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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE
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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2022, NEW DELHI, LATE CITY, 18 PAGES

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in 60 Hours
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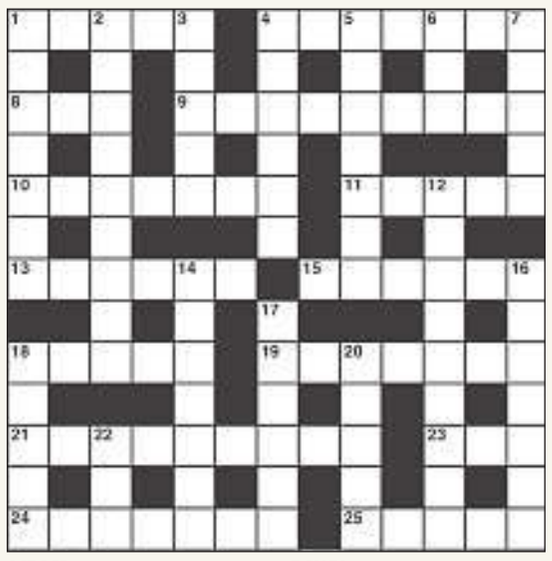
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CROSSWORD 4663



ACROSS

1 Native of Bengal who will do no harm on paper (5)
4 Involved in a cult that's crazy (7)
8 Friday's girl (3)
9 If results go astray efforts may well be (9)
10 Strange native with eastern simplicity (7)
11 A wild shot but a fine musketeer (5)
13 To some extent more willingly (6)
15 A new bride's bits and pieces (6)
18 I get a horse out for her (5)
19 Old instrument for making wine nevertheless (7)
21 She makes man target (9)
23 Is it on the border of impertinence? (3)
24 Ran round a tree like lightning (7)
25 A girl superstar full of sex-appeal (5)

DOWN

1 Used by economical painters - it's not so wide (7)
2 At one time he fought in spectacles (9)
3 Search for a weapon (5)
4 Hardy no; evergreen yes (6)
5 Can turn on speed to make the land more productive (7)
6 Article used for tea by the French (3)
7 Expenses that are legally incurred (5)
12 Flowers seen around beer halls (9)
14 It clears one's view - to humbug? (7)
16 Attack one puts differently (3,4)
17 Slid uneasily round an offshore location (6)
18 It's an idea if Tom comes up first (5)
20 Names landmarks or eyesores we hear (5)
22 Fresh air and water (3)

Solutions Crossword 4662: Across: 1 Shoestring, 8 Drive, 9 Empanel, 10 Spotted, 11 Idiom, 12 Relics, 14 Strain, 17 Basra, 19 Cheerio, 21 Thoreau, 22 Tunis, 23 Countrymen. **Down:** 2 Hair oil, 3 Event, 4 Trendy, 5 Imprint, 6 Genii, 7 Flamingoes, 8 Distribute, 13 Chateau, 15 Arrange, 16 Occult, 18 Stoic, 20 Entry.

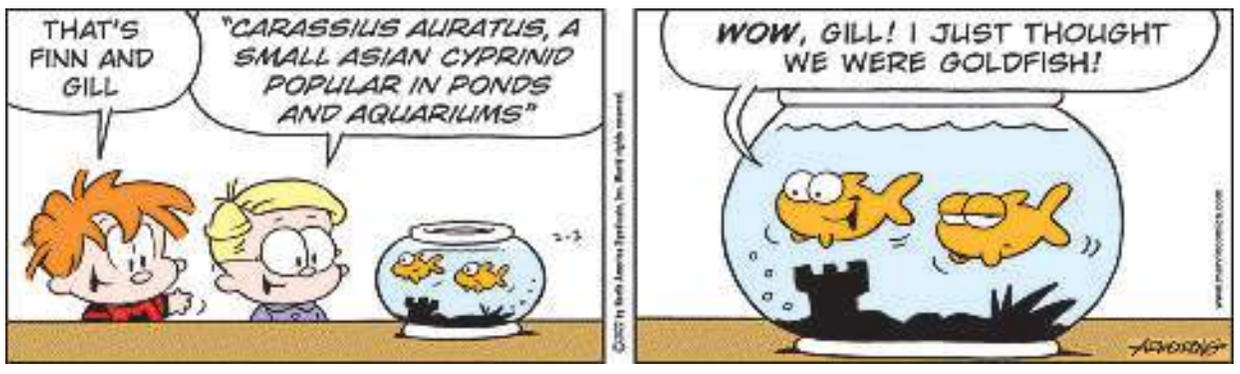
OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



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.

The great composer does not set to work because he is inspired, but becomes inspired because_____. - Ernest Newman (2,2,7)

GTEOR

EOUGHN

TVIIS

AAENKW

Answer: The great composer does not set to work because he is inspired, but becomes inspired because **he is working.** - Ernest Newman

SOLUTION: ERGOT, VISIT, ENOUGH, AWAKEN

SUDOKU 4745

Difficulty Level 4s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

2		4	7		9	6		
9					5			8
								4
	8	9		1	3			
			9	5		8	1	
7								
6			1					2
		1	2		7	4		3

SOLUTION SUDOKU 4744

1	7	9	2	8	4	5	6	3
4	8	3	6	1	5	2	7	9
2	6	5	7	3	9	4	8	1
8	9	6	1	2	3	7	4	5
5	2	4	9	6	7	3	1	8
7	3	1	4	5	8	9	2	6
9	5	2	8	4	6	1	3	7
3	4	8	5	7	1	6	9	2
6	1	7	3	9	2	8	5	4

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)
It's an emotional day and you're set for a busy week with many changes of mood. From today, the urgency to pursue various negotiations, especially those with a personal dimension, will become more obvious. Yet there is no rush to reach a decision.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)
At last, you can begin to map out the future. Plans for the next stage of your relentless advance should now be complete. You are being buoyed up by a continuing sense that financial conditions can only improve. On the other hand, further information is required, as you well know.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
That optimistic planet Jupiter is at a crucial point in its twelve-year cycle around your horoscope, during which opportunities have come and gone. The sky's the limit as the culmination of this long-term phase approaches. It's time to broaden your horizons.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
Even those who were once so close or supportive may now be going their own ways. Don't panic: partners, colleagues and associates will be doing you a good turn if they loosen the bonds even a little. Perhaps you should have the confidence to stand on your own feet.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)
Partners are playing a complicated game, that's for sure. You're still faced with contradictions, but may be utterly unable to clarify the issues, let alone resolve differences. Fall back on support from social contacts as a means of pursuing your goals.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)
You've got three substantial planetary movements over the next week. Venus is soon to join Mercury and Uranus to complete a brilliant and determined trio in critical sectors of your solar chart. There really is nothing that you cannot achieve, if you set your heart on it.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)
Yours is not usually known as an adventurous sign, even though individual Librans have often been known to take a tough stance. Now is one of those times when all of you may take several major steps forward. If you have any truly loyal friends, stick close, they're the ones who will carry you to the future.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)
Much has been written about your financial and business affairs over recent months. Everything that takes place now will convince you that good fortune is likely to become permanent rather than, as once you feared, be no more than a temporary blip.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)
However much you pretend otherwise, chance words can go deep. It must now be repeated that if you step aside and allow partners to take centre stage, you may share in their good fortune. Also, decisions involving your personal affairs must be taken in the full light of day.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)
The planets are indicating the possibility of a dramatic improvement in your health. Yet this will not take place without some initiative on your part, perhaps dietary, perhaps associated with complementary medicine or an exercise regime.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)
An extraordinary line-up of pugnacious planets is exerting an influence over creative sectors of your chart, producing exactly the degree of support that you need at this time. Among the beneficiaries are people romantically linked to you.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)
At last you can feel that property and domestic affairs are going your way. Certainly, you can afford to be optimistic about family relationships and everything which is emotionally fundamental to your existence. You'll also stop imagining that a partner is blocking your path.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-tender Notice No.Com/Lease/ SLR/LHB/DNR/21/5

Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), East Central Railway, Danapur Division, for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender, for leasing space of 3.9/4 tonnes of SLRs/LHBs on per trip basis on payment of lumpsum freight for loading of parcels in following trains for a period of five (05) years. It can be seen on the website: www.ireps.gov.in

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2. Train No.: 12391, **From-To:** RGD-NDLS, **Compartment:** F-1, F-2 & R-1 (4.0), **Reserve Price (In Rs.):** 6,044/-

Date & time of submission of Tender: up to 07.03.2022 at 12.00 hrs through online www.ireps.gov.in only.

Date & time of opening of Tender: After 07.03.2022 at 12.00 hrs.

Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial)
East Central Railway, Danapur

PR/01676/DNR/COML/T/21-22/32

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E-Tender No. – 2022 WPMechJUDWWT-26 OPEN

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1. Name of the work with its location: Composite Works (Civil, Electrical, Mechanical) involving construction of Industrial sheds, other ancillary buildings, Track works, Drainage system, Electrification and illumination works, Procurement and commissioning of specified Mechanical Machineries & Plant (EOT crane etc.) in connection with LHB coach POH enhancement & Wagon Bogie Shop Extension at Jagadhari Workshop, Northern Railway. **2. Approx. Cost of the work:** Rs.21,18,44,708.05, **3. Earnest money to be deposited:** Rs.12,09,200.00 **4. Date and time for closing of tender:** 22.03.2022 up to 13.00 Hrs.

5. Website particular and notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen: Tender can be down loaded from IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in and detailed can be seen from the notice board at Office of CAO/WP, Chamber Bhawan, J.C. Road, Patna-800001.

Any e-tender which is sent by Post/ Courier/Fax or by hand will not be accepted. All such manual submission of tender even if it is on firm's letter pad or received in time will not be accepted.

The above e-tender document along with full information is available on website https://www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. CME-I/WP/Patna

PR/01675/WPO/WP/T/21-22/48

SBI

Strategy & Digital Banking Department,
Corporate Centre, Mumbai-400 021.

CORRIGENDUM - 2

Please refer to RFP No. SBI/S & DB/2021-22/OSS/001 dated 05.01.2022 for Engagement of consultant for setting up an operations support subsidiary. Corrigendum - 2 dated 11.02.2022 can be accessed under Procurement news at Bank's website https://www.sbi.co.in.

Place: Mumbai
Date: 14.02.2022

General Manager (OSD)
Strategy & Digital Banking Department

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SADAR BAZAR ROAD, DELHI CANTT-110010
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क्र.-मप्रपुआअविनि/73 /पयं/भोपाल-02/तक्षा/2022 भोपाल, दि. : 10.02.2022

प्रेस विज्ञप्ति

गोविन्दपुरा जिला भोपाल में 100 बिस्तर नवीन अस्पताल का निर्माण कार्य हेतु निविदा क्रमांक-11/2021-22 ऑनलाइन निविदा क्रमांक-MPPHCL/TENDER No-2022_MPPHC_184152_1) आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र **दिनांक 04.03.2022 समय 5.00 बजे तक** ऑनलाइन से खरीदे जा सकते हैं, विस्तृत निविदा सूचना एवं अन्य विवरण **Portal : https://mptenders.gov.in** पर देखे जा सकते हैं।

म.प्र. माध्यम/109627/2022

परियोजना यंत्री

ARMY HOSPITAL (R&R) DELHI CANTT-10

ADVERTISEMENT FOR PHYSICAL INTERVIEW FOR APPOINTMENTS OF OUTSOURCING SERVICES ON CONTRACTUAL BASIS FOR 02 x MEDICAL PHYSICIST-CUM-RADIOLOGICAL SAFETY OFFICER LEVEL III FOR RADIATION ONCOLOGY DEPARTMENT AND 01 x RADIOLOGICAL SAFETY OFFICER LEVEL III FOR NUCLEAR MEDICINE DEPARTMENT OF ARMY HOSPITAL (R&R) DELHI CANTT-110010

1. Army Hospital (R&R) invites eligible candidates for physical interview for outsourcing services of **02 x Medical Physicist-Cum-Radiological Safety Officer Level III for Radiation Oncology Department and 01 x Radiological Safety Officer Level III for Nuclear Medicine Department of Army Hospital** (R&R) Delhi Cantt-10, in accordance with Directorate General of Medical Services (Army) letter No B/74902/16/DGMS-3D dt 13 Apr 2021.
2. **Minimum Qualifications.** The minimum qualifications required are as under :-
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5. The initial contractual period for the above posts, will be from the day of appointment till 31 Mar 2022, which may be further extended, based on the terms and conditions.
6. Desirous candidates must bring original educational documents and other necessary verification documents and report to Administrative Block for **physical Interview on 21 February 2022 (Monday) between 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.**

Army Hospital (R&R)
Tele Nos: 011-23338190, 9365647416
E mail id- zephyr.001@gov.in

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I,Priyanka W/o Parikshit Arora R/o Flat-1205, Tower-J, Amarpali Silicon City, Sector-76, Noida(U.P.) have changed my name to Priyanka Singh for all purposes.

0040602565-1

I Aparna G, Aparnna Gangakumary, Aparna Girli Kumari, Aparna Girli Babu D/O, Babu Chandrasekharan R/o Flat No 75 -f , Second Floor, Pocket -a (dda Flats), Mayur Vihar Ph -3, Kondli, New Delhi-110096 have changed my name to Aparna Chandrashekhar.

0040602566-1

I Gagandeep S/o Kuldeep Singh R/o E-564, JJ Colony, Raghubir Nagar, Tagore Garden, New Delhi-110027 have changed my name to Gagandeep Singh

0040602567-1

I Jasvir Singh S/o Jaswant Singh r/o BE-392, 4th Floor, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110064 have changed my name as Jasvir Singh Bhatia for all purpose.

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY



Few takers for Maharashtra ATS posting, top cop posts invite on FB

YOGESH NAIK & MOHAMED THAVER
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 13

THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL of Maharashtra Police has posted on Facebook plugging the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and invited officers who would like a posting to meet him.

The ATS chief has written to the state government seeking more manpower for the squad.

The extraordinary push from the two officers last week attest to a crippling shortage of senior personnel at the ATS — among the most high-profile units of the state police at one time, but where a posting no longer seems attractive.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that ATS chief Vineet Agarwal told Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Manu Kumar Shrivastava that several positions, including four key ones, had been lying vacant at his unit for quite some time, and asked for them to be filled at the earliest.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

DECISION 2022

VOTING TODAY

GOA (40)
2017: BJP 13, Cong 17, GFP 3, MGP 3, NCP 1, Ind 3
■ BJP formed govt with GFP, MGP, Inds
2022: Cong-GFP, TMC-MGP in alliance

UTTARAKHAND (70)
2017: BJP 57, Cong 11, Ind 2

UTTAR PRADESH PH 2 (55)
2017: BJP 38, SP 15, Cong 2
■ SP-Cong in alliance

Ph 1 (Feb 10) turnout: over 60%

PHASE 3: FEBRUARY 20



SETTING THE STAGE

Ahead of the Assembly election, officials inspect polling materials at an indoor stadium in Panaji on Sunday. *ANI*

High schools open today in Karnataka, Udupi clamps down

Hijab OK where no uniform: peace meet

DARSHAN DEVAIAH B P
BENGALURU, FEBRUARY 13

WITH HIGH schools reopening in Karnataka on Monday, after a five-day break to cool communal tensions over the hijab ban row, the police in Udupi have imposed prohibitory orders near campuses for six days till Saturday in the southern district at the centre of the controversy.

The move comes at a time when the state is entering a crucial week in the faceoff, with the Opposition set to question the BJP state government on the issue in the Assembly session starting Monday even as the Karnataka High Court resumes hearings on pleas against the ban.

On Sunday evening, a multi-faith peace committee in Udupi headed by the local BJP MLA agreed to ensure that the High Court's interim order on Friday,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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KHUSHBOO NARAYAN
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 13

LIFE INSURANCE Corporation of India (LIC) has filed its draft share sale prospectus with the capital markets regulator SEBI, paving the way for India's largest initial public offering (IPO). There is also a possibility that LIC will become India's most valuable listed company, toppling Reliance Industries Ltd, after listing on the stock exchanges.

LIC plans to sell 316.25 million shares, which is about 5 per cent of its total equity base, said the draft red herring prospectus filed with SEBI (Securities and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

EXPLAINED

Pricing of issue is key

WHILE LIC'S IPO holds key to the government's revised disinvestment target of Rs 78,000 crore for this financial year, it remains to be seen if the market has the appetite to absorb a mega issue at a time when the equity markets are witnessing volatility following spike in inflation and rising interest rates globally. The pricing of the issue will hold the key.

Call from Mamata, Stalin says non-BJP CMs to meet soon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, KOLKATA, HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY 13



Discussion on threat to autonomy: Stalin

TAMIL NADU Chief Minister M K Stalin said Sunday that the CMs of non-NDA-ruled states would soon hold a convention in Delhi to discuss the "threat posed to autonomy of states".

Stalin said he spoke to West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee earlier in the day and a decision was taken to hold a meeting.

In Hyderabad, Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao talked of coming meetings with his Maharashtra counterpart Uddhav Thackeray as well as Banerjee, as part of efforts to unite various political parties against the NDA government. He also backed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's demand for proof regarding the surgical strikes, saying half the country including himself wanted to know the "truth".

While Stalin and Banerjee have both had run-ins with their state governors recently, Rao has been raising the pitch against the BJP, which has been aggressively expanding its footprint in Telangana.

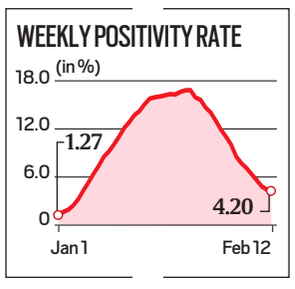
With the Congress's electoral losses leaving a vacuum at the top among the Opposition, all three see an opportunity for themselves at the national level. The Trinamool Congress has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Dists with positivity over 10% down to 105, sign of further retreat of virus

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

JUST OVER 100 districts are now reporting a weekly positivity rate of more than 10 per cent, indicating a further decrease in the spread of coronavirus infection in the country, granular data being tracked by the Health Ministry show.



On Thursday, the Ministry had said that 141 districts had a weekly positivity rate more than 10 per cent. Two weeks ago, 388 districts in the country were above this positivity threshold.

The steady decline in the number of districts with a high positivity rate corresponds to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

U-19 star makes it to father's favourite IPL team nearly 2 yrs after losing him to Covid

DEVENDRA PANDEY & PRATYUSH RAJ
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13



(clockwise, from above) Bawa; Dhull; Hangarekar

WHEN CHENNAI Super Kings coughed up Rs 1.5 crore for Rajvardhan Hangarekar, the U-19 World Cup winning all-rounder's thoughts were with his father who succumbed to Covid in 2020. Chennai Super Kings was his father's favourite team, and its captain MS Dhoni his favourite cricketer.

Tracking the IPL auction on Sunday, it seemed too much of a dream to be true for the son. "My father just loved CSK and used to follow them passionately. I wish he were alive to see this day," Hangarekar told *The Indian Express*. "Wherever he is, he will certainly be happier than all of us. I really have no words," he said, choking with emotion.

Seamer Raj Angad Bawa, man of the match in the Under-19

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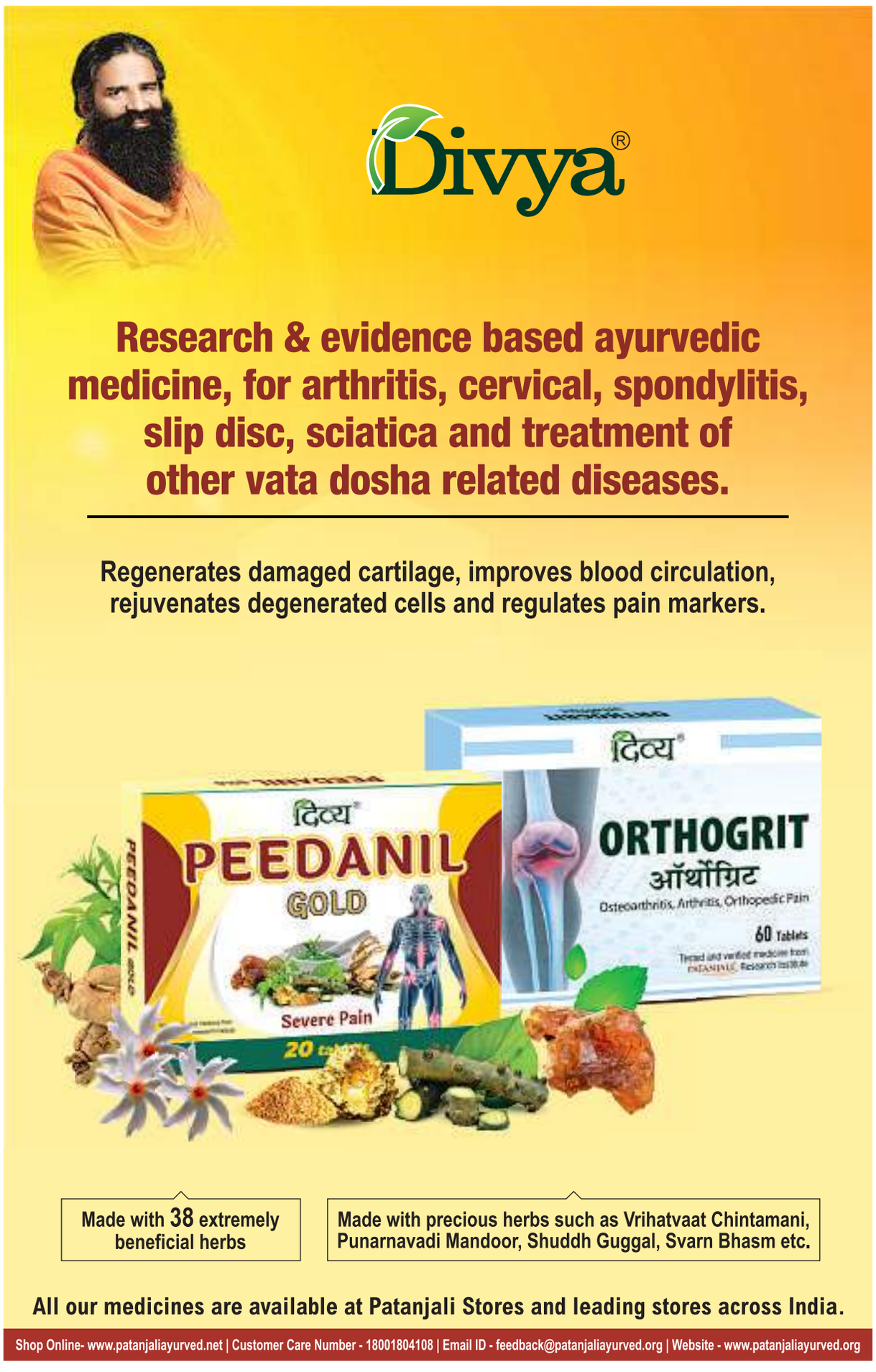
WORLD



RUSSIA MAY CREATE PRETEXT TO ATTACK UKRAINE, SAYS U.S.

PAK: MAN STONED TO DEATH, 85 HELD

PAGE 15





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WEB EXCLUSIVE



'WINGED CUPID PAINTED BLIND': HOW CHERUB FIGURE CAME TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH VALENTINE'S DAY

Amid the romance that February invokes, and the calls for resistance to this "epidemic" of love brought about by the market forces, the story of Valentine's Day perhaps lies somewhere in between.

EDUCATION



FARMER'S SON DROPPED OUT OF IIT-D TO LAUNCH STARTUP

Sagar Patidar and Primathon

TECH



NOKIA 6310 REVIEW: YOU DON'T ALWAYS NEED A SMARTPHONE

Bigger screen but the same solid build

EXPRESS AUDIO

Caste, campaigns, and mahaul: UP Election Special – Part 2

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In the second part of our election series, we discuss the role of caste identities, political campaigns, individual personalities and the mahaul they create.

Channi will lose polls from both seats in Punjab, says Kejriwal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AMRITSAR, FEBRUARY 13

AAM AADMI Party national convenor Arvind Kejriwal Sunday said that Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi will lose from both constituencies -- Chamkaur Sahib and Bhadaur. Kejriwal said that AAP conducted surveys thrice and in all of them it was ahead in both the seats.

"In all the three surveys, the Aam Aadmi Party was ahead in both the seats. According to the survey, in Chamkaur Sahib, Channi was liked by 35 per cent people and 52 per cent people chose Aam Aadmi Party. On the other hand, in Bhadaur, the second constituency from where Channi is contesting, 48 percent people liked the AAP candidate while Channi was liked by only 30 percent people," he said.

Kejriwal also questioned why CM Channi had not been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) yet.

While attacking CM Channi, Kejriwal said, "We have come to know that Channi's nephew confessed to ED that all the money recovered was of Punjab CM. So why is ED not arresting Channi? Because otherwise CM should have been arrested by now on the statement of his nephew."

"Channi got allegations against him probed from officers who were from same area where sand mining was going on and they might be helping Channi in theft of sand. Bhagwant Mann will conduct real probe after becoming CM. How can someone give clean chit to himself?" said Kejriwal.

AAP Punjab's chief ministerial candidate Bhagwant Mann too attacked the Congress and said that the leaders of the ruling party cannot even contest the elections together. What good future will they give to Punjab, he asked.

Mann said, "There is tussle between Congress leaders. Raja Warring has accused Manpreet Badal of trying to defeat him. Former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh's wife Preneet Kaur, who is currently a Congress MP, is campaigning against the Congress candidate for her husband. Similarly, Chief Minister Channi's brother is contesting against Congress candidate and he has full support of Channi from inside."

"The son of Congress government minister Rana Gurjit Singh is contesting the elections as an independent candidate from Sultanpur Lodhi assembly constituency and for that Rana Gurjit is campaigning against the Congress candidate there," the AAP leader added.

UP elections: Votes should go to Yogi, 'Modi vaccines', says CM Adityanath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
FARRUKHABAD, FEBRUARY 13

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that since vaccines against Covid-19 saved lives, votes should also go to "Yogi and Modi vaccines".

"The third wave of Covid-19 did not harm people because of the vaccines… If the vaccine has saved lives, then the votes should also be given to the Yogi and Modi vaccines," the chief minister said while campaigning for BJP candidates at Rajepur and Kamalganj in Farrukhabad.

He said the "double-engine government" of the BJP at the Centre and state reached out to the public during the pandemic even when the SP, Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress spread "propaganda" against the vaccines.

Adityanath called the SP "a party of rioters" and said the maximum number of riots in the state took place during the previous government as the Akhilesh Yadav-led party patronized anti-social elements.

After the BJP government assumed power, he said, effective curbs were implemented, which is why "not a single incident of rioting took place in five years".

Referring to the action taken by his government against criminals, Adityanath said the government's formula is "development on the one hand and bulldozer on the other". Addressing a rally in Kamalganj in support of Bhojpur candidate Nagendra Singh Rathore, the CM alleged that the SP government wanted to make Bhojpur "Islamabad".

Referring to Kanwar Yatra, the CM said curfews were being clamped during the procession earlier. However, under the BJP rule, the yatra was being taken out with much fanfare.

AFTER FAMILY FOUND DEAD NEAR US BORDER

15 'trafficked' from Gujarat on US promise rescued: cops

VAIBHAV JHA
AHMEDABAD, FEBRUARY 13

A TWO-YEAR-OLD girl was among 15 people from Gujarat who were rescued from different areas of New Delhi and West Bengal, where they have been allegedly kept in illegal confinement for two months by a gang of suspected human traffickers who allegedly lured them with the prospects of moving to the US. An agent of the gang has been arrested in Ahmedabad, while the rescued persons returned to Gandhinagar Sunday.

The joint operation by police of various states was the first against such a gang in Gujarat after a family of four persons from Dingucha village in Gandhinagar was found frozen to death near the US-Canada border on January 19 this year, allegedly while trying to illegally enter the US. Police said the operation was conducted on directives from Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, who was approached by a family whose members have been missing for two months.

According to police, seven young couples and a two-year-old girl, hailing from Kharna village of Gandhinagar, Mehsana and Ahmedabad, were rescued by Gandhinagar police and Delhi Police's Special Cell, in an operation on Saturday.

All 15 from Patel community left home in November 2021. However, they were kept in illegal confinement by the gang in West Bengal and Delhi where they were allegedly tortured for money, police said. Rajesh Patel, a local agent of the gang, was arrested in Ahmedabad.

FROM PAGE ONE

Hijab row: High schools open today, Udupi clamps down

asking students not to wear any religious dress to class, will be enforced only in educational institutions that have prescribed uniforms for students -- as stated by the court.

The High Court had said that its interim order "is confined to...institutions wherein the College Development Committees have prescribed the student dress code/ uniform".

The peace committee's decision confirms that students in Udupi are free to wear the hijab in schools and colleges that have no rules on wearing a uniform. Officials said the move will help in reducing tensions over the issue. The state's Department of Undergraduate Education does not mandate uniforms for its colleges, but some individual government colleges have been following their own rules in prescribing uniforms.

Earlier, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said that he had instructed district officials, the police and school administrations to conduct "peace committee" meetings over the issue. The Udupi meeting was chaired by MLA Raghupathi Bhat and attended by several parents of students, political and religious leaders, and senior police officers and district officials.

According to Bhat, among those who attended were members of the Muslim Okkoota, a grouping of community organisations. A religious leader who is a member of the Okkoota confirmed that their representatives attended the meeting.

Bhat said the meeting also included representatives of the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), the political outfit of the radical Popular Front of India (PFI), which is part of the Okkoota. SDPI leaders could not be reached to confirm their participation.

However, the Campus Front of India (CFI), the student organisation of the PFI that has been playing a key role in the agitation against a hijab ban, said they were not invited.

"If they (the MLA) and the taluk administration had invited us, we would have attended the meeting for the good of the students," CFI district chief Aseel Akram said. According to Akram, the SDPI was represented at the meeting.

Among the others who took part in the meeting were Pre-University College Development Committee vice president Yashpal Suvarna and Udupi City Municipal Council chief and BJP leader Sumitra Nayak.

"The organisations that took part in the meeting responded positively to the view that untoward incidents should be avoided over the issue and everyone should wait till the High Court gives a final verdict," MLA Bhat said.

Incidentally, the Government Girls Pre-University College in Udupi, where the row first broke out when a group of eight Muslim girl students were kept out of classrooms for wearing the hijab, has a uniform prescribed for students.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah has convened a meeting of the Congress legislature party on Monday to discuss strategy for the session.

"Although the issue is in the Karnataka High Court, our party is planning to question the BJP government's failure in maintaining law and order during the hijab-saffron shawl row in college campuses across the state. We will also demand an explanation from the government on the declaration of holidays for colleges till February 16," Congress sources told The Indian Express.

Even as schools and colleges were shut in the state from February 9, the Higher Education department had announced the closure of all first-grade and postgraduate colleges as well as universities and technical institutes till February 16.

In Udupi, the police said prohibitory orders will be in place within 200 metres of all high schools in the district from 6 am on February 14 (Monday) to 6 pm on February 19 (Friday). "Prohibitory orders have been issued based on requests from the three sub-divisional police officers of Udupi district," Deputy Commissioner Kurma Rao M told The Indian Express.

The Udupi police have also provided an armed guard for MLA Bhat after he claimed to have received threat calls from unidentified people after the hijab ban snowballed into a controversy.

Speaking to reporters, Chief Minister Bommai expressed confidence that "peace and normalcy" will prevail in the state.

"A decision regarding the reopening of pre-university and degree colleges will be taken after assessing the situation. Trouble-makers will face legal action as schools up to Class 10 are reopening from Monday. The students must focus on the examinations scheduled in March, other things will be taken care of by investigative agencies," he said.

"I have asked the state's Education Minister to submit a report after examining the situation regarding the reopening of pre-university and degree colleges, based on which a meeting will be held and a decision taken," Bommai said.

LIC files papers, set for largest Indian IPO

Exchange Board of India).

The 65-year-old LIC has a total equity base of 6.32 billion shares.

The IPO is fully an offer for sale — which means that the proceeds will go fully towards the government and help it reach its disinvestment target. In the Union Budget presented earlier this month, the government had pegged disinvestment receipts at Rs 78,000 crore for this financial year.

According to the offer document, a portion of shares not exceeding 5 per cent of the offer will be reserved for employees. Similarly, another portion not exceeding 10 per cent will be reserved for eligible policyholders. These are Indian citizens holding LIC policies as on the date of the draft red herring prospectus.

The pricing of the IPO will be decided in due course, two days before the opening of the public offer, according to the prospectus. It also added that policyholders and employees may get a discount compared to the price offered to the public at large. A minimum 35 per cent of issue will be reserved for retail investors.

The prospectus also said that the embedded value of LIC is Rs 539,686 crore. Embedded value is a yardstick used to measure the value of a life insurance company -- it is the sum of the present value of all future profits from the existing business and shareholders' net worth. Insurance regulator IRDAI cleared the LIC IPO last week.

Private life insurance companies are currently trading at two to four times their embedded value. Using the same yardstick, LIC's market capitalisation could be between Rs 10.8 lakh crore and Rs 21.6 lakh crore. Currently, the most valuable firm in India is Reliance Industries Ltd with a market capitalisation of Rs 16.1 lakh crore. A 5 per cent sale even at a valuation of Rs 10.8 lakh crore will net the government Rs 54,000 crore. This will be close to thrice the Rs 18,300 crore raised by One 97 Communications Ltd (the owner of Paytm) in its IPO last year.

LIC is the largest life insurer in India with a 64.1 per cent market share in terms of premium, a 66.2 per cent market share in terms of new business premium, a 74.6 per cent market share in terms of number of individual policies issued as well as by the number of individual agents, which comprised 55 per cent of all individual agents in India as at March 31, 2021, said the prospectus. LIC is the largest asset manager in India with managed assets worth Rs 39.6 lakh crore as of September 30, 2021. LIC's assets under management (AUM) as of March 31, 2021, are more than 3.3 times higher than the total AUM of all private life insurers in India.

The Corporation may allocate up to 60 per cent of the QIB (qualified institutional buyers) portion to anchor investors on a discretionary basis. One-third of the anchor investor portion will be reserved for domestic mutual funds. Kotak, Goldman Sachs, Axis Capital, ICICI Securities, BofA Securities, JM Financial, Citigroup, JP Morgan, Nomura and SBI Capital Markets are the merchant bankers to the issue. The IPO is expected to be concluded before the end of the fiscal year ending March 2022.

Call from Mamata, Stalin says non-BJP chief ministers to meet soon

been trying to expand beyond Bengal, while Stalin has floated the idea of a national social justice front with the DMK as its face. Recently, Rao sent a message by snubbing Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to Telangana to unveil the Statue of Equality.

On Sunday, Stalin tweeted that Banerjee had called him up to express her concern over the role of governors in non-BJP-ruled states.

"Beloved Didi Mamata Banerjee telephoned me to share her concern and anguish on the constitutional overstepping and brazen misuse of power by the Governors of non-BJP ruled states. She suggested a meeting of Opposition CMs... I assured her of DMK's commitment to uphold State autonomy. Convention of Opposition CMs will soon happen out of Delhi!" he posted.

The relationship between the TMC government and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar in Bengal has been broken for a while now, with Banerjee recently blocking him on Twitter. On Friday, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Sekhar Ray submitted a Substantive Motion in the Rajya Sabha, urging President Ram Nath Kovind to remove Dhankhar as Governor.

In Tamil Nadu, tension has been brewing between the DMK government and Governor R N Ravi over the NEET issue, breaking a long period of civility between the CM and Governor House. Stalin has called the Governor's move in not clearing a Bill over NEET as "unconstitutional".

In Hyderabad, Rao said he may go to Mumbai soon to meet Thackeray, while Banerjee was expected to come to meet him. Rao said he would play a major role in uniting anti-BJP political parties, and denounced the Modi government's "anti-people" policies.

"Mamata Behen called me... She invited me to Bengal or she will come to Hyderabad. She said, 'Mujhe dosa khilao (Treat me to a dosa)'. I said most welcome. She may come any time, we are discussing. There are so many political leaders across the nation," KCR said, in reply to a question on whether he was mooting the idea of non-BJP, non-Congress front.

"Mr Uddhav Thackeray is also waiting. They are waiting for me. I have to go to Mumbai," he said.

While refusing a direct reply on if he would lead the Opposition parties, he said, "One thing I promise you, I will play a major role." He also said there were no firm plans as of now regarding how the Opposition unity would take shape.

Rao said the current situation in the country was "disastrous" and "worsening". "The country is filled with religious emotions, which is not desirable, uncalled for, unwanted and not good," he said.

The TRS leader mentioned the hijab row in Karnataka, and said "corruption to the tune of thousands of crores of rupees" was involved in the purchase of Rafale jets.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Officers not keen on Maharashtra ATS, top cop posts Facebook invite

In his post on Facebook, DGP Sanjay Pandey said that a posting with the ATS could get an officer 25 per cent extra salary by way of allowances. He asked officers to express their willingness on his wall, or to meet him or Agarwal.

But there has not been much enthusiasm to join the ATS.

Several current and former ATS officers said the state anti-terror unit has lost some of its sheen over the past few years as the federal National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over some of the most sensitive and talked-about cases it was investigating.

Also, senior officers said, the constant tussle between the governments at the Centre and the state has cast a shadow, and complicated the functioning of the ATS.

Agarwal, who heads the ATS, is an officer of the rank of additional DG. The post occupied by former ATS IG Suhas Warke has been vacant ever since the officer was transferred almost a year ago. DIG Shivdeep Lande was repatriated to Bihar on November 26; his position too is yet to be filled. There are two vacancies for posts of superintendents of police (SP) as well.

Rajkumar Shinde, an SP-rank officer, is holding charge of all four positions. "Shinde was transferred to the Anti Corruption Bureau some time ago, but he has not been relieved as there are hardly any senior officers in the unit," an official said.

Agarwal declined to comment on the vacancies in his unit. A senior Maharashtra Police official, however, said the vacant positions would be filled soon.

In recent years, the ATS has seen its cases related to the Islamic State terrorist organisation — including those involving youths from Kalyan in 2014 and Malwani in 2015 — transferred to the NIA within days or weeks.

The ATS had completed investigations in the 2006 and 2008 bombings in Malegaon, and filed chargesheets before the cases were taken from it.

"Even in the Ambani terror threat case and the case where uranium was retrieved from accused persons, the investigations passed to the NIA, inspite of good work by the ATS," a former ATS officer said. "It is highly demotivating for officers who have put in effort to have to simply hand over these cases (to the central agency)."

According to this officer, the charter of the NIA and ATS being broadly similar, they operate in the same space of terrorism and fake currency. Also, he said, "when the same party is in government in both the Centre and the state, there is a level of understanding — this is currently not the case".

A former ATS chief pointed out that given officers do not interact much with the public, the levels of enthusiasm of senior officers generally play a role in determining how enthusiastic juniors are about joining the unit.

Another former ATS officer said that earlier, the squad had a crunch of assistant commissioners as well, but that situation has now improved.

Maharashtra was the first state to have an ATS following the blasts of 1998, 2000, and 2002 in Mumbai, and serial bombings elsewhere in the country. A similar unit that had been set up earlier in the 1990s was revived on August 22, 2004 with K P Raghuvanshi as its chief.

IPL bonus for India's U-19 World Cup players: star of the final goes to Punjab for Rs 2 crore

World Cup final, was picked up by Punjab Kings for Rs 2 crore. And he is eager to meet South Africa speedster Kagiso Rabada, one of his heroes. "I can't wait to pick his brains," he said.

Bawa's father, Sukhwinder, can't stop gushing over the prospect of his son interacting with Anil Kumble, Punjab's head coach. "He will get to learn a lot from Kumble. It will be a good learning phase for him overall," he said.

U-19 World Cup team skipper and swashbuckling batsman Yash Dhull would be sharing the dressing room with Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw after Delhi Capitals snapped him up for Rs 50 lakh.

For the players, it's not only the windfall from the auction -- to go with Rs 40 lakh announced by BCCI for each player on the World Cup-winning team -- that has them excited but also the prospect of playing alongside some of their heroes, and those of their parents.

"More than money, for me, playing is important. These things will come as long as I am performing. So, my only focus will be on doing well in my cricket," Hangarekar said.

After their dominating conquest in the West Indies, it was expected that the U-19 World Cup team would draw the attention of IPL franchises.

There would have been more players from the squad but for the IPL eligibility norm that only those with experience in domestic cricket, or who had turned 19 before the auction, could enrol.

As for the three that made it, they are aware of being at the foothill of their careers. Asked about playing under Dhoni, Hangarekar said: "I will seek his guidance, and there is a lot to learn from him."

Bawa's father, a cricket coach, knows that his son may not get chances straightaway, but wants him to make the best use of the opportunity to share space with some of the world's best cricketers.

"Sharing the dressing room with the likes of Rabada, Mayank Agarwal and Liam Livingstone will be massive. It will be a good learning phase for him, but I am an old-school coach who believes there is no substitute for first-class cricket. My only advice to Raj is to stay fit, give 100 per cent in the field, be it batting, bowling or bowling, and stay in the present," Sukhwinder said.

The coaches hope that IPL will help make their wards' transition to first-class cricket smoother. Dhull's coach Pradeep Kochar said: "He must stay in the present. Keep performing, he shouldn't get distracted by this fame and stay humble. I have given him ample examples of so many promising U-19 cricketers who failed to cope with pressure at the senior level."

Kochar said: "From now onwards, it is a mental game. No coach can improve his skills. His priority should be on the mental aspects of his game; then only will he be able to survive."

Hangarekar's coach Mohan Jadhav wants his ward to keep an eye on Dhoni. "Playing in the IPL is a dream for every cricketer. My only advice to Rajvardhan is to watch and learn from Dhoni. I know if given a chance, he will showcase his talent as well. There will be nerves, but he is mentally very strong. I have seen him grow as a person since he lost his father to Covid in June 2020."

Districts with positivity over 10% down to 105, sign of further retreat of virus

decline in the number of cases being reported across the country in recent weeks. On Sunday,

Positivity fall signals further retreat of virus the ministry said the number of new cases across the country was 44,877 — this was the first time since January 4 that daily detections fell below 50,000; 58,097 cases had been reported on that day.

The daily positivity rate on Sunday, however, stood at 3.17 per cent, not much lower than the 3.48 per cent reported the previous day.

The national weekly positivity rate was 4.46 per cent on Sunday, compared with the 10.20 per cent reported in the previous week.

India's active caseload currently stands at 5,37,045, a 56 per cent decline from the figure reported in the previous week (12.25 lakh active cases).

The active caseload is likely to fall below 5 lakh in the next few days.

The decline in the active caseload indicates a lighter burden on the health care system due to severe cases of Covid-19.

A total 105 districts reported more than 10 per cent positivity between February 5 and February 11, data from the ministry show. During the same period, 480 districts reported less than 5 per cent positivity.

Five states currently have more than 10 districts with a positivity rate more than 10 per cent: Rajasthan (17), Kerala (14), and Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram (11 each).

Positivity rates above 5 per cent are considered to be cause for concern.

The health ministry has repeatedly asked for local containment and surveillance in districts reporting positivity rates of more than 5 per cent.

ANAND VIHAR: Very Poor — 354 AQI PM 10 (0–500)

SIRIFORT: Poor — 237 AQI PM 10 (0–500)

SHADIPUR: Poor — 275 AQI PM 10 (0–500)

IHBAS: Poor — 236 AQI PM 10 (0–500)

0-50 Good | 51-100 Satisfactory | 101-200 Moderate | 201-300 Poor | 301-400 Very Poor | 401-500 Severe

SKYWATCH

FORECAST: Feb 14
Mainly clear sky.
Mist in the morning.

MAX: 26 (3.0°C above normal) | MIN: 9 (1.4°C below normal)

GURGAON COLLAPSE

Builder faces second FIR, 6 others booked

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 13

THREE DAYS after a portion of the sixth floor collapsed all the way to the first floor at Chintels Paradiso society in Gurgaon's Sector 109, police said an FIR was registered on Sunday night against the builder, Chintels India Private Ltd, contractor and five other parties engaged in the group housing project.

The FIR was registered under IPC sections 417 (cheating), 420 (cheating), 465 (forgery), 467 (forgery of valuable security), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (using as genuine a forged document), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and section 10 of The Haryana Development and Regulation of Urban Areas Act, 1975, at Bajghera police station.

Gurgaon Police Commissioner K K Rao said, "An FIR has been registered on the DTP's complaint."

This is the second FIR registered against the builder of the Chintels Paradiso. On Friday, on the complaint of the husband of Ekta Bhardwaj, who had died in the collapse, an FIR was registered against the chairman of Chintels, Ashok Solomon, under IPC section 304-A (death by negligence) and 34 (common intention).

Police said Sunday's FIR was registered on the complaint of the district town planner (DTP), enforcement, R S Bhath. The DTP had submitted a report recommending that an FIR be registered against the developer, structural engineer, proof consultant, architect, and contractor.

The complaint filed by the DTP states that the mishap — in which part of roof slabs of the apartments from the sixth floor to first floor in tower D4 collapsed and fell down — has



Chintels Paradiso society in Gurgaon's Sector 109

proved that the certificate of the structural engineer and proof consultant and work of the contractor "is not credit worthy and rather fraudulent".

"As per provisions of the Haryana Scheduled Roads and Controlled Areas, Restriction of Unregulated Development Act no. 41 of 1963 and the Haryana Development and Regulation of Urban Area Act No. 8 of 1975 and rules framed there under, the licensee, the structure engineer and the contractors are solely responsible for the unfortunate incident," read the FIR.

The complaint said that "it is apparent that there has been a violation of the provisions mentioned above and accordingly, it is requested to lodge FIR under section 10 and 12 of Act of 1975 and relevant sections of IPC against all directors of Chintels India Ltd, structural engineer, architect, contractor company and its directors who constructed the Towers and against the persons who were getting major addition/alterations on sixth floor as per local enquiry."

The complaint said that the licences were granted to the directors of Chintels India in 2007 for setting up a group housing colony in Sector 109 in an area measuring 12.306 acres. The building plans of the said housing colony were approved in March 2011 and the occupation certificates were granted by Director, Town and Country Planning, in August 2016 and June 2017.

The complaint added that after examination of facts of the case according to the office of DTP, the licensee, the structural engineer, architect and proof consultant, who had supervised the construction and structural designs had stated that the workmanship and all the material used for construction meet the specifications laid down in National Building Code.

In an official statement on Saturday, Chintels had said, "The Paradiso group housing project was contracted to the reputed Bhayana Builders after a stringent due diligence process for construction. We have submitted the contract copy to the DTP, Gurugram. It clearly specifies the highest quality of material and workmanship to be used for the project. As per our records submitted by the contractor, the best of materials from well-known players have been used for the project, details of which have also been shared with the investigating authorities. We ourselves will take up the matter very seriously so that not just us but other developers and buyers do not face a similar situation in future. Even after initiating the handover of the project from 2017, we have been available for any resident complaints and many residents have been appreciative of the same. Affected residents are currently being accommodated in our sister projects with our staff monitoring the situation. We will duly compensate (those) affected."

We knew chances were slim but held on to hope: Kin of woman who died in first-floor flat

PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 13

A DAY after the body of Sunita Srivastava (55) was pulled out from the debris after a complex retrieval process, her family and relatives on Sunday said they had faint hope that she would survive in the initial hours when the rescue operations started on Thursday.

On February 10 evening, a large portion of the sixth floor collapsed all the way to the first floor at Chintels Paradiso society's tower D in Sector 109. Sunita, one of the two women to die in the incident, stayed on the first floor. Her husband, Arun Srivastava (60), a bureaucrat, was trapped under the debris and was rescued after a 16-hour operation. He was rushed to a private hospital in Gurgaon and shifted to ICU for observation.

"We knew that chances of survival are slim, but we were holding on to some hope. There is always hope. The next day, we learnt that she had passed away, and a rescue team was working to retrieve her body," said Sunita's cousin Colonel A K Sinha.

The rescue teams, comprising the National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, fire department and district administration teams, had procured cribs used in railways to stabilise the basement, so they could remove the debris safely and retrieve her body on Saturday.

Her brother, Neeraj Sinha, said that he heard of the collapse 10 minutes after it occurred on Thursday from his second sister, Sujata, who was also in the flat with the couple when the incident took place.

"She had just arrived from Chicago. My brother-in-law Arun had picked her up from the airport and they had reached the house a few minutes before the collapse. She survived as she was in the washroom and was quickly rescued. Arun and Sunita were in the dining room and were trapped underneath the rubble," said Sinha. He said Sunita was a home maker.

The family said that through Thursday night and Friday afternoon, while rescuers were trying to rescue Arun Srivastava, whose lower half of the body was trapped underneath the debris, they received updates from rescuers about his health, which was reassuring amid the tragedy.

"While the rescue was on, I managed to speak to him through an official. He was composed and hopeful and mentioned that rescuers were making their best efforts to rescue him. He told me 'bhaiyya, everything is fine' at the time," said Col Sinha.





Sunita and her husband Arun were at home at Chintels Paradiso society when a large portion of the 6th floor collapsed into their first floor flat on Thursday. *PTI*

Residents demand builder's licence be revoked, write to Haryana CM; Chautala says inquiry on

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 13

RESIDENTS OF Chintels Paradiso in Sector 109, where two women died after a portion of the sixth floor of a tower had collapsed all the way to the first floor on February 10, have written to Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar demanding that the licence of developer Chintels India Ltd (CIL) be revoked with immediate effect.

"All projects, whether announced or under construction, must be stopped with immediate effect. No further sale of any property of any project of CIL should be allowed until there is timely, prompt, effective and satisfactory resolution of this catastrophic event," said the letter.

The residents said 35 families had been uprooted from their homes while other families are unable to sleep peacefully.

Calling for an independent structural and forensic audit of all the nine towers (A-J) of the society by IIT, residents demanded a safety certificate and assurance from government authorities that the apartments of the complex are safe to live and that there are no structural discrepancies in the buildings. "This action must be completed within a week... There is a significant risk to the lives of over 450 families currently residing in the society as there are several construction quality issues that have been raised over the past four years," the letter stated.

Residents also said a separate FIR under sections 304, 120 B and 34 IPC must be filed against the developer. "An independent High Court-monitored CBI enquiry must be initiated with regard to all clearances, permissions, including occupational certificate granted to Chintels India Ltd. The conduct of all government officials involved in this process must be covered under this investigation," they said.

Meanwhile, Haryana Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, on the sidelines of a foundation stone laying ceremony of an ESIC hospital in Manesar on Sunday, said that a detailed report had been sought into the incident and strict action would be taken against the culprits.

"An enquiry has been initiated. To ensure that such incidents do not occur in the future, the norms of occupation certificate will have to be changed. With time, many high rises have come up and we have improved some things such as fire safety. When all the details — who was the builder, contractor etc — are on paper and a report is out, we will take action if there are lapses," he said.

Residents of New Gurgaon, under the aegis of Dwarka Expressway Welfare Association, have also written to Chautala requesting structural audits of all high-rise buildings in new sectors 37 and 77 to 111.

MCDs giving false hopes of permanent jobs to DBCs: AAP MLA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

DAYS AFTER the Delhi government regularised services of 700 contractual Delhi Jal Board employees, the Aam Aadmi Party hit out at the BJP-run municipal corporations for giving Domestic Breeding Checkers (DBC) "false hopes of permanent jobs".

"Whenever communicable diseases spread, like chikungunya and malaria, the DBCs are responsible to control mosquito breeding. They are required to carry out door-to-door inspections to check for stagnant water, or breeding hubs. During the entire coronavirus pandemic, they put their lives at stake and worked tirelessly. Every worker has a dream to have job security wherever they are appointed," AAP MLA Somnath Bharti said.

Recently, leader of the house in South Delhi Municipal Corporation, Inderjeet Sehrawat had made a proposal to regularise services of over 1,100 DBCs in the civic body.

Pointing out that an official designation of a DBC doesn't exist on paper, Bharti said no serious efforts had been made to regularise them over the past 22 years. "There are 3,500 such workers in all three MCDs and they have been working on a contract for past 22 years... Every year we see spread of dengue, malaria, and chikungunya, when services of these DBC workers become a necessity. The MCD has also accepted that the age group of these employees ranges from 40-50 years, and they are not fit for any new jobs either," Bharti said.

Delhi BJP spokesperson, Praveen Shankar Kapoor, meanwhile, blamed the state government. "Services of not only DBCs but thousands of other employees should've been regularised long back but MCDs couldn't do it due to the Kejriwal government withholding funds for 7 years. Earlier, funds were withheld by the Congress regime...," he said.

MCD polls round the corner, AAP, BJP & Cong ready campaign slogans

ABHINAV RAJPUT
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

WITH MCD elections two months away, political parties have come up with slogans signalling the direction of their campaign style.

While the Aam Aadmi Party's slogan is '*MCD mein bhi Kejriwal*', BJP leaders are canvassing with the slogan '*Dilli bole fir ek baar MCD me Bhajapa sarkar*'. The Congress, meanwhile, is banking on its performance in the 2021 bypolls — it won 1 ward of the 5 that went to polls — and is going with the phrase, '*Nigam upchunav me dil jeeta hai*', 2022 me Dilli jeetenge'.

A senior AAP leader said that the party's campaign would be centred on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as the main issue in the municipal corporations is corruption and Kejriwal's image is of someone who has not allowed corruption to flourish in the Delhi government.

The leader said, "Earlier when we said '*Delhi main toh Kejriwal*' (during the Assembly polls), it worked. The message was that Narendra Modi would work only in the role of the Prime Minister, he would not become CM of Delhi. Similarly, the party believes that because the CM works and lives in Delhi, the work of the corporation would also be done under his guidance."

AAP MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said the party is using this slogan as of now, as it believes that Kejriwal's popularity is unmatched in the national capital. As the election slated for April nears, more slogans would be added after a brainstorming session, he added.

Those in the party aspiring for a ticket have been using the slogan on banners, posters, and social media posts.

On the BJP's slogan, party spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it came from the karyakartas and the party found it rhyming and catchy.

Munirka councillor Bhagat Singh Tokas said the slogan goes with the party's message that the BJP has a track record of repeatedly winning the MCD election and would continue to win as it has ensured good governance by taking most facilities online.

This has happened despite limited means and finances, he added.

The BJP, which has been ruling the three civic bodies since 2007, is looking to retain power. Its main challenge is from the AAP which has been vocal on issues related to corruption, especially in the civic body management.

In the 2017 polls, the BJP won 180 of 272 seats. The AAP came a distant second with 48 seats, while the Congress had won 30 seats.

The Congress, through its slogan, is hoping to better its performance.

In the 2021 bypolls to five seats, AAP won four seats and Congress one — the Chauhan Banger ward in East Delhi which was earlier held by the AAP. The BJP drew a blank, losing its stronghold of Shalimar Bagh (North).

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee vice-president Abhishek Dutt said that it was proved during the bypolls that the Congress is in the heart of people. "They are realising that we are the only party that works for development and not divisive politics. The party, therefore, believes in this slogan as it takes our message forward," he said.

Police's mounted unit gets new batch of trainees from Army — nine horses

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

A NEW batch of trainees was inducted into the Delhi Police on Saturday evening — nine horses from the Remount Veterinary Corps (RVC) division of the Indian Army. They were procured for the Delhi Mounted Police, three months after it bid farewell to its last batch of its horses.

Fresh into service, six of the nine horses are now busy rehearsing for the 75th Delhi Police Raising Day parade on February 16. An official said the horses have come from the Remount Depot and Training School (RTS) in Western Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur. The nine are yet to named.

"After the last four horses retired, the Provisioning & Logistics unit was trying to get 15 horses from the Indian Army... On Saturday evening, the first batch of nine horses were handed over. There are 84 mounted police staff, against the sanctioned strength of 115. However, due to shortage of animals, the personnel were deployed elsewhere. With the new batch arriving, staff will be asked to rejoin the division," an officer said.

According to the officer, the Delhi Mounted Police was established in 1930 and sanctioned strength of the horses is 95. The animals were used for patrol in forest areas near VVIP routes which couldn't be covered on foot. "On October 31 last year, the tenure of the last four horses ended and they were moved to the police training school to help train new horses. Some NGOs were also approached to adopt them," the officer added.

In a presentation to Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana earlier, the Provisioning & Logistics unit had said that the animals were used for crowd control during protests, but this stopped due to a shortage of horses.

Asthana was also told that their proposal to procure 15 horses from the Army was pending with the Ministry of Home Affairs. "Asthana then discussed the proposal with the MHA and received sanction. The cost of the 15 horses would be Rs 92 lakh. It has been decided to increase the number in the coming months. In the coming days, the unit will get six more horses," the officer added.

The Delhi Police had last purchased six horses from the Army in 2010.



Fresh into service, six of the nine horses are now busy rehearsing for the 75th Delhi Police Raising Day parade. *Express*

Ambulance driver shot dead by 2 men

New Delhi: A 29-year-old ambulance driver was allegedly shot dead by two men near his house in Rohini over a dispute over parking space. Police said the accused have been identified, but are absconding.

The victim has been identified as Brij Mohan. He is survived by his wife and son. According to police, they received a call about the firing at around 2 pm on Friday. Mohan's wife reported that they were at a clinic in Vijay Vihar when two assailants fired at her husband and fled. The man was rushed to a hospital for treatment but succumbed to his injuries.

DCP (Rohini) Pranav Tayal said, "We registered a case of murder and initiated enquiry. The deceased owned an ambulance and worked with hospitals as a driver. Prima facie... the issue seems to be a dispute over the parking of hospital ambulances. We have identified the accused. They are absconding and teams will soon arrest them." **ENS**

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CORONAVIRUS IN THE CAPITAL

VACCINATIONS IN LAST 24 HOURS **99,390**

PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL: **528**

OXYGEN SUPPORT	127
VENTILATOR SUPPORT	45

DELHI: TOTAL CASES **18,51,320**

	Total	Vacant
HOSPITAL BEDS	15,357	14,830
ICU BEDS	4,479	4,253

	Cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
Feb 12	920	1,388	13	54,913
Feb 13	804	1,197	12	53,719
Total	3,926*	18,21,322	26,072	3,56,26,942

*Total active cases in Delhi

NOIDA

	Feb 12	Feb 13
Cases	125	81
Deaths	0	0

GURGAON

Cases	368	297
Deaths	1	1

Farmers gone, barricades at Kalindi Kunj flyover remain

Commuters complain of traffic snarls; cops cite security

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13



The flyover that crosses the Yamuna river was constructed to ease the commute between Delhi and Noida. *Express*

CLOSE TO two months after farmers protesting against the three farm laws left the capital, the barricades installed on the Kalindi Kunj flyover to stop protesters from entering are yet to be removed — resulting in heavy traffic snarls and bottlenecks.

Commuters, especially those coming from Noida and Greater Noida and going towards Shaheen Bagh, Badarpur and other parts of Delhi, complained of being stuck in traffic for hours every day. "The barricades were installed when the farmers' protest began in Delhi in 2020. But now the protest is over, farmers have left, and the central government also scrapped the farm bill. Then why is Delhi Police not removing these barricades? Vehicle movement is smooth until Rela Pul near Kalindi Kunj, where a traffic snarl ensues due to the barricades," said Dinesha Kaushik, a commuter who travels every day from Pari Chowk, Noida, to Badarpur.

The new flyover that crosses the Yamuna river was constructed to ease the commute between Delhi and Noida. When *The Indian Express* visited the six-lane stretch, it found that three lanes are barricaded with police jersey barriers and plastic dividers. As a result, vehicles coming from Noida get stuck at the Rela Pul bottleneck on the other side of the road.

When asked why these barricades are yet to be removed yet, a senior police officer from the Southeast district said, "We have not removed the barricades because of security reasons. The stretch falls on the interstate border and the Uttar Pradesh elections are underway. Also, these barricades are to stop criminals from UP and other neighbouring areas from entering the city and, similarly, to stop them from escaping Delhi."

The officer added, "We know commuters are facing problems, but this arrangement is for security reasons and to stop criminal activity. The barricades are installed in a zig-zag manner, and it will be eased in future for smooth traffic movement."

Vinod Sharma, another commuter, said, "Why was this stretch built by spending crores of public money if it was to be kept closed?... I travel daily on this stretch, I see no police personnel checking vehicles. The road should be opened completely for commuters."

During the farmers' agitation, the Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri borders were also closed and barricaded with multi-layer concrete dividers and police barricades. They were opened for traffic movement once farmers left.

Job quota law was to ensure employment for youth: Khattar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GURGAON, FEBRUARY 13



Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar, Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, Union Minister Bhupender Yadav at Manesar, Sunday. *PTI*

HARYANA CHIEF Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Sunday said that the state government had brought in the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020, which reserves 75% jobs in the private sector for those having a domicile in the state, to ensure that youth of the state get ample employment opportunities.

"To ensure that the youth of Haryana get employment opportunities, we made a provision to reserve 75% of jobs in the private sector for local residents. It is true that initially some people have raised objections to its implementation and now the matter has gone to court. But our plea is that if industries are being set up in the state, then people of the state should get more opportunities for employment. After all, it is the responsibility of the state to provide employment and as part of our responsibility, we are taking this work forward," said Khattar.

He added that the government was concerned about providing employment.

The CM was speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony of a 500-bed ESIC hospital at Manesar. Haryana Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala and Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav were also in attendance.

On February 3, the Punjab and Haryana High Court had granted an interim stay on the job reservation law. After the stay, Khattar had said that "the government will firmly stand its ground and will fight in court".

On Sunday, while emphasising the important contribution of labour force in all sectors, Khattar listed several programmes and schemes undertaken by the government. "We have changed the definition of BPL (below poverty line). We have increased the scale from Rs 1.2 lakh to Rs 1.8 lakh per annum and anyone below this threshold now comes below the BPL. One member from a BPL family will be given training and provided a loan to ensure that his economic status improves," said the CM.

Chautala said that the objective of the local job reservation was to provide equal opportunities to local youth. He added that the Act is flexible and gives enough leverage to the government and industry to hire workers if local youth are not available. "The purpose of this Act was not to implement license permit raj," he said, adding that "a number of exemptions have already been given under the Act by the government after discussions with industry."

DU's outstation students in a fix: 'Short notice to find a place to stay'

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13



The university reopens on February 17. Outstation students will have to isolate for three days before joining college. *Archive*

WITH OFFLINE classes set to begin in a few days at Delhi University, a section of students from other states say they are not equipped to make this quick shift to the capital.

On February 9, in the midst of strong protests by different student groups pushing for reopening, the DU administration issued a notice that offline classes will resume on February 17 and that 'outstation students' will have to complete three days of isolation before joining their colleges. Several students said less than a week's notice is not enough to travel to Delhi, find accommodation and pay considerable amounts required for private accommodation in the middle of an ongoing semester.

With limited campus accommodation — many colleges do not have any hostel — the biggest challenge is finding accommodation.

Bandi Aadhi is a second-year BA programme student from Telangana at Hindu College where application forms for the hostel have not been released yet. Since he joined the university after the start of the pandemic, he has never been to college. Adding to this is the financial crunch at home.

"My father is a farmer and this is not harvest time so it's not a great time for us. I've booked train tickets for me, my father and brother to help me settle on February 16 and that itself was not comfortable," he said.

He said all he needed was a week or two more to find out a little bit about accommodation options and their rates, and to manage finances.

Students who have already lived in Delhi also say finding reasonable accommodation is a challenge right now. "I used to live in a PG close to college where I used to pay Rs 5,000 per month for a bed. After the announcement by DU, I called them up and found that they're now asking for around Rs 10,000. Most PGs also demand at least two months' rent as security deposit. That means around Rs 40,000 as payments to be in Delhi for just three months before graduating," said Aaushi, from Hisar, Haryana, a third-year BA (Honours) English student at Ram Lal Anand College.

With almost two years of having attended college online, she said she does not think it is fair to make students compulsorily return to campus halfway through their last semester. "This is the part of the semester where assignments start piling up and I have my final semester exams in two months. I will also be preparing for entrance exams for my masters," she said.

She is one of over 37,000 people, as of Sunday evening, who had signed an online petition asking that the option of attending the remainder of the semester online be available.

A second-year student from Bihar at Gargi College said she has been keen on going to the campus that she has not seen yet. "Who doesn't dream of going to a DU college and of campus life, of fests? This is why we took admission there. But right now, it feels like we are being left to our own devices," she said. Her college does not have a hostel.

"I am so unsure of accommodation. Neither my father nor I have ever been to Delhi, so we are not familiar with options there. I haven't booked my tickets yet, I will not be able to get to Delhi in time to join offline classes when they start," she said.

Across colleges, however, administrators said that with their large class sizes, maintaining a hybrid mode of teaching-learning is not sustainable.

DU registrar Vikas Gupta said: "The demand to resume offline classes came from students and there was so much pressure put on the administration last week... In DU, we don't think a hybrid system is possible. That has many implications of its own. Different students joining through different modes will bring more disputes and it will also be too much for teachers to handle."

Some final-year students also said that unclear and conflicting information has led to troubles. "A professor of ours had told us earlier that it was 95% sure that our final semester exams will be conducted online itself. Since there was little official information, I went ahead and paid Rs 45,000 for CAT coaching in my hometown. I wish there were hints given to us earlier that this would happen," said a third-year student at Ramjas College from Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh.

BRIEFLY

NDMC to develop new hostel block for women

New Delhi: The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) will develop a new block with modern facilities at its Indira Niketan hostel for working women at Laxmibai Nagar, said an NDMC official. "Currently, Indira Niketan can accommodate around 200 women. Once the new block is developed, 200 more women will be able to avail the facility. Earlier, we had planned to extend the facility at the other hostels too but there were space constraints. Indira Niketan is spacious and so we have decided to construct a new block here," added the official. The new block will be a three-storeyed building with amenities like a seating area, library, hall, mess, open gym and parking space. It will have air-conditioned rooms with a wardrobe, a study table and washrooms, said the official. **ENS**

New Covid guidelines come into force at IGIA

New Delhi: International passengers arriving at the IGI Airport will not be required to undergo mandatory week-long quarantine as the new Covid-19 guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare come into force from Monday. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority directed health officials and district magistrates to ensure that the Centre's revised guidelines for international arrivals are followed at the IGI Airport from Monday.

Pilgrimage scheme to resume today

New Delhi: The Delhi government's pilgrimage scheme for the elderly, which was halted in the first week of January in view of rising Covid cases, will resume on Monday with a train carrying pilgrims to Dwarkadhish in Gujarat. **PTI**

HARDLOOK

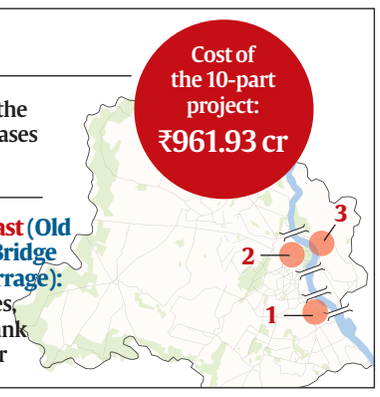
Along the Yamuna

The Delhi Development Authority has embarked on an ambitious 10-part project to restore a 22-km stretch alongside the river that is expected to revitalise the floodplains, and give the public a scenic outing spot. A ground report

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13



At Asita East, one of the 10 parts of the project. *Amit Mehra*



FROM THE roads and bridges that stretch across the Yamuna or run alongside it — the Geeta Colony flyover, the Nizamuddin Bridge, the DND flyway — a downward glance shows vast swathes of land dotted with farms, patches of wilderness, and makeshift homes tucked into places where roads don't go. Several sprawling expanses of the river's floodplains are mostly inaccessible, save by a narrow set of stairs, nearly out of sight, leading down from the Nizamuddin bridge or a discreet pathway hidden behind a row of bushes.

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) plans on changing that. Its project to "restore and rejuvenate" the Yamuna floodplains includes walkways and cycle tracks leading up to the river, besides play areas and eco-tourism activities.

In a 10-part project, the 22-km stretch along the banks of the river from Wazirabad to Okhla will be worked on by the DDA in three phases — the first is the removal of encroachments and the creation of wetlands, planting of trees and laying of walkways; the second phase involves developing the entrance area to these stretches, setting up seating spaces, and providing amenities like toilet blocks; the third phase is to develop a revenue model for the spaces including "outsourcing for adventure play" and cultural events in open air spaces.

The sanctioned cost of the project is around Rs 961.93 crore.

On the possible revenue model, Rajeev Kumar Tiwari, Principal Commissioner, Personnel, Horticulture, and Landscape, DDA, told *The Indian Express*: "If we are maintaining the area, it will require expenditure and it should be self-sustaining. We are looking for avenues, and we are only in the initial phase."

At two out of 10 parts, phase 1 is complete, while the third is partially complete. The section that is complete is one between the Old Railway Bridge and the ITO barrage, called 'Asita', which includes the Golden Jubilee Park, and another 100-hectare section between NH-24 and the DND flyway, called 'Kalindi Aviral'.

Water bodies have been created along these stretches which, DDA officials say, can hold floodwater. At 'Kalindi Aviral', a walkway leads up to the river, and three water bodies have been created, fed by the high ground water table and rain. The area around the Qudsia Ghat, including a garden, is being restored by INTACH on a pilot basis. In some sections, including the Golden Jubilee park, parts including the entrance, are paved with blocks.

On the orders of the NGT, a Principal Committee was constituted in 2017 to "examine and monitor the entire project of cleaning and rejuvenation of river Yamuna".

A K Gosain, Professor Emeritus, IIT-Delhi, who is part of the committee that is also monitoring the DDA project, said, "The NGT order says that no permanent structures are allowed. People should be able to enjoy the natural beauty of the river, but without permanent fixtures. The river needs a huge area in case there is a big flood. In 1978, there was a huge flood and all of Model Town was flooded. If the embankments are breached again in a similar manner, there will be huge damage to life and property."

Gosain was part of a three-member expert committee constituted in 2013 that submitted a report to the NGT in 2014 stating that the DDA's earlier plans for the Yamuna riverfront were within the active floodplain which will reduce the area's flood carrying capacity and that it is "untenable and should be stopped". But these plans were tweaked on the NGT's order in 2015.

"If something is created in the floodplains that is to be maintained every year, public money shouldn't be spent on that. There shouldn't be any concretisation... We have told the DDA to go ahead, but it should be in such a way that if a flood comes, there shouldn't be any issue. Parts of the project that the committee was opposed to have been removed from the project," Gosain said. At 'Kalindi Aviral', for instance, efforts were made to avoid concrete, an engineer associated with the project said.

"The project will not have any impact on the river. The floodplain will be used when the river is not used. Maybe restoring some of the wetlands might bring back the flora and fauna of the area. The aim is to provide access to the scenic points around the river, without any detrimental effect, and restoration of the ecosystem around the river is a byproduct," Gosain added.

The total area under Zone O of the DDA, or the Yamuna floodplain, is 9,700 hectares, of which 1,146 hectares is the river channel itself, as per documents submitted by the DDA to the NGT.

Shashank Shekhar, professor at the Department of Geology, Delhi University, said, "The floodplain has its own distinct ecosystem services in terms of providing drinking water. It sustains its own biodiversity, it's open fallow land and the lifeline of Delhi. Attempts should be made to conserve the floodplains. If you leave it like that, planners are going to eye it since it is empty land. If it is turned into a recreation spot, there is an identified land use. Any redevelopment should be with the perspective of ensuring minimal change."

Sections of the DDA's plans have not moved forward in places where they were met with stiff opposition. At Bela Estate close to Shantivan and the Geeta Colony flyover, Hira Lal (40) points to two water bodies that he said the DDA dug up in the area in 2020.

Repeated attempts have been made to clear the farmlands in the area after that, he said.

"We have been farming here for decades. They tell us that farming can't be done on the floodplains, because we use contaminated water from the Yamuna, but most farmers draw ground water for farming. If we are to move, some sort of rehabilitation will have to be provided," he said.

Cases are pending in the High Court with regard to clearing jhuggis on the floodplains.

The DDA is still attempting to clear makeshift homes on the floodplains in areas where trees are to be planted, and water bodies are to be created. Near the CWG Village, for instance, "demolition programmes" are still being carried out, as per the DDA's status report on the project. Between the Old Railway Bridge and the ITO Barrage, there are around 695 jhuggis that the DDA intends to clear, while there are 323 jhuggis between Wazirabad Barrage and ISBT Bridge.

Manju Menon, senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, who works on environmental justice and policy, said, "It's a very exclusionary vision for creating open recreational spaces for those who can afford it, when there are people right there for whom these spaces matter much more from a survival point of view. Co-existence should be considered and worked out with farmers."

Efforts were made earlier to restore the existing floodplain ecosystem at Yamuna Biodiversity Park. Faiyaz Khudsar, scientist in-charge at the park, said, "The Yamuna floodplains had different forest communities like mitragyna, which is a wild kadamb, jamun, and Acacia catechu plant."

At the Kalindi Biodiversity Park, where around 115 hectares of the floodplain ecosystem is being restored, there are wetlands, he said. The Kalindi Biodiversity Park is also part of the DDA's floodplain restoration project and has been handed over to the Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems for work.

"For a healthy river, a healthy floodplain is necessary. The city has entered into the floodplain — with Akshardham, Metro, CWG Village, power plants. This has reduced the space that the floodplain occupied and its capacity to take away floodwater safely and rejuvenate ground water," said Manoj Misra, convenor of the Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan, on whose application the NGT issued an order on the restoration of the river and its floodplains in 2015.

Covid cases continue to dip, markets want timings to be revised

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

DELHI'S DAILY Covid case count continued to decline, with the city reporting 804 cases on Sunday. The positivity rate, which was 1.68% on Saturday, dipped marginally to 1.5%.

Hospitals in the city reported 12 deaths in the 24-hour period.

As the omicron variant swept across the city, cases rose quickly to touch an all-time peak of 28,867 on January 13. The positivity rate climbed to 30.6%, the highest for the third wave. Hospitalisations, however, did not exceed 25% of the almost 16,000 total bed capacity on a single day.

The reduction in cases was also as fast as the increase, and cases dropped to below 10,000 within 10 days of the surge.

With the decrease, market associations have made appeals to extend timings for markets and shops to open till 10 pm, instead of the 8 pm restriction at present.

The New Delhi Traders Association wrote to L-G Anil Baijal, who also heads the Delhi Disaster Management Association (DDMA), highlighting the problems they are facing.

President of the association Atul Bhargava said that since the timing applicable to restaurants — 8 am to 11 pm — has been extended, the same metric should also apply to shops.

In addition to the restrictions on markets and shops, night curfew also remains in force between 11 pm and 5 am in the capital. Officials said DDMA was expected to meet later this week to decide which restrictions would continue and which would be lifted.

Meanwhile, all school students will be allowed to return to school from Monday. Children in junior classes have been away from classrooms for the longest in the city.

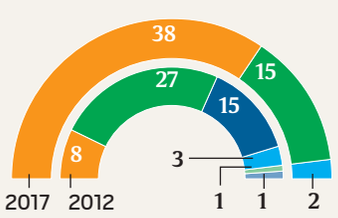
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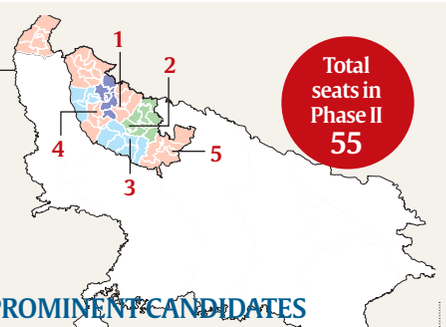
UTTAR PRADESH • UTTARAKHAND • PUNJAB • GOA • MANIPUR

UTTAR PRADESH

BJP SP BSP Cong
Peace Party of India
Ittehad-e-Millat Council



RUNNERS-UP (2017):
BJP 13, BSP 11, SP 21, INC 9, AIMIM 1
SP, Cong in alliance in 2017



Total seats in Phase II 55

PROMINENT CANDIDATES

BJP MINISTERS
- Baldev Singh Aulakh
- Gulab Devi
- Suresh Khanna
- Mahesh Chandra Gupta

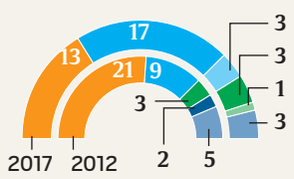
- Azam Khan (SP)
- Iqbal Mahmood (SP)
- ZiaurRahman (SP)
- Haider Ali Khan (Apna Dal)

PROMINENT CONTESTS

1. RAMPUR: Azam Khan vs Akash Saxena
2. AONLA: Dharampal Singh vs Radha Krishan Sharma
3. BADAUN: Mahesh Chandra Gupta vs Rais Ahmad
4. SAMBHAL: Iqbal Mahmood vs Nida Ahmad
5. SHAHJAHANPUR: Suresh Kumar Khanna vs Tanveer Khan

GOA

BJP Congress GFP
MGP NCP GVP Independents



Total Seats 40



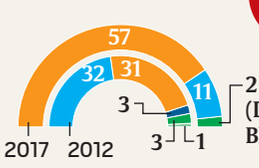
RUNNERS-UP (2017):
BJP 22, Congress 7, MGP 3, UGP 1, GSRP, 1, AAP 1, GSM 1, Ind 4
**BJP-MGP alliance formed government with 24 MLAs*

PROMINENT CONTESTS

Panaji (Babush Monserrate vs Utpal Parrikar vs Elvis Gomes), Poriem (Deviya Rane vs Ranjit Rane), Benaulim (Churchill Alemao vs Venzy Viegas), Mormugao (Milind Naik vs Sankalp Amonkar), Mandrem (Dayanand Sopte vs Laxmikant Parsekar)

UTTARAKHAND

Cong BJP BSP
Independents UKD(P)



Total Seats 70



RUNNERS -UP (2017):
BJP 11, Cong 50, Independents 7, BSP 2

PROMINENT CONTESTS

Khatima (BJP's Pushkar Singh Dhami vs Cong's Bhuwan Chandra Kapri); Nainital (BJP's Sarita Arya vs Cong's Sanjeev Arya); Ramnagar (BJP's Diwan Singh Bisht vs Cong's Mahendra Pal Singh); Lalkuan (BJP's Mohan Singh Bisht vs Cong's Harish Rawat); Kotdwar (BJP's Ritu Bhushan Khanduri vs Cong's Surendra Singh Negi)

Utpal Parrikar, BJP strongman locked in four-cornered battle

MAYURA JANWALKAR
PANAJI, FEBRUARY 13

LIKE THE sussegad (siesta) hours of a typical Sunday afternoon in Panaji, its residents too appear to be quiet a day before the state Assembly polls. Situated on the banks of the Mondovi river, the constituency is, however, all set for a pitched poll battle.

The ruling BJP has fielded its sitting MLA Atanasio 'Babush' Monserrate, a strongman from the Tiswadi taluka. Taking him is Utpal Parrikar, the son of ex-defence minister and four-time Goa CM late Manohar Parrikar, who is making his debut as an Independent candidate after falling out with the BJP that preferred Monserrate, one of the ten Congress legislators who had defected to the BJP in 2019. He subsequently won the Panaji by-poll on a Congress ticket after Parrikar's death.



Utpal Parrikar

In the contention is also the Congress candidate, bureaucrat-turned-politician Elvis Gomes, a former commissioner of the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP). Known for his clean image, Gomes was the AAP's CM candidate in the 2017 polls. The AAP has fielded its Goa vice president Valmiki Naik from this seat again.

A retired Goa Medical College employee, Talgappa says, "I think the present MLA (Monserrate) has done good work. Other candidates are new, so I can't really say anything about them," he says.

Although Utpal has kept his guns trained on Monserrate, calling him a "tainted candidate with criminal antecedents", the latter seems to be in a formidable position, riding on the ruling BJP's backing and years of his political experience. In April 2021, a panel backed by him won 25 of 30 municipal wards in Panaji.

On his part, Utpal, a US-educated engineer, has sought to position himself as Parrikar's heir, staking claim over his political legacy while projecting his "integrity". He may garner the support of his Gaud Saraswat Brahmin community, which had always backed his father who represented Panaji five times. The Christian elite that supported Parrikar may also be on Utpal's side, feel his campaign members.

A shopkeeper on Malacca Road, N Shaikh, however, says Gomes is a front-runner in this contest. "Babush and Utpal are just media hype," he said.

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

Yogi, civic code in last Doon dash; Cong sees desperation

AVANEESH MISHRA
DEHRADUN, FEBRUARY 13

THE LAST day of campaigning for the Uttarakhand Assembly elections was marked by two firsts: promise of a uniform civil code by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami; and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath's appearance for the first and only day for the BJP in the state. The Congress sees in both an attempt by the BJP for last-minute polarisation, and a sign of the party's desperation.

Apart from promising to bring in a uniform civil code if voted back to power – amidst a brewing row over wearing of hijab by students to class in Karnataka — Dhami also repeated the BJP's refrain that a Congress government would set up a Muslim University.

Congress organisation general secretary Mathura Dutt Joshi said the BJP's frustration was growing, and with "no work to show", it was trying such "desperate" measures. Joshi said even Adityanath's speeches, at Tehri and Kotdwar, didn't make any waves. The UP CM talked of Kanwariyas "freely taking out Yatra" under his government, and accused the Congress of "disrespecting" Hindus. "If in Devbhoomi (Uttarakhand), someone does not know the definition of Hindu, that party should not have the right to be in power," Adityanath said.

Incidentally, he also let it slip that a rally by him in Uttarakhand, in the midst of the bitter UP election, was a last-minute plan.

Apart from the relief that the BJP unveiled both the uniform civil code and Adityanath perhaps too late, the Congress believes it also dodged a bullet by refusing to engage with the BJP on such issues. Party leaders said there were strict instructions to avoid any controversial statements, and after the BJP's uniform civil code promise, to not give any reaction and stick to demands of jobs etc.



Dhami with PM Modi. *ANI*

VOTING TODAY

Among the issues it skirted was the Dharma Sansad held in December last year in Haridwar, where hate speeches were made. The BJP government was accused of dragging its feet on the matter, but the Congress refrained from raising it.

Earlier this month, the party immediately moved the Election Commission to ensure a warning to the BJP after the party's Twitter handle reportedly shared a morphed photo of former CM Harish Rawat depicted as a Muslim cleric.

The Congress was acting on cues it picked up in 2017. At the time, the BJP had brought in Adityanath — not yet the UP CM but influential due to his Uttarakhand roots and being head of the Gorakhnath Mutt — to campaign in the final stretch in districts like Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar, Dehradun. While the BJP had swept Uttarakhand amidst a Modi wave, the Congress believes Adityanath hurt it badly in these areas, and was a factor in Harish Rawat's defeat from both Kichha (Udham Singh Nagar) and Haridwar Rural seats.

Congress leaders say Adityanath could have benefited the BJP again this time if his events had been planned in areas like Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Badrinath, Kedarnath, or Srinagar — close to the Modi government's pet Chardham project. Apart from the religious association, BJP has been propagating it as part of its big development push for the state, with fears of ecological impact not cutting any ice among voters.

Said a senior Congress leader: "The most important thing is that we gave no opportunity to the BJP to catch onto any issue. This was our plan from the start... I remember before his visit to the state, senior leader Digvijaya Singh was also given clear instructions to not give the BJP any chance of polarisation."

The leader added there was apprehension that the BJP's bogey of Muslim University would turn away some voters, particularly given how the BJP pushed it, with even PM Narendra Modi raising it. "But, we clearly asked the BJP to show where it said this in our manifesto. People soon realised that this was a baseless allegation."

As part of the same strategy, the Congress state unit advised against events planned for its minority department head Imran "Pratapgarhi" and senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad in some seats.

Denying charges of polarisation, BJP spokesperson Shadab Shams said it was the Congress that had started it with its "plans for a Muslim University" and was now playing the "victim card", and that the BJP was forced to react, even if it was at the last moment. "As far as the uniform civil code is concerned, along with Ram Mandir and Article 370, it has always been an electoral issue for us... There is nothing wrong with bringing a uniform civil code to the state to secure its beauty and culture."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com



TEMPLE RUSH

Devotees in Jalandhar wait to board a train to UP to celebrate Ravidas Jayanti. Polling in Punjab was deferred to February 20 in view of the week-long celebrations. *PTI*

In Muslim belt, support for parties divided along community lines

AMIL BHATNAGAR
SAMBHAL, MORADABAD, FEBRUARY 13

THE WINTER sun bathes the pristine glasses of Moti Masjid as locals begin to gather for afternoon prayers. The mosque is situated on the Asmoli-Sambhal road, which is busier than usual with large convoys constantly on the move of candidates making poll promises.

Mohd Faheem (60), who lives in the lane next to the mosque and has seen many elections, says now more than ever there is a need to defeat the communal forces. "The Hindu-Muslim card is a political ploy. You place it on the table and you get a certain section on your side. There are only a few Hindu families that live in this area. They have never faced any issue and never will. But on your televisions, leaders will make you believe there is enmity all the time. The public is smarter than what everyone likes to believe. The mandate will make it clear," says Faheem.

The Muslim-majority Sambhal district has four Assembly seats in total. While the BJP had won Gannaur and Chandausi (SC) last time, the Samajwadi Party had won Asmoli and Sambhal City.

The SP-RLD candidate in Sambhal City again is Iqbal Mahmood, who has won the seat for the SP the last four times.

MORADABAD SADAR

2017
Ritesh Kumar Gupta (BJP) 1,23,467 votes
Mohd Yusuf Ansari (SP) 1,20,274 votes

SAMBHAL CITY

2017
Iqbal Mahmood (SP) 79,248 votes
ZiaurRahman Barq, (AIMIM) 60,426 votes

Even if locals wish Mahmood had paid more attention to development, he has their "trust". There is also hope that the rising tempo of communalism will cool down should the BJP be dislodged from power.

Mohd Areeb, a resident of Deepa Sarai, argues that even the SP paid price last time for similar politics. "People do not want to live in a state of conflict and eventually get tired of communal rhetoric. When the SP built boundary walls for graveyards, they should have done the same for temples and cremation grounds. It was communal on their part and the public showed them the door. If the ruling party continues this narrative, it will anger people."

The Congress candidate in Sambhal City is former News Nation journalist Nida Ahmad.



Praveen Khanna

Congress's Nida Ahmad campaigns in Sambhal.

The party has made tickets and promises to women the centrepiece of its campaign, and campaigning door to door, Ahmad tells voters she is '*Sambhal Ki Beti*'.

Mahmood, on the other hand, goes by the title '*Sambhal ka Badshah*', and Ahmad admits the contest is tough. However, she has worked to a plan. "There are no degree colleges in many areas, no parks... I am a journalist and even in this role, I will continue to question the status quo till there is change," she says.

Also in the fray is BSP's Shakeel Ahmad, who owns a meat company and is believed to a strong contender for Muslim votes.

The BJP candidate, Rajesh Singhal, starts from a position of disadvantage given the numerical majority of Muslims. However, says a supporter, Anoop Sharma, there is much to recommend in the Yogi Adityanath government. "Law and order is in place, electricity supply has become regular. The Hindus are less in number but our entire vote is for Yogi ji. We are also hoping that our Muslim brothers will see the good since this government cares about everyone," says Sharma.

A similar divide is visible in Moradabad, nearly 30 km from Sambhal. The six Assembly seats here are also Muslim-dominated. The SP had won four of the seats last time, against the BJP's two.

The buzz is missing from the iconic brass market of Moradabad Sadar. With prices of raw materials up by nearly 100%, retail has been heavily impacted.

Moradabad Sadar was one of the seats won by the BJP last time. The party has fielded its sitting MLA, Ritesh Kumar Gupta. The SP has fielded Mohd Yunus Ansari while the BSP candidate is Irshad Hussain.

BJP supporters, however, argue that the government alone can't be blamed for rising prices. Trader Bhushan Gupta lists reasons such as law and order, saying "the present government has done a lot".

However, even his appeal for votes for the BJP comes down to a simple math. "We must come out and vote in large numbers because Muslims will support in one direction... Elections are a true test for us all."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

I HEREBY DECLARE



AMAN MANI TRIPATHI*
BSP, Nautanwa (UP)

TOTAL ASSETS: ₹1.98 crore
MOVABLE ASSETS: Self: ₹39 lakh Wife: ₹7.6 lakh
**Accused of killing wife*

IMMOVABLE ASSETS: Self: ₹1.4 crore Wife: ₹5.8 lakh
LOANS FROM BANKS: ₹6.7 lakh
CRIMINAL CASE: 1 *(related to fatal accident) accused of killing wife*
SOURCES OF EARNING: Salary and agriculture
EDUCATION: Graduate (2010)



OM PRAKASH RAJBHAR
SBSP, Zahoorabad (Ghazipur)

TOTAL ASSETS: ₹2.5 crore
MOVABLE ASSETS: Self: ₹32 lakh (includes a revolver) Wife: ₹7.7 lakh Children (2) ₹27 lakh

IMMOVABLE ASSETS: Self: ₹12 lakh Wife: ₹1.7 crore
LOANS FROM BANKS: Child (1): ₹1.57 lakh (credit card)
CRIMINAL CASES: 2
SOURCES OF EARNING: MLA salary and agriculture
EDUCATION: Graduate (1983)

PROFILE

Bend it like Balwinder: Cong to BJP, to Cong to BJP, on the trail of a Punjab MLA

KAMALDEEP SINGH BRAR
AMRITSAR, FEBRUARY 13

EVEN in an election with several rebel candidates, changing loyalties and open factionalism, few have bent it like Balwinder Singh Laddi. In the past one-and-a-months, the MLA elected on Congress ticket from the reserved Hargobindpura seat has moved to the BJP, returned to the Congress, to again join the BJP, and for now, stay there.

What can be said in Laddi's defence is that both parties had enough forewarning. The 50-year-old former kirana shop owner to sarpanch to zila parishad chairman to MLA has survived many a somersault on the Congress's shifting chessboard, landing always on his feet.

Laddi got his first taste of power as sarpanch of his village Shahbadpur at the peak of militancy in the late '80s. After the sitting sarpanch died, the village couldn't decide on a replacement, and Laddi, a shopkeeper at the time, emerged as the surprise choice.

Luck would never leave Laddi's side after that. Followed by the sarpanch post was membership to the Gurdaspur zila parishad member from the Batala reserved seat in 1994. During the first government of Amarinder Singh between 2002 and 2007, Laddi would become close to the then Congress MLA Ashawani Shekhari (he is the Congress candidate from Batala this time). Laddi credits Shekhari with helping him become the chairman of the Gurdaspur Zila Parishad.

But soon, Laddi was onto bigger stakes. He developed proximity to the powerful brother duo of Partap Singh and Fateh Jang Singh Bajwa, rivals of Shekhari within the Congress. This new friendship is believed to have helped Laddi get a ticket from Hargobindpura in the 2012 Assembly elections. While he lost, he again got the ticket in 2017, and won at a time when the Congress swept Majha.

In 2019, with the Congress already caught up in the Amarinder vs Navjot Singh Sidhu saga, Laddi drew headlines by saying Partap Singh Bajwa could be the next CM. The next day, he made a beeline to Amarinder and ate his words.



Laddi with Congress (left) and BJP leaders. *Express*

Last year, Laddi again batted for Bajwa, a Rajya Sabha MP, by seeking a ticket for him from Batala, instead of his former mentor Shekhari.

Despite the tension between Amarinder and Bajwa, Laddi himself managed to maintain good relations with the Captain. As things came to a head within the party, he even backed Amarinder over Sidhu's attempts to topple him as CM.

However, no sooner was Amarinder made to step down by the Congress than Laddi worked his way into the Sidhu camp. He and Fateh Singh Bajwa, a Congress MLA, were the chief organisers for a rally for Sidhu at Qadian on December 6.

By the end of the month, in his biggest leap of non-faith till then, Laddi, along with Fateh Jang, moved over to the BJP.

It was December 28, and the clock was ticking. So, when less than two months to go for the polls, Fateh Jang got the BJP ticket from Batala and Laddi was kept waiting, the latter made his way back to the Congress. This time, his port of call was the new thorn in Sidhu's side, Charanjit Singh Channi.

On February 11, when the Congress too failed to help, Laddi again knocked on BJP doors and gained entry.

BJP national secretary Tarun Chug says the Congress didn't leave the "hardworking" leader much choice. "Laddi joined the BJP as he was attracted to the party policies and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Congress pressured him using ugly tactics. But now as the Congress is caught in infighting, why should a hardworking leader like Laddi remain in a party which does not value experience and service?" he argues.

The Congress's candidate from Hargobindpura, Mandeep Singh, puts on a brave face, saying Laddi's flip-flops won't hurt him. "Laddi went to the BJP because he wanted a ticket, but returned after the BJP denied him one. He wanted the Congress to cancel my ticket and give it to him, but why should the party do so when he has already failed several pre-poll surveys?" he says.

Meanwhile, Laddi, who is now an owner of a tractor agency, remains frank about his intentions, actions and expectations. He told *The Indian Express*: "I came back to the Congress because CM Channi promised me a ticket. But it just didn't happen. I was left on my own. I am here to do politics. How can I survive politically if the party leaves me with no responsibility?... So I decided to join the BJP, which is a national party and they were ready to give me a ticket. I may have missed the bus, but there will always be opportunities in the future."

FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



THE COUNTDOWN

BUREAUCRATS ALWAYS come under pressure from political leadership to deliver in a stipulated time when it comes to flagship programmes or popular schemes that could be highlighted during elections. Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar has a unique way to push officials in his ministry to pull up their sleeves. He has placed a digital panel that counts the number of days for this government to meet the targets. The digital countdown display, which is placed in his rooms in both the offices — Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) in Electronics Niketan and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in Labour Ministry – shows the number of days left in this government's term. Chandrasekhar tells his officials he has only limited days to meet his target and fulfill the government's promises, so they have to perform according to his deadlines. On Sunday, the panel showed '717 Days Remaining'.

BETWEEN THE LINES

A LINE tucked deep inside the Quad foreign ministers' joint statement that they are "exploring a track 1.5 dialogue between our respective strategic thinkers" has sent a shot of adrenaline coursing through India's strategic corps and think tanks. For the chosen ones, it could mean access to the top in the foreign policy establishment, open doors to funding, and of course, travel to far off Quad member capitals.

PHOTO PROOF

UNHAPPY OVER states not inviting MPs for foundation laying and inauguration functions of works under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the Ministry of Rural Development has come up with an idea to ensure that this does not happen. The ministry has asked the states to upload a "good quality" photograph each of the inauguration and foundation laying ceremonies, showing the MP along with the plaque, on the scheme's portal. Besides, it has asked states to ensure that no such complaints should be received from the MPs in this respect.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Punjab Lok Congress president Capt Amarinder Singh in Patiala on Sunday. *Harmeet Sodhi*

Shah promises to make Punjab drug free if BJP voted to power

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PATIALA, LUDHIANA, FEBRUARY 13

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah on Sunday promised to eradicate drugs menace from Punjab if the grand alliance comprising Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), former chief Minister Amarinder Singh's Punjab Lok Congress and Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa's SAD (Sanyukt) is voted to power.

Addressing a public rally in favour of his ally and Punjab Lok Congress chief Amarinder Singh's support in Patiala, Shah said, "We will eradicate drugs from Punjab. Our goal is to make Punjab drug free. I would call you to choose a government that will work together with the Centre for the development of Punjab."

At the same time, he said he salutes the valour of Punjabis, Sikhs in particular, saying the nation feels safe and secure as they keep a guard.

He said Punjab was a border state and peace and security here was very much important for the security of the country. He said, only an NDA government, which will work closely with the central government can ensure peace, harmony and security here.

He said Amarinder always rose above partisan considerations when it came to the issues concerning national security. He disclosed that when he became the Home Minister in 2019, he felt quite concerned about the security along the Punjab border. "But once I spoke to Capt Amarinder, I felt relaxed", he recalled.

In a special message to people of Patiala, the Home Minister said, "the way the Congress party had treated a senior leader like Capt Amarinder, it (Congress) must not get a single seat from Patiala".

Shah referred to the problem of drugs prevailing in Punjab. He said, give Narendra Modi a chance and drugs will be completely wiped out of Punjab. He took a dig at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying he had the audacity to claim to finish drugs from Punjab when he had drowned Delhi in liquor by opening liquor shops everywhere.

He also questioned Kejriwal's intentions towards Punjab and towards Sikhs. Shah also said that Kejriwal had not appointed a Sikh as part of his Delhi government despite having been in power for around eight years.

Earlier addressing the rally, Amarinder praised Amit Shah and the BJP government at the centre that he had always got full support and cooperation from him and other ministers whenever he needed it. He specially mentioned that during Covid pandemic when the state fell short of vaccines, the central government took no time in providing these.

Addressing a rally in Ludhiana, Shah asked how Congress's CM candidate Charanjit Singh Channi would ensure safety and security of a state when he even failed to provide security to the country's Prime Minister. He also said that religious conversions were a major issue in the state which can be solved only if BJP comes to power.

"Can Punjab remain safe and secure under the leadership of Channi," Shah asked. "It's not about making a comedy film but running a state."

"Similarly, Arvind Kejriwal... has nothing to do with national security," he said, addding, "If they come to power, they will again revive terrorism in the state."

PUNJAB CAMPAIGN

Amarinder replaced as his govt was run by BJP from Delhi: Priyanka

KANCHAN VASDEV
RAJOMAJRA (DHURI), FEBRUARY 13

DEFENDING LAST year's change of guard in Punjab, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said the Amarinder Singh-led government had to be replaced as it was run "by the BJP from Delhi".

"We had our government in the state for five years. But at one point of time, we sensed the 'neeyat (intention)' of our government was changing. We immediately got into action and changed the government. Then (incumbent CM, Charanjit Singh) Channi ji came," Priyanka told supporters in Kotkapura and Dhuri.

Priyanka said the Congress knew that the fact the government was "being run by someone else" would not be taken kindly by the people of Punjab. "Now they are all together-out in open," she said, referring to the alliance between Amarinder's newly formed party, the Punjab Lok Congress, and the BJP for the coming Assembly polls.

In Dhuri, where Priyanka also addressed an 'all-woman' rally, Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi raised the pitch by announcing eight, free LPG cylinders for every household in a year, besides Rs 1,100 per month for women to run their kitchen. "I call on the wise women to get together and decide who to hand over the key of the state," he said.

Dhuri is the constituency from where AAP's chief minister face Bhagwant Mann is contesting. The Congress's promise was a counter to AAP's offer of giving Rs 1,000 per month to women to help run the household.

Slamming the AAP, Priyanka called herself "Punjab ki Beti" (as she is married into a Punjabi family) and urged voters to sense the 'neeyat' of political parties before voting for them.

"Do not go by what you are shown in advertisements in Delhi. I live in Delhi. I can tell you what all they have done there. They have not opened a single new school, not a single new healthcare institute. They just gave advertisements worth Rs 200 crore during Covid pandemic when people were dying of shortage of oxygen. You do not see truth in advertisements. Truth is different but what you are told is different," she said.

The Congress leaders were campaigning for Dhuri MLA Dalvir Singh Goldy, who is seeking a second term, and the party's nominee in Kotkapura, Ajaypal Sandhu.

AICC incharge Harish Chaudhary, PPCC chief Navjot Sidhu, former PPCC chief Sunil Jakhar, and state ministers Razia Sultana were also present at the rally. Sidhu, however, did not address the rally.



AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra during a roadshow in Zirakpur in Mohali district, on Sunday. *Jasbir Malhi*

Congress misinterpreting my remarks on Rahul, says Himanta

LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

ASSAM CHIEF Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, criticised by the Opposition over his 'father-son' barb at Rahul Gandhi, said on Sunday that the Congress was giving a "wrong interpretation" to his statement and making it an issue to "deviate from the real questions" raised by him.

"I raised certain questions — why did the Congress party, instead of appreciating the Indian Army after the surgical strike, questioned the soldiers? Why did the Congress abuse General Bipin Rawat while he was alive? You cannot escape from answering these questions. The country has these to be answered," Sarma told *The Sunday Express*.

At an election rally in Uttarakhand on Friday, Sarma hit out at Congress MP Rahul Gandhi for allegedly questioning the 2016 surgical strike against terrorists across the Line of Control (LoC). "India conducted the surgical strike in Pakistan under his (General Bipin Rawat's) leadership. Rahul Gandhi demanded proof of the strike. Did we ever ask you for proof of whether you are Rajiv Gandhi's son or not?" the BJP leader had said.

This statement prompted a sharp reaction from Congress leaders as well as other opposition parties, including Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao who urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sack Sarma.

"They are trying to misinterpret the remark. What I meant is that there are certain issues that one should not question. In any country, when the armed forces return from a strike, they get applause and praises. But here the Opposition Congress questioned it," Sarma said.

He added that he was trying to question the Congress's "disrespect" to the Army and General Rawat in Uttarakhand – which votes for its next Assembly on Monday – but the Congress was only "trying to deviate attention".

Serving and retired Army personnel make up a sizeable portion of the electorate in Uttarakhand, and political parties have spoken about General Rawat — the Chief of Defence Staff who died in a helicopter crash in December 2021 — during their campaign.

Several Congress leaders have condemned Sarma's remark against Rahul Gandhi. On Sunday, Mallikarjun Kharge — the leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha — said: "It's a childish and condemnable statement. For sake of power, he (Sarma) went to the BJP and now speaks the language of PM and the RSS who always indulge in character assassination."



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma

Delimitation panel's draft recommendations are an attempt to divide people of J&K: Mufti

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti

FORMER CHIEF Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday said the draft recommendations of the Delimitation Commission are an attempt to divide the people of Jammu and Kashmir on sectarian and social grounds.

She also said that the hijab row has been created because it is the symbol and identity of a particular community and that she fears other Muslim symbols would be targeted after this.

"The rights and guarantees given by the Indian Constitution are being mutilated and the Delimitation Report that has come recently is part of that," Mufti said while addressing a press conference in Srinagar after a meeting of the party's Political Affairs Committee (PAC). "They have tried to divide the people of Jammu and Kashmir on sectarian level (and) on social level, so that the people fight with each other. But the PDP's struggle would be against it."

While referring to the merger of Rajouri and Poonch with Anantnag parliamentary constituency, Mufti questioned the logic of the move. "In this delimitation, they have ruined everybody other than the BJP," she said. "If you don't like Rajouri and Poonch and you want to create an exclusive constituency, wait and you can give a separate seat to Rajouri and Poonch. If you don't like Chenab valley, you can give them a separate seat. The delimitation has to happen in 2026. See there are no numbers (supporting) this delimitation. There is a constituency for one lakh people and another constituency for 1.75 lakh people."

Mufti said that while Jammu and Kashmir is a political issue, it is being turned into a religious issue. She said the situation has only become more complicated after the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status. She also reiterated her call for dialogue with Pakistan.

On the hijab row, she said, "Hijab has been turned into an issue because it is a symbol of a community... It all started from Jammu and Kashmir because it is a Muslim majority state and these experiments would be conducted throughout the country," she said.

PUNJAB

BJP Gill candidate 'attacked'; his son terms it a bid to 'vitiate peaceful atmosphere'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUDHIANA, FEBRUARY 13

A GROUP of unidentified men allegedly attacked S R Ladhar, BJP candidate from Gill constituency of Ludhiana, late on Sunday.

Ladhar, a former IAS officer, was returning after addressing a poll meeting at Kheri Chameri village when his vehicle was allegedly attacked.

Miscreants allegedly hit him with baseball bats and he received injuries on his upper body. Ladhar has now been admitted to the Civil Hospital.

Punjab BJP general secretary Jeevan Gupta said, "Our candidate S R Ladhar was returning after addressing a poll meeting at village Kheri Chameri in his constituency when unidentified men attacked him with baseball bats. He has received serious injuries."

Ladhar's son, Gautam Ladhar, alleged that efforts were being made by opponent parties to "vitiate the peaceful atmosphere" of Punjab and after the "successful rally of Union Minister Amit Shah in Ludhiana on Sunday the opponents have got scared".

Rawat says Shah's barb against him shows BJP mentality

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, FEBRUARY 13



Congress leader Harish Rawat

FORMER UTTARAKHAND chief minister Harish Rawat has hit back at Union Home Minister Amit Shah for using a Hindi idiom alluding to the Congress leader's "helpless" state within his party, and said that the statement showed the "mentality" of the BJP.

At a rally in Raipur on Saturday, Shah said the Congress is unable to decide the role of Rawat in the coming state Assembly elections, adding his situation was similar to '*dhobi ka... na ghar ka na ghaat ka*'. The full Hindi idiom makes a reference to the word dog, and Shah said he did not want to use it.

"*Ye bechare Harish Rawat ko neta banayenge, nahi banayenge, banayenge, nahi banayenge, ticket denge, nahi denge, yahan se denge, wahan se denge* (The Congress cannot decide whether to make Harish Rawat their leader or not, whether to give him a ticket or not, and from where)… "*Yeh dhobi ka… aage nahi bolna chahta… na ghar ka ghaat ka*," said Shah.

Rawat reacted to the statement on Sunday, saying that even if the Home Minister wants to refer to him as a dog, he will continue to stand up for Uttarakhand, and "bark" and "bite" for the state.

"Your words have shown the low mentality of BJP for people of Uttarakhand... I will do whatever I need for the security of Uttarakhand and Uttarakhandiyat," Rawat wrote on Twitter.

The former CM also said in a video statement: "Thank you, (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi-ji, and thank you, respected Amit Shah-ji. You all are coming to Uttarakhand and attacking this small worker of the Congress party. Yesterday, Amit Shah said… that Harish Rawat is *dhobi ka*, blank, *na ghar ka na ghaat ka*... Even if I am a dog in his eyes, at least I am of Uttarakhand. I will talk for Uttarakhand. If I will bark, as per him, then it will be for Uttarakhand. But also remember that if the interests of Uttarakhand are hurt, then along with barking, I will bite too."



GETTING READY FOR POLLS: Polling officials collect election material at a distribution centre in Moradabad on Sunday, the eve of the second phase of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections. *PTI*

BSP fields ex- SP MLA against OP Rajbhar, state chief replaces Mukhtar Ansari in Mau

LALMANI VERMA
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 13

THE BAHUJAN Samaj Party (BSP) on Sunday fielded former Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA Syeda Shadab Fatima from the Zahoorabad Assembly seat in Ghazipur district against Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar. The party also announced that its state chief Bheem Rajbhar would contest from Mau. He replaces incumbent Mukhtar Ansari, who is now in prison.

The two are among the 47 nominees whose candidatures were announced during the day. These constituencies are among the 54 that will go to the polls in the last phase on March 7. These seats are in the districts of Azamgarh, Mau, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Bhadohi, Mirzapur, and Sonbhadra. The party has yet to announce its candidates in seven constituencies.

In Zahoorabad, Om Prakash Rajbhar, whose party is in alliance with the SP, is the incumbent MLA. Fatima will look to repeat her performance in the 2012 elections, when she won the seat.

Why some teachers campaigning in rural polls has come to haunt BJD govt

AISHWARYA MOHANTY
BHUBANESWAR, FEBRUARY 13

AN ODISHA government notification in October 2021 that allowed MLAs to recommend names of 10 teachers for transfer in the current academic year has come back to haunt the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) with instances of government teachers campaigning for party candidates ahead of the rural elections scheduled between February 16 and February 24.

BJD has 114 of the total 147 MLAs in the Legislative Assembly.

The images and videos of teachers allegedly campaigning have emerged from Asanpur Panchayat in Jajpur district, Krushnaparsad block of Puri and Maithili block of Malkangiri district. Officials in the State Election Commission said most of such complaints are dealt with at the district level.

When asked about the number of complaints, Azad Hind Panigrahi, Deputy Secretary, State Election Commission told *The Sunday Express*, "It will be difficult to enumerate the number of complaints… The district collectors are authorised to inquire into the allegations and take necessary actions. Such complaints are common in every election, but yes the numbers are more this time."

The BJD has denied allegations of government employees campaigning for the party's candidates. "The allegations hold no veracity. If they have proof, they must file a complaint and let the SEC inquire. The videos and photos have been portrayed out of context to paint a false picture," BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said.

The notification that MLAs can recommend teachers for transfer was issued only for the current academic year; and this is scheduled to end immediately after the rural polls. When contacted, Alok Kumar Kar, Special Secretary School and Mass Education department said, "This was a state government decision. So we cannot comment why the notification was issued only for a year."

In Jajpur, two teachers have been suspended and two were served a show cause notice.

Opposition parties alleged that the teachers in Jajpur participated in party meetings held by Binjharpur MLA Pramila Mallik. He, however, denied the allegations and said teachers were not participating in any meetings held by the BJD in his constituency. "No government employee was present in any party meetings held. The allegations are baseless," he said.

Commenting on names that he recommended for transfer, Mallik said, "The names were recommended as per the rules in the notification, there were no violations."

In Puri, two primary school teachers were seen campaigning with BJD leader Sanjay Das Burma for the panchayat polls in Krushnaparsad block of Puri. BJP leader Upasna Mohapatra who shared these images from Puri through her social media account and plans to approach the SEC said, "These teachers are diverting from their school duties to campaign for the ruling party. This is a small example of how state machinery is being misused time and again. We demand strict actions against those violating rules."

In Malkangiri, MLA and Congress leader Bhujabal Majhi has alleged that a primary school teacher, CHC doctor, and an assistant sub-inspector of Kartanpali outpost were campaigning for the ruling party in Mathili.

Separately, the SEC had received two complaints from the BJP in the issue, an inquiry into which is still underway.

Teachers employed in government schools in the state are bound under the Orissa Government Servants' Conduct Rules of 1959, prohibiting them from participating in any political campaigns. While such complaints of government employees, specifically teachers participating in election campaigns, has become a political slugfest, the issue has gained importance after the state government's October notification. This notification allows MLAs to recommend names of 10 teachers from primary and secondary sections, for transfer and better posting within their constituencies. The notification was criticised by the opposition who called it a deliberate move to solicit favours from teachers who play a crucial role during the rural elections.

President of Odisha School Teachers Association, Vinod Panigrahi said, "Empowering MLAs to recommend transfers means politicising a teacher's post. We strongly condemn the participation of any teacher in political rallies or campaigns."

RS 22,842 CR LOAN DEFAULT CASE

Cong targets govt: What took CBI 5 years to lodge FIR

BJP hits back: Loans to Gujarat-based ship-building firm given during UPA rule

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

A DAY after the CBI said it has booked a Gujarat-based ship-building company and its directors for fraudulent loan default to the tune of Rs 22,842 crore, the Congress on Sunday hit out at the government, alleging that it was running a "loot and escape" scheme for bank fraudsters.

While Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also targeted the government at a poll rally on Sunday, the ruling BJP hit back at the charges, saying these loans were sanctioned when the UPA was in power whereas the Modi government has gone after the promoters behind such frauds.

Claiming that liquidation proceedings of ABG Shipyard had begun in 2017, the Congress asked why it took five years for the CBI to lodge the FIR.

The CBI on Saturday said it has booked ABG Shipyard Ltd (ABGSL) and its former chairman and managing director, Rishi Kamlesh Agarwal, along with then executive director Santhanam Muthaswamy, directors Ashwini Kumar, Sushil Kumar Agarwal and Ravi Vimal Nevetia. Another firm, ABG International Pvt Ltd, has also been booked for criminal conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust and abuse of official position.

Addressing a press conference in Chandigarh, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the process of liquidation of ABG Shipyard was initiated in the NCLT, Ahmedabad in August 2017. In June 2019, he said, the loan and bank accounts of ABG Shipyard were declared as "fraud" and five months later, in November, the State Bank of India filed a complaint with the CBI for registration of FIR against ABG Shipyard's Rishi Agarwal and others. "Despite the apparent fraud and swindling of public money, the CBI, SBI and the Modi government proceeded to complicate the entire matter in bureaucratic wrangling and file pushing," he alleged.

Surjewala claimed that the SBI filed a second complaint with the CBI in August 2020. "The intriguing part is that in the complaint dated August 25, 2020, the SBI has exonerated all the bankers," he said. "Why did it take five years after the liquidation proceedings of ABG Shipyard to lodge even an FIR for duping 28 banks of Rs 22,842 crore?...," he said. "Does this not prove complicity, collusion and connivance of those sitting in the highest echelons of power in the Modi government."

BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Syed Zafar Islam said for the Congress to attack the government over the case is like a thief blaming cops for the crime. He said all these loans were given prior to 2014. Due process was followed and the BJP government identified the fraud, he said. "The Congress is brazening it out. It is its government which ran the 'phone banking' scam with its senior functionaries forcing banks to sanction loans after accepting commissions from promoters."

Referring to the scam at a rally at Sikandararau in UP, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said, "Whenever these major scams take place, people from a particular place are involved. In the scams, which had taken place earlier, a number of people were from that place."

The ABGSL operates from shipyards at Dahej and Surat in Gujarat. WITH PTI INPUTS



President Ram Nath Kovind being welcomed by Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, on his arrival in Hyderabad on Sunday.. *PTI*

PM wants states to buy power from firms that funded BJP: KCR

SREENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY 13

TELANGANA CHIEF Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Sunday alleged that a proposal by the Narendra Modi government at the Centre on clean energy was aimed at making state governments purchase solar power produced by companies that contributed election funds to the BJP.

Rao, popularly known as KCR, said: "The Prime Minister of this country is lying. He is claiming that electricity will be provided cheaply, but what is actually happening is he is asking states to purchase solar power produced by companies which give funds to his party... How is this possible in a democracy? States like Telangana have huge power projects on rivers, especially on Krishna river. We produce over 2,500 MW power from these projects. Are we supposed to stop these projects and purchase solar power just because PM Modi wants it?"

The Electricity Act 2003 and the Centre's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) provide a roadmap for increasing the use of renewable energy. Obligations have been imposed on power distribution companies to purchase energy from renewable sources based on each state's varying renewable energy potential. Power distribution companies are bound to meet these renewable purchase obligations (RPOs) by purchasing a certain percentage of their requirements from renewable energy sources. Corresponding regulations also provide for purchase of renewable energy certificates in lieu of purchasing renewable power by obligated entities from the National Load Dispatch Centre.

Ensuring compliance of RPO targets, though, has proven to be a challenge, with over a dozen states and Union Territories achieving less than 60 per cent of RPOs.

States such as Telangana have been particularly vocal about the "increasing burden" forced upon them by the Centre on account of the clean energy cess imposed on coal, and the RPOs.

The state government has estimated that the increase of clean energy cess from Rs 50 per tonne to Rs 400 per tonne of coal has increased bills for power utilities by more than Rs 7,000 crore in the last seven years. Added to that, the compulsion of RPO is seen as impacting the plant load factor of the generating stations of the Telangana State Power Generation Corporation, alongside the increased burden of buying renewable energy under RPO obligations.

Continuing with his criticism of the BJP, KCR said he was rethinking his decision to invite Modi for the inauguration of the developed and expanded Yadadri Temple, which is one of the most important pilgrimage places in Telangana. He also alleged that 33 businessmen, who defrauded banks by taking loans and then fleeing the country, had contributed funds to the BJP.

(WITH INPUTS FROM ENS, NEW DELHI)

FIR filed against wife of SP leader Lalji Verma in '20 murder case

Former minister says wife innocent, case was lodged to malign his image during polls

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 13

AN FIR has been registered against the wife of former Uttar Pradesh minister and Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Lalji Verma, and others in connection with the murder of a 27-year-old youth in Ambedkar Nagar in 2020.

Verma, who was a minister in the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) government led by Mayawati, joined the SP last November. He is contesting to retain the Katehari seat in Ambedkar Nagar district. On Sunday, he alleged, "The case against my wife has been lodged to deliberately malign my image during election time. She is innocent and was not present at the spot."

In the FIR filed late on Saturday night, complainant Suresh Singh alleged that assailants attacked and killed his son Ritesh alias DM Singh on the direction of Shobhavati Verma, who was a district panchayat member at the time. Singh alleged that Shobhavati, who was the district panchayat president from 2010 to 2015, developed enmity with his son as he too wanted to contest the election to the district panchayat and was opposing her.

According to the police, Suresh and Ritesh went to the village of Utretu on June 26, 2020. While Suresh was in the village to buy goods from the market, his son was there to meet people for the election, the police added. Suresh alleged that unidentified gunmen shot and killed former Utretu village head Dharmendra Verma at the market.

"On the direction of Shobhavati, her associates present at the spot caught Ritesh and two others. They thrashed the three badly with sticks following which two died and another got seriously injured," the police said.

Apart from Ritesh, Sultanpur resident Mohammad Mohsin died in the lynching while Abhinesh alias Vikram Singh was grievously injured. Vikram died later in hospital, said Ibrahimpur Station House Officer (SHO) Manoj Singh.



Lalji Verma is contesting polls from Katehari seat

Suresh alleged in his complaint that he immediately informed the police about the lynching, and added, "In the presence of the police, the accused also poured petrol on the face and tried to set it ablaze."

Following Verma's murder, the police had said that local people had caught Ritesh and the two others and brutally assaulted them, suspecting their involvement in the killing. At the time, the police said the murder was the fallout of a dispute between Verma and a criminal. They also claimed the three men who were lynched were involved in the murder.

"While investigating the murder of Dharmendra Verma, the police found the involvement of three more persons, and filed chargesheet against them," SHO Manoj Singh said on Sunday.

The police officer said that apart from Shobhavati Verma, the FIR mentions the involvement of seven unidentified people in the lynching.

Based on a court's directive, various charges, including murder and attempted murder, were invoked, the officer said, adding that no one had been arrested yet.

Meanwhile, this time, Lalji Verma is up against his former party's nominee Prateek Pandey and NISHAD Party candidate Avadhesh Kumar in Katehari.

The constituency will go to the polls on March 3.

Kerala: 1 killed, 2 injured after bomb goes off at wedding function

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEBRUARY 13

A 26-YEAR-OLD man died while two others were injured in a bomb blast that took place at a wedding procession in Kerala's Kannur district on Sunday, police said.

Kannur city police commissioner R Elango said, "It was a blast...We are investigating how a bomb blast happened in a marriage celebration."

The victim was identified as Jishnu, a resident of of Eachur village in the district, police said.

The blast took place at Thottada, Kannur on Sunday afternoon when a wedding party was returning to bridegroom's home after the function. The victim was a friend of the groom.

Police said, according to the locals, on Saturday night, there was a dispute at the bridegroom's house over a musical event held as part of wedding celebrations. The victim, Jishnu and a few others clashed with another group of people. However, later in the night, the dispute was resolved.

Police said they are looking at the CCTV footage and trying to verify the statement of a few eye witnesses that the bomb was hurled by Jishnu's group and it accidentally hit him after missing the target. "After the bomb blast, Jishnu's friends were in hurry to escape from the scene. Two others-Hemant and Aravind-- suffered injuries. We are investigating whether Jishnu and his friends had come for the marriage procession on Sunday with weapons and explosives to settle scores...," said police sources. The police said that once the injured persons are questioned, further details, including identities of the other members of the attacking group, would be revealed. WITH PTI INPUTS

Rajasthan: Woman, kids found hanging, husband in custody

Jaipur: A 32-year-old woman and her two children were found hanging from the ceiling of a room in their house in Rajasthan's Banswara district, police said on Sunday. According to the woman's husband, he was not present at the house during the time of the incident, police said. Based on the reports of woman's relatives, a case of murder has been registered against her husband and father-in-law, and husband has been taken into custody, said Ambarpura SHO Gajvir Singh said. PTI

TIPRA Motha to hold rallies over delay in tribal council polls

DEBRAJ DEB
AGARTALA, FEBRUARY 13

WITH NEARLY a year having passed since elections to village committees under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) were scheduled to be held, the TIPRA Motha party announced that it would hold rallies across the state and submit deputations addressed to the Governor to all eight district magistrates in Tripura, demanding that the elections be held.

The rallies will be held on Thursday, TIPRA Motha chairperson Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl said.

"Provisions of the Sixth Schedule have to be implemented under the Constitution of India. Why are they not implementing it?... The Governor, the MLAs — all have to abide by the Constitution. Why are they so timid when it comes to VC (village committee) elections? Why are they are not strong enough to hold it in a timely manner?" Hrangkhawl asked. With elections now being held in many "big states", he demanded that elections to the TTAADC village committees should also be held.

The election to 587 village committees were delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

NEW GUIDELINES

Institutes that complete one year can seek provisional NAAC accreditation

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

UNDER A new set of guidelines developed by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), colleges and universities that have completed even one academic year will be eligible to apply for provisional accreditation. According to the guidelines, the move aims to "widen the horizon of accreditation".

Until now, only those higher education institutions that are at least six years old, or from where at least two batches of students have graduated, could apply for NAAC accreditation.

These criteria, and the fact that not many institutions actually apply for review, had led to a situation where very few of the 51,000 colleges, universities and standalone institutions in the country possess NAAC grading.

The NAAC, which is an autonomous institution established under the UGC Act, evaluates the institutions of higher education on a range of parameters, including their governance structure, teaching and learning, research, infrastructure, and financial well-being among others. Based on these parameters, the NAAC gives institutions grades ranging from A++ to C. If an institutions is given a D, it means it is not accredited.

According to official data, as on October 26, 2021, the NAAC has issued 13,971 accreditations, which remain valid for five years. There are only 12 universities and 64 colleges that have been reviewed by the NAAC four times, with a gap of five years between each grading.

Under the new guidelines, provisional accreditation for colleges (PAC) is essentially geared to ascertain the readiness of institutions for the final NAAC accreditation.

Institutions that apply for the PAC process will get feedback regarding the areas they need to work on to reach "the threshold level of quality", according to the manual.

The PAC will be valid for two years, and institutions cannot get it more than two times.

UGC chairperson M Jagadesh Kumar is expected to address a webinar on the guidelines on February 23. The guidelines were communicated to colleges on January 23.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays major emphasis on accreditation. It envisages a "meta-accrediting body" called the National Accreditation Council.

According to the NEP, "Through a suitable system of graded accreditation and graded autonomy, and in a phased manner over a period of 15 years, all Higher Education Institutes in India will aim to become independent self-governing institutions pursuing innovation and excellence."

EXPLAINED

What NAAC examines for PAC

UNDER THE new NAAC guidelines, institutions that apply for provisional accreditation for colleges (PAC) will be examined based on a qualitative and quantitative framework. The quantitative questions that the applicant colleges will have to answer range from student-teacher ratio to pass percentage of students. Qualitatively, colleges will be judged on how they assess learning levels of students and the use of technology in teaching, among others.

Dalit bridegroom in MP plans to ride horse, his home attacked

Bhopal: The home of a 25-year-old Dalit bridegroom was attacked by members of Gujjar community in a village in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district after he announced that he will take out his marriage procession riding a horse and use the services of a DJ.

The attack took place Saturday night in Kachnariya village, hours after Rajesh Ahirwar gave an application to the Superintendent to Police, requesting for protection against members of the Gujjar community in his village who were objecting to his plan to ride a horse in his marriage procession.

Not only was Ahirwar's house pelted with stones, a tent erected for the wedding was torn apart and food prepared for the guests was thrown away by those who attacked the house. Soon after getting information, Superintendent of Police Pradeep Sharma reached the village late night and booked 38 people under eight sections of IPC and three sections of SC-ST Atrocities Act, 1989. Of these, 11 were arrested while 27 others are still at large, police said.

"It was around 10.30 pm that the house was attacked and we immediately reached the spot and spoke to the family...We have assured all help to the family," the SP told reporters. ENS

MAHARASHTRA

Woman killed in fight between 2 families over WhatsApp status

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 13

A 48-YEAR OLD woman from Boisar in Palghar district died after she suffered grievous internal injuries in a fight that took place between two families on February 10, allegedly over a Whatsapp status put up by her college-going daughter, police said. Three people, including two women, have been arrested for culpable homicide and have been remanded to police custody.

The incident took place on Thursday in a chawl in Shivaji Nagar area of Boisar. Preeti Prasad, a 20-year-old college-going woman, had put up a WhatsApp status on her mobile phone which did not go down well with her 17-year-old friend who lives in the same neighbourhood, police said.

On February 10, the teenager, along with her mother, sister and brother, went to the Prasad residence in the evening to confront the 20-year-old woman. The confrontation escalated into a brawl in which Preeti's mother, Lilavati Devi Prasad, suffered internal injuries on her ribs. She was rushed to a nearby government hospital where she died during treatment on the night of February 11. The police said the deceased woman had another medical issue too but it was the injury sustained in the fight that led to her death.

Based on the victim's complaint, the Boisar police registered an FIR under section 304 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for culpable homicide not amounting to murder against the minor girl, her mother, brother and sister. "We arrested the mother, brother and sister over Saturday and Sunday. They were produced before a magistrate court and police have got their custody till February 15. I cannot disclose the Whatsapp status but there was no need for the minor to take it personally," said inspector Suresh Kadam, head of Boisar police station.

Even though he refused to provide information even on the nature of the WhatsApp status, Kadam said there was "nothing specific in the status about the 17-year-old girl or anyone else". The minor girl has been sent to a correction home.

On train tracks in Bhopal, an act of daring saves a life, highlights a risk

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 13

ON FEBRUARY 5, Sneha Gaur, a resident of Aishbagh in Old Bhopal, was on her way home from work as usual. Around 8 pm, the 24-year-old reached the train tracks at the Barkhedi Phatak level crossing and ducked under a parked goods train to reach the other side.

But then, the train began to move. And something unusual happened.

Displaying courage and presence of mind, 37-year-old Mohammad Mehboob, who saw Sneha get stuck under the train, slid onto the tracks past the wheels to reach her and ensure, with a hand on her head, that she stayed down without hitting the 28 wagons that rolled past above.

"For a moment, I was lying there alone and then suddenly there was a man who had jumped in to be beside me. My brother was standing on the opposite side of the track and I could see the horrified expression on his face. I wanted to lift my head and assure him that I was safe. But the man held my head down and kept on saying, '*beta, tu darna mat, mein hun* (Child, don't fear, I am here)'," said Sneha.

Mehboob said: "I was alerted by someone's scream. I immediately thought she might panic and start moving to get out and come in contact with the rolling wheels or hit her head on the wagon above. I jumped in to calm her."

Mehboob is a carpenter and sole breadwinner of a family of seven. He didn't have a cellphone to know that a video of the incident had gone viral. But later, he was given a cellphone by Shoaib Hashmi, a social activist, even as the local police got it recharged while felicitating him.

Sneha's mother, Shama, says her son Rahul told her about what had happened. "I took it as a joke after he told me that an entire train had passed over Sneha. But soon, I realised that it was true. Now I want to meet the 'dada' (elder brother) who saved my daughter," she said.





(Left) A video screenshot of Mohammad Mehboob (above) on the tracks along with Sneha Gaur. *Express*

For Sneha, who works in the marketing sector, Shama and other local residents, the narrow escape provided another opportunity to underscore a long-pending demand: a foot overbridge at the spot located near the national hockey stadium, about 1.5 km from Bhopal Junction.

"Like me, there were many others who were ducking under the wagons to cross. I was under the wagon when, without a horn, the train started moving... After a third line became operational, goods trains stop there for over an hour or so. It is not possible to wait there for that long as there is a liquor shop nearby, and several drunk men loiter around. The area is also poorly lit," Sneha said.

Shama said: "A woman was crushed under the train just two weeks ago. My daughter was lucky but I shudder to think what would have happened if the man had not jumped in."

According to Government Railway Police SP Hitesh Chaudhary, Barkhedi Phatak recorded 18 deaths last year, and is a hotspot on the radar. But with residential and commercial areas mushrooming on either side of the tracks, Sneha said she is "among hundreds of people who have little choice other than to risk our lives every day".

According to officials, as the city expanded, three underpasses were constructed but none in the old city. When contacted, Divisional Railway Manager Saurabh Bandopadhyaya said: "There is no denying that there is a need for an overbridge there. Last year, discussions were held with the state government, including on issues of land encroachment. We are in the process of constructing a bridge, and tenders have been issued by the state government and Railways."

WORDLY WISE

HERE IS MY FIRST PRINCIPLE OF FOREIGN POLICY: GOOD GOVERNMENT AT HOME.

— WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

FRIENDLY PITCH

China's quest for dominance, commercial interests and deepening diasporic links are bringing India and Australia closer

THE GIFT OF a cricket bat, signed by former Indian captain Virat Kohli, from the External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar to his Australian counterpart Marise Payne last week might suggest ties between Delhi and Canberra are stuck with the cliches of "cricket, curry and Commonwealth". But the story of India's Australia ties today is anything but. If Delhi and Canberra found it hard to get along in the past, they have become highly valued partners for each other, thanks to unprecedented political commitment in both capitals to rapidly transform bilateral relations. If Cold War geopolitics divided India and Australia, the new strategic dynamic in Asia — driven by China's quest for regional dominance — is pushing the two nations toward each other. Equally important is the new convergence of commercial interests and deepening diasporic links.

That the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the Japanese foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi joined Jaishankar and Payne at the Melbourne cricket ground at the end of their talks in the Quadrilateral format may not have much political significance. Blinken and Hayashi, with no interest in cricket, were merely indulging their cricket-crazy partners in the Indo-Pacific. Fifteen years ago, Delhi and Canberra were deeply sceptical of the Quad framework proposed by Tokyo and backed by Washington. India and Australia are now active champions of the forum. Delhi and Canberra, which were too deferential to Beijing in the past, are now ready to stand up to Chinese pressures. It was not too long ago that China dismissed the Quadrilateral forum as "sea foam" that is here now but gone the next moment. But as the Quad consolidated itself, Beijing's tone has become harsher. As the Quad foreign ministers gathered in Melbourne, a spokesperson of the ministry of foreign affairs in Beijing attacked the group "as a tool to contain China" and called on its members to shed their "Cold War mentality".

There is more, however, to the India-Australia relationship than the Quad and the Indo-Pacific geopolitics. Jaishankar and Payne reviewed the growing bilateral cooperation in a range of areas from tourism and critical minerals to defence and security cooperation. The two ministers also launched the first India-Australia cyber framework dialogue. Australia is raising its profile in the subcontinent as part of its effort to coordinate regional policies with India. Delhi, in turn, is leveraging its Canberra connection, to strengthen its outreach to the strategic South Pacific Islands. Jaishankar and Payne also welcomed the rapid progress in the trade talks between the two sides. In New Delhi, after his talks with the visiting Australian trade and tourism minister Dan Tehan, commerce minister Piyush Goyal announced that the two sides are pushing hard to conclude an early harvest trade deal within the next month. During his visit, Jaishankar spent time with representatives of the Indian diaspora that has rapidly grown to about 700,000 and is making major contributions to Australian society. During the Cold War, cricket, curry and Commonwealth were just not enough to overcome the geopolitical distance between Delhi and Canberra; today, they will not only become more salient, but also reinforce the deepening strategic partnership between India and Australia.

HAMARA BAJAJ

Rahul Bajaj will be remembered as an industrialist who spoke his mind and adopted best practices of global industry

FOR MANY, RAHUL Bajaj's name was synonymous with the so-called Bombay Club industrialists, who sought a "level-playing field" against multinational companies after the 1991 reforms that slashed import tariffs and liberalised foreign investments. Bajaj Chetak and Bajaj Super scooters had a free run on Indian roads through the 1970s and 1980s, with multi-year waiting periods and the nearest lone competitor rival only in name. But Rahul Bajaj, who passed away on Saturday aged 83, wasn't the usual protectionist industrialist thriving in a seller's market. His vehicles were robust, met high production quality standards and appealed to consumers. For them, the Chetak was the ultimate "*hamara*" scooter on which the entire family could ride. Bajaj wanted to produce more, but the governments of those times denied capacity expansions on the most perverse socialist grounds — that his company was a monopoly. Bajaj also totally indigenised the production of the company's scooters after an initial technical collaboration with Italy's Piaggio, besides making it the world's fourth-largest two-wheeler manufacturer by the early 1990s.

While his scooters symbolised ordinary middle-class aspirations of the Amol Palekar-Farooq Shaikh years, Bajaj should be equally credited for keeping his eyes on the road ahead. Bajaj Auto tied up with Kawasaki to manufacture motorcycles in the mid-1980s, along with Hero-Honda and TVS-Suzuki. It also launched a 50cc single-gear Bajaj Sunny in 1990, aimed at 16-18 year olds who couldn't handle heavier scooters or bikes. It pained him, though, when his son Rajiv decided to exit the scooter section in 2009. In hindsight, the senior Bajaj may not have been entirely wrong. The erstwhile king of scooters couldn't partake in the gearless scooter revolution led by the likes of Honda Activa and TVS Jupiter. These targeted individual buyers, particularly women, craving for mobility, unlike the earlier "family" scooter. Rajiv did, however, turn Bajaj Auto into India's second-biggest and the world's third-largest motorcycle manufacturer. The other son Sanjiv has made Bajaj Finserv into a leading financial services concern with a market capitalisation even exceeding Bajaj Auto's.

Rahul Bajaj, at the end of the day, will be remembered as someone who spoke his mind — not only to his son, but also as a Bombay Club member to then finance minister Manmohan Singh and to the present home minister Amit Shah. When he told the latter of the need to create an environment where businessmen could "openly criticise" the government and still be appreciated, he was voicing a concern that few of his ilk dared express. It was a concern of a man who truly believed in "Make in India", recognised the importance of adopting global industry best practices, and stuck to his knitting without diversifying into unrelated businesses.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



Dealing with China

Delhi's naive optimism, evident since 1962, must give way to pragmatism



ARUN PRAKASH AND ASHOK HUKKU

WELL BEFORE IT recklessly triggered World War II, Germany had provided enough evidence of its hegemonic intent and disdain for international conventions. In September 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced on return from the Munich conference with Hitler: "I believe it is peace for our time." His gullibility was shown up a year later when Hitler, ordering the invasion of Poland, remarked: "Our enemies are little worms. I saw them at Munich."

India's "Munich moment" came in 1962 with the egregious misreading of China's intent by a naive political leadership, leading to a humiliating military defeat in the Sino-Indian war. On October 20, 1962, India's 7th Infantry Brigade was overrun by the 11th Division of the People's Liberation Army at Namka Chu. The Indian soldiers fought gallantly, often to the last man and the last bullet, but in vain. Similar actions took place elsewhere in NEFA (now Arunachal) and Ladakh. The rout lasted all the way up to November 20 when the Chinese declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew 20 km behind the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The LAC had been described by PM Zhou Enlai in 1959 as conforming to "the so-called McMahon Line in the east, and the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west." India did not agree with this definition but its failure to diplomatically contest and militarily defend this line gave China physical control of 38,000 sq km of the Aksai Chin plateau in 1962. Subsequently, China has claimed 84,000 sq km of Arunachal Pradesh as part of "Southern Tibet".

There is probably no precedent where two belligerents after fighting a "border war" have left their disputed boundary undetermined and unmarked for 60 long years. Indian politicians and diplomats used to derive satisfaction from having de-linked the border issue from the rest of the Sino-Indian relationship and rejoiced as bilateral trade — though adversely balanced — zoomed past the $100-billion mark. But to a layman, it appeared that by neglecting to pursue a negotiated demarcation of the LAC, and by glossing over repeated territorial incursions as "differences of perception," our security elite had played into China's hands.

> The government's stand that 'no Indian territory has been occupied by China', seen in the light of the May 2020 sanguinary clash in Galwan, and the 22-month Sino-Indian military stand-off, has confused the citizen and raised many concerns. In Ladakh, if the Chinese have indeed not encroached on our territory, then why are our troops unable to access previously established 'patrolling points' and what exactly are the 'friction points' that find frequent mention in communiques? In Arunachal, are the freshly-built Chinese enclaves and the towns renamed by them located in Indian territory? Finally, what has been the outcome of 22 meetings of the 'special representatives' and why have military commanders failed to achieve 'disengagement', leave alone 'de-escalation' in 14 meetings?

The government's stand that "no Indian territory has been occupied by China", seen in the light of the May 2020 sanguinary clash in Galwan, and the 22-month Sino-Indian military stand-off, has confused the citizens and raised many concerns. In Ladakh, if the Chinese have indeed not encroached on our territory, then why are our troops unable to access previously established "patrolling points" and what exactly are the "friction points" that find frequent mention in communiqués? In Arunachal, are the freshly-built Chinese enclaves and the towns renamed by them located in Indian territory? Finally, what has been the outcome of 22 meetings of the "special representatives" and why have military commanders failed to achieve "disengagement", leave alone "de-escalation" in 14 meetings?

These conundrums indicate that from Jawaharlal Nehru's desperate optimism, encapsulated in the "*Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai*" nostrum, to PM Modi's sustained engagement with Xi Jinping, Beijing has deviously managed to camouflage the true motivation behind its actions as well as its long-term intentions vis-à-vis India. New Delhi, on its part, has failed to evolve a strategy to counter China's designs or even issue a White Paper to explain the dimensions of this challenge to Parliament and the public.

China, having amply demonstrated its penchant for "salami-slicing" territory, as well as its disdain for international law, leaves India with little room for complacency or for vainly hoping that so-called "legacy issues" will resolve themselves with time. It is, therefore, vital to deconstruct China's elaborate charade and to halt the covert but steady haemorrhaging of Indian territory.

While jingoism has its place in politics, we must be realistic enough to understand that neither conquest nor re-conquest of territory is possible in a nuclearised South Asia. India's Parliament and government should now accord utmost priority to establishing settled, viable and peaceful international boundaries all around. Only then will India be able to focus on nation-building and socio-economic development without interruption. A few pragmatic options offer themselves for resolving the Sino-Indian imbroglio.

First, India could exhume and revive the offer reportedly made by PM Zhou in 1960. Seeking strategic depth for Highway 219 that links Xinjiang with Tibet across Aksai Chin, Zhou had suggested negotiating a "quid pro quo" wherein China would recognise the McMahon Line in exchange for India making certain adjustments in the west. This would call for considerable political boldness and diplomatic adroitness.

A second option would be for India to bring sustained pressure to bear on China on the diplomatic, trade and psychological fronts and await results. At the same time, Indian forces must remain poised for swift direct action; seizing unoccupied territory and holding on to it as a bargaining chip. The surprise capture of tactical heights on the Kailash Range by our Special Forces brought severe psychological pressure on Beijing and must serve as a template. While skirmishes and physical confrontations may take place, it is considered most unlikely — for several reasons — that China would take on India in a major or even a limited conflict.

A third option lies in the maritime domain where opportunities exist, both for power-balancing via partnerships, as well as direct naval action. China's economy and industry are overwhelmingly dependent on uninterrupted seaborne trade and energy. Thus, China's Indian Ocean sea lanes constitute a "jugular vein" that India could threaten via trade warfare. In this context, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, suitably fortified and militarised, could become maritime bastions, dominating the Malacca Straits. Far more strategic advantage could accrue if India were to shed its political coyness and offer Port Blair as a logistic "watering hole" to selected friendly navies.

The last option would, obviously, be to maintain the status quo — with 50,000-60,000 troops deployed at high altitudes — and engage in sustained military/diplomatic parleys hoping for useful outcomes — with an unpredictable Chinese threat hanging over our heads like a sword of Damocles.

Prakash is a former Indian naval chief and Hukku was a major general in the Indian army

HE SPOKE HIS MIND

Rahul Bajaj's openness, generosity, warmth and zest for life will be missed



ANU AGA

RAHUL BAJAJ PASSED away on February 12, 2022, after being unwell for some time. He was known the world over and, of course, in India for being a very successful, ethical, and philanthropic businessman.

Bajaj came from an illustrious business family that took part in our freedom struggle. He pursued his MBA from the prestigious Harvard University, married a lovely woman, Rupa, and had three wonderful children. He was the only member of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) who served as an extremely effective president for two terms; he will be remembered for being vocal and making each meeting interesting and fun. He was also a regular visitor to Davos and enjoyed participating in the forum. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha, and always went to the Central Hall to visit his friends whenever he was in Delhi.

I am not going to elaborate on his various achievements, but I will tell you how I saw him as a friend. I knew him for over 22 years, and I will miss his openness and frankness, his generosity, kindness, warmth and care, his zest for life and his loud, argumentative nature.

Living in Pune, I had heard about Rahul and had met him on a few social occasions, but did not know him personally. It was when I became active in CII that I came to know him well. In 2002, when the Gujarat riots took place and I openly condemned the atrocities, Rahul took me aside at a party and said that I had done my bit and, for the sake of my company and family, I should not say any more and that he would write and speak about this cause. And he did keep his promise. This was one of the many occasions when I experienced his warmth and care.

> He was a fun-loving person with a great sense of humour. He would express opinions without mincing words, but gave the same freedom to his friends to differ from him, and sometimes he conceded defeat.

Anyone who knew Rahul would know about his candour, how he was not afraid to speak his mind. Tact was not his strong point, but in the corporate world, where very few have the courage to go against the establishment, his frankness was a breath of fresh air.

Rahul invited me to be a member of the council of advisors of Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation that gives annual awards to outstanding individuals who follow Gandhian values. It was then that I realised the enormous philanthropic work done by this illustrious family. He took a very active interest in matters of the foundation and attended every meeting to select the awardees. He would meticulously plan the main award function in Mumbai each year. Being Rahul Bajaj, he could ask any dignitary to be the chief guest, whether it be a senior politician or a religious guru. I am not aware of anyone refusing his invitation.

I have in the past asked for his support for the NGOs I am involved with, and he has always been very generous. He found it difficult to show his soft side, but behind his loud talk and demeanour, there was a caring, warm heart. He was the founding trustee of the Ananta Aspen Centre and, along with Tarun Das, helped it to flourish as a great institution that encourages leadership. At Ananta Aspen, again, I was touched by his generosity in supporting the Young Leader's Programme and the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship.

Rahul was a fun-loving person with a great sense of humour. He would express opinions without mincing words, but gave the same freedom to his friends to differ from him, and sometimes he conceded defeat. If Rahul was in a meeting, you could be assured it would not be boring.

I recall an incident that is typical of my friend. I had invited him for a small sit-down lunch at my house. He was the first guest to arrive (he was never late for any event), and he asked me who all had been invited. When I mentioned a particular name, he said, "Don't you know we are no longer friends?" I told him that I was not aware of this and now that I had invited both of them, he should behave himself and not make any rude comments. Rahul was civil as requested, but totally ignored him.

Rahul's birthday falls on June 10 and I have fond memories of his birthday celebrations and the annual winter party at his house at Akurdi. Like me, he enjoyed dancing and we had a lot of fun.

I miss my friend. I will cherish these memories and pray that he is happy wherever he may be.

The writer is former chairperson of Thermax


INDIAN EXPRESS

FEBRUARY 14, 1982, FORTY YEARS AGO

NO MID-TERM POLLS

MRS GANDHI HAS ruled out the possibility of mid-term elections in any state. Elections will, however, be held in states where they are due, she told reporters in Bhopal. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh was not being asked to step down nor were there plans for any leadership change in other states, she said. Radical improvement was called for in the judiciary and administration and the system of education to realise the goal of a socialist and egalitarian society. Whatever the form of government, there was a scope for better, she said when asked whether there were efforts to shift to the presidential system.

COURT FEE ABOLITION

UNION LAW MINISTER Jagan Nath Kaushal has hinted at the possibility of court fees being abolished. Inaugurating a conference of the Uttar Pradesh Congress (I) Committee's legal cell, said that a recommendation made to this effect by a panel constituted by his predecessor P Shiv Shankar had been sent to state governments for their approval. The minister said that it was his conviction that the "state had no right to tell a person who comes seeking justice to give money first". A conference of law ministers will be called for the purpose, he said.

FOREIGNERS' ISSUE

LEADERS OF THE All Assam Students Union accused the Home Minister of "conveniently concealing" from the parliamentary consultative committee the policy decision made by the government on the issue of illegal migrants. Reacting sharply to the Home Minister's statement that the government would honour the national commitment to refugees, the AASU general secretary Bhrigu Kumar Phukan that the External Affairs Minister had on April 4, 1966 categorically stated in the Lok Sabha that no person coming from East Pakistan after April 17, 1966 without valid travel documents would be given citizenship.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"A united diplomatic front is the best weapon to persuade Vladimir Putin against invading Ukraine." — THE OBSERVER

Climate smart agriculture

There is need to rethink power and fertiliser subsidies and reorient MSP and procurement policies towards minimising GHG emissions



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI AND REENA SINGH

IN THE BACKDROP of the 2070 carbon neutrality target set by India at the CoP26 in Glasgow, the Union Budget for 2022-23 has listed "climate action" and "energy transition" as one of the four priorities for the Amrit Kaal. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a few announcements in this context, including an additional allocation of Rs 19,500 crore for solar PV modules. She also talked of co-firing of 5-7 per cent of biomass pellets in thermal power plants, "sovereign green bonds" and a "battery-swapping policy". These are positive steps towards making the energy and transport sectors less polluting.

Her announcements on agriculture, however, were rather limited. Agriculture contributes 73 per cent of the country's methane emissions. India has kept away from the recent EU-US pledge to slash methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, despite the country being the world's third largest emitter of methane. The FM did talk of chemical-free natural farming in a 5-km wide corridor along the river Ganga, support for millets, and increased domestic production of oilseeds and kisan drones. These are welcome steps. But they do not assure us that the environmental damage already wrought by the sector can be undone. The damage is largely a result of the various kinds of subsidies — on urea, canal irrigation and power for irrigation — as well as the minimum support prices (MSP) and procurement policies concentrated on a few states and largely on two crops, rice, and wheat.

We also know that as of January 1, the stocks of wheat and rice in the country's central pool were four times higher than the buffer stocking requirement. In fact, rice stocks with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) are seven times the buffer norms for rice. This is despite the record distribution of rice in the PDS and record exports of rice (17.7MMT) in 2020-21. The financial value of these excessive grain stocks is Rs 2.14 lakh crore, of which Rs 1.66 lakh crore is because of excess rice stocks — as per the economic cost of rice and wheat given by the FCI. Interestingly, the Economic Survey 2021-22 gives an economic cost of rice and wheat higher than that reported by FCI. If one uses the survey's figures, the value of excess stocks jumps to Rs 2.56 lakh crore, with rice accounting for approximately Rs 2 lakh crore.

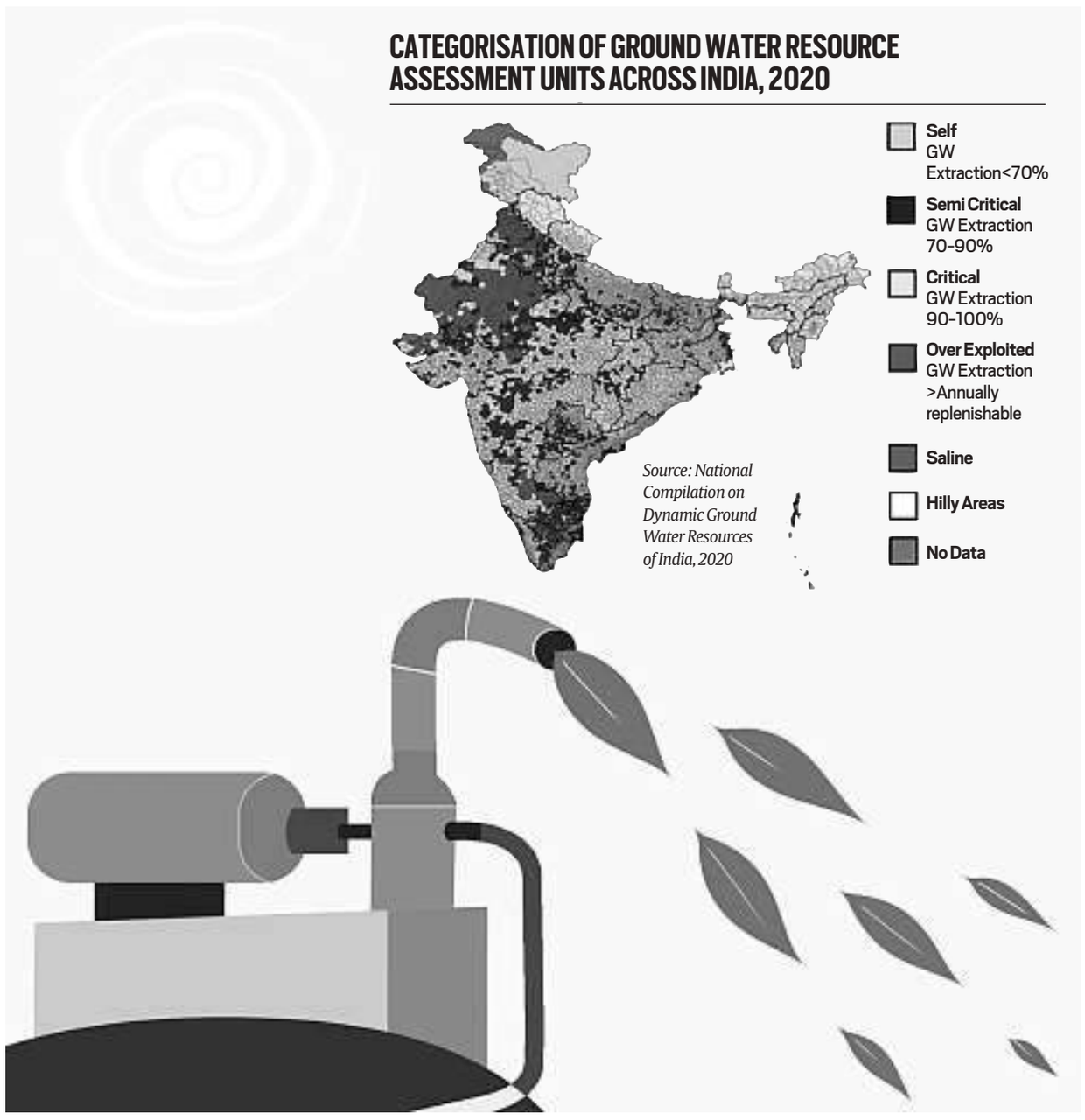
All this does not just reflect inefficient use of scarce capital, the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) embedded in these stocks is also large. As per the national GHG inventory, the agriculture sector emits 408 MMT of carbon-dioxide equivalent and rice cultivation is the third highest source (17.5 per cent) of GHG emissions in Indian agriculture after enteric fermentation (54.6 per cent) and fertiliser use (19 per cent). Paddy fields are anthropogenic sources of atmospheric nitrous oxide and methane, which have been reckoned as 273 and 80-83 times more powerful than carbon dioxide in driving temperature increase in 20 years' (Sixth Assessment Report IPCC 2021). The amount of methane emitted from paddy fields of India is 3.396 teragram per year or 71.32 MMT carbon dioxide equivalent. Two important points need to be noted here: First, India does not report nitrous oxide emissions in its national GHG inventories. There is scientific evidence that intermittent flooding reduces water and methane emissions but increases nitrous oxide emissions. Thus, lowering of methane emissions through controlled irrigation does not necessarily mean net low emissions. Second, emissions due to burning rice residues, application of fertilisers, production of fertilisers for rice, energy operations like harvesting, pumps, processing, transportation are not accounted for in the GHG emissions in rice production.

A study by Vetter et al. (2017) used the Cool Farm Tool (CFT) model to estimate annual GHG emissions by crops from production to the farm gate. It reported emissions of 5.65 kg carbon dioxide equivalent of GHG per kg of rice. Moreover, paddy fields require about 4,000 cubic metres of water per tonne of rice for irrigation. Even if half of that percolates back to groundwater, excess stocks of 46 MMT of rice embed about 92 billion cubic meters of water as well as 260 MMT of carbon dioxide equivalent. According to the IMF, the world needs a carbon tax of $ 75 per tonne by 2030 to reduce emissions to a level consistent with a 2 degree Celsius warming target. India does not have an explicit carbon-price yet, but many countries have begun to implement carbon pricing. Sweden leads the pack with a carbon price as high as $137 per tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent while EU is at $50/tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent. It is high time for India to announce indicative carbon pricing and create a vibrant carbon market to incentivise green growth in Amrit Kaal.

The Economic Survey 2021-22 points out that the country is over-exploiting its ground water resource (see map), particularly in the northwest and some parts of south India. This is primarily due to paddy cultivation on 44 million hectares. This has helped India achieve food security, but it's time now to save groundwater and the environment. This calls for revisiting policies to subsidise power and fertilisers, MSP and procurement and reorient them towards minimising GHG emissions. Farmer groups and the private sector can be mobilised to develop carbon markets in agriculture, both at the national and international levels, which can reward farmers in cash for switching from carbon-intensive crops such as rice to low-carbon-intensive crops or improving farming practices in rice systems to lower GHG emissions. Such a move towards "net-zero" agriculture will give India a "climate smart" agriculture in Amrit Kaal. And, if we can protect productivity levels with a low-carbon footprint, it will help India to access global markets too.

Gulati is Infosys Chair professor for agriculture and Singh is senior fellow at ICRIER

The Economic Survey 2021-22 points out that the country is over-exploiting its ground water resource (see map), particularly in the northwest and some parts of south India. This is primarily due to paddy cultivation on 44 million hectares. This has helped India achieve food security, but it's time now to save groundwater and the environment. This calls for revisiting policies to subsidise power and fertilisers, MSP and procurement and reorient them towards minimising GHG emissions.



Decongesting prisons

Question of mass incarceration of undertrial prisoners needs a public health and gender-sensitive approach



PRATIKSHA BAXI

DURING THE PANDEMIC, the mass incarceration of undertrials led to a humanitarian crisis in overcrowded prisons. Prison officials struggled to prevent mass contagion among inmates and staff, even as thousands fell ill and many died. Prisons instituted their own lockdown rules by quarantining "fresh" admissions, creating quarantine zones, suspending jail manuals and prohibiting visitors. There is no lockdown on the entry of more undertrial prisoners while their rate of exit from prisons has decreased since the onset of the pandemic.

Today, the devastating impact of the highly contagious Omicron variant in prisons is normalised by invoking lockdown curbs. Prisons have not completed vaccination programmes and conditions have worsened as occupancy rates increase. Court visits are suspended. Lawyers cannot visit their clients in person. Prison visits have stopped, even if families and visitors are vaccinated and follow Covid-appropriate behaviour.

Experts tell us that the main reason for "overcrowding" in our prisons is due to the mass incarceration of pre-trial prisoners. The penal policy of the state has not focussed on de-criminalisation. Instead, it has resulted in a shocking 31.8 per cent increase in the incarceration of the number of undertrial prisoners and increase in imprisonment of detenues by 40.1 per cent from 2015 to 2020 (as of December 31, 2020). Jail is the rule rather than the exception. The prison statistics of 2020 show that more than 70 per cent of such undertrial prisoners are from marginalised classes, castes, religions and genders.

In 2020, as the national lockdown was announced, the Supreme Court of India issued directions to set up high-powered committees (HPCs) in each state to decongest prisons. In *Contagion of Covid-19 Virus in Prisons*, the Supreme Court of India held that "the requirement of de-congestion is a matter concerning health and right to life of both the prison inmates and the police personnel working". However, most HPCs did not adopt classification based on the right to life or health nor were these gender-sensitive.

Most HPCs treated decongestion as an administrative issue. One might even argue that the HPC classification adversely impacted bail outcomes and reduced the categories of release adopted by the barely functional undertrial review committees. The 2020 Prison Statistics report supports this analysis in two ways. First, it reveals that as compared to 2019, "the release of convicts has declined by 41.2 per cent and the release of undertrials has declined by 19.6 per cent" in 2020. Second, as compared to 2019, the number of undertrial prisoners increased by 11.7 per cent and the number of detenues increased by 11.4 per cent in 2020.

The pandemic saw the creation of new dockets which were mainly related to violations of "lockdown law" under section 188 of the IPC (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant). In 2019, there were 29,469 cases registered under this section. In 2020, this increased to a staggering 6,12,179 cases. Other laws were also used, including local laws, leading to 16,43,690 more cases being registered in 2020 as compared to 2019. No amnesty has been announced for these offences nor has the misuse of the "epidemic laws" seen judicial review.

As prisons instituted a lockdown on public accountability, the rates of custodial deaths have increased by 7.0 per cent in 2020. So-called unnatural deaths, which include suicides, accidents, and murders in prisons, increased by 18.1 per cent. There is no information on why 56 inmates died in 2020. These figures prove that the lockdown rules in prisons increase custodial violence and disease. These lockdown rules unfortunately are now normalised by the fiction that the HPCs will decongest and oversee the pandemic-induced crisis. Public interest appeals to the committees to adopt a public health and gender-sensitive classification to decongest the most overcrowded prisons in the country were rejected.

Take the example of the approach to incarcerating pregnant women in prisons. In May 2021, the Delhi HPC directed that pregnant undertrials or mothers with children will be released on interim bail for three months. While releasing pregnant women for three months, the HPC did not factor in which trimester each woman was in. If a woman was in labour or delivered a baby three months later, she was expected to surrender or go to court.

Pregnant undertrials who fell into the HPC's exclusion clause, such as foreign national prisoners, were not released. Even though most foreign national prisoners are from the global south, the exclusion clause is not seen as a racist classification. The disaster law was not applied to prohibit such racial discrimination between different classes of pregnant women. Nor did the courts rule unequivocally that custodial childbirth and incarcerated pregnancy is a specific form of cruel and inhuman punishment that is inflicted on women in prisons. Or honour the UN's Bangkok Rules which state that "non-custodial means should be preferred for pregnant women during the pre-trial phase".

Surely it is high time that governments and courts adopt a public health and gender-sensitive approach to the question of mass incarceration of undertrial prisoners. The participation of prison watchdogs in bringing accountability to these dark custodial spaces must be restored. The decline in the rate of release of undertrials from prison and the increase in custodial deaths must be named as a humanitarian crisis. And the bureaucratic approach of the HPCs should be reviewed.

Courts must privilege prisoners' experiences of "lockdown" prisons rather than pay lip service to dead letter reform. It is time to end the law's attachment to inflicting cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment on pre-trial prisoners. The mass incarceration of pre-trial prisoners must be abolished. Surely institutionalised indifference to the cruel and inhuman conditions of custody must be abhorrent to any society.

The writer is a sociologist based in Delhi. She has authored Public Secrets of Law: Rape Trials in India

A blueprint to revive farming

Haryana's innovations on agri-credit system could be a model for other states



BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA

THIS BUDGET HAS disappointed the farming sector. The government has increased the agricultural credit target to Rs 18 lakh crore for 2022-23 from Rs 16.5 lakh crore for the current fiscal, with an allocated subsidy of Rs 20,870 crore. The question, however, is: Is the huge credit and subsidy benefiting farmers on the ground?

The budget speech as well as the *Economic Survey 2021-22* recommended that priority should be given to crop diversification and allied sectors including horticulture, organic farming, dairying and fishing to increase farmers income. But to enable small farmers to shift from wheat and paddy or improve their income through allied sectors, they must have access to institutional credit at reasonable rates of interest.

While the volume of credit has grown over the decades, its quality and impact on agriculture has deteriorated. Over the years, the growth rate in the agriculture sector has been falling: It was 6.8 per cent in 2016-17, whereas it is 3.9 per cent in 2021-22. Agricultural credit has become less efficient in delivering growth.

In the last 10 years, agriculture credit increased by 350 per cent, but it has not reached even 15 per cent of the 12.56 crore small and marginal farmers. Credit is critical for achieving higher farm output. Institutional credit will help delink farmers from non-institutional sources, where they are compelled to borrow at usurious rates of interest.

The RBI has asked if agricultural households with the lowest landholding (up to two hectares) get only about 15 per cent of the subsidised loan from institutional sources. The share is 79 per cent for households belonging to the highest size class of land possessed (above 2 hectares). As per the Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households by NSSO, the share of institutional loans increases with an increase in land possessed. Clearly, the bulk of subsidised agri-credit is grabbed by a handful of big farmers and agri-business companies.

A loose definition of agri-credit has led to the leakage of loans at subsidised rates to large agri-firms. For example, in 2017, 53 per cent of the agriculture credit that NABARD provided to Maharashtra was allocated to Mumbai metro city and suburbs, where there are no agriculturists, only agri-business.

One of the main reasons for this diversion is that subsidised credit disbursed at 4 per cent to 7 per cent rate interest is being refinanced to small farmers and in the open market at interest rates up to 24 per cent.

As chairman of the Working Group on Agriculture Production constituted in 2010 by the then prime minister Manmohan Singh, I had recommended strategies and action plans for increasing agriculture production and productivity, including long-term policies to ensure sustained growth. The report of the working group laid emphasis on the easy availability of institutional credit to farmers for future growth, recommending that "credit should be made available at not more than 4 per cent per annum rate of interest". This was implemented by the UPA government throughout the country. However, in Haryana, the Congress government extended crop credit to farmers at a zero per cent rate of interest through state co-operatives.

I suggest the following changes in the agri-credit system. One, the flow of agricultural credit has not been uniform across states. Institutional development across states is a priority area for equitable flow of subsidised credit. Two, state governments should work in close coordination with the banking system for the promotion of more Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) as per NABARD guidelines to ensure that formal credit reaches financially-excluded farmers. Three, state governments should regularly monitor credit flow. Four, the rate of interest for long-term loans should be kept at 4 per cent. Five, a comprehensive list of all farm-related activities should be prepared by the banks in consultation with NABARD, agriculture experts, farmers and administration. Six, eligibility conditions/criteria for providing agriculture loans should be further simplified and liberalised. The repayment schedule should be according to the farmers' capacity.

As chief minister of Haryana, I had amended the law to provide the recovery of the cooperative loans by leasing out the mortgaged land in place of selling, in the event of default by the farmer, with the mutual consent of cooperative society and the agriculturist. Not a single farmer was arrested in Haryana during my tenure for default in repayment of loans taken from co-operatives. The Haryana model on agri-credit introduced by a Congress government can be a blueprint for other states.

The writer is former chief minister, Haryana

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

VICIOUS CYCLE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The job crisis' (IE, February 12). Data presented by the finance minister may portray an encouraging state of affairs emanating from official files and sound lovely to partial ears but the reality on the ground is pathetic. A vicious cycle of a poor education system coupled with the absence of skill-building capacity through technical institutions, creating an army of unemployed youth with graduate, post-graduate and doctorate degrees, vying for Class IV government jobs, reflects an abysmal picture of our country, which dreams of becoming "*vishwa guru*".

Devendra Awasthi, *Lucknow*

MAMATA'S SIGNAL

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Party unity on her mind, Mamata forms new TMC working panel' (IE, February 13). Asserting her firm control over the party, Mamata Banerjee packed a 20-member working committee with TMC veterans who were facing criticism from Abhishek Banerjee and other next-generation leaders over holding multiple posts in the party and the administration. Her move is seen as a bid to stem dissension over the "one person one post" policy, which was announced by Banerjee herself in 2021 but could not be implemented in totality.

S S Paul, *Nadia*

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● GREEN FINANCE: CAN INDIA GRAB THE OPPORTUNITY?: R R RASHMI

www.indianexpress.com

A DEEP CUT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'At the expense of the poorest' (IE, February 12). The cut in the allocations for the MGNREGA by the NDA government for financing its new economic alternative called capital expenditure and that too when there is a strong demand for extending this tested scheme even for other delicate situations, only shows its skewed approach. The reduced funds will surely hit the people already living hand to mouth. It is those very people who are still waiting for Rs 15 lakh from the black money stashed abroad by unscrupulous businessmen. The tragedy is that the poor man's lifeline is being starved of funds even when the economy is shown to be on a mend. The irony is that this one-man show is getting applause even in the biggest democracy in the world.

Tarsem Singh, *Mahilpur*

BRIEFLY

BIHAR

MLA booked for kidnapping: cops

Patna: A case was filed on Sunday against BJP MLA Vinay Bihari in Patna for allegedly kidnapping a 25-year-old woman, police said. An FIR has been registered against the MLA from Lauriya in West Champaran and two others," said Bipin Bihari, the SHO of Agam Kuan police station. "We received a message from her phone and were told to contact a number. When I called that number, BJP MLA Vinay Bihari received it," the woman's mother claimed. "He threatened me. He said that my daughter is with his nephew Rajiv Singh. He said there is no use going to the SP or DSP," she alleged. The accused MLA could not be reached for comments. **PTI**

MAHARASHTRA

Man who 'stabbed wife' tries to kill self

Thane: A 45-year-old man, who was on the run for the last five days after allegedly injuring his wife by stabbing her, tried to shoot himself dead at his residence in Dombivli of Thane district on Sunday, police said. Somnath Devkar suffered serious injuries in the suicide attempt, senior inspector at Ram Nagar police station Sachin Sandbhor said. On February 8, following a heated argument with his wife, Devkar had stabbed her with a sharp weapon multiple times, in which she suffered severe injuries. He had fled from the scene after that. **PTI**

RAJASTHAN

26 cattle rescued after shootout

Jaipur: Twenty six cattle, including cows, were rescued while another three died following a brief exchange of fire between the police and alleged cow smugglers during night patrolling in Bharatpur, officials said on Sunday. On the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, the alleged cow smugglers opened fire at the night patrol team as it chased the truck in which the animals were being illegally transported. The police, too, opened fire in self-defence. During the exchange of fire, the truck rammed into a tree. One of the accused was injured while the others escaped, police said. **PTI**

UTTAR PRADESH

Cop booked over forgery for rank

Bulandshahr: A senior police officer has been booked on charges of cheating and forgery for securing his promotion on the basis of a wrong affidavit, concealing a criminal case registered against him in an Agra police station. The case against DySP Sudhir Kumar Tyagi was registered on a complaint by Bulandshahr's SP (Rural) Bajarang Bali Chaurasia, an official said on Sunday. He was promoted last month on the basis of seniority but before his promotion, he was required to give an affidavit to the Uttar Pradesh police headquarters disclosing various details, including criminal antecedents, if any, the official said. **PTI**



People pay their respects to Rahul Bajaj, chairman emeritus of Bajaj Auto, in Pune, Sunday. *Ashish Kale*

Workers to ministers, hundreds bid tearful farewell to Rahul Bajaj

MANOJ MORE
PUNE, FEBRUARY 13

SINCE THE early hours of Sunday, all roads in the industrial city of Pimpri-Chinchwad in Maharashtra seemed to lead to one destination — the Bajaj Auto plant at Akurdi area. It was here that Rahul Bajaj's body was laid for people to pay their respects.

And they all came. Industrialists and workers. Politicians and commoners. Many remembered a man with the conviction to take on the powers that be. Others talked of a boss who always felt like an 'aapla manoos' (our man).

At 5.30 pm, the titan of Indian industry was cremated with full state honours in Pune. His sons, Rajiv and Sanjiv Bajaj, performed the last rites.

The chairman emeritus of Bajaj Auto, who was ailing for some time, had died on Saturday afternoon at 83.

Maharashtra Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil laid a wreath on his body on behalf of the government.

Earlier, at the company plant in Akurdi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and state cabinet ministers Aditya Thackeray and Chhagan Bhujbal were among those who paid tribute.

The city of Pimpri-Chinchwad wore a sombre look as all public functions stood cancelled without a state fiat. It was understandable. The Bajajs had set up shop in the 1960s when only a handful of industrial units were present in the Pimpri-Chinchwad-Bhosari industrial belt. By the 1990s, the figure had jumped to 10,000 small, medium and big industrial units in the city, drawing job hopefuls from across the state and even the country.

The company had effectively transformed the city, and at the centre of this transformation was the Akurdi plant.

Here, the queue of those waiting to pay their last respects felt unending. Even those who could not walk due to age made it to the plant with help from kin. Every mourner, it seemed, had a deep sense of attachment to Bajaj. Even after paying their last respects, they stayed back, recalling their days in the company of their boss. Two veterans were seen hugging each other, their eyes welled up. Some of those who spoke to this paper narrated the Rahul Bajaj era with a sense of pride and belonging.

"I joined the company as a fitter in 1969 and retired after 30 years of service. In all the three decades that I worked with Bajaj Auto, I never felt like I lived elsewhere. The company premises were like my own home, my family," said Subash Bodhe, 75, who walked in with the help of a stick and was supported by his grandson.

Bodhe said he started as a worker and retired as a union leader. "Be it as a worker or a leader, Rahul Bajaj was always accessible to us. We have had several conversations with him. I used to think he was a big man and would not be interested in talking to me. But that was never the case. He was an "apla manoos" (our man)... We were an integral part of the Bajaj family," Bodhe said, his voice quivering.

Raosaheb Kalonji, a worker who retired after 30 years of service, said Bajaj would regularly seek feedback and advice from them in a bid to improve the quality of the products and step up production. "'Kay bolta bol… kya kar sakte hai… Kuch idea do yaar'. This is how he would talk to us whenever he made a surprise visit in the shop area," recalled Kalonji. "He made the workers feel part of the Bajaj family. And that exactly was the reason why every worker put in his might to churn out over 1,000 vehicles a day. It was made possible because the company and Rahul Bajaj cared for and respected us."

Besides his rapport with the ordinary company workers, Bajaj had become a "hero" for them as his company never delayed their payments. "No matter what phase the company was going through, we always got our salaries on time," said Harun Haveli, 77, a retired worker. "Bajaj was probably the only company that ensured that its workers and family did not suffer on account of delayed salaries. In my 30 years of service, I don't remember the company ever delaying our salary for a month."

The canteen at the plant provides tea and biscuits, breakfast and a vegetarian meal — all for a princely sum of Re one. "The canteen has been running for 50 years. Initially, an employee got a full plate meal for 50 paise. Later, the amount was raised to Re one. Every worker used to pay Rs 27 every month which was cut from his salary. And the meal has a feel of the one made at home," said Sanjay Joshi, president of the Vishwakalyan Kamgar Sanghatana at the Akurdi plant.

Protests break out in Jharkhand over Bhojpuri, Magahi in govt job exam

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, FEBRUARY 13

PROTESTS ARE spreading in parts of Jharkhand over the inclusion of Bhojpuri and Magahi in a government exam for district-level appointments — amid a larger undercurrent of rumblings over the state's domicile policy.

These agitations have been mostly seen in Bokaro and Dhanbad districts — where protesters say Bhojpuri and Magahi are spoken by a minuscule proportion — but are now spreading to Giridih and Ranchi as well.

At the centre of the protests is Jharkhandi Bhasha Sangharsha Samiti — an organisation of Moolvasis and Adivasis which claims to be apolitical — which has addressed more than 50 gatherings on the issue, attracting large crowds over the last few days.

One of its members, Tirth Nath Akash, said the idea of the protests was to pressure the state government against the inclusion of the languages in the two districts — and on the state's domicile policy. The protesters have demanded 1932 as the cut-off date while taking into account proof of land records, against the current date 1985.

The protests broke out after the state government issued a notification on December 23 to include Magahi and Bhojpuri as regional languages in the two districts for the selection of matric- and intermediate-pass candidates through examinations.



A Jharkhandi Bhasha Sangharsha Samiti member addresses a crowd in Giridih. *Express*

The notification is for district-level appointments and is not applicable for the state-wide selection process. As of now, no vacancies against the notification have been advertised.

The ruling Jharkahnd Mukti Morcha and the Congress have stayed away from the issue so far. The BJP has not said anything explicitly.

The state's domicile policy, meanwhile, has always been a contentious matter.

Following the creation of Jharkhand in 2000, the first Chief Minister, Babulal Marandi, thought it was necessary to define a 'Jharkhandi', as it would help in rolling out benefits including government jobs to local people. However, in 2003, Marandi resigned over this issue. The current JMM government has formed a cabinet sub-committee to re-define who would be treated as a domicile resident. Former CM Raghubar Das' government had come out with a "relaxed domicile policy" in 2016 which included employment for the last 30 years as a category, essentially putting the cut-off year at 1985.

Akash said they have been working in this domain for the last six-seven years. "We had protested against Raghubar Das' domicile policy and also when he attempted to tweak Santhal Pargana and Chotanagpur Tenancy Acts. There is pent-up anger among the people and it was triggered upon the inclusion of certain language as this would lead to their exclusion in government jobs."

The faction in opposition said the protests were fuelled by State Education Minister Jagarnath Mahato's recent comment where he supported the removal of these languages from Dhanbad and Bokaro areas. The minister, who comes from Dumri constituency of Giridih district, said that had even asked the cabinet to remove these as regional languages.

Physical classes begin in J&K colleges from today

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday allowed all universities, colleges and other professional institutions to start holding physical classes from Monday.

"All universities, colleges, polytechnics, ITIs etc., shall commence routine offline (physical attendance) teaching after ensuring readiness for enforcement of Covid Appropriate Behavior and Standard Operating Procedures from February 14," said an order issued by UT Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta.

It also allowed schools in all the summer zones of J&K to open in a phased manner, saying classes 9-12 can start offline teaching from Feb 14. All students in the age group of 15-17 must carry a vaccination certificate with them when going to school, it added. **ENS**

Two advocates, businessman arrested over 'derogatory' posts against judges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

THE CBI has arrested two advocates and a businessman in its probe into alleged derogatory posts made online against judges of Supreme Court and high courts, officials said on Sunday.

Advocates M Chandrasekhar Rao and Kalanidhi Gopalakrishna and businessman Gunta Ramesh Rao were taken into custody on Saturday in connection with the cases being probed by the agency on the orders of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The CBI recently carried out searches at 10 locations, including office and residential premises of the accused and suspects in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, wherein incriminating evidence was recovered, the central probe agency said in a statement.

"The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered several cases/FIRs against the accused allegedly involved in intentionally targeting the Hon'ble Judges and Judiciary through interviews/social media/posts/speeches in on-line platforms, maliciously attributing ulterior motives in delivery of orders/judgments. The cases/FIRs have been registered on the orders of the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh," the statement said.

RS 18,000 CR FIXED FOR SECURITY EXPENDITURE IN J&K, NORTHEAST

Govt approves Rs 26,275 crore plan for police modernisation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

THE GOVERNMENT has approved the umbrella scheme of modernisation of police force for the next five years with a financial outlay of Rs 26,275 crore. More than Rs 18,000 crore of this money will go towards security related expenditure in Jammu and Kashmir, Left Wing Extremism areas and the Northeast.

"The approval for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, moves forward the initiative of the Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah to modernise and improve the functioning of Police Forces of States and Union Territories. This scheme comprises all relevant subschemes that contribute to modernization and improvement," a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) statement said.

According to MHA, under the five-year plan, provision has been made for internal security, law and order, adoption of modern technology by police, assisting states for narcotics control and strengthening the criminal justice system by developing a robust forensic set-up in the country.

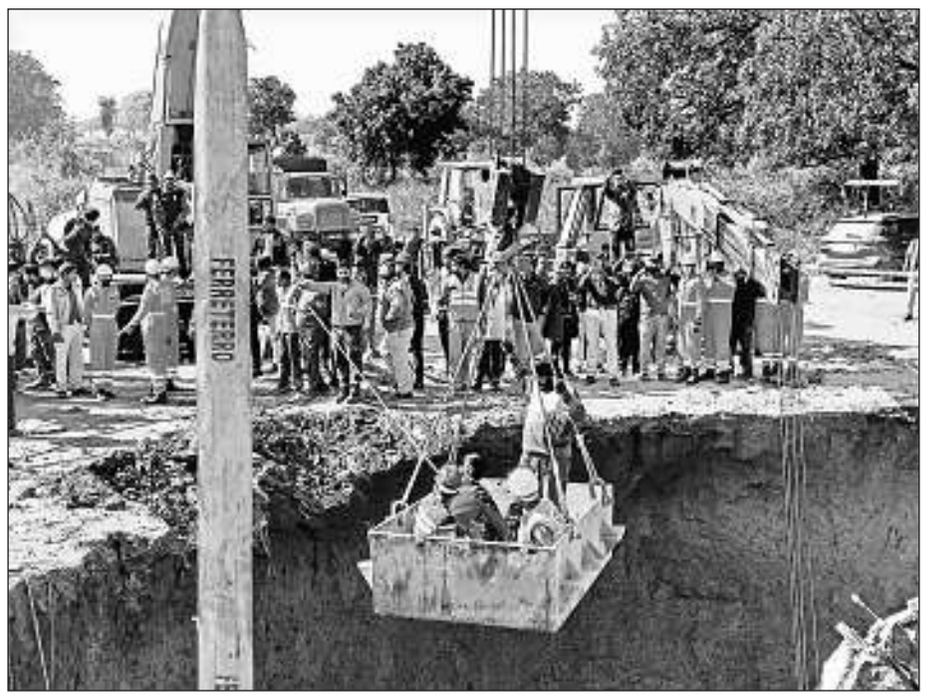
"The scheme for modernization of state police forces has a Central outlay of Rs 4,846 crore," the statement said.

The approval includes central outlay of Rs 2,080 crore "to develop operationally independent and high-quality forensic sciences facilities in States/Union Territories for aiding scientific and timely investigation through modernization of resources".

Incidentally, in the 2022-23 Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the central outlay for "Modernisation of Forensic Capacities" in the coming FY alone is Rs 8,976 crore.

The MHA said a central outlay of Rs 18,839 crore has been earmarked for security related expenditure for the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir, insurgency affected North Eastern States and Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas.

"With the implementation of 'National Policy and Action Plan' for combating LWE, the LWE violence incidents have come down drastically. To further pursue this accomplishment, six LWE-related schemes with Central outlay of Rs.8,689 crore have been approved. These schemes include Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Most LWE Affected Districts & Districts of Concern to consolidate the gains," the statement said.



MP Tunnel Collapse: 2 Still Trapped

NDRF personnel rescue workers after an under-construction tunnel caved in at Sleemanabad in Katni district of Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Nine labourers were trapped when the tunnel collapsed late Saturday night. Seven of them were rescued, but two remain trapped. *PTI*

In driver's seat in coming TN civic polls, DMK braces for bumpy ride in several belts

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, FEBRUARY 13

WITH A week left for the urban local body polls in Tamil Nadu, the ruling DMK seems to be all geared up, aiming to clinch power in most of the civic bodies across the state.

In the run-up to the 19 February polls in 21 corporations, 138 municipalities and 490 town panchayats, the principal Opposition AIADMK seems to be still tottering in the aftermath of its crushing defeat at the hands of the DMK in the May 2021 state Assembly elections. The BJP may be a marginal player in Tamil Nadu politics, but it is going solo in the upcoming polls, fielding candidates in about 43 per cent of the total seats of the poll-bound urban local bodies.

The polls will involve a slew of major municipal corporations including Chennai, Coimbatore, Cuddalore, Nagercoil, Kancheepuram, Madurai, Salem, Tiruchirapalli, Vellore, Sivakasi and Thanjavur across the state.

The local body polls have traditionally favoured the ruling party in Tamil Nadu, and there are barely any signs that this trend might be bucked this time. The DMK, however, appears to be bracing to face stiff challenges in a number of cities, such as Nagercoil, Coimbatore and Salem, even as its entire dispensation, including the ministers, have been campaigning for the DMK candidates across the state.

The polls in Nagercoil, a BJP stronghold, in southern Tamil Nadu could especially be tricky for the DMK, the party feels, as it will face a three-cornered tough fight involving the AIADMK and the BJP here. "AIADMK is weak, they do not have a strong party machinery here. But BJP has been traditionally stronger here. That makes it tough for us, although we hope we will win," said a senior DMK leader campaigning in Nagercoil and other southern belts.

The ruling party is also anticipating a keen contest in the Kongu Nadu region in western Tamil Nadu. When asked whether they were facing a tough battle in western parts, especially in Coimbatore, Tirupur and Salem, a DMK minister said, "It could not be called tough but a strong competition. It is not like Nagercoil, but these three corporations will see strong contests. We are definitely going to make it but there is a challenge."

EXPLAINED E.

Senior DMK leaders, who had been campaigning in western Tamil Nadu for the past three months, also say Coimbatore, Tirupur and Salem corporation polls would be "highly competitive" as they have higher stakes for both the AIADMK and the BJP. Salem is home turf of former chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, while AIADMK veteran S P Velumani, who was dubbed "CM of Coimbatore" during the previous AIADMK government, is from Coimbatore city.

While the DMK leadership hopes to scalp more than 70 per cent of the seats involved in the upcoming civic polls, the BJP hopes to make a mark in the polls by winning some of their strongholds including Nagercoil. The AIADMK leaders are not hazarding any such guesses.

"Isn't it natural that DMK will make maximum use of their being in power to win maximum seats. As a party, we are fighting with DMK, and we also see these polls as an opportunity for reviving our political campaign at the grassroots level," said a senior AIADMK leader, who has been actively engaged in northern districts.

Since its Assembly polls debacle last year, the AIADMK has lost its two key allies — S Ramadoss's Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), which has a significant base among the OBC voters in northern and western parts of Tamil Nadu, and the BJP. The party also suffered a split with the ouster of late J Jayalalithaa's close aide V K Sasikala and her nephew TTV Dhinakaran.

Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) has put up candidates in a few places, but he is not campaigning for the party candidates himself. Sasikala has also confined herself to her T Nagar residence in Chennai. "There is support and guidance from the top for all AMMK candidates," said a source close to Dhinakaran. On Dhinakaran's absence from campaigning, the source said, "Maybe because our winning chances are less."

When asked about Sasikala's role in this election, the AMMK leader said, "We have no clue," even as he admitted that the AMMK's rebel movement and Sasikala's clout have ebbed away faster than they had expected as there had not been any significant political move from the latter after her release from prison in early 2021. "We all rallied behind Dhinakaran hoping for her return from prison. But it wasn't the one we expected. It's now also a (political) career crisis for many who stood with Dhinakaran," the leader said.

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

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

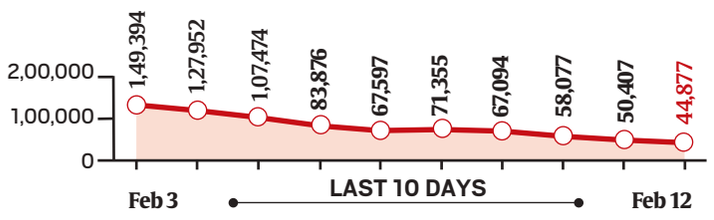
DASHBOARD, AS ON FEB 12

713 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN

New cases	Active cases	Deaths
44,877	5,37,045	684

Weekly CFR: 0.36% | Overall CFR: 1.24% | Total deaths: 5,08,665

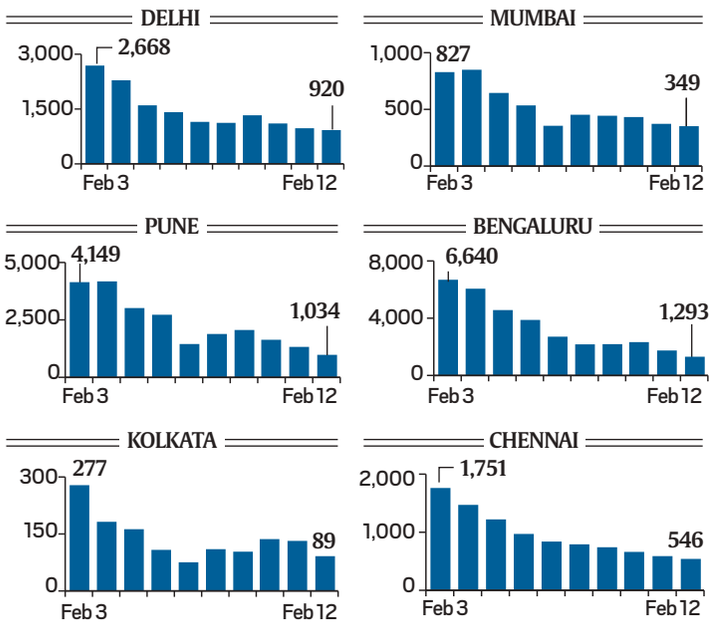
NEW CASES, DAILY



SURGE IN THE STATES

State	ON FEBRUARY 12			Weekly positivity
	New cases	Active cases	Deaths	
Kerala	15184	1,82,118	427	25.96%
Maharashtra	4359	52238	37	5.09%
Karnataka	3202	38781	38	4.65%
Tamil Nadu	2812	47643	17	3.69%
Rajasthan	2606	23404	8	8.12%

CASES IN THE CITIES, LAST 10 DAYS

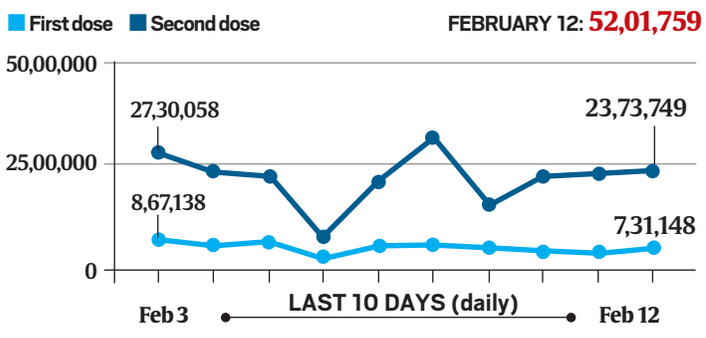


TOTAL TESTS 75,07,35,858

TESTS ON FEB 12	WEEKLY POSITIVITY	OVERALL POSITIVITY
14,15,279	4.20%	5.68%

INDIA TOTAL DOSES 172,81,49,447

(Adults 1st dose: 90,43,49,642; 2nd: 73,97,43,747; 15-18 age group 1st dose: 5,20,32,858; 2nd: 1,47,92,245; precautionary: 1,72,30,955)





EXPLAINED | LAW & JUSTICE

Issues in uniform civil code

The Uttarakhand CM has promised a uniform civil code for the state if BJP is voted back to power. A look at what the Constitution says about UCC, previous attempts to reform personal laws, and the way forward.

EXPERT EXPLAINS



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

From The Indian Express panel of specialists, exclusive insight



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami on campaign. He has said an expert panel will be set up to draft a UCC if his party is voted to power. *Pushkar Singh Dhami/Twitter*

ON THE last day of campaigning for the Assembly polls, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami promised that the BJP, if re-elected, would enact a uniform civil code (UCC) for the state.

Many appear to believe that a UCC would remove all inequalities in one stroke and create a gender-just society. But it is important to understand that "formal equality" cannot bring about a radical change; what society needs is "substantive equality".

Dhami has promised to set up a committee for preparing a draft UCC. But the promise of a UCC is not part of the 60-page BJP manifesto for Uttarakhand. The BJP manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections had stressed there cannot be gender equality without a UCC, and promised a UCC would be drafted drawing from the best traditions and harmonised them with modern times. This implies that the UCC would include the best provisions of all personal laws.

Hindu Code Bill

The Hindu Code Bill Committee was constituted in 1941 but it took 14 years to pass the legislation — and not as one uniform Act but as three different ones: Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; Hindu Succession Act, 1956; and Hindu Adoption & Maintenance Act, 1956.

Moreover, not all reforms could be incorporated because of opposition from the Hindu right. Even Congress leaders such as Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, M A Ayyangar, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Kailash Nath Katju opposed such reforms. In the debate on the Hindu Code Bill in 1949, 23 of the 28 speakers opposed it.

In 1949, the Hindu right formed an All-India Anti Hindu Code Bill Committee under the leadership of Swami Karpatriji Maharaj, who justified unregulated polygamy. Geeta Press's *Kalyan* magazine published a number of articles that favoured polygamy, opposed the daughter's right to inheritance and questioned the Constituent Assembly's right to legislate on religious matters.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee, later founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, said in Parliament that instead of the Hindu Code Bill, the government should bring a UCC. While there was substance in this argument, reforming the majority community's laws is easier than reforming those of the minorities. Several Muslim countries, including Pakistan, have been able to reform Muslim laws but not the laws of their minority communities.

Dr B R Ambedkar had to resign as Law Minister. On September15, 1951, President Dr Rajendra Prasad threatened to return the Bill or veto it. PM Jawaharlal Nehru yielded; the Bill was not passed. When eventually passed after several years, it did not give daughters a share in a Hindu joint family's property. This amendment came in 2005, during the UPA regime.

Reading Article 44

Article 44 of the Constitution says the state shall endeavour to secure for citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India. The definition of 'State', as given in Article 12, includes the government and Parliament of India and the government and the legislature of each of the states and all local or other authorities within the territory of India or under the control of the Government of India. If state means state government or local or other authorities, does it mean states or local authorities can make a uniform civil code for the whole of India? It would be ridiculous to say the Uttarakhand Assembly or Dehra Dun Municipal Corporation could make a UCC for the entire country.

The Constitution's framers used the term "uniform" in Article 44 and not "common", because "common" means "one and the same in all circumstances", while "uniform" means "the same in similar conditions". Different people may have different laws, but the law within a particular group should be uniform. Such a classification is permissible even under the right to equality under Article 14.

"Civil" means matters where personal rights (not public rights) are in question —such as a contract, or sale and purchase of goods/services or properties.

Even "code" does not necessarily mean one single law in every circumstance. It may mean either one enactment such as Indian Penal Code, or the Hindu Code Bill that includes three different Acts.

While Article 44 uses the phrase "state shall endeavour", other Articles in the 'Directive Principles' chapter use expressions such as "in particular strive"; "shall take steps"; "shall promote with special care"; "shall in particular direct its policy"; "shall regard its primary duty"; "shall be obligation of the state" etc. All of these mean that the duty of the court is far greater in other directive principles than in Article 44. While Article 43 mentions that the "state shall endeavour by suitable legislation", the phrase "by suitable legislation" is absent in Article 44, which indicates that the framers did not intend enactment of uniform civil code by a single legislation.

THE EXPERT

FAIZAN MUSTAFA, currently Vice Chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, is one of India's most eminent expert on constitutional law, criminal law, human rights and personal laws.

Diversity in personal law

It is erroneous to assume that India has different personal laws because of religious diversity. As a matter of fact, the law differs from state to state. Under the Constitution, the power to legislate in respect of personal laws rests with both Parliament and state Assemblies. Preservation of legal diversity seems to be the reason for inclusion of personal law in the Concurrent List (entry No. 5). Had uniformity of laws been the primary concern, personal laws would have been included in the Union List with Parliament having the exclusive jurisdiction to enact laws on these subjects. Bringing amendments to central personal laws with enactments such as the Hindu Marriage Act is possible under entry No. 5, but this power cannot be stretched to include enactment of a uniform civil code for the whole of India. Once a legislative field is occupied by parliamentary legislation, states do not have much freedom to enact laws. Such laws would require Presidential assent under Article 254.

It is also a myth that Hindus are governed by one uniform law. Marriage among close relatives is prohibited in the north but considered auspicious in the south. Lack of uniformity in personal laws is also true of Muslims and Christians. The Constitution itself protects local customs of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

As an example, take Goa, often cited as a state that already has a UCC. But Hindus of Goa are still governed by the Portuguese Family and Succession Laws. The reformed Hindu Law of 1955-56 is not applicable to them, and unreformed Shastric Hindu law on marriage, divorce, adoption and joint family remains valid. The Shariat Act of 1937 is yet to be extended to Goa, and the state's Muslims are governed by Portuguese law as well as Shastric Hindu law but not by Muslim Personal Law. Even the Special Marriage Act, a sort of progressive civil code, has not yet been extended there.

While the Uttarakhand CM favours a UCC to ensure equality, reforms in Hindu law have not completely removed gender discrimination. The amount of land actually inherited by Hindu women is a small fraction of what they are entitled to under reformed Hindu law. Even when they inherit land, it is invariably much less than an equal share. The power of will is used to give the entire property to sons.

The way forward

If the Uttarakhand government returns to power, one way forward could be to constitute a Muslim Law Reforms Committee, Tribal and Indigenous Law Reform Committee, Christian & Parsi Law Reforms Committees, just like the Hindu Law Reforms Committee formed in 1941. Based on their recommendations, it could take the reforms process forward.

The state would also need a Hindu Law Committee, as some of the existing provisions of codified Hindu law — such as solemnisation of marriage, *satpati*, *kanyadaan*, joint family and tax benefits, absolute testamentary powers etc — may not find a place in the UCC, and provisions like dower or *nikahnama* (prenuptial contract) are to be incorporated in UCC as per BJP's 2019 manifesto. Are Hindus of Uttarakhand, who are 83% of the population, ready for these reforms?

The goal of a UCC should ideally be reached in piecemeal manner, like the recent amendment on the age of marriage. A just code is far more important than a uniform code.

Function & significance of ISRO's EOS-04 satellite

AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, FEBRUARY 13

AFTER JUST one successful launch in 2021, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is getting back to business on Monday with EOS-04, an earth observation satellite. This is first of 19 launches planned in 2022, ISRO's busiest year ever, including Chandrayaan-3 and the uncrewed Gaganyaan mission. Amid the pandemic, ISRO has conducted just three launches in the last two years.

The showpiece: EOS-04

EOS-04 is the fourth in a series of earth observation satellites being launched under a new generic name. Earlier series of earth observation satellites — Cartosat, Oceansat, Resourcesat, GISAT, Scatsat, and a few others — have all now become part of the new EOS series. Land and forest mapping and monitoring, mapping of resources like water or minerals or fishes, weather and climate observations, soil assessment, and geospatial contour mapping are done through these satellites.



PSLV C5-2, carrying EOS-04 and two other satellites, set for lauch from Sriharikota on Monday. PTI

EOS-01 was launched in November 2020. EOS-02, a micro-satellite, is yet to be launched. The launch of EOS-03 failed last August.

Like EOS-01, the 1,710-kg EOS-04, which will be placed in a sun synchronous polar orbit of 529 km, is a radar-imaging satellite. It will replace RISAT-1, launched in 2012 but now non-functional. RISATs use synthetic aperture radars to produce high-resolution images of the land. Radar imaging is unaffected by weather, cloud or fog, or the lack of sunlight, and can produce high-quality images in all conditions and at all times.

ISRO said EOS-04 was designed to provide high-quality images for applications such as agriculture, forestry and plantations, flood mapping, soil moisture and hydrology.

The smaller satellites

Two small satellites — INSPIREsat-1 and INS-2TD — will be launched with EOS-4 on the same rocket.

INSPIREsat-1 is a student satellite developed by the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram in collaboration with the University of Colorado where it was assembled and tested. Students from Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and National Central University of Taiwan have also contributed. The satellite will study the dynamics of the upper atmosphere and carries an X-ray spectrometer for studying solar flares.

INS-2TD is a technology demonstrator for the first India-Bhutan joint satellite scheduled to be launched next month. The two countries had signed a space agreement last year, and its first outcome would be the launch of BhutanSat, or INS-2B, on a PSLV rocket in March. The INS-2TD that will fly on Monday has a thermal imaging camera meant for earth observation, including assessment of land and water surface temperature, and identification of forest and tree cover.

Hippocrates, Charaka, and the universal principles of medical ethics

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M & MONOJIT MAJUMDAR
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

THE NATIONAL Medical Commission (NMC), the regulator for medical education and practices that replaced the Medical Council of India in 2020, has suggested to medical colleges that the traditional Hippocratic Oath should be replaced by a "Charak Shapath".

The minutes of NMC's meeting with medical colleges on February 7 record, "No Hippocratic Oath. During white coat ceremony (with parents) the oath will be 'Maharishi Charak Shapath' present in NMC website".

The Congress has criticised the proposal as an attempt to "saffronise medical education".

Hippocrates and Oath

The Hippocratic Oath is attributed to Hippocrates of Kos, a Greek physician of the classical period (4th-5th centuries BC) broadly corresponding to the period from the death of the Buddha (486 BC) to the rise of the Mauryas (321 BC) in India.

The *Corpus Hippocraticum* is a collection of 70 books on medicine; however, most scholars agree that the Hippocratic Oath — a charter of ethical principles that physicians over the ages have sworn to uphold in the practice of their profession — was probably not the work of the individual identified as the historical Hippocrates, the "father of modern medicine".

Two translations of the pagan oath from the Greek original are usually quoted — by WHS Jones (*The Doctor's Oath*: 1924) and Ludwig Edelstein (*The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation*: 1943). Among other things, the oath states:

"I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but I will never use it to injure or wrong them; I will not give poison to anyone though asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a plan...; Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will do so to help the sick, keeping myself free from all intentional wrongdoing and harm, especially from fornication with woman or man, bond or free; ...Whatsoever in the course of practice I see or hear...that ought never to be published abroad, I will not divulge, but consider such things to be holy secrets." (Jones, extracts: *BMJ*, 1998)

Multiple versions

There is no universally accepted version of the physician's oath. Modern codes of medical ethics such as those adopted by the American Medical Association (AMA) and British Medical Association (BMA) are broadly rooted in the Hippocratic Oath, but also draw from other sources.

The AMA's Code was adopted in 1847, and underwent updates in 1903, 1949, 1957, and 2008. The World Medical Association (WMA) adopted an international code of medical ethics in 1949, which was amended in 1968, 1983, 2006, and 2017. In May last year, the WMA published a proposed modernised version of the international code, "outlining physicians' duties towards their patients, other physicians, health professionals and society as a whole".

According to the WMA, some of the duties of physicians in general are to exercise independent professional judgment and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct; respect a competent patient's right to accept or refuse treatment; not allow their judgment to be influenced by personal profit or unfair discrimination; and be dedicated to providing competent medical service in full professional and moral independence, with compassion and respect for human dignity.

Ethics of Charaka

The *Charak Samhita* is a medical pharmacopoeia and collection of commentaries and discussions on medical practices that is dated to the 1st-2nd centuries AD.

Along with the compendium of Susruta (c. 4th century AD), which is about surgery, the *Charak Samhita* is considered the foundational text of ancient Indian medicine, which was an evolved system of understanding and treating disease that resembled that of Hippocrates and Galen (2nd century AD), but was in many ways ahead of the Greeks.

The physician was an important and respected member of ancient Indian society, and medical practice followed rules of professional conduct and ethical principles. The Indologist A L Basham (*The Wonder That Was India*, 1954) quotes from a part of the sermon in the *Charak Samhita*:

"...You must strive with all your soul for the health of the sick. You must not betray your patients, even at the cost of your own life... You must not get drunk, or commit evil, or have evil companions... You must be pleasant of speech...and thoughtful, always striving to improve your knowledge.

"When you go to the home of a patient you should direct your words, mind, intellect, and senses nowhere but to your patient and his treatment... Nothing that happens in the house of the sick man must be told outside, nor must the patient's condition be told to anyone who might do harm by that knowledge to the patient or to another."

Physician's oath in India

No single version of the Hippocratic Oath is in use in medical colleges in India, which have adopted their own versions of the physician's oath.

Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) uses the 2017 version of the WMA's international code of medical ethics. A similar oath is administered at St John's Medical College in Bengaluru, but graduates invoke God: "I swear in the presence of God, in the presence of my family, my teachers, and my colleagues that according to my ability and judgment I will honour this Oath and Stipulation."

Graduates at the country's premier health institute, AIIMS, have been taking the Charak Oath at the annual convocation for the past several years. "Not for the self, not for the fulfillment of any worldly material desire or gain, but solely for the good of suffering humanity, I will treat my patient and excel well," reads the AIIMS oath.

SURESH RAINA, FORMER INDIAN CRICKETER

'Players wonder about others' IPL valuations, but performance is key'

Suresh Raina on IPL auctions, the middle-order woes of the Indian cricket team, pressures faced by young players of today and spending over a decade in Indian cricket. This session was moderated by Sriram Veera, Deputy Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*

IDEA eXCHANGE

WHY SURESH RAINA

With a big IPL auction having just concluded, one of the biggest T20 players, Suresh Raina, is best suited to advise youngsters about the importance of managing money and the changes in Indian cricket over the years



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

Sandeep Dwivedi: When the IPL auction came in, how did it change relationships or the dressing room atmosphere? Did some players start feeling superior?

It used to happen earlier. But if you look at the owners today, they are smart — they have their own teams with their own data. They know that one year you could get Rs 15 crore and the next year you might get no money. You have to perform in the IPL. There are instances where players don't perform for one game and don't get to play the rest of the season. So many young players were bought for a large sum in one season but disappeared the next. Some got injured, some put their money on cars or to look glamorous.

On some level, yes, I'm sure players wonder about other players' valuations. But if you keep performing, money is rarely the issue. Image, on the other hand, matters a lot. If you play well for your country and in the IPL, owners will directly let you know what targets to achieve year by year. After 13-14 years, when your brand is developed, you don't need to be told anything. You know what your legacy is, what your process is, and how the franchise needs to move forward.

The new U-19 World Cup players will also be a part of the auction. In my experience, it's important to stay grounded and that money will come and more will keep coming but how to invest it, knowing that you have a 15-year earning cycle, is important.

I remember when I got my first big pay cheque, since I have a big family, I got houses for my brothers and sister. It was only after my marriage — having a wife and kids — that I started understanding things better. Until 2015, my father used to handle my investments. We were from a middle-class family. Back in the day, you would get Rs 50,000 for playing a match for India. Regular players used to make money but if you didn't play for the national team, you didn't earn much money. I used to get a Rs 10,000 scholarship playing for Air India and that was a very important pay cheque for me because I could send that money home. I had two major injuries. After the first injury, I didn't have much money. But after the second injury I had money, so I could see better doctors, better dieticians and got better advice in general.

Devendra Pandey: You have been a part of two generations of Indian cricket — the Rahul, Sachin and Laxman era and then the Virat era. I'm sure the dressing room environment and conversations would have changed too.

Rahul *bhai, dada* (Sourav Ganguly) *aur* Paaji (Sachin Tendulkar) *ke* time *pe* Kishore Kumar *ke gaane sunte they*. The new generation loves to listen to rap songs. I remember while playing, during a match, Rahul *bhai* used to ask me how my family was and whether I'd study further after a tour. Then I'd stand at slip and the next ball, the conversation would continue to the subjects I was studying and where I had gone to eat last night. Anil (Kumble) *bhai*'s timing for jokes was excellent and Bhajji (Harbhajan Singh), we all know, is such a team man.

Rahul *bhai* always used to say, 'UP *ke ladke bahut ache hain*' (UP boys are very good) and always asked me whether I was investing my money wisely. Viru *bhai* always used to give me good advice and told me to hire someone for wealth management.

> Rahul *bhai, dada aur* Paaji *ke time pe* Kishore Kumar *ke gaane sunte they*. The new generation loves rap songs... I preferred the way of communication in my earlier stint with the team

When in 2018 I made my comeback to the team, Dhoni *bhai*, Virat and I used to stick around talking. Rohit and I used to go watch football matches at the 2018 World Cup in England. I preferred the way of communication in my earlier stint with the Indian team. Back in those days, our seniors were our coaches.

Devendra Pandey: Apart from Dhoni, who were your cricket friends you would turn to for help?

I think, definitely, Yuvi *bhai*, Bhajji *pa*, Rahul *bhai* and Virender Sehwag. Ashish Nehra really helped me when I had my second operation; he gave me the number of a doctor in London. Ashu *bhai* was by my side during that phase. Then Aakash Chopra referred me to a doctor in Delhi during my first operation. On some level, the seniors used to communicate really well when there were problems. When you have money, you can charter a flight and use your celebrity status to get the best doctors. But when I didn't have money, they used to communicate with me accordingly.

Sandip G: You made your debut in 2005 and played ODIs until 2018. How did Indian cricket change in those 13 years?

Youngsters now have different kinds of pressure. After two-three series they find themselves under a lot of pressure. Back then, a coach had long-term vision for the team. Selectors used to trust the players; that you would be given five-ten matches. You knew that your captain would give you the time to groom when you were with the squad in two-three tours but not playing. That was a learning curve. You got an idea about the process and the amount of hard work you needed to put in to break into the playing eleven.

Now, there are different leagues around the world. Earlier, there was a lot of emphasis on the Ranji Trophy. We used to play a lot of first-class cricket. You didn't need to report your gym fitness to the selectors. You had to perform for India A or Duleep Trophy or Irani Trophy or the Ranji Trophy to earn the India call-up. And there you had to score heaps of runs. That's missing now.

As regards to marketing, cricket, its digital marketing, has gone to a different level altogether. Players now have their own managers. But it's important to stay grounded. Today's generation has social media pressures, which are different from what the previous generation faced.

Sriram Veera: You had your own challenges in your formative years, as a boy of 12-13 you lived in a sports hostel in UP and faced bullying.

It was difficult. There shouldn't be such ragging anywhere and I was very young then. I was around 13 years old; we had to play cricket, study, sort our food, prepare the ground etc. I learned to live on my own there. It was tough, but I guess I learnt mental toughness. In UP, there are different dialects, different people, culture, and it took me a while. I did leave it and went back home, but I came back and I was much better then on.

I remember a student even tried to commit suicide. He was from Bulandshahr and we were living on the third floor. He was about to do something strange (jump off) and we pulled him back. He had had enough of being ragged. We went to the principal and we had security prowling, and things got better from then on. It was also a learning experience that when you are going through difficult times, it's important to communicate — to seniors, big brother, father, anyone close to you — that you have depression or anxiety or whatever the issue is. I guess I was going through some of that and we managed to stop him. But in ten days time, he went back home and never came back. It does get difficult in hostels, where people come from different places, different backgrounds, cultures, and are living away from their families. There was a PCO outside, but you can't go out after 8 pm. You stand in a queue, reach for a phone, hope your mother is still waiting by the phone (in the neighbour's house). Else, call back, which means get into the queue again. My father's income was Rs 10,000, and the academy was also not cheap… so we had to learn to adjust. It toughened me mentally.

Sriram Veera: You talk about the need to get along with different cultures; we saw recently Mohammed Shami was targeted for his religion after a match in the T20 world cup. Virat Kohli had to tweet that don't target religion.

It feels very bad. It should never happen. Recently Bhajji *pa* (Harbhajan Singh) gave an interview. When the Monkeygate happened in Australia, he was also attacked over his religion. Any abuse is wrong. You know how it is on social media these days. One hashtag can spread like wildfire. When you face abuse over your religion, you need to tell them that it's not right and you need to respect my religion and country.

> [At the sports hostel] a student even tried to commit suicide. He had had enough of being ragged. In difficult times, it's important to communicate that you have anxiety

Mihir Vasavda: Can IPL captaincy prepare a player to lead India? Is that sufficient?

You'll definitely gain experience. But leading a Ranji Trophy team or leading India A can prepare you for the role of pressure in the India jersey. IPL is a different culture, it helps but it's one and a half months. But a state captain for Ranji or Duleep or India A or T20 Championship runs for six months. That gives you an idea of the captaincy method and format. IPL is two months long, it has different voices — the coaches, the owners. So I don't think you can tell a captain's credentials from the IPL. The pressure of leading India, with one lakh people inside the ground and the whole world watching, is the true test of how a captain will handle responsibility.

Nitin Sharma: Now India's middle order is struggling and they don't quite have the wicket-taking abilities. How do you see these problems?

Since the 2015 World Cup or 2017-18, it has been a problem for four-five years now. We'll have to identify players who can play astutely in the middle order. Those who are playing need to get an opportunity to play in a situation where they need to finish for the team. I think Rishabh Pant can perform that role well. Shreyas Iyer is another player who can do it. Suryakumar Yadav too. Somewhere, selectors and coaches will need to show that trust in them. And I'm sure they'll prove themselves. These four-five players, plus Shubman Gill is one of those players who can play well in the middle order. Then there's Rinku Singh from UP, who's done well in domestic cricket.

> Batsmen should practise bowling. When we lost in Champions Trophy (2017) and in Dubai (T20 World Cup), we did not have a sixth bowling option. Now Shreyas Iyer is working on his bowling

Middle order challenge is to play as per the situation. Now there's two new balls. Field is up. So it's not just playing the new ball. You have to rotate the strike. The concern is dot balls that are being played in the middle. Which shouldn't happen. You'll have to rotate strike and trust the partner, and pick the bowler to target and attack, and identify which over to attack. The understanding, as we call it in cricketing language, with non-striker has to get better. These three-four things are important to be a good middle-order batsman.

Sandeep Dwivedi: There would be well-rounded cricketers like you back then, who could not only bat but also bowl four-five overs, get crucial breakthroughs and were also top fielders. Is that lacking a bit these days?

I think this is why we won the 2007 World T20, the 2011 World Cup and the 2013 Champions Trophy. When I started in Ranji, I remember our coach Gyanu *bhai* (Gyanendra Pandey) would always tell us, 'you should bowl.' It gives a captain the ability to get in eight-ten overs if he has a sixth or seventh bowling option, when he is playing only five bowlers. That is good planning. So you see Viru *paa* (Sehwag), Yuvraj Singh, Yusuf Pathan and me, including in the 2011 World Cup, all would bowl. When we lost in the Champions Trophy (2017), or even recently in Dubai (in the T20 World Cup), we did not have a sixth bowling option. Now Shreyas Iyer is working on his bowling, I think he should keep working hard. Rohit will have a good option then. In the South Africa series, recently, Aiden Markram was bowling six-eight overs upfront, and the main bowlers were coming in later. This is a big factor for the Indian team. Suryakumar Yadav can bowl as well. Even Rohit would bowl before his injury. So someone will have to step in, and bowl at least six-eight overs regularly in nets. Batsmen will definitely look to attack a part-timer but that also increases his chance of taking wickets. We haven't seen someone like that since Kedar Jadhav. Hardik is also injured.

That skill should be there (from junior level), definitely. Laxman *bhai* is at NCA, he knows how important it is. Rahul *bhai* knows how Yuvi *paa* and Viru *paa* gave him crucial breakthroughs. Selectors will have to think about it too, you cannot go in with just five bowlers. There are injury concerns, so much cricket is played, and if someone breaks down, you are left with only four bowlers. The same applies to Test cricket too. I have bowled 20 overs (in an innings) in England too. Viru *paa* has also bowled a lot and taken many wickets in Tests. Sachin *paaji* has bowled so much, be it in the World Cup or in the CB Series in Australia or in Sri Lanka, he bowled everywhere. Sourav Ganguly has bowled a lot of overs too. So when the breeze blows at Wankhede in the afternoon, you can bring on part-timers for a few overs to give the main bowlers a rest.

Batsmen should definitely work on their batting but they need to come in early or stay back for half an hour for the nation (to bowl a bit in the nets). They will have to like that process. Once you start liking it, you will not go away without bowling five-six overs.

Sriram Veera: With Rahul Dravid as captain and batting lower down, India started to chase successfully (in ODIs). How was that experience?

Absolutely right. When Rahul Dravid was our captain, we made a world record in terms of winning ODIs while chasing, between 2005 and 2007. We bowled a lot after winning the toss during that period. We used the wet ball for fielding practice. A lot of effort went into (bowling and countering) reverse swing because we used to have just one ball those days, which was replaced after 34 overs. Rahul *bhai* put a lot of emphasis on slip and close-in catching; how to deal with the low bounce on Indian grounds. We used to take 100-150 slip catches during training, be it Tests or ODIs.

He (Dravid) had a clear idea about chasing. Our training sessions, too, lasted for four-five hours. Our training method for white-ball cricket was different. For Test cricket, we used to turn up at the ground at 8 am for training to get accustomed to the early morning dew. Our mindset was different and we benefitted a lot from that kind of preparation.

Tushar Bhaduri: Is it possible to have a fulfilling career playing just T20, white ball cricket, and without playing in Test cricket? Because kids now only want to play white ball cricket. Is it necessary to play Tests?

Whatever the country plays — be it Tests or ODIs, or T20s, all are important. Now white ball is much more. But Tests should be given equal importance because you play Ranji Trophy, you play three-day practice matches. So it becomes important that whichever format you play and represent the country, you keep doing well. I think playing for India itself is a big thing. When the T20 national team is formed, sometimes some bowler shines, then another. Deepak Chahar is such a bowler who did well both in IPL and domestic. And finally he's doing well in T20s and one dayers. So just do well for the country, no matter what format.

Sriram Veera: You are very popular in Tamil Nadu, Chennai, UP. So as the next step, will you join politics?

No, no! Cricket is my sole love. And I'll stick to cricket. It's the sport I know and politics I don't understand much. I want to become a good chef now, cook every cuisine well, and visit every place.



MEANWHILE

ARCTIC SEED VAULT TO GET RARE DEPOSITS

A vault built on an Arctic mountainside to preserve the world's crop seeds from war, disease and other catastrophes will receive new deposits tomorrow, including one from the first organisation that made a withdrawal from the facility. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is only opened a few times a year to limit its seed banks' exposure to the outside world. On Monday, gene banks from many nations will deposit seeds, including millet as back-ups to their own collections.

TOP OF THE WORLD



Frank-Walter Steinmeier. *Reuters*

GERMANY

Steinmeier re-elected as President

Frankfurt: Frank-Walter Steinmeier was elected to a second term as Germany's president on Sunday after a special assembly voted the veteran politician, seen as a symbol of consensus and continuity, back in to the prominent yet largely ceremonial post. Steinmeier's election by secret ballot by a majority of the assembly for another five years was widely expected,amid broad support from most of Germany's major parties during a time of global turmoil and following a recent change of government. In his acceptance speech, Steinmeier criticised Russia's military build-up near Ukraine. "I can only warn (President Vladimir Putin)... Don't underestimate the strength of democracy." **REUTERS**

AFGHANISTAN

Biden's order on frozen funds an atrocity: Karzai

Kabul: Afghanistan's former president on Sunday called a White House order to unfreeze $3.5 billion in Afghan assets held in the US. for families of 9/11 victims an atrocity against the Afghan people. Former President Hamid Karzai at a packed news conference sought the help of Americans, particularly the families of the thousands killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to press President Joe Biden to rescind last week's order. He called it "unjust and unfair," saying Afghans have also been victims of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. **AP**

HAWAII

US, other nations meet to discuss North Korea

Honolulu: United Stated Secretary of State Antony Blinken met his Japanese and South Korean counterparts Saturday in Hawaii to discuss the threat posed by nuclear-armed North Korea after Pyongyang began the year with a series of missile tests. Blinken said after the meeting that North Korea was "in a phase of provocation" and the three countries condemned the recent missile launches. "We are absolutely united in our approach, in our determination," Blinken said after his talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong. **AP**

TENSIONS ESCALATE

US: Russia may cook up pretext to attack Ukraine

DAVID LAWDER & PAVEL POLITYUK
WASHINGTON/KYIV, FEB 13

RUSSIA COULD invade Ukraine at any time and might create a surprise pretext for an attack, the United States said on Sunday, as it reaffirmed a pledge to defend "every inch" of NATO territory.

Russia has over 100,000 troops massed near Ukraine, which is not part of the Atlantic military alliance, and Washington - while keeping open the diplomatic channels that have so far failed to ease the crisis - has repeatedly said an invasion is imminent. Moscow denies any such plans and has accused the West of "hysteria".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, on the eve of a trip that takes him to Kyiv on Monday and Moscow for talks with President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday, called for Russia to de-escalate and warned of sanctions if Moscow did invade..

A German official said Berlin did not expect "concrete results" but diplomacy was important.

In Washington, President Joe Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said an invasion could begin "any day now".

"We cannot perfectly predict the day, but we have now been saying for some time that we are in the window," White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told CNN. US officials said they could not confirm reports that U.S. intelligence indicated Russia planned to invade on Wednesday.

Sullivan said Washington would continue sharing what it learned with the world in order to deny Moscow the chance to stage a surprise "false flag" operation that could be a pretext for an attack.



Service members take part in military exercises held by the armed forces of Russia and Belarus. *Reuters*

It would also "defend every inch of NATO territory ... and Russia we think fully understands that message," Sullivan added in a separate CBS interview.

Biden spoke to his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskiy on Sunday and they agreed on the importance of continuing to pursue diplomacy and deterrence in response to Russia's military build-up, the White House said after the call.

Biden told Putin in a phone call on Saturday that the West would respond decisively to any invasion and such an attack would harm and isolate Moscow.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said on Twitter that Kyiv had so far received almost 1,500 tonnes of ammunition from allies delivered on 17 flights, including about 180 tonnes from the United States.

Sullivan repeated a warning for Americans to leave Ukraine, after the State Department said the US embassy's remaining diplomatic staff would work from the western city of Lviv.

The Kremlin said Putin told Biden during their call on Saturday that Washington had failed to take Russia's main concerns into account, and that it had received no "substantial answer" on key elements of its security demands. Putin wants guarantees from the United States and NATO that include blocking Ukraine's entry into NATO, refraining from missile deployments near Russia's borders and scaling back NATO's military infrastructure in Europe to 1997 levels. **REUTERS**

Pak won't join any camp in global politics, says PM Imran

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 13

PAKISTAN PRIME Minister Imran Khan said on Sunday that his country would not join any camp in global politics as he asserted that Islamabad's strategic direction was to "maintain relations with everyone", amid mounting tensions between the US and Russia over Ukraine and increasing Sino-US rivalry.

"We do not want to be in a position that implies as if we are a part of a certain camp," Prime Minister Khan said while interacting with journalists, former diplomats and representatives of think-tanks in Islamabad.

Khan also rejected the impression that Pakistan was more inclined towards China than any other country, saying the country's strategic direction was to "maintain relations with everyone".

To a question, the prime minister said that he believed that Rawalpindi - the Headquarters of the powerful army, which has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 74 plus years of existence , was also clear about Pakistan's strategic position. It is not for the first time that Khan has said that he would not follow the US and China in case of a new Cold War. **PTI**

UKRAINE LEADER SEEKS PROOF ON NEW INVASION WARNINGS

Moscow: Ukraine's president played down intensified warnings of a possible Russian invasion within days, saying he had yet to see convincing evidence, even as the US warned on Sunday of more Russian troops pressing closer to Ukraine's borders and some airlines canceled or diverted flights there. The Ukrainian leader's repeated statements urging calm among his people grew this weekend to Zelenskyy questioning strident warnings from US officials in recent days that Russia could be planning to invade as soon as midweek. The US picked up intelligence that Russia is looking at Wednesday as a target date, according to a US official familiar with the findings. The official would not say how definitive the intelligence was. **AP**

U.S. BEGINS OSCE STAFF PULLOUT FROM EAST UKRAINE

Donetsk: US staff at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) started to leave the rebel-held city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine on Sunday, a Reuters journalist said, amid fears of a possible Russian invasion. Several armoured cars with the OSCE's logo were loaded with suitcases and seen leaving the mission's headquarters early on Sunday. The OSCE did not respond to a request for comment. The United States and its allies have urged their citizens to leave Ukraine right away to avoid the threat of a Russian invasion, saying an attack could occur at any time. **REUTERS**



Relatives carry the body of Mushtaq Ahmed, 41, in Tulamba, a remote village in the district of Khanewal on Sunday. *AP*

85 HELD FOR LYNCHING MENTALLY ILL

Man stoned to death by mob in Pak for 'dishonouring' Quran

M ZULQERNAIN & SAJJAD HUSSAIN
LAHORE/ISLAMABAD, FEB 13

A MIDDLE-AGED mentally challenged man was stoned to death and his body hung from a tree by a mob for allegedly desecrating a religious book in a remote village in Pakistan's Punjab province, police said on Sunday, another gruesome incident that has sparked nationwide outrage.

The incident took place in Jungle Derawala village in Khanewal district, situated 275-km from Lahore, on Saturday evening, where local people gathered after their Maghrib (evening) prayers, following announcements that a man had torn pages of the Holy Quran and had set them on fire.

Though a police force was deployed in the village before the incident, the mob outnumbered them. The mob seized the victim from the SHO's custody and tied him to a tree, after which he was lynched to death, eyewitnesses said.

The victim claimed innocence but the villagers hit him with bricks until he died, they said.

Over 300 men had gathered at Masjid Shahmuqeem Muaza in Jungle Derawala village, where they tied a middle-aged man with a rope before stoning him to death. Later, they hung his body from a tree, police officer Muhammad Amin said.

He said two policemen, who tried to bring the body down from the tree, were injured when mob began throwing stones at them.

According to *BBC Urdu* service, the victim was identified as Mushtaq Ahmed, a resident of Bara Chak village. The villagers said that the victim was mentally challenged.

An FIR has been registered against 300 people. Of them, 85, including 15 prime suspects, have been arrested so far and raids are being conducted to nab the remaining culprits, Punjab police said.

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday expressed anguish over the incident and said the culprits involved in the lynching will be "dealt with (the) full severity of the law" along with police officials who "failed in their duty". **PTI**

Chief Justice of Nepal faces impeachment motion

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, FEBRUARY 13

CHOLENDRA SHUMSHER RANA became the second Chief Justice of Nepal to face "impeachment" procedure in Parliament in seven years over allegations of corruption. Based on earlier precedence, CJ Rana has been "suspended" pending final disposal of the case, and Dipak Karki, the senior most judge in the Supreme Court has taken over as the acting CJ.

The sudden development followed a swift and secret operation where signatures of 98 Members of Parliament belonging to Nepali Congress, Unified Socialists and Maoist Centre were collected and submitted in the Parliament secretariat in the morning.

The country's main opposition party, Nepal Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist, has called for a party meeting on Monday where it is likely to decide the list of judges it wants "impeached".

Rana, however, had not anticipated the sudden signature drive against him . "We thought the strike was affecting the image of the Supreme Court and the best course to take would be moving an impeachment motion," LawMinister Dilendra Badu said.

PEGASUS ROW

Lawyers in Netanyahu trial say no illegal phone taps found

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM, FEBRUARY 13

PROSECUTORS IN the high-profile corruption case against former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that police have found no unlawful use of phone surveillance technology against witnesses in the trial.

The state attorney's response to the court came a week after an Israeli newspaper report alleged that police used spyware to hack the phones of numerous former ministry directors, mayors, and protest leaders. Among the alleged targets were a key state witness in the trial against Netanyahu and some of the former prime minister's close aides.

The prosecutor's office told the Jerusalem District Court that police officials who looked into the matter did not find any cases of surveillance without a court order in the three corruption cases involving Netanyahu.

It asked the court for additional time for a probe conducted by the attorney general's office to investigate the allegations more comprehensively before responding.



NSO has denied wrongdoing amid reports of privacy violations by government clients using Pegasus. *Reuters*

Israeli business newspaper *Calcalist* first reported that police had illegally used Israel's NSO Group's spyware Pegasus, prompting a high-level investigation and halting the opposition leader's corruption trial.

Netanyahu is on trial for alleged fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate cases. The witness whose phone was reportedly hacked, Shlomo Filber, was set to testify last week when the story broke. The court canceled hearings in the trial last week to allow prosecutors time to respond to claims about the alleged hacking of Netanyahu's associates' phones.

Protesters who remained at US-Canada bridge arrested

THE NEW YORK TIMES
FEBRUARY 13

THE CANADIAN police in Windsor, Ontario, began making arrests on Sunday morning near the Ambassador Bridge, clearing a roadway to a vital border crossing to the US and one of the most visible sites of an anti-government protest movement that has roiled Canada for weeks.

For the moment, the bridge remained closed, but the authorities suggested that might soon change.

"Today, our national economic crisis at the Ambassador bridge came to an end," the mayor of Windsor, Drew Dilkens, said on Sunday. "Border crossings will reopen when it is safe to do so and I defer to police and border agencies to make that determination.

Earlier in the day, hundreds of uniformed police officers approached the protesters, some of whom had left their vehicles parked at intersections leading to the bridge. A phalanx of police officers warned the protesters they would be charged with criminal mischief, before closing in the small crowd and making arrests. A tow truck was used to removed a pair of parked pickup trucks blocking the approach to the bridge.

"There will be zero tolerance for illegal activity," the Windsor Police warned in a statement.



A protester was arrested as police remove truckers and supporters after a court injunction in Windsor. *AP*

The authorities also urged members of the public to avoid the area — but at least some appeared to have other ideas. On Sunday, a Facebook group supporting the protesters issued "urgent announcements" calling on people to make their way to the bridge.

In a meeting on Saturday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "stressed that border crossings cannot, and will not, remain closed, and that all options remain on the table," as per a government statement.

Mayor Dilkens, too, said Sunday that some lines could not be crossed. "Canada is nation that believes in the right to freedom of speech and expression," he said, "but we are also bound by the rule of law."

FRENCH PROTEST CONVOY DEFIES STAY-AWAY ORDER

Paris: A convoy protesting Covid-19 restrictions breached police defences and drove into central Paris on Saturday, snarling traffic around the Arc de Triomphe and on the Champs Elysees, as police fired tear gas at demonstrators. Protesters in cars, campervans and tractors had converged on Paris from Lille, Perpignan, Nice and other cities late on Friday, despite warnings from Paris authorities that they would be barred from entering the capital. Police said that they had arrested 54 people, handed out 337 fines by and stopped 500 vehicles trying to get into Paris in the morning. **REUTERS**

VALENTINE'S CURBS

Pakistan college asks students to wear hijab, prayer caps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, FEBRUARY 13

A MEDICAL college in Pakistan's national capital has issued Valentine's Day guidelines to its students, asking girls to wear hijab and boys to wear white prayer caps while maintaining a distance of two metres from the opposite sex at all times, according to a media report.

On Saturday, Islamabad International Medical College issued a circular forbidding students from participating in Valentine's Day celebrations and associated "activities which lead the youth towards the wrong path," *the Friday Times* newspaper reported.

"All female students should be seen with properly-covered heads, necks and chests with a hijab according to the university dress code. All male students are strictly ordered to wear white prayer caps," the circular said.

It also warned that members of the college staff would be patrolling the campus to catch students violating these guidelines. Those violating these rules, would be fined PKR 5,000, the report said, quoting the college circular.

Hugo Torres, Nicaragua ex-rebel leader whom Ortega jailed, dies at 73

Mexcio City: A former Sandinista guerrilla leader who once led a raid that helped free then rebel and now President Daniel Ortega from prison has died, his family announced Saturday, eight months after Ortega's government arrested him and dozens of other Nicaraguan opposition leaders.

Hugo Torres died at age 73, relatives said. Torres was the first of a large group of opposition leaders rounded up in a 2021 crackdown to die. It was unclear if his death was hastened by conditions in prison. He died at a hospital in Managua, the capital, "of illnesses he had," according to a statement by government prosecutors.



Hugo Torres

Torres was a leading commander of the 1970s Sandinista revolution who broke with Ortega more than 20 years ago to found the Sandinista Renovation Movement.

Torres was one of 46 opposition figures and presidential hopefuls jailed by Ortega in May and June, to clear the way for his almost unopposed re-election on Nov. 7. Three of his children issued a statement announcing their father's death. They did not give a cause, and said that, there would no public funeral or ceremony. **AP**

VICTIM'S MOTHER ENDED A PRAYER WITH A PLEA 'PLEASE HELP PENNSYLVANIA POLICE FIND MAN WHO HURT MY GIRL'

After nearly 58 years, Pennsylvania police solve killing of 9-yr-old

AMANDA HOLPUCH
FEBRUARY 13

ON MARCH 18, 1964, Marise Ann Chiverella left for school, carrying canned goods to give to her teacher, a nun at St. Joseph's Parochial School in Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

Marise, 9, who aspired to be a nun, hurried from her home to bring the gifts to her classroom and still get to morning Mass on time.

For members of her family, those were the last memories they had of Marise, who was found that afternoon in a pit used for refuse. She had been sexually assaulted and killed.

Nearly 58 years later, the Pennsylvania State Police have identified the man they say was responsible for her death.



Marise Ann Chiverella in 1964. *NYT*

Lt. Devon M. Brutosky said at a news conference Thursday that investigators used DNA tests and genealogical research to identify James Paul Forte, who was then 22, as the person who killed Marise. He lived six or seven blocks from Marise, police said, but they did not know of any connection he had to her or her family.

Officials said Forte was 38 when he died of natural causes, possibly a heart attack, in 1980. He was still living in Hazleton.

Police tied Forte to Marise's case with the aid of DNA testing and research by a teenage genealogist who approached police in 2020 and volunteered to help.

Eric Schubert, the teenager, said he had helped in other cold cases and spotted Marise's story while looking for something new to work on. Schubert, now 20 and a student studying history at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, identified possible relatives using an earlier DNA match made in the case.

In 2007, investigators created a DNA profile of the suspect using bodily fluids found on Marise's jacket. In 2019, Parabon NanoLabs, a DNA technology company, helped police upload the DNA profile to a genealogical database, leading to a match with a distant relative of the suspect.

Schubert was able to build out a family tree from that match. Investigators interviewed some family members and took voluntary DNA samples, which narrowed the list of potential suspects to four.

On Jan. 6, they exhumed Forte's body to get a DNA sample and Feb. 3, they received test results that confirmed the match.

At the news conference, Marise's eldest brother, Ronald Chiverella, thanked investigators, who he said had been in continuous contact with the family since 1964. Chiverella said his mother said grace before meals on Sundays and holidays and would acknowledge the unsolved case.

"She would always end it with a prayer asking Jesus, the blessed mother, 'Please help the Pennsylvania State Police find the man that hurt my daughter,'" Chiverella said. At one point, years later, Chiverella said his mother told each of the surviving siblings that she had forgiven whoever had killed Marise. **NYT**

MARKET WATCH

9 OF TOP-10 COS SEE FALL IN M-CAP

New Delhi: Nine of the 10 most valued companies together lost ₹1,03,532.08 crore in market capitalisation (m-cap) last week, with TCS emerging as the worst loser with ₹44,037.2 crore. RIL was the only gainer in the top-10 pack, with ₹30,474.79 crore rise in m-cap. **PTI**

MEITY IN TALKS WITH LABOUR MINISTRY FOR ON-SITE STAFF HOUSING PLAN

Nod to at least one global chipmaker by Mar 31; 2024 target for first fab unit

AASHISH ARYAN
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

THE MINISTRY of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is likely to target 2024 for the formal opening of the country's first semiconductor fabrication unit, senior government officials said.

The ministry plans to approve the application of at least one big global semiconductor fabrication company before March 31 and give the winning bidder 700-750 days to complete the construction of the new unit.

An official said apart from the main factory unit, a plan for on-site housing of all employees may also be approved.

"We have actively engaged with all the leading companies over the last two months. We reached out to Apple and other big companies such as Samsung to understand how they operate their mega-factories across the world. We will be bringing those learnings to India," one of the official said, asking not to be named.

Senior officials from the MeitY have, over the last few weeks, also met officials from the Labour Ministry to understand and finalise the change in regulations needed to approve factories where 40,000-1,00,000 people can work and live in the same premises.

"Owing to the safety hazards, so far this has not been allowed where employees live in close proximity to the factories. We have had discussions with the Labour Ministry. The necessary changes are possible with a simple administrative action from them (Labour Ministry). They have assured us that they will look into changing the rules and regulations or even the law if needed," another official said.

For the housing on campus plan, the MeitY has had meeting with a few states like Karnataka, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. Initially, any one factory from one of these states will be chosen to run a pilot of the housing on campus plan, one of the ministry officials said.

Last December, the Cabinet had approved a Rs 76,000-crore plan for semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in the country. As a part of the plan, the Centre has lined up incentive support for companies engaged in silicon semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound semiconductors, silicon photonics, sensors fabs, semiconductor packaging and semiconductor design.

As a part of the scheme, for setting up of silicon complementary metal oxide semiconductor, fabrication units that manufacture technology node of 28 nanometre (nm) or lower will get up to 50 per cent of the project cost as incentive, while for above 28 nm but up to 45 nm, the Centre will provide 40 per cent of the unit cost.

The government's move to incentivise the setting up of semiconductor fabrication units assumes significance at a time when there is a global shortage of semiconductor products and large chipmakers like Intel, TSMC, Texas Instruments, etc are looking to add capacity. In India, Tata group has expressed plans to foray into semiconductor manufacturing.

As per government estimates, electronic chips worth Rs 1.1 lakh crore were consumed in the country during 2020. All of this demand was met through imports since the country does not have, at present, have any electronic chip manufacturing units.

AMID GLOBAL SHORTAGE



Reuters file

The Centre's move to incentivise setting up of semiconductor fabrication units assumes significance at a time when there is a global shortage of semiconductor products

INTERVIEW WITH FORMER GOVERNOR, RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

'There will be upward pressure on inflation because of high commodity prices'

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO investment outflows in the wake of the US Fed tightening are unlikely to cause any macro instability because India's external sector today is a lot stronger than in 2013, says former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor DUVVURI SUBBARAO. In a conversation with GEORGE MATHEW, Subbarao — who was the Union Finance Secretary before becoming the RBI Governor — spoke about the RBI prioritising growth over inflation, need for job intensive growth, risks to the economy and the manufacturing push. He also says the digital rupee is unlikely to be a gamechanger. Edited excerpts:



File

"I find it curious that most advanced economies are still circumspect about CBDCs, while emerging economies like India and China are moving forward briskly"

DUVVURI SUBBARAO

RBI has prioritised growth over inflation. Do you think the central bank risks falling behind the curve?

Balancing between growth and inflation is always a challenge for monetary policy, and is much more so in uncertain times such as now. Going forward, there will be upward pressure on inflation because of higher commodity prices, particularly of crude ... skirting around $90/barrel, firms passing on on input price pressures to output prices, hardened inflation expectations and the services sector reopening. On the other hand, RBI seems to have factored in significant easing of supply side bottlenecks and a good Rabi harvest in its inflation estimates. RBI has judged that the ongoing recovery is still incomplete and needs policy support. Should the real economy conditions evolve contrary to these calculations, I am sure the RBI will act swiftly to make a course correction.

What will be the impact of the US Fed tightening on India? Taper tantrums 2.0?

There will certainly be taper but possibly no tantrums. The Fed is expected to raise rates faster than earlier thought because of rising inflation in the US. In response, capital inflows into emerging markets such as India which came in search of quick returns will exit.

Some exit has in fact already happened. Nevertheless, these outflows are unlikely to cause any macro instability because our external sector today is a lot stronger than in 2013. There is no hidden pressure in the exchange rate. Notwithstanding its recent widening, the current account is still within safe limits and our forex reserves are plentiful. Besides, relatively stable flows like FDI and NRI deposits have been steady. There is, of course, need for caution but no need for anxiety.

The Finance Minister said that the RBI will issue a digital rupee next year. Do you think that will be a gamechanger?

The short answer: no. Central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are still largely uncharted territory. Only about a half dozen countries, all relatively small economies, have issued CBDCs so far. So, there is not much experience to fall back on. I find it curious that most advanced economies are still circumspect about CBDCs, while emerging economies like India and China are moving forward briskly. Evidently, the motivations for them are different. I think emerging markets in particular are driven by fear and opportunity... fear that in the absence of a CBDC, their monetary and financial stability will be threatened by some credible private cryptocurrency issued by a technology company such as Facebook, for example. They also see an opportunity in CBDCs of reducing the cost of printing and distributing currency. The bottom-line though is this: for people who have already shifted to UPI-based payments, I don't believe the arrival of the e-rupee will in any way change the user experience.

What are the near-term risks to the economy?

Another Covid wave is an obvious risk. Global recovery getting off track or the geopolitical situation deteriorating are two big external risks. On the domestic front, rising inflation and slipping up on execution of the massive public investment, especially at the state level, are two prominent risks. Any self-doubt on the part of the government in implementing reforms, particularly privatisation, will also dent investor confidence.

How do you look at the Union Budget taking into account the big push in capex and higher government borrowings?

The Finance Minister had difficult choices to make given huge spending pressures and limited resources. In the event, she decided to borrow and spend more on capex. This will not only generate growth in the short-term but also build a base for stronger growth in the future. Since we are at last seeing some light at the end of the tunnel of the twin balance sheet problem, the hope and expectation is that public investment will 'crowd in' private investment and put the economy on a virtuous growth cycle. But ramping up execution, which has been our main weakness, will be key.

But the Finance Minister has been criticised for not stimulating consumption.

Indeed yes. But Budget-making is all about prioritisation. It is true that millions of people are still in distress. But even if the FM puts money in their hands, it's unlikely that they would have spent it given how uncertain they feel about their near- and medium-term future. What they want is not doles, but regular incomes through steady jobs.

Do you think the FM has done enough for jobs in the Budget?

The sizeable public investment, especially in construction, and the private investment it will stimulate, will of course create jobs. But the question is: is that enough given the enormity of the jobs crisis? Jobs have been lost because of growth slowdown, but also because of the shift in activity from the labour-intensive informal sector to capital intensive formal sector. We need not just growth, but job intensive growth.

Are you suggesting emphasis on manufacturing?

Certainly. The services sector can help, but I don't believe it can create low-end jobs in the numbers we need. We import nearly $100-billion of manufactures from China. That itself suggests the opportunity for creating jobs at home by expanding manufacturing. This has to happen not by import restrictions but by improving our competitiveness. The PLI scheme has the potential to create jobs, directly of course, but also indirectly through forward and backward linkages with MSMEs which are job intensive.

Implementing structural and governance reforms to make PLI a happy experience for investors should receive much greater attention. Export production too is labour intensive and we need to roll back tariffs so as to make our exports competitive.

Returning to the size of government borrowing, the Finance Secretary said rating agencies are adopting double standards between developed countries and emerging markets.

For sure, rating agencies have double standards. The classic example of this is that in the run-up to the Asian Crisis in the late 1990s, Australia and the east Asian economies had similar build-up of pressures. The markets allowed Australia to make a smooth adjustment and avert a crisis, but denied a similar accommodation to the Asian economies and landed them in a devastating crisis.

The reality is that emerging economies have to live with rating agencies, no matter that they are biased, simply because they are influential in shaping market perceptions. Rich countries get away with softer ratings even though their fiscal parameters are worse than ours because they issue debt in currencies that others crave. We know from experience that markets and rating agencies are less forgiving of excesses by emerging markets such as India.

Do you think our debt-GDP ratio is too high?

No matter the fiscal compulsions, we can't afford to take our eye off the debt level. Higher borrowings and lower GDP have pushed up the debt-GDP ratio close to 90 per cent of GDP. As a result, interest payments have grown to become the single largest item of expenditure and eat up more than 40 per cent of revenues, leaving that much less for spending on growth enhancing sectors like education, health and infrastructure. The hope is that debt will pay for itself since the spending financed by debt will lead to higher growth. That is true in a mathematical sense but is not inevitable. That's why much greater focus is needed not just on the quantum of public expenditure but also its quality.

SECTOR WATCH
CONSUMER PROTECTION

'Attempt to circumvent law': How Sensodyne ad put GSK in trouble

KARUNJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

THE CENTRAL Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has directed GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Consumer Healthcare to discontinue advertisements for Sensodyne products depicting foreign dentists endorsing the product.

The regulator has also ordered further investigation into other claims regarding the product made by the company in its ads.

Why has GSK been asked to discontinue certain advertisements for Sensodyne?

The CCPA found that certain ads for Sensodyne products broadcast on TV, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter showed UK-based dentists recommending Sensodyne products.

Dentists practising in India are not permitted to endorse any drug or product of the industry publically under the Revised Dentists (Code Of Ethics) Regulations 2014.

The CCPA held that the use of UK-based dentists by GSK to endorse its products "was an attempt to circumvent the law" as applicable to Indian dentists and give the impression that practising dentists in the UK are recommending its product. It ordered that the company discontinue all advertisements for Sensodyne products in India featuring "dentists practicing outside India endorsing the product within 7 days" of its order dated January 27, 2022.

"Since dentists who are medical professionals qualified for treating dental health issues can be seen in the advertisement appreciating, recommending and suggesting the use of the product, the advertisement gives the consumer an indubitable impression that if consumers do not buy the product they are ignoring the advice of a dentist", the regulator noted in its order.

What other action could GSK potentially face?

The CCPA also ordered a probe into claims made by Sensodyne in its advertisements that the product was "recommended by dentists worldwide", "world's no. 1 sensitivity toothpaste" and that it provides "clinically proven relief, works in 60 seconds". Under Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, GSK could face a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh and a prohibition from advertising any product and service for up to one year, if the CCPA finds that the company has indulged in misleading advertising.

The CCPA had initiated a *suo moto* action against specific advertisements of Sensodyne products in India featuring foreign doctors and issued a show cause notice to GSK in March 2021.

EXPLAINED

The CCPA initiated action against some ads of Sensodyne

'RBI's G-Secs holding may rise by ₹2 lakh cr next fiscal'

Given the Centre's record borrowing plan of ₹14.3 lakh crore for FY23, the RBI will have to find buyers for at least ₹2 lakh crore, according to an SBI Research report



Government securities (G-secs) maturing by 2061 are worth ₹80.8 lakh crore as of end of January. Of this:

- 37.8% held by banks
- 24.2% by insurers
- 17% held by Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

Foreign ownership of G-secs are a paltry 1.9%. This is the lowest among India's peers, compared to:

- 44.5% in Brazil
- 41.1% in Mexico
- 35% in South Africa
- 10.5% in China

The Budget seeks to pay back ₹3.1 lakh crore next fiscal

With ₹80.8 lakh crore outstanding government bonds, RBI is their second-largest holder of them, after financial institutions

Source: SBI Research/PTI

Not all states enthused: Grants make way for Budget capex push

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

STATES HAVE raised apprehensions about the rise in capital expenditure (capex) proposals outlined in the FY23 Union Budget. The Budget has proposed a hike in capex by 24.47 per cent to Rs 7.5 lakh crore, against the Revised Estimate for 2021-22 at Rs 6,02,711 crore. Some states, however, claim this has come at the cost of a reduction in grants to states.

Hike in capex in Budget

The capex for FY23 has been pegged at Rs 7.5 lakh crore. Together with grants-in-aid for creation of capital assets (including MGNREGA works), the effective capital expenditure for the next year is budgeted at Rs 10.67 lakh crore, 27 per cent more than the RE of FY22 at Rs 8.40 lakh crore.

This expenditure hike comes along with an increase in the state borrowing limit to 4 per cent of the GSDP. States have also been allowed to borrow up to Rs 1 lakh crore through 50-year interest-free loans to make capital investments. For FY22, the Centre had allowed states an additional Rs 15,000 crore for capital investment under a similar window. Over the course of the next 12 months, such government spending may crowd in private sector investment and help create jobs.

The Centre had also made provision of over Rs 2 lakh crore for states and autonomous bodies towards their capex. The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) was launched in 2020 with projected infrastructure investment of around Rs 111 lakh crore during FY 2020-2025 to build infrastructure across the country. NIP was launched with 6,835 projects, and later expanded to over 9,000 projects covering 34 sub- sectors.

Concerns flagged by states

Some Opposition-ruled states have raised concerns about the enhanced capex allocation coming at the cost of a reduction in grants-in-aid, revenue deficit grants, subsidies for food, fertiliser, fuel and allocation for MGNREGA.

"While POOR have DOUBLED in one year to 134 MILLION, Budget CUT FOOD SUBSIDY BY 28%, CUT 100-days-work by 25%, Social Services CUT(as % GDP),Agri CUT(% GDP), Health CUT(% GDP). RUTHLESSLY ANTI-POOR BUDGET & ZERO for MIDDLE CLASS - only selling PIE-in-the SKY & spinning a MIRAGE," Amit Mitra, Principal Chief Advisor to West Bengal Chief Minister had tweeted.

The issue has been seen with the transfer of spending on various grants and schemes to the Rs 1-lakh-crore interest-fire long-term loan to states. "This accomplishes the triple-magic of converting grants to loans, revenue spending to capital investment, and showing an eye-watering 35 per cent year-on-year increase in capital investments," Tamil Nadu's Finance Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan said.

Another state government official said that the increase in capex is merely an accounting trick, even including the debt of Air India. "So far, the money given to states for various schemes was in the form of grants. The revised estimates have reduced the allocation for grants and schemes and they have been labelled as interest-free loans. This is a way to keep the revenue deficit in check and show a higher capex," a government official from Kerala said.

In the Union Budget for 2022-23, the government allocated an additional Rs 51,971 crore towards the settlement of outstanding guaranteed liabilities of Air India and its other "sundry commitments".

Full report on www.indianexpress.com

OPPOSITION-RULED STATES' CONCERNS

Some states ruled by Opposition parties raised concerns about enhanced capex allocation coming at the cost of fall in grants-in-aid, revenue deficit grants, subsidies for food, fertiliser, fuel and allocation for MGNREGA

BRIEFLY

Aramco shares

New Delhi: Saudi Arabia has transferred 4% of Saudi Aramco shares worth $80 billion to the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, the government said. **REUTERS**

IL&FS debt

New Delhi: IL&FS group will resolve debt of ₹55,000 crore by March 2022, the company's board said in an affidavit filed before NCLAT.

CII on exports

New Delhi: India needs to adopt a multidimensional approach to take merchandise exports to $1 trillion by 2030, a CII report said. **PTI**

How a faceless conman 'Yogi' guided ex-NSE MD for 20 years

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 13

CHITRA RAMKRISHNA, who was the MD and CEO of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), was guided by a faceless conman "Siddha Purusha/Yogi", a Paramahansa who may be largely dwelling in the Himalayan ranges, for 20 years, says an order issued by market regulator Sebi on Friday.

The faceless 'Yogi' was responsible for the appointment of Anand Subramanian as group operating officer and advisor to the MD, who was not known in the industry. Subramanian was allegedly an accomplice with the unknown person (faceless Yogi) who influenced the decision of Ramkrishna and thereby benefitting himself by being re-designated as 'Group Operating Officer and Advisor to MD' and having the compensation being paid to him increase substantially each year, upon the advice of the unknown person to Ramkrishna, said the Sebi order signed by Whole-time Member Ananta Barua.



Chitra Ramkrishna, former MD and CEO of NSE. *File*

Subramanian, in his statements dated September 12, 2018, also stated he knew the unknown person — Yogi — for the past 22 years. "His cost to company is not less than Rs 5 crore. Chitra is totally dependent on Subramanian and does not do anything without his consultation," Sebi said.

As per the Sebi order, Ramkrishna, who quit in December 2016, shared certain internal confidential information of NSE with an unknown person by addressing her correspondence to an email id rigyajursama@outlook.com from 2014 to 2016. *Full report on www.indianexpress.com*

UNDER LIQUIDATION, ACCOUNT HAS BEEN DECLARED A FRAUD INVOLVING ₹22,842 CRORE

No effort to delay ABG Shipyard case: SBI

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, FEBRUARY 13

STATE BANK of India (SBI) on Sunday said ABG Shipyard Ltd is presently undergoing "liquidation under an NCLT driven process" and there was no "effort to delay the process" at any point of time. The account has been declared a fraud involving Rs 22,842 crore.

Although ICICI Bank was the lead lender in the consortium and IDBI Bank was the second lead, it was preferred that SBI being the largest PSB lender, lodges the complaint with CBI, SBI said. "The first complaint was filed with CBI in Nov 2019. There was a continuous engagement between CBI and banks and further information was getting exchanged," it added.

First complaint with CBI filed in Nov 2019, second in Dec 2020, says bank

According to SBI, the circumstances of the fraud, as well as CBI requirements, were further deliberated in the various meetings of joint lenders and a fresh and comprehensive second complaint was filed in December 2020. The account is presently undergoing liquidation under an NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) driven process, the state-run bank added.

The account was initially restructured under the CDR mechanism in March 2014 by all lenders. However, as the shipping industry was going through a downturn, one of the worst ever seen, the operations of the company could not revive, SBI said.

As the restructuring failed, the account was classified as non-performing asset (NPA) in July 2016 with backdated effect from November 30, 2013. E&Y was appointed the forensic auditor by lenders in April 2018, and it submitted its report on January 2019.

"E&Y report was placed before the fraud identification committee of 18 lenders in 2019. Fraud is mainly attributed to diversion of funds, misappropriation and criminal breach of trust," SBI said.

A fraud is declared on the basis of forensic audit report findings, which are discussed thoroughly in joint lenders meetings. Typically, when fraud is declared, an initial complaint is preferred with CBI, and based on their enquiries further information is gathered, SBI said.

In a few cases, when substantial additional information is gathered, a second complaint incorporating full and complete details is filed which forms the basis for the FIR. "At no point in time, there was any effort to delay the process. The lender's forum diligently follows through with CBI in all such cases," the bank said.

Incorporated on March 15, 1985, ABG Shipyard had banking arrangements since 2001. It was financed under consortium arrangement by over two dozen lenders, led by ICICI Bank. Due to poor performance, the account became an NPA on November 30, 2013. Several efforts were made to revive the company operations but could not succeed, SBI said.

Finishing touch artists

Livingstone, Tim David & Odean Smith enjoy big payday due to their uncanny six-hitting ability

SANDIP G
FEBRUARY 13

LIAM LIVINGSTONE, the most expensive overseas purchase of this Indian Premier League auction with Punjab Kings spending Rs 11.5 crore on him, has one complaint. "There are no 700 days in a year," he told *The Guardian* last year. He wants to play Test cricket, the dream of his life, but wonders where he would squeeze time for his red-ball predilections.

Over the last two years, he has been the busiest T20 gun-for-hire around, sixes rolling as fast as the cheques to possess him. Two editions of the Pakistan Super League, a couple of IPLs, two Big Bash League seasons in Australia, South Africa's Mzansi Super League, the Vitality Blast, and The Hundred, besides national duty, have made his life faster, just like the sixes that gush out of his bat.

Though his two previous seasons in the IPL have been lacklustre — his nine outings fetching only 114 runs – Livingstone is one of the most voracious six-hitters in the world. Last year, he launched 82 sixes in T20 cricket, the second-most by any international cricketer.

He strikes one six every 11 balls he faces, a four every ninth ball. In club cricket, he once clouted 350 runs off only 138 balls, smashing 34 fours and 27 sixes. His most recent feat is the fastest T20 hundred by an Englishman, when he struck one in 42 balls against a Pakistan attack that featured Shaheen Afridi, Mohammad Hasnain and Haris Rauf last year. By the way, he also pulls off some stunning acrobatic catches and bowls both leg-spin and off-spin.

But it's his power-hitting reputation that earned him the millions. Power-hitting is the most inflation-proof currency in T20 cricket. Natural, unabashed six hitters are a rare commodity. There are stroke-makers who could hit sixes, but few with the instinct to hit sixes, more so in the finisher's role. Livingstone could don multiple roles, but is most dangerous as a finisher, whether his team is setting or chasing a target.

He could come straightaway and unroll sixes with those long levers, with a fusion of power and timing. Catch some of his YouTube reels — there are sixes of all sorts. Clubs, heaves, slogs, sweeps, drives, cut and the odd scoop and ramp (though improvised shots are not his thing).

Finishers of such ferocity are a rare breed. Andre Russell has lost some of his fabled prowess; Kieron Pollard consumes time before breaking free these days; Chris Morris has retired, David Miller's powers have waned; age and injuries have diluted Dwayne Bravo's hitting instincts. Hence, there are just a handful around, like Hardik Pandya and Glenn Maxwell. It's a rarer group in Indian cricket — and those around were exuberantly swooped, both Shahrukh Khan and Rahul Tewatia pouched Rs 9 crore apiece - where even the national team is frantically searching for a successor to MS Dhoni and fussing over the fitness of Pandya.

In high demand

Hence, the overseas, six-happy finishers were the flavour on Sunday. If they happen to possess a second skill, their stocks would just shoot through the roof.

Another beneficiary of this skewed demand-supply situation was Singapore-born Australian cricketer Tim David, a hard-hitting batsman who bowls off-spin. Mumbai Indians splurged Rs 8.25 crore (from a base price of Rs 40 lakh) to pocket him to fill the finisher's role vacated by Pandya. "David is going to partner (Kieron) Pollard at No. 6. We have been tracking Tim and he had success at RCB last year.

Looking forward to seeing him and Pollard finishing the innings for us," said Akash Ambani, the franchise's owner. David has an eye-popping career T20 strike rate of 159. It has been better this year — in BBL, he racked up 218 runs at a strike rate of 163.9 while in PSL, he plundered 221 runs at 206.54, besides an average of 55, mostly batting down the order. He joined RCB mid-season last year and failed to make any impact whatsoever, but was too irresistible a talent for Mumbai.

Punjab Kings, ever blamed for a shortage of six-hitters, didn't stop with Livingstone. They aggressively bid for Jamaican all-rounder Odean Smith, a robust hitter who could consistently clock upwards of 140kph with the ball, and gobbled him for Rs 6 crore. He once split Gayle's bat into two while he reeled out 36 off 18 balls in the third ODI against India to remind prospective buyers of his batting potential.

Fellow Jamaican Rovman Powell too found a deal worth Rs 2.8 crore with Delhi Capitals. It could turn out to be a steal, as he has been in red hot form and recently smashed 107 runs off 53 balls against England. So murderous was he that the ball had to changed three times during the innings. He can also bowl canny medium-pace and Capitals would believe they have unearthed their own Russell. Sunrisers Hyderabad, who fiercely bid for most players, eventually landed Guyanese all-rounder Romario Shepherd for Rs 7.75 crore. His T20 numbers are staggering — a strike rate of 160 with the bat at an average of 26 and an average of 21 with the ball, though he bleeds eight an over.

Like Powell, he prospered in the recent series against England, and once came at No. 7 to hammer 44 off 28 balls.

Even less-consistent finishers such as Matthew Wade (Rs 2.4 crore) and Miller (Rs 3 crore) found buyers, stretching the theme of the day, wherein teams fought fiercely for six-hitting colossuses.

The metaphor of the day was Livingstone, for whom the coming years would turn only busier.





Punjab Kings splashed Rs11.5cr for Liam Livingstone and roped in Odean Smith, a robust hitter who consistently clocks upwards of 140kph, for Rs 6 cr. *Reuters/PTI*

How the seasoned & the rookies fared

Over two days of auction, 204 players were sold as the 10 franchises assembled their respective squads. Here's how the two most successful franchises in IPL history and the two newcomers fared in the exercise.

Chennai Super Kings



SMART BUY: CSK needed an opener after releasing Faf du Plessis. Picking Devon Conway for Rs 1 crore makes their batting line-up well-rounded.
STRENGTHS: Seven all-rounders in Ravindra Jadeja, Moeen Ali, Chris Jordan, Mitchell Santner, Shivam Dube, Dwayne Bravo and Dwaine Pretorius. Their biggest strength remains MS Dhoni's leadership.
WEAKNESS: If any, probably the No. 3 spot, as replacing Suresh Raina is a tough ask.

Mumbai Indians

SMART BUY: Tim David for Rs 8.25 crore, as the five-time champions needed a finisher after letting Hardik Pandya go.
STRENGTHS: Rohit Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah, and the x-factor the two players bring to the table. T20 batting is mostly about the top four and they have proven performers.
WEAKNESS: Losing Pandya's all-round ability could hurt them.

Lucknow Super Giants

SMART BUY: Quinton de Kock for Rs 6.75 crore. He is an impact batsman at the top and a fine wicketkeeper.
STRENGTH: Their bowling line-up, with the right mix of pace and spin.
WEAKNESS: A top-heavy batting line-up and not much international experience in their Indian middle-order pack.

Gujarat Titans



SMART BUY: Jason Roy for Rs 2 crore was a steal. A game-changer at the top, he can decimate any bowling attack on his day.
STRENGTHS: Three impact fast bowlers in **Mohammed Shami**, Lockie Ferguson and Alzarri Joseph. Also, Pandya as a finisher.
WEAKNESS: They don't have adequate cover for Roy at the top, as the English opener might not be available for the whole tournament.

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY

END OF ROAD(IES)

It could be the end of the road for these five IPL veterans who were with the league since the start in 2008. All five -- one current and four former India players -- went unsold in the IPL auction. Suresh Raina too didn't get sold but he retired from international cricket a couple of years ago.

ISHANT SHARMA

Stats - Mat 93, Wkts 72, Econ 8.11, Avg 37.51
Teams -Kolkata Knight Riders, Deccan Chargers, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Rising Pune Supergiant, Punjab Kings, Delhi Capitals

The veteran of 105 Tests could not get a game in India's recent three-Test series in South Africa, another indication that the team management is phasing him out. He was bought by Delhi Capitals for Rs 1.1 crore in the 2019 IPL auction. However, the franchise found use for him in just four games across seasons 2020 and 2021. Although he's been part of as many as six franchises across the duration of the league, none of the teams spotted a worthy deal in Ishant's skills this time. He's still only 33, but the end seems nearer than ever.

AMIT MISHRA

Stats -154 Wkts, 166 Econ, 7.35, Avg 23.95
Teams -Delhi Daredevils, Deccan Chargers, Sunrisers Hyderabad

The leg-spinner is in his 40th year and played his last match for the national team half a decade ago. But he had remained a fixture in the IPL since 2008, and has taken the most wickets by an Indian bowler as well as the highest by a spinner in the league. He began with Delhi Capitals and returned to the franchise in 2015, his price going to Rs 4 crore in 2018. DC picked up two other wrist-spinners in this auction – Kuldeep Yadav and Praveen Dubey – showing they had moved on from the man who played 99 games for the Delhi franchise.

PIYUSH CHAWLA

Stats -Mat 165, Wkts, 157, Econ 7.88, Avg 27.39
Teams -Punjab Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders, Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians

It sounds ridiculous that Piyush Chawla played his last match for India just before he turned 24, is still playing representative cricket, and is still only 33. It sounds even more surprising that only two years ago, Chennai Super Kings paid a whopping Rs 6.75 crore for him, and Mumbai Indians forked out Rs 2.4 crore for his leg-spin last year. After Mishra, he has the second-most wickets by an Indian bowler and by a spinner in IPL history. He remains among the wickets for Gujarat in the Vijay Hazare Trophy and the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, but the IPL is done with him.

SAURABH TIWARY

Stats -Mat 93, Runs 1494, Avg 28.73, SR 120.09
Teams - Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Rising Pune Supergiant, Royal Challengers Bangalore

Saurabh Tiwary played three ODIs for India in 2010 and next year, Royal Challengers Bangalore paid $1.6 million for him. His performances never came close to matching the early hype; his IPL career strike-rate is 120. Franchises soon tempered their expectations. Tiwary had been with Mumbai Indians for half a crore for years. He'd stroll around the Wankhede boundary during games and at times come on as a substitute fielder. At 32, he has played a hundred first-class games and scored nearly seven thousand runs. It is an aspect of his game that is often overlooked, it is perhaps also all he has to look forward to now.

DHAWAL KULKARNI

Stats -Mat 92, Wkts 86 , Econ 8.3, Avg 28.76
Teams - Mumbai Indians, Gujarat Lions, Rajasthan Royals

Another local player who spent years with Mumbai Indians without getting much game time, Dhawal Kulkarni was utilized more by his two other franchises: Gujarat Lions and Rajasthan Royals. The erstwhile Gujarat franchise gave the seamer Rs 2.3 crore, but the amount came down drastically after the two-year existence of the team. MI had him at Rs 75 lakh for the past two seasons, and it was his base price going into this auction, where he found no takers. At 33, there could be some more domestic cricket left to come for the Mumbai Ranji team from Kulkarni, who played his last match for India in 2016.

ABHISHEK PUROHIT

Archer unlikely to play this season, but Mumbai Indians bet long-term

SHAMIK CHAKRABARTY
KOLKATA, FEBRUARY 13

FOR THE INDIAN Premier League franchises, left-arm fast bowlers remain prized assets and the two-day auction attested that. Trent Boult going to Rajasthan Royals for Rs 8 crore didn't offer any surprise, for the Kiwi is a world-class operator. But B-listers like Khaleel Ahmed, Chetan Sakariya and Jaydev Unadkat, too, enjoyed big pay days.

Another interesting aspect of the auction was a change in the franchises' thought process as regards to picking spinners. Multi-skilled cricketers got big money, be it Punjab Kings forking out Rs 11.5 crore for Liam Livingstone and Rs 6 crore for Odean Smith, or the franchise spending Rs 2 crore for India U-19 all-rounder Raj Bawa. Mumbai Indians snapping up the injured Jofra Archer for Rs 8 crore did raise eyebrows, as the England paceman is unlikely to play in the 2022 edition.

Why did MI go all-out for the injured Archer?

Several eyebrows were raised when the England fast bowler made a late entry to the auction pool. For nearly a year now, Archer hasn't played any cricket and according to the England and Wales Cricket Board, is still "in the final stages" of his recovery from an elbow surgery. The 26-year-old listed himself at a base price of Rs 2 crore and went to MI for Rs 8 crore after a three-way bidding war. This is despite the BCCI rider that a replacement wouldn't be allowed for him if the player misses the 2022 season due to his injury. Twitter went berserk at the possibility of Archer pairing up with Jasprit Bumrah, but the fast bowler himself reacted with an eye-popping emoji.

For MI's part, clearly this was an investment for the future, which champion teams sometimes make. To draw a football analogy, this offered a throwback to former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson waiting for a year for Ruud van Nistelrooy to recover from an injured knee after agreeing an £18.5million transfer fee with PSV Eindhoven in 2000. Tymal Mills for Rs 1.5 crore was MI's adequate cover for Archer this season.

EXPLAINED

Why do teams covet left-arm quicks?

There aren't many quality left-arm fast bowlers around and in a mega auction involving 10 teams, demand far exceeded supply. "There's more demand than supply and there are challenges because of 10 teams. The auction dynamics are very different," Punjab Kings head coach Anil Kumble told reporters.

Khaleel last played for India two-and-a-half years ago. His T20 economy rate is north of eight, but after intense bidding, Delhi Capitals bagged him for Rs 5.25 crore. Unadkat took four wickets from six games in last year's IPL. His last game for India was in 2018. MI picked him for Rs 1.3 crore on Sunday. Sakariya, still very much a work in progress, went to DC for Rs 4.2 crore.

Left-arm quicks are coveted because of the unpredictability they offer. Bowling with the new ball, they prompt batsmen to open their stance a bit because of the natural angle which takes the ball away from the right-hander. A left-arm fast bowler with the ability to bring the ball into the batsman becomes even more difficult to counter due to the guessing factor.

With the old ball, when they come around the wicket, they can make the ball straighten after pitching. Also, in the shorter formats, fast bowlers use wide yorkers a lot in the slog overs. From that point of view, a left-arm seamer gets an advantage to target the tramline, bowling from over the wicket.

Why did Livingstone's value skyrocket?

The 28-year-old from Lancashire played just five matches for Rajasthan Royals during the second phase of the IPL last year, scoring 42 runs. At the T20 World Cup, he scored 46 runs in six games for England. Livingstone was the highest run-getter (348) in The Hundred last season and hit sixes for fun, 27 in total. He is widely considered to be one of the most talented young England batsmen, but Livingstone wouldn't have got much money if he weren't multi-skilled. He has the ability to bowl leg-breaks to right-handers and off-breaks to lefties. Five franchises bid for him and Punjab looked determined to rope him in, ostensibly to use the player as an all-rounder. Livingstone is also an outstanding fielder. At an auction that fell for multi-skilled cricketers, he was in the right place at the right time. Livingstone's compatriot Dawid Malan went unsold in the first round despite being among the top five T20I batsmen in the world. Franchises weren't interested in a specialist, a top-order overseas batsman.



Jofra Archer listed himself at a base price of Rs 2 crore and went to MI for Rs 8 crore after a three-way bidding war. *file*

Smith bowled economically and took four wickets in the recent India versus West Indies ODI series. The Caribbean all-rounder showed his batting pyrotechnics when he laid into Kuldeep Yadav in the final ODI. "We have been tracking the players for a while," Kumble said.

A tally of 252 runs and nine wickets at the U-19 World Cup, especially his Man-of-the-Match performance in the final – 5/31 and 35 runs under pressure – did the trick for Bawa, at a time when Indian cricket is crying out for a genuine seam-bowling all-rounder.

Why is there a decline in mystery spinners' value?

In T20 cricket, wrist-spinners are always the most sought-after players because of their ability to take wickets in the middle overs. Little wonder then that leg-spinners went big – Royal Challengers Bangalore getting Wanindu Hasaranga for Rs 10.75 crore, Rajasthan Royals pocketing Yuzvendra Chahal for Rs 6.5 crore, Punjab spending Rs 5.25 crore for Rahul Chahar and Gujarat Titans splurging Rs 9 crore for all-rounder Rahul Tewatia.

Conventional off-spinners who can bat became expensive, like Sunrisers Hyderabad buying Washington Sundar for Rs 8.75 crore. But the so-called mystery spinners weren't in demand.

K Gowtham's value dropped from Rs 9.25 crore with Chennai Super Kings last year to Rs 90 lakh for Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday. KC Cariappa, who was a Rs 2.4-crore buy for Kolkata Knight Riders at the 2015 auction, was sold to Royals for Rs 30 lakh this time around.

With teams relying heavily on analysts, there's no longer any mystery left. Varun Chakravarthy was the only Indian mystery spinner to get a good value at this IPL, retained by KKR for Rs 8 crore. Varun's mystery spin has worked for the franchise, although the 30-year-old was found out at international level, as Babar Azam unlocked his secret at the T20 World Cup last year.

Why didn't Morgan spark interest?

England's captain fantastic went unsold during the first round on Sunday. Morgan masterminded KKR's revival during the second phase of the IPL last year. But as a batsman, he had an average tournament – 133 runs in 17 games. This year, KKR have broken the bank for Shreyas Iyer and he is considered to be a captaincy candidate.

Iyer is still very much a work in progress as a leader. But the majority of the franchises these days pick captains who offer good commercial value, giving tactical responsibility to the head coach and support staff.

The two most successful IPL franchises, however, still keep their captains at the forefront – Rohit Sharma at MI and MS Dhoni at CSK. RCB, too, had a strong captain in Virat Kohli and that they have taken Faf du Plessis this time suggests a continuation even after Kohli's decision to step down.

Vol XC- 82 Regd.No. DL-21046/03-05 R.N.I. No.506/57. Printed and Published by R.C.Malhotra on behalf of The Indian Express (P) Limited and Printed at The Indian Express (P) Limited Press, A-8, Sector-7, Noida -201301 and D B Corp Ltd, Dainik Bhaskar Village Unan Tola, Near Danapur Cantt, Shivylya Road, Post Khagaul, Shahpur, Patna (Bihar) and Published at The Indian Express (P) Limited, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9&10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002. Editorial office: The Indian Express (P) Limited, Mezzanine Floor, Express Building, 9&10, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, NewDelhi-110002. Phone: 0120-6651500. Advertising office: The Indian Express (P) Limited, B1/B, Sector-10, Noida-201301. Phone:01206651291. Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Chief Editor: Raj Kamal Jha, Editor: Unni Rajen Shanker, Editor (Delhi): Rakesh Sinha ** **
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BRIEFLY

Erin wins USA's first Winter Games medal since 1994

Beijing: Erin Jackson of the United States won gold in the women's 500 metres speed skating at the Beijing Olympics on Sunday, giving the U.S. its first gold medal in the event since 1994. She could be seen grinning widely after completing her lap in 37.04 seconds, but had to wait for the last pair to finish before she embraced her coach and burst into tears. "I wish I could describe how I feel. It is amazing. This medal means so much," an emotional Jackson told reporters. "It has been a tough couple of years and a tough beginning for this year. For this to come around like this I am so happy." Jackson could have missed the opportunity to represent the United States after a stumble during the Olympic trials, but her team mate Brittany Bowe gave her spot in the 500m race to Jackson. "She (Bowe) made a big sacrifice for me and I'll be grateful forever," Jackson said. Bowe did eventually qualify for the Olympics after a reallocation of unused spots, finishing 16th out of 30 skaters. "I'm part of the puzzle, but this one is about her. She stood at the start line and she got that job done today," Bowe said of Jackson. Silver medallist Miho Takagi of Japan set the early pace, coming out on top in the fourth pairing out of 15 with a time of 37.12 seconds that was not beaten until Jackson's race.

Record Winter Games medal haul for Australia

Beijing: Australia's Olympic delegation bathed in pride on Sunday as the country hailed a record Winter Games medal haul for their team and an unlikely hero in skeleton racer Jackie Narracott. Narracott's surprise silver in women's skeleton on Saturday pushed Australia to a record fourth medal in Beijing, following gold for freestyle skier Jakara Anthony, snowboarder Scotty James's silver and bronze for women's snowboarder Tess Coady. "It is a fantastic morning," Australia chef de mission Geoff Lipshut told reporters in Zhangjiakou on Sunday. "It was (an) absolute thrill last night, it was history-making. While long known for punching above their weight at the Summer Olympics, Australia have made strides in winter sports over the past two decades.

Swiss favourite Odermatt claims giant slalom gold

Beijing: Switzerland's Marco Odermatt won gold in the men's giant slalom at the Beijing Olympics on Sunday, holding his nerve to fend off a superb effort from Zan Kranjec of Slovenia. Odermatt finished with a combined time of 2:09:35, putting him 0.19 seconds ahead of runner-up Kranjec with France's Mathieu Faivre taking bronze. The first run had taken place in driving snow with poor visibility but the decision to delay the second run by 75 minutes paid off, with better conditions producing a thrilling battle. "It's unbelievable. It was a hard day, with the conditions, with such a long wait between the two runs," said Odermatt, 24. "It was more than five hours for me, it was such a long time to rethink everything and it was hard to stay focused. I tried to sleep some minutes in-between."

REUTERS

Slow and steady, Indian slalom skier Arif finishes 45th

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
FEBRUARY 13

POOR VISIBILITY , a choppy track and skiers falling left and right was the story of the Giant Slalom event in the Nanqing Alpine Centre at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Out of the 87 skiers to start the race, only 47 were able to complete both their runs in the tricky conditions. India's Arif Khan's maiden Olympic appearance saw him come 45th.

With snow falling sideways on a track that boasts of high elevation levels, a hard, icy surface was blanketed with powdery snow. The result saw skiers' equipment stumbling against the hard bits of snow and leading to many falls.

Arif's first run saw him take a cautious approach. Scheduled to be the 85th skier to get an opportunity to post a time, the lone Indian at the Olympics decided to go far slower than his competition. Unlike the leaders of the race, who largely stuck to a set racing line and tapped the blue and red gates peppered along the Nanqing circuit with their shoulders at a blistering pace, Arif was content to keep his balance.

Rarely would the outside of his shoulder touch the gates and a longer, slower arch around the gates belied the strategy — this wasn't the race or the occasion to try to be adventurous but one that required a finish, however late to the party. The race leader, Swiss skier Marco Odermatt, had other plans. Having dominated the giant slalom season this year with four victories out of a possible at the World Cups, the race was his to lose.

And the prognosis didn't look too good with the 24-year-old after he was out of the racing line around 12 seconds into his first run. But he recovered quickly and took the first run. On the other hand, Arif finished his first run with a time of 1:22:35 and was at the 53rd spot on the first session of the day.

The second run was delayed due to the weather but began once visibility got clearer. 33 skiers had failed to complete the course on their first attempt.

With some light starting to show on the course and the season's first snowfall slowing down, Arif set out to complete his second run. Immediately one could see the confidence in this race as the skier's pace was faster and he adhered to the racing line with a lot more discipline this time around. The angles around the gates were a lot sharper, with the Kashmiri skier attempting to tilt as downwards towards the icy slope as he could at angles.

The gulf in competition though was far too high. Arif finished his second run with a time of 1:24:89, which was a marked improvement on his previous attempt. His total time came down to 2:47:24, which was 37.89 seconds behind race winner Odermatt. Odermatt came under challenge from Slovenia's Zan Kranjec, who shaved off half a second from the Swiss race leader in the second run. But it was still 0.19 seconds behind for an agonising silver.

"It's one of my dreams to be at the Winter Olympics and this is my first time. It really means a lot. "There were like millions of people watching me live back home. I was trying my best to give the best I have got. But the weather was uncertain, you couldn't see much… like how the slope was used, but it was good," the 31-year-old Arif told Olympics.com.

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