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**30 held for Haldwani violence, some people flee affected area**

Uttarakhand seeks more Central forces as curbs are eased, shops start opening

**AVANEESH MISHRA**  
HALDWANI, FEBRUARY 11

UTTARAKHAND POLICE Sunday said 30 people were arrested, including 25 in the last 24 hours, in connection with Thursday's violence in Nainital district's Haldwani city that left five people dead and dozens injured. Country-made weapons and live rounds were recovered from those arrested, police said.

The state government has asked the Centre for four additional companies of paramilitary forces to be deployed in the district.

On Sunday morning, normalcy returned to many parts of Haldwani as shops reopened and internet services resumed.

Policemen on guard during a curfew at Banbhoolpura area in Haldwani, Sunday. PTI  
RELATED REPORT, P7**Talks with farmers today, Centre going with an open mind: Agriculture Minister**

KMM: Will wait for the outcome before deciding on march to Delhi



Police put up barriers to thwart the march, at Fatehabad near the Haryana-Punjab border. Manoj Dhaka RELATED REPORT, P7

**THE WORLD****TRUMP: TOLD NATO TO PAY OR I WILL LET RUSSIA HAVE ITS WAY UP FOR FIGHT TO WIN POLLS: SUNAK** P10

However, curfew remained in place in the Banbhoolpura area, where the incident took place, and several residents of the locality were seen packing up and leaving.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**MODI IN THE UAE ON FEBRUARY 13-14****PM visit for Abu Dhabi temple opening aligns with tolerance values: UAE envoy**DIVYA A  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

DESCRIBING PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates for the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi as a "special occasion", Abdulsattar Alshaali, UAE's Ambassador to India, has said it "aligns with the values of toler-

THE EXPRESS  
INTERVIEW  
ABDULNASSER ALSHAALI,  
UAU AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

ance and acceptance that guide our bilateral ties".

Prime Minister Modi's February 13-14 visit to the UAE will be his third in the last eight months and the seventh since 2015. He will hold bilateral meetings with President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and, according to the Ministry of External Affairs, the two leaders will discuss ways to further

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

**Back with BJP, Nitish to take Bihar floor test today, remove Speaker****SANTOSH SINGH**  
PATNA, FEBRUARY 11

MORE THAN two weeks after he joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and took oath as Bihar Chief Minister for a ninth term, Nitish Kumar will face a floor test in the Bihar Assembly on Monday.

According to the Assembly schedule, the Budget session will commence with Governor R V Arlekar's address to both Houses of the legislature. This will be



Bihar Dy CM Samrat Choudhary with BJP MLAs at the residence of Dy CM Vijay Kumar Sinha, in Patna, Sunday. PTI

**Many nursing colleges in MP ran with no students, infra: CBI to HC****ANAND MOHAN J**  
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 11

NURSING COLLEGES with neither students nor teachers, poorly equipped classrooms, and in some cases, no toilets. These are among issues flagged by the CBI in its report to the Madhya Pradesh High Court, which had ordered an investigation into alleged irregularities in the running of nursing colleges in the state.

Ordering the probe on April 26, 2023, the High Court had observed that some of the colleges were recognised in a "clandestine manner", and that this was "jeopardising public health and life of innumerable patients in hospitals... at the hands of so-called students of such colleges holding certificate of qualified nurse".

The CBI then prepared a list of 364 colleges affiliated with the state-run Madhya Pradesh Medical Science University, and submitted a compliance report on 25 colleges on April 28 last year. After perusing the report, the court said it was a "grave situation that even such colleges have been given affiliation which do not conform to the requirement of rules".

The report contained investigation details pertaining to 25 colleges, including 15 in Bhopal, eight in Gwalior, and one each in Bhind and Vidisha districts.

As per Indian Nursing Council standards, nursing colleges should have an area of at least 23,000 sq ft, and according to the Madhya Pradesh Nurses Registration Council (MPNRC) stipulations, it should be at least 17,000 sq ft. Of the colleges

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\* Former Ambassador of South Korea, Uzbekistan
- Ambassador Ashok Kumar IFS (Retd.)**  
Former Head of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) & Former High Commissioner to Cyprus.
- Shri K.K. Agarwal IRTS (Retd.)**  
\* Former Member Traffic Railway Board  
\* Ex. Officio Secretary to Govt. of India
- Shri Anil Kumar Upadhyay IFoS (Retd.)**  
Former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, M.P.
- Mrs Sangeeta Gupta, IRS (Retd.)**  
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- Dr. Bala Prasad IFoS (Retd.)**  
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133 magic mark; Of 101 independents, most Imran's; PMLN wins 75, PPP 54

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN & M ZULQERNAIN**  
ISLAMABAD, LAHORE, FEB 11

THE THREE main political parties in Pakistan on Sunday intensified their efforts for the formation of a coalition government after it became clear that the coup-prone country faced a hung Parliament after general elections.

The general elections were held on Thursday, but the unusual delay in the announcement of results vitiated the atmosphere as several parties cried foul and some resorted to protests.

Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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## FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON  
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## Verdict split, Nawaz leads push for coalition govt

(PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif received the backing of the powerful Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir on Saturday for his call for a unity government to pull Pakistan out of its current difficulties.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced the results of 264 out of 265 contested seats in the 266-member National Assembly. The result of one constituency was withheld by the ECP due to complaints of fraud. Election to one seat was postponed after the death of a candidate.

Independent candidates, a vast majority of them backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), won 101 seats in the National Assembly. PTI candidates contested as independents after the Supreme Court and Election Commission of Pakistan said they could not use the party symbol, a cricket bat.

They were followed by three-time former Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with 75 seats, which technically is the single largest party in Parliament.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of Bilawal Zardari Bhutto got 54 seats, and the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) of Urdu-speakers

ing people who migrated from India during Partition, got 17 seats. Other smaller parties won the rest of the 12 seats.

To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 contested seats in the National Assembly. Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of its total 336 seats, which include the reserved slots for women and minorities which will be decided later.

Sharif's PML-N was leading the push to form the coalition government on the pattern of one it set up after Khan, 71, was removed as prime minister through a no-confidence vote in April 2022. Sharif, 74, tasked his younger brother and former PM Shehzad Sharif to hold talks on the issue.

PML-N leaders on Sunday held a meeting with MQM-P leaders in Lahore. After an hour-long meeting, they have reached a "principle agreement" to work together in the upcoming government, according to a statement released by Sharif's party.

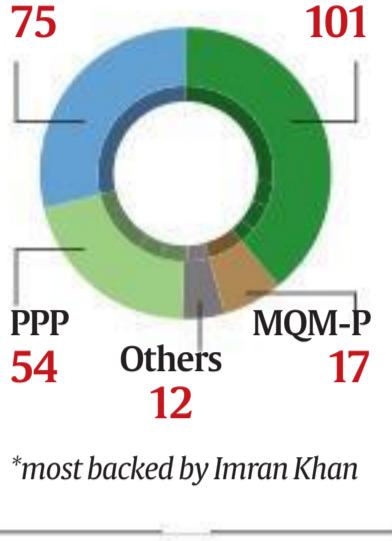
"We will work together in the interest of the country and public," the statement said, adding that basic points had been agreed upon by the two parties.

Shehzad on Saturday met senior PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and his Bilawal on Friday night and

## FINAL TALLY

264 seats of the 266 which are decided by direct voting in 366-member House

133 seats needed to form govt



\*most backed by Imran Khan

discussed the future coalition. Shehzad told the party leaders that former president and PPP leader Asif Zardari has demanded the prime minister's slot for PPP Chairman Bilawal and major ministerial portfolios in exchange for support for the PML-N to form the government, sources said.

Party sources added that so far making a coalition with Zardari was the first option the PML-N

was exploring but didn't want to give away the slot of prime minister.

Sources claimed the meeting decided that in case the negotiations with the PPP failed, the PML-N would make a coalition government with MQM, JUI-F and other smaller parties, including independents. They further claimed that in this scenario, the PML-N would make Shehzad Sharif the prime minister and Maryam Sharif the Chief Minister of Punjab.

"Shehzad Sharif is the favourite for the PM office for being more close to the military establishment besides the PML-N has more seats in the parliament than the PPP," sources said.

Meanwhile, Bilawal, the 35-year-old former foreign minister said no one could form governments in the Centre, Punjab or Balochistan without his party's support, and the PPP's door was open to every political party for dialogue, as reconciliation was vital for political stability.

It is believed that a newer version of the Pakistan Democratic Movement coalition, also called as PDM government, under Shehzad Sharif was more likely based on the experience of running the government after Khan was removed. The new set-up is being dubbed PDM-2.0.

Meanwhile, PTI leader Gohar Khan also claimed that his party would form the government but analysts believe that it was not possible.

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob of the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) said the PTI was not in a position to form the government without forming an alliance with major political parties like the PML-N or the PPP as it doesn't have the required number for claiming majority in the lower house of Parliament.

Shehzad Sharif is the favourite for the PM office for being more close to the military establishment besides the PML-N has more seats in the parliament than the PPP," sources said.

Separately, the complete results of the three provincial assemblies of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been announced but the results of the three constituencies of the Balochistan assembly are still pending.

In Punjab's 296 contested seats, independents got 138 seats, closely followed by PML-N with 137 and other parties getting 21 seats.

In Sindh's total 130 contested seats, results of 129 were announced while the ECP ordered a re-poll in one constituency due to corruption.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a total of 113 seats were up for grabs, and results of 112 seats had been announced and withheld the outcome on one seat.

PTI

## • Talks with farmers today, Centre going with open mind

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Munda said, "One round of talks has already been held. It was a good discussion. The next meeting will be held. Talks will be held again. We will resolve it through dialogue if there is any issue."

Munda, along with Union Minister Piyush Goyal, and Minister of State Nitin Gadkari, will hold the second round of talks with the protesting farmers in Chandigarh Monday.

"There may be differences between the government's thinking and farmers' demands but we will sit and find a solution with care and patience. We are ready to talk with *khule mann* (an open mind) to allay any misunderstanding," Munda said.

"Kitna hum karsakte hain, kitna kisanon ke hit mein rahega, donon ko milkar hi samadhan nikala hain (How much can we do, and what will be in the interest of farmers, a solution has to be found by sitting together)," he said.

"We are always ready to talk with an open mind," he said.

One of the key demands of the

farmers is a legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP).

The Centre has announced MSP for 22 mandated crops on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP).

On July 18, 2022, the Centre had formed a committee to deliberate on several issues including making the MSP more "effective and transparent".

The committee was formed in the wake of the November 2021 announcement by the Prime Minister on his government's intention to withdraw three farm laws — Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 — following a protest by farm unions.

The unions were also demanding a legal guarantee of MSP based on the Swaminathan Commission's C2+50% Formula.

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Har Pal Apke Saath

**MORNINGS TO REMAIN COLD****Cold, foggy days set to end in Capital, mercury to start inching up this week**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

AFTER A cold and foggy winter, temperatures in the city are set to increase.

According to India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials, the maximum temperature is likely to touch 26 degrees Celsius by the middle of this week.

Delhi saw seven cold wave days in January, the highest in 16 years, with the temperatures dipping to the lowest in 12 years.

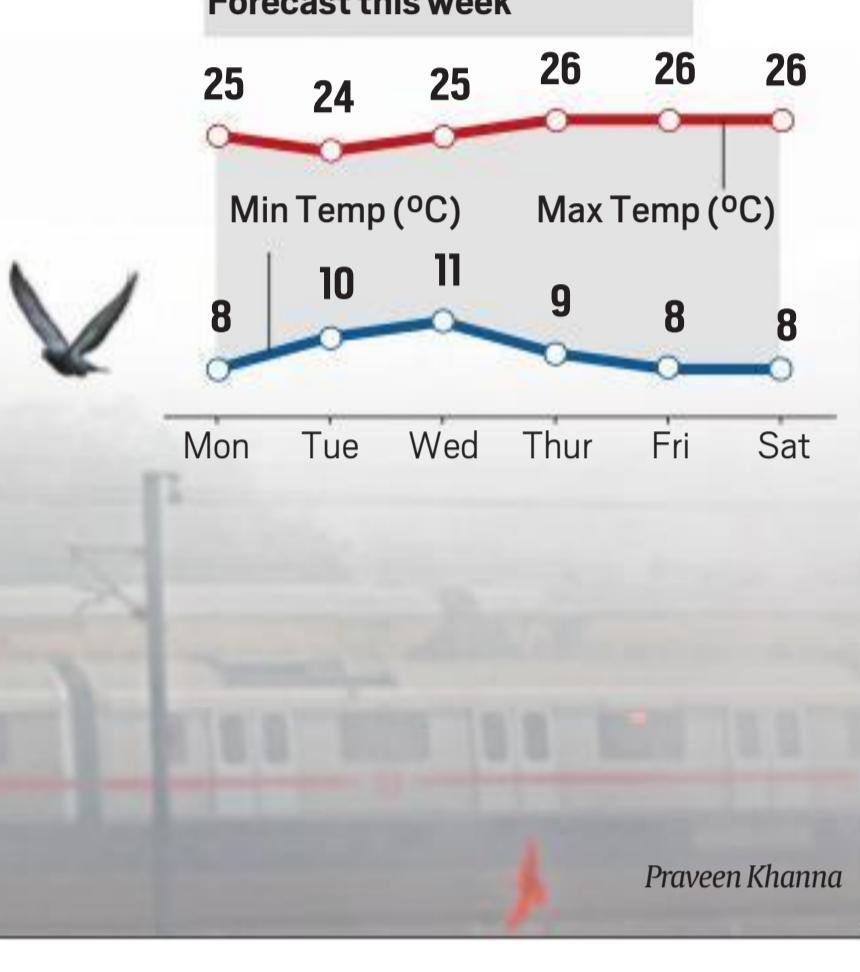
According to IMD, the day temperature is expected to touch 26 degrees Celsius by Wednesday. On Sunday, the maximum temperature was recorded as 24.6 degrees Celsius, a degree above normal.

The minimum temperature, however, is not expected to rise above the 10 degree mark — normal for this time of the year -- for most of the days, and mornings will remain cold.

On Sunday, the minimum temperature was recorded as 7 degrees Celsius, three degrees

**EXPECT SHALLOW FOG**

**Weather**  
**Mon & Tue:** Shallow fog  
**Wed:** Generally cloudy sky with light rain or drizzle  
**Thur:** Fog or mist in early morning  
**Fri & Sat:** Mist



below normal.

There is also respite in store from the fog. Visibility has improved over the past week, after a long spell of very dense fog in the mornings and late evenings.

According to IMD, no fresh spell of dense fog is on the cards at present. Mist or shallow fog is expected, however, as morning temperatures remain below normal.

The reason behind Delhi's long date with the cold was the lack of western disturbances, and wind systems that bring rain and snow to north and northwest India.

"Because there were barely any western disturbances, the sky was clear and there was no retention of heat. This meant cold mornings. Very dense fog on several days also meant that the days were cold as the sunlight was weak. On days when

The minimum temperature, however, is not expected to rise above the 10 degree mark — normal for this time of the year -- for most of the days, and mornings will remain cold.

On Sunday, the minimum temperature was recorded as 7 degrees Celsius, three degrees

there was no fog, icy winds from the Himalayas and from the northwestern parts of the country made the city colder," said an IMD official.

**Air quality deteriorates**

The city's air quality, however, has seen a dip over the past week.

After remaining in the moderate range (Air Quality Index between 100 and 200), between February 5 and 9, it deteriorated to poor (295) on Saturday and further, to very poor (313) on Sunday.

The Early Warning System for Air Quality has forecast a very poor air day on Monday. A slight improvement is seen thereafter and the AQI is expected to be in the poor range.

Strong winds in the second

week of February were responsible for the marked improvement in AQI, IMD officials added.

"Strong winds have the ability to disperse pollutants faster. Increase in temperature also contributes to better air," the official said.

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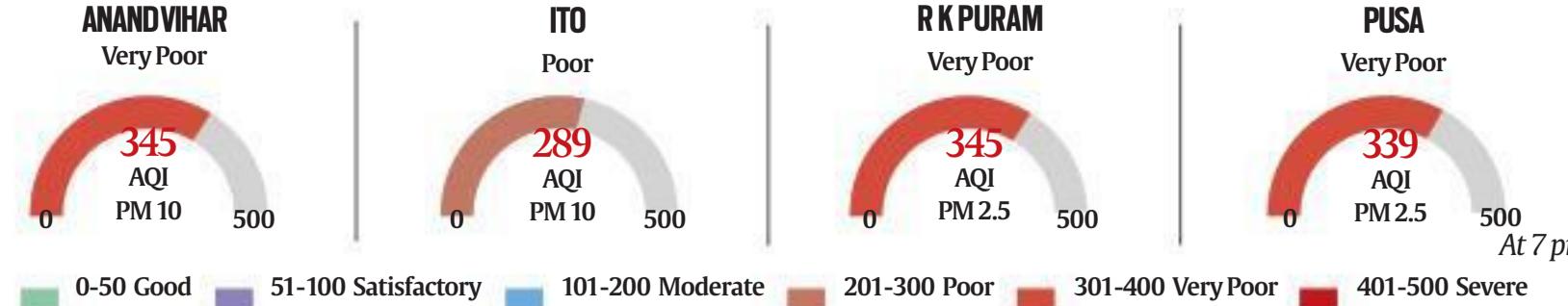
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Strong winds in the second



S K Y W A T C H  
**FORECAST: February 12**  
 Mainly clear sky, partly cloudy sky towards night.  
 Mist/shallow fog in morning  
**MAX: 25** 1.6°C above normal  
**MIN: 8** 1.8°C below normal

Kejriwal, Punjab CM and families to visit Ayodhya temple today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal will on Monday visit Ayodhya along with his family members, and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann to pay obeisance at the Ram temple.

"CM Arvind Kejriwal and CM Bhagwant Mann, and their families will go to Ayodhya to embark on the visit to Ram Lalla and do the 'darshan,'" said party sources on Sunday.

Earlier, CM Kejriwal had said that he would go to the Ram temple in Ayodhya with his family after the consecration ceremony held on January 22, and that he did not get a formal invitation back then. "They had sent a letter, after which we called them. They said someone would come to invite (me) personally. That did not happen, but it is ok... I want to go to the temple with my wife and children. My parents are also very keen on Ram Lalla's 'darshan'. So I will go with my family later... after the ceremony," Kejriwal had said.

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

**GREATER NOIDA**  
Body of trader's son found after 11 days in canal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 11

THE BODY of a 16-year-old boy, who was allegedly killed by his friends and dumped in a canal, was recovered on Sunday in Greater Noida after 11 days of intensive search, police said.

The body was found almost 12 km away from the point where it was dumped in the canal, officials said. The son of a local trader, was strangled by two of his friends on January 30 allegedly over a personal dispute involving the girlfriend of one of the accused. The two accused had dumped the body into the Khareli canal near Hinauti village, according to police. Both the accused were arrested after a gunfight on February 7 with the local Dankaur police station officials. One of them suffered a gunshot injury in his leg during the episode, according to police.

"After the January 30 incident, continuous efforts were made to find the body of the boy. The accused had confessed to killing him and dumping the body in the canal," said a police spokesperson. "Today (Sunday), a team was searching among the bushes along the Mart branch canal. The body was found 100 metres from Chachura culvert," the official said.

## Insurance, compensation, rescue device: What's in UP's Lift & Escalator Bill

DHEERAJ MISHRA  
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 11

REGISTRATION OF lifts and escalators with the authorities; installation of automatic rescue device to aid passengers in the event of power supply failure; insurance; and compensation in case of death or injury: These are some of the provisions in the Lift and Escalator Bill, 2024, passed in the Uttar Pradesh assembly Saturday in a move to curb mishaps in lifts and escalators in urban areas in the state.

"Every 'owner' of any premises intended for the installation of a lift or escalator shall make an application in such form as may be prescribed, giving full particulars or information to such officers authorised in this behalf by the State Government," reads section 3 of the bill.

While the bill has been passed by both the houses, it is yet to be notified and rules yet to be made to implement its provisions.

According to the bill, 'Owner' means any person or body of persons or corporate body which owns or operates or maintains a lift or escalator, including the authorised agent on their behalf. If any alteration or addition is made to the existing lift or escalator, fresh registration will be must.

"The owner shall submit every year a copy of the AMC (annual maintenance contract) for lift or escalator... to such officers as may be authorised on this behalf by the State Government... in private premises, the owner shall

### PREVIOUS CASES

AUGUST 4, 2023:

A 70-year-old woman died after being trapped in a lift at Paras Tiera society in Noida's Sector 137.

NOVEMBER 3:

Four people were injured after a lift went into a free fall after a malfunction at Yatharth hospital in Noida's Sector 110.

DECEMBER 22:

Nine employees of an IT company suffered injuries when a lift they were in crashed from the eighth floor to the basement at River Side Tower in Noida's Sector 125.

not be required to submit a copy of the AMC every year..." reads section 5 (b) of the bill.

On the automatic rescue device, the bill states: "The device should be such that the lift or escalator reaches the nearest landing level, and the landing and cage doors open. The lift will have adequate lighting and two-way communication system for use by passengers and there will be an emergency bell inside the lift..."

According to other provisions, in the case of public premises, the owner must obtain insurance against any accident or disaster during the operation of the lift or escalator. However, no insurance will be required for lifts or escalators on government premises.

"In the event of loss of human or animal life or injury resulting

from any accident during the operation of a lift or escalator, the owner shall... report the same to the District Magistrate or in-charge of the local police station... But it will be mandatory to inform within 24 hours of the accident," reads section 12(1) of the bill.

It further said that a separate log book of the accident history shall be maintained and displayed near the lift or escalator installed in the public premises.

"In case of an accident, financial compensation will be paid to the family of the deceased or the injured person... The owner can recover compensation... from any person found liable for the accident..." reads section 12(7) of the bill.

### 'People will be held accountable'

According to Abhishek Kumar, president of NEPOWA, an organisation of home buyers, "Now the people will be held accountable for such incidents. People are feeling a sense of security."

AK Sharma, Minister of Energy and Urban Development, UP government, said in the House: "Responsibility will be ensured under this... This Act is a framework under which all matters will be addressed."

Under the Factories Act 1948, the conditions of this Act will not be applicable on lifts and escalators installed in industrial areas or premises. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Haryana, Delhi, and Himachal Pradesh already have a lift Act in place.

## SECTION 144, DIVERSIONS IN PLACE

# Barricades, nails, cranes: Delhi cops ready for farmers' protest

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

BRIGHT YELLOW barricades in place, nails being laid out across arterial roads, cranes and earthmovers standing guard — these are some of the Delhi Police's arrangements at the Singhu, Ghazipur, and Tikri areas bordering Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to prevent farmers from Punjab entering the city. These are the same entry points where farmers held a nearly year-long sit-in protest against the three farm laws, which were subsequently withdrawn by the Centre.

The Delhi police have started making arrangements, announcing several diversions for Monday and Tuesday and placing the whole of the North East district under prohibitory orders, even as farmer unions, who have called for a protest march to Delhi on Tuesday, said they would take a final decision on whether to go ahead only after meeting Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda, along with Union Minister Piyush Goyal and Minister of State Nitayanand Rai in Chandigarh on Monday.

The Delhi Police (Northeast district) on Sunday invoked CrPC Section 144, primarily prohibiting the gathering of people at the borders between Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and nearby areas — under the jurisdiction of Northeast Delhi — to avoid any untoward incident and maintain law and order, said officers.



Police barricades at Ghazipur border ahead of farmer's march, in Delhi on Sunday. Praveen Khanna

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, meanwhile, visited parts of the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border to assess the situation, and have security preparedness in place. Joy Tirkey, DCP (Northeast), said entry of protesters on tractors, trolleys, trucks, buses, commercial vehicles, personal vehicles, and horses etc from Uttar Pradesh to Delhi is prohibited.

"...The Northeast district police shall make all efforts to prevent protesters from entering Delhi... No person/protester shall be allowed to carry arms including firearms, swords, trishul, spears, lathi, rods, etc... Police shall make all efforts to detain these people at the spot," read the order.

The DCP also said that any person found in contravention to this order — effective for 30 days, starting Sunday — shall be liable to be punished under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 188.

A Delhi traffic police advisory said that restrictions will be in place for commercial vehicles at the Singhu border on Monday (February 12), and for all vehicles from Tuesday. Inter-state buses travelling towards Sonipat, Panipat, and Karnal etc via NH-44 are suggested to take Exit 1 (NH-44) Alipur cut to Shani Mandir to Palla Bakhtawarpur Road Y-point to Dahisar village road's two-lane stretch to MCD toll (Dahisar) to Jatti Kalan Road to Singhu to Singh stadium to PS Kundali reaching Auchandi border to KMP to Saitpur Chowki. Cars and LGVs travelling towards Sonipat, Panipat, and Karnal etc via NH-44 are suggested to take Exit 1 (NH-44) Alipur cut to Shani Mandir to Palla Bakhtawarpur Road Y-point to Dahisar village road's two-lane stretch to MCD toll (Dahisar) to Jatti Kalan Road to Singhu to Singh stadium to PS Kundali reaching NH-44 towards Sonipat.

According to the traffic advisory, for diversions around the Tikri border, heavy commercial vehicles and trucks travelling towards Bahadurgarh, and Rohtak, among others through the Rohtak Road, are advised to use Najafgarh Nangloi Road from Nangloi Chowk to enter Haryana through Najafgarh Jharda border.



### A CLASSIC TOUCH

Participants pose with their cars at the Vintage Car Rally at National Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday. Praveen Khanna

## Voice cloning scam: How cybercriminals are using kids' voices to dupe parents

DHEERAJ MISHRA  
NOIDA, FEBRUARY 11

SUPPOSE YOU get a call from someone threatening to implicate your child in a criminal case if you do not meet their demands. You grow wary, wondering if someone is trying to con you. The next minute, however, you hear your sobbing child over the phone and you fear it may be true after all. And so you pay up — only to realise later that it was, indeed, a scam. Your child was never on the phone, but their voice was cloned using sophisticated software.

Over the past few weeks, several such voice cloning fraud cases have surfaced in Delhi-NCR.

**Case 1:** Himanshu Shekhar Singh, a resident of Mahagun Moderna apartments in Noida Sector 78, who works as a superintendent engineer in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, said on January 8 around 3.15 pm, he went to drop his 18-year-old son off for his JEE mock test at a centre near Rajendra Nagar Metro station in Ghaziabad. He then left to take care of some work. An hour later, he got a call from a number with a +92 country code.

Singh, "The caller, Vinod Kumar, who claimed he was a police inspector, said my son had been caught with a gang of rapists... he demanded I pay Rs

30,000 through Paytm immediately to get his name cleared. They said I could even talk to my son... The next minute, I heard a voice saying 'Papa please pay him, they are real policemen, please save me'. I could not doubt even for a second that he was not my boy. The style of speaking, crying... everything was the same."

Still suspicious, Singh asked the caller which police station he was posted at but the man didn't respond. "I told him I don't use online services but I had Rs 10,000 in cash and could give it to him in person. But he refused, insisting I seek a shopkeeper's help to transfer the money. I was afraid that he may be a kidnapper. So I asked my driver to pose as a shopkeeper and handed over the phone to him to send Rs 10,000. The transaction failed the first time but was successful on the second attempt.

Then the man kept demanding more..." By then Singh had returned to the test centre, but security personnel didn't allow him to check on his son. Later, he sought help from local police in Sahibabad who took a picture of his son sitting inside, assuring he was safe. Singh said, "...I approached the cyber cell in Noida and filed a written complaint."

**Case 2:** Singh's colleague, Rajesh Kumar Garg, too was targeted. An MCD engineer who lives in Delhi's Pitampura, he received a call on January 9 from a person threatening to implicate his son, who is pursuing his MBA in Hyderabad, in a rape case. "They said my son was caught with a gang involved in heinous crimes... as he seemed to be from a good family, they intended to release him — provided I pay them. I heard my son crying over the phone, it sounded exactly like his voice. First, they demanded Rs 50,000. When I said I didn't have that kind of money, they asked me to pay Rs 30,000 and I did as they asked," he said.

A friend of Garg suggested he call his son to check on him. "My son said he was in college and was fine... It was a +92 code with a police officer's photo," said Garg. He has yet to file a complaint.

**Case 3:** In the case of a Noida-based senior journalist, her son was studying in front of her when the scammers phoned. "It is a huge concern that cybercriminals are targeting children now. From where they are getting details of kids and their parents?... This must be thoroughly investigated with utmost priority... I was lucky my son was sitting in front of me at that time..." she said. She has not filed a complaint.

Additional DCP (Noida) Manish Kumar Mishra, said, "...Such cases are not very frequent, but recently there has been an upsurge in cases of 'cloning'. We are trying to understand how exactly cybercriminals are creating cloned voices to dupe people."

## UP DSP files complaint against 'impostor' ex-husband

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
GAZIABAD, FEBRUARY 11

A WOMAN deputy SP with the Uttar Pradesh Police has filed a complaint in Ghaziabad, accusing her former husband of "marrying her posing as a fake IRS officer and duping many of lakhs of rupees". The Ghaziabad police has arrested the accused and sent him to jail.

Shrestha Thakur, a 2012-batch PPS officer and currently posted as CO in Shamli district,

said that her former husband Rohit Raj Singh not only got married to her by lying, but also cheated people in the name of her job in the police and collected money from them. He allegedly got Rs 15 lakh, which was deposited for buying a plot in Lucknow, transferred his account by using fake signatures.

Thakur said that she got married to the man in 2018 through a matrimonial site.

"Rohit Raj Singh had described himself as a 2008 batch IRS officer, Deputy Commissioner and

posted in Ranchi... Despite knowing the truth, the applicant did not spoil the marital relationship and fulfilled all the financial demands of Rohit and his family and in 2018 took a loan against my own salary and transferred the money to Rohit's father's account," read the complaint of Thakur.

The official alleged that Rohit along with his father and brother had fraudulently transferred an amount of Rs 15 lakh to their account by forging signature and misusing ATM cards, adding she had saved this money to buy a plot in Lucknow.

"Fed up with all these things,

I got divorce from Rohit Raj Singh three years ago. But to misuse my name, after Ranchi and Bihar, he had made his new base in Kaushambi in Ghaziabad. He started cheating people and told all my staff that he was posted as Commissioner Income Tax, Delhi. He also got married again two years ago. He has created a fake Facebook ID by misusing the photo of my small child..." she said.

ACP Indrapuram Swatantra Kumar Singh said Rohit Singh was arrested on Friday.

was constructed by Emperor Shah Jahan who had his Shikargah (hunting palace) here." Indeed, the structure's domed arches and use of red Lahori bricks is a clear marker of Mughal architecture.

In 2018, the minar was accorded a Grade A status that is given to buildings of regional or local importance possessing special architectural or aesthetic merit, or cultural or historical significance.

On the height of the minar, Hasan surmises that it may have had a chhatri or canopy-like roof in its earlier days. Koch, in her paper *The Copies of the Qutb Minar* says the chhatri was probably used as a resting place, and for shooting or watching the hunting forests below.

Local oral history suggests that there was once a tunnel that connected the minar to the hunting palace, located around a 100 metres away.

Koch also notes that such hunting towers were often studied with elephant tusks or similar hunting "trophies", continuing a tradition hailing back to the Sasanians of Iran.

She further states that minars similar to the Hastsal — such as the Hiran Minar in Fatehpur Sikri — also served as the starting point of a system of

mileposts.

Péter T Nagy's paper on Budapest's own elephant-themed minar notes how the Mughals were particularly inclined towards using minars for odd reasons. Nagy cites the example of how Jahangir erected an artificial lake with a pavilion and a minar at Sheikhpura (Lahore) to commemorate the demise of his pet elephant, with the tower bearing inscriptions singing poetic praises about the animal.

Today, the Hastsal Minar is more or less unknown even to people living in Hastsal, let alone Delhi, while its origins remain a subject of mystery and debate.

UPASAKA SINGHAL  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11



MINISTRY OF  
**TEXTILES**  
Government of India



NARENDRA MODI  
PRIME MINISTER

INSPIRED BY THE  
**5F**  
FARM TO:  
FIBRE TO:  
FACTORY TO:  
FASHION TO:  
FOREIGN

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Global Textile Expo  
New Delhi | Feb 26-29

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FASHION  
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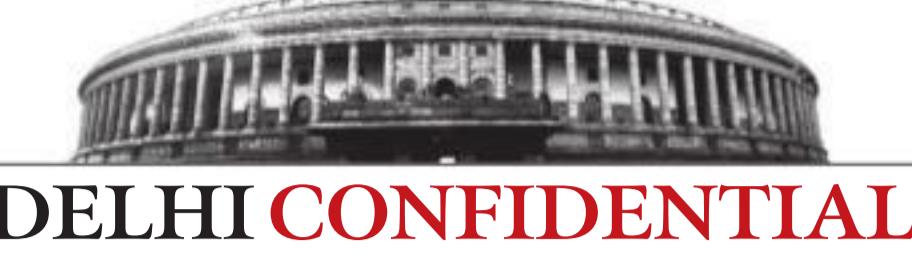
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# GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



RS Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Dy Chairman Hariwansh Narayan Singh with Sudhanshu Trivedi at a farewell event on Thursday for RS MPs. PTI

**LONE EXCEPTION**

IN ITS first list of candidates for the February 27 Rajya Sabha election released on Sunday, the BJP has renominated only one from the outgoing members — Sudhanshu Trivedi. Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted most of the senior members from the Upper House to contest the Lok Sabha elections, the party seemed to have made an exception for Trivedi. Sources said one reason could be Trivedi was nominated to the seat that fell vacant after former Union Minister Arun Jaitley died in August 2019. Thus, Trivedi got just four years in the Rajya Sabha. The other reason, party leaders said, could be that Trivedi is one of the national spokespersons and the BJP wants him to be the face and voice during the campaign ahead of the Lok Sabha elections instead of getting himself into campaigns.

**JAT CONSOLIDATION**

THE BJP on Sunday named former Mathura MP Chaudhary Tejveer Singh for the Rajya Sabha election from Uttar Pradesh. Singh is a prominent Jat leader from western UP where the BJP is in talks with Rashtriya Lok Dal for an alliance to consolidate Jat voters. Eyeing votes from the community, the Narendra Modi government last week had announced the Bharat Ratna for former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh. BJP's UP state president Chaudhary Bhupendra Singh is also a Jat from western UP.

**MONKEY SCARE**

THERE'S a new problem keeping the Railways on its toes, quite literally, apart from delayed train schedules. The Ministry of Railways has written to its senior officials, asking them not to feed monkeys on the Rail Bhawan premises. It stated that it has been observed that a troop of monkeys are causing disruptions on the premises. The ministry wrote to the officials stating there have been instances of monkeys entering the building posing risks to both employees and visitors. It stated that there have been reports of employees being chased, harmed, and cars being damaged by monkeys.

## Cong opposed tribal woman as President: PM in Jhabua

ANAND MOHAN J  
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 11

SPEAKING AT an event in Madhya Pradesh's tribal-dominated Jhabua district, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday that the Congress "never cared for" tribal communities. He also expressed confidence that the BJP would win more than 370 in the coming Lok Sabha elections and that the Congress would be wiped out.

At the event, the Prime Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for development projects in Madhya Pradesh worth ₹7,550 crore.

"I want to tell you that Modi has not come for the Lok Sabha election campaign. Modi has come as a servant to thank the people of MP, who are like God," Modi said.

Targeting the Congress, he said that under the party's rule, the state was counted among the BIMARU — an acronym for Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, a grouping of states that have historically lagged in economic and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav (right) in Jhabua on Sunday. PTI

social indicators — states. Under the BJP, however, the state is now "running fast on the path of development", he said.

"The biggest reason behind Madhya Pradesh having been a BIMARU state was the Congress's hatred towards villages, the poor, and tribal areas... These people never cared about the development or respect for

tribal society. For them, tribal people meant only a few votes. They remembered the village, the poor and the backward only when the election was announced... For us, the tribal community is the pride of our country and the guarantee of our country's bright future. Your respect and your de-

velopment is also Modi's guarantee," the PM said.

He also brought up President Droupadi Murmu's election.

"These people (Congress) come to you to ask for votes from the tribal community, but when a woman from the tribal community contested for the first time for the post of President, the Congress stood like a wall to stop her and defeat her. The country remembers the Congress misdeeds. When elections come, they make big announcements, but when Modi builds pucca houses for every poor, Dalit, backward and tribal person, they abuse Modi," he said.

About the Assembly elections in the state last year, in which the BJP retained power, Modi said the results showed that the people have "already indicated what your mood will be for the Lok Sabha".

"A few days ago, when the Opposition said that they will win 400 seats, I said that I am also hearing that the NDA will win 40 seats, but I am also hearing that the BJP alone will win 370 seats," Modi said. He said the mood in MP was also seen in all parts of India.

**RAJYA SABHA CANDIDATES**

## BJP banks on new faces, names 14 for February 27 polls

ENS &amp; PTI

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11



R.P.N. Singh, who was a minister in UPA govt, is among the candidates

L Murugan, both of whom represent Madhya Pradesh, and Union minister Narayan Rane from Maharashtra are among those retiring from the House as members.

R P N Singh, who comes from the politically important Kurmi caste, was in the Congress before joining the BJP. He was a minister in the Congress-led UPA government.

Former Haryana BJP president Subhash Barala, a Jat, will be the party's candidate from the state and Samik Bhattacharya from West Bengal.

Besides relying on new faces, many of whom have been working in the party organisation for long, the BJP has maintained a balance of caste equation in picking its candidates.

Singh is from the erstwhile

Gond royal family and replaces Saroj Pandey.

Senior leader Sushil Kumar

Modi's name did not figure as the party picked Dharmshila Gupta and Bhim Singh from Bihar having six vacancies. Both the ruling NDA and the opposition are likely to win three seats each, going by their current strengths. The JD(U), a BJP ally, is likely to name its candidate for one seat.

None of the Union ministers, whose terms are coming to an end, were named in the list amid a strong possibility that many of them will contest the Lok Sabha polls. However, the party is yet to name many candidates including from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The BJP's current strength, which is less than the previous Assembly, means that it can ensure the victory of seven of its candidates for 10 vacancies.

Except for Sudhanshu Trivedi, none of the nine outgoing BJP MPs from Uttar Pradesh including Anil Jain, Anil Agrawal and G V Narasimha Rao has been renominated.

The BJP's current strength, which is less than the previous Assembly, means that it can ensure the victory of seven of its candidates for 10 vacancies.

## Sushmita Dev, journalist Sagarika Ghose among four picked by TMC

SANTANU CHOWDHURY  
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 11

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi resumes the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra from Raigarh on Sunday after a two-day break. ANI

SANTANU CHOWDHURY  
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 11

THE TRINAMOOL Congress (TMC) on Sunday announced the names of four candidates from West Bengal for the February 27 Rajya Sabha elections. Besides naming party leaders Sushmita Dev, Md Nadimul Haque and Mamata Bala Thakur as its nominees, TMC sprang a surprise with the candidature of journalist-author Sagarika Ghose.

"We are pleased to announce the candidature of @sagarikaghose, @SushmitaDevAITC, @MdNadimulHaque6 and Mamata Bala Thakur for the forthcoming Rajya Sabha elections. We extend our heartfelt wishes to them and may they work towards upholding Trinamool's enduring legacy of indomitable spirit and advocacy for the rights of every Indian," the TMC said in a post on X.

Going by the strength of the Bengal House, four TMC candidates and one from the BJP will be elected to the Rajya Sabha.

If selected, this will be Haque's third term in Rajya Sabha since 2012. A writer and journalist, he is the owner of the Kolkata-based Urdu daily *Akhbar-e-Mashriq*. Former All India Mahila Congress chief Sushmita Dev, who joined the TMC in 2021 and was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, represented Silchar in the Assam Assembly from 2011 to 2014 before being elected to the Lok Sabha from Silchar. Thakur belongs to the Matua community that has a strong presence in the districts of North 24 Parganas and Nadia. Ghose, a first-time nominee, has worked for prominent news publications and TV channels.

In 2012, TMC chief Mamata Banerjee had stormed out of a TV show hosted by Ghose after taking offence at a question asked by a college student in the audience.

EC snatched NCP from founders, gave it to others: Sharad Pawar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUNE, FEBRUARY 11

SENIOR POLITICIAN Sharad Pawar Sunday said the Election Commission's decision to allot the NCP name and symbol to Ajit Pawar-led group was "surprising" as the poll body had "snatched" the party from the hands of its founders and given it to others.

"I am confident that people will not support the Election Commission's ruling against which we have approached the Supreme Court," Pawar told reporters in Pune. "The EC snatched the party from the hands of those who founded and built it and gave it to others; such a thing never happened before in the country."

## Congress to end Rahul yatra earlier than planned, skip most of west UP

Party says decision not linked to reports of RLD ditching INDIA bloc

MANOJ CG  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

THE UTTAR Pradesh leg of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra will be curtailed by a few days, with party insiders saying the march is likely to culminate at least a week earlier than planned.

The yatra was scheduled to enter Uttar Pradesh this week and spend 11 days in the state that has 80 Lok Sabha seats and where the Congress has failed to make a mark in the last two Lok Sabha elections. In UP, the yatra was to pass through 28 Lok Sabha constituencies, among them Prime Minister Narendra Modi's seat Varanasi, Rae Bareli, Amethi, Allahabad, Phulpur, and Lucknow.

Sources said the yatra would now skip most of the western UP districts and travel directly from Lucknow to Aligarh and then to Agra, both of which are in west UP, before entering Madhya Pradesh. Interestingly, the Congress's INDIA bloc partner Rashtriya Lok Dal

(RLD) that has a strong presence in west UP is in talks with the BJP to join the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Sources in the Congress, however, said the decision to curtail the yatra in UP had nothing to do with the political developments involving the RLD. "We wanted to slow down the yatra to ensure that Rahul Gandhi gets time for in-

teractions with groups on the way," said a party leader. The yatra that was to culminate in Mumbai by March 20 may now end between March 10 and 14, at least a week earlier than planned as it will give Rahul more time to campaign.

Sources said the INDIA bloc has decided to hold its first joint rally later this month in Karnataka.

"We are pleased to announce the candidature of @sagarikaghose, @SushmitaDevAITC, @MdNadimulHaque6 and Mamata Bala Thakur for the forthcoming Rajya Sabha elections. We extend our heartfelt wishes to them and may they work towards upholding Trinamool's enduring legacy of indomitable spirit and advocacy for the rights of every Indian," the TMC said in a post on X.

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The first loan resulted in an additional income of ₹1,955 per month, or ₹23,460 in total during the loan's one-year duration, the report said, adding this was in line with the estimates of marginal returns of small businesses in many parts of the world, it said.

In the sample, the study found 13.9% of all the loans dis-

bursed had been classified as non-performing assets (NPAs), meaning no payments had been made for three months and more. The NPAs were the highest during Covid-19 pandemic and declined over time, with only 9% of loans disbursed in 2022 turning into NPAs.

According to the study, 94% of those beneficiaries who had availed the first loan of Rs 10,000 said they used it to make "business investments". It was 98% in case of those who had availed the second loan.

The study found that the PM-SVANidhi loan was their first-ever bank loan, while for 72% of them said it was the first business loan, the report said.

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# Bihar youth who went to look for work among Haldwani dead

AVANEESH MISHRA  
HALDWANI, FEBRUARY 11



Prakash Kumar Singh

AMONG THE five dead in the Haldwani violence, which followed a demolition drive at a mosque and madrasa, is a 24-year-old from Bihar who had come to the district in search of employment.

The body of Prakash Kumar Singh was found more than 2 km from the epicentre of the violence, with gunshot wounds to the head.

"The body was recovered around 2-3 km from the spot... It could be a case of personal enmity. We will investigate who killed him and why," said Nainital SSP Prahlad Narayan Meena, adding they are trying to ascertain what weapon was used in the murder.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Prakash's brother-in-law Ankit Kumar Singh said they learned of Prakash's death only on Saturday, two days after the violence. Ankit, who lives in Noida, hurriedly travelled to Haldwani on receiving the news.

"He went to Haldwani in search of work. He might have consulted someone before going. We do not have any family members there. He left Bihar on February 7 and reached next day. This was his first time there. He must have been clueless about everything. We think violence started soon after he got off the train and reached Banbhupura," said Ankit.

Prakash had just completed his Bachelor of Arts and was

looking for a private sector job. He is survived by his parents and a younger brother.

"His father is not in a situation to travel, so I came to collect his body. In Haldwani, the administration arranged an ambulance for me to take the body back to our hometown in Bihar. We left on Sunday around 3 pm and will reach there on Monday," he said.

SSP Meena said they will look into all deaths that took place during the violence. According to information provided by the district administration, the deceased have been identified as Singh, and Haldwani residents Faheem Qureshi (30), Zahid (45), his son Mohammad Anas (16), and Mohammad Shaban (22).

The family of Faheem Qureshi has meanwhile alleged he was shot dead by neighbours when the violence was unfolding, after he objected to his vehicle being set on fire. SSP Meena said they will look into the allegations. The family of Zahid and Anas had told *The Indian Express* they both sustained bullet injuries when they ventured out to look for each other during the violence.

# After HC intervenes, 8 FIRs filed in rape case against Sirohi officials

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
JAIPUR, FEBRUARY 11

EIGHT FIRs have been registered against the chairperson of the Sirohi Municipal Council and the former acting Municipal Commissioner, who were last year accused of raping 15-20 women, following directions by the Rajasthan High Court, police said.

Sirohi Deputy SP Paras Choudhary told *The Indian Express* that the case against the two had been sent last year to the women's police station for investigation, and that they had found the allegations to be false. However, some complainants later approached the High Court seeking the registration of FIRs.

"And in compliance with the court's order, we have lodged eight FIRs in the same case against the Municipal Council Chairperson and the former Municipal Commissioner," said

Choudhary, who is also the investigating officer for the case. "The probe is on," he added.

Chairperson of Sirohi Municipal Council Mahendra Mewara and former Sirohi Municipal Council acting commissioner Mahendra Choudhary said the allegations against them were false, and that during the police's probe last year, investigators were unable to locate any of the women or find any evidence. Mewara said a man who had been involved in a case related to the grabbing of municipal land was behind these allegations, and that the same man had got four-five FIRs registered against Mewara in the past.

In the rape complaint lodged last year, a woman had alleged that she and 15-20 other women had gone from Pali to Sirohi for recruitment for anganwadi jobs. She alleged that she met Mahendra Mewara and Mahendra Choudhary there, and

they made the women stay at the place of one of their acquaintances. It was alleged that the food served to women was spiked with drugs, and once the women passed out, Mewara and "10-15 others" raped them and recorded videos.

The complaint also claimed that the accused had blackmailed the women with videos, and demanded Rs 5 lakh from each of them.

The Final Report filed by the Sirohi police in February 2023 in the case had concluded that the case was false.

It had said that none of the women came forward when the incident happened "2-3 months" ago, that they have not specified any location of the alleged rapes, that the complainants have not given any contact number of theirs or the accused, that the complaints were sent by post and not handwritten, and that the same complaint was copied mul-

tiple times.

The police had also said that they could not find a single woman at the given addresses. Moreover, Choudhary, who was working as an executive engineer with the charge of acting municipal commissioner, had retired in August 2022, nearly four months before the allegations were levelled against him. Choudhary also said that anganwadi comes under the Women and Child Development Department, and not the Municipal Council.

Mewara said one Rajendra Gandhi, who he claimed is accused of grabbing valuable Municipal Council land, had been trying to put pressure on him with the help of one Ramniwas Daga, and that they had hatched a conspiracy to malign his image.

"Gandhi gets Daga to mail fake complaints against me via post. Previously, too, he has lodged 4-5 cases against me which were all found to be false," Mewara said.

# To optimise its manpower, Army outsources 'key responsibilities'

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

PREPARATIONS FOR defence training and professional development courses, security of non-sensitive military locations, repair and recovery of stores and equipment, and other facility management services are

among the various essential responsibilities being outsourced by the Army at present, officials told *The Indian Express*.

While these tasks are essential in the routine functioning of the Army, they are being outsourced as part of a manpower optimisation plan in the Army, which aims to sharpen the operational edge of the force.

Some of these practices, which are being implemented by various commands, have been identified as best practices. The Army has asked other commands to replicate them in a similar manner.

According to sources, a few veterans are being taken onboard on contract as instructors for the conduct of preparatory courses for career exams, and this practice may be extended to Army training establishments as well.

Language experts are also being outsourced to train Army personnel in various foreign languages.

*The Indian Express* had reported earlier that the Territorial Army (TA) has recruited Chinese language inter-

preters for border personnel meetings and cyber security experts to support the Army.

Facility management services, which are being outsourced, include food and catering services at military hospitals and hospital waste management services. Certain medical consultancy services such as psychologists and other specialists as well as paramedical staff such as physiotherapists, speech therapists among others are being hired where needed.

Other conservancy services in military stations, manpower and vehicles for cargo handling and transportation and relocation of stores and office assistance are being outsourced wherever required.

No core function, however, will be outsourced and any decision on outsourcing of any new services will have to be first approved by the Vice Chief of the Army.

The Indian Express had earlier reported that the exercise is aimed at sharpening the tooth-to-tail ratio of the force, scheduled for implementation in the next five years in phases, will see the chopping of the "tail" element of every arm of the force, not only the supporting arms and services.

The decision on rightsizing the Army is based on the inputs received from all arms and services and taking into account the existing shortage of manpower in the 12.8-lakh Army.

# CUET UG in hybrid mode this year, with fewer subject choices

DEEKSHA TERI  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

CONDUCTED ONLINE since its introduction two years ago, the Common University Entrance Test-Undergraduate (CUET UG) will now be held in a hybrid mode to allow candidates, particularly those from rural areas, to take the exam closer home, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

Registration for the examination, conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on behalf of the UGC, will likely begin around February 19, it is learnt.

According to senior officials in NTA and UGC, the third edition of the exam, scheduled to be held between May 15 and 31, will see some major changes – from the format to number of subjects allowed to the difficulty level.

UGC chairman M Jagadesh Kumar said that for subjects with higher registration, the test will be conducted using OMR sheets instead of the Computer Based Test (CBT) format.

"For the subjects where there will be a higher percentage of registrations, we will bring in OMR in (multiple choice question format). In this way, we will be able to

## Demand from students

LAST YEAR, in several parts of the country such as J&K and Jharkhand, where the number of centres were limited, candidates complained about having to travel to far-off places to sit for the exam. Many in the Northeastern states, too, demanded examination centres closer home.

conduct the exam for those specific subjects on one day and in one shift for all candidates in the country. We will be able to use several schools, colleges and educational institutes as exam halls, just like we do for other exams such as NEET. This will be beneficial for students, specifically those who are in rural areas, as they will not have to travel to far-off places for the exam," Kumar said.

Last year, around 28 lakh candidates sat for CUET UG, with the highest number of applications received from Uttar Pradesh.

The exam will be conducted in

three shifts on each exam day: 9 am to 11 am, 12.30 pm to 2 pm, and 4 pm to 5.30 pm. According to Kumar, the hybrid format will reduce the number of "exam days" as well. When asked if this will bring down the possibility of the usage of the normalisation process for result calculation, Kumar said a decision on this will be taken as the situation arises.

Number of subjects a candidate can choose will be cut from 10 to six. According to Kumar, data by NTA showed not many students were picking all the 10 subject options. The large number of options was also posing technical difficulties in allotting exam centres for some students.

"Since few students were picking the large number of choices, allotment of centres became very complex. Since our data shows that most students were only taking 4 or 5 papers, in this CUET UG, we will permit students to take only 6 test papers, which would include three domain subjects, two languages and the general test," Kumar said.

The NTA is also working on ensuring the difficulty level of the CUET UG 2024 is kept as moderate to avoid stress among students, Kumar said.

For the subjects where there

will be a higher percentage of registrations, we will bring in OMR in (multiple choice question format). In this way, we will be able to

## AYODHYA DARSHAN

A delegation of 430 legislators led by Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath during a visit to the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Sunday. Samajwadi Party leaders skipped the event. PTI

# In a first, CAPFs constable exam to be held in 13 regional languages

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

THE MINISTRY OF Home Affairs Sunday announced that for the first time, the constable recruitment examination in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) will be conducted in 13 regional languages in addition to Hindi and English from January 1 this year. This historic decision has been taken on the initiative of Shah to increase the participation of local youth in CAPFs and to promote regional languages," an official statement said.

Last year, political leaders in the southern states had objected to only Hindi and English being the language options for the recruitment test.

"Question papers of Constable (General Duty) examination will now be prepared in Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Mal-

cided to conduct the Constable (General Duty) examination for recruitment in CAPFs in 13 regional languages in addition to Hindi and English from January 1 this year. This historic decision has been taken on the initiative of Shah to increase the participation of local youth in CAPFs and to promote regional languages," an official statement said.

The decision will result in lakhs of youth taking part in the exam in their mother tongue/regional language and improve their selection prospects. As a result, the reach of this examination will increase among the candidates in the entire country and everyone will get an equal opportunity for employment," it stated.

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## THREE RATNAS

Honour to Rao, Swaminathan and Charan Singh is well-deserved and politically timed. It should also spur introspection

**T**HE TIMING — AHEAD of Lok Sabha polls — of the Narendra Modi government's decision to confer the Bharat Ratna on Chaudhary Charan Singh and PV Narasimha Rao, both former prime ministers, may be political. While the first was a leading anti-Congress voice from the late Sixties to the mid-Eighties, the latter is someone whom the current ruling dispensation has sought to portray as having gotten a raw deal from the grand old party. But there is no doubt that both — and the third recipient of the honour, the agricultural scientist, MS Swaminathan — fully deserve the nation's highest civilian award. Narasimha Rao was the father of India's economic reforms. The success of the policy changes he unveiled in 1991 — opening up the economy to the world and private investment, both domestic and foreign — can be measured not only by the country's GDP growing some 13-fold, from \$270 billion to \$3.5 trillion, since then, but also by subsequent governments not really reversing direction.

While Rao's market-oriented liberalisation measures unleashed the "animal spirits" of entrepreneurs in India, the other two men were messiahs, no less, for the farmers of Bharat. Charan Singh's three landmark pieces of legislation in Uttar Pradesh — dismantling the zamindari system of intermediaries between the cultivator and the state, enabling consolidation of fragmented holdings, and enforcing land ceiling — transformed the agricultural economy of northern India during the 1950s and 1960s. It helped create a new socially and politically empowered middle peasant class in the region. Their economic fortunes rose with the Green Revolution, whose key architect was Swaminathan. He was the first to recognise the potential of the new high-yielding wheat and rice varieties — less tall with strong stems that responded well to more fertiliser application and didn't bend when their ears were heavy with well-filled grains — and growing them in India. He also strengthened the national agricultural research system (NARS) that has helped boost yields in other crops as well, including through breeding of varieties resistant to pests, diseases and abiotic stresses.

The awarding of Bharat Ratna to the three eminent persons should also be a moment of introspection. Reforms have delivered growth, but not lessened poverty as much as was hoped. Rao wouldn't have been happy with rising inequality and continued mislocation of resources towards inefficient producer and consumer subsidies. In today's times, he may have batttered more for direct income support. Charan Singh's middle peasant has become a prisoner of past success and needs a new formula for boosting incomes through crop diversification, improved input use efficiency and cutting out intermediaries in the marketing of produce (similar to the oppressive zamindars of yore). The best tribute to Swaminathan would be to restore the NARS to its former glory. Farmer interest is better served by more money for research and infrastructure investments, not underpricing of fertiliser, electricity and water.

## AFTER THE POLL

Question in Pakistan: What can army do with a pliable but politically illegitimate government vis-a-vis nation's crises?

**T**HERE IS NO end to the political tragedy of Pakistan, with yet another election manipulated by its army ending in a deliberately engineered stalemate. As in the 2018 election — which saw a hung national assembly and the army's construction of a majority in favour of Imran Khan — Pakistan's army chief, General Asim Munir now directs the construction of a new ruling coalition. But the electoral process under Gen Munir has become an even bigger farce than before, thanks to brazen rigging before and after polling. The Pakistan army's new model of a "hybrid" government — in which the GHQ in Rawalpindi has an expansive role in governing the polity and economy — failed to deliver after the 2018 elections. This time, the puppet government installed by Gen Munir will have even less credibility.

At the heart of the problem has been the deepening contradiction between the massive popularity of Imran Khan and the army's determination to destroy his party and persona. Having built up Imran Khan as the alternative to the traditional leadership, the army was upset with Imran's attempt to strike out on his own and sought to bring him down. Despite handing him long sentences for corruption, leaking state secrets, and adultery, and barring his party (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) from contesting the elections, Imran-backed independents have gained the largest plurality of seats in the National Assembly. Without the alleged rigging during the counting of votes, it is entirely plausible that Imran Khan would have got a two-thirds majority in the Assembly. As it put down Imran Khan, the army facilitated the return of exiled Nawaz Sharif, a three-term prime minister who was ousted from power in 2017 on corruption charges. Yet, it has also been clear the army will not allow Nawaz Sharif a free hand to run the country. His Pakistan Muslim League has emerged as the largest single party, but behind the PTI-backed independents. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has also won a significant number of seats.

By engineering a fractured mandate — the PTI knocked out, and the PML cut down to size, Gen Munir will have a big say in the formation of the next government, in which no civilian leader can threaten the army's dominance over the polity and its preferences in policy-making. Nawaz Sharif has claimed the right to form the new government and has appealed to other parties to join him. The next few days will see intense bargaining between PML and PPP under the supervision of the army to structure the new coalition and the distribution of the fishes and loaves of government. But by keeping Imran Khan locked up and the PTI out of power in a rigged process, it is not clear how long the new government might last. In the near term, the big question is what Gen Munir could do with a pliable but politically illegitimate government under him in addressing the challenges facing the nation. These include unstable borders, the return of violent religious extremism, and a tottering economy. Going by the army's historical record, there is no reason to hold one's breath.

## FREEZE FRAME

EPUddy

Finally they make you Leader of Opposition  
— between this Lok Sabha and the next.



## Election without winner



VIVEK KATJU

It could initiate churning within Pakistan army about its national role. But it is not likely to

THE TRUE PROTAGONISTS in the February 8 national polls in Pakistan were two individuals — Army Chief General Asim Munir and former Prime Minister and founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, Imran Khan. Munir used all levers of state power from behind the scenes and through other institutions and individuals to try to grind Khan into electoral dust. With results of all 264 general seats contested in the elections announced, it is certain, that he has failed to do so.

Khan, imprisoned since early May last year, convicted in numerous cases which prevented him from both contesting elections or campaigning, was compelled to make his party candidates stand as independents. This was because the Pakistan Election Commission suspended PTI's symbol. However, despite these steps and also pressures on Khan's leading colleagues, PTI candidates contesting as independents came through as the single largest group. They secured more seats (declared so far) in the National Assembly (93) than either the Munir favoured party, the Pakistan Muslim League (N) of the Sharifs (75) or the Pakistani Peoples' Party (PPP) of the Bhutto-Zardaris (54). This indicates that Khan has retained a large measure of his voter base amidst very adverse political circumstances.

As no party has secured a majority, Pakistan is necessarily heading towards a coalition government. To understand the complexities in government formation, it is essential to turn to the Pakistan constitution. It provides for a National Assembly of 342 members of which 242 (elections were held for 235 seats) are to be elected directly. At the same time, 60 seats are reserved for women which are proportionately filled, on a provincial basis, from lists provided by parties. It is mandatory for a party to secure five per cent of the vote to be eligible for women's seats. Ten seats are reserved for minorities on a national basis.

As PTI could not contest as a party, it is not eligible for the women and minorities seats. Without these seats, no party can get a major-

In the present scenario, it is the PPP which is crucial to government formation. It has retained Sindh and gained in Punjab too. Munir has no doubt urged PML(N) and PPP to join hands in another version of the pre-election Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM) government led by PML (N) leader and Nawaz Sharif's brother Shehzad Sharif. Talks are taking place between the two on government making but negotiations will be tough for there is much at stake for both parties. It is more than probable that, in the end, Munir and his coterie of generals will make the two parties hammer out an understanding for the "good of Pakistan". It is possible that a PML(N) and PPP government may not fulfil Nawaz Sharif's aspiration to become Pakistan's Prime Minister for the fourth time but the PML(N) would fight for his cause forcefully.

The question is if Imran Khan's extraordinary performance in these elections in the most adverse circumstances will prevail on the superior judiciary to re-look at his convictions so that he can come out of prison and play an active political role. There would be pressures on the judiciary and other institutions too with the large presence of "Khans" Members of the National Assembly. While the army and the coalition that will be formed will try to wean away some of these MNAs, most, fearing adverse voter reactions, would remain loyal to Khan. It is unlikely that Khan will get judicial relief in the immediate future but it is equally unlikely that the courts will not, at some stage, let him out. If they do so, he will remain in Pakistan; he is not the kind who will agree to go into foreign exile.

It is well known that Khan had a good measure of support within the army. Munir ruthlessly dealt with pro-Imran elements, including a Corps Commander, after the May 9 incidents. These election results may revive a positive sentiment in sections of the army for Imran, which Munir and the ISI will deal with an iron hand.

There is a section within Pakistan which wishes the army to become detached from politics. They may be enthused by these results, hoping that they may initiate a churning in the army about its national role. That is unlikely to happen. The Pakistani army will remain both professional and political. And, Munir will not reduce his antipathy for Khan for his neck is on the line.

The writer is a former diplomat

## CLASSROOM VS COACHING

Only schools can cultivate agency and impart a wholesome education



AMEETA MULLA WATTAL

IN A significant move, the Ministry of Education last month announced several guidelines for coaching centres. This comes in response to concerns about the welfare of students, student suicides and the unregulated growth of private coaching.

The coaching industry generates a revenue of Rs 6,000 crore annually and is growing at the rate of 7-10 per cent every year. There is now coaching not only for NEET or JEE, but even for CUET, as well as tuitions across subjects taught in schools. A new malaise has crept in where children are moving out of schools after Class X in order to join dummy schools which admit them without requiring them to attend classes, so they can enrol in coaching centres to crack CUET.

This is resulting in those who have opted for science dismissing the value of school. The government needs to reconsider its earlier decision to give weightage to board exam results in applying for competitive exams. If not, we will lose the franchise of high school education completely.

Unfortunately, policy makers have not been able to provide support to students for the journey beyond school. This has allowed institutions like Kota to become parallel systems. Coaching centres, such as those in Kota, have been established over three decades and are firmly entrenched in the lives and minds of Indians.

The National Education Policy goes beyond textbooks and lays emphasis on mental health, learning and understanding. It focuses on a child's inner needs. Only a school can develop these concepts.

Children are walking away from class-

The teenage brain is vulnerable, affecting long-term personality development. Young adults need a lot of downtime through sleep, social interaction, reflection, developing their identities and articulating their needs. These aspects are not addressed in the coaching culture. In fact, coaching centres do not even give enough time to sleep. Children are not machines — they need communities that are nurturing, supportive, sometimes challenging but always caring.

room teaching into coaching centres, often with parental support. A child in senior and high school needs to be counselled to prevent him or her from succumbing to peer pressure. This is a mandate for both parents and schools. If coaching centres are going to be the foundation of these years, then the youth of today will become directionless.

We can't measure mental health only by the number of suicides. There are many acute and chronic conditions which are unseen. Children suffer from anxiety and are unable to cope. The teenage brain is vulnerable, affecting long-term personality development. Young adults need a lot of downtime through sleep, social interaction, reflection, developing their identities and articulating their needs.

These aspects are not addressed in the coaching culture. In fact, coaching centres do not even give enough time to sleep. Children are not machines — they need communities that are nurturing, supportive, sometimes challenging but always caring.

The role of education, defines and refines itself, particularly in our country, which is socially and economically diverse, where deprived sections are increasingly going to demand their place under the sun by asserting their own identities and aspirations. This feeds into a highly competitive environment, which has reduced learning to tuition shops, thus affecting the emotional stability and well-being of our children.

Learning is a process, where society reflects upon the needs and aspirations of its children. True education is value imparting and goal setting. If the child finds that the idiom he speaks is at variance with the idiom of society, he faces a dilemma. Children are natural actors. They instinctively use pretend play in order to make sense of the world. They imitate words and actions, observe and respond to the environment, create situations and assume roles. They interact with peers and arrange space and objects to bring their stories to life. They direct one another to respond to each other's dramas. They observe and internalise the needs of the society around them through which a world of false expectations is created, which leads to stress.

We need to engage, discuss, clarify, and care for the aspirations of our young. As a country, we need a shared vision, where well-being is the goal of education and co-agency is a guiding light.

Students go to school to become purposeful, reflective, and responsible. Agency helps children to act independently and make their own choices. For life to work, our young will need to innovate, be responsible and sensitive, become creators of products, services and models for the future, alert to the claims that others make on them and open to the deepest emotions.

The obsession with coaching will never be able to validate and strengthen new ideas, approaches and research, required for human flourishing. Prioritising these is the need of the hour.

The writer is chairperson and executive director, Education, Innovations and Training, DLF Schools and Scholarship Programmes

## FEBRUARY 12, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

## ANDROPOV'S FUNERAL

THE FUNERAL OF Soviet President, Yuri Andropov, will be held at noon in Moscow's Red Square, the organising commission announced. Andropov, 69, who died of cardiovascular insufficiency and respiratory arrest, will be buried with full state and party honours amidst Communist greats behind the Lenin Mausoleum. The Soviets have declared a four-day mourning. The body of Andropov was placed in the Hall of Columns for mourners to bid him farewell.

## INSAT-1B DEDICATION

THE MULTI-PURPOSE INSAT-1B satellite took

the four corners of India in its embrace as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi dedicated it to the nation at Hassan in Karnataka. At a function held simultaneously at five centres, Mrs Gandhi, her ministerial colleagues and eminent scientists explained through Doordarshan how the satellite is being used for communication, meteorology and radio and television. She dedicated the satellite to "peace and service of the people".

## P C SETHI'S LETTER

AKALI DAL PRESIDENT Harchand Singh Longowal received a letter from P C Sethi, Union Home Minister, inviting the Akali Dal to hold tripartite talks for solving the Punjab

problem. Immediately after getting the invitation, Longowal sent word to the SCPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra and the former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, for discussions on the proposed tripartite talks.

## MAQBOOL BUTT HANGED

MAQBOOL BUTT, 50, a Pakistani national and founder of the Kashmir Liberation Front, was hanged in Tihar jail at 7.30 am, more than 15 years after he was sentenced to death for murder. The terrorist was buried inside the jail in a spot adjoining the phansi kothi (death row) as the authorities said, there was no one to claim the body.

# THE IDEAS PAGE

## The intrusive state

By formalising what had hitherto been in the realm of informal relationships between consenting adults, Uttarakhand UCC raises constitutional concerns of privacy and personal liberty



FLAVIA AGNES

THE STATE OF Uttarakhand has attained the honored position of being the first state to enact a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) under Article 44 of the Constitution. The UCC would apply uniformly to people across religions, not including tribal populations. The criticism against it is that there has not been sufficient discussion among communities or even in the state legislature. While many of its provisions are controversial, an issue that has raised much public debate is the provision for mandatory registration of live-in relationships. The Act has entered a totally new terrain by introducing provisions of formalising what had hitherto been in the realm of informal sexual relationships between consenting adults and raises constitutional concerns of privacy and personal liberty.

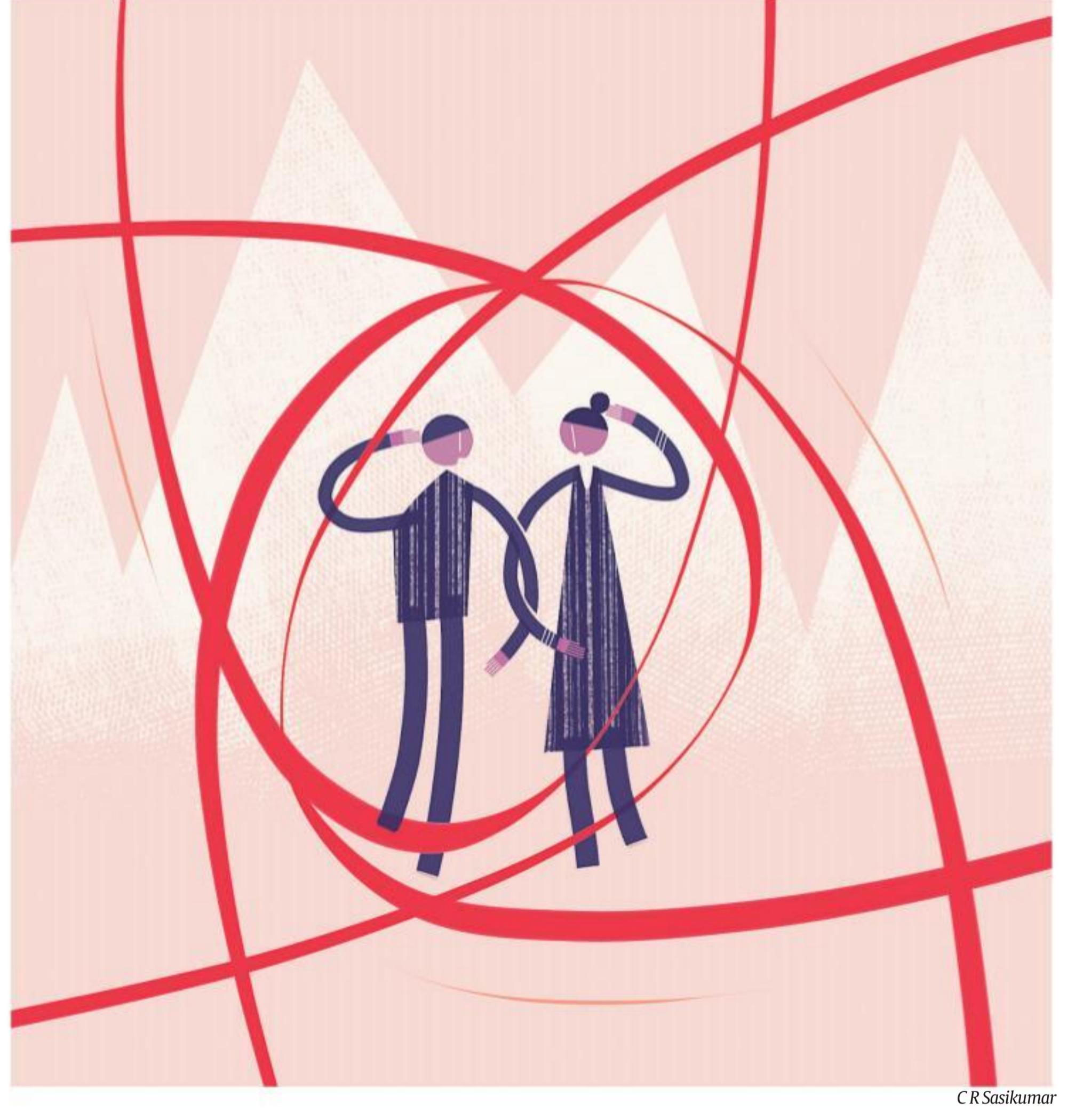
The Code requires the partners to notify the registrar within a month of entering into a live-in relationship and also while terminating it.

One fails to understand the purpose for which the provisions of registering a live-in relationship have been included in the UCC drafted by an expert committee which was headed by Justice (retd) Ranjana Desai of the Supreme Court. This defeats the very purpose of a live-in relationship as it renders it on par with a formal marriage, with conditions for entering into a relationship similar to a marriage contract — monogamy, prohibited degrees of relationships, etc. Also, as is the case in marriage (and divorce), one has to register the contract with the registrar at the time of entering into a relationship and also at the time of exiting from it. Non-registration has been rendered a criminal offence with a fine of Rs 10,000 and/or imprisonment of three months. In case of failure to produce a certificate of live-in relationship, a term of six months is prescribed on conviction and/or fine of Rs 25,000. These stipulations transform the entire relationship from an informal one into one governed by a draconian and rigid criminal law. The entire purpose seems to be to dissuade young couples from entering into such relationships and control their sexuality, and raises questions about individual privacy and liberty.

The Code defines this heterosexual relationship as a "relationship between a man and a woman" who "cohabit in a shared household through a relationship in the nature of marriage, provided that such relations are not prohibited."

It is reported that when asked about these provisions, an official in the state government claimed that "concerns over heinous crimes among live-in couples" was the key imperative behind this provision. He further stated: "When the expert committee went to remote areas in Uttarakhand for public consultation, incidents (of live-in crimes) were fresh in the minds of the people. During public consultation, parents and the elderly insisted that there must be something in law to protect young girls. While personal freedom is important, protection of youngsters is also important. The committee found a way to ensure that."

But young adults may not want this kind of state protection which takes away their



C R Sasikumar

freedom to not choose marriage but to stay in a consensual relationship without the intrusion of the state apparatus into their private life. This type of protectionist approach is parochial and patriarchal, as it intrudes into the domain of privacy which is recognised as a fundamental right in the *Puttaswamy* ruling.

The Code provides for maintenance for a woman "deserted" by her partner, similar to a married woman. Section 388 states: "If a woman gets deserted by her live-in partner, she shall be entitled to claim maintenance from her live-in partner, for which she may approach the competent Court having jurisdiction over the place where they last cohabited."

These relationships are already protected under the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 where they are termed as "domestic relationships". When women in relationships "in the nature of marriage" complain of domestic violence, they are entitled to claim maintenance from their partners.

The Code explicitly stipulates that a child born in a live-relationship is a legitimate child. This is the prevailing legal position but under this UCC, it is codified as law.

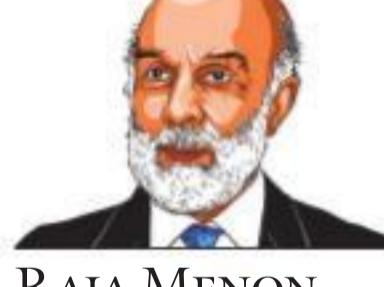
The proposed law will apply to those living in Uttarakhand as well as residents of Uttarakhand living elsewhere in India. Section 378 of the Code requires submission of a statement by those in a live-in relation-

Young adults may not want this kind of state protection which takes away their freedom to not choose marriage but to stay in a consensual relationship without the intrusion of the state apparatus into their private life. This type of protectionist approach is parochial and patriarchal, as it intrudes into the domain of privacy which is recognised as a fundamental right in the *Puttaswamy* ruling.

ship. "It shall be obligatory for partners to live-in relationship within the state, whether they are resident(s) of Uttarakhand or not, to submit a statement of live-in relationship under sub-section 1 of section 381 to the registrar within whose jurisdiction they are living," it further states. "Any resident(s) of Uttarakhand staying in a live-in relationship outside the territory of the state, may submit a statement of live-in relationship under sub section 1 of section 381 to the registrar within whose jurisdiction such resident ordinarily resides," it adds.

The most draconian part of this entire provision is that the registrar, with powers similar to those granted to the magistrate in the anti-conversion legislation, can conduct a "summary inquiry", summoning the live-in partners or "any other persons" for verification. This has scope for misuse by family and society at large, besides infantilising adult women. The registrar is not a judicial officer unlike the magistrate and has no training in investigation. The registrar has to then forward the record to the police station concerned and, in case either partner is less than 21 years of age, inform the parents or guardians (ironically, a girl can marry at 18 without parental permission). With such stringent stipulations, the entire purpose of a live-in relationship is totally negated.

*The writer is a women's rights lawyer*



RAJA MENON

IT REQUIRES 30 years to build a Navy, said a famous Royal Navy Admiral during World War II, and added that it requires 300 years to build a tradition. We are not far from India's independence centenary. The country will also be the world's third richest nation in terms of GDP. What kind of armed forces will India need in 2047? Certainly not the force structure of today conceived two or three decades ago, in the closing years of the 20th century. The Defence Acquisitions Council has approved, in principle, the need for a third aircraft carrier. How large should the carrier be and what will be its role?

Even as we write this, the vital sea lanes of the country are in peril. Shipping companies are reluctant to use the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Insurance rates for cargo have skyrocketed, making both imports and exports costlier, owing to the indiscriminate attacks on merchant shipping by the Houthis operating from Yemen. The safety of sea lanes is a general public good, and yet only the US and the UK have retaliated against the Houthis. India, after which the ocean on which all this occurring is named, is in a defensive posture with naval ships merely tasked with anti-piracy patrols. This will hardly dissuade the Houthis, much less punish them for interfering with the general world order. In the years to come, the possibilities of having to fight and win a

## Securing the sea lanes

Without an Indian carrier force, we could be overwhelmed in home waters

naval battle will gradually recede. Our two existing aircraft carriers are essentially sea control ships, built to win naval battles by conferring air dominance over the ocean. Only the US, and increasingly the Chinese, have aircraft carriers that can project power and influence political decisions ashore by operating near troublesome shores.

Today, we have the chance to build, buy or acquire a true aircraft carrier, capable of operating 70 to 80 strike aircraft or five squadrons. When a carrier of this nature is present off the shores of a country, decision-makers in the capital are constrained in their freedom to decide what options are open to them. A classic instance of this strategy is the presence of the American carrier USS Gerald Ford off Lebanon, while the Israelis were attacking Gaza. The US, without firing a shot, kept Hezbollah from interfering and at the same time deterred Tehran, at whose bidding the Hezbollah operate.

New Delhi was aware that what the Houthis were doing damaged the national vital interests of India and its maritime trade. New Delhi was also aware that the Houthis would not dare take such a major step without the blessing of the Ayatollahs in Tehran. India's External Affairs Minister quite rightly made a courageous and bold journey to discuss matters with Teheran. There, he stressed

Himalayan heights? Surely the Indian army cannot be kept tied down on the border by an incompetent political class unable to come to a border settlement with China?

There are similar questions for the Air Force and Navy. Will the Air Force with a budget of \$150 billion continue to issue a doctrine that speaks of prioritising territorial air defence? Will the Navy be kept stunted by limiting it to 40,000-tonne aircraft carriers? The CDS should be tasked with some kind of forward planning. The world's third most powerful nation will be a regional power guaranteeing the safety of small nations in the Indian Ocean and South Asia. A beginning can be made by permitting the Indian Navy a true power projection aircraft carrier of about 80,000 tonnes.

The PLA Navy has just commissioned its third carrier of 80,000 tonnes with three electro-magnetic catapults. No doubt there will be more in the pipeline. Beijing is angling for a direct land route to the Bay of Bengal through Myanmar, taking advantage of the insurgency there, in which case we will lose our Malacca advantage. Without an Indian carrier force, we may well be overwhelmed in our home waters.

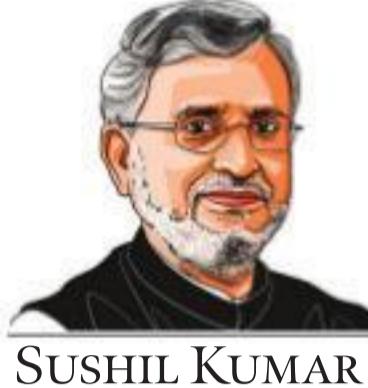
*Menon, a former rear admiral in the navy, is the author of A Nuclear Strategy for India*

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"As war grinds on... and hopes of a breakthrough fade into memory, it is hardly surprising that grumbling increases, scrutiny of Kyiv's decisions grows more marked, and politicians and oligarchs look to their own interests again. Yet people are still anxious not to be exploited by Russia's propaganda mill." —THE GUARDIAN

## Facing the future

Interim budget reflects political confidence to address economic challenges



SUSHIL KUMAR MODI

The plan to enable rooftop solarisation of 1 crore households will further India's sustainability goals and offer common Indians free electricity up to 300 units. This is without being fiscally profligate. Additionally, excess solar power generated can be sold back to the grid leading to monetary gains. This is estimated to lead to savings of Rs 15,000 to Rs 18,000 per annum for every household.

While India has made remarkable strides under the Make in India programme and manufacturing activity has significantly grown in the last few years, to sustain it, India needs to build a robust innovation and research ecosystem. As a follow-up to the Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act, 2023, the government has announced a corpus of Rs 1.5 lakh crore with a 50-year interest-free loan. The corpus will provide long-term financing or refinancing to encourage the private sector to scale up research and innovation significantly in sunrise domains.

The government's focus on women has been further extended. Now ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and helpers, numbering about 35 lakh, will benefit from healthcare coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme. A campaign to cover young girls with the cervical cancer vaccine will be an important preventive healthcare measure. Self Help Groups (SHGs) run by women are transforming our rural socio-economic landscape with empowerment and self-reliance. While nearly one crore women have become Lakhpatti Didis, the government plans to enhance its target to make three crore Lakhpatti Didis.

The government's "housing for all" programme addresses the needs of the poor in a big way. Under the rural programme, an additional two crore houses will be built in the next five years. It now plans to launch a scheme to help deserving sections of the middle class "living in rented houses, or slums, or chawls and unauthorised colonies" to buy or build their own houses.

While the government has not introduced any new taxes it has, in line with its vision to improve ease of living and improve taxpayer services, decided to withdraw outstanding direct tax demands up to Rs 25,000 for the period up to the financial year 2009-10 and up to Rs 10,000 for financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15. This is expected to benefit about a crore tax-payers.

The challenges of over a decade ago are now a distant nightmare — this has been possible only because of a sustained focus on the development of the country while keeping in mind every marginalised section of the society. As the PM often says, the country's progress coincides with the progress of the poor, women, youth and farmers.

Now is the time to pursue the goal of Viksit Bharat with all the vigour at the command of the nation.

*The writer is Rajya Sabha MP and former deputy chief minister of Bihar*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A LESS SHINY RATNA

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A political ratna' (IE, February 10). Even if the prime minister and president have the sole authority to name Bharat Ratna awardees, they must do so objectively. The days when national sentiments strongly supported the choice of recipients of the award seem long over now. The recent back-to-back conferment of the medal on a few popular figures of a bygone era reveals underlying political motives just as general elections are approaching. Following the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the BJP is now firing every cylinder to accomplish PM Modi's lofty target of 400 Lok Sabha seats for the NDA. The announcement of the Bharat Ratna on long-deceased persons may have been a masterstroke in the eyes of his followers, but it has certainly diminished the dignity of the award.

*Kamal Laddha, Bengaluru*

### MORAL POLICING

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Let them live' (IE, February 10). Religious communities are free to practise their faith in their own ways in India. How, then, can they be brought under the Uniform Civil Code? The Uttarakhand Assembly has passed the UCC Bill, which may serve as a template for other BJP-run states to enact similar legislation ahead of the Lok Sabha elections this year. A UCC is expected to apply to all people and communities in the country. But exemption of tribal communities from its scope has given rise to the charge that the UCC may be specifically targeted against the minorities. Further, the government should not regulate live-in relationships, as it seems like a veiled attempt at moral policing.

*SS Paul, Nadia*

### RAO'S WISDOM

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Bharat Ratna PV Narasimha Rao, Charan Singh, M S Swaminathan' (IE, February 10). The award to the ninth prime minister of India comes too late. One wishes the award had been conferred upon him in 2014 when the BJP government came to power. I remember the radio broadcast by PM Rao in 1991 when he concluded saying, "Hum yashasvi honge" (We will acquire fame). True to his word, he kept his tryst with fame when he saved the Indian economy, which was teetering on the brink of a collapse. When the BJP criticised his policies in Parliament, he silenced them with the Sanskrit shloka which says that the wise should save half when all is in danger of being drowned. It requires uncommon courage and wisdom to think out of the box and take along with you the critics in your own party and in the Opposition. Rao displayed this courage and wisdom.

*Narendra Dani, Lucknow*

**WORK-LIFE BALANCE**  
THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Connect, disconnect' (IE, February 9). The Closing Loopholes Bill passed in the Australian Parliament has the potential to create a favourable transformation in the workplace atmosphere. Whether it is a gig worker or an employee in the unorganised sector, everyone deserves the right to have personal time and strictly adhere to the designated working hours. It is unethical to expect employees to be available for emails and calls during their leisure time. Additionally, providing job security to workers can serve as a motivating factor that may enhance workforce productivity.

*Kamla Namitha, Bengaluru*



63 PEOPLE MISSING

**PHILIPPINES LANDSLIDE TOLL RISES TO 54**  
The death toll from a massive landslide that hit a gold-mining village in the southern Philippines has risen to 54 with 63 people still missing, authorities said Sunday. The landslide hit the mountain village of Masara in Davao de Oro province Tuesday. AP

## TOP OF THE WORLD



Britains King Charles III and Queen Camilla in Norfolk, Sunday. AP

UNITED KINGDOM  
King Charles thanks public for support after cancer diagnosis

**London:** Britain's King Charles III Sunday expressed his "heartfelt thanks" to the British public for their messages of support ever since his cancer diagnosis was revealed by Buckingham Palace this week. The 75-year-old monarch wrote the message from his royal estate at Sandringham in Norfolk, eastern England, in which he also expressed his "lifelong admiration" for the work done by cancer charities. On Sunday, a smiling King Charles also attended church on the estate — the first time since his diagnosis. He briefly waved at photographers as he walked up to St. Mary Magdalene's church, accompanied by Queen Camilla. PTI

UNITED STATES  
Judge orders Musk to testify in panel probe

**New York:** A federal judge ordered Elon Musk to testify again in the US Securities and Exchange Commission's probe of his \$44 billion takeover of Twitter, giving the regulator and the billionaire a week to agree on a date and location for the interview. US Magistrate Judge Laurel Beeler's order formalised a tentative ruling she made in December that sided with the regulator. The SEC sued Musk in October to compel him to testify as part of a probe into his 2022 purchase of Twitter. Musk refused to attend it. REUTERS

UNITED KINGDOM  
Indian pleads guilty to killing 19-year-old wife

**London:** A 24-year-old Indian man charged with the murder of his 19-year-old wife at a home in south London last year has pleaded guilty to the crime. Sahil Sharma was arrested at the scene at Ash Tree Way in Croydon, the couple's residential address, on suspicion of the murder of Mehak Sharma on October 29 evening. When he appeared in custody at Kingston Crown Court on Thursday, he pleaded guilty to the murder of Mehak. Both are Indian nationals. PTI

SOMALIA  
Attack kills 3 Emirati troops, 1 Bahraini officer

**Dubai:** The al-Qaida-linked militant group al-Shabab claimed an attack that killed three Emirati troops and a Bahraini military officer on a training mission at a military base in the Somalia capital, authorities said on Sunday. The attack on Saturday targeted the troops at the General Gordon Military Base in Mogadishu. Details about the attack and whether it killed others remained scarce on Sunday, though Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud offered his condolences to the UAE for the loss of troops. AP

## PETITIONS ALSO AGAINST VICTORIES OF NAWAZ SHARIF, HIS DAUGHTER MARYAM

## Pleas flood Pak courts as candidates backed by Imran challenge poll results

Results were manipulated to deprive PTI of its majority: Party

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 11

**PAKISTAN COURTS** have been flooded with petitions by losing candidates who challenged the provisional results in their constituencies within days after the highly polarised general elections, it emerged on Sunday.

Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party claimed that its supported candidates have won the maximum number of seats but the results were manipulated to deprive it of the majority, and in order to turn the tide, its losing candidates have thronged the courts.

According to a report in the Dawn newspaper, a vast majority of those filing challenges against results are PTI-backed independents, including high-profile politicians such as former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi and his wife Qaisera, former Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) finance minister Taimoor Jhagra and ex-KP speaker Mahmood Jan, Islamabad-based lawyer Shuaib Shaheen, former Punjab health minister Dr Yasmin Rashid, as well as Rehana Dar, mother of Usman Dar who was in-charge youth affairs in the PTI government.



Supporters of former PM Imran Khan's party block Peshawar-Islamabad motorway as part of their protest demanding free and fair results of the polls, in Peshawar on Sunday. Reuters

into defeats in the Form 47.

In PP 146 Sialkot, Omar Dar's wife, Ruba Omar, has challenged the election results. According to Form 45, Ruba Omar has won, but she was evidently defeated in Form 47 due to collusion.

Maryam's victory from NA-119 has been challenged by independent candidate Shahzad Farooq, alleging that the presiding officers did not provide Form 45, and the returning officer issued the result in his absence. Farooq claims to have won against Maryam but was defeated due to rigging.

The challengers include PTI provincial chief Haleem Adil

PML-N's Atta Tarar's victory from NA-127 has been challenged by Zahir Abbas Khokhar, who claimed that Tarar has lost according to Form 45 but declared himself victorious in Form 47 with evident collusion.

In Karachi, three PTI candidates moved the Sindh High Court, arguing that the election watchdog, Returning Officer (ROs), those who compiled Form 47, and others flouted electoral laws and rigged the entire process.

The challengers include PTI provincial chief Haleem Adil

## VOTERS SHOUTED LOUD, RESPECT THEIR MANDATE: PRESIDENT

**Islamabad:** Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday said the voters, particularly women and youth, have "not only spoken but shouted out loud their will" in the general elections and urged all political parties and institutions to "respect and recognise" the huge mandate of the citizens. Alvi was a senior member of the PTI party before former PM Imran Khan made him the President in 2018. "I must congratulate the people of Pakistan, especially the women for coming out in huge numbers, notwithstanding all pressures and standing up for democracy." PTI

Sheikh, Arsalan Khalid and advocate Khalid Mahmood, who contested in NA-238 (East-IV), NA-248 (Central-II) and NA-231 (Malir-III), respectively.

Speaking at a rally in Conway, South Carolina, Trump recounted a story he has told before about an unidentified NATO member who confronted him over his threat not to defend members who fail to meet NATO's defense spending targets. But this time, Trump went further, saying had told the member that he would, in fact, "encourage" Russia to do as it wishes in that case. "You didn't pay? You're delinquent?" Trump recounted saying. "No I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills."

**Unhinged, says White House; allies react**

The White House rejected comments made by Trump about not protecting NATO allies from a potential Russian invasion as "appalling and unhinged." White

American and European soldiers at increased risk," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in a written statement. "Any attack on NATO will be met with a united and forceful re-

sponse," he added.

Polish Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz wrote on X: "NATO's motto 'one for all, all for one' is a concrete commitment. Undermining the credibility of allied countries means weakening the entire NATO". "No election campaign is an excuse for playing with the security of the Alliance."

Germany's foreign ministry posted the message 'One for all and all for one' with the hashtag #StrongerTogether on its English language X account. EU Council President Charles Michel said:

"Reckless statements on #NATO's security and Art 5 solidarity serve only Putin's interest."

## Sunak: Totally up for the fight to win polls

ADITI KHANNA  
LONDON, FEBRUARY 11

**BRITISH PRIME MINISTER** Rishi Sunak has said he's "totally up for the fight" of pitching his policies to the electorate to win another term for the governing Conservative Party as he prepares for a general election expected to take place in the second half of the year.

In an interview with The Times this weekend, the 43-year-old British Indian leader said he had reasons to be optimistic because the economy was "pointing in the right direction" and that the "future is going to be better".

"Because economic conditions have improved, because the plan is working, you are

starting to see mortgage rates come down and we have been able to cut taxes. I do believe those pressures are starting to ease and that hopefully over the course of this year, we can continue to make even more progress," he said.

In a message as much for the voters as for the rebels within his own Tory ranks, the Conservative leader reiterated his plan to cut taxes for the hard-working people of the country.

"It's because those are my values, those are the values of my party. It's one where hard work should be rewarded. Actually, the best way to express that through the tax system is to cut people's taxes so when they are working hard they get to enjoy more of the rewards of that for themselves and their family," he said. PTI



A displaced Palestinian man gets a haircut in Rafah on Sunday. Reuters

## Pushed into a corner, people in Rafah fear Israeli ground assault

AGENCIES  
RAFAH, DOHA, FEBRUARY 11

**THE ABU Mustafa family's tent** is hard against the high concrete and metal fence separating Gaza from Egypt in Rafah, the last relatively safe place in an enclave devastated by Israel's military offensive, but one that may now also come under attack.

The family is among more than a million Palestinians now crammed into the area around Rafah. "Every day, we're on the run. Being displaced is tough because I have two daughters with disabilities. I can't carry them around. I don't have a car or a cart," said Laila Abu Mustafa.

"If there will be more dis-

placement, I'm not moving," she said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an interview aired on Sunday that "enough" of the 132 remaining Israeli hostages held in Gaza are alive to justify Israel's war.

"We're going to try to do our best to get all those who are alive back and, frankly, also the bodies of the dead," he said. Netanyahu also said that one Palestinian civilian has been killed for every Hamas fighter killed in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Egypt is threatening to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if Israeli troops are sent into Rafah, where it says fighting could force the closure of Gaza's main aid supply route, two Egyptian officials.

## Missing 6-yr-old girl found dead

Gaza: A 6-year-old Palestinian girl and the two rescuers who

went looking for her nearly

two weeks ago

were found dead

on Saturday, the

Palestine Red Crescent said,

Two rescuers

with the Red Crescent

were dispatched in

an ambulance on the evening of

Jan. 29 to find Hind Rajab, who

was believed to be trapped in a

vehicle in Gaza City with six

dead family members. NYT

in 1924, not as a child's toy, but as a carefully constructed depiction of the best of British craftsmanship for a royal who loved all things miniature.

A January 1924 report in The Times of London described how Queen Mary, then 57, had inspected her gift "and expressed the keenest appreciation of its wonders," which included running water and electric lifts.

To celebrate the centenary, visitors can now get closer to items normally housed inside, like the famed miniature crown, with a selection presented in a special display outside its walls.

"It's got this instant charm," said Kathryn Jones, a senior curator at the Royal Collection Trust. "But also as you dig into it, I think you find it's quite layered."

Windsor Castle's steady stream of guests often gaze upward: at the impressively large Round Tower fortress that looms over the palace grounds, at the ornate ceilings of the formal banquet hall, and at the murals hung high on imposing walls.

But now they are also being encouraged to gaze down at the painstaking details of the dolls' house, with some of its tiniest artifacts placed in low cases to



Alexander Pavlyuk, the new commander of Ukraine ground forces

become the new commander of Ukraine's ground forces. The post was previously held by Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, who was named on Thursday as the replacement for Ukraine's outgoing military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

New presidential decrees also named Yurii Sodol, the former head of Ukraine's marine corps, as the new commander of Ukraine's combined forces; Brig. Gen. Ihor Skribuk as commander of Ukraine's air assault forces; and Maj. Gen. Ihor Plahuta as commander of Ukraine's territorial defense forces.

## AT A TIME OF TURMOIL FOR BRITAIN'S ROYAL FAMILY, EXHIBITION PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO LIVES OF A FORMER KING &amp; QUEEN

## 'Feel a bit like Gulliver': Peek into a 100-year-old royal dolls' house

MEGAN SPECIA  
LONDON, FEBRUARY 11

riositys of royal life in the early 20th century are reproduced at one-twelfth scale.

Scrutiny of Britain's royal family was supercharged this past week by the announcement of King Charles III's cancer diagnosis, which followed the hospitalisation of Catherine, Princess of Wales, in January.

But while the modern monarchy finds itself under a sometimes unwelcome microscope, the dolls' house has for a century allowed visitors to peer inside the rooms of a palace — albeit at a tiny scale.

The house was given to Queen Mary, the wife of King George V,



Queen Camilla views Queen Mary's Dolls' House, which is on display in Windsor, England. NYT

benefit close inspection.

On a recent winter afternoon, two women crouched to look at the miniatures, which are on display in the Waterloo Chamber.

There is a tiny grand piano, complete with working keys; a Singer sewing machine with small reels of thread; and a Hoover vacuum cleaner, its cord carefully wrapped around its handle.

As Jones, the curator, noted: "You start to see the world in a very different way because you are looking over these tiny little things."

"You do feel a bit like Gulliver," she added. NYT



## EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

# What Charan Singh did for farmers' welfare

Singh's land reform laws created a new socially and politically empowered middle peasantry, which saw its economic fortunes rise with the Green Revolution.

**HARISH DAMODARAN**

Mandal Commission, Singh insisted that reservations for farmers had nothing to do with caste, which "has had its day" and "must be abolished". Except in regard to SC/STs, the caste of a candidate "should not be inquired into while seeking admission into an educational institution or public service".

For Singh, the principal line of division in Indian society was between cultivators and city-dwellers. The latter "lord it over the poor peasantry and...have little sympathy with the troubles of the agriculturalists". The town-bred non-agriculturalist "calls his poor countryman from the village a 'dehati', 'ganwar' or 'dahgan' in the same contemptuous tone in which a heaven-born European flings...native'...[at all] Indians without distinction". This was despite agriculture employing nearly 70% of India's workforce and generating 54% of its GDP in 1950-51.

Singh saw reservations as a means "to set right the principle on which privileges of entering government service are enjoyed by one class of town dwellers, businessmen, traders and profession followers..."

Singh was struck by a 1961 survey that showed only 11.5% of Indian Administrative Service officers had agricultural family backgrounds, while 45.8% had fathers who were government servants. He, therefore, not only proposed 60% reservations for farmers' children, but also ineligibility for government jobs to those whose parents had already benefited from public employment.

Reservations, Singh argued, would actu-

ally improve efficiency in government departments: The agriculturist's son "by reason of the surroundings in which he is brought up, possesses strong nerves, an internal stability, a robustness of spirit and a capacity for administration...his hands and heart will not tremble in a crisis as those of a soft person from the city".

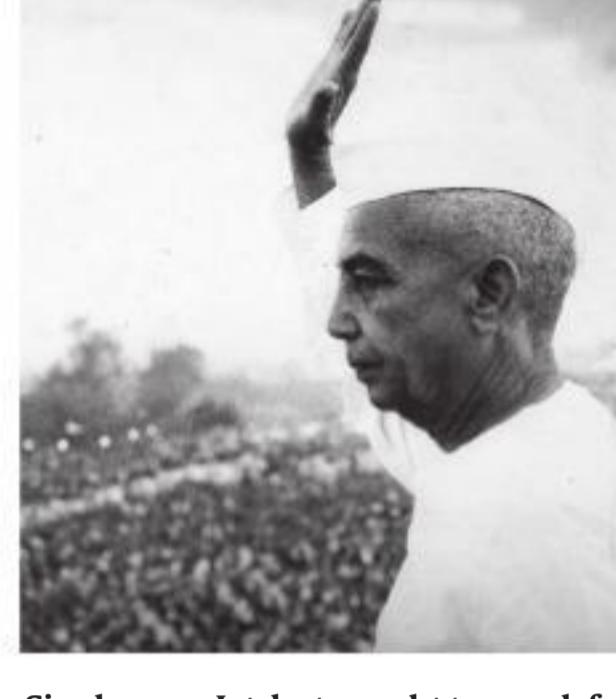
He would react differently to the farmer whose crop has been destroyed by hailstorm than the normal Tahsildar or Deputy Collector who "fixes a dozen dates for hearing a petty suit of [even Rs 100]".

**Criticism, relevance**

The 60% quota — Singh had proposed it first at 50% before the executive committee of the Uttar Pradesh (then United Provinces) Congress Legislative Party in April 1939 — was criticised not for being excessive as much as for covering only the "sons of cultivators". Landless labourers, constituting 28.1% of the total agricultural workforce in the 1951 Census, were excluded. Singh's response was he had no objection to including agricultural labourers, "but in that case I would put the percentage at 75 instead of 60".

Singh was clear his proposal wasn't about caste reservations but about representation to tillers of the soil. That would have, perhaps, appealed today to landowning peasant castes such as Jats, Marathas, Patidars and Kapus, who are demanding OBC status.

Singh was a Jat, but sought to speak for the entire class of cultivators, particularly the

**Singh was a Jat, but sought to speak for the entire class of cultivators. Archive**

middle peasantry drawn from the so-called MAJGAR complex of Muslim, Ahir (Yadav), Jat, Gujar and Rajput. He endeared himself to farmers from all these castes.

**Game-changing laws**

There was a reason for that popularity: His pushing through three major legislations that transformed the agricultural economy of UP.

The first was the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950 (ZALR). It did away with zamindars who paid taxes to the government, from lands that they them-

selves owned and also from those cultivated by others, including as tenant farmers.

ZALR granted all verified tenant-cultivators permanent and heritable interest in their holdings. The zamindars ceased to be tax-farmers or intermediaries between the cultivator and the state, while having ownership rights only on the lands they could demonstrate were their own, self-cultivated holdings.

ZALR basically replaced the zamindari agrarian system with a new rural social order based on peasant-proprietors owning and cultivating family-sized farms. Its beneficiaries were the erstwhile hereditary tenant-cultivators, mainly from the Muslim, Yadav, Gujar, Kurni and other OBC castes.

The second was the UP Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1953. Singh wanted the peasant-proprietor to be not just independent, but also an efficient cultivator. The new law enabled every landowner to have his scattered plots consolidated by swapping parcels of equivalent quality with other farmers in the same village. The idea was to provide every owner-cultivator with a single tract of land making it a more productive holding.

By 1976-77, about 14.2 million hectares (mh) out of a targeted 14.6 mh area in UP had been "brought under consolidation operation", with actual "transfer and possession" taking place in over 11.5 mh. The scheme was implemented with relatively minimal corruption, which probably had to do with Singh taking personal interest in its success as revenue minister through the 1950s.

The last was the UP Imposition of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1960. It established a cap of 40 acres of "fair quality land" per family of five members. Singh, in fact, envisaged both a minimum and maximum landholding size — his ideal range was 2.5-27.5 acres — which a cultivator and his family could viably farm with little outside labour. Consolidated holdings of a certain minimum size were necessary to also allow use of tractors and other productivity-enhancing farm machinery.

**The legacy**

Charan Singh's three transformative land reform laws helped in creating a socially and politically empowered middle peasantry. This new rural middle class saw its economic fortunes rise with the Green Revolution that entailed the introduction of high-yielding crop varieties, chemical fertilisers and labour-cum-time saving mechanisation technologies.

That roughly four-decade spell of economic prosperity from the early 1970s is practically history. Plateauing yields, crop prices not keeping pace with rising production costs, re-fragmentation of holdings and growing weather aberrations from climate change have made agriculture less rewarding than before. It has also eroded the socio-economic status of a once-proud peasant-proprietor class.

The takers for reservations in government jobs for farmers' children would arguably be more now than when Singh first mooted it.

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## EXPLAINED LAW

## Haldwani violence: what is Nazool land

**Police check documents of commuters during a curfew at Banbhupura area in Haldwani on Sunday. PTI**

**ASAD REHMAN**  
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 11

VIOLENCE ERUPTED in Uttarakhand's Haldwani district Thursday (February 8) after the administration conducted a demolition drive at the site of a mosque and madrasa, allegedly on Nazool land, killing five and injuring at least 12.

What is Nazool land? How is such land used? And was the land where the demolition drive took place, Nazool land?

**What is this land?**

Nazool land is owned by the government but most often not directly administered as state property. The state generally allots such land to any entity on lease for a fixed period, generally between 15 and 99 years.

In case the lease term is expiring, one can approach the authority to renew the lease by submitting a written application to the Revenue Department of the local development authority. The government is free to either renew the lease or cancel it — taking back the Nazool land.

In almost all major cities of India, Nazool land has been allotted to different entities for a variety of different purposes.

**How did Nazool land emerge?**

During British rule, kings and kingdoms which opposed the British frequently revolted against them, leading to several battles between them and the British Army. Upon defeating these kings in battle, the British would often take their land away from them.

After India got Independence, the British vacated these lands. But with kings and royals often lacking proper documentation to prove prior ownership, these lands were marked as Nazool land — to be owned by the respective state

governments.

**How does the government use Nazool land?**

The government generally uses Nazool land for public purposes like building schools, hospitals, Gram Panchayat buildings, etc. Several cities in India have also seen large tracts of land denoted as Nazool land used for housing societies, generally on lease.

**How is Nazool land governed?**

While several states have brought in government orders for the purpose of framing rules for Nazool land, The Nazool Lands (Transfer) Rules, 1956 is the law mostly used for Nazool land adjudication.

Is the Uttarakhand land where the mosque and madrasa were located registered as Nazool land?

As per the Haldwani district administration, the property where the two structures are situated is registered as the Nagar Nigam's (Municipal Council's) Nazool land. The administration says that for the last 15-20 days, a demolition drive has been underway in connection with Nagar Nigam properties to free roads from traffic congestion.

"A notice, issued on January 30, required the encroachment to be removed within three days or for ownership documents to be provided. On February 3, several locals visited the Nagar Nigam to discuss with our team. They submitted an application and requested time to appeal to the High Court, agreeing to abide by the court's decision," the DM said, insisting that the demolition took place after the court's go ahead.

However, Shakeel Ahmad, Councillor of Ward Number 31, where the incident took place, said that the locals had requested the administration to wait till the next date of hearing in the High Court on February 14.

## EXPLAINED GLOBAL

## After Pakistan's fractured mandate

**Supporters of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf block the Peshawar-Islamabad motorway, demanding free and fair election results, in Peshawar Sunday. Reuters**

## The key question for India: whom does New Delhi talk to

**SHUBHAJIT ROY**  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

THE JAILED Imran Khan scored a century without a bat, as independent candidates backed by his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), won a high number of seats in Pakistan's parliament, the National Assembly. Of the 101 independents elected, many are backed by PTI.

Despite being barred from contesting under its name and symbol (a cricket bat), PTI got more seats than the two main established parties that have the backing of the Pakistan Army. Pakistan Muslim League (N), led by three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, got 75 seats, while the Pakistani Peoples Party (PPP) led by the Bhutto-Zardari family got 54 seats, according to the final tally released by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Independently, none of the three parties can prove a simple majority in the National Assembly when it is called in a few days.

Such an outcome poses a vexed question: whom does New Delhi talk to in Pakistan? It may be futile to engage with the civilian government. In realpolitik terms, this means the most effective person to talk to is Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir — who wields influence over the political actors.

A new government in Delhi in May will have to take a long and hard look at whether it should continue with the doctrine of indifference or reopen channels of communication with the GHQ in Rawalpindi.

1 Despite the people of Pakistan turning out in large numbers to vote against the Army-backed Sharifs and Bhutto-Zardaris, the establishment seems to have manipulated the outcome in their favour.

2 PTI has managed to be the major player in the battleground province of Punjab, retain pole position in KPK, and register a marginal presence in Balochistan and Sindh. With this, it has challenged the established parties on their own turf, despite no level playing field.

PTI and PMLN have been neck-and-neck in Punjab which has more voters than the other three provinces put together — 7.32 crore out of 12.85 crore — and 141 of the 266 general seats in the National Assembly. In KPK, Khan's PTI has retained its dominance, while PPP has dominated Sindh. Balochistan has seen a completely fractured outcome, split between PPP, PMLN, and PTI.

3 The fact that neither the Sharifs nor Bhutto-Zardaris have the required numbers on their own, and even brought together, still fall short of the simple majority mark, tells you that none of them have retained their political influence and strength of the past — when PPP had the numbers in 2008, and PMLN in 2013.

4 With the fractured mandate, Pakistan Army now has complete control on each of the political actors. Having learnt their lessons from past experiences — with Sharif challenging them in 2017-18 and Khan challenging them since last year — Rawalpindi has gotten smarter and doesn't want to empower any of the civilian political leaders.

## With Imran's independents in the lead, what next?

**YASHEE**  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

WITH INDEPENDENTS backed by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) winning the highest number of seats in Pakistan, the election results — released after much delay amid accusations of rigging — have thrown up an unprecedented outcome.

**How do numbers stack up in the National Assembly?**

Pakistan's National Assembly consists of 336 seats. As many as 266 members are elected through direct voting, while 70 seats are reserved — 60 for women and 10 for non-Muslims. PML-N and PPP have run a coalition government before this, but even if they join hands this time, they won't reach the half-way mark.

The reserved seats present an added complication, as they are filled on the basis of each party's numerical strength in the Assembly, but this time, the highest number is that of independents.

**What are the rules for independents?**

Under Rule 92(6) of Pakistan's election regulations, once their win is announced, independent candidates have three days to join a political party. The independent candidate has to apply to the head of the political party, who then informs the Election Commission. The independents can also choose to band together.

**How are reserved seats filled?**

The reservation for women and non-Muslims flows from Article 51(2A) of Pakistan's Constitution. Political parties can fill these 70 seats in proportion to their win-

ning candidates. Among women, the 60 seats are divided as: 32 for Punjab, 14 for Sindh, 10 for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and four for Balochistan. The 10 non-Muslim candidates are not sub-divided among provinces.

"All political parties submit a list of their choice of candidates for reserved seats at the time of filing nominations, and this list undergoes the Election Commission's scrutiny. After the results, the party with the highest number of winning representatives will see the highest number of reserved candidates from their list get elected," explained Yaqoob Khan Bangash, Pakistani author and fellow, Harvard University's South Asia Institute.

If the PTI-backed independent candidates join any political party, they will get to submit a list now and fill the reserved seats based on their combined strength.

**What will the independents do?**

There's no clarity. PTI as of now is staging protests, alleging its actual tally is higher and the poll results have been rigged. It has also filed a number of petitions in court, alleging election malpractices. There's a possibility that some of the 101 winners will join hands with parties opposed to the PTI. However, this is likely to vary according to provinces — while in Punjab, such a crossover might be easier; in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which PTI-backed candidates swept, such defection might not be forgiven by voters.

In the 1985 elections, no political party was permitted to participate, and thus every candidate, though with party allegiance and backing, had contested in his or her individual name. This time, while the PTI candidates fought as independents, others contested under the name and symbol of their parties.

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So, what are the key takeaways?

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I raise my voice, wherever I think he (Eknath Shinde) is doing it wrong. All the documents pertaining to the court's judgements are on record, which showed how false certificates pertaining to Maratha reservation were issued by the state

**Alok Deshpande:** The Election Commission of India has officially handed the NCP to your side led by Ajit Pawar. As a senior leader of the party, who worked with Sharad Pawar for decades, are you happy today?

It has been 30 years since I left Shiv Sena. People still ask me the reason. I am happy to say that I have not left the NCP. The party is with me. Nobody will ask me those questions now. Yes, I am happy. We got what we wanted.

**Sandeep Singh:** What are your thoughts on Sharad Pawar, with whom you had a long association?

I don't want to comment on that. We have already said why we shifted. All 54 MLAs had signed to shift and join the BJP government. It was not one person. That letter was shown to Pawar *saheb*. After that he resigned as party president. The idea was that he will resign and Supriya Sule will take over and all of us will be part of the government. All of a sudden, in three days, the decision was changed. If you did not want to do it, then why did you consider the signatures? But that's past now.

**Alok Deshpande:** NCP was known as a Maratha party but you never left your identity as an OBC leader.

I left Shiv Sena on the Mandal issue. It was not easy to leave the Sena at that time. There was a Sena leader in Thane named Khopkar, who was murdered on the suspicion of cross voting. There was a saying that if you left the Sena, you'd meet the same fate. I left at that time. Eventually, 18 others left with me. I could not roam freely then as there was fear of attacks. I was twice the Mayor of Mumbai along with being an MLA. All over Maharashtra, except in Mumbai, Nashik, Pune, all the district and taluka-level parties were formed by me for the Sena. I was a senior leader of the Sena and left it despite these conditions on the Mandal issue. In 1994, there was a meeting in Jalna of the Mahatma Phule Samata Parishad, which I had founded. There were over a lakh assembled, demanding implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations. I was the Housing Minister with the Congress then and Sharad Pawarji was also present. Pawar *saheb* announced to implement the recommendations and to execute those within a month. I am grateful to him for that. Though it is sad that now that the reservations for OBCs are in trouble, nobody is talking. Pawar *saheb* should have said that it is wrong.

**Shubhangi Khapre:** Ajit Pawar projects himself as a Maratha leader while you are following the OBC line. Many are saying that Mr Fadnavis is behind this protest by the OBCs.

You know that I don't do *popatgiri* (puppetry) for anyone. Not even when I gave speeches with Balasaheb Thackeray at Shivaji Park. I always give my own speeches and make my own decisions. I am not that new nor small, that somebody will have to tell me what to do. If there has been anything fishy, then I am speaking about it.

**Sandeep Singh:** But is there no dilemma in your party?

See, Ajit Pawar is a Maratha by caste. I, myself, by caste, am an OBC. Some of them are Dalits, Muslims... but what does that mean? Ajit Pawar has not spoken against me. He didn't ask me to refrain from speaking on this issue. Whatever is coming in the papers, he reads. As a Maratha worker or a leader, if he wants to say something on their issues, he can say it.

**Sandeep Singh:** What is your party's stance on the same?

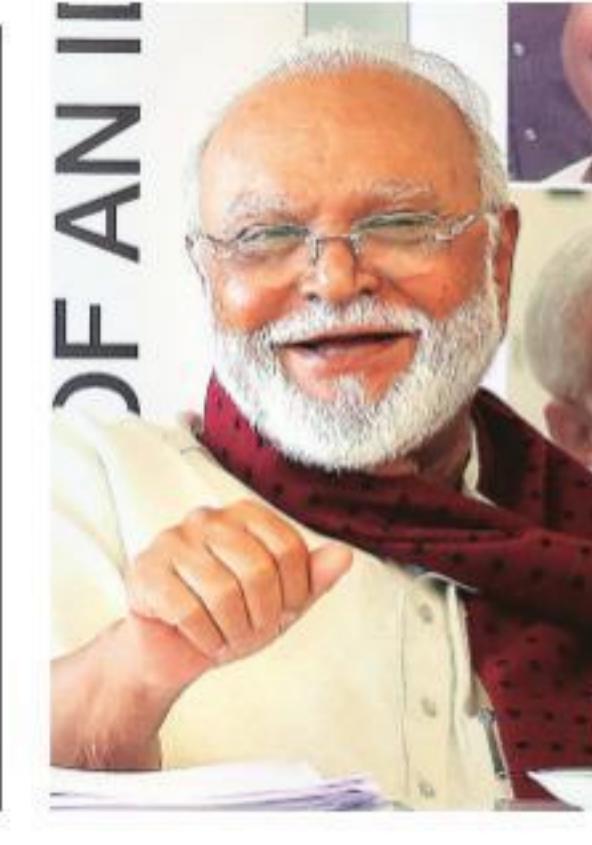
Every party has one stance. 'Will the Maratha votes go away from us?' So whatever has to happen, let it happen. But our votes should be secure. But they are not understanding that Marathas don't account for more than 16 to 20 per cent of the total vote share. Because 54 per cent vote is OBC. We say only 54 per cent, then 20 per cent is SC/ST and three per cent at least are Brahmins, so that takes the tally to 77 per cent. Then you take others such as Jains, among others. According to my study, Marathas are 16 per cent. But the political power, muscle power, money power, all of it rests with them. And now our (OBC) people are scared of them. They fear 'Will they take away my sugarcane?' They have sugar factories and then my sugarcanes will dry up. 'They have the banks, they think 'will they not give me my money?' In politics, if one Banjara stands up, then another Dhangar may stand up against him and they may end up fighting. In the meantime, these united Marathas will watch and rule. But slowly, this is changing. We are organising rallies, explaining what is happening and telling them that because of reservation, some of your people have become doc-



### WHY CHHAGAN BHUJBAL

Chhagan Bhujbal, senior leader of the Nationalist Congress Party, Minister of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection in the Maharashtra government, and one of the tallest OBC leaders, is on a mission to safeguard OBC reservation in the backdrop of the ongoing Maratha reservation agitation led by social activist Manoj Jarange-Patil and CM Eknath Shinde-led state government's moves. Known for his pro-Mandal stance, which led him to quit the Shiv Sena in the early '90s, Bhujbal has maintained his identity as an OBC leader. In the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, a party primarily dominated by the Marathas, Bhujbal is aggressively taking on his own government

Jarange-Patil and CM Eknath Shinde-led state government's moves. Known for his pro-Mandal stance, which led him to quit the Shiv Sena in the early '90s, Bhujbal has maintained his identity as an OBC leader. In the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, a party primarily dominated by the Marathas, Bhujbal is aggressively taking on his own government



I am not bothered about my ministership or MLA chair. But take it from me, I'd be elected by the people with a thumping majority, for the fifth time, on the basis of the work I've done. Marathas would also vote for me as they want development

# 'I don't care what happens to me. We'll create fear of losing OBC votes among leaders'

NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal on being kept in the dark about the government's notification on Maratha reservation and why politicians are scared of speaking the truth to Marathas. This session was moderated by Alok Deshpande, Special Correspondent, *The Indian Express*, Mumbai



Chhagan Bhujbal, senior NCP Leader and Minister of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, in conversation with Alok Deshpande, Special Correspondent, *The Indian Express*, Mumbai. Amit Chakravarty

tors, engineers, and gone to Zila Parishad. And now, if this really big powerful group comes, then it's all over. We will get nothing. This is the fear.

We are not against Maratha reservation. When Prithviraj Chavan made an act, I supported it. Give it to them separately. Fadnavis made another act. I said don't push us. Do it for them, but do it separately and not make a backdoor entry. This is our grievance. You should fill the gaps or cure discrepancies as SC has asked you to and give a separate reservation.

The CM said that Manoj Jarange-Patil and others are saying that they are Kunbis and the old records during Nizam period are in Telangana, therefore the committee should be formed and scrutinise if the records are available. We said, in that case the reservation should be given if Kunbi records are found as they automatically become part of OBCs. Later they said only 5,000 such records were found. But the number kept on increasing to 13,000 and 15,000 in a span of two days. Then Jarange-Patil made a demand that all Marathas in Marathwada should be given Kunbi certificates. Then they demanded all Marathas be given Kunbi certificates. Then the three-judge committee went to several villages to decide modalities. Now they are saying 57 lakh records were found of which 30 lakh were old ones. Then they added the *sage soyare* (extended family) clause. It is affecting the OBCs. I am of the opinion that of the 10 per cent EWS quota, 8.5 per cent is availed by persons from the Maratha community. They are also part of the 40 per cent open category. Some of the Marathas have got Kunbi certificates by giving bribes. OBCs could not avail reservation through EWS. You are leaving the sea and want to enter the well where people from nearly 374 castes are seeking reservation. Marathas are not getting any special benefit but it is *satyanash* (endgame) for the OBCs.

**Omkar Gokhale:** OBC Mahasangh President Babanrao Taywade said that the notification is not going to affect the OBCs.

There are 374 castes in OBCs and there are several leaders who will put forth their say. The other day some people said they are forming a party (for the OBCs). They think no loss is caused to OBCs. How is that possible? Once they get reservation, it will be difficult for us to file cases for each wrong certificate being awarded.

**Omkar Gokhale:** Was there was no consensus within the government?

Nobody asked us. Now there is a sub-

committee of Marathas under the leadership of minister Chandrakant Patil. I'm not a part of that committee. The first time they conveyed about decisions related to Kunbi certificates, it was in a gist and Justice (retired) Sandeep K Shinde Committee's report has not been given to us yet.

**Vallabh Ozarkar:** You've tendered your resignation from the Ministry. Why?

I resigned on November 16, 2023, even though no one had demanded my resignation. I made a conscious decision since I was going to address a rally in Ambad (in Jalna district) for OBCs and was going to put my views, maybe against the government decision. That is why I thought I should resign. While on my way to the rally, I received several calls from my party to not announce the same in public. In the Ambad rally, I said I do not bother about my ministership or MLA ship and I will fight for the OBCs. When I returned from the rally, CM and two Deputy CMs confronted me. Ajit Pawar said I have forwarded your resignation to the CM. He said you can talk about the OBCs but do not reveal that you have tendered your resignation. I agreed and didn't announce it. But when a ruling party MLA from the Shinde group commented that I should be kicked out of the ministry, I felt enough is enough. And I talked about my resignation.

**Zeeshan Shaikh:** In the '90s, Sharad Pawar was standing in your support during your rallies. Are you satisfied with the support that you are getting from the current party leadership?

There are several leaders who are not speaking. Elections are around the corner and everybody wants Maratha votes. Everybody is scared because of votes. But I want to tell them that those votes are not

more than 20 per cent, which are also divided in several parties. If you go to the villages, you will know something is very wrong about this.

**Zeehan Shaikh:** There are talks that you will join the BJP.

As a leader I am connected with OBCs alone. And if something is coming against that, I will fight. I am not unhappy with my party. They have not asked me to stop.

**Zeeshan Shaikh:** Manoj Jarange-Patil hasn't received any backlash from the NCP against the kind of language used against you. Why?

Our whip Anil Patil, and spokesperson Amol Mitkari, have come out on record and said that he cannot speak like that.

**Vallabh Ozarkar:** Your allies also haven't supported you so far.

There are three parties that are part of the ruling alliance and each one of them require support from the Marathas.

**Vallabh Ozarkar:** Despite this, you still want to be in the government?

I have already given my resignation. Ask the Chief Minister to throw me out.

**Mihir Vasavda:** The current chief minister, Eknath Shinde, is at his position after several political developments. Does he have the authority on this subject?

Whether he has an authority or mandate to make decisions in concern with this matter, should be asked to him. I raise my voice wherever I think he is doing it wrong. All the documents pertaining to the court's judgements are on record, which showed how false certificates pertaining to Maratha

reservation were issued by the state.

**Alok Deshpande:** Many people have raised questions based on the legality of this ordinance. What's your opinion?

The notification at the end clearly said that it is applied not only to OBCs, but also to Scheduled Castes, de-notified tribes, nomadic tribes and special backward category. Secondly, all the reports submitted by various commissions' reports including Kakasaheb Kalelkar, BD Deshmukh, then BP Mandal Report, Mutatkar committee, and Khatri Committee have said that the Marathas are not backward. MG Gaikwad Commission approved but Supreme Court rejected. The word 'Sage-Soyare' has no mention in any religious or legal texts or any constitutional debates. How can government committees find out and decide the family tree, which this government is allowing? If the SC has said that the previous CMs belonging to the Maratha community did not include them in backward classes list, does it not mean that what is currently being done is wrong?

**Alok Deshpande:** If there are so many decisions by the courts, how is the government granting reservations, according to you?

The Chief Minister on January 25 said that he had taken the oath of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj that he will give Maratha reservation and now he has fulfilled the promise. How has he given the reservation when the Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission is still working on Maratha reservation? The curative petition is before the Supreme Court. When the matter is before the Commission and Supreme Court how can anybody declare Maratha reservation? Also, if Maratha reservation is done, why is Jarange-Patil going on fast again?

**Omkar Gokhale:** Do you think Marathas have been misled?

I really don't know. Once you set the process of issuance of Kunbi certificates, to all Marathas, then anybody can procure the certificates misusing the lacuna and claim reservation under OBC.

**Vijay Yadav:** Are you going to court? Yes definitely.

**Sandeep Singh:** How has your communication been with the CM, and the two Deputy CMs on this issue?

If they don't want to discuss, what can I do. I am putting across my views through public rallies and public forums.

**Sandeep Singh:** Will this be the biggest poll plank in Maharashtra?

It will certainly be an issue.

**Shubhangi Khapre:** Do you think the CM wanted to project himself as a leader of Marathas?

It is possible. Messiah of Marathas.

**Zeeshan Shaikh:** Congress has asked for 50 per cent reservation to be removed. Is that something that needs to be done?

Yes, I've been saying from the start about undertaking a caste census, and then it will be revealed how untrue are things that all the political parties feel. Especially that the Marathas are 60 per cent. Second, increase EWS by more 10 per cent. Before EWS, many agitations of Jat, Patidar, Kapu were going on. From the day EWS was announced, all those people turned silent.

**Alok Deshpande:** Do you see a national role as an OBC leader?

My only concern is to save the OBC quota first. What would I do with the national role?

**Shubhangi Khapre:** Do you think there was politics within the government? Did Eknath Shinde want to undermine Mr Fadnavis or Ajit Pawar?

What I can see, you can also see, I am going to rallies and openly saying things.

**Sandeep Singh:** You will become politically the most important person to consolidate these castes.

I don't care about what happens to me. I am only concerned about the OBCs. We will consolidate these castes and will create fear of losing OBC votes among leaders.

**Mohamed Thaver:** Do you fear any action for speaking out?

I am not scared of anything.

**Shubhangi Khapre:** Why do you think Devendra Fadnavis is not speaking on this issue?

He is kind of helpless. Maybe, he feels that he will be targeted for being a Brahmin. Also, there is an election ahead.

**Zeeshan Shaikh:** Do you fear backlash from Maratha voters?

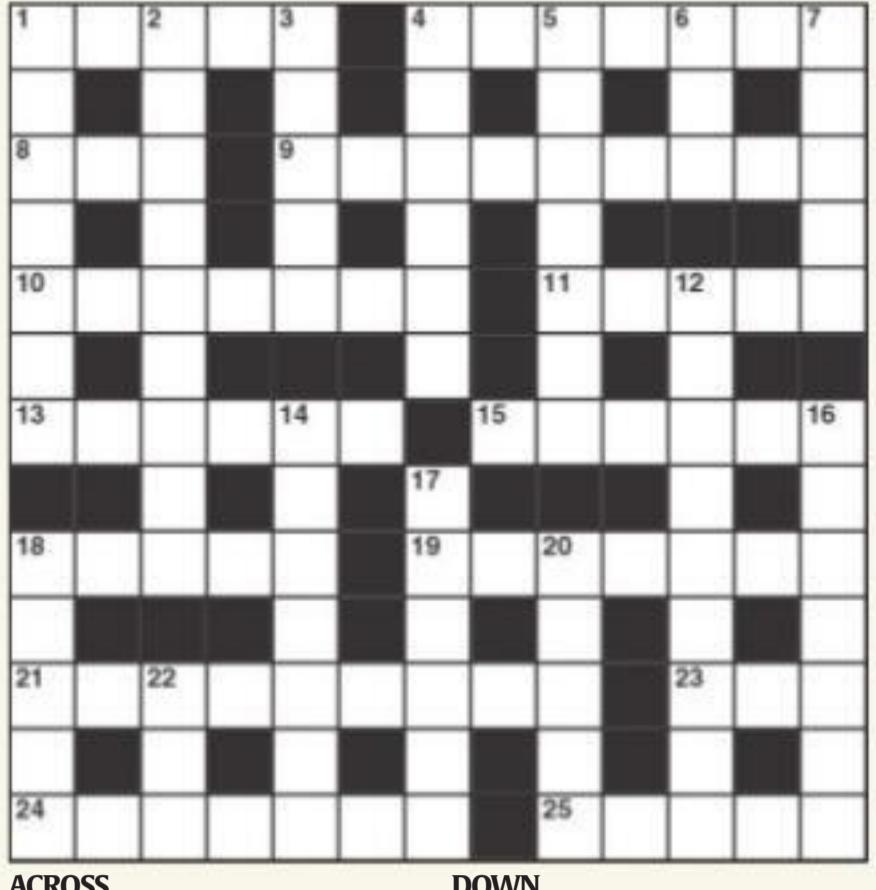
I'm not bothered about my ministership or MLA chair. But take it from me, I would be elected by the people with a thumping majority, for the fifth time, on the basis of the work I've done. Marathas would also vote for me as they want development.



There are several leaders who are not speaking. Elections are around the corner and everybody wants Maratha votes and is scared. But those votes are not more than 20 per cent, which are also divided in several parties



## CROSSWORD 5285



ACROSS

- Progress made in one month (5)
- They're used for cleaning badly rusted bearing (7)
- Fast runner down mountains (3)
- Temple too elaborate as a clan symbol (5,4)
- Free from sailor's love entanglement (7)
- One who draws a London landmark (5)
- Takes out of religious work (6)
- Number after a new atom bomb explosive (6)
- Creep around in a type of rubber sole (5)
- It's an accomplishment with her light weight (7)
- Barely countenanced (9)
- A Scot's surprised expression (3)
- A hundred cheers perhaps or one cry of terror (7)
- They take their turns at sea (5)

Solutions Crossword 5284 Across: 1 Contingent, 8 Preen, 9 Snippet, 10 Started, 11 Uncle, 12 Policy, 14 Reward, 17 Nehru, 19 Refrain, 21 Nonplus, 22 Arise, 23 Distressed Down: 2 Overall, 3 Tenet, 4 Naside, 5 Epicure, 6 Topic, 7 Attendance, 8 Postponing, 13 Couples, 15 Avance, 16 Eraser, 18 Honed, 20 Flags

## JUMBLE WORDS

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

Painting is a source of endless pleasure, but also of great anguish



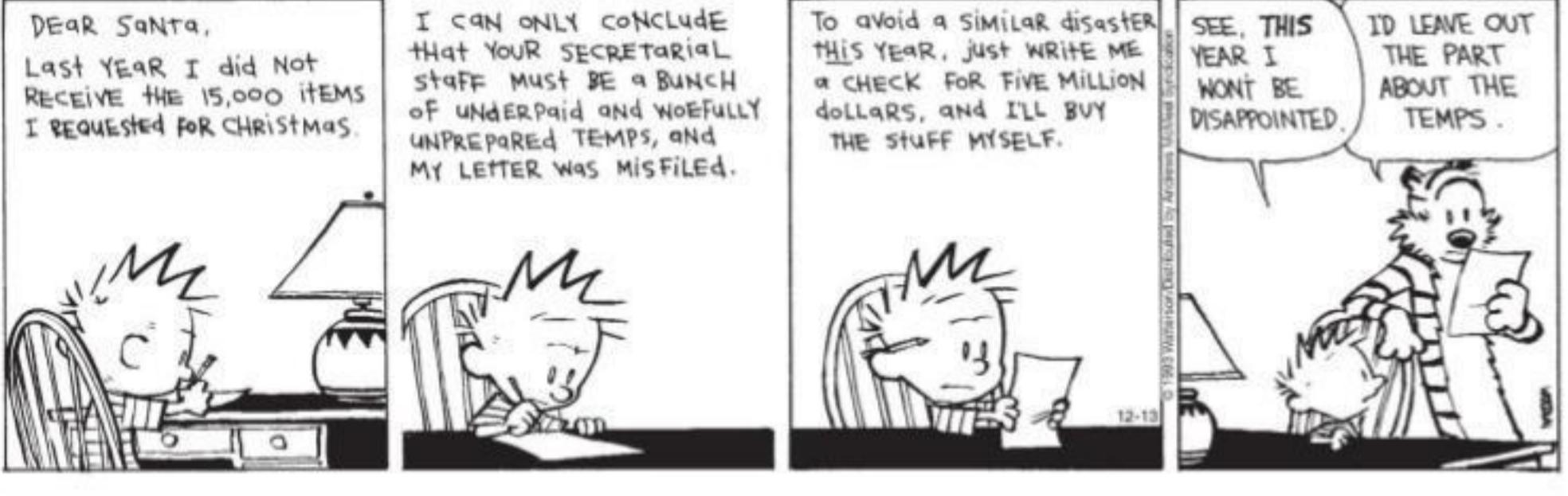
Answers: Painting is a source of endless pleasure, but also of great anguish

SOLUTION: ARASE OSIEER INTUITI SHAGGY

## OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry &amp; I Lewis



## CALVIN &amp; HOBBS by Bill Watterson



## MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



**SUDOKU 5470**  
Difficulty Level 2  
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.

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

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

**SOLUTION SUDOKU 5469**

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

## BEFORE THE ARBITRATOR

## PUBLIC NOTICE

(U/S 84 of the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002)

Link for T&amp;C (dhc.nic.in)

No 4580/x Dispatch/DHC

Dated 07/02/2024

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR COURIER SERVICES

Sealed tenders are invited, as per Performa attached to the terms & condition enclosed herewith, from reputed firms, companies or other Body Corporate in the field of courier services for awarding of contract for Courier Services for delivery of letters, notices/summon, parcel etc. dispatched from High Court of Delhi to every nook and corner of the country and outside India.

Preference will be given to the Courier services having features such as security, speed, tracking, specialized and individualized service, committed delivery time and large network throughout the country, including remote areas as well as adequate arrangement for services outside India.

Interested parties may send their sealed tender in two separate sealed envelopes, one for submitting the tender and another containing Earnest Money, on each envelope superscribing (i) Tender for Courier Services and (ii) Earnest Money for Courier Services addressed to the Registrar (R&D) so as to reach on or before 12.03.2024 up to 5 p.m. which will be opened at 12.30 p.m. on the next working day i.e. 13.03.2024 in the chamber of Registrar General first floor A-Block for the purpose before the tenderers or their authorized representatives who may wish to remain present at the opening of the tender. The tenders received after due date and/or time and/or without Earnest Money shall not be entertained.

- Sd-

Registrar (R&amp;D)

Room No.101, first floor, A-Block, Delhi High Court, New Delhi.

High Court of Delhi, At New Delhi Despatch Branch

Last date of submission of tender: 12.03.2024

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Registrar (R&amp;D)

Room No.10

## Leach ruled out of India Tests with knee injury



Jack Leach injured his knee while fielding during the first Test. Reuters

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
FEBRUARY 11

IN A major blow to England, left-arm spinner Jack Leach has been ruled out of the remaining three Tests against India with a knee injury. Leach, who featured in the first Test at Hyderabad, hurt his left knee while fielding on Day 1 and subsequently because of the excess swelling, bowled mostly four-over spells before missing the second Test at Vizag.

As England left for Abu Dhabi to enjoy the break period, it was expected that Leach would come back fit. However, following further scans in Abu Dhabi Leach has decided to head back to London for further treatment. "He will fly home from Abu Dhabi in the next 24 hours, where the England team have been staying ahead of the third Test in Rajkot, which starts on Thursday. Leach will work closely with the England and Somerset medical teams in respect of his rehabilitation," the ECB said in a statement.

Leach's unavailability means, England will have a re-look at their bowling combination as the ECB confirmed that they will not name any replacement for the series. In both the Tests so far, they have taken the field with just one seamer and three spinners. However, with Leach now not in the fray, it remains to be seen if England will stick to the inexperienced trio of Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley and Shoaib Bashir. Out of the three, Hartley made his debut in Hyderabad, while Bashir played his maiden Test at Vizag.

With all three being on the expensive side, and with India's batsmen looking to unsettle them, England may be tempted to play another seamer at Rajkot as they can always rely on Joe Root to deliver a few overs of off-spin.

England, who headed to Abu Dhabi from Vizag, to enjoy a short break with their families, are scheduled to arrive in Rajkot on Monday.

### 'Real show stealer was BoomBall'

**PTI adds:** Lavishing praise on teammate Jasprit Bumrah, senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said "BoomBall" stole the show in the second Test against England and the pacer reaching top of the ICC rankings across three formats is a "Himalayan feat".

Bumrah displayed brilliance with the ball to play a key role in the team's series-levering 106-run win in the second Test in Visakhapatnam.

"The real show stealer was BoomBall. Jasprit Bumrah has bowled extraordinarily," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"He is the leading wicket-taker with 14 wickets and also the No.1 ranked Test bowler. The first India fast bowler to achieve number one across all formats. I am a big fan of his and this is a Himalayan feat," Ashwin said.

### Yadav stars for Haryana

JAYANT YADAV'S 10-wicket match haul earned Haryana a massive innings victory over hosts Jharkhand in Jamshedpur on Sunday. The off-spinner snared five victims in each innings as Jharkhand were bowled out for 119 and 185 following on, after Haryana amassed 509 batting first. There was only one fifty-plus score for Jharkhand across the two innings. Left-arm spinner Nishant Sindhu chipped in with three wickets in the second innings.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Haryana 509 beat Jharkhand 119 (Jayant Yadav 5/35, Sumit Kumar 3/9) & 185 (Utkarsh Singh 53; Jayant Yadav 5/55, Nishant Sindhu 3/39) by an innings and 205 runs

### Deshpande comes to Mumbai's rescue

SEAMER TUSHAR Deshpande came to Mumbai's rescue as he dismissed centurion and Chhattisgarh captain Amandeep Khare to not only notch up a five-wicket haul, but also secure a slim but vital 1-run first-innings lead.

Deshpande trapped Khare in front for 143 as the hosts were bowled out for 350, one short of Mumbai's total.

Chhattisgarh were reduced to 265/7 at one stage before Khare put on an important stand with the lower order, but they fell just short. Mumbai took control of proceedings with a solid start to their second innings.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Mumbai 351 & 97/1 declared (Ayush Badoni 111, Yash Dhull 82, Anuj Rawat 54) vs Himachal Pradesh 319

PRATYUSH RAJ  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 11

THE ENGLAND football legend Gary Lineker once enviously said about the German side of the late 1980s and 90s: "Football is a simple game. Twenty-two men chase a ball for 90 minutes and at the end, the Germans always win." In the context of cricket, this could be said about Australia. They always win the big final, and of late at the expense of India. In the last seven months alone, they have beaten India thrice in the final of a global tournament—first in the World Test Championship (WTC) final at The Oval, then the ODI World Cup final in Ahmedabad and now in the U-19 World Cup summit clash in Benoni.

Unlike India, Australia had stuttered to the final, enduring a close shave against Pakistan in the semifinal, but when it mattered they produced a ruthless performance reminiscent of their seniors to crush India by 79 runs to claim their fourth U-19 title. Piling 253 for 7, the highest total ever in an U-19 final, on what commentator Ian Bishop described as "one of the fastest surfaces I have ever seen for a U-19 World Cup, with significant lateral movement, bounce and carry", they bowled out India for 174 runs.

Needless to say, Australia's medium pacers thrived on the surface. Callum Vidler and Mahli Beardman troubled India's batsmen with pace;

Charlie Anderson and Tom Straker sustained the pressure with tight bowling, before off-spinner Raf MacMillan reaped the harvest by grabbing three wickets.

Vidler, who politely refused to answer the broadcaster's question on who is the fastest bowler among, produced the first jolt for India by removing opener Arshin Kulkarni cheaply. Adarsh Singh and Musheer Khan somehow managed to survive the powerplay. But Beardman, who came as second change, ran through the top order. The pacer from Dunsborough, West Australia, who has already played for his state ratcheted up the pace. The terrorized batsmen of India looked timid.

As with most pacers from the region, the legendary Dennis Lillee had a decisive influence on him. Three years ago, he pleaded with the Australian legend to take him under his wings, but Lillee initially refused. "DK (Lillee) had a rule that he wouldn't work with anyone until they were 16. I had to do a little bit of waiting and a little bit of work but when I was about 15 I convinced him to finally have a look," Beardman had told reporters ahead of their semifinal clash against Pakistan.

"We went down to the south Perth nets and had a bowl down there and I got along really well with him. Ever since then, he's just been a massive mentor for me. He's such a great man to have in my corner."

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"We went down to the south Perth nets and had a bowl down there and I got along really well with him. Ever since then, he's just been a massive mentor for me. He's such a great man to have in my corner."

ART. But he recalled a quote from former India bowling coach Bharat Arun, while doing his level 1 course at the National Cricket Academy (NCA). "Bharat Arun sir used to say that one had to be very patient with fast bowlers."

Limbani was in two minds and a bit worried about whether he would be the same bowler or not if he worked on the in-swinger. But in Rathwa, he had a mentor who had endured many swings of misfortunes in his career. The 28-year-old, a batch-mate of Hardik Pandya and Deepak Hooda, was on ventilator for a year.

"I used to open for Baroda in U-16 and U-19 cricket. In 2015, I had GBS (Guillain-Barre Syndrome), a very rare disease in India. I was just 19 and on a ventilator at Mahavir Hospital in Surat for a year. I told Raj 'look at me, I fought death and came back, and here you are worrying about your bowling. At least give it a try,'" says Rathwa.

With Rathwa's assurance, Limbani was ready to take up the challenge and for the next eight months, worked on his inswing.

"We started it in May. For the first 40 days,



Raj Limbani was India's best bowler in the final, returning impressive figures of 3-38. AP

he bowled from his crease without any run-up. Then for the next 60, he bowled from five paces. It took time because in the meantime, he was playing Cooch Behar Trophy and Vinoo Mankad Trophy, then the U-19 challengers as well. Before the Asia Cup, he started bowling

from his full run-up. He was glad that without losing pace, he had learned a new art and was relieved as a coach as well," laughs Rathwa.

### Strong mind

He lauds Raj's mentality as well and says apart from his pace, Pathan was impressed with his attitude as well.

"Irfan bhai said he has got potential and a good head on his shoulders and with a little bit of guidance, he can become a good end product in a couple of years. Before going to the World Cup, Irfan bhai spent a week with him. He gave him tips on how to ball in South African conditions, and the importance of hitting a good length there. I think he has ticked most of the boxes, including the six that he hit in the semi-final at a very crucial time," says Rathwa.

"He clocks 135 kmph consistently and at the National Cricket Academy, he has clocked 141 twice. Pace is something that we will work along with his batting once he returns home," he says.

Rathwa feels Limbani wants to play first-class cricket and right from his U-16 days,

would talk about workload management.

"He loves bowling with the red ball. Even before going to the World Cup, he used to bowl with the red ball. During his U-16 days, he used to talk about workload management. He is aware of this aspect. He bowled around 200 overs in six matches in the Cooch Behar Trophy in the 2022-23 season. It was the most by any fast bowler."

He also enjoys bowling long spells. He is from the IPL generation but is very old-fashioned when it comes to cricket," the coach says.

Back in Dayapur in Kachchh, Vasantbhai Patel took the day off, and watched his son play the U-19 World Cup final with 50-odd people at his home. There was some concern when Raj felt his hamstring while bowling his eighth over.

"Final hai, mujhe maloom tha ek pair pe bhi bowling daalega (This is the final and I knew he would bowl even on one leg)," says Raj's father.

"This is what he has lived for. I don't think he ever had any other plans barring cricket. I am happy that he is living his dream," he says.

## RANJI ROUND-UP



Jayant Yadav's 10-wicket match haul (five wickets in each innings) gave Haryana an innings victory over hosts Jharkhand. File

### Delhi fight back

AFTER CONCEDING the first-innings lead, Delhi fought back on the third day through a century by Ayush Badoni and half-centuries by openers Yash Dhull and Anuj Rawat. There were important contributions by skipper Himant Singh and Jonty Sidhu as well, which helped Delhi set a victory target of 327 for hosts Himachal Pradesh at Dharamsala. The visitors had taken one second-innings wicket in pursuit of a come-from-behind win.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Delhi 264 & 381/6 declared (Ayush Badoni 111, Yash Dhull 82, Anuj Rawat 54) vs Himachal Pradesh 319

(Rishi Dhawan 95; Siddhant Sharma 5/103, Himanshu Chauhan 3/72) & 31/1

### TN fighting

AJITH RAM'S five-wicket haul kept Tamil Nadu alive against Karnataka, but the hosts still faced a stiff task to secure an unlikely win over Karnataka. After conceding a 215-run first-innings deficit, Tamil Nadu bundled out the visitors for 139, courtesy Ajith's left-arm spin, that left them chasing 355 in the fourth innings. Karnataka had got the important wicket of Narayan Jagadeesan by the close of play.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Karnataka 366 & 139

(Ajith Ram 5/61) vs Tamil Nadu 151 (Vijaykumar Vyshak 4/26, Shashi Kumar 3/41) & 36/1

### Saxena's one-man show

HOTSPOTS KERALA were in a strong position to claim full points against Bengal at Thumba, courtesy a remarkable all-round performance from Jalaj Saxena. The veteran off-spinner ran through the Bengal order with nine wickets in the first innings before claiming one in the second as well. Opening the batting, Saxena also scored 40 and 37 and has another day to add to his 10-wicket match haul, as Bengal need 372 more runs with eight wickets in hand.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Kerala 363 & 365/6 declared (Rohan Kunnummal 51, Sachin Baby 51, Shreyas Gopal 50; Shahbaz Ahmed 3/80) vs Bengal 180 (Jalaj Saxena 9/68) & 77/2

### Saurashtra in control

SAURASHTRA'S STRONG bowling attack helped them dominate hosts Rajasthan to take a sizeable lead going into the final day. Left-arm spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja's five-wicket haul and off-spinner Yuvraj Singh Dodiya's four scalps helped the visitors take control in Jaipur. Cheteshwar Pujara had a rare modest score in the second innings but Arpit Vasavada and Sheldon Jackson put on an unbeaten century partnership to put Saurashtra 245 ahead.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Saurashtra 328 & 174/4 (Arpit Vasavada 53 batton) vs Rajasthan 257 (Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 5/99, Yuvraj Singh Dodiya 4/88)

## Aus vs WI: Maxwell smashes 5th T20I ton, equals Rohit's feat

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
FEBRUARY 11

GLENN MAXWELL blasted a record-equalling century as Australia beat West Indies by 34 runs on Sunday and took an unassailable 2-0 lead in its three-match Twenty20 series.

Maxwell smashed an unbeaten 120 off 55 balls, with eight sixes and 12 fours, and shared a 92-run stand with Tim David (31 off 14 balls) to propel Australia to 241-4 and the highest T20 international score at Adelaide Oval.

"We're extremely lucky to have (Maxwell) in our team," Australia captain Mitch Marsh said. "He's a match winner, game changer and people come to watch him." The West Indies chase was derailed by the loss of five wickets in the first seven overs, but a rally led by captain Rovman Powell (63 off 36 balls) and Andre Russell (37 off 16 balls) briefly gave the tourists hope of reeling in the mammoth target.

But the weight of the chase ultimately proved too much as Marcus Stoines (3-36) and debutant Spencer Johnson (2-39) led Australia's bowlers in restricting the West Indies chase to 207-9 in its 20 overs.

"Yeah, I think the boys show courage, you know, that we would just start aggressive but we kept losing wickets," Powell said. "We also need to get big partnerships just as the Aussies did." Earlier, Australia slipped to a precarious 64-3 after 6.4 overs after being asked to bat first, with Josh Inglis (four), Marsh (29 off 12 balls) and David Warner (22 off 19 balls) all holding out playing expansive shots.

Maxwell started slowly with his first four

runs coming off five balls, before his innings exploded into life with a rush of boundaries. He shared an 82-run stand with Stoines (16 off 15 balls) and then a 92-run partnership with Tim David, which reaped 25 runs from the final over bowled by Russell.

Maxwell's century came off 50 balls and was the fastest hundred in a T20 international in Australia — beating South African Riley Rossouw's 52-ball effort against Bangladesh during the 2022 World Cup.

It was also Maxwell's fifth T20 international century, equalling the record held by India's Rohit Sharma. "I feel really comfortable in this format. I think over the last probably 18 months, I've felt really good about my batting and really good about my game," Maxwell said.

Australia beat West Indies by 11 runs in the first match in Hobart on Friday. The third game of the three-match series will be played on Tuesday at Perth, Australia, which is playing six T20s over the next three weeks, routed West Indies 3-0 in the ODI series.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Australia 241-4 in 20 overs (Maxwell 120\*) vs West Indies 207-9 in 20 overs (Powell 63, A Russell 37; Stoines 3-36) by 34 runs

**RYBAKINA TRIUMPHS IN ABU DHABI**

*Abu Dhabi:* Top seed Elena Rybakina powered to a 6-1 6-4 win over Russian Daria Kasatkina in the final of the Abu Dhabi Open on Sunday to lift her second trophy of the season and seventh overall. REUTERS

## NUMBER PLATE

4

This was Australia's fourth U-19 title, and the first since 2010. This was also their 14th men's ICC title.

**397** India's captain Uday Saharan emerged as the highest run-getter in the tournament, with a hundred and three fifty-plus scores.

duck. Raj Limbani yorked himself to end India's last lingering hopes.

While batting was catastrophic, the bowlers would rule in letting Australia put on 253 for 7. After getting rid of Sam Konstas with the team score on 16 in 2.3 overs, they let Harry Dixon (42) and Hugh Weibgen (48) put on 78 runs for the second wicket. Though they lost two wickets in the space of adding five runs, Harjas Singh sprung to the occasion. He had managed only 49 runs in the tournament, but top-scored with a valuable 55 of 64 balls. The southpaw was at his imperious best against the spinners, hitting three sixes. Though Australia lost a cluster of wickets in the middle overs Oliver Peake's 43-ball 46 not out gave them the final flourish. Medium pacer Raj Limbani (3/38) apart, none made a decisive impact, costing heavily.

India's captain Saharan blamed his bats

## BRIEFLY

**Nagal wins Chennai Open, set to enter men's top 100**

**Chennai:** India's top singles player Sumit Nagal on Sunday won his fifth Challenger-level singles title, outplaying Italian Luca Nardi in the final of the Chennai Open -- an achievement which will propel him into the top-100 for the first time in his career. Nagal's 6-1 6-4 win is likely to take him to 98 when the fresh rankings will be issued on Monday. Nagal has been in tremendous form as he won the Chennai Open without dropping a set. Nagal will be first Indian to feature in singles top-100 since Prajesh Gunneswaran made the cut in 2019. "I'm very emotional (today). You know, every tennis player's dream is to be top 100 at least. And like I said earlier, to win this match in front of the home crowd in your own country, I don't think I could have asked for a better place," Nagal said afterwards. PTI

**PKL: Paltan hammer Thalaivas, reach semis**

**Kolkata:** The Puneri Paltan thrashed Tamil Thalaivas 56-29 to enter the semifinals of the Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 on Sunday. Aslam Inamdar picked up a few raid points as the Puneri Paltan raced away with a six-point lead within the third minute. However, Mohammadreza Kaboudrahangi helped the Tamil Thalaivas get board through a super tackle on Pankaj Mohite. But Mohit Goyat effected a raid and Abinash Nadarajan tackled Vishal Chahal as the Pune side inflicted the first all out of the match to take a big lead at 12-2. The Pune outfit inflicted another all out to lead 28-10 and never relinquished their lead. PTI

**Tejaswin wins season-opening meet**

**New Delhi:** National record holder in high jump Tejaswin Shankar won the top prize in the International High Jump Gala Elmos 2024 athletics meet in Heist-op-den-Berg, Belgium with a leap of 2.23 metres. Shankar, competing for the first time since October last year, finished ahead of Greece's Antonios Merlos (2.20 metres) in the World Athletics Indoor Tour Challenger event on Saturday. The 25-year-old, who holds both the men's high jump and decathlon national records, however, could not better his personal best of 2.29m. Shankar has trained his eyes on a Paris Olympics berth but for that he will have to achieve a qualifying standard of 2.33 metres. PTI

**Gukesh loses three rounds, finishes sixth**

**Wangels (Germany):** India's Grandmaster D Gukesh had to be content with a sixth place finish in the rapid play-offs of the Weissenhaus Freestyle Chess challenge after losing the last three rounds here. Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan dominated the rapid event that was mainly done to determine the pairings for the knockout stage. The young Uzbek ended with an impressive 5.5 points out of a possible seven and finished a half point clear of Vincent Keymer of Germany. Fabiano American Levon Aronian ended seventh ahead of the struggling reigning world champion Ding Liren who made just a draw with six losses in the event. PTI

After 2-2 draw in regulation time thanks to Hardik's exploits, India get the better of Netherlands in shootout

**VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN**  
FEBRUARY 11

THAT HARDIK Singh is the heartbeat of the Indian men's hockey team couldn't have been more evident than on Sunday in Bhubaneswar.

The vice-captain was at the centre of most things good his side did in the FIH Hockey Pro League match against world No. 1 Netherlands. In a riveting game between two top sides, India took the lead through Hardik and scored an equaliser late on thanks to captain Harmanpreet Singh, from a PC that his deputy won. A 2-2 draw saw the teams share a point each before PR Sreejesh showed in class in the shootout as India won an additional bonus point.

It wasn't quite two teams going all-out attacking throughout the game, it was a bit of 'cat-and-mouse' as Dutch coach Jeroen Delmee put it at half time. But the match built up into a nice crescendo before India edged it in the end. Speaking before the match, India head coach Craig Fulton hoped that India would match themselves well up against the world No. 1 and, while there were a few worrying mistakes, the South African would have been pleased with what he saw overall.

A year back, Hardik's injury in the middle of the World Cup proved to be a tough one to overcome for India. Having started the tournament so well, he was heartbroken and eventually, so were India, after a pre-quarterfinal defeat against New Zealand.

Sunday was another reminder of how much India missed him then, as he ran the show from the centre of midfield. The Dutch started the match brilliantly, looking to catch the Indian defence off guard with long passes - both aerial and on the ground. The ball was pinging off their sticks with impressive rhythm and for most of the opening quarter, India had to hang in, with some sharp deep defending.

It was one of those long passes that India managed to break down that led to the opening goal. Hardik ran with the ball for more than half the length of the field to find Sukhjeet Singh. The forward held the ball and slid a pass back to Hardik.

One of Fulton's mantras is to play with control and the finish from Hardik was all about that. He took a touch and then guided the ball into the net as if he was gently passing a ball to his teammate, only this one beat the Dutch goalkeeper Maurits Visser, who seemed to be surprised that the ball came at him from an acute angle.



Hardik Singh (R) celebrates after scoring a goal against the Netherlands on Sunday. Hockey India

**SCORELINE**

India	Netherlands
<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Hardik Singh 13' Harmanpreet 58'	Jip Janssen 30' Koen Bijn 39'

A combination of good defence and one moment of brilliance from Hardik gave India the lead against the run of play. Hardik then produced a superb steal five minutes into the second quarter as he read a Dutch long pass well. A couple of minutes later, he came up with a fine dribble to win a penalty corner for India with clever direction change and 3D skills.

But the Dutch are the world's top side for a reason and they found goals on either side of the half time to go into the lead. At the very end of Q2, Manpreet Singh's diving interception was deemed to be deliberately sending the ball behind the byline and Jip Janssen fired

it in from the Penalty Corner.

With Fulton saying his team had to get better at avoiding turnover of possessions, the start of Q3 saw India lose the ball more often. From one such turnover at midfield, the Netherlands had a spell of possession that resulted in a PC. This time Koen Bijn reacted sharpest among those in the circle to score off a rebound. Even when India had an ordinary third quarter, it was Hardik who drove the team forward. The final quarter saw India start things off in top gear, and their bravery would be rewarded late on. Hardik reacted quickest to a loose ball in the Netherlands' attacking third and drew a push from the Dutch defence. Harmanpreet was quick to refer this to the video umpire and India had a PC with two minutes left.

**Sreejesh delivers again**

Coach Fulton's one wish before the match was that his side would have to keep India away from penalty corner situations, but after defending well till then, it would prove to be the decisive moment. After a good night from

set pieces against Spain, India's drag flickers didn't have the best of times... until this instance. Hardik stepped up to inject, and Harmanpreet fired in his best drag flick of the night, scoring the equaliser on his 200th appearance for India.

India had taken their goalkeeper off with 2:43 left in the match and scored the equaliser. But shortly after, their talisman PR Sreejesh was back on the pitch and produced a fine save in the dying moments to take his side to a shootout.

And there, he'd shine again, starting with a stunning reflex save before preventing another Dutch goal by holding his ground. No stranger to last-minute interventions, Sreejesh ensured India would stay unbeaten over the weekend (after an impressive outing against Spain too) to send out a timely reminder at the start of the Olympic year that he is still the main man between the posts.

In the end, winning the player-of-the-match award, Hardik said: "We showed the standard where we want to be." Five points from two matches to start the Pro League is a good reflection of that sentiment.

## Arsenal smash six past woeful West Ham to send title message

**MARTYN HERMAN**  
LONDON, FEBRUARY 11

points, although they stay in third place courtesy of scoring fewer goals. Leaders Liverpool have 54 points.

Arsenal were defeated by West Ham in the League Cup although the bigger blow was a 2-0 home defeat in December when they were guilty of squandering a host of chances.

This time they were lethal as they tore eighth placed West Ham to shreds at the London Stadium. Thousands of home fans who streamed out of the exits before half-time were spared the rest of West Ham's worst home league defeat since an 8-2 loss by Blackburn Rovers in 1963.

"It was a brilliant performance from the start to the end, we dominated and controlled everything and today we were really sharp in front of goal as well," Arsenal skipper Martin Odegaard said. "We backed up a big win last week (against Liverpool) with another great performance."

Victories for Liverpool and Manchester City on Saturday had cranked up the pres-



Bukayo Saka celebrates after scoring Arsenal's fifth goal of the game against West Ham United on Sunday. Reuters

**KEY RESULTS**

West Ham	0	6	Arsenal
Aston Villa	1	2	Man Utd

sure on Arsenal to follow suit.

And how they responded.

Arteta's side dominated the opening exchanges with Trossard's ferocious volley tipped over by home keeper Alphonse Areola and Martin Odegaard's shot deflecting just wide.

The away fans might had a sense of déjà-vu from the clash at The Emirates on Dec. 28 when Arsenal were stunned by West Ham despite their superiority. But they need not have worried.

Once Saliba was allowed a simple header at the far post from a Rice corner in the 32nd minute, West Ham disintegrated.

Saka was then played clean through and was taken out by Areola who was shown a yellow card before the young England for-

**Nikhat Zareen goes down in close bout; Panghal, Sachin clinch gold**

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
FEBRUARY 11

FORA brief moment at the end of the women's 50kg final, there was confusion. The announcer read out that the boxer in blue had won, but the referee lifted the arm of the boxer in red. But Nikhat Zareen knew by then that it wasn't her day. She had a wry smile as the referee quickly changed the decision to point to the right winner as per the judges.

It was a silver for the two-time world champion at the 75th Strandja Memorial Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria on Sunday as Nikhat (50kg) went down 2-3 against Uzbekistan's Sabina Bobokulova. On another day, the decision to raise Nikhat's hand could well have been the right one because there wasn't much to choose between the two.

Halfway into the opening round, Bobokulova threw both her arms up in the air as if celebrating a good punch on the Indian, but in effect, those were in response to a big punch that Nikhat had landed moments before.

Over those three minutes, there was a good case to be made that Nikhat landed more meaningful punches than her opponent but Bobokulova exuded more confidence and energy. A 1-4 decision on the scorecard was harsh on Nikhat and it would prove to be tough to overcome after she also lost a tough second round 2-3. The Indian did dominate the final stages to take it 5-0 but the damage had been done early on, meaning Nikhat has now gone two international tournaments without gold after a streak of titles leading into the Asian Games.

There was very little emotion on Amit Panghal's (51kg) face as well but he produced a masterful display against reigning world champion (albeit in a lower division) Kazakhstan's Sanzhan Tashkenbay to win 5-0. The second gold medal of the day for India came from Sachin (57kg) as he prevailed over Uzbekistan's Shakhzod Muzafarov.

That Amit's celebration was muted could perhaps be down to the fact that he is not in India's squad for the Olympic qualifiers in Busto Arsizio, Italy, later this month, with Deepak Bhoria selected for that already. But it was a week when Amit showed he is still a force to be reckoned with, barely breaking sweat in the semi-final and coming out aggressively in the final to down a reputed opponent.

ward dispatched the penalty for his 50th goal for the club.

Rice swung in a free kick that was met by Gabriel with another close-range header and with West Ham resembling rabbits frozen in the headlights, Trossard engineered some space before curling a sublime right-footed shot into the top corner.

West Ham were booted off by their fans at halftime and the exodus continued after the break as Saka fired a clinical shot past Areola to make it 5-0 before Rice, who got a mixed reception from the home fans, produced a stunning finish.

Rice refused to celebrate but the party was in full swing amongst the away fans who left the ground dreaming of going one step further than last season's runner-up finish.

It was a traumatic afternoon for West Ham manager David Moyes who saw one of his teams concede six goals in a home league game for the second time in his career -- the other occasion in 2009 when his Everton lost 6-1, also to Arsenal. REUTERS

**PREMIER LEAGUE**

## 11th in PL with 39 goals conceded, Chelsea not able to douse any fires

the moment in the Premier League.

Except for a midweek win against Aston Villa in the FA Cup, Chelsea have conceded 8 goals in their last two Premier League matches with 4-1 and 4-2 losses to Liverpool and Wolves respectively.

These strings of results have even led to player Thiago Silva's wife talking to social media and demanding the manager's sacking. This does not exactly paint a harmonious picture of a locker room united.

The club which was once revered as a powerhouse and won the Champions League just 3 years ago, look like a shadow of their former selves. They are 11th in the league table at the moment and have conceded 39 goals, losing 10 of their 23 matches. That too after spending more than £1 billion in transfers since 2023.

The huge record signings of Moises Caicedo from Brighton and Enzo Fernandez from Benfica have fallen flat with opponents easily outrunning them in the midfield while Pochettino looks for a way to implement his tactics. Another big signing, the £58 million Romeo Lavia from Southampton has spent more time on the treatment table than on the pitch. Goalkeeper Robert Sanchez who was bought from Brighton with much fanfare has also been ruled out with a knee injury while captain Reece James is out again

Pochettino was trying desperately to get the point across that The Blues need to be patient and, on the night, their opponents were better than them. While pointing out that his thick mop at 51 wasn't particularly thinning because of Chelsea's wretched run.

The mind-mangled managerial musings might not have made much sense but it is the perfect metaphor for the mess Chelsea are in at



Except for a midweek win against Aston Villa in the FA Cup, Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea have conceded 8 goals in their last two Premier League matches. Reuters

with a thigh problem.

Granted these are some of the big misses that the club has had to contend with but they should have the squad depth to cover it. With big names like Thiago Silva, Raheem Sterling,

Only 21-year-old Cole Palmer, a £40million attacking midfielder signed from Manchester has been a bright spot in these dark times, chipping in with 10 goals and 4 assists

year-old Cole Palmer, a £40million attacking midfielder signed from Manchester has been a bright spot in these dark times, chipping in with 10 goals and 4 assists.

If this was any normal time, Pochettino would be out of the door by now but due to the Premier League's Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR), they can't. The Argentine manager has over 18 months left in his current contract and will cost Todd Boehly and Co over £10m to get rid of. With the club being very close to breaching the PSR due to their blind splurge in the market last year, they will have to raise £100 million through player sales in the summer in order to balance their books. Failing to do so, they might have to face points deduction like Everton.

This is a far cry from the empire Chelsea had built under former owner Roman Abramovich who was a shrewd businessman

and knew how the club functions. In Boehly, Chelsea has an owner who quite literally throws a wad full of cash at the problem. As soon as the American took over from Abramovich, the cardinal sin he made was to sack the then coach Thomas Tuchel, the very man who had guided them to a second Champions League. In his place, Graham Potter from Brighton was appointed and subsequently sacked after 7 months.

Chelsea then went on to give the job to club legend Frank Lampard on an interim basis, a man who had already failed at Stamford Bridge once before. After that, the owners brought in Pochettino who was himself coming off an underwhelming coaching stint at Paris Saint Germain. However, this signing was hailed as a sensible one due to the Argentine's propensity to work magic with younger players as he had done in Tottenham, a club which he coached to a Champions League final in 2019.

But it hasn't worked out thus far with the manager still struggling to get the best out of the players under him, with the Blues having just 31 points at this point of the season. Immune to the sack at the moment, Pochettino still has time to imprint his mark on this young side but looking at the way Chelsea play as a unit right now, he has his work cut out for him.