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BHOPAL

19th Feb
5:30 PM-8:30 PM

JAIPUR

5th Feb
5:00 PM-8:00 PM

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NEET & IIT-JEE

THE WORLD



MOST TIME SPENT IN SPACE

RUSSIAN COSMONAUT SETS NEW RECORD

RUSSIAN COSMONAUT Oleg Kononenko has broken the world record for the most cumulative time spent in space, Russian space agency Roscosmos reported on Sunday. The 59-year-old has now spent more than 878 days and 12 hours in space, surpassing fellow Russian Gennady Padalka, who set the previous record of 878 days, 11 hours, 29 minutes, and 48 seconds in 2015. AP

TOP OF THE WORLD



Namibia President Hage Geingob

NAMIBIA

President Hage Geingob dies in hospital at 82

Johannesburg: Namibia's President Hage Geingob, 82, died in hospital early on Sunday, the presidency said, weeks after he was diagnosed with cancer. Geingob had been in charge of the thinly populated and mostly arid southern African country since 2015, the year he announced he had survived prostate cancer. Vice President Nangolo Mbumba takes the helm in Namibia - a mining hotspot with significant deposits of diamonds and the electric car battery ingredient lithium - until presidential and parliamentary elections at the end of the year. REUTERS

SOUTH KOREA

Moscow remark on Yoon: Seoul summons envoy

Seoul: South Korea has called in Russian diplomats to lodge complaints over Moscow's criticism of President Yoon Suk Yeol for remarks about North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear arsenal, the foreign ministry said. Chung Byung-won, South Korea's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, summoned Ambassador Georgy Zinoviev on Saturday to say that Moscow lashing out at Yoon's remarks would only have a negative impact on the relationship between the two countries, the ministry said. REUTERS

AUSTRALIA

Bushfire risk rated 'extreme' after heatwaves

Sydney: Large swaths of Australia on Sunday sweltered through a heatwave as authorities warned of elevated bushfire risk in an already high-risk fire season during an El Nino weather pattern. The nation's weather forecaster had heatwave alerts in place for Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory and Western Australia, warning temperatures in some parts of the country could hit the low 40s Celsius. An El Nino is a climate pattern in which unusually warm Pacific Ocean temperatures are associated with phenomena such as cyclones, droughts, wildfires and heatwaves. REUTERS

UNITED KINGDOM

British-Indian to lead cancer vaccine trial

London: A British-Indian doctor is the chief investigator of a "ground-breaking" trial of a vaccine to treat early bowel cancer for patients worldwide, following a UK-Australia collaboration between scientists and doctors. Dr Tony Dhillon, a Consultant Medical Oncologist at the Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust, proposed the idea for the trial and has worked with Professor Tim Price in Australia for the last four years. PTI

MISSILE SYSTEMS USED IN RED SEA ATTACKS HIT, SAYS PENTAGON

Houthi warn of consequences after US, UK strike targets across Yemen

Third joint strike; worrying threat to peace, says Iran

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, ADEN, BAGHDAD, FEBRUARY 4

THE UNITED States and Britain launched strikes against 36 Houthi targets in Yemen, in the second day of major US operations against Iran-linked groups.

The strikes late Saturday hit missile systems, launchers and other capabilities the Houthis have used to attack Red Sea ships, the Pentagon said, adding it targeted 13 locations across Yemen.

Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said the strikes "will not pass without a response and consequences." The Houthis did not announce any casualties.

British Defence Minister Grant Shapps said the third joint strike was "not an escalation". "We have already successfully targeted launchers and storage sites involved in Houthi attacks," he said. Iran's foreign ministry said continuing such attacks was a "worrying threat to international peace and security".

Meanwhile, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said the US intends to launch further strikes at Iran-backed groups. "We intend to take additional strikes, and additional action, to continue to send a clear message that the US will respond when our forces are attacked," Sullivan told NBC Sunday.



A building destroyed in an Israeli strike in south Gaza's Rafah on Sunday. Reuters

ISRAELI MINISTER'S CRITICISM OF BIDEN SPARKS ANGER

Jerusalem: Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's national security minister, said in an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* that Biden was hindering Israel's war effort, sparking anger. "Biden is busy with giving humanitarian aid and fuel, which goes to Hamas," he said. "If Trump was in power, the US conduct would be different." AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAFAH, FEBRUARY 4

ISRAEL'S MILITARY on Saturday issued its most detailed warning yet to Hezbollah in neighboring Lebanon that it would be "ready to attack immediately" if provoked, as it recounted its actions along the northern border during four months of war in Gaza and made a rare acknowledgement

ment of dozens of airstrikes inside Syria against the militant group.

"We do not choose war as our first priority, but we are certainly prepared," military spokesman Daniel Hagai said, adding: "We will continue to act wherever Hezbollah is present, we will continue to where it is required in the Middle East. What is true for Lebanon is true for Syria, and is true for other

more distant places."

The comments followed the defense minister's warning that a cease-fire in Gaza against the militant group Hamas wouldn't mean Israel wouldn't attack Hezbollah as needed.

Efforts to close wide gaps between Israel and Hamas in pursuit of a cease-fire continued in the region where concerns about a wider war with Iran-allied groups remain.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 4

INCUMBENT US President Joe Biden has secured a decisive win in the Democratic presidential primary in the crucial state of South Carolina, notching his first official victory in his largely unobstructed path to become his party's nominee for a possible rematch against Donald Trump in the November 5 election.

It was the first official primary of the ruling party. South Carolina is the state that launched Biden to the Democratic nomination four years ago.

Biden, 81, who is seeking re-election in the November presidential elections, received 96.2 percent of the votes in Saturday's primary, with Marianne Williamson getting just 2.1 percent of the votes.

Republican primary in the state is scheduled to be held on February 24.

"As I said four years ago, this campaign is for everyone who has been knocked down, counted out and left behind... With more than 14 million new jobs and a record 24

HIS CAMPAIGN had wanted South Carolina to prove that the party's base, particularly Black voters, remain devoted to Biden and would turn out for him in large numbers. Biden got an overwhelming win from state's Democrats, with more than 95 per cent of the vote in all counties, including in heavily Black areas.

straight months of the unemployment rate under 4%, including a record low unemployment rate for Black Americans, we are leaving no one behind," Biden said in a statement.

He said he would make Trump a "loser" in November polls.

"The people of South Carolina have spoken again and I have no doubt that you have set us on the path to winning the Presidency again – and making Donald Trump a loser – again," he said.

RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

E Grand win gifted by Black voters

VOTING ON THURSDAY

Pak EC bars former minister Qureshi from elections for 5 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 4

AT LEAST 14 members of Myanmar's paramilitary Border Guard Police (BGP) have sought refuge in Bangladesh after escaping the junta-run country amid reports of heavy gunfights between the government troops and the rebel resistance fighters, officials said here on Sunday. The soldiers entered through the Tambrapuri border in predawn hours and sought shelter from the Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB).

"The 14 members of their BGP fled their country. They are now in our custody," an official of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) told reporters on Sunday at the southeastern Cox's Bazar, bordering Burma. Asked about the matter, Minister of Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan said, "There are about 14 of them." "As you know, they have been fighting with the Arakan Army. At one point, they came here and took shelter. We are speaking to the Myanmar government about the matter." bdnews24.com quoted Khan as saying.

Officials said the bakery was crowded with civilians when it was struck. Russia's emergency ministry said 10 people had been pulled from the rubble alive.

Residents in several frontier

Bangladesh villages moved to safety amid skirmishes between the Myanmar government troops and the rebel Arakan Army.

The announcement comes

days after a special court, established under the Official Secrets Act, awarded Qureshi 10 years imprisonment in the high-profile cypher case along with Khan. The Election Commission said

any convicted individual, in accordance with the Constitution, cannot participate in elections. The Express Tribune reported.

Former Pak minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi

BALOCHISTAN BANS PUBLIC GATHERINGS

Karachi: Ahead of February 8 general elections, the government of Balochistan has implemented a ban on public meetings and election gatherings in the province because of a threat alert regarding a "potential female suicide bomber". PTI

28 killed in Ukraine shelling of bakery: Russia

REUTERS

MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 4

RUSSIA SAID on Sunday that Ukraine killed at least 28 people, including nine women and a child, when its armed forces struck a bakery and restaurant in Russian-controlled eastern Ukraine with Western-supplied rockets.

Russian-backed officials said Ukraine struck the bakery in Lysychansk at about 1230 GMT Saturday with US-supplied High Mobility Artillery Rocket System.



Rescuers retrieve bodies from rubble after an Ukrainian strike on Lysychansk, in Russian-occupied Ukraine, Saturday. Reuters

Emergency workers worked through the night searching for survivors in the rubble of what remained of the shattered Adriatic Restaurant on Moskovska Street, where Russian officials said a bakery had been set up for civilians.

Officials said the bakery was crowded with civilians when it was struck. Russia's emergency ministry said 10 people had been pulled from the rubble alive.

It said four more people were in "extremely grave condition"

Ukraine has not yet commented on the attack.

The study is based on a database of around 6,00,000 British dogs, which the researchers assembled from breed registries, pet insurance companies and veterinary companies. NYT

BREED-RELATED DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIOUR, DIET, ENVIRONMENT COULD ALSO PLAY A ROLE IN LONGEVITY

Small dogs with long noses live longer than bigger, flat-faced canines: Study

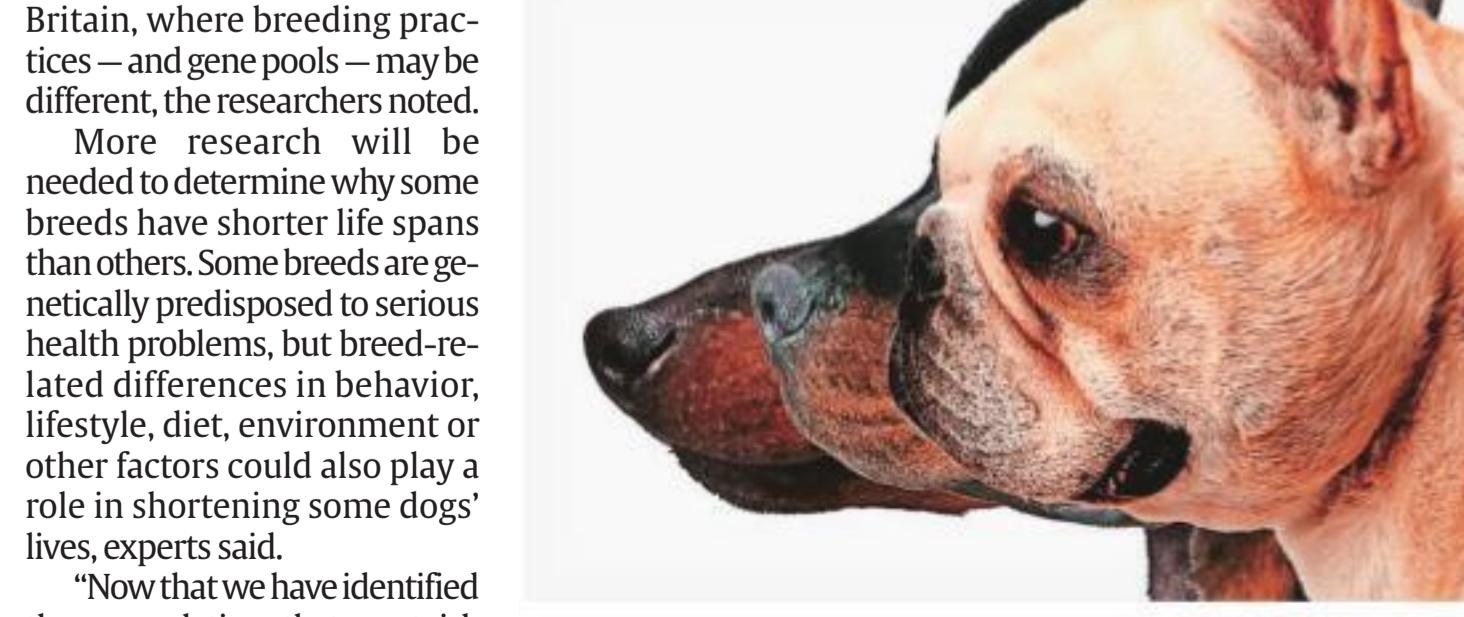
EMILY ANTHERS

FEBRUARY 4

ALL DOGS go to heaven. But a bulldog might find itself headed there years before a border terrier, according to a new study of nearly 600,000 British dogs from more than 150 breeds.

Large breeds and breeds with flattened faces had shorter average life spans than smaller dogs and those with elongated snouts, the researchers found. Female dogs also lived slightly longer than male ones. The results were published in the journal *Scientific Reports* on Thursday.

There are exceptions to those broad trends, and the findings



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Dogs Trust, a dog welfare charity in Britain that led the research.

The study is based on a database of 584,734 dogs. These types of records, which can be prone to various biases, are not necessarily representative of Britain's general canine population, the scientists acknowledged.

But Dr. Audrey Rupple, a veterinary epidemiologist at Virginia Tech who was not involved in the new study, said the researchers' use of so many different data sources was one of the study's strengths. "I think this is a fantastic approach," she said.

Most of the dogs were purebred, representing one of 155 breeds; the rest were combined into a single crossbred category.

small, long-nosed breeds, such as miniature dachshunds and whippets, lived 13.3 years on average—roughly 2 1/2 years longer than large, short-nosed breeds such as boxers and bull mastiffs, which together had an average life expectancy of 10.7 years.

Evolutionary history played a role, too. Closely related breeds had more similar life expectancies.

The researchers also found that purebred dogs, as a group, had average life spans of 12.7 years compared with 12.0 years for crossbred dogs. That survival advantage for purebred dogs contradicts some prior research and could be because all crossbred dogs were combined into a single category, scientists said. NYT



Biden supporters celebrate his South Carolina primary win in North Charleston on Saturday. Reuters

Biden vows to make 'Trump loser again' as he wins South Carolina primary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 4

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Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Increasing opportunities for youth

Most number of government jobs for youth in last 10 years



BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Ram temple was desire of majority, no need to protest: IJML leader



IJML Kerala chief Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal. File

SHAJU PHILIP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB 4

DESCRIBING THE newly consecrated Ram Temple in Ayodhya and the proposed mosque nearby as "symbols of secularism", Indian Union Muslim League (IJML) Kerala president Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal has said that there was no need to protest against the temple. The Muslim community should think about the future instead of milling around the issue, he said.

Thangal, a senior member of Kerala's influential Panakkad family, made the address at a public meeting in Malappuram on January 24, two days after the Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya. The address, a video of which was widely circulated on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Wary of 'attempt to split' its Bihar MLAs, Cong flies 16 to Hyderabad



Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh with the MLAs and others at Hyderabad airport. PTI

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, FEBRUARY 4

AS 40 MLAs of Jharkhand's ruling alliance of JMM and Congress returned to Ranchi from Hyderabad on Sunday night, a day ahead of the Assembly floor test, 16 of Congress's 19 MLAs in

neighbouring Bihar were flown from Delhi to the Telangana capital because of fear in the party about an attempt to split it ahead of the trust vote scheduled for February 12.

Though the Janata Dal (United), BJP, and the Hindustani Awam Morcha, with the support of an Independent, have 128

MLAs in the 243-member House, a clear majority, state Congress leaders said they were wary of the BJP attempting to break away legislators to deal the Mahagathbandhan a crushing blow in the crucial battleground state. Any such move would mark a massive psychological

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Indian Embassy staffer in Moscow held for spying for ISI: UP ATS



Satendra Siwal was posted as Security Assistant at the embassy

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 4

THE UTTAR Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) has arrested an employee of the Ministry of External Affairs posted at the Indian Embassy in Moscow for allegedly spying for Pakistan's ISI.

In an official statement issued on Sunday, the ATS identified the accused as Satendra Siwal, 28. It said that Siwal, a native of Hapur district, was arrested on Saturday and presented on Sunday before a special court in Lucknow, which sent him to judicial custody for 14 days.

"The UP ATS had received inputs from several confidential

sources that the Pakistani spy agency ISI's handlers had used money to influence some people working at the Foreign Ministry of India to leak top secret information regarding the Indian Army and its strategies," the ATS statement said.

"The ATS developed this information and through electronic surveillance and evidence collection, it was found that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

Explained
Politics and confrontation

SEEKING PROTECTION from threats, extortion calls and hooliganism arising out of political rivalry, two organisations of state government-approved contractors and engineers engaged in various developmental projects have written a joint letter to the Maharashtra Chief Minister and the two Deputy Chief Ministers, demanding a law to protect them at work sites. They have threatened to stop work from February-end if measures were not taken for their protection.

"Every district in Maharashtra state is facing the

similar pattern where political opponents of the ruling side and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Macron was pleased': When President's buggy returned to duty after 40 years



President Droupadi Murmu and French President Emmanuel Macron ride the buggy on Republic Day. File

was this black, gold-rimmed buggy that President Droupadi Murmu and French President Emmanuel Macron rode during the ceremonial procession along the 1.8-km stretch from Rashtrapati Bhavan to Kartavya Path on January 26.

After the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, the bulletproof limousines had replaced the buggy in the wake of security concerns.

Until then, Rashtrapati Bhawan officials told *The Indian Express*, Governor General C Rajagopalachari and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AN EXPRESS INVESTIGATION

ANIL AMBANI TO NIIRA RADIA, GAUTAM SINGHANIA TO BAKUL NATH

Searches, summons: ED's Pandora probe touches Indian owners of offshore firms

RITU SARIN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

RECORDING of statements to seizure of assets; summons to searches of premises; getting details from Income Tax and RBI—and detection of money laundering violations. These are the key aspects of the Enforcement Directorate's

ongoing action in the Pandora Papers investigation that shows probes have been "initiated" for almost all Indian owners of offshore firms named in the 2021 investigation by *The Indian Express*.

They include Anil Ambani to Sachin Tendulkar, Unitech promoters and Niira Radia; Gautam Singhania to Lalit Goyal and Malvinder Singh, according to



Anil Ambani, Sachin Tendulkar, Niira Radia and Gautam Singhania among those being probed. File

the current status of the probes, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The Pandora Papers refers to

a trove of 11.9 million secret documents from 14 offshore service providers that gave details of

ownership of 29,000 offshore entities used by the super-rich to manage their global money flows.

The data was obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and shared with 150 media partners—*The Indian Express* investigated the Indian names on the list. The Centre announced the setting up of a Multi Agency Group (MAG) to spearhead the probe.

Subsequently, the Income

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Calling it illegal, DDA demolished mosque in Mehrauli; ASI records listed it a century ago



The Akhoondji Masjid was demolished on January 30. File

VIDHEESA KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

NO ONE'S quite sure when the Akhoondji Masjid was built in Mehrauli. But the "Mosque of Akhondji" was listed in a 1922 publication by an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India who recorded that while its construction date was "unknown", the mosque was repaired in "1270 AH (1853-4 AD)", and that it lay west to an old Idgah that "existed when Timur invaded India in 1398 AD".

On January 30, the Delhi

Development Authority (DDA) razed the Akhoondji mosque and a madrasa, describing them as "illegal structures" in Sanjay Van, a reserved forest area. "Removal of the illegal structures, religious in nature, was approved by the Religious Committee, conveyed vide Minutes of Meeting dated 27/01/2024," the DDA said.

On January 31, the Delhi High Court sought an explanation from the DDA on the basis of which it demolished the mosque, and "whether any prior notice was given before taking the demolition action".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

IDEA EXCHANGE
Ram Mandir dream fulfilled, Modi now has only one agenda, that of development
SAMRAT CHOUDHARY
BIHAR DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER
PAGE 15

EXPRESS NETWORK
PM UNDERLINES DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS SITES P 6

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FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

ED's Pandora probe touches Indian owners of offshore companies

Tax Department is known to have sent directives to a majority of Indian nationals; the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) until end 2022, sent requests to foreign jurisdictions for 482 people named in the reports.

In several cases, the ED sent "Egmont requests" — notes to the Egmont Group, the umbrella organisation of financial intelligence units of 167 jurisdictions, to glean more information about the offshore entities.

An investigation reveals the following updates: on the probe against some of the key names in the Pandora Papers.

ANIL AMBANI

Pandora file: Anil Ambani, chairman of ADA Group, and his representatives own at least 18 offshore companies in Jersey, British Virgin Islands and Cyprus. Set up between 2007 and 2010, seven of these companies borrowed and invested at least \$1.3 billion. Service providers who managed these companies said that their loans from banks were "guaranteed by Reliance/Anil Ambani in order to make investments..." Ambani's lawyer had then said all disclosures had been made in compliance with Indian law.

Probe update: ED has sought details on all reported entities; three Indian companies have been issued directives and Egmont requests have been sent to FIU-BVI, Cyprus and Jersey. Summons were sent to Anil Ambani and his wife Tina Ambani under provisions of FEMA and their statements have been recorded at ED's Mumbai office.

SACHIN TENDULKAR

Pandora file: Tendulkar and his family members were Beneficial Owners of a BVI company, Saas International Limited. The first reference to the company goes back to 2007 with Saas International being wound up in 2016 soon after the publication of the Panama Papers. When liquidated, the shares of the company were bought back by the shareholders, Tendulkar, his wife Anjali Tendulkar and her father. Pandora records showed the family listed as PEPs.

(Politically Exposed Person) since Tendulkar was also an ex-MP. Officials from Tendulkar's office

fice had then called the BVI investments "legitimate."

Probe update: Invoking FEMA, ED sent a communication to Income Tax for IT details of the cricket star. Directives were sent to the CEO of Tendulkar's company and his Chartered Accountant asking for information on Saas. An Egmont request has been sent to FIU of the BVI. Further investigations are in progress.

GAUTAM SINGHANIA

Pandora file: Gautam Hari Singhania, Chairman and Managing Director of Raymond Limited acquired two companies in the BVI in 2008. One is Deras Worldwide Corporation, where he is the Beneficial Owner, with the purpose of acquisition shown as "to hold an account with UBS, Zurich." The other is Lyndonville Holdings Limited, where Singhania and his father Vijaypat Singhania are shown as shareholders. This company was liquidated in 2016.

Probe update: After initiation of a FEMA probe, an Egmont request was sent to the BVI and reply received; queries were also sent to the RBL Income Tax has been asked if any cases under the Black Money Act are pending against any member of the Singhania family. At least three summonses have been sent to Gautam Singhania and his father, Vijaypat Singhania.

The father recorded his statement on April 27, 2023 in which he denied any association with Deras. In response to a second summons, the statement of Gautam Singhania was recorded on June 1, 2023. Travel details of the Raymond's scion have also been sought from the Bureau of Immigration.

NIHAI RADIA

Pandora file: Radia incorporated about a dozen offshore entities, five of these showed her as the master client with her Delhi address. Records had a slew of hefty financial transactions (including the purchase of a \$251,500 watch in Dubai through one of the BVI companies) with emails showing that she was a "do not contact" client. Radia had then said she did not recognise these companies and had no shareholding in them.

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00708868870-1

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Public at large is hereby informed that my client Smt. Mamta Bajaj W/o Sh. Rajesh Bajaj, R/o J-404, Rajput Garden, New Delhi-110027, is in the process of purchasing the Entire Third Floor With Roof Rights of Property No. J-945, Rajput Garden, New Delhi, with free hold rights from (1) Sh. Raj Kumar Mahadev S/o Sh. K. I. Mahadev & (2) Smt. Shashi Mahadev W/o Sh. Raj Kumar Mahadev R/o J-945, Third Floor, Rajput Garden, New Delhi-110027, if any person, body corporate, bank or financial institution having any charge over the said property, can lodge the same to the undersigned within fifteen days. Failing which it shall be deemed that the property is free from all encumbrances, charges, liens etc.

Sanjay Singh (Advocate)

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Public at large is hereby informed that my client Smt. Mamta Bajaj W/o Sh. Rajesh Bajaj, R/o J-404, Rajput Garden, New Delhi-110027, is in the process of purchasing the Entire Third Floor With Roof Rights of Property No. J-945, Rajput Garden, New Delhi, with free hold rights from (1) Sh. Raj Kumar Mahadev S/o Sh. K. I. Mahadev & (2) Smt. Shashi Mahadev W/o Sh. Raj Kumar Mahadev R/o J-945, Third Floor, Rajput Garden, New Delhi-110027, if any person, body corporate, bank or financial institution having any charge over the said property, can lodge the same to the undersigned within fifteen days. Failing which it shall be deemed that the property is free from all encumbrances, charges, liens etc.

Sanjay Singh (Advocate)

M: 9880495152, Enr. No. 01479113

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7 AIR WASEEM AHMAD BHAT FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	8 AIR ANIRUDDH YADAV ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ETHICS CASE STUDIES	9 AIR KANIKA GOYAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES	11 AIR PARSANJEET KOUR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES
12 AIR ABHINAV SIWACH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PT 365, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	13 AIR VIDUSHI SINGH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	14 AIR KRITIKA GOYAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS	15 AIR SWATI SHARMA ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS
16 AIR SHISHIR KUMAR SINGH ABHYAS	17 AIR SIDDHARTH SHUKLA LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	18 AIR LAGHIMA TIWARI ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	19 AIR ANOUSHKA SHARMA LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST SERIES, PT 365, MANS 365 PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT
20 AIR THARUN PATNAIK MADALA ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, ESSAY TEST SERIES	21 AIR SHIVAM YADAV PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	22 AIR G V S PAVANDATTA ABHYAS, MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS CLASSES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	23 AIR VAISHALI PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT
24 AIR ANUBHAV SINGH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES	25 AIR SANKHE KASHMIRA KISHOR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ESSAY TEST SERIES	26 AIR GUNJITA AGRAWAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	27 AIR YADAV SURYABHAN ACHCHIELAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, ETHICS CASE STUDIES
28 AIR ANKITA PUWAR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS	29 AIR POURUSH SOOD ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	30 AIR PREKSHA AGRAWAL ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	31 AIR PRIYANSHA GARG ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, PT 365, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT
32 AIR NITTIN SINGH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	33 AIR 34 AIR 37 AIR 38 AIR 39 AIR 40 AIR 41 AIR 42 AIR 43 AIR 44 AIR 45 AIR 46 AIR 47 AIR 48 AIR 49 AIR 50 AIR	34 AIR 37 AIR 38 AIR 39 AIR 40 AIR 41 AIR 42 AIR 43 AIR 44 AIR 45 AIR 46 AIR 47 AIR 48 AIR 49 AIR 50 AIR	34 AIR 37 AIR 38 AIR 39 AIR 40 AIR 41 AIR 42 AIR 43 AIR 44 AIR 45 AIR 46 AIR 47 AIR 48 AIR 49 AIR 50 AIR
50 AIR CHAITANYA AWASTHI ABHYAS	51 AIR ANUP DAS FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAS	52 AIR GARIMA NARULA FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAS	53 AIR SRI SAI ASHRITH SHAKHAMURI ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS
54 AIR SHUBHAM ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS	55 AIR PRANITA DASH ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	56 AIR ARCHITA GOYAL LAKSHYA, ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	57 AIR TUSHAR KUMAR ALL INDIA TEST SERIES
58 AIR MANAN AGARWAL FOUNDATION COURSE CLASSROOM, LAKSHYA, ABHYAS	59 AIR AADITYA PANDEY PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	60 AIR SANSKRITI SOMANI ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS	61 AIR THARUN PATNAIK MADALA ALL INDIA TEST SERIES, ABHYAS, ESSAY TEST SERIES

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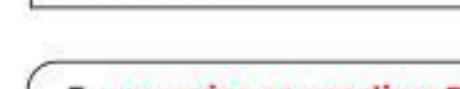
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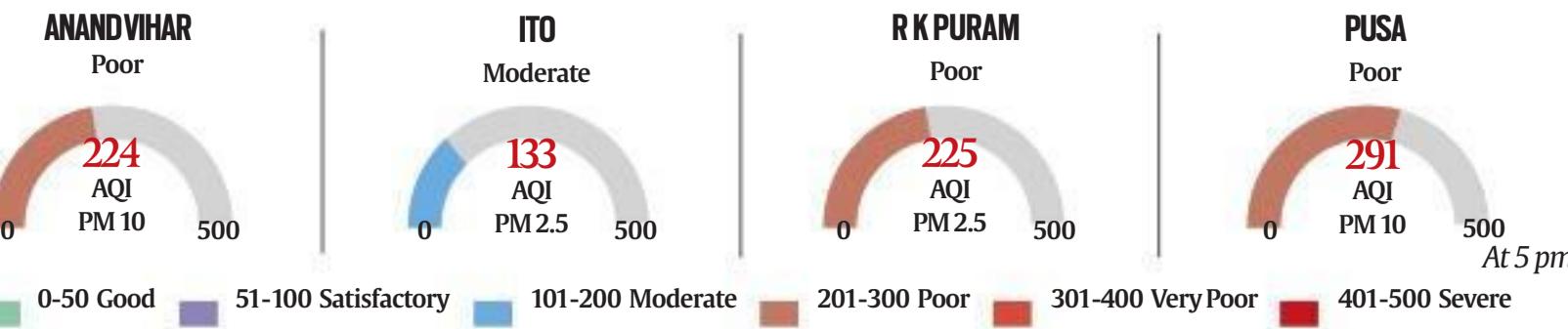
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BRIEFLY

Police bust fake call centre racket, arrest three

New Delhi: Police on Sunday claimed to have busted a fake call centre racket operating in the Paschim Vihar area that was allegedly duping US nationals on the pretext of providing online support with the arrest of three men. Shubham Chaudhary (24), Akhil Baradia (30) and Rahul Gusain (26) — all residents of Delhi — were arrested on Saturday. On January 30, a tip-off was received at the Outer district's cyber police station regarding a call centre that was allegedly cheating US nationals. "We got to know about people involved in large-scale cheating of US citizens by posing as executives of leading internet companies and inducing them to pay to solve their problems," DCP(Outer) Jimmy Chiram said. The officer further said a raid was conducted and three people were apprehended. The accused used English names and posed as executives of leading internet companies. During questioning, it was revealed that they used illegal techniques, causing wrongful loss to the state exchequer, he said. "We have registered a case and an investigation is underway," said the officer. Police also seized five laptops with written scripts and two WiFi routers.

Gurgaon cop hit by biker at check post

Gurgaon: A Gurgaon Police Assistant Sub-Inspector was hit by a bike rider at a check post he was manning, police said Sunday. The ASI was thrown to the ground but the rider was caught by his colleague who was present there, they said. The injured ASI was admitted to a hospital for treatment. According to police, a barricade was set up by the traffic police near 32 Milestone on the Delhi-Jaipur highway on Friday night. The check-point was manned by Zonal officer ASI Dinesh Kumar and his team. While he was at the checkpoint, a bike rider came speeding and hit Kumar in a bid to evade checking. "The accused was a resident of New Palam Vihar area. An FIR was filed against him at Civil Lines police station," police spokesperson Subhash Boken said. PTI

DAY 1 SAW 30% MORE VISITORS THAN LAST YEAR

Packed tents, sea of visitors: India Art Fair ends on a high

VANDANA KALRA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

NOTWITHSTANDING THE serpentine traffic snarls, morning rain and long lines of people waiting to enter tents filled with art, the four-day India Art Fair (IAF) concluded on a high on Sunday. Many of those who attended announced that it had succeeded in drawing in the crowd, both the connoisseurs and the uninitiated.

The first preview day report-

edly recorded 30% more visitors

as compared to 2023, and by Saturday evening, the IAF had declared that tickets and passes were sold out for Sunday.

"The India Art Fair has grown to be bigger than many art fairs in the world... It was a true celebration of art, with so many people. There were visitors from across the country, abroad, professionals, school and college students... and as an artist, it was wonderful to engage with them," said artist Paresh Maity. At the fair, he had two larger-than-life works — a 116x180 inch canvas, *Enlightened*



(Top) Water Lilies by Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei at the Neugerriemschneider booth; (left) At Shrine Empire, Baaran Ijlal's set of works "I didn't ask for fishbones: Notes on songs of abundance". Abhinav Saha



City, at the Art Alive booth, and his 16-ft long installation, *Rhythmic*.

By day four, the tapes meant to maintain distance between the artworks and the viewers were on the ground. At the interactive artworks tent, the

waiting lines were longer. Several were waiting to grab the remotes to navigate the path designed by artist Dhruv Jani for a game play, while others were outside the enclosure where Myles and Ameya were presenting *Orinthoscope*, an audio-visual digital piece that allowed them to listen to birdsongs across India.

At the Berlin-based gallery neugerriemschneider booth, protocols were in place to ensure distancing from one of the fair's showstoppers — the 320 x 1320 cm woman block wall work titled *Water Lilies* by Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei.

The booth also had works by artists Noa Eshkol, Shilpa Gupta and Olafur Eliasson, among others.

"Some of the artists we are presenting are relatively new for the audience, but that's why we are here. We know it will take some time to sell or meet people who know what we do, but the response has been good, even with regard to sales," stated galerist Burkhard Riemschneider.

At the IAF for the first time —

as part of its inaugural Design Section — Henri Charreau of the global art-design house, Carpenters Workshop Gallery, felt the extension into design was successful. "We have been working in India for some time and given that we have collectible design, which is also art, this was ideal," stated Charreau.

Other points of attraction at the booth were Karl Lagerfeld's water fountain, Maarten Baas's coloured clocks and Ingrid Donat's bronze pieces. "We have had good sales, including *Fragile Future* (light sculpture), Nacho Carbonell work and some other pieces too," added Charreau.

"This is one of the most important fairs in the South Asian region and we feel the response this year is better than the last two years (when they were participants). Our work has got a positive response and we have also made sales, including to some of the more prominent museum figures in India," said Niroshini Jayasekera, manager, Saskia Fernando Gallery in Colombo.

15 km from Jewar airport, a wetland awaits protection

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 4

EVEN AS the Noida International Airport in Jewar is set to become operational by September, the eco-sensitive Dhanauri wetland site, located 15 km away, is yet to be granted protection.

Speaking about his former

deputy, the CM said Manish Sisodia had been jailed as part of a witch hunt against AAP leaders. "These people are after us, they have put Manish in jail. They are saying he was involved in corruption. Manish used to visit schools at 6 am. He used to survey 10 to 15 schools a day to check if children were receiving a good education or not. Which corrupt individual takes rounds of schools to ensure quality education?" he said.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva

called Kejriwal's assertion a "new bundle of lies" and said he should either name the BJP leader who made him an offer to join BJP or resign. "On January 27, he falsely accused the BJP of trying to break away AAP MLAs... and now he has been evading police investigation. Today, he levelled baseless allegations that he had received an offer to join BJP. The claim is completely misleading and is proof that Kejriwal is trying to divert public attention away from allegations of corruption against him," Sachdeva said.

The CM laid the foundation of two new buildings, from where four schools will function in two shifts each. The schools will be ready by January next year, he said, and will accommodate around 10,000 kids. Education Minister Atishi and local MLA Rituraj Jha were also present.

In its affidavit submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on January 20, the Ministry said: "The respondent (MoEF) has not received any proposal along with requisite documents from the State Government of UP/UP State Wetland Authority for designating Dhanauri wetland as a Ramsar site till date." The affidavit further said emails were sent to the state government on August 30, 2022, and October 17, 2023, to submit the documents.

When contacted, Dr Arun Vir Singh, YEIDA CEO, said, "When the master plan was made, the DFO was contacted at that time. They said there is about 55 hectares of wetland area. Now they are saying it is around 98 hectares. Plots have been allotted to people, how can they be returned? The authority will superimpose the map and will see the actual position on the ground."

He further said the Authority

will do the needful to save the

area as it is a matter concerning

the environment. "The Authority

already gave a no-objection cer-

tificate for the Ramsar site in

June 2022. If this is the minimum

required land for the site, the au-

thority will give the land on the

other side (of the wetland)

which is vacant and allotments

have not been made," said Singh.

Incidentally, the NGT, in its November 20, 2023, order, had noted that the wetland area de-

marcated in the master plan

appears to be lesser as com-

pared to that in the wetlands

inventory.

Meanwhile, bird-watcher

Anand Arya, who had filed a

peti-

tion in the NGT seeking a stay

on the construction till the wet-

land is granted protection, said:

"It is complete bureaucratic apathy... You cannot change the

wetland, it enjoys protection

granted under a 2017 Supreme

Court order..."

In its report submitted to the

NGT on January 19, the Divisional

Forest Officer (DFO) of Gautam

Buddha Nagar said it has written

to YEIDA, the land-owning agen-

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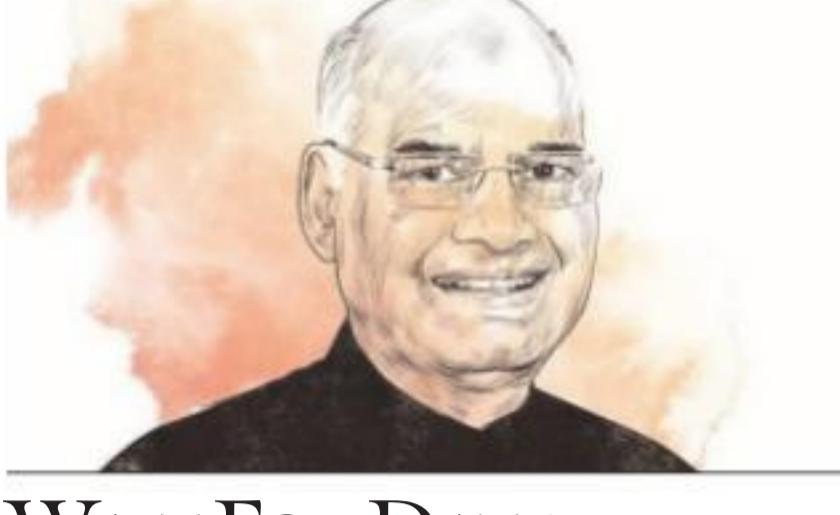
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GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



WAIT FOR DATE

THE HIGH-level committee on 'One Nation, One Election', headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, has had a busy schedule over the past few weeks. The panel held several meetings to consult stakeholders and experts about simultaneous elections. However, the panel is yet to meet the Election Commission of India, despite having suggested a date for the meeting last month, it is learnt. The EC has sent its written submissions to the committee, but is yet to commit a date for the meeting. Over the years, the EC has given its views on the matter several times, including to the Law Commission, which includes the logistical requirements for holding simultaneous elections.

PROBABLE, PROBABLY

SOME CPI leaders, including its general secretary D Raja, had some months ago urged Rahul Gandhi to not contest again from Wayanad in Kerala. Raja was of the view that it would be better if Rahul contested from a seat in North India against the BJP. The CPI now is discussing candidates for Lok Sabha seats in Kerala and among the probables for Wayanad is Raja's wife Annie Raja, who is also the general secretary of National Federation of Indian Women. Raja shares good relations with Rahul and it would be interesting to see if Annie finally takes on the Congress leader.

NEW ASSIGNMENT

INDIA'S AMBASSADOR to Russia Pavan Kapoor has been named as Secretary (west) in MEA, and the topmost contender for the Indian envoy's position in Moscow is Abhay Thakur, who was India's G20 Sous-Sherpa. Indian envoy in Vienna Jaideep Mazumdar has been named Secretary (east).

Govt: 23% manpower shortage in CBI, over 1,000 cases pending

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE CBI is facing a shortage of 23% manpower, including in the posts of Special Director, Joint Directors and DIGs, said the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) in their 2022-23 annual report as 1,025 cases – 943 registered cases and 82 preliminary enquiries – were pending.

"Till December 31, 2022, the total sanctioned strength of CBI was 7,295 against which 5,600 officers were in position and 1,695 posts were vacant," the report said.

Till December 31, 2020, CBI's total sanctioned strength was 7,273 and of them, 1,374 posts were vacant, the report said, adding that in 2021, 1,533 posts were vacant.

As per the report, the vacancies are in the rank of one Special/Additional Director, two Joint Directors, 11 DIGs, 9 SSPs, one Additional SP, 65 Deputy SPs, 360 inspectors, 204 sub-inspectors, 51 assistant sub-inspectors, 123 head constables, 281 constables, and 367 technical officers.

CBI strength is made up of directly recruited personnel and state police personnel on deputation while all higher posts are occupied entirely by officers on deputation. "In 2022, a total of

308 officers were inducted on deputation in CBI in different ranks... Also, the deputation tenure of 133 officials was extended in the different ranks from Joint Director to constable," the report said.

The report also said, "Out of 943 registered cases, 447 were pending under investigation for over a year. Similarly, of the 82 pending enquiries, 60 were pending enquiries for over three months. Also, 23 Lokpal references were also pending."

"In 2022, the courts delivered judgments in 557 court cases of CBI. Of these, 364 cases resulted in conviction, 111 in acquittal, 13 in discharge and 69 cases were disposed of for other reasons. The conviction rate was 74.59%. Around 10,732 court cases were pending under trial in various courts," the report said.

The CBI has made several plans for their personnel. "To provide better office-cum-residential environment, various projects relating to construction of office/residential buildings/quarters in various CBI branches are underway as part of the scheme 'Comprehensive Modernisation and purchase of land and construction of office/residence buildings for CBI' under which funds of Rs 39.06 crore were allocated in the revised estimates for 2022-23," the report said.

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In Assam, PM emphasises on development of religious sites

Talks of peace initiatives taken by BJP governments in Northeast

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, FEBRUARY 4

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi during his visit to Guwahati on Sunday emphasised on the BJP's focus on developing Hindu religious sites.

Modi arrived in Assam on Saturday evening, his first visit to the Northeast since the ethnic violence broke out in Manipur last May. Though he was supposed to address a political rally in Mizoram on October 30, 2023, in the run-up to the Assembly elections there, the visit was cancelled a few days before it was scheduled. The Congress had alleged that the visit was called off because Modi had not visited Manipur even once since the violence broke out.

During an event in Guwahati on Sunday afternoon, Modi inaugurated multiple infrastructure projects in the state, estimated to cost over Rs 11,000 crore. These included the Kamakhya temple corridor, which is supposed to be on the lines of the Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor in Varanasi.

At the event Modi said, "After the Kashi corridor was made, a record number of devotees reached there. (A total of) 8.5 crore people went to Kashi last year... More than 19 lakh people went on pilgrimage to Kedar Dham. In Ayodhya, the Pran Pratishtha (of Ram Lalla) was done just a few days ago. In 12 days, more than 24 lakh people have had a darshan. After the Maa Kamakhya Divyayog Pariyojana is made, we will see a similar sight here."



PM Narendra Modi and Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on Sunday. PTI

"When pilgrims and devotees come, even the poorest earn, be it rickshaw wallas, taxi drivers, hotel operators, vendors... That's why in this year's (Interim) Budget we have given a lot of weightage to tourism... In Assam and NE, there is a lot of potential for this. That is why the BJP government is giving a lot of emphasis to development here," he said.

"Our pilgrimage sites, our temples, our religious places are not just sites for darshan. They are symbols of our thousands of years of civilization. Bharat has remained strong even after facing every difficulty... After Independence, those who ran governments in this country for long, even they did not realise the importance of the sacred places of worship. For their political benefit, they had started a trend of being ashamed of their own culture," he said.

In his address, he claimed the BJP governments have made

strides in bringing peace in the Northeast, but he abstained from mentioning Manipur in his speech. "Today, the Northeast believes in Modi ki Guarantee. If you see Assam, areas which were strife-torn are now witnessing peace. Border disputes between states are being resolved. After the formation of the BJP government, more than 10 big peace settlements have been arrived at. In the past few years, thousands of youths have chosen the path of development over that of violence... More than 7,000 youths of Assam have put down arms... AFSPA has been removed from many districts," he said.

The other projects inaugurated include upgrade of Guwahati's Nehru Stadium, various road projects, foundation stone laying for upgrading facilities at Guwahati Medical College and Hospital and of Karimganj Medical College and Hospital.

Vipassana can solve today's global challenges

New Delhi: Vipassana is a wonderful gift of the ancient Indian way of life to the whole world, but this heritage of ours was forgotten, PM Narendra Modi said during the concluding ceremony of the year-long celebrations of Acharya S N Goenka's 100th birth anniversary via video message Sunday.

"Goenkaji took initiation after doing penance for 14 years in Myanmar and then returned to the country with this ancient glory of India. Vipassana was relevant thousands of years ago... and has become even more relevant in today's life. Vipassana also has the great power to solve the challenges that the world is facing today," he said, adding over 80 countries have "adopted it because of Guriji's efforts." ENS

Borders should be meeting point for law agencies: Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said crimes and criminals do not respect geographical borders, hence, there should be no limit of geographical border for law; instead, geographical border should be a meeting point for enforcement agencies.

Addressing the Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA)-Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference (CASGC), Shah said nowadays crime and criminals do not recognise borders, hence law enforcement agencies will have to be strengthened. "Trade and crime are both becoming borderless and at such times, to deal with trade disputes and crime in a borderless manner, we will have to start some new system and tradition," he said.

Shah said the scope of today's conference is not limited only to the courts, but it is related to the Commonwealth countries and in a way, the common people of the entire world. "There should be no limit of geographical border for law; instead, geographical border should be a meeting point for law. Determining such a meeting point can be done through conferences like today's, only then the laws of all the countries will reciprocate each other and justice delivery will be possible. No country can remain safe without being in coordination with the laws of other countries," he said.

"When today's global crime challenges do not respect the borders, then for the delivery of justice too, we will have to look at the borders as a means and not as an end. Borders will have to be developed as meeting points and not obstacles in justice delivery..." he said. Shah said, "We have chan-



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses the event in New Delhi, Sunday. ANI

ged its form in India by holding discussions with all stakeholders regarding resolving trade disputes and complete reform of criminal laws. We have also increased the use of technology to the extent that it will be possible to incorporate all the changes that will take place in technology in the next 100 years."

Referring to the three new criminal laws, he said after its implementation, India will have the world's most modern criminal justice systems. "In today's changing scenario, the judiciary will also have to change. In view of the cross-border cases, use of technology has to be adopted in the process of justice. We cannot deliver justice in the 21st century with laws of the 19th century," he said.

President Droupadi Murmu said, "In recent times, as the world faces the threat of climate change, we should also add environmental justice to these varied aspects of the concept of justice... the issues of environmental justice often pose cross-border challenges. They form the key area of what this conference is about... Our environment is only the most obvious way in which we are interconnected."

Govt to introduce Bill to curb unfair means in exams in Lok Sabha today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE GOVERNMENT is likely to introduce in the Lok Sabha on Monday a Bill aimed at curbing leaks and organised cheating in public examinations and entrance tests such as NEET, JEE, and CUET.

According to the revised list of business for the day, the Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Jitender Singh, will introduce the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, on Monday.

According to sources, the Bill will cover entrance examinations held by the UPSC, the Staff Selection Commission, the Railways, banking recruitment examinations and all computer-based examinations conducted by the National Testing Agency.

Over the past few years, leaks of question papers of public examinations led to cancellation of tests, affecting lakhs of students.

To curb cheating, the Bill proposes a minimum of three to five years of imprisonment. Those involved in organised crimes of cheating will face five to 10 years of imprisonment and a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore.

The saffron party's ideology is against women and they don't follow what the Constitution says, he cautioned them.

JMM-Cong MLAs back in Ranchi, set for Jharkhand floor test today

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, FEBRUARY 4



Legislators at Birsa Munda Airport in Ranchi on Sunday. PTI

marathon meetings of the coalition – JMM, Congress and RJD – MLAs. A video of the MLAs conducting a headcount and claiming support of 43 legislators later emerged. Among those not in the video were Hemant Soren, his sister-in-law Sita Soren, Ramdas Soren, and Rabindranath Mahato.

Radhakrishnan sprung a surprise and invited Champai Soren to form the government. The new CM, along with 2 ministers, Alangir Alam of the Congress and Satyanand Bhokta of the RJD, was administered the oath of office by the governor on February 2.

The ruling coalition has 47 MLAs in the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly after Gandey

MLA Sarfaraz Ahmed quit on January 2 reportedly to accommodate Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana as the former CM's arrest seemed imminent. The JMM has 29 MLAs while Congress and RJD have 17 and one MLA respectively. Sources said the lone CPI (ML) Liberation legislator, Vinod Singh, has also extended support to the coalition.

Another insider said the coalition had enough numbers to cross the magic figure of 41 in the Assembly.

On Sunday, the CM held a meeting with Chief Secretary L Khaingte and DGP Ajay Singh to review law and order situation. He directed the police to expedite the probe into all cases related to offences against women.

Centre weaponising probe agencies against Opposition: Kharge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
THRISSUR, FEBRUARY 4

KICKSTARTING THE Congress's crucial Lok Sabha poll campaign in Kerala, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge Sunday vehemently attacked the BJP-led central government, accusing it of causing indiscriminate unemployment and inflation in the country and "systematically weakening" democratic institutions.

The gap between the rich and poor is increasing day by day in the country; the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming poorer under the Modi government, Kharge alleged. He was addressing the 'Mahajana Sabha' organised by Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee at Thekkinkadu maidan, attended by representatives from 25,177 booths across the state besides party leaders and workers.

Criticising the Centre's interventions in state governance and alleged attempts to weaken the political autonomy of states, he said it undermines the principles of federalism. He also accused the Centre of harassing the state governments and crushing the

poor people and women of the country. "All democratic institutions are being systematically weakened. Agencies like ED, CBI Income Tax are weaponised to target opposition leaders on false and baseless charges," Kharge alleged. Apparently referring to Modi recently addressing a women empowerment programme here last month, Kharge appealed to the women of the state to be "mindful" of the BJP's tactics.

The saffron party's ideology is against women and they don't follow what the Constitution says, he cautioned them.

The TMC needs to get as much support as possible from the Muslims, who account for 27% of the state's population, to counter the BJP's Hindutva politics. Of Bengal's 42 Lok Sabha seats, there are 7 that have Muslims in a majority and another 6 where the minority votes can be the deciding factor. In 2019, the TMC had won 3 of the 7 Muslim-majority seats and all 6 seats with a sizeable Muslim population.

On Saturday, Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said, "Mamata Banerjee has been alleging the Congress is talking about different things to get Muslim votes. The BJP is also saying the grand old party will be weaker in coming days, and Didi (Mamata) is saying nothing is possible by the Congress... It's quite unfortunate to see a leader who is in the INDIA bloc say such things."

The stage is now set for a three-cornered LS contest, which may see the minority vote divided between the TMC and Left-Congress alliance. The BJP is the principal Opposition in the state.

Behind Mamata's attack on Cong: Fear of Muslim vote split

SANTANU CHOWDHURY
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 4

FROM TAKING a swipe at the Congress from her 'Sarpa Dhama (all-faith)' rally in Kolkata's Park Circus area on the day of the Ram Temple's consecration event to targeting the party for reaching out to the minority voters during its Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra at a time when the BJP is raising its Ayodhya pitch to woo Hindus – West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has been making all attempts to hold on to her crucial Muslim vote bank in the state even at the expense of the INDIA bloc.

Addressing party workers in Kolkata Friday during her sit-in protest against the Centre for "withholding" funds under various welfare schemes, Mamata said, "I asked the Congress to fight

in 300 seats (and leave the rest for INDIA partners in LS polls), but they did not listen. Now, they have come to the state to create a stir among Muslim voters. The BJP is trying to create a stir among Hindu voters. What will secular parties like us do? I don't know if the Congress will even win 40 seats if they contest 300." Mamata's statement against the Congress signalled that the TMC does not want a division of minority votes, which her party has cornered since coming to power in Bengal in 2011.

On January 22, at the TMC's rally, Mamata urged the Muslim community. However, the 2007 case of Rizwanur Rahman, who was allegedly driven to suicide by his influential Hindu in-laws, and the Nandigram and Singur land agitations between 2006 and 2008, all of which fuelled the TMC's rise against the Left Front, swung the Muslim vote in Mamata's favour.

After 2011, the TMC government further consolidated the minority votes by announcing allowances for imams, scholarships for Muslim students, creation of welfare boards, and a Rs 50-crore grant for government-recognised madrasas. Mamata also threw her weight behind the movement against the CAA-NRC.

In the panchayat elections of 2018 and 2023, and the Asse-

mble elections of 2021, minority voters returned the favour by giving the TMC their support. This was evident in 2021 polls when both the Congress and the Left Front failed to win any of the 294

Assembly seats despite forging an alliance, which included the Indian Secular Front (ISF).

However, in 2023, the TMC saw its first electoral defeat in Bengal after 2021 polls. Bayon Biswas, the Left-backed Congress candidate, won the Sagaridighi Assembly bypoll in February 2023. It assumed significance as it was held in Murshidabad district, which has the highest Muslim population in the state at 66.28%.

The result was viewed as a sign of the TMC's eroding minority vote bank. Mamata had ordered changes in the leadership of the party's

EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

ODISHA

Maoist leader gunned down in Kandhamal

Bhubaneswar: A Maoist cadre carrying cash award of Rs 5 lakh on his head was gunned down by police during an exchange of fire at Kakerkupa area of Kandhamal district in Odisha on Saturday evening. A District Voluntary Force commando, who was part of the team combing the area, also suffered bullet injuries in his hand during the fight, said police sources. The deceased Maoist, identified as Dasru, was a divisional committee member of the Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh division, an outlawed outfit. ENS

JAMMU & KASHMIR
Speeding truck hits car, kills four of family

Jammu: Four members of a family were killed and another injured on Sunday after their car was hit by a speeding truck near Tikri in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district. The deceased included Nitin Dogra, 37, his wife Ritu Dogra, 32, besides daughters Khushi, 17 and Vani, 11. Another 15-year-old daughter Brinda was injured. The victims were on their way to Kashmir in a car at that time. ENS

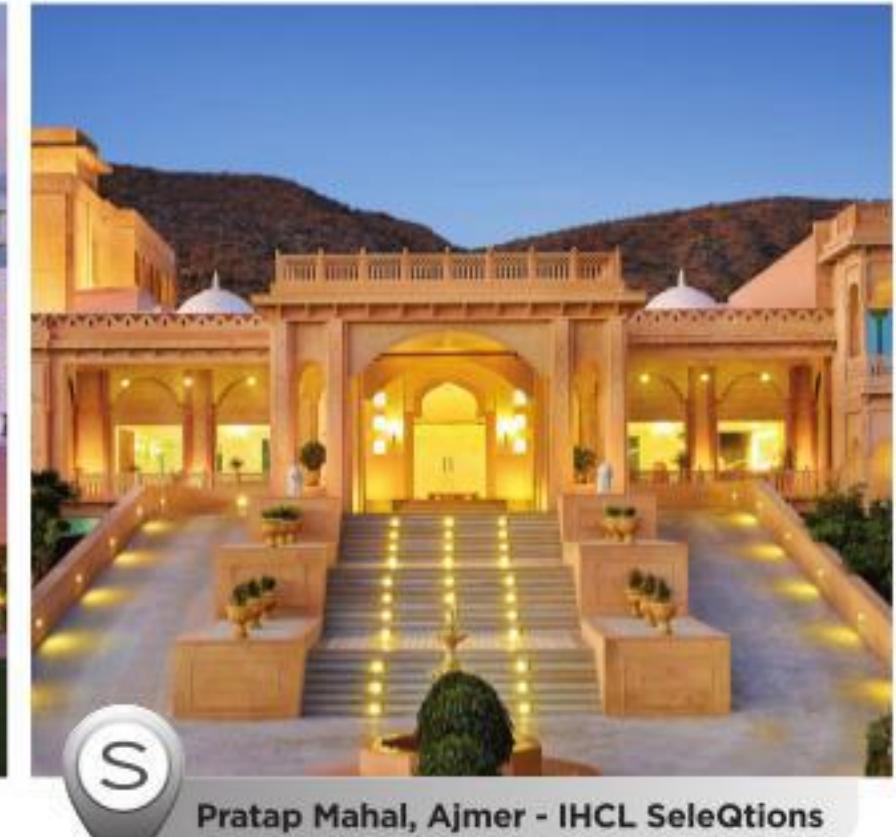
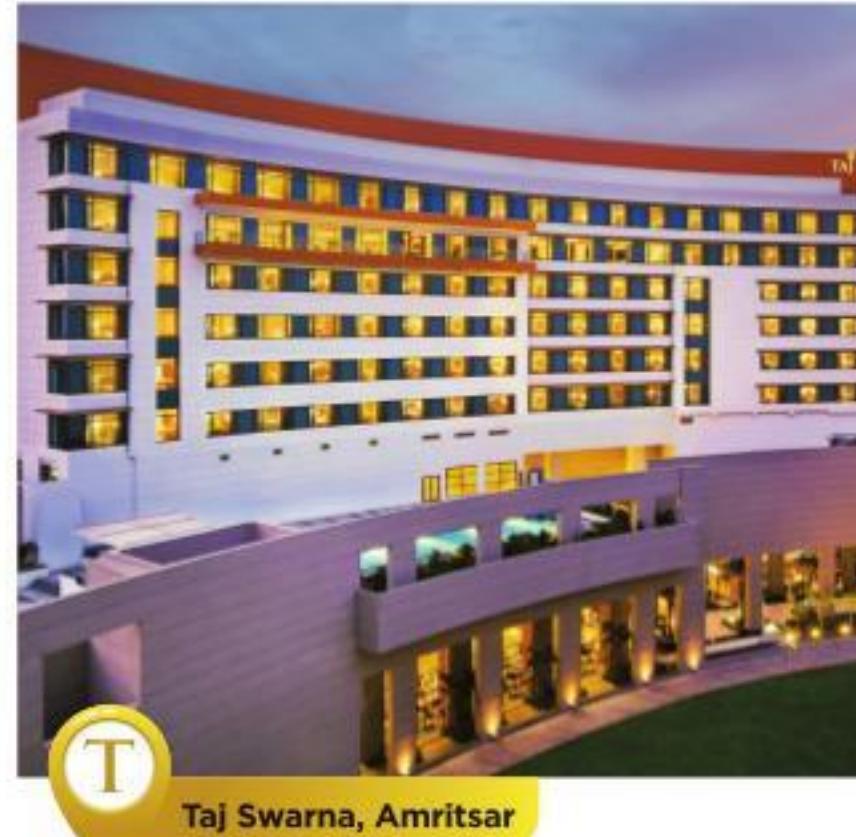
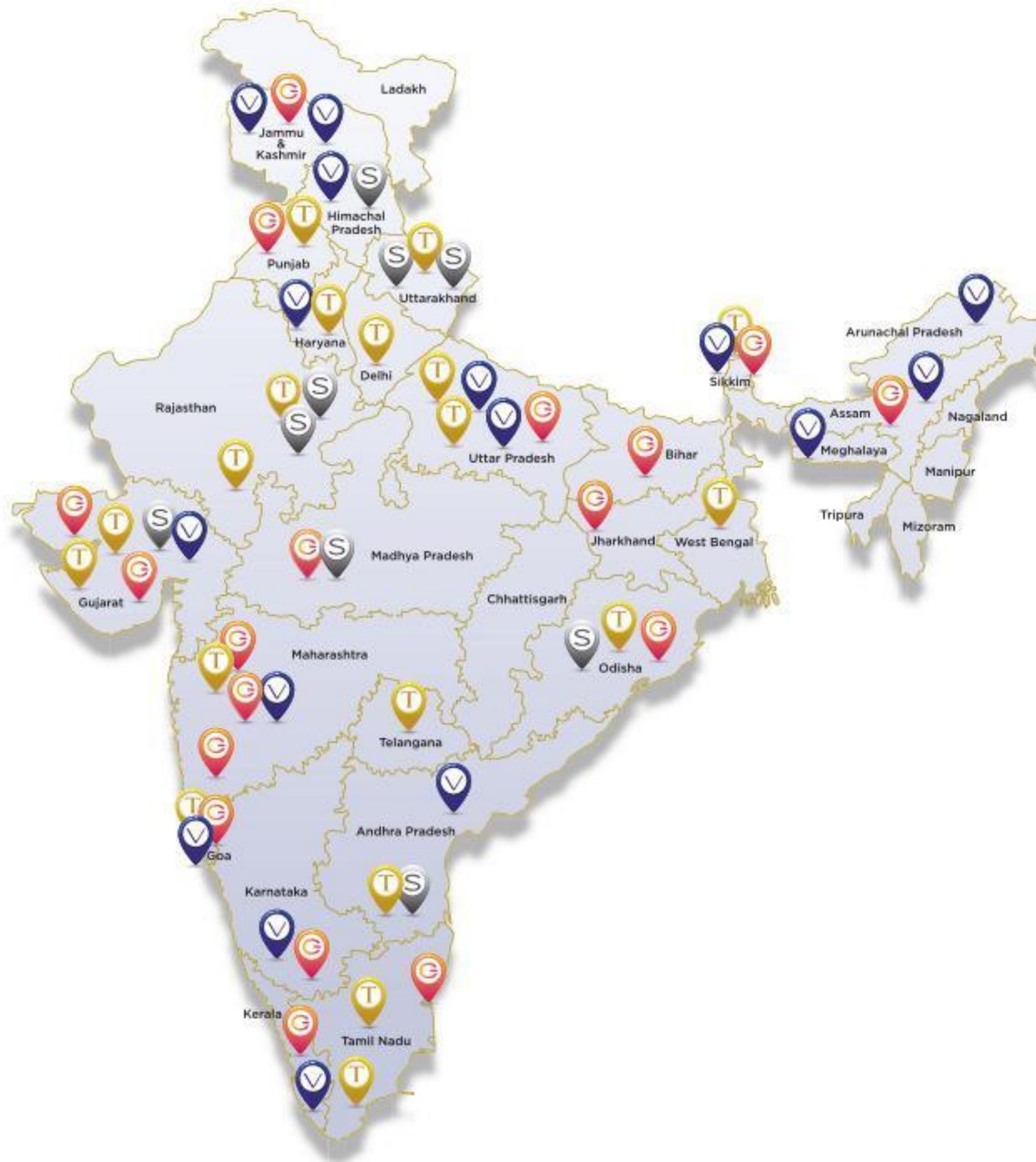
UTTAR PRADESH

Man, son held for triple murder over land dispute

Lucknow: Two days after a broad daylight murder of three members of a family in Malihabad in Lucknow district, a father-son duo was arrested on Sunday. Police said Lallan Khan alias Siraj and his son Faraz were arrested for the murder of Munee Khan (54), his nephew Hanzal (17) and Hanzal's mother Farheen (40). "The accused and the victims are related. The murders are linked to a land dispute," said a police officer. ENS

SOULFUL LIKE ALWAYS

50 AND MORE ABODES LIKE NEVER BEFORE



Taj Skyline, Ahmedabad | Taj Swarna, Amritsar | Taj Coromandel, Chennai | Taj Mahal, New Delhi | Taj Gandhinagar Resort & Spa, Gandhinagar | Taj Guras Kutir Resort & Spa, Gangtok | Taj Cidade de Goa, Goa | Taj City Centre, Gurugram | Taj Krishna, Hyderabad | Taj Amer, Jaipur | Taj Bengal, Kolkata | Taj Mahal, Lucknow | Taj Puri, Puri | Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa, Rishikesh | Taj Tirupati, Tirupati | Taj Aravali Resort & Spa, Udaipur | Taj Ganges, Varanasi | Pratap Mahal, Ajmer | The Crown, Bhubaneswar | Norbu The Montanna, Dharamshala | Pilibhit House, Haridwar | WOW Crest, Indore | Devi Ratn, Jaipur | Gir Serai, Junagadh | Anand Kashi by the Ganges, Rishikesh | Ekante Bliss, Tirupati | Vivanta Aurangabad | Vivanta Ahmedabad | Vivanta Ayodhya | Vivanta Dharamshala | Vivanta Pakyong | Vivanta Goa, Miramar | Vivanta Guwahati | Vivanta Hampi | Vivanta Katra | Vivanta Shillong | Vivanta Srinagar | Vivanta Surajkund | Vivanta Tawang | Vivanta Thiruvananthapuram | Vivanta Vijayawada | Vivanta Vrindavan | The Gateway Hotel Pasumalai, Madurai | The Gateway Hotel Ambad, Nashik | Ginger Aurangabad | Ginger Ayodhya | Ginger Bhubaneswar | Ginger Chandigarh | Ginger Dwarka | Ginger Gangtok | Ginger Goa, Panjim | Ginger Guwahati | Ginger Indore | Ginger Jamshedpur | Ginger Katra | Ginger Kolhapur | Ginger Mysore | Ginger Nashik | Ginger Patna | Ginger Pondicherry | Ginger Trivandrum | Ginger Vapi

TAJ | SELEQTIONS | VIVANTA | GINGER

10

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2024



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BHARAT RATNA ADVANI

His arc shows a rare capacity to reflect and reinvent – he was each and all of his many versions that shaped nation's politics

THE BHARAT RATNA to BJP veteran LK Advani, just days after the consecration of the Ram temple at Ayodhya and the Bharat Ratna to socialist icon Karpoori Thakur, is remarkable for its timing. The two awards help the BJP to symbolically fold in both Mandal and Mandir. Ahead of an important election, they underline the BJP's efforts in nudging Mandal vs Mandir towards becoming Mandir plus Mandal. But this moment is also, and more, about LK Advani, the politician with an arc spanning over seven decades. Advani's arc is impactful and controversial, not just because it is long, but also because it shows a rare breadth and movement, and an even more rare capacity to reflect and reassess and reinvent. He has been each and all of many versions of LK Advani.

The Organisation Man, who worked to strengthen the nuts and bolts of the party from within, mentored a second generation of leaders, and spoke his mind too. Marking the 40th anniversary of the Emergency, one year into the first term of the government of his ex-pretege Narendra Modi, he cautioned on the task ahead, saying he could not rule out another curtailment of liberties. The Parliamentarian, who steered important debates in the House, but was eventually overtaken by the Rath Yatri, who irreversibly changed the political narrative with his journey from Somnath to Ayodhya, using the idiom of religion and joining it to nationalism and patriotism, while sparking communal polarisation and triggering violence that led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, an event that redirected the future course of the country's politics. The Script Writer, alongwith the party's more coalitional face, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, of the BJP's rise and rise, from a political "untouchable" in the aftermath of the demolition at Ayodhya, to the position of the second pole of politics, setting the scene for its edging out of the Congress to become, as it is now, its dominant pole. The (less successful) Script Rewriter, who in 2005, was forced to step down as party president because he praised Jinnah in Pakistan and suggested he was "secular", and who told this paper in a 2010 interview, on the 20th anniversary of his Somnath-Ayodhya rathyatra, that "my party lost an opportunity" during the Jinnah row, of being seen as proud of Hinduism but not anti-Muslim or anti-Pakistan. Said Advani: "If I had any apprehension that the incident (Babri demolition) could take place, I would not have gone to Ayodhya... I'd still have gone to Pakistan".

By honouring Advani with the Bharat Ratna now, the BJP commemorates a founding father in an opportune moment, and it does more than that: It also sends out a message of its continuing inventiveness in sending out messages. It has shown political dexterity earlier in deploying the Ratna. But in a time when spaces of grace and generosity are shrinking in politics, not without the active contribution and complicity of the BJP, with this high award to someone seen as a mentor who also raised concerns, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sets an example even as he scores a political point.

WHAT US NEEDS TO DO

Using military force against the 'axis of resistance' without disciplining Netanyahu will be an American exercise in futility

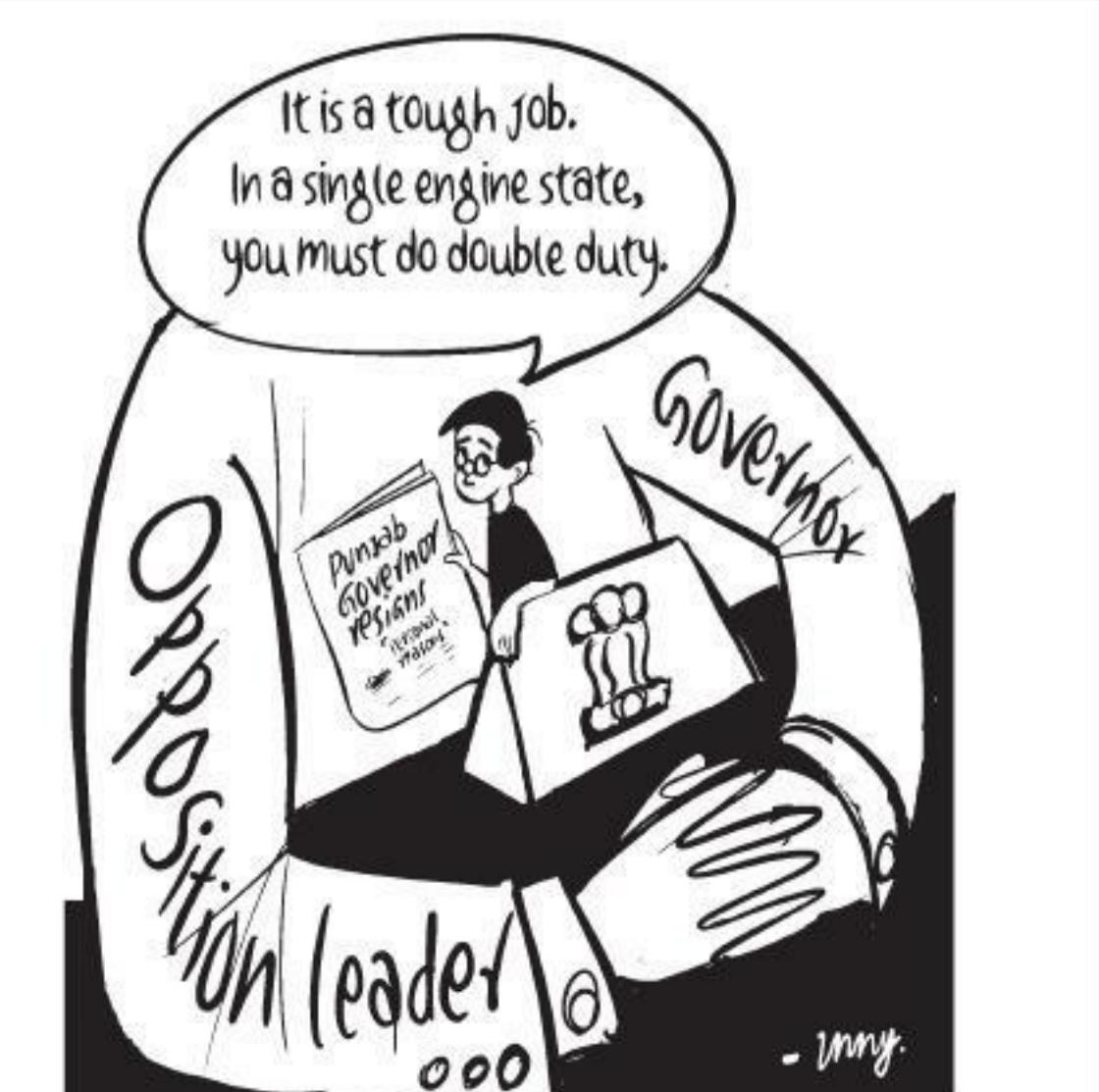
TWO ROUNDS OF US military strikes across the Middle East over the weekend against militant groups – the so-called "axis of resistance" – backed by Iran, are unlikely to either deter US adversaries or reassure US allies in the region. The US military response will not rally the deeply divided domestic opinion behind the White House. Nor will it dampen fears of a widening war and its impact on global commerce that relies on the vital trade route running through the Red Sea. Although the US remains the pre-eminent external power with significant leverage in the region, the Biden Administration's political and military dilemmas have only been accentuated with each passing day since the October 7 terror attacks against Israel. The one step that could dampen the conflict is Washington's decisive pressure on Israel to accept a ceasefire. Despite its push for a pause in the Gaza war, Washington has been unwilling to apply the necessary political pressure on Israel.

The wave of attacks by militant groups on US military presence in the region since October 7 included one at the end of January that killed three US soldiers at a US base in Jordan. President Joe Biden, in the middle of a challenging campaign for reelection, promised a decisive military response. The first round of the response on Saturday saw the US bomb 85 targets of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Force in Iraq and Syria. A second round of attacks in the early hours of Sunday focused on the Houthis, the Yemeni group backed by Tehran, who have been attacking international shipping in the Red Sea region. The US counterattacks are unlikely to impress the hawks at home, especially in the Republican Party, who accuse Biden of being weak, indecisive, and unwilling to confront the source of the challenge in Iran. The doves in the Democratic Party are angry that Biden is leading the US into a wider war in the Middle East, notwithstanding the claims of the Biden administration to the contrary.

A ceasefire in Gaza and a fresh diplomatic effort to address the concerns of the Palestinian people could go a long way in deterring Iran and its proxies that have built support by pointing to Israel's brutal record against Palestine. To be sure, the Biden Administration is trying to broker a long pause in the Gaza military operations and facilitate the release of Israeli hostages and Hamas prisoners that could set the stage for a renewed peace process that would recognise the long-standing aspirations for a credible Palestinian state. But resistance from Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, continues to stymie US peace efforts. Using military force against the "axis of resistance" without disciplining Netanyahu will be an American exercise in futility.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



Leader with a mission



M VENKAIAH NAIDU

Role and contribution of LK Advani in unleashing the power of nationalism will be etched in history

Vajpayeeji is a rare example in walking together on the path of selfless commitment to a larger cause. The results are now visible to all.

Advaniji never craved power. His mission was a new India, drawing strength from its past and rising to its potential. Amid efforts to distort Indian history, he was determined to steer Indian thought and public life clear of this confusion. Being a victim of the turmoil of Partition, he was keen to present secularism in its right spirit. He was concerned by the devious efforts to construct false narratives in this regard. He spared no efforts to expose pseudo-secularist discourse, and also succeeded in placing the debate about nationalism on the right pedestal. For him, nationalism has been an essential and positive force to take our nation to its rightful place. Unity of all Indians is an underlying force of this nationalism, and Lord Ram, an ideal symbol of this much desired unity of Indians. He stirred this new conscience to great effect and to positive results.

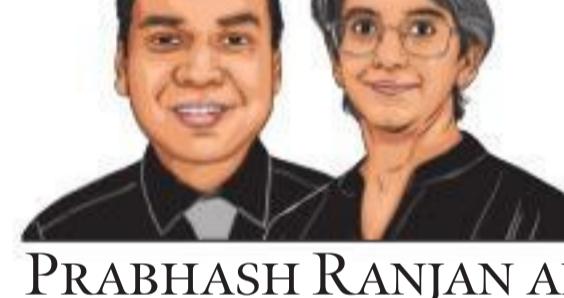
A firm believer in the equality of all Indians, he considered appeasement as a distortion of this spirit of unity. In 1990, Advaniji launched a new national movement in the form of a *rath yatra* from Somnath. The *bhava Ram mandir* recently consecrated by the Prime Minister was not built just by brick and mortar but by the forces of patriotic fervour and nationalist zeal. The role and contribution of Advaniji in unleashing this power of nationalism will be firmly etched in the history of modern India.

Advaniji symbolises clarity of thought and convictions, matched by a steely resolve. In this regard, he is in the mould of Sardar Patel and is hence rightly called the "Loh Purush". However, his tough exterior is more than matched by a graceful and courteous exterior. In his long public life, there has never been an occasion when he has used harsh words for his political adversaries or colleagues. His parliamentary career has been an example in etiquette, demanding respect from all sides. His experiences during the dark days of the Emergency increased manifold his commitment and love for parliamentary democracy. The way he undid the Emergency excesses against the press remains exemplary. He is a democrat to the core.

The writer is former Vice President of India

CROWN JEWEL THAT WAS

Ongoing crisis in WTO's dispute settlement mechanism must be resolved



PRABHASH RANJAN AND R V ANURADHA

ON THE negotiating agenda for the member countries of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), when they meet in Abu Dhabi for the 13th ministerial meeting, is the ongoing crisis in the dispute settlement mechanism (DSM). WTO's DSM – its crown jewel – comprises a binding two-tiered process with a panel and an appellate body (AB). This body, which hears appeals from the decisions rendered by WTO panels, is a permanent judicial body of seven independent members with compulsory jurisdiction over all WTO members. However, since the end of 2019, it stands crippled because the US, which lost several critical disputes before it, has single-handedly blocked the appointment of new members.

Consequently, countries have found an easy way to avoid complying with the WTO panel rulings. They appeal into the void, thereby rendering the WTO toothless.

At the 12th WTO ministerial meeting, countries resolved to create a fully functioning DSM by 2024. As part of this decision, India and several developing countries have rightly demanded the body's restoration. As it existed from 1995 till 2019, a fully functional dispute settlement, with the checks and balances that the appellate body provides, is the best bet for the developing world. However, given the US's keenness to de-judicialise its international trade relations, it looks unlikely that the body, as we know, will spring back to life.

In such a scenario, developing countries

While the US has so far opposed the AB in principle, it may consider an AB with limited powers. The powers of the AB can be truncated in various ways, such as requiring it to be largely deferential to the parties to the dispute, stating that AB rulings will not have a persuasive value, etc. But a diluted AB will be antithetical to the role that WTO law expects the DSM to play: To provide security and predictability to the multilateral trading regime.

have three options to maintain a two-tiered DSM at the WTO. The first option is to join the European Union-led multi-party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA), which formalises the mechanism for arbitration already available under the WTO to provide the appellate review for panel reports. The MPIA's procedure is quite like the one that the AB followed. However, there are two downsides. First, its voluntary nature means that each MPIA tribunal would be an ad hoc one. Second, though MPIA awards are binding on the parties to the dispute, unlike the AB ruling, they are not required to be adopted by all WTO members. This means that all MPIA rulings would remain ad hoc, unlike the AB, whose rulings set a body of jurisprudence that subsequent panels have frequently relied on to ensure certainty and predictability in dispute settlement.

The second option is a diluted AB. While the US has so far opposed the AB in principle, it may consider an AB with limited powers. The powers of the AB can be truncated in various ways, such as requiring it to be largely deferential to the parties to the dispute, stating that AB rulings will not have a persuasive value, etc. But a diluted AB will be antithetical to the role that WTO law expects the DSM to play: To provide security and predictability to the multilateral trading regime.

It will also be inimical to the interests of countries like India. Even if the US does not like AB's jurisdiction, the fact remains that the AB, over the years, has clarified the meaning of WTO law.

There is a third interim option, as argued by scholars Robert Howse and Wenhua Ji, which is to resurrect AB in the same form as it existed till 2019, but with one important change – countries will have the option to opt out of AB's compulsory jurisdiction. A country opting out cannot participate in an appellate process either as a complainant or as a respondent. Thus, if the US opts out of the appellate mechanism, any country with a dispute against the US would have to settle for only a single-tier panel jurisdiction over such disputes. But there would be a functional AB for all other disputes. Critics might argue that this will change the intrinsic nature of a two-tier binding DSM and, more importantly, keep the US – one of the WTO's most frequent litigators – outside the appellate mechanism's purview.

But this is a price that one might have to pay to safeguard the AB in its current form. The US not joining the AB will not undermine its prominence. The non-compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), for example, hasn't diminished its legitimacy and stature.

India and other developing countries should continue striving for the ideal solution: The restoration of the AB in the form it existed till 2019. However, if India is pushed to the wall to choose between the status quo and an AB for only willing countries, the latter, not the former, will be preferable.

Ranjan teaches at the South Asian University and Anuradha is a Partner at Clarus Law Associates. Views are personal

FEBRUARY 5, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO TALKS ON ALIEN ISSUE

THE ALL ASSAM Students Union declined to hold fresh negotiations on the aliens issue saying that the atmosphere had been spoiled with the introduction of the Migrants Act, 1983. AASU president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and general secretary Bhrgu Kumar Phukan said that the Act was passed to make Indians out of non-Indians. They said that from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's speech, it was clear that she had no intention to solve the alien problem.

PM'S CALL FOR UNITY

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi called for unity among all sections of the people of

Assam and other north-eastern states to bring about all-round development of the region. Mrs Gandhi urged the people to co-operate with the present government in the implementation of various schemes launched to help the poor. She said, "We should be united irrespective of caste, creed, language and religion to protect our sovereignty and strengthen the Centre."

KIDNAPPING IN UK

INDIAN DIPLOMAT RAVINDRA Mhatre based in Birmingham is said to be missing. It is suspected that he has been kidnapped by a group claiming to be a supporter of the Kashmir Liberation Front (KL). A note slipped into the KL office said that an Indian

diplomat had been kidnapped and that if by 19:30 GMT Magboot Bhat and other political prisoners were not released, the diplomat would be killed.

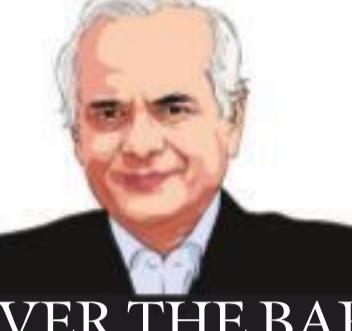
NCR'S DEVELOPMENT

A HIGH POWER officials' body to oversee and regulate development activity in the national capital region is being set up in a fortnight, the works and housing secretary Ramesh Chandra said. The body will be a forerunner of the statutory coordinating board, which will be set up at the central level for planning, monitoring and development of the region. The establishment of the statutory board has been held up for several years because UP, Rajasthan and Haryana had doubts.

THE IDEAS PAGE

How to manage political risk

Businesses have rarely confronted such a complex of potentially disruptive geopolitical uncertainties. Scenario planning offers a path to prepare for the challenges ahead



OVER THE BARREL

BY VIKRAM S MEHTA

I WILL STEP off the boards of several companies this year. This is because of the SEBI regulation that independent directors can only serve a maximum of two five-year terms as non-executive directors. I will leave with a heightened sense of respect for the calibre and talent of Indian management. They are truly world-class. That said, I would like to offer a suggestion — they should incorporate scenario planning into their risk management processes for tackling political risk.

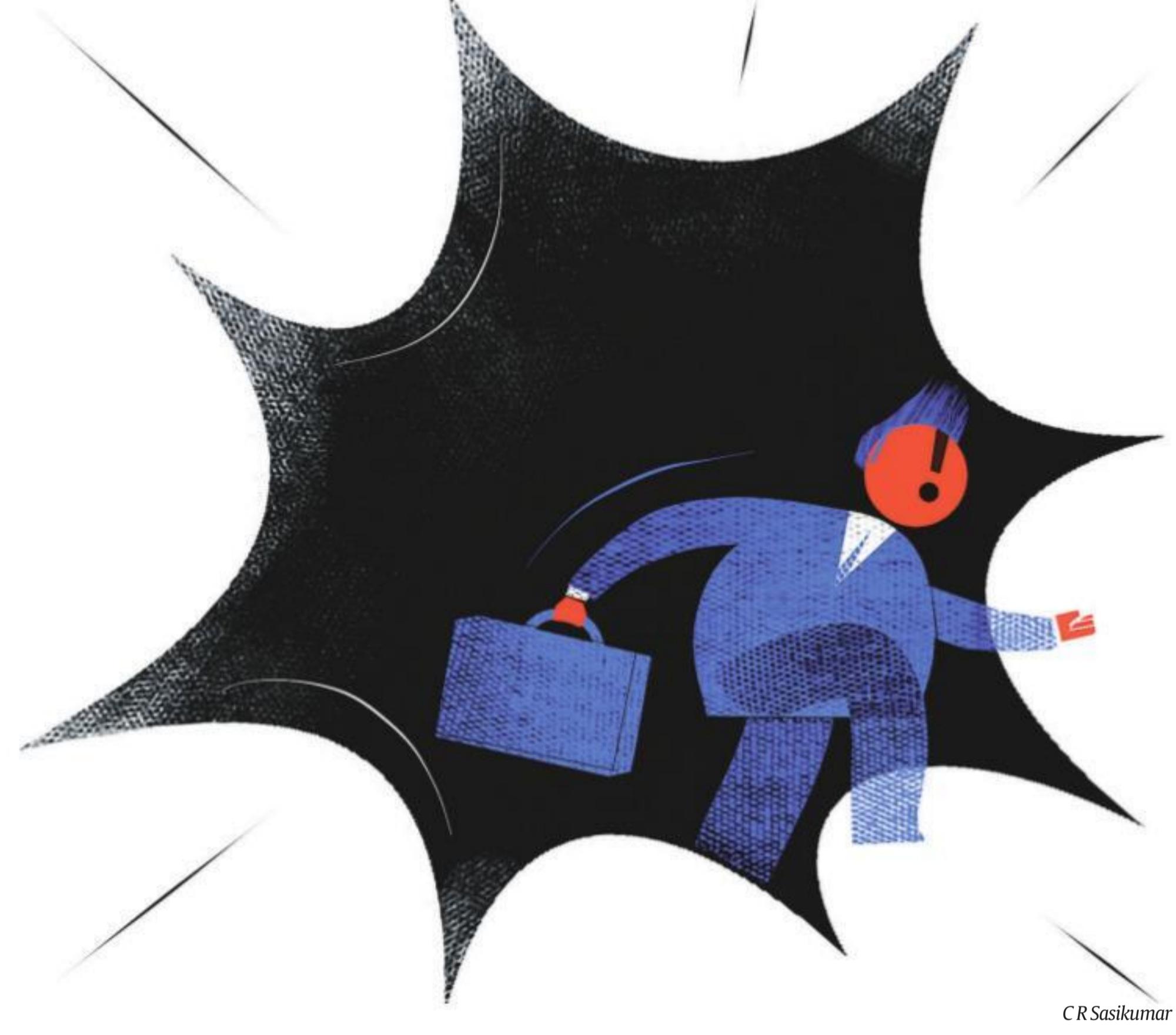
The world is poised on a knife-edge of political uncertainty. Several commentators have pointed out that more than 50 per cent of the world's population is living in countries that will go to elections in 2024. Seventy countries have already or will hold polls this year. Eight countries including Bangladesh and Taiwan held elections last month.

The electoral results in some countries are predictable. President Vladimir Putin will, for instance, win the elections in Russia. And if elections are held in Israel as demanded by the public, PM Benjamin Netanyahu will be out of office. The results in others may not be so definitive but political pundits have already called them. PM Narendra Modi will win a third term; PM Rishi Sunak will sit with the Opposition. And the results in a few will depend on the preference of a minority of fence sitters or a "non-playing" captain. The next president of the US will be decided by the voting outcome in just four (or perhaps five) of the 50 states and according to one analyst, the side of the fence towards which 1,00,000 or so voters in these four swing states jump. The elections in Pakistan will rest on the choice of its military.

At the level of international geopolitics, the conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine and the "Cold War" between China and the US remain front and centre on the global agenda. The Middle East conflict has, in recent weeks, ratcheted up in intensity with the US and UK bombing the Iranian-backed, Yemeni Houthis that have disrupted international trade through their attacks on international ships crossing the Red Sea. This has led to shippers including Maersk and BP rerouting their traffic around the Cape of Good Hope, rising freight costs and causing supply chain delays. Last week, three US soldiers were killed in an attack allegedly by an Iranian proxy, prompting President Joe Biden to echo President George W Bush's muscular response following 9/11. The concern is whether such a response will trigger an escalatory chain reaction engulfing Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran.

The Ukraine war, now in its second year, is stalemated. Ukraine needs more money and ammunition but its allies are divided on how much and for how long to bankroll it. Putin is in no mood to compromise, especially now that Trump looks like he will be riding out his legal troubles into the Republican nomination.

The "Cold War" between the US and China seemed like it might lurch towards



C.R Sasikumar

the edge with the election of the separatist leader Lai Ching-Te as President of Taiwan. Thankfully that has not happened yet, but no one should discount the possibility of "macho" adventurism triggering a "hot" reaction.

Technocratic business leaders have never found it easy to handle political risk. They recognise the problem but tend to sidestep a granular conversation on its impact. This may be because it is a "known" but "unknown" uncertainty. It cannot be easily "price tagged".

My view is that this lacuna must be filled. Given current world conditions, this is a risk that if not managed and/or mitigated could well tip companies over the edge. There is no one-size-fits-all process for tackling such uncertainties. One oft-adopted way is to "outsource" the process to political risk consultants — former civil servants, politicians, and academics. This is better than pushing the issue under the carpet but it provides no more than a useful ballast. It is not sufficient. What is required is a process that engages leaders across all functions and stretches management's mindsets to countenance the "what if".

In this regard, I am a votary of the scenario planning process. I like that this process does not generate predictions, but based on predetermined trends develops descriptions of different but logically consistent and plausible futures. It is led by the planning department but it proves useful only if it is a multidisciplinary, non-linear exercise. It compels intellectual and subjective reflection of the counterfactual but it allows for the translation of these reflections

There is no one-size-fits-all process for tackling such uncertainties. One oft-adapted way is to "outsource" the process to political risk consultants — former civil servants, politicians, and academics. This is better than pushing the issue under the carpet but it provides no more than a useful ballast. It is not sufficient. What is required is a process that engages leaders across all functions and stretches management's mindsets to countenance the "what if".

into quantifiable metrics.

The World Bank has, for instance, recently prepared three scenarios regarding the future trajectory of oil prices. Each of these scenarios is built around predetermined levels of supply disruption. There is the "small supply" disruption scenario wherein supplies are reduced by between 500 kbd and 2 mbd equivalent to the amount taken off the market during the Libyan Civil War of 2011; the "medium disruption" scenario leading to a supply hit of 3-5 mbd equivalent to the impact of the Iraq war of 2003; and the "large disruption" scenario wherein supplies contract by 6-8 mbd a la the Arab Embargo in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

For each of these scenarios, the Bank has provided an oil price range rather than a single line forecast; viz \$93 - 102/bbl in "small" disruption; \$109 - 121/bbl in "medium" and \$140-157/bbl in "large" disruption. I find this approach constructive as whilst it enables the leaders to deliberate the ramifications of the current Middle East crisis against hard metrics, it deters them from fixating on a number that given market conditions would most likely mislead.

Businesses confront such a complex of potentially disruptive risks. There is no one recipe for managing them. Scenario planning is not a panacea, but it does offer a methodological process for better preparing corporate leaders to respond to the unexpected.

The writer is chairman and distinguished fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

Budget questions, no answers

Are poor, women, youth, farmers doing better since 2014?

ASHWINI DESHPANDE

The finance minister (FM) presented the interim budget or a vote-on-account. By definition, this could, at best, seek authorisation from Parliament to spend on important schemes until the new government is in office, and not announce any major new policies. The interim budget stuck to its mandate. There has been plenty of commentary on the budget numbers: Fiscal deficit, tax revenue and expenditure numbers. This piece focuses on the big picture issues that the budget posed.

The budget speech presented a report card of the achievements of the Centre not just in the last year, but since the 2014 regime change. The finance minister outlined that four demographic segments are key to India's march towards becoming a developed country: The poor, women, youth and farmers.

The running theme in her speech was that these four segments are not just doing well, their progress has been noticeably better than in the pre-2014 era. This is an empirical question and should be easy to settle if we have comparable data.

Which we don't. Take the poor. A pre-and post-2014 comparison is like comparing apples to oranges. Prior to 2014, the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) would conduct quinquennial national consumption expenditure surveys that could identify the proportion of people below the threshold

defined by the national official poverty line, which was based on consumption expenditure. This is the poverty Head Count Ratio (HCR). These surveys could also calculate HCR based on internationally comparable poverty lines — one dollar a day, for example. The earlier poverty line isn't sacrosanct. The academic and policy space has witnessed a vibrant "Great Indian Poverty Debate" about where the poverty line should be, whether it should be focused on food consumption or include other items. However, there is overwhelming consensus that the post-1991 reform period witnessed an impressive decline in poverty incidence (from 37.2 per cent in 2004 to 21.9 per cent in 2011 using the national poverty line) along with high growth rates.

Has the decline in poverty been faster in the last nine years compared to the previous two decades? How did poverty incidence change during the devastation wreaked by the Covid-19 pandemic? Here we are stumped because both the last national census and the consumption expenditure survey are roughly 13 years old, and hence outdated.

The FM claimed that 25 crore people have come out of poverty since 2014. This is based on the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) released by the Niti Aayog. This is calculated using 12 indicators — nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, antenatal care,

years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, assets and bank account — that have been grouped under three dimensions namely, health, education and standard of living. The MPI estimates are not comparable to the earlier HCR numbers.

It is hard to determine the HCR using this index but there is some extrapolation that shows a "steep decline" in HCR from an alleged 29 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23. The pre-2014 back-projected HCR is significantly higher than what the NSS survey revealed back then.

The FM claimed that "the average real income of the people has increased by 50 per cent". Given that there is no data on individual household incomes, this is probably based on per capita GDP. In addition to the issue of the comparability of CDP estimates, there is the very real question of how the distribution of income has shifted.

How has inequality changed before and after 2014? A given average income can be associated with different income distributions. There has been ample discussion about increased inequality and the shape of the post-Covid economic recovery. Is the recovery of the GDP being driven by the top 10 per cent of Indians? Is this a K-shaped income growth which means that the divergence between the top and bottom is increasing?

The FM's mention of women was in the

context of massive enrolment in self-help groups and the remarkable work done by ASHA workers. Both phenomena are indeed admirable. Can we be hopeful that ASHA and Anganwadi workers, India's formidable frontline health and care workers, will be remunerated through full-time salary and benefits that are routine for government workers?

We could forget about statistical quibbles and accept that India is doing phenomenally well since 2014 on all fronts. In which case, why a long wait for Viksit India@2047? What are the challenges that will take a quarter century to overcome? Could it be that half of the country's population (women) are massively underrepresented in decision-making in both public and private spheres and significantly out of paid work? Or, that the working-age population is increasing faster than opportunities for productive employment, leading to a jobs' crisis and youth unemployment? Are agricultural incomes not growing? Or that (lack of) inclusive growth is a real concern? Will inequality pose a constraint to future growth? Are early childhood health indicators, which affect several adult-life indicators, not improving as fast as needed? We can only speculate.

The writer is head and professor, Department of Economics, Ashoka University. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The US undoubtedly possesses significant influence and military presence in the Middle East. However, whether it is the 'anticipated' entry into the Middle East dilemma or the 'expected' retaliatory actions, it is evident that the US approach in the Middle East is no longer effective."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Changing gears to grow

For starters, government should combine MGNREGA with PM Awas Yojana in rural areas



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI AND RITIKA JUNEJA

AS INDIA gears up for parliamentary elections in April-May, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's major development plank is the Viksit Bharat Sankalp by 2047 (developed India by 2047). He has also said that the only "castes" that matter are the poor, farmers, women, and youth. While opposition parties are stuck on caste census promises, PM Modi is riding on the promise of Ram Rajya, an inclusive and sustainable growth model.

Moving forward, the big issue is what

should be the strategy to achieve inclusive and environmentally sustainable growth as well as doubling farmers' real incomes by FY23.

Opposition parties are stuck on caste census promises, PM Modi is riding on the promise of Ram Rajya, an inclusive and sustainable growth model. More confident than ever, Modi has set a goal of winning even more seats in this election than in the last one. His confidence stems from the performance of his government over the last 10 years, and the promise of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

There is no doubt that the Modi government has done quite well in the post-Covid recovery period. The Economic Review by the Department of Economic Affairs points out that India will register a more than 7 per cent growth in GDP for three consecutive years — from FY22 to FY24, perhaps even in FY25. This is much higher than the global average as well as the growth in most G20 countries. But for inclusive growth, we need to dive a little deeper and see what has happened in the agriculture sector, which engages the largest segment of the working population (45.8 per cent in 2022-23, as per PLFS). In this context, let us compare the 10 years of the Modi government with the 10 years of the UPA government on certain key parameters.

On the macro-economic front, India's real GDP grew by 5.9 per cent per annum between FY15-FY24 vis-à-vis 6.8 per cent achieved during FY05-FY14. On CPI inflation, the Modi government wins hands down with 5.1 per cent versus 8.1 per cent in the UPA period. Multidimensional poverty fell from 29.2 per cent in FY14 to 11.3 per cent in FY23 as per the NITI Aayog.

Further, the Economic Review states that the unemployment rate has declined drastically from 6 per cent in FY18 to 3.2 per cent in FY23 (PLFS, MoSPI), although ILO data still shows unemployment is at more than 7 per cent. The two differ due to differences in definition. The agri sector, contributing about 18 per cent of India's gross value added (GVA) in FY24, is likely to register a growth rate of just 1.8 per cent in FY24 as per first advance estimates, a major drop from 4 per cent in FY23. If we count this, the decadal growth in agri-GDP under the Modi government is likely to be roughly the same (3.5 per cent) as under the UPA government. It reminds us of the proverbial Hindu rate of growth of 3.5 per cent for 20 years.

The reverse migration during Covid-19 has increased the share of agriculture in the labour force, up from 42.5 per cent in 2018-19 to 45.8 per cent in 2022-23 (PLFS data). This is not a good sign. No wonder, during the Modi 2.0 period, real wages in farming

Gulati is distinguished professor and Juneja a fellow at ICRIER. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROBLEM OF ACCESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Language & learning' (IE, February 3). CBSE's proposition for students to study three languages seems to be geared toward increasing diversity. Adding more language enhances learning and improves skill sets, but for the CBSE schools in rural areas, the probability of such propositions is meagre. Many times, the pupil-to-teacher ratio does not meet the 30 to one mark, and there is little scope of learning other languages. This is because of the lack of qualified linguistic educators and the subsequent issue of their commute to rural areas. So urban schools are able to receive good linguistic education, while rural schools are left out. Thus, there must be good communication between the central and local educational bodies to reduce this disparity.

Madhusree Guha, Kolkata

HOLES IN BUDGET

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'About popularity, not populism' (IE, February 2). BJP is confident about winning the Lok Sabha elections, which is reflected in the interim budget. It has not announced any populist measures to boost prospects. PM Modi has successfully evolved from an able administrator to the guarantor of the masses. But the guarantee only

seems to stem from the fact that the party has fulfilled its promise of bringing Lord Ram to his janmabhoomi. India can never realise its growth story unless there is a planned approach for job creation at a rapid pace for the youth. One can't be complacent thinking that sectors like IT and start-ups, which are at the initial stages, can satiate the employment hunger for millions. Until then, the budget rings like an empty vessel that makes a lot of noise but no music.

Ritika Sarkar, Bangalore

ENGLAND'S WIN

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A defining Test' (IE, February 2). The pitch at Hyderabad is not awful by any means, it helped the spinners from the beginning. It's the second time India has been caught sleeping on "tailored" wickets. Australian pacers made the most of the low-bounce wicket in the 50-over World Cup final, bowling cutters and slow bouncers. Similarly, careful planning and assessment of the conditions, good catching, smart bowling, sticking to the basics of the stump-to-stump line, and constant pressure on a worn-out fourth-day pitch were enough for England to win by 28 runs — with a late fightback from lower order batters only helping to narrow the margin of defeat.

Divakar Mishra, New Delhi

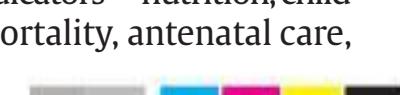


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www.indianexpress.com



What changes CBSE has proposed for Class 10 and 12, why

R RADHIKA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

THE CENTRAL Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is planning significant changes to the academic framework of Classes 9, 10, 11, and 12 as part of its plan to implement creditisation, recommended by the 2020 National Education Policy (NEP).

The CBSE, The Indian Express reported last week, has proposed that Class 10 and 12 students study more subjects, especially more native Indian languages.

The plan was sent to all heads of CBSE-affiliated institutions late last year, to review and provide comments by December 5, 2023.

What is the credit system and why is CBSE rolling it out?

Creditisation aims to establish academic

equivalence between vocational and general education, facilitating mobility between the two education systems, as proposed by the NEP 2020. To implement this, the University Grants Commission – the higher education regulator – had come up with the National Credit Framework (NCF) in 2022.

NCF is a unified credit framework for the integration of training and skill development into schools and higher education. For a student in Class 9 to advance to Class 10, they will need to earn a specified number of credits. Eventually, the student will earn enough credits to be eligible to enrol in an undergraduate programme in a university. The credits earned by a student will be digitally stored in the Academic Bank of Credits and accessible through a linked Digilocker account.

To implement this in its affiliated schools, the CBSE formed a subcommittee in 2022 that suggested how the current academic framework should be redesigned to

align it with NCF.

What changes has the CBSE subcommittee proposed?

At present, the standard school curriculum does not have a formalised credit system. As per the CBSE plan, an academic year would be made up of 1,200 notional learning hours, which would translate to earning 40 credits. Notional learning refers to a stipulated amount of time an average student would need to spend to attain specified outcomes. In other words, each subject has been allotted a certain number of hours so that, in a year, a student spends a total of 1,200 learning hours to be declared 'pass'. The hours will include both academic learning at school and non-academic or experiential learning outside the school.

The scheme of studies has accordingly

been tweaked to mention teaching hours and credits earned against each subject.

In order to operationalise this, the committee has proposed to add multidisciplinary and vocational courses to the list of existing subjects. So, in order to pass the final exams, students in Classes 9 and 10 must complete 10 subjects – three languages and seven core subjects. Currently, students in these grades have to take five subjects: three main subjects and two languages.

Of the three compulsory languages, at least two should be Indian. For instance, students can choose a combination of Hindi, Sanskrit and English. That apart, math and computational thinking, social science, science, art education, physical education and well-being, vocational education and environmental education are the seven main subjects.

For Classes 11 and 12, the Board sug-

gested that students must study six subjects, consisting of two languages and four subjects with an optional fifth. At least one of the two languages has to be Indian. The current system requires passing five subjects – one language and four electives.

How will exams be conducted under the proposed system?

The credits earned will be independent of the marks students obtain in exams.

For Class 10 students, CBSE will conduct external (read: board) exams for the three languages, mathematics and computational thinking, social science, science and environmental education. Art education, physical education and vocational education would be a mix of internal and Board examination. But students would have to pass all 10 subjects to move on to the next grade.

In Class 12, all subjects will be categorised into four groups. The languages group is cat-

egorised as Group 1. Group 2 would consist of subjects of arts education (like dance, music, sculpting), physical education, and vocational education. Group 3 will have social science subjects (eg: history, geography, political science, economics etc) and interdisciplinary areas (such as environmental education and commerce). Group 4 has mainly subjects of mathematics and computational thinking and science.

Class 12 students will have to choose at least two languages from Group 1, and four main subjects (with an optional fifth subject) from at least two of the remaining groups. There will be an external exam for both languages and Groups 3 and 4 subjects. If a student chooses to study a subject from Group 2, she will be assessed based on a mix of internal and Board exams.

LONGER VERSION
indianexpress.com/explained

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

NORTHERN IRELAND GETS NEW GOVT: THE DEADLOCK, AND THE RESOLUTION

YASHEE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4



New First Minister Michelle O'Neill and Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly at Stormont in Belfast on February 3. Reuters

NORTHERN IRELAND finally got a functional government on Saturday, two years after its Parliament was paralysed over new trade rules between the European Union and the United Kingdom, necessitated by Brexit.

New first minister Michelle O'Neill creates history, as she belongs to Sinn Féin, a political party linked to the paramilitary group Irish Republican Army, which has a long history of fighting the British.

The prolonged deadlock in governance had affected public services, while public sector employees had been protesting delayed salary hikes.

Unique position

Northern Ireland was created in May 1921 by partitioning Ireland. In 1922, the rest of Ireland gained independence from the British, becoming today's Republic of Ireland, with its capital in Dublin.

From the 1960s, Northern Ireland saw a bloody conflict between those who wanted to remain with the United Kingdom and those who wanted a free and united Ireland. Finally, on April 10, 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed to end the bloodshed, and gave Northern Ireland a unique system of governance.

Thus, unionists (the side loyal to the British Union) and nationalists share power in Stormont, the Parliament buildings in Belfast. Both sides have to cooperate for the government to work.

Collapse of 2022

After the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) left the EU, Northern Ireland now shared a land border with an EU member, the Republic of Ireland. Since the EU and the UK have different product standards, border checks were necessary before goods could move from Northern Ireland to Ireland.

However, given the history of violence here, it was decided to leave this border alone, and checks were introduced between Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and Northern Ireland instead. This system angered the unionists, who believed it undermined Northern Ireland's position with the UK. Thus, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, leader of Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), refused to allow Stormont to function from May 2022.

The new deal

Various efforts were made to resolve the problem, including the Windsor Framework of February 2023, which introduced a system of green lanes for goods that would stay in Northern Ireland and red lanes (with more checks) for those that would go to the EU. However, for the DUP, these measures were far too little. Now, a new deal has been reached. Its three main points, as stated on the UK's Institute for Government, include: The green lane is now the UK Internal Market channel, on which checks and customs paperwork have been reduced further; there's an "Internal Market Guarantee" which says that at least 80% of Great Britain to Northern Ireland goods will pass through this channel; and the UK government is extending a £3.3 billion package to help Northern Ireland's finances.

Aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to the Centre and states accumulating a mountain of debt. Bringing it down will be a challenge for the next government, when it is sworn in after the Lok Sabha polls



HARISH DAMODARAN

ALL NEW governments carry legacy burdens inherited from their predecessors. It will be no different for the next government taking over post the April-May 2024 national elections.

The Narendra Modi-headed National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government will end its second term with overall public debt in excess of 80% of India's gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices.

According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, general government debt – the combined domestic and external liabilities of both the Centre and the states – touched 84.4% of GDP in 2003-04, the last year of the earlier NDA government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

That ratio fell to a low of 66.4% in 2010-11 during the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime. It rose gradually to 67.7% in 2013-14 and 70.4% in 2018-19, at the end of the UPA's tenure and the Modi government's first term respectively.

The Modi government's second innings saw the debt-GDP ratio soar to 75% in 2019-20 and peak at 88.5% in 2020-21, before easing to 83.8% and 81% in the following two fiscal years (April-March). The IMF has projected the ratio at 82% in the current fiscal and 82.4% for 2024-25, which is still close to the high levels of the early 2000s (chart 1).

What does public debt entail?

Government debt is basically the outstanding domestic and foreign loans raised by the Centre and states – plus other liabilities, including against small savings schemes, provident funds, and special securities issued to the Food Corporation of India, fertiliser firms and oil marketing companies – on which they have to pay interest and the principal amounts borrowed.

As per the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) law, which the Vajpayee-headed NDA government had enacted in 2003, the general government debt

was supposed to be brought down to 60% of GDP by 2024-25. The Centre's own total outstanding liabilities were not to exceed 40% within that time schedule.

The Union Budget papers for various years, however, reveal the Centre's outstanding debt falling from 50.5% of GDP in 2013-14 to 48.1% in 2018-19 at the end of the Modi government's first term. Subsequently, it shot up to 50.7% in 2019-20 and 60.8% in 2020-21, before marginally dipping to 55.9% in 2022-23, 56.9% in 2023-24 and a budgeted 56% in 2024-25. That's well above the original 40% target.

In absolute terms, the Centre's total liabilities has more than doubled from Rs 90.84 lakh crore to Rs 183.67 lakh crore between 2018-19 and 2024-25. The previous doubling, from Rs 45.17 lakh crore in 2011-12, took seven years, one year longer.

The main result of debt levels building up is the Centre's interest payments: Chart 2 shows a decline in the interest-to-GDP ratio from a high of 4.7% in 2002-03 to 3.1% by 2010-11. The ratio more or less stabilised at 3.1% till 2019-20, before surging to 3.4% in 2020-21 and 3.6% in the current and ensuing fiscals.

Why has debt spiraled?

Haasan since shows that the people of Tamil Nadu will not vote for someone for their celebrity status alone. In this context, Vijay's ideology is not easy to pin-point. However, a close aide of his told *The Indian Express* that his ideology is clear in the Friday statement announcing the party. The statement had a line, "Pirappukkum ella uyirukkum", which is a couplet from the classic Tamil text, *Tirukkural*.

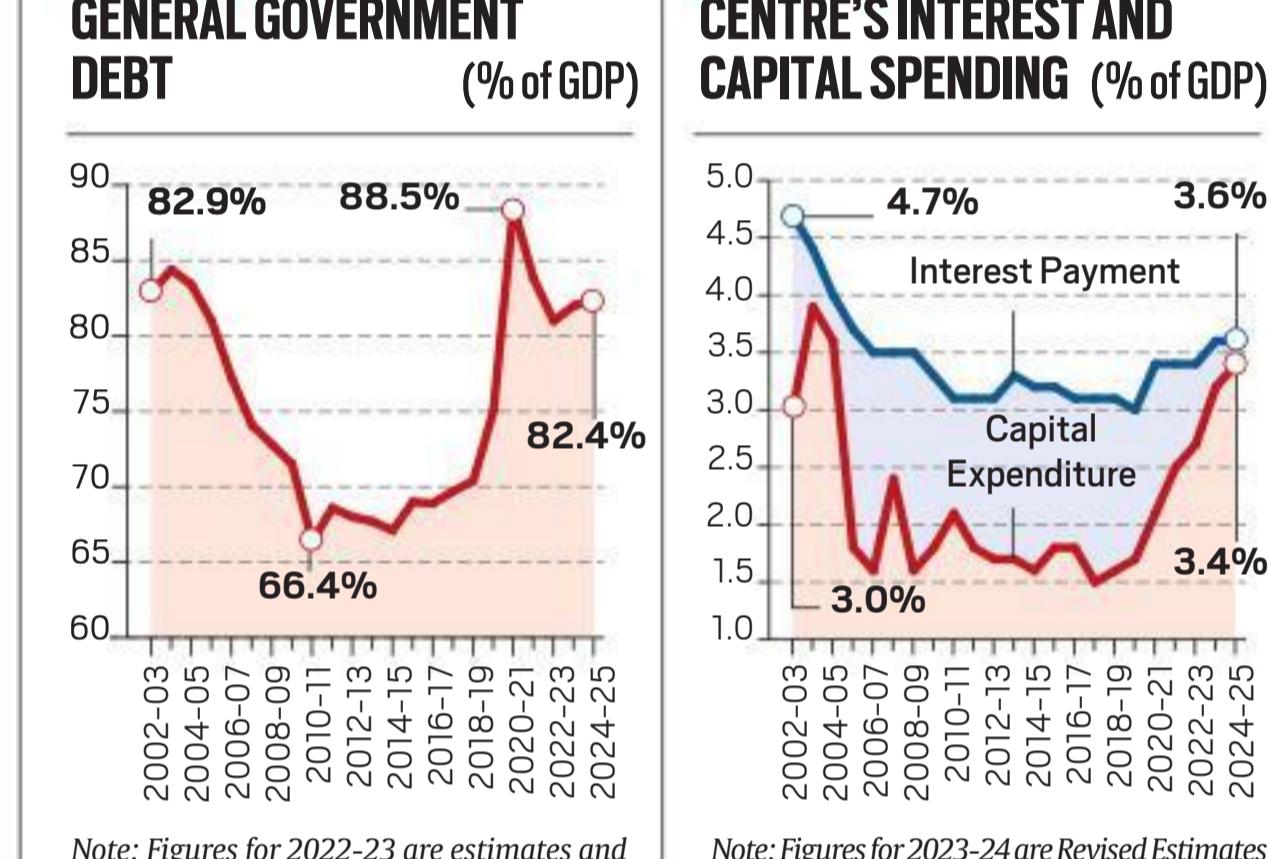
"It suggests a universal kinship among all beings, or the notion that every life is bound by the same cycle of birth, largely focusing on virtues like compassion, non-violence, and respect for life. That is our ideology," the aide said.

The third paragraph of the statement

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

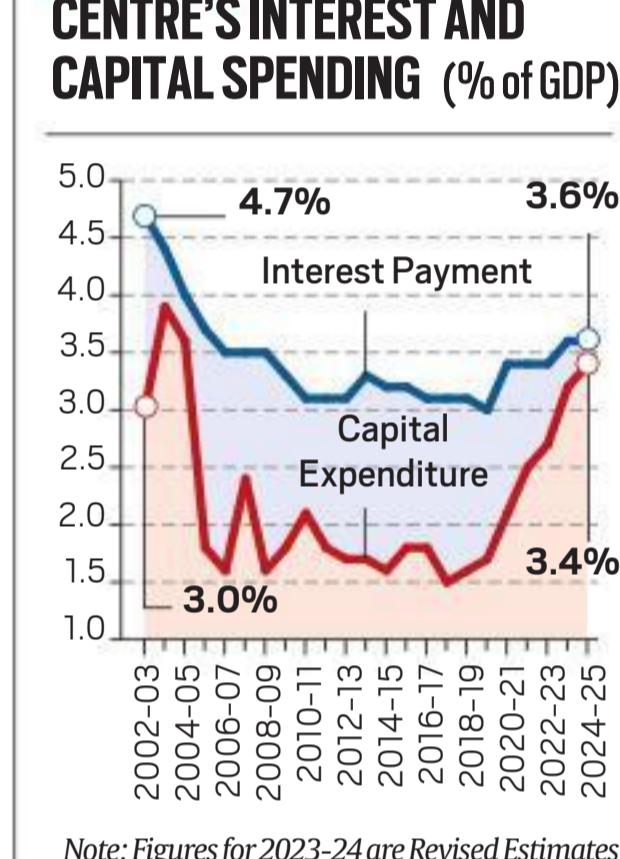
Dealing with govt debt

Aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to the Centre and states accumulating a mountain of debt. Bringing it down will be a challenge for the next government, when it is sworn in after the Lok Sabha polls



Note: Figures for 2022-23 are estimates and those for 2023-24 and 2024-25 are budget estimates.

Source: International Monetary Fund



Note: Figures for 2023-24 are Revised Estimates and those for 2024-25 are Budget Estimates.

Source: Union Budget documents, various years.

ments in roads, railways and other infrastructure. The Centre's capital expenditure, as seen from chart 2, dropped from 3.9% to 1.5% of GDP between 2003-04 and 2017-18. It revived significantly thereafter to reach 3.2% in 2023-24 and 3.4% in the Interim Budget for 2024-25.

All these, of course, widened the deficits and only added to debt.

How can debt be reined in?

The FRBM Act envisaged limiting the Centre's gross fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP by 2020-21. That target, and also that of government debt, has since practically been thrown out of the window.

The Modi government has opted for a new broad "glide path" of fiscal consolidation. This one, announced in Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Union Budget speech for 2021-22, aims to attain a fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio of "below 4.5%" by 2

BUOYANT REVENUE AND MEASURED EXPENDITURE IS THE WAY TO GO: DIPAM SECRETARY

'Disinvestment not a panacea for fiscal deficit'

IN A move that surprised many, the government didn't specify a target for disinvestment receipts in the Interim Budget for 2024-25. According to TUHIN KANTA PANDEY, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), the step is reflective of a conscious effort to free up the Union Budget from being contingent on disinvestment receipts and adopt a broader, and more holistic approach to disinvestment—one of proper and efficient management of public enterprises that rewards all shareholders.

In an interaction with ACCAM WALIA and SUKALP SHARMA, Pandey delves into what he terms a new paradigm of disinvestment and public enterprise management, which follows one marked by extremely tall targets that were progressively missed. Edited Excerpts:

There was no specific disinvestment target this time in the Interim Budget. Could you elaborate on the thought process behind this?

The fundamental thought process is that we have actually been prisoners of the past thinking to some extent. Earlier, it was considered almost axiomatic that disinvestment was a way to manage your fiscal deficit on a sustained basis...that is a little problematic.

Disinvestment needs to be looked at in terms of how you manage enterprises. Whatever we have, till we have it in our control, should perform well. For us, there are two pillars of disinvestment—stake dilution through market listing while retaining control and strategic disinvestment with transfer of control.

We must look at the whole stream of income (from a company). By considering only wealth

disposal (in strategic disinvestments), you are ignoring the income from that wealth, which would be the dividend and is important from the non-tax revenue perspective. At the same time, we cannot only be focussed on dividends...If you put it all together, public asset management is far more complex than what people have been hitherto thinking...We are not just a disinvestment department, we are a public asset management department.

Should we now expect a calibrated approach that is not too reliant on strategic disinvestment?

We should approach disinvestment and asset management in terms of continuously adding value, monetising a little bit, taking some income for us and other shareholders, making the Budget not so much contingent upon it (disinvestment receipts), and once in a while, do a strategic disinvestment transaction, provided that market conditions and valuations are right...For long there has been a thinking that disinvestment alone is a panacea for our fiscal deficit. It is not. Buoyant revenue and very measured expenditure is the way to go.

What would be the broad criteria for strategic disinvestment going forward?

We already have that policy in place...Right now, the policy is that except for bare minimum presence in some areas, we want to get out of business. But it will take a lot of time. Strategic investment has to be through public auction, you have to do due diligence and see that everything is above board, face court cases from employees etc. You have to go through that pain. You may have to separate assets...and go for

restricting and demergers. All these are very time-consuming processes.

Do you feel that keeping high disinvestment targets in the past and not achieving them hit the government's credibility?

I believe that we have wound down from that phase of very tall targets...If you give a target of, say, Rs 1 lakh crore and consistently don't perform, it does affect your credibility...very tall targets can be damaging. You don't even have to keep a target. If you are able to close a transaction, you can receive it even if it was not part of any target, so long as you have a policy of disinvestment...so we decided not to have a specific target for disinvestment. Disinvestment receipts will be booked under 'Miscellaneous Capital Receipts', where asset monetization can also come in.

For the current fiscal, the revised estimate of



**THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW
with
TUHIN KANTA
PANDEY
DIPAM SECRETARY**

miscellaneous capital receipts is Rs 30,000 crore. What would be the split within that?

About Rs 18,000-20,000 crore would be through disinvestment and Rs 10,000-12,000 crore will be through asset monetisation. Unlike disinvestment, we don't put out asset monetisation figures on our website. I think we have to improve on that for transparency...for people to be able to track asset monetisation numbers as well.

Disinvestment receipts are at around Rs 12,500 crore. Are you confident of meeting this estimate of Rs 18,000-20,000 crore?

Looks like we will be able to achieve that level...I cannot share specifics of how it will be done.

There is a view that administrative ministries are reluctant to let go of their

PSUs (public sector undertakings). Is it something you have to grapple with?

Although administrative ministries are a part of our process, I don't think we are really finding the sense of urgency (from them). A lot can be done there. They do not directly report to us. For disinvestments, you may have to constitute boards, get resolutions passed, etc., and nominee directors are of the administrative ministries. We cannot manage those things at our level. So, they should drive the process. If you say that they should start reporting to us, as some people suggest, that has its own issues. DIPAM is not geared up as a department to get into the nitty-gritty of their (PSUs') management issues.

In cases where the government has already started the process of strategic disinvestment, could you share the latest timelines?

I won't be able to. It doesn't work that way because our timelines are revised like anything. That is because we are still in the learning phase. Most of the things we are doing are being tried for the first time...like the LIC (Life Insurance Corporation) IPO (initial public offering)...IDBI Bank is another first. Even the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) is learning because they have never done this exercise for a bank unless it was in distress...IDBI Bank disinvestment is expected in the next financial year. Some others, that have been pending, should be launched in the next financial year.

Going forward, what type of companies would be ideal candidates for strategic disinvestment?

We already have a policy in

place on strategic and non-strategic sectors.

Several non-strategic (sector PSUs) will come. But we first need to complete our existing transactions. We will have to push more for that. We would need a bit more of a problem-solving approach from the administrative ministries, as they are the ones who have to manage the units, dialogues with unions, etc. Much more urgency is necessary in those areas...Such transactions are very complex and throw up multiple challenges...It's also a question of credibility. We need to take some of the ongoing disinvestments to logical culmination, before adding to the list.

In the early phase of disinvestment under this government, there were PSU-to-PSU transactions like ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation) acquiring HPCL (Hindustan Petroleum Corporation). Any possibility of going back to that model?

That was driven by that same logic—get some money in because there is a target. But strategic disinvestment transactions are not for that. Strategic disinvestment is done to bring efficiency and change management. But in such (PSU-to-PSU) transactions, the management culture doesn't change.

In fact, these companies have not even merged and continue to remain separate, continue to have CPSE (Central Public Sector Enterprise) status, separate control is being exercised over them, and the holding company that paid for the equity is wondering how much control does it really have (on the acquired company)...markets are also commenting on that. We have eschewed that model altogether.

MARKET WATCH

MCAP OF 8 OF TOP-10 COS RISE

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of eight of the top-10 most valued firms climbed Rs 2.90 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the lead gainer, amid optimism in equities. PTI

Use of tech, AI aiding direct tax compliance, says CBDT Chairman

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4



CBDT Chief Nitin Gupta. File

AROUND 44 lakh e-mails were sent to taxpayers in December for mismatches between their declared income and financial transactions based on technology-based risk assessment, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman Nitin Gupta said. With the use of technology, including artificial intelligence and changes in the law, the possibilities of tax evasion have been plugged to a great extent and have helped in improving tax compliance, Gupta said in a post-budget interview to *The Indian Express*.

New technology is used everywhere. We shot off around 44 lakh emails in December to those (taxpayers) where the returned income and financial transactions were having some sort of mismatch based on the risk-assessment analysis. Just nudging the taxpayers that this is what we are finding, please check whether you have rightly disclosed your income in the return of income," Gupta said.

The higher buoyancy in direct tax revenue, as outlined in the Budget 2024-25 presented last week, has come mainly on the back of technology along with other measures being taken to plug leakages, Gupta said. "There are a multitude of factors. One is the use of technology for the data which is available with us, and its disclosure to the taxpayer through AIS (Annual Information Statement), and then, we are pre-filling returns...we have also done quicker processing, quicker issue of refunds, there is better taxpayer confidence in the tax department.

Changes have been made in the law in the sense that whatever were the possibilities of evasion, I'm using this word, they've been plugged to a great extent. So the taxpayer is expected to not to resort to those methodologies (for evasion)," he said.

For large-scale variations between the declared income and the financial transactions, the tax department is approaching taxpayers through the e-verification scheme.

"E-verification is also giving some better results in the sense that then the taxpayer is really thinking in what way he or she should have disclosed the real income," he said.

While the Budget announced withdrawal of outstanding direct tax demands up to Rs 25,000 for the period up to financial year 2023-24.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Paytm Payments Bank's future uncertain post-Feb amid RBI's silence

GEORGE MATHEW & HITESHWYAS
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 4

charges against PPBL, which could lead to cancellation of the licence.

When contacted, the RBI did not comment on the PPBL issue.

As per the RBI's licensing and operative guidelines for payments bank, aggregate customer balance limit for PPBL customer at the end of the day cannot exceed Rs 2 lakh.

Neither PPBL nor Paytm has disclosed the deposit base of PPBL. A mail sent to One97 Communications Ltd did not elicit any response.

The Comprehensive System Audit report and subsequent compliance validation report of the external auditors revealed persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in the bank, warranting further supervisory action, the RBI said last week. "This has happened at a time when several banking veterans were on the

board of PPBL. They should have ensured compliance of RBI norms...but KYC issues and data sharing issues remained for the last several years," sources said.

AK Jain, former executive director of Punjab and Sind Bank, Manju Agarwal, former Deputy managing director of State Bank of India, Shrinjini Kumar, former Citibank and Bank of America official, Srinivas Yanamandra, former compliance official with New Development Bank and ICICI Bank, were on the PPBL board.

In October 2023, the RBI had slapped a fine of Rs 5.39 crore on Paytm Payments Bank due to deficiencies in regulatory compliances. Paytm failed to identify beneficial owner in respect of entities onboarded by it for providing payout services, did not monitor payout transactions and carry out risk profiling of entities avail-

ing payout services, breached the regulatory ceiling of end-of-the-day balance in certain customer advance accounts, and even delayed reporting a cyber security incident. One97 Communications owns 49 per cent in PPBL and Paytm founder and Chairman Vijay Shekhar Sharma has 51 per cent stake.

As per the RBI directive, customers will not be able to make deposits or add money to your Paytm Payments Bank savings, current account, debit card, NCMC, transit and FASTag after February 29, 2024. However, there is no restriction on withdrawal of money from the existing balance even after February 29, 2024. "The directive does not impact your existing balances in account or wallet and your money is safe with your bank," PPBL said. On the other hand, parent Paytm said the

disruption of business will continue for a few weeks. There are some operational changes, which will take it a week or two to do before we can kick-start the new business back again, it said. And then the existing business is just about making sure that the people who had set up their mandates from PPBL bank account are able to switch to another bank account, which work has already started. "I think the disruption will be there for a couple of weeks.

And to that extent, we will have an EBITDA impact in our lending business. I don't want to shy from saying that. But we are very hopeful that, let's say, by early March, we should be back to full normalcy, if not earlier," Paytm President and COO Bhavesh Gupta said in a conference call.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

PPBL has over 30 cr wallets, 3 cr bank accounts

Mumbai: Paytm Payment Bank (PPBL) has over 30 crore wallets and 3 crore bank accounts, as per the information on the bank's website. It has over 10 crore KYC customers, with 4 lakh users added every month. The bank is the largest issuer of FASTag with over 80 lakh units issued. A payment bank can raise deposit up to Rs 2 lakh but it cannot issue loans or credit cards. ENS

BRIEFLY

Ambani at 2nd spot in Brand Guardianship index

New Delhi: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani has been ranked first among all Indians and second globally in the Brand Guardianship Index 2024 compiled by Brand Finance. The chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries Ltd overtakes the likes of Microsoft's Satya Nadella, and Google's Sundar Pichai to be ranked No.2, globally only behind Tencent's Huateng Ma. PTI

FPI investment in debt market in Jan at 6-yr high

New Delhi: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have injected over Rs 19,800 crore in the country's debt market in January, making it the highest monthly inflow in more than six years, on the back of inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index. On the other hand, they pulled out Indian equities worth Rs 25,743 crore last month owing to surging bond yield in the United States. PTI

'No proposal with the Finance Ministry to relook duty structures to facilitate Tesla's entry to India'

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA & SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4



ON SLASHING DUTY ON PHONE COMPONENTS

■ In the case of mobile phones, there is a phased manufacturing programme, and accordingly the duties have been decided.

■ The rates were not reduced because of international pressure, calling it a "purely local issue".

an intermediate product...So to avoid these disputes, rates have been rationalised..." Agarwal said. He also clarified that the rates were not reduced because of international pressure, calling the decision a "purely local issue".

In 2019, the European Union (EU) had challenged India's introduction of import duties at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) products like mobile phones and components, base stations, integrated circuits and optical instruments. The EU had claimed that the measures

appear to be inconsistent with certain provisions of the WTO.

Agarwal also said that as part of its investigation into the Mundra Adani port drug haul case of 2021, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has found links to people operating from "some neighbouring countries"...."that case was investigated by the NIA. And they have made further detection in that and they could find the link of some neighbouring countries..." People operating from the neighbouring countries," Agarwal said.

On the issue of mis-invoicing of goods in India-China trade

that causes revenue loss to the Indian exchequer, Agarwal said. "The gap between trade data reported by India and China which you are referring to, I don't know if the items billed to India...everything is consigned for India or a third country. The time gap in shipments could also be the reason."

"The thing is that it is not easy to prove that there is undervaluation. Even if you feel that the item is imported at a low value...does not mean that we can make a case for undervaluation. Because we need to bring evidence on record which is not easy. If we start doing investigations in ease cases, ports will be clogged since volumes are massive..." Agarwal said.

The *Indian Express* in November reported that the magnitude of the discrepancy in the India-China official trade numbers as per data sets released separately by New Delhi and Beijing has widened to a record \$15 billion, amid rising instances of under-invoicing and potentially higher losses to the Indian exchequer despite efforts by tax authorities to plug loopholes.

The disparity between official figures on exports to India released by China and the imports from China reported by India jumped over 20 per cent to \$15.47 billion during the first 10

months of 2023, as against \$12.75 billion in the corresponding period during the previous year. Under-invoicing of imported goods involves marking the stated value of imports below the actual value paid to the foreign exporter, thereby reducing the import tax outgo.

On a question regarding misuse of free trade agreements (FTAs), Agarwal said, since rules of origin problems were faced by customs, Customs Administration of Rules of Origin (CAROTAR) under Trade Agreements rules were imposed so that additional documents can be asked by the importers. CAROTAR rules are applicable for all FTAs".

Rules of origin are criteria needed to determine the national source of a product. FTAs typically have a 40 per cent value addition criteria which means that a product from an FTA partner nation will be eligible for benefits only if it has undergone 40 per cent value addition.

However, India has seen multiple breaches of rules of origin (RoO), especially in the case of FTA with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Due to breach in RoO norms, Indian industry often faces high competition from Chinese products that are rerouted through a country that has an FTA with India.

Moving mountains for months to make payroll, says Byju

PRESSTRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 4

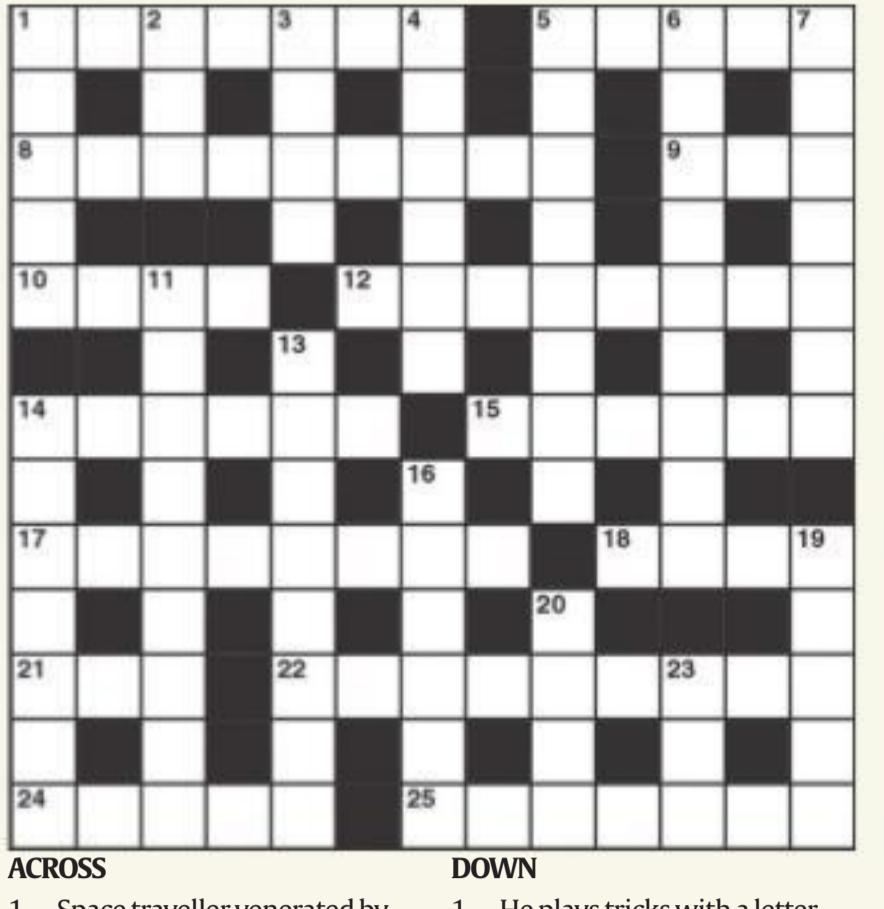
BYJU'S has floated rights issue to raise \$200 million at over 99 per cent lower valuation compared to its peak valuation of \$22 billion in March 2022.

weather every storm," Byju said. He said that his father broke down after seeing the news against the company.

"My father is my role model; I am a teacher because he once was; I am an entrepreneur because he always taught me to follow my dreams. That he, my rock-solid support, was moved to tears made me feel a sudden pain," he said.

The company has cleared all dues of existing employees a day before the committed timeline.

CROSSWORD 5279



ACROSS

- Space traveller venerated by the Romans (7)
- Temporarily secures a levy we hear (5)
- Cop in male form (9)
- This man invaded England (3)
- Sweet music? (4)
- Personality often recorded on disc (8)
- Disregard one note and not another (6)
- Get the member to finish an old story (6)
- Vegetarian bright-eyed and bushy-tailed (8)
- It's about time for a piece of news (4)
- A New Testament hill-dweller (3)
- Thought me old-fashioned about it (9)
- Converts and fits (5)
- A padre's unusual in displays of force (7)

DOWN

- He plays tricks with a letter copier (5)
- A friend brings up drink (3)
- Contract for a fat fryer we hear (4)
- Put together again; dear me! (6)
- Having an occupation (8)
- Temperate land mass (9)
- Roamed the street with ready change (7)
- Band controller for a current transmitter (9)
- Three banks combined to further their progress (8)
- A second cup of this coffee? (7)
- Supported by arms or threatened by them? (4,2)
- Gold sovereign? (5)
- Make the tea go round (4)
- Edward shortly means to spread out hay for drying (3)

Solutions Crossword 5278 Across: 1 Menacing, 5 Alec, 9 Chain, 10 Tantrum, 11 Masterstroke, 13 Icarus, 14 Tussle, 17 Heart-to-heart, 20 Unfrock, 21 Tress, 22 Pole, 23 Stiletto Down: 1 Mace, 2 Niagara, 3 Construction, 4 Notary, 6 Large, 7 Competes, 8 Instrumental, 12 Highjump, 15 Serpent, 16 Locket, 18 Awful, 19 Oso

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & I Lewis



CALVIN & HOBSES 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.

One _____ deserves another. - Petronius (4,4)

LPWOR



EPRTNU



TOQUE



IINPDG



Answers: POWL, QUITTE, PNUETER, PETRIOUS

SUDOKU 5463

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

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5462

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

CONTAINER CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD.
(A GOVT. OF INDIA ESTATE (OPP. NSIC Okha Metro Station), New Delhi-110020
NSIC Building, 3rd Floor, Okha Indl. Estate (Opp. NSIC Okha Metro Station), New Delhi-110020
TENDER NOTICE (E-TENDER MODE ONLY)

Online tender in Two Bid system are invited to for below mentioned work through e-tendering mode only. The bid document can only be downloaded after paying Rs. 1000/- through online from the website (www.tenderwizard.com/CCIL).

Period of Contract 3 years (36 months)

Licensing and/or Space for ISO Container Repair Facility at ICD/Tughlaqabad (Two Vendors/Agencies) terminal of Area-1

Estimated Value Rs.1,03,06,404/- (Inclusive of GST) (For The (02) Vendors/Agencies)

Period of Contract 3 years (36 months)

Earliest Money Deposit Rs. 1,03,065/-through e-Payment*

Cost of Document Rs. 100/-inclusive of all taxes and duties through e-payment which is non-refundable.

Tender Processing Fee Rs. 472/-inclusive of all taxes and e-payment which is non-refundable

Date of Sale (Online) From 05.02.2024 at 15:30 Hrs. to 26.02.2024 up to 16:00 Hrs.

Pre-Bid Meeting 12.02.2024 at 15:00 hrs.

Date of uploading of corrigendum, if any 15.02.2024

Date & Time of submission of tender (Online) 27.02.2024 up to 15:00 Hrs.

Date & Time of opening of tender 28.02.2024 at 15:30 Hrs.

Place for Pre-Bid Meeting and Opening of Bids Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR), Office of the General Manager (Commercial & Operations), Area-1, New MDPB Building, 2nd Floor, Okha Indl. Estate, (Opp. NSIC Okha Metro Station), New Delhi-110020.

*Exemption for MSE CONCOR reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons thereof. For complete details login to www.tenderwizard.com/CCIL. Senior General Manager(CAO)/Area-1, Phone No.: 011-41225000

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA

Request for proposals are invited through e-procurement platform for procurement and supply of Science lab equipments in 339 PM SHRI schools in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

RFP downloading starts from: 06.02.2024 @ 03:00 PM.

Last date for receipt of RFP: 26.02.2024 @ 03:00 PM.

Note: Further details can be viewed at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> or contact: 7989799189

Sd/- for State Project Director

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA

Request for proposals are invited through e-procurement platform for procurement and supply of Chemistry lab equipments in 323 PM SHRI schools in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

RFP downloading starts from: 06.02.2024 @ 03:00 PM.

Last date for receipt of RFP: 26.02.2024 @ 03:00 PM.

Note: Further details can be viewed at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> or contact: 7989799189

Sd/- for State Project Director

AURANGABAD SMART CITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED (ASCDCL)

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

ASDCCL invites firms possessing relevant capabilities to respond to this RFP for following :

Sr. No.	Bid Submission Due Date	Bid Opening Date	Title and Ref. No./Tender ID
1	26/02/2024 at 04:00 PM	27/02/2024 at 04:00 PM	Selection of Integrated Transit Management Operator for the Smart Bus at ASCDCL (2024_ASCDC_996193_1)

The tender documents can be downloaded from <https://www.mahatenders.gov.in>

Sd/- Chief Executive Officer

Aurangabad Smart City Development Corporation Limited

NMDC Steel Limited NMDC Iron & Steel Plant Post-Nagarnar (Bastar) C.G. PIN-494001

CIN-U27310CT2015G01001618. Email: csn@nmdc.co.in; gajendrasethiya@nmdc.co.in; nslcontracts@nmdc.co.in

OPEN TENDER ENQUIRY

NMDC Steel Limited, Nagarnar, invites sealed tenders in two bid system with last date & Time for submission of offers as 20-02-2024 by 02:30 PM for the following:

Name of Work: Repair and rewinding of 33KV, 11200 KVA, Zn0, Volt Amp make Earthing Transformer of Power Distribution System Department. **Tender No & Date:** NSL/CONTRACTS/CON/42/Repair & Rewinding/2024/401 Dated 05-02-2024

Tender documents can be downloaded from websites www.nmdc.co.in or www.eprocure.gov.in in tender section.

HOD (Contracts)

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH SAMAGRA SHIKSHA

Request for proposals are invited through e-procurement platform for procurement and supply of Biology lab equipments to 307 PM SHRI schools in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

RFP downloading starts from: 06.02.2024 @ 03:00 PM.

Last date for receipt of RFP: 26.02.2024 @ 03:00 PM.

Note: Further details can be viewed at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> or contact: 7989799189

Sd/- for State Project Director

NOTICE/SUMMONS TO THE DEFENDANTS No. 2 & 7 U.O.V. RULE 20 CPC

To, Defendant No.2:- Mr. Siddhartha Dey, C/o, FarmDesk, Private address, no known Email id: Siddhartha.Dey@gmail.com, Mobile No: 8572415550

Defendant No.7:- Mr. Jaya Doe/Chokh Kumar WHEREAS the Plaintiff, above named has instituted the above original suit against you seeking Permanent Injunction restraining the defendants, their family members agents, assigns, representative or any person acting for and on their behalf from posting, making, issuing, writing, publishing and/or disturbing any defamatory statement/posts regarding the plaintiff and other relatives.

You are hereby summoned to appear before this Court in person or by a pleader duly instructed on **20.02.2024** at 11 A.M., to answer the same, failing which the application will be heard and disposed of ex parte.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 02.02.2024.

BY ORDER OF THE COURT, Ass't Registrar, Civil Court, Bengaluru

Advocate for Plaintiff Chintan Chinnappa, Partner Spectrum Legal, No.101, 30/F, First Floor, Promenade Road, Next to Punjab National Bank, Bengaluru-560005.

"IMPORTANT"

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DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You may be feeling slightly miffed at the behaviour of someone who appears to have little regard for your financial status or earnings, yet the continuing presence of Mars in your sign reveals that the time is fast approaching when you will be proved to have been right.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Concern about your emotional well-being may be aroused by secret worries. Yet under current planetary influences you've got a golden opportunity to deal with any lingering problems and get into shape for the coming months. Venus is receiving plenty of support, so you should reach your goals.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Pluto's continuing challenge to your sign is really quite wearing and, right now, there seems little doubt about the necessity for compromise, whether you want to or not. It may take a show of generosity to win you over. Partners have the best ideas, by the way, so sit back and listen.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Much of what is going on behind the scenes will undoubtedly be to your benefit if only you would sit back and let certain events take their natural course.

There may be a number of delays, but nothing you

Liz Mathew: The talking point is your *pagri*, which you had pledged you would remove once Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar was out of power. Now that he is Bihar chief minister and you are his deputy, what will happen to it?

When my mother passed away last year, I started to wear the *pagri* in her honour – it is actually called *muretha* in my region and is a symbol of labour. Yes, I had said that I would take it off only when I had removed Nitish Kumar from office. But Nitish Kumar did resign and joined hands with the BJP.

However, the BJP is like my second mother now and I am proud that it made me the state party president, leader of the legislative party and deputy chief minister. The party has continuously honoured me and made me understand that the country comes first, then the party, and finally the individual. That's why I will go to Ayodhya, unwrap my *muretha* at the feet of Lord Ram and get tonsured.

Liz Mathew: There was some opposition against bringing the BJP state unit and the JD (U) together, which was later resolved. Are there any regrets about this equation or is everything fine?

This alliance is for the progress of Bihar. Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav is synonymous with corruption, sand mafia, criminals and was trying to propagate *goonda raj*. There was anarchy in Bihar. We didn't want jungle raj in Bihar, we wanted development. Nitish Kumar is the only chief minister of Bihar who has worked for the development of the state. Yes, his political decisions kept changing, there are qualms about that. We have had bittersweet experiences with him but he prioritised good governance. I wasn't in politics before 1995. When Nitish Kumar, George Fernandes and my father (Shakuni Choudhary) formed the Samata Party, I had to face the atrocities perpetrated by Lalu Yadav. I was hit by *lathis* and sent to jail just because I was the son of a high-profile political leader. Essentially, I went to jail for a movement of which Nitish Kumar was a big part. That's how I started my political career, from the ground up.

Liz Mathew: Who will benefit more from this alliance, the BJP or JD (U)?
Bihar should benefit. It doesn't matter if the BJP benefits or not.

Liz Mathew: Have seat-sharing negotiations for the Lok Sabha elections begun?

This is a natural alliance, which has been in place since 1996. First, there was the Samata Party, then it became JD (U). Therefore, there isn't any contentious issue between us and we will get together to distribute the seats. In 2019, we won 39 out of the 40 Lok Sabha seats. This time, we will work towards winning all 40 seats.

Liz Mathew: Will there be an equal distribution of seats like the last time?
This will be decided by the party's parliamentary board.

Santosh Singh: Nitish Kumar has been demanding a nationwide caste-based survey for a while. Now that he is with you, do you support his demand?

I am the state BJP president and the deputy CM. The BJP's Bihar unit fully supports the demand for a caste-based survey in the state. The last time we were in power, we passed a resolution to conduct the survey. But whether it can be done at a nationwide level or not, only Prime Minister Narendra Modi can tell.

Santosh Singh: How will you accommodate all of your allies? Is there a fear that some of them might leave you?

Everyone knows that if you want to win elections in Bihar, you have to be with the BJP. When there is a natural alliance, people will support it. Last time, the Opposition didn't get seats, so no question of fear.

Liz Mathew: What will be the issue for Lok Sabha elections, Ram Mandir or development?

The dream of Ram Mandir has now been fulfilled. Now, there is only one agenda of Modiji that will be implemented. And that is development, development and development.

Deeptiman Tiwary: Does the BJP accept that it doesn't have any candidate for chief minister other than Nitish Kumar?

This depends on the will of the people, let them decide. If BJP gets a full majority, it will implement its agenda of development in Bihar.

Deeptiman Tiwary: If Nitish Kumar continues to be the chief minister, how will people believe that you have the confidence to form a full majority government?

The BJP lost the 2015 Assembly elections after JD(U) left the alliance in 2013. But in 2017, Nitish Kumar came back to us. This time also, he has come back. He asked

IDEA EXCHANGE

WHY SAMRAT CHOURHARY

for support and we agreed because we believe that *jungle raj* cannot return to Bihar and we need to work for the state's development. Between Nitish Kumar and Lalu Prasad Yadav, the BJP will always choose Nitish Kumar as he has been the symbol of good governance in Bihar... Lalu Prasad Yadav and his family live only for themselves and nobody else.

Deeptiman Tiwary: It is believed that BJP can win more seats in Bihar if it goes alone in the Lok Sabha elections. Now that Nitish Kumar has returned, the party will have to give up more seats. Why will you absorb this loss?

There is no doubt that we can win more seats. But we don't want any Opposition party to win any seats. The INDIA alliance won't be able to open its account in the state.

Harikishan Sharma: Do you think that no other leader can rise in Bihar under the shadow of Nitish Kumar?

Every leader in the Bihar BJP unit is going to lead the state. Bihar will progress. The alliance will continue. We are making efforts to ensure that the NDA forms the government in Bihar in 2024.

Liz Mathew: Nitish Kumar had said that the 2020 Assembly election was his last. What will happen to the JD(U) once he retires? Do you think it will merge with the BJP?

Every party is independent. Nitish

SAMRAT CHOURHARY
BIHAR DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

'Ram Mandir dream fulfilled, Modi now has only one agenda, that of development'

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on support to a caste census, countering the INDIA alliance in the Lok Sabha elections, Central funding for Bihar and Prashant Kishor entering politics.

The session was moderated by Deputy Editor Liz Mathew



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Opposition leaders are corrupt?

Then look at what the Congress did when it was in power at the Centre. It dismissed 86 state governments and imposed President's rule. The BJP has not done this. The Congress thinks that just because it has committed sins, other parties are doing the same. Tejashwi Yadav was a *crorepati* when he was one-and-a-half years old without doing anything. Similarly, Soren as CM wrested all the mining leases. How can you do this?

Modi is considered a great leader by many because he doesn't do anything for himself. He does everything for the nation. When the GST (Goods and Services Tax) was introduced, many people were upset. But today it is widely acknowledged that the GST has cleaned up businesses and eliminated dirty money.

Liz Mathew: Is everyone in the ruling party really so clean?

There is the judiciary to decide that and it is available to Opposition leaders for appeals. There should be a proper investigation in every case. In the fodder scam, the Patna High Court ruled against Lalu Prasad Yadav though he was in power at the time. Courts are independent and go by evidence. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has, in fact, accused the BJP of the Rafale scam but the courts have not ruled in his favour yet.

Liz Mathew: Why did Modi select unknown faces as CMs despite the fact that the BJP won comfortably in the recent Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan?

We contest elections under the leadership of Modi. The party respects each and every worker and gives them a chance. In Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan worked for a very long time... now it is Mohan Yadav's turn. In Rajasthan, a first-time MLA was given a chance to become the CM. The BJP believes in taking everybody along.

Harikishan Sharma: What are the major goals you would like to achieve in Bihar and would you seek the Centre's help?

First is infrastructure. We need international airports, roads and have to improve living standards of the rural population. At 11 per cent, Bihar has the lowest urbanisation rate in India. Second is industry. We have a talent pool but haven't been able to galvanise it for development.

During 10 years of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the Centre, Bihar had got one lakh crore. Modiji has given Bihar 7.5 lakh crore already. The Centre gives over 1.9 lakh crore in the budget to Bihar.

Deeptiman Tiwary: Last time when your government fell, the two issues which stood out were inflation and unemployment. What message will you give to the people before the 2024 polls so that they can keep the faith?

Providing jobs is our agenda. During the 2020 elections, we had promised that we would provide 10 lakh jobs and had even announced 1.75 lakh posts for teachers. However, Nitish Kumar broke away and our government fell before we could complete our promises. Inflation is not an issue in Bihar but development is. We lack a market for many things. We are a landlocked state which further adds to our problems of accessing the market.

Deeptiman Tiwary: How will you accommodate both the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) led by Chirag Paswan and Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party led by Pashupati Kumar Paras?

This is a familial fight in which we have no role. However, we have a political coalition with both the parties and will try to keep everyone together.

Santosh Singh: Do you think Prashant Kishor will become an important stakeholder in the 2025 Assembly elections in Bihar?

All this depends totally on the voters. On the one hand, you have a person who has zero experience of ground-level politics but has so much money that he can enter politics. Think about it, we've been in power for 10 years. We spend Rs 1,000 on a booth... Prashant Kishor spends Rs 20,000. Where does all this money come from? This money is being used to weaken the BJP. Look at his advertisements everywhere.

Santosh Singh: You have a revenue of just Rs 34,000 crore. Nitish Kumar recently announced that Rs 2 lakh will be provided to poor families. This would cost the exchequer Rs 50,000 crore annually. Don't you think with such low revenue, you should let go of populist measures?

The scheme is for 84 lakh poor families who have been left behind. What's wrong in supporting the poor? The revenue is the people's money and it should be used for their betterment and growth. The BJP has no issues with this. The Central government will help us. About Rs 1.35 lakh crore will come from the Central government revenue. The Centre will give us Rs 2 lakh crore.

Kumar has been working in his own style. He has been a political party worker since 1977. It is up to him to decide.

Liz Mathew: In national politics, there has been a lot of talk about dynastic rule. Given your father was an MP and MLA, and your mother was an MLA, what do you have to say about you being a legacy holder as well?

Dynastic rule is burdened by legacy. Nepotism is when your father holds you by the finger. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav's father, Mulayam Singh

Yadav, made him the chief minister. Tejashwi Yadav became deputy chief minister after votes were cast in the name of Lalu Prasad Yadav. My father was a Lok Sabha MP. He worked at the grassroots for years among his people. However, for the past 14 years, my father has renounced active politics. I have begun as an ordinary political worker since 1995, struggled through many challenges but have not used my father's name. I will never do that. People voted for Modiji and Nitishji. Those who work hard as party workers will benefit and get rewarded in the BJP. One thing

Liz Mathew: There's a perception that in Bihar, elections can be won only on the basis of caste engineering and not development?

I don't disagree that caste has a role to play but we will get reward mainly due to the development done by Modiji.

Liz Mathew: In various states, Opposition leaders are facing a plethora of cases by the CBI and ED, former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren being the most recent example. Do you think that only

Loading on Day 4: England's enterprise vs India's spin, Bumrah



A repeat of Jasprit Bumrah's 1st innings heroics will be crucial for India on Day 4. PTI

VENKATA KRISHNAB
VIJAYAPATNAM, FEBRUARY 4

BEFORE ENGLAND took the field on Sunday, Brendon McCullum told them that "even if the target is 600, we are going for it". They require just more than half of those runs on a pitch that is not showing any signs of wearing up, but the match is on a knife's edge, promising to swing either way. England have wiped off 67 runs in 14 overs in the final hour of the final session of Day 3, chasing 399, but this could yet be the biggest ever challenge for the unflappable Bazballers.

The highest any team has chased in a fourth innings to win a Test in India is 387, achieved by the host themselves against England in 2008, just weeks after 26/11, inspired by a breathtaking knock by Virender Sehwag. If Zak Crawley continues to provide the spark at the top, then there is a chance of England overtaking it.

It is not new for the Bazballers. In 2022, against India at Edgbaston, they chased down a target of 378 without breaking much sweat. Before that against New Zealand, they chased three successive totals of 280-plus to set the Bazball era loading. Going one step further here at Visakhapatnam would be icing on the cake.

That India got to 255 in the second innings was largely thanks to Shubman Gill's century as the batting unit continues to blow hot and cold. India would have hoped to put a safe target on board. Of course, they still managed a lead of 398, but it is the Bazball approach that is not attaching a favourite tag next to them.

In that sense, like in the first innings of Hyderabad, India may regret leaving runs behind here in the second innings. Despite the track not showing signs of crumbling, the next highest score after Gill's 104 was Axar Patel's 45. Yashwantrao Jaiswal – double centurion in the

NUMBER PLATE
387

The highest successful fourth innings run chase in India has been for 387 runs when the hosts did so against England in 2008.

Shahs of pace: Naseem's siblings in fast lane

PRATYUSH RAJ
FEBRUARY 4

IN PAKISTAN there is a saying, you shake a tree and a quartet of fast bowlers would fall. In the Shah household in the Mayar Jandool area of Lower Dir district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, the adage almost became a reality.

Naeem, fourth among the Shah brothers, played a tape-ball cricket tournament but he was more focused on the promise he made to his mother that he would become a doctor. He kept his promise. But three of his younger siblings – Naseem Shah, Hunain Shah and Ubaid Shah – are scaring batsmen with their pace.

Naseem, 20, has already made his mark in international cricket. 19-year-old Hunain is making waves in Pakistan's domestic cricket, while Ubaid, 17, is part of the Pakistan U-19 World Cup squad and is being tipped to carry on the country's history of fast bowling and could become its newest hero.

On Saturday, Ubaid was the game-changer for Pakistan in a see-saw contest as he registered a five-wicket haul against Bangladesh in a low-scoring thriller, carrying his side into the semifinals. His match-winning 5/44 took his tally at the U19 World Cup to 17 wickets in five matches at an average of 10.52 and strike rate of 15.52.

The abundance of cricketing talent in one family, from a region that has battled militancy and terrorism since before 9/11, is put rather simply by Naeem.

"Hum Pathan hai, hum majboor hai, hum bekhauf hai, bas yahi wajah hui ham fast daalte hui (We are Pathans, we are well built, we are not afraid, and that's the only reason we bowl fast)," Naeem tells The Indian Express from Lahore. "We love to see fear in batsmen's eyes. Fast bowling is easy because you don't need many things. Aapko bas ek ball ki jaroort hai aur fir zara le dealo (You only need a ball



Naeem Shah with Naseem Shah (L). Special arrangement

and use all your strength to deliver it.)"

Naseem paves the way

Naeem is pursuing medicine in Lahore and recollects how difficult it was growing up in Mayar Jandool and why his father Muzaffar Shah used to beat them up for neglecting studies. "My abbu was against playing cricket. Our elder brother Salim Shah was a fantastic wicket-keeper-batsman but stopped playing after school. The second eldest, Zahir Shah studied geology in Muzaffarabad. Zahir bhai never had any interest, but the other four of us were different," he says.

"Naseem was mad about cricket. By the time school was over, he already used to have invitations from three or four different teams and used to play for all four of them," laughs Naeem. "Our elder brothers became our shields. They used to defend us. But in our family cricket was a big no. My father, in all his in-

terviews, says he has not spent a single penny on Naseem's cricketing career. For him cricket is angrzon ka khel (Britishers' game)."

Naeem played till club level and later moved to Lahore for studies. He says it was Naseem's pagalpan (craze) that paved the way for Hunain and now Ubaid. "They are more or less in the same age group. Naseem used to get beaten up a lot by our father for showing Hunain and Ubaid the wrong path. But he used to say, bhajan mai Pakistan khelunga (Brother, I will play for Pakistan). It is his junoon (obsession) with the sport that has taken him to this level. He just wanted to prove everyone wrong," says Naeem.

"When Naseem was picked for the Pakistan team, the road for these two automatically became easy. They never had to look anywhere else for inspiration," he adds.

The Shahs moved to Lahore in 2018, when Salim started a gemstone business and it

changed their lives drastically.

"Salim bhai started his business and it was because of him that we moved to Lahore. Naseem was initially enrolled in the Pak Lions Cricket Academy, then he moved to the Abdul Qadir academy," recalls Naeem. "He never had a proper cricketing kit. The first time Salman Qadir (Abdul Qadir's son) saw him, he was wearing salwar kameez and bowling at some serious pace. That's how he caught his attention."

Once Naseem made it to the Pakistan U-19 team, Hunain and Ubaid started getting support. While talking about the trio, Naeem reveals that although Naseem and Ubaid are quicker, it is Hunain who worked harder on his bowling. "Naseem and Ubaid are natural but Hunain has worked a lot on his bowling. He was never talented, so had to work harder than the other two. He has worked on his pace as well and it has gone up, which is good to see," says Naeem.

Naeem recalls a pep talk Naseem gave to Ubaid over phone, before the youngster took the flight for South Africa for the U-19 World Cup. "It was just one line. Naseem told Ubaid 'Jo coach bol rahe hai wo karna hai. South Africa mein bowlers ko support milta hai, bas line maintain kare (Follow what the coaches are saying. South African pitches help fast bowlers just bowl on a good line)," says Naeem.

In a video posted by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) during the Asia Cup U-19 tournament, Naseem pointed out his younger brother's wayward bowling.

"U-19 is a big learning phase. With the pace, also work on your line and length. Ubaid takes time to get his rhythm and length, but he will learn the more he plays. If you want to play Test cricket, one pace will not make you effective, you should learn to bowl in good areas. Otherwise, you will not be able to succeed," Naseem said while chatting with Pakistan U-19 pacers Mohammad Zeeshan, Ubaid, and Amir Hassan.

AUSTRALIA BEAT WEST INDIES

Sydney: Australia's Sean Abbott shone with bat and ball as the world champions beat West Indies by 83 runs in Sydney on Sunday, winning the three-match One Day International (ODI) series 2-0. Australia, had earlier beaten West Indies by eight wickets in the first match on Friday. REUTERS

INDIA VS ENGLAND, 2ND TEST

A hundred of relief, redemption

Living on borrowed time, riding his luck, Gill scores a hundred that could revive his career

VENKATA KRISHNAB
VIJAYAPATNAM, FEBRUARY 4

THE MUTED celebration when Shubman Gill got to his third Test century fitted his knock. There were no angry gestures or loud cries or fist pumping, just a sigh of relief followed by a smile. The hundred, too, was calm and composed, after the early wobble.

For a batsman living on borrowed time when the squad for the England Test series was announced, the last three innings had pushed him to the verge of the exit door. With the squad for the three remaining matches yet to be named, Gill needed breathing space. On Sunday, as the locals turned up in numbers at Visakhapatnam, and luck shone brightly on him, Gill found the cushion he had desperately sought.

From the time Gill walked in after James Anderson bowled Rohit Sharma with a peach, he looked tentative. When he and Shreyas Iyer were in the middle, it looked like a straight shootout between the two to lock a spot for the Rajkot Test. By the end of Day 3, he had his place locked at Rajkot, as his 104 took India to 255 in the second innings and set England a target of 399. At stumps, England were 67/1, needing another 332 runs to go 2-0 up.

This was no means a flawless century from Gill. If anything, right through the stay, especially in the first half of his knock, he learned the areas he needs to work on. Even before he got to 25, he survived thrice, and in the process, exposing his problematic areas. Time and again, he tends to thrust his pad ahead of the bat. The incoming deliveries from the seamers continue to cause him trouble. When defending or driving, the long strides go missing, forcing him to lunge forward or push at the ball.

For a batsman short on confidence and runs, he wasn't running short of luck. First up, the snick came to his rescue. Adjudged LBW to Tom Hartley to the one that went straight on, the snick spotted a thin edge off his bat. It was a review that Gill had taken more out of desperation than conviction. As the big screen flashed 'not out' Gill would smile in disbelief. In the next over, James Anderson went for a review after Gill ended up missing one that seemed back in. This time, he was saved by the on-field umpire's call on the height as the ball tracker showed it just about clipping the top of middle and leg stumps. Seven overs later, Hartley would draw him forward with one that gripped and turned, but the resultant edge would head to the boundary in the gap between Ben Foakes and Joe Root at first slip.

Needed: Collectivism

So far in the Test, India have managed to stay on top mostly due to individual brilliance than collective effort. Over the course of three days, Jaiswal, Jasprit Bumrah and Gill have not only kept them in the game, but also laid a platform. On Day 4, India need their attack to step up more than ever before, particularly after how easy England's batsmen found it in the final hour of Sunday.

This is a pitch where India will need more of Bumrah. But for the fast bowler to stay effective, they need support from the other end, which Mukesh Kumar doesn't seem to provide. Having gone wicketless in the first innings, Ashwin got off the mark by removing Ben Duckett, but sans enough assistance, how far the off-spinner and Kuldeep Yadav would be able to run-through England's batting adds to the mystery. In the last Test that India played here, against South Africa, it was Mohammed Shami's reverse-swings that finished the job on the final day. Having found enough reverse-swing in the first two Tests, especially with a semi-new ball, how well they make use of it in the first-half of the day could well determine which way this Test is headed. That Gill said 70:30 in favour of India says the unease that exists in the dressing room.

For England, there is a bit of uncertainty around Joe Root's availability to bat, who injured his finger while fielding. But irrespective of his availability, the game is on a knife's edge. In that sense, like in the first innings of Hyderabad, India may regret leaving runs behind here in the second innings. Despite the track not showing signs of crumbling, the next highest score after Gill's 104 was Axar Patel's 45. Yashwantrao Jaiswal – double centurion in the



Shubman Gill had gone 12 innings without scoring a ton prior to his hundred against England on Sunday. PTI

turners, Gill has looked as tentative at the start as he was on challenging decks. For No 3, India have largely relied on batsmen who can blunt the new ball by being defensive and set the base for their middle-order. With Gill, a more aggressive player by nature, they have opted for a change of direction, in tune with the times. But for it to work, they need Gill to fix these holes, for there is little place to keep attacking for a prolonged period without having a strong defence.

That there are the likes of Rajat Patidar and Sarfaraz Khan waiting in the wings only added to the noise around Gill. It is not as if the 24-year-old was not aware of it. After the first Test, the noise was not just from outside. He could even hear it within the walls of the dressing room as well, with serious deliberation tak-

ing place whether to send Gill back to the domestic fold, especially with the Ranji Trophy's league phase on. The century thus gives Gill space to work on his game, without any noise in the background.

He would later say: "I think it's very important to stay true to who you are and how you have gotten there. Sometimes if you get over defensive or over aggressive or try to or try to be someone that you are not, then you are prolonging those (bad) innings. Then you're sometimes not able to get out of that shell. Going into this test match I said 'I'm going to play how I've played my cricket throughout' and that was that."

Had Gill returned with another low score, he stood a strong chance of turning up for Punjab in their league match against Gujarat

SCORECARD

INDIA vs ENGLAND

ACA-VDCA STADIUM, VIZAG

Toss: India, chose to bat

INDIA 1st INNINGS		396
ENGLAND 1st INNINGS		253
INDIA 2nd INNINGS (O/N)		28/0
Y Jaiswal c Root b Anderson	17 (27b,3x4)	
R Sharma b Anderson	13 (21b,3x4)	
S Gill c Foakes b Bashir	104 (147b,11x4,2x6)	
S lyer c Stokes b Hartley	29 (52b,2x4)	
R Patidar c Foakes b Ahmed	9 (19b,1x4)	
A Patel lbw b Hartley	45 (84b,6x4)	
S Bharat c Stokes b Ahmed	6 (28b,1x4)	
R Ashwin c Foakes b Ahmed	29 (61b,2x4,1x6)	
K Yadav c Duckett b Hartley	0 (5b)	
J Bumrah c Bairstow b Hartley	0 (26b)	
M Kumar not out	0 (2b)	
■ Extras (Nb, Lb, 2)	3	
■ Total (10 wickets, 78.30vs)	255	
■ FoW: 1-29 (R Sharma, 6.4 ov), 2-30 (Y Jaiswal, 8.3 ov), 3-111 (S lyer, 27.1 ov), 4-122 (R Patidar, 30.6 ov), 5-211 (S Gill, 55.6 ov), 6-220 (A Patel, 59.6 ov), 7-228 (S Bharat, 64.4 ov), 8-229 (K Yadav, 65.5 ov), 9-255 (J Bumrah, 77.4 ov), 10-255 (R Ashwin, 78.3 ov)		
■ Bowling: J Anderson 10-1-29-2, S Bashir 15-0-58-1, R Ahmed 24-3-88-3, J Root 2-1-0-T, T Hartley 27-3-77-4		

ENGLAND 2nd INNINGS

Z Crawley batting	29 (50b,3x4,1x6)
B Duckett c Bharat b Ashwin	28 (27b,6x4)
R Ahmed batting	9 (8b,2x4)
■ Extras (Nb)	1
■ Total (1 wicket, 14 overs)	67/1
■ FoW: 1-50 (Ben Duckett, 10.5 ov)	
■ Bowling: J Anderson 2-1-9-2, S Bashir 15-0-58-1, R Ahmed 24-3-88-3, J Root 2-1-0-T, T Hartley 1-0-10-0	

"I think the nerves were there to see today, the way they batted. I think they didn't know how many was enough. They were quite cautious, even when they had a big lead."

- JAMES ANDERSON
ENGLAND BOWLER

next week. If it came down to that, the road to comeback wouldn't be as easy, particularly with all the competition going around.

Once Gill got beyond the tentative period, he looked every bit the batsman who had a stellar 2023 in white-ball cricket. The short-arm jabs over mid-wicket, the sweep in front of square, the lofted sweep over fine-leg, the cover-drive, were all back and as did the long forward strides. As he grew in confidence, Gill would not even hesitate coming down the track to spinners and loft them.

Having found the confidence, the challenge for Gill in the remaining three Tests is to make the most out of it. He will get batting friendly conditions as well. Over to Gill to make full use of it. If not he would be in dire need of domestic help.

Anshu to super-charge in Japan

22-year-old national champion hopes to gain insights into how champions like Fujinami train, learn their drills and systems

NIHAL KOSHIE
JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 4

SITTING IN the coach's corner, wrestler Anshu Malik's father Dharamvir Malik's emotions got the better of him during the 59 kilogram final against Sarita Mor. This was a grudge match between Anshu, the 22-year-old former World Championship silver medalist and Sarita, 28, the former bronze medalist.

At the Asian Games trials last year, Anshu had lost 4-6 to Sarita. Anshu had competed in the trials with a grade-II ligament tear of the knee. The Senior National Wrestling Championships in Jaipur was her comeback and there was a lot at stake.

Dharamvir was warned twice by officials not to vent his ire at the referees but he kept jumping off his chair to gesture and shout.

At the end of the first period, Haryana's Anshu was ahead 2-1 and went on to out-class Railways Sports Promotion Board's Sarita 8-3 in the final.

Dharamvir, a former wrestler, trails Anshu like a shadow and is also one of her coaches. Winning gold was a relief for the father and daughter before they travel to Yokohama's Nippon Sports Science University, the nursery for famed Japanese women wrestlers, including the current 53 kg star Akari Fujinami.

Dharamvir, Anshu and a physio will make the trip to Japan. Getting used to the food will take time, Dharamvir says, so he is packing ghee, aata, chawal and dal. "Initially it is better to have home food and then we will slowly adjust to the diet in Japan," Dharamvir said.

But the biggest plus is that the two-time world champion Fujinami has agreed to spar and train with Anshu. They are in different weight classes - Anshu's Olympic category is 57kg, but not everyone gets a chance to learn from the best in the business. Fujinami, the Japanese wrestling wunderkid, now 20, has gone 111 domestic and international matches without being defeated since 2017, winning the World title and Asia.

Japan is not a common destination for India's wrestlers. "I am going to Japan for training with the support of the Sports Authority of India and Target Olympic Podium Scheme, because Japan is the best in wrestling," Anshu said moments after winning the gold.

Dharamvir says the trip will be an eye-opener for the wrestling family from Noida, Haryana. "We also train hard, eat well and have talent. But the reason we are going to Japan is to find out how they are so good. There is something they do which we do not know about. It could be the way they train or the drills they do or the system they have in place. Once we go there, we will get a better idea. Anshu and I discussed in detail why we

Getting used to the food in Japan will be a challenge so Anshu will be packing ghee, aata, chawal and dal.

Anshu still has a long way to go before she reaches her peak. "I am at 70 percent fitness," she said.

Both Anshu and Sarita didn't participate in the 57 kg (Olympic weight class) but will have to cut weight soon for the trials for Olympic Qualifiers at the end of February.

"I chose 59 here because after the injury I had put on weight. So the physio said don't lose too much weight because there could be risk of injury. But I will now have to compete in 57kg. I could not win a medal at the Tokyo Olympics, but I hope to make amends this time," Anshu said.

Gold at nearly 40

Haryana's Nirmala, 39, defeated RSPB's Neelam by fall with three minutes and 50 seconds left in the 50 kg final to win gold. Nirmala took a while but confirmed that she had bagged her 16th gold at the Senior Nationals. Nirmala, a 2010 Commonwealth Games silver medallist, has been on the circuit for over 20 years. "I continue to wrestle because I don't know what to do if I stop wrestling," Nirmala said.

Nirmala had knee surgery two years ago but returned to win silver at the previous edition of the senior nationals and a gold at the World Police Games in Canada. The gold at the ongoing nationals has boosted her confidence. She hopes to qualify for the Paris Olympics. "Last time I had an injury just before the Olympic qualifying tournaments. So I could not participate. Hopefully, this time I will make it."



Anshu Malik (in blue) in action in the 59kg category at the Senior National Wrestling Championships. Special Arrangement

Unstoppable Vinesh wins Nationals crown

NIHAL KOSHIE
JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 4

IT WAS a near-perfect return to competition for Vinesh Phogat after being away from wrestling for a year-and-a-half because of being involved in protests and a knee injury. The 29-year-old making a comeback after a knee surgery in August didn't concede a single point in the 55kg rounds, displayed strong defense against Haryana's Tamanna in the quarterfinal and won by fall against Madhya Pradesh's Jyoti in the final in just two minutes.

This might be a non-Olympic category, and she will have to face tougher opponents if she eventually qualifies for the Olympics in the 53kg category, but Sunday was about spending time on the mat and going through rounds of a competition. Vinesh, competing for RSPB, said she put in 50 percent effort because she was being cautious.

"I am returning after an operation so there was a little fear. It was like a test for me. I am feeling good. I am on the right track. This is an Olympic year; hopefully I will stay fit and healthy and give my best for my country. Wrestling ko phir se jee rahe hai. (I am enjoying wrestling again)," Vinesh said.

After the 55kg medal ceremony, Sakshi Malik and Vinesh, two of the prominent wrestlers in the protest against former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who is facing charges of sexual harassment, posed together for photos. Their beaming smiles said how



Vinesh Phogat beat Madhya Pradesh's Jyoti in the final. Special arrangement

much they valued the moment. After winning gold in the 59kg final, one of the first people Anshu Malik went up to was Vinesh.

Vinesh later spoke about the joy that comes with seeing wrestlers win medals after a difficult phase for the sport.

"Many senior athletes were injured. They were not on track. They are coming back on track now. Ravi (Dahiya) also competed (France Grand Prix) and has done well. I have won here, Anshu has won here. We want wrestlers to walk with us shoulder-to-shoulder. The bigger team we have in the Olympics, the better it is," Vinesh said.

After the surgery in August, Vinesh returned to the mat in December, according to former Greco Roman wrestler Somwir Rathore, her husband. The rehabilitation phase, when she also

had one eye on the controversial Wrestling Federation of India elections, was a difficult period. She also returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna award in protest after Sanjay Singh, a loyalist of Brij Bhushan, was elected WFI president. The nationals gave her an opportunity to return to what she loves doing though she was a touch apprehensive of how it would pan out because she had a short time window to train. The 53kg Olympic weight category is the one she will have to compete in to have a chance to make it to Paris.

"I have finished the competition with a win at the start of the year which is a positive sign. Now I will increase my training. I think in the next competition, I will play more freely. The doubts are over and we will just have to see how the body reacts after this competition," Vinesh added. A personal coach is also set to join her support staff. "My coach is coming. Let's see what planning will be done. Support staff is with me. There are so many people working behind the scenes."

Wrestlers at the ongoing nationals were better off than when they had participated in previous editions.

"This is the first senior nationals where I am feeling so happy after competing. Earlier junior wrestlers would not get access to water, food. As a senior athlete, we would still manage but I felt bad seeing the plight of juniors earlier. But this time I am happy to see that everyone is getting good food, good place to stay. Wrestlers are competing without any pressure. Kisi ka dabla abha nahi hai yahan pe. (No one is unfairly dominating here)."

India lose to B'desh in SAFF U19 C'ships

Dhaka: India conceded a stoppage time goal to lose 0-1 to hosts and defending champions Bangladesh in their second round-robin match of the SAFF U-19 Women's Football Championship here on Sunday. Sagarika scored the all-important goal for Bangladesh in the fourth minute of the added time at the BSSSMK Stadium. While the win ensured Bangladesh's entry into the final of the four-team tournament as they now have six points from two matches, the defeat left India in a vulnerable position. PTI

SJFI, DSJA honour IOA prez PT Usha



New Delhi: Legendary sprinter and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha on Sunday was conferred with the 'Lifetime Achievement' award by the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) and Delhi Sports Journalists Association (DSJA) at the National Sports Club of India in New Delhi. To honour her stellar sporting career, Ms Usha was presented with a medallion, a citation, and a memento on occasion. The ceremony was graced by Guest of Honours, BCCI Vice President Rajeev Shukla (in pic) and former Indian shooter Shri Jaspal Rana. ENS

Bhambri-Myneni's straight-sets doubles win seals India's promotion

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

FEBRUARY 4

INDIA CAPPED off their first visit to Pakistan for a Davis Cup tie in 60 years with an eighth consecutive win over their neighbours in the team competition, ensuring promotion to the World Group 1. Entering the day with a 2-0 lead, Yuki Bhambri and Saketh Myneni defeated Muzammil Murtaza and Aqeel Khan in the doubles rubber to seal the playoff tie.

Later, debutant Niki Poonacha beat Muhammad Shoaib in a dead rubber, as India completed a 4-0 win in Islamabad on Sunday.

Despite being without their top singles players, receiving the heavy attention that any sporting tie between India and Pakistan grabs - especially after India saw multiple at-

tempts to have the tie moved to a neutral venue rejected - and having to deal with the heavy security cover that restricted their movement within the city, the higher-ranked Indian side comfortably sailed past Pakistan with four wins, dropping only one set along the way.

Bhambri and Myneni - a successful tour-level partnership in the past - won the match in straight sets over Murtaza and Khan, who replaced Bakat Ullah in the lineup to lend some of his grass-court experience. The match, from start to finish, had been on the Indian duo's rackets as their superior serve and baseline games made life tough for their opponents. The Indian duo broke Khan's serve to go 1-0 and 4-1 up and sealed the opening set with ease from there.

While the Pakistani pair raised their level marginally in the second set, they were still



Yuki Bhambri in action against Pakistan on Sunday. PTI

on the back foot. Murtaza nervously saved two break points in the middle of the set, and then the Pakistani duo locked in on serve to take it to a tiebreaker, where they fashioned

a 4-2 lead. But the momentum swung India's way as Bhambri and Myneni tightened their games to extract errors from their opponents. Khan double-faulted on match point, allowing India to win the match 6-2, 7-6 (5).

Poonacha, in the follow-up dead rubber, was also comfortable on top against Muhammad Shoaib, not facing a single break point and crunching returns against his opponent's faltering serve to round out the 6-3, 6-4 win.

Pakistan veteran Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi had caused a slight scare by winning the tight opening set against Ramkumar Ramanathan on Saturday, but after riding his opponent's momentum and recovering to clinch the second set in a tiebreaker, Ramkumar won the match in three sets and India did not look back from there. N Sriram Balaji defeated Khan in two rain-interrupted sets to give his

side the 2-0 lead on Saturday, and the doubles win sealed promotion.

The atmosphere was not buzzing as is usually the case for a sporting tie between India and Pakistan given the security conditions in place, and the International Tennis Federation's (ITF) directive allowing only 500-odd spectators to be in attendance at the Islamabad Sports Complex over the weekend. But India got the job done, ensuring promotion to World Group 1 after their humbling experience of being knocked into World Group 2, the fourth-tier of the Davis Cup.

India were able to get themselves back into the third tier thanks to fortunate draws against lower-ranked Morocco at home, which they won 4-1 in Lucknow last year, and then Pakistan away in the subsequent playoff.

Why it was a dry January transfer window as spending fell by nearly 90%

SAYAK DUTTA
FEBRUARY 4

MANCHESTER UNITED manager Erik ten Hag was distraught at not being able to sign a striker in the January transfer window this year. "I wanted a striker, and because of the injury to (Anthony) Martial, we don't really have the back-up. It was not possible because we have to meet the FFP rules," he said.

It's been a while since the Premier League managers have had to worry about Financial Fair Play rules as witnessed by their spending in the last three record-breaking winter windows. Even last year, the EPL clubs had spent £815m. This year, it has seen a mighty fall with the top 20 flight clubs spending just £100m, which is £715m less than last year according to a report by Deloitte, with Tottenham's signing of Radu Dragusin from Genoa for £25m the highest spent this time around.

EXPLAINED

So, was the Premier League's Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR) the only factor that restricted the clubs from going all out in the market this year? Let's find out.

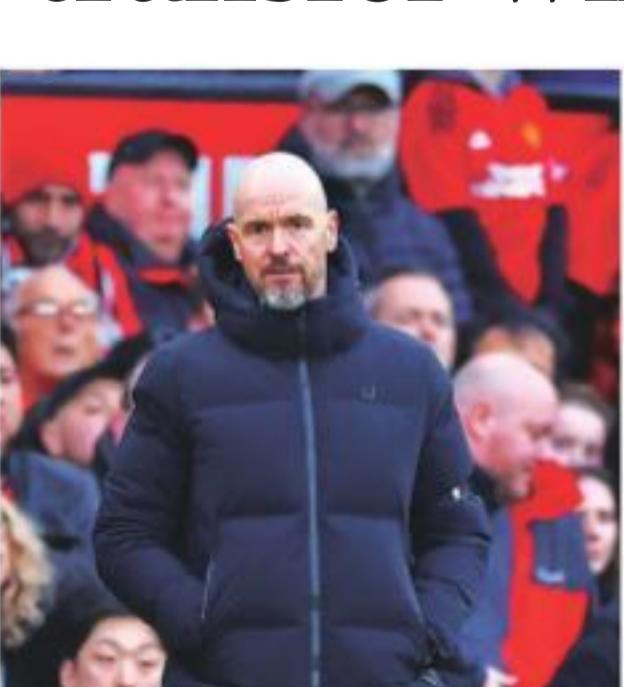
What are the Premier League's Profit and Sustainability Rules?

According to the rules, Premier League clubs are allowed to lose a maximum of £105 million across a three-year assessment period. However, for every season a club was in the second-tier Championship, that amount is reduced by £22 million.

There are a number of deductions allowed for spending on costs that are deemed to be in the general interest of the club and the game.

What has happened to clubs charged with breaching financial rules?

Everton and Nottingham Forest have been charged with breaching the financial rules with both clubs being referred to an independent commission for their 2022-23 accounts. The Toffees have already faced a 10-



Erik ten Hag was left frustrated after Manchester United failed to sign a striker. Reuters

point deduction this season due to their alleged breaches in the 2021-22 season where their losses amounted to £124.5m.

Meanwhile, the reigning champions

Henderson also leaving the gulf after just 6 months for Ajax, the SPL had a rather quiet January window.

What might have been the other factors for a dry January?

There might be many other factors that have led to such an uneventful month in transfers in January with the past record-breaking windows having already strengthened teams that do not have to spend more. There can also be the factor that only 2 managers were sacked this season compared to 11 last year so there was no need for an influx of new players for a new manager.

Which transfer was the biggest deadline day permanent signing in January 2024?

In order to understand how far the mighty have fallen, you just have to look at the biggest deadline day permanent signing in the country with Crystal Palace spending £18m for Blackburn's Adam Wharton, a fee that can rise to £22m.

In January 2023, the highest deadline day deal was Chelsea's £107m signing of Argentina's Enzo Fernandez from Benfica.

What about the spending of the other big leagues of Europe?

In contrast to 2023, the combined spend of Serie A, Bundesliga, La Liga and Ligue 1 has seen an increase with £388m this year to last year's £218m.

Which were the biggest deals in the January 2024 transfer window?

Alongside the aforementioned Dragusin to Spurs deal for £25m, Victor Roque went from Athletico Paranaense to Barcelona for £52.2m which is the highest signing of the January transfer window (in a deal that was agreed in July with the Spanish giants also struggling under FFP regulations). Then there is Sacha Boey who went from Galatasaray to Bayern Munich for £25.6m plus £4.3m in add-ons as well as Ejif Elmas who transferred from Napoli to RB Leipzig for £20.8m.

Other notable deals were made with Donny van de Beek leaving Manchester United for Eintracht Frankfurt, Kalvin Phillips's move to West Ham from Manchester City, and Timo Werner joining Tottenham on loan from RB Leipzig.

#News18IndiaChaupal



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