

India win women's Under-19 T20 World Cup: 'This is a moment we've waited for very long'

SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

GUIDING THE ball past the point fielder, Soumya Tiwari ran frantically for the winning run that ensured India's 7-wicket hammering of England in the women's U-19 T20 World Cup final in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

Midway through her run, she raised her arms and waved towards the dressing room. Just as she completed the run and sank to the turf, her teammates and support staff swarmed her, screaming, fist-pumping, praying and crying. The commentators ran frantically for a byte. But all choked for words, stuttered and stammered as they put a line or two.

Coach Nooshin Al Khadeer somehow managed to say: "This is a moment we've waited for very long... we have a very good future." The demolition of England was so clinical and comprehensive that the team portends a bright future for women's cricket in the country.

In every facet of the game, they were miles ahead of the opponents. By the end of fourth over, new-ball bowlers Titas



The India team led by captain Shefali Verma celebrate their seven-wicket victory over England. *Twitter/BCCI*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

BJD LEADER WAS 3-TIME MLA Odisha minister Naba Kisore Das shot dead by police officer

ASI approached minister's car, shot from point-blank range; arrested



Odisha Health Minister Naba Kisore Das after he was shot in Jharsuguda district on Sunday. *PTI* RELATED REPORT, PAGE 9

SUJIT BISOI
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 29

SENIOR BJD leader and Odisha's Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kisore Das died in hospital on Sunday evening, hours after he was shot at from point-blank range by a police officer at Brajrajnagar in Jharsuguda district.

According to police sources, Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Gopal Das opened fire at Naba Das at Gandhi Chowk near Brajrajnagar town around 12.15 pm, minutes before the minister was to attend a programme. The accused, who was posted at the Gandhi Chowk police outpost, carried out the killing in the



ASI Gopal Das

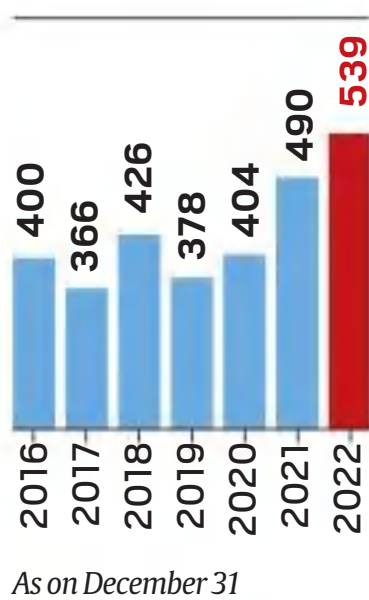
presence of police personnel and the minister's supporters. Guptaeswar Bhoi, Sub-Divisional Police Officer at Brajrajnagar, said the motive for the killing remains unclear and is being investigated.

Prime Minister Narendra

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Report: 165 death penalties by trial courts in 2022, most since 2000

PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW



APURVA VISHWANATH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

EVEN AS the Supreme Court has called for reforming death penalty sentencing, trial courts awarded 165 death sentences in 2022, the highest in over two decades, according to the Annual Death Penalty Report, 2022.

The report will be released on Monday by Project 39A, a criminal reforms advocacy group with the National Law University, Delhi.

"With 165 death sentences at the end of 2022, this is the highest number of death sentences imposed in a year in over two decades (since 2000). This shift has been sharply influenced by the extraordinary sentencing of 38 persons to death in Ahmedabad in a single bomb blast case, representing the largest number of persons sentenced to death in a single case since 2016," says the report.

According to NCRB data, 165 death penalties were awarded by trial courts in 2000. The corresponding figure for the last five years was 146 in 2021, 78 in 2020, 104 in 2019, 163 in 2018, and 110 in 2017.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Rahul unfurls national flag at Lal Chowk: 'Promise fulfilled'

Calls for restoring statehood, polls in J&K; yatra ends today

BASHARAT MASOOD & MANOJ CG
SRINAGAR, NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

WHILE THE Bharat Jodo Yatra, which began from Kanyakumari on September 7 last year, will officially end on Monday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi unfurled the national flag at Lal Chowk, in the heart of Srinagar, on Sunday, saying the "promise made to India" had been fulfilled.

Addressing a press conference later, Rahul spoke on a range of issues — from restoration of statehood and Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to Chinese aggression on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Opposition unity.

But, notwithstanding the symbolic unfurling of the Tricolour and an iteration of his family's links with Kashmir, Rahul was noncommittal on restoration of Article 370.



Rahul Gandhi at Lal Chowk in Srinagar Sunday. *Shuaib Masoodi*

"By hoisting the Tricolour at Lal Chowk, the promise made to India was fulfilled today. Hate will lose, love will always win. There will be a new dawn of hope in India," Rahul tweeted in Hindi.

Since September 7, he has criss-crossed 12 states and two union territories, covering 4,080 kilometres. While the walk

ended Sunday, Rahul is scheduled to address a public rally at the Sher-i-Kashmir Cricket Stadium in Srinagar on Monday, where Opposition leaders have been invited.

"Statehood and restoration of democratic process in J&K is fundamental and very important.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

After HP & Rajasthan, Cong in Karnataka for return to old pension

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, JANUARY 29

THE CONGRESS in Karnataka is likely to follow in the footsteps of party governments in Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh by announcing a return to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for government employees, in the event of the party being elected to power in the 2023 Assembly elections.

Although there has been no formal announcement or election promise of a return to the OPS as yet, several feelers have been given by party leaders in the past few weeks — including an assurance by state Congress chief D K Shivakumar that he was on the side of government employees, during a protest held in December in Bengaluru for the OPS.

"Our Delhi leaders have given us some essential advice. We have collective leadership. We

EXPLAINED The Himachal strategy

ONE OF the reasons attributed to the Congress victory in Himachal Pradesh was its support for OPS. This is why the party is inclined towards bringing back the scheme in Karnataka. But, with pension costs increasing, it remains to be seen if it will be a financially sound move.

will hold discussions and make an announcement. We will stand with you," Shivakumar had said, adding that they would hold consultations with the Congress leadership in Rajasthan, where the OPS has been brought back. "We are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Hindenburg report alleged fraud by its firms, Adani Group says 'attack on India'

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JANUARY 29

THE ADANI Group on Sunday equated the allegations against its companies by the New York-based Hindenburg Research in a report last week to a "calculated attack on India", its institutions and the India "growth story".

In a 413-page response to the 106-page Hindenburg Research report, which accused it of "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud", the Adani Group said, "This is not merely an unwarranted attack on any specific company but a calculated attack on India, the independence, integrity and quality of Indian in-

ECONOMY

BANKS REVIEWING EXPOSURE, SBI SAYS NO DEVOLVEMENT WORRY PAGE 15

stitutions, and the growth story and ambition of India."

"It is tremendously concerning that the statements of an entity sitting thousands of miles away, with no credibility or ethics has caused serious and unprecedented adverse impact on our investors," the Adani Group said.

The report by the New York firm has led to the Adani Group losing more than USD 50 billion

in market value in just two trading sessions and Chairman Gautam Adani losing over USD 20 billion, or about one-fifth of his total fortune.

Questioning the timing of the report — two days ahead of the FPO by its flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd — the group said, "The mala fide intention underlying the report is apparent given its timing when Adani Enterprises Limited is undertaking what would be the largest ever further public offering of equity shares in India."

The Adani Group's response said the Hindenburg report is "neither 'independent' nor 'objective' nor 'well researched'".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



MRUTYUNJAY MOHAPATRA
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF METEOROLOGY, INDIA
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

DEEKSHA TERI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

ENGINEERING IS the only undergraduate programme in the country that has registered a decline in student enrolment over the last five years even as overall admission numbers have increased at the Bachelor's level, shows the latest report of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) released by the Education Ministry Sunday night.

According to AISHE 2020-21, the enrolment in B.Tech and BE programmes in the regular (or full-time) mode has dropped by 10% from 40.85 lakh in 2016-17 to 36.63 lakh in 2020-21. Although the data shows a marginal uptick of 20,000 in enrolment numbers for engineering programmes between academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21, the absolute admission numbers are still the lowest in five years.

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Ministry survey: BTech only UG programme with dip in enrollment, lowest in five years

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Five years ago, undergraduate programmes in engineering had the third highest enrolment of students, with Bachelor of Arts or BA having the highest, followed by Bachelor of Science or

BSc in the second position. Given the decline in admission over the last five years, B.Tech and BE programmes have slipped to the fourth position. Now Bachelor of Commerce or B.Com (with 37.9 lakh students) has the third highest enrolment numbers in the country.

In terms of proportion, in 2020-21, enrolment in Arts or BA accounts for 33.5% of the total enrolment at the undergraduate level, followed by Science or BSc, which accounts for 15.5% of the total, followed by Commerce which has cornered 13.9% share and Engineering and Technology which represents 11.9%.

Asimilar decline has been also observed in the MTech (Master of Technology) programme, where the number of students has decreased from 1.6 lakh in 2016-17 to 1.38 lakh in 2020-21.

Meanwhile, across other major Bachelor's programmes, student enrolment has been following an upward trend. Programmes such as BA, BSc and B.Com have seen a major increase in enrolment over the past five years — BA increased

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

Ragi poori to jowar upma, Parliament gets a new millet menu

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

FROM JOWAR vegetable upma to bajra khichdi, ragi ladoo to bajra ka choorma — these will soon find a place on the menu of Parliament House canteens, alongside traditional favourites biryani and cutlets.

As the government promotes the production and consumption of millets — on Sunday, in his Mann Ki Baat address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said every G20 summit event in India would feature millet dishes — Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has

sought a special millet menu for Members of Parliament, who will now get to choose from the new menu, besides the old one.

On the millet menu are bajre ki raab (soup), ragi dosa, ragi ghee roast, ragi thaitte idli, jowar vegetable upma as starters, and, for the main course, sarson ka saag with makka/bajra/jowar ki roti (choose your bread), ragi poori with aloo ki sabzi, mix millet khichdi and bajra khichdi with garlic chutney. The desserts include kesari kheer, ragi walnut ladoo and bajre ka choorma.

Sources said the à la carte menu has been drawn up in a way that reflects the country's

culinary diversity — oats milk, soya milk, ragi matar ka shorba, bajra onion ka muthiya (Gujarat), shahi bajre ki tikki (Madhya Pradesh), ragi dosa with peanut chutney (Kerala), along with amaranth salad and korra millet salad.

The menu has been prepared by ITDC's Montu Saini, who was executive chef for five-and-a-half years with Rashtrapati Bhavan, serving during the tenures of both Pranab Mukherjee and Ram Nath Kovind. ITDC has been running Parliament's canteens since 2020.

Saini said the millet menu



At a millet lunch for MPs last month. *ANI file*

also reflected popular demand since it drew from the response to the lunch that was hosted for MPs in the inner courtyard of Parliament House during the Winter Session. "The most sought after items were ragi walnut ladoo and bajre ke raab," he said.

The millet dishes will be available in all Parliament canteens and will be delivered to MPs in the Central Hall. Sources said the other food outlets in the complex will have at least one millet dish in the thali. Emphasising that the new menu is all about healthier options, Saini said jaggery will replace

grain sugar in the dessert dishes. "It was the Honourable Speaker who advised that MPs should have a millet option in the menu. He wanted to go beyond just spreading awareness on millets, so we were asked to explore the possibilities and here we are with this menu, offering these dishes along with the other items we usually serve," Pankaj Mittal, General Manager, ITDC, told *The Indian Express*.

Mittal said that while Parliament canteen menus always had a few millet items, once 2023 was officially declared as the International Year of Millets, "the consumption pat-

tern has changed. People started asking for millets".

The government hopes that the promotion of millets would help small farmers across the country. India's millet output has fallen from 21.32 million tonnes in 2003-04 to 15.92 MT in 2021-22. India is among the top five exporters of millets in the world. The country exported millets worth \$64.28 million in 2021-22, up from \$59.75 million the previous year. The major millet producing states are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

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TECH

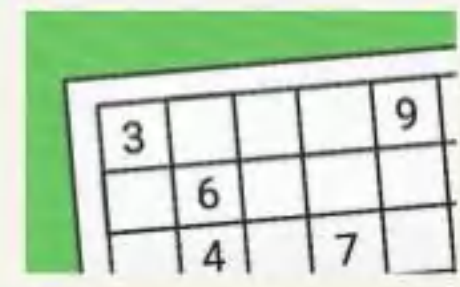
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How Sukesh Chandrashekhar conned Bollywood stars like Jacqueline Fernandez

The story of Sukesh Chandrashekhar, how he managed to con Bollywood actors like Jacqueline Fernandez and Nora Fatehi, and allegedly pulled off a Rs 217 crore scam

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Odisha minister shot dead by police officer

Modi expressed his condolences, saying, "Saddened by the unfortunate demise of Minister in Odisha Government, Shri Naba Kishore Das Ji. Condolences to his family in this tragic hour. Om Shanti."

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "He was a grassroots person and was loved and respected by all, cutting across parties and sections of people. His death is a great loss to the State of Odisha." Earlier, Patnaik visited the hospital where the minister was admitted.

Crime Branch ADG Arun Bothra, who is in Jharsuguda to supervise the investigation, said the accused has been arrested. A seven-member Special Investigation Team of the Crime Branch, comprising cyber and ballistic experts, among others, has been set up to investigate the case.

Videos of the incident show ASI Das approaching Naba Das's vehicle and, as the minister steps out, the accused opens fire with his service revolver. As the minister slumps over, his supporters help him back into the vehicle.

He was rushed to the Jharsuguda district headquarters hospital and later airlifted to Apollo Hospital in Bhubaneswar. A statement issued by Apollo Hospital said the minister was admitted with "gunshot wounds to the left chest".

"...a single bullet had entered and exited the body, injuring the heart and left lung and causing massive internal bleeding and injury. The injuries were repaired, and steps were taken to improve the pumping of the heart. He was given urgent ICU care. But despite the best efforts, he could not be revived and succumbed to his injuries," read a statement issued by the hospital.

Deepak Kumar, Inspector General, North Range, said that according to preliminary investigation, the accused fired two rounds targeting the minister while he fired another two rounds at the police personnel who tried to overpower him. Another person was injured in the incident and has been admitted to a hospital in Jharsuguda.

The wife of the accused told the media in Berhampur that her husband was a "psychiatric patient" and was "under medication for the past seven to eight years". She said her husband was promoted to ASI rank and transferred to Jharsuguda district in 2012.

Senior police officers, however, refused to comment on the ASI's mental health and said the matter was under investigation.

Tension prevailed in Jharsuguda as Naba Das's supporters staged a dharna over the incident. A three-time MLA from Jharsuguda, Das had switched to the BJD from Congress in January 2019, months before the general and Assembly elections. He is one of the richest ministers in the Naveen Patnaik Cabinet, having declared assets of Rs 34 crore, including those in the name of his spouse.

Late Sunday night, after the post-mortem procedure was conducted at Bhubaneswar's Capital Hospital, Das's body was brought to the Assembly building, where MLAs paid their respects.

On Monday, the body will be taken to the BJD office while his last rites would be conducted at Jharsuguda.

That would be a first step. The steps that come after that, I don't want to comment on here... All other states in India have an assembly, a functioning democratic process... I think it should be restored in J&K as well, and an appropriate solution should be found in Ladakh. Even the Ladakhi people are not happy with what happened," he said at the press conference.

To a question on the promises made by Jawaharlal Nehru to the people of Kashmir, he said: "I am not happy with what I see in J&K. In fact, I have sadness when I walk through J&K. When I first entered Jammu, a strange idea came into my mind, which was that in some ways my family descended from J&K and went to Allahabad. And in some strange way, I was making the reverse journey that my ancestors made. So, I felt in a way that I was going home, and that was a very powerful feeling I had. I think I have affection towards the people of J&K and I come here with an open heart, with open arms to help in whatever way I can... I don't want to go into commenting on the historical aspect of it... I want to look forward".

On Article 370, he reiterated that the resolution of the Congress Working Committee was very clear. At its meeting on August 6, 2019, the CWC had attacked the government on the manner in which Article 370 was abrogated and J&K was divided, but shied away from demanding restoration of Article 370.

When pointed out that the CWC resolution was not clear on whether the Congress would restore Article 370 if voted to power, Rahul said: "My position on 370 and the position taken by

Rahul unfurls national flag at Lal Chowk: 'Promise fulfilled'

the CWC is very clear. I will hand you the document... you can read it. That is what our position is," he said.

Asked whether the Congress, if voted to power, would restore the state laws which were scrapped after abrogation of Article 370, Rahul turned to Jairam Ramesh who was with him on the dais. "All the land rights and the job rights of the local population will be fully protected," said Ramesh.

"One of the main issues that has been coming up here is the fact that people's land is being taken away from them. We have been very clear on that issue. As far as restoration of the democratic structure here, we are very clear. Once the Assembly is in place, the Assembly will take those decisions," said Rahul.

Rahul also raised the issue of Chinese aggression along the Line of Actual Control. "I think the way to deal with these Chinese is to deal with them firmly and to be very clear that they are sitting on our land and it is not something we are going to tolerate... The Prime Minister of India is the only person in the country who is under the impression that the Chinese have not taken any land from India. I recently met some ex-army people, even a delegation from Ladakh, which clearly said that 2,000 sq kms of our Indian territory have been taken over by Chinese. They also said many patrolling points that used to be in Indian territory are now firmly in Chinese hands," he said.

He said the government's approach of "completely denying" that the Chinese have "taken our land" was dangerous, as it would give them the confidence to do even "more aggressive things".

Responding to a question on his yatra being cold-shouldered by Opposition leaders like TMC leader Mamata Banerjee, Rahul said: "It is true that there are differences among Opposition parties... but the Opposition will together fight this battle of ideologies in which there is the BJP and RSS on one side, and the forces opposing them on the other," he said.

"The BJP and RSS are attacking the institutional framework of this country. Whether it is Parliament, assemblies, judiciaries, media. All institutions are being attacked and captured by the BJP. What you have seen in different parts of the country and J&K are the result of that assault on the institutional framework," he said.

On the yatra, Rahul said: "It is a vision, an idea of how India should move forward. It is not just a walk... Personally, it was a very good experience for me. Perhaps, I can say that it is the most beautiful and important experience of my life."

He said the yatra would impact the country's politics. "There are two roads before India... two ways of life. One is the vision of oppression and the second is the vision to unite all," he said. "This yatra has not ended... This is the first step, the beginning," he said.

On Sunday morning, the Bharat Jodo Yatra started from Panthachowk, on the outskirts of Srinagar city. There was massive security deployment in the city, with police barricading all the roads leading to the yatra route. Party workers complained that many of them could not take part in the yatra due to security restrictions.

While the original plan was

that the yatra would stop at Nehru Park, on the banks of the Dal Lake, the march was halted near Gupkar, and Rahul travelled to Lal Chowk in a convoy of vehicles.

Incidentally, Rajni Patil, Congress MP and party in-charge for J&K, had said that Rahul will hoist the national flag at the party headquarters in Srinagar on January 30, saying that unfurling the national flag at Lal Chowk was part of the "RSS agenda".

Jairam Ramesh, Congress general secretary in charge of communications, said: "Originally, the plan was that we will unfurl the national flag tomorrow, which is the last day of the Bharat Jodo Yatra. We didn't get permission for Lal Chowk for January 30... Yesterday after discussions with the state officials, they conceded to our demand, but for January 29... So we changed our programme at the last minute and today Mr Rahul Gandhi has unfurled the national flag at Lal Chowk - something that was done for the first time 75 years ago by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru".

The Congress said the national flag will be unfurled at the party's Srinagar office, which is also in Lal Chowk, by party president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday.

In 1992, the then BJP president Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, accompanied by many of his party colleagues including Narendra Modi, had unfurled the Tricolour at Lal Chowk on Republic Day, amid a curfew and security clampdown. The militants had targeted the flag hoisting ceremony by firing rockets at Lal Chowk, the business nerve centre of Srinagar.

Report: 165 death penalties by trial courts in 2022, highest since 2000

In September last year, a three-judge bench headed by then Chief Justice of India U U Lalit, in a suo motu case, had referred the issue of reconsidering death penalty sentencing to a five-judge bench. The court had said that a "uniform approach" is needed on "granting real and meaningful opportunity" to convicts on death row.

In May last year, another three-judge bench led by Justice Lalit had mandated trial courts to collect psychiatric and psychological evaluation of the convict before holding that there is no possibility of reform and awarding death sentence.

Significantly, the report notes that 98.3% of the death penalty cases were decided by trial courts "without any materials on mitigating circumstances of the accused and without any state-led evidence on the question of reform."

According to the report, at the end of 2022, there were 539 prisoners on death row, a 40% increase since 2015. The report attributes this to an increase in the number of death sentences imposed by trial courts and fewer cases being heard in appeal by higher courts.

India win women's Under-19 T20 World Cup

Sadhu and Archana Devi had England reeling at 16/3. Rattled by efficient spin-bowling on a slow track, England floundered, and eventually were wrapped up for a meagre 68 in 17.1 overs.

The aggression was relentless - Sadhu swung the ball wickedly into right-handed batters, Archana would tease them with her loopy off-breaks and delicious dip. Leg-spinner Parshavi Chopra, whose daily watch includes dozens of Shane Warne videos, tormented the English with her drift and turn. The left-arm spin twins of Marnat Kashyap and Sonam Sharma frustrated with stifling lengths.

The fielders would throw their body into the pitch, even on the shaved, grassless part of ground used as practice wickets. Both Trisha Gongadi, who scored a valuable 24, and Archana snaffled two stunning catches that would have made some of South Africa's legendary fielders proud.

The victory for these talented young women was more than beating the opponents on the pitch. Over the years, off the field, they had to fight multi-layered battles. They had faced rejections, discrimination, financial hardships and gender stereotyping. Therein perhaps lies a grander victory.

Archana's mother was blamed for sending her daughter on 'galat

rasta' (wrong path) in her hometown, Unnao. But her mother, the family's sole breadwinner after her husband died of cancer in 2008, and brother stood firmly by her in her cricketing journey. Left-arm spinner Sona Yadav's father, who worked as a labourer in a glass factory in Firozabad, did not have the money to nurture his daughter's passion for the game, but he would put in extra shifts so that he could squeeze some amount for her to buy cricket kit and shoes.

Vice-captain Saumya Tiwari was rejected by coach Suresh Chainani as he did not give training to girls at his academy in Bhopal after some girls dropped out. "But Saumya cried constantly for two days before we went to the academy again and urged him to train her. He agreed," her father Manish Tiwari, who works as an election supervisor at the Bhopal Collectorate, says. Before she joined the academy, she would play with a wooden stick used to wash clothes and paper balls.

Similarly, lower-order batter Hrishita Basu, who has modelled her technique on her idol M S Dhoni, had to wait an entire day in the sun as she did not have Rs 20, which the coach had demanded if she wanted to bat.

It's the tale of sacrificing parents too.

No. 4 batter Trisha's father quit

his job as a gym instructor in Bhadrachalam to relocate to Hyderabad so that the budding cricketer could be enrolled in a cricket academy. Wicket-keeper Richa Ghosh's father, a former club cricketer in Siliguri, would spend hours in the backyard giving throw-downs to his daughter so that she could accomplish his unfulfilled dream of wearing India colours. Spinner Kashyap's father ran a pillar to post in Patiala in search of a coach, for nobody would pick a girl.

For the players, parents, relatives and coaches, it is the culmination of a journey of sweat and tears, of hope and will. But when one journey ends, another begins. In a few weeks, some of them may turn millionaires at the inaugural players' auction of the Women's Indian Premier League. The WIPL could be a game-changer for women's cricket, and the U-19 World Cup winning team is set to benefit.

The reach and impact could be akin to that of Virat Kohli's band of 2008 U-19 World Cup winners. In the auction soon after their triumph, most became millionaires overnight, some turned out to be legends of the game and household names. Just as they are monikered "the IPL generation", the poster boys of the league, Shefali and her group could be called "the WPL generation."

Cong in Karnataka favours return to old pension

looking at how we can overcome the economic effect of a change in policy. We are talking to officials," he had said.

The chairman of the Congress campaign committee in Karnataka, MB Patil, has also said that the party will implement the OPS if voted to power.

Congress leaders privy to the discussions said the OPS would be reintroduced in some form, while keeping the overall financial burden and economic interests of the state in mind.

During the introduction of the New Pension Scheme in 2006, a statement by the Finance Department had noted: "The average annual growth rate of pension payments over the past 40 years has been as high as 21 per cent, which indicates that the pension liability is increasing significantly."

The pension cost of Rs 2,157 crore in Karnataka in 2004-05 was 8.2% of the revenue receipt of Rs 26,162 crore, and the actual pension cost of Rs 19,216 crore in 2022 was 10 per cent of the revenue receipts of Rs 1,95 lakh crore, according to data from CAG audit reports for Karnataka finances. The pension cost increased by 2 per cent in 2021-22 over the cost in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

State employees constitute about 1 per cent of the state's

voters.

"Rightly or wrongly, it was declared ahead of the Himachal Pradesh polls that the Congress would revert to the OPS. The Congress victory in Himachal has been attributed to this promise by some people. Similarly in Rajasthan, the government has announced a return to the OPS. This is why the party favours bringing it back but with some amendments," said a senior state Congress leader.

The Congress is likely to make a briefly worded promise regarding the same in its Karnataka election manifesto. The nitty-gritty of setting up an expert committee to work out the form and structure of the scheme will be decided once the party is elected to power, the leader said. "The party hasn't yet decided upon the OPS for Karnataka, but since it has been implemented in other Congress-ruled states, there can't be a different stand in Karnataka."

At the protest rally held in December by government employees, Shivakumar had stated that the issue was being discussed at the highest level in the party. "We have discussed this with our party president Mallikarjun Kharge and state leaders like (former CM) Siddaramaiah and (Congress

manifesto committee head) G Parameshwara. In the discussion, we spoke about your protests and the decisions taken by the Rajasthan and Himachal governments. Kharge has told Siddaramaiah to make all preparations on this issue," Shivakumar had said.

"Many of you have been protesting since 2004. You have a right to protest. The government is looking at the pension scheme with a business mindset. There is no rule that says the policies of previous governments must not be changed. The government needs funds and must collect revenues and work to create an equitable society. As politicians, we must adopt a policy of live and let live. This is the policy of the Congress party," Shivakumar had said.

The issue of reverting to the OPS was raised in the Karnataka legislature as well in December by Opposition members. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai had called for more debate on the issue before arriving at any conclusion. "The government should not take any unilateral decision since we will all be responsible for the impact on the public," Bommai had told the Assembly. "We have to keep the future position of the state exchequer in mind. We have to consider many things."

Hindenburg report alleged fraud, Adani Group says 'attack on India'

while reaffirming that the Group is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

The report, the Adani Group said, is a "malicious combination of selective misinformation and concealed facts relating to baseless and discredited allegations to drive an ulterior motive."

"The report is rife with conflict of interest and intended only to create a false market in securities to enable Hindenburg, an admitted short seller, to book massive financial gain through wrongful means at the cost of countless investors," the Group

further said.

Questioning Hindenburg Research's credentials, it said, "Ironically for an organization that seeks transparency and openness, nothing much is known about either Hindenburg or its employees or its investors. Its website alleges that the organisation has an experience that 'spans decades' and yet appears to have been set up only in 2017".

Since the release of the Hindenburg Research report on January 24, Adani Group stocks saw a massive sell-off. Over the last two trading sessions, on

Wednesday and Friday, 10 listed Adani companies lost Rs 4.17 lakh crore in market cap.

"While we are under no obligation whatsoever to respond to these baseless allegations made in the report, in the spirit of good governance, transparency to our stakeholders and to avoid false market, we provide our responses to the Report as also the '88 questions' raised in the report," the Adani Group said.

Saying Hindenburg has "not published the report for any altruistic reasons but purely out of selfish motives and in flagrant

breach of applicable securities and foreign exchange laws", the Group said, "The truth of the matter is that Hindenburg is an unethical short seller. A short seller in the securities market books gain from the subsequent reduction in prices of shares."

Saying the Adani Group "is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations", the response said, "The Adani Portfolio also has very strong internal controls and audit controls. All the listed companies of Adani Portfolio have a robust governance framework."

Survey: BTEch only UG programme with dip in enrollment

from 80 lakh in 2016-17 to 85 lakh in 2020-21, BSc increased from 44 lakh to 47 lakh, and BCom increased from 34 lakh in 2016 to 37 lakh in 2020.

The data also showed that currently BTEch has 23.20 lakh enrolled students, of which 28.7% are women; out of 13.42 lakh students enrolled in BE, 28.5% are women. Overall, com-

puter engineering is the most popular branch among students, followed by mechanical engineering, electronics engineering, civil engineering and electrical engineering among students.

In December 2017, The Indian Express had published the findings of its three-month-long investigation, 'Devalued Degree', which found there were

no takers for 51 per cent of 15.5 lakh undergraduate seats in 3,291 engineering colleges in 2016-17.

The investigation found glaring gaps in regulation, including alleged corruption; a vicious circle of poor infrastructure, labs and faculty; non-existent linkages with industry; and the absence of a technical ecosystem

to nurture the classroom. All this, it found, accounted for low employability of graduates.

AISHE findings are based on the responses of 1,084 universities, 40,176 colleges and 8,696 standalone institutions. There are a total of 1,113 universities, 43,796 colleges and 11,295 standalone institutions in the country.

UNDER-19 T20 WORLD CUP WIN

In village hit by outages, cops fit inverter to help Archana's kin watch final without interruption

ON SUNDAY morning, people began to gather at bowling all-rounder Archana Devi's house at Ratai Purva village in Unnao district when the final match of the inaugural Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup started.

Before the match began, a team from the Bilhor police station in neighbouring Kanpur district arrived and fitted an inverter at Archana's house so that

her family members and those gathered there could watch the match without any interruption. The village gets electricity supply for around 15 to 18 hours in a day, locals said.

"People started congratulating us since early morning. In the afternoon, a police team came and installed an inverter here. When the match started, there were around 300 people present in and outside our house. Everyone was discussing and praising Archana," said Archana's uncle Hari Prasad (40).

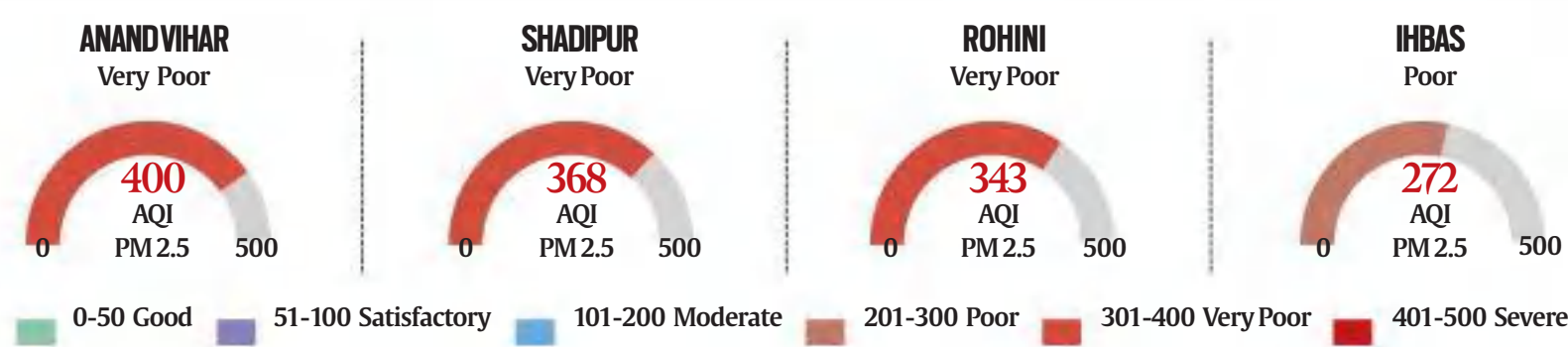
After India won the match, people celebrated the occasion by busting crackers and distributing sweets. Archana's family also went to a nearby temple to offer prayers.

Youngsters played loud music and dance on it. People from neighbouring villages also came and congratulated her mother Savitri Devi. "We get power supply for around 15 to 18 hours in a day. Coming to know of this, police fitted an inverter so that everyone went to watch the match here. Because of inverter,

villagers saw the entire match without any interruption," said village pradhan Ram Satchy.

Bilhor Station House Officer Surendra Singh said, "(IPS officer) Pankaj Kumar Pandey asked me to make arrangements to install an inverter at Archana's house. He purchased the inverter online. In the afternoon, I went to Unnao and got the inverter fitted there. There was a huge crowd outside the cricketer's house." Pankaj Kumar Pandey is posted at the police headquarter in Lucknow.

5 THE CITY



SKY WATCH
FORECAST: January 30
 Partly cloudy sky. Light rain/thundershowers in the morning

MAX: 20 | **MIN: 10**
 2.4°C below normal | 1.1°C above normal

MINIMUM TEMP SETTLES AT 6.4 DEGREES

Capital witnesses first rainfall this winter, more on forecast today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

COLD WINDS and rain swept through Delhi on Sunday, with the maximum temperature dipping to 17.2 degrees Celsius, five degrees below what is normal for this time of the year.

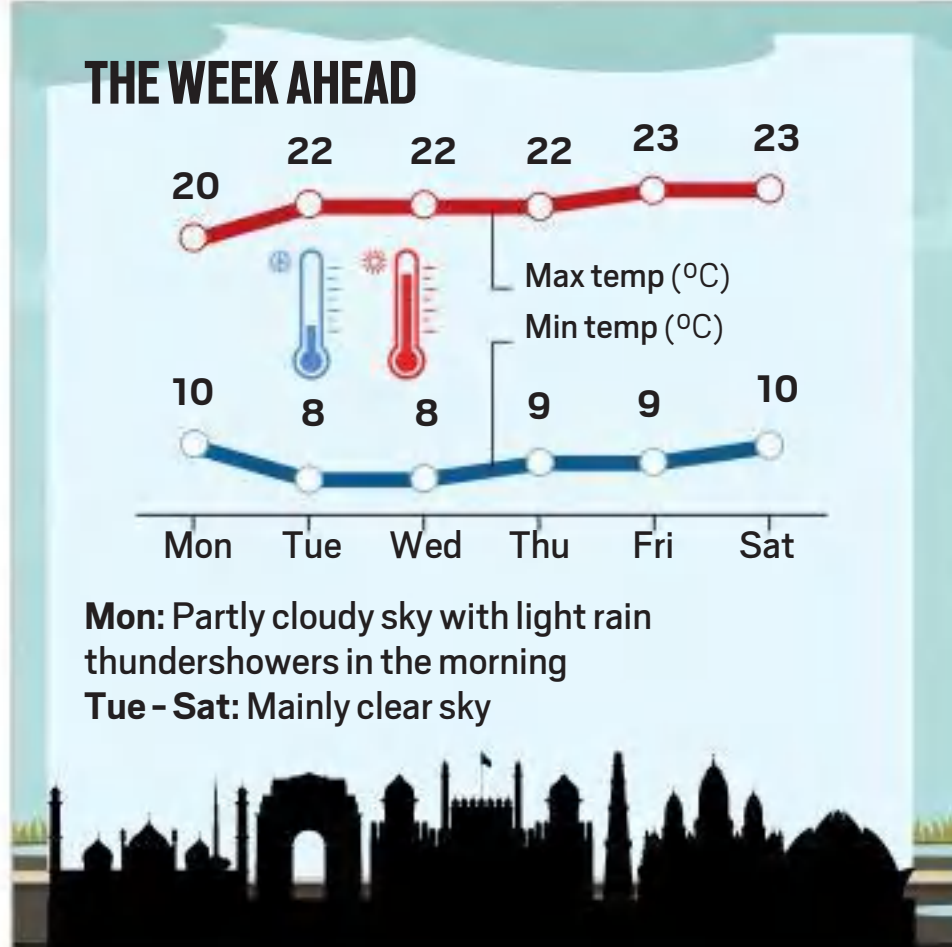
An intense western disturbance over Afghanistan and the neighbouring area is the reason behind the overcast conditions and rain in and around the city, officials at the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Rain gauges recorded 3.3 mm of rain in the afternoon. More is expected on Monday.

The Western Disturbance, IMD officials said, is likely to cause "light/moderate rainfall/snowfall at most places with isolated heavy falls over western Himalayan region during the next two days; light/moderate rainfall at some/many places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan during the same period. Isolated very light rainfall/drizzle would also occur over Delhi on Sunday and Monday morning".

Delhi usually gets around 17 mm of rain in January.

This, however, is the first rainfall of the winter season,



which has been among the driest in the past decade.

After touching 10 degrees Celsius last week, morning temperatures in the national capital dipped again, with the minimum temperature on Sunday

After touching 10 degrees Celsius last week, morning temperatures in the national capital dipped again. Praveen Khanna

recorded as 6.4 degrees Celsius, three degrees below the normal.

Temperatures on Monday, though, are expected to be higher — between 10 and 20 degrees Celsius. "Isolated hailstorms may occur over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, West Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan today, and over Uttarakhand on Sunday and Monday. Strong surface winds of 20-30 kmph may also occur over northwest India during the next two days," the IMD said.

Delhi can get 24x7 supply if Centre gives more water: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday said that all residents can get 24x7 water supply if the Centre allocates 1,300 million gallons of water for the city daily.

"Around the year 1997-98, the water requirement of Delhi was pinned down by the central government. This amount was 800-850 MGD as per the then population of 80 lakh. Today, the population of Delhi is around 2.5 crore but, the water allocation of Delhi has remained the same... Delhi cannot make do with the current allocation. I appeal to the central government that Delhi should get more water from Yamuna and Ganga... We are not asking for 2,000-2,500 MGD water. We are asking for 1,300 MGD, and we will manage it. And trust me, if we get this 1,300 MGD supply, the Delhi government will supply water 24x7 to every household... If the Centre intervenes, the states around us will have to release water," he said, while inaugurating a 110 lakh litre Underground Reservoir and Booster Pumping Station in Patparganj.

The Delhi government has been promising 24x7 water supply in the city for the past several years, with pilot projects in two small colonies in South Delhi showing promising results. Expansion of the project,



CM Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia at the inauguration of an Underground Reservoir and Booster Pumping Station in Patparganj. Abhinav Saha

even within the area, however, has failed due to the lack of availability of water.

Kejriwal said that over the past seven years, the Aam Aadmi Party government had increased water production in Delhi, but more help was needed.

"In 2015, only 861 MGD water was produced in Delhi while today we produce 990 MGD. The AAP government increased Delhi's water production by 129 MGD in just seven years. This 129 MGD water was not given by UP-Haryana, but our government has augmented it by extracting water from the ground through tube wells and ranney-wells... We will try to get more water from neighbouring states but also

recharge groundwater to increase water at our own level... We are fixing irregularities in metre reading and water bills in DJB and are soon going to come up with a plan," he said.

Kejriwal said that Delhi's water "scarcity" was a legacy issue.

"I don't mean to undermine the work of the previous governments, they must have done what they could... The speed at which work was done in the last 70-75 years was not sufficient to cater to a growing country like ours... We aim to radicalise Delhi's water supply network, not just for the purpose of catering to its residents, but because Delhi is the gateway for the world to the rest of India," he said.

Woman wanted in Gurgaon-Manesar land scam arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DELHI POLICE arrested a woman who is allegedly involved in more than 23 cheating cases, including the Gurgaon-Manesar land scam of Rs 1,500 crore, said officials Sunday. The woman, Sonal Bansal, and her husband, Atul Bansal, had been on the run since 2018. Police said several state agencies, the Enforcement Directorate and CBI have booked them in various cases.

Ravindra Singh Yadav, Special Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch), said, "Our teams worked meticulously to arrest the most wanted 'fugitive' couple. The Bansals were changing their locations in India and abroad. We had received information that the couple was staying in Mumbai and sent a team there." Sonal was arrested from a high-end society. Her husband wasn't found there.

During questioning, Sonal claimed her husband died recently but police said she could-

n't produce any documents to prove the same.

"They are allegedly wanted in several high-profile cases including the Gurgaon-Manesar scam. They were directors of a firm, Aditya Build Well Infrastructure Limited. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had initiated a money laundering investigation, and this was later taken up by the CBI. The list of accused persons also included names of public servants," said Singh.

The Bansals had allegedly grabbed land from farmers and land holders at nominal rates by lying to them about fake land acquisition news. They later allegedly sold the same land to private persons/developers and earned a major profit. More than 400 acres of land was taken from farmers and land owners. "The land was valued at around Rs 1,600 crore but the same was bought by the alleged builders for around Rs 100 crore," said police.

Police said the Bansals also allegedly cheated multiple buyers in Delhi-NCR with their fake housing projects.

Pro-Khalistan posters, graffiti found in West Delhi; 2 men arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DAYS AFTER pro-Khalistan posters and graffiti purportedly popped up in several West Delhi localities, the Delhi Police Special Cell arrested two men and said the duo allegedly worked with a banned Khalistani organisation which was "plotting to carry out terror attacks in the city".

Police said graffiti and posters were seen on walls in Vikaspuri, Janakpuri, Paschim Vihar, Peeragarhi, Meera Bagh and other parts on January 19 and 20. Police said they removed the posters and graffiti, which had inflammatory slogans, and repainted the walls. Soon after, banned organisation Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) released a purported video claiming responsibility. Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, general counsel at SFJ, said in the video that the organisation will target Delhi on Republic Day and "raise" Khalistani flags. Police registered a case under IPC sections 153 B (promoting enmity between two groups) and 120 B (criminal conspiracy).

Several teams of local staff and special cell were formed and raids conducted. Technical surveillance was mounted on the suspects and hundreds of CCTV's were scanned. On Sunday, police teams ze-

roed in on the accused and arrested them from Delhi. Police said the duo, Vikram Singh (29) and Balram Singh (34), were caught with a bike, spray paint cans, mobile phones, clothes and shoes that were used during the offence and captured on CCTV.

Vikram is a Delhi resident while Balram lives in Rajasthan's Bharatpur. They work as drivers at a hotel in Aerocity. Sources said the two wore masks and were allegedly seen spraying graffiti in the late hours of January 18, 19. HGS Dhaliwal, Special Commissioner of Police (Special Cell), said, "The arrested men were tasked with painting graffiti in West Delhi in lieu of Rs 2 lakh. The men did the same and recorded a video as well which was sent to SFJ members abroad. Pannun broadcasted the videos and took responsibility. He also threatened to attack Delhi on Republic Day..."

Police said further investigation revealed Vikram was allegedly in close association with a senior SFJ member in the US. "His associate claimed he knew Pannun well and tasked him to spray paint walls for Rs 2 lakh. Vikram roped in his friend Balram... They did the job but were only paid Rs 2,000. They were promised more jobs in the future... the matter is being investigated," added Dhaliwal.

'False affidavit filed against ex-MLA Asif Khan': Court raps cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

A DELHI court issued a show cause notice to the station house officer and investigating officer at Shaheen Bagh police station asking why they should not be convicted for allegedly furnishing false information regarding the previous involvement of former Congress MLA Asif Mohammad Khan, arrested recently for allegedly misbehaving with police.

Additional Sessions Judge Sonu Agnihotri dismissed Khan's bail by stating, "Issue show cause notice to IO SI Ashish Sharma and SHOPS Shaheen Bagh under section 177 IPC to show cause as to why they should not be convicted and punished for furnishing false information to this court regarding previous involvement of accused." During the hearing, the court noted that a wrong/non-updated previous involvement report was filed by police.

Khan's lawyer argued that a "false case was lodged against the accused in order to detain him in custody as the accused

takes up social issues against police and police is adamant to keep the accused in custody on one pretext or the other". Senior advocate Ramesh Gupta was representing Khan.

Additional Public Prosecutor Nischal Singh told the court that "it may be that previous involvement report of accused has been filed by police without updation but that conduct of accused has been consistent in attacking government officials on duty", however, "attack on law enforcers is a depreciable act and accused should not be granted bail".

The court perused the videos of the incident and stated that the accused has "no respect for law of the land and he considers himself to be above law".

PUBLIC NOTICE
 The working committee of the 'The Amir Education Society' has unanimously resolved to adopt the name Modern Delhi International School in place of Modern Delhi Public School. For information to the general public, Panchajanya Batra Singh, Advocate / Counsel for 'The Amir Education Society', #7/137, Sheikhwara, Delhi Gate, Old Faridabad.

संस्कृत मंत्रालय भारत सरकार | G20 | 75वाँ अमृत महोत्सव

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- गांधी आज हमारे जीवन में
- जी-20 एवं विश्व शांति
- अंतिम तिथि, बुधवार, 15 फरवरी, 2023
- कक्षा 7 से 12 तक के बच्चे भाग ले सकते हैं
- सभी प्रतिभागियों को प्रमाण-पत्र दिया जाएगा
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6 THE CITY

BRIEFLY

Row over BBC docu: Hindu Sena puts up placards outside office

New Delhi: Members of the Hindu Sena Sunday put up anti-BBC boards outside the UK-based broadcaster's office at KG Marg and protested against its documentary, 'India: The Modi Question'. Police later removed the placards. Hindu Sena national president Vishnu Gupta said, "The BBC is a threat to the unity and integrity of the country and should be banned immediately..." A senior police officer said a patrolling team in New Delhi found the men putting up the posters and removed them. The men were also removed from the area before they could put up more boards. No legal action has been initiated as police haven't received a complaint.

Three held for killing man

Ghaziabad: Ghaziabad Police arrested three men Saturday in connection with the murder of a 25-year-old man. ACP (Masoori) Nimish Dashrath Patil said the accused were allegedly trying to escape via Meerut when police caught them. He said the body of the deceased, Krishna Kumar, was recovered from the Ganga canal. The accused were identified as Sumit Kumar (22), Monu (24) and Punit Kumar (19). Police said three years ago, Sumit's father and Krishna got into a fight in which the former was injured. "Sumit had threatened to take (revenge)..." said police. **ENS**

DMRC offers another smart card top-up facility

New Delhi: Delhi Metro has partnered with Airtel Payments Bank to provide one more smart card top-up facility to commuters, officials said Sunday. **PTI**



RAINY RETREAT

Despite rainfall, many turned up for the Beating Retreat ceremony at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi on Sunday. *Praveen Khanna*

G20 SUMMIT PREP

After lion statues, airport road to get volcano fountains

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

AHEAD OF THE G20 Summit in September, the Public Works Department (PWD) has come up with more ideas to give the Airport road stretch a unique look. After proposing lion and elephant statues on the 8.5-km stretch from Dhaula Kuan to Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, it has now decided to set up fountains with a volcano effect and colourful lighting.

According to officials, the PWD is planning to install 23 high volcano jet fountains. "This is part of the beautification work and colourful light features, which also includes Tiranga lights, to greet delegates who will visit the city for the Summit," said a senior PWD official.

The officials added that the department has currently installed four water fountains, along with lion and elephant statues, on a 500-metre sample stretch from Dhaula Kuan to NSG camp. "The four fountains, 50-60 feet tall, installed on the pilot stretch are ready and will be opened soon. Meanwhile, the volcano jet fountains, for which a tender has been floated, will be

WHAT'S NEW FOR THE SUMMIT

THE STRETCH: Dhaula Kuan to IGI airport
LENGTH: 8.5 km
30,000 seasonal flowers/plants to be planted, flyovers to be painted red and white
■ Installation of aesthetically designed view cutters with charkha and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav logo at different locations



The 500-metre sample stretch from Dhaula Kuan to NSG camp. *Express*

23 volcano fountains (15 m high) **8** lion statues (6 ft) **2** elephant statues (15 ft)

smaller in comparison to sample one but will have a concrete structure," said an official. The volcano fountain units will be 15-18 feet tall and 12-15 feet wide.

Talking about the work involved, an official said: "Fixing high volcano jet fountains and developing waterwork features on this section is very challenging because the Dhaula Kuan to Airport stretch is very busy. Furthermore, it is a VIP lane and connects to Gurgaon and other key areas. Hence, it sees heavy

traffic during peak hours. However, we are aiming to complete the work by the targeted date."

Officials added that the number of fountain units may increase to 26. The cost of one volcano fountain is around Rs 4 lakh (approximately) and the entire project is estimated to cost Rs 96,15,050 (approx).

The airport stretch is a key route, and redevelopment work is being closely monitored by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, who has in-

spected the site several times.

Besides, the PWD is also increasing green cover on this area with all-weather plants, indigenous and ornamental plants like bamboo from Arunachal Pradesh, and palm trees among others in a landscaped pattern to give a colourful look. It also plans to develop picnic hotspots, install marble statues at the traffic tri-junction, and install art with colourful lights and designer street lamps on the entire stretch. The G20 Summit will be held from September 9-10 in Delhi.

BJP leader sends legal notice to AAP MLAs

New Delhi: Following allegations of corruption levelled against him by AAP MLAs, BJP leader Shyam Jaju Sunday issued a legal notice to them.

Jaju and his son Sandesh sent a 'cease and desist' notice to AAP MLAs Saurabh Bhardwaj, Durgesh Pathak and Dilip Pandey and party MP Sanjay Singh for accusing them of indulging in corruption in a press conference held on January 22. Further, Jaju asked the AAP leaders to remove/take down the "offending" defamatory statement and press conferences from social media within five days. **ENS**

Gandhi to Tagore: At old St Stephen's campus, a glimpse into remnants of the past

AISWARYA RAJ
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DECKED UP for the 13th National Voters' Day, the structure that once housed St Stephen's College, from 1891 to 1941, today provides an ample hearth and home to the Delhi State Election Commission office. Although wires, an array of lights, a large balloon bearing the office name try to take away the building's character, the majestic porch, a large lamp, and its foundation stone allude to an era pre-dating modern-day Constitutional offices.

In the 1870s, Bishop Douglas of Bombay advised that 'men of high scholarship who would live in a religious community and work amongst educated classes of India' be sent, which later formed the Cambridge Mission. The Mission started from Westcott House, Cambridge, and carried forward the motto, "For My Sake and the Gospel's".

On February 1, 1881, to assist the mission's founder principal Rev Samuel Scott Allnutt in teaching five young men, the first students, a college was set up with three teachers in the centre of Chandni Chowk at a rented building known as Shish Mahal. As students poured in, even the additional adjacent house was incapable of lodging growing numbers. At the 100th meeting of the Mission Council, Allnutt proposed two sites for a college building at Kashmere Gate and Lahori Gate; fortune favoured the former.

On April 9, 1890, Sir Charles Elliott, head of the Public Works Department, laid the foundation stone of the building, designs for which were furnished by Colonel Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob, then Chief Engineer of Jaipur State. Later, on December 8, 1891, Delhi L-G Sir James Lyall inaugurated the Kashmere Gate structure.

Sohail Hashmi, writer and director, said the college's journey from a rented room to its sprawling campus came out of a dire necessity: "When the college sought affiliation with the University of Punjab, the varsity demanded they shift to a permanent residence from their rented, humble abode at Chandni Chowk. Following this, the college, with government aid, bought land and shifted to the Kashmere Gate campus."

An exquisite building, standing tall with red sandstone and iron grey granite semi-octagonal turrets, arched colonnades, white domes, and green lawns, added up to Rs 92,702. It had Indo-Saracenic style architecture, foregoing the favoured Gothic style, and the building flaunted a secular character.

Historian Swapna Liddle said the task cut out for Swinton was to Indianise buildings: "Swinton Jacob was originally associated with the New Delhi project, to assist Edwin Lutyns and Herbert



The building located in Kashmere Gate now houses the Delhi State Election Commission office. *Aiswarya Raj*

Baker in the design of New Delhi. Although ailing health forced him to pull out of the assignment and leave India, his contribution to the style of architecture with *dhatris*, *jaalis* and *jharokhas* made him a pioneer of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture. These characteristics are visible in the Kashmere Gate structure."

Above the front porch of the building, the college's motto in Latin reigned supreme, 'Ad Dei Gloriam (To the glory of God)'. In the hall, it said, "Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. He that followeth Me shall not walk in Darkness but shall have the Light of Life", and on the wall behind were the words 'Satyameva Jayate Namratam' from the Mundaka Upanishad.

Through several historians, including David Baker, have claimed St Stephen's College aimed to convert students to Christianity, this is debunked by Ashok Jaitly, an alumnus and former Chief Secretary, J&K, in his work, *St Stephen's: A History*. He writes that though there were attempts to give an overall religious orientation to teaching, "over time, even whilst continually reaffirming the Christian spirit that inspired and drove successive administrations, it was the bedrock of powerful secular and pluralist values upon which the college evolved."

Following the shifting of capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, the college building nestled close to the seat of governance, thus making it favourable for students to engage in politics. The college was next to St James cathedral, the principal church in the early 1900s, bestowing the college with even more distinction.

Dr Mahesh Gopalan, professor at the department of history, St Stephen's college, said, "When the nationalist movement was raging, the students faced a dilemma. Even then, Principal SK Rudra was torn between the British government and the nationalists. The

Kashmere Gate building was at the heart and witnessed the struggle, and its closeness to Old Delhi catalysed the student involvement in the movement..."

This was quite contrary to the life students lived after the campus was shifted. "By then, the independence movement had plateaued, and later, matters Independent India encountered did not invite participation from students..." he added.

On October 4, 1914, Rabindranath Tagore visited the college, exhorting students by issuing the clarion call for 'Indian unity', to defy the diversities tearing them apart. So goes another parable that Tagore completed his English translation of 'Gitanjali' while on campus.

The following year, after Mahatma Gandhi's stint in South Africa, he visited the college and stayed on campus with Principal Rudra. History has it that it was on the campus, in the principal's house, where

Gandhi enunciated his doctrine of non-violence, non-cooperation movement. Moreover, it was here the pact between the Congress and Khilafat Movement was sealed.

In 1922, when the University of Delhi was created through an act of the Indian legislature, St Stephen's was one of the three constituent colleges, apart from Hindu and Ramjas colleges.

Today, the building that accommodates the DEC office and carries all the legacy blends into the background. Hashmi said, "Even the Allnutt Hall at Kashmere Gate, which was the first hostel on the campus, was demolished around 15 years ago... As the election commission office takes up the whole building, the offices and inventory have made it impossible to preserve the college as it was."

Pointing at a room with a nameplate that read 'accountant', a DEC official said the room was occupied by Gandhi during his visit. "It has nothing except government files now, and the room is used by the officer," he said.

Ensure non-diesel trucks enter Delhi: Transport dept to neighbouring states

New Delhi: In a bid to pollution levels, especially in winters, the Delhi Transport department has written to neighbouring states urging them to shift from diesel vehicles to CNG, electric or BS VI fuel.

Special Commissioner Transport Shilpa Shinde wrote to Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh transport corporations to issue ad-

visories to RTOs under their jurisdiction to issue permits to heavy carriage vehicles destined to Delhi only if they are CNG/Electric BS-VI compliant. "It is further requested to take steps to ensure goods carriers destined to Delhi should be conforming to BS VI emission norms or CNG/ electric vehicles w.e.f.01/10/2023," read the letter.

However, truckers and transporters said small transporters

and business will be hit if diesel trucks are not allowed to enter Delhi. Rajender Kapoor, president, All India Motor and Goods transport association, said, "We had a meeting with the transport secretary and they agreed about the problems. Now they have issued an order without consulting transport associations. We will hold a meeting in February and decide how to oppose it." **ENS**

New streetlights to come up near Raj Ghat stretch, PWD floats tenders

EXPRESS IMPACT

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE PUBLIC Works Department (PWD) has decided to install missing lights on street poles and replace sodium lights with LED smart lights on the Outer Ring Road bypass from IG Stadium to Geeta Colony Bridge.

This comes days after a series of reports by *The Indian Express* on dark spots in the national cap-



The Indian Express report dated January 10

ital — the stretch in question is among those highlighted during our reporting. During a spot

check at night, it was found that 26 lights were non-functional from Sachivalaya Road to Raj Ghat Depot near Outer Ring Road bypass. On the Outer Ring Road bypass, while lights on the central verge were working, those on either side of the road were not.

The department has now floated tenders to replace all sodium lights with energy efficient 200-watt LEDs. "Lights installed on the sides of roads were stolen by thieves. Lights on the central verge are working but these are yellow sodium lamps. PWD has deployed nodal officers and a team has also been constituted, which is working to replace all old yellow

lights with LED ones. This will also help the department save on electricity bills," said an official.

The official acknowledged that the department's action came following "observations" by *The Indian Express*. "Besides this stretch, dark spots are being removed all across the city," said the official.

About 250 LED smart lights will be installed on this stretch. The department is also planning to install covers/fencing around the lights to avoid theft. Tenders have been floated for the project and the estimated cost will be around Rs 80 lakh, said officials.

SECOND FROM FAMILY TO LEAD COUNCIL

New head of Stephen's students body: Hindi society V-P, gardener's son

VIDHEESHA KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

NINE YEARS ago, Pankaj Yadav saw his older brother Rohit being declared the winner of the elections for the St Stephen's College Students' Union Society. Now, the 21-year-old, who happens to be the son of the college gardener, has become the second person from his family to lead the student body.

Pankaj, a third-year BA

Political Science and History student, was announced as president of the union Friday. Out of 765 total votes polled, he received 497. The last election held in Stephen's was in 2019 before the college shut down during the Covid-induced lockdown.

Hailing from Pratapgarh, Pankaj is the youngest of three brothers. His family moved to Delhi in 2007, when his father was allotted accommodation on the college campus.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Pankaj said, "I have been

living on the campus since 2007. I have always wanted to work for the betterment of my college, just like my brother."

Rohit Kumar Yadav became president of the student union in 2014. Both Rohit and Pankaj got admission at the college through the staff-ward quota, a reservation for children of college staff.

"I modelled my campaign on my brother's. I gave my speeches in Hindi but I also spoke in English to students who did not understand Hindi. I am more comfortable in Hindi. I am also



Pankaj Yadav is a third-year BA Political Science and History student

vice-president of the Hindi society. I want to make sure we carry forward Hindi and not just English," said Pankaj.

His goal as the new president, he said, is to work towards the betterment of facilities for people with disabilities, increase access to library time, ensure women's empowerment and safety, and eradicate any discrimination towards students of any community. "I want to make things easier for people with disabilities by bringing new things to the campus. If there is a visu-

ally challenged student, it would be good to have technology that could scan the surroundings and tell them which part of the campus they are in," he said.

Pankaj highlighted that although Stephen's already provides a safe environment for women students, he wants to ensure that it continues.

His father, Harish Kumar (55), said, "My father also worked as a gardener at Stephen's from 1948, for about 30 years. I was born on the campus and took over the same job when he retired."

Kumar added, "People always said *maali ka beta maali banega* (the gardener's son will become a gardener), but I said otherwise. I educated my children and made sure they bring a good name to the college and our country... Both my sons have made me proud."

Pankaj's term is going to be shorter than usual. The college elections, which were supposed to be held last August, were pushed to January due to the delay in admission, as the administration wanted all three batches to be able to vote.

"Because of the pandemic, the synchronisation of sessions was completely undermined. Last year, classes began later in November... so there was a vacuum, and the college administration said we must give students their new representative body," said Sanjay Rao, staff advisor to the student's union society.

Rao also highlighted that Pankaj's victory shattered the misperception people have about Stephen's being a college for the elite. "The idea is to embrace and include everyone," he said.

FIR in Lucknow against 10 for burning pages of Ramcharitmanas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 29

LUCKNOW POLICE have booked 10 people for promoting enmity after members of an outfit called Akhil Bharatiya OBC Mahasabha allegedly burnt photocopies of the pages of Ramcharitmanas in Vrindavan area of Uttar Pradesh's capital on Sunday.

The FIR was registered on a complaint lodged by BJP leader Satnam Singh Lavi, police said. "The case has been filed against 10 named and several unidentified people at the PGI police station. No one has been arrested till now," Station House Officer Brijesh Kumar Yadav.

The FIR has been lodged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Meanwhile, PTI reported that members of Akhil Bharatiya OBC Mahasabha burned "photocopies" of pages allegedly carrying "objectionable comments on women and Dalits" in Ramcharitmanas in support of SP leader Swami Prasad Maurya.

UNSC does not reflect today's realities, is paralysed, says UNGA President

ENS & PTI
UNITED NATIONS, NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE UN Security Council does not reflect today's realities, is paralysed and unable to discharge its basic function of maintaining international peace and security when one of its permanent members has attacked its neighbour, UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Csaba Korosi has said.

Russia, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN, attacked Ukraine in February 2022. Russia has vetoed UNSC resolutions on Ukraine and voted against a resolution in the UNGA which called on countries not to recognise the four regions of Ukraine that Russia has claimed.

Korosi, a Hungarian diplomat currently serving as President of the 77th UNGA, said there is a push from a growing number of member nations to reform the powerful UN organ.

The UNSC which was "created back then" and given the primary responsibility of maintaining "international peace and security



Permanent Representative of India to the UN Ruchira Kamboj with UNGA President Csaba Korosi in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

and preventing wars now is paralysed", he told PTI ahead of his three-day visit to India on Sunday at the invitation of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

It is Korosi's first bilateral visit to any country since he assumed the UNGA presidency in September 2022, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, announcing his trip.

"The Security Council cannot discharge its basic function for a very simple reason. One of the permanent members of the Security Council attacked its neighbour. The Security Council should be the body to take action against the aggression. But because of the veto power, the Security Council cannot act," Korosi said, in a reference to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He said this was a "very serious lesson learnt" for the future when talking about how to improve functioning of global organisations.

He said the issue of UNSC reform is both "burning" and "compelling" since the composition of the Security Council reflects "the outcome of the Second World War". India has been at the forefront of the years-long efforts to reform the UNSC, saying it rightly deserved a place as a permanent member in the UN.

In the 77-year-old history of the UN, the composition of the Security Council has been altered only once — in 1963 when the General Assembly decided to expand the Council from 11 to 15

members, with the addition of four non-permanent seats.

"Since then, the world has changed. The geopolitical relations in the world altered, the economic responsibilities in the world in some countries, including in India, including some other very strongly developing countries, actually changed," Korosi said. "So, the composition of the Security Council does not reflect today's realities."

During his trip to India, Korosi, who witnessed the "Beating the Retreat" ceremony at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi on Sunday, is expected to discuss with his Indian interlocutors ways to deal with various challenges facing the globe. He will also hold talks with Jaishankar on key multilateral and regional issues of mutual interest.

Korosi will travel to Bengaluru on Tuesday, where his engagements include an interaction with scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and a field visit to an IISc-led water conservation project. He is also expected to visit development projects in and around Bengaluru, the MEA said.

MANN KI BAAT

'Democracy is in our veins, in our culture'

PM: India's dream of 'techade' will be fulfilled by innovators

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

INDIA IS a democratic society by nature, and it should be our endeavour to continuously discuss democracy and make the world aware of it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday.

"India is the world's largest democracy and we Indians are also proud of the fact that our country is also the mother of democracy," he said in the 97th episode of Mann Ki Baat, his monthly radio programme.

"Democracy is in our veins, in our culture. For centuries, it has been an integral part of our daily lives. By nature, we are a democratic society," Modi said.

He said he received a book, *India-The Mother of Democracy*, few weeks ago. "Upon reading this book, you will realise how the spirit of democracy prevailed in every part of our country, since ages," he said. "As mother of democracy, we must continuously think about this subject, discuss it and endeavour to make the world aware of it. This will strengthen the spirit of democracy in the country."

He said Dr BR Ambedkar had compared the Buddhist Bhikshu Sangha to Parliament. "He described it as an institution which had several rules guiding the motions, resolution, quorum, voting and counting of votes. Babasaheb



PM Narendra Modi. File

was of the opinion that Lord Buddha must have got the inspiration for this from the political system at that time."

The PM also cited the example of a Tamil Nadu village. "There is a small but famous village in Tamil Nadu, called Uthiramerur. An inscription on a rock here, some 1,100 or 1,200 years old, amazes the world. This rock inscription is like a mini constitution. It explains in detail how the gram sabha should be conducted and what should be the process of selection of its members," he said.

"There is another example of democratic values in our history, the 12th century Anubhav Mandapam of Bhagwan Basaveshwara. Here, free debate and discussion was encouraged," he said. "You may be surprised to know this happened even before Magna Carta."

He also mentioned an event called 'Purple Fest' which was held in Goa from January 6 to 8.

"This was a unique effort in itself for the welfare of the divyangs."

The Prime Minister also said the number of domestic patent filing was more than foreign filing for the first time in the past 11 years. "Today India's ranking is 7th in patent filing and 5th in trademarks. Talking about patents only, there has been an increase of about 50 per cent in the past five years. In the Global Innovation Index too, India's ranking has improved tremendously and now it has reached 40th position, while in 2015, India was behind even the 80th position... For the first time in the past 11 years in India, the number of domestic patent filing was more than foreign filing. It also shows the growing scientific prowess of India," Modi said.

"I believe that the dream of India's techade will definitely be fulfilled on the strength of our innovators and their patents. With this, we all will be able to take full advantage of world class technology and products prepared in our own country," he said.

In the past, the Prime Minister had used "techade" to describe the decade being dominated by technologies and India making the most of it.

Modi also talked about growing enthusiasm among Kashmiri youths regarding sports. "In the coming times, many of these youth will win medals for the country, and will hoist the Tricolour," he said.

DAY AFTER DELHI COURT ORDER

NIA attaches Srinagar office of Hurriyat Conference

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 29

THE NATIONAL Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday attached the Srinagar office of separatist conglomerate Hurriyat Conference, a day after a Delhi court issued the order while hearing a UAPA case against separatist leader Nayeem Ahmad Khan.

The Hurriyat Conference called the move "a dramatic action under media coverage" and said "such attaching of buildings of stone and mortar will not detach the people of J&K from their sentiment".

On Sunday morning, the sleuths of NIA pasted an attachment notice on the boundary walls of the two-storey Hurriyat

office in Rajbagh neighbourhood of Srinagar. "This is to inform all members of the public that the building where the office of All Party Hurriyat Conference is located at Rajbagh and is owned jointly by Nayeem Ahmad Khan, who is presently facing trial in case... has been attached by the court order dated 27th January 2023 by Special NIA Court Patiala House, New Delhi," the notice read.

"... In view of the above reasons, the immovable property i.e. building office of All Parties Hurriyat Conference situated at Raj Bagh, Srinagar... is ordered to be attached. Necessary legal process be carried out in this regard," the court said.

The Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said in a



A notice of attachment being put up at the office of Hurriyat Conference in Rajbagh area of Srinagar, Sunday. PTI

statement: "In a lopsided court order, the Hurriyat office has been attached and in subsequent swift and dramatic action under media coverage, notices put up on its walls, signalling some kind of victory takeover."

said that attaching its office will not impact the sentiment of the people of the Valley.

"Those in command and control of J&K should know that the sentiment and desire to see the resolution of the Kashmir conflict and to live in fearless peace is embedded in the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Hurriyat is a manifestation of that desire," the statement said.

"It may seem good optics to those who want to send another shrill message to the people of Kashmir and get votes outside by it, but people of Jammu & Kashmir know better."

The Srinagar office of Hurriyat Conference has remained closed since August 2019 following a crackdown on separatist groups by the government.

PM may flag-off 2 Vande Bharat trains in Maharashtra

SWEETY ADIMULAM
MUMBAI, JANUARY 29

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will visit Mumbai on February 10 for the opening of Dawoodi Bohra community's Arabic Academy in Andheri East, as per sources. He is expected to

share the dais with His Holiness Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin.

During his visit, he is also expected to flag off two Vande Bharat express trains from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) station for Shirdi and Solapur routes. However, an official confirmation about the PM flagging off

Vande Bharat express train is yet to be received so far, said Railway officials on Sunday.

This will be the PM's second visit within a month to Mumbai. On January 19, PM Modi was in Mumbai to lay foundation stones for a slew of projects, and also inaugurated the new Mumbai Metro Lines 2A and 7.

INDIA MONGOLIA 67 years of bilateral relations with India **ADVERTORIAL**

India and Mongolia: Long historical ties



MESSAGE

GANBOLD DAMBAJAV

Ambassador of Mongolia to the Republic of India

Spiritual links between Mongolia and India

BUDDHISM has played an important role in developing relations, primarily spiritual bonds between the two nations. For most of Mongolians, India is the land of Lord Buddha, hence lamas and scholars from Mongolia used to study at the Nalanda University, once the largest residential university in India.

Most ancient archaeological finds manifesting to this ancient spiritual link appertain to the period of the Hunns (BCE 209-AD93). Buddhism, which in the subsequent years, developed in Mongolia led to stronger spiritual, cultural, educational and scientific links and bonds between Mongolia and India. This is precisely why Mongolians and Indians have characterised each other as "Spiritual Neighbours".

Such spiritual links and relations have assumed special meaning and significance in the modern times, as can be evidenced by the gifting of the statue of Lord Buddha and his two disciples to the Gandantegchinling Monastery, Centre of Mongolian Buddhists, by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi during his landmark visit to Mongolia in 2015, which also witnessed the upgrading of the overall relations between the two countries to the level of "strategic partnership".

In 1990, India took an exceptional decision to appoint Rinpoche Kushok Bakula as the Indian ambassador to Mongolia which changed the complex of the bilateral relationship. He embarked on a spiritual recovery of Mongolia's Buddhist past that had been relegated to the communist politology of seven decades. During this period, India reached out a great deal to Mongolia with lines of credit, capacity building scholarships and cultural cooperation. The Ambassador also made efforts to revive monasteries in far off corners of Mongolia that gave the much needed spiritual succour and solace to the Mongolians.

Add to this, for the second time in Mongolia's democratic development history, the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha were taken to Mongolia in June 2022 to the joy of thousands of Buddhists from all across Mongolia. The Holy Relics were delivered by Hon'ble Kiren Rijiju, minister of Law and Justice, Government of India. The Indian government also gifted the reprint of the 108-volume Mongol Ganjuur - corpus of collected teachings of Buddha, translated into Mongolian, during Buddha Purnima (Buddha's birthday). Many Mongolian monks are studying Buddhism at the Gyudmed, Sera-Je and Drepung Gomang monasteries, Karnataka.

I'm happy and privileged to start my Ambassadorship tenure in India and I am confident that our long-standing spiritual neighbourhood bonds will deepen further and be enriched in the years to come.

RELATIONS between Mongolia and India have a long history and have been built on a shared historical and cultural legacy. Such relations with Southeast and East Asian countries are the foundation of India's Act East Policy (AEP), under which Mongolia occupies an important space due to its strong strategic dimension. The country plays a pivotal role in helping India deepen its partnership with North East and Central Asia. Mongolia, being a landlocked country, relies heavily on foreign trade and investment. Although China and Russia account for a large share of the above, India-Mongolia trade has been growing at a faster pace in recent years. However, compared to its potential, current economic engagement is limited primarily to trade in minerals only. While strategic aspects continue to dominate bilateral engagements, the possibility of enhancement of economic relations between India and Mongolia has never been explored in a comprehensive manner in the past. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mongolia in May 2015 has opened new opportunities to take bilateral relations between the two countries to a higher level. India-Mongolia relations hold the promise of fostering the regional integration process in Asia. Given the thrust of the AEP, a book analyses the scope and opportunities emanating from the interdependence in economic areas between India and Mongolia, presents an assessment of economic cooperation, identifies challenges and highlights policy issues that must be taken care of to foster bilateral relations. The study concludes that both sides must engage in constructive dialogue in areas of mutual interest such as connectivity, trade in goods and services, investment, etc. to strengthen the strategic partnership. Maintaining cultural relations with Mongolia is as important as building and enhancing economic relations. The time is now right to move forward but achieving significant progress will require effective management of bilateral trade and economic policy issues, along with strategic engagement on security and foreign policy fronts.

During the visit of former minister of commerce Pranab Mukherjee in 1994, 2 MoUs pertaining to the establishment of a joint trade sub-committee and co-operation between the Planning Commission of India and the National Development Board of Mongolia were signed. An agreement for cooperation in the field of geology and mineral resources was also signed in September 1996. The same year, an agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between



India and Mongolia was also signed. The agreement provides for an 'MFN' status given to each other with respect to customs, duties and all other taxes on imports and exports. During the visit of President Bagabandiin in 2001, both sides signed an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, which is currently under review. Bilateral trade is modest in value and volumes. Main items of exports to Mongolia include medicines, mining machinery, and auto parts, while imports from Mongolia include raw cashmere wool. On 12 December 2018, the Embassy in collaboration with Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a commercial event, 'Trade and Investment Opportunities in India', to promote Indian pharmaceutical, agriculture, dairy, spice, tea, coffee, tourism and educational sectors in Mongolia. The first India-Mongolia joint oil and gas exhibition was jointly organised by the Embassy of India, Ministry of Mining and Heavy Industry, and Mongol Refinery and Engineers India Ltd in May 2019. Thirty-five reputed Indian companies, including Tata Projects, ASCONS, and IGSEC, showcased their products and services.

India established diplomatic relations with Mongolia on 24 December, 1955. In January 1956, the first Mongolian Ambassador was sent to New Delhi. The Indian resident mission in Ulaanbaatar was established on 22 February, 1971. Earlier, Indian Ambassador to Moscow (T.N. Kaul) was concurrently accredited. Mongolians appreciate India's support for its membership in the United Nations in 1961, which was championed by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1991, India supported Mongolia's membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Mongolia, along with India and Bhutan, co-sponsored the famous UN Resolution for the recognition of

establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Mongolia. The momentum of several high-level exchanges in the past three years (visits of Vice-President and Speaker of the Lok Sabha in 2016, along with visits of the Home Minister & EAM in 2018) and the initiation of the process of construction of the first oil refinery in Mongolia funded by a \$1-billion LoC capable of refining approximately 1.5 million metric tonnes crude per year (equivalent to approximate 85% of Mongolian oil consumption) has further consolidated goodwill and friendship between India and Mongolia.

Recently, the two countries reviewed bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbons and steel sectors.

DR C N GANGADARAN
Honorary Consul of Mongolia
Chennai (Tamilnadu)

Best Wishes to Mongolia
United Industries Automotive Plastic Pvt Ltd

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Plot No. 59, Gudipalli Industrial Park,
Gudipalli Village, Anantapur District, A.P.

GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL

FOCUS ON PROJECTS

ALTHOUGH SPECULATION of a possible Cabinet reshuffle surrounded Sunday's meeting of the Council of Ministers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus at the meeting was on completion of mega projects ahead of the G20 summit and ahead of the next Lok Sabha elections, sources said. Various ministries made presentations on the big projects in infrastructure – related to the G20 summit – and agrarian sectors during the three-hour meeting. The Prime Minister did not mince words in insisting that all these projects should meet the deadline and that the government should have a bright report card before the elections. Apparently, the intense speculation about a reshuffle had left ministers anxious, and many of them appeared relieved after the meeting, the sources said.

THE ABSENTEE

THE ABSENCE of Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally in Bhilwara on Saturday has rekindled whispers about the internal feud in the BJP's Rajasthan unit. While some party leaders said Shekhawat was not invited for the rally – which many projected as the launch of the BJP's campaign in the poll-bound state – due to some political interventions, others said it was a "religious event" and Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal was present because he was coordinating between the government and authorities of the Malasari Dungri temple. Shekhawat was not invited for the programme, considered to be important for Gujjars – a politically significant community with influence in around 50 Assembly constituencies, party sources said. However, sources close to the Jal Shakti Minister said he had to attend a pre-scheduled programme in Uttarakhand.

THE BARBS

TECHNICALLY, ANIL K Antony is still in Congress as he has not resigned from primary membership of the party. But Anil, who resigned from all positions in the party last week after his tweet on the controversy over the BBC documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots triggered a backlash in the Congress, on Sunday took potshots at his party again. Antony, son of veteran Congress leader and former Kerala Chief Minister A K Antony, posted screenshots of old BBC news reports, which carried an incomplete map of India, on his Twitter handle with the caption: "Some past shenanigans of BBC, repeat offenders questioning India's territorial integrity, publishing truncated maps without Kashmir. Independent media without vested interests indeed, and perfect allies for the current Congress and partners." And he did not forget to tag Congress communication head Jairam Ramesh and social media head Supriya Shrinete.

SP revamps national panel; Shivpal back, Maurya gets berth

ASAD REHMAN
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 29



Shivpal Yadav is uncle of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

THE REVAMPED national executive committee of the Samajwadi Party (SP), which was announced on Sunday, saw the return of Shivpal Yadav, the uncle of party chief Akhilesh Yadav who had quit the party in the run-up to the 2017 Assembly elections to form Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia). Shivpal, who patched up with Akhilesh last year before winning the Assembly election from Jaswantnagar on an SP ticket, has been made national general secretary.

When asked to comment on Maurya's remarks on *Ramcharitmanas*, Akhilesh said he would ask him to join the movement for seeking caste census in Uttar Pradesh. Former BSP leader Lalji Verma, who won on an SP ticket from Ambedkarnagar, has been made national general secretary, along with Ram Achal Rajbhar, who like Verma had switched to the SP from the BSP in the run-up to the Assembly polls last year. Veteran leader Azam Khan, who was disqualified as an MLA following his conviction in a hate speech case, has been appointed national general secretary. Later in the evening, the SP in a separate statement announced Saleem Iqbal Sherwani, a former Union minister, as a national general secretary. The other national general secretaries are Ravi Prakash Verma, Balram Yadav, Vishwambhar Prasad Nishad, Awadhesh Prasad, Indrajeet Saroj, Ramjilal Suman, J Antony, Harendra Malik, and Neeraj Chowdhury.

While Akhilesh will continue to be national president, the party leader from Bengal, Kiranmoy Nanda, will be the national vice-president. Akhilesh's uncle, Ram Gopal Yadav, will remain chief national general secretary.

Lotus will bloom in all seats of Haryana in 2024 polls: Shah

SUKHBIR SIWACH
GOHANA (HARYANA), JAN 29

UNION HOME Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah said Sunday that the lotus will bloom in all 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana in the 2024 election.

Shah was scheduled to attend a party rally organised in Haryana's Gohana town, but could not reach there because of continuous rain. He then addressed the rally via phone.

In his brief speech, Amit Shah expressed his desire that the people of Haryana vote again to re-elect Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister. "All of us will work together to make Narendra Modi-ji the Prime Minister again. I am confident that the lotus of Bharatiya Janata Party will bloom in every Lok Sabha seat."

The senior BJP leader added: "You have witnessed so much development in Haryana in the last eight years. Corruption has reduced in every sector, law and order has improved, and casteism has ended. In eight years, so much development has taken place in Haryana which could not have happened in 70 years. Now educated sarpaches are taking Haryana forward."

The Union minister said he



Haryana CM Manohar Lal at a BJP rally in Gohana on Sunday. Home Minister Amit Shah addressed the event by phone. PTI

could not reach Gohana on the day, but in the near future he will come to meet the people of Haryana.

"I wanted to come to meet you in this rally but because of bad weather, there is no permission for the helicopter to take off. I also tried to come in a vehicle, but there is a possibility of rain for two hours there (at the rally venue). There was a request from Manohar-ji that I talk to you via telephone itself," he said, referring to CM Manohar Lal Khattar.

On his part, Khattar recalled the 2014 assembly polls when the BJP had formed the government in Haryana for the first time on its own strength.

The BJP leader alleged that "before 2014, an atmosphere of fear, corruption prevailed, but the present government worked to change the system".

Lashing out at the previous Congress regime, Manohar Lal Khattar also alleged "corruption was rampant in all spheres and transfers, recruitments and

'Never again': Bihar BJP resolution rules out pact with Nitish

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JANUARY 29

THE BIHAR BJP state executive has passed a resolution to "never align with Janata Dal (United) leader Nitish Kumar again", the party's state co-in-charge, Vinod Tawde, told reporters on Sunday.

Confirming the resolution, BJP Rajya Sabha MP and former deputy chief minister Sushil Kumar Modi said, "It is the decision of the central BJP leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, that the party will never align with Nitish Kumar again. The decision was conveyed at the state executive meeting in Darbhanga." The two-day BJP state executive meeting concluded on Sunday.

Asked about the BJP resolution, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "What do we have to do with their decision? We have nothing to do with them."

Speaking to the media on Sunday, Sushil Kumar Modi said, "Some senior JD(U) leaders had been floating rumours about Nitish Kumar's return to NDA, which is totally misplaced. He is a spent force now. He has betrayed the mandate and also lost his power to convert votes. We welcome the central BJP leadership's decision to never ever



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar align with Nitish Kumar under any circumstances. This would boost the morale of the party towards forming a BJP government in Bihar in future."

He said the party's leadership was unanimous on "Nitish-free" Bihar now. "Nitish Kumar's party (JD-U) was relegated to the number three position in Bihar with 43 seats in 2020 polls. JD(U) cannot win more than 10-15 seats on its strength in the next polls. Had PM Modi not campaigned for the JD(U) in 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the party wouldn't have won more than two seats. It was because of (Narendra) Modi's campaign the NDA won 39 seats, including JD(U)'s 16," said the MP.

The immediate trigger for the BJP's resolution is said to be senior JD(U) leader Upendra Kushwaha's recent comments that some JD(U) leaders were in touch with the saffron party. Though Nitish had asked Kushwaha to reveal the names, the state politics was again abuzz with speculation of fresh political realignments.



UDYAN UTSAV-2023 BEGINS

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurates the Udyan Utsav-2023, the opening of the Rashtrapati Bhavan gardens, including the rechristened Amrit Udyan, on Sunday. The gardens are open to the public once a year and this time people can visit from January 31. PTI

Ahead of Budget Session, Govt to convene all-party meeting today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE GOVERNMENT has called an all-party meeting on Monday, a day ahead of the start of the Budget Session of Parliament.

The customary meeting, called by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi, is to be held at noon on January 30 in Parliament Annexe Building.

During the meeting, the gov-

ernment is expected to seek co-operation from all parties for the smooth running of Parliament. Opposition parties are expected to raise matters of concern during the meeting and also highlight issues they plan to raise during the session.

In the afternoon, a meeting of NDA floor leaders will also be held to strategise floor cooperation. The Budget Session will be held in two parts.

The session will begin with

President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament. The Economic Survey will be tabled after the President's address.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget on February 1. The Union Budget 2023-24 may be the last full budget before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The first part of the session will be held from January 31 and will go on till February 13.

With BJP leaders in attendance, Hindu outfits hold rallies on 'love jihad', 'forced conversion'

EESHANPRIYA M S & SHUBHANGI KHAPRE
MUMBAI, JANUARY 29

AFTER OVER 30 rallies across Maharashtra, the Sakal Hindu Samaj, an umbrella body of Hindu organisations, held the Mumbai chapter of the Hindu Jan Aakrosh Morcha on Sunday morning, amid calls for laws against religious conversions and alleged 'love jihad', and a boycott of goods from shops owned by members of the minority community.

Sunday's event was attended by several top party leaders and members of the Maharashtra government, including BJP MLA and the party's Mumbai president Ashish Shelar, BJP MP from Mumbai North Gopal Shetty, BJP MP from Mumbai North East Manoj Kotak, MLC Pravin Darekar, BJP secretary Vinod Shelar, and Sheetal Mhatre, former corporator and now member of Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena.

Last week, Maharashtra Minister for Women and Child Development Mangal Prabhat Lodha had urged Mumbaiikars to join the rally in large numbers.

The rally, which started at 10 am from Shivaji Park in Dadar, saw the participants walking around 2.7 kilometers through Central Mumbai until Kamgar Maidan in Prabhadevi.

According to estimates of the Mumbai police, approximately 10,000 to 12,000 citizens participated in the rally.

The Hindu Jan Aakrosh Morcha had started with a mas-



During the rally held by Sakal Hindu Samaj, an umbrella body of Hindu organisations, in Mumbai on Sunday. Ganesh Shirsekar

sive rally in Parbhani district in the Marathwada region in November last year.

Outfits such as the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Sanatan Sangha, Vanvasi Kalyan, Rajput Youth Front, Karni Sena and All India Maheshwar Samaj have organised themselves under the banner of the Sakal Hindu Samaj.

On Sunday, BJP MLA Shelar, who was present at the rally, said, "When Hindu women are torn to pieces, the Hindu family and all of us bear this with sadness. These protesters have come out to express this sadness. Everyone must keep their politics aside and join this rally... The government will take a decision at the right time (on love jihad, land jihad). But the anger of the society is coming out now, and in a disciplined manner in the

form of these protests." Addressing the crowd at Kamgar Maidan, where the rally ended, T Raja Singh, MLA and suspended BJP leader, while urging Hindus to boycott goods from shops run by members of the Muslim community, said, "It is time the Hindu community stands up against the domination by these people. There's anger in the hearts and minds of people... Our sisters and daughters are falling prey to the systematic designs of the other community."

Over the past three months, such rallies have been organised across Maharashtra, in over 20 districts, including Parbhani, Nanded, Ahmednagar, Kolhapur, Gadchiroli, Satara, Karad, Sangli, Solapur, Pune, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nagpur, Amravati, Hingoli, Buldhana and Jalna.

Day after securing 5 seats from BJP, ally IPFT insists on 1 more

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, JANUARY 29

A DAY after the ruling BJP announced that alliance partner Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) will contest from 5 out of 60 Assembly seats, the latter on Sunday said it would field candidates in six seats instead of the five allotted to it.

IPFT assistant general secretary Shuklacharan Noatia said, "We agreed to fight together with BJP in 5 seats yesterday. We have announced candidates for those seats. On behalf of IPFT state committee, we have decided to fight in one more seat – Ampinagar ST reserved con-

stituency. Our sitting MLA Sindhucharan Jamatia will contest from this constituency."

Noatia said his party was hopeful of getting BJP support. "We hope to garner BJP support in areas where IPFT has sitting MLAs and vice-versa," he said.

He said the BJP may withdraw its candidate in the seat or retain but the IPFT would definitely contest from the seat. The BJP has announced candidature of its state vice-president Patal Kanya Jamatia from the Ampinagar.

The tribal party also said it does not feel the issue will affect its alliance with the BJP. "This is our policy, the BJP may take whatever decision they want. We don't think it will affect our understanding," he said.

A senior BJP leader, who did not wish to be named, said, "A discussion is going on in the party about reaching an adjustment... with the IPFT. We are considering if we can allot them one more seat."

On Saturday, the BJP announced to share five seats – Takarjala, Ramchandraghat, Asharambari, Kancharpur and Jolaibari – with the IPFT.

On Sunday, the IPFT announced that its founder president late NC Debbarma's daughter Jayanti Debbarma will contest from Asharambari; sitting MLA Prashanta Debbarma will seek another term from Ramchandraghat; IPFT spokesperson Bidhan Debbarma will contest from Takarjala; and Noatia will contest from Jolaibari seat.



Polling officials take stock of EVMs to be used in the coming Tripura Assembly elections, in Agartala on Sunday. ANI

TIPRA Motha announces 2nd list

Agartala: TIPRA Motha party on Sunday announced its second list of 10 candidates for the Assembly polls, a day after releasing the first list of 20 candidates. The new candidates include three from ST reserved seats, one for a SC reserved seat and the rest for unreserved constituencies. Among the prominent names in the sec-

22 in TMC's first list of candidates; manifesto soon

Agartala: The Trinamool Congress on Sunday announced a 22-member candidate list and said a second list would be announced soon. The list includes former state Youth Congress president Pujan Biswas, who quit the party to float his own – Tripura Democratic Front – for a few months before he joined TMC.

TMC general secretary in-charge of Tripura Rajib Banerjee told reporters several more names would be announced. However, he did not specify the number of seats in which the Bengal-based party would contest.

"We want to defeat the BJP. People want to be freed from this regime. So we have made candidate selection based on that objective. Our high command is considering some more names..." he said. TMC leaders said the party would soon announce its manifesto. ENS

9 EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

HIMACHAL PRADESH 'Contaminated' water leaves over 530 sick

Hamirpur: The number of people taken ill after allegedly drinking contaminated water in a dozen villages in Nadaun sub-division in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur district rose to 535 on Sunday. Rajeev Kumar, the head of Rangas panchayat, said two to three persons in every household have taken ill after consuming "contaminated water" provided by the Jal Shakti department. "High amount of bacteria in the water is believed to be causing the illness," Kumar said. He attributed it to contamination of the pit from which the water is being supplied. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who is also Nadaun MLA, has sought reports from state and district-level agencies and directed the health department to take proper care of the patients. **PTI**

MAHARASHTRA 12 blackbucks die, 2 hurt after falling off bridge

Mumbai: Twelve blackbucks died and two were injured after they fell off a bridge in Maharashtra's Solapur district, said a police officer on Sunday. The incident took place on a bridge in Kegaon on the Solapur-Bijapur Highway, around 44 km from Mumbai, at 6:30 pm on Saturday. "The blackbucks fell to the ground from a height of 30 ft. While 12 died, two injured blackbucks were taken to a nearby hospital run by the forest department. The residents, meanwhile, alerted police and forest department officials," said the officer. **PTI**

RAJASTHAN Three killed in SUV-truck collision

Jaipur: Three persons were killed and four injured in a collision between an SUV and a truck in Rajasthan's Jalore district. The incident took place in Ahor police station area late on Saturday night. SHO Giridhar Singh said Kalu Singh (24), president of the students' union of Government PG College, Jalore, was travelling in an SUV with six others when a truck coming from the opposite direction rammed into it. Kalu Singh, Karan Singh (25) and Kailash (25) died, while four others were injured in the accident. Three of the injured were discharged after first-aid. A case is being registered against the truck driver, the SHO said. **PTI**

Rare plateau found by ARI team could hold clues to plant survival amid climate change

ESHA ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

SCIENTISTS AT the Agharkar Research Institute (ARI) in Pune have found a rare low-altitude basalt plateau in the Western Ghats, an important discovery they believe could hold the clues to how plant species globally survive climate change.

Presence of the low-altitude plateau, an isolated flat-topped steep hill, found at Manjare village in Thane district was not known to scientists who have been studying plateau formations and plant species in the Western Ghats for decades now. "The Western Ghats are one of the four global biodiversity hotspots in India. There were so far three known plateau types in the Western Ghats — high altitude laterite plateaus, low altitude laterite plateaus and high-

altitude basalt plateaus," said Dr Mandar Datar, the lead scientist of the study that announced the discovery and was recently published in Springer Nature. "We only recently discovered there is a fourth type — the low altitude basalt plateau..." Dr Datar and his team found 76 species of plants belonging to 24 different families on the low-altitude plateau, some of which are unique to it while others are common among all four plateaus. "It's

EXPLAINED

Unique model

Scientists say the low-altitude plateau at Manjare supports a unique model that can be used to study the survival of plants in varying environmental conditions. This is crucial given that climate change continues to threaten species, including plants, as average temperatures rise globally.

a unique model to study how species interact in varying environmental conditions," Dr Datar said. Plateaus are a dominant landscape in the Western Ghats and significant because of the predominance of endemic species. According to Dr Datar, survival of plants in these open, mostly arid habitats is an "important repository of information" on how vegetation can survive in high-temperature conditions, likely to be worsened

as climate change continues. "There are only four months in the year — during the monsoon — which are favourable for plants. So, the plants which grow here only have four-month life cycles. After the monsoons, there is a severe water paucity here and the plants die out. The plants survive in two ways — by seeding just before the end of the monsoon spell or by storing nutrition underground, in the form of bulbs. These plants continue to survive in an extremely hostile environment, with soil temperatures going up to 60 degrees Celsius during the summer months," he explained. The ARI team is also seeking to find if genetics plays a role in the plants' survival in hostile environments. If there is a gene that actually helps these plants, scientists can use it for crop survival, Dr Datar said. "That is why information about these plateaus and plants is crucial," he added.

CHANCHAL RANA, COLLECTOR & DM, BALANGIR | AWARD CATEGORY: GENDER

Undoing social discrimination, exclusion of transgender persons — through jobs

SUJIT BISOYI
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 29

BUSY COLLECTING fees at a parking lot near the district collectorate complex in Balangir, Premananda Sahu, a transgender person, can't be happier that she now has "a life of dignity".

Sahu is among 300 transgender persons who have been engaged by the distinct administration under project Sweekruti (acceptance), an ambitious plan seeking to mainstream the transgender community through jobs.

Acceptance apart, Sahu said, the project is a departure from a life of discrimination and social exclusion the transgender persons faced, where no one even gave them a job. "We were forced to beg on trains, dance in marriages and other social functions to earn a livelihood."

Sahu, who earns Rs 7,000-10,000 a month now, said Sweekruti has also ensured an end to transphobia and the mental stress that came from dealing with it. "People coming to park their vehicles also show us respect. My parents are also very happy for me," Sahu said.

Jairaj Nag, 50, who works as a helper in a Swachha Safari, a battery-operated vehicle used in door-to-door waste collection, says Sweekruti has given the transgender persons their

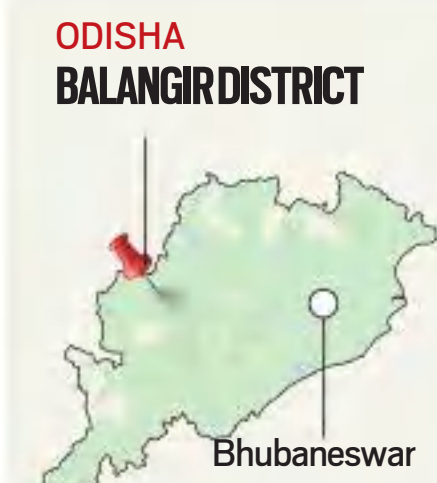
"own identity".

"There was a time when people used to crack jokes at us for being a transgender. Now, like others, I also earn my livelihood with dignity. And I no longer face any transphobia and I am very happy about that. People talk to us whenever we go to their doorstep to collect waste," added Nag, who earns around Rs 9,700 a month.

For Balangir District Collector Chanchal Rana though, Sweekruti is a means to fix a bigger, problematic perception.

"There are programmes that dole out benefits to the transgender, which makes them dependent on the government. But people don't see them as people who can contribute," said Rana.

With many like Sahu running parking lots and others driving battery-operated vehicles or working as sanitation workers, going door-to-door collecting segregated household waste, Rana said transgender persons



are now seen as "part of the workforce".

"The project has also helped form self-help groups among transgender persons to enable these groups to avail of seed capital. Around 400 to 500 people are likely to have benefitted from this, but it is a continuous process of organising and skilling transgender persons," said Rana, who is among the 19 winners of The Indian Express Excellence in Governance Awards for 2020 and 2021.



Chanchal Rana. Abhinav Saha

The biennial awards celebrate the finest work done by District Magistrates, women and men considered the foot-soldiers of governance as they script change that touches the lives of countless people across the country.

According to Naba Krishna Sahoo, the district social welfare officer, Sweekruti was made possible with financial help from the state social security and empowerment of persons with disabilities (SSEPD) department.



Senior Air Force officer to head inquiry panel in Mirage, Su-30 MKI crash

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

A SENIOR IAF officer in the rank of Air Commodore or above will preside over the Court of Inquiry (CoI), which will investigate the crash of the two IAF jets on Saturday in which one pilot was killed, defence officials said on Sunday. The CoI will also comprise fighter pilots, and technical and medical officers, they said.

The crash of the Mirage 2000 and the Sukhoi 30 (Su-30 MKI) fighter jets at Morena in Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring Bharatpur in Rajasthan is learnt to have taken place during a close combat training mission undertaken as part of the fighter combat leader course under the Gwalior-based Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment.

The two aircraft had taken off from the Gwalior air base on Saturday morning. Wing Commander Hanumanth Rao Sarathi, who was killed in the crash, was a directing staff at TACDE. The two Su-30 pilots, who were undergoing the course, had ejected safely from the aircraft before it crashed at Bharatpur.

While sources pointed towards the possibility of a mid-air collision between the two aircraft, there was no official confirmation of this.

The CoI will establish the exact reason by examining the flight data recorders recovered from the wreckage of both the aircraft and by speaking to all IAF person-

The Court of Inquiry will also comprise fighter pilots, technical and medical officers

nel involved in the mission, among other details.

According to a PTI report, IAF teams inspected the forested area where the wreckage fell on Saturday. The flight data recorder of the Mirage 2000 has been recovered and a part of the Su-30's flight data recorder has been found so far.

Officers said bad weather — a common reason for aircraft crashes — is unlikely to be among the reasons for the latest crash as such training missions are usually avoided in that case.

Both the Mirage 2000 and the Su-30 jets have had a good flight safety record. Since 2010, the Mirage 2000 has been involved in five crashes, including one in Madhya Pradesh's Bhand district in October 2021. Around 10 Su-30s have crashed since 2010. Su-30 MKI is a heavier and bigger aircraft than Mirage 2000.

In 2017, the government told Parliament that various steps were being taken to prevent accidents. This includes preventive measures such as invigoration of Aviation Safety Organisation, streamlining of accident/incident reporting procedure, analytical studies and quality audits of aircraft fleets to identify vulnerable areas to avoid aircraft accidents.



Indian Air Force personnel pay tributes to Wing Commander Hanumanth Rao Sarathi, at Belagavi in Karnataka on Sunday. **PTI**

His phone call on R-Day was our last conversation: mother of IAF pilot

KIRAN PARASHAR
BENGALURU, JANUARY 29

"HE CALLED me on January 26 and wished 'happy Republic Day amma'. Then he told me about the new (residential) quarters he had been allotted," recalled a tearful Savithri Sarathi about her last conversation with her 36-year-old son, Wing Commander Hanumanth Rao Sarathi, who died in a fighter jet crash in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district on Saturday.

Wing Commander Sarathi's body was brought to Belagavi in Karnataka by a special Indian Air Force (IAF) plane on Sunday afternoon and taken to his parents' residence at Ganeshpur.

A pall of gloom descended on Belagavi town, which also

houses an Army cantonment, after the news of Wing Commander Sarathi's death broke on Saturday. Various people, including senior leaders, paid homage to the departed soul on Sunday. Later in the evening, the mortal remains of Wing Commander Sarathi were consigned to flames with full military honours.

At the residence of the Sarathis, a six-foot poster reading 'happy landing' stood a reminder of the pride with which the family sent its youngest son to the IAF.

Revensiddappa Sarathi, father of Wing Commander Sarathi, said his son wanted to do a *poorja* at the new quarters allotted to him in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. "He asked Savithri about it. We did not know it would be his last

call to us," he said.

Revensiddappa served in the Indian Army and retired as a honorary captain for his service. Both his sons — Wing Commander Sarathi and his elder brother, Group Captain Praveen Sarathi — were inspired to join the defence services because of their father. Praveen is deployed at the Pathankot airbase.

Wing Commander Sarathi's elder sister, Prathibha, recalled she had a casual WhatsApp chat with her brother on Republic Day. Her husband, Jagadeesh, told *The Indian Express* that they were expecting to see him soon but not in such a manner.

Wing Commander Sarathi got married to Meemansha in 2015. The couple's elder daughter is 3-year-old and younger son is one-year-old.

Jharkhand Gov returns domicile Bill, asks govt to review legality

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, JANUARY 29

JHARKHAND GOVERNOR Ramesh Bais Sunday returned the domicile Bill — which defines a local in the state based on 1932 land records — to the state government, asking it to "seriously review" its legality.

The move comes over two months after the Jharkhand Assembly unanimously passed the Bill at a special session — with the provision that it would come into force only after the Centre carries out amendments to include it in the Ninth Schedule, putting it beyond judicial scrutiny.

The Ninth Schedule of the Constitution contains a list of central and state laws that cannot be challenged in courts. However, courts in the past have said that it can be reviewed if it violates the fundamental rights or the basic structure of the Constitution.

Returning the Bill, Bais said that the state government should review its legality so that it is in accordance with the Constitution as well as the directions of the Supreme Court.

According to Bill, a local is defined as a person whose name or whose ancestors' name is recorded in the survey/khatiyani of 1932 or before. In case of people who are landless, local persons shall be identified by the Gram Sabhas based on culture, local customs and tradition, among other factors.

"It (the Bill) mentions that only local persons identified under this Act will be eligible for appointment against class 3 and 4 of the state. During the review of the said Bill, it was found that Article 16 of the Constitution states that all citizens have equal rights in the matter of employment. According to Article 16(3) of the Constitution, only the par-



Jharkhand Governor Ramesh Bais

liament has been empowered to impose any kind of conditions in the case of employment under Section 35 (A) under special provision. The State Legislature does not have this power," said a press release issued by the Governor's House, quoting Bais.

The Bill, Jharkhand Definition of Local Persons and for Extending the Consequential, Social, Cultural and Other Benefits to Such Local Persons Bill, 2022, states that the definition of local persons, on the basis of the '1932 khatiyani', is based on "living conditions, customs and the traditions and social development" of the "Moolovasis and people from tribal community" which have been affected owing to pre- and post-1932 migration of people from other states to Jharkhand (erstwhile Bihar).

The passed Bill stated that it is aimed at granting local residents "certain rights, benefits, and preferential treatment" over their land; in their stake in local development of rivers, lakes, fisheries; in local traditional and cultural and commercial enterprises; in rights over agricultural indebtedness or availing agricultural loans; in maintenance and protection of land records; for their social security; in employment in private and public sector; and, for trade and commerce in the state.

However, Bais said that the Bill is against apex court orders, citing the case of AVS Narasimha Rao and others vs Andhra Pradesh. The Governor said that various areas of Jharkhand are covered under the fifth schedule.

Kerala man stabbed to death in Poland

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JANUARY 29

A 23-year-old man from Ollur town in Kerala's Thrissur district had been stabbed to death in the west-central Polish city of Poznan, sources close to his family said on Sunday.

Sooraj M is the second person from Kerala to have been murdered in the country in the last one week. One family friend told *The Indian Express* Sooraj had gone to Poland only five months ago after getting a supervisor's job at a warehouse.

Another friend, Gokul, said Sooraj was stabbed when he intervened in a dispute between his Indian and Jordanian flatmates.

"Some persons questioned the Jordanians smoking in the

kitchen of the flat, which led to a dispute. Sooraj sustained stabs while trying to intervene," Gokul said, adding four other men from Kerala were also injured.

According to Gokul, Sooraj's family got to know about the incident on Sunday and are in touch with Indian Embassy officials in Poland. "We have learnt from other Keralites that the Jordanians involved in the incident have fled the flat," Gokul said.

Sooraj, who had completed an industrial training course, is survived by his parents and a sister.

On January 26, Ibrahim Shareef, 30, a native of Puthussery in Palakkad, was found dead at his residence in Warsaw where he worked with ING Bank. Puthussery panchayat member S Geetha said Shareef's family had not been able to contact him since January 24.

Naba Kisore Das: Popular leader from western Odisha with a penchant for rifles

SUJIT BISOYI
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 29

ODISHA HEALTH Minister Naba Kisore Das who died of bullet injuries on Sunday after being shot in the chest by a police officer earlier in the day was a popular public figure from western Odisha who was known for his love for rifles. Politically active since his student days, Das, 60, was a close aide of former Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik.

Das was from Sambalpur district and completed his master's in English and law from Sambalpur University. After completing his studies, he moved to the Jharsuguda district, which is known for its industries.

According to sources in the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Das's family has a significant presence in the mining transportation business in Jharsuguda and



Naba Kisore Das

Sundargarh districts.

At the start of his political career, Das was a Congressman. He tried his luck in electoral politics for the first time in 2004, contesting the Jharsuguda Assembly seat for the party. Though he lost to the BJD's Kishore Mohanty, he polled 50,136 votes.

During his Congress stint, he

was one of the three working presidents for the state's western region. Known for his organisational skills and socio-political understanding of the region, Das developed a strong support base in several Assembly constituencies in Sambalpur, Sundargarh, and Jharsuguda.

Das's luck turned five years later as he won the Jharsuguda seat and retained it in the following two Assembly elections, the third time for the BJD that he had joined in January 2019 ahead of the Assembly elections as the Congress's electoral footprint shrank.

Das was one of the richest Cabinet ministers in the Naveen Patnaik government. In an annual property declaration in 2021, he mentioned that as on December 31 of that year he had assets worth Rs 34 crore. In his annual property statement submitted in September last year,

Das said he owned 70 vehicles, mostly commercial, including a Mercedes.

He also said he possessed a revolver, a double-barrel gun, and a rifle. Once when asked about his love for rifles, Das said he got an all-India licence for revolvers in 1984 when he was a student and "kept the rifles for fancy and not for protection". Das has properties in New Delhi, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, and Jharsuguda.

Last week, the minister made news after he donated a costly gold pitcher to the Shani Shingnapur temple in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. Though reports suggested it was worth Rs 1 crore, Das later clarified that it cost Rs 10 lakh. He had also made headlines in December 2015 after he was suspended from the Assembly for a week for allegedly watching objectionable clips in the House.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Gandhi in Amrit Kaal

His ideals of non-violence and communal harmony remain relevant 75 years after his assassination



SHYAM SARAN

THE SHAPE OF WATER

Indus Waters Treaty threatens to become another pressure point in Indo-Pak relations. Both nations need to salvage it

INDIA'S JANUARY 25 notice to Islamabad seeking modification of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty is the fallout of a longstanding dispute over two hydroelectric power projects on the western rivers — the fully operational Kishenganga on the Jhelum, and Ratle on the Chenab. Under the treaty, along with the Indus, these two western rivers were allotted to Pakistan for its unrestricted use. India could use the waters of these rivers for "non-consumptive use", including run-of-the-river hydel projects. The Kishenganga was constructed after the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague ruled in India's favour. But Pakistan continues to object to this and the Ratle dam. Delhi, reportedly, has sought to modify the treaty after Pakistan refused intergovernmental negotiations on the matter. While that is the first stage provided under the treaty for resolving disputes, the next is the request to the World Bank by the aggrieved party for the appointment of a neutral expert. A court of arbitration is constituted as the last resort. This graded approach to dispute resolution has served the two countries well.

The IWT is the only agreement between India and Pakistan that has stood the test of time, through wars and terrorism. Underlying the treaty is the principle that water does not recognise international boundaries and upper riparians have a responsibility to lower riparians. While the treaty does provide for modification "from time to time", it has to do so by means of "a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two Governments". As reported by this newspaper, in 2021, a parliamentary committee had asked for a renegotiation of the IWT, given present day exigencies such as the impact of climate change on water availability in the Indus basin. Given the record though, it is questionable if the two countries today have the political will and the inclination to arrive at an agreement to replace the IWT for the sharing of the waters.

More likely, the issue will fester and grow into another active pressure point in India-Pakistan relations. This conclusion is inescapable given how already, on the Pakistani side, accusations are made with increasing frequency that India has "turned off the water", and on this side, the view is growing that India has been too generous in the IWT. Recall Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remark in the aftermath of the 2016 Uri attack that "blood and water cannot flow together", even though how this threat might be implemented is not clear as it would be plain dangerous to build big dams to stop the western rivers from flowing across the LoC in a seismologically active region. Using water as a weapon is never a good idea. It would be so much better for both countries to treat the IWT as an instrument for collaboration on climate action in the fragile Himalayan region.

SECURING SUPPLIES

Government must consider importing wheat and milk fat to keep food inflation under check

WHEAT AND ATTA prices are on fire, retailing at an average of Rs 30 and Rs 35 per kg respectively, as against Rs 20 and Rs 25 a year ago. As a mitigatory measure, the Narendra Modi government has approved of flooding three million tonnes (mt) of the cereal from the Food Corporation of India's (FCI) warehouses into the open market over the next two months. The expectation is that this will help cool prices ahead of the arrival of new crops from end-March. But there are two possible hindrances. The first is that public wheat stocks, at 17.17 mt on January 1, are already at a six-year-low and marginally above the required minimum of 13.8 mt for this date. While the discontinuation of the additional 5-kg per-person per-month free grain supply through the public distribution system has given more leeway for the FCI to undertake open market sales, the overall stocks position is still quite precarious.

The second source of uncertainty relates to the size of the 2022-23 wheat crop. Right now, it looks in good condition, with farmers also sowing a near-record 34 million-plus hectares on the back of high prices, adequate soil moisture and reservoir water levels, and improved fertiliser availability. But the crop has barely entered the flowering stage, leave alone grain formation and filling that typically takes place over March and early-April. Knowing from last year's experience — when a sudden temperature spike after mid-March took a heavy toll on the standing wheat, whose kernels were just about ripening and accumulating starch — it would be foolhardy to make any predictions of output at this point. A second consecutive poor wheat harvest can have adverse consequences, more so given that consumer price inflation has only in the last two months fallen below the RBI's 6 per cent upper limit target.

That being so, the Modi government should consider import of 2-3 mt wheat as insurance against a not-too-good crop back home. Wheat from Russia — the world's cheapest supplier — is currently quoting at \$305-310 per tonne free-on-board, which works out to a landed price of around \$350 per tonne or Rs 28.5/kg in India. Similar imports on government account may also be required of milk fat, especially with domestic ghee and butter prices going through the roof. Demand for milk products, from curd and lassi to ice-cream, will peak during the summer months. That's when milk production, particularly by buffaloes, too will fall. Excess volatility in food price is neither in consumer nor producer interest — and a veritable nightmare for an inflation-targeting central bank. The government cannot afford to be lax on supply management, at a time when cereals and dairy products are among the highest contributors to consumer inflation today.

JANUARY 30 THIS year will mark 75 years since Mahatma Gandhi fell to an assassin's bullet while on his way to hold the daily prayer meeting at Birla House. It is a poignant counterpoint to the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebration marking the 75th anniversary of India's independence. Gandhi's ambitions for India went far beyond the achievement of political independence from colonial rule. For him, the people of India could not be truly free without social emancipation, economic empowerment and, above all, a shared sense of solidarity and empathy transcending multiple identities of language, religion and cultural traditions. It is his vision that permeates the Constitution of India which remains the sheet anchor of Indian democracy.

Throughout history, the world has seen many kinds of leaders of men and women. Some have been conquerors who let their swords speak to power. Others connected their followers with the intangible power of the spirit. These were the great religious and spiritual leaders whose legacy still has the power to both unite and divide our world. Some became leaders by conjuring up the worst of our instincts. Others led multitudes by bringing out what is most noble and uplifting in our nature. One kind leads by igniting hate. Another by spreading love and compassion. For one, the threat and use of violence is indispensable to the exercise of power. For the other, the courage to resist violence is what empowers people. It is easy to see what kind of leader Gandhi was. He made the most humble and poverty-stricken Indian feel that he was a participant in something larger than himself, something that, for the first time, gave him a sense of agency. This laid the basis for the success of Indian democracy, with the most humble voter wielding the power to change his own destiny through his electoral choice. It is being argued that violence against the colonial rulers also played a role in gaining independence for India and those who struck violent blows against them must also be celebrated and paid homage to. That does not detract from the direct connection between India's democracy and the legacy of

To Gandhi goes the credit for transforming what was an idea of Indian independence among a small educated and English-speaking elite into a mass and people-centred movement. He gave the struggle for freedom a vernacular dimension, rooted in India's own civilisational heritage. He knew from his own experience how easy it was to slip comfortably into the ranks of a privileged elite and lose touch with the mass of Indian people. It was this concern which led him to suggest that, after India gained independence in 1947, the Congress Party disbanded itself as a political party and remained a mass movement dedicated to the social and economic transformation of the people of India.

non-violence inherited from Gandhi. Non-violent political and social change, which is so fundamental to democracy, is a Gandhian bequest.

In honouring revolutionary leaders who embraced violence as an instrument to defeat colonial rule, one should resist the incipient temptation to glorify violence as a legitimate instrument to achieve political ends in general. One may argue that revolutionary violence against colonial rule was legitimate and should be acknowledged, but it should also be made explicitly clear that in an independent democratic state, there is no room whatsoever for any recourse to violence. Gandhi understood clearly that violence, once unleashed, rarely stays selective, which is why even against colonial rule he preached non-violent resistance.

Gandhi gets the credit for transforming what was an idea of Indian independence among a small educated and English-speaking elite into a mass and people-centred movement. He gave the struggle for freedom a vernacular dimension, rooted in India's own civilisational heritage. He knew from his own experience how easy it was to slip comfortably into the ranks of a privileged elite and lose touch with the mass of Indian people. It was this concern which led him to suggest that, after India gained independence in 1947, the Congress Party disbanded itself as a political party and remained a mass movement dedicated to the social and economic transformation of the people of India. His concerns have proved prescient as a two-track India emerged after Independence, one which used its English language education as a passport to economic and social advancement while pursuing policies that dispensed minimal entitlements to those at the lower ends of the economic and social ladder. It failed to empower them to ascend the ladder through education and acquisition of skills. In a certain sense, we are witnessing the revolt of the vernacular against self-entitled elites and this is being tapped into by the more adept political formations. But we do not see the kind of movement towards empowerment which Gandhi envisioned for his new India. We are back to the poli-

tics of entitlement with the distribution of welfare as benign offerings from the state and its leaders. Gandhi's legacy points the way to an India of empowered citizens and we should reflect deeply on how and why we seem to have lost our way.

Having travelled through the length and breadth of undivided India, Gandhi was aware of the civilisational anchors which underlay its endurance and was able to use them to forge an overarching national identity. But he was also aware that there were deeply ingrained fault lines which could erupt and engulf the national project. These fault lines could be social, such as the caste system and the horrendous practice of untouchability. They could be religious and communal such as the Hindu-Muslim divide. Gandhi was uncompromising in condemning untouchability and rejecting distinctions based on caste, creed, and religion.

Gandhi was a devout Hindu and acknowledged that Indians in general, whether Hindu or Muslim, Sikh or Christian, were all devout adherents of their respective faiths. For him India could only be a secular country, with all religious faiths co-existing in harmony and in mutual respect. The Partition of India was a deeply wounding experience for him which he took as a personal failure. It is an irony that he was assassinated for ostensibly allowing India to be divided based on religion when nothing was more distressing and tragic for him. Till the very end he used his immense prestige and reverence among the masses to stop communal riots and indiscriminate slaughter. It is even more important today to reflect on Gandhi's legacy as the communal fault line is bubbling to the surface again.

As we celebrate the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, let us also recall how the Gandhian values of non-violence, inclusiveness and communal harmony enabled India to establish a unique democracy achieving momentous economic and social transformation through the ballot box rather than through the barrel of the gun.

Saran is a former Foreign Secretary and an Honorary Senior Fellow CPR

CENSUS MATTERS

Welfare schemes will falter in the absence of accurate population data



NANDITA SAIKIA

INDIA ASPIRES TO be a \$10 trillion economy by 2035. To achieve this, conducting population Census, due in 2021 but postponed indefinitely because of Covid, is necessary. Census data is essential for planning at the village or block level to usher in economic and social development, ensure better governance, and increase the transparency of public schemes and programmes.

There are many reasons why conducting a Census has become a prerequisite for economic development. At present, the biggest challenge facing demographers, planners, and other stakeholders is how to estimate the district population — the district is the basic administrative unit for governing, planning, and executing government projects and schemes. In the absence of updated Census data, demographers estimate the annual population count at the district level using past Census information for the intercensal or postcensal period. Say, to estimate the population of a district in India in the year 2015, they use the district-level population growth rate between the 2001 and 2011 Census. Such demographic exercises give reasonably fair estimates when the year of population estimation is within the range of a maximum of 10 years. Beyond this period, estimations can be erroneous, particularly at the district level due to dynamic patterns of population components, among them fertility, mortality and migration. Many districts of

India are experiencing a faster demographic transition with varying fertility and mortality rates. So using the growth rate of 2001-2011 for the period after 2021 becomes more of an assumption-based model than a model that reflects empirical reality. Covid-19 further makes the situation complex as it impacts the fertility and mortality situation in the country. Since many states (and districts) lack a complete civil registration system with a full count of birth and death data, demographers face enormous challenges in providing population counts at the district level. For the above reasons, in several instances, estimates tend to be far off the mark, especially for newly formed districts and states.

Second, migration data collected in the Census has great implications for economic activities and social harmony. As India progresses economically, the pattern of migration within the country, within states as well as outside the country has been changing in unprecedented ways. For instance, even in smaller towns and cities, job patterns have changed. The migration pattern in India in the present decade is very different from what the data in Census 2001 and 2011 suggest. Hence, in the absence of Census data, it is difficult to draw conclusions about migration in India.

Third, the Census counts everyone across regions, classes, creeds, religions, languages, castes, marital status, differently-abled pop-

ulations, occupation patterns etc. Most national-level surveys such as NFHS and NSSO do not have representative data at the population subgroup level, unlike the Census. The existence of numerous faiths and languages as well as the expansion or extinction of such communities will be known only via population Census.

India has a long history of conducting Census without interruption from 1881 with the rare exception of Assam in 1981 and Jammu Kashmir in 1991 due to sociopolitical unrest and secessionist movements. A regular Census at the national and sub-national levels has been a matter of pride for India. It has to be continued until India achieves a fool-proof civil registration system and a dynamic National Population Register.

Conducting the population Census is a mammoth task, of course. Full involvement of the government system is necessary to organise it. But the Census is necessary since it forms the basis of all the plans and programmes that the government wants to implement. Postponing the Census has immediate and long-term negative consequences for India. The government and other stakeholders should take urgent steps to conduct the Census as early as possible.

The writer is Professor in Public Health and Mortality Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences. Views are personal

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



JANUARY 30, 1983, FORTY YEARS AGO

NEW UNION CABINET
INDIRA GANDHI LEFT the face of her government practically unchanged in a feeble dent-beating exercise. She dropped only one Cabinet colleague, Kedar Pande, and seven junior ministers and included two former chief ministers in her Cabinet. K Vijayabhaskara Reddy, Lok Sabha member, who was chief minister of Andhra Pradesh till the Congress (I) rout in the elections, has been inducted as a Cabinet minister without portfolio. Viswanath Pratap Singh, who resigned as Uttar Pradesh's chief minister after his failure to curb the dacoit menace, has been named Commerce Minister with Cabinet rank.

RESIGNATIONS
C P N SINGH, Minister of State for Non-conventional Energy, has resigned from the Cabinet. His resignation has been forwarded by Indira Gandhi to the President for acceptance. It is likely that two or three other ministers who are not in the capital will also submit their resignations in the next one or two days. The news of the resignation of Singh came late, almost eight hours after Gandhi had recast her cabinet team.

EMERGENCY RULES
WITH THE PRESIDENT giving assent to the Assam Executive Magistrate's (temporary powers) Act, the state government added one

more to the list of emergency powers for the forthcoming elections. The new act gives unprecedented judicial powers to the executive magistrates. Under the act the executive magistrates, "to the exclusion of all other magistrates" have the powers to "take cognisance, try and dispose of cases relating to offences under the Indian Penal Code or any other law providing for jail for six months, fine or both."

PILOO MODY DEAD
PILOO MODY, PARLIAMENTARIAN, who not only laughed at his rotund self but punctured others with his darts of wit died in his sleep. He was 57. Mody is survived by his American-born wife Vina and his two brothers.

THE IDEAS PAGE

Enforcing the Patent Bargain

Sensitivity towards intellectual property rights should not be at the expense of public health obligations and long-term national interests



THE SIDEBAR
BY J SAI DEEPAK

IN MAY 2016, the then Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (now known as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) under the Ministry of Commerce released the 32-page National IPR Policy. The overall purpose of this document was to spell out the government's comprehensive vision for the IPR ecosystem in the country towards shaping a more innovative and creative Bharat. To this end, seven broad objectives were spelled out, of which three are relevant to the discussion at hand. Under the head "Legal and Legislative Framework", the goal was "to have strong and effective IPR laws, which balance the interests of right owners with larger public interest"; under "Administration and Management", the objective was "to modernise and strengthen service-oriented IPR administration"; and under "Enforcement and Adjudication", the focus was "to strengthen the enforcement and adjudicatory mechanisms for combating IPR infringements".

Following this, over the last six years, the IPR ecosystem in this country has witnessed both structural and legislative changes. For instance, the Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) was dissolved in April 2021 as part of tribunal reforms, and its jurisdiction was re-transferred to high courts. This was followed by the establishment of dedicated IP benches ("the IP Division") by the Delhi High Court, arguably the country's leading court on the IPR front, for speedier disposal of IPR disputes. These steps have gone hand in hand with a conscious effort to improve the infrastructure and strength of the Indian Patent Office. Such measures, one presumes, are intended to convey to investors and innovators that Bharat is an IP-savvy and even IP-friendly jurisdiction without compromising on national interest and public health commitments. This is evident from the very same National IPR Policy which, among other things, expressly recognises "the contribution of the Indian pharmaceutical sector in enabling access to affordable medicines globally and its transformation to being the pharmacy of the world".

However, it appears that the patent establishment of the country has drawn a very different message — it has gone on an overdrive to prove its patent-friendliness, rather patentee-friendliness, in the pharmaceutical sector at the expense of public health and national interest respectively. This is despite the presence of legislative safeguards in the Patents Act which were introduced between 1999 and 2005 to secure national interest and to balance Bharat's decision to grant product patents for 20 years for "substances intended for use or capable of being used as food, or as medicine or drug". Provisions such as Sections 3(d), 53(4) and 107A of the Patents Act were expressly introduced between 2002 and 2005 to prevent the mischievous practice of "evergreening" of patents, which pharmaceutical "innovator" companies had successfully resorted to in patentee-friendly jurisdictions such as the United States. Despite the foresighted engrafting of these provisions in the Indian Patents Act to prevent a repeat of such ever-



CR Sasikumar

greening behaviour, "Evergreening patents" on drugs which relate to treatment of diabetes, cancers, cardiovascular diseases and other serious conditions continue to be granted to pharmaceutical innovator companies by the Indian Patent Office. Worse, they are regularly enforced through courts at the expense of the statutory rights of generic manufacturers and to the detriment of patients.

What is also disquieting is the non-application of the Supreme Court's verdict in *Novartis AG v. Union of India & Others* (2013) wherein the apex court shed brilliant light on the legislative intent behind the insertion of Section 3(d) in the Act — to prevent the evergreening of a patent monopoly on a drug by making inconsequential additions or changes that in no way enhance the drug's therapeutic efficacy. Disappointingly and disturbingly, the Supreme Court's imprimatur to such legislative safeguards, and clear and binding guidance on the manner of their application in the grant of pharmaceutical patents, have not yielded mature outcomes both from the Patent Office and subordinate courts. The direct consequence of this is the delayed entry of generic versions of off-patent drugs. This, in turn, adversely affects the availability of affordable medicines to patients in a lower middle-income country such as Bharat where most middle-class families and below are only a hospital-visit away from dipping into their hard-earned savings.

It must be understood that IP legislations such as the Patents Act do not exist for the sole benefit of IP right owners. The intended beneficiary of the *quid pro quo* underlying the Patents Act, better known as "the Patent Bargain", is the society which is expected to benefit from dynamic innovation-based competition between market players. Simply put, patent monopolies are granted to innovators in the hope that they disclose something new, inventive and of industrial value to the public which the public may use without the need for a license from the patentee after the expiry of the patent monopoly. This *quid pro quo* between patentees and the society, in theory, increases the general

pool of knowledge in the public domain. The other economic assumption behind the Patent Bargain is that it is expected to trigger innovation-driven competition between market players which results in increasing the basket of quality options for the consuming public. However, when an evergreening patent is granted by the Patent Office and enforced by courts, the Patent Bargain becomes a Faustian bargain since it results in the illegal extension of the twenty-year term of the monopoly. This, in turn, undermines competition in the market and enables patentees to extract more from the society than permitted.

Clearly, there are four stakeholders under the Patents Act — the society, government, patentees and their competitors. Each of these stakeholders has rights under the statute which makes all of them right owners. To interpret, apply and enforce the Act to the exclusive benefit of patentees, and that too evergreening patentees, is to abridge and reduce to a naught the legitimate rights of other stakeholders, leading to sub-optimal and worse, anti-competitive market outcomes.

It is one thing to operate under the understandable belief that Bharat needs to add layers to its IPR ecosystem to attract investment. However, it is entirely another to equate IPR-sensitivity with a pro-patentee position at the expense of public health obligations and long-term national interest. Bharat's confidence in the realm of foreign policy, where it places national interest first, must equally inform its IPR-push. To cut a long story short, 'Make in India' must be reconciled with 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', and in the event of conflict between the two, the latter must prevail for Bharat to retain its position as the pharmacy of the world.

It is one thing to operate under the understandable belief that Bharat needs to add layers to its IPR ecosystem to attract investment. However, it is entirely another to equate IPR-sensitivity with a pro-patentee position at the expense of public health obligations and long-term national interest. Bharat's confidence in the realm of foreign policy, where it places national interest first, must equally inform its IPR-push. To cut a long story short, 'Make in India' must be reconciled with 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', and in the event of conflict between the two, the latter must prevail for Bharat to retain its position as the pharmacy of the world.

The writer is a commercial and constitutional litigator who practises as an arguing counsel before the Supreme Court of India, the High Court of Delhi and the NCLAT. He is the author of bestselling books, *India that is Bharat: Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution, and India, Bharat and Pakistan: The Constitutional Journey of a Sandwiched Civilisation*

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Racism, hate speech and gun crime are chronic systemic diseases in the US. The ambiguous attitude of Washington elites is an important reason why this problem has not been cured and has even intensified." — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Reading it wrong

There is no credibility problem with any of the large household survey based datasets on the Indian labour markets



MAHESH VYAS

THIS IS IN response to the article 'Jobs data and its discontents' by Surjit Bhalla and Tirthatanmoy Das (IE, January 24). The authors create a false impression of a lack of data when there is plenty to use from official and private sources. India has made good progress on employment data in the past six years.

In 2016, CMIE started publishing regular data on employment. This uses its large fast-frequency sample survey — the Consumer Pyramids Household Survey (CPHS). CMIE has continued to publish employment data through the pandemic-induced lockdowns. Record-level data generated from the survey has been used by reputed Indian and global researchers to write papers that have been published in peer-reviewed journals. CMIE pioneered the publication of monthly unemployment rate and other associated labour statistics in India. Today, there is no dearth of fast-frequency data on the labour markets because of this initiative by CMIE.

The government has also succeeded in dramatically improving its data releases in recent years. Since 2017-18, delays and irregularity in release of employment data by the government has reduced enormously. We can always ask for more. But, we must acknowledge the progress made by India's official statistical system. Further, unlike in 2018, official data are not fretted over publicly by government officials anymore, as it was then. The government and the official statistical machinery have made progress and this must be acknowledged even as we demand further progress.

The authors claim that CMIE does not report monthly data on employment. This is incorrect. CMIE publishes monthly data on employment regularly. These are often discussed in the media. Preetha Joseph and Raashika Moudgill have used the CMIE-published monthly employment estimates in their work for the CEDA-CMIE Bulletin. CMIE stands by these estimates. These estimates imply that between January 2020 and September 2022, employment fell by 14 million or by 3.4 per cent.

Bhalla and Das compare this 3.4 per cent fall in employment with the 8.3 per cent rise in national GDP between 2019 and 2020 and claim that both numbers cannot be right. Both can be right, but it is not the best practice to compare monthly point estimates of employment with annual estimates of GDP. If we update the comparison to December 2022 and compare it to a like pre-Covid month, December 2019, we see a 4.6 million increase in employment. It is not advisable to compare point monthly estimates with annual GDP estimates. Joseph and Moudgill don't make such a comparison.

Bhalla and Das then use what they call as the "non-interpolated non synthetic original CMIE data for the calendar years 2019 and 2022". This, again, is wrong. CMIE does not publish calendar year estimates of employment. The claim that these are

original CMIE estimates is incorrect. The authors seem to have derived them as simple averages of results published by CMIE for three different waves in the calendar years 2019 and 2022. It is possible to derive calendar year estimates. To do that one needs to pool the raw data of the three waves and use appropriate weights. The superset of sample observations from three waves is larger than any of the individual waves and therefore needs a different set of weights. The shortcut of averaging of estimates of three individual waves may not yield the correct annual estimate. CMIE avoids such shortcuts.

CMIE publishes wave-wise estimates, fiscal year-wise estimates, quarterly estimates and monthly estimates. It does so by pooling the sample data as required for the estimates and using the appropriate weights. Bhalla and Das have done none of this.

Bhalla and Das claim that the CPHS data lacks credibility because the female labour force participation rate is much lower than that observed by the Periodic Labour Force Survey of the government. True, and the reason for this is a well-known fact. It is because CMIE uses a different definition of employment. It eschews the rather relaxed definition in the official system of classifying a person as employed if such a person was employed for even just one hour in a seven day reference period, to the exclusion of all other statuses during the same week. CMIE's CPHS considers a person to be employed if such a person is employed for a better part of a day.

Because of CMIE's different approach, India now has two different estimates of female labour force participation (PLFS and CPHS). Both are useful and one can use either of the two, or even both. We have a choice.

Finally, a clarification on the World Bank report alluded to by the authors. The paper by Sutirtha Sinha Roy and Roy van der Weide referred to in the World Bank report uses the CPHS data to emulate an NSSO survey for the purpose of estimating poverty in India. They have reconstructed the dataset (the sample itself) and transformed the data substantially to construct estimates that can possibly be comparable to estimates based on a methodology as close as possible to the 2011-12 consumption expenditure survey of the NSSO. These transformations are a researcher's prerogative. Others have estimated poverty using the same CPHS datasets differently. We welcome this diversity.

There is no dearth of data on the Indian labour markets. There is no credibility problem with any of the large household survey based datasets on the subject either. Researchers are putting all this to great use. Both, the CPHS and the NSO databases are being used extensively by researchers to throw light on the Indian economy. Possibly, no other country can match such an incredibly data-rich environment — copious, diverse, official and also private.

The CEDA-CMIE collaboration is an effort to provide data-driven insights into the trends in employment in India. We should welcome and engage with such an initiative and look forward to many more such efforts.

The writer is Managing Director & CEO, CMIE

Gandhi beyond binaries

His striving for 'swaraj' generated an energy that flowed far and touched other lives



RAJNI BAKSHI

SOME YEARS AGO, I had an opportunity to ask Mohammad Yunus what might be his earliest memory of the concept of nonviolence and Gandhi. Yunus became quiet and reflective as he recalled the evening of January 30, 1948, when he was about seven years old.

Suddenly, the whole household was in a state of shocked silence. News had just come over the radio that Gandhiji had been assassinated. Yunus has vivid memories of his father, a staunch Muslim Leaguer, standing before the radio and crying. Over 70 years later, as Yunus talked about this, he was himself close to tears.

Today, Yunus is world famous as a pioneer of micro-finance and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. As a boy growing up in what was then East Bengal, Yunus revered the protagonists of the Chittagong armoury uprising as martyrs. He had watched his father passionately involved in the struggle for the creation of Pakistan. So, in this household Gandhi would have been more of an opponent than a hero. And yet there was a welling-up of grief not only when Gandhi's life was snuffed out but in recalling the moment decades later.

The same was probably true for millions of households across India where, on the

evening of January 30, 1948, no one ate. Many of those people may have strongly disagreed with Gandhi on any number of things. Yet, the passing of Gandhi felt like a death in the family. Even more so, millions mourned because his being killed felt like an assault on an exemplar of the striving for swaraj, command over our self, our passions.

Yet today it is far more common to equate disagreement with rejection and/or vilification of the opponent. For example, the dominant narrative about Gandhi's assassination encourages us to see it as a binary contest between diametrically opposing ideologies. Numerous dramas and films have already offered varied versions of Gandhi-Godse as a merely two-sided story. Even at an emotional level we tend to see the killing of Gandhi as a stark contest between love and hate.

This approach is convenient but dangerous. Such a divide makes life look simple, but it misleads because too much of reality is rendered invisible. This is dangerous because it strengthens the kind of politics that thrives on resentment against some "other" and is insecure in the face of ambiguities.

It could be argued that in everyday life there is a need to "keep it simple". But this does not mean that a simplistic love-hate bi-

nary is all that we can manage. In fact, most people experience these emotions as a wide range spectrum within which they float about, almost constantly on the move. Love and hate are not the opposite ends of a table tennis table with each one of us being tossed this way and that.

This is why Gandhi's life touched people in complex ways — as much inspiring as provoking. Yes, the popular telling of it, the cardboard cutout version, became sadly one-dimensional. But even a fleeting, half-hearted, attempt to learn about Gandhi illustrates that life is made up of situations, experiences and truths that are multi-dimensional. It follows that intentions, actions and outcomes are inevitably muddled and move in a swirling manner — not binaries that can be tracked in straight lines.

This is why turning love and hate into a binary contest is as dangerous as raw hate by itself.

Maybe this is the essence of why Gandhi was an inspiring presence even in the lives of those who disagreed with or opposed him. His experiments with truth were well documented in real-time but it is unlikely that millions of people actually read those letters, articles or books. It was his own daily striving

for "swaraj", despite its many imperfections that generated an energy that flowed far and touched other lives.

Perhaps it was this that created the almost personal bond that countless people felt with Gandhi — even if they had never met or seen him. The American journalist Vincent Sheean was on-site on that winter evening when Gandhi was shot dead. Later, Sheean travelled on the train carrying Gandhi's ashes for immersion at the confluence of Ganga and Jamuna. Sheean wrote: "The long journey of the train across the central plain of India was an evidence — if any were needed — of how every inhabitant, whatever his condition, felt this loss. Wherever the train stopped, and in a great many places where it did not stop, crowds of people had assembled for darshan. ... In empty fields, at small villages and at crossroads it was even more impressive to see the peasants standing with their hands joined in the attitude of prayer as the train passed."

Then and now, grieving over the manner of Gandhi's departure goes with rejoicing in swaraj as a path to suprapersonal happiness.

Bakshi is an author and founder of the online platform, *Ahimsa Conversations*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Market message' (IE, January 28). The release of the Hindenburg report had a significant negative impact on Adani Enterprises. The allegations that shell companies had invested billions in Adani shares raise serious questions about corporate governance and call into question the role of SEBI in addressing such practices. The situation has implications for retail investors, as it raises concerns about the integrity of the company's operations. Concerned authorities should investigate and take action against any misconduct.

Shaswat Jena, Ghaziabad

introspection and correction. Sadly, the reaction of upper castes to the criticism of Ramcharitmanas reflects their disregard for a large section of Hindus.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

TENNIS ICON

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'One of a kind' (IE, January 28). The Australian Open mixed doubles final didn't go the way of the Indian duo, Rohan Bopanna and Sania Mirza. But for young girls, Mirza will always be an inspiration. Her identity — as a woman, a Muslim, a married athlete and a mother — tells a tale of a fighter.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

A TELLING REACTION

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Ramcharitmanas of Tulsidas, and criticism of the holy book' (IE, January 28). It was an informative report for the uninitiated. The article, 'Shadow fight over Ramcharitmanas' (IE, January 28) contextualised the information in the former article within the political culture of intolerance. B.R Ambedkar, the greatest critic of Hinduism and its caste system, had extensively dealt with derogatory references to Dalits in his writings, which is primarily aimed at the upper castes for

MAKING FRIENDS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Delhi to Cairo' (IE, January 27). The invite extended to the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, as the chief guest for India's Republic Day celebrations is a move in the right direction. This would aid in elevating India and Egypt's relationship to a strategic partnership. Securing that relationship would mean gaining another friend in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) after Saudi Arabia.

Aditi Raj, Jammu

Rape victim's father killed, four of accused family booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, JANUARY 29

BANDA POLICE have booked two cousins, accused of rape, and their fathers for the murder of the teenage victim's 53-year-old father. The girl's father was found dead near his residence in Banda district on Friday.

The rape case was lodged over a week ago on court's orders.

The victim's family alleged that the accused, who are their neighbours, had been pressuring them to settle the rape case, police said. They claimed that the accused killed the rape victim's father after they refused to strike a compromise, officials added.

The police had initially ruled out murder of the 53-year-old, saying his post-mortem report stated that the death occurred due to hanging.

Deputy Inspector General (Chitrakootdam range) Vipin Kumar Mishra said since no ligature marks were found around the neck, they were taking legal opinion on the matter. No injury was found on any other part of the body either, he added.

The police are also looking into an old dispute between the family of the accused and the rape victim, the DIG said. They are also collecting call details of the four accused booked in the murder case.

No arrest has been made in the murder case so far.

On January 20, three persons, including the two cousin brothers and an unidentified person, were booked for allegedly raping the girl from their neighbourhood. It was alleged that the girl was raped on October 17 last year when she had gone for work to the fields.

After the police did not file a case, the girl's family had moved court to get the FIR lodged. An FIR was lodged against four persons including cousin brothers on murder charge. The police said the rape victim's brother was booked two years back for sexually assaulting a female member of the men accused of murdering the 53-year-old.

FAMILY OF DEAD SMUGGLING ACCUSED ALLEGES ASSAULT

'He was mechanic, gau rakshaks rammed their Bolero into his car'

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA NUH, JANUARY 29

A DAY after police said that a 22-year-old Haryana man accused of cattle smuggling died of road accident injuries, his family claimed he was a car mechanic who had been waylaid by gau rakshaks (cow vigilantes).

At Waris Khan's house in Hussainpur village of Nuh district on Sunday, his elder brother Imran said: "He was beaten up by Bajrang Dal members on the suspicion of smuggling cattle and succumbed to injuries from assault. He was a car mechanic and had no involvement in cattle smuggling. He had gone to Bhiwadi on Saturday night to check a second-hand car for his two associates and was returning when the incident took place."

Police have contested the claim, saying Waris had likely died of internal injuries and that there was no visible injury on his body.

Showing a purported video of Waris and his two associates allegedly recorded during a Facebook Live by gau rakshaks after the mishap, Imran said: "In the video, it is clear that he has no serious injury. He is answering normally. How did he later succumb to internal injuries? We want justice."

The alleged mishap took place in Nuh's Tauru area. Police said a Santro with three occupants — Waris Khan (22), Shokeen (30) and Nafis — crashed into a tempo near Khori Kalan on Tauru-Bhiwadi road on Saturday at around 5 am.

Nuh SP Varun Singla said both vehicles were badly damaged and three accused suffered injuries in the accident, which was captured on CCTV.

"Gau rakshaks reached the spot and recorded a video of the accused before intimidating the police. A police team arrived shortly after. The accused were handed over to the police and police took



Cow vigilantes with Waris (pictured left) and his two associates in front of their Santro. One of the men is seen with a gun



the trio to a CHC in Tauru, from where Waris and Nafis were referred to government medical college in Nalhar. At Nalhar, Waris died of injuries sustained in the accident," said the SP.

Singla said the post mortem was conducted by a medical board and a final report of cause of death is awaited. "The body had no visible injuries. It seems that he succumbed to internal injuries sustained in the accident. The family of the deceased has alleged that he was beaten up by gau rakshaks of Bajrang Dal, but prima facie, since the body had no visible injuries, there is no evidence suggesting any physical assault. A complaint against Bajrang Dal has been recorded in the daily diary register. There was no delay in police reaching the spot or any negligence in the accused being handed over to the police from gau rakshaks."

Imran, meanwhile, said that at 6 am, a villager saw the alleged Facebook Live video of Waris and informed the family.

"For 3-4 hours, we kept looking for him. At 10 am, we heard that he was taken to Nalhar. When I reached there, he had died. Nafis told us at the hospital that after the crash, the vigilantes forced them into their car and took them to a deserted area and beat them up," he said.

In the purported video of the incident, the vigilantes could be seen bringing out a cow from the Santro and questioning the three injured about their names and respective villages. In another video, vigilantes, one of whom is armed with a gun, are seen posing next to the three injured in front of the damaged Santro.

In a police complaint, Imran said that Bajrang Dal members rammed their Bolero into the Santro around 5.30 am near Khori Kalan.

On the complaint of the tempo driver, police have registered an FIR against the three occupants of the car under several IPC sections and sections of the

Haryana Gauvansh Sanrakshan and Gausamvardhan Act. Police said Nafis was arrested earlier in a case of cattle slaughter and was out on bail.

In the FIR, the tempo driver, Abdul Karim, said: "...I reported the incident to the police (at 112). A PCR arrived and after that, some members of the Gau Raksha Dal from Tauru also reached the spot. The police and Gau Raksha Dal members, with the assistance of passersby, took the injured trio out of the car. The car did not have a rear seat and a cow, which had been forced into the car, was rescued by gau rakshaks. The car occupants were taking this cow for the purpose of slaughtering it."

Waris is survived by his wife and a three-month-old daughter.

Mohit Yadav, member of cow protection task force and Bajrang Dal, who was named in the complaint, said, "The allegations against us are false. It was an accident. We received information about the accused smuggling a cow and reached the spot. We recorded a video of the accused and handed them to police."

From transfers to quality of homes, CPWD asks regional offices to address VIPs' issues

DAMINI NATH NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE CENTRAL Public Works Department (CPWD) on Tuesday asked its regional offices to address the pending "VIP references" on priority basis, including a complaint of harassment of a contractor's employee received via the Prime Minister's Office and complaints from Ministers and MPs about the quality of their government housing.

Among the 32 references, as per an office memorandum, were requests for transfer or to stop the transfer of CPWD engineers, architects and other staff. The PMO reference, dated September 19, 2022, mentioned the "harassment of employees of Swastik Electrotech Pvt Ltd, 3H Division, CPWD, Pant Marg, New Delhi". While the memo did not elaborate on the case, a CPWD official said the matter pertained to a payment issue. Since there was delay in clearing dues from the CPWD, the workers didn't get the payment on time, it is learnt.

Among the VIPs who sent references about the condition of their government houses were Union Minister of State for Defence

and Tourism Ajay Bhatt, who raised concerns about "poor quality of work of wooden flooring, bathroom accessories and electricity work executed in bungalow no. 10, Teen Murti", and MPs Prince Raj (Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party), and Rameshbhai Lavjibhai (BJP). Congress MP Pramod Tiwari asked for the construction of a portacabin with a bathroom in his government house.

Union Minister for Social Justice Virender Kumar, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, MoS Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal, and MoS Agriculture Kailash Choudhary were among those who sent references about transfers and postings of staff. BJP MPs Dharambir Singh, Ajay Nishad, Bhagirath Choudhary, Saumitra Khan, Jaskaur Meena and Jagdambika Pal all raised transfer issues, too.

MoS External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi had the most number of pending references, including two regarding compassionate appointment of family members of deceased officials. She also sent references for repair works in Type-IV quarters at Gole Market and maintenance works at K Block, Type-I, Kali Bari — both in her con-

stituency of New Delhi. She also raised references about a pension case and the re-hiring of an employee fired by a contractor. BJP MP Nanardan Singh Sigriwal and Congress MPs Neeraj Dangi, K C Venugopal and Hibi Eden had also made references for compassionate appointments.

Union Culture Minister Kishan Reddy's pending reference was "regarding construction of special home at Raigharh in Odisha". The CPWD memo cited a reference from Lok Sabha MP Kanakmal, requesting for "approval of Sudhakar brand electrical conduits, PVC pipes and water tank in Southern region states".

Biju Janata Dal MP Chandrani Murmu raised concern over the "problem faced by the residents of Prem Nagar Market" in Delhi, while MP Muzibulla Khan (BJD) raised the discrepancy in wages of employees at the welcome desk of MS Flats in Delhi.

BJP MP S Selvanabathy requested to reduce the penalty of debarment of an electrical contractor. Delhi's Karol Bagh MLA Vishesh Ravi had requested for maintenance and cleaning at a government colony in Dev Nagar.



The protest by Lakhnawal village residents. Express

LAND ROW

Visva-Bharati gives Amartya options: Court or discussion

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, JANUARY 29

IN A fresh attack on Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, Visva-Bharati University (VBU) authorities Sunday said they "strongly deplored mudslinging by those seeking to fulfil their vested interests" over illegal possession of land on the institution's campus.

In a press release, the university said, "In order to avoid such circumstances in future, Visva-Bharati put facts on record and requests Prof Sen to do what is required to be done to protect his self-respect and the institution's reputation."

It further read, "Two options are open — the confusion that Prof Sen seems to be happily nurturing shall be cleared with the intervention of the court of law or through discussion with the Visva-Bharati authorities. The issue needs to be addressed freely and frankly with no baggage carried from distortions of the reality."

The university claimed that of a total of 1,134 acres of land, 77 acres were encroached till 2018. In the last four years, the university authorities have reclaimed 15 acres of land from the illegal occupants, the press release said.

"The drive to evict illegal occupants started in response to an order of Government of India dated November 30, 2017," it said.

It further read, "In case of Prof Amartya Sen, the process for the mutation of land that was given to his father Ashutosh Sen began with the letter of Amartya to the then Vice-Chancellor Rajat Ray. In the letter, Prof Amartya asked Ray "whether appropriate legal steps can be taken during his forthcoming visit to Santiniketan".

University authorities on January 24 wrote to Sen, asking him to hand over parts of a plot he has been allegedly occupying at Santiniketan.

The Nobel Laureate had earlier said that most of the land he is holding at Santiniketan (in Birbhum district) was "purchased from the market" by his father Ashutosh Sen while some other plots were taken on lease.

Paper leak in Gujarat, junior clerk exam postponed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE GANDHINAGAR, JANUARY 29

THE RECRUITMENT examination for the post of junior clerks with the Gujarat government was postponed by the Gujarat Panchayat Service Selection Board (GPSSB) hours before it was to be held on Sunday after its question paper was found to be leaked.

Chaos broke out at some state transport bus stations where irate youths raised slogans as the government pooled buses specially to ferry the candidates for free.

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) has arrested 16 persons in connection with the case registered under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code



Candidates who came to Ahmedabad for the junior clerk exam

(IPC) for breach of trust, cheating and criminal conspiracy. The ATS also claimed to have busted an inter-state gang involved in paper leaks.

Over 9.53 lakh candidates had applied for around 1,000 va-

cancies of Class III Junior Clerk (Administration/Account) posts. The examination was to be conducted at 2,995 examination centres across the state. Around 7,500 policemen and around 70,000 staff were deployed for

the examination.

In an official statement, the Gujarat ATS declared the names of the 15 accused as Pradeep Nayak, Ketan Barot, Bhaskar Chaudhary, Murari Kumar Paswan, Kamlesh Chaudhary, Mohammed Firoz Alam, Sarvesh Kumar, Mintu Kumar Rai, Mukesh Kumar, Prabhat Kumar, Aniket Bhatt, Raj Barot, Pranay Sharma, Hardik Sharma and Naresh Mohanty. The sixteenth accused Jit Nayak was arrested from Hyderabad and process was on to get him to Ahmedabad.

According to ATS, they had got a tip-off Saturday that one Pradeep Nayak was planning to sell the question paper for GPSSB recruitment examination to candidates in collusion with Bhaskar Chaudhary and Ketan Barot.

The examination was to be held between 11 am and 12 noon on Sunday. However, early morning, the Board issued a statement informing the candidates not to go to the examination centres as the question paper was leaked.

Sunil Joshi, Superintendent of Police (Operations), Gujarat ATS, said that most of the accused are connected with educational consultancy activities. Later in the day, GPSSB chairman and IAS officer Sandeep Kumar addressed the media and said an investigation revealed involvement of an "organised gang" from outside Gujarat. He added that prior surveillance was kept on anti-social elements.

Kumar said, "The postponed examination will be held within next 100 days."

Lucknow: Woman, her son injured in acid attack at house

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, JANUARY 29

A 50-year-old woman and her son sustained injuries after an unidentified person threw acid on them at their residence in Lucknow's Gomti Nagar area on Saturday night.

The police said the motive behind the attack is not known yet. The victims, identified as Anita Verma and her son Vikas Verma (22), are being

treated at a hospital and are stable, officials said.

Lucknow Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Syed Ali Abbas said, "On Sunday, we got a complaint that a person knocked at the door of the victims around 10pm. Vikas opened the door and someone threw a substance at him, causing him injuries. It seems that the substance also fell on his mother's hands and face, also leaving her injured."

"A case was lodged under Section 326-A (volun-

tarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc) of the IPC. Both the victims are stable and teams are scanning CCTV footage from the area to trace the accused," Abbas added.

Gomti Nagar Station House Officer Dinesh Chandra Mishra said the victims have not named anyone in their complaint. "They do not suspect anyone. We are scanning CCTV and will arrest the accused. The motive will become clear once we arrest," said Mishra.

FIR against flier over bid to remove emergency exit cover

Mumbai: A passenger on an IndiGo flight to Mumbai from Nagpur allegedly attempted to remove the cover of the emergency exit when the aircraft was about to land in Mumbai, the airline said Sunday.

IndiGo said in a statement that an FIR has been registered against the passenger for the alleged act, and there was 'no compromise' on the safety. The air-

line, however, did not share other details.

"A passenger travelling on Flight 6E-5274 to Mumbai from Nagpur allegedly tried to remove the cover of the emergency exit, while the aircraft was in the air and was approaching for landing... the crew on board alerted the captain, and the passenger was appropriately cautioned," the airline said. PTI

Punjab farm union blocks railway tracks, 9 trains cancelled

RAAKHI JAGGA LUDHIANA, JANUARY 29

NINE INTER-CITY trains were cancelled as Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) Sunday observed rail roko (train blockade) for three hours at 15 locations in 13 districts of Punjab over the pending demands of farmers. Despite the drizzle in many parts of Punjab, the protestors remained on rail tracks.

The train blockade from 1 pm to 4 pm was lifted in Taran Taran, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Moga, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Fazilka, Faridkot,

Malaut, Mansa, Samrala, and Faridkot. However, the blockade at Gurdaspur, announced to be an indefinite one, was not lifted. The cancelled trains were: Ferozepur-Fazilka, Fazilka-Bathinda, Jalandhar-Hoshiarpur, Hoshiarpur-Jalandhar, Bhagatnawala-Khemkaran, Khemkaran-Bhagatnawala, Amritsar-Qadaiar, Qadaiar-Amritsar and Ferozepur-Jalandhar. Commuters faced difficulties as many trains were delayed or short-terminated due to the protest.

Sarwan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the KMSC, said, "On January 29,



Farmers in Amritsar on Sunday. Rana Simranjit Singh

2021, when our dharmas were at Delhi borders, a group of BJP supporters attacked our

tents and a clash broke out between farmers and them. Our farmers were booked in that

incident but not the ones who had attacked us. The tents where women were living were also torn. Two years have passed and despite having video proof of the incident, no action has been taken against them. Many FIRs lodged against farmers during farm agitation have not been quashed to date. This 'rail roko' was to lodge our protest against that injustice and many other demands." He added, "The dharna from Gurdaspur rail track will not be lifted till the demands of farmers on adequate compensation of their land for Bharatmala project are not

met. There are around 4,000 such affected farmers whose land is coming under the project but the compensation is not up to the mark. In addition to this, even sugarcane farmers in this area want pending compensation for their crops."

On February 1, the KMSC will join the protest dharna at YPS chowk on the border of Mohali and Chandigarh by Qaumi Insaaf Morcha demanding the release of Sikh prisoners who have completed jail terms.

Meanwhile, eight trains were rescheduled while three others were diverted.

THIS WORD MEANS

POLAR VORTEX

Chilly weather in Asia is due to the same phenomenon that brought extreme cold to the US last month



A train stops due to a power outage in Kyoto last week. Snow and cold weather hit road, air and train travel in Japan. *Kyodo News via AP*

IT HAS been a cold January in Asia — from China, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula where heavy snow and blizzards temporarily shut down highways, to unusually chilly weather across South Asia, including many parts of India.

The polar vortex

Scientists say Asia's extreme cold is largely the result of the so-called 'polar vortex', the same weather phenomenon that brought exceptionally cold weather to the United States last month. The term refers to an expanse of cold air that generally circles the Arctic but occasionally shifts south from the North Pole. The phenomenon itself has always been present, even if the expression polar vortex has become popular only in recent years.

The polar vortex is held in place by the Earth's rotation and temperature differences between the Arctic and midlatitudes. When those variations in temperatures grow, the polar vortex can shift south.

This month, the polar vortex brought Arctic air to Central Asia before slowly moving eastward, said Woo Jin-kyu, a meteorologist at the Korea Meteorological Administration. Its southward bulge is accompanied by a shift in the jet stream, a ring of strong wind that blows from west to east along the vortex's edges, he said.

"It looks like the rails of a roller coaster," Woo said. "And the larger the

amplitude of the rails, the larger the area of the polar vortex and the farther south the Arctic air extends."

Climate change?

Scientists aren't sure what role, if any, climate change plays in the process of southward shift of the polar vortex. This happens naturally, but some scientists think that as the planet warms, shifts in the polar vortex are likely to become more frequent and pronounced. But there is no consensus on whether the number of extreme freezes will increase as warming continues.

It's likely that recent droughts in Asia made the region even more susceptible to temperature extremes, said Mark Howden, the director of the Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions at the Australian National University.

There has been a general decrease in the frequency and intensity of cold extremes across much of the world since the 1950s, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noted in a report last year. But Howden, the vice chair of an IPCC working group, said the trend is an average that doesn't account for local variations.

"What's happening in parts of the world is that we're getting more cold weather and more extreme weather," he said. "Hotter hot days and colder cold days." **THE NYT, AP**

Study links common viral infections to neurodegenerative conditions

AN ANALYSIS of about 450,000 electronic health records has found a link between infections with influenza and other common viruses and an elevated risk of having a neurodegenerative condition such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease later in life, *Nature* reported in a news article. But the authors of the research, published *Neuron* earlier this month, cautioned that the data only show a possible connection, and that it's still unclear how or whether the infections trigger disease onset.

The analysis (*Virus exposure and neurodegenerative disease risk across national biobanks*) found at least 22 links between

viral infections and neurodegenerative diseases. Some of the viral exposures were associated with an increased risk of brain disease up to 15 years after infection.

This isn't the first time that viruses have been linked to neurodegenerative disease, the article in *Nature* pointed out. Infection with a type of herpes virus has been associated with the development of Alzheimer's, and a study published in *Science* last year found the strongest evidence yet that Epstein-Barr virus is tied to multiple sclerosis. But many of these past studies examined only a single virus and a specific brain disease. **ENS**



HARISH DAMODARAN

WITHIN THE last year, the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation has raised the maximum retail price (MRP) of its Amul brand full-cream milk (containing 6% fat and 9% SNF or solids-not-fat) in Delhi from Rs 58 to Rs 64 per litre. The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)-owned Mother Dairy went further — from Rs 57 to Rs 66 per litre — between March 5 and December 27, 2022.

The last time milk prices went up by Rs 8/litre was between April-end 2013 and May 2014. From the chart, it can be seen that the MRP rise in Amul milk wasn't very significant after May 2014, when the Narendra Modi government came to power. It rose by just Rs 10/litre over almost eight years until February 2022.

Since then, prices have rocketed — and more for full-cream milk. The MRP revision in toned milk (3% fat and 8.5% SNF) by Mother Dairy has been only Rs 6 per litre (from Rs 47 to Rs 53), as against Rs 9 for full cream.

What explains this recent inflation?

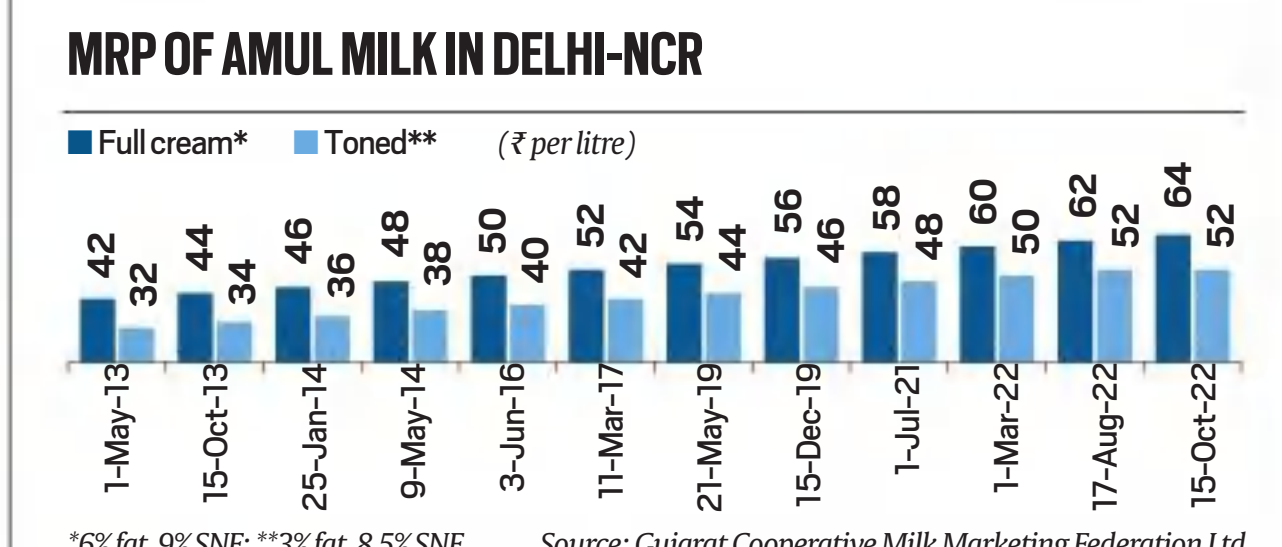
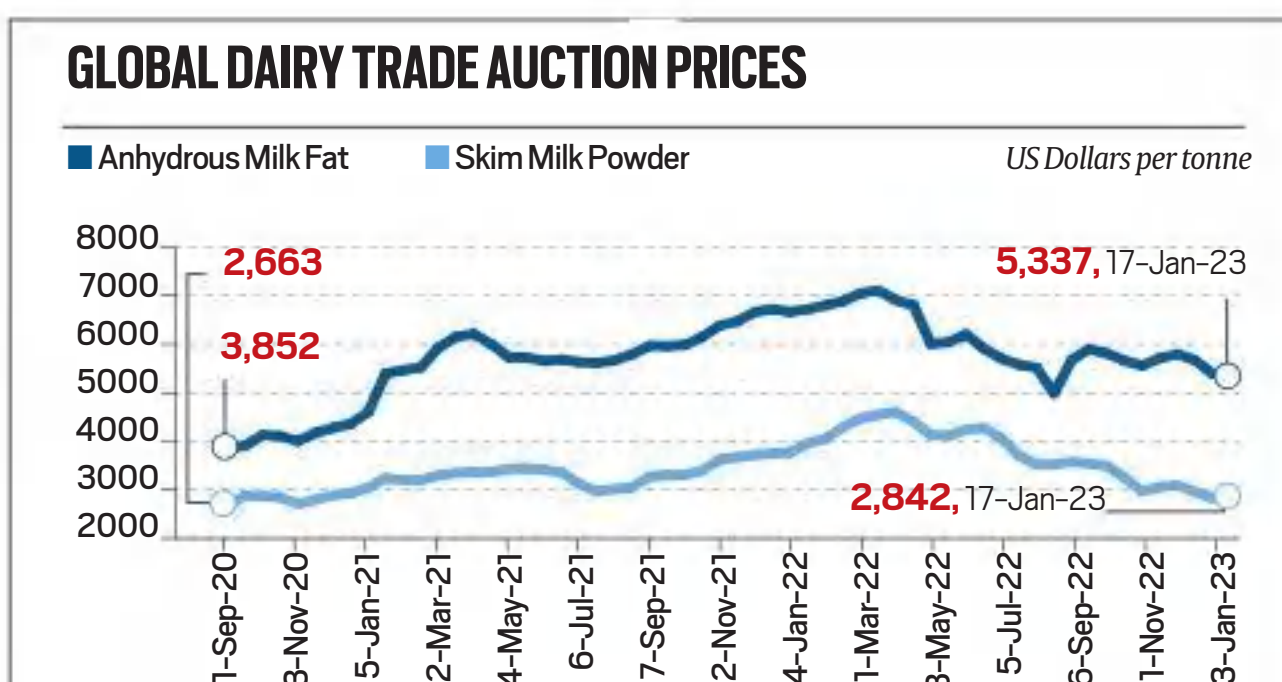
There are multiple factors. The most important probably has to do with the crash in prices following the Covid-induced lockdowns, which forced the closure of hotels, restaurants, canteens and sweetshops, apart from cancellation of weddings and other public functions. The demand destruction led dairies to slash procurement prices of cow milk (with 3.5% fat and 8.5% SNF) to Rs 18-20 per litre during April-July 2020 and that of buffalo milk (6.5% fat and 9% SNF) to Rs 30-32. This was accompanied by ex-factory prices of skim milk powder (SMP) collapsing to Rs 140-150 per kg, along with Rs 200-225/kg for cow butter and Rs 280-290/kg for ghee.

Farmers responded first by shrinking — or at least not expanding — the size of their herds, as milk prices would not cover the cost of feeding and maintaining the animals. Two, they underfed them — particularly the calves and the pregnant/dry cattle not giving milk. A newborn crossbred typically reaches puberty and is ready for insemination in 15-

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

The inflation in milk

Milk prices rose by around Rs 8 in 2022 — the last time this happened was almost 9 years ago. This is in part a consequence of the way farmers underfed calves during the Covid-induced squeeze in business



MRP OF AMUL MILK IN DELHI-NCR

*6% fat, 9% SNF; **3% fat, 8.5% SNF. Source: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd.

18 months. Adding 9-10 months of pregnancy, it will deliver and start lactating after 24-28 months. The age of first calving in buffaloes is higher, at 36-48 months.

The calves that were underfed during the lockdown — which extended past the second Covid wave until June 2021 and beyond — are today's cows. Most of them, even if they have survived, would be poor milkers. This is evidenced by dairies across India reporting lower milk procurement, with the year-on-year drop up to 15-20% for the cooperative federations in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The same dairies that were refusing to buy from farmers in 2020-21 are at present paying Rs 37-38/litre for cow milk and Rs 54-56/litre for buffalo milk.

Is the pandemic-period legacy of underfed animals the only reason?

There are others too, both on the supply and demand fronts.

On the supply side, the average cost of cattle feed spiked from Rs 16-17 per kg in 2020-21 to Rs 22-23 by mid-2022, on the back of more expensive ingredients such as

cotton-seed, rapeseed and groundnut extractions, soyabean meal, maize, de-oiled rice bran and molasses. Availability of straw (particularly wheat, due to a poor 2021-22 crop) and fodder (because of near-incessant rains, especially in the South, from October-December 2021 through 2022, which did not allow the grass to fully come out) has also been an issue. On top of these came the outbreak of lumpy skin disease among cattle in July-September 2022, that seemingly impacted milk output further.

On the demand side, the lifting of lockdown restrictions and revival of economic activity from late-2021 coincided precisely with the building up of supply pressures. This was exacerbated by India exporting about 33,017 tonnes of milk fat worth Rs 1,281.15 crore in 2021-22 and 13,360 tonnes (Rs 664.82 crore) during April-November 2022, against a mere 15,600 tonnes (Rs 717.17 crore) in 2020-21. Higher exports of butter, ghee, and anhydrous milk fat, enabled by soaring international prices, have added to the domestic shortage — and as noted earlier, full cream milk has become dearer, with

branded ghee and butter also disappearing from store shelves.

What's the current situation and the future outlook?

In contrast to the 2020 lows, ex-factory per-kg realisations are now at Rs 305-315 for cow SMP, Rs 340-plus for buffalo SMP, Rs 425-430 for cow butter, and Rs 520-525 for ghee. "Milk shortfall is mainly in the South; it is better in Maharashtra. Even in the northern buffalo belt, supply hasn't picked up as much as one would expect for the flush season," said Ganesan Palaniappan, a leading Chennai-based dairy commodities trader.

But worse could lie ahead. The calving season ("flush") for animals, when more milk flows from their udders, generally begins from September. That's the time temperature and humidity levels dip, alongside improved fodder-cum-straw availability from the monsoon rain and harvesting of the kharif crop. The calvings peak in the winter and continue until March-April before the onset of summer.

The "flush" months are also when dairies convert the surplus milk that they procure into SMP, butter, and fat. Those, in turn, are used for reconstitution during the "lean" summer season, when the animals produce less, even as demand for curd, lassi, and ice-cream surges.

What can the government do now?

A shortage of milk, more specifically fat, is a concern at this point when dairies would ordinarily be building up stocks for the summer. Since that's not happening, it makes sense to allow duty-free imports of butter oil and SMP. The most recent price of \$5,337 per tonne (Rs 435/kg) for anhydrous milk fat at New Zealand's Global Dairy Trade fortnightly auction works out to below the corresponding domestic rate of Rs 520-525/kg. This wasn't the case in March 2022, when global prices had topped \$7,100 per tonne (see chart).

Butter fat imports currently attract 40% duty. For SMP imports, it is 15% up to 10,000 tonnes per year and 60% for quantities beyond that. The government can permit NDDB to import fat and SMP at zero duty for building up a buffer stock necessary for the summer, when milk supplies will dry up in the normal course. Domestic production should hopefully recover by the next "flush" season, when farmers would be enthused enough to milk more animals that have no dearth of feed or fodder.

In HCs and SC, safe abortion debate continues

KHADIJA KHAN
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DELHI HIGH Court has allowed a raped minor to terminate her 25-week pregnancy, and framed guidelines for officers investigating cases of rape and sexual assault where the pregnancy exceeds 24 weeks. "...Denying a woman right to say no to medical termination of pregnancy... would amount to denying her human right to live with dignity as she has a right in relation to her body which includes saying Yes or No to being a mother," Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said on January 24. (*Minor R Thr. Mother H vs. State NCT of Delhi & Another*)

In doing so, the HC went beyond the 24-week upper limit in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021, and the Supreme Court's 2022 ruling in *X vs. Principal Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of NCT*.

SC's 2022 judgment

On September 29, a bench led by Justice D Y Chandrachud, now Chief Justice of India (CJI), expanded the scope of reproductive rights and bodily autonomy under the MTP

Act, 1971 to groups such as unmarried women, transgenders, and genderqueer groups.

"...We use the term 'woman' in this judgment as including persons other than cis-gender women who may require access to safe medical termination of their pregnancies," the court said. It allowed abortions in cases where the pregnancy was 20-24 weeks old, and said it was unconstitutional to discriminate between married and unmarried women in this regard — "all women are entitled to the benefit of safe and legal abortions".

Bombay HC judgment

Building on the aspects of a woman's "reproductive autonomy", "reproductive choice", and "right to dignity" in the apex court's 2022 judgment, Bombay High Court on January 20 this year allowed the termination of a 33-week-old pregnancy on account of severe abnormalities in the foetus.

The court went against the recommendations of the government hospital's medical board which had warned against aborting on account of delay, and the foetus being in an advanced "gestational stage". The

court reasoned that doing so would condemn the foetus to a substandard life and force a "traumatic parenthood" on the petitioner's family.

A two-judge Bench of Justices Gautam S Patel and S G Dige said that it is a woman's right to choose whether she wants to go ahead with a pregnancy with foetal abnormalities. "Given a severe foetal abnormality, the length of the pregnancy does not matter," the court said. (*ABC vs. State of Maharashtra*)

In their judgments delivered within days of each other, the Bombay and Delhi HCs allowed exemptions that went beyond the permissible confines of Rule 3B of the Rules annexed to the MTP Act, which specifies seven categories of women eligible for termination between 20 and 24 weeks, including survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest, minors, women with disabilities or mental illness, etc.

New case before SC

The question of striking a balance between a woman's reproductive choice and the foetus's right to life came before the Supreme Court this month after a 20-year-

old unmarried college student approached it seeking termination of her 29-week-old pregnancy. (*P vs. Union of India & Another*)

On January 19, a three-judge Bench headed by CJI Chandrachud asked the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to constitute the medical board to examine if the safe termination of the petitioner's pregnancy was possible without endangering her life and wellbeing. The report's findings pointed to a high possibility of the foetus being alive at the time of being born.

On January 23, the court requested Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati to interact with the woman after examining the medical board's report. "Even if she wants to abort right now, it has to be a caesarean and there is an 80 per cent chance that the child will be born alive. They say once a child is born even by C-section, it will have to be sent for neonatal care," the CJI said during the hearing.

However, the petitioner stood firm in her resolve to terminate the pregnancy. The matter has been adjourned to February 2 on account of the petitioner's exams.

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Mughal Garden to Amrit Udyan: a short history

DIVYAA
 NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE ICONIC Mughal Garden at Rashtrapati Bhavan was renamed 'Amrit Udyan' on Saturday, in keeping with the theme of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Spread over 15 acres, the spectacular gardens are an integral component of the beauty, grandeur, and mystique of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The Mughal style

The gardens drew their inspiration from the Mughal gardens of Jammu & Kashmir, the gardens around the Taj Mahal, and the miniature paintings of India and Persia, says the Rashtrapati Bhavan website.

Their architecture was based on the gardens of medieval Persia, particularly the *char bagh* (literally four gardens) structure, which Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire, described in his memoir *Baburnama* as his personal favourite. The *char bagh* style was intended to create a rep-

resentation of perfect harmony with the elements of nature. Typical features of Mughal gardens in present-day India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh include pools, fountains, and canals with flowing water.

Lutyens' imprint

Edwin Lutyens had submitted the plan of the gardens — a grid of parterres, water channels, and walkways — behind the erstwhile Viceroy's palace in 1917. He wrote to his wife that year that the Government of India had "commanded a Mogul garden which means terraces, waterways, sunk courts, high walls, etc. etc... It is too Alice in Wonderlandish for words." (*Swarna Liddle: Connaught Place and the Making of New Delhi, 2018*).

With the Mughal canals and terraces, Lutyens fused elements of European flower gardens — flowerbeds, lawns and private hedges. Plantings started in 1928-29, with the Director of Horticulture, William Mustoe, collaborating closely with Lutyens.

Liddle writes that Sarojini Naidu had suggested the name 'Garden of Unity' for the garden, but it was never adopted, and the garden came to be known simply as the Mughal Garden.

By the Presidents

The gardens in Rashtrapati Bhavan also originally included the East Lawn, Central Lawn, Long Garden, and Circular Garden. More gardens were developed during the terms of successive Presidents, especially Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Ram Nath Kovind — such as Herbal-I, Herbal-II, Tactile Garden for the visually challenged, Bonsai Garden, and Arogya Vanam. President R Venkataraman had added a cactus garden as well.

"On the occasion of the celebrations of 75 years of Independence as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the President of India is pleased to give a common name to the Rashtrapati Bhavan gardens as 'Amrit Udyan', the President's Secretariat said in an official release on Saturday.



1) President Giani Zail Singh at Mughal Garden. 2) President Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma with children from the Presidential Estate School at Mughal Garden.

3) President Pranab Mukherjee waves while inspecting flowers at the Mughal Garden. 4) A fountain and flowers at the Garden. 5) President APJ Abdul Kalam was especially fond of the plants in the Rashtrapati Bhavan gardens. *Express Archive*

14 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Elisabeth Borne's comments came ahead of fresh plan of protests this week. *File*

FRANCE
Retirement age must be raised to 64, says PM

Paris: France's prime minister Elisabeth Borne insisted Sunday that government's plan to raise retirement age from 62 to 64 is "no longer negotiable," angering parliamentary opponents and unions who plan new mass protests and disruptive strikes this week. Retirement at 64 and a lengthening of the number of years needed to earn a full pension "is the compromise that we proposed after having heard employers' organisations and unions," she said in interview. **AP**

SRI LANKA
Police probe death threats on election body

Colombo: Sri Lankan police have launched probe into alleged telephone threats received by the members of the independent elections commission, an official said on Sunday. Police spokesperson Nihal Thaldudwa said court orders to analyse telephone records had been obtained. On January 19, two members S.B. Divaratne and K.P. Pathirana had filed complaints over telephonic threats to resign. Later M.M. Mohamed, another member, had received similar threats. Fourth member P.S.M. Charles had reportedly offered her resignation. **PTI**

PAKISTAN
Petrol, diesel price hiked by Rs 35 a litre

Islamabad: Pakistan's ministry of finance announced on Sunday petrol and diesel prices would rise by 35 rupees (\$0.1400) a litre after the country's currency value plummeted this week when price caps were removed. The decision came days before an International Monetary Fund mission will visit Pakistan later this month to discuss the stalled ninth review of the country's current funding programme. Last week, the Pakistani rupee lost close to 12% of its value. **REUTERS**

CHINA
Visa issuing for travellers from Japan resumes

Tokyo: China announced it was resuming issuing visas for Japanese travelers beginning Sunday, ending its nearly three-week suspension in an apparent protest of Tokyo's tougher Covid entry requirements for tourists from China. The decision was announced in a statement posted on the Chinese Embassy's website. China stopped issuing new visas in Japan on January 10 in apparent retaliation for Tokyo's requirement of additional tests for Chinese tourists in December, ahead of Lunar New Year holidays. Japan cited soaring infections in after it abruptly eased restrictions from Beijing. **AP**

At least 42 killed as bus crashes into ravine, catches fire in Balochistan

48 passengers were travelling from Quetta to Karachi; only 3 people were rescued alive, say officials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BALOCHISTAN, JANUARY 29

AT LEAST 42 people, including women and children, were killed on Sunday after a speeding passenger bus crashed into a pillar of a bridge and fell into a ravine in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, according to officials.

The bus was carrying 48 people from provincial capital Quetta to Karachi, the capital of Sindh province, when it crashed into the pillar and subsequently careened into a ravine before catching fire in the Lasbela area, Assistant Commissioner Lasbela Hamza Anjum said.

"The speeding bus crashed into the pillar of a bridge while taking a U-turn near Lasbela and fell into a ravine and then caught fire," he told the media.

Anjum said till now 42 bodies have been recovered from the accident site.

Only three people, including a child and a woman, could be rescued alive, the official said, adding that the death toll could rise as the injured were in critical condition.

"There were a total of 48 people on the passenger coaster," he said. He said the bodies were charred beyond recognition and DNA testing will be done for the identification of the deceased.



Wreckage of the bus in Lasbela, in Balochistan province, on Sunday. *AP*

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah expressed grief over the tragedy and extended condolences to the bereaved families.

Such horrific road accidents happen frequently in Pakistan especially in areas where roads and highways need repairs and no proper safety measures are

followed while awarding licenses and permits to commercial vehicles.

Passenger buses are frequently crammed to capacity and seatbelts are not commonly worn, meaning high death tolls from single-vehicle accidents are common.

AT LEAST 10 CHILDREN KILLED IN PESHAWAR AS BOAT CAPSIZES

Peshawar: At least 10 children were killed on Sunday when a boat carrying religious school students capsized in north-west Pakistan, officials said. Around eight students were still missing while seven injured had been taken to hospital, according to local officials in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where the accident took place. Kohat's district commissioner Mahmood Aslam said around 50 students from a local religious school, had gathered near Tanda lake for a picnic. Twenty-five had ventured out on the water - which was closed by authorities for recreational trips - on a boat that capsized, he said. The pupils who had died were aged between seven and 12 years old, according to a list shared with Reuters by the commissioner. **REUTERS**

UK TAX ROW

Sunak fires party chairperson over allegations of tax bill, code breach

Nadhim Zahawi was Treasury incharge when alleged ethic breach took place

MIKE FULLER & JILL LAWLESS
LONDON, JANUARY 29

BRITISH PRIME Minister Rishi Sunak fired the chairman of the governing Conservative Party on Sunday for a "serious breach" of ethics rules in failing to come clean about a tax dispute.

Sunak had faced days of pressure to sack Nadhim Zahawi amid allegations he settled a multimillion-dollar unpaid tax bill while he was in charge of the country's Treasury.

The prime minister acted after a standards probe found Zahawi had breached the ministerial code of conduct.

It said he had failed to disclose details of his dispute with tax authorities and the fact that he had paid a penalty.

In a letter to Zahawi, Sunak said he had been forced to act to keep his promise that his government "would have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level."

Zahawi had acknowledged the tax dispute but argued his error was "careless and not deliberate."

In his response to Sunak, Zahawi pledged to support the prime minister as a backbench lawmaker and made no reference to the ethics inquiry.

He attacked the media - which first revealed his whopping tax bill, reported at almost 5 million pounds (\$6.2 million) - and claimed some reporting did not reflect "legitimate scrutiny of public officials."

In a report released Sunday, Magnus found Zahawi had shown "insufficient regard" for the requirement "to be honest, open and an exemplary leader through his own behavior" in public life.



Zahawi had acknowledged the tax dispute but argued his error was 'careless and not deliberate'. *AP File*

EXPLAINED
Sunak in a spot

THE ZAHAWI episode was a test of Sunak's authority, who is grappling with a staggering economy and a deeply divided Conservative Party. Standards inquiries are also underway into Johnson - over claims he secured a loan with the help of a Conservative donor who was later appointed chairman of the BBC - and Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab, who faces allegations he bullied staff.

The investigation into Zahawi by HMRC, the UK's tax office, centered around the sale of some 27 million pounds (\$33.4 million) in shares in YouGov, an opinion polling firm he co-founded.

The probe began in April 2021, but Zahawi did not declare it when he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer more than a year later. **AP**

Wagner claims area in Donetsk; Ukraine says attack thwarted



Ukrainian soldiers stand on an armored personnel carrier before going to the frontline in Donetsk region. *AP*

REUTERS
JANUARY 29

UKRAINE'S MILITARY said on Sunday its forces repelled an attack in the area of Blahodatne in the eastern part of the Donetsk region, while Russia's Wagner private military group said it took control of the village.

"Units of Ukraine's Defence Forces repelled the attacks of the occupiers in the areas of ... Blahodatne ... in the Donetsk region," the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces said in its daily morning report, referring to fighting on Saturday.

It added that its forces repelled Russian attacks in the areas of 13 other settlements in the Donetsk region.

The Wagner Group, designated by the United States as transnational criminal organisation, said on the Telegram messaging app on Saturday that its units had taken control of Blahodatne.

Reuters was not able to independently verify the reports.

With fighting heating up in the Donetsk region, the exact line of contact has been unclear, especially around the town Bakhmut where some of the heaviest fighting of the war has been taking place in recent weeks.

The Wagner Group has made premature success claims before.

Ukraine has said that the Russian offensive on Bakhmut has not culminated, but the situation along the front line there has been growingly difficult.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Friday that it was acute.

Four civilians were killed, one in Bakhmut, and 17 wounded in Russian attacks on the region on Saturday, Pavlo Kyrylenko, governor of the Donetsk region said on the Telegram messaging app.

Ukraine has won promises of Western battle tanks and is seeking fighter jets to push back against Russian and pro-Moscow forces, which are slowly advancing along part of the front line.

LAMICHHANE RESIGNED ON FRIDAY AFTER TOP COURT'S MOVE

Two days after repeal, Nepal's ex-Dy PM gets back citizenship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, JANUARY 29

NEPAL'S FORMER deputy prime minister and home minister Rabi Lamichhane on Sunday reacquired his citizenship certificate, two days after he had to resign following a decision by the country's Supreme Court to scrap his status as a member of the House of Representatives for not producing a valid nationality certificate.

Lamichhane on Friday tendered his resignation after the apex court's verdict.



Rabi Lamichhane was stripped of all the positions.

He reacquired a citizenship certificate from Kathmandu's District Administration Office by showing necessary documents.

According to Lamichhane's Press Advisor Navaraj Pande, Lamichhane "re-acquired a Nepali citizenship certificate on Sunday."

After re-acquiring the citizenship certificate, Lamichhane was

re-elected as the president of the Rastriya Swatantra Party. Lamichhane was stripped of all positions - including the posts of Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister, member of House of Representatives and party president after Supreme Court's move.

Lamichhane had in February 1994 acquired citizenship by descent from District Administration Office, Kathmandu. In 2014, he got American citizenship.

His Nepali citizenship was automatically scrapped the day he became an American citizen, as per Nepal's Citizenship Act.

Houses sealed, 2 killed as Israel hardens against Synagogue attackers

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, JANUARY 29

ISRAEL ON Sunday sealed off the home of an east Jerusalem man who killed seven people outside a synagogue, in a preliminary step ahead of the expected demolition of the building, as two Palestinian men died from wounds sustained in fighting with Israeli forces.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Cabinet approved an order to seal the home of a second Palestinian shooter - a 13-year-old boy who wounded two Israeli men in east Jerusalem on Saturday.

His Cabinet also took steps toward approving other measures against the families of Palestinian attackers, including potentially stripping them of citizenship and

deporting them.

The moves by Israel, along with escalating violence, further raised tensions as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in the region. Blinken's high-ware diplomatic act, focused largely on restoring calm, begins Monday after he completes a visit to Egypt.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli police sealed off the east Jerusalem home of a 21-year-old Palestinian attacker who killed seven people and wounded three outside a synagogue on Friday night during the Jewish sabbath. The attacker was shot and killed by police.

The planned demolition is among a series of punitive steps, including plans to "strengthen" its West Bank settlements, announced by Israel in the wake of the twin shootings.

Drone carrying bombs targeted defence factory in Ishfahan: Iran

Three drones were launched - two shot down, one caused minor damage

JONGAMBRELL
DUBAI, JANUARY 29

BOMB-CARRYING drones targeted an Iranian defense factory in the central city of Isfahan overnight, authorities said early Sunday, causing some damage at the plant amid heightened regional and international tensions engulfing the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian Defense Ministry offered no information on who it suspected carried out the attack, which came as a refinery fire separately broke out in the country's northwest and a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck nearby, killing three people.

However, Tehran has been targeted in suspected Israeli drone strikes amid a shadow

The Iranian Defence Ministry offered no information on who it suspected carried out the attack which came as 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck, killing 3

war with its Mideast rival as its nuclear deal with world powers collapsed. Meanwhile, tensions also remain high with neighboring Azerbaijan after a gunman attacked that country's embassy in Tehran, killing its security chief and wounding two others.

Details on the Isfahan attack, which happened around 11.30 pm. Saturday, remained scarce. A Defense Ministry statement

described three drones being launched at the facility, with two of them successfully shot down. A third apparently made it through to strike the building, causing "minor damage" to its roof and wounding no one, the ministry said.

Iranian state television's English-language arm, Press TV, aired mobile phone video apparently showing the moment that drone struck along the busy Imam Khomeini Expressway that heads north-west out of Isfahan, one of several ways for drivers to go to the holy city of Qom and Tehran, Iran's capital.

A small crowd stood gathered, drawn by anti-aircraft fire, watching as an explosion and sparks struck a dark building. **AP**

DEVICE, PART OF SENSOR USED IN MINING, IS BELIEVED TO HAVE FALLEN OFF TRUCK WHILE IN TRANSIT

Sydney scours desert for radioactive capsule smaller than penny

YAN ZHUANG
SYDNEY, JANUARY 29

THE AUTHORITIES in Western Australia are searching for a dangerously radioactive capsule, which they believe fell off a truck while being transported.

But they have a problem: The capsule is smaller than a penny, while the search zone is a stretch of vast desert highway about as long as California's coastline.

The capsule, a small silver cylinder measuring 0.3 inches by 0.2 inches, came from a Rio Tinto mine and formed a part of a sensor used in mining. The sensor

had been put onto a truck and driven from the mine, near Newman in the remote north of Western Australia, to Perth, the state's capital, on a trip that took several days.

The capsule, which contains a small amount of cesium-137, is dangerously radioactive, according to the authorities. An hour of exposure at about a meter away is the equivalent of having 10 X-rays, and prolonged contact can cause skin burns, acute radiation sickness and cancer, they said.

The truck carrying the sensor arrived in Perth on Jan. 16. On Friday, nearly two weeks later, the authorities called an



The sensor had been driven from mine, near Newman in the remote north of Western Australia.

emergency news conference to alert the public that the capsule had disappeared somewhere along the 1,400-kilometer, or 870-mile, journey.

"We want the public to be alert to the possibility of finding the small capsule and the risks," David Gill, a chief superintendent for the Western Australia emergency services department, said at a news conference on Friday.

The state's chief health officer, Dr. Andrew Robertson, warned the public to stay at least five meters away from the capsule if they spot it.

The authorities have acknowledged that they have a

vast distance to cover, and that the search is likely to take "weeks not days." But they hope it will be a little easier than looking for a needle in a haystack.

"What we are not doing is trying to find a tiny little device by eyesight," Darryl Ray, the acting superintendent for Western Australia's Department of Fire and Emergency Services, said at a news conference on Saturday. "We are using the radiation detectors to locate the gamma rays, using the meters, that will help us then locate the small device."

The news of a misplaced radioactive cylinder had many on the internet making the joke: Is

Homer Simpson to blame? The capsule was not lost through cartoonish buffoonery, but through an almost cinematic series of events.

According to the authorities, the sensor containing the capsule was placed inside a wooden box, which was screwed onto a pallet and placed in the back of a truck.

The police believe the disappearance was an accident, and there is no evidence that the box was tampered with after arriving in Perth, he said. But he added that it was unusual for a sensor, or gauge, to fall apart and that authorities would probe how the situation had been handled. **NYT**

15 ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH 7 OF TOP 10 FIRMS SHED MCAP

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of seven of the 10 most valued firms eroded by Rs 2,16,092.54 crore last week, with Reliance Industries Ltd and SBI taking the biggest hit. Last week, the BSE barometer Sensex tumbled 1,290.87 points or 2.12 per cent. **PTI**

FUNDING WINTER, GROWTH SLOWDOWN: CHALLENGES AWAIT IN 2023

How tech firms misread pandemic demand and left workers out in cold

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

"I HAD just woken up, preparing for a regular, boring day at work. Except, at around 10 am, I got a link to join a Zoom call. On the other side of it, my manager informs me that my company, Goldman Sachs, was letting me go. The call ended in 10 minutes. And right after that, my access to all company systems was revoked." This is the version of one of the estimated 700 employees recently laid off by the banking giant in India. This person spoke to *The Indian Express* requesting anonymity, citing professional reasons.

Thousands of other workers in the tech sector — that had boomed during the pandemic — have received similar news since the beginning of 2023. From workers at behemoths like Google, Amazon or Microsoft, to those working at storied startups like Swiggy, Ola and Dunzo, the recent wave of layoffs in the tech sector has barely spared any company.

Those working from home have been laid off over Zoom calls and Slack messages, and those in office have reported incidents where impacted workers have not been allowed to say a final goodbye to their teammates. Those still at these companies are uncertain, and wary of the next round of downsizing.

Google's parent company Alphabet announced it was cut-

ting 12,000 jobs, around 6 per cent of its global workforce. Then, Microsoft announced that it would be cutting almost 5 per cent of its workforce, impacting 10,000 employees. Before that, Amazon said it will be eliminating close to 18,000 employees, a number considerably higher than originally estimated. Salesforce announced it will lay off about 10 per cent of its workforce, roughly 8,000 employees, and close some offices as part of a restructuring plan.

To understand why tech companies are laying off workers now, turn back to the pandemic, when the industry was booming. In the two years of the pandemic, these companies saw record revenues coming in as people shifted to online services to get things done — from buying things on e-commerce platforms like Amazon to shifting their entire working day online on platforms like Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams.

This escalation also meant that demand for skilled tech workers during the pandemic rose, setting off a fierce competition between tech giants and startups alike to attract talent. From fat paycheques to perks including expensive super-bikes, nothing was off the table. Then, there was the availability of abundant capital to startups, who used the money to ensure that even they could outbid the biggest global tech companies for skilled talent.

BEFORE THE LAYOFFS CAME

■ An unsustainable shift by people to online services during the pandemic years, boosting revenue

■ Fierce competition between tech giants and startups alike to attract talent, resulting in fat paycheques, perks

■ Availability of easy money for startups

Then came 2022. The pandemic eased. Russia invaded Ukraine and central banks around the world started sounding the caution about an impending recession. Worse, these companies' bet that the pandemic would be enough of a reason for people to move their entire lives online did not happen.

When Google let go of 12,000 employees, Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, in a blog post explained what exactly had gone wrong: "Over the past two years we've seen periods of dramatic growth. To match and fuel that growth, we hired for a different economic reality than the one we face today."

Similar reasons have been cited by the likes of Amazon and

Microsoft, to a similar effect.

For India's startups, 2023 has been an extension of a year-long funding winter that kicked in in 2022. More than 20,000 workers at the country's startups in sectors like edtech and e-commerce were handed pink slips in 2022 as investors who just a year ago had infused large sums of capital in the market pulled back.

Already in 2023, startups like Swiggy, which in January became a decacorn — a firm with a valuation of \$10 billion or more — recently laid off 380 employees, and Google-backed ShareChat fired 20 per cent, or around 400 of its workforce. Cab hailing firm Ola, which had already fired more than 2,000 workers last year following a failed bid to scale up its quick commerce vertical, let go of 200 employees earlier this year.

"We concluded our performance cycle in October... As with every cycle, we expect exits based on performance," a Swiggy spokesperson said. The layoffs also came on the back of Jefferies reporting that Swiggy's losses during H1 FY23 were six times higher than Zomato's standalone losses during the same time.

"Since our launch eight years ago, ShareChat and our short video app Moj have seen incredible growth. However, even as we continue to keep growing, there have been several external

macro factors that impact the cost and availability of capital," ShareChat said. Since the announcement, its co-founders Bhanu Pratap Singh and Farid Ahsan have stepped down from their active roles in the company.

An Ola spokesperson said the layoffs were because the roles had become redundant.

Where once big valuations were being discussed and decided upon on WhatsApp texts, incidents of alleged corporate fraud at startups like BharatPe meant that investors upped their due diligence before putting money in a startup. 2023 has already seen an example of a startup that in the quest of growing too fast, committed errors in financial reporting to show bloated numbers to its investors.

GoMechanic's founder Amit Bhasin admitted to financial reporting errors at the Sequoia-backed car repair startup and stated that it will lay off roughly 70 per cent of its workforce.

"Our passion to survive the intrinsic challenges of this sector and manage capital, took the better of us and we made grave errors in judgement as we followed growth at all costs, particularly in regard to financial reporting, which we deeply regret," Bhasin wrote in a LinkedIn post. He later edited the post to remove the word 'grave'.



'Ethanol checks all boxes... challenge remains around consumer adoption'

VIKRAM GULATI, Country Head and Executive Vice President at Toyota Kirloskar Motor, speaks to **SANDEEP SINGH** about the multiple pathways in the transition to sustainable energy vehicles, the role of government policy in consumer adoption, and the geopolitical challenges that necessitate country-specific solutions for sustainable transport technology.



In terms of the technology, Toyota has the entire array and there is a sense from the government that it's going to be Lithium-ion plus. On the policy aspect, is there anything that manufacturers are waiting for?

I think the situation has to be seen from the larger objective of energy security — fossil fuel and carbon. These are the two top issues that the Prime Minister has laid out and he has talked about battery electric, hydrogen, ethanol. He has laid out that there will be multi-energy pathways.

The government is placing two-wheeler, three-wheeler and buses at the forefront and there is a logical reason for that and consumer acceptance is key for the transition to take place. It revolves around ownership dynamics, performance dynamics, infrastructure convenience, etc. Ethanol is a great option for India and is truly self-reliant. Coming to hydrogen, I think if we look beyond five to seven years the world is going to use hydrogen seriously, whether you like it or not. I would say the real future is multi technology.

How do you see the push for ethanol?

If you see ethanol, which Mr Nitin Gadkari (Union Minister for Road Transport) has talked about,



I think it is a sensible, practical and fast-paced approach towards achieving our two goals. It is sustainable and recyclable and is the lowest carbon option in Indian and global context. The great thing about this fuel is that the entire value chain is indigenous. It is self-reliant and gives a boost to the agrarian economy, which is carbon neutral, helping displace fossil fuel at a rapid pace. I think Rs 40,000 crore is saved by replacing 10 per cent fossil fuel. It reduces PM 2.5 even further and it is one option that checks all the boxes.

The only area we have to look at is efficiency and hence consumer acceptance. Hence we believe the government is resolving this one by one. The ICE (internal combustion engine) infra exists and the only thing needed is some modification. What we can and

are asking for is consumer adoption because making the vehicle is not a challenge beyond the lead time that is required. But the challenge remains around consumer adoption. I am sure, the fact that the GST on ethanol fuel has been reduced, something more will be done on consumer adoption.

If we have two buckets — ICE adapted with some form of electrification (hybrids being one) vs ethanol vs a different fuel cell, do you see these buckets coexisting or the government playing a role in deciding the winner?

The only thing the government has chosen is the clear objective of energy security and carbon neutrality. If you look at taxation, hybrids get an advantage. We can't say we don't get an advantage in rates but the problem we have been talking about is not the rate but the actual rupee the customer would be paying. So far we didn't have the vehicle in mass segment to be heard, but now it is obvious that the consumer is paying more tax on the strong hybrid than say as compared to gasoline. The issue is that.

In terms of technology, the intent of the government is not to be left behind in the electric space and therefore the fact that we are behind necessitates that there is support to get there. There are geopolitical challenges and everybody knows that China controls the entire market value chain for cells, the

market for rare earth magnets that are absolutely needed for motors that we use in cars. So, if this is the stranglehold in this space, that also points out that you have to be diverse in your approach.

I think the West too has to quickly realise that there is no one solution which can cater to the world. Africa will have something else, South America something else, India something else. Unless you grapple with this reality and are serious about tackling the issue of fossil fuel and carbon, you won't achieve it. Toyota firmly believes that carbon is the No 1 enemy. We could have easily gotten our EVs into Indian markets and nothing stops us, but we are not doing so because we are serious about mass electrification and not about niche electrification.

You have introduced two strong hybrids, Hyryder and Hycross. What is the response and how are you planning to increase localisation?

The response is very good, beyond our expectations, and throws a fresh challenge to manage demand. We are close to 80 per cent on localisation on these vehicles despite the advanced batteries. We are committed to localisation and that is the way for not only meeting societal goals of self-reliance but security for serving all markets. Policy can be an enabler. What we want is kindly make the GST/road tax on strong hybrid technology at least equal in rupee terms.

Banks reviewing Adani exposure, SBI says no divestment worry

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, JANUARY 29

LENDERS TO the ports-to-energy conglomerate Adani Group have started assessing their exposure of over Rs 2 lakh crore to the different businesses of the group in order to take necessary steps, if required, following the release of a research report by US-based short seller Hindenburg Research on Adani, accusing it of "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud", and the crash in the group's listed companies.

According to the State Bank of India, the country's largest lender, as the bank's exposure to the Adani Group is well below the Large Exposure Framework (LEF) of the RBI and is secured by cash generating assets with adequate TRA (trust and retention account)/escrow mechanism in place, debt service will not be a challenge.

"We are looking into it. We are very cognizant of market developments. Whenever events that can affect our exposures take place, we have a process in place to evaluate current exposure to that particular company and take some remedial measures," said an official of a government-owned bank who did not want to be named.

"We are definitely going to look at our exposure (to Adani Group) and see how secure we are and what kind of impact it may have. It may be premature to allude to something right now, but we are watching the situation closely," the official said.

"Coming to SBI, we keep reviewing the non-funded exposures to all large entities periodically, and there is no concern or likelihood of any divestment at this juncture. The bank, as a matter of policy, keeps a watch on all its exposures to large groups and will take measures from time to time on the basis of its assessment," said Swaminathan J, managing director (corporate banking & subsidiaries), SBI.

He said the Indian banking system's exposure to the group as a percentage to their total debt

has been declining over the last two-three years. During the same period, their debt to EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) also has been getting better, which helps the group to service its obligations comfortably.

"As is known, most of their acquisitions have been financed through overseas borrowings and market instruments, hence there is no exposure built up to the Indian banking system on this count," Swaminathan said.

According to a report by investment firm CLSA, the top-five Adani Group companies — Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports, Adani Power, Adani Green and Adani Transmission — have a consolidated debt of Rs 2.1 lakh crore. Indian banks' exposure is less than 40 per cent of the total group debt. Within this, private banks' exposure is below 10 per cent of the total group debt.

The CLSA report estimates that banking exposure to Adani Group is 0.55 per cent of system loans, as bank debt stands at less than 40 per cent of total group borrowing. Within this, PSU banks' exposure as a share of their loans is 0.7 per cent, with the figures for some banks potentially at more than 1 per cent of loans, while for private banks the exposure is 0.3 per cent of loans, CLSA said.

"For a bank, market movement does matter, but what may be even more important is how the company's financials are and how its conduct is. So far, their financials (of Adani Group companies) have been good. It is a big and noteworthy event for everyone connected with the group. All of us are keenly watching it as it unfolds," said another banking source.

"Whenever we sanction loans or take certain exposure to a big corporate, we do a lot of due diligence. We calculate the company's future performance based on certain models. So, irrespective of their market performance, the large focus is on how strong the cash flows are, what kind of promoter backing

the company has, and what kind of bearing any kind of external eventualities can have," he said.

On January 24, the 106-page Hindenburg Research report, which was released a day before the opening up of the Rs 20,000 crore follow-on public offer (FPO) of Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) for anchor investors, also flagged concerns over the group's high leverage.

The Adani Group, however, termed the report as "maliciously mischievous". It also threatened legal action against the research firm.

Following the release of the report, Adani Group stocks saw a massive sell-off. Over the last two trading sessions, on Wednesday and Friday, ten listed Adani companies lost Rs 4.17 lakh crore in market cap. The 20 per cent fall in share prices of Adani companies on Friday also affected banking stocks.

"The carnage in the Adani Group stocks cascaded across the board, and the banking sector faced the maximum pressure," said Ajit Mishra, VP, Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd. SBI shares fell 5 per cent in the bloodbath that hit the sentiment ahead of the Union Budget on February 1.

Bankers said if the FPO is not successful, there could be delay in some projects where the proceeds were to be deployed. This may be a cause of concern for lenders with exposure to these under-implementation projects. Amid massive sell-off in the Adani Group stocks, the AEL's FPO received bids for just 4.7 lakh shares, or 1 per cent, of the issue size of 4.55 crore shares on January 27.

According to the red herring prospectus, AEL has proposed to invest Rs 10,869 crore in capital expenditure for green hydrogen system, airports and construction of greenfield expressway. The group has won the right to own, maintain, develop Navi Mumbai International Airport, a greenfield airport. It is also constructing a six-lane greenfield expressway from Unnao to Prayagraj, the Ganga Expressway, in Uttar Pradesh.

M&A, other corporate deals crossed pre-Covid levels in 2022: report

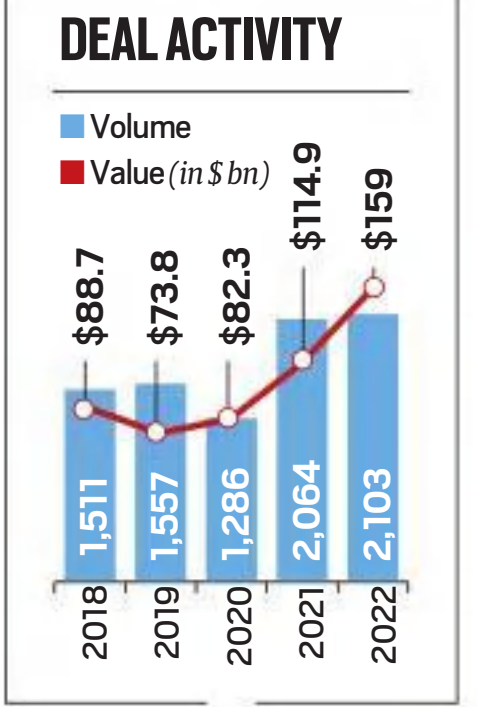
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DESPITE GLOBAL headwinds, mergers and acquisitions in India surpassed pre-Covid levels to reach \$159 billion with as many as 2,103 transactions in 2022, a 29 per cent increase from 2021 in terms of value, said a PwC India report.

India demonstrated signs of stable corporate deals defying the trend among most major economies of the world, said the PwC report titled 'Deals in India: Annual Review 2022'.

Mergers and acquisitions accounted for a major share of the deal value, boosted by more than 20 large transactions, and reached a record high of \$107 billion.

"However, excluding the HDFC Ltd and HDFC Bank merger (worth \$60 billion), M&A



deal values were about 15 per cent lower than that of 2021. Private equity (PE) investments stood at \$52 billion, 22 per cent lower than 2021 but 20 per cent higher than all other preceding three years in terms of value and quantum," it said.

Ahead of Budget, FPIs wary; pull Rs 17,000 cr from equities in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

FOREIGN INVESTORS have pulled out a net of over Rs 17,000 crore this month so far due to the attractiveness of the Chinese markets and the cautious stance adopted by them ahead of the Union Budget and US Federal Reserve meeting.

The outflow in January came after a net inflow of Rs 11,119 crore in December and Rs 36,239 crore in November.

Overall, foreign portfolio investors have pulled out Rs 1.21 lakh crore from the Indian equity markets in 2022, following aggressive rate hikes by the central banks globally, particularly the US Fed, volatile crude, rising commodity prices and the Ukraine war. FPIs have made a net withdrawal of Rs 17,023 crore this month (till January 27).

At 276 MONTHS, MUNEEERABAD-MAHABOBNAGAR RAIL PROJECT IS THE MOST DELAYED

Road transport sector has highest number of delayed projects: Govt report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE ROAD transport and highways sector has the highest number of delayed projects at 428, followed by railways at 117 and the petroleum industry at 88, showed a government report.

In the road transport and highways sector, 428 out of 724 projects are delayed. In railways, out of 173 projects, 117 are delayed, while in the petroleum sector, 88 out of 158 projects are

running behind schedule, as per the latest flash report on infrastructure projects for December 2022.

The Infrastructure and Project Monitoring Division (IPMD) is mandated to monitor central sector infrastructure projects costing Rs 150 crore and above based on the information provided on the Online Computerised Monitoring System (OCMS) by the project implementing agencies.

The IPMD comes under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

RUNNING BEHIND SCHEDULE

428 out of 724 projects.
Road transport and highways

117 of 173 projects
Railways

88 out of 158 projects
Petroleum sector

The report showed that the Muneerabad-Mahaboobnagar rail project is the most delayed project. It is delayed by 276 months.

The second-most delayed project is the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail project, which is delayed by 247 months.

The third-most delayed project, Belapur-Seawood-Urban Electrified Double Line, is running 228 months behind schedule.

The flash report for December 2022 contains information on the status of the 1,438

central sector infrastructure projects costing Rs 150 crore and above.

As many as 835 projects are delayed with respect to their original schedules and 174 projects have reported additional delays vis-a-vis their date of completion reported in the previous month. Of these 174 projects, 47 are mega projects costing Rs 1,000 crore and above.

About the road transport and highways sector, the report stated that the total original cost of implementation of 724 projects when sanctioned was Rs

3,82,180.34 crore but this was subsequently anticipated at Rs 4,02,958.36 crore, implying a cost overrun of 5.4 per cent.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2022 was Rs 2,35,925.26 crore, which is 58.5 per cent of the anticipated cost.

Similarly, in railways, the total original cost of implementation of 173 projects when sanctioned was Rs 3,72,761.45 crore, which was subsequently revised to Rs 6,25,491.15 crore — a cost overrun of 67.8 per cent.

The expenditure incurred on

these projects till December 2022 was Rs 3,65,079.88 crore, or 58.4 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

About the petroleum sector, it said the total original cost of implementation of 158 projects when sanctioned stood at Rs 3,82,097.19 crore but this was subsequently increased to Rs 4,02,446.01 crore, implying a cost overrun of 5.3 per cent.

The expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2022 was Rs 1,54,240.87 crore, or 38.3 per cent of their anticipated cost.

16 IDEA EXCHANGE NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

Every deviation from normal behaviour cannot be attributed to climate change. There is a whole new field of attribution science that deals with just this. It is a difficult and uncertain science. But it is making important progress



WHY MRUTYUNJAY MOHAPATRA

With weather phenomena becoming more and more erratic, people are at a loss to understand what might be happening. There is growing tendency to blame every deviation from normal behaviour to climate change. Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, the director general of Indian Meteorological Department, explains why this might not

be accurate, and points to the multiplicity of causal factors at play behind most observed changes. He also talks about some of the recent trends in weather that are becoming evident over the Indian subcontinent and how they need to invest in equipment, manpower, and research facilities for increasing the accuracy of the forecasts.



During Covid, because the aviation sector — an important source of data for us — was completely shut down, we missed out some important data points that could have thrown more light on the impacts of the pandemic on climate change

Amitabh Sinha: Every season we hear about this or that record getting broken. Was there anything unusual about this winter?

Every season is marked with some unique behaviour. This particular season was marked with one too. This December was the warmest December on record. There were hardly any cold-wave conditions up to the third week of December. Only in the last week of the month, we got a cold spell. So, if you compare the number of days, it was not quite high. If you compare the intensity also, it wasn't that much. But after that in January, we had a cold spell in the first week. We should normally get two to three spells of colder conditions. But so far we've got only one major spell.

The warmer December is in agreement with our previous findings that under the impact of climate change, the temperature during winter months are increasing. There hasn't been much change in the minimum temperatures, but maximum temperatures have been showing a significant rise.

Amitabh Sinha: Globally, the average rise in temperatures from pre-industrial times has already touched 1.2 degree Celsius. Is the warming over India of the same intensity? Or is it more moderate?

You are right. The temperature rise because of climate change is higher in the polar regions and the extra tropical regions. In tropical areas, it is relatively less. In India, average rise in temperatures have been about 0.64 degree Celsius from about 100 years ago, whereas globally it is 1.2 degree Celsius. So, in that sense, global warming over India is not that big.

The rise in average maximum temperatures over India is about one degree Celsius, while minimum temperatures have risen by about 0.26 degree Celsius. So on an average, the temperature rise has been about 0.64 degree Celsius.

Esha Roy: What are we likely to see in 2023? Is this year likely to be warmer?

There is no projection for how warm 2023 is likely to be. We provide only over the seasonal scale. But, maybe, I can give you a qualitative assessment. Last year was a La Nina year. Under La Nina conditions, there is generally a dip in temperatures. But in spite of La Nina, 2022 was one of the warmest years globally, and in India also, average temperatures were about 0.5 degree Celsius higher than normal. Now, the current La Nina conditions have already extended to about three years. It is unlikely to continue further this year. Most of the models are suggesting the possibility of El Nino this year, or at least neutral conditions will prevail. From this perspective, the coming months can be expected to be warmer.

Harish Damodaran: In 2021, India had a very wet winter. But this time it has been extremely dry. Has this been one of the driest winters on record?

Actually, so far the (winter) rainfall is normal over Jammu and Kashmir and other northern states. There was a short-fall, but the recent spell of rainfall has compensated that.

But you are right. Most of the (meteorological) subdivisions in the country are deficient. And there wasn't much rainfall in December and January. This is mainly due to the fact that we did not have significant western disturbance events in this season. This (spell of rainfall in northern India) is the first western disturbance. Prior to this one, all the western disturbance systems had moved north of the Indian latitude.

Harish Damodaran: But 2022 was a La Nina year and La Nina is correlated with better rainfall over India. Why did we still have such a dry winter?

La Nina's relationship with good rainfall over India is limited mainly to the monsoon season. It is not known to impact rainfall outside monsoon season in any significant manner. Even during monsoon, El Nino or La Nina conditions are not the only deciding factors. They have a big influence but there are other factors as well.

Harikrishnan Sharma: Which are the agroclimatic regions most vulnerable to extreme weather conditions in the next five to 10 years? Which crops are likely to be worst impacted?

Let us try to understand what is happening. Under climate change, the warming or rainfall activity, or extreme rainfall events, are not increasing uniformly. There are areas where extreme rainfall events are showing an increasing trend. But there are other regions, like Bihar, some parts of Jharkhand and Northeast India, where rainfall is showing a decreasing trend.

That means that the impact over the roughly 130 agroclimatic zones in the

'The amount we can save by accurate prediction and timely response to a weather event is several times the money invested'

Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of Meteorology, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), on extreme weather conditions, rising temperatures and climate change. This session was moderated by Amitabh Sinha, Resident Editor, Pune



IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra was in conversation with Amitabh Sinha, Resident Editor, Pune *Gajendra Yadav*

country are likely to be very different. The IMD is now providing district-level forecasts and crop-advisory services in association with Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The impact on crops in eastern India and Northeastern states is likely to be different than in other parts of the country.

The crop yields depend on a number of parameters, including rainfall, temperature, soil moisture, humidity. Some studies have tried to model the likely impact and some assessments have been made. For example, everything taken together, it is estimated that the rice yields in the country is likely to decrease with a rise in temperatures.

Mallica Joshi: We have seen a decline in the number of wet days but an increase in extreme rainfall events. As a consequence of this, what areas in the country are more prone to natural disasters?

The vulnerability of any region due to heavy rainfall events depends on several factors. One of the most important of these is physical vulnerability — whether the region is along the coast, a riverine, or hills or plains. In the coastal region, for example, the risk of flooding increases with increasing frequency or intensity of the heavy rainfall. We have seen this in the cities of Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai.

The hilly areas, mainly the Himalayan region and Western Ghats, are prone to cloudbursts, landslides or mudslides. So risks like these increase because of increase in rainfall events. There have been some studies that suggest that the frequency of cloudburst events have remained more or less unchanged, but that mini cloudburst events have increased significantly in these areas.

Mallica Joshi: In the last few years, there have been several instances when the withdrawal of monsoon from Northwest India has been delayed. Is that a trend that is likely to continue in future as well? Is the monsoon season getting extended?

While the onset dates for the monsoon have remained the same — June 1 over Kerala coast — the northward progression of monsoon to southern and central India has been deviating from the normal dates. In some areas, the arrival of monsoon in recent years has been 10 to 15 days later than usual. But when it reaches north India, it advances at a normal pace, and covers the entire region in roughly the same time as earlier. So the onset is happening on June 1, as earlier, and it is covering the entire country by July 15, again, very much like the earlier years. But it is in between the

normal dates of arrival, in some areas, that have been messed up.

Now, when you look at the withdrawal phase, earlier we used to count it from September 1. But, in recent years, we have found that there is a delay in the withdrawal from Northwest India. So, that does indeed mean that the duration of monsoon season is getting extended in some parts of northwest India, and getting crunched in some parts of central India, but remains the same for most other parts of the country.

Esha Roy: There are ongoing efforts to prevent urban flooding in cities like Chennai and Mumbai. Are these efforts being extended to other cities as well?

More and more state governments want to make their cities safe and secure and are requesting IMD for help in flood-management plans for their cities. There have been requests from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and others. The first part of the exercise obviously is to strengthen the observation network. The IMD doesn't have the resources to do this on its own. That is why the initiatives of the states are welcome. We are jointly setting up automatic weather stations to increase the density of observation network.

Second, we are also improving our radar network. And third, we are increasing our capability of satellite-based monitoring. This is particularly useful for remote locations where it is difficult to install and maintain automatic weather stations.

The second part of this exercise is analysis and prediction. Our forecast capability has been improving steadily over the years. The accuracy of heavy rainfall forecasts has increased from about 60 per cent in

2016 to about 80 per cent now. We hope to do it even better in the coming years, reach at least 90 per cent accuracy levels in the next five years. We are also able to provide more localised information now.

The other part is to integrate our forecasts with geospatial information, to provide area specific warning and advisories within a city. For this, we are working with municipal corporations.

So, besides Chennai and Mumbai, we are already working on similar plans for Kolkata, Delhi, Guwahati, and will take up Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Ahmedabad and Pune next.

Harish Damodaran: All of this costs a lot of money right? Satellite, radars, automatic weather stations... how much has your budget gone up? Have you asked for more money?

You are right. Say, about 20 years ago, IMD's budget was around Rs 20 crore or so. But now our budget is about Rs 500 crore. That includes a lot of activities of course, but the core developmental activities budget would also be around Rs 250 crore. But the budget for IMD must not be seen in isolation. The budget for the Ministry of Earth Sciences (under which the IMD operates) is about Rs 1,000 crore and most of this goes for atmospheric sciences. So the budget has gone up substantially, but there is demand for more.

For increasing the accuracy of the forecasts, and provide more services, we need to invest in equipment, manpower, research facilities. This can be done in various ways. There can be direct investment, but investment can also be made in other scientific agencies that contribute to our work. And then there is the investments

being made by the state governments in collaborative efforts.

And these investments are worth every penny, because natural disasters can inflict very huge costs on us. The amount that we can save by accurate prediction and timely response to a weather event like cyclone, for example, is several times the money that is invested. It is often said that every one rupee invested in early warning systems saves at least Rs 1,000 in disasters.

Harish Damodaran: How much of competition do you face from private weather agencies?

There is no threat from others. There are several private agencies offering forecasts and weather services. Many bloggers and YouTubers have also emerged. But most of them actually rely on IMD data, most of which is available for free in public interest. Some of these agencies have also got into an understanding with IMD to use our data and produce forecasts and services.

Amitabh Sinha: Are you monetising the data and information you hold?

If the agency wants to use it for commercial purposes, then we do monetise it. But if it is meant for public service then we still provide most of the data for free. For example, the aviation sector uses our data, and that brings in around Rs 100 crore for IMD every year.

But, yes, we do realise that some private agencies are benefiting from our open access policy for data.

Anonna Dutt: How do we make ourselves, and our infrastructure, more resilient to the impacts of climate change?

There are three steps to increasing resilience. The first part involves improving and strengthening climate science. That means IMD and other scientific institutions generate and provide credible scientific information about what is happening and what is likely to happen. Ultimately, this is what is going to inform the national-level action plan or the state, or local-level action plans. It also involves improving attribution science. We have to make sure that the observed changes are being caused by climate change. Then there are projections. We need to have short-term and long-term projections of the kind of impacts that can be expected. Our capabilities in all these respects have increased significantly.

The second part is adaptation. Whether it is food security, agricultural practices, water management or other things, we will need to get used to new scenarios.

The last step is mitigation. If we want to minimise the impact of climate change, our response mechanism has to be strengthened. The response and relief measures in the case of cyclones for example has improved tremendously, as a result of which we can say, overall, we are much more resilient to cyclones now than we were about 10 years ago.

Amitabh Sinha: There is a growing tendency to attribute every unusual or extreme event to climate change. What are some of the observed changes that we are not sure could be attributed to climate change?

Yes, you are right. It is quite common to link everything to climate change. Every deviation from normal behaviour cannot be attributed to climate change. There is a whole new field of attribution science that deals with just this. It is a difficult and uncertain science. But it is making important progress.

These type of attribution studies are not very frequent in the Indian scenario, but there are already some important insights. For example, the observed increase in lightning and thunderstorms. We are not sure whether this has anything to do with the increase in concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Similar is the case with cyclones, for example. I was part of an international committee to look into the increase in intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea. And after much deliberations, we could only say that this could be attributed to global warming only with very low confidence.

Jatin Anand: Has there been any impact of the pandemic on the impacts of climate change?

There was a statement prepared by the World Meteorological Organization in this regard with inputs from all the countries. The sharp decline in activities during the pandemic has had some impacts. For example, the aerosol loading in the atmosphere was quite less because of which air quality improved. There was less fog and improved visibility. But we could not find any major influence on large-scale weather phenomena like the monsoon.

Actually, we lost an important source of data during this period. We get lot of information from aircrafts. We provide them with forecasts, and in return they collect lots of atmospheric data for us. Because the aviation sector was completely shut down for a few months, we missed out some important data points that could have thrown more light on the kind of impacts that could have been present.



The temperature rise because of climate change is higher in the polar regions and the extra tropical regions. In India, average rise in temperature has been 0.64 degree Celsius from about 100 years ago. So global warming over India is not that big

India square series on square turner

VENKATA KRISHNA B
JANUARY 29

FOR THE second consecutive time in this T20I series, India and New Zealand got a pitch where it gripped and turned. But unlike Ranchi, where competent batsmen of spin could find runs, Lucknow was a furnace for batsmen. Anyone who could bowl spin could take a wicket. That seamers bowled only 9.5 off the 39.5 overs, and India reached the target of 100 runs with just a ball to spare, would tell the story.

You could argue that in T20s the balance of the game is heavily tilted in batsmen's favour. But it is what the format dictates. Millions tune in to watch the game, be it at the stadium, or on television or OTTs, to watch batsmen teeing off from the start. It is the format at the forefront of cricket's changing landscape – where even teams are getting to play even aggressively in Tests – and one where the batsmen are constantly breaking the barriers, providing innovative shots and deliveries. But in Lucknow, they served what former India batsman Gautam Gambhir called a "sub-standard pitch" at Star Sports studio.

Not without reason, as not a single six was hit. Unlike Tests and the ODIs where the diversity of pitches is appreciated, the unwritten universal code for T20s is to roll out a flat deck. Not least for a team looking to embrace a dynamic batting approach.

In 2015, as England pressed a reset button in limited-overs, one of the key but unnoticed aspects was the revamping of pitches. Instead of greenish seaming surfaces, the curators dished out light brown ones with plenty of runs on it. England picked their players to utilise the conditions – attacking batsmen, finger spinners, wrist-spinners, hit-the-deck pacers. Four years later, they won the World Cup.

India are wading through a similar phase. In the ODIs, they precisely got the sort of pitches where they could play free-flowing cricket. It is the model they would prefer in T20s as well, especially as bilateral T20I series are harnessed to build a team for the next T20 World Cup. Instead they got a pitch that captain Hardik Pandya described as a shocker: "To be honest, it was a shocker of a wicket. Somewhere down the line the curators should make sure they prepare the pitches earlier," Pandya said.

It was a pitch where there was a bit of grass in the middle and baldness in the full length area on either side. India duly swapped Umran Malik for Yuzvendra Chahal, who along with Kuldeep Yadav and Washington Sundar out-bowled the Kiwi counterparts.

BRIEF SCORES: New Zealand 99/8 in 20 overs (Mitchell Santner 19; Arshdeep Singh 2/7) lost to India 101/4 in 19.5 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 26 not out; Michael Bracewell 1/13) by six wickets.

Novaxx Djokovic wins

After being detained, deported, and humiliated last year for not taking the covid vaccine, Djokovic comes back to win 10th Australian Open title

NAMIT KUMAR
JANUARY 29

NOVAK DJOKOVIC pointed to his head and heart, in a showing of scarce emotion, moments after he defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-3, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5) to win the 2023 Australian Open. It was not until he climbed up into his players box and embraced his team, that the emotion that had been bottled up over a fortnight of his highest-performance tennis came pouring in.

Djokovic dropped to the floor and wept inconsolably with his team, and later into his towel on court, after completing an extraordinary redemption arc to win a record-extending 10th Australian Open singles title to equal Rafael Nadal's all-time men's record of 22.

A year ago, Djokovic was forced to see Nadal complete a remarkable come-from-behind win in the final to take the lead in the Grand Slam race, after being exiled from his favourite tournament. He was deported, detained, and endlessly humiliated from the city he so adored.

This time around, Djokovic was forced to charm a country's tennis-crazy fans to welcome him back after his failed attempts to enter its borders without a Covid-19 vaccination. He was forced to deal with a hamstring injury he suffered at the Adelaide tuneup, managing it so well that some accused him of faking it. His father was not in his box for the semifinal or the final after he was filmed with Vladimir Putin supporters holding pro-war symbols outside Melbourne Park.

But few athletes are able to turn adversity into steel like the Serb, who gave a showcase on how to defocus his mind from the distractions off the court, to produce some of his best tennis in recent years on it. If Saturday's women's final was a suspenseful, high-octane showcase of top shotmaking and tactics, Sunday's encounter was the direct opposite. It was as inevitable an outcome as anyone could have predicted, between one of the sport's foremost



Novak Djokovic celebrates after winning the final against Stefanos Tsitsipas. AP

players leaving marks of his greatness, but also a few lapses, and a younger challenger who was consistently blown away by the former, and not able to take advantage of the latter.

As Tsitsipas was to find out, getting decimated at the Rod Laver Arena by Djokovic has become a rite of passage in elite-level men's tennis over the past decade and a half. He can look at all-time greats like Rafael Nadal and

Andy Murray – whom the Serb made to look like glorified club players on the same stage – for refuge. Tsitsipas was meant to represent a step up, in terms of level, to each of the opponents that had been blown away by Djokovic this fortnight, and he lived up to the billing to some extent.

After being overwhelmed by a peaking opponent and the occasion in the first set, Tsitsipas improved. He began serving much better, going for the wide serves that troubled Djokovic more often. As the Serb got into his own head and had a lapse in level, he added variety to his game to make him more uncomfortable – moving him side-to-side and bringing him to the net in longer exchanges that Djokovic had been keen to avoid to nurse his ailing hamstring. He began hitting his backhand with a riskier approach, down the line, to avoid getting stuck in long crosscourt exchanges.

But Djokovic did what he has done so many in his play area – night-time at Rod Laver

Arena. Djokovic's greatest attribute is not one iconic movement or shot, but simply his ability to wear opponents down. To make them win a single point with two, three, or four shots, demoralising them by returning their near-200 km/h serves with interest to rob them of time or momentum, chasing down points with incredible anticipation, taking command of the rallies from the baseline.

Even as Tsitsipas served well and increased his aggression, all he could manage was taking the second set to a tiebreaker. He had an opportunity after a few uncharacteristic errors from the Serb, but couldn't take advantage.

Tsitsipas opened the third set by breaking Djokovic's serve. It felt entirely academic. Djokovic immediately got the break back, and progressively increased his level, as Tsitsipas needed top serves to take it to a tiebreaker, in which he slumped to a 0-5 deficit, and eventually lost.

Later on the court, he would call Djokovic "the greatest player to ever hold a racquet", and later in his press conference, said that he did everything he could in his power to play a good match, but came up short, just as many of the younger generation have. "Getting our asses kicked is, for sure, a very good lesson every single time."

Tsitsipas' assessment of the final was honest, but also a reality in plain sight. Sunday's encounter may not have been a high-quality final, but it was an exhibition of what makes Djokovic the greatest player in the Australian Open's history. One year on, Djokovic got his redemption in Melbourne. In truth, nobody even came close to stopping him.

HOCKEY WORLD CUP

Germany halts Belgium juggernaut to win World Cup

MIHIR VASAVDA
BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 29

NIKLAS WELLEN'S tournament began with him becoming a father. It ended with him becoming a world champion. And during this whirlwind journey, the MVP of the World Cup as well as the World Cup final anchored Germany's late, late show en route to them being crowned champions.

On a nippy Sunday night in Bhubaneswar, under the bright lights of Kalinga, Wellen led the frontline, defended his team's half valiantly, drew fouls, won back possession, scored a goal and rounded off the 'keeper twice in the penalty shootout as Germany won 5-4 via tie-breakers to dethrone Belgium.

It was a final for the ages. Unlike the previous two major finals, which were cagey affairs as finals typically are, this one was bonkers. Belgium took a 2-0 lead but Germany, as they have done throughout the knockout stages, staged a remarkable comeback to not just level the scores but also go ahead 3-2 in the final quarter. Belgium then gave Germany a taste of their own medicine by scoring an equaliser with just a minute left to force shootouts.

Once again, the teams were inseparable after the first five attempts for each. This time, it was Belgium who erased a two-goal deficit and leveled the scores at 3-3, just like at the end of regulation time, as the final went into sudden death. And when the 20-year-old Jean-Paul Danneberg denied Tanguy Cosyns, the sea-sawing match that felt like it had gone on forever was at last settled. The Germans sprinted onto the field and jumped on top of their young goalkeeper, playing only his eighth international match, as the players locked themselves in a tight embrace, and yelled like madmen who couldn't believe they had just struck gold.

Germany's Class of 2013

Ten years ago, Wellen had scored a hat-trick in the final of the Junior World Cup, which Germany had won on Indian soil. On Sunday night, seven players from the Class of 2013 – playing under the same coach, Andre Henning – marked Germany's return among hockey's elite. After underachieving for years, this is the European giants' first major title since the London Olympics gold – they did win an Olympic bronze in 2016, but for Henning, it doesn't count for much.

One are the days when Germany were efficient but unadventurous. Henning's Germany has evolved into a heavy-metal, counterattacking unit but has retained – rather, reclaimed – one defining trait: late comebacks.

Thrice in three matches at the World Cup, Germany pulled off heists that no one else apart from them would have anticipated. Against England in the quarterfinals, they



Germany celebrates after winning the hockey World Cup. PTI

scored twice in the last two minutes to force shootouts, which they won. Then, they wiped off another two-goal deficit in the semifinals before scoring the winner with just six seconds left to upset world number 1 Australia.

But when Belgium – the world and Olympic champions heading into the final – took a 2-0 lead within the first 11 minutes, it felt like this would be one comeback too many for Germany. For, if they have a reputation of fighting back no matter what the score line and who the opponents are, Belgium are seen as the masters of protecting their lead.

This was a final where both teams showed the courage to take risks. Both teams guarded their zones and never allowed each other space by crowding the central areas. Belgium used a combination of quick short passes and deadly aerial balls deep into the German half to open up gaps. But it was Antoine Kina's defence-splitting passes through a crowded centre that set-up their two goals.

Once they were up 2-0, Belgium tried to defend their space. It wasn't parking the bus as much as taking fewer risks although they continued to choke their opponents for space. Germany captain Mats Grambusch half-joked about how it 'isn't nice to experience' Belgium's high-press, which they deployed aggressively for a majority of the first half.

But as the match wore on, Germany began to shift the ball through the flanks but more than the ball-movement, it was their off-the-ball running that dragged Belgian players out of their position. Even if they ventured away from their zone just for a split-second, it was enough for Germany to exploit that space and create opportunities.

That's how Wellen once again wielded his influence on the game. In the quarterfinal, he pulled strings from behind the scenes as Germany pulled off a miracle. In the semis, he scored with the final touch to hand Germany another improbable win. And on Sunday, Wellen's goal that opened the scoring for Germany broke Belgium's resilience. The man who became a father at the start of the campaign was the undisputed MVP of a remarkable World Cup.

CROSSWORD 4964

ACROSS
1 It's in our blood (5)
4 Sister is in a whirl with love tales (7)
8 Steal from Roy? (3)
9 Will meant to reform after the trial (9)
10 Has been changed in spirit (7)
11 Ben is out to be a writer (5)
13 Jars of wine on board (6)
15 Still the cause of poor reception (6)
18 Edna's about to provide a seat for a chairman (5)
19 Describe wine and fish (7)
21 Peer drops out though he did well (9)
23 She's a bit of a harridan (3)
24 A go-slow which could be at an end (7)
25 Such paper is rough; could be smoother (5)

DOWN
1 Writers have a small room with a key in a ship (7)
2 A Nottingham bandleader (5,4)
3 A light suit? (5)
4 Better method of making money (6)
5 I'd eat no differently though trying to lose weight (2,1,4)
6 It's always found in an Arctic environment (3)
7 Sat upon an enemy of good (5)
12 Go to bed in a rough sea looking gloomy (9)
14 Pink gin ordered for a VIP? (7)
16 A schoolboy howler? (7)
17 Not much of a press perhaps (6)
18 No right to praise new colour (5)
20 Saddle and take horse about midnight (5)
22 Round, divine and rather funny (3)

Solutions Crossword 4963: Across: 1 Opposition, 8 Quince, 9 Supreme, 10 Trouce, 11 Oxeye, 12 France, 14 Faeller, 17 Legal, 19 Insight, 21 Cheaper, 22 Ratted, 23 Spoilsport. Down: 2 Pandora, 3 Ocean, 4 Instep, 5 Implore, 6 Niece, 7 Celebrated, 8 Out of place, 13 Calypso, 15 Lighter, 16 Signal, 18 Guess, 20 Scrap.

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

CHECKING OUT THE SUBURB'S LATEST ADDITION...
WHAT'S HER NAME?
IT SAYS "RILEY" ON HER BRACELET...
HI, RILEY!
...ARE NEWBORNS NORMALLY SO LIT?
NOT USUALLY.
BUMP!
8-10

CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

OK HOBBS, I'VE GOT A PLAN.
YEAH?
IF I DO TEN SPONTANEOUS ACTS OF GOOD WILL A DAY FROM NOW UNTIL CHRISTMAS, SANTA WILL HAVE TO BE LENIENT IN JUDGING THE REST OF THIS LAST YEAR! I CAN CLAIM I'VE TURNED A NEW LEAF!
TEN SPONTANEOUS ACTS OF GOOD WILL A DAY? THAT'S PRETTY MANY.
DON'T REMIND ME.
WELL, HERE'S YOUR CHANCE. SUSIE'S COMING THIS WAY.
MAYBE I'LL START TOMORROW AND DO 20 A DAY.

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

LOOK, MARVIN! THERE'S SNOW EVERYWHERE!
THAT MEANS THERE'S FUN FOR AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE!
THAT'S FUNNY, I SEE THE EXACT OPPOSITE

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
Although financial pressures and plans are still very much on your mind, you can now afford to put a few possible developments off until later. You're so full of good ideas that all you need now is an extra dose of confidence. And a little more tact.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
Problems of a partnership or matrimonial nature should soon be faced. You may find that once you talk about your concerns, they begin to disappear and your innate sense of well-being returns. An old expense is about to return, but it's also time to collect a debt.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
It's time for a fresh start. Emotional and psychological spring-cleaning should encourage you to put the past behind you and face the future with an open heart. You seem to be keeping a secret, and you may hang on to it for just a little while longer.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)
Much as you'd like to be the centre of attention, you still have no choice but to listen to other people, understand their feelings and try to satisfy their desires. Financial choices are now appearing, but there is no need for a final decision just yet.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
You may now have to come into the open, so have your story ready and make sure you're capable of making yourself understood. Throughout the day you should find that your self-esteem is restored, and that it's no longer necessary to take refuge in your day-dreams.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)
When dealing with finances, business or property matters you should make a point of being as clear-headed as you can. Your heart tells you one thing, your wallet another, so seek expert advice. This is not a good time to give people the wrong idea about your intentions, so make sure you're not misunderstood.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
It's quite a good time to keep yourself to yourself, to find the time and space to listen to your imagination. You may even consider cancelling a social engagement. But before you take any precipitate action, realise that when the time comes, your feelings might have moved on.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
This looks like a busy day, and it's time to call on your more versatile talents. In view of emotional complications, it seems likely that you'll have to juggle different balls in the air at the same time. It may not be easy, especially if a friend or colleague backs out of a commitment.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
You may feel as if you are being forced to do something against your will or against your dignity. However, the best advice now is to press ahead and concentrate on making colleagues see your point of view. Gentle persuasion might work better than brute force. In fact, surely it will.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
Favourable planetary alignments are perfectly balanced by challenging ones, which means that you could have the best of both worlds. This should also be an ideal moment to put your plans into practice. Thought and action should go hand in hand, and your heart and your head should be leading you in the same direction.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
You will soon be afforded a splendid chance to travel to somewhere you've never been before. In any event, you'll do yourself a very big favour if you extend and develop all contacts with companions in distant parts and people from different cultures.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
If you are feeling at all isolated or confused it is because your planetary cycles are now changing and you are being obliged to stand on your own two feet, emotionally speaking. In future, you will have to rely more on your resources and less on support from outside.

JUMBLED WORDS

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

The ___ of the ___ is made possible by nothing but the sanction you give it - Ayn Rand (4,.,5)

ISEOR
BEODL
AASIL
EERSVW

Answer: THE EVIL OF THE GOOD IS MADE POSSIBLE BY NOTHING BUT THE SANCTION YOU GIVE IT - Ayn Rand

Difficulty Level 4s

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

SUDOKU 5094

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5093

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5093

BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Sunday announced a whopping cash reward of Rs 5 crore for the entire India squad following its title-winning performance at the inaugural Women's U-19 T20 World Cup.

Indian women won their first World title claiming the inaugural U19 World Cup beating England by 7 wickets. The brand new champions have faced rejections, discrimination, financial hardships and gender stereotyping to secure a grander victory for women's sport

FIRST LADIES

From playing with washing paddle to hitting the winning runs

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 29

WHEN SHE was younger, India U-19 vice-captain Soumya Tiwari was rejected by coach Suresh Chainani because he did not train girls at his academy in Bhopal. Chainani was disheartened that some of his trainees had dropped out. A young Soumya's first bat was a thaapi thapki (wooden paddle used to wash clothes under a tap) which she took when her mother was not looking. Soon she was using the right equipment after the coach changed his mind when told how anguished Soumya was after he had said 'no' the first time.

On Sunday, Tiwari made crucial unbeaten 24 runs off 37 balls and also hit the winning runs, in a tense chase for India Women's Under-19 team against their English counterparts in the final of the ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup at Potchefstroom.



The victorious India U-19 girls celebrate their title triumph after beating England in the final on Sunday. Twitter/ICC

Cricket on TV instead of cartoons as a toddler

NITIN SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 29

TEN YEARS ago, Gongadi Reddy had to take a tough decision about closing his gym and giving up his job as a fitness trainer with ITC at his Bhadrachalam town in district Bhadrachalam in then Andhra Pradesh. At stake was his only child, Gongadi Trisha's dream of playing cricket.

Reddy, a former U-16 national hockey player, closed his gym and sold four acres of his farmland he owned over the years, to support his daughter's training. On Sunday, the Hyderabad youngster played a knock of 24 runs and stitched together a 46-run partnership with Soumya Tiwari to take India to victory.

"While she initially played in Bhadrachalam, but we had to make a decision to shift to Secunderabad to pursue her cricketing dreams and I had to sell my gym to one of my relatives at what was more than 50 per cent less than the market rate. Later I also sold four acres of our farmland to support the training," said the proud father while talking with *The Indian Express* from Secunderabad.



Soumya Tiwari with her family.

England were bundled out for a paltry 68 runs in 11 overs but India had lost captain Shafali Verma and Shweta Sehrawat early and were reduced to 20 for 2. Soumya's innings included three fours and along with Gongadi Trisha, who also made 24, steadied the innings to pave the way for a famous win.

Soumya, whose father Manish is an election supervisor at the Bhopal Collectorate, recalled his first meeting with the coach which didn't go well.

"When we shifted to New Bhopal (from Shahjahanabad), I took her to coach Chainani for training. At first he refused to train her. Soumya cried for two days. We again went to the academy and urged Sir to train her. He agreed and then made her field in an inter-club match," Manish said.

Soumya was bitten by the cricket bug early. Like kids often do, she searched for something in the house which resembles a bat after watching the game on television and being fascinated.

"Soumya would watch cricket on TV as a kid and would often take the wooden stick used to wash clothes from my wife Bharti. She would ask my elder daughter Sakshi to make paper balls for her and play in the living room. She would play mohalla cricket here and would sometimes complain as boys would not include her in their teams," Manish said.

Prior to the final, Soumya had scored a total of 82 runs, including 22 against New

Zealand in the semifinal.

She also claimed three wickets in the tournament with her off spin. Once she joined Chainani's Arera Cricket Academy at Old Campion ground in Bhopal, Soumya started playing against the boys. Initially she was groomed as an off-spinner before she focussed on batting too.

"Two of my girl trainees had left the game after they were dropped from state teams. So I was disappointed and decided not to train girls. I was impressed by Soumya's fielding and thought of her as an off-spin bowler. So we worked on her action and made her target the off-stump area and also practice on cement as well as turf wickets," Chainani recalled.

Soumya played in the U19 Challenger Trophy last season and also smashed a century, apart from starring for Madhya Pradesh on domestic circuit. Chainani, however, goes back to an incident which showed that Soumya puts team over self.

"We were playing an inter-club tournament. Soumya was the only girl in our team. We batted first and after the first innings, the organiser told us that girls cannot play in the tournament. I protested. Soumya had made a name for herself as a spinner in the local circuit. She came to me and told me that she will sit out to prevent the team from getting disqualified. We won the match but her selflessness is what stood out," coach recalled.

Post the final win, the Tiwari family is celebrating. "Bhopal has been known for the love of hockey and the support of the royals too for cricket. While MAK Pataudi visited the town often, JP Yadav (former Railways veteran) has carried the legacy forward. Soumya has made the city proud and we have been getting calls from so many people congratulating us," Manish said.

BRIEF SCORES: England 68 all out in 17.1 overs (MacDonald-Gay 19; Titas Sadhu 2-6) lost to India 69/3 in 14 overs (Soumya Tiwari 24*, G Trisha 24) by 7 wickets

Taunted for 'showing Archana the wrong path', Savitri is a proud mom

PRATYUSH RAJ
JANUARY 29

AFTER SHE lost her husband to cancer and a son to a snake-bite, she was called a 'daayan' (a witch). Then Savitri Devi was blamed by relatives for sending daughter Archana on galat rasta (wrong path).

When Savitri enrolled her cricket-crazy daughter at the 'Kasturba Gandhi Awasiya Balika Vidyalaya', an all-girls boarding school in Moradabad, 345 km away from their village, Ratai Purwa, Unnao in Uttar Pradesh, there were whispers in the neighbourhood that Archana has been sold by her to some dubious dealer.

"Ladki ko bech diya. (I have sold my daughter). I have put her in the wrong line. People used to tell me these things to my face)," Savitri tells *The Indian Express* over the phone.

On the day her daughter plays England U19 in the World Cup finals, Savitri has gotten on with playing the courteous host to some of these same people. "Now my house is packed with guests and I don't have enough blankets for them. The neighbours, who never drank a glass of water from my house, are now helping me," she said.

Archana's father Shivram died in 2008 due to cancer, leaving behind a lot of loans and three young children. In 2017, her younger son Budhiman Singh died due to a snakebite. Neighbours and relatives didn't spare her then either.

"They used to call my mother a witch, they would say she first killed her husband, then her son. If anyone saw her on the road, they



Archana Devi with her mother outside their house in Ratai Purwa, a village in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao.

would change their route," said elder brother, Rohit Kumar.

Rohit lost his job at a clothing factory in Kapashera Border in New Delhi during the first lockdown in March 2022; he explains the difficulties their mother had to go through to make ends meet for her children.

"Half the time, our farm is flooded with waters of the river Ganga. We depended on the milk of our cow and buffalo (one each). We survived all these years because of our mother. She even ensured I complete my graduation," he added. Unfazed by all these obstacles in her life, Savitri kept going. Her only drive was her dying son's last words to "let Archana fulfil her dream."

"Archana used to play cricket with

If anyone would see my mother on the road, they will change their route. Our home was called witches' house.

ROHIT KUMAR
ARCHANA'S ELDER BROTHER

Budhiman, who was just a year older than her. She hit a shot, and the ball went into an under constructed room, which we never completed after her father died. Every time he would use the bat to get the ball This time he was bitten by a Cobra. His last words were 'Archana ko cricket khilao' (Let Archana play cricket)," Rohit said.

Formal coaching

Punam Gupta, a coach at Archana's school was very impressed by her talent. In the summer break, when she went to her home in Kanpur, she contacted Kapil Pandey, coach of Indian cricketer Kuldeep Yadav. After watching the videos of Archana, Kapil Pandey asked to bring her to Kanpur, and said he would take care of her cricket from his own pocket.

"I saw a passion in her and I had this gut feeling that this girl is a talent and if given a good platform, can play for the country," Pandey said.

"One day, Kuldeep took a few kids from the academy for lunch. On their way, Archana asked which car he was driving. Kuldeep bhai politely replied, 'when you will become a big star, you will get a better car than mine, then do give us a ride' Pat came the reply 'ji bhaiya,'" Rohit narrated.



Trisha Reddy with her mother.

A toddler Trisha had watched cricket matches on TV instead of cartoons. "When she was two and half years old, I started getting her to play with a plastic bat and ball. When she was five, I would take her to the gym along with me and bowl more than 300 throwdowns to her. Later I got a cement pitch installed at a local ground," remembers Reddy.

It was in 2012 that Reddy made a video of Trisha batting in the nets and took the video to show to coaches John Manoj and Sreenivas at the St John's Academy in Hyderabad. "When her father came up with Trisha's batting video to show us, we were impressed with her bat speed and hand eye coordination.

"To have such speed and coordination at a young age of seven years was superb and Sreenivas and I wanted her to be a fine leg-spinner too. Having the technical knowledge of the game at such a young age meant that she was willing to train as a leg-spinner and would bowl the fast one and leg breaks imitating Anil Kumble's action," says Manoj.

Within two years of shifting to Secunderabad, Trisha played for the Hyderabad U-16 team. Nooshin Al Khadeer, who was the Hyderabad U-19 women's coach would take her under her wings and Indian fielding coach R Sridhar would chip in to make her a fine fielder," says Manoj.

Father, a stickler for seating arrangements; daughter Shafali, a champ

ANDREW AMSAN
ROHTAK, JANUARY 29

IT'S ABOUT an hour to go for the U-19 Women's World Cup final between India and England and captain Shafali Verma's father Sanjeev is walking around restlessly in the premises of the Shri Ram Academy in Rohtak where his daughter honed her skills.

When asked what was running through his head, Sanjeev, who runs a small-scale imitation jewellery business, gave an answer apt for a shopkeeper. "Bas aaj women team ko baumi karni hai ji (I just want the women's team to open their account)," father Sanjeev said.

He was referring to the missing World Cup trophy in the Indian women's team's cabinet. The closest India has been to wrapping their arms around a world trophy was back in 2017 in the 50-over format where they lost to England by 9 runs.

But Sunday was India's day. Although star batter Shafali, who got out for just 15 while chasing virtually a no-pressure target of 69, didn't have a great day by her stan-

dards, the joy of lifting India's maiden women's World Cup trophy will bury any disappointments for good.

It was a sleepless night for Shafali's father who has never shied away from going the distance for his daughter's sporting pursuits. "During summers we left home by 5:30 looking for any empty patch to just play. Those things will forever remain here (points towards his heart)," he says, while his eyes go moist.

Superstitious dad

At the screening, attended by Shafali's family and academy mates, father Sanjeev appeared to be the calmest. But it was obvious there was a storm raging inside. Behind the smile, there was a lot of pressure and anxiety. He could be seen chanting prayers and incessantly asking a relative seated next to him to tone down the celebrations during the match. "Hold on. The match isn't over," he told the relative in a stern tone.

Shafali's father is very particular about the seating arrangement during the game. Since India performed immaculately in the first innings he didn't want much tinkering



Shafali Verma's mother Parveen Bala (centre) with her relatives in Rohtak post the World Cup-win. Andrew Amsan

with seating positions in the second innings. But when Shafali came on to bat, he found a friend in place of his relative.

It was a bit comical to see Sanjeev turn

his face towards the friend with a disapproving look on it when Shafali got dismissed as he said: "Yahan baithe out karwa diya (You sat here and now Shafali's

Shafali's father is very particular about the seating arrangement during the game. Since India performed immaculately in the first innings he didn't want much tinkering with seating positions in the second innings.

dismissed)."

The friend probably took it to heart and felt it was best to move to the last row.

It was a proud moment for coach Sandeep, who has spent a lot of time with Shafali at the nets. "She used to try to hit every ball. I had to tell her on so many occasions to just go after the bad balls. Her natural strength is no secret and her reach is amazing," says Sandeep.

At the academy, Shafali has been a revered figure much before today's Cup glory. Each player has a story to share about Shafali and the common theme seems to be "she went hard." 18-year-old Rahul Rathi

still remembers the sixes she smashed against him during a game. "He got hit for three sixes in a row," joked another academy mate. "I wasn't hit for consecutive sixes but I was hit over the rope," clarified Rahul who appears to be well over six feet tall.

Pacer Komal Sadhyam, had no qualms in admitting that she feared a little while bowling to Shafali at the nets. "She used to hit real hard and in the nets sometimes it's hard to spot the ball and there are chances of getting injured. But I enjoyed the contest against her," says pacer Komal.

Back to the screening. The match has reached its business end and Sanjeev seems even more irritated with the constant change of seats to give a better view to the sea of cameras taking position right in front of the screen. To evade the cameras a print news reporter dared to change his seat but Sanjeev asked him to return. "Let them take their photos later. You sit right next to me," Sanjeev told the reporter even as camera persons insisted he leaves the frame.

But Sanjeev was firm. "Ab Cup jeetne ka baad hee uthenge (Now we'll rise up only after sealing the win)."