

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Theresa May

UNITED KINGDOM

Ex-PM Theresa May to stand down as MP after 27 years

London: Theresa May, who was the prime minister of Britain between 2016 and 2019, on Friday announced her exit from frontline politics after 27 years as a member of Parliament in the House of Commons. The 67-year-old, whose travails with getting a Brexit deal through Parliament in the wake of the June 2016 referendum ended in a forced exit from 10 Downing Street over four years ago, said she had taken the "difficult decision" to not contest in the next general election from her Maidenhead constituency in south-east England. She has been the Conservative MP for the Berkshire seat since 1997, having been elected seven times.

PTI

IRAN

Iran responsible for violence that killed Amini: UN

Dubai: Iran is responsible for the "physical violence" that led to the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022 and sparked nationwide protests against the country's mandatory headscarf, or hijab, laws and its ruling theocracy, a UN fact-finding mission said on Friday. The stark pronouncement came in a wide-ranging initial report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council by the Fact-Finding Mission on Iran. It also found that the Islamic Republic employed "unnecessary and disproportionate use of lethal force" to put down the demonstrations that erupted following Amini's death, and that Iranian security forces sexually assaulted detainees.

AP

HONG KONG

Bill gives govt more power to suppress dissent

Hong Kong: Hong Kong unveiled a proposed law that threatens life imprisonment for residents who "endanger national security" on Friday, deepening worries about erosion of the city's freedoms four years after Beijing imposed a similar law that all but wiped out public dissent. It's widely seen as the latest step in a crackdown on political opposition that began after the semi-autonomous Chinese city was rocked by violent pro-democracy protests in 2019.

AP

CANADA

Six of Sri Lankan family killed in Ottawa

Ottawa: Six people from Sri Lanka, including a mother and four young children, were knifed to death in the Canadian capital Ottawa late on Wednesday, police said, rocking a country where mass murders are rare. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he was horrified by the "terrible tragedy." The father of the family was also wounded. Febrio De Zoysa, a 19-year-old male student from Sri Lanka, had been arrested, police said.

AP

FINAL STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS BEFORE NOVEMBER POLLS

Democracy, freedom facing threat in US and world under Trump: Biden

Ex-president hits back, calls Biden 'angry, mentally disturbed'

LALIT K JHA
WASHINGTON, MARCH 8

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden delivered a feisty speech on Thursday to defend his policies before skeptical voters in an election year as he launched a vitriolic attack on his Republican rival Donald Trump who he said was a "threat" to democracy within the country and globally.

Without taking the name of Trump, Biden, a Democrat, in his final State of the Union Address to the joint session of the US Congress, less than eight months ahead of the presidential elections, identified him as "my predecessor", which he mentioned as many as 13 times in his speech that lasted for over an hour. Biden slammed Trump on issues ranging from his recent comment on Russian President Vladimir Putin, immigration, January 6 insurrection, abortion, and gun control. "Any President owes the American people the duty to care. That is unforgivable," Biden said amidst multiple standing ovations from Democratic Party lawmakers.

"Now, my predecessor, a former Republican President, tells Putin, 'Do whatever the hell you want'. A former American President actually said that, bow-



US President Joe Biden shakes hands with Speaker of the House Mike Johnson after delivering his State of the Union address, at the Capitol in Washington, on Thursday. AP

ing down to a Russian leader. It's outrageous. It's dangerous. It's unacceptable," Biden said. Trump recently said he would encourage Russia to do "whatever the hell they want" to any NATO member that doesn't meet spending guidelines on defence.

"What makes our moment rare is that freedom and democracy are under attack, both at home and overseas. Overseas, Putin of Russia is on the march, invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond," he said. He also sought the sup-

port of the US Congress for providing weapons to Ukraine to stop Russia. "Ukraine can stop Putin if we stand with Ukraine and provide the weapons it needs to defend itself. That is all Ukraine is asking," Biden said. They are not asking for US soldiers, he said.

Biden said his administration was working towards a ceasefire that would last "at least 6 weeks," and he detailed a new plan — announced earlier — for the US to construct a temporary seaport in Gaza to allow humanitarian aid to enter by ship. He also had some harsh

words for Israel, saying it had a "fundamental responsibility" to protect innocent lives.

Trump on Friday blasted Biden and his State of the Union address, saying that the US President was "angry and mentally disturbed" and suffers from a terminal case of "Trump derangement syndrome".

Trump said, "He was angry, mentally disturbed, and misrepresenting a lot of the facts concerning almost every subject he discussed." "But he got through it. He is still breathing, and they didn't have to carry him out in a straightjacket," Trump said. "Other than that, I think he did a terrible job," he said.

PTI



Palestinians walk through the destruction left by the Israeli offensive, in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, on Friday. AP

'X' blockade in Pak enters fourth week; govt mum despite court directive

M ZULQERNAIN
LAHORE, MARCH 8

SUSPENSION OF popular microblogging platform X in Pakistan entered the fourth week on Friday after it was enforced apparently to forestall the "propaganda" of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party that accused the PML-N of a "massive rigging" in the February 8 polls.

Neither the previous caretaker government nor the new Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's administration is ready to offer any reason as to why the country is seeing the suspension of X for such a long period. Despite the Sindh High Court directing the restoration of citizens' access to popular social media service X, it has remained inaccessible in Pakistan for more than three weeks.

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) regulates internet access in the country. The PTA, however, denies that X is blocked. "If the country's top regulator is claiming that it is not doing the blocking, who is then preventing access to X?" asked the PTI party, adding that X is a valuable source of information for millions and access to it cannot be denied arbitrarily.

The Pakistani authorities plugged off X in mid-February

I.M.F. DECLINES IMRAN PLEA FOR POLL AUDIT

Islamabad/Washington: The IMF Friday rejected a request by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's bid to link its economic assistance to cash-strapped Pakistan with an audit by the global lender on the recent general elections in the country. On Friday, the IMF confirmed that it had received the letter sent on Khan's behalf but gave a cold shoulder to the PTI founder's demand for an election audit, Geo News reported.

PTI

following the explosive press conference of top government officer, Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaqut Chatha, alleging that Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja are involved in massive rigging in the February 8 polls. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said that shutting down the internet or any social media platforms bleeds online businesses and commerce and adds to the misery of an already fragile and struggling economy.

THE HEAD of the European Commission said Friday a maritime aid corridor could start operating between Cyprus and Gaza this weekend, part of accelerating Western efforts to relieve the humanitarian crisis in the war-ravaged Palestinian enclave.

Ursula von der Leyen's comments came a day after President Joe Biden announced plans for the US military to build a "temporary pier" on Gaza's Mediterranean coast, amid UN warnings of famine among the

territory's 2.3 million people.

Negotiations on a possible ceasefire in Israel's war against Hamas, now in its fifth month, remained deadlocked in Cairo, while the UN human rights office urged Israel not to extend its military offensive into the border town of Rafah, saying this would cause a further "massive loss of life". EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said a pilot test run of food aid collected by a charity group and supported by the United Arab Emirates could be leaving Cyprus as early as Friday.

"We are launching this Cyprus maritime corridor together, the European Union, the United Arab

Emirates, and the United States," she said after visiting facilities in Larnaca, Cyprus.

The Palestinian Authority also welcomed Biden's comments, but reaction among ordinary Palestinians was much less positive. "Instead of telling us they will build a port to help us, stop (providing) the weapons they throw at us," said Hassan Maslah, a displaced Palestinian from Khan Younis now sheltering in Rafah.

Israeli tank fired at reporters: Report

An Israeli tank crew killed a Reuters reporter in Lebanon in October by firing two shells at a

clearly identified group of journalists and then "likely" opened fire on them with a heavy machine gun in an attack that lasted 1 minute and 45 seconds, according to a report into the incident published on Thursday.

The report, opens new tab by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research - which was contracted by Reuters to analyse evidence from the Oct. 13 attack that killed journalist Issam Abdallah - found that a tank 1.34 km away in Israel fired two 120 mm rounds at the reporters.

The first shell killed Abdallah, 37, and severely wounded AFP photographer Christina Assi, 28.

SECURITY FORCES swept through large forests in Nigeria's northwest region Friday in search of nearly 300 children abducted from their school by motorcycle-riding gunmen in the latest mass kidnapping, which analysts and activists blamed on the failure of intelligence and a slow security response.

The abduction of the 287 children in Kaduna state, near the West African nation's capital, is one of the largest school kidnappings in the decade since the kidnapping of schoolgirls in Borno state's Chibok village in 2014 stunned the world.

The victims of the latest attack — among them at least 100 children aged 12 or under — were surrounded and marched into a forest just as they were starting the school day, said locals in Kuriga town, located 89 kilometers from the city of Kaduna. One man was shot dead as he tried to save the students, school authorities said.

Kaduna police spokesman Mansur Hassan said that a search operation is taking place in the nearby forests, which often serve as enclaves for armed gangs. The school, which had no fencing, was "surrounded from all angles" by the gunmen who arrived on motorcycles just after 8 am, said Joshua Madami, a youth leader.

HIS MANGA WAS ADAPTED INTO MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES AND TV SERIES, REACHING FANS BEYOND JAPAN

'Dragon Ball' creator Akira Toriyama dies at 68 due to blood clot in brain

AGENCIES
TOKYO, MARCH 8

JAPANESE MANGA comic creator Akira Toriyama, best known for his 'Dragon Ball' series that spawned widely popular films, video games and TV shows, died on March 1 from a blood clot in his brain, his production studio said on Friday. He was 68.

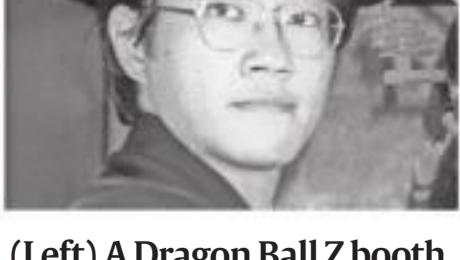
"It's our deep regret that he still had several works in the middle of creation with great enthusiasm," the studio said in a statement posted on the official 'Dragon Ball' website. "We hope that Akira Toriyama's unique

world of creation continues to be loved by everyone for a long time to come."

'Dragon Ball' was first serialised in Weekly Shonen Jump comic magazine in 1984 and was later adapted into movies, video games and TV series distributed in more than 80 countries.

Toriyama was also known as a character and monster designer of the blockbuster role-playing game series "Dragon Quest".

Many fans, and Japan's top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi, paid tribute to Toriyama and the global influence of his work.



(Left) A Dragon Ball Z booth in New York; (above) Akira Toriyama in a 1982 pic. AP

"We will never forget Akira Toriyama for the gift he left on this earth. I can't imagine a world without Dragon Ball," a fan

wrote in section below the post.

Hayashi told reporters on Friday that Toriyama had played "extremely important role in demonstrating Japan's soft power".

"Mr. Toriyama's work has led to the widespread recognition of Japan's content around the world," he added.

"Dragon Ball", a martial arts fantasy series that follows the protagonist's search for orbs known as dragon balls that summon a wish-granting dragon, was inspired by a 16th century Chinese novel and has a widespread following in China.

News of Toriyama's death

was a top trending topic on social media platform Weibo, with 450 million views.

"Let's collect all seven Dragon Balls and then resurrect Mr. Akira Toriyama!" one user wrote on Weibo.

In 1982, Toriyama married a former manga artist who published under the pen name Nachi Mikami, Mainichi Shimbun reported. Besides his wife, he is survived by his children, according to the local media.

When "Dragon Ball" was first published in 1984, it was an immediate hit, becoming one of the best-selling manga series of all time.

MEDIA MOGUL DOES IT AGAIN

RUPERT MURDOCH GETS ENGAGED



Rupert Murdoch, 92, got engaged to his girlfriend, Elena Zhukova, a spokesman said, which would mark his fifth trip down the aisle. Zhukova, who is from Moscow, is 67. It came just months after Murdoch stepped down as chairman of Fox and News Corp.

US sees imminent 'extremist' attack in Moscow, asks citizens to leave

REUTERS
MOSCOW, MARCH 8

THE US embassy in Russia warned that "extremists" had imminent plans for an attack in Moscow, hours after Russian security services said they had foiled a planned shooting at a synagogue by a cell from the Afghan arm of Islamic State.

The embassy, which has repeatedly urged all US citizens to leave Russia immediately, gave no further details about the nature of the threat, but said people should avoid concerts and crowds and be aware of their surroundings.

"The Embassy is monitoring reports that extremists have imminent plans to target large gatherings in Moscow, to include concerts, and US citizens should be advised to avoid large gatherings over the next 48 hours," the embassy said on its website.

It issued its warning several hours after Russia's Federal Security Service, the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, said it had foiled an attack on a synagogue in Moscow by a cell of the militant Sunni Muslim group Islamic State. It was unclear if the two statements were connected.

The FSB said an Islamic State cell was operating in Russia's Kaluga region as part of the Afghan arm of the group, which is known as ISIS-Khorasan and

TURKEY TO PRESS UKRAINE FOR TALKS TO END RUSSIA WAR

Istanbul: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky was in Istanbul on Friday for talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan whose NATO-member country has sought to balance its close relations with both Kyiv and Moscow and repeatedly offered to act as a peace-broker between them. During the talks in Istanbul, Erdogan was expected to press for negotiations to end Russia's war in Ukraine, now in its third year, a Turkish government official said. Talks would also focus on a possible new measure that would guarantee navigational safety of commercial vessels in the Black Sea, the official said.

The visit comes as Zelensky continues to press other nations for more munitions and weaponry to halt the advance of Russian troops.

seeks a caliphate across Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran.

When tackled, the militants offered resistance by Russian special forces and were "neutralised" by return fire, it said.

287 students abducted in school attack in Nigeria

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ABUJA, MARCH 8

SECURITY FORCES swept through large forests in Nigeria's northwest region Friday in search of nearly 300 children abducted from their school by motorcycle-riding gunmen in the latest mass kidnapping, which analysts and activists blamed on the failure of intelligence and a slow security response.

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Kaduna police spokesman Mansur Hassan said that a search operation is taking place in the nearby forests, which often serve as enclaves for armed gangs. The school, which had no fencing, was "surrounded from all angles" by the gunmen who arrived on motorcycles just after 8 am, said Joshua Madami, a youth leader.



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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Ahead of Lok Sabha elections, ₹100 cut in LPG cylinder price

SUKALP SHARMA

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Friday announced a cut of Rs 100 per cylinder in cooking gas prices on the occasion of International Women's Day. The price reduction, which comes days before the likely announcement of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, is set to benefit nearly 33 crore households that use liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) as cooking fuel.

For over 10 crore poor households covered under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), the price cut would be in addition to the existing subsidy of Rs 300 per cylinder.

Following the announcement, public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) – Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation – are set to reduce LPG cylinder prices from Friday midnight. With this price reduction, the standard 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder would cost Rs 803 in Delhi, Rs 802.50 in Mumbai, Rs 829 in Kolkata, and Rs 818.50 in Chennai. The effective LPG cylinder price for PMUY consumers – including the subsidy benefit – would be Rs 503 in Delhi, Rs 502.50 in Mumbai, Rs 529 in Kolkata and Rs 518.50 in Chennai.

The announcement came a day after the Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the PMUY subsidy for the financial year 2024-25 (FY25) at an

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INSIDE



PM AT CREATORS' AWARDS: CAN SENSE TIME AHEAD OF TIME

CONG'S FIRST LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR LOK SABHA POLLS OUT

INDIA POISED TO SIGN TRADE AGREEMENT WITH EFTA P 8, 6, 11

RELATED REPORT P 15

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

Kick-off to history: Premier League gets first Indian-origin referee

nounced Tuesday by the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL), which appoints referees for Premier League games.

While the game itself might not be a marquee clash for a majority of football followers beyond those of the two clubs, for the Gills, from Iver near London, it'll be a moment for generations.

Sunny is the elder of the two sons of Jarnail Singh Gill, 62, who remains the only referee to have worn a turban in the English Football League or EFL, the divi-

sion below the Premier League.

"It's a very proud moment not just for the family or me but the whole Sikh and Asian and Indian community in England," Jarnail Singh Gill told *The Indian Express*.

"Many of us will be seeing one of our own officiating as a referee at the highest level of football in England."

The Gills are trailblazers of sorts when it comes to people of Indian descent officiating in English football. The family has its roots in Kokri Beniwal village



Sunny Singh Gill (left) with father Jarnail Singh Gill and brother Bhupinder Singh Gill. Professional Game Match Officials Ltd

near Moga in Punjab and moved to England when Jarnail was just three.

At 20, Jarnail officiated his first local league game and it wasn't before long that he discontinued his mechanical engineering diploma to join a cab rental service at Heathrow Airport. Then for five years, he worked with the Metropolitan Police before returning to his passion – refereeing, which he did in 150 EFL matches until 2011.

Sunny's brother, Bhupinder, is also a referee. In fact, the siblings

while watching and cheering him on along with 30,000 odd fans (in the stadium)."

According to Jarnail, Sunny's love for football grew when he would take the two boys to be his linesmen in local tournaments held by the South Asian community. The brothers then played football at the local level, with Sunny even appearing for trials for Queens Park Rangers at the age of 14.

When he was 15, Sunny did a refereeing course and two

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CRACKDOWN IN 7 CITIES, INCLUDING MUMBAI, DELHI

CBI says travel agents used student visas to push Indians into Russia war

Have strongly taken up matter with Russian govt for early discharge: MEA

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

ADMISSIONS TO relatively unknown private universities, fee discounts, visa extensions – these are some of the ways travel agents from across the country duped dozens of men into going to Russia and eventually being forced into the country's war with Ukraine, the Central Bureau of Investigation has found.

The agency made these revo-

lations a day after conducting searches at around 15 places in seven cities – Delhi, Mumbai, Ambala, Chandigarh, Madurai, Tiruvananthapuram and Chennai – and ascertaining that various agents at these locations, as well as three currently based in Russia, had allegedly duped Indian youths, primarily students.

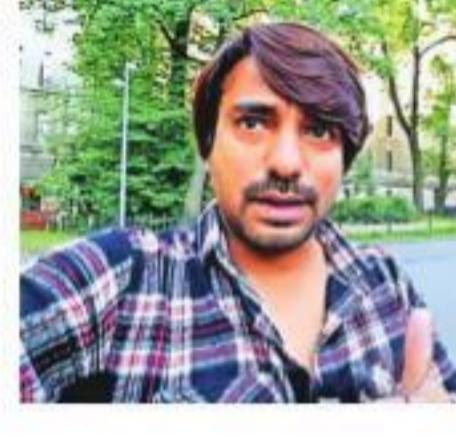
The development comes against the backdrop of two Indian youths – one from Gujarat and another from Telangana – dying on the frontlines.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Faisal Khan aka Baba Vlogs, who led several Indians to Russian frontlines

ZEESHAN SHAIKH
MUMBAI, MARCH 8

"THE MAIN benefit of joining the (Russian) army is that you will get a special government card which will ensure that you get priority everywhere. On the basis of this card, you can apply for Schengen visas and even for permanent residency. The government there feels that all those helping in these times need to be given benefit. It will give you per-



What happened after these men reached Russia was beyond my control: Khan

manent residency," Faisal Abdul Mutallib Khan is heard saying while walking on the streets of Saint Petersburg, in a video uploaded on YouTube in September 2023.

It is through this glib talk that Khan is said to have lured or duped a large number of Indians, including 30-year-old Telangana resident Mohammed Afsan, into working for the Russian Army in its ongoing war with Ukraine.

Afsan, who became the

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INDERLOK, NORTH DELHI

Delhi Police officer kicks men offering namaz, suspended

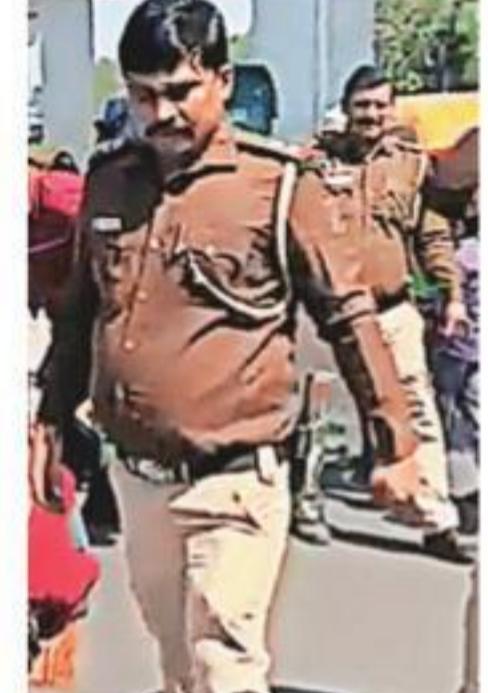
ARNABJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

A DELHI Police Sub-Inspector, who was caught on camera kicking men offering namaz outside a mosque on a road in Delhi's Inderlok Friday afternoon, was suspended with immediate effect, police said.

The officer was identified as Sub-Inspector Manoj Kumar Tomar (35), in-charge of the Inderlok police post in north Delhi. The incident triggered tension and protests in the area.

A purposed video clip of the incident showed Tomar kicking and pushing some men offering namaz, in an apparent effort to remove them from the area. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



Avideogram of Sub-Inspector Manoj Kumar Tomar during the incident



BACK AT RAMESHWARAM CAFE

Guests attend the reopening ceremony of Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on Friday, a week after a blast left 9 people injured. The cafe will open to public 6 am Saturday. Jithendra M PAGE 15

Sudha Murty picked for Rajya Sabha, PM underlines 'nari shakti'

Former Infosys Foundation chairperson Sudha Murty

In '21, RSS-linked magazine said her foundation backs tukde tukde gang

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of Sudha Murty as a nominee to the Rajya Sabha shows the distance travelled. Just over two years ago, RSS-affiliated magazine *Panchayati* had accused Infosys and its foundation, then chaired by her, of deliberately trying to destabilise the Indian economy and helping Naxals, Leftists and "tukde tukde gang".

In a report in September 2021, in the backdrop of glitches

BJP, TDP on cusp of striking poll deal, talks in final stretch

LIZ MATHEW

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE BJP is on the verge of striking an electoral deal with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Jana Sena Party (JSP) in Andhra Pradesh and taking a major stride towards bringing back one of its former allies to the NDA fold.

TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu and JSP chief Pawan Kalyan are awaiting another round of discussion with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J P Nadda.

They are expected to discuss the number of Lok Sabha seats that each side wants to contest, sources said. Naidu, according to insiders, is ready to give the BJP four to five seats of Andhra Pradesh's 25 Lok Sabha seats while the latter is bargaining for

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Post-Covid spend in private hospitals almost twice that in Govt hospitals

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

OVER SIX years since the Centre's flagship health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPMJAY) was launched in 2018, two-thirds of the total money spent under the scheme each year went to private hospitals across the country. This came from 2.95 crore patients – 54% of all beneficiaries till December 2023, an investigation of official records and data obtained under the Right to Information by *The Indian Express* reveals.

The scheme is jointly funded by the Centre and the states in the ratio 60:40 (90:10 in the case of North-East and hilly states). Government hospitals account for 58% of all facilities empanelled.

In a country where the private sector anyway accounts for more hospitalisation cases – 60% in urban areas and 52% in rural areas – this trend affirms that for a big section of the population that was dipping into its savings for treatment in private hospitals, the Ayushman Bharat

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Ayushman Bharat counter at AIIMS, Delhi. Tashi Tobgyal

NO. OF PATIENTS (% SHARE)

■ In Private Hospitals ■ In Government Hospitals

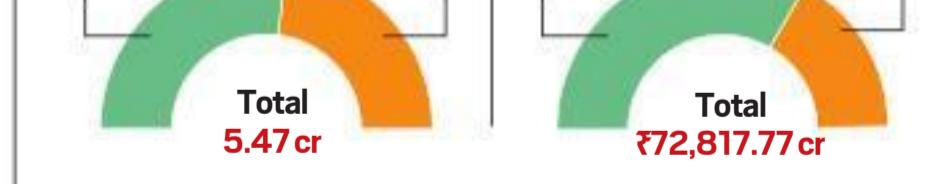


SCALE AND SPREAD

■ NO. OF PATIENTS ■ TOTAL EXPENDITURE

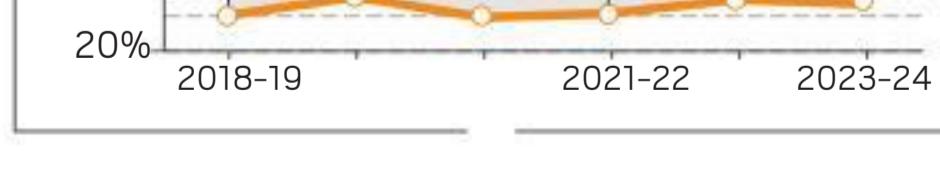


Total 5.47 cr



Total ₹72,817.77 cr

SPEND IN PVT. GOVT HOSPITALS (% SHARE)



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

TOMORROW, PART 2: TOP TREATMENTS

Cuts expenses, expands health care net, gives Centre imprint across states

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

OVER TIME, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's references to the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme launched in September 2018, point to three key takeaways.

One, the scheme holds promise in reducing out-of-pocket expenditure of the poor. Two, it provides patients and their families access to critical medical treatments and emergency care that were previously financially unattainable. Three, its influence is most pronounced in marginalised communities, particularly Scheduled Tribes.

From a political standpoint, Modi has underscored that the scheme is integral to building trust. While health is a state subject, this scheme has allowed him to make the Central government a key stakeholder in providing access to free healthcare to citizens across states, irrespective of which party is in power.

The study of RTI data reveals this and more. Particularly, states in the south, ruled mostly

CONT

• ₹100 cut in LPG cylinder price

estimated cost of Rs 12,000 crore.

"Today, on Women's Day, our government has decided to reduce LPG cylinder prices by Rs 100. This will significantly ease the financial burden on millions of households across the country, especially benefiting our nari shakti," Modi said in a post on X.

"By making cooking gas more affordable, we also aim to support the well-being of families and ensure a healthier environment. This is in line with our commitment to empowering women and ensuring ease of living for them," he said.

This is the second instance of the government announcing a cut in LPG prices for households in the current fiscal. Ahead of the Assembly polls in five states, a price cut of Rs 200 per cylinder was announced on August 29.

At the time, apart from the price cut, the government had also decided to provide an additional 75 lakh PMUY connections, which would take the total number of beneficiaries to 10.35 crore, in a phased manner. Then in October, the government hiked the PMUY subsidy by 50 per cent to Rs 300 per cylinder.

There are two aspects to the cut in LPG prices. First, it could help in easing retail inflation further. Second, oil prices have declined from over \$100 per barrel soon after Russia's invasion of

Ukraine to \$80-85 per barrel, giving the OMCs more headroom to accommodate the cut in retail prices.

Usually, OMCs bear the financial implications of price cuts, while the subsidy bill is footed by the Centre. However, there have been instances in the past when the OMCs sold LPG at reduced prices amid high international fuel price volatility, with the government later providing them with financial assistance to cover the losses incurred on that count.

According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), LPG is the primary source of energy for nearly 50 per cent of households in rural areas and about 90 per cent of urban households across the country. As per latest available government data, the average LPG consumption of PMUY consumers has increased by 29 per cent from 3.01 refills in FY20 to 3.87 refills (till January 2024) pro-rated for FY24.

As per estimates based on FY23 data, LPG consumption by non-PMUY consumers was almost 145 crore cylinder refills, while for PMUY beneficiaries, it was around 36 crore refills, taking the total to around 181 crore refills. Assuming the LPG refill rates and consumer base remain similar to FY23 levels, the financial impact of the latest price cut would be around Rs 18,100 crore on an annualised basis.

• In '21, RSS-linked magazine said...

in the Income Tax e-filing portal developed by Infosys, it said: "Infosys is accused of providing assistance to Naxals, Leftists and tukde tukde gang. The issue of Infosys directly or indirectly supporting divisive forces in the country has already come out in the open."

Flagging some news portals which had received funding from the Infosys Foundation, then chaired by Sudha Murty, the magazine had accused the Murty's of funding "misinformation websites". These websites were seen as being critical of the government and the Sangh.

Some organisations that spread caste hatred are also beneficiaries of Infosys's charity. Shouldn't Infosys promoters be asked what is the reason for the company's funding of anti-national and anarchist organisations? Should companies of such suspect character be allowed to participate in government tendering process?" the report had said.

Sudha Murty retired as chairman of Infosys Foundation on December 31, 2021, just three months after the article was published.

An email sent to Infosys Foundation for a response on Friday did not elicit any response. A Panchayana spokesperson also refused to comment on the matter.

Suggesting a conspiracy by the Opposition, the 2021 report had

also: "One of the promoters of Infosys is Nandan Nilekani who has contested Lok Sabha polls on a Congress ticket. Company's founder N R Narayana Murthy's opposition to the incumbent government's ideology is not hidden from anyone. Infosys appoints people subscribing to a certain ideology on important posts. Most of these are Marxists from Bengal. If such a company gets important government tenders, wouldn't there be a threat of influence from China and the (Pakistan spy agency) ISI?"

It also raised suspicion that glitches in projects contracted to Infosys may be a ploy by the Opposition to ensure that the government is forced to change its policy of giving contracts to Indian companies. This, it said, would hurt the idea of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

However, following a furore over the report, the RSS had later sought to distance itself. "As an Indian company, Infosys has made seminal contribution in progress of the country. There might be certain issues with a portal run by Infosys, but the article published by Panchayana in this context only reflects individual opinion of the author," RSS spokesperson Sunil Ambekar had said. "Panchayana is not a mouthpiece of the RSS and the said article or opinions expressed in it should not be linked with the RSS," he had added.

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

How Indians landed on Russia frontlines

The Ministry of External Affairs also issued a statement in this regard Friday. "Several Indian nationals have been duped to work with the Russian Army. We have strongly taken up the matter with the Russian government for early discharge of such Indian nationals," MEA's official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"Strong action has been initiated against agents and unscrupulous elements who recruited them on false pretenses and promises. The CBI yesterday busted a major human trafficking network, conducting searches in several cities and collecting incriminating evidence. A case of human trafficking has been registered against several agents," Jaiswal said.

"We once again appeal to Indian nationals to not be swayed by offers made by agents for support jobs with the Russian Army. This is fraught with danger and risk to life," he had said.

As reported by *The Indian Express*, the path of several such youths to Russia often started with the search for a job. Several families testified that the young men had come across a YouTube Channel promising jobs in Russian government offices in Moscow, but once the men reached the country, they were swiftly trained and sent to the frontlines.

The CBI found that a single agency based in Delhi sent as many as 180 people to Russia, mostly on student visas. Sources said the role of embassy employees is also under scanner.

In its FIR, the CBI said agents were duping Indians on the pretext of admissions to dubious private universities in Russia, but not in government or publicly known ones. "It has been learnt that on reaching Russia, passports of these Indian nationals were

taken/snatched by agents. They were being trained in combat roles and provided with Russian army uniform and batches. Later, these Indian nationals are/were being deployed at front bases in the Russia-Ukraine war zone against their wishes and put their lives in grave danger," it states.

The CBI said it has established that some people were also grievously injured as a result.

Last week, Jaiswal had told reporters that some 20 Indians, working as support staff or helpers with the Russian Army, have contacted Indian authorities for assistance. "The traffickers have been operating as an organised network and were luring Indian nationals through social media channels such as YouTube, and also through local contacts/agents for highly paid jobs in Russia," he had said.

In its FIR, the CBI also said, "The accused persons, themselves and through their agents, trafficked Indian nationals to Russia on the pretext of getting jobs related to the Russian army, as security guards, helpers, or for a better life, job, education. Huge amounts were charged from these persons illegally. The human trafficking network of these agents are spread over several states across India," the CBI said in its FIR.

The accused named by the CBI in its FIR included four companies, of which three were incorporated in 2023.

Delhi-based 24X7 RAS Overseas Foundation, whose directors are Suyash Mukut and Garima Balayan, was incorporated in January 2023. It has an authorised capital of Rs 1 lakh and paid up capital of Rs 80,000. Its office in New Delhi's Kasturba Gandhi Marg was found locked on Friday, as was its director Mukut's

home in Greater Kailash.

Ambala-based Adventure Visa Services (OPC) Private Limited, whose director is Manjeet Singh, was incorporated in January 2023. It has an authorised capital of Rs 15 lakh and paid up capital of Rs 2 lakh.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Singh denied that his firm was involved in any illegality. "I was not at our Chandigarh office when the CBI team landed there on Thursday. I met the CBI team on Friday and provided all the relevant information. I am ready to face the probe. I don't have to fear anything because we don't do any illegal work," he said, adding that the company's office in Ambala was shut in February 2023, after which it was moved to Chandigarh.

"We have completed all legal formalities, including registration of our firm with the (Union Ministry of) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). We have sent more than 100 youths to Russia, earning nearly US\$300 in each case," said Singh, who hails from Nihalwali village in Punjab's Barnala district.

"We did not recruit anyone for the (Russia-Ukraine) war. We send youths only on study visas... Our work is limited to visas, extension of visas and admission of the students concerned and their classes there," he added.

Another firm named in the FIR, Baba Vlogs Overseas Recruitment Solutions, has Faisal Abdulmattalib Khan and Mohammad Sufiyan Dawood Ahmad Darugar as directors. It was incorporated in August 2023, and has an authorised capital of Rs 5 lakh and paid up capital of Rs 1 lakh.

When *The Indian Express* visited Darugar's Mumbai address as

he had said, the flat was found to have been locked.

According to his next-door neighbour at the Vasai apartment building, the flat had been occupied by Darugar, his wife and their children. "However, we have not seen them in the past week. They did not interact much with anyone. Many people are now coming here and enquiring about them. Faisal was always seen with Sufiyan and he stayed with his family in the apartment building opposite ours," the neighbour said.

Khan, who is in his mid 30s, has been accused of duping people in the past too, and also found himself on the radar of the Maharashtra anti-terrorist squad (ATS) in a conversion case.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* from Dubai on Friday, Khan said that what happened to the people he sent to Russia was beyond his control. "I have sent a total of 35 people to Russia. I am also a victim here. I was told by the other agents and the handlers in Russia that these men would not be deployed on the front lines. What has happened after these men reached Russia was beyond my control. When I got to know that some of the men had been sent to the front lines, I desperately tried to get them back," he said.

He also claimed that all the candidates sent by him were aware of the risks involved with the job and suggested that some of them may have been tempted to take up tougher and more dangerous assignments in lieu of increased remuneration.

"The contract explicitly explained the risks involved with the job. While they were not to be deployed on the frontlines, being associated with military work in a war zone does have risks involved," Khan said.

"My intent has not been to dupe anyone and send them in harm's way. If I was duping people, would I have left any trace? All my videos explaining about the work that people would have to

• Faisal Khan aka Baba Vlogs

second Indian casualty in the war, was sent to Russia by Khan. The two are said to have come in contact when Afsan approached Khan after watching a video that he had posted on his YouTube channel, Baba Vlogs. Khan also runs a manpower consultancy firm by the name of Babavlogs, providing services to send people to countries like Dubai, Serbia, Croatia, Germany and Singapore, among many others.

Khan, who is in his mid 30s, has been accused of duping people in the past too, and also found himself on the radar of the Maharashtra anti-terrorist squad (ATS) in a conversion case.

He landed in a controversy in 2018 after a 23-year-old Mumbai-based man, whom he had sent to Dubai, informed his family that he had converted to Islam. Khan was, at one point, questioned by the ATS about the man's conversion, though no case was registered.

While Khan concentrated mainly on sending people to Dubai, it was from October 2022 that he started sending people to other countries. From July 2023, he started promoting jobs in Russia, telling people they could work as delivery men and taxi drivers. Gradually, he started promoting the benefits of working for Russian Army, promising a starting salary of Rs 40,000, which would be increased to Rs 1 lakh after three months' training.

"You do not have to fire a missile. There is no war happening here. The fighting is taking place at the border, which is where their army is. They need someone who can take care of the home front and need manpower for it. This work will be handled by you. Your work will be to clear demolished buildings. You will also need to take care of their arms and ammunition," Khan says in a video in September 2023.

Khan offered these services through three numbers he shared on his website and channel. The numbers belonged to Khan, Sufiyan, and a woman by the name of Pooja.

do in Russia are still online and I have not pulled them down as I am not guilty," Khan added.

President of Mumbai, Khan is a class 6 dropout and claims that his poor financial conditions made him take up work as a fishmonger in Dadar. In 2008, he headed to Dubai, where he worked as a salesman. In 2016, he started a manpower consultancy named Babavlogs, sending Indians to work in Gulf countries. The same year, he started his YouTube channel.

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• Over half of Ayushman beneficiaries used scheme for pvt care; 53% patients in 5 South states

scheme has significantly reduced their out-of-pocket healthcare spending. The government's own data suggests that average medical expenditure in private hospitals is 6-8 times that in government hospitals.

The scheme covers nearly 2,000 procedures and provides critical illness coverage for patients suffering from cancer, heart and liver diseases, among many more. Besides the expenses incurred during the hospitalisation, the scheme covers three days of pre-hospitalisation and 15 days post-hospitalisation expenses such as diagnostics and medicines.

Beneficiary families are identified from the 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC), based on specific deprivation and occupational criteria across both rural and urban areas. Around 13.44 crore families (65 crore people) are potential beneficiaries of the scheme. So far, 32.40 crore people have been issued Ayushman Bharat cards.

An analysis of data and documents obtained through the Right to Information (RTI) Act shows that between 2018 and 2023, 5.47 crore patients accessed treatment under the scheme. While the annual average hovered around 49 lakh patients in the first three years, the subsequent three years saw a surge, with an average of 1.33 crore patients accessing treatments through the scheme annually.

And nearly 60 per cent of the total 5.47 crore patients who availed of the scheme over five years were from five states — Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. This suggests that despite controversies between the Centre and Opposition-ruled states over schemes and funding, the impact of the Ayushman Bharat scheme is not limited to states governed by the ruling party at the Centre.

Delhi, Odisha and West Bengal have opted out of this scheme.

The scheme: scale and spread

The cashless and paperless scheme offers up to Rs 5 lakh annually per family for hospitalisations in 27,000 empanelled secondary (hospitals with basic specialties including medicine, gynaecology) and tertiary (super-specialty, like neurosurgery,

cardiology, orthopaedics)

healthcare facilities, with the benefits extending nationwide and without restrictions on family size, age, or gender.

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TOP SPENDING STATES

State	Amount	Pvt hospitals	Govt hospitals
Andhra Pradesh	₹13,419 Cr	76.90%	23.10%
Gujarat	₹8,087 Cr	84.97%	15.03%
Tamil Nadu	₹6,249 Cr	58.97%	41.03%
Kerala	₹5,652 Cr	38.53%	61.47%
Madhya Pradesh	₹5,492 Cr	71.99%	28.01%
Chhattisgarh	₹5,437 Cr	64.70%	35.30%
Uttar Pradesh	₹4,528 Cr	82.19%	17.81%

HC 'DISTURBED' AFTER TRIAL COURT JUDGE 'SUGGESTS' SETTLEMENT IN 2020 CASE

Offering money to settle rape case strikes at core of our criminal justice system: HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE DELHI High Court recently expressed concern over the conduct of a trial court judge for allegedly "suggesting" to and "assisting" the accused and the woman in an alleged rape case to settle the matter during recording of prosecution evidence. The observations came while dismissing a man's plea seeking quashing of an FIR registered against him for rape in 2020, on the ground that the matter had been settled and compromised. The court thereafter directed that the case be tried by another judge to ensure that justice should not only be done but also seem to be done.

The HC observed that the trial court had framed charges against the accused and prosecution evidence was being recorded, so it was

unable to comprehend why the judge would have asked the woman to settle the matter involving a heinous offence like rape.

The HC further said the woman had also stated before it that she had entered into a settlement agreement "only at the asking" of the trial court judge and this was mentioned in the agreement, "which is duly notarised".

"... this court expresses concern over the conduct of the learned trial judge, if it is true, that the trial judge had suggested and assisted the accused and the victim, in a case under Section 376 of IPC, to settle the matter, while the same court was recording prosecution evidence," Justice Sharma said.

As per the settlement agree-

ment of January 6, the man agreed to pay Rs 3.5 lakh to the woman if the FIR is quashed, wherein she had agreed that "whatever happened between her and the accused (was) out of her free will and was a consensual relationship".

The agreement also stated that the woman had agreed that she had deposed against the accused before the trial court due to a "misunderstanding".

On this, Justice Sharma observed, "Money, it seems, is to be exchanged for getting a quietus to the present criminal proceedings for offence of rape — a proposition that is not only immoral but also strikes at the very core of our criminal justice system".

Opining that rape is a "heinous violation of a woman's bodily autonomy" and an offence against society,

the HC remarked that allowing a settlement, like in the present case, would amount to "trivialising sufferings of a rape victim and reducing her anguish to a mere transaction".

Raising doubts on the claims in the agreement, the HC further said if the woman's prior statements before police, magistrate and trial court are based on a misunderstanding arising from a consensual relationship, then the need for monetary compensation to settle the matter becomes questionable".

It also noted that the woman had made specific allegations in her testimony against the accused — that he had intoxicated her and then established physical relations without her consent, as well as recorded inappropriate photos and videos of her and had threatened her.

Elvish Yadav booked for beating up fellow YouTuber

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, MARCH 8

A YOUTUBER was allegedly beaten up by Bigg Boss OTT winner and fellow YouTuber Elvish Yadav and 10 others in Gurgaon over social media rivalry, police said. An FIR has been registered against Yadav, they added.

Police said Delhi resident Sagar Thakur (25) was assaulted by Yadav

around 12.30 am on Friday. Inspector Rajender Singh, SHO Sector 53 police station, said Yadav had called Thakur to South Point Mall on Golf Course Road. "It was at a shop owned by Yadav's acquaintance, the moment he came in, he started beating Thakur up," he said.

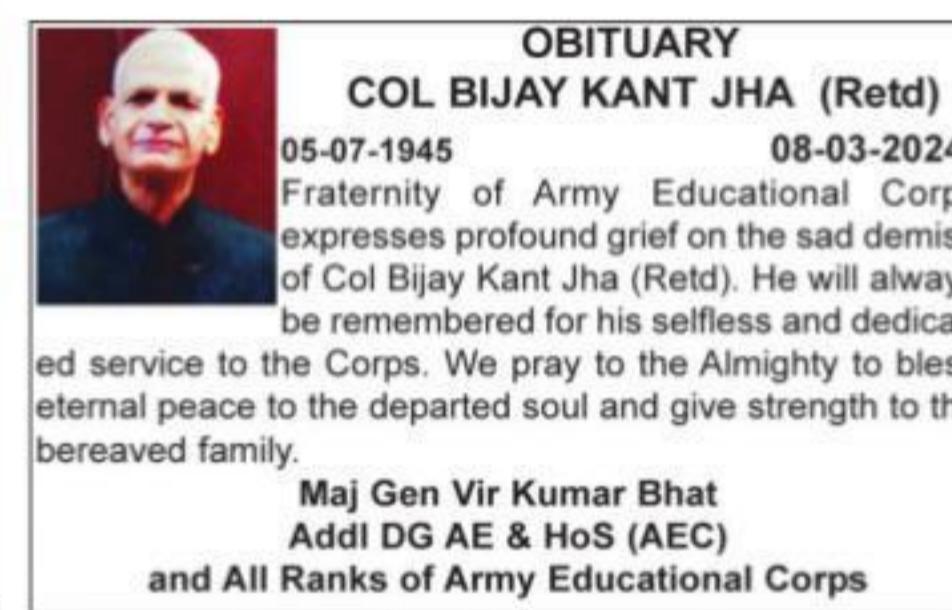
A purported video of the incident shows Yadav entering the room and beating up the victim as he greets him.

Yadav, however, told *The Indian Express* that the victim threatened to

kill his family. "The incident took place in the heat of the moment," he added.

In his complaint, Thakur alleged: "...Over the last few months, Elvish fan pages spread hate... leaving me distressed. I was asked by Yadav to meet (him). When he came to the store, he and his 8-10 goons, who were drunk, started beating me..."

SHO Singh said: "They've been vying with each other on YouTube... We have collected footage; a probe is on."



Maj Gen Vir Kumar Bhat
Addl DG AE & HoS (AEC)
and All Ranks of Army Educational Corps

metaawards.com

SCHEDULE 2024

14 MAR	GAGAN DAMAMA BAJYO Directed by Piyush Mishra, Hemant Pandey (Hindi 1 hr 40 min) 8:00 PM Kamani Auditorium
15 MAR	RAGHUNATH Directed by Bidyut Kr. Nath (Assamese 1 hour 10 mins) 6:00 PM Shri Ram Centre
16 MAR	AGNISUTA DRAUPADI Directed by Neelam Joy Metel (Hindi, 1 hr 30 min) 8:00 PM Kamani Auditorium
17 MAR	BHOOTHANGAL Directed by O.T. Shahjahan (Malayalam, 1 hr 20 min) 6:00 PM Shri Ram Centre
18 MAR	SIACHEN Directed by Makrand Deshpande (Hindi, 1 hr 20 min) 8:00 PM Kamani Auditorium
19 MAR	GOPAL URE & CO. Directed by Sujan Mukhopadhyay (Bengali, 1 hr 50 min) 6:00 PM Shri Ram Centre
18 MAR	AVALANCHE Directed by Gandharv Dewan (Hindi, 1 hr 40 min) 8:00 PM Kamani Auditorium
19 MAR	GHANTA GHANTA GHANTA GHANTA Directed by Mohit Takalkar (Marathi, 1 hr 40 min) 6:00 PM Shri Ram Centre
19 MAR	DO YOU KNOW THIS SONG? Directed by Mallika Taneja (Hindi, English, 1 hr 30 min) 8:00 PM Kamani Auditorium
19 MAR	HAYAVADANA Directed by Neelam Man Singh Chowdhry (Hindi, 1 hr 30 min) 8:00 PM Shri Ram Centre

Perform. Applaud. Rise.

Fix issues in 48 hrs: Atishi to chief secy on sewer overflow, water contamination

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

DELHI WATER Minister Atishi on Friday wrote to Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, highlighting that residents from several parts of the national capital have been filing complaints related to water contamination and sewer overflow, and that a short-term resolution needs to be in place within 48 hours.

Atishi, who is also the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) chairperson, wrote that they have received several such complaints "in the last 24 hours".

Directing the Chief Secretary to find a long-term solution in a week, Atishi wrote in the letter: "I am enclosing 80 complaints regarding sewer overflow, water contamination, and water pipeline leakage that I have received in the last 24 hours... 1916 — the grievance redressal portal for DJB has more than 10,000 unresolved complaints."

She further said that similar directions have been issued to the CEO and other members of the DJB. "Sending complaints to the CEO and other members of the DJB has borne no results. I will now be sending all DJB-related complaints to you. It is now your responsibility to resolve these issues," said Atishi.



Water Minister Atishi

read the letter by Atishi.

The DJB has more than 10,000 unresolved complaints, Atishi said, adding that she has not yet received any inspection report, despite instructions to provide them. "Despite my instructions that inspection reports of the CEO, chief engineers, and other officers be sent to me every Monday, I have not received a single report," Atishi wrote.

She also mentioned that despite bringing the complaints to the CEO's notice, the situation on the ground has not changed.

"I'm shocked that senior DJB officers have not been able to take any long-term corrective action in the matter, despite recurring complaints. In the absence of an effective public grievance system, the people of Delhi are being forced to live in inhuman conditions," said Atishi.

L-G approves 2 panels to enforce aid scheme to help poor prisoners

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

L-G V K Saxena approved the constitution of an 'empowered committee' and 'oversight committee' for the implementation of the central government's scheme to financially assist poor prisoners.

According to L-G House of officials, poor prisoners cannot be released from jail due to financial constraints — either due to non-payment of fines imposed on them or because they can't pay the bail amount.

"The L-G took note that the implementation of the scheme has been delayed, despite the Union Home Minister writing to the Delhi Chief Minister in May 2023 to take advantage of the scheme, for which the entire fund will be provided by the Central government... Later, the Union Home Secretary in June wrote a letter addressing the Delhi government, to take necessary action for imple-

mentation of the scheme. Saxena also noticed that it was part of the Union Budget 2023-24, and there is a need for its expeditious implementation, as per the SOP circulated by the Ministry of Home Affairs," said L-G House officials.

In response, the Delhi government said: "The Home Minister received the file on February 12, and returned it on February 22."

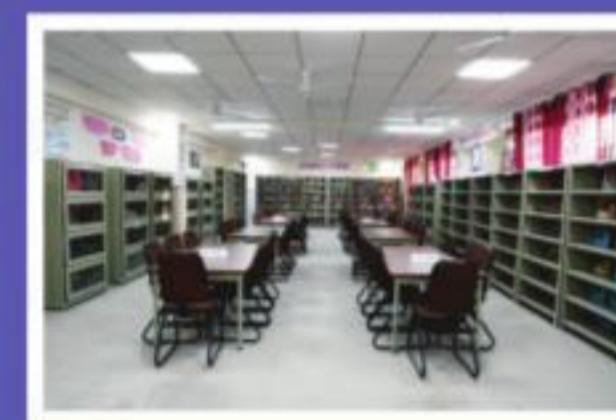
According to officials, the scheme — which will be implemented as per guidelines, and a standing operating procedure issued by the MHA — will likely benefit 162 prisoners.

The approximate amount required to provide assistance to these prisoners — 161 under-trial prisoners, and one convict — is approximately Rs 23,79,000, as per the Prison Department data, officials added. "This scheme will not only benefit the poor jail inmates, but also resolve the overcrowding problem in jails," said officials.

Inauguration of a GRAND SCHOOL IN NORTH EAST DELHI

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- 15 state-of-the-art laboratories and 2 libraries to enrich students' learning experience
- Office & staff rooms, activity rooms, toilet blocks on every floor and lift

Saturday, 9th March, 2024

Chief Guest

Arvind Kejriwal

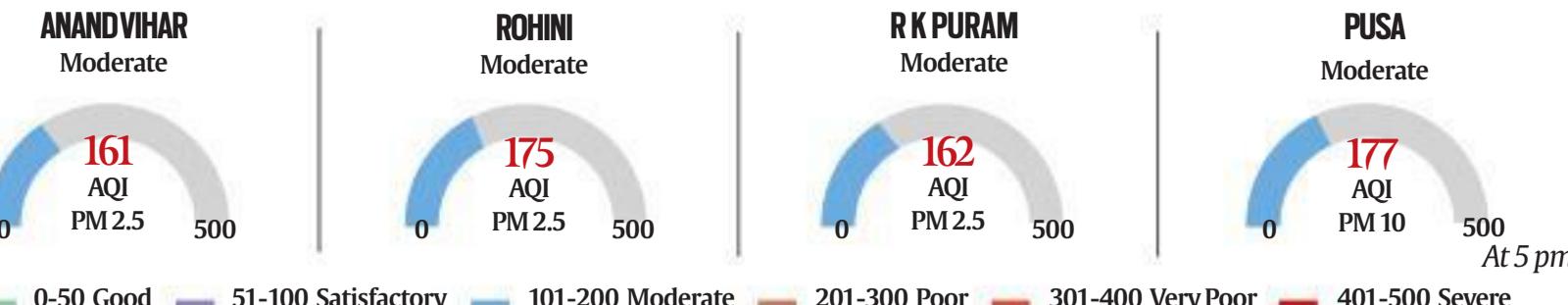
Chief Minister, Delhi

Guest of Honour

Atishi

Education Minister, Delhi





SKY WATCH
FORECAST: March 9
Partly cloudy sky.
Strong surface winds

MAX: 27
1.4°C below normal

MIN: 11
3°C below normal



TAKING THE LEAD

Women staff take the lead at Safdarjung Railway Station on International Women's Day on Friday. The Northern Railways also declared it a pink station for a day. *Praveen Khanna*

Gym trainer killed on wedding eve: Father called him home, turned off lights, stabbed him

ARNABJIT SURI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE NIGHT before he was to be married, gym trainer Gaurav Singh (29) was at his sangeet celebration when his father, Rang Lal, called him to his home – 3 km away – so he could give him some money. Gaurav was surprised as he and his father were not on the best of terms but decided to go nevertheless.

As soon as he stepped into his father's room, the latter switched off the lights. In the cover of darkness, Lal and three of his accomplices, who were lying in wait, allegedly stabbed Gaurav to death – all over his face, back and chest – with a pair of scissors, a knife and iron rods.

In the meantime, relatives realised that the groom was nowhere to be seen.

Said Tanishq, a close relative, "He had left the venue in South Delhi's Tigris around 10 pm... we realised that Gaurav had been missing for almost two hours – and so was his father... Lal was at the event a while ago, giving his blessings to Gaurav."

One of his relatives then decided to go to Lal's house in search of Gaurav. On opening the door, which was unlocked, he was horrified to find Gaurav's blood-soaked body on the floor and called the police. Officers said Gaurav was stabbed at least a dozen times to the extent that the body was mutilated.

Accused estranged from family

After killing his son, Lal (54) and his accomplices hid the body in one corner of the room and fled.



Victim Gaurav Singh owned Fit Box gym in Delhi. His father was arrested in Jaipur and brought back to the Capital on remand on Saturday. *Express*

Police traced him to a hotel in Jaipur, from where he was arrested and brought back to the national capital on Saturday on remand. Police said Lal revealed that he paid his three associates Rs 75,000 for the crime and the total deal was fixed at Rs 1.5 lakh.

DCP (South) Ankut Chauhan said, "Lal disclosed that he was unhappy with his son's extravagant lifestyle and disobedience towards him. He said his wife always supported Gaurav, which added to his frustration. He had been planning to kill his son for the past three-four months but hatched the plot just a day before the murder."

Relatives told *The Indian Express* that Lal stayed apart from the rest of the family, who all lived in and around Tigris. Said Tanishq, "He was not fond of

Gaurav and his younger son and hardly spoke to them and his wife... he built another flat nearby – where the murder took place – and used to stay there most of the time."

Lal made money by renting out several buildings he owned in the area. Gaurav owned a gym near his father's home and had run the institution for the past three years. Said Mahender, Gaurav's uncle, "He was so happy over the wedding... which was fixed over a month ago. He had brought so many firecrackers, cakes and sweets as part of the preparations... he was taking care of everything by himself."

The DCP said the other accused were on the run. Police also recovered cash worth over Rs 15 lakh and gold from Lal's possession.

Resolve issues over Jaypee Infra takeover by April 2nd week: NCLAT to Yeida, Suraksha

New Delhi: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Wednesday gave an ultimatum to Suraksha Realty (SRA) and Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) to resolve its issues over the takeover of Jaypee InfraTech Limited (JIL) and reach a settlement by the second week of April.

The NCLAT said if it does not happen within the due date, then the tribunal will hear the case on its merit, likely on April 18.

On March 7, 2023, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved the resolution plan of Suraksha Realty, a Mumbai-based firm, and allowed it to take over debt-ridden JIL and complete the remaining projects. However, YEIDA challenged the order in the NCLAT. Since then, Suraksha and YEIDA have held discussions but are yet to reach any settlement; construction of projects has also not started so far. *ENS*

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Addressing a press conference at Delhi's HKS Surjeet Bhawan on Friday, Saibaba, who has spent seven years in jail, said: "... It was like an 'agni pariksha' for me. I had to go through this test twice."

"One judgment of the higher judiciary acquitting us was not

EX-DU PROF ACQUITTED IN SUSPECTED MAOIST LINKS CASE

Can't believe I'm free, feels like I'm still in jail cell: Saibaba

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

"EVEN NOW, I cannot believe I am free. I feel like I am still in a jail cell... I am not able to come to terms with the reality that is in front of me even now," said former Delhi University professor G N Saibaba, a day after he walked out of the Nagpur Central Jail.

Earlier this week, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court acquitted him and five other co-accused in a suspected Maoist links case and allowed their appeals against their conviction in 2017.

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"One judgment of the higher judiciary acquitting us was not

reaching the Parliament. It is not fooling the people of Delhi, but it-self," alleged Sachdeva.

Hitting out at the BJP, Kejriwal accused its government at the Centre of trying to stop welfare work for the Delhi residents through L-G V K Saxena, because they want to "avenge" the election of an "ordinary man" as the chief minister. "...These BJP people, L-G, and the Centre tried to stop all our work... They hate you, they hate the 2 crore people of Delhi because you dared to elect an ordinary man as your chief minister three times consecutively... The BJP people are seeking revenge, including the L-G and the Central government," alleged Kejriwal.

"Last year, they cut off the power of mohalla clinics for two months. They stopped the rent for these mohalla clinics. They stopped the supply of medicines

in these mohalla clinics. All of this was done by the L-G and the Central government. They stopped all the tests in mohalla clinics. How can someone be so cruel to stop the treatment of the poor?" he asked.

"I have tried my best to never consider myself the chief minister. I have tried my best by becoming a son of every family of Delhi, a part of every family of the 2 crore people living in Delhi. I have tried to overcome their problems, to be their support. If someone in any family in Delhi falls ill, I feel the pain in my heart," said Kejriwal.

"Today, electricity is available in Delhi 24 hours. There are only two states in the country where there is 24-hour electricity – Delhi and Punjab... Our workers will go to every house to distribute this leaflet; all the work done has been written in it," Kejriwal added.

A single-judge bench of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, in its March 7 order, said: "This court opines that it is not on the basis of the British or other foreign jurisprudence alone but on the basis of unplundered wealth of ancient Indian judicial and mediation jurisprudence which is found in our old texts including Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, when read and understood in detail in context of the messages conveyed in certain chapters, subject to their true interpretation and understanding without being referred to as religious texts alone."

Justice Sharma, however, emphasised that in cases involving offences of a "serious nature" such as those falling under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, "no form of mediation is permissible".

The father had filed a complaint under Section 7 (sexual assault) of the POCSO Act; subsequently, the special court had referred the complaint for mediation based on statements by the father and mother of the two children that they wanted to compromise the matter. In the mediation centre, the matter was settled and the special court had closed the complaint. The father, however, approached the HC claiming that he had agreed to a settlement on the condition that his children would stay with him and his wife would forego all her rights against the children. But, he said, she had failed to fulfil these terms.

Instead of going to the hospital, I chose to speak to the press today because you supported me. My family faced stigma and I was called a terrorist... I am sitting to talk to you all in a lot of pain... I am unable to talk properly nor am I in a position to sit here either," he said.

Remembering his mother, he said, "If I was able to teach in a university like DU, it was only because of my mother... All women across the country, the poorest of the poor... have only one desire that their child should get an education. My mother had the same dream. She died because I was implicated in this case... Until her last moment, she asked to see me."

He said the agreement stated that the parties would be at liberty to revive cases that were pending against them in case of non-compliance with the agreement. The HC, however, refused to reopen the father's complaint after observing that nine years have passed since the special court order.

TO KEEP POLL EXPENSES IN CHECK

Helipad, samosa-kachori, DJ & more: GB Nagar admin fixes rate of 281 items for LS elections

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, MARCH 8

VEGETARIAN THALI for Rs 100, a samosa or a cup of tea for Rs 10, kachori for Rs 15, sandwich for Rs 25, and a kilogram of jalebi for Rs 90: Gautam Buddha Nagar district administration has fixed the rate of a total of 281 items on the basis of which expenditure of political parties will be calculated for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

According to Atul Kumar, Deputy District Election Officer and Additional District Magistrate, the rate list is being issued to ensure that no dispute arises at the time of assessment of election expenses.

"In such a situation, no candidate can understand the value. Suppose they have served 1,000 samosas or distributed sweets, then its price will be decided on the basis of this rate list only. Yes, if someone deposits the bill, then the expense will be calculated separately," he added.

Other heads for which rates have been issued range from

expensive infrastructure, such as helipads, luxury vehicles, and farmhouses, to miscellaneous items like flowers, cooler and sofa.

According to the data with the DM office, the rate of a helipad is fixed at Rs 2.30 lakh.

Similarly, a farmhouse will cost Rs 22,000 per day while a marriage lawn will cost Rs 11,000. The administration has set a standard rate for each article of furniture such as chair (Rs 13 per piece), sofa (Rs 80), and bed (Rs 40). Rates have also been set for rose garland (Rs 120), marigold garland (Rs 12), and bouquet (Rs 180).

Those wishing to rope in the service of a DJ would have to ensure the cost does not exceed Rs 4,200 per day.

The administration has also fixed the rate of items such as bucket (Rs 4), plastic glass (Rs 2), tray (Rs 7), and jug (Rs 4).

For advertisement, a steel frame hoarding will cost Rs 29.50 per square feet, a wooden frame hoarding Rs 12.29, and simple hoarding (3'x2') Rs 100 per piece. Among elec-

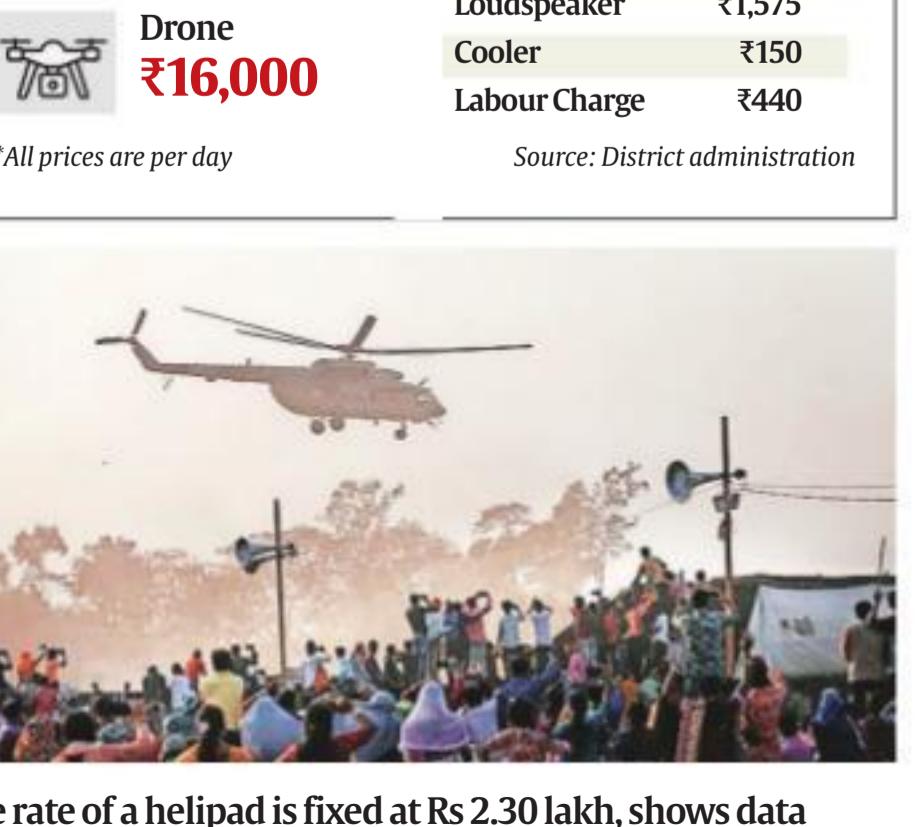
Others Items	Price
VIP Gate	₹5,000
DJ	₹4,200
Luxury Vehicles	₹3,500
AC	₹2,200
Loudspeaker	₹1,575
Cooler	₹150
Labour Charge	₹440

*All prices are per day

THE RATE CHART

	Helipad ₹2.30 lakh
	Farmhouse ₹22,000
	Drone ₹16,000

Source: District administration



The rate of a helipad is fixed at Rs 2.30 lakh, shows data with the DM office. *Archive*

tronic items, the rate of one drone camera per 15 minutes has been fixed at Rs 16,000.

Under the refreshment heads, rates of a total of 26 items have been fixed including non-vegetarian thali (Rs 180), puri-sabzi (Rs 30 per plate), sandwich (Rs 25) and cashew barfi (Rs 700 per kg).

In terms of vehicles, a Tata safari or a Honda City (including fuel) will cost Rs 3,500 per day.

While the rate for running advertisements in multiplex cinema houses has been fixed at Rs 463 per screen per second per week, the rate of printing advertisements per square centimetre in various newspapers ranges from Rs 21.41 to Rs 291.85.

Kumar said the rate list has been prepared after market survey and as per the standards set by Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer.

"We evaluated the prevailing market price and accordingly, fixed the rate of items. Apart from this, we held two meetings with representatives of all the political parties," according to Kumar.



VIKSIT BHARAT, VIKSIT NORTHEAST



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Har Ghar Jal, Agriculture, Sabroom Land
Port and Unity Malls

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Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya,
Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura worth

₹ 55,000 Cr

by

SHRI NARENDRA MODI

Hon'ble Prime Minister



Sela Tunnel

India's highest tunnel
providing all-weather connectivity
to strategic Tawang region



Jal Jeevan Mission
3 lakh Functional Household
Tap Connections in
Arunachal Pradesh

Ekta Mall

to promote One District,
One Product, GI tag Products
and other
indigenous products



Connecting Arunachal
4G connectivity to
321 villages through
170 towers

in august presence of

Lt. Gen. Kaiwalya Trivikram Parnaik
PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.)
Hon'ble Governor, Arunachal Pradesh

Shri Pema Khandu
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Arunachal Pradesh

Shri Kiren Rijiju
Hon'ble Union Minister,
Earth Sciences

Ms. Anusuya Uikey
Hon'ble Governor,
Manipur

Shri Phagu Chauhan
Hon'ble Governor,
Meghalaya

Shri La Ganesan
Hon'ble Governor,
Nagaland

Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya
Hon'ble Governor,
Sikkim

Shri Indrasena Reddy Nallu
Hon'ble Governor,
Tripura

Shri N. Biren Singh
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Manipur

Shri Conrad Sangma
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Meghalaya

Shri Neiphiu Rio
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Nagaland

Shri Prem Singh Tamang
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Sikkim

Shri Manik Saha
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Tripura

9th March, 2024 | IG Park, Itanagar | Please be seated by 0800 hrs

Live telecast on DD NEWS Channel number: Tata Play - 502 SD, 501 HD, Airtel - 381, Dish TV - 699, Videocon D2H - 328
DD Arunprabha Channel number: Tata Play - 1986, Airtel - 649, Dish TV - 1514, Videocon D2H - 846, DD Free Dish(DTH) - 11

Time: 10:20 hrs onwards

DIPR/ARN/001

Wish Farooq sahib had discussed with us: Mufti after NC rejects seat-sharing with PDP

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, MARCH 8

WITH THE National Conference (NC) categorically rejecting any seat-sharing with PDP in Kashmir, PDP leader and former CM Mehbooba Mufti Friday said it was a major setback for the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD).

Mufti said her party would take a decision on fielding candidates after consulting with the Congress and the INDIA bloc.

"For us, unity is more important than Parliament seats. It was time to resist the onslaught on our identity," Mufti said. "If Farooq (Abdullah) sahib had discussed it with us and said that his workers aren't ready, or his legislators are not ready (for seat sharing) in the interest of people, we would have sacrificed not one but three seats. If they would have taken a decision after talking to us, at least the PAGD wouldn't have fallen apart like this."

"Farooq sahib suggested that we should meet the PM and we did. It was NC that suggested we should jointly contest the DDC (District Development Council) elections, and we did," she said. "But Farooq sahib didn't discuss it (seat-sharing) with us even once."

"You know, I am a fighter," Mufti said, hinting that her party would field candidates against NC.



Unity more important than seats:
Mehbooba

Earlier, NC vice-president Omar Abdullah said if he was told in advance that he will have to "weaken his party for some other party", he would not have been part of the INDIA bloc, and ruled out any seat sharing with the PDP.

"I have said it earlier also those who came in third place, what right do they have to seek a seat?" Omar asked, referring to the PDP's demand that the South Kashmir seat should be left for Mufti.

In the 2019 parliamentary elections, PDP lost all the three seats to NC in the Valley. PDP president Mufti, who contested from South Kashmir, stood third behind NC's winning candidate Hasnain Masoodi and Congress's Ghulam Ahmad Mir.

Omar said the objective of the INDIA bloc was to fight the BJP and the NDA. "If the objective was to fight against the BJP, then what is the scope for this internal tensions? There is no scope for any discussion (on seat sharing)," he said. "If I was told before joining the INDIA alliance that we will have to weaken our party for some other party, I wouldn't have joined the alliance," he added.

Sources said Gandhi might contest again from Amethi in UP which he lost to Union Minister Smriti Irani in 2019. There is still suspense over the electoral debut of AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Raeberal. The next meeting of the Congress's CEC is likely on March 11 during

39 CANDIDATES NAMED; SUSPENSE CONTINUES OVER PRIYANKA'S RAEBARELI POLL DEBUT

Cong 1st list: Signal to seniors, stress on south

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE CONGRESS on Friday announced its first list of 39 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, fielding senior leader Rahul Gandhi once again from Wayanad in Kerala, former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel from Rajnandgaon, and former Chhattisgarh Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu from Mahasamund.

The candidature of Baghel and Sahu signal the Congress's intention to field its senior leaders in the Hindi heartland states, where the party was wiped out in the 2019 elections. There is talk in party circles about fielding former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot and CWC member Sachin Pilot.

By fielding AICC general secretary KC Venugopal the party has signalled that veteran parliamentarians in the Upper House may have to prepare to contest the LS polls, party insiders said. Venugopal will contest from Alappuzha in Kerala. It is the only one of Kerala's 20 constituencies the Congress-led UDF lost last time.

Venugopal's decision to fight the LS polls is surprising since he has a little over two years left in his RS term.

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suspense over the electoral debut of AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra from Raeberal. The next meeting of the Congress's CEC is likely on March 11 during



Rahul Gandhi, who was in Gujarat for Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra Friday, was named party's Wayanad candidate. Bhupendra Rana

which the candidates from UP may be discussed. The candidates, announced by Venugopal and party treasurer Ajay Maken includes 18 seats the party currently holds. Of the 39 candidates, 28, or more than 70%, are from southern states (16 from Kerala, seven from Karnataka, four from Telangana, and one from the UT of Lakshadweep). The party has two governments in the south and had the maximum number of MPs from Kerala last time. Fifteen of the candidates belong to the general category and 24 are from the SCs, STs, OBCs, and minority communities. The 39 include 8 SC/ST-reserved seats.

No real surprises

There were no real surprises in the list. In Kerala, the party has retained all sitting parliamentarians except Thrissur MP T N Prathapan. He has been replaced by incumbent Vadakara MP K Muraleedharan, the son of former CM K Karunakaran. He will take on actor Suresh Gopi (BJP). The Left candidate in the seat is CPI's V S Sunil Kumar. In Vadakara, Congress has fielded its young MLA Shafi Parambil.

Among the renominated MPs are Gandhi, who will be taking on his INDIA bloc ally CPI's Annie Raja, CWC member Shashi Tharoor from Thiruvananthapuram, state Congress president K Sudhakaran from Kannur, Congress whip in LS Kodikunnil Suresh from Mavelikkara, and young leaders Hibi Eden and Dean Kuriakose from Eranakulam and Idukki respectively.

In Karnataka, the party has

fielded Deputy CM D K Shivakumar's brother and sitting MP D K Suresh once again from Bangalore Rural. The party has fielded Geeta

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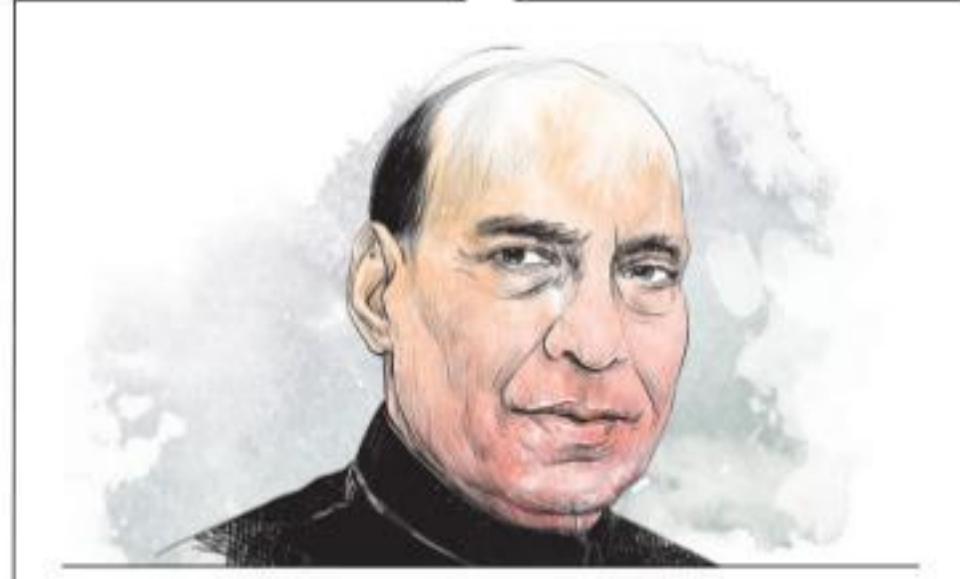
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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



MOVIE MESSAGE

IN BETWEEN his busy schedule ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday found some time to watch the recently released film *Article 370* with his family in a cinema hall in Delhi. The movie presents the events linked to the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. Singh, who watched the movie on International Women's Day, said it also presents a good example of women empowerment. The film shows two women officers leading the government's secret mission to abrogate Article 370.

BOOK OP

AS THE BJP looks to consolidate its OBC votes, a book – *Modi & OBC Politics* – written by Pankaj Choudhary, a law faculty member at Delhi University and the national in-charge of research and policy wing of the BJP's OBC Morcha, has presented the perfect opportunity. The book will be released this Sunday by BJP OBC Morcha president K Laxman, who is also the party's Parliamentary Board member, and BJP national general secretary Arun Singh. It has been published by Prabhat Prakashan. The book's description states that it tells the story of how the Narendra Modi government uplifted the OBCs.

9-YEAR-OLD'S MURDER

Puducherry stands still as DMK, ADMK, Cong unite in protest

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MARCH 8

PUDUCHERRY CAME to a standstill on Friday as political parties and the general public protested the alleged sexual assault and murder of a nine-year-old girl, whose body was found in a drain earlier this week.

DMK, the Congress, Left parties, VCK, and AIADMK all backed a near-total shutdown across the Union Territory to demand justice for the victim and to highlight the issue of drug-related crimes. The girl, who had been missing since March 2, was found dead in a drain near her home on March 5.

Protests had been taking place in Puducherry ever since the initial discovery of her body, with her limbs tied and covered in cloth. There has been speculation about the involvement of drug peddlers and addicts in the murder, prompting calls for a stringent crackdown on such activities.

The day-long bandh on Friday saw the closure of shops and all trade establishments in

Puducherry and neighbouring towns. Public life was disrupted as private buses, autorickshaws, and most commercial activities ceased, although government-run buses continued to operate on a limited basis to facilitate student transportation for exams.

The protests ever since the victim was found dead have been directed towards alleged inaction of the local administration. The subsequent arrest of two men, a 56-year-old and a 19-year-old, on charges of murder and kidnapping, and under the POCSO Act and the SC/ST Act, has done little to quell the public's fury.

Amid escalating tension, Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan visited the victim's family and assured them that a fast-track special court would expedite case proceedings. She also promised the most severe punishment for the culprits, even as calls for her resignation over alleged failures in curbing drug trafficking continued. While Friday's bandh was largely peaceful, protesters expressed their frustration and demanded accountability.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE INCOME Tax Appellate Tribunal Friday dismissed the Congress's appeal against imposition of penalty for discrepancies in tax returns for previous years and said it was exploring all legal options and will move the high court very soon.

Sources said the tribunal had

dismissed the appeal of the Congress for imposition of penalties of Rs 210 crore by the Income Tax department here Friday.

Congress treasurer Ajay Maken said the party is exploring all legal options and would move the high court "very soon".

"The BJP government has deliberately chosen the timing of this to coincide with the national elections," Maken told PTI.

He said the I-T tribunal had

freezing Congress's funds is "an attack on democracy" as it has come just ahead of the national elections. "How can one expect fair elections in such a situation when funds to the tune of Rs 270 crore have been frozen or taken away by the Income Tax authorities from Congress party's accounts," he asked.

Congress's legal head Vivek Tankha said the tribunal has not even followed its own past precedents in this regard and the party

will be approaching the high court soon. "We are disappointed with the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal order. We will be moving the high court very soon. They have not followed their own past precedents in this regard and the party

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SAD-BJP alliance emotion of masses from ground: Jakhar

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, MARCH 8

PUNJAB BJP chief Sunil Jakhar Friday set the political circles abuzz saying that an alliance between the saffron party and the Shiromani Akali Dal "is the emotion of the masses from the ground". He, however, added that the BJP is preparing for all 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab.

"We are ready for all the 13 seats but it is the emotion of the masses from the ground that an alliance (with Shiromani Akali Dal) should happen. But I have neither given any suggestions to the high command nor have any discussions held with me on this matter," said Jakhar.

He was talking to the reporters after flagging off 'Viksit Bharat Modi ki guarantee' video vans, seeking people's suggestions from across the state for preparing the ruling party's manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections. These vans will gather suggestions from the people for the party's "sankalp pa-

tra" (manifesto), Jakhar said.

The BJP state chief also batted for strengthening the regional parties. "I strongly believe that regional parties should be strengthened in every state as they are the voice of the people. The minority community tag is often applied on Sikh community and I feel that there should be a party for raising their voice," said Jakhar.

The over a century-old Akali Dal is the oldest regional party in Punjab and has often claimed to be the 'sole representative' of the Sikhs. The Akali Dal had walked out of the NDA in September 2020 over the now-repealed farm laws.

Asked if an alliance will be beneficial for the BJP, Jakhar said it was not a question of benefit of any individual party, but "it is always about Punjab and its people".

Jakhar's remarks come ahead of BJP national president JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah's expected visit to Punjab to attend an event to mark the first death anniversary of former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal at latter's native village Badal.

ODISHA ASSEMBLY POLLS

BJD-BJP talks hit stalemate: Naveen wants 100+ seats

SUJIT BISOYI
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 8

THE SEAT-SHARING talks between the BJD and BJP continue to hang, with sources talking of hard bargaining on both sides, especially over Assembly seats, with the state seeing simultaneous elections along with the Lok Sabha.

The Naveen Patnaik-led BJD reportedly does not want anything less than 100 of the total 147 Assembly seats. For the Lok Sabha, there is an overall agreement that the BJP will contest as much as two-third of the seats.

Senior BJD leaders V K Pandian and Pranab Prakash Das, who had flown to Delhi earlier this week for the seat-sharing talks, returned to Bhubaneswar Friday. BJP Odisha

leaders, including state unit president Manmohan Samal, who were earlier asked not to leave Delhi by the party, also landed in the state in the evening.

Sources said that Odisha BJP leaders are not agreeable to the BJD claiming the lion's share of the Assembly seats, and instead want the same arrangement as existed between the two parties in 2000-09, when the BJD-BJP share was 84-63, respectively.

State BJD leaders, who have been taking on the BJD as the main opposition in Odisha, are trying to persuade the central leaders that there is strong anti-incumbency against the ruling state party on the ground, and that the BJP "would fight on its own". "We had gone to Delhi to discuss our election strategy with the top leadership. The meeting was to discuss preparations for forming a govern-

ment at the Centre as well as in Odisha," the state BJD chief said.

BJP Odisha unit vice-president Prithviraj Harichandan said the state leaders believed the party would fare better if it fought alone, but they would accept whatever the central leadership decides.

BJD sources, however, spoke of multiple rounds of discussions with central BJD leaders, and said talks over an alliance and seat-sharing would continue.

"When it comes to the Lok Sabha, the two parties have more or less agreed to the BJD fighting 14 of the 21 seats, leaving 7 for the BJD. There may be some issues, such as the BJD looking to contest the Bhubaneswar and Puri Lok Sabha seats, but these can be sorted out. However, there will

be no compromise over the Assembly polls," a BJD source said.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJD had won 12 of the 21 seats, the BJP 8 and Congress 1. In the Rajya Sabha, the BJD has 9 MPs, and helped the BJP's Ashwini Vaishnaw get re-elected recently.

But in the Assembly polls, the BJD dominance has been total, with the party giving specific examples of constituencies and of Naveen Patnaik's continuing popularity, to explain its push for not less than 100 seats. In 2019, the party had won 112 of the 146 seats.

"It would be difficult for the party to manage if it contests less than 100 seats. There will be rebel candidates, and it will cost the party," a BJD leader, on the condition of anonymity, said.

which he replied, "We should do yoga and meditation."

Responding to this, the PM said, "Then they (people) will say that he is sharing Modiji's idea, and that you have become a BJP wala." The conversation ended with Allahbadia, who got 'Disruptor of the Year' award, PM Modi shared a friendly banter. "Will you give a fitness mantra to people?" Modi asked him, to

podcast karne ka mood ho raha hai (I feel like making a podcast with you)." The PM, in turn, asked him to talk about the importance of sleep in his future shows.

In a by-the-way fashion, all of them were nudged towards issues such as insomnia, mental health, environment, health and nutrition, women empowerment, culture and spirituality to work on for their future content videos.

Spiritual orator Jaya Kishori,

who was awarded 'Best Creator for Social Change', was asked by Modi to dispel the notion that spirituality means renunciation; while travel blogger Kamya Jani was asked to highlight local products also, while talking about the main tourist attractions in a city.

When Jani asked if she should talk about Lakshadweep or Dwarka (two places the PM visited recently) in her next blog, the PM jokingly said even as Dwarka is quite deep down, and very tough, they would discuss this in detail some other time.

While awarding Swachhta Ambassador award to Malhar Kalamb, who has collaborated with celebrities on cleanliness campaigns and requested the PM to join him in a swachhta drive, tongue in cheek Modi said, "Is chunao mein bhi safai hone wali hai (This election, too, will see some cleaning)."

Talking about the venue, Bharat Mandapam, the PM said the National Creators have assembled at the same spot today where world leaders gave direction to the future at the G20 Summit last year.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

In Assam, Modi to inaugurate Rs 18K cr projects

Guwahati: PM Narendra Modi arrived in Assam Friday during his two-day visit to the state and Arunachal Pradesh.

After his arrival at Tezpur, Modi travelled to Golaghat district in a chopper from where he participated in a 16-km-long roadshow to Kaziranga for an overnight stay. He is scheduled to experience a safari there Saturday morning. Modi will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of several development projects worth Rs 18,000 crore undertaken by Assam and the Centre.

Later Saturday, he is scheduled to inaugurate the Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh – the world's longest twin tunnels built at an altitude of over 13,000 feet – which is aimed at providing all-weather connectivity to the Tawang region. There, he is also scheduled to launch the Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialisation Scheme with a financial outlay of over Rs 10,000 crore.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

DIVYA A

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

INVITING PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on to the stage to present the first National Creators' Awards, podcaster Raj Sharmi said to the hall packed with social media influencers, "Thank your stars he is not a content creator, because had he been one, our shops would have been shut."

"His reels go viral, his tweets become trends and his slogans become hashtags, he is the OG (a casual term used for someone authentic/exceptional) influencer of the influencers," said Sharmi, a motivational speaker with two million followers on Instagram.

Over the next two hours of the event Friday morning, as the Prime Minister presented awards to 21 content creators, it was clear that formal structure had to give way to irreverence. By interacting with influencers individually before giving them awards, PM Modi also gave them ample content for their reels -- full of humour, wit, and repartee, even personal anecdotes -- the kind of

stuff that works well online.

With every award winner having a million followers at least, the content generated at the event -- with Modi in the frame -- would be viewed by crores in the days to come.

On stage with YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia, who got 'Disruptor of the Year' award, PM Modi shared a friendly banter. "Will you give a fitness mantra to people?" Modi asked him, to

which he replied, "We should do yoga and meditation."

Responding to this, the PM said, "Then they (people) will say that he is sharing Modiji's idea, and that you have become a BJP wala."

The conversation ended with Allahbadia, who got a YouTube channel called BearBicepsGuy, and has interviewed several Union Ministers in the recent past, including S Jaishankar and Piyush Goyal, telling Modi, "Aapke saath

spiritual orator Jaya Kishori,

said. In the second, data from various National Federations, State Federations, State Cooperative Banks (StCB), District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCB), Urban Cooperative Banks (UCB), State Cooperative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (SCARDB), Primary Agricultural and Rural Development Banks (PACRB), cooperative sugar mills, district unions, and multi-state cooperative societies (MSCS) were collated/mapped, he said.

In the third, data mapping of all remaining 8 lakh primary cooperative societies in other sectors was carried out, he said.

After this, it was revealed there are over 8 lakh registered societies in the country, which are connected to over 30 crore citizens, he said.

Addressing an event, Shah said the Centre has introduced 20 new activities to be associated with PACS, enabling them to generate profits. The computerization of PACS has opened up many possibilities for their development, he said. Shah launched the National Cooperative Database and released the 'National Cooperative Database 2023: A Report'. The database aims to identify and address the gaps through a comprehensive analysis.

He said the work on the National Cooperative Database has been carried out in 3 phases. In the first phase, mapping of approximately 2.64 lakh societies in three sectors, namely Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, Dairy, and Fisheries, was completed, he said.

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In the third, data mapping of all remaining 8 lakh primary cooperative societies

Jail official held after gadgets found in Waris Punjab De inmates' cell

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, MARCH 8

THE SUPERINTENDENT of Dibrugarh Central Jail, where Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh and his associates are lodged for nearly a year, has been arrested after contraband items, including a smartphone, were found in their cell last month.

Superintendent Nipen Das was arrested Friday after being taken into police custody Thursday and the charges against him include a section of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for advocating, abetting, advising or inciting the commission of "any unlawful activity".

On February 17, the jail staff seized a smartphone with a SIM card, a keypad phone, a TV remote with keyboard, a spy-cam pen, pen drives, Bluetooth headphones, speakers, and a smart watch from the NSA cell housing Singh and nine of his associates.

On Friday, Dibrugarh Superintendent of Police V V Rakesh Reddy said the investigation into the source of these unauthorised items revealed a "nexus" between jail officials and the detainees.

In Manipur, Army JCO abducted, rescued hours later

officer, sources said.

Just 10 days ago, Manipur's valley districts were rocked by discontent from police forces after an Additional Superintendent of Police was abducted and his house in Imphal attacked by assailants identified as members of Arambai Tenggol. An inspector was also abducted with him. The two policemen were eventually rescued but sustained injuries and had to be hospitalised. The incident prompted the administrations of various valley districts to requisition central paramilitary forces and the Army to assist the police with the law and order situation.

According to sources, the JCO was on leave and at home when he was abducted and taken away in a vehicle around 9 am on Friday. Security forces conducted a coordinated search operation to rescue the abducted

Manipur IGP I K Muivah had also warned that such incidents would necessitate the presence of central forces.

Eight Myanmar nationals repatriated

Guwahati: Eight Myanmar nationals were repatriated by the Manipur government on Friday, and a total of 77 people are expected to be deported in the coming days. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh announced this saying, "First batch of Myanmar nationals who entered India illegally deported today. Although

India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it has given shelter and aid to those fleeing the crisis in Myanmar on humanitarian grounds with a systematic approach."

These 77 people include 51 women and five children, and they are all to be deported by March 11.

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FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

BJP, TDP on cusp of poll deal

nine. For the Assembly elections, which will be held simultaneously, the BJP initially demanded 15 but could make some compromises. But for the Lok Sabha polls, it is insisting on more Lok Sabha seats as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the party a target of winning 370 seats. For the NDA as a whole, the target is winning 400-plus seats.

A source in the TDP said Naidu does not want to completely give away the party's stake in the Lok Sabha as "he thinks it is very important to have a respectable number of seats in the Lower House of Parliament" for the stability of the alliance. A BJP functionary said the party was keen to get its erstwhile partner back in the NDA as well as "increase the number of candidates who contest and win on the lotus symbol".

Naidu, Pawan Kalyan, and the BJP leadership held discussions past midnight on Wednesday too. "The agreement is more or less done. But a formal announcement will be after the final round of talks today," said a source.

The TDP broke its alliance with the BJP in 2018 over Andhra Pradesh not receiving special category status from the Centre. Despite Naidu's repeated attempts to revive the ties after the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had been dragging its feet over allowing the TDP back into the NDA. One of its main reasons was its "friendly partnership" with Andhra's ruling YSR

Congress Party (YSRCP) and Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The BJP made several attempts to reach out to Jagan and get the YSRCP to join the NDA but the Andhra CM has resisted those efforts so far. The BJP offered Cabinet berths to the YSRCP in 2021 in an attempt to bring the party over to the NDA, but at the time Jagan maintained that he "would remain friendly towards the Centre and extend issue-based backing to it".

Last year, the BJP lost both its only southern stronghold Karnataka and failed to stop the Congress from coming to power in Telangana despite a high-decibel campaign. Having saturated itself in the Hindi heartland states and Gujarat, where it has won all in previous elections and is in a commanding position this time, the only way it can increase its tally this time is by making gains in the southern states. The party has officially joined hands with Janata Dal (Secular) in Karnataka and in Tamil Nadu it is attempting to bring back the AIADMK into the NDA.

In Odisha, the BJP has almost finalised the deal with former ally Biju Janata Dal (BJD). Sources said the BJP could contest 14-15 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats from Odisha and about 40 of 147 Assembly constituencies. The final announcement on this alliance is delayed because of differences over some Lok Sabha seats — both the number of seats and candidates — said sources.

Delhi cop kicks men during namaz

video clip also showed two other policemen walking behind Tomar, shouting at the devotees to fold their mats and leave the spot.

According to some eyewitnesses who were among those offering namaz, the crowd of devotees had spilled over from the mosque to the road outside, but were not blocking traffic.

About 10 minutes after the prayers started, Tomar reportedly approached the devotees, kicking some of them, and shouting at them to leave the spot, as seen in the video clip.

"We were not blocking the road... only a narrow pathway beside the mosque was being used to read the namaz, and traffic was flowing smoothly as it does every Friday," said one of the devotees.

"We had just spread out our mats and sat down to read the namaz when the incident took place... police personnel approached us from behind and forcefully removed us, although the road was not blocked... there is a layer of police security (deployed) from the nearby police post every Friday when we offer namaz, but this is the first time this has happened," said another person who did not want to be named.

After the incident, a crowd gathered outside the police post, demanding action against Tomar.

3 observation home employees get life term for custodial murder of juvenile in Mehsana

PARIMAL DABHI
GANDHINAGAR, MARCH 8

A HOUSE-MASTER and two guards of an observation home in Gujarat's Mehsana have been convicted and sentenced to life for the brutal custodial murder of a 17-year-old Dalit juvenile after his failed attempt to escape in February 2020.

A special Atrocity Court that convicted the three accused also held the state government indirectly responsible for the murder and ordered it to pay Rs 1.50 lakh in compensation to the parents of the deceased for violating

his human rights.

"As government-appointed officials have caused the death of the juvenile... by brutally beating him, the government becomes indirectly responsible for the same," the court recorded in its judgment.

The court of Special Atrocity and Additional Sessions Judge C. M. Pavar, in an order dated March 7, also directed the three convicts to pay Rs 2 lakh penalty.

Apart from murder and allied charges, the three accused — Vishnu Prajapati, Akshay Chaudhary and Kanu Chaudhary — have also been convicted under the provisions of the

Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act as the deceased juvenile was a Dalit.

The deceased juvenile was lodged at the Observation Home and Safety Home in Mehsana from where he escaped on February 3, 2020.

He was caught by the Naroda police on February 12, 2020 and handed over to the Observation Home the same day.

According to the case, the now convicted staff mercilessly assaulted the minor with wooden and fibre clubs between 10:20 pm on February 12 and 4:00 am on February 13, 2020,

following which he died of hemorrhagic shock.

The court stated in its judgment that the assault was recorded by the CCTV cameras installed inside the Observation Home. In reference to the CCTV footage, the court recorded that after beating the juvenile, the convicts had abandoned the latter in a corner on the ground floor. When the juvenile, in extreme pain, crawled to the office seeking help, "one of the convicts kicked him to the corner".

Additional Public Prosecutor Ashok Makwana said that in all, the deceased juvenile had sustained 26 injuries on his body. The children were carrying a flag hoisted on an iron rod in a procession. The rod came in touch with a high-tension wire and children along with a woman suffered electric burns. All them were taken to a hospital. One of the children has suffered around 70% burns and is said to be critical," said Arvind Bhardwaj, the Circle Inspector of Kunihar police station, where the incident took place.

The children admitted to Kota's MBS Hospital Kota are between 9 and 16 years, officials said. On receiving information, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla along with the collector Ravindra Goswami reached the hospital. Rajasthan Energy Minister Heeralal Nagar also paid a visit to the injured.

"It is a sad incident. There will be an investigation and everyone will get the best treatment possible. One child is serious. If there is a need for a referral to any other hospital, we will provide that," Birla said.

'Sorry Papa, JEE nahi ho payega': 16-yr-old ends life

PARUL KULSHRESTHA
JAIPUR, MARCH 8

A 16-YEAR-OLD boy preparing for JEE allegedly committed suicide in Rajasthan's Kota on Thursday night — the fifth student suicide in the coaching hub this year.

According to the police, the boy hailed from Bihar's Bhagalpur and had been living in Kota for the last one year.

His body was discovered when the landlord sensed a foul smell coming from his room on

Friday morning. When the boy did not answer the landlord's calls, the door was forcibly opened and the body found.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Dharamveer Singh of Kota said, "A two-line suicide note was recovered which states, 'Sorry Papa. Mere se JEE nahi ho payega. I quit. (Sorry Papa, I won't be able to crack JEE)'."

According to the police, the boy consumed a poisonous substance that emits a strong smell, which caught the landlord's attention. A used and an unused bottle of the substance was re-

covered near the body along with the suicide note, police said.

Police said the boy had skipped coaching tests conducted on January 29 and February 19 this year. He was supposed to take his class XII board exams this year.

The boy's father is a businessman in West Bengal and his mother and younger brother live in Bhagalpur. The family is yet to arrive at Kota and until then, the body has been kept at the mortuary, police said.

As many as 26 students had died by suicide in Kota in 2023.

Hindu Hriday Samrat Bala Saheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samridhhi Highway:

- 701 km long highway directly connecting 10 districts.
- The 625 km long Highway opened for transportation after the inauguration of the third phase from Bharvir to Igatpuri.
- Nagpur to Mumbai journey now in just 8 hours.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri - Navha Sheva Atal Setu:

- The 22 km long Sea Link is the longest in the country which will boost development by connecting Mumbai with Navi Mumbai.
- Huge cut-off in travelling time.
- Emergency Lanes on both the sides of 6 Lane Sea Link.

Coastal Road (South):

- Work of Coastal Road in Mumbai near completion. One lane will be opened.
- Length of road 10.58 kilometers. Number of roads on both sides of the lane is 8. (Six in the Tunnel).
- 70 percent of the time and 34 percent of the fuel to be saved due to Coastal Road.
- Congestion of traffic to be lessen along with decline in noise and air pollution.

New railway route:

- Rupees 3552 crore for Jalna- Jalgaon new Broad Gauge railway and 750 crore for Nanded- Bidar new railway line approved as a part of state's contribution.
- Facilities being increased at 126 railway stations under the Amrit Bharat scheme.
- 5 Vande Bharat Trains started.

Metro network:

- 337 km Metro network to be spread in Mumbai. 46 km route opened. This year a 50 km long road will be opened. Colaba-Bandra-Seaepz Metro route-3 project accelerated.
- Online Bhumi Puja of Pimpri-Chinchwad to Nigdi Metro at the hands of the Prime Minister. Green signal for Metro from Ruby Hall to Ramwadi.
- First phase of Nagpur Metro railway inaugurated at the hands of the Prime Minister and laid the Foundation stone second phase.

Road development:

- Development of a 451 km long road with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank. The work of constructing a 468 km long road in the second phase is in progress.
- 2470 km long road renovated under the loan assistance scheme of NABARD. 731 bridges completed.
- More than 13315 km of National Highway was constructed.
- Construction work of 7426 kilometer long roads under the Mukhyamantri Gram Sadak Yojana is ongoing.
- Maharashtra State Infrastructure Development Corporation (MSIDC) established for implementation of infrastructure projects like Road, ports, airports, railway, metro, electricity etc.

Maharashtra Shakti Peeth Mahamarg:

- Prime Shakti Peeths will be connected due to this express highway as it will be passing through 12 districts between Wardha to Sindhudurg.
- Communication has gained momentum and hence the development of the region will be as per the planned speed.



Directorate General of Information and Public Relations, Government of Maharashtra

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Minor detained, four arrested for gangrape of 18-year-old in Kolkata

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MARCH 8

DAYS AFTER an 18-year-old woman filed a police complaint alleging five persons, including a minor, gangraped her in

Kolkata, an Alipore court Friday sent four of the accused to police custody till March 18. The minor has been sent to a juvenile home, police said.

Sources in the police said one of the accused is the son of a TMC councilor, adding that a probe is

on. According to the police, in a complaint filed Tuesday, the girl alleged the accused persons had spiked her drink and then molested her. The five were detained Wednesday but were released on bail a day later. "However, the girl produced a video related to the

incident after which the section of gangrape was added. The five were detained again and produced before a court on Friday," said a senior police officer.

"Four persons and a minor have been named in the case. The four (adults) have been remanded in police custody till March 18," said the officer.

BJP and CPI(M) workers staged protests outside the police station concerned, demanding stringent punishment for the culprits. The CPI(M) members blocked a road near the police station. BJP MLA Agnimitra Paul, who led the BJP protest, raised questions over women's safety in the state.

Letter for eviction of 'parasite' students from Pune varsity hostels triggers row

DEVANSHI SRIVASTAVA
PUNE, MARCH 8

A LETTER sent from the security department of Savitribai Phule Pune University to the Chief Hostel Rector referring to "action against unauthorised/illegal ('parasite') students staying in the boys' hostels" has left students worried and angry.

The letter, issued on March 6, whose subject was "action against unauthorised/illegal ('parasite') students staying in the boys' hostels" has left students worried and angry.

The letter stated the security department of the university as well as the police administration needs to be intimated of such action in advance. Many students are worried that such inspections will end up driving out genuine students who are adjusting in hostels unofficially. Because hostel vacancies are so few and are allotted only on merititious grounds or first-come basis, many students adjust in the rooms with the hostel residents.

One such student, who has been living in such an arrangement for the past few months, said, "I applied to the hostel several times but did not get it. Now I am staying in a hostel room with the help of a friend who is allotted a room. We are students from weak economic and social backgrounds who want to study, not 'parasites' as the letter is saying."

Chief Rector Varsha Wankhede clarified that the "action" mentioned in the letter would only be taken against outsiders not enrolled as university students. "We conduct such drives regularly and are strict with non-students," said Wankhede.

कार्यालय, उप वन संरक्षक (वन्यजीव) चिडियाघर, जयपुर

क्रमांक एप्रैल / स्टोर / जू. 2023-24/ इं-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

दिनांक:

इस कार्यालय में निर्माणित खाद्य सामग्री की आमंत्रणकर्ता है। अतः माल एवं सेवा कर (Goods & Service Tax) में पंजीकृत फर्मों से निर्धारित प्रत्येक में खुली वोली आमंत्रण सूचना आमंत्रित की जाती है।

कार्य का नाम	अनुमति लाभ करने की समस्त कर सहित	वोली प्रतिवृत्ति गाँधी	वोली शुल्क	आर. एड.	टेपड प्राप्त जाति	विड प्रप्रत जाति	निविदा शालेन करने की विधि व समय	UBN No.
1 इं-निविदा (उप वन संरक्षक)	सूचना 41/2023-23 (भौमिक वाक्यांश वाली वोली)	2650000	530000	5000/-	2000/-	02.03.2024 11:00 AM	20.03.2024 01:00 PM	FOR2324G LRCO1826
2 हरा निविदा/मिश्रित वाद्यालय/हरी ज्ञान कुटी	सूचना 39/2023-24 सूचना गशन	4045000	80900	1500/-	500/-	02.03.2024 11:00 AM	11.03.2024 11:00 PM	FOR2324G LRCO1828
3 इं-दर संविदा सूचना	40/2023-24 जाना फल एवं संबंधी	5770000	115400	2000/-	1500/-	02.03.2024 11:00 AM	11.03.2024 11:00 PM	FOR2324G LRCO1832
4 इं-दर संविदा सूचना	39/2023-24 सूचना गशन	7074000	141480	2000/-	1500/-	02.03.2024 11:00 AM	11.03.2024 11:00 PM	FOR2324G LRCO1825
5 इं-निविदा (दर संविदा)	सूचना 34/2023-23 खाद्य सामग्री (ताजा मूत्र मल्हती)	2520000	50400/-	1000/-	500/-	02.03.2024 11:00 AM	11.03.2024 03:00 PM	FOR2324G LRCO1824

निविदा से संबंधित विवरण वेबसाइट sppr.raj.nic.in एवं eproc.rajasthan.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है।

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चिडियाघर, जयपुर

DIPR/c/2326/2024

**NORTHERN RAILWAY
(E-Auction Notice)**

The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites e-Auction through IREPS (<https://ireps.gov.in/>) for allotment of contracts of Advertisement/NFR at following railway stations/locations:

E-Catalogue No.	Type of Media	Location/ Station	Date & Time for e-auction
DLIADVT MAR24-01	Mobile Assets- Vinyl Wrapping (Trains)	Trains having primary maintenance= 32 Lots	Start: 26.03.24 at 10:00 hrs. onwards
	Out of Home Sites- Unipole Zones	Meerut Section= (1 Lots)	
	Out of Home sites- Station Zones	Delhi- (3 Lots), New Delhi (1 Lot)	
	Non Digital RDN- Display Boards/Pole Kiosks	Anand Vihar Terminal= 1 Lot	
	LED Videowalls-RDN	Delhi (2 Lots) = (Total 2 Lots)	
	Rail Coach Restaurants	Hazrat Nizamuddin, Brar Square, Sarojini Nagar, Sardar Patel Marg (All Delhi Area)- 4 Lots	
	Glow Ball Towers	Delhi, Delhi Sarai Rohilla - 2 Lots	
Battery Operated Carts	Hazrat Nizamuddin= 1 Lot		

Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen : [https://ireps.gov.in/ \(E-Auction-Leasing\)](https://ireps.gov.in/ (E-Auction-Leasing))

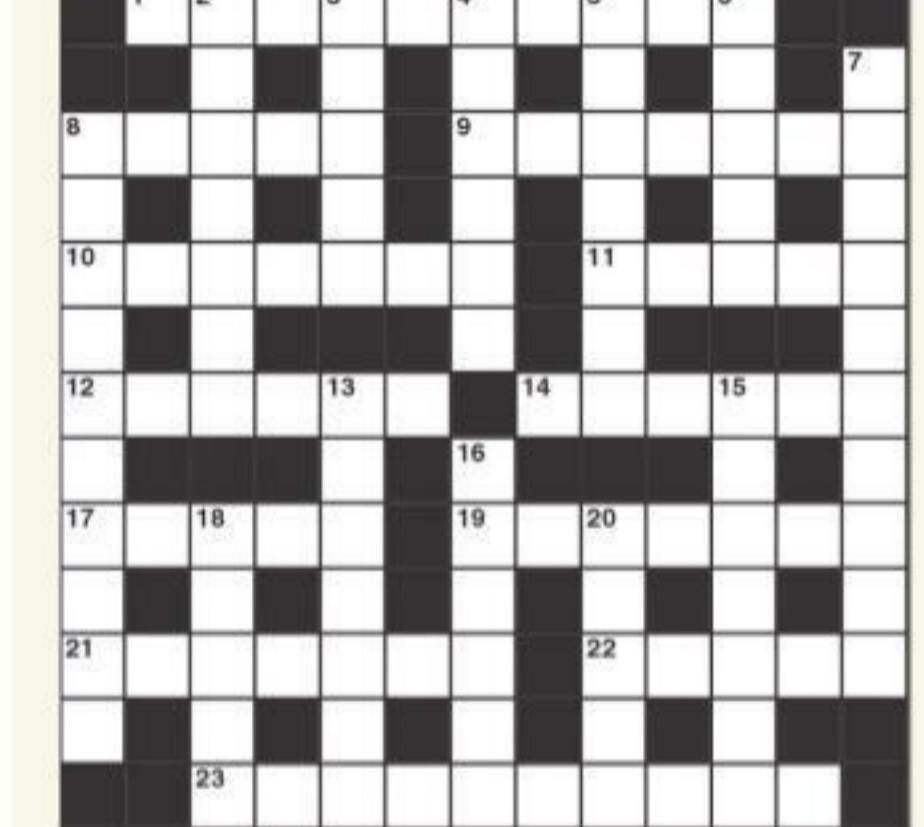
All contractors who intent to participate in the e-auctions conducted through E-Auction Leasing module of IREPS should fulfill following mandatory requirements before they can submit their bids:

- Registration on IREPS for E-Auction Leasing module -Active IREPS User Account for E-Auction Leasing Module.
- Payment of One Time Registration Fee; Current Account in State Bank of India; Integration of SBI Bank Account with IREPS Account; Lien Marking of Funds; Updation of Turnover Details.
- A new mechanism namely **Virtual Account Number (VAN)** has been introduced now for E-Auction Leasing module, which can be used by the bidders as an alternative to Lien Marking Mechanism.
- The bidders are free to switch between Lien Marking Mechanism (if activated) and VAN mechanism at any point of time, before entering the bidding room. VAN mechanism does not require the bidder to have a current account in State Bank of India. The users are free to transfer money from any of their existing bank accounts in any bank to their VAN account, which enables them to participate in IREPS E-Auctions.
- Contractors who do not have IREPS account for any module of IREPS can submit their online request for registration by clicking on New Vendors / Contractors (E-Tender/E-Auction Leasing) link on IREPS Home page.

Railway Authority to contact, in case of any query : Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Commercial Branch, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055; Email: publicitycelldl@gmail.com, Tel: 011-23743084

No: 7UPB/NR-DLIQCOMM(PUB)/26/2023 Dated: 07.03.2024
752/2024
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

CROSSWORD 5308



ACROSS

- Noisy outburst of four voices (10)
- Stiff resolution shown in disputes (5)
- The pound is to a certain amount flexible (7)
- They aim to get her into the bright lights (7)
- Dance from Burma (5)
- Companion of an American star (6)
- Average massacre in Switzerland (6)
- An opponent of the Yemen perhaps (5)
- Take steps to keep down (7)
- RC using a form of bad language (7)
- Relay perhaps in good time (5)
- Opposition since rates were changed (10)

DOWN

- Captain maybe in command in present situation (7)
- Problem for an agony aunt in a magazine? (5)
- Strangely silent recruit (6)
- Keep giving notice (7)
- Wife comes up about to be angry (5)
- Please try anew one at a time (10)
- Damaged car in tense passing situation (10)
- School subject taken by the sick? (7)
- Price I'm prepared to give a quack doctor (7)
- Steps in the development of Wells Fargo? (6)
- Queen Elizabeth right or wrong (5)
- Boxing ring takes an age to erect (5)

Solutions Crossword 5307 Across: 1 Scraps, 4 Profit, 9 Trapeze, 10 Basra, 11 Lotus, 12 Dislike, 13 Candlemaker, 18 Apricot, 20 Canoe, 22 Scon, 23 Resign, 24 Notion, 25 Editor Down: 1 Settle, 2 React, 3 Pleased, 5 Robes, 6 Festive, 7 Teaset, 8 Dead letters, 14 Airport, 15 Accused, 16 Watson, 17 Censer, 19 Canto, 21 Night

JUMBLED WORDS

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

For the _____, the _____ does not exist; only a certain number of writings exist. - Italo Calvino (6,6)

CYARR



BORTTU



DMIIIO



ELNCCH



Answer for the quiz: the editor does not exist, only a certain number of writings exist.

SOLUTION: CARROT, DRYMOM, TURNED, CENCH

SUDOKU 5496

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

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5495

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

NIKKEI: 39,688.94 ▲ 90.23 HANG SENG: 16,353.39 ▲ 123.61 FTSE: 7,659.74 ▼ 32.72 DAX: 17,814.51 ▼ 28.34 | OIL: \$83 ▼ \$0.15

Note: Indian stock and money markets closed owing to Shivratri; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of March 7; International market data till 1900 IST

BLOC LIKELY TO COMMIT \$100-BILLION INVESTMENT OVER 15 YEARS

India poised to sign trade agreement with four-nation EFTA bloc tomorrow

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

INDIA AND the four-nation European Free Trade Association (EFTA) grouping — comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland — are poised to sign a trade deal on March 10, a person aware of the development said.

The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is among three free-trade agreements (FTAs) India is pushing to finalise this month, before the Model Code of Conduct, that bars major policy announcements after the release of general election dates, kicks in.

The two other deals are with Oman and the UK.

While the Oman deal is in advanced stages with legal scrutiny underway, the much anticipated India-UK FTA is also being taken up at the highest level, with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) reviewing the deal late last month. According to a PTI report, UK Secretary of State for

TRADE DEALS: A STATUS CHECK

PACTS BEING PUSHED BEFORE THE POLLS



India-EFTA deal:
To be announced Sunday

India-Oman deal:
Legal scrubbing underway

India-UK: Reviewed by PMO

FTAs EXPECTED AFTER ELECTIONS

A comprehensive India-Australia deal

India-EU deal: 7th round of talks ended last month

Business and Trade Kemi Badenoch has said that an India-UK FTA "is possible" before the Indian elections, but that the UK does not want to use that as a "deadline".

Other trade deals — the comprehensive agreement with Australia and the FTA with the 27-member European Union (EU) — are also being negotiated but are expected to be concluded only after the general election.

Both deals involve the agriculture sector, a sensitive subject for India especially amid the farmers' unrest.

The Indian Express had reported last week that India and EFTA are nearing a conclusion of the deal which would see the European bloc committing an investment of \$100 billion in India over 15 years in sectors including pharma, food processing, engineering and chemicals.

The investment commitment, the first of its kind in an FTA, would largely come from provident funds in EFTA countries. These include Norway's \$1.6-trillion sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest pension fund which posted a record profit of \$213 billion in 2023 on the back of strong technology stock returns.

The investment commitment, however, may not be legally binding. A government official had told *The Indian Express* that the commitment falls under "investment promotion" and that India and EFTA are not signing a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), as is being negotiated with the UK and the EU.

An investment commitment is crucial as India-EFTA trade is largely in favour of the European grouping as far as goods are concerned. Trade experts say India runs a high trade deficit with Switzerland, which could widen after India eliminates duties as part of the deal. During FY23, India's imports from Switzerland stood at \$15.79 billion in stark

contrast to its exports of \$1.34 billion, leading to a substantial trade deficit of \$14.45 billion.

Trade agreements have historically helped India's partner countries because of high average tariffs in India. India, therefore, is looking to attract investments and get better market access for its service sector workforce.

The Indian Express had also reported that EFTA is also looking at striking joint ventures in pharma, (especially medical devices), chemicals, food processing and engineering. Trade experts pointed out that the investment commitment could be a crucial gain for India.

After the India-EFTA deal, India could see higher imports of machinery, pharmaceuticals, medical instruments and machinery as there would be a sharp reduction in Indian tariffs which hover around an average rate of 18%, among the highest in the world. India is also looking at the EFTA deal to help diversify imports away from China. India currently depends on China for key medical imports.

EQUITY MUTUAL funds in February saw a 23 per cent net rise in inflows to ₹26,865.78 crore, the highest infusion in 23 months, even as small-cap funds, which are facing scrutiny, saw a slowdown in funds received.

Inflows into small-cap funds declined 10 per cent to ₹2,922.45 crore in February from ₹3,256.98 crore in January, data released by the Association of Mutual Funds (AMFI) showed. Net inflows into mid-cap funds also dropped 12 per cent to ₹1,808.18 crore from ₹2,061.18 crore in February.

Last month, AMFI wrote to mutual fund houses to take measures to protect the interests of investors in small and mid-cap schemes, which have seen heavy inflows in the recent past.

AMFI Chief Executive Venkat Chalasani said fund houses have been asked to strengthen the risk management framework and to enhance disclosures to investors.

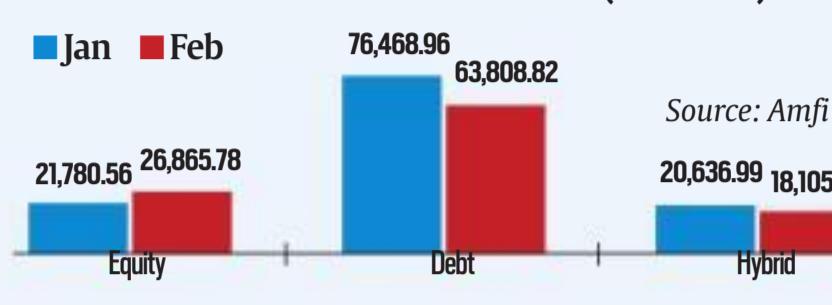
During February, inflows into the large and mid-cap category increased to ₹3,156.64 crore from ₹2,330.1 crore in the last month. Chalasani attributed this to strong macroeconomic fundamentals.

"The economy is performing well, BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance) is doing

well, capacity utilisation has crossed 70 per cent and private investment and consumption are picking up. Signals are positive and people have started investing across sectors," he said.

Equity MF inflows at near 2-yr high in Feb, but investors slam brakes on small caps

FUND FLOW



recorded outflows of ₹17,375.61 crore and ₹4,100.38 crore, respectively. Inflows into liquid funds were highest at ₹83,642.33 crore.

The mutual fund industry's net assets under management (AUM) stood at ₹54,54 lakh crore as of February 2024 compared to ₹52.74 lakh crore the previous month.

In January, net inflows into equity mutual funds stood at ₹21,780.56 crore.

Contributions from systematic investment plans (SIPs) rose to an all-time high of ₹19,186.58 crore in February 2024 as against ₹18,838.33 crore in January.

Among equity categories, all mutual fund schemes received inflows except focused funds. Sectoral or thematic funds witnessed the highest inflows of ₹11,262.72 crore. Focused funds saw an outflow of ₹532.89 crore in the month.

Retail AUM (equity + hybrid + solution-oriented schemes) stood at ₹30,70,641 crore for February. The number of new SIPs registered in February was 49,79,431. The SIP AUM touched the highest ever of ₹10.52 lakh crore for February.

Govt eases thresholds for M&A scrutiny

MANU KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

THE MINISTRY of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has relaxed the exemption limits for notifying mergers and acquisitions (M&As) to the Competition Commission of India (CCI). In the new regime, companies are not required to notify the regulator if the acquired firm has assets (including subsidiaries) of less than ₹450 crore and turnover below ₹1,250 crore. The old thresholds were ₹350 crore for assets and ₹1,000 crore for turnover.

Experts said the revision of the thresholds for combinations is to make CCI focus on deals where the impact on the competition landscape is substantial. "With the increase in high-value deals, the ministry wants to take the burden off CCI to scrutinise bigger M&As," said Rohit Jain, Managing Partner, Singhania & Co.

However, this poses challenges. For instance, a large number of startups don't have assets or revenues in their initial years to qualify for CCI inspections at the time of their acquisitions. But they do add value for the acquiring companies after the deal, and could have implications for competition in the relevant markets.

For instance, when Facebook acquired WhatsApp in 2014, the deal didn't come under the CCI's purview because WhatsApp didn't breach the thresholds. Later, the deal caused discomfort among global regulators. FE

Govt to work on domestic AI chipsets in 3rd term: Vaishnaw

RISHI RAJ
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. PTI

THE UNION government in its third term will work towards enabling domestic manufacturing of AI chipsets, communications and IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told *FE*.

"There are a lot of global manufacturers who are interested in partnering us in developing their chipsets here," Vaishnaw said. "We have started domestic manufacturing of smartphones and IT hardware. A beginning has been made in the direction of semiconductor and the Union Cabinet approved the ₹10,372-crore AI mission on Thursday to create sovereign capability in computing. The next on our agenda, which we will look at in the third term of the Modi government, is making AI chipsets," the minister said.

AI chipsets include graphics processing units (GPUs) and other computing hardware essential for creating AI models as

these require large-scale computing. The US and China lead in computing infrastructure required for the development of AI tech. US-based Nvidia dominates the GPU market.

Vaishnaw said there are several other global firms making GPUs, but their processing capacity is around 60% of Nvidia's. "These firms want to scale up and we need to start from ground zero. If they partner us, together we will be able to make GPUs with processing capacity

NORMS AGAINST DEEPFAKES AFTER POLLS: I.T. MINISTER

New Delhi: The government asked digital platforms to provide solutions to curb misinformation that can harm society and democracy, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said. He also said a legal structure against deepfakes and misinformation will be finalised after polls. "We have been very categorical in our discussions with platforms... after the elections, we will be coming up with a very well thought-through legal structure," Vaishnaw said. PTI

close to that of Nvidia's over time. It will be a win-win for both sides," Vaishnaw said.

The minister said that alliance with the global firms would be on a public-private partnership mode. FE

RBI decision on IDBI Bank bidders soon

PRASANTA SAHU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

ing, immediately after a new government assumes office after the April-May general elections.

The sale of IDBI Bank, formerly a public sector bank, is seen as a test case for the new public sector enterprises policy, which aims to minimise government's presence in businesses, including banking, as the Centre feels private sector is best suited to scale up businesses, with skin in the game. Recent laudatory comments on public sector un-

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Reports had suggested that Kotak Mahindra Bank and Fairfax India Holdings are likely in the fray for IDBI Bank.

"The RBI's fit-andproper assessment of the bidders is at an advanced stage and the approval could come during this month," said the source. FE

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A SPEECH, A QUESTION

PM Modi's public address in Srinagar framed the contours of 'Naya Kashmir'. It will be incomplete without elections

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi's public address in Srinagar on Thursday – his first in the Valley since the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019 – was a report card of the Centre's administration of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. From the announcement of schemes and packages to the expansion of reservation and a growing economy – the PM sought to draw a straight line between the abrogation and what he called "Naya Kashmir". There were at least three aspects to the formulation underlined in the speech. First, that J&K's exceptionalism was a "shackle" that prevented the benefits flowing from New Delhi from reaching people of the erstwhile state. Second, the people of the Union Territory were denied benefits such as reservation. Granting ST status to an internally diverse community such as the Paharis, despite opposition from other social groups, flowed from this understanding. The third was that special status gave the Valley-based parties, which PM Modi painted as dynastic fiefdoms, a stranglehold over J&K's resources and politics. The speech highlighted the importance of J&K and abrogation to the BJP – as an ideological issue – ahead of the general election. But it also left an important question unanswered.

The last time J&K had an elected government was in 2018, which was dissolved after the BJP withdrew from the ruling alliance. Since then, only two local body elections have been held – to Block Development Councils in 2019 and District Development Councils in 2020 – in both of which the Gupkar alliance did better than the BJP. The fact is that the abrogation of Article 370 changed fundamentally the nature of the region. That change is irreversible, especially after the Supreme Court's imprimatur on the decision. Valley-based political parties too seem to have made peace with this reality and are demanding that elections to panchayat bodies – due in January but yet to take place – and the assembly be held with the general elections. The Supreme Court asked that assembly elections be held by September. And, according to the Centre's own claims, the security situation has improved and the delimitation exercise is complete.

PM Modi has in the past said that it is important to remove both "dil ki doori" and "Dilli ki doori" between Kashmir and the rest of India. In fact, bridging the gap – sentimental and political – was a justification for ending the "special" status. Yet, without elections, the erstwhile state continues to be an exception – the only state to have been made a Union Territory by Parliament. The election schedule, even for its local bodies, appears more malleable than anywhere else. Like other Indians, the people in J&K deserve accountable governments and a political process in which they have a stake. Before the Supreme Court, the government said as recently as September 2023 that it was "ready to hold elections", though it did not give a timeline for restoring statehood. By allowing politics to return to the region, the government will go a long way in ending dil ki doori, and Dilli ki doori in Naya Kashmir.

TRAINING GROUND

Subsidised apprenticeship programme can contribute to developing skills, help country reap demographic dividend

THE CONGRESS HAS promised to enact a Right to Apprenticeship law, mandating private or public sector concerns to provide a one-year internship with part-government funding to any college degree/diploma holder on demand. The idea of forcing companies to accept candidates seeking temporary employment – which is what a legal entitlement amounts to – is bad. The decision to hire, even if for only a year, should be the employer's prerogative and not a government diktat. But the idea of the government subsidising an apprenticeship training system in private industry isn't a bad one. Equally welcome is the main opposition party's effort to make jobs for the youth a key election campaign, even if questions may be raised as to what stopped its own governments, whether in the past or in the states now, from implementing similar programmes.

There are costs to a firm's decision to engage in apprenticeship training. The potential employee's capabilities aren't fully known at the time of recruitment, which is often based on unreliable CVs or personal recommendations. Nor does the person contribute much to the firm's revenues during the period of training, when she's still learning on the job. Worse, there's no certainty that the apprentice who has acquired the requisite skills will remain after the training period is over. These costs and uncertainties are higher for MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), which can neither afford to hire people from top-notch educational institutions nor invest in training employees whom they cannot retain. This leads to a classical market failure where firms are deterred from hiring due to a lack of skilled workforce and their own reluctance to train those who may end up working elsewhere.

One way to avoid under-employment and under-provision of training at the workplace is for the government to bear part of the cost. That's what the Congress has proposed, while billing a one-year apprenticeship in the organised private sector or government for a Rs one-lakh annual stipend as a "Pahli Naukri Pakki" or first job guaranteed scheme. A government-financed workforce training programme incentivising companies, especially MSMEs, to hire is preferable to unemployment allowance schemes such as the Congress-ruled Karnataka's recently rolled out Yuva Nidhi. India has to generate gainful employment for its young labour force – both a challenge and a demographic dividend-seizing opportunity. The solution cannot be doles. Instead, it has to be skilling the youth for them to be employable. Those skills have to be imparted in schools, colleges and the workplace. The government can and should do more there, both by itself and partnering with the private sector.

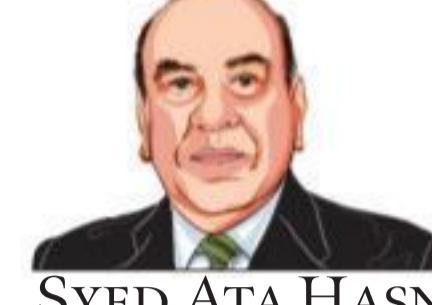
LEGEND OF SON GOKU

Creator of 'Dragon Ball' series, Akira Toriyama, was one of the first global superstars of manga

WHEN SON GOKU, with his shock of hair and orange dogi (martial arts robe), made his first appearance in 1984, he was a little boy with a tail. Based on the monkey hero of the Ming-era Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, the story of Goku's quest to collect seven magical orbs to summon a dragon, catapulted his creator Akira Toriyama into the big time. Goku would eventually shed his tail (it was tedious to draw, Toriyama once said) and grow up into the heavily muscled manga and anime hero recognisable around the world today. Spanning several volumes and fictional timelines, selling millions of copies worldwide and adapted for film, television and video games, the *Dragon Ball* series made Toriyama, who died last week at the age of 68, one of the first global superstar manga creators.

While manga has roots going, some say, all the way back to the painted scrolls from the Edo period (1603–1867), it acquired the recognisable chibi style – characters with slender figures, big eyes and exaggerated expressions and reactions – in the early 1900s, inspired by American and Western cartooning. The "godfather" of modern manga and creator of the iconic *Astro Boy* series, Osamu Tezuka was inspired by Walt Disney. It is to this lineage of art and storytelling that Toriyama belongs – he has cited Tezuka's work as sparking his early interest in manga – and it's no wonder that his vividly drawn and breathlessly paced stories translated so well from the page to the screen. This year will see the release of the new anime *Dragon Ball Daima*, scheduled to coincide with the series' 40th anniversary.

Toriyama's manga company said in a press note that at the time of his death, he had several works "in the middle of creation". Goku died many times, only to be resurrected because of "unfinished business" – an irony that would resonate with Toriyama's legions of fans.



SYED ATA HASNAIN

STOCK TAKING ABOUT Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is usually done post terror-related incidents. However, when a popular leader, that too the Prime Minister of the country, visits such a region after an interval, there is an opportunity to do a more balanced examination and reflect on where we stand in a region seriously affected by externally sponsored "proxy war" for 35 years. There have been many dimensions to J&K over this period. To best understand them, the political, military, social, economic, and most importantly, the psychological domains need examination; we can also add diplomatic to the mix because much depends on external perceptions.

Of these, the psychological domain remains the most important. In 1989, when Pakistan launched its long-drawn plan of wresting J&K by triggering internal turmoil, aided by external support, the ground had been well prepared. The Army's security-related deployment was hardly sufficient to prevent the frequent trans-LoC movement of the people who had already declared J&K a part of Pakistan. "Kashmir banega Pakistan" was the refrain and the most popular slogan. The stark difference 35 years later and five years after the abrogation of Article 370 is that most of India and much of J&K reverberates with the other virtual slogan – "PoJK banega Hindustan". That is the psychological change evident as one talks to Kashmiri youth now; the idea of Azadi and of Pakistan is finally receding. However, the duality in the Kashmiri mind, although seriously dented, remains, and will take time to fully neutralise.

Right from 1997, when the Army adopted a more structured approach to the doctrine of "winning hearts and minds" (WHAM), there existed only a broad understanding for such a doctrine at the national level. In the face of terror threats, it was the civil administration's inability to effectively administer the populous rural segment that led to it falling under the ambit of the Army. Only the Army, assisted by the J&K Police, had the run of the countryside. That has largely changed

In his first visit since abrogation of Article 370, PM charts course for development, ending Pakistan's proxy war

under Prime Minister Modi's passionate delivery of urban and rural development. The transformational change in the security situation after August 2019, enabled by the Centre's strong backing, has facilitated two things. First, that an "all of government" approach could be truly applied, even to WHAM. In earlier years, except for a few departments of the state government, no one had a sense of commitment nor an understanding of its significance – WHAM was considered just a military commitment. PM Modi's socio-economic outreach through deliverable development projects has managed to create far greater hope than ever before. The psychological effect of this has multiplied because of the economic abyss which exists in Pakistan. All this has been possible because of direct rule from Delhi through an astute Lieutenant Governor who has been energetic and committed, but most importantly, understands the mind of the populace. His balanced ideological orientation has been a force multiplier as has been his willingness to meet people.

Youth and women's empowerment is half the battle and both of these have been more than adequately addressed, as is also evident from social media. The Army's experience of outreach has been well exploited through a more integrated approach. What is even more helpful is that the Army's "in the face" projection and involvement have taken a back seat without any perceptible loss of effectiveness. Kashmiri's youth and its aspirations are today well managed by many articulate and dynamic youth leaders, all patriots in their own right. When the PM spoke of Mahashivratri and Ramzan in the same breath and mentioned the lotus which abundantly grows in Kashmir's many lakes, with linkage to the symbol of his party, he was only symbolically articulating the place that J&K has in the psyche of India. By speaking about Kashmir's participation in the G20 process during India's presidency and mentioning tourism as one of the mainstays, he again

made it clear that India's intent was to turn the region into an international tourist hub and link it to J&K's most important industry.

Yet, even the Prime Minister knows that the story of change in Kashmir is not yet over; a great beginning has been made despite the pandemic interlude. J&K is crucial to international and regional security. There are two aspects that will continue to cause concern in the all-important security domain. The first is Pakistan, which remains committed to forces of separation in J&K through acts of sponsored terror whenever possible, in a bid to remain relevant even in the face of a transforming region. The second is that ideological extremism, like elsewhere, continues to remain embedded. A study of the proliferation of international conflicts and their nature reveals that an ideologically driven second cycle of global terrorism could well be triggered. J&K falls within the ambit of such a cycle. Although Pakistan is also a victim of its manipulations, its deemed leadership always perceives its own invincibility as well as India's vulnerability. That thought process could reignite fresh fires, of which we have to be mindful. Pakistan Army's control over Shehzad Sharif also gives no promises of peace and it would be premature to initiate talks with Pakistan because that would mean giving it more significance than it deserves. It is the insignificance it has been driven to that has made such a difference to the psyche of the people.

Although so much has been achieved, militarily we need not indulge in rapid dilution of structures and concepts established through experience. Yet, what is evident is that J&K is ripe for meaningful politics without any sentiment for the provisions of Article 370. The latter is well and truly behind us. The words of the Prime Minister made that very clear.

The writer, a member of the National Disaster Management Authority, is former corps commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps



P V SINDHU

THE COUNTRY'S DEMOCRATIC machinery is gearing up for the 18th Lok Sabha election. In this democratic spectacle, the participation of every eligible voter is crucial, but particularly crucial is the role of the youth, who constitute a significant portion of the population and bring with them the unparalleled spirit of *yuva shakti*. Their engagement in the voting process holds the potential to shape the future of nations. Understanding the pivotal role of the youth in the electoral process is thus imperative.

Over the years, the participation of the youth in elections has been improving. This can be attributed to an increasing awareness among the youth about their role in shaping the political landscape as India inches towards Amrit Kaal. However, given the strength of the young electorate in India, this participation can be increased. The 2024 general elections present an opportune moment for the youth to accept the mantle of the Amrit Peethi.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has taken measures to mobilise young and first-time voters for the Lok Sabha Elections. It has called upon the youth to cast their ballots in record numbers and be part of the Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye campaign. This initiative aims to instill a sense of civic duty and national pride among first-time voters, estimated to be nearly two crore.

This campaign builds upon the need to invest in civic education and create platforms for meaningful participation of the youth in political processes. This has transformed the young voters campaign into a *jan andolan*.

A campaign becomes a people's movement when it builds upon its goals and objec-

EVERYONE GETS A VOICE

Campaign to mobilise youth and first-time voters is becoming mass movement

tives, and resonates deeply across all segments of society, leading to widespread participation. Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye gained momentum as more and more credible voices joined the call to action. In his 110th Mann Ki Baat address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called upon the country's youth to actively participate in the democratic process. Others, including cricketers, cine artistes and social media influencers, have followed in his footsteps. I am privileged to be a part of this campaign, realising the power of the collective, not just as a citizen, but also as a woman.

A stirring anthem encapsulating the essence of the Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye campaign was released recently. Enthusiastic youngsters are sharing videos of the anthem being sung at iconic locations and World Heritage Sites across the country, with some Padma awardees releasing renditions of the anthem in multiple languages.

The digital age has revolutionised the way information is disseminated and opinions are formed. Social media platforms, online forums and digital campaigns have emerged as powerful tools for mobilising support, particularly among the youth. In recognition of this, the MyGov portal is hosting creative competitions for reel making, blog writing, quizzes and an online voters pledge.

The youth and first-time voters are also being mobilised in colleges and higher learning institutions across the country. Students are coming together in celebratory fests where they are taking voter pledges and participating in rallies, seminars, and creative competitions such as debates.

Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye has taken the form of a crowd-sourced movement – it has become a collective effort that inspires widespread participation and seeks to drive meaningful change on a large scale. The cascading effect of growing participation builds upon a familiar feature of several recent campaigns and initiatives, including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Swachh Bharat and Covid-19 awareness. It builds on the momentum of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.

When people get connected to a cause, widespread dividends accrue for the whole nation. The 'Give It Up' movement, launched in 2015, wherein the Prime Minister appealed to people to come forward and give up their LPG subsidy, saw almost a crore households voluntarily give up subsidy in the first year itself. Similarly, empowering the youth to engage in politics will foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the democratic process, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and representative society.

The participation of the youth in the voting process for Election 2024 is not just desirable but imperative for the health of democracy. By empowering the youth to exercise their democratic rights, we can ensure a more inclusive, representative, and responsive political system. As we embark on this democratic journey, let us recognise the immense potential of the *yuva shakti* to shape the destiny of our nation and forge a brighter future for generations to come.

The writer is an ace Indian badminton player. Views expressed are personal



MARCH 9, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

RAJ BHAVAN IN DOCK

THE GOVERNOR OF Madhya Pradesh, Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, has offered to resign in the wake of the controversy over his remarks against the policy reservation for Harijans and Adiavasis. Raj Bhavan sources, when contacted, refused to confirm or deny the news. Sharma had completed his five-year term as Governor in September 1982. Meanwhile, 26 CPI workers were arrested for demonstrating before the Raj Bhawan.

ESPIONAGE IN ARMY

GEN F D Larkins (retd), accused in the espion-

age case, has confessed that he received more than Rs 1 lakh from a foreign source for supplying information about Soviet equipment used by the Indian defence services. He paid his co-accused officers to collect information. He paid Lt Col Jasbir Singh Rs 1,000 per month for military information, especially about tanks. He separately paid him Rs 55,000 for providing eight classified manuals.

BANGLADESH STRIKE

BANGLADESH'S TWO MAIN opposition alliances called for a nation-wide strike to protest against the military government of President Hossain Mohammad Ershad. The

strike, the second in Bangladesh this month, would fall on the second anniversary of Ershad's takeover.

PAKISTAN CLASHES

ABOUT 140 STUDENTS were arrested when a crowd clashed against the police in a campus demonstration against the Pakistani military government's ban on student unions, the police said. The police said some students fired at them when they broke up a protest march led by the right-wing student group Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba (IJT). Eye witnesses said about 25 students and 11 policemen were injured in the clash.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Filling in the diet chart

Nationwide studies on dietary patterns that throw a light on nutrient intake should complement the Household Consumer Expenditure Survey



**SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN
AND RAMA NARAYANAN**

THE RECENTLY RELEASED Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES) data for 2022-23 by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation points to a shift in the food consumption pattern of Indian households. The survey covered a sample of 2,61,746 households (1,55,014 rural and 1,06,732 urban) and was spread over 8,723 villages and 6,115 urban blocks.

The household consumption basket consisted of three major categories – food items, consumables and durable goods. Information was collected through three separate questionnaires for each category. In addition, a questionnaire seeking information on household characteristics and demographic features was also used. Imputed values were obtained for home-grown or home-produced items and also for food items consumed free of cost through social welfare programmes such as rice, wheat, jowar, bajra, maize, ragi, barley, small millets, pulses, gram, salt, sugar and edible oil.

The average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) was Rs 3,773 for rural and Rs 6,459 for urban households. The percentage share of food and non-food items was 46 per cent and 54 per cent for rural and 39 per cent and 61 per cent for urban areas, respectively. The good news is that for the first time the share of expenditure on food for rural households has come down to less than 50 per cent. This means that the earning potential of rural households has gone up, such that they can spend more on other consumer goods, indicating a better standard of living. Even better is the fact that the proportionate share of expenditure on cereals has come down along with better dietary diversity including other food groups. The percentage share of expenditure on cereals stood at 22 per cent for rural and 12 per cent for urban areas in 1999-2000 while the present data shows it to be at 4.9 per cent and 3.6 per cent respectively.

So what does India eat now? Top on the list come beverages, refreshments and processed foods with the share of expenditure being 9.6 per cent and 10.6 per cent respectively for rural and urban areas. Processed foods, known for high sugar and salt content, are not a healthy choice. This is a new development and it is striking that the proportion of processed food consumed in rural and urban areas is very similar. However, it is comforting to know that next on the list come milk and milk products at 8.3 per cent and 7.2 per cent respectively for rural and urban areas. The consumption of pulses is the lowest with the average MPCE being 2 per cent and 1.4 per cent for rural and urban respectively. While milk and dairy products are a source of good quality protein when compared to pulses, the cultivation of pulses has declined substantially with a corresponding increase in cost, which could have led to a decline in consumption levels. Micronutrient-rich vegetables and eggs, fish and meat occupy the



CR Sasikumar

third and fourth positions. The share of expenditure on fruits and edible oil is almost the same and there is practically no difference between rural and urban consumers. Sugar and salt account for less than 1 per cent of the total share of expenses on food.

The MPCE data shows only the consumption pattern of the entire household and does not throw light on intra-household allocation of food. Given the high level of anaemia among adult women, young children and adolescent girls as compared to men, it is important to know the food and nutrient intake of different sections of the population. Though the share of expenditure on salt and sugar is low, this by no means is an indicator of the actual intake since there is no way of estimating the amount of salt and sugar consumed through processed foods and beverages. This is particularly relevant in the context of the increasing risk of obesity, diabetes and hypertension in India. Only diet surveys can estimate the actual nutrient intake.

For a long time, the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) of the Indian Council of Medical Research undertook periodic nationwide dietary surveys that threw light on macro and micronutrient intake of Indians. While the National Family Health Surveys provide information on the frequency of intake of various food groups, they do not estimate the nutrient intake. While the NNMB no longer exists, the

Nutrition literacy will educate consumers about healthy eating practices and lifestyle modification. Front-of-pack food labelling will make consumers aware of the composition of processed foods, with a traffic light system indicating high salt, fat or sugar content. A study commissioned by the Niti Aayog recommended a 20 per cent to 30 per cent health tax in addition to GST on high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) foods. Several countries including Denmark, France, Hungary, Mexico, South Africa, the UK and the US have a dedicated tax on HFSS foods.

National Institute of Nutrition is currently undertaking a nationwide dietary and nutrition survey.

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Swaminathan is Chairperson and Narayanan is consultant nutritionist, M/S Swaminathan Research Centre

What I learnt from amma

Lessons on life, ageing and simple living from a centenarian



ROHINI NILEKANI

DURGABAI NILEKANI RECENTLY entered the 100th year of her life. My mother-in-law is in good health, physically active, and mentally calm. She has mild cognitive impairment and some age-related decline. But every time you ask her how she is, Amma will say, "Oh, I am fine!" On some days, she will giggle and say she is "Ekdam fine". This is even when we can hear her wheezing, or when we know she is in pain.

It is a lifelong training on how to live gracefully. Some days, when I may be feeling depressed, I quiz her. "Amma, how are you like this?" "Simple," she answers. "I don't worry about death. I think about life. And I am happy."

Durgabai epitomises the long-gone culture of a simple, content society.

Her father, Annaji Rao Sirur, was a very popular medical practitioner in the university town of Dharwad in Karnataka, where Amma grew up with 14 siblings and many other relatives. While there was enough to go around, there was not much to spare. "Waste not, want not" was the axiom they grew up with, alongside the idea of moderation in all things.

And the phrase "Reduce, recycle, reuse" might well have been modelled on her. In the days when she expertly ran her household in Dharwad, every last scrap had a life extension that would be incredible to today's use-and-throw consumers.

Simple living and high thinking were not just words but a *dharma* to live by. Compassion to all was not just written in the scriptures but something to practise on everyone who knocked at the mostly unlocked door.

Amma once gave away almost all her personal wealth to help a nephew who needed expensive medical treatment. "Why do I need money when my sons are looking after me?" she shrugged.

Amma now seems like a rare commodity in a world where suspicion is more common than compassion and where neighbours may themselves be strangers.

Her lifetime has coincided with the most prosperous age in human history, where more people have experienced more abundance than ever before.

She has witnessed so much change in these 100 years – from a World War and the Independence movement to rapid technological advances, and a prospering nation. She has experienced abundance and scarcity, death and loss, including that of Mohanrao Nilekani, her husband, and many siblings too. She has coped remarkably well and is as comfortable with microwaves as she used to be making jowar rotis on an open fire, and as easy with Zoom calls as she was writing postcards. "We have to adjust, is it not?" Amma will say, in her ever simple and ever direct way.

There is one thing she cannot adjust to,

though. And that is inflation. While she no longer has to make her own purchases, her face crumples up when I tell her the price of everyday items. "But how do poor people manage?" she wonders, shaken.

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Many countries will face similar chal-

lenges. Humanity will have to deal, for the first time ever, with issues of mass ageing. By some estimates, there are already half a million centenarians in the world today. Research on longevity has also sped up, especially in the West. Unlike Amma, Silicon Valley billionaires seem particularly obsessed with increasing lifespans. One of them allegedly declared death to be a bug, not a feature of life!

And the Methuselah Foundation wants 90 to become the new 50 by 2030. If that fanciful project fails, many hope that it will, more importantly, yield answers to the problems of dementia and other age-related disorders.

Amma herself contributes something of significance to medical research. She has agreed to donate her blood to a project at NIMHANS, which analyses cell degeneration and rejuvenation in older people. She would surely volunteer to donate her body for research if she believed it would help others.

As we plan for her 100th birthday, I ask Amma, "How long should people live?" "So long as they are not a burden to others," she says. "But it is not in our hands, is it?"

Wise words from a compassionate centenarian, who has graciously added life to her years, not just years to her life.

The writer is Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and author of *Samaaj, Sarkaar, Bazaar – A citizen first approach*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"As Pakistan celebrates its first female provincial chief minister, it is a reminder of the progress made and the journey ahead. Ensuring women's rights and participation in all spheres of life is not just a moral imperative but also a necessity for Pakistan's development."

—DAWN, PAKISTAN

In pursuit of conservatism

As even liberals become uncomfortable with radical left, political flavour of the season has changed, including in India



RAM RAJYA
BY RAM MADHAV

SHOULD WE CALL ourselves "conservative"? A section of India's ruling right-wing establishment appears to be mulling over this. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government completes 10 years in office, its unapologetic embrace of India's cultural and civilisational identity has prompted many in those circles to enthusiastically come forward to identify with the concept of "conservatism".

In their riveting account of the history of American politics, Micklethwait and Wooldridge conclude that irrespective of the Democrats and Republicans rotating power, America remains a conservative nation at its core. Thomas Jefferson's famous statement about the "American creed" consisted of a deep commitment to individual freedom, constitutionalism, patriotism, limited government and rejection of tyranny and despotism — all considered conservative ideas. Interestingly, not many liberals will be found opposing several of these ideas. Barring issues concerning sexual morality and statism in economic activity, the classical liberals embrace several of those issues that the conservatives do.

But the challenge that the US in particular, and Western societies in general, face today is the hijacking of the liberal movement by left-wing radicals who want to dismantle society as a whole. While a word like conservatism stood for rational and progressive ideas, a benign word like liberalism came to be identified with anarchy, thanks to this bunch of radicals.

Conservatism may not be the same everywhere. Donald Trump represented a populist-nationalist version of it, which can be identified with trade protectionism, hawkishness on China, restriction on immigration — both legal and illegal — and a fierce dedication to fighting the culture war.

A few months ago, I met one of the "bad boys" of the EU, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban. A proud conservative leader, hated by his peers in Europe for his stand on the Russia-Ukraine war and his resistance to "woke" ideologies, Orban represents a version of conservatism that is gaining popularity in eastern and central Europe. In power for almost 15 years now, he built Hungary into what the OECD describes as a "high-income country". "God, religion, family, nationalism and patriotism — no compromise," he told me when asked about the criticism that he endures. That is his brand of conservatism.

Like the US, India, too, is a conservative nation at the core. Swami Vivekananda called it "Dharma prana Bharata", meaning religion was the soul of Bharat. Gandhi understood it well. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, an unabashed admirer of socialism, admitted in the Constituent Assembly that India was a "deeply religious country". Narendra Modi, too, understands it perfectly well.

Latching on to the conservative bandwagon may or may not mean much domestically for the Indian right wing. But at a time when global conservatives are waging fierce battles against radical left anarchists, with whom even Western liberals are highly uncomfortable, a powerful country like India standing by that political movement definitely means a lot for them.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WIN OVER TERROR

THIS REFERS TO the reports, 'Terror in Punjab', 'Policemen killed' and 'Violence in Jammu' (IE, March 8, 1984). These hostile elements are still active in the hinterland and at the borders. Though the violence has reduced due to the concerted efforts of successive governments, there still exist elements that need managing. Enhanced vigil, use of modern surveillance gadgets, more connectivity in isolated and remote areas, improving infrastructure in healthcare and education, and ample employment opportunities may win the hearts of people in the affected districts. Efficient governance will surely help in achieving a prosperous and peaceful atmosphere sooner than later.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

MODI'S BJP

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'NDA, then & now' (IE, March 8). Atal Bihari Vajpayee stressed on morals and ethics. But his government was dependent on coalition partners. Unlike Vajpayee, Narendra Modi's politics is not based on principles. His NDA has been an alliance of convenience and doesn't deepen federalism.

The give and take of alliance politics is not a part of Modi's BJP. The present push for alliances appears to mark a shift in attitude and is certainly a consequence of Modi setting the NDA a target of winning 400 seats in the Lok Sabha.

SS Paul, Nadia

BOGEYMAN, INDEED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Advantage Trump' (IE, March 7). Whatever legal or financial stress Donald Trump may be facing is simply the reasonable consequence of his actions. The "abuse of reality" the writer mentions is Trump's specialty — countless times over the course of his presidency, he seemed to abide by his own facts. Trump is also no harbinger of "free speech". He has used his office to bully and attack every media outlet that didn't parrot his senseless lies. In the fight between the rule of law and mob rule, the US Supreme Court has bowed down to the brute force of the MAGA mob. An insurrectionist who tried to undermine democracy and failed has been given another go at it, in the name of democracy.

Prakhar Jaiswal, Meerut

Classifieds

PERSONAL

It is for general information that I, Syed Muzaaffar Ali/Syed Osman Ali R/o 19-2-24/14, Kala Pathar, Ali Bagh, Near Fatima Hospital, Charminar, Falaknuma, Hyderabad, Telangana-500053, declare that name of mine and my father has been wrongly written as SD Muzaaffar Ali and Usmanali respectively in my 10th Class School Certificate Cum Marksheets. The actual name of mine and my father is Syed Muzaaffar Ali and Syed Osman Ali respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0070893090-1

In the High school marksheets of my son Shivam, my name is written as Jiginder. Whereas my correct name is Yogender Singh. Therefore, from today onwards as Yogender Singh instead of Jiginder, which I am getting changed. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection. Yogender Singh son of Raghuvaish Singh, Resident of village Sadopur, District Gautam Buddha Nagar.

0070893071-1

I, hitherto known as SURESH C KURUP alias SURESH KUMAR C.son of CHANDRA SEKHARA KURUP, residing at,Flat.No-J-24/FSL-1,Dilshad-Colony, Jhilmil,Delhi-110095,have changed my name and shall hereinafter be known as SURESH C KURUP. 0040718730-6

I, hitherto known as Meenu/D/O Munish Kumar,R/o F-97, Second-Floor,East Of Kailash, Phase-I, Kalkaji,South-Delhi, Delhi-110065,have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Meenu Aroora.

0040718809-9

I, hitherto known as Avinash Sharma alias Avinash Kumar Sharma alias Avinash Kumar,S/o Late Sh.Krishan Lal, Employed As Deputy-Director,Ministry Of Railways (Railway Board),Rai Bhawan, Raisina Road New Delhi-110001,R/o H.No-38,Second Floor,Block-4,Subhash Nagar,New Delhi-110027,have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Avinash Sharma.

0040718809-7

I, Vijay Pandit Rao,S/O-Panditrao Govindrao Thakur,R/o,A-Krishna-Green APPT,Mall-Road Church-Road,Shanti-Kunj,Vasant-Kunj,Delhi-110070,Have Changed my name to PREM KUMAR BAREJA. 0040718809-2

I, Subhash Aggarwal,S/o Tulsi Ram Gupta R/o-A-11,4th-Floor Ashok,Vihar Phase-1,Delhi-110052,have changed my name to Subhash Chand Gupta.

0040718795-2

I, Vartika Kumari,W/O Mr.Rama Raman,R/O D-401,Sapt Rishi Tower-5,Defence-Enclave, Sec-44,Noida-Distt.

GautamBuddhi-Nagar UP, have changed my name,from vartika kumari to vartika thakur.Henceforth I would be known by the name of vartika thakur,for all,future purposes.

0040718796-10

I, Sushobhit Sehrawat,R/o, H.No.911,Sector -4,Gurugram(Haryana)-122001,have changed my-Minor Daughter name,from Arshia to Arshia Sehrawat,for all Purposes.

0040718795-6

I, Sumrati Rekha Mallick W/o Arun Mallick R/o,RZ-30A, Panchsheel Colony, F-Block, Mahavir-Enclave, Part-III,Uttam-Nagar, New-Delhi-110059,have changed my-name to Sumrati Rekha Mallick.

0040718809-3

I, Srijna W/o Rohit Jha R/o A-2503, Cleo County, Sector-121, Noida(U.P) have changed my name to Srijna Jha for all purposes.

0040718739-1

I, Shriya Malik,W/O-Neeraj Kapoor,R/O-Pocket-16/11,Third Floor,Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085,have Changed my name to Neha Kapoor.

0040718806-2

I, Shaheen Shakil,M/o Abdullah Shakil,R/o-R/17,Street-No.20,Brahmapuri,Delhi-110053,have changed my name to Shaheen Anjum.Shaheen Shakil and Shaheen Anjum is one and the same-person.

0040718795-5

I, Sandeep Vats,S/o B B Jha,R/o House No.1648,2nd-Floor Rani Bagh,Saraswati Vihar,Delhi-110034,have changed my minor son name Vansh Vats aged 1-years to Vrat Vats

0040718786-1

I, SUKHPREET SINGH S/O BALDEV SINGH,R/o Kunhaida, Post-Behsuna, Meerut(UP)-250404 have changed my name to SUKHPREET.

0040718796-6

I, Anand Kumar Agarwal,S/O, Panra Lal R/o G-38, First Floor, Phase-1 Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110052 have changed my name to Anand Kumar.

0040718719-1

I, Nirmala W/o Vikas Kumar R/o B-7/107,2nd Floor, Sector-17, Rohini, Delhi-110089 have changed my name to Nirmala for all future purposes.

0040718720-1

I, SAVITA ALIAS SAVITA BAREJA W/O PREM KUMAR BAREJA R/o-B-14, Dera-Wala-Nagar, Opposite Model-Town-2, New Delhi-110009, have changed my name to SAVITA BAREJA.

0040718809-1

I, SAANVIDO/SURENDER KUMAR KAMAL ADD-PLOT.NO-85,BLOCK-C,NEAR-DAYAL BAGH POLICE CHOWKI, DAYAL BAGH COLONY, SURAJKUND, FARIDABAD PIN:121009, HARYANA, INDIA, changed my name to SAANVI KAMAL, for all, future purposes.

0040718730-3

I, Rukhsar Khatoon,D/o-Israr Ahmad Khan R/o Tamkuhi Raj,Kushinagar,UP-274407, have changed my name to RUKHSAR KHANAM, for all, future purposes.

0040718795-8

I, Raju Gupta S/o,Late Katwaru Gupta R/o-E-2, E-Block, JJ.Coloony, Raghbir-Nagar,Tageore-Garden, West-Delhi-110027, that Raju, Raju Kumar and Raju Gupta are one and same-person.

0040718809-4

I, Puneet Goel S/o Brij Mohan Goyal R/o-E-13,Shivaji Road Adarsh Nagar Shanjarpur Delhi-110033, have changed my name to Punit Goyal.

0040718795-3

I, Pronita Thakur,W/O-Vijay Panditrao Thakur,R/o-A-1, Krishna-Green APPT,Mall-Road Church-Road,Shanti-Kunj,Vasant-Kunj,Delhi-110070, have changed my name to Pranita Vijay Thakur.

0040718730-5

I, Anju W/o Punit Goyal R/o-E-13 Shivaji Road Adarsh Nagar Shanjarpur Delhi-110033, have changed my name to Anju Goyal

0040718786-3

I, Pramod Singh Shakya,S/o Late Bindra Van Singh,House no.C-23,Second-floor,Back-side Vishwakarma-Colony Pul Pehlud-Pur New-Delhi-110044, Have changed my name to Pramod Singh,Permanently.

0040718730-7

I, Parvinder Kaur Nagi,W/O-Shri Gursharn Singh,R/o-B-7/38,Pocket-7,Sector-17,Rohini,Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Parvinder Kaur.

0040718806-1

I, PREM KUMAR alias PREM KUMAR BAREJA S/O ISHAR DASS R/o-B-14, Dera-Wala-Nagar, Opposite Model-Town-2, New Delhi-110009, have changed my name to PREM KUMAR BAREJA.

0040718809-2

I, PAN SINGH,S/O KESHAR SINGH,ADD-B-58,3RD-FLOOR BACK-SIDE,CHANAKYA PLACE , PART-1,PANKHA-ROAD,UTTAM NAGAR NEW-DELHI-110059,changed my name to PAN SINGH BANI,for all,future purposes.

0040718792-6

I, Nisha Rani,W/o Satish,R/o Village-Lalpur Ki Dhami, Gram-Lajpur, Rewari,Haryana-123401, have changed my name Nisha,for all purposes.

0040718795-9

I, NIRMAL SINGH BHATTI,S/O SHAMSHER SINGH,R/o 1043-D 5 WARD NO.8 MEHRAULI DELHI-110030.HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO NIRMAL SINGH.

0040718796-8

I, Meenakshi Negi,D/O Laxman Singh Negi R/o 125,Second Floor, Pocket-6, Sector-22,Rohini,Delhi-110086, have changed my name to Meenakshi Singh.

0040718806-4

I, Manoj Jain,S/o Bhushan Lal Jain,R/o-E-10/4,Second-Floor, Krishna-Nagar,Delhi-110051, have changed my name to Manoj Jain.Manoj Jain and Manoj Jain is one and the same-person.

0040718795-4

I, MOHAMMED FAMIL,S/O ABDUL SHAKUR R/o-H,NO-27,New GANESH PORIC RASHID MARKIT KRISHN NASAR DEMI-110051, HAVE CHANGED my NAME TO MOHAMMAD YAMIN.

0040718730-2

I, Kshitija Singh,w/o Abhishek Jain d/o Vikram Verma R/o-20, Windsor Place,Janpath,New Delhi-110001 do hereby solemnly inform that have changed my minor son's name from Kabir Jain to Neil Kabir Jain for all purposes.

0040718796-7

I, Km. Deepshikha Shukla,D/o Chandra Mani Shukla,W/o-Durgesh Mishra,R/o-153B, Ranholi Vihar,Nangloji,Delhi-110041, have changed my name to Deepshikha,for all purposes.

0040718795-7

I, Karan Jeet Singh,S/o Dalvir Singh,R/o House-no-507,A-5,Govind Puri Kalpaki, New Delhi-110019, have changed my name to Karanjeet Singh,Permanently.

0040718730-8

I, K.M. FARNAZ ANSARI ALIAS FARHA NAZ D/O MOHAMMAD FAIZ W/O MOHAMMAD IMRAN R-0/131, No-4, Near, Mohammad Masjid, Kardampuri, Gokal Pur, Delhi-110094, have changed my name to FARHA NAZ. 0040718786-2

0040718795-2

I, JAI PRAKASH KUMAR,S/O SHAILENDRA KUMAR,R/o-197-198,3rd-FLOOR,PKT-B7,SECTOR-4,ROHINI,DELHI-110085, HAVE CHANGED MY CHILD NAME TANASHVI TO TANASHVI DAYAL.

0040718809-5

I, Kavita Devi W/o, Anand Kumar R/o G-38, First Floor, Phase-1 Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110052 have changed my name to Kavita.

0040718720-1

I, SUKHPREET SINGH S/O BALDEV SINGH,R/o Kunhaida, Post-Behsuna, Meerut(UP)-250404 have changed my name to SUKHPREET.

0040718796-6

I, SUHAIL ALI,S/o Sajid Ali,R/o-T-476,Gali.No-17,Near-Masjid Kastalganj,Auton puri,New Seemapur Shastri park East Delhi-110053,declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Mohd Suhail in my class-10th and class-12th marksheets and certificate educational documents. The actual mine name is Suhail Ali which may be amended accordingly.

0040718796-9

I, Anand Kumar Agarwal,S/O, Panra Lal R/o G-38, First Floor, Phase-1 Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110052 have changed my name to Anand Kumar.

0040718719-1

I, Nirmala W/o Vikas Kumar R/o B-7/107,2nd Floor, Sector-17, Rohini, Delhi-110089 have changed my name to Nirmala for all future purposes.

0040718720-1

I, IKRARS,O/ABDULLA,ADD-C-142,MULLA COLONY GHAROLI EXTENSION GHAROLI, EAST,DELHI-110096,changed my name to MOHAMMAD IKRAR,for all,future purposes.

0040718796-3

I, FAHMIDA KHATOON,W/O MOHAMMAD YAMIN, R/o,H.no-27, NEW GANESH-PARK RASHID,MARKET KRISHNA-NAGAR,DELHI-110051, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO FAIMEDA KHATOON.

0040718730-1

I, PUNEET PATHAK,S/O OM NARAYAN PATHAK,R/o-129,Pathakpura,Orai, Jalaun(UP)-285001,have changed my name to PUNIT SAGAR PATHAK.

0040718796-4

I, Rukhsar Khatoon,D/o-Israr Ahmad Khan R/o Tamkuhi Raj,Kushinagar,UP-274407, have changed my name to RUKHSAR KHANAM, for all,future purposes.

0040718795-8

I, Arun Thakral,S/O-Shri MOHAMMAD YAMIN, R/o,H.no-3/76, Sector-8,Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Arun Thakral for all purposes.

0040718806-3

I, Anita Aggarwal W/O Subhash Chand Gupta R/o A-11, 4th-Floor Ashok Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-110052, have changed my name to Anita Gupta.

0040718795-1

I, PUNEET Goel S/o Brij Mohan Goyal R/o-E-13,Shivaji Road Adarsh Nagar Shanjarpur Delhi-110033, have changed my name to Punit Goyal.

0040718795-3

I, Pronita Thakur,W/O-Vijay Panditrao Thakur,R/o/A-1-1, Krishna-Green APPT,Mall-Road Church-Road,Shanti-Kunj,Vasant-Kunj,Delhi-110070, have changed my name to Pranita Vijay Thakur.

0040718730-5

I, Anju W/o Punit Goyal R/o-E-13 Shivaji Road Adarsh Nagar Shanjarpur Delhi-110033, have changed my name to Anju Goyal

0040718786-3

I, Parvinder Kaur Nagi,W/O-Shri Gursharn Singh,R/o-B-7/38,Pocket-7,Sector-17,Rohini,Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Parvinder Kaur.

0040718806-1

I, Premod Singh Shakya,S/o Late Bindra Van Singh,House no.C-23,Second-floor,Back-side Vishwakarma-Colony Pul Pehlud-Pur New-Delhi-110044, Have changed my name to Premod Singh,Permanently.

0040718730-7

I, Parvinder Kaur Nagi,W/O-Shri Gursharn Singh,R/o-B-7/38,Pocket-7,Sector-17,Rohini,Delhi-110085, have changed my

Ms Murty goes to Parliament

From being the person who stood behind Narayana Murthy as he lived his Infosys dream, Sudha Murty has over the years emerged as a more public person — as philanthropist, author of children's books, twice Padma winner and now, a nominated member of Rajya Sabha

KIRAN PARASHAR

In 1981, she famously lent her husband the Rs 10,250 that she had squirreled away, resulting in the creation of the \$80-billion Indian IT bellwether firm Infosys Ltd. That image of Sudha Murty — as the woman behind the successful Narayana Murthy, who doggedly pursued business success as founder, CEO and chairman of Infosys — stayed until her husband retired from executive roles at the company in 2014.

But those who have known her say Sudha Murty was always her own person — the only woman in her engineering college in the 1960s in Karnataka's Hubballi, the first woman engineer at Pune's Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO, now Tata Motors), and later, winner of the Padma Shri (2006) and Padma Bhushan (2023), philanthropist and writer of books for children, and mother-in-law of UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

On March 8, Sudha Murty was made a nominated member of Rajya Sabha — one of 12 members nominated by President Droupadi Murmu to the Upper House.

Speaking to *The Indian Express* from Thailand, Sudha Murty said the news of the nomination had taken her by surprise. "I was not expecting it... It is also a happy moment that the announcement was made on Women's Day. I believe this is a big platform for me. I will definitely try to do my best," she said.

Over the past couple of years, Sudha Murty has made several public appearances, with her comments — on being a "pure vegetarian" and a woman of "simple" tastes — setting off social media trends and triggering speculation that she may be getting ready for a political debut.

While her husband was at one point spoken of as a potential candidate for a high office, Sudha Murty's name was being bandied around as a possible choice for the Bengaluru South Lok Sabha constituency, where the RSS and BJP has a strong hold.

"Thank you, Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. It is my privilege and my honor to be nominated to Rajya Sabha by our Hon'ble President of India Smt Droupadi Murmuji. I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve our nation," Sudha Murty said on social media in response to a congratulatory message by PM Narendra Modi.

Born on August 19, 1950, in Shiggaon in Haveri district of north Karnataka, Murty has often spoken of her father, Dr R H Kulkarni, a surgeon who practised at the Government Hospital in Hubballi and other parts of the state, as being a major influence on her life. Her mother Vimala Kulkarni was a housewife.

After graduating in electrical engineering from BVB College in Hubballi, Sudha Murty pursued a Master's degree at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, where she received a gold medal in 1974.

She was the first woman engineer to be hired at Pune's Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO). The recruitment is considered to be a watershed moment for women engineers since it was a let-

ter to JRD Tata objecting to the firm's 'only male employees' policy that eventually led to her recruitment.

BJP leader and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, also an alumnus of BVB College, recalls that when he enrolled for his Bachelor's in Engineering, Sudha Murty had graduated. "All I knew was her name then — she was the first girl student of our college. It was only after entering public life that I got the opportunity to meet and interact with her. Incidentally, her first job was at TELCO and so was mine," he says.

Sometime in the 1970s, Sudha Murty is said to have met Narayana Murthy through a common friend. In 1978, the couple tied the knot despite Sudha's family having apprehensions about Murty, then an unemployed engineer heavily influenced by socialist values and looking to start his own business.

When Infosys was founded in 1981, Sudha Murty stayed with her parents in Hubballi before shifting to Bengaluru.

In 1996, the Infosys Foundation, a non-profit organisation, was set up with Sudha Murty as its chairperson, a role she executed for the next 25 years. The Foundation has been recognised for its work in eradicating and rehabilitating Devadasis in North Karnataka in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In her book, *Three Thousand Stitches*, Sudha Murty writes about her work among Devadasis and says she was "attacked with slippers and tomatoes" when she approached the women involved in the sex work.

More than 3,000 Devadasis were eventually rehabilitated. The Foundation also works with schools, villages and hospitals and has stepped in with funds and volunteers during natural disasters.

Former Infosys CFO and chairman of Aarin Capital, Mohandas Pai, who has worked with Sudha Murty told *The Indian Express*, "She is committed to her work... I still remember when Akshaya Patra opened in Rajasthan, she rolled chapatis for them. She is a humble human being who is able to connect with all strata of society."

In September 2021, amid glitches in the Income Tax e-filing portal developed by Infosys, the RSS-affiliated magazine *Panchajanya* accused Infosys and the Foundation she chaired of deliberately trying to destabilise the Indian economy and helping Naxals, Leftists and "tukde tukde gang".

Sudha Murty retired as chairperson of the Infosys Foundation on December 31, 2021, three months after the article was published.

Murty has more than 30 books and 200 titles to her credit — including novels, non-fiction, children's books, travelogues, technical books, and memoirs. She is a recipient of the R K Narayan Award for Literature.



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

In recent years, her increasing presence on public platforms, has seen Sudha Murty being subjected to intense scrutiny on social media.

Appearing on a popular food show, Sudha Murty said last year, "One of my biggest fears is that the same spoon may have been used for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes." She went on to say she doesn't eat "even eggs" and called herself a "pure vegetarian", dividing the Internet with many ac-

cusing her of Brahmanical superiority. Yet, many others came to her defence calling her food choices her personal matter.

Earlier, appearing on Kapil Sharma's comedy show, Sudha Murty narrated an encounter with an immigration officer in London who, she said, refused to believe her when she cited her residential address in UK as 10, Downing Street (the official residence of her son-in-law and UK prime minister), suggesting that the officer's response

was due to her "ordinary sari" and "simple appearance".

This time, too, she was trolled on social media, with social media users saying that her simple woman image flies in the face of her being one of the richest in the country.

The social media scrutiny was unsparring. Yet, Sudha Murty remained unruffled. Now, as she walks into Parliament as a member of Rajya Sabha, she will be under a new, national spotlight.

Bengaluru cafe reopens: Dosas and a dash of determination

Week after an IED went off at Rameshwaram cafe in Bengaluru, leaving nine people injured, the eatery was back in business — "it is our answer to the attack"

SANATH PRASAD
BENGALURU, MARCH 8

BANANA LEAVES at the entrance, marigold garlands on the facade, priests chanting mantras and tables packed with guests — a week after an explosion rocked Rameshwaram cafe in Bengaluru's Whitefield, on March 8, founders, employees and patrons turned up at the popular eatery to cheer each other up and help put the incident behind them.

Nine people were injured in the lunch hour blast at the cafe in Whitefield, a tech hub. A man who came to the restaurant is suspected to have planted an improvised explosive device in a corner of the cafe.

On Friday, the cafe's founders, Divya Raghavendra Rao and Raghavendra Rao, were back to business, relaunching their quick service restaurant that's known for its South Indian staples.

"The attack on the cafe did not dampen our spirits. It only united us and made us fight back harder. The reopening today is our response to the attack. It also sends a message — that Indians will not be deterred by such attacks," said Divya, adding that the cafe will reopen for the public from 6 am on Saturday. The cafe had sustained damage in the at-



(Left) A CCTV grab showing the blast at Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru's Whitefield area on March 1; at the reopening ceremony on Friday. PTI, Jithendra M



minutes in the 'Lost and Found' WhatsApp group for employees.

Beaming with pride, Raghavendra said "not a single employee left us after the blast".

A cafe staff member said, "Raghavendra sir held a meeting with us after the blast. He was quite emotional. All he said was that we were going to create a new Rameshwaram Cafe. We all knew then that we could not abandon him."

Applauding his employees, Raghavendra said, "One of them was bleeding after the blast. Still, he was determined that we should reopen the cafe the day after the blast. Such committed employees motivated us to restart our operations within a week."

Pramod N, an HR professional and a cafe regular, said, "I am surprised at how quickly the cafe reopened. I think people will take some time to come back here in huge numbers, like they used to, given the security concerns."

Chethan Kumar, another regular who was at the cafe on Friday, was more optimistic. He said, "The cafe and the management have only emerged stronger after the blast. The cafe is known for its ghee podi dosa and podi idli. I'm sure the area's IT professionals will be back here in no time."

tack, with the impact mostly confined to the area designated for washing of hands. The roof, cash counter and the cafe's logo too had sustained minor damage. Security measures at the cafe have been upgraded since the attack.

Raghavendra said the 1,500-strong cafe family will now "remain on high alert" and "be our eyes and ears" at all times.

"The attack was a wake-up call for us to tighten our security. We have recruited four

retired Army personnel to advise us on making our security measures foolproof. These retired officers will also train the staff to remain alert at all times," he said, adding that two metal detectors and 25 more CCTV cam-

eras have been installed now.

Urging other hotels and restaurants to consider installing metal detectors too, he said the cafe staff has also been directed to report any bag lying unclaimed for over 10

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.: 82244980 Date: 08.03.2024

Invitation of Tenders through E-procurement system

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

S.No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing date
01	82244980	Spine Fixation set comprising of 4 hydroxyapatite screw for spine+02 rods	40	05.04.2024

Note:- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS websites i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.

2. No Manual offer will be entertained.

736/24

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON****(SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) **Ravi S/o Raje R/o E-87, Jhuggi No. 19, 20, Kalyan Puri, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. **00048/21 U/s 379/411 IPC, PS Madhu Vihar, East Distt., Delhi** and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Ravi** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Ravi** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person(s) **Ravi** of case FIR No. **00048/21 U/s 379/411 IPC, PS Madhu Vihar, East Distt., Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated **12.04.2024**.

By Order

Ms. Jyoti Nain

Ld. Metropolitan Magistrate-07

Room No. 06, (North)

Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/2757/NW/2024

(Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON**(SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)**

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) **Jitender @ Jitu S/o Aman Singh R/o E-1531, 2nd Floor, Jahangirpuri, Delhi-33** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No. **387/2023 U/s 302/326A IPC, PS Jahangirpuri, Distt. North-West, Delhi** and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Jitender @ Jitu** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Jitender @ Jitu** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person(s) **Jitender @ Jitu** of case FIR No. **387/2023 U/s 302/326A IPC, PS Jahangirpuri, Distt. North-West, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated **10.04.2024**.

By Order

Sh. Udbhav Kumar Jain
Metropolitan Magistrate-04
Room No. 37, Shahdara,
Karkardooma Courts, DelhiDP/2787/ED/2024
(Court Matter)**OFFICE OF NAGAR PALIKA PARISHAD
PITHAMPUR DISTT. DHAR (M.P.)**

NIT no. 1570/2024

DATED: 06.03.2024

Notice Inviting Tender 3rd Call

Online Lump sum bids are invited from registered contractors/firms of repute for Work of Augmentation of Water Supply System of Nagar Palika Parishad Pithampur Town Under AMRUT 2.0, NIT: 2024_UAD_342033_1 date: 06.03.2024 Probable amount Rs. 2076.04 Lacs, EMD Rs. 1038020/- Cost of bid document Rs. 50000/- Last date and time of submission of bid : 05.04.2024 & time: 17:30 Hrs. All other details are published on website www.mptender.gov.in further information or clarification (if any) shall be published on website only, and not in Newspaper.

President
Nagar Palika
Parishad PithampurCMO
Nagar Palika
Parishad Pithampur**GOVERNOR'S SECRETARIAT
JHARKHAND, RANCHI-834008**Tel - 0651 - 2283465, 2283467, 2283466, Fax - 0651 - 2284870
E-mail – jhrgov@jhr.nic.in, www.rajbhavanjharkhand.nic.in**ADVERTISEMENT**

Inviting online application for the post of Vice Chancellor, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh.

The office of Chancellor invites online application from interested eligible candidates having scholarly pursuit, academic interest, administrative ability and other desired qualifications for the post of :-
1. Vice Chancellor, Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh.
All the instructions and link regarding submission of online application are available on website having URL www.rajbhavanjharkhand.nic.in or, Chancellor Portal (www.jharkhanduniversities.nic.in).
PR 321942 Governor(23-24) D

16

EXECUTION OF BALANCE WORK

Tender Notice No. CON/2024/EFB/06; Dated: 28-02-2024. Open tender through e-tendering system is invited from experienced and reputed contractor(s)/firm(s) for the following works. Tender No. CEF/CON/B-S/MIS/2024/01. Name of work: Execution of balance work of Saingar station building, subway below lobby area, concourse, facade passenger circulating area, PP shed, platform surfacing, horticulture/landscaping work, passenger and goods circulating area, approach road to Saingar station building/circulation area, retaining wall, side drains, longitudinal drains, fencing etc. in connection with construction of Barabari-Saingar New BG Rail Project (Mizoram).

Approximate Value: ₹ 86,05,08,228.55.

E-tender will be closed at 14:30 hrs. on 21-03-2024 and opened at 15:30 hrs. on 21-03-2024. For details of Tender and Corrigendum-1, please visit www.ireps.gov.in.

Chief Engineer/CON/2

Northeast Frontier Railway

(Construction Organisation)

"Serving Customers with a smile"

कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबंधक, यूटी-25

कल्पदम्बशन एवं डिजाइन सर्विसेज

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय)

(उप प्रदेश कार वडा उपकार)

मकान नं.-5, याम जलाहर कालीगंगी,

फिट प्रायाल नगर सेंगे, यामाहा रोड, असाम।

Visit us at: www.cdsupjn.orge-mail id: c25aligarh@gmail.com

पत्राक: 668/इ-टेन्डर/75

दिनांक: 07.03.2024

इ-निविदा सूचना

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय) को

ओर से अधिकारीकार द्वारा जल निगम कार्यालय

के ग्राम पुरानीकार मार्फत में आये

समाज मीरिंग नगर के पर्यटन विकास कार्य

हेतु अनुमति लागू रु. 19.26 लाख (वी.

एस.टी.एस. रोड एवं लेवर सेस सालिंग) हेतु सी.

एण्ड ई-प्रेस एवं लेवर सेस सालिं



ALL OF US STRANGERS ★★★

Director: Andrew Haigh Cast: Paul Mescal, Andrew Scott, Jamie Bell, Claire Foy

When Love Comes Knocking Back

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BRUSH-STROKE BATTING

Work-of-art centuries

Centurions Rohit, Shubman wowed with beautiful batsmanship as they added 129 runs in 1st session

SANDEEP DWIVEDI
DHARAMSALA, MARCH 8

JUST 5 minutes before lunch, Shubman Gill, having crossed his hundred, was performing his signature celebration. He was doffing his cap, taking a bow. Behind him stood Rohit Sharma, like a proud parent.

The Indian captain seemed more pleased now than he was a few minutes back when he had registered his 12th Test ton. A radiating smile on his face, hands spread wide, he waited for his younger batting partner to finish his thing. They would hug each other as Rohit kept patting his back. Dharamsala stood up and gave a hearty applause to the duo that had entertained them all morning.

On the foothills of the scenic snow-capped Middle Himalayan range, inside the perfectly circular quaint stadium with as many colours as there are in those popular busherhi or pahadi topis (Himachali caps), Rohit (103) and Gill (110) played beautiful cricket. The two hundreds of Day 2 of the Test were embedded by several well-timed correct strokes, the kind that sees cricket romantics go weak in their knees. Between them they scored 129 runs in the first session and this was not a brutal assault, this was the classic death by thousand cuts.

The stand-out stroke of the morning came from Gill's bat. It was against England's wily old bowler James Anderson, who was avoiding the drivable length. The tactic wouldn't work, Gill was prepared to be proactive and take risks. He would take a couple of steps, reach the pitch of the ball but still be conscious of being correct and elegant. He followed the basic principle of the age-old copy-book straight drive - the one played with a perfectly straight elbow position. But he gave the shot a modern-day tweak. On reaching the ball, he would lift the ball and send it over the fence.

Pacers have historically felt insulted when batsmen push them in the V for a boundary. A six over the sight screen after rushing down the track is an embarrassment. When a 24-year-old, read Gill, shows such disdain to a 41-year-old, Anderson; a farewell can be expected to be round the corner.

Soon Gill would strike a four through covers. That one stroke would have delighted the Team India coaching staff more than fans in the stands. Of late there had been a pattern to Gill's dismissals. Getting stuck on the crease and being late in coming forward, he has got out bowled or lbw. His indecisiveness has seen the ball sneaking between the bat and pad and hitting the stumps. On this day, he would also log in five sixes.

Though Gill has scored over 400 runs in this series, the pundits have pointed out that the "transfer of weight" - the important law that defines the physics of footwork - hasn't been smooth.

Today at Dharamsala, with runs flowing freely, the doubts disappeared and the muscle memory returned. As Wood pitched the ball slightly up, out went the left foot and got planted on the pitch. As a natural reaction, the right eased its grip on the surface and the bat moved to meet the ball with full force. Those good old habits were returning, Gill was back to his best.

Photogenic leave

Not just strokes, there was one Gill photogenic 'leave' that would have excited the many camerapersons bunched on the sidelines with their zoom lenses. Wood, in the middle of an inspired spell, gave it his all. A

SCORECARD	
INDIA vs ENGLAND	
HPCA STADIUM, DHARAMSALA	
Toss: England, chose to bat	
ENGLAND 1ST INNINGS	218
INDIA 1ST INNINGS (O/N: 135/1)	
R Sharma b Stokes	103 (162b, 13x4, 3x6)
S Gill b Anderson	110 (150b, 12x4, 5x6)
D Padikkal b Bashir	65 (103b, 10x4, 1x6)
S Khan c Root b Bashir	56 (60b, 8x4, 1x6)
R Jadeja lbw b Hartley	15 (50b)
D Jurel c Duckett b Bashir	15 (24b, 2x4)
R Ashwin b Hartley	0 (5b)
K Yadav batting	27 (55b, 2x4)
J Bumrah batting	19 (55b, 2x4)
■ Extras (lb4, nb2)	5
■ Total (8 wickets; 120 Ov)	473
■ FoW: 1-104 (Yashasvi Jaiswal, 20.4 ov), 2-275 (Rohit Sharma, 61.1 ov), 3-279 (Shubman Gill, 62.2 ov), 4-376 (Sarfraz Khan, 84.1 ov), 5-403 (Devdutt Padikkal, 92.1 ov), 6-427 (Dhruv Jurel, 100.4 ov), 7-427 (Ravindra Jadeja, 101.1 ov), 8-428 (Ravichandran Ashwin, 101.6 ov)	
■ Bowling: James Anderson 14-1-59-1, Mark Wood 15-1-89-0, Tom Hartley 39-3-126-2, Shaib Bashir 44-5-170-4, Ben Stokes 5-1-17-1, Joe Root 3-0-8-0	

ball from good length climbed up towards Gill's head. Lesser batsmen would hit on the helmet grill. It was a mean 146 kph ball, capable of serious damage. But Gill was too focused to be caught off guard.

Showing the flexibility of an expert yogi, he swayed away, his abdomen bending back and his legs folding instinctively to provide a base for the body to be stable. He wasn't rattled by the pace or the sudden bounce. He moved away, stayed low but wasn't clumsy nor had a fall after averting the danger. He was like an expert gymnast who had stuck his landing perfectly after a difficult routine.

Gill's breath-taking strokeplay came about after Rohit had given the clarion call. As it was a pre-decided plan, off-spinner Shaib Bashir was targeted early in the day. As soon as he gave the ball the air and the ball was above the eye-line of the batsmen, six runs would get added to India's score. Rohit hit the first six of his three sixes of the day and on the next ball when Bashir cut down the flight, Rohit hit a flat straight strike to get four.

Late on Day 1, Rohit, like always, had shown his eagerness to send all short balls over the square leg boundary. So England had a plan in place for him on Day 2. They would pack the leg-side with six fielders all in place to catch the mistimed pull-shot.

There was a long leg, deep fine leg, deep square leg, deep mid-wicket, short mid-wicket and wide mid-on. Ben Stokes had a catcher for every eventuality in case Rohit miscued his shot. Wood would bowl short but the Indian captain would move and slap the ball past the acres of space around the mid-off region for four.

Rohit never loses shape, form or sleep when the bowlers try to bounce him. Even though it was an unusual and unconventional shot, Rohit wasn't ungainly.

In the morning session, the England bowlers threw everything they had at Rohit and Gill but the duo didn't panic or even compromise aesthetically. After lunch they would get out but the damage had been done. There was a pleasing takeaway from the morning session. With an age difference of 12 years between the two equally graceful batsmen, the generational shift wouldn't make cricket watching dull.

LOFTED-STRAIGHT DRIVE:

6 OFF ANDERSON

(33.2, GILL MOVED FROM 27 TO 33)

"The length of the ball was such that he couldn't have played it along the ground. It had to be aerial. You can't plan such shots, it comes naturally. He often plays such shots. The key is to keep your head still. Your body should have the perfect balance."

BIFFED VIA MID-WICKET:

4 OFF BASHIR

(52.6, 81 TO 87):

"He has good game sense and knows his strengths and weaknesses. The pitch offered some turn and Gill likes to get behind the ball. He was using his feet nicely today. Bashir was

playing some mind games. He was changing his line and length and had kept fielders in the deep. Gill was playing every stroke with the turn. He wasn't trying to play against the spin. On such a pitch, one cannot take the risk of playing against the turn. As the ball can turn, it can be low, so the safest option is to play with the spin. He hit the six with the turn too. He knew there were fielders in the deep. But he had picked his spot."

"I feel the thing which was missing before this series was that he was not stepping out of his crease (to the spinners). Since junior days he has been using his feet nicely to the spinners. He likes to attack and this has been his natural game. The confidence he got in past games has helped. He was timing the ball well and was seeing it. It was the day where he was getting everything right. He had ticked all boxes but I felt if the score was less, he could get more."

PUSH-DRIVEN THROUGH MID-ON:

4 OFF WOOD

(47.2 OVERS 62 TO 69)

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A LEAVE OFF WOOD

(146KPH, SHORT BALL, 41.4, GILL ON 53):

"He is a world class bowler. But muscle memory rescued Shubman. He decided to leave the ball at the last minute. If you have noticed, it's because of his perfect head position and balance. His eyes were on the ball, which helped him to get out of the line quickly. The game sense helped him. He played some of the shots very late. He waited for the ball to come to him."

"I have always believed that discipline is key to success in anything that you do. Whether it be practice or day to day habits or food. I have tried to be disciplined and that was my main goal," he added.

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Sen closer to his Lakshya

22-year-old reaches French Open semis, a boost in race to qualify for Olympics

SHIVANI NAIK
MARCH 8

NO ONE in Michael Jackson's troupe ever thought of practical problems like slipping when there's blood on the dance-floor. But Lakshya Sen who had a nasty gnash on his right hand finger which refused to stop dripping, and his opponent Loh Kean Yew, two of the bounciest beings on a badminton court, had to mind the droplets before resuming their subsequent dancing on the French Open court.

In the end, Sen made the Paris semifinals defeating Loh 19-21, 21-15, 21-13, making him sweat at the net, at which the Singaporean has never been known to be very adept.

The Indian enters every tour event like it's a personal knockout round for him – a race to Olympics, given his ranking currently is out of Top 16. He needs deep runs in big tournaments, and is lucky good at shrugging off reputations of opponents. All England defending champion Li Shifeng – Check. 2021 World Champion Loh Kean Yew – Check. Tamed in three. Reputations and repertoire don't scare Sen, but that Olympic qualification needs to be nailed down.

So, going down 19-21 in the opener could be seen as the pressure weighing down.

In truth, Sen, who won bronze in 2021, has always been many shades better than Loh. He even beat him for the India Open title. Loh relies on a springy, bouncy game that isn't as speedy or powerful as it was in 2021. In seeking consistency, Loh's mad speed got cramped somewhere. Sen did offer him lollipop lifts, imminently smashable, because he plays them like he just wants to get rid of the shuttle and continue the rally. So, Loh jumped high and rained down. In one of his routine defensive dives, Sen nicked his finger bad, and suffered a wretched cut. He was a set down.

Coach Vimal Kumar scolded him to get Loh moving. Padukone told him to not worry. His nerves settled down. Sen's reflex defense is brilliant and his cross smash when not sprayed stays hit. But his best shots are the explosive stride to the net, and the scythe kill in its wake. For some reason against Loh who just doesn't have the patience or skill for the net, Sen simply didn't engage him there for longest.

In the second set, he began to. Longer the rally, higher the chances that Sen prevails. And



Lakshya Sen defeated Loh Kean Yew in three games on Friday. File

he would soon begin to construct points and tease Loh's returns out. Because he retrieves everything within court confines, Loh was slowly forced to go for the lines. Sen had of course done the hard work of absorbing his ceaseless hitting which even as sub-par speed is quite fast. But once pulled to the back line, Loh began over-hitting. He would follow it with a grimace, kicking the floor of having missed the line by centimetres. Sen would respond with poker-faced glee – with extra clicks on the round-the-head short smash flurries.

Sen broke free at 10-10 in the second and never stopped with the half smashes and short snappy round-the-heads reaching 19-12 in no time. The sets levelled at 21-15. He also tended to his finger cut, taping it back into place before the decider began.

Sen is a beast in deciders. Mentally the toughest cookie there is in the clutch. He can bin errors into non-existence at the stroke of Set 3 and strike consistency at will. Why he errs in the opener remains a mystery. But his pace, accuracy and chess-work all auto-up-

grade when he's chasing Set 3. So he would race to a 4-0 lead.

Using the net far better to force Loh into errors, he reached 8-1. Then came four points for Loh, with no rhyme or reason for why Sen would both them suddenly. But he would shake off the reverie and begin using the net space to push Loh further out of his depth. At 17-11 was the most frenzied rally of punchy strokes before Sen killed at the net. A body attack for 20-13, and a tap for a win, saw Sen make his first Super 750 semifinals in months.

Sen is an All England finalist from two years ago, so such results ought to be frequent. But his playing style is brutal on the body – with or without blood shedding, and good results will be intermittent till he finds a rally-crunching attacking weapon.

He runs into the man with the monkish patience, world champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn, the absolute opposite of the restless, frenetic Loh, in the last-4. The Thai is beatable, but won't offer easy pickings at the net as Loh did. Sen can't afford to stop diving on the dance floor though.

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Sanjay Singh, the UWW chief

Wrestling mess: World body says only WFI can conduct Olympic qualifier trials

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, MARCH 8

PLUNGING FROM one crisis to another for the past one year, Indian wrestling is now staring at a situation where, unless a last-minute solution is found, it might not be able to register entries for the Olympic qualification tournament next month.

The situation arose on Friday after the sport's world governing body declared that it would accept names of athletes for the all-important tournament only if the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) would send them.

By doing so, the United World Wrestling (UWW) has essentially snatched all the powers from the Indian Olympic Association-appointed ad hoc committee, which was scheduled to conduct the trials on Sunday and Monday following a Delhi High Court order.

In a letter to WFI president Sanjay Singh, the UWW chief underlined that the athlete 'registration can be made only by the UWW affiliated national federations... and no other entity may take this role on your behalf.'

The interim body running the sport in India, meanwhile, did not sound too perturbed. "The trial will take place as scheduled. Regarding the entries, we are confident of finding a solution," an official told this newspaper.

The UWW's diktat, however, has led to a head-scratching situation. Consider this: the WFI – headed by Sanjay, a close confidante of beleaguered former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh – is recognised by the world body but the committee is suspended by the government and, by extension, the IOA. On Thursday, the Delhi High Court ordered the ad-hoc body that was running the sport to conduct the trials, sidelining the WFI. Now,

the UWW, citing its rules, has said it won't accept India's entries if it isn't sent by the WFI.

Sanjay said 'everything is in the government's hands.' "In the current situation, the government should understand and figure out a solution. The UWW has made it clear through its letter that it won't accept entries sent by anyone else. So the government

should take note of it so that our country isn't disrespected and the athletes don't suffer," he told *The Indian Express*.

The WFI chief, sidelined following the government notification in December last year, sounded open to the suggestion that the ad hoc committee conducts trials, as per the court's order, while his association sends the entries to the world body. "This also can be done. Although I have to see the rules," he said.

This is the latest in a series of crises that have gripped Indian wrestling over the last year after some of the country's top wrestlers – Olympic medalist wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik and World Championship medalist Vinesh Phogat – accused former WFI president and BJP MP Brij Bhushan of sexually harassing women wrestlers.

After a months-long protest against him, Brij Bhushan was charge-sheeted and he later 'retired' from wrestling affairs. However, his close aide Sanjay was elected as his successor. Consequently, Bajrang, Sakshi and Vinesh moved the Delhi High Court to declare the WFI election held in December 2023 illegal on the grounds that the federation was not compliant with the national sports code.

The trio also sought the court's intervention in the "illegal action" of the "suspended" WFI in conducting selection trials. During a hearing on Thursday, the WFI told the single-judge Bench of Justice Sachin Datta that it will not hold the competition, thus paving the way for the ad-hoc committee to conduct the event.

However, that did not go down too well with the UWW. In his letter, Lalovic 'reminded' his Sanjay of 'some principles concerning the registration of athletes and delegations in international competitions.'

"It is the responsibility of the national federations regularly affiliated to UWW to select and announce their teams for the Continental Championships, the World Championships, the Olympic Games Qualifying Tournaments... This is in line with the principles enshrined in our rules and regulations and no other entity may take this role on your behalf," the letter stated.

BRIEFLY

Horner confident Verstappen won't leave for Mercedes

Paris: Red Bull team principal Christian Horner is confident three-time world champion Max Verstappen will remain with the team amid rumors that he might be eyeing a move to rival Mercedes. Verstappen's contract runs through 2028 and the Dutchman said this week that he's "very happy" with Red Bull. However, Horner held a meeting with Verstappen's manager after having a public argument with the driver's father, Jos, at the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix. "He's got a great team around him. He's got great faith in that team. And we've achieved an awful lot together," Horner said. "So he's committed to an agreement until 2028." PTI

Hazlewood five-for puts Aus in control

Christchurch: Josh Hazlewood took 5-31 as Australia bowled out New Zealand for 162 on the opening day of the second Test on Friday, overshadowing the 100th test appearances of Kane Williamson and Tim Southee. By stumps, Australia was 124-4 and the deficit had been reduced to 38. Marnus Labuschagne had played his way out of a slump and was 45 not out at the close.

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 162 (Latham 38; Hazlewood 5/31) lead Australia 124/4 (Labuschagne 45*; Henry 3/39) by 38 runs. AP

Nagal bows out of Indian Wells in R1

Indian Wells: Sumit Nagal was handed a straight-set defeat by Canada's Milos Raonic in the opening round of the BNP Paribas Open here, bringing a swift end to the Indian tennis player's campaign after he made the main draw as a 'lucky loser' due to Rafael Nadal's pullout. Nagal, who is ranked 101st in the ATP charts, went down 3-6 3-6 in a match that lasted one hour and 28 minutes. REUTERS

Warriorz win thriller against Capitals, stay alive in WPL

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MARCH 8

IN THE post-match presentation, Deepti Sharma was asked 'Where do we start?' It was that sort of a match in New Delhi as UP Warriorz came back from absolutely nowhere to clinch a thriller against table-toppers Delhi Capitals by one run to stay alive in the tournament.

At the center of it was the Indian all-rounder who truly lived up to that billing. Deepti produced a strong performance with the bat, ball and on the field. She scored a fifty to take UP Warriorz to a decent total of 138/8. She dismissed the well-set Meg Lanning, who looked to be taking DC past the finish line.

She came back in the 19th over to pick up three wickets – the first two of which completed a hat-trick after Lanning's wicket earlier, a fact that she seemed to be unaware of until the presentation ceremony. And in that three-wicket over, she also took a fine return catch.

Deepti Sharma's 2023 WPL season was one to forget, despite coming into the tournament with the tag of the franchise's marquee Indian player.

After being recruited by UP Warriorz for Rs 2.6 crore – not surprisingly, given her all-round potential – Deepti struggled especially with her batting.

She finished with 90 runs in 9 innings, with a highest of 22, at an average of 12.85 and strike rate of 83.33. Nine wickets from as many games wasn't a return worthy of a bowler of her caliber either.

This season, she has overtaken that tally of runs in just her last two innings, scoring back-to-back half-centuries.

She put all that behind her in sensational style on Friday. Her returns of 59 (48 balls) and 4/19 were both her personal bests in the league. Grace Harris closed out the game eventually for UPW as they lost six wickets in the last two overs.

That Delhi lost the match from 124/4 at the start of the 19th over that Deepti came to bowl, is an almighty choke. DC have looked to be the best team in general this season, but they have now twice lost matches due to late wobbles, the opener against Mumbai Indians and this game against UPW – both well within their grasp.

Lanning took the blame when asked what was the turning point but DC needed 46 off 36 balls with seven wickets in hand after her dismissal. It's a match they should have won.

BRIEF SCORES: UP Warriorz 138/8 (Deepti 59; Radha 2/16) beat Delhi Capitals 137 (Lanning 60; Deepti 4/19) by one run.



PV Sindhu went down fighting against Olympic champion Chen Yufei. File

SHIVANI NAIK
MARCH 8

PVSINDHU lost 24-22, 17-21, 18-21 to Chinese Chen Yufei in the quarterfinals of the French Open, but there was just about sufficient menace in her game against the Olympic champion to show that she can turn merciless at a flick of a switch next week at Birmingham during the All England.

It's rarely about fitness or form for Sindhu in the big matches. She doesn't step onto the court unless she's physically ready, and since her early years, past matches, petty grudges and prolonged phases don't daunt her. New match, and Sindhu is ready to battle. It's almost always about how confident she feels, and the Indian gave Yufei some pretty miserable moments on court that will make her crossing of the English Channel a perky ride full of optimism. Coach Prakash Padukone kept telling her to relax. Who better than him to keep sights on the real battle? But Sindhu needed more than positive takeaways from the Yufei match; she needed the world to know there was plenty left to unleash in her arsenal. Paris was a sneak peek.

First, the negative nit-picking, Sindhu, like HS Prannoy, needs to get going quicker in a match. She trailed 6-12 in the opener, which is half a dozen points too many spent in trying to align her range with the drift and assorted shuttle conditions. No one doubts that she won't make up the early lead, but it sets her up for a scramble to chase the opener, prolonging into a sluggish second set that goes away taking a breather and an inevitable decider. Her first-set rally in Paris, though, was one for the ages. Yufei did the smart thing of giving the shuttle altitude, high lifts, tall toses, deep clears, all of them making Sindhu stretch out and sapping on her energy. Once pinned back, the Chinese resorted to that quick snappy shot

on Sindhu's body or her hip flanks. There were a fair few drops to the forecourt predictably testing the lunge.

But Sindhu caught up at 15 from 11-15 down with remarkable mileage in her retrieving feet. Then she went on the offensive; her choice of weapon the slice drops with a delicious disguise. Sindhu kept the best for the last in Set 1.

She could clamp down on 20-19 lead, but survived a set point, and snatched another at 23-22, making Yufei run back and front. But it was the last point that proved to be a peach. Because Sindhu's blood-rush, teeth-grinding smash is her go-to 9 times out of 10, Yufei retrieved yet another backline floater and hung around just a tad too much in the back court watching Sindhu shape up for the deep running smash. The Indian charged the net alright, but pulled back the racquet the last possible moment to slice the shuttle so close to the net. 24-22.

You'd think the Chinese couldn't be conned a second time, but Sindhu managed it once more. What she couldn't completely control were the mid-court near-parallel fast exchanges, which would see errors accumulate in the net and her dragged into a decider. When made to twist and turn picking shuttles below the tape, Sindhu struggled to vault them over.

Sindhu ran and ran endlessly, defended bravely, but was crowded by the flats, and then stung by the body attack. Yufei opened up an unassailable lead at 16-14 and then didn't take her foot off the pedal till 21-18.

Still, Sindhu had two promising strokes besides the drops. She was hop-smashing on both feet off the ground from the back court, like it was 2016. And she had round-the-head accelerated whacks. Sindhu will get another go at Paris in six months. What she played on Friday was a nice reel.

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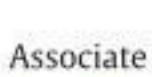
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