

**HIGH COURT HEARING**

State assures no untoward action on hijab: Karnataka AG

‘Petitioners want declaration on hijab that can bind every Muslim woman’

JOHNSON T A & APURVA VISHWANATH
BENGALURU, NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE KARNATAKA Advocate General on Monday told the High Court that efforts have been initiated by the state to ensure that officials of its Education department do not act in an “untoward” manner with Muslim girl students while implementing the court’s interim order that barred religious symbols in col-

leges where dress codes have been prescribed until the matter is decided.

Advocate General Prabhuling Navadgi was reacting to a memorandum presented by Mohammed Tahir, an advocate for petitioners against the hijab ban in a few government colleges in Udupi, that Muslim girls

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ACCEPT DRESS CODE, ABIDE BY COURT VERDICT: SHAH **PAGE 7**



Incidents of stone-throwing and arson were reported during the funeral procession, in Shivamogga on Monday. *PTI*

Bajrang Dal worker killed in communal hotspot of Shivamogga; 2 arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 21

A 26-YEAR-OLD Bajrang Dal worker was stabbed to death in an incident allegedly triggered by previous enmity in Karnataka’s Shivamogga, leading to arson and stone-throwing in the city during the funeral procession on Monday afternoon.

Harsha Nagaraj alias Hindu Harsha alias Batte Market Harsha, an employee of a mobile service centre in Seegehatti, died



Harsha Nagaraj was stabbed to death

after he was attacked by a gang of youths that waylaid him when he stepped out of his home in the communally sensitive area on Sunday night.

“We have arrested two persons in connection with the

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EXPRESS NETWORK

LALU GETS 5-YR JAIL, FINED Rs 60 LAKH IN FODDER SCAM CASE

CORBEVAX GETS EMERGENCY USE NOD FOR 12-18 YRS AGE GROUP

PAGES 4, 10

TERMS INCLUDE: DID GOVT ACQUIRE SPYWARE?

Pegasus: Panel to probe spying charges submits its report to SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE TECHNICAL Committee appointed by the Supreme Court to inquire into allegations of unauthorised surveillance using Pegasus software has submitted its interim report to the top court. A bench headed by Chief Justice of India NV Ramana will consider



Anis Khan’s father Salem Khan (centre) at his residence in Howrah district’s Sarada Dakshin Khan Para village on Monday. *Partha Paul*

STUDENT LEADER’S DEATH

Mamata govt sets up SIT, family firm on CBI probe

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA, ATRI MITRA & SWEETY KUMARI
AMTA, KOLKATA, FEB 21

EVEN AS the West Bengal government announced on Monday that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) would probe the death of 28-year-old student leader Anis Khan, the victim’s family reiterated their demand for a CBI probe under court supervision in the case.

While the family members of Anis claimed that they were “offered a job, money and an opportunity to meet Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at Nabanna” but they “refused for the time

being” — this claim was denied by state panchayat and rural development minister Pulok Roy, who along with TMC’s Uluberia MP Sajida Ahmed, visited the bereaved family on Monday.

According to the family, Anis was killed on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday after being allegedly thrown off the second floor of his residence by four unidentified persons in Howrah district’s Sarada Dakshin Khan Para village. His father Salem Khan has alleged that one of the accused was “in police uniform” and the others in civil volunteers’ uniform.

The police have denied the allegation. Speaking with *The Indian*

Express at his residence on Monday, Anis’s father Salem Khan said, “A man identifying himself as a representative of CM Mamata Banerjee had visited us on Sunday night, saying the government is ready to provide us with a job and compensation... an offer that I refused. I asked him what would I do with the job after losing my son? That night, four people visited my home and killed my son. We want the murder accused to be arrested soon. We want justice. I told him categorically that we want a CBI probe under court supervision,” said the grieving father.

Anis’s uncle Jalim Khan, too,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Akhilesh hits back at PM: Cycle used by poor, BJP will get 440 volt shock

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 21

HITTING BACK at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for linking the bicycle, the SP election symbol, to terror activities, SP president Akhilesh Yadav said Monday that the BJP doesn’t seem to know that the bicycle is used by the poor, labourers and youth of the country.

“Janata mein inke khilaf 440 volt ka current chal raha hai. Isiye jinki janata ne khadhi kar di

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



At 16, India’s big chess hope scales first peak, beats his own hero and World No. 1

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

AS WORLD champion Magnus Carlsen sat bemused, palms on his face, after realising that he was going to lose the eighth round of the Airthings Masters online rapid chess tournament, a wave of shock spread across the face of his would-be slayer R Praggnanandhaa. Wide-eyed and unable to fathom what had unrolled on the other side of the



Magnus Carlsen and R Praggnanandhaa

screen in Oslo, he covered his mouth with his hands in the

2 am silence of his home in the Chennai suburb of Padi.

Praggnanandhaa was so drained by the exacting game of quick wits that all he wanted was to catch some sleep. “I just want to hit the bed,” he told the International Chess Federation website with groggy eyes. It’s likely that he wouldn’t have gotten any sleep at all.

It was his “I can’t believe it” moment, the moment that was always a part of his wildest dream. Norwegian World No 1 Carlsen, the undisputed emperor of chess, a bonafide GOAT, the marketing face of the game, was always his idol. “Beating him once is my biggest dream,” he

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EXPRESS INVESTIGATION

After ‘downgrade’ last yr, MEA sent Speaker’s office talk points on democracy, ‘the Indian way’

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

AN **EXPRESS** RTI APPLICATION

ANISHA DUTTA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

IN MARCH last year when US-based Freedom House and Sweden-based V-Dem Institute downgraded Indian democracy, calling out its restrictions on civil society, treatment of minorities, and crackdown on free speech, the Ministry of External Affairs hit back saying India did not “need sermons”. Slamming a set of what he called “self-appointed custodians of the world,” External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, “India is not looking for their approval, is not willing to play the game they want to play.”

On the ground, things were a little different.

An investigation of records accessed by *The Indian Express* using the Right to Information Act reveal that within days, Jaishankar’s Ministry was at work: preparing a detailed slideshow and a talking-points list to showcase Indian democracy, “the Indian way” (see adjacent story).

And in a move that raises questions of Constitutional propriety, it also sent these to the Lok Sabha Secretariat which is an independent office that functions under the advice of the Lok Sabha Speaker.

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IN THE DEMOCRACY DOSSIER

- Nationalism not narrow, aggressive
- Broad representation deepened democracy
- People more confident about culture, belief
- Open access to foreign media, no firewalls



■ Exporting democracy: Built Afghan Parliament, SCs of Mauritius, Bhutan

New India leaders less from English-speaking world, so judged harshly: MEA paper

ANISHA DUTTA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

CRITICS OF Indian democracy don’t acknowledge that in India today there is a “much broader representation of people in politics, in leadership positions, and in civil society,” and these people are “much more confident about their culture, about their language, about their beliefs.” They are also “less from the English-speaking world, are less connected to other global centres,” and this difference is “judged politically, harshly.”

These are among the key “speaking notes” in a document on ‘India as a democracy’ prepared by the Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry

of External Affairs shared with the Lok Sabha Secretariat after the downgrade of Indian democracy by global watchdog institutions.

The MEA has also sought to highlight what it calls the country’s “robust media (including presence of international media majors)”, “growing space for dissent” and a “thriving civil society.” Significantly, these are the very attributes which have come in for criticism: dramatic escalation of attacks on press freedom, numerous sedition cases against protesters, and threats and legal harassment of NGOs.

The MEA’s information dockets sent to the Lok Sabha Secretariat, reviewed by

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FROM PAGE ONE

Mamata govt

claimed that a “government representative” visited the family with an offer. “The same person came again to our home on Monday morning, and then came along with the minister [Pulak Roy] and the MP [Sajda Ahmed]. They wanted us to go to Nabanna to meet the CM, but we politely refused. We have lost our child. My family is in trauma,” the uncle told *The Indian Express*.

Anis’s elder brother Sabir Khan, however, said, “The minister said the CM wanted to meet us so my father and I should go to Nabanna. But as my father was not feeling well, we told him that we could not go today (Monday), we would visit her later. As of now, my father is in deep shock.”

However, while speaking with *The Indian Express* later on Monday, Roy denied that the government had made any such offer to the family. “We never offered a job or money to the family. If someone has offered these in personal capacity, we cannot take responsibility. It’s very unfortunate that the family lost their son. We are having a humanitarian view of the entire incident. The Chief Minister is also very sympathetic and she is standing with them. The family said they were in trauma and would meet the CM as per their convenience.”

Earlier in the day, when the minister and the MP visited the family, villagers raised slogans. And as soon as they emerged out of the house after the meeting, some local residents also gheraoed them, demanding immediate arrest of the accused. The protest was later called off.

Announcing that an SIT, under the leadership of the Chief Secretary H K Dwivedi and DGP Manoj Malaviya, with the help of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), would probe the case, Mamata said a report would be submitted to her in 15 days.

“Every death is unfortunate. We [in TMC] had good contact with Anis. He used to be in touch with us and had helped us during the election. He was a good man, one of our favourite youngsters. The SIT will investigate and whoever is behind this [death] will be identified. The probe will be completed impartially,” the CM told mediapersons at Nabanna.

She added, “I hope you will understand that not everyone does everything intentionally. Why this happened, who did it, everything will be probed. There will be no mercy for anyone [involved in the case].”

Meanwhile police claimed that Anis had a case under POC SO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) against him. A summons was also issued by a court. However, the police added that it is to be probed whether this had any connection with his death.

DGP Manoj Malaviya told mediapersons on Monday, “The SIT will be headed by ADG (CID) Gyanwant Singh. He will be assisted by DIG (CID-operations) Meeraj Khalid and Dhruvjiyoti Dey, Joint Commissioner of Police, Barrackpore. The team has been given free hand that if they need more people for investigation, they can include the names. There is no doubt that a fair investigation will be done.”

Asked about Anis’s father’s allegation, Malaviya said, “What exactly had happened will be probed. They [suspects] might be police or might be some other persons. It won’t be right to say anything on this at this point. We just appeal to his neighbours, family members, relatives and villagers to co-operate with the investigation.”

“We assure you that there will be an impartial inquiry. Allegations levelled by Anis’s father will also be probed,” said Howrah (Rural) Superintendent of Police Soumya Roy during a press conference on Monday.

Noushad Siddiqui, MLA and chairman of the Indian Secular Front (ISF), of which Anis was a member, and social activist Binayak Sen also visited Anis’s residence on Monday.

“It is a tragedy. We need to fulfil the demand of justice,” said Sen after meeting Anis’s family members.

Siddiqui said, “We will fight for justice.”

Meanwhile, on Monday morning, a police picket was stationed outside the victim’s house and policemen were seen deployed at different locations in the village. “I don’t want the police picket here. We don’t trust the police anymore. Villagers will protect us,” said Salem Khan.

Shivamogga

crime. One has been identified as Kashif and the other as Nadeem. They are locals from Shivamogga. In all, six people were involved in the murder,” Shivamogga SP B M Laxmi Prasad said.

A curfew has been imposed in Shivamogga for the next 24 hours, he said on Monday evening.

Although a social media post with derogatory references to Islam has been attributed as a possible motive for the murder, police sources described it as an “old issue” and said that a case had been filed against Harsha when the incident occurred in 2020.

“The motive behind the murder, according to one of the arrested accused, was a clash they had at a court around six months ago. All the persons involved in the murder have criminal records in Shivamogga,” a senior officer said.

According to local police records, Harsha was involved in multiple cases of violence, including an incident of rioting in December 2020, when merchants at a cloth market in the city were attacked by a mob of pro-Hindutva activists following a communal flare-up.

Over five FIRs were registered in the incident with several suspects, including Harsha, being named. In 2017, Harsha was named in a case for allegedly stabbing a Muslim youth in Seeghatti, and in 2019 for an alleged attack on two youths in the same area.

“He left home on Sunday night and did not return. He had gone out alone. We later heard that he had been stabbed,” Harsha’s father Nagaraj said.

On Monday, when the funeral procession passed through the city, with a large number of pro-Hindutva activists taking part, stones were hurled at buildings and vehicles in Muslim-dominated areas, and a few two-wheelers were set on fire.

Shivamogga city has seen a few incidents of communal violence in recent years with the growing presence of pro-Hindutva groups and radical Islam outfits like Popular Front of India.

“We will send out a clear message that such incidents will be dealt with in a strong manner. There is some information that there are a couple of cases against the victim as well,” Home Minister Araga Janendra said.

Karnataka ADGP S Murugan, who has been sent to Shivamogga to cool tensions, told reporters: “Four police teams have been constituted by the SP to investigate the case. We are in the process of arresting the main accused.”

Union Minister of State Rajeev Chandrasekhar “strongly” condemned the killing. “I pray that his soul rests in peace and urge the (state government) to investigate and ensure justice soonest. I appeal to all to remain calm and allow Govt to pursue this case,” he tweeted.

Describing the victim as “a worker of our organisation”, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said: “We are confident that all suspects will be arrested soon. We have instructed the police to ensure that no untoward incident occurs in the region. I appeal to the people of Shivamogga to maintain peace...legal action will be taken against those involved.”

The murder also triggered a political war of words with senior BJP minister from Shivamogga, K S Eshwarappa, blaming the Opposition Congress for the incident while his party’s state chief Nalini Kumar Kateel said the “murder occurred in the midst of the hijab controversy and is intended to disturb peace.”

“A good worker of our party has been killed in Shivamogga. It has been done by Muslim goondas. The Muslim goondas were never so emboldened in Shivamogga and there should be action against such per-

sons,” Eshwarappa said.

The Congress demanded the resignation of Eshwarappa and Janendra, both from Shivamogga. The region is also represented in the assembly by former chief minister B S Yediyurappa. The Congress had already been demanding the resignation of Eshwarappa for “insulting the national flag” with his remarks about a saffron flag amid the hijab row.

On Monday, Eshwarappa claimed that “the murder has been caused by provocative statements” from state Congress chief D K Shivakumar. “Let them find the assailants and add my name also if I am involved in it,” Shivakumar said.

The leader of Congress in the state legislature Siddaramaiah said the Home minister should resign on moral grounds since the murder occurred in his home district.

Speaker’s office

Consider the sequence of events based on official records that include emails obtained under the Right to Information Act:

■ **MARCH 3, 2021:** Freedom House report rates India as “partly free” and pulls down its score to 67 from 71 where it was rated as “free”. It said Indians’ political rights and civil liberties have been eroding since the Narendra Modi government took charge 2014. It flagged “increased pressure on human rights organizations, rising intimidation of academics and journalists, and a spate of bigoted attacks” targeting minorities.

■ **MARCH 11:** V-Dem calls India an “electoral autocracy” citing “restrictions on multiple facets of democracy” such as civil society groups and free speech. V-Dem Institute said India registered a 23 percentage point drop on its 0-to-1 Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) scale, marking “one of the most dramatic shifts among all countries in the world over the past 10 years”.

■ **MARCH 30:** MEA’s Foreign Policy Planning division sends an email to a Joint Secretary in the Lok Sabha Secretariat attaching a power point presentation on “Indian Democracy”. This is copied to seven other MEA officials including Joint Secretary (EAMO – External Affairs Minister’s Office), Joint Secretary (Parliament) and Director (FS – Foreign Secretary’s Office).

■ **AUGUST 5:** A second email from MEA to the Lok Sabha Secretariat attaches “speaking notes on – India a democracy” as a document file. Like the March 30 communication, the second email is also copied to five Joint Secretary (JS)-level officers and three Director-level officers.

In its response to the RTI request by The Indian Express, the MEA shared these emails but did not share the two attachments citing Section 8(c) of the RTI Act, which relates to breach of privilege of Parliament.

Official sources told The Indian Express that the MEA provided these inputs to the Lok Sabha Secretariat for reference by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla apparently to brief Heads of Missions of other countries.

Significantly, the Speaker, as per the Lok Sabha website, “is looked upon as the true guardian of the traditions of parliamentary democracy,” and his weighing in on the subject, sources said, was considered by the Government.

In response to another RTI application by The Indian Express seeking information on the presentations made or proposed by the Speaker to resident Heads of Missions, the Lok Sabha Secretariat denied information citing Section 8 (1) (a) of the RTI Act, which relates to national security. Asked why the MEA had sent these notes to the Lok Sabha Secretariat given its independent status, the spokesperson declined to comment.

Separately, the MEA and the Lok Sabha Secretariat also refused further information on appeals filed with the RTI Appellate Authority and did not respond to detailed queries about the presentations on democracy, the Constitutional propriety of sending it to the Speaker’s office, and proposed briefing by the Speaker to Heads of Missions.

MEA paper

The Indian Express, include a 33-slide power-point presentation on ‘Indian Democracy’ and a five-page document on ‘India

as a democracy.’ Taken together, these invoke the country’s “civilisational ethos.” Ironically, the presentation highlighted the structure of the Constitution where the “executive is accountable to Parliament.”

“India is a deeply pluralistic society, intuitively an international society. The term ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ – the world as a family, is deeply entrenched in Indian thinking,” the document says. Describing Indian democracy as a “human institution”, the MEA attempts to place its practice in the “civilisational” context tracing it to “panchayats in Ramayana” and “Shanti Parva in Mahabharata,” respectively, and through the birth of different religions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. And, eventually, to the ideas propounded by founding fathers Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Tagore.

Simultaneously, it is confident that India, given that it is the world’s “largest democracy” and a “thriving economy,” will influence international decision making.

The paper talks about countering Western prejudices about India’s democracy: “A large democratic world exists beyond the West, one that gives democracy and pluralism a more universal appeal. But for that to make itself felt in the current situation, the power of ideas and strength of beliefs need to be stronger than the prejudices of history. Whether such convergences can override entrenched frameworks is still an open question. India holds the key to the answer.”

Describing India as a polity which through the spread of democracy is leading to the discovery of roots, heritage, and traditions, the MEA paper hopes it would add “an Indian imprint onto the world – ‘an Indian way’.”

“As a civilisational power now making a comeback on the global stage, it will help create a different global cultural equilibrium,” the paper states.

But in all of this and more, India has to demonstrate ‘an Indian Way’, the paper notes. “...one that delivers at home, embraces the world, contributes its fullest and expresses comfortably what its people really are. That the world has much riding on its success in doing so,” it says.

Akhilesh

khatiya, unke bayan aa rahe hain ghatiya. Woh de rahe bayaan ghatiya, jinki ho gayi khatiya khadi. Batao ab cycle ke oopar aa gaye. Yeh gareebo ki cycle hai ki nahi hai? Humare mazdooron ki cycle hai ki nahi hai? Humare naujawanon ki cycle hai ki nahi hai? Yeh BJP ke log jaante nahi hain yeh baat (People are angry with the BJP and want to give it a 440-volt shock. This is why those facing the ire of people are making cheap statements. Now, they have come to the bicycle. Isn’t this the cycle of the poor? Don’t our labourers have cycles? Don’t our youth have cycles? The BJP people don’t know this), Akhilesh said at an election rally in Amethi.

AAP leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, addressing a rally in Lucknow, too targeted Modi over his bicycle remark: “Yesterday, I heard the Prime Minister came and said all those who ride cycles in the country are terrorists. This is a ‘chhot’ (attack) on all the poor who ride bicycles. The Prime Minister is calling all the poor ‘terrorists,’” he said.

On Sunday, Modi accused the Opposition of being soft on terror and singled out the SP, linking its election symbol, the bicycle, to those used to plant some of the bombs in the Ahmedabad blasts of 2008.

Akhilesh also campaigned for his party’s candidates in Sultanpur and Rae Bareilly. While Rae Bareilly will vote in the fourth phase Wednesday, polling in Sultanpur and Amethi will happen in the fifth phase Sunday.

Akhilesh told the crowds: “This election is for your future. The youth has waited for jobs for five years. If five more years pass, think what will happen to you. Your future will be ruined. I appeal to the youth and farmers. This is an election for taking you to happiness from distress. Then, it is also an election for saving the Constitution and democracy. The BJP has destroyed UP and that is why UP must be saved. It is UP which can show the country the way.”

He also said that the BJP supporters and leaders have

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EXPRESS AUDIO

Using SRK to understand womanhood and the Indian economy

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Economist Shrayana Bhattacharya on why she spent 15 years interviewing women who are SRK fans, and what that revealed about the economy and womanhood

Have told state no untoward action on hijab: Karnataka AG

were being denied entry by authorities in several colleges.

Although the High Court’s interim order of February 10 said that dress codes can be enforced only in colleges where they have been prescribed, it has been interpreted by Education and state authorities as a general ban on wearing religious attire to colleges.

“I have addressed a letter to the Chief Secretary and asked him to convene a meeting of all concerned. I have communicated with the principal secretary of the Education department and they have assured us that nothing untoward will be done. All action taken will be reported to the court,” the advocate general told the full bench of the High Court.

The full bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Justice Krishna M Dixit and Justice Jaubunnisa M Khazi is hearing the batch of petitions against the hijab ban that led to protests on campuses across the state.

On Monday, the full bench raised the question as to whether it was necessary for the court to delve into the issue of whether the hijab is an essential religious practice and whether it would be a part of the fundamental right to freedom of religion.

“Are we required to go into all these Constitutional questions? Whether it is an essential religious practice or not, or whether it amounts to violation of Article 25, is it necessary for

us to look into these aspects?”

Chief Justice Awasthi asked the advocate general. Navadgi contended that the question of whether the hijab is a fundamental right is at the core of the pleas before the court.

“You have argued that the government order (of February 5) that specified norms for uniforms in schools and colleges) is totally innocuous and that you did not issue any direction restricting the wearing of the hijab. Your stand is that the state government has not imposed any restriction on hijab and that only the uniform prescribed by the pre-university institutions must be followed. What is your stand on whether the hijab can be allowed in the institutions or not? If institutions permit, then you do not have any objections? You have to make your stand very clear,” the Chief Justice said.

“If an institution was to permit hijab or prohibit hijab, then we will take a decision as and when the situation arises,” Navadgi replied.

“As a matter of principle, on whether students should be allowed to wear a dress or any apparel, which has religious symbolism, the answer is that the preamble of the Karnataka Education Act itself seeks to foster a secular outlook. The stand of the state is that religious elements should not be introduced in educational institutions,” he said.

Navadgi argued that the status of hijab cannot be raised

to the level of a fundamental right under Article 25 of the Constitution. “The petitioners have not placed any material to substantiate their claim for wearing hijab as a fundamental right since it is not an essential religious practice in Islam,” he said, while claiming that they had only quoted from the Quran to show that wearing of hijab is a religious practice.

Responding to arguments by the petitioners, the advocate general said they “have sought a declaration that every woman who follows Islam religion is required to wear the hijab, they want a declaration, which can bind every Muslim woman”.

“I am nobody to criticise but I can say with some responsibility that you (the petitioners) must have shown some circumspection and discretion when seeking a declaration before a Constitutional court binding not only petitioners but everyone,” Navadgi argued.

While the state government has pinned the case on the test of essential religious practice, Justice Khazi asked if it would also apply to freedom of conscience and not just to religion. This crucial line of questioning – on whether the right to wear a hijab can be found outside the right to religious freedom – is the first intervention by the judge in the case.

“How you manifest your conscience amounts to reli-

gious practice. Question of essential religious practice does not come in freedom of conscience,” the advocate general said, arguing that the freedom of conscience and right to religious freedom are mutual.

“Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion,” Navadgi said, referring to Article 25.

Over the years, the advocate general argued, the Supreme Court has evolved the “essential religious practice” test to protect only those that are seemingly essential to practice of religion under Article 25. Citing Supreme Court decisions from the 1950s, he argued that the petitioners’ case fails the test laid down by the court.

He argued that for a religious practice to be safeguarded by Article 25, it must be established first as a religious practice, then as an essential religious practice, and then whether it affects public order, health and morality, and whether it is in conflict with other fundamental rights.

“In the case at present, petitioners have claimed the hijab to be a fundamental right without establishing it is an essential religious practice... If the wearing of hijab is not obligatory, then it is not essential,” Navadgi argued.

already removed the party’s flags because they can sense defeat. Talking a dig at UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he said: “I have heard that Baba Bulldozer has sent his bulldozer for maintenance because he knows that the next government will be formed by Samajwadis. You must have heard speeches given by their leaders. If you hear them, you will see all of them are lying.”

“Bulldozer Baba is saying that I wake up at noon. You wouldn’t know, some might that Bulldozer Baba and I share a wall. He keeps an eye on me to check what time I wake up. When I got to know, I also started keeping an eye that side... I saw smoke rising at times,” he said.

Pegasus

Last month, *The Indian Express* had reported that at least two security experts, engaged by the petitioners, had deposed before the committee that there is a presence of “strong indicators” pointing to the involvement of “the state, its intelligence and law enforcement agencies” in using the Pegasus spyware for unauthorised surveillance against individuals.

The terms of reference of the committee included:

■ Whether Pegasus was used on phones or other devices of citizens of India to access stored data, eavesdrop on conversations, intercept information and/or for any other purposes not explicitly stated?

■ Details of the victims and/or persons affected by such a spyware attack.

■ What steps/actions have been taken by the Respondent—Union of India after reports were published in the year 2019 about hacking of WhatsApp accounts of Indian citizens, using Pegasus.

■ Whether any Pegasus suite of spyware was acquired by the Respondent—Union of India, or any State Government, or any Central or state agency for use against the citizens of India?

■ If any governmental

agency used Pegasus on citizens, under what law, rule, guideline, protocol was such deployment made?

Ruling on a batch of 12 petitions which sought an independent probe into the alleged illegal use of the spyware created by Israeli firm NSO, the bench of CJJ Ramana, Justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli had said that given the “omnibus and vague denial” by the Centre, “we have no option but to accept the prima facie case made out by the Petitioners to examine the allegations made”.

The Centre, while “unequivocally” denying the allegations against it, had said that the matter involved national security questions due to which it did not wish to put the details in a public affidavit. It said it would divulge the details to a committee of experts who would examine the issue and had urged the court to allow it to set up the committee.

But the SC turned down the request saying allowing this “would violate the settled judicial principle against bias, i.e., that ‘justice must not only be done, but also be seen to be done.’”

The court also asked the committee to conduct the inquiry and submit its report “expeditiously”.

On February 3, the panel had extended, until February 8, the time for people who suspected their mobile phones to be infected, to get in touch with it. In a public notice, the committee said that in response to its earlier January 2 notice calling for people submit their devices, only two people had given their devices for “taking digital images”.

A global consortium of media groups had revealed in July 2021 that the spyware had been used by several governments around the world to snoop on opponents, journalists, businessmen etc.

The Indian leg of the investigation, conducted by The Wire, reported that among the potential list of targets were Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, political strategist Prashant Kishor, the then Election

Commissioner Ashok Lavasa, now Information and Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (who was not the minister then), along with several other prominent names.

The list also mentioned numbers of around 40 journalists, including three editors of *The Indian Express* — two current and one former.

Big chess hope

had told this newspaper soon after becoming the second youngest Grandmaster in the world four years ago. “He (Carlsen) has a solution for even the most complicated problem,” he had explained.

But this time, there was no solution and Pragnanandhaa’s dream was finally realised. That he’s just the third Indian, after Viswanathan Anand and P Harikrishna, to accomplish the rare feat of beating Carlsen underlines his incredible potential. That he topped him in 39 moves and with black pieces, a perceived handicap in the game, brightens the dazzle of his victory.

Aggressive from the start, he pushed Carlsen onto the back foot but missed a glorious chance to kill the game in the middle stage. But he regained his wits and bounced back, piling relentless pressure on Carlsen, who cracked and blundered.

Perhaps, more importantly, India has discovered a potential successor to Anand as well as a poster boy for the imminent chess boom in the country — the Indian Chess League is set to unroll from June with a prize money of at least Rs 2 crore.

Pragnanandhaa’s resurgence is also a timely fillip for the game’s profile in the country. It was a timely reminder of his talent, too.

Outside the close-knit chess fraternity, he was almost a forgotten figure after narrowly losing the race against time to become the youngest Grandmaster in history, a record then held by Sergiy Karjakin before it was claimed by American prodigy Abhimanyu Mishra. The world often forgot that he was still a

child, not even a teenager, and the expectations were often unrealistic.

But the relative anonymity of that period eased the pressure. “There was no unnecessary distraction and he could focus entirely on his game. He was not obsessed with that record, but there was too much attention on him. But after that, he was certainly more relaxed and put in a lot of hard work,” says his father Ramesh Babu.

The step into the big league, pitted in regular match-ups with seasoned pros, was not without a stutter or two. But far from being disillusioned, setbacks and near-misses toughened him. “He is always cheerful and willing to learn, especially from his mistakes. He hates losing games, but does not sulk and moves forward. These traits will ensure that he would be a top player in the future,” childhood coach RB Ramesh had told this newspaper earlier.

Soon after, Anand, who had picked him and Iranian-French GM Alireza Firouzja as the future stars of chess, took him under his wings for the Chess Olympiad and smoothened the rough edges, the occasional tendency to make hasty moves and embrace risks. Adding caution to his aggression made him a better player — one who could be the flag-bearer of Indian chess after Anand’s days.

Carlsen was not the only elite player he scolded in the tournament.

Hours before beating him, he had out-smarted Armenian GM Levon Aronian.

Some time ago, he had defeated Wesley So and Michal Krasenkow, too.

He has broken into the 2600 Elo pointing ceiling, a rarefied space in chess.

He is, after all, just 16. At this age, Anand was not yet a Grandmaster. But despite the number of points he may go on to pile up in his career, or whoever he would defeat in the future — he wants to be a world champion — he will not forget the first time he beat Carlsen, his hero and inspiration. The night he wanted to sleep, but could not.

3 WEST BENGAL

Mamata: Need to preserve Bengali language

Kolkata: On the occasion of International Mother Language Day, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday emphasised the need to preserve the Bengali language and inculcate among children the habit of speaking their mother tongue.

Speaking at an event in Deshapriya Park to mark the occasion, Banerjee said, "Focus should be laid on teaching children to speak their mother tongue from an early age. Every language is important and no language is small. I have seen that a lot of parents do not encourage their children to speak Bengali. I had gone to Dhaka at the invitation of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and had seen how they celebrate and respect the Bengali language. We have to give respect to every language. But, we also have to preserve the Bengali language from extinction."

The CM said Bengal and Bengalis have contributed to both 'renaissance' and 'culture'. "The national anthems of both India and Bangladesh are written by a Bengali. India's national song is also written by a Bengali. I do respect every language, but I am proud of being a Bengali," she said. **ENS**

COAL PROJECT

Amid Deocha Pachami stir, CM hikes land compensation

Relief now Rs 13 lakh a *bigha*; Mamata claims Jharkhand groups behind protest

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 21

FACING PROTESTS against "forced" land acquisition for the Deocha Pachami coal project in Birbhum district, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday reiterated that no one would be compelled to sell land and increased compensation to Rs 13 lakh per *bigha*.

At a press conference at the state secretariat, Banerjee accused some Jharkhand organisations of misguiding local residents. "I want locals to get jobs, especially people of Birbhum, Asansol, Bardhaman, Hooghly. Ancillary industries will also come up, creating employment opportunities. I will appeal to people to not do politics in everything. In this case, lands are not being acquired forcefully. Despite this, if anyone does not want to give land, we will not force and will develop the project



CN Mamata Banerjee at the state secretariat Monday.
CMO

excluding that portion," she said, adding that the project cost is Rs 35,000 crore.

Those who give consent for land acquisition "will get double the market value along with 100% solatium in land cost (total Rs 13 lakh per *bigha*)", said Chief Secretary H K Dwivedi.

The state government also decided to increase the built-up area for rehabilitation houses to 700 sq ft from 600 sq ft. And those who

opt out of the house package will get Rs 7 lakh against the earlier Rs 5 lakh. Earlier, each project-affiliated family was eligible for a junior police constable post. The job offer now includes a higher post for total of 5,100 people.

Banerjee said the revised compensation package has been tabled before the state Cabinet.

In addition, subsistence allowance has been increased to Rs 1.5 lakh from Rs 1 lakh for residents living there for long. The government has also decided to build a Rs 40-lakh centre to manufacture clothes, a motor training centre, a school and repair roads in the area. Three new hostels will be also constructed for tribal students.

"I don't think anyone would let this opportunity slip. If you have faith in me, I would like to assure you that none will be deprived. I am not a person who will acquire land forcefully. I had fasted for 26 days to save farmers' land. So, it's

very clear for me that those who give land will get adequate compensation. The government is developing this project, and we are not giving it to any private company so it can't be compared to other movements," said the Chief Minister.

On the ongoing protest against the project, Banerjee said once the project is completed, "there will be no power crisis for the next 100 years." "We will ensure there is no harm to the environment. We will also set up an eco plant," she said.

The CPI (ML) Liberation, Jai Kisan Andolan and a gamut of other social organisations had on Sunday protested at Deocha Pachami and alleged forcible land acquisition and violence against the tribal community.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 21

PROMINENT PEOPLE from various fields joined processions organised by the Students' Federation of India (SFI) on Monday, demanding justice for the family of 28-year-old student leader Anis Khan, who was allegedly killed on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday.

Students of Presidency University (SFI) also took to the streets, holding large hoardings and banners. A portion of College Street was blocked by their procession, while a scuffle broke out between protesters and police in Entally.

"Amar Bhaiyer Rakto Rangano 21 February (21 February is painted with the blood of our beloved brother) was printed on the banners, seeking justice for Anis's family.

A procession from Dharmatala to Mahajati Sadan was joined by CPI Rajya Sabha MP Bikas Ranjan Bhattacharya, CPM leader Dr Faud Halim and actor Devdutt Ghosh.

"I will repeat that it (Anis's death) is a planned murder. No



Minister Pulak Roy faces slogans during his visit to Anis Khan's house in Howrah on Monday. Partha Paul

one will believe that the state police will investigate the case independently and impartially," said Bhattacharya.

The student activist was allegedly killed after being thrown off the second floor of his house by four unidentified persons in Howrah district's Sarada Dakshin Khan Para village in Amta area.

The SFI had given a call for a two-day statewide protest on Sunday and Monday to protest the murder.

Anis, who had been with the SFI in the past and a prominent face in the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protests at Park Circus Maidan in Kolkata in late 2019 and 2020, later joined the Indian Secular Front.

State records 200 new Covid cases, 11 deaths

Kolkata: West Bengal reported 200 new Covid-19 cases and 11 deaths in the past 24 hours, a state health bulletin said on Monday. The number of active cases in the state is now under 5,000, with 1,286 people having recovered during the day.

There are 4,443 active cases in the state at present. The state has so far reported 21,143 Covid-related deaths and 20,13,553 cases. The recovery rate in the state stood at 98.73 per cent.

The state reported a positivity rate of 0.94 per cent. Kolkata recorded the highest number of fresh Covid cases in a day with 43 persons testing positive. North 24 Parganas recorded four deaths in the past 24 hours, the bulletin said. **ENS**

शिक्षता प्रशिक्षण बोर्ड
(दक्षिण क्षेत्र)
BOARD OF APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING (SOUTHERN REGION)
(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education, Government of India)
चौथी गली, सी.आई.डी. अड्डा, त्रयम्पुर्, चेन्नई-600 113
4th Cross Street, C.I.T. Campus, Taramani, Chennai-600 113.
दूरभाष / Ph: 044-2254 1292 / 2254 2236 / 22542703

"In connection to the Employment News Edition dated 22nd January, 2022 and Indian Express dated 02nd February, 2022, inviting applications for the post of Junior Hindi Translator, it is to inform that the last date for submission of duly filled applications is extended till 28th February, 2022 and the remaining other terms and conditions remain unchanged."

Sd/-
Director Of Training

राष्ट्रीय औषधीय शिक्षा एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान गुवाहाटी
National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Guwahati
CORRIGENDUM FOR THE WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR THE POST OF RESEARCH ASSOCIATE-II (GAP-133)
The date of Walk-in interview for the post of Research Associate-II (GAP-133) [notified vide employment notification No. NIPERG/Project/2022/F&C1, dated: 15/02/2022] has been advanced to **28th February, 2022** from earlier date of 20th February, 2022.
Candidates desirous of attending the Walk-in interview (Physical/Online) need to fill the google form available on NIPER-G website.
The other terms & conditions will remain the same.
For details, please visit NIPER Guwahati website: www.niperguwahati.ac.in
Sd/-Registrar

Land Ports Authority of India
(A Statutory body under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India)

Extension of last date for receipt of Application for Group - 'A', 'B', 'C' posts

Reference vacancy circular No. 13012/3/2020 (rectt.)/(3511273)/ 277-93 dt. 11 January 2022 published in Newspapers regarding filling up various posts of Group - 'A', 'B', 'C' at its Headquarter in New Delhi and ICPs at Attari (Punjab), Agartala (Tripura), Petrapole (W.B), Raxaul (Bihar), Jogbani (Bihar), Moreh (Manipur) and Dawki (Meghalaya) on deputation (Foreign Service).

2. Complete information of posts, eligibility criteria, application format and other details are available on the website at <http://mha.nic.in/vacancies>, <http://lpai.gov.in>, www.ncs.gov.in

3. **Last date for receiving of applications has been extended from 10.02.2022 to 25.02.2022.** Incomplete and applications received after last date shall not be considered.

4. **Address for sending applications:**
Under Secretary
Land Ports Authority of India
First Floor Lok Nayak Bhawan
Khan Market, New Delhi-110511
Tel. No. 011-24340729
Email: yashwant.kjain@lpai.gov.in

davp 19142/11/0009/2122

EXPRESS Careers

RITES LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Enterprise) CIN No.: L74899DL1974G01007227
RITES Bhawan, Plot No.1, Sector-29, Gurgaon - 122001

Requires qualified professionals in following position(s)/ discipline(s):

VC No.	Post	No of vacancies
03/22	Junior Manager (Finance) on regular basis	1
89/21(D)	Manager (Environment) on immediate absorption basis	1

For details regarding Position, pay scale, qualification, age, date & venue, selection process etc., candidates may see the detailed advertisement posted on RITES website www.rites.com under Career Section.

INDIAN PORT RAIL & ROPEWAY CORPORATION LIMITED
(A JV Company Under Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Govt. of India)
4th Floor, Nirman Bhavan, Mumbai Port Trust Building, M.P. Road, Mazgaon (E), Mumbai-400010.
Phone No.: 022-6656 6335 Fax No.: 022-6656 6336 Email: hr@iprcl.in
CIN: U60300DL2015PLC282703

ADVERTISEMENT NO: IPRCL/MUM/HR/REC.01/2022

Applications for the following Posts / Designation are invited from experienced and result oriented persons:

(1) CGM(Projects) – 01 at Mumbai (2) CGM(Operations & BD) – 01 at Mumbai (3) CGM(Bridges) – 01 at Secunderabad, (4) CGM(S&T)- 01 at Mumbai (5) CGM(Projects) – 01 at Ahmedabad-NHMC/Lothal, (6) GM(Projects) – 01 at New Delhi (7) GM (Architect)/AGM(Architect)/JGM(Architect) – 01 at Ahmedabad-NHMC/Lothal (8) GM (Projects)/AGM(Projects)/JGM(Projects) – 01 at Bhubaneswar (9) AGM(Projects) – 01 at Gandhidham, (10) AGM(Electrical)/JGM(Electrical) – 01 at Mumbai, (11) JGM(Projects) – 01 at Ranchi & 01 at Chennai, (12) JGM (Planning and Corporate Co-ordination) – 01 at Mumbai, (13) JGM (Projects)/DGM(Projects)/Sr. M(Projects) – 01 at Phusro & 01 at Piparwar/ Sanghamitra OCP (14) DGM (HR) – 01 at Mumbai, (15) DGM(Contracts)/Sr. M(Contracts) – 01 at Vijayawada, (16) Sr. Manager (Projects) – 01 at New Delhi & 01 at Bilaspur, (17) Asst. Company Secretary – 01 at Mumbai (18) Manager (PWay) – 01 at Kolkata, 01 at Piparwar & 01 at Singrauli (19) Manager (Traffic) – 01 at Bhubaneswar. (20) PSE (Civil)-06, PSE (Electrical)-10, PSE(S&T)-03 at Any location (All India).

Revised designation approved by the Board.

For eligibility criteria and format of application etc. please visit on website www.ipa.nic.in then click for Whats New/Ports/Other Organization Advertisement / Indian Port Rail Corporation Ltd. or www.iprcl.in. The last date of receiving applications in IPRCL Office is 15 days from the date of publication of advertisement in Employment News. The application in prescribed format alongwith photograph, copies of requisite certificates/documents and detailed CV may be submitted either in online mode at the link available in the HR/Vacancy caption on IPRCL website www.iprcl.in or hard copy by post or courier within due date addressed to "Addl. General Manager (HR), Indian Port Rail & Ropeway Corporation Limited, 4th Floor, Nirman Bhavan, M.P. Road, Mazgaon (East), Mumbai-400010.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा
Bank of Baroda

ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No: BOB/ZASARB/2021-22 / 977 Date: 19.02.2022

1. **M/s.Comtrack Systems** (151, S. P. Mukherjee Road, 1st Floor, Kolkata-700026)
2. **Smt. Anuradha Ganguly** – Proprietor (Priyanka Apartment, 1st Floor, P-36, Bank Garden, Bansdroni, Kolkata-700070)
3. **Mr. Ayanjit Krishna Chatterjee**–Guarantor (Flat No-9B, 9th Floor, Temple Tower, 17A, Asutosh Choudhury Avenue, Kolkata-700019)

Dear Sir,

Re: Declaration of account M/s.Comtrack Systems and its proprietor/guarantors as wilful defaulter

We refer to our show cause notice no. HO:RMD: WD:239 :2018 dated 25.03.2019 for declaring M/s.Comtrack Systems and its proprietor/guarantors as wilful defaulter on the following grounds and paper publication made on 10.04.2019.

1. Hypothecated stock has been disposed off without routing sale proceeds through Cash credit account.

2. It has been observed from the statement of your cash credit account that funds were transferred to E-Com hardware solutions Pvt Ltd where Shri Ayanjit Chatterjee is one the directors and also he is brother of the proprietor. Between the period 13.01.2015 to 07.09.2016 a sum of Rs.279.00 lakhs have been remitted to E-Com hardware solutions Pvt Ltd. Moreover, the property you have given for mortgage for securing loan has also been mortgaged to Union Bank of India, New Alipur Branch in response to the show cause notice/paper publication we have not received any representation or response from you.

In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare M/s.Comtrack Systems and its proprietor / guarantors as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the unithas defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has not utilized the finance from the lender for the specific purposes for which finance was availed of but has diverted/siphoned off the funds for other purposes or are the funds available with the unit in the form of other assets.

The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No ARBKOL/WILFUL/COMTRACK/2019 dated 29.06.2019 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters, in terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice. In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.

In the aforesaid circumstances and after perusal of documents on record Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 26.07.2019 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters(COE).

Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare your firm and its proprietor/guarantor as wilful defaulters. This is for your information.

Yours faithfully,
Chief/Senior/ Manager

Information Wanted

AYUSHMAN MUKHERJEE (Boy child)

Age: About 2 Years
Height: 98.0 cm.
Complexion: Fair
Build: Medium
Contact Address: D.C.P.U., Social Welfare Section (Ground floor), Old Collectorate Annex Building, Howrah - 1. Phone No:- 033-2638-0587.or, Keuti Purba Daharani Biplabi Sangha 2, Jagadish Chandra, Vedbyes Lane, Salkia, Howrah, Phone No:- 9836027645 Legal adoption process will be initiated after 30 Days from the date of publication, if no claim is received.

Sd/-
District social Welfare Officer & Membwr Secretary, DCPS, Howrah

GONDWANA UNIVERSITY, GADCHIROLI
EMPLOYMENT NOTICE NO. 42/2022

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for the following post(s) on the establishment of the Gondwana University, Gadchiroli.

Sr. No.	Name of the Post	Pay Scale	Number of Post	Category
01	Registrar	Rs. 1,31,100/- 2,16,600	01	Unreserved
02	Director, Knowledge Resource Center	Rs.1,44,200/- 2,18,200	01	Unreserved

For the above post(s), prescribed fees, required educational qualifications, experience and the conditions etc. is available on the University website www.unigug.ac.in under the **Recruitment** tab.

Application submission period will be from 22/02/2022 to 21/03/2022 upto 5.30 P.M.

Place:- Gadchiroli
Date:- 21/02/2022

Registrar(IC)

Notice is hereby given that Tata Steel Limited ('the **Company**') is seeking approval of the Members of the Company by way of postal ballot through remote e-voting on the following resolution(s) being special resolution(s):

SN	Description of Special Resolution(s)
1	Appointment of Ms. Farida Khambata (DIN: 06954123) as an Independent Director of the Company
2	Appointment of Mr. David W. Crane (DIN: 09354737) as an Independent Director of the Company
3	Re-appointment of Mr. Deepak Kapoor (DIN: 00162957) as an Independent Director of the Company

The Postal Ballot Notice ('**Notice**') is available on the website of the Company at <https://www.tatasteel.com/investors/investor-information/postal-ballot>, the website of the National Securities Depository Limited ('**NSDL**') at www.evoting.nsdl.com and on the website of the Stock Exchanges on which the equity shares of the Company are listed i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and National Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.nseindia.com.

In compliance with the General Circular Nos. 14/2020 dated April 8, 2020, No. 17/2020 dated April 13, 2020, No. 22/2020 dated June 15, 2020, No. 33/2020 dated September 28, 2020, No. 39/2020 dated December 31, 2020, No. 10/2021 dated June 23, 2021 and No. 20/2021 dated December 8, 2021, issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (collectively called '**MCA Circulars**'), the Company has sent the postal ballot notice on February 21, 2022, only through electronic mode, to those members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Company/Depositories and whose names are recorded in the Register of Members of the Company or in the Register of Beneficial Owners maintained by the Depositories as on Friday, February 11, 2022 ('**Cut-off date**'). Accordingly, physical copy of the Notice along with Postal Ballot Form and pre-paid business reply envelope has not been sent to the Members for this Postal Ballot.

The Company has engaged the services of NSDL to provide remote e-voting facility to its Members. The remote e-voting period commences on **Thursday, February 24, 2022 from 9.00 a.m. (IST)** and ends on **Friday, March 25, 2022 at 5.00 p.m. (IST)**. The e-voting module shall be disabled by NSDL thereafter. Voting rights of the Members shall be in proportion to the shares held by them in the paid-up equity share capital of the Company as on Cut-off date. Once vote on a resolution is cast, the Member will not be able to change it subsequently. Please note that communication of assent or dissent of the Members would only take place through the remote e-voting system. Only those Members whose names are recorded in the Register of Members of the Company or in the Register of Beneficial Owners maintained by the Depositories as on the Cut-off date will be entitled to cast their votes by remote e-voting.

To facilitate Members to receive this Notice electronically, the Company has made arrangements with its Registrar and Transfer Agent, TSR Darashaw Consultants Private Limited ('**RTA**') for registration of e-mail addresses in terms of the MCA Circulars. Members who have not registered their e-mail addresses with the Company may register the same with the RTA on or before **5.00 p.m. (IST) on Friday, March 18, 2022**, basis which, the NSDL will provide the Member with copy of the Notice. The procedure to register e-mail address with the RTA and the procedure for remote e-voting is provided in the Notice.

In case of any queries, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Shareholders and e-voting user manual for Shareholders available at the download section of www.evoting.nsdl.com or call on toll free no.: 1800 1020 990 and 1800 22 44 30 or send a request to Mr. Amit Vishal, Vice-President, NSDL or Mr. Sanjeev Yadav, Assistant Manager, NSDL at evoting@nsdl.co.in or at NSDL, 4th Floor, 'A' Wing, Trade World, Kamala Mills Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400013.

The Board of Directors of the Company has appointed Mr. P. N. Parikh (Membership No. FCS 327, CP No. 1228) or failing him, Ms. Jigyasa N. Ved (Membership No. FCS 6488, CP No. 6018) or failing her, Mr. Mitesh Dhabliwala (Membership No. FCS 8331, CP No. 9511) of Parikh & Associates, Practicing Company Secretaries, as the Scrutinizer to scrutinize the postal ballot process in a fair and transparent manner.

The Scrutinizer will submit his report to the Chairman of the Company, or any other person authorized by him, on or before Tuesday, March 29, 2022. The results of the voting conducted by Postal Ballot along with the Scrutinizer's Report will be made available on the website of the Company at www.tatasteel.com and on the website of NSDL at www.evoting.nsdl.com and intimated to BSE Limited ('**BSE**') and the National Stock Exchange of the India Limited ('**NSE**'), where the equity shares of the Company are listed, on or before Tuesday, March 29, 2022. Additionally, the result will also be placed on the notice board at the Registered Office of the Company.

Tata Steel Limited
Sd/-
Parvathesam Kanchinadhram
Company Secretary &
Chief Legal Officer (Corporate & Compliance)
Membership No. ACS: 15921

February 21, 2022
Mumbai

TATA STEEL

Kolkata

BJP PROBLEM

As UP polls move eastward, so do herd of stray cattle

HARISH DAMODARAN
BASTI, GONDA, FEBRUARY 21

ADDRESSING A BJP rally in Unnao Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised a new policy to address “chutta jaan-varon se pareshani” (stray animal trouble) after March 10, when results of the ongoing Assembly polls are out. There’s a reason. As elections in UP move eastward, ‘awara pashu’ or stray cattle is becoming an increasingly potent issue, much to the discomfiture of the ruling BJP.



While west UP is predominantly a buffalo belt, the population of cattle — the cow and its progeny — rises as one goes east. Thus, buffalo numbers in Agra (10.67 lakh), Bulandshahr (9.72 lakh) and Aligarh (9.42 lakh), as per the Livestock Census for 2019, far exceeded that of cattle — at 2.83 lakh, 3.04 lakh and 3.11 lakh, respectively — for these three districts. It’s the other way round, with more cattle than buffaloes, in Gorakhpur (2.87 lakh versus 2.53 lakh), Deoria (2.88 lakh vs 1.91 lakh) and Mirzapur (5.11 lakh vs 2.88 lakh). The effects of the cattle slaughter ban — its strict enforcement by the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government — are clearly seen on the ground. According to Ramchandra Tripathi, a farmer from Basevarai in Harraiya tehsil of Basti district, stray cattle were non-existent in his village five years ago. “Today, we have 50-60 saand (bulls),” says the 57-year-old who grows sugarcane on 50, wheat on 22, mustard on 18 and assorted vegetables and fodder on the rest of his 100-bigha (20 acres) holding. In a field nearby, a dozen animals devoured the standing mustard. “They have destroyed my wheat in 3 out of 5 bigha,” complains Shiv Prasad Verma, who also farms mustard on another 3 and sugarcane on 2 bigha. “Five years ago, we all chanted gau hatya band karo (stop cow slaughter) and voted for BJP both in 2017 (UP Assembly elections) and 2019 (Lok Sabha polls). But this time, we are fully behind Triyambak Nath Pathak (SP candidate from Harraiya). The only reason is awara pashu,” says Sudhir Kumar Tiwari (25), who cultivates wheat on 10, cane on 5, mustard on 3 and masoor (lentil) on 2 of his total 20 bigha. Crop damage by stray cattle

wasn’t a major problem in the pre-Yogi Adityanath government period, as the ban on slaughter was largely on paper. But as the number of strays — bulls, male calves and non-milking cows let loose by farmers themselves — have multiplied over time, its political fallout could well be more in the eastern ‘cow’ than the western ‘buffalo’ belt. For farmers, the costs are not only on account of crop loss, but also erecting barbed wire fences around fields to prevent entry of animals. “For a single one bigha (0.2 acres), 100 kg of steel wire at Rs 80-90/kg and 40 RCC poles (costing Rs 200-250/pole) are required for three rounds. That comes to over Rs 16,000,” points out Jagnarayan Verma, pradhan (president) of Basevarai panchayat. But it isn’t just Basti. Similar anger is palpable in neighbouring districts. “Without awara pashu, my wheat yields would be 4 quintals per bigha. But now I will be happy to even harvest 2 quintals,” notes Ram Sundar Yadav, standing guard over his 4 bigha of wheat and one bigha of mustard at Durauni village in Gonda district’s Colonelganj tehsil. Both he and fellow villager Pankaj Yadav, who has fenced his 16-bigha holding, claim they voted for BJP in the last two elections. This time, they are supporting SP’s Yogesh Pratap Singh: “Baila hi mudda hai (bull is the only issue)”. While the Yogi Adityanath government’s answer to the stray cattle menace has been to help build more gaushalas (cow shelters), farmers aren’t impressed. “If I take my animal there, they will straight-away demand Rs 2,000 from me. They also loot the government by taking money and not properly feeding the animals,” says Shesh Narayan Paswan, a 10-bigha sugarcane, wheat and mustard grower from Shree Jot village of Colonelganj. The UP government is paying Rs 30 a day for every animal housed in gaushalas. The Gau Ashray Kendra at Majiapur in Colonelganj, which was opened in August 2020, has 57 female and 45 male cattle. An average animal, even if unproductive, needs to be given about 5 kg of bhusa (wheat straw) and 1 kg of either whole flour, cattlefeed, rice polish or mustard oilcake. The delivered cost of bhusa and polish is currently around Rs 16/kg, while Rs 22 for flour, Rs 24 for cattlefeed and Rs 40-42 for oilcake.

PREMISES REQUIRED FOR RE-LOCATION OF BURDWAN BRANCH

The bank of Baroda invites proposals /offers in two bid systems from the owners/ Power of Attorney Holders / Builders / Developers of premises having clear and marketable titles over the offered/proposed premises on **ground floor** having carpet area of **1600-2000 sqft** for Branch including 100-120 sqft for on site ATM spaces at the under mentioned locations with all the facilities including adequate power- **Burdwan, Dist: Purbu Burdwan, near City Tower, G T Road** Sealed offers are to be submitted in two bid system viz: **Envelop No. (1) Marked “Technical Bid” TB-** Envelop should contain full technical details viz. Location of premises with detailed address, plan draw to scale with completion/occupation certificate, carpet area of each portion to be acquired, specification of internal finishes, amenities, car parking and space for V-SAT facility, distance from railway station. No indication as to price aspect to be given in technical bid. (For details please log in to tender section of our website www.bankofbaroda.com). **Envelop No. (2) Marked” Financial Bid”(FB)-** Envelop should contain strictly financial details like rate per sq.ft/mtr on carpet area, details of municipal Tax and lease expenses, carpet area(as per IS code 3861-2002)shall exclude staircase, corridor and passage, porch, shaft and machine rooms for lifts, air conditioning ducts, lifts, build-in-wardrobe and shelf, intermediate pillars/columns, partition and wall and other obstruction, verandas, balcony, bathroom and lavatories etc. (For details please log in to tender section of our website www.bankofbaroda.com). Offer should be valid for minimum period of **120 days** from the date of submission of offer. No brokerage shall be paid. Both the sealed covers marked as **TB and FB** super scribing advertisement reference and applicant’s name and address be put in one sealed cover and submitted to **The Assistant General Manager, Bank of Baroda, Burdwan Region 2nd Floor 54 G.T Road, Bhanganakuthi, Dist Burdwan, Pin-713101** within 21-days from the date of publication of this advertisement. Any decision taken by bank at any point of time in connection with this process shall be final and conclusive and no claim or dispute from any quarter in that regard shall be entertained.


Place: **Burdwan** Assistant General Manager
Date:21.02.2022 Burdwan Region

SHRI AMARNATHJI SHRINE BOARD
Chaitanya Ashram, Talab Tillo, Jammu (Nov-Apr)
Tele: 0191-2555662, Telefax: 0191-2503399

ABRIDGED NOTICE INVITING TENDER
FOR PROVIDING HELICOPTER SHUTTLE SERVICES
DURING YATRA 2022 AND 2023

- Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) invites sealed tenders, in two-bids format, from reputed and registered Aviation Companies, having a minimum fleet of three airworthy light helicopters (for the Sector for which the Company is interested in bidding), endorsed on its NSOP, for flight operations in the air space of J&K, in the following two sectors:
a. Srinagar – Neelgrath – Srinagar; and
b. Srinagar – Pahalgam – Srinagar;
(Note: Purely on leave and license basis, for an initial period of the Yatra periods in two consecutive years i.e. Yatra 2022 and Yatra 2023).
- Detailed NIT (DNIT) can be obtained from the office of Director Finance, Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, Chaitanya Ashram Talab Tillo, Jammu, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM on any working day (Monday-Friday) from 22.02.2022 to 14.03.2022 on payment of the cost of document in cash i.e. Rs. 5,900/- (Rupees five thousand nine hundred only) i.e. Rs. 5,000 + 18% GST) or in the shape of Demand Draft drawn in favour of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, payable at Jammu. Alternatively, the DNIT can be downloaded from our website www.shriamarnathjishrine.com, in which case the cost of DNIT i.e. Rs. 5,900/- shall be deposited in the shape of a Demand Draft drawn in favour of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, payable at Jammu, in addition to the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) at the time of submission of Tender (in the Technical Bid).
- The Tender, duly completed, along with EMD in the form of a Demand Draft drawn in favour of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, payable at Jammu, must reach latest by **1400 hours on 15.03.2022**.
- A pre-bid conference will be held on 04.03.2022 at 11:30 AM. The prospective bidders may contact the office of Additional Chief Executive Officer (on 0191-2555662) for registering themselves for the same.
- For further details about the Tender, please refer our DNIT, or contact on the numbers given above.


No: SASB/DNIT/2022/02
Dated: 21.02. 2022 --Sd--
Addl. Chief Executive Officer



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No: BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/ 978**Date: 19.02.2022**


1. M/s.Comware Technologies (151, S.P. Mukherjee Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata-700026)
2. Smt. Anurupa Chatterjee – Proprietor (Flat No-9B, 9th Floor, Temple Tower, 17A, Asutosh Choudhury Avenue,Kolkata-700019)
Dear Sir,
Re: Declaration of account M/s.Comware Technologiesand its proprietor as wilful defaulter
We refer to our show cause notice no **HO:RMD: WD:238 :2018** dated **25.03.2019** for declaring M/s.Comware Technologies and its proprietor as wilful defaulter on the following grounds and paper publication made on 10.04.2019.
1.The firm purchased different hardware materials from supplier E-com Hardware solutions where Mr Ayanjit Chatterjee is one of the directors and who is also husband of the proprietor of borrower firm Comware Technologies. You have submitted fake proforma invoice and money receipt. Moreover, the property you have given for mortgage for securing loan has also been mortgaged to Union Bank of India , New Alipur Branch.
In response to the show cause notice/paper publication we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare the M/s.Comware Technologies and its proprietor as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the firm has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has siphoned off/diverted the funds so that the funds have neither been utilized for the specific purpose for which finance was availed of, nor are the funds available with the company in the form of other assets.
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No ARBKOL/WILFUL/COMWARE/2019 dated 29-06-2019 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice. In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances and after perusal of documents on record Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 26.07.2019 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters(COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare your firm andits proprietor as wilful defaulters. This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
Chief/Senior/ Manager



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No. : BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/843**Date: 05.11.2021**


1. M/s Jupiter Chemical Manufacturers Private Ltd., 8/6, Panditjiya Road, 1st Floor, Kolkata-700029
2. Mr. Anjan Santra (Director and Guarantor), M/s Jupiter Chemical Manufacturers Private Ltd., 16, Bidyasagar Road, Budge Budge, Kolkata-700137
3. Mr. Badal Biswas (Director and Guarantor), 6, Gariahat Road (South), Kolkata-700031
4. Mr. Surajit Kumar Das (Director and Guarantor), 7 No. Moyur Bharija Road, P.S. Ekbalpur, Kolkata-700023
Dear Sir/Madam,
Re: Declaration of M/s. Jupiter Chemicals Manufacturers Pvt Ltd and its Directors as Wilful Defaulters
We refer to our show cause notice no. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/691 dated 01/06/2021 for declaring M/s.Jupiter Chemicals Manufacturers Pvt Ltd. and its directors Mr. Anjan Santra, Mr. Badal Biswas, Mr. Surajit Kumar Das as wilful defaulter on the following grounds:
1. They have closed their business and no trace of the borrower/guarantor. (Inspection report dated 21.03.2013)
2. The borrower did not deposit any amount from sale proceeds of stock/realization of book debts in the account, thereby diverting the funds.
In response to SCN issued we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare M/s.Jupiter Chemicals Manufacturers Pvt Ltd. and its directors Mr. Anjan Santra (Director), Mr. Badal Biswas (Director), Mr. Surajit Kumar Das (Director) as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the Company has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has siphoned off the funds so that the funds have not been utilized for the specific purpose for which finance was availed of, nor are the funds available with the firm/company in the form of other assets.
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/789 dated 09.09.21 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice.
In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances, and after perusal of documents on record, Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 22.10.2021 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare M/s.Jupiter Chemicals Manufacturers Pvt Ltd. and its directors Mr. Anjan Santra, Mr. Badal Biswas, Mr. Surajit Kumar Das as Wilful Defaulters.
Bank reserves the Right to publish the name and photograph of Wilful Defaulter in News Paper and will initiate the necessary recovery action as per extant guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India.
This communication is issued as per the directions of the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters.
This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
Chief Manager



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No.: BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/849**Date: 09.11.2021**


1. M/s Rajhans Jewellers Pvt. Ltd., 12, Abanindranath Thakur Sarani, Usha Kiran Building, Camac Street, 4th Floor, Kolkata-700017
2. Mr. Puspesh Baid (Director and Guarantor), 33, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata-700017
3. Mr. Lokesh Poddar (Director and Guarantor), Address: AD-31, Sector-1, Saltlake City, Kolkata-700064
4. Mrs. Kokila Devi Baid (Director), 33, Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata-700017
Dear Sir/Madam,
Re: Declaration of M/s Rajhans Jewellers Pvt. Ltd. and its Directors as Wilful Defaulters
We refer to our show cause notice no. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/692 dated 01/06/2021 for declaring M/s Rajhans Jewellers Pvt. Ltd and its directors Mr. Puspesh Baid, Mr. Lokesh Poddar and Mrs. Kokila Devi Baid as wilful defaulter on the following grounds and paper publication made on 02.07.2021:
1. The borrower did not deposit any amount from sale proceeds of stock/realization of book debts in the account, thereby diverting the funds. They have closed their business and no trace of the borrower/guarantor.
In response to the show cause notice/paper publication we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances, and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare M/s Rajhans Jewellers Pvt. Ltd. and its directors Mr. Puspesh Baid, Mr. Lokesh Poddar and Mrs. Kokila Devi Baid as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the Company has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has siphoned off the funds so that the funds have not been utilized for the specific purpose for which finance was availed of, nor are the funds available with the firm/company in the form of other assets.
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/790 dated 09.09.21 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice.
In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances, and after perusal of documents on record and representation/s received, Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 22.10.2021 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to M/s. Rajhans Jewellers Pvt. Ltd. and its directors Mr. Puspesh Baid, Mr.Lokesh Poddar and Mrs. Kokila Devi Baid as Wilful Defaulters. Bank reserves the Right to publish the name and photograph of Wilful Defaulter in News Paper and will initiate the necessary recovery action as per extant guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India.
This communication is issued as per the directions of the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters.
This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
Chief Manager



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No.: BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/840**Date: 30.10.2021**


1. Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh (Borrower), S/o Late Sunil Kumar Ghosh, 11/6, Rabindra Sarani, Sreenagarparly, D-Zone, Benachity, Durgapur-713213
2. Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh (Borrower), 11/6, Rabindra Sarani, Sreenagarparly, D-Zone, Benachity, Durgapur-713213
3. Mrs. Dipti Ghosh (Borrower), W/o Late Sunil Kumar Ghosh, 18, Punjabi Gali, Near Old Post Office Building, Subhasparly, Benachity, Durgapur-713213
Dear Sir/Madam,
Re: Declaration of Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh and Mrs. Dipti Ghosh (Borrowers) as Wilful Defaulters
We refer to our show cause notice no. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/695 dated 01.06.2021 for declaring Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh and Mrs. Dipti Ghosh (Borrowers) as wilful defaulter on the following grounds and paper publication made on 07.07.2021.
1. The borrower did not deposit any amount from sale proceeds of stock/realization of book debts in the account, thereby diverting the funds. They have closed their business and no trace of the borrower/guarantor.
(The borrower has not deposited after 25.11.2013 showing no deposit in the account after 25.03.2013. Last Stock and BD statement submitted dated 31.08.2012 and as per godown inspection report dated 12.05.2017 submitted)
In response to the show cause notice/paper publication we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh and Mrs. Dipti Ghosh (Borrowers) as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the Firm has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has siphoned off the funds so that the funds have not been utilized for the specific purpose for which finance was availed of, nor are the funds available with the firm/company in the form of other assets.
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/791 dated 09.09.2021 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice.
In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances, and after perusal of documents on record, Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 22.10.2021 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh and Mrs. Dipti Ghosh (Borrowers) as Wilful Defaulters. Bank reserves the Right to publish the name and photograph of Wilful Defaulter in News Paper and will initiate the necessary recovery action as per extant guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India.
This communication is issued as per the directions of the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters.
This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
Chief Manager



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No.: BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/854**Date: 12.11.2021**


1. M/s Tumpa Multi Projects Pvt. Ltd., Address: MNAV-55, Bengal Ambuja North Avenue, Durgapur-713216
2. Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh (Director), Address: 11/6, Rabindra Sarani, Srinagarparly, D-Zone, Benachity, Durgapur,-713213
3. Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh (Director), Address: 11/6, Rabindra Sarani, Srinagarparly, D-Zone, Benachity, Durgapur-713213
Dear Sir/Madam,
Re: Declaration of M/s Tumpa Multi Projects Pvt. Ltd. and its Directors as Wilful Defaulters
We refer to our show cause notice no. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/696 dated 01.06.2021 for declaring M/s Tumpa Multi Projects Pvt. Ltd. and Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh (Directors) as wilful defaulters on the following grounds:
1. The borrower did not deposit any amount from sale proceeds of stock/realization of book debts in the account, thereby diverting the funds. They have closed their business and no trace of the borrower/guarantor.
(There is nil turnover in the account from 01.04.13 and the unit has been found closed)
In response to the show cause notice/paper publication we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare M/s Tumpa Multi Projects Pvt. Ltd. and Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh (Directors) as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the Company has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has siphoned off the funds so that the funds have not been utilized for the specific purpose for which finance was availed of, nor are the funds available with the firm/company in the form of other assets
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/792 dated 09.09.2021 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice.
In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances, and after perusal of documents on record, Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 22.10.2021 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare M/s. Tumpa Multi Projects Pvt. Ltd and its directors Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh, Mrs. Sucharita Ghosh as Wilful Defaulters. Bank reserves the Right to publish the name and photograph of Wilful Defaulter in News Paper and will initiate the necessary recovery action as per extant guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India.
This communication is issued as per the directions of the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters.
This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
(Chief Manager)



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No.: BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/848**Date: 09.11.2021**


1. M/s Ghosh Enterprise, (Proprietor: Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh), 11/6, Rabindra Sarani, Srinagarparly, D-Zone, Benachity, Durgapur-713213
2. Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh (Proprietor), 11/6, Rabindra Sarani, Srinagarparly, D-Zone, Benachity, Durgapur-713213
Dear Sir,
Re: Declaration of M/s Ghosh Enterprise and its Proprietor as Wilful Defaulters
We refer to our show cause notice no. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/690 dated 01.06.2021 for declaring M/s Ghosh Enterprise and Mr.Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh (Proprietor) as wilful defaulter on the following grounds and paper publication made on 07.07.2021.
1. The borrower did not deposit any amount from sale proceeds of stock/realization of book debts in the account, thereby diverting the funds.
2. They have closed their business and no trace of the borrower/guarantor.
(The Borrower has submitted last stock and book debts statement on 31.08.12 and there is nil turnover in the account after this date)
In response to the show cause notice/paper publication we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare M/s. Ghosh Enterprise and Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh (Proprietor) as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that the Firm has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has siphoned off the funds so that the funds have not been utilized for the specific purpose for which finance was availed of, nor are the funds available with the firm/company in the form of other assets
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our letter No. BOB/ZOSARB/2021-2022/788 dated 09.09.21 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice.
In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances, and after perusal of documents on record, Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 22.10.2021 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare M/s. Ghosh Enterprise and Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Ghosh (Proprietor) as Wilful Defaulters. Bank reserves the Right to publish the name and photograph of Wilful Defaulter in News Paper and will initiate the necessary recovery action as per extant guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India.
This communication is issued as per the directions of the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters.
This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
Chief Manager



ZONAL STRESSED ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH, KOLKATA
21A, Sadananda Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata - 700 026
Tel. No. 033-2419 6434/ 6224 / E-mail: ARMCAL@bankofbaroda.com

Letter No: BOB/ZOSARB/2021-22/980**Date: 19.02.2022**

M/s Lifestyle, Address: 62 H/1, Maharaja Tagore Road, Kolkata-700031
Ms Supriy De (Proprietor), Address: Kismat Nungi, Hental Khali, Maheshstala, South 24 Pargana, West Bengal-700137.
Amiyo De (Guarantor), Address: Kismat Nungi, Hental Khali, Maheshstala, South 24 Pargana, West Bengal-700137.
Ronojit De (Guarantor), Address: Kismat Nungi, Hental Khali, Maheshstala, South 24 Pargana, West Bengal-700137.
Dear Sir,
Re: Declaration of M/s. Life Style and its Proprietor and Guarantor as Wilful Defaulters
We refer to our show cause notice no. BOB/ZASARB/2021-22/697 dated 02.6.2021 for declaring M/s Life Style its Proprietor Ms. Supriy De and Guarantors Mr. Ronojit De, Amiyo De as wilful defaulters on the following grounds:
* As per inspection report dated 12.07.19, the borrower did not deposit any amount from sale proceeds of stock/ realization of book debts in the account, thereby diverting the funds. Borrower has closed her business.
As you are aware that our branch had sent the show cause notice referred above by registered post/speed post/courier on 02.06.2021, which you have received on 11.06.2021. Even after receipt of the above referred show cause notices, we have not received any representation or response from you.
In the light of the aforesaid facts and circumstances, and perusing the documents on record the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE) of bank has decided to declare M/s.Life Style its Proprietor Ms. Supriy De and Guarantors Mr.Ronojit De, Amiyo De as 'Wilful Defaulters' on the grounds mentioned in the show cause notice, after concluding that The Firm has defaulted in meeting its payment/ repayment obligations to the lender and has not utilised the finance from the lender for the specific purposes for which finance was availed of but has diverted the funds for other purposes.
The decision of the COE was conveyed vide our Letter No BOB/ZASARB/2021-22/736 dated 20.07.2021 with an opportunity for submission of further representation, if any, for consideration by the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters. In terms of RBI guidelines and to comply principles of natural justice.
In response to the COE decision, we have not received any further representation or response from you.
In the aforesaid circumstances, and after perusal of documents on record, Bank's Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters in its meeting held on 24.09.2021 confirmed the decision of the Committee of Executives on Wilful Defaulters (COE). Thus after following the due procedure, it has been decided to declare M/s Life Style its Proprietor Ms. Supriy De and Guarantor Mr.Ronojit De, Amiyo De as Wilful Defaulters. Bank reserves the Right to publish the name and photograph of Wilful Defaulter in News Paper and will initiate the necessary recovery action as per extant guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India.
This communication is issued as per the directions of the Review Committee on Wilful Defaulters.
This is for your information.
Yours faithfully,
Chief/Senior/ Manager



DEMAND NOTICE

COLOOTOLA BRANCH
39, Rabindra Sarani, Kolkata - 700 073
E-mail: calcbs@bankofbaroda.com

Demand Notice u/s 13 (2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 issued by the Bank of Baroda as Secured Creditor against the following Borrowers :

Date of Notice / Acctt. Name / NPA Date	Name & Address of Borrower	Nature and type of facility/ Limit / Rate of interest / Amount Outstanding	Security agreement with brief description of securities
13(2) Notice Date: 24.01.2022 / Mr. Kallio Jana / NPA Date: 07.06.2021	Mr. Kallio Jana, Premises no. J3-319 New, 1st Floor, Mouza Saparaypur, Pargana Magura, Saparapur Road, Maheshstala, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal-700142	BOB Home Loan A/c No. 28670600000583 / Limit: Rs.7.00 Lakh / Rate of interest: 7.35% p.a./ Outstanding : Rs.1,62,108.54 and interest other charges due thereon from 10.01.2022	Equitable Mortgage of property situated at Mouza- Saparaypur, Pargana Magura, Touzi no. Sabek 9, Hal 35, R.S. no. 349, J.L. no. 12, comprised in R.S. dag no. 224, R.S. Khatain no. 56, L.R. dag no. 276, Ward no. 15, Holding no. J3-319/New, 1st floor, Saparapur Road, Maheshstala, South 24 Pargana, West Bengal-700142 which is bottled and bounded by on the North: by 20ft. wide common passage, on the south: 4ft. wide common passage, on the East: By house of Laxmi Sardar, on the West: By house of Tota Sardar.
13(2) Notice Date: 24.01.2022 / Mr. Ramesh Kumar Shaw & Mrs. Indrawati Devi Shaw / NPA Date: 31.03.2021	Mr. Ramesh Kumar Shaw & Mrs. Indrawati Devi Shaw / Pratinia Apartment, Flat no. 2B, 2nd Floor, Block no. A, P.S. New Town, Mouza- Hatira, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal-700059	(1) BOB Home Loan A/c No. 286706000000583 / Limit: Rs.12.00 Lakh / Rate of interest: 7.35% p.a./ Outstanding : Rs.10,52,919.56 (2) BOB Top Up Loan A/c No. 286706000000662 / Limit: Rs.3.90 Lakh / Rate of interest: 8.10% p.a./ Outstanding : Rs.3,68,561.46 (3) BOB Home Loan Suraksha Loan A/c No. 286706000000591 / Limit: Rs.0.40 Lakh / Rate of interest: 7.55% p.a./ Outstanding : Rs.19,880.85 TOTAL: Rs.14,41,361.87 and interest other charges due thereon from date 10.01.2022	Equitable Mortgage of property Pratinia Apartment, Block no. A, Flat no. 2B, 2nd Floor, at Mouza- Hatira, J.L. no. 14, L.R. no. 4004/4616, 4007/4632, 4004/4617 and 4007/4631, L.R. Khatain no. 9192, R.S. Khatain no. 1860, R.S. Dag no. 4009, P.S. New Town, Ward no. 14, P.S. New Town, Mouza- Hatira, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal-700059 which is bottled and bounded by on the North: Land of Binay Chakraborty on the south: 10 ft. wide Municipal Road on the East: Land of Binay Chakraborty on the West: Land of 6 ft. wide common passage.
13(2) Notice Date: 04.10.2021 / Mr. Surajit Dey & Mrs. Sudhir Dey / NPA Date: 30.04.2021	MR. SUROJIT DEY & MR. SUDHIR DEY, 38, D. C. Dey Road, Tangra, Kolkata, Near Bhutnath Girl School, Kolkata-700015, West Bengal	BOB Home Loan A/c No. 286706000000655 / Limit: Rs.16,57,363.00 / Rate of interest: 7.35% p.a./ Outstanding : Rs.17,49,462.98 and interest other charges due thereon from 10.01.2022	Equitable Mortgage of property – piece and parcel of the land are about 3 Cottah 7 Chittaks situated at Mouza- Garu, J.L. no. 16, R.S. no. 21, Touzi no.172, comprised in R.S. dag no. 1043, under R.S. Khatain no. 163, 164, corresponding to L.R. Dag no.1897, L.R. Khatain no. 1874, being Holding no. 273, Garu Paschimpara, P.O. Rabindra Nagar, Kolkata-700065, Ward no. 5, Deed of Conveyance no. 14711/2018 of A.D.S.R. Cossipore, Dum Dum, 24 Fgs (North).

You have committed default in repayment of credit facility mentioned above with further interest at the agreed rate availed from our branch as mentioned in the above. The bank has issued notice under the said Act to you to repay the outstanding amount in the above mentioned table. The Demand Notices sent to borrower's address by registered post has been returned unserved. You are called upon to pay the dues together with interest within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which bank will be constrained to exercise right of Enforcement of Security interest as against the secured assets given in the schedule of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002. This notice is without prejudice to any other right remedy available to the bank including initiation of legal action.

Date: 22.02.2022, Place: Kolkata Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda



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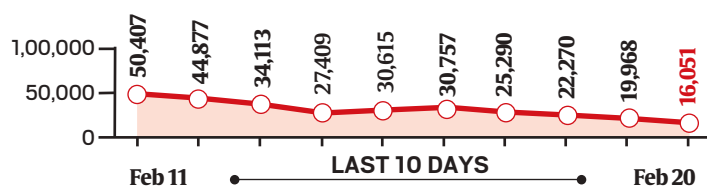
If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON FEB 20

721
DAYS SINCE
PANDEMIC
BEGANNew cases
16,051Active cases
2,02,131Deaths
206Weekly CFR: **0.32%** | Overall CFR: **1.21%** | Total deaths: **5,12,109**

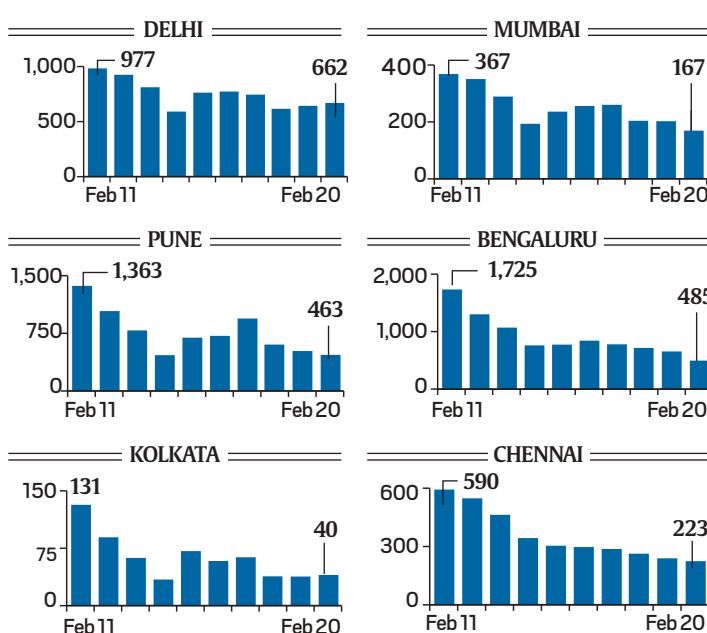
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON FEBRUARY 20			Weekly positivity
	New cases	Active cases	Deaths	
Kerala	5,427	66,814	92	13.80%
Maharashtra	1,437	16,422	8	1.95%
Rajasthan	1,022	9,803	4	3.85%
Karnataka	1,001	12,671	18	1.75%
Madhya Pradesh	950	7,527	2	1.80%

CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS



TOTAL TESTS

76,01,46,333

TESTS ON FEB 20

8,31,087

WEEKLY POSITIVITY

2.07%

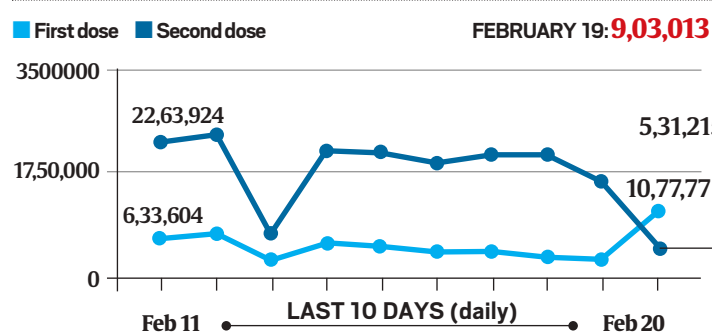
OVERALL POSITIVITY

5.64%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES

175,46,25,710

(Adults 1st dose: **90,74,41,198**; 2nd: **75,27,91,852**; 15-18 age group 1st dose: **5,36,77,342**; 2nd: **2,17,30,069**; precautionary: **1,89,85,249**)

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Apple, Google privacy moves: boost to user agency, data concentration

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

FOR YEARS, the business model of Internet giants that provided “free” services hinged on collecting user data and monetising the information in the form of advertisements. The global spotlighting of data privacy issues has, however, forced the companies to change their ways of working. At the same time, the big tech firms — Facebook, Apple, Google, Amazon — have come under increasingly intense antitrust scrutiny for attempts to monopolise their businesses.

Decisions made recently by Apple and Google to give users greater control over the use of the data they generate online can be seen both as a boost to user privacy and as a step towards consolidating further the position of these companies.

What have Apple and Google done?

Last year, Apple added the app tracking transparency (ATT) feature to iPhones and

iPads, which requires apps to seek users’ permission to track their activity across other apps and websites. This impacted companies who were dependent on advertising as a revenue model, because the ATT feature cut their access to the data of iPhone users, which they harvested and used for targeted advertising. Meta, Facebook’s parent, said the financial hit from Apple’s move could be “in the order of \$10 billion” for 2022.

Earlier this month, Google announced that it would bring the Privacy Sandbox — the privacy solution that it is building for the web — to Android devices. The new solution would “limit” the sharing of user data with third parties, and operate without cross-app identifiers, including advertising IDs. The advertising ID is a unique, user-resettable ID for advertising provided by Google Play services.

The Privacy Sandbox on Android could go live in two years.

But what is the Privacy Sandbox?

In the context of the web, Google has said that the Privacy Sandbox will phase out

third-party cookies and limit covert tracking. A ‘cookie’ is a small piece of data stored in the browser when a user visits a website.

Third-party cookies are stored by a service that operates across multiple sites. For example, an ad platform might store a cookie when you visit a news site. First-party cookies are stored by the website itself.

So, if the news site is storing a cookie, it will use it to offer curated news items the user is more likely to read. But if an ad platform like Facebook stores a cookie when one visits a news site, it is likely to use that information and categorise the user in certain buckets based on preferences, and will offer advertisers the ability to target the user with specific ads. This can also be used for political advertisements.

How do cookies work, in plain terms?

Imagine you are flying with a friend, and you have a check-in bag each. Imagine that before putting the bags in the aircraft belly, airline personnel go through their contents. They find a bottle of Chanel perfume and

for the elections.

Dr Bedavati Laishram, Assistant Professor of history at Manipur University, said *Athenpot Thimba* is a ritualistic procession that marks the auspicious beginning of any event. “*Athenpot* usually refers to an offering, which includes a mix of items, such as food and flowers, and *Thimba* means to present/drop things,” she said. The giving of *Athenpot* is common practice, and found in other traditional festivals such as Lai Haraoba, and even weddings.

In religious ceremonies, *Athenpot* is presented to appease the gods; in elections, it is done to show support to the candidate.

Following that, the candidate can interact with the people, or deliver a speech. Central leaders or star campaigners too attend flag hoisting ceremonies of some candidates. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was in Manipur last week, attended the flag hoisting ceremony for BJP’s Y Khemchand Singh, contesting from Singjamei.

The date of the ceremony is selected on the basis of astrological predictions in some areas. For example, a number of candidates held their flag-hoisting ceremony on February 14, as it was considered an auspicious day.



Flag-hoisting ceremony of Sh Yuh Jonathan Tao, candidate from Karong, in the presence of state BJP President Sharda Devi. [Twitter/BJP Manipur](https://twitter.com/BJPManipur)

While the ceremony cuts across religions and faiths, there are variations on how it is done. The Meiteis, who follow Vaishnavism and Sanamahism, may have a puja in the ceremony. In the predominantly Christian hill districts, the ceremony is usually presided by a pastor who delivers a sermon, with blessings by elders, and may be followed up with

singing of hymns.

The significance

Observers say the flag-hoisting ceremony, apart from being a public declaration that a candidate is standing from a particular constituency, is also an indicator of how strong or popular he/she is. “It is like a show of strength... if a lot of people show up at your flag hoisting, it means you are very popular, and have a better chance of winning,” said a senior Congress leader from Manipur.

The ceremony is also a way to seek blessings from the voters before the campaigning starts.

It is not clear when the tradition started to become an important part of elections in Manipur. Observers say it has been happening for quite a while.

Imphal-based historian Wangam Somorjit points out that flags in general hold a place of importance in the political and religious life of Manipur’s history, and this practice could be linked to that. “For Meiteis, before that go into the temple and pray to a deity/god, they first pray to a religious flag,” he said, adding that the belief was that those who seek power, must especially keep the flag in reverence.

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Pandemic and endemic

The UK has eased restrictions while new measures in California approach Covid-19 as being endemic. What does endemic stage mean, how far is India from getting there, and what changes in control measures?

ANONNA DUTT

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

PEOPLE WITH Covid-19 will no longer legally need to isolate in United Kingdom and the tests are likely to be scaled back as part of a plan to live with Covid-19. California too has announced a shift to an endemic approach to Covid-19 that will focus on watching out for new variants and reacting quickly to outbreaks rather than issuing mandates for masking indoors.

A look at what an endemic stage of Covid-19 will look like, how the world will reach there, and what it will mean for control measures such as masking, social distancing in India and vaccination globally:

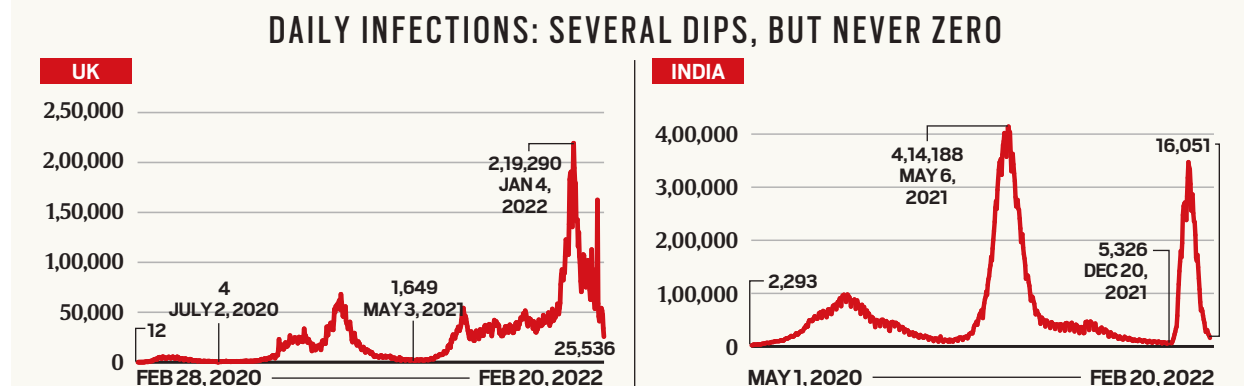
What does endemic stage mean, and are we there yet?

An infection becomes endemic when the rates become static in a given geographical location, meaning that the pathogen causing the disease — SARS-CoV-2 in this case — is likely to remain in circulation without causing large outbreaks as witnessed over the last two years.

Although the number of infections in India is consistently declining, experts say they cannot give a deadline on when the disease will become endemic. It will depend on the number of susceptible people in the population, vaccination rates, and emergence of new variants that are able to evade the immune response.

“Endemic means that the virus will continue circulating in the population and there will be periodic ups and downs when the conditions are favourable to the virus and less favourable to humans. Take, for example, flu which goes up in the winters and when the season is changing because of lower immunity in people or dengue which goes up after monsoons because of the availability of vectors. Covid-19 also may become seasonal and cause disease in the vulnerable,” said Dr Pramod Garg, director, Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)-Faridabad.

An important determinant for whether we can “technically” say that the disease is endemic would be a representative sero-survey (population-level survey of antibodies against SARS-CoV-2) and laboratory suscep-



tibility studies, said Dr Amit Singh, associate professor, Centre for Infectious Disease at the Indian Institute of Science-Bangalore.

“We can say that the disease is endemic only after we see that a majority of the people have immunity against the infection either through previous exposure or vaccination. If a representative sero-survey shows over 90% positivity, we can assume that. But we also need to see whether these antibodies can effectively protect against the current variants and a neutralisation study would tell us that,” Dr Singh said.

Does it mean we are safer?

A disease becoming endemic does not mean it is harmless. In an editorial in *Nature*, Oxford University professor on viral evolution Dr Aris Katzourakis argued, “A disease can be endemic and both widespread and deadly. Malaria killed more than 600,000 people in 2020. Ten million fell ill with tuberculosis that same year and 1.5 million died. Endemic certainly does not mean that evolution has somehow tamed a pathogen so that life simply returns to normal.”

He added, “Nor does it suggest guaranteed stability: there can still be disruptive waves from endemic infections, as seen with the US measles outbreak in 2019.”

Researchers are also wary of new variants emerging. Another *Nature* article on the virus’s future course said, “The sky-high circulation of the Delta variant and the rise of Omicron — aided by inequitable vaccine roll-outs to lower-income countries and minimal control measures in some wealthy countries

such as the United States and the United Kingdom — offer fertile ground for SARS-CoV-2 to take additional surprising evolutionary leaps.”

How will control measures change if the disease becomes endemic?

Although experts have pushed for easing of restrictions, they say that there is a need to maintain high levels of testing and good genomic surveillance.

“We need to maintain high levels of testing and ensure that the cases get reported. Testing is quite less in smaller cities and villages and with home testing becoming available even in bigger cities like Delhi, people are not reporting if they test positive. Testing can tell us whether infections are going up or down,” said Dr Singh. He also insisted on good genomic surveillance.

Talking about genomic surveillance when the disease becomes endemic, Dr Rakesh Mishra, former director of Centre For Cellular And Molecular Biology-Hyderabad which is one of the ten central labs of India’s genomic surveillance consortium, said, “It is not always about the numbers. During the peak of a wave, a lot of sequencing makes no sense. It is more important in a period of lull. That is the time to not relax.”

The best way to find new variants, he said, was to “One, conduct a general survey; sequence probably 1% or 2% of the positive cases. Two, wherever there are more cases from an area, we should sequence immediately. Third, we need to keep a very close eye on hospitalised cases. The sample of any per-

son admitted to the hospital with positive Covid-19 should be certainly sequenced. If they needed to come to the hospital with severe symptoms, it may be because of a new variant.”

Should we continue to mask up?

“There is no real benefit in declaring that the disease is now endemic,” Dr Mishra said. “What is the hurry to remove restrictions? If we live with the new normal, we will be protecting the economy as well. We don’t know when a new variant might emerge. If we look at omicron, it did not cause severe disease in India but in the US it led to high rates of hospitalisations and deaths. US is a smaller country, it is a richer country. We cannot afford to do what they did. We have all suffered, let us not fall into the ditch of a new variant,” he said.

Other experts agreed that the precautions should remain in place.

Another concern with officially declaring Covid-19 endemic would be fewer resources being made available for measures such as vaccination. “There is a vaccine inequity; not all countries are vaccinated. If the disease is declared endemic, then the 10% vaccination rate in some countries will remain 10% nobody will take care of that,” said Dr Singh.

“The more a virus replicates, the greater the chance that problematic variants will arise, most probably where spread is highest. The Alpha variant was first identified in the United Kingdom, Delta was first found in India and Omicron in southern Africa — all places where spread was rampant,” Dr Katzourakis wrote in the *Nature* editorial.



Kolkata



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

The Ukraine dilemma

Delhi can't continue to view Central Asia through
Moscow's prism. It must engage region on its own terms



C RAJA MOHAN

AS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS to de-escalate the crisis in Ukraine continue, the time has come for Delhi to devote greater attention to Central Europe, which is at the heart of the contestation between Russia and the West. Delhi can't forever view this critical region through the prism of Russia's conflict with the West. It must come to terms with its growing strategic significance.

While the prospects for defusing the crisis have risen amidst the planned summit meeting between US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin — brokered by French President Emmanuel Macron — it is important to remember that Central Europe is no longer just a piece of territory that Russia and the Western powers can divide into "spheres of influence". Central Europe today has an identity of its own and the political agency to reshape European geopolitics. A grand bargain between Russia and the West will work only if it is acceptable to Central Europe.

As External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar meets all the Indian ambassadors in Europe this week, it is a good moment to review Delhi's stakes in European security and elevate the importance of Central Europe in India's geopolitical calculus. Putin has been deliberate in raising the military temperature around Ukraine. He has set forth a clear set of demands, in writing, to the US and NATO for a sweeping overhaul of the current European security order that Putin sees as hostile to Russia. At the core of his proposals is the demand for a dominant role in Central Europe. One can quibble on Putin's wisdom on embarking on this risky geopolitical gamble, but there can be no misreading of what he is seeking. He wants to leverage the military tension for specific political ends. As the founder of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Lenin, had said, citing Clausewitz, "war (or the threat of war) is a continuation of politics (by other means)".

Continuing high-level conversations between Putin and Western leaders may yet lead to a de-escalation and substantive negotiations on European security. But the carefully crafted-military tension on the ground could easily spin out of control. The growing clashes between Ukrainian security forces and Russian-backed separatist forces in Eastern Ukraine could trigger an escalation that neither side wants.

As war clouds gather over Ukraine, there is

much focus on India's diplomatic balancing act, its unwillingness to publicly caution Russia against invading Ukraine, and above all its reluctance to defend Ukraine's sovereignty. This is not the first time that Russia's approach to Central Europe has put Delhi in a tight corner. The Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968, exposed an important tension in Indian diplomacy.

In Central Europe, India's pragmatism in not offending Moscow (an important partner) runs against the utter unacceptability of Putin's doctrine of "limited sovereignty", a continuation of the Soviet era policy of saying that the socialist states must subordinate their sovereignty for the sake of the "collective interests of the socialist bloc". While Putin's predecessors, Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev, abandoned this doctrine, he has sought to restore it in spectacular fashion by demanding a Russian say in Ukraine's geopolitical orientation as well as a veto over Central Europe's security policies.

The Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 came amidst Jawaharlal Nehru's thundering denunciation of the Anglo-French attempt to seize the Suez Canal. While Delhi minced words on the Russian invasion of Hungary many opposition leaders criticised Nehru's ambivalence. That India needed the Soviet veto in the UN Security Council on the Kashmir question clearly shaped Delhi's readiness to subordinate its foreign policy principles for political expediency; but it opened India to the charge of diplomatic double standards. The invasion of Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring of 1968 came at a time when Delhi was leading the Asian criticism of the US war in Vietnam. While Delhi twisted in the diplomatic wind to balance its political dependence on Russia with its commitment to national sovereignty, it was subjected once again to charges of geopolitical hypocrisy.

The prospective Russian invasion of Ukraine comes amidst India's military tensions with China and Delhi's continued dependence on Moscow's military supplies. It also comes at a time when Delhi is trying to build an international coalition against China's brazen attacks on the territorial sovereignty of its Asian neighbours. Delhi has no desire to see this coalition break down due to Russia's aggressive actions in Europe.

For the moment, Delhi is in a safe corner by calling for diplomacy in resolving the Ukraine crisis. But if Russia does invade Ukraine, the pressure on India to rethink its position will mount. Any such review must eventually lead to an independent appreciation of the geopolitics of Central Europe. Five crucial factors must shape that review.

First, Russia's claim for a broad sphere of influence in the region has no takers in Central Europe. Neither the former members of the Warsaw Pact like Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania, nor nations such as Ukraine and the Baltic Republics that were part of the Soviet Union want to be part of Putin's re-constituted Russian sphere of influence.

Second, while Russia has legitimate security interests in Central Europe, they can only be realised through political accommodation. Moscow cannot enforce a sphere of influence against the will of its prospective members. Central Europeans have long memories of Russian regional domination and look to the West for guarantees on their sovereignty. Third, few Central Europeans buy into the French vision for "European sovereignty" and "strategic autonomy". They bet that NATO, led by the US, is a better option than a Europe that is independent of Washington. They view with even greater distaste the prospects for Russo-German condominium over Central Europe. Fourth, while they are eager to be part of the Western institutions, Central Europeans resent any attempt by the US and EU to impose political values that run against their traditional cultures. Finally, Central Europeans are eager to develop sub-regional institutions that can enhance their identity. The Visegrad Four — Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia — is one of them. The so-called "Three Seas Initiative" brings together 12 European states running in a vertical axis from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Adriatic and Black Sea in the south.

These groups of states are at once a barrier and bridge between Russia and the West. They underline the complexity of European geopolitics and are valuable partners for Delhi in India's long overdue strategic engagement with Europe.

The writer is senior fellow, Asia Society Policy Institute, Delhi and contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

THE VICIOUS CYCLE

PM's linking of SP's poll symbol, cycle, to vehicle used for bombs tars and disrespects the Opposition

THE FACT IS this: In July 2008, 22 blasts took place within 70 minutes at various locations in Ahmedabad with explosives placed in buses, cars, parked cycles. In the rest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in Hardoi in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, was more than a little spectre-mongering. Recalling the Ahmedabad blasts, days after 38 convicts were sentenced to death for them, the PM accused the Opposition of being soft on terror and joined dots that would otherwise appear to be impossible to connect. Linking the blasts to the SP's poll symbol, he said: "Cycle *par bomb rakhe hue the* (bombs were placed on cycles)". And: "*Main hairan hun yeh cycle ko unhone kyun pasand kiya* (I am surprised why they preferred the bicycle)". The cycle evokes many associations, it has several connotations, from simple mobility and balance to empowerment — the inexpensive and unsnazzy vehicle of the poor and middle class, the unlikely star of the Bihar government scheme for schoolgirls, which helped them to continue to study even when it meant pedalling to a school outside their village. It can no more be linked to the terror act than, say, the Congress's symbol, hand, or the BSP's elephant, except by a similarly incredible semantic leap — the terrorist's "hand", or terror as the "elephant" in the room. That the PM sought to make the poll symbol of a political opponent look sinister ahead of elections, however, speaks not of words and meanings, but politics — a politics that revels in tarring the Opposition and labelling it.

The PM's accusation of softness on terror cases against the SP, when it is in power, was also political polemic, but could be said to have more of a leg to stand on — in 2013, for instance, the then Akhilesh Yadav government ordered the withdrawal of cases against 19 persons facing terror charges, including for blasts in Varanasi and Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Ayodhya, on the ground of insufficient evidence. The PM's portrayal of that decision is harsh, but it is in consonance with his party's muscular stands on terror, and its strenuous projection of these positions to demarcate itself from its rivals in the poll arena. The airstrike on Balakot dominated the BJP's winning 2019 campaign. The cycle-terror equation, however, goes an unbecoming step further. It is one thing to allege that the political opponent is weak on national security and quite another to suggest that it is, in any way, implicated in or associated with acts of terror. In the context of UP, it is also a communal dog whistle, which may not be surprising — the BJP campaign had spoken of kabristan vs shamshan, Ramzan vs Diwali, in the 2017 election in UP — but is nevertheless jarring.

In a democracy, disrespect shown to the Opposition can end up becoming disrespect to the people's right to choose, to democracy itself. For a campaigner of the PM's stature to lose sight of these vital distinctions in the heat of electoral battle is dispiriting and disheartening.

FLASHPOINT UKRAINE

Showdown between Kyiv forces and Russia-backed rebels highlights urgency of diplomatic solution to ongoing crisis

THERE IS LITTLE doubt that the ongoing crisis in Ukraine is in danger of becoming a flashpoint for a prolonged conflict between the US and Russia. On the ground, both state forces and Russian-backed separatists have mobilised, and both sides have accused each other of killing troops in the exchange of fire. Denis Pushilin, leader of the "Donetsk People's Republic", a separatist region, has appealed "to all the men in the republic who can hold weapons to defend their families, their children, wives, mothers". While an escalation of the conflict may not be part of the agenda for either Moscow or Washington, the showdown on Ukraine could spiral out of control.

On the diplomatic front, too, both sides have been raising the stakes. The Russian parliament has asked President Vladimir Putin to recognise the self-proclaimed "republics" of Donetsk and Lugansk in East Ukraine — a far cry from the 2014-15 Minsk Accords under which Moscow and Kyiv agreed to a ceasefire and a political settlement. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson accused Russia of planning to plunge Europe into "the biggest war in Europe since 1945". Washington, meanwhile, has claimed that Moscow has placed 150,000 soldiers on its borders with Ukraine, preparing for an invasion. Both sides, it appears, are raising the temperature in a bid to gain the upper hand in the negotiations. While Russia has remained adamant that it will not allow Ukraine to grow closer to the West — in effect, curtailing the country's sovereignty — the US and some of its NATO allies are presenting the dispensation in Moscow as militaristic and expansionist.

However, attempts at an urgent diplomatic solution are also clearly in the works. On Sunday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for a ceasefire between the forces on the ground. In the immediate term, two high-level meetings in the coming days hold the best hope for a de-escalation in Central Europe. US President Joe Biden has agreed, "in principle", to a summit with Putin but the White House also said that "We are also ready to impose swift and severe consequences should Russia instead choose war". The meeting, reportedly brokered by French President Emmanuel Macron, is contingent, according to the French presidency, on Russia refraining from an invasion. The meeting between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Thursday will, hopefully, move the proposed summit forward. It is in these talks that hopes for regional peace and global stability rest.

POLITICS, NOT SPORT

Winter Olympics in Beijing will go down as China's failed attempt to use and misuse sport for political propaganda

THE WINTER OLYMPICS wrapped up without any severe pile-up. But despite the most controlled outflow of information from the Games venue, the enduring legacy of Beijing 2022 will be of political calculation gone awry. Despite re-assertions from China about politics and boycotts not spoiling their Games, the lingering vibe from the postcard perfect venues will still be of a highly politicised sporting event that just couldn't front and centre the sport.

China's inability to address global concerns about tennis star Peng Shuai's claims of sexual assault against a high-ranking party official, despite allowing access to a French news platform, showed why the hosts couldn't pull off a Beijing 2008 encore of controlling every frame that the world watched. In fact, the chilling censorship, where not one voice of dissent could rise above the snow-blowers, only underlined that China could and would exert control over even their biggest tennis star, dictate every word she spoke, and control every move she made in the public eye. The silence of other athletes was loud. Beyond Peng, the row over Russian teenage ice skater Kamila Valieva's uncertain doping status dragged on through the entirety of the Games, overshadowing the event itself. In fact, winter Beijing's most glaring miss will be how completely overpowering was the stench of politics on sporting action, which might have risen to great heights, but simply couldn't wrest back the headlines. Tokyo last summer, in comparison, stayed understated as hosts, allowing sport to breathe.

The Winter Olympics in Beijing will go down as China's failed attempt to use and misuse sport for political propaganda. Try they did, even boorishly getting a soldier from Galwan to run the torch relay, but this time, China might've overplayed its hand. Turning sport into a sideshow, while hard selling their politics, might well have backfired in Beijing's 14-year-itch.

NOTES OF SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

Sandhya Mukherjee combined skill, emotion to make songs unforgettable



BHASWATI GHOSH

SANDHYA MUKHERJEE CAME to my listening universe inconspicuously. Growing up as a *probashi* Bengali in Delhi in the pre-digital age, I didn't have Mukherjee as part of my early listening experience in the way Lata Mangeshkar or Geeta Dutt had been. I was two years away from hitting my teens when Mukherjee's voice — unmistakable for its lilt and *lalitya*, Sanskrit/Bengali for sweetness or charm — entered my world as we moved to Chittaranjan Park in south Delhi. No Durga Puja went by without listening to songs by two legendary Mukherjees — Sandhya and Hemanta — being blared on loudspeakers. The pandals of the late 1980s were venues for the screening of black-and-white Bengali films on giant projectors. This was also when I found Sandhya Mukherjee's voice merging with the screen persona of Suchitra Sen, even as Hemanta Mukherjee's did with Uttam Kumar's who often played her romantic interest. As I spent the past few days listening to the breathtakingly wide range of songs Mukherjee sang in her long and illustrious career, I found that the ability to adapt — to artistic idiosyncrasies, situational peculiarities and the basic demands of a piece of composition — was what made her such a versatile and gifted artist.

Recently, I stumbled upon some near-forgotten gems — a whole stack of Hindi songs in her voice. Between 1950 and 1951, when she

went to Bombay answering composer S D Burman's call, Mukherjee sang in as many as 17 Hindi films before returning to Calcutta and becoming a household name. One of the biggest appeals of Mukherjee's singing is the effortlessness with which she glides through different musical genres. She has sung some of the most memorable romantic songs, which she injects with sensuous dreaminess or playful vibrancy, depending on the mood the words intend to convey. In songs like "Ke tumi amare daako" and "Ei je kachhe daaka", Mukherjee imbues the notes with a quasi-mysterious air while retaining remarkable control. She's equally at ease singing "Ghiri ghiri aayi", a raag-based thumri in the film Antony Firingee, or in *Kamallata*, rendering *Ham ekakini, tahe abhagini* in kirtan style. In her ease in traversing this multitude of musical landscapes — film songs, Nazrulgeeti, classical and semi-classical compositions, Rabindrasangeet, folk music — Mukherjee went beyond each style and made it her own. Each of her songs in *Antony Firingee*, a film in which she sang opposite Manna Dey, known for his classical command, remains a testament to her ability to combine skill and emotive persuasiveness. Whether it is "Tuhun mama mono prano hey" or "Champa chameli, golaperi baagey" or "Ami je jalsaghare," every song Mukherjee sang under composer Anil Bagchi's direction, bears the

stamp of this fluidity.

Mukherjee belonged to an era when the artist fraternity often came together to lend support to social and political causes. In 1971, when refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan flooded Calcutta, Mukherjee played a leading role in raising funds and creating global awareness. She sang "Bongobondhu phire ele", written and composed to celebrate Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's release from the prison in Pakistan in 1972. The song aired on All India Radio in January that year. After the creation of Bangladesh in February 1972, Mukherjee was invited as a main guest to the celebrations in Dhaka.

Every autumn, just before the Bengali community gets into the Durga puja frenzy comes Mahalaya, the day inaugurating the festival. Bengal is across the world wake up to the notes of Mahishasuramardini, a musical that plays at the crack of dawn on radio (and now on digital devices). From the stellar lineup of singers rises the voice of Sandhya Mukherjee, singing "Bimaney bimaney alokero gaane jaagilo dhoni" ("Riding air chariots, notes of light take flight in song"). Despite her passing, Mukherjee's aloker gaan — bright notes — will keep taking flight.

Ghosh is a writer and translator, and author of Victory Colony, 1950

FEBRUARY 22, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIA-TANZANIA TALKS

INDIA AND TANZANIA expressed grave concern at the building up of military arsenals in the Indian Ocean and resolved to work together to make the Ocean a zone of peace. Speaking at the banquet organised for the visiting Tanzanian President Julius Nyeirere, the President N Sanjiva Reddy said that the Indian Ocean was now bristling with lethal weaponry and it was essential to strengthen efforts to reduce tension and create peace. Nyeirere who had arrived earlier on February 21 said that India and Tanzania were collaborating to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. He criticised South Africa for its continued defiance of international pub-

lic opinion and sanctions against its "odious racist policies". Reddy said India was proud to link with friends in the struggle for justice.

TRAIN CRASH

EIGHT RAILWAY EMPLOYEES were killed when a goods train capsized in the Nilgiris and rolled down a 60-feet slope between Adderley and Hillgrove stations. The train was carrying coal. The cause of the accident was not known and the entire crew died in the mishap. According to sources, the accident may have been caused by the failure of the brake system when the train was negotiating a sharp incline.

DELHI BANK ROBBERY

IN A DARING daylight robbery, five armed bandits looted over Rs 9 lakh from a branch of the Canara Bank in Maharani Bagh in New Delhi. The entire operation lasted about 10 minutes. None of the 23 bank employees present at the time of the incident were injured.

ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

A FRACTURE ZONE under the Antarctic land-mass and a second undersea mountain in the Indian Ocean have been discovered by the Indian expedition that returned on February 20. The discovery of the fracture zone in the Antarctica is said to be of great significance.



THE IDEAS PAGE

After the wave

India's Covid-19 response must now switch momentum, focus on dealing with the disease in its less virulent form and address scars of past two years



RAJIB DASGUPTA

THE OMICRON-LED surge in India — popularly, the Third Wave — saw a rise in new Covid-19 cases beginning end-December for about four weeks. The decline was dramatic, in about three weeks. This phase was marked by less hospitalisations, fewer complications and reduced mortality compared to the Delta-driven second wave. India's experience replicates that of South Africa. Some of the increase in death counts in recent weeks can be attributed to the "reconciliation" of deaths across states in the light of the Supreme Court's directive on compensation.

Omicron is the dominant variant currently, globally and India. It is likely to shape the state of the pandemic for some time. The Alpha variant had nine mutations in its S gene and Delta had between nine and 13 mutations. Contrast these with the staggering 50 mutations in Omicron, including 32 mutations in the S gene. A French study found Omicron to be 105 per cent more transmissible than Delta and a Danish study found the variant's capacity to infect 2-7-3.7 times more than its predecessor. Delta was 100 per cent more transmissible than the parent strain. The WHO had, therefore, warned of a tsunami of Omicron cases overwhelming hospital services despite the virus being less virulent. Indian has, however, weathered this ongoing phase reasonably well.

The Omicron variant comprises three sub-lineages: B.1.1.529 or BA.1, BA.2 and BA.3. As of February 10, India was among the 10 countries that reported a predominance of BA.2 sub-lineage. Emerging evidence suggests that BA.2 is 30 per cent more transmissible than BA.1. However, current evidence from the US, UK, South Africa and Nepal also confirms continued "decoupling" — low hospitalisation and fatalities amidst rising new cases. At the same time, mortality due to Omicron does remain a matter of concern in patients above 75 years, those with comorbidities and importantly, the unvaccinated.

Re-infection, people testing Covid positive 90 days after their last infection, is an emerging concern. The most obvious reason for this is Omicron's uniquely abundant mutations that make the variant extremely efficient to escape pre-existing immunity. Immunity also wanes since the last vaccination. That's why boosters are important. Evidence from countries with rollout and high coverage of vaccines, Israel and the UK, confirm protection from hospitalisation or death. The UK's Office for National Statistics estimates that the rate of re-infection has increased 15-fold in the Omicron phase: Re-infections account about 10 per cent of current infections in England, in contrast to 1 per cent during November 2021. Re-infections with Alpha were symptomatic in 20 per cent cases. In contrast, Delta re-infections caused symptoms in 44 per cent cases and Omicron in 46 per cent. In general, re-infections boost immunity. But such re-infections do not confer 100 per cent immunity.

Analyses from UK confirm protection against mild disease 20 weeks after a two-dose schedule. A booster dose increases it by 65 to 70 per cent. That declines to 45 to 50 per cent after 10 weeks. Protection against hospitalisation after a booster dose, however, is a lot higher — it's estimated at 92 per cent and remains high at 83 per cent after 10 weeks.



AKHILESH MISHRA

THE RECENT VERDICT by a special court in the 2008 Ahmedabad bomb blasts case has brought back memories of the dark era, not too long ago, when Indians were routinely killed with wanton disdain.

Consider this data from the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) for regions outside of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and the Northeast. In just four years between 2005-08, 663 Indians were killed in terror attacks; since 2014 till now, just four and since 2016, zero.

This is not an incidental statistic. It is a reflection of what prevailing political ideologies can do to a country. Consider the contrast between 2004-14 national mindset of the Congress and 2012-17 mindset of the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh with what the Narendra Modi government has displayed since 2014.

One of the first acts of the UPA government that came to power in 2004 was to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The message that went to the terrorists was unmistakable — we now have open season in India. Train commuters in Mumbai and shoppers in Delhi, devotees in Kashi and students in Bengaluru — everyone was a target, no one was safe. Such was the "freedom" that the terrorists enjoyed that they openly bragged about their impending attack through emails sent in advance.

The current lot of Covid vaccines provide substantial protection against systemic disease in the lungs and other organs, but do not generate strong mucosal immunity that would be effective against the mild but the early infectious stage that affects the patient's nose and throat. Mucosal vaccines administered through a nasal spray can correct this significantly but these will quite likely require to be administered repeatedly as the duration of the immunity it confers is relatively short. Bharat Biotech's intranasal vaccine, BBV154, has received regulatory approval for phase 3 clinical trials for use as booster dose (third dose) for those who have received a primary schedule of Covaxin. If it passes the final regulatory test, the vaccine can be a potential game changer.

The performance of the Covid vaccination programme, so far, provides ample testimony to vaccine confidence — trust in the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine, the system that delivers, including the reliability and competence of the health services and professionals and the perceived motivations of the policy-makers making decisions on the vaccine. In the journey ahead, two key challenges will require to be addressed. One, as perceived risks decline, there could be a rise in vaccine complacency with inoculation not being seen as necessary preventive action. Public messaging must ensure that such complacency does not arise. Two, the drive to make vaccines available and accessible must not flag.

The WHO foresees the acute phase of the pandemic to end by the middle of this year if 70 per cent of the global population is vaccinated — this will limit the emergence of newer variants. The goal of vaccine equity — an ethical imperative as well — has been bedevilled by vaccine shortages and funding

In its acute phase in the past two years, the Covid-19 response framework was seen through the lens of a disaster. It focused, almost exclusively, on the mortality and morbidity aspects of disease. Revoking the National Disaster Management Act that framed this response ecosystem should now be seriously considered. A switch to a "slow disaster" framework, instead, will enable re-profiling strategies over the next few years to deal with crises that could be long and complex — the resumption of economic activities and education and removing the trauma and the scars of the pandemic.

and infrastructural inadequacies. Founded on the principles of human well-being, equal respect, national equity, reciprocity and legitimacy, the WHO's Values Framework considers Covid vaccines as a public good. By and large, however, this message did not receive adequate traction, both across and within countries.

We could witness increased cases over relatively shorter periods, outbreaks of smaller scale and the emergence of new variants. Covid-related restrictions are being relaxed in all states. Isolation guidelines and contact management protocols are changing as well. The core principles of prevention continue to be relevant though: Mask-wearing, hand hygiene and vaccination. This is the time to test risk communication strategies. There needs to be more investment in research on social and behavioural aspects of disease management. In fact, dealing with long-Covid will require far greater systemic response than what is being undertaken currently.

In its acute phase in the past two years, the Covid-19 response framework was seen through the lens of a disaster. It focused, almost exclusively, on the mortality and morbidity aspects of disease. Revoking the National Disaster Management Act that framed this response ecosystem should now be seriously considered. A switch to a "slow disaster" framework, instead, will enable re-profiling strategies over the next few years to deal with crises that could be long and complex — the resumption of economic activities and education and removing the trauma and scars of the pandemic.

The writer is Chairperson at the Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

A safer India

Since 2014, a new norm of security has saved Indian lives, prevented attacks

his first acts was seeking to withdraw cases against terrorists who were later convicted. The court thwarted Akhilesh Yadav's attempt to free Tariq Qasmi, accused of the Gorakhpur blasts of 2007, and instead, tried and convicted him, imposing 20 years of rigorous imprisonment. Imtiaz Ali and Sitara Begum of Kanpur were similarly found guilty and sentenced to jail terms despite the Samajwadi Party seeking to have cases against them withdrawn. During this phase, as many as 14 cases against terrorists were similarly sought to be withdrawn by the Akhilesh Yadav government. It is the courts that thwarted these designs.

It is, first and foremost, the duty of a government to protect its citizens against all enemies — foreign and domestic. Everything else comes later. The experience and commitment that PM Modi brought with him from his Gujarat days manifested itself at the national level after 2014 when he became the prime minister.

On the domestic front, anti-terror laws like Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act have been strengthened, NIA has been given more teeth, the investigating agencies have been mod-emised with more resources being made available to them and terror financing has been squeezed through the creation of the Terror

Funding and Fake Currency Cell in the NIA. Insurgencies in the Northeast were ended with the signing of historic accords. Incidents of Naxalism have reduced by 70 per cent in 2020 as compared to 2009. Fatalities (civilians and security forces) have reduced by 80 per cent in 2020 as compared to 2010.

On the external front, the armed forces were given a free hand to deal with Pakistan through strikes which, for the first time, imposed a direct cost on that country. Terrorism and terror financing was consistently brought onto the agenda of the G20 through PM Modi's interventions, eventually leading to a broad international consensus in dealing with terror finance. Pakistan has been on the FATF grey list since 2018, with the threat of blacklisting looming over it.

Today, if India has emerged as a nation that has attracted \$80 billion in FDI even during the pandemic, created 42 unicorns in just one year and is the fastest-growing major economy in the world post the pandemic, then the bedrock of this success is the safety and security that has become the new norm under the Modi government. Any threat to the nation is treated as a threat to every Indian.

The writer is CEO, Bluekraft Digital Foundation and was earlier director (content) MyGov

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The high-speed train of China's rejuvenation once stopped at the '2022 Beijing Winter Olympics' station, shed warm and healing sunshine, watered the flowers of human unity, and brought the world the amazement of winter and the hope of spring."
— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Work of democracy

US-India commercial ties, and convergence could show the way to removing post-pandemic anxieties



ATUL KESHAP

DEMOCRACY IS UNDER strain. We see social tensions within open societies intensify as citizens question whether their system can deliver for them during this pandemic. Our competitors sense discord and the opportunity to challenge the relevance of democratic nations on the world stage. The prospect of global conflict is rising, and strategic competition is heating up; the free world feels beset.

I am, however, an optimist. Throughout my 28-year career as an American diplomat, including my time serving as Chargé d'Affaires to India, I have engaged with governments, citizens, and civil society to pursue shared interests and advance a positive vision of a freer and safer world predicated on fundamental human rights. For these efforts to succeed, we must demonstrate to our people and the world that democracy can secure their well-being and dignity, create a fair and innovative marketplace, and deliver economic growth and good jobs.

We find ourselves at a critical moment of geostrategic and geoeconomic convergence that demands the US and India embrace closer economic cooperation. I believe our two democracies can demonstrate to the world that we can, proverbially, deliver the goods for our people.

Through the pandemic, the US and India have shown the remarkable things we can accomplish when we work together. Delhi and Washington came to each other's assistance at moments of crisis, and we cooperated to airlift hundreds of millions of free doses of vaccines to low-income countries — generosity that reflects the values and compassion of our people.

This pandemic recovery, however, presents new trials. Inflation and supply chain woes are shrinking consumers' buying power, leading them to question the direction of our economic policies. Americans are seeing a dire workforce shortage, shipping delays, and in some cases, empty store shelves. At the same time, Indians are seeing the prices of essential commodities like fuel, cooking oil, and produce skyrocket. Some of this is temporary, as the Omicron wave results in many sick workers in crucial fields. Other root causes, however, are structural and require our urgent attention.

To prove that democracies can lead in the post-pandemic world, the US and India must work together to increase supply, bring prices down, and improve economic confidence. Delhi and Washington need to work together to remove unnecessary barriers to trade and seize the vast opportunities of our commercial relationship — aspiring to achieve \$500 billion in bilateral trade in goods and services. As strategically aligned partners facing shared challenges, the US and India can work to make the free world's supply chains more robust and re-

silient through closer cooperation across a range of sectors — including defence, energy, healthcare, and agriculture.

This cooperative approach could lead to widespread and impactful benefits for our citizens. We could see lifesaving medical innovations reach patients faster and at a better price point by protecting innovation and avoiding unnecessary regulatory divergence. We could better secure our borders through a stronger defence partnership and accelerate the energy transition. In the immediate future, we could ensure more affordable and reliable access to the goods our people need every day, stretching pay-cheques for our 1.7 billion consumers and citizens.

With a reinvigorated Quad and a re-opened Trade Policy Forum, we have the government channels to pursue these goals. Now is the time for both governments to begin the hard work of removing the stumbling stones in the commercial relationship and prepare the way for a bilateral trade agreement. That road will be long, and some will call the goal unrealistic. As a diplomat, I heard the doubters make the same arguments before we sealed the India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement. It was a seemingly impossible undertaking, with a thousand nay-sayers and unworkable obstacles, until leaders on both sides decided it must be done to serve the security interests of both countries. A bipartisan majority in each country ensured the passage of that agreement, which supported India's rise in global affairs and facilitated strategic convergence between Delhi and Washington. Our leaders can likewise embrace the goal of a bilateral trade agreement as a powerful tool to deliver greater prosperity and opportunity that improves citizens' lives and proves the case for democracy around the world.

As we encounter an increasingly competitive and risky geopolitical arena in the 21st century, the US and India can spearhead a sustainable and inclusive abundance agenda through our trade partnership, making the case for democracy through our shared prosperity. This includes relaxing India's trade barriers, lowering America's talent barriers, ensuring sound and aligned regulatory practices, securing the free world's supply chain, and promoting investment across the corridor. As we face the challenges to democracy together, our prosperity is our strength, and our commercial relations are essential to enduring and meaningful cooperation.

The remarkable history of our nations demonstrates that democracies can secure the liberty, safety, and dignity of their people. Combined with free enterprise, these commitments can build a more prosperous and exciting future for the world. Our politicians, bureaucrats, and companies must work together to prove that democracies continue to deliver and show that the free people of America and India can lead the 21st-century world to even greater opportunities for the pursuit of happiness.

The writer is a former US Chargé d'Affaires to India and is currently president, US-India Business Council

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EMPATHY NEEDED

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The compassion lesson' (IE, February 21). The writer has done a commendable job in lifting the veil of hesitation under which matters of children's mental health remain shrouded. We need to break our implicit, collective ignorance. For children, parents have a special role. They need to listen, for children have something to say. Our culture has turned a blind eye to these psychosocial matters. We need to grow as a culture and destigmatise these imperative discussions, for they affect us all. Let's humanise the whole experience of school education and turn it into a transformational and holistic process where every child is genuinely cared for.

A Bhatia, Amritsar

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The compassion lesson' (IE, February 21). While the writer has very correctly pointed out the need for greater compassion towards students as they return to classrooms, let us use this opportunity to make kindness and understanding an essential part of the larger educational ecosystem. While children have suffered from loneliness, loss and grief during the pandemic, in the times prior to that, they were under great stress due to the highly-competitive environment in schools and weighed down by astronomical expectations. We must not go back to that.

Induchoodan Menon, Thrissur

A NEW LOW

THIS REFERS TO the report, "Cycle & bombs": PM targets SP on terror, says it withdrew cases against accused" (IE, February 21). The election scene in Uttar

Pradesh seems to be hotting up and getting uglier. It seems like election campaigning has touched its nadir. How could one liken the planting of bombs on cycles to the election symbol of a political party? The cycle is known to be the poor man's mode of transport. Can one forget how a 15-year old girl brought her ailing father from Gurgaon in Haryana to Darbhanga in Bihar on a cycle, during the lockdown covering a distance of around 1,200 km? Let's not deride that humble cycle. There are other real issues afflicting our country.

Melville XD'Souza, Mumbai

WELCOME PACT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Riding trade winds' (IE, February 21). The Free Trade Agreement between India and the UAE is indeed significant. It shows a renewed hope by New Delhi on improving bilateral economic ties and not just strategic ones — the latter has been the focus for the last few years. As far as RCEP is concerned, India's concerns were pertinent and largely correct. But at the same time, opting out of such a major regional trade agreement was not a sign of strength but of weakness. For that, India must focus on domestic capability and think of joining the latter. Nevertheless, this FTA shows that winds are changing in New Delhi and protectionist policies appear to be on the wane. West Asia is very important for India from many sides. With this deal, New Delhi will further its bilateral ties with the UAE, which have already been burgeoning for the last few years. Efforts should continue to sign other FTAs that are in the pipeline — with the EU, Canada, Australia and Israel.

Dewang Ganesh Thosar, Raigada

BRIEFLY

ANDHRA PRADESH

State minister Goutham Reddy dies at 50

Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Industries and Information Technology Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy died of a heart attack on Monday in Hyderabad. A two-time MLA from Atmakur Assembly constituency in Nellore district, the 50-year-old minister was taken to Apollo Hospital early morning after complaining of chest pain. However, hospital authorities said he was unresponsive when brought. **ENS**

RAJASTHAN

Indian, Omani air forces begin joint exercise

New Delhi: The Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Royal Air Force of Oman began a bilateral joint exercise on Monday. The IAF said in a statement Monday that the bilateral exercise named Eastern Bridge – VI will be held from February 21 to February 25 at Air Force Station Jodhpur. **ENS**

J&K

BJP corporator detained

Jammu: ABJP corporator of Srinagar Municipal Corporation was detained for questioning Monday after he was found travelling in a vehicle bearing fake registration and chassis numbers, police said. Nasir Ahmed Gilkar, they said, was travelling with two PSOs and was detained in Udhampur town. **ENS**

Govt bars scholarships for studying ‘Indian’ subjects abroad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE MINISTRY of Social Justice and Empowerment has issued fresh guidelines barring students from applying for the National Overseas Scholarship (NOS) to study several humanities subjects, including Indian history, culture and heritage, abroad.

Published earlier this month for 2022-23, the ministry has sought applications by March 31. R Subrahmanyam, Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment Department, said the move was a considered one. “There is a rich repository of resources and excellent universities and courses within the country on these subjects. We have made an estimation within the ministry of the capabilities guiding high-quality research within the country and felt that the scholarship for studying abroad was not needed to study Indian history, culture or heritage. In any case for such subjects, the majority of the field work would have to be within the country and 3/4th of the time a student spend would be

Teachers exposed to adversity during pandemic write success stories online

PALLAVI SMART MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 21

PARTH MOMAYA, 27, from Mumbai’s Ghatkopar had little clue how his life was going to change when he started sharing his recorded lectures on social media after losing his coaching-institute job in May 2020. Two years later, with 2.78-lakh subscribers to his YouTube channel, Momaya is now a brand that many big players have tried to acquire.

“The offers are lucrative but I prefer the independence. I have worked really hard on this content,” said Momaya, who creates animated video lessons on science for Maharashtra state board’s Class 10 students from home.

The prolonged education shutdown during the Covid-19 outbreak took a heavy toll on employment in this sector. While there is no official data on the jobs lost, an estimate by Maharashtra Coaching Class Owners’ Association claims around 20,000 coaching centres in the state were shut during the pandemic.

Faced with uncertainty, some teachers turned to YouTube to continue teaching, eventually learning how to embellish their



Shubham Jha, 23, creates video lessons for Class 10 students. Pradip Das

video lectures with catchphrases, background score and animation to attract more students that also helps them make extra money as content creators and influencers.

Wasim Khan, 32, who is M Sc B Ed qualified, says he couldn’t pay the “donation” for a permanent government job and joined a private school. But when the pandemic hit, his hopes were dashed and Khan decided to move on. His first video lesson in Urdu on YouTube had 300 views. Encouraged by the response, he has never looked back.

Khan has nearly 60,000 subscribers, which is impressive given that the caters only to students taking lessons in Urdu. He has even roped in more Urdu-medium teachers on his channel. “I pay them per lecture basis. Some of them join voluntarily for experi-

ence,” said Khan, whose videos are popular for his novel way of using Bollywood movie references, among other things, to explain concepts. He said that students from outside Maharashtra have also approached him.

The transition from face-to-face teaching to online lectures was not easy for Khan. He improved his skills by watching tutorials online. He now uses a green background (chroma screen) to add visual effects to his videos and recently bought a noise-cancelling microphone.

“If we stop adapting and learning new techniques, the content will become boring for students,” said Momaya.

Teacher influencers earn money through YouTube advertisements, subscription-based content, sponsored videos, branding opportunities and by selling question-banks and lecture notes. That apart, they can also earn through “super thanks” and “super chats”, a YouTube feature that allows viewers to support the content creators with small payments.

Well aware that their content has seasonal demand (during exams), many teachers are widening their reach by creating content for other state boards as well.

“Through YouTube views alone, I earn up to Rs 20,000 monthly. Also, there are offers to make sponsored videos. For instance, a publisher might ask me to review a book on my channel because my subscribers are their target audience,” said Shubham Jha, 23, who creates video lessons for Class 10 students of Maharashtra board from his small studio set-up in Delhi. His channel has nearly 40,000 subscribers.

Before Jha set up his channel on YouTube in 2020, he taught at a coaching institute in Mumbai’s Palghar to earn “pocket money” as a college student himself. As the pandemic turned learning virtual, his students at the coaching institute started dropping out. That is when he started studying YouTube videos and reached out to a popular YouTuber, Dinesh Kumar Gupta, for guidance. Gupta, a school teacher, took to online teaching much before the pandemic hit, in 2017.

Edtech platforms, too, have started approaching them to take some lectures as visiting faculty. Payment for such lectures, according to Momaya, depends on the teacher’s popularity. “The more followers you have the higher are your chances of revenue.”

Indian team gets grant for vaccine against Covid variants

ANONNA DUTT NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE TRANSLATIONAL Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI) and Panacea Biotech consortium has become the first Indian team to receive a grant of USD 12.5 million from Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to develop a vaccine that either works against Sars-CoV-2 variants or all beta-coronaviruses.

THSTI is an autonomous in-

stitute under the Department of Biotechnology while Panacea Biotech is a leading Indian drug and vaccine manufacturer.

The vaccine candidate is currently undergoing pre-clinical studies. Once the final toxicology study is completed for the pre-clinical trial, the vaccine will progress onto human trials. The consortium targets to reach the human trial phase in 18 to 20 months, said Dr Syed Khalid Ali, chief scientific officer and the project lead, Panacea Biotech.

This is the fourth grant glob-

ally under Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations’ (CEPI) USD 200 million programme launched in March last year.

There are four genera of coronaviruses – alpha, beta, gamma, and delta. The beta-coronavirus encompasses not only the current Sars-CoV-2, but also Sars-CoV-1 that led to the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak in 2003 and MERS-CoV that led to the high-fatality Middle-East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

cases since 2012.

“What we are trying to do is develop a vaccine designed to prevent all known and future beta-coronavirus infections including SARS, MERS, and Covid-19. These viruses have a tendency to mutate and result in development of variants.

“These variants might escape the existing immune response or non-pathogenic virus might become pathogenic. A broadly protective vaccine will be effective against all beta-coronaviruses,” said Dr Ali.

UGC reforms: Ed-tech firms can tie up with universities to develop e-courses

SOURAV ROY BARMAN NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

ED-TECH companies will soon be allowed to “collaborate” with higher education institutes offering online undergraduate and postgraduate degrees to help develop course content and carry out evaluation of students under a set of sweeping reforms planned by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

UGC chairperson M Jagadeesh Kumar told *The Indian Express* on Monday that the proposed amendments are aimed at encouraging greater flexibility for colleges and universities and harnessing the technological tools available with the fast growing ed-tech sector.

“Through amendments in the UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020, universities and colleges offering online UG and PG programmes will be allowed to collaborate with ed-tech platforms towards developing course content and Financial Rules,” Kumar said.

The amended draft regulations are likely to be put out in public domain for suggestions and feedback in the first week of



UGC chairperson M Jagadeesh Kumar

March.

Kumar said the regulator also plans to allow top-rated autonomous colleges to offer online degrees from the 2022-23 academic session. Autonomous colleges that have been among the top 100 rank holders in NIRF (National Institute Ranking Framework) twice in the last three cycles or have NAAC grading of minimum 3.26 will be covered under the relaxations.

Currently, only universities and their constituent colleges that fulfill these criteria are allowed to offer online degrees. At present, 59 universities offer 120 UG, 29 PG and two PG diploma degrees online, of which 15 per cent are science courses, 50 per cent related to business administration, and 35 per cent to humanities.

The initiative to formalise the involvement of the ed-tech sector in digital education comes at a time when the government has been urging the industry players to conduct their businesses with more transparency.

Covid vaccine Corbevax gets EUA for 12-18 age group

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE DRUGS Controller General of India on Monday granted emergency use authorisation (EUA) to Hyderabad-based Biological E’s Corbevax vaccine for the age group of 12-18 years.

The EUA to Corbevax by the country’s drug regulator makes it the third vaccine to have received EUA for the age group of 12-18 years. At present, India administers only Covid-19 vaccines to those between 15 and 18 years.

The government’s expert panel on vaccine administration is expected to meet soon to decide on expanding the Covid-19 vaccination coverage from 12 years up. The government has only allowed Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin to be used for the population above the age of 15 years.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted, “The @CDSCO_INDIA_INF has granted emergency use authorisation to COVID-19 vaccine #CORBEVAX for 12-18 year age group. It is India’s 1st indigenously developed Receptor Binding Domain Protein sub-unit vaccine against Covid-19. This will further strengthen our fight against Covid19.”

Corbevax received emergency use authorisation in December last year for the adult population. However, it has not been used in the Covid-19 immunisation drive so far.

“We are pleased with this significant development, which helps extend the reach of our vaccine to the age group of 12 to 18 years. We believe that with this approval, we are even closer to finishing our global fight against the pandemic. Once fully vaccinated, children can resume their activities and educational pursuits...” Mahima Datla, MD, Biological E. Limited, said.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Monday said that the proposed Digital University can potentially solve the issue of limited seats in higher education institutes, and prepare students to meet the demands of the present as well as the future.

“When we were connecting our villages through optical fibers, trying to keep the cost of data affordable, improving infrastructure related to connectivity, some people used to raise questions on the need for such initiatives. But during the pandemic, everyone realised the importance of our efforts...The Digital University can entirely solve the issue related to seats in our universities. Imagine the possible transformation in the education world if there are unlimited seats on a particular subject,” PM Modi said in his inaugural address at a webinar on Budget

IN 50 TRUCKS THROUGH PAK

India wheat aid to Kabul starts at Attari today

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

FOUR-AND-a-half months after India proposed to Pakistan that it wants to send wheat for the people of Afghanistan, the first consignment of about 2,000 metric tonnes of the grain, laden in about 50 trucks, will roll out on Tuesday. They will be taken to Afghanistan overland through Pakistan in Afghan trucks, which will pick up the consignments at Attari in Punjab.

This is a significant diplomatic development where India and Pakistan are coming together to help the people of Afghanistan. India doesn’t recognise the Taliban regime in Kabul.

The flag-off is expected to take place on Tuesday afternoon, sources said Monday. This is the first tranche of 50,000 tonnes of wheat India has committed to send to Afghanistan since the Taliban took over the country in mid-August. This follows a pact between India and the World Food Programme, signed earlier this month to supply food grain to Afghanistan as a humanitarian gesture.

India had sent a proposal to Pakistan on October 7 last year seeking the transit facility to send 50,000 tonnes of wheat and life-saving medicines to Afghanistan via Pakistani soil, and received a response from Islamabad on November 24, 2021.

Officials said the task of moving 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan would require more than 1,200 trucks via Pakistan. The logistics suggest that Indian trucks would require

the wheat to be unloaded, and loaded again into Afghan trucks, at the Zero Point on Wagah-Attari border.

In November last year, more than a month after India sent a request to Pakistan for sending food-grain to Afghanistan through land route, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan had told the visiting Taliban delegation in Islamabad that it would “favourably consider” the request by “Afghan brothers” for transportation of wheat offered by India through Pakistan “on exceptional basis” for “humanitarian purposes, and as per modalities to be worked out”. This was conveyed by Imran Khan to Taliban Foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, who was accompanied by the Taliban’s Finance and Commerce & Industry ministers and senior members of the delegation.

In 2020, India assisted Afghanistan with 75,000 metric tonnes of wheat, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had said at the UN High-Level Meeting on the Humanitarian situation in Afghanistan in September 2021.

On several occasions, India has expressed willingness to send humanitarian aid to people of Afghanistan, though it has cautioned the international community to think through the consequences of granting recognition to the Taliban regime.

Currently, Pakistan allows Afghanistan to only export goods to India but doesn’t allow any other two-way trade through the border crossing. India has so far sent five batches of medical assistance consisting of about 9 tons of essential life-saving medicines to Afghanistan.

India rejects UN mission charges over journalist Rana Ayyub’s ‘harassment’

New Delhi: India on Monday reacted sharply to the allegations of the United Nations’ mission in Geneva over “judicial harassment” against journalist Rana Ayyub and termed the charges as “baseless and unwarranted”, asserting that the country upholds the rule of law and no one is above it.

India’s Permanent mission in Geneva, in a tweet, said: “Allegations of so-called judicial harassment are baseless & unwarranted. India upholds the rule of law but is equally clear that no one is above the law. We expect SRs (Special Rapporteur) to be objective & accurately informed. Advancing a misleading narrative only tarnishes @UNGeneva’s reputation,” it said.

Official sources in New Delhi said the matter will be followed up by a note verbale from the Indian mission in Geneva.

Earlier, the UN in Geneva tweeted about “relentless misogynistic and sectarian attacks online” against journalist Ayyub.

Earlier this month, sources in the Enforcement Directorate said the agency has attached over Rs 1.77 crore worth of bank deposits of Ayyub in connection with a money-laundering probe. Ayyub has rejected the allegations. **ENS**

NAGAU RAPPE-MURDER: QUESTIONS RAISED OVER POLICE VERSION

Kin of accused, victim point fingers at local Cong man

DEEPA MUKHERJEE PALOT (NAGAU), FEBRUARY 21

JUST 3 km from Palot village in Rajasthan’s Nagaur district, a long trench runs through a vast expanse of empty field, adjacent to the main road. Empty liquor bottles lay scattered around the trench, dotted by thorny shrubs. It was here that a 35-year-old Dalit woman was found by police on February 10 morning.

Barely alive, she had injuries and insect bites on her body. The police said she had been lying there for six days – raped and strangled by her assailants, who left her to die. They said it was a “miracle” she was alive. The police also suspended two of their own officials for not making efforts to

trace the woman after her family approached them on February 6, two days after she went missing. The woman, who was brought to Jaipur for treatment, died on February 17.

The police have arrested Suresh Meghwal, also a Dalit, on charges of rape and murder. A juvenile who allegedly aided him has been detained.

But several people, ranging from Suresh’s family to the woman’s family, do not buy the police narrative. Instead, they point to the involvement of a man named Aaydan Ram Dara, a Congress worker from the Jat community and member of the Deedwana Panchayat Samiti.

The opposition BJP, too, has alleged his involvement. The party’s Rajya Sabha MP Kirodi Lal Meena

alleged that the accused have the political patronage of Aaydan.

“My nephew is innocent and has been framed. On February 5 evening, Aaydan came to our house with several people and threatened Suresh and family. He abused us with casteist slurs and said there will be dire consequences if Suresh takes Aaydan’s name before the police. Police tortured Suresh to extract his confession,” said Nanuram, Suresh’s uncle.

“Suresh used to work for Aaydan. He would work as a labourer...That night Suresh dropped the woman and the juvenile at a place in the village and returned home. I don’t think the woman was lying there for six days. She may have been dumped there one or two days before she was found. But from February 5 till

his arrest, Suresh was at home.”

According to Nagaur SP Ram Moorty Joshi, Suresh was brought in for questioning on February 6 but was later let off. It was for this negligence that the SHO of the local police station and a head constable were suspended.

A relative of the woman said, “We don’t believe that Suresh is completely innocent but we think that Aaydan is also involved...She may have been taken to some other location and later dumped at the spot where she was found. It is difficult to believe that she was lying there for six days.”

While Aaydan was not available at his home, his family denied the allegations. “Suresh never worked for my father. All the allegations being levelled are false and are part of a political conspiracy.

This is being done because of Congress-BJP rivalry...We have decided to file a defamation case against those who have alleged my father’s involvement, including BJP MP Meena,” said Mukesh, Aaydan’s son.

Although the woman’s brother had demanded Aaydan’s arrest, the police said no proof has been found yet against him. “A call from the woman’s phone did go to Aaydan’s phone, but we have found no evidence of his presence at the crime scene,” SP Joshi said. He denied that Suresh was tortured to extract his confession.

He also denied allegations that the woman was dumped there one or two days before she was found. Teams from FSL came to the conclusion that she was lying there for six days, he said.

FLEET REVIEW

President praises Navy’s prompt deployment in Indian Ocean Region

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

AFTER PRESIDENT Ram Nath Kovind inspected more than 60 ships and submarines of the Indian Navy, the Coast Guard, and the Shipping Corporation of India, as part of the country’s 12th President’s Fleet Review, he praised the Navy’s vigil to protect the Indian Ocean Region.

The President’s Fleet Review is conducted once under every president’s tenure. The last was held in 2016 under late President Pranab Mukherjee.

President Kovind said: “A significant portion of our trade and energy needs are met through



President Ram Nath Kovind in Visakhapatnam. PTI

the oceans... prompt and effective deployment of the Indian Navy in the times of crisis has underscored India’s vision of being the preferred security partner and first responder in the Indian Ocean Region”.

He added: “I am pleased to review the readiness of the Indian naval ships, submarines, aircraft and other elements of our maritime power today.”

Underscoring the importance of Visakhapatnam, where the fleet review was held, he said that its “strategic importance is underlined by the fact that the headquarters of the Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy is located here”.

ECONOMY

SENSEX: 57,683.59 ▼ 149.38 (0.26%) NIFTY: 17,206.65 ▼ 69.65 (0.4%) NIKKEI: 26,910.87 ▼ 211.20 HANG SENG: 24,170.07 ▼ 157.64 FTSE: 7,506.26 ▼ 7.36 DAX: 14,958.55 ▼ 83.96

International market data till 1900 IST

POLICY WATCH
DATA ACCESSIBILITYIT Min draft pitch:
‘Enriched’ Central
data can be sold for
‘appropriate price’AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has proposed that government data, which has been collected at the Central level and has “undergone value addition/transformation”, can be sold in the open market for an “appropriate price”.

The “value addition” would mean when the government data, which is collected by various line ministries, their departments and agencies are processed in a way such that “it can add value to a product or digital delivery of services,” an official of the IT Ministry said, asking not to be named.

According to a draft of a new policy called ‘India Data Accessibility and Use Policy’, stakeholders such as researchers, startups, enterprises, individuals, and even government departments “will be able to access” this “enriched data” through various mechanisms of data licensing, sharing and valuation. The Ministry has sought public comments on the draft by March 18.

These stakeholders can access such data through the India Data Office, which will be a new department created under MeitY.

The move to make public data collected by Central ministries comes even as the government is deliberating on the Data Protection Bill. Though a Joint Committee of Parliament has already presented the final copy of its report on the changes that should be included in the Bill, government officials have said there could be more changes to it before it is tabled in Parliament for discussion and approval.

A new framework for identifying “high value data-set” on the basis of the data’s degree of importance in the market, socio-economic benefits that can be derived from it, the impact of such data set on the country’s artificial intelligence strategy and performance on key global enterprises will also be chalked out.

All the ministries and departments of the Central government will have to “identify, publish and maintain” their high-value dataset (HVD), while the framework to decide what will consist of HVD will be finalised by the India Data Council.

As per the proposed draft,

‘VALUE ADDITION’

■ The “value addition” would mean when the government data, which is collected by various line ministries, their departments and agencies are processed in a way such that “it can add value to a product or digital delivery of services,” an official of the IT Ministry said.

each ministry will have its own Data Management Unit, which will be headed by a Chief Data Officer (CDO). The CDOs at the central and state level, as well as the India Data Officer will together comprise of an India Data Council (IDC). It is this IDC which will define the framework for identifying HVDs of respective central ministries and their departments or agencies.

Though all government data should be open and shareable by default, ministries can notify if a said dataset under “a negative list” of database, which will not be shared. Databases placed under the “restricted access” umbrella will be shared only with “trusted sources” which will be defined by the respective ministries and their departments.

“Each Central ministry/department shall adopt and publish its domain-specific meta-data and data standards. These standards should be compliant with the interoperability framework, policy on open standards, institutional mechanism for formulation of domain-specific metadata and data standards and other relevant guidelines published on the e-govt standards portal,” the draft read.

The draft also proposes a data sharing toolkit, which will be the broad umbrella to help respective central or state government ministries and departments “assess and optimally manage” the risks associated with the release and sharing of such data.

The targeted outcome of the policy would be to allow “new generation of startups to bolster digital innovation for high-priority use cases and enter new markets”, apart from enabling “more informed policy making”, as per the draft.

BRIEFLY
‘Foreign flights’

New Delhi: Regular international flights are likely to resume from March 15 and will follow SOPs effective at Indian airports, sources said. **PTI**

UAE FTA, jobs

New Delhi: India and the UAE are looking at mutual recognition of professional bodies and educational institutions under the FTA, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, adding opportunities for at least 100 million jobs will open up for Indian youth. **FE**

Sebi order

New Delhi: The SAT quashed a Sebi order against HDFC Bank, levying a ₹1 crore fine on the bank in a case related to invoking securities pledged by BRH Wealth Kretors.

Undersea cable

New Delhi: Bharti Airtel has joined SEA-ME-WE-6 undersea cable consortium as a major investor, while Rjio will land its India-Asia-Xpress undersea cable system in Hulhumale, Maldives. **PTI**

TRADE DEFICITS WITH S KOREA, INDONESIA, JAPAN AMONG THE HIGHEST

Behind FTA policy calibration: More imports, lack of competitive edge

KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

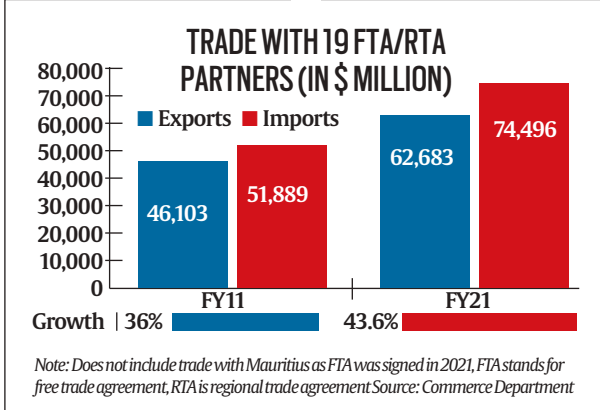
EVEN AS the government signals a renewed push on the trade front by targeting early harvest bilateral deals, India’s existing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), most of which were inked in the mid-2000s and are under an official review process, have seen imports grow much faster than exports over the last decade.

Between FY11 and FY21, exports to nine countries and two trading blocs, with which India already has trade agreements, grew 36 per cent to top \$62 billion while imports from these countries grew 44 per cent to nearly \$75 billion, doubling the trade deficit to \$11.8 billion in FY21 from \$5.8 billion in FY11.

The gap between growth in exports and imports was even larger in FY19, the last fiscal that was not impacted by the pandemic. Between FY11 and FY19, India’s exports to these countries grew by 57 per cent to \$72.4 billion while imports grew 80 per cent to \$93.2 billion.

India concluded an FTA with the UAE last week and is currently in the process of negotiating deals with Australia, the UK, Canada, Israel and the EU.

The country has bilateral trade agreements with Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Mauritius. India also



has a trade agreement with the ASEAN group of countries and is part of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement.

Among countries with which India has trade agreements, key markets where exports have grown on a net basis between FY11 and FY21 include Nepal, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Thailand while import growth has far outpaced export growth in trade with Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia and Japan. While India’s exports to South Korea have grown slightly faster than exports between FY11 and FY21, trade deficit with South Korea in FY21 was the highest among FTA partner at \$8.1 billion, followed by Indonesia at \$7.4 billion and Japan at \$6.5 billion.

India has already launched a review of the FTA with South Korea and is working to launch a review of the FTAs with Japan as

well as the FTA with ASEAN. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has previously said trade agreements with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea “have not met their promise” for India as domestic goods “face barriers” in these countries, even as they provide trade partners duty free access to Indian markets.

In 2019, India backed out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which would entail a trade agreement with 10 ASEAN members as well as Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, citing “outstanding issues and concerns” after the government faced domestic pushback about the adverse impact of the agreement on the MSME, textile, dairy and manufacturing sectors.

Experts noted that the key cause behind India not being able to benefit as much as trad-

ing partners from the lower tariff barriers offered by FTAs was a lack of competitiveness in Indian industry.

Biswajit Dhar, professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said the key issue holding back Indian export growth was competitiveness.

“The issue is one of competitiveness and that has been something that has always kept us behind,” said Dhar, noting that India needs to look at boosting the manufacturing sector and reducing the cost of doing business including logistics costs.

Since 2020, India is looking to conclude early harvest agreements in ongoing FTA negotiations, aiming to exclude sensitive sectors such as agriculture including dairy and sectors where Indian players may not be able to compete with foreign players. Early harvest schemes can allow countries to exclude contentious issues and agree on quick tariff concessions in mutually beneficial areas. The upcoming early harvest scheme with Australia is likely to exclude the wheat, dairy and beef sectors which are considered sensitive sectors but is likely to liberalise trade in mining, pharmaceuticals, health, education, renewables, railways, gems and jewellery, tourism, defence and textiles. Experts have, however, noted that early harvest agreements can, at times, reduce the incentive for further negotiation for a comprehensive FTA and

may also be subject to challenges at the WTO if they are not converted into agreements that eliminate Customs duties and other trade barriers on “substantially all the trade” between the WTO member countries.

Dhar said it was important for the government to ask industry about pain points in market access in countries with which FTAs are there to boost exports. “These are the little things that have often paid dividends in other countries”, Dhar said.

Pradeep S Mehta, secretary general of CUTS International, also highlighted competitiveness as the key issue holding back Indian exports noting the high cost of doing business in India.

“In India, power rates are one of the highest in the world and we have the anomaly of industrial power rates being higher than domestic rates,” Mehta said, adding that high logistics costs and relatively lower availability of finance had also hampered India’s exports. Mehta added that the lack of competitiveness had also made Indian industry hesitant about the FTAs currently under negotiation.

Mehta did note, however, that the government’s Rs 1.97 lakh crore production linked incentive scheme to boost manufacturing across sectors and the national logistics policy were steps in the right direction to boost competitiveness of Indian industry.

FORMER GROUP OPERATING OFFICER OF NATIONAL STOCK EXCHANGE

CBI questions Subramanian in 2018 case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE CBI has questioned former group operating officer (GOO) of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Anand Subramanian in connection with its probe into a 2018 case of manipulation of the bourse. It has already questioned former MD-CEO Chitra Ramkrishna and former CEO Ravil Narain. While Ramkrishna’s questioning took place last Friday, Narain was questioned last Saturday.

Sources said a team of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) also visited the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) office in Mumbai and collected documents related to the case.

The interrogations, according to CBI, are being made in light of a Sebi report that said Ramkrishna had been sharing confidential NSE information with a “Himalayan Yogi” and indicted her for Subramanian’s appointment in contravention of rules.

“Subramanian is being questioned by a CBI team in Chennai for the past three days. Some documents from Sebi office have also

been collected today,” a CBI official said. In an order last week, Sebi penalised Ramkrishna and a few others for allegedly violating securities contract rules in the appointment of Subramanian as GOO and advisor to the MD. Sebi said she was steered by a “yogi” in the appointment of Subramanian.

Last Thursday, the Income Tax Department searched the residences of Ramkrishna and Subramanian as part of its probe into the allegations of illegal gains made by passing on internal exchange information to a third party.

The 2018 case pertains to

SC agrees to
hear Mistry
review plea
on March 9

Cyrus Mistry

File

INDUBHAN

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE SUPREME Court has agreed to hear in open court on March 9 a batch of petitions filed by Cyrus Mistry seeking review of the apex court’s March 26, 2021 order which had upheld his ouster as the chairman of Tata Sons in October, 2016.

A three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice NV Ramana and justices AS Bopanna and VRamasubramanian considered the request for an open court hearing in chamber on February 15, but the order was uploaded on Monday. While the Bench in a 2:1 majority decision allowed the request for a rare open court hearing, Justice Ramasubramanian dissented with the other 2 senior judges. “Applications seeking oral hearing of the review petitions are allowed. List the review petitions on March 9,” the CJ and Justice Bopanna said in their order.

However, Justice Ramasubramanian expressed his “inability to agree” with the majority order. **FE**

‘Gold loan NBFCs may adopt aggressive growth strategies’

Gold loan NBFCs may adopt aggressive strategies to maintain and expand gold loan franchise, an India Ratings report said



GOLD LOAN-FOCUSED NBFCs (non-banking financial companies) could adopt aggressive strategies amid:

- Intense competition from banks
- Absence of any spikes (as seen in the past) in gold prices

Source: India Ratings/PTI

Gold loan auctions by NBFCs rose in April-December FY22 — perhaps highest since FY14 when gold prices saw high volatility

Despite volatility, LIC likely to
push ahead with March listing
Would like to have some stake in IDBI Bank: ChairmanENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 21

STATE-OWNED LIFE Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), which is planning the country’s largest IPO of around Rs 63,000-66,000 crore next month, is going ahead with its listing despite the high volatility in the markets amid increasing global concerns over tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

“We are watching the geopolitical developments closely... but are keen on listing in March,” LIC Chairman M R Kumar said at a press conference.

Investment banking sources said once the Sebi approves the issue, the IPO will open for subscription in the March second week and trading will commence by the third week of March 2022.

The government is likely to

EXPLAINED
Eye on
divestment

THE GOVERNMENT is likely to mobilise about Rs 63,000-66,000 crore from the proposed Offer for Sale (OFS) to meet the disinvestment target of Rs 78,000 crore for the current financial year.

mobilise about Rs 63,000-66,000 crore from the proposed Offer for Sale (OFS) to meet the disinvestment target of Rs 78,000 crore for the current financial year. While the corporation is yet to announce the IPO price, market estimates are that the IPO is likely to be around Rs 2,000-2,100 crore per share.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a post-Budget session, Mumbai. **PTI**

has “messages for sustainability, predictable tax regimen and we continue with the good things we took up last year: such as transparency in accounting.” Revenue Secretary Tarun

Kumar said LIC is well capitalised and potential investors should not worry about government control post the IPO as decisions in the insurance firms are taken by its board and not by the government, which will hold 95 per cent of stake post the IPO.

He said LIC may not sell its entire stake in IDBI Bank and can use its large network of branches to market its insurance services, its chairman said. “I would like to have some stake in IDBI Bank. It has been the strongest contributor for us. This will help us to grow that part of the channel,” Kumar said.

The government, which holds 45.48 per cent stake in the bank, has already expressed its intent to exit by selling the stake.

He said that over 60-70 lakh PAN have been updated on its website.

Hydrogen fuel
cell: Adani
inks deal with
Ballard Power

New Delhi: Adani group and US-based fuel cell manufacturer Ballard Power Systems have inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to evaluate hydrogen fuel cell production in India. The companies will assess the potential of a joint investment for commercialisation of hydrogen fuel cells in mobility and industrial applications including a collaboration for hydrogen fuel cell manufacturing.

“Adani aims to be one of the largest green hydrogen producers in the world through accelerated investment in renewable energy,” Adani group said in a release, adding that Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL), a new subsidiary of Adani Enterprises focused on generation of green hydrogen, green electricity generation, manufacture of electrolyzers and wind turbines, would lead the group’s efforts under the deal. **ENS**

Be customer-friendly: FM to banks

Mumbai: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the government is aiming at a sustained economic recovery and the budgetary proposals on infrastructure building are an attempt to create a multiplier effect to propel growth.

At a two-day post-Budget outreach and to hold interactions with industry stakeholders, large taxpayers and professionals, she said banks should focus more on being customer-friendly so that the process of availing credit is easier for borrowers. However, she said this did not mean that banks should take adverse risks.

Sitharaman said the Budget

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(A Government of Kerala Undertaking)
An ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 Company, Welaga Road, Pookkottu-68624, Kerala.
Email : materials@malabarments.com / bulkncl@malabarments.com

TENDER NOTICE

Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in for Online Submission of Bids for:

- ◆ Global Tender-Supply of 3000MT Clinker on CFR Cochin Port Basis. ◆ Consultancy service for design, engineering and supervision for setting up 0.3 MTPA (1000 TPA) bulk cement terminal at Cochin Port Trust. ◆ Replacement of Coal Mill Girth Gear and Pinion Assembly. ◆ Miscellaneous Civil work at Township (2022). ◆ Collection and transportation of Dry Fly ash from NLC Tamil Nadu Power Ltd, Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu state to Malabar Cements Ltd (Malabar). ◆ Engagement of 1CB / Backhoe Loader for material handling operation in CGU, Palipuram, Cherthala. ◆ Miscellaneous Civil work at Plant. ◆ Supply of Explosives, Cement Mill Pinion Bearing, Reactive Power Compensation System.

Sd/- **MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Dakshin Gujarat Vij Company Ltd.
CIN U40102GJ2003SGC042909
Regd. & Corp. Office: 'Urja Sadan', Nana Varachha Road, Kapodara Char Rasta, Surat 395 006 GUJARAT

DGVCL Toll Free No. 19123 (or 1800 233 3003)

Tender Notice

Details for the tenders mentioned hereunder are available on www.dgvcl.com (for view and download tender documents) and www.dgvcl.nprocure.com (for view, download and online tender submission).

Sr. No.	Tender No.
1	DGVCL/SP / 2205 / 11 KVD.O. Fuse (Polymeric)
2	DGVCL/SP/2249 / Safety Helmet

Note : Bidders may visit the Company website/s for regular updates till opening of the tenders.

CE (P), DGVCL, Surat.

OSBI
CMP & SCF Department, State Bank of India, Global IT-Centre, Sec-11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai-400 614

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

RFP NO: 708 DATED: 10.02.2022

Bids are invited by State Bank of India from the eligible bidders for Procurement of two offsite SAP professionals who will develop SAP utility in their own environment, for a period of 3 years from 01.06.2022 to 31.05.2025, for State Bank. Bidders, who are interested to submit bids, visit Procurement news at <https://www.sbi.co.in> and e-Procurement agency portal <https://etender.sbi>

Commencement of download of RFP: From 22.02.2022.

Last date and time for submission of bids: 16.03.2022 up to 02:00 pm.

Place: Navi Mumbai
Date: 22.02.2022 **CMP & SCF Department**

TOPOF THE
WORLD

Jamal Edwards was awarded an MBE in 2015. AP

BRITAIN

Jamal Edwards, who helped launch stars of music, dies at 31

JAMAL EDWARDS, a British music entrepreneur who championed UK rap and grime and helped launch the careers of artists including Ed Sheeran, Jessie J and Stormzy, has died. He was 31. His mother, broadcaster Brenda Edwards, said Monday that her son died the day before after a sudden illness. She said the family was “completely devastated. He was the center of our world.” Edwards founded the YouTube music channel SBTv as a teenager in 2006. The channel has helped a generation of performers, including rappers like Stormzy, Skepta and Dave, gain national and international attention. **AP**

PORTUGAL

Fire dies down on ship carrying luxury cars, with little left to burn

A FIRE which swept through a cargo ship carrying thousands of luxury cars and adrift off the coast of Portugal's Azores islands has lost its intensity, probably because there is little left to burn, a port official said. The Felicity Ace, carrying around 4,000 vehicles including Porsches, Audis and Bentleys, some electric with lithium-ion batteries, caught fire in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on Wednesday. The 22 crew members on board were evacuated the same day. **REUTERS**

IRAN

US-built military jet crashes in Iran, killing three

A US-built F5 jet in use by the Iranian military crashed into the wall of a school in the northwestern city of Tabriz on Monday, killing the two pilots and a person on the ground, Iranian state TV reported on Monday. The school was closed at the time of the crash just before 9 am, army spokesman Shahin Taqi-Khani said. He said technical failure appeared to be the cause of the crash, but that an investigation was underway. Many air crashes in Iran involve US-built aircraft bought before the 1979 Islamic revolution. **REUTERS**



Passengers are welcomed as they arrive at the Sydney International Airport on Monday. AP

Welcome back world: Australia fully reopens borders after 2 yrs

RENJU JOSE

SYDNEY, FEBRUARY 21

AUSTRALIA ON Monday fully reopened its international borders to travellers vaccinated against the coronavirus after nearly two years of pandemic-related closings as tourists returned and hundreds of people were reunited with family and friends.

More than 50 international flights will reach the country through the day, including 27 touching down in Sydney, its largest city, as the tourism and hospitality sectors look to re-build after getting hammered by Covid-19 restrictions.

“It is a very exciting day, one that I have been looking forward to for a long time, from the day that I first shut that border right at the start of the pandemic,” Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters in the island state of Tasmania, which relies heavily on tourism.

After being away from loved ones for months there were many emotional reunions, including for Cindy Moss who travelled from the US state of Kentucky to see her daughter.

“I just haven’t seen her in so long and it was such a big thing to be able to get over here. So I’m so excited,” she said after hugging her daughter, her voice

cracking with emotion.

Tourism is one of Australia’s biggest industries, worth more than A\$60 billion (\$43 billion) and employing about 5% of the country’s workforce. But the sector was crippled after the country shut its borders in March 2020.

Once a champion of Covid-suppression strategy, Australia shifted away from its fortress-style controls and relentless lockdowns since late last year and began living with the virus after reaching higher vaccination levels. Skilled migrants, international students and backpackers have been allowed to fly into Australia since November in a staggered re-opening exercise. **REUTERS**

Boris Johnson scraps remaining Covid-19 restrictions in England

JILL LAWLESS

LONDON, FEBRUARY 21

BRITISH PRIME Minister Boris Johnson said Monday that he is scrapping the last domestic coronavirus restrictions in England, including the requirement for people with Covid-19 to self-isolate, even as he acknowledged the potential for new and more deadly variants of the virus.

Johnson told lawmakers in the House of Commons that the country was “moving from gov-

ernment restrictions to personal responsibility” as part of a plan for treating Covid-19 like other transmissible illnesses such as flu.

“We now have sufficient levels of immunity to complete the transition from protecting people with government interventions to relying on vaccines and treatments as our first line of defense,” Johnson said.

Johnson confirmed that mandatory self-isolation for people with Covid-19 will end starting Thursday, and the routine tracing of infected people’s con-

tacts will stop. People will still be advised to stay home if they are sick — but will no longer get extra financial support introduced during the pandemic for those who miss work.

Many people who think they have Covid-19 may never know for sure. Starting April 1, lab-confirmed PCR tests for the virus will be available free only to older people and the immune-compromised. The government will also stop offering the public free rapid virus tests, though they will be available for a price. **AP**

Forex-starved Sri Lanka runs out of cash to buy fuel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, FEBRUARY 21

SRI LANKAN government on Monday admitted that it ran out of cash to buy fuel as pumps in most filling stations across the country ran dry, exacerbating the deepening foreign-exchange crisis that has crippled the island nation’s economy.

So dire is Sri Lanka’s current economic situation that it does not even have adequate US dollars to pay for two shipments of fuel.

“Two shipments of fuel have arrived today, but we are unable to pay for it,” Sri Lanka’s Energy Minister Udaya Gammanpila said on Monday.

Last week, state-owned refinery Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) said it was out of money to procure supplies from abroad.

The CPC suffered losses to the tune of \$415 million in 2021 due

to the sale of diesel at prices fixed by the government.

“I had warned about the impending fuel shortages due to the dollar crisis twice in January and once earlier this month,” Gammanpila said.

Sri Lanka’s worsening foreign-exchange shortage has seriously impacted the energy sector, which largely depends on imports for fuel.

The fuel shortage has led to long queues at understocked pumps across the country.

Gammanpila reckoned that the only way out of this mess is by hiking the retail prices of fuel.

The minister also urged the government to reduce the customs duty on fuel imports in order to pass the benefits to the public.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka had bought 40,000 metric tonnes of diesel and petrol from the Indian Oil Corporation to meet urgent energy requirements.

INCREASING FEARS OF ATTACK

Kremlin: Russia will recognise 2 separatist regions in Ukraine

Uncertainty over proposed Biden-Putin summit

NYT & REUTERS

MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 21

THE KREMLIN said Monday that President Vladimir Putin would recognise the independence of two territories in Ukraine controlled by Moscow-backed separatists, further escalating tensions in what Western nations fear could lead to one of the biggest conflicts in Europe since World War II.

The announcement was made by the Kremlin in a statement summarising Putin’s phone calls on Monday with President Emmanuel Macron of France and Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany.

“The president of Russia said that he intended to sign the relevant decree in the near future,” the Kremlin said. “The president of France and the Federal Chancellor of Germany expressed their disappointment with this development. At the same time, they indicated their readiness to continue contacts.”

Putin was expected to deliver an evening address to the nation later on Monday.

His phone calls with the German and French leaders came after an extraordinary session of the Russian Security Council at which Putin accused the US and its allies of using Ukraine “as an instrument of confrontation” with Russia, and said it posed “a serious, very big threat to us”.

The move is a high-stakes gambit by Putin that threatens to engage Russia and Ukraine in a deadly military conflict while sharply escalating Moscow’s conflict with the West.

The separatist enclaves claim all of Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions as their territory, while controlling only about one-third of them. Russia has conducted an enormous troop buildup to Ukraine’s north, east and south, which Western officials say could be used to conduct a

Satellite images show new phase of Russian military readiness



A satellite image shows a motorised rifle battalion near Soloti, Russia, on Sunday. Maxar Technologies via Reuters

SATELLITE IMAGERY collected this weekend shows an apparent shift in Russia’s military deployment around Ukraine. In contrast to the large-scale deployments visible in imagery over recent weeks, some smaller deployments are now visible. Several units or troops have been deployed outside bases or training grounds, with some positioned along tree

lines, according to an analysis by Maxar Technologies, which released the imagery.

The Maxar analysis noted that most of the combat units and equipment at Soloti, a military garrison outside the city of Valuyki, have left and that “extensive vehicle tracks and some convoys of armored equipment” have been seen in the area. **NYT**

BREAKAWAY REGIONS IN DONETSK, LUHANSK



large-scale invasion.

Earlier on Monday, Russian state television showed video of the Russian-backed leaders of separatist territories in eastern Ukraine appealing directly to Putin to recognise their independence. Russia’s Lower House of Parliament passed a resolution making such an appeal to Putin last week.

Earlier, Macron gave hope of a diplomatic solution, saying Putin and US President Joe Biden had agreed in principle to meet.

But the Kremlin said there were no specific plans for a summit. The White House said Biden had accepted the meeting “in principle” but only “if an invasion hasn’t happened”. **REUTERS**

Leak shows Credit Suisse served strongmen

JESSE DRUCKER

& BEN HUBBARD

FEBRUARY 21

THE CLIENT rosters of Swiss banks are among the world’s most closely guarded secrets, protecting the identities of some of the planet’s richest people and clues into how they accumulated their fortunes.

Now, an extraordinary leak of data from Credit Suisse, one of the world’s most iconic banks, is exposing how the bank held hundreds of millions of dollars for heads of state, intelligence officials, sanctioned businessmen and human rights abusers, among many others.

A self-described whistleblower leaked data on more than 18,000 bank accounts, collectively holding more than \$100 billion, to the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

The data covers accounts that were open from the 1940s until



King Abdullah II of Jordan is among the people listed as holding amounts worth millions of dollars in Credit Suisse accounts. File

well into the 2010s but not the bank’s current operations.

Among the people listed as holding amounts worth millions of dollars in Credit Suisse accounts were King Abdullah II of Jordan and the two sons of former Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak. Other account holders included sons of a Pakistani intelligence chief, General Akhtar Abdur Rehman Khan, who

helped funnel billions of dollars from the United States and other countries to the mujahedeen in Afghanistan in the 1980s and Venezuelan officials ensnared in a long-running corruption scandal.

The leak shows that Credit Suisse opened accounts for and continued to serve not only the ultrawealthy but also people whose problematic backgrounds would have been obvi-

ous to anyone who ran their names through a search engine.

Candice Sun, a spokesperson for the bank, said in a statement that “Credit Suisse strongly rejects the allegations and inferences about the bank’s purported business practices.”

Sun said that while Credit Suisse can’t comment on specific clients, many of the accounts identified in the leaked database have already been closed. “Of the remaining active accounts, we are comfortable that appropriate due diligence, reviews and other control-related steps were taken, including pending account closures,” she said.

The leaked records were provided to Germany’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung* more than a year ago by an unidentified whistleblower. Of the dozens of news organizations collaborating on the project, none were based in Switzerland, where a 2015 law restricted journalists from writing articles based on internal bank data. **NYT**

Ukraine seeks emergency meeting of UN Security Council

RICK GLADSTONE

FEBRUARY 21

AS WESTERN fears of a Russian invasion intensified, Ukraine said Monday it had requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss ways to guarantee its security and de-escalate the crisis with Russia.

The request, which was announced by Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, came as President Vladimir Putin of Russia was weighing whether to recognise two breakaway regions of Eastern Ukraine, which could help lay the groundwork for Russian military forces to pour into Ukrainian territory.

“I officially requested UNSC member states to immediately hold consultations under article 6 of the Budapest memorandum to discuss urgent actions aimed at de-escalation, as well as practical steps to guarantee the security of Ukraine,” Kuleba said in a Twitter post. **NYT**

Pak’s Imran set to meet Putin in Russia this week

Islamabad: Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan will fly to Moscow this week to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin, Islamabad confirmed on Monday — the first such trip by a Pakistani leader in two decades.

The two-day visit, starting on Wednesday, was planned before the current crisis over Ukraine.

“During the Summit meeting, the two leaders will review the entire array of bilateral relations including energy cooperation,” Pakistan’s foreign office said, adding that Khan and Putin will also discuss issues including the situation in Afghanistan. **REUTERS**

Trump’s new social media app launched

DONALD TRUMP’S new social media venture, Truth Social, launched late on Sunday in Apple’s App Store, potentially marking the former president’s return to social media after he was banned from several platforms last year.

The app was available to download shortly before midnight Eastern Time and was automatically downloaded to Apple devices belonging to users who had pre-ordered the app.

Some users reported either having trouble registering for an account or were added to a waitlist with a message: “Due to massive demand, we have placed you on our waitlist.”

Trump was banned from Twitter, Facebook and YouTube following the Jan 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol by his supporters, after he was accused of making posts inciting violence. **REUTERS**

THE TRUCKERS WERE PASSIONATE AND ORGANISED

After protests, Canada grapples with question: Was it a blip, or something bigger?

NATALIE KITROFF & IAN AUSTEN

OTTAWA, FEBRUARY 21

A CAVALCADE of big rigs rumbled into the Canadian capital, blocked major streets, drew thousands of supporters, enraged residents and captured the attention of a shocked nation for three weeks. Now they’re gone, leaving Canadians to grapple with some high stakes questions about their country’s political future.

Was the occupation an aberration, or was it the beginning of a more fundamental shift in the country’s political landscape? Did their chaotic blockade alien-

ate the public so much that the movement has no shot at a future, or did it form the base for a lasting political organisation?

“There is a worry, and it’s been expressed in all kinds of ways, that this protest movement will become something much more significant and much more sustained,” said Wesley Wark, a senior fellow at the Center for International Governance Innovation, a Canadian public policy group. “It was given terrific oxygen to spread its message.”

The moment is uniquely tied to the pandemic: Protesters demanded an end to all government pandemic measures. But it is also part of a broader trend.

Social media was a driving force behind street protests of the past decade or so, uniting multitudes in occupations from Zuccotti Park in New York to Gezi Park in Istanbul. But research has shown that such movements often have a tough time converting their energy into real change.

By Sunday afternoon, streets in Ottawa that had been clogged with trucks, makeshift canteens and noisy protesters were largely empty except for police vehicles. A swath of downtown had been fenced off. A protester compound that had occupied a baseball stadium’s parking lot had been cleared — although about two dozen heavy trucks and a cluster



Protesters near Parliament Hill in Ottawa earlier this month. NYT

of other vehicles reconvened about 100 km outside the city.

During their three-week occupation, much about the protests alienated Canadians. At a border

blockade in Alberta, police seized a large cache of weapons and charged four protesters with conspiring to murder police officers.

But demonstrators also saw

much of the disruption they caused as a tactical victory.

One contingent in Windsor, Ontario, blocked a key bridge between Canada and the US for a week, forcing auto plants to scale back production and disrupting about \$300 million a day in trade.

From the beginning, they caught law enforcement flat-footed. Some truckers said in interviews that they were surprised at being allowed to stay in the first place, and the city’s police chief resigned in response to the public anger over the sluggish pace at which authorities moved to dislodge them.

The breakup of the demonstration came after Prime Minister

Justin Trudeau, who has cast himself as a champion of human rights, invoked an emergency measure that gave the police the ability to seize the protesters’ vehicles and allowed banks to freeze their accounts. Trudeau’s decision prompted legal action to quash the order from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

The leader of the Conservative Party, Erin O’Toole, had tilted increasingly toward the center, but was forced out and temporarily replaced by a full-throated supporter of the protests. And Doug Ford, Ontario’s premier, lifted the proof of vaccination requirement and capacity limits for businesses slightly earlier than planned.

Perhaps most consequentially, under the eye of ubiquitous TV cameras and livestreaming phones, the protests dominated airwaves for weeks and generated conversation about coronavirus restrictions.

“The big lesson in all of this is everybody’s learned that we’re not actually powerless,” B J Dichter, an official spokesperson for the convoy, said in an online discussion among supporters last week. Much has “happened as a result of all these people coming together,” he said.

But the demonstrators haven’t actually channelled the energy built up over weeks into a clear political force, experts said. **NYT**

Australia, the home of multi-sport women

Ash Barty & Ellyse Perry are only the latest exponents of a tradition of excelling in various sporting codes

GAURAV BHATT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

LIKE THE rest of her compatriots, Jenny Williams spent a fortnight glued to the screen as Ash Barty went on a history-making run at Melbourne. Williams and Barty — the first home singles champion at the Australian Open in 44 years — both belong to Australia's tradition of talented multi-sport athletes, or cross-coders. And while Barty is probably the most illustrious example, Williams helped set the blueprint decades ago.

Williams, 65, comes from one of the great Aussie Rules dynasties. Father Fos, Australian Football Hall of Fame's inaugural inductee who ruled 40s through 60s as a player and coach, has a grandstand named after him at the Adelaide Oval. Her three brothers all played top-grade football.

Williams, meanwhile, represented South Australia at senior level in cricket, soccer, football, touch football, indoor lacrosse and lacrosse during the 1970s and '80s, and was part of a world champion lacrosse team. She was adjudged the Australian Football League (AFL) Woman of the Year in 2003 for her contribution to the sport.

"Many, in my dad's era, they all played a summer sport, a winter sport, and took what they could from one game into another," says Williams, who received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) last month for her services to women's sport and sports psychology. "Australian athletes have historically used different sports to be fitter for the sport they played."

Aussie Rules, in fact, was devised to keep cricketers fit during winter months before it was developed, codified and got its own league. Earlier, it was simply a variant of English public-school football which grew popular in Melbourne parklands thanks to cricketers, enthusiasts and schoolchildren; no better mix of sports-lovers encompasses Australia's cross-code culture.

Another notable example is Australian wicketkeeper Alex Carey. Carey grew up in Loxton playing both cricket and Australian rules football. Named in the 2009 Redbacks squad, Carey instead chose the oval ball, siding with the expansion team Greater Western Sydney Giants. There, he was coached by Jenny's brother Mark and when his footie career hit a dead end, both Williams



siblings supported him in his return to cricket.

"Traditionally, you play a lot of different sports as a child here," Mark Williams had told *The Indian Express* in an earlier interview. "It definitely helps athletes as they bring something from each sport and it teaches them collaboration."

Cross-code culture

Still, there must be something in the water Down Under?

"I think growing up here, there's a lot of opportunities to play a sport and not just one sport," says cricket coach Andy Richards who helped Barty take up the bat in the Women's Big Bash. "While we have a love for cricket, it was one of the things we encouraged our kids to play in wintertime. We understood the need to go play other sports to make other parts of your body function and acquire different skills through different sports. We always say India is a cricket-mad country. And I would just say Australia is probably a sport-mad country."

Barty famously took a hiatus from tennis after feeling burnt out, played cricket in the Women's Big Bash, returned rejuvenated and began her ascent to the World No. 1 ranking.

The next high-profile example is star all-rounder Ellyse Perry. The first cricketer to score 1,000 runs and take 100 wickets in



(Top) Ash Barty went on a history-making run at Melbourne-AP; Jenny Williams' father Fos (left) was the Australian Football Hall of Fame's inaugural inductee who ruled the 40s through 60s as a player and coach; Jenny Williams.



T20Is, Perry represented Australia in soccer 18 times before famously choosing a T20 against India over a shield game in 2016.

Alongside Barty and Perry, at the elite level, it's mostly a host of less-heralded Australian sportswomen who are thriving in multiple codes. Several of Perry's teammates have played hockey or football. The culture can be traced back to Jenny Williams and Co in the '70s.

The magnificent seven

For Williams, cross-coding began with the children's game Brandy, where kids try

to 'brand' each other with "the wettest ball they could find."

"It hurt, so it taught you to be a little bit tough," Williams says. "But it also taught you to catch the ball, dodge it."

"I grew up with brothers and had a netball. Of course, they didn't ever want to play netball. But they did love putting the ball on the ground. And then we'd play soccer. And having four kids was great because I grew up with twin brothers, so it was me in two-ones. Then with my little brother, it was two-on-twos, and what great development you can possibly have with that."

At the Adelaide Teachers College, Williams formed a cohort with six other physical education students. The magnificent group of cross-coders formed a cricket team, represented Australia in various sports, and went to university together over a three-year span. The group included Olympic basketballers Jenny Cheesman and Pat Mickan, squash world champion Vicki Cardwell, and cricketers Jill Kennare, Wendy Plitz and Lynette 'Lefty' Fullston, who were part of the Test side that toured India in 1984.

"I was fortunate enough to keep wickets to Lefty, who has the lawns named after her at the Oval," says Williams. "In the summer, we would be playing cricket. In winter, I would be playing soccer and lacrosse. We would train for the state team and play one sport on a Saturday. The other sport we would play on Sunday, and then train for another sport in the morning. It was always doing things, running between games."

At the Teachers College, the group once invited Australian cricketer David Hookes — described by Wisden as "a first-class destroyer of second-rate bowling" to bat — and bowled him out a couple of times.

"He got a respect for the group that we had, how driven we were," says Williams. "We found that if the men could see we were really dedicated and wanted to try, they gave us opportunities to get better. They trained

with us. We figured, well, if we could keep up with the best men, we were definitely in the ballpark, if not ahead of other great women."

How it helps

Even before cricket and lacrosse, Williams fell in love with tennis. Mother Von "was an elite tennis player" and growing up, the siblings spent hours on the court.

"As a result, I was really, really good at hitting anything especially square of the wicket on either side. Tennis players-turned-cricketers had to learn how to play with a straight bat," says Williams. "There are so many things that work between the two sports. Being able to catch, able to move well, understanding how to communicate during doubles or with the partner at the other end."

"By playing basketball, I learned how to run inside and do a drop-step, which was a perfect defence in lacrosse. The men played with both hands, while the women's game had only evolved one-handed. Training with them was an 'aha' moment for us. So, it wasn't only cross-coding, but also looking between the genders at times."

During the 1986 world championship, Williams remembers the one-handed Americans saw Australia's plastic sticks as a fad and their wielders "stupid".

"Now you can't find wooden sticks." Williams details the 'intellectual' side of playing multiple sports.

"The joy of actually being able to see how to cross-code sport also takes some intellect. The fact that the good people can actually work out what to take from one sport into another is often underestimated."

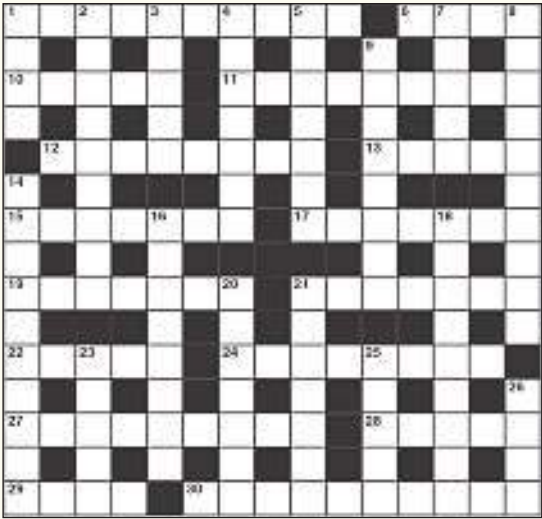
A cross-coder off the field too, Williams has been an author, teacher, administrator and broadcaster. But it's the perspectives as a coach and psychologist that bring a fresh perspective to cross-coding.

"The multi-sport movement is starting to be around a little bit more again, because people are seeing that overuse injuries can be a problem if you're just doing one thing. It's also about staleness and not feeling like you're doing something fresh," says Williams, the PE teacher.

Williams the psychologist, meanwhile, expounds on the reasoning, and how cross-coding helps in the holistic development of children.

"You are subjected to more ideas, more people. And when you come across gems, you learn to recognise them and keep them in your life," says Williams. "We were willing to stand out and play whatever we wanted. People said 'girls shouldn't play that' but we didn't care. It was all about playing well and being really good friends. Even when I got married, I had seven bridesmaids and all of them were amazingly good multi-sports women!"

CROSSWORD 4670



ACROSS

- Penitentiary with unlimited accommodation (4,6)
- Come across a bit of fluff in dusting (4)
- Sort of enemy you've cursed? (5)
- Treat wage adjustment as a political scandal (9)
- No bad feeling? (8)
- Measures taken for the sake of progress (5)
- Perplex with a minus sign? (7)
- Waiting for a religious ceremony (7)
- Be the more usual to succeed (7)
- The sort that is in glasses (7)
- The snag about angling? (5)
- Looking horrible so urge me to make changes (8)
- Mindful of how voters ban change (9)
- Classified unconventional trade (5)
- Part of window dresser's flamboyant attire (4)
- Censorious writer (4,6)

DOWN

- Turn out to be in error about a point (4)
- There's a lot to be said for having it (9)
- Steal a little salt (5)
- Where patients are treated internally (7)
- They're not at home with regulations (7)
- I am on time for the picture (5)
- It should prevent a woman getting into bad habits (5,5)
- Don't lose that quiet shyness (8)
- NCO stripes for police officers (10)
- To arrange the relay is tough (8)
- Crazy about mother in a manner of speaking (9)
- Haul on the canvas to speed the sailor (7)
- Sink with fuel in it perhaps (7)
- The head requires things to be done (5)
- Make fun of one's peers (5)
- I'd look up to one who's worshipped (4)

Solutions Crossword 4669: Across: 1 Garnish, 5 Baste, 8 Rebellion, 9 Alp, 10 Odds, 12 Chastise, 14 Distil, 15 Remiss, 17 Isotherm, 18 Tyro, 21 Ego, 22 Reluctant, 24 Straw, 25 Endemic. Down: 1 Garbo, 2 Rib, 3 Idle, 4 Height, 5 Bandsmen, 6 Stability, 7 Express, 11 Dishonour, 13 Withdraw, 14 Drivers, 16 Grille, 19 Optic, 20 Acid, 23 Aim.

JUMBLD 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.

Where there is injury let me _____. - Francis of Assisi (3,6)

PTAAR



DANCES



BKOOS



ADERPW



Answer: Where there is injury let me **so** pardon - Francis of Assisi

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4753

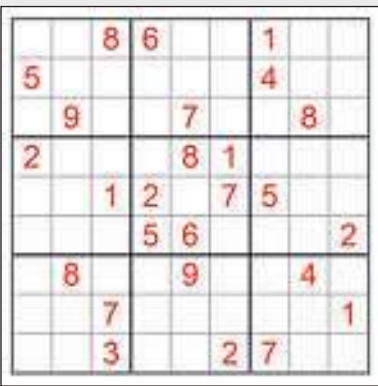
Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4752



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Friends and associates are about to be flabbergasted by your down-to-earth approach to financial matters. You may now sense a prosperous period ahead, even though nothing will happen without sensible team-work. I know co-operation is a struggle, but it's necessary.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

It is almost time to make a final choice and stop worrying about others' feelings or opinions. Judge your own behaviour by absolute standards of right and wrong, not according to what friends or family might expect. Define your limits and other people will respect them.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Behind the day-to-day fluctuations of the planets lie longer-term trends of which you are often only half aware. A creative time is now coming to an end and it is up to you to inwardly digest all that has happened over the last four months.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

The underlying message of current planetary patterns, especially those emanating from Jupiter and Neptune, is that you are expected to hold on to what is sound, worthwhile, personally meaningful and spiritually rewarding. That has to be pretty sound advice, don't you think?

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The good news is that celestial configurations are still lively and, if you are alert and on-the-ball, you ought to be able to turn even adverse developments to your own advantage. This is no time to procrastinate. It's better to know where you stand to start with, and at least you'll know what changes are needed.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Your remarkable analytical faculties often serve you well and prevent you from making potentially disastrous blunders. After what has been a relatively impulsive period you will once again be settling into a practical, efficient and cool routine.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Honesty is vital in all financial deals, especially as far as joint arrangements are concerned. Only when agreement is reached will you be able to determine what your next major move should be. And that might require dealing with urgent personal and family matters.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

If you're grappling with complex personal issues, continue to review the situation on a daily basis. You may be enjoying acclaim for your financial skill, adding to a general feeling of well-being. But that doesn't excuse you from caring about partners' feelings.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

You now realise that someone must be forced to settle a debt of honour, perhaps one that was incurred months or even years ago. How satisfying it must be to know that you were in the right. But, it is necessary to prepare for the unexpected, especially where your security is concerned.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

News from an unexpected source is on its way, and should give you the last piece of a complicated jigsaw. Once it arrives, you will be able to start planning your future with confidence and self-assurance. This means that partners must begin to respect your ideals.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You need to get into peak condition in readiness for a hectic period. In particular, you are now aware of the number of improvements that are required in your domestic situation and family relationships. You will also be paying attention to spiritual needs over the coming days.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

In spite of your fears, you are unlikely to be financially embarrassed. In most spheres your affairs are now on a firmly practical path, which must be welcome news to all who are dependent on you. You don't usually like responsibility, but you're carrying it well.

Two years after winning his first tour-level match in Rio de Janeiro, 18-year-old Carlos Alcaraz of Spain became the youngest to clinch an ATP 500 title at the same event on Sunday when he defeated Diego Schwartzman in the final of the Rio Open. It was a second tour-level title for Alcaraz after his victory in Umag last year and his 6-4 6-2 victory against 13th-ranked Argentine Schwartzman. **REUTERS**

BRIEFLY

Jhingan apologises for sexist comment

New Delhi: India team vice captain and ATK Mohun Bagan footballer Sandesh Jhingan was criticised by fans after his club drew an Indian Super League (ISL) match over the weekend for a sexist comment that saw him comparing the game played to that of women. "I have played a match with women," Sandesh Jhingan was seen saying in a short video shot after the match. Facing backlash, he apologised a day later after the comparison - which hinted that women players are inferior. After the team drew 2-2 with the Kerala Blasters on Saturday night, Jhingan was caught on camera saying "I have played a match with women, with women". The video has now been deleted. The context of the video and who it was referred to was unclear. Jhingan tweeted on Sunday that the comment was made "in the heat of the moment" and wasn't aimed at rivals. However his apology exacerbated matters since he stressed it was in response to his disappointment over how the team played. **ENS**

Neymar keen for a stint in cash-rich MLS

London: Paris St Germain and Brazil forward Neymar would like to play in the United States-based Major League Soccer for at least a season before he calls time on his career. Neymar, who is under contract at PSG until June 2025, said he was more likely to play in the U.S. than return to his home country. "I don't know if I'll play in Brazil again," the 30-year-old said on the Fenomenos podcast. "I have some doubts about that. 'I'd love to play in the U.S. actually. I'd love to play there at least for a season. 'First of all their season is shorter, so I'd get three months' vacation,' Neymar joked. The former Barcelona player said he had not decided when he would hang up his boots but added that he play at least till the end of his PSG contract. **REUTERS**

Djokovic itching to get back into action

London: Novak Djokovic was looking forward to kick-starting his 2022 season in Dubai following his deportation from Australia, and said he would be the first to congratulate U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev if the Russian ends his two-year reign at the top of the world rankings this week. The 34-year-old Serbian will play competitively on Monday for the first time this year in his opening Dubai Duty Free Championships match against Italy's Lorenzo Musetti, ranked 57th in the world. "I am as well prepared as I possibly can be and excited to again be able to tour," he told a press conference on Sunday. Djokovic, who is chasing his 6th tournament win in Dubai, said he resumed training about 10 days after he was deported from Australia and had been playing tennis for the past three weeks. "I did my best to put myself in a good position tennis-wise and mentally as well... I'm really happy to be playing again." The world number one, who is not vaccinated against COVID-19, was flown out of Australia after an 11-day ordeal, at the discretion of the country's immigration minister over concerns the tennis star could fuel anti-vax sentiment. **REUTERS**

Saha to remain mum on scribe's identity if board wants name

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 21

WRIDDHIMAN SAHA will not reveal the name of the journalist to the BCCI, as and when the cricket board communicates with him over his tweet that has become arguably Indian cricket's biggest talking point at the moment.

On Monday, *The Indian Express* reported that the BCCI would ask the wicketkeeper-batsman to reveal the identity of the unnamed person who purportedly sent a string of WhatsApp messages to the cricketer, demanding an interview. Saha later posted a screenshot of the messages on his Twitter handle.

"I haven't received any communication from the BCCI yet. If they ask me to reveal the name (of the journalist), I would tell them it was never my intention to harm somebody's career, to pull a person down. That's why I did

n't reveal the name in my tweet. That's not the teaching of my parents. The main purpose of my tweet was to expose the fact that there's someone in the media who does such things, disrespecting a player's wish," Saha told *The Indian Express*. He added: "It wasn't fair, which I wanted to tell through my tweets. He who has done it knows it very well. I posted those tweets because I didn't want the players to face such things. I wanted to convey the message that what has been done was wrong and no one else should do it again."

On Saturday, the 37-year-old was dropped from the Test team for the upcoming two-match series against Sri Lanka. The tweet was posted on the same day, capturing messages like: "After all of my contributions to Indian cricket... this is what I face from a so called 'Respected' journalist! This is where the journalism has gone." One of the messages from the unnamed journalist had said: "You did not

call. Never again will I interview you. I don't take insults kindly. And I will remember this."

Saha received an outpouring of support from the cricketing fraternity after this, from Ravi Shastri to Virender Sehwag. Shastri, the former India team head coach, in fact, urged BCCI president Sourav Ganguly "to dive in".

Saha said he didn't have any conversation with Ganguly over the last few days. However, former India spinner Pragyan Ojha, currently the Indian Cricketers Association's (ICA) representative on the IPL Governing Council, called him.

"Ojha called me and said, 'I won't ask you about anything which is personal. If you feel that you want to go further on this or pursue the matter legally, the BCCI would support you'. I told him that at the moment I wasn't willing and gave him the reasons. He responded to it saying, it was completely my decision," Saha said.

Conflicting messages

On Saturday, Saha told this paper that following his 61 not out in the first Test against New Zealand at Kanpur in November last year, he had received a WhatsApp message from Ganguly that mentioned: 'As long as I'm here (helming the BCCI), you would be in the team'.

On Sunday, after India's T20I series win against the West Indies, India team head coach Rahul Dravid told reporters that his conversation with Saha at the end of the South Africa tour came from his respect for the 'keeper-batsman's contribution to Indian cricket, as he deserved "honesty and clarity". Dravid told Saha that the team would look to the future, bringing in a younger wicketkeeper as Rishabh Pant's back-up. Chief selector Chetan Sharma, however, had spoken about the veteran being excluded for just two Tests against Sri Lanka, at the post-selection press conference on Saturday.

Saha pulling out of the Bengal Ranji Trophy squad has been questioned, with Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) secretary Snehasish Ganguly, Sourav's elder brother, suggesting that he might have played the tournament.

Asked about this, Saha said: "My opting out has nothing to do with the (Indian) team selection. I opted out due to personal reasons. My wife has been recovering from dengue and that's the reason. But I'm keeping my options open and things can change."

Will there be any motivation left to play cricket after this? "I play cricket because of my love for the game. As long as that is there, I will not hang up my boots. It doesn't matter whether I'm being considered for the Indian team or my state team or my IPL side. As long as I'm enjoying the game, I will play. I won't mind calling time on my career through club and office cricket," Saha signed off.

A state of Wriddhiness

In perpetual readiness on the bench on either side of some solid years, Saha's career ends nearly as suddenly as it began

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 21

FOR A MAN who hardly spoke much - even his wife has said in the past that his inexpressiveness of sadness or joy is the only thing she would like to "cut marks for", Wriddhiman Saha has caused a storm in the wake of his non-selection for Sri Lanka Tests. Befittingly, with as few words as possible by merely restating facts about who said what to him - from Chetan Sharma to Sourav Ganguly to Rahul Dravid, and above all, by tweeting a text message from a journalist that told its own story. Never before in his career has he been discussed as much by the public; now he is part of memes and GIFs to nail down what's wrong with the system. Who would have thought Saha, the quiet unobtrusive man who shuffled behind the stumps with impressive stealthiness, would become the poster boy to bring down a few egos.

The start, though, couldn't have been more sudden. Rohit Sharma tripped during warm-up before the start of the 2010 Nagpur Test and had to wait for his Test debut for nearly four more years. The man over whose foot Rohit had tripped, Saha, found himself facing a red-hot Dale Steyn in the unlikelyst of circumstances: a second-choice back-up wicketkeeper making his Test debut as a specialist batsman at No. 7, because there were no actual specialist batsmen left in the squad to choose from. He left his third ball; it reversed in late to crash into the off stump.

The then 25-year-old Saha had learned what would become the defining lesson of his career the hard way: was the need to be ever-ready, irrespective of circumstances. He had been thrown in at the deep end, without any warning at all, when all he had been ready for was a poolside view. Ever since, he has always prepared for a game assuming he would be in the playing XI. Even though he has spent a large chunk of his career on the bench.

He waited for Deep Dasgupta during his early days for Bengal. He waited for MS Dhoni during his prime years for India. And then, even as the then captain Virat Kohli called him the best wicketkeeper in the world, he waited for home Tests and pink-ball Tests because Rishabh Pant had first dibs elsewhere. Stoic is an understatement for almost an entire career spent in readiness knowing the norm was that you weren't required. It is perhaps apt to call it a state of Wriddhiness.

All along, until the very end - and he has been told by head coach and chief selector that it is actually the end - there was barely



Wriddhiman Saha probably made a better case for T20Is with a swifter strike-rate in the shortest format than Parthiv Patel and Naman Ojha, and just behind Dinesh Karthik (133) at 130. *Partha Paul.*

ever a question of fitness or performance if he was available. How could there be, from a man who came back from shoulder surgery at 34 and dove upon resuming training to fall on the same shoulder? Diving was instinctive for the keeper who had started as a goal-keeper, and Saha wasn't going to restrain that instinct in order to survive a little longer as a lesser version of himself.

Those leaps of perfection, parallel to the ground, body absolutely horizontal from head to toe, and gloves somehow dead-still amid that burst of motion, until they opened and shut at the right instant to gobble the ball. Of course, there is much more to remember, and that itself says a lot for how an unobtrusive man practised an art that is said to be performed best when it goes unnoticed.

Surely it must have happened - he operated in India mostly after all - but one can't straightforwardly recall the dying ball troubling Saha. He would neither attempt to hurriedly fall forward to try and take it on the half-volley, nor jerk his head away in what is a perfectly acceptable reflex reaction to avoid a hit

from a potentially awkward bounce. He would go down sideways on the left knee, open up the right leg as the second line of defence, keep the gloves vertical and almost touching the grass, and calmly let the ball sail in. Maybe it is memory playing tricks, maybe it is the effect his absolute command over the job had, but he could also have been chatting up first slip while doing all this. It was stretching the unobtrusive towards the performative, but remaining well within limits.

The spinner and the batsman know the ball will turn on a wearing pitch in India, but neither can say with certainty how much. The keeper's vision is blocked by the batsman, so he has lesser input to work with. But as the raging ball spat past the pads on turners, Saha would arrive behind the line down the leg side, having precisely judged the length of the sideslip that was needed.

As it is with the best keepers, Saha just knew. He knew when to get up, when to stay low, when to let the gloves ride the bounce. And he was also aware enough to spring to action and go flying to silly point or short leg

if they were vacant and a chance arose.

Not that he was only good against spin. He is the rare Indian keeper who side-shuffled nimbly to his right and gathered the ball on his left against the pacers. Traditionally, it's the Australian way; the English preferred to have their bodies behind the ball in case posthumous swing prevalent in their country tricked them. Saha had no such doubts.

It is a cliché partly because it is often thrown around loosely, but it can be safely said without such danger that Saha was born to keep wicket.

It was something Indian cricket was wise enough to acknowledge early in an era where keeper-batsman was replaced by batsman-keeper, a change led in the country by Saha's great predecessor. But Saha was so far out in front of the rest as keeper that his 13 first-class hundreds didn't suffer in comparison to Dinesh Karthik (28), Parthiv Patel (27) and Naman Ojha (22). And mind you, all three competitors began their careers much before Saha did.

The fact that he could fight a good fight

with the bat when called upon also strengthened his cause. That was visible right after that debut duck in Nagpur, when, in the second innings, he resisted an attack comprising Steyn, Morne Morkel, Wayne Parnell and Jacques Kallis for two and a half hours.

But perceptions can cut both ways. So set was the image of Saha as the Test keeper that he played only nine ODIs despite having a better List A batting average than Karthik, Patel and Ojha, all three of whom played all three formats for the country.

Saha probably made a better case for T20Is - without getting even one match - with a swifter strike-rate in the shortest format than Patel and Ojha, and just behind Karthik (133) at 130. Even now, Saha has as many T20 centuries as Pant has, and the latter is yet to make one in an IPL final.

The first of Saha's three Test centuries came from a position of 126 for 5 in St Lucia, where he and R Ashwin revived India to a total of 353. That was in 2016, the middle year among the three best ones of Saha's career immediately following Dhoni's Test retirement at the end of 2014. He would be out injured for nearly two years after the South Africa tour in early 2018 and Pant would establish himself firmly as the future as well as the present.

Still, Saha would remain true to his primary vocation and never tried to morph into some other role. He was chosen as specialist pink-ball keeper for the 2020-21 Australia tour and didn't concede a single bye in 93 overs in the Adelaide day-night Test. Earlier in 2020, during the pandemic lockdown, he had tweeted a video of him practising on his home terrace. He'd throw a ball into a corner; it would bounce off one wall onto another, or it would hit the intersection, and come back at different angles. Saha would collect everything.

He turned 37 last October. Weeks later, KS Bharat made an impressive entry as substitute behind the stumps in Kanpur. Weeks thereafter, Pant went past Saha's 104 dismissals in Johannesburg. Time was up, but unless you are Sachin Tendulkar, there are no perfect goodbyes in Indian cricket.

In keeping - pun intended - with the nature of the man, drama had surrounded the handling of Saha's injury and its communication by the board in 2018, and there's been noise now over his phasing out. Because when it came to matters on the field, over 40 Tests spread across 12 years, there was never a question of fitness or performance. We might have seen the last of the pure keepers in Indian cricket, and he brought nothing but pure joy to a diminishing art.

ISL SCENARIOS

Hyderabad surprise leaders; Jamshedpur finally inching towards AFC spot

SHASHANK NAIR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

AN INDIAN Super League season, heavily impacted by covid cases at various moments, is nearing an end with four teams looking to win the group stage of the league and seal a spot in the AFC Champions League.

Hyderabad FC, Jamshedpur FC, ATK Mohun Bagan and Kerala Blasters are all in the reckoning for some continental honours. Apart from ATKMB, every other team on the list is a virtual surprise at this point of the season. Last year's table toppers Mumbai City FC lie just out of reach of the playoff spots while FC Goa have had a year of upheaval after almost four consistently good seasons.

The surprise leaders

Last season, a slew of injuries to foreign and Indian players alike meant that Hyderabad FC had to suddenly turn to their young Indian players to take the mantle. And they did, almost making it to the ISL playoffs and then as many as five of their players making the national camp after last year's

league campaign.

This season, the addition of Bartholomew Ogbeche to an already young core has seen an explosion of goals for Manolo Marquez. Last season Ogbeche was a bench warmer at Mumbai, coming in and scoring goals at will if Adam le Fondre failed to make the mark. This year though, Ogbeche has landed the leading role he so richly deserves and is the top scorer across teams.

Hyderabad has 32 points in 17 games, having won nine, drawn five and lost three while scoring 39 goals in the process. To average over two goals a game has turned a young team with potential into the best candidates to go through to next year's Champions League.

In their own hands

No club in the Indian Super League comes quite as close as Jamshedpur does when it comes to making the playoffs and then inevitably failing to do so. Last season they missed out on the Top 4 spot by four points. In the 2018-19 season, they came agonisingly close but fell short by a mere two points. Playoff disappointments have been part and



This season, the addition of Bartholomew Ogbeche to an already young core has seen an explosion of goals for Hyderabad. *ISL*

parcel of Jamshedpur's season. What's changed this time?

Not much. Jamshedpur's statistics can be a little deceptive. They are dead last in the league for the number of touches on the ball

as well as total passes made by the team. They have scored 30 goals from 16 games and conceded 18 and are only on the second spot because both Mumbai City FC and ATK Mohun Bagan have leaked goals aplenty.

But as luck would have it, their destiny is in their own hands. This week Jamshedpur will be taking on Hyderabad in what could be a winner-takes-it-all league match. A victory for JFC would still not make it certain, what with their matches against Odisha, and crucially ATK Mohun Bagan yet to come - but it would make the league theirs to lose. Currently they are on 31 points from 16 games and are in the best position to take the ACL spot.

Bagan in the mix

Having played the same number of games as Jamshedpur, Bagan are a point behind them and can also turn the tide of the league should they beat JFC.

Boasting of one of the best squads in the league, Bagan's season has been topsyturvy to say the least. A great start was followed by a string of dismal results that led to the ISL's most successful coach in

Having played the same number of games as Jamshedpur, Bagan are a point behind them and can also turn the tide of the league should they beat JFC.

Antonio Habas being shown the door. Juan Ferrando made a quick getaway from FC Goa and signed for Bagan. Under Habas, ATKMB were a team that passed little, took fewer touches than most but relied on some heavy lifting from Roy Krishna to push them over the line.

Ferrando has already changed that aspect of the Kolkata club and made them keep the ball for longer periods of the game. In their last four games, they've beaten Hyderabad FC, NorthEast United FC, FC Goa and then drew against a 10-man Kerala Blasters team. Form is on their side and any slip up from Jamshedpur could suddenly hand the keys to ATKMB yet again.

A well-deserved playoff spot

Usually at this end of the season, it's rare to be talking about Kerala Blasters as a contending team but one of the big surprises of the league has been Ivan Vukomanovic's team pulling themselves this deep towards the end of the season. Five points behind league leaders Hyderabad and three points behind ATKMB, Kerala will need quite a lot of luck to take the league crown at this point.

But the change in fortunes for the team is worth note. Ninth last season, seventh before that and ninth again in the 2018-19 season, the Blasters have pulled their socks up this season to come this close to the title. They have conceded the least number of goals in the league - an issue that has constantly plagued the team in previous ISL seasons.

Vukomanovic's team has benefited from the Serbian's emphasis on having a strong base to work from. Had the team signed an Ogbeche like figure as striker, this league could really have been theirs for the taking. They have Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Goa as their remaining four games - making it highly unlikely that they could somehow take the top spot, but not impossible.