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FROM PAGE ONE

Pegasus: Opp

nothing to do with Pegasus and never bought the spyware from NSO group". He said the government has also misled the Supreme Court. "We will ensure that those guilty will be held accountable and raise this vociferously in Parliament," he said.

The Congress said it will reach out to other Opposition parties to formulate a joint strategy. Kharge as also senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi argued that illegal snooping using Pegasus amounted to treason.

"Modi Government bought Pegasus to spy on our primary democratic institutions, politicians and public. Government functionaries, opposition leaders, armed forces, judiciary all were targeted by these phone tappings. This is treason. The Modi Government has committed treason," Gandhi tweeted.

At the press conference with Kharge, Congress communication department Randeep Surjewala said the Modi government had deceived Parliament and the Supreme Court.

"Three things have become very clear now. The government deceived Parliament and duped the Supreme Court. The people of India were lied to by the Government and its Ministers. The role of the Prime Minister and his responsibility is now directly in question. We will discuss this with other political parties and seek accountability of the Prime Minister on the floor of Parliament," he said.

Arguing that the government had misled the Supreme Court as it had, in a sworn affidavit, unequivocally denied the allegations made against it on the Pegasus row, he said: "We will urge upon the Supreme Court to now suo motu take note and issue appropriate penal proceedings against this government for deliberately and knowingly deceiving the Supreme Court...it is nothing short of perjury and deception of the court."

Referring to the NYT report, Trinamool Congress leader Sukhendu Sekhar Roy said: "We strongly believe...(it's) a factual representation of the purchase of the spyware by the Indian

Government from Israel. The telephone of our party's national general secretary Abhishek Bandhopadhyay, his secretary's phone, were tapped," Roy told The Indian Express. Asked whether the party would raise the issue in Parliament, he said: "Our Parliamentary party will discuss and thereafter a decision will be taken."

The Shiv Sena said the opposition stood vindicated today.

"What we had said when the Pegasus issue came to light last year...be it Rahul Gandhi, other leaders, all of us, inside and outside Parliament, we repeatedly tried to bring out facts and evidence regarding it. That all of us are under surveillance. Not just us, many of the senior leaders of the BJP are also under watch. The chief minister of UP is also under surveillance. Everybody knows that...We know what is happening. The bank accounts of our family members are being scrutinized. This is a cheap form of dictatorship," said Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut.

CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the Modi government must explain in an affidavit why it bought the cyber weapon and "who gave permission for its usage, how were the targets selected and who got these reports."

Said BJP leader Manoj Kumar Jha: "The latest revelation on Pegasus finally brings forth in the public domain which almost everyone knew. There cannot be a better example of how the Indian state is degenerating into a deep state."

The NCP said the government is in the dock. Said its leader Majeed Memon: "This kind of a secret deal by the Government of India would certainly invite suspicious queries as to whether this undercover deal of purchase of Pegasus in 2017 from Israel was in national interest or was it for other considerations...The government is in the dock to explain why Parliament was also kept uninformed about such a deal."

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

Govt silent

Earlier last year in July, the newly appointed IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had responded to the by calling the news reports "sensational", and seeming to be an attempt "to malign Indian democracy and its well established institutions".

When contacted Saturday, a senior official declined to comment on the NYT report saying that the Supreme Court was already "seized of the matter" and the Government had made a statement in Parliament.

Late last year, the Supreme Court had, while deciding on a plea moved by some of the persons who were targeted, formed a three-member committee to look into the allegations.

Its three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana, had also said that the state cannot get "a free pass every time the spectre of 'national security' is raised", as it ordered a "thorough inquiry" into allegations of unauthorised surveillance using Pegasus.

The members of the panel are Dr Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, Dean of National Forensic Sciences University in Gandhinagar; Dr Prabhakaran P, Professor at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Kerala; and Dr Ashwin Anil Gumaste, Institute Chair Associate Professor at IIT, Bombay. It is supervised by retired Supreme Court judge, Justice R V Raveendran.

Dalit man

of January 26. In the FIR registered the next day, Meghwal has alleged that the assault stemmed from a dispute in Holi last year and that the accused people insulted him with casteist slurs.

He said he was abducted from his home by one Umesh Jat, a resident of the same village, and seven others. Meghwal said they forced him into a car and drove off to a nearby field.

"Rakesh and Rajesh took out a bottle of alcohol and forcibly made me drink it and after the bottle became empty, Rakesh, Rajesh, Umesh, Tarachand, Akshay, Dinesh, Bidadichand and Birbal united in that bottle and made me drink it," read the FIR, registered on the basis of a complaint by Meghwal at Churu's Ratangarh police station.

The FIR said the accused allegedly abused Meghwal using casteist slurs and a derogatory term for Dalits, saying they (Dalits) "would be taught a lesson" for having the "audacity" of getting into a confrontation with the Jat community.

"All of them beat me with sticks and ropes for around half-an-hour, which has resulted in injury marks on my entire body," stated the FIR.

Meghwal has said that the accused later took his mobile phone and dumped him in the village, believing he was dead.

The police have named Umesh, Rajesh, Tarachand, Rakesh, Birbal, Akshay, Dinesh and Bidadi Chand as accused in the FIR, which has been registered under IPC Sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 365 (ab-

duction), 382 (theft after preparation made for causing death, hurt or restraint). Relevant sections of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 have also been invoked.

The police said Meghwal's allegations of assault appear to be true.

"We are trying to arrest the accused. Prima facie the allegations of Meghwal being assaulted have been found to be true. All the accused are around the same age as Meghwal and it appears that there was a dispute between them. The complainant has said that around a year back, he had dropped a musical instrument and the accused side had made certain remarks, which resulted in enmity. We are investigating this point. Meghwal is able to walk and most of his injuries are on his back, which appears to be made by ropes," said Himanshu Sharma, Ratangarh circle officer and case investigating officer.

Sharma said Meghwal's allegation of being forced to drink urine was added to the FIR, but the police have not found evidence for it yet.

"We are investigating all points. All the accused are from the Jat community. We are hoping to make the arrests soon," said Sharma.

BSF women

part of the 150-member women's team, who were provided jobs in the BSF on compassionate grounds following the death of their husband or father while on duty. From different parts of the country, they comprise recruits as young as 19 and as old as 40.

"We are proud of our women. They are all fresh recruits and haven't even completed their training. Yet they performed so well. The BSF believes that given an opportunity, there is nothing women cannot achieve. We will continue to do our bit not only to help rebuild their lives but achieve much more," BSF DG Pankaj Singh told The Sunday Express.

With no means to bring up her children, Sunita joined the BSF in August 2020.

A fortnight before the January 26 event, Sunita was asked if she would join the motorcycle team for the Republic Day parade. "Until then, I had never been able to ride anything bigger than a Scooty. I always loved bikes, so I thought why not. There were some risks involved. But isn't life full of risks?" she said.

It was 15 days of rigorous training. Sunita would wake up at 4 am to cook for the children before hitting the training ground by 6 am. "Our trainer always gives us confidence. I fell down many times, but kept on trying until I got it right. Today, my children are so proud of me," she said.

For 19-year-old Doli, the youngest member of the team, it was a moment of getting over the tragedy of her father's death. A BSF constable, Doli's father was on election duty in Jharkhand in 2009. Waiting for a train to move to a new duty location, he fell unconscious on the tracks and was crushed by an incoming locomotive. The eldest of his four daughters, Doli was just six years old.

Her mother was unable to

take up a job and lived on her husband's meagre pension in a small house in Aligarh. Doli attended school, acquired a B.Sc degree and then joined the BSF.

Even before her training could start, she was called for the motorcycle acrobatics performance. "At first, I was scared, but when I saw 40-year-old first-timers doing it, I thought why not," Doli said.

On Republic Day, she was holding the national flag at the top of a pyramid formed by multiple motorcycles moving in sync.

Constable Manju Bala from Jhajjar in Haryana had never imagined she would be part of a daredevil team at the age of 40. She joined the BSF following the death of her husband, a BSF constable, in 2019.

When she was called to join the motorcycle team a fortnight ago, she was scared. "What if I lose a limb? Who will take care of my children? But I thought if I have to move up, I must do this," she said.

On Republic Day, as her children cheered from the Rajpath stands, she realised she had made the right call.

Constable Jyoti found her photo splashed in newspapers, hanging on to a bike precariously. She joined the BSF after her husband died in an accident in 2019.

From a farmer family in Bhiwani in Haryana, Jyoti said: "I got great support from my in-laws, my mother and the BSF after my husband died. My daughter was just two-and-a-half-years-old then. I was brought in for motorcycle acrobatics a fortnight before Republic Day. I feel very proud," she said.

All these 14 women were inducted into the team at the last minute -- the team short of regular personnel because of late confirmation of the BSF women's team participation at the parade.

"Women had been called from the borders, but they couldn't reach in time for the training. So we took these women as they were in Delhi. Training them was not easy, as those in advanced age were particularly scarce. But we gave them some practice laps in lotus and other formations to boost their confidence. We practised for 8-10 hours every day. Slowly, they overcame fear and by D-Day were quite enthusiastic," Inspector Himanshu Sirohi, who trained them, said.

IT Ministry plan

her the option of choosing which one to use for what purpose."

The proposal is expected to soon be in the public domain and the Ministry will seek comments by February 27.

As per the proposed framework, the "federated digital identity" would also serve as a key to a registry where all different state and Central identities could be stored. Citizens can use the digital ID "for availing other third-party services through authentication and consented eKYC".

Further, all the digital identities of a citizen can be interlinked with each other, which would eliminate the need for repeated verification process, according to the draft proposal.

The ministry has moved the proposal under the India Enterprise Architecture (IndEA)

2.0. IndEA was first proposed and designed in 2017 "with a view to enable alignment of the IT developments with the business vision of government organisations." The framework has since been updated.

In the 2.0 version, IndEA proposes a framework that enables public as well as private sector companies to build and design IT architecture "that can span beyond their organisational boundaries" to deliver "holistic and integrated services to the customers".

Apart from a "federated digital identity", the new framework has also proposed three major architectural patterns for different government agencies.

The domain architecture pattern would be most suited to be adopted by Central ministries, or by ministries which deal with concurrent or state subjects, or have substantial funding and involvement of the Central government.

The state architecture pattern would be adopted by the state governments, while a third IndEA Lite architecture pattern has been recommended for adoption by smaller departments of the Central and state governments.

BJP candidates

maangnewalon se aisi ghatna nahin honi chahiye (These are our own people, and I forgive them. But such incidents should not happen to those seeking votes in a democracy)."

The police FIR says the men who pelted stones were carrying Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) flags and were being identified. "We are identifying them through available video footage and will take action," said Lakshman Verma, the in-charge of Sardhana Police Station.

While the BJP had swept western UP in the 2017 elections, it is facing a difficult fight this time, due to the lingering anger over the contentious farm laws that were repealed by the Modi government after year-long protests. During the agitation, BJP MLAs had routinely been heckled in west UP villages, with the legislator from Budhana in Muzaffarnagar, facing a violent mob of BKU workers on August 14 last year.

The alliance formed by the Samajwadi Party and RLD, which could bring together their vote bases of Yadavs, Muslims and Jats respectively, could also cut into BJP votes. The 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots had pushed Muslims and Jats apart, which partly explained the BJP's sweep in 2017. BJP top brass, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, are leading the party push in the area. Shah held a meeting with Jat leaders in Delhi and has been door-to-door campaigning through the region.

On Thursday evening, Vikram Saini, the sitting BJP MLA as well as contestant from Muzaffarnagar's Khatauli, was gheraoed by a crowd of farmers raising anti-BJP slogans at Bhainsi village in his constituency. "You have come after five years," the protesters shouted at him.

Saini had criticised farmers protesting at Singhu on Delhi's border when the agitation was at its peak.

In Munnawar Kalan in the same constituency a few days earlier, Saini faced similar protests.

Asked about being heckled, Saini said: "There is nothing new. Such incidents do happen during campaigning."

The BJP contestant from Chaprauli in Baghat, Sahendra Ramala, was shown black flags at Daha village on Friday, and later the same day, not allowed to enter Nirupada village.

Speaking at Taharpur village in Bijinor on Wednesday, BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait said the people's anger was valid. "Government representatives have to face protests from farm-

ers if they ignore their grievances," he said.

With everyone waiting to see which side the BKU will tilt, Tikait reiterated that the party was not supporting anyone. However, he added, "If the farmers don't mind selling their yields for half the due price, they should vote for the BJP."

Manoj Poswal, the BJP vice-president for western UP, said the Opposition was behind the demonstrations. "A majority of the attackers have been carrying RLD or Opposition parties' flags. This shows their frustration as they are losing the coming electoral battle. It also reflects the weakening grip of the RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary on his party workers," he said.

"How one can attack when he is carrying the flag of his party?" countered Rajkumar Sangwan, a senior RLD leader. "The protest against Maninderpal Singh in Siwalkhas was planned by disgruntled BJP leaders because he is an outsider; being a resident of Sardhana town, and is a habitual party hopper. He joined the BJP after being with the SP and BSP for a long time."

Gujarat cleric

Dhandhuka two days ago and the Gujarat government Saturday decided to transfer the investigation of the murder case to the Anti-Terrorism Squad.

Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi, who along with his colleague Kintinsinh Rana, visited Bharwad's family Friday, promised justice.

"The case of violent incident of Dhandhuka has been handed over to ATS. Gujarat police is committed to provide justice to the victim family," Sanghavi said in a Twitter post.

Bharwad used to run a photocopy shop in Dhandhuka. The family has land holdings in Chachana village in Surendranagar district. Police said his child was born earlier this month.

Police said Bharwad was on a two-wheeler with his cousin Bhaumik Boliya and they were passing through Modhwada locality of Dhandhuka when Chopda and Pathan, who were on a motorcycle, opened fire around 5.30 pm on January 25. Bharwad, riding pillion, died of a bullet injury later.

Ahmedabad (rural) Superintendent of Police Virendra Yadav said police recovered the weapon on Saturday and a panch-nama was done.

SilverLine

between the state capital, Thiruvananthapuram, in the south to Kasaragod, a mofussil town in the north, reducing the time taken to cover the 530-km distance from 12 hours to under four. But, for large sections of the state, the Rs 63,940 crore project is a disaster in the making. Among the questions being asked are: how a debt-ridden state can afford the project; what the ecological cost would be on a state tackling climate change; would the train service be affordable given the cost of building it; and what the plans are to rehabilitate those displaced. The loudest concern though is the lack of consultation.

"In 2020, on the day of Uthradam (the eve of the main day of the Onam festival), we opened the local newspapers to find land survey numbers published as part of the K-Rail route alignment. That is how we found out that our homes would be razed," says Subeesh, who does odd painting jobs and whose two-year-old home falls on the proposed route. He says he called up the local village officer, but he had no clue.

On coming to know her house would be demolished, Manjusha says she told her kids: "I might kill myself, but I couldn't bear being on the streets with you, homeless." Many like her have turned

to Santhosh, the Alappuzha district president of the 'Samsthana K-Rail SilverLine Viruddha Janakeeya Samiti', which is leading protests across the state. On December 1 last year, a Samiti protest against officials who had come for a survey had turned violent. At least 20 Samiti members, including Santhosh, were beaten, detained and booked on charges of violating Covid-19 protocols and disrupting government work.

In Kerala, the third-most densely populated state in the country (as per the 2011 Census), land acquisition is one of the biggest problems in infra projects. With land at a premium, families run up large loans to build houses. Last year, domestic agency India Ratings, citing an All India Debt and Investment Survey, said that at 47.8%, Kerala had the highest incidence of indebtedness among urban households.

Indira Bhai, one of the senior-most protesters in Nooranad, says it is not about the money. "Even if they give crores, we don't want it."

D Dhanuraj, chief executive and founder-member of the Centre for Public Policy Research (CPPR), a think-tank based in Kochi, says the government can't think that all it has to do is "sell" a dream to the public. "The public is more informed these days and asks questions," he said.

CPM Rajya Sabha MP Elamaram Kareem said the argument of financial unviability was misplaced. "The cost of such a project does not come from the state budget. Foreign funding agencies are willing to give out long-term loans at low interests. As far as land acquisition goes, one share of it is Railway-owned land. This is a joint venture of the Kerala government and Indian Railways. Plus, all the money is not required at the outset... Moreover, the Detailed Project Report says that as operations start, the revenues can be used to pay off the loan after five years."

Kareem accused "fundamentalists" among environmentalists of opposing all development projects. "Here, if the rail route goes through wetlands and paddy fields, we will have an elevated stretch. Every 500 metres, there will be underpasses or overhead roads... There won't be any environmental damage," he said.

E Sreedharan, called the Metro Man for championing some of India's biggest railway infra projects, calls the project "ill-conceived" and "lacking technical perfection". Sreedharan, who contested the Kerala Assembly elections last year as a BJP candidate, said recently that the corridor must use broad gauge instead of the standard gauge technology. He also accused the CM of "hiding facts" and "underestimating costs".

However, Vijayan doesn't seem inclined towards a rethink, and has in fact held 'vishadeekarana' (explanatory) meetings spelling out the benefits of the rail project. Critics say these meetings are not being attended by ordinary citizens but those in influential positions aligned with the Left. The CM does not take questions at the meetings, and talks about general aspects rather than specifics, they add.

A source who is in on the consultations says, "Ministers themselves are saying they don't want (this project). But how can you convince the CM? They don't have the guts."

At the ground level, like in Nooranad, CPM workers and leaders refuse to talk about the project. A source said they are neither pushing the project nor resisting it.

That doesn't comfort Manjusha. "Both my parents are die-hard supporters of the Left. I grew up believing those ideals. But today, I feel betrayed."

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PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: 1,771	OXYGEN SUPPORT
	500
VENTILATOR SUPPORT	130

DELHI: TOTAL CASES		Total		Vacant
		HOSPITAL BEDS	15,428	13,701
18,23,815		ICU BEDS	4,464	3,813
	Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Jan 28	4,044	8,042	25	47,042
Jan 29	4,483	8,807	28	60,532
Total	24,800*	17,73,218	25,797	3,48,00,027

*Total active cases in Delhi

*Total active cases in Delhi

NOIDA	Jan 28	Jan 29
Cases	376	620
Deaths	0	3
GURGAON		
Cases	1,545	1,338
Deaths	3	3

Indicating saturation in vaccine push, numbers begin to dip in the capital

ANONNA DUTT
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

DELHI HAS reached a stage of saturation in its Covid-19 immunisation drive as most beneficiaries have taken their shots, with the number of doses administered tapering over the last two weeks.

"There are two major reasons for this — one, we have already reached a saturation for many of the categories such as the first dose being administered to over 100% of the estimated population, second dose to over 80%, and first dose to over 75% of the children. Second, when it comes to precaution doses, most people who are eligible were infected during the current Covid wave and cannot

take their shot for three months as per guidelines," said an official from Delhi's health department.

As many as 56,920 shots were administered on an average every day during the current week. In comparison, 90,017 doses were given during the previous week ending on January 23, and 1,48,096 on average during the week ending on January 16, as per data from the CoWIN platform.

Keeping in mind the decline in vaccinations, the districts have "optimised" their vaccination centres. "No vaccination centre has been closed, but we have reduced the number of sites at each premises. This will ensure that vaccines are available to people close to their home but also save on our manpower. At centres

where we used to see between 1,500 to 2,000 vaccinations, we see around 250," said an official from the Northwest district.

Delhi immunised 69,633 persons by Saturday evening, taking the total number of shots given to 29.5 million. So far, 16.1 million first doses have been administered to adults, accounting for 107% of the estimated 15 million population over the age of 18 years. There have been 12.3 second doses administered, accounting for 82% of the population.

The health department official said data shows more than 100% have received their first doses because of "duplication".

He said, "Some of the districts have given first dose to 140% of the adult population. First of all,

the total numbers are an estimate. Then, some of the people who were unable to register for their second dose have re-registered through other phone numbers which has been recorded as the first dose. We are now trying to reconcile this data."

A total of 8.04 lakh vaccines have been given to children in the 15-17 age group in Delhi so far. With an estimated 1.04 million children eligible for the shot, Delhi's coverage stands at 77.4%.

As for those yet to take the shot, another official from the health department said, "They have either migrated to other places, have some contraindications such as allergies which make them ineligible, or have had the infection recently." The official

added, "As for precaution doses, not everyone is eligible yet. It has to be 9 months from the second dose, so people keep becoming eligible as per CoWIN slowly."

There is a very minuscule percentage of people who have actually refused to take the shot, "probably less than 0.1%," the official said. The official from Northwest district said only around 700 refusals were recorded in the district where 34 lakh jabs were administered.

There were 2.69 lakh precaution doses administered in Delhi till Saturday evening, adding up to 27.8% of those who will be eligible under the three categories of healthcare and frontline workers, and people over 60 years with co-morbidities.



When Deshbandhu College was built for educating kids of Partition refugees

ADRIJA ROYCHOWDHURY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

GURCHARAN SINGH (82) often remembers the morning of 1952 when, on a walk to the market in Kalkaji, he heard a lot of excitement about some kind of inauguration. Just 12 at that time, he enthusiastically followed the crowd to sneak into the celebration and get hold of sweets and cold drinks being distributed. It was much later that he discovered that the then minister of education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, had graced his neighbourhood to inaugurate a first-of-its-kind college.

Deshbandhu College, as it came to be named after freedom fighter Deshbandhu Gupta, had been established by the Ministry of Rehabilitation in the refugee colony of Kalkaji, with the specific purpose of educating children of those displaced by the Partition.

Singh was, at that time, living with his mother and six siblings at the refugee camp in Kalkaji Temple. He had found shelter in Delhi a couple of years back, having escaped the horrors of communal violence at his hometown of Quetta in Balochistan. "Those days we had no money, nor any means of livelihood. Education was hardly anyone's priority," said Singh.

He recalled how, in the early 50s, he would attend a government school in Kalkaji during the day and spend the evenings working in a fire-cracker factory nearby to earn a living for his family. Singh recently retired from the college, where he worked in the administrative division, and lives with his family in Kalkaji.

In these initial years after Independence, large parts of Delhi had been drawn up by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, specifically for housing Partition refugees. "This was a very turbulent time and the government's priority was to provide means of livelihood and housing for the refugees. Issues of schooling and higher education, although important, were raised much later, only from 1949 onwards," explained Shrishti Khanna, research scholar at Delhi University, currently working on the history of education in Delhi. "Also, several existing schools and colleges in Delhi were transformed to provide shelter to the refugees."

Later, most of these schools and colleges started admitting these children for education as well. With time, however, it was realised that the number of displaced children had surpassed the seats available in existing



Deshbandhu College had been established by the Ministry of Rehabilitation in the refugee colony of Kalkaji in 1952; (above) Gurcharan Singh (82) was 12 at the time. *Adrija Roychowdhury*

schools and colleges. Thereafter, several schools were opened by the Ministry of Rehabilitation in refugee colonies such as Kalkaji, Lajpat Nagar and Kingsway Camp. "Some of these were also makeshift schools established in the camps," said Khanna.

"Many of the existing schools were also converted into double shifts to accommodate displaced persons," said Dr Vikas Gupta, Professor of Modern Indian History at Delhi University. He said that a number of scholarships were also started specifically aimed at displaced persons.

Dr Gupta explained that the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had in 1948 established a board for the education of displaced people, which included Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Azad, among others.

He said there was a paradigm shift in the policy of education during this period, and the priority now was integration of all people irrespective of caste, class, religion or community. "The integrationist approach to bring together people under a mainstream nationalist is reflected in the way they built institutions," he said. "So it's not as if the displaced people were just given some money to settle here. Institutions were built specifically for the purpose of integrating them within the larger society."

It is in this context of the Ministry's plan to educate displaced persons that Deshbandhu College was opened with just 72 students. Singh, who was just 12 at that time, recalled how the college immediately gained popularity among young adults in the areas in and around Kalkaji. It was particularly well known for its pre-medical and science courses.

Six years later, an evening college was opened on the same premises. It was realised that a number of displaced persons, whose education had been jeop-

ardised on account of the Partition, were working in shops or as labourers in order to earn a livelihood. Consequently, an evening college started so as to meet the requirements of those who were unable to attend college in the morning. Singh, who had turned 18 that year and had dropped out of school after class XI, found a job as a peon in the college.

For the 42 years that he served the college, he saw it grow from its humble origins to the sprawling campus that it is today. "I became friends with most of the students," he recollected with a smile. "As per protocol, the students of the evening college would have to show proof of a day job employment to get admission. Often, they would be confused on how to go about it and would approach me."

From attendance to late fees payment, all issues of the young college goers would be resolved by him.

In 1972, the college became part of the University of Delhi. Dr S Narayanan, who joined Deshbandhu College in 1965 as Professor of Chemistry, said that unlike the campus colleges like St Stephen's and Hindu, there was no craze among toppers to join this college. "Most students in Deshbandhu belonged to lower middle to middle class background," he said.

Narayanan recalled an incident during the Mandal Commission protests of the 1990s when a student from Deshbandhu tried to self-immolate as a mark of protest on the Kalkaji main road, right outside the campus. "The incident was covered by the Time Magazine," he said.

In the mid 1990s, the evening college turned from being only for boys to a co-educational one. Singh remembered the incident of a girl from Bihar who had come for admission to the college, and how nervous she was on account of not having the full fees. He had asked her to pay whatever she had and paid the remaining amount on her behalf from his own pocket.

In 2010, the morning and evening colleges split up, with the latter now being known as Ramanujan College. Dr S P Agarwal, who had joined the evening college in 1980 as professor, said he initiated the decision to form a separate college in 2008 when he took over as principal. "The idea behind the split was to ensure individual development of both colleges," said Dr Agarwal, who is currently principal of Ramanujan College.

In the last several years, he has seen the college grow to a most sought after one, not only for students from Delhi but also from other cities. He noted that among the college's 3,200 students today, about 1,500 are those from outside the city.

BRIEFLY

SIT formed to probe Shahdara assault case

New Delhi: Days after a young woman was abducted, allegedly gang-raped by her neighbours and paraded on the streets in Shahdara, police said a 10-member SIT, under an ACP-rank officer, has been formed to investigate the crime. Police said they have caught 12 persons, including 11 named in the FIR, in connection with the case. R Sathiyasundaram, DCP (Shahdara), said, "We first arrested eight women from the family who were named in the FIR. Three minors, aged around 14-17, who have been accused of rape in the FIR have also been apprehended. A man has also been arrested. We have also recovered the auto that was used to abduct the victim from her husband's house."

Man sets himself on fire near SC

New Delhi: A 19-year-old man from UP set himself on fire near the Supreme Court on Friday afternoon as he was upset over action not being taken on several complaints he filed against the state education department, police said. According to police, the man was rushed to RML hospital where doctors said he sustained 25% burn injuries and is stable. According to police, they received a call at the police control room around 3.48 pm that a man had immolated himself. "Police immediately rushed to the spot and found that the man had poured some inflammable substance on himself inside the subway on Bhagwan Das Road and tried to move towards gate number C of the Supreme Court," a senior police officer said. He was intercepted outside the subway by a police van, and personnel put out the fire using a blanket. **ENS**

552 liquor shops opened till Jan 28

New Delhi: As many as 552 liquor shops, out of 849 permitted vends, have been opened till January 28 under the Delhi government's new excise policy, official sources said. The policy was implemented on November 17 last year. An updated list of all the functional liquor vends has also been uploaded on the excise department's website. **PTI**



The ceremony is a military tradition that used to mark the withdrawal from the battlefield at dusk. *Tashi Tobgyal*

1,000 drones to lasers: Many firsts at Beating the Retreat ceremony

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

FROM LASERS, lights, and drones to a projection mapping 75 years of India's independence on the walls of the North and South Block — this year's Beating the Retreat ceremony saw several firsts.

As the sunset over Raisina Hill on Saturday, the bands of the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Central Armed Police Forces marched down Vijay Chowk playing 23 songs, before they retreated to the tune of *Sare Jahan Se Achha* in a quick march. Trumpeters, drummers, and buglers marched in synchronised formations, playing popular tunes including *Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja*. The bands were cheered on by onlookers who were seated at some distance from one another to observe Covid protocol.

Abide With Me, the hymn that is usually played every year at the ceremony before the national flag is brought down, marking the end of the Republic Day celebrations, was left out this year. A massed band of the different services instead performed *Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon*, a song composed by C Ramachandra.

President Ram Nath Kovind, the chief guest of the ceremony, arrived accompanied by the President's Bodyguard, a mounted regiment of the Indian Army. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh were also present.

The ceremony is a military tradition that used to mark the



President Ram Nath Kovind, PM Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the ceremony; (left) a show marking 75 yrs of Independence. *Tashi Tobgyal*



Abhinaya Harigovind

withdrawal from the battlefield at dusk. The military bands that were part of the ceremony include those from the Kumaon Regimental Centre, and the Bihar and Madras Regimental Centres. The camel contingent of the Border Security Force remained stationed on the parapets of the North and South blocks.

After the bands retreated, lights were beamed onto the

walls of the North and South blocks for a show to mark the 75th year of Independence. The show, with a narration that went with it, included parts of the Independence struggle along with mentions of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, and Bhagat Singh, among others. Parliament House and two blocks were lit up for the rest of the evening.

ing to her. "After a few minutes, he asked her to come for a check-up and she alleged he touched her inappropriately. She left and informed her uncle, who is a doctor and had referred the woman to the accused. She then told her husband, who called police and lodged an FIR," an officer said.

A hospital source said, "The patient had complained of inappropriate behaviour by a doctor. Police are investigating the issue and the hospital will cooperate."

According to police, the woman approached them on January 27 and informed them about the alleged incident.

"The woman said she, along with her husband, visited the hospital earlier this month as she had a leg problem. She was asked by the doctor to come on January 24. She came on January 27, alone, and the doctor called her inside," a senior police officer said.

The woman alleged he put his hand on her shoulder while talk-

‘Anti-CAA protesters roped in entertainers to draw crowds’: SPP at Umar Khalid bail hearing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

WHILE OPPOSING former JNU student Umar Khalid's bail in a UAPA case connected to the Northeast Delhi riots, the prosecution told a Delhi court that the anti-CAA protests were "created in Muslim-dominating areas, in poorest localities in Delhi, wanting to create a secular facade".

"When you do announcement from masjid, you identify place, you make sit-in protest, you... try to show a secular face by performing puja there and mak-

Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Amit Prasad made these arguments before Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat and told the court that the anti-CAA protests were "created in Muslim-dominating areas, in poorest localities in Delhi, wanting to create a secular facade".

"When you do announcement from masjid, you identify place, you make sit-in protest, you... try to show a secular face by performing puja there and mak-

ing a pandit give a speech, what is the activity you have done? You are creating protest sites in Muslim-dominating areas, in poorest localities in Delhi, wanting to create a secular facade. When that message is going to public at large, you want to change the narrative," he told the court.

On the anti-CAA protests, the SPP submitted, "You bring in artists from outside, do this *dam-rubazi*, it's like a gathering, when they get monkeys to dance, do

some kind of activity, and they (locals) will get attracted... They are not interested in your civil society or agenda-based protest. But at the same time, each one of us gets attracted to some entertainment."

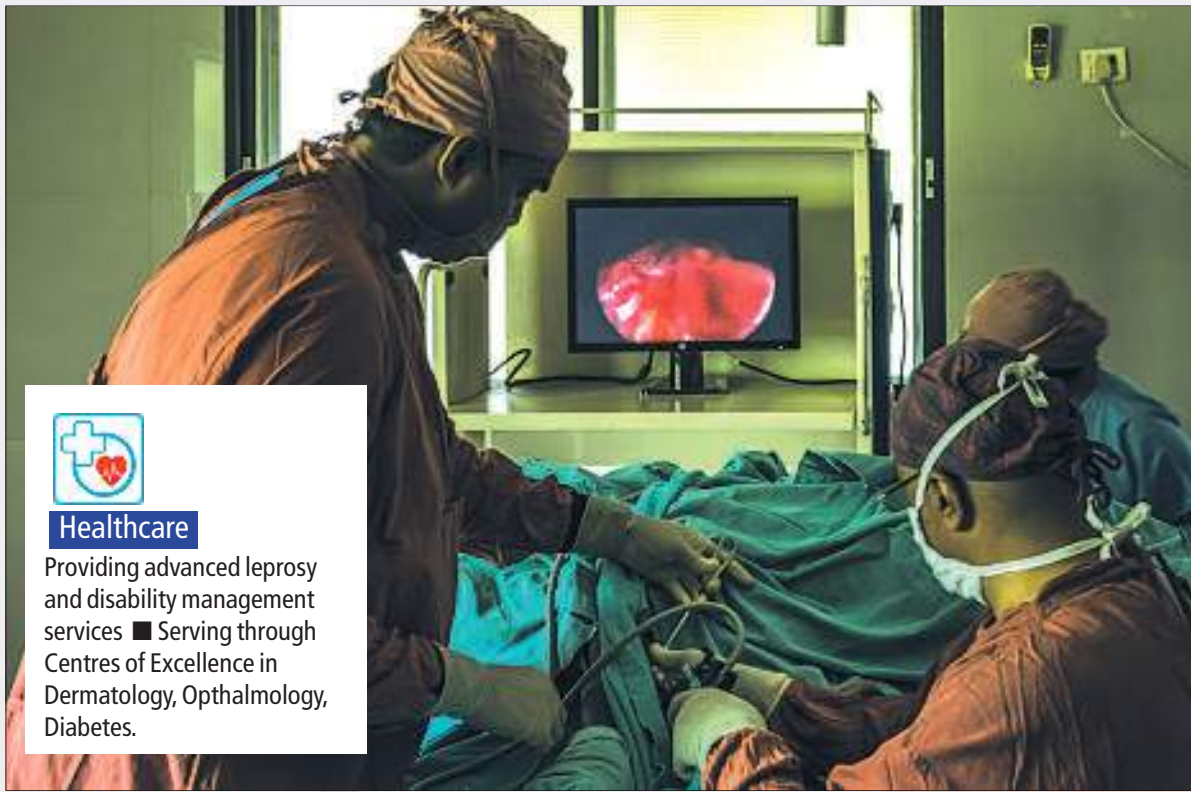
The SPP also read out chats exchanged between members of the Delhi Protests Support Group (DPSG), stating that this was a "highly sensitive group". "The locals there, uneducated masses were used as fodder by this (DPSG) group," he said.

THE LEPROSY MISSION TRUST INDIA WORLD LEPROSY DAY 2022

#United4Dignity #ZeroLeprosy #EndTheNeglect #BeatNTDs

The Leprosy Mission Trust India (TLMTI)—the largest leprosy-focused NGO in India— is invested in addressing every possible consequence of leprosy. It requires a steadfast focus and a multi-disciplinary approach to not just cure people affected by leprosy and other NTDs, but to rehabilitate them in the truest sense and create a respectable space for them in the society.

Approach to Healing, Inclusion and Dignity



Healthcare

Providing advanced leprosy and disability management services ■ Serving through Centres of Excellence in Dermatology, Ophthalmology, Diabetes.



Research & Training

Generating evidence-based knowledge through clinical and social research ■ Training global practitioners on advances in leprosy treatment and surgeries.



Community Empowerment



Training youth from marginalised households on technical and vocational skills and facilitating jobs ■ Generating sustainable livelihood for communities marginalised by disease, disability, gender and poverty.



Advocacy



Influencing attitudes towards leprosy and other disabilities through dialogue with stake holders ■ Building awareness on discriminatory policies and practices.



PACHAMUTHU is not just a person with disability, but also a rural entrepreneur. He is one of the Board of Directors of the first-of-a-kind Farmer Producer Organisation in India, which is established, promoted, run, and managed by the people affected leprosy and other disabilities. He did not allow his physical disability to come in the way of pursuing his dream of being an entrepreneur. He, and other directors, are now helping others to be farmer producers by providing them techno-managerial skills and financial support.



AS a single mother from a marginalised household, **Sasikala** was struggling to provide for her two children. She did not want to be a 'burden' to the society. When she heard about The Leprosy Mission's livelihood generation project, she signed up. With few other members from her village in Cuddalore, she formed a Self-Help Group and received training in making biodegradable plates from areca nut leaves. She chose a livelihood that's profitable and sustainable. Today, she is earning enough to raise her two children. "I now have respect in my neighbourhood, that's enough," she says.



RAJENDRAN hails from a BPL household. After he contracted leprosy, he lost his livelihood. Stigma around the disease was such that people refused to give him work. He got in touch with The Leprosy Mission team and received comprehensive training in operating a dairy business. He also received a few cows to start his own business. Today, Rajendran and his wife can provide for themselves, and do not have to depend on charity or relief aid.



PINKY has come a long distance. From a girl affected by leprosy and low self-esteem, she is now an efficient nurse serving at one of The Leprosy Mission hospitals. With great care, the doctors at The Leprosy Mission did surgeries to correct leprosy-related deformities in her hand and foot. They stood by her when she faced rejections from nursing colleges, questioning her abilities. Pinky proved that one must not let one's potential die and wallow in self-pity but seize every opportunity to rise above adversities.



LATHA is a young woman, who was keen on engaging herself in something meaningful and productive. She didn't think that her disability will limit her or create a barrier. Under the auspices of The Leprosy Mission, she got trained and skilled in candle making. She also mobilised 11 other marginalised members from her community and started candle making business. This successful venture shows the power of collectivism and a fierce conviction that disability is temporary, but determination is permanent.

6 DECISION 2022

UTTAR PRADESH • UTTARAKHAND • PUNJAB • GOA • MANIPUR



Amit Shah during a door-to-door campaign in Deoband on Saturday. ANI

Deoband in tour, Shah invokes 'safety', claims 'false' riot cases

PTI & ENS

MUZAFFARNAGAR, LUCKNOW, JANUARY 29

CONTINUING HIS campaign in western UP for the first phase of Assembly polls, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Saturday visited Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur districts, but had to cancel his door-to-door campaign in both, including Deoband, as crowds surged, breaking Covid rules.

At Muzaffarnagar, Shah accused SP chief Akhilesh Yadav of telling "lies" on law and order, saying the BJP government had chased away criminals who flourished earlier.

Referring to the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, he said: "The victims were made accused, and the accused the victims, and thousands of fake cases were lodged. I congratulate the BJP, which acted under party leader Sanjeev Balyan and fought the 'mayki lada' (fight for justice), either in courts or on

the roads." A Union minister, Balyan was named in the riots.

Urging voters not to make "the same mistake", Shah said: "Otherwise those who instigated the riots will sit in the seat of power in Lucknow."

He scoffed at the SP-RLD alliance, saying the two parties will be seen together only till the election. He said in the event the two parties managed to form the government, the SP would again have by its side pAzam Khan and Atiq Ahmad, while RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary will not be seen.

Shah invoked the names of Jat leader and late PM Chaudhary Charan Singh, Jayant's grandfather, and farmer leader Mahendra Singh Tikait.

He said under the SP government everyone was afraid for their safety. "All goondas have now run away.... When Behenji's party (BSP) came to power, it talked of one caste, the Congress talked of one family and Akhilesh ji of goondas, mafias and appeasement, but the BJP talks of

security and development."

Shah claimed that for 10 years of the UPA government, terrorists came from across the Pakistan border and killed Indian security personnel. "Can the SP, BSP and Congress keep the country and the state safe?" he asked.

BJP supporters greeted Shah and showered flower petals on him and chanted slogans in support during his road show.

At a rally in support of the BJP candidate in Saharanpur Dehat, Shah again repeated that there has been a drop in cases of robbery, murder and rape under the BJP. He said the BJP government had seized land worth Rs 2,000 crore grabbed by gangsters.

Shah also talked about the changes brought by the Modi government "integrating" J&K with the rest of the country. The Kashi Vishwanath corridor in Varanasi and the Baba Vishwanath premises lying destroyed since Aurangzeb period had been rebuilt without any dispute due to the efforts of PM Modi, he said.

AMIT SHARMA
SARDHANA, JANUARY 29

SOM OR Pradhan; the BJP or Samajwadi Party? For the nearly three lakh voters of Sardhana in western Uttar Pradesh, which votes on February 10, the choice has largely been the same since 2012.

While the BJP's Sangeet Singh Som has won both times, the equations are changed now. The SP-RLD alliance is making Muslims and Jats, divided since the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots, rethink their options. And the SP's Atul Pradhan, voter after voter says, is not a bad replacement.

Sardhana, which falls in Meerut district and borders Muzaffarnagar, has around 88,000 Muslims, 50,000 Scheduled Castes and Thakurs each, apart from the Jats and Gurjars who number a nearly equal 25,000. While Som is a Thakur, Pradhan is a Gurjar.

In these parts, Som is also the designated 'Hindu Hridaya Samrat'. He was booked in the 2013 riots over an alleged video of a provocative speech, but cleared. The two-time MLA, with seven criminal cases pending against him, has been at the heart of other controversies to roil this area, including the lynching of Mohd Akhlaq in Dadri in 2015,

when he called for imprisoning Akhlaq's family. He had also demanded that Muzaffarnagar be renamed Lakshmi Nagar.

Pradhan has 38 cases against him, more than 24 of them registered under the Adityanath regime. Most of the cases are bail-able; a large number are for violating Section 144 which prohibits large assemblies.

Shoaib Ahmed, the 26-year-old owner of a grocery shop near the local bus stand, says as an MLA, Som is very helpful to people in the area, "he is our hero". "But the party he belongs to always plays communal politics before every election. Atul Pradhan is also a very good man and has been very active in the region for more than a decade."

Other voters back this, calling both Som and Pradhan very accessible and responsive to their problems.

Wrapped in a saffron shawl at his double-storey house in Sardhana, Som says meeting peo-

ple has made him realise "that this is going to be the easiest electoral battle for me". "My wife (Preeti) has been getting very encouraging response even from Muslim women in Jamalpur village during the door-to-door contact programmes," he says.

Pradhan has also been knocking on doors in village after village, and spending hours talking to people at ghers (the common sitting area in villages). He tells voters, "I have been asking for your vote for 10 years. Help me win at least this time."

Pradhan says he is hopeful of getting the RLD's Jat support now, apart from most of the Muslim votes. "In earlier elections, the BSP fielded Muslims, and took away votes. But this time, the BSP has not fielded a Muslim. (The only candidate from the community has been fielded by the Congress, which doesn't have much of a chance.) I will also get advantage of the anti-incumbency," he says.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

Pradhan (above) may give Som tough fight.
Amit Sharma

LIST OF 91 NAMES RELEASED FRIDAY

Surprises in BJP list for Gorakhpur region, partymen see Yogi stamp

11 sitting MLAs dropped, candidates changed in four other seats

LALMANI VERMA & BHUPENDRA PANDEY
LUCKNOW, JANUARY 29

THE BJP's list of 91 names announced on Friday appears to bear the stamp of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, with as many as 11 sitting MLAs dropped in the Gorakhpur region, which is his fiefdom. This is apart from the change in the Gorakhpur Urban seat, where the sitting MLA earlier stepped aside for Adityanath to contest from there, in his first Assembly election.

While BJP leaders say the candidates were changed for the 11 seats, as well as four more



As CM, Yogi is part of the seat-selection panel. Express

where the party lost last time, as they were either ageing or to tackle anti-incumbency, sources admit the party is having to contend with many more aspirants in each seat given the scale of the BJP's 2017 win. And that many of them are approaching the BJP state unit as well as Adityanath separately.

Of the 62 seats falling in Gorakhpur region, which goes to polls in the sixth and seventh phases (March 3 and March 7), the BJP has

so far announced 37 candidates. Of these 37, 43% are new faces.

In the 295 names announced so far, the BJP has dropped 56 sitting MLAs.

As CM, Adityanath is a member of the BJP's state election committee and attends all the meetings related to candidate finalisation, with other leaders like BJP UP president Swatantra Dev Singh and both deputy CMs Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dinesh Sharma. A Gorakhpur BJP

leader said Adityanath's say holds sway in the region. "He is the CM and the party's face for the polls. The situation was different in 2017 when he was only an MP and had limited say in organisational affairs. Then, Maurya, who was the UP BJP chief, and state general secretary (organisation) Sunil Bansal were the key decision-makers from the state unit's side, including in Gorakhpur," said the leader, adding that the central leadership still takes the final call.

ABJP leader said: "While making the changes, the party has largely ensured that the new candidates are from the same caste as that of the dropped candidates."

Among those dropped is two-time BJP MLA from Khajni (reserved) constituency in Gorakhpur, Sant Prasad, who has been replaced by Sriram Chauhan, a sitting MLA from Ghangata seat in adjoining Sant Kabir Nagar district. Chauhan is a minister in the Adityanath government.

Talking to *The Sunday Express*, Prasad admitted his disappoint-

ment. "I would have had no issue if some local partymen had replaced me. I am a loyal BJP worker since 1980 and was elected as an MLA in 1996 as well. I won this seat in 2012 and 2017 consecutively," he said.

Prasad also pointed out that his Beldar community numbered over 60,000 in the constituency.

A supporter said the BJP would not have it easy in the seat without Prasad, and that it would face tough competition from the woman candidate fielded by the BSP.

Likewise, in adjoining districts, BJP workers are surprised over changes in seats like Kasya and Haata in Kushinagar district and Rampur Karkhana in Deoria. The new faces are little-known in the constituencies and partymen say they will face a tough fight from rival SP candidates.

If change was required, the party should have chosen a loyal leader active in the area and known among the public, a BJP worker said.

I HEREBY DECLARE

BIKRAM SINGH MAJITHIA
Shiromani Akali Dal candidate from Amritsar EastTOTAL ASSETS ₹12.1 Cr
CASH ₹35,000

MOVABLE ASSETS:

Self: ₹6.4 Crore

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:

₹5.57 crore

PROFESSION: Politics

CRIMINAL CASES: Six FIRs including one under NDPS Act in which he is currently out on bail

EDUCATION: Graduate

NAVJOTSINGH SIDHU
Congress candidate from Amritsar EastTOTAL ASSETS ₹44.6 Cr
CASH ₹3,50,000

MOVABLE ASSETS:

Self: ₹3.29 Crore

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:

₹41.35 Crore

VEHICLES: Two Toyota Land Cruiser, one Fortuner

CRIMINAL CASES: Yes, One case.

PROFESSION: MLA

EDUCATION: BA

BHAGWANT MANN
AAP candidate from DhuriTOTAL ASSETS ₹1.97 Cr
CASH ₹1,10,000

MOVABLE ASSETS:

Self: ₹48,10,174

IMMOVABLE ASSETS:

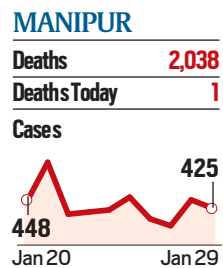
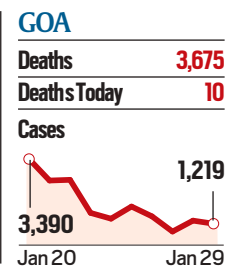
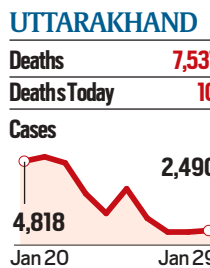
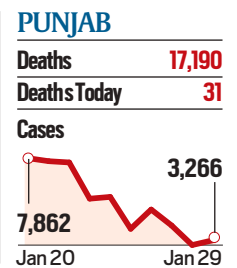
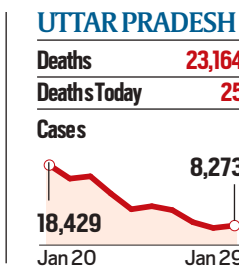
₹1.49 Crore

VEHICLES: Toyota Fortuner (2), Chevrolet cruze

CRIMINAL CASES: FIR dated Jan 10, 2020 at Chandigarh with charges of rally in violation of 144 Crpc

PROFESSION: Politician

EDUCATION: B.Com (1st yr)



POLLS & PUBLICITY

Physical presence to 'moral support', pandemic shrinks NRIs in Punjab

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, JANUARY 29

UNLIKE THE 2017 polls, when Punjab had witnessed its highest-ever participation of the NRI (Non-Resident Indian) volunteers in the poll campaign, the upcoming state Assembly elections have not evoked the same response from Punjabis settled abroad.

With a little over three weeks left for voting, only some close relatives of a few candidates and some overseas members of various parties are likely to take part in the physical campaign in the state, sources said.

A number of NRIs, who spoke

to *The Sunday Express*, said that the Covid pandemic was one of the key reasons why many of them had decided to stay away from physical electioneering in Punjab this time. The then entry of the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) into the Punjab fray as a new contender in the 2017 Assembly polls was a big draw for many NRI volunteers. And the AAP's dismal performance then also led to a section of them losing interest in state politics.

During the 2017 election campaign, about 5,000 NRI volunteers had been active on the ground in Punjab after reaching the state from the USA, Canada, UK, Australia, Germany, Italy and



About 5,000 NRI volunteers had been active on the ground in Punjab during the 2017 election. Express

several other countries. Surinder Mavi, a well known Toronto-based NRI who had mo-

bilised a large number of Punjabi NRIs under the "Chalo Punjab" campaign in favour of the AAP in

the run-up to the 2017 polls, said that he has no plans to come to Punjab this time.

A member of the Punjab AAP media team, Atam Prakash Singh, asserted that the pandemic was the major reason for NRIs not coming to campaign in the 20 February Punjab elections. "Their businesses were hit by Covid and their financial condition is not as good as in the pre-pandemic period, leading to their absence in the election campaign this time," he said.

Recalling NRIs' support for the AAP in the previous elections and how their participation had then made the campaign "colourful", Atam said "they still

give us a lot of moral support".

The AAP had claimed in 2017 that around 35,000 NRIs had undertaken electioneering for the party in the 117 Assembly constituencies across Punjab.

Congress minister and candidate from Hoshiarpur's Urmur seat, Sangat Singh Gilzian, who claims significant NRI support as his entire extended family lives in the US, admitted that only a few family members will come to campaign for him this time because of the Covid situation.

Gilzian said that NRIs have taken a keen interest in the Punjab elections and that a large number of the NRI volunteers have been coming to campaign in

Punjab since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Prior to 2014, a handful of overseas members of different political parties and their supporters used to come to join the poll campaigning in Punjab.

The AAP's electoral success in Delhi and its foray into the Punjab polls seemed to be a key factor in attracting many

NRI volunteers to Punjab's campaign trail. Upset over issues like sacrilege and drugs, they wanted to "teach traditional parties a lesson", said a Canada-based NRI Kulbir Singh, who hails from Tanda in Punjab.

"Despite a wave of AAP in 2017, our aggressive campaign could not form the third alterna-

tive government in Punjab, and then we decided to leave the state to its people only," said Sudershan Singh, an NRI from Canada, who had campaigned in the 2014 and 2017 elections. He also said that a majority of the NRI volunteers were "upset" over the way the people of Punjab voted in favour of the Congress in 2017.

The North American Punjabi Association (NAPA)'s executive director Satnam Singh Chahal said that NRIs were less interested in flying to Punjab for poll campaigning due to Covid and may support political parties digitally. There are about 55 lakh NRIs from Punjab living in various countries across the globe.



People carry the remains of head constable Ali Mohammad Ganie, killed in Anantnag on Saturday. Shuaib Masoodi

J&K policeman shot dead near his home

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 29

SUSPECTED MILITANTS shot a policeman outside his home in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Saturday evening, police said. Shot at by assailants at close range, Ali Mohammad Ganie, who was a head constable posted in nearby Kulgam district, was left critically wounded. He succumbed to injuries at the hospital, police said. "Today, at about 1730hrs, Anantnag Police received information about a terror crime incident at Hasanpora Tabalaa area of Bijbehara, Anantnag, where terrorists had fired upon a police personnel," the police said in a release. "Officers...learnt that

Head Constable Ali Mohammad Ganie was shot at by terrorists near his house...he had received grievous gunshot injuries." It added that Ganie succumbed to injuries at hospital. Soon after the attack, a joint team of J&K Police, paramilitary forces and the Army reached the attack site and launched a cordon and search operation. Ganie is the first policeman killed in a militant attack this year in the Valley. Militant attacks on police personnel in the Valley has seen a steep rise over the last one year. According to official figures, of 42 security personnel killed in Jammu and Kashmir last year, 21 were from J&K Police. In Valley, 20 out of 29 security personnel killed in 2021 belonged to police.

All issues, including Kashmir, should be resolved via diplomacy, dialogue: Imran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING/SLAMABAD, JAN 29

AHEAD OF his visit to China, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that for "enduring peace" in South Asia it is essential that a "strategic balance" is maintained in the region and all "outstanding issues", including the Kashmir issue, be resolved



Pakistan PM Imran Khan through dialogue and diplomacy. In an article in China's state-

AFTER ACCESS TO KEY PORT

Delhi readies red carpet for Oman defence official

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

MOVING TO expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean region and counter Chinese influence, New Delhi is reinvigorating ties with Oman where it has secured access to the key port of Duqm for military use and logistical support. The government is laying out the red carpet for Oman's top defence official Mohammed Nasser Al Zaabi who will be in India from January 30 to February 4 on an official visit. Al Zaabi, Secretary General of Ministry of Defence of the Sultanate of Oman, is the executive head of the Omani defence establishment as the Minister's charge is held by Deputy Prime Minister Sayyid Shihab. Zaabi will be in New Delhi to co-chair the Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC) with Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar. The JMCC, the highest forum of engagement between India and Oman in the field of defence, evaluates and provides guidance to the overall framework of defence exchanges between the two sides. It is expected to meet annually, but could not be



- India secured access to Duqm to counter Chinese influence in the region
- This was one of the key takeaways of PM Modi's visit to Oman in February 2018
- The Indian armed forces conduct bilateral exercises and staff talks with Oman

organised after 2018 when the meeting of the 9th JMCC was held in Oman. Coming as it does after a hiatus of three years, the 10th JMCC is expected to comprehensively evaluate the ongoing defence exchanges and provide a roadmap for further strengthening defence ties in the coming

years. India secured access to Duqm as part of its maritime strategy to counter Chinese influence and activities in the region. This was one of the key takeaways of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oman in February 2018. Work is on to operationalise the access through a pact. On the sidelines of the JMCC, Zaabi is expected to call on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and will also be briefed on the Indian defence production industry for possible procurement and joint production. His visit will be followed by a series of defence engagements in February that will include back-to-back visits to India by the Chief of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), and the Chief of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), staff talks between Indian Navy and CRNO, and a bilateral Air Force exercise in Jodhpur. Oman is the only country in the Gulf region with which all three services of the Indian armed forces conduct regular bilateral exercises and staff talks. Oman also provides critical operational support to Indian naval deployments in the Arabian sea for anti-piracy missions.

30 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

No better time to take India-Israel ties forward: PM Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi said on Saturday that there could not be a better time to set new goals for taking India-Israel relations forward, and asserted that the cooperation between the two countries played a key role in the growth stories of both nations. In a video message on the completion of 30 years of full-fledged diplomatic relations between India and Israel, Modi said the people of both countries always shared a special relationship. "This day holds importance in our relationship as full diplomatic ties were established between the two countries 30 years ago. A new chapter between the two countries had begun. It was a new chapter but history between us is age-old," Modi said. "For centuries, the Jew community has stayed in India in a harmonious environment without any discrimination and has grown. It has made an important contribution in our developmental journey," he said. Modi also said the importance of India-Israel ties has increased at a time when sig-



PM Narendra Modi

nificant changes are taking place. "I am confident that India-Israel friendship will continue to set new records of mutual cooperation in the decades to come," the Prime Minister said. Though India had recognised Israel on September 17, 1950, full-fledged diplomatic relations between the countries were established on January 29, 1992. Emphasising that "friendship and trust" were not only positive traits but also "real assets", the foreign ministers of India and Israel, in a joint op-ed for an Israeli daily on Friday, said the two countries have worked together to "deepen their roots". The development comes on a day when a New York Times report claiming that India bought Pegasus spyware as part of a defence deal with Israel in 2017 triggered a major controversy in India.

After threats, Dalit man's wedding procession escorted by MP police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEEMUCH, JANUARY 29

A DALIT man's wedding procession was escorted by the police after his family voiced fears of possible disruption by some influential people at a village in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district, police said on Saturday.

The procession was taken out on Thursday at Sarsi village under Manasa police station area, an official said. The man's father Fakirchand Meghwal had approached the administration with

a complaint that some influential people in the village may disrupt the wedding procession of his son Rahul. Security was provided for the procession as a precaution, said Kanhaiya Lal Dangi, the in-charge of Manasa police station. "All security arrangements were made by the police and the procession was taken out peacefully. All villagers cooperated and there was no opposition. The villagers said that they all have been living harmoniously," Dangi said. However, Rahul alleged that some villagers had threatened his

father not to take out the procession or the family would be forced to leave the village. BSP leader Radheshyam Commander said that he had got information from Rahul Meghwal that he wanted to take out the procession a couple of days ago and he had spoken to the police and administration in this regard. Earlier this week, police arrested six people after they allegedly pelted stones at the home of a Dalit man and ransacked his house in Sagar district after a wedding procession that was seen as defiance against tradition.

Activist who worked for minorities, opposed ghettoisation, dies at 77

ADITIRAJA
VADODRA, JANUARY 29

HUMAN RIGHTS activist and former physics professor Juzer S Bandukwala died on Saturday morning at his residence in the Pratapgunj area of Vadodra following prolonged illness.

Bandukwala, who had been an advocate for reforms in the Muslim community, was 77.

Bandukwala, who lived alone, developed age-related complications and was under treatment at home for the last one week. His physician Dr Mohammed Hussain told *The Sunday Express*, "He had diabetes and cardiac ailments... He was also suffering from mild Alzheimer's."

Bandukwala was a graduate of Bombay University and a Doctorate in Physics. As the



J. S. BANDUKWALA

President of the Union of Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodra in 1981, Bandukwala stood up for the rights of Dalit students at MSU.

He opposed the alleged ghettoisation of the Muslim community and led a crusade from 2015 to rehabilitate nearly 450 displaced families of Kalyannagar slums in Vadodra who had been left in the lurch after the civic body cancelled a housing draw follow-

ing communal protests in Vadodra. In 2018, he wrote to then Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani over the issue and later rejected authorities' offer to shift the Muslim families to a minority-dominated neighbourhood. He said, "The Muslims have the right to live anywhere." His activism meant he was also targeted several times. His house in Sama area of Vadodra was set ablaze during the 2002 Gujarat riots. Bandukwala, however, continued to advocate for an inclusive society, choosing to live in a mixed neighbourhood throughout his life. Community leaders said that Bandukwala's death has left a void. Dr Hussain, the president of the Zidni Ilma Trust founded by Bandukwala, said, "His demise is a big loss but we will carry forward his work."

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

Martyr on 30th January
L.NK KULWANT SINGH 10 MAR 1968 TO 30 JAN 1996
In the remembrance of Late L.Nk Kulwant Singh who left us for his heavenly abode on 30 Jan 1996. May Wahe Guru Ji give strength to CHHE SIKH fraternity and his family to bear this loss with courage and fortitude. He will continue to be a source of inspiration and strength for us. Let us pray for him in our hearts and remember a life lived so wonderfully in the service of the nation.
CO & All Ranks 6 SIKH

GOVIND GURU TRIBAL UNIVERSITY

BANSWARA-327001 (RAJ.)

FOR CONFIDENTIAL PRINTERS
REGARDING CONFIDENTIAL PRINTING WORKS

Notice inviting information from reputed security printing till date **07 February, 2022**. Details of information to be sent by organization may be seen on website of the **www.ggtu.ac.in**

Control of Examination

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer (SLF)

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation to the RFP for Bio-mining of 50 Lakhs Tons Legacy Waste and Disposal of excavated material, Reclamation of land and Construction of Engineered Landfill Facility, and Setting up 150 KLD Leachate Treatment Plant (LTP) at Ghazipur Dumpsite invited on 30.12.2021 vide ID No. 2021_EDMC_100107_1 with last date of bid submission on 14.02.2022, the EDMC has substantially modified the eligibility criteria and the scope of work. The corrigendum and addendum alongwith replies to pre-bid queries can be seen and downloaded from **www.mcdonline.nic.in/EDMC** and **https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app**.

Sd/-
R.O. No. 57/DPI/EDMC/2021-22 **Executive Engineer (SLF)**

EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303

NTPC Limited

(A Govt. of India Enterprise)

INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR Loading, Transportation, unloading & disposal of Fly ash from NTPC Vindhyachal to Gorbi Mines, Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh

EOI No.: NTPC VSTPS/EOI/2021-22

Name of Work : The work mainly involves filling of fly ash from NTPC Plant in (i) ISO containers/ ISO tank containers, mounted on flat bedded train or containers mounted on truck trailers, transporting to NTPC Vindhyachal Railway siding (About 2 Km) & shifting to flat bedded/suitable railway bogies by crane, (ii) transporting loaded rail rake to suitable Railway siding/station near Gorbi pit, lifting the portable containers/flat bedded containers (By crane or Reach stacker) and stacking the containers in Depot/Parking, shifting containers on truck trailers, transporting the truck trailers to Gorbi pit and pump/dump the ash from containers into Gorbi mine after making slurry.

Containers, Trucks, Railway rake and lifting equipment's shall be arranged by the agency. The arrangement of making slurry from fly ash shall also be installed by the agency. The Dry ash filled containers shall be Unloaded and Evacuated in a fully enclosed structure without any fugitive emission.

The purpose of inviting this EOI is to seek interest from Transporting agencies, for fly ash transportation to Gorbi Mines by RCR (Rail cum Road) Mode on long term basis.

How to apply

'Information to Applicants' and 'Application Form and Annexures' for Expression of Interest have been uploaded on **www.ntpctender.com**.

Application for EOI may be sent to **GM (Ash Dyke Management), NTPC Limited, Vindhyachal Super Thermal Power Station, P.O. Vindhyachal, District Singrauli - 486885, Madhya Pradesh** (Email: **AJ_Vindhyachal@ntpc.co.in**).

For clarification, please contact on Ph.no. **9650999621 or 8318468748**.

Registered Office: NTPC Bhawan, Scope Complex, 7, Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003. **www.ntpc.co.in**

Leading the Power Sector

PROVISION OF CCTV SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

E-Tender Notice No: 17 of 2021-22. Open E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: E-Tender No. M-2021-22-17-Sr.DSTF-MLG; Dated: 25-01-2022. Name of work: Provision of CCTV surveillance system at 07 RPF posts/outposts including lock-ups and interrogation rooms over N.F. Railway. Tender Value: ₹ 22,18,40,857/-; Earnest Money: ₹ 2,28,200/-; E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. and opened at 15:30 hrs. on 21-02-2022. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website **www.iweps.gov.in**

Sr. DSTF, Maligaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

MAINTENANCE WORK IN JURISDICTION OF KAMAKHYA ONE DEPOT

Tender Notice No.: TRD-GH-01 of 2021-22, Dated: 25-01-2022. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No.: EL-TRD-GH-22-001; Name of work: OHE (Non-Core Activity) maintenance work in jurisdiction of Kamakhya CHE depot for 01 (one) Year. Tender Value: ₹ 23,35,127/-; Earnest Money: ₹ 65,700/-; Closing at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 18-02-2022. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 18-02-2022 in website **www.iweps.gov.in**

Sr. DEET (S), Guwahati
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Tendering Tender Notice No.09/2022 Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) N.E. Railways Itanagar For and behalf of President of India invites "OPEN" e-tender through on Line (E-tendering) for the following work: **Sl. No.:1. Description of works: Raising of Medium level to high level platform at (Bazpur, Kashipur, Balespur & Roshanpur stn = 4 nos.) and Rail level to High level Platform at (Gulabpur stn = 01 no.) in IZN Division. Approx. Value: ₹: 5,96,48,401.62, E.M.D. Money (₹): 4,48,200.00, Cost of Tender Forms: ₹: 0.00, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter: 05 months. SL No.:2, Description of works: Balance work of (1). Through filling Renewal (Excluding ECR) from Km-0/0 to km 51/0 (total 51 Track Km) of Lalakuan-Kashipur section. (2). Increasing sleeper density from existing M+4 to M+8 (1.4 Track km). (3). Replacement of steel channel sleeper at bridge. (4) Replacement of PSC sleeper at bridge approaches by Spl Bridge approach sleepers and provision/relaxing of guard rail and other miscellaneous works in the jurisdiction of ADEN/KPV (Under sanctioned work- Through sleeper renewal (3) of CST-B Sleepers in loops with 60 kg rail PSC sleepers in different station yards Total TBR (S) = 2.53 Track Km between RMU-KOM (BG) Section) Approx. Value: ₹: 84,15,316.63, E.M.D. Money: ₹: 1,68,300.00, Cost of Tender Forms: ₹: 0.00, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter: 05 months. Note: 1. On line e-tender can be submitted upto 15:00 hrs of dated 21.02.2022. 2. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website **www.ireps.gov.in**. Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) CPROV-352 Itanagar**

About any passenger emergency complain 800/0 Mobile No. 9679445955
DO NOT TAKE UP WITH UNDESIRABLE OFFICER IN TRAIN

E-TENDER NOTICE

DRM (Electrical)/ECR/Dhanbad for and behalf of the President of India invites e-Tender for execution of the following works. e-Tender No:EL/25/OPEN/2021-22. 1. Name of work with location and Completion of work: Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Lifts at KOR with 3 years AMC after warranty, in connection with Utility Shifting from Bandhua to Gomoh due to DFCCIL alignment (Completion period: 06 Months). 2. Approx. cost of the work: ₹55,00,000/-, 3. Earnest money to be deposited : ₹1,10,000/-, 4. Date & Time for submission of closing and opening of e-Tender: Closing of e-Tender: On 22.02.2022 at 11:00 Hrs. Opening of e-Tender: On 22.02.2022 after 11:00 Hrs. 5. Website particulars: WEBSITE: **www.ireps.gov.in**. Manual offers are not allowed against e-Tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (Elect.) ECR/Dhanbad
PR/01595/DHN/EGEN/T/21-22/28

PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL WATER WAY AT KATHIR DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: KIR/Engg/08 of 2022, Dated: 24-01-2022. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **S.No.:1. Brief Description of work :** Repairs of Goods Carrying area between Line No: 19 & 20 at Kathir yard. (Using Unserviceable PSC sleepers) and provision of toilet at merchant room. Tender Value: ₹ 24,68,775.45; Earnest Money: ₹ 48,400/-; **S.No.:2. Brief Description of work :** Kathir Division: Provision of additional water way at Bt No:133 by replacing existing bridge of span 3x12.2m by (1x10.3) between Telia - Sudhan of New Jagapuri Jn. Middle Town section, (Double line). Tender Value: ₹ 43,59,43,099.88; Earnest Money: ₹ 25,79,600/-; **S.No.:3. Brief Description of work :** Kathir Division: Provision of additional waterways by constructing 11 nos. New RCC Box bridges in Kishanganj-Kumedpur section under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEEN/KIR. Tender Value: ₹ 35,61,04,014/-; Earnest Money: ₹ 19,30,600/-; Closing of above tenders at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 28-02-2022. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 28-02-2022 in website **www.ireps.gov.in**

DRM (W), Kathir
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

EX-SERVICEMEN CONTRIBUTORY HEALTH SCHEME (ECHS) EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

1. ECHS invites applications to engage following appointments on contractual basis in Regional Centre ECHS Dehradun, ECHS Polyclinic Dehradun and Vikasnagar-

Ser	Post	No of Vac	Polyclinics/Regional Centre ECHS Dehradun	Interview Date
(a)	Medical Officer	10	Dehradun-08, Vikasnagar-01, Regional Centre Dehradun-01	15 Mar 22
(b)	Dental Officer	02	Dehradun-01, Vikasnagar-01	15 Mar 22
(c)	Officer-in-Charge	01	Vikasnagar-01	16 Mar 22
(d)	Gynecologist	01	Dehradun-01	16 Mar 22
(e)	Laboratory Technician	02	Dehradun-01, Vikasnagar -01	16 Mar 22
(f)	Radiographer	01	Dehradun-01	16 Mar 22
(g)	Pharmacist	01	Dehradun-01	16 Mar 22
(h)	Dental A/T/H	02	Dehradun-02	16 Mar 22
(i)	Nursing Assistant	04	Dehradun-03, Vikasnagar -01	16 Mar 22
(k)	Clerk	01	Dehradun-01	17 Mar 22
(l)	Driver	01	Vikasnagar-01	17 Mar 22
(m)	Female Attendant	02	Dehradun-01, Vikasnagar -01	17 Mar 22
(n)	Peon	01	Dehradun-01	17 Mar 22
(o)	Chowkidar	01	Vikasnagar-01	17 Mar 22
(p)	Safaiwala	01	Dehradun-01	17 Mar 22
Total		31		

2. For Terms & Conditions, Application Form and Remuneration kindly see website **www.echs.gov.in**. For further details please contact Stn HQ Cell (ECHS) Dehradun at Tele No **0135-2751526**. Last date of receipt of application is **22 Feb 2022 by 1200 hrs.** Interview will be conducted on **15,16 and 17 Mar 2022 from 1000 hrs onwards at Conference Hall, Military Hospital, Garhi Cantt Dehradun**. Candidates to bring their original certificates/degree, photocopy of testimonials/experience certificate, attempt certificate as applicable and one PP size photograph for interview. All Covid guidelines will be strictly followed. Candidates to be in possession of latest RT PCR report not earlier than **72 hrs** and report by **0900 hrs.**

BRIEFLY

ASSAM AHRC sends notice to govt on shooting victim

Guwahati: Assam Human Rights Commission on Saturday issued a notice to Chief Secretary Jishnu Barua asking why a former student leader shot recently by the police in an anti-drugs operation should not be compensated. The police had shot Kirti Kamal Bora, 22, in an operation in Nagaon district on January 22. While the police alleged Bora was involved in a drug racket and had attacked policemen during the operation, his family said he had been "framed". The rights panel, which took cognizance of the incident on January 24, said it had found the case to be "prima facie... violation of human rights". **ENS**

UTTAR PRADESH BJP youth wing member shot at

Etawah: A divisional-level office-bearer of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, BJP's youth wing, was seriously injured after being shot at by motorcycle-borne assailants in UP's Etawah district, police said on Saturday. Amit Barua (26) was standing near his vehicle along with some locals when he was fired at, Etawah SSP Jai Prakash Singh said. **PTI**

GOA TMC-MGP manifesto out

Panaji: Ahead of the Goa Assembly election, the Trinamool Congress (TMC)-Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) combine released its 10-point manifesto on Saturday and promised to do away with the three linear projects cutting through the Mollem National Park in south Goa being opposed by state's environmentalists. **ENS**

\$1.2-BN RECOVERY Devas appeals against US court ruling on finding Antrix assets

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, JANUARY 29

BENGALURU-BASED start-up Devas Multimedia, which is now under the control of a liquidator, approached a US appeals court against a federal court order of January 3 that allowed the start-up's foreign investors to find assets of Antrix Corporation in the US Eastern District of Virginia for the recovery of \$1.2-billion compensation for the failed Devas Multimedia-Antrix Corp satellite deal.

The January 3 order by the US District Court for the Western District of Washington, a federal court, came after three foreign investors of Devas Multimedia — CC/Devas Mauritius Ltd, Telcom Devas Mauritius Ltd, and Devas Employees Mauritius Pvt Ltd — had moved the court to allow the discovery of Antrix assets across the US. The foreign investors have also been targeting assets of Air India — as a Government of India entity prior to its sale to Tata Group — for the compensation. Antrix Corporation is the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). After the 2005 deal between Antrix and Devas was annulled in 2011, Devas investors have won separate compensation awards in international tribunals, including \$1.2 billion awarded by an International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) tribunal on September 14, 2015. This award was upheld by the US District Court for the Western District of Washington on October 27, 2020, and Antrix has appealed this order in a US appeals court. The Supreme Court of India has asked for the ICC tribunal award to be kept in abeyance through a November 4, 2020 order. India's National Company Law Tribunal ordered the liquidation of Devas Multimedia on May 25 last year citing fraud in its creation. The NCLT order was upheld by the Supreme Court on January 17.

J&K admin nod to demarcation process of low-lying land

Rotate hologram statue of 'iconic leaders' at India Gate: Letter to President

[illegible]

Covid-19: Karnataka withdraws night curbs

A memo to this effect was issued by the state education department.



GAS TURBINE RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT (GTRE)
(Government of India, Ministry of Defence)
Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO)
C.V. RAMAN NAGAR, P.O. BENGALURU-560 093
(email: director@gtre.drdo.in / hrd@gtre.drdo.in)

AWARD OF JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS (JRF)
Advt. No. GTRE/HRD/062/2022

GTRE invites online applications for awarding Junior Research Fellowships

Sl. No.	No. of Fellowships	Subject/Discipline	Educational Qualifications
1	02	Mechanical Engineering	Graduate degree in professional course (B.E/B.Tech) from recognized University/ Institute in First Division with valid GATE score Or Post graduate in professional course (M.E/M.Tech) from recognized University/ Institute in First Division both at Graduate & Post graduate level
2	02	Aeronautical/Aerospace Engineering	
3	01	Mechanical Engineering (Quality & Reliability Engg.)	
4	01	Electronics/Electronics & Communication/Electronics & Instrumentation Engineering or eqvt.	(Only GATE 2020 & 2021 are acceptable)
5	01	Computer Science/Computer Engineering/ Information Technology/ Information Science/Data Science or eqvt.	

Upper Age Limit: 28 years as on last date of receipt of application. (relaxable by 5 years for SC/ST & 3 years for OBC as per Govt. of India orders).

Probable date of start of online applications: 24th January 2022
Probable last date of Submission of online applications: 14th February 2022

For Further details and application form (to be filled online)
Please visit website - <http://www.drdo.gov.in> under caption “What’s New” Or rac.gov.in

davp 10301/11/0148/2122

State Bank of India

RASECC Muzaffarpur (Code 10012)

Zonal Office Building, Poddar Complex, Mithanpura, P.O Ramna, Muzaffarpur -842002, email- sbi.10012@sbi.co.in

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **SYMBOLIC/PHYSICAL POSSESSION** of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of **State Bank of India**, the Secured Creditor, will be sold on **"As is Where is", "As is What is"** and **"Whatever there is"** basis on **04.03.2022 (Friday)**. Other details of the e-auction are as under:

Sl. No.	Name of Borrower(s)	Amount of Demand (as per SARFAESI notice)	Description of the property	Name of Mortgagor/ Guarantor	Date of 13(2)	Reserve Price below which the property will not be sold
					Date of 13(4) under SARFAESI Act	EMD Bid Increment Amount
1.	Ms Swapna Jaiswal (Borrower) and Mr. Kaushal Kishore Jaiswal (Co-borrower & Mortgagor)	₹ 12,81,560.00 + interest and expenses, costs, charges etc.	Equitable Mortgage of all that part and parcel of the property consisting of residential land located at Mauza-Mohiuddinpur, PS-Siwan (Mufasil) Dist-Siwan & Registered Sale Deed No.9010 dated 23.07.1996, Khata No.123, Khesra No.1427, Thana No.207, Area-2 Kattha executed on 06.12.2012 by Mr. Kaushal Kishore Jaiswal (Co-borrower & Mortgagor), S/o Late Ramnath Sah, Boundaries:- North-Nawal Kishore Jaiswal, South-Raj Kishore Jaiswal, East-Nala & Rasta, West-Algu Turha at present Chokar Choudhary.	Mr. Kaushal Kishore Jaiswal (Co-borrower & Mortgagor), S/o Late Ramnath Sah	15.06.2020 21.09.2020	₹17,00,000/- ₹1,70,000/- ₹10,000/-
2.	Sri Harendra Prasad S/o Late Ramswarth Singh and Smt. Rita Devi W/o Sri Harendra Prasad	₹ 5,24,396/- + interest and expenses, costs, charges etc.	Equitable Mortgage of all that part and parcel of the property consisting of residential land & building located at Mauza-Halka-Damodarpur Shahjahan Alias Dumri, Mushari Distt-Muzaffarpur Registered Sale Deed No.4440 dated 23.02.2010, Khata No.170, Khesra No.1281, Thana No.332, Area-4 decimal i.e. 1760 Sqft executed on 09.07.2010 by Borrower, Sri Harendra Prasad S/o Late Ramswarth Singh. Boundaries:- North-Hari Narayan Sah, South-Deep Lal Rai, East-12 ft wide Road, West-Bibi Naima Khatoun.	Sri Harendra Prasad S/o Late Ramswarth Singh	21.07.2018 03.10.2018	₹29,16,000/- ₹2,91,600/- ₹10,000/-

E-auction Terms and Condition

- Date & Time of e-auction:** 04.03.2022 (Friday); Time: 120 Minutes. From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 Minutes each.
- The auction sale will be **"online through e-auction"**. The intending Bidders/Purchasers are required to participate in the e-Auction process at e-Auction Service Provider's website <https://mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>.
- The intending Bidders/Purchasers are requested to register on portal (<https://mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>) using their mobile number and email-id. Further, they are requested to upload requisite KYC documents. Once the KYC documents are verified by e-auction service provider (may take 2 working days), the intending Bidders/Purchasers have to transfer the EMD amount using online mode in his Global EMD Wallet before the e-Auction Date and time in the portal. The registration, verification of KYC documents and transfer of EMD in wallet must be completed well in advance, before the auction.
- Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) amount as mentioned above shall be paid online through NEFT/Transfer after generation of Challan from (<https://mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>) in bidders Global EMD Wallet. NEFT transfer can be done from any Scheduled Commercial Bank, however for Transfer the bidder has to visit Indian Bank Branch. Payment of EMD by any other mode such as Cheques, etc will not be accepted. Bidders, not depositing the required EMD online will not be allowed to participate in the e-auction. The Earnest Money Deposited shall not bear any interest.
- MSTC Central Helpdesk Number (for any technical help): 033-40645207, 40609118, 40645316, 40602403, 40607351, 40628253. SBI contact no. (for property related enquiry): 9431510449, 9570646432.
- The General Terms and Conditions of e-auction sale is available on the website: <https://sbi.co.in/web/sbi-in-the-news/auction-notices/sarfaesi-and-others>.**
- To the best of knowledge and information of the Authorised Officer, there is no encumbrance on the property/ies. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of property/ies put on auction and claims/rights/dues/affecting the property, prior to submitting their bid. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment or any representation of the bank. The property is being sold will all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the bank. The Authorised Officer/Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/rights/dues. The sale shall be subject to rules/conditions prescribed under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of security Interest Act, 2002.

This publication is also a 30 days notice to all the borrower/guarantors under Rule 8(6) of Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002. NB: 30 days Sale Notice to Borrower/Guarantors has already been sent by Regd. Post at their last known address. In case they do not receive the said notice then this E-auction sale Notice may be treated as substituted mode of service. The other terms and conditions of the e-Auction are published in the following websites: <https://sbi.co.in/web/sbi-in-the-news/auction-notices/sarfaesi-and-others>


Date : 28.01.2022

Place : Muzaffarpur

AUTHORISED OFFICER

STATE BANK OF INDIA, RASECC, MUZAFFARPUR

IDBI BANK <small>CIN: L65190MH2004G01148836</small>	IDBI Bank Ltd., 1st Floor, Donar Road, VIP Road, Infront of Holy Cross School, Darbhanga, Biahrr-846004	Appendix IV [(Rule 8(1))] POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable property)		
<p>Whereas, the undersigned being the authorized officer of the IDBI Bank Ltd., Darbhanga, Bihar under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice on the date mentioned against the accounts calling upon the borrower/guarantor/mortgagor to repay the amount as mentioned against the account within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower/guarantor/mortgagor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby issued to the borrower/guarantor/mortgagor and in the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on the dates mentioned against the accounts. The borrower/guarantor/mortgagor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of IDBI Bank Ltd., Darbhanga, Bihar, for the amounts mentioned below plus applicable interest and costs/charge thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section(8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.</p>				
Sl. No.	A) Name of the borrower B) Name of the Mortgagor cum Guarantor C) M/s Gyan Sagar Pushtak Kendra (Prop.-Shri Dinesh Kant Choudhary) B) Shri Radha Mohan Choudhary (Mortgagor cum Guarantor)	1) Date of Demand Notice 2) Date of Possession 3) Claim amount as per Demand Notice 1) 11.10.2021 2) 24.01.2022 3) ₹27,60,435/- (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh Sixty Thousand Four Hundred Thirty Five Only) and interest thereon.	Description of the Property All that part and parcel of the property consisting admeasuring 4 Katha 18 Dhur 12.5 Kamma, Khata No.730, 579, 657, 528, 702, 611, 813 Khesra No-511(O), 512(O), 505(O), 497(O), 1627(O), 1626(O), 125(O), 1623(O), Taazi No-15201, Thana No.142, Situated at Vill- Jagarnathpur Dakhran Pargana Habi Sub Reg Bahera Darbhanga. Bounded: On the North by: Ram Sewak Rai, On the South by: Legal Heirs Of Mahavir Choudhary, On the East by: Legal Hirer of Satya Narayan Choudhary, On the West by: Pcc Road. Together with all buildings and structures thereon and all plant and machinery attached to the earth or permanently fastened to anything attached to the earth.	
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%; border: none;"> Place : Darbhanga Date : 24.01.2022 </td> <td style="width: 70%; border: none; text-align: right;"> Sd/- Authorized Officer IDBI Bank Ltd. </td> </tr> </table>			Place : Darbhanga Date : 24.01.2022	Sd/- Authorized Officer IDBI Bank Ltd.
Place : Darbhanga Date : 24.01.2022	Sd/- Authorized Officer IDBI Bank Ltd.			



LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD.

8th Floor, BSFC Building, Fraser Road, Patna - 800001, Tel : +91 612 2332128 / 30

[Rule 8 (1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD. under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (3 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 9 of the Security interests (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice on following date calling upon the following loanee under below mentioned loan A/c to repay the below mentioned amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The loanee having failed to repay the amount, notice in hereby given to the loanee and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under section 13 (4) of the said ordinance read with rule 9 of the said Rules on the following date.


The loanee in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD for below mentioned amount.

The loanee attention is invited to provisions of section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Loanee I/Ac No.	Date of Demand Notice & Dues Amount Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Amitabh Kumar S/o- Bhushan Prasad Singh, At- House No 96, House of Deepak Sinha, Near Baba Laudge, PS-Kidwaiपुर, East Boring Canal Road, Patna, District-Patna State Bihar Pin Code-800001	20.07.2021 Rs. 6,60,017.30 + Sarfaesi + Other charges	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Land & Building Serial No-8586 Sale Deed No.-8381 Date 29-11-2014 Token No-8651 VASTU VIHAR PHASE-1 BLOCK-D 4th Floor Flat No-FR-04 Hajipur Industrial Area Thana Dighi Kala, Khata No-536, 350, Plot No-4638, 4639, Total area-0.37 Decimal District- Vaishali Sub registry office Hajipur District-Vaishali State- Bihar in the name of Amitabh Kumar S/o Sri Bhushan Pd Singh. Boundary : North: Flat No. F.R. 03 (D Block), South: Open Space, East: Common Passage, West: Flat No F.R. 06 (D Block)
Under Loan Account No. - 212100000853	20.01.2022	
Bandana Kumari W/o- Mukesh Kumar and Mukesh Kumar S/o-Sukhdev Prasad, At-Bikkam, Po-Kachhiyana, P.S-Sirari, District-Lakhisarai State-Bihar Pin code-811107	20.07.2021 Rs. 13,96,318.08 + Sarfaesi + Other charges	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Land & Building Serial No-2374 Original, Sale Deed No.-2326 Date 08-04-2016 Token No-2377 Book No-1 Jild No-45 in Page No-570 to 581 Mauja-Sarajapur Halka-Raghopur, Computerized Page No-1464, Jamabandi No-1901, Sub Division-Hajipur Anchal, Raghopur, Thana-Ganga Bridge Thana No-198, Khata No-52, Plot No-117/11 Hajipur District-Vaishali, Total Area-4.5 Decimal sub Registry Office-Hajipur District-Vaishali State Bihar in the name of Smt. Bandana Kumari W/o Mukesh Kumar Boundary : North: Shri Krishndev Prasad, South: Ritu Rani, East: Wide Rural Road, West:Gigal Rai
Under Loan Account No. - 2121000002755	20.01.2022	

Place - Vaishali
Date - 20.01.2022

Authorised Officer
(LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD)



LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD.

8th Floor, BSFC Building, Fraser Road, Patna - 800001, Tel : +91 612 2332128 / 30

[Rule 8 (1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD. under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (ord.3 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with rule 9 of the Security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice on following date calling upon the following loanee under below mentioned loan A/c to repay the below mentioned amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The loanee having failed to repay the amount, notice in hereby given to the loanee and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under section 13 (4) of the said ordinance read with rule 9 of the said Rules on the following date.

The loanee in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD for below mentioned amount.

The loanee attention is invited to provisions of section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Loanee I/A/c No.	Date of Demand Notice & Dues Amount Date of Possession	Description of the Immovable Property
Smt. Manorama Sinha, W/o- Raj Kumar Sinha Under Loan Account No. - 220300000346	18.02.2021 Rs. 17,31,289.84 + Interest & Other Sarfesi charges & Other charges	All that part and parcel of the property Consisting of Sale Deed No.- 16123 Dated 24.10.2016, Mauja-Kendua Thana No.-323, Plot No.-2241, Khata No.-48, Ward No.-46, Dist.-Gaya Property in the Name of Manorma Sinha Area-1660 Sq.ft. Boundary : North: Part of Nij plot, South: Part of Nij plot, East: River, West: 16 ft pakka Road
Shri Awadhesh Kumar & Gayatri Devi Under Loan Account No. - 220300000516	24.01.2022 18.02.2021 Rs. 28,35,606.79 + Interest & Other Sarfesi charges & Other charges	All that part and parcel of the property Consisting of Sale Deed No. - 12882 Dated 16.08.2017, Mauja-Khatkachak Pragana, Thana No.-10, Tauji No.- Khata No.-57 old 1615 new, Plot no 190 old 1949 new, MSP no-20936, Ward No-44, Dist.-Gaya Property in the Name of Gayatri Devi W/o Awadhesh Kumar Area-700 Sq.ft. Boundary : North: Rajesh Vishwakarma, South: Bulhani Kaharin, East: Nij vendor (Vikreta), West: Gali
Smt. Rashmi Patel, W/o- Ravishankar Kumar Under Loan Account No. - 220300000150	24.01.2022 19.08.2019 Rs. 10,74,858.27 + Interest & Other Sarfesi charges & Other charges	All that part and parcel of the property Consisting of Sale Deed No.- 14644 Dated 26.09.2016, Mauja-Parewa, Thana No.-322, Token No.-15704, Khata No.-80, Plot no.-212/213 Dist.-Gaya, Area-1360 Sq.ft Boundary : North: Rasta, South: Janki Mahto, East: Lekhadhari, West: Nij Lekhakari
	24.01.2022	

Place - Gaya
Date - 24.01.2022

Authorised Officer
(LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD)

Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM

Website: pchidambaram.in
Twitter @Pchidambaram, IN

The proper response will be to correct the negative perceptions of service under the Modi government and to explore alternative solutions. One suggestion is to increase the number recruited annually so that the abundance of officers will oblige the states to depute officers to the Cente. Another suggestion is to identify at the time of initial recruitment a small number of willing officers as ‘hard core’ and appoint them to service exclusively under the Centre (as was the practice in IPS)

From service to servitude

THE THREE letters IAS (standing for Indian Administrative Service) have a magnetic quality about them even after 75 years of Independence. They represent social status, power, an assured income for about 32-35 years, pension for life, perquisites, medical care and, more often than not, job satisfaction. A rung or two below is the Indian Police Service (IPS). Nearly 200,000 young men and women go through a process of written examinations and interview to be included among the 400 candidates who are selected to the two services. The reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and, lately, for Other Backward Classes (altogether not exceeding 49.5 per cent) has made the two services an aspirational goal for millions of students belonging to the disadvantaged communities.

The IAS and IPS were successors, respectively, to the ICS and IP under British rule which had acquired the moniker ‘Steel Frame’. The members of the two services render stellar service. The popular opinion, though, is that a number of ills have crept into the services. Among the ills is that some members crave political patronage and the political authority is only too willing to extend patronage. The steel frame is no longer as sturdy and upright as one would have desired.

RULES BROKEN MERRILY

That aside, the Rules that govern the two services are more honoured in the

breach than in the observance. Take the ‘Cadre Rules’ which are now the subject matter of a brewing dispute between the Central government on the one hand and several state governments on the other. The IAS (Cadre) Rules and the IPS (Cadre) Rules were made in 1954 and are similar, but nearly every rule is violated in practice.

Rule 5 provides for allocation of members to various cadres. The method followed for many years was transparent, but inflexible. The method has been tweaked from time to time giving rise to questions and doubts, yet the allocation is reluctantly accepted by many candidates who dare not protest. Rule 7 promises that a cadre officer shall hold a post for the prescribed minimum tenure, but the rule has been merrily ignored by every party-government and transfers — abrupt, frequent and irrational — have become the norm.

Rules 8 and 9 stipulate that cadre and ex-cadre posts shall be filled by cadre officers and a non-cadre officer may be appointed to these posts only temporarily, but these two Rules have been violated so routinely that they have, in effect, been repealed. The worst violation is the creation of numerous ex-cadre posts equivalent to cadre posts (e.g. Chief Secretary and Director General of Police) and shunting ‘unwanted’ officers to hold the ex-cadre posts.

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

The steel frame is broken. There is

worse in store. It will be dismantled altogether if the new amendments proposed recently by the Central government — and vehemently opposed by several state governments — are carried through. The first amendment is intended to address the problem of ‘inadequate’ number of officers deputed to the Central government under the ‘deputation reserve’ of 40 per cent. In the last seven years, the actual ratio has come down from 28 per cent to 12 per cent. The problem may be real, but the causes are deeper. Unlike in the past when officers vied with each other for Central deputation, why are officers unwilling to be deputed to the Central government?

Firstly, the toxic work culture under the Modi government. Secondly, the working conditions, especially the long wait for a suitable house. Thirdly, the over-centralization of authority in the PMO and the reduction of ministries/departments to no more than subordinate offices. Secretaries wait on the PMO every morning to receive instructions. Most paragraphs of the Budget speech are written in the PMO.

Fourthly, the arbitrary postings of officers (many remember the humiliating transfers effected soon after the change of government in May 2014). Fifthly, the gross delays in empanelment and promotion. The Prime Minister should first address these negative aspects of working in the Central government.

Assuming that the first amendment is motivated by need, it is evident that the second amendment is motivated by

pure malice. It will confer power on the Central government, in “specific situations”, to unilaterally summon any officer to serve under the Central government. We know what the “specific situations” will be? The case of a retiring chief secretary of West Bengal who ‘failed’ to receive the Prime Minister at the airport and the cases of police officers who ‘failed’ to provide security to Mr J P Nadda are fresh in memory.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

The proper response will be to correct the negative perceptions of service under the Modi government and to explore alternative solutions. One suggestion is to increase the number recruited annually so that the abundance of officers will oblige the state governments to depute officers to the Central government. Another suggestion is to identify at the time of initial recruitment a small number of willing officers as ‘hard core’ and appoint them to service exclusively under the Central government (as was the practice in the IPS).

Under Mr Narendra Modi, cooperative federalism has long been buried. We have entered the phase of confrontational federalism. If the Modi government has its way, we will have the Indian Beholden Service; the current states will be reduced to mere provinces; and service under the government will be reduced to servitude.

Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen_singh



Betrayal by our political leaders

LAST WEEK the disconnect between what our politicians believe India needs and what India really needs became painfully obvious. Even as Amit Shah wandered from temple to temple in Uttar Pradesh and Rahul Gandhi posed with his 117 candidates at the Golden Temple, student riots broke out in Allahabad and Patna. When protesting students were interviewed by TV reporters, they made it clear that it was the fear of being unemployed that was at the root of the protests that in some places turned violent. Railway stations and railway properties were targeted because the enormity of the unemployment problem became evident when 1.25 crore candidates applied for the 35,281 jobs that Indian Railways was offering. It should shame Indian politicians and policymakers that a government job remains the ultimate Indian dream in the year that we celebrate 75 years of independence.

Unemployment should be the biggest issue in the elections that are currently underway, but if you follow the current election campaigns, you will find hardly any mention of the unemployment crisis. The Home Minister chose on his tour of western Uttar Pradesh to try and get Hindus to remember that their interests were different to those of Muslims. And, that under a BJP government there had been no ‘appeasement’. He then declared that the election in Uttar Pradesh would decide the fate of India. Message? You better vote for the BJP.

In Punjab where Rahul Gandhi went after yet another mysterious trip abroad, he never got around to real issues because he had to spend most of his time calming tensions within the Congress party. But, in campaigns past he has concentrated on attacking Modi more than on raising issues like the alarming rise in unemployment. He appears these days to take his cue from the BJP playbook by allowing TV cameras to follow him on his temple tours and by trying to identify differences between Hindutva and Hinduism. It is a futile exercise, and the popularity of Narendra Modi will continue to soar until the Congress party discovers new ways to communicate what it stands for.

It is pointless saying that the BJP has more money. It does. And it is hard to think of a state election campaign on which more money has been spent than the BJP campaign to win Uttar Pradesh. For many months now we have seen Yogi Adityanath pop up many times a day on our TV screens in propaganda films disguised as news stories. The propaganda seeks to erase memories of bodies floating in the Ganga, and project him as the man who has taken the state from being an economic basket case to being an economic miracle. If this were true, there would not have been student riots in Allahabad.

The BJP stands by what it does. It builds temples, cynically divides Hindus and Muslims, spreads religiosity, hyper-nationalism, and hatred under the illusion of ‘vikas’ and ‘parivartan’. Since there are no challengers to Modi’s BJP, it can do what it wants. We need a challenger, and this can only come if the Congress party finally rises from the ashes of two humiliating electoral drubbings and proves that it is still relevant.

At this point I must clarify that I have never voted Congress and have only contempt for those who allowed it to be turned into a family firm. When R P N Singh became the latest ‘young leader’ to resign and walk into the welcoming arms of the BJP, he said it was because the Congress party was no longer what it used to be. Hard to disagree. Having said this, it also needs to be said that only if the Congress finds some way to revive will there be a real challenge to the BJP’s dangerous monopoly over national politics.

The only political party at the national level that can challenge the BJP is the Congress party. But, instead of learning from the mistakes made in past elections, it continues to remain in exactly the same place it was when it was swept out of power by the Modi wave in 2014. There is still the same old talk about the ‘idea of India’ being destroyed without any Congress leader noticing that Modi has made it clear that he has a different idea of India and that it is equally valid and apparently more popular.

If Congress leaders had discovered by now that our oldest political party cannot survive as an appendage of Sonia Gandhi and her children, then today it may have been in a strong position to challenge Modi. If young Indians continue to grow up believing that the apex of their ambitions is to get a government job, then seven years of rule by a powerful Prime Minister with a full majority in Parliament has changed nothing.

Modi cannot be blamed for all the problems they face or for the tragic reality that millions of young Indians have only one alternative to finding a government job and that is to become economic refugees and flee India. The Gujarati family that was found frozen to death in Canada recently paid human smugglers a small fortune to try and get into the United States illegally. Modi once promised to build an India from which young people would not have to flee in search of jobs. A promise that now seems forgotten.

inside
TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR



FILLING THE VACUUM

FOR OVER 50 years a succession of governments waffled over what should be done with the empty canopy at Rajpath after King George V’s statue was removed to the Coronation Park in 1968. The debate as to which great icon’s statue should be placed at the premier spot continued endlessly. Most felt that Mahatma Gandhi was the rightful choice, though some Congresspersons suggested a memorial to Pandit Nehru and later even Indira Gandhi’s name was mooted. During Morarji Desai’s Janata Party rule, the CPWD commissioned sculptor Ram V Sutar to create a Gandhiji image in proportions which would fit the vacant pedestal and have high visibility on Rajpath. By the time the massive 16-foot-high bronze statue of Gandhiji sitting in lotus position was complete in 1993, the Congress was back in power. Some ruling party MPs voiced objections claiming that it was inappropriate to place the apostle of simplicity under a royal canopy. The CPWD changed its mind and handed over the statue to Parliament. Aesthetes complained that the statue’s dimensions looked incongruous in front of Parliament House. To support the argument not to install Gandhiji, some Left historians even floated a theory that the canopy should remain empty as a reminder of our imperial past. Small wonder that when Narendra Modi took the decision to install Netaji Bose’s statue, he wasted no time in argument. He made the surprise announcement after the graphic model was already prepared by the Ministry of Culture.

‘UNDIPLOMATIC GENUFLECTION’

The deep division among retired foreign service officers over support to the Modi government has become public through open letters, blogs and newspaper articles. The Forum of Former Ambassadors has been around since 2020 but it is an open letter this month by four former diplomats, Kanwal Sibal, Shyamala Cowsik, Veena Sikri and Bhaswati Mukherjee — with 28 ex-ambassadors appending their signatures, including Lakshmi Puri, wife of central minister Hardeep Puri — which has raised the hackles of some of their former service colleagues. The article was a biting response to

an open letter to President Kovind, endorsed by a hundred prominent personalities, including five former service chiefs, urging the government to take action against the hate speeches made in Haridwar and elsewhere by Hindutva elements. A former IAS officer, Avay Shukla, has joined the debate with a blog saying the forum’s attack on the distinguished signatories diminished the Indian Foreign Service. He termed it a “most undiplomatic genuflection” considering the vitriol of the language which is highly unusual among diplomats, who are trained to use measured language. Some wonder if the BJP’s IT cell had a hand in the draft.

SOUTHERN OPTION

By April the BJP has to decide on its presidential candidate for the July elections. Unlike 2017, when Ram Nath Kovind was a shoo-in, this time the NDA may not be as comfortably placed. It has lost allies such as the Akali Dal and the Shiv Sena and its share of elected representatives in states like Maharashtra and Rajasthan has fallen. The outcome of the UP Assembly polls will be crucial. One reported strategy being discussed is to field a person from Tamil Nadu. The state, with 39 Lok Sabha seats, is one of the most powerful states electorally and the NDA’s vote share is negligible. It is felt that if a person from Tamil Nadu is chosen, opposition parties like the DMK would be persuaded to back the candidate out of regional loyalty. In fact, Tamil social media channels have started speculating on names such as Nirmala Sitharaman and governors Tamilisai Soundarajan and La Ganesan.

RELATIVE ADVERSARIES

Akhilesh Yadav’s step-mother Sadhana Gupta and uncle Shivalp Yadav are firm allies, united in their attempts to further the political ambitions of their immediate families and cut down the influence of the SP chief. Akhilesh thought he had checkmated them by his masterful announcement that no one but himself from the extended clan would contest the election on an SP ticket. But his adversaries did not fall in line. Sadhana’s daughter-in-law Apama and her brother-in-law (sister’s husband) Pramod embarrassed Akhilesh by switching over to the BJP. Shivalp, meanwhile, refused to merge his PSP party with the SP and his only concession is that he will fight in alliance with the SP. That way, he keeps his options open post-elections.

NOT INVITED

The DGP’s of the BSF, CRPF, CISE, ITB and SSB were not invited to the Republic Day parade. The omission is perceived as a snub to the one odd million personnel of the central forces.

life &
WORK

SANDEEP DWIVEDI

sandeep.dwivedi@expressindia.com



HE SAID he was a doctor but at heart a cricket-lover. Still that didn’t fully explain his presence in Grenada’s St George’s, a one-street Caribbean island-town that was hosting an innocuous Sri Lanka-South Africa 2007 World Cup game. This shifty, middle-aged Delhi man was our nosy neighbour at the budget hotel which was home to many itinerant reporters at cricket’s big jamboree in the West Indies.

Most evenings he would invariably sneak up next to us. He started with eavesdropping on our cricket conversations but soon mustered the courage to join in. He was an unusual cricket-follower. He didn’t have those usual star-struck fan queries. Doctor didn’t want to know how Tendulkar was in real life nor did he ask if Ganguly and Dravid got along. His questions were direct: Who is going to win tomorrow? Who will top-score? How is the pitch?

One evening the Dodgy Doctor, feeling empowered by our group’s general acceptance of him, asked if any of us knew the umpires. That’s when a seasoned pro among us stepped in. He asked the man wanting to be seen as a traveling fan if he could name a few players from South Africa and Sri Lanka, the teams he had followed to this back-of-beyond cricket destination. He gave a goofy smile and tried to change the topic. Who do you think is better, Lara or Tendulkar? Again, he played the fool. Others too joined in, pointed questions about his trip to Grenada were being asked now.

Nervous by the attention, he took leave and was never to be seen again. The rest of the evening was spent listening to the veterans narrating stories of the many ‘Doctors’ they had met during their cricket travels.

In the betting/fixing world, men like ‘Doctor’ were called the ‘runners’. They were the eyes and ears of the shady syndicate that ran illegal betting rings. Their job was to collect pitch information, keep an eye on the clouds sailing towards the stadium and generally gather every possible input that would help the odds-makers.

The enterprising and adventurous among the ‘runners’ would walk the extra mile. They would approach players, umpires or even reporters for the nuggets of inside information that would be gold dust for the bookies and punters. A player’s limping walk at the end of a training session might be some insignificant match-eve trivia for most but in the betting world, where cricket wasn’t just sport but a volatile stock on *satta* bazaar, it was a tip-off worth millions.

On that breezy Caribbean night, a few

Cricket’s constant crisis: The bad guys



Brendan Taylor admitted to collecting a spot-fixing fee

hard questions flew straight at the face. If the strings of the action on the pitch were being pulled by some unseen hands, what was the point of sitting through press conferences, exploring every blade of grass to write in-depth analysis? If the outcome was pre-decided, pre-match punditry was a sham, a virtual con-job.

Was one actually informed enough to be the glorified reliable messenger? What if you were actually one among the many unsuspecting Trumans inside this remotely-controlled sporting dome?

There are times in their careers when sports writers face such existential questions. Like the other day when former Zimbabwe captain Brendan Taylor confessed of swimming with the sharks. He confessed to snorting cocaine with the fixers and taking money from them while insisting he didn’t cut a deal with them.

How times have changed, you thought. Remember the days when cricketers travelling to the subcontinent came with cans of baked beans and mineral water. Now within days of landing, they start rolling joints with strangers. You can have sympathy for the players representing bankrupt cricket boards, like the one in Zimbabwe, but do you really believe their story?

Cricket fans, it seems, have stopped caring. They have been so used to betrayals. Over the years, sting operations, confessions, match-fixing reports have nailed cricket’s Hall of Famers.

In 2000, a known South African fixer, Hamid Banjo Casim, told the King’s Commission, the panel probing the Hansie Cronje corruption case, that Kapil Dev was a friend. Cronje would confess that in 1996 it was Mohammad Azharuddin who had introduced him to a bookie.

In the mid-’90s, corruption in Pakistan

cricket was brutally exposed by the Justice Qayyum report.

Cricket dutifully swept everything under the carpet. That ugly past has been conveniently forgotten, those charged solemnly forgiven. Even more recent events have had a shadow on them.

There is also an entire book — *Bookie Gambler Fixer Spy* — on the behind-the-doors manipulations before the India-Pakistan 2011 World Cup semi-final at Mohali. The final, some say, was also fishy. Sri Lanka’s ex-skipper Hashan Tillakaratne had asked an uncomfortable question about that game: Why were four Sri Lankan players changed for the final? Where facts start and fiction ends is difficult to say.

But in the wise words of *A Few Good Men*’s Colonel Jessup: Can we handle the truth?

Plus there’s the IPL, the world’s most popular T20 event that has a cryptic business model and mysterious ownership pattern. The league has proven cases of owners placing bets while sitting in the dugout, players more than willing to take orders from fixers, and unscrupulous administrators with dubious conflict of interest links.

Once out of curiosity, I went to *The Indian Express* archives to re-read a match report of a game that I had covered but was later found to be fixed. It was the India-South Africa ODI in 2000 at Vadodra. That was when South African skipper Hansie Cronje’s phone was being tapped by Delhi Police. Transcripts of conversation between Cronje and match-fixers were later made public. Subsequently, it was found that several Indian cricketers in that team too had links with bookies.

It was a tight game that South Africa lost on the penultimate ball. At one point Cronje seemed to be pulling off a miraculous win. Being sympathetic to the visiting team’s final-over heart-break, I had started the report like this: “Cricket is a funny game, they say. Ask Hansie Cronje and he would beg to differ.” In hindsight, the joke was on me. Such episodes don’t turn you into a cynic but they do make you sceptical. They teach you to look beyond the obvious and avoid being a fan-boy.

When stories of rampant cricket corruption hit headlines, reporters often get asked a difficult question. Is everything fixed? Clueless about the answer, I stick to a rehearsed routine. I make a poker face, take a pause, and give out a profound answer: “Not all,” I say. Hope, not conviction, being the basis of the answer.

archaic traditions and military pageantry. Those are questions irrelevant to any military person. Music is rhythm, with beats, and that facilitates the precision that is at the core of military ethos.

As a recently transitioned veteran, may I appeal to the zealous guardians of our culture, order and now even military, to consider channelising their high-octane spirits into other crying sectors of national growth. May we allow the highly professional military of India to retain and build their faith in the nation they have sworn to defend. Please give them the faith that what they stand for is worth all their sweat and toil.

The writer retired as Commodore from the Indian Navy



JOHNSON ODAKKAL

IN THE Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav year, and with India@75, the renovated Rajpath in the national capital witnessed military and cultural pageantry of a high order.

The parade included a highly motivated and vivacious Naval marching contingent led by the best military band in the country. At the end, Lt Cdr Aanchal Sharma, the Contingent Commander, shared with pride that their “hard work and tough schedule” of two months had paid off.

Getting selected for the Republic Day Parade contingent is itself an honour. Captain

Hey, people, leave the band alone

N Shyam Sundar (retired) recalls the time he led the Naval contingent in 2003 after practising “for 45 days in the biting cold months of Delhi”. “The hand holding the sword gets numb within 15 minutes. But we march 11 km every day for that final moment of marching past the dais.”

The contingents are required to be at the practice area before 4 am. Drill instructors then shake into shape those freezing limbs and reluctant muscles, bearing heavy rifles and unwieldy musical instruments, into harmony, matched to a marching pace of precisely 115 steps per minute. The key to that mathematically precise and artistically perfect movement is the martial marching beat and melody of the accompanying band.

The Mumbai-based Naval Central Band

plays a repertoire of music forms, from marching tunes to Carnatic and Jazz, to popular folk and movie numbers. Often, they are the soothing interlude for the men and women from one intense practice march to the next.

Sadly, an out-of-context 21-second video clip of a transition schedule during practice, recorded by an enthusiastic and perhaps ignorant onlooker, became the news this time. To some, the crime was that the contingent was giving to a Bollywood number, even if old and evergreen. To others, it was more fodder for politics over what songs to be played at the Republic Day event. The content and pace of the transmission confused even some veterans, till a longer 145-second clip was released. In the “breaking news”

media environment, the damage was done, with no attempt to get the context.

Remorse or regret will not come from those who spread this. Instead, the drill coordinators will now add some more checklists, and tell troops that there can be no private or relaxed moments when out on the ground. Certainly, such moments are *not* what the highly motivated sailors, soldiers and air warriors of armed forces deserve, as per the critics. I wonder if these self-proclaimed guardians of Indian military ethos examine their own adherence to motivation, order and discipline. In the past, not so innocuous questions have been asked about the relevance of music and march in a modern military. In the current cyber and space age security complex, some wonder at the

11 SUNDAY STORY

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

JUST OVER two years ago, in December 2019, then Chief Justice of Pakistan Asif Saeed Khosa told a conference of women judges that they should not conduct themselves in court like their male counterparts. At the time, Pakistan had five women judges across its five High Courts. In widely reported remarks, he said women judges were expected to be “compassionate”, “kind, like mothers”. But, he said, “when they become judges, somehow because the whole atmosphere is male-dominated... a ‘she judge’ also likes to behave like a ‘he judge’...” Male judges cracked jokes with lawyers, Khosa added, but women judges “somehow have to change their personality. She has to become an iron lady so that nobody messes with her.”

In the audience that day was Justice Ayesha Malik of the Lahore High Court, one of the organisers of the conference. On January 24, the 55-year-old Malik, a graduate of Punjab Law College and Harvard Law School (1998), was sworn in as a justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court, becoming its first ever woman judge. Her appointment was particularly notable as, much like parts of India, Pakistan is steeped in patriarchy, with violence against women commonplace.

As per Pakistan’s Punjab Commission on the Status of Women data, there were 746 honour crimes, nearly 1,000 reported cases of rape, 730 cases of gangrape, 31 cases of sexual harassment, and 305 cases of physical harassment in the country in 2017. The 2019 Women, Peace and Security Index ranked Pakistan 164 out of 167 countries, above only Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen.

Through the decades, Pakistani women have fought back, using every crack in the system to raise their voice, even during the tough Zia military dictatorship when the Hudood laws made it virtually impossible for rape victims to get justice. Thanks largely to women’s activists, recent years have seen several big reforms. Two years ago, after a woman was raped by two men in front of her children outside Lahore, Pakistan’s parliament approved a new, tough anti-rape law.

But access to justice for women remains poor, especially in sexual assault crimes, for which victim shaming is the default response. None other than Prime Minister Imran Khan said recently that it was “common sense” that “a woman wearing few clothes... will have an impact on the man”.

The elevation of Justice Malik comes against this background.

“PM Imran Khan has greatly exacerbated the dismal situation of gender-based violence by his statements. Let us hope Justice Ayesha Malik’s judgments will help rectify the imbalance to some degree,” says Tahira Abdullah, a leading rights activist and a member of the Women’s Action Forum of Pakistan.

In her most famous judgment, Malik had in January 2021 ruled against the controversial ‘two-finger’ virginity test for rape victims. In the *Sadat Aziz vs The Federation* case, she ruled that ‘virginity’ could not be a determining factor in rape, and that there was no scientific or legal basis to the hymen test.

Quoting from the Supreme Court of India’s ruling in *Rajesh & another v State of Haryana*, as well as other judgments in the Gujarat and Allahabad High Courts, Malik said: “The virginity test by its very nature is invasive and an infringement on the privacy of a woman to her body... The conclusion drawn from these tests about a woman’s sexual history and character... leads to adverse effects on the social and cultural standing of a victim,” Malik ruled. “What it does is place the victim on trial in place of the accused... even the most promiscuous victim does not deserve to be raped.”

THE SUNDAY PROFILE

Woman at the door

As Pakistan’s first woman SC judge, Ayesha Malik is many things to many people — a milestone in its patriarchal society; a tough judge who gave a landmark rape ruling; even an example of gaps in judicial appointments. She herself sees her role as “a voice that nudges, to improve, to include”



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

In an undated interview published on the website of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Malik, at the time in the Lahore High Court, says: “The biggest way I’ve had an impact is that I’ve become a voice. I’m there to call out the discrimination, call out stereotyping, and bring out the gender perspective. I’m the voice that nudges, reminds, and suggests ways to improve ourselves and make our system more inclusive.”

The gender issue, she says, is all about community. “You must keep in mind that, as you open one door, there is a line behind you. Don’t just open the door for yourself, step in and close it. You must keep it open for others, and that’s the tricky part.”

A mother of three, Justice Malik has her own take on the struggles of being what Khosa called a “she-judge” among “he-

judges”, including finding the right work-life balance. In the UN interview, she recalls that in 2012 when she was appointed to the Lahore High Court, she was the only woman judge, and everything, from gender sensitive language to bathrooms, was a challenge. Including pointing out to fellow justices that their reference to each other as “brother judges” excluded her.

Malik doesn’t feel the need to heed to Khosa’s other advice, of amiability. Many in describe her as “short-tempered”, and “not popular”. However, she is clear that her work is not a popularity contest. In January 2019, Malik was nominated to head a four-member committee set up by the Lahore High Court to hear complaints of women judges in district courts in the Punjab province against hooliganism by lawyers. In 2020, she was reported to have ticked off a lawyer for not keeping his mask on in court.

In the UN interview, Malik says her way of

creating her “space” was to “say less, do more”. She has never missed a single parent-teacher meeting at her children’s school, but has not had to take time off work. Malik says she is clear to her male colleagues that her responsibilities at home are different from theirs, as well as what work she is willing to do, and what she cannot.

For instance, as a Lahore High Court judge she made it plain that she would not travel to other benches of the Punjab High Court, as she was “a hands-on mother”, and the “central figure” of her home, and did not want to be in an “all-male living environment” for any length of time. But, she says, “I do more and show them that I can do it.”

As celebrated as Malik’s elevation to the Supreme Court has been, it has also divided the legal community, as well as women’s ac-

tivists. She superseded four others — all men — in the Lahore bench, apart from others in the four High Courts, including a woman judge. This has become a sticking point, though there is no rule that the seniority principle be followed in appointments to the Supreme Court.

Malik’s candidacy for the Supreme Court was first taken up in September 2021 by the nine-member Judicial Commission of Pakistan, that appoints judges to higher courts. Lawyers, responding to calls from bar associations, alleged favouritism and a plot to create a rift among the judiciary. In the end, Malik’s appointment failed to go through.

It was taken up again on January 6, 2022. While this time too lawyers mobilised against the move, the Chief Justice refused to blink. Malik was selected, but with four of nine opposing the appointment.

Justice Faez Isa, a member of the commission, who has taken on the powerful military in his rulings and earned its wrath, has been among the most vocal against Malik’s appointment. He had sought a discussion first on the criteria for appointments to the Supreme Court before considering Malik’s name.

A cautious statement by the Women’s Action Forum of Pakistan welcoming Malik’s appointment also called for reforms and transparency in judicial appointments, “... with the equal inclusion and participation of women across the board”.

Tahira Abdullah says it is sad that a historic moment has a cloud over it. “It is a giant step towards that elusive goal of gender equality and gender justice. I just wish Justice Malik’s appointment had not become so mired in controversy, both politically as well as in terms of the raging debates on Constitutional/legal interpretation,” she says.

Nazish Brohi, a writer and researcher on violence and conflict, also makes the same point. Welcoming Malik’s appointment as “not just a token representation for women”, Brohi adds that it didn’t lessen the need for reform in judicial appointments, to make the process less arbitrary, more inclusive, an acknowledgment of merit. “For the women’s movement the question is why make Ayesha Malik the lynchpin of this debate. We should support the lawyers’ demand for reform without putting Justice Ayesha Malik at the centre of it,” Brohi says.

Some have wondered about Malik’s political leanings, given how she was appointed and Justice Isa’s opposition. However, her work has largely coalesced around gender.

Human rights activist and columnist Marvi Sirmed believes that the government picked Malik rather than the other option, of a judge from the Balochistan or Sindh High Courts. “All judges in these courts are considered either anti-establishment or too principled. They don’t suit this compromised Supreme Court,” Sirmed says. According to her, by appointing Malik, the Chief Justice “killed two birds with one stone” — prevented a “dangerous judge” from ascending in comparison to a “safe” judge like Malik, and earning for himself the label of a “progressive” by choosing a woman.



In the UN interview, Malik, who went to school in Paris, New York and London, says she had first wanted to be a criminal lawyer, perhaps inspired by the Perry Mason books she loved. Later, she wanted to put her law degree to use in policymaking. “I never thought about being a judge and adjudicating. However, when it came my way, I... saw it as another way to make a difference.”

She calls her father her biggest supporter and motivator. “He said ‘One day when you get the chance, make your presence felt.’ And that’s what I have lived by.”

TAKE 5 VACCINE STAND

AZAHTO KIBA, 41,
PASTOR OF NEW LIFE CHURCH,
KOHIMA



End discrimination against those who refuse: Rev Kiba

‘Not against vaccination, we just don’t want to be forced’

Last week, Kohima saw a ‘Freedom Rally’ against mandatory vaccination. Organised by civil society groups and churches, it ended with a memorandum to the Nagaland CM to let vaccination be a choice. Reverend Azahto Kiba, 41, pastor of New Life Church, Kohima, was an organiser:

TORA AGARWALA

1 Who all participated? We were like-minded people — representatives from different churches, civil society groups as well as the public — who are against the government’s drive to mandatorily vaccinate the public.

2 What is your demand? Despite the Supreme Court saying that vaccination is not mandatory, governments have made up rules to coerce people. We are not against people getting vaccinated, we just don’t want forced vaccination, since we believe the decision is a very personal choice. It should be voluntary and the government should end discrimination against those who refuse it.

3 How are the unvaccinated discriminated against? Unvaccinated students are not allowed to attend offline classes, malls prevent entry if you don’t flash your vaccine certificates. Same with banks, and many other public places. In every family, there are vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, but there is no discrimination among them. Then why is the government discriminating?

4 But isn’t vaccination needed against Covid? We are not stopping people from getting vaccinated, we are just asking the government to give us the freedom to decide.

5 Why did you call your rally ‘Freedom Rally’? The name was ‘Freedom Rally — Restitutio De Libertus’, or Restoration of Liberty. Our freedom has been snatched. We cannot attend school, college, malls, move from district to district, without vaccination.

india75
NUMBER PLATE
13 lakh

The number of donkeys counted in the first livestock census (1951) in independent India. The first such counting, twice a decade, took place in 1919. According to a new study, reduced utility, theft, illegal slaughter and decreasing grazing land are among the reasons for a 61 per cent decline in the population of donkeys between 2012 and 2019

3,20,000

Donkey population in 2012

1,20,000

Donkey population in 2019. That is a 61.23% drop from 2012 and a 90.96% fall from 1951

23,000

The number of donkeys in Rajasthan in 2019, the highest, followed by Maharashtra (18,000) and UP (16,000)

71.72%: Drop in donkey numbers in UP between 2012 and 2019, the highest.

SHIVNARAYAN RAJPUROHIT

Minimum City

SADAF MODAK

THIS IS Cruzmuthu Sathyaseelan’s story. A tailor in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, Sathyaseelan decided to find work in Mumbai. The 21-year-old Class 9 dropout had heard of the city where many went to build their lives. Moreover, he was in love with a girl from outside his community, a relationship his father, a mill worker, didn’t approve of.

That was in 1995. After almost three decades of struggles and some triumphs, Sathyaseelan, now 49, finds himself in a seemingly inescapable debt trap, his Mumbai dream now further away, with the pandemic and the multiple lockdowns proving to be the last straw.

Sathyaseelan’s story is illustrative of what a recent survey found: that the poorest section of Indian households took the hardest hit from the pandemic. According to the survey by the Mumbai-based think-tank People’s Research on India’s Consumer Economy, the annual income of the poorest 20%, that had been constantly rising since 1995 or liberalisation, plunged 53% in the pandemic year 2020-21 compared to 2015-16, even as the richest 20% saw their incomes grow 39% in the same period. The survey, covering 2,42,000 households, also revealed



that the pandemic hit the urban poor the most, eroding the household income of many like Sathyaseelan.

After he landed in Mumbai, Sathyaseelan found a tailoring job in Chembur. However, after a few months he began looking for a way out as he did not like the filthy living conditions of the workers. He heard about Navi Mumbai, a satellite city within the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, that was more spacious. Filled with new hope in a new city, he left for Navi Mumbai and soon found work in Vashi’s Sector 17, a commercial hub where several garment shops had mushroomed.

“My workplace was a sewing machine outside one such shop. I did alterations. I saved money and got my partner Jeya to Mumbai. We got married, rented a room and apart from my job, started a laundry service,” says Sathyaseelan. They would earn around



“I have no option but to start again. It is tiring,” says Sathyaseelan, 49. Express

Rs 10,000 a month, he says.

Better days followed. Sathyaseelan was soon “promoted” — first to salesperson and then store manager. “I bought a one-bedroom house taking a bank loan of around Rs 8 lakh and hired a space to for the laundry,” he says. Their two sons, Allen and Aryan, now 22 and 18, were born in 1999 and 2003.

After being away from home for over a decade, around 2009, Sathyaseelan thought of starting a business in Nagercoil.

He sold his house and returned with plans to open a garment store. “I went there with a lot of hope. I knew how a shop should be managed, how to handle staff. But the shop didn’t take off. A redevelopment project cut off access to my shop. I began running into losses. In 2011, I returned to Mumbai,” he says.

Till 2020, he picked up the pieces of his life. He took a room on rent for Rs 10,000 and took back the laundry he had handed over to



a friend. The couple also briefly sold vegetables. When the laundry started bringing in Rs 30,000 a month, they thought their woes were over. “But in 2019, the landlord increased the rent. I began borrowing money to meet expenses,” Sathyaseelan says.

Then came the pandemic, followed by the lockdown. “Since people weren’t going out, there were no clothes for ironing or washing. Our income fell to zero. We requested the landlord to delay the rent, but he refused. We hung on for a few months and then, when he gave us an ultimatum, we left,” Sathyaseelan says, adding that by the

end of 2020, he had no option but to leave his rented space and the shop.

“Until then, I had kept hoping I would put our lives back on track, but my debts kept mounting,” he says. He even sold the only property he owned back home in Nagercoil, a house he had bought for Rs 25 lakh.

Now Sathyaseelan lives in Kalyan, on Mumbai’s outskirts. Here, he has bought a small one-room house for Rs 12 lakh and a shop space for Rs 12 lakh, from where he runs a smaller laundry-cum-grocery shop. Jeya works as an assistant to a doctor, earning Rs 2,500 a month. The earnings at the laundry are less than Rs 200 a day, and Sathyaseelan’s debt now stands at Rs 7 lakh.

While the elder son now has a job at an insurance company, earning Rs 15,000 a month, Sathyaseelan says every rupee saved is put away towards repaying the debt. His younger son had to drop out from school due to learning disabilities.

“I have no option but to start again. It is tiring. What could we have done? Banks will not even give us loans. How are we to survive with zero earnings? I wish the government starts some scheme to at least give us loans for our losses,” Sathyaseelan says.

Last month, his son got a passport and is now looking for job opportunities. “My only hope is that he gets out of here,” he says.

12 THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan *Reuters*

TURKEY

Erdogan threatens media with reprisals

Ankara: President Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday threatened Turkish media with reprisals if they disseminated content that damaged the country's core values, in a move that might be a prelude to further censorship in the sector. In a notice published in the Official Gazette, he said measures were needed to protect Turkey's "national culture" and prevent its children's development "from being adversely affected as a result of exposure to harmful content on all written, verbal and visual media." Erdogan did not specify what such content was, but said legal action would be taken against "overt or covert activities through the media aimed at undermining our national and moral values and disrupting family and social structure." **REUTERS**

SWEDEN

Finnish envoys' mobiles hacked with spyware

Stockholm: The mobile devices of Finnish diplomats working abroad have been hacked with the use of sophisticated spyware, Finland's government said on Friday, and the Nordic country's spy chief said a "state actor" was likely to blame. The Finnish Foreign Ministry said the victims were targeted through Pegasus software developed by Israeli spyware company NSO Group. "The malware has infected users' Apple or Android phones without their noticing and without any action from the user's part," the foreign ministry said. **AP**

HONG KONG

Varsity covers up Tiananmen memorial slogan

Hong Kong: A leading Hong Kong university on Saturday covered a painted slogan commemorating China's Tiananmen Square crackdown, the latest instance of a public June 4 memorial being removed in China-ruled Hong Kong. Asked why the university covered the 20-character slogan, an HKU spokesperson said by email, "The University regularly conducts maintenance work at various locations and facilities, with the above site being one such project." **REUTERS**



A TEARY ADIEU TO THICH NHAT HANH

Pallbearers lift up the coffin of Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh during his funeral in Hue, Vietnam on Saturday. Thousands of monks and disciples trailed a procession of pallbearers carrying Nhat Hanh's coffin from Tu Hieu Pagoda, where he spent his last days, to the cremation site. Others knelt and clasped their hands in prayer on the roadside and bowed to the ground as the casket went past. AP

Rejected by New Zealand, pregnant reporter turns to Taliban for help

NICK PERRY

WELLINGTON, JANUARY 29

A PREGNANT New Zealand journalist says she turned to the Taliban for help and is now stranded in Afghanistan after her home country has prevented her from returning due to a bottleneck of people in its coronavirus quarantine system.

In a column published in *The New Zealand Herald* on Saturday, Charlotte Bellis said it was "brutally ironic" that she'd once questioned the Taliban about their treatment of women and she was now asking the same questions of her own government.

"When the Taliban offers you — a pregnant, unmarried

woman — safe haven, you know your situation is messed up," Bellis wrote in her column.

New Zealand's Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins told the Herald his office had asked officials to check whether they followed the proper procedures in Bellis's case, "which appeared at first sight to warrant further explanation."

Last year, she was working for Al Jazeera covering the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan when she gained international attention by questioning Taliban leaders about their treatment of women and girls.

In her column Saturday, Bellis said she returned to Qatar in September and discovered she was pregnant. She said she

resigned from Al Jazeera in November and the couple moved to Huylebroek's native Belgium. But she couldn't stay long, she said, because she wasn't a resident. She said the only other place the couple had visas to live was Afghanistan.

Bellis said she spoke with senior Taliban contacts who told her she would be fine if she returned to Afghanistan.

Chris Bunney, the joint head of New Zealand's Managed Isolation and Quarantine system, told the Herald that Bellis's emergency application didn't fit a requirement that she travel within 14 days. He said staff had reached out to Bellis about making another application that would fit within the requirements. **AP**

Italy President Mattarella set for second term after vote logjam

Rome: Italy's head of state Sergio Mattarella agreed on Saturday to serve a second term, senior politicians said, after parties failed to find a mutually acceptable alternative candidate in a week of often fraught voting in Parliament.

Mattarella, 80, had ruled out remaining in office, but with the country's political stability at risk, it was considered unlikely he would resist pressure to stay on.

Mattarella's "willingness to serve a second term... shows his sense of responsibility and his attachment to the country and its institutions", Regional Affairs Minister Mariastella Gelmini said in a statement.

The leader of the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) Enrico Letta, who had championed Mattarella's re-election, spoke to reporters to express his "enormous thanks to President Mattarella for his generous choice towards the country".

Parliamentary chiefs went to the president's palace in central Rome to ask him to remain in office, after lawmakers failed to elect a president on Saturday after seven rounds of voting.

There was no immediate comment from the president himself.

Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who failed to find backing for his own ambitions for the job, earlier called Mattarella and also urged him to stay on, a political source said. **REUTERS**

Omicron drives US deaths more than in fall's delta wave

AP & REUTERS

JANUARY 29

OMICRON, THE highly contagious coronavirus variant sweeping across the country, is driving the daily American death toll higher than during last fall's delta wave, with deaths likely to keep rising for days or even weeks.

The seven-day rolling average for daily new Covid deaths in the US has been climbing since mid-November, reaching 2,267 on Thursday and surpassing a September peak of 2,100 when delta was the dominant variant.

"Omicron will push us over a million deaths," said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California, Irvine. "That will cause a lot of soul searching. There will be a lot of discussion about what we could have done differently, how many of the deaths were preventable."

The average daily death toll is now at the same level as last February, when the country was slowly coming off its all-time high of 3,300 a day.

Omicron symptoms are often milder, and some infected people show none, researchers agree. But like the flu, it can be deadly, especially for people who are older, have other health problems or who are unvaccinated.

With over 878,000 deaths, the US has the largest Covid-19 toll of any nation. During the coming week, almost every US state will

A man received a Moderna booster shot in Bali, Indonesia on Saturday. *AP*

see a faster increase in deaths, although deaths have peaked in a few states, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Maryland, Alaska and Georgia, according to the Covid-19 Forecast Hub.

Meanwhile, the US government has procured more than 100 million additional Covid tests from testmaker iHealth Lab Inc. as part of the White House's plan to distribute 500 million free at-home tests across the country, the Department of Defence said on Friday. Starting in January, the US government has been allowing households to order four free at-home Covid-19 tests from the website COVIDTests.gov with shipping expected within seven to 12 days of ordering.

TENSIONS MOUNT OVER UKRAINE

Russian build-up includes blood for wounded, say US officials

REUTERS & AP

WASHINGTON/MOSCOW, JAN 29

A RUSSIAN troop build-up along its border with Ukraine includes supplies of blood for the wounded, three US officials told *Reuters*, a detail reinforcing US comments that Russia "clearly" now has the capability to move on its neighbour.

The disclosure by the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, adds to growing US concern that Russia could be preparing for a new invasion of Ukraine as it has amassed over 100,000 troops near its borders.

The Russian Defence Ministry did not immediately respond to a written request for comment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the West has not addressed Moscow's main security demands in the crisis over the former Soviet state — but he said that it was ready to keep talking, offering some hope that an attack is not imminent.

Putin offered his first reaction to the US and NATO responses to Russia's demands in a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron after weeks of personal public silence. The Kremlin quoted Putin as telling Macron he would study the responses provided by Washington and NATO this week before deciding on further action.

Current and former US officials said indicators like the blood supplies were critical in determining whether Moscow would be prepared to carry out an invasion, if Putin decided to do so.

A French presidency official said Putin, in his call with Macron, had underlined that he

Russian tanks during military drills in Rostov region *Reuters*

EXPLAINED How will US sanctions affect Russians?

FOR AN average Russian, the harshest US measures could mean higher prices for food and clothing, or, more dramatically, they could cause pensions and savings accounts to be severely devalued by a crash in the ruble or Russian markets.

did not want the situation to intensify, echoing conciliatory comments by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who said Moscow did not want war.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said the US remained focused on countering Russian disinformation, including anything that could be used as a pretext for attacks on Ukraine.

NEW ZEALAND PM SELF-ISOLATING

Wellington: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said late on Saturday she is self-isolating after coming into close contact with a person infected with the coronavirus. The exposure came on a flight from the town of Kerikeri to Auckland. New Zealand's Governor-General Cindy Kiro was also on the Jan 22 flight and has also gone into isolation. Both women had been in the Northland region to do some filming ahead of New Zealand's national day, on February 6. "The PM is asymptomatic and is feeling well," her office said. "In line with Ministry of Health advice she will be tested tomorrow and will isolate until Tuesday." **AP**

RUSSIA'S DAILY CASES EXCEED 1 LAKH

Moscow: Russia's daily coronavirus cases exceeded 100,000 on Saturday for the first time since the pandemic began, the coronavirus task force said. Russia confirmed 113,122 new daily infections, setting a record high for a ninth consecutive day, which the authorities blame on the spread of the Omicron variant. Russia's Covid task force said 668 deaths had been confirmed in the past 24 hours, after Russia's coronavirus death toll exceeded 700,000 on Friday. **REUTERS**

President Joe Biden visits the site where the Fern Hollow Bridge collapsed in Pittsburgh's East End. *AP*

Biden visits bridge collapse site, vows more investment

ANDREA SHALAL & DOINA CHIACU
PITTSBURGH, JANUARY 29

PRESIDENT JOE Biden stopped to look at a Pittsburgh bridge that collapsed just hours before he arrived for a scheduled visit to the city on Friday, dramatically underscoring the urgency of his drive to rebuild the United States' creaky infrastructure.

Visibly moved, Biden gazed across a ravine over the buckled sections of the half-century-old Fern Hollow Bridge, flanked by Pennsylvania and local officials and emergency workers as he surveyed the damage.

"The idea that we have been so far behind on infrastructure, for so many years — it's just

mind-boggling," the President told them.

One emergency worker described the scene after the collapse as loud as a jet engine. Biden praised the work of rescuers, noting a natural gas leak that was not stopped until some 30 minutes after first responders arrived at the scene.

Rescuers rappelled at least 150 feet (46 meters) into Fern Hollow, and used ropes to pull people to safety after the snow-covered span over the ravine collapsed around 6 a.m. (1100 GMT), Pittsburgh Fire Chief Darryl Jones said. "They helped the firefighters that were here initially on scene, also did like a daisy chain, with hands just grabbing people and pulling them up," Jones said. **REUTERS**

Cambodia to host ASEAN summit from Feb 16

REUTERS & AP

PHNOM PENH, JANUARY 29

FOREIGN MINISTERS of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will meet next month to discuss humanitarian aid for Myanmar, the current chair of the grouping, Cambodia, said on Saturday.

Cambodia's foreign minister, and ASEAN special envoy, Prak Sokhonn, is a preparing for his first visit to Myanmar, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"His priorities are to implement the five-point consensus which was agreed unanimously and will be discussed during the upcoming ASEAN foreign ministers' retreat," it said, adding that the event was scheduled for

February 16 and 17.

Meanwhile, China's UN ambassador on Friday said the UN Security Council's primary goal in strife-torn Myanmar should be to avoid more violence and a civil war.

Zhang Jun told several reporters after the council heard closed-door briefings from the new Myanmar envoys for the 10-member ASEAN and the UN that he hopes their efforts and others "can really continue to calm the situation."

Almost a year ago — on February 1, 2021 — Myanmar's military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Its takeover was quickly met by nonviolent nationwide demonstrations, which security forces quashed with deadly force, killing over 1,400 civilians.

MANY HAVE DISAPPEARED SINCE MYANMAR WAS PLUNGED INTO TURMOIL AFTER MILITARY COUP: ACTIVISTS

A year after coup, families of detainees search for answers

THU THU AUNG

JANUARY 29

NEARLY A year after his son was last seen being hauled away by Myanmar junta troops, 66-year-old Win Hlaing says he just wants to know whether he is alive.

One night last April, a neighbour phoned to tell him his son, Wai Soe Hlaing, a young father who ran a phone shop in Yangon, had been detained in connection with protests against the Feb. 1 military coup.

They traced the 31-year-old to a local police station, according to Win Hlaing and The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a non-

profit that has been documenting arrests and killings.

Then the trail went cold. He had vanished. *Reuters* called the police station but was unable to determine the whereabouts of Wai Soe Hlaing, or the missing relatives of two other people who were interviewed for this article.

A spokesman for the junta did not respond to emailed requests for comment and did not answer calls seeking comment.

Wai Soe Hlaing is among many people who activists and families say have disappeared since Myanmar was plunged into turmoil after the military overthrew the elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung Nay Myo, a protest organiser and satirical writer from Myanmar inside a temporary shelter at an undisclosed location in a country bordering Myanmar. *Reuters*

The AAPP estimates more than 8,000 people are detained

in prisons and interrogation centres, including Suu Kyi and most

of her cabinet, while about 1,500 have been killed. Reuters was unable to independently verify the figures from the AAPP.

They say hundreds have died after being detained. The junta has said the figures are exaggerated and that the AAPP spreads false information. The junta has not disclosed the number of people in detention.

The military does not notify relatives when a person is arrested and prison officials often do not do so when they arrive in jail, so families laboriously search for their relatives by calling and visiting police stations and prisons or relying on accounts from local media or human rights groups.

In many cases, AAPP co-founder Bo Kyi said, the organisation has been able to determine someone has been detained but not where.

In a border town, 43-year-old activist Aung Nay Myo, who fled there from the northwestern Sagaing region, said junta troops took his parents and siblings from their home in mid-December and he does not know where they were.

He believes they were detained because of his work as a satirical writer. Among them is his 74-year-old father, left disabled by a stroke. "There is nothing I can do but worry every moment," Aung Nay Myo said. **REUTERS**

13 ECONOMY

AT \$634.287 BILLION AS ON WEEK ENDED JANUARY 21

Forex reserves decline by \$678 mn amid drop in foreign currency assets

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE NATION'S forex reserves posted a decline of \$678 million during the week ended January 21 to reach \$634.287 billion, data release by the RBI showed.

In the preceding week ended January 14, the foreign exchange — or forex — reserves had risen by \$2.229 billion to \$634.965 billion. The forex kitty had hit a lifetime high of \$642.453 billion in the week ended September 3, 2021.

For the reporting week ended January 21, the slip in the reserves was on account of a drop in the foreign currency assets (FCA), a vital component of the overall reserves, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly data released on Friday.

FCA declined by \$1.155 billion to \$569.582 billion in the reporting week.

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

RISE OF \$2.229 BN IN PREVIOUS WEEK

■ In the previous week ended January 14, the foreign exchange — or forex — reserves had risen by \$2.229 billion to \$634.965 billion

Meanwhile, gold reserves saw an increase of \$567 million to \$40.337 billion during the week

ended January 21, as per the data. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) fell \$68 million to \$19.152 billion.

India's reserve position with the IMF also decreased by \$22 million to \$5.216 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

Falling forex reserves may cause issues for the government and the RBI in managing the nation's external and internal financial issues.

Higher reserves are a big cushion in the event of any crisis

on the economic front and enough to cover the import bill of the country for a year. Higher reserves also help the rupee strengthen against the dollar.

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

READY TO COMMENCE OPS WITH 15 CASES WORTH ₹50,335 CRORE

Bad bank structure: NARCL to take final resolution calls, pvt banks-owned IDRCL to assist

SUNNY VERMA

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

AKEY proposal announced in this fiscal's Budget — a bad bank to deal with stressed assets in the loss-laden banking system — has received all regulatory approvals.

The bad bank — National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) — is ready to commence operations with 15 cases worth Rs 50,335 crore to be transferred by March 31. Majority-owned by state-owned banks, the NARCL will be assisted by the India Debt Resolution Company Ltd (IDRCL), in turn majority-owned by private banks, in resolution process in the form of a Principal-Agent basis.

What is the structure of the bad bank?

NARCL will acquire and aggregate the identified NPA accounts from banks while IDRCL, under an exclusive arrangement, will handle the debt resolution process, State Bank of India (SBI) Chairman Dinesh Khara said on Friday at a press conference. Padmakumar Nair, a Chief General Manager from SBI's Stressed Assets vertical, will manage NARCL while Manish Makharia, Head of Alternate Investment Fund, SBI Funds Management Pvt Ltd will head IDRCL. Subrata Biswas, the nominee director on the Board of NARCL, will be the interim Chairman and Diwakar Gupta continues as the Chairman of IDRCL.

Khara said there were "certain concerns" raised but eventually both NARCL and IDRCL have requisite approval. Concerns mainly arose on the dual ownership structure and operational mechanism, with the setting up of two separate entities NARCL and IDRCL. "This is a structure which has been envisaged for the first time, and whatever time has been taken, it is essentially to iron out some of the issues which could have possibly come up in future. So, they have all been ironed out and they have been appropriately addressed. And so, that the functioning of both entities should be smooth, and they should be in a position to achieve the objective for which they're brought into existence," the SBI Chairman added.

How will the bad bank work and what does the Principal-agent mechanism entail?

NARCL and IDRCL will have an exclusive arrangement that will be as per the scope defined in the 'Debt Management Agreement' to be executed between these two entities. This arrangement will be

'HIGH LEVEL OF PROVISIONING BY PSBs'

FINANCE MINISTER

Nirmala Sitharaman, in her February 1, 2021 Budget speech, had proposed a new structure for resolution of stressed assets as "the high level of provisioning by PSBs of their stressed assets" called for measures to clean up the bank books



on a 'Principal-Agent' basis and final approvals and ownership for the resolution shall lie with NARCL as the Principal, Khara said.

While he argued that this is as per the structure "originally envisaged", the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) is learnt to have wanted a dual structure with the asset management company (AMC) as a privately held entity, to be out of the purview of the regulatory entities. That would have given it requisite flexibility to deal with the resolution process, as normally a single entity is accountable as owner and for recovery of the assets in the asset reconstruction business. But now, with the 'Principal and Agent mechanism' that has been put in place to address regulatory concerns, the final approvals will be still be done by NARCL as the Principal. So, even though IDRCL is majority-owned by private banks, the final authority will rest with NARCL, which is majority-owned by public sector banks. This has been done possibly to address regulatory concerns around the bad bank structure.

In her February 1, 2021 Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had proposed a new structure for resolution of stressed assets. "The high level of provisioning by public sector banks of their stressed assets calls for measures to clean up the bank books. An asset reconstruction company and asset management company would be set up to consolidate and take over the existing stressed debt and then manage and dispose of the assets to Alternate Investment Funds and other potential investors for eventual value realisation," she had said.

What kind of resolutions are expected?

The asset resolution will be done in a phased manner. While a total of 38 accounts aggregating Rs 82,845 crore have been identified for transfer to NARCL, it will be done in a phased manner.

In the first phase, at least 15 accounts worth Rs 50,335 crore will be transferred to the proposed bad bank by March 31.

Initially, an estimated Rs 2 lakh crore worth of bad assets were planned to be transferred to the 'bad bank'. However, some of these accounts have already been resolved and further resolutions will happen as and when referred to the bad bank. With a combination of post-Covid moratorium and recoveries, there was an actual decline in non-performing assets (NPAs) from Rs 8.40 lakh crore in 2020 to Rs 7.80 lakh crore in 2021.

In a press statement, SBI said IDRCL is expected to bring in superior resolution techniques, preserve the value, showcase brown-field assets and attract domestic as well as foreign investors, alternate investment funds, etc. This will free up capital for further bank lending, the state-run bank said.

What will the government guarantee?

The NARCL will purchase these bad loans through a 15:85 structure, where it will pay 15 per cent of the sale consideration in cash and issue security receipts (SRs) for the remaining 85 per cent. The SRs will be guaranteed by the government. The government guarantee will essentially cover the gap between the face value of the SRs and realised value of the assets when eventually sold to the prospective buyers.

The government approved a 5-year guarantee of up to Rs 30,600 crore for SRs to be issued by NARCL as non-cash consideration on the transfer of NPAs. This will address banks/RBI concerns about incremental provisioning, Government guarantee, valid for five years, helps in improving the value of security receipts, their liquidity and tradability.

A form of the contingent liability, the guarantee does not involve any immediate cash outflow for the Central government.

Australia seeks to join WTO talks on China-EU trade row

REUTERS
MELBOURNE, JANUARY 29

AUSTRALIA WILL seek to be included in consultations about a trade dispute between the European Union and China launched by the EU at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Australian trade minister said on Saturday.

Thursday's EU challenge accuses China of discriminatory trade practices against Lithuania, saying they threatened the integrity of the single market.

"Australia has a substantial interest in the issues raised in the dispute brought by the European Union against China ... and will request to join these consultations," Trade Minister Dan Tehan said in a statement.

China, which regards self-governed Taiwan as its own territory, has downgraded ties with Lithuania and pushed firms to sever links with the Baltic nation of 2.8 million people after it allowed Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in Vilnius.

Its strictures include a refusal to clear Lithuanian goods through Chinese customs, rejection of import applications from Lithuania and pressure on EU firms to remove Lithuanian content from supply chains when exporting to China.

POLICY WATCH BANKING

Post backlash, SBI pulls back circular on norms for hiring of pregnant women

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, JANUARY 29

FACED WITH widespread criticism from several quarters, including a notice from the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), the State Bank of India (SBI) on Saturday withdrew its controversial circular stipulating new conditions on recruitment of pregnant women.

"In view of the public sentiments, SBI has decided to keep the revised instructions regarding recruitment of pregnant women candidates in abeyance and continue with the existing instructions in the matter," the bank said. Earlier in the day, the DCW issued a notice to the lender seeking withdrawal of its new rules and details of the scheme.

An SBI circular dated December 31 said if pregnancy is of more than 3 months, the candidate will be considered temporarily unfit and she may be allowed to join within 4 months after delivery of child. In case of pregnancy which is less than three months, the candidate will be considered fit, the circular had said.

In its statement Saturday, the bank said, "it has recently reviewed the various Fitness Standards for Recruitment in the bank, including norms for pregnant women candidates."

According to SBI, the revised guidelines were intended to provide clarity on various health parameters where instructions were not clear or were very old. "In some sections of the media, the revision in norms in this regard has been interpreted as discriminatory against women."

In its notice to SBI, DCW said, "This is a serious matter. This action of the bank appears to be discriminatory and illegal as it's contrary to the maternity benefits provided under the 'The Code of Social Security 2020'. Further, it discriminates on the basis of sex which is

The circular was dated December 31

against the fundamental rights under the Constitution." "State Bank of India seems to have issued guidelines preventing women who are over 3 months pregnant from joining service & have termed them as 'temporarily unfit'. This is both discriminatory and illegal. We have issued a notice to them seeking withdrawal of this anti women rule," DCW Chairperson Swati Maliwal tweeted.

Several MPs too protested against the SBI's controversial letter. "Insulting pregnancy is a crime towards motherhood. It is a discrimination against women. SBI guidelines in this regard is anti-constitutional. Finance Minister should intervene and withdraw the discriminatory circular with immediate effect," CPI MP Binoy Viswam said.

Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi tweeted, "The guideline is extremely discriminatory in nature and debilitates the progress made to empower the women of the country."

DMK MP Kanimozhi said, "SBI's new set of rules that prevent women, pregnant over 3 months from joining the workforce is highly condemnable. Apart from being inconsiderate and discriminatory."

As per existing rules of SBI, pregnant women candidates are eligible to be appointed in the bank up to six months of pregnancy, provided they furnish a certificate from a specialist gynaecologist that their taking up the bank's employment at that stage is in no way likely to interfere with their pregnancy or the normal development of the foetus, or is not likely to cause her miscarriage or otherwise to adversely affect their health.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

'Remote working new normal; 82% employees prefer WFH'

With the pandemic bringing unprecedented changes, 82% employees admitted they prefer working from home (WFH) to going back to office, as per an SCIEKY survey



>80% of human resource (HR) managers admitted that hiring employees for full-time office presence is getting more difficult

>67% of companies admit that hiring talent with office-only working conditions has become increasingly difficult

Survey details: The Talent Tech Outlook 2022 study is an analysis of inputs from 100 plus C-suite and human capital leaders across four continents, done by SCIEKY through surveys, social media inputs, interviews and panel discussions

NTPC Q3 net up 25% at ₹4,132 cr

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

STATE-OWNED NTPC Ltd posted a 24.6 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) increase in its standalone net profit to Rs 4,131.9 crore in the three months ended December mainly on higher power sales.

The company's revenue rose 18.1 per cent to Rs 29,837.1 crore in Q3 as the power company sold 67.6 billion units of electricity in the period, 11.4 per cent higher than the year-ago period. Its board has approved an interim dividend of Rs 4 per share for FY22.



NTPC, Farakka File

Expenses, mostly comprising fuel cost, grew 12.5 per cent to Rs 24,428.1 crore. Overall coal consumption in the quarter increased by 16.4 per cent to 53.3 million tonne (MT), and the com-

pany's coal imports doubled to 0.5 MT in the same period.

Coal output from its newly-commissioned captive mines increased 55.6 per cent to 4 MT. NTPC coal-based power stations achieved utilisation levels (PLF) of 68.9 per cent in the first nine months of the fiscal, against the national average PLF of 57 per cent. The company sold power at an average tariff of Rs 3.91 per unit in the same period. The average plant availability factor (PAF) — which determines the fixed cost recovery levels — of NTPC coal stations fell 36.1 basis points y-o-y to 85.5 per cent in the quarter. **FE**

EPFO onboards Air India employees

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

THE LABOUR Ministry said on Saturday that the EPFO has on-boarded Air India Ltd for social security benefits like PF, pension and insurance and has received contributions for about 7,453 employees for the month of December from the airline.

The Tata Group took over the debt-ridden airline from the Government of India. Air India had applied for EPFO coverage,

which has been allowed, the retirement fund body said.

"EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) onboards Air India for social security coverage to service the social security needs of their employees. Air India Ltd applied for voluntarily covered u/s 1(4) of the EPF & MP Act, 1952 which has been allowed vide gazette notification on January 13, 2022 — with effect from December 1, 2021," the ministry stated.

The social security benefits will be provided to around 7,453 employees, it added. **WITHPTI**

BharatPe founder's wife too goes on leave as co undertakes audit

New Delhi: About a week after BharatPe founder Ashneer Grover went on leave, his wife Madhuri Jain Grover — who is also working with the company — has followed suit as the firm undertakes an independent audit of its internal processes and systems.

As per sources, Madhuri — who is the Head of Controls — has gone on leave, and with the company undertaking an independent audit, there could be governance-related issues at BharatPe that could now come to the fore. When contacted, BharatPe in a

statement said the board is committed to the highest standard of corporate governance at the company and "is doing an independent audit of the company's internal processes and systems".

The statement said, "BharatPe, through its legal firm, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas has appointed Alvarez and Marsal, a leading management consultant and risk advisory firm to advise the Board on its recommendations. The Board strongly believes in protecting interests of all stakeholders, including customers, em-

ployees and partners." BharatPe did not comment on Madhuri's exit. On January 19, BharatPe co-founder and Managing Director Ashneer Grover had said he was taking a voluntary leave till March.

Earlier this month, an audio clip surfaced on social media with claims of Grover abusing and threatening a Kotak Mahindra Bank employee for missing out on share allotment during the initial public offering (IPO) of FSN E-Commerce Ventures, which operates online fashion and wellness company Nykaa. **PTI**

BSTX To Be 17TH EXCHANGE APPROVED: US SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Nod to US bourse with blockchain feed, faster settlement

JOHN McCRAK
NEW YORK, JANUARY 29

THE US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) late on Thursday approved the country's 17th stock exchange, a subsidiary of Boston-based BOX Exchange, which will incorporate blockchain technology.

The new exchange, named BSTX, aims to launch in the second quarter, said Jay Fraser, a director. It will initially trade securities, such as stocks or exchange-traded funds, first listed on its exchange, but those securities would be tradable on rival bourses.

BSTX ultimately aims to ex-

pand trading to all US stocks and potentially tokenized securities, Fraser said. Stock tokens are digital versions of equities pegged to the underlying share, usually traded in fractional units.

Fraser said the aim is for BSTX to look "more like" crypto exchanges such as Coinbase as opposed to traditional exchanges like Nasdaq.

In addition to traditional pricing data feeds, BSTX plans to offer a market data feed that will operate on a private blockchain. That feed will allow exchange members to see their own activity, as well as the activity of other BSTX participants on an anonymized, delayed basis, the exchange filing said.



US SEC Chair Gary Gensler. The regulator said BSTX's revised rules was 'substantively similar' to those of other bourses. Reuters

The exchange plans to expand its use of blockchain, the technology that underpins cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin, over time to support products like tokenized securities, Fraser said.

BSTX was originally going to be called the Boston Security Token Exchange and planned to exclusively trade tokenized securities, but the SEC rejected that plan in December of 2020.

The exchange will also give members the option to settle trades as quickly as the same day, as opposed to the current two-day standard settlement time, which would free up cash counterparties have to pledge against trades while also reducing the risk of either party defaulting.

The securities industry as a whole is currently debating moving to single-day settlement.

In its Thursday notice, the SEC said that notwithstanding the blockchain feed and faster settlement times, BSTX's revised rules was "substantively similar" to the rules of other stock exchanges.

BSTX is a joint venture between BOX and tZero, which is providing the blockchain technology. BOX is an options exchange jointly owned by Toronto Stock Exchange operator TMX Group, Citadel Securities Principal Investments LLC, and brokers including arms of Citigroup and UBS. **REUTERS**

BRIEFLY

Strike deferred

New Delhi: A forum of trade unions deferred the February 23-24 nationwide strike.

Banks' Q3

New Delhi: IndusInd Bank's Q3 consolidated net profit rose 50% to ₹1,241.55 crore. Karnataka Bank's Q3 net rose 8.1% to ₹146.42 crore

Godfrey Phillips

New Delhi: Godfrey Phillips' Q3 net fell to ₹116.8 crore.

IREDA MoU

New Delhi: IREDA inked a MoU with Goa Shipyard to provide its expertise to set up a solar power project. **PTI**



POINT OF VIEW

The Hum of Hurry

Shelja Sen writes about how the conveyor belt of capitalist culture has indoctrinated us to believe that time is money

eye



SPOTLIGHT

What Boasting Can Do

Like a bar-room singer's voice, it empowers women to join the great human chorus, and to hear their voices — powerful, joyous and loud

WHERE LONELY MINDS WANDER

Malayalam director Rahul Sadasivan on his latest film *Bhoothakaalam*, why a psychological edge to horror works, and the difficulty in making such films

Vishnu Varma

FOR AN industry drawing praise around the world for its realistic storytelling techniques and content-driven scripts, horror, strangely, has not been a genre that the Malayalam cinema has particularly excelled in. The earliest horror film in the truest sense was cinematographer-director A Vincent's *Bhargavi Nilayam* (Bhargavi's Mansion) in 1964, a superhit at the time, based on a short story by acclaimed writer-freedom fighter Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, titled *Neela Velicham* (Blue Light, 1952). It told the story of a novelist (played by Madhu) who had moved into the home of a woman who was killed by drowning. Vincent threads romance and horror into the plot that was both scary and charming. In the following decade, AG Baby-directed *Lisa* (1978) (re-made in Hindi, *Woh Phir Aayegi*, in 1988) released to rave reviews, telling the story of an introverted, young woman whose life turns upside down when a dark spirit enters her body. But the film that truly championed the horror genre through a new style of storytelling and sensational sound-effects was Fazil's 1993-thriller *Manichitrathazhu* (re-made in Hindi, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* in 2007). Starring powerhouses like Shobana, Mohanlal, Suresh Gopi, Nedumudi Venu and Thilakan, the story was set in a haunted mansion where the spirit of a classical dancer comes alive. Nearly three decades later comes *Bhoothakaalam*, which tells an intriguing and baffling story, with terrifying results. It is written and directed by Palakkad-based Rahul Sadasivan, and has been streaming on the OTT platform SonyLIV since January 21. "*Bhoothakaalam*" means the "past", but also a "ghost" (*bhootham*) in Malayalam. At its core is a mother-son relationship which

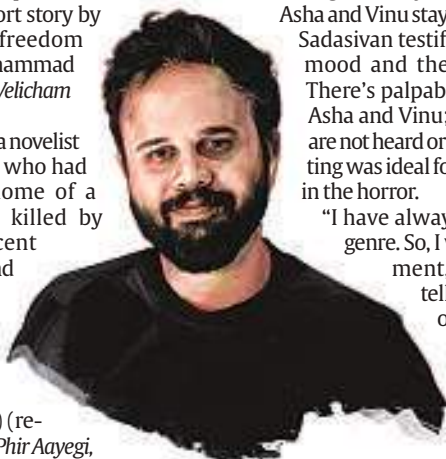


ILLUSTRATION: SUVAJIT DEY

gets frayed as the movie progresses. Revathy plays Asha, a widow and kindergarten school teacher who suffers from clinical depression, and Shane Nigam is Vinu, a pharmacy graduate, who's unable to find a job. The third member is Asha's mother, who passes away in her sleep within the first 10 minutes of the film. But not before she breaks the fourth wall, a blink-and-you-miss shot that prepares you for the eeriness that unfolds. It's a kind of chamber film, much of which is set within the three rooms and the kitchen of the single-storey rented house, where Asha and Vinu stay. The atmosphere, as Sadasivan testifies, is critical to the mood and the pace of the film. There's palpable tension between Asha and Vinu; they both feel they are not heard or understood. The setting was ideal for the director to rein in the horror.

"I have always loved the horror genre. So, I was ready to experiment, but how does one tell a ghost story without showing the ghost? Or even if I am showing a ghost, how does it connect with the characters or the context of the film? I wanted to be subtle, not loud, and I knew I could only achieve it through powerful performances in creating that atmosphere," says Sadasivan. *Bhoothakaalam* is Sadasivan's second film and it comes nearly nine years after his first outing *Red Rain* which was a sci-fi thriller that took a page out of actual events in 2001 when certain parts of Kerala received red-coloured rain, due to the presence of lichen-forming algae. It was after he returned from his filmmaking course at the London Film Academy in 2010. *Bhoothakaalam* stands on firmer ground, with terrific performances by Revathy and Nigam. Seasoned with family drama and psychological thrills, it is an out-and-out horror film, which leaves one with questions, but does not provide answers. Sadasivan didn't want the film to be just a commentary on mental health. Instead, through the psychological moods of the two principal characters, Asha and Vinu, we glimpse into the paranormal. So much so, one is left wondering, is it happening in their minds?



ROOM WITH A VIEW

(Left) Director Rahul Sadasivan; Revathy and Shane Nigam in *Bhoothakaalam*

Sound, or more importantly the lack of it, plays a major role in the film. At no point is it loud or in-your-face. It's so subtle that it makes one squirm. "When I was writing the script, I wanted the poetic aspect of the tension to come from the absence of something. That can only be achieved through silence," says Sadasivan, who also worked as a sketch artist-animator in different studios in Kerala. "My father was a huge film buff and he would take me to all kinds of films, such as the James Bond series and *Jurassic Park* (1993). I was fascinated by the images on screen. How can we create something like that? Such thoughts were always on my

mind as I grew up," he says. Bred on a wholesome diet of Western and European films, Sadasivan understands the formula of creating fear. "I thought the best way to present a horror film would be to have a psychological theme to it, which is the premise for *Manichitrathazhu* (The Ornate Lock). It's a very powerful formula and I think it worked for a film like *Bhoothakaalam*, too," says the 35-year-old. Among the other films that influenced him, such as *Paranormal Activity* (2007), *The Exorcist* (1973), and Japanese horror films, is the Malayalam cult film, *Thaniyavarthanam*, which explored society's response to mental health, in the late '80. "I believe films come from life experiences. If you are dealing with a person with clinical depression, how

do you talk to him or her and how do others react," he says. *Bhoothakaalam* has been winning rave reviews ever since it released. Among them is filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, who scared audiences with his films such as *Kaun?* (1999) and *Phoonk* (2008), and had first cast Revathy in a horror role, in the Hindi/Telugu bilingual *Raat/Raatni* (1992). He praised its director and producer for the "ambience", and the acting by Nigam and the "ultra-versatile" Revathy. Sadasivan took nearly a year to write the film. "From the beginning, Shane was part of the pre-production process. We sat and wrote a lot, in terms of dialogue delivery and bringing out emotions on screen. It was the same with Revathy; I could imagine them

playing these characters in my head," he says. For someone who wrote the script first in English and turned to scriptwriter Sreekumar Shreyas for the Malayalam screenplay, dialogues are only a cherry on the top. "I wanted to get the structure first with a proper beginning, a mid-point and a gripping climax. I kept the dialogue minimal." As a young filmmaker, it has been challenging though. "The Malayalam film industry is very competitive. Unless you have a fresh concept, it's hard to survive. If I am working on another film, I have to start from scratch to form an idea and wait for it to be released. But, I had complete support from the cast and crew of *Bhoothakaalam*, especially from my producer Anwar Rasheed, who believed in my idea and trusted me," he says.

TEMPLE GRANDIN (2010) Directed by Mick Jackson, the award-winning biopic is based on Temple Grandin, an autistic person who revolutionised practices of handling livestock on cattle ranches in America. Claire Danes (pictured) plays Grandin. *Temple Grandin* could be reminiscent of *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), based on mathematician John Nash, who was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia.

IRON MAN SERIES (2008-) This superhero is more than his suit. The endless tinkering around and the adrenaline addiction point out that Tony Stark/Iron Man is the poster boy of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

MARGARITA WITH A STRAW (2014) Kalki Koechlin stars as Laila Kapoor, a teenager, with cerebral palsy, who has her share of joys and heartaches as she learns about her sexual identity. **EXPRESS FEATURES SERVICE**

Diverse and Unapologetic

Representations of neurodiversity on screen often borders on the sentimental and the pedantic. We could do with a lot more authenticity instead

Shubhra Gupta

DOES IT get any easier?

No, not really. It's a hell of a burden. But it's also a gift.

This exchange, in a new eight-part web-series *As We See It*, is between the father of a young adult with autism, and a long-time witness to the challenges both face. Twenty-something Jack says it like he sees it. He has no filters. He doesn't really know the niceties of behaviour, of how to say one thing and mean another.

In a world which is quick to judge and move on, Jack, played by Rick Glassman, is dismissed as "weird", even "eccentric". But he isn't any of those things; he just comes off different, and that's down to his neurological make up. Jack lives in Los Angeles, with two flatmates. Like him, they are also beset by sensory overload. Harrison (Albert Rutecki)

doesn't step out of the house and binge-eats his way out of anxiety: the world is too much for him. And Violet (Sue Ann Pien), who has a tenuous job at a fast-food delivery place, longs for a "hot" date, sexual awakening, and a "normal" life.

What *As We See It*, created by TV veteran Jason Katims, does is deeply liberating. It is a coming-of-age story with a difference, which shows its principal characters learning how to live by themselves, with the help of Mandy, their life coach (Sosie Bacon). Though this trio is on the able end of the autistic spectrum, and their fully-committed-to-their-cause aide feels too good to be true, the very sight of them trying to work around the curveballs thrown at them, is heartwarming. And what makes the show so special is that the three actors are all on the spectrum, not neurotypical people playing people with special needs.

The choice of the cast makes me want to cheer. Mental-health problems are so liable to

be turned into "issues", and "issue-based" films can so easily turn pedantic, that they can either manipulate us into feeling sorry for those with a neurological condition or a disorder, or nudge us into labeling those who "look after" such individuals as noble and good. People with mental-health challenges are people too, with their interests, foibles, quirks, and it is time that films or TV series get out of that old, easy trap of using them as lame pegs to hang soapy operas, where they are either child-like and innocent, or totally beyond the pale. Earnest attempts to convey a "positive message" about mental health, or a six-hanky weepie? Done and dusted.

Just like other "minorities", the track record of popular culture focussing upon people with special needs has been dismal. The fight for representation is real. But once neurodivergent characters are brought into the script, they are in danger of becoming a prop, placed there so that neurotypicals can feel good about



BEAUTIFUL MINDS

All three actors in *As We See It* are on the autistic spectrum in real life, too

themselves, or that they can lead famous actors to display their chops towards awards glory. A "beautiful mind" can also be a dark, messy place. For filmmakers who do not know nuance, just the thought of depicting a rounded person, with, say chronic depression, can be an impossibility. A terrific exception is

the latest Malayalam language film, *Bhoothakaalam*, starring Revathy and Shane Nigam, in which director Rahul Sadasivan uses the condition as both a compassionate layer and lens, without infantilising either the character, or us the viewers. Hindi cinema's propensity of portraying

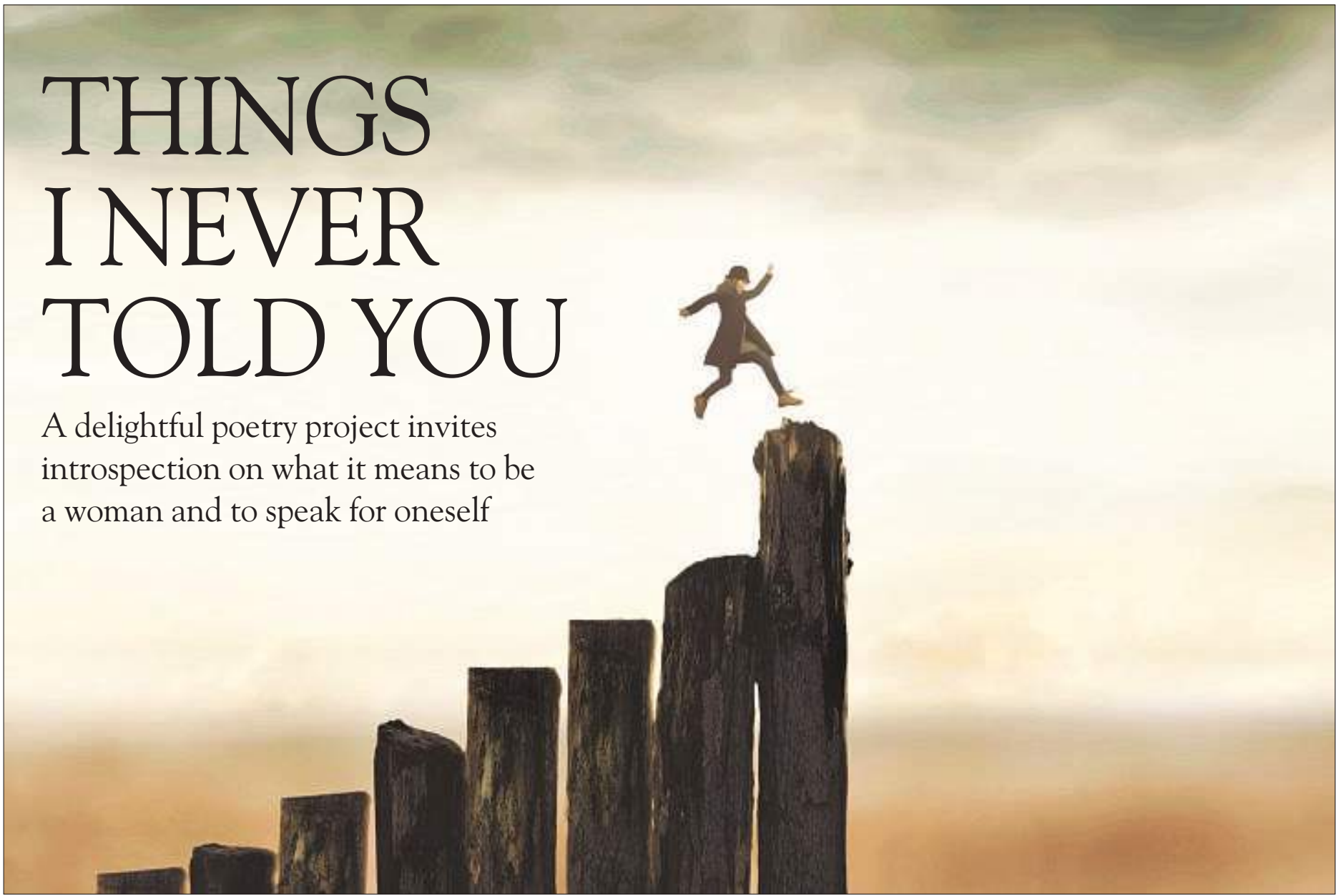
people with neurological challenges with callous disregard, or making them the butt of off-putting jokes, has been so strong that even now, more real, accurate attempts at creating such characters have been rare. It's wonderful to see an Ahaan, a Down Syndrome person played by a person (Abuli Mamaji) with Down Syndrome in a film of the same name directed by Nikhil Pherwani, stepping into the future with confidence. Ahaan wants a job, a car, a family, a "life of his own". And that's lovely.

But there are also films that make you cringe. Take, for example, the lead character from *Atrangi Re*, directed by Anand L Rai: Rinku, played by Sara Ali Khan, has schizophrenia, and it is appalling to see how many thoughtless liberties have been taken in terms of the description and "treatment" of someone struggling with demons of the mind. Yes, the attempt to take Rinku away from the "bichari/ bichara" (poor thing) syndrome is commendable. It's great to see her laughing, dancing, romancing, but how do you affix a diagnosis to a whole live girl without upending her entire being? This needed much more sensitive, knowledgeable handling.

Sentiment is fine. Saccharine is not. Empathy is great. Begging for sympathy is not. It's not just about representation any more. It's also about authenticity. Ups and downs and all around. Burden or gift? The juggle never ends. And that's life.

THINGS I NEVER TOLD YOU

A delightful poetry project invites introspection on what it means to be a woman and to speak for oneself



GETTY IMAGES

Arundhathi Subramaniam

MOST OF us are aware of the difference between self-esteem and vanity. But recent times have seen the boundaries grow somewhat blurry. And not without reason. In a delightful initiative entitled *Project Boast*, two UK-based women poets, Rachel Bentham and Alyson Hallett, approached 28 women poets around the world and asked them to write “boastful” poems. The project was inspired by Sarah Guppy, an ingenious Bristol-based Victorian engineer and inventor who created designs for a suspension bridge in her city without arches or sterlings. She also designed exercise beds for women, a samovar that brewed tea and cooked eggs, and figured how to prevent barnacles from sticking to ship hulls. If Mr Guppy had done it, he’d have been a common noun in Bristol by now. But unsurprisingly, there are no plaques or statues in Sarah’s honour. She herself said it was “unpleasant” when women spoke of their achievements. It is impossible to hear of Guppy and not think of the innumerable Sarahs one has known, and those one will never know — all those who will remain unanointed, not just because they are dead, non-White and female, but because they felt it was indecorous and unwomanly to speak. It started me thinking of the invisibility and trivialisation to which such silence has

lent validation. Somehow pride, that cardinal sin, continues to work differently with men. In men, taking up space — verbal mansplaining, as it were — still passes unnoticed. In women, it remains a double bind: if you brag, you’re unfeminine and tasteless; if you don’t, you’re invisible. For Bristol-based Bentham and Hallett, the best tribute to Guppy was to create an anthology that invited women poets to ‘boast’ in their own ways. “Are women still finding that it’s unpleasant to speak of themselves?” they asked. “Are we still self-censoring for fear of being judged as boastful? How much has really changed in a hundred years?” Being asked to contribute to their anthology compelled me to take a long hard look at the taboos that run deep in my own bloodstream. I decided the problem wasn’t just *adakkam*, the emphasis on restraint that was part of my cultural baggage. It wasn’t just the English language — although I still wonder if Anglophone Indians of a certain vintage are more infected by British understatement than the coloniser’s confidence. The problem is, above all, a cultural climate that still encourages women to “please like a woman and impress like a man”. In her book, *Women and Power* (2017), Mary Beard writes of the many overt and insidious curbs on female speech, drawing attention to figures from Medusa and Philomela to the many women trolled and sexually harassed even today on social media. In an essay on the field of public address, analysing speeches delivered by Hillary

...
The problem with conventional ‘boasting’ is scarcity: we hear the braggart’s hollowness rather than achievement. A silence can be more powerful... But when born of chronic self-doubt and social devaluation, silence is not humility; it is self-denial
...

Clinton and Barack Obama in their 2008 contest for the Democratic nomination, writer Joshua Gunn speaks of the pressure of gendered norms: the impulse to “perform” femininity, given that tone and sound are rated as far more important than content in female speech. “We don’t simply *think* in discriminatory ways,” says Gunn. “We *hear* in sex.” The problem with conventional “boasting” is scarcity: we hear the braggart’s hollowness rather than achievement. A silence can be more powerful than such verbal desperation. But when born of chronic self-doubt and social devaluation, silence is not humility; it is self-denial. “What cannot be spoken will be wept,” the poet Sappho said some 2,700 years ago, pointing to a vital human need: to speak one’s truth. This arises from the essential longing for authenticity, for self-determination — not merely to impress others, but to express ourselves. It is a bid to sing our own song, rather than surren-

der to borrowed wisdom, eternal laryngitis, the desiccation of the spirit. I have long been fascinated by the “goddess” poems of Annamacharya, the 15th century Telugu Bhakti poet. The *bhakta* here is not a groveling supplicant but a spunky goddess. “He’s my slave,” she proclaims of her god, reminding us that the finest sacred poetry is often stoutly egalitarian. Spirituality here is not deference, but joyful self-reclamation. In an extraordinary poem on ageing, Amrapali, the legendary courtesan-turned-nun of the Buddhist tradition, surveys the ravages of her body and acknowledges the truth of her master’s gospel of impermanence: “*Black was my hair/ — the colour of bees — / and curled at the tips;/ with age, it looked like coarse hemp... Smooth in their lines, like an elephant’s trunk/ both my thighs were once splendid/ With age, they’re like knotted bamboo...*” The poem is both a cautionary tale about youthful feminine vanity and a supremely elegant “boast” by a woman who has enjoyed every moment of her lifetime of adulation! Perhaps, a joyful renunciation is only possible if one has consciously enjoyed one’s share of sensuous abundance? I decided to explore these questions at a poetry workshop a couple of years ago. Were there ways to feel good about oneself without the indignity of self-congratulation? Is there a difference between self-assertion and self-advertisement? Between self-confidence and self-promotion? Between self-esteem and narcissism? The first writing exercise I proposed to the participants was to brag unabashedly —

but on behalf of another woman. A slew of responses flowed forth. Particularly heart-warming were verses about little-acknowledged women friends and mentors. The second exercise was an invitation to boast on behalf of any group or collective — but only one that might elect them as their spokesperson. The responses were startling. The participants wrote anthems on behalf of middle children, those with soft voices and those who sing to plants! Mine was on behalf of “catabolic women”: those no longer oppressed by the need to impress, to conform, or even to belong. “Boasting” suddenly turned into a joyful paean to fellowship, to membership in shadowy, nameless constituencies. The conventional boast excludes; we included, and grew bigger and happier with that inclusion. It reminded me of the account of a Zen woman practitioner who said that when she delivered a talk on female adepts in Buddhism, a young woman in the audience began weeping uncontrollably. Just hearing of other women on the path had touched a chord. Clearly, there are areas of such long exclusion that the simple act of articulation can release an almost-ancestral pain. Something similar happened at this workshop. The licence to sing the praises of ordinary, little-known women shifted the energies in that room. Eyes were brighter, voices more animated. There was a distinct aliveness in the air. What Alyson and Rachel do, I realise, is to subvert the very idea of the “boast”. The poets in their book aren’t saying “Look, I can do it better than you”. They’re simply saying “Hey, here’s what I do, and it makes me feel great”. One woman boasts of having loved the same man since the age of 18. Another speaks of a victorious confrontation with a rude shop-owner. A third boasts of the simple choice of living in the heart. Collectively, they point to a path between cowering and chest-thumping, whining and crowing. The opposite of gagging doesn’t have to be bragging, they tell us; it can be inhabiting oneself happily and unapologetically. This can be healthy and life-changing, the editors declare, and what’s more, may even produce “statues and plaques of all the forgotten women” in every city. Utopian? Perhaps. But what the exercise points to is the need to recognise a human desire deeper than supremacy: the longing for *dignity*. Dignity entails cultivating a gaze without hierarchy, a refusal to perpetuate either oppression or victimisation. It is dignity we hear in the Annamacharya goddess verses 600 years ago, exultantly echoed in 20th century African American poet Maya Angelou’s much-loved poem, *Phenomenal Woman*. Dignity empowers everyone to join the great human chorus, and to hear their voices fill the world — powerful, joyous, big and husky. Like “a bar-room singer”, as the Scottish poet Don Paterson writes. The aesthetics of boasting still makes me uneasy. I continue to be drawn to those who use words sparingly — those whose presence speaks louder than their voices. But if speaking is a gendered issue, I know silence is too. The powerless silence is the muteness of the disenfranchised. The powerful silence is a chosen one. It is born of a reclaimed dignity and a profound anchorage in the self — an anchorage so secure that it can include others in its embrace as well. As Paterson writes, “*Beneath the blue oblivious sky, the water/ sings of nothing, not your name, not mine.*” Perhaps, the real journey of self-retrieval, then, is always in the direction of the ultimate “boast” — the world’s ongoing song in praise of the nameless.

Arundhathi Subramaniam is an award-winning poet and writer

Statement Art

Delhi-based artist couple Manu and Madhvi Parekh’s artwork found a new life at Dior’s spring-summer 2022 show in Paris

Vandana Kalra

IN 1971, when artist Madhvi Parekh painted an image of Kali armed with weapons against an intricate backdrop of folk iconography, the thought of it travelling to a fashion ramp in the world’s sartorial capital Paris was inconceivable. Yet, five decades later, the work, *World of Kali*, turned out to be a conversation starter at the French capital at the spring-summer 2022 haute couture presentation of global luxury brand Christian Dior last week. Showcased alongside her husband, artist Manu Parekh’s work, an embroidered version of *World of Kali* was part of the fashion giant’s set at Musée Rodin in Paris. Carefully embroidered tapestries based on the modernist artists’ works garnered as much attention as the monotone outfits showcased by Italian fashion designer Maria Grazia Chiuri, creative director at Dior. “The response has been overwhelming,” says Manu, 82. Unable to attend the show in-person due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the artists viewed it live from their Delhi home. “It was fabulously designed and put together. The project intertwines art, craft and design and is a celebration of our heritage, which we ought to celebrate more often,” he says. The process began last year, when Karishma Swali, creative director of



Mumbai-based embroidery house Chanakya and co-founder of Chanakya School of Craft, came to the couple with the proposal of embroidering their artwork on tapestries. “I began collecting works by the Parekhs many years ago and found an incredible synergy between modernism and traditional Indian motifs... The collective vision for this collaboration was to create an immersive experience that celebrates the culture of craftsmanship and the interconnection between us all,” says Swali, who took the initiative to reach out to the fashion brand and get them on board. During a subsequent trip to Europe, she and Chiuri shortlisted 12 works by Madhvi and 10 by Manu to translate onto tapestries, which comprise the monumental display — it included Madhvi’s paintings seeped in folk and rural traditions and Manu’s spiritual abstracts and a rendition from his famous *Banaras* series. “We were looking at works that we felt complemented the male and female energies coming together in perfect harmony,” says Swali. The transition to cloth took place at the Chanakya atelier in Mumbai, under the close watch of Swali and remotely by the artist couple. While the natural tonalities of paint and thread would differ, each detail was carefully studied and it took over 320 artisans more than six months to embroider 340 sq m (3,600 sq. ft) of work by hand. Most tapestries have six-seven layers to create depth



IN VOGUE
(Clockwise from left) The Parekhs; the multi-disciplinary hand-embroidered artwork Manu Parekh and Karishma Swali for Chanakya, *Evening at Banaras*; Karishma Swali, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pietro Beccari, (CEO, Dior) in front of the *World of Kali* installation; Madhvi Parekh and Karishma Swali for Chanakya, *Power of Shakti*



and several traditional techniques have also been used, from variations of knots and zardozi to sfumato, couching, stem stitch and feather stitch. “We followed a very instinctive process, allowing the form and lines of the artists’ paintings to lead the way. The aim was to retain the purity and power of the



works and vividness of lines, and, therefore, we used organic cotton, ecologically dyed material, fine silk and cotton and linen threads,” says Swali. Manu’s experience of working as a designer at the Handloom Board for over two decades, in the 1960s and ’70s, also enabled

seamless ideation of the visual narrative. “During that period, I travelled across India, deep into the villages of Odisha, Bihar and Rajasthan, to create new textile patterns with the rural craftspeople. My aim was to promote indigenous materials and design. The aim here is also to recognise and appreciate our craft,” says Manu. Even as Swali introduces the audience in Paris to the philosophy, symbolism and techniques of the works on display at Musée Rodin till January 30, back in Mumbai, at the atelier, artisans are embroidering more tapestries based on the artists’ works, scheduled to travel across the world later this year. For her part, Madhvi is happy to have put a bit of India in the West. “Durga and Kali represent the strength of women and my work has been an embodiment of that feminine energy. It represents our religion and culture. Though we wish we could have attended the fashion show in Paris, we enjoyed attending it online too,” says Madhvi, 80.

Nassiri's son Kiyan stars for Mohun Bagan

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, JANUARY 29

AN EAST BENGAL legend's son broke the red-and-gold hearts, playing for Mohun Bagan.

Kiyan Nassiri, son of former East Bengal striker Jamshid Nassiri, announced his arrival in Indian football, scoring a hat-trick for ATK Mohun Bagan at the return-leg Indian Super League derby against SC East Bengal in Goa on Saturday. The green-and-maroon came back from a goal down to win the match 3-1.

Back in the 1980s, Jamshid was a star forward for East Bengal, forming a deadly partnership with Majid Bishkar. They came from Iran and especially Majid lit up the Kolkata maiden with his football sorcery. Jamshid was a typical marksman, always ready to pounce on goal-scoring opportunities. While Majid returned to Iran after a short but dazzling career that eventually fell by the wayside, his friend adopted this country and Kiyan was born here as an Indian citizen 21 years ago.

Jamshid never played for Bagan. Back then, the Kolkata giants had a policy of not recruiting any foreigner. Kiyan, though, is a Bagan player through and through, a product of the club's youth system. He appeared for the senior team trial during the 2019-20 season, impressed then Bagan coach Kibbu Vicuna and made his debut in the I-League. Following the club's merger with ATK, Kiyan moved into the ISL.

And what a night he had, as a super-sub. Coach Juan Ferrando rolled the dice on 61 minutes, with his team trailing by a goal. ATK Mohun Bagan's talisman Roy Krishna was only fit enough to be on the bench. But Ferrando resisted the temptation to bring him on, introducing Kiyan instead as Deepak Tangri's replacement. The equaliser came on 64 minutes, Kiyan slotting home with his first touch of the game. Liston Colaco's cross from the left was blocked by Sourav Das but the ball ricocheted to Kiyan, who pounced on it, like his father, intelligently targeting the far post.

His second goal came in the added-on time. An attempted cross from Colaco dipped and hit the woodwork and went to Kiyan, in the right place at the right time. It was heart-break for SC East Bengal, who were pretty resolute until their defenders ran out of steam. They also deserved their lead on 56 minutes, through Darren Sidoel.

But it was a night when the ISL witnessed the emergence of a star, Kiyan completing his hat-trick deep into the added-on time, once again a poacher's strike, from a Manvir Singh assist. The youngster also saved senior striker David Williams' blushes, who missed a penalty on 67 minutes.



SANDIP G
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 25

AROUND 9.30 pm on January 26, a message from a friend popped out on Avesh Khan's phone. He read it carefully and felt a sudden shiver of joy. He calmed himself and walked up to his parents, who were watching the television and broke the news that he had been picked in the Indian team for the series against the West Indies next month.

There was no burst of emotions. "I was almost sure about T20s, but I was genuinely surprised about the ODIs," he tells *The Indian Express*.

But when he saw the joy on the face of his parents, he tore up. Through the tears of joy they shed, he fleetingly glimpsed his journey from a raw teenager from a cricketing outpost whose only ambition was to bowl as fast as he could to bowling alongside two of the elite fast bowlers in the world in the IPL and now on the brink of playing for his country.

He reminisced the sacrifices his father made—some time ago, the local authorities ran down his father's roadside paan shop and rendered him jobless—and the pillar of strength his mother had been through his coming-of-age years.

The blessing of his uncles and aunts; the prayers of his grandmother; the support of his friends and the mentoring of his coaches, especially Amay Khurasiya, who spotted him, and fine-tuned him in his academy. "I put in a lot of hard work. Yes, I was fortunate to have good coaches. But I couldn't have been what I am without the support of my family. This (playing professional cricket) is the least I could have done to repay them," he says, his voice momentarily choking before regaining its measuredness.

The incessant ring of phones snapped the emotional reverie. Then he lost his sense of time. "Everyone's phone kept ringing non-stop for several hours. The neighbours joined, it was too late for a party, but we did manage some sweets and distributed it to them," he says. By the time the celebrations drizzled out, it was already 2 in the morning. "I don't recollect anything. I was so drained that I fell asleep the moment I hit the bed," he says. He had previously thought that he wouldn't get sleep the night he got picked for his country. But here he slept like a log.

By the time he woke up the next morning, at 7.30 am, he felt as if the celebrations had never stopped. The family was making a big feast and there was revelry all around, as if it were a festival. "Chicken, mutton, *sab tha*.

SPORTLINE: The latest entrant to India's fast bowling brigade is a 25-year-old who likes to bowl fast and gets a kick out of it. His journey to the top, though, was anything but quick or easy.

Khan, the 90-miler from Indore



I am a big mutton fan and my mother had cooked my favourite mutton curry," he says. At night, he took them for dinner. It's after the heavy dinner, as he stumbled onto the bed that the moment really sunk in. Then, he took out that message and read it again, just to confirm that it was indeed real.



Nothing daunts Avesh. "I like to take everything as a challenge and face life as it is," he says. He has walked through fire in his life and endured enough hardships to realise that he needs to be brave every time he steps on the field. Yet, he was nervous at the start of the last IPL season. "I had hardly played in the last few years, maybe one or two games a season. I had my share of injuries in the past, and so I was a bit nervous before the first game," he admits.

All he needed was a spur-on. Coach Ricky Ponting provided that. "Both (Kagiso) Rabada and (Anrich) Nortje were injured and I knew I would get a game. I knew I would play, but was a bit tense. Then Ponting pumped me up by telling me, your time has come young man and just show the world how good you are. You have the talent, we know. Now show it to the world too." Those words really kicked me on. I suddenly felt I am strong and confi-

dent," he remembers the season-defining conversation with Ponting.

Fast bowling, to him, is fundamentally about feeling strong and confident. The higher his pace, the stronger he feels. He feels all-powerful. "Bowling fast is a lot of fun. It's difficult to explain," he says. It's not an acquired joy. "It came naturally to me, not by watching cricket on the television. It came the moment I picked up a ball," he says.

The pace-fixation was there to be seen, and often felt, in this IPL. He consistently clocked 145kph, the fastest was measured at 149, matching his colleagues Rabada and Nortje for pace. "There is a healthy competition among us. We are good friends and congratulate each other's success, but in the middle, we are trying to be the best. They treat me as an equal," he says.

Avesh keeps close to his heart a piece of advice from Rabada. "*Kaafi simple advice hai, lekin meri bowling me bohut farak pada tha* (It was pretty simple advice, but it improved my bowling a lot). So he used to tell me to bowl the ball I feel like bowling in a particular situation and not to think too much about whether I should bowl that or whether I should do this. Bowl the ball that I am most confident of. The ball you are most confident of bowling is often your best ball," he says.

Besides, he learns a lot just by observing



Fast bowler Avesh Khan is a former Under-19 star and has often clocked 145 kmph-plus while playing for Delhi Capitals. (above) Khan with his family.

them, like how they plot a dismissal, their field settings and their lengths. He makes mental notes.

Midway through the season, he had already evolved into an undroppable figure in the team. What's more, he had usurped Rabada as the chief death bowler too. It brings him *maza* too. "*Ek alag feeling hai, death mein bowling karna* (It's a different feeling, bowling in the death overs). I relish that pressure. Sometimes I get hit, but that only drives me more," he says.

But he's flexible to bowl any time in a match. He can seam the ball into the right-hander with the new ball; he could pound the hard length to keep the batsman tied in the middle-overs, and at the death, he could let his yorkers rip. He has developed off-cutters, leg-cutters and slower balls to deceive the batsmen. He could strike different lengths without any discernible change in action too. He could adjust to the needs of all three formats—in first-class cricket, he averages a shade over 23, bowling mostly on one of the flattest tracks in the country at the Holkar Stadium in Indore. Pace is his guiding force, but not everything, he understands.

He is not unhealthily obsessed about his game, but is in constant pursuit of perfection. "My priority is now to get as fit as possible. I am doing a lot of running and gymming so that I can reach my optimal level of fitness and keep injuries away," he says.

The year 2021 has been transformational. In the past four editions combined, he had managed just five wickets in nine games. Last season, he snared 24 in 16 games, mostly on sluggish surfaces. The seasons before were frustrating; last season was fruitful. He was one among a raft of young seamers in the

country; now he's among the select few. Among his wickets were MS Dhoni (twice) and Virat Kohli. He tormented Rohit Sharma, as fine a player of pull as you would find, with short balls. Kohli had words of praise for him after the match, Rohit gifted him a jersey and Ponting called him a "real find."

IPL conquered, now Team India beckons. Avesh is far from sweaty. "A challenge as well as a chance," he reminds, his voice bursting with robust confidence. Nothing daunts him.



The world around him has changed. But Avesh has resisted changing. He still lives in the same old house as he had since he was born. He has not slipped into a life of indulgence; his mother insists on spending "money properly".

And wherever he goes, or in whichever hotel he stays, nothing beats the feeling of being with his parents. "It's my world and whenever I am at home, I spend all the time with them, talking, chatting and being naughty at times. I don't get this warmth anywhere," he says. Occasionally, he meets some of his friends, but he is far from an outdoor person. He is so nostalgic that he drops in impromptu for a tennis-ball cricket game. Even as recent as two weeks ago, he turned up for a match under floodlights in a housing colony park in Indore. A decent crowd had turned up for the game. "Whenever I get time or feel like it, I go and play tennis-ball cricket. It's what made me and I don't find any difficulty in switching back and forth," he says.

He slips into an alley of memory: "Those days used to be fun. I used to play half a dozen games on some days, from eight in the morning till late in the evening, until it got really dark. I started it for fun, then it became my passion and has taken me this far. So I can quite shake off my ties with it," he says.

Neither could he cut the bond with a creaky old second-hand bicycle.

"We couldn't afford to buy a new one, so my parents brought me an old one. It was my best friend. I used to take that to the school, from there to cricket practice, then back home. Then to that street or this street to buy something. I barely ride it these days, but didn't dispose of it. I had given it to my nephew and he's riding it all the time like I had been once upon a time."

In the next few years, life around him would change even more rapidly, but for him, nothing surpasses the feeling of being with his parents and extended family in the chaotic splendour of his old house.

BRIDGE

Dealer: West Vulnerable: None

NORTH

♠ K

♥ QJ865

♦ Q865

♣ 1094

SOUTH

♠ A7

♥ 42

♦ A107432

♣ AK7

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3S ♠	pass	pass	3NT
pass	pass	pass	

West leads the queen of spades against 3NT and dummy provides some comfort for South, including the king of spades. What is South's plan?

The West Hand: S-QJ108542 H-73D-C-J862
The East Hand: S-963H-AK109D-KJ9C-Q53

3NT is a great contract and making it is surely going to be a nice result. The trick is making it. Many players would lead to the ace of diamonds, hoping for all six diamond tricks. This is an optimistic play since West's preempt warns that bad distribution may exist. Assuming you consider the worst, what is the correct play?

Lead a small diamond from dummy. East will play the nine. South should play the ten, expecting it to lose, but knowing that this play will ensure the contract. If West wins with the king or jack, it means that the rest of the diamonds are good.

And, if West shows out, South will be able to concede one diamond trick and will come to the same five diamond tricks. This line can cost a trick if West has a singleton king (or perhaps a singleton jack) but it gets you enough tricks for 3NT. Of course, if by some chance East shows out on the first diamond, South can win and lead to the queen in dummy.

NOTE: If South plays a diamond to the ace, East will have two diamond tricks and that will cause South to go down four tricks.

Dealer: North Vulnerable: None

NORTH

♠ 862

♥ A42

♦ A83

♣ A765

SOUTH

♠ QJ7

♥ QJ53

♦ J54

♣ K102

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1S ♠	pass	pass	1H ♥
pass	pass	pass	1NT

West leads the five of spades and South takes trick one. Where are the tricks coming from?

JUMBLED WORDS

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

_____always looks worse through a window - Tom Lehrer (3,7)

DRAEE



EIRTDH



TARTS



AMOTBW



Answer: **Bad weather**, always looks worse through a window - Tom Lehrer
SOLUTION: **EABED**, **TARTS**, **TART**, **DITHER**, **WOMBAT**

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2358

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- Popular social networking site (8)
- Assail by argument, challenge (6)
- A major transverse part of the body of a church (8)
- Kind of tree (6)
- Works out (9)
- Subdued (5)
- Got a hole in one (4)
- Convent or cloister (7)
- Unpoetic (7)
- Seal herds (4)
- Belly button (5)
- Treachery (9)
- Moderating or tempering? (6)
- Toy for railway enthusiast (5-3)
- Corresponded in sound (6)
- Adventure (8)

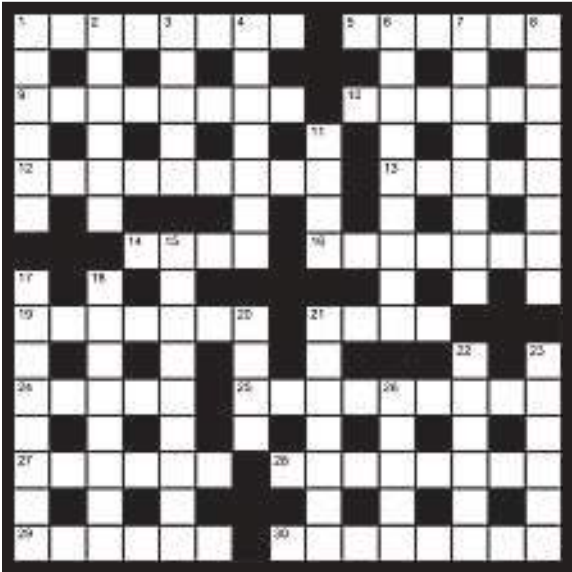
DOWN

- Agreed or equipped? (6)
- Old aircrafts or cars? (6)
- Fundamental (5)
- Took the other side (7)
- Made slightly damp (9)
- Remove the forefront from a field gun unit (8)
- In these times? (8)
- ___ example: e.g. ? (2,2)
- Dare (9)
- Single woman (8)
- Not a bankrupt state? (8)
- Rogues (4)
- Ancient writing material (7)
- Noxious emanation (6)
- Shiny evergreen shrub (6)
- Mediterranean isle (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Thinking of British lines during breakfast, may be (8)
- Looks around for boy in uniform (6)
- In a manner of speaking, one may give a single weapon like this (4,4)
- Northern coming back in alarm (6)
- She is right behind wordplay from characters of the retributive kind (9)
- Reluctant promise to support liberal (5)
- Black cover can be such a bore (4)
- As used for building an extra strong sty ? (3-4)
- Homer's enchantress began talking about left ring (7)
- One's case may rest on it (4)
- Body of professional theologians in a Muslim country makes a mule run wild (5)



- Not the popular time to get away with a ticket (3-6)
- They go on the head, or in the mouth (6)
- Nearly with spring approaching (4-4)
- Don't accept garbage (6)
- A short cut from school ? (4,4)

DOWN:

- Like some lamb with white horses? (6)
- Regretting that another gun was produced with misguided ire (6)
- Takes over domestic vessels (5)
- Ventilation space in botany ? (3-4)
- To be pedantic about work record is smart (4,5)
- That's another storey (8)
- What you call Ray, when being ironic? (8)
- Initially, the answer must be looked for in France (4)
- When every S is not S? (3,6)
- Transport for the Rovers, perhaps? (5-3)
- Upsets the officers and withdraws (5,3)
- Type of gait has reversed civil injury (4)
- Think it will provide you with an

Solutions to 2357

QUICK CLUES ACROSS: 1 Restive, 5 Eagerly, 9 Steno, 10 Erudition, 11 Oversight, 12 Aisle, 13 ASAP, 15 Examined, 18 Insignia, 19 Toot, 22 Panic, 24 Pressure, 26 Antipasto, 27 Tieto, 28 Galileo, 29 Stratum. Down: 1 Rostov, 2 Stevenson, 3 Idols, 4 Evergreen, 5 Ewelt, 6 Guitarist, 7 Rails, 8 Yonder, 14 Principal, 16 Analogous, 17 Emolument, 20 Sprang, 21 Reform, 23 Natal, 24 Pesto, 25 Ester. **CRYPTIC CLUES ACROSS:** 1 Cardiff, 5 Hebrews, 9 Magog, 10 Ellington, 11 Letter box, 12 False, 13 Mass, 15 Audition, 18 Addendum, 19 Doth, 22 Clear, 24 Sunbather, 26 Rhinoceri, 27 Dicit, 28 Decodes, 29 No claim. Down: 1 Cornely, 2 Right hand, 3 Ingle, 4 Freeboard, 5 Helix, 6 Benefited, 7 Extol, 8 Sinner, 14 Swearword, 16 Dimension, 17 Octahedra, 20 Scored, 21 Pro tem, 23 Eniac, 24 Sheds, 25 Asdic.

If it's your Birthday

Sunday January 30

Some of the excitement around could relate to what happened long ago. It may have nothing to do with you. But if you do lay yourself on the line now then you might just reap the rewards very soon.

Monday January 31

The only cloud on the horizon is a partner's willingness to question your plans, but that's nothing to worry about. You can press ahead with confidence.

Tuesday February 1

Today's stars are livelier than yesterday's and you do seem to be facing chances to make a fresh start. There is an outside possibility of an unusual offer, but you may have to take the initiative.

Wednesday February 2

You have your path ahead mapped out, so what you really need is faith. Your confidence that your plans will succeed is one of your most valuable assets.

Thursday February 3

It's the big picture which counts, and your major ambitions could soon be thrown into reverse gear, or even abandoned, depending on your whim.

Friday February 4

Your ties to the past are difficult to shake off. Your most appropriate course is to use all that's best about your life to make the most of your current relationships.

Saturday February 5

In matters of the heart you need variety, especially where your family is concerned. You will do well in competitive activities just as long as everyone knows the rules.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Wild ideas will be flowing thick and fast although it's likely that some will be too impractical to implement. But then there are times when even your best, laid plans just don't work out. It's a pleasant and profitable week, so get on with it.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Someone, probably a close partner, deserves your affection. Don't hold back, because appreciation of what has been done on your behalf will guarantee good relations. Monetary stars look best around the middle of the week, so plan accordingly and make wise long-term investments.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

You may need to work hard to persuade people to fall in with your plans. Don't worry if you can't secure the co-operation you need as there's nothing to be lost in going it alone. Stay in touch with older relations. They seem to have their finger on the pulse of family affairs.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Venus and Mars are influencing your financial affairs. Although you stand a good chance of boosting your earnings, the most likely result will be an increase in your outgoings. Make the most of increasingly happy social stars, and take the initiative, rather than sitting by the phone, waiting to be asked.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

You're more dependent on partners than you sometimes admit. The appreciation and respect of your friends is vital to sustain your sense of emotional well-being. Such attention should be in plentiful supply this week, thanks to the affectionate planet, Venus.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Work may be hard but it should also be enjoyable, perhaps throwing up a new friendship. If you have any practical interests which seem to have been stalled, do team up with like-minded people. The whole point about current developments is that one or two minor crises now may be necessary in order to push you on to the next stage.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Venus is a superb planet, occupying as it does a central position in your astrological make-up. Its current location signifies that whatever troubles you encounter, you'll always bounce back. Saturn is still advising caution, so you'd be advised to tread carefully in personal matters.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

A happy atmosphere at home may be knocked off course by a personal surprise. The fact is that partners and loved ones will be so enthusiastic about their own plans that they may be unwilling to compromise. So, you could make it your goal to bring everyone together. This is no time to leap without looking.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

The combined movement of the Sun and Mercury is due to take the heat off at home and allow you more space for your own personal needs. You really must try to get out and about as much as you can. Jupiter, your ruler, has more surprises in store within a few weeks, so plan your hoped-for improvements now.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

The emphasis is shifting to your home life and it now seems that long-term plans may finally come to fruition. Indeed, there is every chance that events will now move towards a speedy and satisfactory conclusion. Pay more attention to financial affairs, there are healthy profits to be made if you spot the right opportunities.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

It's a lively time for Aquarians, mainly on an intimate, personal level. The pressure on your finances should ease, which is one reason why you may now contemplate new purchases. You can act in the knowledge that the fates are with you, although you can never be totally sure what twists and turns await you.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

For the next three to four weeks money is going to be on your mind. You will be assertive where your finances are concerned, pushing your interests as hard as you can, which is all to the good. Positive trends are forecast for Pisceans for the next five months.

How a switch hit helped Champion Barty

Playing cricket gave Ashleigh Barty a sense of belonging and made her a better person, says her Big Bash coach Andy Richards

GAURAV BHATT
JANUARY 29

CARRYING THE 'world No. 1, top seed' targets on her back, and hopes of a nation on her shoulders, Ashleigh Barty became the first Australian player to win the Australian Open singles title since 1978. During the fortnight that ended a 44-year wait, Barty had her full repertoire on display. The kick serve aka "the hopper". The one-handed slice, two-handed drive backhands. The forehand dripping with heavy topspin. Risky drop shots, opportune volleys, and the all elite overhead.

The shot that generated the most buzz, however, was played during practice: Barty casually tucked the tennis ball off her hip, a text-book leg glance, pointed elbow and all.

"It was a sweet little glance, wasn't it?" laughs Andy Richards, cricket coach, proud Queenslander and a "fairweather tennis fan". Richards, who trained Barty during her brief switch to cricket, gushes over his ward's exploits at the Melbourne Park.

"She's looked awesome. I think just in the last couple of years, she's got so much more mature," Richards says on the phone, minutes before the start of the final, from his Brisbane home where he's putting out "beverages" for friends who'd come over to watch history being made. "Whatever happens, Australia is excited for her. We tend to put a fair bit of pressure on our people... I just think people will be happy for her because she's just a genuine, really good human being. We have people all across the world that get a bit taken aback as to how she presents herself. And I can tell you from experience that how she presents is exactly how she is."

"An 18-year-old with the maturity of a 30-year-old" was Richards' first impression of Barty.

It was 2015, and Barty was a doubles contender (she reached three Grand Slam finals) and a singles' prospect, when she walked away from a sport she had been playing since she was 4. Exhausted with the rigours of the Tour, she did not seek a protected ranking, but didn't throw away her racquets either. Barty was coaching kids when she was invited to speak at the national women's cricket team dinner.

There, she told Queensland cricketers Jess Jonassen, Delissa Kimmince and Beth Mooney: "I really wouldn't mind giving cricket a go."

"It was half a throwaway line, half-serious chat. The girls came back and told me," says Richards, who was the coach of Queensland Fire and was putting together the team for Brisbane Heat for the inaugural Women's Big Bash that year.

"I'd tried it with a few different sportspeople before so I thought we would give it a go. She came in and we just had a coffee and then I said okay, we'll organise to have a hit and see what she looked like."

At the hit, Barty, kitted up in borrowed gear, faced 150 deliveries. Richards reckons she missed three. "She'd never played the game, except for some backyard cricket. And during that first hit, she was probably already better than the bottom third of my squad. I asked her if she would like to come and train and she said no, not until she'd had another four or five hits," says Richards. "She didn't want to embarrass herself. She also didn't want to put anybody out."



Ash Barty with coach Andy Richards.

Barty soon earned the spot. The next challenge was to earn camaraderie.

"Fitting into such a competitive environment is not always easy. The girls are not always necessarily accepting of people coming in from outside. A couple of our girls had a fair bit of friendly banter with Ash, and she gave back as much as she got. It seemed like she had been with the team for years. That's not an easy thing to do in a group of competitive sporting women. But she did it seamlessly."

Barty, expectedly, was "a coach's dream".

"An extraordinarily talented woman, her hand-eye coordination is as good as I've seen from a crossover sport point of view. Elite athletes like her have awareness about where their body needs to be, to execute their skill," says Richards, who has also worked with Pakistan women's team as an assistant coach and batting consultant.

A cursory glance at Barty's game is enough to reveal why she was able to transfer her skills from the court to the pitch. How the 5'5 all-courter goes toe-to-toe with stronger specimens, getting on top of the bounce to 'flat bat' the forehand. How she bends and picks the ball with a double backhand, sometimes on the half-volley, and powers it deep cross-court.

"Obviously, the cow corner, sort of wide mid-on was a strength. But for me, it was her ability to play straight. At the back end of that first session, I said 'I just want you to hit them as hard as you can as straight as you can'. Immediately, she got her body in position. Clearing the front leg and hitting it straight."

On her debut for the Heat, Barty scored a 27-ball 39 — "There was a six that she hit straight out of the Junction Oval," Richards recalls, "men are happy to hit the ball as far as she did that day" — but had a largely indifferent season. The media attention around her, however, helped jumpstart the tournament.

"She added so much more to our sport from a professional point of view. We were at that crossroads, sort of moving into full professionalism in women's cricket, and she was able to add a whole different perspective for the girls and us as well."

But what did Barty get out of her cricketing sojourn? She has previously said that the 18 months away from tennis made her "a better person, on and off the court. A better tennis player," Richards believes cricket gave Barty a sense of belonging, and teammates for life.

"We've had a couple of chats about it. She's very much a team-oriented person. If we look at her love for her family, her indigenous cultural background, there's a strong feeling of belonging in all of that. In tennis, she didn't have that as a young girl growing up, spending a lot of time away, overseas without a really strong network," Richards says. Tennis is considered



Ashleigh Barty recovered from 5-1 down in the second set to beat Danielle Collins 6-3, 7-6 (2) in the Aus Open final.

AP

an individual sport. But you'll notice that when she talks, she always says 'we'. She talks about her team. I think she had a lot of fun with us, she had a lot of freedom. And she's carried that forward."

In an interview with the New York Times, given during her Big Bash days, Barty said: "Everyone is part of the squad, and when you've got 15, 16 girls around each other, everyone pushes each other on. It was a very good dynamic from the get-go, and I was just very lucky that they welcomed me in so easily... We played a game at the Gabba, and we won, and went down the shed to have a beer. I'd never had a beer after a win before."

In the same piece, Rennae Stubbs, an Australian six-time Major champion, had opined: "Selfishly, would I love to see her come back and play tennis? Absolutely, because I still think that her best tennis is ahead of her."

She returned in 2016, and has since achieved the world No. 1 ranking and three Grand Slam titles. Cricket, though, has never strayed far from her mind. Ongoing women's Ashes was her distraction before Saturday's final. She played cricket with her entourage, kit bag doubling as stumps. When not on the court, she pulls a Donald, volleying a golf ball against a wall with a bat.

Richards shares that Barty keeps in touch with her former teammates. And when in town, Barty and her fiancé go to a game of cricket with Richards and family.

"I was devastated when she came up to me one day, and sheepishly said, 'look, I think I want to go back to tennis'," Richards says. "But deep down inside, I knew, that's where she belonged."

Richards knew that cricket's loss was Australia's gain. The sentiment was perhaps best summed up at an awards show by comedian Rove McManus, who broke down the Ash Barty-tennis-cricket love triangle.

"...If you love something, set it free — it may go have a crack at cricket and come back to you!"

Special Ks: Kokkinakis, Kyrgios win Aus Open doubles

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MELBOURNE, JANUARY 29

NICK KYRGIOS and Thanasi Kokkinakis entered on a wild card and were dubbed the Special Ks on their wild ride to the men's doubles title at the Australian Open.

With a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Matt Ebden and Max Purcell on Saturday, the long-time friends became the first home-grown pairing to win the men's doubles title here since Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde, aka the Woodies, in 1997. And this was only their fourth Grand Slam event as a team.

The pair, who won the Wimbledon boys' doubles title nearly nine years ago, never faced a break point in a dominant performance in a final that started on Rod Laver Arena following Ash Barty's drought-breaking women's singles title.

It capped a decent day for the Aussies, with the so-called Special Ks becoming the first all-Australian team to win a Grand Slam men's doubles title since Woodforde and Woodbridge won their 11th together at Wimbledon in 2000.

Kyrgios and Kokkinakis conceded only two sets in six matches on a run to the title that included wins over the No. 1 and No. 3 seeded teams. "What a week. I can honestly say we didn't expect to come even close to this. This is a crazy cherry on the top," Kokkinakis said. Kyrgios added: "I wouldn't have wanted to do this with anyone else."

He gave thanks to his support team, also, when he said "I battled COVID a week out from the Open and I wouldn't be here without you." Woodbridge and Woodforde, both working as



Nick Kyrgios, Thanasi Kokkinakis celebrate winning the title.

AP

TV commentators, presented the trophy to the winners.

Kokkinakis, who won his first ATP singles title at Adelaide earlier this month, is still making his way back onto the tour after several seasons interrupted by injuries and illness. The 26-year-old Kyrgios has a career-high singles ranking of No. 13 and won six ATP titles, all on hard courts, but hasn't fulfilled the potential he showed by reaching the quarterfinals at Wimbledon in 2014 and at the Australian Open the following year.

His style of play and attitude on and off court has divided opinion, too. His first Grand Slam title, albeit in doubles, could be a sign of things to come.

The men's doubles competition attracted more local attention than usual, with Kyrgios and Kokkinakis packing a smaller, 5,000-seat outside stadium and getting boisterous support in earlier rounds before having to shift into all-ticketed main arena for the semis and the final.

HISTORY BECKONS

In Medvedev, Nadal meets gatekeeper of Slam No 21

CHRISTOPHER CLAREY

MELBOURNE, JANUARY 29

ONCE AGAIN, the last defense against No. 21 will be Daniil Medvedev.

He has quite the temper, as he showed in an extraordinary rant at a chair umpire Friday, and he has become quite the spoiler with his long, elastic limbs and unconventional, often outside-the-lines approach to constructing points and demolishing opponents' game plans and dreams.

In last year's U.S. Open final, the 6-foot-6 Russian stopped Novak Djokovic from completing the Grand Slam, which requires winning all four major tournaments in the same calendar year, and also kept Djokovic from breaking his tie with Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer for most career major titles.

On Sunday, with the three men who have dominated this era still deadlocked at 20 Grand Slam titles apiece, Medvedev will face Nadal in the Australian Open final.

"It's a great rivalry," Medvedev said of tennis' Big Three — Federer, Nadal and Djokovic. "I'm happy to have the chance to try to stop one more time somebody from making history."

But Medvedev, 25, with just one major title to his name, also has the luxury of remaining above the fray.

"I'm just trying to focus on myself, doing my job," he said. "I know what's happening. I know what Rafa is going for. I knew what Novak was going for. I'm not going to say, 'Oh, yeah, I am trying not to listen about this.' But it's kind of their thing, not mine."

Medvedev's thing has been establishing himself as the sport's new leading player, at least on the hard courts that suit his game and



Rafael Nadal of Spain is watched by fans during a practice session at Melbourne Park ahead of his final against Daniil Medvedev.

AP

comfort zone far better than clay or grass for now. Nadal got an extended taste of Medvedev's protean ways and new-age talents in the 2019 U.S. Open final when Medvedev shifted tactics after losing the first two sets. He began attacking the net to break up long rallies and pushed Nadal for nearly five hours before losing in the fifth set.

They have not played each other on an outdoor hard court since then, and although both played their semifinal matches indoors under a closed roof in Rod Laver Arena because of rain, the weather is expected to be clear on Sunday when they meet again in Melbourne.

"I am facing my most difficult rival of the whole tournament in the final," Nadal said.

That might not have been true if Djokovic had been able to play. He has won the Australian Open a men's record nine times, including the last three, but in one of the most stunning twists in tennis history, he was deported from Australia on the eve of the tournament after his visa was revoked by the federal government and his final appeal was rejected.

Nadal, seeded sixth, was initially in the top-seeded Djokovic's half of the draw but ended up playing No. 7 seed Matteo

Nadal got a taste of Medvedev's protean ways and new-age talents in the 2019 U.S. Open final when Medvedev shifted tactics after losing the first two sets. He began attacking the net to break up long rallies and pushed Nadal for nearly five hours before losing in the fifth set.

Berrettini in the semifinals instead. He feasted on Berrettini's weaker backhand wing and broke the powerful Italian's serve four times to prevail, 6-3, 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

Medvedev also won in four sets, defeating Stefanos Tsitsipas, 7-6 (5), 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, although Medvedev's victory was considerably more tempestuous. After losing his serve in the ninth game of the second set and receiving a code violation for an obscenity that he said was misinterpreted, Medvedev shouted angrily at chair umpire Jaume Campistol for most of the changeover. He suggested that Tsitsipas' father was illegally coaching his son from the player box.

Such behavior is a contrast with that of Nadal, who has never broken a racket in anger during his 20-year career. Now, Nadal has a chance to set himself apart, even as he continues to insist that finishing first in the Grand Slam chase is not his obsession or even his priority.

"Being very honest, for me is much more important to have the chance to play tennis than win the 21, no?" he said.

NYT

Why longer rallies will give Rafa the advantage in final

ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 29

EMERGING FROM a six-month injury lay-off and a recent Covid-19 episode, 35-year old Rafael Nadal became the fourth oldest man in the Open era to reach the Australian Open final. In the semifinal, as he picked apart Italy's Matteo Berrettini, 10 years his junior, Nadal, the sixth seed, seems to have reinforced his dominance over the rallies after his lay off.

A breakdown of the rally points in the semifinal clash reveals that Nadal won 48 per cent of the short, or first strike rallies (0-4 shots); 58 per cent of the 'pattern of play', or mid-length rallies (5-8 shots); and an overwhelming 61 per cent of the extended rallies (9-plus shots). While Nadal is typically in a class of his own in mid-length rallies, on Friday, as rallies got longer, he edged out Berrettini.

■ The breakdown of rallies, in terms of points won, during Friday's semifinal, gravitated overwhelmingly in Nadal's favour as the rallies got longer:

0-4 shots: Nadal won 56 of the 117 points (48%)
5-8 shots: Nadal won 28 out of the 48 points (58%)
9+ shots: Nadal won 24 out of the 39 points (61%)

Remarkably, his stats during the semifinal in Melbourne seem even better than

some earlier comparisons.

An Infosys ATP Beyond The Numbers analysis by Craig O'Shannessy of data sets of players who competed in a minimum of 20 matches at ATP events on Hawk Eye courts from the beginning of the 2018 season dissected Nadal's win percentages by rally length.

■ The data showed Nadal to be way more dominant in the mid-length rallies of 5-8 shots.

0-4 Shots: 52.9% (1126/2127)
5-8 Shots: 59.7% (652/1092)
9+ Shots: 55.3% (412/745)

Nadal won an overwhelming 59.7 per cent of points in the 5-8 shot range from 33 matches, with Argentina's Diego Schwartzman coming in as next best at 55.9 per cent (547/978), putting the Spaniard almost four percentage points higher than his closest rival. Novak Djokovic came in at third place, having won 55.5 per cent (1043/1879) in 5-8 shot rallies in that analysis.

On Sunday, as Nadal looks to win his 21st Grand Slam title and go ahead of Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, Russia's Daniil Medvedev will have some food for thought. Nadal's post-lay off effectiveness in the extended rallies are stretching much younger men, like data from his semifinal win showed. At 25, Medvedev too is 10 years younger than Nadal. But then on Sunday, age is likely to be just a number at the Rod Laver Arena.

EXPLAINED