

38th Statehood Day

PEOPLE OF
ARUNACHAL PRADESH

heartily welcomes

SHRI JAGDEEP DHANKHAR

HONOURABLE VICE PRESIDENT

in the Land of Rising Sun



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DIPR/ARN/SD/0054



THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Reuters

THAILAND

Royal libel case: Thaksin meets prosecutor

Bangkok: A day after his high-profile release from detention, Thailand's former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra met with prosecutors on Monday to discuss allegations he insulted the powerful monarchy, during which he appeared "truly ill", a senior official said. "I spoke to him and he barely had any voice. From what I can see he is truly ill," Preecha Sudsanguan, director general of the office of litigation told a press conference. He was paroled, with conditions, on account of his age, health and time served.

REUTERS

SOUTH KOREA

Amid spat with govt, Doctors quit en masse

Seoul: Trainee doctors in South Korea began submitting their resignations en masse Monday in protest of a government medical policy, causing reported delays in surgeries and other treatments at hospitals. Health authorities say it's urgent to have more doctors considering South Korea's fast-aging population. They say the number of doctors in the country relative to the size of the population is among the lowest in the developed world. But doctors' groups say the government must use available resources to raise medical fees and resolve other problems first.

AP

BHUTAN

China 'builds' villages on disputed border

Beijing: China is reportedly pressing ahead with the construction of border villages in the disputed territory with Bhutan, despite the ongoing border talks between the two countries. At least three villages have been built in the mountainous region separating the two countries, with some doubling in size, the South China Morning Post reported on Sunday. The expansion began as poverty alleviation scheme but serves a dual national security role, the report quoted the Chinese Communist Party officials as saying.

PTI



EIFFEL TOWER SHUTS AMID STRIKE

A signboard outside Eiffel Tower in Paris on Monday announcing that the monument is closed. The CGT union, which represents a large number of Eiffel employees, said it went on strike against poor financial management of the monument. They have called for a salary hike in proportion to the incoming revenue and improved maintenance of the tower. Reuters, AP

Media watchdog starts neutrality probe over Sunak's TV appearance



UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, FEBRUARY 19

BRITAIN'S INDEPENDENT media watchdog on Monday opened an investigation into whether impartiality rules were broken during British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's recent television appearance after receiving around 500 complaints from viewers.

The Office of Communications (Ofcom) said its probe covers the 'People's Forum: The Prime Minister' programme which aired on 'GB News' last Monday.

Under its Broadcasting Code, Ofcom requires a wide range of views to be expressed to ensure impartiality within a political setting.

"We have received around 500 complaints about the programme which aired on 'GB News' on 12 February 2024," an Ofcom statement said.

The show's presenter said the questions addressed to Sunak were from undecided voters and had not been seen in advance by Sunak or by the channel.

UKRAINIAN FORCES CONFIRM PULLING OUT OF AVDIIVKA

Capture of east Ukraine city complete: Russian military

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, FEBRUARY 19

RUSSIAN FORCES have completed their takeover of Avdiivka by eliminating the last pocket of resistance at the eastern Ukraine city's huge coke plant, the Russian military said Monday, after the sheer weight of its troop numbers and greater firepower drove out Kyiv's forces.

Moscow officials announced Saturday said they had taken control of Avdiivka. Ukrainian forces confirmed pulling out of the bombed-out city in what amounted to a triumph for the Kremlin even though the four-month battle was costly.

The victory was a morale boost for Russia, days ahead of the two-year anniversary of its full-scale invasion of its neighbour on Feb. 24, 2022. For Ukraine, the loss underscored its reliance on the supply of Western weapons and ammunition, as hold-ups have left it short of provisions and handicapped in the fight.

"Delays in Western security assistance to Ukraine are likely helping Russia launch opportunistic offensive operations along several sectors of the front line in order to place pressure on Ukrainian forces along multiple axes," the Institute for War and Peace Reporting said in an assessment late Sunday.



A building destroyed during fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces in Borodyanka, Ukraine, Monday. AP

Wife promises to continue Navalny's fight against Putin

ASSOCIATED PRESS

FEBRUARY 19

THE WIDOW of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny vowed on Monday to continue his fight against the Kremlin while authorities denied his mother access to a morgue where his body is believed to be held after his death last week at an Arctic penal colony.

Julia Navalnaya accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of killing her husband in the prison and vowed to punish him and other alleged perpetrators.



Julia Navalnaya, widow of Navalny

She also slammed the authorities, saying they were refusing to hand over the body to Navalny's mother to cover up his alleged killing, and referred to his alleged earlier poisoning with a Soviet-era Novichok nerve agent.

Russian authorities said that the cause for Navalny's death is still unknown.

Maldives will thwart illegal efforts to impeach Muizzu, says senior minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MALE, FEBRUARY 19

ACCUSING THE Opposition of trying to illegally overthrow Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's government in less than 100 days in power, a senior minister has said the administration would not allow them to do so unless they cut "every vein in our throats".

The comments by Minister of Islamic Affairs Mohamed Shaeem Ali Saeed came on Sunday as he was accompanying Muizzu on his first trip to Addu, the second-largest urban area in the Maldives in terms of population.

Saeed alleged that the government is facing challenges from inside and out, and were being bombarded with the relentless spread of misinformation and baseless rumours, The

Edition reported.

He said that it is the responsibility of the Opposition to hold the government accountable.

However, he said, it is not part of holding a government accountable to attempt to create obstacles for and overthrow a government elected by the people just as it has begun, in a manner that will ultimately cause the most harm to the people themselves.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, FEBRUARY 19

WIKILEAKS FOUNDER Julian Assange's fight to avoid facing spying charges in the United States may be nearing an end following a protracted legal saga in the U.K. that included seven years of self-exile inside a foreign embassy and five years in prison.

Assange faces what could be his final court hearing in London starting Tuesday as he tries to

QUASAR WITH FASTEST GROWING BLACK HOLE EVER KNOWN AT CENTRE ASTRONOMERS FIND 'UNIVERSE'S BRIGHTEST OBJECT'

Astronomers have discovered what may be the brightest object in the universe, a quasar with a black hole at its heart growing so fast that it swallows the equivalent of a sun a day. The record-breaking quasar shines 500 trillion times brighter than our sun. The black hole powering this quasar is more than 17 billion times more immense than our sun, an Australian-led team reported Monday in the journal *Nature Astronomy*.

AP



'RAFAH OFFENSIVE SHOULDN'T PROCEED'

US drafts UN resolution supporting temporary ceasefire in Gaza war

Deviates from aversion to ceasefire in previous UN actions

REUTERS

UNITED NATIONS, FEBRUARY 19

THE UNITED STATES has proposed a rival draft United Nations Security Council resolution that would underscore the body's "support for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza as soon as practicable," according to the text seen by Reuters on Monday.

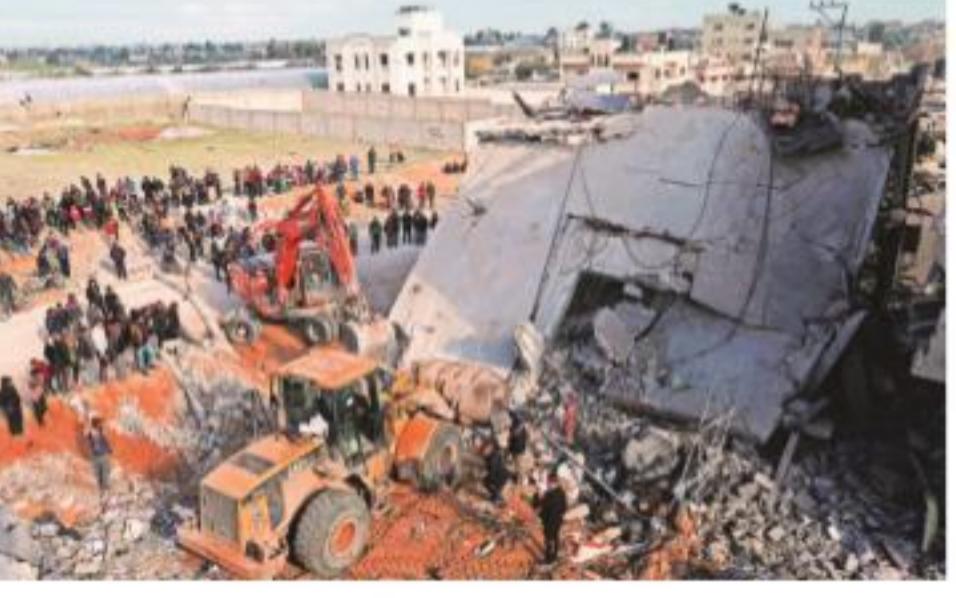
Washington has been averse to the word ceasefire in any UN action on the Israel-Hamas war, but the US draft text echoes language that President Joe Biden said he used last week in talks with Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu.

The draft says "a major ground offensive into Rafah would result in further harm to civilians and their further displacement including... into neighboring countries."

Over a million Palestinians have sought shelter in Rafah. The US draft said an assault "would have serious implications for regional peace and security, and therefore underscores that such a major ground offensive should not proceed under current circumstances." It was not immediately clear when or if the draft resolution would be put to a vote.

The US put forward the text after Algeria Saturday requested the council vote Tuesday on its draft resolution, which demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

US envoy to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield quickly signaled that it would be vetoed.



Palestinians inspect a house destroyed in an Israeli strike in Rafah on Monday. Reuters

Release hostages by Ramadan or fighting will continue: Bibi aide

AP & REUTERS

RAFAH, FEBRUARY 19

A MEMBER of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's War Cabinet threatened to invade the southern city of Rafah if remaining Israeli hostages are not freed by the upcoming Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki Monday demanded an immediate end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories at the hearings on legal status of disputed land at the UN top court. Over 50 states will present arguments before the International Court of Justice until February 26, after a 2022 request from General Assembly for an advisory opinion.

Imran party says independent winners will join Sunni alliance



PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 19

REVERSING ITS earlier decision, jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Monday said that the party-backed independent candidates, who won the February 8 elections, will join the rightwing Sunni Ittehad Council.

The party had earlier decided that its members elected to the National Assembly and the Punjab provincial assembly would join Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM), a Shia party, while those elected in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa would become part of Jamiat-e-Islami (JI), which is a hardline Sunni religious party.

The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is an alliance of Islamic political and religious parties in the Muslim-majority country which represents followers of the school of Sunni Islam.

"Our candidates in the National Assembly, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies will join the Sunni Ittehad Council," Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan said while addressing a press conference along with leaders of the MWM and SIC.

He said a "formal agreement" made with the Sunni alliance would be submitted to the ECP.

Assange faces key UK court hearing on extradition



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, FEBRUARY 19

stop his extradition to the U.S. The High Court has scheduled two days of arguments over whether Assange can ask an appeals court to block his transfer. If the court doesn't allow the appeal to go forward, he could be

sent across the Atlantic.

His wife says the decision is a matter of life and death for Assange, whose health has deteriorated during his time in custody. "His life is at risk every single day he stays in prison," Stella Assange said Thursday. "If he's extradited, he will die."

Assange, 52, an Australian computer expert, has been indicted in the U.S. on 18 charges over WikiLeaks' publication of hundreds of thousands of classified documents in 2010.

Prosecutors say he conspired with U.S. army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to hack into a Pentagon computer and release secret diplomatic cables and military files on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He faces 17 counts of espionage and one charge of computer misuse. If convicted, his lawyers say he could receive a prison term of up to 175 years, though American authorities have said any sentence is likely to be much lower.

Andreas Dresen Depicts Germans Who Resisted Hitler; Mati Diop Challenges Post-Colonial Notions Of Reparations, Repair

'From Hilde, With Love', 'Dahomey': The undead memories of Holocaust, colonialism

Diop's 'Dahomey', brings to the fore a similar feeling of connecting the dots when 26 stolen objects were sent back from Paris to Benin in 2021, 61 years after the African country gained independence from France.

The large-scale looting of thousands of artefacts from the Kingdom of Dahomey (as Benin used to be known), took place over a century ago. Now with their return, it would appear to be a restitution, and a closure, but the low numbers are 'humiliating', said the French-Senegalese director at the press conference after the screening.

The 67 minutes film uses a unique documentary approach

Screen grabs from *From Hilde, With Love* (left); *Dahomey*. X@indieWire, @heinzl_stefan

ated, and the only way she can postpone certain death is to make herself useful in the ward with other expecting mothers. She's been trained as a dentist's assistant, and is deft with her touch as she soothes the women in pain, even as she raises her baby: the crude doctor attending to her birth says the baby won't survive, but Hilde is determined, and it lives, and thrives.

laced with fantasy, as one of the artefacts — a mighty statue of King Ghezo packed carefully within a container — suddenly finds a human voice. Why was he in darkness all these years? There's joy and pride at the return of these items, but there's also the sorrow that comes from being uprooted, and taken away to an alien land.

'Dahomey' powerfully challenges post-colonial notions of reparations and repair: as a young woman says, 'I speak French, but I am not French'. What does it mean to not have access to the language of your ancestors? Memories and history go hand in hand.

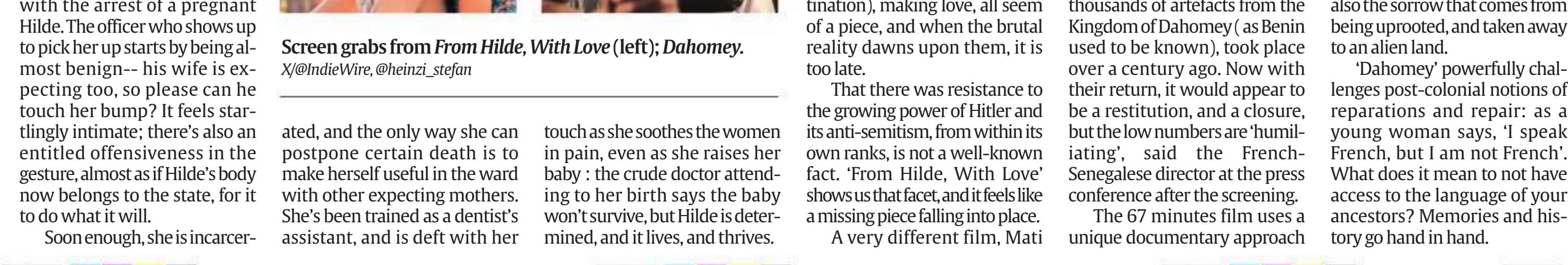


EXPRESS AT BERLINALE

SHUBRA GUPTA

FEBRUARY 19

IT'S NOT a Berlinale if it doesn't have at least one film turning a lens on Germany's Nazi past. It's been so many years since the Holocaust, and yet the wound still festers. Whether it is the



paper.indianexpress.com



Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Prosperous Farmers, Prosperous Nation

Kisan Rail connecting farmers with new markets; Over 2300 Kisan Rails operationalised on 167 routes

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Government of India
002201/13/2024

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Sandeshkhali: NCW chief says she got 2 rape complaints; TV journalist held

SANTANU CHOWDHURY & SWEETY KUMARI KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 19

THE NATIONAL Commission for Women chairperson Monday said she had received 18 complaints from the women of West Bengal's Sandeshkhali, including two of rape, during a visit to the area. The chairperson, Rekha Sharma, also demanded President's Rule in the area and resignation of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "failing to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

6-MONTH WINDOW BECOMES 6 YRS
Amnesty stretched, 100 projects with 'violations' cleared

JAY MAZOOMDAAR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

AN AMNESTY window opened for just six months in March 2017 to clear projects in a novel "violation category" became routine through a Union Environment Ministry notification in July 2021, and provided ex-post facto approval to over 100 projects till the Supreme Court stayed the notification in January this year.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

VIOLATIONS WERE RECORDED ONLY TO BE CONDONED

SC SAYS NO NEW ZOO WITHOUT ITS NOD P8

Projects that started work without obtaining a mandatory prior environmental clearance or exceeded the limits set as clearance conditions fall under the "violation category".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A DAY after the Centre proposed minimum support price (MSP) on three pulses, maize and cotton through cooperatives, agitating Punjab farmer leaders Monday evening rejected the of-

fer and said they would resume their 'Dilli Chalo' protest at 11 am Wednesday to demand legal

guarantee of MSP on all crops.

Bharatiya Kisan Union
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Farm leaders Sarvan Singh Pandher and Jagjit Singh Dallewal address reporters in Patiala. PTI
CENTRE'S PROPOSAL, P15



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CHANDIGARH MAYOR POLLS
Bring ballot papers to court, count afresh, says Supreme Court

ANANTHKRISHNANG
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

EXPRESSING CONCERN about horse trading in Chandigarh mayoral polls, Supreme Court Monday decided to examine the ballot papers of the January 30 elections to see if the results can be deduced by disregarding the "defacement" allegedly made on some of them by the Returning Officer.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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Indian hockey team's Jyoti dazzles crowd, hopes her home next door isn't demolished



Jyoti Chhetri; (right) the house her parents built on Govt land 20 years ago

For the rising forward in the national women's hockey team, last week was straight out of a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Sants are building new temples, I am rebuilding nation: PM Modi

'If today Sudama gave rice to Krishna, PIL in SC, graft verdict'

VIKAS PATHAK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Monday said that like sants and acharyas are building new temples, God has entrusted him with the responsibility of rebuilding the "rashtra-roopi mandir



PM Modi, UP CM Adityanath in Lucknow on Monday. PTI
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

(the temple that is the nation)".

"I am working day and night to rebuild the temple that is the nation and make it grand. Today, India has reached a place where we are not emulating (others) but setting examples," he said, laying the foundation stone of Kalki Dham in Sambhal in western

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Govt. of India



Where Development Values Nature

Delhi Development Authority

Inauguration of Island Fountains (Sector 1/7 and Sector 2/6) and Rejuvenation of Storm Water Channels 2 and 5 at Dwarka

By
Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena
Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Delhi

Guests of Honour
Shri Parvesh Sahib Singh
Hon'ble MP, West Delhi

Shri Ramesh Bidhuri
Hon'ble MP, South Delhi

FOUNTAIN

- 4 cascade type horse fountains of 12 feet each
- Redeveloped green areas, barrier free ramps

STORM WATER CHANNELS

- To provide green and clean environment for walking, jogging, cycling etc.
- Open air food court, open air theatre, yoga pavilion, children park, and public toilets along the channels
- Sewerage Interception and treatment
- Greenways developed along the channels for connectivity of the dwellers River front activities like viewing decks, pergola bridges, check dams etc.

Date

Tuesday, 20th February, 2024

Time: 11:30 AM

Place

Exit Gate No. 1, Dwarka Sector-9, Near by Metro Station, Dwarka, New Delhi

• Indian hockey team's Jyoti

fairy tale. But for one twist – soon, she might not have a home.

On the field, Jyoti has been playing hard and moving up. Off it, she has been fighting to avert demolition of her house where she has lived all her life.

Jyoti's father Bhim Chhetri, a mason, said the family has been served a "notice" by local authorities to vacate the house to make way for widening of the road.

It's going to be a challenge given that the family moved in 20 years ago and built a house on this estimated 300-square-foot plot of government land without any papers.

It's a no-frills home on a winding road that overlooks the confluence of three rivers – Sankh, Koel and Saraswati – right across the fabled Panposh Sports Hostel that has produced many international hockey stars, including the likes of former captain – and current Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey; ex-internationals Lazarus Barla and Prabodh Tirkey; and current India team defender Amit Rohidas.

"I moved to Rourkela from Ranchi in 1988," Bhim recalled. "When I first came here, I was a watchman at the hostel and stayed in quarters they provided. I joined their canteen as a helper cook. Then I got married, two kids were born and the place was too small to live with the family."

He claims a hostel official suggested he build a house on the tiny land parcel outside the main gate.

The family of four moved there soon after Jyoti was born and it remained their home until two years ago, when local authorities landed unannounced at their doorstep.

"Some 8-10 government officials came to take measurements and informed us that they will demolish the house," Bhim said. "They gave us time till 2025 or latest 2026 before the demolition job begins... We cannot afford to buy a new house or land. We have requested the government officials to rehabilitate us. They asked us for our Aadhar cards and other documents. But there is no response yet."

Once the house is razed, the narrow one-lane road will be broadened to ensure there are no bottlenecks on the bridge that runs over the river and connects Kuarmunda to Panposh, 10 km away. This is part of a national highway and the four-lane widening work is being done by the

NHAI in Odisha.

An NHAI official, who didn't wish to be named, said that he wasn't aware of this case. But if there's any encroachment on government land, demolition notices are issued by either the tehsildar or the competent authority on land acquisition led by Additional District Magistrate or NHAI.

District Collector of Sundargarh – in which the area falls – Gavali Parag Harshad said he will look into the case and assured all support.

"Though I am not fully aware of the issue, I will definitely look into it. Whatever help is required to her (Jyoti) family, we will extend on our behalf. Even if it's not possible on our part, we will request the state government to extend help," Harshad said.

Six months ago, Jyoti approached the Additional District Magistrate seeking relief. "He assured me they will do something but nothing has happened till now. I am doing whatever I can to seek some support."

Surbhankar Mahapatra, the ADM whom Jyoti met, did not comment on the issue, saying he has been transferred from Rourkela.

He directed the query to the current ADM, Ashutosh Kulkarni, who told *The Indian Express*: "Since I have just taken charge, I am not aware of the case so I won't be able to comment."

Most of the house is just bricks and mortar but with the prize money Jyoti has won recently, her father painted the exteriors fac-

FROM PAGE ONE

FULLREPORTS
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Punjab farmers reject Govt's offer

(Sidhpur) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal said they discussed at length the Centre's proposal, which was offered during a meeting between the protesting farmer leaders and three Union ministers Sunday night, and reached the conclusion that it was "not in favour" of the farmers.

"We stand by our demand of legal guarantee for MSP on all 23 crops," he told reporters.

Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher said the "Dilli Chalo" protest would resume at 11 am Wednesday. "We will start marching towards Delhi. We should be allowed to protest. We have every right to launch an agitation. There is no need for any meeting. The government should take decisions now. There have been enough discussions," he said, adding the Haryana-Punjab borders should be opened for them.

"We appeal to the government to either accept our demands or let us go to Delhi," he said, adding that the protesting farmers did not want to break the barricades. "But nobody listens to us. We have been trying not to cause harm to anyone.... We do not want anyone to lose his life. But this government is not listening..."

Jyoti hopes this success can be a way out. "If I do well in hockey and continue playing in the future, then I may get some financial support or win prize money. With that, I can support my family," she said.

Bhim does not want his daughter to get distracted. "We are worried what will happen but have told Jyoti to play without any pressure, without thinking about any of this," he said. "We will see what happens, we are at God's mercy. Wherever he takes us."

**(With SUJIT BISOYI,
BHUBANESWAR)**

He alleged that the government's intent was questionable. "The Union ministers kept telling us inside the meeting that the proposal was for all the farmers across the country. But after they came out, they started saying that only those farmers would get MSP on pulses, maize and cotton, who will diversify from paddy," he claimed, referring to the fourth round of talks in Chandigarh on Sunday to find a resolution.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda and Minister of State for Home Affairs Nitin Gadkari participated in the meeting with the farmer leaders along with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Dallewal said that according to the Union ministers, the MSP on pulses alone will cost the government Rs 1.5 lakh crore. "We have calculations from experts who say that the MSP on all 23 crops will cost the exchequer Rs 1.75 lakh crore. We spend Rs 1.75 lakh crore on palm oil imports. The palm oil is already responsible for so many diseases in the country. If the government announces MSP on oil seeds, then Rs 1.75 lakh crore can be saved on these imports."

Emerging from Sunday's meeting, which ended after midnight, Goyal had announced the Centre's proposal. According to the proposal, government cooperative agencies, including NCCF and NAFED, will procure maize and three pulses – Arhar, Urad and Moong – and Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) will procure cotton produce after the MSP is decided upon by CAPC. For this, the farmers and these agencies will get into a legal contract of five years, he said.

Goyal said the farmer leaders had pointed to the rising desertification in Punjab due to water sources drying up, and this led to a discussion on diversification. "We discussed how the cultivation of pulses could reduce imports, conserve water in Punjab, help soil health and boost farmers' income," he told reporters.

On Monday, Pandher said that the proposal was actually contract farming in the name of diversification. It will only benefit those farmers, who diversify from paddy. "We took time to discuss so that the people of the country do not say that the farmers do not accept any proposal. But this was a cunning move of the government," he said.

"This is a reflection on the intent of the government. We want the government to make a proposal on all crops. We want MSP legal guarantee legislation. The Government of India should tell us what study it has done on the debt waiver..."

Referring to the presence of Chief Minister Mann at their meeting with the Union ministers, Dallewal said they wanted him to attend the meeting. "We wanted to tell him that he is the CM and teargas shells and other ammunition were being lobbed in our state. That is why we wanted him in the meeting," he said.

"Today, the Haryana DGP stated they have not used pellet guns (on protesting farmers) and not even teargas shells. We want to tell him if the DGP has not done it, then who has done it. Why is Haryana government not taking action against those people? The Supreme Court should also take suo motu notice," Dallewal said.

Earlier in the day, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, which spearheaded the 2020-21 stir and is not part of 'Dilli Chalo' call, said saying they will accept nothing less than 'C-2 plus 50 per cent' formula for MSP as recommended by Swaminathan Commission.

• Sants are building new temples, I am rebuilding nation: PM Modi

Uttar Pradesh.

"We are being seen as an innovation hub. We are the fifth largest economy for the first time and have become the first country to reach the Moon's south pole. For the first time, we have Vande Bharat and Namo Bharat trains; we have a vast network of highways and expressways. The positive energy and self-confidence in the nation is a unique experience," the Prime Minister said.

Replying to Acharya Pramod Krishnam, the head of the Kalki Dham Trust who said he had nothing to offer to the Prime Minister except his feelings, Modi said, "Pramod ji, it's good you gave me nothing. Warna zamana aisa agar hai ki agar ake jay mein Sudama Shri Krishna ko ek potli mein chawal de, video nikaali, Supreme Court mein PIL ho jaati, aur judgment aata ki Bhagwan Krishna

ko bhrashtachar mein kuchh diya gaya, aur Bhagwan Krishna bhrashtachar kar rahe hain (That in this era Sudama had given a small bag of rice to Lord Krishna, a video would have surfaced, there would have been a PIL in the Supreme Court, and a judgment would have been delivered that Lord Krishnagot the spoils of corruption and is engaged in it.)"

The PM was invited to the event by Acharya Krishnam, who was recently expelled from the Congress for "anti-party activities". In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Acharya Krishnam had contested from Sambhal, a seat with high Muslim population, on a Congress ticket and lost.

The Kalki Dham temple will be dedicated to the "future" Kalki Avatar of Lord Vishnu, who, it is believed, will be born in Sambhal.

The temple will have 10 garbagrihas (sanctum sanctorum), each dedicated to the 10 reincarnations of Lord Vishnu.

Modi recalled that the 500-year wait for Lord Ram to be consecrated in a grand temple finally ended in January, and a grand temple has come up in the UAE as well. "One experience after another of this kind has been witnessed – what can be a greater fortune? We have seen Kashi Vishwanath corridor coming up; we have seen the development of Mahakaleshwar temple; we have seen development of Somnath and Kedar Valley. We have internalised the mantra of development with heritage," the PM said.

While on one hand places of pilgrimage are being developed, on the other, cities are getting hi-tech infrastructure, he said, adding that today, if temples are being

built, new medical colleges are also coming up across the country.

"Today, our ancient sculptures are also being brought back from abroad and a record number of foreign investments are also coming. This change is proof that the wheel of time has turned and a new era is knocking at our doors. It is time that we welcome this with an open heart," Modi said.

He recalled what he had said in Ayodhya that a new era has begun and that Ram Lalla's consecration marked the beginning of a new journey for the country for the next 1,000 years.

Prasing Pramod Krishnam, Modi said, "He had to fight with the previous governments and go to court for this temple... He was told that peace would be disrupted if the temple comes up. Today, in our government, he has started this work without any worry."

built, new medical colleges are also coming up across the country.

Project developers who benefited over the last six years include Singareni Collieries Company Limited, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited, Jaypee Cement, UltraTech Cement, Ramco Cements, Bhushan Steel Limited (Tata Steel), Steel Authority of India, Godrej Agrovet Limited, Hindustan Copper, Lloyds Metals & Energy Limited, Hindustan Marble, Artemis Hospital, Pushpawati Singhania Hospital, Spaze Towers, Hotel Leela Venture Ltd., Special Protection Group etc.

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Records reviewed by *The Indian Express* show that an Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) set up to deal with violation cases met 46 times between June 2017 and June 2021 and recommended at least 112 projects. Of this, at least 55 were granted environmental clearances.

Judgements by the Supreme Court in Common Cause versus Union of India (2017) and Alembic Pharmaceuticals versus Rohit Prajapati (2020) have held that the concept of ex-post facto clearance is against the fundamental principle of environmental jurisprudence and the EIA Notification 2006 which requires a prior environment clearance.

Records reviewed by *The Indian Express* show that an Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) set up to deal with violation cases met 46 times between June 2017 and June 2021 and recommended at least 112 projects. Of this, at least 55 were granted environmental clearances.

Since July 2021 when "handling of violation cases" became a routine procedure, the ministry's ten EACs – industry 1-3, infrastructure 1-2, thermal, hydro, coal mining, non-coal mining and CRZ – that deal with projects in different sectors have met over 400 times and recommended at least 144 projects under "violation category". Of this, at least 46 have been issued final environmental clearances.

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ORDER TO DCPs, UNIT HEADS

Don't share CCTV footage and clips of crimes: Police chief

MAHENDER SINGH
MANRAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19



Police chief
Sanjay Arora

WHEN A crime is committed in the Capital, CCTV footage of the incident often finds its way to social media. Take the instance of a shooting at a salon in Nafajgarh earlier this month that left two men dead. In purported CCTV footage that surfaced online, one of the victims could be seen pleading with the attackers before he was shot in the head at point-blank range.

Unhappy that such footage is going viral, Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora has issued an order to district DCPs and unit heads to ensure they are not shared with anyone. In case of any breach, he said "they (officers) will be responsible for lapse of supervision on this account".

Pointing to several such instances in the recent past, Arora, in his February 10 order, said it adversely impacts the privacy and sensitivities of victims of such crimes and, at times, provides an avoidable defense to the accused during test identification parade proceedings.

"Analysis of almost every such instance of unwarranted circulation of sensitive CCTV footage has brought (us to) the conclusion that local police extracts such footage to assist in investigation before making a formal seizure of the digital video recorder (DVR) or network video recorder (NVR)," the order states.

"...Needless to say, field formations, as well as investigators of specialised units, have been producing lightning-quick results in terms of working out the crime and apprehending criminals con-

sistently following this practice. However, in this process, police lose control over circulation of CCTV footage as these digital artefacts get circulated in what is commonly understood to be a viral manner," it further states.

Arora said it is pertinent to state that the same results can be achieved if relevant still images, that show facial or other features of the suspects, are cropped from the footage. "In cases where CCTV footage of a crime being committed is found, it will be the sole responsibility of the SHO concerned to ensure there is no sharing of any video clip. What is shareable, strictly to assist in quick identification of suspects, will be cropped snapshots/still images as derived from video footage having the best possible description of the suspect," he said.

He said in cases of a serious crime, apart from local police, "special staff of the district and, in a limited number of cases, teams from the Crime Branch/Special Cell also visit the (spot). They should also follow all instructions as laid down above for local police. To address their inquiries, local police should share snapshots/still images (of footage) with these units..." he said.

Arora directed all DCPs of districts/units to ensure the instructions are followed. "(This) should be briefed to off-field and investigative policing hierarchies by Special CPs concerned, re-briefed and ensured by Joint/Additional CPs concerned," he added.

Ensure minimum wage and pension: Domestic workers demand new law

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

A LEGISLATION for domestic workers, which will consider the homes they work in as 'workplaces', ensure minimum wage and social security benefits like pension – these are among the demands raised by domestic workers, who are part of the National Platform for Domestic Workers (NPDW).

The NPDW, constituted in 2012, held a press conference on Monday to raise the demand for a legislation that will cover those who are part of the informal sector, with "specific cover" for domestic workers. Speaking at the event, domestic workers said they have no legal protection or guaranteed benefits, which makes them more likely to be exploited.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
NANGAL UNIT, NAYA NANGAL (PUNJAB) 140 126
Date : 20.02.2024

Pre-Qualification Notice

National Fertilizers Limited invites applications from eligible and experienced bidders/parties for Pre-qualification for Nano Urea (Liquid) Fertiliser Project at Nangal Unit for following individual works packages:

S. No.	Package	Estimated Cost (Rs crores)excluding GST
1	Civil works (Including PEB, Interior / Landscape works)	75
2	Electrical, ELV and Instrumentation works	45
3	Mechanical works	40

The pre-qualification documents can be downloaded from our websites <https://www.nationalfertilizers.com> and CPP portal <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>. The last date for submission / uploading of pre-qualification documents on E-tender / CPP portal is 15 days from the date of publishing of tender. For any information, please contact Mr. S. K. Negi, DGM (TS & Project) at +91-94171 66650.

GM (TS & Projects)

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT MUMBAI
1st floor, Terminal 1, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Santacruz (E), Mumbai - 400 099.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN BIDDING PROCESS FOR VARIOUS SERVICES CONCESSIONS AT CSMIA AIRPORT

Mumbai International Airport Limited ("MIAL") invites parties to participate in the competitive bidding process for various Services - Pharmacy, ATM, Car Rental, Hotel Reservation & Ticketing, Sim Cards and Female Wellness Concessions at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport ("CSMIA"), Mumbai. Parties are requested to visit the website: (<https://csmia.adaniairports.com/> → Business → Tenders) for downloading form of Application for purchase of Request for Proposal document(s). Please check the website for Last date and time for submission of Application.

IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED
NAVRAATNA COMPANY
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
Website: www.ircon.org, CIN - L45203DL1976G01008173
e-Tender Notice
e-Tender for and on behalf of IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED is invited from bidders meeting qualifying requirements for work of "Design, Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Training of various types equipment for MSME-ESDM (Electronics System Design and Manufacturing) Centers located at Greater Noida, Puducherry and IDEM, Mumbai on Manufacturing". Last Date and Time of e-Bid Submission 09.03.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.

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For further details, visit website : <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>. Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted only on the website.

CGM/Mechanical, IRCON International Ltd. C-4, District Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110017

6 MONTHS AFTER COMMUNAL CLASHES DURING VHP, BAJRANG DAL YATRA

Nuh violence: UAPA charges added in 3 cases

AISWARYA RAJ
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 19

POLICE HAVE slapped sections of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on the accused in three cases for their alleged involvement in the murder of three persons in Nuh violence that took place in July 2023, and an attack on a cybernetic police station.

In response to court documents, the action by the Nuh Police comes nearly six months after six persons were killed in communal clashes that erupted in Nuh and adjoining areas during a yatra by the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal on July 31 last year.

The deceased in the three

cases were two homeguards, Neeraj Khan and Gursev, and Bajrang Dal member Abhishek, who was a Panipat resident. The UAPA sections have been added against two accused, Osama and Murslim, read police documents.

In response to the bail plea of accused Osama, police said that UAPA sections 10 and 11 have been added in the investigating officer's report. "Osama could commit the same offence again, create pressure on witnesses, and violate conditions set by the honourable court. So, it is requested that the accused, Osama, not be granted bail in the interest of justice," read the reply to the bail plea.

The counsel, representing one of the accused, Tahir Hussain Rupariya, said that the Nuh Police had mentioned the charges in re-



Six were killed in the Nuh violence on July 31 last year. Archive

ply to the bail plea. "Two accused, who are already in custody, will now face UAPA sections 10 and 11. In these three cases, naming a total of 65 accused, bail has been granted to 33, so the Nuh Police will submit a supplementary chargesheet with the names of the accused against whom UAPA will

be imposed. Police had filed the chargesheet against the accused, but these sections were not mentioned earlier," said the counsel.

In response to bail pleas by Murslid alias Murslim, police said, several witnesses were mentioned in the statement under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)

Section 161. "Based on the charges under sections 10 and 11 of the UAPA, or the final report of the case and CrPC Section 173(8), a challan was prepared and submitted on 06.02.2024," it said.

The UAPA gives power to the government to investigate and prosecute people for terrorism, as well as to designate an organisation as an "unlawful association" or a "terrorist organisation", or an individual as a "terrorist".

In his disclosure statement, Osmania cited that they attacked the rally members due to their "hatred" for Bajrang Dal after the Rajasthan Police disclosed their alleged connection with the murderer of Junaid and Nasir; and that Osama had posted an audio asking the members of a WhatsApp group to be "prepared" for the July

2023 yatra. Junaid and Nasir, who were residents of Ghata in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district, had gone missing on the morning of February 15, 2023. Their bodies were found in Bhiwani the next day. The chargesheet, filed in May 2023, said cow vigilantes had attacked them on suspicion of smuggling cattle in Peeru.

Questioning the delay in imposing charges, Osama's brother Ajjal said, "They (the accused) are trying to get bail, and even after six months, police are coming up with a new course of action. We do not know on whose orders such sections are being added."

Murslim's brother Salman said, "He is just 20 years old, has no criminal antecedent. Hearing in these cases are underway, with one of them set for Tuesday..."



CAPITAL BLOOM

Tulips at Baansara along the Yamuna. For the first time this year, the flowers have been planted in areas other than Lutyens' Delhi. Following the directions of Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, areas such as Rohini, Dwarka, ISBT Kashmere Gate, Shalimar Bagh, Karampura-Rohitk Road, Mehrauli, Greater Kailash I and Vasant Vihar among others are seeing tulips in full bloom. Express

Two toll plaza staffers mowed down by car on Gurgaon e-way

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 19

TWO TOLL plaza workers were mowed down by a car on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) expressway in Farrukhnagar, Gurgaon, on Sunday night, said police on Monday. Police said they were informed at 11.10 pm on Sunday that a speeding car ran over the two KMP toll plaza employees; and the driver "waited for 20 seconds" before fleeing.

The deceased are crane helper Jai Kishen Sahni (21), a native of Deoria, and electrician Sonbir (26) from Agra. Based on a complaint filed by one Deepak, a driver who was in the area when the accident took place, an FIR has been registered against the accused under IPC sections 279 and 304A. The two men were taken to a hospital in critical condition, and they later died, said police.

The investigating officer said, "We have identified the car and the driver... The accused will be arrested soon," said the officer.

Advt. No. 20/2023
Government of India
Search-cum-Selection Committee
Department of Defence Production
Ministry of Defence

Invites applications for the post of
Chairman & Managing Director (CMD)

IN

Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL)

Last date of receipt of applications in
DDP/MoD

By 1500 hours on
20th March, 2024

For details login to website
<http://www.ddpmod.gov.in/vacancyandcircular>

EXPRESS Careers

S.N.D.T. WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY
1, Nathibai Thackersey Road, New Marine Lines, Mumbai - 400 020.

Applications are invited for the following posts in the prescribed format to be filled at SNDT Women's University, Mumbai :

1) Principal, SVT College of Home Science, Juhu (Aided)
2) Principal, SNDT Law School (05 years - Tenure post) (Un-aided)
3) Professor- Dr.Ambedkar Chair (Interdisciplinary Study & Applications of Thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar sanctioned by Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, New Delhi)

All above posts are unreserved i.e. Open to all categories. For details and application form, visit the University website <https://sndt.ac.in/vacancies>. Cost of application form is Rs. 500/- for Reserved Category and Rs. 1000/- for Open Category applicants. The application form along with the copies of requisite documents and the prescribed fee should reach the office of the Registrar on or before 29.02.2024 till 5:00 p.m., at the above-mentioned address.

Place :- Mumbai
Date :- 15.02.2024

(Dr. Vilas D. Nandavadekar)
Registrar

IDBI BANK
Regd. Office: IDBI Tower, WTC Complex, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai 400 005 - Tel. 6655 3355

IDBI Bank Ltd.
Advertisement No. 14 / 2023-24

Advertisement for Bank Medical Officer (On Contract)

IDBI Bank Ltd. invites applications for appointment of Bank Medical Officer (part time and on contract) at its Zonal Offices/Residential accommodations, located at various locations in India.

For eligibility criteria (age, work experience, job profile etc.), mode of application and other details, please visit the 'Careers' section of the Bank's website www.idbibank.in

Applications received on or before March 07, 2024, only will be considered.

NOTE: IDBI Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any/ all application(s) without assigning any reason(s) thereof.

Place – Mumbai
General Manager- HR

SBI
State Bank of India
Central Recruitment & Promotion Department
Corporate Centre, Mumbai
Phone: 022-22820427

Recruitment of Specialist Cadre Officers on Contractual / Regular Basis

Applications are invited from Indian citizens for the following posts.

Sr. No.	Post	Vacancy Advertisement No.
1	Circle Defence Banking Advisor (CDBA) Contractual equi.TEGS-VI (Dy. General Manager)	01 CRPD/SCO/ 2023-24/31
2	Assistant Manager (Security Analyst) Regular JMGS -I	23 CRPD/SCO/ 2023-24/32
3	Deputy Manager (Security Analyst) Regular MMGS -II	51 CRPD/SCO/ 2023-24/33
4	Manager (Security Analyst) Regular MMGS -III	03 CRPD/SCO/ 2023-24/34
5	Assistant General Manager (Application Security) Regular SMGS -V	03 CRPD/SCO/ 2023-24/35
6	Credit Analyst Regular MMGS -III	50 CRPD/SCO/ 2023-24/36

For eligibility criteria (age, experience, job profile etc.), requisite fees and other details, log on to Bank's website <https://bank.sbi/web/careers> with a link for online submission of application as well as online payment of application fee. Refer detailed advertisement to ensure eligibility and other details before applying and remitting fees.

**DATE FOR FILING ONLINE APPLICATION & PAYMENT OF FEES:
FROM 13.02.2024 To 04.03.2024.**

For any query, please write to us through link "CONTACT US" → "Post Your Query" which is available on Bank's website.

Place: Mumbai
Date: 13.02.2024
General Manager (RP & PM)

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

#DelhiPoliceWeek2024

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Our Mobile App facilitates easy registration, aiding beat officers in ensuring effective security.

SOS button for emergency contact with Senior Citizen Helpline (1291).

49,603 SENIOR CITIZENS REGISTERED

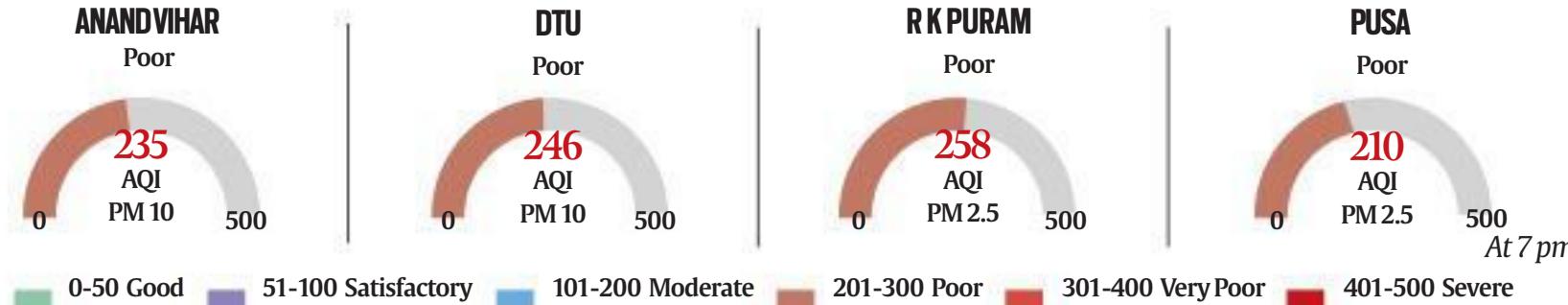
2,69,731 VISITS BY LOCAL POLICE

DP/9540/2024

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FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 14547



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: February 20
Generally cloudy sky.
Possibility of drizzle at one or two places

MAX: 28 3.6°C above normal | **MIN: 12** 1°C below normal

'INTENTIONALLY DISOBEYED 3 SUMMONS': ED

Excise case: CM gives 6th summons a miss

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19



CM Arvind Kejriwal will appear in court on March 16.

Praveen Khanna

posted the matter for March 16. Kejriwal's counsel assured the court of his physical appearance that day.

The ED issued the latest summons to Kejriwal on February 14, asking him to appear on February 19. Before that, he did not appear for questioning on five prior occasions.

On the ED's complaint in court, AAP national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar said: "The ED has already moved court against the Delhi CM and he already appeared virtually on February 17; he will appear again on March 16. The ED should also wait. Whatever decision comes in this matter, we will accept it."

On its part, the BJP said it shows Kejriwal's disrespect for the law and legal procedures of the country. "Today, Kejriwal demonstrated his disrespect for the law the sixth time by evading ED summons... You brought the confidence motion in the Assembly so the session would linger on," Delhi BJP secretary Harish Khurana alleged.

"Do you remember (former Jharkhand CM) Hemant Soren, who had skipped 10 ED summons? He finally had to face the ED's questions and was arrested after he couldn't answer them... you will need to face the ED too one day," he added.

Rahul Kumar (35), another accused whose house in Nand Nagri was partly demolished, is allegedly involved in cases under the NDPS Act and the Excise Act, among others, said Tirkey. All cases are currently under trial.

The MCD team reached Kumar's house at 10 am on Saturday to start demolition. Kumar was arrested alongside

another man on February 15 last year. "Officials of police and the MCD were making daily visits to our house but no official notice was received by us," Kumar's wife said.

Kumar said he was not involved in drug peddling and that he runs a travel agency.

The third house that was demolished belongs to Monu (35), who, police said, is involved in over 100 NDPS Act cases. He is currently lodged in jail.

His house in Amar Vihar stands partly demolished. His step-son said he opened a chicken shop on the ground floor three days before the demolition. A day after the shop was opened, the family received a

OWNERS WERE ACCUSED OF PEDDLING DRUGS

'Unauthorised construction notices, trials underway': Four houses razed by MCD

SAMAN HUSAIN &
UPASIIKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN ACTION taken against four properties belonging to men and women accused of peddling drugs, at least two were demolished because they were "unauthorised constructions", according to notices served to them by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

The Indian Express visited the four demolition sites in Aman Vihar, Nand Nagri and Jafarpur Kalan to find that three properties were partially demolished while one was completely razed.

According to DCP(Northeast) Joy Tirkey, one of the accused, Vikram, whose Nand Nagri house was demolished Saturday, is involved in two cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, three cases of Excise Act and one case under the Gambling Act. His wife and son are also involved in several cases, he added. The NDPS Act cases against him are under trial.

On Monday, a team of the MCD and Delhi Police returned to the site to demolish the remainder of the building but found the doors locked. The MCD team left a notice stating, "A demolition programme has been fixed against the unauthorised construction... under section 433 of the DMC Act..."

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notice from the MCD. Two days later, the house was demolished.

The showcause notice from the MCD, dated February 7, stated that the house in Amar Vihar was an unauthorised construction whose ground and first floors had "projection over government land". Another showcause notice, also dated February 7, said it had been brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner, Rohini Zone, that the house was being misused to run a drug trafficking racket. Citing sections 345A and 491 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the Deputy Commissioner gave the residents 48 hours to make their case as to why their house



(Left) the houses in Aman Vihar and (top) Nand Nagri.

Caleigh Christy/Saman Husain

should not be sealed.

In the last case, demolition of the house in Jafarpur Kalan was complete. The house owner, Sunita, was arrested on March 9 last year along with two other associates in an NDPS Act case.

"She is still in judicial custody. Her house, which was built with the proceeds of narcotics, was demolished at Dabur Enclave at Jafarpur Kalan," said DCP (Dwarka) Ankit Kumar. The case is currently under trial at a Dwarka court.

According to MCD officials, directions for demolition were received from the office of Delhi L-G VK Saxena. They did not comment on the matter further.

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

According to L-G House officials, since April last year, 65 premises being used by those accused of peddling drugs have been identified and are being sealed.

"A total of 35 properties belonging to those booked under the NDPS Act have been identified. Details have been shared with MCD to take action based on building bylaws. As per the action taken report provided by the MCD, 14 properties have been sealed; vacation notice has been issued to two; showcause notice has been issued to five; verification is underway for 13; and one belongs to the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board," the official said.

"The L-G wants to give out a strong message that these activities will not be tolerated. There are provisions for seizure of properties under the NDPS Act," a source added.

According to the section on 'Seizure, freezing and forfeiture of property' under the NDPS Act, seized or forfeited properties are managed and disposed of by the administrators as per Illegally Acquired Property (Receipt, Management and Disposal) Rules. The Rules, however, state that properties will be disposed of by tender or public auction.

(INPUTS FROM ARNABJIT SUR)

BRIEFLY

'Form panels for random checking of students' bags'

New Delhi: The Directorate of Education has asked school authorities to form committees for random surprise checking of school bags to ensure that students do not carry any object/material that may harm fellow students. A recent circular issued by Doe read "some incidents" have come to its notice that students "indulge in quarrel and fight in and outside school premises during school hours". ENS

Fire breaks out in slum



130 shanties were gutted. Tashi Tobgyal

New Delhi: Nearly 130 shanties were gutted after a fire broke out in a slum area near Shahbad Dairy in Outer Delhi, an official of the Delhi Fire Service said Monday. No casualty was reported in the blaze that broke out on Sunday night. Fire officials said they received a call regarding the fire at 10.17 pm on Sunday. PTI

2 SUSPENDED JINDAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ALLEGED; VARSITY SAYS ALL PROCESSES FOLLOWED

'We were manhandled, told to vacate hostels in the middle of the night'

VIDHEESA
KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

HOURS AFTER they were suspended for allegedly putting up posters and engaging in a discussion regarding the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, two students of O P Jindal University alleged they were "manhandled" and asked to "vacate their hostels in the middle of the night" on February 10.

Varsity officials had called their action "a serious violation of the student code of conduct". The public discussion was organised on February 7 by the Revolutionary Student League. A poster read: "Ram Mandir: A far-

reached out to university officials for comment, they said: "In the very first instance, parents and local guardians were informed and apprised of the process. Once disciplinary action has been initiated, it is mandatory to vacate the hostel for the duration of the suspension... As India's leading private university with an international reputation, all processes are followed diligently in a systematic and professional manner. We don't have any response towards arbitrary comments."

Both students are yet to file their appeals against their suspension. The woman is back home with her parents in Delhi, while the man is staying with friends in the Capital.

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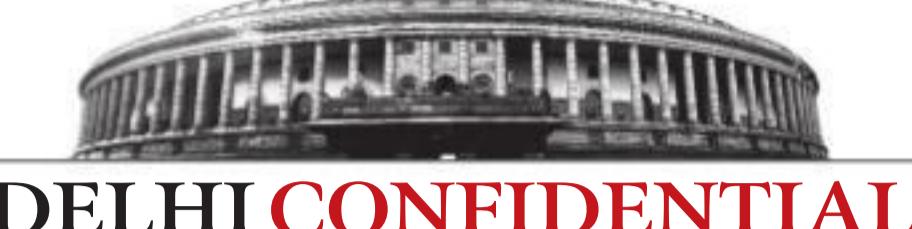
Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)
The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

Place - Jammu | February 20, 2024, Tuesday | Time - 11:00 AM



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STATUS QUO

INTERNAL ELECTIONS of the RSS are scheduled to happen in the organisation's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha baithak in Nagpur this March. However, RSS Sarkaryawah Dattatreya Hosabale, who became the executive head of the RSS in 2021, will retain his position as will other top office-bearers in view of the 2024 elections and the Sangh's centenary celebrations next year, sources said. Changes in the leadership at state level, however, may happen, they said.

DENIAL MODE

INADEQUATE ARRANGEMENTS for drinking water and food at the BJP's two-day national convention at the Bharat Mandapam over the weekend were a point of discussion, according to some delegates who attended the event. Following 'several complaints of water scarcity', BJP national secretary (organisation) BLSanthosh took charge of the 'basic arrangements' after assessing the situation at a snap meeting on Saturday evening - the first day of the event. The Delhi BJP, which was responsible for the arrangements, however, refused to acknowledge that anything was lacking, with a senior leader offering to show appreciation messages from some visiting dignitaries as 'evidence' that all went well.

RACE FOR TICKET

JOINING THE race for Lok Sabha ticket from Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar, BJP national spokesperson Gopal Krishna Agarwal is circulating the soft copy of a 72-page vision document among the voters in the constituency. Besides making a slew of promises, the document underlines that resentment among farmers in the constituency was a major issue. Former union minister Mahesh Sharma is the sitting MP from the constituency and it is his second term.

Stones hurled at Goa minister over Shivaji statue installation

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA

PANAJI, FEBRUARY 19

GOA'S MINISTER for Social Welfare, Subhash Phal Desai, suffered minor bruises when a group of people allegedly threw mud and stones at him as tensions rose in São Jose De Areal village in South Goa's Salcete taluka on Monday, following the installation of a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on the previous day.

While village residents said at least three people were injured after police resorted to 'mild lathi-charge' to disperse protesters, police denied that any lathi-charge took place.

The statue was installed on Sunday by a group of people, who identify themselves as 'Shiv Premis', on a private plot of land in the village. This led to tension in the area, with local residents alleging that the statue was installed illegally. According to São Jose De Areal deputy sarpanch Valent Fernandez, one Sarbat Makandar from Margao had written to the village panchayat on February 9 requesting permission or a no-objection certificate (NOC) for putting up a 24-square-metre plinth'

platform on his private property. "There was no mention of any statue. The panchayat decided to conduct an inspection of the area and accordingly decide the next course of action," Fernandez said.

However, at around 3 pm on Sunday, the 'Shiv Premis' brought a statue of Shivaji and placed it on the said private plot of land, he said, adding, "No permission had been given by the panchayat for installing a statue. While the documents of the plot were being verified, the authorities and police allowed the group to place the statue, claiming that the owner of the private property had given an NOC."

Alleging that some "vested interests" were trying to disturb communal harmony, he said, "The statue has been installed illegally, and must be removed. The minister (Desai) instigated people by coming here... We are not against the statue, but the law of the land has to be followed," he said.

The panchayat Monday issued a notice under the Goa Panchayat Raj Act to the plot's owner, Sarbat Makandar, stating that "illegal land filling" was being undertaken on two properties without the panchayat's permission.

He later said he was returning to his old home, referring to his early political stint with the RSS-affiliated student body Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in school and college. He also said he was "saddened and hurt" when he was denied permission to attend the Ayodhya Ram Temple consecration ceremony on January 22 by the Congress. "I follow Sanatan Dharma, I pray to gods and god-

desses at temples..." he added. Though the party's central leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury did not attend the event, there was no directive to party leaders to not attend the ceremony.

Malviya was camping in Delhi for the past few days as he claimed he was accompanied by Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma when he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JPNadda on Sunday.

Days before joining the BJP, he had indicated that he was unhappy at being overlooked for the post of Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the state Assembly.

"In 2013, I was among the names for the CLP (leader), (but after the 2018 win) I was not made a minister for three years. My name was again (overlooked) for the CLP (leader) now. Congress, in a way, is limited to some people. The vision it had for the nation and

the people earlier is not there anymore," he said on Friday.

Malviya was one of Congress's tallest leaders in the Mewar-Vagad region. He was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1998 on a Congress ticket from Banswara while he was still a village pradhan. After being an MP, he be-

UTTAR PRADESH INVESTMENT EVENT

In 7 yrs, red tape replaced by red carpet for investors: PM

MAULSHREE SETH

LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 19

AT THE launch of 14,000 projects worth Rs 10 lakh crore in Uttar Pradesh on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the "red tape culture" has been replaced with "red carpet culture" for investors in the seven years of the double-engine government in the state.

Praising the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government in the state for aspiring to become a \$1-trillion economy, Modi said other states should take a lesson from UP for ensuring progress of the country.

"UP mein double-engine ki sarkar bare saat saal ho raha hain. Beete saat varshon mein red tape ka jo culture tha, us red tape ke culture ka khatam karke, red carpet culture ban gaya. Beete saat varshon mein, UP mein crime kam to hua, business culture ka vistar hua. (For the past seven years, there has been a double-engine government in UP. The red tape culture has been replaced by red carpet. In the past seven years, crime has decreased in the state and business has expanded)," Modi said after laying



PM Narendra Modi with UP CM Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in Lucknow on Monday. Vishal Srivastav

the foundation of the projects that the UP government signed during the last year's Global Investors Summit in Lucknow.

"The exports from UP have doubled in the past years. UP has done commendable work in electricity production and transmission. UP has the most number of expressways in the country... MSMEs are the strength behind Viksit UP and they benefitted from schemes such as One District, One Product and Vishwakarma Scheme," he said, adding "an environment of trade,

development and trust has developed in UP in last seven years".

Modi, who is an MP from Varanasi, said no one would have thought 7 to 8 years ago that there would ever be such an environment in UP for investment and jobs. With the Opposition, especially the Samajwadi Party (SP) accusing the BJP government of not working for the welfare of Pichcha, Dalit and Adivasis (Backwards, Dalits and Tribals), Modi countered by citing the example of "Swanidha Scheme". A study has shown, the PM said, that 75 per

cent beneficiaries of the scheme are Dalits, Backwards, and Scheduled Tribes. "Banks never used to help them because they did not have any guarantee to give to banks. Now, they have "Modi Ki Guarantee" and that is why the banks are also helping them... Yahi to samajik naya hai jiska sapna kabhi JPN dekha tha, kabhi Lohiaji ne dekha tha. (This is actual social justice, which was the dream of Jai Prakash Narain and Ram Manohar Lohia)," the PM said.

He also accused the Congress of failing to give "due respect" to Chaudhary Charan Singh when his government decided to honour the former PM with Bharat Ratna. "Congress ke log, Bharat Ratna par ek hi pariwar ka haq samajhate hain. Isliye Congress ne dashakon tak Baba Saheb Ambedkar ko bhi Bharat Ratna nahi diya. (The Congress feels that only one family is entitled to get Bharat Ratna. Therefore, for decades, it did not give Bharat Ratna to Baba Saheb Ambedkar)," Modi said.

UP Governor Anandiben Patel, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and CM Yogi Adityanath also attended the event.

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

BJP may submit its memorandum to Kovind panel today

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

DISCUSSIONS OF the One Nation, One election committee, which met Monday, are in the advanced stages and *The Indian Express* has learnt that the BJP is likely to submit its memorandum to the panel Tuesday.

The committee met Monday to review the progress at a meeting attended by Kovind and its members Home Minister Amit Shah, former Finance Commission Chairperson NK Singh, former Lok Sabha Secretary General Subhash CKashyap, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner Sanjay Kothari, and senior advocate Harish Salve, a Law Ministry statement said.

According to a source, the process of finalising the report is in the advanced stage, with each of the terms of reference being addressed. As a part of its consultations with parties, the panel is likely to meet senior BJP leaders on Tuesday. BJP president JP Nadda and Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav are likely to meet the committee to submit the party's memorandum, it is learnt.

While simultaneous elections have been in the BJP's manifesto in 2014 and 2019, it remains to be seen if the party will suggest specific amendments to the Constitution and what should happen in the case of a hung verdict and if a government loses majority before its five-year term ends.

So far, the committee or its chairman have met leaders of several political parties to seek their views on holding simultaneous elections. The panel has also met former Chief Election Commissioners, Chief Justices, industrialists, economists and other experts. On Monday, Kovind met former CJs SA Bobde and Dipak Misra and former Delhi High Court Chief Justice DN Patel, the Law Ministry said.

The committee was set up by the Law Ministry on September 2 last year to suggest ways for holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha, the state Assemblies, municipalities and panchayats. Apart from suggesting Constitutional amendments, the committee was also asked to examine if these amendments would need to be ratified by states.

Our relationship is long-standing, one of love: Rahul in Amethi



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AMETHI, FEBRUARY 19

UNION MINISTER Smriti Irani on Monday claimed that deserted streets welcomed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi when he arrived here as part of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and dared him to contest from Amethi alone in the Lok Sabha elections.

Both Gandhi and Irani were in the Amethi parliamentary constituency, where the BJP leader had in 2019 humbled Gandhi who is now the MP from Kerala's Wayanad.

"Rahul Gandhi considered Amethi as the centre of power but did not provide service, that is why he was welcomed by the deserted streets of Amethi. Congress workers who welcomed Rahul Gandhi did not participate in his yatra due to which the Congress had to call workers from Sultanpur and Pratapgarh,"

Irani told mediapersons.

"Amethi's former MP insulted the people of Amethi in Wayanad. Amethi was distressed due to this. Ram Lalla's invitation was rejected by him and his family. Amethi is distressed due to this also," she said, adding, "Idare him (Rahul) to contest from Amethi alone in the Lok Sabha elections."

Gandhi had represented Congress bastion Amethi in the Lok Sabha for 15 years before he was defeated by Irani in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress leader, however, won

from Wayanad, the second seat he contested in the elections.

Referring to this, Irani said Amethi decided to bring a change in 2019 and sent the Gandhi family away. "This is the reason why this family has now also fled from Raebareli ahead of the 2024 polls," the Union minister said.

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who has represented the Raebareli parliamentary seat since 2004, recently announced that she will not be contesting the Lok Sabha polls this year due to health and age issues.

On the chances of SP leader Akhilesh Yadav attending the Nyay Yatra, Irani said, "Why would any leader support someone who himself needs support?" Yadav Monday said his party will not participate in the Nyay Yatra till seat-sharing with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh is finalised. The SP chief had earlier said he would join the march in Raebareli.

Rahul's Yatra will traverse Amethi Monday, where he along with Kharge will also address a public rally in Babuganj area. Rahul will stay in Amethi for the night and resume his Yatra for neighbour-

ASAD REHMAN

AMETHI, FEBRUARY 19

IN AMETHI, a former Congress bastion, local residents on Monday gathered outside houses and shops to catch a glimpse of party leader Rahul Gandhi. Roads in the district were laced with Congress flags, billboards with slogans like "Nyay Yoddha", and cutouts featuring Rahul. While Smriti Irani may have won the seat in 2019 defeating Rahul by 55,000 votes, there was some excitement in the air as Rahul visited.

His fleet of around 50 cars arrived, with Rahul in a red SUV with an open roof, at 2:40 pm at Deori Bazaar from neighbouring Pratapgarh district. The yatra on Monday covered Amethi's Kakwa Road, Sagra, Tiraha, Raipur Phulawari, Gauriganj and then headed to Babuganj.

"The goal is to stand up against the hatred being spread,"

he said. "Lots of people came to us during our yatra, including farmers, labourers, small traders. They told us about unemployment, inflation, and complained about GST," he said, talking about the first Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"I have come to Amethi and

you have welcomed me with love. Our relationship is long-standing, one of love. I thank you all from the heart," he said.

The Congress leadership, including Rahul Gandhi, will stay overnight in Amethi's Tendua area and then head to Raebareli.

The SP's Raebareli unit too has not received any communication from the party leadership so far about Akhilesh's visit.

Congress spokesperson Anshu Awasthi said, "In the prevailing situation, protecting the democracy is more important than seat-sharing. Everyone including SP will have to show a big heart to strengthen INDIA alliance."

Akhilesh raises seat-sharing heat, set to skip Rahul yatra

LALMANI VERMA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

sure him about his joining the Yatra either in Amethi or Rae Bareli, while wishing success for the UP leg of the Yatra.

The Amethi and Raebareli parliamentary constituencies are among the Congress's few remaining strongholds in UP.

On February 6, Akhilesh had received the Congress leadership's invitation to join Rahul's cross-country Yatra that entered UP on February 16. While asserting that he will join it in Amethi or Raebareli, the SP chief also claimed that the INDIA alliance along with his party's strategy centred on "PDA" - Picchde (backward classes or OBCs), Dalits and Alpsankhyak (minorities) - will create a "new history of victory".

Akhilesh said Monday that he will join Rahul's Yatra only after the finalisation of seat-sharing between the SP and the Congress for the UP seats for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The SP chief's announcement came barely a couple of weeks after he wrote to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge to assure

Afzal Ansari among 11 SP names

New Delhi: The SP on Monday

announced candidates for 11 Lok

Sabha seats, fielding Afzal Ansari

from Ghaziabad, former MP

Harendra Malik from Jat-domi-

nated Muzaffarnagar and Shreya

Verma from Kurmi-dominated

Gonda. As 16 candidates were

announced last month, the SP

had so far declared candidates

27 LS seats in UP.

The other names on the list are Virendra Singh (Chandauli), Ramesh Gautam (Braharpur), SP Singh Patel (Pratapgarh), RK Chaudhary (Mohanlalganj), Rampal Rajvanshi (Mishrikh), Usha Verma (Hardoi), Rajesh Kashyap (Shahjahanpur) and Neeraj Maurya (Aonla).

ENGLISH

Rahul's Yatra will traverse

Amethi Monday, where he along

with Kharge will also address a

public rally in Babuganj area. Rahul

will stay in Amethi for the night

and resume his Yatra for neighbour-

Rae Bareli on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters in

Lucknow Monday, Akhilesh said

that the seat-sharing talks with the

INDIA partner Congress were

continuing.

A supercomputer and the AI in AIIMS: How they are helping identify therapies for cancer patients

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

CAN ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) help doctors identify the best cancer therapy for their patients? A supercomputer and AI, developed by researchers from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi, promises to do just that.

Oncologists usually toggle with ideas as they decide the best therapy for their patients. But with iOncology AI, which employs a supercomputer in Pune and a high-capacity server called Charak I at the National Cancer Institute campus in Jhajjar, doctors can determine the most common type of genetic mutation in their patients, helping them narrow in on the best treatment option.

For instance, a doctor treating someone with breast cancer of a particular subtype such as HER2 can cross-reference data related to therapy that has worked for patients of the similar genetic makeup, thus helping the doctor make informed, faster and precise therapy choices.

iOncology AI aims to sequence the genomes of 3,000 cancer patients who are currently seeking treatment at AIIMS, aiming to address a fundamental

WHAT IS iONCOLOGY AI

■ Developed using CDAC-Pune's supercomputer and patient data saved in Charak I server at NCI Jhajjar, it's an electronic health record and treatment guidance system with patient records such as pathology, radiology details and clinical history

■ Additionally, genomic

data of cancer patients from AIIMS will be uploaded to the system to understand its relation with various treatments

■ AI then studies the data and tries to correlate which treatment works best for patients with what history and test results



question: Does a patient's genetic makeup correlate with the efficacy of diverse cancer therapies?

So far, the AI model has been tested on 1,500 breast and ovarian cancer patients from AIIMS and was found to be over 75 per cent accurate when compared to the diagnosis provided by the clinicians. Genomic data is a powerful tool for medical researchers and doctors. It helps them understand how variations in DNA affect our health.

"This is an evolving platform, the more data it gets, the more accurate it will become," said Dr Ashok Sharma, the principal investigator of the project and additional professor specialising in epigenetics in the department of biochemistry at AIIMS. The

system is now being validated in five district-level hospitals in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

How does AI tool work?

The platform, developed with Pune's Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, allows doctors to store cancer patients' blood test and lab reports, scans and ultrasound reports and their history. Along with collecting and collating data, the AI-enabled platform is also capable of reading the different types of datasets and helping the doctors make decisions.

"After studying the clinical data and genomic make-up of, say, a couple of thousand cancer patients, the tool will be able to

help the doctors in selecting the appropriate treatment for the next patient," said Dr G K Rath, former head of the National Cancer Institute, Jhajjar, and one of the key coordinators of the project. This tool, he explains, can help in targeted treatments in resource-constrained settings as well where genomic studies might not be possible.

"While the system cannot replace a doctor, it can guide them. When a scan or histopathology report is uploaded on the platform, the trained AI will be able to automatically flag the ones that have certain abnormalities. Or, take for example, an extremely small tumour that a radiologist might miss at first. The AI will flag it. This can help in

early detection of cancers in some cases," said Dr Sharma.

This data can help oncologists create their own prevention strategies and standard protocols. "For example, haemoglobin levels of people in India are less compared to the Caucasian population. Our treatment protocols can be adjusted to account for this," said Dr Rath.

Is it for all cancer types?

The research will focus on five types of cancers that are the commonest, deadliest or have immunotherapies available -- breast cancer, ovarian cancer, head and neck cancer, colorectal cancer and two types of blood cancers.

At present, the platform is trained only for breast and ovarian cancer. It already has various models on CT scan prediction, ultrasound image, histopath prediction, mammogram image prediction and detection and classification of the tumour.

"These parameters were decided upon after extensive discussions with clinicians to figure out what they really look at to decide whether a patient has cancer, what stage the cancer is at, and what should be the treatment protocol," said Dr Sharma.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

'No lights, no heating': Power cut in J&K HC invites judges' ire

NAVEEN IQBAL
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 19

AFTER A power failure at the High Court of J&K and Ladakh on Monday left its courtrooms without lights and heating, a division bench of the court sought a "permanent solution" from the UT administration.

In its order issued on Monday, the Srinagar wing of the High Court stated, "During court hours, the High Court has suffered a complete power failure. The generator is also not working. There are no lights. The air heating unit is also not functional."

Terming the issue "pathetic and unbelievable", the court said, "The power failure has taken place at about 09:45 am and has still not been restored when this order is passed at about 11.28 am. The matter has gone from bad to worse."

Seeking a permanent solution to the issue of power cuts in the court, judges Moksha Khajuria, Kazmi and Atul Sreedharan sought the assistance of J&K Chief Secretary to "pass necessary orders to solve this problem forthwith".

The solution, the order states, may include "having a separate power line to the High Court which does not experience any downtime and is supported by generators that can power the court and the air heating unit".

The matter has been listed for February 21 "at the top of the list" for further orders.

J&K has seen severe power cuts through the winter and with incessant rains over the last two days, temperatures have plummeted to single digits again. The J&K administration has stated that the power cuts are due to reduced generation in its hydro power plants.

BTech student dies by suicide in Kota

Kota: A BTech student who was undergoing treatment for depression for the last three years allegedly hanged himself in his house in Ambedkar Nagar in Kota, police said.

According to police, the youth called his father – an engineer posted in Alwar – about his intention to commit suicide on Sunday, following which the latter asked neighbours to check on his son. Police said the matter came to light in the evening after the father reached their house.

The 23-year-old was receiving treatment for depression for last 3 years and had tried to kill himself in the past too, said Rajaram, Sub Inspector at Kunhari police station. Police handed over the body to family members after autopsy on Monday morning and lodged a case under Section 174 of CrPC for further investigation.

The victim was identified as Rohit Mathur (23) who was pursuing a BTech from Jalandhar in Punjab and living with his family in Kota.

Kochhars' arrest by CBI abuse of power: HC

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19



Chanda Kochhar, husband Deepak Kochhar. PTI file

THE ARREST of former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar by the CBI in a loan fraud case was done "without application of mind" and amounts to "abuse of power", the Bombay High Court has said.

The court made the observations in its order confirming the interim bail granted to the couple. The Kochhars were arrested on December 23, 2022 in connection with alleged irregularities in loans provided by the bank to the Venugopal Dhoot-led Videocon Group.

They had challenged the arrest, claiming that it was in violation of the law, and were granted interim bail by the High Court on January 9, 2023. The interim bail was confirmed by the court on February 6 this year.

In the detailed order, which was made available on Monday, the High Court has said that the arrest was made not on the basis of any additional material detected during the course of in-

vestigation, but the same material within the knowledge of the investigating officer when they were issued notices under Section 41A of the CrPC in 2022.

"Such routine arrest without application of mind and due regard to the law amounts to an abuse of power and does not satisfy the requirement of Section 41A(3) CrPC," the division bench of Justices Anuja Prabhudesai and N R Borkar said.

The bench said the CBI has not been able to demonstrate the existence of circumstances or supportive material on the basis of which the decision to arrest was taken.

"In the absence of this, the provision is reduced to a dead

letter and the arrest is rendered illegal," the court said.

Under provisions of Section 41A of CrPC, an investigating officer can issue a notice for appearance to a suspect in a case. Various judgments of the Supreme Court have ruled that if the person has appeared before the court and complied with the notice, the person shall not be arrested unless there are reasons recorded as to why the arrest is necessary. The provision is to avoid routine arrests when a person can be investigated without taking them into custody.

The CBI had claimed that the decision to arrest the couple was taken as they did not cooperate with the probe and the investigators needed to unearth the conspiracy and ascertain names of any other co-conspirators of ICICI Bank.

The Kochhars, through senior counsel Amit Desai, had challenged their arrest and argued that they had complied with notices issued to them by the CBI and had appeared for questioning twice. They also said that

their right against self-incrimination cannot be called non-cooperation with the probe agency. The court agreed with this contention and said that exercise of the right to remain silent cannot be equated with non-cooperation.

The court said that the preliminary inquiry in the case was from 2009 to 2017 and the FIR was filed in 2019. "Despite the gravity of the offence, the petitioners were not interrogated or summoned for a period of over three years from the date of registration of the crime," the bench said, adding that no new material was submitted for their arrest.

The court, however, rejected the contention of Chanda Kochhar that the arrest was illegal also because she was arrested after sunset and it was not done by a woman police officer.

The court said that she was arrested before sunset and the case diary revealed that the arrest was in the presence of a woman police officer and hence there was no contravention of other sections of the CrPC.

T P Chandrasekharan murder case: Kerala HC quashes acquittal of two

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
FEBRUARY 19

THE KERALA High Court on Monday set aside the acquittal of two CPI(M) leaders, and upheld the life sentences handed to 11 others, including three party leaders and gangsters hired by them, in connection with the murder of CPI(M) rebel leader T P Chandrasekharan in 2012.

A Division Bench of Justices A K Jayasankaran Nambari and Kausar Edappagath gave its verdict on petitions moved by the convicts challenging the life term handed to them by the trial court, and one moved by CPI(M) leaders and MLA K K Rama, who had challenged the acquittal of some of the accused. The state government had also appealed against the trial court verdict in 2014.

Quashing the acquittal of two local CPI(M) leaders, K K

Krishnan and Geothi Babu, the Bench directed that they be produced before the court on February 26 for hearing on their sentencing. They were convicted under section 120B (criminal conspiracy) read with section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code.

While upholding the life imprisonment handed to 11 people by the trial court, the High Court also found six members of the gang that carried out the attack guilty under section 120B of the IPC. The sentences of these six will be delivered on February 26.

Rama, a UDF-backed legislator from the Vadakara Assembly seat, hailed the High Court verdict. "The court has now ratified our stand that CPI(M) is behind the murder," Chandrasekharan was murdered for airing his opinion. CPI(M) used its political and financial power in the case, and the party is still fighting the case for the killers. The legal fight will continue to en-

sure conviction for other accused," she said.

CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan, however, said the party had no role in the murder. "The party got involved in the case when there was an attempt to implicate its (Kozhikode) district secretary (P Mohanan)," he said.

A special court in Kozhikode had in 2014 sentenced 12 people, 11 of them to life imprisonment, for the murder of Chandrasekharan, who had floated a new party called the Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) in the Vadakara region of Kozhikode district. The prosecution had arraigned 36 accused, and the trial court acquitted 24 of them, including CPI(M) Kozhikode district secretary P Mohanan. One of the accused, CPI(M) leader C H Ashokan, died during the course of the trial. Of the 10 convicted to life, local CPI(M) leader P K Kunhanandan died in 2020 while serving the sentence.

"The Act does not say no petition under Section 125 shall be filed by Muslim women. They should have said that. In the absence of such a thing, we can add the restriction to the Act?" That is

the point," Justice B V Nagarathna, presiding over a two-judge bench, said.

THE MUSLIM Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, enacted by the Rajiv Gandhi government in the aftermath of the Shah Bano case judgment, does not say that a divorced Muslim woman cannot file a petition under Section 125 of the CrPC, 1973, seeking maintenance from her former husband, the Supreme Court observed on Monday as it reserved decision on the question as to which of these two laws would prevail.

"The Act does not say no petition under Section 125 shall be filed by Muslim women. They should have said that. In the absence of such a thing, we can add the restriction to the Act?" That is

the point," Justice B V Nagarathna, presiding over a two-judge bench, said.

Act, which is a Special Act will prevail over the Provisions of Section 125 CrPC which is the general Act.

The question had arisen while the court was dealing with an appeal by a man, Mohd Abdul Samad, who had been ordered to pay Rs 20,000 monthly maintenance to his ex-wife by a family court in Telangana.

The woman had moved the family court under Section 125 of the CrPC, stating that Samad had given her triple talaq. He appealed to the High Court, which while disposing of the plea on December 13, 2023, said "several questions are raised that need to be adjudicated" but "directed the petitioner to pay Rs 10,000 as interim maintenance".

Challenging this, Samad told the SC that the HC had failed to appreciate that the provisions of the 1986

Act has to be interpreted in such a manner that the divorced Muslim woman is entitled to all rights of maintenance as are available to other divorced women in the country. Consequently, the rights of divorced women cannot be taken away only from one section of divorced women of our country, lest it would infringe Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution.

Appearing for the ex-husband, Senior Advocate S Wasim Qadri contended that if the intention of Parliament was to allow Muslim women to file under Section 125 of CrPC, there was no need for the 1986 Act.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

SANDESHKHALI VIOLENCE

SC stays privileges panel notice to Bengal officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE SUPREME Court on Monday stayed further proceedings on a notice issued by the Lok Sabha Privileges Committee to West Bengal officials, including the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police, to appear before it on a complaint filed by BJP MP Sukanta Majumdar over alleged "misconduct, brutality and life-threatening injuries" to him.

A three-judge bench, presided by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and comprising justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, took note of the submissions of senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the state officials, stayed the notices issued to the state officials and fixed the week for hearing after four weeks.

"There shall be a stay on further proceedings in pursuance of the office memoranda dated February 15, 2024...," the bench ordered. Advocate Sibal contended that parliamentary privilege would not extend to "political activities".

The committee has summoned West Bengal Chief

Secretary Bhagwati Prasad Gopalika, DGP Rajeev Kumar, North 24 Parganas District Magistrate Sharad Kumar Dwivedi, Basirhat SP Hossain Mehdi Rehman, and Additional SP Partha Ghosh to appear before it on February 19.

Sibal said, "Section 144 was imposed at 6 am on February 13 itself. So this complaint is based on a falsehood.

In this fracas, 38 police personnel were injured, and eight lady personnel received injuries. And the video shows their own lady member pushed the MP and that's how he got hurt. We can show the video".

Sibal said Majumdar "is not even an MP of that area".

"The idea is I am not above the law as a parliamentarian. My activity as a parliamentarian is protected," said advocate Singhvi, who also appeared for the petitioners, referring to some past judgments of the court.

The bench remarked, "Presently, we will issue notice and stay further proceedings".

Bharukha urged the bench to allow the proceedings to continue. "It does not really harm anyone in that sense," he said. The court, however, went on to issue the stay order.

Calcutta HC stays Section 144 in Sandeshkhali for seven days

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 19

THE CALCUTTA High Court on Monday issued an interim stay of seven days on the imposition of Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) in the violence-hit Sandeshkhali area of West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district.

The single bench of Justice Kaushik Chanda also allowed Leader of Opposition in state Assembly Suvendu Adhikari to visit the area but stipulated that the BJP leader must refrain from delivering any "provocative speeches" during his visit.

SC says no new zoo, safari without its nod

Apex court issues directions for forest conservation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

ANY FRESH proposal for opening a zoo or starting a 'safari' on forest land will now require the approval of the Supreme Court, which on Monday issued a slew of directions for forest conservation across the country.

The top court took note of the submission that the definition of forest under the 2023 amended law on conservation leaves out nearly 1.99 lakh sq km of forest land from the ambit of 'forest' which can be used for other purposes.

Dealing with a batch of petitions challenging the amendments to the forest conservation law of 2023, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra directed the state governments and union territories to provide the details of the

forest land within their jurisdiction to the Centre by March 31 this year.

The court said the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will put all the details on "forest-like area, unclassed forest land and community forest land", to be provided by the states and UTs, on its website by April 15.

"No zoos/safaris to be notified in forests lands without prior approval...any proposal for the establishment of zoo/safaris referred to in the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 owned by Govt or any authority in forest areas other than protected areas shall not be finally approved save and except with the prior permission of this court," it said.

In its interim order, the bench asked the states and UTs to act as per the definition of "forest" as laid down by the top court in the 1996 judgment in the case of TN Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union of India.

It noted that the process of identifying land recorded as forests in government records is going on as per the amended law.

The petitioners have alleged that the wide definition of "forest" in the apex court judgment has been narrowed under Section 1A inserted in the amended law. As per the amended law, land has to be either notified as a forest or specifically recorded as a forest in a government record to qualify as a "forest".

Additional Solicitor General Ashwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, said the amendments were passed in furtherance of the apex court's directions in the judgment.

On March 27, 2023, the Centre had introduced the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill.

The pleas challenge the constitutionality of the amended law and want it struck down as null and void.

In most cases, violations were recorded only to be condoned

JAY MAZOOMDAAR

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE STANDARD Operating Procedure (SOP) notified by the Environment Ministry in July 2021 laid out the policy for identification and handling of violation cases with two possible outcomes.

Under the SOP, each case of violation is assessed to determine if the project is permissible under the law and can be run sustainably with adequate safeguards. If yes, the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) prescribes a remediation plan, along with a fine. If not, closure of the project is recommended along with penal actions.

In August 2018, records show, the EAC (Violation) denied ex-post facto clearance to six limestone mines for their proximity to Baroda Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat. In most cases, though, violations were recorded only to be condoned.

On 15 MTPA Pakri Barwadih coal mine run by NTPC Ltd in Jharkhand, for example, the EAC (Coal) noted that the developer

already obtained three amendments to EC for extending the timeline for transportation of coal by road and cautioned it for concealing the Supreme Court's direction on switching to a closed belt conveyor system.

However, noting that coal supply to many critical thermal power plants ensures the regular electricity supply in the country, the EAC recommended another extension of the mine's EC.

On renewal of EC for a 2x350MW thermal power plant project in Odisha, for example, the EAC noted that developer Ind-Barath Energy (Utkal) Ltd, a subsidiary of JSW Energy, started construction on forest land before the grant of forest clearance (FC). But the project was cleared with the observation that no "condition is mentioned in the EC regarding obtaining of (sic) FC before starting the project construction work."

A second chance to come clean did not always have the sobering effect on the developers. For example, when the EAC (Coal) considered the proposal for expansion of Jalagan Vengala

Rao opencast mine in Telangana by Singareni Collieries Company Limited, it found that the company violated the conditions of EC granted "under violation category by excess production."

Between March 2017 and January 2024, till the July 2021 notification was stayed by the Supreme Court in January this year, the Union Environment Ministry had cleared over 100 projects.

Some of the approved violation cases include a greenfield airport being developed by the Karnataka government at Vijayapura, the Lower Orr hydel project of the National Water Development Agency near Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh, enhancing production at a pesticide factory in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri run by Godrej Agrovet Limited, expansion of Leela hotel in Delhi's Chanakyapuri, and the residential-cum-training complex for Special Protection Group in Delhi's Dwarka.

The next hearing of the challenge to the post-facto clearance regime before the SC is due in the first week of March.

The petitioner in the case, advocate Rishabh Gupta, had filed a

writ petition on August 22, 2023 before the Indore bench of the HC based on *The Indian Express* report.

Gupta visited the village himself after the report was published and "found that there are 30 students studying in the middle school belonging to nearby villages". These students, from the Bhil community, are "required to cross the Koteshwari river daily to attend the school".

"The alternate road connecting the school from their villages is 10-12 kilometers long, therefore the construction of a bridge or culvert is necessary," Gupta told the court.

The bridge has been a long-standing demand of the villagers, and the Chief Executive Officer, Jila Panchayat of Dhar, had sent a proposal in 2011 to the Panchayat and Rural Development Department for construction of a culvert on the river. The MP government told the High Court that the "Rural Engineering Services Department, Dhar, taking into consideration the legitimate demand raised with regard to construction of a bridge on the river, has prepared a proposal and sent it to the Rural Engineering Services Department for construction of said bridge with an estimated cost of Rs 108.13 lakh".

The MP government said the bridge will be given priority and "constructed under MGNREGA after following the due process".

Abduction of 3 miners: Search ops on in Assam and Arunachal

SUKRITA BARUAH

GUWAHATI, FEBRUARY 19

SEARCH OPERATIONS for three coal mine workers, allegedly abducted by insurgents in the early hours of Sunday from near Phinbiro on the border of Assam's Tinsukia district and Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang and Tinsukia districts, continued in the two states on Monday.

The three men — Gyan Thapa, Lekhok Bora and Chandan Narzary, all from Assam — were reportedly taken away in a dumper truck to Arunachal Pradesh, towards Myanmar, the police said. SP Tinsukia, Gaurav Abhijit Dilip said from the statements of eyewitnesses it has been inferred that the abductors were probably from ULFA. However, SP, Changlang, Kirli Padua said no group had claimed responsibility for the abduction, nor made any ransom demand yet.

On Sunday, intensive search operations were carried out jointly by the Arunachal police, the Assam police and the Army. Parsuram, a relative of Gyan Thapa, said, "It's been two days but we still don't know why Gyan was picked up. He is an ordinary worker and the person who runs the mine is not a heavyweight either." The second abducted miner, Bora, is also a resident of Tinsukia. No details about the third miner, Narzary, have been ascertained yet, said the police.

brigades and other logistics components. The newly reconstituted corps will have all the troops and equipment from other arms and services such as artillery, engineers and aviation, among others, under its direct command to successfully conduct operations in the central theatre.

As per officials, the increased troop density in the area and additional emerging operational requirements have necessitated a change of focus towards operational tasks.

The move was on the cards for almost a year.

Changing the static formation to an operational corps, officials added, would change the focus of the organisation, which will now be on carrying out various operational tasks even as sub areas and training establishments continue to focus on their traditional peacetime roles.

So far, these units did not come under UB Area in its role as a peacetime formation.

"The mental mindset and operational thought process will also undergo a change, essential to keep the prime focus on the LAC," an official said.

Officials said that raising a new headquarter would also have required greater manpower and other assets and hence the decision was made to convert the existing area headquarter into a corps headquarter. The change is being done with the existing authorised manpower of the Army.

Officials said that raising this corps will help bolster development of border infrastructure and combat logistics facilities and the corps HQ will be the centralised response agency for all security threats in the region.

Army to set up new corps for ops along LAC

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

THE ARMY is converting its Headquarters Uttar Bharat (HQ UB) area into a full-fledged operational corps — a move that will shift its focus towards operations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) from its current responsibility of peacetime duties, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Based in Bareilly, the HQ UB area is currently a static formation looking after peacetime locations and training establishments of Uttarakhand and western Uttar Pradesh, in addition to the LAC running along Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand — also referred to as the central theatre.

The move was on the cards for almost a year.

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Boat tragedy: Vadodara civic body initiates action against 2 officials

Vadodara: Blaming them for not "performing their duties sincerely", the Vadodara Municipal Corporation has issued show-cause notices to its six officials, including the executive engineer of the Futuristic Planning Cell based in the Harni boat case.

Parsuram, a relative of Gyan Thapa, said, "It's been two days but we still don't know why Gyan was picked up. He is an ordinary worker and the person who runs the mine is not a heavyweight either." The second abducted miner, Bora, is also a resident of Tinsukia. No details about the third miner, Narzary, have been ascertained yet, said the police.

On Monday, it came to light that disciplinary action was initiated against two of the six officials; while an Additional Assistant Engineer was suspended, service

of another who was on contractual employment was terminated.

As the blame-game continues, the show-cause notices, issued on February 5, sought the initiation of disciplinary action against the six officials. Four officials who received the notices are from VMCs Futuristic Planning Cell, which had signed the contract and awarded the work order to M/s Kotla Projects, and one each from East and North Zone offices.

ENS



STAYING PUT

Protesting Punjab farmers camp at the Shambhu barrier in Patiala district on Monday. Farmer leaders said they will resume the 'Dilli Chalo' protest march on Wednesday. PTI

Children swim to reach school, court asks MP govt to finish bridge

ANAND MOHAN J
Bhopal, February 19

THE MADHYA Pradesh High Court has directed local authorities in Dhar district to fast-track the construction of a bridge on the Koteshwari river, six months after *The Indian Express* reported how tribal children in the district were forced to swim across a river infested with snakes to attend school.

The report, published on August 8, 2023, chronicled the four-decade struggle of tribal villagers from the Bhil community, with many children having to drop out of school. Despite election promises by both the BJP and Congress, local authorities have failed to build a bridge across the river.

A bench of Justices Vivek Rusia and Anil Verma, in an order passed earlier this month, directed the state authorities to consider a proposal and take a final decision to build a slab culvert/bridge on the river within 90 days.

"This court hopes and trusts that this will not remain in the note sheet for years to come and the same (will) be given a logical end. Construction of the bridge is important not only for villagers but students," the court said.

The petitioner in the case, advocate Rishabh Gupta, had filed a

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)

Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://noidaauthorityonline.com)

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firms for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website:

www.noidaauthorityonline.com & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) Fresh- Tender Work:-

SL. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (in Lacs)
1	33/DGM (E/M)/I-2024	Hire Charges of innova, Honda city/Ciaz & Swift Dzire/ Etios	Rs. 81.11

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 04.03.2024 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-Qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 05.03.2024 at 11.00 AM.

Dy. General Manager (E&M) NOIDA

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

Office of the Chief Engineer, Flood Control & Drainage Water Resources Department (WRD), Birpur

1st Floor Kausiki Bhawan, Birpur

Supaul, Bihar India (854340)

CORRIGENDUM TO INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

FOR

Pr.R.No.: IN-BIHAR/BAPEPS/WRD/PMC/GOODS/2023-24/1R

With reference to Invitation for Bids for Selection of System Integrator for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Training and Operation & Maintenance of Equipment, instrumentation and tools for Mechanical workshop, Carpentry workshop, Electronic and instrumentation workshop, Sediment lab, Geotechnical lab, Hydraulic Lab, IT Infrastructure Equipment at Physical Modelling Centre (PMC), Centre of Excellence (CoE) Birpur, Supaul, Bihar, following changes have been made.

c) Last date for downloading of bidding document from e-procurement Platform: 29/02/2024 at 15:00 Hours <https://eprocure.gov.in/>

d) Last date and time for bid Submission/ uploading of Bid in e Procurement Platform: 29/02/2024 at 16:00 Hours

e) Time and date of opening of bids-Technical part: 29/02/2024 at 16:30 Hours

In reference to
Pr.No.: IPRD_PR_015280/23-24
RFB No: IN-BIHAR/BAPEPS/WRD/PMC/GOODS/2023-24/1R
With reference to Invitation for Bids for Selection of System Integrator for Design, Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Training and Operation & Maintenance of Mechanical workshop, Carpentry workshop, Electronic and instrumentation workshop, Sediment lab, Geotechnical lab, Hydraulic Lab, IT Infrastructure Equipment at Physical Modelling Centre (PMC), Centre of Excellence (CoE) Birpur, Supaul, Bihar, following changes have been made.

c) Last date for downloading of bidding document from e-procurement Platform: 29/02/2024 at 16:00 hours on 29/02/2024 and will be opened online on 29/02/2024 at 16:30 hours. Any bid or modifications to bid (including discount) received outside e-procurement system will not be considered.

All other terms and conditions in the IFB remains the same.

For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar

PR-

बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम, लि० पटना
(बिहार सरकार का उपक्रम)

राष्ट्रीय स्पर्धा ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना सं-73/2023-24

- विज्ञापनदाता का पदनाम एवं पता
- निविदा आमंत्रण की तिथि
- निविदा कामजात प्राप्त (डाउनलोड) करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय
- निविदा जग्ना (अपलोड) करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय
- निविदा विक्री का स्थान
- प्री-बीड मीटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान
- प्री-बीड मीटिंग की तिथि, समय एवं स्थान
- निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय (टेक्नीकल बीड)
- निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय (वित्तीय बीड)
- निविदा वैद्यता की तिथि
- कार्य का विवरण

- मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लि०, अस्पताल रोड, शास्त्रीनगर, पटना-800023
- दिनांक: 16.02.2024
- दिनांक: 02.03.2024 से 23.03.2024 को 15:00 बजे तक।
- दिनांक: 24.03.2024 के 15:00 बजे तक।
- केवल वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर
- दिनांक: 11.03.2024 को 16:00 बजे संबंधित उप महाप्रबंधक के कार्यालय कक्ष में।
- दिनांक: 12.03.2024 को 16:00 बजे, मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, बिहार राज्य भवन निर्माण निगम लि०, अस्पताल रोड, शास्त्रीनगर, पटना-23
- दिनांक: 25.03.2024 को 15:00 बजे।
- लकड़ीकी मूल्यांकन के बाद।
- 120 दिन

प्र० जिला का नाम

कार्य का नाम

प्राक्तिक्ति राशि (अनुसूचित एवं गेर अनुसूचित) (₹) में

अग्रधन की राशि (अनुसूचित) (₹ में)

परिमाण विपत्र का मूल्य (अप्रत्यापीय) (₹ में)

Bid Processing Fee

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कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि (माह में)

उप महाप्रबंधक का नाम

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कार्य का नाम

प्राक्तिक्ति राशि (अनुसूचित एवं गेर अनुसूचित) (₹) में

अग्रधन की राशि (अनुसूचित) (₹ में)

परिमाण विपत्र का मूल्य (अप्रत्यापीय) (₹ में)

Bid Processing Fee

कार्य समाप्ति की अवधि (माह में)

उप महाप्रबंधक का नाम

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कार्य का नाम

प्राक्तिक्ति राशि (अनुसूचित एवं गेर अनुसूचित) (₹) में

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The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

KEEP THE DOOR OPEN

Farmer unions should rethink. Govt offer for open-ended MSP procurement of pulses, maize, cotton is an opportunity

FARMER UNIONS HAVE rejected the Centre's offer of assured minimum support price (MSP) linked to the cultivation of pulses, maize and cotton, which are less water-consuming crops than paddy, wheat and sugarcane. The unions' decision is disappointing. Farmers — not just in Punjab and Haryana, but even MP and Telangana — have a point when they say that they have little incentive today to grow maize, pulses, oilseeds or cotton in the absence of proper MSP procurement by government agencies. This is unlike in paddy and wheat, where the government has to procure in order to meet the requirements of the public distribution system. There's no similar outlet for most other crops, in which case the likes of Nafed and Cotton Corporation of India would have to sell the procured produce in the open market. The losses booked, if any, would then have to be borne by the Centre. Alternatively, the Centre could simply pay the difference between the market price and MSP for these commodities, and credit this directly into farmers' accounts.

Either way, the idea — linking MSP to crop diversification and procurement with no quantity limitations — is welcome. But it hasn't helped break the ice between the government and the unions, which are seeking a "legal guarantee" for MSP in all crops. That's an unreasonable demand, not the least because national elections are less than two months away. Enactment of any law to make MSP mandatory can be made only by the next, not current, government. Secondly, the government can "guarantee" MSP only on the crops and the quantities it procures. It cannot force private traders to pay any price above the supply-and-demand determined rate. The very fact that the government is ready to undertake open-ended MSP procurement of pulses, maize and cotton is something the unions should view as an opportunity. India is short in pulses and needs to produce more maize (for both livestock feed and as bio-fuel) and cotton (for fibre, oil and meal). And yields of these crops would be higher when grown in Punjab and Haryana.

The use of MSP for crop diversification will work better if the Centre stops open-ended procurement of paddy and wheat, along with a phase-out of water, electricity and fertiliser subsidies. This newspaper has consistently advocated a minimum income support — MIS, not MSP — for farmers. This can be in the form of per-acre or per-farmer direct benefit transfer. MSP procurement should be deployed only for limited purposes such as supplying the PDS or encouraging the cultivation of specific crops. As a general tool of farmer welfare, it would be a fiscal disaster. The Centre needs to do more spadework to explain this to the farmers but the trust deficit doesn't help. That's why, after the breakdown of talks late Monday, the government needs to keep the door open, frame the negotiations in a manner that assures farmers their welfare is the key imperative of any change in policy. In the run-up to the elections, its task is cut out.

CEASE FIRE

It is high time Israel heeded its friends and well-wishers and paused hostilities — suffering of Palestinian civilians must end

ISRAEL MUST LISTEN to its friends." The anguish of the prime ministers of Australia, New Zealand and Canada in a statement demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza expresses a broader sentiment within the global community. Israel said that it will launch an offensive in Rafah in southern Gaza if Hamas does not release the hostages it holds in the next 10 days. Reports suggest that over 29,000 Palestinians have already been killed in the conflict. For civilians fleeing Gaza, Rafah is the last refuge — its population has grown by over six times since October 7. An offensive here would be catastrophic for the refugees. It is indeed time for Israel to listen to its friends — including India.

On Saturday, for the first time since Hamas's horrific attack and Israel's devastating response, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said that Israel should be "mindful of civilian casualties". As he reiterated India's unequivocal condemnation of the October 7 attacks, he also underscored the urgency of a humanitarian corridor in Gaza and the long-term need for a two-state solution. Jaishankar also framed Israel's responsibility towards the principles of international law. The gist of his words and the three PMs' letter is this: Palestinian civilians must not continue to pay the price for the actions of the extremist wing of Hamas. Equally, a ceasefire cannot be one-sided — it will require Hamas to stop its violent actions. International pressure will be far more effective, however, if it is championed by Israel's closest ally.

On Monday, a day after Israeli airstrikes killed at least 18 people, the US said it would block the Algeria-sponsored draft resolution at the UN Security Council, calling for a humanitarian ceasefire. The US has already vetoed several such resolutions and the White House has bypassed the legislature to supply arms to Israel. The justification offered by the American ambassador to the UN is that such resolutions run counter to Washington's efforts to end the fighting. If that is indeed the case, it is time for the US to step up these efforts. President Joe Biden has been increasingly critical of the civilian casualties and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's maximalist positions, calling the former "over the top". The Netanyahu government must move beyond the rhetoric of revenge towards peace. The killing of civilians must stop. Aid must be allowed a way through. With the conflict spreading to crucial commercial lanes like the Red Sea, a ceasefire is the only way to give the region a chance at peace.

A RUSSIAN TRAGEDY

Alexei Navalny's story speaks both of the loneliness of dissent and its absolute necessity

THE 2022 OSCAR-WINNING documentary on Russian dissident Alexei Navalny opens on a prescient note: In the event of his incarceration or death, what message would President Vladimir Putin's biggest opponent leave for his country. Navalny's answer comes towards the end of the movie. "We don't realise how strong we actually are. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing. So don't be inactive," he says. On Friday, the death of the 47-year-old in a penal colony in the remote Arctic Circle where he was serving a 19-year jail term on charges of extremism, was reported by Russian prison authorities. Amid global outrage and censure over Kremlin's purported role in the event, Navalny's death also raises an important question: What happens to the fractured Russian opposition — especially given that the presidential election in Russia is scheduled to be held between March 15 and 17, and that the war with Ukraine shows no sign of abating?

A trenchant critic of the Putin administration since the early 2000s, it was an attempt on his life in 2020 that galvanised global support behind Navalny, despite Russia's dismissal of him as a CIA agent tasked to foment trouble in the country. The increasing authoritarianism of Putin has meant that the space for dissent in Russia has shrunk abysmally in recent years, with severe clampdowns on civil liberties that brook no opposition. A former lawyer, Navalny was, in a way, the perfect antagonist to Putin and the unofficial leader of Russia's opposition, scattered across ideologies, and with its most prominent members such as Ilya Yashin and Vladimir Kara-Murza, incarcerated or in exile in the West.

Cold, hard political analysis will say that Navalny's resistance will rest as a footnote in Putin's scheme of political aggrandisement, that there is little that stands in the way of the Russian President winning another term in office. Yet, Navalny's story is crucial in that it speaks both of the loneliness of dissent and its absolute necessity.



HARISH DAMODARAN

THERE'S NO BETTER way to understand agriculture markets — and the need for some kind of price assurance for farmers — than by looking at specific commodities.

An illustrative case is *jeera* or cumin. This seed spice is currently selling at an average of Rs 30,000 per quintal in Gujarat's Unjha APMC (agricultural produce market committee) mandi. It is trading even lower in the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) futures market, at Rs 25,380/quintal for the one-month-ahead (March 20) and at Rs 24,350 for two-months (April 19) expiry contracts.

jeera prices in Unjha were at Rs 22,000-24,000/quintal during sowing time (early-November to mid-December) for the 2022-23 crop. During harvesting, from mid-February to March-end, these crossed Rs 30,000 levels. The peak of Rs 73,755 was touched on July 22 and the average modal (most-quoted) price at Rs 58,750.

The prices have since come off those highs and, going by the NCDEX futures, may further drop with the new crop's arrival.

Consider this from the farmer's perspective. When he sowed this time, the modal price in Unjha was Rs 40,000-45,000/quintal through November and the first week of December. Imagine his disappointment if he were now to sell at half that rate and below the levels of a year ago.

It's not simply prices that are lower. The *jeera* grower, as the Jodhpur-based agritech entrepreneur Bhagirath Choudhary notes, has also incurred higher expenses. Seed costs alone have soared from Rs 400-500 to Rs 1,100-1,200 per kg this season. At 15 kg/hectare, that translates into Rs 16,500-18,000 and Rs 80,000 with all other input costs. Taking *jeera* yields of 6-7 quintals per hectare and price at Rs 25,000/quintal, the farmer would net an income of Rs 70,000-95,000. It would be Rs 40,000-60,000/hectare if realisations fall to Rs 20,000/quintal.

jeera is just an example of how exposed farmers are to price volatility. This is apart from production uncertainty at every stage of the crop — whether due to dry weather, pathogens and pests (*jeera* is highly susceptible to fusarium wilt and alternaria blight fungal disease and aphid and jassid attacks) or unseasonal rain, frost and hot winds. No large listed automaker, consumer durable or

How MSP

Price assurance for farmers is necessary for promoting crop diversification, serves consumer interest

FMCG company can plausibly handle this extent of both price and production risk!

Why are crop prices so volatile? The answer is prices themselves. When these are good, farmers plant more. Gujarat, for instance, has reported 5.61 lakh hectares (lh) area sown under *jeera* this time, as against 2.76 lh in 2022-23 and the last three years' average of 3.51 lh. Expanded acreages result not only in bumper crop and price collapse, but also higher costs for farmers from increased demand for seed and leased-in land. We have seen it in *jeera*.

That's where the minimum support price (MSP) comes in. MSP is a means for insulating farmers from low prices — which may, incidentally, reduce plantings in the following year, engendering a fresh round of volatility.

But MSP can also help promote crop diversification. We want Punjab farmers to cultivate less paddy and wheat, and divert that area to maize, cotton, oilseeds, pulses and horticultural crops. But why would they, sans any price assurance for the latter? Farmers are ultimately producers, not traders or stock investors. Their income comes primarily from what they grow, on which there's no certainty of yield between the time of sowing and harvesting. The least we can give them is some certainty of price.

The debate today should be not on "why" but "how" MSP. The government cannot obviously procure all the *jeera* and know that farmers may otherwise be selling at distress prices; it cannot do so even for the 23 crops technically covered under MSP. Nor can the government realistically force the private trade to pay the MSP if this is higher than the prevailing supply-and-demand based market price. The trade may choose not to buy at all, making the farmer worse off.

It leaves a third option: Price deficiency payments (PDP). Suppose the MSP of *jeera* is set at Rs 20,000/quintal, guaranteeing a 50 per cent return on production cost of Rs 80,000 at 6 quintals/hectare. If the ruling market rate is Rs 18,000/quintal, the government, instead of procuring at Rs 20,000, would pay the difference (Rs 2,000/quintal) and transfer the amount (Rs 12,000 on 6 quintals) to the farmer's account.

The PDP has several advantages.

One, it doesn't interfere with the market mechanism. Traders and farmers would

continue buying and selling at market rates. Nor will the government physically purchase and stock.

Two, farmers when aware of PDP will start demanding receipts from buyers detailing both the quantity and price at which they have sold. It will induce formalisation of the entire farm trade, which we know is largely cash-based, just as with the GST — where the buyer makes sure the supplier pays the tax charged on goods or services purchased by him in order to claim input credit — farmers would henceforth insist on recording of transactions through digital payments.

Three, PDP will incentivise states to set up APMC mandis or even electronic trading platforms outside physical market yards, where farmers can sell their produce. The farmer only needs the sale invoice to be able to claim the PDP. The onus for creating this market infrastructure for recording of transactions should lie with the states. If Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar wants the maize farmer in Purnea or Khagaria to get MSP via price difference — which the Centre will pay — he has to ensure generation of the necessary sales data.

MSP through PDP, in other words, can fulfil many of the goals dear to the Narendra Modi government: Formalisation, digitisation, crop diversification and even the marketing reforms that were envisaged in the re-pealed farm laws. The farmer only needs basic price assurance. So long as it is there, he will grow the crops we want him to.

PDP, it is argued, may be used by traders to game the market. If, say, the normal market-clearing price is Rs 18,000/quintal, the *jeera* trader can bill the farmer for Rs 15,000 and ask him to claim Rs 5,000 as PDP. Out of the Rs 3,000 gain, he can share maybe Rs 1,000 with the farmer and pay that in cash.

But these market manipulations, like with GST, cannot sustain beyond a point. The government can always determine indicative market prices below which it will not pay, or combine PDP with some physical procurement. At the end of the day, MSP is not charity. India, unlike most other countries, has many mouths to feed. As consumers, it's in our vested interest that the farmer and his children remain in business.

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AKSHITA AGARWAL

INDIA HAS THE potential to transform itself into one of the top fruit and vegetable (F&V) sources for the world. There is a huge opportunity being created not only for exports, but also for domestic consumption in F&V. As we look ahead to 2030 and beyond, the focus of the Indian diet is shifting from mere calorie security to a nutrition-secure mindset, leading to an increase in per capita consumption of F&V. Catering to the evolving dietary needs of a growing population will continue to drive an upsurge in horticulture in the nation.

Increase in horticulture production also marks a shift in farming practices and unlocks immense potential for the agri-inputs sector that comprises seeds, agrochemicals, and fertilisers. I strongly believe that the highest potential of disruption lies in seeds over the longer term, while the realisable potential is huge for agrochemicals in the short term. Combined with digital and technology advancements and increased focus on bio-based and sustainable solutions, India is entering its pivotal decade to fundamentally solve some of the key challenges that have plagued many horticulture value chains across the nation.

Horticulture farming not only promises higher incomes, but also offers a steady income stream throughout the year, steering

THE NEXT STEP FOR FARMERS

Focus on fruit and vegetable production could be a gamechanger

away from the subsistence farming of traditional field crops. One question arises: Is the return worth the investment for a smallholder farmer? The answer lies in

addressing the twin needs of higher productivity and better price realisation to make horticulture a viable choice. The core strategy of leading agri-tech startups in F&V has been to build value-added, export-led businesses that ensure consistent prices for farmers. An integrated value-chain approach from sourcing to processing also lends a cost advantage to the business. At the same time, advisory and supply of key agri-inputs to the farmer catchments help improve yield.

Innovation in seeds could be another game-changer. Agronomic and genetic seed innovations, including high-quality hybrids, can enhance shelf life and improve access to quality F&V produce. Could these innovations empower farmers to achieve more output with fewer inputs? High quality seeds that help widen the availability window, and extend the geographical footprint for cultivation can be one such breakthrough.

Another approach that offers inspiration is the 1.0 hectare model of integrated farming, being piloted in various districts across the country. This cluster-based, whole-farm approach holds promise for climate-resilient agriculture. Implementation can include

multiple interventions such as solar-powered farming equipment, water conservation practices, diversified cropping integrated with livestock, vermicompost, etc., soil health replenishment with natural bio-based agri-inputs, village cluster creation for produce aggregation and exports. This model allows smallholder farmers to adopt horticulture farming with limited risk. It also holds the potential to address the challenges faced in areas prone to high-risk droughts and erratic weather patterns.

Overall, a tailored approach to F&V agri-inputs is needed for India's diverse agro-climatic zones. Success will not be defined by technology alone; affordability and accessibility of these inputs are equally crucial. Multi-stakeholder partnerships — among farmers, government, customers, industry, academia/research — need to be strengthened to achieve demand-backed production, high productivity, robust credit and risk management, and market linkages.

The writer is a management consultant at McKinsey & Company. Views are personal



FEBRUARY 20, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

PUNJAB PROTEST

AT LEAST FOUR persons were killed and many injured in a clash between two groups belonging to different communities and subsequent police firing outside a place of worship in Panipat. A crowd of nearly 10,000 persons shouted slogans protesting against the violence in Punjab and Haryana and militant Sikh leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

DISSIDENCE IN STATES

THE CONGRESS(I) high command is finding it difficult to control the sudden spurt in insubordination and open mudslinging by rival fac-

tions in almost all states. The crisis is so serious that even Rajiv Gandhi's management has come under severe strain. In many states, rebels have tacitly challenged the repeated directives of the Prime Minister's son. Mrs Gandhi had held meetings with all dissidents and CMs from all states.

AKALIS ARRESTED

A DOZEN PROMINENT local Akali Dal (Longowal) leaders were arrested. These arrests were described by police sources as "preventive". The Delhi Police promulgated prohibitory orders under Sec 144 in different parts of the city falling under nine police

stations. It is learnt that some other Akali leaders had gone underground.

ZIA'S ACCUSATION

PRESIDENT ZIA-UL-HAQ HAS accused India of making efforts at subversion and destabilisation of his pro-Western military regime with Soviet connivance. Describing the Russians in Afghanistan and Indians on the other flank as two "standing threats" to Pakistan's security, he said they were joining hands to try to destabilise his regime. He claimed that he had done "all in our power for good relations with Mrs Gandhi's government and shall continue to do so but..."

THE IDEAS PAGE

A wider viewfinder

Raisina dialogue and Milan exercises are part of a global exchange that is acquiring a new salience. Over the last decade, Delhi has taken to these arenas with vigour



RAJA-MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

THREE MAJOR EVENTS this week draw attention to the expanding Indian diplomatic footprint. One is the annual Raisina Dialogue, hosted this week by the Observer Research Foundation and the Ministry of External Affairs, which brings together ministers, officials, scholars, and policy researchers from across the world to promote an India-centred global agenda. The other is the biennial Multilateral Naval Exercise (Milan) in the Bay of Bengal that attracts naval leaders from far and wide for professional exchanges on maritime issues.

A less visible but equally important event is a gathering of top intelligence officials from like-minded countries on the margins of the Raisina Dialogue. For India, the emerging "intelligence diplomacy" could be as consequential as the "discourse diplomacy" of the Raisina Dialogue and the "naval diplomacy" of the Milan exercises.

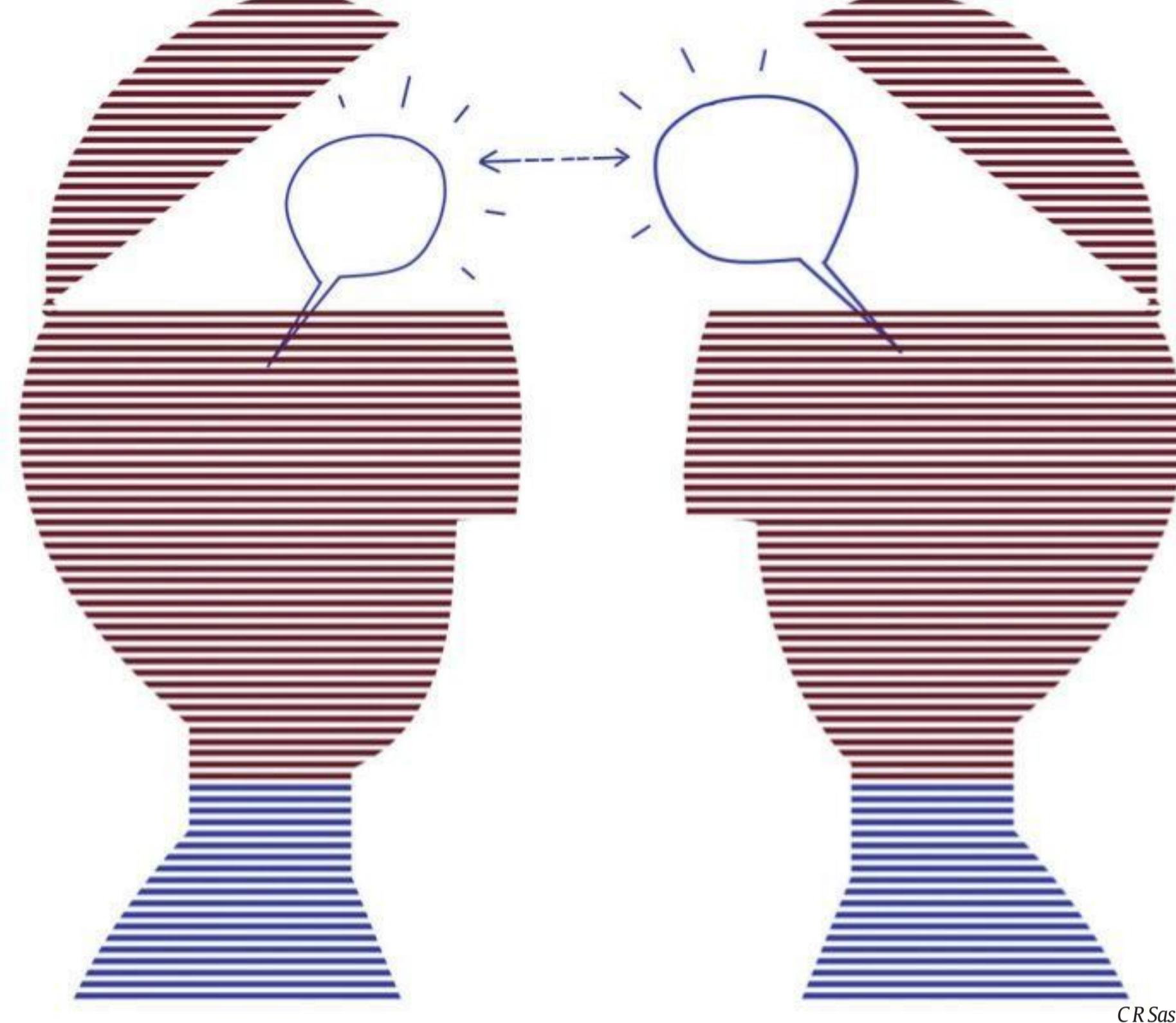
The three events are part of a broader trend in international politics. As the volume of international engagements dramatically expanded in the 21st century, there has been a rapid growth in the size of the global communities interested in international commercial, political, technological and military affairs. This has translated into a proliferation of think tanks and media outlets discussing foreign and security outlets.

The rise of the international conference circuit on foreign and security policy issues is part of this process. For example, the Aspen Security Forum, the Munich Security Conference, and the Shangri-La Dialogue focus on American, European, and Asian security issues.

The deepening military crises worldwide, the new stresses on the global economic order and the return of great power rivalry have created new risks to global peace and prosperity. They have raised the value of the forums that facilitate valuable exchange of notes among national security professionals.

Over the last decade, Delhi has taken to this arena with some vigour. Communication with foreign media, academia, and civil society to influence perceptions has always been part of statecraft. India is no exception. The Foreign Office's External Publicity (XP) Division and its embassies have long pursued these outreach activities. The business chambers — CII and FICCI — have been at the forefront of creating these networks since the economic reforms began at the turn of the 1990s. What we have seen in the last decade is the intensification of this outreach through conference diplomacy.

Within eight years of its launch in 2016, Raisina Dialogue has become a "must-go" event for the global strategic community interested in India. The MEA also supports an annual Global Technology Summit organised by Carnegie India that has become a major international forum to discuss issues at the intersection of technology, policy, and geopolitics. Among the other MEA conferences are the Pune International Centre's annual Asia Economic Dialogue and the India Foundation's Indian Ocean Dialogue. South



Block's traditional suspicion of the Track-Two conversations has been replaced by a recognition that discourse diplomacy sets narratives and creates transnational networks that bring together serving officials, business leaders, scholars, analysts, consultants, and the media.

The Milan exercise is part of a much older naval diplomacy. Navies have always been flexible instruments for sovereigns in power projection and diplomacy. In India, the navy was the first service to take to active military diplomacy in the reform era. By nature, nationalist in its outlook, the Indian Navy pushed to end ingrained isolationist sentiment in Delhi's defence establishment. The annual Malabar exercises with the US and the multilateral Milan exercises were among the first initiatives of the Indian Navy in the early 1990s. Today, they together showcase India's new strategic salience in the Indo-Pacific.

"Milan" began as a modest "Indian Ocean Panchayat" to bring the Bay of Bengal navies to reflect together on regional maritime security. Four countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand) joined India in the 1995 Milan exercises in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands waters. It has become bigger with each iteration. In the 2022 edition, 39 countries participated. Fifty countries are expected to participate this year.

But what about "intelligence diplomacy"? Although barely visible in the public domain, the intelligence agencies are an essential part of the national security establishment along with the diplomatic community and the armed forces. As the first line of defence against internal and external threats, intelligence has been a critical part of statecraft since ancient times.

The role of intelligence in national security has grown significantly in recent years thanks to the rise of international terrorism, the growth

For India, too, 'intelligence diplomacy' has become critical amidst the expanding scale and scope of its security challenges. The regular exchanges between the Indian agencies and their counterparts from like-minded countries on the margins of the Raisina Dialogue underline Delhi's shift from the isolationism of the later Cold War decades to building productive intelligence partnerships today. Delhi's intelligence diplomacy aligns with India's current strategy of building regional and global coalitions.

of cross-border criminal networks, renewed economic competition, the increasing need to protect intellectual property, the return of great power rivalry, and the impact of new technologies that are reshaping the domestic and global dynamics of an interconnected international society. Along with the new importance of intelligence in national security has come the idea of "intelligence diplomacy".

At its simplest, "intelligence diplomacy" is about sharing information with allied governments and their security agencies. The US, for example, has a tight circle of intelligence gathering and sharing with its Anglo-Saxon allies — Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Similar to the "Five Eyes" arrangement are intelligence-sharing networks among the NATO allies and the EU partners. As it looks beyond its traditional alliances to deal with emerging challenges, which are global and demanding, the US is pursuing a wider range of partnerships; intelligence cooperation has become an important element of this strategy.

For India, too, "intelligence diplomacy" has become critical amidst the expanding scale and scope of its security challenges. The regular exchanges between the Indian agencies and their counterparts from like-minded countries on the margins of the Raisina Dialogue underline Delhi's shift from the isolationism of the later Cold War decades to building productive intelligence partnerships today. Delhi's intelligence diplomacy aligns with India's current strategy of building regional and global coalitions. It is also an important part of modernising India's spying agencies — the Intelligence Bureau and its many offspring — which date back to the late 19th century.

The writer is a contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

THE UNIFORM CIVIL Code that looms over Uttarakhand is a Frankenstein created by cobbling together large tracts of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and testamentary provisions of the Indian Succession Act, 1925. It retains existing ambiguities in Hindu Law while preserving the primacy of agnacy i.e. the male line — for instance, preferring the step mother and father's siblings over maternal grandparents and other cognatic relatives.

Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code is neither uniform nor civil. This can be seen in provisions which make many exceptions for groups, its silence on the Hindu Undivided family, and its dilution of existing uniform standards. More troubling are the criminal provisions introduced in a statute that claims to be a civil code.

Particularly problematic is Part 3 on Live in Relationships. It is at variance with the "relationship in the nature of marriage" envisaged in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) and as expounded by courts, which is equal, necessary protection for women all over India, bar none. By their very nature, such relationships are often not formally recognised by society or by other laws. The Code threatens to push some women outside the ambit of domestic violence law. Maintenance is a crucial right for women under the domestic violence law. Under the Code, maintenance rights of unregistered women become murky. The Protection

of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, is a law that cuts across personal laws, customary laws, and state laws — and this should be the law that should prevail.

Cumbersome procedures seek to actively dissuade non-marital relationships. Non-registration does not criminalise marriage, no notice for such intended marriage needs to be given under the law. However, for a live-in relationship, the situation is the opposite. Under the Code, after the couple applies for registration, the Registrar will conduct a summary inquiry, and may even call for additional evidence including summoning other persons before issuing a registration certificate. This is something not done in cases of marriage. As laid down in the *Maneka Gandhi* case, procedures impacting fundamental rights must be fair and reasonable to avoid being struck down. As the judge observed in the case, the procedure must not be "arbitrary, freakish or bizarre".

LGBTQI rights have led to all sexual relationships between consenting adults being protected by the legal system. In the groundbreaking case of *Navtej Singh Johar*, the Supreme Court upheld the rights of consenting adults, reading down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Ironically, now, relationships between men and women are criminalised under the Code unless procedures are followed, whereas all other relationships are not.

A sinister outcome of the Code is restrict-

ing freedom. It exposes young adults' sexual and marital choices to state, societal and parental control in complete violation of their constitutional rights to privacy, autonomy and personal liberty. The state, through the registrar, has to mandatorily inform the local police station as well as the parents of such relationships of young adults until the age of 21. It allows third parties to be summoned and perhaps encouraged to supply information and evidence as to the nature of the relations. If the registrar feels the statement is "suspicious", he can inform the police. All this makes couples vulnerable to violence, including honour killings, and will have a chilling effect on their freedom of choice. This chilling effect will impact inter-caste and inter-community marriages, and also many marriages which are outside the "arranged marriage" system.

Decriminalising consensual relationships has taken an about turn in the Code. Staying in a live-in relationship for more than one month without submitting a statement could lead to imprisonment of up to three months and fine of up to ten thousand rupees. Moral policing and "outing" couples would violate their rights even if they are not convicted.

The harassment value of this provision far outstrips that of the notorious Section 377. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was first challenged in the *Naz Foundation* Case where the petitioner pointed out how it served as a "weapon for police abuse". It was pointed out

that it allowed police to harass couples, or demand sexual favours and bribes. This is an imminent threat here too by threatening detention or filing of cases. Unfortunately, most young people are so unempowered and vulnerable that they cannot confront their parents openly, let alone the might of the state in the form of the registrar or the police. Instances of human rights violations of consenting couples may not come to light at all.

Cross-cultural couples are damned if they marry and damned if they don't. Couples in relationships outside marriage are often those who cannot marry due to parental or societal disapproval or threats from state or non-state actors if they try to marry by giving notice under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. They are also often young and concerned about privacy due to fear of reprisals and, especially in the case of young women, of being forced to marry someone else against their will. The Code infantilises young adults till age 21 and allows a patriarchal and paternalistic state and society to dictate what ought to be an intensely personal decision on whether their relationship should be private or public.

These provisions of the Code are a violation of intimate individual rights and a monstrous affront to our constitutional ideals and rights. They must be struck down immediately.

The writer is professor of law, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru

Neither uniform nor civil

Uttarakhand's UCC restricts liberties, has chilling effect on freedom of choice



SARASU ESTHER THOMAS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CM MUST ACT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bengal déjà vu' (IE, February 19). The West Bengal police and state administration have surrendered to the dictates of the chief minister. The worst part of the nexus between the government, musclemen and the business community is that while the vested interests gain from the system, poor people become victims. The revelations made by the victims of Sandeshkhali are awful. Political parties may be trying to fish in troubled waters, but that should not prompt the CM to avoid taking required steps.

FARMERS' CHALLENGE

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Income, not MSP' (IE, February 19). If the writer's reference to the government claiming that only 11 per cent of the population lives under poverty is right, then how has it decided to give free ration to 80 crore Indians for five years? The discussion around MSP generally leaves out the incomes of farm labourers. In MP, male agricultural workers got a daily wage of just Rs 229.2 while in Gujarat it worked out to Rs 241.9 in 2022-23. The national average for the year was Rs 345.7. Co-incidentally, both states have been ruled

by BJP for decades.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Income, not MSP' (IE, February 19). A fixed MSP is needed to ensure farmers' survival in times of climate change-induced events that often lead to failing crops. On the other hand, MSP is targeted by the World Trade Organisation as unfair and India has had to invoke the Bali peace clause to allow subsidies in their current form to persist. There is the question of heavy burden on the exchequer. But farmers cannot be left without support. WTO reforms will require consensus that is difficult to obtain given the dominance of a few nations. Any solution to the issue then must be at the national front.

Ananya Mishra, Bhilai

UNJUST LAWS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Rights of the single woman' (IE, February 19). The Surrogacy(Regulation) Act, 2021, prime facie seems arbitrary for putting single women on a different pedestal in comparison to a married woman, and for denying the former the right to have children through surrogacy. The issue now needs effective deliberation both inside and outside the courts.

Nupur Sharma, Ghaziabad

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"There should be gender-sensitive interventions that recognise the unique challenges faced by women. Empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and access to healthcare services is vital to break the cycle of malnutrition and poverty."

— THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH

The puzzle of monetary policy

MPC statements are silent on impact of tight policy on growth outlook. This raises questions on trajectory of policy



RAJESWARI SENGUPTA

RECENTLY RELEASED DATA reaffirms that inflation in India is much less of a problem now than it was a year ago, in part, thanks to the monetary policy stance of the RBI. But what is the right policy going forward? The answer is not obvious — perhaps not even to the RBI.

Over the past three years, India experienced high and persistent inflation. Between April 2021 and September 2022, the wholesale price index (WPI) inflation averaged 13 per cent, the highest in more than a decade, triggered by the pandemic disruptions and the Russia-Ukraine war. Surges in wholesale prices normally suggest "inflation in the pipeline" and indeed, they soon translated into high retail inflation. During the first three calendar quarters of 2022, consumer price index (CPI) inflation averaged 7 per cent. Even excluding the rise in food and fuel prices, core inflation still hovered above 6 per cent for nearly every month from May 2021 to March 2023.

The persistence of core price pressures implied that high inflation had become embedded in the system. It seemed as if inflation had become the Achilles heel of the Indian economy's recovery from the pandemic. Since then, the inflation dynamic seems to have changed. Starting April 2023, wholesale price inflation turned negative. According to the latest data, headline CPI inflation fell to 5.1 per cent in January 2024, the lowest in three months. With this, inflation has now been within the RBI's tolerance band of 2 to 6 per cent for five consecutive months. Even more striking, core inflation came down to only 3.6 per cent in January, its lowest rate since the start of the pandemic. While there is still some way to go before the target of 4 per cent can be achieved on a sustained basis, it now seems much closer than it did two years ago.

The story however gets confusing if we look at the RBI's GDP growth forecast. The economy is expected to grow at 7 per cent in 2024-25 amidst a slowing global economy, implying that domestic demand will be quite strong. This raises a set of puzzling questions: If indeed monetary policy is slowing demand down and cooling off inflation, how can GDP growth continue to be high? Alternatively, if demand will somehow be strong next year, then why would inflation continue to fall?

The recent MPC statements are silent on this. In particular, they do not mention the lagged impact of tight monetary policy on the growth outlook. This seems like an important omission especially since the pass-through is not yet complete and will most likely continue to work through the system over the next few months, thereby further dampening demand.

Given that the legal mandate of the inflation targeting framework is "price stability with an eye on growth", these puzzles need to be resolved before the RBI can figure out the appropriate stance of monetary policy.

Consider the following: If indeed the economy is expected to perform well in 2024-25, there is no imminent need for a rate cut. We may even see a resurgence of inflation, given that demand conditions are predicted to remain strong. If, however, the underlying demand conditions are weakening, then a rate cut may be needed sooner. After all, the last thing a slowing economy needs is a tight monetary policy.

It will be interesting to see how monetary policy responds to this conundrum.

The writer is associate professor of Economics, IGIDR

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Shriram Chourasia, R/o J-19 Vishnu Garden New Delhi 110018, declare that Shriram Chourasiya and Shriram chourasia both are my names.

0130040375-1

I, NEETU Singh, D/o Inder Singh, R/o House No-32, Munirka-village, Delhi-110067, declare that name-of mine and my-father has been wrongly-written as Neetu and Inder in my 10th-class educational-documents and name of my-father has been wrongly-written as Inder in my passport name the actual-name of mine and my-father is Neetu Singh and Inder Singh respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0040715225-9

I, MOHAMMAD JAMILUDDIN SAH, S/O MOHAMMAD MOFID SAH, R/O SARUPA, MOHALLA GARHI, SIRINIWASPUR, EAST OF KAILASH, NEAR STATE BANK EAST OF KAILASH, SOUTH DELHI-110065, aged 44 years changed my name from JAMAL MAFI SHA to MOHAMMAD JAMILUDDIN SAH

0070889937-1

I, MICHAEL MARIA SUSAI S/O SARAVIMUTHU MICHAEL R/O E-7, NIGHTNGALE APARTMENT, NEAR F-BLOCK, VIKAS PURI, DELHI-110018 declare that name of mine and my wife has been wrongly written as M. MARIA SUSAI and MRS. VOILAT SUSAI in my Service and Discharge Certificate. The actual name of mine and my wife are MICHAEL MARIA SUSAI and VOILET SUSAI

0070889948-1

I, Lalita w/o-Prem Chand sahu, R/o 395 sector-12, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110022, have changed my name, from Lalita to Lalita sahu as per affidavit no-IN-DI4276362084758w date-13/02/2024

0040715225-6

I, LAKSHMI NARAIN S/O SATYA PARKASH R/O 1915/143, GANESH PURA, TRI NAGAR, DELHI-110035 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO LAKSHMI NARIAN FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES.

0070889931-1

I, Kishore Kumar S/o Kumarsen-Goyal R/o 53, Bashant Vihar, Budh Bihari, Baharampur, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Kishori Lal Goyal.

0070889929-1

I, Garima Arora W/o Amit Kumar Narang R/o C12A 2nd Floor Eldeco Residency Greens Sector-Pt-1, Greater Noida U.P. have changed my name to Garima Narang for all future purposes.

0070889950-1

I, Dharmender Kumar Jha R/o G-37, LG Flats, Sec-56, VTC, Noida, G.B.Nagar, UP-201301, have changed my name to Dharmendra Kumar Jha for all future Purposes.

0070889927-1

I, Devinder Sharma S/o Ramji Lal Sharma R/o Village Sabhapur Delhi-110090 have changed my name to Devendra Sharma for all future purposes

0070889936-1

I, Devendra Sharma S/o Late Ramji Lal Sharma R/o Village Sabhapur Delhi-110090 confirm that in my Voter ID Card my father name has been wrongly mentioned as Ramji Sharma instead Ramji Lal Sharma.

correct name of my Father is Ramji Lal Sharma.

0070889943-1

I, Anushka Saini W/o Atul Saini R/o u-95m, second, Solanki road, near pnb atm, uttan nagar, delhi-110059 have changed my name to Anu Shridhar for all future purposes.

0070889946-1

I, Anshu,S/o-Suresh Kumar Singla,Address-h.no.879,sector-16 faridabad haryana-121002,changed my name to Anshu Singla.

0040715228-7

I, Shveta Singh D/o Suchet Singh and W/o Deepak Pratap R/o House No-171C, Palam Vihar, Choma(62), Carterpuri, Gurgaon, Haryana-122017, have changed my name to Shveta Pratap

0070889934-1

I, Kashesh Verma alias Divya Verma D/o Sh. Raj Kumar Verma R/o B-604, Maharaaja Aggarwal Society, GH-9, Sector-21C, Part-3, Faridabad, Haryana-121001 have changed my name to Divya Verma for all purposes.

0040715190-5

I, Hanuman S/o Santal R/o Chura, Rajasthan-331701, have changed my name to Mandeep Kumar

0070889932-1

I, CHANDEEP SHARMA, R/O E-167, GK-2, NEW DELHI-110048 HAVE MISTAKENLY GOT WRITTEN THE NAME YUVAANSHIKA SHARMA IN AADHAR CARD AND IT NEEDS TO BE CORRECT TO YUVAANSHIKA SHARMA.

0040715205-1

I, hitherto known as, I, Dinesh Singh S/o Sh. Gajee Singh, R/o 377-A, Nyay Khand-I, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201014 have declare that, name of my son is wrongly written as SUNDEEP instead of his correct name SANDEEP SINGH and also date of birth wrongly written as 01/01/2001 instead of correct date of birth 16/04/2002; SUNDEEP and SANDEEP SINGH (both are same person) for all future purposes.

0040715206-1

I, Khush Hal Singh, S/o Sunder Singh, R/O House no-1-9, Gali no-13/1, Hari-Nagar Extension Jaitpur Badarpur, New Delhi -110044, Have changed my name to Khushal Singh, Permanently.

0040715245-2

I, Ngai Jodee, D/o Kamlianthing Guite, R/o 84 Apartment No-17, Shanti Niwas, Arjun-Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi-110029, Have Changed My Name To Ngaijodee Guite.

0040715275-3

I, Manoj Kumar S/o Satpal Chaudhary, R/o B-4/48, Sector-18, Rohini , Delhi-110089 have changed my name from Manoj Kumar to Manoj Kumar Chaudhary permanently.

0040715208-1

I, NEETU Singh,D/o-Inder Singh,R/o House No-32,Munirka-village,Delhi-110067,Declare that name-of mine and my-father has been wrongly-written as Neetu and Inder in my 10th-class educational-documents and name of my-father has been wrongly-written as Inder in my passport name the actual-name of mine and my-father is Neetu Singh and Inder Singh respectively,which may be amended accordingly.

0040715225-9

I, megha garg,W/o- Anshu singla,Address-h.no-879 sector-16 faridabad haryana-121002,changed my name to megha singla.

0040715258-8

I, It is for general information that I, Pradhyumn Agrawal R/o S/o Kanhaiya Agrawal R/o Ward No.- 6, Town Farah Mohalla, Kaderpura, Fateha, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh-281122, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my father name as Kanhaiya Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my mother name as Neelam in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate and in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate. The actual name of mine, my father and my mother are Pradhyumn Agrawal, Kanhaiya Agrawal and Neelam Agrawal respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0040715225-1

I, Michael Maria Susai S/o SARAVIMUTHU MICHAEL R/O E-7, NIGHTNGALE APARTMENT, NEAR F-BLOCK, VIKAS PURI, DELHI-110018 declare that name of mine and my wife has been wrongly written as M. MARIA SUSAI and MRS. VOILAT SUSAI in my Service and Discharge Certificate. The actual name of mine and my wife are MICHAEL MARIA SUSAI and VOILET SUSAI

0070889948-1

I, Lalita w/o-Prem Chand sahu, R/o 395 sector-12, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110022, have changed my name, from Lalita to Lalita sahu as per affidavit no-IN-DI4276362084758w date-13/02/2024

0040715225-6

I, Swati Lamba,W/o Shri.Gaurav Kumar Lamba,R/o Flat.no.10119,10th-Floor, Tower-08,Block-E2, Society-GH07,Crossing Republik Ghaziabad,Uttar Pradesh-201016,have changed my name after marriage from Swati Kumari to SWATI LAMBA,for all,future purposes.

0040715245-9

I, Sunil S/O OJAI PAL SINGH,ADD-E-45-C, IIIRD FLOOR, JAWAHAR PARK DEVLI ROAD, KHANPUR, SOUTH, DELHI-110062,changed my name to SUNIL SALWAN,for all,future purposes.

0040715227-3

I, It is for general information that I, Pradhyumn Agrawal R/o S/o Kanhaiya Agrawal R/o Ward No.- 6, Town Farah Mohalla, Kaderpura, Fateha, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh-281122, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my father name as Kanhaiya Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my mother name as Neelam in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate and in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate. The actual name of mine, my father and my mother are Pradhyumn Agrawal, Kanhaiya Agrawal and Neelam Agrawal respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0040715225-1

I, Mehta Singh,W/o- Anshu singla,Address-h.no-879 sector-16 faridabad haryana-121002,changed my name to megha singla.

0040715258-8

I, It is for general information that I, Pradhyumn Agrawal R/o S/o Kanhaiya Agrawal R/o Ward No.- 6, Town Farah Mohalla, Kaderpura, Fateha, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh-281122, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my father name as Kanhaiya Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my mother name as Neelam in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate and in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate. The actual name of mine, my father and my mother are Pradhyumn Agrawal, Kanhaiya Agrawal and Neelam Agrawal respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

0040715225-7

I, Mehta Singh,W/o- Anshu singla,Address-h.no-879 sector-16 faridabad haryana-121002,changed my name to megha singla.

0040715258-8

I, It is for general information that I, Pradhyumn Agrawal R/o S/o Kanhaiya Agrawal R/o Ward No.- 6, Town Farah Mohalla, Kaderpura, Fateha, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh-281122, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, as Pradhyumn Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my father name as Kanhaiya Agrawal in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate, my mother name as Neelam in my Secondary School Marks Statement Cum Certificate and in my Senior School Marks Statement Cum Certificate. The actual name of mine, my father and my mother are Pradhyumn Agrawal, Kanhaiya Agrawal and Neelam Agrawal respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

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0040715225-7

SENSEX: 72,708.16 ▲ 281.52 (0.39%) NIFTY: 22,122.25 ▲ 81.55 (0.37%) NIKKEI: 38,470.38 ▼ 16.86 HANG SENG: 16,155.61 ▼ 184.35 FTSE: 7,726.71 ▲ 15.00 DAX: 17,066.14 ▼ 51.30



GOLD

₹62,800



USD RATE

₹83.03



OIL

\$83.04



SILVER

₹76,000

Note: Gold, silver rates at Delhi spot market, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) as of February 16

International market data till 1900 IST

INDIA'S OIL, GAS IMPORT BILL DURING APR-JAN: \$101.3 BN IN FY24, \$128 BN IN FY23

Fall in energy prices brings down oil, gas import bill despite volume growth

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

INDIA'S NET oil and gas imports in value terms for April-January of 2023-24 (FY24) declined by nearly a fifth on a year-on-year basis to \$101.3 billion due to relatively lower prices of crude oil, natural gas, and petroleum products in the international market, as per latest data from the petroleum ministry.

This decline in the value of oil and gas imports came despite a rise in import volumes, suggesting that the fall in prices was significant enough to offset the volume growth. In the first 10 months of the previous financial year—FY23—India's net oil and gas import bill was \$124.8 billion.

Oil, natural gas, and refined petroleum products had seen extreme price volatility in the last financial year following Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

In the initial few months of FY23, international prices of these commodities were overheated. Their prices in the current financial year have been

DECLINE IN IMPORT VALUE

Trade segment	Trade value (\$ billion)	
	Apr-Jan FY23	Apr-Jan FY24
Crude oil imports	136.2	110.5
Petroleum product imports	22.5	19.2
LNG imports	14.8	10.9
Petroleum product exports	48.8	39.2
Net oil, gas imports	124.8	101.3

Source: PPAC, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas

relatively softer and far less volatile. The average price of the Indian basket of crude for April-January of FY24 was \$82.4 per barrel, but in the first 10 months of FY23, it was \$96. Oil and gas imports have the highest share in India's overall merchandise import bill. Petroleum product exports are among India's top merchandise exports in value terms.

According to provisional data from the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the oil ministry, India imported crude oil worth \$110.5 billion in April-January of the ongoing fiscal, against \$136.2 billion a year ago. However, in volume terms, oil imports for the period were higher by 0.9 per cent at 194.2 million tonnes.

Apart from generally lower prices of crude oil globally, India has also benefited from ramping up imports of discounted Russian crude. Although the discounts are not as high as last year, the volume of oil imported from Russia has gone up notably.

In April-December of FY23, Moscow had a share of nearly

18 per cent in New Delhi's overall oil imports (by volume), as per India's official trade data. In the first nine months of the current fiscal, Russia accounted for a whopping 37 per cent of India's oil imports. The government has so far not released country-wise trade data for January.

As for natural gas, which is imported into India in the liquefied form, import value for the first 10 months of FY24 was \$10.9 billion, down over 26 per cent from a year ago. On the other hand, liquefied natural gas (LNG) import volumes for the period were higher by 15.4 per cent at 25,305 million standard cubic metres (mscm).

The country's petroleum product imports in April-January declined almost 15 per cent year-on-year to \$19.2 billion, while petroleum product exports were down nearly 20 per cent to \$39.2 billion. India is a net exporter of petroleum products, thanks to its refining capacity of over 250 million tonnes per annum exceeding the country's domestic demand. India, however, does not export crude oil and natural gas

and is heavily dependent on imports of both due to high domestic demand and low production.

According to the PPAC data, India's import dependency in the case of crude oil was 87.6 per cent in April-January, up from 87 per cent a year ago due to rise in consumption even as domestic production remained stagnant.

The country is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil. India's domestic crude oil production in April-January was almost flat year-on-year at 24.5 million tonnes. Consumption of petroleum products, however, rose to 192.7 million tonnes from 183.1 million tonnes a year ago.

As for natural gas, India's import dependency for the first 10 months of the current financial year was 45.9 per cent against 43.8 per cent in the corresponding period of the last fiscal. India is among the major importers of LNG as well. The country's gross natural gas production for April-January rose 5.2 per cent year-on-year to 30,353 msbcm, even as consumption increased by 9.9 per cent to 55,074 msbcm.

'Developed world using climate concerns as a smokescreen to cut imports'



come of the plurilateral negotiations on e-commerce, frequently referred to as the Joint Statement Initiative on Digital Trade, would do very little to promote India's interests.

There are many provisions in these negotiations which would prevent governments from effectively regulating big tech. While MC13 is likely to see a push to conclude these negotiations, it would be in India's long-term interest not to endorse the final outcome on this issue.

There is an impression that a dysfunctional dispute settlement mechanism is not hurting India.

I disagree. A dysfunctional dispute settlement mechanism at the WTO adversely affects countries who cannot match the political or economic clout of the developed countries. It is in India's interest to have a well-functioning dispute settlement mechanism. The reason why the US agreed to settle cases with India was because we had imposed retaliatory tariffs on the US.

At the WTO informal discussions are being held to reform the dispute settlement mechanism. Unfortunately, restoration of the Appellate Body, which is mandated to hear appeals against the finding of WTO dispute settlement panels, is not even figuring in these talks.

How can India best protect the interest of fisherfolks at WTO?

At the last Ministerial Conference of the WTO held in 2022, a partial agreement on fisheries subsidies was finalized.

However, negotiations on subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and over-fishing (OCOF) could not be concluded at that meeting. These negotiations have gathered considerable momentum over the past few months and some outcome on OCOF subsidies could be expected at MC13. India has been pushing hard to curtail the subsidies provided by large fishing nations, while seeking to protect the interests of its own small and poor fisherfolks.

FULL INTERVIEW ON www.indianexpress.com

Days after first FC meeting, FinMin says new member to be appointed

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

The Ministry said action will be taken to appoint a member of the 16th Commission in lieu of Rajadhyaksha

Panagariya as Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission. It had also announced Rituraj Ranjan Panay, a 1998-batch IAS officer, as Secretary of the Commission.

Rajadhyaksha is presently Executive Director, Artha Global and was appointed as Member in the 16th Finance Commission through a notification dated January 31, 2024. "Dr. Rajadhyaksha has expressed his inability to take up this responsibility due to unforeseen personal circumstances," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. The Ministry said action will be taken to appoint a member of the 16th Commission in lieu of Rajadhyaksha.

In January, the government had announced the appointment of three full-time members and one part-time member of the Commission. In December last year, it had announced the appointment of former NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Dr Arvind

BRIEFLY

Tesla Power India to hire 2,000 people

New Delhi: Tesla Power India on Monday said it is planning to recruit over 2,000 employees across various verticals as part of its expansion plans. The planned recruitment drive will encompass positions across engineering, operations, sales, marketing, and support functions, providing ample job opportunities for the youth, it said. PTI

TVS Mobility forms JV with Mitsubishi

New Delhi: TVS Mobility on Monday said it has formed a joint venture (JV) with the Mitsubishi Corporation to establish a comprehensive vehicle mobility ecosystem in India. PTI

CBDT caps old tax demand withdrawals at ₹1 lk per assessee

New Delhi: Pursuant to the Budget announcement about withdrawal of direct tax demands, the Income Tax department in an order has set a ceiling of Rs 1 lakh per assessee for withdrawal of small tax demands till Assessment Year (AY) 2015-16.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget for 2024-25 had announced that tax demands for AY 2010-11 up to Rs 25,000 and for AY 2011-12 to 2015-16 of up to Rs 10,000 will be withdrawn.

Tax demands totalling about Rs 3,500 crore will be withdrawn following the announcement.

The tax department's order said that such outstanding demands pertaining to income tax, wealth tax and gift tax as on January 31, 2024, shall be remitted and extinguished "subject to the maximum ceiling of Rs 1 lakh for any specific taxpayer/assessee". ENS

Additional Secretary in the Commerce Ministry Amardeep Bhatia said that the government is not considering any cut

Hospitality sector revenue may grow 11-13% in FY25

The hospitality industry is expected to clock revenue growth in 2024-25 on steady domestic demand, as per Crisil Ratings



"The domestic travel demand, which remained a key driver this fiscal, will sustain next year as well. This momentum will be supported by healthy economic activity which drives business demand and continuing leisure travel demand," — Anand Kulkarni, Crisil Ratings Director

Source: Crisil Ratings/PTI

EXPECTED GROWTH:

15-17% Expected revenue growth in current financial year

5-7% Growth in average room rates in FY25

73-74% Occupancy to remain healthy

32-33% Operating leverage will help maintain strong operating profitability

10% Foreign tourist arrivals in India are estimated to remain below the pre-pandemic level

■ The strong demand along with modest supply will keep operating performance of the industry

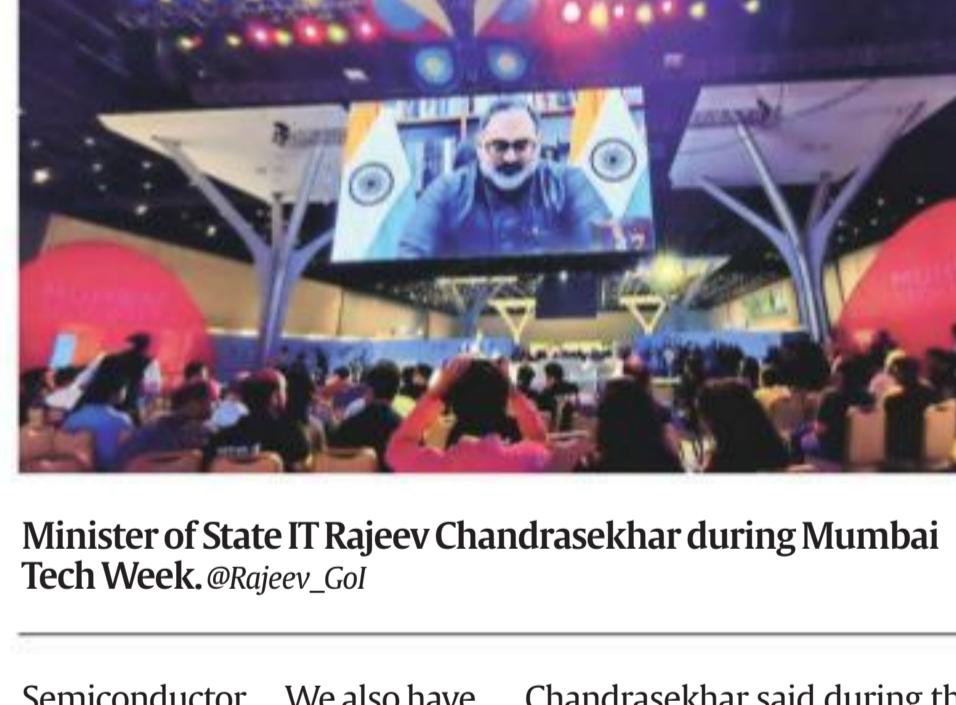
Tatas, Tower have applied to set up chip foundries in India: Rajeev Chandrasekhar

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19

INDIA HAS received two proposals to set up semiconductor fabrication plants in the country – one from the Tata Group and the other from Israeli chip maker Tower Semiconductor, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said Monday.

The collective value of the proposals equals nearly about \$22 billion, more than twice the \$10 billion incentive amount that New Delhi has earmarked for the chip ecosystem.

"The two fab proposals that have been received by India, and represent a total investment of about \$22 billion, are one from Tata and the other from Tower



Minister of State IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar during Mumbai Tech Week. @Rajeev_GoI

Semiconductor... We also have two very big packaging proposals, one from the Tata Group and the other one from a consortium which is headed by a Japanese semiconductor company,"

Chandrasekhar said during the Mumbai Tech Week organised by Tech Entrepreneurs Association of India (Team). He

was in conversation with Anant Goenka, Executive Director, The

Indian Express group.

The Indian Express was first to report that Tower has submitted a fab proposal worth \$8 billion. "After 75 years, for the first time you are going to see big multi billion dollar fab proposals coming to India. The government of India is currently in the process of evaluating and approving the proposals," he said.

Chandrasekhar also said that the government is very bullish on online gaming and will soon create a framework which will allow safe and permissible norms for the sector.

He said even Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a believer that online gaming is a very important segment of the country's digital economy which needs.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Govt raises funding for development of natural rubber sector for two years

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

There are 13 lakh rubber growers in India with Kerala accounting for a major chunk of the production.

Singh Bhatia said that the funds will be used for supporting the plantation of rubber, generation of planting material, productivity enhancement, formation of rubber producers societies, and rubber research and training.

"The outlay (has) increased by 23 per cent from Rs 576.41 crore to Rs 708.69 crore for the next two financial years," Bhatia told reporters. In traditional areas, including Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, plantation of rubber will be undertaken on 12,000 hectares.

Bhatia said that the government is not considering any cut

in import duty on rubber as of now as the differential between the local and international prices is maintained.

The rate of assistance has been increased to Rs 40,000 per hectare from the previous Rs 25,000 per hectare, he said, adding that it will help to cover the increased cost of production as well as provide additional incentive to growers.

In non-traditional areas like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and north-east states, 3,752 hectares will be brought under rubber cultivation during 2024-26. The scheme is implemented through the Rubber Board. Bhatia further said that an outlay of Rs 29 crore has been provided for the next two years for rubber research.

"This will aim at developing rubber clones suitable for different agro-climatic regions of the country to expand rubber cultivation to new areas," Bhatia said.

Investigation on near-miss incident with IndiGo planes

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

TWO AIRCRAFT of India's largest airline IndiGo came perilously close to each other as they climbed out of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport on November 17, with vertical and lateral separation between the two planes going below the minimum permissible levels. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has categorised it as a "serious incident" and is conducting investigation.

The two aircraft involved in the incident are an Airbus A321 bearing registration VT-IUO, and an Airbus A320 (VT-ISO). The A321 was operating a Delhi-Hyderabad flight, while the A320 was flying to Raipur from the Capital.

The Executive Engineer, Bengaluru South Constituency Lakes Division, BBMP, Bengaluru invites item rate tenders from eligible Contractors registered in BBMP or equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES or any State Govt. Organizations for the work mentioned below.

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice
Tender No: 3rd Re E-Tender No. WRDJKWACCE SR/4850/2022_26_12_11/RC 1/1
Jal Jeevan Mission (JMM)-Karoor Panchayat - Package 6 - Construction of Raw Water Pump House and Raw water pumping main-PipelineWork. EMD: Rs. 2,00,000/- Tender fee: Rs. 11025+1985 Last Date for submitting Tender 01-03-2024 03:00 pm Phone: 0481 2562745 Website: www.kwa.kerala.gov.in

</

**SARDAR SAROVER NARMADA NIGAM LIMITED**

(A wholly owned Government of Gujarat Undertaking)

Tender Notice No.
&
Name of the work

- 1) Est. Cost (Rs. in lacs)
2) Tender Fee (in Rs.) (including GST)
3) EMD (in Rs. lacs)
4) Class
5) Time Limit
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|

Works under the Chief Engineer (SBC), SSNNL, Limbdi

Tender Notice No- 06 of 2023-24
ID No.46492
EPC Contract for Construction of Dhadui Sub-Branch Canal between Ch.23.025 km to 68.522 km (Earthwork, Structures, Lining, Service Road, C.R.H.R./Escape Gates, Stoplogs, Control Cabins, etc) including Geo-Investigation, Design of Structures and Operation and Maintenance of the same for 5(FIVE) years.

Note: The details regarding contact place for physical submission and opening of tender, please visit website www.tender.procure.com

INF/2522/23-24

Near Railway Crossing, Badipur Road, Jogiwala, Dehradun-248001 (Uttarakhand)

Telephone No.: 0135-2974411, E-mail: uk sugars@gmail.com

Website : www.uttarakhandsugars.com, GST No. 05AAFBUT713K2Z1

Letter No. : 1879/PUR/35/Bazpur/Scrap/2023-24

Date : 19 February, 2024

E-TENDER NOTICE FOR SALE OF M.S. SCRAP OF CO-OPERATIVE SUGAR MILL BAZPUR (UDHAM SINGH NAGAR) UTTARAKHAND

Online e-tenders are invited from reputed buyers of Sale of M.S. Scrap available in our One Co-operative Sugar Mill Bazpur (Udham Singh Nagar) Uttarakhand as per detail given in tender document. Tender of Sale of M.S. Scrap will be uploaded up to 06:00 PM on 29.02.2024 and Technical and financial bid will be opened on the scheduled date 01.03.2024 at 10:30 AM to 03:00 PM.

Tender documents can be downloaded from e-tender portal <https://uktenders.gov.in> or Federation's website www.uttarakhandsugars.com. The bidders will have to deposit tender fees (Non Refundable) of Rs. 2,360/- (GST Inclusive) & earnest money in the form of Demand Draft / RTGS / NEFT / NET BANKING for Rs. 1,60,000 (Rupees One Lacs Sixty Thousand Only) in favor of Uttarakhand Sahkari Chini Mills Sangh Limited, Payable at Dehradun. Tenders without Tender Fees and Earnest money will not be accepted. The bank details are available inside the tender document.

The details for submission of The E-Bids is available on the E-Tender Portals www.uptenders.gov.in & www.uttarakhandsugars.com from 19.02.2024 at 06:00 PM. The Federation reserves the right to cancel any or all E-Bids without assigning any reason. The decision of Federation shall be final and binding.

इस निविदा के समन्वय में सभी संस्थान, स्पष्टीकृत शुद्धिप्रबन्ध, परिचोदन, समय वृद्धि आदि को केवल www.uptenders.gov.in & www.uttarakhandsugars.com पर ही दिया जायेगा। निविदाता अद्यतन जानकारी के लिए नियमित रूप से इन वेबसाइटों पर पहुंचे रहें।

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Government of Odisha
Office of the Chief Construction Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur
E-mail: Id servciclesb@yahoo.com

Bid Identification No. Building Tender Online RWCSBP-65/2023-24 No. 702 Dated: 17.02.2024

The Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online percentage rate Bid from experienced & eligible bidders for 09 (Nine) nos. of Building work for the year 2023-24.

1 Name of work : Construction of (24x7) PHC (New) /PHC Day Care Building for the year 2023-24.

2 No of work : 09(Nine) nos. of Building work Details as per DTCN.

3 Estimated cost : Approximately varies from Rs.102.22 lakhs to Rs.210.09 lakhs.

4 Class of Contractor : B& 'A' & 'C' Class

5 Cost of tender paper and mode of deposit : Rs. 10,000/- per set. (to be deposited On-line) in favour of concerned Superintending Engineer/ Executive Engineer

6 Mode of submission of tender : Tender should be submitted only On line in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

7 EMD and mode of deposit : 1% of estimated cost of the work to be remitted online as mentioned in DTCN.

8 Summary of key data are provided below :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Last date & time for seeking clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To	Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur	Bidding Tender Online-RWCSBP-65/2023-24	26.02.2024 From 11.00 A.M.	11.03.2024 Upto 5.00 P.M.	7.03.2024 Up to 5.00 P.M.	12.03.2024 To be intimated later

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

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

* The amount put to bid is exclusive of GST.

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

Sd/-

Chief Construction Engineer,
Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur
OIPR-250911/11/0094/2324

POOMPUHAR SHIPPING CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Tamilnadu Enterprise)
692, Anna Salai, IVth Floor, Nandanam, Chennai - 600 035, India
Telephone No. : 044 - 24330505 / 807, Fax: 91-44-24345593 / 24335706,
E-mail : pscship@gmail.com CIN : U63090TN1974PLC006596

GLOBAL E-TENDER INVITING NOTICE

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER FOR LONG TERM TIME CHARTERING OF ONE SELF-TRIMMING PANAMAX/KAMSARMAX GEARLESS (OR WITH GEARS CONSIDERED AS GEARLESS) VESSEL WITH CAPACITY OF ABOUT 65,000 TO 86,000 DWT ON ACCOUNT OF NTECL.

E- tenders are invited from the Ship owners / disponent owners for the following specification:

Tender Number	Lay Days	Period	Tender Download start date	Bid Submission end date	Tender opening Date
PSC/CHARTERING/006/2023-24... Dt 15.02.2024	20.05.2024 to 05.06.2024	6 month+ 3 month +/- 10 days choption	20.02.2024 at 1600 hours	26.03.2024 at 1200 hours	26.03.2024 at 1400 hours

Tender document is available in e-tendering web portal <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgep/app> and www.tamilship.com at free of cost. Prospective bidders are advised to refer for <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgep/app> specific important details and upload their bid. The conditions / requirement mentioned in the website shall be met out by the bidders. This advertisement is an invitation for bid only. The details given in the website are comprehensive. **Tender Opening Venue:** Poompuhar Shipping Corporation Limited, Head Office, No. 692, Anna Salai, MUH Complex - 4th Floor, Nandanam, Chennai - 600 035.

Further, all communications / corrigendums will be updated through <https://intenders.gov.in/nicgep/app> only.

GENERAL MANAGER (OPS)

DIFR/1062/TENDER/2024

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DIFR/1062/TENDER/2024

Further document is available in e-tendering web portal <

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

Centre's MSP proposal: Situation in pulses, cotton

There is a strong case for crop diversification in water-starved Punjab. But production and procurement of pulses, cotton, and maize has been low in the state

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

DURING THE fourth round of talks with protesting farmers that ended past midnight on Sunday, the Centre presented a proposal for crop diversification in Punjab, under which government promoted cooperatives would offer five-year contracts to procure five crops – tur (arhar), urad, masur (lentil), maize, and cotton – at minimum support prices (MSP).

Food Minister Piyush Goyal told reporters that under the “very innovative, out-of-the-box idea”, the National Cooperative Consumers’ Federation of India Ltd (NCCF), the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED), and the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) would buy these crops with “no limit on the quantity”.

On Monday evening, the farmers, who have demanded a legally guaranteed MSP for all crops across the country and determination of crop prices as per the report of the Dr Swaminathan Commission, rejected the Centre’s proposal. The ‘Dilli Chalo’ protest march will resume on Wednesday, they said.

Why is the Centre pushing for crop diversification in Punjab?

More than 80% of the geographical area of Punjab (41.17 lakh hectares out of 50.33 lakh hectares), is under cultivation, mostly under rice and wheat. In 2019-20, as much as 35.21 lakh hectares out of the net sown area of 41.17 lakh hectares was under wheat, and 31.42 lakh hectares was under paddy.

The crops in the Centre’s proposal had very small shares in comparison: 2.48 lakh hectares for cotton, 1.14 lakh hectares for maize, and 33,000 hectares for pulses (both kharif and rabi) in 2019-20.

Paddy is a guzzler of water – about 2,500 litres (through irrigation or rainfall) is needed to produce 1 kg of rice – and its cultivation has led to massive and indiscriminate withdrawal of groundwater in the state, which now stares at widespread desertification.

Attempts at diversification of crops have not yielded the desired results. The area under cotton came down from 2.91 lakh hectares in 2017-18 to 2.51 lakh hectares in 2021-22, and the area under maize (which is a kharif crop in Punjab) came down from 1.14 lakh hectares to 1.05 lakh hectares in the same period.

The area under pulses, however, rose from 30,200 hectares in 2017-18 to 62,600 hectares in 2021-22.

Which states are the major producers of



Union Ministers (from left) Nityanand Rai, Piyush Goyal, and Arjun Munda with Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann at Sunday’s talks with farmers in Chandigarh. PTI

the three pulses in the government’s proposal?

Just a handful of states account for half of the country’s total production of pulses.

Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Jharkhand produce 95% of India’s masur; Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Jharkhand produce 80% of arhar (tur); and Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra produce 75% of urad.

India is dependent on imports of pulses to meet its domestic demand. Total production

in 2021-22 was only 27.69 million tonnes.

The government has set a target of becoming self-sufficient in pulses by 2027, and has been promoting their production through incentives (in terms of higher MSP), and procurement through initiatives like Price Support Scheme (PSS) and Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF).

How much pulses and cotton does the government procure?

The Centre announces MSP for 22 crops, but procurement is limited to only a few

crops. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) procures cereals, especially wheat and paddy; NAFED mainly procures pulses and oilseeds; CCI is the procurement agency for cotton.

COTTON: Official data show that the procurement of cotton by CCI in Punjab has been rising in the last three years; the overall figures however, are still very low. Punjab accounts for about 5% of the total cotton procurement by the CCI in the country.

Figures available with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare show that CCI procured a total 91.90 lakh bales (each bale equals 170 kg) during 2021-22, out of which the largest share of 34.01 lakh bales came from Andhra Pradesh. The figure for Punjab was just 5.36 lakh bales in 2021-22, which was, however, more than the 3.58 lakh bales in 2020-21.

PULSES: In 2022-23, NAFED procured 29.64 lakh tonnes of pulses at the MSP under PSS, (benefiting 13.77 lakh farmers), and 57,754 tonnes under PSF. Of the total quantity procured by NAFED, the largest share (84.59 lakh tonnes) was of gram, followed by moong (12.59 lakh tonnes).

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), the body that recommends the MSPs for various crops, has raised questions about the procurement of pulses by NAFED.

In its report, *Price Policy for Rabi Crops Marketing Season 2024-25*, the CACP noted:

“Due to record production of gram and depressed market prices during the last two seasons, Government procured about 25.6 lakh tonnes of gram during RMS2022-23 and 22.3 lakh tonnes (as on 1 June 2023) in RMS2023-24 under...PSS. Total procurement of pulses increased from about 29.61 lakh tonnes in 2021-22 (KMS2021-22 and RMS2022-23) to about 30.2 lakh tonnes in 2022-23...[But] since there is no assured mechanism for disposal of pulses procured under the PSS...NAFED disposes of the stock of pulses in open market at a price much lower than the MSP.”

For instance, the CACP said, average disposal rate of gram procured under PSS was Rs 4,646 per quintal during 2022-23, which was lower than the MSP. “The sale of pulses in open market below the MSP adversely affects the market prices and discourages traders to procure directly from farmers,” the CACP said.

It expressed the view that “distribution of pulses to households in the aspirational districts would help in improving nutrition in these areas and disposal of stocks without affecting the market prices... Liquidation of stocks of pulses procured under PSS by NAFED continues to remain a challenge as NAFED incurs losses in the open market operations.”

THIS WORD MEANS

ODYSSEUS SPACECRAFT

A US-based private company recently launched a lunar lander, named after the hero of Homer’s epic *Odyssey*



The Odysseus lander in Houston on February 1, 2023. The NYT

Why is it called Odysseus?

This particular spacecraft was named Odysseus after a contest among employees of Intuitive Machines of Houston – the company in charge of the mission. Mario Romero, the engineer who proposed the name, said the travels of the hero of *Odyssey*, the ancient Greek epic poem, provided an apt analogy for the lunar mission. “This journey takes much longer due to the many challenges, setbacks and delays,” Romero said in Intuitive Machine’s press kit for the mission. “Travelling the daunting, wine-dark sea repeatedly tests his mettle, yet ultimately, Odysseus proves worthy and sticks the landing back home after 10 years.”

What is its significance?

If private companies can pull off this feat, at a cost much lower than a traditional NASA mission, it will open the door to wider exploration of the Moon by NASA and commercial endeavours.

NASA is the primary customer for this mission, paying Intuitive Machines \$118 million to take its payloads, which include a stereo camera to observe the plume of dust kicked up during landing and a radio receiver to measure the effects of charged particles on radio signals.

But if these private efforts continue to

crash, NASA won’t get its money’s worth. The launch of the Intuitive Machines mission comes just one month after another US company, Astrobotic Technology of Pittsburgh, attempted to send Peregrine, its lander, to the moon. But a malfunction with its propulsion system shortly after launch prevented any possibility of landing.

Both Odysseus and Peregrine are part of NASA’s Commercial Lunar Payload Services program, or CLPS. The object of the programme is to use commercial companies to send experiments to the Moon rather than NASA building and operating its own moon landers.

Thomas Zurbuchen, the former associate administrator for science at NASA who started the CLPS program in 2018, said the space agency expected half of the CLPS missions to fail and he repeatedly told Congress, scientists and the companies to expect that. But even if half of the commercial missions fail, NASA would still come out ahead, because a traditional mission costs \$500 million to \$1 billion, Zurbuchen said, while on a CLPS mission, NASA is paying a company about \$100 million to fly its payloads.

THE NYT

AMITABH SINHA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 19

MONSOON RAINFALL over India is known to be strongly influenced by El Niño and La Niña events, the alternating warming and cooling of the eastern Pacific Ocean that impacts weather across the world. A new study by Indian researchers has now suggested that even air quality in the country could be influenced by the two events.

The study, by researchers at the Bengaluru-based National Institute of Advanced Studies and Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, has argued that the unusual air quality in some Indian cities in the winter of 2022 could be attributed to the record-breaking spell of La Niña prevailing at that time. This is the first time that air quality in Indian cities has been linked to a La Niña event – and indirectly to climate change, which is making El Niño and La Niña more severe.

What happened?

During October to January, northern Indian cities, particularly Delhi, experience very high concentrations of PM2.5. A variety of meteorological factors – temperature, moisture, heaviness in air, wind speed and direction – play a role in trapping pollutants in the lower levels of the atmosphere.

These factors are also responsible for transporting pollutants from other regions, particularly those generated by agriculture waste burning in Punjab and Haryana, to Delhi and adjoining areas.

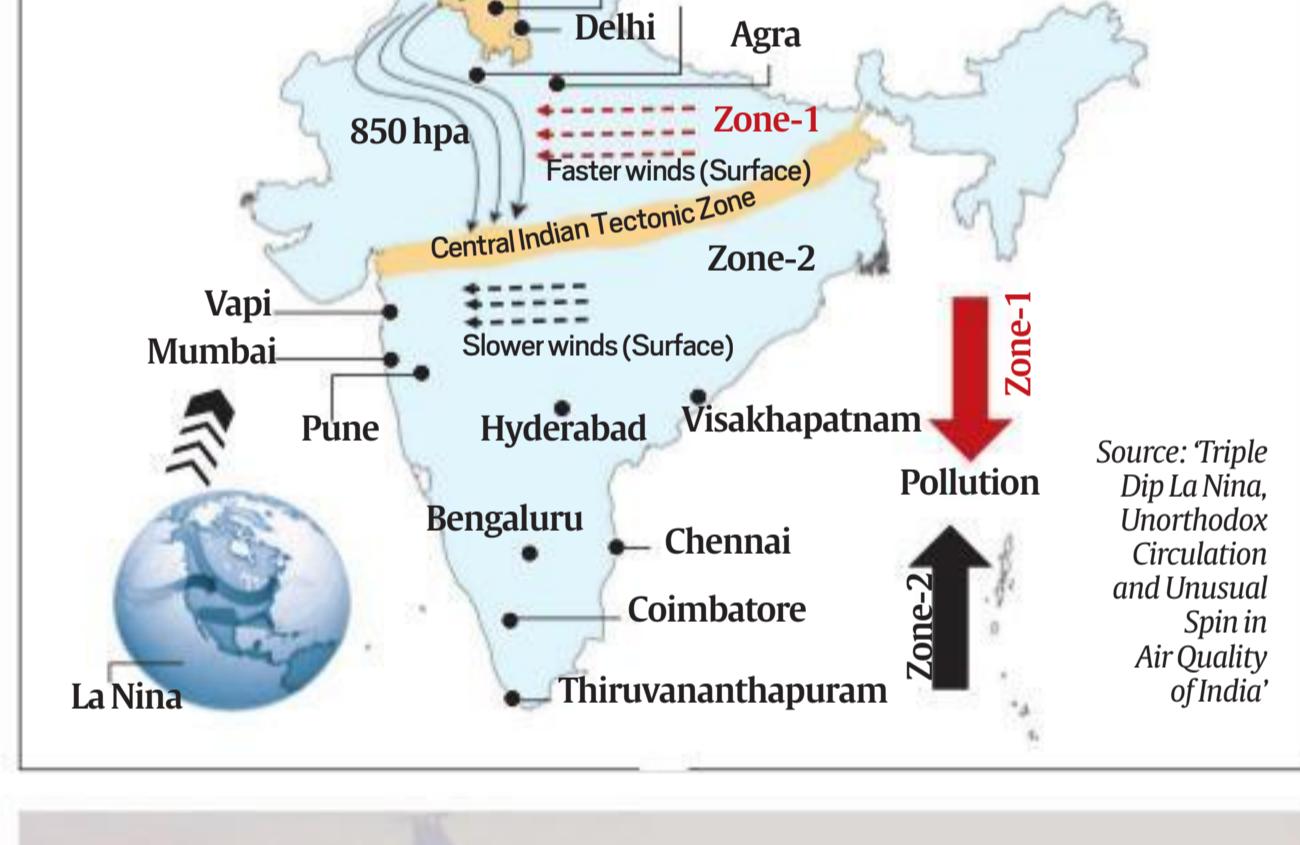
The western and southern parts of the country have always had relatively lower levels of pollution, because of their proximity to oceans.

The winter of 2022, however, showed a significant deviation from this normal. Northern Indian cities, including Delhi, were cleaner than usual, while cities in the west and the south, like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai, experienced worse-than-usual air quality.

The study said PM2.5 concentrations in Ghaziabad that winter saw a reduction of about 33 per cent from normal, while in Noida, the concentration was 28 per cent below normal. Delhi saw a reduction of about 10 per cent. Simultaneously, the concentrations in Mumbai rose by 30 per cent, while Bengaluru registered a 20 per cent rise.

It was this anomalous behaviour that the researchers had set out to study when they

CHANGES IN WIND PATTERNS IN THE WINTER OF 2022-23



South Mumbai engulfed in smog and haze on December 16, 2022. Mumbai saw unusually poor air quality that winter. Express Archive

found themselves led to the possible effects of La Niña.

Wind direction

The most crucial factor in explaining the anomaly of winter 2022 was a change in the normal wind direction. During this time, wind usually blows in the northwesterly direction: for example, from Punjab towards

Delhi and further into the Gangetic plains. This is one of the main reasons why agricultural waste pollutants in Punjab and Haryana flow into Delhi.

In the winter of 2022, however, the wind circulation was in the north-south direction. The pollutants being carried from Punjab and Haryana bypassed Delhi and surrounding areas and flew over Rajasthan and Gujarat to

southern regions (see map).

“There was no change in the local sources of emissions in Delhi and Mumbai. But the additional pollutant load from the northern states, which usually lands in Delhi and surrounding areas, moved in a different trajectory and reached peninsular India, some landing in Mumbai as well,” explained Gufran Beig, the lead researcher and one of the leading air pollution experts in the country.

The local circulation of wind near Mumbai also had an anomalous behaviour that year. Wind currents alternate between blowing from the land to the sea every few days. When blowing from the land towards the sea, the winds carry pollutants out of the city. In 2022, however, instead of changing direction every four to five days, the winds persisted in one direction for more than a week or 10 days, leading to greater accumulation of pollutants in Mumbai.

La Niña and climate change

Beig said the wind behaviour in both cases had something to do with the extended La Niña which, by the winter of 2022, had been persisting for an unusually long three years.

“When we used the global air circulation data as a result of La Niña in our computer models, we found the emergence of wind patterns over the Indian region that were very similar to the observed changes. When we ran the models with data from previous years, when a strong La Niña was not present, these anomalous wind patterns disappeared. It showed a strong sensitivity to La Niña conditions,” Beig said.

Beig said not all La Niña events might produce noticeable changes in wind circulation over India. “This one was a particularly strong event. And the impact on air circulation became evident only in the third year of La Niña. So, there may be an accumulative effect,” he said.

He said it was not yet entirely clear whether El Niño would produce an opposite effect for air quality over India.

The study did add that changes in wind patterns were not the only reasons for the unusual trends in air quality that year. It mentioned local meteorological conditions, unrelated to La Niña, that could also have resulted in the reduction of pollutant concentrations over northern India.

LONGER VERSION ON
indianexpress.com/explained

Chanda Kochhar, husband’s arrest: why Bombay HC called it ‘abuse of power’

SADAF MODAK

MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 19

TERMING THEIR arrest an “abuse of power” carried out “without application of mind”, the Bombay High Court recently confirmed the interim bail granted to former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar. The couple is named in a CBI case about loans given to the Venugopal Dhoot-led Videocon Group by ICICI Bank.

The court said the arrests made by the CBI on December 23, 2022 violated Section 41A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

What was the case?

EXPLAINED
LAW

In 2019, the CBI filed an FIR against the Kochhar couple, Dhoot, and others, on allegations including cheating under the Indian Penal Code and relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The agency had alleged that ICICI Bank sanctioned six loans to Videocon Group companies after Chanda Kochhar took charge as MD and CEO between 2009-2011. In lieu of this, Videocon invested in Nupower, the company linked to her husband Deepak Kochhar.

Over three years after the FIR, the CBI arrested the Kochhars. The couple then approached the Bombay HC, claiming there was no material to arrest them since they had complied with the notices issued by the police officer.

The reasons for arrest can include grounds such as preventing the person from tampering with evidence, from committing any further offence, and for a proper probe.



Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar are named in a CBI case related to loans given to the Videocon Group by ICICI Bank. Archive

The provisions are meant to prevent routine arrests by the police where custody is avoidable.

In various previous judgments, such as *Arness Kumar and Satyendra Kumar Antil*, the Supreme Court has reiterated the need to comply with the provisions of this Section, so that the police don’t make unnecessary arrests and magistrates do not authorise detention casually and mechanically.

What did the HC say in its order?

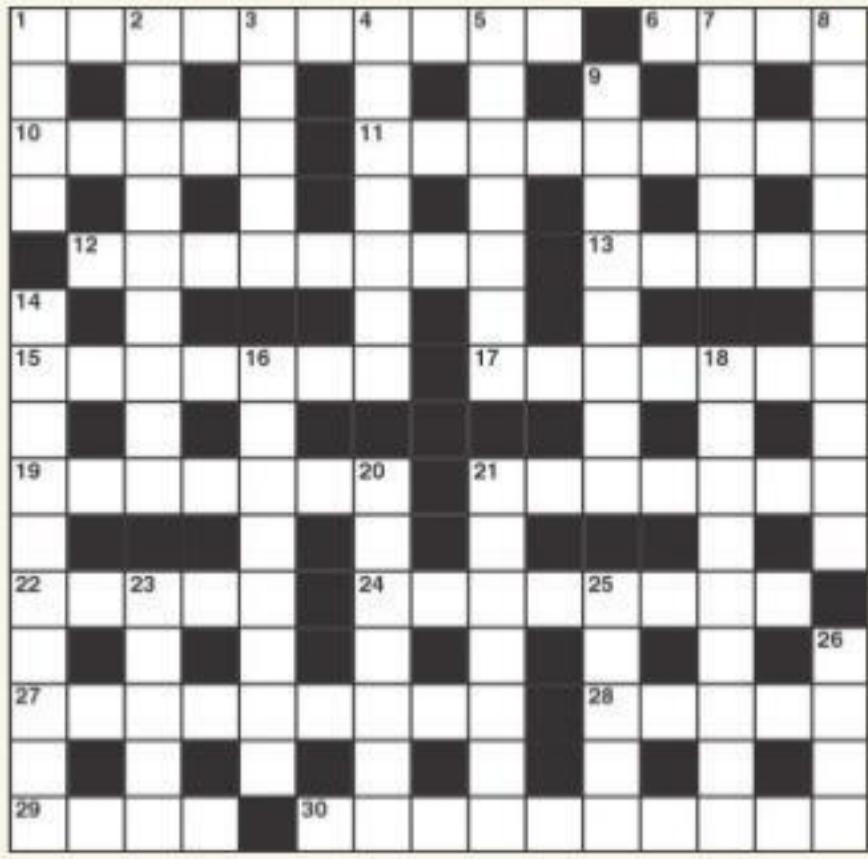
The Bench of Justice Anuja Prabhudesai and Justice N.R. Borkar said that the CBI had only submitted a case diary that purportedly records the reason for arresting the Kochhars. The CBI stated that they were not cooperating and their custody was required

to unearth the conspiracy and find if there were other conspirators.

The court said the diary reveals that the couple was served notices twice by the CBI in June and December 2022, which they complied with.

The HC noted that the Kochhars were not interrogated or summoned for over three years after the FIR was filed and their arrest in 2022 was not on the basis of any additional material discovered during the probe. The court said that under these circumstances, “such routine arrest without

CROSSWORD 5292



- ACROSS**
- The mating game (5,5)
 - Curry or honey (4)
 - Find the start to the event (5)
 - Stupidly I led a riot as an expression of feeling (9)
 - Things thrown at the match (8)
 - It's expensive and going up all the time (5)
 - Sort of exercise drill in CIA gets backing (7)
 - I'll get so used by them (7)
 - He can just about stand up for himself (7)
 - Runner allowed to enter the re-run heat (7)
 - Composer of regal disposition (5)
 - Quality land (8)
 - Classical equivalent of Tom, Dick and Harry (3,6)
 - Correct signs (5)
 - An act of duplicity? (4)
 - Joint accompaniment? (10)
- DOWN**
- Maybe a capital place to raise (4)
 - Fascinated by an unusual demeanour (9)
 - It's bound to be a bit of a shock (5)
 - Cast pie out though it's germ-free (7)
 - French style of cooking (7)
 - Oil producer under pressure (5)
 - He will stick at his job (10)
 - No doubt it was used in bygone days (8)
 - A neat farm structure (6,4)
 - Where everybody goes in to sweep around the floor (8)
 - Unwilling to give credit (9)
 - About to be given beans? Push off (7)
 - Mix a tonic noted for its deadly properties (7)
 - Soundly ridicules appearance (5)
 - Special edition surcharge (5)
 - Takes advantage of customs (4)

Solutions Crossword 5292 Across: 1 Distaff, 5 in bed, 6 Fireguard, 9 Tap, 10 Rife, 12 Proceeds, 14 Saigon, 15 Utmost, 17 Observer, 18 Afar, 21 Cog, 22 Namesakes, 24 Lethe, 25 Deirdre Down: 1 Defer, 2 Sir, 3 Argo, 4 Flare, 5 Indicate, 6 Better off, 7 Deposit, 11 Foretold, 13 Entrance, 14 Stoical, 16 Beamed, 19 Roses, 20 Tzar, 23 Kid

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLE WORDS

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

We shape our _; thereafter they shape us. - Winston Churchill (9)

ENIIS



AEPTDU



FGULN



AIMTBG



Answers: NISE, FLING, UPTIDE, GAMBLI
Solutions: NISE, FLING, UPTIDE, GAMBLI
Answers: We shape our jumbles; thereafter they shape us. - Winston Churchill

SUDOKU 5478

Difficulty Level 3s

Instructions

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

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

Difficulty Level

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5477

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

WESTERN RAILWAY - VADODARA DIVISION

OPEN 'E' TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. EL/TRD/Tender/23-24/22R2, Tenders for and on behalf of The President of India are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical Tr.D) Western Railway, Pratapnagar, Vadodara - 390 004 for the following work: Sr. No.1-Tender No. & Name of Work: EL/TRD/Tender/23-24/22R2, Alteration in existing OHE due to provision of Road Under Bridge (RUB) and provision of number plates on Drop Arm (Da/Bom) of Portal/TTC in Guratpur, Vadodara-Godhra and Vadodara-Dabhoi section of Vadodara division. Approximate cost of the work: ₹ 1,26,31,886/- Bid security: ₹ 2,13,000/- Cost of Tender documents and completion period: Completion period: 12 months. Tender scheduled on: Tender closing date 21/03/2024 and time of closing at 15:00 hrs. on the same date. Web page particulars and notice for location where complete details can be seen & address of the office and clarification: Web site @ www.reps.gov.in Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical Tr.D) Western Railway, Pratapnagar, Vadodara - 390 004 (EL/TRD/Tender/23-22R2 dt. 15/02/2024) 333 Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRailway

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PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Asha W/o Sh. Yangthappa, R/o - Kotha No. 52, 11nd Floor, GB Road, Delhi aslo at Jari Nagar, Bangalore has committed (or suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No. 487/2015 U/s 392/342/411/34 IPC PS Kamla Market, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Asha cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Asha has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Asha of case FIR No. 487/2015 U/s 392/342/411/34 IPC PS Kamla Market, Delhi is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of 28.03.2024

By Order,

Ms. Meena Chauhan
Metropolitan Magistrate-08,
Central, Room No.272,
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

DP/1762/CD/2024 (Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Mohd Iqbal S/o Sh. Haji Dilawar, R/o- B-49, 1st Floor, Joshi Colony, Delhi has committed (or suspected to have committed) the offence in case registered vide FIR No. 239/14 U/s 288/336/506 IPC P.S. Madhu Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Mohd Iqbal can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Mohd Iqbal has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Mohd Iqbal of case FIR No. 239/14 U/s 288/336/506 IPC P.S. Madhu Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the complaint on or before the day of 23.03.2024.

By Order

Sh. Udbhav Kumar Jain
Metropolitan Magistrate-04
Room No. 31, Shahdara
Karkardooma Court, Delhi

DP/1549/ED/2024 (Court Matter)

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl Namely Sneha D/o Anil Kumar R/o Jhuggi No. N-28/B-434, CSA Colony WPIA, Ashok Vihar, Delhi, has been missing/kidnapped from her house since: 01/02/2024. In this regard, a case FIR/ DD.No.62/24 dated 03.02.2024 has been registered at P.S. Ashok Vihar Delhi. The description of the missing girl is as under:

Age: 17 Year, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Shallow, Built: Medium, Face: Round,

Wearing: Purple color suit and black color pazami. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing girl then please inform P.S. Ashok Vihar, Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>, providing clue about the person.

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

Fax No. 011- 24368639

DP/1424/NW/2024



Sneha

Sd/- S.H.O.
Ashok Vihar, Delhi
Ph No. 8750870221

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr.P.C.)

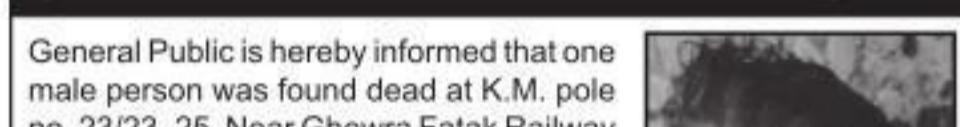
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Vivek Kumar @ Kallu, S/o Ram Lal R/o H.No.12, Gali No.1, Khasra No.1, Block-1, Pratap Nagar, Harsh Vihar, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No.1065/2023 u/s 392/394/397/411/34 IPC, P.S. Wazirabad, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Vivek Kumar @ Kallu cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Vivek Kumar @ Kallu has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Vivek Kumar @ Kallu of FIR No.1065/2023 u/s 392/394/397/411/34 IPC, P.S. Wazirabad, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 01.04.2024.

By Order,

Sh. Chatinder Singh
Metropolitan Magistrate (Central)-07, Room No.32, Ground Floor, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

DP/1858/N/2024



Sneha

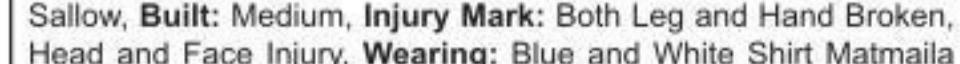
SHO Sarai Rohilla Railway Station, Delhi

General Public is hereby informed that one male person was found dead at K.M. pole no. 23/23-25, Near Ghewara Fatak Railway Station. In this regard a case DD No. 49A dated 16.02.2024 has been registered at P.S. Sarai Rohilla Railway Station, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for identification at Subzi Mandi Mortuary, Delhi for 72 hrs. The description of the dead body is given as under Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 55-60 years, Height: 5'4", Face: Round, Complexion: Sallow, Built: Medium, Injury Mark: Both Leg and Hand Broken, Head and Face Injury, Wearing: Blue and White Shirt Matmaila Colour Sweater and Blue Colour Lower. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.

SHO Sarai Rohilla Railway Station, Delhi

Ph.: 011-28711697, 8750871308

DP/1985/Rly/2024



UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

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DP/1985/Rly/2024



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India crack Bazball code, Rajkot pitch could be template

SRIRAM VEERA

RAJKOT, FEBRUARY 19

THE BATTLE between England's Bazball and India's Jamball, as R Ashwin titled a video on his YouTube channel, reached a pivotal point at the end of the third Test. With India leading 2-1 after the record-breaking 434-run win, coach Rahul Dravid and captain Rohit Sharma seemed to have arrived with a blueprint to crack the Bazball code and its 22 yards in length. As Rajkot proved, a paata, a track that does its thing on the final two days, is the perfect antidote for England's aggressive Bazball style of play.

Those in the know say that the Indian team have done away with the turners not due to some ethical concerns, but a deeply-thought-out punt on how it will play out against this England team. Though Rohit Sharma would deny any involvement with the pitches at the end of the third Test: "We come two days to the venue before a game, and we play what the curator prepares." He said it with such a wondrous straight face that it's clear why his acting talent in advertisements have considerably improved in re-

cent times.

Ashwin, however, had explained the rationale. "It is supposed to be that way, to cash in if there is a fourth-innings possibility and the wicket deteriorates. The way they are playing is high-risk cricket and you would expect the rub of the green to go your way, like how it did in Vizag." And in Rajkot.

The kind of pitches India have served up nullifies England's 140 plus kph pacer Mark Wood, it reduces the effectiveness of inexperienced England spinners Tom Hartley and the teenager Rehan Ahmed, and leaves James Anderson with too much to do. The ball spun a lot earlier in the first Test in Hyderabad, started later in the second Test in Vizag, and very late in the third Test in Rajkot. It's not Yashasvi Jaiswal or Sarfaraz Khan's second-innings knocks that tell the story but the utter comfort with which the nightwatchman Kuldeep Yadav batted on the fourth morning.

Teasing Bazball ego

It also teases the ego inherent in the Bazball cult that England's batsmen belong to. "We played four and a half sessions; [if] they want to get it done in two, so be it," Ashwin would say. The tracks allow



Senior batsmen Joe Root (L) and Ben Stokes have messed up Bazball execution. Reuters

England's batsmen to be effective with their flamboyant approach - opener Ben Duckett's monstrous slog-sweeps to the cow corner is far tougher to visualise coming off without a threat of a top-edge on a turner where the ball jumps and breaks. It has emboldened

England's batsmen so much that they have crossed the Lakshman Rekha of sensible-aggression and self-destruction.

It's remarkable that England have managed to do so well despite their inexperienced spin attack and even Mark Wood nul-

lified on these tracks. Without their frontline spinner Jack Leach and without Stokes's bowling abilities, they had no business, really, to be in a position to attempt a 2-1 series lead, if not for a manic batting approach on day 3 in Rajkot.

Root, Stokes the culprits

Interestingly, it's the senior batsmen in England who are messing up the Bazball execution. Joe Root and Ben Stokes, and occasionally Ollie Pope. Not the Ducketts and Crawleys. Both Duckett and Crawley have spoken about how they play the shots that they have trained a lot for and after weighing the risk percentage. And so, it's the reverse sweeps and slog-sweeps they play.

Not a reverse lap-scoop, like Root did, on a pitch where the ball had begun to keep a touch low and didn't have much pace; two elements crucial for that shot. Stokes's slog sweep was fine in theory but with Jadeja cleverly altering the line to further outside off and with a wide long-on in place, he would need far more malleable wrists and a lot of luck to drag it even wider of that fielder.

With Jonny Bairstow's poor form continuing, will England turn to some other bats-

man like Dan Lawrence, who has also been practicing his off spin with an odd action a lot in the nets? It's also time to rest Wood and bring in Ollie Robinson, who showed a great understanding and skill on how to bowl on flat tracks in the series in Pakistan that England won.

The huge run margin win in Rajkot doesn't quite tell the story not just of the series but even of the game itself. If Root had shown greater match awareness as he should have as a former captain, and Stokes had shown better shot selection, England could have incredibly found themselves in a far better position. It was the same pair that messed up the Vizag chase as well. Root rushing down the pitch for the oldest slog in this business as if ordered by someone with a gun on his head and Stokes strolling in the garden to get himself run out. If these two can sort out their batting headspace, and either Lawrence clicks or Bairstow finds his way out of the mess, England can still push India.

Finally, the big question: How will the Ranchi pitch play? Will it be a further fine-tuning of the Rajkot version or will India try to spring a surprise and throw a rank-turner in case they want to rest Jasprit Bumrah?

RANJI ROUND-UP**Mumbai, Baroda to meet in quarters**

THE LEAGUE stage of the Ranji Trophy came to an end on Monday, with four of the eight quarter-finalists confirming their berths on the final day.

Group A

When the last round began, four teams - Saurashtra, Vidarbha, Haryana and Services - were in with a chance. While Saurashtra wrapped up an innings win over Manipur, they were made to wait by Services till the very end on Monday. Having managed a first innings lead of 207, Services needed last four Maharashtra wickets to pip Saurashtra to the last eight on bonus point. However, a dodged effort from Maharashtra batsmen denied them a win as they finished third. In the other game at Nagpur, Vidarbha posted a thumping 115 run to make it as table toppers. Chasing 296 for a place in the quarter-final, Haryana were never in the game as they folded for 180 after an all-round effort from Vidarbha bowlers.

BRIEF SCORES: At Delhi: Maharashtra 225 & 157/6 (Kulkarni 58, Tambe 44) drew with Services 432.

At Nagpur: Vidarbha 423 & 205 (Sarwate 42; Sindhu 4/56) bt Haryana 333 & 180 (Kamboj 46; Wakhare 3/30).

Group B

This was the only group which had identified its quarterfinalists even before the final round began. With the top two decided, there was not much at stake. Mumbai, with five wins, finished with 37 points - the most by any team in this Ranji season. Andhra, who conceded a big first-innings lead to Kerala, managed to hang in for a draw on the final day.

BRIEF SCORES: In Vizianagaram: Andhra 272 & 189/9 (Hebbal 72; Thampi 3/36, Basil 3/43) drew with Kerala 514/7 declared.

Group C

It was one of the most closely-fought groups, with four teams with a realistic chance of making the quarter-finals. On Monday, Tamil Nadu posted a nine-wicket win over Punjab which took them to 28 points and sealed their berth. Interestingly, despite having a genuine chance of finishing as toppers, Karnataka didn't push for a win over Chandigarh and shook hands when the mandatory final hour began. At that stage, Karnataka needed five wickets, but were content with a draw.

BRIEF SCORES: At Salem: Tamil Nadu 435 & 71/1 bt Punjab 274 & (F/O) 231 (Wadhera 109; Kishore 4/80, Ajith 3/52, Paul 3/23).

At Hubballi: Chandigarh 267 & 236/5 (Arslan 63, Sidhu 56; Koushik 2/26) drew with Karnataka 563/5 declared.

Group D

Like in Group B, even before the final round began, Madhya Pradesh and Baroda were assured of their spots in the quarter-finals. But both teams head to the knockouts in contrasting styles, with Madhya Pradesh posting a resounding 256-win against Jammu & Kashmir, and Baroda managing a draw with Uttarakhand.

BRIEF SCORES: In Dehradun: Uttarakhand 382 & 221/6d drew with Baroda 180 & 218/4 (Sharma 75 not out, Solanki 51).

At Indore: Madhya Pradesh 200 & 422 (Gawli 147, Chouhan 61; Mushtaq 5/111, Lotra 4/97) bt Jammu & Kashmir 242 & 124 (Khejriwala 3/27, Kartikeya 3/31).

Quarterfinal lineup (Feb 23-27): Vidarbha vs Karnataka, Nagpur MP vs AP, Indore Mumbai vs Baroda, Mumbai TN vs Saurashtra, Coimbatore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

KANE WILLIAMSON**b ASHWIN 75, 1st INNINGS, KANPUR, 2016**

Kane Williamson came with a clear plan to nullify Ashwin. He would shuffle across. The plan would serve multiple purposes, A) It could force Ashwin's line wider off the off-stump. B) He could get outside the line and sweep, which he performed expertly. C) He

could milk him for singles down the ground. The plan worked perfectly on the second day, by the end of which Williamson had motored along to a half-century.

But the third day was different. Ashwin would begin with an in-out field and bowl standard off-breaks, flighted, dropping and turning, inviting him to cover-drive, and keeping the region vacant. To establish his superiority, he cover-drove him for a couple. He began the tease, frequently varying length, angle, and pace. Williamson still dealt comfortably with all the questions Ashwin posed, but the constant length-change had begun to disturb him.

Then Ashwin flung a full, over-spun delivery on fourth stump, delivered a widish angle from the crease, that bounced more than Williamson had adjudged. He paddle-swept the ball for a couple, but the extra bounce meant he could not commit to the front foot.

The next ball landed fractionally short of the good length area. Williamson pressed back. The line was so wide outside the off-stump that his instinct was to slap it through covers. He dragged his feet further wide. Even if the ball spun back, he could leave it; even if it hit him the impact would be outside the off-stump. He accounted for the turn, but not this turn. The ball, imparted with massive revolutions, spun back like a drunk truck, past his bat after landing on a developing rough, which accounted for the low bounce.

KUMAR SANGAKKARA

c VIJAY b ASHWIN 18; 2nd INNINGS, P SARA OVAL, 2015

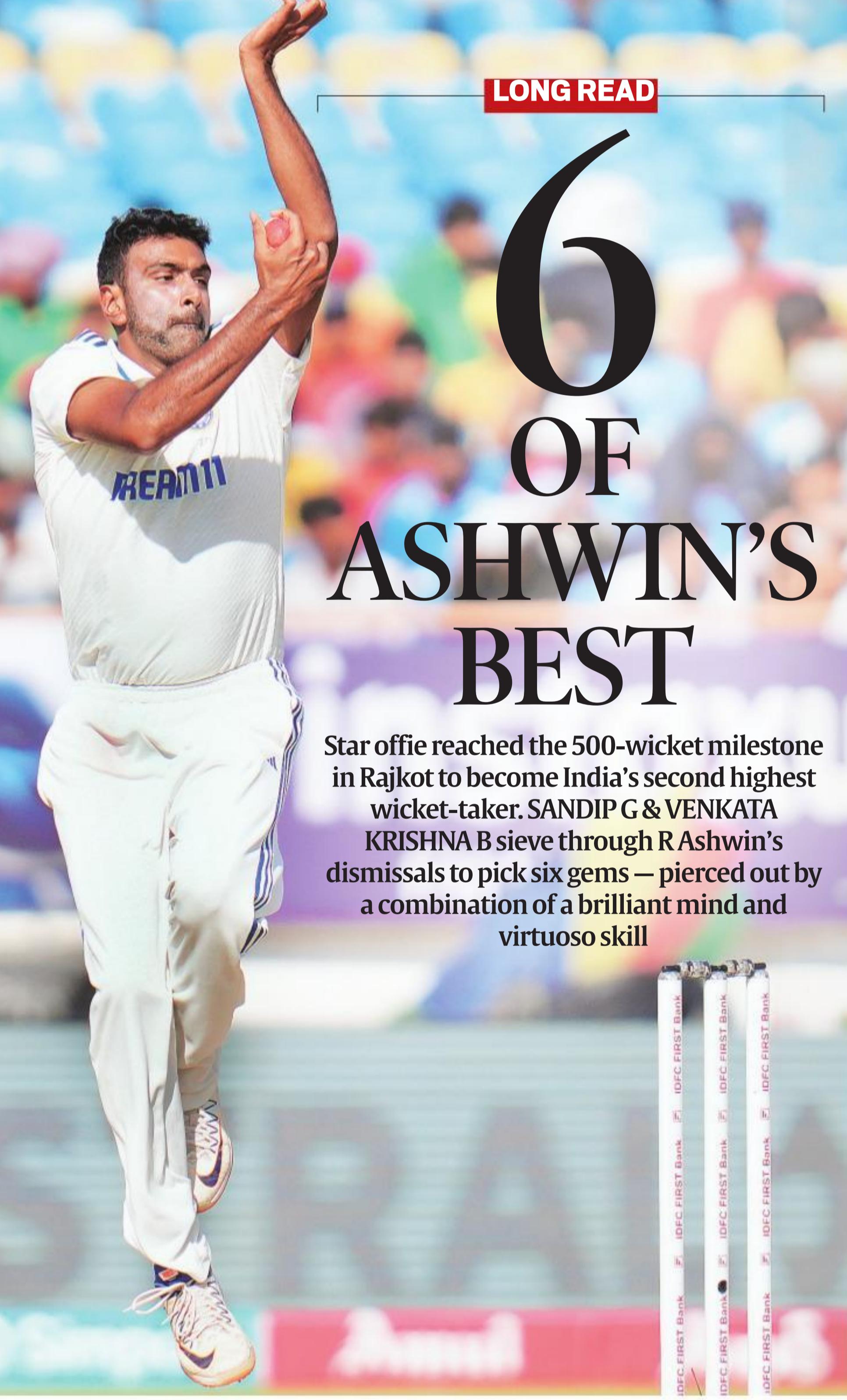
Kumar Sangakkara was no muck-as-any left-hander against off-spinners. He often destroyed them. That is until he encountered Ashwin in his farewell series, where he consumed him four times in as many innings.

STEVE SMITH

c RAHANE b ASHWIN 1; 1st INNINGS,ADELAIDE, 2020

He read lengths so early that he always had time to play or not play his strokes. So when he strode out to the middle for his farewell innings, he batted with as much clarity as he always had in his life, despite Ashwin's recent success. Immediately, he charged at him and swished him for a couple through the leg-side. Ashwin slowed the next ball that he defended on the front foot.

The next ball he faced off Ashwin, 15 Ishant Sharma balls later, was to be the Sri Lankan talisman's last in cricket. Immediately he repositioned Murali Vijay from mid-on to gully. He also had a slip, a silly point and cover. Often, Ashwin keeps the cover region vacant, but here he has kept one, inverted his 6-3 leg-side prediction, opening up spaces in the leg-side, Sangakkara's preferred zone against offies. Ashwin then went wide of the crease and reduced the ball-speed for maximum hang-time. Sangakkara stretched his front foot. But the angle and drift opened up his front shoulder; as a chain reaction the bat descended on an angle, the face semi-close. The drift and angle has already fooled him, so would dip and turn. The ball dropped a few



centimetres from where he had anticipated, stranding him afar the ball's pitch. He ended up pushing feebly at the ball, outside-edging it to Vijay.

DAVID WARNER

b ASHWIN 33; 1st INNINGS, BENGALURU 2017

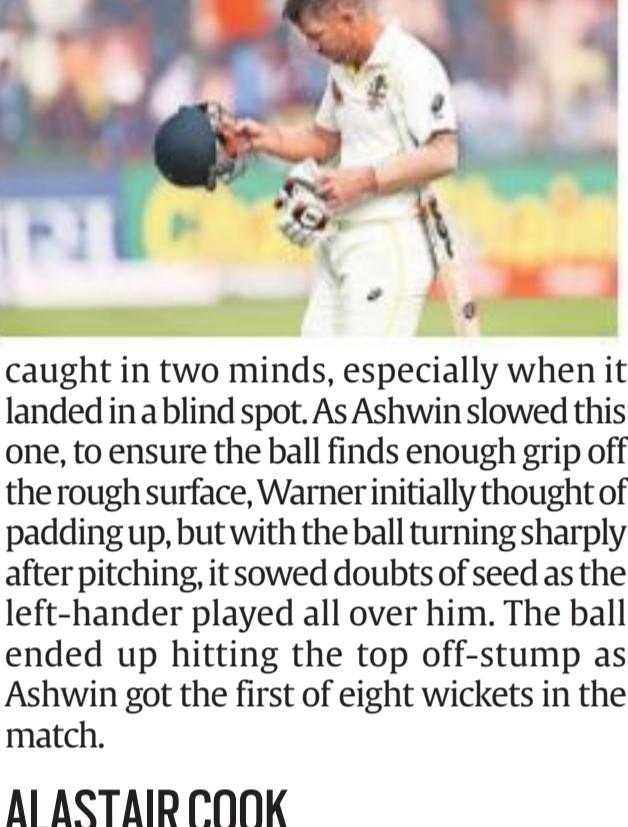
So it began. Smith had scraped to one off 26 balls, before Virat Kohli introduced Ashwin, the pink ball still agleam. The first ball was tossed up outside the off-stump, which was tossed down. The second was similarly tossed up, but landed on the off-stump. The next ball, Smith would have assumed would skid onto his stumps. That's how a lot of spinners go about, distracted by his shuffle, to ping his pads. But Ashwin second-guesses the second-guesses of the batsmen. The next ball landed fractionally short of

a spinner's good length. The length froze Smith's feet. Crease-tied, he used his hands to wriggle him out of trouble. But Ashwin had over-spun this; the consequent extra bounce defeated him. The commentators wondered whether it was a natural variation. It was not. He just cut his thumb across the seam, so that the ball did not spin and skid straight on.

JONNY BAIRSTOW

b ASHWIN 51, 2nd INNINGS, MUMBAI, 2016

This was a series where Ashwin was at the peak of his prowess. Having already won



caught in two minds, especially when it landed in a blind spot. As Ashwin slowed this one, to ensure the ball finds enough grip off the rough surface, Warner initially thought of padding up, but with the ball turning sharply after pitching, it sowed doubts of seed as the left-hander played all over him. The ball ended up hitting the top off-stump as Ashwin got the first of eight wickets in the match.

ALASTAIR COOK**b ASHWIN 13, b ASHWIN 0; BIRMINGHAM, 2018**

On an overcast Day 1 morning, after seamers failed to give a break-through, Virat Kohli turned to Ashwin as early as the sev-

enth over. It raised eye-brows, but it was a well thought-out plan, where India wanted Ashwin to make use of the early morning moisture on the dead grass. And the off-spinner stuck in his second over with a peach. Bowling from around the wicket, he angled this one into the line of the stumps that made Cook commit to a forward defence. And as it left Ashwin's hand and drifted into the middle-stump, Cook thought he had it covered. But the new Duke ball got the grip it needed off the surface as it spun just enough to hit the top of off-stump. This was a classical off-spinners dismissal. It didn't end here for Cook. In the second innings, Ashwin would test him with a similar delivery and the opener, this time, probably with the first-innings dismissal playing in his mind, would half press forward. In the next split second, he would hear the new ball take the bail with it. It was a carbon copy of his first instant dismissal.

JONNY BAIRSTOW**b ASHWIN 51, 2nd INNINGS, MUMBAI, 2016**

This was a series where Ashwin was at the peak of his prowess. Having already won



duels over each of the English batsmen on traditional Indian flat decks that saw wear and tear on Day 4 and 5, Ashwin's 12-wicket haul in the match was one of his best bowling performances. And the pick of the lot was the one that had Bairstow totally outfoxed. Early on Day 5, having tested Bairstow only with his off-breaks (side spin and conventional), Ashwin delivered a carom a ball or what he calls sudoku ball - a delivery he picked from the streets of Chennai while playing tennis ball cricket.

As Bairstow prepared to work him out on the leg-side, it pitched on the middle-stump and went the other way, hitting him flush in front of the stumps. As the ball made contact with his right-pad, Bairstow was all squared-up at the crease, giving a puzzled look to what had unfolded.

From deceiving the batsman with a variation he seldom used in the innings to the well-disguised execution, there was everything magical about this Ashwin's de-

Embracing adaptability

India head coach Fulton is getting players to take up different roles

MIHIRVASAVDA
ROURKELA, FEBRUARY 19

IN HIS typical self-effacing manner, Manpreet Singh once said, in a lighter vein, that he is called aloof by his teammates. One of the fittest players in the world, Manpreet was referred to as a humble potato for a simple reason: the utility factor. He could be used anywhere on the field, in any shape the team plays.

By extending that logic, India coach Craig Fulton is now trying to assemble a team of 10 aloos and a goalkeeper.

A centre-half, Manpreet, has played as a defender and an attacking midfielder. A forward, Gurjant Singh, has dropped back and played on the right of the midfield. Defenders have pushed up, midfielders switch positions among themselves and someone like Hardik Singh has covered literally every part of the field. On Monday, Manpreet started the FIH Pro League match against Spain at his bread-and-butter position in the centre of the midfield, unlike some of the previous games where he was the defender. With a little more than 30 seconds played, Manpreet lobbed the ball from the centre to the right, near the circle.

Ready to receive the aerial was Jarnanpreet Singh, the right-back. Soon after push-back, Jarnanpreet – an attack-minded defender – marched forward and Hardik Singh, the all-rounder, immediately covered his space.

One touch to control the ball, followed a powerful hit and India found an unlikely scorer on a night they drew 2-2 before getting a bonus point from a shoot-out win.

It was a scratchy, error-ridden performance by India, but the result remains of academic interest in a competition where all Paris-bound teams are fine-tuning their preparations. Fulton's experiments' are in sync with that bigger picture.

Fulton isn't chasing total hockey. His motives are driven by the need to have a Plan B, just in case the team is faced with an untoward situation – a card leading to suspension or an injury – during the Olympics. "We need to build some depth in a few areas. Because if you have just one and then you have two injuries at the wrong time, then who's ready to play?" Fulton says.

Fulton talks about the preparation phase in 'blocks'. This Pro League 'block' is to identify his team for the Paris Olympics, which begin on July 26. Also crucially, it's to get the players



Manpreet Singh, no stranger to multiple roles, has been playing in defence as well as midfield in the Pro League. *Hockey India*

to master multiple positions.

"It's different to play those roles. We are using this block for that and hopefully will set up the Olympic squad after this and have enough depth everywhere," Fulton adds. Playing in different positions might not be a new concept – Manpreet, over the years, has shouldered many responsibilities – but there have been instances in Indian hockey in the past where a forward, during the London Olympics, refused to play as a midfielder during a match, saying he wasn't comfortable.

While that incident has no bearing on what's happening now, Fulton wants to ensure if it comes to any makeshift arrangements during a match, his players will be prepared. And so, someone like a Gurjant – who was rested on Monday evening – has played as a right midfielder in some matches. "Coach is trying to get some of us comfortable in playing two positions at least," says Gurjant, the scorer of two of the most famous goals for India, the winning goal of the 2016 Junior World Cup and one against Germany in the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal match. It can be argued if it's too close to the Olympics to introduce such concepts, especially when – on the evidence of the last three matches against Spain, Ireland and

Australia – India need a lot of work in many other areas.

Long term goals

But the players seem to have bought into Fulton's ideas and the outcomes in the Pro League, win or lose, do not seem to impact their long-term targets.

"We have to change our positions according to situations," Hardik says. "A centre striker might have to play as a DMF (defensive midfielder). A DMF moves to right-half; right-half will move a little inside... It's all a part of the strategy." For midfielders and attackers – virtually interchangeable positions – it might not be a huge ask. "But if you are playing as a DMF and then as an attacker, it might get tough to adjust," Gurjant says.

That's not been a problem for Manpreet, who is impeccable as a centre mid, seamlessly transitioning into central defender and gallops to join the attack. He's done that since the time he transitioned from junior to senior team, and now as the most-capped player in the current squad. Fitting in without any hassle.

"Kahin bhi fit ho jaenge, alojaise (we'll fit anywhere like a potato)," he'd once joked. If Fulton has his way, he'll not be the only one.

Darn good feeling, there was no pressure on me in deciders: Kharb

SHIVANI NAIK
FEBRUARY 19

IN HER mind, Anmol Kharb, was merely happy to land an opportunity to play against quality international opposition after Badminton Association of India took the inspired call to pick senior national champions for the Asian Team Championships. But the 17-year-old has returned with a historic gold medal for India who won 3-2 pipping Thailand, and the start of an enduring love for chocolate bubble tea. Like a song of glee ending the despondent Indian women's singles badminton scene, the miracle kid from Malaysia, speaks about her magical last five days.

Excerpts:

How does it feel to become India's fifth rubber specialist and win gold?

It's a damn good feeling. For starters, I played the deciders for India. And helped make the entire medal journey easier for the team. I was happy winning the semifinals, and for the support I got from everyone.

With what mindset did you approach the fifth decisive matches against China, Japan and Thailand in the final?

It was only about giving my best and there was no pressure on me. I was playing an international level tournament abroad for the first time, but everyone told me a Win or Loss doesn't matter.

What advice did you get from PV Sindhu and coach P Gopichand?

Sindhu di kept telling me 'if one point goes, stop thinking about it, and just focus on the next one. Never mind bolke, aage badho'. Gopichand sir also said if point goes, no problem. I was a little worried when rallies started getting longer. I got tired, I'm also a human being only. All he said was, don't show the opponent you are tired. Stand straight and face the next point, looking strong. And the next point will be yours. That's exactly what happened.

Why did you ditch speed skating in favour of badminton?

In skating, I would often get pushed from behind by other competitors. My feet were always grazed and bruised, so I got fed up. Badminton was indoors and safe.



Anmol, 17, returned with a historic gold medal from Malaysia. *Badminton Asia*

What do you like best about badminton? Do you have any role models?

I like aggressive badminton. Mostly I like my own game. I get compared to Saina di often and people say our game styles are similar. Outside of India, I like Tai Tzu Ying's game. Because it's so deceptive. But I don't get enough time to watch and practice her shots to include in my game.

What do you remember from the Japan semis match where the tie was 2-2?

My opponent (Natsuki Nidaira) was very senior and experienced and a World No 29. There was no pressure on me as such, but as I kept getting better, I was excited about the possibility of beating her. Slowly, slowly, I started compiling points and my confidence grew as she started to make mistakes. It was great fun. Actually, after I made a few errors, Gopichand Sir told me koi dikkat nahi (no worries), she will tire more, so just play safe-safe. In a mad rush to get points, she started making mistakes. I realized she's in a hurry, and she'll get frustrated and make mistakes on her own. So never mind kehike, I continued playing. I was in no hurry and had nowhere else to be.

In the final at match point you smiled. What was going on in your mind?

At 20-9 match point, all the girls from the team cheering for me while sitting had jumped up and they just wanted me to get that last point and were ready to rush and start celebrating on the court. Seeing them

so happy, I couldn't focus on my serving. I was happy for them, they had supported me so much. So I smiled. I knew I won't lose from that point.

How's there such consistency and accuracy in your game playing under pressure? Your smashes don't sail out.

I didn't use too many smashes here. At this level, all girls have great defence. I knew if they sent my smashes back I would struggle to react and counter. So plan was to stick to drops, tosses, and rush the net to the frontcourt whenever possible. The blow dryer was on (A/C that causes drift), so the aim was to play to the centre line.

You work on physical fitness at a boxing center in Faridabad. How does it help?

Physicality matters the most in my sport. Like against China, the match went on for 1 hour 18 minutes. So even if I might train less on the court one day, I never skip my physical. Boxing is much harder than badminton, so I train with them to become stronger. Some of their speed work and strength sessions are tough. We do short sprints, long sprints, gym and agility. On hard days, the pain gets unbearable. But I like getting stronger.

What do you like besides badminton?

I love food and trying out cuisines from different countries. I like roaming around and travelling with friends and family and exploring places around. But this time in Malaysia, I couldn't try anything. The match draws were tough, China, Japan, and Thailand. Every day I decided if we won, the next day I would try out everything at the breakfast buffet. But I ended up eating very little because I was excited to play matches. So it was the staple - yogurt, eggs for protein and fruits. But what I loved about Malaysia is the bubble tea. It was mostly just milk tea with brown pearls. But then one day suddenly there was chocolate-flavoured bubble tea! That was amazing. I eat everything in Indian food. That's for strength.

Do you think it will get challenging from here on?

I have to play more international tournaments, against more experienced players. So I need to start my hard training again. And be prepared.

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