

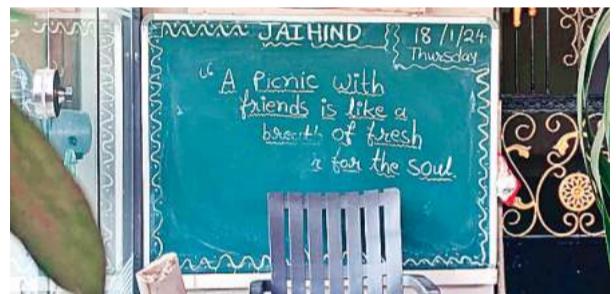
DAY AFTER 12 CHILDREN DIED IN VADODARA BOAT CAPSIZE

Families grieve: Daughter who packed extra clothes, son who insisted on trip

SOHINI GHOSH
VADODARA, JANUARY 19

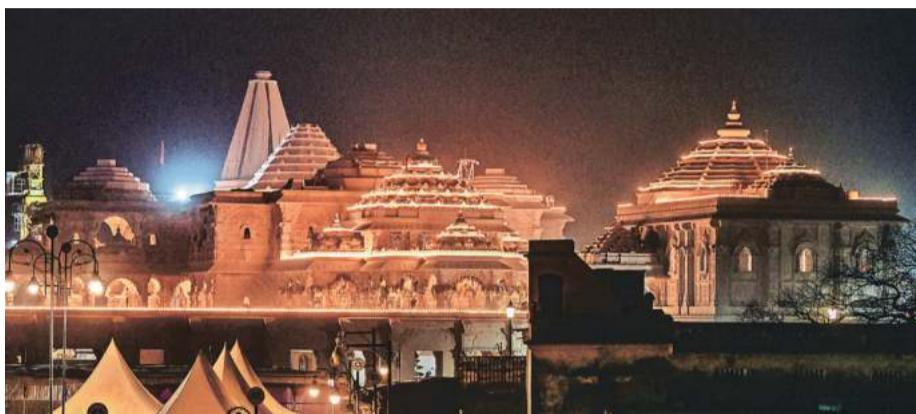
AN INCONSOLABLE mother, a father too far, a child in the dark. A day after 12 young lives perished when an overloaded boat capsized at Harni Lake in Vadodara, the families are grappling to come to terms with the loss.

At the Kishanwadi neighbourhood, Mazbina Faruk Sheikh (32), who lost her seven-year-old



A day after the incident, the picnic announcement remains on a board at New Sunrise School. Sohini Ghosh

PAGE 8



An illuminated Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on Friday night. ANI

RELATED REPORTS, PAGE 6

On short break, workers eager to return home — with tales to tell

MAULSHREE SETH
AYODHYA, JANUARY 19

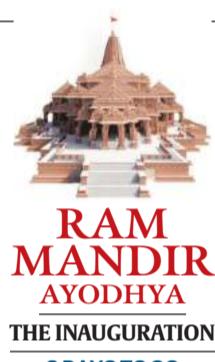
BEFORE NEARLY 8,000 VIP guests descend on Ayodhya for the January 22 consecration ceremony, 2,000 workers who have been toiling in two shifts of 12 hours each for months to get the temple ready for the "grand opening" were given a "short break" on Friday evening.

Construction at the temple was temporarily halted on Friday evening and will resume after the ceremony.

An official responsible for the construction told *The Indian Express*, "Around 2,000 workers

are engaged here at present. The work has been halted till January 22. Slab laying work is nearly complete for the first floor.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



RAM MANDIR AYODHYA

THE INAUGURATION

2 DAYS TO GO

BIG PICTURE
PAGE 11

The Officer Architect

Nripendra Misra's journey to January 22

NAGARA STYLE OF ARCHITECTURE

PAGE 15

EXPLAINED
E Opportunity to face test

WITH MOST Opposition parties opposing it, the 'one nation, one election' proposal lacks bipartisan support. However, what remains to be seen is whether the INDIA bloc manages to speak in one voice. Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, for instance, was earlier a votary of simultaneous elections.

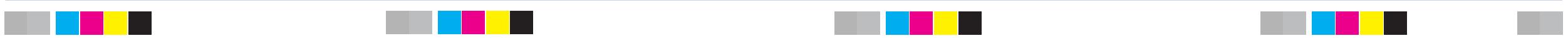
to allow his "persona" and the office of the former President to be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Fostering aerospace innovation in India

As part of our commitment to India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision, we are dedicated to driving aerospace innovation in India and the world. The new Boeing Sukanya Program will invest in the further growth of female pilots and advancement of women in aviation.

Join us at boeing.com/indiacareers





Ayodhya In the era of Renaissance

As the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on January 22, draws near, the nation, not just Ayodhya, is abuzz with the singular name that unites everyone, the Bhagwan Shri Ram.

Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Ayodhya has undergone significant developmental transformations. The government's focus on infrastructure and its commitment to preserving the rich cultural heritage played a pivotal role in shaping Ayodhya in the era of the Renaissance.

The significant consecration ceremony for Shri Ram Lalla is slated for January 22, coinciding with Paush Shukla Dwadashi Abhijit Muhurta at 12:20 pm. On the auspicious occasion of Pran Pratistha, dignitaries including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, RSS Chief Dr. Mohan Bhagwat, Ram Janmabhoomi Trust President Mahant Nritya Gopal Das and all the trustees will attend the Shri Ram Lalla Pran Pratistha ceremony.

Over 8000 people will gather in the temple courtyard

In preparation for the grand event, approximately 8,000 chairs have been meticulously arranged in the temple courtyard for the attendance of distinguished individuals. January 22 is not just a day for the local community but a call for people across the nation to partake in cleanliness initiatives and engage in bhajans and kirtans within their local temples.

The live broadcast of the



Pran Pratishtha program extends an invitation for widespread participation. Following the ceremony, the customary blowing of conch shells and the distribution of Prasad take place, with a special emphasis on reaching out to as many people as possible. The festivities pivot around the temple and as night descends, households are encouraged to light five lamps at their outer doors in the evening as an offering to the Bhagwan Shri Ram.

Various instruments will be played during Pran Pratistha

The temple will resound with the melodies of various traditional Indian musical instruments, showcasing the vast diversity of the country's musical heritage. Percussion

instruments such as pakhawaj and dholak, along with enchanting flute performances from Uttar Pradesh, will echo through the temple. Karnataka will contribute the soul-stirring notes of the veena, while Maharashtra will present the mesmerizing Sundari. Punjab's Alghoza, Odisha's Mardala, Madhya Pradesh's Santoor, Manipur's Pung, and Assam's Nagada and Kali will all add their unique tunes to the cultural tapestry. Instruments like Tambura from Chhattisgarh, Pakhavaj from Bihar, Shehnai from Delhi, Ravanatha from Rajasthan, and Shri Khol and Sarod from Bengal will further enrich the musical symphony. Additionally, the performance lineup includes Ghatam from Andhra, Sitar

from Jharkhand, Santoor from Gujarat, and a combination of Nadawaram, Thavil, Mridang, and Hudka from Uttarakhand. The meticulous selection process ensures the participation of the country's finest musicians, making this musical showcase a true celebration of India's rich cultural heritage.

53 representatives coming from 50 countries

A global presence is anticipated at the Pran Pratishtha ceremony, with 53 guests representing 50 countries being invited to the event. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring the comfort of the attendees. Beginning January 23, individuals visiting Ayodhya will have the privilege of experiencing the divine presence of Bhagwan Ram. The ceremony itself will encompass the performance of 120 Vedic rituals conducted in the nine kunds situated within the Yagyashala on the premises.



Lata Mangeshkar Chowk



Choodamani Chauraha



Ram Path



Bhakti Path

ITMS to ensure seamless & safe movement of devotees

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the state government is aggressively working to make Ayodhya, more aesthetically pleasing overall, with an emphasis on spirituality, mythology, education, health, and transportation. Starting the Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS) project is one of the major projects in this large-scale undertaking. The purpose of this project is to optimize traffic flow in the city, guarantee tourist safety, and provide a smooth travel experience.

Since 2017, the Yogi government has been diligently addressing Ayodhya's traffic issues. Currently operational at 20 intersections, the ITMS is poised to extend its coverage to two additional intersections soon. With an estimated cost of Rs 47.74 crore, the project commenced in October 2021 and was inaugurated by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on January 17, 2022, as part of the Smart City Scheme.

Electric buses on the Ram Path and Dharma Path



Aiming to provide essential facilities for tourists and pilgrims visiting places like Ram Janmabhoomi and temples in Ayodhya, the Yogi government has introduced electric buses on the Dharma Path and Ram Path. Moreover, after January 22, various activities, including the efficient management of crowds for darshan, worship, and travel, as well as the rapid development of temporary parking, will also be undertaken. In the coming time, there will be a continuous increase in the number of pilgrims and tourists in Ayodhya. Viewing this, the operation of electric buses has been initiated on the Dharma Path and Ram Path.

World's largest 'solar powered street lights line' in Ayodhya



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's ambitious vision to transform Ayodhya into a solar city is reaching new heights with the establishment of the world's largest 'solar-powered street lights line.' This pioneering initiative involves the installation of 470 solar street lights spanning a substantial 10.2 km stretch from Guptar Ghat to Nirmali Kund. Beyond contributing to Ayodhya's commitment to sustainable energy, this remarkable project is set to secure a prestigious entry into the Guinness Book of World Records, following the city's earlier recognition during Deepotsav for illuminating the highest

number of earthen lamps. The installation work is well underway, with approximately 70% completed, and the remaining 160 solar streetlights slated for installation before January 22. More than 310 solar lights have been installed from Lakshman Ghat to Guptar Ghat, while work is ongoing to install the remaining solar-powered street lights in the stretch between Guptar Ghat.

Six grand entrance gates will welcome devotees to Ayodhya

Aiming to restore the glory and grandeur of ancient Ayodhya, the government is spending Rs 140 crore to construct six grand gate complexes in the city. The government has started the process of building grand entrance gates on all entry routes of Ayodhya, which would be reminiscent of gates in the ancient capitals.

Gates Names on Ramayana period characters

Lucknow-Ayodhya road is set to witness the construction of an impressive gate, 'Shri Ram Dwar,' adding to the architectural richness of the route.

Enhancing the Gorakhpur to Ayodhya road, plans are in motion for the development of a majestic gate named 'Hanuman Dwar,' showcasing intricate design and grandeur.

Gonda to Ayodhya road will soon feature an entrance with the construction of the proposed 'Lakshman Dwar' gate, ensuring a visually stunning addition to the roadway.

A significant addition to the Prayagraj to Ayodhya route will be the construction of the 'Bharat Dwar' gate, a symbol of cultural and architectural prominence.

A grand gate named 'Jatayu Dwar' is proposed on Ambedkar Nagar to Ayodhya road.

The Rae Bareli to Ayodhya road is poised to receive a touch of architectural brilliance with the planned construction of 'Garuda Dwar,' a grand gate.



Official bypassed while granting nod for tree removal at CM house: Report

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

A JOINT committee constituted by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to look into alleged violation of norms in construction at the official residence of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has found that a senior official was bypassed while granting permissions to remove trees from the site.

Besides, a committee of the Public Works Department had not sanctioned building plans and approval of the Delhi Urban Art Commission was not obtained for additions or alterations made on the premises, as per a report submitted by the committee to NGT.

The committee comprises the Chief Secretary, a nominee of the DUAC, the area District Magistrate, and the Principal Secretary, Environment and Forest. It has recommended that to ensure the residence of the CM is "safe and secure," in accordance with the Unified Building Bye-Laws for Delhi, the Building Committee of the PWD be directed to place before the Tribunal the "certified building plans of 6, Flag Staff Road as well as 45-47, Rajpur Road (which are being used as residence by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi)."

The petitioner, Naresh Chaudhary, had allegedly only 83 saplings were planted even as the conditions for granting nod to felling of 28 trees stipulated plantation of 280 saplings.

The petitioner had also alleged that permissions for tree felling were taken by "manipulation and circumvention" of a 2009 order of the Department of Forests and Wildlife — instead of disclosing that 28 trees were to be cut, for which permission of senior officers was required, permissions were taken in installments of less than 10 trees.

The petition had also alleged that the construction was raised

ignoring observations of the DUAC for increasing green area.

The committee, in its report submitted to the NGT earlier this week, stated that allegations by the petitioner are "prima facie substantiated by records". It has noted that permissions were being sought by PWD for removal of more than 10 trees, but the then Deputy Conservator of Forests, Central, Aditya Madanpotra, had not obtained the approval of the Conservator of Forests. Instead, he approved the application at his own level.

Further, in 2022, DCF(Central)

had issued a notice for a tree offence at 45-47 Rajpur Road — exposing the roots of six trees — to the wrong address, issuing it to the Executive Engineer of the Maintenance Department, Lok Nayak Hospital, instead of the Executive Engineer of the PWD.

The committee has said this cannot be treated as an inadvertent mistake but was "deliberate misconduct" by the DCF. It also noted that the PWD made three applications for removing trees within a year — one for 6, Flagstaff Road, and two for 45-47 Rajpur Road — without "disclosing the fact that the said plot 45-47, Rajpur Road was amalgamated in 6, Flagstaff Road."

The committee observed that it seems this "non-disclosure" was done with "malafide intentions" to bypass the limitation that the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act provides for — only two applications in a year can be entertained from a person for the same area.

Observing that Madanpotra failed to perform his duties, the committee recommended that disciplinary action may be considered against him.

The report noted that the 'Building Committee' of the PWD, "which is to certify that building plans conform to the Unified Building Bye-Laws for Delhi, 2016, has not accorded sanction for building plans addition or alteration in plot 6, Flagstaff Road..."

Toddler injured in attack by Pit Bull in North Delhi, receives several stitches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

A one-and-a-half-year-old girl received three fractures and multiple stitches on her body in an alleged dog attack in North Delhi's Burari area, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred on January 2 when a Pit Bull allegedly attacked the girl outside their house in C Block of Burari. The girl and her grandmother, Jageshwar Mehta, were out for a walk when the dog attacked the child.

The dog owner had "not held on to the leash properly" when the Pit bull attacked, Mehta told PTI. "The dog held my grandchild's leg with its jaw and it took us some time to release her from its clutches. My grand daughter has received multiple injuries on her body. Her right leg has received three fractures and multiple stitches," Mehta said.

Mehta added that the girl had to spend two weeks at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital.

"We approached police three times but they never registered any case nor took any action against the dog owner," Mehta claimed.

Police said they were verifying the facts of the matter before registering a case under relevant sections.

In a similar incident, a seven-year-old girl was allegedly attacked by a neighbour's American Bully dog in Rohini's Sector 25 area on January 9. The girl had received 15 injuries on her body. Several members of the society held a protest against dog menace in their area.

Delhi Police had said the minor saw the dog approaching her and tried to run but fell on the ground. The dog then jumped on her and bit her multiple times, they added.

A case had been registered against the dog's owner, who lives near the victim's house, under sections of negligent conduct around animals and causing hurt by acts endangering life.

BROTHER A GANGSTER, POLICE SUSPECT FALLOUT OF GANG RIVALRY

Heading back from gym, Air India crew member gunned down in Noida market

Suraj Mann was in his car in Noida's Sector 104 market when three men on a bike shot him dead

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, JANUARY 19

ON HIS way back from the gym, a 32-year-old man was gunned down by a group of armed assailants in broad daylight in Noida's upscale Sector 104 market on Friday. The deceased, Suraj Mann, was from Delhi and lived in a high-rise in Noida Sector 100. He was working as a crew member with Air India. He is survived by his wife and 4-year-old daughter.

Though the motive behind the killing is not clear yet, police sources suspected it could be the handiwork of rivals of Mann's brother, gangster Parvesh Mann alias Sagar, who has been in jail for the last three years.

According to police, the incident took place around 2.30-3 pm. Mann had finished his workout session at Anytime Fitness Gym in the market and was sitting in his car when three men on a bike pumped bullets into him, killing him instantly.

"Police reached the spot



The incident took place around 2.30-3pm in Noida. Suraj Mann (left) sustained five bullet injuries, police said. Express

and rushed Mann to a hospital where he was declared dead on arrival. The body has been sent for post-mortem. A team of senior officers and forensics experts reached the crime scene soon after. A total of four teams have been formed to

investigate the case," said DCP (Noida) Harish Chander.

Police said Mann received five bullet injuries. They are checking CCTV footage in the area to identify the accused. Other patrons of the gym are also being questioned.

An FIR under murder charges has been registered against the unidentified accused.

Police sources said Mann was originally from Delhi's Wazirpur, but had been residing away from his family for a while now, purportedly due to safety reasons. However, police said they would investigate all possible angles.

'Brother involved in series of crimes'

According to police, Sagar is one of the most dreaded criminals of Delhi. He, along with his gang members — Ajay Mann alias Goli; Sahil Dahiya; Sachin Mann; Tarun Dahiya; Yudhveer alias Narendra Mann alias Chandan — were allegedly involved in several crimes including murder, robbery, Arms Act and other heinous offences.

Sources said his gang and that of Jitender Gogi have been embroiled in a gang war for years, one that has left many from both sides dead or in jail.

Sources said gangster Sagar was booked under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) and IPC sections related to murder, robbery

and Arms Act etc. in the past.

He is also accused of murdering two brothers from a family in his village in Delhi.

According to officials, Suraj's family has expressed suspicion that he was murdered allegedly by a person from that family in revenge.

Meanwhile, eyewitnesses and passersby recounted the shooting. "Suraj used to come to the gym every day. Today, after his session, he came down, opened his car, and sat to eat a banana. Within two minutes, three men arrived on a bike. One fired in the air and the other started firing bullets at the windshield of the car. Around 8-10 rounds were fired," said Mustafa, an eyewitness.

Another eyewitness, who did not wish to be named, said: "It happened right in front of my eyes. I had come to the market and was a short distance away when I suddenly heard the sound of bullets being fired. The attackers looked to be in their 20s... After about half-an-hour, police came and the body was taken away."

Excise case: Court grants Vijay Nair interim bail

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

ADELHI court Friday granted interim bail of two weeks to former Aam Aadmi Party communication-in-charge Vijay Nair in the excise policy case. Seeking bail for eight weeks, Nair had stated in his plea that he was suffering from haemorrhoids and had been advised surgery for the same.

The Enforcement Directorate opposed the bail plea, stating that the surgery was not life-threatening and could be performed in judicial custody. Nair, however, said he needed constant support and presence of his family members for a speedy recovery.

This is the first time in over 26 months after his arrest by the ED that Nair was granted bail. In July 2023, the same Delhi court had dismissed his bail plea. The CBI arrested Nair in September 2022 — making his one of the first arrests in the case. He was, however, granted bail in the CBI case. Before he could be released from custody, he was arrested by the ED in November 2022.

Nair was accused of being a middleman between the 'South Group,' which allegedly gave Rs 100 crore as kickbacks to enter the liquor retail segment in the national capital, and the AAP. The ED also accused him of laundering money received as kickbacks during the AAP's Goa Assembly poll campaign.

According to the investigating officer, Nair, in collusion with co-accused Dinesh Arora and Amit Arora, allegedly arm-twisted a few wholesalers to surrender their L-1 licences and then coerced manufacturers to choose wholesalers of his choice.

"On account of the conspiracy, the government lost revenue of 12 per cent — Rs 581 crore — that would have accrued in case the expert committee recommendations were accepted..." the investigating officer said.

6th tower at Chintels unsafe, chlorides in concrete: Report

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, JANUARY 19

A SIXTH towers at Chintels Paradiso in Gurgaon's Sector 109 has been declared unsafe by a committee that was formed following the 2022 collapse at the residential society. This comes after IIT-Delhi, in its structural audit report, pointed to chlorides in the structure and that it will lead to further deterioration.

In February 2022, a large portion of an apartment on the 6th floor of tower D collapsed to the first floor, killing two. Since then, the Deputy Commissioner asked residents of towers E, F, G, and H

to vacate as the structural audit reports of the towers showed they were unfit for habitation.

The report by the committee, comprising the ACP (West), DTP (Enforcement), Superintending Engineer (PWD & R&R), and the ADC, dated January 19, states that the tower is unsafe and residents should be immediately evacuated. It also cited an incident when the balcony on the fifth floor of Tower J collapsed on January 12.

"The Committee is of the view that structure of Tower J is not safe for habitation. The repair and rehabilitation of this Tower is also not feasible due to high chloride content in the concrete throughout the structure, which has al-



Portion of a balcony in Tower J collapsed on Jan 12.

ready acted in a detrimental manner. Therefore, the committee is of the view that Tower J should be permanently closed. Residents... should be asked to vacate immediately," the report, addressed to the Deputy Commissioner, stated.

The IIT-Delhi report further said, "Tower J visually appears to be better... but in a worse condition than towers A, B, and C. The test results confirm that the risk of corrosion of reinforcement can rapidly accelerate without any prior warning, leading to a loss in structural capacity."

Quoting from the IIT-Delhi report, which deduced that chlorides were present in the concrete at the time of its production, the committee stated, "... both construction agency and developer failed to ensure quality construction. Timely intervention such as testing of concrete and use of material that does not have chloride content beyond a prescribed limit

could have been vital in structural safety." Regarding settlement for families in Tower J, the committee concluded that Chintels India Pvt Ltd should settle all claims of allottees in a time-bound manner.

A Chintels spokesperson said they've received the report: "As suggested by DTCP, we urge residents to vacate... We're studying the report; we'll share similar package as offered to others."

Residents of Tower J said they should be given settlement soon. In a statement, RWA president Rakesh Hooda said, "... We want revaluation to be done as the older valuation is 1.5 years old and the real estate market has significantly appreciated ever since..."

Reliance Industries Limited
Growth is Life

Regd. Office: 3rd Floor, Maker Chambers IV, 222, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400 021.
Phone: 022-3555 5000 • Fax: 022-2204 2268 • E-mail: investor.relations@ril.com
CIN: L17110MH1973PLC01976

Extract of Unaudited Consolidated Financial Results for the Quarter and Nine Months Ended 31st December, 2023

Particulars	Quarter Ended 31st December, 2023	Nine Months Ended 31st December, 2023	Quarter Ended 31st December, 2022
Value of Sales & Services (Revenue)	248,160	735,288	240,532
Less: GST Recovered	20,190	61,531	20,367
Revenue from Operations	227,970	673,757	220,165
Profit Before Tax from Continuing Operations	25,986	76,907	22,902
Profit After Tax from Continuing Operations	19,641	57,777	17,706
Profit from Discontinued Operations (Net of Tax)	-	-	100
Profit for the Period	19,641	57,777	17,806
Total Comprehensive Income (Net of Tax)*	20,091	58,443	22,287
Paid up Equity Share Capital, Equity Shares of ₹ 10/- each	6,766	6,766	6,766
Other Equity excluding Revaluation Reserve**	-	-	-
Earnings per Equity Share (in ₹) (Face value of ₹ 10/- each)	-	-	-
Continuing Operations	25.52	74.90	23.19
Basic (in ₹)	25.52	74.90	23.19
Diluted (in ₹)	25.52	74.90	23.19
Discontinued Operations	—	—	0.15
Basic (in ₹)	—	—	0.15
Diluted (in ₹)	—	—	0.15
Continuing & Discontinued Operations	25.52	74.90	23.34
Basic (in ₹)	25.52	74.90	23.34
Diluted (in ₹)	25.52	74.90	23.34

* Includes share of Non-Controlling Interest
** Other Equity excluding Revaluation Reserves for the year ended as on 31st March, 2023 was ₹ 709,106 crore.

Notes:

- The Audit Committee has reviewed the above results and the Board of Directors has approved the above results and its release at their respective meetings held on 19th January, 2024. The Statutory Auditors of the Company have carried out a Limited Review of the aforesaid results.
- Additional information on Unaudited Standalone Financial Results is as follows:

Particulars	Quarter Ended 31st December, 2023	Nine Months Ended 31st December, 2023	Quarter Ended 31st December, 2022
Value of Sales & Services (Revenue)	136,083	415,650	134,799
Less: GST Recovered	5,504	18,722	5,522
Revenue from Operations	130,579	396,928	129,277
Profit Before Tax from Continuing Operations	12,978	40,222	11,600
Profit After Tax from Continuing Operations	9,924	30,759	8,263
Profit from Discontinued Operations (Net of Tax)	-	-	110
Profit for the Period	9,924	30,759	8,373
Total Comprehensive Income (Net of Tax)	10,083	30,351	6,660

3. The above is an extract of the detailed format of the Unaudited Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results for the quarter and nine months ended on 31st December, 2023, filed with the Stock Exchanges pursuant to Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.

The full format of the Unaudited Standalone and Consolidated Financial Results for the quarter and nine months ended on 31st December, 2023, are available on the Stock Exchanges' websites (www.bseindia.com / www.nseindia.com) and the Company's website www.ril.com.

For Reliance Industries Limited
Sd/-



PM Narendra Modi, Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin, Union Minister Anurag Thakur, Union MoS Nisith Pramanik in Chennai. ANI

'Great start to 2024': PM declares Khelo India Youth Games open in Chennai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, JANUARY 19

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Friday declared the Khelo India Youth Games 2023 open at the Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai.

The opening ceremony of the national sports event took place in a grand fashion with several cultural programmes exhibiting the traditional and cultural practices of Tamil Nadu.

The event, which is being held for the first time in a south Indian state, will feature over 5,600 athletes. The games will be played across four cities of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, Madurai, Trichy, and Coimbatore, from January 19 to January 31. The games will feature 26 sporting disciplines with a mix of conventional sports and traditional ones.

Chief Minister M K Stalin, Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Thakur, Union Ministers of State L Murugan, Tamil Nadu Youth Welfare and Sports Development Minister Udhyanidhi Stalin were among the dignitaries present alongside the Prime Minister at the event.

Modi placed the Game's torch handed by Olympians

Study needed to find if enemies behind rise in natural disasters in border states: Rajnath

Inaugurates 35 projects in Uttarakhand

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

EXPRESSING CONCERN over the rising number of natural disasters in some border states and Union Territories, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Friday said there is a need to conduct a detailed study to find out if India's adversaries are behind it. Climate change is no longer just a weather-related phenomenon but is also linked to national security, Singh said.

After inaugurating 35 border infrastructure projects worth Rs 670 crore at an event in Uttarakhand's Joshimath-Malari Road, Singh said the increase in number of such incidents in the border regions cannot be ignored and that the government will seek cooperation from friendly countries on the issue, if needed.

"The frequency of natural disasters has risen in some states and Union Territories like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh. Experts believe it is linked with climate change. But I think a study needs to be conducted to find if there is also a role of our adversaries in it," Singh said, without naming any country. "The Ministry of Defence is taking this very seriously," he said.

"We are developing infrastructure on the mountains and deploying the troops on hill borders in such a way that it is ensuring the safety of the people there, and helping the military to effectively deal with our adversaries," Singh said.

The defence minister described the large migration from border areas in Uttarakhand as "a matter of concern". He said the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister are taking the schemes related to infrastructure development to the last person as the aim is to cover the development journey from the seas to the borders.

"People living near the borders are no less than soldiers. If a soldier protects the country by wearing a uniform, the residents of border areas are serving the motherland in their own way," he said. (WITH PTI INPUTS)



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Dhami in Chamoli district, Friday. PTI

one each in Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh.

Rajnath said the Modi government, unlike previous governments, considers border areas as a part of the mainstream and not a buffer zone.

"Governments used to work with the mentality that the people living in the plains are the mainstream people. They were worried that the developments on the border might be used by the adversary," he said, adding that due to this narrow mentality, development never reached the border areas.

"We are developing infrastructure on the mountains and deploying the troops on hill borders in such a way that it is ensuring the safety of the people there, and helping the military to effectively deal with our adversaries," Singh said.

The defence minister described the large migration from border areas in Uttarakhand as "a matter of concern". He said the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister are taking the schemes related to infrastructure development to the last person as the aim is to cover the development journey from the seas to the borders.

"People living near the borders are no less than soldiers. If a soldier protects the country by wearing a uniform, the residents of border areas are serving the motherland in their own way," he said. (WITH PTI INPUTS)

FROM PAGE ONE ■ FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Joint elections undemocratic: Congress

abused by the Centre to "subvert the Constitution and parliamentary democracy". He said "even common voters" feel that the "consultations" are likely to be a "pretence since minds have already been made up".

On October 18, 2023, the panel had written to all parties, seeking their views on the issue. The Trinamool Congress, CPI(M) and CPI, which have sent their responses, have also opposed the proposal.

Some of the Opposition parties like the Congress, TMC, NCP and the Left had rejected the idea in 2015 too, when a parliamentary panel took up the issue. But their opposition was less strident then. However, the Muslim League, Congress's ally and INDIA bloc member, had then backed the idea, along with AIADMK, Asom Gana Parishad and the Akali Dal.

Soon after the constitution of the Kovind panel, the Congress Working Committee had called the proposal another "brazen attack" on the federal structure.

While the Centre had included Congress leader in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, as a member of the panel, he had declined to be a part of the exercise, saying the "terms of reference" of the committee "have been prepared in a manner to guarantee its conclusions".

Reiterating this in his letter, Kharje said: "When the committee is headed by no less than the former President of India, it is distressing when even common voters feel the consultations of the committee are likely to be a pretence since minds have already been made up. Firm views in support of the proposal have already been expressed in public and a dispassionate analysis of pros and cons is not being attempted in a serious and systematic manner."

He said the composition of the

committee "seems highly biased without giving substantial representation to the Opposition parties that head various state governments that would be affected by the recommendations of this committee".

He recalled that Kovind, while addressing the joint session of Parliament in 2018 as the then President, had said frequent elections impede the development process. "Your letter also repeats the same point. We would like to submit that the development process and governance is being brought to a standstill frequently because the Prime Minister is actively involved in electioneering rather than governance," he said.

In its letter to heads of parties, the Kovind committee had said the "advantages of simultaneous elections... by way of savings in financial and human resources have long been recognised" and that "with the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct during elections, development work is halted and official work... virtually comes to a standstill." It had attached reports of the Law Commission of India and Niti Aayog on the proposal.

Kharje contested all these arguments. "The EC had estimated the cost of conducting the 2014 Lok Sabha elections with VVPAT machines to be about Rs 3,870 crore... The argument that the cost of conducting elections is extremely high seems baseless. Considering elections are held once in 5 years, the expenses make up less than 0.02% of the total Union Budget for the preceding 5 years. When elections are held separately to the state assemblies, the cost of the election is fully borne by the respective states. The expenses for Assembly elections may also be a similar percentage of their state budgets. We feel the people will be willing to consider

this small amount as the cost of free and fair elections to uphold democracy," he said.

He also flagged issues regarding political funding and counting of VVPATs. Claiming that the BJP had received donations of Rs 10,122 crore during 2016-2022, of which Rs 5,271.97 crore was through anonymous electoral bonds, he said: "If the committee, the government and EC are serious about the expenditure on elections, it would be more appropriate if they could make the funding process more transparent, especially in matter of poll bonds."

On VVPATs, he said the EC has said that a substantial part of the increase in election expenses is due to the use of VVPAT machines.

"We would like to point out that the EC is not counting the VVPAT slips or corroborating the final votes with VVPAT slips as demanded by various political parties. As you are aware, these slips are unreadable within a few weeks of the results and election petitions are rendered infructuous due to lack of initiative on the part of the EC to make the results transparent," he said.

Kharje said the argument that imposition of the model code of conduct hurts welfare schemes or development work is also baseless.

"Pre-existing schemes and projects continue during elections and in any case, the EC can always approve any disbursements of pre-existing schemes," he said.

He also rebutted the report of the Niti Aayog, and said the committee should not have referred to it in the first place. "The committee should have applied its own mind and made its own recommendations... This only reinforces our concern that the committee seems to have already made up its mind and seeking a consultation seems to be an eye-wash," he said.

"The Niti Aayog maliciously interprets the Constitution to state that tenure of a state assembly need not be 5 years and can be substantially lesser. It suggests that to meet the objectives of simultaneous elections, tenures of some state assemblies including Tamil Nadu and Kerala be curtailed by more than 2 years, and tenure of state assemblies like Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand be extended by more than 2 years. The Constitution nowhere authorises the Union Government to dissolve the state assemblies or to suspend the state governments, except under the Emergency clauses," he said.

"Dissolution of several legislative assemblies which are still halfway (or less) through their terms... would be a betrayal of the electorate in those states... If a chief minister loses the confidence of the House and no other party is able to form the government, the Niti Aayog report says the state should be put under President's Rule until the fresh elections can be synchronised. This would be a travesty of democracy," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

He also rebutted the report of the Niti Aayog, and said the committee should not have referred to it in the first place. "The committee should have applied its own mind and made its own recommendations... This only reinforces our concern that the committee seems to have already made up its mind and seeking a consultation seems to be an eye-wash," he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

"Suppose simultaneous elections are held in 2024 and suppose, the central government is defeated in February 2025 and the PM calls for fresh elections... Will all the state assemblies also be dissolved and simultaneous elections held throughout the country?" he said.

"The government and this committee should have been honest in stating at the outset what they are attempting goes against the basic structure of Constitution... Congress is strongly opposed to the idea of one nation, one election. For the sake of maintaining a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-power committee dissolved," he said.

THE INAUGURATION

AYODHYA, JANUARY 22

Ritual fire to remain lit; only QR-coded pass-holders to witness 'Pran Pratistha'

MAULSHREE SETH
AYODHYA, JANUARY 19

THE RITUALS for the day began early this Friday around 9 am with the lighting of the fire, as part of the "Arani manthan", where the fire was lit by rubbing two woods with the help of a cloth.

Apart from the main "yagna shala", nine kundas (pitchers) of different shapes have been prepared, which were lit on Friday, as part of the "kunda puja" from the fire taken from the "Arani manthan".

Apart from the starting of the yagna, the remaining rituals were also performed on the idol, including "Aushadhadhivas", Kesarakdhas, and Chritadhdhivas".

Explaining these rituals, one of the priests performing them said under "Aushadhadhivas", the idol was covered with water in which 8-10 different types of "ausdhadi" (medicines), as written in the "shastras", were soaked.

The idol was then covered with kesar-soaked water and paste made of kesar alone, as part of the "Kesarakdhas" ritual. As part of the "Chritadhdhivas", the idol was soaked in "pure cow ghee" that has come from Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

There was continuous chanting of mantras and the rituals ended with "Dhanadhdhivas" of the idol in the evening aarti. As part of the Dhanadhdhivas, about 25 kg of rice was poured on the idol slowly to cover it completely.

Priests involved in the rituals said the fire, which has been lit in the kundas, will be "akhand (continuous)" till the consecra-



The new idol inside the sanctum sanctorum. PTI

Show patience, schedule your visits... don't come on foot: UP CM to public

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 19

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who reached Ayodhya Friday, reviewed the preparations for the consecration ceremony. Adityanath also offered prayers to Ram Lalla and also visited the Hanuman Garhi temple in Ayodhya.

Saying that the consecration ceremony would be a "historic" occasion, he pointed out that it would be an event that would "reiterate India's faith and pride."

"Bharat ke vishwas our lok astha ki punah pratistha ka karikaram hai," said the CM, making an appeal to people to show patience in planning their visits to Ayodhya. Adityanath asked people to plan their visit as per schedule and not to come on foot amid cold weather conditions.

Earlier, while participating in an event in Ayodhya, he said, "Whether it is Kashi or Ayodhya, Prayagraj or Chitrakoot, Badrinath Dham or Kedarnath Dham, Mahakal or Somnath, pious sights are visible to followers of Sanatan Dharma everywhere today."

During a review meeting of the preparations, the CM also announced that his entire Cabinet would offer prayers at the Ram temple on February 1.

Earlier, while participating in an event in Ayodhya, he said, "Whether it is Kashi or Ayodhya, Prayagraj or Chitrakoot, Badrinath Dham or Kedarnath Dham, Mahakal or Somnath, pious sights are visible to followers of Sanatan Dharma everywhere today."

During a review meeting of the preparations, the CM also announced that his entire Cabinet would offer prayers at the Ram temple on February 1.

FOUR-ACRE RAMSEVAKPURAM PREMISES IN AYODHYA

Away from the temple, a tale of devotion around unused stones

An estimated 15,000 pilgrims visit spot everyday, says local VHP leader

LALMANI VERMA
AYODHYA, JANUARY 19

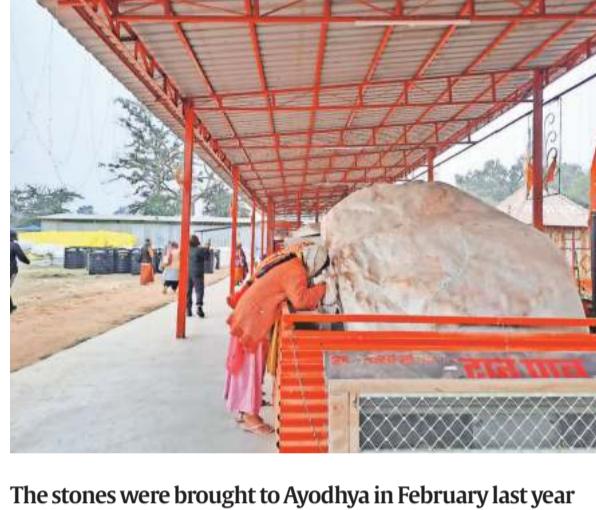
WITH DEVOTEES on their ultimate pilgrimage to Ram temple, the activities under a tin shed on the four-acre Ramsevapuram premises in Ayodhya are also grabbing their attention.

The eight pieces of stones under the tin shed, which had arrived from various corners of the country and abroad, carry as much significance for the devotees as the Ram Lalla idol – they wish to see and touch these stones. These stones were meant for the Ram Lalla idol, but later, the 51-inch tall idol sculpted by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogi Raj was selected.

Ramsevapuram is managed by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). Earlier, it was the workshop for cutting and carving pink sand stones. These carved stones have been used in the Ram temple. After visiting Ram Janmabhoomi and Hanuman Garhi, devotees are also reaching Ramsevapuram.

When a group of devotees from Maharashtra reached Ramsevapuram Friday afternoon, a local guide, Vimal Kumar took them to the six-foot high "Devshila" of Shaligram, brought from Nepal in February, meant for the Ram Lalla idol.

This is one of the eight shilas – two brought from Galeshwari Dham in Nepal and three each



The stones were brought to Ayodhya in February last year

from Rajasthan and Karnataka. Devotees undertook a parikrama of the shilas, chanted 'Jai Shri Ram', and also offered cash to the "daanpatra" (donation box).

Describing his feelings about the stones, Amanarao, who came from Sikar in Rajasthan, said, "I had heard that the Shaligram stones have been brought here in Ramsevapuram. All these stones are sacred. I will never be able to touch the Ram Lalla idol inside the Ram temple, but I can touch the stones which were meant for making the idols."

"Ram was an incarnation of Vishnu and the Shaligram is considered a form of Vishnu. Hence, I am here to worship the Shaligram and other stones," said another devotee from Uttar Pradesh's Mahoba, Rajneesh Pandey, who touched his forehead to the Devshilas.

A Bajrang Dal worker, Prakash Bahewal from Mumbai, said, "These stones are pujiya (worthy of being worshipped) because these are meant for Lord Ram." Bahewal claimed he had visited Ayodhya first in 1989 as a kar sevak.

"At that time," he recalled, "there were policemen all around to arrest kar sevaks. Today, policemen are guiding us here. In 1989, we had to hide ourselves to avoid being ar-

rested. Today, I am proudly walking in the same Ayodhya. This change happened due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath."

A local VHP leader said that the stones were first placed in the open in February. But when devotees began coming, he said, a shed was erected. Around 15,000 pilgrims come here daily, he said. When the construction of Ram temple is complete, these stones will be shifted to Ram Janmabhoomi. About the reason for worshipping the stones, he said these were brought for the Ram Lalla idol.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust arranged for seats for the pilgrims, while the Uttar Pradesh government is running a free medical camp inside the Ramsevapuram premises, and at the VHP camp, visitors are offered tea and rusk.

Two Shaligram stones were brought to Ayodhya in February last year after a week-long 1,000 km road journey from Nepal's Janakpur. Priests of Janaki temple in Nepal had handed over the stones to office bearers of the trust. On the occasion, 51 priests offered prayers in the presence of a huge gathering of devotees. Janaki temple priest Ram Tapeshwar Das and former deputy Prime Minister of Nepal Bimalendra Nidhi had handed over the Shaligram stones to the trust general secretary Champat Rai.

CCPA notice to Amazon over sale of sweets with 'misleading claims'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

Security personnel at Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, Friday. ANI

THE CENTRAL Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has issued a notice to Amazon over the sale of sweets with "misleading claims" they are prasad from the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

According to the Consumer Affairs Ministry, the CCPA has initiated action against Amazon Seller Services Pvt Ltd. The notice has been issued regarding the sale of sweets on www.amazon.in under the name 'Shri Ram Mandir Ayodhya Prasad'.

"The action has been initiated based on a representation made by the Confederation of All India Traders, alleging that Amazon is engaging in deceptive trade practices involving sale of sweets under the guise of 'Shri Ram Mandir Ayodhya Prasad'." The CCPA has sought response from Amazon within seven days from the issuance of notice, failing which necessary action would be initiated against them under provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. "Such practices falsely influence consumers to purchase products they might not otherwise, if accurate attributes were mentioned," said the Ministry.

'India will never be a theocracy. The State will be neutral, treat all religions equally...'



**THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW**
WITH
**RAVI SHANKAR
PRASAD**
SENIOR LEADER, BJP

SENIOR BJP leader and senior advocate RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD appeared in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title dispute case as the lawyer representing Ram Lalla, the deity. Ahead of the Ram Temple inauguration, he speaks with LIZ MATHEW. Excerpts:

You were closely involved with the process that is now set to culminate into the construction of the Ram Temple. Looking back, what are your thoughts?

Let me give a context. Three important findings in the judgment given by the Supreme Court are very crucial. First, the Muslim side could not produce any evidence. They were in exclusive possession of the so-called Babri structure for a few hundred years. There is ample evidence on record that, in spite of the erection of the so-called disputed structure, the faith of the Hindus never wavered on the place of birth of Lord Ram. They would go and bow their heads in front of it, for which there are accounts of travellers and Christian missionaries. Archeological Survey of India (ASI) findings also clearly established that on the ruins of a very old temple of the 8th-9th Century, the Babri mosque was

erected. That many of the artefacts of the temple were used in it. Therefore, a question I would like to raise is that, in view of these scientific findings... why were the same statesmanship and determination not demonstrated in the case of the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute as in the case of Somnath?

Sardar Patel, KM Munshi and Rajendra Prasad showed determination which was crucial for (rebuilding) the Somnath temple. When India became free, the entire country was littered with

statues of Queen Victoria, Lord Harding, King George V... were they removed or not? Why? Because they were not statues of creativity but symbols of slavery. The same attitude ought to have been shown here.

The Opposition's argument is that the ceremony has become a BJP-RSS event.

The temple is being erected with a Supreme Court order. It had ordered a committee to be formed for this purpose. No State fund is being used. But PM Modi took the initiative to erect this beautiful temple, turn Ayodhya into a great city. Would there have been this beautiful airport, amenities, railway station?

But they (the Opposition) needed an alibi... The Congress fought for the freedom movement, they know (Mahatma) Gandhiji talked about Ram Rajya. It is regrettable that they are not going (for the event). Posterity is going to ask them a lot of questions.

Temples have always been part of our political culture. But do you think the line between State and religion has become blurred now, with the Modi government so deeply involved in the temple?

One must remember that this matter was in the SC. India is a deeply religious country, and respect for all faiths is integral to Indian ethos. Rig Veda says 'Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti', meaning truth is one but interpreted differently. You have your own perceptions, you respect my path, I will respect yours. The ultimate truth is permanent, eternal and omnipresent. That is the real core.

Therefore, India is secular not because of the Constitutional induction. The founding fathers knew about it, so they did not include secularism as part of the Preamble.

But India has never been a theocracy. The State will maintain neutrality from religion and the State will treat all religions equally. The first mosque (in India) came up in Kerala; when the Parsis were persecuted in Iran, they came to India. The Constitution also accepted that in spite of the pain and agony of Partition, we would not go in for a theocracy. But this does not mean that because of one view, the political reason of the other side is vetoed. That is the issue. That's why I asked why there was no enthusiasm for Ram Mandir.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

In Aligarh, on & off campus, temple as much about prayer as power

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
ALIGARH, JANUARY 19

IN THE canteen adjoining the Zakir Hussain College of Engineering on the sprawling campus of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), students are milling around during a break in the classes. Hritik, Vivek and Shivam, all MSc students, are talking about upcoming exams over tea. A question on the Ram Temple surprises them. But after some hesitation, the three agree: yes, they approve its upcoming inauguration on January 22.

All three of them Brahmin, they say the event is a matter of faith for millions of Hindus, and nothing to do with politics. "It is a matter of Hindu self-respect," says one. While Hritik credits PM Narendra Modi for the temple, Vivek interjects: "It is (LK) Advani and (former UPCM) Kalyan Singh who should get the credit. Modi is merely inaugurating it."

The invitation has been sent by the special secretary protocol of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

At another table, where four students of engineering belonging to the Muslim community are sitting, questions on Ram Temple are met with careful reticence. Their initial reaction is "no problem", that the temple is being built as per a court order. However, after a few minutes, they open up.

"The politics around it is not good for the country, it is taking away from the real issues," says Riyaz, who is worried about jobs after finishing his course. "There is no employment." The four also question the poor healthcare facilities, the low budget for education – even the IPL budget is more – and, especially, the "divisive" politics of the BJP. "What they have done to the country will take years to change even after they are gone," says one of them. Ashfaq adds, "Maybe awareness is the key, and that cannot come from education alone. It will take time."

Located roughly at the one-third mark on the road from Delhi to Aligarh, Aligarh is a good

barometer of how the two sides caught up in a dispute lasting decades are viewing January 22.

At the canteen near the Faculty of Urdu, Obaid, who is doing his PhD, says he is not surprised at the BJP rhetoric around the temple. "All political parties work to stay in power. They think this will help them win polls... It will change only when people stop voting on these issues."

Obaid adds, "There is no point in Muslims talking about religion. That is what they (the BJP) want. People should talk about the government's economic policies, the problems facing the country. Young Muslims must focus on education and break out of poverty."

A student of the university's Faculty of Mass Communication, who is at the canteen with three of her friends, regrets that "what should have been a moment of faith has become an assertion of a certain political narrative". Her friend explains the Muslim "alienation". "There may have been a temple at the Babri Masjid site, but it was broken by a king. What is happening now is in a democracy. There is a big difference," she says. Adds another: "They (the BJP) are now convinced that they can do anything."

Outside the AMU campus, especially in the Hindu areas of Aligarh, the preparations to celebrate the inauguration day – led by the BJP – are more obvious. Amit Varshney, 30, a lawyer, says there was never any doubt that the temple would be built. "There is so much evidence. Modi is lucky it has happened in his time. That went to court has turned it political, but it is a matter of faith for millions of Hindus."

However, not all sections of the Hindu society, especially those that are traditionally not BJP supporters, share this excitement. Praveen Kumar, a Jatav Dalit who works in a wedding band, says it is fine that the temple is being built, but it has nothing to do with him. "I don't get time to go to my local temple, where will I go to another?"

At Birni village in the district, brothers Sandeep and Sumit Singh, who are in their late 20s and also Jatav Dalits, answer with an emphatic "no" when asked if they would be celebrating on January 22. "We have nothing to do with a religion that does not respect us. We don't care about the Ram Temple. Nobody in the village does," says Sandeep.

Sumit proceeds to show a video of Reliance Group owner Mukesh Ambani's wife Nita addressing a foreign audience, saying, "Ladies and gentlemen! I come from the land of Buddha."

"In front of the world, they showcase Buddha. Even Modi gifts Buddha statues to foreign dignitaries. But inside the country, it is Ram Ram," says Sumit.

FULL REPORT www.indianexpress.com

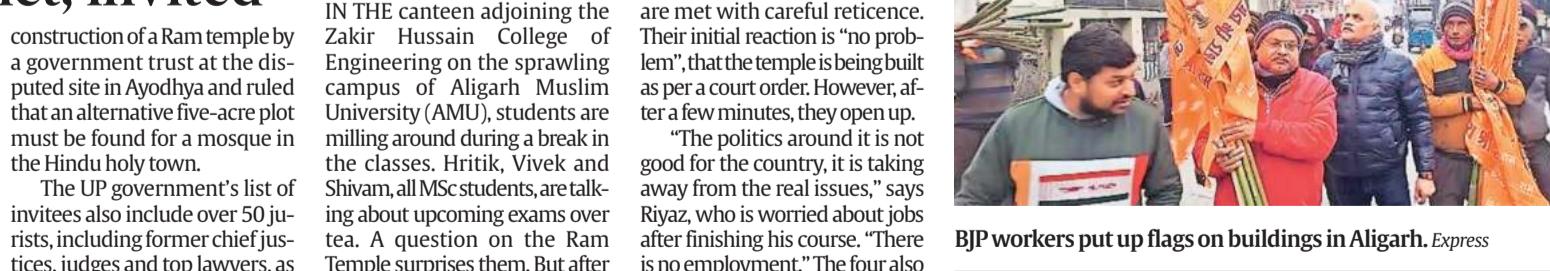
5 SC judges, who gave temple verdict, invited

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

FIVE SUPREME Court judges including Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, who were part of the Constitution bench which paved way for the construction of the Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, are invited as state guests to witness the consecration ceremony on January 22.

Besides CJI Chandrachud, former CJIs Ranjan Gogoi and S A Bobde and former judges Ashok Bhushan and S Abdul Nazeer were part of the Constitution bench which had delivered the historic verdict on November 9, 2019.

The unanimous and anonymous verdict had backed the



BJP workers put up flags on buildings in Aligarh. Express

Chandrayaan-3 lander Vikram is now a landmark on Moon

NASA spacecraft receives reflected laser beams sent to LRA on Vikram



NASA's Laser Retroreflector Array on Vikram lander.
NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre

"use these retroreflectors in the future," a NASA statement quoted Xiaoli Sun, the leader of the team that had developed the LRA instrument, said.

This is not the first LRA to be deployed on the Moon. Such instruments were placed by the Apollo missions as well, and are still used.

The LRA onboard Vikram is the tiniest, and most sophisticated, of them all, and has uses in many different kinds of situations. It is also the only one available near the South Pole of the Moon. "In the future, they could guide Artemis (NASA's Return to Moon programme) astronauts to the surface in the dark, for example, or mark the locations of spacecraft already on the surface, helping astronauts or uncrewed spacecraft land next to them," the NASA statement said. ISRO said the LRA on Vikram was designed to last for decades. "NASA's LRA on Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander will continue to serve as a long-term geodetic station and a location marker on the lunar surface, benefiting current and future lunar missions. These measurements will help refine the lunar geodetic frame, revealing insights into the Moon's dynamics," the ISRO said.

"We have shown that we can locate our retroreflector on the surface from the Moon's orbit. The next step is to improve the technique so that it can become routine for missions that want to

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Daljit Singh Chaudhary is SSB chief

New Delhi: Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary was on Friday appointed as the director general of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), a Personnel Ministry order said.

Chaudhary, a 1990 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Special

Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment as the DG, SSB for a period up to November 30, 2025 i.e. the date of his superannuation, the order said. The SSB guards India's frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan. PTI

HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DEPARTMENT

GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI,

9TH FLOOR 'A' WING, DELHI SECRETARIAT, DELHI-110002
ADVERTISEMENT TO FILL UP THE POST OF DIRECTOR IN INSTITUTE OF LIVER
AND BILIARY SCIENCES, VASANT KUNJ, DELHI.

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates to fill up the post of Director in Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, Vasant Kunj, Delhi on Direct recruitment/Deputation basis.

1	2	3	4	5
S. No.	Name Of Post and No. Of Post	Classification	Pay Band	Upper Age Limit
1.	Director (01)	Category A	Rs. 2,25,000/- fixed plus NPA of 20% of basic (Basic Pay and NPA shall not exceed Rs. 2,37,500/-) and as revised from time to time.	Upto 66 years (as on last date of receipt of application)

Eligibility Criteria

Essential: for Direct Recruitment and Deputation:-

- a) D.M. in Gastroenterology/Hepatology.
- b) At least 10 years of service as Professor of Gastroenterology/Hepatology in a recognized Hospital/University/Institute.
- c) Experience of teaching along with research of not less than 10 years after D.M.
- d) Minimum Twenty-five years standing in profession.

e) Administrative experience of at least five years of running an important scientific education institution in the field of medicine either as Head of the institution or Head of Department (of sizeable size) of the Institution.

Desirable:

- 1. An eminent Hepatologist of national and international repute, who has an outstanding record as a clinician, teacher and researcher with leadership qualities in liver and biliary diseases.
- 2. Extensive practical and Administrative experience in the field of medical relief, medical research, medical education or public health organization.
- 3. The candidate should have creditable and cutting-edge research publications in national and international indexed journals etc. of repute.
- 4. The candidate having awards and recognition from National and International bodies in this field. *

Additional Criteria for Deputation:- Applicant must be holding analogous post on regular basis in Central Govt., State Govt., Union Territories, Autonomous or Statutory Organizations, PSUs, University or Recognized Research Institutions.

The Director shall be Chief Executive Officer of the hospital and shall be directly responsible for the overall management of the hospital.

The initial tenure of the Director shall be for a period of five years or till he/she attains age of 70 years, whichever is earlier and can be renewed by the Governing Council with the approval of Hon'ble Lt. Governor for a period upto five years or till he attains age of 70 years whichever is earlier.

The effective date for determining the eligibility as per the prescribed qualification, age, experience etc. for the post shall be the last date of receipt of application viz. 29/02/2024.

Applications alongwith all the necessary credentials in support of educational qualifications & Clinical as well as Administrative experience should reach the Office of Special Secretary (Health & Family Welfare), Room No.1005, A-Wing, 10th Level, Delhi Secretariat, New Delhi-110002 in or before 5:00 PM on 29/02/2024.

Note

i) Qualifications are relaxable at the discretion of the Competent Authority in the case of candidates otherwise well qualified.

NOTE: Department will not be responsible for any postal delay.

DIP/Shabdharth/Classified/0304/23-24

Sd/-
Special Secretary (Societies)

NTPC Limited

(A Govt. of India Enterprise)

Corporate Identification Number: L40101DL1975GOI007966
Registered Office: NTPC Bhawan, Core-7, SCOPE Complex 7, Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003, Tel: 011-24367072, Fax No: 011-24361018
Email: lsd@ntpc.co.in, Website : www.ntpc.co.in

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Company has fixed **Tuesday, 6th February, 2024** as the Record date for the purpose of payment of second interim dividend for the financial year 2023-24, if declared by the Board of Directors in its meeting scheduled to be held on **Monday, 29th January, 2024**.

The Members whose names appear in the Register of Members/ Beneficial owners as on record date i.e. **6th February, 2024** shall be entitled to receive second Interim dividend, if declared by the Board.

For NTPC Limited
Sd/-
(Arun Kumar)
Company Secretary

Leading the Power Sector



National Council of Educational Research and Training Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016

Recruitment of Editorial Staff and DTP Operators

Publication Division, NCERT will be conducting a Skill Test for the engagement of 60 Assistant Editors (25 for English, 25 for Hindi and 10 for Urdu), 60 Proof Readers (25 for English, 25 for Hindi and 10 for Urdu) and 50 DTP Operators (20 English, 20 Hindi and 10 Urdu) purely on contract basis, initially for a period of four (04) months, which is likely to be extended by 12 months, with a remuneration of Rs. 80,000/- for Assistant Editors, 37000/- for Proof Readers and Rs. 50,000/- for DTP Operators per month, respectively. The period of engagement can be terminated at any time without assigning any reason. Eligibility criteria, i.e., qualifications, experience, age limit and other terms and conditions may be seen on the NCERT website www.ncert.nic.in. Walk-in registration for above mentioned posts shall be held on 1 February 2024 from 10 am to 3 pm. Skill test for Assistant Editors shall be held on 3 February, 2024; for Proof Readers shall be held on 2 February, 2024; for DTP Operators shall be held on 2-3 February, 2024 at Publication Division, Ambedkar Khand, NCERT, Sri Aurobindo Marg, and New Delhi 110016.



Head
Publication Division
National Council of Educational Research and Training

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया



ZONAL OFFICE: SIWAN ZONE

1st Floor, Tarwara More, Siwan - 841226,

E-Mail- zo.siwan@bankofindia.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE

(Under Rule 8 (1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)

Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the Bank of India under securitization and reconstruction of financial assets and enforcement of security interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued a demand notice as detailed in the table hereunder written calling upon the below mentioned Borrowers to repay the amount shown in the respective notices mentioned against their names in the table within 60 Days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers / Guarantors mentioned below having failed to repay the amount shown in the respective notices issued U/S 13 (2) within the stipulated time, notice is hereby given to the aforementioned borrowers/ guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property (Secured Assets) Described in the table given below, in exercise of powers conferred on me under section 13(4) of the said Act Read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date(s) mentioned against the respective property. The aforesaid borrowers / Guarantors in particulars and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties mentioned in the table hereunder written and any dealings with the said property/ies will be subject to the charge of the BANK OF INDIA. For the amount shown in the respective column of the table and interest thereon.

Name of Borrower	(1) Branch (2) Date & Amount as per Notice U/S 13 (2)	Description of the Immovable / Movable Property	Date of Possession of Assets
BORROWER- Mrs. Nisha Shandilya and Mr. Vidya Bhushan Shandilya.	(1) Sonpur (2) 22.08.2023 Rs.31,81,861.85/- (Rupees Thirty One Lacs Eighty One Thousand Eight Hundred Sixty One and Paise Eighty Five) with interest @ 8.60% p.a. from 29.07.2023	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Land & Building situated at Thana No.- 181, Survey Ward No.- 10, Halka No.- 10 under ward No.-18, Hajipur Nagar Parishad, Mouza- Rambhadra, Khata No.- 64, Khosa No.- 331, P.S.- Hajipur Town within the registration sub-district- Hajipur and District- Vaishali. Area: 2.25 decimal (10 hours) Boundaries- North- Self Excuttant etc. Veena Upadhyay, South- Shandilya, East- Pratima Singh, West- 12 feet wide Private Rasta.	16.01.2024

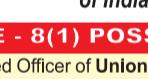
Date- 16.01.2024

Place- Hajipur

Authorised Officer

Bank of India, Siwan Zone

यूनियन बैंक



of India

DEHRI ON SONE BRANCH

Mehra House, Pali Road, Dehri on sone, PO & Dist. - Rohtas - 821311

APPENDIX-IV RULE - 8(1) POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (second) Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice on below mentioned date calling upon the Borrowers & Guarantors to repay the below mentioned amount together with future interest within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower/Guarantor / Mortgagor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and also the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules on the following date.

The Borrower/Guarantor / Mortgagor in particular, and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Union Bank of India, Dehri On Sone Branch for an amount mentioned below and further Interest thereon.

The Borrower's /Guarantor's / Mortgagor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section 8 of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured Assets.

Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	Date of Demand Notice & Due Amt. Date of Possession	Description of Immovable Properties
1. Sri Krishna Prasad, S/o Ram Prasad Sao. 2. Sri Ashish Kumar Gupta, S/o Sri Krishna Prasad and 3. Smt. Kaushalya Devi, W/o Krishna Prasad, Ward No. - 17, Patel Street, New Area, Dehri on sone, Rostas-821307	23.06.2023 Rs. 6,65,547.43 as on 28.09.2021 + Interest & Charges thereon 18.01.2024	Residential Land and Building admeasuring 9 Dhur in the Name of Smt. Kaushalya Devi, Wife of Sri Krishna Prasad, Situated at Mausa Pali Dehri, Dehri on Sone, Ward No. - 160, Ward No. - 93 New, 6 Old, Khata No. - 36, Plot No. - 10, Dist. - Rohtas and Boundary : North- Hal Karidhar, South - Nij Mukti, East - Surya Mahto & ORS, West - Rasta.
Sri Byakhy Narayan, S/o Bajnath Singh and Smt. Pinki Devi	12.05.2023 Rs. 14,95,629.22 as on 16.04.2023 + Interest & Charges thereon 18.01.2024	Residential Land and Building admeasuring 2.87 Decimal in the name of Smt. Pinki Devi, Wife of Sri Byakhy Narayan situated at Company Sub Plot No. A-2 (P) out of CS Plot No. - 950 and MS Plot No. - 437, Khata No. (C.S. 108, M.S. 161) Revenue Village Matri Dist. - Rohtas and Boundary - North - Company Sub Plot No. A- 3 & Anju Devi, South - 42' Wide Rasta, East - Company Sub Plot No. A- 2 & Maa Kaleshwari Construction, West - Mangal Singh.

Date : 18.01.2024

Authorised Officer (Union Bank of India)

यूनियन बैंक



Union Bank
of India

APPENDIX-IV RULE - 8(1) POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (second) Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice on below mentioned date calling upon the Borrowers & Guarantors to repay the below mentioned amount together with future interest within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower / Guarantor / Mortgagor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and also the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules on the following date.

The Borrower/Guarantor / Mortgagor in particular, and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Union Bank of India, below

ALLEGED PLOT TO KILL SEPARATIST PANNUN

Czech court rules Nikhil Gupta can be extradited to US

Final decision with Justice Minister

REUTERS
PRAGUE, JANUARY 19

A Czech appeals court has ruled that Prague can extradite to the United States an Indian man accused by the US of involvement in an unsuccessful plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil, the Justice Ministry said Friday.

A final decision on the extradition of Nikhil Gupta, 52, will be in the hands of Justice Minister Pavel Blazek once the ruling is delivered to all parties in the case, a ministry spokesperson told Reuters. Gupta has been accused by U.S. federal prosecutors of working with an Indian government official on the plot to kill a New York City resident who advocated for a sovereign Sikh state in northern India.

Gupta was arrested by Czech authorities in June last year when he travelled from India to Prague. Czech news website www.seznampravy.cz, which first reported on the appeals decision, said Gupta had argued his identity was mistaken and that he was not the man the United States was looking for. He described the case as political, it said.

"The time frame for the minister's decision cannot be assumed at this point," the Justice Ministry spokesman said, adding that Gupta could be expected to take all steps possible to try to prevent extradition.

The minister has three months to turn to the Supreme Court in case he has doubts about the lower court's decisions, the spokesperson said. The Prague HC rejected Gupta's appeal against a December decision by a lower court that ruled that extradition is allowed.

A spokesperson for the Prague High Court declined immediate comment. The Czech Republic has in the past agreed to US extradition requests. A lawyer for Gupta did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Czech news website quoted the lawyer as saying he would ask the minister not to extradite Gupta, and would also take the case to the Constitutional Court.

PROVISION OF GRID CONNECTED ROOFTOP SOLAR POWER PLANTS

E-Tender Notice No. AP/EL/09/23-24/RT. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:

Tender No. AP/EL/09/23-24/RT. Name of work: At Alipurduar Division - Provision of Grid connected rooftop Solar power plants including rooftop Solar power plants which was given the contract to run the Lake Zone by the VADODARA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC).

Police Commissioner Anupam Singh Gahalaut identified them as Bhimsingh Yadav and Vedprakash Yadav from VADODARA

and Rashmikant Prajapati from Nadiad. The others who were arrested on Friday were Lake Zone manager Shantilal Solanki as well as two men who were operating the boat that capsized - Nayak Gol and Ankit Vasava.

Earlier in the day, Gahalaut appointed a seven-member special investigation team (SIT) headed by Joint Commissioner of Police Manoj Ninama to probe the incident, while the district education officer (DEO) instituted an inquiry into whether the school had taken requisite permissions for the picnic. The VMC, meanwhile, sealed the Lake Zone. The Harni police on Thursday night booked 18 people, including partners of Kotia Projects, based on a com-

DAY AFTER 12 SCHOOL STUDENTS, 2 TEACHERS DROWNED IN VADODARA

3 partners of firm that ran Lake Zone arrested; SIT set up, probe ordered

ADITI RAJA
VADODARA, JANUARY 19

and Rashmikant Prajapati from Nadiad. The others who were arrested on Friday were Lake Zone manager Shantilal Solanki as well as two men who were operating the boat that capsized - Nayak Gol and Ankit Vasava.

Lake Zone refers to a facility including boat rides, food court, banquet hall and other amenities.

Earlier in the day, Gahalaut appointed a seven-member special investigation team (SIT) headed by Joint Commissioner of Police Manoj Ninama to probe the incident, while the district education officer (DEO) instituted an inquiry into whether the school had taken requisite permissions for the picnic. The VMC, meanwhile, sealed the Lake Zone. The Harni police on Thursday night booked 18 people, including partners of Kotia Projects, based on a com-

plaint filed by the executive engineer of VMC, Rajesh Chauhan.

The FIR said the accused committed "rash and negligent acts", causing the death of 12 children and two teachers. It said the accused "did not follow safety precautions of providing life jackets to all passengers in the boat, while overcrowding the boat above its capacity, not installing boards with warnings for those undertaking boat rides and faltered on the maintenance of the boats and in providing safety equipment such as buoys and ropes (to prevent casualties in accidents)".

"We received information that around 4.30 pm, a boat in Harni Lake Zone had overturned, as it was overcrowded. On arriving at the spot and examining the incident, and speaking to teacher Mansi Parmar, we learnt about 30

people were seated in the boat and some children were without life jackets. When the boat moved ahead, the boat began wobbling and water began seeping from the front. It led to more unsteady movement before the boat overturned completely and all the passengers were thrown into the water," the FIR further said. While 82 children were part of the picnic, 34 were taking a ride on the boat, which had a capacity to accommodate only 16 passengers.

DCP (Crime) Urvaj Singh Jadeja, a supervising officer, said: "If it is found that there was negligence on part of the civic body and its officials, they will also be booked."

Gahalaut said of the 14 killed, 11 were buried or cremated. Three bodies were in a hospital morgue as families were awaiting the arrival of their relatives from abroad.

'Their staff ran away when boat capsized': School blames amusement park for mishap

SOHINIGHOSH
VADODARA, JANUARY 19

School trustee Russy Wadia speaks to media. Bhupendra Rana

A PARTIALLY erased quote, handwritten in chalk on a blackboard at New Sunrise School in Vadodara's Wagholi says - 'A picnic with friends is like a ... of fresh... for the soul'. A mop stands near it to dry, a day after 12 students studying in classes I to VI, as well as a teacher and a supervisor, died as their boat capsized at Motnath lake in Harni while they were on a school picnic.

The New Sunrise School, founded in 1976, was closed when The Indian Express visited the premises on Friday. Spread over two-three-storeyed buildings, separated by a vast playground and a road, one of the school building's ground floor is the residence of the

trustees – the Wadia family.

Russy Wadia, trustee and managing member of the New Sunrise Education Trust, which runs the school, blamed the Funtime Arena and Lakeview – the management of the amusement park at Lake Zone in Harni – for "running away" from the scene when the boat overturned

with the schoolchildren.

Wadia told *The Indian Express*, "No permission is required for such a small field trip. It is only needed if we were to go outside the city. We had taken the consent from parents on forms duly signed by them." Wadia said that Funtime Arena and Lakeview had "invited" the school for the picnic

and provided a pick-up and drop facility to the site, which is "barely 10 minutes" from the School.

"It was their negligence. They had invited us to a picnic, but their staff did not help us. My teachers told them 'don't take so many children'... even then they did and said 'we do this daily'. They did not give life jackets to 7 to 8 children and some teachers... No staff of the Funtime Arena Lakeview was present," Wadia said. He alleged that the boatmen "ran away", as did the bus drivers who took the children to the lake. "Only our school staff was there. We had to make arrangements to bring people back," Wadia said.

Parents of the deceased have told *The Indian Express* that they neither received any response or aid from the school nor were informed on time about the mishap.

GOA MURDER CASE

Suchana Seth sent to judicial custody

Panaji: A children's court in Panaji on Friday remanded Suchana Seth, the Bengaluru-based CEO of a tech start-up who is accused of killing her four-year-old son in a Goa hotel, to 13-day judicial custody.

Suchana was in police custody since January 8. As the police did not seek her further remand, the court sent her to the 13-day judicial custody. ENS

Mahua Moitra vacates govt bungalow month after expulsion from Lok Sabha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

FORMER LOK Sabha MP Mahua Moitra on Friday vacated her government bungalow after the Delhi High Court dismissed her plea for a stay on eviction proceedings on Thursday.

A team of officials of the Directorate of Estates (DoE), Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, was dispatched on Friday morning to carry out an eviction drive at 9B, Telegraph Lane, said two ministry sources. However, Moitra vacated the residence ahead of the drive. Moitra's counsel Shadan Farasat said the residence was vacated by 10 am on Friday. "The bungalow's posses-

sion has been handed over to the DoE..." said an official.

Moitra was expelled from the Lok Sabha on December 8 after the ethics panel found her conduct "unethical". She was accused of raising questions in Parliament on behalf of businessman Darshan Hirandani, which she denies.

'Raising doubt on fair polls not offence': HC quashes FIR against journalist in MP

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, JANUARY 19

OBSERVING THAT "free speech exists when citizenry can express views that are critical of the government without fearing backlash", the Madhya Pradesh High Court quashed an FIR against a journalist who made a social media post casting doubts on the Assembly elections.

As single-judge bench of Justice Anand Pathak quashed the FIR against the respondent who cast doubts on the polls in Lahar constituency of Gwalior Chambal region. Treating the petitioner's post as derogatory and public mischief, an FIR was registered against the accused and another person for commission of offence under IPC sections 505(2) (statements

condoning public mischief) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).

Petitioner Monu Upadhyay moved the HC with his lawyer Gaurav Mishra, who argued that his client expressed his opinion on social media and "since the post was related to an IAS officer, the FIR has been registered against the petitioner hastily".

Quashing the FIR, the HC said: "The FIR... is in confrontation with the fundamental rights of petitioner as guaranteed by the Constitution under Article 19. The social media post of the petitioner merely falls under the Freedom of Speech and Expression and does not constitute any offence under IPC sections 505(2) and 188."

The HC said: "Freedom of speech is one of the core pillars

upholding the constitutional spirit and democratic process and thus its protection is essential.. Free speech exists when citizenry can express its opinion, including views that are critical towards the government, without fearing backlash, such as being put into prison or receiving threats of violence..." it said.

"Conducting free and fair elections in the Legislative Assembly, particularly in Bhind/Chambal area, is always a paramount consideration and if doubt is raised by anybody in relation to conduct of free and fair election, then by no stretch of imagination it constitutes offence under IPC Section 505(2)," said the court, adding that the petitioner's post

"cannot be saddled with the allegations of promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will..."

After EC intervention, NCSI cancels 'facial recognition of voters' tender

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

ON THE Election Commission's (EC) orders, the National Informatics Centre Service Incorporated (NCSI) on Friday cancelled a tender it had floated in December seeking to empanel agencies for "surveillance and monitoring" of voters, including using facial recognition technology, during the Lok Sabha polls.

The EC said the tender was floated without its approval. "When the NCSI tender came to notice, the Commission directed NCSI to immediately cancel it. The tender was not floated with ECI approval. The Commission shall not allow

invasion of citizens' privacy in any manner during elections," the EC spokesperson said in a post on X on Friday.

NCSI, a company under the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, had on December 7 called for bids for "empilation of agencies to provide surveillance and monitoring services" to be used during polls. It asked for software with AI features that can give a "voter's queue head count" and "EV/M monitoring and malpractice alert".

According to EC sources, the matter came to light on Friday and the NIC was asked to cancel the tender within minutes. In the cancellation notice, the NCSI cited "administrative reason" for the decision.

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

No. CE/CW/182/2023-24/3

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D (Roads), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bid from approved and eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for 2 (Two) nos. of projects for repair/re-construction of Guwahati city roads / drains etc. for mitigation of floods in Guwahati city under SOPD (G) for the year 2023-24 pertaining to PWD, Dispur & Dimoria Territorial Road Division, in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district of Assam.

Details along with packages for the works may be seen at website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned in the "City Works Cell". Amendment/Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractor/bidder must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

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

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

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

बिहार सरकार

MUZAFFARPUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, MUZAFFARPUR

Website : [https://www.mymmc.org](http://www.mymmc.org), E-mail ID-mmc-muz-bih@nic.in, muzaffarpur.ulb@gmail.com, Control Room – 18003451061

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (2nd Call)

(Through e-procurement mode only www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

NIT NO. 15/MMC/2023-24

Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Muzaffarpur invites online proposals for Construction of Administrative Building for Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Muzaffarpur MRDA (D) Office Campus in Muzaffarpur under Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Muzaffarpur, Bihar on EPC mode.

1. Brief particulars of the project are:-

Sl.No.	Name of the work	Estimated Project cost (Rs. in crores)	Earnest Money/Bid Security (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of document (in Rs.)	Processing Fee (in Rs.)	Time of completion
1.	Construction of Administrative Building for Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Muzaffarpur MRDA (D) Office Campus in Muzaffarpur under Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Muzaffarpur, Bihar on EPC mode.	10.94	21.88	25,000.00	As per e-proc2	12 months

2. Details of schedule for the Bid are given below:-

Sl. No.	Activity	Timeline & Address
1	Online Sale/Download /Upload date of Tender documents	From 06.02.2024 (11:00 Hrs) Till 12.02.2024 (15:00 Hrs) (https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/)
2	Pre-bid meeting date (Only two members per bidder are allowed)	08.02.2024 (16:00 Hrs) (At the Conference Hall, Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation)
3	Last date for submission of Bids in hard copy	15.02.2024 At 15:00 Hrs. (A) Municipal Commissioner, Muzaffarpur B) Superintending Engineer, Nagar Vikash Circle, Muzaffarpur C) Chief Engineer, North Bihar Division, Urban Development & Housing Department, Bihar, Patna
4	Opening of Technical bids	16.02.2024 At 15:00 Hrs.
5	Place of opening of bids	Through website https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/
6	Date of opening of Commercial bids	To be informed later to technically qualified bidders
7	Period of Bid validity	120 Days after the date of receipt of tender

RFP document shall be available on website: [https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/](http://eproc2.bihar.gov.in/)
For Queries & Clarifications, send email to: Muzaffarpur.ulb@gmail.com

उत्तर सुनानी दूरी है, क्योंकि परिवार जरुरी है।

Municipal Commissioner
Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation, Muzaffarpur

Government of Manipur Public Works Department

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI): CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION CONSULTANCY (CSC) SERVICES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF ROADS WITHIN IMPHAL CITY WITH RIGID PAVEMENT INCLUDING CONCRETE LINED DRAINS

Public Works Department, Manipur has invited for EOI for CSC services for "Improvement of roads within Imphal city with rigid pavement including concrete lined drains" under Manipur Urban Road, Drainage and Asset Management Improvement Project which is to be implemented as an Externally Aided Project with assistance of AIIIB. The detailed description of EOI is available on the website [https://manipur tenders.gov.in](http://manipur tenders.gov.in)

Y. Joykumar Singh
Project Director-cum-Chief Engineer
PIU, EAP, PWD, Manipur.

MADHYA PRADESH BUILDING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
(An Agency of Govt. of M.P. Public Works Department)
16-A, CEDMAP Building, Arera Hills, Bhopal (M.P.)-462011
Telephone No. : 0755-4853297, 0755-4853295
E-mail : einc-mpbdc@mp.gov.in, ajay.nagarla@mp.gov.in
NIT No. : 4093/GM/MPBDC/DPR/24/NIT-48 Bhopal, Dtd. : 18.01.2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Madhya Pradesh Building Development Corporation invites online tender for the following works in various Districts of Madhya Pradesh :-

Architectural, Design & DPR Consultancy Services for Construction of Medicity (150 MBBS admission seats Medical College with 605 Bedded Hospital & 300 Bedded Super-Specialty Hospital including Cancer Unit) at Ujjain M.P.-01 Works, Cost of Project- Rs. 900 crore and Consultancy fee Rs. 15.30 Crore (Excluding GST).

Detailed NIT and tender documents can be viewed and purchased online only from 25.01.2024 at 18:00 hrs. to 28.02.2024 at 15:30 hrs. from website www.mptenders.gov.in

MANAGING DIRECTOR

M.P. Madhyam/113360/2024

GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



LORD'S ADVOCATE

SENIOR BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad has received the invitation for the consecration of Ram Lalla idol at Ayodhya temple on January 22. It is learnt that Prasad, who represents the Patna Sahib Lok Sabha seat, has been invited as the advocate of Ram Lalla. Prasad represented Ram Lalla, the deity, as an advocate during the hearing of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case during the proceedings in Allahabad High Court. However, when the case came up for hearing in the Supreme Court, Prasad could not participate as a lawyer as he was then a Union Minister.

SCIENCE AND FAITH

A MODEL of Ayodhya's Ram Temple was the centre of attraction for the delegates from India and abroad at the International Science Festival, a four-day event being held in Faridabad. It is learnt that Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Jitendra Singh, also appreciated the model, which is made by CSIR-Central Building Research Institute. Officials said the model showcases the science behind the construction of the temple.

Lalu meets Nitish; Tejashwi calls it regular, says 'all well'

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JANUARY 19

AMID FRESH speculations of the BJP "keeping its door open" for Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, RJD president Lalu Prasad and Bihar deputy CM Tejashwi Prasad Yadav met the JD(U) chief on Friday.

Tejashwi, however, told reporters that it was a "regular" meeting and that "all is well" with the Mahagathbandhan. JD(U) leader and minister Ashok Kumar Choudhary echoed Tejashwi, and asked "if they needed to give a certificate to the media about their strong ties".

Sources in the RJD, however, said that Lalu and Tejashwi met Nitish after reading Union Home Minister Amit Shah's interview to a Hindi daily in which the Home Minister had replied to a question from the reporter on whether the BJP would welcome its old allies, including the JD(U), to its fold, to which Shah had said if there was "any such proposal" from Nitish's party, the BJP "would look" into it.

Shah's statement assumes importance because he had said during his Bihar rallies that "the BJP's doors have been shut for Nitish forever". When asked about Shah's comments to the Hindi daily, Tejashwi sarcastically said, "I do not know. Maybe you people have better knowledge of what Amit Shah wanted to imply."

The two top RJD leaders also met the CM after the JD(U) had been "upset" with RJD leader Bhai Birendra's January 16 statement that "Nitish had been CM because of Lal Prasad's blessings".

Though the RJD called the

ED summons Lalu, Tejashwi

New Delhi: The ED has issued fresh summons to RJD president Lalu Prasad and his son and Bihar Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav to appear for questioning at its Patna office in connection with a money laundering investigation into the land for jobs 'scam' case.

A team of ED officials went to the official residence of Lalu's wife and former Bihar CM Rabri Devi in Patna to deliver the summons.

"While Lalu has been asked to appear on January 29, Tejashwi has been called the next day," said a source. ENS

meeting of the alliance leaders part of the ongoing seat-sharing process, the Bihar BJP holding a meeting of its legislators from the Assembly and the Council fuelled the political speculation. The BJP, however, called it a pre-scheduled meeting with its legislators ahead of the coming Ayodhya consecration ceremony, Kapoori Thakur centenary function, and the upcoming budget session.

Tejashwi, who is on the ED radar, and has skipped more than one summonses issued by the agency, said after the meeting, "Nitish Kumar is the CM and I am his deputy. We keep meeting regularly on government matters...I feel sorry for media queries (on the alliance). It is not necessary for me to give explanations on non-existent issues..."

Though the RJD called the

Bank scam: ED summons Pawar's grandnephew

VIJAY KUMAR YADAV
MUMBAI, JANUARY 19

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has summoned Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA Rohit Pawar, the grandnephew of party president Sharad Pawar, in connection with the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam. Rohit has been asked to remain present before ED officials in south Mumbai on January 24, sources with the central agency

confirmed on Friday.

The officials wish to question Rohit over the affairs of his company Baramati Agro, which is allegedly linked to the MSCB scam. Rohit Pawar requested the ED to call him for questioning on January 22 or 23. "I have requested the ED to call me on January 22 or 23 as a number of Maratha protesters are coming to Mumbai to join the agitation for Maratha reservation. ED is not at fault as it's implementing orders..." he said on X.

150 Cong workers get notice for 'anti-party' acts

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh Congress's disciplinary committee met on Friday and issued show-cause notices to nearly 150 local leaders who allegedly indulged in "anti-party" activities during the November 2023 state Assembly polls, where the Opposition outfit faced severe drubbing, a functionary said.

The notices are returnable in 10 days and those not giving satisfactory replies will face expulsion from the party, he said. ENS

January 25, in time of the Republic Day parade the next day. This will be the sixth time that a French leader will be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations.

Modi was the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Parade in Paris on July 14, 2023. This was followed by Macron's visit to India for the G20 Summit on September 8-9 last year. As strategic partners, India and France share a high degree of convergence on a range of regional and global issues, and officials are working on some deliverables.

The two sides are trying to do some stock-taking in the short period of time since the July announcements.

Beyond defence, space and civil-nuclear, New Delhi and Paris have expanded their partnership to include domains of counter-terrorism, maritime security, climate change, renewable and sustainable development, digitisation, and cybersecurity among others.

An invitation to be the Republic Day Chief Guest is highly symbolic from the Indian government's perspective. New Delhi has been weaving a strategy with hospitality to decide its Chief Guest for the Republic Day. The choice is dictated by a number of reasons – strategic and diplomatic, business interest and international geo-politics.

FRENCH PRESIDENT'S VISIT

Before R-Day, Modi-Macron roadshow likely in Jaipur

Forts, palaces on Rajasthan agenda; high-level talks during Delhi leg

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

MOVES ARE afoot to host French President Emmanuel Macron in Jaipur and New Delhi next week, when he visits India as the Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day celebrations.

Macron, who is scheduled to arrive for a two-day visit on January 25, is likely to be accompanied by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a roadshow in Jaipur soon after his arrival.

Preparations are also underway to felicitate him at iconic forts and palaces in and around the city.

A French advance delegation has been camping in Jaipur to make the necessary arrangements, which is expected to involve a brief stopover at the city's Amer Fort.

While the Jaipur leg is expected to be high on pomp and show, the Delhi leg will see high-level talks. Modi is also expected to host Macron for a Rajasthani-style meal on January 25.

Officials are working on the



Both expected to return to Delhi on night of Jan 25. File

Jaipur leg of the visit, and are trying to showcase the "colours of India", just like it was done during then US President Bill Clinton's visit in March 2000.

Both the leaders are expected to reach Delhi on the night of

E EXPLAINED Strong ties

INDIA AND France have shared a strong and robust diplomatic relationship over the last seven decades. This is the sixth time a French leader has been invited for the Republic Day. Modi and Macron will try to consolidate and translate their personal chemistry into concrete outcomes.



CISF's all-woman band contingent marches amid fog during rehearsals for the Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path, in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

Maximum women participation, Rafale jets in flypast on R-Day

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

REVOLVING AROUND the themes of 'Viksit Bharat and Mother of Democracy', the Republic Day celebrations on 26 January will showcase India's rich cultural heritage and will

have the maximum participation of women, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Friday.

In a first, the Republic Day parade will begin with 100 women artists playing Indian musical instruments such as Sankh, Naadwaram and Nagada, marking a shift from the past when this was done by military bands.

Another first in the parade is

the participation of two French

form in the event, he said, adding that the aim is to take the number to 20,000 next year.

Around 13,000 special guests, including Indian patent and copyright holders and those who excelled by making use of various government schemes have been invited to the parade. The seating capacity at Kartavya Path is 77,000, of which 42,000 is reserved for the general public.

He said the objective of inviting special guests is to provide an opportunity to the people from all walks of life to take part in celebrations in line with the government's vision of 'Jan Bhagidari'.

A total of 25 tableau from 16 States and UTs and nine ministries and departments will be participating in the celebrations.

Il women among 56 lawyers designated as senior advocates

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

UNDERLINING THE need to ensure "full working judge strength at all times", the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Friday recommended the elevation of Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Prasanna Varale as senior in one go. Till the latest exercise, the court had only about 10 senior woman advocates on its rolls. A full-court meeting presided by Chief

Justice D Y Chandrachud finalised the names Friday. The 11 women lawyers who made the cut are Shobha Gupta, Swarupama Chaturvedi, Liz Mathew, Karuna Nundy, Nisha Bagchi, Uttara Babbar, Haripriya Padmanabhan, Archana Pathak Dave, NS Nappinai, S Janani, and Shirin Khajuria. ENS

Surya Kant and Aniruddha Bose.

In a four-page statement, the Collegium stated its criteria for recommending Justice Varale. The Collegium statement in the past would only mention a statement containing the recommended names.

The Collegium cited criteria ranging from "the seniority of Chief Justices and senior puisne judges in their respective parent High Courts as well as overall seniority of the High Court Judges; the merit, performance and integrity of the judges" to diversity and inclusion.

Apart from CJ Chandrachud, the five-member Collegium that recommends SC judges comprises Justice Sanjiv Khanna, BR Gavai, Justice Arun Kumar, Justice Jayanta Bhattacharya and Justice Dipankar Datta.

On diversity and inclusion, the Collegium added that it considered representation of High

Courts in the Supreme Court; appointment of persons from marginalised and backward segments of society; gender diversity; and representation of minorities.

The Collegium said Justice Varale, whose parent High Court is the Bombay High Court, is a "competent judge with unimpeachable conduct and integrity and has throughout maintained high standard of professional ethics". The Collegium also underlined that it has taken into consideration the fact that Justice Varale belongs to the Scheduled Caste and ranks sixth in the All-India list of seniority of High Court judges.

Order restoring defamation complaint against EPS stayed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

THE SUPREME Court on Friday refused to interfere with the Madras High Court order upholding the expulsion of O Panneerselvam and three other leaders from the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in July 2022.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv

Khanna and Dipankar Datta,

hearing their appeals against the August 2023 High Court order,

refused to interfere in the matter

and said it expected that the trial court shall proceed with it further as per law.

The plea filed by the AIADMK general secretary against the HC order came up for hearing before an SC bench of Justice B R Mehta and Justice Sandeep Mehta, which stayed the order.

proappropriate to observe that the observations made in the impugned judgment, including the order passed by the single judge, would not be treated as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

Dismissal of SLP should not be treated as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case," said the Supreme Court.

Senior Advocate K K Venugopal, appearing for Panneerselvam, told the court that the post of general secretary was removed in the honour of former party general secretary J Jayalalithaa after her death, and two posts of "coordinator" and "joint coordinator" were created.

"She (Jayalalithaa) was declared the eternal general secretary, and two posts equal to this post were created, coordinator and joint co-

ordinator. Panneerselvam was the joint coordinator..." he submitted.

THE SUPREME Court on Friday stayed an order of the Madras High Court which had set aside a trial court order dismissing a criminal defamation complaint by former AIADMK MP K Palanisamy against party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami.

The high court had passed the order on November 28 last year on a plea by Palanisamy challenging the trial court order. It had restored the complaint and said the trial court shall proceed with it further as per law.

The plea filed by the AIADMK general secretary against the HC order came up for hearing before an SC bench of Justice B R Mehta and Justice Sandeep Mehta, which stayed the order.

decided to stay away. The Congress has said it is a political event.

What about Kamal Nath's saying it was Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress party who opened the locks of the Babri Masjid in 1986, to take credit for the temple? Why are they not talking about December 6? Basically, all these so-called secular parties are saying that had Modi not been there, they would have gone... that is what they are saying, isn't it?

The INDIA bloc is discussing seat-sharing to ensure that there is only one Opposition candidate against the BJP in most of the seats.

I cannot comment on seat-sharing because I am not privy to their decision-making process. But what kind of ideology is this that Arvind Kejriwal is saying that we will recite Hanuman Chalisa and Sunderkand Path in government schools? What is this ideology? Do you want to take on the BJP this way?

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, JANUARY 19

FORMER MLA from Morena and a Jyotiraditya Scindia loyalist, Rakesh Mavai, quit the Congress on Friday and joined the BJP dealing a blow to the INDIA bloc just a few months before the Lok Sabha elections.

Mavai, a heavy-weight in the Gwalior-Chambal region, joined the BJP in the presence of Union Civil Aviation Minister Scindia in Delhi, along with Param Singh Rawat, the Janpad Panchayat Adhyaksh of Shivpuri.

Mavai told *The Indian Express*, "I won against the BJP government in a by-election. I stayed with the Congress, and did not leave with Scindia. Despite winning all elections, I was not given a ticket. I left the Congress since

AIMIM CHIEF and Hyderabad MP ASADUDDIN OWAISI is among the most vocal critics of the BJP as well as of attempts by the Opposition parties to take on Narendra Modi. In an interview to MANOJ CG, Owaisi talks about the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, what it means, and why he believes that the Opposition is equally responsible for the events of December 6, 1992, when the Babri Masjid was demolished.

How do you see the BJP-RSS build-up to the opening of the Ram temple in Ayodhya?

Basically, it is a product of the movement which started in 1949 by surreptitiously placing the idol in the Masjid. Then Muslims were prohibited from using the Masjid. So, at every step, Muslims were ousted further and further, while the Sangh Parivar side's positions

were strengthened by courts and by governments. Subsequently, the demolition happened in 1992. Demolition was also part of the process. The Masjid was demolished despite assurances of various elected governments and the BJP-Sangh Parivar in the Supreme Court. Subsequently, the 2019 judgment paved the way for the construction of the temple. While the Muslim side argued on the legal title, the court looked for evidence of faith. I have always said that if the judgment had been given on faith, then what would the judgment have been had the Masjid not been demolished? The only consolation for us was that the Court upheld the Muslim side's argument that there was no archaeological evidence that the mosque was constructed on a de-



THE EXPRESS INTERVIEW

WITH
ASADUDDIN
OWAISI
AIMIM CHIEF AND
HYDERABAD MP

molished temple.



No. Tender Online - RWCCESNG-52 of 2023-24, Letter No. 131/Dtd. 18.01.2024

e-Procurement NOTICE

- Type of the Work : Roads (DMF)
- Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
- Time of Completion : As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
- Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
- Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
- Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Last Date & time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender
From	To	Technical Bid	Financial Bid	
1	2	3	4	5
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-52 of 2023-24	24.01.2024 11:00 AM	27.02.2024 5:00 PM	06.02.2024 5:00 PM
				06.02.2024 11:00 AM

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer
Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh

OIPR- 25133/11/0072/2324

CHENNAI METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Thalamuthu Natarajan Building, No.1, Gandhi Irwin Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) – e-Procurement Notification

(Consulting Services – Firm selection)

Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) is implementing a component of the Tamil Nadu Housing and Habitat Development Project (TNHHDP) assisted by the World Bank. CMDA invites eligible consulting firms to submit their proposals for providing the services for the below mentioned assignment under the TNHHDP.

Undertaking Multisectoral Analysis and Strategy Development to support CMDA's Multisector Approach to promote Resilient, Green and Inclusive Land Use Planning for Chennai Metropolitan Area. The RFP document & ToR are available on the website <http://tntenders.gov.in> as tabulated below:

Dates	Details
RFP No.	C1/14489/2021 dated 20.01.2024
Last date and time of receipt of E-tenders	20.02.2024 up to 15.00 hrs
Pre-proposal conference	29.01.2024 at 11.30 hrs
Downloading the tender document	20.01.2024 to 20.02.2024 upto 15.00 hrs

The proposal shall be submitted only through the website mentioned. Any other mode of Submission of the proposal through email, speed post, courier, etc. will not be considered.

Any further Corrigendum or Amendment shall be notified on the website <http://tntenders.gov.in> only. Consultants shall regularly visit the website to keep themselves updated. For any communication mail at cmdatprocurement@gmail.com

Sd/- 19.01.2024

Member Secretary

Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority

Government of Odisha
Office of the Chief Construction Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur

E-mail id servcircleshp@yahoo.com

Bid Identification No. Road tender Online RWCSBP-56/2023-24 No. 224 Dated: 18.01.2024

The Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online Percentage rate Bid from experienced & eligible bidders for Road works under DMF in the district Sambalpur for the year 2023-24

1 Name of work	: Construction of road under DMF for the 2023-24.
2 No of works	: 1 (One) No details as per DTCN.
3 Estimated cost	: Approximately varies from Rs.133.85 lakhs
4 Class of Contractor	: "B" and "A" Class
5 Cost of tender paper and mode of deposit	: Rs. 10,000/- per set. (to be deposited On-line) in favour concerned Executive Engineer.
6 Mode of submission of tender.	: Tender should be submitted only On line in website www.tendersorissa.gov.in (https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)
7 EMD and mode of deposit	: 1% of estimated cost of the work to be remitted online as mentioned in DTCN.

8 Summary of key dates are provided below :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Last date & time of seeking clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender
From	To	Technical Bid	Financial Bid	
1	2	3	4	5
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur	Road Tender Online-RWCSBP-56/2023-24	25.01.2024 From 11.00 A.M.	08.02.2024 Up to 5.00 P.M.	06.02.2024 Up to 5.00 P.M.
				By 5.00 PM
				Will be intimated later

*Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in. ([https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in))

* Subsequent modification/corrigendum/Addendum if required shall appear in website only.

* The amount put to bid is exclusive of GST.

*Bidder should inspect the road before bidding and quote his rate accordingly.

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur

OIPR-25091/1/10083/2324

Online Tender Document for M.P. Police

POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL

No. PHQ/15/GPC/ 7520-2 /2024 Bhopal, Dated 12/01/2024

"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>

List of Equipments for New DNA Lab at RFSL Jabalpur

Sr	Name of Equipment	Quantity	EMD Paid Online Through imptenders.gov.in	Tender Fees (Rs.)
1	Automated DNA extraction machine	02	120,000	3000
2	Bio safety cabinets	03	36,000	2,000
3	Micro pipettes	10sets	36,000	2,000
4	Multichannel pipettes	3	3,600	1,000
5	Freezer mill (Cryo grinder)	1	15,000	1,000
6	Ups 10 KVA	2	15,000	1,000
7	Digital balances	3	9,000	1,000
8	Hot Air Oven	1	6,000	1,000
9	Test tube Rotator	3	2,700	1,000
10	Rotary Mixer	3	3,600	1,000
11	Digital pH Meter	2	3,000	1,000
12	Vortex Shaker	8	4,800	1,000
13	Magnetic Stirrer Hot Plate	4	3,000	1,000
14	Microwave Oven	4	3,600	1,000
15	Electric Generator 100 KVA	1	36,000	1,000
16	Air Conditioners (2tons) for safe keeping of equipments	6	120,000	1,000
17	Computer PC with wifi facilities	4	36,000	2,000
18	Multi-functional printer with Photocopier and Scanner	4	9,000	1,000
	Total cost of EMD & tender fees		462,300	23000

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-23109-23

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-23109-23

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/

BIG PICTURE



Vishal Srivastav

The Officer Architect

From Principal Secretary to two UP CMs with a ringside view of the Ram temple movement, to being the topmost bureaucrat in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first PMO to taking charge of the temple construction project, Nripendra Misra is Ayodhya's officer-architect-in-chief.

P VAIDYANATHAN IYER tracks the arc of his journey to January 22

SI X DECADES in bureaucracy and as the top executive authority in the Prime Minister's Office couldn't have prepared Nripendra Misra for this one-line brief — build a temple for Ram that will last at least a thousand years. In February 2020, when Misra expressed his keenness to take on the responsibility, he couldn't have fathomed what the project entailed — the scale, the complexity, and the need for seamless coordination between not just the contractor (L&T), consultant (Tata Consulting Engineers), and client (Ram Janmabhoomi Trust), but also the architect (C B Sompura), master planner (Design Associates), and various local, state and national agencies.

But for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, civil engineering expertise or knowledge of *agama shashtra* (manual for temple building and rituals) was definitely not the key consideration to pick Misra to helm one of the most important ideological projects of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar.

Modi had, after all, worked closely with Misra over the five years that the latter served as Principal Secretary to the PM, during Modi's first term in 2014–19. In May 2014, Misra was pitched as the bureaucrat best placed to understand the new Prime Minister, translate his politics into policy, help him navigate the many *gol chakkars* of Lutyens Delhi, and administer the mammoth government machinery from Raisina Hill.

At the moment, the time schedule that is really, really chasing me is December 2023. I do not want to fail the nation. I want the temple ready for the Lord to be installed" (MISRA IN APRIL 2023)

Pinpointing the attributes that prompted Modi to approve Misra's appointment as the chairperson of the construction committee under the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, a senior bureaucrat said, "He trusts his colleagues, empowers them to be candid with their views, and is a leader who motivates. He takes decisions quickly, and is a stickler for time schedules. Most importantly, he can convey the Prime Minister's expectations, and say what the PM would think of a particular idea."

'I do not want to fail the nation'

In January 2020, six months after he resigned as the Principal Secretary to the PM, Misra was named Chairman of the Nehru Memorial (now called the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library Society, PMML).

A month or so after his appointment as PMML chairperson, he told P K Mishra, his successor in the PMO, that he would have liked "something more". He had two positions at the back of his mind — a Governorship or the chairmanship of the Ram temple construction committee, as envisaged in the Supreme Court's November 2019 judgment. A surprised Amit Shah, who had joined Modi's cabinet as Home Minister in the second term, even called Misra to ascertain this. Then came the Prime Minister's approval.

In the subsequent months and years, as Misra landed the job, he would feel the political urgency and the weight of people's expectations. A temple at the place where the Babri Masjid once stood has been a lingering demand of a section of Hindus for almost 500 years. It has also been a crucial socio-political and religious project pursued by the BJP, helping it return to power with absolute majority in 2014. With the Supreme Court judgment on

November 9, 2019, paving the way for a temple, there was the unsaid imperative of fructifying it ahead of the 2024 general elections.

Eight months ago, in April 2023, when *The Indian Express* visited Ayodhya, work at the site was on at breakneck speed. At its peak, about 3,500 labourers were working round-the-clock in two shifts at the temple site, and another 1,500 at the mines and workshops where stones were being cut into pillars and slabs and being intricately carved.

"At the moment, the time schedule that is really, really chasing me is December 2023. I do not want to fail the nation. I want the temple ready for the Lord to be installed," Misra had then said, walking *The Indian Express* around the site and giving us the first picture of the progress thus far.

For this to happen, Misra had to be where the action was. The Circuit House in Ayodhya's Civil Lines, and the site office barely 100 metres from the sanctum sanctorum, have been Misra's second home for the last three years. This Tuesday, he made his 54th trip to the city since his appointment as the construction committee chairperson in February 2020.

At a personal level, Misra is a deeply religious person, and a devotee of Hanuman. This Ram temple in Ayodhya is not the first he built. About 25 years ago, in 1995–96, his mother wished for one in their Lucknow residence. In the residential compound, but outside the living area, he built a small temple and installed Hanuman as the idol while making space for other Hindu gods too — Ram, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva and Ganesh. "Hanuman is my *isht devta*. I have a lot of personal faith in Hanuman, who is the *param sevak* of Ram. You can now imagine my religious faith in Ram," he says.

While he was sort of inclined to this assignment, or thought it could come to him, Misra says he had mixed feelings about the challenge. "This is something of national importance, which has come out of the apex judiciary — if I can live up to it and deliver, it will be my way of paying back to this country and society. I am not accepting the assignment as a religious person who must make a temple," he says.

According to Misra, this is an "important distinction" to make to understand him — that religion is his private affair, but not his personal conduct.

Long association with Ayodhya

Born in Meerut district, Misra obtained a Master's degree in Chemistry — he was the topper in Allahabad University's Department of Chemistry. With two years to go before he was eligible to appear for the Civil Services exam, he enrolled and completed another Master's in Political Science from Allahabad University.

He became an IAS officer in 1967, and was allotted the Uttar Pradesh cadre. As Principal Secretary (Finance), Misra is known to have overhauled the finance department in the state, initiating the process of zero-based budgeting, structuring excise and taxation policies, and computerising the treasury. Those who worked with Misra point to one remarkable ability of his — fast decision-making. As Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce at the Central government, he is known to have cleared proposals of dozens of Export-Oriented Units "in minutes".

A competent officer and a quintessential bureaucrat who is conscious of hierarchy, Misra's political acumen is something many of his contemporaries vouch for.

Misra's date with Ayodhya goes back to the late 1980s. As Principal Secretary to then



Misra was Principal Secretary to PM during Modi's first term. Renuka Puri/File

KEY MILESTONES

- Was Principal Secretary to two former UP CMs, Mulayam Singh and Kalyan Singh
- Took over as Chairperson of Greater Noida Authority in November 1992.
- As Principal Secretary (Finance), UP, he initiated measures like treasury computerisation, taxation policies, etc.
- During his stint with the Union Ministry of Commerce, he led negotiating teams to the European Union and WTO.
- Served as Fertiliser Secretary and Union Telecom Secretary.
- Was Chairperson of TRAI from 2006 to 2009.
- Around 2009, he floated an NGO, Public Interest Foundation, to "reinforce democratic traditions of the country".
- Became Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi from 2014 to 2019.
- In 2020, he was appointed the chairperson of the Ram temple construction committee

chief minister and Janata Dal leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, Misra was on October 30, 1990, sitting in the control room when the Commissioner of Police called him about people assembling near the temple in large numbers. The situation, however, went out of control and Mulayam Singh ordered police to open fire at the *kar sewaks* — on October 30 and then on November 2 — killing some of them.

Misra says he got along "perfectly well" with CM Mulayam Singh initially, but his advice that the CM should not arrest BJP leader L K Advani, who was on a *rath yatra* with plans to reach Ayodhya on October 30, did not go down too well. Misra's logic was that the Janata Dal government headed by V P Singh at the Centre was dependent on the BJP for support and arresting Advani might lead to the BJP withdrawing support. But this advice is said to have "infuriated Mulayam Singh" and, as history would have it, it was Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad who ended up arresting Advani on October 23 in Samastipur about a week before he was scheduled to reach Uttar Pradesh.

When Kalyan Singh succeeded Mulayam as CM in June 1991, the BJP leader retained Misra as his Principal Secretary. But many

within the state BJP objected, with an article in the RSS's *Panchayana* even calling Misra "a CIA agent", making it difficult for Kalyan Singh to hold on to Misra. Misra was eventually transferred from Lucknow and posted as the Chairman of the Greater Noida Authority in November 1992, just a month before the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Bureaucrat who had PM's ear

After being Fertiliser Secretary and Telecom Secretary at the Centre, Misra was in 2006 appointed Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Post his three-year tenure as the telecom regulator, in 2009, Misra ran what he would refer to as a "one-person NGO", the Public Interest Foundation, whose charter was to "reinforce democratic traditions in the country", and wrote opinion pieces in newspapers. One such write-up in a newspaper in April 2014, in which he defended Modi over Opposition allegations about gaps in his election affidavit, caught the attention of the top BJP leadership.

A month later, with the BJP winning a massive mandate and coming to power, Misra says he was driving his car around 4 pm, when he received a call from Arun Jaitley asking him if he could come the next morning, May 20, to Gujarat Bhawan, where the prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, was camping.

On May 19, just a day before Misra was to meet Modi, the BJP's senior OBC leader and former UPCM Kalyan Singh called on Modi. It was probably a mere coincidence, but its significance is not lost on those who follow UP politics and bureaucracy closely.

Among those Misra saw at Gujarat Bhawan on May 20 was A K Doval (now National Security Advisor), and a few others. He was soon summoned inside to meet Modi, who spoke about his key priorities, including housing the 75th year of Independence, swachhata, rationalisation of government departments and ministries, among others. Over the next three to four days, sitting in a room at Gujarat Bhawan, Misra would work on a blueprint on Modi's priorities. On May 25, Modi finally offered him the job of Principal Secretary in the PMO. At least three others were in the race to the same post: K Kailashnath (now Chief Principal Secretary to the Gujarat Chief Minister), Anil Bajaj (who served as Lieutenant Governor of Delhi for five-and-a-half years till May 2022) and P K Mishra (the current Principal Secretary to the PM).

Misra joined office on May 27, the same day that Modi took charge as the Prime Minister. But there was a legal hurdle in formally issuing an order appointing him the Principal Secretary because of his earlier stint as the telecom regulator. The TRAI Act specifically barred its Chairman from taking any government position post the tenure. Jaitley came to the res-

cue — he said an ordinance to rectify this anomaly would take care of the obstacle. The ordinance came through a day later, on May 28. It is learnt Misra would not take the Principal Secretary's chair and instead sit on the visitors' sofa in his office till a formal appointment order was issued.

Over the next five years, Misra developed a rapport and gained the PM's confidence.

In the initial couple of years, Misra says, he would on occasions "overstep" his brief and tell the Prime Minister that a particular idea expressed by him may not be politically acceptable or tenable. Modi would politely but firmly convey to him that he should stick to administrative issues and leave the political arena to him. Over time, however, the Prime Minister would go on to appreciate Misra's advice. "The moment an idea was floated, the PM would want to know whether the policy appeared to be elitist, whether it would reach the masses... his go-to person would often be Misra," said a source, who wished to remain anonymous.

Given Prime Minister Modi's instinctive opposition to freebies, it was initially not easy for ministries and ministers to push through policies such as PM Kisan and Ujjwala. That's where Misra would step in — often reorienting discussions on policies and schemes, moving them away from political considerations to more economic and developmental aspects. For instance, the PM Kisan scheme could find salience with Modi when it was projected as a means to boost rural consumption demand, and hence aid economic growth. Similarly, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan would sit down with Misra to frame the free cylinder scheme in the developmental context, with data and evidence to suggest how it would benefit women in poor households.

In Modi's first term as PM, it was Misra who was often called upon to convince the party and its then president, Amit Shah, on some of the key policy decisions that the government took — from demonetisation to the need for a unified Goods and Services Tax (GST) given Gujarat's long-standing opposition.

Misra's role, his colleagues would say, was akin to that of an elder brother, ready to stand up for them before the Prime Minister, and convey to secretaries of the Government of India the Prime Minister's expectations from their ministries and departments.

Before the *pran pratista*

On Friday, around noon, 72 hours before the *pran pratista* (consecration) ceremony that is scheduled for 12.30 hours on January 22, Misra undertook a "site walk down" to review the completion of Phase I of the temple project. This has been a daily routine since he landed in Ayodhya on Tuesday. The day wasn't spectacular — he prodded key executives from L&T and Tata Consulting Engineers to work on snag list rectification, phasing the construction of the first and second floors of the temple, completion of the *parkota* (perimeter wall) and the seven temples representing social harmony.

But the feeling, at the end of the day, of having not failed the nation, and having the Lord installed in the *garba griha* was, in his own words, "divine".

"This is something of national importance, which has come out of the apex judiciary — if I can live up to it and deliver, it will be my way of paying back to this country and society"



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE WHEAT TEST

Keeping import window open without resorting to export and stocking controls is what's required in all agri-commodities

WHAT STOCKS IN government warehouses are at a seven-year-low of 16.4 million tonnes (mt) as of January 1. That, by itself, is not cause for concern. The present stocks are more than the minimum buffer of 13.8 mt to meet the operational requirements of the public distribution system, plus a strategic reserve, for the next three months. By then, the new crop would start arriving in the mandis. Besides, the government has sufficient rice stocks to more than compensate for any shortfalls in wheat. That should keep both cereal and overall retail food inflation — at near double-digits now — somewhat under control, at least till the national elections scheduled in April-May. The measures taken so far — banning wheat and non-basmati white rice exports, not permitting large retailers and traders to hold more than 1,000 tonnes of wheat, and selling grain from the Food Corporation of India's stocks in the open market — are good enough for that.

The problem, if any, would be after the elections. If the current wheat crop, due for harvesting only from March-end, turns out not too good, it's the next government that will have to deal with the ensuing supply challenge. The Narendra Modi government, to its credit, has been proactive in supply-side management with regard to pulses and edible oils; imports of these have been allowed at nil or low duties till March 31, 2025. The same alacrity hasn't been seen in wheat, rice and sugar — perhaps because the growers of these crops are politically more organised than pulses or oilseeds farmers. While exports have been restricted, along with curbs on diversion of cane juice and intermediate-stage molasses for ethanol production by sugar mills, the Modi government has refrained from opening up imports. But given the finely balanced supply situation — the new 2023-24 sugar season, too, has begun with six-year-low stocks and no clarity on actual production — imports may be inevitable sooner than later.

Ideally speaking, keeping the import window open (like in edible oils and pulses) without resorting to any export and stocking controls (going against the letter and spirit of the Modi government's now-repealed farm laws) is what's required in all agri-commodities. India's farm sector, unlike industry and services, has suffered the most from lack of policy stability and predictability, impacting investments in processing, warehousing, marketing and research. The preoccupation with short-term goals has meant deploying the sledgehammer approach in response to every inflation event in onions or pigeon pea — and not doing anything when prices crash. It has taken the focus away from long-term policy that is in the ultimate interest of both producers and consumers. A strategic vision for Indian agriculture, going beyond food inflation, should be a priority for the next government.

COSTS OF CAVE-IN

Removal of Tamil film *Annapoorani* from Netflix points to a disturbing trend of capitulation to whims of the moral police

THE REMOVAL of the Tamil film *Annapoorani* from OTT platform Netflix and the apology from its makers point to a disturbing trend of capitulation to the whim of the moral police, whose opprobrium regularly threatens to cramp the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution. At the heart of director Niles Krishna's film is an upper-caste Hindu woman who harbours an innocuous dream — to follow her father's vocation, but to do it her way. This means stepping out of her conservative family home and into the wide world, where she will have to master the art of cooking items that are anathema to her strictly-vegetarian, devout household — non-vegetarian food. Support comes in the form of her Muslim love interest, who helps her conquer both the kitchen and her own prejudices.

A storm of "hur" religious sentiments at the film's purported promotion of "love jihad" and non-vegetarianism saw its removal from Netflix. But what the withdrawal essentially does is to cede ground to the prejudices of a faceless mob. It also points to the blind spots and limits of the OTT "revolution" that had arrived with the promise of greater openness and choice. It was a win-win for directors, producers and viewers in that it freed them from the constraints of access and certification boards and made room for content that was original and diverse and catered to a wider demographic. But, from the web series *Tandav* on Amazon Prime in 2021 to *Annapoorani* on Netflix, the increasing weaponisation of "hurt sentiments" that results in legal action, calls for boycott, and raises the spectre of violence, has seen global new media behemoths protect their commercial interests by caving in to majoritarian demands. At a time when social media amplifies messages of polarisation with alacrity and when there seem to be insufficient protective safeguards, their first instinct is to limit the damage.

The challenge, and the pushback, lies closer home. Any possible solution will involve all stakeholders to come together to thwart the mob's sway. Creators of content must hold their ground if spaces in which they can give free rein to their imagination have to be protected and widened. The onus is also on audiences to reclaim their freedom to watch what they want and steer clear of that which they find offensive. If diversity and freedom of expression are threatened into submission, the only one poorer for it are the people.

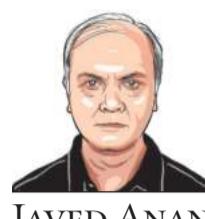
SOMETHING ABOUT DOGS

South Korea has banned slaughter of dogs for meat. What makes man's best friend different from goats and pigs?

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE — from an objective moral lens — between pigs and goats and dogs? They all walk on four legs, they were domesticated by humans. As far as intelligence and emotion are concerned, the jury is out — pigs, especially, can be quite bright. The answer, perhaps, lies in what Jules Winnfield (Samuel Jackson) said to Vincent Vega (John Travolta) in *Pulp Fiction*: "... dogs got personality, personality goes a long way." It may well be that the undeniable charm of the *Canis Familiaris* has led to centuries of culinary tradition being upended in South Korea. Earlier this month, the country passed a law banning the breeding, slaughter and sale of dog meat.

Over the years, there has been much international criticism of South Korea's consumption of dogs. The culinary practice, though, has been on the decline, limited now largely to older people, nostalgic for a traditional meal. Activists have highlighted the cruelty dogs bred for meat are subjected to, from unhygienic living conditions and life in cages to disease and deprivation. There have also been high-profile supporters of the ban. President Yoon-suk Yeol and First Lady Kim Keon are family to many fur balls and made their opposition to the consumption of dogs well known.

Yet, is there a germane difference between the cruelty that canines face in South Korea and other animals bred for food? The answer is important, especially in contexts where policing dietary choices is often a weapon against the weak. The difference between dogs and cows, pigs, goats and sheep, is that dogs were not domesticated — at least not widely — for food. In fact, there is research to show that humans as we know them — with language and emotion — evolved with and even through dogs, in a sort of emotional symbiosis. Or maybe that's just what people tell themselves as they stare into puppy eyes while enjoying lamb chops.



JAVED ANAND

MUCH HAS RIGHTLY been written and spoken on the abject failure of the institutions of secular India over the years in containing the forward quick-march of militant Hindutva from 1986 onwards; from the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 to the point where we have now arrived: A de facto Hindu Rashtra. But little has been written or said about the failure of the Muslim religious and political leadership in reading the writing on the wall and seizing a window of opportunity it was provided well before the centuries-old mosque was reduced to rubble and the subsequent anti-Muslim violence (Bombay 1992-93, Gujarat 2002).

In September 1991, as the conflict over Ayodhya was headed towards the abyss, Parliament passed the Places of Worship (Special Provisions), Act 1991. Supported by all political parties except the BJP and the Shiv Sena, the new law stipulated that with the exception of the ongoing Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute pending in court, "the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August, 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day... No person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination or any section thereof into a place of worship of a different section of the same religious denomination or of a different religious denomination or any section thereof".

A month later, in October 1991, I wrote an article that was published by the Sunday Observer (now non-existent) under the heading: "Why Muslims must now gift away the masjid". My main argument was this. The Sangh Parivar's agenda was not limited to a mosque in Ayodhya. Ayodhya was just a station on the way; Hindu Rashtra the final destination. The real battle was between two radically opposed ideas of India: Secular India or Hindu Rashtra? Coupling the same as a Hindu-Muslim conflict works to the great advantage of the Sangh Parivar. Muslims, I urged, should not fall in this trap. Sadly, the community's leadership did precisely that.

Had my suggestion found favour, a magnificent temple in the name of *Maryada Purush Bhagwan Ram* could well have been built in Ayodhya long ago with the active participation of Indian Muslims. In doing so, they could have recalled the century-old poem of poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal: *Hai Ram ke wajud pe Hindustan ko naaz/Ahl-e-nazr samajhte hain unkko Imam-e-Hind* (India proudly proclaims Ram as its own/The knowledgeable recognise him as India's Imam).

Iqbal is not the only one. Non-sectarian Muslims have for long cited a verse from the Quran which says that Allah has sent his messengers to every country and nation at different times in history. How then could a country as large as India be an exception?

The Muslim leadership could have relied on contemporary examples from Saudi Arabia where mosques have often been demolished over time "in the public interest".

If only leaders of the minority community had read the writing on the wall, seized the initiative

Sadly, the community's leadership did precisely that.

Based on my conversations with a cross-section of ordinary Muslims, I had argued that the community's leadership should grab the opportunity provided by the 1991 Act. As a return gesture, it should unilaterally relinquish its claim to the disputed site, gift it to the government of India with the plea that a grand Ram Mandir be built there with the blessings and under the guidance of non-communal Hindu seers. This, I believed, would earn for Muslims enormous goodwill among millions of ordinary Hindus, would halt, even reverse, the growing communalisation of the majority community.

For writing what I did, I was slammed both by my non-Muslim secular friends as by many Muslims. "The Babri Masjid belongs to secular India, not just to Muslims. Who are you to talk of gifting it away?" fumed the former. The latter claimed the Sangh Parivar was talking of liberating 3,000 mosques: "If we concede one today, tomorrow they will ask for all the remaining".

Having prevailed over the Rajiv Gandhi government (also 1986) in the Shah Bano matter — precedence to shariah over the law of the land — little did they realise that the Sangh Parivar would turn this "Muslim victory" on its head. If faith is above the law of the land for the minority community, why not the faith of the Hindu majority?

I can do no better today than to copy-paste here the concluding paragraph of my 1991 article: "Hitherto, Muslims have fought for the retention of the Ayodhya mosque under the banner of the Babri Masjid Movement Co-ordination Committee. If only the Muslims could demonstrate the capacity for generosity and political sagacity, tomorrow's battles against Hindu theocracy could be fought on a very different terrain -- under a secular, national banner, with Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians fighting side by side. If only Muslims were to seize the initiative that today clearly lies in their hands".

Had Muslims seized the initiative then, we all would likely be living in a different India today.

Some Muslims had even procured a fatwa at the time from a Saudi religious head in support of such an act.

But Syed Shahabuddin (who resigned from the Indian Foreign Service to enter politics) and Imam Bukhari of Delhi's Shahi Jama Masjid, leaders of the two competing Babri Masjid Action Committees and their band of followers opted for a head-on confrontation with those leading the Ramjanmabhoomi Andolan. A week before my article was published, newspapers across the country had splashed a photograph in which Shahabuddin is seen, all smiles, beside the sword-wielding, pro-Khalistan Simranjit Singh Mann. How would this image have been received even by non-secular Hindus?

Having prevailed over the Rajiv Gandhi government (also 1986) in the Shah Bano matter — precedence to shariah over the law of the land — little did they realise that the Sangh Parivar would turn this "Muslim victory" on its head. If faith is above the law of the land for the minority community, why not the faith of the Hindu majority?

I can do no better today than to copy-paste here the concluding paragraph of my 1991 article: "Hitherto, Muslims have fought for the retention of the Ayodhya mosque under the banner of the Babri Masjid Movement Co-ordination Committee. If only the Muslims could demonstrate the capacity for generosity and political sagacity, tomorrow's battles against Hindu theocracy could be fought on a very different terrain -- under a secular, national banner, with Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians fighting side by side. If only Muslims were to seize the initiative that today clearly lies in their hands".

Had Muslims seized the initiative then, we all would likely be living in a different India today.

The writer is convener, Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy and co-editor, Sabrang India online



PARAS JASRAI AND DEVENDRA PANT

AFTER AN INCREASE in deficits due to the Covid19 pandemic, state governments have veered towards the path of fiscal consolidation. In both 2021-22 and 2022-23, the aggregate fiscal deficit of state governments was actually under 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), despite the Union government providing them greater space to borrow, capping their deficits at 4.5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.

State governments, put together, spend more than the central government. In fact, they account for over three-fifths of total general government expenditure. In the past few years, states have been focusing more on the revenue expenditure (money spent on paying salaries, pension, interest, subsidies, etc.).

However, in 2023-24, there has been a shift in their spending priority with more allocated towards capital expenditure. The capital outlay of states (excluding Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur and Meghalaya) jumped 45.7 per cent, while their revenue expenditure grew by a modest 9.3 per cent during April-November 2023.

The quality of their expenditure — ratio of capital outlay to total expenditure — which effectively implies the proportion of funds channelled towards productive assets stands at 14.1 per cent, an eight year high, during this period. This is growth enhancing. A one per cent increase in the capital outlay effectively leads to a 0.82-0.84 per cent increase in the states' GDP.

THE CAPEX PUSH

Increasing allocation by states for capital expenditure will boost growth

The tepid growth in overall revenue receipts has meant that the states have had to resort more to market borrowings for funding their expenditure this year. In fact, as per the latest data available, the states' gross market borrowings were at a record of Rs 5.8 trillion during the first nine months of the year. Higher borrowings are, however, largely utilised for capex.

States' capital expenditure (capex) is being fuelled by an interplay of two forces. First, the advance release of the monthly tax devolution and timely disbursements of funds for the special scheme on capital assistance. The Union government has been proactive in releasing the advance instalments of tax devolution in the past few years.

In 2023-24, the customary advance instalments which were usually released in end of fiscal year (until 2021-22) were released in June and December. In addition, the Union government has approved capital expenditure worth Rs 973.74 billion and released Rs 590.3 billion under the scheme of special assistance to states for capital investment till November 2023 out of the budgeted Rs 1.3 trillion in 2023-24.

Second, the states' own revenues have been fairly buoyant. The states own tax revenues (SOTR) and own non-tax revenues (SONTR) have grown at a good pace of 11.5 per cent and 19.5 per cent respectively during the first eight months of the year.

Tax revenues are generally a function of economic activity. It has to be noted that nominal GDP growth has been muted and likely to be 8.9 per cent as per National Statistical Office's First Advance Estimates. With own tax revenues growing at a faster pace than nominal GDP growth, it suggests efficiency of tax administration and increased formalisation of the economy leading to improvement in tax capacity. Also,

revenue from mining industries forms a significant chunk of collections under SONTR. The mining activity (in real terms) has grown at a strong pace due to reforms such as e-auction of mining leases, etc. However, the benefits are limited to mineral rich states.

Despite this healthy growth in states own revenues, their overall revenue receipts have grown at an average pace of 5.5 per cent during this period owing to a shortfall in grants from the Union government. These fell 29.2 per cent during this period.

The tepid growth in overall revenue receipts has meant that the states have had to resort more to market borrowings for funding their expenditure this year. In fact, as per the latest data available, the states' gross market borrowings were at a record of Rs 5.8 trillion during the first nine months of the year. Higher borrowings are, however, largely utilised for capex.

Based on the current trends and the NSO's expectation of a pick up in net taxes in the second half of the year, states may find it a bit difficult to achieve their aggregate fiscal deficit target of 3.1 per cent of GDP. A marginal slippage of 20-30 basis points can't be ruled out.

Jasrai is Senior Analyst and Pant is Chief Economist, India Ratings & Research (Ind-Ra) respectively. Views are personal



JANUARY 20, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

NDA AGITATION

THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC Alliance will launch a country-wide agitation to focus attention on the "failure" of the Congress (I) to solve the nation's economic problems. It will hold demonstrations in February. This was decided at the BJP-Lok Dal NDA's coordination committee meeting. The NDA will prepare a charge sheet listing the "acts of omission and commission" of Congress (I).

AKALI DO OR DIE

THE AKALI DAL has directed its "do or die"

squad volunteers to be ready for the "revolutionary action" to be announced on January 26 — the deadline given by it to the Centre for conceding to its demands, a statement from the party headquarters said. The force of 1.25 lakh volunteers was raised by the party on April 13 last year.

R-DAY ELEPHANT LOOSE

AN ELEPHANT THAT was meant to take part in the Republic Day parade, broke loose at the Delhi zoo, creating mayhem and leading to the death of a zebra. The elephant ran amuck for two hours before the mahout

managed to control it. In the zoo, it was two hours of dark chaos as men hunted frantically for the elephant in pitch dark.

A PEACE PLAN?

THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE Organisation (ICO) summit meeting in Casablanca adopted a resolution on West Asia, a Moroccan spokesman said. The resolution, widely seen as a new peace plan, is based on a 1982 Fez peace project, which implicitly recognised Israel's right to exist, and efforts for a new United Nations resolution on Palestinian rights.

A green blueprint

Pollution control plans must be science-based. They must account for specifics of local environment and draw on robust data



GUFRAN BEIG AND
SHAILESH NAYAK

COP 28 WAS amongst the most headline-grabbing events in the last months of 2023. The event was held at a time when several Indian cities were reeling under poor air quality. Pollution attracted the climate delegates' attention, rather tangentially, because the COP opened to a thick smog in Dubai.

In 2019, the Centre launched the National Clean Air Action Plan (NCAP) to tackle the increasing air pollution problem. The plan's report card shows mixed results. The fact remains that much needs to be done to bring down air pollutants to permissible levels. Air pollution and climate change are closely related as both share common emission sources – fossil fuel combustion, industrial processes and biofuel burning. Weather extremes such as heat and cold waves lead to air pollution emergencies whose frequency and severity may increase under the influence of climate change. These extreme events could result in distress, diseases, even deaths. Hence, there is no time to lose.

While anthropogenic pollution can be controlled, pollution from natural sources and processes that may vary in different climatic zones is almost inevitable. Air pollution mitigation actions could address climate change concerns and reduce health hazards. To effectively address air quality issues at the national level in an era of fragile climate, India needs to develop an indigenous, science-based, and credible air quality resource framework – an information mechanism to help decision-makers in government and the private sector. The office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India is considering an ambitious initiative along this line. The framework should integrate information on sources of emissions with precise knowledge of air-sheds – an area where local topography and meteorology limit the dispersion of pollutants. Air quality forecasts should be combined with health advisories and mitigation strategies should be devised in short, medium, and long terms to help local, state, and national governments. In other words, a blend of science, policy and advocacy.

India has diverse micro-environments and climatic conditions vary according to regions. This means we need to understand a diversity of natural and scientific processes. Air quality management in India must be addressed at three levels – rural, urban, and industrial agglomeration. Currently, our efforts are largely confined to analysing observed air pollution data at the urban level. Then, there are policy implementation issues at the state and district levels.

The basic factors governing air quality in India are air-sheds, the baseline levels of pollutants in an area and dynamic factors – local weather and emissions. Two critical input parameters – an inventory of emissions and air-shed mapping – should be reinforced before embarking on the development of an air quality early warning framework. Indian cities



CR Sasikumar

are geographically diverse – they consist of different climatic zones with different air-sheds and dominant emission sources. Therefore developing a pollution prediction system in India is more complex compared to the rest of the world. By baseline levels, we mean the ambient air pollution naturally present, without any anthropogenic sources of emission. It's also a pollution level to which the local population is likely to adapt and develop immunity. NIAS researchers recently determined the first experimentally derived baseline levels of major air pollutants – PM10, PM2.5, NO2, ozone, CO, and SO2 – in cities in the different climatic zones of the country. The baseline level of PM2.5 vary from 20–40 µg/m³. They are much higher than the WHO guidelines numbers, suggesting that India should frame its standards based on its own findings.

Emission inventories are the basis for air pollution trends analysis, air quality modelling efforts, and regulatory assessments. An air quality forecasting system requires micro-planning and micro-environmental inputs. There is no systematic emissions inventory in India that can be periodically updated. This is one of the major shortcomings in India's air quality management framework. This stems from a lack of accurate data and inadequate monitoring networks. Ground-based data in association with satellite-driven data and other new techniques should be used for forecasting. NIAS has recently used drone-based artificial intelligence to identify emission hot spots in Bengaluru – the first time this technology has been used for this purpose – and attempted to narrow down the uncertainty in emission estimates. Such experiments need to be extended to other cities. We need to explore the possibilities of "CubeSats" – a class of nano- and microsatellites. Local weather factors directly influence the dispersion, trans-

We propose an indigenous science-based air quality resource framework. It should be stewarded by a consortium of domain experts, health scientists, policy specialists, communicators, and an outreach group to steer the air quality issues. This group should give recommendations to government bodies on all aspects of air quality science and management. In other words, we propose an integrated mechanism that translates data into information, frames communication strategies and health advisories, issues alerts and plans mitigation strategies. We also underline the need for a centralised emissions dataset as per international norms. There should be more robust application of data from Indian satellites to air quality science. Data collection methodology, reporting protocols and database for the emission inventory should be standardised. Emerging technologies like drone-based unmanned aerial vehicles and CubeSats should be deployed. The 15th Finance Commission provided enough funds to states for air quality management. State agencies need to work in tandem with academic and research establishments to develop forecasting systems and operationalise them. The proposed consortium should be especially relevant in providing scientific recommendations and area-specific recommendations at the state and district level.

formation, and accumulation of air pollutants shaping the quality of the air we breathe. Recognising and understanding this relationship is crucial for policymakers, urban planners, and environmental agencies.

We propose an indigenous science-based air quality resource framework. It should be stewarded by a consortium of domain experts, health scientists, policy specialists, communicators, and an outreach group to steer the air quality issues. This group should give recommendations to government bodies on all aspects of air quality science and management. In other words, we propose an integrated mechanism that translates data into information, frames communication strategies and health advisories, issues alerts and plans mitigation strategies. We also underline the need for a centralised emissions dataset as per international norms. There should be more robust application of data from Indian satellites to air quality science. Data collection methodology, reporting protocols and database for the emission inventory should be standardised. Emerging technologies like drone-based unmanned aerial vehicles and CubeSats should be deployed. The 15th Finance Commission provided enough funds to states for air quality management. State agencies need to work in tandem with academic and research establishments to develop forecasting systems and operationalise them. The proposed consortium should be especially relevant in providing scientific recommendations and area-specific recommendations at the state and district level.

Beig is a Chair Professor at NIAS and Founder Director, SAFAR@IITM (MoES). Nayak is Director NIAS and Former Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences. The article is based on a policy brief of NIAS by the authors on "Air quality forecasting and resource framework"

Making of an insecure Asia

Iran strikes in Pakistan, Iraq and Syria suggest deeper links amongst extremist groups



ANJU GUPTA

ON JANUARY 16, through a combination of missile and drone strikes, Iran claimed to have destroyed bases of the Jaish-al-Adl (JAA) terror group in border areas of Koh Sabz in Balochistan, Pakistan. The Iranian Foreign Minister clarified that the strikes did not target Pakistan or its nationals, only fighters who had been mounting serious attacks inside Iran. He cited a deadly attack on a police station in Rask in the neighbouring province of Sistan-Baluchestan by JAA on December 15, which resulted in over 18 casualties.

The next day, while Pakistan was mounting diplomatic retaliations, JAA again claimed the assassination of three Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials, including Colonel Hossein-Ali Javadfar, commander of the Sistan-Baluchestan Corps of the Quds force.

On January 18, Pakistan forces, using drones and rockets, carried out strikes against "hideouts" of the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) and Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) inside Iran which they accused of recent attacks in Pakistan. Since then, the two neighbours, nudged by China, Turkey and others are seen moving towards dialogue and diplomacy.

However, Iranian strikes into Pakistan on January 16 and into Iraq and Syria a day earlier suggest deeper links amongst groups and threats they pose to the region and beyond.

The JAA, a Sunni Baloch group of Iran – earlier known as Jundallah – was founded around 2002 by Abdolmalek Regi, who was executed by Iran in 2010. Following deadly suicide attacks in Iran in 2009–10, the US

designated Jundallah as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation in November 2010 and amended the designation in 2019 to rename it as the JAA. Though the JAA describes itself as the Baloch Resistance of Iran, it is not believed to have any visible links with the Baloch resistance groups of Pakistan. For years, Iran and Pakistan have been accusing each other of sheltering groups and carrying out cross-border raids in "hot pursuit" in the border areas.

The return of the Taliban to power in 2021 may have initially raised the prospects of Taliban support to the JAA against Iran for leverage. However, Iran has been consistently warning only Pakistan. The deep divide between the Taliban and the Pakistani army may have reassured Iran that there is much likelihood of the JAA getting support from the Taliban against Iran. However, the strikes in Pakistan also demonstrate Iranian "over the horizon" capability to Afghanistan.

Though Iran chose to refer to the Rask attack as the trigger for the strikes, the JAA has mounted a series of serious attacks in Iran since 2017, especially on security forces.

The group seemed to have upped the ante in recent months, frequently targeting border guards, military posts, police stations and security patrols. In 2023, the JAA also began posting long videos featuring IRGC cells supposedly active outside Iran and claiming attacks on such cells.

In parallel, Iran has been facing growing propaganda by Daesh and greater intent to attack. Iran has made several interdictions

in this regard. The most prominent of these was in September when it claimed to have prevented over 30 simultaneous bombings across Iran by arresting Daesh-linked operatives – some with links in Syria, the Kurdish region of Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. On January 3, Iran witnessed the deadliest twin suicide attacks in Kerman, in which over 100 people were killed and scores were injured. Daesh claimed the attacks and Iran vowed to take revenge.

With quick arrests of reported supporters of the Kerman plot, Iranian officials identified a Tajik national known by his alias Abdollah Tajiki as the ringleader and bombmaker, who they claimed had entered Iran by mid-December from the southeast border of Iran. After making the bombs, he had left before the attacks. The officials also reportedly identified one of the bombers as a 24-year-old with the surname Bozrov who had dual Tajik and Israeli nationalities and believed he had come to Iran from the south-eastern border after months of training by Daesh in Afghanistan. Thus, the Kerman plot seemed to have highlighted the facilitation networks for Daesh in the south-eastern border along Pakistan and connections with potential Daesh trainers in some parts of Afghanistan.

Interestingly, Iran has in the past accused the JAA of cooperation with Kurdish separatists and the JAA has criticised Iran for its intervention in Syria. Following a suicide attack by the JAA on an IRGC convoy in February 2019 resulting in over 47 causal-

ties, though warning Pakistan, IRGC Commander in Chief Mohammad Ali Jafari accused Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Israel of conspiring for such attacks in Iran.

On January 15, Iran mounted missile attacks into Erbil in the Kurdish area of Iraq, apparently killing a well-known Kurdish real estate developer and some civilians. Iran described the site as the "espionage headquarters of Mossad", responsible for attacks on IRGC targets in the region. Do back-to-back strikes by Iran indicate that groups are coordinating across Af-Pak and the Middle East? Though a deeper probe is needed, it is clear that Iran has demonstrated its resolve in chasing targets across Af-Pak as well as the Middle East. This surely raises the threat perception for the region and beyond.

As for Pakistan, a single retaliatory strike against the so-called hub of Baloch groups is unlikely to make much difference to its dire security situation. In 2023, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed over 881 attacks and 2,193 casualties of security forces, while the BLA claimed 247 attacks and 422 casualties of security forces. Pakistan forces have mounted several air strikes and drone strikes into Afghanistan to eliminate TTP hideouts but with no tangible outcome. Already facing hostilities along the Afghan and Indian borders, Pakistan forces seem to have limited bandwidth for direct action.

The writer is a security analyst and former Director General of Police

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Reporters in Gaza who have suffered devastating personal loss, have been swift to return to work. They do not want to be the story. But when so many are dying, it is essential to ask why — and to make clear that the carnage must not continue."

— THE GUARDIAN

Suspend disbelief

The controversy over whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi is qualified to consecrate the temple at Ayodhya is meaningless



RAM RAJYA

BY RAM MADHAV

In 1973, when Swami Satyananda Giri invited Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for the consecration of the Bharat Mata Mandir in Haridwar, she readily agreed and performed the rituals. In the states, it is very common for chief ministers and others to engage in such activity. During his tenure, former chief minister of Chhattisgarh Bhupesh Baghel went on a spree of opening Ram temples in many villages.

Thousands of saints belonging to different orders are going to attend the consecration ceremony. The organisers have decided to restrict the invitations to a few thousand eminent citizens, besides a large number of saints. All the workers involved in the temple construction, too, are being raked up as controversies to mar the occasion.

In

In the Hindu dharma tradition, temples are not merely the "abodes of god" but an institution in themselves. God in Hindu dharma is omnipresent. Temples house the *murtis* of the God, but they perform many other socio-religious functions.

Temples performed five important socio-religious and economic functions – the provision of food, education, healthcare, promotion of traditional art forms and propagation of spiritual values. In the Hindu tradition, they were considered as centres of social cohesion, economic support and cultural revival.

That's why they were always patronised by the kings. South Indian kings like the Cholas, Pandyas and Pallavas to the North Indian royals like the Guptas, Palas, Pratiharas and the various kingdoms of Rajputana (Rajasthan) were known for building great temples in the early and medieval periods of Indian history. Even the first Ram temple at Ayodhya was said to have been built by King Vikramaditya of the Gupta dynasty in 4th century AD.

Hence, the controversy over whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi is qualified to consecrate the temple at Ayodhya is meaningless.

One may argue that the era of kings is over, and we are in a secular democracy. Secularism is not understood as the same in every country. In France, a total rejection of religion in public life is considered secularism, whereas in the UK, the monarch must always publicly pronounce adherence to Anglican Christianity. In the US, Presidents take oath by placing a hand on the Bible held up by a bishop. All those countries are not less secular.

In India, we historically practised the principle of "sary panth samadar" – equal respect to all religions, which became the secular creed here. When KT Shah proposed in the Constituent Assembly that secularism be explicitly mentioned in the Preamble, B R Ambedkar argued against the inclusion of that word since the entire Constitution carried that spirit anyway. Jawaharlal Nehru too suggested that one should "go slow" on that word. It was decided in the end to omit reference to it in the Constitution.

The Somnath temple saga was the first occasion when this concept was put to test. It, too, was rebuilt with support received from the public. However, when the question of its consecration came, a debate ensued between Prime Minister Nehru and President Rajendra Prasad. Ignoring Nehru's remonstrations, Rajendra Babu went ahead and installed the Shiv Linga in the sanctum of the new temple with his own hands. The then President of the Congress Party, P D Tandon, the Rajpramukh Jamsaheb and others were present on that occasion.

Revered Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada mutt, Bharati Tirtha Swami also expressed support, confirming that the ceremony aligns with Hindu rituals. As the mutt also emphatically stated, the criticism of some Shankaracharyas "has nothing to do with the Hindu religion and its rituals, which are being performed as prescribed in our religious books".

Ram is the greatest unifier of our nation. Let's celebrate January 22 in that spirit.

The writer, president, India Foundation, is with the RSS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A PROMISE BROKEN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Unquiet Manipur' (IE, January 19). The victims of the continuing ethnic violence in Manipur, which erupted in May of 2023, have now transcended from civilians to police and security forces. This is a failure of the CM Biren Singh-led BJP government. The current situation also betrays Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance of peace and development to the people of Manipur on the floor of Parliament during the no-trust motion. Contrary to striving for peace, the CM has opened a new controversy over the Kukis' status. This reflects lack of understanding and political will.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

A TEST OF ABILITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Doubly super' (IE, January 19). The suspense about using a double super over as a decider in the case of a tied international T20 cricket match lasts much longer and tests the decision making capability of the captain. He has to decide the three batsmen and one bowler to elect, whom to send as openers, from which end to bowl, and so on. It is interesting that this is only the

second time that a double super over has been used. This includes the IPL match between Mumbai Indians and Punjab. Rohit Sharma was the winning skipper in both.

YG Chouksey, Pune

NOT RAM RAJYA

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'On way to Ayodhya, Ram is omnipresent, jostled by other concerns, uncertainties' (IE, January 19). The excitement over the consecration of the Ram temple on January 22 in Ayodhya marks the triumph of religious extremism. Far from being the crowning glory of a great religion, the Ram mandir is a symbol of the triumph of majoritarian nationalism. As a nation, we have failed to recognise the fact that the BJP's resolve to create Ram Rajya, a Hindu state, isn't a matter of pride for us. Fighting for Hindutva or uniting Hindus for vote banks isn't what Lord Ram preached. Political motives have soared so high that misusing Lord Ram's name is no longer a sin. Today, when the nation is facing gross inequality, creating a Hindu state and labelling it as Ram Rajya isn't going to make it one. Following Lord Ram's principles might

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali



Imran Khan

PAKISTAN

Govt moves SC against verdict on Imran jail trial

Iskamabad: Pakistan's caretaker government on Friday challenged in the Supreme Court the Islamabad High Court's verdict nullifying the jail trial of former prime minister Imran Khan in the cipher case for allegedly leaking state secrets. In its petition filed in Pakistan's Supreme Court, the federal government implored the apex court to overturn the Islamabad High Court's decision, saying that the high court did not evaluate the facts of the case properly. Advocate Rizwan Abbasi submitted the petition on behalf of the federal ministries of law and interior, contending that the IHC order was "not in consonance with the law". PTI

GERMANY

House okays new rules for citizenship

Berlin: German lawmakers on Friday approved legislation easing the rules on gaining citizenship and ending restrictions on holding dual citizenship. It argues the plan will bolster the integration of immigrants and help attract skilled workers. Parliament voted 382-234 for the plan put forward by center-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz's socially liberal coalition, with 23 lawmakers abstaining. The main center-right opposition bloc criticized the project vehemently, arguing that it would cheapen German citizenship. AP

NORTH KOREA

Underwater drone tested says Pyongyang

Soul: North Korea said Friday it has tested a nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by South Korea, the United States and Japan this week, as it continues to blame its rivals for raising tensions in the region. The test of the drone, purportedly designed to destroy naval vessels and ports, came days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared he is scrapping his country's long-standing goal of a peaceful reunification with South Korea and that his country will define South Korea its most hostile enemy. AP

UNITED KINGDOM

London bus fare to be same to ease living cost

London: Most public transport fares in London will remain the same this year, in a move aimed at easing cost-of-living pressures and boosting the retail and hospitality sectors, the city's mayor said on Friday. In London and across Britain, households have tightened their purse strings due to a cost-of-living crisis over the last two years that has pushed up the prices of everything from food to furniture. The cost-of-living crisis continues to hit Londoners, Mayor said. REUTERS

THE WORLD

SOLAR PANELS NOT ABLE TO GENERATE POWER, COULD BE ANGLED WRONG, SAYS SPACE AGENCY

Japan becomes 5th country to land on Moon

REUTERS

TOKYO, JANUARY 19

JAPAN ON Saturday became the fifth country to put a spacecraft on the moon but the probe was not generating solar power, its space agency said, during a mission to prove a "precision" landing technology and revitalise a space programme that has suffered setbacks.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said its Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) landed on the moon's surface at 12:20 a.m. (1520 GMT Friday) and re-established communication with earth, but its solar panels were not able to generate electricity, possibly because they are angled wrong. "SLIM is now operating only on



Celebrations at a public viewing of the SLIM landing at Sagamihara, south of Tokyo early on Saturday. Reuters

its battery, and we are prioritising the transfer of its data onto earth", Hitoshi Kuninaka, head of JAXA's

research centre, told the press. Despite "life-sustaining treatments" such as turning off its

EXPLAINED E. Japan's precision landing bid

DUBBED THE "moon sniper", SLIM attempted to land within 100 metres (328 feet) of its target, versus the conventional accuracy of several kilometres, a technology JAXA says will become a powerful tool in future exploration of hilly moon poles seen as a potential source of oxygen, fuel and water.

take risky actions.

JAXA hopes a shift in the sunlight's angle will hit the panels in a way that can restore its functions, Kuninaka said. "It takes 30 days for the solar angle to change on the moon," Kuninaka said. "When the solar direction changes, and the light shines from a different direction, the light could end up hitting the solar cell."

"Looking at the trace data, SLIM most certainly achieved a landing with 100-metre accuracy," Kuninaka said, although adding it will take about a month to verify it.

Japan is increasingly looking to play a bigger role in space, partnering with ally the United States to counter China. JAXA aims to send an astronaut to moon as part of NASA's Artemis programme.

AFTER TIT-FOR-TAT STRIKES

Pak tells Iran it wants to build security ties, mutual trust

Foreign Ministers hold telephonic talks to cool down regional tension

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, JANUARY 19



Jalil Abbas Jilani; Hossein Amir-Abdollahian

PAKISTAN AND Iran on Friday agreed to "de-escalate the situation" and strengthen coordination on counter-terrorism as the two sides began to pick threads of tattered ties following their tit-for-tat military strikes in each other's territory.

Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani spoke with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on the telephone and expressed his country's desire to "work with Iran based on the spirit of mutual trust and cooperation," Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement.

"The Foreign Minister stressed that respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty must underpin this cooperation," it said. They "agreed that working-level cooperation and close coordination on counter-terrorism and other aspects of mutual concern should be strengthened. They also agreed to de-escalate the situation," the FO said, underscoring the close "brotherly relations" between the two neighbours.

The return of the Ambassadors of the two countries to their respective capitals was also discussed.

In a separate statement earlier, the FO said Foreign Minister Jilani expressed Pakistan's readiness to work with Iran on "all issues and underscored the need for closer cooperation on security issues".

The positive development came after Pakistan conducted "precision military strikes" against what it called "terrorist hideouts" in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province that killed 9 people on Thursday. The attack was seen as retaliation to Iranian missile and drone attacks on Israel.



@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

EXPLAINED HEALTH

Use & overuse of antibiotics: why regulator has stepped in

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

THE UNION Health Ministry has urged doctors to write down the exact reason for prescribing antibiotics to patients. It has also asked pharmacists to not dispense these medicines without a valid prescription, as specified under law.

A letter from the Union Director General of Health Services Dr Atul Goel, addressed to the doctors' association earlier this month, said resistance to antibiotics is growing. It added that 4.95 million deaths globally in 2019 were attributable to drug-resistant infections.

This comes after a recent survey by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) showed that on average, 71.9% of patients coming to tertiary care hospitals were prescribed antibiotics. More than half the prescriptions were administered as prophylaxis or preventive medicine before procedures and surgeries.

What happens if antibiotics are over-prescribed?

Dr Purva Mathur, professor of Microbiology and member of the hospital infection control team at the Trauma Centre of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, said excessive use of antibiotics (medicines like Azithromycin and Amoxycillin) can lead to drug-resistant 'superbugs'.

Resistant pathogens can also then circulate through sewer and drinking water routes in a wider population.

Dr Sangeeta Sharma, professor of Neuropharmacology at the Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences, and president of the Delhi Society for Promotion of Rational Use of Drugs, said, "The impact is clearly visible now — common infections are not curable anymore. Earlier, community-acquired infections like tuberculosis were very easy to treat with first-line therapy. Now, even they are multi-drug resistant."

In hospitals, infections are resulting in

longer treatment times and the use of costlier, more toxic antibiotics.

How could the DGHS move help?

Dr Sharma said the small step of writing down the indication for which the medicine is being prescribed helps doctors review their decision on the necessity of antimicrobials.

"It forces doctors to narrow down their suspicion — either through clinical observations or tests — on which pathogen is causing an infection. This, in turn, helps them prescribe narrow-spectrum antibiotics. These antibiotics are targeted to treat certain types of infections instead of affecting every bacterium in the body. If you can work with a needle, why take out the sword?" she said.

When are antimicrobials most commonly misused?

There are two common scenarios in which antimicrobials are misused. "One, when doctors cannot make a diagnosis on whether an

infection is caused by a bacteria or virus and prescribe antibiotics to err on the side of caution. Two, when they know it is a bacterial infection but want to avoid secondary infections. This is where antibiotics can be conserved because very few people get such secondary bacterial infections," Dr Sharma said.

In the case of a patient admitted to hospital, broad-spectrum antibiotics may be prescribed for 48 hours. They can then be tested for which pathogen is causing the infection. The antibiotics need to be switched after that.

Further, a single dose of antibiotics 60 to 120 minutes before surgery is enough to prevent surgical site infections. But doctors end up prescribing antibiotics for 7 to 14 days. If proper sterilisation of equipment and preparation is done, infections are unlikely.

What does the NCDC survey say?

It found that there was only a 10 percent-point difference in antibiotic use between intensive care units, which have the sickest

patients, and other wards. Surprisingly, 55% of the antibiotics were prescribed not for the treatment of an infection, but to prevent one.

"Such a high level of prophylactic use of antibiotics is concerning. While it is not recommended, many physicians prescribe antibiotics to people with viral infections to prevent a supra-added bacterial infection. This is because they are scared that their patients will get an infection, but it needs to be avoided," Dr Mathur said.

The survey found that 57% of antibiotics used were from the watch group, a category of antibiotics used in sicker patients, which are more likely to lead to antimicrobial resistance. This is the second level of antibiotics as per the international classification. The access group of antibiotics resulted in the least antimicrobial infection (38% of antibiotics used). Reserve groups are last-resort antibiotics.

How can deaths due to infections be prevented?

The NCDC report said hospitals should adhere to standard treatment guidelines, have a defined antibiotic policy, and encourage using the access group of medicines where needed. It also suggested avoiding the use of multiple antibiotics. The study recommended that only a single dose or one-day dose of antibiotics be given before any surgery. Post-surgery infections should be treated only after diagnosis.

"There is an urgent need to train people about the harms of excessive antibiotic use and have stewardship programmes in place to change this trend," said Dr Kamini Walia, a senior scientist who coordinates the antimicrobial resistance initiative of the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Dr Chand Wattal, chairperson of the Institute of Clinical Microbiology and Immunology at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, said there is a need to scale up testing facilities and have microbiologists at hospitals. This will ensure that there are fewer empirical prescriptions.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

CHINA'S TOTAL POPULATION FELL IN 2023: FOUR TAKEAWAYS

RISHIKA SINGH
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

CHINA RECORDED 11.1 million deaths and 9 million births in 2023, marking the second consecutive year in which the country's total population has fallen — a phenomenon last witnessed in 1961.

1. Falling TFR

Since 2016, the Total Fertility Rate or TFR (the number of children a woman is expected to bear in her lifetime on average) has been falling in China. This is related to another important concept — replacement rate. It is the number of children a woman has to have in a population on average, to at least replace the present generation in the future.

China's TFR, according to its 2020 Census, was 1.3 births per woman — marginally up from 1.2 in 2010, but way below the replacement rate of 2.1.

2. State policies

China introduced the one-child policy in 1980, forcing couples to have only one child or face harsh penalties, to accelerate economic growth. But birth rates were falling even before this.

In the 1970s, several Five-Year Plans from the Chinese state saw mentions of reducing the birth rate. The policy was widely promoted and forcefully implemented. Throughout this decade, TFR fell. The need for a stringent policy in 1980 was questioned later not just over issues of privacy and the state's overreach, but on whether it was needed at all.

3. Women's agency

There are several other reasons why China's population has stopped growing.

Women's greater education and employment gave them the agency to make decisions about their reproductive health.

CHINA'S POPULATION CONTINUES TO SHRINK



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China. Note: In 2015, China announced that married couples would be allowed to have two children. In 2021, China said it would allow couples to have three children. Graphic: The New York Times

Economic issues also figure in. *The Financial Times* said, "It is a vicious cycle. An economic slowdown should mean young couples delay having children. The resulting decline in fertility rates eventually pushes the economy's productivity rates lower."

4. Possible impact

The working-age population has fallen to 61% of the total population. Life expectancy has also increased for both men and women.

In the short run, it will require greater investments in elderly care. Later, it could lead to increased pressure on the working population to support the elderly and children. This also comes at a time when China's overall economic growth has been slowing.

Government support measures like subsidies for raising children have not made a significant impact so far.

How do the two groups of islands compare as tourism destinations? Why is the Maldives so far ahead, and why does the Lakshadweep MP want 'high-end tourism, but with low volumes'?

LIZ MATHEW & DIVYA A
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's call to tourists to travel to Lakshadweep provoked an extraordinary attack on him by Maldivian government officials, and irate responses by Indians on social media — including announcements that they were cancelling visits to the Maldives — earlier this month.

The Maldives, an archipelago of 1,190 coral islands and sandbanks clustered in 20 odd atolls, sprawls over a patch of North Central Indian Ocean southwest of Kerala and Sri Lanka; Male, the capital, lies about 600 km southwest of Thiruvananthapuram.

Lakshadweep, which translates into Sanskrit and Malayalam as "hundred thousand islands", is a group of 36 coral islands with a total area of only 32 sq km — India's smallest Union Territory. The islands, which are at distances between 220 km and 440 km from Kochi, lie to the north of the Maldives.

Both archipelagos are part of a chain of coralline islands that extends southward beyond the equator to the Chagos archipelago.

How many tourists visit Lakshadweep currently?

No updated data are available, but the numbers are negligible compared to other tourist destinations in India, according to *India Tourism Statistics 2019* published by the Ministry of Tourism. According to the data, 10,435 domestic tourists and 1,313 foreign tourists visited Lakshadweep in 2018; these numbers were 6,620 and 1,027 respectively in 2017.

Basic Statistics 2014, a publication of the Directorate of Planning and Statistics, Lakshadweep, says 5,277 Indians and 398 foreigners arrived in the islands in 2013–14; 7,315 Indians and 437 foreign tourists visited in 2014–15.

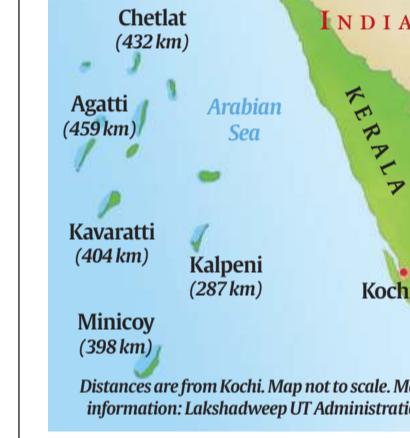
How do these numbers compare with those for the Maldives?

Data on the website of the Maldives Ministry of Tourism show 1,01,626 tourists had arrived in the country until January 17 in 2024 — almost 6,000 arrivals per day on average. This was higher than the 92,848 arrivals until January 17 in 2023, and 76,155 arrivals until January 17, 2022.

More than 1.87 million tourists visited the Maldives in all of 2023, and more than 1.67 million visited in 2022, the data show.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, tourists from

THE ISLANDS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN



India have made up the largest share of visitors, Maldivian government data show. More than 2 lakh Indians visited in 2023 (11.2% of arrivals); in 2022, 2021, and 2020 Indians were 14.4%, 22.1%, and 11.3% of the total respectively.

How did the Maldives become such an attractive destination for tourists?

The Maldives has long invested in tourism. The Maldives tourism master plan 1996–2005 notes that tourism, which started in 1972 with the development of 60 tourist beds on two islands, has been "the most important economic activity" in the country since the 1980s.

Today, the Maldives is an international tourism hotspot. Tourism directly contributes 30% of its GDP, and generates more than 60% of its foreign currency earnings. The country is serviced by 40 carriers from around the world, including Air India, Vistara, and IndiGo that fly to Male from Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kochi.

The Maldives offers visa-free arrivals to its major source markets, which include India, Russia, China, and Kazakhstan. As of January 17, there were 180 resorts, 15 hotels, 811 guesthouses, and 140 safari vessels offering a total of more than 62,000 beds, according to the Maldives tourism ministry.

Often an entire island is occupied by a single resort, offering privacy and luxury to wealthy visitors. Over the years, many of the resorts have gained a reputation for high standards of hospitality.

Why is there such a vast gulf between the Maldives and Lakshadweep?

The Lakshadweep occupies a far smaller area — only 10 islands are inhabited — and the scope for tourism is limited.

However, India has never invested in its tourism potential, in part due to concerns over environmental damage and destruction of local livelihoods.

P P Mohammed Faizal, who has represented Lakshadweep in Lok Sabha since 2014, said the islands simply do not have the capacity and resources to host a large number of tourists, and that the recent calls by celebrities to head to Lakshadweep was the "wrong way".

"We're not in a position to accept a huge influx of tourists because of the fragile ecology and environment," he told *The Indian Express*.

In May 2012, the Supreme Court appointed a panel under Justice R V Raveendran (retd) to look into the environmental and developmental challenges on the islands. The committee recommended that all infrastructure development proposals should be in accordance with an Integrated Island Management Plan, and should be implemented in consultation with elected local self-government bodies.

The report noted the "fragile ecology of the islands and the need for conservation of the corals, lagoons and other ecosystems" and laid down the carrying capacity of each island. Bangaram, the uninhabited island that the Prime Minister visited, has the

largest carrying capacity of 200 cottages. Faizal said people who have been living on the islands for generations are opposed to the administration behaving "as if the land belongs to the government". The Administrator, Praful Patel, has faced protests for his development initiatives, and local groups have got a stay on some of the works from the High Court. "Even if you want to develop the islands, not much land is available," Faizal said.

What tourist infrastructure is available on the islands currently?

Bangaram currently has just 67 cottages. Many places in Kavaratti and Minicoy are yet to be renovated after they fell into disuse during the pandemic. "In Kavaratti, there could be 14 cottages," Faizal said.

Entry to the islands is restricted. "One requires an entry permit issued by Lakshadweep Administration to visit," the administration says on its website.

A small 72-seat aircraft flies between Kochi and Agatti, often only once a day, which caters to both tourists and residents. Only five of the seven passenger ferries that ply between Lakshadweep and Kochi are currently operational. "The passage takes 14 to 18 hours," the administration website says.

The ships together can carry 2,100 people, but not all the five ships are available every day. Only about 1,500–1,900 seats would be available at a time, and only a few ships have some seats reserved for tourists," Faizal said. Local people complain this is inadequate even for their requirements.

Fareed Khan, a property developer and resident, said there has not been much follow-up action after the Lakshadweep Tourism Policy was published in February 2020. "Private, public, and PPP model was allowed in tourism development. Applications were invited from local entrepreneurs to develop tourist homes and resorts in Agatti and Kavaratti. Eleven applications were made, but no final approvals came. We still have to bring in tourists through the permit system, following a complicated documentation process," Khan said.

However, both Faizal and Khan are optimistic, now that the Prime Minister himself has taken an interest. "It looks promising. I have learnt that applications will be invited for four islands, Bangaram, Thirunakkara, Suheli Cheriyakara, and Cheriyam. There could be big projects too," Khan said.

Faizal said: "What we want is high-end tourism, but with low volumes."

Drishti IAS 

General Studies Foundation Batch
(Prelims + Mains)
(Along with Free Online Facility)

Offline Batch **Admissions Open**

8010-440-440 OR Visit Our Karol Bagh Centre at 21, Pusa Road, Delhi.

Nagara style of temple architecture, in which Ram temple is being built

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

THE RAM temple in Ayodhya will be inaugurated on January 22. Designed by Chandrakant Sompura, 81, and his son Ashish, 51, it is being built in the Nagara style of temple architecture.

A 'language' of architecture

The Nagara style emerged some time in the fifth century CE in Northern India. It is seen in juxtaposition to the Dravida style of Southern India, which too emerged around the same time.

The use of the term 'style', however, is debated because of the immense variations observed. Adam Hardy, in *The Temple Architecture of India* (2007), refers to them as "the two great classical 'languages'" of Indian temple architecture. "Languages" seems a [more] suitable term, in that each is a system providing a 'vocabulary', a kit of parts, along

ways being on top of the *garba griha*.

Comparison to Dravida style

The Dravida counterpart to the *shikhara* is the *vimana*. There is, however, a fundamental difference. In the Dravida style temples, *vimanas* are typically smaller than the great gatehouses or *gopurams*, which are the most immediately striking architectural elements in a South Indian temple complex.

Moreover, while *shikhara*s are mentioned in southern Indian architectural texts, they refer to



Nothing Steady About It

SHUBHRA GUPTA

THAT MAIN Atal Hoon would be a stroke-by-stroke retelling of the high points of an illustrious political personage comes as no surprise. But the fact that Ravi Jadhav, the director of the marvellous musical, *Natrang*, reduces this biopic of India's 10th Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to such a rah-rah hagiography is a deep disappointment: the poet-turned-politician, a staunch follower of the RSS, and a committed believer in the concept of the Hindu Rashtra, was a colourful, charismatic character, and this film doesn't do justice to his multiple facets.

For a section of today's audience, just the fact that the film — more a step-by-step handbook of how the Hindu Right came to power rather than a deep, layered dive into Atal Bihari's life and times — exists, will be cause for celebration. Coming as it does, right before the Ram Mandir inauguration, with the Lok Sabha elections down the road, the timing, for the ruling dispensation, can't be more perfect.

But what we would have liked is a much more rigorous, demanding biography: how did Atal, the schoolboy who became tongue-tied on a stage, become such a skilled orator? How did one little lecture from his father (Piyush Mishra) do the job? How did young Atal become a member of his *shakha*, learning to twirl the *lathi*, while being imbued by the ideology of the Sangh? He became a young man when India was still under the British Raj, and patriotism was in the air, but what stirred his blood, other than his beautiful classmate Rajkumari (Ekta Kaul)?

Pankaj Tripathi, in and as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was born to play this part. His command over Hindi, and the rhythms of his speech are so hypnotic that we get swept away, but even an actor of Tripathi's calibre can't do much with such a reductive script. What we could have got is a rounded portrait of a budding *neta* who was instrumen-

MAIN ATAL HOON

★

Director: Ravi Jadhav
Cast: Pankaj Tripathi, Piyush Mishra, Raja Sevak, Ekta Kaul, Daya Shankar Pandey, Pramod Pathak, Payal Nair, Harshad Kumar

So enamoured is the film with its primary subject that all other figures within its own party who rose to prominence around that time are turned into ciphers: Lal Krishna Advani (Raja Sevak) is the most unfairly dealt with, becoming 'the friend' who introduces the hard-working Vajpayee to the magic of cinema, and little else; the actors playing Arun Jaitley, Sushma Swaraj, Pramod Mahajan barely get a look-in, as Vajpayee's highlights — the nuclear bomb, the Lahore bus, and the Kargil war — get maximum play. Atal's relationship with Rajkumari and her family, and the menage they created, is so sanitised — being turned into more his duty, than passion — that you cannot take it seriously, even if Kaul is quite lovely, leaving quite an impact.

What we are left with is Tripathi, who nails Vajpayee's characteristic neck-shake and flinging-of-the-hands, while orating in and out of Parliament. He is more character than caricature, and that's the only reason to sit through this two-and-a-half-hour film.



Dry as Dust

ANYONE BUT YOU ★★

Director: Will Gluck

Cast: Glen Powell, Sydney Sweeney, Alexandra Shipp, Gata, Dermot Mulroney, Charlie Fraser

edy, it is not smart, not funny, not appealing and almost desperate in its attempts to be some of the above. Powell has at least a twinkle in his eyes that promises a charm. Sweeney is a complete misfit, and as she protests about trying to figure out her life, including whether she wants to go through with a law degree, she comes across as simply confused, not charmingly so.

There are several reasonable people waiting around with their hearts on offer for these two lovebirds to make up their minds. And Fraser's Margaret, charismatic without even trying, is among those who deserve better.

Love and hate is a thin dividing line — the well-known truism is the fallback line of two characters in the film as they try to figure out Ben and Bea. Where *Anyone But You* lands, though, is on the thin dividing line between love and indifference. Plus Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* as apparently inspiration.

Eventually, though, everything considered, it must still come down to 'boy meets girl'. And when this boy Ben (Powell) meets this girl Bea (Sweeney), not a single sinew of bodies on display shows any fire.

A bland, ticking-all-boxes kind of rom-

Buzz Kill

THE BEEKEEPER ★

Director: David Ayer
Cast: Jason Statham, Josh Hutcherson, Jeremy Irons, Emmy Raver-Lampman

NOW WOULD be a good time to tell a story on the crooked ways of the people in the White House. However, Jason Statham is not about to get all serious on us. So there is the US President, and there is the US President's drug-snorting, scuffle-less son, but what *The Beekeeper* is about is Statham and Statham alone, plus how many things one can throw

at the charismatic action star without him needing to catch his breath.

It starts out with Statham's ex-government agent actually raising some bees, extracting honey and decimating hornets, in a quiet corner of a countryside, using the barn of a lovely old lonely widow. The two strike a friendship. And, hence, when that woman is scammed out of her life's savings, by a bunch of indiscriminate city slickers, Statham as in Adam Clay as in *The Beekeeper* decides to sting back. Asking no questions, for needing no answers, Clay sets about killing people and burning down buildings, working his way right up the hierarchy till he reaches the doors of, you know, who.

Hutcherson plays against type as the bad



ass son who should know better now that mom is in the White House. While Jeremy Irons hangs around in a thankless role as an ex-CIA man and now the security in-charge and the keeper of secrets of the President's

son. Even Minnie Driver turns up as a blink-and-miss CIA operative.

There is no humour to relieve the violence, though Statham has proved proficient in that department, and there is barely any pause in the relentless fighting. Worse, while 'Beekeepers' is meant to be the name of one of those US Black Ops programmes that work under the radar, and Clay just one among them now retired, he clearly loves his job enough to raise bees and keep dropping inane bee references. Queen bee, slave bee, queen slayer... you name it, and you have it. One of those bulky sorts blind to the powers of Clay even threatens him: "To bee or not to bee, that is the bloody question." Let's just say he gets his stinging answer.

STREAMING WATCH LIST

BY ALAKA SAHANI



IN BED WITH VICTORIA

MUBI

In Bed With Victoria by French auteur Justine Trier, who won the Palme d'Or at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival, follows Victoria, a criminal lawyer, who bumps into her friend Vincent and Sam, a former drug dealer she defended. When Vincent is accused of attempted murder, Victoria accepts to defend him and hires Sam as an au pair, marking the beginning of troubled times.



THE KITCHEN

NETFLIX

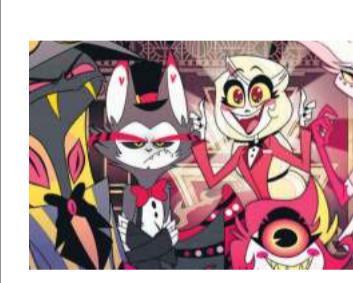
Set in 2044, Oscar-winner Daniel Kaluuya's directorial debut takes us to a dystopian future when all forms of social housing have been eradicated and London's working classes have been forced to live in temporary accommodation on the outskirts. Called *The Kitchen*, London's last village harbouring residents that refuse to move out, Izzi, a resident close to escaping but faces tough decisions when young Benji enters his life.



TWO SINNERS AND A MULE

LIONSGATE PLAY

Kicked out of their town, two women come across an injured bounty hunter. Having done their best to nurse him back to health, they decide to join him on his mission to track down Gila Grimes, a ruthless, murdering bandit, but for a 50/50 share of the bounty. Starring Cam Gigandet, Chantelle Albers, and Hannah James, this film takes you back to the Wild West with its action, camaraderie, and old-fashioned gun-slinging.



HAZBIN HOTEL S1

PRIME VIDEO

The eight-episode series created by Vivienne Medrano follows Charlie, the princess of Hell, as she pursues rehabilitating demons to reduce overpopulation in her kingdom. In this animated musical comedy, after yearly extermination imposed by angels, Charlie opens a hotel in the hopes that patrons will 'check out' into Heaven. While most of Hell mocks her goal, her devoted partner Vaggie, and their first test subject, adult film star Angel Dust, stick by her side.



SL

SENSEX: 71,683.23 ▲ 496.37 (0.7%) NIFTY: 21,622.40 ▲ 160.15 (0.75%) NIKKEI: 35,963.27 ▲ 497.10 HANG SENG: 15,308.69 ▼ 83.1 FTSE: 7,484.45 ▲ 25.36 DAX: 16,587.74 ▲ 20.39



GOLD

₹ 63,000



USD RATE

₹ 83.06



OIL

\$ 78.46



SILVER

₹ 76,000

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of January 19

International market data till 1900 IST

Sebi probing 'mule accounts', 3 IPO applications on the radar

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU

MUMBAI, JANUARY 19

SECURITIES AND Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is probing cases of mule accounts and inflated initial public offering (IPO) applications which are meant to jack up share sale subscription numbers, its Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch said on Friday.

There are three cases which have come to the notice of the capital markets regulator, Buch said, without divulging any further details. Some of the merchant bankers who are involved in such unauthorised activities are also under Sebi's radar.

"Mule accounts...we all know how those work. We are now getting evidence and data about it," Buch said while speaking at an event organised by the Association of Investment Bankers of India (AIBI).

The second is in terms of inflating the IPO application numbers to give an impression of high subscriptions. So, either people who withdraw their (IPO) applications later or even



Sebi Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch. File

worse, apply in a manner that their applications get rejected. So, you put in hundreds of crores of applications with multiple PANs (permanent account numbers) knowing that they will get rejected," Buch said.

These are the kind of practices which are being observed and the regulator has data on it, she said.

A mule account includes a trading account maintained with a stock broker or a dematerialised or bank account linked with such trading account in the

name of a person, where the account is effectively controlled by another person.

The chairperson said Sebi is unhappy about such malpractices, and will soon come out with some directions to crack down on them.

The regulator has been able to detect a pattern in the kind of merchant bankers who indulge in such activities on a frequent basis.

"There are three cases before us. We would need much more data to be able to assess as to

what would be the next step in this," she said.

On IPO investments, Buch said data shows that the percentage of flippers (investors who exit a company within a short period of time after the listing date) within a week is high.

In 2023, 57 domestic corporates raised Rs 49,434 crore through main board IPOs.

"The percentage of people who flip in the first week in any IPO in the NII (non-institutional investor) category, which is high net worth (HNI) category, is 68 per cent, and in the retail category, which is less than Rs 2 lakh, it is 43 per cent," Buch said.

After one month of the listing date, 76 per cent of NII and 52 per cent of retail investors exit a company, she said.

Talking about IPO pricing, Buch said the price discovery mechanism of IPOs currently is imperfect.

She suggested that a retail investor who wants to hold shares for a reasonable period should wait until the share price of a company stabilises after listing or possibly wait until the first set of quarterly results.

PM INAUGURATES BOEING CAMPUS

'Companies no longer have to wait to manufacture first fully-manufactured aircraft of India'

SANATH PRASAD
BENGALURU, JANUARY 19

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Friday said that firms no longer need to wait for a longer period to construct India's first fully designed and manufactured aircraft, given India's strong 'Make In India' policy and stable governance.

Modi was speaking after inaugurating the new state-of-the-art Boeing India Engineering & Technology Center (BIETC) campus in Devanahalli near Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru.

"We have to speed up the process of establishing the aircraft manufacturing ecosystem in India. We have a robust network of MSMEs, talent pool, stable governance and strong Make In India policy. This makes it a win-win situation for all the sectors. I am hopeful that aircraft manufacturers no longer need to wait for more time to build India's first fully designed and manufactured aircraft," the PM said.

Built with an investment of Rs 1,600 crores, the 43-acre campus at Devanahalli near Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru is Boeing's largest such investment outside the US. The Boeing's new campus in India is expected to become a cornerstone for partnership with the vibrant startup, private and government ecosystem in India, and help develop next generation products and services for the global aerospace and defence industry.

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

fleet.

The 737 MAX family of aircraft has had a rather turbulent past, and the latest Alaska Airlines incident has just added to Boeing's woes. Launched with much fanfare by Boeing a few years ago, the 737 MAX family of aircraft suffered a major blow when two aircraft crashed within a period of six months between October 2018 and March 2019, leading to its grounding by regulators all over the world.

After months of investigations, rectifications, and testing, the FAA cleared the 737 MAX in November 2020, followed by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency giving its nod in January 2021. The DGCA waited for much longer, allowing the 737 MAX to take to the skies only in August 2021, making India one of the last major aviation markets to allow the aircraft to operate.

Over the next couple of years, even as 737 MAX aircraft started winning the trust of airlines and aviation regulators globally, the aircraft's production was hit time and again due to problems with quality and specifications of certain parts from suppliers.

mid-air plug door blowout that led to a section of the fuselage breaking away, causing decompression in the cabin and leaving a door-sized hole in plane's fuselage at an altitude of around 16,000 feet.

Following the incident, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grounded all MAX 9 aircraft in the US, and announced a "rigorous inspection and maintenance" as a necessary step before deciding on the return of the planes to service. "The safety of the flying public, not speed, will determine the timeline for returning these aircraft to service," the FAA said in a statement on Wednesday. In view of the incident, a number of carriers with MAX 9 planes in other countries also grounded the aircraft.

Although India does not have any MAX 9 jets in service, safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) mandated a one-time inspection of emergency exits on all their MAX 8 aircraft. The regulator later said that the checks were done satisfactorily with no adverse findings. Air India Express, Akasa Air, and SpiceJet have MAX 8 aircraft in its

fleet.

The 737 MAX family of aircraft has had a rather turbulent past, and the latest Alaska Airlines incident has just added to Boeing's woes. Launched with much fanfare by Boeing a few years ago, the 737 MAX family of aircraft suffered a major blow when two aircraft crashed within a period of six months between October 2018 and March 2019, leading to its grounding by regulators all over the world.

After months of investigations, rectifications, and testing, the FAA cleared the 737 MAX in November 2020, followed by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency giving its nod in January 2021. The DGCA waited for much longer, allowing the 737 MAX to take to the skies only in August 2021, making India one of the last major aviation markets to allow the aircraft to operate.

Over the next couple of years, even as 737 MAX aircraft started winning the trust of airlines and aviation regulators globally, the aircraft's production was hit time and again due to problems with quality and specifications of certain parts from suppliers.

Akasa Air announces plan to start flights from Noida international airport

Hyderabad: Fledgling airline Akasa Air and the upcoming Noida International Airport (NIA) on Friday entered a strategic partnership, paving the way for the former to operate flights from the new airport, which is expected to start operations before the end of this year. With this, Akasa Air has become the second carrier to sign up for operations from the NIA.

In November, the country's largest carrier IndiGo had inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with NIA, becoming the airport's launch carrier.

As per the Akasa Air-NIA agreement, which was inked at Wings India 2024 in Hyderabad, the airline will base aircraft at the

full report on [www.indianexpress.com](#)

earlier this month, an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX 9 plane operating the flight 1282 between Portland and Ontario (in California) made an emergency landing soon after take-off after a

Q3 CORPORATE EARNINGS

RIL's net up 10.9% as digital & retail arms deliver strong performance

Jio reported rise of 11.6 % in net profit

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JANUARY 19

AIDED BY profits posted by digital and retail arms, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), the largest listed company in terms of market capitalisation, reported a 10.9-per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 19,641 crore for the quarter ended December 2023 as against Rs 17,067 crore in the same period last year.

The net profit (attributable to the owners of the company) rose 9.3 per cent to Rs 17,265 crore in the third quarter (Q3FY24) as against Rs 15,792 crore a year ago. Revenue from operations rose 3.2 per cent to Rs 248,160 crore in Q3 from Rs 240,532 last year.

Jio Platforms Ltd, RIL's digital

arm, made an 11.6 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 5,445 crore during the December quarter (Rs 4,881 crore last year) and a revenue of Rs 32,510 crore (Rs 29,195 crore).

Reliance Retail Venture Ltd (RRVL), the retail subsidiary of RIL, posted a net profit of Rs 3,165 crore in the latest quarter as against Rs 2,400 crore a year ago and revenue of Rs 83,063 crore (Rs 67,623 crore).

"Jio has completed in India the fastest rollout of True 5G services anywhere in the world. Every city, town, and village in the country is now equipped with high-speed digital connectivity, which will usher in a new era of unparalleled digital accessibility and technology-led growth," RIL Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani said.

The oil and gas segment posted its highest ever quarterly earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA). "KG D6 is now contributing 30 per cent of India's gas production, fuelling its transition towards a greener and cleaner tomorrow. The O2C (oil-to-chemical) segment delivered resilient performance aided

by operational flexibility and strong domestic demand. Reliance has become the first Indian company to chemically recycle pyrolysis oil into circular polymers," he said.

Revenue from RIL's oil-to-chemicals business declined by 2.4 per cent to Rs 141,096 crore (\$17.0 billion) primarily on account of lower price realisation led by 5.3 per cent decline in average Brent crude oil prices. Crude oil benchmarks declined due to concerns of global economic slowdown and seasonal lower demand. Crude supply remained adequate despite headline production cuts by OPEC nations, it said.

RIL shares closed almost flat at Rs 2,735.05 on the BSE on Friday. It has risen 36 per cent from the 52-week low of Rs 2,012.14.

Paytm narrows losses to ₹221.7 cr

New Delhi: Fintech company One97 Communications, which operates under the Paytm brand, on Friday saw narrowing of losses to Rs 221.7 crore for the October-December quarter. The losses stood at Rs 392.1 crore in the year-ago period. The revenue from operations jumped over 38 per cent year-on-year to Rs 2,850.5 crore in the third quarter of 2023-24. PTI

UltraTech Q3 net profit grows 67%

New Delhi: UltraTech Cement Ltd on Friday reported a 67 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,774.78 crore for the December quarter, helped by lower fuel and raw material costs as well as higher sales and operational efficiencies.

BRIEFLY

NSE, BSE open today in lieu of January 22

New Delhi: The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) will have full trading sessions on Saturday. Trading across equities, debt and money markets is closed on Monday due to a public holiday in Maharashtra. AGENCIES

Kotecha to lead PepsiCo India

New Delhi: In a leadership re-jig, food & beverage major PepsiCo on Friday said Jagrut Kotecha will lead the India business as the CEO, while the incumbent Ahmed El Sheikh will assume the charge of the Middle East business unit. PTI

India sets up alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality

BARUN JHA
DAVOS, JANUARY 19

INDIA On Thursday announced here a new alliance for global good, gender equity and equality, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, with the WEF Founder and Chairman Klaus Schwab offering to partner this initiative with full support.

The announcement was made at an India Reception on the sidelines of the WEF Annual Meeting, hosted by apex industry chamber CII and attended by union ministers Smriti Irani and Hardeep Singh Puri as well as WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab, among others.

The idea of this alliance emerged from the G20 Leaders' Declaration and India's abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development as propounded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said.

As a follow-up to the activities

GLOBAL ECONOMY, TRADE MOVING TOWARDS NORMALISATION, YET FAR FROM NORMAL: WTO DG

Davos: As the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting drew to a close, global leaders on Friday said the economy and trade appeared to be moving towards normalisation but were yet expected to be far from normal. WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said the global trade was weak in 2023 before seeing an uptick in the last quarter.

"We have been more optimistic about 2024, and I feel, we are moving towards normalisation, but I still don't see it returning to a normal fully," she said at a panel discussion on 'The global economic outlook' on the last day of the WEF Annual Meeting 2024 here.

The announcement was made at an India Reception on the sidelines of the WEF Annual Meeting, hosted by apex industry chamber CII and attended by union ministers Smriti Irani and Hardeep Singh Puri as well as WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab, among others.

The idea of this alliance emerged from the G20 Leaders' Declaration and India's abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development as propounded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said.

"Prime Minister Modi has not only given a high growth rate and contained inflation but has also ensured food security to 800 million Indian citizens and also sup-

ported people overseas. This alliance is about the global good, as the name suggests," she said.

Irani lauded the prime minister's governance agenda in bringing out a social revolution in the country, keeping women at the centre of good governance.

"It is a very strong support to India," she said.

"Prime Minister Modi has not only given a high growth rate and contained inflation but has also ensured food security to 800 million Indian citizens and also sup-

ported people overseas. This alliance is about the global good, as the name suggests," she said.

Irani lauded the prime minister's governance agenda in bringing out a social revolution in the country, keeping women at the centre of good governance.

"It is a very strong support to India," she said.

"Prime Minister Modi has not only given a high growth rate and contained inflation but has also ensured food security to 800 million Indian citizens and also sup-

ported people overseas. This alliance is about the global good, as the name suggests," she said.

Irani lauded the prime minister's governance agenda in bringing out a social revolution in the country, keeping women at the centre of good governance.

"It is a very strong support to India," she said.

"Prime Minister Modi has not only given a high growth rate and contained inflation but has also ensured food security to 800 million Indian citizens and also sup-

ported people overseas. This alliance is about the global good, as the name suggests," she said.

Irani lauded the prime minister's governance agenda in bringing out a social revolution in the country, keeping women at the centre of good governance.

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Kiran Kumar S/o Vijay Kumar Meshram, R/o flate-No.202, Second-floor, Saraswati apartment, pocket-6, Vasant Kunj, South-West, Delhi-110070, have changed my name Kiran Kumar Meshram to Kiran Kumar, for all future purposes

0040709171-1

I, Khanna Chahat Mohit W/o, Mohit Anil Khanna, R/o-6/302, Second-Apartments, Mayur Vihar, Phase-I, Extension, New-Ashok Nagar Vasundhara-enclave, East Delhi-110096, have changed my name to Richa Khanna

0040709151-2

I, Jitender Popli S/O R K Popli, R/o B-273 B Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, D.K. Mohan Garden S.O, West Delhi, Delhi-110059, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Shiva Nand Bhairava.

0070884222-1

I, Gagan Chauhan S/o Binesh Chauhan R/o 172, Dhaka Village, GTB Nagar, Delhi-110009, declare that the name of my mother has been wrongly written as Geeta Chauhan in my educational document. The actual name of my mother is mridula. The above two names viz Mridula & Geeta Chauhan one & the same person

0040709153-1

I, Davinder Kumar S/O Sh. Madan Lal R/o J7/24, Ground Floor, Rajouri Garden J-6, West Delhi-110027 have changed my name from Davinder Kumar Chana to Davinder Kumar for all purpose.

0070884156-1

I, Bhairavi Devi Rai W/O Khima Nand Lal R/O, House No.-82, Purnigiri Road Thuyal Khera, Champawat, Uttarakhand-263209, have changed my name from BAIRAVI RAI to BAIRAVI DEVI RAI for all future purposes.

0070884144-1

I, Anju W/O Jitender Kumar, R/o House No- 102, Taimoor Nagar, New Friends Colony, South Delhi, Delhi-110025. I have changed the name of my minor Son Tavish aged about 4 Years and He shall hereafter be known as Shourya

0070884202-1

I, APRAJITA SINGH C/o Ajay Kumar Singh R/o D-183 Green House Apartment, Flat.No.102, Street.No.4, Near Krishna Dairy, Patel Garden Extn. Sector-15, Kakrola, South West Delhi, Delhi-110078 have declared that in my education certificate my name is mentioned as KUMARI APRAJITA SINGH instead of APRAJITA SINGH. In future I will be known as APRAJETA SINGH for all purposes, which may be amended accordingly.

0070884234-1

I, Yash Pal S/o Sh. Pappu Kumar R/o CN-254, Chahat Ram And Bhadana Mohalla, Village Dallupura, East Delhi, Delhi-110096 have changed my name to Yashpal Singh for all purposes.

0040709147-3

I, Subodh Kumar S/o Bharat Prasad Jaiswal R/o House No.-326, Sector-23, Gurgaon, Haryana - 122017, have changed my name to Subodh Kumar Jaiswal

0070884216-1

I, Shubhranshu Tripathi S/o Rakesh Tripathi R/o House No-69, Gali No-5, A-Block, Near Shiv Shakti Shani Mandir, Khazuri Khas, Dayalpur, Delhi-110094, have changed my name to Shubhranshu Rakesh Tripathi

0070884226-1

I, Rishabh S/o Ved Prakash R/o Flat No 904, Urvashi-1, Amrapali Royal, Vaibhav Khand, Indirapuram, Uttar Pradesh-201014 have changed my name to Rishabh Gupta.

0070884196-1

I, Mangi Lal Garoo S/O Mana Ram, R/o Khandi, Pali, Rajasthan-306421, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Mangi Lal Guroo.

0070884163-1

I, Rishabh Kumar alias Rishabh Kumar Mittal S/o Shri Kishan Mittal R/o Flat No.1, Nav Shakti Sadan Apartment, Sector-13, Rohini, Delhi-110085 have changed my name to Rishabh Mittal for all purposes.

0040709169-1

I, Mangi Lal Garoo S/O Mana Ram, R/o Khandi, Pali, Rajasthan-306421, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Mangi Lal Guroo.

0070884163-1

I, Rishabh Kumar Mittal S/o Shri Kishan Mittal R/o Flat No.1, Nav Shakti Sadan Apartment, Sector-13, Rohini, Delhi-110085 have changed my name to Rishabh Mittal for all purposes.

0040709169-1

I, Parul D/o Sh. Jagat Singh R/o H.No-B-56, Street No.1, Near Sarvada Modern School, Sadatpur Extn., Karawal Nagar, Dayalpur, North East Delhi, Delhi-110094 have changed my name to Parul Singh for all purposes.

0040709147-4

I, Harpal Singh Chouhan S/o Gyan Singh R/o B-72, Yadav Enclave, Gali No.08, Vikas Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 have changed my name to Amit Singh Chouhan for all purposes.

0040709147-1

I, Amit Singh Chouhan S/o Harpal Singh R/o B-72, Yadav Enclave, Gali No.08, Vikas Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 have changed my name to Amit Singh Chouhan for all purposes.

0040709147-2

I, Mohammed Asim S/o Mohammed Zaheer R/o 475-76, Chitla Gate, Chawri Bazar, Delhi-110006 have changed my name to Mohd Asim S/o Mohd Zaheer for all purposes.

0040709222-1

I, Arvind Kumar, S/O Shri Brahamdev Mahto aged about 47 Years, resident of House No. 35A, Tola Patna, Amari, Amaridih, Begusarai, Bihar-848202 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that I do hereby wholly renounce, relinquish and abandon the use of my former name of Devendra Prasad Singh so that I may hereafter be called, known and distinguished by my assumed name of Arvind Kumar for all future purposes.

0040709206-1

I, ASHRAF S/O YAMIN, R/O HOUSE NO-Y-1047,MANGOL PURI, DELHI-110083 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM ASHRAF TO MOHAMMAD ASHRAF

0070884166-1

I, ABHIT S/O RAVINDER KUMAR R /o 117/22 Shiv Nagar Pataudi Road Gurgaon Haryana have changed my name to ABHIT YADAV for all purposes

0050234767-1

I, PROMILA D/O-SURESH CHAND SHARMA, R/O-C-29,DDA-LIG-FLATS,G.T.B ENCLAVE,DELHI,NORTH EAST,DELHI-110093, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO PROMILA SHARMA,FOR ALL,FUTURE PURPOSES.

0040709217-2

I, hitherto known as DHARMENDER KUMAR alias DHARMENDER.son of,MAHENDER SHANI, residing at,Bal Sahyog,Minto-Road, Connaught-Place,New Delhi-110001,have changed my name and shall hereinafter be known as DHARMENDER KUMAR.

0040709229-6

I, hitherto known as AAKANKSHA GUPTA alias GAARVI JAIN,D/O-JAI KISHAN GUPTA,W/O RAJESH KUMAR JAIN,R/O 65/81,1ST FLOOR,NEW ROHTAK-ROAD, KAROL-BAGH,DELHI-100005,have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as GAARVI JAIN. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

0040709230-2

I, Chandrakal Vishwakarma, W/o,Mehar singh Vishwakarma,R/o,E-86,Shastri market, Jhuggi,south moti-bagh south-west,Delhi. 110021,have changed my name to Maya/vishwakarma,for all,future purposes.

0040709232-6

I, PRAVEEN KUMAR,S/O JAGANNATH PRASAD, R/O,BURJ WALA KUAN,HATHRAS,UTTAR PRADESH-204101,changed my name to PRAVEEN KUMAR VARSHNEY.

0040709233-4

I, NIRANJAN S/o Beer Singh,R/o H-No-127, Chilla-Village,Mayur-Vihar Phase-I,Delhi-110091,have changed my name Nirajan Singh,for all purposes.

0040709233-7

I, VIJAY MALHOTRA S/O-GIAN CHAND MALHOTRA, R/O,POCKET-A/36,SECTOR-03,ROHINI,DELHI-110085,have changed my name to VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA.

0040709233-2

I, My old name Rohtash changed to new name as Rohtash Singh vide Affidavit No. IN-UP3934653410086W Dated-18/01/2024 0070884237-1

I, Tripti D/o Sh.Ravinder Kumar,R/o 16/6, Shakti Nagar,Delhi-110007,have change my name to Tripti Mittal.

0040709229-3

I, Sunit Manocha S/o Sardar Lal,R/o 165 Anand-vihar Pitampura,New Delhi-110034, Have changed my name to Sumeet Manocha,for all purposes.

0040709214-4

I, Shalini Goel,W/o-Nishesh Goel,R/o-30,Vaishali Enclave,Sarswati vihar,Pitampura,Delhi-110034,have changed my name,from Shalini Aggarwal,to Shalini Goel,for all future purposes.

0040709256-1

I, Shalhki Mohmmad Zaki,S/O Shikha Mohammed Shahi,R/o 6-B,Ataur Rehman Lane.Under Hill Road,Civil-Lines,Delhi-110054,has been changed my name to Shaikh Mohammed Zaki,for all purposes.

0040709217-3

I, Shahina Khan Grover,D/o Abdul Wahed Khan,R/o A-916,Jal-Vayu Towers,Sector-56,Gurugram,Haryana-122001,have changed my name to Shaheena Khan,for all purposes.

0040709256-8

I, Saroj Bal Gupta,W/o,Suresh Chandra Gupta,H/o-34, Opposite-Vandana International School, Dwarka,Delhi-110075.Changed my name to Saroj Gupta.

0040709217-4

I, Sanjeev Singhal,S/O Mahavir Prasad,R/O-C-959,Arjun Nagar,Kota Mubarakpur,New Delhi-110003,Have Changed my Name to Sanjeev Kumar.

0040709214-7

I, SUSHIL GOGIA S/O SHIV DUTT R/O 110/A,A-6,JWALAHERI,PASCHIM VIHAR,DELHI-110063.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUSHIL KUMAR.

0040709214-2

I, SUNITA RANI MALHOTRA/SUNITA KUMARI,W/O VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA R/O,POCKET-F,22/3,SECTOR-3,ROHINI, DELHI-110085,have changed my name to SUNITA MALHOTRA.

0040709233-3

I, Amit Singh Chouhan S/o Harpal Singh R/o B-72, Yadav Enclave, Gali No.08, Vikas Nagar, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 have changed my name to Amit Singh Chouhan for all purposes.

0040709147-1

I, Mohammed Asim S/o Mohammed Zaheer R/o 475-76, Chitla Gate, Chawri Bazar, Delhi-110006 have changed my name to Mohd Asim S/o Mohd Zaheer for all purposes.

0040709222-1

I, SUMAN PARKASH W/O MR. RAVI PARKASH, R/O Q-1, NIVEDITA KUNJ,R.K. PURAM, SECTOR-10, NEW DELHI-110022, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SUMAN PRAKASH

0040709204-1

I, SONALI GOGIA W/O SUSHIL KUMAR R/O 110/A,A-6, JWALAHERI,PASCHIM VIHAR,DELHI-110063.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO SONALI.

0040709214-3

I, SHALINI AKA RADHA TARAPRAKASH NAMDEO,W/O-MUDIT VERMA, ADDRESS-B-90, flat.no.3D,2nd-floor,,Nangal dewat,Vasant Kunj-110070,changed my name to SHALINI NAMDEO.

0040709214-8

I, DEVENDER,S/o RAM SAKAL,R/O,C-5,A, PANDAV NAGAR,NEAR-RADHA KRISHNA MANDIR,LAXMI-NAGAR,DELHI-110092, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME SAIMA IBRAHIM TO SAIMA FAISAL,FOR FUTURE.

0040709214-5

I, Rishabh,S/o Sanjeev Kumar,R/o/C-959, Arjun Nagar,Kota Mubarakpur,New Delhi-110003,Have Changed my Name to Rishabh Singh.

0040709214-6

I, Renu Kaushik,W/o Vipin Kumar Kaushik,resident of,E-174, Galaxy-Vega, Tech Zone-IV, Greater Noida (UP)PIN-201318,have changed my name to Renu Kaushik to Renu Sharma vide-Affidavit dated-18.01.2024.

0040709214-10

I, Ramesh Kumar,S/o-Mulkh raj Address- F-2634, first floor palam vihar choma(62)Gurgaon,Haryana-122017,changed my name to Ramesh Kumar Kapoor.

0040709232-3

I, RASHMI KAPOOR D/O D K ARORA R/o,House.No-1/21/29 DLF Phase-III Nanthupur(67) Gurgaon Haryana-122002, have changed my name to RASHMI AURORA.

0040709256-3

I, Rishabh,S/o Hemant Rohra,R/o/9-16,Single Story,Near Hanuman Mandir,Ramesh Nagar,West Delhi,Delhi-110015,have changed my name to Maya/vishwakarma,for all purposes.

0040709266-3

I, Poonam w/o Hemant Rohra,R/o/9-16,Single Story,Near Hanuman Mandir,Ramesh Nagar,West Delhi,Delhi-110015,have changed my name to Poonam Rohra,for all purposes.

0040709266-3

I, PRAVEEN KUMAR,S/O JAGANNATH PRASAD, R/O,BURJ WALA KUAN,HATHRAS,UTTAR PRADESH-204101,changed my name to PRAVEEN KUMAR VARSHNEY.

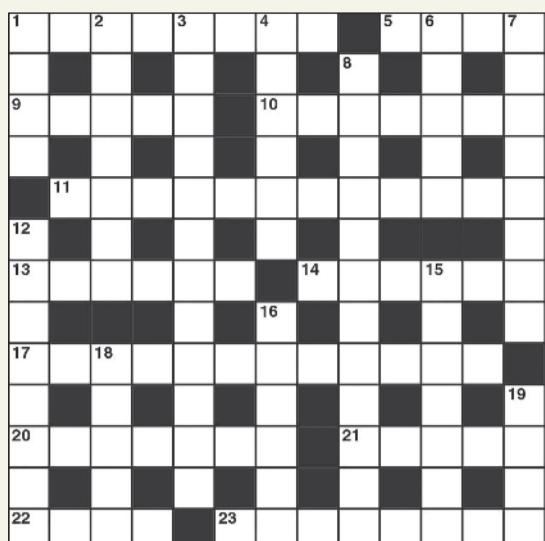
0040709233-4

I, NAVIKAHL R/O 1/1,Baroda Road,Ward No.20,Kath Mandi,Gohana,Sonipat,Haryan-a-131301,have changed my name to NAVIT KUMAR.

0040709230-1

I, NAVIT GOELS/O RAM CHHAIL,R/O 1,Baroda Road,Ward No.20,Kath Mandi,Gohana,Sonipat

CROSSWORD 5266



ACROSS

- The prototype of an oil rig installation (8)
- Stage favourite's comeback (4)
- Flying heart specialist (5)
- A sunny spot? (7)
- Nautical version of rock'n'roll (5,3,4)
- Call for a strike? (6)
- A lot comes under it (6)
- They help people grow better (5,7)
- Not much spoken about as space travel is? (7)
- A doctor goes round the French scene of massacre (5)
- Scattered snow about (4)
- End rivet wrongly fixed upside down (8)

DOWN

- Unrepeatable start of fairy tale (4)
- I'm the type to make an impression (7)
- Instruct one in tract I'd put out (12)
- Disturbance produced by a very loud fish! (6)
- Foreign capital coming from Kyoto (5)
- Request written with certain enjoyment (8)
- Not suitable for use by quick talkers? (4,8)
- Sustained response to applause for the archers (8)
- Biting witticism about right and wrong? (7)
- Fiddle by mixing oil in French wine (6)
- This joint is below ground (5)
- Note antique and valuable stuff (4)

Solutions Crossword 5265 Across: 1 Pilgrimage, 8 Nurse, 9 Coastal, 10 Gambol, 11 Cestus, 12 Fullstop, 15 Palm tree, 18 Select, 20 Sprint, 21 Younger, 22 Tinge, 23 Liberate Down: 2 Alone, 3 Pashto, 4 Transfer, 5 Entail, 6 Probit, 7 Well-spent, 11 Composite, 13 Lee shore, 14 Glaring, 16 Tinsel, 17 Planet, 19 Clean

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

...may turn out to be the one thing necessary to a worthwhile achievement. - Henry Ford (4,1,7)

DRAEE

AOUMNT

DYAIIS

EINOKV

Answer: DRAEED, AUMONT, INVNOYE

SUDOKU 5447

Difficulty Level 1s

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5446

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

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Try to remember that with the Moon approaching a visionary relationship with Neptune, you are in an idealistic mood. Yet your ambitions are being fuelled by hopes which may be unreasonable and others may complain that you have a rather outsize ego.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Idealistic, inspirational, religious and imaginative

Taureans should come into their own under today's high-minded planetary impulses. All of you will find that overseas contacts and travel plans assume a more pressing importance than in the past.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The Moon shifts its position ever so gradually, bringing one brief phase to an end. You may begin to see developments, which once seemed incredibly dramatic, through new sober and down-to-earth eyes. The point to remember at the moment is that endings always give way to new beginnings.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Sagittarians are not always known as the world's greatest charm -- they're usually much too truthful. Yet I have a feeling that you may have to withdraw or qualify a number of recent statements, no matter whether you do have the facts on your side.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

After all you've

endured on the personal level, you

may be inclined to

resent other people. I don't

think that anyone can blame

you for the way you feel, but

for your own sake, you must

realise that the future is more

important than the past.

Now could be the time to

let go.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

During the next few weeks you should ensure that any adjustments in your earnings and joint finances will be to your long-term advantage. Don't be embarrassed about the need to look after number one. And don't be backward about coming forward.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Over the next month

or two you must give

full rein to your

utterly unique and

individual talents. Those artistic

and creative aspects of the

Virgoan character, about which

I have already spoken in

previous columns, are growing

daily more intense. Believe in

yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

A sociable start to the day could be followed by a more reclusive phase. You may find that there are certain meetings and gatherings you would rather cancel. It all depends on who exactly is involved, and where you're meeting them. Take it one step at a time.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

You may as well burn the candle at both ends - after all, you only live once. Your social, romantic and emotional stars have scarcely ever been better, and I wouldn't want you to miss significant opportunities. Neither would I want you to miss out on a new friendship.

CORPORATE BRIEFS



AWARD—BHEL

BHEL has won three prestigious SCOPE Awards in the categories of R&D, Technology Development & Innovation, and Digitisation. The Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar presented the awards to K. Sadashiv Murthy, CMD, BHEL, & Jai Prakash Srivastava, Director (E, R&D) & (Finance - Addl. Charge), BHEL. Tajinder Gupta, Director (Power), BHEL & Ms. Bani Varma, Director (IS&P), BHEL were also present on the occasion.



MOU—NHPC

An MoU has been signed under CSR between NHPC & Cheshire Home India, Delhi Unit, recently in Faridabad for providing medical care and nutritional support to the physically & mentally challenged persons residing at Cheshire Home India. Further, arrangements will be made to appoint doctors, nurses, psychiatrists & attendants for the care of the physically and mentally challenged people.



MOU—NBCC

NBCC signed an MoU with the National Institute of Fashion Technology for planning, designing, execution and construction of NIFT campus at Varanasi. The work shall also include the modification of existing buildings of Trade Facilitation Centre (Pt Deendayal Hastkala Sankul) as a part of the campus.



PROGRAM — CENTRAL BANK

Central bank of India, kick starts Centralized Corporate premier League 2024. Addressing the press conference R P Anand, Regional Head said in this campaign the bank is focusing on fresh CASA deposit, digital banking & conversion of dormant account to operational. The Customer of Central Bank of India can avail various facilities being given by Central Bank of India like, free debit card issuance, free fast-tag issuance etc.



SEMINAR—NABARD

A State Credit Seminar was organized by NABARD, wherein State Focus Paper for the year 24-25 was released by CM Pushkar Singh Dhami in the presence of Agriculture Minister Ganesh Joshi & Cooperation Minister Dr. Dhan Singh Rawat. NABARD has assessed a credit potential of Rs 40158 crore for the state for the year 24-25.



AGREEMENT—BLS

BLS International Services Ltd. (BLS) announced that it has entered into a definitive Share Purchase Agreement through its wholly owned subsidiary BLS International FZE, UAE, to acquire 100% stake in iDATA and its wholly owned subsidiaries for an Enterprise Value of Euro 50 million & additional milestones based payments. iDATA, based in Turkey, specializes in Visa and Consular Services, making it a strategic addition to BLS's expanding portfolio.

CORPORATE BRIEFS



AWARD—RAITEL

Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar presented the SCOPE Eminence Award to Raitel. The company won the award in Institutional Excellence (Miniratna I & II) Category for overall outstanding performance during the yr 2019-20. The award was presented in a grand ceremony held today at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. Talking about the award, Sanjai Kumar, CMD/Raitel, said 'The Raitel family is deeply honored to receive the prestigious SCOPE award from Sh.

Jagdeep Dhankhar, the Vice President of India. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to SCOPE and the distinguished members of the jury for acknowledging the relentless efforts and commitment demonstrated by the entire Raitel team. A special expression of thanks is extended to all our stakeholders for their steadfast support.



AWARD—RITES

RITES, has registered a 'triple' triumph with two SCOPE Eminence Awards and the EEP INDIA Regional Award for institutional, corporate and export excellence. Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar presented the coveted awards to RITES Chairman & MD Rahul Mital & Director Finance & Chief Financial Officer KG Agarwal at a ceremony in Vigyan Bhawan. RITES also bagged the EEP INDIA Regional Award (Northern) for Export Excellence for 2018-19 in the category of 'Top Exporter for the Year 2018-19 - Gold Trophy'. On behalf of RITES, Dir. Technical Dr. Deepak Tripathi received the award from Raksha Raja Mantri Ajay Bhatt. This acknowledges RITES competent performance and its position among the top engineering exporters in India.



MOU—POWERGRID

POWERGRID, NR-I signed an MoU on 9th January 2024 with DC, Faridabad under Corporate Social Responsibility initiative of POWERGRID. The MOU was signed by Ashok Kumar Mishra, General Manager (HR-CSR) on behalf of POWERGRID and Vikram, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Faridabad in presence of SK Verma, GM(HR) POWERGRID, Gaurav Singh, Add. CEO, Haryana CSR Trust & Vinay Gupta, CMO, Civil Hospital, Faridabad. As per the MoU signed, POWERGRID will provide Medical Equipment to Civil Hospital, Faridabad and its attached PHCs to the tune of 1.68 Cr., which shall be of immense benefit to the hospital in providing effective treatment to needy patients. This project is an initiative of POWERGRID towards promoting health infrastructure. On this occasion CMO, Faridabad thanked POWERGRID for taking up this CSR initiative for providing this infrastructure to the Hospital. Faridabad being one of the major districts in Haryana and due to its close proximity to the Delhi NCR region, the footfall of patients is enormous.



SAVING MORE LIVES AND LIMBS

Combining thermal detection and automated pressure application, Ridima Jain's innovative tourniquet design is a promising advancement in battlefield medical care, especially in zero-light conditions. Effectively juggling delivering lifesaving medical care, often in zero light conditions, while remaining undetected by enemies is an additional challenge for paramedics in stressful battlefield situations, wherein the proper use of tourniquets – a device that is used to apply pressure to stop the flow of blood – comes with its own set of risks. As traditional methods for controlling severe bleeding, tourniquets' ability to stop life-threatening hemorrhages is indisputable in medical emergencies, but their incorrect or excessive application can lead to severe damage or loss of limbs. This is where Ridima Jain, an Industrial & Lighting designer with a Master's degree in Industrial Design from New York's Pratt Institute, has come to save the day with an effective solution, which not only significantly reduces the risk of human error owing to its automated nature but also the need for extensive training. Renowned for her innovative design ideas, Ridima Jain has developed a tourniquet designed for zero light conditions to accommodate the challenging environment of battlefields & potentially save more lives and limbs. This pioneering development, enriched by Dr.

Adelaide: Josh Hazlewood claimed his 11th five-wicket total in Test matches as Australia completed a 10-wicket win over West Indies on Friday before lunch on the third day of the first Test. AP

LONG READ: U19 WORLD CUP INDIA PREVIEW

In Gill's footsteps from Fazilka

India's Under 19 captain at the World Cup in South Africa, Uday Saharan grew up in a family where his father Sanjeev, an ayurvedic doctor was nursing his own shattered cricketing dreams and left no stone unturned to make sure his son made it to the top

PRATYUSH RAJ
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

THERE ARE uncanny similarities between Shubman Gill and Uday Saharan. Both scored heavy runs for Punjab in junior cricket, were trained at home by their cricket-crazy fathers, and shifted base to get good facilities. Shubman, the player of the tournament in the 2018 U19 World Cup has graduated to the senior team, while Uday, who will be leading India in this year's event promises to follow in the footsteps of his senior.

"I used to carry him on my lap to the academy. I failed to become a cricketer and I wanted my son to become one. He also showed interest from a very young age and never complained about it," Saharan tells *The Indian Express*.

Sanjeev Saharan says he himself was a good cricketer and if he could have gone to Jaipur, instead of Udaipur, he might have played first-class cricket for Rajasthan.

"Back in the 80s, there were only three districts in Rajasthan, where cricketing facilities were good. Those were Jaipur, Udaipur and Ajmer. After I cleared PAT (ayurvedic exam), I got to Udaipur Centre. My coach was Arjun Naidu, a legend for Rajasthan and Rajputana. Till his last breath, he used to tell me if I would have gone to Jaipur, I would have played Ranji Trophy, but it wasn't meant to be," says Sanjeev.

At the age 11, like Shubman, Uday too shifted his base. He moved to Fazilka, Punjab, which was 80 km from his village, where his father's friend was the district association's president.

"Fazilka was not far. So, we used to travel everyday. But within a year, he was picked for Punjab U14 camp and then I had to drop him to Mohali. It was the first time, he started alone. By the time, I had crossed Ludhiana, he started calling that he wanted to come back. For the next week, I kept making excuses that I would visit him tomorrow. It worked, he started enjoying the camp and when he came back, he asked me to let him join the aerobics classes for fitness. I was amazed," says Saharan.

Like Lakhwinder Gill, Shubman's father, Sanjeev Saharan, too, had prepared a net in his backyard, where Uday's initial training began. Sanjeev nursing his own shattered cricketing dreams, would spend most of his waking hours pouring cricket into Uday.

"In Sri Ganganagar, the temperature goes down till 1 degree in winter. But I have never seen him skipping his training. I guess at a very early age he understood that I am living my dream through him."

"However he did get annoyed as he taunted me 'yaar papa aap kabhi khush nahi ho sakte mai 100 karu ya 200 karao tab bhi lagta hai ki mai not ou hi waapis aau (You are never satisfied with my performances, whether I score 100 or 200, you want to me to remain not out)," laughs Sanjeev.

Uday was among the reserves in 2022, when the Yash Dhull-led team won the title. He was even flown to the Caribbean following a Covid-19 outbreak in the camp. However, he didn't get a game. But Sanjeev says something changed in his son.

"The car dropped him off at 11 pm on his return, and next day at 6 in the morning, he was ready before me to go to the academy. I asked him to take rest. He would say 'Papa West Indies maya pata chala bahut kaam karna'



India Under-19 skipper Uday Saharan with his Bangladesh counterpart Mahfuzur Rahman Rabby ahead of their game in Bloemfontein. ICC/mediazone

hai khud pe abhi (I have realised that I need to work a lot on my game)," recalls Sanjeev.

Yuvraj's words of wisdom

"There is a different confidence in him now. He has grown in stature after working with Laxman sir (VVS). The way he motivates him has made him believe that he can achieve anything in cricket," says Sanjeev.

Uday played U-14 and U-16 from Fazilka, then moved to Bhatinda to play U-19.

Despite being from a different state, Sanjeev says his son never faced any difficulties in his progress.

"I always used to narrate to him what Yuvraj Singh once said 'jab tak ball bolta hai har koi salam karta hai' (As long as you keep scoring, everyone will salute you). This mantra has worked for him and now it is because of his talent, he has been made India's captain," says Sanjeev.

Uday bats in the middle order like his idol Virat Kohli, is an ambidextrous bowler and his father says like Kohli, he hates losing.

"Haar isey bardaasht nahi hai (He can't digest a loss). He gets really upset, be it the academy match or state matches, he always wants to win it for his team," says Sanjeev.

Punjab captain Mandeep Singh, calls Uday 'changa munda' (good boy), who reminds him of young Shubman. "There is hunger in his belly, and that's what makes him different. This mentality will take him far and I am sure, he will make it big," predicts Mandeep, who was part of India's 2010 U-19 World Cup.

Sanjeev says Mandeep was so impressed with Uday that he gifted him a bat after he pipped him in the Fitness Test.

"In Punjab's Syed Mushtaq Ali camp, Uday topped the yo-yo test and in the practice match, he scored 108 in 60 balls. Mandeep was impressed and gifted him his bat, with which he scored a century against South Africa U-19 recently," says Sanjeev.

Uday was among the reserves in 2022, when the Yash Dhull-led team won the title. He was even flown to the Caribbean following a Covid-19 outbreak in the camp. However, he didn't get a game. But Sanjeev says something changed in his son.

"The car dropped him off at 11 pm on his return, and next day at 6 in the morning, he was ready before me to go to the academy. I asked him to take rest. He would say 'Papa West Indies maya pata chala bahut kaam karna'

RANJI ROUND UP

Umesh takes four

IN Nagpur, VIDARBHA PRODUCED a meek batting effort in the first innings to squander the advantage veteran pacer Umesh Yadav gave them with a four-wicket burst against defending champions Saurashtra in their Elite Group A Ranji match here on Friday. Umesh took four for 56 as Vidarbha bundled out Saurashtra for a modest 206 but found themselves in deep trouble at 26 for 4, still trailing by 180 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: Saurashtra 206 all out in 58.4 overs (Harvill Desai 68, Cheteshwar Pujara 43; Umesh Yadav 4/56, Harsh Dubey 2/15) vs Vidarbha 26/4.

Dube continues rich form

INDIA all-rounder Shivam Dube carried his rich recent form into domestic circuit cracking a rapid fifty but Shreyas Gopal's four-wicket haul ensured that Mumbai were bowled out for 251 on the first day against Kerala.

BRIEF SCORES: Mumbai 251 all out in 78.4 overs (Bhupen Lalwani 50, Shivam Dube 51, Tanush Kotian 56; Shreyas Gopal 4/28) vs Kerala.

Ajay scalps five

At Jodhpur, Rajasthan were in driver's seat after left-arm spinner Ajay Singh (5/75) and pacer Arafat Khan (3/34) wrecked Maharashtra first innings, bundling them out for 189. In reply, Rajasthan reached 110 for two with Deepak Hooda (36) and Karan

Lamba (45) holding the fort for them.

BRIEF SCORES: Maharashtra 189 all out in 55.5 overs (Nikhil Naik 48, Kedar Jadhav 42; Ajay Singh 5/75, Arafat Khan 3/34) vs Rajasthan 110/2 in 26 overs (Karan Lamba 45 not out, Deepak Hooda 36 not out).

Majumdar, Porel among runs

At Kolkata's Eden Gardens, veteran Anustup Majumdar struck a timely 55 not out and his 79-run unbeaten stand for the fifth wicket with Abhishek Porel (47 not out) took Bengal to 206/4 in 73 overs against Chhattisgarh at the end of play.

BRIEF SCORES: Bengal 206/4 in 73 overs (Sudip Kumar Gharami 49, Anustup Majumdar 55 n.o, Abhishek Porel 47 n.o) vs Chhattisgarh.

Jharkhand fight back

At Delhi, Kumar Kushagra (69 n.o) and captain Virat Singh (85 n.o) helped Jharkhand recover from 55 for four, and reach a healthier 195 for 4 against Services.

BRIEF SCORES: Jharkhand 195/4 in 71 overs (Virat Singh 85 not out, Kumar Kushagra 69 not out) vs Services.

Himanshu shines for Delhi

At Indore, Rookie speedster Himanshu Chauhan bagged his maiden five-wicket haul to put Delhi in the driver's seat against Madhya Pradesh.

BRIEF SCORES: MP 171 all out (Shubham Sharma 59, Himanshu Chauhan 5/51, Divij Mehra 3/48) vs Delhi 86/2.

2004 U19 WORLD CUP, 2011 WORLD CUP WINNER

Don't let success go to your head or failure affect you too much



SURESH RAINA

TO BE selected for the Under-19 World Cup that was held in 2004 was a big deal for me. I was aware of the impact in Uttar Pradesh cricket when Mohammad Kaif captained India to the title six years earlier. Those were slightly different times. Today young cricketers have more opportunities to catch the eye of selectors; for example there is the Indian Premier League. But trust me, the path from junior to senior cricket won't be easy.

I have an interesting anecdote from my Under-19 days.

Ambati Rayudu and I went to the old office of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) at the Brabourne Stadium to collect our kit. We packed it in the suitcase we got and was so excited that when we reached our hotel both of us forgot the combination lock password.

I too wanted to be part of a title-winning side, like Kaif but it was not to be. But destiny was kind and I was able to experience the joy of winning a World Cup with the senior team in 2011.

I can almost relive the feeling young crick-

eters who are part of India's current team will be experiencing on the eve of their opening game in South Africa.

The Under-19 World Cup is a great platform for a youngster to perform. It is telecast 'live' and you are wearing the India jersey. A good performance will get noticed. Playing in the junior World Cup gave me a different level of confidence and I carried that for many years. A standout knock by me was the

The Under-19 World Cup is a great platform for a youngster to perform. It is telecast 'live' and you are wearing the India jersey. A good performance will get noticed. Playing in the junior World Cup gave me a different level of confidence and I carried that for many years.

90 off 38 balls against Scotland and everyone took notice. Soon I was playing for the Uttar Pradesh team and sharing the dressing room with stalwarts.

But let me not get the hopes of the current batch too high. For every player who successfully progresses from the Under-19 level to the senior level, there are many others who don't make it. Simply because the competition is intense in India and the higher

one goes the tougher it gets. This holds good in any field, and not just cricket.

But one thing which will hold them in good stead, whether they have a good Under-19 World Cup or not is hard work, focus and a positive attitude.

An example of someone with the right mindset is Shikhar Dhawan. He was very talented, had a good junior World Cup in 2004 but it was only after a few years that he could break into the senior team.

I was lucky that a few former players backed me, be it Pravin Amre in junior cricket, Gopal Sharma, who was Uttar Pradesh's selector then and later Dilip Vengsarkar sir, who was heading the TRDO (Talent Resource Development Officers) department then.

Those part of the junior World Cup must always believe they are good because they are part of a select group of players.

But at the same time, being part of an Under-19 World Cup team is not the only way to get noticed.

A perfect example is that of Rinku Singh. He made a mark in the IPL but has been scoring runs in domestic cricket and has been working hard. So this batch should not let success go to their head or allow failure to affect them. This is a big moment, so just go out and enjoy it.

Raina played 226 ODIs, 78 T20s and 18 Test matches for India. He spoke to Devendra Pandey

PLAYERS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Among the talented bunch, a few have already made their mark

ARSHIN KULKARNI, 18

FAST BOWLER, OPENING BATSMAN

Kulkarni is a fast-bowling all-rounder, who opens the innings and bowls seam-up. He has led India in the Asia Cup. Kulkarni was a find of the

Maharashtra Premier League, where he played only three games but hit 19 sixes, the most in the tournament. It earned him a senior team debut for Maharashtra at the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and also an IPL contract with Lucknow SuperGiants.

MUSHEER KHAN, 18

MIDDLE-ORDER BATSMAN, LEFT-ARM SPIN

Musheer Khan is a promising top-order batsman, who can bat anywhere in top-six, and is a left-arm spinner. Musheer has already

represented the Mumbai Ranji Trophy team last season. He played three first class games with a highest score of 42. He is the younger brother of another Under-19 World Cupper Sarfaraz Khan. In U-19 Vinoo Mankad Trophy, Musheer was the highest wicket-taker with 22 wickets and also scored 438 runs to finish fourth in the run-getters list.

NAMAN TIWARI, 18

LEFT-ARM MEDIUM

Tiwari is a left-arm seamer and has been the strike bowler for this India U-19 unit. The Lucknow boy caught everyone's attention after taking 12 wickets in four games in the U-19 Quadrangular series. He was in red-hot form in the U-19 tri-series comprising hosts South Africa and Afghanistan. He picked up seven wickets in three matches.

PRATYUSH RAJ

INDIA'S GROUP FIXTURES

JAN 20: vs Bangladesh, Bloemfontein

JAN 25: vs Ireland, Bloemfontein

JAN 28: vs USA, Bloemfontein

Jagadeesan ton helps TN start off on the right foot

VENKATA KRISHNA B
COIMBATORE, JANUARY 19

THE LAST 14 months have been a roller coaster ride for NJ Jagadeesan. The need to improve his strike-rate had seen him walk out of his shell in T20s, which led to him owning the world record for the highest individual record in List A cricket. In the Ranji Trophy, he scored 534 runs in seven matches, his highest tally so far. But as he stepped out and looted left-arm spinner Akash Pandey to reach the three-figure mark on Day 1 of Tamil Nadu's Ranji Trophy third-round fixture against Railways here on Friday, it felt as if he was getting a monkey off his shoulders.

Despite a strong white-ball performance last season, Jagadeesan didn't even start for TN in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, playing only two games. In the Vijay Hazare Trophy that followed, he tallied just 137 runs in 8 matches. And as the Ranji Trophy began, he was handed a demotion in the batting order, with youngsters Vimal Khumar and B Sachin preferred alongside B Sai Sudharsan.

However, on the eve of this crucial game against Railways, captain Kishore gave Jagadeesan a chance to open at his home ground and the 28-year-old's unbeaten 155 meant Tamil Nadu ended Day 1 at 286/5, recovering from a slight wobble in the second session.

To show intent or not has been a question surrounding Jagadeesan throughout his ca-



Jagadeesan. File

reer. A top-order batsman, who prefers to play shots, he has been pulled up in the past for being too brash. When he has gone into a shell, he has



Novak Djokovic reacts after beating Tomas Etcheverry 6-3, 6-3, 7-6(2). AP

Djokovic moves closer to eleventh Aus Open crown

REUTERS

JANUARY 19

NOVAK DJOKOVIC finally hit his stride at the Australian Open on Friday as he sent Argentine Tomas Etcheverry packing 6-3 6-3 7-6(2) in the third round and marched into the second week of the tournament for the 16th time.

The 10-times champion, who was dragged into dogfights in the first two rounds, gave a masterclass in clean and clinical tennis for two sets as he picked apart the 24-year-old Argentine in his 100th match at Melbourne Park.

Etcheverry had seen off 36-year-old Andy Murray in the opening round and 37-year-old Gael Monfils in the second, but found the 36-year-old Djokovic an altogether different prospect. The 30th seed was unable to land a punch on the 24-times Grand Slam champion, who did not face a single break point, until a revival in the third set finally gave the crowd the contest they wanted.

Djokovic, the top seed and reigning champion, clearly did not want to play a fourth set as he continues to struggle with a cold-like ailment and raced through the tiebreak and into the fourth round of a Grand Slam for the 63rd time. "It was the best performance during this tournament and obviously I'm pleased with how I played throughout the entire match, particularly in the first two sets," said the Serbian, who hit 34 winners over the match.

"He stepped it up in the third set... (but) in the tiebreaker I found the right shots, the right serves and closed it out in straight sets."

The first week of a Grand Slam for top seeds is first of all about getting through against keen lower-ranked players looking to snatch the limelight with an upset.

At the Australian Open, there is also the balancing act of wanting enough time on court to get properly match fit after the off-season break and needing to conserve energy for the business end of the tournament.

Djokovic probably expended more energy than he wanted in the first two rounds but on Friday always looked like he was in control, even when Etcheverry came back at him at the end. Next up for Djokovic is France's 20th seed Adrian Mannarino who edged out American young gun Ben Shelton in five sets.

THIRD ROUND

Men's singles

Novak Djokovic def. Tomas Etcheverry, 6-3, 6-3, 7-6(2); Jannik Sinner def. Sebastian Baez, 6-0, 6-1, 6-3; Andrey Rublev def. Sebastian Korda, 6-2, 7-6 (6), 6-4; Stefanos Tsitsipas def. Luca Van Assche, 6-3, 6-0, 6-4; Alex De Minaur def. Flavio Cobelli, 6-3, 6-3, 6-1.

Women's singles

Aryna Sabalenka def. Lesia Tsurenko, 6-0, 6-0; Coco Gauff def. Alycia Lee, 6-0, 6-2; Barbara Krejcikova def. Storm Hunter, 4-6, 7-5, 6-3; Maria Timofeeva def. Beatriz Haddad Maia, 7-6(7), 6-3.

INDIA OPEN

Prannoy rides crowd support to counter Wang

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 19

THE ONE consistent feature of HS Prannoy's recent upturn of form on the international circuit is the number of firsts he has registered late in his career. A historic Thomas Cup gold medal. A first World Championship medal. A first Asian Games medal. A first title for him on the BWF World Tour.

And continuing that trend, he has begun 2024 with his first-ever semifinal appearance at the India Open. It is a tournament with plenty of good memories for him. Playing and defeating his idol Taufik Hidayat, then facing Lee Chong Wei and pushing Viktor Axelsen. But the best result at India's premier event for him was the quarterfinals against Wang Tzu Wei. On Friday, he pulled off a thrilling comeback after looking down and out in the decider to win 21-11, 17-21, 21-18 in 77 minutes at IG Stadium.

Prannoy 2.0

It is tough to imagine if Prannoy of younger days would have pulled this off after struggling in the second game and going down 5-10 in the third. But this is the new and improved version of Prannoy, one that has made it a point to force himself to be courageous when the chips are down. This is what he had told himself when he slipped and fell in the Thomas Cup semifinal decider against Denmark. Tune



HS Prannoy took 77 minutes to dispatch Wang Tzu Wei 21-11, 17-21, 21-18. BAI

everything out. Fight it out.

And so he did. A mini-run of points from that deficit helped Prannoy make it 9-11 at the final change of ends. He let out some of the biggest roars of the night as he caught up with Wang and then finally had a lead at 17-16. Riding the wave, Prannoy safely reached the shore.

"You need to be fighting with yourself. Stay in the present no matter what the situation is and bravely try different shots, that is one thing I have been trying the last two years," Prannoy

told reporters about his mindset. "You can't blame yourself when someone like Wang goes on a run with good shots, you can't get annoyed. You just have to let it go, let him have those points with smashes and net-play. I knew that was going to come, you just have to keep going."

Indeed, at various points in the match Wang dominated. He had two 6-point runs in the first two games, and a 5-point run in the decider. But when it mattered the most in the end, Prannoy found a way to regroup. And one of those brave points he talked about was a Tai Tzu Ying-esque slice drop to leave Wang on the floor and make it 10-13.

The net-play was a delight to watch from both players on the night and it eventually played a pivotal role. "The net battle was extremely tricky with the new shuttles, as they are fast for the first 2-3 shots," Prannoy explained. "So we were both trying not to lift early on in a rally because we were both not getting the lengths right. That's why a lot of the battle was at the net. He's somebody who can hit very odd shots from the backcourt and comes really hard with the bodyline smashes. It's tough to defend that and that's why a lot of net-game was needed towards the end."

Crowd support

With two winners for the first two points, Prannoy got the crowd warmed up nice and early. The opening game saw the India No 1

play with supreme confidence and the world No 28 from Chinese Taipei looked a bit lost. But an athlete often relies on the energy from fans when the chips are down. After the point at 5-8 in Game 3, Prannoy was floored by a Wang winner. He lay down on the court for a few seconds, face down. The match was slipping away. The crowd was tensed. While he got up, however, the crowd started chanting "HSP, HSP, HSP" for a good minute or so as he regathered himself for the next point.

It can't be a coincidence that the match turned there. Prannoy hit two straight winners and the crowd responded with bigger cheers. Then came a delightful deceptive push to the backcourt to make it 8-10. After the change of ends, Prannoy upped the ante. A down-the-line smash winner to make it 14-14 was sufficient evidence that the eighth seed was regaining control.

Prannoy said later, "I knew that I had to get the deficit down to 2-3 points in the decider, then the crowd would help me to get through the backend. So when it became 9-11, I was confident that I can win this. Definitely, at 15-11 the crowd really helped push through with their energy. Hopefully, we have bigger crowds for the semifinal with full stands."

With the match having ended later than he would have liked, the key will be recovery for the semifinal against newly promoted world No 2 Shi Yu Qi of China. A tough physical test awaits but Prannoy 2.0 will be ready in his mind.

Satwik-Chirag pull out 'mind tricks' to avenge Worlds defeat

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN

JANUARY 19

MEN'S DOUBLES, in general, is fast and furious but the Danish duo of Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen have a knack to rush their opponents even more. When they are in the zone, they barely give breathing room between points and dictate the tempo. It's something Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty know all too well. The Indian star duo have struggled in the past against them, most recently suffering a heart-breaking loss at the 2023 World Championships, a defeat that Satwiksairaj gave him sleepless nights.

But during the India Open Super 750 quarterfinal in Delhi on Friday, Satwik-Chirag produced a win that appeared dominant. The attacking brilliance reflected in the 21-7, 21-10 scoreline but the mental resolve is hidden between the lines.

For instance, the Danes recovered decently after the first-game drubbing to close the gap to 5-6 in Game 2. As Astrup got ready to serve, the Indians paused. Soon after, the Danish left-hander took a step back. The Indians made them wait a little longer. And after winning that exchange, Satwik-Chirag went on another dominant run of 8 straight points to effectively nul-

lify the challenge of the World Championships silver medallists.

Chirag explained after the match, "They usually just come and serve (very quickly), even before you are ready sometimes. A lot of pairs fall to that, we have so many times as well. We usually don't play such mind tricks, so we decided we need to be ready and only then receive. Not play at their pace."

In the meetings between these two pairs in the past, it was never just a game of skills. It's a mental battle. "Whoever wins that, comes out on top. Today we did that quite well. We didn't get into their rhythm. We served quite well," Chirag added.

The win was also a moment to savour for former Danish doubles star Mathias Boe. Satwik-Chirag's coach had seen them lose twice against Astrup-Rasmussen in the past. "From the time he's been with us, we have kept losing to them. It was a challenge for me as well to prove that he is here to help us win. He was hungry before the match, he was pumping us up," Satwik quipped.

The second seeds have another tricky challenge coming up against former world champs Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik, who had been a thorn in their flesh until recently. If they play anywhere close to the level they did on Friday, it promises to be a cracker.