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¹ Estimated battery life based on testing on pre-production hardware and software using a mix of talk, data, standby, and other limited features that are default in Extreme Battery Saver mode. Battery life depends on many factors, and use of certain features will decrease battery life. Actual battery life may be lower.

CROSSWORD 4934

ACROSS

1 Got out of a grave situation (7)
5 Specialists expressed in plain language (5)
8 Dead body found in the garden (4,5)
9 An attack may be appropriate (3)
10 Spare list (4)
12 Humiliating return from a summit meeting? (8)
14 A new affair that's binding (6)
15 They have jobs in the theatre or in religious work (6)
17 Just the same it means you had the right money (2,6)
18 Flower girl (4)
21 Robin has a sash for his middle (3)
22 Keen rep in trouble is one who may take orders (9)
24 Canny sort of girl? (5)
25 Iron kind of cup (7)

DOWN

1 Ninety in general to rise and shine (5)
2 He gains nothing in an aura of glory (3)
3 First movement if loud is seen to irritate (4)
4 Monster in women's clothing? (6)
5 Bearing gifts we hear vaguely (8)
6 A shade less than well (3-6)
7 Nurse in bizarre sex case holds out (7)
11 Tender feeling from a foe in fact is odd (9)
13 There's a lot of laughter when a girl swallows it (8)
14 In poor health - result of a car accident? (3,4)
16 A note sent out by representatives (6)
19 Belt is broken in parts (5)
20 Each one a fairy (4)
23 The standard is taken from Paris (3)

Solutions Crossword 4933: Across: 1 Strapped, 5 Chop, 9 Whale, 10 Reissue, 11 Philatelists, 13 Pass up, 14 Editor, 17 Shake the head, 20 Laertes, 21 Gaffe, 22 Step, 23 Zeppelin. Down: 1 Sows, 2 Reaches, 3 Poet laureate, 4 Errata, 6 Hosts, 7 Pleasure, 8 Filled the gap, 12 Epistles, 15 Tearful, 16 Chaste, 18 Anele, 19 Mean.

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.

If there were no bad people, there would be no _____. - Charles Dickens (4,_,7)

AWAER

ORUDLY

PWOOS

AEHIGW

SOLUTION: AWAER, SWOOP, DOURLY, AWICHT

Answer: If there were no bad people, there would be no good lawyers. - Charles Dickens

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

SUDOKU 5060

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5059

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I,Naresh Gupta,S/o-Bali Ram,R/o B-5/327, Sector-8,Rohini,New Delhi-110085,have changed my name to Naresh Kumar Gupta,for all future purposes.

0040646836-1

I,Akash Mittal S/o Bhawani Shankar Mittal R/o- B1/109,Shantidoot Apartments, Vasundhara Enclave Delhi-110096,Have Changed My Name To Aakash Mittal.

0040646836-2

I, Shalendra Kumar, S/o Janardan Sharma, R/o 37- A/38-B, Deep Shree Enclave, Dayal Bagh, Agra, Uttar Pradesh-282005, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Shailendra Kumar.

0070819183-1

I, Saleem, S/o Ikram, R/o D514B, Sec-11, Pratap Vihar, Ghaziabad, UP-201001, have changed my name to Saleem Ahmad.

0070819221-1

I, Rajinder Kaur, W/o Paramjit Singh R/o Khundan(114), Khunan, Fatehabad, Haryana-125051, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Rajvant Kaur.

0070819188-1

I, Hema, W/o Mukesh Banga, R/o B-244, Third Floor, Jhimil Colony, Shahdra, East Delhi, Delhi-110095, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Hemlata.

0070819179-1

I, Ankit Kumar, S/o Jeevan Ram, R/o Nirmani, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh-251001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Ankit Khemu.

0070819186-1

I, Alok Aggarwal, S/o Jai Bhagwan Aggarwal, R/o BQ- 47, Shalimar Bagh, North West Delhi-110088, I have changed the name of my minor Daughter Chanel Aggarwal, aged about 14 years and she shall hereafter be known as Shanaya Aggarwal.

0070819185-1

I,VINOD KUMAR,S/O GIRISH CHANDER BAHUGUNA, ADD-FLAT NO- 202, D- 105 MAHAVIR VIHAR SECTOR - 1, DWARKA DELHI 110075, changed my name to VINOD KUMAR BAHUGUNA, for all future Purposes.

0040646384-1

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U.P. State Industrial Development Authority
UPSIDC Complex, A-1/4, Lakhnapur, Kanpur-208024

Notice for Public Objection / Suggestion on Part Layout Plan of Industrial Area Growth Centre Shahjahanpur Distt. bareilly by which Industrial Plot No. G-2, G-3, H-41, H-42, H-43 & H-44 has been amalgamated and created a new Plot No. G-3/4, H-41-42/43-44 (Measuring-13600.00 Sq.m.).

1 (a) The Part Layout Plan of Industrial Area Growth Centre Shahjahanpur Plot No. G-3/4, H-41/44 of Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) situated in Industrial Area Growth Centre Shahjahanpur District Bareilly has been prepared.

(b) A copy thereof will be available for inspection at the Regional Manager of the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority, 1116 Janakpuri Ramjanki Mandir ke Samne Sivaji Park ke Pass, Bareilly between 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on all working days till the date mentioned in Para 3 hereafter as well as [Website: www.onlineupsidc.com](http://www.onlineupsidc.com)

2. Objections and Suggestions are hereby invited with respect of the Draft Layout/Amalgamation Plan.

3. Objections and suggestions are shall be sent in writing to the office of Regional Manager UPSIDA at 1116, Janakpuri, Ramjanki Mandir Ke Samne Sivaji Park ke Pass, Bareilly within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice mentioning subject as "Regarding Public Objection / Suggestion on Draft Layout / Amalgamation Plan for Industrial Area Growth Centre Shahjahanpur Distt. Bareilly. Any person making the Objections or Suggestions should also give his / her full name & address, Email id and contact number.

(Regional Manager)
U.P. State Industrial Development Authority

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PWD: BUILDING:

ASSAM: CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI-3

No. T/TB-1/62/2022/13

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Bldg.), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids for the following work from eligible contractors having requisite experience in similar nature of work. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website www.assamtenders.gov.in

Sl No.	Name of Work	Approx. bid Value (Rs. in lakh)	Time of Completion	Bid Security	Tender Cost (Rs.)
1.	Modernization of Assam State Zoo (Construction of Amazonian walk-through aviary at Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden under SOPD Scheme)	284.30895	12 (Twelve Months)	(2% on bid value for General & 1% for Reserve Category)	5,700.00

Note :-
1. Value of work may vary during uploading of DNIT for which no claim will be entertained.
2. The Press Notice will form a part of the Bidding Document.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Bldg.), Assam,
Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

JANASANYOG/C/16920/22

I Jai Kumar S/o Late Karan Singh R/o H No.717 Near Railway Station, VPO, Ghevra Delhi - 110081, inform that in my LIC Policy No.123124185 my name & Date of Birth was written as Jai Kanwar instead of Jai Kumar and 02/07/1980 instead of 12/12/1987 and my father name as Karam Singh instead of Karan Singh. Jai Kumar & Jai Kanwar is same person. Karam Singh & Karan Singh are same person.

PUBLIC NOTICE

"This is to inform the public at large on behalf of Our clients "SURJEET TAKKAR AND RANJANA TAKKAR" both residents of GB-15, Upper Ground Floor, Shivaji Enclave, Tagore Garden, Delhi-110027, that our Clients are joint owners of the below mentioned properties: (hereinafter referred to as the "Said Properties")

1. GB-15, UPPER GROUND FLOOR, SHIVAJI ENCLAVE, TAGORE GARDEN, WEST DELHI, DELHI-110027

2. R-438, J J COLONY, RAGHUBIR NAGAR, WEST DELHI

3. 7TH & 10TH Floor HB TWIN TOWER, PEARLS BUSINESS PARK, MAX HOSPITAL BUILDING NETAJI SUBASH PLACE, PITAMPURA, DELHI-110034

4. B-125, JANTA COLONY, RAGHUBIR NAGAR, TAGORE GARDEN, S.O., WEST DELHI, DELHI-110027

5. B-121, JANTA COLONY, RAGHUBIR NAGAR, TAGORE GARDEN, S.O., WEST DELHI, DELHI-110027

6. 657B, MM ROAD, NEAR DELHI CLOTH MILLS DELHI-110006

7. 866/9, G.F. NAHAR SADAT, SHAYAMA MUKHERJI MARG, NEAR NAWALTI CINEMA, DELHI-110006

8. HOUSE NO. 84, GROUND FLOOR, POKHET-12, ROHINI, NEAR NDPL OFFICE, SECTOR -20, DELHI-110086

9. B-6/7, VIKAS SURYA PLAZA, SECTOR-7, ROHINI, DELHI-110085

10. B-119, GROUND FLOOR, JANTA COLONY, RAGHUBIR NAGAR, TAGORE GARDEN, S.O., WEST DELHI, DELHI-110027

In case any person(s) other than the Our Clients above mentioned claims to have any kind of right, title or interest over the said properties or has entered or may enter into any agreement of any nature whatsoever with any person(s) claiming any interest or title over the said properties, shall considered to be entering into a deal/sale bargain which shall totally be void and illegal unless the same is acted upon without the due written consent of our clients for which they should contact Our clients or their counsel at the under mentioned contact details. As by way of this public notice it is made clear that any person(s)/body corporate dealing with regard to the aforesaid properties with any person(s) shall be doing so at their own cost(s), risk(s) and consequence and our clients shall not be responsible for any loss or damage as may be caused in any manner whatsoever.

Mr. Surjeet Takkar
C.No.: +91 9899616671

Sd.
(Naman Gauba)
Advocate
Live Legal Offices
R-8, LGF, Nehru Enclave,
New Delhi-110019
C.No.: +91 9910347289
Enrl. No.: D/119/16

DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

HC Sumit Kasana

Delhi Police के

Wise Words

Work-From-Home का हो रजिस्ट्रेशन मांगे कोई पैसे तो समझो है टेंशन

Beware of Fraudsters online and offline

Please keep in mind

• Check the veracity of Work-From-Home offers before accepting

• Confirm the identity of the Caller/ Company before proceeding

• Be careful while clicking on links/ attachments

For reporting cyber/financial fraud, call 1930

cybercrime.gov.in

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112 OR VISIT THE NEAREST POLICE STATION

TATA POWER

THE TATA POWER COMPANY LIMITED
Registered Office:
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Email: tatapower@tatapower.com, Website: www.tatapower.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Tata Power Company Limited—Distribution Business in Mumbai (Tata Power-D) is inviting bids for Procurement of Short-Term Firm Power for April-23 to June-23, through competitive bidding process.

For more details of tender, please visit <https://www.msctcecommerce.com> (DEEP Portal) and Tata Power website <https://www.tatapower.com/Tender/tenderlist.aspx>

DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You're known as a good social performer, which is precisely why today's planetary patterns suit you down to the ground. Lively people hold the key to your relationships, and you should take any and every opportunity to broaden your social circle. Listen to people you might once have thought were beneath you.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Professional concerns must be of paramount importance for all of you who are currently pursuing a vital working objective. Whatever your ambitions, you should see yourself as moving forward as part of a large family rather than as a solitary individual. You're not alone.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Long-distance and travel interests require attention although, from today's picture, it doesn't seem that anything is going wrong. Perhaps it will do you good to check, though. Also, give a little more space to any mystical or religious beliefs and aspirations.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Wrap up all agreements and arrangements over the coming days, although there's no real sense of urgency, even as far as money is concerned. Indeed, if someone has been pressing you to make a financial decision, you might be well advised to put the brakes on. Pause for thought.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Partnerships hold the key to your happiness today, although it does seem very likely that you are feeling resentful or even bitter. You must choose whether to face up to people who have given you a hard time, or mix only with amiable and easy-going types.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

This certainly seems to be a time to keep busy but, quite aside from the inevitable work, you should put a little thought into your physical well-being. The Moon's recent relationship with Pluto suggests that this is a good moment to deal with long-standing complaints.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

The overall planetary picture is still pressured, but it just so happens that what may be difficult for other people seems to be relatively easy for you. Perhaps you will gain from someone else's bad luck. If so, please see to it that they share in your good fortune.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Having put long-distance or long-term arrangements to one side, or satisfied yourself that all overseas contacts are up and running, you should then check out any outstanding legal questions and consider all the ethical issues. You need to occupy the moral high ground.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

Tie up any loose ends in the financial area over the next few days - today if possible. You must realise that if you ignore any outstanding business, you could be in danger of tipping a vast amount of money down one of those mysterious black holes that appear from time to time.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

It's a pleasant day for distractions like shopping, or even just plain old-fashioned window-shopping. However, on the personal note, it is quite important to make sure that everyone is absolutely clear about your thoughts, opinions and intentions.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

The tide of fortune flows your way today. My one concern is that you could be a little over-emotional, but then this might be no bad thing if you have been refusing to face up to certain awkward feelings. You will get nowhere by denying your desires. Instead, you need to understand them.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Your mind should be at its very creative and imaginative best for another three days so, if other people have any sense, it is you to whom they should turn if they want to ask the pertinent questions and receive original answers. A romantic affair, though, could be hard work.



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Science & Technology Led Growth

Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh

LAUNCH OF MADHYA PRADESH SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION POLICY 2022

by
Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Chief Minister
Madhya Pradesh

Vibrant STI Ecosystem	Creation of State Innovation Fund	Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Startup Culture	Investment in DigiTech, Drone-Tech, Bio-Tech, and Green-Tech
Good Governance++: Contactless, Faceless, digital delivery of citizen services		Creation of knowledge and skill-based economy	Digitisation of Traditional Knowledge

In presence of

Dr. Vijay Kumar Saraswat
Member, NITI Aayog, GoI

Om Prakash Sakhlecha
Minister, MSME and S&T, GoMP

Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi
Vice Chairman, MPSPPC & AIGGPA

Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood
Principal Scientific Adviser to GoI

Prof. Rajat Moona
Director, IIT, Gandhinagar

Dr. Akhilesh Gupta
Senior Adviser, DST, GoI


Dr. Sudheer Kumar N
Director (CBPO), ISRO, Bengaluru


Praveen Ramdas
Secretary, Vigyan Bharati


26 December, 2022 | 7:30 P.M.

Golden Jubilee Auditorium, RCVN Noronha Academy of Administration and Management, Bhopal

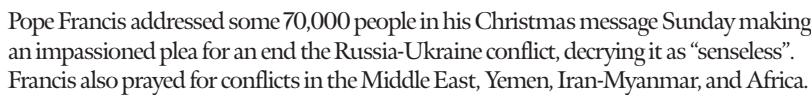
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 **JansamparkMP**

Department of Science & Technology, Government of Madhya Pradesh



Still, many hope to return to their ancestral villages. **NYT**



EXPLAINED

**NEW IN THE NEW YEAR**
NINE STATE STOPS
ON ROAD TO LOK
SABHA 2024
PAGE 13**IDEA EXCHANGE**

The Indian Express newsroom held insightful conversations with newsmakers every week of the year. Here's a glimpse into some of these

PAGE 14

TV actor 'dies by suicide', her co-star held on charge of abetment



Tunisha Sharma and Sheezan Khan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

A DAY after actor Tunisha Sharma, 20, allegedly died by suicide, police arrested her co-star, Sheezan Khan, on charges of abetment of suicide on Sunday.

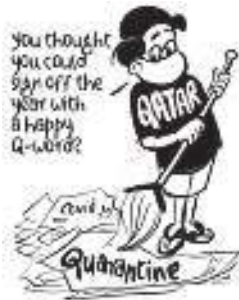
Khan, 28, was arrested on the basis of a complaint filed by Sharma's mother, Vanita, who blamed him for the death. In the FIR, Vanita alleged that Sharma was earlier in a relationship with Khan and was upset for the past 15 days over their break-up.

Based on her complaint, police registered a case against Khan under IPC Section 306 (abetment of suicide) and arrested him. Khan was produced before a court in Vasai, which sent him to police custody for four days, said a police officer.

On Saturday, while shooting for a television serial, Ali Baba: **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY

**WANG YI'S FIRST COMMENTS AFTER LATEST ROUND OF TALKS**

Ready to work with India for 'steady, sound growth' of bilateral ties: China

Both sides have maintained communication, committed to border stability: China foreign minister

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

IN HIS first comments after the latest round of talks between Indian and Chinese military commanders, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Sunday that China is ready to work with India for the "steady and sound growth" of bilateral ties and the two countries are committed to upholding stability at the border areas.

His comments come days af-

ter Indian and Chinese military commanders held a fresh round of talks on December 20 to resolve the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh – the first high-level talks after troops of the two sides clashed in Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9.

Addressing a symposium on the international situation and China's foreign relations in 2022, Wang said: "China and India have maintained communica-



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. PTI/File

tion through the diplomatic and military-to-military channels,

and both countries are committed to upholding stability in the border areas... We stand ready to work with India in the direction toward steady and sound growth of China-India relations."

Wang, along with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, is the Special Representative of the India-China boundary mechanism which has remained dormant in the current standoff.

India and China have held 17 rounds of talks so far to resolve the standoff. A joint statement

issued last Thursday after the 17th round, said the talks were "frank and in-depth" and "in line with the guidance provided by the leaders of the two countries to work for the resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest".

"In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the security and stability on the ground in the Western sector," it said, referring to the eastern Ladakh region.

In September, Indian and Chinese troops disengaged in the **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**



REMEMBERING VAJPAYEE

PM Narendra Modi and others pay tributes to Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 98th birth anniversary, at the former PM's memorial in New Delhi, Sunday. Amit Mehra **P9****1,200 HOUSES FOR KASHMIRI PANDITS BY APRIL, ANOTHER 1,800 BY NEXT DECEMBER, SAYS SINHA**

Stop seeing killings in Kashmir on the basis of religion: J&K L-G Manoj Sinha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

JAMMU AND Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha said it is a fact that some Kashmiri Pandits became victims of targeted killings, but the country should stop seeing this on the basis of religion since a lot of other people have also been killed.

"Ye suchh hai ki kuchh durb-



J&K L-G Manoj Sinha during the Idea Exchange on Friday

hagyapurn ghatnayan hui hain aur kayi Kashmiri Pandit lakshit humlon ke shikar hue hain, lekin

ek dusra paksh bhi hai. Ise dharm ke aadhaar par dekhne ki koshish desh ko band kar deni chahie. Kafi sankhya mein dusre log bhi maare gaye hain (It is true some Kashmiri Pandit became victims of targeted killings. But there is another side too... The country should stop seeing this issue on the basis of religion. A lot of other people have also been killed," he said on Friday at the Idea Exchange on Friday.

"I want to say that people from the Kashmir valley are also killed. There are also labourers **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

Citing damage to ancient rock carvings, experts red-flag mega oil refinery project

OMKAR GOKHALE & VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

THE SITE proposed for a mega oil refinery in Barsu village of Maharashtra's Ratnagiri district is at the centre of a row over whether it might damage ancient rock carvings found in the area.

The rock art, or petroglyphs, estimated to be 20,000 years old and classified as protected monuments by the state archaeology



The petroglyphs near the site in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri are estimated to be 20,000 years old. Nisarga Yatri Sanstha

Lowest in six years: Fewer than 100 joined J&K militant ranks in 2022 till November

NAVEED IQBAL
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 25

RECRUITMENT TO militant ranks in Jammu and Kashmir has not only seen a significant decline in the current calendar year 2022, but is also the lowest over six years.

In 2022, it stayed below 100. Until November end, militant recruitment stood at 99, all from Kashmir. Of this, 63 have been killed, 17 arrested and 19 still re-

main active.

The dip in numbers, however, does not account for what is described as "shadow" or "faceless militancy" that drew concern from the security establishment in the Valley this year. A number of targeted killings in the Valley were attributed to "faceless militants" or individuals who were not officially counted among militants in police records or in many cases reported as missing persons. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

EXPRESS NETWORK

**MANY MINISTRIES NOT SHARING RECORDS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES HEAD****MANN KI BAAT: PM URGES CAUTION DURING FESTIVITIES**
PAGES 9, 12

Window for FTAs shrinks as India braces for set of non-tariff barriers

Trade talks becoming more about non-trade issues, say govt officials

AANCHAL MAGAZINE & ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

AS INDIA pushes the pedal on free trade agreements (FTAs), non-tariff issues such as carbon emission norms, climate action, labour and gender balance standards, that comprise an increasingly substantive part of these new pacts, are weighing on these ongoing negotiations.

Policymakers in New Delhi have flagged concerns these issues could pose hurdles for India in reaping the gains of its comparative labour advantage, with officials of the view that these incremental issues need to be dealt with "cautiously" in the ongoing FTA negotiations with the UK, the European Union, as well as the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Co-operation Agreement (CECA).

There is also a considered view in policy circles here that the window for wrapping up these FTA talks could narrow by early next year, given that New Delhi's focus would invariably shift to the series of events linked to India's G20 Presidency and that political lobbying from influential lobby groups such as

EXPLAINED
E The shadow on FTAs

AS TRADE talks with UK, EU and Australia enter a crucial phase, Indian policymakers realise they are fighting against not just time as India prepares for the G20 Summit next year, and national elections the year after, but also a new set of non-tariff issues that have become substantive now. Recession in the developed world also stokes protectionist tendencies there, to which they respond by erecting walls – not necessarily based on tariff – to stall imports from other countries.

farmer unions and the auto sector could intensify in the run up to the 2024 national elections.

In much of the negotiations currently under discussion, climate action, carbon emissions and labour issues are taking precedence over pure trade issues. Indian negotiators view **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

Backed by Oli, other parties, Prachanda appointed Nepal PM



Prachanda submits his application for appointment as PM to Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari, Sunday. ANI

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, DECEMBER 25

HOURS AFTER he walked out of a pre-poll five-party alliance led by Nepali Congress president and outgoing Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' joined hands with rival K P Sharma Oli, chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), and other smaller parties to be appointed as the new Prime Minister of Nepal on Sunday.

Prachanda has claimed the support of 170 parliamentarians – from six parties and four Independents – in the 275-member House.

The general elections last month failed to produce a clear

winner. The Nepali Congress is the single largest party with 89 seats, while CPN-UML and CPN-MC have 78 and 32 seats respectively.

In a statement, the President's office said Prachanda has been appointed as the Prime Minister of Nepal as per Article 76(2) of the Constitution – his third time in office. He is set to take oath on Monday.

A PTI report said Prachanda and Oli have reached an understanding to lead the government on rotation basis, and Oli agreed to make Prachanda Prime Minister in the first round, as per his demand.

Earlier in the day, Prachanda walked out of the Nepali Congress-led pre-poll alliance after Deuba rejected his bid to become the Prime Minister in the first round. Deuba and Prachanda had earlier reached a **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

PAGE 1 ANCHOR**SUJIT BISOIYI**
ROURKELA, DECEMBER 25

WHEN CHIEF Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for a new hockey stadium at Rourkela on February 16, 2021 – in the middle of a pandemic – and announced that it would be a second venue for the Men's FIH Hockey World Cup, many, even within the government, were sceptical about its timely completion. So much so that the International Hockey Federation had to give the state a deadline of November 30 to complete the main structure and lay the turf.

For two years since then, over 1,200 migrant workers – many of them from Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal – worked round the clock in three shifts to construct the stadium. And less than three weeks before the first match, the grand saucer-shaped steel structure, with a seating capacity of around 21,000, stands tall over 16 acres of land.

The Chief Minister is expected to inaugurate the structure, the country's biggest hockey stadium, early in January. Along with the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, it will host the World Cup from January 13 to 29. A total of 20 matches will be

played in the new stadium to be named after freedom fighter and tribal icon Birs Munda.

At the stadium site, workers continue to toil round the clock to put things together. Though the stadium work has already been completed and the ground was used for a practice match between junior teams of India and South Korea, large cranes have been deployed to fix the aluminium facades and glass windows, and finish other structural work. Some other workers were racing against time to complete roads, lawns, parking lots and other ancillary work on the stadium premises.



The Rourkela hockey stadium, India's biggest with a seating capacity of 21,000, will be inaugurated early January. Sujit Bisoiy

Sabarish, the project manager at the site, said they built the stadium in just 15 months as they started the work in August 2021.

"When we started, the patch of land was a jungle with thousands of large trees and bushes, which has now been turned into the country's largest stadium. We faced several difficulties while carrying out work with Covid regulations. Transportation of materials, especially steels which were transported from Bhilai and the synthetic turfs which were imported from Germany, was also a challenge," said Sabarish.

The Monsoon rainfall also affected the work for several months.

Around 3,600 tonnes of structural steel and 4,000 tonnes of TMT steel were used to build the stadium. Each seat has been designed to provide an uninterrupted view and spectators will be closer to the pitch than at any other hockey stadium in the world, claimed an engineer without wishing to be named.

The state's BJD government has not given any official figure on the amount spent for building the stadium at Rourkela. Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera, in a written reply on November 24,

said that a total of Rs 875 crore has been spent for construction of Birs Munda Hockey Stadium and upgradation of the Kalinga Stadium. An official said over Rs 500 crore has been spent to build the new stadium.

Unlike other cities, players will not have to travel much in Rourkela during the event as their accommodation, practice pitch, main stadium, swimming pool and gym are located in close proximity. The newly developed airport is also adjacent to the stadium.

Considering the limitations in the hospitality sector in the steel city, the Odisha **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**



Police sources said the statements of all those present on the set of the TV serial and Sharma's personal staff would be recorded. Sharma started her career as a child actor. She also featured in *Baar Baar Dekho* and *Fitoor* (as the young Katrina Kaif). Popularly known for his role as the young Akbar in TV serial *Jodha Akbar*, Khan appeared in other shows like *Silsila Pyaar Ka*, and *Ek Thi Rani Ek Tha Raavan*.

SERVICES HIT FOR AN HOUR ON MAGENTA LINE

Delivery drone carrying vials of blood falls on Metro tracks

EXPRESSNEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A DELIVERY drone, carrying a box filled with vials of blood, fell on the tracks of the Delhi Metro’s Magenta Line on Sunday afternoon, causing panic and disrupting services on the line for nearly an hour.

According to officials, the services on the line were closed down as there was concern regarding a security breach. The line connects Janakpuri to Noida’s Botanical Garden station and is one of the longest lines in DMRC’s network. The section that was impacted because of the drone was between the Jasola Vihar/Shaaheen Bagh to Botanical Garden stations.

The drone fell on the line near the Jasola Vihar/Shaaheen Bagh station around 2.45 pm. “Services are not available between Jasola Vihar Shaaheen Bagh to Botanical Garden due to security reasons,” DMRC said in a tweet in the afternoon.

Services restarted around 3.45 pm, before which police were called to examine the drone. “We were alerted that an



The drone fell on the line near Jasola Vihar/Shaaheen Bagh station around 2.45 pm. ANI

unidentified object, that looked like a drone, was present on the tracks. As per protocol, we halted the service and called police. They examined the drone and after some time cleared the stretch,” said a source.

Police, meanwhile, said the drone belongs to a private pharma company based in Noida and accidentally fell on the tracks. “It was carrying a box filled with vials of blood. There was no other object. The pharma company has all the papers and required licences for the drones.

They use drones to supply medicines or carry samples at times,” said a senior police officer. No case has been registered in the matter yet, police said.

In June, the Indian Council for Medical Research released a guidance document for use of drones in healthcare. It was based on trials conducted in parts of Manipur and Nagaland, where drones were used to deliver Covid-19 vaccines, vaccines used in routine immunisation programs, antenatal care medicines, multi-vitamins, syringes and gloves.

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

AFTER ROOFTOP panels, the Delhi government has come up with a new proposal to generate electricity through solar energy by installing ‘floating solar farms’ in lakes, water bodies and ponds across the city. While the project has been started in Telangana and Visakhapatnam, it will be the first in Delhi, said officials.

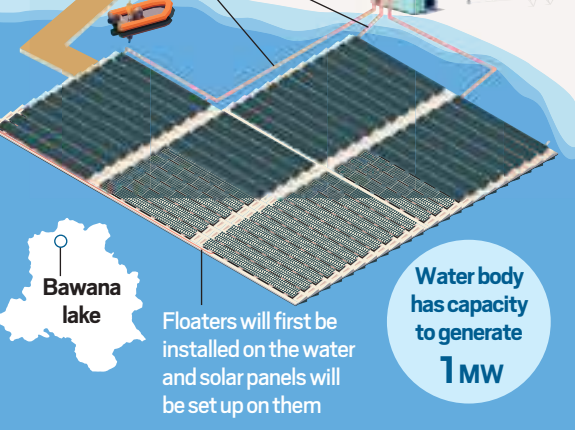
The power department has decided to start the project on a pilot basis at Outer Delhi’s Bawana lake. “We are working on a proposal to install floating solar panels on water bodies such as on the Yamuna at Wazirabad and several ponds and lakes, wherever possible. These panels can be installed on natural water bodies and man-made lakes. But it will require running water with good flow, only then can it successfully generate electricity,” said a senior Delhi government official.

“Bawana lake comes under the Delhi government and we already have our power plant, so installation process, including permission and required clearance

THE PROPOSED PLAN

A wire rope between the floaters and solar panels will be connected to a transformer across the water body

Electricity produced from the floating solar panels will be stored in the transformer and the grid and will then be distributed accordingly



from departments such as DJB won’t take time,” said the official. The official said the water

body at Bawana has a capacity to generate about 1 MW power: “The Bawana power plant has

EXPLAINED
The benefits

Floating solar panels are cheaper and more efficient than rooftop ones and don’t need land to be acquired to install photovoltaic panels. They reduce water evaporation, thereby saving more water for hydropower generation.

1,500-1,600 MW capacity, and big plants have ancillary power requirements. So, power produced during the pilot will be used to meet requirements of the plant.”

The panels will be installed through IPGCL. Explaining the process, an official said: “Floaters will first be installed on the water and solar panels will be set up on them... A wire rope between the floaters and solar panels will be connected to a transformer across the water body... Electricity produced from panels will be stored in the transformer and grid and will be distributed accordingly.”

According to officials, floating solar panels are cheaper and

more efficient than rooftop ones. A solar expert said, “As there is scarcity of open land in Delhi, installing solar panels in lakes and reservoirs will be beneficial as the water flow here is also stationary. But it depends on which model the government picks. There are multiple models... floaters are costlier than other models.”

A study titled ‘Floating solar PV to reduce water evaporation in water-stressed regions and powering water pumping: Case study Jordan’, published in the Energy Conversion and Management journal in May, also looked at correlation between floating solar panels and evaporation from large waterbodies. It said the system installed on a reservoir in Jordan, which faces extreme water scarcity, led to reduction of over 40% in evaporation and produced 425 MWh of electricity annually.

Power department officials added, “Once the proposal is presented, it will be moved to the minister in-charge for approval. Tendering process will then begin; it will take about 6 months to be installed.” The government has so far generated 230 MW through rooftop panels.

Gurgaon multi-cr heist: Cops recover Rs 4.12 cr from village in Jhajjar

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
GURGAON, DECEMBER 25

DAYS AFTER Vikas Lagarpuria, alleged gangster and mastermind of a multi-crore heist in Gurgaon, was arrested by Haryana Police Special Task Force (STF), police said Rs 4.12 crore in cash was recovered from a village in Jhajjar.

STF officials said the total recovery in the case now stands at 9.9 crore, including gold and foreign currency. A total of 19 accused have been arrested in relation to the case, so far.

An STF officer said, “During questioning, it was found that Lagarpuria’s associates had hidden over Rs 4.12 crore in a private property near his village in Jhajjar at his behest. Based on the input, teams raided the place and recovered the cash. During questioning, he has admitted to his involvement in

stealing over Rs 23 crore. Out of his share from the stolen money, he claims to have invested some in property and some on his expenses and court cases.”

Lagarpuria was detained from IGI Airport by central intelligence agencies on December 14 after he arrived from Dubai, following which a team of Haryana Police STF got his custody after coordinating with agencies. The STF had said he was arrested from the Delhi-Gurgaon border on December 15 morning.

Lagarpuria is alleged to be the mastermind and main conspirator in the heist case in which “over Rs 25-30 crore cash” is suspected to have been stolen from the office/flat of a society in Gurgaon in August 2021. Officials said he was taken on 10-day remand and will be produced in a district court Monday.

NEHRU MEMORIAL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY
Teen Murti House, New Delhi-110011
(Autonomous Body set up by the Govt. of India)

The Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML), an Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Culture, seeks qualified candidates for appointment to the post of Junior Curator, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya.

Name of the post : Junior Curator
No of post : 1 (one)
Category : UR
Pay Scale : Level-8 (47600-151100)

Eligibility: For details like qualifications and experience required, general instructions etc., please visit NMML **website: www.nehrumemorial.nic.in**.

Interested candidates may send their applications along with self-attested copies of educational qualifications and experience certificates, etc. to this office address i.e. The Director, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi-110011 so as to reach latest by 27th January, 2023.

davp-09142/12/0047/2223

उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण

क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय: सी-2, चतुर्थ तल, महालक्ष्मी मॉल, आर०डी०सी०, राजनगर, गाजियाबाद
E-mail: rmghaziabad@upsidc.com, Website: onlineupsidc.com

परिचयना कार्यालय: प्रशासनिक भवन, सैक्टर-बी-3, दिल्ली-सहारनपुर रोड, टाउन दिल्ली, सिग्नेचर सिटी, गाजियाबाद; E-mail: potonica@upsidc.com, Website: onlineupsidc.com

उत्तर प्रदेश इण्डस्ट्रीयल एरिया डवलपमेंट एक्ट-1976 की धारा-7 में उत्तर प्रदेशीय सरकार द्वारा प्रकाशित विधायी परिशिष्ट भाग-2, खण्ड(क) संख्या 15/79-वि-1-22-क-3-2022, खण्डक, 7 जनवरी, 2022 अधिसूचना के अन्तर्गत किये गये संशोधन के क्रम में प्राधिकरण द्वारा विकसित औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों के समस्त ऐसे आवासीय जिनको औद्योगिक इकाई और /अथवा किसी सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी / सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी सम्बन्धित सेवा इकाई(सॉफ्टवेयर / आर्गेनाइजेशन) मूल्यांकन को आवंटन 28.07.2020 से 08 वर्ष पूर्व किया गया था तथा वर्तमान समय तक उक्त आवंटियों द्वारा प्राधिकरण के मानकों (क्रियाशीलता /न्यूनतम अधिभाग)के अनुसार मूल्यांकन पर इकाई स्थापित कर संचालित नहीं की गयी है, को जारी नोटिसों /विज्ञापित के क्रम में अवगत कराना है कि उपरोक्त प्राक्कानों के अन्तर्गत उनके पक्ष में किये गये मूल्यांकन का आवंटन 31.12.2022 को स्वतः रद्द हुआ माना जायगा तथा उक्त भूमि प्राधिकरण में स्थिति से जायगी।

यदि आवंटि द्वारा प्राधिकरण के मानकों (क्रियाशीलता / न्यूनतम अधिभाग)के अनुसार इकाई स्थापित कर संचालित कर ली गयी है और आपके द्वारा प्राधिकरण को वर्तमान समय तक तत्सम्बन्ध में सूचित नहीं किया है तो उक्त की सूचना दिनांक 31.12.2022 से पूर्व सम्बन्धित कार्यालयों में उपलब्ध कराना सुनिश्चित करें।

क्षेत्रीय प्रबन्धक / परियोजना अधिकारी, यूपीसीडी

उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग
हनुमान
फोन नं०-249484

मंत्रालय - 314/37/च.कु.प्रसा./पुलिस आरक्षी,पी०ए०सी०,आई०आर०पी०,
अग्निशामक परीक्षा-2021/अतिथीयन-2/22-23 दिनांक: 23 दिसम्बर, 2022

विज्ञापित
एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है दिनांक: 18 दिसम्बर, 2022 को आयोजित उत्तराखण्ड पुलिस विभाग के अन्तर्गत आरक्षी/पी०ए०सी०/आई०आर०पी०/अग्निशामक परीक्षा-2021 के अन्तर्गत सामान्य हिन्दी, सामान्य ज्ञान/सामान्य अध्ययन एवं उत्तराखण्ड से संबंधित विविध ज्ञान की लिखित परीक्षा के प्रश्नपत्र की वार्डों सीरीज (A, B, C & D) की उत्तरकुंजी को उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग की वेबसाइट www.psc.uk.gov.in पर अन्यापितों के सूचनाएं प्रसारित कर दिया गया है। यदि किसी अन्यापित को वार्डों सीरीज के किसी प्रश्न एवं उत्तर विकल्प पर कोई आपत्ति है तो वह आयोग की वेबसाइट पर **Online Answer Key Objection** हेतु दिये गये लिंक पर जाकर अपनी आपत्तियों को आयोग द्वारा जारी विज्ञापित निर्देशों के अनुसार दिनांक: 26 दिसम्बर, 2022 से 01 जनवरी, 2023 (समय वार्डों के 23:59:59 बजे तक) तक दर्ज करा सकते हैं।

आयोग की वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध लिंक **Online Answer Key Objection** के अधिनियम ई-नैन, डाक अथवा अन्य किसी माध्यम से प्रेषित आपत्तियों एवं अनियमितियों के उपरान्त प्रेषित आपत्तियों पर कोई विचार नहीं किया जायगा। उत्तर कुंजी के संबंध आपत्ति दर्ज किये जाने से पूर्व आयोग की वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध विज्ञापित निर्देश सम्बन्धी विस्तृत विज्ञापित संख्या:- 313/37/च.कु.प्रसा./पुलिस आरक्षी,पी०ए०सी०,आई०आर०पी०,अग्निशामक परीक्षा-2021/अतिथीयन-2/22-23 दिनांक: 23 दिसम्बर, 2022 का अध्ययन अवश्य करें।

(गिरधारी सिंह रावत) सचिव

Honoring the courage and supreme sacrifice of
Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji
on the occasion of
Veer Baal Diwas
with a
Historic Congregation

■ 3000 children to hold a march past ■ Shabad Keertan by children

26 December 2022 | 11:00 am
Major Dhyana Chand National Stadium, Delhi

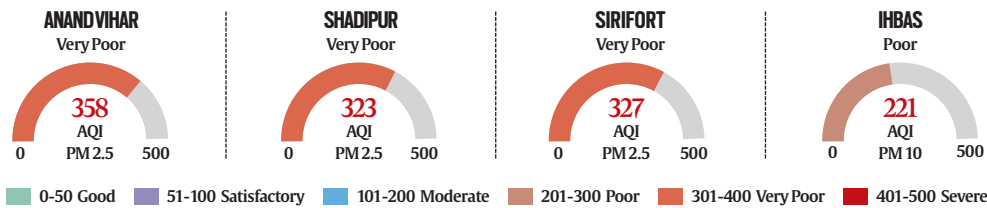
Nationwide activities to mark the day

- Announcement of PM National Children Bravery Award winners
- Address to the nation on the life & sacrifices made by Sahibzaade by various leaders & dignitaries
- 2000 child care centers to hold digital exhibitions and special meetings
- Schools and colleges all over the country to organize quizzes, essay writing competitions, short film exhibitions, and special assemblies
- Digital exhibition at various public places like railway stations, airports, and petrol pumps on the supreme sacrifice made by Sahibzaade

ALL ARE CORDIALLY INVITED!

“ Sahibzaada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzaade Fateh Singh Ji chose death instead of deviating from the noble principles of religion. 'Veer Baal Diwas' is a fitting tribute to the courage of the Sahibzaade and their quest for justice ”
Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Watch the live telecast of this program on DD News
Special Support: Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee



S K Y W A T C H
FORECAST: December 26
Mainly clear sky. Dense fog in the morning. Cold wave conditions at many places
MAX: 19 2.4°C below normal
MIN: 4 3.9°C below normal

2 cops held for ‘extorting’ gold from 2 passengers at Delhi Airport

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

TWO DELHI Police head constables have been suspended and arrested for allegedly threatening and extorting gold from two passengers at IGI Airport’s Terminal 3. Both passengers had come back from Dubai when the accused allegedly threatened them and took their gold. Police said the items recovered cost around Rs 50.6 lakh.

The accused, Robin Singh and Gaurav Kumar, were posted as security personnel at T3. As per the FIR, the complainant, aged 24, left India in 2020 to work at a construction company in Qatar but returned after his employers refused to pay him. He then went to Muscat to find work but again decided to leave over the work conditions. In Muscat, he met a man who gave him gold weighing around 600 gm and asked him to deliver it in Delhi in exchange for money, the FIR claimed.

On December 20, when the complainant arrived at the airport, the two policemen allegedly stopped him near the forecourt area. “They stopped my taxi and forced me to sit in their police gypsy. I was taken to the police station where they asked me about the gold. They then took me to a forest area where they beat me up and threatened me. I was scared and gave them the gold...They broke my SIM and put my phone on reset mode. They gave me some cash and booked a cab for me. They threatened me not to tell anyone about the incident,” the complainant alleged.

On the same day, the accused allegedly took 400 gm gold from another passenger, a businessman who had come from Dubai. “They stopped and searched me and took all my gold,” he alleged.

Police clubbed the complaints and lodged an FIR of extortion and mischief. The complainants identified the accused and they were arrested Sunday after an enquiry. “As per our information, they targeted passengers who would sneak gold items into the airport. We have arrested and suspended them...,” said an officer.

DAY TEMP DROPPED TO 16.2°C

Christmas Day coldest of the season so far, cold wave expected today

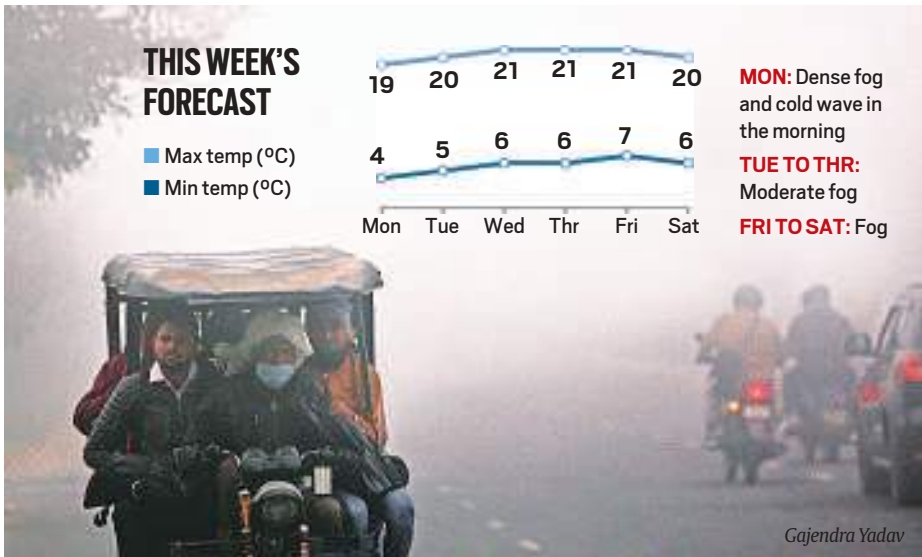
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

DELHI SHIVERED on Sunday with the day temperature falling to 16.2 degrees Celsius, five degrees below the normal for this time of the year, making Christmas the coldest day of the season so far.

The morning (minimum) temperature was recorded at 5.3 degrees Celsius, a degree below the normal at Safdarjung, which is Delhi’s official observatory.

At the Ridge observatory, however, the minimum temperature dipped to 3 degrees Celsius and to 3.5 degrees Celsius at Ayanagar. During the day, Jafarpur and Mungeshpur were the coldest with maximum temperatures of 13.7 and 13.4 degrees Celsius.

According to IMD officials, cold wave conditions are expected in Delhi on Monday morning, with the minimum temperature expected to drop to 4 degrees Celsius. Dense fog is



also expected in the morning. The maximum temperature is expected to be around 19 degrees Celsius.

Delhi saw its coldest December day since 1901 three years ago (2019) when the day

temperature dipped to 9.4 degrees Celsius at a time when most of north India was reeling under a persistent cold wave.

This winter, however, was warmer than usual till the second week of December, with no

western disturbances to bring snow to the Himalayan regions and no rains to the plains. As a result, the days were sunny, bright and warm. However, two back-to-back western disturbances are expected to keep the next week

cold.

According to IMD, the western disturbance is expected to bring light rainfall and snowfall over parts of the Western Himalayan Region on Monday. More rain and snow are expected over isolated parts of the area on December 29 and 30.

“Dense to very dense fog is likely in many parts of Punjab, Haryana and north Rajasthan during the next 24 hours and gradual reduction in intensity and spread thereafter is likely because of reduction in moisture in lower tropospheric levels over the region. However, dense fog in isolated pockets is likely over the region during the subsequent 3-4 days... No significant change in minimum temperatures is likely over plains of Northwest India during the next 24 hours and the rise by about 2-3 degrees Celsius is expected thereafter,” IMD said in a statement.

The Delhi government has ordered the closure of schools for the winter break from January 1.

Crossed-out pics of kids, threat calls: Dance teacher tries to extort cash from client

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 24

A DANCE teacher, along with his associate, has been arrested for allegedly attempting to extort money from a family whose children he taught by threatening to kill the kids. The accused have been identified as Durga Dutt Singh (27) and Vishnu Mishra (28). Police said Mishra had been teaching the complainant’s family members for the last decade.

According to Special Commissioner (Crime) Ravindra Singh Yadav, the complainant, who lives in Dayanand Vihar, received a message on December 20 with a crossed-out photo of his son and daughter. He was then called by a man claiming to be a gangster who was aware of his family details. The complainant then cut the call and blocked the number. Soon after, the same photos were sent to his wife. A message accompanying them claimed the sender was a gangster and threatened to kill the children. She blocked the number and told her husband.

Yadav said the complainant then called the number from another phone. The accused, however, called him back on his own phone and demanded Rs 30 lakh, saying he would kill the children before 11 am the next day if they failed to give the money. He said he would provide account numbers for the payment.

Raids and enquiries were carried out in Gurgaon, Delhi, Noida and trans-Yamuna area. Police said Singh was arrested in New Ashok Nagar, while Mishra was arrested from Dadri.

Police said Singh made the extortion calls, while Mishra was familiar with the family on account of the classes. He counted many families from wealthy areas in East Delhi as his clients. Police said he was in demand at weddings and other functions.



ART DISTRICT

A woman passes by street art at Lodhi Road in Delhi. Praveen Khanna

Couple strangled: Cops claim juvenile hatched murder plot

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DECEMBER 25, GHAZIABAD

TWO MEN were arrested and a 12-year-old juvenile was apprehended for allegedly killing a senior citizen couple in Ghaziabad’s Loni last month. Police said the motive for the murder was money as the accused were aware the couple had a scrap business. Police claimed it was the juvenile who allegedly hatched the plot. A fourth accused is currently absconding in the case.

The incident was reported on November 22 when family members had found Ibrahim (65) and Hazra (55) strangled to death. The couple lived with Ibrahim’s daughter from his first marriage and their children.

According to DCP (Rural) Iraj Raja, police had narrowed down the suspects using human intelligence and informants. They were caught after police found

out they had been in the area at the time of the murder.

DCP Raja said, “The juvenile had planned the whole incident. He had come before to sell iron on a few occasions and knew the couple had a scrap business. The accused had gone there on the pretext of selling scrap around 4 am and planned to murder the couple and steal the money.”

Police said the juvenile knocked on the door and the woman answered. When she came out, she was murdered first. Her husband, who was sleeping inside, was strangled next. The accused then fled after stealing Rs 50,000, a silver chain which belonged to the man, and a phone. The chain and phone have been recovered, along with Rs 12,000.

While no criminal history of the accused has been found so far, police are looking into their native place in Bihar for any prior crimes they might have committed.

Ghaziabad police bring Xmas cheer to runaway 12-year-old

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DECEMBER 25, GHAZIABAD

ACROSS THE world, many countries have different names and costumes for Santa Claus — but for 12-year-old Shivam in Ghaziabad, Santa wore the khaki of the police uniform. After police found him trying to run away to his native place, they sent him home after cutting a cake with him.

According to Kaushambi Station House Officer Prabhat Kumar Dixit, police had found the child, who was in his school uniform, walking on the highway. When they brought him to the police station, the distraught child told them he had wanted to go to school in a Santa Claus costume. His mother, however, had scolded him, sending him to school in his uniform. He was also upset as his birthday had not been celebrated, while had seen other children celebrating their birthdays.

The SHO said, “The child’s father paints houses, and his



Police officers gifted the child a Santa Claus costume

mother is a domestic worker. As his parents do not make much money, they could not buy a Santa Claus costume for him. Instead of going to school, the child intended to go on the highway to his native place in Bilaspur, where other relatives are staying. Before sending him back with his parents, we decided to help him celebrate Christmas.”

He further said, “As policemen, we also are human and we felt sorry for him. We saw that we could do something for him,

and we decided to do it.”

Police officers at the station then gifted him the Santa Claus costume that he had wanted all along.

The child’s mother, Geetha, said, “There was a function in school to celebrate Christmas. I scolded him and told him to go in his uniform. He became upset and didn’t go to school... he is happy with the gift from the police. I never imagined that police would give a gift and cut a cake with him.”

AAP exploring how to keep MCD ward and zone committees in line

MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

THE AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) is exploring options to limit powers of zonal and ward committee heads in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, it is learnt.

AAP, which won 134 out of 250 wards in the MCD elections earlier this month, has already named Shelly Oberoi for the post of mayor and Aaley Mohammad Iqbal, son of AAP MLA Shoaib Iqbal, for the post of deputy mayor. While AAP may be able to elect the mayor and deputy mayor because they have a majority in the house, it is the zonal committees where it will face opposition from the BJP.

There are 12 zone committees in the civic body, which are governed by a ward committee. Their role is to make administrative decisions.

While AAP is expected to get its pick of the ward committee heads in 8-9 zones, at least four wards — Keshavpuram, Shahdara South, Shahdara North and Najafgarh — will go in the favour of the BJP since the party has won more wards than AAP in these zones.

“We are looking at making some financial and structural changes in the ward committees. Over the years, they have been granted some financial powers. After the election of the mayor and deputy mayor on January 6, we will look into curtailing financial powers of these committees to ensure work is

not hampered in areas where we don’t have AAP leaders heading them. We don’t want one zone to suffer because the two parties are at odds with each other,” said a senior party leader.

The ward committees also have another function, which is to elect members to the standing committee, which is the key decision-making body of the MCD. The mayor is the nominal head of the civic body and it is the standing committee that wields most power.

The ward committees comprise the councillors from the zone and nominated members, called aldermen, who are experts in different fields. The L-G can nominate 10 aldermen and they have voting powers in ward committees.

Sources in MCD, meanwhile, said that curtailing powers of the ward committees may not be easy. “Several functions of the zone committees, such as electing standing committee members as well as some administrative functions are written into the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act. In cases where there is some ambiguity, AAP may still face problems because the MCD comes under the Centre, via the L-G,” said an official.

The AAP-led Delhi government has been at loggerheads with the L-G, with both accusing the other of exceeding their power and flouting rules. Most recently, the AAP government accused the L-G of interfering in its functioning as bureaucrats were not cooperating with ministers.

Kejriwal does not play Muslim card: Aaley Iqbal, AAP’s deputy mayor pick

AISWARYARAJ
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

A DAY after he was selected by the AAP as its deputy mayor candidate in the MCD, three-time councillor Aaley Muhammad Iqbal told *The Indian Express* he might become the first Muslim to be nominated to the post in many years.

“The last person for the post from our community was in 1977. This sends out a message that AAP is a party Muslims can trust, and their rights will be protected. (CM) Arvind Kejriwal ji chose me because I am a senior councillor; this is my hat trick (election win), and that is not a mean feat. I won with the highest margin (in MCD polls). Calling this appeasement or tokenism is not right, it forgoes my achievement, and Kejriwal ji does not play the ‘Muslim card,’” he told *The Indian Express*.

Aaley won from the Chandani Mahal ward with a margin of 17,134 votes, the highest in the MCD polls.

Attributing his victory to the trust of the people in his ward, he said: “I am a workaholic and I’m always available to lend a ear to people’s grievances in the walled city. The population is mostly lower and middle class... Like my father, I have always been there for them.” His father is AAP MLA



Aaley Muhammad Iqbal

Shoaib Iqbal, a six-time MLA from Matia Mahal who joined the party in 2020, along with his son.

A seasoned politician, Aaley has had a long career, vacillating between different parties — he contested as an independent in 2012, aged 22; in 2017, on a Congress ticket, and in 2022, after he was fielded by AAP.

Aaley said his brief stint with Congress made him realise how powerless they were. “I knew if I had to do something, I would have to join those in power.”

On the AAP’s poor show in Northeast Delhi in the MCD polls — the first election after the 2020 riots — he said there was so much to be done in those wards where the party put up a sub-par performance. “We have to go to the ground, talk to people and analyse what went wrong. Especially in Northeast Delhi. However, AAP managed to pull wards in Chandni Chowk constituency under its sway.”

TALES OF A SCAM

The men who counted trains at New Delhi rly station — and lost Rs 2.6 cr

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

IT WAS a simple job — stand at the New Delhi Railway Station for six-eight hours every day and count each and every train that passes through. And that’s exactly what a group of 10-odd men from Tamil Nadu’s Virudhunagar district did every day, for around 30 days, before realising the “job” they were doing — and one they had paid anywhere between Rs 2 lakh and 20 lakh to land — was fake.

“Since the pandemic, we have been suffering and looking for job opportunities to support our family. Last year, around December, I requested my father and my sister’s husband for money after our neighbour told us he had met a man named Vikas Rana, who works with the Northern Railways. We went to Delhi for training — all we had to do was count trains. We were sceptical of the activity, but the accused was a good friend of our neighbour. I feel ashamed now; I lost more than Rs 12 lakh,” said Jagadeesh (25), a BA graduate from Madurai

who was one of those duped.

He, along with 24 others, were cheated of a total of Rs 2.6 crore by scammers on the pretext of a job at the railway station. A case was lodged last month by Delhi Police’s Economic Offences Wing on the complaint of an ex-serviceman, M Subbusamy (78). He told police he wanted to help the unemployed youth in the area, but ended up losing everyone’s money.

He said, “I met a man named Sivaraman in Coimbatore, who said he knew all MPs and ministers. I had only asked three men



in the area to apply for a TTE job, but others also came. We met Vikas Rana, who said he will look after training. They trusted me and sent the money. I would transfer the amount to Rana’s accounts. As soon as I came to know about the scam, I informed the police.”

“Rana would say he would give jobs as TTE, clerks, managers etc. I escorted them to

The men were promised jobs at the railway station.
Archive

Delhi and accompanied them. Rana and his associates would take us for fake medical examinations and registration. After the training, I called Rana but he didn’t take my calls,” said Subbusamy.

Senthil (25), another victim of the scam, said, “We were made to pay Rs 20 lakh. I was happy when I heard about the job this year. I asked my father to send me money and left Madurai. Some of us were told we would be employed as TTEs or traffic assistants, and needed to know everything about the station. Everyone

did the same training and counted trains for hours. I wondered why Rana wouldn’t take us inside trains or offices, but didn’t question him. We were never introduced to an officer. We stayed in small rooms nearby and paid for everything ourselves.”

Most of the men are BA and engineering graduates. Many, when contacted, refused to talk about Rana or what had transpired.

Another victim, aged 24, said he borrowed money from a distant relative for the job. “I could only manage to pay Rs 3 lakh. We

would sit on the platform for hours. There was nobody to look after us. Rana would come outside the station and take money. After April, I suspected something was wrong. We approached railway officers, who said the job training was fake and all appointment letters are forged. We were devastated and came back.”

Delhi Police said they have registered a case and are analysing call detail records, forged letters, transactions and CCTV footage to ascertain the identity of the gang members and arrest them.

Govt & Politics



DISCORDANT NOTE

ON A day the BJP remembered the contributions of late former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary, a Congress member's tweets set off a war of words. Gaurav Pandhi, an AICC coordinator with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's office, tweeted that Vajpayee had boycotted the Quit India Movement and worked as a British informant. His tweets came hours before the Congress announced that Rahul Gandhi would be visiting Vajpayee's memorial on Monday to pay tributes, leading BJP leaders to cry foul. BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla called for Pandhi's sacking if Rahul truly respects the former PM.

CHATHAM HOUSE RULES

INSTITUTE FOR Defence Studies and Analyses this week held the YB Chavan memorial lecture, but it came up with a twist: Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan's lecture was to be under Chatham House rules. The media was kept away, and so much so that IDSA members from the media fraternity were also dis-invited. This created a bit of displeasure among the members of the Institute, which is funded by the Defence Ministry.

THE SCRAMBLE

BY PUBLICISING the status of landfill remediation plans prepared by states and Union Territories under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry has set off a competition among them. The ministry's dumpsite dashboard went live about a month ago, with details of how many legacy landfills a state has and the progress of their remediation plans. Within days of the information being made public and media reports on it, states scrambled to update their data to show further progress. Prior to the dashboard, the number of landfills sites in the country and the amount of garbage piled up was not clearly known.

President leaves on 5-day winter sojourn today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

PRESIDENT DROUPADI Murmu will visit Srisailem Temple in Andhra Pradesh on Monday and inaugurate projects related to the development of the shrine under PRASHAD scheme of the Ministry of Tourism. She will also visit Sri Shivaji Spoorthi Kendram at Srisailem, before reaching Rashtrapati Nilayam, for winter sojourn from December 26 to 30.

The President will address the students and faculty members of Keshav Memorial Educational Society in Hyderabad on Tuesday, and visit Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy to address the Officer Trainees of Indian Police Service.

She will also inaugurate the Wide Plate Mill of Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited in Hyderabad.

On December 28, President Murmu will visit Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamyvari Devasthanam, Bhadrachalam, and lay the foundation stone for the development of tourism infrastructure at Bhadrachalam Temple under PRASHAD scheme.

Ballari mining baron Reddy launches new party; BJP says won't be threat in Karnataka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BELAGAVI, DECEMBER 25

MINING BARON and former Karnataka minister Gali Janardhan Reddy on Sunday announced a new political party and said he would contest the coming Assembly election from Gangavathi constituency in Koppal district. Minister for Tourism and Infrastructure Development in the BJP-led Karnataka government from 2008 to 2011, Reddy is being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for alleged illegal extraction and money laundering.

Reddy said at a press conference that the Kalyana Rajya Pragathi Paksha, his party, would



Gali Janardhan Reddy

follow the ideals of social reformer Basavanna and stand against "the divisive politics pursued in the name of religion and caste".

Speculation was rife that Reddy would launch a new political outfit after he met Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy earlier this month. Though BJP leaders maintained

Replied to Gov's queries, now she must clear quota Bills, says Baghel

JAYPRAKASH S NAIDU
RAIPUR, DECEMBER 25

CHHATTISGARH Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday told the media that his government has sent its reply to all the 10 questions raised by Governor Anusuiya Uikey, who has yet not given her assent to the reservation amendment Bills passed in the Assembly earlier this month.

"We have sent a reply to the Governor even though such an arrangement is not there in the Constitution. She should have taken replies from the departments concerned. But the reply has been sent. Now she should sign (on the Bill)," said the Chief Minister.

An official in the Governor's house in Raipur told The Indian Express that Uikey is on a visit to Bilaspur and will return on Sunday evening after which a comment can be expected from her.

The Chief Minister and the Governor got into a tug of war earlier this month over the reserva-



CM Bhupesh Baghel and Governor Anusuiya Uikey

tion amendment Bills proposing to take the total quota in the state to 76 per cent. On December 2, the Legislative Assembly unanimously passed two Bills — Chhattisgarh Public Service (Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes Reservation) Amendment Bill and Chhattisgarh Educational Institutions (Reservation in admission) Amendment Bill — related to reservation in government jobs and admission to educational institutions in proportion to population of different categories. The Bills propose 32 per cent reservation for Scheduled Tribes, 27 per cent for Other Backward Classes and 13 per cent

EXPLAINED The quota face-off

THE BILLS cleared by the Chhattisgarh Assembly aim to hike the total quota in the state to 76 per cent. Governor Anusuiya Uikey has cited the Chhattisgarh High Court order, refusing to increase reservation to 58%, to question the urgency and exceptional circumstances for passing the Bills. The delay in her assent has given rise to speculation of yet another CM-Governor confrontation in an Opposition-ruled State.

quota for Scheduled Castes, while 4 per cent has been provisioned for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in public employment and admissions in educational institutions. The Bills are pending with Governor Uikey who has sought to know the basis on which the state government is planning to

increase the reservation beyond the 50 per cent ceiling.

The 10 answers sought by Uikey include details of quantitative data on SC/ST communities, if collected by the government, before tabling the Bill; any study or extraordinary situation compelling the state government to hike reservation beyond the 50 per cent ceiling; data on how SC/ST are deprived of social, economic, and educational growth in the state; any committee report to support the Bills, among others.

Reacting to Baghel's statement, BJP MLA Brijmohan Agrawal said the state government should make public its reply to the Governor on the reservation bills.

The issue of reservation flared up after the Chhattisgarh High Court in September this year set aside the Raman Singh-headed state government's 2012 order to raise the quota to 58 per cent in government jobs and admissions in educational institutions, observing that reservation exceeding the 50 per cent ceiling "was unconstitutional".

CAG flags risk of data tampering in Assam NRC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 25

THE COMPTROLLER and Auditor General of India has flagged the "risk of data tampering" in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam, due to "improper" software development related to data capture and correction during the updation process of the citizenship document.

A highly secure and reliable software was required to be developed for the NRC updation exercise, but during the audit, "lack of proper planning" came to the fore.

The updated final NRC, which validates bonafide Indian

citizens of Assam, was released on August 31, 2019, with total 3,11,21,004 names included of the 3,30,27,661 applicants, though it is yet to be notified.

The CAG submitted a report for the year ended in 2020 on the last day of the winter session of the Assam Assembly, Saturday, which pointed out that 215 software utilities were added in a "haphazard manner" to the core software.

It was done "without following the due process of either software development or selection of vendor through eligibility assessment following a national tendering," the report said.

"Haphazard development of software and utilities for NRC

data capture and correction posed the risk of data tampering, without leaving any audit trail, which could have ensured accountability for the veracity of NRC data," the CAG report said.

It maintained that the objective of preparing a valid error-free NRC has not been met despite entailing huge expenditure to the state exchequer.

According to the report, there have been irregularities in the utilisation of funds, including excess and inadmissible payment to vendors. The CAG report on compliance audit of 'logistical arrangements for NRC updation project in Assam', recommended fixing responsibility on erring authorities

for the financial irregularities and penal action against M/s Wipro Limited, the system integrator, for violating Minimum Wages Act.

The NRC was updated in Assam under the supervision of a Supreme Court bench.

It noted that the initial project cost was estimated at Rs 288.18 crore when the NRC updation process had commenced in December 2014 and the deadline for completion was set for February 2015. The final draft of the document was, however, published in August 2019 and the project cost escalated to Rs 1,602.66 crore (expenditure of Rs 1,579.78 crore was reported), the CAG report said.



President Droupadi Murmu pays tribute to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth anniversary at his memorial in New Delhi on Sunday. Amit Mehra

Vajpayee contribution to India indelible: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to late former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 98th birth anniversary, recalling his "indelible contribution" to the country.

Along with President Droupadi Murmu, the PM, Home Minister Amit Shah, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and others visited Vajpayee's memorial, Sadaiv Atal, to pay floral tributes. The PM also paid homage to Vajpayee at an event in Parliament.

"Tributes to Atal Ji on his Jayanti. His contribution to India is indelible. His leadership and vision motivate millions of people," the PM tweeted.

Home Minister Amit Shah called Vajpayee's "patriotism, dutifulness and dedication". He tweeted that Vajpayee's life was dedicated to "taking the country back to its ultimate glory". "...By laying the foundation of a new era of development and good governance under his leadership, Atalji made the world aware of India's potential and instilled a sense of national pride in the public. Today, on his birth anniversary, I pay my respects to him," Shah said.

After coming to power in 2014,

MP ALLOTS LAND FOR MEMORIAL IN GWALIOR

Gwalior: Madhya Pradesh has allotted 4,050 hectares of land to build a memorial of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at his birthplace Gwalior, an official said Sunday. About 4,050 hectares of land was allotted for building a memorial of Vajpayee in Sirol, Gwalior Divisional Commissioner Deepak Singh said. **PTI**

the Modi government had announced that December 25 would be observed as Good Governance Day in honour of Vajpayee.

Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh compared Vajpayee's time as an MP to the latest session of Parliament, where Opposition's demands for a discussion on the India-China situation were not met. "Today is the birth anniversary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He was a first term MP when he co-signed a letter to Nehru requesting for Parliament to be convened earlier than scheduled to debate the Chinese invasion. Nehru agreed. Now, MPs can't even discuss the ongoing Chinese incursions," Ramesh tweeted.

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The EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

WELFARE'S PURPOSE SHOULD BE TO ELIMINATE, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, THE NEED FOR ITS OWN EXISTENCE.
—RONALD REAGAN

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

RIGHT RECIPE

Government has done well to rejig its free grain scheme.
New measure is physically and fiscally sustainable

THE NARENDRA MODI government has done the right thing by not extending the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) beyond December. The scheme, which provides 5 kg of foodgrains per month to about 81.35 crore people free of cost over and above their National Food Security Act (NFSA) entitlement of 5 kg per person per month at Rs 2-3/kg, was neither physically nor fiscally sustainable. A monthly ration of 10 kg (5 kg each under NFSA and PMGKAY) for 81.35 crore persons translates into nearly 100 million tonnes (mt) or over a third of India's total cereal production. The current stocks of rice and wheat in the Central pool, at 55.46 mt on December 1, are a third lower than a year ago. There isn't that much grain in the Food Corporation of India's warehouses today to distribute as was possible during the post-Covid lockdown period. And with economic activity normalising, there's no necessity either.

While discontinuing PMGKAY, the Modi government has, at the same time, decided to make available the 5 kg/person/month grains under NFSA free of cost for one year from January 2023. The fiscal implications shouldn't be too high; there's not much difference really between issuing 50 mt of wheat/rice at Rs 2-3/kg and giving it out free. Politically, it is a shrewd move replete with symbolism — which the ruling BJP will milk in the coming state elections and the general election in 2024. The NFSA, enacted in 2013 by the previous Congress-led UPA regime, made access to subsidised grain a legal right for up to three-fourths of India's rural and half of its urban population. The Modi government has taken it one step further. NFSA beneficiaries will, henceforth, receive not just subsidised grain but free grain. So long as this is limited to 5 kg — roughly half of the average monthly per capita cereal consumption as per the last National Sample Survey data for 2011-12 — it can be considered a reasonable entitlement.

If only 50 mt of grain is required under the NFSA, and another 10-15 mt for other welfare schemes plus a buffer stock, government agencies don't need to procure more than 60-65 mt annually. Actual procurement, however, has averaged 90-100 mt (55-60 mt rice and 35-40 mt wheat) in recent times, the last wheat marketing season being an anomaly due to a poor crop. The gap between the two is what has led to overflowing public godowns becoming the rule rather than the exception. It's time to dispense with the existing open-ended procurement of paddy and wheat at minimum support prices. All farm price support and input subsidies should be replaced with per-hectare income transfers, which will complement the limited grain entitlement for poor and vulnerable consumers under the NFSA.

NECESSARY DEBATE

Karnataka government stance on marital rape takes
forward the conversation on the sensitive subject

LAST WEEK, THE Karnataka government came out in support of putting a married man on trial for allegedly sexually assaulting his wife. In an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court, the state government has indicated that it does not disagree with the Karnataka High Court's decision in March this year, refusing to quash rape charges filed by a wife against her husband, defying the exception in law. The issue of criminalising marital rape is a crucial and necessary conversation that is taking shape in courts. The state government's stance is a welcome intervention in this debate at a time when the Centre is still to formulate its view.

Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code that defines rape carves out a crucial exception: "Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under eighteen years of age, is not rape." This immunity for married men in law prevents a wife from filing a case of rape against her husband. In this context, the Karnataka HC ruling draws a new line. Justice M Nagaprasanna's order while acknowledging the existing law defies it by calling out the "age-old...regressive" thought behind the provision. The ruling called on lawmakers to hear the "voices of silence" while holding that "rape is a rape" even if the accused is the husband. However, much of the reasoning in this case is couched in references to the grim facts of the case (the complaint alleges sexual assault of the man's child as well) narrated by the woman. The Supreme Court has stayed the Karnataka HC order but the case has revived the debate on marital rape. Before this ruling, in 2018, the Gujarat High Court also called for a relook at the marital rape immunity but quashed the charge of rape against the married man. In May this year, the Delhi High Court delivered a split verdict in a case where it examined the constitutionality of the marital rape immunity. A two-judge bench of Justices Hari Shankar and Rajiv Shakdar recorded diametrically opposite findings in the decision. Justice Shakdar's decision holding that the provision is unconstitutional because it impinges on the personal liberty and right to equality of a woman has set the ball rolling.

The issue is complex, especially since the dominant social consensus on the subject is shaped by a conservative understanding of marriage as an institution. But neither social mores nor the letter of law are set in stone. The ongoing conversation in the courts needs to resonate in legislative bodies considering the social sensitivities in the matter. Legislators tend to pass the buck to the judiciary on issues considered socially controversial — for instance, decriminalising homosexuality, adultery or reform in personal law. However, when the idea of change is filled with fears of misuse, legislation alone can carefully reflect on the issue and reach a nuanced conclusion.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



ANASTASIA PILIAVSKY

"WE HAVE NO fear. Nor should anyone in the world have it...Ukraine holds its lines and it will never surrender." These words were addressed by Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to all Americans on this year's darkest day, the winter solstice on December 22. Zelenskyy spent the previous day in Bakhmut, a frontline town in the Donbas where Ukrainian soldiers have held their lines since May, refusing to surrender.

One year ago, most of them were busy decorating Christmas trees, cooking meals and reading books to their children. Today, they are freezing in mud-filled trenches. Many readily abandoned their peaceful lives, comfortable homes and the people they love for a frozen hellhole. They did this not because they are bloodthirsty warmongers or because they were forced into fighting by their government or by Americans, or because they fell into a mad nationalist frenzy. On the contrary, every Ukrainian soldier I met is eminently sane, lucid and steady in their purpose. "We will fight with everything that we have," said Vitaly Ustimenko, a sergeant now stationed in Bakhmut: "The human civilisation is with us. We have everything to lose." Grim and exhausted, Vitaly was anything but grandstanding; he simply voiced what most Ukrainians now think and feel.

The war that Russia has unleashed against Ukraine is a struggle not only for Ukrainian lands and lives. It is a battle for all our collective futures, for the future of humankind. Just as the outcome of the Second World War shaped the world we now live in, this war — already a world war in all but its name — will determine our inexorably conjoined destinies. In the era of weapons that can wipe out half the world in a quarter of an hour, the significance of this outcome is as global as it is existential.

The Second World War was an apogee of European imperialism, when the empire came home to self-destruct. Hitler shared with the other European imperialists' the

The choice in Ukraine is stark — either the peace of sovereign states or the permanent war of empires

The Ukrainian peace deal, which Zelenskyy urged on his audience, and which begins with Russia's total withdrawal from Ukrainian land, is neither unreasonable nor unrealistic. In fact, it is the only real peace for the modern world. Any other gives up on international law as a guarantor of collective security.



PRABHASH RANJAN

THE THIRD ROUND of negotiations of the India-European Union (EU) free trade agreement concluded recently. The two sides are also negotiating an investment protection agreement (IPA), which will contain investment protection standards and an independent mechanism to settle disputes between investors and states under international law.

Notwithstanding the laudable intent of the government to welcome them, foreign investors in India have often got into numerous regulatory troubles with the state. Several foreign corporations like Vodafone, Cairn Energy, Nissan, White Industries, Telenor, Nokia, Vedanta have sued India to enforce the rights guaranteed to them in bilateral investment treaties (BITs). This is the main motivation behind the EU seeking an IPA with India. Arguably, EU investors can rely on Indian law for protection. But Indian law can be unilaterally changed to the detriment of the investor. Moreover, the Indian judiciary is agonisingly slow in resolving disputes. Thus, the longing for protection under international law.

But the road to a successful India-EU IPA is going to be bumpy largely because of India's inward-looking approach to investment protection under international law as enunciated in India's 2016 Model BIT. The following differences between the two sides are daunting.

First, India wants to push taxation measures outside the scope of the treaty by making tax-related regulatory measures non-judicial. The EU has difficulty accepting this proposition given the recent history of India's tax-related investment disputes with

conviction that the strong have a natural right to subjugate the weak. Just like rulers of the French and British empires, Hitler believed that countries that have bigger armies and more advanced arms can legitimately conquer, enslave or kill anyone else. Just like them, he assumed that those with more means to conquer constitute a superior race. His war of imperial conquest followed this idea to its macabre logical end. The realisation that in the industrial age, empire is a fatally misguided idea came to Europe at the cost of 20 million European lives, and twice as many worldwide. A new world map arose out of the devastation, as did a new global order that gave every state, whether a former coloniser or a colony, the right to govern itself within its borders. If most of human history has been a history of empires, the Second World War put an end to empire as a legitimate political principle.

But empires refuse to die. In the post-War world the Russian/Soviet and American empires displaced the European ones and brought an era of new imperial wars. Illegal and covert, proxy and justified through contortions, these wars have normalised the reasoning of empire — of might's right — and rolled back the order of sovereign states.

Putin has always appealed to this to justify his invasions — of Chechnya, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine — citing Russia's "sphere of influence" and "interest zone". In other words, colonies. A global chorus of "Putin-Verstehers" purveys this vision, insisting that Ukraine must concede its lands, people and properties to strike a peace deal because Russia is bigger and stronger, and Ukraine smaller and weaker, and that is how the world works. This chorus has singers on the political right and left, among Austrian neo-Nazis and Bengali Communists, among supporters of Trump and — most peculiarly — critics of imperialism across the Global South.

Ukrainians have defied all this. With

every Russian tank they stopped with their bare hands, with every town they liberated, with every surgery they conducted without light or heat they have shown that it does not have to be this way. By standing up to the most unceremoniously aggressive coloniser-state 18 times its size, Ukraine has shown that the tyranny of crude force can be stopped. Indeed, it must be stopped for all our futures.

This is why, in his speech, Zelenskyy said that aid to Ukraine "is not charity, it is your investment in global security" for "this war will define what world our children and grandchildren, and their children and grandchildren will live in." This is not a hyperbole. This war is not only a standoff between a ravenous tyranny and a democracy fighting for its life, but it is also a clash between the old order of empires and the new order of sovereign states. Its outcome will determine whether or not the world will descend into a new age of imperial conquests. And if the last large-scale attempt at imperial conquest took away 60 million human lives, any such attempt in the future may wipe out most of humanity.

The Ukrainian peace deal, which Zelenskyy urged on his audience, and which begins with Russia's total withdrawal from Ukrainian land, is neither unreasonable nor unrealistic. In fact, it is the only real peace for the modern world. Any other gives up on international law as a guarantor of collective security. As Immanuel Kant noted more than two hundred years ago in his essay on "Perpetual Peace," when we let go of universal law, we abandon peace. This is what Zelenskyy insists that we take seriously. And this is why Ukrainian soldiers have such steady resolve. This war comes at the end of a long history that has shown their choice to be simple and stark — either the peace of sovereign states or the permanent war of empires.

The writer is Reader in Anthropology and Politics at King's College, London

A PARTNER'S DUTY

India should give up its inward-looking approach in negotiating trade pact with EU

Vodafone, Cairn Energy, and Nissan.

Second, the EU's investment proposal to India talks of creating a two-tier court-like system with an appellate mechanism and tenured judges to resolve treaty disputes between investors and the state. This proposal is connected to the EU's stand internationally for creating a multilateral investment court (MIC), negotiations for which are going on at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). The MIC is aimed at overcoming the weaknesses of the current arbitration-based system of settling investor-state disputes. India's position on creating an investment-court-like system is unknown. India hasn't publicly contributed to the ongoing negotiations at UNCITRAL towards establishing a MIC.

Third, the EU's investment proposal contains a most favoured nation (MFN) provision to ensure that EU investors do not face discrimination vis-à-vis other foreign investors. On the other hand, India's position is not to include the MFN provision in its investment treaties because of the apprehension that foreign investors will use the MFN clause to indulge in disruptive treaty shopping. The solution to such disruptive treaty shopping is to negotiate for a qualified MFN provision and not exclude it altogether.

Fourth, the EU investment proposal contains what is known as a fair and equitable treatment (FET) provision, which is missing in the Indian 2016 Model BIT. The FET provision protects foreign investors, for example, by making the states liable if it goes back on the

specific assurances made to an investor to induce investments on which the investor relied while making the investment.

A popular yet flawed perception in India is that investment treaties like the India-EU IPA are not needed because foreign investors are anyway thronging Indian shores. Nothing can be further from the truth. According to Arvind Subramanian and Josh Felman, overall FDI to India has stagnated for the past decade at around 2 per cent of the GDP. In the case of the EU, while its share in foreign investment stock in India increased from €63.7 billion in 2017 to €87.3 billion in 2020, this is way below the EU foreign investment stocks in China (€201.2 billion) or Brazil (€263.4 billion). Furthermore, recent research by Simon Hartmann and Rok Spruk shows that India's decision to unilaterally terminate BITs has negatively impacted FDI inflows to India. Thus, India needs the IPA with the EU to attract FDI for achieving the aspirational milestone of becoming a \$10-trillion economy by 2030.

But first, India needs to put its own house in order. India should review the 2016 Model BIT, as has also been recommended by the Parliament's standing committee on external affairs. Simultaneously, India should evolve a clear position on MIC, and, like the EU, maintain high transparency in negotiations by publicly articulating its position on critical issues.

The writer is Professor and Vice Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O P Jindal Global University. Views are personal

DECEMBER 26, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

AKALI TALKS

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi will negotiate with Akali leaders on their demands after the elections in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura on January 5, Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh said. The CM assured Akali leaders that they would not be arrested if they came to Delhi for discussions.

WORKERS' STRIKE

A SERIES OF strikes involving about three million workers will affect the working of the public sector undertakings in the next one month, marking the beginning of a period of prolonged labour troubles ahead. Barring strikes in a few units with local demands, all

major all-India strikes are jointly sponsored by the Opposition-led trade unions in defence of their charter of demands, which includes scrapping of the Bureau of Public Enterprises' guidelines restricting wage raises.

DISSIDENTS' PARTY

FORMER CONGRESS (I) dissidents in Gujarat, who left the ruling party on December 1, have decided to form their own separate regional party which will be known as the Rashtriya Congress. The formal announcement of the new party will be made at the first state-level convention of the break-away group to be held in Navroji Hall in the Shahibaug area of Ahmedabad.

NTR'S FIGHT

NOTWITHSTANDING THE VARIOUS handicaps that beset his party, the Telugu Desam president, NT Rama Rao, is fighting a relentless battle for power in the assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh. The regional party, which was founded by the glamour star of Telugu film industry nine months ago in a bid to topple the Congress-I from power and provide a "corruption-free" rule in the state, mainly lacks a well-drilled propaganda machinery and the galaxy of leaders that the ruling party can boast to gear electoral campaign. It is also no match to the infinite fund-raising capacity of the well-entrenched Congress-I.

THE IDEAS PAGE

An engine for growth

India needs to increase its spending on research and development to become a global leader



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND PURVI THANGARAJ

WITH THE G20 presidency, India has an opportunity to set the global agenda and be in the limelight for at least a year. But, if it has to be a real leader, say a Vishwaguru, it has to do some heavy lifting for quite a number of years. The real Vishwaguru today is the US, which has retained its global leadership for almost a century since World War I. It is not just its military might but its technological superiority in various fields that has made the US the largest and most competitive open economy.

How did the US achieve all this? Thanks to the culture of innovation backed by a solid base of research and development (R&D). Innovation is rightly recognised as an engine for economic growth and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is right when he extended the old slogan of Lal Bahadur Shastri and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, jai jawan, jai kisan, jai vigyan, to include jai anusandhan (research and innovation). In 2016, the Modi government launched the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) to create an ecosystem to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. All these are steps in the right direction, but the foundation of all this lies in how much India actually spends on R&D, both in absolute terms as well as a percentage of its GDP, in relation to other G20 countries.

Even the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030 aims to “build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”. In particular, SDG Target 9.5 calls upon nations to encourage innovation and substantially increase the numbers of researchers as well as public and private spending on R&D. Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (GERD) is the proposed aggregate to quantify a country’s commitment to R&D.

According to UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics (UIS) latest report, the G20 nations accounted for 90.6 per cent of global GERD (current, PPP\$) in 2018. Global R&D expenditure has reached a record high of about 2.2 trillion current PPP\$ (2018), while Research Intensity (R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP) has gradually increased from 1.43 per cent in 1998 to 1.72 per cent in 2018. Though looking at spending in PPP terms is a reasonable metric for welfare measurement in the economy, when it comes to technological prowess in high-end activities of R&D, it all boils down to measuring hard currency in US dollars.

The G20 countries, accounting for 86.2 per cent of the global GDP and over 60 per cent of the global population in 2021, are the leaders in every way. The US leads the G20 by spending \$581.6 billion on R&D followed by the European Union (\$323 billion), and China (\$297.3 billion) in 2018. India lags way behind with a paltry R&D expenditure of only \$17.6 billion in 2018. In terms of their relative shares

R & D INTENSITY OF G20 COUNTRIES, 2018

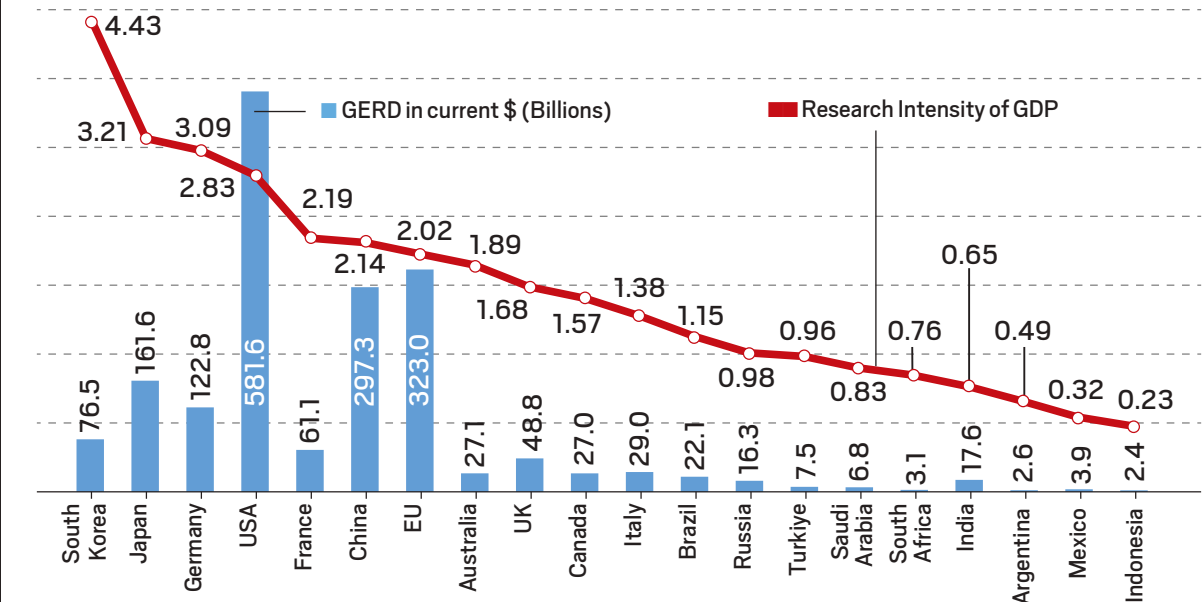


Illustration: C R Sasikumar

in G20 R&D expenditure, the US is way ahead with 36 per cent, followed by the EU (20 per cent), and China (18 per cent). India’s share is less than 1 per cent of G20 R&D expenditure in dollar terms.

The lesson is very clear: To realise its dream of becoming a Vishwaguru, India has a long way to go. And the only way to achieve this seems to be by repurposing its massive expenditures on various subsidies (“revdi” culture) such as on food, fertilisers, PM Kisan, free power, and even the PLI scheme for manufacturing towards a multi-fold increase in expenditure on research and innovation.

While the absolute expenditure on R&D provides a sense of scale, their percentage to the respective GDP provides the research intensity (RI). It is interesting to note that in 2018 for which the latest information is available, South Korea has the highest RI at 4.43 per cent, followed by Japan (3.21 per cent), Germany (3.09 per cent), the US (2.83 per cent), France (2.19 per cent), China (2.14 per cent) and EU (2.02 per cent). India is ranked 17th in the G20, with a RI of 0.65 per cent (see infographics).

However, there are many non-G20 countries that have a higher RI than even the countries in the G20. But their absolute expenditure on R&D is relatively very small. One of these non-G20 countries is Israel, which, while having an R&D expenditure of just \$18.6 billion, a population of only 9.3 million and a per capita income of around \$51,430, has the highest RI of over 5 per cent. No wonder, Israel is known as a land of innovations, be it in defence or agriculture.

To realise its dream of becoming a Vishwaguru, India has a long way to go. And the only way to achieve this seems to be by repurposing its massive expenditures on various subsidies (“revdi; culture) such as on food, fertilisers, PM Kisan, free power, and even the PLI scheme for manufacturing towards a multi-fold increase in expenditure on research and innovation.

The innovation system in Israel is a fundamental driver of its economic growth and competitiveness. The government has played an important role in financing innovation, particularly in SMEs, and in providing well-functioning frameworks for innovation, such as venture capital (VC), incubators, strong science-industry links, and high-quality university education. Israel builds a strong case to show that despite being a smaller nation, sustainable growth can be achieved by prioritising investments in R&D. A lesson India can learn.

During India’s G20 presidency, the engagement group, Science20, has the theme of “Disruptive Science for Innovative and Sustainable Development” focusing on universal holistic health; cure and prevention of disease; clean energy for a greener future; and connecting science to society and culture. It will be interesting to see how India can leverage this for the shared prosperity of the world.

But one thing is clear: India needs not only technological development and brilliance in various sectors ranging from defence to agriculture to manufacturing, but it desperately needs innovations that can safeguard its basic environment — land, water, and air. India has shown its global leadership in the IT and digital world. If it can show similar breakthroughs in other sectors, it will turn its aspiration of Vishwaguru into reality and confidently enter the golden era of Amrit Kaal.

Gulati is Distinguished Professor and Thangaraj a researcher at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“To avoid a repeat of that dark day [January 6], an attack not only on the temple of democracy but democracy itself, Congress should erect more guardrails — and voters should remain careful about whom they choose to lead.”
— THE WASHINGTON POST

The last defender

Judiciary must stand up to attacks from a powerful executive, secure rule of law and protect the rights and liberties of citizens



DUSHYANT DAVE

THE CONTROVERSY OVER the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and high courts is not as straightforward as it appears. The executive wants to take complete control of the last bastion of democracy, the judiciary.

Under the Bharatiya Janata Party, the executive is all-pervasive. With constant attacks on opposition parties and their leaders. By coupling denigrating words with the skillful use of investigative agencies like the CBI, ED, etc., the executive seeks to place itself on a higher moral ground. Parliament is used to project the ruling party’s ideology and actions. Real issues affecting the common man and the nation are debated in passing with selective information and statistics. The ruling dispensation is using Parliament to further its agenda.

The towering personality of the prime minister is eclipsing the cabinet and its role and every constitutional and critical appointment that is being made appears to suit the executive, be it the comptroller and auditor general of India, chief vigilance commissioner, election commissioners, cabinet secretary and other crucial secretaries or the heads of the ED, income tax department etc. What else can explain the extensions given to the ED head and the hurried appointment of the last election commissioner? Gujarat cadre officers belonging to IAS and IPS services, who have served the PM well in the past, seem to be chosen over deserving and independent officers from other state cadres.

What could the reason be for such subjectivity, except to consolidate power in the hands of a few? Skilful methods are adopted to depose duly-elected state governments run by opposition parties, thereby creating a constant challenge in governance. Attacks on critics, simply on account of tweets or articles, are designed to create an atmosphere of fear across the nation. Even films and actors are not spared, with *Pathaan* being the latest target. The prevention of two young actors from even offering prayers at the great temple of Mahakaleshwar in Ujjain is an example of the vigilantism that has gone unpunished by the state.

Minority communities are constant targets, in forms both subtle and unsubtle. In a Constitution Bench judgment of July 7, 2018, the Supreme Court said, “There can be no shadow of doubt that the authorities which are conferred with the responsibility to maintain law and order in the States have the principal obligation to see that vigilantism, be it cow vigilantism or any other vigilantism of any perception, does not take place.”

The courts are being systematically approached by fringe elements in furtherance of such objectives and sadly, they are unable to see and stop such attempts, causing grave misgivings to millions of Indians. After a virtual free run under a series of Chief Justices of India with the powers to

constitute seemingly convenient benches and allocate cases to them, the judiciary under recent chief justices has shown remarkable resilience and is pushing back. Questions are being asked by judges on sensitive matters to sub-serve public purpose. Judgments and orders have been passed to protect the civil liberties and fundamental rights of citizens. All these may have upset those in power.

Thus, the not-so-veiled attacks by the law minister, followed by the vice president, himself a respected lawyer, are calculated to send a chilling message to the judiciary: Fall in line or we will take away your powers to appoint and transfer judges. They need to be reminded of Articles 141 and 144 of the Constitution, which make Supreme Court judgments the law of the land.

I have been an open critic of the collegium system installed by the Supreme Court, arrogating to itself powers that the Constitution does not. I even argued in support of the NJAC in a changed form. But that was in 2015. Having seen the government in action, I am now convinced that if the executive were to start appointing judges to the higher judiciary, they will end up making disastrous and subjective appointments as is being done for other constitutional offices. And that will be the death knell of democracy in India. Citizens will be deprived of their fundamental rights and civil liberties will be jeopardised.

The executive has crippled the judiciary by not providing much-needed funds for large-scale infrastructure and sufficient manpower. To top it all, the high pendency of cases in courts is also on somewhat on account of mis-governance and unlawful and arbitrary actions on part of the executive at every level, from the district to the Centre.

Rule of law and an independent judiciary are basic features of our Constitution. The two are deeply connected. Constitutional framers were quite clear in their resolve that “No Executive should be able to have any influence upon judges.” But as Ambedkar had feared, “...I feel, however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot”. Our nation cannot afford its failure because millions of Indians sacrificed their lives, liberties, properties and peace for a free India and its Constitution. At a time when India has assumed the G20 presidency with year-long programmes in the country, it would be important for the country to showcase a functioning and vibrant democracy.

As the US president Andrew Jackson once said, “All the rights secured to the citizens under the Constitution are worth nothing, and a mere bubble, except guaranteed to them by an independent and virtuous judiciary.” There is a heavy burden on the collegium to build such a judiciary. Its functioning so far has been a mixed bag. It needs to be much more vigilant and objective in the future. Let us hope the executive does not prove Ambedkar right. If it does, let us pray that the judiciary will step in to defend the Constitution in letter and spirit.

The writer is a Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India and former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association



VAMSEE JULURI

THE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS of some movies in India (and among the Indian diaspora) does not mean that these movies will be seen or felt the same way by foreign audiences whose impressions of India are already profoundly skewed in certain directions by a relentless, hostile global propaganda campaign.

Indian cinema has made ripples, although of different kinds, beyond our borders in the last few days. On the happier side, the Telugu blockbuster *RRR* won nominations for two Golden Globes. On a less pleasant note, the movie *The Kashmir Files*, despite its deeply emotional reception by survivors of the 1990s ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits, was rather harshly described as “vulgar propaganda” by an Israeli movie maker.

Since that time, there has been much controversy, reaching even diplomatic levels. While many people expressed dismay at Nadav Lapid’s indifference to the victims of violence, some filmmaker friends of mine also found his stand to be noble.

There was also a debate of sorts between the concerned two directors. Lapid professed his inability to tell if the events in the movie really took place and worried about how survivors would react to it, but did not reconsider his criticism. Propaganda could be artistic too, like Sergei Eisenstein and Leni Reifenstahl, he wrote, and no one calls that propaganda now. But *The Kashmir Files* was still, he insisted, just that.

Vivek Agnihotri, in turn, pointed out that “propaganda” is often what anyone calls an opposing point of view. He reminded us that there is no dispute about the veracity of the horrible events depicted in his movie, and that

he had interviewed 700 victims for his story.

The debate appears to have paused there, with both camps perhaps settling down to feeling unheard by the other side, worrying exclusively about either Islamophobia, or Hinduphobia, respectively, even as public attention shifts again to *RRR* and tantalisng claims about Indian soft power abroad (and of course, more polarising disputes about new Bollywood releases).

It is in this context that I would like to share some lessons from having screened and talked about Indian cinema with hundreds of non-Indian students over many years (my most recent talk, coincidentally enough, was a guest lecture in a Judaic Studies professor’s class on nationalism where we discussed *RRR*).

The basic reality that Indian movie-makers, critics, and “soft power” buffs should confront is that often what works for an Indian viewer doesn’t make sense to others at all. What we loved in a theatre in India, say, a *Hum Aapke Hain Koun or Mr India*, is rarely as engaging for students or viewers abroad, except if already deeply invested in the genre. There was indeed a bit of a speciality fascination around the world since the 1990s with “Bollywood,” a loose signifier for everything from Shah Rukh Khan to diasporic movie makers like Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha, but this never meant that Indian movies were actually advancing a narrative from India.

With this reality check in mind, we might turn to some basic questions about taste, content and form.

Why is it that a movie like *RRR* (and before that *Baahubali* to an extent), managed

to win the attention of both Indian and non-Indian viewers?

And why is it that a movie like *The Kashmir Files*, while evoking the heartbreaking sight of the survivors of the ethnic cleansing of the 1990s weeping in theatres after the screening, failed to win the sympathy of every artist who watched it?

Is the issue only one of rigid identity politics, with Hindus simply not counting as being worthy of having human rights in the eyes of the global human rights establishment? Or is there also a need to recognise limitations in our ability to tell stories that break across boundaries, in the best of times, let alone in these, our exceptionally polarised times?

I think there is a big risk that if we fail to consider these issues, we will find ourselves, despite *RRR*, with simply one more bungled renaissance.

Writers and movie-makers of a certain inclination have found commercial success in India in recent times partly because of their passion, but also partly because of the sheer representational starvation that Hindus, quite specifically, have felt in relation to cinema, publishing, and other cultural industries.

If it’s seen as pro-Hindu (or even pro-nationalist across the religious spectrum) or at least not gratuitously mean and mendacious towards Hindus in the name of some nobler political ideal, (aka “wokeness”), it will sell. Here. But only here.

As the Lapid unpleasantness shows us, if Indian storytellers (and their soft-power, foreign-policy, think-tank-type friends) don’t get the global landscape of tastes, sensibilities, and desires today, even the most seem-

ingly important truths to Indian audiences will be callously dismissed by others. The dichotomy that has plagued us between those who seemingly “sell out” to crassly racist neo-orientalist cravings about India, and those who “settle in” complacently to the dull, insular, polarisation-dependent tastes of our own, has to be overcome.

Indian storytellers must urgently learn to neither sell-out nor settle in, but actually, “tell out.”

In conclusion, since accusations of propaganda and counter-propaganda only take us so far in learning to communicate better, perhaps India’s soft power heads could take a simple lesson from someone they might recognise better.

Carl Von Clausewitz wrote that in a war, propaganda had to be considered in relation to all three audiences: Supporters, enemies, and those who were neutral. The India story that we have witnessed for the past few years, unfortunately, has focused almost exclusively on the first category. If Indian cinema is to go global, and if the India story is to be really accepted by the world, we will have to learn to speak to all three audiences in the future, rather than merely label anyone who disagrees slightly as enemies or anti-nationals.

The real sign of narratives being changed will be when those who are neutral find themselves sympathetic to an experience or point of view.

Until then, it will just be “our propaganda, their propaganda,” and not a bridge in between.

The writer is professor of media studies at the University of San Francisco

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WRONG RESPONSE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Targeting the song’ (IE, December 24). One can argue that the cited poem by Muhammad Iqbal should not be a part of a secular curriculum. It is not “free of faith-based language and undertones”. But, it cannot be argued as a case of “hurting religious sentiments”, given that it was included in a course for an Urdu primary school. The invoking of Indian Penal Code sections 298 (deliberate intention to wound religious sentiments) and 153 (provocation with intent to cause riot) against the staff by the Uttar Pradesh government is an avoidable and exaggerated response.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

PREPARE FOR CHINA

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Tackling Beijing’ (IE, December 24). As China continues with its tactics at the border, the Indian troops have to be prepared to hold their own against the PLA at various points all along the LAC. There will be more flare ups like Tawang. Diplomatic parleys and ramping up military infrastructure are the need of the hour.

Vijai Pant, Hampur

COVID AGAIN

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The Covid spectre again’ (IE, December 24). With the festive season currently going on, it is imperative that basic Covid protocols

reis sincerely observed in view of spread of Covid-19 BF. 7. This variant, wreaking havoc in China, can lead to major spikes in various countries, including India. We must adopt a proactive approach to ward off the menace and stay safe. Medical staff must remain ready in all respects to counter the problem with the help of local administration and society.

Subhash Vaid, New Delhi

ATAL’S LEGACY

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Vajpayee played positive role in changing anti-BJP views: Kovind’ (IE, December 25). Atal Bihari Vajpayee was elected to the Lok Sabha 10 times and twice to the Rajya Sabha. He was a parliamentarian par excellence, who had the trust and affection of the people he governed. He made important contributions which paved the way for a stronger economy through bold reforms and rapid development of infrastructure. Vajpayee was a great statesman who served three terms as the prime minister of the country. Under his government, the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was introduced, which revolutionised bank lending to farmers. In the same year, nuclear tests made India a full-fledged nuclear power. He also took major initiatives to bring peace between India and Pakistan. The country also remembers him for the first national telecom policy and several grand infrastructure projects.

Sanjay Chopra, Mohali

12 EXPRESS NETWORK

BRIEFLY

GUJARAT

Korean man dies in paragliding accident

Gandhinagar: A 51-year-old South Korean man died after falling from around 50 feet while paragliding in Kadi of Mehsana district Saturday evening. According to police, Korean national Shin Byeong Moon was in Gujarat on an invitation from one of his friends in Vadodara. A case of accidental death has been registered and investigations are on to ascertain the reason behind the accident. Patel added that a team from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) is investigating the reasons behind the accident. "A case of accidental death has been registered and process is on to send his body home," Patel said.

ENS

UTTARAKHAND

Tiger kills man in Corbett

Rishikesh: A 32-year-old man was killed by a tiger in Ramnagar forest division of Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR), officials said on Sunday. The half-eaten body of Nafees was recovered on Sunday morning, 150 metres away from a bridge over Panod canal, CTR Director Dhiraj Pandey said. Nafees was dragged away from near the canal by the tiger late Saturday evening when he was drinking liquor along with some friends, he said. Nafees was a resident of Khatari village near Ramnagar, Pandey said.

PTI

PUNJAB

2 arrested with 10 kg heroin

Amritsar: Punjab Police has busted a drug smuggling cartel with the arrest of its two kingpins after recovering 10 kg heroin and one sophisticated drone from their possession, said DGP Gaurav Yadav here on Sunday. The arrested smugglers, identified as Dalbir and Jagdish, both residents of Gharinda in Amritsar, had been allegedly engaged in drug trafficking for the last three years and have no criminal case registered against them. An FIR was registered under sections 21 and 23 of the NDPS Act. Police teams have been conducting raids at 12 locations in Haryana and Delhi.

ENS

Cops: 2 days after friend's death, Russian tourist dies by suicide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAYAGADA, DECEMBER 25

A RUSSIAN tourist died after falling from the third floor of a hotel in Odisha's Rayagada district, two days after his fellow traveller was found dead there, police said on Sunday.

Pavel Anthom, 65, was found lying in a pool of blood outside the hotel on Saturday, they said.

Vladimir Bidenov, Pavel's co-traveller, was found dead at the same hotel on December 22. He was found lying unconscious in his room on the first floor of the hotel with a few empty wine bottles around him. When taken to the district hospital, doctors declared him dead.

Vladimir and Pavel were part of a four-member group of Russian tourists who along with their guide Jitendra Singh had checked into the hotel in Rayagada town on Wednesday.

On Pavel's death, a senior police officer said it appeared to be a case of suicide. "Pavel was in depression due to the death of his friend," he said.

The police said they are investigating Pavel's death from all angles. Two other members of the group were asked to stay back and coordinate with the investigation, the officer said.

MP man held, his house demolished after video of him assaulting woman goes viral

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
REWA, DECEMBER 25

A VIRAL video of a 24-year-old man beating up a woman known to him in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh prompted the authorities to arrest the accused, demolish his house and suspend the in-charge of the area police station for "dereliction of duty".

The accused, a driver, was arrested from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday night, Superintendent of Police (SP) Navneet Bhasin said. The 19-year-old victim was admitted to a hospital in a critical condition and she is undergoing treatment, he said.

Taking to Twitter, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the accused's driving licence has been



A video grab of demolition of the house of the accused

cancelled. "In the incident of a brutal attack on a young woman in Mauganj area of Rewa district, the criminal, Pankaj Tripathi, has been arrested and bulldozer has been run over his house... Anyone who commits atrocities on women in Madhya Pradesh will not be spared," Chouhan tweeted in Hindi.

Police registered a case against

the accused under sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 366 (abduction) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code after the video of the attack, which took place earlier this week, surfaced on social media.

In the video, the woman is seen asking the accused to marry her. The man initially gets irritated and then proceeds to

kick and slap her repeatedly in the face and keeps attacking her even after she faints.

The victim went to the police station to inform about the incident but refused to lodge a complaint. The accused was detained under Section 151 (disturbing public peace) of the IPC and later released, an official said.

After the video went viral, the in-charge of Mauganj police station, Shweta Maurya, was suspended for dereliction of duty, and the district authorities demolished the house of the accused in Dhera village, the official said.

The victim, meanwhile, has lodged a police complaint against the person who shot and circulated the video and a case has been registered under Information Technology Act, the official said.

Agra man who returned from China tests positive for Covid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AGRA, DECEMBER 25

A 40-YEAR-OLD man, who returned from China two days ago, has tested positive for Covid-19 following which he has been isolated at his home here, Chief Medical Officer Arun Srivastava said on Sunday. His samples will be sent to Lucknow for genome sequencing, he said.

"The man has been isolated at his home and teams of the health department have been asked to conduct tests of his family members and those who came in contact with him," Srivastava said.

The man returned to Agra from China via Delhi on December 23 following which he was tested at a private lab. The report came out positive for Covid, he added.

This is the first Covid positive case in the district detected after November 25, officials said.

Amid a surge in Covid cases in some countries, including China, the Centre has ramped up its anti-coronavirus measures.

The Centre had said RT-PCR test would be made mandatory for passengers from China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand.

Huge cache of arms, ammunition seized in J&K's Uri sector: Army

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 25

A HUGE cache of arms and ammunition and "war-like stores", including AK-74 rifles, Pakistan-origin hand grenades and balloons with "I Love Pakistan" markings, were recovered along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri Sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, an Army officer said on Friday.

The recoveries were made at a time when there is desperation on the Pakistan side to either infiltrate terrorists or smuggle war-like stores into Kashmir as the number of ultras and arms and ammunition was at an all-time low in the Valley, he said.

Giving details, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Army's 19 Infantry Division Major General Ajay Chandpuria said, based on intelligence inputs received from multiple intelligence agencies over two weeks about infiltration attempts and dumping of war-like stores by terrorists in the Hathlanga area of Rampur Sector in Uri, multiple ambushes and search operations were conducted along the LoC.

On Friday, a search operation was launched in the general area of Hathlanga Nala that lasted for eight hours and concluded with the recovery of arms, ammunition



Arms, ammunition recovered from Uri sector in J&K. PTI

tion and war-like stores, he said.

The recoveries include eight AK-74 rifles, 24 AK-74 rifle magazines, 560 7.62mm AK-74 live ammunition, 12 30mm Chinese pistols, 24 Chinese pistol magazines, 244 30mm pistol live ammunition, nine Chinese hand grenades, five Pakistan-origin hand grenades, 81 balloons with "I Love Pakistan" marking on them and

five synthetic gunny bags with Pakistan marking, the officer said.

In this sector, this year, six to eight operations along the LoC or close to it, 14 AK rifles, 20 pistols, one M16 rifle, 76 hand grenades, 1226 AK rounds, 484 9mm rounds, 15kg drugs and 10 more suspicious narcotics packets have been recovered, the official said.

Assam CM distances himself from 'police letter' seeking info on churches, conversions

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, DECEMBER 25

ASSAM CHIEF Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday "completely disassociated" himself from a controversial letter, purportedly issued by the Special Branch of Assam police seeking information on pattern of religious conversions and the number of churches in the state, and asked the DGP to take immediate corrective measures.

The purported letter, which was issued on December 16 by an SP-rank officer of the Special Branch, referred to discussions held



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

during an SPs' conference at Staff College on November 2 this year.

The purported letter sought top officials of the state police, including all district police superintendents, to furnish details of new churches established in the last one year and other data such as details of allotted land, instances of conversion in last six years, other patterns associated with religious conversion, iden-

tity of persons playing a "pivotal role" in conversion activities and status of police cases lodged against such persons, prime factors responsible for religious conversions, among other issues.

Distancing himself from the letter, Sarma said, "I feel we should not asking for such information, like how many churches (are there) in Assam. This might hurt the sentiments of a particular religious community... I would like to clarify the position of the government of Assam. We don't want to have any survey on any church or, for that matter, on any other religious institution..."

"In short, I completely dissoci-

ate myself from the letter. It was never discussed at any government forum. As an Assamese, we want to live in harmony with all communities. I think the DGP will take corrective measures," he said.

On the issue of religious conversions, the CM said a distinction exists between forceful conversions and otherwise. He also clarified that Assam doesn't have any law as yet to regulate religious conversions. His assurance comes in the midst of concerns voiced by Christian forums, which said, "We are pained for the simple fact that the Christian community has rendered yeoman service in the fields of education and health."

LAST MANN KI BAAT OF 2022

Enjoy festivals but be a little cautious: PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday, while extending Christmas and New Year wishes to the people, advised them to be "a little cautious" as they enjoy the festivals amid reports of increasing Covid-19 cases in other countries. He was delivering his 96th 'Mann Ki Baat' address — the last one for 2022.

"You are also seeing that corona is increasing in many countries of the world, so we have to take more care of precautions like masks and hand-washing. If we are careful, then we will also be safe and there will be no hindrance in our enjoyment," he said.

The Prime Minister held a review meeting on the Covid-19 situation and preparedness in the country earlier this week amid reports of a surge in cases in China. Throughout the week, there were meetings involving the Union Health Minister and state health officials, and a number of guidelines were issued regarding increasing Covid-19 tests, random testing of international travellers, and increasing genome sequencing, among



PM Modi's remarks came amid rising number of Covid cases in other countries

other measures. Several states also announced that they were getting their health infrastructure ready for a possible increase in Covid numbers.

Although India continues to see a decline in the number of cases, there has been an upward trend in cases globally for the last six weeks, with an average of 5.9 lakh cases reported a day.

In Sunday's 'Mann Ki Baat' address, Modi spoke of the work being done to prove the efficacy of traditional practices like yoga and Ayurveda, and said the country was on the brink of eliminating kala azar (visceral leishmaniasis) and that it was working towards the goal of eliminating tuberculosis by

'DEGENERATION AND WRONG TENDENCIES' IN CPI(M)

P Jayarajan ups ante, keeps debate on E P Jayarajan alive in Kerala

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DECEMBER 25

DAYS AFTER the Kerala CPI(M) resolved to fight against "degeneration and wrong tendencies" among party cadres, senior party leader from Kannur P Jayarajan on Sunday upped the ante saying those who won't mend their ways would not remain in the party.

Addressing a party function in Kasaragod, P Jayarajan said, "There is degeneration in society. When that affects a party worker, CPI(M) would debate it. A party cadre has to surrender his personal interest before that of the party as well as society. If there is a deviation from the party's ideology, it will seek rectification. Those who do not correct their ways would not have any slot in the organisation. If there is a debate, the party would not collapse, instead it would emerge as refined gold."

P Jayarajan's resolve came a day after media reports claimed that he had sought a probe into the financial dealings of party's central committee member and Left Democratic Front convener E P Jayarajan. Both Jayarajans hail from Kannur district of Kerala.

It is learnt that P Jayarajan was referring to E P Jayarajan's alleged link to an ayurvedic resort, constructed in Kannur in 2014, in which his family members have direct stakes. The resort has come up in Morazha village, the native place of CPI(M) state secretary and Taliparamba legislator M V Govindan.

P Jayarajan had reportedly



P Jayarajan and E P Jayarajan

raised the issue in the meeting of the party state committee held on Wednesday and Thursday.

Govindan told the media after the meeting that there were "wrong tendencies in the party, which would not be tolerated". "If there are unacceptable tendencies, the party would intervene and correct it. Rectification is a continuing process," he said.

P Jayarajan on Saturday had denied media reports on his allegations against the LDF convener. "E P Jayarajan is a prominent leader. That he is running a resort has not come to my notice. There would be intra-party struggle in CPI(M) against wrong tendencies... The committee has not met to raise any personal allegations. We cannot share any details of the discussion in the committee with the media," he said.

CPI(M) leaders, including party media, have remained tight-lipped about the allegations. E P Jayarajan, too, has not responded to the media reports on the allegations. His social media posts on Sunday were mostly confined to customary Christmas greetings.

Both Jayarajans are powerful leaders in the CPI(M) and both got side-lined in the party over different reasons.

MORE THAN 300 JEE, NEET ASPIRANTS VISIT TEMPLE DAILY

Kota students scribble on 'wall of beliefs' to crack exams



Radha Krishna temple in Kota's Talwandi area has to be repainted every two months. PTI

dents has been so strongly cemented over the years that the temple has to be repainted every two months.

More than 300 students visit

the temple daily, they said. A record two lakh students have enrolled in various coaching institutes here this year.

Initially seen as defacement

by the temple authorities, the "wall of beliefs" was named after the temple because popular in early 2000 when a few students who had scribbled their prayers cleared the engineering entrance exam IIT JEE and medical entrance tests.

"Long back, when a few students came to pray here, they scribbled their wishes asking for their selection in IIT JEE or medical entrance tests. A few months later, parents of two students visited the temple and offered to make a donation for the temple claiming the wishes of their children scribbled on the wall have been fulfilled and from there it became a trend.

"Initially, people used to write their wishes anywhere on the temple walls and we tried discouraging them citing defacement and also warned of action. But later when the faith of locals

2025. He also said the government and the people were working on 'swachata', as well as conservation of biodiversity, and preserving local traditions.

With India taking over the presidency of the G20 and preparing to host the summit of the intergovernmental forum, Modi also said, "In the year 2023, we have to take the enthusiasm of G20 to new heights — make this event a mass movement."

Recounting the various successes of 2022, the Prime Minister spoke of India achieving the status of the world's fifth largest economy, crossing the "magical" exports figure of \$400 billion, administering more than 220 crore Covid-19 vaccines shots, and welcoming the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

Modi also spoke of the various events organised to celebrate "unity and togetherness", such as the Madhavpur Mela in Gujarat, the Kashi-Tamil Sangamam, and the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign to celebrate India's 75 years of Independence.

Modi also wished everyone for Christmas and also pointed out that it was the birthday of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

E P Jayarajan had been the second-in-command in the previous LDF government led by Pinarayi Vijayan. In 2021, he was denied ticket from Mattannur Assembly seat by the party, which decided not to field any legislator who had completed two consecutive terms. Stung by the decision, E P Jayarajan announced that he was quitting electoral politics. The announcement left the party leadership red-faced as it was against the Communist style of functioning.

After M V Govindan, another central committee member became party state secretary after the death of Kodyiyeri Balakrishnan, E P Jayarajan has been keeping away from active political life citing health reasons. Govindan is junior to E P Jayarajan in the party.

On the other hand, P Jayarajan, arguably one of the most popular CPI(M) leaders in Kannur, found himself on the wrong side of the party bosses after Vijayan assumed office in 2016.

He had often faced the allegation of being the darling of lumpen elements in the party who indulged in violence. After Vijayan became the Chief Minister in 2016, he was not keen on promoting "P Jayarajan brand of politics".

P Jayarajan, who was earlier CPI(M)'s Kannur district secretary, had been fielded as a party candidate in the Lok Sabha elections in 2019. He lost the polls and was not reinstated as party district secretary. Jayarajan is a state committee member. Recently, he was made the vice-chairman of Khadi Board.



New Delhi





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

NEW IN THE NEW YEAR

Nine state stops on road to Lok Sabha 2024

2023 is packed with state elections that could shape the political script of 2024. The popularity of Modi and BJP will be tested as he nears the end of his second term. Rahul will hope to walk further on the road to Congress revival. Kejriwal will try to go from being a successful disruptor to a claimant for bigger prizes.



MANOJ CG

WITH A mix of fear and hope, India came out of the long shadow of Covid in 2022 and life and politics — the latter more turbulent and fractious than at any time in recent history — started to return to normal. 2022 saw ideological divisions worsen, social and communal cleavages deepen, and the political chasm between the BJP and the opposition widen.

The BJP maintained its electoral dominance, winning five of the seven state elections including Uttar Pradesh, but the defeat in Himachal Pradesh at the end of the year came as a reality check. Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued to occupy the political centre stage, and his popularity, at least electorally, remained more or less intact.

The Congress finally addressed its leadership question by choosing Mallikarjun Kharge. Former president Rahul Gandhi's ambitious march from Kanyakumari to Kashmir got him significant mileage but his party's electoral woes continued. The Himachal victory brought hope, but it was decimated in Punjab and Gujarat.

Fleet-footed parties like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) are posing a challenge to the grand old party in newer territories. The AAP emphatically declared its arrival in 2022, knocking down the Congress in Punjab and registering its presence in Goa and Gujarat.

The bitterness in politics, both in Parliament and outside, worsened. Conversations in social media and elsewhere took on clearer communal overtones. In litigation around the Gyanvapi mosque-Kashi Vishwanath Temple dispute, in the gruesome beheading in Udaipur and the grisly murder of Shradha Walkar, and in the non-sensational controversy over a Shah Rukh Khan-Deepika Padukone song, the communal cauldron was kept simmering.

The government sought to hardsell India's G20 presidency even as the economic recovery remained tentative with the Russia-Ukraine war pushing up food and energy prices. To address the jobs crisis, it rolled out the Agnipath scheme despite massive street protests, it clashed with the higher judiciary, and it tried to turn the Chinese aggression at the LAC into a political attack on the opposition.

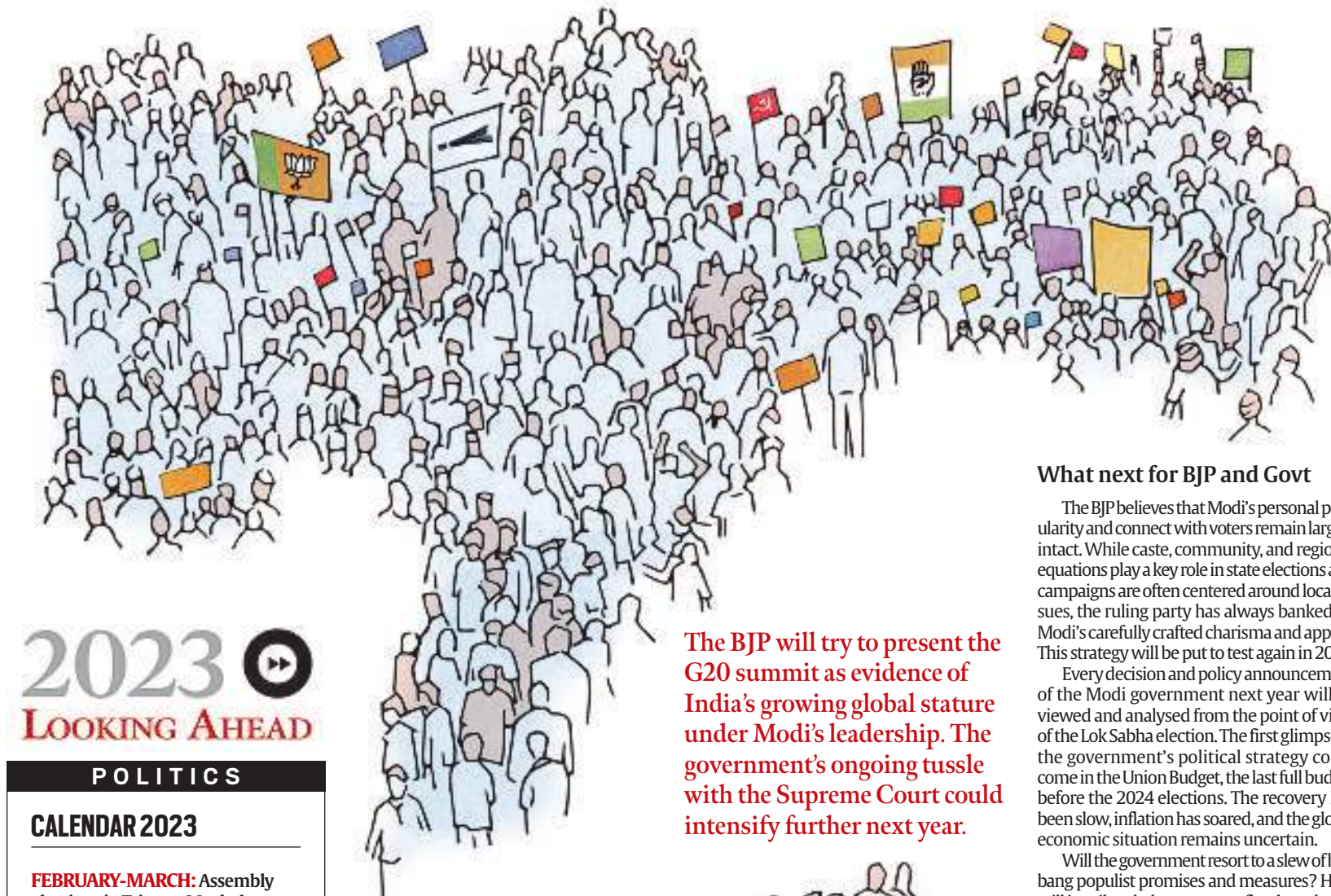
The political calendar of 2023 is packed with high-stakes state elections. Political events of 2023 are important because they have the potential to shape the debate and narrative for the Lok Sabha battle of 2024.

The semi-final clash

2023, in all likelihood, will shape the political script of 2024.

The BJP and Congress will be in election mode throughout the year. From Tripura, Meghalaya, and Nagaland in February-March, Karnataka in May, and Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, and Telangana in November-December, they will clash in state elections around the country — the outcomes of which will give a sense of the way the political wind is blowing.

The ruling party won Gujarat, UP, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Manipur in 2022, but it will not rest on its laurels. The nine states that will



2023

LOOKING AHEAD

POLITICS

CALENDAR 2023

FEBRUARY-MARCH: Assembly elections in Tripura, Meghalaya and Nagaland

MAY: Assembly elections in Karnataka

JULY-AUGUST: Rajya Sabha elections for 10 seats, the bulk of them in West Bengal

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram

go to polls next year account for 116 Lok Sabha seats. Some of them have voted differently in the previous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. In 2018, the BJP lost in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, but decimated the Congress in Lok Sabha elections a year later.

The ruling party is not in great shape in Karnataka; the situation of the Congress is no different in Rajasthan. Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh could spring surprises. In Telangana, the BJP will use its full might and organisational firepower to try to dislodge K Chandrashekar Rao's Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) — now rechristened Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) — and take a second South Indian state.

It will also be a crucial year for the TMC, which is keen to extend its political presence outside West Bengal. The AAP's massive success in Punjab and its small but significant openings in Goa (2 seats) and Gujarat (5 seats) would have made the TMC both anxious and hopeful. Mamata Banerjee's party is working hard to make inroads in Tripura and Meghalaya.

The BJP will try to present the G20 summit as evidence of India's growing global stature under Modi's leadership. The government's ongoing tussle with the Supreme Court could intensify further next year.

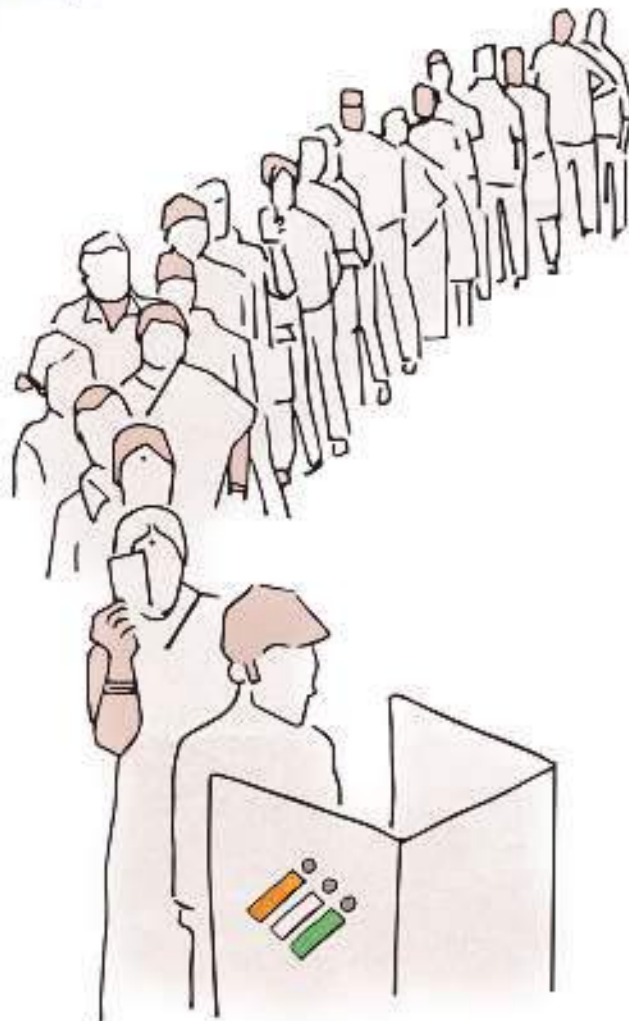


Illustration: Mithun Chakraborty

to predictions that have been made — and proven wrong — earlier.

Kharge has shown signs of emerging as a potent speaker who could take on the BJP. It is to be seen whether he can bring at least some opposition parties together in a credible coalition.

Of the election-bound states next year, two are ruled by the Congress. The party will have to win some and retain some if it is to pose a credible challenge to the Modi juggernaut in 2024. It fancies its chances in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, and believes it is on a stronger wicket in Chhattisgarh. However, it also has a recent history of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

While the G23, which functioned as a pressure group within the party, has lost its relevance, the big organisational question is whether Kharge and the leadership would agree to hold elections to the Working Committee at the AICC plenary in Raipur in February. The biggest challenge for the Congress — and the opposition as a whole — will be to navigate the politics of polarisation which will likely get worse in the election year.

AAP, regional forces, Opp unity

2022 was a defining year for AAP — it became the third party to be in power in more than one state, and it'll become the ninth national party. The big question is whether Arvind Kejriwal will try his brand of ideology-agnostic politics in states going to polls next year.

Kejriwal has to maintain the tempo if he has to emerge as a challenger to the BJP in 2024. And he has competition. The TMC and BRS have national ambitions, and Nitish Kumar has declared that the 2025 Bihar elections will be fought under Tejashwi Yadav's leadership, suggesting that he senses an opportunity for himself in national politics. It is significant that almost all non-Congress, non-BJP Prime Ministers have come from the Janata family.

What is Kejriwal's next big idea? Many in the opposition believe his brand of politics more or less mirrors that of the BJP. And that makes him *persona non grata* for many parties. As the AAP, TMC, and BRS eye national roles, the casualty will be opposition unity.

Is a pan Indian anti-BJP electoral coalition possible? Many parties prefer state-level alliances, though some are pushing for a non-BJP, non-Congress coalition — a sort of third front. Posturing and discussions in that direction will continue in the opposition space.

Government-judiciary conflict

The last months of this year saw the government and the Supreme Court enter into confrontation mode once again. After remaining silent for seven years, the government has started to express unhappiness over the scuttling of the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act by the apex court in 2015.

The Supreme Court has pushed back against the government's criticism of the collegium system. There is a tussle over names being recommended by the Supreme Court collegium for appointment as judges, with the government delaying appointments.

The opposition feels the government is keeping the threat of bringing back the NJAC alive to get the judiciary to fall in line. The tussle could worsen next year, as the court hears petitions and delivers judgments on matters with major political implications. Among them: appointment of members of the Election Commission, challenges to demonetisation and constitutional changes in J&K, electoral bonds, the Citizenship Amendment Act.

NEXT: ECONOMY

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

In inversion of US treasury yields, a recession is foretold

UDIT MISRA

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

AS THE new year approaches, there are fears of recession in many of the world's top economies, including the United States, the biggest and most consequential of all. The US does look headed for a recession — a key pointer is the inversion of US treasury yields.

What is a recession, to begin with?

A recession typically involves the overall output in an economy contracting for at least two consecutive quarters, along with job losses and reduction in overall demand. The US National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) decides whether the economy is in a recession based on its assessment of the depth, diffusion, and duration of the impact on the economy.

Sometimes, the duration may not be long but the decline could be very severe — as it happened in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Or, the depth and diffusion may be relatively less but the downturn may last long — as is expected in the United Kingdom in the wake of the economic crisis triggered by the Liz Truss-Kwasi Kwarteng mini-Budget of September 2022.

What are US treasuries?

In any economy, the safest loans are those

that are given to governments — entities that will always be there, and which typically do not default on their debt. Governments need to borrow money because their tax revenues more often than not aren't enough to finance all their spending.

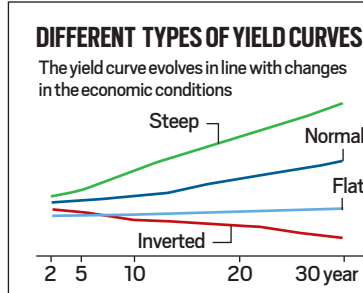
The instrument by which the government borrows from the market is called a government bond. In India they are called G-secs, in the UK they are called gilts, and in the US, they are called treasuries.

And what is the yield of a treasury?

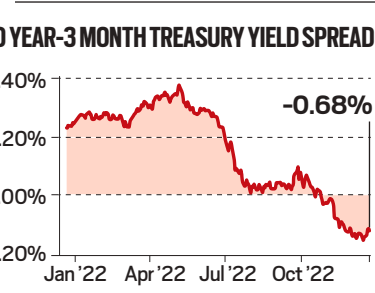
Unlike a bank loan, on which the interest rate varies with time, a government bond comes with pre-determined "coupon" payment. So, the US government may "float" a 10-year bond with a face value of \$100 and coupon payment of \$5. This means, if you lend \$100 to the US government by buying this bond, you would get \$5 each year for the next 10 years plus the whole sum of \$100 at the end of 10 years. This would imply a yield of 5%.

But if for some reason one sold this bond to another investor, the yield will change depending on the price at which the bond is sold. If the price increases — say, the bond is sold for \$110 — the yield will fall because the annual return (\$5) remains the same. And if the price falls, the yield will rise.

What is the yield curve?



Governments borrow for durations ranging from 1 month to 30 years. Typically, yields are higher for longer tenures because one is lending money for longer. If the yields for different tenures of bonds are mapped, it will give an upward-sloping curve ("Normal"



in the chart above).

The curves can be flat or steep depending on the money available in the market and the expected overall economic activity. When investors feel buoyant about the economy, they pull money out of long-term

bonds and put it into short-term riskier assets such as stock markets. As prices of long-term bonds fall, their yields rise — and the yield curve steepens.

What is yield inversion?

Yield inversion happens when yields for shorter duration bonds are higher than the yields on longer duration bonds. If investors suspect that the economy is heading for trouble, they will pull out money from short-term risky assets (such as stock markets) and put it in long-term bonds. This causes the prices of the long-term bonds to rise and their yields to fall.

This process first leads to flattening and eventually the inversion of the yield curve.

Yield inversion has long been a reliable predictor of recession in the US — and US treasuries have been witnessing yield inversion for a while now. The spread between the yields of 10-year and 3-month treasuries has turned negative (See chart).

Is all of this unexpected?

Not entirely. In its bid to contain historically high inflation levels, the US Federal Reserve has been raising short-term interest rates to curb overall demand and economic activity. Historically, every time the Fed has tried to bring down inflation by more than two percentage points, the US has witnessed a recession.

The Fed appears determined to bring down inflation to the 2% level, but despite rapid interest rate hikes — around 425 basis points — inflation has only moderated from around 9% in July to 7% in November.

Moreover, the economy grew by over 3% in the July-September quarter and continued to create hundreds of thousands of jobs, pushing up wages and keeping unemployment at historic lows. As such, even though the Fed has now started raising rates at a slower pace, it is expected that it will keep raising rates and stay at those higher levels for longer.

The more the Fed tightens its monetary stance, the more likely it is for the US economy to fall into a recession. That is what the yield inversion is showing.

Why does this matter to India?

It matters in several ways. Rising interest rates are likely to make the US dollar even more strong against the rupee. Indian imports will become costlier as a result, and could fuel domestic inflation.

Higher returns in the US may also lead to some rebalancing of the investments coming to India.

Indian exports may benefit due to a weaker rupee but a recession will dampen the demand for Indian exports.

A slowdown or recession may, however, come with the silver lining of lower crude oil prices for India.

2022 IN QUOTES

From South African Dr Angelique Coetzee, who first alerted the world about the Omicron variant, to German Ambassador Walter J Lindner who spoke about the complexities of the war in Ukraine — The Indian Express newsroom held insightful conversations with newsmakers every week of the year. Here's a glimpse



“Don't look at your positivity rate or your daily Covid cases. Look at how many people are admitted in the ICU”

DR ANGELIQUE COETZEE
CHAIRPERSON, SOUTH AFRICAN
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
JANUARY 17



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

RAMACHANDRA GUHA
HISTORIAN
JANUARY 24



“Those who troll aren't real fans, nor are they real Indians. I know what I represent, fight for my country”

MOHAMMAD SHAMI
FAST BOWLER, TEAM INDIA
FEBRUARY 28



“Russia has made us open our eyes, that to keep peace, there might be a price”

WALTER J LINDNER
GERMAN AMBASSADOR TO INDIA
MARCH 7



“I'm opposed to minority commissions, rather strengthen the human rights panel that can take care of everybody”

ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN
GOVERNOR OF KERALA
MARCH 14



“The digital world is breaking old monopolies and driving competition because consumers have choices”

SANJIV BAJAJ
CMD, BAJAJ FINSERV
MARCH 21



“Even if I get 70%... I can take CUET and get admission... this entire focus on high scores will go away”

M JAGADESH KUMAR
CHAIRMAN, UGC
MARCH 28



“What we need is an open climate within our institutions to allow artists to practise their art”

GULAMMOHAMMED SHEIKH
ARTIST
APRIL 4



“Everybody can be instigated to beat up small, poor people in the name of any big cause, the lid has been lifted”

ARUN SHOURIE
FORMER MINISTER, ECONOMIST
APRIL 11



“The only way out is to fight for the cause of the people; a leader then emerges automatically”

BHUPENDER SINGH HOODA
CONGRESS LEADER
MAY 16



“My mother was crying and said no one would marry me... People told my father boxing was a men's sport”

NIKHAT ZAREEN
WORLD BOXING CHAMPION
MAY 23



“Ancient Hinduism is very liberal. What's being said in its name today makes no sense historically. It grows out of politics”

WENDY DONIGER
PROFESSOR, AUTHOR
JUNE 20



“We are no longer chess players from mythology; someone bespectacled, slightly old. Now chess is seen as a young sport”

VISWANATHAN ANAND
INDIA'S FIRST GRANDMASTER
JUNE 27



“Targetted therapies ...and using customised diet as a drug is the fifth pillar in anti-cancer therapy”

DR SIDDHARTHA MUKHERJEE
ONCOLOGIST;
PULITZER-PRIZE WINNING AUTHOR
JULY 18



“A lot of tech firms escaped regulation by pushing the innovation image”

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR
MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
JULY 25



“Despite corruption charges, AAP is not willing to answer questions. They're drunk on power”

ANURAG THAKUR
UNION MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND
BROADCASTING
AUGUST 29



“Every university has a lunatic fringe. They can be left, right, centre, anything. But they cannot define the identity of the University”

SANTISHREE DHULIPUDI PANDIT
VC, JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
AUGUST 22



“The Reserve Bank of India should intervene only to curb volatility, let the rupee depreciate”

D SUBBARAO
FORMER RBI GOVERNOR
SEPTEMBER 12



“Gone are the days when the CBI was a caged parrot. This government has set it loose, thrown away the cage”

JITENDRA SINGH
MOS, SCIENCE & TECH AND EARTH SCIENCES
OCTOBER 17



“History is a child saying my truth is the truth. Myth is an adult saying who can be sure of the truth?”

AMISH
AUTHOR
OCTOBER 24



“Reservation is only a tool for representation. If we can find a better tool, we will throw it into the Arabian Sea”

PROF G MOHAN GOPAL
CONSTITUTIONAL LAW EXPERT
NOVEMBER 14



“It's a new virus, it's still evolving, still adapting. We still need to be cautious”

DR SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN
CHIEF SCIENTIST, WORLD HEALTH
ORGANISATION
NOVEMBER 28



“India is leader in energy transition and nobody has done as much as we have”

RK SINGH
MINISTER FOR POWER, NEW AND
RENEWABLE ENERGY
DECEMBER 5



“Data is not oil, it's actually the opposite... you burn and it's gone. Data is more like air, you can't lock up air”

NICK CLEGG
PRESIDENT, GLOBAL AFFAIRS, META
DECEMBER 12

Portrait illustrations: Suvajit Dey

15 ECONOMY

DEMAND FOR SUVs, NEW-AGE FEATURES GONE UP

Just like new: Demand for pre-owned cars matches first-hand auto sales

Companies say that the growing preference for personal mobility has gained traction post Covid

MIHIR MISHRA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

INDIA'S YOUTH are driving record sales for the automobile industry, not just in the new car segment but also in the pre-owned car segment. The demand for new-age features, even in pre-owned cars, is a phenomenon that has become more stark post-Covid pandemic.

Maruti Suzuki, India's largest carmaker, and Hyundai, country's second largest, are seeing more-than-expected demand for pre-owned cars and most of it is coming from first-time young buyers, who prefer sport utility vehicles (SUVs) over others.

This trend is not just limited to pre-owned car sales but also in new cars, where a quarter of sales come from youngsters under the age of 30 - about 5 per centage points increase over the past about three years.

Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motors and Tata Motors, which cumulatively constitute about 70 per cent of the total PV sales in the country, are all seeing a healthy response from buyers below the age of 30. For Maruti and Hyundai, youngsters' contribution to the overall sales is about 23 per cent each - lower than the industry's average -- while for Tata Motors, nearly 30 per cent of sales come from people under 30 years of age.

Companies say that the growing preference for per-



Many new companies are also entering the pre-owned car segment. Express photo

sonal mobility has gained traction post Covid. "Post pandemic and with the growing preference of personal mobility, we have witnessed a 33 per cent growth YoY as far as True Value (brand name for Maruti's pre-owned car stores) is concerned. Nearly 50 per cent of our pre-owned car buyers fall in the 18-35 years age bracket, followed by nearly 45 per cent of the POC buyers falling in the age group of 36-60 years and the rest ageing 65+ years," Shashank Srivastava, Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, MSIL, was quoted in an email response.

"About 67 per cent of our POC buyers were first time buy-

EXPLAINED
E Pre-owned car category

SALES OF pre-owned cars too is primarily driven by youngsters, which is an indicator that urban consumers in India are driving this demand. While the demand is high, one cannot predict as to how long will this demand last.

ers while the rest of the buyers bought POC as an additional vehicle or replaced their existing

vehicle," the response read.

Hyundai says they have reported a 21 per cent increase in car sales across their stores during the January-November this year as compared to last year.

"H-Promise (brand name for Hyundai's pre-owned cars sales outlet) counts Gen Z, millennials and boomers amongst our esteemed customers. However, customers in the 31-40 years age-bracket account for the biggest slice of the pie when it comes to pre-owned car sales across our outlets," the company said in an email response.

Such is the allure of the pre-owned car segment that new companies are also entering the segment. Kia India, which is just

three years old in India, has entered the pre-owned car sale space. "With exclusive Kia Certified Pre-Owned outlets, the company intends to provide a new age experience to customers, in line with new car buying experience, that will allow them to sell, buy or exchange pre-owned cars, backed by hassle-free ownership transfers and customised finance options," Kia had said in a press statement. Currently, Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai Motors and Mahindra are in the pre-owned car sales space. Mahindra did not respond to a query by *The Indian Express*. The companies have also witnessed a demand for SUVs and new-age features, including automatic gearbox.

"Just like new cars, we are witnessing a rise in demand for SUVs and MPVs in the pre-owned car space too. SUV and MPV segments are also seeing faster replacement cycles, so owners are selling off their SUVs much sooner than some other segments," Srivastava said.

"The most sought after features our pre-owned customers look for include company fitted AVN (Audio, Video Navigations) systems, automatic climate control, airbags, braking systems like ABS with EBD, automatic gearbox, etc," Hyundai said.

In the pre-owned category space, sales of cars running on petrol account for a substantial part of sales for both Maruti and Hyundai.

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT, FICCI

'India to face pressure ahead...should focus on manufacturing reforms'

EVEN THOUGH global economic conditions pose the risk of short-term turbulence through second degree effects, India is well positioned and the best way to prepare for it is to focus on manufacturing, Ficci President Subhrakant Panda said. In an interview with AANCHAL MAGAZINE, Panda said the government must consider to extend the concessional tax regime for new manufacturing units beyond 2024 to help businesses to board the manufacturing bus. Edited excerpts:

With the global economic outlook pointing towards recessionary conditions, what impact do you see for the Indian industry and economy?

To just peek at why we are where we are today, which is about as well placed as India can be from its own domestic situation, that's very clearly to do with the fact that going right back to the pandemic, where both the timing and the quantum of stimulus measures was spot on. Because what we're seeing globally is that wherever there was an excess of stimulus measures, their inflation has been elevated for far longer, and has been much more stubborn than what we're seeing. Not only that, during the pandemic, the government focused quite a bit on reforms. As a result, we are benefiting from that today. So whether it is enhancing ease of doing business, whether it is reducing the cost of doing business, or if you look at it from the point of view, I'm a very big votary of the PLI schemes, which are a very focused manner of targeting sectors where India is import dependent or there is an unnecessary outflow of foreign exchange. So as a result of that we are looking at a growth rate of 7 per cent, which is the fastest in the world...but what is very, very clear is that we are not an island, we are not decoupled. From that point of view, the IMF forecast for global growth is a matter of concern, it stood at 6 per cent for 2022 and it has almost halved to 3.2 per cent for 2023...so, unquestionably there are going to be second degree effects when global slowdown or global growth slows down so sharply. While India in itself is very well positioned, and even next year, we are going to once again be the fastest growing large economy, but there will be second degree effects for which we need to prepare. The inflationary impact of Europe or US, the consequent effects on growth, we are seeing that trickled through to us, from the point of view of exports, which had a sustained period of growth, and breached the \$400 billion mark.

For the first time this year, it has definitely taken a bit of a knock and we'll be under pressure going ahead. So that is where we have to prepare ourselves. And the best way to do that is to continue to focus on reforms, to continue to focus on manufacturing competitiveness.

The steps India has taken to improve ease of doing business, and to reduce the cost of doing business, especially with logistics cost being targeted, will have an impact. What is clear at one level is that the next year is going to be turbulent...we have to be prepared for a certain degree of of turbulence, but I am a great believer in the India growth story, and what I believe is that while we have to



Subhrakant Panda

via DSP

While India in itself is well positioned, and we are going to once again be the fastest growing large economy, but there will be second degree effects for which we need to prepare...the best way is to focus on manufacturing competitiveness

have one eye on the short term, and see in real time what corrective measures need to be taken to navigate, deftly, but some little course corrections may be required to navigate but equally one has to be in the medium to long term, because I think the potential that we have over the medium to long term is just absolutely stupendous. We shouldn't be alarmed by short term turbulence.

I think a few steps one can take is broadening the scope of the PLI schemes to include certain high export potential sectors. And the second thing, what the government is already doing, which is looking at port proximate clusters, which can give a boost to manufacturing exports. The importance of the manufacturing sector is very, very clear, because you can't have a situation where 16-17 per cent of the country's GDP comes from agriculture, but 45 per cent jobs are agri jobs, and we have a robust services sector, which will take up a lot of the slack, but manufacturing simply cannot afford to be in that 16-18 per cent range, it needs to go up.

I believe there is a lot of scope for a China plus one strategy. And when we had that earlier, unfortunately, you know, we couldn't quite capitalize on it. But today when you talk about China plus one, that one need not necessarily be India, a lot of it will come to India, but we have to work at it. And to that extent, taking some steps like for example, in our budget recommendations, we have talked about extending the concessional tax regime for newer manufacturing new manufacturing entities, which is currently slated to expire in 2024...when you look at competing geographies, like Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore etc where they have taxes of 17-18 per cent. So we need to be competitive in that regard...we need to provide a clear

window in our opinion for five years to say look, this is your opportunity to move supply chains to India. That will be a bold step which would attract investment.

You spoke of the concessional tax regime. The government cut the corporate tax rate, but the benefits of it were not really visible on ground.

I think we are conflating two issues. As far as corporate tax rates are concerned, for existing units, you have the option of either continuing with your old tax regime, or switching to the new one, which is 25 per cent plus surcharges. Now, as far as the concessional tax regime of 115 BAB is concerned, that was first set to expire in 2023, which was extended to 2024. Now, if you look at it from what investment has it been able to attract? I agree, not much. But you have to see it from the context that you had two years of COVID, with lockdowns, etc, which disrupted a lot of activities. It was at a time where people were hesitant to commit new investments...the government did at the behest of chambers extend it from '23 to '24. Maybe you will see some data of units coming in. But I mean, on that basis alone, does it justify extending 115 BAB? Perhaps not. Let me be clear about that. But what we are saying is that when the Prime Minister says that we are willing to do everything to climb the manufacturing bus this time, we feel this is an important aspect.

Given the concerns over Covid cases and related shutdowns in China, there may be risks affecting the linkages. How do you see that?

I would like to contrast it first of all with how well India has handled the pandemic, starting with lockdowns, when you didn't know what it was about...then when vaccines came about we have conducted the world's largest vaccinations in a very efficient manner...contrast that with China where unfortunately at the first instance, they've had a lot of lockdowns, and continued longer than perhaps when necessary, leading to unrest. Now they've opened up in a manner where there are reports of a surge in cases...but I think it's a little too early. And, given the state of affairs, whether there is underreporting of cases, or is this a lot of exaggeration...in a few days, it will be clear, but I really commend the government for being proactive.

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

FPIs invest ₹11,557 cr in equities in Dec

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

FOREIGN INVESTORS have infused a net Rs 11,557 crore in Indian equities in December so far despite a market correction and increasing concerns over re-emergence of Covid-19 in China and some other parts of the world.

Going ahead, macro data from the US and Covid-19 news will drive FPI flows and the markets in the near term, said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

According to data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) invested a net sum of Rs 11,557 crore in equi-

ties during December 1-23.

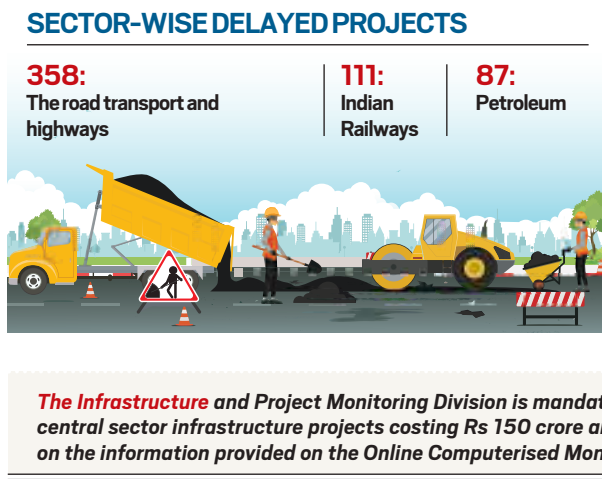
This comes following a net investment of over Rs 36,200 crore in November primarily due to weakening of the US dollar index and positivity about overall macroeconomic trends.

Prior to this, foreign investors pulled out Rs 8 crore in October and Rs 7,624 crore in September, data with the depositories showed.

"Despite correction in the markets, increasing concerns over re-emergence of Covid-19 in some parts of the world and recession worries in the US, FPIs remained net buyers in the Indian equity markets (in December)," said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India.

'Road sector has the maximum number of delayed projects'

As many as 756 projects are delayed with respect to their original schedules and 304 projects have reported additional delays, as per a government report



New age firms' market cap in red since listing

TUSHARGOENKA
BENGALURU, DECEMBER 25

A CLUTCH of new age technology companies has lost nearly Rs 2.5 trillion or roughly \$20 billion in market capitalization since they listed on the exchanges. Shareholders have been disappointed by either poor performance or unwieldy acquisitions. In some instances, the sale of stakes by investors post the expiry of the lock-in period, has dragged down the stock.

SWARAJ BAGGONKAR
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 25

THE INDIAN electric vehicle (EV) industry could be bracing for yet supply chain disruption as China experiences its worst wave of Covid-19 infections, causing disruption in battery cell producing factories and other critical components that power EVs.

Battery pack makers in India, who depend on suppliers in China, believe that by the time the authorities are able to bring the pandemic under control, the country will shut down for the Chinese New Year in the

second half of January. Although PayTm reported smaller losses, sequentially in the September quarter of Rs 571 crore and revenues grew 14 per cent to Rs 1,914, the arrival of new competition has also prompted analysts to become more cautious. For example, analysts at Macquarie believe that Jio Financial Services "can pose a significant growth and market-share risk" for players such as Paytm and Bajaj Finance.

PayTm has launched a buy-back of shares at Rs 810 apiece, about 60 per cent lower than its IPO price, but that has not en-

thused shareholders.

The stock is trading at Rs 476.40, less than a fourth of its IPO price of Rs 2,150.

In mid-October a cautionary outlook from Delhivery sent the stock crashing. The company had said that while the festive season sale surge in shipment volumes will spill over to the third quarter as well, it anticipated moderate growth in shipment volumes through the rest of the financial year.

Delivery's losses narrowed sequentially to Rs 254 crore in

Q2FY23 but revenues grew a marginal 3% to Rs 1,796 crore. Analysts at ICICI Securities have trimmed their revenue growth estimates "meaningfully" by 16 per cent for the current year and by 23 per cent for FY24.

Nykkaa's performance in Q2FY23 was a shade below expectations since the net profits came in at just Rs 5.5 crore, the fallout of inflationary pressures. Analysts at Jefferies pointed out that despite the fashion business being at an early stage, a low single digit q-o-q growth is a disappointment. **FE**

TO IMPROVE COST STRUCTURE OF INDIAN ALUMINIUM 'Reduce custom on critical raw materials'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 25

INDUSTRY BODY ASSOCHAM has sought reduction in basic customs duty and correction of inverted duty structure on critical raw materials for the aluminium industry as high import duties is a huge disadvantage for the sector heavily dependent on imported raw materials.

In its pre-Budget memorandum 2023-24, ASSOCHAM said high import duty on raw materials results in Indian finished goods getting costlier and uncompetitive in international



Reuters File

High import duty on raw materials results in Indian finished goods getting costlier and uncompetitive in international markets, rendering negative protection against cheaper imports of finished products

markets, rendering negative protection against cheaper imports of finished products, and discourages domestic value addition within the country.

"The average production cost of Indian aluminium producers is amongst highest in the world, majorly due to high incidence of unrebated Central & State taxes

and duties on inputs/ raw materials accounting for 18-20 per cent of aluminium production costs," it said.

In a bid to improve the cost structure of the Indian aluminium industry and enhance competitiveness, the basic customs duty on critical raw materials should be reduced. The industry body has sought reduction of basic customs duty on calcined petroleum coke, caustic soda lye and green anode/pre-baked carbon anode from 7.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent and on raw petroleum coke from 10 per cent to 2.5 per cent, amongst others.

Defiance saves the day

After being reduced to 74/7, Shreyas and Ashwin's unbroken 71-run stand for eighth wicket gives India series victory

ABHISHEK PUROHIT
DECEMBER 25

RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN and Shreyas Iyer saved India from what would have been a hugely embarrassing defeat, lifting them from the depths of 74 for 7 and dragging them to the target of 145 before lunch on the fourth morning of the second Test against Bangladesh in Dhaka for a 2-0 series win.

When Mehidy Hasan Miraz uprooted Axar Patel's leg stump for his fifth wicket of the innings, India were just past the halfway stage of what was increasingly looking like a target beyond them. Resuming on 45 for 4, India had lost Jaydev Unadkat plumb leg-before to Shakib Al Hasan, and had also burned a review in trying to save the nightwatchman.

Bangladesh had said after the third day's play that Rishabh Pant would be the key batsman, and the wicketkeeper showed why, reverse-sweeping and sweeping Shakib from around the same spot to make a mess of the hosts' fields. But the relentless Mehidy soon had his man; bowling a tight line from round the wicket, with one turning and another going straight, Mehidy trapped Pant in front with one that did not turn. It was so plumb that Pant did not even review.

Axar had arrived ahead of Virat Kohli on the third evening at No 4 and while the specialists had imploded, he'd played a mighty useful innings, defending resolutely and punching the spinners off the back foot for boundaries. But in his next over, Mehidy slipped in another straighter one that crashed into Axar's leg stump off his pad. And within half an hour into the day, India were down to their last recognised batting pair.

Mehidy continued to cause problems, but Mominul Haque – he'd taken two excellent catches of Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli at forward short leg – put down what was arguably a much more straightforward chance off Ashwin, who was on just 1 then.

Someone had to bell the cat eventually, and it was Shreyas Iyer who wrested back the initiative. He cracked Mehidy through the covers for a couple of fours, and with the risk of throwing away probably India's last chance if he got it wrong, danced down the track to loft Shakib over mid-off. That brought the shorter ball immediately and Iyer rocked back to pull it over midwicket for another four. The Bangladesh counter-attack from 113 for 6 in their second innings had begun around this stage as well, as the older ball had become softer and ceased to do as much off the pitch.

Ashwin, named the Player of the Match for his six wickets and unbeaten 42 in the chase, said: "We didn't have much batting left. It was one of those games where we let the game drift whenever we could have shut it off. Shreyas batted beautifully. Sometimes in these situations you feel like you have to get ahead of things, they bowled good lines and I felt that we didn't trust our defences enough. Loved the way Shreyas batted. I thought the ball got soft really quickly. Credit to Bangladesh, they put us under real pressure at certain moments."

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 227 & 231 all out in 70.2 overs (Litton Das 73, Zakir Hasan 51; Axar Patel 3/68) lost to **India** 314 and 145 for 7 in 47 overs (Ravichandran Ashwin 42 not out, Shreyas Iyer 29 not out; Mehidy Hasan 5/63) by 3 wkts.



Shreyas Iyer (29) combined with R Ashwin (42) on Day 4 of the Test match against Bangladesh to lead India to victory.

AP

Why isn't Ashwin the vice-captain in Tests?

VENKATA KRISHNAB
DECEMBER 25

WHY ISN'T R Ashwin the allrounder raved as much as he should be? Why isn't he the vice-captain of the Indian Test team? The first question's failure is on us, the watchers. The second reflects the conservative vision of the current Indian think tank where they hedge on the known – and fail.

You never appreciate what you have until it is gone.... That thought might have played in the minds of numerous Indian fans as Ashwin scored the winning runs in the Mirpur Test on Sunday. Down at 74 for 7, Ashwin cradled India to another Test series win, walking away with the Man of the Match Trophy.

There are only two cricketers who have scored over 3,000 runs and taken 400-plus wickets in Test matches for India. One is Kapil Dev, the greatest allrounder Indian cricket has ever seen, and the other is Ashwin. At 36, he is the senior most in the team, and in a team that includes Ravindra Jadeja, Ashwin still stands out as a serial match-winner as an all-rounder. He has more centuries than Jadeja and has more wickets. And over the last three years where Jadeja has evolved more into a batsman, Ashwin has still ended up playing three innings that are bound to hold a special place in his heart.

There was that epic at the SCG, there was that century at Chepauk, which silenced England's batsmen who were complaining about the pitch. The latest in the list is the unbeaten 42 against Bangladesh, which has kept India's hopes of World Test Championship final qualification, alive.

In a team that has Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Jadeja, Ashwin remains their MVP in Tests, irrespective of the conditions. Of course, India have chosen to even leave him out overseas even when they play five bowlers, but that has more to do with playing four pacers so that none of them is overworked.

Yet, as India are entering a transition phase, with no regular, dependable Test captain in sight, it is curious that the selectors never really looked at Ashwin even as a vice-captain material. After Kohli decided to step down as captain, India went with Rohit as all-format captain, well aware of his fitness struggles. And for the vice-captaincy, they went with Bumrah, a player who is struggling with injuries and whose workload has to be managed carefully. So that left India to look at Rahul, a player who has not even cemented his place in the XI, let alone be seen as a long-term option. Beyond Rahul, India were looking at Pant, but only to name Cheteshwar Pujara as the deputy for the two Tests against Bangladesh.

Be it calling himself a cricket scientist or coming across as a cricket obsessed player, Ashwin always comes across as a player who is futuristic in terms of where the game is heading. Yet, even the vice-captaincy has continued to elude him.

In the past, the selectors and the team management have had apprehensions with regards to Ashwin as a captain for Tests. It was said privately that Ashwin tends to be over-think and ends up overdoing too much stuff from outside the box (presumably Indian cricket isn't up for innovations yet), and which is why they were hesitant to hand him captaincy. Even here, with a good strong coach, that trait to



R Ashwin was named the Player of the Match for his six wickets and unbeaten 42 in the chase.

AP

overthink could be handled but that moment perhaps has passed us by. But there are no such issues with vice-captaincy; he is one with a stomach for a fight, and mentoring upcoming players comes naturally to him.

Instead, Ashwin has had to battle insecurities in the not-so-distant past when his position in the team wasn't handled as well as it could have been. At his age, he might not be the captaincy material and he might not command the kind of unqualified respect and stature within the team as Anil Kumble might have done – and Kumble used all that once to handle a mighty controversial tour of Australia.

From the time Kohli stepped down – end of South Africa series in 2021 – India's assignments were against Sri Lanka, Bangladesh (away) and Australia. In each of these conditions, Ashwin was bound to be starter and for

Be it calling himself a cricket scientist or coming across as a cricket obsessed player, Ashwin always comes across as a player who is futuristic in terms of where the game is heading. Yet, even the vice-captaincy has continued to elude him.

all you know with Rahul continuing to struggle in Tests, India could have tried Abhimanyu Easwaran at the top alongside Shubman Gill to groom him for the long run. Instead, with Rohit missing, by virtue of being the vice-captain, Rahul ended up playing both the Tests and ended-up well short of expectations.

When he isn't playing for India, Ashwin doesn't even hesitate to even turn up in First Division matches in Chennai. Last season, with his team Mylapore Recreation Club 'A' looking for a spin-bowling all-rounder, he reached out to Harsh Dubey, a 20-year-old from Vidarbha. Dubey ended up scoring a century in the final and giving MRC their first title. Or unearthing fast bowlers with talent camps. These are qualities that one often finds in natural leaders.

The new selection committee can look at Ashwin as an option for vice-captaincy as he is bound to play all the matches (fitness permitting) as India enter a period of transition. That way, even if Rohit isn't available, in Ashwin, India will have a captain who isn't new to the role and allow someone like Pant to groom as well.

BRIEFLY

Pele's family gathers at hospital

Sao Paulo: Family members of Brazilian soccer great Pelé are gathering at the Albert Einstein hospital in Sao Paulo where the 82-year-old icon has been since the end of November. Doctors said earlier this week that Pelé's cancer had advanced, adding the three-time World Cup winner is under "elevated care" related to "kidney and cardiac dysfunctions." No other hospital statements have been published since. Edson Cholbi Nascimento, one of Pelé's sons and known as Edinho, arrived Saturday, one day after he gave a news conference to deny he would visit his father in hospital. Edinho, who works for a soccer club in Brazil, had said then that only doctors could help his father.

AP

Conte not happy with quick PL restart

London: Tottenham Hotspur manager Antonio Conte is "not really happy" that the Premier League will resume just eight days after the World Cup and hinted he might rest players for the Boxing Day match at Brentford. Out of the 12 Tottenham players who featured in Qatar, Conte has ruled France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris and Argentina's Cristian Romero, who played in the final last Sunday, out of Monday's game. "It is a strange situation and honestly to play so quickly, only one week after the World Cup, I am not really happy," Conte said in comments published in British media on Sunday.

PTI

Basketball stand collapses, injuring 27

Cairo: At least 27 people were injured when stands partly collapsed during a basketball game in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, health authorities said. Officials said part of the seats fell on spectators at the Super Cup match between Cairo's Al-Ahly and Ittihad of Alexandria following a stampede in the stands. The game at the Hassan Moustafa Sports Hall in Cairo's 6th of October district was called off. Spokesman Hossam Abdel-Ghaffar said in a statement that most of the injured suffered broken bones. He said they were taken to hospitals and their injuries were not life threatening.

PTI

Indian Archers on target at Asia Cup

Sharjah: The Indian junior archers reigned supreme in the Asia Cup Stage III by returning with nine medals, including five gold on Sunday. The biggest medal haul came from the compound section where Indian archers bagged seven of the eight medals up from grabs, including a clean sweep in the individual women section. Priyansh and Ojas Deotale bagged gold and silver in the compound individual. The Indian compound archers also topped the team events in both men's and women's, defeating Korea en route to gold medals.

AP

QATAR HANGOVER

After euphoria of World Cup, big teams have big tasks at hand in PL return



Players like Mohammad Salah will be rejuvenated after the World Cup came with a crucial break for him, along with other Liverpool players.

AP

NAMIT KUMAR
DECEMBER 25

EIGHT DAYS on from the dramatic finale of the football World Cup, the return of English league football may come as a surprise to some, and to the resentment of some football-overloaded others.

Here's everything one needs to know about the league's major contenders, as the narrative of one of the world's most popular sporting competitions resumes.

Arsenal in title race

Arsenal have been good this season. No, they really are looking good.

Mikel Arteta has effectively integrated a host of new signings into their system this season. They have looked fluid in midfield and attack, and won big London derbies against Chelsea and Tottenham, as well as convincingly trumped Liverpool.

The team has instilled belief in the ever-passionate global fan base of the North London team.

A fan base that will be quick to remind everyone that Arsenal are five points clear at the top of the league table at Christmas, a superstition in English football undoubtedly sullied by the layoff.

Arteta's side has, for the most part, answered the questions critics have posed at them in the first half. But after losing crucial striker Gabriel Jesus to injury, and seeing an already light squad go through an

The magic of a World Cup is in watching the planet's best players fighting for the sport's foremost prize, but fans were robbed of the opportunity of seeing Manchester City's latest goal-scoring sensation Erling Haaland.

intense World Cup, keeping up with their star-studded rivals will be a big ask.

Haaland is back

The magic of a World Cup is in watching the planet's best players fighting for the sport's foremost prize, but fans were robbed of the opportunity of seeing Manchester City's latest goal-scoring sensation Erling Haaland.

It took the Norwegian less than 10 minutes to get on the scoresheet in City's 3-2 thriller against Liverpool in the League Cup on Thursday. Haaland has scored 18 of the team's table-topping 40 this season, and looks hungry to prove himself after a six-week break.

Add to that Pep Guardiola's winning machine that has won four of the last five league titles, and a hungry Kevin De Bruyne, one of the best midfielders of his generation determined to do well after dis-

EPL STANDINGS						
	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Arsenal	14	12	1	1	22	37
Man City	14	10	2	2	26	32
N Utd	15	8	6	1	18	30
Spurs	15	9	2	4	10	29
Man Utd	14	8	2	4	0	26
Liverpool	14	6	4	4	11	22

appointment with Belgium in Qatar, and Arsenal have a lot to worry about at the top.

Rejuvenated Liverpool

Liverpool have spent three of the last four years contending for the title, and won it once, but in a transitional phase this season, it seems that a more realistic goal is making it into the top four.

While their performance against City was not exactly inspired, and off-field distractions are aplenty after their owners put the club on sale in October, they are well rested for the post-World Cup rush of fixtures that are coming their way.

Fabinho was mostly unused by Brazil, Thiago – bafflingly to some – was not called up by Spain, both Luis Diaz and Diogo Jota are on their way to recovering from injury, and other squad mainstays like Andy Robertson, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Joel Matip have got a crucial break. After

the six weeks off, talisman Mohamed Salah also has the chance to recover his form.

Race for Top 4

Several fumbling clubs, who have been disappointing for the last few seasons, make up the rest of the contenders looking to ensure European football for next season.

Erik Ten Hag's Manchester United have been streaky, looking good in parts. And without the distraction of the Cristiano Ronaldo fiasco, they will look to go on a run of form.

However, the start may be tetchy, as first-choice defensive partnership Lisandro Martinez and Raphael Varane played the World Cup final only eight days prior to the season restart.

Tottenham have one of Europe's more glamorous coaches – in fame but not playing style – in Antonio Conte, but have looked far from settled. Under new ownership and the surprise managerial change in replacing Thomas Tuchel with Graham Potter, Chelsea's woeful form – two points in the last five games – has them languishing in eighth place.

Amid these teams, Newcastle United, bolstered by the influx of Saudi Arabian cash and a buoyant and energetic team under Eddie Howe looking to wake up an English football giant, find themselves in third place having won five games on the trot. They will be a major player in the top-4 race.