

In his book *Delhi*:

Unknown Tales of a City, RV Smith wrote: "Patiram is believed to have been a wealthy trader who gave his name to the locality, which has as its neighbourhood Koocha Pandit, where the Kashmiris came and settled down during the reign of Shah Jahan after he moved his capital to the

newly-built Shahjahanabad."

He further wrote: "The Pandits earlier used to live in Agra's Kashmiri Bazaar, before moving to Chilinti Ghatia... where the Rainas, Kauls, Kunjhurs, Dars, and Nehrus made their abode. Motilal Nehru was in fact born in nearby Maithan...

Jawaharlal Nehru got married in Sita Ram Bazar."

Dalrymple wrote in his post: "The Kucha is littered with glorious *bania* havelis, depicting Krishna or Ram on their sandstone doorways and small temples... Due to the ghettoisation of Old Delhi, the traffic, and the lack of parking facilities, many of the inhabitants of this old locality have shifted outside the walled city. The *havelis* lie empty, awaiting a day when Delhi once again takes notice of its fading glory."

PIN CODE

110001

Location icon

Shah Umair, a numismatist and an amateur historian, told *The Indian Express*, "There is no proper documentation of the exact history of this kucha... During the era of Shah Jahan, a temple was made here at Kucha Pati Ram. Post the mutiny of 1857, when Muslims were forced out of Shahjahanabad, the *havelis* were brought by the Jains, Kashmiri pandits and *banias*."

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ANKITA UPADHYAY

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

DELHI'S All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Sunday reversed its decision to shut its out-patient department (OPD) for half day on January 22 in view of the Ram Temple consecration in Ayodhya. AIIMS authorities said the decision was taken to "prevent any inconvenience to patients and to facilitate patient care services".

The other Central Government hospitals in the Capital, including Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, which had ordered similar restrictions, have also decided to keep their OPDs open Monday.

AIIMS authorities said the decision was taken to "prevent any inconvenience to patients and to facilitate patient care services".

A fresh memorandum issued by its administration Sunday said, "All clinical services, including outpatient services, shall remain open to prevent any inconvenience to patients and to facilitate patient care services. All chief of centres, heads of department, units and branch officers are requested to bring this to the notice of all staff working under them."

Its earlier memorandum issued Saturday has ordered closure of all services, barring critical and emergency care, on January 22 until 2.30 pm as "Ram Lalla Pratishtha at Ayodhya will be celebrated across India."

It cited an order issued by the Centre on Thursday, announcing a half day for all offices, institutions and industrial establishments under it across the country "to en-

able employees to participate in celebrations" in view of the Ayodhya event.

Around 15,000 patients on average visit the AIIMS OPD daily, most of them with cancer and heart and neurological issues. A majority of them come from states across north India.

The institute's OPD remains closed on national holidays, with no appointments scheduled. AIIMS sources told *The Indian Express* Saturday's order, and the decision to reschedule patients' appointments, was withdrawn as it was felt it was taken "in a rush".

"In cardio and neuro centres alone, we see almost 3,000-4,000 patients per OPD. Those needing admission post consultation could have suffered a lot and rescheduled dates are mostly given with delayed time periods," said a senior faculty member at the hospital.

The Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital said all routine services, including OPD, laboratory tests, and emergency services will now remain functional. Patient registration will take place between 8am and 10am, and critical services will also function as usual, it said.

At Safdarjung Hospital, although OPD will remain open, registration, which starts at 8am, will end at 10 am instead of the usual 11:30, a circular by its administration said. Lab services will also be available until 11:30 am and the pharmacy will run till noon. Elective surgeries, however, will remain closed, the circular added.

At Lady Hardinge Medical College, too, the OPD registration will be allowed from 8-10 am.

ED attaches premises of jeweller group under PMLA

New Delhi: A group company of Shree Raj Mahal Jewellers, located in Central Delhi's Karol Bagh market area, has been attached under the anti-money laundering law as part of an investigation into a multi-crore bank loan fraud, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Sunday.

"The properties belong to Ginni Gold Private Limited and its directors-cum-promoters Ginni Devi and Reena Goel. Ginni Gold is a group company of Shree Raj Mahal Jewellers Private Limited, the agency said in a statement. Shree Raj Mahal Jewellers is currently undergoing insolvency proceedings," an ED spokesperson said in a statement.

According to the ED, the shops have been provisionally attached under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and are valued at more than Rs 4.34 crore. "The money laundering investigation stems from a CBI FIR filed against the company (Ginni Gold) and its promoters for bank fraud and cheating the Union Bank of India of Rs 53 crore," the spokesperson said, adding multiple FIRs have been lodged against the promoters and group companies of Shree Raj Mahal Jewellers for duping banks to the tune of Rs 232 crore. ENS



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj during the Ramlila on Sunday. Express

SCHOOLS CLOSED FOR MORNING SHIFT

FOR MORNING SHIFT

The Delhi government's Directorate of Education has ordered the closure of morning or general shift schools on Monday.

FOR EVENING SHIFT

Schools running in the evening shift will commence at 02.30 pm, and follow their usual timing.



A decked-up market in Delhi. Tashi Tobgyal

■ The order would apply to all government and government aided-schools

■ The decision is in line with the Office Memorandum from the Services Department of GNCTD, declaring a half-day closure (up to 02:30 pm) for all Delhi government establishments to facilitate employees' participation in the celebrations of Ram Lalla Pratishtha in Ayodhya.

SAMAN HUSAIN

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

THE RUN-UP to the Ram Mandir consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on Monday has spelt boom for several businesses in Delhi as demand for flowers, saffron danglers, Jai Shri Ram flags, copies of the Ramcharitmanas, and 3D Ram Mandir models has surged in the capital.

Due to the heightened demand, the prices of flowers at Ghazipur Mandi saw an increase of over 50 per cent on Sunday with some varieties selling at four to five times their original price.

While, on a regular day, the wholesale price of roses is around Rs 250 per kg, the price surged to Rs 450-500 on Sunday. Marigolds, typically priced at Rs 50 to 60 per kg, were sold at Rs 250. According to Manoj Kumar, who sells flowers at the wholesale flower market, the prices of all flowers, including lilies, orchids, and lotuses, have risen due to bulk orders for decorations from temples across the capital and in Ayodhya.

A new product that has gained a lot of popularity in the markets is the 3D model of Ram Mandir. It is the 3D model of Ram Mandir.

"We received over 1 crore orders of 3D Ram Mandir models in just



3D models of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on display at a shop in New Delhi. Gajendra Yadav

a few days. Eventually, we had to stop taking more orders and redirect them to other warehouses.

Several other traders making the 3D models are also facing high market demands," Bijay Pal, who owns a woodcraft warehouse in Okhla, said.

Ankur Gupta from RK Gupta general store in Chota Bazar, Chhatta Hinjamal, Shahdara, said his shop has seen the sales of Ramcharitmanas skyrocket this month.

"On a usual day, we would sell two to three copies a day but due to the consecration ceremony, the sales have jumped to 200 to

300 copies a day," Gupta said. According to Gupta, this is because several people are placing bulk orders to distribute copies of the epic.

"We have the Ramcharitmanas available in three to four sizes. Many people have placed bulk orders for the purpose of distribution during the celebrations. The sale of patkas, danglers and saffron flags has also seen a massive rise," he said.

Amit Kumar, who owns a shop selling puja items outside the Hanuman Mandir in Chandni Chowk, said, "There has been a huge rise in the number of devo-

tees visiting the temple lately. Massive preparations are taking place to host the devotees who will visit the temple on the day of the consecration. All shops selling Pooja Samagri outside the Mandir have stocked up as we are expecting the sales to be even higher on the day of the consecration."

Monu from Saif Nath ji fabrics in Timarpur said, "We have stocked up on flags in different designs and price ranges. Six different varieties of flag designs in different sizes are being sold in our shops. Thousands of flags are being sold daily."

Meanwhile, ahead of the Republic Day, a few sellers of the Tricolour have reported decline in sales as compared to previous years. According to Javed, who runs a flag-manufacturing company called Almoda Creations, there has been a 60% decline in his Republic Day business this year.

"A lot of stock is left... the Indian Flag has witnessed decline in sales," he said. A representative of Sadar Bazar-based Sona Enterprises, which has been selling both the Tricolour and Jai Shri Ram flags, said, "Some bulk orders of the national flag have also been placed but the orders for the Jai Shri Ram Flags would be around 60 to 70% more than that."

newly-built Shahjahanabad."

He further wrote:

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The Only Road to "RAM RAJYA"



"You have to become Ram from inside"

- Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

In these modern times when the idea of God seems a mirage and ego rules the mind, it is only through understanding and awakening the essence of Shri Ram within that one can cross the sea of illusion, the Bhavasagara. However, it is not through a mental activity such as reading or discourse that Shri Ram's essence can be understood, but an inner understanding that comes through the awakening of a subtle energy within. The subtle energy called as the Kundalini bears lot of mention in all the scriptures and sacred writings (granthas) like Vedas and Upanishadas, the working benefit of which was also taught to Shri Ram and Lakshmana by their guru, Vashishtha, during their stay in his ashram. Kundalini is a form of divine feminine energy (or Shakti) that resides in three and a half coils at the base of the spinal cord in the sacrum bone, called as the Mooladhara. This Kundalini energy is thus the 'mother' energy which rises through different centers of the Human Subtle System, piercing the six chakras above it, ultimately opening the Sahasrara in the limbic area. When this Kundalini gets awakened, the union of the Spirit 'Atma' or Yoga takes place with the Divine and one starts experiencing a new level of awareness within. This is also called self-realization. It is said that without knowing oneself, one cannot know God. It is only after self-realization one can actually understand the truth of all religions, saints and all the incarnations including Shri Ram. In ancient times though, the awakening or jagruti of this energy was very difficult and one guru could give self-realization to only one disciple. The process was extremely rigid and involved strict purification of the mind and body through tough penances and practices under the instructions of the guru. From penances in the hills of the snowcapped Himalaya to extensive meditations in the deep forests of the Kishkindha, only and only, the most pure and dedicated ones could get their Self Realization. As a result, among millions, only one or two hardly got the Spirit enlightened in their attention.

BESTOWING THE GREATEST GIFT OF KALIYUGA IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SAHAJA YOGA, THE METHOD OF EN-MASSE REALIZATION FOUNDED BY HER HOLINESS SHRI MATAJI NIRMALA DEVI IN THE YEAR 1970. FONDLY CALLED AS SHRI MATAJI, SHE WORKED OUT A METHOD TO GIVE SELF REALIZATION TO DESIRING SEEKERS HOWEVER SMALL OR LARGE THEY WOULD BE IN NUMBER. 'SAHAJA' MEANS EFFORTLESS, hence this union with the Divine, the 'Yoga', becomes extremely effortless through Kundalini awakening in Sahaja Yoga. Once the pure desire is expressed, Mother Kundalini rises, crossing all the chakras, opening the Sahasrara, ultimately filling the attention with the light of the Spirit. As the light penetrates the being, all the darkness of ignorance goes away and one starts experiencing the connection with the Divine expressed as subtle waves of cool breeze on the palms of our hands and on top of the head.

"Although the Mani (Kundalini) manifests in the world, but without the grace of Shri Rama no one can achieve it. To achieve it is also easy (Sahaja) but unfortunate people reject the easy method."

(Shri Ramcharitmanas)

On enlightenment this body itself becomes a temple with the enlightened light of the different deities at their respective chakras, one of them being Shri Ram, residing in the Temple of our Hearts. When Shri Hanuman grabbed open his chest, Shri Sita Ram were seen residing in his heart. Similarly, in our Subtle System which is made up of three channels (nadis) and seven energy centers (chakras), Shri Ram resides with his consort Shri Sita in the right side of the Heart or the Anahata Chakra. When the Kundalini passes through this chakra, Shri Ram gets awakened and the person automatically starts adopting his qualities on his own. This adoption of qualities is not forced through any mental activity or outward discipline but occurs spontaneously on the Central Nervous System just as other parasympathetic activities of digestion and heartbeat.

Shri Ram is the Maryada Purushottam, the keeper of the sanctity and the greatest in all mankind. Through his incarnation he showed the character of an ideal being, the importance of Dharma and the role as a responsible and benevolent king. Shri Ram always looked for the welfare of the public, their opinion and worked for Janamatta or the decision of the people. Not only that, the greatest quality (guna) visible in his life is that of an honest government keeper and a truthful king which he accomplished through his balance, peace, mildness and sweetness.

"The sweetness of Shri Rama, the way He used to make people feel comfortable, an example is of an oyster who gets a little stone into the body of the shell, takes out a kind of a shiny liquid and covers it with that shiny liquid and makes it into a pearl to be comfortable. Now He did not want His own comfort. Rama is a little bit different, that He wanted to make everyone into a diamond or a pearl so that the other person

Sahaja Yoga family extends heartfelt congratulations on the consecration ceremony of Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya

Awakening the Essence of Shri RAM within

would shine and would look nice and that is how He felt comforted. The benevolence of Shri Rama was shown when He started ruling the people. He was the one who cared for the needs of the people."

(H.H. Shri Mataji's description of Shri Rama as a benevolent king)

For the protection of the innocent, Shri Ram killed innumerable Rakshasas including the hefty Ravan, even though he was the most patient and calm (Paramsheel) but for the protection of Dharma and righteousness he did not hesitate in devouring the evil doers. In Treta Yuga, these Rakshasas however manifested in the physical form but in this Kaliyuga when the Ravan sits in each mind as the Ego and these Rakshasas have seeped into the human nature, hollowing the country with corruption and dirty politics, it can only be killed when light of Shri Ram's power within gets enlightened. This enlightenment is an actualization which occurs and can be felt on the Parasympathetic Nervous System. It is not just talking, it is a happening. We talk of Ram Rajya but Ram Rajya cannot be achieved through outward purification of the system but first through this inward purification of each individual. Unless and until all the politicians and people get their innate honesty awakened within, Ram Rajya will just be the vision of a utopian society which seems good in principle but not in practice.

"If Ram Rajya has to come, then Ram is to be born in the hearts of the people who are at the helm of affairs."

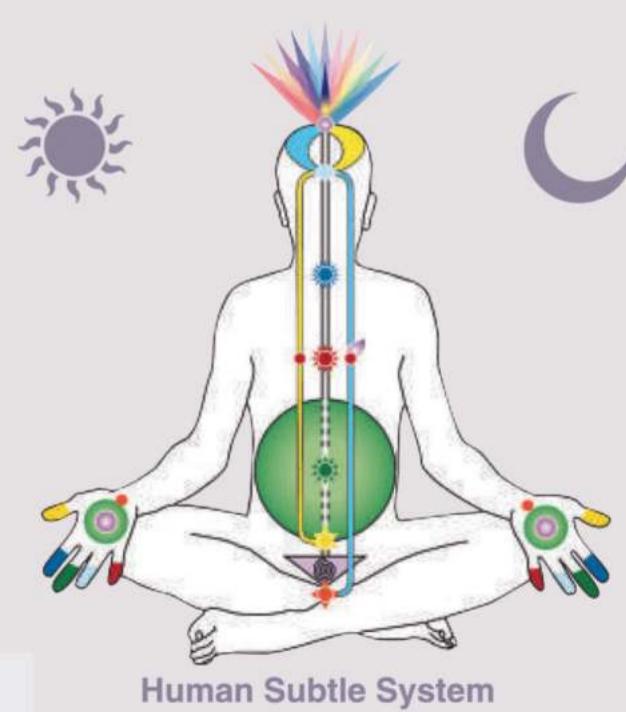
(Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi)

Shri Ram resides in the heart with all his gunas of truth (Satya), righteousness (Dharma) and responsibility (Maryada). Shri Ram's life as a loving father, husband and a benevolent king lay the vision of an ideal leader and individual. His humility in accepting 'ber' (Indian plum) from even the most down trodden Shabri shows his utmost humility and immense love. Shri Ram was above the ideas of inferiority or superiority even though he was the son of a king but for him everyone was the same. The love and compassion with which he received Shabri's offerings reflects the beauty of his character. For him, stature and caste did not matter. His love and respect permeated the being of every person with the same intensity. This love comes when the identification with Pure Spirit takes place. That is when we start seeing beyond a person and can touch his/her essence. In today's time we see hefty discourse on politics and governance but taking examples from Shri Ram's life we can see that an ideal government can only function if it is based on the ideals of public opinion (Janamat) and public good (Janahit) with complete love, humility and selflessness.

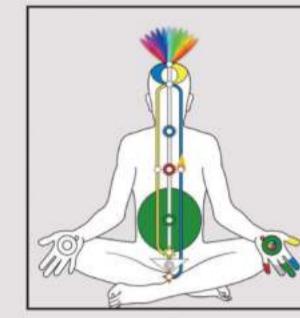
In Kaliyuga lies this most crucial choice, either to take to Shri Ram or Ravan, both reside within us but the ultimate freedom lies in the hands of the man. Unless and until the Mother Kundalini is not awakened within Shri Ram can never be truly understood. There can be discussions, discourses, book readings, construction of temples, rallies, all in the name of Shri Ramchandra but if Shri Ram is missing from the heart itself, then all these things fall futile. A lamp which is not lit cannot spread the light; similarly unless and until the light within us is covered with the dark clouds of ignorance, Shri Ram's character (charitra), which is greatly talked, discussed and revered in the whole of the Bharatavarsha, can never permeate our being. Only talking will not make us like Shri Ram, it is through Kundalini awakening which is a living process and is an actualization that occurs on our Central Nervous System which can be felt and experienced as a result of which get nourished by the essence of the Maryada Purushottam. One can say that he worships Shri Ram a lot but that worshipping is only outward unless we are connected within. The real Dusshera takes place inside us, that is, when the Ravan settled in the human personality as Ego, the Ahamkara, is burnt and destroyed by the cooling fire of the Mother Kundalini within. This is the real victory of good over evil, but it lies in your hands. Only in your own complete independence you have to desire this awakening. It cannot be imposed. It is a seeking which works out with a pure desire and nothing else. Therefore, it is only through the subtle and spontaneous awakening of the Kundalini which happens in Sahaja Yoga because of which we can fully adopt the tattva (essence) of Shri Ram and place him in the Temple of our Hearts.

"After achieving his ideals, we reach another because he was human ideal. It is great that God came to this world in a human form to become our ideal. He has gone through all the hardships to show us strength to keep Dharma. That is Vishwa Dharma and the state of Yoga."

(H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi)



Human Subtle System



H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi
Sahaja Yoga Trust



The crow Kakbhushundi says to the Garuda, "Oh Garuda, the foe of serpents, this Kaliyuga is the house of sin and falsehood. But, the greatest blessing in Kaliyuga is that one gets free from the trap of Bhava effortlessly."

(Shri Ramcharitmanas)

The Twelve Principal Qualities of Shri Ram:

- MARYADA PURUSHOTTAM:** Shri Ram is the keeper of the Maryada, the divine limits and the greatest in all humankind. He is the ideal being, the one whose words are his actions.
- SWEETNESS:** Despite being the son of the king Ram's character is full of sweetness (madhurya). His social stature does not affect him. Whomsoever he interacts with gets enveloped in the sweetness of his personality just like a particle of dirt gets transformed into a pearl by an oyster.
- SELFLESSNESS:** Shri Ram kept his people higher than himself, his wife and children. If politicians today understand this point they wouldn't be selfish and would follow Dharma.
- BENEVOLENCE:** Welfare of the people and respect for public opinion are key ideals from Shri Ram's life. Shri Ram was a benevolent king. Unless and until this benevolence comes within us we cannot be an honest government keeper. Only when we care for the benevolence of others we can actually become leaders in a true sense.
- HUMILITY:** Hailing from the most revered Raghukul, Shri Ram still did not have any false mental projections of himself as superior to others. He was very humble. His humility is shown in his acceptance of the Shabri's ber.
- COMPASSION:** With zeal to transform others, with love and understanding, Shri Rama is the most compassionate, the Karunamay. Even when he devours the Rakshasas, it is done with the compassion to save the saints. Ahilyodhhar, the emancipation of Ahilya shows Ram's heartfelt compassion and love for the troubled and down trodden. Compassion is a very rigorous force whose real meaning we can understand only after Realization.
- SATYA:** Shri Ram's life was completely truthful. What he said, he did that and there was no escape from the reality. The absolute truth, which is the spirit, comes naturally to us when the attention gets enlightened by the Kundalini and we become completely honest and truthful by both words and actions.
- DHARMA:** Shri Ram's greatest quality was to follow the path of righteousness. He was the one who kept the Dharma, the innate righteousness. Even being the most calm and compassionate, he took up the bow and slew the demons and the wrong doers. Ram's dharma was of the Spirit. When we get Self Realization, our Atma Dharma also gets established within us.
- PATIENCE:** Through the patience and mildness in his attitude Shri Ram won the hearts of the people. He patiently waited for

fourteen years during the period of his exile and there is no doubt that the sheer strength of his character came from the silence of his attention. This silence of the Spirit nourishes us and develops these qualities.

BALANCE: Shri Ram stood on the essence of balance and love. His character was very simple, loving and balanced. This is the quality of the Sushumna Nadi, the channel of ascent which gives us balance and is the path of our innate evolution.

OBEDIENCE: Portraying the form of the ideal human, Shri Ram at various instances of his life showed the utter sense of obedience of his elders and the right things. In the same manner, when the essence of Shri Ram gets established in our hearts, we develop the obedience of the Spirit and do what is right. Automatically whatever is wrong and inappropriate for our being falls off from our personality and the truth takes its charge.

STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION: Shri Maryada Purushottam's entire life shows the sheer strength of his character, the power of his love and his dedication towards his endeavors in life. He was above the temptations, the one who could not be lured by Surpanakha. Shri Ram was above all these false ideas. He did and achieved what he said through his dedicated efforts and determination of the Spirit. We too can develop this quality (guna), the only thing is to enter the realm of our Spirit that resides within.

The tattva of Shri Ram stands on Sanatana, the ever eternal. Only when we become one with the power of Spirit which is also Sanatana, can we actually understand Shri Ram. Through Sahaja Yoga, this union takes place effortlessly just as any other living process like breathing, which happens on its own. We do not do any efforts to make the heart pump, we do not make any efforts in the living process of digestion and similarly we cannot make any efforts to raise our Kundalini. It takes place spontaneously on its own. All the qualities of Shri Rama can be manifested in our personalities through Kundalini awakening in Sahaja Yoga. When the Kundalini touches the Sahasrara and pierces it, our attention is nourished and established in the light of the Spirit. That is when we become the real Self, the Pure Spirit. Becoming the Spirit is the highest point of our evolution and only through Sahaja Yoga this actualization can be felt, experienced and imbibed in life. This is the absolute truth. It is time that in this Yuga we understand it, take our Self Realization and lead a life full of eternal joy and everlasting peace. If we are at peace within there will be peace all over the world. The answer to man's seeking has come. Let the entire humanity yearn for it.



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

UP & DOWN

Stock markets have been volatile. A combination of global and domestic factors will influence investment

AFTER SCALING NEW highs, the Indian stock markets have been experiencing a bout of volatility. The BSE Sensex began last week by crossing the 73,000 level. Over the course of the next few days, it fell 2,141 points or nearly 3 per cent. On Friday, it recovered marginally, ending the day up 0.7 per cent. From the beginning of this year, the Sensex is down 1.7 per cent. However, this weakness does not reflect in the broader market. Over the same period, the BSE mid cap index is up 3.63 per cent, while the small cap index is up 3.81 per cent.

The recent market volatility can be traced to several factors. Investor sentiment soured after HDFC Bank, the leading private sector bank, posted weaker than expected third quarter results. The bank fell more than 8 per cent on Wednesday and around 3 per cent on Thursday, dragging down the benchmark index. The fallout could be seen in stock prices of other private sector banks. Since January 15, the NIFTY Private Bank index is down around 4.5 per cent. Alongside, remarks by US Federal Reserve official Christopher Waller also seemed to have caught investors off guard. Waller cautioned that the Fed might not cut rates as quickly as many investors had believed — following the US Fed's December meeting in which it had indicated the possibility of three rate cuts in 2024, many had penciled in the first rate cut in March. Waller's comments, which came after the minutes of the December meeting that showed that most officials were in favour of keeping interest rates high for some time, seem to have dented investor exuberance over the policy pivot by major central banks. Foreign portfolio investors have also changed tack. After \$1.08 billion in November and \$7.93 billion in December, net investments by FPIs have turned negative (-\$1.56 till January 19). However, the Sensex is currently trading at a PE ratio of 25, higher than its average over the past decade.

A combination of global and domestic factors will influence markets. Towards the end of this month, the US Fed will hold its first meeting of this calendar year. This meeting is expected to provide clues on when the central bank is likely to begin cutting rates. Alongside, the continuing crisis in the Red Sea will also be felt across markets. On Friday, Brent crude oil rose to \$78.51 per barrel as a growing number of oil tankers diverted course from the region. On the domestic front, investors will turn their attention to the interim budget and the monetary policy committee meeting that is slated a few days thereafter. In the following weeks, the focus will shift to the 2024 general elections.

THE RIGHT TREATMENT

Government's nudge for responsible antibiotic prescription is welcome. Medical community must also weigh in

THE CENTRE HAS done the right thing in asking doctors to be more responsible when they prescribe antibiotics. The Union Health Ministry has asked physicians to write down the exact reasons for advising patients to use these medicines. It has also asked pharmacists to not dispense antimicrobials without a prescription. The country has had a policy to prevent the overuse of antibiotics for close to a decade. However, the use of such medicines is still not monitored by the government. A Lancet study in 2022 noted that "India consumes a large volume of broad-spectrum antibiotics that should ideally be used sparingly". Antibiotic overuse is the primary reason for bugs developing resistance to these medicines. That is why patients with severe diseases like tuberculosis are increasingly not responding to the first line of treatment.

Broad-spectrum antibiotics target a wide variety of bacteria and are antidotes to serious infections. However, anecdotal evidence shows that doctors tend to err on the side of caution and prescribe these medicines without diagnosing whether an infection is viral or bacterial. They also advise antibiotics to prevent secondary infections even when the threat of such a malady is remote. Individual doctors, though, are only one part of the problem. Medical protocols require hospitals to have a policy for rational use of antibiotics — this is important because studies show that these healthcare facilities are major breeding grounds for antimicrobial resistance. But only a few big hospitals follow this mandate. A recent study by the National Centre for Disease Control revealed that three out of four patients who went to a tertiary care centre were prescribed an antibiotic, often to prevent an infection rather than to cure it. The study conducted between November 2021 and April 2022 under the National Programme of Antimicrobial Containment found only a 10 percentage point difference in antibiotic use between intensive care units that have the sickest patients and the other wards.

Given the heterogeneity of the country's healthcare settings, a one-size-fits-all approach might not be apt to regulate antibiotic use. In 2013, the Chennai Declaration by a group of concerned doctors suggested strict control of the use of such medicines in areas with relatively well-provisioned medical facilities and a more liberal system based on the strict monitoring of select oral antimicrobials in other areas. Another school of experts believes that medical experts must create more awareness within their community. Some others advocate that healthcare centres must have more microbiologists to guide doctors. The government's nudge to doctors should spur such conversations. The medical community must now step in to tackle the problem in all its dimensions.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



PRATAP BHAWAN MEHTA

THERE ARE MOMENTS in history that appear to drive wave after wave of people in a great torrent of catharsis, ecstasy, emotion and an elevated group mood that almost all conventional analysis, historical categories, moral measures and political prognosis seem beside the point. It would be foolish to deny that the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya is one such event. Just in sheer magnitude, of the tens of millions of people mobilised, whose identity, emotions and hopes are, at least for the moment, oriented towards Ayodhya, this event has almost no precedent in history. It is a watershed moment. The *pran pratishtha* following the foundation stone of Ayodhya, marks the consecration of Hinduism as a political religion pure and simple. It is not just a moment where the state, which has pulled all its mighty power behind this event, ceases to be secular. It is also the moment where Hinduism ceases to be religious.

The sheer spectacle of the event, now fusing modified but still traditional *yama* and *niyama*, with mass broadcasting and mass mobilisation, is itself considered an achievement. The spectacle is the statement: That Hindus have asserted their collective power, reclaimed their historical agency, and overcome the deep sense of insecurity, and despite some murmurings, for once managed to make something of a show of unity. The BJP has kept its promises. Prime Minister Narendra Modi now donning the mantle of Hindu kingship, has the ability to get millions of people to play their parts for an audience of One, with all institutions, corporations, sects, civil society, media singing the same tune. It is a terrifying spectacle on any proper measure of democracy. But as a form of deference to mass sentiment it is now carrying its own democratic imprint. There is something astonishing about this mobilisation of power. You have to struggle to remember its ominous origins and shadows.

Some parties may contest the ceremony. But everyone has to rush to declare their allegiance to Ram. The Ram whose role in Indian cultural and spiritual life was one whose centre was everywhere and circumference nowhere, has now been anchored to a centre. Ram has been transformed from a radiant glow of righteousness, compassion, and imaginative power into something merely instrumental: A litmus test for national loyalty. We are now more valorous devotees of Ram — more than Tulsiadas or Gandhi, who rejected the logic of retaliation. You now have to swear allegiance to this Imam-e-Hind, or else.

January 22

What it means and what it doesn't — between the dhwaja and the dharma

was one whose centre was everywhere and circumference nowhere, has now been anchored to a centre. Ram has been transformed from a radiant glow of righteousness, compassion, and imaginative power into something merely instrumental: A litmus test for national loyalty. We are now more valorous devotees of Ram — more than Tulsiadas or Gandhi, who rejected the logic of retaliation. You now have to swear allegiance to this Imam-e-Hind, or else.

In many ways, Bhagavad Gita 17.18 captures the spectacle being made out of this ceremony perfectly. It goes: *satkara mana puja ar�ham tapah dambeha cheva yat/kriyate tadiham proktam rajas am chalam adhruvam* (Penance and austerities performed ostentatiously out of pride for the sake of gaining honour and recognition are all in the mode of a passion. Its benefits are unstable and fleeting). This is an accurate description of this mode of worship and a warning. It names this worship for what it is: A spectacle. But the fact that the passions and emotional resonances it produces are transitory is not reassuring in this context. It will require that the deep insecurities and needs this spectacle has tapped into be constantly satiated. The passion around Ram is not a form of ecstasy finding its final repose in a radiant calm. It is going to be one in a long chain where our pride will have to be constantly fed. This is because in an inversion of *dharma*, the relation between pride and its object is reversed. We no longer take pride in genuine achievement; generating pride is considered the achievement.

In the Mahabharata there is an evocative word, *Dharma Dhwajii*. It is a pejorative for those who make a show of their worship in what is a sign of lack of real faith. The term *Dharma Dhwajii* refers to those who, as it were, care about the flag more than they care about dharma. The *Dharma Dhwajii* have, for the moment, won the political, cultural and emotional battle fair and square. It is the overwhelming power of this moment, and the fact that we now inhabit a political universe solely dominated by power, that expressing even ambivalence about this *pran pratishtha* seems more like blowing straws in a hurricane. Bearing witness, fighting for republican ideals,

are all now reduced to self-satisfied snarks or expressions of sour grapes. There is no real ideological counterpoint.

Rallying around the dhwaja is clear. What dharma it portends is less clear. The content of this new Ramrajya, is, for a moment, founded in a logic of retaliation and blood, rancour and division; that India's post-1951 constitutional ideals sought hard to avoid. That project was, first and foremost, betrayed in many different ways by its own custodians. The Dharma Dhwajis, with popular acclaim, have reduced whatever was left of the dharma of that republic to ruins. The only content to the new dharma one can see on the horizon is, ironically, to intensify the logic of the 1930s: To create an ethno-nationalist state with its cult of power and violence, its worship of purity and concentration of power. This is a project that never ends well. It produced devastating wars in Europe, and the partition of India.

This time the partition is more intimate and close: It is running through families. It is also a fissure within Hinduism. Worshipping idols is central to Hinduism, no matter what deracinated intellectuals might tell you. It gave Hinduism a playful intimacy. But the idols we worship are no longer intimate; they are mega showpieces. More grievously, concentration on the idol was a path to self-consciousness. But now, as the philosopher, Arindam Chakrabarti, once wrote, the idol has been replaced by the I-doll, the worship of the "I". We are consecrating our own collective narcissism in the image of God.

In the Ramayana, in any version, there is always a sense of sadness around Ram himself. Bhavabhuti captured it beautifully: Ram has been filled with the rasa of pity/ kept hidden by his profound demeanour/ the sharp pain of it held deep within/ like a clay pot baking in embers. This moment of triumphalism is also accompanied by a pain that cannot even be expressed. It will cook in the embers of this moment. Ram's dhwaja has been planted. But the question of dharma is met only with a yawning and ominous silence.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express



DEEPIKA GUPTA

THE EDUCATIONIST and media theorist Neil Postman argued that the path to learning is a difficult one — it requires attention to "sequence", "perspiration", "perseverance" and "perplexity". Madhav Chavan's article, 'Classroom at a click' (IE, Jan 18) is in complete opposition to the idea of learning as an arduous journey. Chavan celebrates the spread of technology and argues that it would make it possible to teach, learn and test "anytime-anywhere". He says the recently released ASER 2023 Report indicates an increase in smartphone ownership and the ability to use them among youth in the age group of 14-18 years. However, the faith in digital technology as an enabler in accessing knowledge and widening opportunities needs to be scrutinised.

While Chavan acknowledges that increased school enrolment does not imply enhanced learning, he fails to see a similar distinction between smartphone access and learning. An increase in access to digital devices cannot ensure automatic knowledge construction or skill development.

My criticism of the uninhibited use of internet technology in education is threefold. First, a challenge to this is presented when the medium itself is placed under a scanner of critique. Sociologist Basil Bernstein called digital technology "quasi-pedagogical" wherein education becomes a process of transmission, and the provider of the transmission is often unaware of the consequences of such a transmission. Education, on the other hand, does not entail the transmission of information or transaction of ideas. It is an intended and

UNDER THE DIGITAL GLOSS

Learning happens in classrooms, not at a 'click'

Even though internet technology brings a wide array of information at the learner's disposal, it turns the process of learning into an act of telling and consuming. The information presented in "educational" videos is monological and unidirectional. The possibility of discussion, argument, and contestation of ideas in a classroom is undermined if the digital platform is accepted as an instrument to enhance the quality of education.

planned activity involving the mutual construction of knowledge through dialogue and discovery. Even though internet technology brings a wide array of information at the learner's disposal, it turns the process of learning into an act of telling and consuming. The information presented in "educational" videos is monological and unidirectional. The possibility of discussion, argument, and contestation of ideas in a classroom is undermined if the digital platform is accepted as an instrument to enhance the quality of education.

Second, the idea that learning can happen "anytime-anywhere" ignores the country's socio-economic reality. It does not consider a student's environment that could be fraught with violence, discrimination, or poverty. It undermines the significance of the classroom as a space where students can divorce themselves from their immediate realities and engage in the process of learning with their teachers and peers. In a society ridden with caste and religious distinctions, the physical classroom space provides a chance to overcome socioeconomic barriers and learn collaboratively. The uninhibited internet consumption can expose learners to ideas that could strengthen the identities they were ascribed at birth, rather than challenging them.

Finally, Chavan argues that technology can offer education that is different from schools and colleges — it would give importance to issues such as natural resource management, environment, and climate. His argument assumes that the training required for agriculture, forestry and fisheries can take place effec-

tively online and easy connections can be made with environmental awareness. Such an argument overlooks the disconnect that internet technology creates. There are two ways to learn through digital means: By watching videos, and by attending a live class with a teacher. In the former, the video will most likely be generic and produced without knowing who the viewer is and what their specific context is. In the latter, the teacher could be anywhere in the country and the learners could also be from diverse backgrounds. In both cases, the learner will only receive information that might not be suited to their occupational specificity or geographical context. Moreover, formal training in traditional occupations such as agriculture needs to be interdisciplinary and include economic, demographic, geographical and scientific concepts — this seems beyond the scope of education "delivered" via a smartphone.

In a recent book, Mark West, who works in UNESCO's education sector said education technology exacerbates inequalities, impoverishes the quality of education, slows down the process of socialisation and cultivates a behaviour of consumerism among students, parents and teachers. Instead of viewing education through digital means as an all-encompassing provider, adopting a sceptical stance would clear out the digital gloss and classrooms would emerge as reliable spaces for learning, albeit in need of reform.

The writer is a former history teacher and a scholar of education at the University of Delhi



JANUARY 22, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM ON AKALI DEMANDS

THE PRIME MINISTER, Mrs Indira Gandhi, told the National Integration Council that the door was open for negotiations with the Akalis on their outstanding demands like water and territorial readjustment. She hastened to add that issues concerning other states were not, entirely in her hands. "Even if I convince my partymen, other parties may not be ready to accept the solution," she said.

INDO-PAK VISAS

INDIA AND PAKISTAN agreed to issue double-entry tourist visas and sign a protocol on the promotion of group tourism soon. These are among the decisions taken during the three-

day meeting of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission's two sub-commissions to expand cooperation in the fields of travel, tourism, information, education, culture and sports. One of the subcommissions decided that the two countries would also arrange exchange visits of artists, poets, writers and experts in various fields besides exchange exhibitions of paintings, photographs, handicrafts and folkcrafts.

TAX TALKS

THE UNION FINANCE Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, and the top industrialists of the country spoke on different wave-lengths on matters of taxation when they met to discuss the forthcoming budget. While the Finance Minister favoured a more elastic tax system to

fetch more revenues, the industrialists wanted the incidence of both direct and indirect taxes to be reduced.

TARZAN DIES

JOHNNY WEISMULLER, THE five-time Olympic swimming champion who thrilled millions as Tarzan of the Jungle, died at his home, a funeral home spokesman said. He was 79. Weissmuller had been ill for a long time after a series of strokes. Born in Chicago on June 2, 1904, Weissmuller grew up to become the most successful swimmer of his day, winning five gold medals at the 1924 and 1928 Olympics. He set 67 world records and won 52 national championships for various events. He turned to films in 1931.

Temple & a quest for resolutions

The journey from Somnath to Ayodhya has shown continuity. It establishes that the decolonisation of minds and ideas is a cultural and spiritual process



RAKESH SINHA

THE INAUGURATION OF the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22 is more than a religious event. It carries with it the civilisational character of the country for posterity. It is not an end itself but a means to proclaim the progressive message of a commitment to faith that is not premised on "otherness". The movement to restore the *Jamnaboomi* was neither a battle against any religion nor an effort to re-prosecute history. It was to proclaim the commitment to the culture that has shaped Hindus' worldview. Lord Ram is not a god that gives, one to whom people go with wishes and aspirations but a deity who personifies ideals of life. He is a non-sectarian icon and represents those virtues considered essential for the uplift of the soul, a harmonious social order and inclusive welfareism for the people. It is these virtues that allow him to transcend the limits of time, geography and religious philosophies.

It is for these reasons that the battle to reclaim his birthplace has been fought by his devotees for five centuries.

Earlier, too, the Somnath temple was reconstructed after Bharat's independence. But there is a world of difference between the two reconstructions. The first one was carried out largely through political and cultural elites, often enmeshed with the Indian state. There was a limited debate on ideas, even from opponents led by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The masses were an audience in the celebration. The Ram temple movement involved the common masses of all religions and sects, who participated in the ideas and had aspirations to regain the land and rebuild the temple. The movement was not a prisoner of political or cultural elites. In the process, everything under the sun was debated and the present generation can now understand the value of Bharat's cultural exceptionalism in a world where there is a "clash of civilisations".

The movement to restore Ram Janmabhoomi saw an ideological opposition that denounced it as an attack on the liberal-secular values of India. These arguments were relegated to the realm of the polemical as archaeological evidence and other historical sources failed the critics. Moreover, they wanted to discover the nation's past without endorsing its culture, traditions and spirituality.

The limits of which aspects of India's past glory and philosophy could and would be celebrated have been determined by the West – whether from an Orientalist or post-colonial lens. This not only circumscribed the nation's autonomy to rediscover its past but also its capability to reproduce its civilisation.

Today, we see no ideological attack against the temple inauguration. There is only dissent by those sections of the political class that subscribe to an outdated idea of secularism. This ideological stream cherishes European modernity and has tried to redefine India civilisationalistically, disconnected from its culture. Like Russian czar Peter the Great, they belong neither to their home nor to the West.



CR Sasikumar

The reproduction of civilisation does not exclusively depend on people's aspirations and commitment to their culture. The role of the state is also vital. Many civilisations declined when the state denied legitimate space to culture and spirituality, and measured progress only through material measures.

During the freedom struggle, the Indian National Congress did not include a civilisational reproduction of Bharat and borrowed the Western idea of the nation-state. In the eight colonial-era census reports between 1872 to 1941, there is a clear concern about the slow rate of conversion of Hindus, indicating that religious conversion was part of the "civilising mission". The colonisers tried to present the diversity among Hindus as competing identities. Congress – with the exception of some leaders like B G Tilak, Lajpat Rai, B C Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh – ignored this cultural aggression. The party did not pass a single resolution against it. Further, Partition was not merely due to the religious and political situation between the Hindus and Muslims. Demographic changes contributed substantially to the communal ideology. Hindus saw no change under the Nehruvian state in terms of the colonial cultural climate.

All these constituted Hindu anxieties and led to an apologist mindset. The success of the RSS, from the leadership of K B Hedgewar to Mohan Bhagwat, lies in addressing these Hindu anxieties. How could the RSS exceptionalism become a reality? Other Hindu organisations, movements and leaders – including the Hindu Mahasabha and V D Savarkar – argued that only by politically consolidating their majority status could Hindus' identity and existence be safeguarded. This was a theory of domination. The RSS, on the other hand, has been Hinduising Hindus since 1925, who have been divided along caste, creed and have an enforced amnesia about their own greatness. It has tried to free them from sectarianism, orthodoxy and isolationism by investing huge human resources. This is not a majoritarian ambition but a Hindu renaissance.

Movements for cultural revival have been plagued by feudalism and capitalism. This creates plebeians and patricians and eventually sabotages a civilisation's continuity. The state plays an important role here. Narendra Modi's social and economic philosophy has made the state more moral. Aggressive poverty alleviation measures, along with his emotional connection with the marginalised are unique, in India and the world. He is committed and consistent in word and deed. PM Modi also enjoys enormous moral power beyond his office. His intervention has removed the danger

Till today, the decolonisation of postcolonial societies, especially Bharat, was dependent on discourses generated in the West. They critiqued the West's domination but wanted erstwhile colonies integrated with Western modernity. This contradictory approach has failed. The construction of the Ram temple involves generations, millions of people as well as the courts and intellectuals. It unfolds with the spirit of decolonisation and inclusiveness. The next step is to ensure social unity.

of the emergence of cultural plebeians and patricians.

His spiritual positioning has uniquely impacted the psychology of people. The Ram temple is not the only example of this. In 2017, he unveiled a 112-foot-tall Adiyogi Shiva statue in Coimbatore. He succeeded in getting space for a Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, an Islamic society, in 2018. There's also the renovation of the Kashi Vishwanath temple 2021.

All of this highlights the fundamental difference between the two most significant leaders of Modern Bharat, Nehru and Modi.

Both are unapologetic about their worldviews. Nehru did not hide his attachment to Western values. His was a case of enlightened subjugation. On the issue of the reconstruction of the Somnath temple, he wrote to chief ministers on August 1, 1951, pointing out that "It is little realised here what great injuries to our credit abroad is done by the communal organisations of India because they represent just the things which a Western mind dislikes intensely and cannot understand. The recent inauguration of the Somnath temple with pomp and ceremony created a very bad impression abroad about India and her professions."

Neither Somnath temple nor Ram temple denies space to non-Hindus nor does secular space shrink due to them. The Modi era is a quest for resolutions. The PM attends ceremonies, performs rituals and proactively integrates himself with Hindu spirituality. In ancient Bharat, the most iconic kings were those who lived with dharma. The political class in post-independent Bharat earned more from the Machiavellian idea of deluding the people by showing artificial sympathy to religions. Modi demolished this political cynicism, which was based on religious appeasement.

The journey from Somnath to Ayodhya has shown that cultural continuity is unaffected by aggression, physical or ideological.

The Ram temple also establishes that the decolonisation of minds and ideas is a cultural and spiritual process.

Till today, the decolonisation of postcolonial societies, especially Bharat, was dependent on discourses generated in the West. They critiqued the West's domination but wanted erstwhile colonies integrated with Western modernity. This contradictory approach has failed. The construction of the Ram temple involves generations, millions of people as well as the courts and intellectuals. It unfolds with the spirit of decolonisation and inclusiveness. The next step is to ensure social unity.

The writer is BJP Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Nearly eight decades ago, the Jews of Europe faced such conditions at the hands of Nazi Germany. Today, Israel is carrying out a similar massacre in Palestine."

—DAWN, PAKISTAN

Viksit Bharat, litmus test

Poverty eradication hinges on real wage rates, which have fallen in rural areas in the last five years. This needs urgent attention



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI AND SHYMA JOSE

So, it is important to see what is happening to employment in agriculture and the real wage rates in rural areas over the last two government regimes.

Our research shows that during UPA-1 (2004-05 to 2008-09), real agricultural wages for men (deflated by CPI-AL) grew at a meagre 0.2 per cent per annum, while real non-agricultural wages (deflated by CPI-RL) declined at -0.9 per cent per annum. But we observe spectacular growth during UPA-2 (2009-10 to 2013-14) with real agriculture and non-agriculture rural wages growing at 8.6 per cent and 6.9 per cent per annum respectively. In contrast, during the NDA-1 period (2014-15 to 2018-19), growth of real farm and non-farm wages in rural areas decelerated to 3.3 per cent and 3 per cent per annum respectively. However, most concerning has been the situation in the last five years of NDA-2 (2019-20 to 2023-24), when the annual growth rate of real rural wages has become negative for both agriculture (-0.6 per cent) and non-agricultural (-1.4 per cent). It may be the impact of Covid-19 and its aftermath, giving credence to the K-shaped recovery.

The share of the workforce engaged in agriculture had seen a secular decline – from 69.7 per cent in 1951 to 54.6 per cent in 2011 (Census), then to 42.5 per cent in 2018-19 (PLFS). But in 2019-20, it reversed to 45.6 per cent and then increased to 46.5 per cent in 2020-21 (reverse migration due to Covid), before falling to 45.5 per cent in 2021-22. This may be one reason why growth in farm and non-farm rural real wages has become negative during Modi-2 period.

As far as the unemployment rate is concerned, the ILO data suggests that it averaged around 8.4 per cent during 10 years of the UPA government (2004-05 to 2013-14) and roughly 7.9 per cent during the 10 years of the Modi government. So, the growth model under both governments has not seen a significant reduction in unemployment. During the UPA government, the BJP was at the forefront saying that it was "jobless growth", and the same criticism is being flung at it by the Congress and other opposition parties.

Interestingly, government data from the PLFS, which started collecting information on unemployment from 2017-18, shows a much lower level and a clear declining trend.

It has come down from 6 per cent in 2017-18 to 4.1 per cent in 2021-22. The difference between ILO estimates and PLFS estimates, says Santosh Mehrotra, Economic Adviser in the erstwhile Planning Commission and a prolific writer on this topic, is due to difference in the definition. PLFS tends to include some work as employment even when it is not paid for. That makes PLFS estimates non-comparable with other countries, which follow ILO criteria. Mehrotra further argues that CMIE estimates are on the lines of ILO, and it shows much higher levels of unemployment compared to PLFS.

For us, the litmus test of employment hinges on real wage rates, and we have seen from the government data itself that in rural areas, real wages in fact have had negative growth in the last five years of Modi-2 period. This needs urgent attention and further research to create more employment-intensive growth processes.

What occupations are these extremely poor engaged in? The majority of them are in rural areas, working both in agriculture as well as in the non-farm sector as labourers.

Gulati is Distinguished Professor and Jose is Research Fellow at ICRIER. Views are personal

Putting Israel in the dock

India must lead diplomatic efforts for an end to the conflict in West Asia



VENU RAJAMONY

ON DECEMBER 29, 2023, South Africa filed in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), The Hague, an application instituting proceedings against Israel. The petition alleged that Israel has violated its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the "Genocide Convention") in relation to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

According to the application, "acts and omissions by Israel...are genocidal in character, as they are committed with the requisite specific intent...to destroy Palestinians in Gaza as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group". South Africa sought the Court's jurisdiction on Article 36, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Court and on Article IX of the Genocide Convention, to which both South Africa and Israel are parties.

South Africa has informed the ICJ that since October 7, 2023, "Israel has engaged in, is engaging in and risks further engaging in genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in Gaza". It has sought provisional measures to "protect against further, severe and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people under the Genocide Convention".

The ICJ stipulates that any request for the application of provisional measures must have priority over all other cases. The ICJ promptly titled the case "Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v Israel)" and scheduled public hearings on the matter on January 11-12. South Africa and Israel both presented their arguments before the Court, which has now adjourned for

deliberations. It is expected that a date will soon be announced for its decision on provisional measures.

The 15-judge ICJ, which represents all major regions and legal jurisdictions of the world, has been a strong supporter of victims of human rights violations, especially at the stage of provisional measures. Its orders in the case filed in 2019 by Gambia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) against Myanmar over the Rohingya issue and the Jadhav case filed by India in 2017 against Pakistan are examples.

It is reasonable to expect that the Court will issue orders calling upon Israel to halt the war and impose a ceasefire immediately. But, will those orders bring an end to the war? Sadly, that seems unlikely. The UN General Assembly resolutions passed with an overwhelming majority have been ignored by Israel. The fate of provisional measures ordered by the ICJ might suffer the same fate. Moreover, the Court normally takes two to three years to issue final orders. A decision on Gambia's case against Myanmar is still awaited. The people of Gaza cannot afford to wait that long.

The provisional measures sought by South Africa ask the ICJ to call upon Israel to immediately suspend its military operations in and against Gaza, desist from all acts that lead to the killings as well as bodily and mental harm to Palestinians and rescind all orders that have resulted in expulsion and forced displacement, deprivation of access to food, water, humanitarian assistance and medical supplies, and the destruction of Palestinian life in Gaza. Israel has denied these accusations and claimed that its actions fall within its legitimate right to self-defence against Hamas rocket attacks and threats to civilian security. It has argued that South Africa's case misconstrues complex security realities and ignores Hamas's role in inciting violence. It has claimed that South Africa misinterprets the Genocide Convention. Tel Aviv has asserted its actions do not target Palestinians as a national group – it is aimed solely at Hamas, a terrorist organisation. Israel has questioned the ICJ's jurisdiction in the case. It has also asserted that it does not accept the Court's compulsory jurisdiction on matters relating to armed conflict.

Proving intent for genocide is difficult in international law. The ongoing daily human cost and civilian casualties alone are insufficient to establish that a genocide has occurred. South Africa needs to convince the Court that the current situation is tantamount to genocide as specifically defined in the Convention. The definition contained in Article II of the Convention describes genocide as a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part.

The only country that can influence Israel's policies in this regard is the US, its best friend and strong backer. The Security Council has remained deadlocked due to the veto of the US and the UN has been incapable of bringing an end to the war. All we can therefore hope is that an ICJ verdict against Israel will strengthen moral pressure on Tel Aviv and influence Israeli domestic opinion – as well as in the US – to bring an end to the conflict and move towards a political resolution of the Palestinian issue.

This also requires sustained diplomatic and political efforts by all important members of the international community, including India. South Africa deserves praise for having taken the initiative to approach the ICJ. Rather than stay on the sidelines, India should correct the perception that it has tilted towards Israel. It should place its views on the situation in Gaza and the allegations of genocide against Israel before the ICJ. It should also lead international diplomatic efforts for an end to the conflict and a permanent political resolution of the Palestinian issue.

The writer is Professor of Diplomatic Practice, O P Jindal Global University, Former Ambassador of India to the Netherlands, with responsibility for the ICJ

The need of the hour is an immediate end

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHEN ART SUFFERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Costs of cave-in' (IE, January 20). The recent withdrawal of the movie *Annapoorani* from an OTT platform due to protests proves that well-organised groups can easily supersede the censor board. Authorities must ensure that artists' gets circulated without fear or favour to the audience. Audiences can independently gauge whether a series or movie is worth their time. With mob aggression escalating, the space for artists and art is shrinking. In a country that promises citizens the right to freedom of expression, how is the censure of certain perspectives from audiences, not a violation?

Sayant Ray, Bengaluru

A COMPLEX HISTORY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Mandir that could have been' (IE, January 20). The consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 will be a historic event. Seen in isolation, it could be a game changer as it is set to trigger the biggest mass awakening. It is a matter of faith to accept as a historical fact that place as the Ramjanmabhoomi. But the political implications of the event may have epochal importance. The event is a triumph of a particular faith – just one in a shrine with a complex history.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

FOR FAIR ELECTIONS

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Joint elections under democratic consultations eye-wash: Cong' (IE, January 20). The simultaneous conduction of elections, while economical, will have an adverse effects on our federal structure. It will require the curtailment of the powers of a hung legislature to call for snap elections and will also cut short the term limits of other state governments. The argument that asynchronous elections keep governments in "election mode" all year is irrational. Elections in one state should not disrupt the central government. Perhaps if the two stars of the BJP didn't also hold important positions at the Centre.

Prakhar Jaiswal, Meerut

ADDRESS THE ROT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Young and struggling' (IE, January 19). The limitations in adapting to the needs of our students, deficient infrastructure, and the dearth of motivated professionals taking up school teaching as a career, are responsible for the present rot in the school education system. Private tutors and the coaching industry emerged out of the necessity to supplement and address these inefficiencies. Deficits must be addressed now so that our students can realise their full potential.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Barasat

Snipers to anti-drone systems, temple town under watchful eyes

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 21

A MULTI-LAYER elaborate security cover was in place in Ayodhya Sunday, a day ahead of the consecration ceremony at the new Ram temple.

Around 8,000 VIPs, including foreign dignitaries, have been invited to the 'Pran Pratishtha' on Monday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi set to take part in the main ritual. Some of the guests, including former Presidents Ram Nath Kovind and Pratibha Patil, reached the town a day before the ceremony.

CM Yogi Adityanath made frequent visits to Ayodhya over the past few days to take stock of preparations. "All arrangements for security and safety in the temple town are in place," said Prashant Kumar, Special DG (Law and Order) of the UP Police.

Giving details, Kumar said the deployment includes "seven

companies of CAPF, two anti-drone systems, and two NSG sniper teams". A CAPF company usually has an operational strength of about 70-80 personnel. Thousands of UP Police officers and personnel have also been deployed, including 26 companies of the Pradeshk Armed Constabulary (PAC), Kumar said.

"We have also put in a request to the Centre for 10 vehicle-mounted jammers, and six vehicle-mounted X-Ray baggage scanners," he added. According to Kumar, elaborate arrangements were in place for the movement of VIPs, with "green corridors" established on all five highways leading to the temple town under the supervision of senior officers.

"For tight security on the India-Nepal border, there is tight checking by Sashastra Seema Bal. In Kushinagar district, where there is no deployment of SSB, duty has been fixed under one Inspector General-rank officer," he said. Kumar said an integrated

control and command centre was established, staffed by senior officers from various departments, for better coordination.

"The NDRF, SDRF, Special Task Force (STF), Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) and the Intelligence department have been told to maintain coordination. Constant water patrolling is also being done," he said, adding the Railway Police, the Airport authorities and the CISF have also been told to ensure security in the neighbouring districts as well. According to Ayodhya district officials, among the guests who arrived in the town a day ahead of the main event were RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, business tycoons Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, film superstar Rajinikanth and cricket great Sachin Tendulkar.

Former Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and Sumitra Mahajan, and former Army chief M M Naravane also reached Ayodhya Sunday.



EXCITEMENT SKY-HIGH

Flower petals being showered from an IAF chopper during rehearsals ahead of the consecration, Sunday. Vishal Srivastav

AYODHYA DIARIES



Visitors at a shop selling clothes inspired by Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Sunday. Vishal Srivastav

Team of 200 makes Mahaprasad for VIP guests at consecration

THE SHRI Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has prepared mahaprasad for VIP guests, who will be attending the Pran Pratishtha event. The mahaprasad will be given after the Pran Pratishtha. Besides, food prepared with desi ghee will also be served. A team of 200 people has prepared the mahaprasad using more than 5,000 kg ingredients. More than 20,000 packets of mahaprasad have been made.

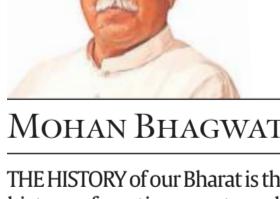
ENS

Govt blocks 100 social media accounts, sends cyber experts

THE CENTRE has blocked around 100 social media accounts days after it asked police chiefs of all states and UTs to monitor suspicious activities or attempts being made to disturb the communal harmony and law and order situation before the Ram Temple consecration. Sources said a team of cyber experts, comprising officers from the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre of MHA, Ministry of Information Technology, CERT-IN, and the IB, has been sent to Ayodhya to do real-time monitoring. ENS

2,500 folk artistes to perform on 100 stages to make event 'historic'

THE UP Culture Department has made preparations to accord a grand welcome to PM Narendra Modi Monday. To make the event historic, 2,500 folk artistes will perform on 100 stages. Through various forms of dance, music and singing, they will showcase the splendor of Treta Yuga in Ayodhya. The cultural event will be held on 100 platforms, including in front of Airport Gate No. 3 and Ram Janmabhoomi Gate No. 1. ENS



MOHAN BHAGWAT

THE HISTORY of our Bharat is the history of continuous struggle against the invaders for around the last one-and-a-half-thousand years. The aim of early invasions was to plunder and sometimes (like Alexander's invasion) for colonisation. But the attacks from the West in the name of Islam only brought complete destruction and alienation of society. To demoralise the nation, society, it was necessary to destroy their religious places, hence foreign invaders destroyed temples in India. They did this not once but multiple times. Their aim was to demoralise Bharatiya society so that they could rule over Bharat unhindered with a weakened society.

The demolition of Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya was also

Noon rituals, sacred rice showering to mark completion of consecration

MAULSHREE SETH
AYODHYA, JANUARY 21

PRIESTS ASSOCIATED with the consecration ceremony said Acharyas of the four Vedas will chant mantras when the Prime Minister enters the Ram temple premises at 12.05 pm.

"He will be accorded Magalarchan Swagat, which is the chanting of mantras by

Acharyas of the four Vedas," said one of the priests and this was expected to last about 5 minutes.

According to the priest, the "mhurat" or auspicious time for the consecration is between 12.20 pm and 12.29 pm. The Prime Minister is scheduled to enter the Garbhagriha or the sanctum sanctorum by 12.10 pm since it will take them nearly 15 minutes to prepare him for the final ceremony.

All preparations, pre-consecration rituals will be completed before the arrival of the PM, another priest said. When the "auspicious time", decided by Acharya Ganeshwar Shastri Dravid, arrives, "akshat" (sacred coloured rice) will be showered on the 51-inch idol of the child Ram, sculptured by Arun Yogiraj. This ritual, amid chanting of mantras, will mark the completion of the Pran Pratishtha of the idol.

Sankardeva propagated a form of Bhakti called Ekasharana Naam Dharma and espoused a society based on equality and fraternity, free from caste differences, orthodox Brahmanical rituals, and sacrifices. His teaching focused on prayer and chanting (naam) instead of idol worship. His dharma was based on the four components of deva (god), naam (prayers), bhaktas (devotees), and guru (teacher).

"Sri Sankardeva was one of India's greatest religious leaders, social reformers and cultural figures. A 15th-16th century personality he continues to be a source of inspiration to people not only in Assam but all over our country. His life and teachings have acquired even greater significance now," said Congress communications head Jairam Ramesh.

The AAP, which has flirted with Hindutva in the past, announced it would organise Shobha yatras across Delhi on Monday which will be attended by its senior leaders. It will also organise community kitchens. Trinamool Congress (TMC)

Other two Ram Lalla idols will get 'pride of place' in temple, all sculptors compensated

LALMANI VERMA & DIVYA A
AYODHYA / NEW DELHI, JAN 21

THE SHRI Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has compensated all the three sculptors, and they said that the two idols, which couldn't make it to the sanctum sanctorum, will be installed inside the temple complex.

Vinod Bansal of the VHP told *The Indian Express*, "We have respectfully accepted all 3 idols, even though only one could have made it to the Garbhagriha."

The trust has selected the 51-inch Ram Lalla idol sculpted by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj. He added that the other two idols by Ganesh Bhatt and Satyanarayan Pandey will also get a pride of place in the temple complex and their exact location will be decided at an appropriate time.

Bhatt and Pandey said they are not disappointed that their Ram Lalla idols did not get se-

lected. They said they are proud of their work and claim their idols were unique. Both have been invited by the trust for consecration ceremony, along with Yogiraj.

"All three sculptors have been compensated by the trust for their efforts, which ran into months," Nripendra Mishra, the chairman of the temple construction committee told *The Indian Express*.

Bhatt (62) hails from Idagunji, Karnataka, and has made idols of Ganesha, Vishnu, Hanuman, and Adi Shankaracharya for many temples in India and abroad, including in the US, UK, and France.

Son of a priest, he started carving at the age of seven. Bhatt took a formal training from KG Shantappa Gudigar and learnt ancient Indian traditional carvings from Devalakunda Vadiraj. He also studied "Shilpastraam" from professor SK Ramchandra Rao.

For making Ram Lalla idol,

Bhatt used high-density stone of

Krishna Shila. He said, "I am not disappointed... It was like a competition in which at least one person should win. It is not like that another one is not good. I feel Ram Lalla in a different way. To me, my (idol) is the best... I made a pure Indian traditional Ram Lalla."

He had started carving the stone in May 2023 after performing a ritual and puja. From the start to completion, he kept ghee-filled diyas lit. He completed making a 54-inch idol on December 10 and handed it over to the trust.

Pandey (65) of Jaipur is originally from Uttar Pradesh but his grandparents had moved to Rajasthan decades ago. He learnt the art of sculpting from his father and grandfather. Having expertise in making idols using marbles,

Pandey, a satsangi, and a devotee of Hanuman, also has expertise in clay modelling. He has a workshop and showroom in Jaipur he runs with his two sons.

He had come into contact

with a senior VHP functionary in Ayodhya in 2022 to whom he had shown two small-sized idols (12.5 feet) of Ram Lalla he had made from a white marble in Jaipur.

In December 2022, he had given one Ram Lalla to UP CM Yogi Adityanath. "I told Pankaj ji (VHP leader) I want to make Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. He also came to my workshop in Jaipur," Pandey said. After a meeting in Delhi, Pandey and other two sculptors were selected.

"I imagined Lord Ram according to whatever I had heard about him in satsangs," Pandey said. Pandey clicked 25 photographs of his sister's 5-year-old grandson, Raghav, and put it up in the workshop to visualise and depict ideal features with innocence of Ram Lalla. He sculpted the idol in a white makrana marble. On his idol not getting selected, Pandey said, "I am not disappointed. I trust Lord Hanuman who gave me strength to carve the Ram Lalla idol."

Inside the Garbhagriha, the lighting is meant to accentuate the intricate marble carvings and beyond that lighting design high-

from the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government in Assam.

"We are happy that Rahul Gandhi will visit the Than, but tomorrow around 10,000 people will gather here. At that time we do not want Rahul Gandhi to come here, because there may be some difficulties in the process of welcoming him. Today the Karnadhar Committee of Batadrava Than Management Committee has decided that he can come tomorrow after 3 pm and we will be able to give him a grand welcome. We have already informed the local MLA, District Commissioner and SP," news agency ANI quoted the Committee's president Jogendra Narayan Dev Mahanta as saying.

"I will first visit the Kali Mandir on my own. Then I will do an interfaith rally from Hazra to Park Circus Maidan and hold a meeting there. We will cover mosques, temples, churches and gurdwaras along the way. Everybody is welcome to join. People of all faiths will be there at the rally," Mamata said earlier this week.

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, who in the past openly spoke of the Sena's participation in the demolition of the Babri Masjid, will visit the Kalaran temple in Nashik. On his visit to Maharashtra on January 12, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the temple located in the Panchavati area, which finds mention in the Ramayana.

Not all leaders of the INDIA alliance, however, will be visiting temples. On Monday, Akhilesh will be in Lucknow.

Party sources said he would visit the Janeshwar Mishra Park to pay tribute to the late socialist leader on his death anniversary. Later, he will attend a couple of meetings at the party office in the city. The Janata Dal (United) is organising a three-day event from January 22 to 24 to mark the birth anniversary of socialist icon Karpoori Thakur. On Monday, several of its leaders, as well as those of friendly socialist parties, will attend an event in Karpoori Gram, kickstarting the three-day celebrations.

The AAP, which has flirted with Hindutva in the past, announced it would organise Shobha yatras across Delhi on Monday which will be attended by its senior leaders. It will also organise community kitchens. Trinamool Congress (TMC)

Enhance aesthetics: Brief to lighting firm

DIVYA A
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

THE LIGHTING strategy inside the Garbhagriha of the Ram temple involved a meticulous approach to enhance aesthetic appeal and spiritual ambience, said the brain behind the illumination of the sanctum sanctorum.

Parag Bhatnagar, the President of Havells India, told *The Indian Express* when they were entrusted with the project by Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, a simple brief given to them was to "enhance aesthetic appeal and spiritual ambience of the temple".

"I imagined Lord Ram according to whatever I had heard about him in satsangs," Pandey said. Pandey clicked 25 photographs of his sister's 5-year-old grandson, Raghav, and put it up in the workshop to visualise and depict ideal features with innocence of Ram Lalla. He sculpted the idol in a white makrana marble. On his idol not getting selected, Pandey said, "I am not disappointed. I trust Lord Hanuman who gave me strength to carve the Ram Lalla idol."

Inside the Garbhagriha, the lighting is meant to accentuate the intricate marble carvings and beyond that lighting design high-



Meticulous approach taken for lighting strategy

lights the architectural elements.

On how they went about designing the illumination, Bhatnagar said the lighting strategy involved a meticulous approach. "In the Garbhagriha, linear in-ground lights, spot in-ground lights, and 24 carat gold-plated spotlights were strategically placed..." he said. Also, the marble steps leading to the temple are illuminated using bespoke-designed step lights. FULL REPORT

www.indianexpress.com

'Construction of Ram temple marks the reawakening of national pride'

done with the same intention and for the same purpose. This policy of the invaders was not limited to just Ayodhya or any one temple, but was a war strategy for the entire world. Indian rulers never attacked anyone, but the rulers of the world have done such misdeeds by being aggressive for the expansion of their kingdom. But in Bharat, it did not have the desired results, not at least as per their expectations. On the contrary, in Bharat, the faith, commitment and morale of the society never diminished, the society did not bow down, their struggle of resistance continued.

Therefore, repeated attempts were made to take control of the birthplace and build a temple there. There were many wars, struggles, and sacrifices for him. And the issue of Ram Janmabhoomi got ingrained in the minds of Hindus. In 1857, when a rebellion was being planned against the British, Hindus and Muslims together expressed their readiness to fight against them, and then there was mutual exchange of ideas between them. At that time, a

situation evolved where there would be a reconciliation on the issue of banning cow slaughter and liberation of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi.

Bahadur Shah Zafar also guaranteed a ban on cow slaughter. As a result, the entire society fought together. The Bharatiya people showed bravery in that war but unfortunately this War of Independence failed. Then, Bharat did not get independence, and the British rule remained uninterrupted, but the struggle for Ram temple did not stop.

The British "policy of divide and rule", towards the Hindus and the Muslims that was already in practice, gained prominence after 1857. To break the unity, the British hanged the heroes of the struggle in Ayodhya and the question of liberation of Ram Janmabhoomi remained unresolved. The struggle for Ram temple continued.

After the Independence in 1947, when the Somnath temple was unanimously renovated, the discussion on more such temples started. A similar consensus could have been considered re-

garding the liberation of Ram Janmabhoomi, but the direction of politics changed. Selfish policies such as discrimination and appeasement became prevalent and hence the question remained as it is. On this issue, the governments did not even consider the wishes and sentiments of the Hindu society. On the contrary, they tried to destroy the initiative taken by the society. The legal battle related to this, which had been going on since pre-Independence, continued. The mass movement for the liberation of Ram Janmabhoomi began in the 1980s and continued for 30 years.

In 1949, the idol of Bhagwan Shri Ramchandra appeared at the Ram Janmabhoomi. In 1986, the temple was unlocked as per the court order. In the coming period, the struggle of the Hindu society continued through many campaigns and karseva. In 2010, the Allahabad High Court passed a judgment. The efforts had to be sustained for final resolution of the issue at the earliest. On November 9, 2019, after 134 years of legal struggle, the Supreme Court gave a balanced

decision after examining the truth and facts. The feelings and facts of both the parties (religions) were also considered in this decision. This decision has been given after hearing the arguments of all the parties in the court. According to this decision, a board of trustees was constituted for constructing the temple. The bhoomipujan of the temple took place on August 5, 2020, and now on Paush Shukla Dwadashi Yugabdi 5125, according to January 22, 2024, the installation and Pran Pratishtha ceremony of the idol of Shri Ram Lalla has been organised.

From the dharmic point of view, Shri Ram is the most worshipped deity in the majority society and the life of Shri Ramchandra is still accepted as an ideal way of conduct by the entire society. Hence, now the conflict that rose from the dispute should end. The bitterness that has arisen in the meantime should also end. The enlightened people of the society must see that the dispute ends completely.

Ayodhya means a city



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



LEAVES NO IMPRESSION

LAST WEEK, when Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra vacated her MP bungalow, a month after she was expelled from the Lok Sabha, the house handed over to the Directorate of Estates (DoE) looked as neat as a new pin. Usually, when the DoE gets possession of houses back from former allottees, sources said, there is always something left behind. Not only were the larger personal possessions removed by the time the DoE team reached the 9B, Telegraph Lane bungalow, there was not even a piece of waste paper or an old newspaper lying around, sources said.

A SCHOOL NOTE FOR ALL

DELHI POLICE Commissioner Sanjay Arora has informed all Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) personnel that they can send their children to Delhi Police Public Schools at Safdarjung, New Police Lines, and DPA/Wazirabad from 2024-25 academic session at concessional fee. Arora said it will facilitate students who may be commuting long distances to school. Until now, only children of Delhi Police personnel would go to these schools. Though many police chiefs had earlier asked paramilitary personnel to send their children to these schools, it was mostly informed verbally. Arora, who has spent a significant tenure of his service in the paramilitary, for the first time, communicated the information through a written order.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah being greeted by Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai in Raipur, Sunday. PTI

Rid Chhattisgarh of Maoists in 3 yrs: Shah to security agencies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

RAIPUR, JANUARY 21

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday chaired a review meeting in Raipur on Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in Chhattisgarh during which he underlined the need to rid the state of Maoist menace in three years.

The meeting was attended by the CM and Deputy CMs; along with senior officials, including Union Home Secretary, Director (IB), Director General of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Chhattisgarh Chief Secretary, and the state police chief.

Shah said that on account of the combined efforts of the security agencies, Central as well as from the state, the LWE problem has been confined to some pockets, which needs to be cleared in the next three years.

In order to achieve this, Shah emphasised the need for a well-coordinated detailed plan to tar-

get the entire ecosystem sustaining the LWE. Shah directed the Chhattisgarh Police to fill up the gaps in security, ensure comprehensive investigations, closely monitor prosecution, choke finance streams and continue intelligence-led operations. He also stressed the need to review all inputs shared through the Multi-Agency Centre and operationalised verified inputs.

Shah also stressed the need for saturation coverage of the Central and state government schemes in LWE-affected districts. He mentioned that the MHA should be flexible both in the allotment of funds as also its usage in affected areas.

He also highlighted the need for a proactive and sensitive handling of all local grievances about bonafide entitlements. Subsequently, on the directions of the Union Home Minister, a detailed interaction was held by the Union Home Secretary with the Collectors and SSPs of the highly LWE-affected districts.

Justice Prasanna Varale – a public-spirited judge with an Ambedkar connection

JOHNSON T A & OMKAR GOKHALE BENGALURU, MUMBAI, JAN 21

DOWNTOWN earth and public-spirited – this is how lawyers at the Karnataka High Court described Justice Prasanna Varale, who the SC collegium on Friday recommended for elevation to top court.

As Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court since October 2022, he has been known to initiate several suo motu cases in the public interest. Before his move to the Karnataka HC, he served as a judge of the Bombay High Court for around 14 years.

While recommending his elevation, the collegium pointed out that he is the only chief jus-

2 dead in Mumbai marathon; over 59,000 runners swarm city

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, JANUARY 21

TWO PERSONS, including a 74-year-old man, collapsed and died, while 22 others had to be hospitalised during the 19th edition of the annual Tata Mumbai Marathon on Sunday. The marathon, which saw the participation of 59,515 people, was flagged off by CM Eknath Shinde and Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST).

A statement issued by the Asian Heart Institute read, "We are grieved by the demise of our participants Suvradeep Banerjee (41) from Kolkata and Rajendra Bora (74)." Both collapsed and were rushed to the hospital where they were declared dead.



SPIRITUAL SOJOURN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to Arichal Munai point, said to be the place from where the Ram Setu was built, in Tamil Nadu on Sunday. PTI

Amid talk of strain in JDU-RJD ties, Bihar gets new education minister

Lalu Prasad aide Alok Kumar Mehta replaces 'controversial' Chandra Shekhar

SANTOSH SINGH

PATNA, JANUARY 21



Senior RJD leader Alok Kumar Mehta. @AlokMehtaMP/X

A DAY after Bihar education official KK Pathak, the increasingly prominent additional chief secretary of the department, returned to work, scotching rumours of his resignation, the state government on Saturday removed Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Chandra Shekhar as the education minister and named him the minister of the low-profile sugarcane department. The government replaced him with senior RJD leader Alok Kumar Mehta, a long-trusted aide of party chief Lalu Prasad who held the ministry of revenue and land reforms.

Mehta, 57, has been elevated to the education department for a number of reasons, ranging from his experience to his proximity to Lalu. He is well qualified with a Bachelor's degree in engineering and was also elected to the Lok Sabha as the Samastipur MP in 2004. A second-generation politician in his family, his father Tulsi Das played an active role in the Janata Dal's protest against BJP leader L K Advani's Rath Yatra to Ayodhya in October 1990, and later served as a minister in Lalu's Cabinet.

When Tejaswi Prasad Yadav decided to join active politics in 2012, Mehta was among a few senior leaders who took it upon themselves to guide and groom him. In the 2015 Assembly polls, when the ruling JD(U) and RJD fought in an alliance, Mehta won

Mehta, who entered active politics in 1994, rose from a leader in the RJD's youth wing to the state unit and then the national unit of the party. He began his electoral career as an MP when he won from Samastipur seat in 2004 with 50.6% of the vote share. A member of the OBC Kushwaha community, he is also prominent as the Kushwaha face of the party that is otherwise dominated by the Yadav-Muslim combination.

When Tejaswi Prasad Yadav initially registered at the Gursai police station, Mendhar, district Poonch. NIA had taken him into custody Saturday and produced him before the Juvenile Justice Board, Rajouri, for remand. The case was initially registered at the Rajouri police station. Later, the case was transferred to the NIA, which re-registered the case on January 13.

'Juvenile held' in Jan 2023 terror attack, says NIA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, JANUARY 21

THE NATIONAL Investigation Agency (NIA) Sunday claimed to have arrested a "juvenile" for " harbouring terrorists involved in the killing of five civilians" in Rajouri district's Dhangri village of Jammu and Kashmir on January 1, 2023.

The juvenile was lodged at observation home, R S Pura,

MANIPUR STATEHOOD DAY

Help contain violence, don't just observe: Biren to central forces

LEIVON JIMMY

IMPHAL, JANUARY 21

MANIPUR CHIEF Minister N Biren Singh expressed dissatisfaction over how the Central forces are handling the present crisis in the state.

The CM was speaking at the

52nd Statehood Day observance held on Sunday at the 1st Manipur Rifles battalion parade ground in Imphal. Manipur, a princely state merged into India in 1949, was granted statehood in 1972. He said the role of central forces extends beyond observation to the protection of lives and property. They are in the state to help contain the violence and not to simply watch and observe, he added.

lecturer at Ambedkar Law College in Aurangabad from 1990 to 1992. He went on to work as an assistant government pleader and additional public prosecutor at the Bombay High Court bench in Aurangabad, and as additional standing counsel for the Union of India. He was appointed as a Bombay High Court judge on July 18, 2008.

As Bombay HC judge, benches headed by him initiated

from the Ujjiarup Assembly seat with 52.4% of the vote share and became the cooperatives minister in the Nitish Kumar-led Mahagathbandhan government. He won again in the 2020 Assembly polls with 48.8% of the vote share. Another reason

Mehta emerged as the clear choice for the education department is his penchant to work behind the scenes and not get into any controversy. Chandra Shekhar, meanwhile, regularly made the headlines more for his controversial remarks than for any administrative reasons. From referring to some verses of the Ramcharitmanas as "casteis" and "potassium cyanide" and backing fellow RJD MLA Fateh Bahadur Kushwaha on his remarks against Hindu goddess Saraswati to taking on Pathak, the three-time Madhepura MLA had become more of a liability for the RJD.

An RJD insider said, "Lalu Prasad and Tejaswi wanted to remove him because CM Nitish Kumar wanted an education minister who can coordinate well with his education secretary at a time when a flurry of new appointments are being made and several education reforms are underway."

The RJD, which has been sensing unease in the

Sources in the RJD said Lalu and Tejaswi met Nitish after reading Union Home Minister Amit Shah's interview to a Hindi daily in which he was asked if the BJP would welcome its old allies, including the JD(U). The Union Home Minister replied that if

there was "any such proposal"

from Nitish's party, the BJP

"would look" into it. When asked about the comment, Tejaswi sarcastically said at the time, "I do not know. Maybe you people have better knowledge of what Amit Shah wanted to imply."

On Sunday, Nitish and Tejaswi shared the dais at the inauguration of a hospital at Sarairanjan in Samastipur.

Mahagathbandhan, appears to be treading carefully so as not to ruffle Nitish's feathers. Chandra Shekhar's removal is more a matter of the RJD seeking peace with Nitish than to effect a change for better governance.

Recently, the RJD had been upset with the JD(U) for not giving it due credit in government advertisements on employment drive. On Friday, amid fresh speculations of the BJP "keeping its door open" for the JD(U), Lalu and Tejaswi met with Nitish. Tejaswi, however, told reporters that it was a "regular" meeting and that "all is well" in the alliance.

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'Jagan pushing state into fiscal crisis': Andhra Congress chief targets brother

SREENIVAS JANYALA

HYDERABAD, JANUARY 21



ANDHRA PRADESH Congress Committee (APCC) president Y S Sharmila, 51, on Sunday launched a direct attack on her brother and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy while addressing party workers at Vijayawada. This is the first time that Sharmila has criticised her brother.

Stating that Telugu Desam Party's N Chandrababu Naidu and now Jagan had pushed the state into financial crisis, Sharmila said: "The financial condition of the state is such that we do not even have money to repair the roads. In the last five years of Jagan Reddy's rule, he has borrowed Rs 3 lakh crore. Before that, Naidu borrowed Rs 2 lakh crore. When the state was bifurcated, we had a debt of Rs 1 lakh crore, now it has risen to Rs 6-7 lakh crore. Do we have a capital city? Do we have at least a metro? Are government employees receiving salaries on time? What will you all say if I ask did any development take place in the past five years of Jagan Reddy and YSRCP rule?"

Sharmila, who made a big issue of SCS did not pursue the matter with the Centre. The BJP is denying SCS status to Andhra but both Jagan and Naidu support the BJP. Even after 10 years of bifurcation, we

proceed.

On January 19, she and Jagan shared a few icy moments when he attended her son's engagement in Hyderabad. Sharmila also singled out Naidu, accusing him of not pursuing the special category status.

If Andhra was granted SCS status, we would have got industries and development, and youth would have got employment opportunities, but Naidu failed to do it. He and Jagan have cheated the state... even Jagan who made a big issue of SCS did not pursue the matter with the Centre. The BJP is denying SCS status to Andhra but both Jagan and Naidu support the BJP. Even after 10 years of bifurcation, we do not have a capital city. Naidu did not complete Amaravati, while Jagan has not made any city as capital," she said.

Sharmila, who had launched YSR Telangana Party, which she merged with the Congress, has never criticised her brother before.

ED searches 22 places in Gujarat, Delhi over illegal emigration

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21



place the same year, where an Indian family of four had frozen to death while attempting to illegally enter the US from Canada," the spokesperson said.

The ED case filed under various sections of the PMLA stems from two Gujarat Police FIRs registered against the accused under the IPC and the Passports Act for their alleged involvement in sending Indian citizens abroad illegally since 2015. "The accused were taking huge consideration for sending Indian citizens abroad illegally on the basis of bogus or fabricated documents for getting visas of different countries with duplicate or bogus passports used as genuine by impersonating the passengers," the spokesperson said.

"The searches were carried out on January 19-20 at 22 locations in Ahmedabad, Surat and Mehsana in Gujarat and in Delhi. These were linked to key conspirators Bobby alias Bharatbhai Patel, Charanajit Singh and others in a case of aiding illegal foreign immigration," an ED spokesperson said in a statement.

"Patel was arrested in this case by the Gujarat Police in 2022 and was also involved in the Dingucha case that took

tardly implementation of laws meant to protect Scheduled Castes and Tribes from being subjected to discrimination.

In February 2023, a bench headed by Chief Justice Varale, also initiated a suo motu PIL after a tribal woman was stripped and beaten up in Belagavi because her son eloped with a woman from a wealthier family.

Strongly condemning the incident, Justice Varale said, "How does this happen? On the one hand we are celebrating Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, and after 75 years this is the situation? We can only borrow the words of Shakespeare in Hamlet and say: 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.'"

He also had strong words for the Karnataka government for

Lucknow: Days after the Varanasi police submitted a chargesheet against the three accused in the IIT-BHU sexual assault case in a local court, it invoked the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act against them on Sunday.

The three accused – Kunal Pandey (28), Saksham Patel (22) – and Abhishek Chauhan (22) – were arrested on December 31 for the alleged incident that took place inside the campus on the night of November 1 when a female student of the institute was allegedly disrobed, sexually assaulted and filmed by the accused.

IIT-BHU ASSAULT
Police invokes Gangsters Act against accused

Lucknow: Days after the Varanasi police submitted a chargesheet against the three accused in the IIT-BHU sexual assault case in a local court, it invoked the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act against them on Sunday.

ENS



Justice
Prasanna
Varale

generations taking up the legal profession and adorning the seat of a judge of the High Court," Justice Varale said at the event. He has also said that Ambedkar had advised his father, Bhalchandra Varale, to pursue legal education.

Bhalchandra Varale went on to become a judicial officer in several courts and ultimately Registrar of the Bombay High Court.

Born in 1962 at Karnataka's Nipani, on the border with Maharashtra, Justice Varale studied Arts and Law from Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Maratha University, before getting enrolled as an advocate in 1985.

At the beginning of his career, he joined the chamber of advocates S N Loya, and practised civil and criminal law

BRIEFLY

Man Singh wins gold at Asian Marathon Championships

Hong Kong: Man Singh became only the second Indian man to clinch a gold medal at the Asian Marathon Championships as he won the race with a personal best time here on Sunday. The 34-year-old Man Singh clocked two hours, 14 minutes and 19 seconds (2:14:19) to win the competition. His earlier best was 2:16:58, which he had clocked while finishing 11th in the Mumbai Marathon last year. China's Huang Yongzheng took the silver with a time of 2:15:24 while Kyrgyzstan's Tiapkin Ilya came third in 2:18:18. Another Indian in the fray, AP Bellappa finished sixth with a time of 2:20:20. In the women's marathon race in Hong Kong, Ashvini Madan Jadhav finished eighth with a time of 2:56:42 while Jyoti Gawate ended at 11th in 3:06:20. PTI

Super Cup: Mumbai beat Chennai in 1-0

Bhubaneswar: Mumbai City FC rode on Hmingthanmawia's first-half strike to defeat Chennaiyin FC 1-0 in a Group C match and make it to the semi-finals of the Super Cup football tournament here on Sunday. Hmingthanmawia struck the all-important goal in the 24th minute. The highlight of the match was Mumbai City goalkeeper Phurba Tempa Lachenga's performance as he made numerous saves to secure the win for his side. Mumbai City thus finished at the top of their group with nine points after winning all their three games. Chennaiyin FC settled for the second spot with four points from one win, one draw and one loss. Petr Kratky's Mumbai City will either face Odisha FC or FC Goa in their last four clash on Wednesday. PTI

Bayern suffer shock home loss to Bremen

Munich: Bayern Munich slumped to a 1-0 home loss to Werder Bremen on Sunday courtesy of a Mitchell Weiser goal to stay seven points adrift of leaders Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga title race. It was Werder's first victory in Munich since 2008 and Bayern's second league loss of the campaign. The result leaves Bayern on 41 points in second place with a game in hand. Leverkusen are on 48 following their last-gasp 3-2 win over RB Leipzig on Saturday. The hosts, who face Union Berlin in their postponed league game on Wednesday, struggled throughout to break down a disciplined Werder backline. REUTERS

Narendra, Ajinkya steer Thalaivas to win

Hyderabad: Tamil Thalaivas relied on some incredible raiding and resolute defending to clinch a 45-28 victory over Bengaluru Bulls in the Pro Kabaddi League match here on Sunday. Narendra and Ajinkya Pawar, with 14 and 11 points respectively, were excellent for Tamil Thalaivas as was their captain Sagar, who grabbed five tackle points. Bengaluru Bulls' Akshit also had a superb game as he finished with 12 raid points. There was more reason to celebrate for Tamil Thalaivas as Sahil Gulia also crossed the 50 tackle points mark and the team closed out a comprehensive 17-point win. PTI

RANJI ROUND UP

Chirag Jani took a five-wicket haul to help Saurashtra win. PTI

Easy does it for Djokovic

Serb breezes past Mannarino 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 to reach record-equalling 58th Grand Slam quarterfinal



Novak Djokovic only lost three games, all in the third set, during his fourth-round win at the Australian Open on Sunday. AP

REUTERS

MELBOURNE, JANUARY 21

NOVAK DJOKOVIC marked a rare daytime Australian Open appearance with a crushing win over Frenchman Adrian Mannarino on Sunday as the 10-times champion flattered with a 'triple bagel' before sealing a 6-0 6-0 6-3 win to reach the quarter-finals.

Djokovic, handed an early session slot at Melbourne Park for the first time since 2021, said earlier in the week he had been battling a viral infection and the world number one was coughing and appeared to be breathing heavily at times during the match.

The Serb's health issues had no impact on his play, however, and with the roof at Rod Laver Arena closed due to rain he eased to a 32nd straight match win at the tournament and a 58th Grand Slam quarter-final, equalling the all-time record of Swiss maestro Roger Federer.

"The way I played today, I don't mind playing in the day to be honest," said Djokovic, who is chasing a 25th Grand Slam to go past Margaret Court.

"It's no secret I like to play at 7 p.m. but it was not too bad today at all."

Tricky left-hander Mannarino can pose problems for the best of players by working the angles and the world number 19 pushed Djokovic hard in the opening game of the contest but still found himself down a set in only 33 minutes.

Djokovic let out a roar after breaking early in the second set, and delivered an-

other body blow in the third game when he held serve after six deuces.

Two sets down and still not on the scoreboard, Mannarino finally won a game early in the third to draw level at 1-1, avoiding a rare "triple bagel" - 6-0 6-0 6-0 - and smiled as the crowd cheered.

Djokovic soon closed out victory, however, and said it had been one of his best performances.

"Yeah, after the first two sets, one of the best I've played in a while," he said. "I really wanted to lose that game in the third set because the tension was building up in the stadium."

"I just needed to get that one out of the way so I could refocus on what I need to do to close out the match. I played great from the first to the last point."

Djokovic, who next faces American Taylor Fritz, said slowly gaining momentum through the tournament was not something new to him.

"It's not the first time I have this particular circumstance where I start off slower and then I build as the tournament goes on," Djokovic, who won last year's title with a hamstring tear sustained in the build-up to the event, told reporters.

"Today was the best day in terms of tennis, the way I felt on court. I'm really excited to enter the second week."

"I look forward to the battles because the opponents are higher ranked... There's no easy matches."

Clinical Sabalenka into quarters

Reigning champion Aryna Sabalenka

reached the quarter-finals of the Australian Open in dominant fashion on Sunday when she swept past American Amanda Anisimova with a clinical 6-3 6-2 victory on Margaret Court Arena.

The top remaining seed after Saturday's early exit for world number one Iga Swiatek, Sabalenka's biggest enemy has often been her own emotions but she continued to keep them strictly under control to reach the last eight with the loss of only 11 games.

"I'm super happy with the level, super happy with the win," said Sabalenka.

"I just tried to stay focused on my game, and just focus every single point. I want to stay here right until the very end and hopefully we can get this one again."

The Belarusian was not distracted by her relegation to the second showcourt for the first time in the tournament, or by a couple of rain showers that interrupted the contest and forced the closure of the stadium's roof.

Anisimova, ranked 442nd in the world after an eight-month break from the game, had held a 4-1 lead in career meetings with Sabalenka but found the 2024 version of the 26-year-old a much tougher nut to crack.

In the opening set, the former French Open semi-finalist was unable to win a single point off Sabalenka's first serve, which on occasion was clocked at the 195 kph mark.

One break was enough for Sabalenka to win the opening set and another to start the second stanza killed off any hopes the

MORE HISTORY

58 Djokovic has now reached his 58th Grand Slam quarterfinal, equalling Roger Federer's all-time record

14 Djokovic is in his 14th quarterfinal, equalling Rafael Nadal and John Newcombe as joint second-highest at this tournament, which he has won a record 10 times

32 Djokovic is now 32 matches unbeaten at the Australian Open, a streak that is running since 2018

405 Monday kicks off Djokovic's record 405th week as World No. 1

93 Djokovic won a 93rd main draw match at the Australian Open on Sunday, second-highest in history behind Federer's 102

KEY RESULTS

Day Eight

Men's Singles

1-N Djokovic bt 20-A Mannarino 6-0, 6-0, 6-3; 4-J Sinner bt 15-K Khachanov 6-4, 7-5, 6-3; 5-A Rublev bt 10-A De Minaur 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-0; 12-T Fritz bt 7-S Tsitsipas 7-6(3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3

Women's Singles

4-C Gauff bt M Frech 6-1, 6-2; 2-A Sabalenka bt A Anisimova 6-3, 6-2; 9-B Krejcikova bt M Andreeva 4-6, 6-3, 6-2; M Kostyuk bt M Timofeeva 6-2, 6-1

American had of building pressure on her opponent.

Another break for 5-2 in the second set allowed Sabalenka to serve for the match and, although Anisimova finally managed to earn her first break point, the second seed was soon celebrating her spot in the last eight.

Sabalenka, who will next meet ninth seed Barbora Krejcikova, did not drop a set at last year's Australian Open until the final as she landed her maiden Grand Slam title.

Her opponent on Rod Laver Arena that day, Elena Rybakina, exited in the second round and Coco Gauff and Krejcikova are the only other top 10 seeds left in the field.

"I think I feel stronger than last year. I don't know. So far I feel good. Hopefully I just can keep it up," she added.

U-19 WORLD CUP

Kwena Maphaka: Teenager dubbed as next Rabada



The hallmark of Maphaka's bowling is his searing pace and aggression. ICC

PRATYUSH RAJ

JANUARY 21

KWENA MAPHAKA bowls quick and his progress has been meteoric. The 17-year-old left-arm seamer has been in the fast lane.

Maphaka is already playing his second U-19 World Cup, has represented South Africa A, and possesses an SA20 contract with Paarl Royals. The youngster caught the eye in his home U-19 World Cup with his fiery inswinging yorkers and quick bouncers against the West Indies. Coming off a short, bustling but rhythmic run-up, Maphaka returned figures of 5/38 and has already been tipped as the left-handed Kagiso Rabada.

Given Maphaka went to the same school, the comparisons with fellow St Stithians alumnus Rabada are expected. But the prodigy from Johannesburg is humbled with all the attention he has been receiving.

"Rabada is a great bowler and it is special to be compared to him. He is someone who has done so many incredible things in his international career. Just being compared to a great like that is something really special," Maphaka tells *The Indian Express* from Potchefstroom.

Maphaka is not as tall as Rabada but is more explosive and there is certainly more aggression in his bowling. Wim Jansen, director of cricket at St Stithians, feels his wicket is unique.

"Kwena's an unbelievable freak of nature. He's got an amazing gift," Jansen was quoted as saying by *Daily Maverick*. "I always say God has a sense of humour. He gives some athletes a lot of talent but not a lot of brain and the lesser talented people he gives more brain. Kwena's got both, which is unusual."

The hallmark of Maphaka's bowling is his searing pace and aggression channelled only at the stumps. He is a firebrand and feels it is so because he has played multiple sports.

"I have played a lot of sports. I have played cricket, did athletics, played hockey, football and rugby as well. I was a really sporty kid since I was really young. I have always enjoyed sport," he says in a 10-second monologue.

The youngster also explains why he picked cricket even though he was a brilliant defender in hockey, a sport in which he still represents his province. "I think it is the love and passion that I have for the game. There is definitely love and

passion for all the other sports but cricket just tops it," he says.

Steyn fan

Maphaka has been compared with Rabada after his heroics but it is Dale Steyn whom he really idolises and has grown up watching and wanting to emulate as an all-format bowler.

"I was lucky enough to watch Dale Steyn bowl live a few times. He has definitely been someone that I have tried to emulate. I have tried to keep something like his aggression in my game. It's amazing to see what he has done, taking the most Test wickets in SA history, it's an incredible feat," he says. "There are definitely a few things that I tried to take away from his (Steyn's) action. But I tried to keep my action as natural as it can be and create my own brand." The youngster also has clarity in his mind. At a time when there are a lot of opportunities for top cricketers on the franchise circuit, playing for South Africa is his first preference because he wants to emulate his hero in all three formats.

"It's my dream to play all three formats for a long time. First prize is to represent South Africa in all three formats. Everything that comes in between is just a bonus," he says.

Dreaming of Kohli's wicket

The way Maphaka's career has progressed so far, and if he stays fit, there is a chance that the left-arm quick would make it to the senior South African team sooner rather than later. That could provide an opportunity to realise his cricketing dream.

"If he is still playing Test cricket, I would love to take the wicket of one of the greatest batsmen of all time and that is Virat Kohli," he says.

"It is easier to relate to someone who is in and around our generation. Just the way he plays the game, the intensity he brings, the consistency he has throughout his career. It's insane. He has a fast bowler's soul in him," says Maphaka. He adds he is not someone who visualises a lot. But at the same time, he looks at other left-arm quicks and their strengths.

"I know what kind of a wicket I want to bowl for that I look up to Mitchell Starc. If I want to bounce someone out, I would look at Mitchell Johnson. For seam-up deliveries and to be able to move it both ways, there is Trent Boult," he explains.

Brook to fly home for personal reasons, to miss five-match Test series in India

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

JANUARY 21

THE ENGLAND Cricket Board (ECB) on Sunday has confirmed that middle-order batsman Harry Brook will return to the UK and miss the India Test tour due to personal reasons.

"Harry Brook is set to return home with immediate effect for personal reasons from the England Men's Test tour of India. He will not be returning to India," ECB said in a statement.

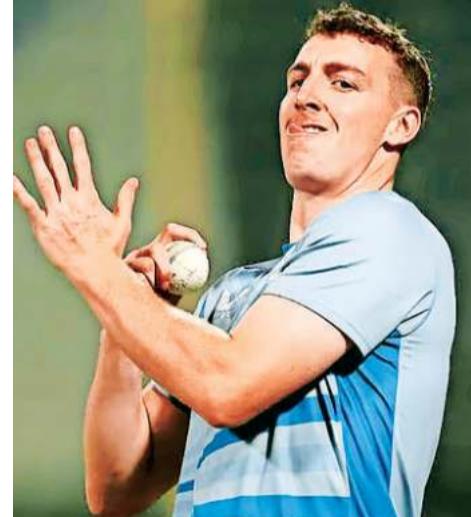
"The Brook family respectfully requests privacy during this time. In light of this, the ECB and the family kindly request the media and the public to respect their wish for privacy and refrain from intruding on their private space."

"The England selectors will confirm a replacement player for the tour in due course."

The 24-year-old has played 12 Tests and has amassed 1181 runs at an average of 62.15, including four centuries and seven fifties.

Brook had broken an astonishing 125-year-old record after scoring 455 runs in his first 6 innings for England.

Reigning champion Aryna Sabalenka



Harry Brook recently broke a 125-year-old record after scoring 455 runs in his first 6 innings for England. Reuters

other batters. The Indian talisman looked like his older self when he churned to massive runs for fun.

"Kohli also has the amazing ability to score big when he gets a start. Yeah, conversion means having more hundreds than fifties. With Kohli, he has a similar amount of hundreds and fifties (Kohli has 29 centuries and 30 half-centuries), which means he has a good conversion rate," Gavaskar said.

"England have adopted a new approach in Test cricket in the last 1-2 years. It's an aggressive approach where batters look to attack. They just want to play attacking cricket no matter the situation."

"It'll be interesting to see if this approach works against the spinners of India," Gavaskar further added.

England will start their series in Hyderabad, followed by games in Vishakhapatnam, Rajkot, and Ranchi, and play the final Test in Dharamsala.

England last won a Test series in India in 2012. Since then, they have been hammered.

In the recent tour in 2021, they started positively with a win in the first Test in Chennai; however, they lost the next three.

With Ben Stokes and Brendon McCullum at the helm, who have yet to lose a test series, the England team hopes to get better results this time.

"The way he's (Virat Kohli) been batting, his movement looks good," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"Though, Kohli did not make many runs in South Africa with respect to his standards on spicy pitches where there was seam moment and invariable bounce. But he looked a class apart from the

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VEDANTA, HINDUSTAN ZINC, OLA ELECTRIC HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST

India to send industry delegation for copper mining opportunities in Zambia

AGGAM WALIA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

THE MINES Ministry has proposed sending an Indian industry delegation to copper-rich Zambia to discuss potential copper exploration and mining projects in the southern African country. Mining companies including Vedanta and its subsidiary Hindustan Zinc, along with electric vehicle (EV) maker Ola Electric and lithium-ion battery recycler LOHUM, have expressed interest in joining the delegation to Zambia to attend a joint working group (JWG) meeting to discuss cooperation in the field of mineral resources.

Zambia has about 6 per cent of the world's copper reserves and was the eighth largest producer of copper in 2022. Copper is widely used in sectors like construction, consumer durables, transportation, and industrial manufacturing. It is also used in clean energy technologies including solar panels, EVs, and energy efficient motors. China Nonferrous Mining Corporation (CNCM) is among the largest producers of copper in Zambia.

In a stakeholder meeting held on October 18, 2023, VL Kantha Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Mines, stated that the second meeting of JWG, which was set up under an memorandum of understandings (MoUs) signed by the Ministry of Mines, India and the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Development, Zambia, is set to take place in Zambia. He added that the ministry wants to send



Zambia has about six per cent of the world's copper reserves and was the eighth largest producer of copper in 2022. File

a combined business delegation to Zambia, with participation from both private and public sectors, for an effective outcome of the collaboration between the two countries, according to minutes of the meetings accessed by *The Indian Express* under the Right to Information Act (RTI). The first JWG meeting under the MoU, which was signed in August, 2019 for a period of five years, was held through video conferencing on September 23, 2020. The mines ministry did not respond to a query on when the second JWG meeting is scheduled to take place.

On December 26, 2023, Kantha Rao met with Ashok Kumar, High Commissioner of India to Zambia, to explore possibilities of expanding bilateral cooperation with Zambia in the mining sector, according to a report available on the mines ministry's website.

During the stakeholder meeting in October, Khanij Bidesh India (KABIL), a central public

sector enterprise (CPSE) under the mines ministry tasked with the acquisition and development of critical mineral projects overseas, also proposed to set up a video conferencing meeting with the Zambian side to discuss opportunities based on interest shown by industry stakeholders. Both the mines ministry and KABIL did not respond to a query on whether industry stakeholders have submitted proposals following the meeting in October. KABIL also did not confirm whether a meeting with the Zambian side has been arranged until now.

As per the minutes, KABIL also revealed that it has no engagement with Zambia currently; however, it is interested in exploring opportunities given the good potential of copper mining in the country. On Monday, KABIL had announced the signing of an agreement with a state-owned company in Argentina to explore and develop five lithium blocks in the South

American country.

As per International Copper Association India, domestic copper demand grew by 16 per cent in FY2022-2023 (FY23), while demand for copper in clean energy technologies grew by 32 per cent. At the same time, net imports of copper cathode, which is the basic product of copper production, grew by 180 per cent in the same financial year as India is not self-sufficient in copper due to low domestic reserves. The current scenario of increasing demand for copper coupled with limited domestic supply makes the acquisition of copper mining blocks overseas an attractive proposition for Indian mining companies.

Currently, India has a limited presence in Zambia's copper mining sector. In September last year, Vedanta regained control of Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) after it was seized by Zambian authorities in 2019. The Zambian government owns a 20 per cent stake in KCM. In 2023, Vedanta also pledged to invest over \$1.2 billion in Zambia to increase output of mined copper and pay outstanding debt. KCM holds about 250 million tonnes of copper ore reserves. According to the meeting minutes, Kantha Rao advised Vedanta "to share with the industry the logistics and other information required for doing business in Zambia as they have good experience".

India is not alone in investing

in Zambia for its copper reserves. Canada-based First Quantum Minerals and China's CNCM are among the largest producers of copper in Zambia. In December, Sokwani Chilombo, chief executive officer of Zambia Chamber of Mines, had revealed that CNCM plans investments worth \$1.3 billion developing its existing mines to increase output.

Among the interested companies to explore mining opportunities in Zambia is Vedanta-owned Hindustan Zinc, in which the Indian government also owns a 35 per cent stake. Vedanta did not respond to a query on whether it plans to acquire more copper blocks in Zambia.

Ola Electric, a major maker of electric two-wheelers, also did not elaborate on its interest in copper mining in Zambia.

LOHUM, a Noida-based leading recycler of lithium-ion batteries in India, clarified that it is not interested in acquiring or exploring copper mining blocks in Zambia.

"LOHUM is racing to fulfil the demand for copper exclusively through recycling and by making recycled copper more competitive, sustainable, and of higher quality than its mined origins," said Rajat Verma, its founder and CEO. Verma did not clarify the purpose of LOHUM's proposed inclusion in the industry delegation for the second JWG meeting between India and Zambia.

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INTERVIEW

WITH
MUKESH AGHI
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE
US-INDIA STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP FORUM

How are investor sentiments given it's an election year for both the US and India?

The state elections (in India) took place and it sent a message to the global investor community that there will be political stability going forward. So, at least the global investors are pricing in their thinking that this government will come back again.

There are a number of factors that are driving sentiments. Primarily, geopolitics. The aggressive positioning of China is a big factor. Every boardroom in the US is asking what your China-plus-one strategy? Apple Inc is a great example. Next year we expect them to do 25 per cent of iPhone 16 manufacturing in India. So if a world class company is succeeding in India, they're sending a message to other companies to move production in India.

Are the US and India looking to mutually eliminate non-tariff barriers?

Both countries are looking to bring down non-tariff barriers. India has done that (imposed barriers such as quality control orders) because of the China factor. And India and the US will find a solution. But the message to the US companies is that you cannot bring all the components from China. If you look at EV too, one of the conditions that have been put is that you can't bring cars from China at lower duty and sell them here.

Visa has been a concern. Is it a political problem like in the United Kingdom?

It is not a political issue in the US. The US has already issued record numbers of visas to Indians. Generally their constraint was lack of staff (at embassy) during Covid-19.

Today, we have around 272,000 Indian students in the US. Our objective is to take it to 500,000. We have been putting in a lot of requests to improve the staff. They have got temporary staff too.

Air India's first A350 enters service today, carries the airline's hope of restoring glory

SUKALP SHARMA

HYDERABAD, JANUARY 21

IN A long-bygone era, Air India helmed by JRD Tata was known to be a delight for fliers, with ornate interiors and in-flight services second to none in the world. But most passengers today have only heard about this pinnacle of Air India's service quality, for they have been used to a product that reflected the carrier's woes—acute financial distress, excessive government interference, and inefficiencies that mar many a public sector company. Rundown planes with poor upkeep became the hallmark of India's flag carrier. Now back in the Tata fold after its privatisation, Air India is aiming to restore the famed status it enjoyed decades ago.

The carrier will put into service its brand-new Airbus A350-900 from Monday. The plane, which is also the first A350 aircraft in the country, was officially inaugurated at Wings India 2024 in Hyderabad on Thursday. The plane will initially be deployed on domestic routes for a few months for crew familiarisation flights, before switching to international medium and long-haul routes by mid-2024.

With this aircraft, Air India hopes to enter a new era defined by world-class products and superior passenger experience.



Air India's A350-900 comes with 316 seats in a three-class cabin configuration. Sukalp Sharma



Air India's new A350 aircraft

The A350 entering service on international routes will also kickstart the process of a \$400-million full interior refit of the carrier's legacy wide-body fleet, much of which is in a desperate need of a refresh.

The airline's Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Campbell Wilson calls the A350 a "game-changer" for Air India. "It will not only elevate our passenger experience but also open up new routes and opportuni-

ties for expansion," Wilson said, adding that fleet and product upgrading is a "key pillar" in Air India's action plan to become an airline of global repute.

Over the past few years, cash-rich Gulf-based carriers offering superior services on board modern aircraft have emerged as airlines of choice for a large number of passengers looking for comfortable long and ultra-long-haul travel from and to India.

With Air India being the only Indian carrier truly offering such trans-continental flights, the carrier in its new avatar is looking to attract passengers away from the Gulf airlines. The airline's network expansion and fleet modernisation programme, at least in part, is directed at taking the competition to Middle Eastern giants like Emirates, Etihad, and Qatar Airways.

The writer was in Hyderabad on Air India's invitation for the inauguration of its first Airbus A350 aircraft. FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](#)

is among the six that were originally meant for Russian flag carrier Aeroflot, but were offered to the Indian carrier due to the West's sanctions on Moscow over the war in Ukraine. Five more of such A350-900 aircraft will join the Air India fleet by March. In all, 20 each of the A350-900 and the bigger A350-1000 are part of Air India's 250-plane order to European aerospace major Airbus. The order is placed by Air India last year, with the order for the other 220 aircraft going to American plane maker Boeing.

According to Airbus, in a standard three-class configuration, the A350-900 can carry 300-350 passengers and has a flight range of over 15,000 km. The A350-1000 can carry 350-410 passengers, and can cover a little over 16,000 km non-stop.

"The A350 offers wider cabins, larger windows, mood lighting, and advanced entertainment systems, and comes with world-class cabin products, setting a new benchmark for passenger experience on Indian airlines. Air India's A350-900 comes with 316 seats in a three-class cabin configuration (business, premium economy, and economy)," Air India said.

The writer was in Hyderabad on Air India's invitation for the inauguration of its first Airbus A350 aircraft. FULL REPORT ON [www.indianexpress.com](#)

MARKET WATCH

COMBINED MCAP OF 5 FIRMS FALLS

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of five of the top 10 valued firms eroded by Rs 1,679,36.21 crore last week, with HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest laggard. PTI

'India, US addressing Pannun controversy; Tesla awaits EV policy for entry'

IN INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES (US)

have sandboxed the controversy around the alleged plot to assassinate Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun as both countries are geopolitically aligned — with most US firms such as Apple Inc looking at India to de-risk their supply chain, MUKESH AGHI, President and Chief Executive Officer of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum told DIVYA A and RAVI DUTTA MISHRA.

On the much anticipated electric vehicle (EV) major Tesla's entry into India, Aghi, who was in India briefly to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit recently, said that there is no discussion on the same as Tesla is awaiting India's EV policy and that the company's entry would involve a strong chip manufacturing ecosystem and not just a battery ecosystem. Edited excerpts:

How has the Pannun incident impacted the India-US economic relationship?

There are multiple factors driving the India-US relationship. The Pannun incident is isolated and it has been sandboxed. It has been sandboxed because there is enough maturity on both sides.

There is a sense that an incident like that should not derail the broader relationship.

You have what is called a geopolitical alignment. The US companies want to secure the supply chain. That is driving the relationship. The access to each other's market is critical. Another factor is the five million Indian American population in the US. They comprise 1.5 per cent of the population but generate about six per cent of the gross domestic product. So they are affluent and are deeply engaged in political appointments too.

Has there been concrete discussion on Tesla's entry into India?

There hasn't been a discussion on Tesla. Tesla is waiting for government policy to come. But we

have to look at Tesla not just purely from the EV perspective but from the perspective of how it can build an ecosystem for chip manufacturing.

A Tesla car requires around 2,000 chips. And if they plan to have a production facility to manufacture 5 lakh cars, think about the ecosystem. Tesla's storage technology is world-class. So once the government policy gets streamlined, Tesla may come in. But there is no discussion at the moment.

Do you think the US will restore Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) status to India?

A congressional act can restore GSP but it is an election year and the administration will not push for anything that may upset unions and people who are against these things. The US has a tremendous trade deficit. So, my thinking is that this year it will be very difficult to get GSP restored.

WTO dispute settlement body revival faces delays over country differences: GTRI

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

REINSTATING A fully functional WTO dispute settlement body to resolve trade disputes between countries could take longer than expected as there continues to be wide differences between developed and developing countries over the issue, a GTRI report said on Sunday.

This comes as the 164-member World Trade Organization (WTO) is set to gather next month in Abu Dhabi for the 13th ministerial conference (MC) to resolve different issues such as reforms in dispute settlement mechanisms, agriculture-related matters among other key issues.

Protectionism has been on the rise due to the lack of a functional dispute settlement body as the US, since 2017, has been blocking the appointment of new judges to the WTO's seven-member appellate court as it believes that

the body is hurting its interests.

GTRI said that balancing India's demands for an appellate body to the United States because more than one-quarter of all disputes at the WTO have been challenges to US laws or other measures. Specifically, 155 disputes have been filed against the United States and no other member has faced even a hundred disputes," the US had said in a report in 2020.

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) in its report had pointed out that up to approximately 90 percent of the disputes pursued against the US had been filed against the United States and no other member has faced even a hundred disputes," the US had said in a report in 2020.

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EXPLAINED HISTORY

1822-2024: The Ram Mandir journey

The movement for a grand Ram temple at Ayodhya is two centuries old. Before the final consecration came several court cases, an idol's 'magical' appearance, a mosque's demolition, and bloodshed

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

THE RAM Janmabhoomi movement for a temple at Ayodhya has a timeline running over more than 200 years, with several milestones and spilling of blood. Here is a brief history.

Before Independence

In 1751, the Marathas appealed to the Nawab of Awadh, whom they had helped defeat Pathan forces in the doab region, to transfer control of Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura to them, former BJP Rajya Sabha MP Balbir Punj writes in his book *Tryst With Ayodhya*. In 1756 too, when Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula sought their help against an imminent Afghan invasion, the Marathas requested that the three sites be transferred to them. However, the Nawab switched sides later, and the Maratha demand became irrelevant.

Punj says that in judicial records, the Ayodhya dispute dates back to 1822. A court official called Hafizullah made a submission to the Faizabad court in 1822 that a mosque built by Babur on the birthplace of Lord Ram stood in proximity to Sita Rasoi in Ayodhya.

On July 28, 1855, there was a bloody clash between Hindus and Muslims at Hanuman Garhi temple near the Babri Masjid. The 2019 SC judgment on the Ayodhya title suit says, "It is said that up to that time the Hindus and Muhammadans alike used to worship in the mosque-temple. Since British Rule, a railing has been put up to prevent the disputes..."

In 1885, Jamasthan mahant Raghubar Das moved court to seek permission to build a temple at the Ram Chabutra, close to the Masjid but within the complex. The petition was dismissed on the grounds that historical justice could not be delivered after so long.

After 1947

In July 1949, a petition was made to the UP government that a temple should come up at the site. The government forwarded it to the district administration of Faizabad. City magistrate of Faizabad, Guru Dutt Singh, submitted a report in October 1949, saying the land belongs to the government and that people have faith in Ram Lalla and want a temple.

On August 14, 1949, the UP Hindu Mahasabha passed a resolution for the 'liberation' of Ram Janmabhoomi at Ayodhya, Krishna Janmabhoomi at Mathura and the Vishwanath temple at Kashi.

On the night of December 22-23, 1949, the idol of Ram Lalla was supposedly placed in the mosque by Abhiram Das, born Abhijanan Mishra before he became an ascetic (according to the Liberhan Commission).

Supporters of the Ram temple claimed the idol had appeared by itself. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru directed the UP government to get the idol removed. However, City Magistrate Guru Dutt Singh, termed the 'first Kar Sewak' by VHP leader Ashok Singh, did not allow Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant to enter Faizabad-Ayodhya and later resigned.

District Magistrate KK Nair also refused to remove the idol, citing law and order concerns.

Congress leader and former UP minister Dau Dayal Khanna was the first politician to write to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in May 1983 demanding the restoration of Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura to the Hindus.

On April 7 and 8, 1984, at a Dharma Sansad in Delhi, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Delhi announced the launch of a movement for the 'liberation' of the holy sites at

Ayodhya, Mathura, and Kashi.

In December, 1986, Faizabad district judge KM Pandey ordered the opening of the locks of the Babri Masjid and permitted Hindus to offer prayers therein. The judge later claimed in his book, *Voice of Conscience*, that a black monkey sat on the roof of the courtroom when the hearing was on. When he delivered the judgment and went home, he saw the "same monkey" in his lawn, and saluted him, "treating him to be some Divine Power".

In mid-February 1986, the All-India Muslim Personal Board met in Delhi and urged political parties to support their demand for the handing over of the Babri Masjid to Muslims. On February 3, 1986, Hashim Ansari, one of the litigants who had filed a writ petition on behalf of the Sunni Waqf Board on December 18, 1961 seeking possession of the Babri Masjid, moved the Allahabad High Court. The court said that until further orders by it, the nature of the property shall not change.

On February 6, 1986, the Babri Masjid Action Committee was formed in Lucknow.

On July 10, 1989, the Allahabad HC decided to consolidate all suits related to the matter.

In July 1989, the BJP plunged into the movement, passing its Palampur resolution that said the Ram Janmabhoomi should be handed over to the Hindus through a negotiated settlement or legislation.

In September 1989, the VHP announced it would take consecrated bricks (*Ram Shila*) from all over the country and perform a *shilanyas* (foundation-laying) for a Ram temple at Ayodhya on October 10, 1989. The Congress government permitted it. Rajiv Gandhi launched his 1989 Lok Sabha campaign from Ayodhya. The foundation-laying ceremony was held on November 9, 1989, and Kamleshwar Chaupal, a Dalit, laid the first Ram Shila.

On September 25, 1990, then BJP president LK Advani started a Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya. There were riots in many parts of India, killing about 600 people. The police fired on Kar Sevaks in Ayodhya on October 30 and November 2. Mulayam Singh Yadav was CM of UP.

On December 6, 1992, a mob demolished the Babri Masjid.

On January 7, 1993, Parliament passed the Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act, through which the government acquired 67.03 acres of the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land. It also asked the SC to determine whether there was a temple at the site before the Babri Masjid.

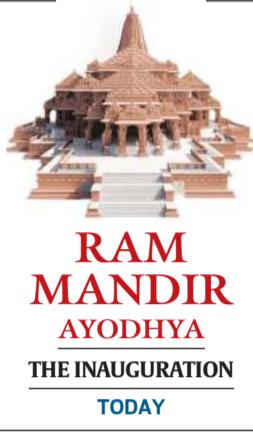
The Justice Liberhan Commission report was submitted on June 30, 2009. It said the events of December 1992 were neither spontaneous nor unplanned. In April 2017, a special CBI court framed criminal charges against Advani, MM Joshi, Uma Bharti, and others. On September 30, 2020, the court acquitted all 32 accused on grounds of inconclusive evidence.

In 2010, a special bench of the Allahabad High Court divided the disputed land in a 2:1 ratio, with two-thirds going to litigants for a Ram temple. One-third of the land was given to the Sunni Central Waqf Board.

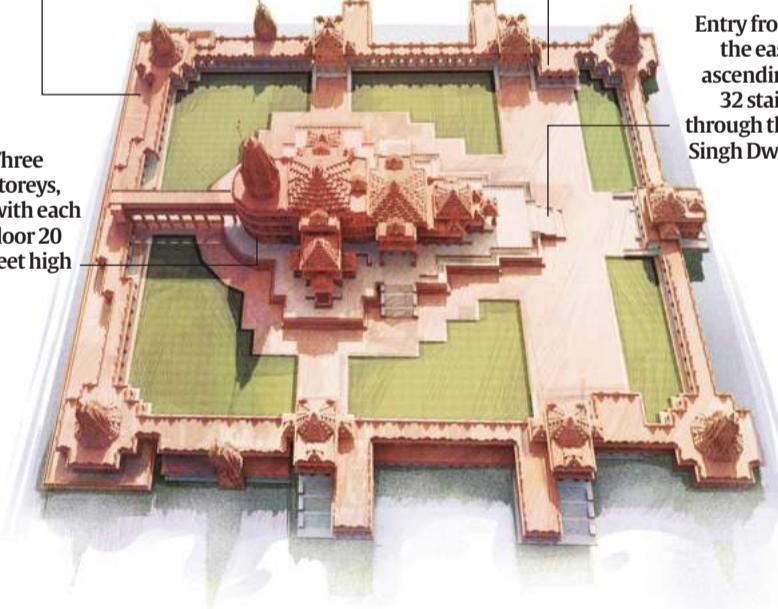
The verdict was challenged in the Supreme Court by both Hindu and Muslim litigants. On November 9, 2019, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court awarded the entire disputed land to the Hindu petitioners.

The *shilanyas* of the Ram temple was done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5, 2020, in Ayodhya.

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Landscape court around temple
Pilgrim toilet
Landscape around Sheshavat temple
Landscape around Rishi temple
Plaza around ancient Shiva temple
Landscape around Yagya mandap and Anusthan mandap
Parkota (rectangular compound wall)
732 metres long and 14 feet wide around the temple



whose rulers are all named after Ram, and he is styled Rama X. In Laos too, the story of *Phra Ram* is the national epic.

Of course, in all these countries, the story of Ram has undergone various changes. Also, the inspiration for their versions of Ram's tale are not necessarily the *Valmiki Ramayana*. For example, in the countries where the story was popularised by traders from south India, it bears more similarity to the Tamil epic *Kamban Ramayana*.

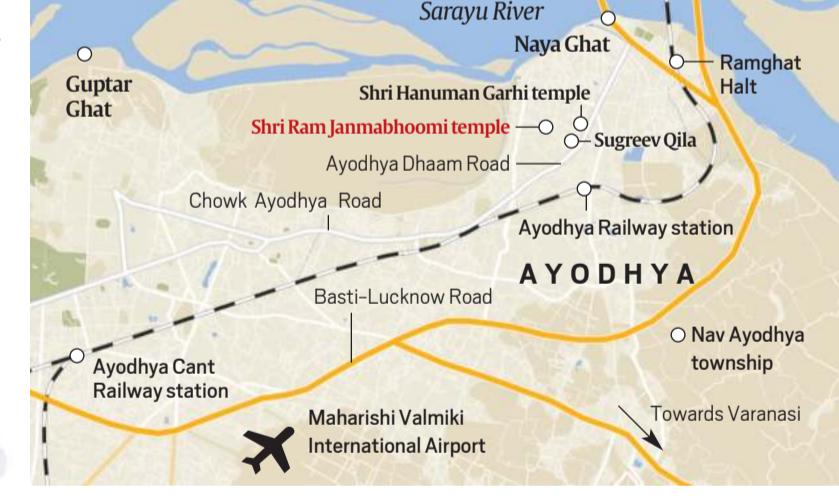
Some differences that these tales of Ram have from the Indian epic are: in Cambodia's *Reamker*, a mermaid princess, Suvannamaccha, falls in love with Lord Hanuman; in Java, the Javanese deity Dhayana and his sons

The temple complex



12:05 PM TO
12:55 PM
Pran pratishtha
rituals will
take place

The Rs 1,200-crore Ram temple has been tested for resistance to flood and earthquakes of severe intensity, thus ensuring a life of up to 2,500 years, architects Chandrakant Sompura (81) and son Ashish (51), who designed the temple complex, have said. The temple underwent a 3D structural analysis for calamity resistance before it was built, Ashish said



Illustrations based on landscape plan provided by Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra.

Ramayana outside India, from east Asia to the Caribbean

YASHEE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21

THE RAMAYANA has been popular in India for millennia, as text in Sanskrit and many other languages, as folk theatre, as puppet shows, and as countless *kathas* or oral narrations in small towns and villages.

However, the epic enjoys popularity much beyond Indian shores too, and the spread of the *Ramayana* is also testimony to how Indians travelled across the world – as prosperous traders, as preachers, and as bonded labourers.

How it spread in Asia

As Santosh N Desai, then Assistant Professor of Asian History and Religion at St John's University, New York, wrote in 1969, the *Ramayana* travelled from India to the rest of Asia in "the early centuries of the Christian era" along three routes, "by land, the northern route took the story from the Punjab and Kashmir into China, Tibet, and East Turkestan; by sea, the southern route carried the story from Gujarat and South India into Java, Sumatra, and Malaya; and again by land, the eastern route delivered the story from Bengal into Burma, Thailand, and Laos. Vietnam and Cambodia obtained their sto-

become part of the story; the Malaysian *Hikayat Seri Rama* is more sympathetic to Ravana (Maharaja Wana); while in Laos, "Phra Ram is considered a previous incarnation of Gautama Buddha...Hapmanasouane, the Lao Ravana, is considered the previous incarnation of Mara, the demon that tried to impede the Buddha's ascent to enlightenment," according to an article published by the University of Washington's Center for Southeast Asia and its Diasporas.

In all these countries, the story has been kept alive through plays, dance dramas, puppet shows, etc.

Desai writes, "Generally the stories derived from the northern strand of legends

emphasise the nobility and greatness of Rama. The versions based on the southern legends, on the other hand, depict Ravana as a hero and praise his scholarship."

Ramayana outside Asia

A major current that took the *Ramayana* to Africa, the Caribbean, etc. was the girmitya migration outside India in the 19th century. After slavery was abolished, there was an urgent demand for labourers who could work on plantations earlier serviced through slave labour. Waves upon waves of men and women were sent out from British India as indentured labourers to countries like Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, etc.

Majority of these girmitya labourers were from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and when they boarded ships towards an entirely new life, they carried among their scant possessions and in their memories Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*, written in Awadhi and arguably the most popular religious text in North India.

How it survived

The girmityas were not rich traders likely to influence kings, but there is a more personal element in how they remembered and preserved the tale of Ram. In an alien land, far away from their homes which they had left to flee either poverty or caste oppression

or some form of social boycott, the *Ramcharitmanas* to them became a source of succour, of nostalgia, the symbol of a homeland more real than the actual home.

Author VS Naipaul, born in Trinidad to a family descended from indentured labourers, wrote, "The other where Gandhi and Nehru and the others operated was historical and real. The India from which we had come was impossibly remote, almost as imaginary as the land of the *Ramayana*, our Hindu epic."

Historian Clem Seecharan, born in Guyana in a girmitya family, wrote that for his forefathers, "The *Ramayana*...was constructed as an authentic representation of the motherland. The real eastern UP and western Bihar disappeared from the radar."

He also explains that the "India of the *Ramayana* endured", "because it is a narrative that answered many of the monumental, urgent needs of the girmityas". "The theme of Lord Rama in exile in the Dandak forest is resonant among Indians in the diaspora. His triumphant return to Ayodhya has a freshness...It is an evocation of hope and renewal, even of their own triumphal return, however illusory."

Today, in these countries, the *Ramayana*'s popularity endures.

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Colleges are the places where some of the most important issues get decided and tested. You can believe one thing one day and then test out something else another day. You don't have to be the same the day you started



WHY DR CAROL FOLT

Dr Carol Folt, president of University of Southern California (USC), is the first woman to hold this position. She took charge in 2019, when the university's name first surfaced in 'Operation Varsity Blues', the college admissions scandal marked by allegations of academic fraud involving student-

athletes. Since then, Folt has worked to keep students at the centre, made education affordable, advanced academic excellence and innovation, and amplified the university's research enterprise. Prior to USC, Folt, a distinguished scientist, served as chancellor of University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.



When students learn the ability to work across disciplines and try things that might not be the ones that are immediately identified with a current job, that's their biggest learning from the American education system

'One of the jobs of a president of a university is to hold the centre, so that all voices are heard'

President of University of Southern California (USC) Carol Folt on resolving issues at USC, enhancing diversity on campus and what it means for Indian students to be in American universities. The session was moderated by Ritika Chopra, Chief of the National Bureau (Govt) and National Education Editor, *The Indian Express*



Carol Folt (right), president, USC, with Ritika Chopra at The Indian Express Noida office. Abhinav Saha

and 25,000 graduate students. It's a very different world. At USC, they have a different sense of community. They tend to think about jobs and respect for the workplace. So, we don't see this battle.

We have several programmes that are run by people who are Republicans and Democrats in the public sphere... We just got a new campus in DC, because we want our students exposed not just to California culture, but to what takes place in the government and in DC. We're making it possible for students to learn across political differences. That's just another form of diversity that we should be very intentional about encouraging.

Ritika Chopra: Should higher education institutions weigh in on the controversies of the day?

One of the main jobs of a president of a university is that we have to hold the centre. My job is not to tell you what I personally think about a political candidate or things like that. Mine is to make a place that allows other people to speak about what they care. You hold the centre, so that all voices can be heard. I think that's an absolute principle. On the other hand, we should comment on things that have to do with education. And, in our areas of importance, we should be taking a moral stance. I think it's very different, where you might weigh in.

Anant Goenka: Since you've come out of the varsity blues scandal, what advice would you give the new president of Harvard?

I would say the first thing that the president needs to do is get a lot of voices. You need to understand the difference between trying to talk in a legal way and trying to talk in a human way... You have to just be aware of it. And you better be ready to sometimes say I don't know the answer.

Anant Goenka: But this issue isn't dying down anytime soon. Today, if there was a pro-Israel protest and one sympathetic to the Palestinian cause on the USC campus, how would you navigate that?

My guiding principle is safety first. If we can keep you safe, we're going to do it. We work with people before it happens. One day, some of our Jewish students put up pictures of all the hostages for five hours near Tommy Trojan (sculpture). They were there talking to people, they had flags and balloons. People went by respectfully. The next day, a group set up pictures of the people who were killed in Gaza. They sat there for hours right in the same place, and peo-

ple went by. This doesn't mean students aren't still anxious. But, we've increased security, increased mental health, and made sure that where they need to be able to speak, we do our best to protect them.

Neeti Nigam: Most Indians going to US universities have jobs in mind but amid the Covid recession, layoffs are happening, especially in US companies. Do you still think this is the right time for Indians to go abroad?

At USC, we have an enormously successful placement rate. Our engineers are all getting jobs. It depends, to some extent, on the school they went to and the specialty they did. We have lots of hybrid degrees, which is what I think gets students jobs. So, they can get an engineering degree, pair it with a business degree and those students get the best jobs anywhere in the world. It was the cinematic art school, that went together with the engineering school and created the world's first gaming programme. I think it's a great time for Indian students to come to USC because they develop connections in these industries that are global. I think countries that have people who are deeply globally connected in business, industry and health are a real asset.

Neeti Nigam: What skills do Indian students abroad have that is their strength?

The Indian students we have are fantastic. They're hardworking and come through an amazing system. Usually, they are very entrepreneurial, which means that they're willing to try different things. The students who are self-selected already make that big leap. They are kind of fearless... The biggest asset is that they learn in our system which is multidisciplinary, the

new word is multi-hyphenate. When they learn the ability to work across disciplines and try things that might not be the ones that are immediately identified with a current job, that's the biggest learning... American education systems are very chaotic. We aren't hierarchic or as linear and there are a lot of jumps. I do think that's one of the greatest things we offer students.

R Radhika: Regarding the student debt crisis, what are your thoughts on the Biden-Harris administration's plan?

The only thing I know is they are trying to reimburse people who had debt. That's different than trying to get the prices low to have the support for students so more and more students can come. I support that. They've also been trying to increase community colleges. I'm a real supporter of that. Community colleges are less expensive... It's what I did. I went to community college in California and worked as a waitress at the pier in Santa Barbara. So, when I went to UC Santa Barbara, I'd already saved a lot of money. But right now, I don't think we have a countrywide plan to really address that lack of affordability. I think it's being addressed state by state, school by school.

R Radhika: USC has been able to implement AI in scholarly and creative work. What kind of framework is essential to regulate it and use it to its full potential?

There are different levels of regulation. Our students were already using Chat GPT, when it was first introduced. So, our faculty did a series of workshops. The general philosophy was that we would not try to regulate it. Within the university, we built a centre to work on it. In the arts, people have been involved in trying to understand what is the boundary between using peo-

ple's work and generating new work. We're trying to be part of the national conversation as they develop these frontline decisions. It's going to take us a long time to know the final answer. But I think the whole point is not to be afraid of it.

Vandita Mishra: The world over, we see a distrust in institutions, which is taking a toll in terms of politics and the rise of populism. In that larger setting, what is the challenge for the university?

We start with people that we have — are our students feeling that? If a university is a place where they can come, explore things that really matter to them, develop lifelong friendships, it is the single best way to help them stay connected and find their way through that disengagement. That's what we do every day. I think the move to also incorporate wellness — we do a lot of work so that students are told it's not just about class, it's about developing yourself as a whole person. We talk a lot about ways that they can serve in communities... The best way to feel disenfranchised and cynical is to feel like you can't do something... When you get them out of the distant-book phase to the hands-on phase, you start building trust, and that helps fight cynicism... A lot of our programmes are in schools in downtown LA, with young children. And we do programmes in prisons. We try to get out and be in every walk of life, even if they not necessarily going to university, but they could transfer there.

Ritika Chopra: Post the US Supreme Court's position on affirmative action, how has USC tried to tweak its approach to ensure diversity?

I do think universities benefit by having inclusive environments where people can be successful. So that's what we do. Our admissions officers go out to every neighbourhood, spend time trying to develop an applicant pool of people from all walks of life.

Ritika Chopra: There's a view that standardised tests like SAT and ACT reward students of privileged backgrounds. Have you seen a difference in the student body composition after you've made the two tests optional?

No, it hasn't made any difference. A lot of students still submit them. Some pretty good papers show that there are biases. There are also pretty good papers that show if you just take one class, you can eliminate that. It's like a 50-point spread by taking a class. A lot of universities have tried to do a

lot more education and give people classes so they can learn how to take those tests. It gets kind of crazy when you're teaching people to take a test. It's one vehicle, but for USC, it has never been the metric of choice. It's just 25 or 30 different things they look at... The single biggest difference was when we made tuition free at USC for anyone from a family under \$80,000. We got a lot more applications from people from low-income and from all walks of life. That was a big surge.

Ritika Chopra: Did this surge also lead to a larger number of candidates from those walks of life getting selected?

We don't go around that way, pulling out who got selected and who didn't. But our diversity is as high as it's ever been. Since I've taken over, applications have gone from 70,000 to 80,000 to 100,000. Once you take the test away, you don't have a way to know if your class is different than it was before, because that whole metric is gone. But we look at GPA and other things... Interestingly, more than half of our students still send the test scores in. We don't tell them that they have to, we make these decisions independent of that test.

Ritika Chopra: If a donor or a CEO of a certain company said that I wouldn't donate or I wouldn't hire a candidate based on a protest they participated in, how would you handle the situation?

I would say very clearly, I'm sorry, you feel that way. Would you like to talk about it? If they persist, I would say, well, that's your choice. But I think a university has to continue to do what it believes is the right thing to do.

Ritika Chopra: You're the first woman president of USC. Could you take us through your experience of navigating gendered institutions?

I'm a woman in science, and things have changed radically since I've been in university. For women in science, one of the most important things we wanted to do was make it easier for the people who followed us. I spend a lot of time on mentoring programmes... Ever since I've been at the AAU, every year, the number of women presidents is going up.

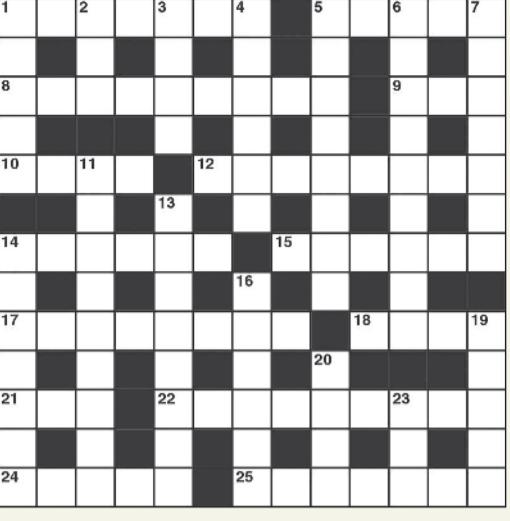
I think we'll start seeing differences in the people who choose to stay as leaders because people sort of self-select. I think we're going to see more women, people of colour and people from different backgrounds. You're also going to see more people in American universities who aren't necessarily academics also running a university.



We have several programmes that are run by people who are Republicans and Democrats in the public sphere... We're making it possible for students to learn across political differences



CROSSWORD 5267



ACROSS

- Sporting a new rig out (7)
- Hairdressing business built from loans (5)
- The German caller produced a gun (9)
- Choose to get out of the helicopter (3)
- You want to be in it (4)
- A sweater specially designed for the ocean (3,5)
- Improves compensation (6)
- Turn up with two Frenchmen at the Spanish strike (6)
- What's inside pleases (8)
- Common food of the insect larva (4)
- A measure of fellowship (3)
- Came back with a diet change for the undernourished (9)
- Test the patience of a good man at a meeting (5)
- Writes down some music notes at the centre (7)

DOWN

- Broaden Edwin's outlook (5)
- Give vent to a song (3)
- Bird nesting in the hibiscus (4)
- A comedian who did so badly should be (6)
- How one driver in turning makes mistakes? (6,2)
- Wildcat strikes will put him out of work (4,5)
- As one might expect, ecologists study such history (7)
- Always enter perhaps with a friend (9)
- He daresn't upset a supporter (8)
- Nine act in an old-fashioned way (7)
- Possible result of overworking a melody? (6)
- Waits while one bed's made up (5)
- Steal a free ride (4)
- An addition to the family? (3)

Solutions Crossword 5266 Across: 1 Original, 5 Step, 9 Cupid, 10 Freckle, 11 Pitch and toss, 13 Outry, 14 Hammer, 17 Greenfingers, 20 Orbital, 21 Alamo, 22 Sown, 23 Inverted Down: 1 Once, 2 Imprint, 3 Indecisive, 4 Affray, 5 Tokyo, 7 Pleasure, 8 Deadlanguage, 12 Longbows, 15 Mordant, 16 Violin, 18 Elbow, 19 Gold

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLE WORDS

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

Riches don't make a man ___, they only make him busier. - Christopher Columbus (4..6)

BYERR

DDELCLU

ENIIS

BELOBH

Answers: RICHES don't make a man rich, they only make him busier. - Christopher

SUDOKU 5449

Difficulty Level 2s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5448

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

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) Corporate Identity No. U40109UR2001SC02587/2358

Victoria Cross Vijeta Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun

Telephone: 0135-2762444, Fax No.0135-2763839, Email: cecommercialupcl@gmail.com, Website: www.upcl.org

CORRIGENDUM- FOR BANKING OF ENERGY AGAINST TENDER SPECIFICATION

No.14/CE (COMM)/UPCL-14/2023-24 (Banking of Energy)

The tender process and activities timeline modifications against tender specification No.14/CE(COMM)/UPCL-14/2023-24 (Banking of Energy) are as under:-

Particulars	Date and time
Venue: Superintendent Engineer (Commercial), UPCL, Victoria Cross Vijeta Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun	
Last date of request for purchase of tender document	25.01.2024 upto 12:00 hrs
Date of Bid Submission (START)	13.01.2024 from 10:00 hrs onwards
Date of Bid Submission (END)	25.01.2024 up to 17:00 hrs
Date of Bid Opening Technical (Part I)	27.01.2024 at 16:00 hrs
Date of Bid Opening Financial (Part II)	Shall be intimated through email after conducting technical evaluation of the tender.

Further, the following modifications have been made in bid documents and the same way be read as follows:-

(a) 16.5.1 No trading will be allowed on the quantum of energy supplied by UPCL.
16.5.2 Trading margin will be paid by UPCL to successful trader at rates quoted by trader in part-II against the quantum of energy supplied to UPCL.

(b) The cost of EMD is ₹ 30,00,00/- (₹ Thirty Lac only) in place of ₹ 1,00,00,00/- (₹ One Crore only).

All other terms and conditions shall remain as per bid document of Tender No. 14/CE(COMM)/UPCL-14/2023-24 (Banking of Energy) and its amendment/corrigendum.

No.: 40/EE/cm/UPCL/A-2
Date: 20/01/2024

Superintendent Engineer (Commercial)

SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE NATION Use LED Bulb Save Electricity. (Toll-Free- 1800 419 0405 or 1912)

"Pay Electricity Bill Online 24x7 from www.upcl.org" (For information on Electricity Theft, Informer may report to Toll Free No. 1800 180 4185/Fax No.: 0135-2760911)

Online Tender Document for M.P. Police

POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL

Dated 12/01/2024

No. PHQ/15/GPC/ 7520-7 /2024 Bhopal,

ONLINE TENDER NOTICE

Online tender are invited by Deputy Inspector General of Police (Provisioning) Police Head Quarter, Bhopal on behalf of DGP MP Bhopal for FSL Items on website

<https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>

Equipments for Biological Lab of Ratlam and Rewa

Sr Name of Equipment Quantity EMD Paid Online Through mptenders.gov.in Tender Fees (Rs.)

1	Laboratory Refrigerators	4	6,000	1,000
2	Double distillation Assembly	2	6,000	1,000
3	Shaker	4	4,800	1,000
4	Vortex machine	4	3,000	1,000
5	UV chamber	2	3,000	1,000
6	Portable UV light source (torch)	4	3,000	1,000
7	UV face shield and protection goggles	4	3,600	1,000
8	Autoclave (vertical)25 liter	2	7,200	1,000
9	Microwave oven (capacity 0.6CU FT)	2	1,800	1,000
10	PH meter	2	3,000	1,000
11	Air conditioners (2.0 Tons) for safekeeping of equipments	4	6,000	1,000
12	Computer PC with wifi facilities	4	7,200	1,000
13	Multifunctional printer with Photocopier and Scanner	4	4,800	1,000
TOTAL EMD & Tender FEES		59,400	13,000	

1. Cost of tender document (Tender Fee) is non refundable and cannot be exempted in any condition & must submit online through website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>.

2. Tender document can be download from the website of MP Police (www.mppolice.gov.in)

3. Bids shall be submitted online only at MP Tenders website: <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>

4. Critical Date Sheet:

Published Date 13/01/2024 Time 14:00 PM

Bid Document Download Start Date 13/01/2024 Time 16:00 PM

Pre Bid Meeting Date 18/01/2024 Time 12:00 PM

Bid Submission Start Date 24/01/2024 Time 11:00 AM

Bid Submission End Date 01/02/2024 Time 14:00 PM

Bid Opening Date 02/02/2024 Time 16:00 PM

5. Intending Bidders are advised to visit this website regularly till closing date of submission to keep themselves updated as any change/ modification in the tender will be intimated through this website only by corrigendum / addendum/ amendment.

6. Bids will be opened as per date/time as mentioned in the Tender Critical Date Sheet. After online opening of Technical-Bid the results of their qualification as well Price-Bid opening will be intimated later.

Sd/-
(D.R. Teniwar)
D.I.G. (Provisioning)

For: Director General of Police M.P.

G-23208/23



Short Term Tender Notice

National School of Drama, is organizing 23rd Bharat Rang Mahotsav from 01st to 21st February, 2024 in Delhi. Sealed tenders are invited from reputed firms to provide Tent Material on hiring basis during 23rd BRM- 2024. The Tender Document may be downloaded from NSD website i.e. www.nsd.gov.in. Last date for submission of tender is 26.01.2024 by 1500 hours.

Registrar
National school of Drama

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER AGRA CIRCLE, P.W.D AGRA

Short Term Notice inviting E-Tender

Letter No. : 216/14M-A.C/2024

Date :- 15.01.2024

1. The Superintending Engineer Agra Circle, U.P.P.W.D. on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved registered Contractors. As The work Comprises of specialized Road work, hence contractors bidding for this work must be registered in Road work with UP PWD. Bidders are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified in Clause 4 of the Instructions to Bidders to qualify for the award of the contract.

2.

Sl. No	District	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs. in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs. in Lacs)	Cost of Document (In Rs.)	Time of Completion	Address of Executive Engineer executing the work	Supervisor of Engineering	Address of Chief Engineer	Category of Contractor</