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# Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

**India becoming world's manufacturing hub**Over 200 mobile manufacturing units in the country now as compared to two in 2014;  
India is the second largest mobile manufacturing country in the world**INDIA-MALDIVES HIGH-LEVEL CORE GROUP HOLDS FIRST MEETING**

## Maldives Govt pushes for withdrawal of Indian troops, sets March 15 deadline

Discussed mutually workable solution for continuing operation of aviation platforms for humanitarian aid: MEA

DIVYA A  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

A DAY after Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu took an indirect jibe at India for "bullying" his government on Sunday set a March 15 deadline for India to withdraw its military personnel

from the country.

The deadline was announced by a senior official in the Muizzu government on a day the India-Maldives high-level core group held its first meeting in Male on Sunday.

"In this meeting, on behalf of President Muizzu, the Maldivian delegation proposed the re-



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu in Beijing on January 10. Reuters file

moval of Indian troops by March 15," Ahmed Nazim, policy director at the President's Office, told reporters, according to a Reuters report. "This date was proposed in the agenda by the government and specifically by the President. These discussions are ongoing," he said.

Local media reports also quoted Nazim on a March 15 deadline. "Indian military personnel cannot stay in the Maldives. This is the policy of President Dr Mohamed Muizzu

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Rahul yatra begins: In mandir season, Cong says BJP using Ram for votes

Manipur suffered due to BJP ideology, hatred... will restore peace, says Rahul



Rahul Gandhi in Manipur's Thoubal district on Sunday. AICC



Milind Deora with CM Eknath Shinde in Mumbai on Sunday

Deora joins Shinde Sena: 'Cong intent on opposing everything PM says, does'

## BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY



Unlike the leader, no silly should take a walk.

ALOK DESHPANDE & ZEESHAN SHAIKH  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 14

IN A setback to the Congress in Mumbai ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, former MP Milind Deora quit the party on Sunday and joined the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED  
**E** The loss, gain

CONGRESS HAS lost its only available candidate who could have contested the Mumbai South LS seat. The Shinde Sena gains a face with deep links in business circles and Delhi's political circuit.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**ARMY DAY 2024**

A RED initiative appears in today's edition of The Indian Express. These pages are an initiative of the marketing solutions team of The Indian Express Group and contain content paid for by advertisers. These pages should be read as advertisement.

## Army to let Lt Cols who specialise in niche tech opt out of command posts

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

ARMY OFFICERS specialising in niche technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and drones, among others, can now continue in the same domain on promotion to Colonel instead of

getting posted out for command assignments, The Indian Express has learnt.

According to sources, the Army is bringing in a new HR policy under which Lieutenant Colonels approved for promotion to the rank of Colonels can voluntarily continue in their field of expertise and not move for com-

mand appointments, which is the standard practice at present.

Only about 30-40 per cent of Lieutenant Colonels are approved for the rank of Colonel.

This will also be applicable for officers specialising in niche areas like space, information technology, nano technology,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Can a nylon shuttle match one made of feathers? IIT researchers may have answer

**THE SCIENCE BEHIND BADMINTON SHUTTLES**

**SYNTHETIC SHUTTLECOCK**

- Shuttlecocks are traditionally made from duck feathers, but the nylon ones are more durable.
- Using a wind tunnel, three Indian researchers studied the aerodynamics of shuttles.
- At higher speeds, a synthetic shuttlecock buckles, deforms into a square, and vibrates radially.

"Our study opens up the possibility for improved designs that make the nylon shuttlecock structurally stiffer so that it more closely mimics the aerodynamic performance of feather shuttlecocks. This could be a game-changer" Sanjay Mittal, IIT Kanpur

PAGE 1  
ANCHORSHIVANI NAIK  
MUMBAI, JANUARY 14

EVERY TIME Sanjay Mittal, 55, held a badminton shuttlecock made of feathers, all he thought of was the cruelty inflicted upon birds.

This got the IIT Kanpur aerospace engineering professor thinking. Could a nylon alternative replicate the flight pattern of a duck or goose feather shuttle

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Delhi AQI severe, restrictions back on cars and construction

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

THE AIR quality in Delhi turned 'severe' Sunday, prompting officials to bring back a ban on construction and on the running of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers.

Delhi's average AQI on Sunday was 447. Saturday's AQI was 399. According to officials at the India Meteorological Department, low wind speed and high moisture levels, which aid accumulation of pollutants,



A foggy Sunday morning in Delhi. Gajendra Yadav

contributed to this.

The Union government's Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), which has brought in the restrictions under phase III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), said in a statement that local pollution sources, including large-scale open burning, were also to blame.

Delhi has been gripped by cold conditions for two days.

The ban will cover construction and demolition activities, except for projects related to Railways, metro rail, airports,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Footfall down, Gulmarg businesses look to the skies — awaiting snow

BASHAARAT MASOOD  
GULMARG, JANUARY 14

WITH SNOW eluding Gulmarg so far this winter, the slopes of the ski resort have remained lifeless and the tourist buzz usually felt there during this time of year has been absent.

"If Gulmarg is a movie, then the snow is the hero. When the hero is missing, the movie becomes a flop," said Waseem

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



The ski resort has seen little snowfall this year. Shuaib Masoodi

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## THIS HYDERABAD COMPANY MADE A 'STETHOSCOPE' FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

Pheeze is a wearable medical device that measures the movement of the joint and the health of the muscle responsible for a particular movement. The 100-gram device comes with two wearable modules that have a Velcro strap, which needs to be worn above and below the joint.

## ENTERTAINMENT



## KATRINA-VIJAY IN KILLER FORM

In *Merry Christmas*, Katrina and Vijay the only lovers in building



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## EXPRESS AUDIO

## Cricket's Game of Thrones and India's Olympic dreams

We discuss how the changes in India's favourite sports team will become permanent, even as the nation looks at new heroes in sports other than cricket with the audacity of hope for the summer Olympics in Paris this year.

## • Rahul yatra begins

Over the next two months,

the Manipur-to-Maharashtra yatra will cover 6,713 km, mostly by bus. From Imphal to Mumbai, Gandhi will cross 15 states, passing through 100 Lok Sabha constituencies, before reaching Mumbai on March 20-21. The custom-made Volvo bus has been equipped with a hydraulic lift so that he can address crowds en route.

Addressing a public meeting in Thoubal, near Imphal, minutes before the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra was flagged off, Gandhi was largely cautious while Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge took on the BJP on its Hindutva pitch. Both criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not visiting trouble-torn Manipur till date.

"We understand the pain that the people of Manipur have been through, we understand the hurt, the sadness. We will bring back harmony, peace and affection for which this state was known," he said.

Gandhi said India was going through a period of great injustice – social, economic and political.

"Economically, monopolies are being built and few people are getting access to all the wealth of the country. One or two businesses have their fingers in everything and the large majority of businesses, small and medium businesses, are being destroyed. Huge levels of unemployment, massive price rise is what the whole of India is facing," he said.

"On the social side, he said, 'the large mass of India's people... the lower castes, Dalits, tribals simply do not have a say in the governance system of the country... These are the issues that the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is going to raise,'" he said.

"We want to listen to your man ki baat. We want to understand your pain and make a vision for India with you... not of violence, of hatred, of monopoly... but a vision of a harmonious, equitable (society) and brotherhood... we want to craft that vision by listening to your voices and present it before India," Gandhi said.

After starting the yatra, Gandhi made his first stop at a tea stall at Lamjung Bazar, a few kilometres away.

WITH INPUTS FROM JIMMY LEIVON IN IMPHAL

## • Delhi AQI severe, curbs back

"projects of national importance", hospitals, water supply, sanitation and linear public projects (including roads, flyovers, bridges, highways and pipelines).

The fine for violating the restriction on running BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers is Rs 20,000.

Delhi's average air quality in November and December has been poorer than in previous years.

With the AQI touching the severe (400) or 'severe +' category (450+) several times in these two months, the CAQM had imposed GRAP restrictions multiple times, the latest being on December 22. This was revoked on January 1.

Since October last year, Delhi and NCR have spent a total of 36

days under GRAP III and 13 under GRAP IV.

GRAP is a set of emergency measures implemented to prevent the deterioration of air quality in Delhi-NCR. Stage I of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300).

The second, third and fourth stages are activated when the AQI reaches the 'very poor' category (301 to 400), 'severe' category (401 to 450) and 'severe +' category (above 450), respectively.

According to the Early Warning System for Air Quality forecast, a slight improvement is expected over the next two days, but within the 'severe' category.

Thereafter, there is a likelihood of the AQI improving – to the 'very poor' category.

## • Deora joins Shinde Sena: 'Cong intent on opposing everything PM does'

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that I had joined and what it has become now. The party which 30 years back ushered in economic reforms is abusing industrialists and businessmen, calling them anti-nationals. The same party that used to offer constructive suggestions on how to take the country forward these days its only intention is to oppose everything that Prime Minister Modi does or says. Tomorrow, if the PM says that the Congress is good, they will oppose that too."

Later, in a statement issued on X, Deora said he had opposed the Congress's alliance with the Shiv Sena in 2019. "During the establishment of the MahaVikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra in 2019, I opposed the alliance with UBT, foreseeing its detrimental impact on the Congress. Despite personal gains taking precedence over ideology for both UBT and Congress, I consistently advocated for caution over four years," he wrote.

He said the Congress had deviated from its ideological and organisational roots. "It has strayed from celebrating India's diverse culture and religions, fostering division based on caste, and creating a North-South divide. Failing not just to attain power but also to effectively serve as a constructive opposition at the Centre."

When he entered Parliament in 2004, Deora was one of the youngest parliamentarians and part of a group of young leaders considered to be members of Team Rahul. Jyotiraditya Scindia, R P N Singh, Jitin Prasada, and Sachin Pilot were among the others in the group. In recent years, all of them, except Sachin Pilot, have quit the party.

Earlier in the day, Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh told The Indian Express that Deora was worried about losing his Mumbai South Lok Sabha seat – which he has contested in the last four parliamentary elections and represented from 2004 to 2014 – to the Shiv Sena (UBT) of Uddhav Thackeray as part of a seat-sharing agreement in the MVA.

Deora lost the last two elections from the seat to Shiv Sena MP Arvind Sawant, one of the few Sena parliamentarians still with Uddhav. Deora was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 2004 with a 50.3% of the vote share. In 2009, he won with 42.5% votes.

His vote shares were 31.6% and 41% in the 2014 and 2019 polls, respectively. In comparison, Sawant had a 53.6% vote share in 2014 and 48% five years later.

The former Congress leader is said to have been unhappy

with Uddhav and his son Arvind for kickstarting the poll campaign in the city from Mumbai South on January 5 and claiming that Sawant would be fielded again.

Ramesh said Deora wanted him to intervene and put in a word with senior leader Rahul Gandhi. "He spoke to me on Friday. He wanted me to explain to Rahul Gandhi that his seat was going. He said he was concerned. He messaged me at 2.48 pm. I spoke to him at 3.40 pm. I told him to meet Rahul and explain," he said.

The Congress leader alleged that the BJP orchestrated the resignation to divert media attention from the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. "This whole thing is a farce he enacted. The whole timing was planned by (PM Narendra) Modi to dampen the headlines on the yatra. We didn't feel his (Deora's) presence. We won't feel his loss either, unlike the loss of his father (Murli Deora)," Ramesh said.

Eknath Shinde's son Shrikant, the Lok Sabha MP from Kalyan, played a key role in Deora's switch to the Sena. Welcoming the former Congress leader to the party, the CM said, "You and Shrikant have decided this. We need to do constructive work together and we will do it."

## • Can a nylon shuttle match one made of feathers? IIT researchers may have answer

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that is used at the sport's highest level?

Last week, Physics of Fluids, a journal by the American Institute of Physics, published a research paper by Mittal and two other Indian scientists, Darshankumar Zala and Harish Dechiraju, that explored the aerodynamic performance of nylon shuttles at different flight speeds.

Their article – 'Computational analysis of the fluid-structure interactions of a synthetic badminton shuttlecock' – studied how air flow and speed can deform the flared skirt of the shuttle. This opens up the possibility for improved designs that can make the nylon shuttle stiffer, helping it accurately mimic a feather shuttle's aerodynamic performance. "This could be a game-changer," Mittal says.

Mittal, who has a keen interest

in aerodynamic studies in sport, started playing badminton at clubs on the IIT Kanpur campus.

Co-researcher Zala is a BTech student from Ahmedabad while Dechiraju is Mittal's former student at IIT and currently a product application engineer with a semiconductor company in Chennai.

Mittal explains the key differences between nylon or synthetic shuttles and the ones made of feathers. "Traditionally, a feather shuttle is brittle and becomes useless after a few shots. But it holds its shape longer than nylon. And there is the issue of cruelty to animals as well. There is a move to get in nylon shuttles from a sustainability point of view. But the aerodynamics are hugely different as the nylon one deforms faster and turns too wobbly to continue playing. Our study has

taken on the challenge to find out how to redistribute the nylon in a shuttle design so it stays stiff at the right place and behaves exactly like the duck shuttle," he says.

A shuttle typically weighs 5 grams – the cork makes up 1.5 grams and the skirt 3.5 grams. The pressure on a nylon shuttle at a speed above 40 metres per second (mps), or 89 miles per hour (mph), forces it to lose shape, altering its flight behavior as the vortex structure weakens. For context, shuttle speeds easily reach 300 mph.

"In a nylon shuttle, as it deforms, the air resistance is much less, and it starts becoming unstable. The speed increases so much that players have very little reaction time. Elite players don't like such inconsistency. Duck shuttles stay stiff no matter what speed they are subjected to, because the

coefficient of drag doesn't vary," Mittal says.

Studying the relative trajectory and drag on the two types of shuttles, by examining aerodynamic forces on the shuttlecock as well as its deformations at each flight speed, Mittal and his fellow researchers noticed patterns in nylon that are different from natural feathers. The outermost skirt of nylon shuttles tends to be flimsy and deforms inwards, upto 9 mm, asymmetrically. With reduced air resistance, the speed gets wild and uncontrollable.

Synthetic shuttles have a high drag due to a pressure difference. Seventy-five per cent of the drag comes from the outer skirt. The centre of pressure in nylon shuttles is distributed towards the cork, compared to a duck shuttle where it's towards the feathers.

The study also showed a process of buckling, where the shuttle sways vertically after 40 mps and the skirting starts getting rumpled. "Nylon shuttles buckle at 40 mps, then become an unstable square shape. Then they start vibrating radially and finally travel in a wave form. That's wobbly and not very good to play," Mittal says.

He compares this to batters tackling an uneven cricket pitch. "Players are used to a certain kind of shuttle where they can show their skills and want uniformity, not a struggle for survival. Duck is the gold standard right now. So, our studies are trying to find how to redistribute 3.5 grams of nylon into a shuttle skirt so that it behaves like a duck shuttle."

Mittal says leading manufacturer Yonex brings out two nylon shuttles yearly, with thicker walls

and more holes in the skirt. Though not his area of expertise, he reckons other composite materials beyond nylon, which is light and elastic, but not expensive and unbreakable like carbon fibres, can be tested. "The goal is to redistribute nylon structure to mimic duck shuttle trajectories. The next step is to get designers to work on it," he says.

While he says his research work can help designers tweak the structure, Mittal believes Indian coaches are astute about shuttle flights even if they may not possess scientific details. A fan of Chinese legend Lin Dan, he feels there's a larger goal. "India has a big community of badminton players. But we import all gear. Imagine if we can deploy science to develop our own designs, and then export equipment."

## • Postings for Lt Cols

weapons, ammunition as well as in information operations, specific languages and other important projects. The idea, as per sources, is to promote domain specialisation in the Army.

However, such officers who choose to remain in their selected domain, will have to forgo command assignments. They will also not be eligible for subsequent career courses such as senior command, higher command or equivalent courses. As per the policy, the officer will continue in his domain of specialisation for two years, after which his/her further extension will be decided by a board of officers, based on his performance and the organisational requirements at that time. In case he/she does not get an extension, the officer will be posted to other staff appointments as a Colonel.

The policy also mandates that the officers must be approved for

the rank of Colonel as per merit.

"While the policy will provide an opportunity to officers to develop an expertise and excel in a specific domain, it will also deny them any future promotion and career enhancement," an officer explained.

Such officers would continue to be employed in the specialised field and would also be eligible for study leave or deputation only in the selected domain," the officer added.

The need for the policy came after it was found that few officers choose to continue in their domain of specialisation and forgo their command appointment. For progression in career, it is mandatory for a Colonel to serve in a command appointment as a commanding officer. Officers moving out prematurely from their domain specialisation appointment also create a void, thus affecting the overall requirement of the Army.

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SWISS WOMAN KILLED IN CAPITAL: POLICE FILE CHARGESHEET

# Fight over money, threat to 'expose' him: What transpired minutes before Gurpreet killed Nina

MAHENDER SINGH  
MANRAL  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

MINUTES BEFORE he allegedly killed 36-year-old Swiss national Nina Berger, accused Gurpreet Singh had a heated argument with her over not paying Rs 8 lakh she owed him. Nina, however, claimed he did not perform a 'puja' properly and threatened to expose him. "Hearing this, the accused feared Nina would file a case against them (him and his father) and if they were exposed in Switzerland, their business would be ruined. So he decided to eliminate her on the pretext of performing another ritual," the Delhi Police is learnt to have stated in their chargesheet filed in a Delhi court earlier this month.

The woman was killed in Delhi on October 18 and her body — with her limbs chained and sporting burn marks — was found outside a school in West Janakpuri on October 20. Police later arrested Gurpreet, a 29-year-old Janakpuri resident who runs a gemstone business.

The final findings of Nina's post-mortem, conducted by a panel of three doctors from DDU Hospital, attributed her death to "asphyxia caused by constriction

## RITUALS, MONEY & MURDER



Nina Berger; accused Gurpreet Singh

1 Gurpreet Singh and his father worked in foreign countries; performed pujas/prayers and sold stones

2 He met Nina five years ago, later introduced his father to her as a famous saint

3 Nina allegedly owed Singh Rs 8 lakh. She, however, felt cheated. Singh was scared she would file a police complaint against him in Switzerland

4 Singh asked her to come to Delhi last October on the pretext of a 'ritual', killed her

5 Nina's body — with burn marks and chained limbs — was found outside a school in West Janakpuri on Oct 20 last yr. Singh arrested next day



Nina Berger's body was dumped behind a primary school in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar. Archive

from pain and disease, get jobs, or solve their problems" by performing pujas and selling stones.

During their investigation, police found that Gurpreet met Nina around five years ago on a dating app. "He is learnt to have told police that he visited Switzerland four times to meet her as she was worried about being jobless. He assured her he would perform puja and chant mantras for a fee. He also introduced his father to her as a very famous saint and did not disclose their relationship. Father-son took a lot of money from her and other people, converted it into Indian currency, and deposited the cash in their family members'

accounts in Delhi," an officer said.

Investigation also revealed Nina was facing a financial crisis and had borrowed Rs 6-7 lakh from the accused. "She didn't pay for the puja or repay the money she had borrowed from him. Last September, Gurpreet went to Switzerland and asked for the money, but she requested more time. He later decided to eliminate him and asked her to come to Delhi on the pretext of a 'ritual', promising to help her attain 'mental peace' through occult rituals and gemology," the officer said.

Before her arrival, police said he put his plan into motion — he purchased a car in someone else's name and bought several

iron chains and locks from a hardware shop.

"A day after Nina's arrival on October 11, he called and pressured her to return his money. They went to ATMs nearby on October 17 but she withdrew Rs 10,000, which made Gurpreet angry. On October 18, he took her to another ATM, but she failed to withdraw any cash. They got into a car and an argument ensued. Nina also accused him of not doing the puja properly and threatening exposure," the officer said.

Fearing that she would ruin his business, he pretended to perform another ritual. "First, he tied and locked her hands, legs and body with chains and drove to a vacant spot in a parking area in West Delhi's Sant Nagar Extension. There, he increased the music volume, wrapped a cloth around Nina's neck, and strangled her. To ensure she was dead, he covered her mouth and chest with black polythene and taped it. He later parked his car after putting up black (film on the windows)," the official said.

Police said before he left the spot, he took Nina's belongings, including her iPhone. "He deleted all his chats and call records from her phone... he visited the spot after 48 hours to dump her body near the school," the officer said.

In view of pending registration of flats, the Uttar Pradesh government had last month issued an order to implement the Amitabh Kant committee recommendations with some amendments. The panel was constituted by the Union Ministry of Housing to provide solutions for such legacy stalled projects.

The state government had announced a number of measures to help developers complete projects stuck for years — a 2-year 'zero-period' relief; time extension of three years without

## As lakhs of buyers in Noida await registry of flats, dept short of year's revenue target

any fee; provision to bring in a co-developer if builder is unable to complete project; relaxation in conditions to mortgage; and payment of land dues in installments over three years.

Even though authorities have informed builders about their final dues after deducting zero-period relief, many of them are yet to opt for the scheme. "Registry of these stalled flats will definitely help increase revenue. The outline for starting the registry will be decided in the meeting. It is only after this that we'll be able to calculate the income we can earn from these registries," said the official quoted above.

Data shows that the Stamp and Registration Department had a target to collect revenue of Rs 4,728.70 crore in FY 2023-24 through stamp duty, registration and court fees. However, it could generate only Rs 2,662.47 crore (56.30%) by December 2023. In the last financial year, the department had a revenue target (from April 1 to December 31) of Rs 3,036.95 crore of which it received Rs 2,136.22 crore.

Gautam Buddh Nagar is one of the biggest cities of UP in terms of revenue collection through stamp and registration. However, many developers have not been able to provide flats to buyers in Noida and Greater Noida for a long time, owing to reasons such as non-availability of funds, increasing dues on builders, litigation, fund diversions, criminal cases against realtors, etc. Due to this, registry has been hit.



many developers have not been able to provide flats to buyers in Noida and Greater Noida for a long time. Archive

## NRI woman alleges rape by man at five-star hotel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

Delhi Police said the accused is the chief executive officer of a private firm in New Delhi. No arrest has been made yet, they added

AN INDIAN-ORIGIN US citizen was allegedly raped by her colleague at a five-star hotel in New Delhi.

The Delhi Police said the accused is the chief executive officer of a private firm in New Delhi. No arrest has been made yet, they added.

According to police, the NRI woman, who is in her 40s, approached police in January alleging she was raped last year by the accused.

A senior police officer who refused to be named said, "She told us that she met the accused at a five-star hotel in the Lutyens' area on September 14 last year. She alleged he raped her."

A case under sections of rape has been registered. Police said the woman had been living in the United States for years.

## BRIEFLY

Delhi govt to organise skill training camps for construction workers

New Delhi: The Delhi government will launch a skill development initiative for construction workers, according to an official statement Sunday. Labour Minister Raaj Kumar Anand said the goal is to empower construction workers and labourers with skills that transcend borders. Under the initiative, training camps will be organised at labour chowks and construction sites, the statement said. Speaking about the initiative, the minister said compensation will be provided to workers for loss of daily wage during the training. "... This initiative aims to empower our workers for global opportunities," Anand said. PTI

2 workers die after inhaling toxic fumes from angithi

New Delhi: Two men died after inhaling toxic fumes from an angithi (coal brazier) in their room in Inderpuri, police said. They worked at a restaurateur's home and were sleeping in the same room on the third floor of their employer's house. ENS

## Kites dot Delhi skyline as Baansera hosts festival

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

OVER 5,000 visitors flocked to Delhi's bamboo-themed park, Baansera, on the banks of the Yamuna, over the weekend to celebrate "patang utsav", a two-day kite festival organised by the DDA on the occasion of Makar Sankranti. The event, inaugurated by L-G V K Saxena, sold out all tickets by the second day Sunday.

More than 30 professional kite-fliers from various states showcased their artistry at the event, flying kites of diverse shapes,



It was organised for Makar Sankranti. Praveen Khanna

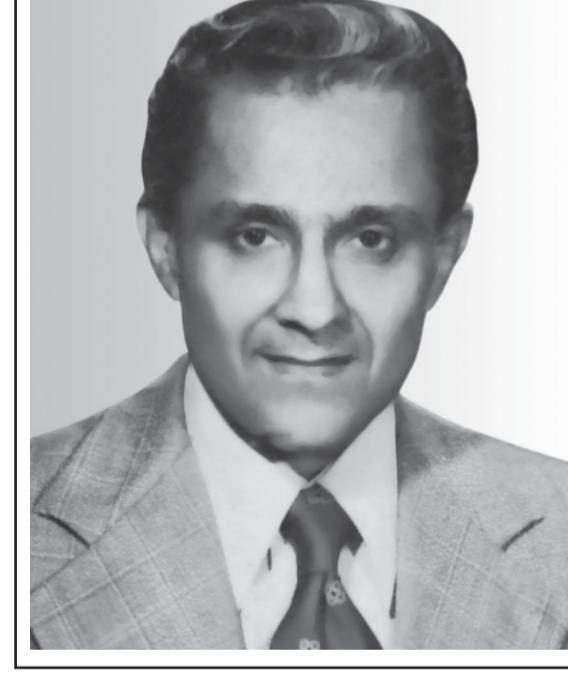
sizes, and colours, including the Tricolour, train, and eagle designs. The festivities were at-

tended by Union Minister of

State for External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi; MPs Harsh Vardhan, Ramesh Bidhuri, and Gautam Gambhir, along with foreign envoys and diplomats from multiple countries.

Saxena commended the DDA for its efforts in organising the festival and transforming Baansera's "earlier degraded landscape into a vibrant and lush green space". On the first day of the event on Saturday, Saxena said the festival was a tribute to Lord Ram who is said to have "flown kites in his childhood".

## In Loving Memory



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## The apolitical and nationalistic essence of the Indian Army

*It is imperative for the nation to ensure future readiness, elevating India into a military power that complements its growing stature*

INDIAN Army has been the strongest pillar of Indian democracy since independence. It has resolutely defended the sovereignty of the country on multiple occasions against aggression by two hostile neighbours, assisted in countering insurgency and terrorism, helped in maintaining law-and-order, came to rescue in disaster situations and even provided military assistance to foreign governments like Sri Lanka and Maldives at their invitation.

In 21st century, we must make the Indian Army future-ready and convert India from a military force to a military power. We have to prepare for future conflicts, a two-front threat and grey zone warfare. The two-front is a collusive threat emanating from China and Pakistan, which is likely to be complemented by proxy war through terrorists. The grey zone warfare includes several non-kinetic instruments of war like cyber space and information warfare in addition to diplomatic sanctions, economic leverages, food security, energy security and more.

In recent years, certain bold operational decisions have been taken, and some transformational changes have been initiated. When terrorists launched an attack on the Army Base at Uri and we lost 18 soldiers, Indian Army boldly launched surgical strikes at the terrorist camps across the LoC. A couple of years later when we lost 40 CRPF men to a terror attack launched by a Pakistan based terror outfit, India's precision air strikes caused havoc at a terrorist camp near Balakot. On the LAC, when the Chinese PLA attempted to advance into Bhutan territory at Dolaib Plateau, the Indian Army forced the PLA to stop on their side of the LAC in 2017.

In 2020, when PLA tried to alter the LAC unilaterally in Ladakh, they were stopped at the expense of a bloody battle at Galwan, in which both sides had fatal casualties, for the first time in half a century. Another bold step was appointment of CDS to usher in transformational reforms and integration of structures and processes of armed forces, which is the need of the hour in this era where multiple inputs have to be processed simultaneously to arrive at decisions with speed.

Sensitive to demands of contemporary warfare, defence cyber and space agencies have been raised. Information warfare processes have also been strengthened and integrated. A special operations division has also been established and such structures will help in negotiating the grey zone warfare.

On the issue of women empowerment, not only women serve in the Indian Army as officers as well as soldiers, girls are now allowed to join Sainik Schools which prepare



**IN THE 21ST CENTURY,  
IT IS IMPERATIVE TO  
MODERNISE THE  
INDIAN ARMY,  
TRANSFORMING IT  
INTO A MILITARY  
POWER TO  
EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS  
FUTURE CONFLICTS**

them to join the army along with the boys.

No country which aspires for a global regional role can remain dependent on foreign weapons and equipment. Hence, some path breaking reforms have been ushered in to

make India self-reliant (Atmanirbhar Bharat) in defence needs. A boost has been given to domestic industry, and special incentives to the private sector. Under strategic partnership, defence industry is being encouraged to partner with foreign defence manufacturers to bring in better technology and investment. For the first time an allocation of 25% of R&D budget has been reserved for the private sector.

Defence corridors for manufacturing have been established in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, technology hubs have been set up in Pune and Bangalore. These will support, incentivise and synergise an entire ecosystem of defence manufacturers, especially MSMEs. Under the IDEX scheme, innovations by the academia or industry are being encouraged by government funding.

It has already started showing results. From being a net importer of defence equipment, India's exports of arms and defence technologies touched a record ₹15,000 crore, with 70% share from the private sector. An increase of more than six times has been registered from 2015, when it was ₹2,059 crore only.

While these transformational reforms are a must, Indian Army's biggest asset is that it is totally apolitical and truly nationalistic. It is also incumbent on the nation to make it future-ready, and make India into a military power that can support the country's growing stature.

*Lt General Satish Dua (Retd.)  
The views expressed in this article are personal and do not reflect the official stance of the Indian Army or the Government of India.*

## Birth of a battle-ready beast: DRDO's assault rifle 'Ugram'

*The assault rifle boosts frontline firepower, demonstrating our commitment to arming soldiers with top-notch weaponry*



AS India gears up to celebrate Army Day on January 15, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has delivered a powerful present, days ahead of it—the 'Ugram' assault rifle that will strengthen the nation's defence capabilities. This state-of-the-art weapon marks a significant stride in India's indigenous weapons development programme and bolsters the Indian Army's capabilities.

*Ugram*, which translates into 'fierce', lives up to its name. Crafted with a potent 7.62 x 51 mm caliber, the rifle boasts an effective range of 500 meters and a sleek design while weighing less than four kilograms, rendering it agile and lethal in diverse combat scenarios. This indigenous marvel, engineered for precision and reliability and designed based on the general staff qualitative requirements (GSQRs) of the Indian Army, offers a perfect balance of firepower, maneuverability, and portability, making it a formidable companion for soldiers on the frontlines.

Designed to meet the operational needs of the Indian Army, *Ugram* is not merely about firepower. Developed by DRDO's Pune-based facility, Armament Research and Development Es-

tablissements (ARDE) in collaboration with Hyderabad-based Divya Armoil India private limited, the assault rifle embodies the nation's growing prowess in advanced weapons technology and marks a significant step towards self-reliance in the critical domain of infantry weaponry.

With its ergonomic design, inherent modularity, and adaptability that equip soldiers with the agility and tactical advantage needed in modern combat, *Ugram* delivers the promise of enhanced operational efficiency and battlefield dominance. The rifle, which has a 20-round magazine and fires in both single and full auto mode, awaits rigorous testing and trials before it joins the Indian Army's arsenal. However, its successful launch indicates that India is well on its way to achieving self-sufficiency in advanced weaponry.

As the nation salutes its brave soldiers on Army Day, it is also a time to celebrate the ingenuity and dedication of our scientists and engineers who tirelessly strive to provide them with the edge they deserve. *Ugram* underscores the unwavering commitment of our defence apparatus, which is always "In Service of the Nation" to safeguarding our territorial integrity.

The Schiebel Group set up its Schiebel India subsidiary two years ago and is collaborating with VEM to be able to manufacture the world leading rotary UAS within the country. This shows our commitment towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. We are taking small but strong steps in order to provide a reliable product to our customers and work along with them with total commitment. The S-100 has several years of operational experience with 40+ clients worldwide operating the UAS on a daily basis. Our payload capacity is up to 50 kg, which enables the S-100 to fit multiple sensors, making it ideally suited for ISR operations. Having the experience provides us the opportunity to be ahead of the curve and think of future tech integration. Case in point is the recent REPMUS 23 NATO exercise, where the world market saw future offerings possible in the maritime domain.

— Jajati Mohanty, CEO at Schiebel India

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## Fortifying Indian Army's combat readiness - BRAHMOS

INDIA commands one of the largest ground forces in the world. Indian Army – world's second largest military force and the largest standing volunteer army – has remained at the forefront of safeguarding national unity and territorial integrity while maintaining constant vigil in the border frontiers.

In the backdrop of swiftly changing regional and global geopolitical landscape, India has steadfastly focused on building and sustaining a highly modernised and organised military force capable of decisively dealing with constantly shifting multi-faceted conflict situations of current times.

As the largest wing of Indian Armed Forces, Indian Army has marched ahead on an ambitious path of transformation to become a modern, agile, technology-driven and self-reliant 'future ready force'. In such critical times, state-of-the-art BRAHMOS supersonic cruise missile system has evolved to occupy a central place in Indian Army's modern land warfare domain by immensely bolstering its artillery firepower.

BRAHMOS land attack cruise missile (LACM) system has been deployed in Indian Army since 2007. During numerous successful test firings conducted over the years, the tactical weapon has validated its impeccability to precisely engage and neutralise strategic ground-based installations of an adversary such as command & control centres, radar stations, underground bunkers, arms depot among others.

"The Indian Army, capitalising on the superior technologies and unmatched capabilities offered by BRAHMOS, has sharply enhanced its combat power and flexibility. Over the years, we



**BRAHMOS, WITH ITS  
SUPersonic SPEED,  
STAND-OFF RANGE,  
DESTRUCTIVE  
FIREPOWER, AND  
USER-FRIENDLY  
OPERATIONS, IS THE  
INDIAN ARMY'S TOP  
WEAPON OF CHOICE**

Dinkar Rane, DG (BrahMos, DRDO) & CEO & MD of BrahMos Aerospace – the India-Russia defence JV entity between DRDO and NPOM which has been designing, developing and producing the BRAHMOS weapon system in various configurations for the Indian Armed Forces.

With its supersonic speed, stand-off range, deadly accuracy, destructive firepower, and user friendly operations, BRAHMOS has emerged as Indian Army's 'first weapon of choice.' The tactical weapon's quick adaptability, mobility, near-simultaneous launch capability towards different targets and launch-readiness at very short notice has strongly fortified the Army's operational preparedness in times of contingency and conflict. The powerful weapon has proved its salience at a time when the Indian Army is actively deliberating on the formulation of Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) as part of the future joint battlefields.

As India builds a formidable Defence Force capable to fight and win modern wars in highly complex, multi-domain combat environments, an incredibly versatile weapon like BRAHMOS which has established its 'across the full spectrum of operations' capability, has emerged an indispensable asset to secure national interests in synergy with all three services.

Recent successful test firings of BRAHMOS by the Tri-Services from ground, ship and air platforms have fortified India's stature as a rising military power of 21st century.

BrahMos Aerospace extends its greetings to the Indian Army on 76th Army Day

have also upgraded the missile by infusing more cutting-edge technologies and indigenous systems to improve its overall operational and functional features," says Outstanding Scientist Atul



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# Modernisation & indigenisation- Focus areas for Indian Army

Modernisation spans personnel, equipment, technology, and infrastructure, crucial for maintaining a credible defense posture and ensuring national well-being



**Vikas Manral**  
Global Aerospace & Defence expert



INDIAN Army has been actively involved in modernising its forces to enhance its capabilities and meet the challenges of contemporary security threats. Modernisation efforts encompass a wide range of areas, including personnel, equipment, technology, and infrastructure. Modernisation of the Indian Army is essential for maintaining a credible Defence posture, adapting to contemporary security challenges, and ensuring the nation's security and well-being. It aligns with the broader goal of building a robust and resilient Defence infrastructure to protect the interests of the country and its citizens.

Recent approval of capital acquisition proposals worth ₹2.23 lakh crore by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) to enhance the operational capabilities of the Armed Forces is a testimonial of the fact that the process of modernisation is on track.

The DAC has accorded the acceptance of necessity (AoN) for procurement of two types of

anti-tank munitions namely, area denial munitions (ADM) Type - 2 and Type-3, which will give additional lethality to Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers to take down enemy tanks, armoured vehicles and personnel. The ADM munitions are essentially rockets that can drop bomblets over an extended area, which can take down incoming armoured formations. The order will be split between the industrial development partners of DRDO—Munitions India Ltd (MIL) and Economic Explosive Ltd (EEL). The two companies will in the near future present commercial bids and the order will be split 60:40 in favour of the lower bidder.

To replace the Indian field gun (IFG), which has completed its service life, AoN for procurement of state-of-the-art towed gun system (TGS) has been granted which will become a mainstay of artillery forces of the Indian Army. The new

towed gun system (TGS) will be lighter, more versatile, and feature-packed compared to current artillery guns. The Army aims to acquire 400 advanced 155mm/52 calibre guns, with a total requirement estimated to be 1,200 guns.

The AoN for procurement and integration of automatic target tracking (ATT) and digital basaltic computer (DBC) for T-90 Tanks under Buy (India) category have also been accorded which will help in maintaining combative edge of T-90 tanks over adversary platforms. ATT technology helps in precise engagement with moving targets. As of now, to hit a target accurately, the T-90 tanks are positioned manually. The DBC, which is used for the fire guidance system, calculates the trajectory of the round based on the atmospheric conditions. A round of ammunition generally gets affected by the atmospheric temperature condi-

**ATTAINING DEFENCE SELF-SUFFICIENCY REQUIRES SUSTAINED EFFORT, GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, INDUSTRY COLLABORATION AND A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS CAPABILITIES**

tions, temperature inside the tank, and wind conditions such as the speed and direction. The DBC makes calculations based on all these factors in order to hit a target accurately. The computer currently installed in the tanks is analogue in nature and systems are being digitised to remove the scope for human error and bias.

To boost indigenisation, most of these equipment of the Indian Army will be procured under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category. However for self sufficiency in defence, it requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving government support, industry collaboration, and a commitment to building indigenous capabilities over the long term. The success of indigenisation efforts often hinges on a multi-stakeholder approach involving the government, private sector, research institutions, and the Armed forces.



Today, as we honour the unwavering commitment and the indomitable spirit of our Indian Army on this occasion of Army Day, we stand united in reverence and gratitude. The resilience and dedication displayed by our forces resonate deeply with our core values at AXISCADES. With a long defence pedigree, we take pride in supporting our defenders, and we remain committed to develop cutting-edge defence technologies, empowering them to safeguard our nation's security. Our new age solutions such as electronic warfare systems, telemetry, simulators, radars, drone & anti-drone solutions provide critical strategic advantage, ensuring they remain the epitome of strength. Their unwavering commitment inspires us to deliver advanced solutions, reinforcing our pledge to fortify our defence capabilities. Together, let us honour and support these men and women of our Army, ensuring a safer tomorrow.

— Arun Krishnamurthi  
MD & CEO, AXISCADES

## India buttresses firepower with Sig Sauer assault rifles

HE ministry of defence's approval for the acquisition of an additional 70,000 'shot to kill' US-made Sig Sauer assault rifles marks a significant stride in enhancing India's arsenal. This procurement not only contributes to the ongoing modernisation efforts but also elevates the operational capabilities of Indian troops.

India's military modernisation drive has taken a significant step forward with the decision of the ministry to sanction the acquisition of over 70,000 Sig Sauer assault rifles (7.62x51 mm caliber). The approval for procuring more of these rifles—the second batch of Sig Sauer procurement by the ministry was given during the meeting of the defence acquisition council (DAC). The deal, valued at a ₹840 crore, marks a continued commitment to reinforce national security, central to which is equipping troops with cutting-edge weaponry for border security and counter-insurgency operations.

The recent decision to procure these rifles through the fast track procedure (FTP) comes on the heels of the first order of the same under the 'Buy (Global)' category of the government, wherein the Indian Army received 66,400 of these rifles while the Indian Air Force acquired 4000 rifles and the Indian Navy got 2000 rifles. Reasons abound for the repeat order of these US-made assault rifles, bought to replace the Indian Small Arms System or INSAS Rifles (5.56x45 mm).

Specifically chosen for this procurement, the Sig Sauer 716 Assault Rifle is a proven performer known for its accuracy, longer range and enhanced operational ease. The 7.62x51 mm caliber of SIG 716 ensures an extended effective range, rendering it more lethal in operations. Firing the powerful 7.62x51 mm NATO cartridge, the 716 provides greater stopping power and precision compared to the 5.56x45 mm ammunition used in India's INSAS rifles.

Delivering reliability, versatility, and adaptability built for rugged conditions, the Rifle can be configured with various attachments—optical sights, laser pointers, forehand grips and bipods to suit different operational needs. Scoring

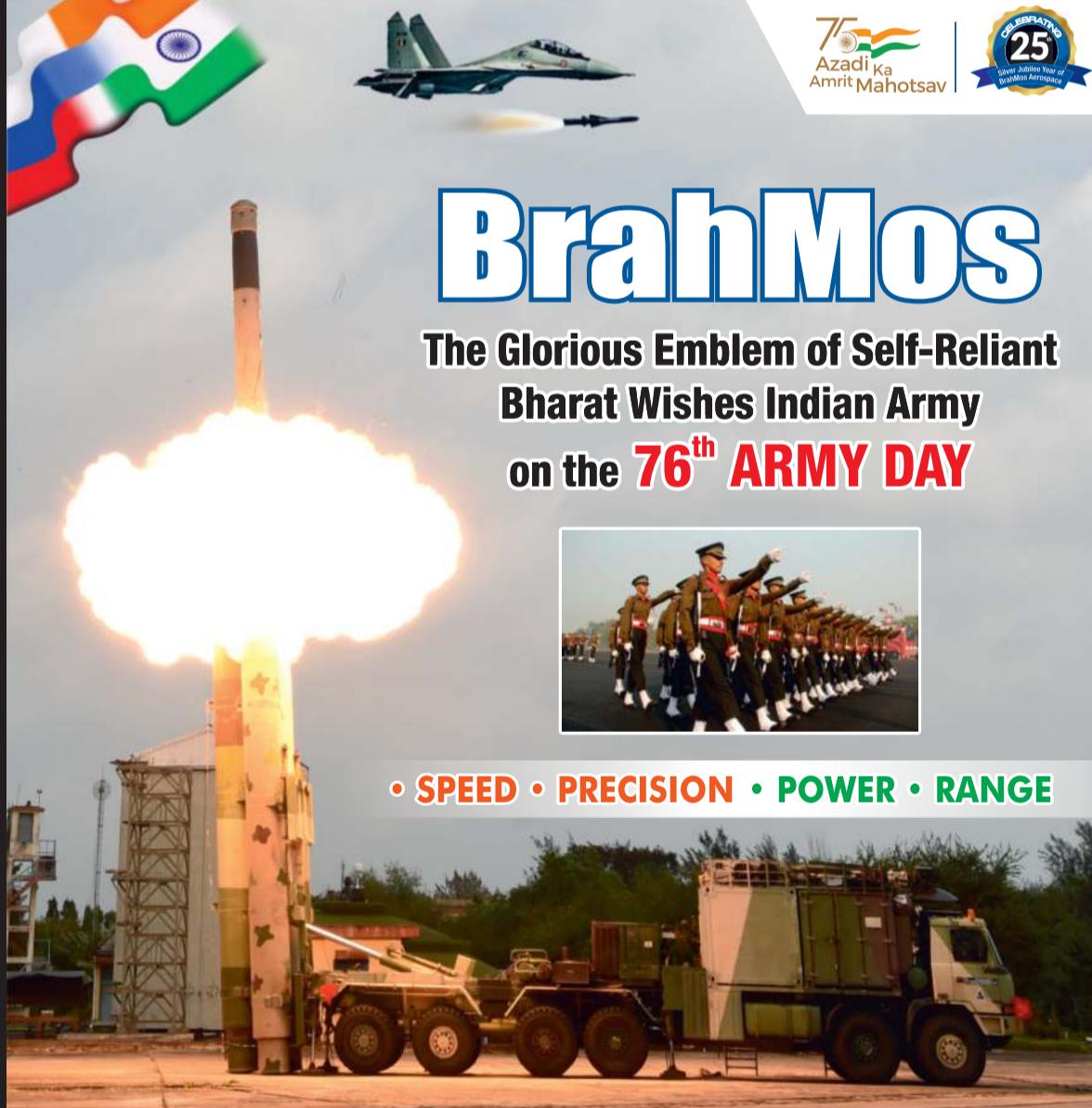
high on ergonomics and ease of use, this rifle is designed for enhanced convenience and control, with features like an adjustable stock and ambidextrous controls, making it suitable for a wider range of users. With the nod

for India's Sig Sauer acquisition granted at a defence ministry meeting, the move

reflects not only a focus on modernising the country's arsenal to boost Indian soldiers' firepower but also sends a clear message to the world of India's commitment to national defence and regional stability.



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# ARMY DAY

2024: Year of Technology Absorbtion

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## MESSAGE

**O**N THE occasion of the Army Day 2024, I convey my felicitations and warm wishes to All Ranks of the Indian Army, Civilian employees, Veterans and their families. We solemnly remember and pay homage to our comrades who have laid down their lives in service of the nation. Their supreme sacrifice shall always inspire us.

The Indian Army has a vital role to play, in ensuring a stable and secure environment, so that the nation's progress continues unabated. Our resolve towards that, must remain robust and grow stronger with each day. I urge each member of the 'Olive Green' fraternity to continue with an unwavering commitment, to counter security threats, to the nation.

The character of Warfare continues to change. To prepare ourselves for the future, we had set into motion a holistic transformation process, last year. We have made good progress and many

milestones have been achieved. Our capability development endeavours stand on the edifice of *Atmanirbharta*, to which we firmly stand committed to. The transition towards becoming a modern, agile, adaptive and technology enabled future ready force, shall continue, as part of the Transformation Roadmap. The Indian Army will observe the year 2024 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption' a theme which underscores our focus and efforts to leverage technology, as a catalyst for transformative change.

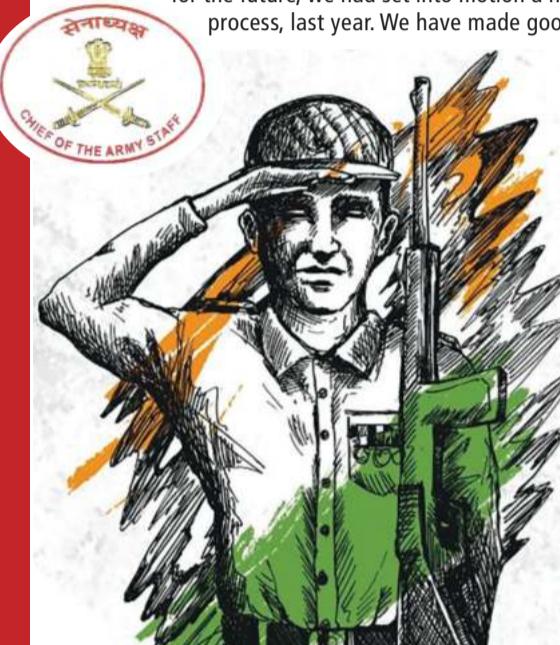
Our responsibility towards the Veterans, *Veer Naris* and their families, remains a sacred commitment. Endeavours to augment welfare initiatives, proactively reach out to them and address their grievances, must remain a focus area for commanders at all levels.

The Indian Army enjoys a distinct stature in the national mind space. I am sanguine that we shall forever remain steadfast in our resolve to uphold the trust reposed in us, by the nation. Let us re-dedicate ourselves to the service of the nation, in the true spirit of our core ethos of *Naam, Na-mak aur Nishaan*.

'Jai Hind'



**Manoj Pande**  
General Chief of the Army Staff



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## SALUTING INDIAN ARMY FOR THEIR COURAGE AND COMPASSION.

On Army Day 2024, Trimble and Allterra India extend a heartfelt thank you to the Indian Army for their selfless service and unflinching determination to do what's right for India, including embracing technology to become one of the most modern armies globally.



**Ron Bisio**  
Senior Vice President  
Field Systems, Trimble

Trimble is a trusted supplier of innovative, high-performance geospatial solutions for military customers worldwide. Trimble and its strategic partner Allterra India are proud to support the Indian Army in its acquisition of best-in-class technologies.



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Trimble South Asia



**Pradeep Rathor**  
CEO & Managing Partner  
Allterra India



## Choose the right institute for a bright career



**Dr. R.K. Agarwal**  
Director General, AKGEC

A young aspiring student, no matter what stream he/she may be from, is faced with numerous options of choosing the right course and the right institute for a successful career. My advice to aspirants is to evaluate your passion for your career because the secret to success and happiness is being able to love whatever you do in life. Identify your skill set and capabilities and choose a course that is a natural progression of your existing skills and qualification. Take advice from your parents and teachers and use their experience as a guide in deciding the course you choose.

With technology changing at an exponential rate and the glaring gap between the academic curriculum and fast changing industry requirements, employability is a major challenge. Students, therefore, should look for institutions (like AKGEC) which, in addition to academic excellence, emphasise project-based learning, industry relevant training programmes and all round development to make their students globally employable.

My best wishes to all the young aspirants for a bright and successful career and a happy life.

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- AKTU Chancellor's Medal for securing maximum marks across all B.Tech branches bagged by AKGEC students for five consecutive years
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- Silver Medal at India Skills 2021 National Competition in Additive Manufacturing Skills
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- The only Institution in U.P. to have established the Common Facility Center for General Engineering under "One District One Product (ODOP)" scheme of the Government of U.P.
- The only Institution in U.P. to have received approval from DST, Govt. of India, for establishment of Centre of Relevance and Excellence (CORE) in the field of Industrial Automation & Robotics
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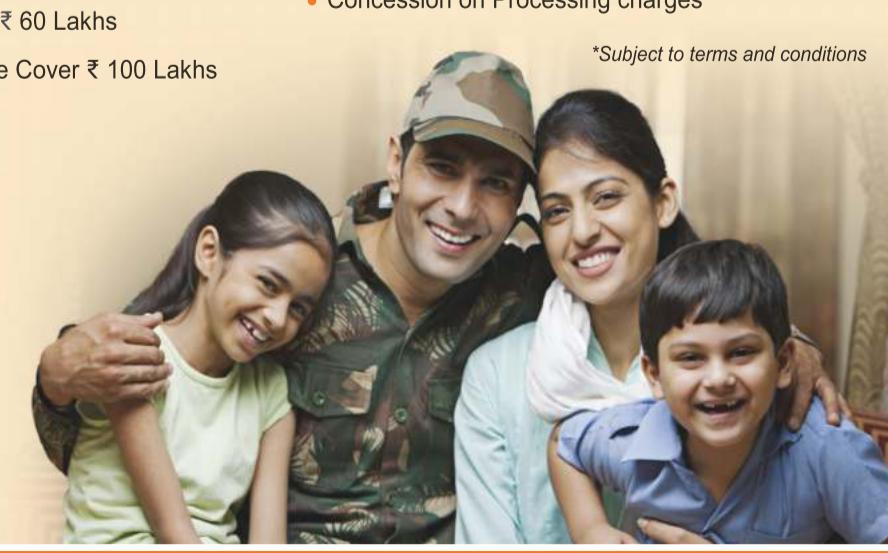
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# ARMY DAY

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# **Saluting Indian Army's spirit of “In Service of the Nation”**

*Pulsating with national pride and patriotism, Army Day in India transcends a historic event's commemoration while honouring Indian soldiers' valour and the mindset of "Service before Self" that ensures that Indians thrive in a free and safe nation*



**AS THE NATION  
CELEBRATES ARMY  
DAY, IT'S VITAL TO  
RECALL THAT THE  
DAY'S SPIRIT GOES  
BEYOND FESTIVI-  
TIES, SPARKING  
PATRIOTISM IN BOTH  
THE YOUNG & OLD**

the Partition of India and laying the foundation for the formidable Indian Army. The annual observance of Army Day on January 15 commemorates the momentous occasion, when he assumed the prestigious role of the Indian Army's first Indian Commander-in-Chief.

**Celebrating Indian Army's valour**

The vibrant cultural extravaganza of the Army Day celebration, replete with a grand parade, military shows, synchronised march past and awe-inspiring aerial maneuvers demonstrating the Indian Army's airpower alongside awarding Sena medals for gallantry in combat operations takes place annually on 15th January.

**Beyond the celebration**

As the country comes together to celebrate Army Day every year, it is important to remember that the spirit of the day extends beyond the revelry of a single-day observance igniting the spark of patriotism in the hearts of young and old alike. The occasion serves as a call to action for Indian citizens to uphold the legacy of courage, values of patriotism and the spirit of nationalism while fulfilling their role in ensuring the nation's safety and prosperity and pledging to stand united under the banner of our tricolor.



On Indian Army Day, we stand united in reverence for the valiant soldiers who embody the spirit of ‘service before self.’ The Indian Army, a formidable force dedicated to national security and unity, stands as a symbol of dauntless courage and sacrifice. General KM Cariappa, the first Indian Commander-in-chief, set the tone for this legacy of bravery and commitment. This historic occasion serves as a touching reminder of our soldiers’ tireless dedication and unyielding patriotism. Today, we salute the protectors of our sovereignty, the guardians of peace, who face external and internal challenges with unshakeable resolve. Their sacrifices reverberate through the pages of history. On this Indian Army Day, let us pay a heartfelt tribute to these fearless warriors and express our deepest gratitude for their service to the nation.

— S.K. Narvar  
Group Chairman, Trident Realty

Group Chairman, Trident Realty

Himalayas to the scorching sands of the desert—the unwavering commitment, unflinching valour, countless sacrifices and selfless service of our brave soldiers have secured our borders and shielded us to provide a safe cocoon for India to safely march ahead on the path of progress.

As we pay homage to the Indian

**From emerging from colonial rule to defending an independent India**

The story of Indian Army Day traces its way back to the birth pangs of a free nation as India gained its independence from British rule on 15 August 1947. On 15 January 1949, Lieutenant General Kadalurko M. Garrison, the

As we pay homage to the Indian Army's bravehearts and those men in the olive-green uniform, who have made the supreme sacrifice for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity while upholding the nation's honour in every conflict, the theme of this year's Army Day – "In Service of the Nation" – shines a spotlight on the essence of the Indian Army's existence. General Kodandera M. Cariappa took over the reins as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Sir Francis Robert Roy Bucher, the last non-Indian to have held this position after India's independence. This momentous transfer of leadership to one of the only two Indian Army officers to have held the rank of Field Marshal, marked a critical juncture in India's history.

Received by and remainders may be transferred to other members of the same family.

dia's military history, symbolising the dawn of a new era where Indian valour would stand sentinel over the security of the independent nation, which has emerged as a regional power since then.

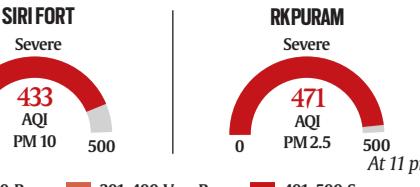
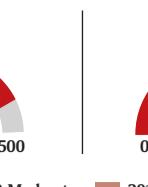
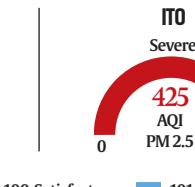
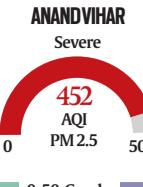
and defence, heralds a new era beyond a mere handover of command, as the symbolic passing of the baton of responsibility from colonial rule to an independent India.

**NO FOUR WALLS ARE STRONGER  
THAN THE COURAGEOUS RESOLVE  
OF A SOLDIER WHO PROTECTS  
THE DREAMS OF OUR NATION**

Trident Realty extends gratitude to the bravehearts of Indian Army who defend our nation with indomitable courage and valour.

# CELEBRATING 76<sup>TH</sup> ARMY DAY

**Corporate Office:** Trident Realty, DLF Square, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Jacaranda Marg, DLF Phase 2, Sector 25, Gurugram, Shahpur, Haryana, Pin-122002  
83430 90909 | [tridentrealty.co.in](http://tridentrealty.co.in)



**S K Y W A T C H**  
**FORECAST:** January 15  
Mainly clear sky. Dense fog in morning  
AQI: Very poor

**MAX: 20** 0.1°C below normal | **MIN: 4** 3.4°C below normal

**NOIDA SCHOOLS SHUT FOR STUDENTS UP TO CLASS 8; DELHI, GURGAON TO REOPEN**

# Delhi wakes up to zero-visibility Sunday as mercury plunges to season's lowest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

DENSE FOG enveloped Delhi and north and east India as visibility in many places dipped to zero on Sunday morning.

The minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded as 3.5 degrees Celsius, four degrees below normal for this time of the year and the lowest of the season so far.

As the day wore on, the thick blanket of fog started to lift, and the maximum temperature was recorded as 20.6 degrees Celsius, a degree above normal.

Monday morning, however, is expected to be cold, with the minimum temperature expected to be around 4 degrees Celsius. Dense to very dense fog is also expected in the morning.

Schools for students up to Class 8 in Noida, meanwhile, will remain shut till Tuesday. Schools in Delhi and Gurgaon, however, will reopen on Monday, after extensions were earlier given in the winter break because of the cold.

In Delhi, however, no school



People visit India Gate amid dense fog in New Delhi. Amit Mehra

will be allowed to open for students before 9 am or have classes past 5 pm. Teaching and non-teaching staff, though, have to report for duty at the usual time.

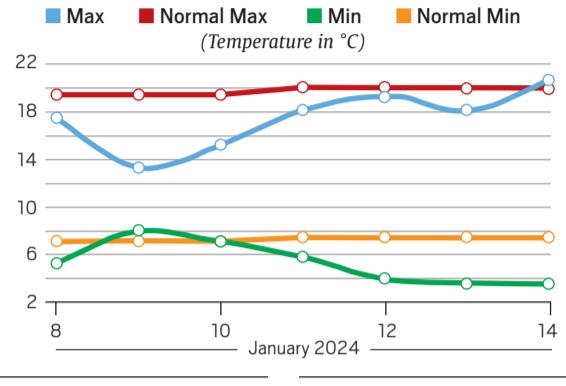
## Longest dense fog episode

The visibility at Palam and Safdarjung stations dipped to

zero at 5 am and remained so till 8.30 am. Hisar in Haryana also saw visibility dipping to zero.

"This is the first time this winter season that zero visibility is being reported from Amritsar to Dibrugarh across Ganganagar, Patiala, Ambala, Chandigarh, Palam, Safdarjung, Bareilly, Lucknow, Bahraich, Varanasi, Prayagraj and Tezpur

## HIGHS AND LOWS: HOW DELHI HAS FADED IN JAN



(Assam)... The fog cover extends over an area of more than 10 lakh square kilometres and a linear distance of 2,350 kms — from Amritsar to Dibrugarh," said a senior India Meteorological Department (IMD) official.

An orange alert was issued for Delhi, with the IMD and the Delhi Airport Authority urging all passengers to check timings of flights and trains with their respective airlines and the Indian Railways.

On X, Delhi International

Airport Limited (DIAL) issued a warning to passengers, asking them to contact their airlines for updated information.

According to the Delhi Airport website, scores of flights were affected because of the fog.

According to Flightradar24, an online portal that tracks flights in real time around the world using satellite information, over 700 flights were delayed (arrival and departure both) and around 100 were cancelled.

As ammonia levels rose in Yamuna, a water treatment plant struggled to keep pace

Wazirabad plant supplies water to Civil Lines, Karol Bagh, Rajinder Nagar, Greater Kailash and the Walled City



Toxic foam was seen floating on the Yamuna last week. Close to 70% of Delhi depends on the Yamuna for its water needs. Gajendra Yadav

MALLICA JOSHI  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

A KEY water treatment plant in the national capital that supplies water to Civil Lines, Karol Bagh, Rajinder Nagar, Greater Kailash and the Walled City struggled to keep pace with the rising ammonia levels last week, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

An official responsible for quality control at the Wazirabad water treatment plant is learnt to have flagged the issue to senior officers, who decided to reduce treatment capacity to tackle the issue.

The DJB, when contacted, acknowledged that production was reduced to 50%, but said the water quality at the outlet was maintained.

The problem of high ammonical nitrogen concentration in the Yamuna during winter is not new. Between December and March each year, treatment plants have to be either shut down or work at reduced capacity several times as the system can handle ammonia only up to 1 part per million (ppm).

The Wazirabad plant receives water from two sources — through the Carrier Line Channel or the Munak Canal, and the Yamuna river stream. Since the canal is regulated, effluent from industries are not dumped into it as it travels through Haryana into Delhi. The same does not hold true for the river channel — as it makes its way, hundreds of industries dump untreated waste into it. By the time the Yamuna enters Delhi, the water is highly polluted.

The problem intensifies in winter because the efficiency of the chlorination plant reduces, explained a senior officer: "As the temperature drops, icing at the chlorination plant increases and it can work only at around 25% to 50% capacity... The machines are 10-15 years old and they do not work at 100% capacity in any case... Water that was supplied (last week) was not fully treated."

An official responsible for quality control at the plant alerted senior officers that the concentration of ammonia was beyond the treatable range, it is learnt. The official suggested one of two options — to draw water only from the canal or shut the plant.

**The DJB acknowledged that production was reduced to 50%, but said the water quality at the outlet was maintained**

December 15 last year.

Water at the Wazirabad water treatment plant is drawn from the pond as well as the Munak Canal and once the two are mixed, the concentration of ammonical nitrogen at the inlet of the treatment plant decreases.

On Wednesday afternoon, concentration of ammonia at the Wazirabad Water Treatment Plants 1 and 2 was 2.9 ppm, DJB sources said.

She had also asked the Chief Secretary to address the "serious delay" in starting an in-situ ammonia treatment plant at Wazirabad pond.

An official explained that while the DJB does not check ammonia levels after chlorination, they do check for residual chlorine, which, as per the Jal Board's standards, should be 1.5 ppm. This is also the standard DJB asks bidders to maintain in its tender documents.

A joint report by United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), DJB and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), among others, also states that "proper disinfection of the clear water is maintained by keeping 1.5 ppm of residual chlorine".

"For the past four days, residual chlorine in treated water has been around the 0.25–0.75 ppm mark. The standard of 1.5 ppm residual has been set keeping in mind the need to eliminate pathogens after ammonia has been neutralised. That the residual chlorine is 0.25 ppm shows that neither has ammonia been neutralised fully, nor is there enough chlorine to manage pathogens (that can cause water borne diseases). Improper chlorination is also linked to the formation of toxic compounds in water," the official said.

## Forest department's weekly drive soon to clear Southern Ridge of encroachments

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

STARTING THIS month to around mid-March, the Delhi Forest Department is set to carry out weekly encroachment removal drives to clear farmhouses and temporary structures from forest land in parts of the southern ridge.

In an affidavit submitted to the Delhi High Court earlier this week, the Forest Department said that a total of 398.61 hectares of the southern ridge was found to be encroached in 2019. The affidavit shows that from 2019 onwards, only around 85.6 hectares or around 21% of the total encroached land in the southern ridge has been cleared.

Asked about the encroachment removal plans, a senior Forest Department official said it is a regular process and would be carried out with necessary police protection in areas of habitation.

As part of the action plan that has now been prepared, encroachments on a total of 80.75 hectares of land have now been identified for "early removal".

This includes areas with "temporary structures(habitation and others)" and areas with farmhouses, going by the affidavit. The action plan has divided encroached land into three categories — khasras with heavily built structures, khasras with temporary structures, and khasras with farmhouses and other structures.

The week-wise encroachment removal plan has been prepared by the South and West forest divisions for land in Rajokri, Ghitorni, Rangpuri, and Asola.



Asola is one of the areas where the drive would be carried out. Archive

In addition to these areas, encroachments in the south and west forest divisions have been identified in Noida Sarai, Aya Nagar, Chhattarpur, Jaunapur, Devli, Bhatti, Mahipalpur, Saidulajab, Maidangarhi, Tughlaqabad, Satbari, and Pulpheladpur.

In November last year, an oversight committee constituted by the National Green Tribunal had expressed displeasure over the "slow pace of progress of encroachment removal in the ridge area," and directed the District Magistrates and the Deputy Conservator of Forests of the south and west forest divisions to intensify encroachment removal.

Of the remaining encroached land in the southern ridge, around 100 hectares can be cleared only once pending court cases are resolved, the Forest Department has said in its affidavit.

A total of 103 JJ clusters are located on forest land in the ridge or the morphological ridge in Delhi. In the Rangpuri forest division, residents of JJ clusters had earlier approached the Environment Minister over the removal of encroachment from forest land.

The problem intensifies in winter because the efficiency of the chlorination plant reduces, explained a senior officer: "As the temperature drops, icing at the chlorination plant increases and it can work only at around 25% to 50% capacity... The machines are 10-15 years old and they do not work at 100% capacity in any case... Water that was supplied (last week) was not fully treated."

An official responsible for quality control at the plant alerted senior officers that the concentration of ammonia was beyond the treatable range, it is learnt. The official suggested one of two options — to draw water only from the canal or shut the plant.

## 300-YEAR-OLD TEMPLE IN OLD DELHI

# This later Mughal era temple is home to 'last surviving Vaishnav frescoes'

VIDHEE莎  
KUNTAMALLA  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

STANDING OUT among a straight row of cycle shops in Chandni Chowk is a white marble temple with its pillar painted in gold colour and a painting of Lord Hanuman adorning its top-most storey. This is the Narsinh Hanuman Mandir — one of the several Mughal-era temples that dot different corners of the city.

Though there is no written record of when the temple was built, it is believed that it came into being some 300 years ago, in the era of the later Mughals.

Many believe the decision to construct the temple at the pres-

against demolition. That land in Delhi is a matter that comes under the Centre is something AAP is making sure is known.

As he met people, Bharadwaj said that old JJ colonies have been identified and listed by the Delhi government and this list has been shared with the Supreme Court.

"These clusters are so old that based on law, you cannot remove them. First, the government must make in-situ housing for residents. After everyone has shifted, only then can the government demolish the area," he said.

BJP Delhi secretary, Bansuri Swaraj, meanwhile, said AAP was responsible for the plight of people. "The Chief Minister will have to answer what his government has done in the last nine years to provide houses to the poor. If he had allowed the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana to be implemented in Delhi, perhaps no poor person would have had to live in a slum today," she said.

Authority, under the BJP's influence, intends to relocate slum dwellers 50 km away to Narela and Kakrola. Accusing the BJP of deceptive practices, she stated, "Before elections, BJP pledges houses in existing locations, but post-elections, promises crumble."

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Atishi, who also holds the PWD portfolio, alleged that despite pre-election promises of providing homes in the same locations, the Delhi Development

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Government of India

# MODI GOVERNMENT DEDICATED TO TRIBAL WELFARE



PAN INDIA  
**188** DISTRICTS

INTERACTION OF  
**PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI**  
with the beneficiaries of

**PRADHAN MANTRI JANJATI ADIVASI NYAYA MAHA ABHIYAN  
(PM JANMAN)**

(through Video conferencing)

15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 12:00 Hrs

## Empowering Tribal Communities through PM JANMAN

### Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural)



**1 Lakh**

Pucca Houses Sanctioned  
Outlay: ₹2390 crores

### Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)



**Remaining 1830**

Habitations sanctioned for  
Piped Water Supply  
Outlay ₹220 crores

### Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme



**70,000**

Households Electricity  
Connection  
Outlay: ₹300 crores

### PM JANMAN Vikas Yojana



**450**

Multipurpose Centre  
Sanctioned  
Outlay: ₹270 crores

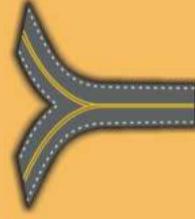
### Universal Service Obligation Fund



**206**

Mobile Towers sanctioned  
to cover 503 villages  
Outlay: ₹240 crores

### Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana



**1200 KM**

Road Sanctioned  
Outlay: ₹900 crores

### PM Janjatiya Vikas Mission



**405**

Van Dhan Vikas Kendra  
Sanctioned  
Outlay: ₹20 crores

### Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan



**100 Hostels**

Sanctioned for Tribal  
Students  
Outlay: ₹275 crores

### Anganwadi Services



**916**

Anganwadi Kendra  
Sanctioned  
Outlay: ₹125 crores

### National Health Mission



**100**

Mobile Medical Units  
to be Operational  
Outlay: ₹34 crores

More than  
**8,000** Camps  
outreaching over  
10 lakh beneficiaries

**2.5 Lakh**  
Beneficiaries  
identified for  
Kisan Samman Nidhi

More than  
**82,000**  
New Ayushman Cards  
made to reach  
saturation

and  
**70,000**  
New Aadhar Cards  
made

*Janjatiya Sashaktikaran*

*Viksit Bharat*

Live Telecast on DD News



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



## VISITOR'S NOMINEE

WITH THE recent amendments to the IIM Act, the Union government has regained control over crucial appointments, including that of the institute's director and board chairman. The Visitor, who is the President, can now nominate a representative on the search-cum-selection committee (ScSC) to pick a new director. Among the IIMs that have recently approached the Education Ministry with names for the Visitor's nominee for the committee are IIM Calcutta and IIM Lucknow. While IIM Calcutta's director, Uttam Kumar Sarkar, resigned prematurely last year, IIM Lucknow director Archana Shukla's term ends in three months. The ministry is learnt to have suggested Ashish Kumar Chauran, Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange, as Visitor Draupadi Murmu's nominee on IIM Lucknow's ScSC.

## PONGAL GIFT

IT WAS a special moment for Minister of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying L. Murugan on Sunday when Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached his official residence in Delhi to attend a Pongal programme. During his hour-long visit, the PM participated in rituals and later watched culture performances organised on the occasion. He was so impressed by the performance of young artists that he gifted his shawl to a young singer, a girl from Tamil Nadu, as a token of appreciation.

## OPEN LETTERS

FORMER BJP Rajya Sabha MP Balbir Singh is busy receiving visitors at his office since the release of his book, *Tryst with Ayodhya: Decolonisation of India*. While some are curious about the source of a quote from Jawaharlal Nehru on temples, some others want to know when did Mahatma Gandhi say "if a religious place comes up after forceful occupation of another, it should be brought down". Singh has kept the collected writings of Nehru and Gandhi ready to show the source to the visitors, who are allowed to click photographs of the relevant pages for their collection.

## TMC takes dig at Cong over Assam Council poll results



Abhishek mocks Cong's seat-sharing aspirations. File

THE RECENTLY concluded North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) elections in Assam that saw the Congress and Trinamool Congress draw a blank have become another point of contention between the INDIA blocs amid seat-sharing talks for the Lok Sabha polls that seem to have hit a wall.

The TMC won a higher vote share in the 11 seats it contested at 12.4% compared to the Congress's 8.87% across 22 seats.

On Sunday, the Congress's Bengal spokesperson Soumya Aich Roy said, "We know this model... The TMC fought in many states like Tripura, Goa, Mizoram, Assam to give an advantage to the BJP."

## SANKRANTI SPECIAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi feeds Punganur cows on Makar Sankranti at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

## Govt to release first instalment of Rs 540 cr for houses to 1 lakh vulnerable tribals today

DIVYA A  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

IN CONTINUATION of its tribal outreach ahead of Lok Sabha elections, the government will release the first instalment for pucca houses amounting to Rs 540 crore to one lakh beneficiaries from particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) on Monday.

The money will be credited directly in their Jan Dhan accounts.

On the occasion, Modi will virtually interact with the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha

Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), the flagship central scheme launched in November 2023 for socio-economic welfare of PVTGs, across 18 states and UTs.

Simultaneously, in 100 districts, officials from both the Centre and the respective state governments will distribute benefits under the package, said a statement by the Tribal Affairs Ministry Sunday.

In the two months since the launch of the scheme on November 15, the government has sanctioned projects worth over Rs 4,700 crore through nine ministries under the PM-JANMAN package, said Union Tribal

Affairs Minister Arjun Munda.

PM-JANMAN, with a budget of Rs 24,104 crore, focuses on 11 critical interventions and is aimed at saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, electricity, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Munda, who will join the event from Bishnupur in Jharkhand's Gumla district, said in order to reach out to every household, more than 7,000 camps were organised in PVTG

habitats of all 188 districts, to facilitate their Aadhaar cards, Jan Dhan accounts, Ayushman Bharat cards, and enable registration for different schemes under the mission.

Modi, meanwhile, will be on a 2-day trip to Andhra and Kerala from Tuesday to launch development projects, including the New Dry Dock and the International Ship Repair Facility at the Cochin Shipyard Limited.

PMO said Modi will visit Sri Sathya Sai District in Andhra and inaugurate the new campus of the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics.

chest. Even his colleagues do not know what he is planning."

On one issue though, the 90-year-old, who is a Rajya Sabha MP, was categorical: that he would not be contesting the Lok Sabha polls.

Deve Gowda said it will all come down to what Modi decides. "Kumaranna (Kumaraswamy) will do what Modi says since they are in communication... Once he makes a decision, we will decide." The JD(S) president also said that the party could separately meet on January 16 for talks on the polls and candidates.

While reiterating he would not contest Lok Sabha polls, Deve Gowda said he would pitch in for campaigning. "Since I have the strength to speak and the strength of memory, I will use my full capabilities," he said.

## Deora switch to Sena latest in high-profile exits from Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

Former Congress MP Milind Deora Sunday became the latest in a line of high-profile leaders to sever ties with the Opposition party and join CM Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena. When he entered Parliament for the first time in 2004, Deora was part of a group of young MPs considered a part of Rahul Gandhi's team. Among the others were Jyotiraditya Scindia, Jitin Prasada, Sachin Pilot, and R P N Singh. All of them, except Pilot, have left the Congress in the past few years.

Some of the big leaders who have quit the Congress in the last five years:

R P N Singh

Former Union minister R P N Singh joined the BJP in January 2022, saying the Congress was no longer the party it used to be. A three-time MLA, Singh was in Congress for over 3 decades. An OBC Kurmi leader belonging to the erstwhile Sainthara royal family of eastern UP, Singh was never considered a political heavyweight.

Kapil Sibal

A Union Cabinet minister in the Manmohan Singh government, his exit from the Congress

in May 2022 came just two months after he openly asked the Gandhis to step aside from leadership roles. In the Congress, he worked closely with the late Ahmed Patel, which ensured his proximity to Sonia, but he could never establish a good working relationship with Rahul Gandhi.

Gulam Nabi Azad

Three months after Sibal, Azad quit the Congress. In a letter to then-party chief Sonia Gandhi, Azad said the situation in the Congress had reached a point of "no return". Azad floated his own outfit the Democratic Progressive Azad Party. He was critical of Rahul Gandhi saying "the entire consultative mechanism which existed earlier was demolished by him".

Jaiveer Shergill

Shergill was the Congress national spokesperson when he quit in August 2022, the same month as Azad. He resigned saying "sycophancy" had taken precedence over merit in the party. He also said he had not been able to get an audience with the leadership because of his lack of proximity to a "certain coterie". He joined the BJP that December.

FULL REPORT [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## KARNATAKA

## BJP distances itself after MP demands 'raze more mosques'

AKRAM M

BENGALURU, JANUARY 14

Hegde under IPC Section 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 505 (statements conducing public mischief).

BJP MLA C N Ashwath Narayan said Hegde's remarks were his "personal views". "I don't want to say anything more. (PM) Modi has called upon people to ensure harmony, unity and respect for all religions," he said Sunday. Though some temples were converted to mosques, this is not the time to rake up such issues, he added.

In his speech, Hegde targeted CM Siddaramaiah, calling him "Moorka (Foolish) Ramaiyah" and accusing him of "selling his mentality for minority votes".

Siddaramaiah said Hegde's remarks reflected his culture. "When Ananthkumar Hegde was a Union Minister, he said we will change the Constitution when we come to power. Can we expect culture from him?" he said.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said, "Your disgusting words may appeal to only a few people intoxicated with Hindutva. But, sensible Hindus will never agree with you," he said.

## Only PM knows: Deve Gowda on LS talks, plans for son

JOHNSON TA

BENGALURU, JANUARY 14

HAVING ENTERED into an alliance with the BJP for the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka, the JD(S) is waiting for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make crucial decisions, including the possible induction of former CM H D Kumaraswamy into the Union Cabinet, the seats the JD(S) will contest, and the candidates.

Indicating this on Saturday,

the JD(S) national president and former PM, H D Deve Gowda,

said: "No discussion has hap-

pened in my presence. We do not know what is on Modi's mind. He does not reveal what is on his mind. In many states, he has made new leaders chief ministers, to the surprise of all. Modi keeps his action plans close to his

and candidates.

While reiterating he would not contest Lok Sabha polls, Deve Gowda said he would pitch in for campaigning. "Since I have the strength to speak and the strength of memory, I will use my full capabilities," he said.

## More exits to business clout to big Gujarati name: 5 ways Deora's resignation may hit Mumbai Cong



Deora first entered Lok Sabha in 2004. File

But just three months later, after losing the Mumbai South Lok Sabha seat for the second consecutive time, Deora resigned from the post, saying he was looking forward to playing a role at the national level to help stabilise the party following the Lok Sabha debacle.

Cong loses only Mumbai South LS candidate

By losing Deora, the Congress has lost its only available candidate who could have contested the Mumbai South Lok Sabha seat. The party virtually has no leader now who can contest the election in his place if the Congress gets this seat after the seat-sharing negotiations. It lost a

Mumbai South Lok Sabha constituency to Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena in the previous two general elections.

**Deora's clout in business circles**

Irrespective of his on-ground visibility, Deora had extended financial support to the party, at least in the South Mumbai region. His connections across businesses and corporates could have ensured sustained funding for the party ahead of the LS polls. In December 2023, he was even appointed the joint treasurer of the AICC. "My late father and I have dedicated ourselves to nurturing soft powers, including cultivating relationships with industry on behalf of the party," he had said at the time.

However, electorally, this didn't pay off for him in the Congress. Despite shaping an image as a forward-looking, business-friendly and cosmopolitan leader, Deora could not save his Lok Sabha seat in 2014. He lost again five years later despite an endorsement from Mukesh Ambani.

**Shinde Sena gains noted Gujarati face**

The Congress has also lost a

prominent, elite Gujarati face in Deora, who had widespread acceptance in a cosmopolitan and multicultural city like Mumbai.

The Mumbai South constituency has a significant Muslim population along with a Marathi electorate. Plus it has voted for the Shiv Sena, undivided at the time, in the last two elections.

This may have swayed Deora to join the Sena led by CM Eknath Shinde instead of the BJP. But it is still not given that Deora will get the constituency - the BJP has not yet given up its claim on Mumbai South and names such as Speaker Rahul Narwekar and minister Mangalprabhat Lodha have been floated recently.

Deora had first entered the Lok Sabha in 2004 from Mumbai South, a seat his father, the late Murli Deora, held several times.

He was one of India's youngest MPs at the time and was known as a part of Team Rahul Gandhi. Except for Pilot, all of them have jumped ship.

In 2009, he won the Mumbai South seat again. Since then, his vote share fell in 2014 and 2019 polls. Deora was also the Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology and Shipping.

**Adityanath-led UP government, Prasada, in June 2021, became the first of the Group of 23 Congress leaders to join the BJP. Prasada was a Union Minister of State under former PM Manmohan Singh.**

**Amarinder Singh**

In November 2021, months before Punjab Assembly polls, the former Congress CM quit the Congress and joined the Punjab Lok Congress. Less than a year later, he merged it with the BJP.

Before quitting the Congress, he had resigned as Punjab CM after a long spell of infighting in the state unit led to the party high command asking Singh to step down.

**R P N Singh**

Former Union minister R P N Singh joined the BJP in January 2022, saying the Congress was no longer the party it used to be. A three-time MLA, Singh was in Congress for over 3 decades. An OBC Kurmi leader belonging to the erstwhile Sainthara royal family of eastern UP, Singh was never considered a political heavyweight.

**Kapil Sibal**

A Union Cabinet minister in the Manmohan Singh government, his exit from the Congress

FULL REPORT [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

## India can play key role in Ukraine peace formula: NSAs meet in Davos

Davos: National security advisors of several countries met here on Sunday to discuss early restoration of peace in war-hit Ukraine, with the host Switzerland asserting that India can play a key role with its influence and relations with Russia.

The fourth NSA meeting also

saw many participants echoing India's position that war can never be a solution and dialogue was a must to resolve the situation. India was represented by Deputy NSA Vikram Misri at the meet.

Addressing a press conference, Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis said Russia would be asked

to join the peace plan discussions at some point in time but to bring it on the table would require mediation by some countries.

The Swiss Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs said currently, Russia is not willing to make any concessions, but there is no alternative to bringing both coun-

tries to the table for which a collective momentum would be required from more than 100 countries, including those from outside Europe.

Replying to questions, he said participation from BRICS countries, including India, is very important, as these are the coun-

tries, which have got some relations continuing with Russia.

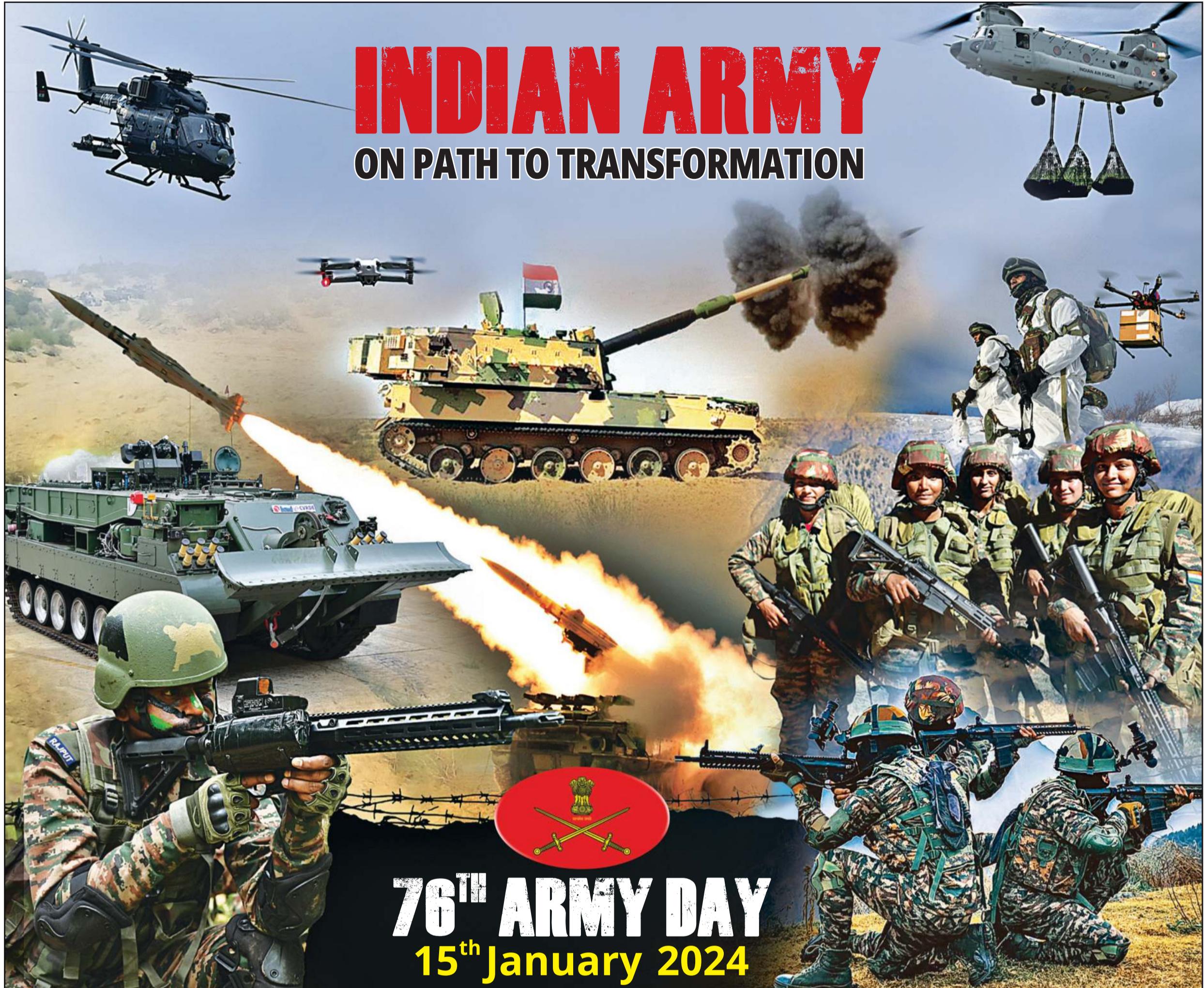
"They may be faraway (physically from the conflict zone), but they can play an important role as they have influence. China can also play a key role, and we will have to work to involve China in these meetings," he said. PTI

## Will protect borders at all costs: Army chief

New Delhi: The Indian Army continues to maintain a "robust posture" at the borders and is prepared to protect the country's territorial integrity at "all costs", Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande said on Sunday, amid the over three-year festering border row with China in eastern Ladakh.

On the eve of the Army Day, Gen Pande said the force is fully committed with an "unwavering resolve" to counter any security threat, asserting that its fundamental character, core ethos and professionalism will enable it to live up to the expectations of citizens. He said the transition

towards becoming a modern, agile, adaptive, technology-enabled and future-ready force shall continue as part of the transformation roadmap. Without naming Pakistan, Gen Pande said the Army along with other security forces are dealing with the "proxy war" in J&K. PTI



### OUR FALLEN HEROES IN THE YEAR 2023

RANK	NAME	ARMS/SERVICES
SEPOY	AMIT SHARMA	INFANTRY
NAIB SUBEDAR	PARASHOTAM KUMAR	INFANTRY
HAVILDAR	AMRIK SINGH	INFANTRY
SEPOY	PAWAN KUMAR	INFANTRY
HAVILDAR	NEELAM SINGH	INFANTRY
NAIK	ARVIND KUMAR	INFANTRY
LANCE NAIK	RUCHIN SINGH RAWAT	INFANTRY
PARA TROOPER	SIDDHANT CHETTRI	INFANTRY
PARA TROOPER	PRAMOD NEGI	INFANTRY
HAVILDAR	VIVEK SINGH TOMAR	INFANTRY
NAIK	DEEPAK KUMAR SINGH	SIGNALS
SEPOY	NUFAIL KT	ARMY POSTAL SERVICE
HAVILDAR	MANDEEP SINGH	INFANTRY
LANCE NAIK	KULWANT SINGH	INFANTRY
SEPOY	HARKRISHAN SINGH	INFANTRY
SEPOY	SEWAK SINGH	INFANTRY
LANCE NAIK	DEBASHISH BISWAL	ARTILLERY
NAIK	LENGKHOLAL	INFANTRY

RANK	NAME	ARMS/SERVICES
SEPOY	ALDRIN HMINGTHANZUALA	INFANTRY
HAVILDAR	CHARANJIT SINGH	INFANTRY
SUBEDAR	ARUN KUMAR MISHRA	INFANTRY
HAVILDAR	BABULAL HARITWAL	INFANTRY
RIFLEMAN	WASEEM SARWAR	INFANTRY
SIGNALMAN	VALA MAHIPALSINGH PRAVINSINGH	SIGNALS
NAIK	GORE AMOL TANHAJI	INFANTRY
MAJOR	JAYANTH A	ARTILLERY
LIEUTENANT COLONEL	V VINAY BHANU REDDY	ARMY AVIATION CORPS
NAIB SUBEDAR	KULDEEP SINGH	MECHANISED INFANTRY
LANCE NAIK	TELU RAM	MECHANISED INFANTRY
SEPOY	RAVI KUMAR	INFANTRY
NAIK	MOTI RAM	ARMY SERVICE CORPS
SEPOY	THAKOR RASANGJI SAVAJI	ARMY SERVICE CORPS
SEPOY	PARDEEP SINGH	INFANTRY
COLONEL	MANPREET SINGH, SM	INFANTRY
MAJOR	AASHISH DHONCHAK, SM	INFANTRY
HAVILDAR	BHARMAL INANIYAN	CORPS OF ELECTRONICS AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS



## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

## BRIDGING CAPACITY

Atal Setu is a significant step in India's bid to project itself as a key investment destination

**L**AST WEEK, THE country's longest sea bridge, the 22-km long six-lane Atal Setu was inaugurated. Formally called the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewari-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu or the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, the bridge has been built at a cost of Rs 17,840 crore. By using it, commuters will be able to cut the travel time between central Mumbai and the fast-growing Navi Mumbai from 2 hours to about 20 minutes. But viewing the Atal Setu merely as a way to decongest the traffic woes in India's financial capital would be akin to missing the forest for the trees. It is indeed another key step in India's bid to transform not only its physical infrastructure but also its global image as an investment destination.

While inaugurating the bridge, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the "Atal Setu is the picture of developed India. This is a glimpse of what a developed India is going to be like." Over the past decade, the government has carried out structural reforms that will pave the way for India's economy to realise its full potential. In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, India's growth story faltered as the economy faced the twin-balance sheet problem -- private businesses were over-leveraged while most of the banks were weighed down by non-performing assets. These factors threatened to drag down India's ability to become an international investment destination and compete with the likes of China. As things stand today, Indian banks have been nursed back to health, and they are both ready and capable of financing India's growth. In the meantime, the government has taken a lead in boosting infrastructure. It has done this both by allocating an increasing amount of resources towards capital expenditure as well as improving the implementation of such projects. Most metrics suggest that be it roads, railways, ports, airports or bridges, the pace and quality of construction has risen sharply from the long-term average. What's more, this pace of infrastructure creation is set to increase.

Focus on boosting infrastructure -- be it physical or digital -- is of paramount importance if India wants to truly take advantage of the disenchantment with China that's setting in several parts of the world. Developed country markets and investors are looking for countries that can replace China in the global supply chain. India can leverage this opportunity to become a developed country in the next quarter of a century if it can find a way to match its existing advantages of a young and ambitious labour force, a free-market economic system and a vibrant democracy with the kind of infrastructure these deserve. However, a bulk of the capacity enhancements are a result of direct government spending. In an emerging economy, there are limits to how long the government can go all by itself. For sustained growth, the private sector needs to step in as well.

## THE MORAL POLICE AGAIN

Attacks on interfaith couples in Karnataka follow disturbing logic of 'love jihad'. Criminal justice system must respond

**A**CROSS STATES, INDIVIDUAL rights -- including those enshrined in the Constitution -- seem to be under constant threat from the mob, acting as a self-styled moral police. Last week, two horrific incidents of assault in Karnataka underlined, once again, the disturbing intolerance for inter-faith relationships among consenting adults -- real and imagined -- and the casual resort to violence. In these cases, the criminals objected to Muslim women being involved with men from other communities. Their logic is the same as those who raise the bogey of "love jihad" and the prevalence of this disturbing phenomenon across communities and geographies needs a more robust response from the criminal-justice machinery.

On January 13, seven men were arrested after they assaulted two people -- mistaking them for an inter-faith couple -- at a park in Belagavi city. The young Muslim woman was with her cousin, a Hindu. A day later in Haveri district, five men barged into a hotel room and allegedly assaulted a man and attacked and raped the woman. They recorded and circulated videos of their criminal act. State Home Minister G Parameshwara said the law will take its course. Perhaps it will. But the violence on couples for "love jihad" in UP, Haryana, Rajasthan, or in the case of Karnataka between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, the casual manner in which incidents of violence are recorded and distributed online, call for a broader response. Chief Minister Siddaramiah had promised action against such crimes when he took office. Thus far, it seems his government has fallen short. Instead, his colleague, Parameshwara, is engaging in whataboutery by asking, "Weren't there crimes against women doing BJP's rule".

Governments -- whether of the Congress, BJP or any other party -- need to draw sharp lines. Leaders and parties cannot hint at even timid support for such acts of violence. Unfortunately, many of those who have sworn their oath on the Constitution have equivocated on the issue of inter-faith and sometimes, even inter-caste relationships. Another disturbing aspect of the attack in Haveri was the culprits using the internet to broadcast their crime. The misuse of technology in this manner requires the police to increase their capabilities in dealing with cybercrime. Campaigns that address the stigma that often gets attached to victims of sexual violence must be launched. As of 2021, the conviction rate in India for crimes against women was an abysmal 26 per cent. That figure represents a shortcoming that must be urgently addressed by investigating and prosecuting agencies. For the broader political class and civil society, the task is simple: The freedom of choice of individuals must be protected, not sacrificed at the altar of thin-skinned prejudice.

## FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



## Leading the climate dance



ANAND KRISHNAN

Addressing pollution involves trade-offs.  
Politicians must take the initiative

IT SHOULD BE clear to all of us by now that the problem of air pollution, anywhere in India, especially in NCR, is unlikely to be solved in the near future. It has now become a perennial problem rather than a seasonal one that we could ignore as a short-term inconvenience. Addressing it requires making difficult choices and tough decisions, both at the societal and governmental levels -- neither is ready to discuss and debate the issue except to indulge in a blame game. As is true for any environmental issue, climate change and air pollution present us with the difficult proposition of making choices based on multiple trade-offs between development and environmental preservation. These trade-offs are hard but critical and should be well-informed and based on societal values.

There is a saying in Thailand that a triangle moves the mountain with three angles -- in this case, this could be scientists or academia, governments and people. Scientists from the arena of atmospheric sciences and the health sector have generated sufficient evidence for us to act. Some gaps will continue to exist, but that is the nature of science. There is always more to discover and learn. The job of academicians is to generate and present evidence so that these trade-offs are done in an informed manner. So, who should make these trade-offs?

Academicians are not the right people to make or recommend these trade-offs. Activists have already made the trade-offs (generally pro-environment) and are trying to convince the world that their trade-off is the only right one. While they are of immense value in moving the needle of the debate, for a good dialogue, the first thing to acknowledge is that there is no "one" right trade-off. A hard stance can cramp an open discussion. While many of these issues end up in courts, I do believe that they are not the appropriate fora for such discussion. But they can ensure that such platforms are made available, and the debates take place. The political class, given that they are the chosen representatives of the people, should be the obvious choice. Unfortunately, currently, they have been unable to rise to the occasion. This does not sub-

tract from major policy decisions taken by different political parties in the past to address air pollution. If they responded appropriately in the past, they can do so in future as well. However, we need to understand the intersection of air pollution and political decision-making better.

Our experience with the BRT corridor (Bus Rapid Transport) in Delhi and the odd-even experiment in the capital are good case studies to learn from. The BRT corridor between Ambedkar Nagar to Delhi Gate (15 km) was a futuristic plan that segregated traffic to expand road space for public transport at the cost of private four-wheelers. It also addressed the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. An IIT-Delhi study showed that it resulted in increased speed of public transport, increased travel time of private cars and improved pedestrian safety -- all its intended objectives were achieved despite covering a short stretch which did not fully incentivise its users. Yet inexplicably, it was deemed a failure and dismantled with a change in political leadership. This was because the car-using-middle-class rejected this trade-off between the inconvenience and the multi-fold benefits of using public transport and politicians capitulated. Despite Delhi abandoning the BRT corridor, it was adopted in many cities in India.

The odd-even experiment in 2016 was necessitated during a "public health emergency". Its impact continues to be debated as it is highly contextual. The overall impact would be a mathematical function of the contributory share of the vehicles to the total pollution (varies usually between 30 per cent to 50 per cent) and the proportion of vehicles which stay off the road (<50 per cent depending on exemptions and degree of enforcement). Despite a lack of clear evidence of its usefulness and the severity of public inconvenience, it is considered a politically acceptable alternative, best exemplified by its reruns, perhaps due to its short period. In the same context, it is also interesting that the lack of effectiveness of smog towers has not prevented them from being installed and actively pursued even now. These are so because politicians want to promote a public perception of being sensi-

tive to the concerns of the people. Lack of effectiveness can always be addressed by an imaginative political narrative.

The challenge in effectively addressing the crop-burning issue is to find a win-win solution and convince all the concerned parties. Given the complexity of the problem, it will need a package of technical, regulatory, fiscal, and informational interventions to succeed. This package needs to be defined clearly and marketed well so that all stakeholders feel that a concerted effort is being made and all involved are contributing their share to the solution. This can only be done by setting up the right political narrative, which clearly our politicians are capable of, but are choosing not to do as they are not comfortable with the political fallout of such decisions.

While we are making incremental gains in our fight against pollution, the speed is not enough to negate the increasing pollution. So, are we doomed to go round in circles, or a tangential move is possible? Only the public can make it politically expedient for this issue to be effectively addressed. We are yet to reach a critical or tipping point in our fight against air pollution. That will come when the politicians assess that the middle class of NCR are ready for real and hard trade-offs as reflected by a higher use of public transport and use of cleaner vehicles. While the public is ready for short-term inconveniences like odd-even, they are not ready for hard decisions. Our experience of this Diwali confirms this non-acceptance of change by the middle-class.

Further progress will need some incentivisation of people by appropriate public policies. It is a circular logic of politicians incentivising people to move in the right direction and citizens signalling to the politicians that they are ready for further compromise. This potentially sets up a cascade that can take us to the tipping point. As they say, 'It takes two to tango'. What we are seeing today is a tango between community and the political class. The question is who is leading the dance.

The writer is Professor of Community Medicine at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. Views expressed are personal



MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA

WITH JUST A few months left for the Lok Sabha elections, it's all up in the air in the political landscape of Punjab. The stakes are high, not just for INDIA, whose members -- the ruling Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress -- are at daggers drawn in the state, but also for the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal), the oldest regional party in the country that is now fighting an existential battle. Then there is the BJP, resurgent in the rest of the country, but still finding its feet in a volatile state that has often bucked the national trends.

This will be the AAP's first Lok Sabha election after it swept the state with a never-before tally of 92 out of 117 seats, almost decimating the Akali Dal, which had in the not-too-distant past ruled the state for an unprecedented 10 years along with its former ally, the BJP. That the parliamentary polls have different dynamics came home to AAP when it lost Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's Sangrur Lok Sabha seat to Simranjit Singh Mann, president of the hardliner Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), months after its landslide win. A year later, the party regained its footing by securing victory in the Jalandhar Lok Sabha bypolls, prompted by the unfortunate demise of the incumbent Congress MP. The parliamentary polls hold a special significance for AAP, for it was in the 2014 LS polls that it opened its account in Punjab, winning four of the 13 seats. Three years later, it became the main Opposition in the border state.

## ON THE CUSP OF TAKE-OFF

High expectations from leaders means parties have their work cut out in Punjab

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA

This time around, the INDIA bloc is set to play a crucial role in the way both AAP and its main opposition, Congress, fight the polls. On the ground, any truck between the two seems to be a contradiction, given that AAP was voted to power due to the widespread sentiment against Congress and Akali Dal, which had been alternating in power for almost seven decades. But the high command of the two parties may have a different point of view.

But despite that, it fared poorly in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when it could win just one seat of present CM Bhagwant Singh Mann in Sangrur.

This time around, the INDIA bloc is set to play a crucial role in the way both AAP and its main opposition, Congress, fight the polls. On the ground, any truck between the two seems to be a contradiction, given that AAP was voted to power due to the widespread sentiment against Congress and Akali Dal, which had been alternating in power for almost seven decades. While most of the eight sitting Congress MPs may be positive about this alliance, other party leaders, many of whom have felt the heat of disproportionate assets cases, vigilance inquiries and jail time, are virulently opposed to any ties with AAP, that they have often charged with witch-hunting. The state AAP too is not keen on aligning with a party it claims is antithetical to its principles.

But the high command of the two parties may have a different point of view. For once, the Punjab story is not confined to the state. It's linked to seat sharing in other states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Goa, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh where AAP may like to try its luck.

The state is also curious about another alliance, or rather rapprochement, between former allies, the Akali Dal and the BJP, which broke up on the issue of the farm laws in 2020. While it's too early to call, if the state party leaders refuse to get off their high horses, Punjab could be looking at a charged multi-cornered contest. In a state whose people set a high standard for their leaders, and get easily disillusioned when these expectations are not met, another question preying on many minds is about the candidates. Where are the leaders who will fight these elections? Now that's a point worth pondering.



## JANUARY 15, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

## DEATHS IN J&amp;K

THREE PERSONS WERE killed and over 500 injured, 28 of them seriously, when police resorted to firing, repeated lathi-charges and tear-gas shelling in 12 townships of Kashmir Valley. The violence was offshore of a directive by the Pradesh Congress (I) to its district units to hold tehsil-level protests and demonstrations and present memoranda to tehsil heads to draw their attention against what they described as the "state government's failure to solve the problems of the people and its encouragement to anti-national forces in Kashmir".

## OPPOSITION STIR

THE OPPOSITION CONCLAVE decided to

launch a nationwide mass movement beginning on February 13 to force the Centre to concede its economic demands. This will be followed by a national convention towards the end of March to build up and strengthen public opinion in this regard. Three resolutions were adopted on the second day of the conclave and an action programme for the future chalked out.

## CHECKS ON OFFICERS

THE GOVERNMENT HAS directed intelligence agencies to prepare a list of all the senior army and civil officers who have retired during the last two years and information about their present occupation. It has been learnt that the government is contemplating some checks

on senior officers taking up employment with private companies and overseas firms immediately after retirement. There is special scrutiny on top-ranking officers who had sought voluntary retirement to take up jobs with private companies.

## BUSA FIRE

AFTER A GRIM, daylight search, authorities in the southern port city of Busan put the death toll at 37 and said 75 people were injured in a fire that raged through a tourist hotel. Military helicopters that joined fire-fighters were credited with saving nearly a score of people, lifting them from the roof of the 10-storey hotel or plucking them from open windows.

# THE IDEAS PAGE

## A truth forsaken

Dravidian disjunction from Sanatan Dharma is a reiteration of colonial



### THE SIDEBAR

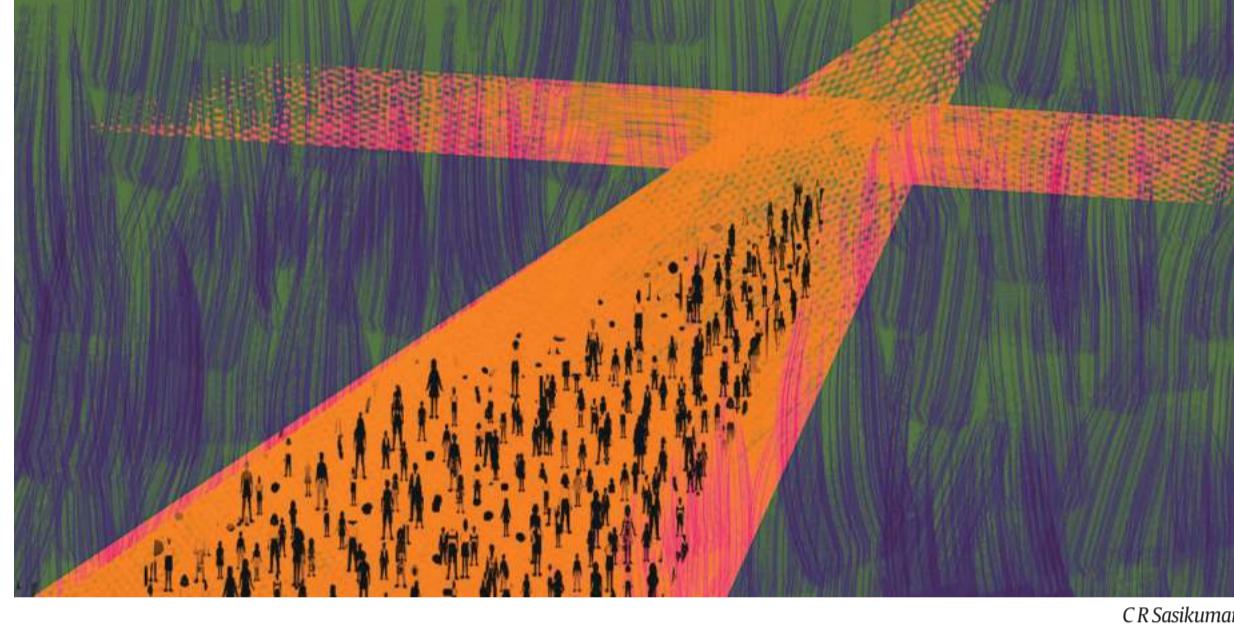
BY J SAI DEEPAK

**I**N THE SECOND part of this series ('Construction of identities', IE, November 6) on the anti-Dharmic origins and journey of the Dravidian Movement, drawing from scholarly literature, I had stated that "caste" and "tribe" as we understand them today, are ethnocentric categories created by the Christian European coloniser based on ethnographies of Bharat's society and social organisation prepared by Christian missionaries. I had ended the piece with the following questions: One, what were the motivations of the colonial-missionary combine in seeking to understand and document the ethnography of Bharat? Two, how did they go about this exercise? How much of a role did European Christian theology and ethnocentrism play in framing the purpose and methodology of the exercise? Three, what was the role played by the "native" in aid of the exercise? Did the "native" understand colonial intentions and evangelical motives? If yes, why did he continue to cooperate and collaborate with the colonial exercise to the detriment of Bharat?

The first question may give the impression that documentation of Bharat's "ethnography" was undertaken for the first time during the British colonial period. However, literature reveals that the interest of Christian European missionaries in Bharat's social organisation predates the formal establishment of the British Raj. In this piece, I will present a broad snapshot of early missionary work in Bharat which birthed both "caste" and the "Dravidian" identity.

In his seminal work, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (2001), Nicholas B Dirks demonstrates factually that the use of "caste" to understand Bharat's society is a modern phenomenon attributable to the colonial period. He points out that the word "casta" was first used in relation to Bharat's social order by the Portuguese official Duarte Barbosa in the sixteenth century. After all, the first European nation to establish a colony in Bharat was Portugal, a few years after Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut in 1498. Barbosa's observations on *casta* were based on his stay in the Vijayanagara Empire.

Perhaps the next important milestone was the founding of the Tranquebar Mission (Tharangambadi in present-day Tamil Nadu) or the Royal Danish Mission in 1706 by the German Lutheran missionary Bartholomeus Ziegenbalg under the directions of the then King of Denmark, Frederick IV. The Danish king, like any good Christian ruler, sent 48 missionaries (most of whom were German Lutherans) to spread the Protestant version of the Christian faith in Tranquebar. As Will Sweetman explains in detail in his article 'The Dravidian Idea in Missionary Accounts of South Indian Religion', the Danish Protestant Mission tolerated continued "caste distinctions" among converts to Christianity from Hinduism. This toleration of



CR Sasikumar

caste distinctions among converts from the Hindu fold was common to Protestant Missions operating in the North and South of Bharat until the 1820s.

Coming back to the founder of the Tranquebar Mission, Ziegenbalg, his primary contribution, critical to the topic at hand, was his understanding of the religion in the South, because for him it was the religion of the South. He captured his views on the subject in his two works, *Malabar Heathenism* (1711) and *The Genealogy of Malabar Gods* (1713). Both these works, especially the latter, would go on to contribute to the creation of a Dravidian identity and its cleaving from the identity of the "Aryan North". Sweetman points out that despite being aware of Sanskrit and Sanatan Dharma, since Ziegenbalg was primarily exposed to the collection of Tamil religious texts in the libraries of non-Brahmin Saivaite *adheenams* (religious institutions), he formed the view that the "Tamil Religion" was distinct from the "Brahminical/Vedic religion of North."

This is, perhaps, the earliest expression of the missionary position that Tamil Saivism has nothing to do with Sanatan Dharma. It should not come as a surprise that this line continues to be parroted by Dravidianists of today, the latest occasion being the release of Mani Ratnam's *Ponniyin Selvan* when Dravidianists such as Thirumavalavan, Seeman, Kamal Haasan and Karunas (the last two are actors) claimed that Cholas were not Hindus since Saivism had nothing to do with the Vedic religion.

Between Ziegenbalg's premature death at the age of 37 in 1719 and the arrival of Lutheran Missionaries of Leipzig Missionary Society such as Karl Graul as Mission Director in Tranquebar in 1844 (who I will discuss in the next piece), the other missionary who contributed significantly to the scholarship on "caste" was the French Catholic Missionary Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois. According to Nicholas Dirks, Dubois' work, *Description of the Character, Manners, and Customs of the People of India, and of Their Institutions, Religious and Civil*, was "the first extensive, and in the early years of the nineteenth century the most influential, European account of caste united textual formulations with empirical observation".

However, Dirks states that Dubois' work was largely based on an earlier work of a Pondicherry-based French Jesuit Missionary,

Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (also known as Père Coeurdoux), who is known for his Telugu-French-Sanskrit dictionary. Coeurdoux's correspondence in the 1760s with other French Indologists on the similarities between

As the literature will further reveal, 'Indology', as we know it today, has its foundations in Christian evangelical motives since it was important for the missionaries to understand the social lay of the land of Bharat to harvest souls and convert the "natives" to the "one true faith". Unfortunately, stating this indisputable documented fact invites *ad hominem* labels. Pertinently, the heavy concentration of missionaries in Southern Bharat and the rise of Dravidianism cannot be dismissed as being unrelated developments. Despite this history, it is somehow deemed "anti-secular" to draw attention to the continuity of thought, speech and action between missionaries of the past, and present-day Dravidianists and their benefactors (whoever they may be). This is not surprising, considering that one of the expected requirements of "independent" India's brand of secularism is that it must trump and prevail over truth. So much for "Satyameva Jayate".

In the next piece, I will cover more ground on the "anthropological service" provided by Christian missionaries to the colonial rulers of Bharat and the motivations behind the same.

The writer is a commercial and constitutional litigator who practises as a counsel before the Supreme Court of India, the High Court of Delhi, the NCLAT and the CCI

The Navy also deployed a P-8I maritime patrol aircraft and an MQ-9B drone to monitor the operation and send in live footage. Within hours, the Indian Navy's marine commandos boarded the Lila Norfolk and rescued all 21 crew members, including 15 Indians.

The operation, live-streamed from a drone, is making waves on social media. The Indian Navy has received deserved praise for its prompt and effective response. The operation was a self-assured demonstration of capability to deliver security in the face of adversity. Nonetheless, the resurgence of piracy has placed India and other regional states under immense strain. The attempted takeover of Lila Norfolk is only the latest in a series of pirate hijackings since November 2023. In the past six weeks, attacks on merchant ships have become increasingly common, and regional navies are struggling to keep up.

Theories abound about why piracy in the western Indian Ocean is witnessing a surge. One explanation is that the pirates are taking advantage of the security shift from the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea. Notwithstanding the successes of the past decade, observers say anti-piracy operations have failed to decisively address Somalia's piracy problem. In recent years, international maritime presence in the Gulf of Aden has progressively fallen, shifting the security burden to a select few navies. Following the termination of NATO's anti-piracy mission in 2016, the onus of security in

the Gulf of Aden has fallen on the US-led coalition, some EU maritime forces, and independent actors such as the Indian Navy and the Chinese navy. Yet, as international focus has shifted to the Red Sea, the mission in the waters of Somalia has been increasingly hard – not only due to a lack of capacity but also because regional navies have tended to regard anti-piracy operations as a bare-bones act required to reassure international shippers. The growing frequency of attacks in the Gulf of Aden has called into question their assumption that piracy in Somali waters stands eradicated and is unlikely to recur.

The other theory is that the pirates and the militants are acting in concert. The proponents of this line of reasoning cite intelligence that suggests Al-Shabaab in Somalia joined hands with the Houthis in the Red Sea. Both groups reportedly have sympathies with Hamas, with whom Israel is engaged in conflict. There is scant evidence to support this contention.

A third perspective links piracy with power rivalries in the Horn of Africa. By some accounts, there is a connection between rising pirate attacks and a recent agreement signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland, a breakaway province of Somalia that declared independence from the country in 1991. The pact offers land-locked Ethiopia access to the sea in return for the country's recognition of Somaliland as an independent state. The Al-Shabaab – a terrorist group that controls vast

parts of Somalia – opposes the pact. Recently, it threatened Ethiopia and Somaliland, calling for jihad attacks against both. The increase in pirate attacks is a possible attempt by Al-Shabaab to highlight its disruptive potential to European states that are inclined to recognise Somaliland, as well as to dissuade the UAE and Saudi Arabia from investing in Somaliland's ports. It is no coincidence that pirate hijackings have occurred across the water from Somaliland, which has never been a serious hotbed for pirates – a seeming plot by the terrorist group to undermine the breakaway province's ability for self-governance and maritime law enforcement.

It merits mentioning that the socio-economic realities that underpin Somali piracy remain. Research shows that international fishing vessels continue to illegally exploit fish off Somalia's coastline. Foreign fishing vessels still harvest tuna stocks in Somali waters, leaving little for coastal fishing communities. The revival of piracy could well be chalked down to the fact that when people have little, crime is the only way. That does not detract from the complexity of piracy or the reality that no theory fully captures its essence. Whatever the real reasons behind the recent spurt in attacks, shipping companies, and regional navies must brace for tough times ahead.

The writer is head of the Maritime Policy Initiative at ORF, New Delhi

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It will not be easy for the PTI support base to come to terms with the move [PTI's disqualification from upcoming elections]. One also wonders what the general impact of this decision will be on how 'free and fair' the upcoming elections are publicly perceived to be."

—DAWN, PAKISTAN

## Towards a pragmatic future

For India, the easiest way to decarbonise is to scale up renewable capacity to the extent possible



SOMIT DASGUPTA

of intense heat, for example, iron and steel, aluminium etc. Renewable sources of power are not in a position to provide that kind of power supply.

The best solution for sectors like heavy transport or industries is getting access to green hydrogen. Though there is a lot of brouhaha about green hydrogen, the fact is that it is only a thought right now. Production of green hydrogen globally is less than 1 per cent today. Production of green hydrogen needs ample quantity of green power and also water which can be very daunting. To give an idea, India has laid down a target of producing 5MMT of green hydrogen by 2030, which alone would need 125 gigawatts (GW) of renewable power. The total solar and wind based capacity today is only about 116 GW. To go further, transportation of hydrogen is also a problem as it makes the pipelines brittle over time. Storage is also an issue since hydrogen (though having high energy content per unit mass) has low density per unit volume and would need huge containers to store unless pressurised. Hydrogen can, of course, be pressurised into liquid form but this is highly energy intensive and if one relies on grid-based power (which is fossil fuel based) to do this, it defeats the entire purpose of decarbonisation.

What is thus evident is that the easiest way to decarbonise is to scale up renewable capacity to the extent possible as this is the low-hanging fruit. This should have been very easy for a country like India which is rich in renewable resources, especially solar. Though our renewable capacity has grown manifold, it is nowhere near what we actually need if we want to move away from fossil fuels. Let us also bear in mind that the power sector emits only about 39 per cent of the CO2 and that we need to simultaneously pursue other avenues as well, such as, adoption of EVs and green hydrogen if we are serious about being net-zero by 2070. On the renewable front, imposition of basic custom duties and insistence on the list of approved manufacturers need to be looked into afresh. We need to prioritise whether we want to handhold a few domestic manufacturers of solar cells and modules or ensure low-cost, rapid growth of renewable capacity. States need to make land acquisition processes simpler and also ensure regular payments to the renewable generators. Access to the grid has to be ensured. Rooftop solar needs special attention in the form of easier finance. The next power ministers' conference should have only one agenda for discussion – how to promote renewable capacity. Lastly, there should be no flip-flop in policy announcements. One can't announce today that 80 GW of additional coal based capacity is required to meet our demand of 2030 after having announced just six months ago that no new coal-based capacity will be commissioned in the next five years apart from what is already under construction.

The writer is senior visiting fellow, ICRIER and former member (Economic & Commercial), CEA. Views are personal

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### A HERCULEAN TASK

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A green fiscal blueprint' (IE, December 13). As the 16th Finance Commission led by Arvind Panagariya steps in, it faces a Herculean task exacerbated by the silent fiscal crisis. To strengthen public trust and ensure effective implementation of its recommendations, the Finance Commission should prioritise transparency and accountability in its operations. This could involve publishing detailed reports on its deliberations, making data and analysis readily accessible to the public, and establishing clear mechanisms for stakeholder engagement. The Finance Commission should consider recommending measures to alleviate the states' burden, such as expanding the scope of tax devolution, providing targeted grants for specific developmental programs, and incentivising states to adopt fiscal reforms that promote efficiency and resource optimisation.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

#### DEMOCRACY TESTED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The fifth term challenge' (IE, January 13). The elections in Bangladesh, though marked by an opposition boycott, were bereft of both spirit and substance. It is sad that a nation that had consistently recorded a voter turnout of 80 per cent-plus barely touched 40 per cent this time. This comes in an era where there is a trend of executive heads of democratic nations increasingly being impatient with the constraints of the parliamentary process. Given the compulsions of swift geopolitical currents and a growing

economy, arguably a martinet governance is being preferred and pursued in earnest.

SS Paul, Nadia

#### RAM AND THE STATE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'An invitation in bad faith' (IE, January 13). The invitation for the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22 has been extended to VIPs from all walks of life. If many Shankaracharya have refused to attend the ceremony, finding it inauspicious, politicians have declined by calling it a BJP-RSS political event. But how will this event measure up to the ideals of Ram and the Constitution? Is it the government's job to promote one religion under the secular Constitution of India?

LR Murmu, New Delhi

#### A POOR STRATEGY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'RSVP regrets' (IE, January 12). Congress's decision to skip the consecration of the Ram Temple is in line with, failing prey to the setups by the BJP, the party's poor political strategy in the last decade. It's laughable when Congress talks about religion being a "personal matter" after Rahul Gandhi's "janeyu flaunting pujas" didn't bear political fruits. Congress must accept that religion is an undetachable part of Indian society and it's bound to have political repercussions. If not Hindutva, then Congress have to define its way to embrace Hinduism. But discarding it altogether will not help its cause.

Kiran B Ransing, Ahmadnagar



ABHIJIT SINGH

## The pirate resurgence

Regional navies are struggling to keep up with attacks on merchant ships



THE WRITER

The Navy also deployed a P-8I maritime patrol aircraft and an MQ-9B drone to monitor the operation and send in live footage. Within hours, the Indian Navy's marine commandos boarded the Lila Norfolk and rescued all 21 crew members, including 15 Indians.

The operation, live-streamed from a drone, is making waves on social media. The Indian Navy has received deserved praise for its prompt and effective response. The operation was a self-assured demonstration of capability to deliver security in the face of adversity. Nonetheless, the resurgence of piracy has placed India and other regional states under immense strain. The attempted takeover of Lila Norfolk is only the latest in a series of pirate hijackings since November 2023. In the past six weeks, attacks on merchant ships have become increasingly common, and regional navies are struggling to keep up.

Theories abound about why piracy in the western Indian Ocean is witnessing a surge. One explanation is that the pirates are taking advantage of the security shift from the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea. Notwithstanding the successes of the past decade, observers say anti-piracy operations have failed to decisively address Somalia's piracy problem. In recent years, international maritime presence in the Gulf of Aden has progressively fallen, shifting the security burden to a select few navies. Following the termination of NATO's anti-piracy mission in 2016, the onus of security in

the Gulf of Aden has fallen on the US-led coalition, some EU maritime forces, and independent actors such as the Indian Navy and the Chinese navy. Yet, as international focus has shifted to the Red Sea, the mission in the waters of Somalia has been increasingly hard – not only due to a lack of capacity but also because regional navies have tended to regard anti-piracy operations as a bare-bones act required to reassure international shippers. The growing frequency of attacks in the Gulf of Aden has called into question their assumption that piracy in Somali waters stands eradicated and is unlikely to recur.

It merits mentioning that the socio-economic realities that underpin Somali piracy remain. Research shows that international fishing vessels continue to illegally exploit fish off Somalia's coastline. Foreign fishing vessels still harvest tuna stocks in Somali waters, leaving little for coastal fishing communities. The revival of piracy could well be chalked down to the fact that when people have little, crime is the only way. That does not detract from the complexity of piracy or the reality that no theory fully captures its essence. Whatever the real reasons behind the recent spurt in attacks, shipping companies, and regional navies must brace for tough times ahead.

The writer is head of the Maritime Policy Initiative at ORF, New Delhi

**AHEAD OF RAM TEMPLE CONSECRATION, BJP LAUNCHES CLEANLINESS DRIVE IN TEMPLES**

**Jan 22 will mark the fulfilment of work to establish Ram Rajya: Yogi**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, JANUARY 14

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Sunday said that the opening of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 will mark the fulfillment of the work that began in 2014 to establish Ram Rajya in the country.

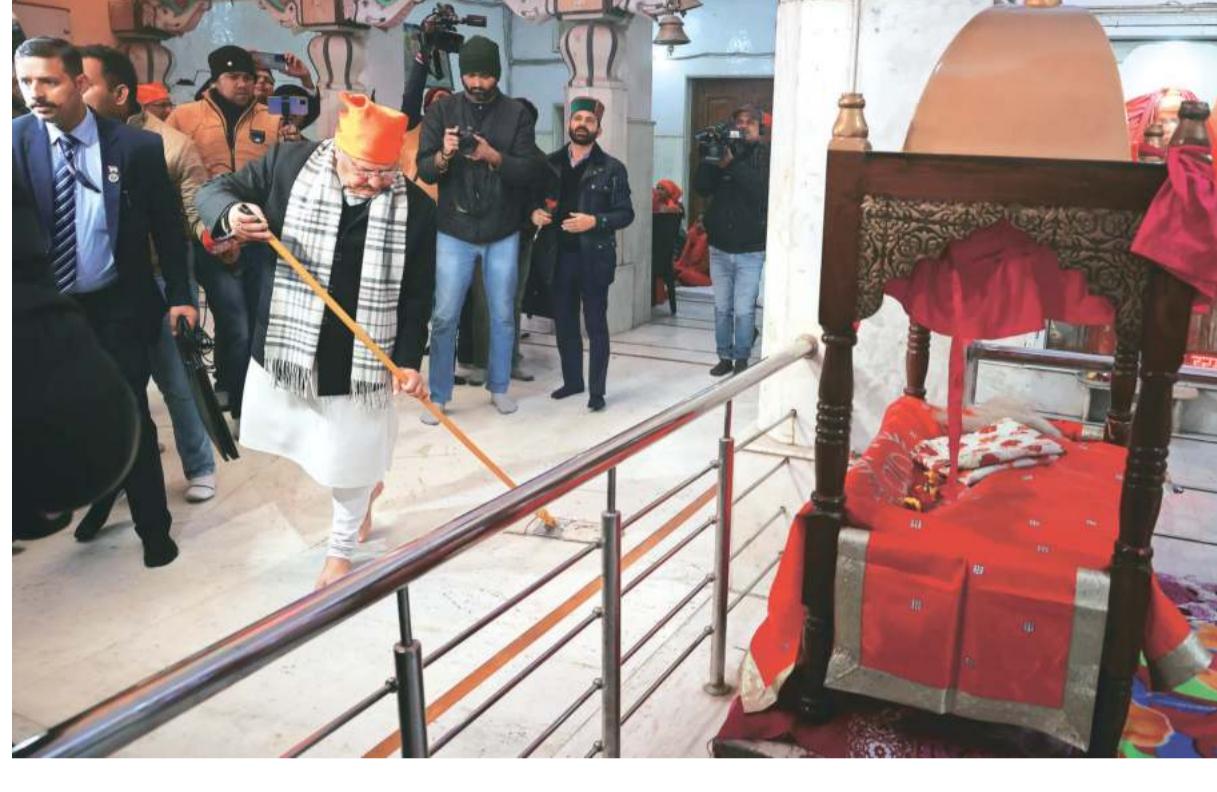
Taking part in various events, including the launch of 50 electric buses and 26 e-rickshaws, in Ayodhya, the chief minister said: "January 22 is not only a day to honour the country's faith and devotion, but also it is a sacred day to restore the pride and honour of the country... When Lord Shri Ram will be seated in his magnificent temple after 500 years, it will not only mark the establishment of Ram Rajya in Ayodhya but also the fulfillment of the work that began in 2014 to establish it throughout the country and the state."

"Our generation has received this opportunity... The country and the world are eagerly looking forward to the event (consecration ceremony)," he added.

The chief minister, who took part in BJP's cleanliness drive — Swachh Teerth Campaign — at the Lata Mangeshkar Chowk in Ayodhya, said: "This cleanliness campaign will continue across the state until January 21. From January 16 to January 22, there will be the continuous recitation of Ramayana and Ram Sankirtan in every temple. Whether at home or in temples, in villages



UP CM Yogi Adityanath during the cleanliness drive in Ayodhya on Sunday. PTI

**BUILDING FERVOUR**

BJP president JP Nadda cleans the premises of Guru Ravidas Mandir in Delhi on Sunday. Through the cleanliness drive in temples, the BJP is looking to build up fervour in the run-up to the consecration of the Ram temple. Amit Mehra

or cities, everyone is encouraged to participate in the recitation."

Urging the people to watch the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on TV on January 22, Adityanath said, "Later, when they get the opportunity, they can come to Ayodhya and have the darshan of Lord Ram. We will be delighted to welcome them."

"Since Ayodhya is currently going through a phase of reconstruction, it would be good if there was no VIP movement here before January 22. After the consecration ceremony, when people come here, they should not face any inconvenience," he said.

On infrastructure and beautification projects underway in Ayodhya, Adityanath said: "The widening of roads, railway lines, airport facilities, along with electric buses, will enhance the shine of Ayodhya."

**In run-up to Ayodhya event, Dhami opens cultural fest at Kainchi Dham**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

DEHRADUN, JANUARY 14

UTTARAKHAND CHIEF Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami inaugurated a "cultural festival" in the state in Kainchi Dham on Sunday and asked people to join the campaign by running a cleanliness drive in Kainchi Dham and Ghorakhal temples.

Dhami started the campaign by cleaning Ram Shila in Kainchi Dham and offered prayers. He said January 22, when the Ram



Uttarakhand CM Dhami during the cleanliness drive at Kainchi Dham in Nainital on Sunday. ANI

temple in Ayodhya will be consecrated, will be a historic day. The Uttarakhand government has announced a dry day on January 22.

Dhami appreciated the work of paryavaran mitras involved in the cleanliness drive. He honoured schoolchildren, self-help groups, village heads and paryavaran mitras with citations.

Dhami said the number of devotees coming to Kainchi Dham is increasing every day and his government is preparing a masterplan for it.

**BRIEFLY****MAHARASHTRA**  
**Opp to Centre: Sack Rane for remark on seers**

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena (UBT) has demanded the dismissal of Union minister Narayan Rane from the Narendra Modi cabinet for questioning the "contribution" of Shankaracharyas to the Hindu religion. The party also sought a public apology from the BJP ahead of the consecration of Ram temple in Ayodhya over Rane's comments. "No one could do it until now. Modi and the BJP took it up and a temple is being built. Should they bless the temple or criticise it? It means Shankaracharyas look at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP through a political prism. This temple is not built on politics but on religion. Ram is our God," Rane had said. PTI

**UTTAR PRADESH**  
**Gita Press: Download holy book for free**

Gorakhpur: The Gita Press will allow free download of Ramcharitmanas from its website as it is unable to meet an increased demand for the holy book ahead of the January 22 Ram temple consecration ceremony, an official said. Giving a comparison, he said in 2022, it had printed and distributed around 75,000 copies of the Ramcharitmanas. Since the announcement of the date of the "Pran Pratistha", the demand for the book has increased manifold, the official said. We cannot suddenly print and provide 2 lakh to 4 lakh copies of the book, he said. PTI

**Roll-out of new criminal laws: Bhalla meets UT police chiefs**

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14



Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla

ordinate with them and also for the training," an official said, adding that Bhalla specifically is also learnt to have directed them to aware women and girls about the new laws after visiting schools and colleges.

Director-General of Police (Puducherry), Dr B Srinivas told *The Indian Express* that they have started a training course for their personnel. "We are also calling judicial officers from Chennai to give training to our police personnel. We have also decided to start an awareness programme and will distribute pamphlets, mentioning about the changes in law, so that people will get to know about the changes as well as law," he said.

In the DG conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi exhorted the state police chiefs to think imaginatively to convey the emotional spirit behind the newly enacted laws to different sections of society. Laying emphasis on sensitizing women and girls about rights and protection provided to them under the new criminal laws, he exhorted the police to focus on women safety by ensuring that women could work fearlessly "kabhi bhi aur kahin bhi (anywhere and anytime)".

In the meeting, Bhalla also discussed the upgrade of the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) and their Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS). "Some of the DGP's also informed that they have formed several committees in their UTs to assess the upgrade of infrastructure and also to make modules," an official said.

**Budget hiked, Agri Ministry returned over Rs 1L cr in 5 yrs****Amid BJP's Ram temple push, INDIA plays social justice card: Caste pitch to Karpoori events**

'Kamandal' vs 'Mandal' politics may escalate ahead of LS polls

LALMANI VERMA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

THE OPPOSITION INDIA alliance is looking to take on the ruling BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections on the plank of social justice, especially in Bihar which has a long history of socialist politics.

The coming weeks would mark a resurgence of conflict between the BJP and the Opposition parties over "Kamandal" versus "Mandal" politics. This is set to see an escalation in the next 10 days, which will see three crucial developments—the opening of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22, the launch of the Congress's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra by Rahul Gandhi from Manipur on January 14, and the birth anniversary celebrations of socialist icon Karpoori Thakur in Bihar by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (U).

In the course of Rahul's two-month-long yatra, the Congress will raise the issues related to "arthik nyay, samajik nyay and raja-nitik nyay (economic, social and

political justice)".

The Congress has invited its INDIA bloc allies to join the yatra in their strongholds, which would also rouse up their demand for a nationwide caste census.

On October 2 last year, the Nitish-led Mahagathbandhan government, which includes Lalu Prasad-led RJD and the Congress among others, released the data of a caste survey in Bihar in which Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) were found to make up over 63% of the state's population. These findings strengthened the demand of the INDIA parties for a caste count.

Facing the "Mandal pressure", the BJP central leadership called a meeting of its Chief Ministers and senior OBC leaders in November to discuss the "advantages and disadvantages" of the party's current position of not going for a caste count.

Meanwhile, the JD(U) is now gearing up for commemoration of Karpoori's birth anniversary on a grand scale in Bihar in a bid to give a fresh push to the cause

of social justice. The JD(U) will hold various programmes and events during January 22-24 to mark Karpoori's birth anniversary, which will encompass Patna as well as his village Pitaunjhia—now renamed Karpoori Gram—in Samastipur district. Nitish will attend some of these events. Karpoori's son and JD(U) MP Ram Nath Thakur said that there will be a seminar, "Karpoori Charchha", in Karpuri Gram on January 22.

Karpoori, a two-time Bihar CM and a towering socialist leader, is widely considered as the pioneer of OBC and EBC reservations in the country.

As the CM in 1978, Thakur implemented a layered reservation regime, despite resistance from the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, a major constituent of the then Janata Party government.

"After B R Ambedkar, only Karpoori Thakur had raised the issue of reservation and social justice effectively," said the JD(U) chief spokesperson K C Tyagi.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
**www.indianexpress.com**

**In Kerala, Cong caught between rock and a hard place over invite**

SHAJU PHILIP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

JANUARY 14

THE DECISION of the Congress to keep away from the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya has left the party in a sticky situation in Kerala.

When the invitation was sent to the Congress, party leaders from Kerala were in the forefront demanding a boycott of the event, sensing the uneasiness among Muslims on the issue. But with two prominent Hindu organisations in Kerala hailing the ceremony, the Congress now fears the anger of its Hindu base.

Soon after the Congress national leadership "respectfully declined" the invitation extended to its leaders to attend the event, the prominent Kerala Hindu outfit Nair Service Society (NSS) said: "It was the duty of every faithful to take part in the Ram Temple consecration ceremony." Asking the faithful to do the same, NSS general secretary G Sukumaran Nair went on to say, "Boycotting the consecration event, based on politics, would amount to blasphemy. If political parties or org-

ganisations oppose the consecration, it would only be because of their (desire for) political gain."

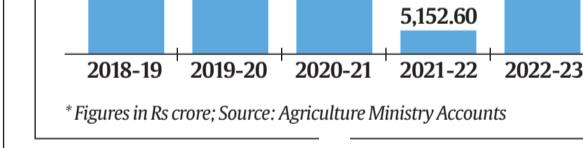
The NSS is traditionally known as pro-Congress, and several senior party leaders, including K C Venugopal, Shashi Tharoor, Opposition leader V D Sathesan and former opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala, belong to the Nair community.

Close on the heels of the NSS, the influential backward Hindu Ezhava organisation, Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNPD), urged the faithful to light up their homes on the consecration day. Its general secretary Vellappally Natesan said the sentiment of every Hindu was attached to the Ram Temple.

"Any force standing against that sentiment would get washed away," Natesan said.

If the CPI(M) has little to lose, the BJP has only to gain on the issue, with the Ram Temple helping it consolidate the Hindus behind it while projecting the Congress, with its ally IUML, as anti-Hindu. The BJP is also set to use it to strengthen its outreach towards the Christians.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
**www.indianexpress.com**

**FUNDS SURRENDERED**

\* Figures in Rs crore; Source: Agriculture Ministry Accounts

the financial year 2018-19, the combined budget of the two departments, under the Agriculture Ministry, increased from Rs 54,000 crore (or 2.3% of the Centre's total budget of Rs 24,42 lakh crore) in 2018-19 to Rs 132 lakh crore (or 3.5% of the total Rs 39,44 lakh crore during 2022-23).

The scheme's annual allocation has been in the range of Rs 20,000 crore to Rs 75,000 crore over the last five years.

The government, however, marginally reduced the ministry's total allocation to 1.25 lakh crore during the current financial year 2023-24 from Rs 132 lakh crore in 2022-23, perhaps due to non-utilisation of funds.

The issue of fund surrender by the Agriculture Ministry has also been highlighted by the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing, headed by P C Gadigoudar, asking the government to "avoid" the "practices" of fund surrender.

The panel report Demand for Grants (2023-24) of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, which also comes under the ministry, has surrendered Rs 9 lakh of its total allocation of Rs 8,658.91 crore in 2022-23, Rs 1.81 crore in 2021-22, Rs 600 crore in 2020-21, Rs 232.62 crore in 2019-20 and Rs 7.9 crore in 2018-19.

With the Centre launching the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi during

**Uttarakhand likely to be first state to implement UCC, says Rajnath Singh**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW, JANUARY 14

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh Sunday said Uttarakhand is likely to become the first state in the country to implement a Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

A UCC for Uttarakhand was one of the major promises made by the BJP in the run-up to the state assembly elections held in 2022.

Addressing a gathering at the "Uttarayani Kauthuk" programme organised by people who hail from Uttarakhand, Rajnath Singh said, "I think if some state is going to become first in implementing uniform civil code, it will be Uttarakhand."

The Union minister, however, did not elaborate on this.

After being voted to power for a second consecutive term, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami gave his nod to setting up a committee headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Ranjana Prakash Desai to draft the UCC at the very first cabinet meeting headed by him.

**Section 144 imposed in Arunachal's Namsai district as 2 groups clash**

SUKRITA BARUAH

GUWAHATI, JANUARY 14

AUTHORITIES IMPOSED restrictions on public gatherings in parts of Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district on Sunday as tensions prevailed after a clash at Namsai Bazaar Saturday night left multiple people injured. A pilgrimage route that passed through Namsai to Parshuram Kund, a major Hindu pilgrimage site in Lohit district, was also diverted.

As per a precautionary measure, the Namsai district administration issued prohibitory orders under section 144 of the CrPC on Sunday. According to the order, a "serious law and order problem" arose because of a "clash between All Tai Khamti Singpho Youths and Adivasi Youths of Namsai".

As a precautionary measure, the Namsai district administration issued prohibitory orders under section 144 of the CrPC on Sunday. According to the order, a "serious law and order problem" arose because of a "clash between All Tai Khamti Singpho Youths and Adivasi Youths of Namsai".

संचालनालय स्वास्थ्य सेवाएँ

कार्यालय जय प्रकाश चिकित्सालय 1250 कैम्पस भोपाल, (मध्य)

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना क्रमांक 3/2023-24/71

भोपाल, दिनांक 4/1/2024

संचालनालय स्वास्थ्य सेवाएँ, मध्य की ओर से निम्नलिखित कार्यालयोंका लिये निविदा पोर्टल अनलाइन

(निविदा ई-टेंडरिंग के माध्यम) से [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) (Department:- Directorate of Health Services) में निम्नलिखित निविदा प्रपत्र "3" कार्यालय में परसेटेंट वेसिस पर तीव्र लिपिका पद्धति से प्रोजेक्ट डिपार



प्रधानमंत्री भारती

# Good Governance

**Modi's Guarantee delivered in one Month**

Free housing for over  
**18 lakh poor families.**

Paddy procurement  
bonus of Rs. 3716 crores to  
**13 lakh farmers.**

Purchase of 21 quintals  
of paddy per acre at the rate  
of ₹ 3100 from farmers.

Free water connections for  
**50 lakh rural families.**

Free rations for  
**69.92 lakh poor families**  
for the next five years.

Rs. 1200 crore allocated  
for women empowerment  
( Mahatari Vandana Yojana)

CBI investigation into  
irregularities in the PSC exam.

Construction of another  
state of the art library  
( Nalanda Parisar) for students .

Free of cost Darshan tour  
for pilgrims from Chhattisgarh  
to Ayodhya for the  
darshan of Ramlala.



**Shri Vishnu Deo Sai**  
Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

हमने बनाया है  
हम ही संवारेंगे

**Shri Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister of India

सबका साथ-सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास



Donald Trump, AP

**Trump criticises Ramaswamy publicly ahead of Iowa caucus**

**Washington:** Former US president Donald Trump for the first time has lashed out at his rival Vivek Ramaswamy, who is most closely aligned with him in the race for the Republican nomination, accusing the Indian-American entrepreneur of engaging in "deceitful campaign tricks". Trump's remarks came ahead of the Iowa caucuses on Monday, marking the beginning of the long process by which the Republicans and Democrats choose their nominees for the presidential election. The comments come after a series of remarks and posts by Ramaswamy, 38, that have angered Trump and his team.

PTI

**SRI LANKA**  
**12 Indian fishermen held for 'poaching'**

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 12 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, an official statement said on Sunday. The fishermen were arrested, and their three trawlers seized on Saturday off the coast of Karainagar in the northern Jaffna peninsula, the Navy said in a release. They were escorted to the Kankesanthurai harbour for further action, it said.

PTI

**SOUTH KOREA**  
**Seoul: North Korea launched ballistic missile**

**Seoul:** North Korea fired a ballistic missile toward the sea on Sunday, its first missile launch in about a month, its neighbour said. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the launch occurred Sunday but gave no further details like how far the weapon flew. Japan's Defence Ministry also said it detected a possible ballistic missile launch by North Korea but gave no other details. It is the North's first missile launch since it test-fired its Hwasong-18 solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile, the North's most advanced weapon, on Dec. 18. The Hwasong-18 is designed to strike the US.

AP

**UNITED KINGDOM**  
**5 migrants die trying to cross English Channel**

**London:** At least five illegal migrants were killed in French waters early on Sunday when their boat overturned while trying to cross the English Channel, authorities said. Around 70 people were trying to board a small boat attempting to launch near Wimereux beach, Pas-de-Calais, when it overturned, French media reports said. The migrants got into trouble almost immediately after the boat departed the French coast for England at around 02:00 local time (01:00 GMT), the French Maritime Prefecture said.

PTI

# THE WORLD

**FIRE FROM LEBANON KILLS TWO ISRAELI CIVILIANS**

## No one, not even The Hague, can halt war against Hamas, says Netanyahu

Thousands protest in Washington, London, Paris, demand end to war

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
RAFAH, GAZA STRIP, JAN 14

**ISRAEL** WILL pursue its war against Hamas until victory and will not be stopped by anyone, including the world court, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a defiant speech Saturday, as the fighting in Gaza approached the 100-day mark.

Netanyahu spoke after the International Court of Justice at The Hague held two days of hearings on South Africa's allegations that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians, a charge Israel has rejected as libelous and hypocritical.

South Africa asked the court to order Israel to halt its blistering air and ground offensive in an interim step. "No one will stop us, not The Hague, not the axis of evil and not anyone else," Netanyahu said in televised remarks Saturday evening, referring to Iran and its allied militias. The case before the world court is expected to go on for years, but a ruling on interim steps could come within weeks.

Court rulings are binding but difficult to enforce. Netanyahu made clear that Israel would ignore orders to halt the fighting, potentially deepening its isolation. Israel has been under growing international pressure to end the war, which has killed more

than 23,000 Palestinians in Gaza and led to widespread suffering in the besieged enclave, but has so far been shielded by US diplomatic and military support.

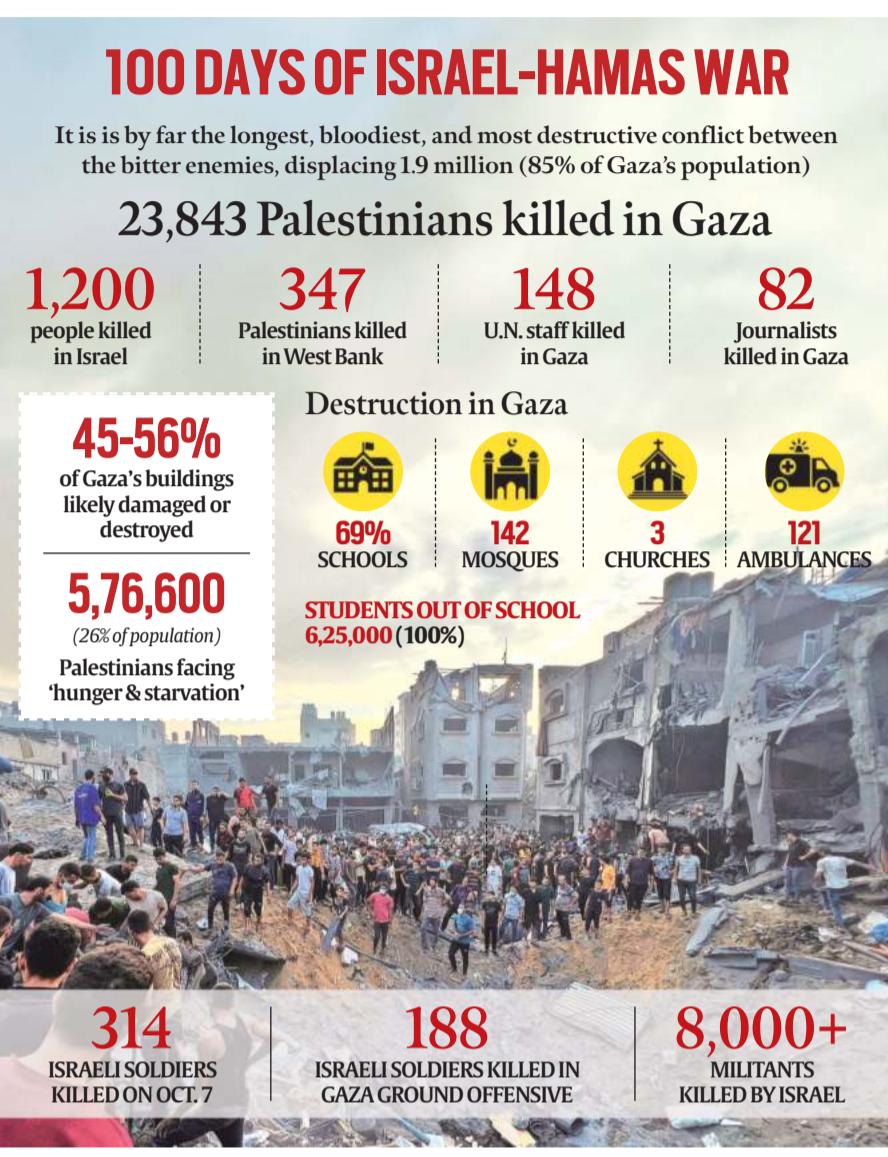
Thousands took to the streets of Washington, London, Paris, Rome, Milan and Dublin on Saturday to demand an end to the war. Protesters converging on the White House held aloft signs questioning President Joe Biden's viability as a presidential candidate because of his staunch support for Israel during the war.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu and his army chief, Herzl Halevi, said they have no immediate plans to allow the return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza, the initial focus of Israel's offensive.

Netanyahu said Israel would eventually need to close what he said were breaches along Gaza's border with Egypt.

Two civilians were killed in northern Israel Sunday after an anti-tank missile fired from Lebanon hit their home in a town near the border, raising new concerns of a second conflict.

Sunday's missile strike came a day after the Israeli army said it killed three militants who had crossed into Israel from Lebanon and attempted to carry out an attack. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, said that his group won't stop until a cease-fire is in place for Gaza.



**Ex-mayor's jail time cut short after he agrees to fight Ukraine**

**Moscow:** A disgraced former Russian mayor convicted over bribery had his prison sentence cut short after signing a contract to fight with Russia's military in Ukraine, local media reported on Sunday.

Oleg Gumennyuk, who served as mayor of the far eastern city and cultural hub of Vladivostok between 2018 and 2021, was convicted last year of accepting bribes worth 38 million roubles (about USD 432,000) and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment.

However, he was released after agreeing to bear arms and fight as part of his country's military operation in Ukraine that started nearly two years ago, his lawyer Andrei Kitaev told Russian news outlet Kommersant.

AP

Gumennyuk was released after agreeing to bear arms and fight as part of his country's military operation in Ukraine that started nearly two years ago, his lawyer Andrei Kitaev told Russian news outlet Kommersant.

AP

**Sri Lanka to continue drug bust despite UN concerns**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
COLOMBO, JANUARY 14

**SRI LANKA** police Sunday said that they would launch a new phase of the controversial drug bust operation despite concerns raised by the UN Human Rights chief over its fairness. Police said they were targeting 42,248 suspects identified as criminals.

"All police stations must work 24 hours a day for the next

one month to arrest 42,248 suspects," a statement said.

On Saturday, the UN Human Rights body slammed Sri Lanka police's ongoing operation to curb the narcotics menace and called on the government to reassess strategy with a human rights-based approach. "A staggering 29,000 people have reportedly been arrested since December 17, with allegations that some have been subjected to torture," the UN said.

The UN said the operation

**Denmark's King Frederik X takes throne as his mother steps down**

**REUTERS**  
COPENHAGEN, JANUARY 14

**DENMARK'S KING** Frederik X ascended the throne on Sunday, succeeding his mother, Queen Margrethe II, who formally abdicated after 52 years as monarch, with big crowds gathered in the capital to witness history.

Margrethe, 83, stunned the



King Frederik and Queen Mary with Prince Christian in Copenhagen on Sunday

she announced she planned to become the first Danish monarch in nearly 900 years to voluntarily relinquish the throne.

The succession was formalized during a meeting of the Council of State at parliament, the royal palace said.

Denmark, one of the oldest monarchies in the world, does not have a coronation.

**Day after elections, Taipei and Beijing trade barbs amid visit by US team**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
TAIPEI, JANUARY 14

A WAR of words erupted the day after Taiwan's presidential and parliamentary elections, with Taiwan Sunday accusing China of making "fallacious comments" and China criticising the US for congratulating the winner.

The verbal sparring highlighted the seemingly intractable divide over Taiwan's fate, a major flashpoint in US-China relations.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement on the election that "the Taiwan question is China's internal affair" and "the basic fact that ... Taiwan is part of China will not change".

Taiwan said that statement "is completely inconsistent with international understanding and the current cross-strait situation. It goes against the expectation of global democratic communities and goes against the will of the people of Taiwan to uphold democratic values. Such clichés are not worth refuting".

The US, in a statement attributed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, congratulated Lai on his victory and said it looks forward to working with all of Taiwan's leaders "to advance our shared interests and values".

China's Foreign Ministry said the US statement "sends a gravely wrong signal to the Taiwan independence' separatist forces" and

THE VICTORY of Lai Ching-te in Saturday's election was a setback for China's efforts to bring Taiwan under its control. His Democratic Progressive Party advocates maintaining the status quo, in which Taiwan governs itself but refrains from declaring formal independence. China calls for what it terms a "peaceful reunification", but that seems unrealistic as most Taiwanese have come to oppose becoming part of China.

goes against a US commitment to maintaining only unofficial ties with Taiwan.

Meanwhile, former US national security adviser Stephen Hadley and former Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg arrived in Taipei on Sunday for meetings with political leaders.

It was unclear how China would react. They will have meetings on Monday, the American Institute in Taiwan, the de-facto US embassy, said in a news release. The institute said the US government had asked Hadley and Steinberg "to travel in their private capacity to Taiwan".

**Old pillars and some surprises: Macron's new Cabinet tilts right**

**THE NEW YORK TIMES**  
PARIS, JANUARY 14

**PRESIDENT EMMANUEL** Macron of France convened a new, smaller cabinet for the first time on Friday, a day after a government reshuffle that brought in a handful of new ministers — including one poached from the right and a Europe-focused foreign minister — but that left most key positions untouched.

The new cabinet was announced on Thursday evening just days after Macron appointed Gabriel Attal, 34, as the new prime minister, an attempt to reinvigorate his second term after a year of successful, but politically bruising, pension and immigration overhauls.

The most unexpected announcement was the appointment of Rachida Dati as culture minister. She is also under investigation in a corruption case involving Carlos Ghosn, the disgraced former chief executive of the car manufacturers Nissan and Renault. Dati had been extremely critical of Macron in the past. She was expelled from her party, the right-wing Republicans, after her appointment on Thursday.

Macron signaled a focus on



President Emmanuel Macron with Catherine Vautrin, the new minister for labour, health and solidarities; and Sébastien Lecornu, the defence minister. NYT

**BLAS JAIME HAS SPENT TWO DECADES RESURRECTING CHANÁ, AN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE IN ARGENTINA**

**This language was believed extinct, then a man spoke up: I am here**

**NATALIE ALCoba**  
PARANÁ, (ARGENTINA), JAN 14

AS a boy, Blas Omar Jaime spent many afternoons learning about his ancestors. Over yerba mate and torta fritas, his mother, Ederlinda Miguelina Yélom, passed along the knowledge she had stored in Chaná, a throaty language spoken by barely moving the lips or tongue.

The Chaná are an Indigenous people in Argentina and Uruguay whose lives were intertwined with the mighty Paraná River, the second longest in South America.

They revered silence, considered birds their guardians and sang their babies lullabies: Utala 'tapey-e', ua'utala' dioi — sleep little one, the sun has gone to sleep.

Miguelina Yélom urged her son to protect their stories by keeping them secret. So it was not until decades later, recently retired and seeking out people with whom he could chat, that he made a startling discovery: No one else seemed to speak Chaná. Scholars had long considered the language extinct.

"I said: 'I exist. I am here,'" said Jaime, now 89, sitting in his sparse kitchen on the outskirts



Blas Omar Jaime and his daughter Evangelina Jaime raising their hands to perform a traditional Chaná greeting. NYT

of Paraná, a midsize city in the Argentine province of Entre Ríos. Those words kicked off a journey for Jaime, who has spent nearly two decades resurrecting Chaná and, in many ways, placing the Indigenous group back on the map. For UNESCO, whose mission includes the preservation of languages, he is a crucial vault of knowledge.

His painstaking work with a linguist has produced a dictionary of roughly 1,000 Chaná words. For people of Indigenous ancestry in Argentina, he is a beacon that has inspired many to connect with their history. And for Argentina, he is part of an important, if still fraught, reckoning over its history of colonization and Indigenous erasure. "Language is what gives you identity," Jaime said. "If someone doesn't have their language, they're not a people."

Along the way, Jaime has had brushes of celebrity. The subject of several documentaries, he has delivered a TED Talk, lent his face and voice to a coffee brand and has appeared in an educational cartoon about the Chaná. Last year, a recording of him speaking Chaná echoed across downtown Buenos Aires as part of an artist project that sought to honor Argentina's Indigenous history. Now, a passing of the guard is underway, to his daughter Evangelina Jaime, who has learned Chaná from her father and is teaching it to others. "It's generations and generations of silence," said Ms. Jaime, 46. "But we won't be silent anymore." Archaeologists trace the presence of Chaná people back roughly 2,000 years in what is now the Argentine provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Entre Ríos, as well as parts of present-day Uruguay. The first European record of the Chaná was made in the 16th century by Spanish explorers.

NYT

**INVESTORS WITNESS A WEALTH APPRECIATION OF RS 430,000 CR IN ONE YEAR**

## Market value of 57 IPOs in 2023 up 870%, 52 trading at premium

**GEORGE MATHEW & HITESH VYAS**

MUMBAI, JANUARY 14

INVESTORS WHO put money in initial public offerings (IPOs) in 2023 have seen handsome appreciation in their investments after listing of shares on the stock exchanges. The market value of 57 IPOs listed in the last 12 months has shot up to Rs 479,656 crore, translating to an 870 per cent spurt in investor wealth as these companies raised only Rs 49,434 crore from the market through the IPOs.

This means investors, mainly promoters and institutional investors, have seen an overall appreciation of Rs 430,000 crore in their wealth from these IPOs.

Of the 57 companies listed on the stock exchanges in the last 12 months, share prices of only five companies are trading at a discount. Others have gained up to 236 per cent.

According to Pranav Haldea, Managing Director, PRIME Database Group, overall public equity fundraising increased by 59 per cent to Rs 1,44,283 crore in 2023 from Rs 90,886 crore in 2022. Of the 57 IPOs, 41 IPOs received a mega response of more than 10 times (of which 16 IPOs were subscribed by more than 50 times) while nine IPOs were oversubscribed by more than three times. The balance seven IPOs were oversubscribed between 1 to 3 times, he said.

The market capitalisation of Tata Technologies is now Rs 47,378 crore while they raised Rs 3,042 crore through the IPO. Its shares were at Rs 1,167.90 on January 12 as against the IPO price of Rs 500 per share. Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency's market capitalisation is at Rs 29,834 crore as against the IPO size of Rs 2,150 crore. Its share price was Rs 111 on January 12 as against the IPO price of Rs 32. Mankind Pharma's investor wealth is now Rs 88,970 crore as against the IPO size of 4,326 crore from the IPO price of Rs 1,080. Its share price shot up to Rs 2,221.

While promoters and institutional investors hold a lion's share of this gain through the listing, retail investors who have stayed invested have witnessed significant value appreciation. A retail investor who got 10 shares of Tata Tech shelled out Rs 5,000 in the IPO, and is now sitting on a gain of over Rs 6,000 as the market value of his 10 shares has gone up to Rs 11,679.

The good returns have led to huge oversubscriptions in most

**TOP GAINERS**

Company	IPO price#	Amount raised*	Market price#	%Gain	Market cap*
Motison Jewellers	55	151	223.81	236.33	2,203
IREDA	32	2,150	111	221.25	29,834
Signature Global	385	730	1,132.10	191.35	15,907
Netweb Tech	500	631	1,455.70	165.87	8,161
Cyient DLM	265	592	669.65	149.83	5,310
Utkarsh SFB	25	500	62.77	132.68	6,894
Tata Tech	500	3,042	1,167.90	132.66	47,378
Senco Gold	317	405	795.40	132.11	6,179
Mankind Pharma	1,080	4,326	2,221	99.12	88,970
JSW Infra	119	2,800	211.85	80.84	44,488

\* Rs crore, # Rs per share

IPOs. Learning from the past experience, issuers didn't opt for overpricing. "The IPO frenzy of the past few months has not stopped. Big names are flocking to the market, attracting the attention of business enthusiasts," said Mahavir Lunawat, Managing Director, Pantomath Capital Advisors. IPOs in recent times have transcended mere financial transactions, grabbing the attention of investors across the board and are no longer confined to just seasoned equity investors, he said. The IPO market was vibrant in 2023, following the bullish trend in the secondary market. 57 IPOs came to the market for subscription to raise funds worth Rs 49,434 crore against 40 IPOs last year (total issue size of Rs 64,000 crore).

Going ahead, the pipeline remains strong with sharp increase expected in new-age tech IPOs including Ola Electric, Swiggy and MobiKwik.

Why is the IPO market vibrant? The benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty gained around 18.74 per cent and 20.03 per cent during the calendar year 2023. As the performance of the IPO market is also linked to the stock market, IPOs have also done well, analysts say.

"Most IPOs last year were profitable for investors, as they were well-priced (buyers' market). The year 2023 was robust for the overall equity capital market (ECM), and the momentum is expected to continue over the next 12-24 months. Last year, we saw the advent of local investors, including mutual funds, insurance companies, family offices and retail entering the market," said S Ramesh, Managing Director and CEO of Kotak Investment Banking.

Moreover, GDP growth in the first half of FY24 stood at 7.7 per cent led by a robust print in manufacturing and investment sec-

tors. This led to the Reserve Bank of India revising its gross domestic product (GDP) forecast upwards to 7 per cent for FY24. Such optimistic expectations for real GDP growth have boosted the market. Even other high-frequency data points (GST collections, automobile sales, power demand and PMI data) witnessed robust growth. On the other hand, the first half of FY24 corporate earnings ended on a buoyant note with Nifty companies delivering 30 per cent YoY profit growth, according to a Motilal Oswal report.

The confidence of the investors regarding political continuity post 2024 Lok Sabha elections has received a big boost, it said, adding, "this augurs well for macro and policy momentum for India, which, at the moment, is seeing the highest growth among major economies (both GDP as well as corporate earnings)."

Kotak Investment Banking's Ramesh said this year fundraising activity may temporarily slow down due to the elections in India and the US, but the IPO momentum is unlikely to stop. While 2023 was the year of mid-cap IPOs with an average deal size of Rs 750-800 crore, this year, the average IPO size is expected to return to Rs 1,500 crore.

"We expect a diversified set of companies to hit the market this year, including larger financial and tech services, manufacturers, and infra companies going public. Additionally, new-age tech listings will happen in the next 12-24 months," Ramesh said.

Currently, under the PMAY-G, the beneficiaries are provided financial assistance of Rs 1.2 lakh in plains and Rs 1.3 lakh in hilly states – Northeastern states and union territories (UTs) of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh – as well as difficult areas and Integrated Action Plan (IAP) districts. Under the revamped scheme, the cash support will likely be enhanced to a maximum of Rs 2.39 lakh/housing unit, according to Motilal Oswal report.

The current version of PMAY-G will run only till the end of the current fiscal.

On November 29, 2023, the Union Cabinet approved Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN), under which Rs 2.39 lakh/unit is given for the provision of pucca houses to improve socio-economic conditions of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs).

"Keeping in mind the escalation in cost, a similar cash support will likely be given in the new version of PMAY-G. Construction of new housing units over an extended period will also boost the rural economy," an official told FE. The cash support could be similar to what

**MARKET WATCH****MCAP OF 5 OF TOP-10 COS JUMPS**

New Delhi: Five of the top-10 most-valued firms added Rs 1,99,111.06 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest gainer, in tandem with bullish sentiments. PTI

## Govt likely to unveil new PMAY-G version with 85% higher financial assistance

**PRASANTA SAHU**

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14



Under the revamped scheme, the cash support will likely be enhanced to an average of Rs 2.39 lakh/housing unit. File

is being offered under PM JANMAN, the official added.

An announcement could be expected in interim Budget 2024-25 to be presented in Parliament on February 1.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that uplifting the poor, youth, women and farmers are his priority areas to make the country a developed nation.

The current version of PMAY-G will run only till the end of the current fiscal.

With the PMAY-Urban scheme also ending in March this year, the Centre will likely launch a revamped urban affordable housing keeping in mind the escalation in costs. Accordingly, it may unveil a new ₹60,000 crore interest subsidy scheme for the urban poor and middle class for five years. It will offer interest subvention of 3-6 per cent per annum on home loan amounts up to Rs 50,00,000. The extant scheme offered interest subvention to home loans up to Rs 18 lakh.

To achieve the target of 'Housing for All' in rural areas, the Centre rolled out PMAY-G on April 1, 2016, to assist in constructing 29.5 million pucca houses with basic amenities. Out of the overall target, 29.46 million houses have been sanctioned to states, out of which, 25.4 million houses have been completed as of January 14, 2024.

The government may save around Rs 18,000 crore in PMAY-G in the current financial year as some states are not eligible to get funds, either for failing the eligibility conditions or not implementing the scheme.

The government has budgeted Rs 54,487 crore for PMAY-G in FY24, the highest annual allocation after the launch of the scheme in 2016.

The expected savings in PMAY-G would cover the additional allocation of Rs 16,143 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the first supplementary demand for grants, which was approved by the Lok Sabha in December. FE

## Accelerated market entry: Govt permits parallel testing for electronics from manufacturers

**JATIN GROVER**

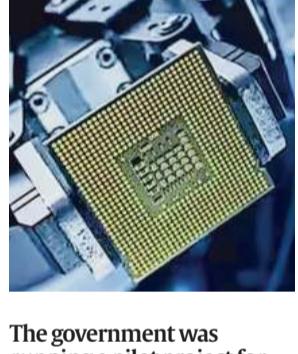
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

PRODUCTS OF electronics and mobile manufacturers like Samsung, Apple, Xiaomi, Lenovo, Dell, boAt, among others, can now reach the market faster as the government has allowed parallel testing of 64 electronic devices, which includes mobile phones, wireless earphones, headphones, laptops, notebooks, and tablets.

As per the Compulsory Registration Scheme (CRS), electronic products, whether imported or manufactured locally, require to be mandatorily tested and need security approvals from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), before being deployed in the final product and sold to consumers.

Over the last one year, the government was running a pilot project for parallel testing of components, moving away from the system of sequential testing. In parallel testing, different components are simultaneously tested unlike sequential testing where the tests are done one after another.

As a result, components can be deployed and products can



The government was running a pilot project for parallel testing of components.

File

reach market faster in parallel testing compared to sequential testing.

According to industry executives, the entire compliance process can now be completed within four to 13 weeks against 16-21 weeks in the case of sequential testing.

"Under parallel testing, the lab will test the first component and issue test report. This test report number along with the name of the lab will be mentioned in the test report of the second component. This proce-

dure will be followed for subsequent components and final product also," BIS said in a recent notification on the subject.

Electronics Industry association MAIT, which represents the information technology (IT), mobile, datacom and consumer electronics companies has called the move by BIS progressive.

"The voluntary adoption of parallel testing not only streamlines the compliance process for manufacturers but also significantly accelerates the go-to-market strategy compared to the traditional sequential testing methodology," said Suhail Zaidi, director general of MAIT.

"This initiative enhances the speed of doing business, allowing companies to introduce cutting-edge products to Indian consumers more swiftly, thus contributing to the success of the Make in India mission," Zaidi added.

Under the pilot project in September 2022, initially the parallel testing was allowed only for mobile phones. The scheme was later extended to include wireless earphones, headphones, laptops, notebooks, and tablets. FE

can be largely attributed to investors booking profit with Indian equity market trading near its all-time high level, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Adviser.

Moreover, uncertainty over the interest rate scenario could have also prompted them to stay on the sidelines and wait for further cues, before taking investment decision with respect to investing in emerging markets like India, he said.

The investment has slowed down compared to Rs 66,134 crore attracted in the entire December.

Before that, FPIs invested Rs 9,000 crore in November.

According to data with the depositories, foreign investors made a net investment of Rs 3,864 crore in Indian equities this month (till January 12).

The latest investment pattern

## Automobile exports from India drop in 2023: SIAM

Automobile shipments from India declined 21% as many overseas markets continued to face monetary crises

**TWO-WHEELER EXPORTS SLIPPED 20%**

2023: 32,43,673 units

2022: 40,53,254 units

**THREE-WHEELER EXPORTS SLIPPED 30%**

2023: 2,91,919 units

2022: 4,17,178 units

**OVERALL EXPORTS (in Units)**

52,04,966 42,85,809

**PASSENGER VEHICLE SHIPMENTS**

2023: 6,77,956 units

2022: 6,44,842 units

**COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SHIPMENTS**

2023: 68,473 units

2022: 88,305 units

Source: Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM)/PTI

## Navi Mumbai airport to begin operations from March 2025: Scindia

**ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU**

MUMBAI, JANUARY 14

UNION MINISTER for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia said commercial operations of the Rs 18,000-crore Navi Mumbai International Airport are expected to start by March 31, 2025.

Scindia said in the first and the second phase that will begin together, one runway, one terminal and a passenger capacity of two crore will be created. "The second runway, four terminals along with an increased passenger capacity of nine crore will be created in Phase 3, 4 and 5," he said in Navi Mumbai.

He added that the Navi Mumbai airport will have road, rail and metro connectivity with future plans of water connectivity as well. The airport will be connected to the road in three directions: NH 4B (348), the Sion Panvel Highway and through Atal Setu (new sea link). The airport will be connected to the railway network by Targhar Railway station. Metro connectivity to the airport will be via Metro line 2D: DN Nagar to Mandale – Mankhurd, metro line 8: Mumbai Airport to Navi

Mumbai Airport and Navi Mumbai Pendhar Belapur Talaja metro line. In the future, there's a plan to connect the airport through hovercraft from Colaba and through cargo from Raigad in Phase 2, he said.

Scindia was in Navi Mumbai to inspect the development of the new airport. He said the physical and financial progress has been completed up to 55-60 per cent.

The airport will be the first in the country with automated passenger movement within its 1,600 hectares for 10 kms on the city side and on the airside.

A hundred percent green airport is being created in the first phase

## TOP 10 TRENDS OF 2024

## Your money, your leaders, your world

Investor and author Ruchir Sharma speaks to economist and psephologist Prannoy Roy on the likely big trends of the new year

**Prannoy Roy:** If you want to know whether you should buy or sell shares this year, whether you should expect the dollar to get stronger or weaker against the rupee, that will affect your holidays, and many, many more forecasts that should and could change the way you tackle your income and spending in 2024...

Thanks very much, Ruchir, for joining us. **Ruchir Sharma:** I think it is great to sort of recap first how the year has gone by, and also to try and forecast what's going to come by. And a key thing, there are two forecasting rules I try and keep in mind while doing this.

One, that all because a new calendar year begins doesn't necessarily mean that a new trend begins. Many of the trends may be carried forward from what was already happening in the previous year. Trends don't care about calendar years, just that we like to define them that way.

And the second, it's always a mix of contrarian and some trends which are predictable. We always like to sound very fashionable, come up with major contrarian things, or sometimes say things with great certitude, which is already happening. So, I think just a mix of those two is what shapes these trends that we're going to speak about for the year.

**Roy:** Let's see what your forecasts are now for 2024, for the year ahead.

Your first forecast is that this is going to be the biggest year for democracy. In fact, 46% of the world's population will have elections. That's the highest since 1800.

There's been a major change in the way people vote. Now, only 30% of governments are voted back. There is 70% anti-incumbency. Ten, fifteen years ago, globally, 70% of governments were voted back. There was pro-incumbency. [Psephologist] Dorab [Sopariwala] coined this phrase "anti-incumbency" many years ago, and the world is catching up with Dorab finally.

**Sharma:** This term is a very uniquely Indian term, but I think that the rest of the world are going to start using it much more. We looked at the analysis that people had done... The approval ratings of leaders, those now declined steadily in the first term... The chances someone like [Joe] Biden getting re-elected today, the betting market puts the odds at not much better than 30%. What are the implications?

One of the implications is that...because [whether] it's income inequality or general pain that people are facing, that we have this tendency to throw the leaders out. So, I think that most leaders going to the polls this year run the risk of losing their re-election bid.

**Roy:** It's amazing... So, it's like the world is going back to where India was in the late '80s. Your next forecast for 2024 is that with elections coming, governments will spend more, and budget deficits will go up. They could rise further. But investors don't like that. So, they're going to push back. In fact, if you look at the budget deficits, America has gone from 3.5% to 6% of GDP; India from 4% to 5.6%, approximately. Mexico, 2% to 4%. Elections are coming. They're going to go up even further. So, investors are worried about that.

**Sharma:** Investors will demand a greater premium for holding government debt, just because there's so much supply which is going to be coming. And in an election year, there's a tendency for politicians to spend even more... [Leaders'] approval ratings in general are low. Now, of course, it's an exception in countries like India and Indonesia, but in most places, approval ratings of leaders are low. They're going to be tempted to spend even more, because the easiest thing is to spend other people's money. But the tension they'll face is that the budget deficits are already very high.

**Roy:** You call it an epic clash between politicians and investors. And if you look at India, the biggest worry is the deficit of states. Their budget deficit is a higher percentage of overall budget deficit than ever before. Just explain that.

**Sharma:** It's also because the amount of spending which is done by Indian states is very high. In that way, we have a true federal system, that more than 50% of total spending by government in India is done at the state level, which is nearly twice as high as the global average. In India's case, most of the spending is done by the states. A lot of the spending is going towards freebies and other populist giveaways...

**Roy:** As a side aspect, calling them freebies, giveaways, etc.. There're also welfare measures involved... When it's targeted right, it does help the poor.

**Sharma:** It's just about the proportion. All countries need welfare spending. Question is how much can you afford and how much are you spending towards infrastructure and capex, and how much are you spending towards welfare?

...Because of the general election...the pressure [to spend] will be much more... It's not just about India, [it's] across the world. The biggest risk for me is the United States, that they used to run a budget deficit of 3% and now it's going to be 6% for the foreseeable future.

**Roy:** Your third forecast, which is actually quite worrying as well, but on a completely different issue... There's been a huge amount of migration into the developed world.



There's going to be a backlash against immigration is what you say. [In] America, immigration is up 35%; UK, 45%; Canada, up 20%; Australia, up 25%.

But you also say that actually it's helping India a bit because NRIs are emigrating from here, are sending back money and it's gone up to \$125 billion in remittances to India [in 2023]. That's hugely helpful for the economy.

**Sharma:** More than 3% of GDP, much more than FDI or other sources. In fact, if you take NRI deposits, that's another three and a half per cent of GDP. So what the NRIs and Indian diaspora are sending back to India is quite significant.

From a developed country standpoint, one thing we have to remember is that in the last year, immigrants, in fact, played a major role in easing labour shortages, in cooling wages down, and also bringing inflation down... But it also leads to social tension. And the numbers, they are just [of] the legal immigrants.

The illegal immigrants in places like the US are even higher than the legal immigrants. And how we're seeing that there's a lot of

backlash against that.

**Roy:** Immigration is helping the West, but it's also helping Donald Trump because [of] that social tension you talk about... Now, coming to the economy and your next forecast, you're saying that there's going to be no bust, no terrible recession, but there will be a slowdown. And one of the reasons is that stocks now are not as overvalued as they were earlier. They were overvalued 45% in 2021. Now, they're overvalued 20%. So, there's not as much of a drop to happen. You're also saying the rise in interest rates will have no immediate impact because a lot of, say, US interest rates are fixed.

**Sharma:** The big mystery, I think, for many people was that why was there no recession in 2023, despite the fact that the Federal Reserve raised interest rates so aggressively over the past couple of years? And that mystery is partly resolved by the fact that even though the Fed was raising interest rates, a lot of the US consumers, corporations, had fixed interest rates. Therefore, they didn't feel the impact of high interest rates there.

But over time, if interest rates remain high, that impact will be felt because you have to refinance it and every year some people will need new loans. So, there'll be a slow impact. So, what my forecast here is, that this is a long grind, you will get a slowdown, but it'll be spread over time. It'll be elongated. It won't be like one of those sharp shocks of 2007, 2008...

**Roy:** Staying with the stock market, it's a little worrying for India because you say, risk

## NEW YEAR PREDICTIONS

**1 BIGGEST YEAR FOR DEMOCRACY** Many leaders, especially in Western democracies, have relatively low approval ratings. Many are going to be thrown out. Anti-incumbency, an Indian term, is going global – as a trend.

**2 POLITICIANS VS INVESTORS** Generally there's a tendency in election years for politicians to spend a lot. Budget deficits are already much higher than what they used to be before the pandemic. Some of the investors may not like that.

**3 BACKLASH AGAINST IMMIGRATION** A surge in immigrants gives people like Donald Trump [in the US] a big agenda. It helps the US economically, but it becomes a fertile ground for political backlashes for people to capitalise on.

**4 NO BUST, BUT SLOWDOWN** INEVITABLE We have not had the classical bust so far. But don't rule out a further slowdown. Air may come out of this balloon slowly because a lot of interest rates have been taken at fixed rates. It may take a while, but the impact will come through.

**5 TIME FOR EUROPE TO BOUNCE BACK** There are reasons why Europe may be more resilient: higher savings; they've already absorbed some of the pain with floating rates compared to fixed rates. Like Japan (in 2023), when expectations are very low, it doesn't take that much to trigger some upside.

**6 CHINA FADING** Money is fleeing China. Global investors want to de-risk from China. There's so much geopolitical tension. Some of the growth drivers aren't there anymore. Their population is shrinking, which is not great for economic growth or dominance.

**7 STARS EMERGING OUTSIDE CHINA** Mexico is doing particularly well. Even countries like India, Vietnam, Indonesia are benefiting from global investors de-risking from China. There is a huge opportunity for India.

**8 DOLLAR DECLINE COULD ACCELERATE** The dollar has already been declining. Historically, once a dollar decline begins, it tends to last for 6-7 years. We could just be in the second year of that. And typically in the second year, you tend to see the decline accelerate.

**9 HYPE IN AI STOCKS COULD GET REALITY CHECK** It's a huge revolution, so expectations have been very high and they've all been loaded onto the 'magnificent seven' stocks. But if you look at the historical templates, it takes a while for the expectations to be realised, for companies to know how to monetise.

**10 POLITICAL AGENDA HURTING MOVIES** It's an under-appreciated reason for why people aren't going back to the movies like they used to go. There's a lot of self-congratulation in India about four-five massive hits, but the data shows that it's going to take a while. And look at the contrast with cricket.

to India is from very high expectations, that India's stock market valuation is the most expensive in the world. Our stock market valuation is 22. This is the PE ratio. US [is] 20 and the rest of the world only 14. Are the expectations too high?

**Sharma:** In general, the overall economic scenario for India looks pretty good. My only concern is that a lot of this is maybe in the price because expectations are very high. And also, the volatility of the Indian stock market today is technically the lowest in the world. So, it's the most expensive market and the least volatile market.

**Roy:** Moving on to quite a major forecast you're making about Europe, which is lagging behind everywhere, and you're saying [it's] time for Europe to bounce back... Since 2011, Europe has lagged behind the US. You're saying, now, Europe is going to bounce back.

**Sharma:** I think that people are very bearish on Europe, that everyone talks very negative about Europe, and rightly so. My point is that expectations are very low out of Europe today and Europe has already had a serious downturn. There is a list of reasons as to why potentially Europe could surprise on the upside.

[First,] the savings rate. Lots of governments give massive amounts of stimulus. In America, the consumer got the stimulus and has gone and virtually spent all of it. In Europe's case, they have saved a lot of it, partly because of the fact that they are much more cautious. So, they have a much bigger savings net.

**Roy:** You also said that there's hope for the future that Europe's inflation has declined more than the US.

**Sharma:** Apart from being under control, it's the fact that it's fallen from very high level. They suffered enormously from the Ukrainian energy crisis. But now that energy crisis is in the rear view window. Things are looking a bit better for consumers...

**Roy:** Then, Europe's wage growth is rising.

**Sharma:** ...Because purchasing power has improved because of the decline in inflation... And then... in Europe, a lot of people had taken floating exchange rates. They suffered the shock much more...

**Roy:** [They have] already absorbed it.

**Sharma:** At least part of it compared to America. These are some of the reasons why I think that Europe has a chance of surprising on the upside.

**Roy:** Moving on, China, China, you say, is fading. The economy is shrinking relative to the rest of the world. The gap between the US and China economies was narrowing, but has now started widening.

**Sharma:** [The Chinese] want to be the world's largest economy. And...just a 30%

was left [with the US] in 2021. But [in the] last couple of years, especially last year, the Chinese economy has been slipping. And you have the US economy, which has been relatively resilient. So, the gap is opening. Even in the global share, China is slipping. US is sort of doing well. And there are some of the other countries, India, Indonesia, Poland, Mexico. So, these are the countries which are gaining share.

**Roy:** One of the key things which you forecast and highlighted is that to a large extent China's growth was also helped by a lot of foreign investment, FDI. And now you're saying capital is fleeing China. Net FDI flows are negative for the first time.

**Sharma:** Because during the boom period in China over the last couple of decades, there were some quarters where the Chinese economy attracted FDI of 100 billion dollars. Remember, India gets 50 billion or so in the entire year. But how sentiment has shifted, that for the first time in recorded history, since this FDI data began for China in the last quarter that we have data for, there was negative, an outflow of 11 billion from China. So, it just tells you about how capital is getting reallocated and which countries are benefiting.

**Roy:** Stars [are] emerging outside China. Capital is leaving China for other emerging markets.

**Sharma:** And my feeling is that this year in 2024, if the dollar weakens, then we are likely to see far greater capital flows.

**Roy:** That's one of your forecasts. You have said that the dollar decline could accelerate. In fact, US dollar downcycles, if you look at your graph, last six to seven years. And now, the downcycle of the dollar has just begun. So, it could continue for another few years. And you also say, there could be alternatives arising. For example, you point out that banks are buying gold now at higher level than ever before.

**Sharma:** One of the major geopolitical mistakes that America made was to impose sanctions on Russia in 2022 in the way it did, which is that it virtually threw Russia out of the international payments system, seized its foreign exchange reserves. Morally, that may have been the right thing to do. But what it did was send a chill across many countries that if America can do that and has such great control over the financial system, then what stops it from doing it to us one day?

And, so, I think, that's really what has started a move for central banks to say we can't be this dependent on the US dollar. We cannot have so much of our foreign exchange reserves stored in the US dollar.

**Roy:** And, what about gold getting stronger, that people should invest in gold, I think...

**Sharma:** I think generally, that having some investment in gold does make sense because people are looking for alternatives. The problem today is that...the alternatives to the US dollar aren't there so much, right?

Because, the Chinese should have been the alternative. The Chinese economy is still 17% of the global economy. [But] China's share of the global payment system is very small. No one really trusts holding the Chinese currency given what it's backed by. So, what do you hold? So, things like gold, I think, have been alternatives that central banks have been holding, and other smaller currencies, the Swiss franc, the Australian dollar, the Canadian dollar.

**Roy:** If you had to choose a star competitor to China, is there one or is it going to be multiple?

**Sharma:** It's very hard to come up with just one. Obviously, size wise, India... But we know that does India have the policy mix to implement the growth rates of 10, 12 per cent? The opportunity [for India] is huge because I think that people in the US have made up their mind that from a strategic standpoint, they want to de-risk from China. The issue is that which countries have the scale which can give them an alternative to China? So far, there's no one country with scale. So, they're spreading their bets. But India could be that logical choice where so much capital could come in if it was so much easier to do business here on the ground.

**Roy:** Your next forecast, You said the hype in artificial intelligence stocks are going to get a reality check. You're saying people have overemphasised it. You're saying for companies to monetise AI, it will take time like all the other ones.

**Sharma:** I think that AI is skewed... Which is, the tech sector in general has been in a mini recession. And that's what the data shows. But it doesn't show up in, let's say, the stock market performance because it's so skewed by the AI wave. I'm not saying that AI is not for real. It's a huge revolution.

But if you look at the Internet revolution as well, you know, it was here in 2000. But it took time to monetise it. It took many years for the Apples or Googles, and the other companies... till about 2009-10, to start taking off. My point is that there's been a lot of AI hype which has lifted many stocks, particularly these mega cap tech stocks. Even those which have no AI experience so far, like Apple, Amazon...

Edited excerpts from the conversation. **Ruchir Sharma** is Founder and Chief Investment Officer of Breakout Capital, an investment firm focused on emerging markets. The forecast and analysis are both by Sharma and his team at Breakout Capital. Watch the full show at [www.dekoder.com](http://www.dekoder.com)

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You are consuming content which the algorithm wants you to consume. When the platform is no longer a platform in the true sense, should the safe harbour be a safe harbour in the original sense?



**ANIL SASI:** With regard to the railways, there seems to be a gap between demand and supply. The passenger traffic demand is approximately to the tune of 1,100 crore annually while the supply is about 800 crore. When it comes to larger network planning, are you looking at addressing this demand-supply gap?

Any country of our size requires multiple transportation modes to be developed simultaneously. Until 1950, the railways had a very dominant role in transportation. Over a period of time, since railways was an isolated organisation, with its own budget and processes, it was starved of investment.

When Atalji started the Golden Quadrilateral Project, the thought was to have a golden quadrilateral for highways and railways. Unfortunately, the investment in railways could never come. There was a structural issue because of which railways lost out on cargo and the demand-supply gap in case of passengers became prominent.

In 2014, Modiji merged the railway budget with the general budget. From about Rs 35,000 crore annual budgetary allocation, he has increased it to Rs 24,000 crore. In the last 9.5 years, we've added 26,000 km of new tracks. Today we are adding new tracks at a rate of 14 km a day. Almost 94 per cent of the network is already electrified.

**ANIL SASI:** There is still an element of cross-subsidy in railway fares between freight and passengers. While you have some degree of flexibility now on fares on trunk routes, the operating ratio still continues to be fairly high at 97-98 per cent. Does the flexibility give you more headroom to bring down the cross-subsidy element? Given the high operating ratio, does it give you enough surplus to work on things like safety?

I don't think we can look at it purely from the prism of subsidy, cross-subsidy or flexibility in fares. Railways carry a social obligation, and that's important. In every train today, a person travelling over 1,000 km pays Rs 450 to 500 depending on the train track. We are also catering to the lowest-income segment and should not look at it from this prism of cross subsidisation.

Even in the case of cargo, the difference between road and rail carrying one tonne for one km is Rs 2, which is almost 62 per cent cheaper compared to road. If you take a slightly bigger perspective, if we carry more cargo by rail by increasing capacity, having better technology, more locomotives, wagons, better terminal facilities, we'd have to spend less on imported oil. The pollution load of the road sector is nine times compared to the rail sector. That much carbon emission is saved, cost is saved, congestion in terms of time of travelling is avoided.

**ANIL SASI:** The Data Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP) and the Telecom Act were much-needed reforms, but the data bill seems to offer government entities blanket exemptions and the Data Protection Board is not as empowered as it was envisaged earlier. On the Telecom Act, there seems to be some confusion on whether OTT platforms are included. Can you clear the air on that?

It is very straightforward. In the DPDP Act, the exemption is very narrow and clearly defined. There is no blank exemption to the government. In the case of telecom, you have to define what is being transported... So the carrier is regulated by the Telecom Ministry. The content is regulated by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The financial services are regulated by the Ministry of Finance. Overall, the internet and OTT world are structurally regulated by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology through the IT Act.

**LIZ MATHEW:** As we walk into an election, there is a belief that YouTube and that kind of communication has a lot of influence on public opinion. How well are we prepared in terms of safeguarding democracy?

All over the world, democracies are worried about the influence of social media on the democratic process, especially after the AI-related developments. The promise of social media was that everybody gets a voice. That promise had an inherent understanding that whoever is publishing views on social media would also be accountable for it, be cognizant of the legal structure, so-called realities, make sure that nobody else is hurt. Today's social media has become free for all, where anybody can write anything derogatory about anybody else. So, many countries have already taken steps, which in a different context would be seen as suppressing freedom of speech. But they have taken those steps because that is necessary for society and protection of democracy. We

**WHY ASHWINI VAISHNAW**

Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw has been working for the modernisation of Indian Railways and the introduction of Vande Bharat Express trains across India. An alumnus of IIT Kanpur, the former bureaucrat is now in the

process of revamping the regulatory regime for the internet and telecom through key legislations such as the Digital Personal Data Protection Act and the Telecom Act. Known to enjoy the confidence of PM Narendra Modi, there is also speculation that he may contest the Lok Sabha elections in 2024



I don't think we can look at it purely from the prism of subsidy, cross-subsidy or flexibility in fares. Railways also carry a social obligation, and that's very important... We are also catering to the lowest income segment

## 'From the UP govt to highways, telecom and railways, we are all ready (for the Ram temple)'

Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw on regulating telecom and upgrading safety systems in Railways. This session was moderated by Deputy Editor Liz Mathew and National Business Editor Anil Sasi



(From right) Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology, with Liz Mathew and Anil Sasi Abhinav Saha

have a legal structure, which addresses some of the concerns to some extent, but we need a much stronger and more comprehensive legal structure, where what is right, what is wrong, there has to be some judgment on that. There has to be accountability, both of the platform as well as the users. We are working on the overhauling of the entire digital legal framework. We are working on four legislations. The first and second, we have already enacted in the Parliament. There are two more. One is a law, actually. The fourth is not a law, it's more of a framework.

**LIZ MATHEW:** With the opening of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Railway Ministry has a key role to play. How well prepared are you for the massive crowds that are expected?

We have a structure and a work ethos which is very different from 10 years back. We are in a position to take up any big challenge. Practically every organisation, from the UP government to the highway system, telecom system or the railway system, we are all prepared.

**SOUMYARENDRA BARIK:** You're working on the Digital India Bill. The biggest gripe is that the way we've envisaged the concept of safe harbour for intermediaries, which was heavily borrowed from the US concept, was flawed. As we move towards a more complex system of intermediaries over the internet, how do you think safe harbour has changed since we first thought of it?

The context then was that the internet was an emerging thing. People who wanted to take the internet to the general public, said, 'How do I limit my liability to somebody who puts content on the net, for which I'm not responsible?' That was the construct. The context has totally changed. Every platform moderates content as per their own policies. It's not as per law. The investment they make in moderation is different in different geographies, depending on their own priorities. When you say an algorithm is defining what will be seen, that's not equitable either. You are consuming content which the algorithm wants you to consume. When the platform is no longer a platform in the true sense, should the safe harbour be a safe harbour in the original sense? That's my question.

**SOUMYARENDRA BARIK:** When the Apple threat notification issue came, you and the MoS put the ball in Apple's court, that they have to justify why this was triggered. Since then, some

developments have happened but the concern was initially raised because it seemed that some people who had received the notifications were either from the Opposition or people from civil society or the media who are seen to be little critical of the government. Is there an understanding about why the notification was triggered? Also, why people from that particular strata?

You have answered your own question. You're saying that strata of the society 'seemed' to have. That means there is also a significant number of people who received, who are not in that 'seemed to have received' category. We have clarified everything. Apple has come out with a statement. Every company in the world has a standard language in which they issue notices. There is absolutely nothing abnormal in this case.

**RITU SARIN:** Apple has come to India for one or two meetings. What was the result of those meetings?

Once the inquiries are complete, it will be known to everybody. The technical investigation is still going on.

**ANIL SASI:** In the Pegasus case, the panel investigating it had said that the government had not cooperated.

They never said this. There was absolutely no lack of cooperation. We wanted that investigation to be absolutely objective and done by the expert committee. Whatever they asked, we provided – the technical help, data required, documents required. We never took care of the hospitality, which we were not supposed to do. It was an absolutely objective and purely technical investigation.

**LIZ MATHEW:** As the Railways Minister, what lessons did the Balasore train

accident teach you?

The entire team and system worked as one, which was committed to saving every possible life and making sure that every family affected by the incident would get the best possible support.

We have invested more than Rs 1,27,000 crore in the last 10 years to develop new safety systems. All the railway systems in the world moved to automatic train protection in the '80s and '90s. In 2016, Automatic Train Protection (ATP) was trialed on a live train system for the first time in India. ATPs need a complex certification system, called Safety Integrity Level 4 (SIL4), which means if something is operating for 10,000 years, it will fail only once. It took the Railways three years to get SIL4 certification for the entire system. It is an indigenously developed system, which is a matter of pride for us. We have now reached a level where the industry and the railways are capable of installing about 1,500 km to about 2,000 km (of railway lines) every year.

**SOUMYARENDRA BARIK:** The NSO Group, which makes the Pegasus software, has said that it does not sell the software to anyone else but a government or government agency. A lot of unease about Pegasus stems from the fact that the Indian government has never really clarified if it has ever bought Pegasus or not.

Has the TMC come out with a statement, clarifying if they have not bought it or not? The governments of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh are also governments. Why do you look at the government as only the Central government? There was a proper Supreme Court-supervised investigation. We have clarified everything. I have submitted a reply in Parliament.

There has to be accountability, both of the platform as well as the users. We are working on the overhauling of the entire digital legal framework. We are working on four legislations

**VIKAS PATHAK:** There has been a lot of talk about Digital India but there have also been internet blackouts. A report revealed that there were 84 internet blackouts in 2022, making India the country with the most internet blackouts in the world. What is the balance between citizens' freedom to communicate and the concerns that the government cites?

All over the world, there are standard operating processes built for law and order situations. There was a time when curfews were quite common. Agencies responsible for maintaining law and order will have to take certain steps.

**JATIN ANAND:** The BJP is understood to have told most of its Rajya Sabha ministers and several MPs to contest the Lok Sabha elections. Would you prefer contesting from Rajasthan or Odisha?

I'm a disciplined karyakarta of the BJP, who understands what is expected of me and what is the meaning of karyakarta. I will do exactly what the party tells me. The party asked me to go to Maharashtra to organise the Rajya Sabha election. I went there. The party sent me to Madhya Pradesh for Assembly elections. I took a house there, lived and worked there.

**UPASNIKA SINGHAL:** Why have there been so many delays in the tendering for the New Delhi railway station's redevelopment?

We are developing about 1,309 railway stations across the country and the progress on most is very good. New Delhi has a special challenge. We are located in an area which is very congested. So the station should decongest not just railway transportation. Our PM's mandate to us is very clear – the station has to join both sides of the city and become the city centre. It has to be a facilitator for all modes of transportation in that area. We have to integrate metro, intercity buses, interstate buses and cars. This creates a very large network outside the station. A complete road network gets built around the station that will decongest a large part of the city for many years to come. We should not take that as a station project but look at it as a project to create a transportation hub for a large part of the city.

The price quoted for the tender was high, so we cancelled it and are redoing the tender. We have now revised the entire design and made it fully perpendicular.

**HARISH DAMODARAN:** What is the status of the Dedicated Freight

**Corridor project?**

The Dedicated Freight Corridor is very important because the capacity of railways needs to significantly increase. The thought process in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government was a golden quadrilateral for highways and a golden quadrilateral for railways. In 2005, the first papers started getting published on it. In 2007, the project was approved. Before 2014, zero km of the dedicated freight corridor was done. Now, practically the entire network is done, except for a small section which had design flaws. So we have revised the design. The system is designed to take about 400 trains a day. It's already taking more than 300 trains. It has helped us decongest the East and West parts of the golden quadrilateral. As we go forward, more capacity will be created, especially in sections that are highly congested.

**JATIN GROVER:** In the telecom sector, two operators – Jio and Airtel – occupy 70 per cent of the market share. You had earlier said that there were no signs of duopoly in the sector. How do you see it now? Vodafone and BSNL are continuously losing subscribers in the market.

I see this sector as a sunrise sector. There are new technologies, new investments. Close to Rs 2 lakh crore investment is happening in the 5G rollout. BSNL is reviving in a very systematic and methodical way. (We have) indigenously developed 4G and 5G technology. Today, there are only four countries in the world that have end-to-end telecom technology stack – China, South Korea, Sweden and Finland. India has become the fifth country to have an end-to-end telecom technology stack and the entire world, including the US, Europe and Australia, are showing interest in importing technology from us. That technology deployment has started. By Diwali, you'll see a significantly rolled-out network of BSNL 4G, which is upgradable to 5G.

**AMITABH SINHA:** The proposed alignment of the new Pune-Nashik speed corridor is very close to the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) centre in Pune, which is your major radio telescope. It was feared that this would affect the quality of signals captured by GMRT. Has that issue been resolved?

We are working on it. It's a very complex issue because that is one of the observatories that we are proud of. We are trying to figure out a solution. We looked at either bypassing it on the right side of the map or on the eastern side or western side.





**BRIEFLY****2nd T20: NZ beats Pakistan by 21 runs**

**HAMILTON:** New Zealand overcame the loss of its captain in an innings that faltered late to beat Pakistan by 21 runs in the second Twenty20 International Sunday, taking a 2-0 lead in the five-match series. The Black Caps failed to build on the foundation of the first half of its innings, making 194 for eight batting first after being 111 for one at the end of 10 overs. The batting slump followed captain Kane Williamson retiring hurt after 10 overs with a tight hamstring. Pakistan also stumbled in the second half of its innings and was bowled out for 173 in the 20th over. **AP**

**BRIEF SCORES:** New Zealand 194/8 in 20 overs (F Allen 74; H Rauf 3-38) bt Pakistan 173 all out in 19.3 overs (B Azam 66, F Zaman 50; A Milne 4-33)

**PKL: Vinay's 'Super 10' gives Haryana win**

**JAIPUR:** Haryana Steelers came up with a stupendous performance, beating Tamil Thalaivas 36-31 in the Pro Kabaddi League here on Sunday. Vinay turned out to be the Steelers' star man, gaining 10 raid points, while defender Rahul Sethpal also contributed with five tackle points. Both teams were locked at 3-3 in the fourth minute before K Prapanjan pulled off a brilliant raid, while Jaideep Dahiya tackled Ajinkya Pawar to give Steelers a 5-3 lead. As Narender's double-point raid kept the Thalaivas going, the scores were level at 8-8 once again. However, Vinay generated a double-point raid, followed by the Steelers inlicting an 'All Out', as the Steelers stormed to a 17-8 lead. **PTI**

**Indian shooters continue golden run**

**JAKARTA:** Indian shooters continued to hit the bullseye in the Asia Olympic Qualifiers here on Sunday, with Yogesh Singh winning the men's 25m individual standard pistol gold before combining with Amit Kumar and Om Prakash to claim the team event. At the Olympic qualifiers for shotgun discipline in Kuwait City, at least two women trap shooters were favourably placed after day one of qualification, to make the top six finals cut on Monday. Yogesh shot 572 to clinch the standard pistol gold and then partnered with Amit (565) and Prakash (553) for the team gold in the event, bringing India's overall podium finishes to a whopping 32, including 14 gold and 10 silver. **PTI**

**Super Cup: Bagan eke out win over Hyd**

**Bhubaneswar:** Australian Dimitrios Petratos scored from the spot in the dying minutes of the match to hand Mohun Bagan Super Giants a 2-1 win over Hyderabad FC in the Kalinga Super Cup here on Sunday. Mohun Bagan once again had to come from behind to earn a hard-fought victory over the valiant Hyderabad FC and earn three points. While the Kolkata giants now have six points from two matches, Hyderabad are virtually out of the competition after losing both their matches. **PTI**

**Mulani spins web, puts Mumbai in driver's seat****DEVENDRA PANDEY**

MUMBAI, JANUARY 14

**MUMBAI** LOOK to register their second consecutive outright win in the ongoing Ranji Trophy after Andhra are tottering at 164 for 5 in their second innings at the end of the penultimate day at the MCA-BKC ground.

Earlier in the day, Mumbai bundled out Andhra for a paltry 184 and enforced follow-on. The visiting team didn't have any answer to Mumbai left-arm spinner Shams Mulani's spin as he finished with six wickets in first innings and later took three in the second.

Andhra had earlier resumed on 98 for 3 but it took mere one session for Mumbai bowlers to get seven men down. It was Mulani and veteran medium-pacer Dhawal Kulkarni running over Andhra's line-up. While Mulani hogged the limelight, Kulkarni's consistency in his line helped him snatch three wickets.

Andhra must have hoped to prove their mettle in their second innings but that wasn't the case. They lost their top three batsmen with a score of 17 on board. Their most experienced batsman Hanuma Vihari and skipper Ricky Bhui showed some resilience but Mulani managed to get Bhui caught behind by Prasad Pawar. The ace spinner was managing to get an odd ball skidding off the pitch and it was taking the batsmen by surprise. He kept his plan simple, to bowl on stumps and try to hit the batsmen's pads. He was successful in the first innings.

Vihari looked to architect Andhra's fight-back but found a nick behind off-pacer Royston

**With two slots seemingly non-negotiable for the T20 World Cup, Jaiswal and Shivam Dube seemed to be trying to outdo each other in their partnership as they aimed for the boundary and beyond on every ball.**

With two slots seemingly non-negotiable, Jaiswal and Shivam Dube seemed to be trying to outdo each other in their partnership as they aimed for the boundary and beyond on every ball. With Tilak Varma and Shubman Gill - who ran Rohit out in the previous game - making way for Kohli and Jaiswal, and Suryakumar Yadav certain to get back in once he recovers from injury, there will be a few deserving candidates left disappointed when the time comes to make selection calls. There's also the small matter of adjusting Hardik Pandya, if and when he becomes available in time for the T20 World Cup. There's only one more T20I left to play before the mega event, which puts a whole lot of significance on what all the contenders do in the IPL.

On Sunday in Indore on a small ground and flat pitch, chasing a score that was considerably below par, the two Mumbai left-handers did a demolition job, matching each other shot for shot. If Jaiswal reached his fifty in 27 balls, Dube got to the landmark in 22. The Afghan bowlers hardly helped their own cause by serv-

**Reliable performer**

Earlier, it was another T20 bowling clinic from Axar Patel, who is fast becoming India's banker in the format. So much so that he is

ing up length balls. Without the injured Rashid Khan in their ranks, they seemed bereft of ideas and inspiration. The veteran Mohammad Nabi was on the receiving end of Dube's onslaught, being clobbered for three consecutive sixes. Jaiswal and Dube (63 not out off 32 balls) added 92 runs in 42 deliveries before the former departed for a 34-ball 68. Jitesh Sharma followed soon for a duck going for a big shot over mid-off when he could have seen the team past the finish line. Maybe, the narrowing window of slots has made everyone a bit more desperate to showcase their hitting ability, even when it's not needed.

**He is not known to be a big spinner of the ball, but by bowling stump to stump and changing his pace, trajectory and angles, he kept the Afghan batsmen guessing. The visitors, put into bat for the second successive match, went into their batting innings with much more attacking intent than was evident in Mohali, as they reached 50 in five overs.**

Axar came on to bowl in the last over of the Powerplay and was done inside 12 overs, but the damage he inflicted on the Afghan momentum was so much that even the experiment to have Dube bowl the 19th over - which didn't go to plan as 20 runs were con-

ceded - couldn't get them to a remotely competitive total.

The tall Gujarat bowler, who seems to have become every captain's go-to man when a rampaging opposition batting line-up needs to be pegged back, answered Rohit's call again. He got hit for just one boundary in his spell, off the final ball of the Powerplay when there was no fielder on the deep midwicket fence. Axar put the struggling Afghanistan captain Ibrahim Zadran out of his misery, slowing the pace considerably and getting the ball to straighten ever so slightly to hit off-stump.

All the momentum in the first half of the Afghan innings was courtesy Gulbadin Naib, who hit an enterprising 57 off 35 balls, reaching his half-century in 28 deliveries. But he hardly got any worthwhile support and when Axar induced him to shovel a length

**SCORECARD****INDIA VS AFGHANISTAN**

HOLKAR STADIUM, INDORE

Toss: India won, chose to field

**AFGHANISTAN**

R Gurbaz	c Dube b R Bishnoi	14 (9b, 1x4, 1x6)
I Zadran	b Patel	8 (10b, 1x4)
G Nabi	c R Sharma b Patel	57 (35b, 5x4, 4x6)
A Omarzai	b Dube	2 (5b)
M Nabi	c Singh b R Bishnoi	14 (18b, 1x4)
N Zadran	b A Singh	23 (21b, 1x4, 2x6)
K Janat	c Patel b A Singh	20 (10b, 2x4, 1x6)
M Ur Rahman	run out	21 (9b, 2x4, 2x6)
N Ahmad	c Kohli b A Singh	1 (1b)
N ul-Haq	not out	1 (1b)
F Farooqi	run out	0 (0b)
■ Extras (lb 4, w 7)		11
■ Total (20 overs; all out)		172
■ FoW:	120 (Rahmanullah Gurbaz, 2.2 ov), 2-53 (Ibrahim Zadran, 5.4 ov), 3-60 (Azmatullah Omarzai, 6.5 ov), 4-91 (Gulbadin Naib, 11.3 ov), 5-104 (Mohammad Nabi, 14.2 ov), 6-134 (Najibullah Zadran, 17.1 ov), 7-164 (Karim Janat, 19.1 ov), 8-170 (Noor Ahmad, 19.5 ov), 9-171 (Mujeeb ur Rahman, 19.5 ov), 10-172 (Fazalhaq Farooqi, 19.6 ov)	
■ Bowling:	Arshdeep Singh 4-0-32-3, Mukesh Kumar 2-0-21-0, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-39-2, Axar Patel 4-0-17-2, Shivam Dube 3-0-36-1, Washington Sundar 3-0-23-0	

**INDIA (TARGET: 173 RUNS)**

Y Jaiswal	c R Gurbaz b K Janat	68 (34b, 5x4, 6x6)
R Sharma	b F Farooqi	0 (1b)
V Kohli	c Zadran b N ul-Haq	29 (16b, 5x4)
S Dube	not out	63 (34b, 5x4, 4x6)
J Sharma	c Naib b Janat	0 (2b)
R Singh	not out	9 (9b, 1x4)
■ Extras (lb 2, w 2)		4
■ Total (15.4 overs)		173/4
■ FoW:	1-5 (Rohit Sharma, 0.5 ov), 2-62 (Virat Kohli, 5.3 ov), 3-154 (Yashasvi Jaiswal, 12.3 ov), 4-156 (Jitesh Sharma, 12.6 ov)	
■ Bowling:	Fazalhaq Farooqi 3-0-28-1, Mujeeb ur Rahman 2-0-32-0, Naveen-ul-Haq 3-0-33-1, Noor Ahmad 3-0-35-0, Mohammad Nabi 2-0-30-0, Karim Janat 2-0-13-2	

ball outside off-stump into the hands of short midwicket, it was clear that Afghanistan were going to fall well short of where they needed to be.

Arshdeep Singh kept it relatively tight in the death overs, helping himself to a three-wicket haul in the process, reminding the decision-makers that he remains an option when the time comes to select those who will make it to the Caribbean and the United States in the summer.

All the momentum in the first half of the Afghan innings was courtesy Gulbadin Naib, who hit an enterprising 57 off 35 balls, reaching his half-century in 28 deliveries. But he hardly got any worthwhile support and when Axar induced him to shovel a length

shot that one doesn't associate with the batting technician that Kohli is, but it reflected the message he was trying to send about his utility in the format. Mujeeb was handsomely cover-driven to the fence, bisecting the off-side ring, when the bowler offered width on a full ball. Then Kohli set his sights on Naveen again. The medium pacer was slog-swept across the line, as if he was a spinner, to the long-on boundary.

All this while, Yashasvi Jaiswal was going full throttle at the other end, and Kohli seemed intent on showing that he could keep pace.

Much talk about the return of Kohli and Rohit to the T20 fold surrounds their strike rates, but he seems determined to prove there are more strings to his bow.

India's Yashasvi Jaiswal's 34-ball 68 against Afghanistan on Sunday included 5 boundaries and 6 sixes. **PTI**

likely to pip Ravindra Jadeja to the spot of the spin-bowling all-rounder. On a surface that hardly provided him any assistance, the Gujarat left-arm spinner came away with figures of 2-17 from his four overs.

He is not known to be a big spinner of the ball, but by bowling stump to stump and changing his pace, trajectory and angles, he kept the Afghan batsmen guessing. The visitors, put into bat for the second successive match, went into their batting innings with much more attacking intent than was evident in Mohali, as they reached 50 in five overs.

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Much talk about the return of Kohli and Rohit to the T20 fold surrounds their strike rates, but he seems determined to prove there are more strings to his bow.

**No waiting game: Kohli trying to embrace new brand of T20 batting**

**TUSHAR BHADURI**  
JANUARY 14

**THE SCORECARD**

THE SCORECARD	will show 29 off 16 balls, hardly much for a player of Virat Kohli's pedigree, but the manner in which he batted and got out seemed to suggest he was willing to go against his nature to fit into the new brand of T20 batting that India is trying to embrace.
THE SCORECARD	is discussed, the straight six he hit off a hard-length ball from Pakistan speedster Haris Rauf during the World Cup game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground comes up. Now, Naveen-ul-Haq is no Rauf, but there's history between him and Kohli, and the latter rekindled memories with a flat-bat shot over the bowler's head off a much wider ball that landed just inside the boundary.
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THE SCORECARD	ial shots that one doesn't associate with the batting technician that Kohli is, but it reflected the message he was trying to send about his utility in the format. Mujeeb was handsomely cover-driven to the fence, bisecting the off-side ring, when the bowler offered width on a full ball. Then Kohli set his sights on Naveen again. The medium pacer was slog-swept across the line, as if he was a spinner, to the long-on boundary.
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**Reliable performer**

Earlier, it was another T20 bowling clinic from Axar Patel, who is fast becoming India's banker in the format. So much so that he is

wicket that keeps the scoreboard moving and gets him into the rhythm of the game.

But on Sunday, in his first T20I since the 10-wicket semifinal loss to England at the 2022 World Cup in Adelaide, Kohli wasn't going to play the waiting game. He was in the middle in the first over itself, replacing Rohit Sharma, and was back before the Powerplay got over, but the former captain, for once, wasn't playing the situation or the target but trying to prove that there were more gears to his batting which can be activated even early on in a race.

The first ball Kohli faced, from left-arm Fazalhaq Farooqi, was driven firmly to mid-on. The second, from mystery spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman, was a length ball outside off, which was lofted over mid-off for a boundary. No</

## Villa stay third after 0-0 draw away at Everton

REUTERS  
LIVERPOOL, JANUARY 14

ASTON VILLA missed the chance to go level at the top of the Premier League when they were held to a 0-0 draw by Everton at Goodison Park on Sunday, as they dominated possession but were unable to break down a stubborn home side.

Villa moved to 43 points from 21 games, level with second-placed Manchester City, but two behind league leaders Liverpool. Both those clubs have played a game fewer. Everton are now a point clear of the relegation zone with 17 from their 21 matches.

The visitors had several chances to open the scoring, but the best opportunity in the game fell to Everton striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin when he raced clear one-on-one with Villa goalkeeper Emi Martinez, but had his effort saved.

Both sides had goals correctly chalked off by the Video Assistant Referee for offside and Everton will be the happier with the point, while Villa manager Unai Emery may well view it as a missed opportunity and two dropped after his first 0-0 draw in 97 games in the Premier League.

It is the longest a manager has gone in the competition's history before being involved in a goalless draw.

"I think we played well and we are a little frustrated because we created the chances to score, but I'm happy with 43 points," Emery told Sky Sports.

"The match we played today, we tried to push our game-plan and find good positions on the pitch. They (Everton) had a few chances and we needed our goalkeeper to save us."

"But the second half we had much better control of the game and did not concede anything, and we had three or four chances to score."

"I'm very proud of the players and how we are trying to improve our level. We are not happy with one point only, but we are happy with the way we played."

Villa thought they had taken the lead when Alex Moreno's superb strike from outside the box arrowed into the bottom corner, but it was chalked off by the VAR for an off-side in the build-up.

It took more than three minutes to make the decision, during which time both sets of supporters chanted in unison their displeasure at the use of the VAR system.

Martinez also saved from James Garner, diving low to his left, while at the other end Matty Cash saw his goal-bound effort blocked and John McGinn's follow-up was cleared off the line.

"We played OK," Everton defender James Tarkowski told the BBC. "I'm just glad it's (the VAR decision) gone our way, not many have this season. We had the best opportunity through Dominic."

"We are still building and working towards where we want to be and our job is to keep putting points on the board."

Captain Seamus Coleman made his 355th appearance in the Premier League for Everton, a club record.



Villa manager Unai Emery. Reuters

# Satwik-Chirag miss cherry on cake

Liang Wei keng and Wang Chang bounce back after dropping first game, trailing 3-10 in decider to take revenge of Asiad loss

SHIVANI NAIK  
JANUARY 14

IT IS believed in some quarters that the Chinese badminton decision-makers, a few years back, set about finding men's doubles talent that could be moulded along the lines and game style of Indonesia's legendary pair - The Minions'.

It was the hustlers with wicked serving skills, speed and shot variations who masterfully altered every moment and mood each second of rallies and aced unbalanced reflex returns, that the Chinese coaches went sniffing after. In Liang Wei keng and Wang Chang, they found their skill-wielders to play the busy game. Not quite replicas, but in their evolution, Liang-Wang were on the path to the Gideon-Sukamuljo model.

The matchup with these Chinese is growing into one right headache for Satwicksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, though the score is just 2-4 unlike the 0-11 against the Minions. Unfortunately, it's cost the Indians two finals and progress at an All England last few years.

On their first finals Sunday of 2024 at Malaysian Open, the Indian World No 2 were beaten 9-21, 21-18, 21-17 by the Chinese World No 1s. Satwik-Chirag led 10-3 in the decider. There's two things you can trust the Indian aces with - they start a rally to win in the first 1-2-3 shots. And they finish a match with the modern-day cliché, a monster mentality.

Carving their comeback from 9-3 down in the decider, the Chinese though, showed up the Indians at both the start of each rally and at the finish of the match. Nervousness gnawed at the Indians and finally gobbled them.

The match started with a 21-9 blitz by the Indians from the helpful side of the court with Satwik leading with a 466 kph monster smash at 4-0. Wang looked dazed as he over-shot his straight returns with fast pushes that went long. The Indians picked quick points, not allowing the Chinese serve to settle. So completely disoriented was Wang, who marshals their net, that the Indians were stubbing rallies swiftly pocketing the opener in 13 minutes.

It didn't make the Indians complacent, as they had played similar matches at Malaysia and All England earlier. And knew the coun-

ter was underway as they trailed 8-11 in the second. Wang had been erring into the net, and Satwik had been going after him, but surely the Chinese would jolt awake.

The second set was from the unhelpful side, but it was Wang's recovery from his funk that truly turned the tables. He had been tentative right upto 15-12, but at that juncture, he swivelled a fantastic body defense parry and won a couple of fast exchanges, and his confidence and equilibrium were restored.

Still, the Indians and Chirag especially looked in the mood to wrap this up soon like in the semi-final. These Chinese don't flake away like a croissant or like the Koreans or Malaysians though. Behind their easy smiles



Satwicksairaj Rankireddy (L) and Chirag Shetty lost to China's Liang Wei keng and Wang Chang 9-21, 21-18, 21-17. AP

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is steel and a bit of spite when they play the Indians who defeated them at the Asian Games in front of their home crowd. Satwik who had been doing the bashing without quite being 100 percent in it, had gathered a few service and return errors by now. At 18-19 he served into the net. The Chinese didn't need asking twice. The Indians were dragged into the decider.

### Mixing serves

Back to the advantageous side, the Indians led 10-3 before things fell apart. The trouble with being so good at the early 1-2-3 shots in a rally is, if it does get extended, the Indians are forced to defend. Wang, now restored to his creative perch, started mixing

up the serves, as Liang employed the tumble serve and toggled with a flick one. These are high quality openings when the Chinese play, and the Indians couldn't snap shut the returns.

The big Indian attack couldn't pulverize either, as the Chinese played blocks from the mid court and varied the short dips instead of flat pushes, and Wang found the length on his drives which stopped whistling long and stayed within bounds. Chirag was still lethal, but Satwik was coming undone. "This wasn't our 100 percent game. There's still something left off court, I felt it inside me. Not satisfied enough. In few other tournaments I used to be happy that I gave my 100 percent. But here I felt we played only 60 to

70 percent," was how Satwik put it to BWF. Carving their comeback from 3-10 down in the decider, the Chinese showed up the Indians at both the start of each rally and at the finish of the match. Nervousness gnawed at the pair and finally gobbled them

70 percent," was how Satwik put it to BWF. But pertinently, when Chirag couldn't be hassled, they pressured Satwik who was in bombastic mode. Liang was shaving pace off the shuttle, and began teasing tame lifts out of Satwik which Wang gleefully pulped to smashes. These were rushed defensive lifts lacking depth or height and duly punished.

All four serves came under pressure, and errors occurred, but at 15-17, Satwik had another poor one, though there was chaos all around as the Chinese leapt for the same shuttle a point earlier, but resolved the confusion with a smile. Then Liang served into the net. But at 16-18, the Chinese brought out the 'Minion' reflexes and wild racquet juts that magically connected and Liang returned everything thrown at him. Satwik just couldn't refrain from lifting next and the Chinese had their prey trapped and cooked, showing better nerves at the end.

"We thought we should keep at least 4-5 point lead. Even if it went 2-3 points here and there, no need to panic. Let's play our game. Don't think about lead. Because same thing happened yesterday. Here they came back, 10-3 down, they played freely. One point and it could've been 11-3. But next it became 10-7. When we started again, it was 12-all. Last Malaysia Open and All England, same situation. Happy way we played. But disappointed we couldn't keep our nerves in control. We took much more pressure than them. Towards end, we made silly mistakes. But they kept on pressing us, pressing us. Hopefully next time we can take revenge," Satwik said.

The opportunity should be up if both make finals at Delhi, the next stop for international badminton bandwagon. "We are more hungry for next week. In front of Indian crowd," Satwik promised.

## Salima delivers left, right & center as India beat NZ 3-1

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN  
JANUARY 14

JUST AFTER 30 seconds from pushback, Udita hit a long pass to Neha at the edge of the circle. The midfielder earned a foul, released a pass to find Salima Tete down the right flank. The speedster from Simdega, who was dubbed as 'Ferrari' by former coach Sjoerd Marlijne, broke through at pace and dribbled into the circle. Her pass then found the stick of Jyoti first and broke kindly for another Simdega star in Sangita Kumari who swept home first time to put India ahead.

That goal came with 14:29 on the clock, and 41 seconds into a massive clash against New Zealand at the FIH Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi on Sunday, India took the lead. Make no mistake, the pressure on Savita Punia's team for this clash was incredibly high after a defeat to USA on Saturday. Another defeat here and that was it for their dreams of reaching Paris.

An early goal was just what the doctor ordered as India prevailed 3-1 against the Black Sticks to keep their hopes alive.

Captain Janneke Schopman would later reveal that she was a little bit worried that India had scored far too early and it might lull them into stepping back too soon. That did happen

in Q1 as New Zealand responded well to equalise. But to their credit, India bounced back immediately in the opening fifteen minutes to lead 3-1 and held on to that for the rest of the night.

Udita (12'), celebrating her birthday, and Beauty Dungdung (14'), who is also a product of the Simdega training center, scored the second and third goals. New Zealand's equalising goal came from Megan Hull (9').

After the Asian Champions Trophy last year, Schopman told *The Indian Express* that "Salima has these unique feet for her speed, and ability to eliminate defenders to create opportunities." Salima - reluctant to play through the middle but understanding what the coach was asking of her - had impressed in that new role. She was the Player of the Tournament.

On Sunday, she made an instant impact. Back in the starting lineup, she delivered the first major attacking outcome of the match. In general, she was central to everything India did well in the first half. She switched flanks, threatened both wings of New Zealand and didn't hesitate to move in as well when the chance presented.

Salima would be involved in the third goal too and from the left this time. It was her driving diagonal run from the right flank that set up a Penalty Corner first. After good attacking

pressure, India recycled the ball well and Salima released Beauty down the left byline. The youngster's pass into the center was deflected and India celebrated their third goal in one quarter after not scoring at all against USA.

When she started to pick up the sport from her father Sulakshan in Barkhichapar, Salima used to wake up at 4 am and run for hours near the river. It is likely where she got that speed

in her legs from. As a kid, she used to play in tournaments where goats were given as prizes, she did well in the local events and won a lot. From her school in Tumdeggi, playing tournaments in Lathakhaman, she was spotted as a talent that was worth investing in and she made the move to Simdega's hockey training center where she was mentored by Pratima Barwa.

Against USA, along with the majority of the India squad, she didn't have the best of matches. She often ran into a wall while trying to take on defenders and the usual connections with Sangita were missing. India needed at least one player to step up their game so that the others could follow suit, and it was Salima who did that versus New Zealand. "Salima is very good at playing multiple positions. She also played through the center today but I have asked her to do both, switching from side to center. It is really difficult for the opponents, so they can't really know where she ends up," Schopman told reporters in the mixed zone.

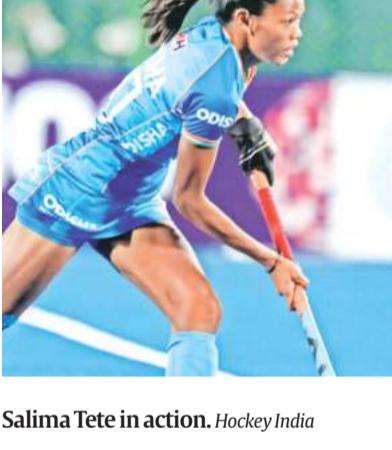
### Defence shines

In between those two goals, Udita connected well from a PC with her slap as India scored a goal very similar to New Zealand's equaliser. With all four goals coming in the first quarter, the rest of the match was about game

management for India. Schopman would have liked a goal or two more that would have sent India above New Zealand on the table.

But it was imperative not to let them back into the match as well. There was a period of sustained pressure in the third quarter from New Zealand, but India's deep defence was in sync. It was not flawless either but any time there was a mistake made, there was another player to mop it up. If India lost the ball, Nikki Pradhan was there to clear the lines. Nisha and Monika dropped deep to help out as well, while young Ishika Chahdary too put in crucial tackles. "With Grace not here, that's a lot of experience in our defensive line that we don't have. I have asked Moni to play a lower line and she is doing a very good job there. I think Ishika is doing a good job with Udita and Nikki. They need to connect and play together with Savi. They did that today. We kept them from being dangerous," Schopman said.

New Zealand's performance mirrored India's against USA as they struggled to fashion clear-cut chances. But credit where it's due as India put the disappointment behind them to come up with a result that keeps them in contention for the Olympics. Italy await on Tuesday as India would know what their equation is based on how USA vs New Zealand unfolds.



Salima Tete in action. Hockey India



Novak Djokovic was pushed to four sets by 18-year-old Major debutant Dino Prizmic while Aryna Sabalenka blew past Ella Seidel 6-0, 6-1. Reuters

### KEY RESULTS

#### Day One

##### Men's Singles

1-N Djokovic bt D Prizmic 6-2, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-4; 4-J Sinner bt B van de Zandschulp 6-4, 7-5, 6-3; 5-A Rublev bt T Wild 7-5, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 7-6 (6); 12-T Fritz bt F Acosta 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2, 6-4; 17-F Tiafoe bt Borna Coric 6-3, 7-6 (7), 2-6, 6-3; 22-F Cerundolo bt D Sweeny 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 6-2; 26-S Baez bt J Wolf 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 3-0 (retd)

##### Women's Singles

C Wozniacki bt 20-M Linette 6-2, 6-0 (retd); 32-L Fernandez bt S Bejlek 7-6 (5), 6-2; 30-X Wang lost to D Parry 3-6, 6-2, 3-6; A Anisimova bt 13-L Samsonova 6-3, 6-4; 28-L Tsurenko bt L Bronzetti 3-6, 7-5, 6-3; 2-A Sabalenka bt E Seidel 6-0, 6-1

Argentine Facundo Diaz Acosta in another four-hour marathon.

The addition of an extra day to the tournament to help clear the first round matches left the early schedule a little light on star power.

Czech Barbora Krejcikova was the only former women's Grand Slam winner playing in the day session and the ninth seed had to come from behind to beat Japanese wildcard Mai Ontama 2-6 6-4 6-3.

Women's eighth seed Maria Sakkari had an easier time getting past her Japanese opponent Nao Hibino 6-4 6-1 but 13th seed Liudmila Samsonova crashed out 6-3 6-4 at the hands of American Amanda Anisimova.

Sabalenka will next play Czech qualifier Brenda Fruhvirtova, who became the youngest winner in the main draw since Coco Gauff beat Naomi Osaka in 2020 with a 6-2 6-4 6-3 victory over Ana Bogdan at the age of 16 years and 287 days.

Former champion Caroline Wozniacki advanced to the second round after four years away from Melbourne Park when last year's semi-finalist Magda Linette retired due to injury while trailing 6-2 2-0.

Marin Cilic played his first Australian Open before Fruhvirtova was born and reached the final in 2018 but he had little to celebrate after his 50th match at Melbourne Park, a 6-1 2-6 6-2 7-5 loss to Hungarian Fabian Marozsan.

REUTERS  
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 14

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka entertained bumper crowds with contrasting first-round victories over teenagers as the Australian Open got underway a day earlier than usual on Sunday.

Djokovic, who admitted he had been feeling under the weather for the last few days, needed more than four hours on Rod Laver Arena to subdue qualifier Dino Prizmic 6-2 6-7(5) 6-3 6-4 and remain on course for an 11th title at Melbourne Park.