



सत्यमेव जयते

A New Epoch of India's Infrastructural Future



— AAMCHI MUMBAI GETS GIFT OF —

INDIA'S LONGEST BRIDGE

Inauguration of

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE SEWRI-NHAVA SHEVA ATAL SETU

by

NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister

Friday, 12th January 2024

at

3:30 PM
Sewri, South Mumbai



ATAL SETU: An Engineering Marvel Furthering 'Ease of Mobility' of Citizens

21.8 km long 6-lane Atal Setu is longest bridge as also longest sea bridge of India

Connecting Millions from Sewri, South Mumbai to Nhava Sheva, Navi Mumbai

Movement of over 70 thousand vehicles everyday

Reduction in travel time from 1.5 hours to just 20 minutes

Developed as Mumbai Trans-harbour link, it will ensure seamless connectivity between Mumbai Port & Jawaharlal Nehru Port

Environmentally Friendly Design strengthening the Commitment to Sustainability

Built at a cost of about ₹ 17,800 crore



Devendra Fadnavis
Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Eknath Shinde
Chief Minister, Maharashtra

Ajit Pawar
Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra



Eknath Shinde
Chief Minister, Maharashtra



Watch the event
live on DD News

THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Sheikh Hasina takes oath in Dhaka on Thursday. Reuters

BANGLADESH

Hasina swears in as PM for 4th straight term

Dhaka: Sheikh Hasina was on Thursday sworn in as the prime minister of Bangladesh for the fifth term, days after her Awami League won an overwhelming majority in the general elections boycotted by the main opposition BNP and its allies. President Mohammad Shahabuddin administered the oath of office to 76-year-old Hasina at a ceremony joined by politicians, foreign diplomats, civil society figures and senior civil and military officials at presidential palace here. She will serve as the 12th prime minister; her 4th straight term and 5th overall term. PTI

PAKISTAN

Poll body moves SC against HC's PTI symbol ruling

Islamabad: Pakistan's top poll body on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict that annulled its decision to declare as "unconstitutional" the organisational polls in the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party and revoked cricket 'bat' electoral symbol. On the other hand, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party filed a contempt of court petition against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) over its failure to comply with the order issued on the party's petition. PTI

No dialogue with TTP, says Pak Foreign office

Islamabad: Pakistan on Thursday said that it was not interested in a dialogue with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) after a leading cleric visited Kabul and talked of dialogue following his meeting with the Afghan Taliban leadership. Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in her weekly press briefing said that Pakistan's stance was clear because the TTP had accepted responsibility for numerous terrorist attacks in the country. "Our demand from the Afghan government is that they take action against the terrorists," she said. PTI

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

PM declares emergency after violent protests

Sydney: Papua New Guinea's prime minister declared a state of emergency on Thursday, suspending government and police officials after 16 people were killed in rioting in the Pacific island nation. A police and public sector protest on Wednesday over a pay cut that officials blamed on an administrative glitch descended into lawlessness. TV footage showed thousands of people in the streets of the capital Port Moresby, many of them carrying what appeared to be looted merchandise as black smoke billowed over the city. REUTERS

CASE MOTIVATED BY SOUTH AFRICA'S APARTHEID HISTORY: RAMAPHOSA

ICJ begins hearing SA's genocide case against Israel as Gazans return to ruins

Israel says South Africa speaks for Hamas, which Pretoria says is untrue

REUTERS
GAZA, THE HAGUE, JANUARY 11

SOUTH AFRICA accused Israel on Thursday of carrying out genocide in Gaza and demanded that the UN's top court order an emergency suspension of Israel's devastating military campaign in the Palestinian enclave.

Meanwhile, first residents returned to northern areas where Israeli forces have begun withdrawing, leaving behind scenes of total devastation.

On the first of two days of hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), South Africa said Israel's offensive, which has demolished much of the coastal enclave and killed 23,469 people according to Gaza health authorities, aimed to bring about "destruction of the population" of Gaza.

"The intent to destroy Gaza has been nurtured at the highest level of state," Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, advocate of the High Court of South Africa, said. He said Israel's political and military leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, were among "the genocidal inciters".

Israel rejected the accusations of genocide as false and baseless

EXPLAINED

E What after the 2-day hearing?

THE ICJ is the highest judicial body of the United Nations but it does not have a police force to implement its rulings. Once the panel of 17 judges decide on the initial measures, the process of hearing the full case begins. Any nation that believes another member has failed to comply with an ICJ order, can report to the UN Security Council. Other signatories of the genocide convention could also apply to make submissions.

and said South Africa was speaking on behalf of Hamas - which Pretoria said was untrue. PM Netanyahu on Thursday condemned South Africa's genocide case against Israel in Gaza as "hypocrisy and lies".

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said they were driven to bring the case by the "ongoing slaughter" of Gazans and due to their own apartheid history.



The South African and Israeli delegations at the International Court of Justice on Thursday.



Reuters

Russian missiles hit Kharkiv as Ukraine raises defence focus

REUTERS
KYIV, JANUARY 11

TWO RUSSIAN missiles struck a hotel late on Wednesday in the centre of Ukraine's second largest city, Kharkiv, injuring 11 people, one person seriously, the regional governor said.

The repeated missile barrages on Ukraine come as it shifts its military operations against Russia to a more defensive footing. The defences aim to help Ukraine weather assaults while regenerating its forces as Moscow takes the battlefield initiative, military analysts said.

Photos showed windows blown out, balconies destroyed with large piles of rubble in the street below. Emergency teams made their way through gaping holes to sift through rubble.

Kharkiv Governor Oleh Synehubov, on Telegram, said the strike at about 10.30 p.m. local time involved S-300 missiles.

"Nine of those injured have been taken to medical facilities," Synehubov wrote on Telegram app. "One of them, a 35-year-old man, is in serious condition."

Visiting Turkish journalists were among the injured, he wrote. The Russian Defence Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

REUTERS



Volodymyr Zelensky was on a tour of the Baltic countries.

U.N. SEEKS \$3.1BN AID TO UKRAINE IN 2024
Geneva: United Nations agencies will next week ask for \$3.1 billion to finance aid to Ukraine this year, a senior humanitarian official told the UN Security Council on Wednesday. "As the war in Ukraine continues unabated, driving high levels of humanitarian need, financial support must be sustained," the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told the Council.

Ceasefire will benefit Russia: Zelensky

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Thursday that a ceasefire in the Russian-Ukrainian war would not lead to political dialogue, and would only benefit Russia to boost its supply of munitions. He spoke during a visit to Estonia as part of a wider tour of the Baltic region.

ASEAN envoy meets Myanmar junta chief in bid to bring peace



Myanmar junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

The junta has refused to initiate dialogue with its opponents in a shadow National Unity Government (NUG) and a pro-democracy resistance movement, a key component of the agreement, calling them "terrorists".

Communist Laos has made no mention of the envoy's trip in its state-run media, or issued any statement on the meeting as ASEAN chair. Its foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Violence has intensified in recent months as ethnic minority armies, mainly in northern Myanmar, step up efforts to drive the junta from their territories, capturing outposts and even a major commercial town on the border with China.

Trump defies judge, gives speech on last day of New York civil fraud trial

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NEW YORK, JANUARY 11

BARRIED FROM giving a formal closing argument, Donald Trump seized an opportunity to speak in court at the conclusion of his New York civil trial Thursday, unleashing a barrage of attacks during a six-minute diatribe before being cut off by the judge.

"We have a situation where I am an innocent man," the former president protested. "I'm being persecuted by someone running for office and I think you have to go outside the bounds."

After a few minutes, Judge



Former US president Donald Trump

Arthur Engoron — who had denied Trump permission earlier to give a closing statement at the trial — cut him off and recessed.

Trump, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination, has repeatedly disparaged Engoron, accusing him in a social media post Wednesday of working with the New York attorney general "to screw me."

"This is a fraud on me. What's

happened here, Sir, is a fraud on me," Trump said. He later accused the judge of not listening to him. "I know this is boring to you."

"Control your client," Engoron warned Kise.

Engoron then told Trump he had a minute left, and then adjourned for lunch.

The exchange took place hours after authorities responded to a bomb threat at the judge's house. Police checked out the threat at Engoron's Long Island home, which came a day after he denied the former president's extraordinary request to deliver his own courtroom close, officials said. The proceedings were not delayed.



CONGO RIVER IN SPATE, 300 DEAD

People using makeshift boats in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Thursday. The Congo River has risen to its highest level in more than 60 years, causing floods across the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo Republic, killing more than 300 people. AP

SHOW PORTRAYS HOW HUNDREDS WHO RAN POST OFFICE BRANCHES WERE ACCUSED OF THEFT DUE TO FAULTY IT SYSTEM

How a TV show brought UK's devastating post office scandal to light

STEPHEN CASTLE
LONDON, JANUARY 11

MORE THAN 700 people convicted of a crime they didn't commit. At least four suicides. A woman sent to jail while pregnant. Bankruptcies. Marriages broken, lives ruined.

The show dramatizes the fate of hundreds of people who ran branches of the Post Office across Britain, and who were wrongly accused of theft after a faulty IT system called Horizon created false shortfalls in their accounting.

Between 1999 and 2015, they were pursued relentlessly in the courts by the Post Office for financial losses that never occurred. Some were jailed, most were driven into financial hardship, many suffered mental health issues.

Until last week. A gripping ITV drama series, *Mr. Bates vs. the Post*



A still from *Mr. Bates vs. the Post Office*. PM Sunak has promised a new law to exonerate and compensate all known victims. NYT

sues and some took their lives.

Under pressure, PM Rishi Sunak on Wednesday promised a new law to exonerate and compensate all known victims, a sweeping intervention that aims to finally bring justice after years of glacial progress.

All this has left an intriguing question: how has a TV show achieved in one week more than investigative journalists and politicians in more than a decade?

"However brilliant the journalism is, it may appeal to your intellect, to your head," said Gwyneth Hughes, the writer of "Mr. Bates vs. the Post Office." "Whereas drama is designed to appeal to your heart — that's what

it has been doing for years."

Matias Frey, a media professor at City, University of London, argued that the drama shows the continuing power of terrestrial TV to change public perceptions and generate "one of those old fashioned water cooler moments" that fuels broader public debate.

An official inquiry into the scandal was established in 2020, and more than £148 million, or more than \$188 million, has already been distributed to victims from compensation programs. In 2019, 555 branch managers successfully challenged the Post Office in the High Court.

Since ITV's drama aired,

more victims have come forward, but dozens of other people died before they could receive compensation.

The heroic Mr. Bates, played by Toby Jones, is portrayed as an even tempered and indefatigable character who — like other victims — was told by the Post Office that he was the only person to report problems with Horizon. He found others, formed a group, and pursued their cases with meager resources, battling a succession of setbacks to achieve an extraordinary victory in the courts.

"Everyone likes an underdog, and we had underdogs in spades," said Hughes, the writer. NYT



Skill Development, Entrepreneurship
and Livelihood (SDEL) Department



Shri D. K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

**Direct Benefit Transfer
on the occasion of
National Youth Day and Swami
Vivekananda's Birth Anniversary**

Yuva Nidhi

12th January
2024

Freedom Park,
Shivamogga Town

- "Yuvanidhi" scheme provides financial assistance to educated, unemployed youth creating a sense of self-esteem and making them self reliant
- Unemployment allowance is given for a period of 2 years or until getting employment, whichever is earlier

Rs. 3000 for Graduates and
Rs. 1500 for Diploma holders



Dr. Sharana Prakash Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood giving information about the Yuvanidhi Scheme

Shri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

Candidates should be Domicile of Karnataka who have passed Degree / Diploma in the year 2023 and without Govt. / Private jobs for a period of six months

Those who are not self-employed and not pursuing higher education

Documents required for Registration: S.S.L.C., PUC, Degree/Diploma Certificates

For Registration visit : <http://sevasindhugs.karnataka.gov.in>

Applications can be submitted at Karnataka-One, Bengaluru-One, Grama-One and Bapuji Seva Kendras, free of cost

Registered candidates need to compulsorily declare and update their unemployment status every month in Sevasindhu portal. Legal action will be taken against candidates who give false declaration.

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UNITS
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10kg
Free food grains
(per person / per month)
• Rs.170 per head in
lieu of 5kg food grains



₹2000
per month to the
female head of the family



₹3000
Per month for
Graduates
₹1500
Per month for
Diploma Holders



As is enshrined in our Constitution, to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform is the fundamental duty of every citizen of the country.

Published by: Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood (SDEL) Department

E.EXPLAINED

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2024

SEA LINK & VIADUCTS

MUMBAI TRANS HARBOUR LINK is a 22 km long 6-lane (3+3-lane) bridge, with an emergency lane on each side, connecting Sewri in the island city to Chirle on the mainland.

THE SEA LINK IS 16.5 KM LONG; the viaducts on land on both sides are cumulatively 5.5 km long.

INTERCHANGES ARE LOCATED AT Sewri on the Mumbai side, and at Shivaji Nagar and Jasai on SH-54 (Uran-Panvel Road) and Chirle on NH-348 (JNPT Road) on the mainland side.

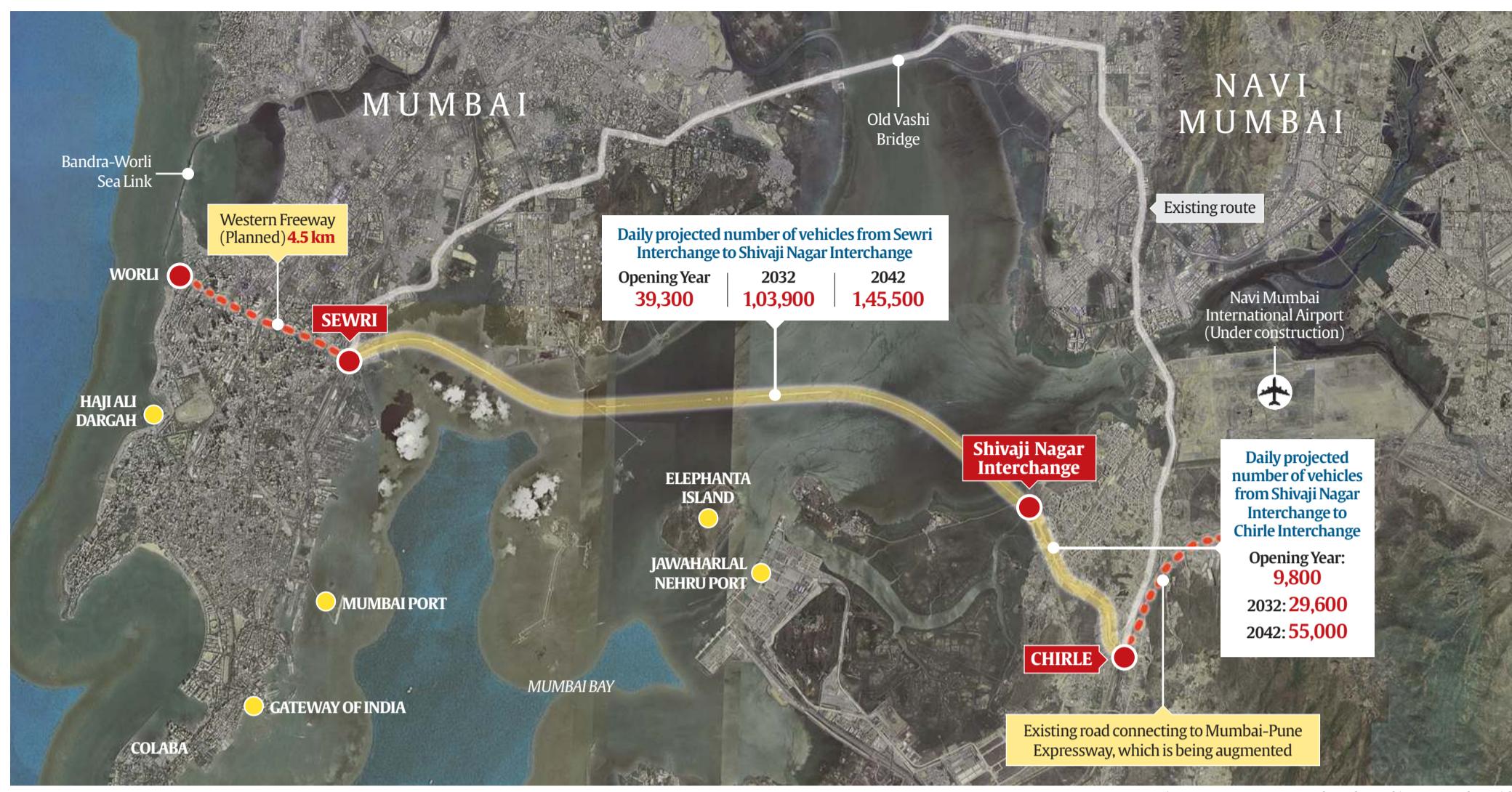
STEEL & CONCRETE

Trucks that moved the concrete for the project travelled a distance equal to that from Earth to Moon

Reinforcing bars (used in reinforced concrete) used in the project could have built 17 Eiffel Towers.

Length of prestressed steel wire in project is equal to four times the diameter of the Earth.

85,000 tonnes of orthotropic steel used in the deck, the weight of more than 185 Boeing 747 jumbo jets (without passengers or fuel)



ACROSS THE SEA IN 20 MINUTES

On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the country's longest bridge over the sea, the 22 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, officially the Atal Setu Nava Sheva Sea Link. The bridge that was first conceptualised six decades ago will cut the travel time between Sewri and Chirle to under 20 minutes

ZEESSHAN SHAIKH
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

The new sea link

THE MUMBAI Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) is a 22-km-long twin-carriageway six-lane bridge over the Thane Creek in the Arabian Sea, connecting Sewri in the island city of Mumbai to Chirle in Raigad district on the mainland.

The MTHL includes a 16.5 km sea link and viaducts on land at either end with a cumulative length of 5.5 km.

The objective of the project is to improve connectivity in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region which comprises the districts of Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad, and promote the region's economic development. The MTHL will bring Mumbai and Navi Mumbai closer by dramatically cutting travel time, and will decongest the existing route

over the Vashi bridge.

From 1963 to 2024

The idea of a bay crossing connecting Mumbai to the mainland was first floated in 1963 by the American construction consultancy firm Wilbur Smith Associates, but no follow-up action was initiated. The plan was revived in the late 90s, and the first tenders were floated in 2006.

In February 2008, Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure emerged as the preferred bidder after promising to build and recover the cost of building the (then) Rs 6,000 crore bridge in nine years and 11 months through a public private partnership (PPP) model.

Months later, however, Ambani withdrew from the project. Multiple unsuccessful bidding processes followed, and the nodal agency was changed from the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) to the Mumbai Metropolitan

NAVI MUMBAI, PROPOSED NEW AIRPORT COME CLOSER TO CITY

SHORTER: 38 km is travel distance from one end of MTHL to another now (via Vashi bridge). The 22-km MTHL will cut that distance by 16 km.

FASTER: Average travel time from Sewri to Chirle will be cut by 45 minutes – from about 61 minutes to about 16 minutes. During peak hours, you could save 60-90 minutes.

Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

The project finally got moving after MMRDA entered into an agreement with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which agreed to fund 80 per cent of the project cost, with the rest being borne by the state

NEARER: From Chirle, an existing road connects to the Mumbai-Pune Expressway almost 18 km away. Once the planned elevated connectors to the Expressway are built, travel time to Lonavala, Pune, Alibaug and Goa will be reduced.

FLY EASY: Upcoming Navi Mumbai airport is 14 km from Chirle. Will ease approach from South Mumbai.

and central governments.

The deal and tendering were finally completed in December 2017, and work commenced in early 2018. A total Rs 21,200 crore has been spent on the project, of which Rs 15,100 crore is loan from JICA.

How MTHL will help

According to a study conducted by MMRDA and JICA, the MTHL will bring down the average travel time between Sewri and Chirle from 61 minutes currently to less than 16 minutes. Close to 40,000 vehicles are expected to use the link every day in the opening year (2024).

The project is expected to facilitate greater economic integration of Navi Mumbai with Mumbai, with benefits extending to Panvel, Alibaug, Pune, and Goa.

It will very significantly improve connectivity between South Mumbai and the under-construction Navi Mumbai International Airport, the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, the Mumbai-Goa Highway, and the main hinterland in general. It will also provide improved access to Jawaharlal Nehru Port.

GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

Some questions remain

While the project has obvious benefits in terms of furthering the development and prosperity of the megapolis and its extended neighbourhood, there are doubts on whether it will be of help to regular commuters who travel between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai every day.

The Rs 250 toll for a one-way crossing of the Trans Harbour Link is deemed to be high, and the landing points of the bridge on the mainland side – Shivaji Nagar in Ulwe, and Chirle – are more than 10 km away from the main residential areas of Vashi, Nerul, Sanpada, Juinagar, and Seawoods, which will add to the commuting cost.

No public transport facilities, such as buses on a dedicated lane, have been announced on the bridge yet.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

HOW A TV SHOW EXPOSED BRITAIN'S POST OFFICE SCANDAL

HUNDREDS OF British postal workers, wrongly convicted in "one of the worst miscarriages of justice in British history", will soon have their convictions overturned after a TV docudrama triggered a public outcry.

The scandal

In 1999, the state-owned Post Office rolled out the Horizon IT system, developed by Japanese company Fujitsu, to automate sales accounting.

Soon, however, subpostmasters in charge of local post offices began finding unexplained losses in their accounts – losses they were responsible to cover. The Post Office stood behind its new IT system and pointed fingers at its employees instead.

Thus, between 2000 and 2014, more than 900 Post Office workers were wrongly accused of fraud and false accounting and had their contracts terminated. Some were convicted and imprisoned.

Long struggle for justice

In 2009, a magazine called *Computer Weekly* reported alleged flaws with Horizon. This prompted the Post Office to investigate, but in 2015, Paula Vennells, CEO of the Post Office, told a parliamentary committee there was no evidence of miscarriage of justice.

In 2016, a group of wronged postal workers took legal action against the

Post Office. The High Court in London, in 2019, would rule in favour of the workers, saying that Horizon contained a number of "bugs, errors and defects". However, to date, just 95 convictions have been overturned.

The TV show

Things came to a head after a TV docudrama, *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*, aired on ITV on January 1. It told the story of branch manager Alan Bates, who spent nearly two decades trying to expose the scandal. The British public was outraged, and demanded justice. The police, last week, opened an investigation into the prosecutions carried out by the Post Office.

Concerns

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has announced legislation to overturn the conviction as well as a massive compensation package for those affected. Some legal experts, however, have warned that legislating to quash convictions is unprecedented in Britain, and could open the doors for political interference into the judicial process.

Also, many feel that charges should be brought against people who were aware of the software problems but allowed the prosecutions to go forward. Then there is also the question of what happened to the money that went "missing".

What was the Speaker deciding, why? The Speaker was acting on instructions of the Supreme Court. In its May 11, 2023 judgement, the SC had said there were no extraordinary circumstances for it to act on disqualification pleas, which should be done by the Speaker of the Assembly.

The SC had said that the Speaker should decide which faction was the "real Shiv Sena", while not basing his decision on a "blind appreciation" of which group possessed a majority in the Assembly. It also asked the Speaker to act without being influenced by the Election Commission's ruling of February this year, which had recognised the Shinde faction as a political party.

Which three factors did the Speaker consider to decide the issue?

The Speaker analysed three factors – the 1999 constitution of the Shiv Sena, the leadership structure of the party, and the legislative party majority.

Why the 1999 constitution? The Speaker held that the 1999 constitution of the Shiv Sena provided by the Election Commission (EC) was the only official constitution for determination of the "real political party". Narwekar noted that the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s submission calling for the amended 2018 constitution to be taken into account could not be accepted as it was not on record.

What did Narwekar say about the leadership structure of the Shiv Sena?

He held that the Pakshapramukh's power was "not absolute" and had to be exercised in consultation with the Rashtriya Karyakarini (national executive).

EXPLAINED POLITICS

Shinde fraction is the real Shiv Sena: How Speaker came to this decision

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

IN A setback to Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker on Wednesday (January 10) declared that the faction led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde was the "real Sena". Rahul Narwekar also dismissed all 34 petitions seeking the disqualification of 54 MLAs belonging to the two rival factions.

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The Speaker analysed three factors – the 1999 constitution of the Shiv Sena, the leadership structure of the party, and the legislative party majority.

Why did the Speaker hold that Uddhav did not have the power to expel Shinde? The Shiv Sena (UBT) faction had submitted that the 1999 constitution provided for the post of a 'Shiv Sena Pramukh', which was the same as the 'Shiv Sena Pakshapramukh' as mentioned in the 2018 leadership structure. The added that the post of Pakshapramukh was held by Uddhav, and therefore, his authority to expel a leader from the party reflected the will of the political party in case of a rift. Narwekar termed this "wrong and devoid of merit".

He held that the Pakshapramukh's power was "not absolute" and had to be exercised in consultation with the Rashtriya Karyakarini (national executive).

What did Narwekar say about legislative majority?

The Speaker held that which group was the real Shiv Sena was "discernible" from the legislative majority that existed when the rival factions emerged on June 21, 2022. The 'Shinde faction' had an overwhelming majority of 37 out of 55 MLAs, and thus it was the "real Shiv Sena Political Party", the Speaker held.

Where did the Speaker differ with SC findings?

The SC verdict had held that the Speaker's decision to appoint Shinde faction MLA Bharat Gogawale, in place of Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Sunil Prabhu, as Chief Whip was "illegal". However, Narwekar, noted that as the Shinde faction was held to be the real Shiv Sena when the rival factions emerged, Prabhu "ceased to be the duly authorised whip from June 21, 2022". Also, while the SC had held that the appointment of Eknath Shinde as the 'leader' of the party was illegal, Narwekar held this to be valid.

What did the Speaker say on the plea for Shinde faction MLAs' disqualification?

The Speaker held that the allegation of the Shinde faction MLAs going incommunicado or untraceable (accusations of them moving to Surat and Guwahati) is not acceptable as no evidence or material has been put forward to substantiate it.

The Sena (UBT) faction had also alleged that the Shinde faction MLAs had deliberately remained absent in the Shiv Sena Legislative Party meeting called by Sunil Prabhu on June 21, 2022, and therefore should be disqualified. The Speaker stated that Prabhu did not have the authority to call the said meeting.

Why were Uddhav Sena MLAs not disqualified?

The Speaker held that the ground taken by them that the MLAs had "voluntarily given up" the party's membership was "mere allegation" and no material was provided to substantiate it. He also held that the whip was not duly served to the UBT faction.

THIS WORD MEANS

AMALEK

Use of word by Netanyahu has come up at genocide case against Israel at ICJ

Attackers of...Israel'

The Amalekites, descendants of Amalek, were an ancient Biblical nation who, according to the Hebrew Bible, were the first to attack the children of Israel (the Jewish people) after their escape from Egypt into the Sinai peninsula.

The Torah imposes two obligations on the Jewish people with regards to the Amalek: "Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget" (Deut 25:19). Moreover, King Saul, the first monarch of the United Kingdom of Israel, is instructed by Prophet Samuel to annihilate the Amalek – "both man and woman, infant and sucking".

The other as 'Amalek'

Sociologist Gerald Cromer points out that throughout history, Rabbinic scholars have gone to great lengths to point out the depths of the Amalekites' depravity (*Amalek as Other, Other as Amalek: Interpreting a Violent Biblical Narrative in Qualitative Sociology* Vol. 24, No. 2, 2001).

In a parallel development, however, rabbis and laymen alike have used the term to refer to other nations and groups that allegedly threaten the continued existence of the Jewish people," he wrote.

This is where Netanyahu's invocation of the Amalek comes in. It not only evokes collective memories of historical persecution, it also justifies brutal, collective reprisals.

ARJUN SENGUPTA

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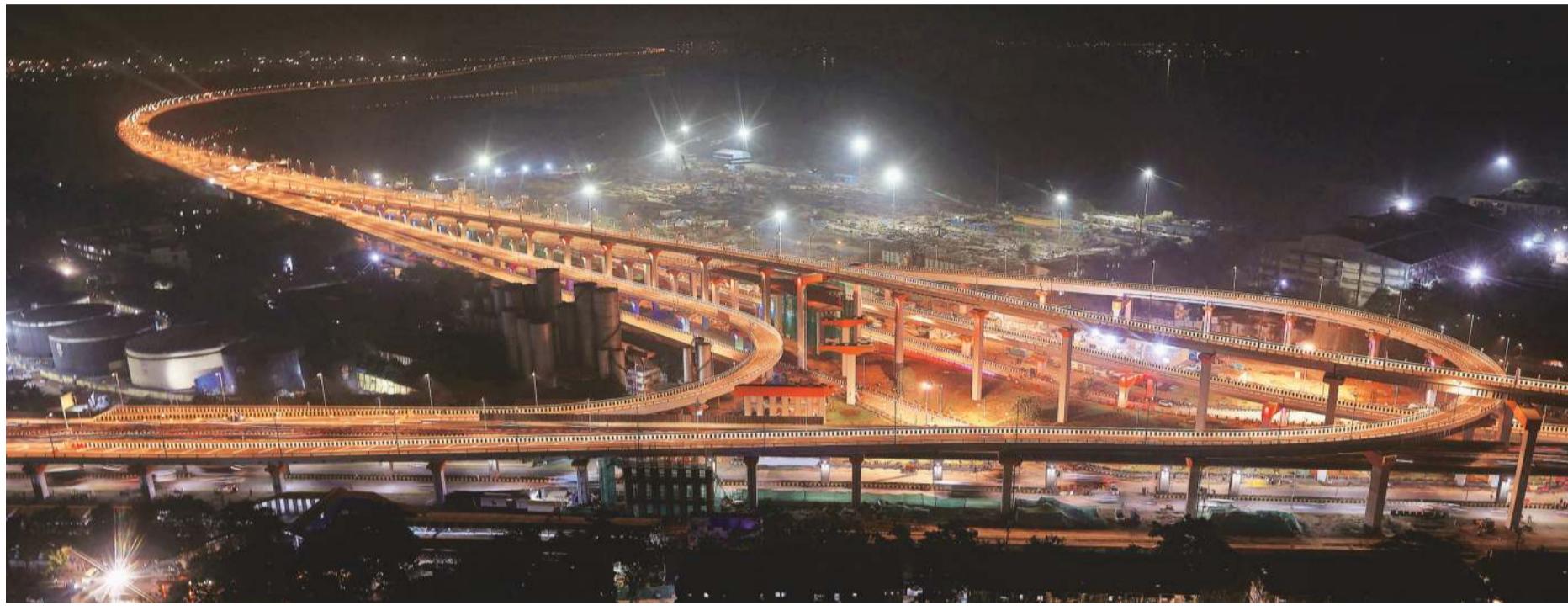
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Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

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The Mumbai Trans Harbour Link lit up on the eve of its inauguration. Amit Chakravarty

ATAL SETU, MUMBAI: PM OPENS INDIA'S LONGEST SEA BRIDGE TODAY

22 km 2-carriageway, 6-lane bridge comprises 16.5-km sea link, 5.5-km land viaducts

Rs 21,200 cr Cost of project; construction began in 2018

16 min Average travel time from one end to other, against current 61 minutes

100 km/hr Speed limit for light motor vehicles such as cars and taxis

Manipur: Day after 4 go missing, father, son among 3 found killed**SUKRITA BARUAH**
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 11

THE BODIES of three people – including a father and son – were recovered in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Thursday, a day after four people from the Meitei community went missing from their village in the area.

A fourth person, Dara Singh (55), was still missing as of Thursday evening and security forces and police were conduct-

ing search operations to locate him. The bodies of the three deceased – Ibomcha Singh (51), his son Anand Singh (20), and their neighbour Roman Singh (38) – have been shifted to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal.

A police statement said security forces were making efforts to search for the person still missing and to flush out armed miscreants from the area.

All four men were residents

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Handed whitelist of loan apps to Govt, says RBI Gov; others set to face action**SOUMYARENDRA BARIK**
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11RESERVE BANK of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said the central bank has shared a whitelist of lending apps with the Centre. The Union IT Ministry is expected to soon take action against illegal loan apps that are not on the list, *The Indian Express* has learnt.In a two-part investigation published on November 20-21, *The Indian Express* had reported how dubious loan apps advertise on Instagram and Facebook, and,**AN EXPRESS INVESTIGATION- PART I—**
Fraud loan apps run amok as Govt, RBI, tech platforms silent on who's the monitor**HOW ILLEGAL LOAN APPS TRAP PEOPLE**
FLOOD SOCIAL media with fake ads, offer loans with NBFCs, promise quick loans despite low income, and more if this was a prime rate lender.*The Indian Express* report on November 20, 2023

RBI collected list of loan apps from its regulated entities: Das

Summit and Awards on Thursday, Das said the RBI had collected a list of loan apps from its regulated entities – banks and NBFCs – and given it to the Ministry of Electronics and IT.

"But, the problem is with illegal lending apps. We have already shared a list with the government. Whenever we come across any further problem, we give it to the government and there is active engagement between the RBI and concerned ministries of the government and law enforcement agencies.

Coordination meetings are held

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

despite whatever filters the platforms claim to use, many such apps, including those red-flagged by the government, continue to offer their services. It had also reported that the RBI initially did not have a whitelist of registered loan apps, or even a negative list which is updated.

Speaking at the Mint BFSI

Assam sets 3-child cap for new rural scheme beneficiaries

For SC, ST women, limit is 4 children



All state govt schemes will be tied to such norms: CM

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 11

A NEW financial support scheme for rural women entrepreneurs by the Assam government comes with a few conditions – including a cap on the number of children they have. While women from general and OBC categories cannot have more than three children if they wish to avail of the scheme, the limit is four children for women from Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs).

Announcing the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA) on Thursday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Karnataka: Interfaith couple assaulted in hotel room, woman alleges gangrape**KIRAN PARASHAR**
BENGALURU, JANUARY 11

FIVE PERSONS have been arrested in Karnataka's Haveri district for allegedly barging into a hotel room and assaulting a Muslim woman and Hindu man who had checked in together on

Sunday. Based on the woman's allegations, police have also invoked charges of gangrape against the accused.

The accused are not affiliated to any outfit, police said, though investigators are probing if some of them have been involved in similar cases in the past.

The men also recorded

videos of the assault, which quickly spread online, grabbing the police's attention.

Haveri Superintendent of Police Anshu Kumar confirmed that IPC Section 376D (gangrape) had been invoked against the accused, in addition to other charges.

"We have taken five persons into

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

After complaints, Tamil film pulled from Netflix; FIR against OTT platform, actor**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**
MUMBAI, BHOPAL, JANUARY 11TAMIL FILM *Annapoorani: The Goddess of Food* has been removed from Netflix amid complaints that it hurt religious sentiments.

Ever since it started stream-

ing on Netflix on December 29, the film has faced protests and police complaints, with claims that it contained "controversial" remarks about Lord Ram and "promoted love jihad".

The film is about a woman named Annapoorani, portrayed by Nayanthara, who comes from a conservative family and aims

to become India's top chef. Her friend, Farhan (portrayed by Jai), helps her navigate the challenges she faces, including cooking and eating meat.

Police in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur registered an FIR against Nayanthara and others involved with the film based on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**PAGE 1
ANCHOR****At 79, doctor goes back to classroom, enrolls for PhD at IIT-Kanpur**

IIT-Kanpur on January 10. Her research, which she will now pursue at IIT-Kanpur's Biological Sciences and Bioengineering Department, will focus on how stem cells from a person's bone marrow or abdominal lining can help in the regeneration of damaged spinal nerves, helping patients with spinal injuries or vertebral damage get back on their feet.

During her long and illustrious career, Dr Gopal has developed new techniques in paediatric surgery and devised low-cost innovations to make



Dr Saroj Chooramani Gopal (right) with her PhD supervisor, Prof Ashok Kumar

treatments accessible to the poor – among them, a new stent for hydrocephalus (buildup of fluid in the brain) and a humidifier for babies. She is a recipient of the Padma Shri as well as the country's highest recognition for physicians, the Dr BC Roy Award.

It was her years as a post-

graduate student at Agra's Sarojini Naidu Medical College that triggered Dr Gopal's interest in regenerative medicine. She said, "I remember this baby born with a condition called meningomyelocele – a condi-

tion where the spinal cord of the baby is damaged at the time of birth. It was clear to us that the baby would not be able to walk or control bowel movements.

When I asked my senior what we could do for the child, he said

there was absolutely nothing that could be done. I was determined then to find a way out for children like that."

While the case sparked her

curiosity in cutting-edge global

research in regenerative medicine, she continued her medical training. In 1973, she completed

her super-specialisation in paediatric surgery from AIIMS Delhi. "I became the first person to complete an MCh (superspecialisation) in paediatric surgery. The course was simultaneously started at AIIMS New Delhi, PGI Chandigarh, KEM Mumbai, and Egmore Institute Chennai for one candidate each. While I completed my MCh in three years, the others took an extra year," she said.

After her MCh, she joined Banaras Hindu University's Faculty of Medicine as a lecturer (equiva-

lent to assistant professor) and re-tired as Medical Superintendent and Dean in 2008.

During her early years at BHU, she proposed to carry out research on the use of stem cells for the regeneration of spinal nerves in children born with congenital defects. "But they rejected my proposal. It was only after I was appointed V-C at KGMU that I was able to get my project approved," she said.

At KGMU, in 2014-15, Dr Gopal was able to demonstrate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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REPORT, PAGE 8



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Dehradun: FIR after ruckus over Lord Ram posters at store run by Muslim man

AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, JANUARY 11

DAYS AFTER a video showing a group of people in Dehradun barging into a shop operated by a Muslim employee and forcefully removing posters of Hindu gods went viral, police on Thursday filed an FIR into the incident.

The 9.47-minute-long video shows a group of people creating ruckus in the shop and raising "Jai Shri Ram" slogans. A woman, identified as one Radha Semwal Dhoni, could be seen pointing at posters in the shop that have images of Lord Ram.

The posters, which also had the name of the shop — Aman General Store — written on it, were then forcefully removed.

The woman could be heard saying in the video that if the store has been given to a Muslim man to run, the name should be changed. The owner of the store is a Hindu man.

"Change the name... and remove these pooja items. If you keep the name of our gods, then

FROM PAGE ONE ■ FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Govt set to launch cervical cancer vaccine campaign

genital warts.

Currently, the two-dose HPV vaccine is available commercially for about Rs 2,000 per dose. But once the government includes it in its immunisation programme, it will be available for free.

"A third of the children (girls) between the ages of 9 to 14 years will be immunised each year over three years. During these three years, the new cohort of children who turn nine in states where the catch-up has happened will also receive the vaccine," said a senior official, adding that the government is in the process of selecting the states where the campaign will first be rolled out.

The official explained that nearly 8 crore children between the ages of 9 and 14 years will be eligible for the vaccine across the

country. When divided over three years, there will be at least 2.6 crore children eligible during the first year. In addition to these 2.6 crore children, another 50 lakh to 1 crore children who will turn nine in the places where the campaign has already been rolled out will need the vaccine doses during the second and third year.

The immunisation drive will be conducted through schools and existing vaccination points.

India accounts for about a fifth of the global burden for cervical cancer, recording about 1.25 lakh cases and about 75,000 deaths each year. Persistent infections with certain high-risk HPV strains lead to nearly 85 per cent of all cervical cancers. At least 14 HPV types have been identified as oncogenic (potential to cause cancer). Among

these, HPV types 16 and 18, considered to be the most oncogenic, have been found to be responsible for about 70 per cent of all cervical cancer cases globally.

While Cervavac, an indigenous developed quadrivalent vaccine by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune, is already available commercially, the company is in the process of scaling up its manufacturing to meet government requirements.

Cervavac offers protection against four HPV strains – 16, 18, 6 and 11. "At present, SII has a production capacity of about 2-3 million doses of Cervavac per year. However, we intend to increase this capacity, with a target of 60-70 million doses," said an SII spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has recommended that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) conduct trials on the efficacy of a single-dose regimen of HPV vaccine in the age group of 9-15 years.

While none of the HPV vaccines available globally recommend a single-dose schedule,

the World Health Organisation says that a single-dose regimen can be followed for public health programmes.

According to the minutes of a meeting held last year, the ICMR said a Phase-3 single-dose trial to test efficacy would take a long time. A Phase-3 trial would mean waiting for several years to observe a certain number of cancer cases in the group that hasn't been administered the vaccine. Instead, the ICMR study will look at antibody persistence after one dose of the vaccine.

• Zero tolerance on rights violations: Army Chief on J&K civilian deaths

and Mohammad Showkat — were allegedly tortured to death during questioning. Some of the others were admitted to hospital with injuries.

The Army Chief also said that the security situation in the Rajouri-Poonch belt was a cause for concern.

On the ongoing military standoff with China in eastern Ladakh, he said the Army's primary aim is to go back to status quo ante which existed mid-2020, before planning a de-escalation of troops in the region.

Referring to the current situation in the Northeast, he said the Army is keeping a close watch on possible attempts by insurgent groups to cross over to India from Myanmar, in the wake of the situation there.

The Army Chief's comments

on the situation in the Rajouri-Poonch belt come in the wake of multiple terror attacks in the area last year. "With the situation in the Valley getting normal, this is one area our adversaries have been active in, in terms of abetting terrorism, encouraging proxy tanzeems to operate," he said.

He said terrorism was wiped out from the area in 2003, and the region saw peace till 2017-18. But, in the last three years, while seven soldiers were killed in Kashmir, 20 were killed in ambushes in the

Rajouri-Poonch belt.

During this period, 45 terrorists were killed in the belt lying south of the Pir Panjal range, he said. This includes 14 in the hinterland and six others who were killed during infiltration bids. A total of 71 terrorists were killed in J&K in 2023, including 52 in the Valley, he said.

He said the Army's focus was on strengthening the existing intelligence network, including human and technical intelligence, in coordination with other agencies, and outreach to the local population. The Army has increased deployment in these areas and re-oriented some units which were operating there, he said, adding that the organisation is drawing certain tactical lessons which will be incorporated, including the use of technology.

On the civilian deaths last month, the Army Chief said while an internal inquiry is underway, the Army has already taken follow-up action. "The 'affected' village has been adopted by the Indian Army," he said, referring to the village from where the civilians were picked up for questioning. He added that the Army is regularly interacting with the local community.

On December 27, the Army Chief had accompanied Defence Minister Rajnath Singh when he

visited Rajouri and met the families of the civilians. Addressing troops the same day, Singh had said that while the aim was to eliminate terrorists, "our bigger aim shall be to win the hearts of our people".

Last week, J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha had also said that those involved in the incident "will not be spared".

Referring to the LAC, the Army Chief said the situation was stable but sensitive, and both countries were continuing talks at the military and diplomatic level. The Army's first aim is to continue the agenda-based talks with China so as to go back to the status quo ante of mid-2020, he said. "Then we can look at the larger issues of troop reduction," he added.

On infrastructure development along the LAC, the Army Chief listed construction of roads and tunnels, underground storage, helipads, plans for 4G connectivity in 355 Army posts, power connection to 105 forward posts, and habitat for about 50,000 personnel.

Regarding the situation in Manipur, he said the troops deployed there had exhibited restraint. Saying that the issue of missing weapons was a major challenge, he said: "Only 30% of the weapons at large have been recovered. Attempts to recover the

remaining weapons are underway."

Gen Pande also expressed concern over the volatile security situation in Myanmar, adding that besides the influx of civilians, 416 Myanmar Army personnel had crossed over to India earlier.

"Because of the situation, we have some insurgent groups which are feeling the pressure and have attempted to cross over to Manipur. That's something we are keeping a close watch on," he said.

He said the Army has strengthened its position along the India-Myanmar border and 20 Assam Rifles battalions are currently deployed there.

Saying that India and Bhutan share common security concerns, the Army Chief said India was keeping a close watch on the ongoing boundary talks between China and Bhutan. "We are interacting with friends in Bhutan in a transparent (manner) and on a regular basis," he said.

The Army Chief also said that 120 women officers have been promoted to selection grade rank of Colonels, and posted as Commanding Officers, both at peace locations as well as challenging areas like Baramulla. He said the Army is currently working on a common promotion policy to underline the selection criteria for women officers.

• Interfaith couple assaulted

custody, while a sixth, who met with an accident, is in hospital. We will take him into custody once he recovers," Kumar said.

While two men -- Aftab Maqbool Ahmed Chandanakkati (24) and Madarsab Mahmud Isaq Mandakki (23) -- were arrested in the morning, the rest were picked up later in the day. Police have not disclosed their identities.

Police said the woman, in her 20s, is married and hails from Uttara Kannada district. According to police, she was in a relationship with the man she had checked into the hotel with, who is from Shivamogga district.

The initial complaint about the attack was filed by a hotel staffer on January 10, and police invoked sections relating to assault and outraging a woman's modesty.

However, in a video that emerged on Thursday, the

woman has alleged that she was gangraped. "I reached the lodge around 1 pm. A few minutes after I entered, many youths barged in and attacked us. They assaulted me and took me on a bike. I was taken to a forest and raped. I begged them to leave me but they did not pay any heed. Later, they dropped me near the bus stand and left. I want them to be punished," she says in the video.

On Thursday evening, police recorded the woman's statement. "The suspects were aware of the woman's meeting, and followed her and the man to the room," said an officer, adding that the videos were possibly recorded to blackmail the man and the woman and to ensure that she didn't report the crime. This modus operandi has led police to believe they may have been involved in such crimes in the past too.

State Home Minister G Parameshwara said there are standard instructions to curtail such incidents of moral policing, and the law will take its course.

Karnataka Director General of Police Alok Mohan said, "We will initiate action against those who take the law into their hands. We are taking this case seriously."

The communally sensitive coastal Karnataka region often witnesses cases of moral policing. Days after taking charge as Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah had vowed to put an end to such incidents in the state.

• At 79, doctor goes back to class

that patients who were administered stem cells fared much better than those who underwent a surgery to stabilise the spine after an injury. But by then, her research focus had shifted. "Since I was so moved by the child I saw during my post-graduation days, I had hoped to carry out my research on children. But at KGMU, I remember there was a dedicated 30-bed ward for those who suffered from spinal injuries and were paralysed waist down. I thought, I have been worrying about children when my research can also help adults and other earning members of a family lead a better life."

She soon started her research at KGMU -- "there were at least four people in my trials who ended up being able to walk. It was unheard of." After her B-HM term, Dr Gopal returned to BHU as Professor Emeritus, where she hoped to complete her research, but the university didn't have the specialised lab that her work required. Years passed, until two years ago, Dr Gopal met Prof Ashok Kumar, her now supervisor, at a seminar organised by the National Academy of Medical Sciences, of which she was president. "At the session that day, Prof Kumar had delivered a lecture on the engineering aspect of regenerative medicine. I approached him and told him about my long-pending dream of completing her research," she said, attributing her determination to a trait she has

had since she was young.

"When my family said girls can't study medicine, I went on a five-day hunger strike till they agreed on the condition that I enrol in the Agra college that was the nearest to my home. Later, when I had the option of taking up either obstetrics and gynaecology or general surgery for my post-graduation, everyone said I should choose gynaecology because that's what women did. I was denied a seat in general surgery that was traditionally meant for men. I fought. I took the matter to the admissions committee and said when men can study gynaecology, why can't women study surgery?" she said.

Now, in her new role as a visiting professor at IIT Kanpur, Dr Gopal will also mentor other PhD students while working on her research.

Prof Kumar, who has been working on the biological engineering aspect of regenerative medicine at IIT Kanpur, said he was pleasantly surprised to see Dr Gopal's enthusiasm for a PhD.

"Ma'am has had such an extraordinary career that anybody would happily grant her an honorary doctorate. But she wanted to work on the project she is passionate about and actually earn it. The good thing is that in IITs, there is no age bar on research," said Kumar, adding that Dr Gopal provides the crucial clinical aspects to his lab's work.

• RBI's whitelist of loan apps

regularly between these agencies to take appropriate measures against illegal lending apps," Das said.

A senior IT Ministry official

confirmed that the RBI had sent a list of "valid" lending apps. "The RBI has been working on a list of valid lending apps for a while, but has sent us a new list of loan apps that are being used by registered entities like banks and NBFCs after your report came out. We will take action accordingly," the official told *The Indian Express*.

The IT Ministry is also learnt to be preparing a course of action to deal with the menace of illegal loan apps. Last October, it had suggested that the RBI could design detailed know-your-customer (KYC) norms for lending apps, similar to the process that users have to follow before opening a bank account, in a process called Know Your Digital Finance App (KYDFA).

Last November, Banking Secretary Vivek Joshi had chaired a meeting with government stakeholders where it was decided, for the second time, that a whitelisting of digital lending apps will be done after consultation with relevant stakeholders.

As part of a months' long investigation into dubious loan apps, The Indian Express had spoken to a range of stakeholders including borrowers, fintech intermediaries, government functionaries, big tech companies and former RBI officials.

A number of victims caught in the crosshairs of these apps pointed towards a common narrative. In the absence of any government and regulatory norms, online platforms carry out little due diligence, letting fraudsters openly advertise predatory loan apps.

• Three found killed in Manipur

of Kumbi Haotak, an area close to the Meitei-dominated Bishnupur district's border with Kuki-Zomi dominated Churachandpur district. According to police, the three bodies were recovered from a foothill area around 2 kilometres from their village. Police did not comment on the nature of injuries sustained by the deceased.

According to locals, the four had left home at around 11 am on Wednesday to collect firewood from nearby hills. An exchange of fire across the district borders in this area had also taken place on Wednesday afternoon.

"The homes of the deceased are just 10-15 metres apart. Villagers say it was everyday

business to go to the adjacent hills to collect firewood, but while they normally go in groups of more than 20, these four had gone by themselves. When firing began in the afternoon and the four did not return by dark, people realised something was wrong," said Romeo Ng, a volunteer with civil society organisation COCOMO, who was present at the site on Thursday.

The conflict in Manipur has been continuing for more than eight months now, and the death toll has crossed 200. Borders of areas where either of the two conflicting communities are in the majority are the fiercest sites of the conflict, and the border of Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts has been one such area.

• Assam sets 3-child cap for new rural scheme beneficiaries

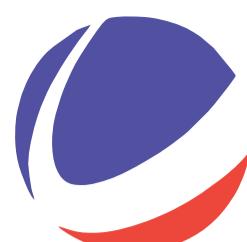
and 'tea tribes', which have been pushing for ST status, have also imposed a four-child cap.

The scheme aims to help women who are part of self-help groups in rural parts of the state develop into "rural micro entrepreneurs", with the target being an annual income of Rs 1 lakh for each member.

Sarma said the rationale for tying this scheme to the number of children was to ensure that the women utilise the funds for setting up their businesses. "If a woman has four children, where will she get the time to spend the money, where will she get the time to do business? She will be busy with making the children study," he said.

Sarma said that of the 39 lakh women involved in self-help groups in rural Assam, about 5 lakh were likely to be excluded from the scheme due to the limit on the number of children.

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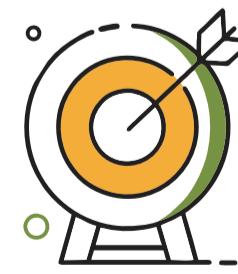
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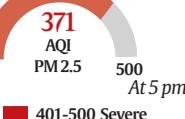
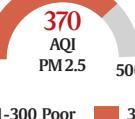
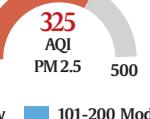
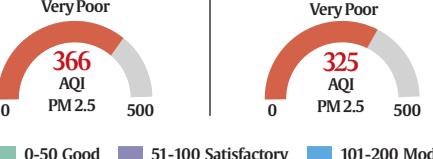
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MCD SCORES 90TH RANK

NDMC moves up two notches to 7th rank in Swachh survey

SAMAN HUSAIN

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

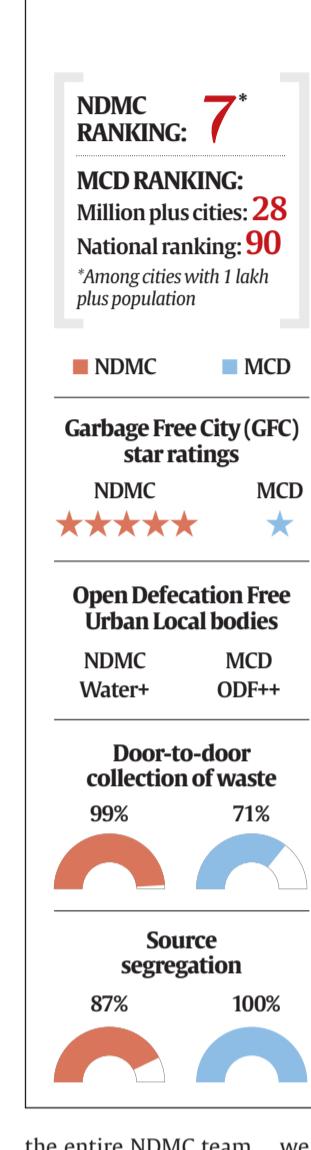
THE NEW Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) was ranked at number 7 – two notches higher than last time – in the ranking of top 10 cities with a population of more than 1 lakh at the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs-organised Swachh Sarvekshan Awards – 2023 held at Bharat Mandapam Convention Centre Thursday. Meanwhile, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) received a national ranking of 90 amongst cities with more than 1 lakh inhabitants.

In the city report card released under the Swachh Sarvekshan (survey), the NDMC received 99% score in door-to-door collection of waste; 87% in source segregation; 100% in waste generation vs processing and remediation of dumpsites, cleanliness of water bodies and public toilets; and 93% in cleanliness of residential and market areas.

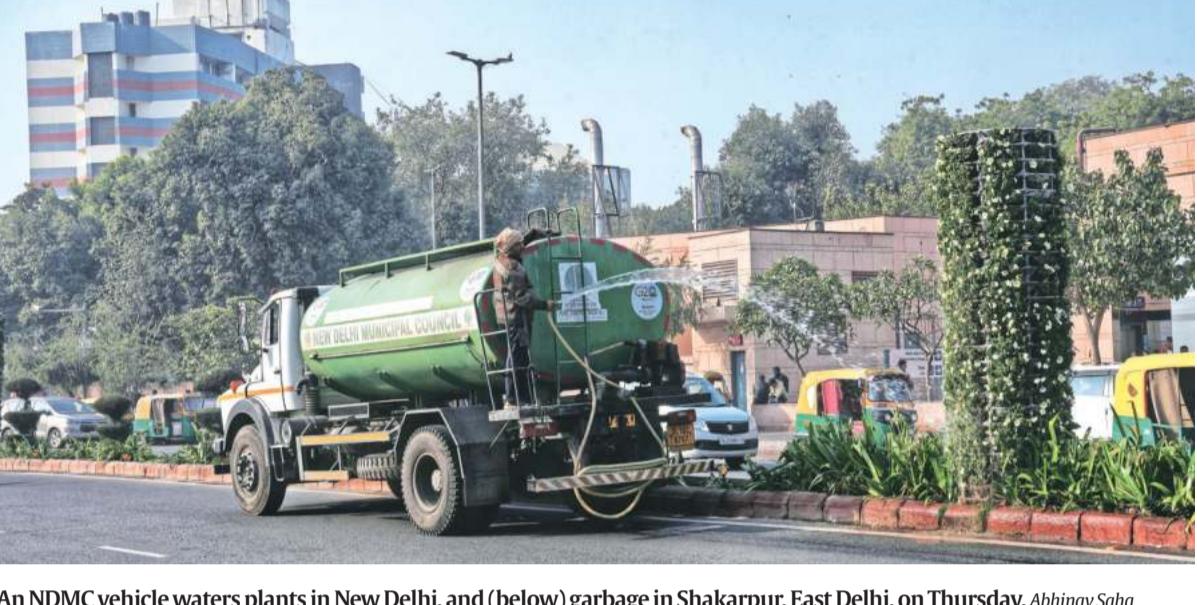
The NDMC was also ranked at number 3 in the list of capital cities after Bhopal and Vijayawada at number 1 and 2 respectively, and a 5-star Garbage Free City (GFC) rating. The star rating conditions are based on 25 key parameters across the solid waste management spectrum.

"Proud moment! NDMC secured Rank 7 in All India Clean City category. Moved 2 rank up from Rank 9 to Rank 7. NDMC also got 5 star garbage free city and the cleanest city within Union Territory in Swachh Survekshan 2023 award. Next year, NDMC will strive to be in the top three cities," the NDMC, which comes under the Central government, said in a tweet on X.

The award is a recognition of NDMC's continued efforts to establish excellence in service standards and provide world-class civic amenities to its residents, it said. "The credit for getting the Swachhta awards and ranking goes to the hard work of



HOW THE COUNCIL, CIVIC BODY FAERED



An NDMC vehicle waters plants in New Delhi, and (below) garbage in Shakarpur, East Delhi, on Thursday. Abhinav Saha



the entire NDMC team... we have moved two ranks since last year from number 9 to number 7. We need to continue with dedication and focus to improve to provide best all-round services to New Delhi. Next year, we should strive to be in the top three cities," NDMC chairperson Amit Yadav said.

Meanwhile, the MCD received a 71% score in door-to-door collection, 100% in source segregation, 86% in waste generation vs processing, 38% in remediation of dumpsites, 59% in cleanliness of residential areas,

100% in cleanliness of water bodies, and 97% in cleanliness of public toilets.

The MCD has also bagged the Open Defecation-Free++ (ODF++) status in the national ranking of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).

In addition, MCD has also achieved a 1-Star Garbage Free City (GFC) rating. This is the first time MCD has received both the GFC 1-Star Rating Certificate and the ODF++ certificate. The civic body was ranked at number 28 in the ranking of million plus cities, and 1 star GFC rating along with 382 other cities.

Delhi BJP said that under Arvind Kejriwal's regime, Delhi's sanitation services have gone down to the worst level, adding the results of the survey have "disappointed" Delhiites.

MCD is helmed by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which wrested control from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2022. This is the first time a unified MCD has taken part in the central government's annual cleanliness survey, after the three civic bodies, which existed earlier, were unified again into a single entity in 2022.

The mayor's office said the MCD was in a worse condition during the BJP rule, while raising

questions at the ranking system. "Experts associated with MCD say that Delhi's ranking among cities with a population of more than one lakh is 90, but it is not possible to compare the improvement in Delhi's sanitation system with this. Because in the Swachh Survekshan 2022, the ranking of cities with population of one lakh to 10 lakh and cities with population of more than 10 lakh was released separately," it said.

"MCD will have to be compared with the ranking of cities with a population of more than 10 lakh," it added.

Noida is the cleanest city in Uttar Pradesh, Ghaziabad runner-up

DHEERAJ MISHRA

NOIDA, JANUARY 11

NOIDA WAS declared the cleanest city in Uttar Pradesh in the Swachh Survekshan-2023, rankings for which were released by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Thursday. At the national level, Noida obtained the 14th rank out of 446 cities or Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) with a population of more than 1 lakh.

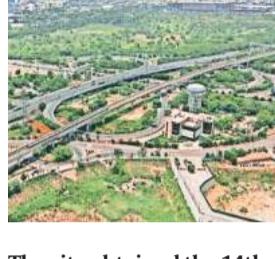
In UP, it competed with 61 other cities, which completed the survey, to top the charts. Noida has also become the first and only city of UP to have received Water+ certification in Open Defecation Free (ODF) category and 5 star rating in Garbage Free City (GFC) Category. Water+ is the highest certification in the ODF category.

In the last survey in 2022, Noida had received ODF++ certificate. Apart from Noida, Prayagraj is the only other Urban Local Body in UP to have received Water+ rating.

Meanwhile, Ghaziabad received the second rank in the state and 38th rank at national level in the survey. It has received 3 stars in GFC and an ODF++ certificate.

Noida Authority CEO Lokesh M called the ranking a "big achievement" for the city. "In the upcoming Swachh Survekshan 2024, we will compete for 7 star ranking in GFC Category," he added.

On how it managed to handle its waste, the authority said it has installed bamboo screens and bar screens in the drains for removal and disposal of the floating material. It further said that while sewage is being treated in sewage treatment plants, the treated water is utilised in parks, green belts, gardens and construction areas. The authority also said that it has constructed toilets and urinals, including 16 pink toilets of high quality, across the city.



The city obtained the 14th rank in national category.

the national level out of 382 ULBs of population between 1 and 10 lakh.

Noida Authority said that a plant with a day processing capacity of 400 MT has been set up for the waste generated from construction and demolition. "Dry and wet waste is being segregated by a door-to-door waste collection agency. The wet waste is being used for gas and fertilizers production by compost and bio methanation plants. The dry waste is being reused by Material Recovery Facility (MRF) centres,"

said the authority in a press note.

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BRIEFLY

Woman dragged out of e-rick, dies: Man arrested

New Delhi: Nearly three weeks after a 66-year-old woman died after being dragged out of an e-rickshaw during a snatching bid, the Delhi Police arrested the accused from UP. The woman, Kesang Dorjee, was travelling from Majnu Ka Tila to the Vidhan Sabha metro station when the accused snatched her bag. ENS

Ex-WFI chief: Court order on closure report

New Delhi: A Delhi court is likely to pronounce on March 2 its order on whether to accept a police report seeking cancellation of a complaint filed by a minor wrestler against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh accusing him of sexual harassment. Additional Sessions Judge Chhavi Kapoor, scheduled to pass the order on Thursday, said some clarifications were required in the matter. PTI

6 'dry days' till March 29

New Delhi: The Delhi government has declared six 'dry days', including Republic Day, for the last quarter of the financial year, officials said. Other days include Guru Ravidas Jayanti (February 24), Swami Dayanand Saraswati Jayanti (March 6), Maha Shivaratri on March 8, Holi on March 25, and Good Friday on March 29. PTI

True love between minors can't be controlled by state action: HC

MALAVIKA PRASAD

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

The court was hearing a plea by a man to quash the kidnapping and rape case against him by the father of a woman he had eloped with in 2015

again concluded that true love between two individuals, one or both of whom may be minor or minors on the verge of majority, cannot be controlled through rigours of law or State action.

The court was hearing a plea by a man to quash the case registered against him by the father of a woman he had eloped with in 2015. The couple got married according to Islamic rituals as they belonged to the same faith. When the woman was "recovered" and the man arrested, she was five months pregnant.

Meantime, the woman "patiently waited" for the man while raising their daughter, the court noted. The petitioner was released on bail on April 2, 2018, and since then, the couple is "liv-

ing happily", and have had another daughter, Justice Sharma noted.

Justice Sharma said that while the petitioner got arrested, the woman chose to continue her pregnancy and supported the petitioner's case. It further said that the future of families of the parties and the two daughters born out of this wedlock, "and the wife who is a housewife and their beautiful harmonious life...is at stake and dependent on the outcome" of the quashing of petition.

"When the scales of justice have to be weighed, they are not always on the basis of mathematical precision or mathematical formulas, but at times, while one side of the scale carries the law, the other side of the scale may carry the entire life, happiness, and future of toddlers, their parents, and parents of their parents. The scale that reflects and portrays such pure happiness sans any criminality will definitely equal the scale carrying law as the application of the law is meant for maintaining the rule of law," Justice Sharma underscored.

The court said it is "disturbed to witness" scenarios wherein parents wish for the well-being of their daughter after she leaves her paternal home and tries to settle in the matrimonial home but instead of providing her love and support, the "new bride is met with unrelenting greed and harassment" from her in-laws.

The court was hearing a case of dowry death of a woman after being allegedly harassed by her

Divya Pahuja case: Man who disposed body detained

Gurgaon: Gurgaon Police Thursday detained Balraj Gill, one of the men who allegedly disposed of Divya Pahuja's body, from Kolkata airport, police said.

According to ACP (Crime) Varun Dahiya, Gill was nabbed between 5 and 6 pm from the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in West Bengal.

"We have been chasing him for some time and with the help of West Bengal police, we detained him. We have informed the airport authority and the CISF and he is being brought to Gurgaon," said Dahiya, adding that it was suspected that he was trying to leave the country.

Divya Pahuja, a 27-year-old former model, was shot dead in a hotel room last week, and four people were arrested in connection with this. The ACP added that they are on the heels of Ravi Banga, Gill's accomplice. "Banga and Gill were in Howrah together and parted ways as they had different plans," he added. Dahiya

said they are making efforts to find the body and further interrogation of Gill would be conducted to expedite the recovery. ENS

Since these are general elections, according to us, lack of seats at the Assembly-level does not apply..." said a senior Congress leader.

"If push comes to shove regarding the number of seats they (the AAP) are willing to concede, the Congress, in the national interest and as the larger partner, is willing to discuss the prospect of a 4-3 seat-sharing arrangement," said another leader.

Three AAP leaders who attended Monday's meeting – national general secretary (organisational)

(Sandip Pathak and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj – will attend the meeting Friday. AAP Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha is also likely to be in attendance, sources said.

Rajya Sabha MP and Congress general secretary Mukul Wasnik, National Alliance Committee (NAC) member Ashok Gehlot, former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, Delhi and Haryana in-charge Deepak Bararia, and Delhi PCC chief Arvinder Singh Lovely are likely to represent the Congress.

"The leaders will discuss seat-sharing not just in Delhi but in other states as well," said an AAP source.

AAP Delhi convenor Gopal Rai, on Tuesday, had said the party wants to contest with its partners in five states – Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Goa and Gujarat. "What basis is there to forgo seats in Haryana, where the Congress not just has its own cadre but massive support from the grassroots? As it is, their (the AAP's) decision to unilaterally announce a candidate for Gujarat has not gone down well with the Congress," the source quoted above said.

Three AAP leaders who attended Monday's meeting – national general secretary (organisational)

Man held for hoax call, was frustrated over joblessness'

Gurgaon: A Mumbai resident made a hoax bomb call threatening to carry out a massive explosion all over India, officials said. Gurgaon Police's crime branch arrested the man from Samaspur on Thursday. The man told police he was dissatisfied over unemployment and wanted to cause fear and unrest in society, said police.

According to ACP (Crime) Varun Dahiya, control room 112 received a call from an unknown number around 2.40 am on Tuesday, wherein the caller threatened to carry out a large detonation across the country.

The accused has been identified as Vikas Amarpal Jaiswar (37), a Mumbai resident, cur-

DENIES BAIL TO MAN IN DOWRY DEATH CASE

People need to be educated that chromosomes of son, not daughter-in-law, decide the gender of child: HC

MALAVIKA PRASAD

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

constantly nagged for not fulfilling her husband and in-laws' desire of preserving the family tree.

A single-judge bench of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, in its January 8 order, said that it is constrained to observe that such people need to be educated that "it is their son and not their daughter-in-law whose chromosomes will decide the birth of a daughter or a son, the



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



No ROLE CLASH

A NEW biopic on former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee releasing next Friday has led actor Pankaj Tripathi, who is portraying the lead role, to step down as the Election Commission's national icon for voter awareness. Before anyone could point a finger or allege any political leanings, Tripathi has voluntarily stepped down, as per the terms of the memorandum of understanding signed between him and the poll panel in 2022.

FOCUS ON YOUTH

AHEAD OF the Lok Sabha elections, BSP president Mayawati's political successor and party's national coordinator Akash Anand Thursday launched a mobile number to connect youths with the party. Any person can get associated with the BSP by giving a missed call on the particular number. The party will approach the caller, said BSP sources. Akash launched the exercise following Mayawati's message to the party leaders to ensure that youths get 50% participation in the BSP. The party had not been using such mediums to connect with the masses so far. Now, with Akash as its youth face, the party is using technology to increase supporters.

Formulate policy to replace heavy diesel vehicles with BSVI, top court tells Govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE SUPREME Court Thursday asked the Centre to formulate a policy to phase out heavy-duty diesel vehicles and to replace them with BSVI vehicles.

A bench of Justice AS Oka and Justice Pankaj Mital directed that the Centre should formulate a policy in six months. The order came on a plea by the Container Corporation of India challenging an order of the National Green Tribunal.

Hearing a plea, which alleged that the use of the Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Tughlaqabad by large number of trucks and trailers not destined for Delhi was contributing substantially to air pollution in Delhi NCR area, the NGT had on March 8, 2019, asked the corporation to ensure, in a phased manner, that diesel vehicles stop visiting the ICD and shift to electric, hybrid, and CNG vehicles.

The tribunal gave the corporation six months to comply with the direction.

Hearing the appeal by the corporation challenging the NGT order, the SC had on February 10, 2020, asked the court appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) to look into the issues raised in the appeal and to make recommendations to resolve the problem.

The court which perused the EPCA's recommendations said that "the process of exploring the possibility of finding better sources, including CNG/hybrid/electric, for the use of heavy-duty vehicles shall continue".

It ordered that the plan for optimal utilisation of ICDs around Delhi, in terms of the EPCA recommendations, shall be formulated by the corporation in six months.

It also asked the corporation to coordinate with all official agencies to enable the setting up of central laboratories near ICDs around Delhi NCR.

The SC asked the corporation "to implement" in six months, "the recommendations made by KPMG in February 2021 for improving the parking management of vehicles in the said ICD".

"The issue of pollution, particularly air pollution, has been a cause of concern for the last few decades. Air pollution directly affects the fundamental rights of the citizens guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The right to life guaranteed under Article 21 includes the right to live in a pollution-free environment. The issue of air pollution is of a great deal of importance to every citizen. Air pollution affects citizens' quality of life. It adversely affects health...," it pointed out.

The court will now hear it on July 31 to monitor compliance of its order.

GOVT & POLITICS

Setback for INDIA seat-sharing hopes in Bengal: TMC won't meet Cong panel

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

IF Congress top brass speaks to Mamata Banerjee, she might give one more seat, says senior TMC leader. PTI

THE POSSIBILITY of a seat-sharing pact between the Congress and the TMC in West Bengal received further Thursday with the TMC signalling it would not meet the five-member national alliance committee of the Congress that has been holding talks with parties of the INDIA bloc to work out seat adjustments. TMC sources said the party had already conveyed its offer to the Congress.

The Congress panel has held one round of discussions with parties such as the SP, Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP, AAP, and RJD. The TMC, sources said, had offered Malda Dakshin and Baharampur to the Congress. The Congress holds both seats at the moment.

Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has already rejected the offer, saying the Congress does not need any "grace or generosity" from Mamata to win those two seats.

"I can fight it alone against Banerjee and the BJP because I have proved it. My colleague and I can fight in both the seats on our own...," Chowdhury told *The Indian Express* earlier this week. That the TMC is not willing to meet the Congress panel to discuss its offer signals that the party is in no mood to concede more seats to the grand old party.

"The Congress got over 30% votes in only 2 of the 42 seats in Bengal. How can they claim more seats? If the top Congress leadership speaks to Mamata Banerjee, maybe she will concede one more seat. So there is no point in meeting the Congress alliance committee," a senior TMC leader

Seize assets of banned outfits: Centre to J&K

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE MINISTRY of Home Affairs Thursday directed the Jammu and Kashmir administration to seize all assets and freeze bank accounts and finances belonging to the pro-Pakistan separatist amalgam Tehreek-e-Hurriyat and Muslim League Jammu Kashmir, headed by separatist Masarat Alam.

Both organisations were recently banned by the government.

Tehreek-e-Hurriyat was founded by late separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by section 42 of the UAPA, the central government hereby directs that all powers exercisable by it under section 7 and section 8 of the said Act shall be exercised also by the state governments and the UT administration in relation to the above said unlawful association," the MHA notification said. Section 7 of the UAPA is related to power to prohibit the use of funds of an unlawful association and the Section 8 is related to power to notify places used for the purpose of an unlawful association.

The court will now hear it on July 31 to monitor compliance of its order.

ANJISHNU DAS
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

AFTER A series of meetings this week, seat-sharing negotiations for Lok Sabha polls in INDIA bloc are off to a rocky start.

Already, the JD(U) and RJD in Bihar have claimed at least 16 seats each, with 5 for the Congress and 3 for the Left parties. In West Bengal, the TMC has offered the Congress just 2 seats. In UP, the SP has signalled it would contest in 65 seats, leaving just 15 for Congress and Rashtriya Lok Dal. In Maharashtra the Shiv Sena (UBT) has demanded 23 seats, with the remaining 25 to be split between the Congress and Sharad Pawar's NCP.

The Congress, though, appears to be willing to make concessions for its allies.

The national alliance committee is likely to have its second meeting with leaders of the AAP and SP Friday and also meet with the JD(U). The first meeting between the Congress and the AAP saw the latter putting on the table its demand for seats in Gujarat, Goa, and Haryana besides Punjab and Delhi. The committee members told the AAP delegation that its mandate was confined to discussing a pact for Delhi.

Meanwhile, complicating the seat-sharing talks in Bihar, the CPI (M-L) Liberation said it wants to contest five seats and has conveyed its view to Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav. FULL REPORT www.indianexpress.com

If Kharge's statement means the party will contest 255 seats, it will be the fewest it has fought in LS polls since the Independence. Across the 17 LS polls from 1951-2019, the Congress has contested an average of 478 seats in each.

Number of seats Cong has fought in the past

The fewest seats it has contested so far was in 2004 when it fought in 417 seats. The highest was 529 seats in 1996, after its five-year government led by PV Narasimha Rao. In 2014 and 2019, against the Narendra Modi-led BJP, the Congress contested 464 and 421 seats, respectively.

The BJP went from contesting 229 seats in 1984 - its poll debut when it won two seats - to 436 seats in 2019. Since 1991, it has not contested fewer than 300 seats.

The Congress had struggled even more in 2014, finishing as the runner-up in 224 seats but in third place or lower in 160 seats. On paper, successful seat-sharing talks could help the Congress reduce these figures in the absence of multiple non-BJP parties cutting into each other's vote shares.

In terms of its strike rate - number of seats won as a percentage of the seats contested - the Congress has been falling from its early days. In 1951 and 1957, it won more than 75% of the seats it contested, and in 1984, it peaked at 80%. Until 2014, its strike rate did not drop below 25%. But in 2014, it was 9.48% when it fell to its lowest ever Lok Sabha seat tally of 44, and in 2019, it was 12.35%.

EXPLAINED

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MONEY LAUNDERING
SC extends interim bail of NCP leader Malik by six months

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday extended former Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik's interim bail by six months on medical grounds in a money laundering case, pending his plea seeking bail on health grounds.

A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mittal passed the order after Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju, representing the Enforcement Directorate (ED), did not object to the request by Malik to extend temporary relief.

ASG Raju submitted, "This request may be extended. They have asked for six months. No objection. On medical grounds, an extension can be given."

The bench then directed,

"Temporary medical bail of petitioner extended by six months as prayed for. List the main matter after six months." On August 11, 2023, a bench of Justice Aniruddha Bose and Justice Bela M Trivedi had granted Malik temporary bail on medical grounds for two months after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the ED, did not object to it.

On October 12 last year, the bench led by Justice Trivedi had extended the relief by three months. The Bombay High Court on July 13, 2023, had rejected a plea by Malik seeking bail on health grounds in the money laundering case. His plea seeking bail on merits is pending before the court.

Malik had sought relief from the HC, claiming he was suffering from a chronic kidney disease apart from various other ailments. The HC had held that since there were no compelling reasons warranting interim medical bail, it was denied to him. Malik thus approached the SC seeking medical bail.

The ED arrested Nawab Malik in February 2022 in a money laundering case registered over the Goawala compound property in Kurla, allegedly linked to fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim.

GIFT City to host 10 lakh people, work on to attract ship, aircraft leasing businesses: Adhia

RITU SHARMA & PARIMAL DABHI
GANDHINAGAR, JANUARY 11



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in Gandhinagar on Thursday. ANI

WHEN COMPLETE, the Gujarat International Finance-Tec (GIFT) City will provide living and working spaces for around 10 lakh people, even as changes in the regulatory framework are being worked out to attract ship and aircraft leasing businesses from countries like Ireland, said GIFT City non-executive chairman Hasmukh Adhia at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS) on Thursday.

The announcement came a day after PM Narendra Modi, along with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, met 26 global CEOs at the GIFT City during the Global FinTec Leadership Forum to get suggestions on making GIFT City a world class city and India a hub of fintech.

Among the global CEOs who attended the forum were Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, Sanjay Mehrotra of Micron Technology, Lakshmi Mittal of ArcelorMittal, Uday Kotak of Kotak Mahindra Bank and RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das.

Speaking at a session on 'GIFT City: An aspiration of Modern India' at the VGGS on Thursday, Sitharaman said, "GIFT City should be the place for finance and technology related entrepreneurs. We aim to build here a diverse fintech laboratory for the world that addresses several

needs. India fintech firms wanting to go global should be here. Foreign fintech firms, wanting to come to GIFT IFSC (International Financial Services Centre) naturally have to be here and Indian fintech firms aiming to grow their business or wanting to work on regulatory sandbox, through which they can have a proof of concept, should be here."

Maintaining that there were certain "nuts and bolts that we are trying to fix" to bring offshore activities onshore, Adhia said that the finance ministry was making sure the "regulatory hitches were removed" to enable leasing activities to happen from Indian shores.

"Yesterday, the PM was mentioning that as of now, there are 900 wide body aircraft in India and all have been taken on lease by companies... Indian companies together have ordered 2,000 more aircraft. Now that is a huge

number. All this leasing services at present happens from Ireland. We need to bring that activity to GIFT City."

"That will be a big business for GIFT City but there are some issues with these companies, lessors have some issues, we will sort them out. We will make sure that all these activities that are right now offshore are brought onshore," Adhia added.

Crediting the PM for prioritizing GIFT City, Adhia said, "Three hours he heard 30 CEOs. It is because such attention is given at the top... and then, the finance minister was there yesterday along with the RBI Governor, and we had a very good discussion. So, the kind of confidence which is expressed by global CEOs now about GIFT City makes us believe that within no time, GIFT IFSC will compare with the best in the world."

Abu Dhabi Investment Authority 1st sovereign fund to set up base

PARIMAL DABHI & RITU SHARMA
GANDHINAGAR, JANUARY 11

BY DAY 2 of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS), the GIFT City has received commitments from at least four foreign firms, with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority becoming the first sovereign fund to set up base here.

Ruler of Abu Dhabi and President of UAE, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, was the chief guest of the 10th edition of the three-day VGGS that began on Wednesday.

The other firms that have announced offices in GIFT City included Mizuho Bank, which will be the second Japanese bank to set up a unit at the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC); financial services group American StoneX that will set up a bullion trading desk; Bermuda-founded Apex Group that will set up an office for fund administration and fund accounting services and Transworld, the Dubai-based ship and aircraft leasing company.

The Indian companies included ONGC Videsh that will set up a finance company for treas-

ury operations and Wipro, which has applied for techfin operations at GIFT City, Managing Director and CEO of GIFT City, Tapan Ray, told mediapersons at the summit on Thursday.

Earlier in the day, at a session in the summit, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman listed out the expansion witnessed in GIFT City lately, including the international bullion exchange, 25 banks operating within the IFSC of which nine are foreign banks and the IFSC attracting 26 aircraft lessors collectively leasing over 136 assets.

"There are 80 fund managers who have established 89 schemes and 29 insurance entities, including eight insurance and reinsurance firms. Eight ship leasing companies have commenced operations here. Very clearly, the global situation on container shortage of shipping lines is being felt," she said, adding: "Our economy is growing... Don't we need to be atmanirbhar on producing ships... holding leasing entities in GIFT City will help access global finance and use the building capacities of shipping yards to make India a good manufacturing hub for shipping lines."

HC clubs 15 suits linked to Krishna Janmabhoomi, Shahi Idgah

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 11



The dispute involves ownership of 13.37 acres, which the petitioners claim belong to Shri Krishna. File

13.37 acre of Katra, Keshav Dev, and for the removal of the disputed structure have been filed".

The High Court also took note that the Sunni Waqf Board, the Idgah mosque committee, and other defendants had earlier submitted that suits of similar nature and involving the same question "may be consolidated".

In his submission, Advocate Jain also said that the composition and the modalities of the commission of three advocates for the inspection of the disputed property as ordered by the High Court last December are yet to be determined. He further submitted that pursuant to December 14 order, the Commission may be headed by a retired High Court judge and two advocates. He also said that "certain advocates on behalf of plaintiffs may also be permitted to participate in the proceedings of the Commission".

The court was informed that Advocate Punit Kumar Gupta, lawyer for the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board, had moved an application on the ground that his father had passed away and was not able to attend the court.

The court has listed the matter for further hearing on January 17.

Strategic interests of India, Canada aligned: Envoy

RITU SHARMA
AHMEDABAD, JANUARY 11

NOTWITHSTANDING THE recent diplomatic tensions, the long-term strategic interests of India and Canada are "absolutely aligned", said Canada's High Commissioner to India at Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024 in Gandhinagar Thursday. He also urged everyone to "let governments do diplomacy".

"My advice to my govern-

ment and that to the Indian government and business community on both sides is to let the governments do what they are doing, let the government do diplomacy but everyone knows that in the long term, Canada's strategic interest and India's strategic interest are absolutely aligned," the high commissioner said during a seminar 'India-Canada Business: The way forward' organised by Indo Canadian Business Chamber (ICBC).

The relations between the

two countries saw some bitterness last year following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegation about India's suspected involvement in the killing of Khalistani separatist and designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in his country. India denied the allegation as absurd.

Admitting that "the past few

months have been a time of

some tension between the two

countries," Mackay said, "But I am really encouraged, by the

leadership and the vision that

business leaders here in the audience today and outside the room, to continue the trade and investment relationship that we're growing quickly to make both our countries more prosperous. These growing commercial ties will support job creation. They'll support technology partnerships, prosperity of both of our countries, which is what the young people in our country need more than anything."

The commissioner urged everyone to let "businesses do

business". "So, everybody get together and talk about how you can work together better, once again to make our businesses and nations more prosperous... I have no doubt that 2024... is going to be an even better year for the business-to-business relationship between the two countries. Things can only get better between the two governments," he said.

Mackay also downplayed the diplomatic tensions when asked if it would affect Canada's education sector.



Dedication of National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Guwahati to the Nation and Inauguration and Foundation Stone Laying of Healthcare Infrastructure Projects in Assam

by
Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya

Hon'ble Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare, Government of India

&

Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Assam

In August Presence of

Shri Bhagwanth Khuba

Hon'ble Minister of State (Chemicals & Fertilizers), Government of India

Shri Keshab Mahanta

Hon'ble Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Assam

NIPER

12th January 2024
Changsari, Kamrup, Assam

PANNUN 'ASSASSINATION BID'

Nikhil Gupta case: US govt refuses to provide defence material till his appearance in court, arraignment

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

TWO DAYS after a New York court ordered the US government to respond to a motion filed by lawyers of Indian national Nikhil Gupta, seeking material relating to the charges against him, the authorities have objected to providing defence materials till the appearance of the accused in the court and arraignment in the case.

Gupta, 52, is detained in a Czech prison on murder-for-hire charges in an alleged assassination attempt on Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

His attorney had filed a motion to "compel production of discov-



Khalistan separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun

ery" on January 4 in the US District Court, New York, requesting it to direct the federal prosecutors to provide "the defence materials relevant to its ability to defend the instant charges".

US District Judge Victor Marrero on January 8 gave the government three days' time to respond to the motion filed by Gupta's attorney. The government, in its reply filed with the district court on Wednesday, said Gupta's motion should be denied.

"The government respectfully submits this letter in opposition to Nikhil Gupta's motion to compel discovery during the pendency of his extradition proceedings in the Czech Republic," federal prosecutors said.

AFTER CONG 'NO' TO AYODHYA INVITE

Uddhav Sena: Will spend Jan 22 at Ram exile site in Nashik

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

A DAY after the Congress declined the invitation extended to its leaders Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for the forthcoming Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, saying it has become a "BJP-RSS" event, its INDIA alliance partner, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), has also confirmed he would not be going.

Uddhav will instead be at the Kalaran temple in the Nashik district of Maharashtra, believed to have been among the sites where Lord Ram stayed during his exile from Ayodhya. It was also here that Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and Marathi social activist Sane Guruji in 1930 led an agitation to give Dalits access to temples.

A senior Sena (UBT) leader told The Indian Express: "Our decision has already been taken... Our leader will perform an *aarti* on the banks of Nashik's Godavari river and visit the Kalaran mandir. On January 23, the birth anniversary of Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray, the Shiv Sena (UBT) will organise a camp in Nashik and hold a rally in the evening."

On January 6, speaking to the



A gold-plated door being installed at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. As many as 46 doors will be installed in the temple, out of which 42 will be coated with 100-kg gold. ANI

Existing Ram idol to be shifted to new temple on Jan 19, no 'darshan' for 3 days

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 11

'RAM LALLA Virajman' (existing Ram idol) kept at the makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya is likely to be shifted to the new under-construction shrine on January 19 and 'darshan' will be discontinued for devotees for three

days ahead of the 'pran pratista' (consecration ceremony) of the new idol of the deity, those familiar with the matter said.

'Darshan' will be suspended to ensure security arrangements before the January 22 consecration ceremony to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others, it is learnt.

"Not everything has been fi-

nalised yet but according to our information 'darshan' will be stopped from January 20," a senior trust official said.

Also, keeping security concerns in mind, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is contemplating some changes in the consecration rituals starting January 16, officials said.

tion proceedings states that "no evidence or documentation of any sort has been given to him other than the US indictment itself". "An order compelling discovery is particularly appropriate here" as Gupta "is being subject to repeated interrogations by US officials without the presence of the counsel," the motion said.

The defence counsel present in Prague has no evidence or other case materials, other than the bare indictment," the motion said. It said a municipal court in Prague had initially recommended extradition, "but several layers of judicial review remain before any final extradition order issues". The US government, in its motion, rejected Gupta's assertion that he

has been subjected to repeated interrogations without the presence of the counsel representing him. "In fact, he has met only twice with US officials, the second time in the presence of counsel, and on both occasions he was advised of his rights."

In the motion, his attorney stated that Gupta, "was last in the US in 2017". The motion states that Gupta's family has reported to the media that they have "limited access" to him, he is not allowed consular access and he "faces basic human rights violations in custody in Prague, including solitary confinement. A habeas petition has been filed on his behalf with the Supreme Court of the Czech Republic."



President Droupadi Murmu presents the award to MP CM Mohan Yadav in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

Indore, Surat cleanest cities, Maharashtra 1st among states

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

INDORE AND Surat were Thursday named the joint winners of the cleanest city award, while Maharashtra bagged the top spot among states in the Union government's annual cleanliness rankings for urban areas.

This was the seventh year in a row that Indore was named the cleanest city in the Swachh Survekshan Awards. Surat, which has been in second place behind Indore for the past three years, won the top award for the first time.

Both cities had 100% door-to-door collection of waste, 98% segregation at source and 100% remediation of dumpsites, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' Swachh Survekshan 2023 dashboard. Both cities were tied at the top place among cities with a population over 1 lakh.

The rankings take into account door-to-door collection of waste, segregation at source, cleanliness of public areas, clean water bodies and citizens' feedback regarding the cleanliness of their cities.

Of the eight rounds of annual awards since 2016, this was the first time that two cities shared the top prize. Navi Mumbai was named the third cleanest city.

Starting with 73 cities in 2016, the number of cities covered in the annual ranking has increased over the years. The 2023 round covered 4416 urban local bodies, 61 cantonments and 88 gaon towns. According to the ministry, 1.58 crore online citizen feedback and 19.82 lakh face-to-face views were received as a part of the ranking.

Distributing the awards at a ceremony here, President Droupadi Murmu highlighted the importance of creating wealth from waste. She said a large amount of urban land was buried under mountains of garbage, which had a harmful impact on health.

Indian Army looks to upgrade to insulated 'pup tents' on the icy heights along LAC

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

AMID THE stand-off with China, the Army is planning to get insulated 'pup tents' for the thousands of troops deployed on the icy heights along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) – where temperatures are extreme and plunge as low as minus 50 degrees Celsius.

These 'pup tents' – relatively lighter, easier to set up and better insulated – will accommodate up to four soldiers each. They are meant to replace the existing 'Tent Arctic Small Mk II', which can accommodate two to three troops, and, as per an Army Request for Information (RFI), has limitations that affect troop productivity and safety in high-altitude areas.

In the recently floated RFI, the Army invited original equipment manufacturers and authorised dealers to participate in the upgrade process.

The pup tents are meant for soldiers deployed in extreme cold weather conditions, such as in eastern Ladakh (the site of the China stand-off), Sikkim and the Siachen glacier. They will have exceptional insulation capabilities for winter but can also be adjusted for summer.

Other criteria listed by the Army include a robust structural design that can withstand strong winds and heavy snow, efficient ventilation, and cold-resistant components and materials such as zippers, fabric and insulation.

The pup tents should also be easy to set up, with colour-coded or reflective components for easy assembly in low light or adverse weather. They should be compact and light enough for troops to carry with their per-

sonal load, but with adequate headroom and space for storing equipment.

As per officials, the small size of the tents will make it easy to be carried by soldiers during patrols, and, being self-contained, will be easy to set up. "They could be easily deployed on small posts where there is limited space. They can be established for sentries and observation posts operating in buddy pairs, farther from the main post," an official said.

The Army has scheduled a vendor interaction later this week to discuss and fine-tune other criteria for the tents. All interested vendors will have to provide two sample tents on the broad criteria listed for user trials, which, tentatively, begin next month.

History, present, future – what Cong weighed in for its call

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

Models of Ram temple in Ayodhya being sold ahead of the consecration ceremony, in Varanasi on Thursday. PTI

the temple, saying the party was for construction of one without demolishing the Babri Masjid. A year later, the mosque came down under the watch of a Congress government at the Centre.

A year later, Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao publicly committed to building the masjid.

Then, in November 2019, came the Supreme Court ruling in favour of the Hindu side. With the Narendra Modi-led BJP back with an even larger majority at the Centre, the Congress, fighting for its political survival, welcomed the order and declared it was in

favour of construction of a Ram temple. This time, there was no mention of the Babri Masjid.

Five takeaways from the party's decision:

The framing

The party is wary of associating with the consecration ceremony – both for historical and political reasons. The temple, after all, has always been a Sangh Parivar project, though the Congress has tried to wade in, wittingly and unwittingly, at different points in the last nearly four decades.

'Incomplete' argument

The Congress statement declining the invitation mentioned that the temple was still "incomplete", and that the inauguration

appears to have been brought forward by the BJP and RSS "obviously... for electoral gain".

Incidentally, just a day earlier, shankaracharyas of several peeths were reported as saying that they would not attend the event for the same reason, suggesting that installing the idol in an incomplete structure was against "shastra vidhi (rituals)". "Our shastras do not permit pran pratishtha in an incomplete temple. The PM is not a shankaracharya," a Congress leader said.

Weighed down by history

In the aftermath of the Babri demolition, the Congress laid the entire blame on Rao, who in turn committed to rebuilding the Masjid. By the late 1990s, through an era of coalition governments and with the BJP in a more moderate avatar under Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Congress stayed away from the contentious dispute – except arguing that it would support either a negotiated settlement "between the parties to the dispute", or await the judicial set-

tlement. In 2019, that option ended when the apex court gave its decision in favour of the Hindu side. Forced again to choose, the Congress said it respected the apex court verdict and asserted it was in favour of construction of a Ram temple.

Explaining decision

Sources said that the overwhelming view in the Congress was against attending the ceremony. However, many of its leaders from the Hindi heartland were not so sure. Some of these state units proposed a symbolic representation to ensure that the BJP and Sangh Parivar did not get a talking point to project the Congress as anti-Ram or anti-Hindu.

Convincing the allies

The Congress's hope will be that its allies in the INDIA bloc follow suit and stay away from the Ram Temple consecration; several indicated the same on Wednesday. It will do the party no good if it is seen as isolated on this issue.

FULL REPORT ON

www.indianexpress.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors for the following job 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.noidauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) (Rs. 30.00 Lacs to 100.00 Lacs)

S. No.	Job No.	Sale Start Date	Sale End Date	Tender Opening Date and Time
1	Job No.-13/E-TENDER/SP02/2023-24	12.01.2024	25.01.2024 upto 5:00 P.M.	29.01.2024 11:00 A.M.

Office: Sector-39 Store Purchase Officer, Noida

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Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)
Website : www.noidauthorityonline.in

SC quashes NGT order, approves Shimla development plan; BJP, Cong vie for credit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE SUPREME Court Thursday quashed National Green Tribunal (NGT) orders staying the development plan for Shimla and allowed Himachal Pradesh to go ahead and implement it stating that "prima facie" the court is of the view that "there are sufficient safeguards" in the plan "to balance the need for development while taking care of and addressing the environmental and ecological concerns".

Setting aside the NGT orders

suggestions given by the NGT. In that regard, if any person feels aggrieved by any of the provisions, they would always be at liberty to take recourse to such remedy as is available in law".

Writing for the bench, Justice Gavai said the court had, however, "not considered the development plan in minute details".

The judgment added that "at the same time, it cannot be ignored that the development plan has been finalised after various experts from various fields including those concerned with urban planning, environment etc., were taken on board.

The ruling Congress and the opposition BJP in Himachal Pradesh vied for credit after the SC go-ahead to Shimla Development Plan 2041.

Naresh Chauhan, the principal advisor (media) to Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, said it was due to the concerted efforts of the state government that the blanket ban has been removed. He said the plan was notified by the present government in March 2023.

Senior BJP leader Suresh Bharadwaj said, "We designed the Shimla Development Plan."

(WITH PTI INPUTS)

EXPLAINED
E Hunkering down in east Ladakh

SINCE 2020, India has been heavily investing in building infrastructure and habitat in the border areas of eastern Ladakh and northeast for close to 55,000 troops deployed there. This includes modern habitats with water, electricity and heating.

Troops in forward locations were accommodated in larger heated tents and solar-heated and insulated Ladakhi shelters. In 2020, India had also made an emergency purchase of high-altitude winter clothing for troops from the US under a logistics exchange pact.

These pup tents are meant for soldiers deployed in extreme cold weather conditions, such as in eastern Ladakh (the site of the China stand-off), Sikkim and the Siachen glacier. They will have exceptional insulation capabilities for winter but can also be adjusted for summer.

Other criteria listed by the Army include a robust structural design that can withstand strong winds and heavy snow, efficient ventilation, and cold-resistant components and materials such as zippers, fabric and insulation.

The pup tents should also be easy to set up, with colour-coded or reflective components for easy assembly in low light or adverse weather. They should be compact and light enough for troops to carry with their personal load, but with adequate headroom and space for storing equipment.

As per officials, the small size of the tents will make it easy to be carried by soldiers during patrols, and, being self-contained, will be easy to set up. "They could be easily deployed on small posts where there is limited space. They can be established for sentries and observation posts operating in buddy pairs, farther from the main post," an official said.

The Army has scheduled a vendor interaction later this week to discuss and fine-tune other criteria for the tents. All interested vendors will have to provide two sample tents on the broad criteria listed for user trials, which, tentatively, begin next month.

IIT-K student found dead in hostel, police suspect suicide

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 11

AN MTECH student at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT-K), who was recently issued a termination notice by the institute, was found dead in his hostel room on Wednesday evening.

Police said they were investigating the death and prima facie it looked like a case of suicide. Police said they have found a copy of a purported suicide note and are trying to verify it.

Vikas Kumar Meena, 26, was a student at the Department of Aerospace Engineering. He hailed from Meerut.

After visiting the IIT campus and speaking with the faculty members and students, Kanpur Police Commissioner Akhil Kumar, in a statement, said: "Yesterday (Wednesday) evening the incident was reported... Prima facie, it seems like a case of suicide... After the post-mortem, we will take the probe forward. We have received a soft copy of a suicide note. I can't verify the authenticity of the note."

"In the note, he wrote that he was having some academic issues. He also wrote that he took the step on his own and no one should be blamed for his suicide," Kumar said.

A police officer involved in the investigation said that Vikas was found hanging in his hostel room, which was locked from inside. When his peers knocked on the room's door and did not get any response, they informed the institute's officials. The lock of the room was broken and Vikas was found hanging," the senior police officer said.

Anil Kumar Meena, the father of Vikas, said that his son was depressed after he recently received a termination notice and couldn't file a timely appeal against it. "There was some issue with the institute's management and his papers. I had spoken (with my son) and was told that there is some process for termination. He had said that if he had appealed against it, it could have been repealed," the father said.

Asked if the termination notice was the reason behind Vikas dying by suicide, Anil, who is a retired official, said, "Yes. What I understand is that when he was sent the email for termination, he had left for home and couldn't submit an appeal in time."

Police said the purported note, in English, was written on a piece of tissue paper using an eyeliner. "The note is a crucial piece of evidence and it could help ascertain her state of mind and motivations," said a police officer in

PM NARENDRA MODI TO INAUGURATE ATAL SETU THAT LINKS MUMBAI AND NAVI MUMBAI

India's longest sea bridge opens today

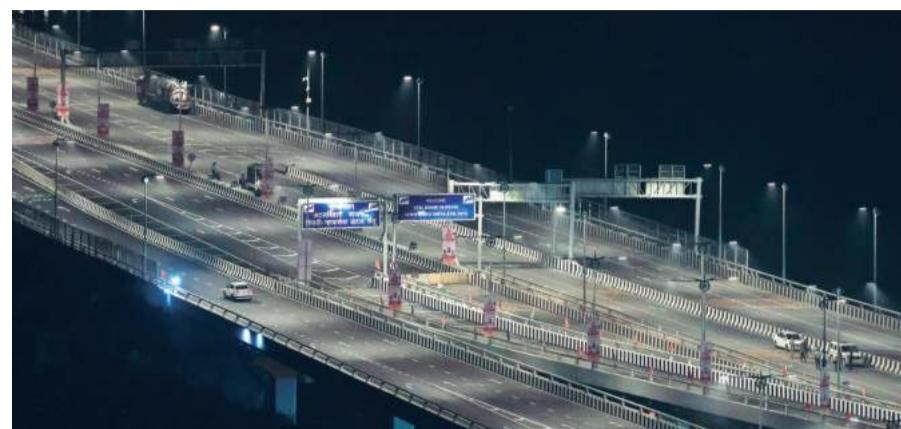
SWEETY ADIMULAM
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

MORE THAN seven years after laying its foundation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 22-km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), the country's longest sea bridge, during his day-long visit to Maharashtra on Friday.

Formerly named 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewari-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu', the bridge connects Sewri in Mumbai to Chirle in the state's mainland district of Raigad at Navi Mumbai and is expected to cut travel time by around 45 minutes. Modi's cavalcade is set to take this route to reach Panvel where he is scheduled to address a rally.

The two-carriageway, six-lane bridge – comprising a 16.5-km long sea link and 5.5 km land viaducts on the approach at both ends – was constructed at a cost of over Rs 21,200 crore, including a loan of Rs 15,100 crore from the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

To get an idea of the scale of the project, the bridge was constructed using 170,000 tonnes of reinforced steel, enough to build



The Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, or Atal Setu, ahead of the opening. Amit Chakravarty

17 Eiffel Towers.

Commuters using the bridge will have to pay Rs 250 toll per car, imposed by the Maharashtra government, for a one-way trip.

The Atal Setu aims to improve connectivity in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, which comprises districts such as Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad, besides mitigating traffic congestion between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai and promoting regional economic development.

It is poised to provide faster

access to both Mumbai International Airport and Navi Mumbai International Airport, besides enhancing connectivity between Mumbai Port and Jawaharlal Nehru Port.

Furthermore, it is also expected to substantially reduce travel time from Mumbai to Alibaug, Pune, Goa, and the southern parts of the country.

The project was executed by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) on an Engineering

Procurement Contract (EPC) basis. While PM Modi laid the foundation stone of the project in December 2016, work commenced in 2018.

The most arduous part of the project was the construction of the segments that lie in the marine portion, where engineers and workers had to dig as deep as 47 metres in the sea bed to provide strong foundations to hold up the massive girders and deck of the bridge.

The fact that the bridge lies

Note on tissue 'written by' Bengaluru CEO could be key, say police

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
PANAJI, JANUARY 11



Suchana Seth, 39, is accused of killing son

THREE DAYS after Suchana Seth, a Bengaluru based CEO of a tech start-up, was arrested for allegedly killing her four-year-old son in a Goa hotel, investigators said they have recovered a handwritten "note" on a piece of tissue paper purportedly written by her.

Police sources said the "cryptic" note alluded to the fact that Seth (39) did not want the custody of her son to go to her husband.

Seth and her estranged husband Venkatraman P R got married in 2010 and had a son in 2019, after which differences cropped up in their marriage. The two were separated and embroiled in divorce and custody proceedings.

Police said the purported note, in English, was written on a piece of tissue paper using an eyeliner. "The note is a crucial piece of evidence and it could help ascertain her state of mind and motivations," said a police officer in

volved in the investigation. The tissue paper was crumpled and an attempt had been made to tear bits of it, police sources said.

"At least five lines had been scribbled on it, and it alludes to the custody battle. The note was discovered by a forensic team during inspection at Aimganga police station in Karnataka. We have taken a sample of her handwriting and sent it for forensic examination. The exact contents of the note cannot be revealed at this stage," said a police officer.

Police had earlier said that she had relations with her estranged husband and a custody battle may have led her to allegedly commit the crime. They said she continues to deny she committed the crime, claiming she did not know who did it.

Kolkata: Describing the Gangasagar Mela as one of the world's largest religious congregations, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to declare it as a "national fair".

Earlier this week, Banerjee had expressed regret that the Centre is not giving due recognition to the Gangasagar Mela, which is visited by lakhs of pilgrims for taking a holy dip at the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal during Makar Sankranti every year. "Considering the uniqueness, significance, magnitude and spiritual depth associated with Gangasagar Mela, I would earnestly appeal to you to kindly consider declaring it a National Fair," she wrote to Modi. PTI

Sankranti every year. "Considering the uniqueness, significance, magnitude and spiritual depth associated with Gangasagar Mela, I would earnestly appeal to you to kindly consider declaring it a National Fair," she wrote to Modi. PTI

Himachal: IPS officer moves SC again over HC order on shifting

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

IPS OFFICER Sanjay Kundu has again approached the Supreme Court after the Himachal Pradesh High Court rejected his application seeking recall of its order directing the state government to move him out of the post of the state director-general of police (DGP).

The HC had on December 26, 2023, asked the government to shift Kundu and Kangra superintendent of police Shalini Agnihotri from their posts to ensure a fair probe into Palampur-based businessman Nishant Sharma's complaint about a threat to his life.

This was stayed by the SC on January 3. The top court noted that the HC was set to hear the matter

again on January 4, and said Kundu could approach the high court with an application seeking recall of the December 26 order. Kundu petitioned but the HC rejected it on January 9.

While reiterating that it was not expressing any opinion on the merits of the claims of the parties, as the investigation in the matter is still not complete, the HC said that the "attempt of the DGP" to settle a civil dispute "seems to be a colourable exercise of his power and authority prima facie". It also said there was "prima facie dereliction of duty" on Agnihotri's part.

The HC bench asked the state government to provide "adequate and effective" security to the businessman and his family.

Kundu has now challenged this order before the SC.

The CALCUTTA High Court on Thursday ordered an interim stay on proceedings in an FIR against Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials who were attacked in Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas on January 5 during its search at the residence of Trinamool Congress leader Shahjahan Sheikh in connection with its investigation in the alleged ration scam.

The ED on Wednesday had filed two petitions at the High Court seeking quashing of the FIR lodged at Nazat Police Station in North 24 Parganas district against its officials, claiming that false allegations were made against them. The ED stated that three of its officers were injured and their

belongings were snatched during the attack.

Hearing one of the two petitions, the single bench of Justice Rajeswar Mantha ordered an interim stay on proceedings in connection with the FIR till March 31. The bench also asked the state government to file an affidavit in this regard and sought a copy of the case diary from the police. The court will hear the matter next on January 22. The police have registered three FIRs in connection with the January 5 incident, including the one against ED officials. However, no one has been arrested till Thursday.

On Thursday, the Calcutta HC dismissed a PIL filed by West Bengal BJP on the January 5 attack. The Bench said that since the PIL was filed based on media reports and lacked any background research, it was not admissible.

Mufti posted on X. Visuals show the front end of the vehicle, towards the driver's side, severely damaged.

MEHBOOBA MUFTI, the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and president of the Peoples Democratic Party, Thursday survived a road accident that left the driver of her vehicle and her personal security officer injured.

The accident took place in Srinagar area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district. According to party officials, the driver of the car received injuries in his leg. Her PSO, too, sustained minor injuries. Mufti was on her way to Khanabal to meet victims of a recent fire incident when the vehicle met with an accident.

"Ms Mufti's car met with a terrible accident enroute Anantnag today. Thanks to the grace of god she & her security officers escaped unhurt without any serious injuries," her daughter

posted on X. Visuals show the front end of the vehicle, towards the driver's side, severely damaged.

Mufti initially complained of chest pain and was taken to a hospital in Srinagar for check-up. "Thankful to everyone for their prayers & the outpouring of concern about my well being. I am fine alhamdullah. My driver & PSO have suffered injuries & I hope they recover soon," Mufti said.

Former J&K CM Omar Abdullah said: "I expect the government to enquire into the circumstances of the accident. Any gap in her security that contributed to this accident must be addressed immediately," he wrote on social media.

People's Conference president Sajad Lone also expressed concern over Mufti's accident, posting on X, "Glad to hear she escaped unhurt. Praying for her good health and long life."

Another perceived positive in the Speaker's verdict for the BJP was the recognition of the faction led by CM Eknath Shinde as the real Shiv Sena. Narwekar, while dismissing 34 related petitions from both sides, ruled in Shinde's favour, citing that a majority of the MLAs had sided with his faction when the party split in June 2022.

The disqualification of Sena (UBT) MLAs, sources said, would have put the BJP in a bad light and allowed Uddhav Thackeray to play the victim card in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls. Moreover, the Shiv Sena is a party that thrives on emotions and the disqualification of Uddhav's legi-

slators would have garnered more public sympathy for him.

Surveys by the BJP and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) suggest Uddhav has garnered sympathy after the split and the subsequent fall of the MVA government led by him. To add to this, he also lost the party name and symbol after the Election Commission (EC) ruled in Shinde's favour. A source said the sympathy has increased as

people believe the split and its consequences were engineered by the BJP. "The Thackerays are the core of the emotion that binds the Sena. Any injustice to them resonates with supporters and cadre. Had Narwekar disqualified Sena (UBT) MLAs, Uddhav would have got an opportunity to further encash on the sympathy that he has garnered. More often than not, sympathy for the Sena has translated into votes," the source said.

However, the source pointed out that Uddhav can still play the sympathy card as the Speaker has ruled that the Sena led by Shinde is the real party.

They also say the Sena (UBT)

SC to AMU: How would minority tag loss affect women's studies

It's an institution of national importance even without minority status, says court

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

THE SUPREME Court on Thursday questioned the submission that the lack of minority tag for Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) may hamper higher education of Muslim women in India, and pointed out that AMU has continued to be an institution of national importance even without the minority tag.

Meanwhile, during his visit to Mumbai, PM Modi will also undertake the Bhopumijan (ground breaking ceremony) of projects like the Orange Gate-Marine Drive underground tunnel. He will also flag off the second phase of the Seawoods-Belapur-Uran train service and inaugurate the Digha railway station. Prior to his Mumbai engagements, the PM will be in Nashik to inaugurate the 27th National Youth Festival.

"Over the last 100 years, without the minority institution tag, it has continued to be an institution of national importance. How does it matter if we are not with you on Basha (judgment in S Azeem Basha vs Union of India), you started your address by saying that it would create great damage... How does it matter for the people whether it is a minority institution or not. It's only the brand name AMU," asked Justice Dipankar Datta, who is part of a seven-judge Constitution bench hearing a reference on the university's minority status.

In 1967, the Supreme Court in the case S. Azeem Basha vs Union of India, had held that AMU was not entitled to minority education status as it "was neither established nor administered by the Muslim minority".

The SC held that the university was brought into existence by the Central legislature and "not by the Muslim minority". In the current reference, AMU and others have taken the stand that the bench should examine whether Basha judgment was correctly decided or not.

Justice Datta made the remarks as advocate Shadan Farasat – appearing for the Hajji Muqeet Ali through his legal representative R Mustafa Muqeet, part of the local Muslim community at Aligarh – referred to the contribution of AMU towards

FULL REPORT

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MULTI-STATE OPERATION

NIA raids 32 places in crackdown on BKI, Bishnoi gang

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

IN A multi-state crackdown on the banned Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and the Lawrence Bishnoi crime syndicate, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Thursday raided 32 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Chandigarh.

"Such activities include smuggling and induction of terrorist hardware, such as arms and ammunition, explosives, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) etc., from across the borders," the NIA spokesperson said.

According to the NIA, the terror hardware is being used by the operatives of terror outfits and organised crime syndicates for carrying out bomb blasts, targeted killings, extortions and funding of such outfits in various parts of the country. Thursday's crackdown involved raids at 16 locations in a case related to the activities of the chiefs and members of the BKI.

The party's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut termed the Speaker as a leader of the BJP and accused him of acting as a lawyer of the Shinde-led Sena. "This is a conspiracy of the BJP as it dreams of Balasahab (Thackeray)... The Speaker received the order copy from Delhi (BJP)," he said.

The BJP hailed the verdict and claimed its stand had been vindicated. "All legal and Constitutional aspects were adequately factored in when the Shinde-led government was formed. It is on a strong footing..." Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis said. FULL REPORT

www.indianexpress.com

How Maharashtra Speaker's non-disqualification of MLAs helps BJP

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

MAHARASHTRA SPEAKER Rahul Narwekar's decision on Wednesday not to disqualify MLAs from either faction of the Shiv Sena is likely to prove beneficial for the BJP, especially in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Sources say the BJP would have found itself in a tough spot had Narwekar disqualified legislators of any of the two – Shiv Sena (UBT) and Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) – factions as it would have lost the perception battle just ahead of the polls.

Speaker Rahul Narwekar

isolators would have garnered more public sympathy for him.

Surveys by the BJP and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) suggest Uddhav has garnered sympathy after the split and the subsequent fall of the MVA government led by him. To add to this, he also lost the party name and symbol after the Election Commission (EC) ruled in Shinde's favour. A source said the sympathy has increased as

moving the Supreme Court just ahead of the verdict also would play in his favour as he can seek votes from people claiming injustice to the party. Uddhav had moved the apex court over Narwekar's meeting with Shinde just ahead of the disqualification verdict claiming it was like

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The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

RSVP REGRETS

Congress doesn't have a language on Hinduism. Staying away on January 22 follows its dismal pattern of me-too and boycott

THE CONGRESS'S REFUSAL to attend the invitation to the consecration of the Ram temple checks token boxes but fails to make a case. It will not go to Ayodhya on January 22, it says, because religion is a "personal matter" and inauguration of an "incomplete" temple is a "political project" and an RSS/BJP event" brought forward "for electoral gain". There is criticism of the RSS and BJP — certainly, that box is ticked. But in this consequential moment, 32 years after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, and following the striking successes of Mandir politics over decades, there is nothing more than just that. India's main Opposition party has nothing to say to those Hindus who see the temple as an embodiment of their faith, and whom it must also find ways of engaging, if it does not wish to speak only to its dwindling bastions. On the other side, there is no attempt either to invoke secular ideals or constitutional values, to strike a chord among those who share its views on the politicisation of the temple. Even voters who agree will be hard put to draw succour from a Congress statement that seems to be mainly nay-saying, lacking in a conviction that is firm or soaring. The belated and bare-bones RSVP to the Ayodhya invite underlines that Congress, as is its wont of late, is not taking a decision, but being forced to take a decision by the BJP.

As the parliamentary election draws closer, the fact is that Congress does not have a language on Hinduism with which it can go to the people. Over the years, the BJP's project has visibly pushed it onto the backfoot and against the wall, putting it in a bind it has not managed to think a way out of. There have been far too many vacillations, and few moments of clarity — from 1989–1991 when a Congress government opened the locks and allowed the VHP to shilanyas at the disputed site, to 2019, when the Congress in Opposition welcomed the Supreme Court ruling that paved the ground for the temple. Sonia Gandhi even said that its labelling by the BJP as a "Muslim party" cost the Congress electorally. And in the electoral fray, senior leaders like Kamal Nath most recently in MP have tried to wear on their sleeves their version of an in-your-face public religiosity. Overall, Congress responses to the BJP have spanned the unremarkable distance between a me-too stance and boycott politics. Its refusal to show up on January 22 confirms this dismal pattern.

Of course, picking up the BJP's political gauntlet is fraught but another response, more imaginative, more political and bold, was possible. But for that, the Congress would need to think and act, not just react to agendas set by the BJP. It would need to frame an alternative idea and politics, and do the hard political labour of rallying the party behind it, as well as allies in the joint Opposition front. And then, it would need to communicate it to the people in a language that is persuasive, appealing and uplifting. That's the challenge the Congress has boycotted, not just the upcoming Ayodhya ceremony. Running away isn't nimble politics.

COSTS OF A LEVY

EU's carbon tax will need to be contested. Industry concerns in effecting the green transition must be heeded

ACCORDING TO A report in this newspaper, Indian industry has expressed concerns about the European Union's Carbon Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The regime came into effect on October 1 last year, but it won't be before 2026 that tariffs will be imposed on imports to the 27-nation bloc. India Inc's immediate worries are about a CBAM clause that requires exporters to submit nearly 1,000 data points about their production methods. Brussels contends that the requirement is meant to ascertain carbon footprint-related information but Indian exporters fear that they could lose critical competitive advantage in the process. Industry says that besides being a burdensome process, the data-sharing exercise could compromise sensitive trade secrets.

A more serious challenge for industry will be to navigate CBAM's definitive phase when tariffs start getting imposed. In 2022, more than a fourth of India's exports of iron, steel and aluminium went to the EU. According to industry estimates, the EU tariffs could raise the costs of Indian exports by 20 to 35 per cent. A multi-pronged effort will be required. For one, India will have to contest CBAM's protectionist underpinning. The government has already questioned the mechanism at the WTO. It will also need to join hands with other affected countries to contest CBAM at climate fora. The measure is being imposed in an already unequal context, due to the failure of rich countries to honour commitments to make clean technologies accessible to developing countries. One suggestion by experts is, therefore, to impose the tariff but channel the fund to developing countries — instead of the proceeds going to the EU's corpus. Given the already contentious nature of climate financing, implementing this recommendation will require tough talking. The government is reportedly contemplating a levy similar to CBAM to nudge industry to reduce its carbon footprint — the revenue would then be used to fund the domestic green transition. There are, however, imponderables, including whether the EU will play ball and withdraw its tariff.

There are apprehensions that other developed economies could follow in the EU's footsteps — the US, for instance, opposes CBAM, but conversations have already started in America about imposing a similar levy. Big companies like Tata Steel and JSW seem to be bracing for this challenge — they have ambitious decarbonisation targets. However, abating emissions from the steel sector is tough. Technological interventions — carbon capture and storage, for example — could be costly for small companies. They will require handholding by governments, regulators and financial institutions.

DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Orissa HC directive will find resonance with millions who have struggled to decipher doctors' handwriting

AN OLD JOKE goes like this: A young lover is unable to read a letter from his beloved because her handwriting is illegible. He takes the spider-trail-like scrawl to the local chemist, who promptly hands him medicine. After all, an ineligible cursive is the hallmark of prescriptions, not love letters. Now, thanks to a judgment by the Orissa High Court, there may be hope for the hapless millions who have struggled to make sense of their prescriptions.

The Court has directed Odisha's health department to ensure that doctors write all prescriptions, post-mortem reports and other documentation in capital letters. Or at least in legible handwriting. Both the common man and the judiciary cannot comprehend the "zig-zag" of the doctors' penmanship. There has been speculation about the reason for the scrawl. It has been attributed to the fact that doctors are often in a hurry, in overburdened public healthcare systems. Medical jargon is complicated and the possibility of errors when writing by hand — without spellcheck — is compounded. A cynical view is that poor handwriting is a strategy to keep medical knowledge out of reach in the age of Google.

Beyond the punchlines, though, poor penmanship can have tragic consequences. The deaths and injuries caused by it led the Medical Council of India to issue multiple directives on ensuring prescriptions that do not require a graphology degree to decipher. Hopefully, the Orissa HC's directive will have some effect. Increasing digitisation too can help avoid errors when it comes to prescriptions and reports — it is far easier to have a printout or even a cloud-based medical history with all prescriptions and reports than trying to make sense of the crisscrossed lines on a piece of paper. And it's easier than trying to write in all caps, all the time. The only loss, of course, will be of jokes at doctors' expense.

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE
WHEN RELIGION AND POLITICS RIDE IN THE SAME CART, THE WHIRLWIND FOLLOWS.
— FRANK HERBERT

A new Maharashtra model



GIRISH KUBER

Speaker's decision legitimising Shiv Sena split, bad in letter and spirit of law, sets a poor precedent

IT MAY BE no exaggeration to say that the Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly has made a mockery of the Constitution with his decision on the Shiv Sena split. Speaker Rahul Narwekar's decision to recognise Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who left the Uddhav Thackeray-led group, as the leader of the actual Shiv Sena might be used as a textbook example of disregard for the legislative procedure and regulations.

While his decision legitimises the split, it is bad in the law's letter and spirit. After years with the Shiv Sena and the NCP, Narwekar is now a member of the BJP, and it can be said that no one imagined anything different from him. Usually, there is a palpable anxiety in the air ahead of a crucial decision, such as on the disqualification of legislators. In Maharashtra, however, it was business as usual. Chief Minister Shinde was away from Mumbai, none of the political heavyweights were present in the state assembly as the order was being passed and the bureaucracy was busy preparing for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-profile Maharashtra visit on Friday. This, incidentally, is the 10th visit in as many months. This fact alone underlines how important Maharashtra is for the ruling dispensation in the coming polls. It also highlights how improbable it was, perhaps, to expect the Speaker to rock the boat by disqualifying the ruling Shinde-led group.

However, in absolving Messrs Shinde & Co of committing any legislative sins, the Speaker has left craters, not holes, in his order. One doesn't have to be a legal eagle to highlight the three most glaring lacunae.

First, Shinde enjoyed a majority when he left Shiv Sena, says the Speaker. However, defection is a one-time act and not an ongoing process. The fact is that Shinde had 16 MLAs with him, out of 55, when he left for Surat en route to Guwahati. He went on to mop up another 21, thanks to the powers-that-be in Delhi, along with the Election Commission which looked the other way and the judiciary which, perhaps inadvertently, was late in its

To say that the Speaker's decision is bound to trigger yet another legal battle would be a no-brainer. It's also not as if the Speaker, and those supporting him, aren't aware of what lies ahead. Perhaps they have more faith in legal delays and what follows them. It was the delay that offered elbow room for political manoeuvring and thus set a new precedent in political battles. Until then, there were defections by individuals or by groups. But what Shiv Sena experienced was the taking away of a party from its leader: Lock, stock and barrel. And it was not going to be for the last time.

response. That Shinde had not had enough members with him initially was the reason that the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena filed a disqualification petition against only these 16 MLAs, including Shinde.

While rejecting the demand to disqualify Shinde and his associates, the Speaker held as valid the appointment of a new whip by the splinter group. But this is in clear violation of the Supreme Court which, on May 11, 2023 had found fault with the Speaker's decision to recognise the Shinde-appointed whip.

The apex court had categorically dubbed as illegal the Speaker's decision to appoint an MLA of the Shinde faction as the chief whip of the Shiv Sena. The SC, in that order, also articulated its views on differentiating party structure from its legislative wing and their powers. "To hold that it is the legislature party which appoints the whip would be to sever the figurative umbilical cord which connects a member of the House to the political party. It would mean that legislators could rely on the political party for the purpose of setting them up for election... but that they can later disconnect themselves entirely from that very party..." the SC had said. It held that the whip being appointed by a political party is crucial for the Tenth Schedule and that the Speaker must recognise only the whip appointed by the political party. It would seem that Speaker Narwekar is either unmindful of the Court's view or wants to ignore it for reasons not difficult to guess.

This leads to yet another and bigger contradiction. To turn the tables on the Uddhav Thackeray camp, the Shinde faction accused it of violating the party whip, becoming liable to be disqualified. Accordingly, a counter-petition was filed with the Speaker by the Shinde camp demanding the disqualification of 14 MLAs belonging to the Thackeray camp. This group of 14 MLAs refused to join hands with Shinde and instead stayed with Thackeray. Neither did they obey the diktat of the Shinde camp's whip. And since the Speaker considers this newly appointed whip legal, as per the

law, its violation on the floor of the House should have led to the disqualification of the 14 MLAs belonging to the Thackeray camp. However, in this case, Speaker Narwekar admits that the Thackeray camp MLAs violated the whip, but at the same time rejects the demand to disqualify them.

To say that the Speaker's decision is bound to trigger yet another legal battle would be a no-brainer. It's also not as if the Speaker, and those supporting him, aren't aware of what lies ahead. Perhaps they have more faith in legal delays and what follows them. It was the delay that offered elbow room for political manoeuvring and thus set a new precedent in political battles. Until then, there were defections by individuals or by groups. But what Shiv Sena experienced was the taking away of a party from its leader, lock, stock and barrel. And it is not going to be for the last time.

Soon after, came the Shiv Sena-style split in the Sharad Pawar-led NCP. If in the Shiv Sena, Shinde, who had until then been party chief Uddhav Thackeray's right-hand man, was lured away, in the NCP, it was Ajit Pawar, the nephew of party chief Sharad Pawar, who walked out of the party with the majority of MLAs. The thread that binds these two parties and their two splits is the BJP. This supremely confident power machine has not only perfected the art of engineering defections, it also has taken it to heights unimaginable and unseen until now. Emboldened by the enormous success in Maharashtra, will the BJP take this model to other states as well? Might the Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) or, say, the Trinamool Congress, witness a blitz like the one in the Shiv Sena and the NCP?

The answer lies in how nimble-footed the judiciary is and how far it wants to go to assert "constitutional morality". The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Speaker's decision could be the perfect opportunity for the courts to walk the talk.

The writer is editor, Loksatta



SNEHAL DHOTE

ON JANUARY 8, 2024, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court quashed the remission granted to 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case finding that the remission applications were illegally decided by the Gujarat government. The Court reiterated established law that the government of the state where a convict is tried is the appropriate authority to decide the remission application, i.e., the Maharashtra government in this case. Notably, the bench made a scathing remark against the Gujarat government for "usurpation of power". Along with reaffirming the role of the Supreme Court as a guardian of the rule of law, this case must act as a springboard to reflect on deeper questions about remission policies in India. Transparent remission procedures with appropriate substantive considerations will help prevent the kind of misuse we saw in Bilkis Bano's case.

Remission is a reward earned by prisoners in "days" for their good conduct, activities and work done inside prison. Without changing the nature of punishment, remission offers an opportunity for prisoners to engage in reformative activities in the hope of getting out before the completion of their sentence. Essentially, it emanates from the rehabilitative goal of imprisonment. The total number of days earned in remission is deducted from the sentence, making prisoners eligible for early release — a person with a ten-year sentence and one-year remission earned can potentially be released after serving nine years.

Applying remission policies to convicts of petty offences like theft, punishable with a determinate period of imprisonment (up to three years) is relatively straightforward. However, applying them to convicts of seri-

THE SECOND CHANCE

Remission is a ray of hope for prisoners, crucial for reformation and reintegration

ous crimes, like rape, and those sentenced to life imprisonment ("lifers") is challenging. While a life sentence essentially means imprisonment for the whole of a convict's life, the law allows for lifers to be considered for remission once they have served a minimum term of 14 years. However, this is inconsistent across offences and states as "prisons" and "persons detained therein" are state subjects in the Constitution of India. There are offence-based exceptions for lifers convicted of heinous offences like rape and murder. In most states, they undergo longer minimum periods of imprisonment to be eligible for consideration for remission compared to other lifers. In fact, in some states, they are barred from remission due to the crime category. In Maharashtra, lifers convicted of gang rape have to serve for at least 28 years before being eligible to apply for remission, whereas, in Gujarat, remission policies don't apply to such persons at all.

The impact of the severity of the offence is also reflected in how remission is earned. States generally grant ordinary remission of two days per month for good behaviour or prison duties and special remission of longer durations for any special service such as acts of bravery. In Goa, Mizoram and Odisha, murder convicts are excluded from earning ordinary remission. Offence-based exclusions are also being extended to other leave provisions like parole and furlough — Delhi (2010) and Jammu and Kashmir (2020).

A remission application is assessed by a Sentence Review Board and decided after considering the impact of the crime, chances and potential of reoffending, the purpose of continued imprisonment of convict and

socio-economic conditions of their family. As these factors (identified by the Supreme Court) indicate, consideration of remission for each prisoner must be individualised.

Remission policies across states raise procedural and normative questions. Procedural questions about the constitution of review boards and their decision-making process — are remission applications fairly considered according to the Supreme Court's guidelines and the rehabilitative and reformatory goal of prisons? More importantly, longer terms of imprisonment for eligibility and offence-based restrictions to apply for remission for certain kinds of offenders raise a normative question about prisons as rehabilitative spaces. It is, of course, an entirely different yet crucial question to ask whether our prisons in their current form have the capacity to do this. With massive overcrowding, securitisation, overburdened prison personnel, etc., the crisis in our prison system needs urgent transformation.

Leave provisions like remission, parole, and furlough serve as a ray of hope for prisoners. They play a crucial role in their process of reformation by offering the opportunity to rebuild their lives and reintegration into society. Lifers equally deserve the chance to reform through policies that help impose definite durations on otherwise indeterminate life imprisonment sentences. In a penal system where remission is an indispensable opportunity that facilitates reform, exclusionary policies need to be interrogated.

The writer is Associate (Sentencing) at Project 39A, National Law University, Delhi. Views are personal



JANUARY 12, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

DRIVERS ROBBED

AFTER LYING LOW for some time, Sikh extremists struck, killing the driver of an oil tanker, Kedar Nath, 32, and looting a number of other truck and tanker drivers near Duburji octroi post, about five km from Amritsar. According to eyewitnesses, there were seven extremists. They escaped after a brief encounter with the police.

RICE PRICE HIKE

THE CENTRAL ISSUE price of rice distributed through fair price shops is being raised by 20

paise a kilogram from January 16. V C Gangopadhyaya, Department of Food secretary, CRajeswara Rao, who wants the CPI to continue opposing Mrs Gandhi's domestic politics and explore avenues of cooperation with left and democratic parties.

OWN A FLAT IN DELHI

THE BOMBAY APARTMENT Ownership Act will be extended to Delhi soon to make flat ownership an attractive proposition. The decision was reportedly taken to give a boost to co-operative housing activity in the Capital to ease the acute housing situation. There has been a rush for membership in co-operative housing societies since registration opened.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Open up the playing field

Telecommunication Act sidelines issue of promoting competition, does not recognise technology neutrality in provisioning



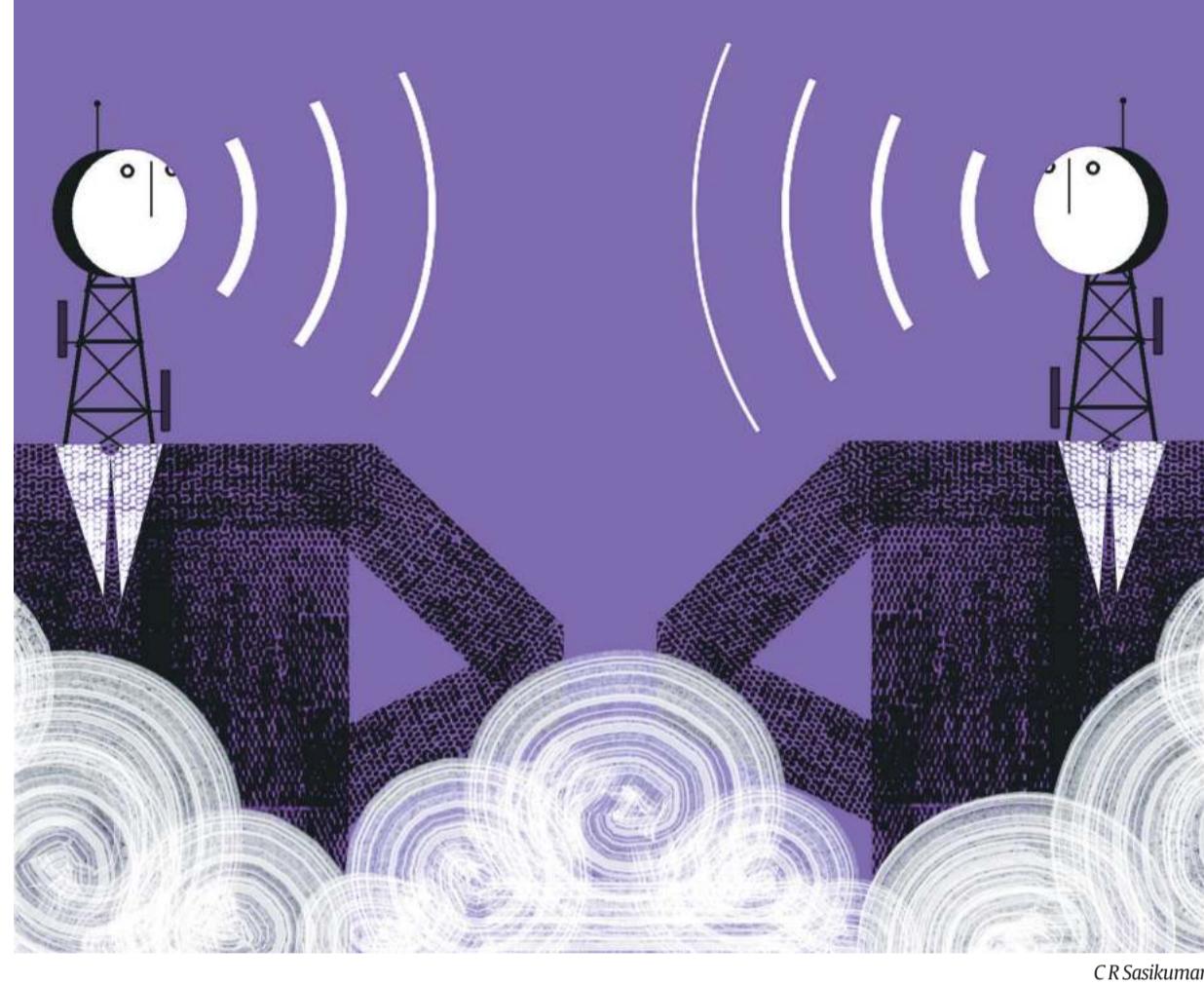
MANSI KEDIA AND
ROHIT PRASAD

THE TELECOMMUNICATION ACT 2023, replaces the hoary Telegraph Act 1885 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933. Through these years, as technology evolved, service providers entered and exited, and communications changed from voice to data, the Telegraph Act stood tall, albeit through a series of amendments and intermittent policy reforms. The life span of this new Act may not be as long, but it will need to see through the next few generations of communications technology including a multitude of innovations spanning human-human (voice calls, messaging, video calls), human-machine (wearables), and machine-machine (Industry 4.0) communications. The use of computing and other complementary technologies such as artificial intelligence, internet of things, and quantum computing, will become inseparable from communications technology.

The Act has introduced several vital changes, though not without the contested provisions for safety standards and public emergencies which give the government unfettered power that can infringe on citizen privacy with little or no accountability for governing officers. The positive changes – providing flexibility for allocation of spectrum, mechanisms for improving right of way and building common ducts and cable corridors, expanding the application of USOF (now Digital Bharat Nidhi) and improving fund utilisation – are certainly steps in the right direction. In this piece we focus on two important, and perhaps overlooked objectives: (i) The promotion of competition and (ii) resource mobilisation for infrastructure upgrade in a debt-laden industry.

On 5G, India, like most other countries, is stuck in a vicious cycle of unattractive use cases, poor monetisation and under-investment in infrastructure. The publicly committed capex of Rs 42,000 and Rs 33,000 crore for 2023-24 by Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel respectively, is driven by their roll out targets, after which both companies are expected to substantially lower capex, between 30-40 per cent of previous year's levels. Investments in 5G start-ups have shrunk from \$639 million in 2022 to \$134.1 million in 2023. One of the reasons cited by venture capitalists was the limited availability of 5G connectivity beyond the metros. Opening up the market to new players and improving competition can attract more investments and consequently innovation in the industry.

The Act's section on Powers of Authorisation and Assignment rightly provides for technology neutrality of spectrum use, but does not reflect the same in the delivery of communication services. Telecom services are no longer distinguishable by technology type. A combination of technologies can be used to deliver voice and data services. It is important that any new player in the services market has non-discriminatory and non-exclusive access to infrastructure on a commercial basis for it to compete against integrated entities. In the new Act, the spirit



CR Sasikumar

of infrastructure unbundling that is manifest in the section on right of way for facilities providers needs to find expression in the section on authorisations. The aim should be to facilitate what is referred to in the literature as equivalence of inputs (products and processes offered to competitors at the same terms as to the operator's own retail arm) and/or equivalence of outputs (products and services offered by the operator to its own retail business and to other operators, are functionally comparable). What we are pointing towards is merely the old idea of functional separation that was first brought up in the Communications Convergence Bill of 2001.

Functional separation has been used as a regulatory remedy by many countries to address market concentration. Some common examples include Sweden, UK, Australia, Ireland and Poland. However, no regulation is without risk. The remedies when disproportionate can lead to counterproductive outcomes including lower investments and lower innovation. Voluntary transitions, as implemented by Italy, always work better for infrastructure industries served by incumbents. When incentivised through lower taxation or other fiscal benefits, we expect to see the industry settle into a range of configurations from fully integrated telcos to network aggregators and pure play service providers.

Further, for India to move to high quality digital applications, it has to lend itself to multiple technology configurations and transition from wireless to a wireline led architecture. The emphasis on Right of Way in the provisions of the new Act, acknowledges this need as well. Besides creating an enabling business environment that lowers cost for business, investing in fibre infrastructure will require a significant amount of resource generation for both urban and rural areas.

For India to move to high quality digital applications, it has to lend itself to multiple technology configurations and transition from wireless to a wireline led architecture. The emphasis on Right of Way in the provisions of the new Act, acknowledges this need as well. Besides creating an enabling business environment that lowers cost for business, investing in fibre infrastructure will require a significant amount of resource generation for both urban and rural areas.

significant amount of resource generation for both urban and rural areas. The government through the USOF, should also contribute through explicit targets for infrastructure buildout in rural and non-rural areas, while creating a competitive space for investments by the private sector.

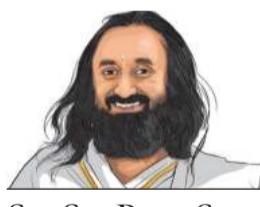
Finally, just as this Act has integrated two acts whose separation had become superfluous, the siloed view of telecommunications and internet will soon become inhibiting. Regulatory convergence is no longer a new idea for digital technologies, telecommunications and broadcasting. TRAI's Consultation paper of January 2023, raised the challenge of fragmented oversight over converged services. It asked questions on the efficacy of separate licences and distinctive administrative departments to handle converged services. In a world where the functional distinction between telcos and over-the-top services is blurring, with the two playing both complementary and competitive roles with respect to each other, an integrated view is essential. Adding broadcasting to the mix is also important. A unified vision of the government of India should bring synergies in licensing, standards, skilling and governance across different departments.

The sustained growth of India's telecom industry sits at the centre of India's digital revolution. Unleashing competition in services and facilitating the transition to fibre-based networks, while promoting technology dynamism are lodestars for the new era ushered in by the Telecommunications Act, 2023. This time it cannot be a case of so near, yet so far.

Kedia is Senior Fellow, ICRIER and Prasad is Professor, MDI Gurgaon. Views are personal

Goddess Kali & Ram mandir

When Ayodhya was rocked by violence, a prophecy showed the way



SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

AS THE COUNTRY prepares for the consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, a long-awaited dream is about to become a reality. It's time to appreciate the role played by the Supreme Court, our prime minister and all the stakeholders. The saga around the Ram temple in Ayodhya is full of interesting anecdotes and mysteries.

In the summer of 2002, Ashok Singhal, then president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, came to meet me at our Bangalore ashram. He had arrived from Kanchipuram where he had met the erstwhile Kanchi Shankaracharya Sri Jayendra Saraswathi in connection with the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. This was soon after the talks between the Shankaracharya and prominent Muslim leaders had failed. Singhal wanted then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to clear the path to build the Ram Mandir immediately. Some of his demands seemed impractical given that Vajpayee was running a coalition government.

Vajpayee and I had kept in touch on the Ayodhya issue ever since we met in 2001, following my return to India from the World Economic Forum (WEF). He had entrusted me with the task of finding a cordial settlement to the long-standing dispute. In response, I embarked on a series of discussions with influential members of the Muslim community.

At the time, Singhal was not on talking terms with Vajpayee, especially after the latter had him force-fed during his fast-unto-death campaign on the Ayodhya dispute. He

had arrived at the ashram to persuade me to convince Vajpayee to introduce legislation to solve the Ram Janmabhoomi matter once and for all, even if it led to the collapse of the government. "I don't care", he said.

At 76, Singhal radiated a fervent spirit and the spark in his eyes displayed passion, righteous indignation and frustration. He asked me whether the temple would ever be built. I then intuitively felt that it would not happen for at least another 14 years. I remember telling him, "Pray for it and with your commitment, all is possible".

The next morning during meditation, I had a vision of a dilapidated Devi temple with a pond that needed to be resurrected. I didn't pay much heed to it then. A few days later, an elderly Nadi Siddhar from Tamil Nadu visited the ashram. As he read the ancient palm leaves, he said with gentle authority, "Gurudev, it is written that you will need to play a role in bringing both communities together to resolve the Ram Janmabhoomi issue." He added, "The nadi leaves also reveal that a temple built for the Kuladevi (family deity) of Shri Rama, Devkali, is languishing in severe neglect. Unless it is restored, the strife surrounding the Ram temple in Ayodhya will not end".

Neither Nadi Siddhar nor I were aware of the existence of such a temple. Enquiries were made. It wasn't long before we discovered that there were, indeed, two Kali mandirs in Ayodhya. The first, in the heart of the city, was called Chhoti Devkali mandir while the second, slightly more distant, was

known as the Devkali mandir – it was in ruins, with its central pond reduced to a dumping ground. I reached out to our volunteers to start work on renovating the temple and rejuvenating the pond. By mid-September, they had completed the task.

On September 19, 2002, the re-consecration of the Devkali temple took place. As I offered the *purnahuti*, I noticed tears of joy and gratitude in the eyes of the temple's aged priest. Goddess Devkali was shining in all her glory.

Strangely enough, after the puja at the temple, the town has not witnessed any bloodshed or rioting due to communal violence. A prophecy had been fulfilled.

Later that evening, a Sant Samagam was held at the Devkali temple premises, to which we had invited both Hindu and Sufi saints. Over a thousand people joined in a satsang. Everyone collectively prayed for a peaceful resolution of the dispute. As I was honouring the Muslim leaders, they presented me with a copy of the Quran along with a book of the Tulsi Ramayan and spoke of their reverence for Ram. Their gesture strengthened my belief that only those with vested interests wanted the communities to stay divided.

Enough blood had already been shed in this age-old conflict and a resolution that would hold the test of time was needed. It was keeping this in mind that in 2003, I proposed an out-of-court settlement where the Muslim community could gift the Ram Janmabhoomi to the Hindus as a gesture of goodwill and the Hindus, in return, could gift

them a five-acre plot of land for the construction of a mosque that they would help build. This would send a clear message of brotherhood.

After the Devkali Prana Prathista, Singhal invited me to his ancestral home in Allahabad. I told him that it is not human effort alone, but the Divine will too, that plays a role in the fruition of any action. And for that, we need patience. I hinted to him that he should not rush matters. By the end of the evening, he seemed much more relaxed and had softened in his stand against the Vajpayee government.

Years passed. In 2017, prompted by leaders from both communities and later the Supreme Court, I resumed my efforts to mediate in the Ram Janmabhoomi matter. Ultimately, the Supreme Court delivered its judgment allocating the said land for the construction of a temple and designating five acres for the construction of a mosque. It was a momentous occasion as a 500-year-old conflict reached a peaceful resolution.

What may often seem like a phenomenon, actually has an underlying subtle aspect. We tend to navigate the cause-and-effect dynamics within the realm of the tangible, seldom extending our perception beyond it. The truth is the forces of the subtle realm have a great say over what ultimately materialises in our physical world – another mystery of this enigmatic world that we inhabit.

The writer is a spiritual leader and founder of the Art of Living Foundation

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Israel should recognise now that there is no reasonable, long-term settlement with the Palestinians that does not involve the creation of a Palestinian state... Biden administration must make clear that Oct 7 has changed the picture, and Israel's policy must change, too."

— THE WASHINGTON POST

Opposition's things to do

First and foremost, it should underline that Ram temple hype cannot hijack the political agenda



DUSHYANT DAVE

The term Opposition must be understood as "constitutional Opposition" and not merely as "opposing". The delicate process of constitutionalisation of politics results in an approach in which the opposer is not an enemy. The Opposition must not just obstruct or oppose, but be constructive. Of course, this can work more easily in two-party systems. But with the multi-party system in India, the challenge is unique. The Opposition must understand that it may be called to "respond" in the coming general elections. It must display that it is oriented towards governing. For this, it needs to demonstrate that it can be responsible, restrained and realistic.

The emergence of a dominant party under a strong prime minister increases the possibility of an erosion of democratic values. This happened between 1975 and 1977 during the Congress regime and is presently in action. To counter this, the Opposition must unite – not just in numbers, but in spirit.

Thousands of Congress leaders and workers sacrificed their lives, liberties and resources in the struggle for freedom. The Congress must deliver this message to the voters. Today's Congress is far removed from its original self. It must reinvent itself to project that image if it wants to play a role in the future of the nation. This calls for huge sacrifices from its leaders and cadres. First and foremost, it must realise it is no longer a dominant force, nor does it have the ideology to galvanise the country. It must acknowledge the rise of regional parties and work in tandem with them to achieve constitutional goals. In turn, regional parties must respect the Congress while ascertaining their own positions and work towards success in the forthcoming general elections.

The popularity of the prime minister and the BJP's organisational structure and vast financial resources need not deter the Opposition. It must remember that the ruling party secured less than 40 per cent vote share to succeed in the last general elections. But to counter it effectively, the Opposition needs strategy, hard work, sincerity, sacrifice and internal accommodation.

The Constitution envisages a parliamentary system of government. Under it, following the elections for the Lok Sabha, the majority party/parties are invited to form the government by the President, while those belonging to the minority party/parties become the Opposition.

B R Ambedkar on November 4, 1948, gave a rationale for this system vis-a-vis a presidential system saying, "In England, where the parliamentary system prevails, the assessment of responsibility of the Executive is both daily and periodic. The daily assessment is done by members of Parliament, through questions, resolutions, no-confidence motions, adjournment motions and debates on addresses... The draft Constitution in recommending the parliamentary system of Executive has preferred more responsibility to more stability."

But, the absence of assessment, much less "daily assessment" by Parliament has resulted in an absence of responsibility. The fundamental premise of parliamentary democracy appears to be vanishing. This, coupled with the failure of constitutional institutions, including the judiciary, makes it seem as though the democracy envisioned by the constitutional framers is failing.

The challenges should be highlighted with facts, figures, and sober slogans. The prime minister occupies a constitutional office that must be respected and the Opposition would be well advised to steer clear from attacking him personally, much less with unparliamentary language.

Any delay in the Opposition getting its act together will only make its task more difficult, if not impossible.

The writer is a senior advocate practising before the Supreme Court of India

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HOLD YOUR GROUND

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Tighten your seatbelts' (IE, January 11). The political scenario in the US is in turmoil, but that is so far limited to the borders of the country. Politicians of all hues remain united as far as matters of foreign policy are concerned. Unlike some Indian politicians, they don't go to other nations to garner voters' support. The "America First" principle is given priority by all parties. With that perspective in mind, they will deal with India in all spheres including strategic, defence and issues of commerce. This policy continues irrespective of the party in power.

Accordingly, Delhi should also keep its interests intact during its dealings with America.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

CLASSICAL MUSIC STAR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Music cut short' (IE, January 11). In the passing away of the Padma Bhushan awardee Ustad Rashid Khan, a mellifluous voice which mesmerised, enthralled and regaled millions of people across the globe has been muted prematurely, at such a young age. Rashid Khan possessed such talent that also made Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi utter that after watching Rashid, it is com-

forting and safe to assume that the future of Indian Classical music is very bright. The eclectic nature of his style of singing was what brought him admiration from the cognoscenti and layman alike. Rashid Khan gave his first performance at the age of 11 and his uncle Ghulam Mustafa Khan, who also was a very popular musician cum singer, spotted Rashid's precocity and took him under his wing.

Hemant Hemmady, Virar

UNITE AND ACT NOW

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bad weather report' (IE, January 11). Without addressing the following three concerns, a united front on climate action will be difficult. The first is the lack of prompt funding for climate adaptation and carbon mitigation for developing nations. The second is weak action on the transition to clean energy. The third is poor coordination between nations to handle the inevitable health, economic and migration crises that will occur due to climate change-induced extreme weather events. India is emerging as a leader in the fight against climate change, but a few nations alone cannot counter this emergency. Unity is necessary and action is urgently required.

Anany Mishra, Bhilai


Canara Bank
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RECOVERY & LEGAL SECTION, CIRCLE OFFICE

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PROPERTY FOR E-AUCTION
E-AUCTION Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / hypothecated/ Pledged / charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive / physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Canara Bank** will be sold on "As Is where Is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on **29.01.2024**. Details are as under :

Sl. No.	Name / Add. Contact No. of the Branch	Name and Address of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Outstanding in Rs.	Details of Property	Reserve Price (Rs.) /EMD/Bid Multiplier Amt./Ac No./IFSC Code	Sl. No.	Name / Add. Contact No. of the Branch	Name and Address of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Outstanding in Rs.	Details of Property	Reserve Price (Rs.) /EMD/Bid Multiplier Amt./Ac No./IFSC Code
1	Pachna Branch Mob. 8210998560	Borrower - Sri Anmol Saw S/o Rameshwar Saw, Smt. Fekni Devi (Co-Borrower cum Mortgagor) W/o Sri Rameshwar Saw, Both R/o Mauza - Kaithama, P.S - Sheikhpura, Dist- Sheikhpura - 811107	Rs. 11,76,157.08 as on 05.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	The property is residential constructed building (Floor - G.F) situated at Mauza- Kaithama, Thana No - 224, Khata No- 82 & 81, Plot no- 1294 & 1293, Near- South Bihar Gramin Bank, Anchal - Sheikhpura, Dist- Sheikhpura, Bihar in the name of Smt. Fekni Devi W/o Sri Rameshwar Saw Extent Area- 05 Decimal Boundary : North - P.C.C Road, South - Mahendra Choudhari, East- 6' wide gali, West- Udit Narayan Singh	Rs. 8,69,400.00 Rs. 86,940/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0001721	16	Genbari Branch Prithvi Market, Genbari Bazar, Korha, PO-Genbari, Bihar-854108 Mob : 8210998596	(1) M/s Amisha Traders, Prop. A m o n K u m a r S i n g h , Mahinathpur, Sisia, District - Kathiar, Bihar, Pin- 854108 (2) Mr. Amod Kumar Singh (Borrower), S/o Ramesh Prasad Singh, Mahinathpur, Sisia, District - Kathiar, Bihar, Pin-854108 (3) Mr. Subhash Kumar S/o Kuldev Singh (Guarantor in Housing Loan) House No. - 8, Mahinathpur, PO - Shishiyia, District- Kathiar, Bihar- 854108	Rs. 16,26,099.15 as on 10.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	1. Sale Deed No. -7939, Dated -11.06.2016 All that part and parcel of land Measuring 06 Decimal Covered Under Khata No. - 128, Khesra No. - 1270, Thana No. - 120, Tauji No. - 1/1309, Situated at Mauja - Mahinathpur, Thana + Anchal - Korha, Registry + Dist - Kathiar, Bihar in the name of Mr. Amod Kumar Singh S/o Ramesh Prasad Singh , Boundary : North - Arbind Singh, South - Brick Soling Road, East - Niz Purchaser, West - Niz Seller. 2. Sale Deed No. -4452, Dated -11.03.2010 All that part and parcel of land Measuring 2 Decimal Covered Under Khata No. - 128, Khesra No. - 1270, Thana No. - 120, Tauji No. - 1/1309, Situated at Mauja - Mahinathpur, Thana + Anchal- Korha, Registry + Dist - Kathiar, Bihar in the name of Mr. Amod Kumar Singh S/o Ramesh Prasad Singh , Boundary : North - Gayatri Devi & others, South - Brick Soling Road, East - Niz Purchaser, West - Niz	Rs. 18,04,000/- Rs. 1,80,400/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0008362
2	Faridpur Branch Mob. 8210998541	Borrower- Mr. Yadunandan Yadav, S/o Late Kuldeep Yadav, Co - Borrower- Mr. Pintu Kumar S/o Yadunandan Yadav, Both Resident of Vill - Vilta, PO - Manana, P.S. - Sheikhpura, Bihar- 811105	Rs. 6,16,536.30 as on 05.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	Freehold Residential Property situated at Mauza- Vihta, Khata No. - 15, Plot No. - 664, Dist- Sheikhpura, Bihar in the name of Mr. Yadunandan Yadav , S/o Late Kuldeep Yadav, Total Area - 9 Decimal Boundary - North - Niz Rasta Purchaser, South - Ramotar Yadav, East - Guleshwar Chaudhary, West- Lakha Yadav	Rs. 22,90,500/- Rs. 2,29,050/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0005469	17	Madhubani Branch Nariyal Bazar, Madhubani, Bihar Pin- 847211 Mob. : 8210998612	1. M/s Maa Lakhya Drug Agency, Prop. - Mrs. Sarita Kumari (Borrower) W/o Santoshi Kumar, Vill - Nabhat, PS- Pandalu Vla- Lohat, Distt- Madhubani, Bihar- 847231 2. Santosh Kumar (Guarantor) S/o Sri Satydev Yadav, Vill - Nabhat, PS - Pandalu Vla- Lohat, Distt-Madhubani, Bihar- 847231	Rs. 51,38,519.85 as on 10.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	Sale Deed No 6852 Dated 30.07.2012 All That Part And Parcel of Land Measuring 2.18 Decimal Khesra No-5461,5462(old)6 (new) Khata No. -X, Thana No.-62, Tauji No. -6424, Situated At Singhiniya Chauk Locality Sangat Mohalla No-23 Post & Dist- Madhubani in the Name of Mr. Santosh Kumar S/o Late Satydev Yadav Boundary : North - Niz Vendee & Road, South-Md. Ilyas Darji, East-Ram Chaitra Mishra, West -Road.	Rs. 16,32,000/- Rs. 1,63,200/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code: CNRB0008362
3	Dibhiya Branch Mob. : 8210998539	Borrower Cum Mortgagor :- Sri Arvind Kumar Singh S/o Late Sheosankar Singh Mortgagor: Smt. Sulakhana, Kunwar W/o Late Sheosankar Singh. Guarantor: Sri Jit Narayan Singh S/o Late Sheosankar Singh, All Resident of Vill- Shiwan, Po+P+Kargahar, Dist-Rohtas, Bihar, 821107	Rs. 11,24,307.38 as on 05.01.2024 interest & Other Cost thereon	The property is residential property situated at Plot No- 2069/2289, Thana No- 78, Mauza- Shivan, PS - Kargahar, Dist- Rohtas, Bihar, Extent of Area- 2.66 Decimal, Boundary: North : Tej Narayan Singh, South : Jagdish Singh, East : Chandradhan, West : Gali & Suresh Name of title holder-Sri Arvind Kumar Singh S/o Late Sheosankar Singh & Widow Sulakhana Kunwar W/o Late Sheosankar Singh	Rs. 4,48,000/- Rs. 48,800/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0001737	18	Munger Branch 1st Floor, Shivnandam Palace, Bari Bazar, Munger, Bihar- 811201 Mob. : 8210998615	1. Malti Devi W/o Prakash Poddar, Maksuspur, Dhobi Tola, Near Mahabir Asthan, Munger Pin- 811201. 2. Mukesh Kumar S/o Sri Nath Sah, Shadipur, In front of Nathum dealer, behind Bari Durga Asthan, Munger - 811201	Rs. 42,33,744.58 as on 10.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	All That Part And Parcel of Landed Property Situated At Mauza - Maksuspur, Thana - Kasim Bazar, Munger, Sale Deed No -1627, Date 22.05.2007, Tauzi No. - 414, Jamabandi -No./295/298, Khesra No. - 258 Sheet No-2, Holding No. - 496 (old)534 (new), Area-1.65 Decimal In The Name of Malti Devi . Bounded : North - Aradhana Sinha, South - Shashikala Devi, East - Govt. Toilet West -10' Municipal Path	Rs. 22,29,600/- Rs. 2,22,960/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code: CNRB0008362
4	Balihar Branch Mob. : 8102915093	Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) : Sri Akhilesh Kumar Singh S/o Rajeshwar Singh, Mortgagor: Sri Rajeshwar Singh S/o Late Akhilesh Kumar Singh, Both Resident of Vill- Dhodhandih, P.o- Nonhar, P.s- Surayapura, Dist- Rohtas, Bihar - 802221	Rs. 9,89,101.84 as on 05.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon	Residential Property (single Storey Building) Situated at Mauza- Nonher, Thana No. - 326, Khata No-41, Khasra No - 3875, Ps - Surajpura Dist - Rohtas, Boundary-North-Niz, South -Rajeshwar Singh, East - Ganesh Singh and Others, West - Kacchi Road & Karha, Extent of areas- 3.125 Dec. Name of Title Holder:- Mr. Akhilesh Kumar Singh His Minor Sons Bir Bahadur Singh and Vikash Kumar Singh), All are resident of Vill- Dhodhandih, PO-Nonhar, PS-Suryapura, Dist-Rohtas, Bihar 802221	Rs. 14,90,000/- Rs. 1,49,000/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0017582	19	Gulabbagh Branch First Floor, Hansda Road, Sanauli Chowk, Gulabbagh, Bihar- 854326 Mob. : 8210998598	1. M/s Platinum Overseas Prop.-Kamal Ahmad, Shastri Nagar, Gulabbagh, Purnea, Bihar- 854326 2. Kamal Ahmad S/o Mohammad Jalal, Shastri Nagar, Gulabbagh, Purnea, Bihar- 3. Ishrat Jahan W/o Md. Jalal, Shastri Nagar, Gulabbagh, Ward- No-36, PO Gulabbagh, Purnea, Bihar	Rs. 68,54,546.93 as on 10.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	1. Sale Deed No -13087/13 Dated 13.12.2007 All That Part And Parcel of Land Measuring 06 Decimal 03 Kari Covered Under R.S. Khata No. -448, Survey No. -2903 & 2904, Situated At Mohalla / Village- Basantpur, Mauja + Thana - Abdullanagar, Thana No. - 100/1, Tauji No. - 9/5, Gulabbagh, Purnea, District-Purnea In The Name of Ishrat Jahan W/o Md Jalal Boundary - North - Santosh Choudhary, South - Nij Baya, East - Nij Baya, West - Road . 2. Sale Deed No - 399 - Dated 10.01.2013, All that Part and Parcel of Land Measuring 13 Decimal 6.5 Kari Covered Under R.S. Khata No. - 448, Survey No. - 2903 Ansh, Situated At Mohalla / Village- Basantpur, Mauja + Thana-Abdullanagar, Thana No. - 100/1, Tauji	Rs. 33,66,500/- Rs. 3,36,650/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0008362
5	Mahnar Bazar Branch Mob. 8210998412	M/s Surekha Stores, Prop. Sh.Shashi Nath Singh, S/o Late Raghuvan Singh, Ward No. 07, Hasanpur Utri, Hasanpur Junaid, Vaishali- 844503	Rs. 31,51,000/- as on 02.03.2022 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	All that part and parcel of the property bearing Khata Number - 674, Khesra No - 2211,2216, Thana Number - 625 situated at Mauza - Hasanpur Junaid, Anchal & Sub division- Mahnar , Vaishali, Area - 11 dec. Equivalent to 479.20 soft, Mortgagor - Sh. Shashinath Singh , S/o Late Raghuvan Singh, Boundaries as per Deed No. 3130 dated 12/06/2017 Boundary: North - Ravindra Singh & Others, South - Shivnath Choudhary A/p/Road, East - Late Ramchandra Jha & Virodi Singh, West - Ram Ishwar Chaudhary & Others	Rs. 24,53,000/- Rs. 2,50,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0005245	20	Bhore Branch Vill. & PO - Bhore, Gopalganj Mob. : 8210998472	Borrower - M/s Ram Wood Furniture Udoy, Prop- Sri Suresh Kumar Pandey, S/o Kailash Pandey, Vill. - Musahi Bazar, PS - Vijayeeupur, Dist - Gopalganj, Guarantor / Mortgagor - Smt. Fulbadan Devi, W/o Suresh Kr. Pandey, Vill. - Musahi Bazar, PS - Vijayeeupur, Dist - Gopalganj.	Rs. 3,92,519/- as on 04.01.2022 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	All that part and parcel of the property consisting in the name of Smt. Fulbadan Devi , W/o- Suresh Kumar Pandey, Khata No- 898, Plot No. - 116, Tauzi No. - 3296, Thana No. - 106, Area - 5 Katha 13 Dhur. Boundary : North - Jagat Sah, South - Mahadev Kanu, East - Parali Bithia, West - Khadh (Kharah). Location- Vill- Musahi Pragana Kuwadi, Thana No. - 106, Tauzi No. - 3296, P.S. - Vijayeeupur, Dist - Gopalganj.	Rs. 6,89,310/- Rs. 68,931/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB000987
6	Gulabbagh Branch First Floor, Hansda Road, Sanauli Chowk, Gulabbagh, Bihar- 854326 Mob. : 8210998598	Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s): 1. M/s GTC Trading Company Proprietor - Mrs. Viral Kumar, NH-31 Bypass Road, Gulabbagh, Purnea 2. Mrs. Viral Kumar W/o Mr. Sujit Kumar, Chandan Nagar, Gulabbagh, Purnea, 3. Mr. Sujit Kumar S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad Sah, Boundary : North - Pkt Kachhi Rasta 10 Ft, South - Sarayu Sah, East - Nahar, West- Khesra No.-2514 Falawati Devi	Rs. 71,18,098.31 as on 10.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon	Sale Deed No-3198 Dated- 25.02.2011 All that part and parcel of land measuring 17 Decimal 8.50 Kari Covered Under Khata No. - 445, Khesra No. - 2516, Situated At Mauza - Abdullanagar, Tauzi No. - 8/5, Thana No-100/1, Mohalla- Chandannagar, Ward No- 46, Dist- Purnea In The Name of Mr. Sujit Kumar S/o Mr. Rajendra Prasad Sah, Boundary : North - Pkt Kachhi Rasta 10 Ft, South - Sarayu Sah, East - Nahar, West- Khesra No.-2514 Falawati Devi	Rs. 41,83,500/- Rs. 4,18,350/- 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0008362	21	Bhore Branch Vill. & PO - Bhore, Gopalganj Mob. : 8210998472	Borrower - M/s Prabhu Auto Centre, Prop- Prabhu Pandey, Near Shiv Mandir, Main Road Bhore, Dist - Gopalganj - 841426, Ph. : 9006867591	Rs. 30,75,434/- as on 04.01.2023 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	All that part and parcel of the property consisting in the name of Mr. Prabhu Pandey , S/o- Ramayan Pandey, Khata No.- 465, Plot No. - 3831, Tauzi No. - 3296, Thana No.- 362, Jamabandi No.- 3855, Area - 1 Katha 04 Dhur 16 Dhuri, Boundary : North - Sadak, South - Thakur Pandey, East - Sudama Mali, West - Suresh Mani Tripathi, Location- Mauza- Hussepur, P.S- Bhore, Anchal-Bhore, Dist - Gopalganj	Rs. 24,63,210/- Rs. 2,46,321/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB000987
7	Jalalgarh Branch Anand Bazar Main Road, Jalalgarh, Bihar- 854327 Mob. : 8210998599	Anguri Khatoon W/o Md Kalyum, Harchanderpur, Jalalgarh, District Purnea, Bihar- 854327	Rs. 12,96,133.54 as on 10.01.2024 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	Sale Deed No- 9642 Dated- 18.08.2017 All That Part and Parcel of Land Measuring 1 Decimal 470 Sq. Kari Covered Under R.S. Khata No. - 162, R.S. Survey No. 919, Situated At Mohalla/village-Harchandrapur, Mauja + Thana- Harchandrapur, Thana No- 165, Tauji No/ 8/5, Anchal- Jalalgarh, Registry Office- Sadar Purnea, District- Purnea In The Name of Mrs. Angoori Khatoon W/o Md Kalyum Boundary-North -Ramcharan Mandiwal And Road, South -Bibi Mustkeena Begum, East -Satyanarayan Dubey Etc. West -Md Jainul Mistri & Private Road 4 Feet	Rs. 10,16,500/- Rs. 1,01,650/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB0008362	22	Bhore Branch Vill. & PO - Bhore, Gopalganj Mob. : 8210998472	Borrower - M/s Pandey Saw Mill, Prop-Vipin Pandey, Vill. & PO - Musahar Bazar, PS - Bhore, Dist - Gopalganj - 841426 Prop- Vipin Kumar Pandey, S/o- Suresh Pandey, Vill. & PO - Musahar Bazar, PS - Bhore, Dist - Gopalganj- 841426	Rs. 36,86,123/- as on 04.01.2022 + interest & Other Cost thereon till realization	All that part and parcel of the property consisting in the name of Mr. Vipin Kumar Pandey , S/o- Suresh Pandey, Khata No.- 49, Plot No. - 115, Tauzi No. - 3296, Thana No. - 106, Area - 7 Katha 06 Dhur. Boundary : North - Garju Kohar, South - Sadak, East - Durga Asthan, West - Khadh (Kharah). Location- Vill- Musahar Pragha Kuwari, Thana No. - 106, Tauzi No.- 3296, P.S.-Vijayeeupur, Dist - Gopalganj.	Rs. 6,15,600/- Rs. 61,560/- Rs. 10,000/- A/c - 209272434 IFSC Code - CNRB000987
8	Murligan Branch Shanti Nagar, Ward No. - 8, Murligan, Bihar- 852122 Mob. : 821099861										



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

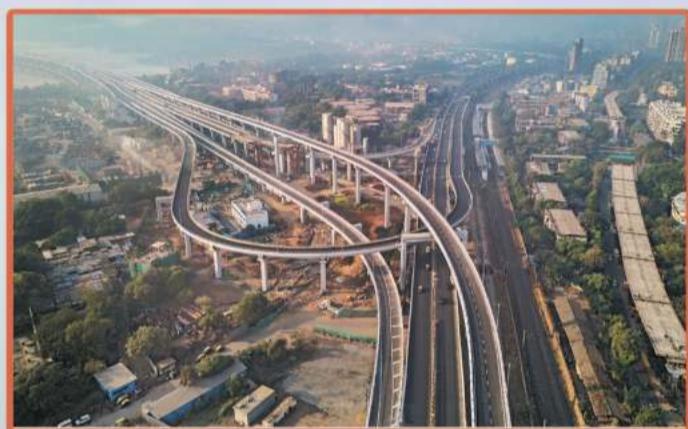


Eknath Shinde
Chief Minister

Dynamic & Modern Project's Shaping India's Progress!

Inauguration, Foundation stone laying ceremony and Dedication to the nation

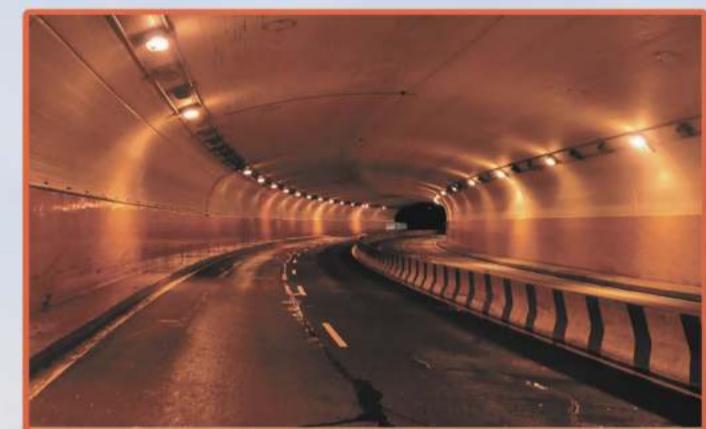
Various development works by the auspicious hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi



Atal Bihari Vajpayee
Sewri Nhava-Sheva Atal Setu



NaMo Mission – Chief Minister
Women Empowerment Scheme



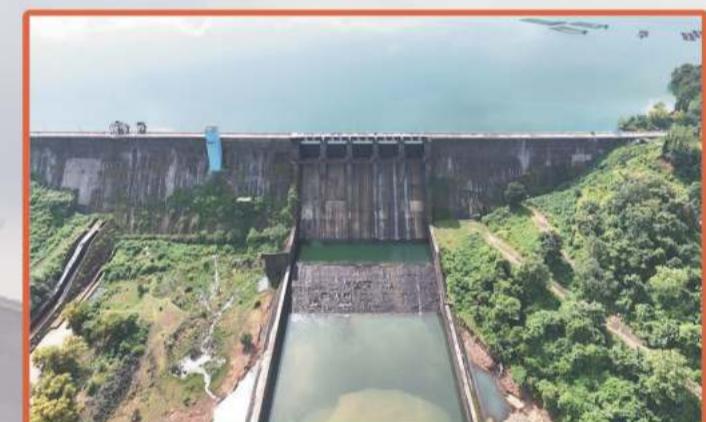
Orange Gate to Marine Drive
underground tunnel project



Nari Shaktidoot App



Navi Mumbai Metro-1 from
Belapur to Pendhar



Surya Regional Water Supply project
for the cities located in the Western
Division of Mumbai Metropolitan Region

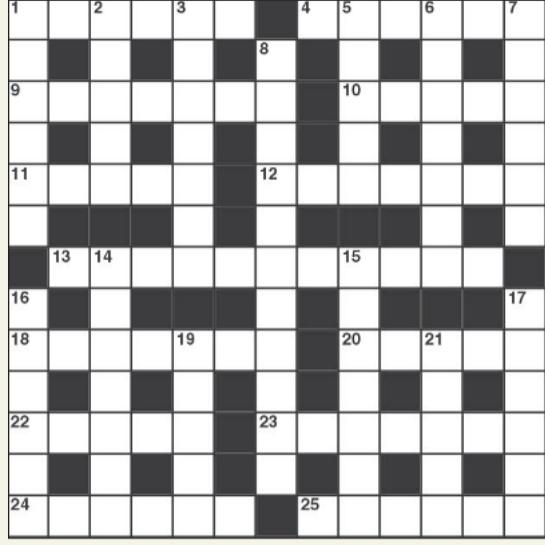


DGIPR-2023-24-6626

Date: 12 January 2024 | Time: 4 PM

**Navi Mumbai International Airport Ground Opp. the office Building,
Tehsil-Panvel, District Raigad, Pin-410206.**

CROSSWORD 5259



ACROSS

- 1 The first man is taken in by me to see a lady (6)
 4 The boring sound of us makes one laugh (6)
 9 He and Carol are convulsed by disease (7)
 10 Colour for putting on (5)
 11 Sort of kid to get things humming? (5)
 12 Broadcast a tirade perhaps (7)
 13 The price of cleanliness? (7,4)
 18 For sure it's made of iron (7)
 20 Show into Poe's house? (5)
 22 A great cry of 'Stop' (5)
 23 Stop and go after amber changes (7)
 24 He has absolute control of the French vessel (6)
 25 Brushes and feeds (6)

Solutions Crossword 5258 Across: 1 Reserve, 5 Lever, 8 Current prices, 9 Evens, 10 Iron ore, 11 Canine, 12 T-shirt, 15 Unkempt, 17 Gifts, 19 Tricky problem, 20 Dear, 21 Elapses Down: 1 Ruche, 2 Surgeon's knife, 3 Reels in, 4 Entail, 5 Largo, 6 Victoria Falls, 7 Respect, 11 Courted, 13 Signora, 14 Staple, 16 Maher, 18 Sumps

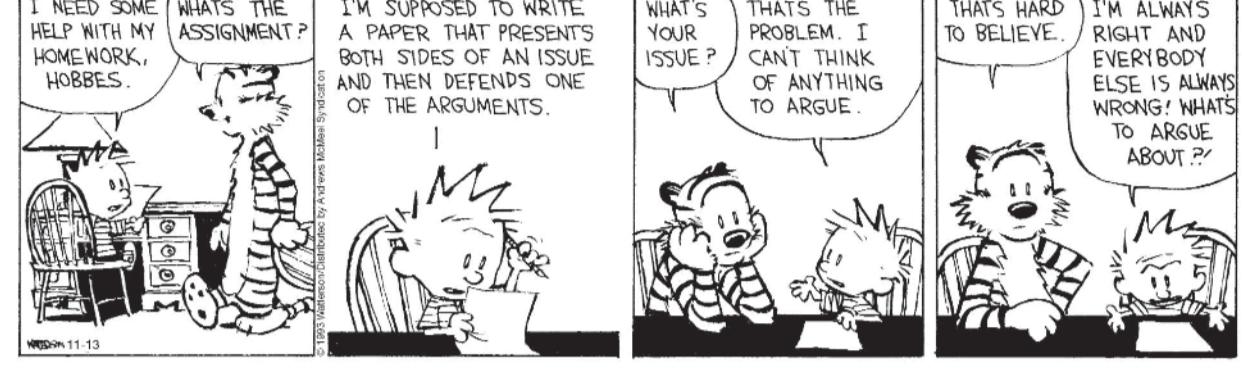
DOWN

- 1 Scotsman saw strange birds (6)
 2 Loincloth with evidence of red-hot iron (5)
 3 Muslim of high calling? (7)
 5 Did some pressing (5)
 6 Blanket is finished completely (7)
 7 Person very like a campanologist (6)
 8 One of the top stylists (11)
 14 Overhead lines (7)
 15 Cry from a whale (7)
 16 Far-flung relief for the fearful (6)
 17 Slavers exchanged or sold (6)
 19 Excel with an alfresco celebration (5)
 21 Unit of frequency does some damage we hear (5)

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

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

Absence of ____ is not ____ a mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.

-William Cowper (10.,4.)

TAEOR

ESSNTU

CIOST

AETCCP

William Cowper
Answer: Absence of respect is not rest; a mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.

SOLUTION: ORATE, STOTIC, SUNSET, ACCEPT

SUDOKU 5439

Difficulty Level 5s

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.

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5438

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

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P. C.

Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **Aditya @ Raj @ Raj Kumar S/o Satish @ Mahender** R/o E-291, JJ Colony, Sec-24 Rohini, Delhi, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 380/23 U/s 307/146/147/148/201/34 IPC, has been registered at P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, **Aditya @ Raj @ Raj Kumar** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, **Aditya @ Raj @ Raj Kumar** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused of **Aditya @ Raj @ Raj Kumar** FIR No. 380/23 U/s 307/146/147/148/201/34 IPC, registered at P.S. Budh Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 25.04.2024.

By Order

Ms. Divya Arora, MM,
Room No. 112, Rohini Courts, Delhi

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

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) **Ramesh Kumar S/o Harbans Lal R/o H. No. CA36C, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi** Also at: BS-Block, 57A, Janta Flat, Shalimar Bagh, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No. 143/2012, U/s 420/468/471/201/34 IPC, PS Model Town, Delhi and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Ramesh Kumar** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Ramesh Kumar** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person(s) **Ramesh Kumar** of FIR No. 143/2012, U/s 420/468/471/201/34 IPC, PS Model Town, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated 28.02.2024.

By Order

Sh. Himanshu Sehlot
Metropolitan Magistrate-03
Court No. 213 (North),
Rohini Courts, Delhi

INSTITUTE OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR & ALLIED SCIENCES (IHBAS)

Hospital based autonomous academic Institute, under Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi, dealing with "Brain – Mind Problems & their Solutions" Dilshad Garden, Delhi 110 095 (India), Tel.: 2259 7750 E-mail: purchaseihbas@gmail.com; website: www.ihbas.delhi.govt.nic.in

No.F.14/27/PSM/IHBS/2022/494 Dated: 08.01.2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The following tenders are being uploaded on the E-procurement site (<http://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>) of Delhi Govt./IHBAS website:

S. No.	Name of items	Uploading Site
1.	Tender for Empanelment of local chemist	E-procurement portal

Interested firms/suppliers may please see the detailed Terms & Conditions of the respective Tenders from the above mentioned sites before submission of the tender.

Sd/-

Officer In-charge Purchase
(Medical)

SEARCH FOR MISSING



Danish

General Public is hereby informed that a person namely **Danish S/o Sahidu, R/o H.No. B-253, Gali No. 12, Shri Ram Colony, Delhi** has been missing since 06.01.2024. In this regard a **GD No.011-A** dated **09.01.2024** has been lodged at PS, Khajuri Khas, Delhi. The description of missing person is as under:

Name : Danish, Father's Name : Sahidu, Age : 35 years, Height : 5'4", Complexion : Fair, Face : Oval, Built : Medium, Wearing : White Colour T-Shirt, Blue Colour Jacket & Jense and Blue Shoes in feet.

If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in

Fax : 011-24368639

Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641

Extn No. : 2101

DP/398/NE/2024

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

(See Section 82 Cr.P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely **(1) Nitin Kumar, R/o 2/725 - 726, Agarsen Chowk Main Market Old Faridabad, Haryana also at H.No. 9, Block 16, First Floor, Back Side of Spring Field Colony, Sector-30 - 31, Faridabad, Haryana and (2) Kanchan Mahajan, C/o M/S Faridabad, Handloom, R/o 2/725 - 726, Agarsen Chowk Main Market Old Faridabad, Haryana also at H.No. 9, Block 16, First Floor, Back Side of Spring Field Colony, Sector-30 - 31, Faridabad, Haryana** has committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence in **Case Ct. Case No. 4082/2019, U/s 138 NI Act, PS Mangolpuri, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused (1) **Nitin Kumar** and (2) **Kanchan Mahajan** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused (1) **Nitin Kumar** and (2) **Kanchan Mahajan** have absconded (or are concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused (1) **Nitin Kumar** and (2) **Kanchan Mahajan** of Ct. Case No. 4082/2019, U/s 138 NI Act, PS Mangolpuri, Delhi are required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 13.02.2024.

By Order

Shri Rishabh Kapoor

Metropolitan Magistrate (North-West)

Room No. 105, First Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi

DP/378/OD/2024

SHO
P.S., Khajuri Khas, Delhi
Ph. : 011-22962735
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BRIEFLY

Alexandrova stuns Rybakina to enter SF

Adelaide: Australian Open runner-up Elena Rybakina was handed a humbling defeat ahead of the year's first Grand Slam as the world number three was beaten 6-3 6-3 by the unseeded Ekaterina Alexandrova in the Adelaide International quarter-finals on Thursday. Kazakh Rybakina laid down a marker by beating Melbourne Park champion Aryna Sabalenka in Sunday's Brisbane final but was well off the pace against world number 21 Alexandrova as she sought a second win in their fourth meeting. The top seed found herself 4-0 down following an error-prone start before clawing her way back with some fierce ball-striking but the counter-punching Alexandrova held firm and broke again to clinch the opening set. **REUTERS**

Avani remains tied second in Melbourne

Melbourne: India's Avani Prashanth braved a tough round three to hang onto the shared second place on the third day of the Australian Masters of Amateurs tournament in Southern Golf Club here Thursday. Avani, who shared the second place with two others at 3-under 143 for two rounds at the Par-73 course, was four shots behind the new leader, Lion Higo from Gold Coast, Australia. Higo, who plays US College golf in Pepperdine, played rounds of 71-71-70. Avani, ranked 50th in the world, and one of the top contenders for the title shot 77 on this day, but still managed to be in second place with Rianne Malixi of the Philippines, who shot 1-over 74. **PTI**

Super Cup: Mumbai rally to beat Gokulam

Bhubaneswar: Mumbai City came from a goal down to beat Gokulam Kerala 2-1 in their Group C match of the Kalinga Super Cup here on Thursday. An off-colour and youngster-filled Mumbai City were made to struggle for the points and rely on a penalty to seal it in injury time. Deep into the injury time a needless foul by Basith Ahmed Bhat on the edge of the box saw Gokulam concede a penalty. El Khayati made no mistake from the spot to give Mumbai the win. **PTI**

Eriksson reveals cancer battle

London: Former England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson has said he has been diagnosed with cancer and has a year to live in a "best-case scenario". "Everyone can see that I have a disease that's not good, and everyone supposes that it's cancer, and it is. But I have to fight it as long as possible," the 75-year-old Eriksson said in an appearance on Swedish Radio P1. "I know that in the best case it's about a year, in the worst case even less. I don't think the doctors I have can be totally sure." **REUTERS**

DEVENDRA PANDEY

MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

ALL EYES will be on Shreyas Iyer as the middle-order batsman uses Mumbai's Ranji Trophy game against Andhra at the MCA-BKC ground to get some valuable red-ball game time ahead of the five-match home Test series against England.

With merely two weeks left for the first Test in Hyderabad, Iyer will hope to find the middle of the bat to go into the series with some runs under his belt.

The Mumbai stalwart has cemented his place in the Indian white-ball set-up and will look to do likewise in Tests as well. He is coming off a lean outing in South Africa, like many of his fellow Indian batsmen, but the team management has backed him to be the right candidate for a middle-order slot. Iyer, in the past, has shown he can handle crunch situations.

The 29-year-old though didn't turn up for the pre-match practice session on Thursday and neither was he available for the team meeting later in the day, as he was yet to join the squad.

Iyer was given the option by the BCCI's selection committee to feature in the India A series against England Lions in Ahmedabad. Instead, Iyer has chosen to play in the Ranji Trophy to prepare for the upcoming Tests after managing scores of 31, 6, 0 and 4 not out in South Africa.

His presence will be a boost for Mumbai, who will be missing the services of Sarfaraz Khan and all-rounder Shivam Dube. Khan has been picked for the India A side to face England Lions while Dube is in the national squad for the three-game T20 series against the visiting Afghanistan team.

Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane said that

For Iyer, preparation for England series begins against Andhra



Shreyas Iyer will want to cement his place in India's Test squad. **PTI**

having Iyer back in the camp will be a shot in the arm for his side, as they look for a win at home after starting their campaign by beating Bihar in Patna.

"Shreyas is available for this game and that boosts everyone's morale. Youngsters are trying to settle and cement their place in the team, so it's a good sign. Guys who are coming into the team have done the hard work, they did well in club cricket. We just want to back them up," the veteran middle-order batsman said.

"I'm happy that guys are going ahead, Shivam has gone to play T20s (for India) and Sarfaraz has gone to play for India A. That gives us an opportunity to other players to come in and do well and win the match for Mumbai."

The 41-time Ranji Trophy champions didn't qualify for the knockouts last season and would look to make amends. "Last season, we played good cricket but unfortunately didn't qualify. We have learnt from last season and

the areas we need to improve in. The four-day format is all about winning every session, one day at a time, and being in the moment. We are trying to keep it simple rather than trying different things because then things get messed up," Rahane added.

Meanwhile, Andhra will look to put on a good show like they did in the last game against Bengal. They managed a first-innings lead at home and now will hope to stun Mumbai in their own backyard.

"Last year, we qualified for the quarterfinals, so we are a good red-ball team. This start was important because in this group Bengal and Mumbai are the big teams. We knew if we win both the games, we will have a great start and a good chance (to qualify) in the next five games. The first game gave us a lot of confidence and we hope to carry on in the same vein," Andhra skipper Ricky Bhui stated.

In a circular sent to all match referees and state associations, accessed by The Indian Express, the board states, This is to inform you that the BCCI has dispatched 'Player of the Match' medals to all the host associations of the Ranji Trophy matches for both Elite and Plate groups. You are requested to hand over the medal (one per match) to the match referee on his/her arrival."

The decision comes after the BCCI felt that a player should cherish the memento earned for his hard work.

Till now, players used to get medals or awards for international games or IPL only, but the BCCI thought that they should also provide medals so that it can be in the players' possession for posterity.

"In other sports, athletes have something to show when it comes to rewards but domestic cricketers were deprived of this. So it was decided to give medals along with prize money rewards after each game. Domestic players will have something to take back home," a BCCI official said.

Now, Player of the Match to be awarded medals

DEVENDRA PANDEY

JANUARY 11



IN THE current Ranji Trophy season, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will honour the 'Player of the Match' with medals.

Till last season, the Player of the Match used to get Rs 25,000/- from the sponsors. This year, the BCCI has decided to award them a medal. However, there is no clarity on whether the cash award will remain the same.

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PLAYERS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN RANJI TROPHY

Cheteshwar Pujara: Saurashtra vs Haryana at Rajkot

After scoring a double century in the previous outing against Jharkhand, the veteran will look for another big one against Haryana at home. While an India call-up seems far fetched, another good show over here could keep him among discussions should a slot open up because of injuries or lack of form.

Hanuma Vihari: Mumbai vs Andhra at Mumbai

While all eyes are on Shreyas Iyer in Mumbai, it will be a crucial outing for Vihari who has slipped down the pecking order. He has stepped down as captain after the first game against Bengal where he scored a fifty. He is due a big innings which could bring him back into contention.

Devdutt Padikkal: Karnataka vs Gujarat at Ahmedabad

A couple of seasons back, Padikkal seemed ready for the big league. But after battling fitness concerns, he is again back to doing what he knows best. He scored 193 against Punjab last game and now faces Gujarat in Ahmedabad, whose all-round attack would test him further. He might be up for the challenge.

Riyam Parag: Assam vs Kerala at Guwahati

One of the consistent performers in limited-overs events in domestic circuit, his aggressive gameplay in red-ball hasn't got the selectors attention as yet. Despite captaining the side, he hasn't shown signs of slowing down his game. If he keeps going at this rate batting at No 4, would be interesting where he ends up.

Sai Kishore: Tamil Nadu vs Tripura at Agartala

With so many left-arm spinners around, he has flown under the radar. He has been delivering consistently with the ball and bat and has shown he can be a reliable asset. A string of good performances with the ball is the need of the hour for the 27-year-old who has to carry TN's attack on his shoulders.

Sudip Kumar Charami: Bengal vs Uttar Pradesh at Kanpur

A compact, technically sound batsman, Charami has been consistent in scoring charts for Bengal. A player who is in the radar of the selectors, he narrowly missed out on India A berth. If he makes a notable performance in the seaming conditions at Kanpur, similar to what he encounters in Kolkata, he could get into India A fold for the series against England Lions.

SANCHO RE-JOINS DORTMUND

London: Jadon Sancho has re-joined Borussia Dortmund on loan from Manchester United, the German club confirmed on Thursday, bringing an end to the attacker's exile from football over a disciplinary issue. United will pay a portion of Sancho's wages during his loan, according to reports in British media. **REUTERS**

Dube delivers to take India home

Left-hander makes full use of opportunity to hit unbeaten 60 off 40 balls as hosts beat Afghanistan by 6 wickets in T20 series opener

PRATYUSH RAJ
MOHALI, JANUARY 11

ON WEDNESDAY evening, Shivam Dube didn't even pad up at the nets. He spent his two hours bowling in small spells to different batsmen, before taking a few throwdowns from Raghu. It was a clear sign that the Mumbai man was not in contention to play in the first of three T20 Internationals, but an injury to Yashasvi Jaiswal gave him an opportunity, and the all-rounder grabbed it with both hands.

With his military medium pace, Dube kept the run flow in check and even got the wicket of Afghanistan captain Ibrahim Zadran. He walked out to bat when India had lost both their openers, and the visitors were sensing a route back into the contest. Dube first steadied the ship with Tilak Varma who scored a sedate 26, played the perfect foil to Jitesh Sharma, saw Rinku Singh do his thing from the other end, and reached his second T20I fifty in 38 balls as India coasted to the target of 159 with two and a half overs to spare for a six-wicket win.

Dube was not in contention to play in the first of three T20 Internationals, but an injury to Yashasvi Jaiswal gave him an opportunity, and the all-rounder grabbed it with both hands.

Dube's fortunes changed after he joined Chennai Super Kings, where MS Dhoni's advice turned his career around. "Mahi Bhai once told me something and those are the most encouraging and motivating words for me. He said, 'You're good. Just be fearless,'" Dube had told CSK TV during the last IPL season.

It would be harsh to compare Dube with Hardik Pandya, because the 30-year-old is not the first time I was injured. My mindset during the rehab is how I can improve my game. In the NCA, I worked a lot on my bowling. I have worked consciously to add 5 to 10 per cent in my bowling," Axar Patel told the reporters after the match. "Against Australia, I have started varying my pace and started using the crease. As a left-arm spinner, you don't have much variation, I can't bowl googlies like a leg-spinner," he said.

Dube is undoubtedly not the most fluent batsman while fronting up to pacers and his struggles against short-pitched bowling are well documented. Yet, Chennai and Dhoni were able to maximise his potential as he was used to destroy spinners in the middle overs. On Thursday, the left-hander remained unbeaten on 60 off 40 balls and took his team home.

Nightmare return for Rohit

On a cold January evening, in front of a packed PCA Stadium in Mohali, Rohit Sharma's comeback to India's T20 team with the bat lasted two balls. The India captain, who was playing his first game for the country in the format in 14 months since the Adelaide loss to England in the 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal, was sold down the river by his opening partner Shubman Gill.

Visibly upset, Rohit gesticulated frantically towards his young teammate before



Shivam Dube and Rinku Singh celebrate India's win over Afghanistan on Thursday. **Jasbir Malhi**

Not thinking of economy rate anymore: Axar

Mohali: Axar Patel suffered a quadriceps injury during the Asia Cup and missed the World Cup, but he says he has worked on his bowling during rehabilitation at the NCA and has added "5 to 10 per cent".

"It was an unfortunate injury, but it was not the first time I was injured. My mindset during the rehab is how I can improve my game. In the NCA, I worked a lot on my bowling. I have worked consciously to add 5 to 10 per cent in my bowling," Axar Patel told the reporters after the match. "Against Australia, I have started varying my pace and started using the crease. As a left-arm spinner, you don't have much variation, I can't bowl googlies like a leg-spinner," he said.

On the cold conditions in Mohali and the wicket, Axar said: "There was no help from the pitch, the weather was also very harsh. My aim was to stick to my strength and wait for the batters to go after me. I bowled a tight line and got the wickets as the batters took a chance," he said.

When asked about the difference between the captaincy of Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya, Axar said: "I don't think there are many differences. Both of them have given me the freedom to execute my plans."

Walking back to the hut without troubling the scorers.

It has been a tough couple of days for Rohit, who joined the Indian team late after his flight got delayed due to fog. Then he dropped Azmatullah Omarzai, whose 68-run stand with veteran Mohammad Nabi helped Afghanistan post 158 for 5.

With Rohit going back without contributing with the bat, Gill entertained the crowd with his strokeplay and during his knock 12-ball stay at the crease, it looked like the youngster was in a hurry to finish the match. But he failed to convert his start. The credit must be given to Mujeeb Ur Rahman who,

has also changed his mindset in T20 cricket. "I am not thinking about the economy anymore. My mindset is how can I attack more. I have got the confidence... more about taking wickets than bowling economically," he said.

On the cold conditions in Mohali and the wicket, Axar said: "There was no help from the pitch, the weather was also very harsh. My aim was to stick to my strength and wait for the batters to go after me. I bowled a tight line and got the wickets as the batters took a chance," he said.

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IPL franchise Punjab Kings. The wicket-keeper-batter, who out of nowhere has risen to be India's No.1 gloverman in this format, once again showed why his fearless style of batting is exactly fit for India in the middle order. Jitesh's 31-run cameo got India out of a precarious situation.

Jitesh's dismissal brought Rinku, who received the loudest reception from the crowd, and the left-hander executed his finishing role to perfection.

Earlier, seamers Arshdeep Singh and Mukesh Kumar were decent, but it was Axar Patel who again showed why he should be the one playing as the spin all-rounder ahead of Ravindra Jadeja. So far in his career, Axar has been Jadeja's understudy. Axar might not be as quick in the field as Jadeja, but he is not bad either.

He has improved significantly in the past couple of years as a cricketer. The way he varied his pace to get the wickets of Rahmanullah Gurbaz and debutant Rahmat Shah indicates he is a smart cricketer.

Cold outing for Afghans

The Afghanistan team had arrived three days prior to the match. They had three net sessions, in comparison to India's one, but looked all at sea in all three departments.

The batsmen, barring veteran Mohammad Nabi, threw away their starts.

The bowlers were not up to the mark either, while their fielding was shoddy. They may blame the weather as when they came out to field, the temperature had fallen to seven degrees from 12, when India were bowling. The dew factor also didn't help as their seamers were taken for plenty.

SCORECARD

INDIA VS AFGHANISTAN

PCA STADIUM, MOHALI

Toss: India won, chose to field

AFGHANISTAN

R Gurbaz st J Sharma b Patel 23 (28b, 2x4, 1x6)

Baljeet finds her target, with assist from ex-India forward Daljit

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

IT WAS a call of duty that saw Daljit Singh Dhillon relocate to Tarn Taran, the drug-infested district near Amritsar. And chance, that the then Deputy Superintendent of Punjab Police and former India forward stumbled upon a group of girls playing hockey at a government school ground.

"I saw them while I was out jogging in the morning. There were around 20-25 girls. They didn't have basic gear and the condition of the ground wasn't great either. I saw them a few times and then couldn't resist myself from asking them if they wanted 'India's' training," Dhillon says, referring to the methods he'd experienced with the national team. For the girls, most of them in their pre-teens, it was a no-brainer. "They agreed," Dhillon adds.

On Saturday, 12 years after the World Cupper accidentally spotted them, one of the girls from there – **Baljeet Kaur (in pic)** – will step onto the field in front of packed stands in Ranchi when India start their bid to qualify for the Paris Olympics with a match against the USA in a do-or-die tournament.

Baljeet wasn't an automatic choice for coach Janneke Schopman when she picked her squad of 18 for the tournament. But three days into the New Year, the team was dealt a massive blow when forward Vandana Kataria, a veteran of more than 300 international matches, fractured her cheekbone during training and was ruled out of the tournament.

And just like that, the 22-year-old Baljeet has been thrown into the deep end. She isn't a like-for-like replacement – Vandana was a constant threat inside the 'D' for India's opponents; Baljeet, who idolises former men's team captain Manpreet Singh, is more of a playmaker who is lightning quick in the midfield apart from being a reliable stopper during penalty corners.

'Speedy player'

With India running thin on goal-scoring options, Baljeet will be expected to use her speed, dodging skills and vision to create opportunities and remain flawless in set-piece situations by stopping the ball dead so that the drag-flickers can do their thing.

Baljeet is a very promising player," Schopman says. "She has shown in the last year that she's more than capable of playing in tournaments. She went to Europe with the national team and played a lot of games there; played in the Asian Champions Trophy too. She's a speedy player, works very hard and hopefully will bring herself to the game. That's what I expect."

The only thing speedier than a Baljeet Kaur in full flow has been her rapid rise through the ranks.

"I never thought I'd come this far," Baljeet, whose father is a mason and got introduced to the sport through her cousin sister, says. "If it wasn't for Daljit Singh Dhillon, I wouldn't have been here. He took interest in us, trained us and provided us with hockey equipment."

Iga faces 2 past champions early; Djokovic vs Tsitsipas likely QF

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 11

TOP-RANKED Iga Swiatek will face 2020 champion Sofia Kenin in the first round and potentially 2016 winner Angelique Kerber or Danielle Collins in the second in a tough start to her bid for a first Australian Open title.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic's bid for a record-extending 11th Australian Open title could include a third-round match against Andy Murray and a quarterfinal against No. 7 Stefanos Tsitsipas, the runner-up last year. The draws to determine singles brackets were held Thursday, with the return of former champions Naomi Osaka, Kerber and Caroline Wozniacki to Melbourne Park after maternity breaks resulting in some high-pressure opening rounds.

Osaka, who has won the Australian Open and U.S. Open titles twice, opens against No. 16 Caroline Garcia and is in the same quarter of the draw as U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff. Three-time major winner Kerber will open against Collins, who beat Swiatek in the semifinals here in 2022 on her way to the final. That was Swiatek's best run at the Australian Open so far.

Wozniacki, the 2018 champion, will meet 2023 semifinalist and 20th-seeded Magda Linette in the first round, while defending champion Aryna Sabalenka opens against a qualifier. Possible women's quarterfinals could be: No. 1 Swiatek vs. No. 7 Marketa Vondrousova, and No. 3 Elena Rybakina vs. No. 5 Jessica Pegula on the top half; No. 2 Sabalenka vs. No. 6 Ons Jabeur, and No. 4 Gauff vs. No. 8 Maria Sakkari on the bottom half. As well as the potential 2023 final rematch between Djokovic and Tsitsipas, other quarterfinals could be: No. 4 Jannik Sinner vs. No. 5 Andrey Rublev in the top half; No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz vs. No. 6 Alexander Zverev, and No. 3 Daniil Medvedev vs. No. 8 Holger Rune on the bottom half.

Nagal inches closer to main draw

PTI adds: Sumit Nagal is just one match away from making the main draw of the Australian Open tennis tournament as he reached the final round of the qualifying tournament here on Thursday. Nagal beat Australian Edward Winter, a wild card, in the second qualifying match 6-3, 6-2 that lasted one hour and four minutes at the KIA Arena. The 26-year-old Indian will face Alex Molcan of Slovakia in the final round on Friday for a place in the season-opening Grand Slam proper.

Shooting: India set to field biggest team at Oly as Rhythm makes it 16

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 11

IT WAS a bronze medal worth its weight in gold for **Rhythm Sangwan** in the 25m pistol final of the Asian Olympic Qualifier in Jakarta. Rhythm's third place finish secured a quota place for the Paris Olympics, the country's record 16th. The previous biggest contingent from India was 15 at the Tokyo Olympics. A bit of luck also went Rhythm's way.

Though Koreans Yang Jiin and Kim Yeji won gold and silver, it didn't matter in terms of quotas because the country had already bagged two quota places in the event. Rhythm was ecstatic after the quota was confirmed. "I think it's really important to win the quota place for the country.

Everyday, we aim to stay calm at whatever stage we compete and today was such a day. Every one of the 16 quota place winners for India would hope to carry the fine form ahead to seal their place for Paris and that's what I too would be aiming for," Sangwan told The Indian Express from Jakarta.

Twice she had an opportunity to secure a quota but missed out.

Rhythm had come close to becoming one of the earliest to seal an Olympic quota place in the ISSF World Championships in Cairo in 2022.

With four quotas on offer in the final, Rhythm was well placed after the first three series to seal the quota for India. But missed all the five shots in the fourth series to finish fifth.

Last year at World Championships in Baku in August, Rhythm had qualified for the final in which three of the eight shooters were ineligible for the Paris quota place. All that Rhythm needed to do was not to finish last in the eight-shooter final. But the

Can India bag all 24 quotas on offer?

India have 16 Paris Olympics quota places but can add a maximum of eight more either from the remaining three qualifying events and rankings. One each in the men's 25m rapid fire, women's 10m air pistol (Based on world qualification event and world ranking), one each in men's and women's trap event and two each in men and women's skeet events from a maximum of two qualification events and world rankings. **ENS**

points after the third series. Rhythm then shot the fourth series with a score of four to be placed tied third with Chia Ying Wu of Chinese Taepui and Shun Xie Tio of Singapore. With the top two Koreans Jiin Yang and Yeji Kim being ineligible for quota place, all Rhythm needed was to stay in the top four. Rhythm then shot a score of 4 in the fifth series before shooting a two in the sixth series to assure herself of the quota.

Controlling emotions

"I believe that it's not over till the end of the series or match and anything is possible in this format. Yes, pressure is there but I have learnt to control my emotions as well, not worrying about other scores. I just tried doing that and I am glad that it happened," Rhythm said.

At the National Rifle Association of India's Olympic trials, Rhythm, like other quota winners in her event, will get a two-point advantage to start with.

On Thursday, Rhythm had shot a score of 298 out of 300 in the rapid stage of qualification and her coach Vineet Kumar believes that a good score in rapid will help the youngster in the final.

"I was expecting a score of 300/300 in the rapid stage of qualification. She took that confidence in the final but struggled a bit with the targets initially in the final. The key for her will be to go back to the basics and make minor changes in the coming days before the trials," Kumar said.

Rhythm's father, Narendar Sangwan, a Haryana Police DSP, encouraged her to take up the sport and took her to the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range from their Faridabad home in 2016. It helped that coach Kumar was Narendar's colleague.

The Haryana youngster would make it to the Indian junior team within four years.

Rhythm is aiming high. "London Olympics silver medallist Vijay Kumar sir is one of my inspirations. And so is my coach. I hope to win an Olympic medal".

Ashwini-Tanisha dovetail for epic upset

Indian pair beats former world champions Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara to enter quarterfinals of Malaysia Open

SHIVANI NAIK
JANUARY 11

AN ARCHING parabola of a floated return from Ashwini Ponnappa, timed from her backcourt to drop slowly and lull the opponents. Followed immediately by a scything smash, hit brutally flat and fast and rushing on them by Tanisha Crasto, looming like a storm from the front court.

The Indian pairing used their in-rally changes in pace and waves upon waves of this 1-2 routine marvelously to scramble the minds of former World No 1s and twice World champions, Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara, winning 21-19, 13-21, 21-15 at Malaysia Open Super 1000.

Olympic qualification is the obvious target this year. But Ashwini's are not the small, limited dreams of merely pipping Treesa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand and finishing as the best Indians. There are tougher Chinese and Japanese to slay beyond the mere Indian duels of the qualification bubble. Like she did with Jwala Gutta in 2012 and 2016, the now 34-year-old wants to steer the 20-year-old Tanisha into seriously challenging the top names.

Ashwini's even bitten back her instinct to rain down smashes like hell breaking loose, allowing Tanisha to attack, while she focuses on patience and placements and loopy patterns to confuse opponents. "I have to play patient, no? I just can't rely on hard smashes and go boom-boom-boom. I won't survive if I do that so have to play smarter, and sustain a full women's doubles match," said the one-time record holder of the fastest smash in women.

Japanese pairings seldom play sharp, their game is one of consistency game, and they stretch rallies endlessly. But the biggest Indian achievement in this second-round win in Kuala Lumpur was just how many times Ashwini-Tanisha got the seventh seeds to lose their defensive shape at the end of long rallies. And Naga-Matsu, as they are commonly known, ended upon the same side of the court corners, with anarchy induced into their returns by the canny, quick Indians.

Tanisha's badminton is breathless to watch - coach Arun Vishnu informs the two are reg-



Tanisha Crasto returns a shot during the match against Japan's Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara on Thursday. AP

ularly hitting heart-rate scores of 190 now. She dives frantically and has remnants of a clumsy defense that will get better with anticipation.

But her attacking glee even from imbalanced positions, the body contortions she routinely gets into, to thwack at the shuttle no matter what, gave the Japanese one right headache on the day. This one time she squat-slashed with quite the venom to scare Matsumoto.

The plan was to take the lead early, and guard it zealously. From the favourable side, the Indians pulled away at 6-6 in the first. Conditions were conducive to hard-hitting, and like Cap America tells Hulk to follow one plan: Smash. "Against the big teams, there's only one way to approach: go all in all guns

blazing," Ashwini said.

She's not quite as flash as Chirag Shetty, but Tanisha is getting there, inrazing across to the front court corner and killing the bird with a swat. While Ashwini played the short crosses from the back, Tanisha blitzed at the front and found herself the whole court to attack with steep smashes from the front right corner as they took off to 19-16. Having full faith in their attack, they weren't scared to lift high, but smartly. Ashwini would bring her forearm racquet control into play, to manoeuvre the shuttle for breadth and height. "The angles were planned, and I've been accepting of change," said the senior pro, who's added a bunch of variations from the back.

The floaty winners don't merely punctuate her smashes anymore, but are set-up shots.

At 17-16, Ashwini went after Matsumoto like a heat-map missile, peppering her with body shots all around the court. The 5'10" Japanese, once a livewire, has slowed down considerably, but Ashwini-Tanisha were relentless in hassling her. "We knew she rushes a bit, so it was important to pin her to the backcourt," Ashwini said. Tanisha took over in the third, and at 20-15 the Indians crowded the Japanese with pace on down strokes, before Tanisha slashed one at Matsumoto.

In the mid-game, the Indians took the foot off the pedal a tad, and playing from the tough side, moved a touch slow. At the start

Satwik-Chirag in last-8, Srikanth out

Kuala Lumpur: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the men's doubles quarterfinals but Kidambi Srikanth failed to cross the second round. Satwik and Chirag, who had a stellar run in 2023 with six titles, beat France's world No. 36 Lucas Corvee and Ronan Labar 21-11 21-18 to set up a clash with China's world No. 32 He Ji Ting and Ren Xiang Yu.

Srikanth, however, failed to rein in his errors and went down 13-21 17-21 to Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus in the second round. PTI

of decider, the switch flicked, and Tanisha began attacking the second shuttle more aggressively. They wouldn't let go of the lead from there. "That early lead was crucial. We held our nerve to not get carried away with the lead, or let the head get too far ahead. We were disciplined," Ashwini said.

Court mops were used cleverly for parleys in the first set at 20-19, and Tanisha bisected the Japanese to seal the opener. Start of third, she had her bent knee reflex returns when the Japanese changed the length. The lifts to the back, Tanisha's short snappy smashes and the body attacks on an awkward hip length were the recurring tropes. The Indians used Japanese duo's height against them, forcing them into cramped body defense. Matsumoto was a hassled soul at 15-13 and 16-13 in the third when the Indians went after her. Ultimately, it was one of Tanisha's rizz serves that saw Wakana stab the shuttle into the net.

While coach Arun Vishnu would laud Tanisha for her patience and improved defense, Ashwini was all praise for her grasping power. "She's come a long way and has a long way to go still. But she understands game plan changes fast and though we both make mistakes, Tanisha has learnt to snap out of it and focus on the next point. My confidence in Tanisha has increased a lot," she said of the star of the day.

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GOLD

₹63,150



USD RATE

₹ 83.03



OIL

\$ 78.21



SILVER

₹ 76,300

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

International market data till 1900 IST

As SEC OKs
bitcoin ETFs,
Das says EMs
can't afford
'crypto-mania'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

A DAY after the US equity markets regulator allowed bitcoin exchange-traded funds (ETFs) to list on bourses, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday batted for a specified framework for the group insolvency mechanism and a vibrant market for stressed assets in the country to improve the working of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

In the absence of a specified framework, the group insolvency mechanism has been evolving under the guidance of the courts, said Das. "Perhaps the time has come for laying down appropriate principles in this regard through legislative changes," he said at a conference on IBC organised by the Centre for Advanced Financial Learning (CAFRL).

"There has been quite a bit of brainstorming on this issue in the policy circles for some time now. The task now is to move forward through appropriate legal changes," Das said.

He also pointed out challenges in this process: intermingling of assets, devising a definition of a 'group' and addressing cross-border aspects. "It would still be preferable to see the opportunity here and put in place a workable framework for group insolvency," Das said.

On stressed assets, Das said

Need legislative change for group insolvency framework: RBI's Das

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JANUARY 11

Mumbai: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday raised concerns over algorithm-based lending by banks and NBFCs and said there is a need for a continuous testing of such models to prevent any possible build-up of risk.

The RBI is closely watching the model-based lending approach which banks and NBFCs are relying on.

"This model-based algorithm or the model-based lending is one area where currently we are looking at," Das said while speaking at a banking event organised by Mint.

He said the management, board of directors and the au-

dit committees or the risk management committees of banks and NBFCs need to see how robust the algorithms and the models are. Ground realities keep on changing and so, banks and NBFCs should check whether their model is falling behind the curve, or it is in tune with the times, and what are the possible risks the models can create, Das said.

He also exuded confidence that the Indian banking system is well placed to support the country's growth. "The remarkable turnaround in the Indian banking system has been the cornerstone of India's success story in recent years," Das said.

ENS

one major impediment for implementing a successful resolution plan has been the absence of a vibrant market for stressed assets in the country. "This effectively limits the pool of prospective resolution applicants for stressed assets under IBC," he said.

Any amendments to the Code and its evolution thereof may continue to lay emphasis on

a financial creditor-led resolution framework, in an overarching manner, he said.

Das said creditors have realised Rs 3.16 lakh crore out of the admitted claims of Rs 9.92 lakh crore as of September 2023, which works out to a recovery rate of 32 per cent. "It needs to be emphasised here that significant value destruction would

have already happened in these assets prior to their admission under the IBC," he said.

The credible 'threat of insolvency' ignited by the code has strengthened the negotiating powers of the creditors, in the absence of which it is most likely that those defaults would have lingered for much longer, resulting in value destruction, he said.

Das said the criticisms of the IBC are on two fronts – the time taken for resolution and the extent of haircuts vis-à-vis the admitted claims.

The code envisages a time-bound process, requiring the completion of CIRP within 180 days, with a one-time extension by up to 90 days in exceptional circumstances.

However, the data published by the IIBI raises certain serious concerns. As of September 2023, 67 per cent of the ongoing CIRP cases have already crossed the total timeline of 270 days including possible extension period of 90 days. "More concerning is the fact that, the average time taken for admission of a case during FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22 stood at 468 days and 650 days respectively. Such a long degree of delays will substantially erode the value of the assets," Das said.

**FULL REPORT
www.indianexpress.com**

No written communication from I-T Dept on searches: Polycab

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

CABLE AND WIRE manufacturer Polycab India reiterated Thursday that it has not received any written communication from the Income Tax Department regarding the outcome of the searches carried out in December.

This came a day after the I-T Department issued a statement, without naming the company, regarding the searches carried out at 50 premises of Polycab in December that resulted in detection of alleged unaccounted cash sales of around Rs 1,000 crore.

Earlier Thursday, the company issued another statement saying stock exchanges have sought a clarification from the company about news reports related to the Income Tax searches.

Polycab India shares plummeted 21 per cent Thursday, eroding Rs 15,485.96 crore from its market valuation.

The company's share prices started to decline Tuesday after reports alleged that the tax department found tax evasion by the company. Polycab, however, told stock exchanges that it had not received any communication from the I-T Department regarding the outcome of the search while maintaining that it fully cooperated with the tax officials during the search in December.

Tax officials said Wednesday in a statement that preliminary analysis suggested that the company indulged in unaccounted cash sales, cash payments for unaccounted purchases, non-genuine transport and sub-contracting expenses, etc for suppression of its taxable income.

Diesel exports to Europe at record high in Dec as flows shift from Latin America

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

INDIA'S DIESEL exports to Europe touched an all-time high in December, largely due to a recent shift in flows away from the Latin American market, where American refiners are now trying to gain a foothold, as per an analysis of ship tracking data.

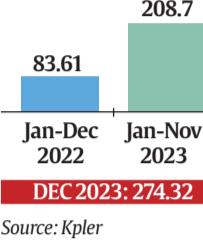
The displacement of Russian fuels away from Europe – the major reason that led to the spurt in Indian fuel exports to the continent in the aftermath of the Ukraine invasion – also continues to play a role in the equation.

As per data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler, India exported 2,74,321 barrels of diesel per day to Europe in December, higher than the previous record of 2,69,585 barrels per day (bpd) in September. In the 11 months of 2023 preceding December, diesel exports to Europe averaged 2,08,709 bpd. In 2022, the year Russia invaded Ukraine, diesel exports to Europe from India averaged 83,608 bpd, the data shows.

"Reliance (RIL) has historically had a very healthy positioning in Latin America, specifically in the Brazilian, Argentinian, and Uruguayan markets, sending some 60,000 bpd of diesel there in both 2021 and 2022. Recently, that flow of product exports has been rendered quite difficult as US (United States) Gulf Coast refineries took over the Argentinian market. After

DIESEL EXPORTS TO EUROPE

VOLUME (thousand bpd)



Source: Kpler

losing out on Brazil which is now the second-largest buyer of Russian ULSD (ultra low-sulphur diesel), the US really needed to maintain some foothold in Latin America... that has come at the expense of Reliance," said Viktor Katona, Lead Crude Analyst at Kpler.

As a large refining hub that has ramped up purchases of discounted Russian oil following Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, India now finds itself playing an increasingly prominent role in the global crude oil and refined product supply map. The trend is significant on various counts.

Europe does not want to buy crude as well as refined fuels and products from Russia. Countries such as India, which is a major oil refiner, are playing their part in bridging the gap by buying Russian oil on one hand, and increasing supply of refined products to the continent on the other. That is the primary reason why much of the West, which at first seemed annoyed at India's high purchases of Russian oil, has been largely comfortable with India's rising supply of fuels to Europe.

With Latin America not importing as much diesel as it ear-

India-US trade policy meeting starts today: GSP, laptop import monitoring system on table

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 11

INDIA AND the US are set to take up a number of sticky trade issues – ranging from New Delhi's long-pending demand seeking the restoration of Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) that was revoked under former US President Donald Trump to Washington's objection on India's laptop import monitoring system – at the trade policy forum that begins today.

Why is the trade policy forum meeting crucial?

The US is India's single largest trade partner and the only large economy where India exports more than it imports. At a time when goods exports are slowing in the West due to the Russia-Ukraine war, India predominantly depends on the US demand for export earnings and is also banking on the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) trade pact to counter China's mammoth influence on trade in Asia. With the US firms increasingly adopting China plus one policy and the ongoing supply chain reset, closer trade ties with the US could help India attract more foreign direct investment (FDI). Moreover, in the absence of a



during the last India-US trade policy forum last year too.

Why is the US concerned about India's laptop import monitoring system?

Even as India clarified that it will not impose restrictions on laptop imports, the US continues to raise questions on the purpose of the "monitoring system" that has been proposed as an alternative. This is likely to be taken up in the trade policy meeting as such measures are seen as a non-tariff measure. India has said that the aim to impose such a system is to ensure that the IT products come from "trusted geographies".

How is India looking to boost service trade with the US?

Ajay Sahai, Director General & CEO of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations said India is seeking liberal visa regime to boost service trade. India's services exports have been on the rise and healthy export numbers largely due to the US demand has helped lower the current account deficit. However, visa delays to Indians surged to record levels during Covid-19. Visas are a key concern for the US as immigration is a politically sensitive issue in the election year.

Sebi proposes easier rules for startup listings

Mumbai: In a measure that could bring relief to promoters of startups, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is in favour of relaxing the rules on the minimum promoters' contribution at the time of an initial public offering (IPO).

As startup founders typically dilute their stakes in the course of fundraises, they are often unable to meet the minimum 20% stake required post the IPO. In a discussion paper released Thursday, Sebi has also recommended that listing regulations be eased such that the application of the regulations is more dynamic.

An expert committee's suggestions for the ease of doing business and for the harmonisation of Sebi (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations (LODR Regulations) and of Sebi (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations (ICDR Regulations) are contained in the paper.

The consultation paper notes that the LODR regulations, which are applicable on the basis of market capitalisation, remain effective "forever" even if the figure falls and the entity moves out of top rankings. The panel has suggested that a sunset clause be added, so that if the ranking of the entity changes for three straight years, the regulatory provisions should cease to be applicable for the listed entity.

America grew 13.2 per cent and Asia Pacific grew 3.9 per cent.

KARNATAKA BANK

New Delhi: Karnataka Bank has opened its 915th branch with a mini e-lobby at Ayodhya, it said.

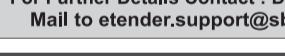
Anil Mishra, Trustee, Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, inaugurated the branch.

The company's share prices started to decline Tuesday after reports alleged that the tax department found tax evasion by the company. Polycab, however, told stock exchanges that it had not received any communication from the I-T Department regarding the outcome of the search while maintaining that it fully cooperated with the tax officials during the search in December.

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