



GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY @4.0

— 19 FEB 2024 • LUCKNOW —

Investment Projects

Worth

₹10

LAKH CRORE+
TO BE LAUNCHED

34 LAKH+

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Aligning with Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve to make India a \$5 trillion economy and the world's third-largest economy, Uttar Pradesh is steadfastly progressing towards becoming a \$1 trillion economy. With this objective, investment projects worth ₹4.28 lakh crore secured during Investors Summit 2018 have been successfully implemented in the state. Out of the MoUs of ₹40 lakh crore received during UP Global Investors Summit 2023, Projects worth ₹10 lakh crore are being launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister today, which will create more than 34 lakh job opportunities.

On behalf of the 25 crore citizens of the state, we **Welcome & Express our Gratitude** to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his invaluable guidance and encouragement in Uttar Pradesh's development journey.

- Yogi Adityanath
Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

CELEBRATIONS PROGRESS & PROSPERITY UTTAR PRADESH'S NEW IDENTITY





THE MAHAKUMBH

OF BUSINESS INVESTORS

Investment Projects

Worth

₹ 10
LAKH CRORE+

Inauguration of



GROUND BREAKING
CEREMONY @4.0

— 19 FEB 2024 • LUCKNOW —

34 LAKH+
JOB OPPORTUNITIES



Electronics Manufacturing Hub



MSMEs Hub



Defence Industrial Corridor

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

In the august presence of

Anandiben Patel

Governor
Uttar Pradesh

Rajnath Singh

Minister of Defence
Govt. of India

Yogi Adityanath

Chief Minister
Uttar Pradesh

Keshav Prasad Maurya

Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Brajesh Pathak

Deputy Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi'

Minister, Industrial Development, Export Promotion
NRI & Investment Promotion, Uttar Pradesh

Jaswant Singh Saini

Minister of State, Parliamentary Affairs &
Industrial Development, Uttar Pradesh

AND OTHER DIGNITARIES

Date : 19th February, 2024 | Time : 12:00 PM
Venue : Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow



Airport Prades



Metro Prades



Express Prades

LIVE TELECAST

DD NEWS & [Youtube.com/DDNEWS](https://www.youtube.com/DDNEWS)
[Youtube.com/dduttarpradesh](https://www.youtube.com/dduttarpradesh)

and

[UPGovtOfficial](#)

[CMOUP](#)

[CMOfficeUP](#)



Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Hamara Sankalp
Viksit Bharat

Prosperity of farmers

1 lakh 25 thousand PM Kisan Samriddhi Kendras developed as one stop shop; Farmers are getting modern facilities and information close to home



Scan for more
information



Governor's Seal
cbe 22/2017/3/027/2324

RENEWS CALL FOR 370 SEATS AT PARTY'S NATIONAL CONVENTION

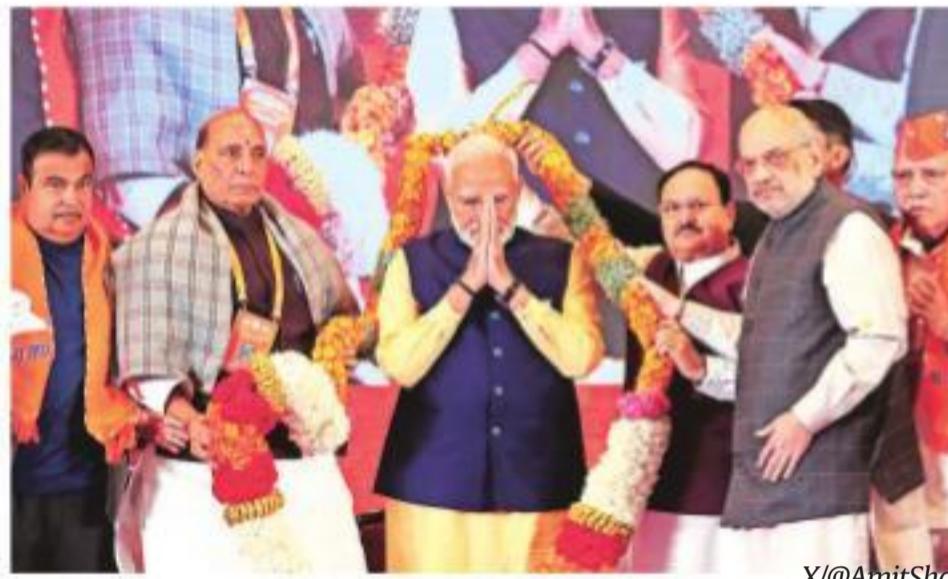
BJP win must for Viksit Bharat, reach out to every voter in next 100 days: PM

Even foreign countries are confident about BJP's return to power: Modi

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

REITERATING HIS call for 370 seats for the BJP in the coming Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asked party workers to reach out to every new voter, beneficiary and community over the next 100 days and win their trust.

Addressing the BJP's national convention, which was attended by about 12,000 party workers from across the country, Modi said India would have to dream big and make big resolutions to "take a giant leap towards a Viksit Bharat" over the next five years. And the first step is to en-



X/@AmitShah
PM Narendra Modi with Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, BJP chief J P Nadda and former Karnataka CM BS Yediyurappa in New Delhi on Sunday.

sure the BJP's return to power with a stronger mandate, he said.

Amid chants of "ab ki baar 400 paar" from party workers, Modi, in his 65-minute speech at the Bharat Mandapam, said the party has to cross the 370-mark.

"Today, even some Opposition leaders are chanting 'NDA sarkar 400 paar'. However, to take the NDA past 400 in the Lok Sabha

elections, the BJP has to cross 370 seats," he said, in an apparent reference to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's remark in Rajya Sabha during the just concluded Budget Session.

"In the coming 100 days, you will have to work with new vigour, enthusiasm, hope and excitement. You have to reach

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

'Ram Rajya for next 1,000 years': BJP passes Ram temple resolution

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

THE CONSTRUCTION of the Ram temple in Ayodhya "heralds the establishment of Ram Rajya in India for the next 1,000 years", the BJP said in a resolution passed by its national council on Sunday.

The resolution also said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership: "India is fulfilling the goal of all-embracing and inclusive development in the spirit of Ram Rajya."

The Ram temple has become a temple of "national consciousness" and will play a decisive role in fulfilling the resolutions adopted in building a Viksit Bharat, the party said at its two-day national convention which

GOVT & POLITICS

SHAH: LS POLLS ARE A BATTLE BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND DYNASTIES PAGE 6

ended on Sunday.

"The construction of a grand and divine temple of Lord Shri Ram at his birthplace in the ancient holy city of Ayodhya is a historic and glorious achievement for the country. This heralds the establishment of Ram Rajya in India for the next 1,000 years with the beginning of a new Kalachakra," said the resolution moved by party chief J P Nadda.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FARMERS TO GET BACK TODAY: GOYAL

Talks positive, focused on crop diversification, aid via NAFED: Govt



Union ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal and Nitayand Rai and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann during the meeting with farmer leaders in Chandigarh on Sunday. Express

several issues, we had a long discussion after an out-of-box thinking," he said, adding that it was not just Punjab and Haryana farmers who would benefit.

Goyal said they focused on crop diversification and told farmers that if they start sowing pulses, many of the state's problems would be resolved. "We told the farmers that cooperative societies like NAFED will help the farmers. They will sign a contract of five years with farmers and buy their produce at MSP," he said.

Goyal said the farmers would get back to the government on CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Jharkhand CM gives go-ahead for caste survey

ABHIShek ANGAD
RANCHI, FEBRUARY 18

JHARKHAND CHIEF Minister Champal Soren has given the green signal for a caste-based survey in the state, three months after the Bihar government announced findings of a similar exercise in its state.

The Department of Administrative, Personnel and Rajbhasha has been given the responsibility to conduct the survey, according to officials.

However, the modalities of the survey are yet to be announced.

Earlier in the day, Champal Soren, who took charge as Chief Minister on February 2, cited a report on caste survey and posted on X: "Jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni hisse daar! Jharkhand hai tayyar (The more one's number, the more is the share! Jharkhand is ready.)"

Vinay Kumar Choubey, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, said the personnel department will prepare a standard operating procedure for the survey. "After deliberations, a standard operating procedure will be made to conduct the caste survey. This will be then presented before the Cabinet and only after its approval the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Key aspect in poll bond case still alive: Money Bill route

7-judge bench to decide on petitions

AUPURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

EVEN AS a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court struck down the electoral bonds scheme as unconstitutional on Thursday, it saved one aspect of the challenge for another day and a larger bench – the issue of the government using the money Bill route to bring in the laws that introduced the electoral bonds.

Please challenging the use of the money Bill route, which allows a legislation to bypass scrutiny of the Rajya Sabha, is pending before a seven-judge bench that is yet to be formed.

In his opinion in the electoral bonds ruling, Justice Sanjiv Khanna wrote, "The question of

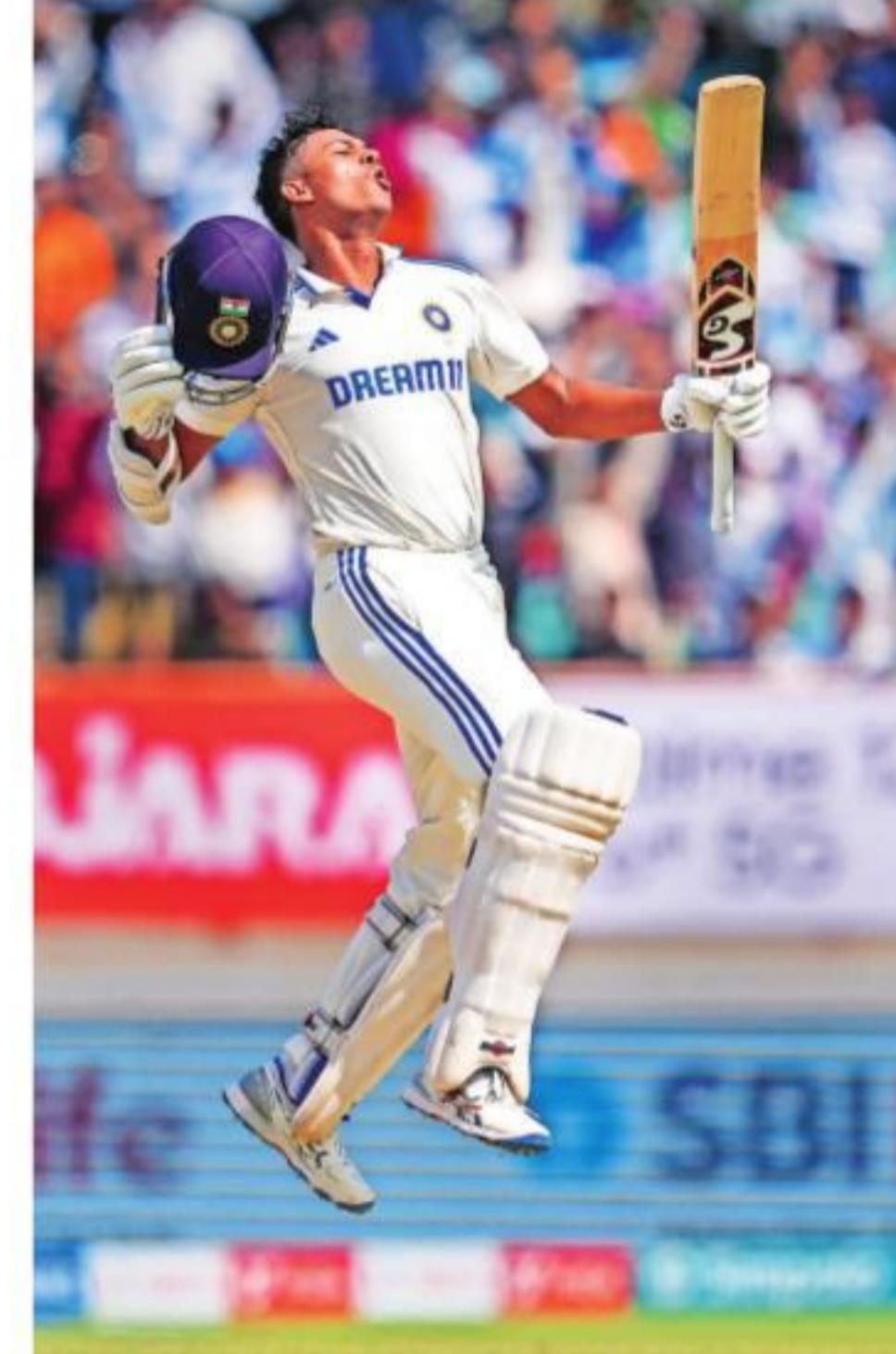
EXPLAINED E The pending cases

ARTICLE 145(3) states that a minimum of five judges must hear substantial questions of law that involve the interpretation of the Constitution. The money Bill issue raises key questions on parliamentary supremacy and extent of judicial review permissible. By 2023-end, according to SC records, 19 such cases were pending for hearing.

constitutional validity of the scheme and the amendments

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Young guns shine in India's biggest Test win by runs



Yashasvi Jaiswal celebrates his double century in the 3rd Test between India and England in Rajkot, Sunday. PTI REPORTS, P15

Chasing 557 runs, England collapse for 122; Rohit says youngsters showed character

SIRAM VEERA
RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 18

AFTER INDIA'S 434-run win over England at Rajkot on Day 4 of the third Test, the team's biggest in terms of runs, captain Rohit Sharma spoke about the biggest takeaway – youngsters delivering when it mattered.

"Lots of credit to the young boys who have shown character and that they belong at this level and want to belong here. We talk about bench strength and we saw it in this series. It's a good feeling to win a game after being down 33 for 3 in the first innings," Rohit said after the team took a 2-1 series lead with two Test matches to go.

For India, the performances of the youngsters was a sign of a bright future for the Test team.

Yashasvi Jaiswal, 22, became the third youngest to hit two double hundreds (Vinod Kambla is the youngest and Don Bradman the second youngest).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ON EVE OF TOP COURT HEARING Chandigarh mayor resigns, three AAP councillors join BJP



Former AAP councillors Neha Musawat (left), Poonam Devi and Gurcharan Kala with BJP National General Secretary Vinod Tawde (centre) and BJP ex-city chief Arun Sood (right)

HINA ROHTAKI
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 18

BJP'S CHANDIGARH Mayor Manoj Sonkar, whose election last month was marred by allegations of vote tampering by the presiding officer, resigned from the post citing "moral grounds" on Sunday, a day before the matter is scheduled to come up in

the Supreme Court for hearing. Incidentally, this came on a day three AAP councillors joined the BJP – a development that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Year after Sepoy death, series of setbacks, wife makes it to officers' academy

PAGE 1
ANCHOR

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 18

A 26-YEAR-OLD woman from Uttarakhand's Haldwani has overcome multiple tragedies over the past year, including the death of her Army jawan husband just a month after their marriage, to clear the Service Selection Board (SSB) interview and get selected to the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai.

Soni Bisht's world had come

crashing down in January 2023 when her husband, Sepoy Neeraj Singh Bhandari of the 18 Kumaon regiment, died in a road accident. The couple had been married just a month earlier in December 2022.

More misfortune followed for Bisht, with her mother suffering a heart attack and being put on life support soon after getting news of Bhandari's death. It was also around this time that Bisht's younger brother became paralysed.

"I was in a state of numbness as all these events took place in my life. I did not know what to do. But I received encouragement from many quarters, and

gradually, I began to take stock of my life and my options," she said.

Her father, Subedar Kundan Singh, reached out to former officers of his regiment for guidance for his daughter. Bisht had studied in Army Public Schools and did her B.Com from a college in Jodhpur, where her father was posted at the time.

"I was encouraged by many officers who knew my father, and this gave me strength to carry my life forward in a meaningful way," she said.

Her husband's commanding officer also encouraged her and motivated her to apply for OTA Chennai under the special quota



Soni Bisht, 26. Her husband died in a road accident in January 2023, just a month after their marriage. Express

for widows of Army personnel.

"The Commandant of the Kumaon Regimental Centre also encouraged me to apply for officer's commission when I visited the centre for documentation after my husband's death," she said.

Bisht was guided and coached by retired Army officers for the SSB interview. "I also approached Major General Yash Mor (retd) for guidance for the SSB interview," she said.

Maj Gen Mor, from the same regiment – Brigade of the Guards – as Bisht's father, said, "I and my team of officers, who are trained in conducting SSB interviews, group tasks and psychological as-

essment, put efforts to ensure that Soni (Bisht) made the grade."

There is tough competition for securing the lone vacancy under the quota for widows of armed forces servicemen in each course in OTA Chennai. Those going through the quota don't need to clear the written exam.

"I had to get out of the most traumatic period of my life as well as prepare for SSB. But I was fortunate to have had proper guidance from several Army officers who coached me on how to present myself at the interview and conduct myself," she said.

In the recently declared results, she topped the merit list for those

in the quota, thus making the cut for selection to OTA Chennai.

There, she will soon begin training for an officer's commission in the rank of Lieutenant.

This has come as good news for a family that has seen a tough year. "My in-laws have been supportive, and started crying when they learnt of my selection. After my mother's heart attack following Neeraj's death, and my brother's paralysis, this has been the first good news," Bisht said.

Maj Gen Mor said: "By the end of the year, she will be an officer. This shows that you can achieve anything if you are determined enough."

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

BJP win must for Viksit Bharat: PM

out to every new voter who turned 18 in the last five years, every beneficiary, every community and every group to earn everyone's trust," he said.

"Due to the loyalty and dedication of BJP workers, we are getting the people's blessings. By forming the government for the third time in 2024, we are going to create an unmatched history of public service and national service," he said.

India will now have to dream big and the government should make big resolutions to transform it into a developed country by 2047, he said. "The country's dreams and resolve have gotten bigger. Our dream and resolution today is to make a Viksit Bharat, and the next five years will be crucial to taking our country there. Over the next five years, we have to take a giant leap towards a Viksit Bharat," he said.

Concluding the two-day national convention, which was held to give final guidelines to party workers for the Lok Sabha elections, Modi said he was seeking a stronger mandate "to fulfill the dreams of freedom fighters, to continue stringent action against corruption, to control inflation, to restrain the country's enemies, to ensure more opportunities for investments and jobs, to make India the third biggest economy in the world, to build robust infrastructure swiftly, to make Atmanirbhar Bharat a reality, to ensure that

poor continue to get free ration, farmers get Kisan Samman Nidhi benefits, and all other beneficiaries continue to benefit from government schemes".

He said every country across the world is now keen to forge a deeper relationship with India because they know "a strong India is good for the world". "Elections are yet to take place, but already have invitations from different countries for July, August and September. This means that several countries across the world are also fully confident about the return of the BJP government," he said. Every country knows "ayega toh...", he said, as the gathering shouted "...Modi hi. Aayega toh Modi hi."

While Home Minister Amit Shah, who addressed the convention ahead of Modi, targeted the Congress-led INDIA bloc, Modi focused on the Congress. "We must safeguard the future, youth and citizens of India from the Congress. The Congress's track record speaks volumes. It has been the epicentre of instability, corruption, dynastic politics and appeasement. Every Congress leader has attempted to bring instability in India. They lack a clear roadmap for the future and are solely focused on dividing India based on language, region or caste. Moreover, Congress has even questioned the integrity of our armed forces," he said, adding that the party had now resorted to

"abusing" him.

He said while the "big families" in politics had always nurtured those who were close to them, he "introduced new people and gave opportunities to various sections".

Modi said he was seeking a third term not to enjoy power but to work for the poor and the nation. "If I had taken comfort in power and thought of my own home, 25 crore people would not have come out of poverty. It would not have been possible to build homes for crores of people," he said.

"A senior leader once told me that I had done enough as PM and CM, I should rest. I am not here for rajneeti but for rashtrneeti. I am someone who respects and follows the ideals of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. He never stopped after becoming an emperor. I am not someone who relishes my own comfort or happiness. I am advocating for a third term for the BJP not for political gains but for the benefit of India. My efforts are dedicated to the people of India. The dreams of Indians are my commitments," he said.

He said he was the first Prime Minister to raise the issue of toilets and speak about the dignity of women from Red Fort. The BJP is bringing together the power of the youth, women and farmers in building a Viksit Bharat, he said. "We asked those who were not

acknowledged by anyone, and not just that, we have also worshipped them," he said.

He said that with India on its way to become the third largest economy in the world, there would be plenty of opportunities for "our mothers, sisters and daughters".

While most of the speakers, as well as the party's political resolution, dwelt on the Ram Temple, Modi only referred to it once, saying the BJP had ended the wait for the temple in Ayodhya. "The religious flag has been hoisted in Pavagadh, Gujarat, after 500 years. After seven decades, we opened the Kartarpur Sahib Highway. After waiting for seven decades, the country has got freedom from Article 370," he said.

He said the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" was visible in governance. "The Northeast was completely ignored by earlier governments. But we don't work for votes and seats. For us, every corner of the country should be prosperous and developed, this is our belief," he said. "Our government is for everyone. Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas is reflected in our work ethics," he added.

In his speech, Modi also paid tribute to Jain seer Acharya Vidhyasagar Maharaj, who died earlier on Sunday. "His demise is a personal loss for me. I went to meet him a few days back. I never thought I would not be able to meet him again," he said.

• Key aspect in poll bond case still alive: Money Bill route

introduced by the Finance Act, 2017 are being examined by us. The question of introducing these amendments through a money Bill under Article 110 of the Constitution is not being examined by us. The scope of Article 110 of the Constitution has been referred to a seven-judge Bench and is sub-judice."

"Further, a batch of petitions challenging the amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 by the Finance Acts of 2016 and 2018 are pending. The challenge to the said amendments is not being decided by us," Justice Khanna wrote.

The fate of at least three other key legislation – two of which have been upheld by the

Supreme Court – also hangs in the balance. The Supreme Court has upheld stringent amendments made to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in 2022 and the Aadhaar Act in 2018. These laws could still be struck down if the court decides that they were enacted through improper procedure.

The pleas challenging the constitutionality of the Tribunals Reforms Act, also introduced as a money Bill in 2017, is pending before the apex court.

Article 110 of the Constitution deals with money Bills. A bill, which in the opinion of the Lok Sabha Speaker deals with taxation or the appropriation of public funds – in the Consolidated Fund of India or the Contingency

Fund – is considered a money Bill. A key difference between a money Bill and an ordinary Bill is that it need not be passed by the Rajya Sabha. The Finance Act, which brings in the annual Budget, is a money Bill.

The NDA government tested the money Bill route in its first term, when cobbling up the numbers in the Rajya Sabha was a cause of concern for it, especially for contentious legislation. As the Opposition had higher numbers in the Rajya Sabha, some legislation, including the Aadhaar Act, may not have been passed had they not been introduced as money Bills.

In 2017, the government also introduced Tribunals Reforms Act as part of the Finance Act – a

money Bill. While hearing a challenge to the changes made in service conditions of tribunal heads, the Supreme Court had referred the money Bill issue to a larger bench.

The government argues that constitutionally the Speaker's decision is final on certifying a Bill as money Bill and the court cannot review the Speaker's decision. However, petitioners have argued before the Supreme Court that no constitutional authority can have unchecked powers.

The lone dissenter in the five-judge bench that upheld Aadhaar; Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, had termed the government's use of money Bill route a "subterfuge" and "fraud on the Constitution".

• Talks positive, focused on crop diversification, aid via NAFED: Govt

its offer on Monday. "If they give us their decision by tomorrow, we will proceed," he said, adding that the remaining issues were "policy issues" which "can't be discussed with a few representatives".

Besides Goyal, Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nitin Jayant Rai, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian met the farmer leaders at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration (MGSIPA) here.

The farmers were represented by a 14-member delegation which included farmer leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Delhi. They were led by Sarvan Singh Pandher, coordinator of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and general secretary of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, and Jagit Singh Dallewal, president of BKU Ekta (Sidhpur).

Ahead of the meeting, Pandher had said they had "high hopes", adding that "the ball is in the Centre's court now". The farmers are demanding a law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) among other issues. On Saturday, KMM leaders had said the government should bring an Ordinance to provide MSP guarantee. "If the government wants, it can bring an Ordinance overnight. If it wants a resolution to the farmers' protest, then it should bring an Ordinance," Pandher had said.

The meeting reportedly began with the union leaders paying tribute to Gyan Singh, 78, a farmer who died after suffering a heart attack while protesting at the Shambhu border on Friday. Even as the meeting was underway, news broke of another farmer's death. Manjit Singh, 70, the unit president of BKU (Krantikari), fell ill and died at Patiala hospital late Sunday evening. He was participating in the protest at Khanauri.

On Sunday, farmer leaders from both Haryana and Punjab extended their support to the "Dilli Chalo" protest which began on February 13. Protesters have been camping at the Punjab-

Haryana border – at Shambhu and Khanauri – since then.

After a meeting of farmer unions and khap in Kurukshetra, Haryana BKU (Chaduni) chief Gurnam Singh Chaduni said all organisations in Haryana had come together for the "big battle". He said they would announce a plan for peaceful agitation Monday if the talks failed.

The Punjab unit of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella unit for the farmers' agitation in 2020-21, decided to picket the houses of the BJP's state office-bearers, MPs and MLAs from February 20 to 22, regardless of the outcome of Sunday's meet.

The ongoing dharnas at three locations by BKU Ugrahan will be suspended for a day and resumed on February 20. BKU Ugrahan protested outside the residences of BJP state chief Sunil Jakhar in Abohar, Capt Amarinder Singh in Patiala, and Kewal Dhillon in Barnala on Saturday and Sunday.

The farmers also plan to hold dharnas outside the houses of BJP MLA Ashwani Sharma in Pathankot, Union Minister of State Som Parkash in Phagwara, and the party office of Sunny Deol in Gurdaspur, among others.

Raminder Singh Patiala from Kirti Kisan Union, a constituent of the SKM, said they would make toll barriers across the state toll-free on these dates.

On Sunday, Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu also threw his weight behind the farmers' demands. Former CM Amarinder

said he was in Delhi to hold meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and appeal to them to resolve the farmers' issue.

The Union ministers and farmer leaders have held three rounds of talks – on February 8, 12 and 15 – so far. After the third round, both sides had said the talks were "very positive". Mann, who has taken on the role of mediator, has told the farmers to try to resolve the issue.

On Sunday, besides Dalawal and Pandher, the 14-member delegation of farmers included Jaswinder Singh Longowal, president of BKU Ekta Azad; Surjeet Singh Phul, president of BKU-Krantikari; Amarjeet Singh Mohri, president of BKU-Shahed Bhagat Singh; Satnam Singh Bargrian, president of Pargi Sambhal Jatta; Abhimanyu Kohar, president of BKU-Naujawain Haryana; Gurdas Singh Lakadwal, president of BKU-Ekta Kalawadi, Haryana; Kurbur Shanta Kumar, president of Karnataka Sugarcane Farmers Association; Maninder Singh Marin, member of Kisa Coordination Committee, Rajasthan; Ramandeep Singh Mann, SKM Delhi; Malkit Singh, president of Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, Punjab; and Onkar Singh Bhangal, president of Azad Kisan Sangharsh Committee, Doaba.

The Home Ministry extended the suspension of internet services in Punjab to February 24, and expanded it to 20 police station areas in seven districts.

• 'Ram Rajya for next 1,000 years': BJP passes Ram temple resolution

"Lord Shri Ram, Mata Sita and Ramayana are present in every aspect of Indian civilisation and culture", it said. "Our Constitution, dedicated to our democratic values and justice for all, has been inspired by the ideals of Ram Rajya. Even in the original copy of the Constitution of India, on the section of fundamental rights, the picture of Lord Shri Ram, Mother Sita and Lakshman after returning to Ayodhya after the victory, is proof of the fact that Lord Shri Ram is the source of inspiration for the fundamental rights," it said.

Saying that the temple is a historic and glorious achievement for the country, it said, "Ram Mandir is a symbol of India's vision, philosophy, path. Shri Ram Temple truly becomes a temple of national consciousness."

Referring to the consecration

ceremony of the temple on January 22, the party said it was "the day of aspiration and accomplishment for crores of Ram devotees, the renaissance of India's spiritual consciousness and the beginning of the journey back to great India."

With the consecration of the temple, "the nation, freeing itself from the mentality of slavery, (has) created a new history by taking inspiration from every part of the past," it said.

"This convention congratulates Prime Minister Modi for making the shared power of heritage and development the identity of new India through his determined efforts and thanks the

Prime Minister for making the whole of India experience the magic of Ram," it said.

"Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, India's unity and solidarity have received the power of public participation. He has raised the morale of the nation with his policies and leadership. Indian cultural, spiritual and historical pride has been restored in the last 10 years," it said.

"Through his unwavering commitment towards religion, he started many such programmes which are taking India towards a bright future," it said.

The farmers were represented by a 14-member delegation which included farmer leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Delhi. They were led by Sarvan Singh Pandher, coordinator of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and general secretary of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, and Jagit Singh Dallewal, president of BKU Ekta (Sidhpur).

Ahead of the meeting, Pandher had said they had "high hopes", adding that "the ball is in the Centre's court now".

The farmers are demanding a law to guarantee minimum support price (MSP) among other issues. On Saturday, KMM leaders had said the government should bring an Ordinance to provide MSP guarantee. "If the government wants, it can bring an Ordinance overnight. If it wants a resolution to the farmers' protest, then it should bring an Ordinance," Pandher had said.

The meeting reportedly began with the union leaders paying tribute to Gyan Singh, 78, a farmer who died after suffering a heart attack while protesting at the Shambhu border on Friday. Even as the meeting was underway, news broke of another farmer's death. Manjit Singh, 70, the unit president of BKU (Krantikari), fell ill and died at Patiala hospital late Sunday evening. He was participating in the protest at Khanauri.

On Sunday, farmer leaders from both Haryana and Punjab extended their support to the "Dilli Chalo" protest which began on February 13. Protesters have been camping at the Punjab-

Haryana border – at Shambhu and Khanauri – since then.

After a meeting of farmer unions and khap in Kurukshetra, Haryana BKU (Chaduni) chief Gurnam Singh Chaduni said all organisations in Haryana had come together for the "big battle". He said they would announce a plan for peaceful agitation Monday if the talks failed.

The Union ministers and farmer leaders have held three rounds of talks – on February 8, 12 and 15 – so far. After the third round, both sides had said the talks were "very positive". Mann, who has taken on the role of mediator, has told the farmers to try to resolve the issue.

On Sunday, besides Dalawal and Pandher, the 14-member delegation of farmers included Jaswinder Singh Longowal, president of BKU-Ekta Azad; Surjeet Singh Phul, president of BKU-Krantikari; Amarjeet Singh Mohri, president of BKU-Naujawain Haryana; Gurdas Singh Lakadwal, president of BKU-Ekta Kalawadi, Haryana; Kurbur Shanta Kumar, president of Karnataka Sugarcane Farmers Association; Maninder Singh Marin, member of Kisa Coordination Committee, Rajasthan; Ramandeep Singh Mann, SKM Delhi; Malkit Singh, president of Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, Punjab; and Onkar Singh Bhangal, president of Azad Kisan Sangharsh Committee, Doaba.

The Home Ministry extended the suspension of internet services in Punjab to February 24, and expanded it to 20 police station areas in seven districts.

Opt for a caste survey this year. YSRCP-ruled Andhra Pradesh started a caste survey in January while the Congress-majority Telangana Assembly on February 16 unanimously passed a resolution to conduct a "door-to-door" caste survey.

The demand for a caste survey in Jharkhand goes back to September 2021, when an all-party state delegation, including the BJP, wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Opt for a caste survey this year. YSRCP-ruled Andhra Pradesh started a caste survey in January while the Congress-majority Telangana Assembly on February 16 unanimously passed a resolution to conduct a "door-to-door" caste survey.

The demand for a caste survey in Jharkhand goes back to September 2021, when an all-party state delegation, including the BJP, wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Police Control Room



#delhipoliceweek2024

RENEWING OUR PLEDGE TO BE THE RING OF PROTECTION FOR EVERY CITIZEN OF DELHI



With the help of PCR, the people injured in road accidents are immediately taken to the hospital by the Delhi Police.



PCR plays an important role in maintaining safety & security at places like schools, colleges, and public places like railway stations, bus stops, and airports.



More than 610 missing children traced

More than 86 criminals nabbed

More than 22765 injured person shifted to hospital

Getting obscene calls dial 1096

For immediate Police Help Call 112

DP/9639/2024

Total 6255323 calls attended during the year 2023

Eyes and Ears Helpine-Dial 14547

Senior Citizen Helpine-Dial 1291

Women Helpine-Dial 1091

PCR Van - For assistance, dial 112



Scan QR CODE to
get UPSC Preparation
Insights from VisionIAS
Toppers' Talk



*make your
IAS
Dream
come true*



General Studies

Foundation Course 2025

Prelims cum Mains

INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM PROGRAMME

Scan to know more
& REGISTER



For FREE COUNSELING
connect with our
Experts

8468022022

ENGLISH MEDIUM

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

AHMEDABAD
8 JAN

BHOPAL
5 APR

CHANDIGARH
5 APR

HYDERABAD
6 MAR

JAIPUR
21 FEB

JODHPUR
7 MAR

LUCKNOW
12 MAR

PUNE
15 MAR

मोपाल
11 जून

जयपुर
21 फरवरी

लखनऊ
5 जून

जोधपुर
7 मार्च

हिन्दी माध्यम

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

FEATURES OF OUR CLASSROOM PROGRAMME



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

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



Daily Assignments, Weekly Mini-Tests and Monthly Revision Tests

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



Holistic Current Affairs Coverage

- Comprehensive coverage of Current Affairs through Monthly Current Affairs Revision Classes (MCAR), PT-365, and Mains-365 Classes.



All India Test Series for GS Prelims, GS Mains, CSAT and Essay

- Mock tests with Innovative Assessment system consisting of Post-Test Analysis, Test-Discussions, and All India Ranking.



Comprehensive Study Material

- Access to updated Classroom material with enriching value addition material, reference material, and Quick Revision Material (QRMs) for effective study.



Continuous Mentoring and Support System

- Personalized guidance with tailored mentoring featuring regular one-on-one and group interactions with a dedicated Classroom Mentor.



Classes with Real-time Query Resolution

- Personalized Student Portal having access to Live & recorded classes with query resolution and academic resources beyond course duration.



Tech-Enabled Classrooms

- Enhanced learning with interactive animations & videos and a personal portal for tracking progress, feedback, support and administrative updates.

OTHER VISIONIAS PROGRAMS FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION



PERSONALITY
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION - 2023

ADMISSION OPEN

English & हिन्दी Medium

For queries regarding DAF analysis and Mock interview contact at
7042413505, 9354559299 | interview@visionias.in



PT 365

1 YEAR CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR
GS PRELIMS 2024 IN 60 HOURS

- Focus on Prelims-specific Current Affairs and Smart Revision
- Access to Updated PT-365 Material.
- One-to-One Mentoring Support for Doubt-clearing.
- Access to Recorded Classes on Student Personal Portal.

ENGLISH | 15 FEB, 5 PM

हिन्दी | 23 फरवरी, 5 PM

ALL INDIA TEST SERIES

PRELIMS



- General Studies
- Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT)

MAINS

- General Studies
- Sociology
- Anthropology
- Philosophy
- Essay
- Geography
- PS & IR



Scan to know more

ENGLISH MEDIUM 2024: 25 FEBRUARY

हिन्दी माध्यम 2024: 25 फरवरी

ENGLISH MEDIUM 2025: 18 FEBRUARY

हिन्दी माध्यम 2025: 18 फरवरी

Karol Bagh | Mukherjee Nagar

DEHLI | DELHI

1st floor, Apsara Arcade, Near Gate-7 Karol Bagh Metro Station, 1/8 b, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi – 110005

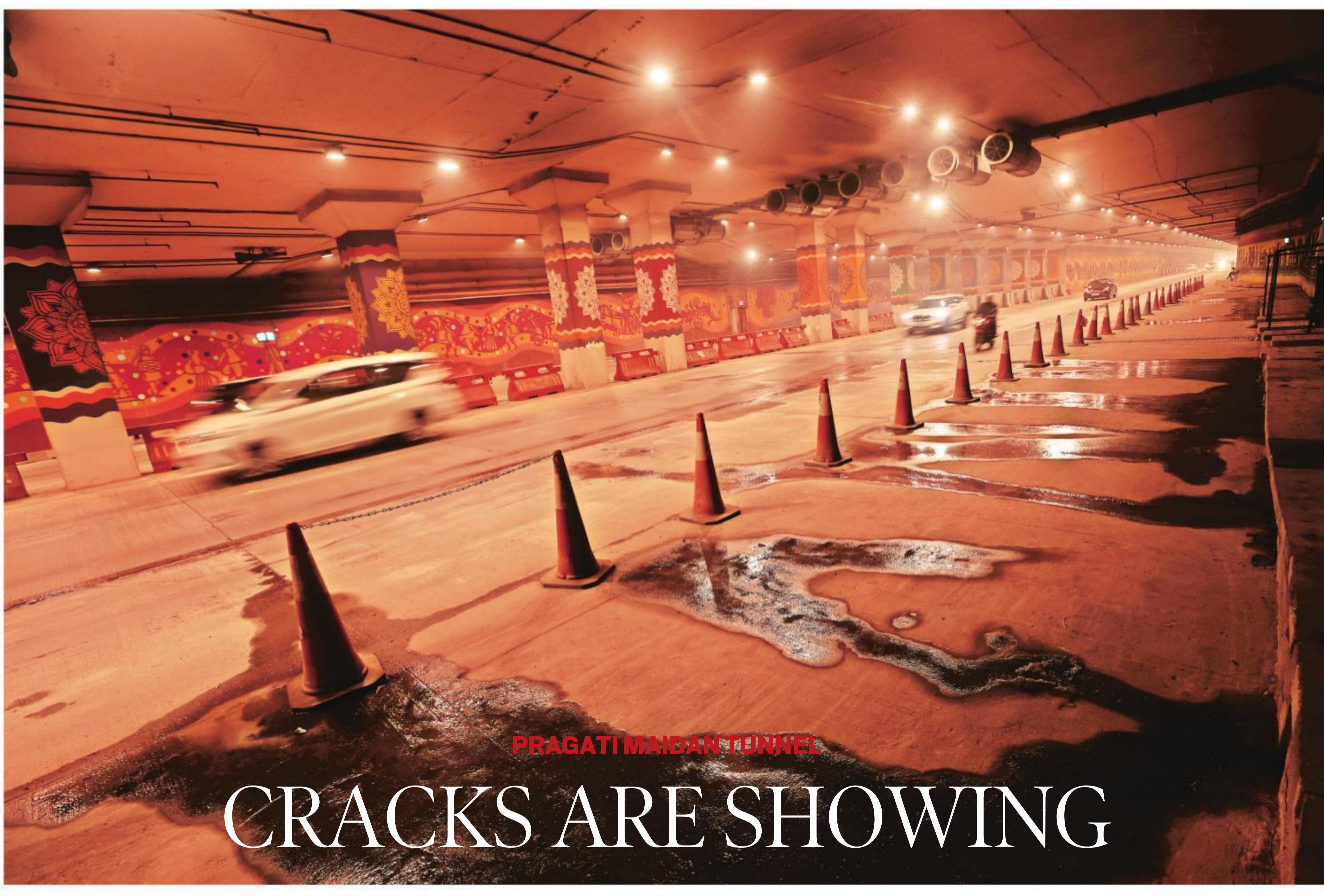
Vision IAS Classroom, Test centre & Enquiry office, metro gate no 2, above GTB Nagar Metro Station, Delhi – 110009

+91 8468022022, +91 9019066066

www.visionias.in

OUR CENTERS

AHMEDABAD | BHOPAL | CHANDIGARH | GUWAHATI | HYDERABAD | JAIPUR | JODHPUR | LUCKNOW | PRAYAGRAJ | PUNE | RANCHI | SIKKIM



CRACKS ARE SHOWING

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

IN JUNE 2022, to provide relief to commuters travelling from Noida, Ghaziabad and parts of Delhi, the 1.3-km-long Pragati Maidan tunnel and five underpasses on Mathura Road were thrown open with much fanfare. With colourful artwork adorning its walls, the tunnel, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was billed as an "engineering masterpiece".

Less than two years later the structure is riddled with cracks, waterlogging, and seepage. Terming it a "potential threat to the life of passengers", the Public Works Department (PWD) has issued multiple notices to Larsen and Toubro (L&T) — which executed the project — to deposit Rs 500 crore for "serious technical and design deficiencies".

Last week, *The Indian Express* walked through "Delhi's widest tunnel" from the Sarai Kale Khan-Ring Road section, leading towards India Gate — one of the main entrances. Here's what it found:

■ Within 40-50 metres, water could be seen leaking from the concrete blocks, side walls, kerbstones, surface, and ceiling.

■ Visible drainage blocks and waterlogging were witnessed at several locations.

■ The surface of the tunnel was broken at multiple points, with water stagnating inside cracks and potholes.

■ The walls with murals depicting seasons of the year, too, have been damaged — the bright orange, red, green, and yellow paintings have faded and turned dirt black due to dampness and seepage.

■ Constructed using the "box-pushing method" — an engineering technique that allows giant cement boxes to be pushed under the earth — the tunnel had various points where the box joints had developed massive breaks, causing water leakage.

■ Various cross-drain points and saucer drains were also found damaged, leading to further leakage, potholes, and cracks.

■ The entry point of the tunnel on Mathura Road, which starts near Bharat Mandapam gate no 6 and 7, was closed. Inside, large cracks could be seen on the roof through which water was dripping. A guard posted at the site said the entrance has been closed for weeks now and is under maintenance.

Repairs underway

Meanwhile, a group of workers were seen cleaning the artwork and covering the seepage with a fresh coat of paint. A contractor at the site said, "A month ago, when they (the department and construction firm) approached us for painting work, we asked them to repair the seepage and carry out grouting so that the paintings could stay. But they did not pay heed and asked us to just paint. So, we are doing what we have been paid for. This painting won't last long if the leakage does not stop."

A senior PWD official, when asked about the leakage, said, "Earlier, we thought it was due to a fault in the drainage system... but recently, it has been observed that water is also dripping from the roof. This is unusual..."

Emphasising that there is little chance

Less than two years after it was inaugurated, the much-touted Pragati Maidan tunnel is marred by seepage, cracks and waterlogging, with the PWD even declaring it a 'potential threat to passengers'. *The Indian Express* hits the ground to see how the project is faring



The tunnel is riddled with cracks, waterlogging and seepage. The walls, which had murals depicting seasons of the year, too, have been damaged. Photos: Gajendra Yadav



The safety and well-being of our citizens are of utmost priority, and any shortcomings in infrastructure maintenance are unacceptable... While the project is funded by the central government, the PWD and ministers concerned have been actively monitoring the situation."

— DELHI GOVT STATEMENT

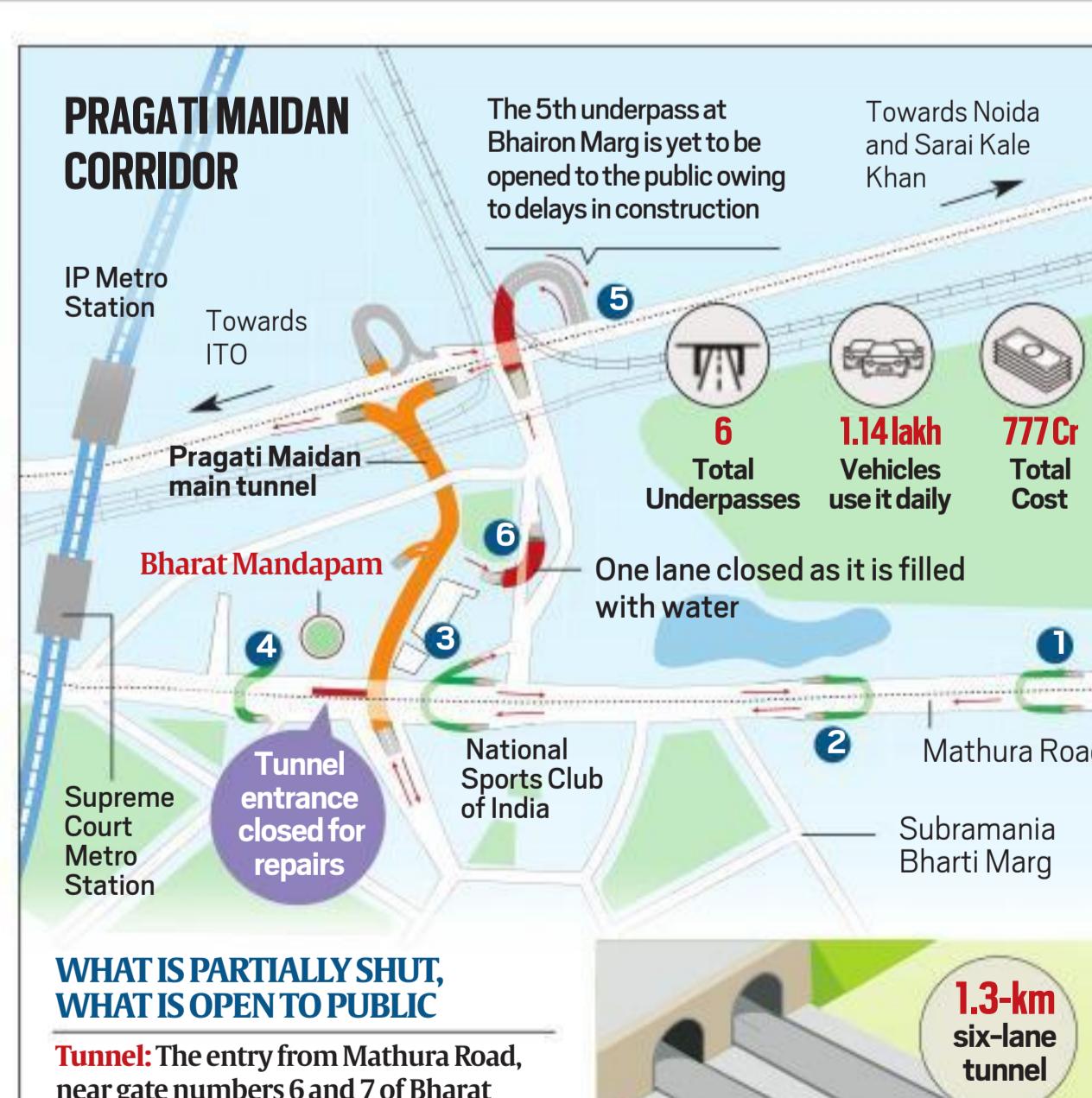
The civil division of the PWD and L&T are working to identify why this is happening... Cement and concrete waste have been found lying near drainage... it may not look like a garbage dump but cement can block water movement..."

Senior officials said it was recently found that the water dripping inside the tunnel, at several points, was not smelly, suggesting it could be drinking water. "...there must be a leakage somewhere of a water pipe passing through this stretch... the department and L&T are working on identifying the key issue and a solution on how to fix it..." said another official.

The frequent water leakage not only damaged roads and hindered traffic movement but also led to massive waterlogging last monsoon season, when the tunnel was inundated and closed for nearly a month.

Asked why the tunnel is still open to the public, despite the PWD deeming it unsafe, an official, on condition of anonymity, said, "For four-wheelers, the stretch is not that dangerous, but two-wheeler users should avoid using the tunnel. The concrete block is broken at several locations and is also wet... a slight mistake by a speeding two-wheeler could have dangerous consequences..."

Emphasising that there is little chance



WHAT IS PARTIALLY SHUT, WHAT IS OPEN TO PUBLIC

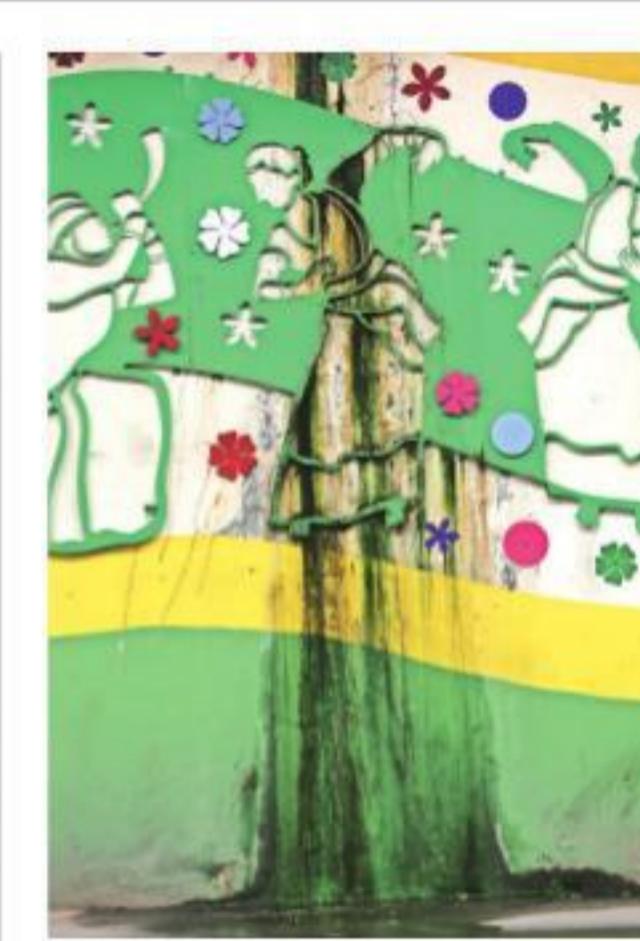
Tunnel: The entry from Mathura Road, near gate numbers 6 and 7 of Bharat Mandapam, is closed for repairs

Underpass 6: One lane on Bhairon Marg, near Bharat Mandapam gate number 4, is closed as it is filled with water

Underpass 5: On Ring Road, Bhairon Marg, is fully closed; construction work is still ongoing

Underpasses 1, 2, 3, 4 on Mathura Road: are open to the public

THERE ARE 6 UNDERPASSES: Four on Mathura Road, one on Ring Road and one at intersection of Ring Road and Bhairon Marg



of a collapse as the structure is made of "strong concrete blocks", the official said it "definitely needs repair and proper maintenance", which the department and contractors are working on.

On the drainage problem, the official said, "It is also arising because of the differences with the one at the Pragati Maidan Convention Centre... both were constructed by different agencies. If any problem is found in the synchronisation of the drainage system between the corridor and convention centre, it will be rectified."

The PWD also stated that because of the "unexplained seepage", the drain had to be "cut at several places to drain the water out."

On the ITO side, paintings and artwork made of steel have been cut and stolen, prompting authorities to hire more security guards.

The corridor provides connectivity to commutes travelling towards Sarai Kale Khan,

India Gate, Pragati Maidan, ITO, Akshardham, Noida, Ghaziabad, and South Delhi via Mathura Road. It also has a loop that connects with the basement parking of the Pragati Maidan ITPO, which is yet to be opened.

How do the underpasses fare?

The Indian Express also visited the six underpasses — four on Mathura Road, one on Ring Road and one at the intersection of Ring Road and Bhairon Marg — built as part of the Integrated Transit Corridor Redevelopment Plan of the Pragati Maidan area.

Of the four underpasses, three had minor cracks on the walls and the surface. However, the underpass that provides connectivity to the Supreme Court was found in poor condition, thanks to water leakage and cracks in the walls. This is the same underpass that got flooded within days of its inauguration.

Underpass 6, on Bhairon Marg near Pragati Maidan Gate number 4 and near the giant fountain, was also found in poor condition due to waterlogging — this lane has been closed.

Underpass number 5 on Bhairon Marg Ring Road is yet to be opened as construction work is delayed. Since it comes under a busy railway track, officials said work is carried out only after permission from the Railways — when trains are not plying.

In its notice to L&T, PWD noted that this underpass not only missed the deadline but also encountered "serious design issues and technical hurdles". "The tunnel below the railway track... was also to be completed on a stipulated date along with remaining parts of the project.. However, this remains to be completed even till date due to your inaction, faulty design and insufficient use of the equipment..." the PWD said in the notice.

When contacted, the Delhi government said it was deeply concerned about the reported condition of the Pragati Maidan tunnel corridor. "The safety and well-being of our citizens are of utmost priority, and any shortcomings in infrastructure maintenance are unacceptable," it said.

"While the project is funded by the central government, the PWD and ministers concerned have been actively monitoring the situation," it added.

The Delhi government said legal action will be initiated against "the contractor" if it does not deposit Rs 500 crore.

L&T, meanwhile, did not respond to requests for a comment. In response, an L&T spokesperson had said earlier: "PWD, Delhi, is an esteemed client and we value the long years of association we have enjoyed with them. However, L&T would like to state that a counterclaim of Rs 500 crore has been made by the company against PWD, Delhi."

According to a transport expert, the issue may lie in the construction or design. "Construction work may have gone wrong..."

The designs also need to be checked... The design and construction material need to be audited. There is also a need to identify the techniques used for construction," said PK Sarkar, former professor and head of transport planning at School of Planning and Architecture.

KEJRIWAL MEETS KHARGE, SENIOR CONG LEADERS

AAP-Cong alliance in Delhi remains on table

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

A LOK Sabha alliance between the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress in Delhi is likely, despite AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak announcing last week that the party was willing to part with only one seat in the Capital.

Leaders pointed to a meeting between senior leaders from both parties at Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi's house on Sunday. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and minister Atishi were seated at the same table as Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress general secretary Mukul Wasnik and Singhvi. Wasnik has been part of the two alliance-specific meetings between the two parties, alongside Atishi.

"During the meeting, leaders from both parties affirmed that an alliance for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Delhi is likely to be forged in the city. It was also discussed that a joint front is the way to put up a fight against BJP," a senior AAP leader said.

While the two parties have been hopeful of coming to a consensus on seat-sharing in Delhi, AAP leaders said the wait had been too long. Pathak, during a press conference, had expressed the AAP's frustration with the delay and said things have been stagnant after the last meeting which took place over a month ago. He



CM Arvind Kejriwal, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi and ex-Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda during a lunch hosted by Singhvi at his residence, in New Delhi, Sunday. PTI

also said based on merit and performance, Congress did not deserve a single seat in Delhi but AAP was willing to part with one.

On Sunday, Kejriwal met Kharge before going to Singhvi's house, sources said.

"Both AAP and Congress have clarified in the past that the situation in Punjab cannot be compared with that in Delhi. Unlike in Punjab, the leaders in Delhi are open to an alliance. The Delhi CM also reiterated this on Sunday. The signals from Congress have also been positive," a leader said.

In the past, the two parties have discussed a 4-3 sharing pact, with 4 seats going to AAP. While Pathak's statement was not taken too kindly by Congress, sources said senior party leaders spoke and sorted things out.

Things have also been tense

between the two parties after AAP announced names of three candidates in Assam, two candidates in Gujarat, and one in Goa. AAP leaders said the announcement was made as candidates need to start campaigning.

Added to this is the Congress's stand that it is only discussing seat-sharing with AAP in Delhi and not in other states for now.

During the lunch meeting, Kejriwal also took a dig at BJP and said the party would disintegrate if ED and Prevention of Money Laundering Act are taken out of the equation. In a video from the gathering, Kejriwal, seated with Kharge and Atishi, is heard saying, "If ED is shut down and PMLA is removed, perhaps half of all BJP leaders will leave. There is only one agency that is responsible for so many leaders going to BJP."

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

IN THE winter of 2022-23, Delhi saw cleaner-than-usual air quality while Mumbai's air was more polluted than is usual for the coastal city. A new research paper concludes that this "sudden flip-flop" of the pollution cycle is linked to large-scale wind patterns associated with the 'triple dip' La Niña.

This may have contributed to intrusion of stubble-burning smoke from Punjab and Haryana into parts of peninsular India and Mumbai in the winter of 2022-23, a phenomenon that's not usually seen, according to Gufran Beig, chair professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies and

founder of the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), who is the lead author of the paper.

While La Niña itself is a cyclical phase in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, involving cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures, the La Niña event that began in 2020 and extended into early 2023 lasted for about three years.

The paper, recently published in the journal 'Science of the Total Environment' by scientists from National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, points out that the impact of this "multi-year" La Niña may have been more potent on account of its duration, and its "unprecedented extended period is

linked to changing climate." What it may have done to the weather is alter wind pattern, which in turn was "mainly responsible for befuddling air quality."

As per the paper, changes in direction and speed of long-range transport level winds were observed in October and November 2022 compared to 2021. Winds blowing towards Delhi during this period are usually northwesterly; they dump pollutants generated by stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, in NCR and Indo-Gangetic Plain. In November 2022, these winds were northerly and "relatively faster," escaping most of the region in the NCR, including Delhi. Instead, they carried pollutants from stubble-burning towards the west-south part of India, including Mumbai,

where they were trapped along with locally produced pollutants by relatively calmer surface-level winds. PM 2.5 levels in Mumbai increased significantly during the period, the paper noted.

Surface level winds from November 2022 to January 2023 were also "relatively stronger" in the north and slower in the southwest parts of the country compared to 2021-22. This, along with absence of 'cold day' conditions over northwest India till early January may have prevented parts of the region from experiencing stagnation conditions that can prevent dispersion of pollutants. Air pollution in Delhi-NCR in winter is linked to low temperature and wind speed that keep pollutants trapped close to the surface.

In the La Niña phase, winds

over the equatorial Pacific Ocean are easterlies. Easterlies from the Pacific and northeasterlies from Bay of Bengal "appear to accelerate and enhance the northwesterly flow from north India and converge over the Indian peninsula (region)." Thus, it supports transport of pollutants from North India towards Peninsular India," the paper explained.

This resulted in a cleaner winter over some parts of north India. In Ghaziabad, PM 2.5 level for the October-January period of 2022-23 was 33% lower than the average for the previous three years. In Noida, it was 28% lower. Delhi saw a 10% fall in PM 2.5 levels in 2022-23 compared to the average of the previous three years, the paper noted. In contrast, Mumbai registered a 30% increase in PM 2.5.

MCD razes 4 properties belonging to accused in drug peddling cases

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

THE MUNICIPAL Corporation of Delhi demolished four properties belonging to those accused of peddling drugs on Saturday.

This comes after Delhi L-G VK Saxena had, at the state-level committee of the National Narcotics Coordination (NCORD) meeting in April last year, directed the agencies concerned to seal buildings that were allegedly being used to peddle drugs and begin the proceedings for demolishing them.

At the time, 25 properties

were sealed.

According to officials, of the four properties, two were located in East Delhi's Nand Nagri, one in North Delhi's Aman Vihar and one in Southwest Delhi's Jafarpur Kalan.

As per documents, the demolished properties belonged to Monu, Rahul, Vikram and Sunita. Officials said they were arrested in different cases of drug peddling between 2022 and 2023.

In Aman Vihar, a three-storey building on a 40-sq yard plot was partially demolished. The action taken report in the case says that the roofs and walls have been demolished and

made uninhabitable.

Two properties in Nand Nagri have been partially demolished and action is underway. In Jafarpur, the building has been completely demolished.

In June last year, officials from the office of the L-G had said that the move was aimed at sending across a "strict message against drug trafficking" in Delhi.

The 25 properties were sealed by the MCD on the recommendation of the Delhi Police, L-G House officials had said, adding that 24 of these were residential and were allegedly being used by drug peddlers.

(INPUTS FROM PTI)

Nestled in Sanjay Van, tale of 2 'centuries-old' shrines

UPASNIKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

AS ONE walks down deep into the rocky, undulating terrain of Sanjay Van in Mehrauli, a burst of colour catches the eye. Silver streamers flutter overhead while the walls painted in bright green and yellow stand out amid the stark surroundings: This is the Aashiq Allah dargah.

According to Zafar Hasan's *List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments*, the dargah (shrine) was built in 1317 for Shaikh Shihabuddin Aashiq Allah by Sultan Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah Khilji. According to Sadia Dehlvi's *The Sufi Courtyard*, the saint was a disciple of Shaikh Badruddin Ghaznavi, who, in turn, was one of the leading disciples of Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, whose shrine situated nearby is referred to as the Mehrauli dargah.

Narrating the legend of the Sufi saint in her book, Dehlvi states that once, during Urs festivities of his father, Shaikh Shihabuddin was informed that the langar (community feast) would not suffice for the large



Aashiq Allah dargah was built in 1317. Rameen Khan/City Tales

number of devotees that had gathered.

"Shaikh Shihabuddin ordered that the lid of the food cauldron be covered, and to begin feeding people in the name of Allah. The attendant did as he was told and the food sufficed for everyone," Dehlvi writes. This legend earned the Sufi saint the moniker of "Aashiq Allah," or one who loves Allah deeply.

According to the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities database, the dargah is famous for organ-

ising langars for pilgrims even today.

"Locally, the dargah is also called 'nazariya peer,' believed to have the power to remove the 'evil eye,' and is quite popular with both locals and pilgrims coming from afar," says Rameen Khan, who organises heritage walks around Delhi.

The dargah also houses a famous Sufi landmark where Baba Farid Ganj-Shakkar, one of the founders of the Chisti Sufi order, performed his Chilli-e-Makooos — a challenging



PIN CODE
110001

spiritual practice in which a person hangs upside down using a rope, often in a well, as per historian Rana Safvi.

While the Ashiq Allah dargah still survives, despite demolition fears in light of the razing of Alkhoondji Masjid in the neighbourhood, another dargah a few metres away was not as fortunate. This was the Haji Rozbih dargah — a bare structure with just a rough perimeter of stones around two graves. In January, it was demolished by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for allegedly encroaching on the Southern Ridge area.

In his book, Hasan mentions that Baba Haji Rozbih was revered as one of the oldest saints to have visited Delhi. It is said the Sufi saint took abode in a cave just below the walls of Qila Rai Pithora in the 12th Century. "Many embraced Islam by his advice, and astrologers... told the Raja that the coming of Baba Haji forbode the ad-

vent of the Muhammadan rule into Delhi," Hasan writes.

The second grave on the premises was believed to have been of a woman; both Hasan's book and Safvi's *Where Stones Speak — Historical Trails in Mehrauli, The First City of Delhi*, state the grave belonged to Prithviraj Chauhan's daughter Bela Sidhi. According to both historians, local legend states that the princess had converted to Islam under the tutelage of Haji Rozbih. However, in another part of the city, locals claim the princess died by Sati after her husband was killed in battle.

With the twin-grave structure now reduced to rubble, all eyes are now on the Aashiq Allah dargah. In February, a PIL was filed in the Delhi High Court seeking orders to the DDA to desist demolishing the Ashiq Allah dargah and the Baba Farid chillaqah, and other monuments in Mehrauli and Sanjay Van. The HC pointed out that the forest was considered the "lungs of the city" and all statutory authorities have to put in efforts to ensure "no illegal or unauthorised construction is carried out on this public land".

In first 3 months since its launch, 2,900 riders used Namo Bharat train daily

DHEERAJ MISHRA
GAZIABAD, FEBRUARY 18



Currently, five stations — Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, Gulzar, Duhai and Duhai Depot — are operational. Archive

that month alone. In November 2023, a total of 71,124 passengers traveled on the train. Similarly, in December 2023 and till January 23, 2024, a total of 72,335 passengers and 72,382 passengers used the RRTS. If the average of total journeys of these 95 days is calculated, then a total of 2,941 people travelled on the rapid train every day.

Meanwhile, the NCRTC, a joint venture company of the Government of India and state governments that is implementing the RRTS projects, has earned around Rs 83.98 lakh from ticket sales. According to official figures, income in October, November and December was Rs 27.05 lakh, Rs 23.77 lakh and Rs 20.03 lakh respectively. From January 1-23, the department earned Rs 13.12 lakh from tickets.

According to NCRTC's feasibility report, once the complete 82-km-long corridor from Delhi's Sarai Kale Khan to Modipuram in Meerut is operational, the daily passenger footfall is expected to be around 8 lakh. "The line up to Meerut South will become operational by March end... For last-mile connectivity, talks are on with UPSRTC," said the official on condition of anonymity.

Data shows that after the RRTS was opened to the public on October 21, a total of 63,582 passengers used the service in

Why winter of 2022-23 in Delhi was cleaner than usual, but Mumbai saw poor air quality

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

IN THE winter of 2022-23, Delhi saw cleaner-than-usual air quality while Mumbai's air was more polluted than is usual for the coastal city. A new research paper concludes that this "sudden flip-flop" of the pollution cycle is linked to large-scale wind patterns associated with the 'triple dip' La Niña.

This may have contributed to intrusion of stubble-burning smoke from Punjab and Haryana into parts of peninsular India and Mumbai in the winter of 2022-23, a phenomenon that's not usually seen, according to Gufran Beig, chair professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies and

founder of the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), who is the lead author of the paper.

While La Niña itself is a cyclical phase in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, involving cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures, the La Niña event that began in 2020 and extended into early 2023 lasted for about three years.

The paper, recently published in the journal 'Science of the Total Environment' by scientists from National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, points out that the impact of this "multi-year" La Niña may have been more potent on account of its duration, and its "unprecedented extended period is

linked to changing climate." What it may have done to the weather is alter wind pattern, which in turn was "mainly responsible for befuddling air quality."

As per the paper, changes in direction and speed of long-range transport level winds were observed in October and November 2022 compared to 2021. Winds blowing towards Delhi during this period are usually northwesterly; they dump pollutants generated by stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, in NCR and Indo-Gangetic Plain. In November 2022, these winds were northerly and "relatively faster," escaping most of the region in the NCR, including Delhi. Instead, they carried pollutants from stubble-burning towards the west-south part of India, including Mumbai,

where they were trapped along with locally produced pollutants by relatively calmer surface-level winds. PM 2.5 levels in Mumbai increased significantly during the period, the paper noted.

Surface level winds from November 2022 to January 2023 were also "relatively stronger" in the north and slower in the southwest parts of the country compared to 2021-22. This, along with absence of 'cold day' conditions over northwest India till early January may have prevented parts of the region from experiencing stagnation conditions that can prevent dispersion of pollutants. Air pollution in Delhi-NCR in winter is linked to low temperature and wind speed that keep pollutants trapped close to the surface.

In the La Niña phase, winds

over the equatorial Pacific Ocean are easterlies. Easterlies from the Pacific and northeasterlies from Bay of Bengal "appear to accelerate and enhance the northwesterly flow from north India and converge over the Indian peninsula (region)." Thus, it supports transport of pollutants from North India towards Peninsular India," the paper explained.

This resulted in a cleaner winter over some parts of north India. In Ghaziabad, PM 2.5 level for the October-January period of 2022-23 was 33% lower than the average for the previous three years. In Noida, it was 28% lower. Delhi saw a 10% fall in PM 2.5 levels in 2022-23 compared to the average of the previous three years, the paper noted. In contrast, Mumbai registered a 30% increase in PM 2.5.

In Memoriam



RAVISH TIWARI

Political Editor, Chief of Bureau, The Indian Express

1981 - 2022

Remembered by his family, friends and colleagues

at The Indian Express

MINERAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT DIRECTORATE OF GEOLOGY AND MINING,

MADHYA PRADESH

29-A KhanijBhawan, Arera Hills Bhopal

Phone and fax 0755-2551795



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



NEW NAME

POLITICIAN, SENIOR lawyer, and author — Congress's Abhishek Singhvi wears quite a few hats. Sunday, he was bestowed with yet another title. At a luncheon hosted by the Rajya Sabha MP at his official residence, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal called him *Sankatmochan* (reliever of troubles). Singhvi appeared for the AAP government in the Supreme Court in many cases, including the party's legal wrangling with the Centre over the control of Delhi's administrative services. At the lunch, Kejriwal and AAP's Delhi minister Atishi broke bread with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Mukul Wasnik, the convenor of the Congress panel responsible for seat-sharing talks with allies.

SELFIE CM

DURING TEA breaks at the BJP's National Council held over the weekend, MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav was mobbed by delegates trying to click selfies with him. The same was the case with Rajasthan CM Bhagwant Singh. In contrast, Shivraj Singh Chouhan was mostly seen alone and sometimes with a few delegates around him. Even Vasundhara Raje failed to match up to the attention the new Rajasthan CM got.

PARKING PLAN

WHILE THE buildings are still under construction, preparations have begun for government offices to move to the new Common Central Secretariat. Officers in Nirman Bhawan, including of the Housing and Urban Affairs and Health Ministries, have been asked to provide details of how they commute to work so that parking arrangements can be made in the new buildings. It is learnt that the officials have recently been asked to fill in a Google form with details of where they commute from, if they use a personal vehicles (four- or two-wheelers) or public transport, and what is the last-mile connectivity.

INVITE ACCEPTED

BSP chief Mayawati avoids attending social gatherings, including family events hosted by party leaders. She, however, made an exception for the party's lone MLA in UP, Uma Shankar Singh. Mayawati Sunday attended the wedding ceremony of Singh's son Prince Yukesh Singh at a five-star hotel in Lucknow and blessed the newly married couple. The BSP MLA's son got married to Kanika Singh, the daughter of BJP leader and minister in UP cabinet Dinesh Pratap Singh's brother Brijesh Singh.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

(Survey & Construction) E-Tender Notice

For and on behalf of the president of India, Dy. Chief Engineer/Const-II, North Western Railway, Udaipur invites e-tender under "Two packet system" from the agencies fulfilling the eligible criteria for the following work:-

1. Tender No. : NWR-SC-NDT-NDTT-NL-T-11

2. Name of the work with its location:

Construction of major and minor bridges, earthwork in cutting and filling, blanketing, construction of new station building, other service buildings, platforms, PF shelters, circulating area, staff quarters, Road Over Bridges, Road Under Bridges, supply of track ballast, laying and linking of new BG track including turnouts, SEJs, etc., transportation of P-way material and carrying out all other ancillary civil works and track works between Nathdwara (excluding) and Nathdwara Town (including) stations in connection with Nathdwara- Nathdwara Town New Line Project.

3. Approximate cost of work:

Rs. 1.31.09.35.607.58

4. Earnest money to be deposited :

Rs. 67.04.700.00

5. Last date for submission of E-tender :

12.03.2024

up to 15.00 hrs.

(6) Details and particulars of website where e-tender can be seen & filled up : www.irsps.gov.in

(7) Office e-mail address:

dycc2ud@gmail.com

214-DG/24

Please join us on

F/NWRailways

BSP, GGP snap ties in 2 states

New Delhi: The BSP has snapped ties with the Gondwana Gantra Party (GGP) in MP and Chhattisgarh.

Rajya Sabha MP and BSP's central coordinator Ramji Gautam said BSP will fight the coming Lok Sabha polls alone in all states. ENS

The resolution, passed in a conference held by party's minority cell attended by Pawar, said, "This gathering demands special protection of minorities and caste census. Based on the results of caste census, minorities should be given educational and job reservation in that proportion."

Addressing the convention at Vashi in Navi Mumbai, Pawar said he would ensure all resolutions passed in the conference are implemented. This is for the first time that an ally of BJP has openly advocated for reservation of minorities. It was the Congress-NCP government led by former Chief Minister

Prithviraj Chavan that had extended five per cent reservation to Muslims in education and jobs through an ordinance, along with 16 per cent for Marathas, in 2014.

The Bombay High court had not struck down Muslim reservation but the next BJP government led by then CM Devendra Fadnavis did not convert the ordinance into an Act. The issue is pending since then.

However, in a major goof-up, the resolution initially men-

tioned political reservation for minorities, which was later withdrawn by the party.

Pawar also said that the minorities should not fear till the time he is in power. "When there was an incident between two communities in Satara, I personally went there to bring everything under control. Till the time I am here, you need not fear. We all follow the law. I want to tell all of you that Maharashtra will continue to have rule of law and nobody will face any injustice. I promise you all," he said.

"There was an incident on Mira Road as well. I immediately intervened and asked the police commissioner to meet the delegation. I have always worked to maintain law and order... we

should celebrate the festivals of every community, every religion with happiness and warmth," he said. "We are governing the state by taking every community along with us... our NCP is a party of bahujans and minorities."

The Sharad Pawar-led group suffered a setback on Thursday after Speaker Narwekar held that the faction led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar was the real NCP. He also rejected the disqualification petitions filed by both the rival groups against each other's MLAs. The ruling came days after the Election Commission held the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the real NCP and allotted it the party name and symbol 'clock'.

"Our fight for name and symbol will continue in the Supreme Court. We will present before the SC how the Speaker... has misused his position," Pawar said.

No threat to coalition govt in Jharkhand, says CM Champai

New Delhi: The JMM-led alliance in Jharkhand is "strong" and there is no threat to the coalition government in the state, Chief Minister Champai Soren said Sunday, amid reports of resentment brewing among a section of Congress MLAs over the induction of four party MLAs as

ministers. Soren, who is in the national capital, made the remarks before meeting Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

Asked about disgruntled

Congress MLAs reaching Delhi, he told reporters, "This is an internal matter of the Congress, they will resolve it."

The two-day convention, which ended on Sunday, also saw the passage of three resolutions.

Some party leaders indicated that several leaders from different parties, including Congress, may join it in next few weeks as the BJP looks to achieve its target of winning 370 seats in the elections to 543-member Lok Sabha.

A party leader said MP Nakul Nath, the son of senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, may join the BJP.

He also named some other Congress leaders, including former Union ministers and current MPs,

who may switch over in the run up to the elections. The focus will be on strong leaders in places where the BJP

may not be very strong, he added.

A meeting of chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of BJP was held

after the convention and they discussed the party's strategy to win 370 seats in the Lok Sabha polls. PM Modi and

Nadda also attended the meeting.

Later in a post on X, Modi said,

"Had an extensive meeting with chief ministers and deputy chief

ministers of states where the BJP is

serving in government. Discussed

ways to further strengthen the

growth trajectory of the states so

that we can leverage double engine

of growth to build a 'Viksit Bharat.'

He claimed that while back-

wards, Dalits and tribals com-

dinated in Lok Sabha, the caste compositions – he said his entire focus was on that," Verma told reporters in Delhi.

Verma also said that Nath did not "have any such thoughts" nor discussions, referring to the speculation.

Former chief minister and Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, also expressed confidence that Nath would remain in the party.

"The pressure of ED, I-T and CBI, which is on everybody, is also on him. But Kamal Nath's character is not that of someone who gives into pressure," Singh said.

Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari said he had also spoken to Nath. "He told me... I was, am and will be a Congressman... he has lived his life firmly with the ideals of the Congress, and will continue to live with the ideals of the Congress till his last breath," Patwari said.

However, even amid the dis-

play of confidence, Congress leaders have been contacting Nath loyalists, employing a wide

range of tactics to convince them to stay. A delegation of Congress leaders has been dispatched from Bhopal to Chhindwara to make contact with Nath's loyalists.

A senior leader who is part of the negotiations said, "We have managed to convince at least one or two of Nath's loyalists to not leave the party. We have told loyalists close to Nath that they are not ready to fight by-elections and don't have the numbers to escape the anti-defection law.

Some of the leaders now have doubts in their minds about their future course of action."

Another Congress leader said, "There are many tactics that we are employing. We have also promised these leaders (Nath's loyalists) better positions in the party. We promised one MLA

that we would make him the official Lok Sabha candidate from Chhindwara. We are trying our best to ensure the worst case scenario doesn't play out."

Shah: Lok Sabha polls a battle between democracy, dynasts

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah Sunday launched a scathing attack on the Congress and the INDIA bloc, calling the coming Lok Sabha elections a battle of democracy and development versus dynastic parties.

Presenting the second resolution of the two-day BJP national council, Shah said, "How can those who could not bring democracy in their party nurture democracy in the country? The battle is between democratic, developmental alliance and dynastic alliance," Shah said.

He said all the INDIA bloc leaders had just one aim — making their sons and daughters PM or CM. "Can they, who have this aim, work for the poor or the country? These are 2G or 3G parties, meaning second- or third-generation parties. In these parties, the talented and the hardworking can never progress. Had the BJP been dynastic like them, someone who sold tea would never have become PM," Shah said.

"Modi is from a very poor family; President Droupadi Murmu comes from a poor adivasi family. The Vice-President comes from a farmer family. We have made our

party democratic. The dynastic parties can never ensure the welfare of the nation; only the BJP under Modi can," he said.

Fashioning the upcoming Lok Sabha election as a battle between the Kauravas and Pandavas, Shah said the country has to choose between the "dynastic INDIA bloc" and an NDA committed to the nation. He said the country has to choose between "corrupt, appeasement-loving INDIA bloc" and the NDA.

The Congress is the *janak* (father) of corruption and nurtured it," Shah said, reeling out names of the scams the Congress was accused of in the UPA days and earlier. "From land, sea or space, the Congress did corruption every-



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses the BJP national convention in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

PM MODI TO VISIT LUCKNOW TODAY

Lucknow: PM Narendra Modi will visit UP Monday and launch 14,000 projects worth over Rs 10-lakh crore at the fourth ground breaking ceremony for proposals received during the UP Global Investors Summit. He will also lay the foundation stone of the Shri Kalki Dham Temple in Sambhal. ENS

tions simultaneously.

Shah said the need of the hour was to take forward the message that once Modi comes to power for a third time, India would become the third largest economy. Modi also ensured national security and then made India *Vishwa Mitr* (world's friend), he said.

Shah said, "Panth nirpekhshta is part of our tradition; the state has no religion. But Congress manipulated even the Constitution to bring appeasement into politics. They even opposed the rights of Muslim women. They also proposed the UCC..." Shah said, adding that under Modi 3.0, the country would be free from terrorism and Nazism.

He said earlier there was a false binary between a government of farmers and a government of industry, and that Modi had proved that the government can work for all classes and sec-

tions simultaneously.

Shah said the need of the hour was to take forward the message that once Modi comes to power for a third time, India would become the third largest economy. Modi also ensured national security and then made India *Vishwa Mitr* (world's friend), he said.

Shah said, "Panth nirpekhshta is part of our tradition; the state has no religion. But Congress manipulated even the Constitution to bring appeasement into politics. They even opposed the rights of Muslim women. They also proposed the UCC..." Shah said, adding that under Modi 3.0, the country would be free from terrorism and Nazism.

He said earlier there was a false binary between a government of farmers and a government of industry, and that Modi had proved that the government can work for all classes and sec-

tions simultaneously.

Shah said the need of the hour was to take forward the message that once Modi comes to power for a third time, India would become the third largest economy. Modi also ensured national security and then made India *Vishwa Mitr* (world's friend), he said.

Shah said, "Panth nirpekhshta is part of our tradition; the state has no religion. But Congress manipulated even the Constitution to bring appeasement into politics. They even opposed the rights of Muslim women. They also proposed the UCC..." Shah said, adding that under Modi 3.0, the country would be free from terrorism and Nazism.

He said earlier there was a false binary between a government of farmers and a government of industry, and that Modi had proved that the government can work for all classes and sec-

tions simultaneously.

Shah said the need of the hour was to take forward the message that once Modi comes to power for a third time, India would become the third largest economy. Modi also ensured national security and then made India *Vishwa Mitr* (world's friend), he said.

Shah said, "Panth nirpekhshta is part of our tradition; the state has no religion. But Congress manipulated even the Constitution to bring appeasement into politics. They even opposed the rights of Muslim women. They also proposed the UCC..." Shah said, adding that under Modi 3.0, the country would be free from terrorism and Nazism.

He said earlier there was a false binary between a government of farmers and a government of industry, and that Modi had proved that the government can work for all classes and sec-

tions simultaneously.

Shah said the need of the hour was to take forward the message that once Modi comes to power for a third time, India would become the third largest economy. Modi also ensured national security and then made India *Vishwa Mitr* (world's friend), he said.

Shah said, "Panth nirpekhshta is part of our tradition; the state has no religion. But Congress manipulated even the Constitution to bring appeasement into politics. They even opposed the rights of Muslim women. They also proposed the UCC..." Shah said, adding that under Modi 3.0, the country would be free from terrorism and Nazism.

He said earlier there was a false binary between a government of farmers and a government of industry, and that Modi had proved that the government can work for all classes and sec-

tions simultaneously.

Kamal Nath keeps cards close to chest, Cong works phones to keep flock intact

ANAND MOHAN J & MANOJ CG

BHOPAL, NEW DELHI, FEB 18



Kamal Nath had landed in Delhi on Saturday

3 Assam miners kidnapped from Arunachal: Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE & PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TINSUKIA (ASSAM), FEB 18

AT LEAST three miners from Assam have allegedly been kidnapped by suspected militants in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, a senior police officer said Sunday.

A team comprising police of both states and the Assam Rifles launched a rescue operation to trace the miners, a spokesperson of the paramilitary force told PTI.

Tinsukia Superintendent of Police Abhijit Gaurav said three persons from the district, working in a coal mine in the neighbouring state, were among those suspected to be kidnapped.

"They have been identified as Gyan Thapa, Lekhan Bora, and Chandan Narzari. The exact number of people abducted is not known yet," he said.

The ASP of Tinsukia, Bibhash Das, is monitoring the case to ensure their safe return. According to reports, workers at a coal mine in Febru Basti area of Changlang district were abducted by suspected ULFA(I) and NSCN militants.

The Tinsukia district has been a hotbed of ULFA militants, while the NSCN has been active in the Changlang district.

CBI press officer Gaur hangs boots after 26 years

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

RK GAUR, who was working as Press Information Officer with the Central Bureau of Investigation's information wing, has hung his boots after 26 years of service at the agency.

Gaur had joined as a sub-inspector on deputation from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in 1997. He had retired in 2020 but was asked to stay as a consultant.

Gaur maintained a delicate balance to ensure that queries of journalists were answered honestly, and at the same time, the agency's version also reached the public accurately.

Recipient of the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service, Gaur kept up with changing technology and incorporated them to reach out to the media in the age of 24X7 news.

Tribal body urges govt employees in Churachandpur not to go to offices

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, IMPHAL, FEBRUARY 18

THE INDIGENOUS Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) – an influential organisation of the Kuki-Zo community – urged all state government employees in Manipur's Churachandpur district to not go to their offices from Monday onwards.

The strike is part of an agitation demanding the withdrawal of suspension of a Kuki head constable, who was seen in a video with armed men from his community at what appeared to be a "frontline" firing position in the hills. The ITLF has also demanded that the Churachandpur's

'It's time the Indian economy realised its full potential of 10 per cent growth'

Dr ARVIND PANAGARIYA, the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, speaks to **HARIKISHAN SHARMA** on the economy and the reform agenda he would like to see implemented by the new government. Excerpts:



**THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW**
WITH
**ARVIND
PANAGARIYA**
CHARMAN, 16TH FINANCE
COMMISSION

years?

We certainly need to do our own liberalisation. Many of the tariffs are still, by the global standards, high... That's number one. Particularly, we need to pay attention to tariffs that impede the building up of the supply chains. There's always this temptation

that you protect everything and therefore, hope that every component and all value added will be produced within the country. But then (in) these days of specialisation, I think it's unrealistic expectation, so we should really think in those terms, but more importantly, we really must build the free-trade agreements that we've been negotiating... The one with the UK... That needs to be completed so that we can move on to European Union, which is important.

Labour laws, the four labour codes, they really have to be implemented. Then, there is a whole commitment of the government on privatisation, both the PSUs and the banks, and I now think even some of our forward-looking states should begin to look into this subject to privatisation. There are some states also which have public sector enterprises, which could actually, more or less follow the kind of policy that central government has put in place. There was a commitment of privatisation of banks. And I think, after the elections, that process should also begin... We can con-

tinue to make India a friendlier place to do business. I think this is something that continues to be a pain point for investors that both domestic as well as foreign and one particular thing that you hear a lot about is this whole, unexpected tax assessments, tax notices... We have to continue moving in that direction because now we are entering into an era where we will be emerging as truly an economic powerhouse. The economy's basic size, now about \$3.6–\$3.7 trillion, is solid base. It's a substantial size of the economy already and when that sized economy can grow, I mean, the difference between 7% growth and 10% growth of this size economy is huge... I think, we ought to really now target a 10% growth, (as) 7% we have shown for almost 20 years now. It's time we realised our full potential of 10%.

One of the big issues which states raise today is that cess and surcharges reduce their divisible pool. How do you look at the issue?

It is obviously an issue for the devolution because cess and sur-

charges are out of the divisible pool. So, there's clearly an issue which the Finance Commission will need to grapple with as it goes, but also in some ways, you can say that from the viewpoint of the design of tax systems, generally you know, public finance experts lean against cess and surcharges particularly when they are imposed, they are to be temporary for specific purposes. Once the purpose is done, they should be withdrawn. That is how economists see it.

The 14th Finance Commission raised the devolution 41% (1% for J&K). Given that the Centre has to spend so much money on key national schemes, do you think that was a wise decision at that time?

These are the issues with which the Finance Commission will have to grapple with and we will be having discussions... Until we make some progress on these issues, it's not appropriate for me to comment on anything.

FULL INTERVIEW ON
www.indianexpress.com

Maoists axe police officer to death in Chhattisgarh

JAYPRakash S NAIDU
RAIPUR, FEBRUARY 18

THE COMMANDER of a Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) company was axed to death Sunday by Maoists when he was out to buy vegetables near a police camp in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district.

The killing took place barely 200 metres from the camp in Jagir at around 9.30 am. Tijau Ram Bharya, 52, an inspector-rank officer who served as the commander of a company in the fourth battalion of the CAF, was accompanied by two armed security personnel during that time. They were purchasing supplies for the force in the camp, which was set up in 2021.

A police official said: "We suspect there were seven to eight Maoists, two of whom executed the attack. The incident was seen by the public and efforts are on

to find eyewitnesses."

The two security personnel, meanwhile, escaped and alerted the camp. By the time additional forces arrived, the Maoists had succumbed to multiple chest injuries.

An official from Bijapur said: "Bharya was an experienced officer who has been part of anti-Maoist operations in different parts of Bastar. He had 20 years of service experience. The Maoists were militia members – that is, they stay in the village and collect information on police movements."

Bharya was a resident of Bhanupratappur in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district. He is survived by his wife and two children. Police said Maoists usually carry out a recce of police movement before executing a surprise attack such as this. A team of CAF and District Reserve Guard (DRG) is now conducting search operations.

Tension over Shivaji statue in Goa village, police teams deployed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANAJI, FEBRUARY 18

Subhash Phal Dessai went to the spot and took stock of the situation.

Dessai said, "According to me, no one should have any problem when the statue has been installed on a private plot of land. Those installing the statue have applied in the panchayat for requisite permission and given representation for installation and also informed the deputy collector's office. Despite that, some villagers or I don't know where they came from... I came to know there are some political instigations to people to come and create nuisance."

"If they have any issue, they should go to the court, instead of creating a law and order situation. There is no change of purpose of land here. If I want to place a statue of my God or a leader [on a private property], no one can tell me that I cannot do so," said Dessai.



US DESTROYER ARRIVES

USS Halsey (DDG-97), an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer of the US Navy, arrives to take part in MILAN 24 hosted by Indian Navy at Visakhapatnam on Sunday. ANI

Will not link state schemes with Aadhaar, says Bengal CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 18

ACCUSING THE BJP government at the Centre of "intentionally cancelling" people's Aadhaar registrations "to deprive them of social schemes' benefits", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday said her government would not allow any state schemes to be linked with Aadhaar and people could avail benefits even if they do not have Aadhaar cards.

Speaking at a public distribution programme in Birbhum, the chief minister said: "I am telling the people of Bengal, don't be afraid. I am here. I will not allow any scheme in Bengal to be linked with Aadhaar card."

"First the Centre insists on this (Aadhaar) card. Then suddenly it cancelled many cards without informing anyone. I know some cards were can-

celled in Bardhaman, some people's cards were cancelled in Birbhum, and some in both 24 Parganas. This is the conspiracy of the Centre... so that you won't get the advantage of social schemes," the Trinamool Congress chief said.

"Whether Aadhaar is there or not, no project or facility of the state government will be stopped... From now on, I will not allow Aadhaar to be linked to any welfare scheme of the state," she added.

The CM also said that she had Chief Secretary BP Gopalika to start a portal on which people can file complaints regarding Aadhaar cancellation.

"After getting the complaints, we will take proper measures," she added.

She said that if banks don't allow transactions for customers without Aadhaar cards, cooperative banks can be an alternative. "If the banks think they will not

work without the Aadhaar cards, then they will work without them... we have so many cooperative banks and other financial organisations," Banerjee said.

Referring to the ongoing agitation of the farmers in Haryana and Punjab demanding the government's guarantee on minimum support price (MSP), Banerjee said that cultivators in Bengal do not face any problems.

"I salute the farmers' protest. I condemn the attacks on them. In Bengal, farmers are our 'annadatas' who provide us with food. But look at the way they are being treated by them (BJP). Look at how Punjab, Delhi, and Haryana are burning. I sympathise with our farmers," she said.

The TMC chief also alleged that the BJP is conspiring to implement NRC as well as CAA. "Be alert! they are also playing a game in the name of implementing the Uniform Civil Code," she said.

The TMC chief also alleged that the BJP is conspiring to implement NRC as well as CAA. "Be alert! they are also playing a game in the name of implementing the Uniform Civil Code," she said.

12 BHU students booked for vandalising V-C house after car mows down man

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 18

TWELVE STUDENTS of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) have been booked after some students allegedly pelted stones and vandalised a section of vice-chancellor's residence on the campus on Saturday evening.

The violence took place after a labourer got killed by an SUV on the campus.

BHU Chief Proctor Professor SP Singh said after the car crash on Saturday, "rumours were spread on social media that the deceased was a science student of BHU. Some students and outsiders gathered at the varsity and began protesting and blocked several gates of the varsity. During the protest, some people indulged in vandalism at chief

proctor's office and V-C residence. Some officials of the varsity and policemen were injured. After a couple of hours, the situation was brought under control by policemen. More than 200 people were involved in the vandalism. The V-C's car and some police cars were also damaged. The protests started around 9 pm and lasted for three hours."

The students have been booked for rioting and other charges under the IPC along with the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984. The FIR was lodged at the Laka Police Station on a complaint by Rakesh Kumar Gupta, the assistant secretary officer of BHU. SHO Shivakant Mishra said, "Before the accident, the car had a Jamaiwadi party flag. After the accident, it has a BJP flag. We have identified the people... and are taking further action."

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Chandigarh mayor resigns, 3 AAP councillors join BJP

will now give the BJP an edge over the AAP-Congress coalition in the fresh mayoral election to be held after Sonkar's resignation.

AAP councillors Neha Musawat, Poonam Devi and Gurcharan Kala joined the BJP in Delhi in the presence of senior party leaders. "I am the most educated and the AAP had promised to make me the mayoral candidate. I was surprised when Kuldeep Kumar was declared the (AAP-Congress) candidate. I am impressed by what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done for the poor and Dalits," Musawat told reporters in Delhi.

Sonkar had won against Kumar in the January 30 election after presiding officer Anil Masih declared eight votes as invalid. Kumar approached the Supreme Court, which on February 5 took a serious note of the presiding officer's conduct during the election, and asked him to appear in court on the next date of hearing on Monday.

Reacting to the party councilors switching sides, AAP Chandigarh in-charge Sunny Ahluwalia alleged that the three were threatened to join the BJP. "The entire country knows what happened on January 30 and that 20 votes were polled in the favour of our candidate. Now, they have threatened our councilors and made them join. Everyone knows what is happening and how they have threatened them," he said.

With the three joining the party, the BJP's councillors' strength goes up to 17 from 14. Along with this, they have the vote of BJP MP Kirron Kher and the lone SAD councillor's vote taking the number of votes to 19.

The AAP-Congress strength in the 36-member general house has been reduced to 17 – with 10 AAP members and 7 from the Congress. Confirming the resignation of Sonkar, which will now bring fresh mayoral polls, Chandigarh BJP chief Jatinender Malhotra told *The Indian Express*:

"The mayor resigned on moral grounds. AAP and Congress were vitiating the atmosphere by levelling baseless allegations of tampering with the votes. Now when fresh polls will be held, people will get to know who takes the majority."

Sources said a meeting of senior office-bearers of the BJP took place in Delhi with the party high command, following which the top leadership asked Sonkar to resign immediately.

There were apprehensions among a section of BJP leaders of the possibility of the Supreme Court passing adverse remarks on Monday, therefore it was felt that Sonkar should resign, sources said.

A few days ago, the Chandigarh BJP had dropped Masih, the presiding officer, who has been under fire for allegedly defacing ballot papers, from its minority cell. The Congress and AAP have been seeking the removal of Sonkar, alleging foul play in the mayoral election. It alleged that Sonkar had won after Masih

Says Muslims were feeling 'ignored'; asks how was SP different from BJP

Saleem Shervani quit party post Sunday

going to polls from the state for the Upper House, nominated former IAS officer Alok Ranjan, actor-turned-politician Jaya Bachchan – both Kayasts – and Dalit leader Ramji Lal Suman as its candidates.

Meanwhile, in his resignation, Shervani pointed out that the Muslims were feeling "ignored" as SP's nominations did not have a member from the community and questioned how the party was different from the BJP. "In the recent past, I have held discussions with you on the condition of the Muslim community had tried to convey to you that they are feeling ig-

nored, and losing their trust in the SP... The feeling among them is that there is no secular front to take up their issues. I had requested you for a Rajya Sabha seat for the community (even when you did not consider my name). Your nominations make it clear that you do not accord importance to PDA, giving rise to the question of how you are different from the BJP?" he said in the letter addressed to Akhilesh.

A five-time MP from Badaun, Shervani had joined the SP in October 2020. He had been elected as a Lok Sabha member four times as the SP's nominee and once as a Congress candidate. He first joined the SP from the Congress in the 1990s and in 2009, returned to the grand old party after being overlooked by the SP in favour of Akhilesh's cousin Dharmendra Yadav, to whom he lost. Shervani said the attempts to



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A VARIABLE GEOMETRY

Framing India as 'non-West', not 'anti-West', government shows self-assurance, leaving room for closer ties with US, Europe

PARTICIPATING IN A panel discussion at the annual Munich Security Conference over the weekend, along with the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, and the German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, the External Affairs Minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has offered a new template to think through India's relationship with the West and how it is different from other members of the BRICS forum that India founded with China and Russia. He was responding to a question about India's apparent freedom to choose between multiple partners, including the US, Europe and Russia and the implicit assumption that the BRICS forum dominated by Beijing and Moscow was "anti-Western". Affirming the distinction "between being non-West and anti-West", Jaishankar said he would "characterise India as a country which is non-West but which has an extremely strong relation with the Western countries, getting better by the days". He added that that definition might not apply to other members of the BRICS.

While Russia and China might want to mobilise the BRICS against the West, Jaishankar said India had no interest in such an agenda. At the same time, he insisted that Delhi sees value in the BRICS as a non-Western forum that has had considerable value in reshaping global governance in the 21st century. Although many in the West are dismayed by Delhi's close ties to Russia and BRICS, Secretary Blinken had no reason to quarrel with Jaishankar's formulation. He endorsed Jaishankar's case for "flexibility" in international relations and underlined the importance of "variable geometry" in the current global context. Rejecting the division of the world into "rigid blocs", Blinken said the US "may have different collections and coalitions of countries that bring certain experiences and capacities" in dealing with different challenges. Blinken added that the relationship between the US and India is now "the strongest it's ever been", and it "makes no difference that India happens to be a leading member of BRICS". He also highlighted the wide-ranging international collaboration between Delhi and Washington, including in the Quadrilateral Security Forum, along with Canberra and Tokyo.

This new comfort level at the highest political level in Delhi and Washington with the apparent geopolitical contradictions does not always filter down to Delhi's foreign policy discourse that has long defined India's international relations in anti-Western terms. The anti-imperial left and the nativist right in India, as well as the centrist Congress party and the national security establishment, have long operated on the assumption that the contradictions between India and the US are irreconcilable. The Narendra Modi government has transcended this paradigm by engaging the US with greater self-assurance and building a strategic partnership with Washington that is deeper and broader than ever before. The decline of the left in India and the weakening of the Congress removed much of the traditional resistance to India's productive engagement with the US and Europe. However, there is residual anti-western sentiment among the rising conservative nationalists. In framing India as "non-West" but not "anti-West", the Modi government consolidates the support of the Hindu right for its foreign policy while leaving much room open for closer ties with the US and Europe.

BENGAL DEJA VU

Violence in Sandeshkhali, West Bengal government's response, show Mamata Banerjee's party has not heeded lessons of past

FOR CHIEF MINISTER Mamata Banerjee, the situation in Sandeshkhali may well evoke a sense of déjà vu. It also has a lesson she needs to heed. In 2006-7, the CPM government in West Bengal was as domineering, if not more, as the Trinamool Congress government is today. The protests, then, Banerjee leading from the front, against land acquisition for the Tata Motors factory in Singur and the SEZ in Nandigram – and the excesses of the party and state response to it – had marked the beginning of the end for 'bam', the Left, in Bengal. In her third term as CM, Bam has been replaced by the Syndicate, a government-TMC-business nexus, and the same politics of violence and whataboutery continues to undermine the rule of law in the state.

Protests broke out in Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district earlier this month with villagers demanding the arrest of TMC strongman Shahjahan Sheikh, zila parishad member Trivprasad Hazra and Uttam Sardar, TMC region president of Sandeshkhali panchayat – Hazra was arrested on Saturday. The protesters, many of them women, have accused the three men of land grabbing and sexual assault. Violence ensued with clashes between those allegedly backed by the TMC and BJP. Sheikh is already absconding from the Enforcement Directorate: A group of his loyalists had attacked the ED team last month when it came to search his home. The government's initial reaction was disturbing. The ruling party insisted that the protesters had been "brainwashed" by the CPM and BJP and the government issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC, subsequently overturned by the Calcutta High Court, which has also taken cognisance of the sexual assault allegations. Unfortunately, the BJP has tried to communalise the issue, while the CPM is holding protests of its own.

With the state police forming a "special team" to look into the allegations, it remains to be seen whether further arrests are made and how the law takes its course. But the government's larger response has touched off apprehensions of a politicisation of the case. CM Banerjee has accused the BJP-RSS of "fomenting trouble" and riots in the area – her allegations ignore the structural issue of which Sandeshkhali seems but a symptom. The government and police must have a monopoly on violence – in Bengal, vital ground has been ceded to the Syndicate. Figures like Shahjahan Sheikh are seemingly beyond the law because they are the lynchpins, at the local level, of this warped system. The first step for the government must be to act – and be seen to act – against those within its own ranks who are undermining the rule of law.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY

FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI

FARMERS, largely from Punjab, are protesting on Delhi's borders. The government must deal with them rationally – study their demands and sit down with them to resolve the problem at the earliest.

The farmers' demands include making minimum support prices (MSPs) legally binding and fixing MSPs according to the so-called Swaminathan formula – it suggested 50 per cent profit over comprehensive cost, often referred to as Cost C2. This cost concept includes not only all the paid-out costs of farmers and imputed value of family labour (Cost A2+FL), but also imputed rent on owned land and imputed interest on owned capital. The difference between Cost A2+FL and Cost C2 is roughly 25 to 30 per cent for most crops. The current MSP formula that the Modi government has accepted is minimum 50 per cent margin over Cost A2+FL. So, if this is replaced by Cost C2 plus 50 per cent margin, in most crops covered under MSP regime, the MSPs will go up by 25 to 30 per cent.

The farmers have some other demands including loan waivers, pension for farmers and agricultural labourers, a minimum wage rate of Rs 700/day and allowing MGNREGA workers to work on farmers' fields. Accepting them could have significant economic implications, including putting severe pressure on the fisc and raising food inflation. So, any decision on the farmers' demands needs cool headed thinking, keeping emotions and politics out of the negotiations. It is election time and everyone tries to put pressure to get the best possible deal for their economic well-being.

One thing that must be understood by policy makers negotiating with farmers is that the real issue behind these economic demands is that farmers basically want significantly higher incomes. There is nothing wrong in that – almost everyone wants a higher income with least uncertainty. The question is whether the government has the

Farmers' protests highlight fundamental problem: Agri-food policies favour consumers at producers' cost

wherewithal to pay without wrecking the economy. It is difficult to put a figure on the fiscal cost of this package. It will depend upon how many of the 23 commodities the government will have to buy at enhanced MSP, the level of market prices and the amount of loan waiver and pensions. It is, however, clear that the budget for this package will be large, and it could throw a big spanner in the Centre's fisc calculations.

So, what would be the best way to increase farmers' incomes? Before I respond to this basic question, a few things must be noted. The 23 crops under the current MSP regime constitute only 28 per cent of the value of agriculture and allied produce. If the government agrees to raise the MSP of these 23 crops based on Cost C2 plus 50 per cent margin, and make it legally binding on all buyers, why should this formula not be applicable to other agri-products?

It would be interesting to note that the biggest agricultural produce of India is milk, and its value exceeds the value of paddy, wheat, all pulses, and sugarcane combined. Why should milk producers, or for that matter any livestock producer, or even any horticulture producer not get the same treatment as the 23 MSP crops of today? So, the demand for higher MSP will not be confined to 23 crops. Livestock and horticulture together constitute more than 50 per cent of agri-produce, and they have been growing without any MSP. In fact, their growth is much higher (5 to 8 per cent) than the growth in cereals (1.8 per cent) over the last two decades. There is a lesson here. The future of Indian agriculture's potential and farmers' incomes lies more in livestock, fisheries, and horticulture. And, these commodities need a well-integrated value chain approach like the Amul model in milk or the vertically integrated poultry sector, which is actually growing at the fastest pace. The market risk is taken by the integrators.

In the 23 crops under the MSP regime, the

best way to augment farmers' incomes is to raise their productivity in a sustainable manner and enable them to access the best markets not only in India but across the world. While augmenting productivity requires a lot of investments in agri-R&D and irrigation – this takes time – the issue of access to best markets can be achieved in a relatively shorter time.

The first and foremost policy action that is needed is to remove all bans on agri-exports, stocking limits on private trade, and stop unloading wheat and rice in the open market below the economic cost of the Food Corporation of India (FCI). These are all anti-farmer policies designed to favour consumers. The fundamental problem of today's agri-food policies is that they are highly tilted towards consumers at the cost of farmers. This mindset needs to change, especially when the government claims that just 11 per cent of the population live under poverty.

Take the Central budget. Out of roughly Rs 47 trillion, subsidies in the agri-food space account for about Rs 5 trillion, of which 80 per cent is geared towards consumers to keep food prices low. The food subsidy of Rs 2.12 trillion and even the fertiliser subsidy of Rs 1.88 trillion (RE of FY24) is a pass on to consumers as it keeps the costs and thus MSP prices low. This entire gamut of subsidy policies needs a re-visit and reorientation where 75 per cent could be geared towards producers in the form of a price stabilisation fund or policies like PM-Kisan, and only 25 per cent goes to well-targeted vulnerable consumers. It is time to stop revidis, and get on with real rational policy making. Policy makers have a big job at hand, but believe me, it can be achieved, if they have the will to do so. I sympathise with policy makers who have to balance the interests of producers and consumers.

Gulati is Distinguished Professor at ICRIER. Views are personal

The first and foremost policy action that is needed is to remove all bans on agri-exports, stocking limits on private trade, and stop unloading wheat and rice in the open market at below the economic cost of the Food Corporation of India (FCI). These are all anti-farmer policies designed to favour consumers.



JAYNA KOTHARI

A SINGLE WOMAN in her forties once sought my legal opinion on a surrogacy arrangement she was planning to undergo in a foreign country because current laws do not permit single women in India to have children through surrogacy. I gave her my opinion and she went ahead with her surrogacy arrangement abroad. But another woman recently approached the Supreme Court seeking the right to have a child through surrogacy as a single woman. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021, permits only married couples or only a woman who is a widow or divorcee between the age of 35 to 45 years to have children through surrogacy. It does not allow a single, never-married woman to use surrogacy for having children. The petitioner has challenged this provision of the law as being discriminatory on the grounds of her single status.

The Supreme Court, while issuing notice to the government, remarked that there were other ways in which the woman could have a child – she could get married or adopt. It also remarked that she could not have everything in life as she had chosen to remain single and that the institution of marriage was important in society as children need to know their fathers. The petition questions the inherent biases that our society has in accepting single women, especially when it comes to access to reproductive choices.

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 does not prohibit divorced or widowed women from having children through surrogacy. Women who choose to be single or are never married, however, are seen as a stigma, with negative stereotypes, of wanting to "have it all" and hence not allowed to have biological

RIGHTS OF THE SINGLE WOMAN

Law must take the lead in securing their reproductive rights

children. Sex-based legal inequality is still very present for single women in India. Compared to married or coupled people, who are often described in positive terms, single, never-married women are assumed to be immature, maladjusted, and self-centred.

This discrimination includes systemic, structural, and institutional ways in which single women are unfairly disadvantaged and married people are advantaged. It is built into laws, regulations and policies, especially on reproductive rights and choices. The Surrogacy Regulation Act, for example, benefits people who are or were legally married by permitting them to use surrogacy, turning single women into second-class citizens and a disadvantaged class. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, even after it was amended in 2021, did not contain any reference to single women, and only states in Rule 3 (B) (c) that abortions would be permitted within 24 weeks on grounds of a change in the marital status of the women to divorcee or widowhood. It is completely silent on the single status of a woman leading to them facing great barriers in access to safe abortions.

The Supreme Court had to interpret this to include the right of single women to terminate their pregnancies as doctors were refusing to do so unless they obtained consent from husbands or family members. Despite the SC's positive interpretation, single women seeking termination of pregnancies are still facing hurdles.

Motherhood, especially through new reproductive technologies, has been particularly restrictive for single and lesbian women. Inequalities in reproductive rights including

In 2001, 51.2 million single women were living in India. By the 2011 Census, this number had risen by 39 per cent to cross 71 million and in the next census, this number could even cross 100 million. Till recently, this large group was silent, excluded and even absent in accessing surrogacy and reproductive treatments, but they are not silent anymore. The law needs to take the lead in ensuring equality and enhancing the reproductive rights of single women, especially when it comes to access to reproductive choices.

The law needs to take the lead in ensuring equality and enhancing the reproductive rights of single women, especially when it comes to access to reproductive choices.

FEBRUARY 19, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

VIOLENCE IN ASSAM

A MASSIVE OUTBREAK of communal rioting all over the lower Brahmaputra valley claimed at least 60 more lives and the figure was likely to rise considerably with the authorities still trying to get a measure of the situation. In a series of bloody attacks in the trouble-torn Nowrangpur district, tribal villagers attacked a cluster of over 2,000 immigrants and at least 30 dead had been accounted for by the end of the day. The attacks were scattered over wide areas and many bodies are believed to be lying around. The village of Nilli was burnt down, rendering 5,000 people homeless.

KARNATAKA PROTESTS

TENSION CONTINUED TO grip Bellary as anti-police agitators indulged in violence for the third day and set on fire three banks and a few government offices. Curfew was re-imposed. The police repeatedly lathi-charged and burst teargas shells when irate mobs set on fire the Andhra, central and the state banks. The death toll in the past two days remained at seven. The mobs continued their demand for the parading of the suspended sub-inspector and five constables of the Cowl Bazar police station, who allegedly raped a 16-year-old girl in the station.

NEW AKALI FORMULAE

TWO NEW FORMULAE to solve the territorial issue were presented by opposition leaders, at the tripartite meeting among cabinet committee members, the Akalis and the opposition leaders. These will be discussed with the Haryana Chief Minister Bhajan Lal and the state opposition leaders. This will be followed by another round of talks with Akalis. The tripartite meeting concentrated solely on the territorial issue. The water dispute has still to be finalised. The Opposition thought the water issue would be less complicated if the territorial issue is solved.



THE IDEAS PAGE

AI in the year of elections

We should certainly take the electoral risks of AI seriously, but also keep in mind the risks presented by rushed efforts to manage those risks



BHASKAR CHAKRAVORTI

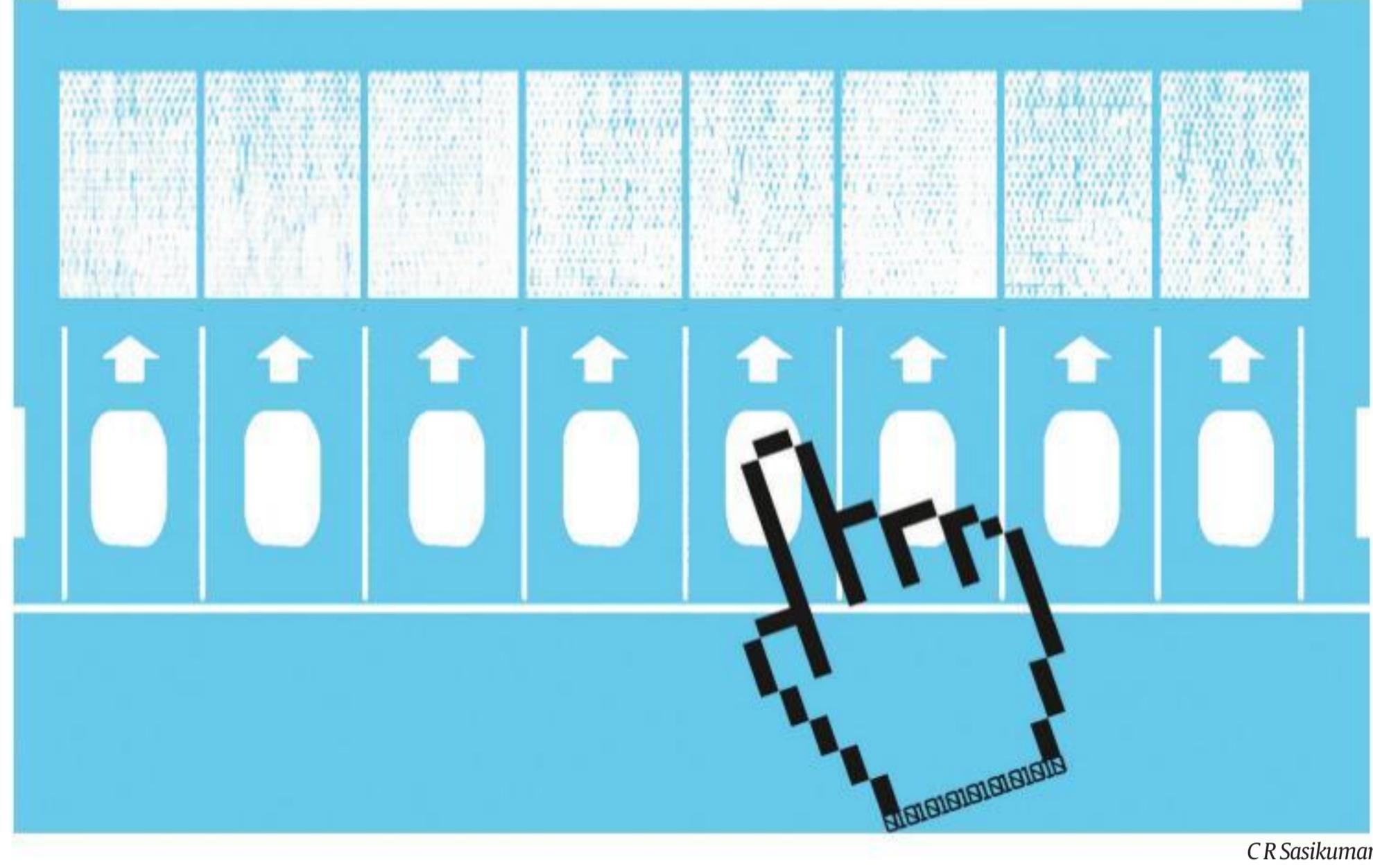
2024 has been billed by *Time* magazine as the "ultimate election year" — the largest ever global exercise in democracy, with close to half the world's population engaging in elections. This year, democracy's defenders are fretting not only over the run-of-the-mill election demons, but also over newer demons of the digital kind. Since 2023 was the year of AI frenzy, there is a worry that AI will turbocharge 2024 election-related naughtiness. Think: Deepfakes, disinformation, robocalls and other dastardly forms of digital voter manipulation.

It is no surprise, therefore, that governments around the world have leapt into action. From the regulation-loving Europeans and the regulation-allergic Americans to India's minister of state for electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar — who claims to have "woken up earlier" than others to AI's dangers — rules to tackle AI-created disinformation are being rushed out. I worry that in the scramble to nab the AI bogeyman during this year of elections, we may end up making the wider problems of AI worse. Here are three ways that can happen.

First, through disinformation surge. January's elections-related experience has already raised alarms. Consider the case of Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader, Tarique Rahman, whose manipulated video showed him suggesting a toning down of support for Gaza's bombing victims — a surefire way to lose votes in a Muslim-majority country. Facebook's owner Meta took his own sweet time to take the fake video down. Granted, Tarique Rahman is no Taylor Swift — whose fake pornographic images caused quicker social media blackouts — but, surely, a bit more swiftness in catching the deepfakery would have been a nice gesture to the Bangladeshi voter.

It is not surprising that Meta would take its time, with their content moderation staff cut way back, as part of the massive layoffs of 2023. With elections taking place in so many different countries, the company has to make choices on where to allocate their thinned-out resources. Meta's scaling back is just the tip of the iceberg — content moderation teams on social media elsewhere have also been decimated. With pressure from more consequential markets, such as the US or the EU and, in a pinch, India, they will attend to the squeakiest of wheels. This means voters in much of the rest of the world, the likes of Bangladesh, may have to fend for themselves. There are at least 83 elections being held this year. Ironically, the volume of disinformation worldwide could surge overall precisely because of the pressure to catch disinformation coming from a few powerful governments.

Second, the growing might of the already mighty. The piling up of AI regulations could lead to a second paradoxical outcome — reinforcing AI industry concentration. To get a sense of that concentration, consider this: Just three companies, OpenAI, Anthropic and Inflection, cornered two-thirds of all the investments made in generative AI last year and



C R Sasikumar

all that money came from just three other companies, Microsoft, Google and Amazon. The EU regulations as well as the Executive Order from the White House have seemingly sensible requirements of AI products, such as "watermarking" to clearly label AI-created content or requiring results of "red-teaming" exercises — simulated attacks by adversaries — to detect safety and security vulnerabilities in AI models. However, watermarking requirements are problematic since the watermarks aren't fool-proof and smaller companies reliant on external sources cannot verify such sourced content. Red-teaming exercises are expensive once you account for the staffing and process complexities along with legal and documentation costs. Such regulations will only serve to lock in the power of the already powerful by creating a barrier to entry or making it infeasible for scrappy start-ups.

Concentration in the AI industry hands power to a few companies, possibly locking in ethical lapses to which they may be blind, allowing risks to proliferate without oversight or competitive forces and biases, and black box systems gaining control of consequential decisions.

Third, the perils of earnest guidelines. With these concerns about ethics, risk, and transparency in AI development, many regulators and civil society groups have been at work putting frameworks and guidelines in place. But these guidelines themselves could be problematic.

For example: Whose ethics and values should inform the framework? We live in polarised times, where we disagree over politics, religion, economics, and much more. Societies differ on fundamental ethical questions, such as: Should free speech be prioritised or should we have "guardrails" on expression to protect the weak? Even the idea of prioritising regulation based on levels of risk — as the EU regulations propose — can be contentious.

Some believe AI's risks are existential, while others believe that such dire warnings are distracting us from more immediate higher-likelihood risks. Members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council

For transparency to be a meaningful requirement, we need audits of AI systems. But who will perform them and where are the laws that make them mandatory? A landmark law in New York that requires employers using automated employment decision tools to audit them for race and gender bias was found to be toothless by a recent Cornell study. In the meantime, companies, such as IBM and OpenAI, have been volunteering their own transparency mechanisms. But we should be wary of foxes drafting reports on the state of the henhouse.

themselves have argued that even the idea of risk management is risky in the case of AI. They argue that AI is non-linear, evolving and unpredictable — a "complex adaptive system" — and applying blunt instruments of pre-set risk frameworks would be foolhardy.

For transparency to be a meaningful requirement, we need audits of AI systems. But who will perform them and where are the laws that make them mandatory? A landmark law in New York that requires employers using automated employment decision tools to audit them for race and gender bias was found to be toothless by a recent Cornell study. In the meantime, companies, such as IBM and OpenAI, have been volunteering their own transparency mechanisms. But we should be wary of foxes drafting reports on the state of the henhouse.

So, what should be done? First, we should remember that democracy has many demons to battle even before we get to the AI demon. Already, political candidates have been jailed in several parts of the world, bomb threats have gone out, cellphone networks have been shut down, candidates have warned of bedlam if they lose or are taken off the ballot, and vote-buying and ballot-stuffing are still part of the toolkit. Its novelty notwithstanding, Allosorcery may, on the margin, not rank among the biggest mischief-makers this year.

Second, we should certainly take the electoral risks of AI seriously, but also keep in mind the risks presented by rushed efforts to manage those risks. There has been a scramble among regulators to reign in AI in advance of elections setting up 2024 to be a year of the AI freak-out after 2023's AI frenzy. It is better that these well-intended regulators understand the unintended consequences of rushed regulations.

Third, AI regulators ought to think several steps ahead and formulate rules that anticipate the greater risks tomorrow. Voters in elections beyond 2024 will be grateful for such foresight.

The writer is Dean of Global Business at The Fletcher School at Tufts University

Of new shrines and old

Temples in India signify a journey and a homecoming

VAMSEE JULURI

LAST WEEK, I performed my mother's first annual ceremony by the river Tungabhadra near Hampi. I was moved by the invocation to the punya kshetra uttered by the priest. He reminded us we were near the holy river island of Navabindavana, the seat of nine Dvaita sages, and then called the region by one of its oldest names — Kishkindha — invoking the presence of the mighty Hanuman himself.

My mother, actor and former Member of Parliament, Jamuna, was born on the other side of that river. One year after her passing, her ceremonies were done on this side, surrounded by boulders, mountains, temples and shrines, some destroyed and empty, some still alive. It felt like she came home. But along the way, was an incredible journey, not only of her life and career, but also of what temples have come to mean for the people of Bharat (and the diaspora).

It was in the midst of this mood of filial gratitude and surrender to the natural beauty of this kshetra that I got the news about another temple that had just been inaugurated. This time, it was not in the historical Hindu lands of South Asia but in Abu Dhabi. The only thing that visitors seemed to be talking about after our ceremonies was the new BAPS Swaminarayan temple — and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Perhaps by virtue of being in Hampi and hearing lectures about Krishna Deva Raya these past few days at the Vijayanagara Utsava, I was reminded of a comment made by a friend around 2014 that Modi was nothing short

of an avatar of Sri Krishna Deva Raya! Then, it had seemed like a fan's hyperbole. Today, it warrants some attention, if only to help us understand where our current euphoria about temples may end up going.

It is indeed possible now that like Krishna Deva Raya, PM Modi's legacy will be of someone who revived something very dear to us; the ritualistic celebration of our ancestral gods in their traditional (and new) homes. Just as one might visit almost any sacred temple in southern India and find a record of Krishna Deva Raya's support for it, be it the magnificent Tirumala or the peaceful and sleepy Srikrishna, perhaps one day people will think of Kashi, Ayodhya, and even the Abu Dhabi temples as things that happened because of PM Modi's leadership.

The building of temples seems to be something that we expect of our leaders, whether they happen to be monarchs, or democratically elected prime ministers. Historians might debate the nuances of what Jawaharlal Nehru or P V Narasimha Rao did or did not do in this regard, and experts will argue about whether Modi's unabashed love for big temple developments is a blow to secularism or a reasonable counterforce to "pseudo-secularism". But it is clear that the people, the leader, and the times — all have converged on Hindu temples as something instrumental in forging a new Bharat.

This force is indeed a ground reality today, but there is also a sobering analysis that is needed. Will temples merely become tools

for things other than what they are traditionally meant to be? Is a temple merely a place where lots of people come to spend money and grab souvenirs? Is a temple even a place where people are meant to gather in large numbers, as is the case with congregational faiths? Is the modern social or cultural function of a temple bigger than the ecology of the natural surroundings which house it? Will the gods still be there if their trees and sacred springs are disturbed?

The strain is showing on this count in many places. In the small Yantrodharaka Hanuman temple which sits snugly among boulders by the Chakratirtha in Hampi, the presence of growing crowds demanded a new structure. The trouble is, this garish new stone face looks like an eyesore in the undisturbed valley. Even worse has been done, locals say, to the Pampa kshetra.

If the transformation of temples into mass tourism sites poses one challenge, the other one comes from the growing generational loss in cultural, intellectual, and ritual competence. Certain temples, especially ancient ones, are so closely tied to their deities and customs of worship, whether it is Sabarimala or Kamakhya, that the "stakeholders," some of whom can claim that label over hundreds of generations, need to be privileged over mass tourism (and armchair activism).

One way forward might be to encourage a conceptual distinction in the minds of devotees as well as government officials between traditional kshetra-centric temples

and modern, or eclectic temples. Already, many temples once known only in their own regions have become hubs for mass pilgrimages, leading to ecological destruction, as well as a ravaging of the cultural harmony of the structures. At least two ancient temples we visited in Andhra Pradesh, for example, no longer looked like temples because of all the modern trappings, railings, police presence and so on. In Hampi, by contrast, one feels the deity long before entering the shrine because of the undisturbed landscape.

In the future, it would therefore be vital to preserve the natural surroundings and traditions of the traditional punya kshetras, while celebrating the building of large and joyous new temples by modern sampradayas such as the BAPS Swaminarayan community.

The genius of polytheism has been to understand deeply that "all religions are not the same". The imperative of polytheisms that have survived monotheistic expansion for centuries and still wish to remain plural and free is to recognise that "all temples are not the same" either.

Krishna Deva Raya honoured not only the different gods of his people, but also their unique cultural styles of worship. We can hope our democracy too will express the idiom of that diversity, that beauty, that refusal to be just one that is *sanatan dharma*.

The writer is professor of Media Studies, University of San Francisco

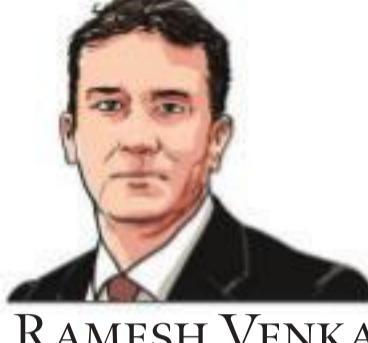
WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Instead of addressing the public's apprehensions or assuring them that issues in results tabulation will be promptly looked into, the ECP has chosen to stay mum. Now, much more serious allegations are being levelled against senior officials of the state. The commission must wake up."

— DAWN, PAKISTAN

Abu Dhabi has a message for Delhi

UAE, Saudi Arabia are moving towards expanding space for non-Muslims — this will affect terms of debate over India's secular ethos



RAMESH VENKATARAMAN

remarkable is the near-complete absence in everyday life — schools, housing, jobs — of prejudice against non-Muslims.

Of course, the UAE is no liberal haven. It remains an autocracy with strict controls on political activity and freedom of speech and expression. On the religious front, there are prohibitions on blasphemy and proselytising by non-Muslims, and attempting to convert Muslims is effectively banned. The authorities clamp down on acts seen as insulting religions or provoking religious hatred.

But the direction of travel is clear. Religion in the UAE is steadily becoming a personal, private matter. The country's rulers are not just downplaying Islam's role in public life but consciously creating a welcoming, live-and-let-live environment for non-Muslims in their efforts to lure top professionals and entrepreneurs from around the world.

All this would, at best, be of moderate interest were it not for its impact on the Saudis next door. Emulating the UAE model has become a mission for Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, in his drive to modernise the kingdom. MBS is rapidly ridding it of overt Islamic trappings and refining in the previously powerful Sunni clergy, especially its reactionary elements. Saudi funding and support for Islamic radicals and fundamentalist outfits across the world have been substantially cut.

On a global basis, the ongoing secularisation of the UAE and potentially the Saudis — custodians of Mecca and Medina — represents a remarkable turn. For the past four decades, secular ideals have been on the retreat in the Islamic world even in countries such as Turkey, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, which are officially still secular.

From India's perspective, the cutbacks in Saudi funding (coming on top of Modi government curbs on foreign money flows) are undoubtedly disabling ultra-conservative mosques and madrasas in the country. This will free up Indian Muslims to turn back to moderate, homegrown sources of religious guidance, better suited to a modernising, multi-faith and (still) secular country, rather than be swayed by hide-bound rhetoric from the Gulf.

More dramatically, even a partial secularisation of Saudi Arabia would alter the terms of the debate over secularism in India. The kingdom is the bogeyman of the Hindu right: "Look at how they treat non-Muslims and especially Hindus in Saudi" is their frequent riposte to secularists. Indeed, the Hindu rashtra dream is nothing but a Hindu majoritarian mimicry of the Saudi model. Saudi Arabia remains far behind the Emirates in its accommodation of non-Muslim faiths but MBS's reforming zeal will likely push it to catch up quickly.

Opening the temple, Modi said that the Islamic UAE has added a new cultural chapter to its identity. "We do not see hatred in diversity, we consider diversity our specialty! In this temple, we will see a glimpse of diverse faiths at every step," he said. Hindu residents and Indian visitors to Dubai and Abu Dhabi will increasingly have to contend with the uncomfortable contrast between this "diversity" and their own country's steady backsliding on secularism.

The writer is a private equity investor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MISSING DIALOGUE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The MSP fiasco' (IE, February 17). After three years,

farmers are protesting again following the failure of talks held with the Centre. There was no agreement on the key demands raised by the farmers, including the enactment of a law to guarantee a minimum support price (MSP) for all crops, implementation of the Swaminathan Committee's recommendations, pensions for farmers and farm labourers, farm debt waiver, etc. Farmers are demanding better prices and policies from governments across the world. Governments are not resorting to high-handed measures against them.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

FOR A LEVEL FIELD

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Day after, way ahead' (IE, February 17). Fighting elections entails exorbitant costs which when funded come with an expected quid pro quo. This has its repercussions, diluting the values our Constitution enshrines. The striking down of electoral bonds with their lack of transparency was the right way forward to curb money power in politics. While the apex court has raised the right issues, it must nudge the government to initiate a process that levels the playing field.

Vijai Pant, Hempur

MONEY MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The watchful guardian' (IE, February 17). The Supreme Court is certainly the last resort for democracy in India. One cannot help contrast how the ruling party got the lion's share of funds with how it has gone about financially throttling NGOs and think tanks. Transparency in electoral funding is one of the basic tools to ensure the healthy functioning of a democracy. The higher judiciary must now ensure better handling of critical cases which affect the health of democracy.

SS Paul, Nadia

TO STEADY THE SHIP

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Straws in trade wind' (IE, February 17). Despite a slight uptick in January exports, there's a nearly 5 per cent decline in total goods exports for the fiscal year. Labour-intensive sectors are particularly affected. The Red Sea conflict poses a significant threat, given its importance in India's trade routes with Europe. It urges proactive measures from the government and stakeholders, including diversifying trade routes and enhancing domestic production capabilities. Overall, it emphasises the need for urgent action to ensure India's trade resilience and economic sustainability in these times.

Likhitha Manoj, Bengaluru

Temples in India signify a journey and a homecoming

VAMSEE JULURI

LAST WEEK, I performed my mother's first annual ceremony by the river Tungabhadra near Hampi. I was moved by the invocation to the punya kshetra uttered by the priest. He reminded us we were near the holy river island of Navabindavana, the seat of nine Dvaita sages, and then called the region by one of its oldest names — Kishkindha — invoking the presence of the mighty Hanuman himself.

My mother, actor and former Member of Parliament, Jamuna, was born on the other side of that river. One year after her passing, her ceremonies were done on this side, surrounded by boulders, mountains, temples and shrines, some destroyed and empty, some still alive. It felt like she came home. But along the way, was an incredible journey, not only of her life and career, but also of what temples have come to mean for the people of Bharat (and the diaspora).

It was in the midst of this mood of filial gratitude and surrender to the natural beauty of this kshetra that I got the news about another temple that had just been inaugurated. This time, it was not in the historical Hindu lands of South Asia but in Abu Dhabi. The only thing that visitors seemed to be talking about after our ceremonies was the new BAPS Swaminarayan temple — and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Perhaps by virtue of being in Hampi and hearing lectures about Krishna Deva Raya these past few days at the Vijayanagara Utsava, I was reminded of a comment made by a friend around 2014 that Modi was nothing short

of an avatar of Sri Krishna Deva Raya! Then, it had seemed like a fan's hyperbole. Today, it warrants some attention, if only to help us understand where our current euphoria about temples may end up going.

It is indeed possible now that like Krishna Deva Raya, PM Modi's legacy will be of someone who revived something very dear to us; the ritualistic celebration of our ancestral gods in their traditional (and new) homes. Just as one might visit almost any sacred temple in southern India and find a record of Krishna Deva Raya's support for it, be it the magnificent Tirumala or the peaceful and sleepy Srikrishna, perhaps one day people will think of Kashi, Ayodhya, and even the Abu Dhabi temples as things that happened because of PM Modi's leadership.

The building of temples seems to be something that we expect of our leaders, whether they happen to be monarchs, or democratically elected prime ministers. Historians might debate the nuances of what Jawaharlal Nehru or P V Narasimha Rao did or did not do in this regard, and experts will argue about whether Modi's unabashed love for big temple developments is a blow to secularism or a reasonable counterforce to "pseudo-secularism". But it is clear that the people, the leader, and the times — all have converged on Hindu temples as something instrumental in forging a new Bharat.

This force is indeed a ground reality today, but there is also a sobering analysis that is needed. Will temples merely become tools

for things other than what they are traditionally meant to be

TOP OF THE
WORLD

Former US President Donald Trump. AP

UNITED STATES
Trump rails against judge in NY fraud ruling

Michigan: Former President Donald Trump railed against the judge who slapped him with a \$355 million fine in his New York civil fraud trial and went after the long list of prosecutors with cases against him as he campaigned in Michigan Saturday night while facing penalties that, with interest, could exceed half-a-billion dollars. Trump cast Friday's decision as "a lawless and unconstitutional atrocity that sets fire to our laws like no one has ever seen in this country before." He was making his pitch in a state that is expected to be critical in November as he pivots toward a likely rematch against Joe Biden. AP

CONGO
US condemns Rwanda backing for Congo rebels

Washington: The US condemned on Saturday Rwanda's support of the armed M23 group in eastern Congo, whose rebellion has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, and called on the rebel group to "cease hostilities." It called on Rwanda "to immediately withdraw all Rwanda Defence Force personnel from the (Congo)." It also urged the rebels to retreat from their current positions. This is likely to put pressure on Rwanda, whose government has repeatedly denied any links to the M23 group. AP

SOUTH KOREA
Do not quit: PM to doctors over student intake

Seoul: South Korea's prime minister pleaded on Sunday with doctors not to take people's lives hostage, a day before scores of trainee doctors are expected to quit to protest a plan to increase medical school admissions and the number of physicians. The Korean Medical Association, which represents doctors, and medical students have also opposed the government plan and pledged to take action, although they have not yet specified what they intend to do. REUTERS

ENVY SAYS RESOLUTION COUNTER TO WASHINGTON'S EFFORTS TO END WAR**US says will block another UN ceasefire resolution as Israel strikes across Gaza**

Algeria circulates draft plan in UN for pause in war

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RAFAH, FEBRUARY 18

Palestinians after an Israeli strike on a house in Rafah on Sunday. Reuters

Fighting, fuel shortages knock Gaza's second-largest hospital out of servicesREUTERS
CAIRO, JERUSALEM, FEB 18

FIGHTING, FUEL shortages and Israeli raids put the Gaza Strip's second-largest hospital completely out of service on Sunday, local and UN health officials said.

The latest blow to Gaza's destroyed healthcare sector came as Israel prepared for an assault of the southernmost city Rafah, home to over a million mostly displaced Palestinians - a move that the international community, in-

The US has used its veto on similar previous resolutions, and President Joe Biden has bypassed Congress to rush arms to Israel while urging it to spare civilians.

Russia says Ukrainian troops holed up at coke plant in Avdiivka

REUTERS
MOSCOW, KYIV, FEB 18

RUSSIA ON Sunday said it had full control of the Ukrainian town of Avdiivka after Ukraine withdrew from Moscow said that some Ukrainian troops were still holed up in a vast Soviet-era coke plant after one of the most intense battles of the war.

The fall of Avdiivka is Russia's biggest gain since capturing the city of Bakhmut in May 2023.

Russia said Ukrainian forces were still holed up at the Soviet-era coke plant in Avdiivka, which is key to Russia's aim of gaining full control of the industrial Donbas region. "Measures are being taken to completely clear the town of militants and to block Ukrainian units that have left the town and are entrenched at the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant," Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said. There was no public comment yet by Ukrainian authorities on this.

Together with members of Navalny's legal team, Lyudmila Navalnaya, 69, traveled to the town of Kharp in the Yamalo-Nenets region, some 1,900 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

Prison employees told Navalny's mother Saturday that they did not have her son's body. They said it had been taken to the nearby city of Salekhards, a little over an hour's drive away, as part of a probe into his death.

Upon arriving at Salekhards, they found that the morgue was closed. When the lawyer called

FOR THE mother of Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who died at age 47 in an Arctic penal colony, the journey to recover her son's body Saturday was an odyssey with no clear destination. In the end, she didn't get what she came for.

Together with members of Navalny's legal team, Lyudmila Navalnaya, 69, traveled to the town of Kharp in the Yamalo-Nenets region, some 1,900 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

Prison employees told Navalny's mother Saturday that they did not have her son's body. They said it had been taken to the nearby city of Salekhards, a little over an hour's drive away, as part of a probe into his death.

Upon arriving at Salekhards, they found that the morgue was closed. When the lawyer called

ASSOCIATED PRESS
FEBRUARY 18

THAILAND'S BILLIONAIRE former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was released on parole on Sunday after six months in detention, his first day of freedom in his homeland 15 years after fleeing in the wake of his overthrow in a military coup.

Thailand's best-known and most polarising premier, the influential Thaksin has loomed

adamant girl who refuses to say yes to a match selected by her family, her heart already given to a lower-caste man. She is instantly deemed a culprit many times over. How dare she, a mere female, behave in this manner? Not only is she disobedient, a terrible quality in a potential wife, but has had the temerity to actually fall in love. Naturally, she has to be possessed, and equally naturally, she has to be exorcised, under the watchful cum-baleful gaze of Pandi (Muthuchamy), the would-be groom.

The bulk of the film is spent in a ramshackle vehicle, in which the mutinous Meena and her helpless mother, her sniffling to-be

Ben plays Meena, the



Former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra after his release, in Bangkok, Sunday. AP

large over politics during the years spent mostly in self-imposed exile to dodge jail for abuse of power; charges he maintained were cooked up by the country's old guard to keep him at bay.

The 74-year-old tycoon, whose family's party is back in power, was granted parole despite having not spent a single night in prison for a sentence that had in August been commuted from eight years to one year by the country's king.

Due to health reasons, Thaksin

TRICKING HIM INTO MAKING VIDEOS TO RIDICULE HIM**GEORGE SANTOS SUES LATE-NIGHT HOST JIMMY KIMMEL**

Former US Rep. George Santos alleged in a lawsuit filed that late-night host Jimmy Kimmel deceived him into making videos on the Cameo app that were used to ridicule the disgraced New York Republican on the show. The lawsuit filed in US district court for the southern district of New York names Kimmel, ABC and Walt Disney Co. as defendants. A media contact for 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' show didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. AP

PAKISTAN: TALKS TO CONTINUE TODAY**Power sharing talks: PML-N, PPP claim 'significant' progress**

Imran party demands judicial probe after poll official alleged rigging

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 18

JAILED FORMER Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's party on Sunday demanded a judicial probe into growing allegations of vote rigging even as two major political parties failed to reach a power-sharing formula to form a coalition government.

Esmail Qaani met representatives of several armed groups in Baghdad airport on January 29,

Brigadier General Esmail Qaani

less than 48 hours after the US blamed the groups for the killing of three US soldiers in Jordan, the sources said.

Qaani said

that drawing American blood risked heavy US response, ten of

the sources said.

He said the militaries

should lie low

to avoid US

strikes on their senior commanders, destruction of key infrastructure or even a direct retaliation against Iran, the sources said.

While one faction did not initially agree to Qaani's request, most others did.

Buoyed by the allegations of



Nawaz Sharif; Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari

vote rigging, the PTI on Sunday demanded a judicial probe into the manipulation of the results of the elections.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party met for the third time after deciding to unite for the formation of the government in Centre last week after the February 8 elections resulted in a hung Parliament.

A brief announcement issued by the PML-N after the meeting said that there had been "significant progress" in talks with both sides, stressing the need for a "strong democratic government".

In the meantime, PPP Chairman Bilawal on Sunday revealed the power-sharing formula he was offered by the PML-N under which the prime minister's post would be shared between two parties. "I was told that let us be the prime minister for three years and then you can take the premiership for the remaining two years," the former foreign minister told a rally in Thatta city in Sindh province.

CHINESE FISHERMEN DEATHS OFF TAIWAN
Tensions rise over Taiwanese islands: China coast guard to strengthen patrolsREUTERS
BEIJING, FEBRUARY 18

CHINA'S COAST guard said on Sunday it will strengthen its law enforcement activities and carry out regular patrols around a small group of Taiwanese-controlled islands off the Chinese coast as tensions rise over the deaths of two Chinese nationals.

The Home Office said that

from early 2025, all those in the UK under one of the Ukraine visa schemes will be able to

apply to stay here for an

additional 18 months and con-

tinue to have the same rights

to access work, benefits, health-

care, and education throughout

their stay.

This will mean those who

came on the first visas under one

of the Ukraine visa schemes

could now stay in the UK until

September 2026.

PTI

LIFT SANCTIONS ON CHINESE FIRMS, WANG YI TELLS BLINKEN

Beijing: Washington should lift sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals, and that attempts to decouple from China would only hurt the US, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The US should not harm China's legitimate development rights, Wang told Blinken Friday on the sidelines of a Munich security conference, as per a statement from China's foreign ministry.

Kinmen and Xiamen, one of the Chinese cities Kinmen faces.

This is to "further maintain the order of operations in the relevant waters and safeguard the safety of fishermen's lives and property", it added.

Late on Saturday, China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the deaths had caused "strong indignation" in China, but that there were no off-limits waters.

P S VINOTHRJA ENTWINES MISOGYNY, MORALITY; RAAM REDDY'S MANOJ BAJPAYEE STARRER UNWINDS A CLUTCH OF MYSTERIOUS GOINGS-ON**Kottukaali, The Fable: Indian entries from young directors leave audience pondering****EXPRESS AT BERLINALE**SHUBhra GUPTA
FEBRUARY 18

TWO INDIAN entries are making quite a splash at the 74th Berlinale, both from young directors with a singular vision: P S Vinothraja's 'Kottukaali' (The Adamant Girl) featuring Soori

Muthuchamy and Anna Ben, and Raam Reddy's 'The Fable', helmed by heavyweight Manoj Bajpayee, along with Deepak Dobriyal and Priyanka Bose.

'Kottukaali' is self-taught Vinothraja's second feature, and makes on the promise of his 2021 Rotterdam break-out 'Koozhangal' (Pebbles), a hard-scrabble tale of a father-and-son trekking across a parched landscape in search of a missing element that will make them whole. 'The Fable' is also a sophomore feature, which comes after a long gap — Reddy's 'Thithi' premiered in 2016 at the Locarno film festival.

Ben plays Meena, the



Anna Ben in Kottukaali (left); Manoj Bajpayee in The Fable.



X@P Vinothraja, @BajpayeeManoj

sisters-in-law, a young boy, and a rooster are being ferried to the exorcist.

The tale, which beautifully entwines morality and misogyny, is leavened with dashes of humour: the

vehicle needs to be kickstarted every-time it sputters to a stop for various reasons — the boy needs to pee, the accompanists on a motorcycle look for local hooch, the sick rooster needs to be revived.

Reddy's 'The Fable' is about a clutch of mysterious goings-on

alive not just with the crackle of the fire, but also dark tales — come up. The estate manager (Dobriyal), who has been there for years, is as concerned as Dev, but by now, the latter seems to have changed, from a rational man to someone brimming with suspicion.

A streak of magical realism shows up in an Icarus-like figure, which swoops above the valley: do his massive wings get singed?

'The Fable' throws a tonal switch as it both soars and is grounded by the questions it poses: is flying strictly for birds? What is real? What is not? And ultimately, who are we?

Big themes enveloped in a vivid, stunningly shot film.



ISRO latest launch: why GSLV rocket is called 'naughty boy'

ALIND CHAUHAN AND
AMITABH SINHA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

THE INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched a new-generation meteorological satellite, INSAT-3DS, meant to carry out enhanced monitoring of the Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans and environment.

But more than the satellite, it was the rocket that was the focus of attention of this launch. The INSAT-3DS satellite rode on the GSLV-F14 rocket to reach its intended geo-stationary orbit. GSLV is one of the three main rockets used by ISRO for carrying its

satellites, the other two being PSLV and LVM3 (earlier called GSLV-MkIII). GSLV has had a rather patchy track record thus far, because of which it has been described as the 'naughty boy'. On Sunday, however, it made a flawless flight, and deposited the satellite in the desired orbit.

But why 'naughty boy'?

GSLV had flown 15 times before this, and four of the flights were unsuccessful, a very high failure rate for any rocket. PSLV has failed only twice in its 60 launches, including the first time it was tried way back in 1993. The LVM3 rocket has flown seven times and never failed.

GSLV's most recent failure was in August

2021, when it was attempting to carry an earth observation satellite EOS-03 into space. Five minutes into the flight, it deviated from the scheduled trajectory, lost the power to carry on, and fell into the Andaman Sea.

It did have a successful launch after that, in May last year, but the uncertainty over its performance had not dissipated completely.

What is the problem?

GSLV is a more powerful rocket than PSLV and can carry much heavier satellites. It can carry more than 2,200 kg to geostationary orbits, and more than 6,000 kg to the low earth orbits.

Its problems have mainly been with the cryogenic engine that powers the third and final stage of the flight. Cryogenics is the science relating to the behaviour of materials at very low temperatures. Cryogenic engines

use liquid hydrogen as the main fuel. Hydrogen, the most efficient rocket fuel, is very difficult to handle in its natural gaseous form, but manageable in liquid state. However, it liquifies only at very low temperatures, nearly 250 degrees Celsius below zero. The oxygen that is needed to burn this fuel also needs to be in liquid form. Oxygen is in a liquid state at about 90 degrees Celsius below zero.

The GSLV uses a cryogenic engine that is

reverse-engineered on a Russian design. The Russians had won a deal to supply cryogenic engines and technology to ISRO in the late 1980s, but that deal had come under pressure from the United States, which claimed it violated the Missile Technology Control Regime, an international legal framework meant to stop the proliferation of missile technology.

The deal was thus called off. Russia did supply a few of those cryogenic engines but could not transfer the technology. India used those engines in some of its launches in the 2000s, and for later flights, tried to reverse-engineer that engine on its own. It is this engine, used in the GSLV rockets, that has caused a few headaches for ISRO.

What about LVM3?

In the meanwhile, India has managed to develop its own cryogenic engine as well, a result of decades of research and development.

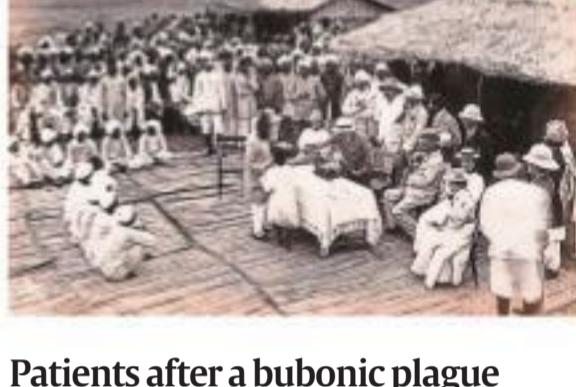
This engine has an entirely Indian design, developed within ISRO, and uses a different process to burn the fuel. It is closer to the designs of the Ariane rockets that were used by ISRO till a few years ago to launch its heavier satellites.

This indigenously developed cryogenic engine has been deployed in LVM3, ISRO's most powerful rocket so far, which carried the Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3 missions, among others. LVM3's seven flights have been without any trouble.

EXPLAINED HEALTH

BUBONIC PLAGUE CASE REPORTED IN THE US: SHOULD YOU BE WORRIED?

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18



Patients after a bubonic plague outbreak get relief money in Karachi in 1897. Wikimedia Commons

to person by inhaling infectious droplets – also making it the most contagious.

What was Black Death's impact?

The Black Death was the single-most deadly disease outbreak in history till the Great Influenza pandemic of 1918–20. Taking into account the significantly lower population levels of the 14th century, the Black Death is still the most deadly outbreak of all time, by some estimates, wiping out up to half of Europe's population.

A study published in 2022 in the journal *Nature* found that certain genetic mutations increased survival chances by around 40 per cent. This 40 per cent "was the strongest selective fitness effect ever estimated in humans," Professor Luis Barreiro, of the University of Chicago, told the *BBC*.

Unfortunately, this mutation, which has since been passed, has been directly linked to the incidence of certain autoimmune diseases – meaning what happened 700 years ago might be impacting your health today.

So, should you be worried?

No. Doctors do not expect the disease to spread from Oregon or cause any deaths among humans. This is because of modern antibiotics, which are fairly capable of dealing with the danger posed by *Y pestis*, as well as better hygiene and understanding of the disease.

Today, according to the CDC, a couple of thousand plague cases are reported worldwide each year, mostly in Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Peru. Fatality is roughly 11 per cent.

YOUR GO-TO INSTITUTE FOR GENERAL STUDIES PREPARATION



Prelims cum Mains
General Studies Comprehensive Programme
10 Months
FEBRUARY 2024

Prelims
CSAT Course
2 Months
FEBRUARY 2024

Optionals
Optional Subjects Course
5 Months
JUNE 2024

080-6220-6330 www.vajiramandravi.com

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

PAKISTAN'S RIDE-HAILING service, Careem, recently posted on X: "Program war gaya?" which literally translates to "program gone bust?" As the country's election results poured in and independents backed by Imran Khan's PTI trumped the Army's preferred Sharif-Bhutto-Zardari combine, this phrase was being used by PTI leaders to refer to how the military's plans had gone wrong.

Soon, Careem clarified it was not making a political point, but was simply advertising a "later booking" option in their cab-hailing service. However, PML(N) workers started the #BoycottCareem campaign on social media, posting bad reviews and deleting downloaded apps.

The incident is symptomatic of the polarised political environment in Pakistan, which threw up the recent fractured verdict. While the PML(N) led by the Sharifs and the Bhutto-Zardaris' PPP look set to come back to power, the message from voters has been loud and clear – possible to muzzle but not to mute.

Unusual, not unprecedented

The verdict means that the 'establishment' – as the Army is frequently referred to in the local media – has been challenged in a manner it is not used to. And that has challenged Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir's authority, a development being watched closely inside and outside Pakistan.

Raza Rumi, Editor-at-Large, *The Friday Times*, and founder of *Naya Daur Media*, told *The Indian Express*, "This is a major blow to the narrative spread by the establishment that PTI is an anti-state party. The voters have rejected this and the Army's standing among the public, especially among the youth, has taken a major hit. Now the institution will have to take measures to restore its image. This is a huge challenge for Munir."

The delay in the declaration of results, shutting down of internet and mobile services, and allegations of massive rigging have added to voter outrage. In fact, some are comparing the vocal public discontent to that seen in the aftermath of the 1970 elections, when the people of east Pakistan challenged the writ of the Army.

However, Yaqoob Khan Bangash, historian and Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Lahore-based Information Technology University of the Punjab, told *The Indian Express*, "This is not the first election where people have challenged the status quo. We have had several such. First was in 1988 when Benazir Bhutto came to power after over a decade of Zia ul Haq's rule. In 2018, Nawaz Sharif ran on a clearly anti-establishment line. Furthermore, this election has nothing in common with the 1970 one, which was



PTI supporters stage a protest in Peshawar on Saturday. Reuters

more about Bengali rights."

Munir-Imran feud

Gen Munir and Imran have a history. Then Lieutenant-General Syed Asim Munir was appointed the ISI head in October 2018 by then Army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa. But eight months later, he was replaced with Lt Gen Faiz Hamid on the insistence of then Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ajay Bisaria, wrote in his book *Anger Management, The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship between India and Pakistan*, "The real reason for Munir's axing would only tumble out into the public domain in 2022. Asim Munir, the revelation went, had dared put the scope on First Lady Bushra Begum and warned PM Imran Khan about corruption in his household."

Thus began their rivalry, and Gen Munir was possibly the shortest-serving head of the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's infamous spy agency.

Khan himself had been a candidate hand-picked by the Pakistan Army and groomed since 2013, before he was famously "selected" the Prime Minister in the 2018 elections. But after he fell out of favour, he continued to challenge the generals.

Last year's May 9 protests following Khan's arrest, in which PTI workers and supporters entered military installations, came as a shock to the otherwise untouchable establishment. In fact, there was talk that the military itself was divided, as Khan had been one of their own till recently. Pakistan's military fired three senior army commanders and disciplined 15 top officers over their conduct during those protests, in what many called the strongest action the military has taken against its own members in decades.

However, the military closed ranks quickly and came down hard on Khan and his party.

On Thursday night, a key political leader, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, president of Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam, made an explosive revelation in a TV interview: he said it was the Pakistan Army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI chief Faiz Hamid who asked all political parties to oust Khan's government through a no-confidence motion in April 2022 – confirming what the conventional wisdom was.

As the Munir vs Khan battle hots up amid the political machinations, the Army chief has much to counter.

What sets PTI apart

With the election mandate "snatched" from them, PTI workers are now challenging some election results, while holding protests against rigging and other malpractices.

Nasim Zehra, Diplomatic and Strategic Affairs Editor at Pakistan's TV channel, Channel24, and author of best-selling book, "From Kargil to the Coup: Events that Shocked Pakistan", told *The Indian Express*, "PTI is back on the parliamentary path opting for three tracks – firstly, having won overwhelmingly in KP, it is set to form government; secondly, at the Centre it will be the main Opposition; and thirdly, it will try to regain its symbol through fresh intra-party elections, and explore coordination with other political parties, targeting the PML(N) & PPP plus the establishment."

PTI itself is not without problems, though.

Bangash said, "The PTI is the first party which relies a lot on social media for its campaigning... its mantra is 'evil' vs. 'good', which is beyond traditional politics where politicians oppose each other but do not declare elections a 'good versus evil' battle. This level of self-righteousness is certainly new

in Pakistan. All this then feeds into a very dangerous tendency in the PTI where it is unable to accept the mandate of any other party. Without any sense of compromise, the upcoming Parliament will be hamstrung and little democratic progress will be made."

Ajay Darshan Behera, Professor at the Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, said, "Imran Khan has called the main established parties as *daakis* (dacoits), and doesn't speak the language of reconciliation."

What the results mean for India

If the civilian leadership is shaky and weak, for India, the key question will be who to engage with for any meaningful progress in bilateral ties.

Rumi said, "The incoming civilian government is likely to be an unstable coalition. It is expected that some initiatives will be undertaken to normalise relations with India; but given the political chaos, it is unclear how this would pan out. Especially when the large bloc led by Imran might not be on board with this policy."

Joshua T White, Professor of the Practice of International Affairs at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, told *The Indian Express*, "Here in Washington, the most significant concern is that the new coalition government will be fragile, and either unwilling or unable to undertake difficult but necessary reforms related to subsidies, taxation, and long-standing problems in the energy sector. A Pakistan plagued by economic dysfunction is not good for India, the United States, or any other country in the region. It is fair to assume that Pakistan's military will not permit the elected leaders to exercise much authority when it comes to Pakistan's relationship with India."

A new government in Delhi in May, with a mandate of five years, will have to assess if it should reopen channels of communication with the GHQ in Rawalpindi.

And what is known of Munir's stand on India? Bisaria's book narrates an incident when ISI – Munir was DG at that time – tipped off New Delhi about an al-Qaeda plot to carry out an attack in Kashmir in June 2019.

Shortly after PM Modi returned to power for the second consecutive term in May 2019, Bisaria writes, he got a phone call at 2 am with the information. "One theory about why the high commission was used as a channel was that the ISI was taking no chances and wanted no repeat of Pulwama; it wanted to make it clear at a political level it was not involved with the revenge attack being planned, but was only giving India a friendly tip-off with a piece of intercepted intelligence."

LONGER VERSION
indianexpress.com/explained

Seven cheetahs born in Kuno: Challenges, and the wild-vs-protected debate

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 18

WILDLIFE OFFICIALS in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National park are ecstatic about the birth of seven cheetah cubs in January this year.

Four cubs were born to the Namibian Cheetah Jwala and three to Asha. The seven newborns, and another 10-month-old female born to Jwala, are the future of Project Cheetah, an ambitious venture to re-introduce the animals to India. After seven adult cheetahs and three cubs died last year, the births have raised hopes that the cheetahs may be acclimatising to Indian conditions.

Stages in a cub's life

According to the Cheetah Conservation Fund, at birth, the "cubs weigh 8.5 to 15 ounces, are blind and helpless" and their

"mother will groom them patiently, purring quietly and providing them warmth and security."

In a few days, the mother will leave to hunt. The cubs will live in a secluded nest for the next six to eight weeks, being regularly moved by their mother from nest to nest to avoid detection by predators. The cubs begin joining their mother on its daily travels around six weeks of age. This period is fraught with danger for the cubs, with "less than one in 10 surviving." The only protection a cub has apart from its mother – whose mobility is restricted due to the babies –

is a "long mantle of hair on their backs, which serves the dual purpose of keeping them warm and helping hide them from predators who mistake them for the aggressive honey badger."

Between four to six months of age, cheetah cubs are very active and begin gripping tall 'play trees' that they climb. These trees serve as observational points that will one

day help them survey the landscape for prey and keep a look-out for predators.

Around one year of age, the cubs begin hunting with the mother. At about 18 months, they sperate from their mother. While male siblings form a coalition and hunt together, the females lead a solitary life until their own cubs are born.

Protocol for cubs

Petro Van Eeden, General Manager at the Ann van Dyk Cheetah Centre, South Africa, told *The Indian Express* that in her experience, the "best thing is the cub should stay with mom."

"The hunting instincts will be transferred to the cubs, that is always the first priority. Taking them away from the mom is the last resort. You should support the mom in such a way that you reduce stress for the cheetah. The main cause of stress is people and movement, and activity around them. No visitors should be allowed," she said.

"When they get to 8 weeks to 2 months old we start vaccinations. Also they need



Three of the newborn Cheetah cubs.
Kuno National Park

to have supplements like Vitamin A, copper and calcium to ensure they have proper eye sight and strong bone development," she said.

Need to intervene

Jwala delivered its first litter in March last year – the first cheetah cubs to be born in the park. But the sanctuary soon saw

rough weather, and three of the cubs died in May. The sole surviving cub, which was also observed to be weak and could have met the same fate, was taken away when Jwala was feeding on a fresh kill.

However, this had consequences, as once the cub was nursed back to health and reintroduced to J

India is where the energy story is really thriving. Exxon, Chevron, Petrobras, Petronas, BP — they all want to come to India... Why? Because this is where the growth is. This is where the growth in demand is



WHY HARDEEP SINGH PURI

Hardeep Singh Puri has been a seasoned diplomat for nearly four decades and served as the permanent representative of India to the United Nations from 2009 to 2013. He is currently a senior member of the Union Cabinet as the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs. Be it the

Central Visa Redevelopment project, the new Parliament building, or the global energy crisis in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, his ministries have seen ample action in these last couple of years. Puri has been the government's face on these issues, both on the domestic political scene as well as on the global stage.



No matter what the results of the US election, the India-US story will go on at a steady pace. In the sectors I work, there's no room for philanthropy and altruism. You do solid investment because you want to make money out of it

'Don't clutter analysis of energy sector thinking who's right or wrong on a political issue'

Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri on India's energy security against the backdrop of global conflict, on strengthening alternative fuel sources and the US-India story. The session was moderated by Sukalp Sharma, Senior Assistant Editor, *The Indian Express*



Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri in conversation with Sukalp Sharma, Senior Assistant Editor, at the Noida office. *Tashi Tobgyal*

Sukalp Sharma: In light of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, how do you assess India's strategy to mitigate the crisis from the perspective of energy security and affordability amid geopolitical challenges?

Our strategy has been highly successful... Our situation as of February 2022 was that the Russian Federation accounted for 0.2 per cent of our total (oil) imports... Today, I don't think you should allow your analysis of the energy sector to get cluttered with thinking who's right or wrong on a political issue... So, after Jan-Feb 2022, our imports from Russia shot up (as Russia offered cheaper oil)... As a democratically elected government, we had to ensure availability, affordability, and sustainability... We've done reasonably well on all three. We are the only country in the world where over a two-year reference period, (fuel) prices have actually come down... On Red Sea, I am repeatedly asked how worried I am. I'm anxious but not worried. My confidence stems from the fact that I don't think any of the major state players involved in that part of the world wants an outright outbreak of hostilities.

Sukalp Sharma: With India buying more Russian oil, there are voices from the West who say that India might find itself on the wrong side of history by doing this. What's your reaction?

The heart of the narrative is that somebody is financing the war machine. Luckily, they don't say that, because the counter to that is very strong. I told my colleague, the external affairs minister: 'You tell them that they buy more in an afternoon than I buy in a quarter.' If you're worried about filling the coffers of a country in war, then why didn't you stop gas also? So, this is a very selective approach... We are absolutely clear in terms of policy. If you have a sanctioned country, we would not go into that; Russia was never under sanction. They (West) wanted a price cap. So, the underlying sentiment was to buy as much as you like but buy it cheaper. I think the use of that market card is what has stood us in good stead.

Sukalp Sharma: We are the world's third-largest oil consumer depending on imports to meet over 85 per cent of our requirement. How have your discussions been with producer cartels on their production cuts?

I have never discussed with any foreign minister saying you must release (oil) otherwise prices will go up... You do what you like, I'll do what I have to... There are new sources of oil coming into the market. There are Guyana, Suriname, Brazil and Namibia. Then you have green hydrogen and ethanol. As far as gas is concerned, I think by 2025-26, there'll be more gas available. There are huge pipelines being laid in Africa also... Insofar as petroleum is concerned, you can limit the production, but you can't stop the others. Some of the new countries are saying they will join OPEC, but they will not subscribe to their production cuts. What is the guarantee that all the guys who are part of that producers' cartel do not want to sell more or are not selling? If I were a member of a team in a producing country, I would be very careful. The global situation can change suddenly... India is well-positioned and we are going full throttle with biofuels, compressed biogas and green hydrogen... So, things are changing.

Sukalp Sharma: Except for the excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel, at their end, the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have not reduced prices for nearly two years now.

Is that a good thing or a bad thing? It's a deregulated sector. Sometime in 2010 for petrol, and sometime in 2014 for diesel, a decision was made that we would not tell them (OMCs) what to do. But they're good corporate citizens and they decided not to raise the price... If they had, we would have gone into a difficult situation, to the point where demand would have fallen, and we would have had political turmoil. We (government) step in sometimes. They (OMCs) lost about Rs 28,000 crore on gas and we compensated them by Rs 22,000 crore.

They tell me that we have been a little less than reasonable because they lost about Rs 30,000 crore on petrol. I tell them that if I had a balance sheet like yours, I wouldn't even look at Rs 30,000 crore. We are giving them Rs 15,000 crore by way of equity infusion... It is fair to ask if they will bring down the prices, provided somebody can say there's not going to be another global turbulence. Their profits for three quarters are good and the fourth quarter is also good, then you can start looking at these things.

Amitabh Sinha: At a G20 meeting, you said that India will most likely achieve its

net zero status much before the target year of 2070. Can you share that assessment?

I said the net zero 2070 target, like all the targets that we set in this country, enjoys the benefit of a lot of care. We don't want to do something unrealistic. That's why we ended up as one of the countries which complies with its Paris commitments. If I look at the oil companies and their individual targets, they are between 2035 and 2045. Look at the speed with which we're going into biofuels. You had a target of 20 per cent blending by 2030, you brought it forward to 2025. We have over 100 biogas plants functional and we are setting up another 100 or so in UP. You're making second-generation ethanol from agricultural waste (*parali*)... Net zero is a very big thing for a developing country like India. But I think it can be done before 2070 and that's the sentiment I was expressing.

Amitabh Sinha: Even the green hydrogen target of 5 million metric tons...

It is too conservative. I see in the coming time that a company like Indian Oil Corporation will convert to green hydrogen. Others are doing the same thing. What do you need for green hydrogen? You need green energy at a reasonable cost... You need an electrolyser. Every electrolyser manufacturer in the world is in India today, either through collaboration or otherwise... Green hydrogen will succeed in places where there is local demand, there is local production, and there is local consumption, which leaves the United States, India and China. My take is that 5 million metric tons per annum is very conservative.

Amitabh Sinha: The Central Vista is your showpiece project. Are they model buildings for the entire world? Sustainability and energy efficiency-wise? If not, why not?

Anything that we do now, we make a conscious attempt to get the greenest technology. Will that situation change three years from now? I don't know but I don't think so. What we're building now is for the next 50 to 200 years... Will that be a model? I think it's already a model.

Jatin Anand: There is a view that all members of the Union Cabinet have been asked for the preference to contest Lok Sabha.

One prominent member has just been declared from Orissa — Ashwini Vaishnaw. Some members who've been in the Rajya Sabha for extended periods — some even

had three terms — are young and would want to contest Lok Sabha because that is a different political dynamic. There are others, for instance, who have not even completed two terms. I've been a minister for seven years, but I still have a Rajya Sabha term for the next three years. As a party worker, you do what the party tells you to do. Many of them who are already announced in the electoral fray will admit that they've been told to contest or they want to contest and they are already looking at seats.

Jatin Anand: How do you see the BJP's association with the Akalis playing out, especially in view of the farmers' agitation?

As a member of the Cabinet and the Council of Ministers, I remember the representative of that party sitting inside the Cabinet and welcoming those farm laws then. The decision to leave was theirs. Secondly, I have never been fascinated by that alliance because it placed us in a subsidiary position in Punjab... If you are in an alliance, it has to be, at the very least, a relationship between equals... Also, for one party to say we are the true representatives of the Sikhs, where did you get that from?... Insofar as the farm agitation is concerned, the party's senior leadership not only has a commitment to resolve issues but resolve them in a constructive, amicable manner.

Anil Sasi: With regards to the Russian oil flows, how tricky was it getting around the oil price cap? Do you see a temptation by the G7 to perhaps tweak the \$60 cap?

First of all, we didn't get around the price gap. The price cap suits me, if I can buy something cheaper, why would I want

to buy it for a more expensive price? If somebody says there's a price cap, shouldn't I be going around and telling the supplier saying there's a price cap, you have to sell me for less? If it's not doable, if they say shipping becomes a problem, that's their problem. You have global turbulence... you've got a huge centre for supply in close proximity (to India) — the UAE, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. Earlier, some of them used to charge an Asian premium. They have stopped that. Going forward, it's largely going to be if you have the resource, who can buy it. We're in the happy situation of being one of the few who can buy.

Mallica Joshi: What are your thoughts on the buzz around the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress alliance, especially in Delhi?

Have they got an alliance? They are giving them one seat and you call that an alliance. I have a reasonably good working knowledge of the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress. It's not happening in Punjab, I'd be surprised if it happens in Delhi... Even in the INDIA alliance, I used to say the test will come if you can engage in seat sharing. That never came... What is the internal dynamic of each party? I know for a fact that potential or aspiring candidates must all be lining up for an alliance. Alliance will not work out if you are getting one seat out of seven. I don't see any of them giving the other party three. Which means, the BJP will win all seven.

Ritu Sarin: The Lutyens Bungalow Zone (LBZ) is an unfinished item on your agenda.

I don't think that's something that we have to talk about just now. It's a very interesting issue because a lot of people's individual property interests would get covered by that. If their place is taken out of the LBZ, they can raise the height of their structure and get commercial profit... Half the people want out and half the people want in.

Harikishan Sharma: It seems that the government has not been able to find a suitable language to talk to farmers. Also, it seems there's a growing distrust among farming communities. Does this worry you?

I must respectfully submit that I don't agree with this. I think the Central government has gone out of its way to accommodate the legitimate interests of farmers... We are trying for a permanent solution for surplus, food stock and stockpiling.

Harikishan Sharma: Why has the BJP not been able to expand its base in Punjab?

With the *gathbandhan*, we were in an alliance where we were the junior partners. If you look at the vote base that the BJP has there, at any given point of time, it is pretty significant. I fought an election in Punjab. I was given only 17 days to prepare. I got 41.4 per cent of the vote which is a record vote... Everyone I know of, in the Congress Party, wants to join us.

Arunima Bharadwaj: The IEA member countries have recently agreed to start discussions on including India and giving it full membership. Where does this position India?

It's a belated recognition of where India already is... India is where the energy story is really thriving. Exxon, Chevron, Petrobras, Petronas, BP — they all want to come to India... Why? Because this is where the growth in demand is. If you're in the energy business, whether you are situated in Houston, Texas, which is in a way the energy capital, or you are in São Paulo, Brazil, or in Malaysia, they are interested in India... We've already got another 50 million metric tons per annum (new refining capacity) in the pipeline. In the new world which we are seeing take shape, we'll have three or four refining hubs in the world... So, we're very much part of the world.

Dheeraj Mishra: Do you think the Amitabh Kant report on real estate projects is working on ground? Also, should there be a mandatory clause that unless the builder pays 25 per cent of the dues, only then the registry will begin?

The principle of that report is that if you

have a stuck project, the way to get it off the ground is by equal burden sharing, you take some shave here and there and you get the project going... Now if somebody had gone to NCLT before that, I can't do anything about it. Issues arose essentially because land is such a valuable segment, we never had a regulator. And then RERA came in (2016 Act).

Earlier, a lot of people bought into land banks thinking the price would increase. Then suddenly the price dropped. The buyer was not looking at the fine print of the project. So, they got stuck with a builder. It was one-sided... If there are any remaining issues, I think under RERA and with the chief ministers of Haryana and UP, we'll resolve them.

Ambreen Khan: Politics is a game of chess. How did you perceive politics when you were a diplomat and how different is it when you are a politician? What were the nightmares of a diplomat compared to that of a politician?

If you were to write one's story in terms of the nightmares, I can tell you, I've had them both as a civil servant and as a politician... You have to do your job, but the roles are different... If you can sleep well, you won't have nightmares, but I think in a country like India, there will be challenges. And most of those nightmares are caused by the press, by the way. It's a story in the press which is likely to cause you a nightmare, not something else. How will this play out etc? Now, if you make the mistake of getting into it, you've had it, because you are wading right into it. That becomes the sticking point.

Sukalp Sharma: Donald Trump might return as US president, there is a war raging in the Middle East, in Palestine. How do you see these factors playing out for India?

I predicted Trump's victory the first time around. On India, there is a bipartisan consensus in the United States. There's also a bipartisan consensus on the United States in India. Fact is you have a vibrant Indian community in the US. Look at the kind of exchanges we have with the US in the area of technology, pure sciences. It's a very different game... No matter what the results of the US election, the India-US story is going to go on at a steady pace. In the sectors I work, there's no room for philanthropy and altruism. You do solid investment because you want to make money out of it. That is the spirit in which India-US will also succeed.



Alliance (between AAP and Congress) will not work out if you are getting one seat out of seven. I don't see any of them giving the other party three. Which means, BJP will win all seven

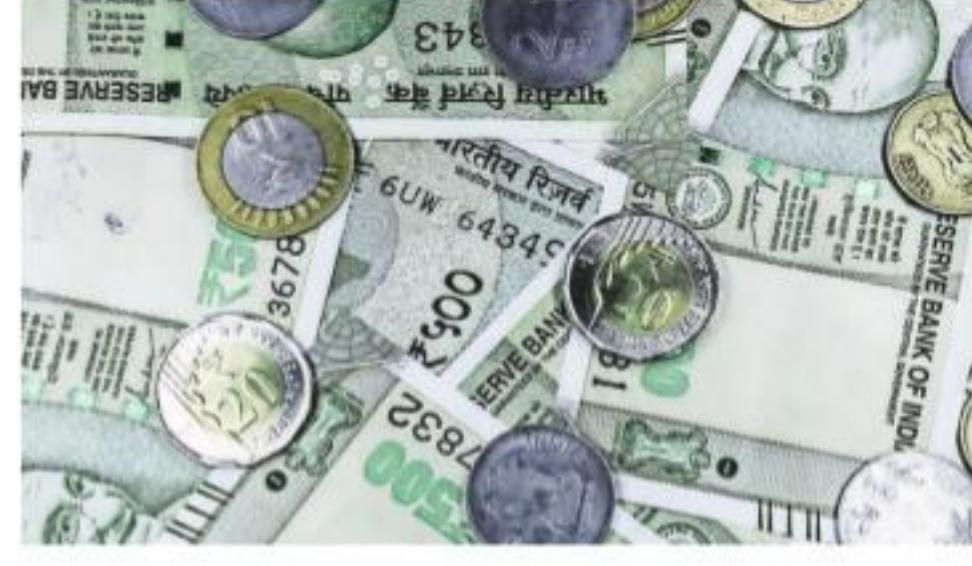
LIMITS HIKE AFTER 18 YEARS, FOURTH SUCH INSTANCE SINCE INDEPENDENCE

After PAC nod, hike in reporting limits for Ministries' spending proposed

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18

AFTER A gap of about 18 years, the government is set to revise its financial limits for 'New Service' and 'New Instruments of Service' after getting approval from Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The panel has approved the Finance Ministry's proposal to raise the reporting limit for new policy-related expenditure by ministries/departments to above Rs 50 crore but not exceeding Rs 100 crore along with mandating prior approval of Parliament for spending over Rs 100 crore.

The approval, which has come in line with expansion in GDP growth and the Budget size, has fixed the reporting limit for 'New Instrument of Service', to up to 20 per cent of the original appropriation or up to Rs 100 crore, whichever is higher. "Approval from Parliament would be mandatory for amounts exceeding 20% of the original appropriation or above 100 crores, whichever is higher, subject to savings within the same section of the grant," the PAC, headed by Congress leader



Parliament's Public Accounts Committee approves Finance Ministry's proposal to raise financial limits for spending. File

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, has said in the report titled 'Revision of Financial Limits for Determining the Cases Relating to New Service/New Instrument of Service', tabled in Parliament on February 7.

This proposal for revision in the financial limits, which has just been the fourth such instance since Independence, is aimed at minimising the frequency of Supplementary Demands for Grants presented to Parliament during a financial year. The last such revision had

come into effect in 2006. Due to the low financial limits for new policy-related expenditure earlier, there has been a reported increase in the number of supplementary proposals from the ministries/departments. The time taken in seeking Parliament's approval would then cause delay in execution of projects, the report said.

New Service (NS) refers to expenditure arising out of a new policy decision, not brought to the notice of Parliament earlier, including a new activity or a new investment. 'New Instrument of Service' refers to relatively large

expenditure arising out of important expansion of an existing policy. The financial limits for 'New Service/New Instrument of Service' are applied whenever the expenditure is incurred on account of the expansion of an existing policy.

"The proposed amendments intend to encourage the Ministries to meticulously estimate their budgetary requirements. The necessity for the upward revision arises due to a surge in supplementary proposals from the Ministries/Departments seeking prior approval from Parliament, causing delays in execution of projects/schemes/programmes despite availability of savings," the PAC report said.

With an expected growth of GDP in the range of 6-7 per cent year-on-year, the size of the Budget is anticipated to grow substantially in the next decade too and thus, required an upward revision in the financial limits.

Bharti Bharti Mahtab, Member of the PAC and Biju Janata Dal leader, said this is the fourth such change since the last 50 years and has come after wide consultations.

"During the last 50 years, the

first such change occurred in 1970. Then subsequently in the 1980s, the third one was in 2005. This is the fourth time the PAC has prepared this report. All such reports are unanimous and are prepared after wide consultations," he told *The Indian Express*.

According to the report, a substantial growth in budget size has diminished the delegated powers of the ministries leading to voluminous proposal(s) being forwarded, for reporting/approval of the Parliament.

"The limits were very low between Rs 10 lakh to Rs 2.5 crore and the value differed across nearly 50 items of expenditure. Hence, it was extremely difficult to comply and it would slow down the overall government spending process," a senior government official told *The Indian Express*.

The PAC and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India have been pointing to the growing instances of unnecessary supplementary, re-appropriations not adhering to the NS/NI limits; and re-appropriations without reporting to Parliament or without obtaining prior approval of the Finance Ministry.

FULL REPORT ON

www.indianexpress.com

The intention is to bring Air India up to the same levels as Vistara: CEO



merger is 2025.

Air India is an older brand that has a strong recall value globally, while Vistara is seen as the better brand in India. Would it not be better to have all international operations under the Air India brand and domestic under Vistara, instead of merging the brands as well?

If you have separate AOCs (Air Operator Certificates) or separate airline registrations, you have to have separate machinery—post-holders, specific safety and operational apparatus, etc. It is a lot more efficient if you combine these together instead of having two airlines. Also, one brand makes it a lot more seamless for the customer, particularly on the domestic-to-international connections. So, those are some of the considerations. In the grand scheme of things, with India growing so fast, you will have a lot of feed into the international segment from domestic. So, it makes even more sense to have a single entity.

Mergers can be quite messy when it comes to people integration. How is the morale among Vistara employees about what the future holds?

The first set of approvals is competition-related and the CCI (Competition Commission of India) has already approved the merger, and so have most other jurisdictions. We have a few pending, Singapore being one of them. I think that is the last one pending, which we hope to get latest by March.

The next one is NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal), which is the official merger approval from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and that process is also ongoing. We are confident that that should also come through by the first quarter or the first half of this year. The last one is the DPTI (Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) approval.

We expect all the approvals to come by the middle of this year. Once all these legal approvals are in, the operational merger will start. If all goes right, and subject to further approvals from the ministry (of civil aviation) and DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation), we expect things to take another 12 months or so. So roughly, the timeline for the

Have you started the process of charting out growth paths for your crew in view of the integration, considering there will be more opportunities to transition to wide-body aircraft in the merged airline?

Wherever it's possible legally and from a compliance perspective, those things have happened.

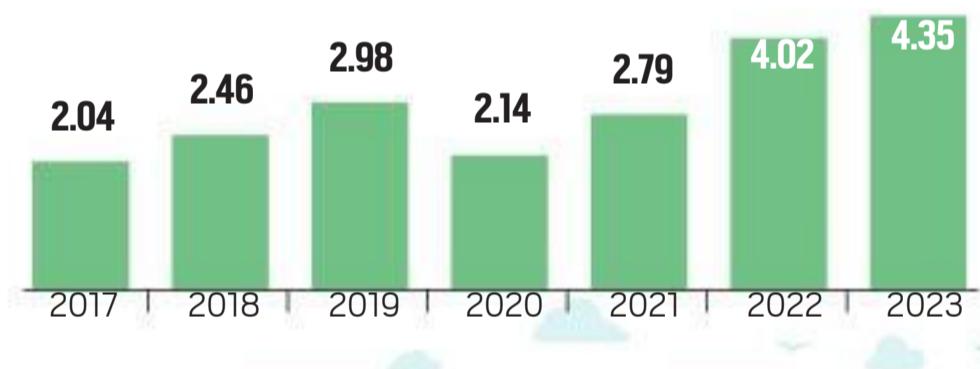
FULL INTERVIEW ON

www.indianexpress.com

'Builders completed 4.35 lakh homes last year in 7 cities'

India's seven major cities witnessed an annual 8% rise in the completion of housing units last year as developers' cash flows improved on better sales, according to Anarock.

HOUSING UNITS IN PAST 7 YEARS (in lakh units)



Completed units in 2023

Mumbai	1,43,500
Metropolitan Region:	
Delhi-NCR:	1,14,280
Pune:	65,000
Bengaluru,	87,190
Hyderabad, and Chennai:	
Kolkata:	25,075

"The Indian residential sector is unlikely to forget 2023, which was nothing less than phenomenal at every level. Housing sales breached the previous peak levels of 2022 and remain robust in 2024," Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said.

Source: Anarock/PTI

Hybrid funds surge: ₹20,634 crore inflow in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 18

HYBRID MUTUAL fund schemes have been gaining popularity among investors, attracting Rs 20,634 crore in January, marking a 37 per cent surge from the previous month, largely due to their appeal as an alternative investment option post-change in taxation laws for debt funds.

With this, total inflow in the category reached Rs 1.21 lakh crore in the April-January period of the current financial year.

FULL REPORT ON

www.indianexpress.com

(FY24).

However, hybrid schemes saw outflow in the same period of the preceding financial year.

Hybrid funds are mutual fund schemes that typically invest in a combination of equity and debt securities and sometimes in other asset categories such as gold.

The category has been attracting regular inflows since April 2023, after a change in taxation for debt funds that kicked off in the same month. Before that, the segment saw a net withdrawal of Rs 12,372 crore in March last year.

According to the latest data

with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi), hybrid schemes witnessed an inflow of Rs 20,637 crore in January, which was higher than Rs 15,009 crore inflow seen in December.

The two categories of hybrid funds that attracted most funds during the month under review are arbitrage funds and multi-asset allocation funds.

Out of the Rs 20,637 crore inflow in hybrid funds in January, arbitrage funds witnessed an inflow of Rs 10,608 crore, while for multi-asset allocation funds it was Rs 7,080 crore.

Moreover, around 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the allocation in the hybrid category has been going towards arbitrage funds in the last six months.

"The main reason for the increase in flows in this category is that they are being looked at as an alternative post-change in tax laws."

"Currently, arbitrage funds are sitting at a spread of around 8 per cent making it an attractive investment opportunity, especially on a post-tax basis," Feroze Azeem, Deputy CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, said.

insurance companies, pension funds, must put in about minimum 15 per cent of their earnings into the start-up movement of India, to make India a great deep tech, startup country of the world," he said.

Unlike foreign capital, which chases quick returns, domestic capital can help bring in stability to Indian enterprises.

He said when India makes a quantum jump in areas such as deep tech, drones, robotics and battery storage, it will require a lot of patient capital because returns come in late. There is a need for the creation of a large fund of funds for deep tech.

"When venture capitalists put money into deep tech, the fund of funds should be able to support them so that there is a sharing between the fund of funds and the venture capitalists and private equity. It is very important for deep tech to really take off," he said.

Kant said the reason for the success of the government's flagship initiative, Start-up India, was the creation of a Fund of Funds for Start-ups (FFS), which is managed by the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). As of December 18, 2023, a commitment of Rs 10,229 crore has been made under FFS.

When asked about the ways the tech industry can work along with the government when it comes to regulations, Kant suggested transparency, good governance and self-regulation as the most important factors.

Bima Sugam to offer free services to consumers, says IRDAI; various insurers to be shareholders

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 18

INSURERS WILL FACILITATE AVAILABILITY OF THEIR INSURANCE PRODUCTS FOR SALE AND PROVIDE ALL SERVICES RELATED TO AN INSURANCE POLICY

operable platforms, enabling seamless integration with various services to facilitate purchase, sale, settlement of insurance claims, grievance redressal and servicing of insurance policies and other related matters as allowed by the authority under a single platform. All insurance companies will join the proposed platform.

Insurers will facilitate availability of their insurance products for sale and provide all services related to an insurance policy including settlement of insurance claims and grievance redressal on the platform on an ongoing basis.

The new company will seek prior approval of the IRDAI for appointment, reappointment, termination and change in the terms and conditions of the appointment of Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer.

"The company will appoint key managerial persons with appropriate experience, a mix of skills, and the integrity necessary to discharge their responsibilities for the operation and risk management of the Marketplace and clearly specify the roles and responsibilities of the management," IRDAI said in its draft regulations. IRDAI would nominate two members on the board of company.

Alok Rungta, Deputy CEO and Chief Financial Officer, Future Generali India Life Insurance Company, said, "We are happy to witness the imminent launch of IRDAI's 'Bima Sugam'. This initiative represents more than just a digital platform... it's a transformative step in our ongoing commitment to empower policyholders and reshape the insurance landscape."

The company, through collaboration and innovation, is poised to enhance accessibility, affordability and transparency, he said.

"With its not-for-profit structure and diversified shareholding, it is set to become the central hub for insurers, intermediaries, and consumers alike. This advancement aligns seamlessly with our industry's collective vision, propelling us toward the ambitious goal of insurance for all by 2047. Bima Sugam isn't just a welcome development... it points to a future where consumers and industry advancements work together for the benefit of all," he said.

The proposed platform will be a not-for-profit entity established through a company formed under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

According to Tarun Chugh, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz Life

Insurance, the draft regulations for Bima Sugam is a big step towards bringing this transformative initiative to fruition.

"The regulations focus on making insurance easy to access and affordable for everyone. It's towards streamlining the entire insurance value chain, from policy issuance to claim settlement, thereby promoting transparency and collaboration at every stage. These initiatives will play a huge role in driving penetration of insurance and enabling us to achieve the vision of 'insurance for all' by 2047," he said.

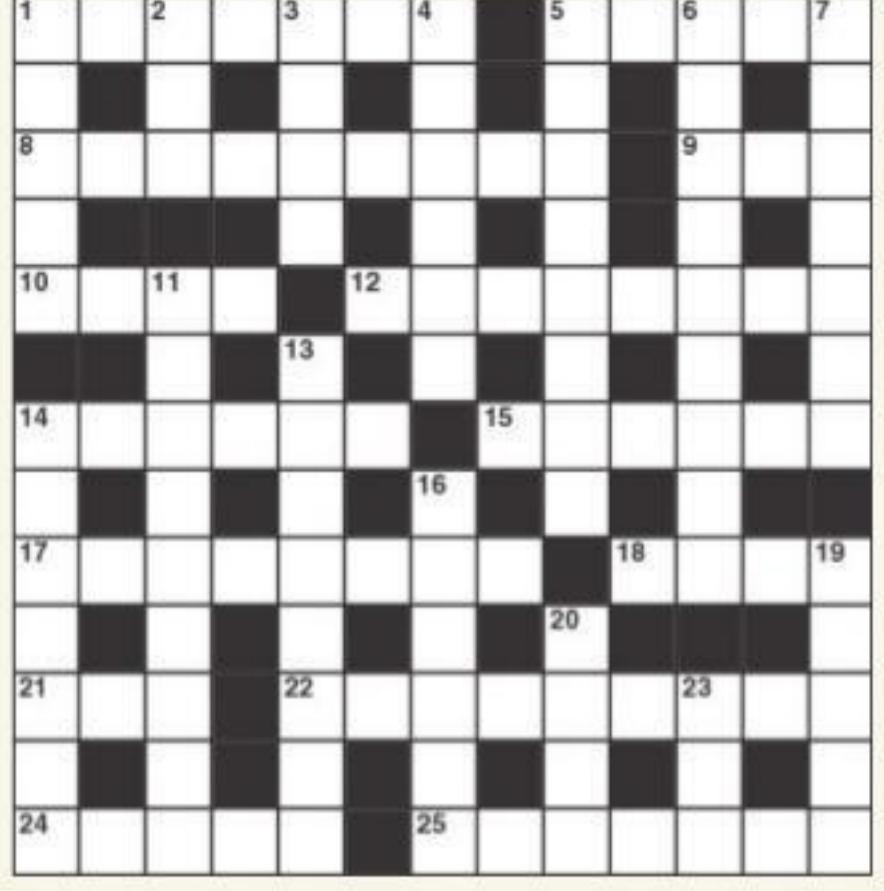
This platform will raise awareness about insurance and significantly enhance the overall customer experience in the industry, similar to the transformative impact that UPI has had on payments in India, said the CEO of an insurance firm. "It will contribute towards easy accessibility of insurance and making products more affordable," he said.

MARKET WATCH

6 OF TOP-10 COS SEE M-CAP EROSION

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most valued firms eroded by Rs 71,414 crore last week, with state-owned company LIC emerged as the biggest laggard. PTI

CROSSWORD 5291



ACROSS

- 1 I'd back employees on mother's side (7)
5 Where to spend the rest of your life (2,3)
8 Figure out a way to obtain protection in the home (9)
9 Either way it's a light touch (3)
10 How fire can become widespread (4)
12 Advances or returns (8)
14 Something lyrical about a redheat's garment (6)
15 One can't do more than this (6)
17 Watchman who sticks to the rules? (8)
18 A force retreats to a distance (4)
21 It is engaged in making a machine work (3)
22 Men of the same calling (9)
24 Flower making drinkers forget their past (5)
25 Laughs at what could be desired (7)

Solutions Crossword 5290 Across: 1 Betrayed, 5 Boom, 9 Medals, 10 Withheld, 11 Wool gatherer, 13 Absorb, 14 Thwart, 17 Kleptomaniac, 20 Verbose, 21 Maori, 22 Rule, 23 Meanness Down: 1 Bump, 2 Tedious, 3 Acceleration, 4 Enwrap, 6 Other, 7 Moderate, 8 Right-hand man, 12 Walkover, 15 Almade, 16 Impede, 18 Enrol, 19 Miss

DOWN

- 1 Fed up with hesitation and delay (5)
2 An officer's entitlement (3)
3 Freight unopened in Jason's ship (4)
4 If going overland you'll need a cab (6)
5 I acted in variety show (8)
6 The richer for not getting on (6,3)
7 Top side possibly put down (7)
11 A marksman will use this sort of gift horse (9)
13 Be charming coming in (8)
14 A clot is perhaps not readily moved (7)
16 Smiled widely having support (6)
19 Sprays of flowers (5)
20 A good man rises to king and emperor (4)
23 Deceive a child (3)

The earth___in flowers. -Ralph Waldo Emerson (6)

JUMBLED WORDS

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 query.

The earth___in flowers. -Ralph Waldo Emerson (6)

CUYAS

OOTTYH

INRSTG

LSYLU

Answers: THE EARTH LIES IN FLOWERS. -RALPH WALDO EMERSON

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



REFRAINING FROM THROWING THESE SNOWBALLS IN THE HOPE OF BEING REWARDED AT CHRISTMAS IS DELAYED AND UNCERTAIN PLEASURE.



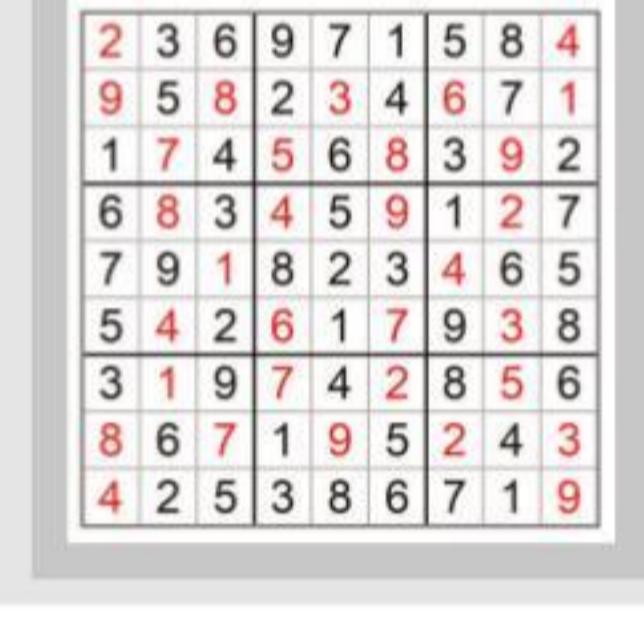
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 5477
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.

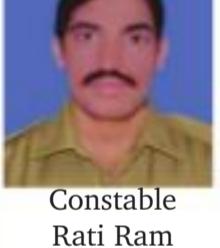


Difficulty Level
1s = Very Easy; 2s = Easy;
3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;
5s = Very Hard;
6s = Genius

**SOLUTION SUDOKU 5476**

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITB)
19 February 2024



Constable
Rati Ram

ITBP salutes its braveheart Constable Rati Ram of 4th Battalion, who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2001.

Village : Mukandpura, Distr - Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

CISF Salutes the Soldier
19-02-1994



CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of this brave-heart. On this day, he laid down his life at the altar of duty while fighting with terrorist at HMT Srinagar. His courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to him for this noblest deed.

Classifieds

I, MITALI BIST, W/O BIST DEVENDRA MANGAL SINGH resident of AFS Palam have changed my name from MITALI BIST to MITALI DEVENDRA BIST vide affidavit dt 15/02/2024 before New Delhi. 0050237205-1

T Khalid S/O, Abdul Kalam R/O H177, 1st Floor, Shamshul Road, Near Wisdom Creative School, Khadda Colony, Jaitpur, Badarpur, New Delhi 110044 have changed my name to Khalid Kalam. 0040715029-1

I, Tanya Mehra W/o Hrishik Mehta R/o F-2484, 2nd Floor, Palam Vihar Choma(62), Cartarpuri alias Daulatpur, Nasirabad(63), Gurgaon, Haryana-120217 changed my name to Tanya Mehta for all purposes. 0040714967-1

I, Sunil Kumar Gupta, S/O Gyan Prakash, R/O A-58-A Block,pocket-00-60,MTR Plot Sector 2 Rohini,North West,DELHI-110085.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME Sunil Kumar Gupta to SUNIL,for all,future purposes. 0040715152-4

I, Sharwan Lal,Son of,Late Sh.Jay Narayan R/O,House.no- A-282/B Sangam-vihar New Delhi-110062,have changed my name to Sharwan Lal Jangid,Permanently . 0040715152-6

I,Mohd Saleem Qureshi,S/O,MOHAMMAD MUSTAQEEM,R/O,H.no,A-41,Gali,no.1 ZIAUDDIN-PUR NEW-MUSTAFABAD DELHI,have changed my name,from Mohammad Saleem to Mohd Saleem Qureshi,for All purpose. 0040715152-5

I, MOHIT KUMAR,S/O MADHU SUDHAN GUPTA,R/O C-4/34,First-Floor,Sector-11, R.K.Puram, New Delhi and permanent resident of 1071, F.C.I. Colony, Shrinagar, Hapur (UP) declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as PRAVEEN KUMAR in my service record. The actual name of mine is PRAVEEN KUMAR SHARMA respectively which may be amended accordingly 0070889790-1

It is for general information that I PRAVEEN KUMAR SHARMA Son of Shri Rameshwar Dayal Sharma residing at 1380, Sector-12, R.K.Puram, New Delhi and permanent resident of 1071, F.C.I. Colony, Shrinagar, Hapur (UP) declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as PRAVEEN KUMAR in my service record. The actual name of mine is PRAVEEN KUMAR SHARMA respectively which may be amended accordingly 0070889790-1

I, Surender M Kumar S/O Kedar Nath, R/o B-48-49, Block B Lajpat Nagar 1, Delhi-110024, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Surender Mohan. 0070889733-1

I, Sachidanand Mishra S/O Uday Narayan Mishra, R/o House No. 660 I Block Gali No 8 Sangam Vihar Deoli, Hauz Khas South Delhi-110062 have changed the name of my minor Son Anmol aged about 15 Years and He shall hereafter be known as Devyansh Mishra 0070889730-1

I, Mohammad Mahmood S/o Khaleel Ur Rehman R/o 150, GT,Road, Takia Pasonda, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Mohd Mahmood Ansari. 0070889812-1

I, K Suman Dikshit W/o Mohd Qamar Anjum R/o 703, Richmondpark, GH-9, Sec-6, Vasundhara, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Suman Anjum. 0070889721-1

I, Inderjeet Paul alias Inderjit Kaur Paul D/O Mohan Singh Bhasin, W/O D/S Paul R/o 8/A, Pocket A 10, Kalkaji, Extn., South Delhi, Delhi- 110019, have changed my name and shall hereafter be Known as Inderjeet Kaur 0070889728-1

I,Dhruv Kumar S/O Ajay Kumar Chachra,R/O J-50D, J-Block, Ashok Vihar,Phase-1,Delhi-110052,have changed my name to Dhruv Chachra. 0040715152-1

I, BIST DEVENDRA MANGAL SINGH resident of AFS Palam have changed my son's name from HRIYANSH DEVENDRA BIST to HARRSHIT DEVENDRA BIST vide affidavit dtd 15/02/2024 before New Delhi. 0050237204-1

Whilst care is taken prior to acceptance of advertising copy, it is not possible to verify its contents. The Indian Express and its licensees or be held responsible for such damage, nor for any loss or damage incurred as a result of transactions on its websites, e-mail, telephone or mobile devices, advertising in its newspapers or publications. We therefore recommend that readers check the terms and conditions before sending any monies or entering into any agreements with advertisers or otherwise acting on an advertisement in any manner whatsoever.

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

At least you, like most other people, have now adapted to the status quo. Over the next few days you'll have all the time you need for self-reflection. The most important people you meet this week are likely to be out-of-the-ordinary and an enormous force for change.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Mars is hanging around the inspirational sectors of your chart, and you might well be carried away on a flight of fancy. But remember that, for the coming few weeks, you must take a stronger line than usual over financial affairs and business arrangements.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

You're probably going to have little choice but to deal with domestic affairs.

There's just no way certain people can be properly handled if you only allow them a little of your time. Do your bit and give them all the attention they need.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You often have it all

mainly by the simple art of spreading your options around but, on many recent occasions, people have expected you to cave in and agree to their demands. The situation is now shifting quite rapidly, and you will be urged to stand your ground and not give way.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

In spite of your reputation for being a tower of strength, you do have a number of reservations about allowing other people to rely on you. Neither should you permit anyone to push you too far. It seems that your best policy is to establish proper boundaries.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Let's turn our attention back to the amazing alignments of Jupiter and Saturn. You really do seem to believe that it is your prerogative to put the world to rights, and you may well be quite correct. But watch out, because you might also have to foot the bill.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

By rights the day should kick off to a good start, although I'll wager that more of you than usual will have experienced some sort of strange dream or broken night. Whatever is on your plate, domestic questions are not about to answer themselves, so get down to the nitty-gritty.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

While the Sun is so positive, you must make the development of partnerships, both personal and professional, your principal goal. Don't expect dramatic results, but look for interesting openings which can be developed later and try to surround yourself with useful people.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male Age : Approx. 30-40 years, Height : Approx. 5'7".

Complexion: Wheatish, wearing sky blue colour hoodie, badami colour jeans and black colour leather shoes in feet, was found dead on 13.02.2024 at Haiderpur.

Water Treatment Plant, Rohini, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 61-A dated 13.02.2024 u/s 174 Cr.P.C. has been lodged at P.S. K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for identification in the mortuary of BSA Hospital, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone numbers.

SHO - P.S. K.N. Katju Marg, Delhi
Tel. No. 011-27571162, 27571171
08750870327, 09711315445

DP/1999/RD/24

Please join us on NW Railways

219-DG/24

Office of the Superintending Engineer

Bulandshahr Circle, P.W.D., Bulandshahr

No. 1532/96M(iv)-BSR Circle/2023-24

Short E-Procurement Inviting Tenders

On behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Superintending Engineer Bulandshahr Circle, U.P.P.W.D., Bulandshahr invites following percentage rate bid online through <http://e-tender.up.nic.in> from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with P.W.D. class as per column no. 10 below Setu work Category as applied from 20.02.2024 to 26.02.2024 upto 12:00 Noon as per the prescribed T-2 of Govt. of U.P. The technical bids will be opened online on dated 26.02.2024 at 12:30 P.M. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day, at the same time any validity of bid will be considered from the original date. The date and time of opening of the financial bid shall be notified on the website.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs.in Lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lakhs)	Time of completion work including rainy season	Tender document fee including GST (In Rs.)	Address of Executive Engineer Executing the work	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer	Category
1	जनाद गौतमबुद्धनगर में वित्तीय वर्ष 2023-24 में खुला जेवर मार्ग (प्रतिक्रिया) के लिए निर्माण कार्य	108.00	7.40	6 Months	Tender Cost Rs. 300/-200+ 18% G.S.T. Rs. 414.00 = 2714.00	Executive Engineer Provincial Division, P.W.D., Gautambudhnagar	Superintending Engineer Bulandshahr Circle, P.W.D., Bulandshahr	Chief Engineer Meerut Zone, P.W.D., Meerut	A, B Setu Work

1. Time allowed for completion of Whole work is mention in col. No. 5 with including rainy season.
2. The Tender Document fee must be deposited through Internet Banking only.
3. All registered contractors have to upload Turnover certified by C.A. of last 5 years and details of maximum cost of work satisfactorily completed in last 5 years on Chanakya Software before submission of tender.
4. Details of e-tender uploaded on <http://e-tender.up.nic.in> shall also be uploaded on UP PWD Chanakya software, before last date & time of submission of bid.
5. During execution of work contractor should ensure the all safety Measures for COVID-19 issued by the Uttar Pradesh government.
6. In PWD technical evaluation of tenders is to be done by Prahar Software URL for Prahar is <http://wms.upwd.gov.in/Prahar/>.

(Kanchan Singh)
Executive Engineer
P.W.D.,
Gautamb

We know that things don't always work out exactly how you want it to, but at 2-1 down in the series, still got two games left, so we've got a great chance to come home with the trophy at 3-2.

BEN STOKES, ENGLAND CAPTAIN

It's a different ball game now

India defang England with a 434-run win in Rajkot — their biggest in Tests in terms of runs — to take a crucial 2-1 series lead

SIRRAM VEERA
RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 18

IF SATURDAY afternoon was overcooking of their Bazball cult persona, Sunday was a throwback to an earlier English era of resignation to a lost cause. They came, they swished, and they fell.

It took two Tests into the series but normally returned to an India-England series at home. Finally. Over the decades, barring Kevin Pietersen-led team's heroics in 2012, Indian fans have been used to watching pasty-faced Englishmen, surrounded by an Indian mob of fielders, and being clueless in front of the stumps. They would poke, push, stab, and flail out their sweeps. And the English top order finally did that on Sunday evening to hand a 2-1 series lead to India.

There was more than English collapse to the 90's nostalgia as the left-handed Yashasvi Jaiswal became the third youngest to score two double tons. Don Bradman was the second, but the youngest was Vinod Kambli, another Indian left-hander who whacked the English for the first of his two in 1993. Jaiswal's frenzy allowed India to declare at 430 for 4, setting a target of 557 and England were shot out for 122 in under 40 overs.

The large six-seater Rajkot autos had started to arrive not long after tea to pick up many of the strong Sunday-crowd fans as the English fight had evaporated rather too quickly into the late afternoon air. It's a credit to England that this throwback moment has taken this long to arrive and if not for the mania battoning on the third day, this moment might never have come too.

Ollie Pope, the hero of the first Test, went for a cut to a ball from Ravindra Jadeja that had some extra bounce and also came at a fair clip to force him to hurry with his shot. The ball flew to midriff of Rohit Sharma at slips. As is his wont with such catches, Rohit opened his palms to fling the cherry into the air with both hands still pressed together ala Azharuddin in those days of English collapse. It used to be Kumble, Raju or Chauhan then; these days it's with a bit of help from Indian seamers too.

Jonny Bairstow, in the midst of a forgettable series, went for a sweep shot, missed and was trapped LBW. Again, sweep-and-out had the 90's feel to it. It used to be Robin Smith then; it's Bairstow now.

Root's plight

Joe Root, who had got out to rushes of blood twice in succession, never looked settled out there again. With the ball beginning to keep low, he was trying to squirt it out to slip, nudralling across the line, trying to even pull. And unsurprisingly, he too went for a sweep off Jadeja but didn't get down in time. He is a fabulous sweeper usually and on his good days would get his back knee down in a flash or crouch really low on the front foot. He did neither here, and his bat parallel to the ground swished over the ball and was trapped lbw.

Ben Stokes, the leader, had seen enough by then and had enough of tuk-tuk cricket as well, and went for a powerful sweep. But he too missed and Kuldeep too had a lbw victim.

Amidst all this, there was a run-out too. There had to be. It came right at the start when Ben Duckett pushed one towards the right of midwicket and rushed headlong but Zafar Khan, already a crowd favourite, too went for his lofted hits on a stretched front foot and slog sweeps as India marched on toward declaration. And as it turned out, it was a march towards a thumping win. Jadeja had his hands aloft after the fifth wicket to seal the game, but otherwise it was a quiet celebration from the team.



Ravindra Jadeja exults after dismissing Joe Root LBW. Jadeja took 5 for 41 as England were bowled out for just 122 in 39.4 overs in their second innings. PTI

INDIA'S BIGGEST WINS

Margin	vs	Venue	Year
434	Eng	Rajkot	2024
372	NZ	Wankhede	2021
337	SA	Delhi	2015
321	NZ	Indore	2016
320	Aus	Mohali	2008

* in terms of runs

with his match-setting hundred in the first innings.

The nostalgia wasn't just restricted to India's bowling but also their batting as they bossed around in some style until they declared. Even the nightwatchman Kuldeep Yadav batted on without any fuss; such was India's domination. The only blip came when Shubman Gill was run out on 91. Kuldeep charged out for a drive and then took a couple more steps and Gill responded swiftly.

But once Kuldeep changed his mind, neither had the presence of mind to keep running on to sacrifice the nightwatchman as it all happened far too quickly in the moment. And Gill couldn't get back in time and Kuldeep sank to his knees at the other end.

Barring that, it was all India, Jaiswal, who had retired hurt last evening to back spasm, walloped the ball around. The highlight was a hattrick of sixes off James Anderson - a lapped six off a full toss, an imperious wall-down the track to smash over extra cover, and a shuffle to off before biffing the ball to the sight screen.

Sarfraz Khan, already a crowd favourite, too went for his lofted hits on a stretched front foot and slog sweeps as India marched on toward declaration. And as it turned out, it was a march towards a thumping win. Jadeja had his hands aloft after the fifth wicket to seal the game, but otherwise it was a quiet celebration from the team.

Steady restart laid foundation for Jaiswal double

SIRRAM VEERA
RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 18

A COUPLE of days before the Rajkot Test, Yashasvi Jaiswal called for the throw-down specialists to the nets. He had already batted long, but wanted to work on something specific. It wasn't the coaches telling him but it was on his initiative. He pointed to a spot on the length around off stump, and asked them to slant it away or straighten outside off stump. He kept leaving those that angled across, defending only balls on the off-stump. Occasionally, a ball would bounce more and he would yank his arms up to either tap them down or leave it alone.

Interestingly, as it would turn out, it was that kind of ball that got him out in the first innings, when he guided the delivery to slips. It might not have helped him on that occasion but it showed how well he prepared, and played a part in him becoming the third youngest to score two double hundreds.

It helped him in the second innings where he had to start twice, after he retired hurt on the third evening. He started cautiously, playing himself in, before opening up dramatically. Even though he was well past the hundred when he retired, he resumed as if he were on zero. Tuk-tuk, bat and pad pressed close together in defense and left the balls outside off from James Anderson. Ben Stokes too noticed it. "The way he took his time to get in, even today ... he is a great player to watch."

In a double ton that would be remembered for the thunderous hits - the hat-trick of sixes off Anderson where he swept over square-leg, charged out to clear cover boundary and smashed to the sight screen, it's these quiet settling-in periods that are a testament to his batting approach and character.



Yashasvi Jaiswal took time to settle in when he restarted batting on Sunday after retiring hurt on Day Three because of a back spasm. Reuters

Something in Anderson eggs him on. On the third afternoon too, he unloaded against him. The game was hanging in a balance with Shubman Gill in a bit of a bother against Anderson's reverse swing. He packed an arc of fielders from short cover to short mid-wicket, right in Jaiswal's eyeline. The message seemed to be: 'C'mon, show me what you got!' Perhaps, it was designed to make Jaiswal go wider of this ring, which meant he would have to play across the line to a reversing ball.

Instead, Jaiswal smoked him with big shots, secure in the confidence that even a top edge that goes behind the stumps wasn't going to find any English palm, as they were all mostly in front. So he pulled repeatedly, one flew to third man boundary. Anderson was soon off the attack.

We need more match evidence to form

an opinion about Jaiswal in such situations, as to whether he takes the aggressive approach out of adrenaline rush or if he takes deliberate risks to go with his plan.

Cool head

There was a moment in the fourth over of the second innings of the second Test too. When off-spinner Shaobai Bashir floated a ball full outside off stump, Jaiswal went for his ferocious cut and under-edged it awkwardly. He had attempted the shot in the first innings too—the same full length un-conducive to cut in theory, again pretty early in the piece, and it just about cleared the point fielder. Rohit Sharma wasn't too pleased, and quickly strode across to tell him not to play the shot. He pointed the bat straighter into the ground, seemingly telling him to play straighter.

Even though he was well past the hundred when he retired, he resumed as if he were on zero. Tuk-tuk, bat and pad pressed close together in defense and left the balls outside off from James Anderson.

The captain had just told him to be careful in a way that might have been seen as admonishment, but Jaiswal knows his skipper more than many. He took what he wanted: that bat pointing to the straighter part of the ground. But his response was worth a watch. He blocked the next ball and punched the following ball to cover.

When Bashir floated the next ball in a similar spot as the first that had led to the iffy cut, Jaiswal hammered it straight. Next ball was outside off, but on a good length, Jaiswal didn't hesitate for a moment to cut the ball past the point boundary. The next was fuller on the leg stump, which he drove to the straight boundary past his captain, who quietly went across to punch his glove.

Little big moments like that tell a story about Jaiswal's batting and character. Old timers will want to hold their opinions until they see Jaiswal handle the moving ball in England and extra bounce on Australia before nodding their heads in approval.

He had a series in South Africa where his top score in four innings was 28 but they were spiced up-pitches where nobody scored and a conclusion can't be drawn. Australia, at the end of the year, will be his next big Test. But one thing is certain. He will do his preparations extensively and be ready.

NEW KID OFF TO A FLYING START

Sarfraz, an instant hit on debut, just like Kambli was many years ago

SIRRAM VEERA
RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 18

PERHAPS IT'S his relationship with his shayari-loving emotional father that has done rounds in the media, his stocky build and girth, the boyish adolescence which still hasn't left him when he speaks, his years of waiting while silently performing in domestic cricket, the rags-to-riches story and above all, the way he bats aggressively, Sarfaraz Khan is a box-office hit in Rajkot stadium.

When he walked down the stairs to bat in the second innings, the fans, who were roasting under the hot sun with paper shields, erupted into raucous cheers and many even stood up.

For a batsman, playing just his second international innings, it was startling. Another from somewhat similar background and was much loved in his initial days of international cricket was Vinod Kambli. Sarfaraz seems to trigger similar feelings, at least in Rajkot.

Unsure if he realised the welcome, once he got on to the park, he started to stride briskly towards the centre and the ovation kept growing. The square-leg umpire cast a look at the stands behind him, turned and looked at the advancing figure.

Patidar a touch unfortunate

Last evening, another batsman, new to Test cricket, stood dazed at yet another bizarre dismissal. Rajat Patidar has somehow managed to look comfortable at the crease until the ball he gets out - either through a soft dismissal, bowled after defending with the ball rolling on to the stumps with him being a mute witness or dragging long-hops to cover or midwicket as was the case here in the second innings.

His too is a tale of perseverance in domestic cricket with an unlikely window opening up due to injuries to KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja. But such has been the roll of dice for him that he hasn't quite been able to soak in and enjoy the experience of being a Test bats-



Sarfraz Khan's bold approach resulted in him scoring 62 and 68 not out at strike rates of 93.93 and 94.44. PTI

man. As yet.

With Rahul likely to return for the next Test, who knows if this Rajkot proves to be his last international outing for a while at least, if not ever. No wonder former players talk about the role of luck in sporting careers.

He had got a chance to bat with around 20-25 minutes to stumps when Jaiswal had to retire hurt due to a lower-back spasm.

Jaiswal had first threatened to leave the field a over before and even began to walk towards the dressing room when he changed his mind.

Patidar might have been ready then but had to linger on for a few more minutes before it was his time to go down to bat. And when he was dismissed, he stood there dazed as the ball looped up to mid-wicket and stayed frozen for a while in disbelief. He turned to trudge back, and at the non-striker's end Shubman Gill stood, hands on his hip. It was all too bizarre.

What wasn't bizarre was Sarfaraz's confidence and presence in the field. When a po-

tential DRS call is about to be taken, invariably Sarfaraz would rush from slips to speak his mind rather animatedly to Rohit. And when Rohit chooses not to go for the DRS, Sarfaraz would talk excitedly to at least a couple of other team-mates, yanking his eye frequently to look at the big screen.

There was a funny little moment between him and Jaiswal while batting on Sunday that got the crowd going. Sarfaraz had clipped a ball into untenanted spaces behind square-leg and wanted two.

There were clearly two runs in it. Jaiswal, who was one shot away from his double hundred, wasn't too keen; he walked first before running slowly to the other end. Sarfaraz wasn't pleased, gesturing his displeasure and pointing where the ball had gone and how it was easy two. The crowd cottoned on and a general murmur of fun went around: not a boo, not a hoot, just a cry at something amusing unfolding.

When the two batsmen met in the middle after a ball, Jaiswal turned and began to

walk away, but Sarfaraz would stop him and tap the bat again. More cheers from the crowd. Next over, it was Jaiswal's turn to want to bat and Sarfaraz chose to walk across. Jaiswal shook his head this time. More chats ensued at the end of that over and when Jaiswal tapped the ball through cover point and set off, Sarfaraz raised his hands in celebration even as he responded to the call.

Both batsmen celebrated almost simultaneously.

The crowd loves such moments. The last time around it was Mohammad Siraj who did that to celebrate R Ashwin's hundred in a Test.

But Sarfaraz let Jaiswal have his moment, standing at his own end for a while, before he ran across after Jaiswal finished his celebrations. And both enveloped each other in a bear hug and the crowd cleared their lungs again. These are two first-class cricketers who have waited for years to get a chance under arc-lights and it couldn't have gone more differently.

PROCTER PASSES AWAY AT 77

Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Sunday mourned the death of one of country's finest all-rounders Mike Procter. He was 77. Procter's career as a fast bowler, capable off-spinner, hard-hitting middle-order batter, and astute captain is etched in the annals of South African cricket history. PTI

SCORECARD

INDIA vs ENGLAND

NIRANJAN SHAH STADIUM, RAJKOT

Toss: India, chose to bat

INDIA 1ST INNINGS: 445

ENGLAND 1ST INNINGS: 319

INDIA 2ND INNINGS (O/N) 196/2

Y Jaiswal not out	214 (236b, 14x4, 12x6)
S Gill run out (Stokes)	91 (151b, 9x4, 2x6)
K Yadav c Root b Ahmed	27 (91b, 3x4, 1x6)
S Khan not out	68 (72b, 6x4, 3x6)
■ Extras (lb 9, w 2)	11
■ Total (declared, 98 overs)	430/4d
■ FoW: 3-246 (Shubman Gill, 63.6 ov), 4-258 (Kuldeep Yadav, 71.4 ov)	

■ Bowling	James Anderson 13-1-78-0, Joe Root 27-11-1, Tom Hartley 23-2-78-1, Mark Wood 10-0-46-0, Rehan Ahmed 25-1-108-1.
-----------	---

ENGLAND 2ND INNINGS

Z Crawley lbw b Burnrah	11 (26b, 2x4)
-------------------------	---------------

B Duckett run out (Siraj)	4 (15b)
---------------------------	---------

O Pope c Sharma b Jadeja	3 (14b)
--------------------------	---------

J Root lbw b Jadeja	7 (40b, 1x4)
---------------------	--------------

Didn't feel like I was valued or respected by Hockey India: Schopman

MIHIR VASAVDA
ROURKELA, FEBRUARY 18

LAMENTING THAT 'this country is extremely difficult for a woman', the first female to coach the Indian hockey team broke down as she opened up about the day-to-day challenges she has faced in her two-and-a-half years in the job.

An Olympic gold medallist, Janneke Schopman, claimed she felt 'alone a lot in the last two years', wasn't 'valued and respected' by her employers Hockey India and hit out at the differential treatment towards the women's team compared to the men.

Schopman, 46, further added that she 'should have left after the Commonwealth Games because it was too hard for me to manage' although she had 'no regrets' for staying on.

Talking about dealing with officials in Hockey India, Schopman said: 'Very hard, very hard. Because, you know, I come from a culture where women are respected and valued. I don't feel that here.'

The Dutchwoman was speaking moments after India defeated the USA via tie-breakers in a FIH Pro League match at the Birsa Munda Stadium here on Sunday.

When asked about her future with the

team, which failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics after finishing fourth in Tokyo three years ago, Schopman replied: 'Maybe, despite the fact that I know it's tough. But like I said, I love the girls and I see so much potential. But it is very hard for me as an individual.'

Schopman came to India in January 2020 as an analytical coach on the staff of then-chief coach Sjoerd Marijne. From that moment on, Schopman said she didn't feel valued by those running the sport.

'Even when I was the assistant coach some people wouldn't even look at me or wouldn't acknowledge me or wouldn't respond and then you become the chief coach and all of a sudden people are interested in you. I struggled a lot with that,' she said.

Marijne left soon after the Tokyo Olympics and, as per the succession plan designed at the time, Schopman – who was earlier the USA coach – took over. Even then, her opinions weren't valued, she claimed and added she didn't get much support.

'I look at the difference at how men's coaches are treated... between me and the men's coach, or the girls and the men's team, just in general. They (the women players) never complain and they work so hard. I shouldn't speak for them so I won't. I love



Janneke Schopman came to India in January 2020 as an analytical coach on the staff of then-chief coach Sjoerd Marijne. Hockey India

them. I think they work so hard, they do what I ask, they wanna learn, wanna do new things,' Schopman said. 'But for me personally, coming from the Netherlands, having worked in the USA, this country is extremely

difficult as a woman, coming from a culture where, yeah, you can have an opinion and it's valued. It's really hard.'

Schopman said the differential treatment became apparent to her last year after

the men's team failed to qualify for the quarterfinals of the World Cup on home soil. After that result, she said all the focus was on the men's team.

'I just know that when the World Cup didn't go well for the men's team, all focus was on them. Since February 2023, all the focus was on the men's team,' she said.

The federation's secretary-general Bhola Nath Singh reportedly wanted to sack her after India could not win the gold medal at the Asian Games last year but could not do so because of Hockey India president and former India captain Dilip Tirkey's intervention.

Schopman said she 'received a lot of support' from Tirkey as well as the organisation's CEO Elena Norman.

Schopman did not talk about any incident specifically but said 'Elena has been very, very supportive always and she's kept me in this position'.

'If you asked my family, I should have left after a year. In hindsight, I should have left

after the Commonwealth Games because it was too hard for me to manage,' she said.

Asked what was the hardest bit, she said: 'The fact that I feel – I don't even know if it's true – that I am not taken seriously.' When prodded further and asked if it was from people in Hockey India, Schopman nodded affirmatively.

Schopman's future has been a part of speculation ever since India failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics in January. Her contract was till the Games in July-August and India's next assignment, as per the calendar, is the European leg of the Pro League in May.

She said whether she continues depends on whether the players want

her, the federation is keen to keep her on board and if she 'wants to be there'. 'I'm going to reflect, look, you know, did I do a good enough job, yes or no. I need to ask that myself,' Schopman said. 'But like I said, I love the girls and I see so much potential. If the support is really there for them, then I do think the Indian women's team has a bright future.'

— JANNEKE SCHOPMAN
INDIAN HOCKEY WOMEN'S COACH

Ranji: Dhull, Jonty tons help Delhi recover

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
FEBRUARY 18

YASH DHULL scored his first century of the season, which, supplemented by Jonty Sidhu's unbeaten 105, allowed hosts Delhi to take an 11-run lead against Odisha at the Jamia Millia Islamia on Sunday. After conceding 440 runs in the first innings and starting the day at 187 for two, the two tons were followed up by half-centuries from debutant Gagan Vats (66) and Kshitij Sharma (64) which gave Delhi control.

BRIEF SCORES: Odisha 440 (Senapati 111, Samantray 110; Mathur 4/97) trail by 11 runs vs **Delhi** 451 all out (Dhull 112, Jonty 105*; Mohapatra 3-63)

Bengal win big against Bihar

After being released from the Indian team during the ongoing home series against England to feature in the Ranji Trophy, **Mukesh Kumar** made it count by registering match figures of 10 for 50 to lead Bengal to an innings victory over Bihar at Eden Gardens. Mukesh followed up his 4-fer in the first innings by running through

Bihar's line-up with six wickets as fellow new-ball bowler Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal took four to bowl out Bihar for 112.

BRIEF SCORES: Bihar 95 & 112 all out (Gani 28; Mukesh 6/32, Jaiswal 4/34) lost by an innings and 204 runs to **Bengal** 411/5 declared (Easwaran 200 not out, Porel 56; Ashutosh 2/64).

Karnataka comfortably placed

Thanks to three tons, two of which were unbroken from Sharath Srinivas and Vysakh Vijaykumar, Karnataka declared their first innings after putting on a total of 563. The hosts had a 235-run lead against Chandigarh by the end of the day's play in Hubballi on Sunday.

Manish Pandey's 148 was followed up by tons from Srinivas and Vijaykumar.

BRIEF SCORES: Chandigarh 267 and 61/0 (Bhambr 33, Arslam 27) vs **Karnataka** 563/5 declared (Pandey 148, Vijaykumar 103 not out; Karan Kalia 3/143).

Saurashtra reach quarters

Veteran left-arm spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja notched up figures of 5/55, his 22nd 5-fer in first-class cricket, to lead Saurashtra to an innings victory over Manipur, who were bowled out for 144, in Rajkot on Sunday. With 29 points from seven games, Saurashtra have booked their spot in the quarterfinals.

Jadeja picked up 4 wickets in the first innings, before a troika of hundreds from skipper Arpit Vasavada, Prerak Manik and Cheteshwar Pujara put Saurashtra in the driver's seat.

BRIEF SCORES: Manipur 142 and 144 (Bikash 64 not out, Longiam 32; Jadeja 5/55, Dodia 3/51) lost by an innings and 243 runs to **Saurashtra** 529/6 declared.

Chhattisgarh lead UP

Half-centuries from skipper **Nitish Rana** and Yash Dayal were not enough for Uttar Pradesh as they were bowled out for 238 by Chhattisgarh in Lucknow on Sunday. Despite ending the day's play at 124 for 5, Chhattisgarh, who rode on the momentum provided by Sanjeev Desai's double-century in the first innings, have a comfortable 300-run lead over the hosts.

BRIEF SCORES: Chhattisgarh 414 & 124/5 (Ashutosh 43, Chandrakar 42; Shivam 3/14) lead by 300 runs vs **Uttar Pradesh** 238 all out (Dayal 55, Rana 54; Ravi Kiran 3/59, Butte 3/66).

India's precious new talent

Anmol Kharb wins crucial fifth rubber as women's team beat Thailand to win first-ever medal, a gold, at Badminton Asian Team C'ships

SHIVANI NAIK
FEBRUARY 18

THE 'KOI NAHI' phase of Indian badminton has officially begun. Not only will you hear that northern phrase (which means, 'it's ok, play the next') every time Anmol Kharb steps onto the court from the cheering squad. It will be a heady few months of watching fearless badminton played with uncluttered memories of past wins or losses, and unmuddled vision, just like the last four days in Malaysia.

India's women's team beat Thailand 3-2 to win their first-ever Asian Team Championship. Playing the decisive fifth rubber, Anmol struck the shuttle to risky corners and riskier lines, as if there are endless tomorrows out there. She's 17, the tomorrows are indeed many, and she's justified in playing like that. Coach Gopichand called it 'innocent play', and her 21-14, 21-9 win over Thailand's Pornpicha Choeikeewong was unblemished.

Against China, Japan, and Thailand, she pulled India out of a 2-2 deadlock. She left shuttlers tipped by Asia's far-flung powerhouses as their Gen next, feeling not-so-great about themselves. Choeikeewong came with a reputation of power and pace; Anmol disarmed her with patience.

Anmol was 3-6 down in the first, as the Thai was sending deep whipping smashes to her right and left. PV Sindhu had bulldozed Supanida Katethong with her power. Ashmita Chalihia slipped into becoming erratic at the first hint of Busanan Ongbamrungphan needling her into playing a long rally game, with over 60% errors into the net. Anmol had neither Sindhu's brilliant impatience in swatting aside an opponent 21-12, 21-12, nor Ashmita's frustrating impatience in chucking it all away. All Anmol did after that was keep at the rally, anticipate the power hits, and take the sting out of the shuttle with pokes and pushes to midcourt in such a way that Choeikeewong was starved of any pace. It wasn't badminton by any measure, Anmol's every return sought to draw out an error. The Thai fell into the ensnare.

Anmol practices pin-point accuracy for every 2 sqft patch on the court in simulations at her academy. They have sessions where shuttles are lobbed at the lines and she decides which ones to leave and which to pack away. At 8-8 was one such leave. Because of her fine court coverage, Choeikeewong started going cross, with wide errors off the racquethead; a pacay, power game unable to restrain itself.

The Thai's coach Kim Ji Hyun is always animated and she told Choeikeewong to go fast-fast and send the shuttle high. Anmol merely chuckled, retrieved the pacy zingers, and preyed on the Thai's patience, as she inevitably dumped it into the net. From 14-11, Anmol was efficient - no over-hitting at the net, no extra aggression on the smash. By 19-14, Choeikeewong was in one right state.

Ranked 472, and her opponent at 45, Anmol had nothing to lose. She made that free spirit count. Because the Thai was in a hurry to make something happen, to bury the shuttle into the floor with a kill smash and to get a chokehold over Anmol, for she was expected to, Choeikeewong piled up the errors.

Adrenaline, fist pumps and cannon-balling shoulder are all very well, but the Indian remained unfazed, playing her version of badminton where you neither engage at the frontcourt, nor dictate from the back, just play deceptive shuttles to midcourt, and draw out one error after the next.

Every other shuttler in the historic first finals tie for both countries had a reputation to guard. Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand are already expected to be good enough to cause upsets over Top 10 players at 20. They did well to come through the wringer with Treesa immense on the forecourt, and Gayatri falling back to pull strings. Anmol simply did the young thing of keeping calm and playing a steady game, going from 11-5 to 17-6, never being rushed or drawn into a repartee.



Anmol Kharb is lifted up by her teammates after beating Thailand's Pornpicha Choeikeewong 21-14, 21-9 on Sunday. BAI

BATC FINAL RESULTS

PV Sindhu bt Supanida Katethong 21-12, 21-12

Treesa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand bt Jongkolpan Kititharakul/Rawinda Prajengjai 21-16, 18-21, 21-16

Ashmita Chalihia lost to Busanan Ongbamrungphan 11-21, 14-21

Priya Konjengbam/Shruti Mishra lost to Benyapa Aimsaard/Nuntakarn Aimsaard 11-21, 9-21

Anmol Kharab bt Pornpicha Choeikeewong 21-14, 21-9

Women's badminton no longer just about Sindhu as young stars emerge

SHIVANI NAIK
FEBRUARY 18

WHEN THE public rendition of the national anthem happened with the stadium at Shah Alam, Malaysia standing up for the women's badminton team in blue, India's 3-2 finals success over Thailand got imprinted in public memory. It was a historic moment as India won its first-ever Asian team title, with the women having never crossed quarters before, and with three youngsters not even 21 years old, leading this charge.

As unseeded and unheralded India beat the top-three seeded teams China, Japan and Thailand 3-2, it was Anmol Kharb, only 17 years old, Treesa Jolly, 20 and Gayatri Gopichand, 21, who won 6 of those 9 crucial matches. The youngest member, Faridabad's Anmol, was tested for three days playing the tie-breaking 5th rubber, and ranked 478, beat players ranked far above her in each of those pressure games. Treesa-Gayatri won 3/3 of their matches against better placed opponents, including two Top 10 pairs from Japan and Thailand.

The great Indian women's badminton story will not suddenly stop or gradually fade out at PV Sindhu.

A bond is formed

But well before they stepped up to the podium winning gold at the Badminton Asia Team Championships, the team assembled for private, fortifying 'Jana Gana Mana' huddles, before and after every team tie, as they went about building the blocks of this success. The anthem was summoned not only in time of success, but also during every step of the struggle.

Anmol, Treesa, Gayatri, Ashwini Ponappa, Tanisha Crasto and PV Sindhu are at varied



The duo of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand beat two Top ten pairings at the tournament. OlympicKhel

junctures of their individual careers. But those team huddles daily, irrespective of their own results, helped build an insta bond which carried over onto the playing court.

Every player was also urged to take a few moments by themselves to pray to their gods or whoever they worshipped or whatever centred them in life, to help find calm before they entered the shrieking, dinning cauldron of competition. A team dinner was planned only after they won the title, taken across the tape by a calm and assured 17-year-old Anmol, ranked 478 who clinically downed Pornpicha Choeikeewong, ranked 45, with the tie in balance at 2-2.

Nobody would have blamed the teenager had she lost, but after pulling out wins against China and Japan, the team was strangely confident that India's third singles player who not many knew of till three days ago, would safely take India home. 'I was looking forward to somehow getting to the Anmol match, knowing she'll figure it all out,' said coach Pullela Gopichand. 'We all were.'

After Sindhu broke no sweat in taking the

opener 21-12, 21-12 against Supanida Katethong, Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand, played their second straight Top 10 pairing on successive days. Through the week, the pairing that faces deep and oftentimes nasty scrutiny as Gayatri is Gopichand's daughter, battled the toughest matchups. And the youngsters played excellent tactical and physical badminton, winning 21-16, 18-21, 21-16 against the Thais to go 2-0 up.

India lost the next two matches, but then it was time for the most exciting talent to take centre stage in the fifth decisive rubber. Anmol Kharb showed no nerves. 'The only thing she needed to be told was don't be super-active when cheering for other matches, eat something and give your voice a little bit of rest. Any more advice would've been unnecessary pressure for her. She needed nothing to be told about how to play,' Gopichand said.

Thailand, with two singles players ranked No 17 & 18 and two doubles pairings ranked No 10 and 13, didn't see this coming from a mile, or metres even.

The tournament was an important box ticked for Sindhu who didn't have a women's team gold in her career. 'Sindhu played really well. Didn't let her opponent take off at all,' Gopichand said.

For young Treesa-Gayatri, who cop dramatic abuse from lunatics watching on YouTube whenever an error occurs, the advice was specific: 'They tend to be extra alert and too fast on their feet, so shots come off from hard hands. All we told them was to not jump everything and play with soft hands.'

There were no expectations from this team. 'Wherever the tie went - leading 1-0, trailing 0-1, 2-2, quarterfinals, semifinals, there was no pressure to win. There was freshness to the team.' The team ticked the one criterion that matters - they were in it together.