

FROM PAGE ONE

Delimitation
commission
redraws J&K
electoral map

districts of the Kashmir division.
While Kupwara is the only district in the Valley where a constituency is being added, changes have been proposed to other existing constituencies as well. The new seat of Trehgam has been created to include Keran, parts of Kralpora tehsil among others.
In Baramulla, while the Assembly segments remain at five, Kunzer and Tangmarg constituencies have been carved out by splitting Gulmarg and merging the Sangrama constituency.
Sangrama and Gulmarg constituencies, which went to the PDP in the 2014 Assembly elections, now cease to exist, according to the delimitation draft.
In south Kashmir, the Shangus tehsil has been split between Anantnag East and Larnoo constituencies. Kokernag, a constituency previously held by the PDP, has also been split between Dooru and Larnoo. Dooru is considered a Congress stronghold.
Kulgam will have three as against four seats earlier with areas within the current Hom Shali Bugh constituency being included under Devsar, according to the draft.
Srinagar district will now have a separate constituency in Chhanpora area. Several constituencies of the district are being redrawn to create this constituency.
(A PTI report quoted unnamed officials saying the report has proposed redrawing of the Anantnag Parliamentary seat by including Rajouri and Poonch from the Jammu region, besides carrying out massive changes in the Kashmir division.)
In December last year, the Commission, comprising retired Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Desai, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and J&K Election Commissioner K K Sharma, proposed seven additional Assembly seats — six in Jammu division and one in Kashmir Valley.
For the first time, the Commission proposed reserving nine seats for Scheduled Tribes (STs) on the basis of population. Seven seats were proposed for the Scheduled Castes (SCs).
Once these proposed additions are effected, the total number of Assembly constituencies in J&K will rise to 90 — in Jammu, the number of seats will go up to 43 from 37, and in Kashmir, by one seat to 47.
An additional 24 seats are proposed to be reserved for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
Of the seven additional Assembly constituencies in the Union Territory, one each was proposed in the districts of

Kathua, Samba, Rajouri, Reasi, Doda and Kishtwar in Jammu division, and Kupwara in the Kashmir Valley.
The Commission said it proposed carving out an additional constituency in some districts to balance the representation for geographical areas with inadequate communication and lack of public conveniences given their excessive remoteness or inhospitable conditions on the international border.
The December meeting saw the participation of all five MPs — Farooq Abdullah, Hasnain Masoodi and Mohammad Akbar Lone (NC) and Jitendra Singh and Jugal Kishore Sharma (BJP).
The NC MPs, who stayed away from the first meeting of the Commission on February 18, 2021, had rejected the draft proposal of the Commission, saying it was “biased” against Kashmir and, therefore, unacceptable.

India at
forefront as firm
believer in
equality, govt
programmes for
all: PM Modi

day, with the state BJP slamming him. The CM's office said he was unwell and resting. The PM was received by Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, Union Minister for Tourism G Kishan Reddy and Telangana Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav among others.
Speaking at the function in the evening, Modi likened his government's schemes such as providing free gas cylinders, free electricity connections, Jan Dhan accounts, and other schemes to the marginalised communities with Ramanujacharya's philosophy. He said the Centre's schemes cover all people, irrespective of their caste and religion.
Modi said, “I am proud to witness the moment of the inauguration of the Statue of Equality. It is indeed a very proud moment for every Indian. India holds many great minds, and one of them was Sri Ramanujacharya, who taught us the lesson of equality between all cast, creed, and gender.”
The Statue of Equality, he said, “puts our nation at the forefront as a firm believer in equality, having one of the most diverse populations globally.”
Earlier in the day, Modi toured the complex housing Ramanujacharya's statue. Born in 1017 in Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu, Ramanujacharya advocated social equality among all sections. The inauguration of the Statue of Equality is part of the ongoing 12-day Ramanuja Sahasrabdi ‘Samaroham’ to mark the 1,000th birth anniversary of Ramanujacharya, which began February 2.
Slamming BJP over his absence, Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the CM who

Girls losing out to boys in getting
treatment for paediatric cancer

Even at the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital, Varanasi, the second largest paediatric oncology centre among the TMCs — it runs a total of eight — the gender gap is wide. In 2019, of the 325 paediatric cancer patients, 197 or 60 per cent were boys and in 2020, of the 392 patients, 250 or 63 per cent were boys.
At TMH, Mumbai, over the last 10 years, the aggregate number of boys is nearly double that of girls who came for treatment at the hospital — the gap over 75% in each year except for 2018 where the number of boys was only 24 per cent more than that of girls. (See chart)
In comparison, the gender gap narrows in the adult population. According to data available, in 2017, of the total 34,906 cancer cases among the adult population who came to TMH, Mumbai, 57 per cent were male and in 2018, of the 36,095 adult cancer cases, 58 per cent were male.
This gap is a matter of concern given that the most common cancers in children don't discriminate based on gender.
Said Dr Girish Chinnaswamy, paediatric oncologist at TMH: “Oral, breast or prostate cancers are minimal among children. Mostly, we witness blood cancers or cancer in bones, lungs, brain, among others which equally affect both genders.”
He attributed the gap to the possibility that “compared to boys, girls are less likely to be referred for diagnosis.”
Also, since early detection and timely treatment result in recovery in almost 80 per cent

THE GENDER GAP IN PAEDIATRIC CANCER				
Year	Total paediatric patients	Boys	Girls	Boys over Girls (%)
2011	1,222	826	396	108.6
2012	1,291	881	410	114.9
2013	1,616	1,100	516	113.2
2014	1,585	1,126	459	145.3
2015	1,832	1,216	616	97.4
2016	1,795	1,160	635	82.7
2017	1,972	1,273	699	82.1
2018	2,035	1,130	905	24.9
2019	2,081	1,336	745	79.3
2020	1,189	779	410	90.0
2021	1,776	1,135	641	77.1
Total	18,394	11,962	6,432	86.0

of the paediatric cases, oncologists said that girls who are not getting treated with cancer are losing their chance of survival and having a normal life like other children.
An illustrative example is that of a one-year-old girl from Latur who was detected with leukaemia — blood cancer — in 2021 and was undergoing treatment at the hospital. On March 7, 2021, however, her father got her discharged and took her to their native village. When social volunteers contacted him, he refused to continue with the treatment and the girl died in a few weeks.
“The family already had another daughter so citing the example of her future, they refused to travel back to Mumbai for treatment of the patient,” said Shalini Jatia, Secretary, ImPaCCT Foundation, Paediatric Oncology, TMC.
“No one says it directly. They beat around the bush then subtly pass on the message — a girl's life holds lesser value,” she added.
The gender wise detection and treatment gap in India is in sharp contrast to that in developed economies where it is 1:1.
Said Dr S D Banavali, director of all the eight Tata Memorial Centres (TMCs) in India and professor at medicine and paediatrics at TMH: “The skewed sex ratio in cancer detection can be attributed to the social attitude where cancer-ridden girls aren't prioritised for treatment. They don't even reach the hospitals for treatment so cancer cases in girls go unreported.”
Banavali added: “Although the situation has improved, in cases of cancer in eyes and kidneys, where we need to re-

move the organs, parents refuse to do so citing that their girls won't get married. Similar attribute is observed when we suggest amputations to save lives.”
“The sex-ratio in cancer detection is more skewed in northern parts of India. A study of AIIMS showed the ratio of boys to girls was 5:1,” said Dr Banavali.
The gender gap is also reflected in the rate of “treatment refusal and abandonment” (TRA) when it comes to girls. The TRA rate among boys in 2019 at TMH, Mumbai, was 2.3% compared to 2.7% among girls.
Of the 20 girls who dropped out of treatment, eight of the cases were due to gender-based disparity.
In 2020, the TRA rate was 3.2% among boys compared to 4.6% among girls. Of the 19 girl drop-outs, in eight cases, the reason was gender-discrimination. However, last year was an exception when TRA was higher in boys (1.9%) than girls (1.7%).
Often, even after arranging money for treatment of the girls, parents opt out. Anita Peter, executive director, Cancer Patients Aid Association, said that often parents refuse to upload the photos of girls affected with cancer on crowd-funding portals to collect money for treatment.
“They fear that if their relatives or neighbours get to know about cancer, their daughters won't get married. So they deny financial help even if that costs the lives of their daughters,” she said.

“talks about the Constitution does not respect it.” “Mr KCR, Is this your culture? You claim to have read 80,000 books. Is it what you have learnt from them,” PTI said quoting him.
The development comes amid an escalating war of words between Rao's party, TRS, and BJP. Justifying KCR's staying away from the PM's programmes, the TRS tweeted, “There is no necessity for the CM to receive PM in a private visit! It's totally as per the Protocol issued by Govt of India validated by Ministry of Home Affairs.” The party also posted that the state BJP should “stop these cheap & misleading tactics”.
The statue was proposed and designed by Seer Chinna Jeeyar, who heads JIVA. It is made of ‘panchaloha’, a combination of five metals: gold, silver, copper, brass, and zinc. The 54-foot base building, named ‘Bhadra Vedi’, has dedicated floors for a Vedic digital library and research centre, ancient Indian texts, a theatre, an edu-

cational gallery which has details about many works of Ramanujacharya.
Seer Chinna Jeeyar Swami said, “Bhagavad Ramanujacharya remained a true icon of equality for 1,000 years and this project would ensure that his teachings are practiced for at least another 1,000 years. Our mission is to make the Statue of Equality a culturally paramount destination for people across the globe and inspire everyone to make the world a more equal place to live.”
Karnataka govt endorses hijab ban: ‘Don't wear clothes that disturb equality, law & order’
administration can choose a uniform of their choice,” the order stated.
“In the event of the admin-

istrative committee not selecting a uniform, clothes which disturb equality, integrity and public law and order should not be worn,” it stated.
Section 133 (2) of the Act gives the state the power to “give such directions to the officers or authorities under its control as in its opinion are necessary or expedient for carrying out the purposes of this Act, and it shall be the duty of such officer or authority to comply with such directions”.
The purpose of the Act is “to provide for the planned development of educational institutions, inculcation of healthy educational practice, maintenance and improvement in the standards of education and better organisation discipline and control over educational institutions in the State with a view to fostering the harmonious development of the mental and physical faculties of students and cultivating a scientific and secular outlook through education”.
The order comes days before a scheduled hearing in the

Karnataka High Court over the issue.
The directive cited an order of the Supreme Court in Asha Ranjan and Others vs State of Bihar and Others in 2017 which summarised that the larger public interest prevails upon individual interest not by negating the individual rights but by upholding larger interests and to ensure relationship between institutions and students.
The row over the ban on wearing hijab to the classroom was initially restricted to Udupi and Chikmagalur but has now spread to other parts of the state.
Describing the row as a “systematic conspiracy”, V Sunil Kumar, minister for Kannada and culture, said a hijab or a burqa can be worn from home to college, but on entering the classroom, everyone should be in uniform.
Last week, B C Nagesh, minister for school education, announced plans for a uniform policy: “What if tomorrow someone comes to the college

India at UN: Political ideologies part
of democracy not same as radical
ideologies that subscribe to terror

YOSHITA SINGH
UNITED NATIONS, FEBRUARY 5

INDIA HAS underlined the need to distinguish between political ideologies that are part of a pluralistic democratic polity and the radical ideologies that subscribe to terrorism, emphasising that any attempt to paint both of them with the same brush is “inaccurate” and “counterproductive”.
Speaking at the ambassador-level annual briefing to member states organised by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), India's permanent representative to the UN, Ambassador T S Tirumurti, said India has always maintained that nations should not go back to the pre-9/11 era when terrorists were being divided into “your terrorist” and “my terrorist”.
He said categorising them weakens the collective resolve to combat terrorism.

THE FEBRUARY 5 editorial ‘Saying no’ incorrectly stated that the Galwan Valley clash between India and China took place in August 2020. The clash actually took place on June 15, 2020.
The error is regretted.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

Martyr of CISF on 06th February
ASI/Exe BIDHI CHAND, DHEP DULHASTI 06-02-1993
The CISF proudly remembers the supreme sacrifice of the brave-heart. On this dayhe laid down his life at the altar of duty while fighting with militants. His courage and bravery would remain an abiding source of inspiration for the force. The force will remain eternally indebted to him for this noblest deed.

NK MAGHAR SINGH, 16 JAN 1961 TO 05 FEB 1991
In the remembrance of Late Nk Maghar Singh who left us for his heavenly abode on 05 Feb 1991. May Wahe Guru Ji give strength to CIHHE SIKH fraternity and his family to bear this loss with courage and fortitude. He will continue to be a source of inspiration and strength for us. Let us pray for him in our hearts and remember a life lived so wonderfully in the service of the nation.

OO & All Ranks 6 SIKH

For first time this year, fresh Covid
cases dip below 2,000 in Delhi

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

DELHI HAS been recording a consistent decline in the number of Covid cases, with fewer than 2,000 fresh infections reported for the first time this year. As per Saturday's health bulletin, the city saw 1,604 new cases while the positivity rate stood at 2.87%.
A Covid-19 outbreak is thought to be under control when a positivity rate below 5% is maintained for over two weeks, according to the World Health Organisation. With the lower positivity rate, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority said schools, colleges, and gyms can reopen from Monday.
The current surge — the fifth for Delhi and third for the country — waxed and waned quickly in the national capital. The number of fresh cases reported each day remained over 2,000 for 35 days during the current surge of infections. In comparison, it remained over the 2,000-mark for 52 days during the previous surge in April-May last year.
The surge was largely driven by the highly mutated omicron variant and resulted either in no symptoms or mild

WHAT DATA SHOWS		
	OMICRON WAVE	DELTA WAVE
Highest no. of cases recorded in a day	28,867	28,395
Highest positivity rate	30.64%	36.23%
No. of consecutive days when over 2,000 new cases reported	35	52
No of consecutive days when positivity rate remained over 5%	30	44
Highest hospitalisations	2,734	20,142
Highest no. of deaths in a day	45	448
(Source: Delhi government's daily health bulletin)		

symptoms such as fever, chills, body ache, and sore throat in most of the people it infected. And, although the number of cases was similar at the peak of the current and previous wave, there were fewer hospitalisations and deaths.
There were 28,395 cases reported in a single day on April 20 last year at the peak of the previous surge and a comparable 28,867 cases on January 13 at the peak of the current surge in cases. However, hospitalisations peaked at 2,734 on January 19 for the current wave as compared to 20,142 on May 3 during the previous wave.
The highest number of deaths recorded in a day during the current wave was 45 as

dose of the vaccine and 80% receiving even the second dose in Delhi, we had thought that the course of the infection wouldn't be too bad. With the omicron variant having silently infected most of Delhi residents, this immune response must have been boosted without many deaths or severe disease. This will offer protection from further infection,” said Dr Pragya Sharma, professor of community medicine at Maulana Azad Medical College. Her team conducts the serosurveillance studies in Delhi.
Dr Jayaprakash Muliylil, chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the National Institute of Epidemiology, said, “A natural infection always offers better protection than a vaccine. Because of the previous exposure to the Wuhan variant and then the delta variant among the Indian population — and also vaccine coverage — omicron resulted in mild disease but offered protection against future infection.”
Data from the National Clinical Registry shows that only 10.2% people who were completely vaccinated but needed hospitalisation died during the current wave as compared to 21.8% of unvaccinated individuals.

Can Fadnavis demand
ban on wine and liquor
in Goa: Eknath Khadse

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 5

NCP LEADER Eknath Khadse once again targeted Opposition Leader in state Assembly Devendra Fadnavis. Khadse has dared Fadnavis to demand a ban on liquor and wine in the state of Goa.
“The liquor and wine flow freely in every ‘gulli’ (narrow lanes) across the state in Goa. Fadnavis should first seek a complete ban on liquor in Goa. Can he speak against liquor in Goa, which is run by BJP?” Khade said.
It is to be noted that Fadnavis is the election in charge of the Goa assembly polls and has parked himself there for extensive campaigning for the assembly polls.
Earlier, Fadnavis had slammed the Maha Vikas Aghadi government for allowing the sale of wine in supermarkets and step-in shops. When asked about his stand on similar liquor policy in BJP-ruled states, the former CM said that he was the opposition leader in Maharashtra therefore, he was raising the issues related to his state.
“I am from Maharashtra. My concern is Maharashtra. I will not allow Maharashtra to turn into a madh rashtira (liquor state). We will protest against the MVA's wine policy. The decision has already created unrest among several quarters. People are not liking the decision,” he said.
The former senior BJP minister, who joined NCP in October 2020 has often attacked Fadnavis. While addressing a public function in Jalgaon, Khadse again reiterated how Fadnavis had entangled him in a Pune land case on charges of corruption to tarnish his image.

Two killed as SUV rams two scooters

Gurgaon: Two motorists were killed after an SUV rammed into two scooters near Atul Kataria Chowk in Gurgaon on Friday night. Police suspect the SUV driver was under the influence of alcohol at the time and he suffered minor injuries. He was arrested and later released on bail. Police said both victims suffered multiple injuries and died on the spot. They have been identified as Sanjeev Kumar (45), who worked at a private company at Sector 18, and Keval (46), a labourer. **ENS**

EXPRESS AUDIO

What are truly wireless audio devices

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

Here we discuss what truly wireless audio devices are. They talk about how the pandemic and work from home have transformed the audio space, how noise cancellation is growing in India

in shorts saying it is hot? We cannot allow it. Colleges had set their own rules and it was being followed. There are Christian missionary-run colleges and a few of them do not allow Hindu students to wear bangles or bindis. Nobody has questioned it because it was the college's decision.”

Protect girls' rights, access to study: Opp

MP Priyanka Chaturvedi struck a different note.
She said that school is a place for education and students should be students, not “religious brand ambassadors.”
Speaking on the issue for the first time, senior Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted: “By letting students' hijab come in the way of their education, we are robbing the future of the daughters of India. Ma Saraswati gives knowledge to all. She doesn't differentiate. #SaraswatiPuja.”
His tweet Saturday — when Saraswati Puja was observed — appeared carefully crafted reflecting the anxiety in the Congress about a possible backlash.
Said his colleague Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge: “They have been going to schools wearing headscarves for decades. Nobody had any objection earlier. Now why are they objecting? They are doing this to divert attention. There are no jobs, they are not able to control inflation, they are using areas like Udupi and Mangalore as experiment grounds. If it's a success, they can replicate it elsewhere in the state.”
“The courts are dealing with it. The constitutional rights of the people must be protected. That is our position,” CPM's general secretary Sitaram Yechury told The Indian Express.
Senior RJD leader and Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Kumar Jha invoked the Constitution. “The hijab is not a barrier, the barrier is in the minds of those who are objecting to it,” Jha said. “I teach in a university, I have had several students over the years who wore the hijab. It never occurred to me that I should be concerned about it. We must look at how the Constitution, particularly Article 25 (right to freedom of religion) speaks about it. Have we now decided to jettison every idea which is dear to this nation simply because you

want to create a new barrier between people and communities every day to deflect attention?”
Said Trinamool Congress's Sushmita Dev: “As long as there are personal laws, customs and traditions in this country, no one can tell people what to do and what to wear. It is a part of their culture and their custom. You have to respect it.”
Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi disagreed. “When we were in school, uniform was above all religious affiliations. If a school is setting a norm, why are our politicians and religious leaders getting into it and making it about religion? Let's say even for a club entry if you are not allowed to wear a sandal... then you follow those rules. School is a place for education and every school follows a norm of a uniform. In Maharashtra, we had the same uniform: canvas school bag, same canvas shoes, pleated hair... we went as students... we didn't go as religious ambassadors,” she told The Indian Express.
“Of course, democracy gives you the freedom to choose; after school hours you can choose whatever you want to wear... If you are talking about a secular nation, a secular nation has to abide by the rules and norms,” she added.
For BSP's Lok Sabha MP Kunwar Danish Ali, the move to block girls because of their hijab undermines the Modi government's plank of beti bachao, beti padhao. “As a country, we have been trying hard to change the mindset of a large section of people who believe that a girl child's education is a second priority. It is a fact that education of girl children is still not a top priority in many communities, including Dalits, tribals and minorities, especially Muslims,” he said.
NCP's Majeed Memon said the controversy is hardening fault-lines with non-Muslim girls wearing saffron shawls to protest. “This seeks to divide the students into two different communities which is very unfortunate,” he said.
More so, when students' education was hit hard by the pandemic. “Now on resumption, the girls should not be made to suffer further on the issue of hijab. Until the government committee comes out with a decision one way or the other, it would be desirable that the authorities let them attend classes. However, Muslim girls and parents must adhere to the rules of uniform,” he said.

3 WEST BENGAL

CIVIC ELECTIONS

Protests grow after TMC candidate list ‘goof-up’

Firhad Hakim says password to party’s portal was misused to post unapproved list

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 5

THE OVERNIGHT protests over publication of the Trinamool Congress’s list of candidates for the upcoming elections to 108 municipal corporations spread to Purba Medinipur district on Saturday, as the convenor of the district party committee for the selection of candidates vented his ire over the final list of nominees.

Protests erupted across the state after a separate list of candidates went up on the party’s website at the same time the official list was being released at a press conference. Spotting the goof-up, the TMC leadership issued a statement saying that the list uploaded on the portal and the party’s Facebook page wasn’t approved by its chairperson Mamata Banerjee.

Nearly three hours later, Chatterjee told mediapersons that the party won’t publish a revised list of candidates. The final list was subsequently sent to the party unit presidents of the poll-bound districts.

The convenor for Purba Medinipur claimed that many leaders, who continue to be loyal to former party leader Suwendu Adhikari despite his switch to the saffron camp, have been favoured for tickets. “Dada’s (Adhikari’s) loyalists have been given priority when it comes to distribution of tickets. Many of these leaders are in touch with the BJP. This is very unfortunate. I will resign from the post of district convenor tomorrow (Sunday),” he said. However, later in the evening, the convenor clarified that he won’t resign from his post immediately.

In neighbouring Malda district, senior leader Krishnendu Narayan Chowdhury accused the Trinamool leadership of handing tickets to leaders close to the BJP. Blaming I-PAC, the



Mamata Banerjee was furious over the list row: sources

organisation run by the party’s poll strategist Prashant Kishor, for the controversy around the publication of the party’s poll lists, Chowdhury said, “This is a direct fallout of the I-PAC finalising the names of candidates. They know nothing about Malda.”

In Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Burdwan, Nadia, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas and other areas, a section of Trinamool workers vented their anger in front of local party leaders.

After the publication of the final list Friday late night, protests erupted in several districts over the choice of candidates. There was palpable anger among a section of party workers in the Kamarhati municipal area, with the party’s labour arm, Indian National Trinamool Trade Union Congress (INTTUC), accused of stopping buses, e-rickshaws and auto-rickshaws from plying in the area. A section of the party’s trade union activists even threatened to shut down local factories if the candidates weren’t replaced.

Addressing supporters of the party’s labour arm publicly, INTTUC leader Ali Raja said, “If the candidates aren’t replaced, I will launch a massive movement that will bring Kamarhati to a halt.”

Responding to the threat, local Trinamool MLA Madan Mitra said, “It’s unfortunate that the names of some leaders, who were expecting to be among the candidates, were deleted from the final list. The party’s senior leadership has to deal with the situation.”

Kolkata Mayor Firhad

Hakim claimed that the password to access the party’s official portal was misused to post an unapproved list of candidates. “The password of our website was misused and the list signed by Subrata Bakshi and Partha Chatterjee wasn’t uploaded. We are trying to find out how it happened and who was responsible. However, no one should be unhappy for missing out on a ticket. We are all soldiers of the Trinamool Congress and should fight unitedly,” Hakim said.

The controversy around the list and the protests ever since have also raised fresh questions on internal discipline in a section of the party’s leadership.

According to sources in the ruling party, supremo Mamata Banerjee was furious with the goof-up that resulted in the Trinamool releasing separate candidate lists at a press conference and the party’s official portal and Facebook page.

She made enquiries from senior party colleagues on what could have possibly led to the goof-off, sources said. At the party’s organisational polls where she was yet again elected as the TMC chairperson unopposed, Banerjee sought unity in the ranks. Charing a meeting of her party MPs earlier, the TMC supremo had stressed on the need to ensure a fine balance between young and old leaders.

Meanwhile, reacting to the controversy, CPM leader Sujan Chakraborty said, “There is fierce jockeying in the Trinamool to be councillors as those vying for tickets want to loot money like any have. These protests are proof that the party has no ideology at all.”

BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh said, “This is the beginning of the end for the Trinamool. The ongoing internal conflict is an indication of the same.”

Battling faction fights, BJP says candidate list to be out soon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 5

EVEN AS other parties, including the ruling TMC, have announced candidate lists for the coming polls to 108 municipalities in the state, the BJP is yet to finalise its list of contenders. Party leaders and workers are unsure of when the list will be announced. Factional fights have escalated since the district committee was announced recently, with some leaders openly expressing their displeasure on social media.

The election will be held on February 27. On February 3, the State Election Commission announced this formally. The CPM and other political parties of the Left Front have already announced their candidates. The TMC announced its candidate list on Friday. A senior BJP leader said, “Our party leadership are working on the candidates’ list and within a very short period, the party will announce it.” He added, “The party’s state committee has asked the district committees concerned to send the probable choices (candidates). The state leadership will finalise the list after consulting with the district leadership.”

Another party source said the BJP is emphasising on choosing candidates from among their ‘core workers’. “Many TMC leaders who are unhappy with the party may be chosen as our candidates but the problem is, they may return to their old party after winning. So, the party has decided that candidates will be chosen from among our core party members.”



BRIGHT SPOT

People visit Kolkata’s Victoria Memorial on the occasion of Saraswati Puja on Saturday. *PTI*

Governor now questions appointment of state information commissioners

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 5

KEEPING UP his attack on the Trinamool Congress government, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has now questioned the recommendation for the appointment of former director general of police (DGP) Virendra and retired assistant chief secretary Naveen Prakash as state information commissioners. Sharing a note he sent to the state government on December 6 on social media, the Governor alleged that he hasn’t yet received a response to it.

“WB Gov awaits response to issues flagged on Dec 6 in views of flaws & disregard of Supreme Court directives in recommendation seeking appointment of retired DGP Virendra IPA 1985 @IPSAssociation & retired ACS Naveen Prakash IAS 1987 @IASAssociation as Information Commissioners,” the Governor tweeted on Saturday.

“Govt seeks appointment of Ex DGP Virendra now Chairman WB Police Recruitment Board & Ex ACS Naveen Prakash now Pr Adv (Infrastructure) as



Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar outside the West Bengal Assembly. *File*

Information Commissioners. Recommendation flawed in view of Supreme Court directives Response sought on Dec 6 awaited,” he added.

Dhankhar also shared a recorded statement where he says, “...the recommendations examined by me were not in conformity with directives imparted by Honourable Supreme Court. In that situation I sought response. Response is still awaited despite two months passed.”

In an indication that the continuing war of words with the Governor had reached a flash-point, the chief minister recently told media persons that she had blocked Dhankhar on Twitter claiming she was disturbed by his tweets criticising her government.

Later, chairing an administrative meeting in Kolkata, which was beamed live by some media networks, the CM pulled up the Purba Medinipur SP asking him if Dhankhar was talking to him personally over the phone. She further told him that he need not feel under pressure from the Governor.

The note to the state government, which the Governor shared along with his latest tweet, read, “It is gathered from the applications that people from various walks of life with credentials, law and the services – IAS, IPS, IFS, academics, judicial services etc has responded to the advertisement for appointment of State Information Commissioner of West Bengal Information Commission.”

“The Minutes made available indicated thus----- ‘After pursuing respective biodata, it was

seen tha Shri Virendra, IPS (retired) EX -- DGP, West Bengal and Shri Naveen Prakash, IAS (Retd), Ex--Additional Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal, fulfil the criterion for appointment as State Information Commissioner’...” the note stated.

“Other than this reflection, the Minutes do not advert to any other aspect. Neither the minutes, nor the recommendations can be reckoned to conformity of the binding directives of the Honourable Supreme Court on the point.

“The premise in the Minutes that Shri Virendra... Shri Naveen Prakash... fulfil the criterion for appointment as state information commissioners cannot be reckoned as part of any evaluation in as much as such situation obtains for other applicants as well. There is no finding recorded in the Minutes other than (that) the recommendees ‘fulfil the criterion’” the note further read.

“In this premise, all information in the light of the above be made available at the earliest,” the Governor wrote at the end of the note.

Foundation laid for private super specialty hospital in Salt Lake

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 5

TECHNO INDIA Group, one of the largest knowledge management groups in education and healthcare in West Bengal, on Saturday joined the Eastern India Rotary Welfare Trust in laying the foundation stone for Rotary Techno Global Hospital, a private multi-super specialty hospital in Kolkata.

Satyam Roychowdhury, founder, Techno India Group, and Shekhar Mehta, president, Rotary International, laid the foundation stone for the 650-bed hospital that will come up in Salt Lake.

Coming up on 3 acres of land in the heart of Salt Lake’s Electronics Complex, the hospital

will have state-of-the art infrastructure and healthcare facilities conforming to global standards. The cost of building the hospital is estimated to be in excess of Rs300 crore.

The healthcare facility will provide specialised high-end healthcare to serve a large population of eastern and Northeastern states of India as well as neighbouring countries. In the first phase, the proposed hospital complex will have 350 beds and be fully operational by 2024.

An educationist and entrepreneur, Roy Chowdhury said, “In the journey towards medical excellence, Techno India Group of Hospitals, the architect of modern day healthcare in Kolkata and West Bengal, has reached many

milestones each of which have had a significant impact on the Healthcare industry. The journey continues and the launch of Rotary Techno Global Hospital, Kolkata will add a new dimension to healthcare in the state.”

“Rotary Techno Global Hospital, Kolkata will begin a new era in healthcare. It will bring together all the components of healthcare and create an environment that will leverage the best of all forms of medicine. I firmly believe that this will bring up a number of newer options of managing disease and wellness. The hospital will create job opportunities for thousands of young boys and girls in the coming days,” said Mehta.

Bengal sees slight dip in Covid cases at 1,345; 31 more die

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 5

WEST BENGAL registered 1,345 new Covid-19 cases over the last 24 hours, a marginal decrease from 1,523 on Friday, said a bulletin issued by the state health department.

According to the bulletin, the fresh infections took the state’s tally of cases thus far to 19,64,972. The state also logged 31 new Covid related deaths over the last 24 hours taking its toll till date to 20,789.

The state also saw 2,251 more Covid patients cured of

the infection in the past 24 hours. With the fresh recoveries, the state’s overall count rose to 19,64,972, the health bulletin said.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in West Bengal currently stands at 98 per cent while the state now has 19,276 active Covid-19 cases.

Five districts, including Kolkata and North 24 Parganas, remain areas of concern for the health department, according to an official.

Of 1,345 new cases, 522 were reported from these five districts.

‘Bose can be honoured only by following his inclusive ideology’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 5

CHANDRA KUMAR Bose, grand nephew of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, on Saturday took to social media on Saturday to highlight that “Netaji can only be honoured by following his inclusive ideology.”

“Netaji cannot be honoured – just by building his statue, setting up a museum or making a tableau – towering personality like Netaji can only be honoured by following & implementing his inclusive ideology of uniting all communities to build India that he envisioned @narendramodi” Bose



Chandra Bose, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's grand nephew

tweeted. Earlier, Chandra Bose urged the Centre convene a meeting of a high-level committee for celebration of the 125th birth anniversary of the freedom fighter where they can put forth their proposals of celebrating Netaji’s ideals. This was after the Centre announced the proposed statue of the freedom fighter at India Gate in New Delhi.

Chandra Bose is also the member of the committee, which is headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Netaji’s family has reservations about the salute posture in the hologram statue of the freedom fighter which was unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 23.

On January 27, Chandra Bose wrote to the prime minister urging him to discuss at a virtual meeting details related to the “statue aesthetics and design”.

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Dalit tractor driver lynched, 1 accused detained: UP Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 5

A 35-YEAR-OLD Dalit man – a tractor driver – was beaten to death allegedly by a group of villagers after he allegedly knocked down a man riding a bicycle while “driving rashly in a drunken state” in Koirauna area of Bhadohi on Thursday, police said on Saturday. The cyclist was not injured in the accident, they said. The main accused, Jai Shankar Pandey (50), who allegedly led the group of assailants, was detained on Saturday, police added. Police identified the deceased as Munshi Gautam, a resident of Purva village.

His family members and local residents staged a protest outside the Koirauna police station demanding action against the assailants. They called off the protest

after the police assured them that stringent action would be taken against the culprits.

Charanjeet, father of the deceased, registered an FIR against Jai Shankar Pandey and five unidentified persons at the Koirauna police station on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The police also invoked the SC/ST Act against the accused. Jai Shankar was detained on Saturday. A probe was on, said Circle Officer, Gyanpur, Ashok Kumar Singh.

According to the police, on Thursday evening, Munshi along with his neighbour, Shiv Chandra Yadav, were returning home from a market in tractor, which is owned by Munshi’s neighbour, Suresh Singh. When Munshi reached Beruva Pahar village, he lost control of the vehicle while going over a speed bump and hit a man riding

Odisha journalist killed blast triggered by IED in Odisha; Maoists suspected

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, FEBRUARY 5

A JOURNALIST was killed when an improvised explosive device (IED), allegedly planted by Maoists, went off in Madanpur Rampur block of Odisha’s Kalahandi district, police said on Saturday.

The journalist was identified as Rohit Biswal, 43, who was working with Odia daily Dharitri.

This is the first reported instance of a journalist in Odisha getting killed in alleged Maoist violence. Kalahandi’s superintendent of police said police were the likely target of the IEDs.

As per preliminary information, Biswal had visited the spot to take visuals of posters put up by Maoists asking residents of the area to boycott the



Rohit Biswal worked with an Odia daily

coming Odisha rural elections. The posters were put up near Karlakunta bridge in Mohangiri area, which passes through a forest region. The posters were allegedly put up by the Kalahandi-Kandhamal-

Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division of CPI(Maoist) that is active in Kalahandi and Kandhamal border.

“Whenever such posters come up, there is a possibility that IEDs have been planted targeting police. But that does not happen every time. Our team was alerted, but before we reached the spot, the unfortunate incident happened. The area is still being sanitised by our bomb squad.

“We can recover the body from the spot only after ascertaining that there are no more IEDs.” Kalahandi SP Vivek M Saravana told *The Indian Express*.

Kalahandi’s Madanpur Rampur block shares its border with Kandhamal district and comprises dense jungles, and has heavy presence of Maoists.

The slain journalist is survived by his wife, a son and a

daughter.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced Rs 13 lakh as ex-gratia for his family.

“There is no place for violence in democracy. I strongly condemn the incident and the state government will take stern action against the persons involved in the killing of the journalist,” the chief minister tweeted.

BJP national vice-president Baijyant Panda also condoled the killing. “Very sad at the murder of journalist Rohit Biswal by Maoists in Odisha. All you idealist young students & Liberals, know that leftists have killed nearly 100m people, by far the most in history. Remember this when you hear anyone praise the Left or say Lal Salaam. Om Shanti,” he said in a Twitter post without elaborating.

(WITH PTI INPUTS)

‘Traffic jams behind 3% divorces in Mumbai, says Amruta Fadnavis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 5

A WAR of words broke out between Amruta Fadnavis, wife of former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, and Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi on Saturday after Amruta said that three per cent of divorces in Mumbai take place due to traffic jams. “I’m saying this as a common citizen. Once I go out, I see several issues including potholes, traffic. Due to traffic, people are unable to give time to their families and 3 per cent of divorces in Mumbai are happening due to it,” she told reporters.

Following this, Shiv Sena leader Priyanka Chaturvedi, without naming Amruta, tweeted, “Best (il)logic of the day award goes to the lady who claims 3% Mumbaiers are divorcing due to

traffic on roads. Please take a holiday break rather than having a mind on brake... Bengaluru families please avoid reading this, can prove fatal for your marriages.”

Responding to Chaturvedi’s tweet, Amruta referred to a report by Survey Monkey – a market research firm and a leader in survey software – and tweeted, “Hey Lady, do not deviate from truth. Report by - Survey Monkey states – Mumbaikar suffers from psychological illness due to huge traffic jams & delay in movement of traffic. There is a fall in employee productivity & increase in divorce rates. All thanks to you and urs.”

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar. “Her allegation is astonishing that traffic leads to divorce. There can be many reasons for divorce but it is for the first time that I am hearing this,” Pednekar was quoted as saying by news agency ANI.

4 GOVT & POLITICS

Never told students what to wear at JNU, says newly appointed UGC chairperson

DEEKSHA TERI & RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

THE CLOTHING practices of students have never bothered M Jagadesh Kumar, the newly appointed chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) who was a professor at IIT-Delhi and until recently the vice-chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

In an interview with *The Sunday Express*, Kumar refused to specifically remark on the escalating controversy over hijab ban at pre-university colleges in Karnataka but said that there were never any restrictions on students' clothes while he was heading JNU.

The UGC chairman also said he welcomes criticism from the students and that any protests should be peaceful to ensure they remain "meaningful". His priority, he said, was to implement the National Education Policy "and that he would see the higher education regulator talk more frequently to the stakeholders and vice-chancellors, listen to their concerns and challenges and provide solutions to them. Excerpts:

Take us through your top priority as the UGC Chairman

My first priority is going to be the speedy implementation of the new NEP (National Education Policy). I am going to sit together with the officers of UGC and also the officials of Ministry of Education (MoE) and work out a plan that can be implemented. This has to be done by taking feedback from the stakeholders by sitting across the table and understanding the challenges that our educational institutions are facing and try to figure out solutions collectively.

This is the second year of NEP implementation, but there has

not been (PLEASE CHECK) been any significant increase in the education budget. How will a body like UGC achieve the NEP goals?

We definitely need good funding in the education sector. One good thing that has come from the Budget is an increase of 11.8 per cent in allocation for higher education. We will soon have the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) in place, which will work closely with the industry and various ministries to fund research. The proposed National Research Foundation will also address research funding. In the future, there will be a more integrated approach (to funding) instead of different agencies funding separate projects. We will also prioritise our needs better and utilise funds more efficiently.

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But what about investing significantly more in education as advocated by the NEP?



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW

WITH
M JAGADESH KUMAR
CHAIRMAN OF THE UGC

In the last two years, due to the Covid-19 situation, even though funds were given to the universities, not everything was utilised adequately because of various reasons. For instance, universities were closed and staff was working from home. But now that we are coming out of it, there will be increased funding for higher education.

The government is working on setting up an overarching body for higher education. How does this affect your planning for UGC, which may soon be merged with a larger body?

All bodies such as AICTE, UGC will be part of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), but we cannot wait till HECI happens. We need to start our groundwork right now and implement reforms within our organization, so that whenever UGC is merged with HECI it will help improve the functioning of that body.

Your term at JNU witnessed unprecedented student protests. You are now heading an even larger body that will oversee university education across the country. Is there anything you would like to change in your handling of protests and resolving conflicts with the student community?

I believe that we must encourage the students to stand up and ask questions. I motivate students to not just be happy with status quo, but question it and bring a change. I am happy that JNU students are active in making sure that changes are brought. That is why in the past five years, we were able to introduce lots of changes in the university.

I welcome criticism and all I ask is that all demonstrations and protests should be done in a meaningful way, and should not become violent or unlawful...

But during the peak of the 2020 student protests over hostel fee hike, you were criticised for shutting students out

In 2020, I was physically attacked by some students, but thanks to the presence of mind of my driver, I could get away. The situation at that time was like that, and unfortunately we all were not familiar with technologies such as Zoom. Once people became familiar with these tools, we held several face-to-face meetings in an online mode... these had nearly 4,000 participants and a meaningful conversations happened. For any dialogue to take place, both sides have to come forward and create that kind of an ecosystem.

The EdTech sector has witnessed a boom during the pandemic even as there have been complaints of malpractice. Do you think this sector needs to be

regulated?

The ministry has already issued a note to all EdTech companies and they have voluntarily adopted a code of conduct. EdTech companies also have great potential to grow and provide the backend technology for universities and institutes... If low-cost educational resources can be provided, then it will be a boon for the education sector.

What do you think of hijab ban controversy in Karnataka? Should students be denied access to education based on their attire?

I do not know the background of the incident that took place. However, if we look at my university (JNU), we do not have any such restrictions on what clothes they wear. I can only talk about my institution (JNU) and the practices here.

What was the thinking behind JNU not imposing a dress code on its students?

Well, today I am wearing a coat because it is cold, but tomorrow I may choose to wear a kurta if it is hot. So, I think clothes have more to do with weather conditions and comfort level. We have adapted clothing to what is more suitable to Delhi's weather. We have not done anything new to clothing; it is a societal practice that is going on and we have nothing to say about our students' clothing practices.

Religious practices can also influence clothing. What was JNU's stand on that?

I think in our university, we never looked at this issue at all. Students wear what they wish to wear, which are civil in nature... For me, I was very flexible towards the clothing that my students had in my classrooms at IIT.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

'Owaisi saw me shoot, so he ducked... I fired at lower portion of car'

Men arrested for shooting at MP's car said had abandoned plan thrice due to large crowds: police

AMIL BHATNAGAR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

THE TWO men accused of firing at Lok Sabha MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi's car aborted the attack thrice earlier because of large crowds, according to Uttar Pradesh police which recorded their statements.

The MP's car was shot at when he was returning from Meerut to Delhi on Thursday, following which police arrested Sachin Sharma and Shubham.

According to the FIR, the accused did not give satisfactory answers to the police initially, but when investigators told them that the incident had been captured on CCTV, Sachin apologised and described what had transpired.

"I wanted to become a big politician. I consider myself a true patriot. I found Owaisi's speeches harmful to the nation. In my head, I had developed an enmity with him," the FIR quoted Sachin as having told police.

He told police he got in touch with AIMIM's Dasna chairman to keep track of Owaisi's visits. According to the FIR, he decided he would attack Owaisi during a campaign visit. Following the decision, he contacted Shubham, a resident of Saharanpur, whom he has known for several years.

"After I called him, Shubham came to Ghaziabad and we met on January 28 near Wave City. Shubham was staying with his friend. Both of us decided to kill Owaisi and began waiting for the



Asaduddin Owaisi was on the campaign trail again on Saturday with a stop in Baghpat's Asara village on Saturday. *Express*

right time," the FIR quoted Sachin as having told police.

The two men attended a public gathering by Owaisi in Ghaziabad's Shahid Nagar on January 30. They wanted to execute their plan the same day but called it off owing to the crowd, Sachin told police. The two then went to Meerut's Gola Kuan on Thursday with the intention of shooting him. They did not do it due to the large crowd again.

They tailed him to Kithore but a similar situation played out there as well. The two then learnt that Owaisi was leaving for Delhi in his white SUV and decided to attack since they did not know when they would get another opportunity, the FIR stated.

"Jaise hi Asaduddin ki gaadi Chhajarsi toll par shaam ke samay pe aayi tatha toll par slow hokar guzar rahi thi, maine aur Shubham ne ek rai hokar Owaisi ko jaan se maarne ke liye iski car ko target kar goliyan chalana

shuru kar di... maine jaise hi pehli goli chali to Owaisi ne mujhe goli chalate huye dekh liya aur yeh apni jaan bachane ke liye car ke neeche ki or baith gaye. Tab maine unki gaadi par neeche ki or goli chalayi. Mujhe ye ummed thi ki Owaisi mar gaye honge (The moment his car slowed down near Chhajarsi toll plaza, Shubham and I decided to kill Owaisi and started shooting at his car. Owaisi saw me shooting and to save himself, he ducked. It is then that I fired at the lower portion of the car. I was under the impression that Owaisi must have died)," Sachin told police, according to the FIR. He said he did not know how many rounds Shubham fired because both of them ran in different directions.

Shubham also told police that his gun jammed and that he could not fire more than one round. According to the FIR, the two men told police they did not know how Owaisi managed to survive.

Security lapse during PM visit: SC probe panel in Punjab today

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 5

THE INQUIRY committee headed by Justice (ret'd) Indu Malhotra, constituted by the Supreme Court to look into the alleged lapses in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security during his visit to Punjab on January 5, will be in state on Sunday.

Sources said that Justice Malhotra will land at 9.30 am in Amritsar from Delhi, and would proceed to Ferozepur by road. She will spend the day in Ferozepur and reach Chandigarh in the evening to talk to the officers.

"We have been told that she will only go to Ferozepur. She is likely to go to the place where the alleged security lapse took place. She might want to go to the site where the PM was to address a rally but returned after his convoy was stopped on his way to Hussainiwalla," an official said.

The apex court had set up a 5-member committee on January 13 to inquire into security lapses during PM's visit to find out causes, fix accountability on erring officers and suggest remedial steps to prevent

RAHUL LIKELY TO ANNOUNCE PUNJAB CM FACE TODAY

Chandigarh: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will hold a virtual rally in Ludhiana on Sunday, where party leaders expect him to announce the party's CM candidate for Punjab. AICC in-charge Harish Chaudhary had stated on Friday that Rahul will make the announcement of Congress' CM face at 2 pm Sunday in Ludhiana. The party has asked all its candidates to put up huge screens in their respective constituencies. **ENS**

future slip-ups. The apex court had also stayed the inquiry committees set up by Punjab and the Union government.

Prime Minister's convoy was stopped allegedly by the farmers protesting on the road. The PM was stranded on the road for 20 minutes before returning to Bathinda airport, where he had asked Finance Minister Manpreet Badal to thank his chief minister that he had returned alive.

2nd Opp candidate faces sedition case, Congress's Ajay Rai booked

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 5

IN A SECOND case of sedition against an Opposition candidate in Uttar Pradesh, the Varanasi police Saturday booked the Congress's Ajay Rai for allegedly making objectionable statements against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, at a public meeting on January 31.

Police said it registered a case after an inquiry. A former MLA, who has been elected to the Assembly five times, Rai has been fielded by the Congress from Pindra seat in Varanasi. The complainant in the case is a sub-inspector.

In the Bijnor case too, in which police registered an FIR against SP-RLD candidate Dr Neeraj Chaudhary, the complainant was a police personnel. Police said there were allegations that 'Pakistan Zindabad' slogans had been raised by supporters during a rally by Chaudhary. A well-respected doctor of the area, he has denied the allegation.

No one has been arrested so far in either case.

Police action against Rai followed a complaint by the BJP to the Election Commission, seeking his arrest.

Rai, who contested the 2017 election also from Pindra and



Ajay Rai has been fielded by the Congress from Pindra seat in Varanasi

lost to the BJP's Avadhesh Singh, had earlier contested unsuccessfully against Modi from Varanasi in the 2014 and 2019 parliamentary elections.

According to police, Sub-Inspector Ram Krishna Yadav had filed a complaint that on January 31, Rai held a public meeting in Pindra without obtaining permission. And that during his address, he told people: "Aap log namak rakhey rakha, March 7, 2022, ko Modi vah Yogi ko khanke gaad diya jayega (Be ready with salt, on March 7 we will bury Modi and Yogi)."

Yadav said the remarks were meant to create enmity between people and disturb law and order, and that a four-member team had conducted an inquiry and concluded that an FIR should be lodged. Police also found violation of the model code of conduct and Covid-19 protocols at Rai's meeting, states the FIR.

Circle Officer, Pindra, Abhishek

Kumar Pandey said they had a video of Rai's speech with the objectionable statement. He said they had acted on the basis of an inquiry by a team formed by the returning officer. "The video will be sent to a (forensic) laboratory for examination," he added.

The FIR has been lodged under IPC Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life), 124-A (sedition), 153-A (promoting enmity between groups and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony) and 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot).

Denying the allegations, Rai said: "People have complained that salt distributed from the fair price shops was not of good quality. People were falling ill after having it. I told people to collect it, and bury them (the BJP) on March 7, which is voting day... A deliberate misinterpretation was done that I said something about the PM and CM."

Belonging to the Bhumihar community, Rai has considerable following in the area among Brahmins and Bhumihars. He began his political career with the BJP, and was elected thrice from Varanasi as BJP MLA. In 2012, he joined the Congress. Rai won the 2012 elections from Pindra constituency on a Congress ticket.

In first poll meet after attack, Owaisi asks SP leaders to come with him

AMIT SHARMA
MEERUT, FEBRUARY 5

AIMIM CHIEF Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday asked Samajwadi Party leaders to join hands with him to oust the BJP from power.

"I appeal to my brothers to vote not only with the sole aim of defeating BJP candidates but vote for ensuring the victory of our people in the fray," Owaisi said, campaigning for his party candidate Anees in Baghpat's Asara village in Chaprauli. It was his first meeting after Thursday's attack on him in western UP.

Owaisi said joining hands with him would only be to the benefit of SP leaders, and that staying with Akhilesh Yadav would be their undoing. "Aisa karne mein hi bhalai hai. Ab agar baith gaye to hamesha ke liye ghar bhai jayenge (This is the right thing to do. If you delay now, you

will be out of the race forever)," the AIMIM leader said.

In his poll speeches, Owaisi has been attacking the BJP and SP in equal measure, inviting charges of having a deal with the BJP and cutting into the Opposition's minority votes. Owaisi has also accused the SP of not wanting an "independent leadership of Muslims in UP".

On Saturday, he also advised leaders who had been denied tickets by the SP to come to his party for tickets from constituencies of their choice. "Do not beg for tickets from the SP," he said.

The AIMIM has so far announced candidates for 66 seats, most of them with a sizeable population of Muslims.

AIMIM state chief Shauqat Ali Saturday said that while they initially planned to field around 100 candidates, they might now go up to around 175. "We have got very good response from able

candidates in 240 of the total 403 seats," Ali said.

Owaisi said attacks such as the firing at his car on Thursday did not scare him. "Those who killed Gandhi, they are the same people who shot at me. If you have the guts, kill me. Ek Owaisi marega toh lakho paida honge (If one Owaisi gets killed, lakhs will be born)," said the Hyderabad MP.

His car had been hit by bullets at Ghaziabad's Chijars village. Two people, including one with right-wing links, have been arrested.

Owaisi said the attack was the result of the poor law and order situation under the Yogi Adityanath government. Having rejected the Centre's decision Friday to give him Z-plus security, the AIMIM leader said: "I do not need Z-category security cover. If you can, provide security to the people of UP. If you cannot protect me, then there is no need for categorised security cover for me."

NMC: Fee of 50% seats in pvt medical colleges should be on par with govt ones

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

THE NATIONAL Medical Commission (NMC) has issued guidelines saying that the fee for 50 per cent of the seats in private medical colleges and deemed universities should be on a par with the fee in government medical colleges in the respective states.

"The benefit of this fee structure would be first available to those candidates who have availed government quota seats, but limited to the extent of 50 per cent of the total sanctioned strength of the respective medical college," the office memorandum issued by NMC said.

It noted that if the government quota seats are less than 50 per cent of the total sanctioned seats, the remaining candidates would avail benefits of the fee equivalent to the government medical college fees, based purely on merit.

At present, fees in private medical colleges are fixed by the state regulatory authority for the merit

seats. However, after the implementation of the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, the NMC has mandated framing guidelines for determination fees and other charges in respect of 50 per cent seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities.

Significantly, NMC, said no institution should charge a capitation fee in any form or manner. "For determination of fees for MBBS/PG courses, it needs to be ensured that the principle of education being 'not to profit', is strictly adhered to," it said.

The government, however, has not yet issued an official gazette notification in relation to the office memorandum.

"Therefore, it is necessary that whereas all the operating costs and other expenses for running and maintenance of the institution for imparting medical education on a sustainable basis are covered in the fees, no excessive expense and exorbitant profit component should be allowed to be added to the fees," it said.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Digital learning, promotion for teachers in state school reforms

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY 5

THE ANDHRA Pradesh government will promote over 22,000 teachers from Secondary Grade Teachers (SGT) to School Assistants, and introduce digital learning in classes 8, 9 and 10 as part of reforms it is bringing in the education sector.

These teachers will be deployed for subject-wise teaching in many of the new schools that would come up due to the changes in the education system.

The state education department also accepted the AP State Council of Educational Research and Training's (SCERT's) recommendation on not employing teachers and headmasters for non-academic work.

The teachers set for promotion will receive training to improve their skills and other capabilities before they are promoted in June.

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEBRUARY 5

THE CASE of smuggling of gold through diplomatic baggage to the UAE Consulate here, which had rocked the previous LDF government, is back on the political debate table after key accused Swapna Suresh's disclosures against senior IAS officer M Sivasankar, who was suspended as principal secretary to the CM when the scandal emerged in 2020.

While Sivasankar, in a book —

extracts from it were published two days ago, in the Malayalam magazine *Pachakkuthira* — has stated that he was shocked at hearing about Swapna's links with the smuggling racket, and that the accused had purportedly sought his help, which he had turned down, Swapna has claimed that Sivasankar was privy to the content of the diplomatic baggage, from which 30 kg smuggled gold was seized by the Customs.

Sivasankar was last month reinstated as Principal Secretary, Sports and Youth Affairs, after being in suspension for a year-and-a-half.

In the excerpts published from his book, *Aswathamavu Verum Oru Aana*, (Ashwathamavu is just an elephant), which was released on Saturday, Sivasankar has stated that Swapna had allegedly sought his help twice to get the diplomatic baggage (which contained smuggled gold) cleared from the Customs, but he had refused to interfere. He claimed that he had informed her about his inability to interfere with the Customs.

Sivasankar also alleged that Swapna had bribed him by offering an iPhone as a gift on his birthday, and that he had not

recommended Swapna's name for appointment as a manager with Space Park, which is under the IT Department, an assertion the accused denied.

Hitting back at the IAS officer, Swapna said, "While the Customs probe into the smuggling was on, Sivasankar had advised me to go into hiding and asked me to seek anticipatory bail. When Customs detained the diplomatic baggage, he offered help and told me, 'don't worry'."

About an audio clip, in which she was heard purportedly saying that Central agencies were exerting pressure on her to name

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the smuggling scandal, Swapna alleged that Sivasankar was behind the audio clip. While in judicial custody, a woman police officer had offered her a cellphone to record the audio, she claimed.

On Sivasankar's allegation that she had tried to bribe him with an iPhone as a gift, Swapna said, "... His writing (the memoirs) has pained me. I had been very sincere to him. I... respected him so much. I have limitations to expose more..."

She also alleged that Sivasankar "exploited me, used me, manipulated me..."



5 DECISION 2022

UTTAR PRADESH • UTTARAKHAND • PUNJAB • GOA • MANIPUR

I HEREBY DECLARE



NBIREN SINGH
BJP CM,
Heingang,
Imphal East

TOTAL ASSETS:
1 crore

Cash: ₹1.95 lakh
MOVABLE ASSETS:

₹ 69 lakh (includes a .32 Walter pistol)
Cars: Mahindra Bolero (Rs 6 lakh)

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:
TOTAL: ₹39 lakh
Self-acquired land: ₹9 lakh
Inherited assets: ₹39 lakh

BANK LOANS AND LIABILITIES: ₹1.44 lakh



YKHEMCHAND SINGH
BJP,
Singamei

TOTAL ASSETS:
₹2.23 crore

Cash: ₹1.5 lakh
MOVABLE ASSETS:

₹1.7 crore
Cars: Tata Zest, (₹ 4 lakh), Mahindra Scorpio

(Rs 11 lakh), Range Rover (Rs 70 lakh)
IMMOVABLE ASSETS:
Self: ₹52.6 lakh (inherited 5220 square feet non-agricultural land owned jointly with members of family).

BANK LOANS: ₹59 lakh
CRIMINAL CASES: Nil

TOTAL INCOME (last 5 years, till March 2021): **₹30 lakh** – according to Income Tax returns.



KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA
BJP Dy CM,
Sirathu
Kaushambi

TOTAL ASSETS:
₹8 crore

MOVABLE ASSETS:
Self: ₹1.29 crore (includes 2 revolvers)
Wife: ₹23 lakh

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:

Self: ₹5.16 crore
Wife: ₹1.37 crore

LOANS FROM FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS OR INDIVIDUALS:

₹95 lakh (self)
₹1.98 lakh (wife)

CRIMINAL CASES: 7
SOURCES OF EARNING:

Business
EDUCATION: Graduate (1997)

BALLOTIN

18 PhDs, 15 'illiterate' in first phase of UP polls: ADR

Noida: Among the candidates in fray for the first phase of Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, 125 are educated up till Class 8, while 15 have declared themselves to be "illiterate", according to polls reform advocacy group ADR. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) also noted that there are more than 70 candidates in the fray who are aged above 60 years. The ADR said it has analysed self-sworn affidavits of 615 candidates across political parties and independent nominees from the 58 assembly seats in 11 districts of UP where elections are scheduled on February 10. According to their data, 15 candidates are 'illiterate', 38 'literate'; 10 have passed Class 5; 62 have passed Class 8; 65 have cleared Class 10; and 102 have cleared Class 12. There are 100 'graduate' candidates, 78 'graduate professionals', 108 'post graduate', 18 'doctorate', and seven 'diploma' holders, the ADR noted. **PTI**

Manipur: Cong, Left issue CMP

Imphal: Terming it as "a historic beginning in the state", the Manipur Progressive Secular Alliance (MPSA), a pre-poll formation between the Congress and six left-wing parties, released its Common Minimum Programme on Saturday. The 18-point CMP, which came a day after the Congress released its manifesto, offers free transport to working women, girls and school students. Senior Congress MP Jairem Ramesh said the CMP reflected the "similar ideologies" of the parties in the MPSA. "We are pro-farmers, youths, democracy... and it has been reflected in the common agenda," he said, also using the occasion to attack the ruling BJP. "Congress doesn't believe in having a B-team, but an alliance of the like-minded parties, unlike the BJP. Calling the BJP government "pro-corporate and anti-people, CPI national executive member Dr M Nara said the alliance is "the only way to bring down the dictatorial rule of BJP". **JIMMY LEIVON**

BSP fields long-time party worker in Yogi stronghold

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 5

AFTER THREE decades, the BJP is going to face a Muslim candidate from one prominent party in Gorakhpur Urban as the BSP announced party worker Khwaza Shamsuddin Saturday as its candidate for the seat, against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Shamsuddin (42) is a government contractor who has been a BSP functionary for 20 years. He is currently the party's chief sector in-charge for Gorakhpur division. This will be his first Assembly election.

"Only the BSP is in contest against the BJP. This is going to be a bipolar election because locals are against the SP, which is planning to field a Brahmin candidate from BJP background. I am a local person," Shamsuddin told *The Sunday Express*.

While the task before him seems impossible, Shamsuddin said he is counting on the substantial Muslim and Dalit vote in the constituency to back him, apart from some Brahmin voters. The BSP has been wooing the Brahmin community through prabudha varg sammelans led by its national general secretary S C Misra. Gorakhpur Urban seat has



A HOLY SIP

Rahul Gandhi at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar on Saturday. The Congress leader targeted PM Narendra Modi, calling him "a 21st-century king" who had chosen not to talk to farmers during the farm laws agitation. *Courtesy: Twitter/@INCIndia*

CAMPAIGN TRAIL: 94 AND FIGHTING

Badal Sr back in battle: 'Powers with Centre, states must unite'

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
KANGAR KHERA (LAMBI), FEB 5

"PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee was an exemplary leader... The Modi government's tendency to centralise powers will weaken the country. Regional parties must form a front to take up this challenge."

Though still weak after a recent bout with Covid-19, Shiromani Akali Dal patron and five-time Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, 94, is as strong as ever in the defence of his party and the country's federal structure.

In a whistle-stop interaction after three public meetings on February 3 that he gently cut short with "Beta, I am tired now", Badal said the biggest achievement of his life has been his fight for Punjab's rights. "As a party, whenever there was any 'sankat' (trouble) in Punjab, be it Emergency or the struggle for its rights, we were always at the forefront. I myself spent 15 years in jail. And when I formed the government, I did *raji ke* (unlimited) development."



Parkash Singh Badal at a meeting in Lambi. *Express*

"Be it farmers, labourers or traders, I did my best for peace and communal harmony," he added. As people flagged down his car to take a selfie, his hands came together automatically, in a thanks. This, his government's public outreach, is something Badal takes special pride in. "As a party, as a government, I did my duty. In India, I was the only CM who used to do sangat darshan," he said, recounting how he would take officers to the people. "We would go to wards and villages. That is how you get to learn about the real problems of people."

On the federal structure for which his party had once waged a Dharam Yudh Morcha to get

more powers for Punjab under the Anandpur Sahib resolution in 1982, he said just like all "ang (limbs)" have to be strong for a healthy body, states must be empowered for a powerful India. "All the powers have now gone into the hands of the Centre." Hence, he said, "Regional parties must come together."

Asked about any leader that he has idealised, Badal paused for a moment and then answered, "Vajpayee, he was an ideal leader. He did not discriminate among people... He took everyone along."

The former CM, who once enjoyed very warm relations with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, also criticised the bid to polarise the country. "Polarisation is very damaging. It doesn't allow people to make any progress."

Looking back at his political career spanning over seven decades, Badal remembered how his village had made him a sarpanch when he came home after graduation from Lahore. "I went to Giant Kartar Singh, a minister, and asked him to nominate me as a PCS officer (a tehsildar), but he refused, saying 'I want you to become someone who would

give jobs'." This is a household story in Killianwali village dominated by the Jakhar clan. Kartar Singh was their patriarch, and MP at the time of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Badal started the day from Dabwali Rahurianwali village. It was a cold, foggy, rainy day, the perfect excuse for a delay, but the oldest politician known to contest an Assembly election was five minutes early for his meeting at Kangan Khara village in Lambi.

A group of villagers waiting for him under a shed stood up as he walked in, helped by his security men. As the dhaadi jatha, which had been entertaining the listeners, piped down, Badal greeted the audience saying "I can't express in words the happiness I feel on seeing you." He then appealed for votes, reminding the village that he adopted a few years ago of their long association with him. "I have come here many times and whenever I have made any request to you, be it a small fight or a struggle against the government, you have always supported me... You are my family."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

2% of numbers, 1 in 117 MLAs, Punjab Muslims seek a voice

RAAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, FEBRUARY 5

RECENTLY, THE Ludhiana Jama Masjid held a 'Muslim panchayat', where different organisations came together to thrash out a memorandum for political parties ahead of their manifesto announcements.

With seats likely to be decided in Punjab on very thin margins this time, given the number of parties in the fray, the Muslim community that makes up nearly 2% of the population in the state as per the 2011 Census (numbering around 6 lakh) is also hoping to be counted.

At the panchayat meeting, the participants asked why speeches about the Muslim community were limited to promises of land for *kabristan* (graveyards), and spoke about how all parties neglected them. For years now, there has been only one Muslim MLA in the Assembly.

Shahi Imam Maulana Usman Ludhianvi, the national president of the Majlis-e-Ahrar Islam Hind Party, who organised the meeting, said: "In more than two dozen constituencies, the Muslim vote is 10,000-plus. With a five-cornered contest this time, we should not be ignored as a vote bank."

Hans Raj Mofar, the president of the Muslim Front Punjab, said they had been raising issues related to the community since 1999. "But talk is only of graveyards, and it remains only talk. Most graveyards don't even have a boundary wall and hence encroachment is increasing. The Waqf Board is just an administrative board while very little representation is given to Muslim leaders in Punjab, especially those who are Punjabi by origin. The few Muslim families which are active in Punjab have migrated from UP or other states."

One of the most prominent Muslim politicians in Punjab is Razia Sultan, the Congress candidate from Punjab's only Muslim-dominated constituency Malerkotla, with around 95,000 members from the community. The real power in the family rests with her husband, retired DGP Mohd Mustafa, who is originally from UP. Malerkotla is the only constituency with a Muslim representative in the Assembly.

Maulana Ludhianvi listed other seats where Muslims are in large numbers, besides Malerkotla, such as Amargarh,

SEATS WITH MUSLIM VOTERS ABOVE 10K

1. Sujapur
2. Ludhiana North
3. Ludhiana East
4. Ludhiana South
5. Mohali
6. Malerkotla
8. Amlah
9. Lehragaga

*Approximate constituency size: 1.5 to 2 lakh voters

Sujanpur, Ludhiana North, East, South, Lehragaga, Amlah and Mohali. "We deserve tickets from at least five-six Assembly seats. Only then will we be able to raise issues of our community in the Vidhan Sabha," he said.

Mohd Mustkeem, the media secretary of the Shahi Imam, added: "Muslims are spread out across the state but political parties project as if only Malerkotla (matters)... Only one Muslim MLA is not enough to represent our community."

Mohd Saleem, a Mohali-based advocate who attended the Ludhiana panchayat, said they expect the Muslims to be more widespread in the state than suggested by the 2011 Census, as many had not registered at the time.

Akali Dal spokesperson Daljeet Singh Cheema said, "We always take care of minorities, as we too represent a minority community (Sikhs). It is true that our party has been giving tickets to Muslims in only Malerkotla, and that there are several other seats where Muslim voters are in a significant number, but we do believe in giving representation to all communities at various levels. Our government had formed a grievances committee as well in which every minority community in Punjab was represented."

Punjab Congress spokesperson Rimple Midham also asserted that the party was committed towards all communities. "Let the latest Census figures come out, and we will know the exact population of Muslims in the state... There are many senior Muslim leaders in our party and the Muslim community can always send their representations through them."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Jayant 'fake' tweet: RLD files complaint

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MEERUT, FEBRUARY 5

THE RASHTRIYA Lok Dal (RLD) lodged an FIR on Saturday, a day after party chief Jayant Chaudhary flagged a "fake" tweet that asked people not to vote for the party's Baghat candidate Ahmed Hameed.

Chaudhary, whose party is contesting the coming UP polls in alliance with the Samajwadi Party, indirectly accused the ruling BJP of spreading misinformation against him.

"Fake posts and accounts are being created to spread misleading information before the elections. When they have failed to answer questions related to the development, they are doing such condemnable jobs. I have lodged an FIR so that people should know names of those behind such acts," the RLD chief tweeted.

Eleven persons have been named in the FIR lodged by RLD Baghat chief Jagpal Teotia. "I hope police will take a swift action in this connection," Teotia said. Baghat SP Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said a probe is on. "We will take action when the inquiry is completed," he added.

PATEL VS PATEL

The many Dals in Apna: Another election, another chapter in the bitter family feud

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 5



Yogi in Gorakhpur, Saturday. *PTI*

been a stronghold of the BJP for over three decades. In 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1996, the winner was the BJP's Shiv Pratap Shukla. In 2002, he was defeated by Radha Mohan Das Agrawal, a candidate of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, who was backed by Adityanath. Agrawal has held the seat since. Adityanath, who has replaced him as the BJP candidate, will be fighting his first Assembly election.

While in 2017, the seat saw 24 contestants, and in 2012, 16, none was Muslim. In earlier elections, when unknown parties fielded Muslim candidates, no one got more than 3,000 votes. In fact, the last time a Muslim candidate did well here was on a BSP ticket when, in 1993, its Jafar Ali Jippu finished third, getting 14% of the votes.

A DAY after the Samajwadi Party (SP) pitted its ally Apna Dal (Kamerawadi) leader Pallavi Patel against UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya from Kaushambi's Sirathu, Pallavi's younger sister Anupriya Patel, Apna Dal (Sonelal) president and Union Minister, appeared on 3 February on a stage with the BJP heavyweight in Sirathu and joined him in his road show, appealing to local voters to ensure the victory of her "brother" Maurya.

While the Apna Dal (K) has joined hands with the Akhilesh Yadav-led SP for the coming UP Assembly polls, the Apna Dal (S) has been an ally of the ruling BJP for several years. The two rival smaller parties are splinter groups of the Apna Dal founded in 1995 by OBC leader Dr Sonelal Patel who passed away in a road accident in 2009, survived by his wife Krishna Patel and four daughters including Pallavi and Anupriya.

After Sonelal's demise, Krishna was made the Apna Dal president



Anupriya with 'brother' Maurya at his nomination filing. *PTI*

while Anupriya became the party general secretary. "In the party meeting after Dr Sonelal ji's death, it was decided that Anupriya will look after political works while Pallavi will take care of party assets. But later she also decided to enter politics," said Apna Dal (S) spokesperson Rajesh Patel.

In the 2012 polls, Anupriya contested from Rohaniya and emerged as the lone winner from her party. Eyeing her party's support base among Kurmis and other non-Yadav OBC voters in eastern and central UP, the BJP tied up with Apna Dal for the 2014 Lok

Sabha polls, with the latter contesting and winning two seats. Anupriya won from Mirzapur.

Then surfaced the rift after Krishna appointed Pallavi as the party vice-president. Anupriya called her mother's decision "illegal and arbitrary".

Krishna removed Anupriya as the party general secretary too. She contested the Assembly by-poll from Rohaniya vacated by Anupriya, but lost following which she alleged that Anupriya and her husband Ashish Patel had "conspired" to ensure her defeat. She also charged their "personal

ambitions" had brought the party and the family to a crossroads.

In May 2015, Krishna "expelled" Anupriya from the Apna Dal, even as both continued to stake their respective claims on the party presidency. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi inducted Anupriya into his ministry in July 2016, Krishna charged that the BJP did not consult her.

"Following feuds, Anupriya had moved a petition in the Election Commission to claim she was party president but the EC refused to intervene. She further moved a petition in Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court. We also presented the documents. Now the matter is pending at a lower court in Lucknow. In 2020, Krishna Patel floated Apna Dal (K) and got it registered last year. It will be first election for the new party," said Vinod Kaseria, Apna Dal (K) spokesperson. Pallavi is looking after its organisation while her husband Pankaj Niranjan is its general secretary.

An Apna Dal (S) leader however said it was Krishna who had moved the HC to stake her claim

over the party presidency.

Anupriya floated the Apna Dal (S) outfit in 2016. She allied with the BJP again in the 2017 UP polls, in which her party won 9 out of 11 seats it contested. In 2018, her husband was elected member of the UP Legislative Council with the BJP help. Continuing this partnership with the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Anupriya retained her Mirzapur seat and was last year inducted into the Modi ministry again.

In the current polls, the Apna Dal (S)'s influence with the BJP-led NDA alliance has increased after Om Prakash Rajbhar's Suheldo Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) left it. On the formation of the two breakaway outfits, Rajesh said, "Krishna ji and Pallavi deviated from Dr Sonelal's ideology. Their leaders even agreed to contest on the symbols of other parties. Like Krishna ji contested in Gonda and Pankaj Niranjan from Phulpur in 2019 on Congress tickets and lost. Anupriya ji never made such compromises."

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

6 SUNDAY STORY

THE SUNDAY PROFILE

A new beat

As the top ED officer at the helm of some of the most high-profile cases, from the Aircel-Maxis deal to 2G, Rajeshwar Singh was known to be a good officer, a natural leader, and someone with friends across divides. Will these traits see him through his new role, as the BJP's poll candidate in UP? DEEPTIMAN TIWARY profiles the 48-yr-old

MINUTES AFTER former Enforcement Directorate (ED) Joint Director Rajeshwar Singh announced on January 31 that he was taking the political plunge after his voluntary retirement from the agency, a montage video of Singh went online. In the video, Singh is seen praying to Lord Shiva, walking in a park in slow motion, reading a newspaper and engaged in an intense discussion — all this while the score of S S Rajamauli's brawny epic *Bahubali* plays in the background. The video was retweeted by his sister Abha Singh with the comment: "Here comes #Rajeshwar Singh ex ED".

This unmistakable strongman image has often been associated with Singh's career — be it during his stint with the Uttar Pradesh Police or the country's premier anti-money-laundering agency.

In his decade-long career as a police officer in UP — from 1997 to 2007 — Singh, now 48, cracked down on mafia gangs in Lucknow and Allahabad, with the high point of his career being the arrest of strongman Atiq Ahmed. A recipient of the police medal for gallantry, Singh has close to two dozen encounters to his name — this, many would argue, sits at odds with his law degree and doctorate in human rights from Delhi University.

An alumnus of IIT, Dhanbad, Singh operated in the ED — which he joined in 2007 as an assistant director — with no less swagger. From the Madhu Koda case to the Sahara case, from 2G scam to the 2010 Commonwealth Games case, from the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy case to the coal scam cases, Singh probed almost all the high-profile cases of the UPA era, involving politicians of the then ruling dispensation.

Singh's nomination as the BJP candidate from the key Sarojini Nagar constituency in Lucknow comes at a time when the ED is accused of going after Opposition politicians. While there have been instances of CBI directors becoming governors after retirement or entering politics, Singh's decision to join the BJP raises questions of propriety, given that he was a serving officer of a central agency and quit to join electoral politics.

Questions have also been raised over the allegedly political nature of the ED's investigations, with their tardy progress and poor conviction record. While its first conviction came in the Madhu Koda case, more than 10 years after the ED began probing money laundering cases, its marquee 2G scam probe resulted in acquittal of all the accused.

The most important case of Rajeshwar's career was the 2012 Aircel-Maxis deal, in which the accused include then finance minister and senior Congress leader P Chidambaram. As the regime changed in 2014, he probed a series of cases — from the INX Media deal to irregularities in the Rajasthan ambulance scheme and investments in Vasan Healthcare — where either Chidambaram or his son Karti was named. Chidambaram sent time in detention over it.

Sources said this would not have gone unnoticed by the top BJP leadership, which holds Chidambaram responsible, as Home Minister, for probe into the encounter killings in Gujarat that saw the arrest of Amit Shah.

More recently, as head of the Lucknow Zone in the ED, Singh led the investigation against Gayatri Prajapati, a Samajwadi Party leader and mining minister in the previous Akhilesh Yadav government, in a case of alleged money laundering and illegal mining.

Singh's former colleagues in the agency talk of him as a sharp and meticulous officer.

"He is intelligent and very hardworking, with a deep understanding of cases and, above all, takes bold decisions," says former ED Director Kamal Singh, who supervised

Singh's probe into the Aircel-Maxis and INX Media cases, among others.

"We were always a step ahead in every case. Before an accused could make a move, we were prepared for the court. During interrogations, Singh could surprise even the most well-prepared suspect with evidence," said former ED deputy director Kamal Singh, who had worked with Singh since the days of the 2G scam case.

Another close colleague, retired deputy director Satyendra Singh, remembers him as a "true leader" to his subordinates. "Despite his commanding presence in the agency, he was always warm, even in adverse situations. Once, some sensitive details of the 2G case got leaked to the media and the superiors

"He has friends everywhere, be it in ministries, legal fraternity and every political party. I wouldn't have been surprised if, had there been a Congress government, he got a ticket from the Congress," said a senior IPS officer

were very angry. He shielded all of us by taking full responsibility and asked for action to be taken against him," Satyendra Singh said. However, beyond his qualities as an offi-

cer, Singh's rise was also shaped by his ability to work the power circles. His critics say he found a "guardian angel" in every political dispensation. There was a time when he top Congress politicians attended his parties.

"He has friends everywhere, be it in the ministries, the central agencies or the legal fraternity. He could also move with ease across the political spectrum. I wouldn't have been surprised if, had there been a Congress government at the Centre, he got a ticket from the Congress," said a senior IPS officer who didn't want to be identified.

Born in Lucknow, Singh belongs to a family of civil servants. His father Ran Bahadur Singh, who rose from being a UP Police service officer to an IPS within a span of 12 years,

eventually retired as DIG of the state capital.

Singh's wife Laxmi Singh is an IPS officer currently posted as IG, Lucknow. Meenakshi Singh, one of his two sisters, is an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer married to UP-cadre IPS officer Rajiv Krishna, who is currently posted as ADG, Agra. His other sister, Abha Singh, an Indian Postal Service officer-turned-lawyer, is married to Maharashtra cadre IPS-turned-lawyer Y P Singh. His brother Rameshwar Singh, also an IRS officer, is currently an Income Tax commissioner.

Throughout his 14-year ED career, Singh had top lawyers such as Prashant Bhushan, Harish Salve and BJP MP Subramanian Swamy arguing in court to procure protection for him against allegations of malpractice or disproportionate assets.

In 2011, at the peak of the 2G probe, when allegations were made against Singh by the Sahara Group, a Supreme Court Bench of Justices G S Singhvi and A K Ganguly not only issued contempt notice against the group but also provided Singh protection from slander.

According to sources, during the 2014 general elections, Singh had been considered by the BJP as a potential candidate for Amroha, but things had not worked out.

In 2017, too, when allegations were made against Singh to then Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia, a Bench headed by Justice J Chelameswar gave blanket protection to Singh against any investigation.

Another testimony of this goodwill is an episode from 2014 when government counsel K K Venugopal went against the Centre's move to repatriate Singh back to UP, arguing that it could not be done as the officer was probing the 2G and Aircel-Maxis cases.

Singh had won an order for permanent absorption in the ED from the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in December 2013 but the government was unwilling to absorb him, even after the regime changed in May 2014. After the matter went to the SC and following Venugopal's argument, a Bench of Justices H L Dattu and S A Bobde gave the government three days to absorb Singh into the ED.

By his own account, Singh had been accused by Adhia of "manipulating the judiciary, especially the Supreme Court", which Singh said was "strange" and "unbelievable", wondering if "so many judges could be manipulated over such a long period of time".

This was part of a letter that Singh wrote to Adhia at the peak of the 2018 battle within the CBI, accusing him of "siding with scammers and their affiliates".

The 2018 tug of war between then CBI director Alok Verma and then special director Rakesh Asthana was the first major controversy that had Singh in its crosshairs. In this battle that forced the Prime Minister's Office to intervene and push both officers out of the agency, Singh was rumoured to have been siding with Alok Verma.

It saw a fresh complaint being filed before the Supreme Court against Singh with the Finance Ministry submitting a report that Singh received a call from Dubai. Though the allegation was rubbished by then ED Director Kamal Singh, the SC, for the first time, removed the protection granted to him and the government instituted a probe.

According to an investigation by *The Wire*, this was also the time when Singh and his family were listed as potential targets of the Pegasus spyware.

"Yet, the government accepted his VRS request and the ruling party has given him a ticket. And for that, Rajeshwar hasn't had to work out outrageous cases in anticipatory obedience. That itself tells you that he was always bigger than his job," said the IPS officer who spoke on condition of anonymity.

== TAKE 5 == PORTERS

KRANTHIVEERA SANGOLLI
RAYANNA RAILWAY STATION,
BENGALURU



"280 of us, after queuing for a day, often we earn nothing"

'Not just us, destitutes rest here... We don't ask their religion'

Last week, right-wing Hindu activists barged into a room for porters at the railway station alleging Muslims were using it as a prayer room. The porters denied this, but South Western Railways later "cleared" the portion being used for namaz. Afraid of identifying themselves for losing their jobs, the porters talk about the row:

KIRAN PARASHAR

1 How did the row start? Religious practices are not our problem but livelihood. We wanted the media to highlight our plight before the Budget, instead there was an entirely unnecessary controversy...

2 Who complained? None of us complained. We live in harmony. All we care about is earning our bread and butter. Some miscreants created this nuisance. We celebrate Annamma festival, Ayyappa festival, observe Gyarvi Sharif together. Muslim porters joined Hindus to protest a Railway plan to demolish a temple for an escalator. We together saved it.

3 Did you try opposing changes to the room? We were scared for our jobs. We had no choice but to listen to the officials... It's not just a room for porters, often people who are abandoned take shelter there. Nobody asks their religion.

4 What issues should the government address? There was a time when we earned good money. But then came luggage bags with wheels and escalators, we took a massive hit. As long as there was a separate Railway Budget, we hoped things would change. But now, there is not even hope.

5 Do you have a union? There are about 280 of us at this railway station and we have two unions. We come in two shifts, divide spots at the front and back gates, to prevent crowding... There are days we go back home with no money. On best days, like in April and May, we earn up to Rs 500 a day.

india 75
NUMBER PLATE
16,829

The number of foreign tourist arrivals in India in 1951, according to the India Tourism Statistics, a publication of the Union Ministry of Tourism

27,44,766

The number of foreign tourists arriving in India in 2020. This number was 10.93 million in 2019 before the Covid-19 outbreak

\$6,958 million

Estimated Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism in India during 2020. This figure was \$30,058 million in 2019 during pre-Covid times. It recorded a decline of 74% during 2020, when the pandemic hit the world

5,49,273

The number of foreign tourists from Bangladesh, the highest, followed by the United States (3,94,092) and the United Kingdom (2,91,874)

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

Neither hair nor there

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA
& ATRI MITRA

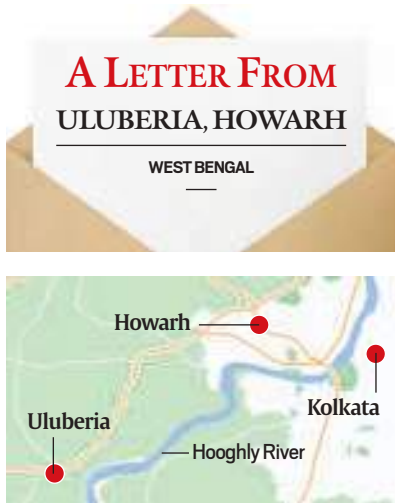
SAHABUDDIN MULLICK, 46, sits near the door of a 12 foot by 10 ft room, comb in hand, brushing the strands of hair atop a wooden bust. Others in the room are weaving hair into a patch of cloth to make a wig.

"Lockdown was a nightmare. Business is yet to pick up, and then there are the touts and middlemen. Our entire village thrives on processing human hair, but there is no government support," says Mullick, who has been in the business for 25 years and employs about 20 youths in the workshop he runs out of his home in Mullickpole village in Howrah, about 60 km from Kolkata.

Now has come another blow. On January 25, the Centre imposed restrictions on exports, on the demand of the hair industry, to check smuggling. Now an exporter needs a permission or licence from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade.

Welcoming the Centre's move, Human Hair and Hair Products Manufacturers and Exporters Association of India's Sunil Emani told PTI that unchecked smuggling was hurting local industries and exports.

During April-November this fiscal, hair exports stood at USD 144.26 million, a huge



jump from USD 15.28 million in 2020-21. West Bengal is among the highest contributors to this, with some estimates putting its share at more than 50% of the exports.

And the hub of the trade are the districts of Howrah, Murshidabad, Malda and Purba Medinipur, where processing of human hair is a cottage industry. The Centre's new rules, these traders fear, may mean monopoly for a handful of exporters with licences, further



Sabir Ali at his workshop. The family has been in the business for 50 yrs. Partha Paul

cutting their dwindling profits.

Mullick procures raw hair and, after processing, sells it to middlemen, who in turn sell it to exporters. "I used to sell 200 packets of processed human hair per month (each packet is around 1 kg). My unit shut down for a year following the 2020 lockdown and I had to take loans to retain my workers. Now my sales are down to 20 packets a month."

The routine involves agents collecting or

buying hair from households and temples, and bringing them to the workshops. Many women in these parts save hair they shed while combing, and every four-five months, an agent buys it off them. Hair donated in temples in the south also makes its way here.

Depending on quality, hair can sell from Rs 500 to up to Rs 5,000 per kg. The price varies as per length. A kilogram of 50-inch good human hair can sell for about Rs 90,000

to Rs 1.10 lakh. It's the processing that makes the difference, with processed hair selling for nearly double the rate for regular hair.

Processing involves untangling the hair, shampooing it and sometimes dying it. Then it is stored (in wooden boxes with iron nails), pulled constantly for hours for further untangling and smoothness. Village households also do the untangling, for a price.

Shuvendu Dolui, 19, has been working with Mullick for five years. With an expert's ease, he points out the "50 types of wooden busts, for different head shapes" for wigs.

Depending on their skills, workers get paid between Rs 2,000 and Rs 18,000 a month, for 10 hours of work a day.

Sheikh Saifuddin Ali, 52, says the middlemen from big cities like Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai are a necessary evil. "How can exporters come to villages? And we don't have the infrastructure to export on our own."

One unit here though has had its brush with big time, having supplied wigs and hair pieces for Bollywood and Tollywood as well as the TV industry. Sheikh Ali Hossain, 70, started his business 50 years ago with his father. "We then collected hair from middlemen, processed it and made wigs... I have personally travelled with Bengali film stars like Biswajit Chatterjee and Soumitra Chatterjee. Hossain's sons Sabir Ali and Sekender Ali

have now taken up the business. Sabir says they built a workshop in Mumbai but it had to be shut due to labour problems. Sekender has ventured into exports. "Small exporters like us follow all the rules. Banks and Customs are involved. But this new policy of the Centre will only help the big exporters with huge working capital," he says.

At Kulai Sheikh Para, about 15 km from Mullickpole, Sheikh Akhtar Hossain, 46, whose workshop deals in synthetic hair, says, "We supply to states like Delhi, Gujarat, Mumbai and Odisha, where the hair pieces are used in plays performed in villages."

The lockdown hit them too, says Hossain. First, he couldn't travel. Then, "at many places night curfew is on and therefore rural plays and theatres have closed down."

He hopes the government builds a hub near a city such as Kolkata exclusively for hair. "It will enable us to directly sell to exporters."

Kolkata-based exporter Sumanta Chakraborty agrees smuggling of hair to Bangladesh and China is an issue. "So, a proper policy was needed. 'Raw hair' is in more demand and leaves the country fast."

MSME Minister Chandranath Sinha says small exporters had approached them. "They are in crisis after the Centre decided to include raw hair in the export list. We are monitoring the situation."

Across THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

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The Budget's messages are no cash transfers or free rations to the very poor; no increase in social security pensions; no interventions to combat malnutrition, stunting and wasting; no intervention to overcome the huge 'learning loss' among school children in the last two years; no tax relief to the middle class; and no GST relief to consumers. My conclusion: welfare has been thrown to the wind

No work, no welfare, only wealth

SINCE I came out of the Utopian dream of socialism, I have believed in three driving forces to build a progressive, prosperous and plural nation: **Work, Welfare and Wealth.** None of the three is less or more important than the other two.

The context will, of course, vary. In the last 30 years, we have seen dramatically different economic contexts in 1991 (near default), 1997 (globalization), 2002-03 (drought), 2005-08 (global upswing), 2008 (international financial crisis), 2012-13 (taper tantrum), 2016-17 (demonetization, drought) and 2020-22 (pandemic, recession). Each context will require a different and nuanced response, especially while presenting the Budget, but the basic philosophy of promoting work, welfare and wealth ought not to change.

WHY WORK?

The *Homo sapiens* are no longer only hunters and gatherers of food. As his/her desires and needs increased, he/she embraced the culture of work. In the modern era, work is an integral part of life. In a developing economy, an important indicator is the number of persons aged 15 years and above who constitute the workforce. In the workforce, the LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rate) is the proportion of the population that is presently employed or seeking employment. In India the current numbers are workforce: 94 crore, LFPR: 37.5 per cent,

equal to 52 crore (*source: Economic Survey, Appendix*).

The gravest economic challenge facing India — a young nation where the median age is 28.43 years — is unemployment. Mr Narendra Modi understood this when he bid for power but, over the years, his philosophy seems to have changed. His promise to create 2 crore jobs a year had electrified the youth. Later, he said that selling *pakor*as was also a job! In the last seven years, unemployment has increased. The pandemic and the lockdown brought in their wake more unemployment. 60 lakh MSMEs were closed down. Millions lost their jobs, that included salaried jobs and non-regular jobs. The self-employed (e.g. tailor, electrician, plumber) lost work. Many of those jobs have not come back. The current unemployment rates are Urban: 8 per cent, Rural: 6 per cent.

Besides, those who returned to work faced wage cuts. In the last two years, 84 per cent of households have suffered a loss of income. In this background, the Budget has promised that 60 lakh jobs will be created in the next five years. As against the 12 lakh new jobs a year, the number of persons who enter the workforce every year is 47.5 lakh (*source: Labour Bureau*). My conclusion: unemployment will rise, especially among the less educated.

WHY WELFARE?

Welfare is a wide concept that in-

cludes many aspects such as livelihood, job, food, healthcare, education, social security, rest & recreation, etc. Welfare measures are intended to address these challenges. For example, MGNREGA is intended to address the challenge of livelihood, National Food Security Act to address the challenge of food, free public health facilities and health insurance to address the challenge of healthcare, Right to Education Act to address the challenge of education and so on. What has the Budget done? Look at the allocations:

Subsidy/ Allocation for	2021-22	2022-23 (in Rs crore)
Petroleum	6,517	5,813
Fertiliser	1,40,000	1,05,000
Food	2,86,219	2,06,481
Mid-day Meals scheme	11,500	10,233
Crop Insurance	15,989	15,500
MGNREGA	98,000	73,300
Health	85,915	86,606

The total subsidy bill has been cut by a humongous 27 per cent!

The Budget's messages are no cash transfers or free rations to the very poor; no increase in social security pensions; no interventions to combat malnutrition, stunting and wasting; no intervention to overcome the huge 'learning loss' among school children in the last two years; no tax relief to the middle class; and no GST relief to consumers. My conclusion: welfare has been thrown to the wind.

WHY WEALTH?

I support the creation of wealth. Wealth is the source of new capital and, consequently, new investment. Rising incomes, after taxes, will result in accumulation of wealth. Both income and wealth are triggers for investment, risk-taking, innovation, R&D, charity and other uses. My opposition is not to the creation of wealth but to the accumulation of wealth that widens inequalities in society. India, according to some studies, is one of the most unequal countries in the world. A Budget that is constructed on capital-intensive investment, advanced science and technology, digitization and sophisticated ecosystems to the *exclusion* of capital, technology and labour that are required to sustain the lives and livelihoods of millions of poor people is a mockery of the poor. If more resources are needed to help the poor, the correct approach will be to tap the wealth of the rich — *the very, very, rich in India are 142 persons whose wealth is Rs 53,00,000 crore* — and use the resources for programmes and interventions to help the poor. My conclusion: this Budget is a capitalist budget that has ignored the poor.

The on-going debate in the media and in Parliament has exposed the deep divide between the privileged sections and the deprived sections. The capital market may salute this Budget but the poor and middle classes will not forgive the makers of this Budget.

Fifth COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

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Rahul Gandhi's delusions

AS I listened to Rahul Gandhi's speech in Parliament last week, I found myself understanding anew why Narendra Modi has won two terms in office. And understanding anew why I was once such a supporter of Modi that I continue to be charged daily by someone or other on Twitter of being a 'fascist enabler'. Before going any further, let me make clear that I believe Modi has done some things that are truly admirable. Swachh Bharat and his government's programme that aims to provide drinking water to every Indian home are on top of my list.

In my view it was the efficiency that he brought to rural welfare programmes in general that won him a second term. Since then though there has been too much Hindutva, too many hate speeches, too much religiosity and too much disdain for dissident opinions, for me to continue being a '*bhakt*'. At heart I am a liberal and a proud member of the Khan Market gang and cannot abide people whose politics is based on spreading hatred between communities or castes. So, I am not only no longer a '*bhakt*' but a critic and a dissident.

There is a great deal that is dangerous and dishonest about Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. But, to listen to Rahul Gandhi's long and rambling speech in the Lok Sabha was to realise that if he remains the only challenger that the Congress party produces, Modi will continue to look much, much better. A recent *India Today* poll found that when it came to choosing a Prime Minister, the people polled put Modi at the top and Rahul at a really low number two.

The Dynasty's crown prince has learned nothing from two humiliating defeats in general elections and seven years of being in the Opposition. The most important thing that he has not learned is that it is not his birthright to rule India, and the sooner he sheds his air of entitlement, the better it will be for him. He charged Modi with behaving like an Emperor, instead of like a democratically elected leader, but seems to have forgotten that his grandma once allowed the President of the Congress party to announce that 'India is Indira and Indira is India'. More recently I happened to be present in the audience when his mother declared grandly, just months before the last general election, that Modi would not be coming back. 'We will not allow him to.'

He seems to have forgotten that when his mother was India's de facto prime minister, she was so powerful that she could order the man who was technically India's Prime Minister to send top secret government files to her residence for inspection. So powerful that her kitchen cabinet made policies that the Government of India was ordered to implement. So powerful that she could include her son-in-law in a list of VVIP officials who did not need to be frisked or metal-detected at airports. It was power without accountability on a sickening scale, and it became one of the reasons for the rise and rise of Modi. And, even when it was clear to most Indians that Modi would become Prime Minister, it was still possible for one of Sonia Gandhi's courtiers to publicly proclaim that the only job Modi was fit for was to make tea in the Congress party's office.

Rahul Gandhi made serious mistakes when analysing foreign policy in his speech, but that bothered me less than his saying that under Modi, India has been divided into two countries. One India is inhabited by the rich and the other India that is inhabited by the poor. His political homework is so deficient that he seems not to know that this division has existed for the 75 years that India has been an independent nation. The divisions in Nehruvian socialist times were so pronounced that those who inhabited the India in which the ruling class lives could not have cared less that in the other India there were people who did not have access to such basic things as clean water. In that exalted India inhabited by high officials and mighty political leaders was where policies were made. The disdain for the other half was so obvious that they could not have cared less about the abysmal quality of the public goods these policies created. They did not need to be because their own children went to private schools, and nobody needed to use the medical services provided in filthy government hospitals.

If Modi has not been able to make much difference to the dreadful socialist legacy that he inherited, he cannot be blamed for not trying. The Budget that was presented in Parliament the day before Rahul Gandhi made his speech was defined by the emphasis it placed on building infrastructure and creating an India in which every Indian home will have clean, running water, a toilet built with government assistance and subsidised cooking gas. Modi may not succeed in achieving all these things but there is no question that he is trying to give ordinary Indians a chance to have something resembling a standard of living.

So, before Rahul makes his next speech in the Lok Sabha, he would do well to do some homework and take some elementary history lessons. If he does, he may discover why Modi remains popular despite his many failings.

The symbolism of inter-caste marriages

Dalitality

SURAJYENGDE

Twitter @Surajyengde



SURROUNDING THE anti-caste movement, a topic remains hotly contested. It is about inter-caste marriages as a way towards the annihilation of caste. Activists, thinkers and leaders are divided over this. Dr Ambedkar's famous quote from *Annihilation of Caste*, wherein he stated that inter-caste marriages were "the real remedy for breaking caste", is often cited. Ambedkar thought "fusion of blood" would create the feeling of kith and kin.

Ambedkar's advice remains unheard. The Indian Human Development Survey reported that 95% of Indians still find partners within their subcastes. What is the situation of the rest 5%, who have braved the odds against tradition and caste? There isn't data or satisfying coverage of them. Many a time second- or third-generation educated Dalits who have managed to access quality education, and landed respectable (elite) jobs, find the prospects of marriage outside caste available to them. What then happens to their inter-caste marriages? Their union is unlike any other marriage. It is a political act — an achievement of love over caste. The Dalit person marrying outside caste, say to an upper caste, finds himself or herself duelling between the struggle of their community, and the culture of their spouses and in-laws. It's akin to getting a good job in a company surrounded by oppressor castes. Rarely does one get a chance to balance both, and what is the outcome if they do?

The children of mixed-caste parents also grow up amidst profound misunderstanding of their complicated backgrounds. They are brought up in a caste-neutral or a-caste environment, which essentially means being subjected to the dominant caste parent's identity. The closest they come to caste is while availing caste reservations or visiting their Dalit family. If they align themselves with the identity of the oppressed caste parent, which is need-based, they risk a backlash.

The Government of India launched a scheme in 2013 to encourage inter-caste marriages. It offers Rs 2.5 lakh if one of the partners is a Dalit. One of the requirements is a recommendation from a sitting

MLA / MP and government officer concerned. The scheme wants to appreciate and promote the "socially bold step" of the couple. When countries worldwide are now integrating rapidly across color, racial, ethnic boundaries, the Indian government has to offer incentives for couples to marry outside rigid boundaries.

Does inter-caste marriage then result in the anticipated social change and abolish untouchability?

I can share my experiences. Of a *savarna* woman in the US who married a Dalit man and joined the Dalit community's network. Often, during interactions, the *savarna* woman wouldn't parse her background. The Dalit community's culture, religion and festivals were different from hers. Unknowingly, the *savarna* woman would privilege her experiences. At some point, she forgot about her caste identity and started to claim Dalit identity passively. Since she was a student and an activist, she profited from the networks offered by her Dalit compatriots.

As she became more comfortable with the Dalit community, she began to take over leadership roles. She started to call out the Dalit leadership for their overrepresentation of males. Within a matter of a few months, she was representing Dalits at conferences and seminars.

What we see from the above anecdote is that the notion of inter-caste marriage has become a passport for those who have lived the life of oppressing Dalits directly or by virtue of their participation in anti-Dalit prejudices, to now suddenly assume the position of misrepresenting Dalits.

The second case is of a Dalit minister married to a Brahmin woman, who was asked about it on a Marathi talk show. He replied that it was because "Brahmin women are very good", and appealed to all Dalit men to marry Brahmin women.

Coming back to Ambedkar's speech quoted above, he further suggested that to break the caste system, it was pertinent to destroy religious notions, the sanctity of the Shastras on which caste was founded and not occasionally bring about "inter-caste dinner and inter-caste marriages, which were futile methods of achieving their ends".

What Ambedkar is arguing is not against inter-caste marriage, but he is inviting us to go deeper, beyond social sanctions. He wants us to be participants in movements that would upend and eventually change mindsets.

Suraj Yengde, author of 'Caste Matters, curates the fortnightly 'Dalitality' column

life & WORK

NASEERUDDIN SHAH



IN COLLEGE I read a book, *The Man who killed Lincoln*, and I can still sharply recall how electrified I was by the description of the travails of John Wilkes Booth, who after shooting Abraham Lincoln escaped from the Ford theatre, breaking his leg, and for a while managing to evade a man-hunt until he was surrounded and killed in a burning barn, though evidently it was never confirmed that the charred body was his.

The seed of wanting to become an actor had germinated fully in me by then and I remember dreaming of someday playing Booth — I'd study pictures of the man and wonder if I could pass off as him; the role seemed to be one which I, or any actor, would devour with great relish. Everyone had heard about the humanity of Lincoln, and in no way did I identify with Booth and his beliefs, but I felt a strong empathy for the man. I thought it was greatly dramatic and would give me a chance to display all my acting wares.

But those were the dreams of a 17-year-old, would-be actor. Had I been American, I might have thought differently. Gary Oldman, who is actually British, certainly didn't get dragged over the coals for playing Lee Harvey Oswald. I have no idea what his actual feelings about the killing of John F Kennedy were, but he obviously felt no pangs of guilt about playing Oswald, or playing it sympathetically.

Amol Kolhe of the NCP, however, is a politician and should really have thought several times before agreeing to play Nathuram Godse, because I guess a politician's first duty ought to be to the impression his party wants to project. I don't know if deep down he, or the filmmaker/writer, consider Godse's act heroic or not, but they should have known that Kolhe's party doesn't, or at least wants to give that impression. I suppose he decided to play the part either because it would be a challenge or because he genuinely felt that Godse's point of view ought to be heard, and I see nothing wrong with either motivation.

I am truly at a loss to understand what this outrage, over a film no one seems to have yet seen, is all about. It needs to be viewed before it is judged, and those who find its arguments unacceptable should know only too well the futility of trying to engage with unreasonable convictions. But since the '70s this cancel culture has become a malaise; its main symptom is a tendency to condemn a thing without knowing fully about it and is illustrated in examples aplenty: the attempted em-

Playing Nathuram Godse: Censor as sensibility



No Indian can condone Gandhi's killing, but don't judge a film without watching

bargo on the brilliant play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, the *Kissa Kursi Ka* episode, or the banning of *Satanic Verses* suggested by Salman Khurshid, who at that time hadn't read the book. You can't beat that for irony!

But if the majority of people who see *Why I Killed Gandhi* are offended, Kolhe will have to own up to the responsibility of having helped glorify someone who committed one of the most heinous acts in the history of modern India. He should not forget the fate of Leni Reifenstahl, who after making two cinematically brilliant documentaries extolling Hitler's greatness, had to seek refuge in Switzerland.

Or the case of the great conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic (and Hitler's favourite conductor) Wilhelm Furtwangler who, perhaps under the illusion that Hitler would win, did not leave Germany. After Hitler's humiliation, Furtwangler of course maintained that he didn't agree with the Nazis, but about whom a writer said, "...he chose the wrong side, living at arm's length with the Nazis and holding his nose".

I refuse to believe that any true-blue Indian, leaning however far to the right, with the slightest awareness of a man called M K Gandhi, would celebrate his murder. This insistence by certain respected underlings that Godse was a patriot has to ring hollow, and of course we will never forgive such politicians "in our hearts", though we may do so in our actions!

I have not seen Kolhe perform or speak, but in a scenario where the Prime Minister's own venomous rabble-raising passes as great oratory and a deeply patriotic foreign national wins a revered Indian acting award for playing a Naval officer with a moustache, I wouldn't be surprised if Kolhe is considered good at both.

On the LOOSE

LEHER KALA

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EVERYONE I know is obsessing about Wordle these days. For the uninitiated, in this Internet game, players have to guess a predetermined five-letter word on a grid of green, yellow, black and white boxes. It's the letter equivalent of Sudoku, easy enough to beguile a preteen and tough enough to fox a middle-ager. As any economist knows, sought-after luxury items are a function of scarcity — the shrewd Wordle developer releases just one game a day, ensuring a hooked audience is anxiously waiting for it to drop.

Would Wordle be such a hit if the world wasn't in the grips of serious existential boredom? Probably not. Lately, life

Keep calm and Wordle on

had reverted back to the lonely cycle of lockdowns and curfews, forcing us to rely on blinking gadgets and aimless scrolling. Play is essential for child development but what's not acknowledged enough is that games are crucial for adults as well who need something to distract themselves from the harsh realities of their lives. Look no further than the enduring popularity of Crossword and Word Search. Putting in the effort to solve a puzzle, watching the letters flip to green provides a jolt of welcome satisfaction, at any age. On days when tedium feels overwhelming, these little victories see us through. A game like Wordle provides exactly that.

Enthusiasm is a hallmark of youth and one of the biggest challenges of ageing is finding something to be excited about. Unfortunately, the messaging we inter-

nalize in our careers is that when faced with high-pressure situations, the only acceptable outcome is to succeed brilliantly or not participate at all. There is a ridiculous premium on perfectionism than experience. It explains why the other bane of middle age, diets, is destined to fail. No normal human being, however determined to undertake a dogged slog, can stick to long spells of denial. If we used the Wordle approach — tough, not too tough — to other areas of our lives, we would be far more at peace. Instead, people are subconsciously divided into two categories, geniuses and workaholics; there is no space for people content with moving the ball just slightly ahead every day.

It is perhaps the lot of humanity that we dreamily imagine success as something transformative and beautiful. Like

watching Rafael Nadal script history in an epic five-set match, to win the Australian Open. We are awestruck at his performance, not the process behind the creation of Nadal. The finished product is impressive indeed, but to get there involved unending practice and many painful hours of strengthening exercises. Such big wins are rare and only a chosen few experience them. Yet, in all our lives, there are many minor milestones worth striving for, which can recreate (albeit, smaller) Nadal-like thrills; like cooking a nice meal or exercising. We underestimate the value of incremental improvements, our preferred target being major breakthroughs, the kinds we watch in the Olympics and the Oscars.

Home-bound and bored, a lot of us rediscovered boardgames and old-fash-

ioned entertainment in general, thanks to the pandemic. Monopoly reported a 21% jump in sales in 2020 and 21, clearly because people were looking for ways to spend their hours. A lot of my friends started learning bridge, enjoying the happy state of full absorption in a leisure activity, usually denied to adults too caught up with work. Personally, I rediscovered Scrabble. There is a presumption that someone who reads and writes for a living will be good at it, but actually the opposite is true. I am routinely thrashed by a far less articulate friend who uses 'Q' and 'X' exasperatingly well.

Losing, however, doesn't diminish the joy I derive from Scrabble; I am optimistic the small tweaks I am making can turn the tide of the game.

The writer is director, Huttokay Films

8 ECONOMY

NO SPECIFIC TIMELINE FOR PRIVATISATION OF TWO PSBs, ONE GENERAL INSURER

Budget a continuity of 2021 policies ... capex push to lead lasting revival: FM

SUNNY VERMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

A "TIMELINE" for privatisation of two state-owned banks and one general insurance companies cannot be specified, but the government policy on privatisation will continue, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Saturday. Addressing the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) National Council in a post-Budget interaction, she said the Budget has been very "simple and straightforward" with a clear path chosen for investing in creation of assets, which have a higher multiplier effect on economic activity and job creation.

"The policies which were announced in 2021 are continuing and I'm reiterating them in this Budget. I'm also ensuring that there is stability, there's continuity and transparency. And privatisation was part of a policy announcement. In fact, it was very specifically an announcement that we want minimum government maximum governance and

therefore government will get out of many of these areas and equally open up all the sectors, all the areas for private sector. However, the strategic sectors will be those in which at least a bare minimum presence of the government will be there," Sitharaman said.

"...when I say bare minimum, there are others, some of whom have already been cleared by the Cabinet which will have to go for privatisation and the issue of insurance and banks are all part and parcel of that. I'm not going to be able to give a timeline now as we are moving forward with each of them. Near the time and when it is (ready), because all this is related also to the markets, we will announce closer to when we think it's appropriate to announce, but my not speaking about it in this Budget as much as I spoke about it last year does not indicate that I changed my mind," she added.

Sitharaman was responding to a specific query from Bajaj Finserv CMD Sanjiv Bajaj regarding the timeline for privatisation of two-state owned banks and one gen-



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a post-Budget CII National Council interaction in New Delhi, Saturday. *Praveen Khanna*

eral insurance company. The government's ambitious privatisation agenda has been scaled down, as it revised down the disinvestment receipts target to Rs 78,000 crore in the current fiscal's RE from Rs 1.75 lakh crore in BE. For FY23, it has been set at a modest Rs 65,000

crore. Incidentally, Sitharaman did not use the word 'privatisation' in her speech this year, the hallmark of her FY22 Budget presentation.

The Finance Minister stressed that the capex push by the government should lead to a "lasting" revival and recovery in the economy, having a bearing on the "core industries" soon, thereby crowding in private investment. Globally investors are now looking for law abiding, rule-based and possibly English-speaking jurisdictions to expand manufacturing and "India fits into that very well," she said, while telling industry captains not to lose this opportunity for having higher level of industrialisation.

Responding to a suggestion by Kotak Mahindra Bank MD & CEO Uday Kotak on the need to set up a "proactive group" to deal with uncertainties emerging from likely rate hikes by developed country central banks and higher commodity prices due to geopolitical developments, the Finance Minister said the government has a "contingency plan" that keeps evolving to deal with such factors.

CII president TV Narendran said private sector investments will be catalysed through push on public capital expenditure (capex) but inflation remains a key concern. "Inflation is a key concern, if it can be addressed without raising interest rates. One suggestion is including Indian bonds in global bond indices," Narendran said.

In her suggestion, Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd (TAFE) CMD Mallika Srinivasan said despite intensive government support, the rural stress continues and therefore allocation for MNREGA schemes should be kept at last year's (revised estimates, or RE) levels.

Sitharaman said MNREGA is a demand driven scheme, and "we will be anytime ready to add on to that money." Allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, at Rs 73,000 crore for next year, is the same as in budget estimates (BE) for this year, but sharply lower than the RE of Rs 98,000 crore for the current fiscal, and the actual expenditure of Rs 1,11,170 crore during 2020-21.

OVERALL REVENUE OF ALL HOTEL CATEGORIES WILL FALL YEAR-ON-YEAR BY:

5-10% for the first quarter of 2022-23

25-30% for fourth quarter of FY22

OCCUPANCY RATES across the hotel categories are likely to fall, but will bounce back in a similar fashion as seen in the first two waves

Source: Ind-Ra/PTI

'Omicron disruption for hotel sector may be less in Q1FY23'

The third Covid wave is likely to hit the hotel industry in Q4FY22, but the effect will be less in Q1FY23, Ind-Ra said



EBBING OF INFECTION WAVE starts from metro cities, therefore, the minimal restrictions by both the Centre and states and self-restrictions by the people will start blurring away in a couple of months

Recovery of the hotel sector will be more protracted and patchier due to the mass cancellation of planned events due to the limit on the number of people attending an event

BharatPe's Nakrani: Not sought CEO ouster, he has my support

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 5

BHARATPE CO-FOUNDER Shashvat Nakrani said Saturday he has not given any consent or demand for the removal of CEO Suhail Sameer from the Board and that the CEO continues to enjoy his support. Nakrani's statement came a day after Ashneer Grover, a co-founder of BharatPe, sought Sameer's removal from the Board.

"I have neither given my consent, nor sought the removal of

Suhail Sameer from the Board of BharatPe and fully support his continuance on the board. News reports suggesting this are incorrect. I can confirm that I was one of the two joint nominees in the appointment resolution of Suhail Sameer as the CEO and Board member of BharatPe, and he continues to enjoy my support," Nakrani said in a statement.

Sameer, whose term is for five years, was jointly nominated by both Grover and Nakrani.

The board of BharatPe currently comprises nine members

— the two founders, one joint founder nominee (CEO), four investor nominees and two professional independent directors including former SBI Chairman Rajnish Kumar and Kewal Handa. Rajnish Kumar is also the Chairman of the BharatPe board.

After an audio clip of him abusing a Kotak Mahindra Bank employee surfaced, Grover had "informed" the company's board of his decision to go on a "voluntary leave of absence" till the end of March, the company had said in a statement on January 20.

INSOLVENCY IndusInd moves NCLT against ZEEL

New Delhi: IndusInd Bank has filed a plea before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to initiate insolvency proceedings against Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL). In its plea before the Mumbai bench of NCLT, IndusInd Bank claimed a default of Rs 83.08 crore against the media and entertainment firm, ZEEL said in a regulatory filing late on Friday.

The application has been filed under Section 7 of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), it said.

As per ZEEL, "the issue of the company's alleged default under the DSRA Guarantee Agreement, is sub-judice before the Delhi High Court in a suit filed by the company against IndusInd Bank." Filing of the said CIRP Application is in breach of the order dated 25th February 2021 as modified by the order of December 3, 2021 passed in the said suit." **ENS, WITHPTI**

Penalising export-import data publication: Govt says to punish 'illegal sharing'; experts flag lack of clarity

KARUNJIT SINGH & AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

THE GOVERNMENT has, in the Budget 2022-23, proposed making publishing of export-import data from the country — unless required by law — by a person as a punishable offence, with imprisonment of up to six months.

As some Opposition leaders and industry players raised concerns about the penal provision, government officials and agencies on Saturday tried to address the concerns by stating that it's meant to only punish the unethical and illegal sharing of such data.

"The aggregate data on exports and imports will actually be published by the Department of Commerce and by all the agencies, there is no issue on that. The problem that we are facing was that some of the exporters and im-

porters came to us and told us that our data is being stolen and is being shared on the Dark Net and is also being shared otherwise, and this is illegal. We don't want somebody to know at what price did I buy my product and from whom did I buy my product, it's a competition advantage that I have or it's a privacy issue that I have. So what we are saying is that people who are going to violate the law, who are going to use this information to sell it to others, we want to punish or we want to make a deterrent for it," Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj said while addressing the CII National Council post-Budget meeting on Saturday.

The Finance Bill has proposed inserting a new Section 135AA in the Customs Act which proposes: "if a person publishes any information relating to the value or classification or quantity of goods entered for export from India, or import into India, or the details of

CRUDE WATCH

OIL TOUCHES 7-YEAR HIGH

New York: Oil rose to seven-year highs Friday, stretching its rally to seven weeks, amid supply disruption worries ongoing global political turmoil. Brent crude rose 3.6% for the week to \$93.27 a barrel. US WTI crude ended 6.3% higher at \$92.31 a barrel. **REUTERS**

INTERVIEW WITH CHAIRMAN, CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECT TAXES

'FY22 tax collections historic high ... next year a window to cash in on the good times'



JB Mohapatra *Credit: CBDT*

REVENUE TARGETS for next year are not conservative and the tax department has a good window to cash in on good times, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman JB MOHAPATRA said. In an interview with AANCHAL MAGAZINE AND SUNNY VERMA, he also clarified that the retrospective amendments of cess and surcharge being a part of tax are clarifying the intent of the Department. Edited excerpts:

There are many legal changes that have happened. One was about retrospectively clarifying about cess and surcharge being part of tax and the other is also on allowing the tax department to question the flows of funding for companies. This has led to some concerns.

There are some cases which are coming through with regard to the claim of cess as an expenditure. Cess was introduced in assessment year 2005-06. The department and the government believes that cess and tax, they are part and parcel of the same species, right? They are the same nature, so cess cannot be treated any differently than tax.

That's the reason as to why you have made it effective from 2005-06.

Effective from the date, the cess was implanted into the Act. The interpretations should be going back to that year. That's the only reason. It's basically because of historical reasons. Because it was introduced in a year, it should be interpreted to be effective from that year onwards. On the other part, with regard to trying to see if funding is right or not, the operating section is Section 68.

This is unexplained credit, if the amount in your books of accounts is coming from tainted sources. Then the department can ask, get satisfied, whether the funding in your books, whether it's apparently from the right sources or illegitimate sources. Then we can make the investigation and tax it in the hands of the man who has received it.

In the case of the private companies, the provision was that in case of share capital, share premium and share application money, we can go behind the one behind that credit and we can ask the source of the source. Now, we have expanded it to say when it comes to loans, borrowings or whatever, we can have that source of source variation.

This is required in the context that there are situations aplenty

in the field where there is huge lot of layering when it comes to funding and laundering of illicit money, the nature and the source and the legitimacy of a typical lump of money cannot be answered by looking at the first source, we have to go to second to third to fourth and fifth. Because through layering, cash will be generated and will be introduced at one point and the banking channels will be routed and the cheques will be out from another source. So it's a very difficult situation for the investigators. And there are these entry providers, those who exchange cheques for cash, those kinds of people are there. So just to prevent the whole economy, the tax economy, also getting contaminated because of these kinds of layering tactics.

That is why the source of source verification was also needed. We thought it would be required for loans and borrowings, not just the capital and share application money.

On the retrospective thing because the government has over the years been saying that we will not follow a retrospective policy and we have seen the pullback in the other key areas which were under criticism, so will this amendment not generate fresh perception that again there is a retrospective policy from 2005?

Let me correct this is not retrospective. I agree there is a language, which is clear from the Bill. It is worded from 2005-06. But one also has to read the context in which the retrospectivity provision has been kicked in over here.

The Department strongly feels at the time of presentation of the Bill that cess can never be part of an allowable expenditure. That's the reason conviction in this case is unanimous. That cess can never be and could never have been allowed as an expenditure. But this

is at the Bill stage. There will be a lot of discussions among people who are proficient in this area and we'll get a considered view after the discussions are over. But this retrospectivity is very different contextually from the retrospectivity in Section 9.

How are the revenue trends? The revised estimates have been kept at a higher level than the budget estimates for the first time in the last three years. Is the buoyancy good enough?

The department is in a very good space right now. Unlike last year, and before that one, when we were struggling for collections. This year collections have been good thankfully and hopefully another three months will go in this manner. So the buoyancy has been outstanding and the numbers are very strong.

On this day, Rs 10,43,000 crore has already been collected, which is more by a distance from 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. This is a historic high for the Department. We will be reaching the revised estimate of Rs 12.5 lakh crore. We are confident that this will be the Department's highest number in its history. It will be breaching Rs 12-lakh-crore easily and enter the plus-Rs-12-lakh-crore category.

So, for next year you think the targets are not conservative and modest.

They absolutely are not. Next year's target is Rs 14.20 lakh crore, which is quite a large number. But with a base of Rs 12 lakh crore plus, next year also will be as good as this year and better than this year ... this is a once in a century kind of thing. So there is a good window for the Department to cash in on the good times hoping this will go on. Next year is Rs 14.2 lakh crore and next to next year is Rs 15.83 lakh crore. So the trajectory has been drawn and we are probably on track to achieving those.

SECTOR WATCH PHARMACEUTICALS

Nimbus Health deal: Why DRL is eyeing medical cannabis mkt

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

INA bid to strengthen its offerings in the fast-growing medical cannabis industry globally, Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) has said it will acquire German medical cannabis firm Nimbus Health.

What are DRL's plans?

The Indian pharma major said the acquisition will allow it to build on Nimbus Health's offerings and introduce medical cannabis-based medicines as a promising treatment option for patients. The company will be operating under the brand Nimbus Health and as a wholly-owned subsidiary of DRL. The two companies did not disclose financial details of the deal, but Dr Reddy's said it will acquire Nimbus Health for an upfront payment plus performance and milestone-based earnings over the next four years. "Medical cannabis is increasingly used to address and treat high unmet medical needs, especially in pain management and CNS. Further, with numerous studies being conducted to leverage and introduce medical cannabis, we believe this is a must-be field for future healthcare delivery," said Patrick Aghanian, head of European Generics at DRL.

What is the size of medical cannabis globally?

DRL said the demand for medical cannabis in Germany has risen over the past years with the legalisation of medical cannabis by the German Parliament in 2017. It said the medical cannabis market in Germany saw a growth of about 25 per cent in 2021 over 2020 and a CAGR of close to 55 per cent since 2017, making it one of the largest markets in

Europe. Globally, the legal cannabis market is expected to reach an estimated valuation of \$146.4 billion by the end of 2025. A recent report by researchandmarkets.com pegged the market size of medical cannabis at \$176 billion by 2030, amid growing legalisation in various nations.

What challenges and opportunities does this segment present?

While countries and jurisdictions are increasingly legalising use of medical cannabis, varying rules and regulations present hurdles for companies in building a global market. Further, some regulators have given a cold shoulder to such treatment protocols because many players rely on experimental approaches for administration of cannabis products.

However, the involvement of major pharmaceutical and biotechnology players in this segment is likely to bring in the muscle necessary to deal with regulatory hindrances.

What is the status of medical cannabis in India?

While cannabis trade and consumption is banned in India under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985, calls for legalising its use for medicinal purposes have grown stronger over the years. In January, the Centre told the Delhi High Court that the use of cannabis is not completely prohibited in the country as its medical and scientific use is allowed after obtaining necessary permissions from state governments.

In 2018, Uttarakhnad became India's first state to allow commercial cultivation of hemp crops. A year later, the Madhya Pradesh government decided to allow the farming of hemp in the state.

BRIEFLY

GNFC profit

New Delhi: Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers & Chemicals Ltd's Apr-Dec profit after tax rose to ₹1,060 crore. **ENS**

Apple trial win

Washington: A US court threw out a verdict telling Apple and Broadcom to pay \$1.1 billion to Caltech. **REUTERS**

₹8,432 cr net in Q3: SBI posts record quarterly profit

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 5

STATE BANK of India (SBI) on Saturday posted a 62.27 per cent year-on-year rise in its net profit at Rs 8,432 crore for the quarter ended December 2021, against a Rs 5,196 crore in the year-ago period. This is the highest quarterly net profit reported by the bank.

The state-run lender's net in-

terest income for Q3FY22 rose 6.48 per cent to Rs 30,687 crore, against Rs 28819.9 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year.

SBI's gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio in the quarter stood at 4.50 per cent (Rs 1,20,029 crore) against 4.77 per cent (Rs 1,33,705 crore) in the year-ago period. Net NPA ratio was recorded at 1.34 per cent versus 1.23 per cent last year.

The bank reported net interest margin at 3.15 per cent for Q3 as



Chairperson Dinesh Kumar Khara said SBI posted a credit growth of ₹1.3 lakh crore. *File*

against 3.12 per cent a year ago, it said. Total income also rose to Rs 78,352 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 75,981 crore in the same period of 2020-21, it said. The company's total deposits grew 8.83 per cent year-on-year to Rs 38,47,794 in the quarter.

SBI Chairperson Dinesh Kumar Khara said the lender recorded a credit growth of Rs 1.3 lakh crore with good performance across segments.

BoB profit doubles in Q3

Mumbai: Bank of Baroda's (BoB) net profit in Q3FY22 rose to Rs 2,197 crore, against Rs 1,061 crore in the year-ago quarter, a 107 per cent growth. Gross NPAs fell to Rs 55,997 crore from Rs 63,182 crore in Q3FY21. **ENS**

Revival of lapsed policies from Feb 7 to Mar 25: LIC

Mumbai: Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India has decided to come out with a special revival campaign for lapsed policies from February 7 to March 25, 2022. The concession in late fee ranges between 20-30 per cent with maximum concession ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000, LIC said.

In view of the prevailing circumstances, concessions are be-

ing offered in late fee for other than term assurance and high-risk plans, depending on the total premiums paid, it said. There are no concessions on medical requirements. Eligible health and micro insurance plans also qualify for the concession in late fee, LIC said. Policies of specific eligible plans can be revived in 5 years from the date of first unpaid premium. **ENS**

TOPOF THE WORLD



Iran and US flags.

Reuters

UNITED STATES
Iran welcomes US sanctions relief but says it's too little

Tehran: Iran's foreign minister on Saturday welcomed US sanctions relief intended to entice Iran back to the 2015 nuclear deal, but called it insufficient. On Friday, the Biden administration restored some sanctions relief to Iran's atomic programme as world powers and the Islamic Republic continue talks aimed at salvaging the languishing agreement. "Lifting some sanctions in a real and objective manner could be interpreted as the good will," Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said. However, he said the move "is not sufficient." Another official said Tehran expects the lifting of sanctions outlined under nuclear deal. **AP**

PERU

Light plane crash kills five tourists, two crew

Lima: At least seven people have died after a light aircraft crashed during a flight above the Nazca Lines archaeological site in Peru, local police and the national government said on Friday. Local police said the deceased included three Dutch tourists, two Chilean tourists, and two Peruvian members of crew. The Ministry of Transport and Communications said in a statement that the Cessna 207 aircraft crashed in the vicinity of the Maria Reiche airport in the city of Nazca. It added that the cause of the accident is being investigated. **REUTERS**

PAKISTAN

3 militants killed in Balochistan, says military

Quetta: Three militants have been killed by security forces in the Balgatar area in Balochistan province, the military said on Friday, a day after the attacks on its camps in Panjgur and Naushki. It added that militants were killed in a follow-up operation at a safe house linked with the recent attack on the Frontier Corp camp in the Panjgur. On Thursday, armed assailants attacked the camps in Balochistan province, triggering exchange of fire in which at least 15 militants and four soldiers were killed. **PTI**

Russian bombers fly over Belarus amid spiralling Ukraine tensions

Though Kremlin's intentions are unclear, Russia moves troops from Serbia to Belarus for joint drills

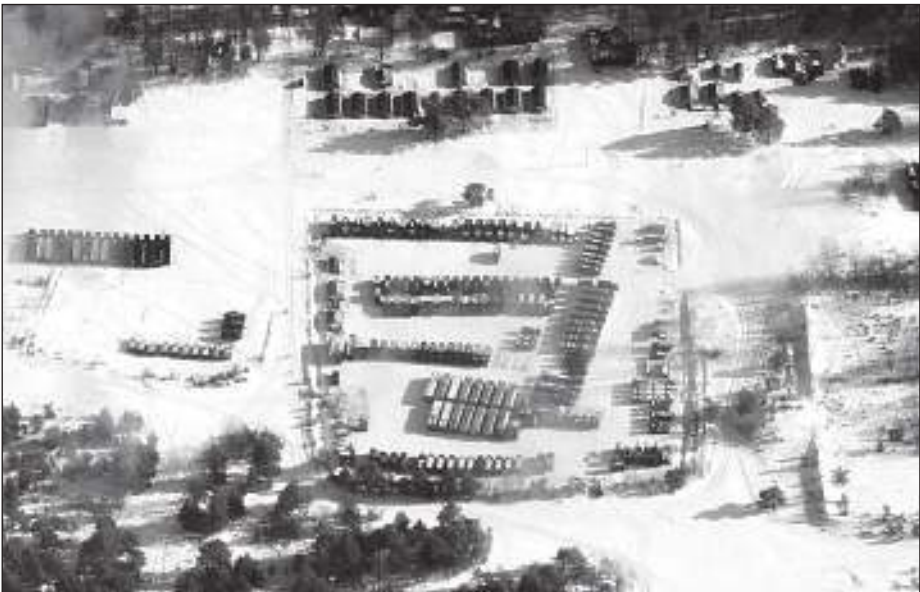
VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
MOSCOW FEBRUARY 5

RUSSIA ON Saturday sent a pair of long-range nuclear-capable bombers on patrol over its ally Belarus amid spiralling tensions over Ukraine. The Russian Defence Ministry said the two Tu-22M3 bombers practiced interaction with the Belarusian air force and air defence assets during a four-hour mission. The flight followed several similar patrols over Belarus, which borders Ukraine to the north.

The mission came as the Kremlin has moved troops from Siberia and the Far East to Belarus for sweeping joint drills. The deployment added to the Russian military buildup near Ukraine, fueling Western fears of a possible invasion.

Russia has denied plans of attacking its neighbour Ukraine, but urged the US and its allies to provide a binding pledge that they don't accept Ukraine into NATO or deploy offensive weapons and roll back the alliance deployments to Eastern Europe. Washington and NATO have rejected the demands.

The West has called on Russia to pull back an estimated 100,000 troops from areas near Ukraine, but the Kremlin has responded by saying it will station troops wherever it needs to on the Russian territory.



A satellite image released by Maxar showing Russian Iskander missile batteries deployed to Belarus. **NYT**

The Russian troop deployment to Belarus raised concerns in the West that Moscow could stage an attack on Ukraine from the north. The Ukrainian capital is just 75 km from the border with Belarus.

In recent months, Russia has conducted a series of joint drills with Belarus and repeatedly sent its nuclear-capable long-range bombers to patrol the skies over its neighbour, which borders NATO members Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko has called for closer defence ties with Moscow and recently offered to host Russian nuclear weapons.

Amid the standoff over Ukraine, US President Joe Biden has ordered 2,000 US-based troops to Poland and Germany and shifted 1,000 more from Germany to Romania in a show of the US commitment to NATO's eastern flank. **AP**

EXPLAINED

Russia adds troops in Crimea too

IN TWO weeks, Russia has deployed an additional 10,000 troops to Crimean Peninsula, including infantry and airborne forces. The deployments mean that Russia could soon be fully prepared to begin military actions along about 800 miles of Ukraine's eastern and southern borders.

US Covid toll passes 9 lakh

THE NEW YORK TIMES
FEBRUARY 5

MORE THAN 2,600 Americans are dying from Covid-19 each day, an alarming number that has climbed by 30 per cent in the past two weeks. Across the US, the pandemic has now claimed more than 900,000 lives.

Yet another, simultaneous reality of the pandemic offers reason for hope. Reports of new Covid infections are plummeting, falling by over half since mid-January. Hospitalisations are also declining.

The country's per capita death rate still exceeds those of other wealthy nations, a reflection of widespread resistance to vaccines and boosters in the US. During the Omicron surge, hospital admissions in the US have been higher than in Western Europe.

That the 900,000-death milestone comes over a year after vaccines were first authorised adds to the pain, said Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, the Baltimore health commissioner. Federal data shows that a vast majority of deaths have been unvaccinated people. Multiple studies have shown that vaccination offers strong protection against severe illness and death from Covid.

Deaths over the past seven weeks were reported in large numbers across the US, with especially high rates in the Southwest and around the Great Lakes. Much of the Midwest, Northeast and Southwest already were suffering large outbreaks fueled by the Delta variant in December before Omicron became dominant. It is possible that many of the most recent deaths in those regions were caused by Delta.



Canadian cities braced for disruptions on Saturday as protests against vaccine mandates spread from the capital of Ottawa, raising fears of clashes with counter protesters. Protesters have shut down downtown Ottawa for the past eight days, with some waving Confederate or Nazi flags and some saying they wanted to dissolve Canada's government. **Reuters**

Those with weak immune systems must get additional shots sooner, says CDC

New York: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday encouraged people with weakened immune systems to come forward sooner for additional coronavirus shots, part of what the agency's scientists described as a bid to shore up those people's levels of protection in the face of the highly contagious Omicron variant.

Members of an advisory committee to the CDC also signaled their support for another change to vaccination guidelines, indicating that they would endorse extending the gap between first and second doses of Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines from roughly four to eight weeks. That change, expected to reduce the risk of heart-related side effects and heighten the effectiveness of the vaccines, has not yet been voted on by the committee or implemented by the CDC.

Those and other updates to vaccination guidelines were the focus of a daylong meeting on Friday of CDC scientists and expert advisers.

During the meeting, the advisers also updated their endorsement of Moderna's coronavirus vaccine after the Food and Drug Administration on Monday granted full approval to the shot, making it the second to receive full regulatory approval. Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, the CDC director, gave her own backing to Moderna's vaccine later on Friday. **NYT**



Tayyip Erdogan

ERDOGAN TESTS COVID POSITIVE

Istanbul: Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday that he had tested positive for the Omicron variant of Covid-19. "The result of Covid tests done with my wife after showing mild symptoms came back positive," Erdogan said in a tweet, adding that both had the Omicron variant of the virus. "We will continue our work at home. We look forward to your prayers," he added. **REUTERS**

LANKA: VACCINE MUST TO ENTER PUBLIC PLACES

Colombo: Sri Lanka has made Covid-19 vaccination mandatory to enter public places and use public transport, according to a gazette notification. The notification dated January 25 under the Quarantine and Prevention of Diseases Ordinance says "a person shall not enter any public place without having the proof of being fully vaccinated unless exempted by the proper authority in respect of the whole of Sri Lanka". The new rule will be effective from April 30. **PTI**

MEANWHILE

QUEEN To MARK 70 YEARS ON THRONE TODAY

Queen Elizabeth kicked off celebrations for the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne by inviting local community groups on Saturday to her Sandringham residence in the east of England. Sunday will mark the queen's platinum jubilee, a first for a British monarch. Elizabeth, 95, became the queen of Britain and more than a dozen other realms including Canada, Australia and New Zealand on the death of her father King George VI on Feb. 6, 1952.



In diplomatic push during games, Xi meets more leaders

REUTERS
BEIJING, FEBRUARY 5

CHINESE PRESIDENT Xi Jinping met the leaders of several more countries on Saturday as Beijing used the start of the Winter Olympics to score diplomatic points amid simmering tensions with the United States.

Following a groundbreaking agreement with Russia on Friday over Taiwan and against NATO expansion, Xi held meetings with the leaders of Serbia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and hosted a banquet at Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

The *Global Times*, run by the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily, hit back at foreign media reports that the event had attracted only "authoritarian" leaders, accusing them in an editorial of using "outdated anti-China clichés".

The People's Daily described strengthened China-Russian relations — announced by Xi and Russian President Vladimir Putin after they met on Friday — as "an important guarantee for maintaining an international strategic balance, world peace and stability". The *Global Times* called it the start of a new era "not defined by the United States".

"China has made every effort to overcome the impact of the Covid pandemic, earnestly fulfilled its solemn commitments to the international community and ensured the Beijing Winter Olympics is being held as scheduled," Xi said.



Xi held meetings with leaders of Serbia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan. **Reuters File**

China: US should do more to reduce N Korea tensions

United Nations: China's UN ambassador said on Friday the US should come up with "more attractive and more practical" policies and actions to reduce tensions with North Korea and avoid a return to a "vicious circle" of confrontation, condemnation and sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programme.

Zhang Jun said the solution lies in direct dialogue and that if the Biden administration wants to see a breakthrough with Pyongyang "they should show more sincerity and flexibility."

In rare remarks to reporters on Beijing's views on dispute, the Chinese ambassador said, "What I see is the key in solving this issue is already in the hands of the US." Zhang said the Biden administration should be asked "in what way they can accommodate the concerns of DPRK... to really bring tension down." **AP**

Pak a priority in regional diplomacy, says Premier Li

Beijing: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Saturday said that Pakistan is a "priority" in China's neighbourhood diplomacy as he met his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan who ensured him that his government will do its utmost to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals and projects in his country.

Li, the second-ranking leader of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) after Chinese President Xi Jinping, has expressed China's willingness to strengthen all-dimensional practical cooperation with

Pakistan, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Li said China supports its enterprises to invest in Pakistan and appreciates the Pakistani government's efforts to safeguard the safety of Chinese firms and personnel in the country.

Li, in his meeting with Khan, said that China will actively consider expanding the import of agricultural products from Pakistan. Khan said the strategic cooperative partnership with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. **PTI**

ACT 'DESPICABLE' SAYS INDIAN CONSULATE

Mahatma Gandhi's statue vandalised in New York

YOSHITA SINGH
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 5

A LIFE-SIZED bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi was vandalised in a New York City neighbourhood on Saturday, an act strongly condemned as "despicable" by the Consulate General of India.

The 8-foot-tall statue, located in Manhattan's Union Square, was defaced by some unknown people, the Consulate General of India said.

"The Consulate condemns this act of vandalism in the strongest terms," it said. "The matter has also been taken up with the US State Department for immediate investigation and urged appropriate action against those responsible for this despicable act," it said. **PTI**

The statue was donated by the Gandhi Memorial International Foundation, and was dedicated on October 2, 1986 to mark the 117th birth anniversary of Gandhi.

American civil rights leader Bayard Rustin had delivered a keynote speech at the ceremony.

Incidentally, the statue was removed in 2001, conserved and reinstalled in a landscape garden area in 2002. This is not the first time a statue of Gandhi has been desecrated in the US. In January last year, unknown miscreants had vandalised, broken and ripped from the base a statue of Gandhi in a park in the US state of California, evoking a strong response from India, which sought a thorough investigation and appropriate action against those responsible. **PTI**

GOVT FORMS ISLAM FORUM TO ENSURE SAFETY AND FREEDOM TO MUSLIMS; CRITICS SEE IT AS A POLITICAL PLOY

Macron's govt seeks to give Islam a French makeover without extremism

BARBARA SURK
NICE, FEBRUARY 5

THE FRENCH government on Saturday forged ahead with efforts to reshape Islam in France and rid it of extremism, introducing a new body made up of clergy and laymen — and women — to help lead the largest Muslim community in western Europe.

With France bloodied by past Islamic extremist attacks, having hundreds of citizens who went to fight with jihadists in Syria in past years and thousands of French troops now fighting extremists in Africa, few disagree that radicalisation is a danger.

But critics also see the efforts as a political ploy to lure right-wing voters to President Emmanuel Macron's centrist party ahead of April's presidential election.

The new body, called the Forum of Islam in France, is being introduced Saturday by the French Interior Ministry. Supporters say it will keep the country — and its 5 million Muslims — safe and free of foreign influence, and ensure that Muslim practices in France adhere to the country's cherished value of secularism in public life.

Its critics, including many Muslims who consider the religion a part of their French identity, say the government's latest initiative is another step in an institutionalised discrimination process that holds the whole community responsible for violent attacks of a few and serves as another barrier in their public lives.

The new body will include imams, influential figures from civil society, prominent intellectuals and business leaders. All of its members are hand-picked by the government, and women will make up at least a quarter of its members, according to French media reports.

It replaces the French Council of Muslim Faith, a group set up in 2003 by former President Nicolas Sarkozy, then interior minister. The Council served as an interlocutor between the government and religious leaders. It is being dissolved this month by Macron's government because, according to Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, it was no longer fulfilling its role in the Muslim community and French society as it was reeling from attacks in recent years that killed hundreds.



Muslims pray at a mosque in Paris. **AP File**

locutor between the government and religious leaders. It is being dissolved this month by Macron's

government because, according to Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, it was no longer fulfill-

ing its role in the Muslim community and French society as it was reeling from attacks in recent years that killed hundreds.

"We want to launch a revolution by putting an end to (foreign influence) on Islam," Darmanin said in a recent interview with *Le Parisien* daily. "Islam is not a religion of foreigners in France, but a French religion that should not depend on foreign money and any authorities abroad."

In his project, Macron envisions measures like training imams in France instead of bringing them in from Turkey, Morocco or Algeria — a plan many in the Muslim community approve of.

Muslims are divided over the project. Some believers visiting the Grand Mosque of Paris for Friday prayers cautiously welcomed the idea while others worry it's going too far in trying to control their faith, or say that the government has singled out Islamic institutions but would not dare suggesting such changes to Christian ones.

Muslims in France have long complained of stigmatisation in daily life, from being singled out by police for ID checks to discrimination in job searches. Whenever extremist violence hits, by foreign-born attackers or by French-born youth, France's own Muslims come under suspicion and pressure to denounce violence.

Islam is the second religion in France, with no single leader and multiple strains represented, from moderate to Salafist with a rigorous interpretation of the religion to outright radical upstarts.

Last year the French parliament approved a law to strengthen oversight of mosques, schools and sports clubs. The government says it was needed to safeguard France from radical Islamists and to promote respect for secularism and women's rights. The law, which raised concern in parts of the Muslim world, has been used to shut down multiple mosques and community groups. **AP**

THE SUNDAY EXPRESS MAGAZINE



POINT OF VIEW

Poetic Engineering

Preserving a structure like the Rashtrapati Bhavan requires innovative finesse and a capacity to hold heritage with sensitive gloves

eye

BOOKS

- Review of Ritu Menon's *Zohra!*
- Review of Meeta and Rajivlochan's *Making India Great Again*
- Review of Shrayana Bhattacharya's *Desperately Seeking Shah Rukh*



A RAGA FOR EVERY THOUGHT



EXPRESS ARCHIVES

Hindustani classical vocalist Prabha Atre, 90, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan last month, continues to challenge ideologies of a rigid system and make classical music approachable to all

Suanshu Khurana



PHOTO COURTESY PRABHA ATRE

NOTES TO HERSELF

(Top) Prabha Atre has never failed to question tradition even as she nurtures it; with her guru Hirabai Barodekar

OVER THE last 15 years, Hindustani classical vocalist Prabha Atre has headlined the Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Mahotsav — a significant event in the country's cultural calendar. Initiated by Pt Bhimsen Joshi in memory of his *guru*, the annual Pune festival draws large crowds, who travel from far and wide, some even sleeping outside the ticket counter for festival passes in the morning. Until he retired in 2006, Joshi would close the festival. He then chose Atre, who has carried it forward even after his passing in 2011.

This year, the festival — Joshi's birth centenary year — stands cancelled due to the pandemic. In its place, there will be Abhivadan — a three-day festival that honours the Kirana *gharana* doyen. Atre will be its main act. At home in Shivajinagar, Pune, Atre, one of the seniormost performing artistes in the country, continues to do what she has for the last 70 years — wake up at dawn to discover the secrets of the *swaras* (notes). "There is no other way to hone your art, to discover something more," says Atre, who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan last month. She has earlier received the Padma Shri in 1990 and the Padma Bhushan in 2002.

Atre, at 90, may come across as an ortho-

dox musician but a look at her oeuvre tells otherwise. She has nurtured this knowledge and at the same time questioned it. She challenged existing ideologies of classical music, in the way it's taught to young adults, in the allegiance to a *gharana*, the adherence to singing a raga at a particular time and has been fascinated with the idea of using *sargam* (solfège) to present her *khayals* (thoughts). *Sargam* is declass in classical music since it is used to understand the form at the beginner level, but it became the topic of her PhD in 1974. Her radical thoughts have riled many. But Atre is unfazed. "One needs to analyse and present a thought with logical reasoning even when it's something as technical and abstract as the classical arts," she says. According to Mumbai-based musicologist Deepak Raja, "Prabha Atre is a thinker, and one of the most respectable vocalists in the country."

Her ability to question the art form probably comes from the fact that she was not born into a family of musicians. "Forget about performing classical music, no one had even heard it in my family," says Atre. Sometimes, the radio played at home, in Pune, and Atre found herself being pulled in by the voices of Noor Jehan, Begum Akhtar and Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan.

But real learning happened when she met her *gurus*. Her father, a headmaster, employed a harmonium *guru* for her ailing mother. Though her mother quit after three-four lessons, Atre continued. She was in her mid-teens when her father's friend took her to Mumbai-based vocalist Sureshbabu Mane, son of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan of the Kirana *gharana*. Atre sang *Ka Karoon Sajni*, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali's famed *thumri* in *raag* Sindhu Bhairavi. Mane was impressed and agreed to teach her.

Four years later, when Mane died in 1953, his sister Hirabai Barodekar took her on as a student for the next couple of years. "My

gurus were very open-minded and would always say 'don't be a photocopy'. They gave me a strong foundation," says Atre. She also graduated in science followed by a law degree.

Atre joined All India Radio, Ranchi, as an assistant producer in 1960, where she was introduced to a variety of musicians and genres, including Carnatic classical and Western pop. She was fascinated by the music of Ustad Amir Khan, the founder of Indore *gharana*, Patiala *gharana* legend Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, and Roshan Ara Begum of Kirana *gharana*. This is when she was deepening her quest to critically analyse her own music. "There is art and then there is the *shastra* (science) behind it. Art will change with time, so the *shastra* can't stay behind. My background allowed me to have a scientific approach to an abstract form," says Atre. By then, she had begun to perform

and was a rising star in the concert circuit in the '60s. Like everything conventional, she grappled with the idea of marriage and decided it was not for her.

In those days, alongside her was Kishori Amonkar — Indian classical vocalist Mogubai Kurdikar's temperamental and talented daughter — whose popularity was on the rise. "Kishori took the vocal music world by storm. But Prabha retained her individuality and stature even at a time when the Indian music world was swept by the Kishori wave," says Raja.

By the middle of 1971 came an HMV record that overwhelmed the *rasikas* (aesthetes). It was Atre's presentation of two much-loved *ragas* — Maru Bihag and Kalavati. Atre was 43 then, presenting one of her own compositions, not common at such an early stage. "The way we think of Kishori *ta's* Bhoop, we associate Maru Bihag and Kalavati with Prabha *ta's*," says Hubli-based Jayateerth Mevundi, a leading vocalist from the Kirana *gharana*. "I see children singing her *bandish* (composition) *Tana mana dhana* in music competitions all the time. They may not know who's composed it but that's how popular it is," he says.

After her last stint at AIR in 1970, Atre

headed the music department at SNDT University, Mumbai, from 1980-92. There she turned around the curriculum, making it broader in approach, allowing students to explore various genres of music. According to Raja, there is hardly anyone who's been a full-time teacher and retained a top-class status in the performing field. "Full-time teachers tend to be academic. But in her case, it did not stifle her," he says.

Mumbai-based classical singer Chetna Banawat-Pathak, who has learnt from her for 24 years, remembers travelling with Atre for concerts. By the time they would reach a destination, a new *bandish* was ready. "Her *raag Bahar bandish*, *Ritu basant aayi*, was created on the train. One has to not just know the art form well, but go deep into the ocean for this," says Banawat-Pathak. Atre's inward reflections have led to many new ragas.

When Atre is not composing and performing, she is writing books. Her book *Enlightening the Listener — Contemporary North Indian Classical Vocal Music Performance* (Coronet Books Inc, 2000) is a guide to understanding finer details of classical music. "I wanted to explain the idea behind this system, teach it to students, and explain it to the masses," says Atre, for whom the audience, often inconsequential to the concept of classical music, plays a significant role. "If we want people to appreciate classical music, then we have to make it approachable," she adds.

To the world she is a scholar and a musician, but to her students, she is a friend and a mother, who sometimes cooks a typical Maharashtrian meal for them. Even after all these years, Atre's discipline and commitment is impeccable. It's probably why Atre sounds euphonious even at this age.

A couple of years ago, there was a theft in Atre's Pune home; some cell phones, pen drives and hard disks were stolen. It was 4.30 am and Atre was immersed in her *riyaz*. She heard some rustling in the next room, she told the police later, but she continued to sing.

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Kolkata

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A Life Lived Queen Size

In a new biography, Ritu Menon captures the indomitable spirit and perseverance of Zohra Segal, the theatre doyenne who held the nation in thrall for over seven decades

Kirti Jain

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OR memoirs, particularly of artistes, I have always found more fascinating than biographies. For one, they record a kind of oral history that is valuable because it gives a more vivid picture of their life and brings alive the multilayered context of their times. Second, the way memories are mediated reflects another aspect of the personality of each writer in terms of what they want projected and what they choose to hide. Third, being in first person, it captures the nuances of expressions, language, cultural symbols, and, therefore, the whole personality in a way that would be difficult for a biography to evoke. However, I found an unusual exception in Ritu Menon's biography of Zohra Segal — *Zohra! A Biography in Four Acts*.

Segal's autobiography, *Stages* (1997), written by Joan L Erdman with Segal has more details and, yet, is more staid and tedious. Menon's biography is an absolutely delightful read. It captures the mischief, impulsiveness, courage, perseverance and the indomitable spirit of Segal in a way that her autobiography did not. In any case, Segal's life is like a roller-coaster ride with breathtaking ups and downs from pre-independent India to the 21st century, a period that coincides with a time in Indian and world history where new cultural movements were in the making and Segal played an active part in them. How many of us can boast of a life lived as fully as hers till the ripe old age of 102? To capture this life in words is a stupendous task — and Menon carries it out with elan and grace.

The book is aptly titled for it unfolds with all the theatricality of a play, scene after scene. I was hooked to it from the first line: "Uday Shankar was her first love — as was dance. Zohra Mumtaz, all of 23 in 1935, couldn't believe her eyes when she received the following cable from Shankar: 'LEAVING FOR JAPAN TOUR ELEVENTH AUGUST STOP CAN YOU JOIN IMMEDIATELY'." One immediately wanted to know how this came about and what happened subsequently. Then, Menon mentions that if there was one trait that Segal happily admitted to, it was her impulsiveness. Just as she impulsively decided to join her uncle on a road tour from Dehradun to Lebanon, "It was impulse again that made Zohra declare in Beirut that she wanted to be an actress. Very well, responded her cousin Mahmud, let's see how you improvise: imagine your lover has sent you a letter saying he will not be able to meet you tonight. Before Zohra could arrange her expression to indicate dismay or disappointment — or even relief — she had changed her mind and decided that she wanted to be a dancer instead." And so, off she went for training in dance to Germany, her impulsiveness beautifully captured in these few sentences. That is how the whole biography reads — colourful and evocative. It has a light touch but is packed with a mine of information that would be a delight to anyone interested in the cultural history of the country.

Then follows a treasure trove of information about Shankar's journey as a dancer, his starting as a magician performing for King



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

George V in London, going on to touring the world and finally setting up the legendary Almora Dance Centre. This book provides a rare documentation of its beginnings, its supporters, its dancers and members, and its methodology. I was fascinated to read that among the sponsors of the centre were luminaries like Jawaharlal Nehru, (Russian actor) Michael Chekhov, Sir Feroz Khan Noon, Rabindranath Tagore, (American dance critic) John Martin and (French novelist/dramatist)

ENTER STAGE RIGHT

Actor Zohra Segal at her residence in New Delhi in 2014

Romain Rolland. Among its members, apart from Zohra were (theatre person) Gul Bardhan, (dancer) Sundari Shridharani, (actor-director) Guru Dutt, (writer) Nayantara Sahgal and (dancer-stage director) Shanta (Gandhi). The legendary Ustad Allauddin Khan also agreed to join for music. One can only imagine how electric the environment must have been. The place had a magic where an artiste like Segal blossomed, and also found her life partner in Kameshwar Segal.



ZOHRA! A BIOGRAPHY IN FOUR ACTS
BY RITU MENON
Speaking Tiger
272 pages
₹399

I must say that the book reads like the *Arabian Nights*, unfolding one story after another, the common thread to all of these being *shehzadi* Zohra. Each story is about some legendary personality, event or institution. Brief history of all these has come alive through painstaking research into archives, interviews with friends and relatives, and putting together stray references.

Act II of this life drama is about her shift to Mumbai after a brief stint in Lahore trying to run a dance school there in pre-independence India. In Mumbai, she lived in the same house as the Anands (Uma and Chetan), along with Dev Anand, Balraj Sahni and his wife Dhamyanti and regularly met a huge artiste community. It is from here that Segal made a switch from dance to theatre by joining Prithviraj Kapoor's Prithvi Theatre in 1945. She spent more than 14 years acting, choreographing and touring with the company. Thanks to the personality and work ethic of her mentor Kapoor, whom she called "Papaji", theatre and acting became her second passion — one which she pursued till the end of her life. This part is a superb documentation of the work and ethos of Prithvi Theatre. Segal left Bombay when, close on the heels of her husband's sudden death, Prithvi also closed down. She had now lost both her anchors. She called this period "a period of dying".

Meanwhile, her children had grown up. So, the intermission consists of her moving briefly to Delhi, where she tried her hand at art administration. Not really enjoying it, she grabbed the chance to go to London for a 10-week acting course at the British Drama League. Act III is about London, where she tried bit roles on the stage. This phase of her life also throws light on the lack of space for diaspora Asian artistes in British theatre and television. With her talent and tenacity, Segal gradually made her presence felt in serials and films there. In the last Act, she returned to Delhi in 1987 and continued to travel for film and theatre projects, which not only kept her in the limelight but also helped earn a livelihood.

There are so many significant details that this biography offers. I would recommend it strongly to those interested not just in the life of Segal but also wanting to know about institutions and individuals who were significant but their role has not really been documented well. I will end this review with the lines Zohra mentioned in an interview... "I didn't want money; I was interested in fame, I wanted power." She did get that in abundance. And she deserved every bit of it. Hats off to this feisty diva — an inspiration to us all.

Kirti Jain is a Delhi-based theatre director

What We Lack

A critical engagement with history looks to creating an action plan for the future

TCA Raghavan

MAKING INDIA *Great Again*, as the title, does suggest that the work aims to give prescriptions on how a long past golden age can be reconfigured. That, however, is not the intention of the Rajivlochans. Their aim is to closely scrutinise some aspects of our history and extract from it a list of deficiencies as action points to be addressed and fixed as India looks to the future. Finding "lessons" from history is, of course, treading on a slippery path but within the methodological limits posed by this caveat, their book is a thought-provoking effort to critically engage with our history with a view to our present predicaments. The latter, in particular, can be summarised as simply that while we have made some good progress and have substantial achievements to our credit, our performance remains under potential and others have done better.

In pre-colonial times, India had developed a certain dexterity in establishing complex financial institutions; it had substantial achievements in mathematics, as well as a level of technology which demonstrated that it was second to none in the world in these and related skill sets. Yet, colonial conquest, economic exploitation and degradation followed at the hands of external powers that were smaller, weaker and, in many ways, less developed. Why did this happen? The answer that the book develops has different dimensions but each emerges from one central impulse: "A certain inability to systematise information". The authors explain at the outset "whether it is taxation, fighting battles or doing business and making money, it is a superior quality of information that would decide who might win and who finally loses. The encounter with the English East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries is important in that it shows both missing pieces. It is neither superior technology, nor a greater access to capital that gave the Company decisive advantage over local rulers and merchants. These advantages were generated by superior record-keeping, a high quality of information for better decision-making and the knowledge that trading produces more profit when protected by the authority of the state."



MAKING INDIA GREAT AGAIN: LEARNING FROM OUR HISTORY
BY MEETA AND RAJIV LOCHAN
Manohar Publishers
299 pages; ₹320

Another superior technology, nor a greater access to capital that gave the Company decisive advantage over local rulers and merchants. These advantages were generated by superior record-keeping, a high quality of information for better decision-making and the knowledge that trading produces more profit when protected by the authority of the state."

This thesis is fleshed out with examples from our history: the House of Jagat Seth in eastern India; the making of high-quality steel that had a great reputation internationally till well into colonial times, and, the many achievements in mathematics, but no comparable achievement in other sciences or in marrying science to practical knowledge to advance and scale up technology. In each of these varied fields, the authors point out the common thread running through is the absence of systems for systematising information and experience to establish a knowledge pool which could be transmitted, replicated and scaled up. Thus, in India while "knowledge was important, knowledge systems remained distant". India fell behind, in other words, because Indians were deficient in collecting, organising and passing on knowledge to create ever expanding "systematic networks of information and trust". In contrast, Europe "forged ahead to use its collective knowledge, accumulated over generations, to bring in industrialisation and associated efficiencies, reduction in the cost of production and enlargement of the scale of society." Thus, India remained as it was while the world around it changed.

Why didn't Indians change when they saw Europeans doing things differently? At times, the authors suggest that existing endowments in terms of rich natural resources were so plentiful that there was little incentive to change. More convincing is the argument that "Indian society found it difficult to generate means, whether formal or informal, of exchanging information across groups." These deficiencies also had a direct impact on political and military power. The Marathas lost to the English not because they lacked superior firepower or were deficient in numbers but because the English, Scottish and Eurasian officers they relied upon were not going to fight the English. But "no Maratha chief had ever cared to set up any institution for formal training of their officers" and, thus, the larger failure was the inability to understand the value of knowledge systems.

This, the book argues further, is by no means restricted to the story of India's past. If India is to become a wealthy nation we need to, it says, "build a learning society" which means "a society that is self-reflexive; that constantly takes feedback" and "we should stop looking for feel-good arguments which only see India as a victim". These are conclusions difficult to disagree with and the book is a serious effort to understand and explain our sub-optimal performance in different fields.

TCA Raghavan is a former diplomat. His latest book is *History Men: Jadunath Sarkar, GS Sardesai, Raghubir Singh and Their Quest for India's Past* (2020)

SHELF LIFE

March of History

IN HER deeply researched book, by placing the work of the triumvirate: Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray in the "postcolony", author-professor-historian Rochona Majumdar, "activates the past". Since the epic task of a comprehensive analysis of the Indian art cinema's movement isn't for a book to realise, she zooms on what's proximate and familiar, to the fount that paved the way for future rebellious cinematic voices to emerge.

She locates her accessible academic book — laced with evocative archival film stills, scene dissections and criticisms dug from the dustbin of history — in the "postcolony", the post-independence decades, whence emerged Ray and his confrères. The postcolonial, what she calls the "long present", begins with colo-

nialism and continues to the present day.

She references English critic-filmmaker Marie Seton's efforts, in the 1950s, to establish "art cinema as a universal idiom"; and the 1951 Film Enquiry Committee acknowledging the form as "good cinema", aiding the nation-building process.

Majumdar charts the march of history through the trilogies of the respective auteurs: Ghatak's 1960s' Partition trilogy (*Meghe Dhaka Tara*, *Komal Gandhar*, *Subarnarekha*), Sen's (*Interview*, *Calcutta 71*, *Padatik*) and Ray's (*Pratidwandi*, *Seemabaddha*, *Jana Aranya*) 1970s' Calcutta films. If the "tragedy of Partition" was desolate and unrelenting Ghatak's "lifelong obsession", the Bengal famine, was angry Sen's cinematic deliberation. The Nehruvian optimism of chronicler-



ART CINEMA AND INDIA'S FORGOTTEN FUTURES: FILM AND HISTORY IN THE POSTCOLONY
BY ROCHONA MAJUMDAR
Columbia University Press
307 pages; ₹699

ethnographer Ray dissolves into seeing "the contemporary as deadlock in nation's history". It is to the "forgotten futures" one needs to look back in anger — the "utopian desire for unity" that Ghatak ended his meditations on loss and longing with, the "betrayal of ancestors" that Sen invokes, to hammer in the speciousness of democracy, jolting public into "questioning national sovereignty, when people remained poverty-stricken, unemployed, insecure in the new republic", and the hope for a more (gender and racial) "equitable, yet unattained, future" as seen in Ray's *Mahanagar* (1963).

Sen created the original onscreen Angry Young Man — starting with Ranjit Mallick in *Interview* (1971), replete with political ambivalence — which was amiss in the more popular Hindi film's Vijay, essayed by Amitabh Bachchan. But the woman question sticks out like a sore

thumb. Ray's "crisis of historicism" in his city films was in showing women as ciphers, their "complexities and quirks" not fleshed out like the men's. Ghatak projected a sacrificial lamb, and Sen a disillusionment with the absent intersectionality in the women's movement.

History moves in circles. The first blow to art cinema came with the restructuring of the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) in the 1980s. Today, as NFDC is set for yet another restructuring, the statist erasure of art cinema might be near-complete. The book exhorts that art cinema, as a tool of history, offers resources to live through our disorienting times, of "global pandemic, authoritarian politics..." and tremendous might of neoliberal states challenging conditions of being citizens and humans".

TANUSHREE GHOSH

To the Men Who Never Loved Us

A superstar becomes the starting point in this book that examines gender relations

Adrija Roychowdhury

RARELY DOES a book appear as if it was written just for you, to help you make sense of your life. Shrayana Bhattacharya's book is one of them. The title might suggest that the book is about Shah Rukh Khan and how a generation of women are hopelessly looking out for him. But going through the interviews carried out by Bhattacharya of female fans of Khan, spread out across class, caste, professions and religion, one realises that the actor is, in fact, a myth, a symbol of a particular kind of romance these women are seeking. In spite of the multifaceted backgrounds, a few things are common among all her interviewees. One, of course, is that they love Khan and everything he represents. They also grew up in post-lib-

eralisation India and desire a life of economic independence in which men are desired for companionship and not for financial security. Last year, I turned 31. In a locked-down year, conversations around marriage and "settling down" became harder to dodge. Unhappily, I settled for the idea of an arranged marriage. A matrimonial agency was found and a profile created. What followed is a saga best forgotten. Men with illustrious degrees, high-paying jobs and from "good families" were put on display. One MBA graduate told me that he wants a career woman, but too much time spent on the job meant that I am bad with time management. Another rejected me with the explanation that while he appreciated my career aspirations, he wanted someone whose priority would be the family.

I was unable to articulate to my parents

what exactly I was looking for. I wanted someone to acknowledge my aspirations, appreciate my independence and be proud of my accomplishments. I wanted the Shah Rukh Khan of the movies I had grown up watching, one who would look into the eyes of the woman he loved, open his heart and arms to her and admire her for who she was. If I told this to my mother, she would likely roll her eyes in despair at my impracticality. "Marriage is about compromise" she would tell me, as she has, so often in the past.

Yet, as Bhattacharya's book shows, I am not alone in craving for such a partner. Through hard data and long conversations, she has established the struggle women face to find a unique combination of independence and intimacy in a post-liberalised India. Despite the many leaps and bounds made by the Indian



DESPERATELY SEEKING SHAH RUKH: INDIA'S LONELY WOMEN AND THE SEARCH FOR INTIMACY AND INDEPENDENCE
BY SHRAYANA BHATTACHARYA
HarperCollins India
445 pages; ₹699

economy after the historic reforms of 1991, gender relations in the country continue to be steeped in inequality.

Money and love and the interaction between the two is the running theme of Bhattacharya's book. Interestingly, while more money ensures more love for men, for women, it plays out otherwise. "Women feel more loved when they toe the patriarchal line, when they prop up powerful men," she writes. The numbers put together by Bhattacharya testifies to this sad reality. "As the Indian economy grew at an average of seven per cent be-

tween 2004 and 2011, the share of women in the labour force fell to 33 per cent before plunging even further between 2011 and 2017 to a historic low of 23.3 per cent," she writes. This, despite the fact that in post-liberalised India there has been a sharp increase in the number of educated women.

Then there are those like Vidya, a Delhi-based engineer, with degrees from some of the best institutions in the world, working for a hefty pay package at a private foundation. Her boyfriend of nine years had broken up with her for her supposed "arrogance". Over the years, she kept meeting men who were just as disappointing. Vidya belongs to a minority of women, the true beneficiaries of liberalisation, who choose to remain defiant, opting for financial independence over settling down with a man far from their dreams. "Blame the Shah Rukh movies, the books I've read, but I just won't do it!" she says.

The relationship between love and money plays out differently as one moves down the class ladder. The women of *agarbatti* (incense sticks) colony in Ahmedabad have benefitted from the emergence of home-based jobs. But

they realise the precariousness of their new-found independence. Most are married to men with unstable incomes and raging tempers. They are fearful of losing their love. So, they silently endure violence at home and find respite in Khan's movies.

Bhattacharya's approach to gender is unique. In exploring Khan's fandom, she reveals why Indian women continue to struggle in the workplace, the kitchen and the bedroom. Economic theories and data blend beautifully with her anthropological approach. For instance, she writes about a east Delhi accountant who spent years finding a government job. Her parents finally stopped looking for a groom for her in her mid-30s when a prospective suitor and his family complained about her complexion, suggesting that the travel to office and back was making her dark. That day, the accountant cried afterwards. "These matches were always insulting my hard work and everything I had done in life," she tells Bhattacharya. My heart went out to the woman. Aren't we all seeking the same things in love — to be seen, acknowledged and appreciated?

Ruusuvuori sets up Tata Open final clash vs Sousa



Emil Ruusuvuori during his 6-3, 7-6 win over Kamil Majchrzak. Tata Open Maharashtra

Finland youngster Emil Ruusuvuori earned a shot at his maiden ATP World Tour title with a hard-fought win over Kamil Majchrzak while Joao Sousa edged out Elias Ymer after saving three match points in high-quality semifinals at the Tata Open Maharashtra, here on Saturday. Kamil got himself to a position where he was serving for the second set to force a decider but 22-year-old Emil walked out with a 6-3 7-6 (0) win after one hour and 46 minutes of engrossing tennis at the Balewadi Sports Complex.

In the other semifinal, world number 137 Sousa used all his experience to wriggle out of crunch situation against talented Ymer to win the marathon contest 5-7

Bengaluru rally past JFC

Bambolini: Bengaluru FC made it three wins on the spin to move to the third spot, riding a come-from-behind 3-1 victory over Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League at the Athletic Stadium here on Saturday. Daniel China Chukwu had given Jamshedpur the lead inside the first minute but Bengaluru made a roaring comeback in the second half with Cleiton Silva (62nd, 90th) scoring twice on either side of Sunil Chhetri's equaliser in the 55th minute. Chhetri scored his 49th goal, equalling Hyderabad FC's Bart Ogbeche who became the all-time highest scorer of the ISL the other day with 49 strikes as Bengaluru stretched their unbeaten run to eight games. Jamshedpur had their chances but Chukwu and Stewart were denied from the goal line. Bengaluru now have 23 points from 15 games, same as Kerala Blasters who are second due to better goal difference. Jamshedpur dropped to fourth with the loss with 22 points from 13 matches.

PTI

7-6(4) 7-5 in three hours and 13 minutes. Sousa, 32, will now fight for his fourth singles title in his 11th final on the ATP Tour.

In the first semifinal, intense rallies featured from the beginning with both Emil, ranked 87, and 95th-ranked Kamil displaying their range of shots. It was not before the eighth game that a break opportunity opened up for the Finnish player in the opening set. Kamil's backhand landed just outside the lines and Emil found a passing winner to convert the chance as the Polish player was not in a position to counter while approaching the net. Emil's ability to find angled shots, that made Kamil work harder to reach out balls, made a huge difference. **PTI**

China seek 9th Asian Cup title

China would look for an unprecedented ninth title while Korea seek their maiden triumph when the two continental heavy-weights square off in the summit clash of the AFC Women's Asian Cup on Sunday. China and Korea have defeated two-time defending champions Japan and another title favourite Australia, respectively, en route to the finale at the DY Patil Stadium. History favours China as they have won the tournament seven times on the trot from 1986 to 1999 before adding another one in 2006. They have also been in the top four in every edition from 1986 till now, which is an amazing achievement. Korea, on the other hand, have reached the last four on four earlier occasions.Coached by five-time AFC Women's Asian Cup winner Shui Qingxia, China also have a superior head to head record against Korea Qingxia said her side's win over defending champions Japan in the semi-finals via penalty shoot-out, after trailing in 120 minutes of play, will inspire them. **PTI**

Bawa saves best for last

Raj Angad had been barred from bowling fast by father-coach for five years

PRATYUSHRAJ
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

BACK IN 2000, when Mohammad Kaif-led India won the Under-19 World Cup, Sukhwinder Bawa was the toast of every cricket journalist. His ward Yuvraj Singh was Player of the Tournament, and everyone wanted a piece of the coach who had trained the to-be superstar.

Cut to the present, two decades later. Sukhwinder's phone is buzzing, but he is not overwhelmed. "I am having deja vu. I have seen it before," he says.

"Back then, it was an adrenaline rush. Abhi aisa lag raha ki yaar ye sab dekh chuka hoon (Now I feel like I have seen all these things before). Yes, I am a bit emotional because Raj is my son," says Bawa with a heavy voice.

Sukhwinder Bawa's son Raj Angad Bawa has not put a foot wrong in the 2022 U-19 World Cup. He bagged a four-wicket haul against South Africa. With his 108-ball unbeaten 162 against Uganda, he surpassed Shikhar Dhawan's 155 against Scotland in 2004 as the highest individual score by an Indian at an U-19 World Cup.

He was the destroyer-in-chief for India in the final with fiery figures of 5 for 31 as he ran through England's middle order; it was the best bowling performance ever in an U-19 World Cup final.

What impressed Sukhwinder the most was George Bell's dismissal. A well-directed bouncer first ball, right up near the grille; Bell was taken aback, and wicketkeeper Dinesh Bana did the rest.

"He can't do anything wrong today, can he," says Sukhwinder. "That dismissal will make any fast bowler proud. I am sure Bell was not expecting a bouncer first ball. It was well executed."

Especially by someone who had been banned from bowling quick for at least five years, by his father. Raj was then a middle-order batter who would bowl off-spin, and Sukhwinder was more focused on his son's batting.

"Fast bowling toh uske DNA mein hai (Fast bowling is in his DNA). He picked up a five-wicket haul in an U-12 match in Gurgaon. That was the moment I told him you should focus on your batting more," Sukhwinder tells *The Indian Express*.

"I wanted him to become a proper batter, not some fast bowler who can't even face 10 balls. I worked on his batting and never allowed him to bowl pace for almost five years."

The love for fast bowling reignited when Raj was selected for the Punjab U-16 team. There was a strict instruction from Sukhwinder that he must focus on his bat-



Raj Angad Bawa was the destroyer-in-chief for India in the U19 World Cup final with fiery figures of 5 for 31 as he ran through England's middle order.

PTI

ting, but the teenager would bowl at nets, and request everyone to keep it a secret.

"I knew the first day he started bowling again. Baap hoon uska (I am his father after all). I didn't say a word because he was scoring runs," says Sukhwinder.

Sukhwinder played hockey for the Haryana junior team and was even selected for the India U-19 camp in 1988. His dream of playing cricket, however, ended due to a slipped disc injury, and at the age of 22, the student of the late coach DP Azad became a coach himself.

"When I completed my diploma from SAI Centre Gandhinagar, I was very young. I always dreamt of producing a genuine all-rounder who can bowl at deceptive pace and is a solid batter. Maybe because growing up, I have seen the likes of Kapil Dev, Imran Khan, Ian Botham and Richard Hadlee. What a rivalry it used to be among them!" says Sukhwinder.

His dream to develop a proper all-rounder came to be fulfilled with his son's growth. "Raj was with me 24x7. He used to accompany me everywhere. We've always talked cricket, and I used to tell him stories about Kapil paaji. I think he sensed at a very young age what I was looking for.

"When I saw his bowling, I knew he was a natural pacer. So I concentrated all my efforts on his batting. I am glad it has worked. He is a complete all-rounder, not even 60-

40." When asked why he didn't allow him to bowl quick for almost five years, Sukhwinder replies, "You can work on someone's technique till they are 16; after that, it is all mental. I have been able to groom him technically. But I've worked very little on his bowling. The only thing I have worked upon is his landing knee because it used to bend a lot, and was injury-prone."

Raj bowls with his right arm but bats left-handed. He switched his stance after watching Yuvraj. "I used to watch Yuvraj practise at my father's coaching centre. When I first picked up the bat maybe I was trying to imitate him, and it stuck with me," says Raj, who idolises Yuvraj, and dons the same jersey No 12.

Sport runs in the family. Raj's grandfather, Tarlochan Singh Bawa, was part of the Indian hockey team that won the 1948 London Olympics gold. Tarlochan scored in the 4-0 win over Great Britain in the final, earning independent India its first gold medal.

"Mujhe India khelna hai, aur saare formats khelna hai (I want to play for India in all three formats)," Bawa told this paper ahead of the final.

"But my real struggle will start once I return from the U-19 World Cup. I will have to establish myself in first-class cricket. As my father always says, 'believe in the process, and keep working hard.'"

If it's your Birthday

Sunday February 6

Deep stirrings in positive regions of your solar chart will soon burst into the open and you will gain the confidence and faith in yourself which is necessary if you are to make your dreams come true.

Monday February 7

Happily, you'll feel one particular burden lifted from your shoulders in about four months, and a surge of confidence and optimism in about nine months.

Tuesday February 8

Even while you're looking at life's spiritual realities, you'll be much more involved in business, and there could be amazing chances to make money.

Wednesday February 9

There seems to be a strange connection between whatever happened about eight years ago and plans which are coming to fruition around now.

Thursday February 10

If you're really and truly sensitive, then you'll be aware of the subtle changes taking place at the moment, deep down in the recesses of your psyche.

Friday February 11

Your pattern of behaviour seems to be shifting, and over the next few weeks you'll be more aware of the need to take a down-to-earth and practical approach to almost everything.

Saturday February 12

It's never too late to say never. You're about to have a second chance to take a major long-term decision, even to back out of a recent commitment.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

The Sun makes its way through a creative region of your chart, shedding new light on areas of experience you'd thought were gone for good, or which you had never even considered. It's not a bad moment for falling in love so, if you're already happily settled, you can rekindle old feelings.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

You may still be keeping yourself to yourself. The advantage of the current moment is that you can, if you wish, explore those spiritual and mystical realities which underlie the world you take for granted. Once you understand life's deeper meaning, you'll put your daily affairs into order.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Short distance travel is more likely than long although, as soon as you leave home, you are liable to face delays. On the other hand, you never know when a hold-up might actually be for the best, perhaps saving you from a worse fate. At work, you may replace one job with another.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Ambitious stars are in the ascendant. Press ahead at work, and even in leisure activities, you should aim to come first. You're in a competitive mood, and you may as well recognise it, for false modesty will only lead to frustration in the long run.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

The more adventurous zones of your chart are being triggered by brilliant planetary movements, which means that if you don't set off on some new venture now, you may have to wait another month or so. Always remember that the past holds the key to future success.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

There is much to be said for taking a break from your normal commitments. You do have a tendency to live the life of a hermit, and right now a brief period of solitude could be the most invigorating way to spend your time. Oh, and think ahead and arrange entertainments and gatherings for next month.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

It's time to pay a little more attention to all those routine matters, like how much things cost. You can be businesslike when you want, and this is precisely the time to take the lead and sort other people out as well. Younger relations will rely on you for your firm support, and will repay any favours over the coming years.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

All your stars are crying out for collaboration and you will have to team up with partners: there is no choice. If you don't keep up, or if you imagine that you can go it alone, you will soon find otherwise. In love you are searching for status.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

Travel plans could be subject to some delay, so take the necessary action, like making sure you give yourself enough time. A family matter may involve a legal dimension so, here as well, you should be thoroughly prepared: leave nothing to chance.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Your stars are making a rather lively turn. Take a more adventurous line, and also consider the ethical and moral consequences of your actions: if you have any doubts, hold on until you've been reassured. Travel plans should be put on to the top footing.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

You may take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that, if you are let down in the future, no problems ensue. You should make a point of encouraging other people to see that their choices are theirs alone, and that you are not holding them back.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

If you do your best for other people, they will undoubtedly do their best for you. You should be as generous as you can. This is not to say that you should be exploited, but whenever you see a deserving cause you must chip in with moral support and financial help.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2359

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Practical guide (4,2,5)
- S. American city ____ Paolo (3)
- Tilts over (5)
- Mass (9)
- Knickknack (9)
- Striped animal (5)
- At least theoretically, if not practically? (2,5)
- Brass instrument (4)
- Roman poet (4)
- English mathematician (7)
- Basic drink (5)
- Shakespeare's shrew tamer (9)
- Peeved (9)
- Rigid social stratum (5)
- Chap (3)
- Hard-working (11)

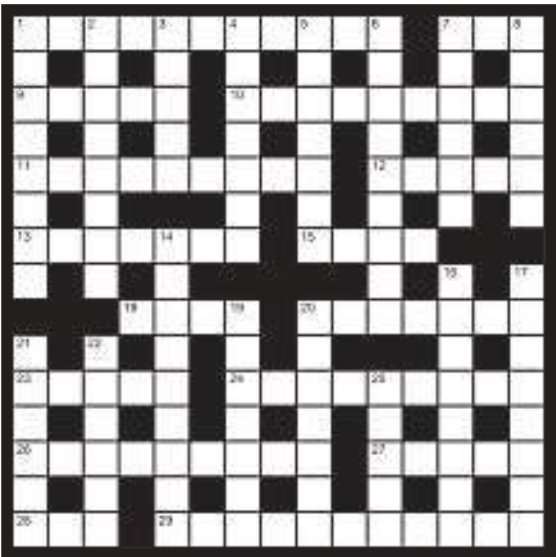
DOWN

- Connection (8)
- When this is gone, one gives up! (4,4)
- Beginning (5)
- Instructor (7)
- An ointment (7)
- Satan (9)
- Run-down (6)
- Musical dramas (6)
- Tenor Luciano (9)
- Exaggerated sense of manliness (8)
- Updates or refashions (8)
- Delegated task to a person? (7)
- Happens to, archaically speaking? (7)
- Possessing (6)
- Strongly built (6)
- Sore (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Office worker with cabinet duties maybe (6,5)
- Shed tears in Caesar's obituary (3)
- Teaching assistants run into hospital facility for shocker (5)
- Making no move to get things done (9)
- Advisory group consider equipment for army (5,4)
- They make a difference to the position on the board (5)
- Hope expressed that it's all wrapped up (7)
- Perhaps an American vessel to pull? (4)
- Beast turning up with a person of learning (4)
- Sounding expert perhaps, he certainly knows his pipes (7)
- Rubbish tip initiated skin



- complaint (5)
- Gold sovereign? (4,5)
- How a groan jangled North Sydney (9)
- Man at university dressed to go around (5)
- Not very clever to reduce the wattage? (3)
- House plot developed at nether end (5,4)
- Arab emirate has an immature flower in a habit yet incomplete (3,5)
- Takes chair, sees drip forming (8)
- It starts to be questionable to look

- so doubtful (7)
- One hung by the neck seen to breathe with difficulty, about to die (7)
- A good man got into debt when laid up (6)
- Indian chief gives me cash (6)
- No flight speed is showily masculine (5)

Solutions to 2358

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Facebook, 5 Impugn, 9 Transsept, 10 Willow, 12 Exercises, 13 Tamed, 14 Aced, 16 Nunery, 19 Prosaic, 21 Pods, 24 Navel, 25 Duplicity, 27 Toning, 28 Train-set, 29 Rhymed, 30 Escapade. **Down:** 1 Fitted, 2 Crates, 3 Basic, 4 Opposed, 6 Moistened, 7 Unlimber, 8 Nowadays, 11 As an, 15 Challenge, 17 Spinster, 18 Solvency, 20 Cads, 21 Papyrus, 22 Miasma, 23 Myrtle, 26 Ibiza. **CRYPTIC CLUES Across:** 1 Cerebral, 5 Scouts, 9 One's word, 10 Tossin, 12 Punishers, 13 Loath, 14 Pall, 16 Pig-iron, 19 Cirdet, 21 Rack, 24 Ulema, 25 Off-season, 27 Crowns, 28 Well-nigh, 29 Refuse, 30 Eton crop. **Down:** 1 Choppy, 2 Ruing, 3 Bowls, 4 Air-cell, 6 Choplogic, 7 Upstairs, 8 Sunshine, 11 RSVP, 15 All Saints, 17 Scout-car, 18 Cries off, 20 Trot, 21 Reflect, 22 Ashier, 23 Unship, 26 Ellen.

JUMBLE WORDS

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

Only the ideas that we ____ have any value. - Hermann Hesse (6,4)

GLAEE



GLILR



EHRULL



EFIRVY



SOLUTION: EFACE, GRILL, HUILE, VERIFY

SUDOKU 4737

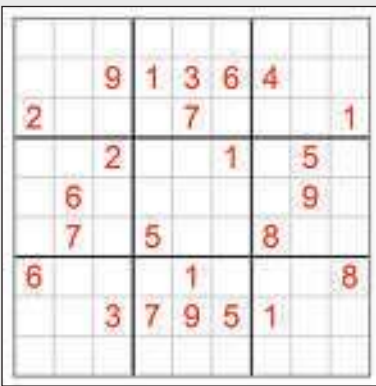
Difficulty Level 2s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4736



When Virat was captaining, I was the vice-captain, so we pretty much went about the team in similar fashion. I just have to take it from where he (Virat) left.”

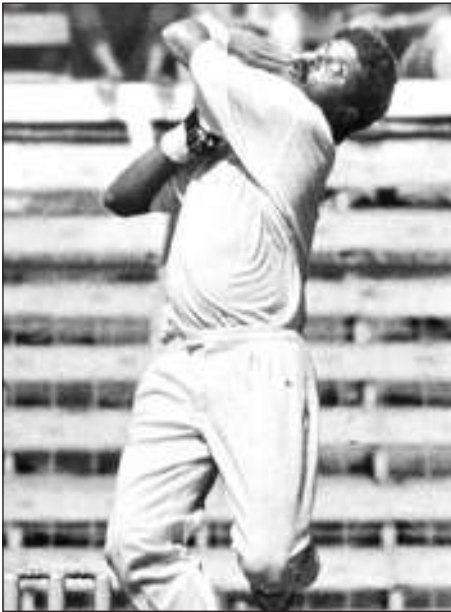
ROHIT SHARMA
INDIA ODI CAPTAIN

INDIA’S 1000 ONE-DAYERS, ONE DECADE AT A TIME

The 50-over has lost some of its old pomp and pride, but it remains a format close to the heart and history of the country’s emergence as a cricketing force, financially and sportingly. In the onslaught of T20s and IPL, a renewed attention on Test cricket, it might no longer be the favourite format, but few incarnations of the game have rolled out as many memorable moments in its heyday. A short history through the eyes and lives of those that have played in different eras. **SANDIP G** reports



Sunil Gavaskar’s 176-ball 36* was a metaphor for the confused approach to ODIs initially.



Kapil Dev and Co’s historic World Cup win was but one step in India’s rapid rise.



India found its first deity-star-multimillionaire cricketer, Sachin Tendulkar. *Reuters*



Leading a revamped India’s charge on the field were Kaif and Yuvraj. *Reuters*



MS Dhoni, India’s most successful leader in the format, wrapped up the World Cup win.

BABY STEPS (1974-1979)

India stutters and stumbles as they grapple with the ways of the new format.
Played: 13, Won: 2; Lost: 11

THREE YEARS after the accidental birth of one-day international cricket, India, the future cradle of this format, made baby steps into the unknown. There, though, was no sense of history-making or excitement, or a sense of foreboding that the format was to change the landscape of the game in the country, for most of the eleven debutants. “Looking back, and compared to the boys now, we were naive,” says Madan Lal, then just a 23-year-old overzealous youngster.

There were graver concerns, for both the country and its cricket team. After mounting expectations before the series, they stumbled to a 3-0 defeat in Tests and worse of all, were skittled out for their then lowest Test score of 42. While they were still in England, there was tumult back home. Vijay Balla, a giant bat erected in memory of India’s series wins in England and West Indies in 1971 were defaced by tar in Indore. Soon upon landing, captain Ajit Wadekar lost his captaincy, whereupon he retired. The nation, meanwhile, was descending into a state of Emergency.

There, though, was curiosity. From the outside, it looked like a compressed Test match. They laid plans accordingly, before their leap into the dark at Leeds in June 1974. A brief and rough plan was sketched. “How do you prepare for a format you haven’t played? Or even watched. The general approach was that we would bowl as normal, but start playing attacking shots a bit earlier than in the Test matches. There were a few more men near the ropes, but at the same time slip-fielders and other catchers. More than batting and bowling, we struggled in setting fields,” he remembers.

For first-timers, they batted with stoic clarity. In the first game, they compiled a modest 265 in 54.3 overs (of 55 overs), powered by Brijesh Patel’s 78-ball 82. But they could not contain England with the ball. “We got a taste of the format and we liked it. Obviously, we had to trial and error to be successful in a new format. We knew that the more we played, the better we would get in this format,” Lal recounts.

Nearly 10 months later, a fortnight before the Emergency was declared, India were in England again for the inaugural World Cup. They thought they were better prepared, but then the moment of truth arrived. Sunil Gavaskar’s 36 not out off 176 balls against England when chasing 334 (in 60 overs) stood out as a metaphor for their confused approach in the format. Lal refutes: “That game was an aberration. We were a much more competent side, and knew what this format required. Just that we were inexperienced. We played just two, three games a year,” says Lal. The first twin winked in — against East Africa, a hotchpotch of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia — but that was as good as it got.

There were years that passed by without them playing a single game (there was a 32-month ODI-less stretch, that largely overlapped with the Emergency in the country). “Often, it was like starting all over again,” he says.

As the years unrolled, it didn’t get any better. They played just six games in the next three years, managing to win just one game, against Pakistan, and contriving to lose all three in the 1979 World Cup. Wages were meagre — the weekly allowance for the 1979 World Cup was 105 pounds. Jerseys barely fitted; no sponsor’s logo blazed from the sleeves. The sweaters were so substandard that an English apparel company donated them woollen. The set-up was amateurish.

Tell them they were going to lift the next World Cup, Lal said chuckling: “We would have rolled on the grass.” There was no hunch of history awaiting them, though by then they had a taste of the format’s dynamics. And they liked it.

A LEAP (1980-1989)

From childhood, India leap straight to youth
Played: 155; W: 69; L: 80

ONE OF the greatest underdogs stories in world cricket was scripted at the World Cup in 1983, but that was not all. It was the decade both India and the ODIs truly emerged. ODIs as the sport’s glamour-spread, and India as its fast-emerging market. For Indian cricket, there was no tumultuous teenage, it was a leap from childhood to early adulthood.

The World Cup triumph altered the trajectory of Indian cricket in ways unimaginable. But even some of the World Cup-winning cricketers realised the format’s capacity for change at the World Series Championship in Australia two years later. If the World Cup popularised the sport, WSC glamourised it. Cricketers were made to feel Hollywood. “The first time I played, it was unlike any other tournament I had played,” says Dilip Vengsarkar.

There was so much colour, literally and figuratively. “It was the first time we played in coloured clothes, and under lights in packed Australian stadiums. White balls were used and the atmosphere was truly electric. There were actual prizes of the Man of the Match and Man of the Series. I thought like how quickly the game had changed in a few years,” he remembered.

The grandeur was sparked further by splendid broadcasting. Topnotch commentary — spearheaded by Richie Benaud and Tony Greig — introduction of multiple camera angles, pitch reports (in which Greig always plonked his keys in the pitch), the magic marker that helped us learn about field placements and stump cam all made WSC an endearing, often unputdownable spectacle in an era where televisions were becoming popular in the country.

The concept of multi-team series gathered currency and in 1984, Sharjah hosted the Rothmans Cup for the first time. It was the dream-child of Abdul Rahman Bukhatir who, back in 1981, envisaged turning Sharjah, an outpost in Arabia, into another Mecca for world cricket, after falling for the game when at school in Pakistan. The stadium was then just a concrete block with a couple of tents, with the grass playing area leased from the local football club, but he had faith. Till 2003, it was an annual affair, though the names changed frequently, as Sharjah became the venue that had hosted the most ODIs (191). Driven no less by marketing forces and the burgeoning clout of cricket’s South Asian bloc, the World Cup dragged out of England, as Pakistan and India co-hosted the 1987 edition, which was a box-office hit.

Suddenly, the calendar filled with more dates to accommodate the swelling demand. “From playing two-three games a year we started playing 10-15. So we got more familiar with the format, and we did pretty well too in big tournaments. We won the World Cup, World Series Cup, a series against England and two, three Sharjah Cup,” he says.

Along with the game’s shooting portfolio came celebrity-hood, sponsors and better wages. From drawing remuneration of Rs 1,500 plus an allowance of Rs 200 for a one-day game in the 1983 World Cup, there were five-digit salaries, besides advertisements and endorsements. On the field, they played exuberant cricket, the success corner-stoned by their panoply of all-rounders and dashing batsmen. “We had all sorts, all-rounders who bowled swing, seam, off-spin, left-arm spin. The team had great flexibility,” he says.

By then, cricket had well and truly arrived in the country and expectations had begun to rise. The sport reached the far reaches of the nation, and cricket had begun to be the country-unifying force it would later be, like its magnificent railways. And for this reason, Vengsarkar calls the era “the most significant one in the country’s history.” A foundation-laying era, without which the sky-piercing skyscraper that is Indian cricket would never have sprung up.

EMOTIONAL ERA (1990-1999)

India were expected to fly, but they barely walked despite Sachin, the opium of the masses
Played: 257; Won: 122; Lost: 120

THERE WOULDN’T be an era where fans were so emotionally or passionately invested in the game. The market had opened up for foreign investment, the board became richer and more powerful, thanks to hefty sums for broadcasting rights, and most especially of all, Indian cricket had its first deity-superstar-multimillionaire cricketer, Sachin Tendulkar.

No cricketer, before or after, has enjoyed as much adulation or admiration, or love, as Tendulkar. Tendulkar in the 90s was an ineffable emotion, one you could explain only if you have lived in that era. You needn’t necessarily be a cricket fan to understand that. When he batted, he dictated the mood of the nation. When he scored a hundred, the nation smiled; when he didn’t the nation mourned. More often than not, he made them smile and dance, forget the pangs of an economic crisis of the early years, stock-market crashing and acts of terrorism that were getting more frequent.

To him was attached the warmest of 90s memories, be it the twin hundreds in Sharjah, the famous Desert Storm that stoked a passion for the game in the mind of his spiritual successor Virat Kohli, or his five-wicket haul in Kochi against Steve Waugh, the mauling of Henry Olonga, thrashing Kenya in the 1999 World Cup, soon after performing the last rites of his father. A generation would relate their memories to the knocks he rolled out, sometimes even the strokes he unfurled. He was the first love of the 90s kids.

The Desert Storm knocks still make you tear up in joy. “It inspired several generations of cricketers and will continue to do so. It has to be one of the most important 50-over knocks, and to me, the best by an Indian batsman,” says Anshuman Gaekwad, who was then the national coach. “It gave India the belief that they could beat the best teams from any situation. It was several years later that they won the Champions Trophy and the Natwest Trophy. But it all began here,” he adds.

It was not always Tendulkar — there was a clutch of match-winners, from Mohammad Azharuddin and Anil Kumble and Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid towards the end of the decade — but it was still always Tendulkar. Yet, for all the quality on paper, India struggled to lap up trophies, most heartbreakingly the 1996 World Cup. The other two World Cups too ended on a disappointing note. The 1999 edition is one of regret for Gaekwad. “We were just a bit unlucky. We missed Sachin for that game against Zimbabwe. We lost that game and it had a huge bearing on our campaign,” he observes.

The board, though, got wealthier and more powerful. For the first time in 1993, the BCCI sold television rights to Trans World International (TWI) for the India-England series, which earned them \$600,000. Consequently, there was an explosive spurt in the number of 50-over games they played too. The graph just kept climbing: in 2018, the Star Group shelled out 944 million dollars for broadcast rights for matches in India.

But in arguably the most competitive era of one-day cricket, India were woefully inconsistent and lagged behind the likes of South Africa and Australia in fielding, bowling resources, all-round utility and planning.

“However, towards the end of the decade we were winning more consistently, and we all knew that we had the nucleus of a good team. There has to be a beginning, and that beginning was that victory in Sharjah,” says Gaekwad.

Through all these travails, though, they tugged onto Tendulkar, like a pillow.

TURNAROUND (2000-2009)

India embrace a bolder, tougher approach to assemble the blocks of a world-beating side
Played: 307; Won: 161; Lost: 130

TEN YEARS flew by. The decade began with Indian cricket, nay world cricket, slumping to the worst match-fixing scandal in its existence. Hordes of disillusioned fans slunk away from the game, some never returned, but for a majority, the sport was an irresistible pull. They returned, they could not but, once India resurged under Sourav Ganguly. There were fresh faces, a confident and daring, at times even abrasive, generation; unabashed to throw their bodies around, stare into the eyes of their mean-eyed combatants, spout expletives if need be. Ready to pour their mind on the ground and put the body on the line, demonstrating steel and athleticism that was often absent from their predecessors.

Leading them on the field were Mohammad Kaif and Yuvraj Singh, often prowling the arc from cover to backward point. “Great fun it was, we liked to dive around, block runs and pluck catches. Such efforts brought a smile to the face of the bowlers and audience, besides creating a buzz. It’s what you played the game for, for that buzz,” says Kaif.

Ganguly embodied their spirit (the steeliness of mind, not always athleticism) — when he whipped off his top and whirled it frantically on the Lord’s balcony, as much as an act of spontaneous joy as a piece of defiance. A symbolic statement that never again would India be the uncomplaining patsies of world cricket. Even now, it stands as a metaphor of the Brave New India. In this context, the Natwest Trophy victory had far-reaching consequences.

The greatest joy for Kaif, who conceptualised the steep chase with 87 not out off 75 balls, is that people still relive that moment. “The other day when I was at the airport, a security guy told me that he had just watched the highlights of the game. There were others who told me that they were doing this or that when the match was going on. So that shows the impact of the knock,” he says.

Less than a year later, they reached the World Cup final, losing to arguably the finest of all Australian World Cup winners. India wailed and wallowed when they lost the final, but they dragged themselves back onto their feet, self-commiserating that it was one of the most competitive editions. Like the 90s, it was an ultra-competitive era. “When we played Pakistan, it was like playing for a team of legends against a team of legends. We had Sachin, my role model and inspiration, Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid and Anil Kumble, and they had Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Saeed Anwar and Shoaib Akhtar. Then there was Ricky Ponting, Shane Bond, Glenn McGrath and Shaun Pollock and all. It was a great era to play cricket,” Kaif remembers.

Match-winners popped up, one after the other, the pieces of the jigsaw falling into their places as if glued by destiny. First came Zaheer Khan, Yuvraj Singh and Mohammad Kaif; then came along Harbhajan Singh and Virender Sehwag, before MS Dhoni and Gautam Gambhir emerged. Together with Tendulkar, they formed the nucleus of the 2011 World Cup-winning side. They cracked the code of chasing — stitching 17 successive ones. “Not long ago we failed to chase 250-odd against England at the Wankhede, and here we chased down 325. That made us believe that we could chase any target, and that’s the reason we became good chasers in the coming years,” says Kaif. A mental block was cleared.

There were thorns strewn on the rosy path. Like the disastrous 2007 World Cup campaign, the tumultuous Greg Chappell days. There were distractions too. Like a new format, a World Cup victory in it, the IPL, auctions and after-match parties, but India were hurtling inevitably to World Cup glory and cricket’s financial behemoth. The CB Series win in Australia was a precursor.

PEAK, PLATEAU (2010-2019)

After triumphant start, India flatlined amid an existential crisis for the format itself
Played: 249; Won: 158; Lost: 78

THE NARRATIVE of the decade could be told through the overlapping careers of three icons of the game. Through Sachin Tendulkar, the ageing superhero who got to kiss the one piece of precious trophy that had eluded him all his life. Through MS Dhoni, the country’s most successful leader in this format and finisher exemplar, wrapping up the World Cup win with arguably the most famous six in Indian cricket’s folklore. Through Virat Kohli, an inheritor of the mantles of both Tendulkar and Dhoni, the premier batsman in the post-Tendulkar era and the captain when Dhoni relinquished his throne.

The World Cup remains the pinnacle; its memories still fresh and radiant. Suresh Raina breaks into a nostalgia-hewn trip. “For a lot of us, the greatest moment of our lives, one we had been dreaming of since we were kids. It was a fabulous team, all legends and heroes, and at the peak,” he says.

Flawless a team seldom has been — as opposed to the first World Cup winners. Batsmen of hues, from biffers to finishers, bowlers of all sorts — left-arm seamers to off-break virtuosos — agile fielders and astute strategists, it would have been a catastrophe had they not held the trophy aloft. Raina delves on an often under-stated dimension — the role of the part-timers. “Viru pa and I used to bowl off-spin, Sachin paaji bowled leg-spin, off-spin and seam-ups. There was the left-arm spin of Yuvu pa. Yusuf (Pathan) bowled. We all used to relieve some burden of the main bowlers, and chipped in with wickets,” he says.

Their diminishing was among the reasons India plateaued after scaling the peak in 2011. Post-2011, India were expected to set up a dynasty as Australia had in the previous decade, they seemed to have the goods, but that was not to be. The 2013 Champions Trophy was their last stand of glory. They had the most ingredients to be a superpower — arguably their best ever fast bowler (Jasprit Bumrah), a clutch of extraordinary batsmen (Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan), a rare seam-bowling all-rounder (Hardik Pandya) and a wrist-spinner (Yuzvendra Chahal). Yet, they have often emerged as the second-best or the semifinalists. “Definitely, this team would be better with some of the part-time all-round options we had,” says Raina.

Bizarrely, India somewhat failed to sense the direction the format was to take, thus lagging behind teams like England and New Zealand with their bolder, braver philosophy. In that sense, the decade was a blend of the eighties and 90s. The spurt of the former and the stasis of the latter.

A powerful India ODI team is indispensable for the format’s survival, at a time when it’s grappling with context. T20s have clearly usurped the ODIs in the popularity scale. Any given window, boards exuberantly squeeze in T20s, like how ODIs were in the 90s. The triangular and quadrangular series ceased to exist long ago, and subsequently the number of ODIs have gone down (from 307 in the aughts to 248), for the first time since India won the World Cup. Bilateral series are more like a complimentary side dish with the main menu, assuming significance only in the proximity of a World Cup that comes in four years. But Raina says the doomsday is distant. “It’s still an exciting and popular format.

Despite T20s, they still run full houses. I think it will stay on. The last few years didn’t have too many games because of the pandemic,” asserts Raina. A lot of the format’s popularity hinges on how India would perform in this decade. In this context, the next World Cup at home could be as significant as the 1983 and 2011 editions. Lest it would be like a geriatric on the deathbed, the days of glory and gaiety long over, and waiting now for the requiem.