

FROM PAGE ONE

TMC and Abhishek Banerjee. Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim and many other leaders who are handling key ministries in the state have been included in the working committee. Excluding Mamata and Abhishek, those part of the committee are Amit Mitra, Subrata Bakshi, Partha Chatterjee, Sudip Banerjee, Yashwant Sinha, Firhad Hakim, Aroop Biswas, Chandrima Bhattacharya, Kakali Ghosh Dastidar, Sukhendu Shekhar Roy, Rajesh Tripathi, Jyotipriya Mullick, Anupa Patra, Malay Ghatak, Anubrata Mondol, Buluchik Baraik, Goutam Dev and Shovande Chattopadhyay. This was announced by Partha Chatterjee during a press conference.

On February 3, Mamata Banerjee was unanimously re-elected as TMC chairperson. The same day, senior TMC leader Partha Chatterjee announced that Banerjee would announce the new working committee of the party. A senior leader of TMC said, "Senior leaders of the West Bengal TMC unit expressed reservations about the party's association with professional agencies as political strategists. The final call will be taken by our chairperson."

According to TMC sources, three prominent leaders have not been included in the TMC's newly formed working committee. These three leaders are Derek O'Brien, Sougata Roy and Dulal Murrem. O'Brien and Roy are considered close to Abhishek Banerjee.

A senior leader who attended the meeting said, "Over the past few days, there has been speculation about growing differences between senior leaders in the party and Abhishek Banerjee. But Didi has sent a clear message that she is the last word in the party."

He added, "Sushmita Dev, who is considered close to Abhishek Banerjee, was not included in the national working committee whereas Anubrata Mondol, who is the Birbhum district chief of the party, has been included in the committee."

The latest tussle between Abhishek and senior TMC leaders came to the fore after two candidate lists were released by the TMC for the civic polls, with the party later clarifying about a "final list".

"Abhishek thought the party needed a "proper direction and professional approach." But a majority of the party leaders believe Mamata Banerjee is the only leader who can make a difference in any political fight."

On Thursday, a number of young leaders in the TMC took to social media to bat for the TMC's 'one person, one post' policy.

The 'one person, one post' policy has been floating around in the corridors of the ruling camp after Trinamool's win in the last Assembly polls, but it is yet to be implemented in earnest.

However, according to sources close to Mamata Banerjee, she gave a clear message to party leaders, reiterating that she would not tolerate this type of "open fight within the party" and "any differences should be resolved within the party."

Before the meeting with Mamata Banerjee, senior leaders of TMC such as Partha Chatterjee, Subrata Bakshi, Sudip Banerjee, Firhad Hakim, Aroop Biswas, Chandrima Bhattacharya met at Bakshi's office in Hazra. Sudip Banerjee said, "We want the best for the party. That has been discussed."

Jaishankar tion has impacted the relationship, trade has increased, underlining the degree of dependence on China's manufacturing.

On the Quad and China's criticism of the grouping, Payne said: "We are not against anything. We are about building confidence and resilience, about promoting a region in which all countries are able to be and feel sovereign and secure without the threat of coercion or intimidation." This was an oblique reference to China's actions at the LAC, and in the Indo-Pacific region.

While Jaishankar and Payne agreed on the Chinese behaviour along the LAC, there were divergences in their public statements on the Russia-Ukraine situation.

Responding to questions on Russia's actions along the Ukrainian border, Jaishankar said "diplomacy is the only way out". He did not criticise the Russians for massing troops along the Ukrainian border, triggering fears of a conflict.

Payne, however, was critical of the Russian behaviour and voiced "concern" over the "extraordinary unilateral action" by Russia. She expressed "support" for "Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity".

The two Foreign Ministers held a meeting on cyber security as well.

A joint statement on the cyber security dialogue said the ministers reiterated their commitment to secure, resilient and trusted technology and agreed to work together to "address the significant threat of malicious cyber activity by state and non-state actors".

They acknowledged the importance of the security and resilience of telecommunications networks and the need to work closely with each other to protect next generation telecommunications networks, including 5G and 6G, it said.

This also assumes significance in the wake of Chinese players in the cyber space being shunned by many countries, including Australia and India, for strategic reasons. India's ban of Chinese mobile apps, including the popular Tik Tok app, was done with this rationale in mind.

Recognising the importance of working collaboratively with international partners, the statement said the ministers agreed to undertake joint engagement with Indo-Pacific partners to collaboratively improve the region's cyber capabilities.

States push back Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY). In a letter dated January 5, NHA CEO R S Sharma wrote to Department of Food and Public Distribution Secretary Sudhanshu Pandey: "...due to deficiencies in the SECC database, beneficiary identification (under AB PM-JAY) has become extremely difficult. In this regard, NHA has been trying different ways and means to enrich the SECC database, which can then be used to target beneficiaries. Possible mapping of SECC beneficiaries with Aadhaar and NFSA will help in the easy identification of beneficiaries."

He said without mapping Aadhaar with the SECC database, it will be "extremely unlikely" to achieve Ayushman card saturation.

Following Sharma's letter, the Department of Food and Public Distribution's Director (Public Distribution) Vivek Shukla is learnt to have written to states on January 6, requesting them for "necessary assistance and co-operation" in sharing beneficiary details.

An official at the NHA told *The Sunday Express* that states have flagged concerns about the "security aspects of such a data transfer" and the possibility of Centre "using it for political gains".

It is also learnt that at a January 4 meeting with officials of the food department, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and IT ministry,

the NHA had raised the issue. "Due to the lack of clarity on whether Aadhaar information can be freely shared between the ministries or not, there has been reluctance on the part of state governments owning the NFSA beneficiary information to share the Aadhaar details with NHA. This was raised by the NHA at the meeting," another government official said.

At the same meeting, it was discussed that existing UIDAI circulars allow ministries and departments to share Aadhaar and related data among themselves "for effective formulation of schemes and selection of beneficiaries".

In October last year, the UIDAI had allowed sharing of Aadhaar details between different government departments under the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.

The PM-JAY scheme, launched in 2018, aims to provide a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable families. The beneficiaries are to be decided based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of SECC 2011 for rural and urban areas respectively. The NHA is tasked with implementation of the PM-JAY scheme.

An official said the onus of ensuring compliance of various provisions and regulations of data protection, data storage, data privacy and seeking consent from Aadhaar holders will lie with the user departments -- in this case the NHA.

"The NHA is planning to attain consent of beneficiaries through both online and offline modes, for example text messages or physical forms at ration shops," the official said.

The NHA CEO, Department of Food and Public Distribution and UIDAI did not respond to queries seeking comments.

In October last year, the Niti Aayog called for the PM-JAY scheme to be extended to cover a section of people without health insurance, highlighting that at least 30 per cent of the population, or 40 crore individuals, called the 'missing middle', are devoid of any financial protection for health.

Among three models suggested to achieve this, the Niti Aayog recommended expanding the government-subsidised health insurance through the PM-JAY scheme to a wider set of beneficiaries.

CRPF officer Chintan nala, close to Putkel village. Security forces responded to the firing by unknown Maoists. Additional reinforcements were sent to the spot, and they are searching the area," he said.

According to sources, security forces had received intelligence inputs that Maoists had gathered near the area.

Police said the Maoists also looted Turkey's AK-47 rifle. His body was recovered from the forest and has been sent to Jagdalpur for post-mortem. Turkey was a resident of Ranchi district in Jharkhand.

Police said the injured CRPF constable, a resident of east

Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, was stable.

Expressing grief over the officer's death, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said in a statement: "Our jawans have been entering the den of Naxals and battling against them with valour and courage. They have pushed Maoists to a limited pocket (in Bastar). The martyrdom of our jawans will not go in vain."

Meanwhile, police are still tracking information on the abduction of a sub-engineer and a head mason, involved in bridge construction work in Bijapur district, by armed Maoists on Friday, over 80 km from the encounter spot.

On Saturday, Sonali Pawar, wife of the sub-engineer, requested Maoists to release him, in a video interview to local media. "We have two young daughters, he had come to Bijapur to earn for them. We will leave immediately, go back to our homes. Please release my husband, I apologise for any of his mistakes," she said.

"A bridge is being constructed over the Indravati river to connect Bijapur and Narayanpur districts. It will connect Bedre to Abujhmad, which is a threat to Maoists," a senior police officer from Bastar had said on Friday. The bridge is being built by a private company.

"Maoists are fighting their last battle as our forces are entering their regions. This is a desperate attempt to ensure their reign of terror," said a senior police officer.

Goa contest with much fanfare, only to see its leader Mamata Banerjee disappear once the elections were announced. And, of course, the bit players who end up having a key role in making and breaking governments.

There's something in the air that's keeping everyone on the edge. After the campaign ended at 6 pm, Congress leaders made a dash to the Chief Electoral Officer to file a complaint against an alleged 'sting operation' by a Hindi channel that claimed some of the party's candidates had accepted money to defect to the BJP after the election. The TMC, too, filed a similar complaint late at night.

A week ago, 37 candidates of the Congress and three of its ally Goa Forward Party swore by the Constitution not to defect if elected. They even put it down in affidavits in the presence of Rahul Gandhi, so that he could deliver these to Sonia Gandhi.

And in the final countdown, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent the temperature soaring when he targeted the Congress and the Gandhi family, accusing Jawaharlal Nehru of delaying Goa's liberation by nearly 15 years in order to protect his global image of a peacenik.

On the ground, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who took over the top job after the death of Parrikar, has been leading the BJP charge. Contesting from his seat Sanquelim for the third time, the 48-year-old's leadership is also being put to test this election. Although he says he is sure to return as CM, this election is quite unlike the last one for his party. It is contesting all the 40 seats for the first time.

Unlike 2017 when with the help of regional allies and independents, the BJP formed the government despite winning only 13 seats, the party has set its sight on winning a majority on its own with the slogan of "Baavisan Baavis plus (In 2022, 22 plus)".

The party lost four sitting MLAs including minister Michael Lobo to other parties ahead of the election and dropped four sitting MLAs who were among the 12 who defected to the BJP from Congress and MGP in 2019. However, the party also inducted "winnable" candidates from other parties and independent sitting MLAs to build its formation.

This is also the first election

that the BJP is contesting after the death of Parrikar. While he has featured on the party's campaign flyers and every speech including that of Modi, his son Utpal, who was denied an election ticket, is now an independent candidate, determined to defeat the BJP in Panaji.

The AAP, meanwhile, is hoping to make a splash with a slew of promises, including a Chief Minister from the numerically strong Bhandari community. A state where election campaigns have steered clear of religious or caste planks, the AAP's strategy remains to be tested. Party chief Arvind Kejriwal has said the party is open to a post-poll alliance with non-BJP party should the need arise.

The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress arrived in Goa with political strategist Prashant Kishor's I-PAC. While Banerjee made two trips to Goa, formalised an alliance with MGP, Goa's oldest regional force, interacted with people and political leaders in the state, she remained absent after the announcement of the election.

Both AAP and the TMC have had to battle the "outsider" perception that weighs heavily on the Goan voter.

Hansel Vaz, a businessman from Margao, said, "This time the election is the loudest we have seen, but the voters are silent. Every election in Goa attracts national attention since Goa is a harbinger state. Parrikar used to call it a lucky charm. It's a small state but it's the voice of the educated class."

Lawyer Shailendra Bhobe, who votes in the Taleigao constituency, said, "This time the election is too unpredictable. It is

not an easy election to call. That is mainly because of the mix of people and also the rise in the number of candidates contesting the election. There are 13 candidates in one constituency and for a small place like Goa that's a big number. Earlier, there would be Congress, BJP, MGP and most people knew who the contest was between. This is what is very different about this election."

Rahul Bajaj dies Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Shri Rahul Bajaj ji will be remembered for his noteworthy contributions to the world of commerce and industry. Beyond business, he was passionate about community service and was a great conversationalist. Pained by his demise. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti."

"He was a very unique individual. He was both a competitor and a friend. He was also a friend of my father and he regarded him as his Guru. He had very clear values, a strong differentiation of right and wrong and was an institution builder. Not only did he build his company, but he was also a big leader for the industry," said Sunil Kant Munjal, Chairman, Hero Enterprise. "He had no hesitation in showing a mirror to anyone regardless of their position and was a straightforward and fearless individual," he said.

Months after the 2002 Gujarat riots, when the Confederation of Indian Industry was hosting then Chief Minister Modi in New Delhi, Rahul Bajaj pointedly asked him if Gujarat was safe for investors during the 'Question and Answer' session.

address mentioned in the licence, but couldn't find anyone.

Shankar Choudhary, (Dwarka), said, "More than 20 teams were working on the case. We had scanned CCTV, spoke to informers, and simultaneously analysed beat books and other diaries to identify the accused. We went to the car showroom to get details about the owner. We found that the accused had sold the car and bought a new Eriga. We found a mobile number and analysed call detail records. The suspect was in

touch with a friend. We went to his friend's place and got his address. A team was sent and they found the Eriga parked outside the house. Kumar was arrested."

According to police, during interrogation, Kumar confessed to raping the woman. He told police he planned to extort money from couples at the park, but raped the woman after her friend left and she was alone.

"He also made a call from her phone to his to get her name.

We matched the call records from his phone. We have also recovered the khaki pants he wore. More than 20 teams worked on the case. We found that the accused would wear khaki pants to scare and mislead couples. He would often go to parks in other areas too," added the DCP.

Sources said they checked his call detail records and found that he has been spotted roaming near parks in South Delhi and Rohini. Police suspect he has blackmailed and extorted money from others too.



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EXPRESS AUDIO

Caste, campaigns, and mahaul: UP Election Special – Part 2

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In the second part of our election series, we discuss the role of caste identities, political campaigns, individual personalities and the mahaul they create

Steady uptick in Muslim girls going to schools, colleges

PERCENTAGE OF MUSLIM GIRLS' ENROLMENT TO TOTAL ENROLMENT OF GIRLS, 2019-20 (UDISE)			
	Upper primary	Secondary	Higher secondary
KARNATAKA			
2015-16	15.16	13.61	8.08
2019-20	15.81	15.47	8.69
ALL INDIA			
2015-16	13.30	11.23	8.77
2019-20	14.54	13.29	10.67

body of a girl. In such circumstances also, the entry of Muslim women with scarf is the only way to address this problem. If they are wearing a scarf under the pressure from their family and the society, they will remove it once they find themselves economically independent after getting higher education," said Khan.

Former Planning Commission Secretary N C Saxena said he is concerned over the hard lines in the current debate. "Equal bias does unequal harm. Muslim women have a moral and legal right to wear hijab but it's a bad strategy because it will lead to further polarisation and bias outside the community which will affect them in many ways. It will further widen the gap," Saxena said.

Going to schools or colleges is what will empower the girls, said Poonam Batra, a professor of Education at Delhi University. "It's education which can enable young women to understand how a hijab or a ghunghat are symbols of patriarchy. So what is regressive here, is to deny them an education in the name of adhering to rules of school uniform. The agenda is to invisibilise Muslims further," Batra said.

More so, for Muslim girls and women. Khan, who has studied the GAR data, said that restricting young women from attending colleges based on their attire will push them back to the "same patriarchal trap which the Karnataka government thinks to remove".

"One may think that wearing a scarf is a patriarchal imposition of the dress over the

tained."

"The hijab row clearly extends the political targeting of the Muslim community by Hindutva forces," said Afeeda. "If we look at its impact on Muslim women's higher education, it's early to predict. But it will influence life choices, especially for women who also have to tackle the embedded patriarchal system in this country."

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CIIL for two terms – 1979-80 and 1999-2000 – he led the industry through two crucial periods.

"I have heard him speak many times in Indian industry and there were times when there could be no more inspiring because he expressed confidence in India and its industries. He was someone who believed if something was right to say or do, one must say or do it because that is the right thing to do. I think we need more such people around," said Naushad Forbes.

According to TVS Motor Chairman Venu Srinivasan, he was among the few stars who created the Indian automotive industry. "He was a pioneer who established a culture of quality and technology. He stood for high integrity in business and stuck to his principles. Rahul played a key role in industry bodies around the world like World Economic Forum and CII and was very well respected. He will be sorely missed," said Srinivasan.

Many feel that Bajaj's contribution to India is unparalleled. His efforts to promote local manufacturing has helped build the foundation of Aatmanirbhar Bharat for decades. "This is a personal loss for me of a good friend whom I have known for nearly 50 years. He was one of the most dynamic and forthright businessmen of his time. He has created an empire and passed it on to the next generation to grow and nurture. I have always admired him for being a passionate and fearless voice of the industry and miss his presence," said Hemendra Kothari, Chairman, DSP Investment Managers.

Retired Army subedar arrested for rape of Delhi teenager: Police

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

THE DELHI Police has arrested a 38-year-old retired Army subedar for allegedly posing as a policeman and raping a 19-year-old woman at a park in Dwarka last month.

The investigating team found that the accused, who contractually works with the Haryana government's sports department as a wrestling coach, would frequent public parks in

South Delhi and Rohini in the evening. It is suspected that he has targeted other couples there to extort money.

On January 28, the woman and her friend were sitting inside a DDA park when the accused approached them wearing a khaki uniform and threatened to charge them, saying they were indulging in obscenity. The incident took place at around 7.30 pm.

The woman alleged in her complaint that the man then assaulted her friend and demanded Rs 11,000 as a "fine". He allegedly

sent the woman's friend to get the cash and molested her. When her friend came back, the accused collected the money and assaulted him again. He forced the friend to leave and then allegedly raped the woman. The woman said she managed to escape eventually.

Police said she told her mother about the incident a day later, and an FIR was registered on February 4.

Police identified the accused as Rajesh Kumar, who joined the Army in 2002 under the sports quota and left in 2019. Since then,

he has been a wrestling coach in Gurgaon on a contractual basis. He lives in Gurgaon with his wife and two children and was arrested from his home, police said.

In the days following the incident, police had few leads. A team was sent to collect CCTV footage from cameras near the spot, and they spotted the accused in an Eriga car. But the quality of the footage wasn't good enough to read the registration number. Footage from other CCTVs on the route was either overwritten or lost, an officer said.

The team then called informers and personnel to share details of "suspicious" persons in the area. A police constable from Dwarka shared photos of a man, his driver's licence and other details, saying he was found walking near a park, had a Swift Dzire car, and that his activities were "suspicious". The inputs from the constable were corroborated by a street vendor, also a police informer, who told officers that he had spotted a suspicious looking man in a Swift Dzire roaming near parks.

Police said they reached the

address mentioned in the licence, but couldn't find anyone.

Shankar Choudhary, (Dwarka), said, "More than 20 teams were working on the case. We had scanned CCTV, spoke to informers, and simultaneously analysed beat books and other diaries to identify the accused. We went to the car showroom to get details about the owner. We found that the accused had sold the car and bought a new Eriga. We found a mobile number and analysed call detail records. The suspect was in

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We matched the call records from his phone. We have also recovered the khaki pants he wore. More than 20 teams worked on the case. We found that the accused would wear khaki pants to scare and mislead couples. He would often go to parks in other areas too," added the DCP.

Sources said they checked his call detail records and found that he has been spotted roaming near parks in South Delhi and Rohini. Police suspect he has blackmailed and extorted money from others too.



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4 WEST BENGAL

ELECTIONS TO FOUR MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

Polling at 71% amid 'isolated incidents of violence'

BJP alleges that the Trinamool Congress brought fake voters and rigged booths to win polls, ruling party denies claim

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 12

AMIDST SPORADIC incidents of violence, over 71 per cent polling was registered in elections to four municipal corporations in West Bengal on Saturday. While 71.87 per cent voting was registered in Asansol Municipal Corporation, 71.09 per cent polling was recorded in Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation. Chandannagar Municipal Corporation, too, saw robust polling at 70.76 per cent while Siliguri Municipal Corporation recorded 73.60 per cent polling.

Elections to these four municipal corporations were last held in 2015. Polling couldn't be held in time due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The counting of votes for these four civic bodies will be done on February 14.

Though largely peaceful, the civic polls on Saturday were marred by isolated incidents of violence. In Asansol's Jamuria area, the CPM alleged that TMC supporters allegedly fired shots outside polling stations number 112 and 114. CPM candidate Dayamoy Bauri said TMC workers made attempts to capture the polling booths but their supporters resisted such attempts. "As they could not capture the booths, they fired shots while fleeing the area. I congratulate my party workers for putting up a resistance," the CPM candidate said.

The TMC however denied such claims. Local TMC leader Laltu Barik said, "This is a baseless allegation. There was a wedding near the polling booths. Sound crackers were burst which were mistaken as gun shots."

At Bumpur in Asansol, a CPM camp office was vandalised allegedly by TMC workers. Also in Asansol, BJP candidate Adarsha Sharma came under an alleged attack from TMC workers. He was seen bleeding from his head. In Bidhannagar, CPM candidate Sukanta Bandyopadhyay also alleged a similar attack.

Opposition parties further alleged that the TMC brought fake voters in Bidhannagar and Asansol. In several booths of Bidhannagar, alleged fake voters were spotted standing in queue to cast their votes.

In ward 31, 'fake' voters were spotted hiding in the toilet of a polling booth. The BJP claimed

that the police remained mute spectators while their candidates chased away the 'fake' voters.

In Asansol, Chaitali Tiwari, a BJP candidate and wife of former mayor Jitendra Tiwari, was allegedly heckled outside a polling booth. The TMC has denied the allegation accusing the BJP of staging a drama.

The police issued a notice to Jitendra Tiwari asking him to keep his armed security guards outside while visiting polling stations.

Police also detained BJP candidates Subhasish Das and Biswajit Mondal in Siliguri for their alleged involvement in stirring trouble outside polling booths.

Meanwhile, West Bengal State Election Commission (WBSEC) directed the police to stop the entry of outsiders in Bidhannagar from New Town and Beliaghata entry points. The directive was issued after the poll panel received information that outsiders were trying to enter Bidhannagar to influence polling.

However, the state poll panel said polling was largely peaceful barring one or two incidents of violence.

TMC Secretary general Partha Chatterjee congratulated the people of four civic bodies for exercising their franchise. "The polling was peaceful. People were able to exercise their franchise. We thank them for taking part in these elections," Chatterjee said.

The BJP, however, termed the election as a farce. BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar said, "This cannot be called an election. The TMC, with the help of the police, turned it into a farce. They brought fake voters, attacked our candidates and rigged booths to win the election. It is unfortunate that a free, fair and peaceful election cannot be held in West Bengal."

In Bidhannagar, a total of 203 candidates are contesting in 41 wards, while in Siliguri 200 contestants are in fray in 47 wards. In Siliguri, there are 594 polling stations of which 89 are sensitive booths.

In Chandannagar, there are 120 candidates vying to be councillors from 33 wards, while Asansol has 106 wards for which a total of 431 candidates are in fray. A total of 1182 polling stations were put together in Asansol.



BIDHANNAGAR

Voters allege scuffles outside booths, CPM flags 'false voting'

SWEETY KUMARI
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 12

SOON AFTER polling began for Bidhannagar municipal corporation, reports of trouble filtered in from several wards in the area. On a ward visit in the Bidhannagar area during the polling hours, *The Indian Express* came across several complaints, from fake voters to physical assault on Opposition candidates.

While no large-scale incident of violence was reported this time, many voters claimed to have witnessed scuffles outside polling booths throughout the day in the presence of police personnel.

"I have swelling on my head and bruises on my hand," said Abhilash Saw, the polling agent of Soumyadip Bhattacharya, the BJP candidate from ward 39 of Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation.

Around 9.44 am, this correspondent reached a polling station at Bidyadhori Vidyalaya in ward 39. There were separate queues for male and female voters and the polling arrangements seemed adequate, with Covid protocols followed and 6-7 police personnel watching over the premises.

However, what caught the eye was a bunch of boys on two-wheelers, who were alleged to be TMC supporters standing outside the booth.

BJP candidate Soumyadip Bhattacharya was approaching the booth with his election agent



Two-time Bidhannagar mayor and TMC nominee from ward 31 Sabyasachi Dutta enjoys an ice cream outside a polling booth on Saturday. Partha Paul

when they were surrounded by several alleged TMC supporters.

"Why have you come here... Go away," one of the alleged TMC men was heard telling the BJP candidate as he closed in on the booth with his polling agent. Both sides started abusing each other and a scuffle broke out soon after. The BJP polling agent was allegedly slapped and pushed around even as police personnel stood guard only a few steps away. Roughly 15 minutes after, additional forces reached the spot but by then, the tension had already ebbed.

Former councillor and TMC candidate Rajesh Chirimar also reached the spot soon after.

"Why are you creating scene here? Why do you need to visit a booth where the polls are being conducted peacefully? You (BJP)

have this habit of creating disturbance during the polling process," Chirimar was heard telling the BJP candidate.

"My election agent was beaten up. He was thrashed. I am not creating any scene. As a candidate, I have every right to see if everything is going smoothly or not. But this is clearly undemocratic," Bhattacharya retorted.

Asked to comment on the alleged physical assault on the BJP candidate, he said, "The police will investigate if anyone was beaten up. I have no problem if the police pick up anyone who they feel is creating disturbance during the poll process."

Even as the scuffle broke out outside the booth, polling continued uninterrupted.

"I voted peacefully and am

happy that there wasn't a repeat of 2015. The polling was more peaceful this time," Saraswati Mondal, a voter, said.

However, another voter at the same booth, Sharmista Maiti, alleged that she was initially stopped from voting. "They identified me as a BJP supporter and did not allow me inside. However, I was determined to vote and did. But who will dare vote in this ambience of fear created by the TMC?" she said.

The CPM alleged that at several wards, the ruling party brought outsiders to rig the polls and the police stood as mute spectators.

However, in many areas, elderly voters braved the alleged intimidation and stepped out to exercise their franchise. Jibantala Seal, a 92-year-old voter from Duttabad Road, said, "I was given a pair of gloves and voted. A police officer even dropped me off near my house."

"The voting process was very well managed. This was, perhaps, the most peaceful polling in my area. However, I don't think too many voters turned up today," said Sourav Saha, a differently abled voter, who arrived on his wheelchair to exercise his franchise at BF Block of Salt Lake.

However, Srijoni Ghosh, a 30-year-old voter from ward 30, alleged that she wasn't allowed to vote on her serial number. "I was told that somebody else had already voted on my serial number. When I asked how could this be possible, the polling personnel told me to cast my vote on a different



(Left) Voters queue up at a booth at Duttabad in Salt Lake on Saturday; the polling agent of Soumyadip Bhattacharya, the BJP candidate from ward 39 of Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation, alleged that he was roughed up outside the Duttabad polling booth. Photos: Partha Paul

serial number," she said.

Around 1.30 pm, about 200 police personnel in helmets and armed with batons rushed to this ward after residents of Baisakhi Abasan alleged hooliganism in their area. "Some outsiders had gathered here, creating an ambience of fear. When we objected to their presence, a few of them pelted stones at us. We chased them away," a voter told *Express* on the condition of anonymity.

A huge police contingent was deployed at ward 30 after the incident. The men in uniform were seen chasing away crowds outside polling booths in this ward.

As the *Express* reached ward 32, a scuffle broke out at booth 6 at a community centre between TMC and CPM supporters. It was alleged that several senior citizens of this ward were manhandled by the ruling party supporters.

Sanyashi Ghosh, the election agent CPM candidate Sukanta Banerjee, claimed that several "outsiders and false voters were brought by the TMC to vote in their favour". However, local TMC supporters denied the charge. The CPM agent and other party supporters were alleged to have been chased by ruling party supporters. However, the police acted swiftly and brought the situation under control. "You all are here and still the outsiders managed to enter this area. Salt Lake is an upscale area and we can identify outsiders. There are so many unknown faces voting," Ghosh was heard telling policemen.

"We don't have the authority to check allegations of false voting. These have to be cross-checked by the presiding officer. Please leave the area and let people vote," R Sardar, an on-duty policeman, told the CPM polling agent.

All eyes were on the Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation as the Calcutta High Court ordered on Thursday that the commissioner of the SEC would be personally liable if there was any violence in the area.

"There was no disturbance and everyone voted peacefully," said Kamal Gandhi, a businessman from CF Block.

TMC candidate from ward 31 and two-time Bidhannagar mayor, Sabyasachi Dutta, gave full marks to the election commission over the conduct of the polls and praised the police as well. "The State Election Commission has been successful in abiding by the court's order. Police personnel also did their bit to ensure that people voted peacefully. Central forces were not required here. People in Salt Lake are peace-loving. Central forces cannot change people's mandate. I contested the 2021 (Assembly) polls under the central forces (on a BJP ticket) but lost," Dutta told *Express* in between enjoying an ice cream outside a polling booth near CF block.

The first-ever mayor of Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation, Dutta joined BJP in 2019. However, losing in the Assembly election in May, he returned to the TMC.

State logs 672 fresh Covid cases, 25 deaths

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 12

WEST BENGAL reported 672 fresh Covid-19 infections on Saturday, taking its tally of cases to 20,10,389. However, according to a bulletin issued by the state health department, the active cases in the state stood at 13,484, 700 less than the previous day.

The overall case positivity was 1.65 per cent.

However, the state logged 25 fresh fatalities from Covid-19 over the last 24 hours, taking its toll to 20,990.

Bengal also reported 1,347 fresh recoveries, pushing the cumulative figure up to 19,75,915. The discharge rate was at 98.29 per cent as of Saturday.

Of the fresh cases, Kolkata reported the highest at 89, fol-

lowed closely by North 24 parganas at 88. The bulletin stated that of the 25 fresh fatalities, Kolkata logged the most at 6, followed by South 24 parganas at 4. Purba Bardhaman and Paschim Bardhaman reported 3 deaths each.

A total of 40,848 samples were tested for Covid in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of such examinations to 2,37,27,701.

Governor prorogues Assembly on govt recommendation

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 12

ON THE recommendation of the state government, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday prorogued the state Legislative Assembly with effect from February 12, exercising the power vested in him under Article 174 of the Constitution.

"In exercise of the powers conferred upon me by sub-clause (a) of clause (2) of article 174 of the Constitution, I,

Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governor of the State of West Bengal, hereby prorogue the West Bengal Legislative Assembly with effect from 12 February, 2022," the Governor tweeted.

Prorogation is discontinuing a session of the Parliament or a legislative assembly without dissolving it.

The Governor clarified that his decision comes on the recommendation of the state government. "In view of inappropriate reporting in a section of media, it is indicated that taking

note of govt recommendation seeking proroguing of Assembly, Govt in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by article 174 (2)(a) the Constitution has prorogued WBLA w.e.f. Feb 12, 2022," Dhankhar said in another tweet.

While proroguing the Assembly, the Governor directed that "all necessary steps, including publication for general information of the notification proroguing the West Bengal Legislative Assembly with effect from 12 February 2022, may be

taken immediately. Thereafter, the proposal for taking necessary steps as per article 174(1) of the Constitution may be sent to this office for due consideration in the light of earlier note dated 3 February 2020."

The state government will have to take permission from the Governor to commence the next session of the Assembly and it would have to begin with a speech by him.

The Budget session of the Assembly was scheduled to commence either in February or

March in view of the ongoing civic body polls in the state. The Trinamool was considering bringing a motion against Dhankhar during the upcoming session, accusing him of interfering in the day-to-day activities of the state government.

On Friday, Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Sekhar Ray had submitted a Substantive Motion under Rule 170 in the Rajya Sabha, urging President Ram Nath Kovind to remove Dhankhar as West Bengal Governor.

Haryana CM Khattar's visit to Punjab called off

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, FEBRUARY 12

THE BJP has cancelled all the three rallies of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar scheduled for Saturday stating that he was busy somewhere else. However, 23 farmer unions of Punjab claimed that it was because of their proposed protest at all the rally sites because of which the rallies were cancelled.

To celebrate the cancellation of rallies, the BKU Dakaunda even took out a victory rally at the grain market of Jagraon on Saturday morning.

Khattar had to address rallies in Gill and Jagraon constituencies of Ludhiana district while the third one was in Kapurthala.

HIJAB ROW

Karnataka hijab row: PU colleges to remain shut till Wednesday

KIRAN PARASHAR
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 12

THE KARNATAKA government on Saturday extended holidays for all pre-university (PU) colleges amid the ongoing row over students wearing hijab not having been allowed to enter classes in some colleges in the state. The state government, in an order, announced that PU colleges will remain shut on Monday and Tuesday.

The Karnataka High Court is scheduled to hear the case on Monday. In an interim order, the court had restrained students from wearing any religious attire in classrooms of colleges where

such attire is prohibited, until a final order is given in the case.

Colleges have remained shut since last Wednesday (February 9) amid tension in campuses over the hijab issue.

The state's Higher Education Minister C N Ashwathnarayan had on Friday announced that all degree, post-graduate and technical colleges would remain shut until the coming Wednesday (February 16). Students of PU colleges are scheduled to have their final exams from April 16.

Police, meanwhile, have held flag marches in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts as part of preventive measures in communally sensitive areas.

There were, however, some incidents that led to the flaring up of tensions.

In one such incident, a video was being shared since Friday of students performing namaz inside a school in Dakshina Kannada. The video was purportedly from a government school in Dakshina Kannada's Ankathadka. According to a source, the video was of students performing namaz on February 4, but it began to spread from Friday (February 11).

Education department officials visited the school on Friday and have sought a report. Teachers have directed students not to engage in any religious activity inside classrooms.

In another incident, in Bengaluru, people gathered in front of Vidyasagar English Public school on Saturday morning amid tensions over the alleged use of derogatory words by a teacher to a section of students regarding the hijab row.

Shahabuddin, a parent, told reporters that there had been no previous instances of Hindu-Muslim divide in the school. The alleged use of derogatory terms by a teacher prompted him and other parents to come to the school, Shahabuddin said. He added that the school assured him that action would be taken, and that the issue had been resolved.

RAIL WHEEL FACTORY
Yelahanka, Bangalore-560 064.
Website: www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE NO. -RWF/S/P/10/18/2021-22 dt 11.02.22

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from Interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal - www.irops.gov.in. The Tender documents and the Corrigenda to the Tenders, if any, will be available on the Portal only.

Tender No/Due Date	Short Description
P1221103 02-03-22	Steel Blooms 300 mm Sq for forging LHB/flat Bogie Axles as per RWF specification. Qty:- 13742 MT
P1211566B 28-03-22	Graphite Electrode with preset nipple as per RWF specification. Qty:- 412 MT
P1211544A 28-03-22	Graphite Powder as per RWF specification. Qty:- 955 MT

GLOBAL TENDERS:-

P3211041B 14-03-22	Graphite Mould Blanks as per RWF specification. [1] 1097 mm dia X 575 mm height - RWF Regt: 50 Nos, RWP/Bela Regt: 34 Nos. [2] 1224 mm dia X 575 mm height - RWF Regt: 585 Nos, RWP/Bela Regt: 116 Nos
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Principal Chief Materials Manager

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L. No. 6191/UPUMS/Recruitment Cell (55 (Part-II)/2021-22 Dated: 12 February, 2022

CORRIGENDUM

As per the Advt. No. UPUMS/ACAD/18/2021-22 dated **03-01-2022** published, the deadline for the submission of the applications for all positions is being extended till **28.02.2022 till 05:00 PM**.

For details kindly visit the University website :- www.upums.ac.in.

Registrar

Shri. Rahul Bajaj

Chairman Emeritus, Bajaj Group



An Extraordinary Life 1938 - 2022

Cremation: 13th February, 5:00 pm
Vaikunth Crematorium, Sadashiv Peth, Behind Alka Talkies, Pune

Prayer meeting will be held on
Wednesday, 16th February, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
at the Bajaj Auto colony, cricket ground, Akurdi, Pune
Live stream link will be shared on Bajaj Group websites & social handles

Late Smt. Rupa Bajaj

Rajiv & Deepa Bajaj, Sanjiv & Shefali Bajaj,
Sunaina & Manish Kejriwal,
Sanjali, Rishab & Siddhant Bajaj,
Aryaman & Nirvaan Kejriwal

Suman Jain & Naresh Chandra,
Shishir & Minakshi, Shekhar & Kiran,
Madhur & Kumud, Niraj & Minal,
Tarang & Rochna Jain, Anurang & Varsha Jain,
Kushagra & Vasavadatta, Apoorv & Meenakshi,
Late Anant & Pooja, Nirav & Sheetal,
Geetika, Neelima & Aditya Swamy,
Nimisha & Amit Jaipuria, Kriti & Ram Chandra

BAJAJ

Bajaj Parivar



I HEREBY DECLARE



RKIMO SINGH
BJP,
Sagolband,
Manipur

TOTAL ASSETS: ₹5.1 crore
MOVABLE ASSETS:
Total: ₹1.1 crore
(includes a shotgun and a .38 pistol)
Cash: ₹2.1 lakh
Bank deposits: ₹37 lakh (in 7 accounts)
Vehicles: Maruti Gypsy

(₹6.5 lakh), Mahindra Scorpio (₹16.6 lakh), Harley Davidson bike (₹18 lakh)

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:
Total: ₹3.9 crore
Self-acquired property: ₹15 lakh

Inherited assets: ₹1 crore

Building: ₹2.4 crore

BANK LOANS AND LIABILITIES: ₹44 lakh

CRIMINAL CASES: Nil

SOURCES OF EARNING:
MLA salary, interest on fixed deposits



KRISHNA PATEL
Apna Dal (Kamerawadi),
Pratapgarh

TOTAL ASSETS: ₹6.87 crore
MOVABLE ASSETS: ₹4.87 crore

IMMOVABLE ASSETS: ₹2 crore

LOANS FROM FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS OR INDIVIDUALS: ₹2 crore

CRIMINAL CASES: Nil

SOURCES OF EARNING:
Krishna Patel Students' Hostel and Neeraj Investments



RAMSHARAN NAUTIYAL
BJP, Chakrata
Dehradun

TOTAL ASSETS: ₹19 crore
MOVABLE ASSETS: Self: ₹1.89 crore
(includes a rifle, a pistol and a revolver)
Wife: ₹3 crore

(includes a revolver)
IMMOVABLE ASSETS: Self: ₹5 crore
Wife: ₹9 crore

LOANS FROM BANKS OR OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: Self: ₹30 lakh
Wife: ₹78.78 lakh

CRIMINAL CASES: Nil

SOURCES OF EARNING:
Agriculture and business

EDUCATION: MA in Sociology (1978-79)

BALLOTIN

Rebel BJP legislator booked for violating model code of conduct

Ballia (UP): Bairiya's BJP MLA Surendra Singh, contesting the UP assembly election as a Vikasheel Insaan Party ticket after quitting his earlier party, has been booked for allegedly violating the model code of conduct. Singh had held a meeting in the Haldi police station area on Friday in violation of the model code of conduct, they said. Meanwhile, targeting the BJP leadership, MLA Singh has termed its leadership as "feudal lords of democracy". Addressing his supporters, he said, "The BJP has got a disease in its mind that it can even make a donkey an MLA. They probably do not know that the people of rebel Ballia land had slapped the British rule away," Singh added. **PTI**

AAP complains against BJP leader

Chandigarh: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday said it has lodged a complaint with the poll panel and the police against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa for allegedly spreading false information. "Sirsa shared a news story on his Twitter handle that claims Kejriwal has said that in Punjab 10-year-old vehicles won't be allowed (to ply) under an AAP government, which is fabricated information and is shared to promote ill-will and feeling of hostility against the Aam Aadmi Party," the Punjab unit of the party said in a statement. **PTI**

BATTLE IN THE HILLS

As Uttarakhand prepares to vote, Kumaon gets a big push

Smaller of the two regions, both Dhimi, Rawat are fighting from this region



Harish Rawat campaigns in Lalkuan; and (right) CM Pushkar Singh Dhimi in Khatima. *Express*



AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, FEBRUARY 12

AS THE election campaign in Uttarakhand drew to a close on Saturday, with both the BJP and the Congress coming out with all their big guns blazing, the focus now shifts to election day on February 14, when the state and its two broad regions — Kumaon and Garhwal — go to the polls.

While both the regions are key to the election result, this time, the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress have focused their energies on Kumaon, the smaller of the two regions.

Of the state's 13 districts, Kumaon, which has Nainital as zonal headquarters, has six. Garhwal, with Pauri Garhwal as headquarters, has seven districts. Garhwal, of which capital Dehradun is a part, has 41 constituencies and is much larger than Kumaon, which has 29.

One of the reasons Kumaon has been more in focus this election is because both Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhimi and senior Congress leader and chief ministerial aspirant Harish Rawat are contesting from Kumaon. While Kumaon is traditionally considered a Congress stronghold, in

Garhwal, the odds are more even.

In 2017, riding the Narendra Modi wave, the BJP managed to win in 57 of the total 70 Assembly seats while the Congress was limited to 11 seats. Two of the remaining seats were won by Independent candidates who are now with the ruling party.

That election, it was the Garhwal region that powered the BJP to a big win, mainly because several powerful Congress leaders from the region, including Satpal Maharaj, Harak Singh Rawat and Vijay Bahuguna, had joined the BJP ahead of the elections. The party won 34 out of 41 seats in Garhwal and 23 out of 29 seats in the Kumaon region. The Congress won six in Garhwal and five in Kumaon.

But now, with Harak Singh Rawat back in the Congress and Vijay Bahuguna and Satpal Maharaj seen as sidelined in the party, and with the anti-incumbency against the BJP likely to be a factor, both sides seem evenly matched in this region.

That leaves Kumaon wide open for both the parties — a fact that's evident given the attention lavished on the region by both

the Congress and the BJP.

Earlier, in an interview with *The Indian Express*, Harish Rawat had said that he decided to contest from Lalkuan seat in Nainital because "the seat is the heart of Kumaon", from where the party needs to get as many seats as possible.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier accused the Opposition of creating a wedge between Garhwal and Kumaon.

Sources in the BJP suggested the party's desire to do well in Kumaon was one of the factors it considered when it brought in the relatively inexperienced Pushkar Singh Dhimi, a two-MLA from the region, as Chief Minister to replace Tirath Singh Rawat. It was a move to counter Harish Rawat, they said.

Both Tirath Singh and his predecessor Trivendra Singh Rawat were from Garhwal.

Of the state's 10 CMs so far, six were from Garhwal and the remaining four from Kumaon. Yet, it is Kumaoni leaders who have mostly dominated politics here, even before Uttarakhand became a state.

Uttar Pradesh's first chief min-

VOTING TOMORROW

TRACKING COVID IN ELECTION-BOUND STATES

UTTAR PRADESH

Deaths 23,391

Deaths Today 9

Cases 1,746

5,240 Feb 3 Feb 12

PUNJAB

Deaths 17,585

Deaths Today 10

Cases 422

2,154 Feb 3 Feb 12

UTTARAKHAND

Deaths 7,645

Deaths Today 2

Cases 447

1,618 Feb 3 Feb 12

GOA

Deaths 3,769

Deaths Today 1

Cases 157

618 Feb 3 Feb 12

MANIPUR

Deaths 2,080

Deaths Today 3

Cases 110

262 Feb 3 Feb 12

LAST DAY OF CAMPAIGNING

Dhimi promises Uttarakhand a Uniform Civil Code of its own

AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, FEBRUARY 12

ON THE last day of election campaigning in Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhimi announced that the BJP government, if re-elected, will constitute a committee to draft a uniform civil code (UCC) as the "security" of the state's cultural and religious heritage as well as its borders was important for the country.

"The security of cultural and religious heritage of Uttarakhand, its environment and borders is important not just for the state, but for the entire country. With that, soon after our oath-taking ceremony, the upcoming BJP government will form a committee of those with knowledge of the legal system, retired employees, prominent people from society and other stakeholders. This committee will prepare a draft of the uniform civil code for the people of Uttarakhand. This UCC will be for equal laws on subjects like marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance for people of all religions," Dhimi told a news agency on Saturday.

Uttarakhand will vote on February 14 to elect its next Assembly.

"The UCC will be an important step towards fulfilling the dream of the Constitution's creators, and will solidify the spirit of the Constitution. This will also be an



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhimi

effective step towards Article 44 of the Constitution, which talks about securing a UCC for every citizen of the country. The apex court too has from time to time not only laid emphasis on its implementation, but has expressed dissatisfaction over steps not being taken in this direction," the Chief Minister said.

"Along with this, the immense spiritual and cultural recognition of devbhoomi will also be increased while keeping the environment secured. The UCC of Uttarakhand will also act as an example for other states," he said.

Congress state media in-charge Rajiv Maharshi on Saturday called the announcement a desperate attempt by the BJP to polarise the coming election because the party is staring a defeat in Uttarakhand.

"The announcement by the

Chief Minister shows their frustration. It is the same party which took a U-turn on the formation of Devasthanam Board (temple shrine board) and on allotment of land in Gairsain (as a third commissionerate in the state after Kumaon and Garhwal) to be developed as summer capital. The UCC appears to be another issue on which they will take a U-turn," he said.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi too reacted to Dhimi's statement, saying that the CM should "understand that 'uniform' doesn't mean common". "Babasaheb (Dr B R Ambedkar) had said that it should be voluntary and not mandatory. AIMIM believes in 'unity in diversity'. What does diversity mean? It means one size won't fit everyone. India has several cultures," said the parliamentarian.



SP president Akhilesh Yadav at a rally in Badaun on Saturday. *Courtesy: Twitter/Akhilesh Yadav*

After first phase of voting, BJP leaders left cold, says Akhilesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 12

IN A jibe at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's comments against "heated" young leaders, Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday said that after the first phase of the UP assembly elections, BJP leaders and workers have been left cold. He predicted that the second phase on February 14 will be worse for the BJP.

"You must have heard that the Baba CM was saying that he will remove the heat from us ('garmi nikal denge'). But after polling in the first phase, their workers and leaders have been left cold," said

Akhilesh while addressing his party workers in Badaun.

"After the first phase only, the winds in UP have changed and the bad time for the BJP has started. In the second phases, the BJP's situation is going to get worse. The BJP will be cleaned from UP. Especially in Badaun, they will not open in their account," said the former chief minister. The SP chief also addressed a public gathering in Shahjahanpur, which along with Badaun will vote in the second phase. Akhilesh hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said that all medical colleges Modi inaugurated in the state are "modern ruins". "You must have seen that the prime minister inaugurated new medical colleges. But

those medical colleges are not functional. Not a single one. They all stand like modern ruins," said Akhilesh.

He reiterated that under the "double-engine" government of the BJP, corruption has doubled.

"Our Baba CM says that there will be mafia raj if the SP is voted to power. Have you thought why the CM says so? It is because when he wakes up in the morning and looks in the mirror that is what he sees, and hence, he discusses it the whole day during election rallies. He talks about what he sees in the mirror. Is there any CM in the country with so many cases? Tell me. He is the first CM who has withdrawn cases against himself," said Akhilesh.

‘AAP not B-team of BJP or Cong, but A-team of Punjab’

AS AAP co-in-charge of Punjab, **RAGHAV CHADHA** has been managing the party's election campaign in the state for months. And it seems the Punjab polls have also transformed Chadha, the suave AAP leader from Delhi with a degree from the London School of Economics. After weeks of campaigning and months of press conferences, he can not only hurl barbs at his opponents in Punjabi but also break into a jig at will, much to the glee of his audience as he criss-crosses the state. With polls barely a week away, **MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA** asked him questions about various challenges facing the AAP, including the charge that it has diluted its "aam aadmi" identity by giving poll tickets to other parties' turncoats. Excerpts:



the people. Also, it is appalling that poor Sunil Jakhar has been compelled to retire from electoral politics only because he is from the Hindu community. In their myopic way of looking at the state through the prism of religion and caste, Congress party doesn't perhaps understand Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyat.



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW

WITH
RAGHAV CHADHA
AAP CO-INCHARGE OF PUNJAB

There's an apprehension that if AAP comes to power, the government here will be remote-controlled by Delhi.

This is a nonsensical argument which doesn't even merit a response. People love Kejriwal, they desperately want to experience his model of governance.

Has Congress's decision to make Channi their CM face made your task more challenging?

Punjab has steadfastly refused to get divided on the lines of caste and religion. As for the Dalit vote-bank politics, BSP is a political party born in the state, but in order to practise its Dalit-centric politics, it had to shut its shop here and move to UP. Mayawati lost Lok Sabha polls in Punjab but won in UP. Any attempt to divide the people on caste lines will backfire.

What is your model of development for Punjab?

The Kejriwal model of governance will be implemented in the state based on its needs, characteristics and condition. The pillars of this model are social security, basic amenities, law and order and prosperity.

Your party has also fielded many turncoats.

AAP is a party that welcomes any leader who wants to work for the prosperity of Punjab. There are good people in other parties too and AAP is happy to welcome them. **FULL INTERVIEW ON**
www.indianexpress.com

There seemed to be a bigger wave for AAP in 2017, yet you managed only 20 seats?

The difference between 2017 and 2022 is that in the last Assembly elections, people had not experienced Delhi's development. Now people have seen the governance in Delhi, and they want a similar system here. 2017 was our first outing, and the Akali-BJP-Congress combine might have managed to outsmart us. A senior Akali Dal leader has said that votes were transferred from BJP-Akali account to Congress because they were in a position to challenge us.

Former Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar has alleged that you (AAP) are in cahoots with the BJP.

Congress says we are 'B' team of BJP, while BJP says we are 'B' team of Congress. We are neither of the two. We are the 'A' team of

In SP stronghold, PM hits out at previous 'corrupt' govts in UP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 12

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday targeted the Samajwadi Party (SP), saying that the itra (perfume) industry of Kannauj has been associated with corruption due to the policies of the previous government in Uttar Pradesh. Modi was addressing a public rally in Kannauj.

Referring to the itra (perfume) industry there, Modi said, "One witness of the family-oriented parties' bad policies is the perfume industry here in Kannauj. With their corruption and black deeds, they have brought shame to the perfume industry and associated the itra with corruption. We are working to make itra a global brand." Drawing a parallel between Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, Modi said Gujarat suffered due to "frequent riots" before the BJP came to power in the state.

"There was a time when Gujarat was in the same situation. The Congress government had created a situation where businesses couldn't prosper. People weren't safe. And riots used to happen every year. In 10 years, seven years would see riots. There used to be riots over small issues, such as the flying of kites. And because of that there used to be curfew and people had to sell their house for



PM Narendra Modi at a rally in Kannauj, Saturday. *PTI*

cheap prices and the identity of the houses had to be changed. Gujarat was stuck in this situation for a long time. When the people of Gujarat gave a chance to the BJP, the situation changed. We gave primary importance to the law-and-order [situation], the rule of law. Now, people from all sections and communities are working for the development of Gujarat and the country," said Modi.

"For the past two days, after polling in the first phase [in Uttar Pradesh], the parivaarvadis (dynasts) have stopped dreaming. You know why? Because they can't sleep. They were thinking that they would spread casteism, communalism and divide votes. But I am happy that the people of UP are uniting in voting against those who support mafia and rioters. This unity is in favour of making the state free of riots," he said.

‘With Ukraine, Putin has forced a debate on Russia’s acceptability as a European power’

In this explained.Live session, Dr C Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor, National University of Singapore, dissects the many dimensions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, its impact on India and the way nations look at spheres of influence



In conversation with Shubhajit Roy, Deputy Chief of National Bureau. *Express*

is seeking protection from other big powers to stand up to Russia's bullying tactics. If Sri Lanka gives a base to the Chinese tomorrow, India cannot afford to be threatening. Big countries have to win over the small ones and the smaller ones should be careful not to provoke bigger neighbours because that's how Crimea happened and Ukraine lost territory. This is where the prudence and balance of trying to respond to a new historical circumstance is a big challenge but it's hard for the nationalist mood to agree to a mutual understanding.

On whether India should be worried

It's difficult to manage foreign policy when major powers start fighting. If there are serious sanctions against Russia and the US blocks waivers, they will impact our \$400 deal. We have to evacuate a large number of Indians. Oil prices will shoot up if there is a war and worsen inflation. But the biggest problem will be if Russia seeks a referendum saying it has taken Crimea on the basis of a vote where 90 per cent of the population wanted to join it. A referendum allows you to take somebody else's territory in the name of ethnic and religious solidarity. Tomorrow, Pakistan might do the same in PoK. Remember when a referendum took place in Crimea, the Hurriyat issued a statement saying it was a great idea. We don't want to talk about it because of our friendship with Russia.

But if there's a referendum in eastern Ukraine, I doubt India will support that kind of action.

On India's diplomatic position

We will face dual pressure, from the Russians as our traditional ally and from the US with whom we have partnered for Quad. Our interests with the West are far deeper, our economic interests are largely with the US and Europe. And though Putin met Chinese President Xi Jinping, China will be guarded and not go the whole hog. Everybody has to judge their own interests instead of going by sentiment. India is not a small nation, it's becoming the third-largest country. We can navigate this with finesse, take strong positions on principle and make sure that our interests are met. The US-Russia-China relationship has changed so much over the last 70 years. China today is 10 times bigger than Russia though in the 50s, it was the junior partner. A Russia fighting with the US and Europe would have little value for China. The moot point is that our problem with China is real, deep and unlikely to change. We have to go in the direction that helps us neutralise it.



SCAN THE CODE TO WATCH VIDEO

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

On whether US and Russia can sort this mess

Russians have been in statecraft for the last 1000 years, much longer than independent India, and have had deals with Americans before. They are not innocent, being pushed into this conflict by wretched Americans. Russia has genuine grievances on NATO expansion and US weapons sitting in Ukraine. We understand both positions. If they cut a deal, good for us. If they can't, we have to respond to that situation.

On whether India should have a regional security architecture like Europe

Europe's peace has rested on US ascen-

dancy and Russia's decline. So Europeans are delusional if they think they have discovered the perpetual peace of Immanuel Kant and Asia is still in the Hobbesian world of ruthless war with each other. Putin has already got a victory. He has forced a debate, and if he doesn't overplay his hand, he can walk out of this with some gains. Today French President Emmanuel Macron says Russian trauma must be addressed, that Russia is a part of Europe and must have a common security. At least the crisis has forced the West to stop saying that Russia is a regional power. It has enough military power to play hell, which is what Putin is demonstrating.

knowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest tragedy of the 20th century. He wants to undo that past as his legacy. The West, on the other hand, doesn't want Russia to sanitise or gain a kind of veto over its neighbourhood. Besides, former Soviet Republics like the Baltic nations of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia deny Russia's paternalistic interest in them and do not want to go back to a structure they willingly broke out of.

The US is following its old protectionist Monroe Doctrine that once warned European nations against further colonisation or puppet monarchs. In South Asia, India has sensitivities about Chinese proximity to Nepal and Sri Lanka. All large countries tend to seek a sanitised zone around them. In

that sense, Russia is trying to do the same just as China is trying to build its favourable sphere of influence in Asia. The story of international relations is always about deferring to the interests of the great powers as opposed to protecting the interests of the smaller countries.

The fourth dimension is Ukraine's international relations in the face of Russia's "No Ukraine in NATO" demand. NATO had promised Ukraine to induct it in 2008 and though US President Joe Biden says this cannot happen immediately, Russia wants a legal guarantee against a new inclusion. But what about Ukraine's own interests and choices? If NATO comes into Ukraine, instead of Ukraine going into NATO, that's also not accept-

NCSC summons Maharashtra officials, flags Wankhede's 'harassment' by Mumbai Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 12



Sameer Wankhede

THE NATIONAL Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has written to top bureaucrats of the Maharashtra government, asking them to appear before it on March 7 with an up-to-date action taken report in the FIR under The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, in the complaint filed by former Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) zonal director Sameer Wankhede.

Wankhede is currently serving as an officer with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). "The petitioner (Wankhede) belongs to SC community as per the available documents so far. An inquiry of the case is being done by lower rank police officers and the constitution of SIT is not in accor-

dance with the Act. The investigating officers are harassing the petitioner and his family members. This violation has been viewed by the Commission," the panel recorded in the minutes of its meeting on January 31.

Referring to the meeting records, on February 11, Arun Halder, vice-chairman of the Commission addressed a letter to the state Chief Secretary (CS), DGP, Principal Secretary, Home department, Mumbai District Collector and Director General of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute (BARTI), Pune, to appear on March 7 in hearing before NCSC vice-chairman Arun Halder, with

"up-to-date action taken report" and all the relevant documents including files and case diaries etc.

On January 31, the panel had directed the Maharashtra government to register an FIR in the case within seven days. The Commission had also directed that the investigation be done by a police official not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) in the case. The panel had suggested that the SIT formed by Mumbai police to look into allegations by Wankhede be dissolved immediately, as there was no provision under the Act to constitute such a team or to do preliminary examination before registration of FIR.

Wankhede has been fighting allegations made by Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik that he forged his caste certificate to secure a job as an IRS officer.

NAVJEEVAN GOPAL
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 12

INA classic scenario of once bitten, twice shy after the January 5 security breach fiasco, Punjab police are leaving nothing to chance to make security arrangements for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to

NOTICE

My Client: Mr. Indranil Saha, son of Late Babul Saha, of 'Madhabvilla', Thakurpara, Purba Putiary, P.O. Gangapuri, P.S. Regent Park, Kolkata- 700093, (M) 9073935605, going to purchase two separate self contained complete flats, being No. 'D', measuring 1100 sqft. (including 25% super built up area) more or less and flat being No. 'E' measuring 1177 sqft. (including 25% super built up area) more or less, both on the 7th floor along with a Car parking space (under the roof) being No. 11, measuring 120 sqft. on the ground floor in R.S. & L.R. Dag no. 3084 (P), under R.S. & L.R. Khatia Nos. 1108, 1395, 133, of Mouza Ghuni, J.L. No. 23, under Jyagra-Hatiara II No. Gram Panchayet, P.S. New Town, Pin-700059, Dist. 24 Pgs. (N), got by SRI JAYANTA ROYCHOWDHURY, son of Manoj Roy Chowdhury, of Gouranga Nagar, P.O. & P.S. New Town, Kolkata- 700159, Dist. 24 Pgs. (N), by a Registered Deed of gift vide Book No. 1, Being Nos. 152311772 & 152311771, for the year 11.10.2018 at A.D.S.R. Rajarhat Office, is the sixteen annas owner thereof and he did not sold, lease, mortgage or gifted any time to any body or organization and there is no case, suit, proceedings are pending before any Court of Law in respect of the said two flats & a Car Parking Space, and there is no other owner except him over the said two flats & a Car Parking space and the said two flats & a Car Parking space are in no way of encumbered. If anybody raised any objection in respect of the said two flats & a Car Parking space he/she is requested to contact me with valid documents thereof within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which no claim/demand shall be entertained.

Pratip Das (Advocate)
Alipore Judges's Court,
3, Eastern Park, Baghajatin, G-Block, (Near Vidyasagar Bus Stand), Kolkata-700086, (M) 9836898293/94232308232

poll-bound Punjab on February 14, 16 and 17 ahead of February 20 elections in the state.

Official correspondences accessed by The Indian Express reveal that Punjab police are on their

toes to put foolproof security arrangements in place for Modi's visit to Punjab even as five-member panel headed by retired Supreme Court judge Indu Malhotra is finalising its report on

January 5 security breach of PM when he was on his way to address a rally in Ferozepur but had to return after nearly a 20-minute halt at a flyover on the way.

Department] personnel should pay special attention to the pockets and hands of the people who are suspicious," reads a correspondence on Friday from Punjab ADG of Police (Intelligence).

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL TEACHERS TRAINING AND RESEARCH
SECTOR-26, CHANDIGARH-160019
(An Autonomous Institution under the M.E. Government of India)
Website: www.nitsrrchd.ac.in

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 205/2022
Online applications are invited for following posts:

Group	Name of the post	No. of posts	Pay Matrix Level as per 7th CPC
A	Research Assistant	01	Level 10 (Rs. 56100-177500)
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	Producer	01	Level 10 (Rs. 56100-177500)
C	Senior Visualiser Grade-I	01	Level 10 (Rs. 56100-177500)
	Visualizer/Graphic Artist	01	Level 5 (Rs. 29200-92300)

Web link for online registration, details of posts, qualification, experience, age, reservation, application fee and general instructions etc. are available on the institute website www.nitsrrchd.ac.in. The last date for online registration is 31.3.2022 till 5.00 P.M.

Faculty Incharge, Administration

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SIKKIM

RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION

NIT Sikkim invites applications for the posts of Associate Professor and Professor on regular basis. For details such as educational qualification, eligibility criteria, application form etc., please visit institute website: www.nitsikkim.ac.in. Closing Date: 11-03-2022. Advt. No: NITS/Rect/Fac/2022/01

Director

COVID SITUATION IMPROVES

TN back to normal as nearly all curbs lifted, playschools to open

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, FEBRUARY 12

NEARLY TWO years after they were closed due as Covid-19 began its spread, the Tamil Nadu government on Saturday announced the reopening of playschools and nursery schools with Lower KG and Upper KG sections from Wednesday.

The latest announcement involves withdrawing almost all significant restrictions that were in place due to the pandemic. Relaxations were increased on the number of people who can attend public events — up from 100 to 200 at wedding functions and 100 at funerals.

All this will come into effect from Wednesday, even as the government urged people to retain precautions.

In a statement, Chief Minister M K Stalin said relaxations were meant to help people's livelihoods. "I request everyone to wear masks in public places, maintain social distancing, and to take double vaccination," Stalin stated.

The statement said the government took the decisions to withdraw the curbs in view of the future of students, employment

opportunities, and the necessity to restore everyday life.

While exhibitions and trade fairs will be allowed from Wednesday, the ban on political, cultural and social events will continue to be in place until March 2, according to the government statement. The release stated that all other restrictions imposed due to the pandemic have been lifted.

SAHJAY GANDHI POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
RAEBARELI ROAD, LUCKNOW, 226014 (U.P.)

Notice
On line application forms link against Advertisement No. I-34/ B to R/Rect/2021-22 dated 17-11-2021 Computer Based Test (CRT) Exam 2021-22 has been activated from 25-01-2022 to 14-02-2022 is being extended upto 28-02-2022. Please visit SGPGI website (www.sgpgims.org.in) / (www.sgpgi.ac.in)

(Prof Rajnoesh Kumar Singh)
Joint Director (Admin)

ADVT.No.: I/55/Rect/2021-22

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
EX-SERVICEMEN CONTRIBUTORY HEALTH SCHEME
STATION HQ (ECHS CELL), LEIMAKHONG
PHONE: 0385-2429392
e-mail: shgleimakhong@echhs.gov.in
EMPLOYMENT NOTICE
112/23/Pub/ECHS/Stn dt 12 Feb 2022)

1. ECHS invites applications to engage following Para & Non-Medical Staff on contractual basis in 02 x ECHS Polyclinics, Imphal & Churachandpur for a period of one year for ESMs and 11 months for the civil candidate.

ECHS Polyclinic	Appointment	Minimum Qualification	No of Vac	ESM Quota	Fixed Remuneration
Imphal	Data Entry Opr (DEO)	Graduate/Class 1 Clerical Trade (Armed Forces). Min 05 years work exp.	01	70%	Rs 19,700/-
	Amb Driver	Class 8 passed/Class 1 MT Driver (Armed Forces)	01	70%	Rs 19,700/-
	Female Attendant	Literate and min 05 years work exp in civil/Army health institution.	01	70%	Rs 16,800/-
Churachandpur	Dental A/T/H	Diploma Holder in Dental Hyg/ Class 1 DH/DORA Course (Armed Forces).	01	70%	Rs 19,700/-
	Data Entry Opr (DEO)	Graduate/Class 1 Clerical Trade (Armed Forces). Min 05 years work exp.	01	70%	Rs 16,800/-
	Chowkidar	Class 8 passed or GD Trade for Armed Forces.	01	70%	Rs 16,800/-
	Safaiwala	Literate and min 05 years work experience.	01	70%	Rs 16,800/-

2. **For Terms & Conditions, Application Form & Remuneration.** Kindly see our website www.echhs.gov.in. For additional details, please contact Station HQ (ECHS Cell), Leimakhong at Tele No 0385-2429392, Mobile No. 7005434783 & e-mail ID shgleimakhong@echhs.gov.in or echisleimakhong@gmail.com. Also approach concerned ECHS Polyclinic for details.

3. **Last date of receipt of application as per format given at our website.** Application as per requisite format along with self at tested photocopies of testimonial s in support of Educational Qualifications and Work Experience will be submitted to OIC, Stn HQ (ECHS Cell), Leimakhong by **28 Feb 2022** in duplicate. Any application received after **28 Feb 2022** will not be accepted.

4. **Interview Date, Timing & Venue.** Candidate must reach Station HQ, Leimakhong at 1000 hrs on **05 Mar 2022** for the interview to be held between 1030 hrs to 1300 hrs. Candidates must bring all the original certificates / mark sheets /degree of 10th / Matric, 10+2 & Graduate / Post Graduation /diploma / course, work experience and discharge book, PPO, service record and 01 PP size colour photographs at the time of interview. No TA/DA is admissible. Only Candidates meeting the Qualitative Requirement may apply.



Jithendra M

Udupi, Class of 2022

The walk to the canteen, after-class hangouts, shared benches — simple campus joys have been disrupted as students face off in Udupi over wearing the hijab to class. UMA VISHNU travels to the coastal Karnataka town to explore what lies beneath the anxieties that run deep

THAT DAY at the gate, something about a friendship changed. As Mehek stood outside Udupi's Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) College, clutching the bars of the iron gate that had been shut on her and her friends as they turned up for their laboratory classes, the jeering crowd behind her got "unbearable". She swerved to face them and her eyes caught his — her "close friend" in college, almost unrecognisable in his saffron shawl and turban. "I was shocked. He was someone I would hang out with. Though we are in different sections and joined the college only this academic session, we would meet for lunch or walk up to the canteen where we usually had 'Maa' juice or even catch up after class. He was very friendly. I don't know what happened to him. I didn't know he was so filled with hate. That day, he reacted angrily to everything I said. He said if you go in with the hijab, I will wear my *kesari* shawl. They were all shouting, chanting Jai Shri Ram," says Mehek, a First PUC (Class 11) student at MGM, one of the premier colleges in Udupi that has over 2,500 students across its pre-university (Class 11 and 12), under-graduation and post-graduation classes. Mehek (who seeks to be identified only by her second name) got over the shock to shout back at her "friend" and the others in his group. "I said, there are so many of you to take on one girl. If you have the courage, why don't one of you step forward," she screamed, her eyes brimming with angry tears.

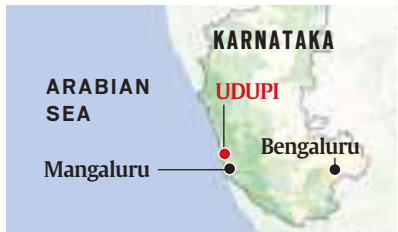
It was a moment the cameras captured, launching Mehek alongside Muskaan — the girl from Mandya's PES College who assuredly walked past a rowdy crowd that chased her waving saffron shawls — as the young faces determined to push back in the face of the latest communal flashpoint to have enveloped Udupi, the coastal Karnataka district that's almost split down the middle over the right of young women to wear their hijab or head scarves to classrooms.

What started in the Government Pre-University College for Girls in Udupi town on December 27, when around six girls who insisted on wearing the hijab to their classrooms were thrown out, has since then spread to other colleges in the district and the state, where, waving a government circular, colleges such as MGM, which have for decades allowed students to wear the hijab to classrooms, suddenly shut the gates on them.

Most Muslim students in these parts come to colleges in their burqas, which they remove in the "ladies room" before proceeding to class. The hijab is usually the scarf or dupatta that's wound around their heads. The policy on the hijab, thus far, had been left to individual colleges.

While the question of whether the Udupi girls college — where the matter first came up — ever allowed hijabs in its classrooms continues to be in a grey zone, with both the protesting students and the management submitting photographs and other evidence to support their respective claims, the matter turned political as the Campus Front of India, the student wing of the Muslim radical outfit, the Popular Front of India, moved in to back the girls. Pro-Hindu groups, too, jumped in the fray, turning up outside colleges in saffron shawls and asking to be allowed inside, making this almost a point of no-return.

With colleges shut until temporarily, Udupi nervously awaits a final word from the Karnataka High Court. On Friday, the court



released an interim order for colleges to reopen and for students to refrain from wearing clothes that are not prescribed under colleges' uniform norms.

The principal of a government-aided college, which was among those that witnessed tension over hijabs last week, said on condition of anonymity, "I have been in this field for 30-35 years. Never have I seen anything like this. Never have Muslim girls insisted on wearing the hijab like this... Some girls used to come in shawls, not the hijab... The hijab has become a communal word. There are miscreants at work behind this."

On men in saffron shawls turning up at his college gate, he said, "That was a reaction to what happened in Udupi (where the issue first took place)."

In Udupi, a temple town by the Arabian Sea that has lent its name to one of the most popular vegetarian cuisines, those who wistfully talk about the communal harmony the town once witnessed cite the story of Haji Abdullah — an early 20th Century philanthropist and businessman who founded Corporation Bank — and how he is said to have donated land for the town's Krishna temple and even oil to light its lamps. Besides the several banks that came up here — Corporation, Syndicate, Vijaya and Canara banks, each catering to different castes and communities — the area also has a rich educational legacy of schools set up during the British era.

Now, in the midst of one of the most divisive issues to have rocked Udupi, there is little trace of that storied past, with the "us" and "them" binary finding its way into everyday conversations. As he drives around Udupi town, Ramesh Naik, 64, a taxi driver, says, "The government should be strict. How can they come to school in their hijab when there is a uniform? So they'll do whatever they want to do in Hindustan and we stand by and watch? Are the children coming to school for education or to do religion? My daughter (a second-year student of Artificial Intelligence in a Mangalore college) sometimes says she won't wear the bindi. Will I make her sit at home?"

While neighbouring Dakshina Kannada district, which has Mangalore as its headquarters, has been a known communal hotbed, the embers mostly spared Udupi, which has a smaller Muslim community — 8.22% of the population, as compared to Dakshina Kannada, where Muslims make up 24% of the popula-



Uma Vishnu

(Top) At Udupi's MGM College, one of the flashpoints: "I wear the hijab even at home. How can I just take it off?" says Sana, a student here.

tion, according to the 2011 Census.

Many trace the Hindu-Muslim schism in this region to the days after the Babri Masjid demolition and the ghettoisation of Muslims that followed. "Muslims in coastal Karnataka speak a language called Beary while Hindus mostly speak Tulu, besides Konkani. Those growing up in the pre-Babri demolition days, including me, grew up speaking Beary and Tulu. But the ghettoisation of the 1990s meant that a large number of Muslims and Hindus had no reason to interact with each other. So now, they don't speak each other's languages and stay out of each other's lives. Their worlds meet for the first time in these PU colleges that are grounds for organisations like the ABVP on one side and the Campus Front of India on the other," says Muneeb Katipalla, 46, who grew in these parts and is state president of the Left-affiliated Democratic Youth Federation of India.

In the 2018 Assembly elections, the BJP won 17 seats out of 19 in coastal Karnataka, with the Congress ending up with a mere two seats.

In a sign of evident polarisation, in the December urban local polls, the SDPI, for the first time, won five seats in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

Sana, 21, has been feeling this creeping sense of hostility for a while — mostly in the class WhatsApp groups or her classmates' Instagram posts on the CAA and NRC and ca-

sually cruel remarks strewn with the "go to Pakistan" line.

"Until now at least, my Hindu classmates were fine in person, but online is where they become different people. It hurts to read these messages, but I can't leave the WhatsApp group either because there are college-related announcements there. So I simply put them on mute," says Sana, a Master's student at MGM.

Sana, whose second name is being withheld for reasons of privacy, started wearing the hijab in Class 8, when she joined a school run by a Muslim trust. "Now I wear it even at home. My mother tells me it's not good for my hair to be wearing it all the time, but now the hijab is a part of me. How can I take it off just because someone else doesn't like it?" says Sana, the eldest of three siblings. Her younger sister, who is in Class 9, also wears the hijab.

At their home, metres from the MGM campus, Sana's mother, who is without a hijab at home today, says she makes it a point to wear one when she steps out, along with her burqa. "While we were in school and college, we never wore the hijab or the burqa. We just wore a dupatta like the other girls. *Tab itna knowledge nahin tha religion ke baare mein*. We didn't know what was right and wrong," says the 45-year-old homemaker.

With the politics over the hijab forcing 16- to 20-year-olds to take grown-up positions on friendships and fraternity, the "right and the wrong", the middle ground, like the pathway leading up to the MGM College that Tuesday

afternoon, is increasingly getting crowded out. Yet, for a 16-year-old, Alman speaks with rare clarity on what is at stake.

"It's just somebody's political agenda. So some people tell me the hijab affects them. I want to ask them, why doesn't the Sikh turban affect you? Why doesn't the *kada* that some wear on their wrists affect you? Just as nobody has the right to tell them to remove this because they are uncomfortable, it's not right to ask these girls to remove their hijab," says the Ist PUC student at MGM.

"For instance, in all the schools we attended, we had Sarswati puja. We never had a problem attending the puja because we respected it... not tolerated. That's a wrong word," he adds, standing outside the gate with a few other boys in solidarity with the Muslim girls in hijab.

As the boys tuck their I-cards in their shirt pockets to protect their identities, one of them looks at the crowd in saffron turbans on the other side of the pathway and says, "Some of them told me, 'you are Hindu and you support these girls?'. I have never looked at religion while making friends, so why I should do that now?"

"Hey, you wore a hijab while in school, didn't you?" asks Amrith Shenoy, 45, of his long-lost classmate whom he recently tracked down to the flat opposite his in an upscale residential area in Udupi. "No, I never did," responds the friend (she didn't want to be named for this story). "Of course you did!" ... "Would I know better or you?"

The banter, shorn of the anxieties that has gripped most of the town, is a keepsake of more innocent times.

Shenoy, a businessman and a Congress leader who is Udupi president of Sahabhalave or 'Peaceful Co-existence', a grouping of anti-BJP, anti-government parties and bodies in Udupi, says that for most people of his generation and older, personal and religious choices never came in the way of friendships.

"I grew up in my maternal home, a strict Brahmin household where even onion or beet-root didn't enter the kitchen. But my friends Akram and Altaf would come home to watch cricket matches and I would go to their homes and sit with them while they ate biryani. I went to a government school where there daily shlokas and Ganesh pujas. Things were very peaceful. We never saw our classmates through the prism of religion. There was orthodoxy those days, but no hatred."

But sometime in the early 2000s, things began changing in Udupi. "Hindu *samajotsavas* began to be organised, where Pravin Togadia and others would make speeches, and young people attended these. Gradually, your name alone wasn't enough to deal with you. There were other considerations — your religion, caste, what you wore," he says.

His friend and classmate, now a homemaker and mother of two, says, "The hijab is an unnecessary controversy. We wear it for our own protection. It's like the mask you wear now. That's for your protection. Will you take it off because somebody else has a problem with it? And anyway, why should my hijab threaten you or make you uncomfortable? If anyone has to feel uncomfortable, it's me, I am the one wearing it." She is a mother of two, including a 10-year-old who prefers fancier hijabs to her cotton ones.

Her neighbour Sabina Begum, 36, also a homemaker, is bewildered that something as

personal as what she wears is now the subject of a communal standoff.

"It's my right to wear the hijab. No one can take that away from me. No one has asked me to wear it; there is no fatwa, no order. The Quran says women must wear it for their protection and we follow that," says Begum, adding that her eight-year-old daughter "loves wearing the hijab". For now, though, she only wears it to her Arabic classes. "She will wear it too, when she grows up."

Manipal is barely five kilometres away from Udupi, yet there couldn't be a world more distant. An elite, cosmopolitan university town whose life revolves around the campus and its food joints, there are few jagged edges of identity or politics to poke its happy bubble.

As she leaves the food court of the Kasturba Medical College, adjusting the scarf around her head, Fatima, a BSc Biotech student at the university who preferred to identify herself by a single name, sits down to chat. "I have heard about it, not very clued in, though," she says of the row that has gripped Udupi. "Anyway, no one here cares about what you wear or what you do. My parents ask me to be careful and I tell them, 'Oh, but that's happening in Udupi.' And then I realise, Udupi is right here," she adds.

The hijab, she is clear, falls in a very personal space. "No one has forced me to wear it. I grew up in the Gulf, which is probably when I started wearing it. Today, if I want to, I can take it off now and no one will know or ask. But I wear it because we have been taught God wants us to wear it. It's my individual choice."

Back at her home, waiting for the court verdict, Mehek says she is not scared. "None of us are scared. In fact, my mother is proud of me," she says. "After what happened at the gate, when I got home, she was crying. My cousin had told her about the incident, and told her to keep me home for a while, that it's not safe. But when my mother saw me, she asked me to take the scooter and pick my sister from school," says Mehek, the eldest of four siblings.

If someone is a "little scared", it's Mehek's father, who works at the Malpe dock in Udupi. "He is like, what if something happens to you," she says.

"*Hum ne galat thodi kiya hai. Dar kis liye* (We haven't done anything wrong, why should we be scared?)," says Mehek's 36-year-old mother. "I have worn the hijab since I was three. We are all used to wearing it. It's now a part of us, our bodies. My two elder daughters wear it; once the younger ones (a five-year-old and a two-year-old) come of age, they will wear it too. It's for their protection. Why should others have a problem?"

Her second daughter, now in Class 10, hopes to join the same college as Mehek. "I am nervous. I hope they let us in with the hijab next year," says the 15-year-old.

Is Mehek worried about an adverse court verdict? "No," she smiles. "Even then I'll go and stand at the gate in my hijab. I am not protesting. I am just asking them to let me in... People call me brave. But anyone in that situation would have done that. *Humare peeche aur bhi log khade hain*. If we don't speak up, how will they have the courage?"

On that frayed friendship, though, she is willing to concede a bit. "I won't approach him. But if he does, *ek minute bhi bina soche* I'll talk to him," she smiles.

Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.in
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There are good reasons why the private sector is shying away from investment. The foremost reason is lack of demand. The capacity utilisation in many industries is around 50 per cent. Why would any one invest more when there is idle capacity? Besides, the business environment has become more difficult, not easier, and is filled with cronyism, suspicion and fear

inside
TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR



SHAH TAKES CHARGE

AMIT SHAH realised early on that the real hurdle for the BJP in the Uttar Pradesh polls was not so much the farmer vote in western UP but that Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav would mobilise his campaign on a backward vs forward projector. He knew that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Thakur caste was a disadvantage with some sections. It was Narendra Modi, not Shah, who decided that Adityanath be declared the BJP's CM candidate. By early January, after the exit of Swami Prasad Maurya and a few other OBC MLAs dealt a blow, Shah stepped in to take complete charge of the UP campaign. Outside of Adityanath's home territory, Gorakhpur, it was Shah who had his way in the selection of candidates. Shah ensured that OBCs were given large representation and OBC leaders like Keshav Prasad Maurya and Anupriya Patel were projected in the campaign. Shah also began a blitzkreig tour of the state.

KISHOR'S WATERLOO?

Will Goa turn out to be campaign whiz Prashant Kishor's Waterloo? Kishor's outfit I-PAC is in total charge of the TMC campaign. TMC Goa in-charge Mohua Moitra's responsibilities are largely confined to interacting with the media. The list of Goan politicians who joined the TMC but quit after getting a negative feedback from their constituencies is growing. Former Congress MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco is now fighting as an Independent. Former MGP MLA Lavoo Mamledar is standing on a Congress ticket. A founding member of the Goa TMC, Yatish Naik, resigned after not getting a ticket. Other prominent TMC supporters who appear disillusioned include literary personality Damodar Ghanekar, footballer Denzil Franco and tennis player Leander Paes. Former CM Luizinho Faleiro, who was the TMC's first recruit, backed out of contesting from Fatorda, after a Rajya Sabha seat from the party. Less-known names grumble that they were wooed initially simply so that I-PAC could get access to their contact numbers.

The TMC has invested heavily in Goa. Its giant hoardings far outnumber those of all other parties. But the hoardings simply carry a picture of Mamata Banerjee, not even the candidates' photos.

she
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"ME? YOU'RE accusing me of chauvinism?" This is what the spouse said a few weeks into marriage, when I thought it wise to complain about the burden of running the kitchen. Not wanting to be accused of militant feminism, often linked to short hair like mine, I surrendered even before the battle had begun. Who wants acrimony in the honeymoon period?

Feminism and chauvinism are not epithets much bandied about now, as they were three decades ago. In fact, very few young women now declare themselves to be feminist, though some men do, earning brownie points.

In an arranged marriage, the prospective groom is not asked if he can cook and

THERE WAS a time when Mr Narendra Modi — and on cue his Finance Minister — swore by the private sector. Like Agriculture and most of the Services, in industry too, Mr Modi's preferred model was private sector-led growth. The State will step back and be content to be the regulator where regulation was necessary.

At some point of time, after demonetisation, Mr Modi appears to have changed his philosophy. As his faith in the private sector waned, he became a votary of the government-led model. With Budget 2022-23, the change is complete. This is a Budget driven by one engine: government capital expenditure. The rub, however, lies in the numbers.

SHIFTING GEARS

The Finance Minister claimed that in 2021-22 the government had exceeded budgeted capital expenditure. As against a BE of Rs 5,54,236 crore, the RE number was Rs 6,02,711 crore. The surprise turned out to be unpleasant after one read the fine print. The latter amount included a sum of Rs 51,971 crore that was infused into Air India to repay past loans and liabilities before privatization! I did not know that *repaying a loan* would qualify as *capital expenditure*! Deducting this amount, the capital expenditure in 2021-22 was only Rs 5,50,840 crore — lower than the BE!

That is not surprising. The government's capacity to spend money on the

DIVIDED HOUSE

More than the ineffectual Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, BJP organising secretary Satish Dhond is being blamed for the mis-guided election strategy of the party in Goa. Dhond, an RSS pracharak, was transferred to Maharashtra when Manohar Parrikar was around. He returned to Goa while Parrikar was ailing and was given a free rein because of a lack of alternatives. In selecting candidates, factors such as party loyalty, *parivar* links and a clean record were given short shrift. The cadre-based party has allotted 25 per cent of its tickets to Congress defectors. Dhond's critics say he has failed to gauge the public disenchantment with defectors. For old-timers the cynical decision to allot the Panjim ticket to the controversial Atanasio Monserrate rather than Utpal Parrikar, the son of Parrikar, was the last straw. Subhash Velingkar, former Goa RSS chief, has endorsed Utpal's candidature, as have many others with the Sangh Parivar.

ART OF NETWORKING

There are many fascinating facets to Captain Krishnan Nair's life story besides founding the Leela Group of Hotels. He was a pioneer in the handloom textile industry, setting up Leela Laces and promoting bleeding Madras shirts to the West. Bachi Karkaria's soon-to-be-released biography *Capture the Dream* recalls Nair's ability to get the right doors opened. From Morarji Desai and Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia to Vasantdada Patil, Nair cultivated many. His major mentor was V P Menon, to whom he managed an introduction through the Malayali network. Nair's mother requested Menon's wife to carry a bottle of her pickle to her son in Delhi. Menon eventually introduced the boy from Kannur, Kerala, to his many contacts. For instance, when Nair needed an introduction to a snooty Nottingham lace machine manufacturer, he could ask Lord Mountbatten to vouch for him.

DECEPTIVE LOOKS

The body language of the candidates in the Punjab campaign can be deceptive. Sukhbir Singh Badal exudes supreme confidence and humour, even if the Akali Dal is down in the dumps. Captain Amarinder Singh maintains his unflappable, regal demeanour, though he is aware he might be fighting a losing battle. Conversely, the two frontrunners seem rather down in the mouth. AAP's Bhagwat Singh Maan is anxious to present a sober image as he fears any show of exuberance will be misunderstood. The Congress's Charanjit Singh Channi looks depressed and tearful at times, perhaps nervous about the unpredictable Navjot Singh Sidhu.

clean. But when love reigns supreme, it should be part of the pre-nuptial agreement. Otherwise forget your high-sounding principles.

When prolonged lockdowns forced many husbands, young and old, to cook and clean, it was a triumph for feminism, but nobody phrased it in these terms. Feminism has never been easy to understand, for the missing undergarment is not as obvious as headgear — red caps, headscarves or colourful turbans.

I remember two occasions when the word was bandied about in a puzzling way. A scintillating danceuse being interviewed backstage minutes before her performance said, "If I didn't have a daughter, what use my feminism?" There was no time for a clarification. It stuck in my head until I figured out that passing on her ideology was

capital account is constrained by many factors: multiple levels of decision-making, huge paperwork, diffused accountability, and so on. These constraints will not go away because Mr Modi shifted gears.

There are more unpleasant surprises in the numbers. The Finance Minister generously announced that she will allow the states to borrow an additional sum of Rs 1,00,000 crore, interest free, if it was tied to capital expenditure. Soon it became clear that the states would borrow directly from the market and the Central government would bear only the interest. The nasty surprise was that the Finance Minister quietly tucked this sum into the 2022-23 BE of the Central government's capital expenditure that printed at Rs 7,50,246 crore, and claimed that the Central government had enhanced its capital expenditure by 35 per cent over the previous year! By no stretch of argument would the additional borrowing by the state governments for their capital expenditure qualify to be *Central government capital expenditure*. This was deception of the worst kind. Deducting this amount, the Central government's capital expenditure in 2022-23 BE would be only Rs 6,50,246 crore — a modest increase of Rs 1,00,000 crore over the true number of 2021-22 RE.

LOSING FAITH

The Modi government's rhetoric of government capital expenditure-led

history
HEADLINE

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THE WEST BENGAL BJP's Scheduled Caste Morcha-led agitation in January to commemorate the Marichjhapi massacre of 1979 has thrown light on a dark incident in the state's contemporary history which remains conveniently forgotten. It involved violence and forceful action by the Left Front government between January and May 1979 against refugee settlers on the small Sundarbans island of Marichjhapi.

Having come to power after overthrowing the Left, the Trinamool Congress government had also initiated the process of acknowledging the incidents, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announcing in 2018 that a memorial to honour the Marichjhapi victims would be set up.

However, such political stands from time to time apart, the events of Marichjhapi remain largely forgotten in mainstream Bengali conscience. Not among the victims though. As Annu Jalais wrote in an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in 2005, the memories are evident in the lingering resentment among the present generation of local settlers regarding the unequal distribution of resources between them and the Royal Bengal Tigers of the Sundarbans.

In order to understand the Marichjhapi tragedy, one needs to step back in time, to Bengali Hindu migration into West Bengal from East Pakistan and, subsequently, independent Bangladesh. The backward sections of the Bengali Hindu community (particularly the Namashudras) had forged a formidable alliance with the Muslim League and the Krishak Praja Party during the last decades of British rule to keep out the upper caste-dominated Congress from power in Bengal. The clout of the Namashudras was, however, lost with Partition and Independence. Recurrent riots and atrocities forced many of them to migrate into India along with upper caste Hindu Bengalis.

The second phase of the exodus involving more of these marginalised people occurred after the creation of independent Bangladesh, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination in 1975 and a vigorous turn towards a more Islamic identity for Bangladesh, witnessed a rise in communal riots.

As large groups of refugees began to arrive, the government of West Bengal negotiated with the Centre along with other states to settle some of the refugee groups outside, like on the Andaman Islands, and more particularly in the arid and forested

growth is hyperbole. Further, the government does not have faith in the appetite of the private sector to invest more. The latter was exposed when the ambitious scheme to privatize public sector assets collapsed. Two years ago, the government decided to privatize BPCL, CCL and SCI. Last year, the government decided to privatize two public sector banks and one public sector insurance company. Also, last year, the Finance Minister announced a Grand Bargain Sale of monetizing public sector assets valued at Rs 6,00,000 crore. Not one of the proposals has seen the light of the day! The Railways invited bids to privatize 151 passenger trains on 109 routes — and got no bids! It was no surprise that against a disinvestment revenue target of Rs 1,75,000 crore in 2021-22 BE, the government hopes to achieve Rs 78,000 crore — that is if the LIC IPO goes through before March 2022!

There are good reasons why the private sector is shying away from investment. The foremost reason is lack of demand. The capacity utilisation in many industries is around 50 per cent. Why would any one invest more when there is idle capacity? Besides, the business environment has become more difficult, not easier, and is filled with cronyism, suspicion and fear.

IGNORING ADVICE

Many economists have advised the

Why and how Bengal forgot Marichjhapi



Holding a tiger replica at a village in the Sundarbans. The events of 1979 linger on in the resentment many feel towards resources for the tiger reserve. Partha Paul

Dandakaranya, lying partly in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh then and now mostly in Chhattisgarh.

Such actions by the Congress government were opposed by the Left. So the Left coming to power for the first time, in 1977, saw many refugee families trying to come back and settle down in parts of West Bengal. The islands of Sundarbans were a favoured area, as earlier groups of refugees from East Pakistan had settled largely here and it provided opportunities in fishing and agriculture. Marichjhapi was particularly important as the refugees had cleared the island and even set up a school and health centre on their own initiative.

The Left Front government under Jyoti Basu, however, opposed such settlements as illegal encroachment in areas allocated for tiger projects. The local press reported about police atrocities on the settlers. There was hardly any possibility of the refugees getting any support from the other end of the political spectrum as the Congress was a weak force after its defeat in 1977. The coalition government at the Centre under Morarji Desai was dependent on Left support. The All India Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF) led by Kanshi Ram also not yet powerful.

From January 1979, the state government initiated more punitive action. On 27th, it prohibited all movement from and to Marichjhapi. This was challenged by the refugees in the Calcutta High Court and a stay was obtained. The Left government reportedly did not follow the order

following approach to pull the economy out of the current state of jobless and sluggish growth:

- Stimulate demand by putting more money in the hands of the poor and the middle class — transfer cash, cut indirect taxes;
- Revive the MSMEs that have shut down or have scaled down their business. Such revival will also bring back millions of jobs that were lost;
- Spend more on welfare. The excuse that "we don't have enough money" will not wash because the top 10 per cent of the population has garnered 57 per cent of the national income and holds 77 per cent of the nation's wealth. They must come forward and say, like the American billionaires, "tax us more";
- Review the licence *raj* that has found its way back through multiple regulations and directions by the RBI, SEBI, the Income-Tax department, etc;
- Rein in the CBI, ED, SFIO and IT so far as businesses and banks are concerned.

I have no expectations that the government will listen to well-meaning advice. Leaving that aside, will the Finance Minister solve a puzzle that is troubling many economists. In 2022-23, will the nominal GDP grow by 11.1 per cent (as projected in the Budget papers) **and** the real GDP grow by 8 per cent (as predicted by the new CEO)? That would be heaven with inflation at only about 3 per cent!

Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

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Look behind the hijab

LAST WEEK I found myself embroiled unwittingly in the hijab saga. I did not mean to get caught up in it but when I saw well-meaning women, most prominently Priyanka Gandhi, proclaim that to wear or not wear a hijab was a matter of choice, I felt it was necessary to point out that this is rubbish. Women brought up in conservative Muslim homes are taught from the time they are small girls that veiling themselves is an act of piety and they should accept this unquestioningly. When this idea is taken to its logical conclusion, we get Afghanistan, Iran, and the awful ISIS caliphate. When the caliphate was at the height of its power and glory, women could be shot in the street for showing their faces in public.

When the Prophet of Islam urged women to dress modestly, he may not have realised that what modesty meant exactly would be determined by men. This is what has happened, and there is no point in pretending that wearing a hijab is a matter of choice. It is not. This is why the sight of young women demanding the 'right' to wear a hijab is distressing and to see liberal ladies with powerful voices back them up even more so. Islam has given the world some fine ideas about equality and brotherhood, but the treatment of women is not one of them. Since India is not an Islamic country, Muslim women should be encouraged to rid themselves of their robes and headgear instead of being encouraged to fight for their 'right' to wear a hijab.

Once embroiled in the controversy, I began to examine more closely what was happening in Karnataka, and the closer I looked, the more worried I became. What worried me most was that the students who were part of the original protest were being supported by the Campus Front of India (CFI), which is the student wing of the Popular Front of India (PFI). This is a violent, jihadist organisation. It has an army of jihadists who often participate in military drills. The next one is planned in Murshidabad next week on February 17 with the stated aim of taking on 'Hindu, fascist forces'.

My own interest in the PFI began in 2010 when it ordered an attack on a teacher in Kerala, Professor T J Joseph, and in this attack his hand was chopped off by PFI fanatics. He was punished because in the eyes of the PFI he had insulted the Prophet Mohammad. The PFI embodies the kind of radical Islam that has been directly responsible for most attacks of jihad terrorism in the world and that has given birth to the Taliban government that now rules Afghanistan. Indian Muslims who have been feeling increasingly alienated in Narendra Modi's 'new India' are particularly vulnerable to the ideas of political Islam being spread by organisations like the PFI. So, it should surprise nobody if, when a proper investigation into the hijab protest is conducted, it turns out that the PFI sponsored it. Without powerful backing it is hard to imagine how it has been possible for a small group of Muslim students to have taken their hijab demand right up to the Supreme Court.

It is just as hard to understand how a protest that began in one government college in Udipi should have so quickly and easily garnered the support of veiled Muslim women in cities across India. Veiled protesters in different cities carried the same placards that said, 'Hijab is my Right'. This protest is no longer about Muslim girls being denied access to education but Muslim girls becoming unwitting pawns of political forces whose ideology and ideas are the opposite of the ideas that define India in our Constitution. What is more worrying is that the men who control the PFI have convinced these young girls that it is the Constitution of India that gives them the right to freedom of religion and worship. It does give them this right. What it does not give is the right for forces like the PFI to spread their violent, ugly ideology unchecked.

At a personal level, I first noticed the spread of radical Islam in our southern states more than 20 years ago. I was in Coimbatore to investigate the serial bombs that went off on February 14, 1998, in which 58 people were killed and more than 200 injured. I remember going to a Muslim locality around a large mosque and discovering that Tamil Muslim girls who once dressed in saris like their Hindu sisters were now wearing *salwar-kurtas* and wandering around in elaborate hijabs. When I tried to engage them in conversation, they said they were not allowed to speak to strangers unless they got permission from the local *maulvi*. So off I went to the mosque in search of him, but I remember it, either permission to speak was not given to the girls or the *maulvi* remained elusive.

After the 9/11 attacks, radical Islam has spread exponentially among our Muslim communities. Before Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, they said it was a response to Islamophobia and the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Today they say it is a response to what PFI videos call 'Hindu, fascist forces'. What is clear is that these developments are dangerous for national security and need to be investigated and stopped urgently and firmly.

she
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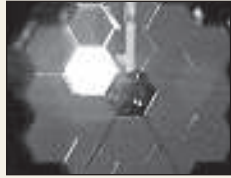


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In an arranged marriage, the prospective groom is not asked if he can cook and

TOPOF THE WORLD



This image shows a 'selfie' taken by telescope. AP

USA NASA's new space telescope sees 1st starlight

Cape Canaveral: NASA's new space telescope has captured its first starlight and even taken a selfie of its giant, gold mirror. All 18 segments of the primary mirror on the James Webb Space Telescope seem to be working properly 1 1/2 months into the mission, officials said on Friday. The telescope's first target was a bright star 258 light-years away in the constellation Ursa Major. "That was just a real wow moment," said Marshall Perrin of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore. Over the next few months, the hexagonal mirror segments will be aligned and focused as one, allowing science observations to begin by the end of June. AP

UAE Afghan refugees in protest for third day

Dubai: Afghan refugees held in the United Arab Emirates for months since fleeing Afghanistan last year protested for a third day on Friday, calling for resettlement in the US. The demonstrations by hundreds of Afghans began on Wednesday at the centre where they are being housed. A US State Department spokesperson confirmed several Afghans had taken part in peaceful demonstrations and that US government officials had met with Afghans this week to discuss their concerns with the resettlement process. REUTERS

SYRIA Artillery fire kills six, including two children

Beirut: Six people from the same family, including two children, were killed in a Syrian military artillery strike on a rebel-held village in northwest Syria on Saturday, opposition activists said. Residents said the family was outside their house enjoying sunny weather and drinking tea when the shell struck. Low-flying reconnaissance aircraft circled the area, Maarat al-Naasan village in Idlib province, after the strike. The opposition's Syrian Civil Defence group, also known as the White Helmets, said the two children were aged three and seven. AP

INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY REPORT

US: India faces very significant challenges, mainly from China

LALIT K JHA WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 12

INDIA FACES "very significant challenges", in particular from China and its behaviour in the Line of Actual Control, the White House has said, as it unveiled the Biden administration's first region-specific report on the strategic Indo-Pacific. The report on US's Indo-Pacific Strategy, released on Friday, outlines President Joe Biden's vision to firmly anchor the country's position in the Indo-Pacific, strengthen the region and support India's rise and regional leadership.

"We will continue to build a strategic partnership in which the US and India work together and through regional groupings to promote stability in South Asia; collaborate in new domains such as health, space, and cyberspace; and contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the White House said.

"We recognise that India is a like-minded partner and leader in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, active in and connected to Southeast Asia, a driving force of the Quad and other regional fora, and an engine for regional growth and development," the White House statement added.

At a White House background briefing, a senior administration official pointed out that India was facing "significant challenges". "China's behaviour on the Line of Actual Control has

EXPLAINED Key elements of report

FIRST, THE goal is to strengthen the US role in the region, which it considers very important. Second, the US seek to build the collective capacity to rise to 21st century challenges and seize opportunities, whether that has to do with climate, with PRC behaviour, or preparing for the next pandemic and recovering from the current one.

had a galvanising impact on India. From our standpoint, we see tremendous opportunities in working with another democracy to advance critical issues in the region," the official said. China, the report said, is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific.

"There is tremendous appreciation of the importance and the challenges of strengthening the engagement with India and a recognition that India is a critical strategic partner, and a desire to continue building on the very good work of previous administrations to significantly broaden and deepen that relationship," the official said. PTI



VOLCANIC STORM

A volcanic thunderstorm over Mt. Etna in Sicily, Italy, generates volcanic lightning during an eruption on Friday. A volcano expert said such volcanic storms are rare but can happen in particularly violent eruptions or with volcanoes located near the sea. AP

Lanka resumes on-arrival visa for tourists, not from Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA COLOMBO, FEBRUARY 12

SRI LANKA has announced resumption of visa on-arrival facility for international tourists, except travellers from 10 countries including Pakistan and Nepal.

The on arrival visa facility for

foreign tourists was on hold since the pandemic broke out in the country in 2020.

The move is expected to give a much-needed boost to the island nation's tourism industry, a major forex earner, which has been badly hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Issuance of on arrival elec-

tronic travel authorisation (ETA) for tourists at the port of entry to Sri Lanka has been activated from 8 February 2022. This is to facilitate the tourists who experience difficulties when obtaining the online ETA due to the time constraints of arranging their journey to Sri Lanka, according to a recent government statement.

However, the facility would not be available for passport holders of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Myanmar, Nepal and North Korea, it said.

Sri Lanka is one of Asia's most popular travel destinations. In the pre-pandemic days, India was Lanka's biggest inbound

tourism market. As per official data, some 3,575 Indian tourists have visited Sri Lanka so far this month, while 4,500 visited from Russia and over 3,700 were British travellers.

Sri Lanka recorded over 82,000 tourist arrivals in January 2022, up from just 1,600 in January 2021. PTI

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ECONOMY

FOR WEEK ENDED FEBRUARY 4

Over \$2-billion rise in currency assets pushes forex reserves to \$631.9 bn

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

THE NATION'S foreign exchange, or forex, reserves gained a healthy \$2.198 billion to reach \$631.953 billion during the week ended February 4, according to weekly RBI data.

During the previous week ended January 28, the forex kitty had recorded a decline of \$4.531 billion to reach \$629.755 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$642.453 billion in the week ended September 3 last year.

According to the data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released on Friday, during the re-

porting week, the surge in the forex reserves was on account of a rise in the FCA.

A major component of the overall reserves, the foreign currency assets (FCA) posted an increase of \$2.251 billion to reach \$568.329 billion in the week ended February 4.

Expressed in dollar terms, the FCA include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Meanwhile, gold reserves moderated by \$210 million to \$39.283 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International

AFTER \$4.5-BILLION FALL LAST WEEK

■ During the previous week ended January 28, the foreign exchange, or forex, reserves had recorded a decline of \$4.531 billion to reach \$629.755 billion, according to RBI data

Monetary Fund (IMF) saw a rise of \$98 million to \$19.108 billion, as per the RBI.

India's reserve position with the IMF rose by \$59 million to

\$5.233 billion in the reporting week, as per the data.

Higher forex reserves are a big cushion in the event of any crisis on the economic front and enough to cover the import bill of the country for a year. It also helps the rupee strengthen against the US dollar.

Rise in reserves will provide a level of confidence to markets that a country can meet its external obligations, demonstrate the backing of domestic currency by external assets, assist the government in meeting its foreign exchange needs and external debt obligations, and maintain a reserve for national disasters or emergencies.

A fall in forex reserves, how-

ever, may cause issues for the government and the RBI in managing the nation's external and internal financial issues.

The Reserve Bank functions as the custodian and manager of forex reserves, and operates within the overall policy framework agreed upon with the government. It allocates the dollars for specific purposes.

For example, under the Liberalised Remittances Scheme, individuals are allowed to remit up to \$250,000 every year.

The central bank uses its forex kitty for the orderly movement of the rupee. It sells the dollar when the rupee weakens and buys the dollar when the rupee strengthens. **WITHPTI**

'RBI believes differing policy strategy, policy stance can coexist'

In its latest monetary policy meet, the central bank has set a clear distinction between policy strategy and policy stance and that these can coexist, said an SBI Research report



FY23 could usher in a new era of separate strategy and separate stance, an unconventional monetary policy setting in the true sense Source: SBI Research/PTI

RBI SURPRISED everyone with its status quo on rates and accommodative stance for the 10th time in a row and a lower forecast for inflation and growth for FY23, at 4.5% and 7.8%, respectively

BOND YIELDS shed 7 basis points (bps) to 6.73% last Thursday, after touching 6.88% on Budget day when the Centre said it would borrow a record Rs 14.3 lakh crore to fund its capex plans of Rs 7.5 lakh crore

LOWER INFLATION forecast took the market by surprise and the 10-year yields fell 7 bps to close at 6.73% after falling 10 bps after the policy was announced

High global oil prices fuel near 7-fold rise in ONGC Q3 net

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

OIL AND Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Saturday posted a near seven-fold growth in net profit for the quarter ended December 2021, as higher oil and gas prices offset a drop in output.

Net profit of Rs 8,764 crore in October-December 2021 rose 596.7 per cent over Rs 1,258 crore net profit in the same period a year back, the state-owned company said. ONGC got \$75.73 for every barrel of crude oil it produced and sold in the third quarter of the ongoing financial year, as against \$43.20 a barrel realisation in the same period of 2020-21.

Gas price rose to \$2.90 per million British thermal unit in October-December 2021 as against \$1.79 a year back. This spurt in prices more than made up for the fall in production. Oil production fell 3.2 per cent to 5.45 million tonne while gas output was 4.2 per cent lower at 5.5 billion cubic meters.

Revenue in Q3FY22 was up 67.3 per cent to Rs 28,474 crore. The board of the firm approved a second interim dividend of 35 per cent (Rs 1.75 per share). "The total payout on this account will be Rs 2,201.55 crore." **WITHPTI**

42 mines auctioned till date for commercial mining: Coal Ministry

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

A TOTAL of 42 coal blocks have been auctioned till date for commercial mining, the Coal Ministry said in a statement on Saturday. Of the said blocks, 10 coal mines were auctioned the past week under the third tranche, it added.

"Under the commercial coal mining auction process, a total of 42 coal mines, including... mines auctioned in tranche-3, have been successfully auctioned till date with a total cumulative PRC (peak rate capacity) of 86.404 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)," the statement said.

The ministry said that the 10 blocks sold last week are projected to generate an annual revenue of Rs 2,858.20 crore, adding that the "annual revenue projected (is) based on the PRC (peak rate capacity) of mine."

On the first day of the auction, five blocks were sold, with Dalmia Cement Bharat Ltd emerging as the highest bidder for two coal blocks in Jharkhand.

While Mahanadi Mines and Minerals was the highest bidder for a coal block in Odisha, Yazdani Steel and Power was the highest bidder for another mine in the

Sufficient stock to hike supply to non-power: CIL

New Delhi: Coal India (CIL) said it is currently supplying around 3.4 lakh tonnes of coal per day to non-power sector, and stressed that it has sufficient buffer stock to increase the supply of the dry fuel to this sector. **PTI**

eastern state, the Ministry had said in a statement on Tuesday.

Assam Mineral Development Corp Ltd was the highest bidder for a mine in Assam.

On the second and the third days of auction, Jindal Steel and Power bagged Utkal-C coal mine in Odisha while Hindalco Industries made the highest bid for Meenakshi mine in the eastern state.

BS Ispat Ltd emerged as the highest bidder for Majra mine in Maharashtra, and Assam Mineral Development Corporation bagged Garampani coal block in Assam.

Platinum Alloys Pvt Ltd bagged Namchik Namphuk mine in Arunachal Pradesh. **WITHPTI**

CRUDE WATCH

OIL SOARS TO FRESH 7-YR HIGH

New York: Oil prices rose to fresh seven-year highs on Friday, as fears of an invasion of Ukraine by Russia added to worries over tight global crude supplies. Both benchmarks saw an eighth week of gains, with Brent up at \$94.44 and US WTI at \$93.10. **REUTERS**

'STAR OF INDIAN AUTO INDUSTRY': A LOOK AT RAHUL BAJAJ'S LIFE

JUNE 10, 1938: Born in Calcutta; grandfather Jamnalal Bajaj founded Bajaj Group in 1926

1968: Became CEO of Bajaj Group, after having started off as deputy general manager as part of his father Kamalnayan Bajaj's team

1976-77: Elected president of SIAM



"He was among the few stars who created the Indian automotive industry. He was a pioneer who established a culture of quality and technology"

VENU SRINIVASAN,
CHAIRMAN, TVS MOTOR

1979/80: First term as president of industry body Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

1989: Iconic 'Hamara Bajaj' jingle used to advertise Bajaj two-wheelers, especially Bajaj Chetak scooter

1999/2000: Elected CII president for second term

2005: Passed baton of



"Under his stewardship, the first codification of corporate governance norms in the country happened way back in 1998"

TV NARENDHAN,
PRESIDENT, CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRY

company to son Rajiv Bajaj, who became Bajaj Auto MD

JUNE 2006: Elected to Rajya Sabha, member till 2010

2008: Split Bajaj Auto into three units -- Bajaj Auto, Bajaj Finserv and a holding company

FEBRUARY 12, 2022: Passes away due to age-related illness



"I am devastated - he was a dear dear friend and will miss him dearly. The country has lost a great son & nation builder"

KIRAN MAZUMDAR-SHAW,
EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON, BIOCON

SECTOR WATCH AVIATION

Interline pact: How it will work for domestic flyers of Air India, AirAsia

PRANAV MUKUL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

TATA GROUP airlines Air India and AirAsia India signed an agreement on interline considerations on irregular operations (IROPs) that will allow the two airlines to transfer passengers to one another in case of disrupted operations.

What are IROPs?

Airlines typically enter into such interline agreements with other carriers, especially on routes where they operate limited number of flights, to prevent inconvenience to passengers in case of disruptions. These disruptions could occur as a result of extenuating circumstances such as delays, cancellations, diversion of flights, etc.

What does this mean?

As a consequence of this agreement, in case of disruptions witnessed by either of the airlines on one of the routes where the other airline is operational, passengers will be transferred to the alternative available flight.

How does this work?

Through the agreement, which is valid only for domestic routes till February 9, 2024, the transfer of passengers shall be done only on "as available" basis as determined by the airport manager of the accepting airline. For example, on a sector like Siliguri-Delhi, where both airlines operate, in case Air India's flight is cancelled for some reason, passengers on

'AS AVAILABLE' BASIS



File

■ With this pact, valid till February 9, 2024, only for domestic routes, transfer of passengers shall be done only on "as available" basis as determined by the airport manager of the accepting airline

EXPLAINED

the cancelled flight will be transferred to the AirAsia India flight basis the available seats on the aircraft. This will be in addition to the other refund or free date change options that the airlines offer.

What about the various services available through one airline?

With respect to baggage allowance, in case a passenger booked on AirAsia India is being transferred to an Air India flight, the original AirAsia India allowance of 15 kg will be applicable. However, if a passenger originally booked to fly on Air India is being transferred to an AirAsia India flight, the free baggage allowance will be as per Air India's ticket. Air India typically has 25 kg of free baggage allowance on domestic routes in economy class.

BRIEFLY ESIC scheme

New Delhi: Union Labour Minister Bhupender Yadav on Saturday announced the expansion of the pilot scheme of annual preventive health check-up programme for ESIC members aged above 40 years to 15 cities from the existing five.

India, US trade

New Delhi: Bilateral trade between India and the US rose by 45% to \$113 billion in 2021, against \$78 billion in 2020, Commerce Ministry Piyush Goyal tweeted. **PTI**

SMEL Q3

New Delhi: Shyam Metals and Energy Ltd (SMEL) posted a 95% on-year rise in profit after tax for Q3FY22 at ₹423 crore. **ENS**

Hope for combustion engine future beyond 2030: Lamborghini

REUTERS
FRANKFURT, FEBRUARY 12

VOLKSWAGEN'S SUPERCAR brand Lamborghini is looking to keep combustion engine vehicles alive beyond the end of the decade, the unit's CEO Stephan Winkelmann said.

"After hybridisation, we will wait to see whether it will be possible to offer vehicles with an internal combustion engine beyond 2030," he told German weekly newspaper *Welt am Sonntag*. "One possibility would be to keep combustion engine vehicles alive via synthetic fuels." Winkelmann last month said Lamborghini planned to roll out its first fully electric model at the end of this decade,



The carmaker planned to roll out its first full electric model at end of the decade. Reuters file

after comments last year that a release was planned for second half of the decade.

Lamborghini, and some of its key rivals, are wrestling with how to shift their ranges to battery power without losing the high performance that supports their premium pricing.

Factory output at 10-mth low: Capital goods, manufacturing activity still weak

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT slumped to a 10-month low of 0.4 per cent in December 2021, according to data released Friday by the National Statistical Office (NSO). The factory output — measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) — had registered a growth of 1.3 per cent a month ago and 2.2 per cent in December 2020.

Reasons for output fall

The December IIP was pulled down by manufacturing, capital goods (tools and physical assets used by manufacturers in the production process) and consumer durables output, along with an unfavourable base. In absolute terms, the general index level was



A worker at a furniture factory. File

higher than pre-Covid levels seen in December 2019, but experts cautioned that the full impact of the restrictions in view of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 may get reflected in the industrial output data next month.

The biggest drag for industrial output in December came from the 0.1 per cent contraction in manufacturing output, which ac-

counts for 77.6 per cent of the weight of the IIP. Manufacturing output had grown 0.8 per cent in November 2021 and 2.7 per cent in December 2020.

'Need policymakers' attention'

"The short-lived Omicron wave and mobility restrictions could impair industrial output further in January. However, rapid

control of new infections, and the removal of activity curbs means the economic recovery could resume from February onward," Rahul Bajoria, chief india economist, Barclays said.

Successive monthly data of industrial output is making it abundantly clear that consumption demand will need policy makers' attention much more than hitherto being given if recovery is to become a sustainable one, India Ratings & Research (Ind-Ra) said.

"Also the continued weakness in capital goods does not augur well. Although there are indications that finally private corporate investment is picking up but the same has yet to find a reflection in the IIP data," Sunil Kumar Sinha, principal economist, Ind-Ra.

Full report on
www.indianexpress.com

RIL plans to become largest blue hydrogen producer

New Delhi: Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) aims to become one of the largest producers of blue hydrogen globally, with a target of producing the zero-emission fuel at costs that will be half the global average.

In a presentation detailing the separation plan, RIL — the operator of the world's largest oil refining complex — said it will repurpose a Rs 30,000 crore plant that currently converts petroleum coke into synthesis gas to produce blue hydrogen for \$12-15 a kg.

Hydrogen is the cleanest form of known fuel. Depending on production methods, hydrogen can be grey, blue or green. Grey hydrogen is the most common form and is generated from natural gas, or methane, through a process called 'steam reforming'. **ENS, WITHPTI**

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



INSIDE

Bound for Glory

Lata Mangeshkar, the singer, was that rare thing — a perfect mix of genius, endeavour and nuance, writes classical musician Shubha Mudgal



POINT OF VIEW

Moving Pictures

In his new book, Raghu Rai brings to life intimate portraits of auteur Satyajit Ray

eye

SONGS FOR ALL SEASONS

Lata Mangeshkar had a protean voice that drew her listeners into a world of emotional and meditative depth. In this issue, we celebrate the genius of the musician whom we lost a week ago. First up, a veteran actor on the versatility of a musician who defied the law of diminishing returns and set a gold standard for generations to come



BY SHARMILA TAGORE

*"Rahen na rahen hum, meheka karenge,
Ban ke kali, ban ke saba, baag-e-wafa mein
Rahen na rahen hum..."*

THESE LYRICS from Asit Sen's film, *Mamta* (1966), starring Ashok Kumar, Suchitra Sen and Dharmendra, is so apt for Lataji's life, who remains immortal despite her passing on February 6 in Mumbai.

As I was leaving for our ancestral home in Pataudi on Sunday, the news of Lataji's passing flashed on my phone. Before I could process the news and grasp the magnitude of this loss, I was confronted with a deluge of media interactions to discuss Lataji's life and memory. There was so much to say yet nothing could do justice to her grand life. I had been in touch with her niece Rachna since her hospitalisation after COVID-19 and was convinced that Lataji would be home soon, that I would get an opportunity to meet her in Mumbai to receive the very prestigious Deenanath Smriti Prathishthan Award which she had been keen to bestow upon me since 2020. Unfortunately, the pandemic made it prohibitive for me to receive the award in 2020 and 2021. I hoped to receive this great honour from her, in person, sometime this year. But it was not to be and I am overcome with deep regret and sadness.

Lataji has been a part of my life since I was just a year old. My mother would sing her songs to me and her voice gradually became a looming presence in our house. As an adolescent, I found myself humming her songs; *Aayega, aayega aane wala* (*Mahal*, 1949) was an absolute favourite of mine. Little did I know then that a few years later, Lataji would be my voice in several films and I would actually have the privilege of knowing her, albeit from a revered distance. My husband Tiger (cricketer Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi) was a devoted admirer of Lataji's. When I met him, he was absolutely unfamiliar with my work and his only gateway to the Hindi film industry was through (actors) Yusuf *sahab* (Dilip Kumar), Vyjayanthimalaji, and Lataji. Not one given to public displays of emotions, Tiger could be found gushing at the very mention of Lataji. Once, when he found out that Lataji was recording at Famous Studio, Tardeo, and there could be a possibility to meet her, he immediately seized the moment and rushed to meet his favourite icon.

When Lata Mangeshkar was born in Indore in 1929, no one could have known that she would, perhaps, become one of the most recognisable voices in the world. But the prediction came at an early age from none other than Madam Noor Jehan, who was so impressed by the young singer's rendition of *rag Jaijaiwanti* and RC Boral's *Jeevan hai bekaar tumhare* from the film *Wapas* (1969), she instantly proclaimed that the little girl will be a successful singer one day and advised her to continue with her *riyaaz*. Several years later, in 1961, Lataji left Madam Noor Jehan spell-bound as she performed *Allah tero naam* (*Hum*

Dono, 1961) in front of her idol at Shanmukhananda Hall in Bombay.

In 1942, when she was 13 years old, Lataji started her career with the Marathi film *Kiti Hasaal* after her father's early demise. But it was't until 1948 that she got her first major playback opportunity from Ghulam Haider for the film *Majboor*. The song *Dil mera toda*

o mujhe kahin ka na chhoda became an instant hit. Thereafter, Lataji's rise was swift. She became a powerful presence. Music composers were in awe of her control and infallible intonation and queued up to offer her their best compositions.

In the 1950s and '60s, Lataji was singing a range of wonderful songs. She eluded banal-

ities with her buoyancy and interpolations. She sang many raga-based songs with Naushad *sahab*, sentimental hits of Salil Chowdhury, and the versatile songs for the commanding duo Shankar-Jaikishanji, some of which were even inspired by jazz, Western classical music and pop hits of The Beatles. Lataji's eerie and haunting rendition of *Gumnaam hai koi* (*Gumnaam*,

1965) was influenced by *Somewhere my love* from *Dr Zhivago* (1965) and the Hawaiian-themed number *Ajeeb dastan hai yeh* (*Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai*, 1960) was inspired by Jim Reeve's *My lips are sealed*. Shankar-Jaikishan got out the best in Manna De. Lataji proved to be a formidable match with him. Some of Lataji's best music is with De — *Pyaar hua ikraar*

hua (*Shree 420*, 1955), *Chadh gaya paapi bich-hua* (*Madhumati*, 1958) and *Dil ki girah khol do* (*Raat Aur Din*, 1967) are just some of the many gems they gifted us. During this period, Lataji's rebellious *Pyaar kiya toh dama kya* from *Mughal-E-Azam* (1960) also achieved cult status.

Lataji was a protean voice. She set a gold standard for music against which singers continue to be measured. Lataji used her radiant, warm voice like an instrument emphasising virtuosity rather than arrogant conviction. Her singing was characterised by purity, an impeccable sense of rhythm, clarity, perfect diction, melody and an expansive vocal range. She had the uncanny ability to place the song just where it should be. She made the lyrics matter by lending them the right emotional depth. There was joy, serenity and absolute security in the music of Lata Mangeshkar.

On January 26, 1963 legends from the film industry like Yusuf *sahab*, Raj Kapoor *sahab*, Shankar-Jaikishanji, Madan Mohanji and Hemant Kumarji, to name a few, flew down to Delhi to see Lataji perform the music miracle *Ae mere watan ke logo* at the Ramlila Maidan. Lataji was initially hesitant to sing the song as she had very little time for preparation but conceded defeat to a very determined Kavi Pradeep, the lyricist of the song. Lataji was given time only on the flight to Delhi and the night before to memorise the song and render it before a packed audience at 3.30 pm the next day. We are well aware about the magic that followed. A misty-eyed Jawaharlal Nehru invited Lataji for tea to his official residence where she met Indira Gandhi, who without wasting a moment, introduced Lataji to her two "admirers" — sons Rajiv and Sanjay Gandhi. Since that day, *Ae mere watan ke logo* is regarded as an essential in the canon of Indian patriotic songs and Lataji became a beacon of hope, a symbol of national integration. She wore this badge of honour, conferred on her by millions of India, with utmost grace, humility and responsibility.

Once accompanied Shaktiji (Samanta) to Bombay's Film Centre where Lataji was recording. She came dressed very modestly, greeted the members of the orchestra with a soft "*namaskar*", stood in front of the microphone and matter-of-factly performed the song with great precision. Once the music started, Lataji tested the song's resilience with startling verbal dexterity. She had the unique gift of trimming her powerful voice to suit everything from a soft and sibilant *Kuch dil ne kaha* from *Anupama* (1966) or a gentle ballad like *Lag ja gale* (*Woh Kaun Thi?*, 1964) to the lively abundance of *Guide's Aaj phir jeene ki tamanna hai* (1965).

Lataji crossed all barriers and borders of music and sang everything there was to sing with equal perfection. In a demanding and precarious profession like ours, Lataji successfully defied the law of diminishing returns. I feel that besides her extraordinary talent, her personality and her quiet abstemious life contributed to her longevity — her career spanned almost eight decades. Lataji never behaved like a star. She was shy, retiring and underplayed her tremendous success. During concerts, she conversed with her audience in a way that suggested a delightful humility.

Lataji was unique, unparalleled. She allowed us to escape from our moments of despair to experience something meditative, something almost other-worldly. She will continue to live in each one of us and will always command a special place.

The writer is an actor and former chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification



PHOTOS: EXPRESS ARCHIVE

THE FIRST LADY OF MUSIC

Lata Mangeshkar

‘She was a soulful artiste who loved me a lot’

An actor on her personal and professional bond with the singer



BY HEMA MALINI

THE FIRST time I met her was before my first Hindi film, *Sapno ka Saudagar* (1968).

Although I was a newcomer, she met me very warmly. From then till the Lohri song in (film-maker) Yash (Chopra)ji's *Veer-Zaara* (2004), I had a long innings with Lata Mangeshkar.

If in *Sholay* (1975), where the world remembers Basanti as a young, feisty village woman, she portrayed my character beautifully in the two songs *Holi ke din* and *Jab tak hai jaan*, in *Sapno ka Saudagar*, *Raja Jani* (1972) and *Sharafat* (1970), where I played a gypsy girl, a street dancer and a courtesan respectively, it took a Lata Mangeshkar to imbue



PERFECT NOTES

(Left) Hema Malini with Lata Mangeshkar at the *mahurat* of *Meera*; from *Kinara*

those characters with her voice to make it easy for the artiste to perform the songs on screen. She would mould her voice to fit not only the character but also the actress' voice.

From my many songs by her, some of them definitive in my career, my personal favourite is *Gulzar's Naam gum jaye ga* for his film *Kinara* (1977). I also love the way she sang *Tune o rangeele* (*Kudrat*, 1981). *O babul pyare* (*Johnny Mera Naam*, 1970) became an anthem for young brides, or *Najaane kya hua* (*Dard*, 1981). Also from *Johnny Mera Naam*, the emotive *Chhup chhup Meera* roye remains a favourite.

With our respective careers in full swing, we did not get to meet much except at public functions. After 2018, when she discovered

WhatsApp, she'd often send me my pictures from public appearances and say, "You are looking beautiful." She would also send pictures of me with Dharamji (actor Dharmendra) and express her fondness for us. At times, she'd even edit them and add elements to make the photographs more beautiful. She would also send pictures of flowers that she had clicked.

People talk about her as a feminist icon, about her personal life, but I only view her as a soulful artiste who loved me a lot. And I respect her a lot for all that she is...was.

The writer is an actor and a member of the Lok Sabha

(AS TOLD TO DIVYA A)

Kolkata

‘Let’s do the song again’

When a veteran film music director-arranger would ferry Lata Mangeshkar to the recording studio



BY UTTAM SINGH

WHEN RAJSHRI Productions was making a comeback with *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) after a string of flop films, music director Raam Laxman tasked me to persuade Lata *didi* to sing for the film. Since I began as a solo violinist in the Bombay film industry, in 1962, and later grew as an arranger, I’d built a rapport with Didi. At her home, when she said to me, “*Main gaati nahin hoon* (I don’t sing anymore),” I requested her to do it for me because I’d be arranging the music. After two minutes of silence, she agreed on one condition: “*tum mujhe lena aage* (you will come to pick me up)”. From there began our new chapter. I’d drive from my Andheri home to her Prabhu Kunj residence on Peddar Road. She’d sit in the front seat, with two constables with guns at the back. Whether I was the composer or arranger, ferrying Didi became my duty. She’d never eat food from outside, her tea also arrived from home, but after the recordings, she’d demand a chilled soft drink, with extra ice cubes.

Saraswati *didi*, as I’d call her — the only two people I’ve heard call her Lata were sound recordist BN Sharma and filmmaker V Shantaram — *ne kisi ka likha kabhi nahin padha*. She’d come into the studio with her music book, write down the song, and make corrections while you were speaking, storing away everything in her memory, and that very moment the song became hers. Only when she was convinced, after rehearsals, would she step into the recording room. It’s a practice that had stuck from when Naushad *sahab* made her rehearse 40 times for a song, to my time, when after five-seven rehearsals the song was done in a single take. For her song with Mahendra Kapoor in *Painter Babu* (1983), our first Hindi film as music directors Uttam-Jagdish (music-arranger duo Singh and Jagdish Khanna), we were recording live in the studio from 9 am-4 pm, with 120 musicians and 40 chorus; the first take only happened at 2 pm.

Then she sang for us in *Ricky* (1986), *Waaris* (1988), *Clerk* (1989), *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997), *Dushman* (1998), and *Hum Tum Pe Marte Hain* (1999), among others. Lata *didi* remembered that we (Uttam-Jagdish) wanted to cut a private album with her. It kept getting pushed. Jagdish died in 1992, and I was busy arranging for Raam Laxman on *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* (1994). Eventually, a 12-song devotional album was cut for Tips record label, *Om Sai Ram* (1996), with two songs by her. After a sitar section in a piece that I made her



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

STRIKING THE RIGHT CHORD

(From left) Filmmaker Manmohan Desai, Lata Mangeshkar, music director Raam Laxman, music arranger Uttam Singh and director Ketan Desai on the sets of *Anmol* (1993)

listen to, she held my hand. She’d held my hand many times earlier, but in that moment, it felt like a blessing from goddess Saraswati. The affable Swar Kokila was large-hearted, too. She’d forgo her fee when a composer couldn’t afford to pay. For us, after her *bhajan* in *Ricky*, she’d said, “*bhakti-bhaav se gaya* (sang it out of devotion), won’t accept fee”.

There was a time in the industry, in the ‘60s-‘80s, when not just music directors and composers, but every single department wanted to have Lata *didi* sing in their film. At Mehboob Studio, I’ve myself overheard a group of lightmen wishing Lata *di* would sing. Now there can’t be two departments far removed from each other than set lighting and playback singing, and yet, everybody wanted Lata *di*, *unka* aura, *unki shakhsiyat ka darza hi alog thha* (her personality was on a different plane).

Directors and producers would wait for a whole year after their films were ready to have Lata *di* sing for them. I, too, waited for five-six months for her to sing *Udja Kale Kawan* in *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001), but she was abroad, so I signed on Alka Yagnik. In *Dil to pagal hai*, it had to be Didi. In *Arre re arre*, when I asked her for another take of the second *antara* (verse), she said, “why, let’s do the whole song again”, and recorded, barefoot, for two-and-a-half hours.

She sang for great composers and while the compositions, like *Lag jaa gale*, were magical, she’d lift the songs further, with her enunciations, and also with her pauses and silences, she’d evoke myriad emotions in a single line. If a composer gave her 20 per cent of a song, or thought his composition was brilliant, Lata *di* would return it 100 per cent with *heere*, *pukhraj* (jewels) embedded in it.

Among my compositions for her, a favourite is *Mere pyar ki umar* (Waaris). *Main nahin manta ki agar unse koi better singer hota... jo baat unme thhi, woh kisi mein nahin, woh khudaai, ruhani awaaz* (I don’t believe there could have been a better singer, the divinity in her voice wasn’t to be found anywhere). When she called me after my son’s death in 2014, her voice sounded just the same that I’d been hearing for 40 years. What she’s done musically hasn’t happened in the 1900s, isn’t happening now, and won’t happen even a 100 years later. She was God’s gift to us.

Uttam Singh, now 74, was given the Maharashtra government’s ‘Lata Mangeshkar Award for Lifetime Achievement’ in 2016

AS TOLD TO TANUSHREE GHOSH

BOUND FOR GLORY

Lata Mangeshkar, the singer, was that rare thing — a perfect mix of genius, endeavour and nuance. Little wonder then that there cannot be another like her



BY SHUBHA MUDGAL

DEATH COMES with a terrifying finality. It silences forever the voices of the lives it snuffs out. But some exceptional voices refuse to be silenced even by death. This most certainly holds true for Lata Mangeshkar. Not only will we continue to hear the thousands of exquisite songs that immortalised her voice, but even the silences and pauses she inserted with such mastery in some of her renditions will continue to speak to us (remember that wistful *haye* and the pause thereafter before she begins *Kaise din beete* in *Anuradha*, 1960).

Stories of the lives of prodigies usually begin with the discovery of their remarkable genius that later burgeons over the years; or in some cases, witnesses a meteoric rise and fall. In Lataji’s childhood, there could have been little or no time to celebrate the discovery of her extraordinary gift. At an age when most little girls play with dolls and are pampered for cutely lisping out a rhyme or *bandish*, she was on stage delivering songs with the commitment and skill of a professional, because she had to fend for her mother and siblings. Lataji was catapulted into a professional career as an actor-singer without any period of apprenticeship, and it would not be inaccurate to assume that she was able to do so on the strength of her prodigious talent alone.

While she was born and reared in a family that earned its livelihood through music and the arts, and was, therefore, in an environment where children learn music even without formal training, inheriting as it were the musical *sanskars* so integral to the making of an accomplished musician, her formal training with her father was probably irregular and dependent on the time he may have been able to set aside from his professional commitments. Even those opportunities were cut short by his early death at the age of 41. Flung into the position of becoming the provider for her family, there would have been very little time to spare for *riyaz*.

Though Lataji respectfully acknowledged her *taaleem* with the great Aman Ali Khan *sahab* of the Bendi Bazaar *gharana* — between 1945, when she is said to have moved to Mumbai, and 1953, when Khan *sahab* passed away — it was just a span of eight years. This must also have been a period of immense upheaval for her caused by the grief of losing a beloved parent, the terrifying prospect of failing to make ends meet, the disruption of being uprooted from Pune and Kolhapur and moving to Mumbai, and of establishing herself in a male-dominated industry. By 1948, she had recorded the hugely successful *Aayega aanevala* for *Mahal* under the direction of Khemchand Prakash, and in the ‘50s, she was recording prolifically for leading music directors in the industry. Perhaps, it was her untiring pursuit of perfection and phenomenal au-



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

ral observation that helped her learn in whatever time was available to her for *taaleem*. What else can explain the crystal-clear agility of her *taans* in some songs (for instance, at 0.44 seconds in the Meerabai *pada*, *Ramaiyaa bin neend na aave*, composed by her brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar), the perfect enunciation of raga-specific phrases in others (*Eri jaane na doongi* for the film *Chitralekha*, 1964), the impeccable *lehjaa* (utterance) that she brought to each of the forms she rendered and to the dozens of languages in which she recorded songs. This gave her the ability to sing any form — a classical *bandish*, a folk song from any part of the country, a *thumri*, a *ghazal*, a *kirtan* or a *bhajan* — without actually being trained as a specialist in any one of these.

Apart from being a one-of-a-kind singer, surely she must have been a listener like no

ONCE UPON A SONG

Lata Mangeshkar had the ability to sing any form — a classical *bandish*, a folk song from any part of the country, a *thumri*, a *ghazal*, a *kirtan* or a *bhajan* — without actually being trained as a specialist in any one of these

other too! That ability to listen, observe and store away the memory of sounds, music, pronunciations, exclamations used in diverse song forms, languages and dialects probably equipped her with a reference library that she must have drawn upon when required. This should ideally be one of the many lessons we can take from her life and work.

Her unmatched ability to emoté is amply illustrated in her songs. But I once had the privilege of hearing a rare recording of an extract from the *Sundarkand* in *Tulsi Ramayan*, sung by Lataji and composed by Pt Raghunath Seth, possibly for the Films Division of India, if my memory serves me correctly. My father, the late Skand Gupta, who learnt the flute from Seth *sahab* in Allahabad, was an ardent admirer of his work as a composer. I remember Seth *sahab* bringing over a copy of the record-

ing for the listening pleasure of his loyal disciple, where Lataji had sung a *chaupai* representing the words of a captive Sita in Lanka, who describes her husband as being *Komal chitta krupaal Raghurai*, or one who is gentle and soft-hearted. Had a recording of this *chaupai* existed in the public domain, all a listener would have to do is to listen to her enunciation of the word *komal* to understand what it meant!

Lataji’s handling of *laya* and *taal* was also exquisite. Often film songs prefer to stay away from complex *layakari* and *taals*, but there have been arrangers and composers such as the legendary RD Burman and Pandit Ravi Shankar, who have included complex rhythms and counter rhythms in their work. But listen to Hridaynathji’s composition in Lataji’s voice for the non-film album *Chalaa Wahi Des*. In Mirabai’s *Sakhi ri laaj bairan bhayi*, the first two words, *sakhi* and *ri* are spaced over two rounds of the six-*matra dadra taal*, with several twists and turns in the melody. If this seems easy, it would only be because of the effortless rendition by Lataji, and of course, the brilliance of the composer.

Lataji’s total attention to the aural element of her work is a remarkable aspect of her art. She was from the tradition of playback singing, where for many decades, the vocalist remained a name on records, cassettes and later CDs. Her *pehchaan* came from her voice. Video footage of her rehearsing, recording or performing on stage almost invariably show her standing in front of a mike, barely moving or gestulating, but despite that, never holding back in expressing and emoting. She performed and how, but only through the sound of her voice. The spectacle of performance, so highly valued today, meant nothing to her despite the actor in her. Could that be one of the reasons why she could make listeners cry, laugh, flirt, dance, whisper sweet-nothings through her songs?

I also wonder if her sari-clad simple persona was a consciously crafted image meant to keep away unwanted attention. We hear of exploitation in the industry even today, and one can only imagine the kind of challenges she must have faced as a vulnerable young girl struggling to establish herself. She herself remained silent on this issue, but it is probably a silence that stems from grit, determination and quiet dignity.

Much has been said and written about her voice being “thin” and the challenges she initially faced due to this perceived disadvantage. Indeed, her voice was thin, light and airy and full of an indescribable sweetness. But it was never a sickening sweetness. Neither was it tinny, metallic or shrill. Like the photogenic quality of some faces, her voice was perfect for the microphone and acquired full-bodied strength and character on the mike. Among the many singers who mimic her are some with voices that come close to hers in many ways, but are marred by the almost diabetes-inducing sweetness they bring to their renditions of her songs. To me the truth is quite apparent. There can be no second Lata Mangeshkar; the singer, try as anyone might. What we can all do is to follow her example by continuing to chase perfection, knowing full well that, for us, perfection will, forever, remain elusive.

Shubha Mudgal is a Hindustani classical vocalist



ON THE SAME PAGE

(From left) Liora Itzhak (Israel); Annette Philip (the US); Pauline Laravoire and Meghdut Roy Chowdhury (France-India); Sohana Ahmed (Bangladesh); Sara Azad Khan (Pakistan)

Rinku Ghosh

LIORA ITZHAK
TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

Liora Itzhak has an old diary on her nightstand, a collection of handwritten Lata Mangeshkar songs, which is a Bible to her. It holds her up through life’s ebb and flow.

The 47-year-old Israeli singer-performer credits her passion for Hindi film music to her parents. “They would often play songs of Lata, Mukesh and Mohammed Rafi. That’s how Lataji became my ‘cassette guru’.” I did not understand the language but the lilt in her voice, the cadence, the subtlety and sensuousness connected with my core,” she says.

At age 15, Itzhak was naturally drawn to Mumbai and soon was learning light classical music under composer duo Kalyanji-Anandji. By the time she returned to Israel after a year-and-a-half, Mangeshkar’s *Dil to pagal hai* (1997) had become a cult hit on the radio. “I began singing Hindi film songs, especially Lataji’s numbers. Be it *Lag jaa gale*, *Dil vil pyaar vyaar*, or *Baahon mein chale aao*, their acceptability here is proof of her universality.” Each song has helped her reconcile with life. “My father is in hospital right now. But the fact that my parents listen to *Lag jaa jale* together and the longing in me for him to return makes the song my very own,” says Itzhak. She plans to have a digital tribute.

Here We Come As One

Followers from around the world remember Lata Mangeshkar as their life’s soundtrack and cassette *guru*

ANNETTE PHILIP
BOSTON, USA

As the founder-artistic director of Berklee Indian Ensemble, Annette Philip doesn’t carry the weight of expectation lightly. She has contemporised Mangeshkar’s renditions for a global audience. With her students, she is currently researching Mangeshkar’s repertoire and creating playlists for each decade. That might be followed by select reinterpretations of the originals.

One such reinterpretation, *Jiya jale*, performed in 2014, is till date the most visited video with over seventy million views. This encouraged Philip to attempt a second reinterpretation of another gem, *Aapki nazron ne samjha* in 2017, with Shreya Ghoshal. The video got them over seven million views.

Philip finds in Mangeshkar a master storyteller. “Every time she performed, it was as if she was asking herself, ‘who am I as a narrator?’ Her collaboration with AR Rahman is the biggest example of her ever-evolving self. She is not just the definitive voice of India, she is the soundtrack of our lives.”

PAULINE LARAVOIRE
PARIS-KOLKATA, FRANCE-INDIA

Before 2018, Parisienne Pauline Laravoire had no idea of who Mangeshkar was. That changed when the 28-year-old met her now husband, Meghdut Roy Chowdhury, and moved to Kolkata in 2020. The lockdown allowed the newlywed couple to practise music, and soon she took to Lataji’s Bengali numbers. They would rehearse a song and put the final cut on Instagram. That’s how Indo-French Singing Sundays came about. She sang two numbers, *Aaj mon cheyeche ami haariye jaabo* and *Ajeeb dastaan hai yeh*, which gathered more than nine lakh views. “But what mattered was the incredible lightness of being I felt and its uplifting melody. My Parisian friends, too, want more Lata numbers now. We need to internationalise her.”

SOHANA AHMED
DHAKA, BANGLADESH

Growing up on Mangeshkar’s Bangla hits, Sohana Ahmed was inspired enough to sign

up for the PhD course in Hindustani classical music at the University of Delhi and specialise in the Indore *gharana*. “I never feel that Lataji was a non-Bengali artiste, so effortless was she. You could hear her *Nijhumo sondhyaye pantho pakhira* in the remotest tea shop in villages here.”

Something Ahmed, 53, takes away from the legend is the ability to treat both classical and popular genres as worthy of *sadhana* and every rehearsal as *riyaz*. “I know how difficult it is to recreate the complex layers that sound mellifluous. She never missed the slightest note and was so confident,” she says.

SARA AZAD KHAN
LAHORE, PAKISTAN

She listens to Mangeshkar’s songs once every eight hours in between her *riyaz*. Singing from the age of four, but with no formal *taaleem*, the sari-clad Mangeshkar became Sara Azad Khan’s inspiration. Her first favourite was *Didi tera devar deewana*, a song that catapulted Khan to the finals of the music talent show *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Challenge* in 2009. However, the 27-year-old’s crowning glory came when she was allowed to sing *Rang dil ki dhadkan bhi laati* on Pakistan national television despite an official ban on Indian content. “Today, half of my seven million fans on YouTube are Indian. How do you explain this borderless space? It is only because of Lataji’s purity and rootedness.”

BRIEFLY

Kiwis crush India W by 62 runs

Queenstown: Skipper Mithali Raj's half-century went in vain as Indian batting flopped once again with the visitors losing the first WODI against New Zealand by 62 runs here on Saturday. Opting to bowl, New Zealand rode on Suzie Bates century (106 off 111 balls) to score 275 and India were all-out in the last over for 213 in 49.4 overs and never for once looked like being in the chase. The 39-year-old Mithali, playing her 221st ODI, continued her dream form in the format — seven fifties in the last 11 innings in ODIs — to keep India in the hunt with a 73-ball 59 (6x4). Mithali also joined Charlotte Edwards in making 1,000 runs against four different teams — Australia, England, Sri Lanka and New Zealand — in ODI cricket. **PTI**

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 275 (Bates 106, Satterthwaite 63) beat India 213 (Raj 59, Bhatia 41, Jess Kerr 4-35) by 62 runs

Russian skater's dope case ruling on Monday

Beijing: The Russian coach of the 15-year-old figure skater embroiled in an Olympic doping scandal broke her silence to defend Kamila Valieva on Saturday, while the sport's highest court said it would hold a hearing on Valieva's Winter Games future on Sunday. Coach Eteri Tutberidze said she was certain Valieva was "clean and innocent" in an interview with Russian state television after hugging her figure-skating prodigy, who trained again at the rink next to the Capital Indoor Stadium on Saturday. Valieva's future at the Winter Games will be decided by Monday afternoon Beijing time, after a hearing by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) on Sunday. CAS said in a statement on Saturday.

Saketh, Ramkumar win doubles title

Bengaluru: India's Saketh Myneni and Ramkumar Ramanathan won the doubles title of the Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger after dominating their French rivals Hugo Grenier and Alexandre Muller in the final here on Saturday. Banking on the support of the local crowd, the Indian pair won 6-3 6-2 at the KSLTA Stadium. This was Saketh's ninth doubles title at Challengers while Ramkumar registered his third victory in as many weeks. **PTI**

PRATYUSHRAJ
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 12

November 16, 2021 turned out to be a turning point in Abhinav Manohar Sadarangani's career. Making his debut for Karnataka, the right-hand batsman smoked a 49-ball 70 - including two fours and six sixes - against Saurashtra in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament.

Abhinav's childhood coach Irfan Sait feels that knock changed the youngster's life. "I started receiving endless calls from several IPL teams, enquiring about him, asking for his batting videos. There were questions such as how he is built and how big a six he can hit. Is he a middle-order batsman or a top-order one," recalls Irfan. Karnataka lost the Syed Mushtaq Ali final, courtesy a last-ball six by Tamil Nadu's Shahrukh Khan, who was picked by Punjab Kings for a whopping Rs 9 crore in Saturday's auction. Manohar left his mark on the tournament with 162 runs in four innings at a strike rate of 150. His performance was rewarded when he was called for selection trials of at least half a dozen franchises.

The right-hand batsman was bought by Gujarat Titans for a 'mic-drop' deal of Rs 2.6 crore, 13 times more than his base price. Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals started the bidding. The contest became fiercer, with Gujarat Titans entering the fray when it crossed Rs 1 crore mark. Delhi Capitals eventually opted out, and Gujarat piped Kolkata to sign the rookie.

Irfan is not surprised that his ward has got such an eye-catching deal. "Those who follow the Karnataka Premier League will tell you how good a batsman and fielder he is. This is a new franchise, and I hope he gets a handful of matches to showcase his six-hitting ability."

Irfan vividly remembers a six-year-old kid Manohar coming to his academy 20 years ago. The kid who was initially scared to face the ball is now known as a hard-hitting batsman.

"He was never into cricket. He was scared of facing the bowlers when he first came to my academy. His father (Manohar Sadarangani) and I are very good friends. They used to have a footwear shop, and I was running a clothing shop on Commercial Street in Bengaluru. His father asked me once to enrol him in my academy. I was a bit reluctant because he was never interested in cricket. I said I will give it a shot," says Irfan.

Manohar and his first cousin Sharanya Sadarangani started playing cricket at the academy. Slowly, Abhinav started to take in-



Abhinav Manohar with Manish Pandey before his debut game for Karnataka.

He was never into cricket. He was scared of facing the bowlers when he first came to my academy. His father and I are very good friends. They used to have a footwear shop.

-IRFAN SAIT
MANOHAR'S CHILDHOOD COACH

terest, but the passion was lacking. "It became a routine for him. After school, his father would drop him off, and then pick him up in the evening. There was nothing special back then," says the 60-year-old coach.

It all changed in 2006. "Our academy played a practice match against the Hyderabad state U-14 team. A ball hit him (Manohar) in the forehead (the scar is still there), he was bleeding. We took him to the hospital; he got a couple of stitches. Deep down in my heart, I was sure he was never coming back. The next day, he was there, and scored a brilliant century. If you ask me, that was the turning point in his cricketing career," says Irfan.

Manohar's sister Sharanya went to England after playing age-group cricket for Karnataka and currently turns out for the German national women's cricket team. However, Abhinav decided to stay; he has

been a consistent performer through the age groups. He faced financial duress when his father had to close his footwear shop, and then a couple of more businesses due to financial loss.

"They went through really tough times. For a teenager, it wasn't easy to endure. However, all of his aggression was reflected in his batting. He started training three times a day. Suddenly a kid, for whom cricket was just a hobby, took it as a passion," narrates Irfan.

Manohar, a consistent performer at the junior level, had failed to make it to Karnataka's side, which has the likes of KL Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Karun Nair and Manish Pandey.

"He has scored runs in U-14, U-16, U-19 and U-23 levels, but was never able to break into Karnataka senior team. It was not his fault; you look at Karnataka's batting lineup, it is stacked. But I am glad that when he got the opportunity, he grabbed it with both hands," says the coach.

"He was among the top five run-getters in the state league. Within a month, he had made his Karnataka senior team debut, and now this IPL contract. What else can a coach ask for!" he says.

"Today was an off day in our academy; we were glued to the TV for the auction. The day was not wasted at all."

Other windfall stories

BABY AB

South Africa's U-19 World Cup star DEWALD BREVIS, known as 'Baby AB' for his batting style's resemblance to AB de Villiers', was bought by Mumbai Indians for Rs 3 crore.

There is an uncanny similarity in their shot-making. Just like his childhood hero, Brevis can play the lap shot, scoop, switch hit, ramp and reverse sweep. He was the leading run-scorer in the recent U-19 World Cup with 506 runs (a tournament record) & hit 18 sixes (another record).

With de Villiers as his hero Brevis was eager to join RCB in the auction, but will be playing for Mumbai Indians.

"I support RCB because AB and Virat play there," Brevis had told the paper. "In our household, IPL is a huge thing; we hardly miss any games. The biggest conflict is between my brother and me; he is a huge MS Dhoni fan and a CSK supporter through and through," said Brevis.



FROM U-19 STAR TO IPL

ABHISHEK SHARMA, who returns to Sunrisers Hyderabad for Rs 6.5 crore, is the son of former Indian U-19 cricketer Raj Kumar Sharma, who nowadays works at Bank of India in Amritsar. Sharma later moved to the UAE and even played for their national team. On Saturday, the 21-year-old Abhishek was the subject of an intense price battle among Sunrisers, Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans.

Abhishek was the captain of the India U-19 team which won the Asia

Cup in 2018 and was impressive with his all-round performance at the 2018 U-19 World Cup. His first Indian Premier League stint was with Delhi Capitals who picked him up for Rs 55 lakh for the 2018 edition. Abhishek would then be traded to Sunrisers Hyderabad and has played in the lower-batting order for the team apart from donning the left-arm spinner's role. After former skipper David Warner was dropped last season, he got the opportunity to open the batting and also claimed two wickets in an over against Punjab Kings. Abhishek will also lead the Punjab Ranji team this season.



STEADY PROGRESS

HARPREET BRAR, the son of former Punjab Police head constable Mohinder Singh, was bought by Punjab Kings for Rs 3.80 crore after a bidding war with Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Last season, he was a consistent performer for the Punjab franchise and the team managed to get the left-arm spinner back at Saturday's auction. He gave trials for then Kings XI Punjab three times before getting picked up by the franchise for 2019 for Rs 20 lakh. Brar played two matches in 2019 and only one in 2020.

In 2021, Brar managed the scalps of Virat Kohli, Glen Maxwell and AB de Villiers, and has been with the Indian team as a net bowler for the ongoing West Indies series.

PRATYUSH RAJ AND NITIN SHARMA

BRIDGE

Dealer: South Vulnerable East/West

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ Q84		♠ K103	
♥ 109652		♥ QJ87	
♦ K32		♦ A8	
♣ A7		♣ KJ42	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1S♠	dbl	pass	2H♣
pass	3H♥	pass	2H♥
pass	pass	pass	4H♥

South gets to 4H after a 1S overall by West and a Negative Double by North. It's hands like this one that make you realize that the opponents' bidding isn't always a pain. On this hand their bidding gives you a big clue about the winning line. West leads the queen of diamonds. South wins and leads the queen of hearts, won by West with the ace. West continues with the ten of diamonds and you win in dummy. Another heart lead goes to East's king, West following. East leads a diamond and South ruffs. One possible line is to play a club to the ace and finesse the jack. This would give you a place to get rid of a spade. Do you see anything better?

The West Hand: S-AJ765H-A4D-QJ104C-109
The East Hand: S-92H-K3D-9765C-Q8653

One thing is reasonably clear. You are not sure where the queen of clubs is. While not 100% sure about the jack of spades, you have a really strong insight that it is with West. Normal play in spades is to lead to the queen and then finesse the ten. You know this is not a good idea given the bidding. On the assumption that West has the jack of spades, is there a way to get two spade tricks for sure?

There is a line that will take advantage of what you learned in the bidding. Play the ace and king of clubs and ruff a club in dummy. Perhaps the queen will come down. It doesn't, but this line does eliminate all of West's clubs and it puts you in the dummy. Lead dummy's little spade to your king, giving up, momentarily, on the spade finesse. You will get that option back in just a second.

West takes the ace of spades and returns a spade. If you still think West has the jack of spades you will finesse this lead to your ten, and that works. Making 4H because of a good line, but more so by being informed about the spade suit by West's bidding.

Dealer: South Vulnerable North/South

NORTH		WEST	
♠ AQJ10		♠ 652	
♥ 5		♥ AKJ763	
♦ KJ875		♦ 109	
♣ K1043		♣ 72	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4S♣	pass	2S♠
pass	pass	pass	pass

West led the king of hearts and East played the two, South the four. What now?

JUMBLED 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.

Although prepared for _____, I preferred that it be postponed - Churchill (9)

FIARR	EGITDM
MPSOT	ELLSMY

SOLUTION: FIARR, STOMP, MIDGE, SNEELY
Answer: Although prepared for martynidom, I preferred that it be postponed - Churchill

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2360

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Heeded, lent an ear? (8)
- Grew less or diminished (6)
- Carbonaceous material (8)
- Take on (6)
- Actress Merman (5)
- Elongates, extends or draws out (9)
- State of equilibrium (6)
- Pillage or loot (7)
- Marauders (7)
- Imprison (4,2)
- Addition (9)
- Gangsters (sL), (5)
- Young cow (6)
- That man from capital of France? (8)

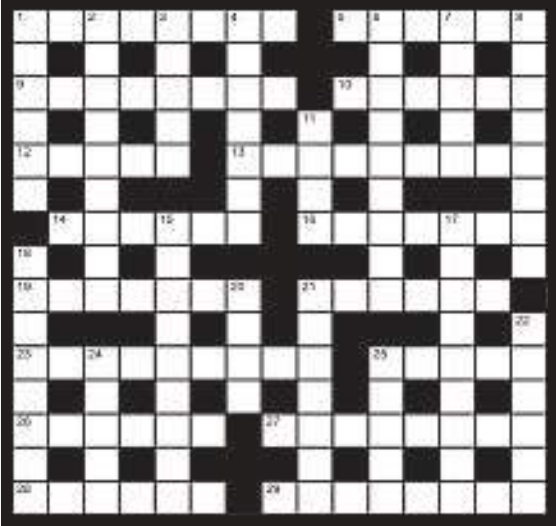
DOWN

- ___ up: Imprisoned (6)
- Pasta dish (9)
- Do outstandingly (5)
- Makes possible or easy (7)
- Indecision (9)
- Intense (5)
- Memento (8)
- Growl (4)
- "Tortilla Flat" author (9)
- Hostility (9)
- Knee-length trousers (8)
- Do not sink? (4)
- Language of Karnataka (7)
- Benefits derived from wealth (6)
- Coniferous evergreen forest (5)
- Seaport in NW Israel (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Talk of getting hit back with a weapon (8)
- Jack gets in cars - they're found on the Norwegian coast (6)
- Give the wrong form to emphasis (8)
- Soon my return will be known by another name (6)
- Made an animal noise - part of a violinello wedding march! (5)
- Can one kill fish only in this? (4,5)
- 100 left replenished and fuelled the fire? (6)
- One with three lines of equipment to fit into vehicle? (7)
- Half the city lives after them, think the despots! (7)
- Two consecutive wins and no opponent either to say "cheerio" (3,3)
- Average quantity is most important



25. Japanese Commander had no love in the morning to get stuck into things (2,3)
26. One "B. Wells" is a member of the Iroquois confederacy (6)
27. Get ruffled as daughter is very taken by scoundrel (8)
28. The girl comes at last with the milky drink (6)
29. Moved quickly, not being suited (8)

30. Small point of personal imperfection (6)
31. Got up to do the flowers with scented stuff (4-5)
32. Sucker for publicity surrounding hip establishment (5)
33. Garment paid for on receipt in Massachusetts (4,3)
34. Nude jiber arranged participant for nuptials (4,5)
35. Donor translated musical piece (5)
36. Does mime flop in apse? (8)
37. Strip final item from list of candidates (4)
38. Gold sovereign? (4,5)
39. Jerky barge a Viking split in Iceland (9)
40. How to tell the rooster to shut up and shut off (8)
41. Old King, cunning, endlessly

42. hoarding gold (4)
43. Live Dumbo acquires porno rating in the middle (7)
44. Wandered but didn't start, having moved at an easy pace (6)
45. Choler he detected in Nelson's blood (5)
46. It's funny, you being empty inside (5)

Solutions to 2359

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Rule of thumb, 7 See, 9 Lets, 10 Aggregate, 11 Tortoise, 12 Zebra, 13 On paper, 15 Tuba, 18 Olvid, 20 Babbage, 23 Water, 24 Petrichio, 26 Irrigated, 27 Castle, 28 Guy, 29 Industrious. **Down:** 1 Relation, 2 Last hope, 3 Onset, 4 Teacher, 5 Unguent, 6 Beelzebub, 7 Shabby, 8 Operas, 14 Pavarotti, 16 Machismo, 17 Remodels, 19 Deputed, 20 Bettides, 21 Owning, 22 Sturdy, 25 Ulcer. **CRYPTIC CLUES Across:** 1 Tiling clerk, 7 Sub, 9 Taser, 10 Shiftless, 11 Think tank, 12 Moves, 13 Trussed, 15 Yank, 18 Puma, 20 Plumber, 23 Trash, 24 King Midas, 26 Wahroonga, 27 Cloud, 28 Dim, 29 Electronics. **Down:** 1 Fitt state, 2 Luscious, 3 Norsk, 4 Custard, 5 Eriskey, 6 Kathmandu, 7 Steeve, 8 Bases, 14 South pole, 16 Abu Dhabi, 17 Presides, 19 Askance, 20 Pendant, 21 Stowed, 22 Sachem, 25 Macho.

If it's your Birthday

Sunday February 13

The coming year is one of raised emotional hopes, and personal opportunity. The main word of advice is not to make demands on partners that they can never fulfil.

Monday February 14

You'll be juggling commitments and you may be a little more emotional than usual. You'll also be putting your ideas forward with confidence.

Tuesday February 15

You'll probably be planning decorations or repairs at home, or at least a family party. Yet, before you can enjoy yourself, you must clear the air and resolve a lingering disagreement.

Wednesday February 16

You have one last chance to have a final attempt at moving one step closer to achieving a life-long goal. Don't waste it.

Thursday February 17

You'll be impatient to make the most of your skills and to complete overdue projects. However, you can't complain if partners misunderstand you.

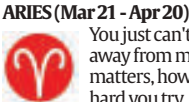
Friday February 18

There could be a lot of goodwill coming your way from people who have strong, romantic feelings. Keep your feet firmly on the ground and generate as much sweetness and light as you can.

Saturday February 19

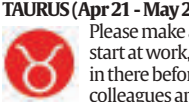
You may be a little sensitive early on, but you'll be in an ideal position to offer loved ones the support they now require. A rival at work may soon concede defeat.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD



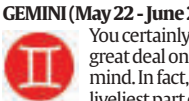
ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You just can't get away from monetary matters, however hard you try. Cost still seems to be the determining factor, and this is maybe why you are so aware of the need to increase your income. Those of you in the housing market, or making major domestic purchases, are on strong ground.



TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Please make a quick start at work, getting in there before colleagues and rivals can make their move. However, it may be that the best planetary aspects will assist partners, and that you will therefore have to link up with others in order for your interests to be protected.



GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You certainly have a great deal on your mind. In fact, the liveliest part of the day may take place when you're asleep. If you have any strange, uncomfortable feelings, it could be because your dream life is particularly active at the moment. You'll be happier once a family mystery is resolved.



CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Friendly stars are coming your way, and this is a useful moment to team up with other people in a new venture. It is also a perfect period for giving yourself over to social pleasure and putting aside the stresses of the 'real' world. Hopefully you'll find someone who shares your fantasy.



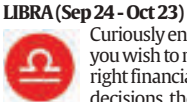
LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

A sensational alignment between the Sun and Mercury will endow you with sheer brilliance, so don't be slow to bring your ideas forward. However, partners will be ready with their awkward questions. The golden rule is therefore not to talk about things you don't know anything about.



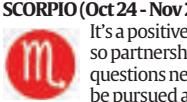
VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Legal matters seem to be looming and, if at all possible, you should attempt to find a quick solution. Also, if you still have travel plans to arrange, do so as soon as you can. And, if there's a mystery to solve, go back as far into the past as you can to find the answer.



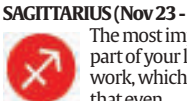
LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Curiously enough, if you wish to make the right financial decisions, the answer may lie in a dream, perhaps in a waking day-dream. If an emotional tie is becoming too intense, try to keep your feet on the ground. Also, if a partner is unable to give you the support you require, you may need to rely on yourself.



SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

It's a positive week, so partnership questions need to be pursued as a matter of urgency, especially if there has been any bad feeling lately. It is domestic and family ties which are most important, although you may be perplexed by a colleague's changing ideas.



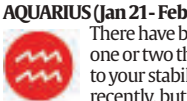
SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

The most important part of your life is work, which means that even relationships actually need to be worked at. Domestic chores should also be tackled, and if you get ahead of yourself now, you'll have more spare time later. Extravagant stars are lingering in the background.



CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Personal and professional planets are finely balanced, which is undoubtedly good news. Within your family, children and younger relations should be given first place. You should also try to be more youthful and young at heart. If artistic ventures are on the go, you should do well.



AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

There have been one or two threats to your stability recently, but these seem to be more imaginary than real. The way to find your feet is to seek support from those who know you best, the people you grew up with. Make sure that you offer partners support when they need it.



PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

It is unlikely that you'll be happy staying in one place, and there is much to be said for taking a few short trips. Emotional relationships require extra attention, and partners shouldn't be taken for granted, otherwise you may find that you lose out.

₹51.75 cr were expended on just six capped wicket-keepers, that is an average of Rs 8.625 crore per player. The highest earner of the day too was a wicket-keeper batsman, Ishan Kishan, while even the lowest earner among them, Dinesh Karthik, fetched Rs 5.5 crore

₹82.3 cr shelled out for 15 Indian seamers, both capped and uncapped. Deepak Chahar bagged the maximum (₹14 cr) while four others too joined him in the ₹10 crore-plus bracket

₹11.05 cr were spent on overseas spinners, as only two of them were purchased—Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga and Afghanistan's Noor Ahmed. A slew of them such as Adam Zampa, Imran Tahir, Adil Rashid, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Mohammad Nabi, Sandeep Lamichhane went unsold

Multi-tasking multi-millionaires

Young utility cricketers in demand with teams keen on steady nucleus at reset IPL auction

SANDIP G
FEBRUARY 12

IN THE middle of an intense bidding tussle for leg-spinning all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga, Indian Premier League auctioneer Hugh Edmeades collapsed onto the floor, leaving the audience in chilly silence. Shortly, after news arrived that Edmeades was safe and had just suffered a bout of low blood pressure, the franchise representatives parted for lunch. After the short break, Royal Challengers Bangalore got the Lankan, who was their mid-season replacement last year, for Rs 10.75 crore.

The debilitating moment of the day would be the fall of Edmeades, while the most surprising of purchases would be that of Hasaranga. The amount he elicited was unprecedented, though he's a perfect purchase from the perspective of franchises.

The two most sought-after entities in IPL auctions are big hitters and leg-spinners. Hasaranga is both — has a strike rate of 136 with the bat and an economy rate of 6.44 and average of 15 with the ball. He is touted as an all-format player, though he has been at his most lethal in the shorter versions. He could be to RCB what Sunil Narine has been to KKR — a wily bowler and strong hitter, with a lethal googly

Men of his ilk are IPL gold. It explains why more proven, even India spinners, were purchased for lower amounts. Yuzvendra Chahal, for instance, was gobbled up for Rs 6.5 crore; Rahul Chahar fetched Rs 5.25 crore; Ravichandran Ashwin Rs 5 crore; Kuldeep Yadav Rs 2 crore.

Adil Rashid, Imran Tahir and Adam Zampa, far more experienced than Hasaranga, went unsold. It's another evolutionary leap in the IPL — multi-utility cricketers, even if they be bits-and-pieces ones, are more valued than those with singular, specialised skills. Steve Smith, for example, didn't interest any buyer.

Least surprisingly, most of the top earners, those that crossed Rs 10 crore, are multi-taskers. Ishan Kishan, who became the fourth-most expensive player in the history of the league when Mumbai Indians went full-throttle to grab him, not only keeps wicket but could be an opener too. He is, literally, an all-rounder. Deepak Chahar was another big earner, not only because he's a competent bowler, but also because he could merrily swing his bat (he has a strike rate of 129). His timely 38 against the West Indies on Friday also benefitted him. He might not be as devastating a bowler as Kagiso Rabada (Rs 9.25 crore) or Trent Boult (Rs 8 crore), but all those little bits and pieces add up to a hefty sum.

Shardul Thakur, too, didn't go cheap, as Delhi Capitals coughed up Rs 10.75 crore. These players garnered attention that even some of the most promising young Indian batsmen didn't. Devdutt Padikkal, considering his rampaging potential, settled for Rs 7.75 crore.

Doing their homework

Franchises, thus, have become smarter and sharper. They have also, astutely, waged the fiercest battles for youngsters with proven track records. Mumbai Indians' aggressive pursuit of Kishan exemplifies it. Kishan, apart from his big-hitting expertise and wicket-keeping skills, is only 23 but with abundance of experience and still miles ahead of his cricketing peak.

Shreyas Iyer is another example, as he is 27, and his career is just about blossoming. Both are touted as future captains too. It's not a surprise then that only three of the 14 who earned more than Rs 8.50 crore are 30 or more. Of them, New Zealand seamer Lockie Ferguson and West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder are 30 while previous edition's highest wicket-taker Harshal Patel is 31. Both



Shah Rukh Khan's children Aryan and Suhana filled in for Kolkata Knight Riders' owner at the auction; five-time champions Mumbai Indians forked out Rs 15.25 crore for Ishan Kishan. *IPLT20.com*

Franchises, thus, have become smarter and sharper. They have also, astutely, waged the fiercest battles for youngsters with proven track records. Mumbai Indians' aggressive pursuit of Kishan exemplifies it

Patel and Ferguson are exemplary death-over bowlers while Holder is among the finest all-rounders in the world.

So, evidently, franchises picked up players with an eye on the future rather than settling for short-term gains. The reasons are clear. A) Teams want a steady nucleus, and not one that's in perennial flux. B) The next big auction could take several years, and they would have to make do with what they already have.

Not that some of the older players didn't invoke interest, but bidding for them was less frantic. This rang especially true for batsmen. None of the 30-plus batsmen set the stage on fire. For instance, David Warner, the most successful overseas batsman in the league, managed only Rs 6.25 crore; Faf du Plessis received Rs 7 crore; Manish Pandey Rs 4.60 crore. Past-the-prime cricketers like Suresh Raina and David Miller too went unsold. It was bleedingly obvious that the owners were not keen on keeping too many ageing players on their decks, for in five years' time, they could be over the hill in a format that's getting increasingly athletic. They were cut-throat too — CSK didn't push for Raina at Rs 2 crore, a fixture with them since the first season. No one wanted Amit Mishra (Rs 1.5 crore). Some of them could find a team in Sunday's auction, but their signatures are no longer as coveted as they once were. Only Shikhar Dhawan bucked the trend.

Franchises fought passionately to swoop young, uncapped talents as the day rolled on. Punjab Kings forked out Rs 9 crore for uncapped all-rounder Shahruxh Khan; Shivam Mavi managed Rs 7.25 crore and Abhishek Sharma was sold for Rs 6.50 crore. It was good to be young at the IPL auction on Saturday.

How did Chahar become more expensive than Dhoni?

In 2018, CSK had bought the seam-bowling allrounder for Rs 80 lakh. An almost 18 times salary hike over four years not only proved that the IPL is recession-proof even in a pandemic-hit world, but it also showed how a franchise could go the extra mile for a specific target.

Chahar had been part of the CSK set-up, a Powerplay specialist. He swings the balls, which not many Indian pacers do in modern-day cricket. His batting pyrotechnics lower down the order adds value to his game. As for CSK, their bowling attack has been based on a swing bowler upfront followed by spin-choke and Dwayne Bravo taking pace off the ball. From that perspective, they needed Chahar, someone the team management knows and trusts. Breaking the bank for him was a result of that thought process, notwithstanding that Chahar would be earning more than his captain.

Team India watches money grow

DEVENDRA PANDEY
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 12

AT AROUND 5pm, Ishan Kishan posted a 'velfie' from a balcony from a room at the Team India hotel in Ahmedabad after he was picked by Mumbai Indians for a whopping Rs 15.25 crores. "Thank you owners and management for having faith in me," he says in the clip. Kishan was with the main man from the management during the auction; he was in Rohit Sharma's room, along with Suryakumar Yadav, who had already been retained by MI. Also in the room were other members of the India T20 squad - Shreyas Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Shardul Thakur, and Rishabh Pant.

Sharma had shared a picture on *Instagram* of the players sitting around in a large sofa, glued to the proceedings. Titled 'Some tensed and some happy faces'.

The group caught the live telecast of two big paycheques - Kishan and Shreyas Iyer, who was first to go past Rs 10 crores when Rajasthan Royals got him for Rs 12.5 crores. Pant's team Delhi Capitals was one of the bidders for Iyer but they wouldn't eventually get him. Inside, Sharma's room, hugs and high-fives were exchanged for the two big crorepatris before the fall of the auctioneer Hugh Edmeades led to a break and change of plans for the players.



They had a flight to catch in Kolkata where India will take on West Indies in three T20s. The players wondered whether the auction would be postponed. Texts and calls were made to check for updates before it became clear that the auction would resume after a break. The party split up and they got ready to leave for the airport. Inside the bus there was happiness as many had hit jackpots at the auction. Those whose turn was about to come at the auction were glued to their phones; *Hotstar* was on.

Interestingly, players worry the possibility of their names appearing just after someone else has picked up a hefty price tag. The concern is their perception about past trends where the next player doesn't get sold for as much.

"There is a general trend that the next player in the queue doesn't get a good price if someone ahead of him has been sold at a higher price. There was certainly a fear that what if the franchise ran out of the money much early. Look at the way spinners got good money, some were very good," a player told this newspaper.

At the airport lounge, the team was informed that their flight was delayed due to a technical issue. Eyeballs returned to the phones, some still awaiting their names to be called out by the new auctioneer Charu Sharma. For many Ahmedabad to Kolkata flight must have been certainly long.



CSK, MI auction mantra: Love is letting them go, and buying them back

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
FEBRUARY 12

THE MAXIM 'if you love someone let them go, if they come back, they are yours' — erroneously attributed to Richard Bach, the writer of cosmic mush, but whose origin is unknown — was the mantra on Saturday. Only with a twist: If they are yours, you buy them back.

It was set by the tournament's two most successful franchises, Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians. Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bangalore, too, were on the same cosmic page.

Five-time champions MI forked out Rs 15.25 crore for Ishan Kishan, making him the second most expensive Indian in the history of IPL auction. The dashing wicketkeeper-batsman would earn a higher salary than Jasprit Bumrah, retained for Rs 12 crore. Four-time champions CSK spent Rs 14 crore for Deepak Chahar, making him more expensive than their talisman MS Dhoni, retained for Rs 12 crore.

CSK picked six players at the auction on Day One, five of them the franchise's old hand, including KM Asif for Rs 20 lakh. MI picked four players today, mainly stressing upon breaking the bank and bringing back Kishan, a franchise thoroughbred. They came into the auction with a purse of Rs 48 crore and spent almost one-third of that on the southpaw, a player the team mother-henned. A determined piece of bidding clearly suggested that they didn't want Kishan doing his future development elsewhere. Also, after releasing both Quinton de Kock and Kishan, they needed to bring one of them back; a 'keeper-batsman who could open and make an impact.

CSK usually don't breach the Rs 10-crore mark. Today, they did it for a proven performer, a pace-bowling all-rounder and a Powerplay specialist. Chahar has been in cracking form in white-ball cricket for India of late. Only on Friday, he had scored run-a-ball 38 and took two wickets in the third ODI against West Indies. For CSK, however, it was about sticking to their plan and bringing back a player whom they know and trust.

CSK focused on retaining their core. They also welcomed back their old hands — Ambati Rayudu for Rs 6.75 crore, Dwayne Bravo for Rs 4.4 crore and Robin Uthappa for Rs 2 crore. They were in bidding wars for Faf du Plessis and Josh Hazlewood as well, before losing both of them to Royal Challengers Bangalore for Rs 7 crore and 7.75 crore respectively.

CSK retained Dhoni, Ravindra Jadeja, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Moeen Ali, and their auction pick ensured that the core of their old squad was once again in place. MI, too, will thrive on their old core, through the retention of Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav and Kieron Pollard, and the re-signing of Kishan.

The KKR's picks had only one 'outsider', Shreyas Iyer at Rs 12.25 crore. The four other auction buys — Pat Cummins (Rs 7.25 crore), Nitish Rana (Rs 8 crore), Shivam Mavi (Rs 7.25 crore) and Sheldon Jackson (60 lakh) — had been part of their set-up. Two years ago, the Kolkata-based franchise had bought Cummins for Rs 15.50 crore. This time, they got him for much less. Along with Iyer, Cummins would be a captaincy option. More importantly, alongside the retained players — Andre Russell, Varun Chakravarthy and Venkatesh Iyer — the auction buy-backs would form the backbone of the two-time IPL champions.

RCB brought back Harshal Patel for Rs 10.75, last year's Purple Cap holder with 32 wickets. The franchise spent Rs 10.75 crore for Sri Lankan leggie Wanindu Hasaranga and Rs 2.4 crore for all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed, both part of the team's set-up last season. Ahead of the auction, RCB's director of cricket operations

ments. A 35-year-old middle-order batsman wasn't in demand and it would have been different if he were an opener. Raina and Smith aren't big-hitters and the franchises rather went for impact players. It is learnt that some franchises are looking at them as bargain buys, after checking the purse available, when the players will return for another round.

Why did Dhawan get big money?

Once again, on the face of it, Rs 8.25 crore that Punjab Kings spent for Shikhar Dhawan defied logic. Dhawan has been left out of the Indian T20I set-up, but after losing KL Rahul to Lucknow Super Giants, Punjab needed an opener to partner Mayank Agarwal and maybe a short-term captaincy option also.

'Auctionomics' worked for 37-year-old Faf du Plessis as well, for RCB, too, needed an opener and a captaincy candidate after Virat Kohli's decision to step down. Du Plessis is out of Cricket South Africa's scheme of things, but RCB bought him for Rs 7 crore.

Why did Raina and Smith go unsold?

Suresh Raina has 5528 runs in 205 IPL games. But at the first round of auction, franchises considered him surplus to require-

FRANCHISE-WISE BIGGEST BUYS

MUMBAI INDIANS

Ishan Kishan (Rs 15.25 crore)
Kishan fits into the role of an aggressive opener and a wicketkeeper.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

Deepak Chahar (Rs 14 crore)
A Powerplay specialist and a very good lower-order batsman, Chahar has been the franchise's top pace-bowling preference

DELHI CAPITALS

Shardul Thakur (Rs 10.75 crore)
Shardul has been a revelation of late, as a partnership-breaker and a game-changer as a batsman lower down the order

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Shreyas Iyer (Rs 12.25 crore)
DC released their former captain and KKR pounced, to add serious quality in their middle-order apart from giving the team management a captaincy option.

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

Washington Sundar (Rs 8.75 crore)
An off-spinner who can bowl in the Powerplays and a very capable batsman down the order

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE

Harshal Patel, Wanindu Hasaranga (Rs 10.75 crore)
Patel is a death-bowling option, while Hasaranga is a middle-overs wicket-taking option

PUNJAB KINGS

Kagiso Rabada (Rs 9.25 crore), Shahruxh Khan (Rs 9 crore)
Rabada is a fast-bowling royalty, while Khan has enhanced his reputation as a finisher.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS

Prasidh Krishna (Rs 10 crore)
The India vs West Indies ODI series enhanced his stock as a fast bowler

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS

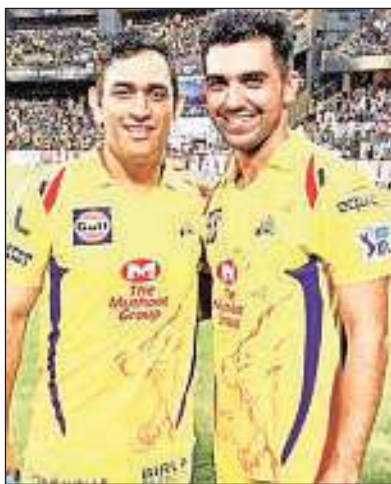
Avesh Khan (Rs 10 crore)
A wicket-taker, the last year IPL was his coming-of-age season

GUJARAT TITANS

Lockie Ferguson (Rs 10 crore)
An impact bowler, he would be available for the entire duration of the tournament

Mike Hesson had spoken about bringing back some of their old players to continue with their development. They walked the talk.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar and T Natarajan returned to Sunrisers Hyderabad for Rs 4.2 crore and Rs 4 crore respectively. Out of the two new franchises, Lucknow Super Giants did some smart buying, Gautam Gambhir doing the mentoring for the team. De Kock for Rs 6.75 crore was a steal, given the versatility and impact the South African 'keeper-batsman offers. They also bought Manish Pandey (Rs. 4.6 crore), Jason Holder (Rs 8.75 crore), Deepak Hooda, (Rs 5.75 crore), Krunal Pandya (Rs 8.25 crore), Mark Wood (Rs 7.50 crore) and Avesh Khan (Rs 10 crore).



After retaining MS Dhoni for Rs 12 cr, Chennai Super Kings bought seamer Deepak Chahar for Rs 14 cr. *Twitter*