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ICE360 SURVEY: K-SHAPED RECOVERY IN COVID YEAR

Income of poorest fifth plunged 53% in 5 yrs; those at top surged

SANDEEP SINGH
MUMBAI, JANUARY 23

IN A trend unprecedented since economic liberalisation, the annual income of the poorest 20% of Indian households, constantly rising since 1995, plunged 53% in the pandemic year 2020-21 from their levels in 2015-16. In the same five-year period, the richest 20% saw their annual household income grow 39% reflecting the sharp contrast Covid's economic impact has had on the bottom of the pyramid and the top.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

HOW COVID DEEPENS DISTRESS, DIVIDE

Widening disparity in annual household income (₹ lakh)	2015-16	2020-21	Change (%)
Q1 (Poorest 20%)	1.37	0.65	-52.6 ▼
Q2 (Lower middle 20%)	1.85	1.25	-32.4 ▼
Q3 (Middle 20%)	2.25	2.05	-8.9 ▼
Q4 (Upper middle 20%)	3.01	3.22	7.0 ▲
Q5 (Richest 20%)	5.26	7.31	39.0 ▲
All-India average	2.98	3.23	8.4 ▲
Total personal disposable income of households (₹ bn)	83,574	99,184	18.7 ▲

*Q is quintile and is obtained by dividing population into five equal slabs of 20% each; Source: ICE 360 data

German navy chief quits over remarks on Ukraine

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

GERMANY'S NAVY chief has stepped down over remarks he made about Russia and Crimea at an event in Delhi last week that have escalated into a diplomatic row between Germany and Ukraine.

Speaking at the Manohar

**Vice Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach was speaking in Delhi**

Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MPIDSA) on Friday, Vice Admiral Kay-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

UNVEILS HOLOGRAM; INVOKES AMBEDKAR, PATEL

Correcting mistakes of past: PM on Bose statue

'Efforts were made to erase contribution of several leaders'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi unveiled a hologram statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at India Gate on Sunday and said the country is correcting "mistakes" made after independence when, according to him, efforts were made to erase the contribution of "several great personalities" along with the nation's heritage and culture.

The Prime Minister's remarks were echoed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah who also spoke at the event about "an attempt to push into oblivion" several personalities from the freedom struggle.

Modi said: "Yeh durbhagya raha ki azadi ke baad desh ki sanskriti aur sanskaron ke saath hi anek mahan vyaktiyon ki yogdan ko mitane ki kaam kiya gaya. Swadhinata sangram mein lakhon-lakh deshvasiyan ki tapasya shamil thi lekin unke itihaas ko bhi seemit karne ki koshish hui. Lekin aaj azadi ke dashkon baad desh un



The hologram of Subhash Chandra Bose at India Gate. ANI

galtiyan ko danke ki chot par sudhar raha hai, thik kar raha hai." ("It was unfortunate that after independence, efforts were made to erase the contribution of several great personalities, along with the culture and heritage of the country. The freedom struggle involved the penance of lakhs of people but there was an attempt to limit their history. But today, after decades of independence, the country is correcting

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

OMICRON-DRIVEN SURGE

2 yrs into pandemic, top gene body says virus in community

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, PUNE, JANUARY 23

TWO YEARS into the coronavirus pandemic, India is now finally acknowledging that the disease is in community transmission stage. Recently released bulletins of IN-SACOG, the consortium of national laboratories that is tracking the different variants of the virus, have mentioned that Omicron is now spreading through community transmission.

"Omicron is now in community transmission in India and has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED
E Test and trace now difficult

THE ANNOUNCEMENT is not hugely revelatory in the current situation in India, even though it is the first acknowledgment. It only means that the epidemic is so widespread that it is now difficult, if not impossible, to determine who is passing on the infection to whom.

Canada deaths: Concern, anxiety in Gujarat village

VAIBHAV JHA
DINGUCHA (GANDHINAGAR), JANUARY 23

A DAY after it emerged that four people who froze to death in Canada allegedly trying to cross the border illegally into the US,

Dingucha village of Kalol tehsil in Gandhinagar district has become the centre of attraction in the region.

Police showed up at the village on Saturday, and reportedly called on a man whose family members travelled to Canada

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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*Details of proposed IPO will be intimated once finalised.

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Till early 2020, Chittaranjan Avenue was busier than any other street in Kolkata. Glances of interested customers, sex workers soliciting them. Narrow alleys. Dark staircases leading up to dimly-lit rooms. However, everything has changed since the pandemic.

ENTERTAINMENT



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MUNICH THE EDGE OF WAR REVIEW

Just one among many mediocre films about World War II

Vakil said residents of the village have been calling relatives overseas ever since news of the deaths in Canada became known.

"A number of friends from Dingucha who now live in the US and Canada contacted me asking if I was aware of the identity of the deceased family. Families in communities such as Patidar, Darbari and Thakor are close-knit and part of the same clan, which means everyone is distantly related to each other here," Vakil said.

Rainfall in Jan so far is capital's highest in 122 yrs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

THE RAINFALL that Delhi received recently shattered previous records to become the highest amount of rainfall received so far in January from 1901 onwards.

The Safdarjung weather observatory, which provides representative data for the city, recorded 88.2 mm of rainfall this month, till January 23. This is the highest amount of rainfall the weather station has recorded for the same time frame in the past 122 years, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). This year's rainfall has surpassed the record that was previously held — 79.7 mm of rainfall in January 1989.

Between 8.30 am on Saturday and 8.30 am on Sunday, the Safdarjung station recorded 19.7 mm of rainfall. A western disturbance, which is a storm that originates in the Mediterranean region, brought winter rainfall to Delhi over the weekend.

The Palam weather station has recorded a total of 110 mm of rainfall this month, far in excess of the normal amount of 10.2 mm.

The maximum temperature recorded Sunday was 14.9 degrees Celsius, six degrees below normal for this time of the year. The minimum temperature was 10.5 degrees Celsius, three degrees above normal.

'Cold day' conditions are on the IMD forecast for Monday. A 'cold day' is recorded when the maximum temperature dips 4.5 to 6.4 degrees below normal, and the minimum temperature is less than or equal to 10 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature on Monday is likely to be 7 degrees Celsius, while the maximum is likely to be 16 degrees Celsius.

In an update on Sunday evening, the IMD predicted a fall in minimum temperature by 3 to 4 degrees over most parts of northwest India over the next 24 hours.

For January 25, the IMD has predicted cold wave conditions at isolated parts of Delhi, Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. A similar cold wave forecast persists for January 26 and 27. A cold wave is recorded when the minimum temperature is less than or equal to 4 degrees, or when it is 4.5 to 6.4 degrees below normal.

Meanwhile, the AQI on Sunday was 202, in the 'poor' category, having improved from a 'very poor' AQI of 316 on Saturday, going by the Central Pollution Control Board bulletins.

26-yr-old woman molested in bus, 1 held

Gurgaon: A 31-year-old man was arrested for allegedly molesting a 26-year-old woman on a bus. Police said he had allegedly misbehaved with her and threat-

ened her, and fled after allegedly biting her thumb. Police said the accused was arrested from Bilaspur. During questioning, he denied having molested her. ENS

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4 THE CITY

CORONAVIRUS
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LAST 24 HOURS
74,246OMICRON
CASES
549PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: **2,424**
OXYGEN SUPPORT **650**
VENTILATOR SUPPORT **164**DELHI: TOTAL
CASES
17,91,711HOSPITAL BEDS
ICU BEDS
4,444

Total active cases in Delhi

	Total	Vacant
HOSPITAL BEDS	15,411	12,977
ICU BEDS	4,444	3,622
	Deaths	Tests
Jan 22	11,486	14,802
Jan 23	9,197	13,510
Total	54,246*	17,11,845
	25,620	3,44,70,770

	Jan 22	Jan 23
Cases	1,011	968
Deaths	0	0
	Deaths	Tests
Jan 22	11,486	14,802
Jan 23	9,197	13,510
Total	54,246*	17,11,845
	25,620	3,44,70,770

NO NEW SUMMONS ISSUED, SAY OFFICIALS

Punjab elections round the corner, Kejriwal says ED set to arrest Health Minister Jain

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal claimed Sunday that Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials were set to arrest Health Minister Satyendar Jain ahead of the Assembly polls in Punjab.

"We have learnt through our sources that the ED is about to arrest Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain just ahead of the polls in Punjab. They are welcome. The Centre has raided Satyendar Jain twice earlier and has come up empty handed. If

they want to come again, they are most welcome," Kejriwal said.

ED officials said that while Jain had been called for questioning last month, no new summons had been issued to him recently.

Kejriwal alleged that the ED's actions were politically motivated: "Whenever the BJP is on the verge of losing polls, they unleash their agencies. It is obvious that there will be raids and arrests. We are not scared because when you are walking the path of truth, these hurdles always come up. The BJP government at the Centre is welcome to send other agencies

Delhi Health Minister
Satyendar Jain

such as the CBI, Income Tax, Delhi Police, and any others along with the ED. If they want

to arrest someone alongside Satyendar Jain, they can do that too. We have never done anything wrong. I have been raided, so has Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain. Twenty-one of our MLAs have been arrested. All these matters have been discharged by the court. In this case too, he will be arrested, will get bail in 5-10 days."

Pointing to ED raids against Punjab CM Charanjit Channi's nephew, Kejriwal said the two cases were different.

"We are neither scared of going to jail nor of your raid. We will not whine like Channi ji. We

will not panic... Why is he panicking? Because he has indulged in wrong-doing and he has been caught. When ED officers conducted the raid there, they were counting thick wads of notes. The people of Punjab were shocked. We are not scared. We want to say to BJP and agencies, send all your people. We are not scared. Why just Satyendar Jain, send them to me, send them to the house of Bhagwant Maan (AAP's Punjab CM face) as well. When the agencies come, we will welcome them with a big smile. We aren't scared," Kejriwal said.

The CM did not say what case the ED would arrest Jain under.

The ED had, in 2017, registered a case against Jain under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on the basis of an FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The CBI complaint had said that Jain could not explain the source of funds received by four companies in which he was a shareholder. It had registered a case against him, his wife and four others on charges of alleged money laundering. The CBI had also questioned him in the case earlier.

In Delhi, a murder inspired by crime shows, with eye on social media fame

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

WHEN THE Telugu crime drama *Pushpa - The Rise* released last month, a group of teenagers living in a Northwest Delhi neighbourhood were hooked. They were so taken in by the movie that they copied the look and mannerisms of the titular character played by actor Allu Arjun, and even started a gang called Badnaam along with 10-15 boys. Their fascination, however, took a dark turn when three boys from the group allegedly killed a 24-year-old man inside a park on January 19.

Police said the victim, Shibhu Hussain, had objected to the boys playing *gilli danda* there. The three allegedly beat him up before stabbing him to death. The act was filmed by one of the boys, and police said they were planning to upload it on Instagram to become "popular".

DCP (Northwest) Usha Rangnani said her team received a call from the hospital about the victim. "CCTVs near the spot were scanned and our team managed to apprehend the three boys within 12 hours. We feel we reached in time; the boys were about to post the video online. I saw it and it was brutal. We found that they were inspired by movies and wanted more followers on social media. They also wished to 'inspire' their friends by this act..." said the DCP.

ACP Tilak Chandra Bisht's team caught the boys, who were changing their hideouts, and recovered a sharp weapon from their possession.

During questioning, the trio, aged 15, 16 and 17, revealed that they recently watched *Pushpa* and the crime series *Bhaukaal*. "The boys also followed many gangsters on social media. They wanted the same life. They didn't seem afraid of being arrested; they believe they will be released in 3-6 months and can go back home," said an officer.

Their families said they didn't know the boys were into crime movies.

The mother of the 15-year-old boy told *The Indian Express*, "I lost my husband years back and I am dependent on contractors for small work. I don't think my son can kill someone. Police told



The 3 boys allegedly killed a man named Shibhu (left) inside a park on Jan 19, said police

me he's inspired by some movie; I have never even heard of it. I thought he didn't have a social media account."

The other two families run small shops in the area.

Said the father of the 16-year-old boy: "We thought he likes to act as he always talked about movies. We got him a phone because he said he wanted to work. He dropped out of school years ago. We regret everything now. Police said he beat up a man and then used a dagger. How can I believe that? We don't have the money to get him out or get a lawyer."

The victim's family said he was heading home after work when he was attacked.

"He didn't have a fixed job and worked as a labourer... He was walking near the house and the boys brutally attacked him. Neighbours called us and we found him lying in a pool of blood. There was nobody to help us. We rushed him to the hospital, but the doctors said he was dead. What was his fault? These boys should be booked under stricter sections. I heard they were filming the incident..." said Kesar Hussain, Shibhu's father. He and his wife work as labourers.

Police said the boys are active on Instagram and often posted reels/videos where they lip-synced or danced to Bollywood songs. In many posts, they can be seen hurling abuses and talking about guns, violence, and smoking. They have also posted videos of themselves standing outside police stations.

They called themselves 'Badnaam', 'sher', 'gangster'. The bio of one of the boys reads - "address- mukadam no./302..307" — ostensibly referring to IPC section 302 and 307 for murder and attempt to murder.

Police said they are checking their social media accounts and are trying to counsel the teenagers, who have been sent to a juvenile home.

Man who 'molested' PhD student on JNU campus arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

DAYS AFTER a PhD student of Jawaharlal Nehru University was allegedly molested by a motorist on campus, police said they have arrested a 27-year-old man in connection with the case. The accused was identified and caught after more than a hundred CCTVs were scanned in and around the vicinity.

The woman was taking a stroll on the campus around 11:45 pm Monday when the accused, who was on a scooter, allegedly molested her. After the woman raised an alarm, he managed to escape. A case of outraging the modesty of a woman was registered.

On Sunday, police arrested a man named Akshay Dolai. He runs a mobile repair and SIM shop at Bhikaji Cama Place and lives with his wife and two children in Munirka.

According to police, Akshay was drunk at the time of the incident. On Monday night, he was on his scooter outside the JNU campus when he saw three women walking inside. He followed them and wasn't stopped at the entry gates. The women reached their hostel, but he kept driving inside the campus, police said.

He then found the PhD student jogging towards the East Gate. He followed her and allegedly stopped her at an iso-

crease in the number of cases, there is a sudden decline now, this was expected. Also, even as cases rose, the number of people who were hospitalised remained low. All of these are hopeful signs," said a senior government official.

While the government was in favour of easing restrictions in markets last week, the L-G objected to the proposal.

ACROSS STATES

DELHI

MARCH 12, 2020: Schools closed

JAN 18, 2021: Opened for class X, XII

FEB 5: Opened for class IX, XI

APRIL 9: Schools closed again

SEPT 1: Reopened again for class IX-XII

NOV 1: Fully opened for all grades

NOV 15: Fully closed

NOV 29: Schools opened

DEC 3: Fully closed

DEC 18: Partially opened for class VI-XII

DEC 29: Fully closed

MUMBAI

MARCH 20, 2020: Schools closed

OCT 4, 2021: Opened for class VIII-XII

DEC 15: Opened for class I-VII

JAN 3, 2022: Closed for all

KOLKATA

MARCH 14, 2020: Schools closed

NOV 16, 2021: Opened for class IX-XII

JAN 3, 2022: Closed again

AHMEDABAD

MARCH 16, 2020: All schools closed

JAN 11, 2021: Class X and XII opened

FEB 1: Classes IX and XI opened

FEB 18: Class VI-VIII opened

MARCH 18: Closed for all classes

JULY 15: Class XII opened

JULY 26: Class IX-XI opened

SEPT 2: Class VI-VIII opened

NOV 22: Class I-V opened after 20 months

JAN 8-31, 2022: Classes I-IX closed

economy," she said.

In the first survey to indicate how learning levels among children have been impacted because of schools being shut during the

HARDLOOK

School's out

The pandemic has thrown the schooling system out of gear across the country. The situation is pronounced in Delhi, which has seen extended closures owing to intense Covid waves as well as air pollution. Officials and experts weigh in on the road ahead



Delhi itself has shuttled between opening and closing multiple times. Archive

"100% vaccination of students will help us in shifting from online education to offline. Now that Covid cases are declining, and most students in higher classes have been inoculated, a proposal may be placed before the DDMA for reopening schools"

MANISH SISODIA, DEPUTY CM

schools," said Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia.

Experts, parents speak

A Delhi education department official said they are keen on reopening schools. "We now have the example of Maharashtra, and there are global examples in favour of opening them. There is medical evidence that Covid affects young children less. But people who must make this decision have to do so based on logic and evidence and not perception," the official said, referring to the DDMA.

"There needs to be more clarity on how we will handle this moving forward, at what stage these steps need to be taken. Between the second and third wave, there was a substantial time when we could have opened," the official said.

Yamini Aiyar, president, Centre for Policy Research, said that by keeping schools closed to reduce the spread of Covid, the trade-off in terms of children's learning is huge.

"When the pandemic first set in here, we experimented with a harsh lockdown and realised that the economic consequences are huge. When the second wave took place with the Delta variant, which was deadlier, we entered a more measured lockdown because we had learnt from past experience. We never made that choice for schools... One thing that has made governments recalcitrant has been elite voices, where there is an assumption that online learning can be a substitute. We found different ways to work around our economic lives sensibly. It would only make sense that we could have found different ways of opening schools with proper SOPs, and over time we would have found ways to overcome hesitancy as well. But there was nobody to lobby for this while traders' associations and business owners' associations lobbied hard to open the

9 with the onset of the second wave. Schools then opened for these grades from September.

The capital had also ventured into reopening for pre-primary, primary and middle school students from November 1. But within two weeks, physical classes for all grades were suspended from November 15 over rising air pollution levels. Schools reopened for all grades on November 29 and were ordered to shut yet again within days, citing pollution, on December 2. The year 2021 saw Delhi's longest 'air pollution closure'.

While schools briefly opened for classes VI to XII for 10 days, they closed completely on December 29. The net result is that schools have been permitted to open for primary classes for 18 days since the start of the pandemic.

Amid the third wave, discussions around reopening centre around speeding up vaccination for 15-17-year-olds. Immunisation against Covid-19 opened up for this age group on January 3 and the government is aiming to vaccinate 100% eligible teenagers by January 30.

"100% vaccination of students will help us in shifting from online education to offline. Now that the Covid cases are declining, and most students in higher classes have been inoculated, a proposal may be placed before the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) for reopening

those who get tested each day, is an indicator of the spread of the disease in the community and has been coming down steadily over the past week. Last week, the positivity rate stood at 27%.

The Delhi government, which is in favour of easing the restrictions that were imposed in view of the increased cases earlier this month, is expected to bring it up with L-G Anil Baijal



SUKRITA BARUAH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

ON JANUARY 10, a headline flashed across news portals around the globe: "Uganda reopens schools after world's longest Covid-19 shutdown." In India's capital, however, repeated and extended closures have meant primary and middle school children have barely attended physical school since the beginning of the pandemic.

According to UNESCO's global date sheet on the duration of school closures, which has data on the number of weeks of full and partial closure in every country between March 2020 and October 21, 2021, schools were closed in Uganda for 83 weeks till then — 60 weeks of full closure and 23 weeks of partial closure.

India follows with 82 weeks of closure, along with Nepal and Bolivia, with 25 weeks of full closure and 57 weeks of partial closure.

However, these country-wide figures do not reflect regional variations in an opening and closing process that has to some extent been carried out in a decentralised way in India. From March 1, 2020, to October 31, 2021, Delhi schools were shut for 85 weeks or approximately 19 months — fully closed for 65 weeks, partially for 20 weeks.

Other major metropolitan cities in India, with varying Covid circumstances, have had different reopening timelines:

■ In Kolkata for instance, schools have not opened for primary and middle school children for even a single day since they first closed on March 14, 2020.

■ In Mumbai, schools reopened after the first extended closure on October 4, 2021, for classes VIII to XII. They had reopened for classes I to VII as well on December 15 before closing completely on January 3 with the onset of the current wave. The local government has now decided that schools will reopen for all grades, including pre-primary, on Monday.

■ Ahmedabad tried opening for classes VI to VIII earlier in February 2021 before closing on March 18 due to the second wave. These grades opened again on September 2, followed by classes I to V on November 22. Schools closed for classes I-IX on January 8 because of the current wave.

■ Delhi itself has shuttled between opening and closing multiple times. Schools first opened for classes IX to XII in January 2021 before they closed on April

BRIEFLY

18-year-old beaten up after row over video

Gurgaon: An 18-year-old man was allegedly beaten up by 15-20 men at Sakatpur village after an argument over sharing a video clip on social media. Police said he suffered multiple injuries and is undergoing treatment at a private hospital. No arrests have been made yet, police said. Police said the incident took place around 2 pm Thursday when the victim, Mohit Khan, was out with two friends. Dinkar, SHO of Badshahpur police station, said the victim had uploaded a video clip featuring the accused on Instagram and they had objected to it: "...They beat him up over this. Two accused have been named in the FIR and the rest are unknown. Raids are on to arrest them." An FIR was registered against the accused under IPC sections 148, 149, 323 and 506, said police. Alleging laxity in the probe, Mohit's father Mustafa Khan said police only added bailable sections in the FIR: "My son had no enmity with the accused." Gurgaon Police spokesperson Subhash Boken said they are seeking legal opinion on additional sections that can be added.

Man attacks wife, hangs himself

New Delhi: A 32-year-old man committed suicide in Ghaziabad after allegedly attacking his wife with a blade at her mother's house in West Delhi. Police said the man assumed his wife died and fled. He went back to his home and hanged himself, said police. Urvija Goel, DCP (West), said, "The couple got married recently but often fought over petty issues. The woman moved in with her mother last week. The man stayed at their house for a day. On Thursday evening, when his mother-in-law went to the market, he attacked his wife." The woman was taken to DDU hospital where doctors said she lost a lot of blood. A constable donated blood. **ENS**

Harmeet Singh Kalka is new DSGMC president

New Delhi: Harmeet Singh Kalka of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) was elected president of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee Saturday amid heated arguments among members. Voting had to be stopped after a member revealed his vote publicly. **PTI**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

DELHI REPORTED 9,197 Covid cases Sunday at a positivity rate of 13.32%, as a little over 69,000 tests were conducted in the city.

The positivity rate on Saturday stood at 16.36%. The positivity rate, which is the share of people who test positive out of



New Delhi





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Restructuring education in real terms

Focussing on multi-disciplinary and skill-based learning, NEP 2020 is being implemented across the country on a mission mode to provide holistic education to students in today's competitive scenario. The Maharashtra task force has suggested a three-phase plan of execution

With an aim to restructure our education sector, the Ministry of Human Resource Development introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 almost two years ago. The move was widely appreciated and welcomed by the society as NEP 2020 emphasises on providing holistic, multi-disciplinary education to students. With an orientation to promote entrepreneurship over jobs, the prime focus of NEP is on providing skill education right from pre-school to Class XII and empower each student in at least one vocational skill.

The key recommendations of NEP 2020 for higher education are — multiple exit options, expansion of online learning, an academic bank of credit allowing students to move between courses and institutions and a central council for higher education. The policy also suggests "abolishing the current system of affiliated colleges by providing 'graded autonomy' and replacing the federal structure with large multi-disciplinary university complexes." This was the first time after 34 years that the education policy of the country was revised to meet the changing needs of Indian and international education standards.

Since NEP 2020's introduction in July 2020, a lot has changed in the education sector today. Curricula have been tweaked in schools to include subjects such as financial literacy and artificial intelligence. When it comes to the medium of instruction in schools and colleges, the mother tongue or a regional language has been introduced on a pilot basis. This applies even to engineering courses and a few institutes chose to implement this initiative in the 2021-22 academic year.

At the school level, the first step will be to invest in teachers who can speak multiple languages. Currently, mostly teachers speak English; a regional language and/or Hindi. Under NEP 2020, schools and colleges must train teachers in additional languages or hire more staff.

The primary objective of NEP 2020 was to reduce undue focus on the Class 10 and Class 12 board exams. Consequently, board exams administered by the CBSE will have a higher number of multiple-choice and analytical ques-

tions from this year onwards.

In schools, subjects such as financial literacy, data science and artificial intelligence will be offered to students on an optional basis. As part of this initiative, CBSE tied up with Microsoft to help students of Class VI-VIII work on coding-related modules from the 2021-22 academic year onwards.

NEP 2020 also allows the top 100 universities in India to offer online degree courses to make them affordable and improve accessibility. Following this, online platforms are offering a range of courses in partnership with institutes.

In Maharashtra, a task force has been set up that has recommended implementing NEP 2020 in three phases. From proposing a transition from a three-year bachelor's programme to a three or four-year programme with a final year focus on research, to offering

university status to a large group of institutions with proven academic record, the state task force committee has made several recommendations in the short-term implementation plan, which will not require financial resources.

In the long-term plan, it has endorsed offering universal free digital rights to all learners in the State. The task force has identified 18 provisions in NEP that can be immediately implemented through simple directives. Offering a plan for a four-year degree programme, starting post-doctoral programmes in universities, enabling digital adjunct faculty for foreign universities on board and enabling provisions for rationalisation of fees and reforming fee regulatory policies are included. The need to define a dual-degree mode of operation and collaboration and creation of an academic bank of credits were included in the medium-term plan, which needs some funds.

Further, the report by the task force estimated an annual investment for state-wide digital transformation to be around Rs 3,000 crore for about 30 lakh student beneficiaries, starting from 10 lakh in 2022-23. This comes to around Rs 10,000 annually per child, which is just a 12-18% increase from current costs.

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Assistant Professor OB & HR
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HASHTAG POLITICS



• Singing the same tune

The rap song '*Bambai mein ka ha*', by Anurag Saikia and Manoj Bajpayee, continues to inspire poll jingles in Uttar Pradesh. After BJP leader and singer Ravi Kishan came out with '*UP mein sab ha* (UP has everything)', extolling the "achievements" of the BJP government, Bhojpuri artiste Neha Singh Rathore hit back with '*UP mein ka ha* (what does UP have)'. Now, the Twitter handle of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Uttar Pradesh has pinned another jingle set to the same tune on its profile, tilted '*UP mein ee haa* (this is what UP has)'.

1.6K LIKES, 4.4K RETWEETS IN 37 HOURS

• 'Migration' matter

With politicians in Goa switching sides rather frequently, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) has tweeted a video mocking Congress leaders moving to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Titled 'The Great Migration', the video narrates in documentary style the story of Clafasio Dias, who was elected on a Congress ticket in the last polls but moved to BJP in 2019. While the TMC, by attacking both Congress and the saffron party, is aiming to kill two birds with one stone through the video, the party itself has welcomed turncoats ahead of the state polls.

100 LIKES, 46 RETWEETS IN 11 HOURS

BJP ally fields Haider Ali to take on Azam Khan's son in Suar

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 23

BJP ALLY Apna Dal (Sonelal) on Sunday announced its first candidate for the forthcoming UP polls, fielding Haider Ali Khan from the Suar constituency in Rampur district.

This is a significant move as Apna Dal (S), which has a significant base of Kurmi (OBC) votes in eastern and central UP, is contesting polls for the first time in western UP – that too with a Muslim candidate.

Haider, who joined Apna Dal (S) a few days ago, was earlier the Congress candidate from the same seat. His father Nawab Kazim Ali Khan is still with the Congress and is the party's candidate from Rampur seat.

"The Congress contacted him and tried to stop him from leaving



Was earlier Congress candidate from the seat

the party, but Haider did not change his decision," said Dharmendra Dev Gupta, Congress's Rampur district president. He added the Congress will announce a new candidate from Suar soon.

Fighting his first election, Haider, 31, is a graduate from the University of Essex, UK. He handled his father's campaign in Rampur during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, and the 2012 and 2017 state polls as well. He has said his decision to quit the Congress for Apna Dal (S) was to work "in interest of the public."

"Haider agreed with the ide-



With education having emerged as one of the core issues, Channi and Sisodia (right) have been visiting schools to take stock as their parties attempt to outdo each other ahead of the Assembly polls. *Express*



Punjab school scorecard: AAP, Cong fight over 'best' model

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL
LUDHIANA, JANUARY 23

IN A recent interview, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal claimed that a Dalit voter in Punjab had come to him and said he would vote for AAP. "I asked him, why not [Punjab CM] Charanjit Singh Channi who is claiming to be the messiah of Dalits. He said AAP has transformed government schools in Delhi and it is only education that can change the lives of people," he said, making an appeal to vote for AAP if voters "want state-of-art government schools in Punjab like in Delhi."

In a state where panth and religion have long dictated electoral politics, education has emerged as one of the core issues with the AAP and Congress, the two main contenders in the fray, indulging in politicking, discussions and debates. There has even been a Twitter war between the education ministers of Punjab and Delhi — led by Congress and AAP governments, respectively — eventually forcing other parties

to specify their roadmap for school and higher education.

The political one-upmanship began early last year when, in the run-up to the elections, the state was declared the top performer in the Performance Grading Index 2019-20, released by the Union Ministry of Education.

While the Punjab government then led by Captain Amarinder Singh went all out to take credit for the ranking, Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia suggested that it was

rigged, saying Punjab's top rank was the result of "the blessings

Modiji has showered on Captain Amarinder Singh". He added, "Strangely enough, this report has been released at a time when people have been raising questions regarding the performance and inadequacies of the Punjab government in education."

Amarinder had hit back, calling the accusations "atrocious". Then in November last year, a Twitter war erupted between Punjab Education Minister Pargat Singh and Delhi Education

Minister Manish Sisodia, with each during the other to visit schools in their states.

The Twitter war soon shifted to the ground. On December 1 last year, Sisodia reached Chamkaur Sahib, CM Channi's constituency, and claimed to have "exposed" the real condition of the schools. He alleged that the schools did not have enough teachers and drinking water facilities, and that the classrooms were filled with cobwebs and garbage.

Almost 20 days later, Channi visited those schools again to "ex-

pose the lies being spread by AAP". He did a Facebook Live, claiming that the schools Sisodia visited were among the "best".

On November 27 last year, Kejriwal joined protesting contractual teachers in Mohali and promised them regularisation if AAP is voted to power. State Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, in turn, joined a protest of contractual teachers in Delhi near Kejriwal's residence on December 5.

'PROVOCATIVE' SPEECH IN MALERKOTLA

Ex-DGP booked; denies it was Cong event

RAKHI JAGGA
LUDHIANA, JANUARY 23

THE POLICE on Sunday booked former Punjab DGP Mohammad Mustafa for allegedly making a provocative speech during a gathering in Malerkotla on January 20.

The former top cop and principal strategic advisor to state Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu has been charged with promoting enmity between different

groups on the grounds of religion under Section 153A of the IPC.

Mustafa had made the alleged provocative speech three days ago in Baghwan Mohalla after AAP supporters, angry as police halted their event barely 25 feet away, shouted slogans against him.

In a video which has gone viral on social media, Mustafa can be heard saying, "I swear by my mother, I will not let them organise any political event... I swear by God that I will enter their

houses and beat them."

"I want to tell the district police and the district administration, if such permission is given along with my *jalsa*... I will create a situation that will be difficult to control." State BJP leaders had accused Mustafa of attacking a particular religion in his speech.

Mustafa, however, denied targeting any religion and even stated that the event in question was not held by the Congress.

Why Bhandari community is significant in Goa elections

MAYURA JANWALKAR
PANAJI, JANUARY 23

THE AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) has named a 45-year-old political debutant Amit Palekar as its Chief Ministerial candidate in the 14 February Goa Assembly elections. A lawyer-turned-politician, Palekar belongs to the Bhandari community, which is Goa's largest caste group constituting a significant percentage of its Hindu population. His selection is in keeping with the AAP's earlier announcement that its CM nominee for the Goa polls will be from the Bhandari community. Declaring Palekar as the AAP's CM face on 19 January, AAP supremo and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal had said his party was not resorting to caste politics but was "correcting" the "injustice" the Bhandari community had long suffered at the hands of Goa's major parties who, he added, never picked a CM from the community despite its numerical strength.

Who are the Bhandaris?

The Bhandari community's traditional occupation was toddy-tapping and distilling, farm tilling and working in orchards. It is placed in the OBC category in Goa. The community is spread across Goa and Maharashtra's Konkan belt including parts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg.

Their share in Goa's population

Gomantak Bhandari Samaj (GBS) president Ashok Naik said there has been no survey of the actual population of the Bhandari community in Goa. But he contests the figures recorded by the state Social Welfare Department. In written reply to a question raised in the Assembly in October 2021, Social Welfare Minister Milind Naik had said a survey of OBCs was conducted in 2014 by the Goa State Commission for Backward Classes. "As per the survey report, the population of OBC was 3,58,517 which was 27% of total population. As per this survey, total number of Bhandari community is 2,19,052 which constitute 61.10% among OBC."

"There has never been a proper survey of the population of Bhandaris. The government says it is about 2 lakh which is not correct. Estimates suggest that at present the number should be about 5.29 lakh which would make up for at least 30 per cent of the state's population," said Naik.

Their political representation

Goa's political parties have always tried to woo the numerically strong Bhandaris, with some seeking to champion reservation for them. The GBS chief had earlier said that the Bhandari Samaj would back the party that gives maximum election tickets to candidates from the community.

While the community has had representation in the state Assembly, there has so far been

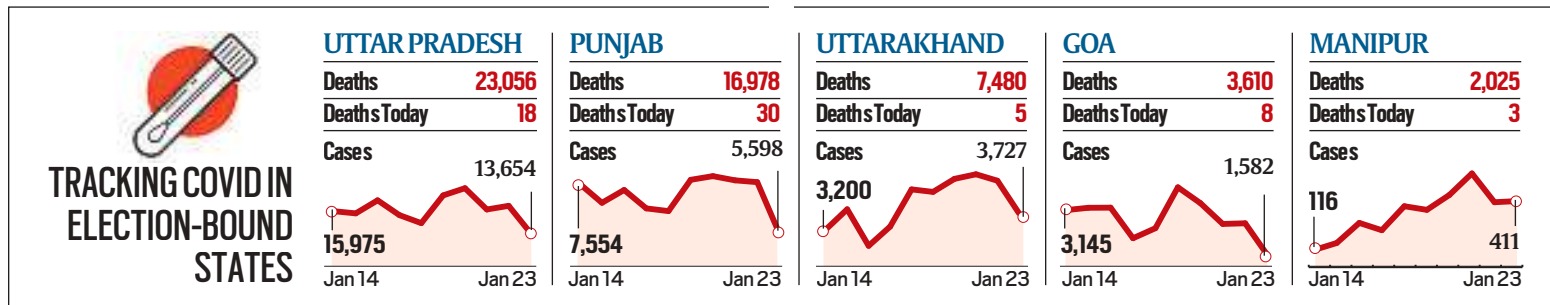
only one CM in Goa from the community, Ravi Naik, who was formerly with the Congress and is now with the BJP. The outgoing 40-member state Assembly has four MLAs from the

Bhandari community.

Its CM face a Bhandari, does AAP have edge?

"For the first time in 60 years a party has come to us and said they will give us a CM from the Bhandari community. Whether they win or not is another story but they have tapped our pulse and recognised our community needs to be given its due," said Naik. While he said the community leaders would rally around the AAP's CM nominee, the Bhandari population in St Cruz constituency is not high, from where Palekar is going to make his electoral debut.

Political observers say even if the GBS throws its weight behind Palekar, the community at large has been closely associated with the BJP. However, traditionally votes sought on basis of religion or caste have not gone down well with the Goan electorate. Senior journalist and author Sandesh Prabhudesai, whose book Ajeeb Goa's Gajab Politics was recently released, said the first instance of wooing Goa voters on basis of caste was in 1972 but it backfired. **FULL STORY** www.indianexpress.com



FAMILY & POLITICS

SP candidate's journey: UK to Dubai to Fatehabad

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 23

THE SAMAJWADI Party's 34-year-old candidate from UP's Fatehabad constituency, Roopali Dixit, completed her postgraduation and management studies in the UK and worked in a multinational company in Dubai before returning to her home in Agra in 2016 after her father, Ashok Dixit, and four other family members were sentenced to life imprisonment in a murder case.

As all senior male members of her family had been in jail, Roopali started dealing with their case. After finding it hard to decode the legal process, she took admission in a law course in Agra University and got the degree. In the meantime, she started engaging with local political and social activities too.

Roopali's father Ashok Dixit, 75, and others were convicted in 2015 in the killing of a government school teacher Suman

Yadav in Firozabad in 2007. Sixty-nine criminal cases, including three murder cases, had been lodged against Ashok, a native of Firozabad, who had shifted to neighbouring Agra along with his family, which runs a cold storage business. Ashok was arrested in the Suman Yadav murder case in 2007 and had been in jail since then.

Roopali was 19 years old when her father was arrested while her younger brother Abhinav Dixit was 14. "No one in the family told me about the case initially. They used to give different excuses about my father not staying with us. Later, I was sent abroad for study," she said.

She completed her graduation from Symbiosis, Pune and went in 2009 to the UK, where she got admission in Cardiff University, Wales for her MBA degree. She later took admission in Leeds University, Yorkshire and did her postgraduation in marketing and advertising. Subsequently, she got a job with



Roopali Dixit meeting with supporters. *Express*

an MNC in Dubai and worked there for three years before returning to India in January 2016.

"I knew that something was going wrong in our family but no one gave me the real picture. With passing time, I came to know about the 2007 case. In July 2015, a local Firozabad court pronounced judgment in the case and sentenced 12 persons, including my father and four uncles to life imprisonment," said Roopali.

"Soon afterwards, I got a call from my father, who asked me

to return home as my family needed me. I was then working as a senior executive in a company in Dubai. I immediately submitted my resignation and returned to India," she said.

"On returning home, I found male members of my family in jail and no one left to deal with the case in court. Without a background in law, I was also having problems while my family was losing hope. I then took admission in Agra University for a law degree to equip myself

with legal education to face the situation," she added.

Except Ashok, lodged in Bareilly Central Jail, and his younger brother Ajay Dixit, 62, lodged in Agra Central Jail, all other convicts in the 2007 case are currently put on bail.

While handling court cases and meeting lawyers regularly, Roopali also started engaging with Fatehabad politics. In the 2017 Assembly polls, she campaigned for BJP candidate Jitendra Verma who won the Fatehabad seat by over 34,000 votes. Verma admitted that Roopali had actively campaigned for him.

Two years later, however, Roopali stopped attending the ruling BJP's meetings and functions. She started an organisation "Karma Sanghatan" with the objective to help underprivileged and weaker sections. It provided them food packets during the Covid pandemic.

FULL STORY ON www.indianexpress.com

SP built Haj house, our govt made Kanwar Mansarovar centre: Yogi

ABHINAV RAJPUT
GHAZIABAD, JANUARY 23

UTTAR PRADESH CM Yogi Adityanath Sunday attacked the Samajwadi Party on a range of issues – from free electricity to Covid management and alleged Muslim appeasement – as he took part in several poll-related events in Ghaziabad district.

"Today a glorious Ram Temple is being built at Ayodhya, Kashi Vishwanath corridor work is completed and in Ghaziabad, the Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan has been constructed. Earlier, here a Haj house was made by flouting norms. Today, not Haj house, but Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan is made. That's why I tell you that the difference is clear," the CM said.

The Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan in Indirapuram is meant for boarding and lodging of Kanwar pilgrims and those embarking on the annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

"When Samajwadi Party got



Yogi in Ghaziabad, Sunday.

power in 2012, the first first decision they took was to withdraw the cases of the terrorists who attacked Ram Janmabhoomi... gave protection to the mafia and a series of riots started in Uttar Pradesh, which was not stopping," Adityanath added. "It stopped when there was a feeling that BJP would come to power."

The firebrand leader also took a dig at SP chief Akhilesh Yadav who has announced 300 units of free electricity to domestic users

and free power for irrigation to farmers if his party comes to power in the forthcoming polls.

"Did you get electricity during the Samajwadi govt? Today they are saying they will give 300 units free but if electricity will not come, then what they will they give for free? We have done what we said and have done development works in the state," Adityanath said.

Attacking his rival parties, the CM further said, "During the COVID times, Congress, SP, and BSP were missing from the field, and only the BJP workers of the Central and state governments were struggling to save the lives of each and every person." "How can people choose a party that wasn't with them in difficult times like the Covid pandemic," he added.

During his tour, Adityanath also started a door-to-door campaign from a Valmiki colony in Mohan Nagar, which houses over 20,000 people mostly from the Dalit community. Adityanath paid a visit to around 10 houses.

7 EXPRESS NETWORK



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



SEAT ISSUES

WHILE IT is almost certain that Harish Rawat would contest the upcoming Assembly polls from Ramnagar seat in Nainital district, his name was not in the first list of candidates announced by the Congress on Saturday. This has evoked some surprise in party circles. Sources said the former Chief Minister of Uttarakhand himself had asked the party not to announce his name in the first list. He perhaps wanted more time to sort out some issues in the constituency, for which his friend-turned-foe Ranjeet Rawat had staked claim. Ranjeet could now be shifted to the Salt seat.

NICK OF TIME

A LAST-MINUTE intervention in correcting a mistake in its Republic Day tableau has helped the Navy save the blushes. An artwork depicting the 1946 Naval uprising was supposed to adorn the tableau. However, there was an oversight in picking the poster, which later turned out to be associated with Russia's Potemkin mutiny of 1905. The error was noticed only when the model was unveiled last week. The artwork was removed from the final tableau at the nick of time. But by that time its images had made it to a Ministry of Defence press release. Now the tableau only mentions Naval Uprising 1946 where the artwork was placed earlier.

LETTERS FROM NETAJI

THE INDIAN Embassy in Berlin celebrated Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary with an exhibition of his rare and personal letters to his wife, Emilie Schenk, in 1930s and 40s. Indian envoy P Harish and Bose's daughter Anita Bose Pfaff were present at the event. Among the letters included one informing her of Jawaharlal Nehru's wife Kamla Nehru's death and Bose's meetings with leaders in Europe.

Venkaiah tests Covid positive

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

A WEEK to go for the Budget session of Parliament to begin, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu tested Covid positive on Sunday.

Sources said at least one-third of the Parliament staff have so far tested positive since the first week of January. They said more than 850 personnel have tested positive till January 20. The majority of them have already recovered.

As many as 2,847 tests have been conducted in Parliament complex since the start of the third wave out of which 875 personnel have been found to be positive.

Having tested positive, Naidu is unlikely to attend the Republic Day celebrations on January 26.

"The Vice President, M Venkaiah Naidu, who is in Hyderabad, tested Covid positive today. He has decided to remain in self-isolation for a week. He has advised all those who came in contact with him to isolate themselves and get tested," the Vice President Secretariat tweeted.

Cong in dire straits in UP, don't waste votes on them: Mayawati

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 23

BSP PRESIDENT Mayawati on Sunday said that the Congress is in dire straits in Uttar Pradesh and people should not "waste" their votes on the grand old party. In a sly dig at Congress general secretary and UP-in-charge Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, she further said that the Congress CM candidate has "changed her stand within hours".

"In the UP Vidhan Sabha elections, the condition of the Congress is so bad that their CM candidate changed her stand within a few hours. In such a situation, it would be better if people don't waste their votes on Congress and instead vote for BSP," Mayawati tweeted on Sunday morning.

Priyanka had earlier declared that she was the face of the party in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh but remained evasive on whether she would contest the upcoming Assembly polls. Asked who the Congress's face would be in UP, Vadra said, "Aapko kisi aur ka chehra dikha raha hai Congress

PLA confirms missing boy in custody, identity being verified

KRISHNA KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

FIVE DAYS after a 17-year-old from Arunachal Pradesh went missing in a forest near his village along the border, with his family alleging that he had been abducted by the Chinese, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has confirmed to the Indian Army that they have found a boy and that his identity is being verified.

Sources said the PLA will confirm his identity through images, and start the process of sending him back, which could take about a week.

The Army had reached out to the PLA to locate Miram Taron, who had gone missing on January 18, and return him as per protocol.



Miram Taron, 17

col. The PLA subsequently responded that they found a boy on January 21.

Taron's case came to light in a tweet posted by Tapir Gao, the BJP MP from the state, who alleged that the boy had been abducted by PLA. The allegation was repeated by Taron's family in Zido, a village in Upper Siang near the boundary with China.

The village is next to a forest where Taron had gone to hunt and

collect herbs last Tuesday when his friend, who had accompanied him, said Chinese troops surprised them. The friend managed to flee. Taron's family later filed an FIR at the local police station.

The incident comes at a time when the relationship between India and China is at one of the lowest points in history. The two nations are yet to resolve the over 21-month long standoff in eastern Ladakh even after 14 rounds of meetings at the Corps Commander level.

Besides, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs last month announced standardised Chinese characters, and the Tibetan and Roman alphabet, for the names of 15 places in Zangnan, the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh, which it claims is South Tibet.



REMEMBERING NETAJI

President Ram Nath Kovind pays tributes to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday. PTI

MANIPUR

AFSPA removal in manifesto of BJP ally NPP

JIMMY LEIVON
IMPHAL, JANUARY 23

THE NATIONAL People's Party (NPP), one of the allies of the BJP-led government in Manipur, on Sunday released its manifesto for the upcoming Assembly election.

The manifesto, titled 'People's Action Document 2022', was released by NPP chief Conrad Sangma online along with Manipur Deputy Chief Minister Y Joykumar Singh, NPP state working president Jayentakumar Singh and Arunachal NPP president Mutchu Mithi.

Conrad Sangma said the NPP manifesto includes clear-cut stands in all aspects unlike the manifestos of other political parties.

The first agenda in the manifesto, the NPP highlighted, is to work towards repealing AFSPA from Manipur, protection of indigenous rights of all communities, focusing on sustained peace by engaging in dialogue with insurgent groups and addressing human rights violations.

Cong: TMC suggested Goa alliance, but kept poaching party leaders

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PANAJI, JANUARY 23

FORMER UNION minister P Chidambaram on Sunday said that the Trinamool Congress had suggested forming an Opposition alliance in Goa but the matter was "closed" after the TMC poached Congress leaders in the state that goes to polls on February 14.

"There was a suggestion from the TMC that we should form an alliance. But before and after, certain events took place. They first poached Mr. Luizinho Faleiro, a sitting MLA. On December 16, we announced the candidature of Mr. Regionaldo Lourenco. They poached him four days later on December 20. The suggestion to form an alliance was made on December 24. Even after that they poached our leaders from Vasco and Mormugao. All these facts were before the leadership of the Congress party and I had no instruction from the leadership of the Congress party to hold any talks. So the matter is closed there," Chidambaram,

R-Day: 6 Army contingents to showcase uniforms through the decades

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

SIX ARMY contingents marching in the Republic Day parade this year will showcase the different uniforms worn and weapons carried by soldiers through the decades, Chief of Staff of Delhi Area Major General Alok Kakkar said on Sunday.

The Indian Army, on January 15, unveiled its latest combat uniform. The new uniform, which will be made available to 12 lakh personnel of the force in a phased manner, has changes related to camouflage pattern and design, and is made of a new material. Before this, the force changed its uniform in 2008.

Each Army contingent at the parade will display the uniforms and weapons used by the troops since the 1950s, Major General Kakkar said in New Delhi.

The Rajput Regiment's contingent will wear the Army's uniform from the 1950s, carrying a 0.303 rifle. The Assam contingent will carry the same weapons, but it will adorn the uniform from the 1960s.

Similarly, the fourth and fifth contingents from the Sikh Light Infantry and Army Ordnance Corps regiments will wear the existing uniform (introduced in 2008), and carry the 5.56 mm INSAS rifles.

There will be 16 marching contingents: six from the Army, one each from the Navy and the Air Force, four from the CAPF, two from the NCC, one from the Delhi Police, and one from NSS.

To maintain pandemic protocols, the number of members in each contingent have been reduced to 96 from 144 earlier.



Congress leader P Chidambaram

who is also the party's senior election observer, said in Panaji.

The coming legislative assembly election in Goa has transformed into a multi-corner contest – with the TMC and the Aam Aadmi Party running aggressive campaigns as the traditional Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) versus Congress intensifies.

Of the five MLAs that the Congress had after ten of its legislators defected to the BJP, Congress lost two MLAs to the TMC and one to the Bharatiya Janata Party in recent months. The TMC also took several block-level and local leaders into its fold after it arrived in Goa in September 2021.

Former Chief Minister Luizinho Faleiro, now a TMC Rajya Sabha MP, was the first Goan MLA to resign from the Congress and join the TMC.

ASSAM

Ex-student leader shot at by police; probe announced

TORA AGARWALA
GUWAHATI, JANUARY 23

FOLLOWING FURORE over police shooting at a 22-year-old former student leader in Assam's Nagaon district on Saturday evening, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced a one-man inquiry commission into the incident, headed by the state Additional Chief Secretary. The report is to be submitted within seven days, Sarma said.

"If we find that the police have done any wrong, action will be taken immediately," he said, addressing a press conference in Guwahati.

On Saturday evening, Kirti Kamal Bora, a former general secretary of Nagaon College, who was earlier a member of All Assam Students' Union (AASU), was injured during an anti-drug operation in Nagaon's Kachalukhua locality when the police shot at him in "self-defence". Bora, who has sustained injuries on his left thigh, left arm and forehead, is currently undergoing treatment at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital.

While the police have alleged that Bora was involved in the drug racket and attacked the policemen, his family said he had been "wrongly framed".

Acting on a tip-off that drugs were being sold at Nagaon's Kachalukhua area, the police had arrived at the spot in plain clothes on Saturday evening. "Two of our men were there to inspect... then people present there got suspicious and started questioning our men, who told them they were policemen. After that, chaos ensued and a brawl began," said Nagaon SP Anand Mishra, adding that there were three or four people in all. "Two tried to



Kirti Kamal Bora

EXPLAINED
E Under fire for police action

THE LATEST shooting incident comes at a time when the Himanta Biswa Sarma government has been under fire for increased police action on alleged criminals. Since Sarma became Chief Minister in May last year and adopted a "zero tolerance" policy against crime, at least 60 alleged criminals have been injured and 30 killed in firing incidents, while either purportedly trying to escape police custody or attacking the police. Sarma remains unfazed by criticism that the police have turned "trigger-happy". He maintains that he had given the police "full operational freedom" to take the "toughest of actions" within the ambit of law to deal with criminals.

run away, so one policeman began to chase them. In the meanwhile, the other policeman who was left behind was being beaten up by two others present. As per his version, he was compelled to fire to save himself, otherwise he would have been killed." The SP added that they recovered eight vials of drugs from the spot, including one from Bora's person.

Bora's family rubbished the police version and said he has been "wrongly framed".

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Netaji's kin welcome move to install statue

'Best monument to Netaji is to spread his legacy of equality and unity'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, JANUARY 23

FAMILY MEMBERS of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on Sunday welcomed the Central government's move to install a statue of the freedom fighter at the India Gate in Delhi, and said his ideology goes far beyond the statue.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, grand nephew of Netaji and former TMC Lok Sabha MP Sugata Bose said, "I have welcomed the installation of the statue at the India Gate. I have also said the best monument to Netaji is to spread his legacy of equality and unity. Importance to Netaji's work must be given as well." Sugata is also the director of the Netaji Research Bureau in Kolkata, set up at the

house of the freedom fighter.

From this year, the Central government has begun Republic Day celebrations from January 23 instead of January 24 in order to include Netaji's birth anniversary. Until the granite statue is ready, a hologram statue of Netaji, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be at India Gate.

Another grand-nephew of Netaji, BJP leader Chandra Bose, urged that communal politics practiced by all parties must stop as a mark of tribute to Netaji. "We welcome the decision to install his statue at the India Gate... Today, communal politics has taken the centre stage in the country, which is being done by all parties. To pay real tribute to Netaji, this kind of politics needs to stop..." Chandra Bose said.

PM CONFERS SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE AWARDS FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT FOR 2019-22

Gujarat institute, Sikkim official among disaster management awardees

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

THE GUJARAT Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM) and Professor Vinod Sharma, vice chairman of the Sikkim Disaster Management Authority, were conferred this year's Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for their work in the field of disaster management.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday distributed the awards for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. The awards for the previous years had been announced earlier, but were given out by the PM on Sunday.

The 2022 awards were presented to the winners chosen from 243 nominations. GIDM was the winner in the institutional category and Sharma in the individual category.

Established in 2012, GIDM has been working to enhance the Gujarat's disaster risk reduction capacity. "Through a series of strategically designed capacity building programmes, GIDM has trained more than 12,000 professionals on diverse issues concerning multi-hazard risk management and reduction during the pandemic. Some recent key initiatives include the development of a user-friendly Gujarat Fire Safety Compliance Portal, and development of a mobile app technology-based Advanced Covid-19

Syndromic Surveillance system to complement the Covid-19 surveillance efforts of Integrated Disease Surveillance Project," the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement.

Professor Sharma, a senior professor at the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the vice chairman of the Sikkim



PM Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri with the winners of Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for 2019-22 at India Gate. ANI

State Disaster Management Authority, was the founder co-ordinator of the National Centre of Disaster Management, now known as the National Institute of Disaster Management. "He has worked tirelessly towards bringing disaster risk reduction (DRR) to the forefront of the national agenda. His pioneering work in DRR in India gave him international recognition..." the MHA statement said.

According to the MHA, Sharma has made Sikkim a model state in implementing DRR, while initiating panchayat-level preparedness plans, linking climate change and DRR.

The awards were instituted to recognise and honour the contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organisations in India in the field of disaster management. They are announced every year on January 23, the birth anniversary

of Subhas Chandra Bose.

In 2021, Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) (institution category) and Dr Rajendra Kumar Bhandari (individual category) were conferred the awards.

According to Home Ministry, SEEDS has done work in building community resilience to disasters. "In the aftermath of earthquakes in India (2001, 2005, 2015), SEEDS had mobilised a group of building masons who are adept in carrying out disaster-resistant construction. These masons have become ambassadors in local communities across several emergencies in multiple states," it said.

On Dr Bhandari, the ministry said he is among the pioneers in India in laying down the foundation of scientific studies on geo hazards in general and landslides in particular.

For 2020, Disaster Mitigation and Management Centre, Uttarakhand (in the institution category) and Kumar Munнан Singh (individual category) were given the award.

According to MHA, since its establishment in 2006, DMMC has coordinated various post-disaster activities relating to coordination, requisition, information exchange and media briefing.

Singh was appointed as a founder Member of the National Disaster Management Authority in 2005 following his work during 2004 Tsunami. He was also instrumental in establishing the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

The 2019 award was given to 8th Battalion of the NDRF. The Home Ministry said the award was for a decade of work. NDRF participated in 314 major operations in this period and rescued over 50,000 people.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

SIDE BY SIDE

Amar Jawan Jyoti, National War Memorial showcase a rich history. Both flames should endure

THE DECISION TO put out the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate, and honour the supreme sacrifice of India's war heroes with an eternal flame at the National War Memorial (NWM), has been described as a logical decision for several reasons. For one, the NWM houses the names of all the soldiers who died in wars that took place after independence in 1947. The Amar Jawan Jyoti, which was set up in 1972 under the initiative of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi under the arch of India Gate, seeks to commemorate those who laid down their lives in the 1971 war, but their names are not inscribed on the monument itself. The case has been made that the NWM is where all the official functions are now held to honour the country's soldiers, and having a flame there would be more apt. These are all good arguments in favour of an eternal flame at the NWM, but still not a convincing enough explanation for why the government will no longer honour Indian soldiers who laid down their lives in wars prior to 1947. This is why the decision has proved divisive, and rankled the sentiments of many. The government's virtue signalling on the issue, that the "merging of the flames", as the project is now being described, is a "decolonising" move, has only made the issue more problematic.

It is one thing for a nation to be aware of its colonial past. But quite another for a government to use its ideological predilections to smear everything that went before as "tainted". In defence of the move, some claim that the Amar Jawan Jyoti memorial was inappropriate in its location at India Gate, a Lutyens' monument and as such a colonial relic. This insults the sacrifice of 15,000 men who laid down their lives as part of the British Army in the two world wars, and whose names are inscribed on the arch, but not at the NWM. These men were no mercenaries as they are now being cast. Moreover, the present day Indian Army is a legatee of the British Indian Army, organised much along the same lines as it was 75 years ago, and cannot turn its back on its own heroes.

The best way out of the present controversy would be to leave the Amar Jawan Jyoti burning at India Gate, along with the one at the NWM. Delhi has space for two flames. Located in a much loved public space, there is no match for India Gate's openness, which gets the monument more visitors than the gated and more select NWM can. Keeping the flame alive there will ensure that none of India's war heroes is forgotten

FISCAL ARITHMETIC

Tax collections are buoyant, but meeting fiscal deficit target set in Union budget will be difficult

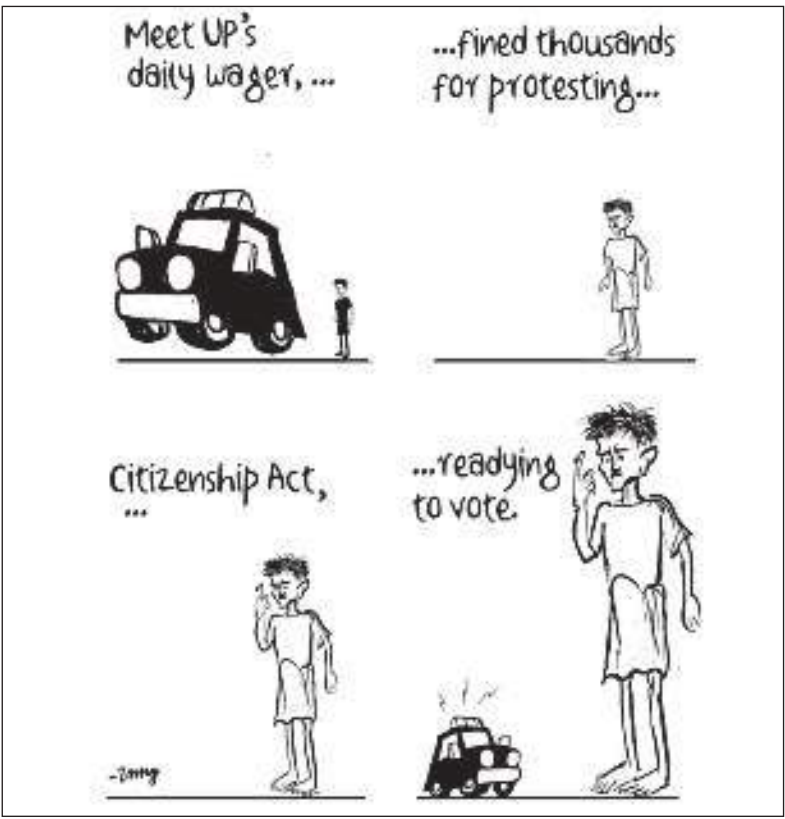
EARLY NEXT WEEK, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union budget. The last budget had presented a roadmap for fiscal consolidation, projecting to bring down the fiscal deficit from 9.5 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 to 6.8 per cent in 2021-22, and thereafter, to below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. This trajectory broadly mirrors the path laid out by the 15th Finance Commission. But, even though the Centre's tax collections have grown at a fairly robust pace and nominal GDP growth this year is expected to surpass what was factored in the budget numbers, meeting the 6.8 per cent target for this year might be challenging with proceeds from disinvestment likely to fall way short of expectations, and considering the government's additional expenditure outlays.

At the aggregate level, the Centre's gross tax collections in the first eight months of the year (April to November) have already touched Rs 15.4 lakh crore. The disaggregated data shows that both direct and indirect tax collections have been fairly buoyant. The trends so far suggest that tax collections are likely to exceed the budgeted target by a significant margin. However, it is difficult to arrive at firm estimates due to the economic uncertainty stemming from the third wave of the pandemic. A major area of concern is the disinvestment target. As against a target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, collections have so far only touched Rs 9,330 crore. But this shortfall is not a one-off. Last year too, the government was able to mop up only Rs 32,000 crore against a budget target of Rs 2.1 lakh crore. This trend of proceeds falling well short of ambitious targets is because disinvestment continues to be treated only as a means to shore up revenues to meet the fiscal deficit target, and not as part of a concerted effort to get the government out of business, and improve the efficiency of companies.

On the other hand, government spending does not appear to have maintained a steady pace. Spending has so far remained subdued in the third quarter, with total expenditure clocking only a 5 per cent growth, down from 21 per cent in the previous quarter. Spending though may pick up in the months ahead on the food and fertiliser subsidy, export incentives, and other items as detailed in the supplementary demand for grants. However, despite the criticality of public sector investments at this juncture, in eight months so far the government has spent just under half its full year budgeted capex. Considering that the economy is being driven by the engines of exports and government spending — private consumption and investments continue to remain muted — if government spending itself remains subdued, it will impact the economy's growth prospects.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SHARAT SABHARWAL

PAKISTAN HAS RELEASED the public version of what is billed as its first-ever National Security Policy (NSP). It stipulates, inter alia, economic security as the core of national security, an expansion of the economic pie, supplementing geostrategy with geoeconomics, making Pakistan a trade and connectivity hub, curbing extremism and terrorism, and inculcating a culture of introspection and pragmatism in defining national security interests. An impressive wish list indeed for a national security state. However, the devil will lie in its implementation.

The elephant in the room is Pakistan's adversarial posture towards its much bigger and better-endowed neighbour — India. This, together with the primacy of its army, the growing and unaccountable defence expenditure, low resource mobilisation, a crushing debt burden, entrenched economic interests, extremist violence, and ethnic fissures accentuated by Punjabi dominance, largely accounts for Pakistan's woes. The country, while counting increasingly on its nuclear arsenal for its defence, retains its obsession to keep up with India's conventional military capability. The NSP mentions the "growing conventional force differential in the region," but is silent on how the increasing defence outlays are to be tamed. One cannot see the Pakistan army giving up its India bogey — the mainstay of its primacy — and its business empire anytime soon.

Expanding the economic pie is an uphill task on account of vested interests draining the national treasury without contributing their due share to it and dampening economic activity by violence and terrorism. Pakistan's growth rate remains very low, decent growth having been registered mainly during phases of large external aid inflows.

The NSP expresses the wish to improve relations with India, but places "a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute" at the core of the bilateral relationship. This has been in essence the publicly articulated Pakistani position over the years. Given the ground realities, the only feasible peaceful solution to Kashmir will have to be non-territorial. The backchannel (2004-07) deliberations on the issue represented an important

Pakistan's new security policy has trade in focus, but falls short of reimagining ties with Delhi

step in that direction. However, Pakistan did not show the courage and sagacity to take them to their logical conclusion. This begs the question: Does Pakistan want a mutually acceptable solution to Kashmir or use it as a perennial hostility plank against India? Things have since moved on with the withdrawal of the special status of J&K, China's deeper involvement in the illegally occupied territory of "Gilgit-Baltistan" and its aggressive moves in eastern Ladakh.

Pakistan has pruned down its initial demand of reversing India's August 5, 2019 move to the restoration of statehood to J&K and no change in the area's demography. The restoration of statehood may come in due course, but no government in India would like it to be seen as a response to a Pakistani demand. There has been no mass influx into J&K to change its demography in a significant manner — something that Pakistan has done to the parts of J&K under its illegal occupation. Unless Pakistan takes a pragmatic approach to Kashmir and relations with India to promote the larger goals mentioned in the NSP, the conclusion that it sees Kashmir as a perpetual stick to beat India with will be inescapable.

Pakistan's emphasis on geoeconomics without trade and transit links with India is an empty slogan. The access provided to China to the Makran coast is the only important economic linkage Pakistan provides. Pakistan can become a meaningful transit hub only by providing linkage, together with India, between Central/West Asia and beyond on one side and Southeast Asia and beyond on the other. However, it has continued to deny transit to India and blocked intra-regional connectivity in SAARC. Instead of addressing these issues, the NSP describes Pakistan's eastward connectivity as being "held hostage to India's regressive approach".

The withdrawal of the MFN status by India in February 2019 was justifiable only as a retaliatory move. It did not have the potential to influence the calculus of Pakistan's security establishment (Pakistan's exports to India are less than 2 per cent of its global exports) and raised the cost of imports from the next-door market for the Indian consumer. Pakistan took

an even more short-sighted step by suspending trade with India in August 2019 which would hurt its economy more than India's. A move last year to permit the import of Indian cotton, cotton yarn and sugar was scuttled quickly by the Pakistan government. The Pak daily *Express Tribune*, quoting an official source, mentioned recently that trade could be normalised if there was progress in dialogue. The term progress is undefined, though I would expect Pakistan to revise its stand on trade at some stage under pressure from its business and industry.

Due to encouragement by politicians and the army for their selfish ends, including the perpetration of terrorism in the region, religious and sectarian extremism and the accompanying violence are deeply entrenched in Pakistan. Repeated attempts to regulate the madrasa education system and counter Pakistan's rogue terror groups have come a cropper.

The aforementioned factors rule out any dramatic results of the NSP by way of an enduring change in the internal and external orientation of the Pakistani state. Because of stiff resistance by vested interests, any positive transformation will inevitably be a gradual process. However, we need to take note of the NSP for two reasons: First, it is a sign of Pakistan's growing challenges, particularly economic, in continuing with its old policies; and second, because it reflects, albeit partially, the thinking of the sizeable constituency in Pakistan that realises the importance of a stable relationship with India in its own interest. Going forward, these factors should present us with opportunities to improve the relationship beyond the ceasefire restoration of February 2021 by way of resumption of trade and the upgradation of diplomatic representation, especially having senior interlocutors in each other's capital. Whatever Pakistan's problems, a calmer western front also suits us in focussing on the Chinese challenge.

The writer is former High Commissioner to Pakistan, and is the author of the forthcoming book, India's Pakistan Conundrum — Managing a Complex Relationship



SAYANDEB CHOWDHURY

THIS YEAR MARKS the 150 years of what can be called the first use of caricature in an Indian publication. It was in *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, then a formidable English daily published from British Calcutta. It mocked the efforts at municipal reform by George Campbell, the then Lieutenant Governor. It could hence be more than serendipity that Bengal's most popular living comic-artist was also to pass away on January 18 this year. To that end, Narayan Debnath's death marks the termination of a comic culture that began so many years ago, a culture whose multiple genealogies involved the British *Punch*, or as the art historian Partha Mitter proposes, that of the pioneers Thomas Rowlandson and James Gillray. For more than a century since, illustrated humour has been a key part of Bengal's public life — be it cartoons, strips, political caricature or graphic storytelling. Debnath himself could well have been a product of several influences — from local gag magazines to the antics of the Depression-era comic-duo Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, if not also Bert Wheeler and Robert Woolsey. The last is not an informed guess but a certainty because slapstick was Debnath's primary tool of comic mobilisation.

The arsenal of Bengali comics had Gaganendranath Tagore, whom the ever hard-to-please pluralist Nirad Chaudhuri had compared to French caricaturist Honoré-Victorin Daumier, the "Michelangelo of caricature". Bengali comics also had the likes of Upendrakishore Ray Chaudhuri and his son Sukumar, the latter's bestiary and wondrous critiques of the archetypes of the Colonia re-

NOT MERELY A LAUGHING MATTER

Narayan Debnath's comic world was rich but stuck in slapstick and stereotype

main unparalleled works of sapient humour. Bengal's caricature repertoire also made space for the gall of Prafulla Chandra Lahiri, the socialist anguish of Chittaprosad, and the political discernment of Rebati Bhushan Ghosh, among several others.

Narayan Debnath, who came to the fore in the 1960s and absorbed the postcolonial political ennui of much of Bengali popular culture, drew well, really well. Debnath had a gift of clean lines and a conspicuous talent to draw figures in fast movement, displaying his ample grip on animated, hand-drawn kinesis that later helped his strips no end. But he did not imbibe the gifts of his predecessors, nor had he stories to tell. So, when he got a chance to do something of his own, he took to the genre of stilted, repetitive adolescent pranks in the capers of Handa and Bhoda, who appeared as double-page spreads in the variety magazine *Shuktra* in 1962. He repeated the same tricks and clichés when later that decade he created Nante and Fante, a pair of boarding school brats. Stereotypes and reiterations were galore. Every story had to end in dimwit denouement.

Debnath may have been short of ideas, but he was versatile otherwise. He drew biographical comics like *Rabi Chobi* (on Tagore), detective comics involving super-sleuth Indrajit Roy; a John Prentice and Alex Raymond-inspired strip about a hardboiled secret agent called Kaushik, etc. He was also behind *Patalchand* — a strip about a young magician; *Bahadur Beral* — about a smart feline; *Danpite Khadu aar tar Chemical Dadu* (1983), a Rick and Morty-like pairing of a boy and his grandfa-

ther; and *Petuk Master Batukdal* (1984) — about an insatiable teacher. Most of them banked on the same staple of bawdy slapstick.

His current fame largely rested on his strip *Batul the Great*, perhaps the only example in Bengali of an indigenous superhero, who was unrepentantly brawny, casually bareknuckle and conspicuously against the tide of the insistent intellectualism of Bengali life. Apparently, this 1965-born strip complemented the emerging aspirations that led to Bangladesh's *Muktijuddho* in 1971. But exactly how did this bullet-dodging squat man with a barrel chest, in pink vests and accompanying black shorts, allay the anxieties of Bengali hyper-nationalism is, to date, unfathomable.

And yet, Debnath remained synonymous with comic culture in Bengal, being its most popular face for generations that grew up in the 1960s, '70s and even the '80s. That generation has most noisily mourned his death in the last few days, grieving the passing of their childhood. But was Debnath's gags really constitutive of a childhood where fatuous frolic, vicious mischief and burlesque body-comedy were the primary forms of entertainment? If yes, then how did that same childhood and in that same period, accommodate the commodious, learned humour of Feluda? If it did not, then why mourn?

Chowdhury teaches at Ambedkar University Delhi and has recently put together, with Rituparno Basu, www.humourinbengalinfo, an archive on the history of caricature in Bengal.

JANUARY 24, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

INDIA-EUROPE TRADE

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION will remove the obstacles coming in the way of efforts to improve trade between India and the European Economic Community (EEC). However, it was for businessmen of both sides to take advantage of the political decisions according to Wilhelm Haferkamp, vice president of the Commission of the EEC. He was speaking after signing a document with the Commerce Minister Shivraj Patil at the end of the meeting of the Indo-EEC commission. Haferkamp repeated his insistence on the removal of obstacles but sidestepped a specific question on whether he considered the quota system on the entry of Indian textiles into the

markets of 10 EEC countries as an obstacle or an irritant. He said textiles was a special issue and was the only such issue because of the unemployment in the textile industry in Europe.

LOK DAL CRISIS ENDS

A SPLIT IN the Lok Dal in the midst of efforts for non-communist Opposition unity was averted following Charan Singh's withdrawal of his acceptance of the resignations of Biju Patnaik and Devi Lal from the Parliamentary board and the national executive of the party. A rapprochement was brought about due to the intervention of several party leaders including Karpuri Thakur and Rabi Ray.

BIHAR ORDINANCES

THE GOVERNOR OF Bihar promulgated two ordinances amending the Patna University Act and the Bihar University Act, clipping the powers of the two universities. According to the ordinances, all appointments to these universities will be made through a centralised examination to be conducted by the state public services commission.

NATO SANCTIONS

NATO COUNTRIES DENOUNCED military rule in Poland and announced an agreement to coordinate sanctions against the Soviet and Polish governments.

THE IDEAS PAGE

A prison diary from Tihar

In Tihar Jail during the second wave, we mourned the deaths of our co-inmates. Amid suffering brought on by pandemic, Indian judiciary, state must ensure right to life of prisoners



NATASHA NARWAL AND DEVANGANA KALITA

“AISALAGTA HAI kabr mein aa gaye hain, na koi awaaz bahar ja sakti hai, na koi awaaz andar aa sakti hai” (It feels like we have entered a grave, no one can hear us and we cannot hear anyone) — a piercing observation made by one of our co-inmates last year, as we lived the deadly second wave of the pandemic inside Tihar’s women’s prison, Jail No.6. With the third wave currently unfolding, urgent attention must be paid to the terrible conditions under which one of the most neglected groups of this country is surviving — India’s prison population. The latest NCRB data tells us that 76 per cent of prisoners are undertrials with a stark overrepresentation of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and other minority communities amongst both undertrials and convicts.

The days of incarceration when the second wave was devastating lives outside and inside, its pain and horror, continue to haunt us. Tihar’s women’s prison witnessed a massive spread of the virus. We watched helplessly as cases emerged from one overcrowded ward after another. We mourned the deaths of our co-inmates far away from their homes. We waited in restless dread for the next day’s five-minute phone call for what news it may bear of our loved ones outside. We began to confront the fear of our own deaths inside that wretched place. On contracting the virus, a prisoner would be shifted to the “Corona ward”, while the barrack where the case was detected would become a “quarantine” barrack for the next 14 days where the inmates inside were locked up 24/7. Since cases kept emerging from every barrack, most of us lived in a state of permanent quarantine. We spent many heart-breaking days and nights listening to the shattering cries of little children when their barrack came to be quarantined.

Our barrack mate and co-accused, Gulfisha, suffered high fever, severe head and body ache, sleeplessness and loss of appetite. Identified as “symptomatic”, she was put in a tiny suffocating cell with two other inmates. Her Covid was never detected because no RTPCR tests were available — only a limited number of antigen tests were being conducted. Testing kits were in short supply, along with all other equipment such as sanitisers, masks, gloves, PPE suits. Barracks full of symptomatic patients were given a liberal supply of paracetamols, cetrizine, cough syrups and various other drugs through untrained inmates who had to work as paramedics in the absence of a requisite number of trained medical staff.

During the initial days of the outbreak, access to mullaqaats/phone calls/letters/newspapers was terminated. Imagine contracting the virus, being shoved into an overcrowded diseased barrack or a lonely cell all alone, provided negligible medical attention and allowed no contact with your family or friends at a time when you most desperately need it. It was only after the intervention of the Delhi High Court



C R Sasikumar

that some of these facilities were resumed inside prison and vaccination of inmates was undertaken. Family and legal mullaqaats in prison have remained suspended through most of the last two years. Even as the facility of e-mullaqaats came to be instituted in August 2020, families of most inmates do not possess smartphones or the digital literacy for accessing the same. Additionally, as a result of courts becoming online and visits by judges or government bodies being discontinued during the pandemic, the impunity that rests in the hands of the jail administration has come to be strengthened. The minimal mechanisms of redressal available to prisoners with regard to discrimination and abuse by prison staff have thus ceased to exist.

Indian prisons have always been overcrowded. In Delhi for example, against a sanctioned prison population of 10,024, the three jails — Tihar, Mandoli and Rohini — have around 19,000-20,000 prisoners. The infrastructure and facilities simply do not exist inside prisons to be able to handle and mitigate a pandemic of this scale. The Supreme Court of India took suo motu cognisance of this issue and on March 23, 2020, issued guidelines for state/UT-wise formation of High Powered Committees (HPC) for the decongestion of prisons. However, the criteria decided by the HPCs of different states for interim release of prisoners, instead of being based on the fundamental principle of equality of all human life, create an arbitrary categorisation of prisoners that deserve to live, based on nature/severity of offence, number of years of sentence but not factors like age, health, comorbidities and other vulnerabilities. So, despite being at “high risk” of mortality, because an undertrial/convict may be charged under certain laws like

We watched helplessly as cases emerged from one overcrowded ward after another. We mourned the deaths of our co-inmates far away from their homes. We waited in restless dread for the next day’s five-minute phone call for what news it may bear of our loved ones outside. We began to confront the fear of our own deaths inside that wretched place. On contracting the virus, a prisoner would be shifted to the ‘corona ward’, while the barrack where the case was detected would become a ‘quarantine’ barrack for the next 14 days where the inmates inside were locked up 24/7. Since cases kept emerging from every barrack, most of us lived in a state of permanent quarantine.

UAPA, sedition, NDPS or is a foreigner, they are not entitled to interim bail/parole. The online functioning of courts meant that trials couldn’t commence or remained suspended, further prolonging the incarceration for undertrials charged under these sections.

Such unfair criteria in the grant of interim bail are the reason why Father Stan Swamy was not granted bail last year and died in custody, and G N Saibaba, a 90 per cent disabled former Delhi University professor continues to be incarcerated after having contracted Covid once again in Nagpur Jail. These are the names we know but our prisons are filled with hundreds of such undertrials and convicts who are most at risk from the virus but have been denied access to any form of interim relief. Like Elsie, who was from Bolivia and lived in our ward. Despite her co-morbidities, as a foreigner and an NDPS undertrial, she was not eligible for the HPC’s interim bail criteria and died inside prison, thousands of miles away from her two little children whose faces she longed to see. She was put to rest inside prison premises as her family did not have the resources to reclaim her body. Even in death, there was no freedom.

In these times of suffering and despair brought on by the pandemic, it is imperative for the Indian judiciary and the state to ensure the right to life of the people it continues to hold in its custody and not let prisons become graveyards of human rights and dignity.

Narwal is pursuing a PhD in Modern History and Kalita is pursuing an MPhil in Women’s Studies from JNU. Both are Pinjra Tod activists and spent almost 13 months in Tihar jail no.6 charged under UAPA and various other provisions

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“While curbs should have been put in place earlier to keep Covid in check, now the state must enforce these restrictions, and urge citizens to act responsibly to help dampen the impact of the fifth wave.” — DAWN

Crisis of fraternity

The abrasive intrusion of religion in the public square and the daily othering of minorities puts the nation in danger



ABDUL KHALIQ

IN WHAT COULD pass for a handout from a spokesperson of the government or the Nagpur headquarters, 32 retired IFS officers last week berated critics for “a sustained smear campaign against the present government on its presumed violations of the secular ethos of the country”. Ironically, their angry outburst comes at a time when respected international rating agencies have variously dubbed India an “electoral autocracy”, a “flawed democracy” and as a “partially free democracy” in the wake of unremitting attacks on minorities and dissidents.

The detractors are accused of “anti-Hindu tirades” by reason of their opposition to the Hindutva ideology and the government, implying thereby that this regime and Hindutva embody the Hindu ethos, which many would see as an insult to a great religion. The government’s apologists argue that “the attacks on majoritarianism are a way to question the mandate that the democratic process gives to the political party that wins elections legitimately and considers itself obliged to the electorate to implement its declared agenda lawfully”.

In their skewed understanding, laws like the plainly discriminatory Citizen Amendment Act (CAA) are just since they have been passed by a duly-elected government. But the Nuremberg and Jim Crow laws were also ratified by elected legislatures. The refusal to acknowledge the persecution of Muslims, Christians and political dissidents is akin to the Big Lie of American republicans, denying that Donald Trump lost the presidential election or had anything to do with the insurrection on Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021. Amidst such frightening social discord, secularism as the underpinning credo of our multi-religious country is clearly under threat.

Secularism has meant different things for different nations. The French have a term — laïcité — to define their form of secularism that not only segregates the state from religion but also banishes religious practice and insignia from the public square. In contrast, the US, UK, and, until a few years ago, India, adhere to multiculturalism, where one can be a good citizen and at the same time publicly identify with a culture that is not the ascendant one. Sadly, India can no longer claim to be the secular republic proclaimed in our Constitution. There has been an abrasive intrusion of religion onto the public square. Today, the religion of the majority enjoys state patronage whereas other religions are tolerated, some more than others. The Ayodhya verdict, by privileging faith over the law, was a body blow to the foundational idea of a secular republic. Last year, the prime minister of the country laid the foundation stone of the Ayodhya temple in an elaborate religious ceremony. The cries of “Jai Shri Ram” that rent the air were nothing short of a dirge to secularism. Along with the resurgence of religio-

ity has come the “othering” of Muslims and, to a lesser extent, Christians, who now live in a social milieu bristling with distrust and hate. An unremitting horror story plays on, with the call for the genocide of Muslims, the hounding of Christians, the state-sponsored eviction drives in minority-dominated areas, the disruption of the prayer services of minorities, etc.

In this grimmiest of times for minorities, a section of the Muslim elite under the banner of Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy (ISMD) provided unintended grist to the agenda of the rabid right-wing by turning on those already under siege, allegedly for the crime that a handful of them supported the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The actions of a few deviants led these self-styled secularists to hector the entire Muslim community with the rhetorical question: “Do they want a reformed modern Islam or the old barbarism of the past decades?” By drawing a contextual relationship between the fiendish worldview of the Taliban and the Indian Muslim, they have reinforced the right-wing disinformation campaign stereotyping Muslims as bigoted, deeply patriarchal and intolerant.

But the real damage to the interests of Muslims from within the community has been wreaked by the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB)’s unyielding obscurantism. Remember the Shah Bano case and the infamous intervention that fanned the fires of inter-religious conflict? And its opposition to the law upending the iniquitous instant triple talaq? The backward-looking AIMPLB’s grotesque response to the current attacks on Muslims is to urge the government to enact legislation against blasphemy, which is a painful reminder of Pakistan’s awful blasphemy laws. The demand of the AIMPLB is unconscionable, does not represent the community’s concerns and must be withdrawn.

Jawaharlal Nehru had presciently observed that too much religion and religiosity would destroy our nation. That seems to be happening already. How do we recover the secular essence that is the lifeblood of our country? Last year, the Delhi High Court underlined the need for a uniform civil code in order to overcome the tangles arising out of the differences in various personal laws. While the court’s prescription is unexceptionable, the rationale given was unconvincing. To believe, as the court does, that modern Indian society is “gradually becoming homogenous and the traditional barriers of religion, community and caste are slowly dissipating”, is an absolute travesty of facts. On the contrary, the crux of the problem is that our society continues to cling to archaic practices in the name of religion, caste or tradition. It’s high time that our interpersonal and social conduct is regulated by a uniform system of rules and regulations. The need of the hour is a uniform civil code that addresses issues of equality and gender justice, but the understandable fear is that under the present dispensation, such a code would be nothing more than the universalisation of the Hindu personal law.

The writer is a former civil servant and Secretary General of the Lok Janshakti Party. Views are personal



SIDHANT KUMAR

THE JOINT COMMITTEE of Parliament has recently presented its recommendations on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019. The Bill principally seeks to regulate the use of our data and to foster a privacy protection framework in the country. However, in many respects, it fails to strike the balance between privacy rights and ease of doing business.

The prime minister has recently said that “innovation, aspiration and application of technology” will fuel the country to become a \$5-trillion economy. The government has also indicated that technology and electronics manufacturing will be the foundation of the \$5-trillion economy. Its stated goal is to grow the technology and electronics manufacturing sector to \$300 billion by 2025.

However, the Bill as it stands imposes regulatory burdens on businesses without securing proportional gains in privacy protection. It perpetuates an uncertain and onerous regulatory environment. The proposals are certain to undo the gains made in recent years by progressive policies of the government. It could result in the largest expansion of the regulatory state in India since economic liberalisation in 1991. The burden of onerous regulation will be fatal to new entrants, while the costs will be absorbed by established incumbents. The Bill, if adopted, will ensure that the start-up ideas of today that could become unicorns of tomorrow are stillborn.

There are several areas of concern. First, the framework under the Bill is premised on a centralised Data Protection Authority with a wide

Unease of doing business

Personal Data Protection Bill imposes regulatory burden on businesses

discretionary remit to formulate regulation. Second, the Bill has broad-based restrictions on the transfer of data overseas that are likely to splinter our market from the global digital economy. Third, it seeks to impose onerous compliance obligations that have little to do with data protection. Fourth, it sets forth an inflexible framework that is bereft of any formal consultative rule-making process. Lastly, substantial portions of the Bill are out of sync with international data protection practices, which could blunt India’s competitive advantage as a digital market. These aspects of the Bill require substantial changes for it to not only achieve its objective of privacy protection, but to also avoid stunting the growth of our digital economy.

The Bill imposes restrictions on the transfer of sensitive personal data outside India. The authority’s prior approval would be needed for any such transfer. Further, a narrower category of personal data that is considered “critical” would be entirely prohibited from transfer outside India. It is the authority who is to define “critical data” without even an indicative hint of its scope in the Bill. These requirements destroy the basic value of the digital economy — connectivity beyond physical barriers. It is these steps that are certain to deprive India of the full fruits of the global digital market without any enhancement in user protection. This is completely out of step with the capitalist digital market and places us in the same category as protectionist China.

The Bill also requires large players to have data protection officers physically located

within India. These officers are required to be key managerial personnel. The outside world is likely to see these measures as less about protection and more about protectionism.

The JPC has recommended that all hardware must be monitored, tested, and certified by an authorised agency to ensure its “integrity and trustworthiness”. This does not augur well for our goal for electronics manufacturing. This is an all-encompassing requirement alien to any data protection law in the world, including the EU’s GDPR. The avowed objective is to ensure against “malicious insertion of software that may cause data breach”. In making this recommendation, the JPC has ignored the existing testing requirements under the Bureau of Indian Standards and the mandatory testing of telecom equipment regimes. This proposal is a clear duplication of existing requirements. It constitutes an unfair burden on a sector that holds promise for Indian champions who are already struggling because of the onslaught of Chinese mobile companies in India. This change will impose a testing requirement on hardware as diverse as computers and cars including over 50 million internet enabled connected devices that are likely to blossom across the country over the next decade.

This is certain to result in delays and disruption in supply chains. The premise of this requirement of a continuing liability on manufacturers after the sale of hardware products to ensure against “malicious software” is divorced from reality. The Bill ignores the real threat posed by the insertion of such software clan-

destinely post the sale of hardware through other means. The JPC report provides an insubstantial explanation of these means having even a chance of protecting users.

Extensive compliance requirements have been included, such as the conduct of audits and impact assessments to be filed with the authority. This approach of breathing down the neck of digital businesses is unknown to any data protection regime. The compliance burden is likely to act as a potent deterrent to fulsome participation in the Indian market as most digital businesses run on lean business structures. Also, technology companies that thrive on acquiring a competitive advantage will be reluctant to share information on their processes and business models. These proposals would give companies a reason to pause as they seek to grow in India.

The foundation of the framework is a domineering mandate to be given to a data regulator, structurally geared to intervene rather than facilitate. The provisions seek to regulate by fiat alone, with innovation and ease of doing business as the main casualties. Value generation through technology requires an open and innovation-friendly regulatory environment. The government, therefore, must closely consider each of the policy prescriptions in the Bill including the unintended but deleterious consequences of the regulatory regime mooted.

The writer is an advocate practising in Delhi and co-author of Privacy Law: Principles, Injunctions and Compensation

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HEAR CRITICISM

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘PM: Attempts being made to ‘tamish’ India’s image’ (IE, January 21). It is disappointing to find that despite the prime minister’s countless visits abroad, India’s international image continues to be blemished. Apparently, leaders of the West do not command as thorough control over their media as Modi does. The vain reluctance to recognise any merit in international media criticism of this government, by projecting the truth as an insult to the nation, is banal besides being detrimental to people’s interests. Accusatory facts must be countered with facts, not demagoguery. The nation can, in fact, be grateful to the international media, for exposing to the world the true state of our affairs, however well concealed by our “nationals” behind walls and statues. It is the individual’s duty to claim their right, in the interest of the society, and to not let the leader make their self, the nation.

M Yusuf Ghazali, Patna

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘PM: Attempts being made to ‘tamish’ India’s image’ (IE, January 21). Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his keynote address during the virtual launch ceremony of ‘Azadi Ke Amrit Mahotsav se Swarnim Bharat Ke Ore’, lamented that precedence given to rights, ignoring duties, since independence has made the nation weak. He also regretted that “there is a tendency to tarnish the image of India, including at the international level”. Call it coincidence or irony, a re-

port just alongside it ‘India: UN should recognise ‘phobia’ against Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs’, where TS Tirumurti, India’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations speaking at the International Counter-Terrorism Conference on January 18, about the emergence of contemporary forms of religion-phobia, said “especially anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist, and anti-Sikh phobias is a matter of serious concern and need the attention of the UN and all Member States to address this threat”. Now putting such an agenda on the UN table for discussion by the government itself would inevitably raise doubts and questions India’s secular credentials.

L R Murmu, Delhi

MUDDLED SURVEYS

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Sanitation reality check’ (IE, January 20). There is no gainsaying that surveys conducted by the government to show their achievements and success in different areas often do not present the true picture. This is because the survey reports are softly manipulated and sanitised. Such data contains noise that needs to be reduced to know the reality. The much-talked-about NFHS-5 may also not be smelling roses in this respect. Moreover, as the sanitation concept changes from one person to another person, leave alone from one state to another state, parameters and benchmarks were needed to be calibrated accordingly.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur



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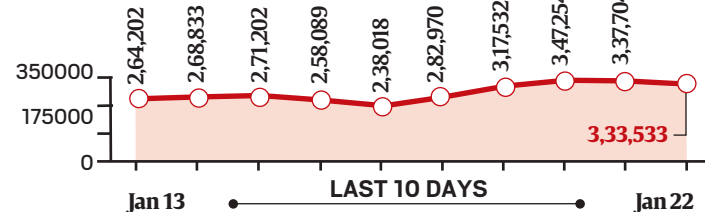
If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

DASHBOARD, AS ON JAN 22

692 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN	New cases 3,33,533	Active cases 21,87,205	Deaths 525
Weekly CFR: 0.52% Overall CFR: 1.38% Total deaths: 4,89,409			

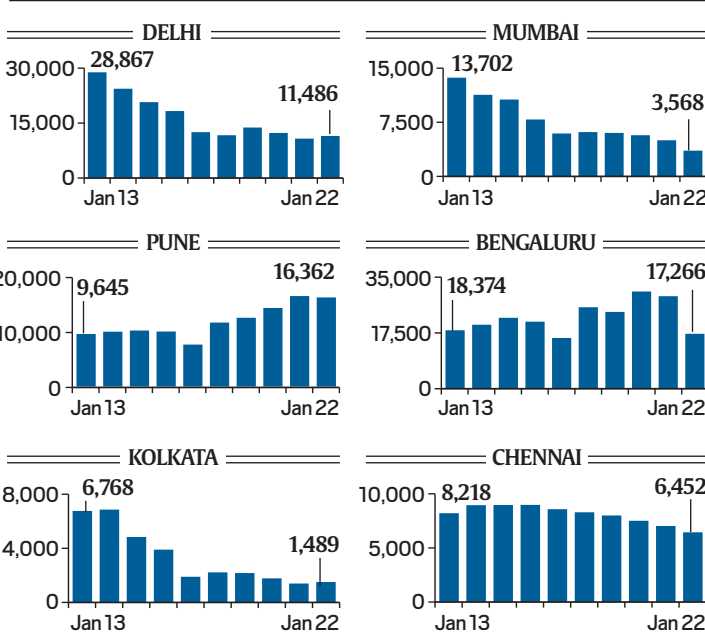
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON JANUARY 22			Weekly positivity
	New Cases	Active Cases	Deaths	
Maharashtra	46,393	2,79,930	56	20.98%
Kerala	45,136	2,47,938	132	38.67%
Karnataka	42,470	3,30,477	26	18.47%
Tamil Nadu	30,744	1,94,697	33	18.06%
Gujarat	23,150	1,29,875	15	17.77%

CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS



TOTAL TESTS

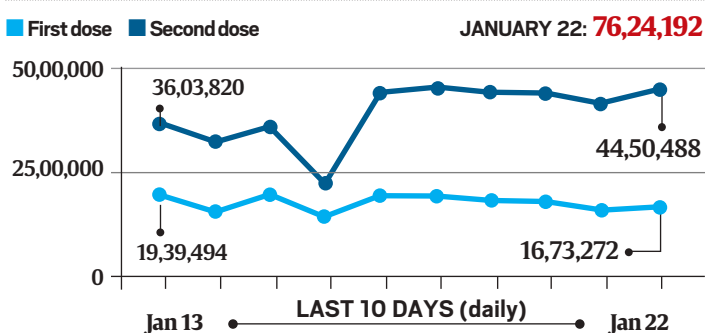
71,55,20,580

TESTS ON JAN 22	WEEKLY POSITIVITY	OVERALL POSITIVITY
20,20,688	16.18%	5.48%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES

161,92,84,270

(Adults 1st dose: **88,57,74,825**; adults second dose: **68,39,22,086**; 15-18 age group first dose: **4,15,77,103**; precautionary doses: **80,10,256**)



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SIMPLY PUT

Reining in the subsidy bill

After falling for several years, the food and fertiliser subsidy outlay has reversed the trend since 2020-21, thanks to additional allocation, higher food procurement amid Covid-19, and rising global fertiliser prices.

HARISH DAMODARAN

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

ON FEBRUARY 1, Budget day, two numbers likely to come under close scrutiny relate to the Centre's spending on food and fertiliser subsidy. Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the aggregate outlay on the two fell, both in absolute terms (from Rs 211,834 crore to Rs 189,813 crore) and as a share of the Centre's total expenditure (from 11.8% to 7.1%). A further drop, to Rs 186,879 crore and 6.1%, was projected in the Budget for 2020-21 presented on February 1, 2020. This was before Covid-19 struck.

That declining trend has, however, since completely reversed. The combined food and fertiliser subsidy bill in the revised estimates for 2020-21 was a massive Rs 556,565 crore, representing 16.1% of the Centre's entire Budget (Table 1). While the budget estimates for 2021-22 stood lower, they are still way above the trend till 2019-20.

There are two reasons for the reversal.

Coming clean

The first has to do with the Centre, until last year, not providing fully for the subsidy, arising from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and fertiliser firms selling grains/nutrients at below cost to public distribution system (PDS) consumers/farmers.

In the case of food, the Centre wasn't wholly funding the difference between the FCI's economic cost – what it incurs in procuring, handling, transporting, distributing and storing grain – and its average issue price, multiplied by the quantities sold. To bridge the gap, FCI had to borrow heavily, especially from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). These loans were availed at interest rates ranging from 7.4% to 8.8% per annum.

Table 2 shows that FCI's borrowings from NSSF in 2019-20, at Rs 110,000 crore, exceeded the food subsidy of Rs 108,688 crore provided through the Budget. The same goes for fertilisers, where the industry was owed Rs 48,000 crore of subsidy dues at the start of 2020-21. The budgeted subsidy of Rs 71,309 crore fell short of the requirement of about Rs 85,000 crore just for 2020-21, exclusive of arrears.

But in the revised estimates for 2021-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman allocated an additional Rs 3,69,687 crore towards food and fertiliser subsidy. As a result, all outstanding NSSF loans to FCI got repaid and the fertiliser subsidy dues cleared at one go. This

TABLE 1 CENTRE'S SPENDING ON SUBSIDY (Rs CRORE)					
FISCAL YEAR (APR-MAR)	FOOD SUBSIDY (1)	FERTILISER SUBSIDY (2)	TOTAL (1+2)	CENTRE'S BUDGET* (3)	TOTAL AS % OF (3)
2013-14	92,000	67,339	1,59,339	15,59,447	10.22
2014-15	1,17,671	71,076	1,88,747	16,63,673	11.35
2015-16	1,39,419	72,415	2,11,834	17,90,783	11.83
2016-17	1,10,173	66,313	1,76,486	19,75,194	8.94
2017-18	1,00,282	66,468	1,66,749	21,41,973	7.78
2018-19	1,01,327	70,605	1,71,932	23,15,113	7.43
2019-20	1,08,688	81,124	1,89,813	26,86,330	7.07
2020-21**	1,15,570	71,309	1,86,879	30,42,230	6.14
2020-21***	4,22,618	1,33,947	5,56,565	34,50,305	16.13
2021-22**	2,42,836	79,530	3,22,366	34,83,236	9.25

*Centre's total expenditure; **Budget Estimates; ***Revised Estimates.

Source: Union Budget documents for various years.

TABLE 2 FCI'S BORROWINGS FROM NSSF (Rs CRORE)

	BORROWED	REPAID	OUTSTANDING*
2016-17	70,000	0	70,000
2017-18	65,000	14,000	1,21,000
2018-19	97,000	27,000	1,91,000
2019-20	1,10,000	46,400	2,54,600
2020-21**	1,36,600	68,400	3,22,800
2020-21***	84,636	3,39,236	Nil
2021-22	Nil	Nil	Nil

*As of end-fiscal;

**Budget Estimates;

***FCI data.

Source: Budget papers and FCI.

exercise of coming clean — the Centre owing up its expenditures, rather than transferring to the balance sheets of FCI and fertiliser companies — also meant a huge one-time spike in the subsidy bill.

Covid and after

The second source of overshooting has been Covid (in respect of food subsidy) and soaring international prices (vis-à-vis fertilisers).

In 2020-21, a record 93.11 million tonnes (mt) of rice and wheat was sold through the PDS, compared to 62.19 mt, 65.91 mt and 60.37 mt in the preceding three fiscals. Government agencies also procured 103.53 mt of the two cereals from the 2020-21 crop, surpassing the previous high of 90.82 mt in 2019-20, 78.53 mt in 2018-19 and 73.97 mt in 2017-18.

Simply put, the post-Covid crisis led the Centre to not only distribute, but also procure, unprecedented quantities of grain. The PDS — more so, the 5 kg of free grain per person per month given under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), apart from the regular 5 kg quota of wheat or rice at Rs 2 and Rs 3/kg, respectively — became the government's preeminent social safety net programme, both during and after the lockdown.

The 5 kg extra grain provision under PMGKAY was implemented for eight months (April-November 2020, until the Bihar elections) in 2020-21. In the current fiscal, it was restarted in May 2021 and has been extended until March 2022, when polls in UP and four

other states also get over. With PDS grain off-take already at 74.55 mt in April-December 2021, and three months to go, the total quantum of subsidised/free sales looks set to top 100 mt, a new high. Government officials have further indicated that PMGKAY alone will cost Rs 1.47 lakh crore this fiscal, with the revised food subsidy bill at around Rs 3.7 lakh crore, as against the budgeted Rs 242,836 crore.

A similar overshooting, despite no pending past dues, is expected in fertiliser subsidy. The primary reason is global prices. Urea imports into India are taking place now at \$900, 1,000 per tonne (cost plus freight) and di-ammonium phosphate at \$900, while ruling at \$300 and \$400 respective levels a year ago. Prices of MOP (muriate of potash), too, have surged over this period, from \$230 to \$600 per tonne. So have that of imported inputs: phosphoric acid (\$689 to \$1,330), ammonia (\$300 to \$900), rock phosphate (\$100 to \$200) and sulphur (\$150 to \$300).

Following the surge in international prices, the Centre last month secured Parliament's approval for an additional Rs 58,430 crore towards fertiliser subsidy through a supplementary demand for grants. Rating firm ICRA Limited pegs the revised fertiliser subsidy figure for 2021-22 at Rs 1.40 lakh crore-plus, up from the budgeted Rs 79,530 crore.

The road ahead

The overshooting of the food and fertiliser subsidy by roughly Rs 1.9 lakh crore in 2021-22,

in spite of no carry forward from previous years, would raise the hackles of fiscal hawks. This is particularly when 10-year Indian government bond yields — a barometer for interest rates in the economy — have climbed from 5.96% to 6.62% in the last one year.

The hawks can derive some comfort, though, from no blockbuster elections being scheduled for 2022-23: The political imperative for extending PMGKAY may not be as great for Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh as for UP and Bihar. Also, the current Omicron wave doesn't seem presenting a threat calling for intense lockdowns like those in 2020-21 and 2021-22. It is realistic, then, to expect a lower food subsidy outgo in 2022-23. The same cannot be said for fertiliser subsidy, where there is no certainty with regard to international prices.

Many economists would, of course, want more substantive measures to rein in subsidy. These include hiking PDS issue prices, capping grain procurement, decontrolling urea and providing a fixed per-tonne nutrient-based subsidy similar to that for other fertilisers. But such far-reaching reforms may be easier in the first three than the last two years of a government's term — irrespective of the results of the Assembly elections.

(Damodaran is National Rural Affairs & Agriculture Editor of The Indian Express and currently on sabbatical as Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi)

The appeal of hymn 'Abide With Me' in India

SUANSHU KHURANA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

A DAY after the eternal flame at Amar Jawan Jyoti was merged with the one at the National War Memorial, the government has dropped *Abide With Me*, the sombre highpoint of the conclusion of the Republic Day celebrations.

Penned in the pre-modern world by Henry Francis Lyte, a Scottish Anglican minister, the hymn, known for its simplicity and sombre theme, is often sung to English composer William Henry Monk's evocative tune *Eventide*, and has been a fixture in India's Beating Retreat ceremony since 1950.

It is always the last piece played by the brass bands before the troops recede up Raisina Hill to the tune of poet Allama Iqbal's *Saare jahan se achha*, and the last before the retreat buglers bring down the Indian flag.

In 2020, reports had emerged about the hymn being dropped from the Beating Retreat Ceremony and being replaced by *Vande Mataram*. Following criticism, the hymn was retained in 2020 and 2021.

At the ceremony, the hymn — played by

the massed bands of the three armed services — creates a sombre moment when the tubular bells ring from the North and the South blocks, followed by an echo effect created by musicians posted atop the two buildings.

The hymn

Lyte wrote the hymn in 1820 after visiting a friend, who in his last moments continually uttered "abide with me", a request to ease his pain. But he kept the piece to himself until his own death in 1847. Paradoxically, the first time the hymn was actually sung was at Lyte's own funeral in Nice.

The hymn, which is popular across Christian denominations, was also played at the wedding of Queen Elizabeth II, and by musicians as the *Titanic* went down. It also became popular during World War I. Edith Cavell, a British nurse, would sing it the night before she was shot by a German squad for helping British soldiers escape from occupied Belgium. It is played during various military services in Australia and New Zealand.

Significance in India

Abide With Me was one of Mahatma

Gandhi's personal favourites. He first heard it played by Mysore Palace Band.

At Sabarmati Ashram, the ashram bhajanavali, with the bhajans *Vaishnav Jan Toh and Ram Dhun* by Tulsidas, *Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram* in it, *Abide With Me*, along with *Lead Kindly Light*, was put together under Gandhi's watch. The gentle hymn at the dusk of January 29 has also been a moment to remember Gandhi as the next day is the day he was assassinated.

The last phrase of the hymn, *'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'* has been drawn from the Bible. The moment is also an ode to soldiers who have laid their lives in defending the country.

The hymn is sung regularly in church choirs, and in educational institutions in the country.

It has been translated into various Indian languages. There is also a Usha Uthup version in a Bangla film titled *Madly Bengali*.

What changes

Abide With Me has been replaced with Kavi Pradeep's seminal *Aye Mere Watan Ke Logon*, which was written in the wake of the Sino-

Indian War, and went on to become a tableau of Indian nationalism.

The song was first sung on January 27, 1963. Composed by C Ramachandra and sung by Lata Mangeshkar, it was first performed at Delhi's National Stadium in a fundraiser organised by the film industry for war widows. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru welled up as the six-and-a-half-minute song was sung.

Quite a few changes have happened in the playlist of the Beating Retreat ceremony in the last few years but *Abide With Me* had remained untouched, mostly because its symbolic sonority goes beyond the ceremony.

2016 saw a focus on popular music and less on traditional western and Indian martial tunes. A version of A R Rahman's *Bharat Humko Jaan Se Pyaara Hai*, *Ma Tuijhe Salaam*, and Laxmikant Pyarelal's *Dil Diya Hai Jaan Bhi Denge* were experimented with.

This year, a Kumaoni tune from Uttarakhand, *Channa Billauni*, has made it to the list. The folk piece, first sung by singer Beena Tiwari on radio, is a gentle ditty about a woman asking her father to not marry her in a village named Channa Billauni because she feels that it's unusually hot there.

The comments in India that led to removal of Germany's navy chief

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

THE HEAD of the German navy, Vice Admiral Kay-Achim Schönbach, resigned on Saturday evening after certain comments made by him while on an official visit to India drew criticism in Germany and triggered a diplomatic situation in Ukraine.

What exactly happened here?

Vice Admiral Schönbach, who was speaking at an event organised by the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) in Delhi, said on Friday that Russia's President Vladimir Putin deserved "respect", and that Ukraine would never get back the Crimean peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014.

The comments came at a sensitive moment, with tens of thousands of Russian troops amassed at Ukraine's borders, NATO's negotiations with Russia stalemated, and US President Joe Biden having predicted this

week that Putin would "move in" and invade Ukraine.

The German Defence Ministry asked the navy chief for an explanation, and on Saturday evening, Schönbach posted on his official Twitter handle that his "security policy statements in a talk show at a think tank in India" were his "personal opinion for that moment on the spot".

He added that he "shouldn't have done it like that... it was a clear mistake", according to a translation of the tweet in German.

He submitted his resignation later that evening.

But what did Schönbach really say?

"The Crimean Peninsula is gone. It's never coming back. This is a fact," he said. "Is Russia really interested in a small tiny strip of Ukraine soil to integrate into their country? No, this is nonsense. Putin is probably putting pressure because he can do it, and he knows he splits us, he splits the European Union."

What Putin "really wants is respect", he said. "On eye level, he wants respect. And my

God, giving him respect is low-cost, even no-cost. It is easy to give him the respect he demands, and probably deserves."

Schönbach said it was important to have Russia on the side of the West against China. "...And there we have a Christian country, even Putin, he's an atheist but it doesn't matter. I think having this big country, even if it is not a democracy, on our side [is important]... probably keeps Russia away from China".

What is the situation with Ukraine and Russia right now?

According to Western nations, Russia and Ukraine could be on the brink of war. Russia has positioned more than 100,000 troops along the border. British officials said on Saturday that Putin plans to instal a pro-Russian leadership in Kyiv.

On January 19, President Biden delivered a grim prognosis of the situation.

"Do I think he'll (Putin) test the West, test the United States and NATO, as significantly as he can? Yes, I think he will," Biden told reporters at the White House. "But I think he



Vice-Admiral Schönbach speaks at MP-IDSA on Friday. [Twitter/@IDSAIndia](https://twitter.com/IDSAIndia)

will pay a serious and dear price for it that he doesn't think now will cost him what it's going to cost him."

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V Lavrov in Geneva on Friday. International media reports said the US had offered a summit be-

tween Biden and Putin in a final attempt to defuse the crisis, but that Blinken had underlined that the right of Ukraine and other countries to join NATO was not negotiable.

Russia has been asking the US to stop the expansion of NATO to the east, and to not establish military bases in former Soviet states, or develop bilateral military cooperation with them.

And where does Germany stand?

While the UK and the US have sent weapons to Ukraine, Germany has so far not done so, despite appeals from Kyiv. Defence Minister Lambrecht sought to explain Germany's position in an interview to *Welt am Sonntag*: "We are standing on Kyiv's side. We have to do everything to de-escalate. Currently, arms deliveries would not be helpful in this respect; there is agreement on this in the German government."

How has Ukraine responded to Schönbach's comments?

Kyiv has been very upset, and the German

ambassador, Anka Feldhusen, was called in to receive its "

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IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

RAMACHANDRA GUHA, HISTORIAN

“Civil service, judiciary, media are performing at below optimum levels...framers of Constitution would’ve been horrified”

Ramachandra Guha on the Indian Republic, deepening of democracy, undermining of public institutions, rewriting of history, and the abandoning of national icons by the Congress, allowing the BJP to appropriate them. This session was moderated by MONOJIT MAJUMDAR, Editor for Explanatory Journalism, *The Indian Express*

Monojit Majumdar: *Rebels Against the Raj* documents seven remarkable foreigners who gave up their country and their old lives to embrace and immerse themselves in India. Why is it important to know them now?

This book has been in the making for a very long time. I wrote a biography of Verrier Elwin, an Oxford scholar who came to India in the 1920s, became the leading authority on Adivasis, was close to both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and was the first foreigner to be granted Indian citizenship after 1947. One of his abiding regrets was that despite all his books on Adivasis, having met Madeleine Slade (later Mira Behn) at Sabarmati Ashram, knowing Gandhi and Nehru and understanding their nationalism, he didn't have that absolute mark of identification with India, which was going to prison during the Raj. That's why I wanted to write about people who took this rather radical step of identifying so completely with their adopted country, that they were willing to undergo arrest and incarceration. After I finished the second volume of my Gandhi biography in 2018, I began writing this book. It just so happens it is out in the 75th year of Indian independence but it is timely because it is principally a group portrait of seven extraordinary individuals and through them, provides a newer understanding of 20th century India and its encounters with the West. It's a challenge to xenophobia, insularity and parochialism. It also questions the sense that Indians know everything and can't learn anything from foreigners. Jingoism is sweeping the world and these lives are a challenge to that kind of view. I think they uphold the best traditions of our freedom movement; people like Gandhi and Tagore, who were completely grounded in India but willing to engage with open minds and learn from other countries and cultures.

Monojit Majumdar: Seventy-two years after the Constitution was adopted, where does India's republican experiment stand today?

In some ways, democracy has deepened. Narendra Modi is the Prime Minister with an OBC background. Mamata Banerjee, who has no dynastic connection in politics, is also completely self-made. Our voting percentages are still high. Many of our entrepreneurs are no longer from standard business families like the Ambanis, Birlas and Tatas.

In other ways, I think we are facing a decline, particularly in the quality, capability, and effectiveness of our public institutions. The civil service, the judiciary and the media are performing at below optimum levels, at levels the framers of the Constitution would never have anticipated. If Ambedkar and his colleagues had seen the turbidity, laggardness and delays in the judiciary, seen how much of the media is completely captive to the ruling party, how bureaucrats and police officers just serve their political masters and not what is laid down in the Constitution, they would be horrified. Our institutional decay has been going on for a very long time and isn't just a product of this government. It dates back to the '70s and the Congress governments. More recently, of course, our ruling party is completely silent on sectarian polemics. So secular institutional decline is something that should worry us.

But for a country as large and complicated as India, things don't always move in a unilinear direction. It is always harder for a historian to pass judgment on what's happening today as compared to what happened 15 or 20 years ago. But in my interim opinion, this is the Republic's fourth major crisis. The first was Partition. The second was the '60s, when we had wars with China and Pakistan, severe droughts and food riots. The third was the Emergency. And now it is the fourth. The rest of the world knows this, though some of us might be navel-gazing. Either the ruling party will claim India is more powerful and respected than ever before, which is complete nonsense, or the Opposition will only see Modi as the problem. But what about institutional decline, sectarian mobilisation and finally, the galloping pace of environmental degradation? Even if there was no climate change, India today would be an environmental basket case, exacting a huge social, economic and medical health cost. India came through the previous crisis, rebuilt itself and rededicated itself to constitutional values. I can't say the same will happen this time.



WHY
RAMACHANDRA
GUHA

Ramachandra Guha is a historian and public intellectual whose works include a biography of Gandhi, a pioneering environmental history, a social history of cricket and his latest book, *Rebels against the Raj* (Penguin/Allen Lane).

An authority on modern India, he is an important voice on contemporary India and the nation's journey, 72 years after it adopted the Constitution



Sandeep Dwivedi: Once princely states invited foreigners, now we have Jaspreet Bumrah getting spotted by John Wright in the IPL. What is the role outsiders have played for cricketers in India?

The global context starts from Ranjitsinhji, who had to make his name in England before being accepted as an Indian cricketer. Sunil Gavaskar said how an English coach called TS Worthington, who was opening batsman and played Test matches for England in the 1930s, taught him how to play the rising ball at a school camp in the 1960s. There have also been reverse examples. Bishan Singh Bedi taught Alan Knott yoga to improve his flexibility. The great thing about cricket is that it is

truly non-xenophobic. The fans are xenophobic, but cricketers are not.

Sandeep Dwivedi: You were in cricket administration...Is there an inevitability in the Indian cricket system that the political class will prevail regardless of who is the chief or his qualifications?

I agree. I think Sourav Ganguly's tenure has been disappointing in that a person who was independent-minded and stood up for what he believed

was right as captain has become so submissive and deferential. Why didn't he fight for the Ranji Trophy? I hope that our defeat in South Africa leads to some introspection about how not having a Ranji Trophy may have contributed to us not having a very good bench strength. Is there a great young Indian batsman now after Kohli? No. You learn batting in the long haul only in Ranji Trophy, you can't learn it in IPL.

Liz Mathew: The BJP has managed not just an electoral victory but succeeded in making an ideological intrusion. It has changed the narrative. How is this happening?

I think of the poet WB Yeats' lines — "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity" — when I contrast Manmohan Singh with

Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, or Rahul Gandhi with Shah. No one should underestimate the political intelligence of Narendra Modi. I think the political intelligence of Amit Shah may be overrated; he's a manipulator and a divider, an intriguer but Modi understands things. He understands how to shift the narrative. The fact that the BJP has claimed Patel and Bose — two life-long Congressmen — as its icons, is a sign of how clever he is, and in some ways, diabolically clever he is. But of course, it's the Congress party who has ceded them. At a state level, I think they face robust ideological opposition. But absolutely do not underestimate Modi's intelligence, his ability to manipulate symbols, ideas, names, rewrite the past and paint dreams of what the future might be like. Clearly Rahul Gandhi is incapable of opposing him, not just politically, but also ideologically. In many ways, the Gandhis are Modi and the BJP's best friends and this is becoming more evident every day. History will pass its own verdict on what's happening. I am looking beyond symbols, ideas and statues and events to the deeper degradation of Indian democracy. We should be worried about all that has gone on under Modi's watch for the last eight years, and particularly after 2019, after Amit Shah entered the Cabinet.

Liz Mathew: Being a historian, you must have assessed the purpose of this history rewriting for the right wing, and it is in the process now. How far can it go?

As long as Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are in charge of the Congress, it can keep going on. Because in Sonia Gandhi's history, the Congress is all the Gandhi family, except one person, Mahatma Gandhi. Even they have to make an exception of Mahatma Gandhi. Otherwise, it is Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi. A lot of this rewriting has been enabled by the ignorance and nepotism of the leadership of the Congress, which has allowed the BJP to so daringly claim not just Patel, who was Gandhi's right-hand man and then later Nehru's right-hand man, but Bose, who named the brigades of the Indian National Army (INA) Gandhi brigade, Nehru brigade and Azad brigade. This has only been enabled because Sonia Gandhi and the Congress Party discarded Patel, Bose, and many others. They discarded Gokhale, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Kamraj, Shastri — a lifelong Congressman and a principled secularist. So I think a lot of this has to do with the family capture of the Congress party. And the sooner it goes, the better for the Congress and the better for

Indian democracy. I think Modi and Shah want the Gandhi family there forever, for both political and ideological and history rewriting reasons.

Harish Damodaran: Do you think that maybe the first 68 years were actually an aberration; the majoritarian impulse was always there? What exactly happened in the '40s? How is it that we became a 'secular' state and lasted 68 years? Suppose Godse hadn't killed Gandhi, what we are seeing today maybe would have come a little earlier?

My great teacher, the sociologist Andre Beteille, told me many years ago that the fundamental blocks of Indian so-

Why is the BJP celebrating Bose? One, it does not have icons in the freedom struggle. Second, he's not Nehru. Third, he seems closer to the BJP's idea of masculinity. All these are being done as distractions from unemployment, inflation, our declining status in the world, attacks on minorities

Devyani Onial: You were born and grew up in Uttarakhand and in *The Unquiet Woods* you wrote about peasant uprisings against commercial forestry. What do you think of projects like the Char Dham corridor and do you see any local opposition to them?

I have been in touch with those opposing the Char Dham project and was dismayed by what the Supreme Court

has decided. If you just look at the pictures that the Ravi Chopra committee gathered, you realise that it's an utter environmental and social disaster. I think my home state has made some terrible strategic mistakes, the first being making Dehradun the capital instead of Nainital or Gairsain, which is so far away from the hills. This obviously distorted Dehradun and led the real estate mafia to take over. Why can't it learn from hill states like Himachal and what it has done in education and health besides horticulture? I have no nostalgia for Uttarakhand being part of Uttar Pradesh but broadly speaking, Uttarakhand has not fulfilled its potential.

Monojit Majumdar: Do you believe that non-historians have rushed into the space to explain India's past because purist and scholarly historians have stayed away from writing for a wider audience? The problem with popular history

not just change the way we think, it distracts attention from the urgent tasks of economic and social renewal. Modi sees himself as an emperor. Not as an emperor of Hindu minds or even as the first Hindu emperor; he sees himself as doing what Shivaji and Prithviraj Chauhan could not do, which is to create a unified Hindu state. That chills me, frightens me. And that's absolutely not good for the Republic.

Raj Kamal Jha: A refrain today is how polarised we have become. Are we more polarised than ever or is it that we are spending too much time on our phones? How do we expand the common ground? Are there issues in politics today, for example, on which the BJP voter and the non-BJP voter would agree?

The obsession of people, particularly young people, with their phones is universal across all democracies and they reinforce each other. I'm increasingly horrified by the fact that on Twitter I only get feedback that comforts me and I have to follow different kinds of people from the other side of the spectrum. Every morning, I take a walk in Cubbon Park, which is next to the cricket stadium. Around 7.30 am, I see boys coming in for practice, all of them on their smartphones. When we played cricket, we chatted with each other. You go to board a flight and you see the airline staff on their smartphones. This is a peculiar disembodied experience we are leading. Whether that contributes to polarisation, I'm not sure, but certainly visual images of a certain type reinforce your prejudices.

Can we have a common ground? Not in the short term. Maybe in mature democracies we can have a transformation. I think young people have to find a way of connecting with each other and getting their information from other places as well — from reading, writing, travelling and listening to music.

Raj Kamal Jha: You referred to Andre Beteille's formulation that family, caste, and religion are the building blocks of society in India. Where do you situate free speech and dissent in these?

First, it must begin at home; there must be dissent within the family, within the caste system, and within religion. At the time of our freedom movement, Ambedkar was showing a different path on how caste should operate. Gandhi was showing a different path on how Hindus and Muslims should operate. Family, caste, and religion do constrain dissent and free speech within the territories they control. And if family, caste and religion are so overwhelmingly important, the society as a whole, the political system as a whole, will also constrain dissent.

Shivani Nail: As a historian who interacts with India's educated elite, do you think the lack of a humanities education keeps people from getting a more balanced view of our realities?

My short answer is yes. The longer answer, it works both ways. History and politics graduates have absolutely no understanding of the complexities of the scientific and technological world and vice versa. So we are a nation of two cultures. We have to find ways of breaking the silos within the university system itself.

Monojit Majumdar: What might Gandhi have said about putting Netaji under a canopy at India Gate that was for some time considered for him?

Netaji was a fascinating and complex figure. When he took over the leadership of the INA, he constituted four regiments. One was called Bose Regiment; the other three were called Gandhi, Nehru and Azad. He had profound respect for his colleagues, his past, and what he thought would be his future colleagues in the Congress-led national movement. He was all for Hindu-Muslim harmony, detested the Hindu Mahasabha and would have detested the RSS. Also, in 1943, when Gandhi was in jail, Bose gave a wonderfully moving address over the Azad Hind Radio on October 2, the former's birthday, calling him "the father of the nation" for the first time. Bose talked about how Gandhi was the fountainhead and inspiration not just for him but for the freedom movement as a whole. I think Gandhi would not have minded being displaced by Bose. They had great mutual affection for each other. INA soldiers worked with Gandhi in Noakhali for his vision of Hindu-Muslim reconciliation.

Why is the BJP celebrating Bose? One, it does not have icons in the freedom struggle. Second, he's not Nehru. Third, he seems closer to the BJP's idea of masculinity.

All these are being done as distractions from unemployment, inflation, our declining status in the world, attacks on minorities. Quite likely on August 15, the Sangh will appropriate Aurobindo Ghosh as it will be his birth anniversary.

Illustration: Suvajit Dey



TOP OF THE WORLD



Police escort Sedef Kabas before her appearance at court on Saturday. AP

TURKEY

Journalist jailed before trial for President insult

Istanbul: A well-known Turkish journalist has been jailed pending a trial for insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, her lawyer said. Sedef Kabas was taken into custody after she cited a proverb on television and social media referring to an ox. Under the insult law, thousands have been prosecuted for targeting Erdogan since he became President in 2014. Her lawyer, Ugur Poyraz, tweeted that she had been arrested during an appearance at court in Istanbul on Saturday. The judge accepted the prosecution argument that she posed a flight risk. Kabas, 53, was detained by police at her home in Istanbul on Saturday following her remarks on Tele 1 and Twitter. AP

UAE

Ship detained, drugs seized in Mideast waters

Dubai: The US Navy announced in Sunday it seized a boat in the Gulf of Oman carrying 40 tonnes of urea fertilizer used to make explosives that was caught last year smuggling weapons to Yemen. The British royal navy said it confiscated 1,041 kg of illegal drugs in the same waters. The interdictions were the latest in the volatile waters of the Persian Gulf as American and British authorities step up seizures of contraband during the grinding conflict in Yemen and on-going drug trafficking in the region. US forces found 40 tonnes of urea fertilizer, known to be a key ingredient in homemade improvised explosive devices, hidden on board. AP

FRANCE

Adventurer dies attempting solo Atlantic crossing

Le Pecq: A 75-year-old French adventurer has died on a solo attempt to row across the Atlantic Ocean. The death of Jean-Jacques Savin was announced by his friends on Facebook. They said maritime rescue services located the body on Saturday inside the cabin of his boat, which was found overturned off the Azores Islands, a mid-Atlantic Portuguese archipelago. The former soldier set off on Jan. 1 from the southern tip of Portugal on the westward voyage he had thought would take about three months. In 2019, Savin had previously floated alone across the Atlantic in a large barrel-shaped capsule. AP

DEPUTY PM SAYS CLAIM SHOULD BE PROBED IF COMPLAINT IS MADE

UK lawmaker claims she was fired over her Muslim faith

REUTERS & AP
LONDON, JANUARY 23

A FORMER minister in Britain's Conservative government says she was told her Muslim faith was a reason she was fired, a claim that has deepened the rifts roiling Prime Minister Boris Johnson's governing party.

Former transport minister Nusrat Ghani told the *Sunday Times* that when she was demoted in 2020, a government whip said her "Muslimness" was "making colleagues uncomfortable."

She said she was told "there were concerns 'that I wasn't loyal to the party as I didn't do enough to defend the party against Islamophobia allegations.'"

"It was very clear to me that



Nusrat Ghani

the whips and No. 10 (Downing St.) were holding me to a higher threshold of loyalty than others because of my background and faith," Ghani said.

Chief Whip Mark Spencer said he was the person Ghani was talking about, but strongly denied her allegation.

"These accusations are completely false and I consider them to be defamatory," he wrote on Twitter. "I have never used those words attributed to me."

The Conservative Party whips' office said Ghani's claims

"are categorically untrue." "The Conservative Party does not tolerate any form of racism or discrimination," it said.

The Prime Minister's office said Johnson met with Ghani to discuss her concerns in 2020, and invited her to file a formal complaint, but that she didn't do so.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab said on Sunday that Ghani's claims should be properly investigated if she makes a formal complaint.

"We have absolutely zero tolerance for any discrimination, and any Islamophobia, in the Conservative Party," Raab told *Sky News* on Sunday. "A claim like this, as serious as it is, should be properly reported, and then a proper investigation (should take place)."



People take part in a demonstration against the Belgian government's restrictions imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19 in Brussels on Sunday. Reuters

PM JACINDA ARDERN CANCELS WEDDING

New Zealand orders nationwide curbs

NYT & REUTERS
JANUARY 23

NEW ZEALAND announced on Sunday that it would impose its highest level of Covid restrictions across the country at midnight, after at least nine cases of the highly transmissible Omicron variant were reported.

The cases, in the South Island town of Nelson, are the first Omicron infections detected outside of workers connected to the international airport or the country's hotel quarantine facilities. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said some of the infected people had attended a large wedding in Auckland.

"That means Omicron is now circulating in Auckland and possibly the Nelson-Marlborough region, if not elsewhere," Ardern said announcing the restrictions.

She also announced that she has cancelled her wedding. "My wedding will not be going ahead," she told reporters, adding she was sorry for anyone caught up in a similar scenario. However,



Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

Ardern said the new measures, classified as "Red" under the country's traffic-light-based system, were "not lockdown."

"At Red, businesses stay open and you can do most of things that you normally do, including visiting family and friends and traveling around the country," she said.

But people who are not vaccinated will face significant restrictions, including being barred from worship services and from businesses that serve food or drinks. Schools will stay open, but all pupils from third grade up must wear masks. Events like weddings and funerals will be limited to 100 people, all of whom must be vaccinated. On Friday, New Zealand announced that people who test positive for the virus would need to isolate for 14 days, up from 10.

Beijing introduces more measures as cases mount

Beijing: Beijing's city government on Sunday introduced new measures to contain a recent outbreak of Covid-19, as China's capital continued to report new local cases of the virus less than two weeks before it hosts the Winter Olympic Games.

Nine locally transmitted cases were found in Beijing on January 22, the National Health Commission said on Sunday, of which six were in the city's Fengtai district.

Fengtai will organise nucleic acid tests for Covid for all of its residents on Sunday, district



People queue at a nucleic acid test street booth in Beijing on Sunday. Reuters

health authorities said. Authorities have asked resi-

Hong Kong tests thousands after an outbreak at housing complex

HONG KONG locked down a half dozen apartment buildings and ordered testing for 37,000 people after over 100 new cases of the Omicron variant were reported in a housing complex, posing a risk of "exponential growth," the city's top official said.

A jump in infections from multiple sources has led to fears that cases could surge, particularly at a vast housing complex in the Kwai Chung district, in the New Territories area of the Chinese mainland. "We are worried in an exponential increase of Omicron cases, like we've seen in other parts of the world, now happening in this estate," Carrie Lam, Hong Kong's chief executive, said on Saturday.

Lam announced that one apartment building would be locked down for five days, after another building in the complex began a five-day lockdown on Friday. Four more buildings in the neighborhood have been ordered to undergo a single-day lockdown. All 37,000 residents in the complex and a pair of nearby buildings have been ordered to undergo testing. NYT

UAE bans flying of recreational drones after fatal attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DUBAI, JANUARY 23

THE UNITED Arab Emirates has banned the flying of drones in the country for recreation after Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed a fatal drone attack on an oil facility and major airport in the country.

As of Saturday, drone hobbyists and other operators of light electric sports aircraft face "legal liabilities" if caught flying the objects, the Interior Ministry said, adding it may grant exemptions to businesses seeking to film.

A rare drone and missile strike

on the capital of Abu Dhabi blew up several fuel tankers and killed three people last week.

The Houthis, who hold Yemen's capital and have fought a bloody, yearlong war with a Saudi-led military coalition that includes the UAE, claimed the assault. While the UAE has largely withdrawn troops from the stalemated conflict, the country continues to be a major player and support local militias on the ground. Government regulations in the UAE already restrict flying drones in residential areas as well as near, around and over airports.

Aid group: Toll from Yemen prison airstrike touches 87

Cairo: Workers in war-wrecked Yemen recovered five more bodies from the rubble of a prison facility hit by a Saudi-led coalition airstrike, bringing the death toll to at least 87, an international aid group said on Sunday.

Internet access, meanwhile, remained largely down after another hit a telecommunications center

on Friday. Ahmed Mahat, head of the Doctors Without Borders mission in Yemen, said rescuers completed their search efforts late Saturday at the site of the prison in Yemen's northern province of Saada. He said 266 people were wounded in the airstrike during an intense air and ground escalation in the country's civil war. AP

MEANWHILE

ITALY'S BERLUSCONI OUT OF PRESIDENTIAL RACE



Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi decided against running for President, removing an obstacle to cross-party negotiations ahead of the vote in parliament beginning on Monday. The nomination of PM Mario Draghi is seen as the probable outcome, but it is still unclear whether the broad sweep of parties that support his coalition will endorse him for fear his departure could trigger an early national election.

Sanctions will undercut ability to deter possible Russian aggression: US

UK says Russia plotting to install 'puppet regime'; Moscow denies

AGENCIES

LONDON, MOSCOW, KIYV, JAN 23

US SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken on Sunday rebuffed the idea of imposing economic sanctions on Russia now, as suggested UK minister after Britain accused the Kremlin of seeking to install a pro-Russian leader in Ukraine, by saying that doing so would undercut the West's ability to deter potential Russian aggression against Ukraine. "When it comes to sanctions, the purpose of those sanctions is to deter Russian aggression. And so if they are triggered now, you lose the deterrent effect," Blinken said.

Germany, too, has urged Europe and the US to think carefully when considering sanctions against Russia for any aggression against Ukraine in a crisis pitting Berlin's main gas supplier against its biggest security allies. "Prudence dictates choosing measures that will have the greatest effect on those who violate the jointly agreed principles," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was quoted as saying. "At the same time, we have to consider the consequences this will have for us," Scholz added.

Britain made the accusation late on Saturday, also saying Russian intelligence officers had been in contact with a number of former Ukrainian politicians as part of plans for an invasion.

The Russian Foreign Ministry dis-



A Ukrainian soldier at the border with Russia. NYT

EXPLAINED Who is Yevhen Murayev?

YEVHEN MURAYEV is part of a group of politicians in opposition to the pro-Western leadership that took power after the 2014 Maidan street protests. In 2014-2019, Murayev was a lawmaker. He registered as a presidential candidate in the 2019 elections, but withdrew his candidacy before the vote. Murayev has promoted views that closely align with Russian narratives on Ukraine.

missed the comments as "disinformation", accusing Britain and NATO of "escalating tensions" over Ukraine.

"The disinformation spread by the British Foreign Office is more evidence that it is the NATO countries, led by the Anglo-Saxons, who are escalating tensions around Ukraine," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on the Telegram

messaging app on Sunday. "We call on the British Foreign Office to stop provocative activities, stop spreading nonsense."

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said the information "shines a light on the extent of Russian activity designed to subvert Ukraine, and is an insight into Kremlin thinking."

Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian advisor to the Presidential office, said the allegations should be taken seriously. "There'll be very serious consequences if Russia takes this move to try and invade but also install a puppet regime," British Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab told *Sky News* on Sunday.

The foreign ministry said it had information the Russian government was considering former Ukrainian lawmaker Yevhen Murayev as a potential candidate to head a pro-Russian leadership. "This kind of plotting is deeply concerning," National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Home said. "The Ukrainian people have the sovereign right to determine their own future, and we stand with our democratically-elected partners in Ukraine."

3-day talks with Taliban begin in Norway as hunger stalks Afghanistan

Oslo: A Taliban delegation led by acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Sunday started three days of talks in Oslo with Western government officials and Afghan civil society representatives amid a deteriorating human-

itarian situation in Afghanistan.

The closed-door meetings are taking place at a hotel in the mountains above the Norwegian capital. The first day will see Taliban representatives meeting with women's rights activists and human rights

defenders from Afghanistan and from the Afghan diaspora.

Muttaqi is certain to press the Taliban's demand that nearly \$10 billion frozen by the US and other Western countries be released as Afghanistan faces a precarious

humanitarian situation. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry said, "Norway continues to engage in dialogue with the Taliban to promote and strengthen humanitarian and economic efforts in Afghanistan. AP

कार्यालय जेल अधीक्षक केन्द्रीय जेल, रायपुर छत्तीसगढ़

क्रमांक-555/उद्योग/2022 रायपुर दिनांक-19/01/2022

लघु निविदा सूचना

केन्द्रीय जेल रायपुर में संचालित उद्योगों प्रिंटिंग प्रेस, काष्ठकला उद्योग, लौह उद्योग, बुनाई उद्योग, सिलाई उद्योग, साबुन व फिनायल उद्योग के लिये आवश्यक सामग्री क्रय करने हेतु निविदा सीलबंद लिफाफे में दिनांक 08.02.2022 को अपराह्न 03.00 बजे तक आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। जो निविदा दिनांक से आगामी तीन माह तक वैध रहेगी। इच्छुक व्यापारी निविदा फार्म एवं निविदा से संबंधित पूर्ण जानकारी दिनांक 07.02.2022 तक शासकीय अवकाश को छोड़कर किसी भी कार्य दिवस में प्रातः 9.00 बजे से दोपहर 1.00 बजे तक प्राप्त कर सकते हैं एवं जेल विभाग की वेबसाइट jail.cg.gov.in पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

◆ निविदा फार्म क्रय करने की अंतिम तिथि 07.02.2022 को दोपहर 1.00 बजे तक।

◆ निविदा फार्म की राशि रु. 5,000=00 (रु. पांच हजार मात्र)

◆ निविदा जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय 07.02.2022 प्रातः 09.00 बजे से अपराह्न 03.00 बजे तक।

◆ निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय 08.02.2022 सायंकाल 04.00 बजे।

हस्ता/-
जेल अधीक्षक
केन्द्रीय जेल, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

67055

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Directorate of Floriculture Srinagar Kashmir
Tel-0194-2474234 Fax-2482032 - email:- kashflori@rediffmail.com

Gist of e-Tender Notice No. 42 of 2022
Dated:- 20/01/2022

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K UT, e-tender is invited from interested parties/persons for **Outsourcing of entry ticketing system of Badamwari Park, Srinagar** of Floriculture Department Kashmir as per details given below:-

The participants have to quote their bid amount in the concerned BOC:-

S.No.	Period of contract	Reserve Bid (Rs. in Lakhs)	Value of security deposit	Cost of tender document
1.	01 year from the date of award of contract	27.95,898/-	2,19,580/-	1000/- in the shape of e-auction

The bidding document (s) consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, terms and conditions and other details can be seen/downloaded through the Departmental website www.dflorikmr.in / www.jk-tenders.gov.in as per schedule of date given below:-

1.	Period of downloading of bidding document	21.01.2022 from 3.00 PM to 11.02.2022 up to 02.00 PM
2.	Bid submission Start Date	22.01.2022 from 10.00 AM
3.	Bid submission End date	11.02.2022 up to 02.00 PM
4.	Date and time of Opening of Tenders (Online)	14.02.2022 at 02.00 PM

The security deposit money exceeding 2% shall be adjustable towards approved bid amount in favour of the successful bidders. The CDRs of the bidders who offer below the reserve bid shall be forfeited. In case of any eventuality, the date of opening will be considered on any other convenient working day.

Sd/-
Accounts Officer,
Member Secretary

dipk-17046

KARNATAKA STATE INDUSTRIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
4th Floor, East Wing, "Shanija Bhavan", No. 49, Race Course Road, Bengaluru - 560 001.

SELECTION OF CONSULTANT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS
Through Gok e-Procurement platform (<https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>)

Government of Karnataka intends to develop a project management software for infrastructure projects. KSIIDC invites Tender (Two cover system) through e-procurement platform from the eligible Applicants/Bidders for "Implementation of Project Management Software for Infrastructure Projects". The tender document may be accessed from e-procurement portal of the GoK (<https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>).

Important Dates: Tender document can be downloaded from : 24.01.2022 onwards. Pre-Bid Meeting: 27.01.2022 at 1100 hrs. Last date for submission of tender documents: 22.02.2022 up to 1700 hrs. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website (<https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>). Any further changes pertaining to this tender will be uploaded in e-procurement platform only. Contact No. DGM(IPD-II), 080-22267014/9980070769, e-mail: ipd2@ksiidc.com

DIPR/IDU/2966/MCA/2021-22 Sd/- Deputy General Manager (IPD-II)

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Directorate of Floriculture Srinagar Kashmir
Tel-0194-2474234 Fax-2482032 - email:- kashflori@rediffmail.com

Gist of e-Tender Notice No. 41 of 2022
Dated:- 20/01/2022

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K UT, e-tender is invited from interested parties/persons for **Outsourcing of Hiring of Parking lot at Mughal Garden Parimahal**, of Floriculture Department Kashmir as per details given below:-

The participants have to quote their bid amount in the concerned BOC:-

S.No.	Period of contract	Reserve Bid (Rs. in Lakhs)	Value of security deposit	Cost of tender document
1.	01 year from the date of award of contract	10.43,000/-	1043000/-	1000/- in the shape of e-auction

The bidding document (s) consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, terms and conditions and other details can be seen/downloaded through the Departmental website www.dflorikmr.in / www.jk-tenders.gov.in as per schedule of date given below:-

1.	Period of downloading of bidding document	21.01.2022 from 1.00 PM to 11.02.2022 up to 02.00 PM
2.	Bid submission Start Date	22.01.2022 from 10.00 AM
3.	Bid submission End date	11.02.2022 up to 02.00 PM
4.	Date and time of Opening of Tenders (Online)	14.02.2022 at 02.00 PM

The security deposit money exceeding 2% shall be adjustable towards approved bid amount in favour of the successful bidders. The CDRs of the bidders who offer below the reserve bid shall be forfeited. In case of any eventuality, the date of opening will be considered on any other convenient working day.

Sd/-
Accounts Officer,
Member Secretary

dipk-17036

14 ECONOMY

SECTOR WATCH COMMERCE

Buoyant exports but unfavourable trade balance: Why is there a dichotomy

KARUNJITSINGH

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

EXPORTS HAVE risen nearly 50 per cent year-on-year in the first nine months of the fiscal to put the country on track to hit a target of \$400 billion in merchandise exports. Imports have also risen sharply during the same period, leading to a sharp uptick in fiscal deficit. India is pursuing a number of new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to expand opportunities for exporters.



Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Navi Mumbai. *File*

How have Indian exporters performed in FY22?

Exports between April and December 2021 hit \$301.4 billion, up 49.7 per cent year-on-year and 26.5 per cent above exports during the same period in 2019. Exports of two traditional sectors — petroleum products and gems and jewellery — have been key contributors to export growth in December, rising by 152 per cent and 16.2 per cent, respectively, over the previous fiscal.

India's exports have been buoyed by a worldwide increase in trade, with global merchandise trade posting a quarterly record of \$5.6 trillion in Q3 2021, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Global trade in both goods and services in 2021 is estimated to be worth \$28 trillion, up 23 per cent from 2020, and 11 per cent, compared to pre-Covid levels.

Among non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports, engineering goods, such as iron and steel products, organic and inorganic chemicals as well as textile products like cotton yarn and fabrics, have been key contributors to export growth in this fiscal.

Exports of engineering goods grew 38.4 per cent in December to \$9.8 billion, up from \$7.1 billion a year ago. Exports of electronic goods rose 34 per cent to \$1.7 billion while exports of organic and inorganic chemicals grew by 27 per cent to \$2.7 billion in the same period.

A Sakthivel, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), said this trend of growth is likely to continue with Indian exports benefiting from positive sentiment internationally.

"Now, there is a good sentiment towards Indian goods internationally," Sakthivel said, adding Indian exporters were increasingly understanding market requirements and upgrading their products.

Outbreaks of Covid-19 infections in key competitors such as Vietnam, leading to disruptions in supply have also likely contributed to increased demand for Indian exports.

India's services exports

have grown at an estimated 18.4 per cent to \$177.7 billion in the first nine months of the fiscal year.

How have India's imports grown? What is the impact on the current account deficit?

India's merchandise imports have grown even faster than exports at 68.9 per cent year-on-year in the first nine months of the current fiscal to \$443.8 billion, up from \$262.8 billion in the previous fiscal. Key imports for India during the fiscal, so far, include petroleum and petroleum products, gold and electronic goods.

Higher imports of machinery, electronic goods, vegetable oil, coal, and chemicals were key contributors to the sharp uptick in imports in the first three quarters of the fiscal.

The rise in imports has led to an increase in the trade deficit to \$142.4 billion in the April-December period, up from \$61.4 billion in the year-ago period, and 125.9 billion in the corresponding period of FY20. Services trade surplus is estimated to be about \$74.4 billion in the first three quarters.

Experts have estimated that current account deficit for the fiscal will be about \$40-\$45 billion.

What are key developments in Indian trade?

India is currently in the process of negotiating FTAs with the UK, the UAE, Australia, Israel, and the EU, and is aiming to close interim trade deals with the UAE, Australia and the UK within this year.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has, at multiple forums, noted that Indian industry should be prepared to give market access to trading partners if it wants to benefit from greater market access for its own products.

"Our focus is wherever we have a competitive or comparative advantage, we should look at market access and wherever the advantage is with some other country, we don't have to force the Indian consumer to buy expensive," Goyal said to an industry body on Friday.

KEY INFRA PROJECTS IN POLL-BOUND STATES; TWEAK TO PUSH NEW I-T REGIME

Expenditure push for states to be theme

SUNNY VERMA & AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

BUDGET 2022-23 is likely to have a populist ring to it, interspersed with a string of announcements, entailing road, railways and health-care projects, focussed on a handful of poll-bound states, alongside a greater degree of flexibility to states in market borrowings and capex spending. Coming just ahead of Assembly elections in key states, the Budget is likely to mark a departure from last year's reformist theme, instead, sticking to the implementation of previous announcements — most of which are hanging fire.

While there's an official acknowledgment for the need to bolster sagging consumption demand, official sources indicated that the discussions in the run-up to the Budget overwhelmingly favoured incentivising the new personal income-tax regime rather than any major overhaul in the slabs of the older system. The new income-tax regime hasn't picked up pace the way it was expected to at the time of the introduction two years ago.

Funding patterns for certain Centrally-sponsored schemes (CSS) and borrowing by states might see a tweak, with the

Centre pushing for more spending by states.

"The Budget thrust will be more about execution and delivery of the existing reforms and capex rather than focussing on new schemes altogether. In election states of Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Punjab, greater focus is being put on road and railways and health projects while some port sector related investments and decisions will benefit Goa," a government official said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has held a series of meetings with top officials from the road and railways Ministries prior to the Budget. In the current fiscal's Budget, the government had announced major national highways works in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Assam.

The total outlay for Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been pegged at Rs 1.18 lakh crore for this year, but spending in this sector is expected to be higher in the revised estimates, with the government targeting nearly 30 per cent expansion next year.

Expenditure by states, especially on investment and infrastructure, is likely to take precedence in the Budget. "Revenue growth is a concern for states. Now with another wave of Covid coming in and restrictions being imposed by states, the recovery



**BUILD UP TO
BUDGET
2022-23**

requires another push from spending more. For that, states are expected to get some tweaks to funding patterns and borrowing in order to have more funds to spend," an official said.

For states that meet the capital expenditure plans, the incentive scheme allowing them additional borrowings of 0.5 per cent of GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) is expected to continue. The government had made a provision for a total of Rs 2 lakh crore for states and autonomous bodies towards their capital expenditure.

Many states have already raised concerns over revenues, especially in the context of the assured compensation mechanism under the Goods and Services Tax regime coming to an end in June this year. "GST compensation will

come to an end and then many states would require additional funds as Covid has affected revenue growth already," the official added.

States in their pre-Budget meeting last month had urged the Central government to consider increasing its share in CSS and an extension of compensation for another five years. States argued that the Centre's share in CSS should rise from the present level of 40-50 per cent in several schemes.

Under GST, states were guaranteed compensation at the compounded rate of 14 per cent from the base year 2015-16 for losses arising due to implementation of the taxation regime for five years since its rollout. West Bengal, Rajasthan, Delhi and Tamil Nadu were some states which had raised concerns over increasing the compensation period under GST and raising the share of the Union government in CSS.

States' demands had come into focus recently when the GST Council called a meeting with the single agenda of reconsideration of a rate hike for textiles. The Council had decided to defer the proposed hike in tax rate for the textiles sector to 12 per cent from 5 per cent, which was to be implemented from January 1, based on representations by some states including Gujarat.

More spending and more disposable income to incentivise consumption are likely to find focus in the Budget. Last November, the Centre held a meeting with states to discuss measures to incentivise expenditure, growth and investment. The Finance Ministry announced the advance of an instalment of tax devolution to states, in addition to the one to be given in November. This helped in improving cash flow for Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim and Manipur, which had negative cash balances as of October 30.

The front-loading of tax devolution was aimed at helping states in meeting their expenditure needs amid lower revenues. At present, 41 per cent of tax collected is devolved in 14 instalments which gives predictability of cash flows to states. On Thursday, the Centre authorised release of another advance instalment of Rs 47,541 crore of tax devolution to states, in addition to the regular monthly devolution for January 2022. States, therefore, received Rs 95,082 crore in January 2022.

Speeding up the National Infrastructure Pipeline, with an estimated investment of Rs 111 lakh crore over a five-year period till 2025, is another avenue where the government is looking to step up investments — both at the

Centre and state levels. As per industry estimates, less than 5 per cent of the projects under NIP have been rolled out till mid-November.

As the government looks towards a greater focus on spending, a push towards consumption demand has also been central to discussions.

"After a gap of two years, the Indian economy will show a meaningful expansion, as the real GDP in FY23 will be 9.1 per cent higher than the FY20 (pre-Covid level) GDP level. However, the size of the Indian economy in FY23 will be 10.2 per cent lower than the FY23 GDP trend value. A continued weakness in private consumption and investment demand is estimated to contribute 43.4 per cent and 21.0 per cent, respectively, to this shortfall," Fitch-group company India Ratings said in its Economic Outlook for FY23.

Concerns about inflation are also weighing on discussions surrounding the Budget, with it getting entrenched more due to the supply-side factors, and the government may look at taking steps towards easing those constraints. The retail inflation rate rose to a six-month high of 5.59 per cent in December, while wholesale inflation, which reflects prices at producers' end, stood at 13.56 per cent in December.

445 infra projects show cost overrun of ₹4.4 lakh cr

As many as 445 infrastructure projects, each entailing investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns totalling over Rs 4.4 lakh crore, as per a MoSPI report



Total original cost of implementation of the 1,673 projects was Rs 22,23,791.78 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 26,64,649.18 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,40,857.40 crore (19.82% of original cost)

Of 1,673 such projects, 445 projects reported cost overruns and 557 projects were delayed

Expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2021 is Rs 13,08,766.65 crore, which is 49.12 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation monitors infrastructure projects of Rs 150 crore and above



Source: MoSPI/PTI

HDFC Capital closes \$1.8 bn affordable housing fund

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
MUMBAI, JANUARY 23

HDFC CAPITAL, a wholly owned subsidiary of HDFC Ltd and acting as an investment manager, has achieved the initial close of its third fund of an estimated \$1.88 billion (about Rs 13,989 crore) focussed on affordable housing, the HDFC Capital Affordable Real Estate Fund - 3 (H-CARE-3).

H-CARE 3 is one of the largest funds raised to invest in the residential real estate sector in India with investors committing in excess of \$1.22 billion towards the first close, which combined with the potential reinvestments by the fund, creates an estimated total fund corpus of \$1.88 billion. The primary investor in H-CARE 3 is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA). Set up in 2016, HDFC Capital is aligned with the Government of India's goal to in-

"In India, housing will play an even more important role as a catalyst for growth with increased demand for affordable and mid-income housing"

DEEPAK PAREKH
CHAIRMAN, HDFC

crease housing supply and support the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - 'Housing for All' initiative. H-CARE 3 combines with the HDFC Capital Affordable Real Estate Funds - 1 & 2, raised in 2016 and 2017 respectively, to create a \$3 billion funding platform which has recently been rated as one of the world's largest private finance platforms focussed on development of affordable housing.

H-CARE 3 will provide long-term, flexible funding across the lifecycle of affordable and mid-in-

come housing projects including early-stage funding. In addition, H-CARE 3 will also invest in technology companies (construction technology, fintech and cleantech) engaged in the affordable housing ecosystem.

HDFC Capital's target is to finance the development of one million affordable homes in India through a combination of innovative financing, partnerships and technology, whilst focusing on sustainability. The company is in active discussions with leading global investors to raise additional funds to be invested in affordable housing in India.

HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh said, "In India, housing will play an even more important role as a catalyst for growth with increased demand for affordable and mid-income housing. Combined with India's growth prospects, I have never been as optimistic about the housing sector as I am today."

Samara ready to invest ₹7K cr to avert default, Amazon tells FRL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 23

PUT ON notice to confirm capital infusion to avert a looming loan default, Amazon told Future Retail Ltd (FRL) that Samara Capital remains interested in buying out the retailer's businesses such as Big Bazaar for Rs 7,000 crore.

Asked by FRL's independent directors to confirm if it will infuse Rs 3,500 crore into the cash-strapped retailer to enable it to pay its lenders by the due date of January 29, Amazon wrote to them saying FRL should provide its financial details to Samara Capital for the private equity fund to conduct an expedited due diligence. "We confirm that based on

According to sources, Amazon is trying to facilitate the deal between Samara and FRL to protect its own investment in Future

your letter dated January 21, 2022, Samara Capital has once again reiterated to us that they remain interested and committed to lead and take forward the term sheet dated June 30, 2020, signed amongst Samara, FRL and the promoters of FRL, which contemplates a purchase consideration of (Rs 7,000 crore)," Amazon said in January 22 letter to independent

directors of FRL.

An email sent to Amazon asking why Samara Capital was communicating with it and not with Future Retail directly remained unanswered. Emails sent to Future and Reliance also remained unanswered by the time of filing of the story. Samara Capital, which had in June 2020 signed a non-binding term sheet to acquire FRL's businesses including Big Bazaar, among other chains, for Rs 7,000 crore, couldn't be reached to confirm the offer. According to sources, Amazon is trying to facilitate the deal between Samara and FRL to protect its own investment in Future, and ensure that FRL doesn't sell its unjuncted assets to Reliance Retail or entities prohibited as per the original contract.

Devas shareholders to continue pursuing Indian assets abroad

New Delhi: Shareholders of Devas Multimedia will continue to seek seizure of Indian government assets abroad to collect \$1.2 billion the firm has been awarded by arbitration tribunals for cancellation of a satellite deal but are open for talks to settle the issue, their counsel said.

"The decision by the Supreme Court does not change anything. The Modi government and the Indian courts cannot rewrite the facts. Their flimsy allegations of fraud will never stand up in courts outside of India," said Matthew D McGill, partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, and lead counsel for sev-

eral Devas' shareholders. "A better approach for the Modi government would be to return to the negotiating table, and continue with settlement talks."

Devas shareholders are pursuing Indian assets abroad to recover the awards and have got a French court order for freezing Indian properties in Paris and got partial rights over funds maintained by India funds in Canada.

"We have already entered liens or obtained seizures and garnishment orders on tens of millions of dollars in Indian state assets," a spokesperson for Devas Multimedia said. **PTI**

BRIEFLY Economic Survey

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry is expected to come out with a single volume Economic Survey for 2021-22 projecting growth of around 9 per cent for the next fiscal.

NCLAT, SREI

New Delhi: The NCLAT has asked the Kolkata Bench of NCLT to decide over the plea of SREI Infrastructure Finance against the rights issue of its arm Trinity Alternative Investment Managers. **PTI**

Bitcoin falls 5%

Bengaluru: Bitcoin dropped 5.6 per cent to \$34,448.94 on Saturday, losing 1,878.27 from its last close. **REUTERS**

Fire and water mix well

Tanisha-Ishaan win Syed Modi International title, in sign of bigger things to come

SHIVANI NAIK
MUMBAI, JANUARY 23

IT IS not uncommon for Tanisha Crasto and Ishaan Bhatnagar to squabble plenty on court. "Kyu aayaa tu? Mera shuttle hai." (Why did you go for that return? It was my shuttle to hit.) has rung across playing arenas through the European winter swing of tournaments and now in India - Delhi and Lucknow. But the duo, she - 18 and he - 19, eventually settle into a frenzied pace, and have now secured their first Super 300 mixed doubles badminton title at the Syed Modi International on Sunday.

Beating Hema Nagendra Babu and Srivedya Gurazada 21-16, 21-12 in a severely depleted field, the Crasto-Bhatnagar pairing, follow in the footsteps of Jwala Gutta-V Diju and Ashwini Ponappa-Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, who have played immensely entertaining badminton on way to victories. "I think after this title, we are capable of great heights, though there's scope to do much better. We'd like to create our own history," Tanisha says.

When the Badminton Association of India announced six years ago that the U17 nationals would have its first-ever mixed doubles competition, the two paired up together - both say "randomly."

"Everyone was searching for partners, so I messaged her," Ishaan from Raipur, recalls. "I'd just started on the Indian circuit and really liked his game. He was all over the news winning both singles and doubles, so I randomly asked him. Then we won the first ever tournament," Tanisha, born and raised in Dubai, remembers. Both followed their fathers onto the court - Ishaan's father played at a local club while Tanisha's dad switched from cricket to badminton. They would eventually wind up in Hyderabad at the national camp.

"It was the toughest adjustment for me. In Dubai, hardly any female players used to practise then, so I would train alone. In India, there's a good crop of sparring partners," Tanisha says, adding she misses her mother's home-cooked fish fry in Hyderabad, vastly different from the academy's mess kitchens.

On court, Tanisha is a fighter. "She's a great motivator. Even if we are 10 points behind, she'll say 'kuch nahi hai' (it's nothing) and convince me we can win. I play better when I'm calm, and her confidence rubs off," Ishaan says. The chatter is often as bustling as the energy she brings to her hop-skip defence at the net. "Sometimes she has some logic, and I have mine, and it doesn't work together. Then we go blank," Ishaan explains of their chaotic communication, which somehow still works.

"I think he covers for my mistakes really well," Tanisha says, and reckons the coordination developed after six years together is their strength. They both agree that Ishaan can get angry, though he insists, "Sometimes she doesn't listen to me and



Tanisha Crasto and Ishaan Bhatnagar first teamed up six years ago for the U17 Nationals mixed-doubles tournament.

makes a mistake the very next point."

Playing for each other

Ishaan is skilled and aggressive from the back court, though he admits he ought to gain power and hit smashes harder. "At the international level, I'll need more muscle strength." But it's mostly him setting up the kill for Tanisha to finish at the net.

At the Scottish and Welsh Opens last autumn, England's Jessica Pugh really got stuck into Ishaan - peppering him ceaselessly - and he needed Tanisha to protect him. "I used to think *bas laakhe hi tez maarte hai* (only boys smash hard). But Pugh attacked me so much, and the intensity was high in every point. We lost both times, but it was a good lesson. But Tanisha is getting better at the net, and I'll work hard to create chances for her," says the fan of Japanese doubles star Yuta Watanabe.

The English style is to defend stoutly with their side-by-side game, while the Indians follow the Asian quick blitzes. With every shuttle getting lifted from mid-court these days, the Indians work on outlasting opponents. "You need to be very calm in defence and make op-

ponents run," Ishaan says.

On Sunday, he would rush to thank Satwiksairaj post winning, saying, "He had told me once that I'll do well in mixed doubles and be the next star. I want to thank him for believing in me."

Tanisha has told her doubles partner that she enjoys mixed doubles more and will likely prioritise that should results align with expectations. "I've been competitive ever since I've known any game. So, the fighting spirit is just there," says the ace who's a livewire chasing down shuttles.

She knows she has a long way to go. "Right now, I'm just a normal player trying to get better at the net," she admits, adding she owes it to Ishaan to finish the kills that he sets up. "Off court, we are complete opposites. Fire and water. He's mostly alright, but maybe he should eat right," she quibbles.

Across the court, she revels in attacking the male opponent. "Mostly in trying to cover for the woman, they make mistakes of their own. So I play to him, which works to my advantage," she muses. All in a day's squabble and work.

After breaker, Nadal hits cruise control

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 23

RAFAEL NADAL finally got the better of a crazy, long tiebreaker and knew he'd won half the battle. After saving four set points and missing with the first six of his own, Nadal finally clinched a tiebreaker that lasted 28 minutes and 40 seconds to set himself on course to secure a spot in the Australian Open quarterfinals for a 14th time.

After his 7-6 (14), 6-2, 6-2 fourth-round victory over fellow left-hander Adrian Mannarino on Sunday, Nadal is potentially just three wins away from a men's record 21st Grand Slam singles title. He later reflected on a tiebreaker where momentum swung wildly; where chants of "Let's go Rafa, Let's go!" rang out; where a point was decided on a 25-shot rally with both players scrambling at full stretch; and that ended only when Nadal volleyed from deep in the court and Mannarino's reflex reply skewed wide.

"Well, you know, I played a couple," he said, smiling, in reference to long tiebreakers. "But, yeah, (it was) a crazy one, chances for both. And, yeah, lucky to win that tiebreak at the end, no? "Half of the match in the tiebreak, without a doubt." Nadal will next play Denis Shapovalov, the 22-year-old Canadian who finished off a 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3 win over Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev on Margaret Court Arena less than an hour later to reach the last eight in Australia for the first time.

Shapovalov had to isolate after testing positive for COVID-19 when he arrived in Australia ahead of the year's first major, but recovered quickly to help Canada win the ATP Cup in Sydney and now reach a Grand Slam quarterfinal for the third time.

Women's No. 1 Ash Barty advanced to the quarterfinals for the fourth straight year when she beat 20-year-old American Amanda Anisimova 6-4, 6-3. Barty is aiming to be the first Australian woman to win her home Grand Slam title since 1978 and has gone through the first four rounds without dropping a set.

Anisimova, coming off a third-round upset over defending champion Naomi Osaka, broke Barty's opening service game of the second set - a first for the tournament - but the two-time major winner responded by taking six of the last seven games.

Barty beat Anisimova in the semifinals of the French Open in 2019 on the way to winning her first Grand Slam title and won her second at Wimbledon last year.

She'll next play No. 21-seeded Jessica Pegula, who beat fifth-seeded Maria Sakkari 7-6 (0), 6-3.

French Open champion Barbora Krejickova breezed to a 6-2, 6-2 win over two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka and is into the last eight for the third time in four Grand Slam events.



Rafael Nadal defeated fellow lefty Adrian Mannarino 7-6 (14), 6-2, 6-2 to reach the quarter-finals of the Australian Open for the 14th time. Reuters

Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini completed a Grand Slam set with a 7-5, 7-6 (4), 6-4 win over 19th-seeded Pablo Carreno Busta in the last match on Day 7.

The seventh-seeded Berrettini has now reached the quarterfinals at all four of the tennis majors and will next play No. 17 Gael Monfils, who beat Miomir Kecmanovic 7-5, 7-6 (4), 6-3. The 35-year-old Monfils made it to the last eight for the second time in 17 trips to Melbourne Park.

Mannarino, who didn't finish his 4-hour, 38-minute four-set, third-round win over No. 18 Aslan Karatsev until after 2 a.m. on Saturday and appeared to be hampered by an abdominal or upper leg injury, threw everything at Nadal in the opening set on Rod Laver Arena.

"After first set I couldn't really fight against Rafa," said the 33-year-old No. 69-ranked Mannarino. "You know, he was playing too well for me not to be 100%. The second and third set just went all the way for Rafa, so that's it." The No. 14-seeded Shapovalov spent almost 11 hours on court through the first three rounds, winning twice in four sets and once in five, and was surprised by the relative speed of his 2-hour, 21-minute win over Zverev. "Definitely happy with where the game is at," he said. "I played pretty smart today."

FOURTH ROUND
Men's singles: R Nadal (6), Spain, def. A Mannarino, France, 7-6 (14), 6-2, 6-2, D Shapovalov (14), Canada, def. A Zverev (3), Germany, 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3, G Monfils (17), France, def. M Kecmanovic, Serbia, 7-5, 7-6 (4), 6-3, M Berrettini (7), Italy, def. PC Busta (19), Spain, 7-5, 7-6 (4), 6-4; **Women's Singles:** M Keys, United States, def. P Badosa (8), Spain, 6-3, 6-1, B Krejickova (4), Czech Republic, def. V Azarenka (24), Belarus, 6-2, 6-2, J Pegula (21), United States, def. M Sakkari (5), Greece, 7-6 (0), 6-3, A Barty (1), Australia, def. A Anisimova, United States, 6-4, 6-3
THIRD ROUND
Mixed doubles: R Ram, United States, and S Mirza, India, def. M Middelkoop, Netherlands, and E Perez, Australia, 7-6 (6), 6-4

BRIEFLY

Asia Cup: Japan stun holders India 2-0

Muscat: Defending champions India were stunned 0-2 by reigning Asian Games gold-medallists Japan in their second Pool A match of the Women's Asia Cup hockey tournament here on Sunday. Japan scored through Naga Yuri (2nd minute) and Saki Tanaka (42nd minute) to stun the Indians. A slow start from the Indians cost them dearly as Japan took the lead against the run of play in the second minute through Nagai Yuri. The Indians continued to dominate the proceedings after the change of ends but failed to create any real scoring opportunity. Japan surprised India again in the 42nd minute when Tanakana doubled the lead.

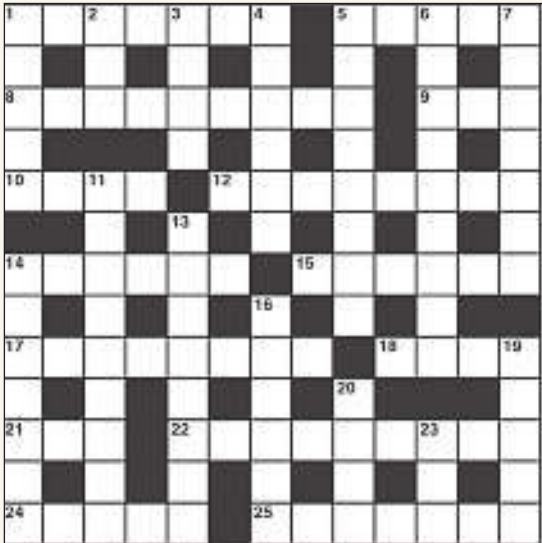
Chhetri equals ISL goalscoring record

Bambolim: Sunil Chhetri's 11-game barren run of goals in the Indian Super League came to an end as he salvaged a point for Bengaluru FC in a 1-1 draw against FC Goa here on Sunday. Scoring his 48th ISL goal, the India captain equalled the league's all-time record goalscorer, Ferran Corominas' tally. Dylan Fox (41st) scored his first goal for FC Goa with a header until Chhetri (61st) equalised with his first of the campaign. The result keeps both Bengaluru FC and FC Goa in eighth and ninth place positions respectively in the points table with 14 points each. Bengaluru FC will be up against Chennaiyin FC in their next at the Athletic Stadium on Wednesday.

Sindhu wins Syed Modi International

Lucknow: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu eased past young compatriot Malvika Bansod in straight games to win her second women's singles title at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Sunday. Playing in a depleted field due to multiple COVID-19 cases, top seed Sindhu hardly broke her sweat to get past Bansod 21-13 21-16 in a lop-sided title contest. The final lasted just 35 minutes. It was former world champion Sindhu's second Syed Modi title after having annexed the BWF World Tour Super 300 event in 2017. Earlier, the men's singles final between Arnaud Merkle and Lucas Claerbout was declared a "No Match" after one of the finalists tested positive for COVID-19.

CROSSWORD 4645



- ACROSS**

 - Fundamental shifting in cargo (7)
 - Is classified as military distinctions (5)
 - US rifle is adapted for infantrymen (9)
 - It's sticky to chew (3)
 - How fire can become widespread (4)
 - Cheer up when the right man is about (8)
 - Slips in proofs of humanity? (6)
 - Shooting star's remote origins (6)
 - A new look for cars here (8)
 - Space evolved a long time back (4)
 - Potted plant leaves (3)
 - It keeps locks in good order (9)
 - Cried for a drink (5)
 - Dull fashion dies out (7)
- DOWN**

 - Bid for a chest without a top (5)
 - Gossip that could cook one's goose (3)
 - Wiggly line on the map of Africa (4)
 - Fruit woman within call (6)
 - Reconciled to having had to give up work (8)
 - Sleepwear in unusual gathering (5,4)
 - Remains as a group of students (7)
 - Strong line taken at a trade exhibition? (4,5)
 - A rest for every living being (8)
 - Wandering man about desert (7)
 - Screenplay many tear up in a way (6)
 - Chase around wanting treatment? (5)
 - Not yet up in the garden (4)
 - Initially thought by some to come from outer space (3)

Solutions Crossword 4644: Across: 1 Stud farm, 5 Scar, 9 Relic, 10 Schemes, 11 Off the record, 13 Ousted, 14 Africa, 17 Labour of love, 20 Willing, 21 Early, 22 Reed, 23 Dressers. Down: 1 Sort, 2 Uplifts, 3 Face the music, 4 Rested, 6 Cameo, 7 Residual, 8 Cheerfulness, 12 Follower, 15 Inverse, 16 Forger, 18 Bulge, 19 Ayes.

JUMBLD WORDS

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

_____ unless they sleep a lot, are cruel. - Renata Adler (5,6)

GSEEE

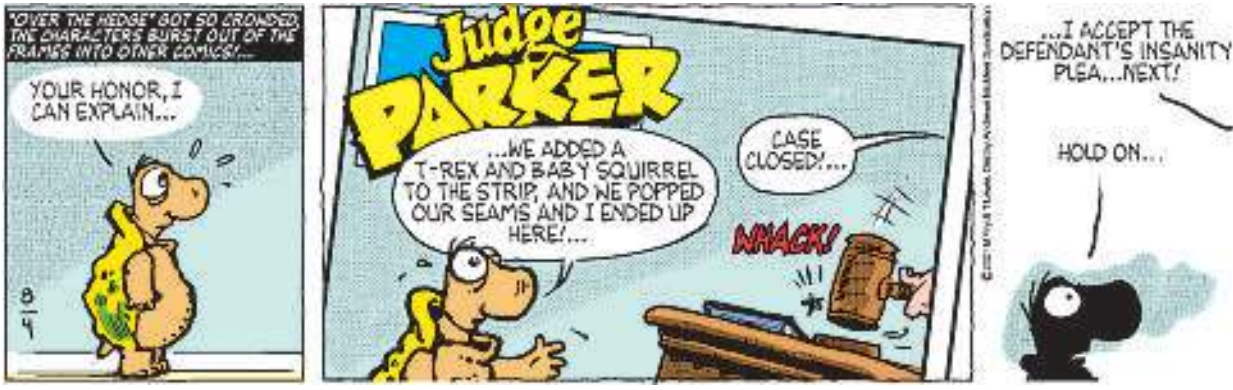
FOROL

EIPDLP

CILUBP

Answer: GSEEE, FLOOR, LUPPED, PUBLIC

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



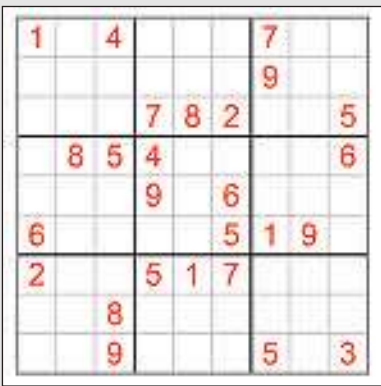
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4724

Difficulty Level 3s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4723



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
You should have a busy start to the week, so no slacking, please. This is one of those moments when the very best you can possibly do is stick to routine tasks and put sentiment and regrets to one side. There is no substitute, by the way, for a healthy dose of self-discipline.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
If you've been concentrating on pursuing your worldly ambitions in recent weeks, then don't let up now. Even if success is assured, there's still some thinking to be done and people to be convinced that you're right. It's mainly a matter of finding the best words.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
You should spare no effort when it comes to improving your existence. It's quite rare that such a beneficial line-up of planets affects your emotional state as at the present time, and you'd be foolish not to take advantage of this to improve the general condition of your partnerships.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
The immediate future looks positive and constructive, even if you do have a few doubts. Over the long-term, there's a definite need for more space and comfort in your living conditions, although you may not make a move until the Moon begins to play a role in your home and family affairs.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
You may concentrate on your material resources. It seems better to save than spend but if money must flow out, aim it towards necessities rather than luxuries. Above all, steer clear of those who are too fond of rumour and gossip, or who are out to waste your time.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
With the Moon so powerfully aligned with your sign, this is a fine day to make a greater than usual effort to get your own way and still reach sensible compromises. You'll be able to clear up nagging irritations with little difficulty, although you'd better have the facts at your fingertips.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
Sometimes you can hide your head in the sand, but not now. There's no getting away from your essential needs and desires today. The general planetary picture is extraordinarily helpful and there's little risk in forcing issues into the open as long as you keep a dialogue going with other concerned individuals.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)
In spite of a certain shyness, you love it when other people are forced to listen to your opinions, and that's exactly what you'll be insisting on this week. The fact is that your ideas are probably the best. But will other people agree? Well, probably not.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)
There should be a welcome absence of tension from most of today's personal proceedings, although excitement could boil over into animated arguments and disputes. These are lively times and you're a force to be reckoned with, as reckless individuals could soon discover.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
The sky's the limit, and there's no reason why you shouldn't achieve your ambitions in whatever your main areas of activity happen to be. Friends will be of more help than you've come to expect, although any favours you accept now might have to be paid back sooner than you hope.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
The planetary connections between your work and money are so powerful as to suggest an imminent windfall, almost certainly as a reward for all your past efforts. At least, that's one interpretation. Plus, for some reason we have yet to understand, discretion is required in personal matters.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
This is no time to be shy and withdrawn. The Sun, Mars, Venus and Saturn are just a few of the planets compelling you to face up to your needs, wants and desires and it's about time you made these your guiding priority rather than always trying to please other people.

Virus stops play: A dozen players test positive, India out of Asian Cup

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, JANUARY 23

FOR TWO years, the Indian women's football team had been preparing for its biggest tournament so far: the Asian Cup. However, after playing just one match, they had to withdraw from the continental championship on Sunday following a Covid-19 outbreak in the squad.

It is learnt that a dozen out of the 23 players in the group and four members of the support staff tested positive ahead of the crucial group-stage match against world number 39 Chinese Taipei. However, even as Taipei players took the field at Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium at the official kick-off time, 7:30 pm, there was no one to face them.

With two players already out injured, and 12 testing positive, India had just nine players available for the Taipei game. Out of them, two had symptoms consistent with Covid-19.

According to tournament regulations, a team has to name a minimum of 13 players for a match to go ahead. The hosts' 'failure' to do so meant they could not take part in the match, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said, and as a consequence, had to withdraw from the competition.

The AFC cited clause 4.1 from its rulebook, which stated that if a team has less than 13 players and is not able to participate in a match, it 'shall be held responsible for the Match not

taking place and shall be considered to have withdrawn from the relevant Competition.'

All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Praful Patel said the players were 'heart-broken' but insisted 'this wasn't the end of the world' for them. "The promise on display in the first match against IR Iran was there for all to see, and am confident they will bounce back from this temporary setback," he said.

Despite the hosts being forced out, the AFC said the show will go on in the 12-team Asian Cup. On Monday, four matches will be played as scheduled, with the 2023 World Cup hosts Australia and former world champions Japan among the teams in action.

The AFC's decision to go ahead with the games despite a Covid-19 outbreak underlines the approach being taken by sports bodies, who continue to organise tournaments amidst global rise cases globally. Just days ago, the Indian squad at the Under-19 Cricket World Cup in the West Indies was hit by Covid-19 but the schedule was unaffected and the BCCI sent reinforcements.

No men's final at Modi badminton

At the Syed Modi International Super300 event in Lucknow, the men's singles finalists, Frenchmen, Arnaud Merkle and Lucas Claerbout were forced into isolation on Sunday after one tested positive and the other was deemed a close contact. The world governing body, BWF, had not determined what to do



While Chinese Taipei players took the field at Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium at the official kick-off time, there was no one to face them. Amit Chakravarty

with ranking points, given this unprecedented situation where two opponents from the same country were involved, and the walkover was mutual - not naming the positive.

But this came to pass at the end of a torrid week where 32 matches across singles and doubles witnessed Walkovers / no matches. Assam shuttler Ashmita Chaliha had a confirmed positive on Day 1, and then the spurt of walkovers kept piling up, till the French duo were denied a final due to the virus.

Last week, the India Open had started with seven positives amongst Indians, including Kidambi Srikanth. Subsequently, Singaporean women's singles player Yeo Jia Min had tested positive after returning home, days after having a fever when in India. The Indian jamboree now moves to Orissa for a Super 100, again risking the health of players.

The ongoing tournament was India's first appearance at the Women's Asian Cup after 19 years, and on home soil. The tournament,

BUBBLES BURST

CRICKET The Indian squad at the Under-19 World Cup in the West Indies was hit by Covid-19 last week, with five players testing positive. Four Zimbabwe players and two from the West Indies team, too, had tested positive.

BADMINTON The men's singles finals of the Syed Modi International Super 300 event on Sunday was called off after one of the finalist tested positive. A total of 32 matches witnessed walkovers / no matches in the tournament. Last week, the India Open had started with seven positives amongst Indians, including Kidambi Srikanth who was staying at the official hotel.

TENNIS There have been three confirmed positive cases reported at the ongoing Australian Open. Australian Bernard Tomic and Ugo Humbert of France tested positive earlier this week while Belgian Alison van Uytvanck said she was down with the virus on Sunday.

FOOTBALL Ahead of India's first match of the women's Asian Cup, two Covid-19 cases were reported within the group. Before the second game on Sunday, a total of 12 players were down with the virus along with four support staff. Isolated cases in at least four other teams were reported earlier in the week.

Virat could've carried on for two more years: Shastri

DEVENDRA PANDEY
JANUARY 23

FORMER INDIA coach **Ravi Shastri** believes Virat Kohli could have led the Indian Test team for another two years. Kohli decided to step down after the 1-2 series defeat in South Africa, and now won't be captain in any format.

"I felt that he could easily continue for next two years, but now as he has stepped down, we should all respect his decision," Shastri told *The Indian Express* on the sidelines of the Legends League Cricket in Oman.

Shastri decided not to continue as head coach of the Indian team after his tenure expired at the end of the T20 World Cup last year and was succeeded by Rahul Dravid.

Under the Shastri-Kohli regime, India won two Test series in Australia and also took a 2-1 lead in the series England, with the final Test to be played later this year. The former India all-rounder describes his seven-year tenure with the Indian team as satisfactory and predicts a bright future for the team.

When asked who should now lead the Indian team, especially in Test cricket, Shastri's first choice is Rohit Sharma.

"First thing, the future of the team is very bright. From what I have seen in seven years, the new talent that is coming in is amazing. As far as the captain is concerned, Rohit is the captain in two formats. He was appointed vice-captain of the Test team that went to South Africa, but he couldn't go due to injury. This means that he must be being thought of as the captain," he said.

'Why make a vice-captain?'

However, Shastri is not in favour of appointing a vice-captain of the Indian team and says there is no rule which states that a team has to have one. "Why make a vice-captain? Whose place in the team is certain and is better on that day, make him the vice-captain. What is the use of making a vice-captain who has to be dropped from the playing 11?"

Some analysts feel that Rishabh Pant should be appointed as vice-captain. "As far as Pant is concerned, he is an amazing player. He listens to it. It's not that he doesn't listen. He has a lot of talent and will go on. He is a better alternative than having a designated vice-captain," Shastri said.

Kohli's lack of major silverware is often counted against him, but Shastri feels a captain shouldn't be judged on World Cup wins alone.

"How many top players do we have who have never even touched the World Cup? Who is the captain who has won the World Cup? Only Kapil Dev and Mahendra Singh Dhoni in India. Should we not talk about any other captain? I can speak because I have grabbed the World Cup trophy. In our country, even if you won the World Cup and lost the Test series, people would still go after the team. We all have this habit. For seven years, it was our endeavour to win as much as we can," he argued.

Shastri has taken a break after his tenure with the Indian team and is expecting to be back in the commentary box for India's final Test in England in the summer.

(Devendra Pandey is in Oman on the invitation of Legends Cricket League)



India run hosts close, but can't prevent 0-3 ODI series debacle to end disappointing tour which had begun on a high note

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
JANUARY 23

A SOUTH Africa tour that had begun with expectations of dominance – heightened by the Centurion Test win – ended with a fifth successive defeat for India, a four-run loss in Cape Town bringing a 0-3 ODI series wipeout. It was the closest India had come to winning a game after Centurion, albeit an inconsequential one with the series already lost. But just when the match seemed to have settled decisively in their grasp, following a familiar middle-order stumble and a stunning revival, they fell apart at the final hurdle.

In his previous ODI, Deepak Chahar had walked in at 160/6 in a chase of 276 against Sri Lanka in Colombo last July. It became 193/7, but Chahar took India to a series-sealing victory with an unbeaten 69, playing some outrageous strokes along the way.

Six months later, Chahar appeared to have stolen another ODI chase from a home side's grasp; his 54 off 34 deliveries had resuscitated India from 223/7 in their pursuit of 288 at Newlands. In his only match of the tour, Chahar had come in at 195/5 after Shreyas Iyer's exit to a short ball for 17.

Chahar's enterprise

Chahar pulled a Lungi Ngidi short ball for four and hit Dwaine Pretorius for successive sixes – a swipe high over deep mid-wicket and a sliced drive past sweeper cover. His blows, aided by Jasprit Bumrah's spunk, had shocked the South Africans, and the once-steep equation had been hacked down to a mere 10 off 18.

And then Chahar played one shot too many on a surface where taking the pace off had increasingly made uninhibited strokeplay fraught with risk. He was caught by a sliding Pretorius at cover off Ngidi, and India managed to add only five runs after his dismissal. Four balls were still left in the game when Yuzvendra Chahal top-edged Pretorius for David Miller to take a sitter and leave Chahar close to tears on a chair near the boundary with his pads still on.

He had tried his best to change the script but India eventually stuck to the narrative of the first ODI in Paarl. They were 138/1 there chasing 297. Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli had added 92, but after the former's departure, they unravelled to 214/8 and a 31-run loss.

In Cape Town, India were 116/1. Dhawan and Kohli had put on 98. Dhawan fell, and the middle order caved in again. There was an enterprising 39 off 32 from Suryakumar Yadav, who had replaced Venkatesh Iyer, but like Chahar, he played too many forcing shots on a difficult pitch, and paid the price.

In contrast, Quinton de Kock had hung around long enough to make 124 to propel South Africa to 287, which proved to be just enough to consign Rahul Dravid's first tour as full-time India coach to an utter disaster.

In his previous ODI, Deepak Chahar had walked in at 160/6 in a chase of 276 against Sri Lanka in Colombo last July. It became 193/7, but Chahar took India to a series-sealing victory with an unbeaten 69, playing some outrageous strokes along the way.



South Africa batsman Quinton de Kock's 130-ball 124 included 12 fours and two sixes. Reuters

SCOREBOARD

South Africa	
Q de Kock c Dhawan b Bumrah	124
	(130b, 12x4, 2x6)
J Malan c Pant b Chahar	1 (6b)
T Bavuma run out	8 (12b, 1x4)
A Markram c sub b Chahar	15 (14b, 3x4)
R van der Dussen c Iyer b Chahal	52
	(59b, 4x4, 1x6)
D Miller c Kohli b Krishna	39 (38b, 3x4, 1x6)
A Phehlukwayo run out	4 (11b)
D Pretorius c SA Yadav b Krishna	20
	(25b, 3x4)
K Maharaj c Kohli b Bumrah	6 (5b, 1x4)
S Magala c Rahul b Krishna	0 (2b)
L Ngidi not out	0 (0b)
Extras: (lb 2, nb 3, w 13)	18
Total: (49.5 overs)	287
FoW: 1-8, 2-34, 3-70, 4-214, 5-218, 6-228, 7-272, 8-282, 9-287, 10-287	
Bowling: Chahar 8-0-53-2, Bumrah 10-0-52-2, Krishna 9.5-0-59-3, Yadav 10-0-53-0, Chahal 9-0-47-1, Iyer 3-0-21-0	
India	
KL Rahul c Malan b Ngidi	9 (10b, 2x4)
S Dhawan c de Kock b Phehlukwayo	61
	(73b, 5x4, 1x6)
V Kohli c Bavuma b Maharaj	65 (84b, 5x4)
R Pant c Magala b Phehlukwayo	0 (1b)
S Iyer c Phehlukwayo b Magala	26 (34b, 2x4)
S Yadav c Bavuma b Pretorius	39
	(32b, 4x4, 1x6)
D Chahar c Pretorius b Ngidi	54
	(34b, 5x4, 2x6)
J Yadav c Bavuma b Ngidi	2 (6b)
J Bumrah c Bavuma b Phehlukwayo	12
	(15b, 2x4)
Y Chahal c Miller b Pretorius	2 (6b)
P Krishna not out	2 (3b)
Extras: (lb 2, nb 2, w 7)	11
Total: (49.2 overs)	283
FoW: 1-18, 2-116, 3-118, 4-156, 5-195, 6-210, 7-223, 8-278, 9-281, 10-283	
Bowling: Ngidi 10-0-58-3, Pretorius 9.2-0-54-2, Magala 10-0-69-1, Maharaj 10-0-39-1, Phehlukwayo 7-0-40-3, Markram 3-0-21-0	
South Africa won by 4 runs	

Kohli: Sedate fielder, super-charged batter

SANDIP G
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THE LONG and tedious wait for Virat Kohli's 75th international century dragged on to another day. It has been 784 days since he registered one—his longest ever wait—and a span in which both his life and cricket changed unrecognisably. He became a father, forsook captaincy, and the halo around his batting has just begun to fade. But for all the changes in his life and career, for all the intrigue that surrounds his decision to step down as Test and T20 captain, he hasn't lost his passion or intensity, the drive or energy, those characteristics that define him, on the field.

Relinquishing captaincy has not doused the fire of ambition in him—not even in ODIs, the only format wherein captaincy was stripped off him. He might be more quiet when fielding, he might not exhort the bowlers as fervently as when he was the captain, he might not walk or run as urgently as when he was the captain, the stump mic might not capture the incessant hard-edged tone of his chatter.

But it's no longer Kohli's business to inject energy and intensity into his colleagues when fielding—it's the duty of the captain to conduct the orchestra, and Kohli is no longer one. It would have been weird had he run around the field as animatedly as he had been when he was the captain. It would have painted him as overbearing and obtrusive, keen to impose his persona even when he was not the captain. So he was sedate. There were no turbo-charged celebrations, no vein-popping or fist-punching, or feisty send-offs. Phew, he even had a congratulatory chat with de Kock, as he walked back to the dressing room.

But let his calmness not be misconstrued as detachment, or a lack of passion. For, it was the usual Kohli when he strode out to bat.



During his 84-ball 65, Virat Kohli didn't look to over-impose himself. Reuters

Evident was his bristling intensity to revive his gold standards, the burning passion to slog through the desert and find an oasis of hundreds.

Only such a switched-on, determined batsman, and not a cagey one, could flick the first ball off his body for a four. It might have been a semi-loose ball, but the emphatic way he whipped it stressed that none of his hunger has diminished. He would not go easy into the sunset.

On the contrary to rumours that he had lost his vigour. He seemed extra-energised, super-stimulated. There were some clues that captured his mindset—like the striding front-foot, the buoyant drives and the alacritous running between the wickets.

The usual spirit-sapping stream of singles appeared through the leg side. In between he

drove with thrilling, easy power through the covers. He teased out the weak points of South Africa's bowling and pulled them apart. None of his fours was a cover-drive, well-cushioned as the region was. But he drove as sumptuously as he had in recent times. He seemed to have regained his free-spiritedness. Not fully, but almost fully.

Impressively, he didn't look to over-impose himself. At times in his journey to rediscovery, he had looked over-eager and in the end self-defeated him. Here, he struck an impeccable balance of mind, for all the outward energy. For 41 balls, he was content stealing singles. If he stepped once in a while, it was not in pursuit of boundaries, but to dislodge the length of the bowlers.

At times, he veered into the Steve Smith realm of a mime-artist, giving the onlooker a visual running commentary of what is buzzing through his head. Like when the bat flipped in his hand when cover-driving Lungi Ngidi, he screamed at himself, shadow-practised the stroke a couple of times and yelled at his non-striker Shikhar Dhawan that "boundary marna tha." Later, when Ngidi's dipping floated beat him, he blew a sarcastic wink at him. When he missed a horrible half-tracker from Sisanda Magala, he grimaced and seemed close to beating his own brow in frustration as he ran the single. The shrug of the shoulder, the shake of his head, the broad smile, the warm applause, the bulging eyes when he stretched for a two, a whole range of emotions flashed and flickered across his face.

Those were clear signs that he was enjoying his batting. For when he is not, he turns pensive and ponderous, does his best to hide his emotions. Here, he let it flow, more aptly, let it rip. He fell 35 runs short of his 75th century—but in a broader sense, it didn't matter, for there were enough signs and portents that he has lost none of his intensity and passion.